

Chapter 6 Love at first sight.

Just at the end of the first blitz of bombing in London, in May 1941, Don Haycraft, with Joan, arrived on the doorstep at No 4 Pinfold Road.

The story goes that Don and Joan arrived at the house while the two girls were out at the local cinema. Someone was sent to fetch them out of the film, as some friends of Tony's had arrived and so it was time to celebrate. This first time visit was an introduction to a wild excitable family that consisted of Mater and two daughters, Yvonne and Marie, who were the dotting younger sisters of Tony.

This was the first of a number of visits to Streatham by Joan who was so drawn in so that by the beginning of June, she had brought her brother along who was also drawn into the welcoming family.

This "new family" was ideal for Joan who, remember, had been orphaned at 13, and Peter, her brother, seemed to enjoy the company of his little sister and became happy to become a regular visitor to the household.

Peter wrote on the 3rd June to thank Mater for such a good time. See Appendix 12.

Later he somehow bought a grand piano in London for £10 and had it delivered to 4 Pinfold Road where it stayed until the 1980s from whence it travelled to Joan's farm in Cumbria, for old times sake.



Peter Dibdin

Two weeks after that first visit, on the 7th June 1941, Tony had just arrived on leave from Scotland and was about to start training as a 2nd Lieutenant at Shrivenham. Joan arrived on the door step with her friend Jean Irvine and she was met by Tony with the comment:

"I have heard a lot about you."

And so begins a story of intense passion, longing, creativity and trauma involving the lives of at least three people, although, in reality, considerably more.

When the first edition of this was written, the narrative was pieced together from a couple of letters from Tony to Joan and a handful of letters to his mother. Life as it developed from these could be worked out, but not including all the details and insights that have been acquired because over 100 letters from Tony to Joan have surfaced, covering the period from their first meeting until Tony went India. These letters have been included in Appendix 4, with all those covering the early part of the war and Appendix 5 the later India period.

Although the information drawn from the letters is a little one sided, there is still enough for the researcher and reader to appreciate the depth of the relationship that quickly developed between Tony and Joan. Tony's letters also give us considerable detail of his work and life in the army as well as terrific insights into his nature and how he handled and expressed his very deep love for Joan Dibdin, later Joan Guise..

Much of this new found archive, supports many of the ideas that I had developed from earlier work, however it would be no exaggeration for me to use a modern idiom and say that I was completely blown away. Whereas we have no letters from Joan we get some idea of her feeling from the poem in Appendix 10 "I came to You"

Five Months at Shrivenham

The doorstep encounter led to an intense passionate relationship and strengthened Joan's involvement with the Guise family. She was probably grateful for this new family, although she would have found their intensity and clannish ways strange.

With the first week of going to Shrivenham after a somewhat passionate week with Joan, he wrote, in his first letter to her dated 16th June 1941 the following:

*"Life seems such an empty worthless husk without you, such an awful placid uninteresting thing. I long for those mad wild flights of love and gently fluttering silences, when the earth stood still and time went mad and everything was annihilated to the green thought of our desire... Broken only by the beating of our own hearts. And I long for the seducing fingers that stole my soul, and for the lips that enslaved my heart and for the body that tore my bowels in an ecstasy of wonderment, and for you... You,!! The whole of you that I love and love to love - - I hunger!
Oh God, I'd sooner be a crossing sweeper that might I be with you, that all the officers in the British army and away from you."*

He then went on to pragmatically accept that he was geographically nearer to her there than any where else in the army and

"I shall sally forth and do my best in this sole crushing job and like it"

*"All my love sweetheart -
You are my heart and my mind and I shall sleep with your name up on my lips and in you rejoice, for the world is good again and made perfected by your memory and humbly shall I look upon the Moon and the Stars and the Sun and remember... She who shames them all*

*" Oh thou lovely incarnation of the nectar dropping Moon..."
I love you Tony"*

The letter starts with some down to earth details about him not getting a long leave for three months but that bits of weekends are free under some circumstances so Joan could do the 2½ hour journey down to Shrivenham and stay at a hotel. !

However the way the letter develops is for me, on so many counts, a gem. How I wish that I had such command of language to express myself in such a way. When I first found his reference to the Hindu poem regarding Nectar Dropping Moon during my earlier research, I had assumed that he met it in India, however it is apparent that he had learnt it long before probably while at Art College before the war. For the interested reader, a discussion of the poem can be found in full in Appendix 10.

What I find so astounding, is being taken back by this letter, a time of nearly sixty years to those early days of meeting Joanna my wife. His expression *"that tore my bowels in an ecstasy of wonderment, and for you..."* so expresses the intensity of feeling that I had in 1963 and the completeness of *"Life seems such an empty worthless husk without you"* says it all. Shame that I did not have a father to discuss such issues with. Research into my in-laws life indicate very similar chaotic emotions although they were reluctant to admit it in later life but it is in letters between the two.

And so through regular letters, we embark on a torrid relationship blended with the rigours of Army life and the responsibilities of Leadership.

There is a noticeable change in Tony's letters to his mother once he has been selected for officer training. His money issues still arose from time to time but we seem to be reading letters from a more responsible individual and he no longer complains about day to day hardships. Of course, at Shrivenham, he is in barracks

similar to Catterick and despite the hard work, that is necessary, he is recognised as a potential officer.

From the few letters to his mother we get some idea of life in the barracks, the sort of information that would interest his mother: cigs ration limited to 20 a week and nowhere local to buy them. So a very grateful thanks to Mater for the cigarettes, although this is followed by a discourse on the quality of Turkish cigarettes and the delights of Sobranie Black Russian, a detail on which, from first hand experience when a few years younger, I have to agree. The feeling was for Tony was like being a new boy at school, but there is a cheerful atmosphere. He had to do monthly exams and swot hard for them as well as bayonet fighting, unarmed combat, and PT {physical training}, and managing visits to his tailor to be fitted for Officer's uniform. He was obviously pleased with the uniform "My uniform is quite a honey but the Major doesn't know what hand stitching is and looked a bit askance."

Despite his ability to cope with all this study work and training, he really does not like the unreality of it and is longing to get on with some proper work. And here now lies the paradox because once he is trained as an officer, his "work" will be, by nature, to order other people to do it. We shall see, as the next three years pan out how he tackles this issue.

Tony's letters to Joan give very little detail about his life at camp other than what is necessary to explain possible planning for their next meeting. It was fortuitous that their first encounter was just as he was about to enter Shrivenham as, although he did not get long leaves, he did often have time free at weekends. Joan was now no longer a minor and had, within reason access to her inherited funds and so was able to travel down to Shrivenham at weekends, presumable when she had leave from her nursing duties. It became apparent for the letters that Joan was visiting quite a lot, finding a hotel or a pub to stay in. There is reference from Tony to Joan obtaining a flat in London, so that Tony could

visit her when he got a weekend free, rather than them meeting up a Pinfold Road which would be "boring" compared with them being on their own. Granville Place was probably a room in a private house and unsuitable for relaxing. One reference in a letter in September suggests that Joan could obtain a flat local to Shrivenham, which would have been more convenient than endless booking rooms in pubs. On one occasion there was nowhere to be found for a weekend. Joan's visits must have been considerable as there is even reference to her possibly visiting for a Wednesday evening, which fortunately did not occur as Tony was very busy studying.

On one occasion Joan lost her ring in the room of a pub and Tony had to spend a week chasing the staff to search for it. Finally, it was found in a crack in the floorboard by the "weeny". This term used by Tony is only the second time I have come across it. It was used with considerable meaning in a film from 1957, "The Admirable Crichton" which was light hearted look at complete social class reversal. Within a month of getting to the camp, Tony had found somewhere local to swim and boat and there is reference to him finding an opportunity for Joan and him to horse ride. As he was writing so much to Joan, he asked her to pass on his love to the family and friends in Streatham and presumably assumed that she would pass on news of activities at camp, most of which they no doubt discuss at odd moments when she visited.

There are a couple of references to Jimmy, Joan and Yvonne and one to Johnnie (Sloan).

Jimmy, who Joan referred to Jiminy Cricket, a reference to Pinocchio the 1940 Disney Film, is thought to be Oswald James Frankland, the brother of Paul. Although a couple of years older than them, they seemed to have spent much time together, and one gets the impression that during the war both brothers frequented Pinfold Road.

The occasional references to Jimmy in Tony's letters suggest a couple of things but these are only supposition. Jimmy had a soft spot for Yvonne while she was vacillating over Neil.

Sept 40

"Have communicated with Neil on his sad bereavement – Still it's your life and what you have done is no doubt for the best – Tho' why James. {Jimmy}"

Dec 40

"Too bad about Jimmy – Have we done the thing re Paulos and Tricky?"

Also

Joan probably had a soft spot for him judging from comments from Tony about letting him down gentle and being kind to him. "Poor Jimmy! I do hope you were not too cold and distant... He is so much in need of a friend, and I feel rather a cad pinching his girlfriend, he is so diffident. I fear he may be feeling a little bleak at the moment."

What a busy life was had by all at 4 Pinfold Road.

There is a reference to John in a letter or two. This must be Johnnie Sloan, a friend of Tony's from before the war and who plays a considerable role in the narrative later on.

Joan's close friend, Jean, who may well have been living in Chiswick by this time had her baby boy, John, on 9th Sept 1941

A letter of 29th October indicates that this was the end of his time at Shrivenham and a short leave before moving on. He would meet Joan at Paddington Station and if they missed each other, he would be in Cocktail Bar, called the Royal, at Paddington Station. It is uncanny to appreciate that many large Railway Station have considerable "social" facilities. I, myself once spent the night in the Hotel at Paddington, before giving a short lecture within the confines of the station to an audience of Engineers. It happened the fire alarm went off three times during the night.

This leave was going to be a great affair with lots of Noozling with his friends and neighbours. Joan had moved into Pinfold Road by 14th October. Interestingly there is no reference to this move in her diary however this is the date of Tony's first letter written to Joan at 4 Pinfold Road.

Although under considerable time pressure, Tony wrote to Joan long supportive letters, in one saying that her project of a concert was a good idea and writing another one during a gas lecture.

This letter is in a blatantly romantic-poetic style for which he apologised in an adjoining letter written the next day. He also informs Joan, in this letter, of Sergeant Donald Haycraft's address in Glasgow.

There is no doubt that Tony is completely besotted with Joan and although, as he gets older, his letters from Asia express more stable leadership and tremendous support to her, he still is very much in love with her and misses her; "wishing she was there to share".

It is interesting to question about the nature of Tony Guise. Who was this 25 year old art student, adored by a mother and two sisters, effusive with his language of endearment within the family and yet training to be an officer of men in an army with, as we shall see later, strong colonial overtones.

Also from his letters one cannot fail to notice the comparison between letters to his mother and those to Joan. He does explain to Joan about this issue and how he has to write in a style to satisfy Mater's expectations.



Love Letter 6th August 1941

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

Darling

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

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

I want!!

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

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

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

Therefore my darling .. forgive

Forgive ... these hot jumbled notes, that in wanton fever I have written ... forgive my mad importunity of Sunday night. Forgive and forget that I ever implied that I wanted you as anything but ... a deity --- no mistress but a statue, so quickly ... jump!!

My darling on to that pedestal from which you came look down in understanding sympathy on the wriggings of men – Wrap your soul in you divine music and so habited walk with the Gods and never come down.

The light is shining in my eyes, your soul is blinding me... and I cry !! I am dead and dying a thousand deaths, with every death I worship a thousand times more your soul, your soul is choking me....

Oh Cruel !! arrows of desire my spirit is chained

Look up mine eyes .. I worship your soul

And kiss your hand ... !!

God be with you in the days to come.

On rereading letter ---

Damn you,

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

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

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

I worry you ... and am ashamed

I kiss your hand

Tony

PS Don Address - Sergeant D. Haycraft 107 AA Z Battery RA
Glasgow

It is noticeable that once Tony started writing, from Shrivvenham, to his new beloved in July 1941, his letters to Mater started to tail off, presumably because Joan was carrying the necessary news back to Streatham as she was using Pinfold road as lodgings.

Back to Scotland – Poolewe

After 7 days leave Tony was transferred to Scotland, as an officer, to a village on the North West Coast, called Poolewe.

Articles on the internet may give a clue to the purpose of the camp at Poolewe, however the dates don't quite match.

Early in 1943, the War Office was concerned at the failure rate of young candidates at Officer Cadet Training Units. In consultation with Dr Kurt Hahn, the founder of Gordonstoun, Lord Rowallan was asked to set up a unit to instil leadership into potential officers classified as 'not yet mature enough for commissions'. The Highland Fieldcraft Training Centre was established in May 1943 at Glenfeshie in the Cairngorms. Glenfeshie can become impassable in winter, so, by the winter of 1943, Poolewe had been chosen as the ideal coastal base with its mix of sea and mountains.

The W end of the site five hut bases are arranged in a semi circle. A standing building identified as a Gun Operations Room (GOR) (see NG88SE 73.01) occupies the SE corner of the camp site. According to local sources a garrison theatre was located in the area now occupied by St Maelrubha Close.

It may be that before May 1943 the camp included a gun emplacement for defensive purposes and maybe it was associate with Naval Defence.

During WW2 Pool House was requisitioned by the Royal Navy and became the Command Headquarters for the Russian Arctic Convoys. Lord Rowallan also used the house at this time as his Headquarters for the Highland Field Craft Training Centre putting young officers through vigorous winter training in the local mountains.

There is no doubt that he was performing as an officer with men under his supervision, however, he referred to the leave and then made understanding comments regarding Joan and possible relationship within the family. Bear in mind Joan had now moved into the household.

Tony obviously had a fairly clear grasp of the personalities around him and in his first letter to Mater there is an interesting note asking her to be more understanding to Joan.

From 2nd Lt Tony Guise to Mater

“Thank you so much for a glorious leave it was only too short!! Arrived last night at 8.30 after a rather cold and trying journey relieved only by the glorious scenery.

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

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

At this time Joan is working in the “Mobile Unit” in town and seems to be struggling a bit with the work. She was obviously pining for Tony and maybe finding the job of nursing not quite her thing. Remember just two years before she had destined herself to be either a concert pianist or an actress.

She was still committed to the “Red Cross and Mobile Units” and perhaps she could have coped with the excitement of emergencies during the blitz period, but the emotion of help long term wounded or terminal patients may have been too much. Visions of the plane crash involving her parents may still have left deep scars.

21 November 41

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

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

December 5 looks impossible. Courage darling!

Try and take an interest in the other lads and lasses - time will go quickly – Christmas is almost upon us and four weeks later I shall see you.

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

26 Nov 41

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

We got it! And ate it!

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

As you may have guessed our batmen rule us with a rod of iron.. So when we tried to put them on PT, they simply threatened to go back to "duties" and to throw up their steward job.

Being completely in their hands, we had to give in. So, the batmen don't do PT.

I had occasion to turn some blokes out of the NAAFI 20 minutes past closing time – this meant a war with the NAAFI manager.. He capitulated! And presented us with a tin of golden syrup, the next morning as a peace offering! So now we have syrup for tea. This sort of semi comedy and mock tragedy goes on all the time so that, though life is very simple, narrow perhaps, and sexless, it's never boring. We have no radio therefore, no music.. But, by the same token there is no chance of Jazz to drive me mad. There is no pictures (films) so we can't get bored with that!"

30 Nov 41

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

And Jimmy and Paul and Victor seem to be here for good.

Three names that crop up in letters from Tony to Mater and later to Joan are John (Johnnie) Sloan, Paul (Paulos) Frankland and Jimmy (Jiminy Cricket) who was actual Oswald James Frankland, and probably a doctor.

4 Dec 41

How much ground I have (perhaps) lost and what a long time seemed to have elapsed since those early days of the war. And I saw me as a soldier (how I used to loathe them) and really wished this war would end, so that, might I live, in paint, in music and in poetry.

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

For it is time ...I am dead! And... The extraordinary thing is I didn't realise until last night -No rather thought I had this is a different life and a new life ... But a WIFE !! Oh vague deceit
Damn the yearnings for what is gone. This is a fight somewhere and we must slaughter and be slaughtered before....

Die for shame! This introspection. I have a job, a great job. On with the war ...Annihilation!

Then goes on to say he had a good time getting four or five blokes to dig a hole

“Had a marvellous time today – took 4 little blokes out with me and five spades and made the poor little devils dig like hell for ¾ hour - working like mad myself – until we had dug a bloody great hole. Then we sandbagged it and came home to muse our blisters -my uniform is getting so tight, I must have some exercise. The blokes either think I am a blasted slave driver or a hell of a chap.... I sweated with them throwing shovel full for shovel full and with them and licked my calluses.. Was it all frightfully demeaning? ‘Tis a debatable point but.. Grand fun!”

Tony seemed to be relishing aspects of his power and responsibility and in a letter to Neil Callow, who was to eventually marry Yvonne in May 1942, his delights in the description of a little task that he imposed on a few soldiers.

4 Dec 1941 Touraig House Poolewe

To Neil

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

Today I asked some blokes cleaning Ammo if they were bored with the job...! Selecting 4 of the smallest from the [group], I sent them to draw spades, sandbags and a pick... walked them up a hill (mountain not hill) ... Arriving at the chosen spot, I threw off my blouse, hat and gloves and looked at my watch (great gesture), it was 16.00hrs....

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

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

By 10 to 5, my hands were a perfect mess of blisters but we had done it ... it was 4 foot deep. And were they proud !!” Coupled with Tony relishing his bit of power as an officer and the fun of controlling people, we begin to see his feelings of responsibility as an officer and a sense of concern for those under his command.

To Mater

Poolewe Achnasheen Winter -

Short of officers so handling the site on my own

“A Padre turned up this morning so we had the unusual consolation of mass. Nobody could serve so I did it – Took me back quite a day or two, to half forgotten times .. I was quite thrilled, it seemed absurdly “fitting” that I should be serving the mass for my men.” No doubt he felt that it pleased his mother to relate occasional episodes relating to his limited religious life

After Christmas 1942 there are less letters, so we must assume that Tony became busier or perhaps the letters are lost. There was reference to him feeling that he was doing something useful at Poolewe and not just involved in a Bumph War.

As in all young love affairs there is so much to talk about and for each to learn about the other. Even in wartime, the discerning

couple will wish to find time to absorb as much as possible about the other unless of course we are discussing a short fling. Tony and Joan were now meeting up so seldom that this suggestion came up and Tony encourage Joan's writing as he was aware that she could write interesting letters.

In mid December he wrote

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

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

Sadly within a week Joan seemed to have declined, which is understandable, having gone through the traumas and possible blunders of the previous 8 years.

In the next letter sadly we have "Sorry you backed out of write autobiography"

About this time Tony had got trapped into advising his mother on furniture and financial matters. Because of his down to earth manner when giving financial and practical advice, Mater had 50 pink fits and drew Joan into her dramatic turmoil. Joan had only been in the household for a couple of months and coming from relatively steady family probably misinterpreted the situation telling him off for being so heartless with his mother. He replies by explaining that he was fool to get drawn into giving advice and then explaining that when dealing with practical issues he always goes very formal. He goes on to explain :

"I think you would (quite rightly) be a little disgusted see if you read my average letters to the Mater. A sort of slushy semi-love letter - which she demands and is not happy unless she gets and is usually frantically annoyed if I dare suggest this is not quite applicable to details of gas and electricity like bills."

This short explanation confirms what I had come to observe some ten year ago when writing the first edition of this and was a little bewildered by his ability to code switch to such an extent.

One gets the feeling that although he had the natural ability to be dramatic and could call on the classics and poetry at will, he tended to be very straight and up front with Joan.

He had to stay at Poolewe over Christmas and so just after, he reports the following rather moving little anecdote.

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

Looking in retrospect this situation is not at all surprising. He had an inbuilt desire to do the best for the men for whom he was responsible and this extended to their pastoral and social wellbeing as well as in military matters.

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

The reader will find echoes and reflections of this attitude towards men, continuously throughout this narrative in respect to Tony and his life.

"Is it best to be respected by those above or below one in rank ?"

Royal Hotel Ladybank Fife Scotland
5 Jan 1942
For 2 weeks

“The course is a quite charming and most unmilitary affair... we just a stroll down to the workshops and pull are motorcar to pieces. Then put it together again. Decoking and so on. It is rather like teaching your grandmother to... Etc.. The staff seem to realise that, and have left me quite alone so I’m as happy as a sandboy just tinkering with engines.. Another officer is working with me and as he knows damn all about motor transport, I am teaching him some engineering.”

Had quite a useful course with weekends, in Perth, Edinburgh and Inverness. He obviously was down in that region again in February as we have a record that on 16th - 17th Febuary Joan joined Tony for a short while in Kilcaldy and stayed at the Station Hotel. The journey form Poolewe took about 16 hours, which is why he never considered it feasible for Joan to travel up to Poolewe

One of the issues that cropped up while he was at Poolewe over the Christmas is that of money. Tony is always short of cash and relatively speaking Joan was well off. So much so that she was happy to shower gifts on to Tony. This was totally understandable and she was very generous both to Tony and to her brother, Peter who is also in the army. Both got delightful pipes and tobacco etc. Tony was somewhat concerned not just for his own sake, his pride, but also for personal financial survival. Joan must have longed to pour gifts at her lover whom she was able to see so seldom.

“You view with dismay the Orkneys, actually in travelling time I shall be just as near home and if I get a plane am only 4 or 5

hours away ... and up there we shall get 14 days furlough, (I believe).
Perhaps nursing isn’t quite your cup of tea old thing... It may all be for the best ... ever considered ENSA in a grade A1 mob”

Tony struggled to help her from afar, and continued with support and advice right through the next year as she moved into another hospital and then with conscription joined the ATS.

Conscription of women

In December 1941 Parliament passed a second National Service Act. It widened the scope of conscription still further by making all unmarried women and all childless widows between the ages of 20 and 30 liable to call-up.

Men were now required to do some form of National Service up to the age of 60, which included military service for those under 51. The main reason was that there were not enough men volunteering for police and civilian defence work, or women for the auxiliary units of the armed forces.

As conscription loomed in February he made the comment
“Perhaps nursing isn’t quite your cup of tea old thing... It may all be for the best ... ever considered ENSA in a grade A1 mob”
She was obviously searching for the way ahead and in 1942, Joan had ‘handwriting test done by someone in Croydon Library for herself and Tony. The result from these handwriting tests were produced in March 1942.
See Appendix 11 for Handwriting Test results

Joan eventually joined the ATS and trained and worked as a motorcyclist. It must be pointed out that all her work in the Red Cross for two years was considered to be good.

Next Stop – Shetland

From early March Tony was posted to Skaw in Unst to the RAF Station at the very north.

There is no doubt that this was active service although from his letters we get very little of what he was doing.

It seems that he was in the 94th Light Anti Aircraft Battery protecting the Radar installation which was vital for defence.

The LAA was Tony's first love.



The Advance Chain Radars in Shetland were operational at the beginning of 1941 but the full Chain Home Radars were not commissioned until April & May '42.

It is interesting to note that Peter, Joan's Brother, was probably working in a similar capacity but primarily as an Engineer in the south of England.

Tony's first port of call was Lerwick, Grantfield Camp, but quickly moved on up about 65 miles north to Skaw.

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

Lerwick itself is quite a town! About 5000 inhabitants, I should think, with most of the amenities of a small town of pictures, dance hall, girls, real people who work in offices and do other strange, every highly civilised, jobs, policemen and motor cars (some). The islands are of course really quite wealthy with the Town Hall Lerwick, library and other public utilities and services. But! They are dry. there are no pubs

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

Despite its bleakness he is blown away by the sheer rugged natural beauty of Skaw, compared the relative dullness of Poolewe, but he naturally feel somewhat out of touch with everybody being 1000 miles or so away. "Our nearest big town is Bergen in Norway are 180 miles away."

In his second letter written to Joan on 9th March 1942, he gave the most detailed description of the area and its wildlife telling us that he has walked up to the most northerly point.

He quotes "A dream and deftness memory
That gathers Glory more and more" - local poet.

I leave the reader to see this in the Appendix 4.

By mid march Tony had become very ill and was seen by the local Doctor
“Doc did come and see me and I told him to sound me around the left lung, he fished out a stethoscope about a hundred years old and after much mysterious and impressive ceremony, pronounced me “as sound as a bell”. (There are a number of chronic consumptives labouring under a similar happy delusion.) Doc is a dear old boy tho’ and his mother has written some quite exceptional folklore of the Shetlands.
Am still rather weak but recovering rapidly under tender ministrations of my batman who has the perspicacity of a woman without the small talk and found some oranges, eggs, beef tea, horlicks and so on.”

He seems to have settled in very nicely to his officer role and takes for granted the service of a “batman” and later on in Scotland a “Batwoman” who was probably a member of the ATS.

Later in the month he still was a bit poorly but was getting better. He agreed with Joan that her new job, working in “Packing”, seemed rather boring and then went on to discuss a little about her financial position which is, surprisingly, not as clear cut as it should be. It seems that she still was under the influence of solicitors etc, despite being “of age”.
He went on to advise her to be a little more careful with money as he felt that she was far too generous. “Money goes only too quickly if you’re not very careful. These days especially in a delightful family like ours where everybody’s money and belongings are public property.. I am afraid that this is what would happen. The family would have every penny from you – I am myself possibly the greatest culprit, but am fortunately in a position – or shall be in near future, to liquidate my debts to you.”
Following a short discourse regretting his human frailty, he asked about the furniture move, presumably from store into 4 Pinfold

Road and refers to some of his special belongings.
“The bear I can easily repair, keep an eye on him, as I’m rather fond of it. It went to Brussels and Paris with the school exhibition and received good mention. Before I finally bought it and carted it away it was a permanent exhibition in the school and had become known as the Camberwell Bear”. This bear he made as a student and is now in my possession and is fully renovated. In this letter he asked Joan to send him up some of his Art materials.



In April we begin to see the cracks forming in the arrangement with Joan living at Pinfold Road. Four forceful women in the same house under the stress of war and no emolument is a situation that Joan was going to find difficult to handle. She found herself in arguments with Yvonne, who was a little older, and would always know better and always be supported by her younger sister.
Joan learnt to recognise that her imposed isolation for a week after an argument always ended after the girls had “gone to confession” ie “and said sorry to God,” until the next argument and she was back in isolation. This posed a considerable philosophic problem for her which Tony had to endeavour to unpick in his letter of the 1st of April. The tension created by the variations between Church of England and Church of Rome seem to have continually thrown Joan whereas Tony seemed to have had a more fluid approach to religion and humanity, accepting

human weaknesses as they are and sad at Joan's more rigid and perhaps less forgiving approach, which in fact steered her away from organised religion.

Tony in this letter went on to explain to Joan that there were historic reasons why Yvonne would be somewhat stressed as she approaches her forthcoming marriage in May, and how Mater's reaction to everything was that she wants everyone to be happy "on her terms".

These letters, written off from Shetland nine months after Tony met Joan, give us a very good insight into the dynamics that were going to develop between Joan and the Guise family over the next few years as well as some idea as to how understanding Tony was of his own family and the difficulties they had and could cause.

He demonstrates remarkable ability to be able to run with the hare and jump with the hounds, so demonstrating that at this early age he had acquired very confident diplomatic skills. Time and again one sees this when able to compare the tone of his letters to Mater and those to Joan.

Tony is excited about Yvonne's wedding as he was due to give her away however in his absence, 1000 miles away, the job will probably be done by Paulos".

Despite having a degree of time to get out and about in the countryside, he was so preoccupied with work that he became aware too late that it was Easter time and so has to rush off a quick greetings letter to all at Pinfold Road.

He had become aware of impending spring "---- I saw some daffodils growing in a hothouse and a few crocuses and snowdrops actually growing in the open, in a sheltered part of a field and of course cultivated."

As to be expected we get no indication of his work on active service, but he obviously had time to spend on activities out of work time. In one set of letters there was a delightful discussion between him and Joan on details of design for a dress that she was considering to make and also his analysis of one of her portraits of him giving some insights gained at college. Against his better judgement he also sent her a portrait of her from a photograph. One can see that, in a time of peace, they would have made a formidable artistic couple. And we have just a little insight into Tony's appetites: "So many thanks for the books – a spot of Shelley is a great consolation in this desperately celibate life - the peasant girls here live curiously promiscuous sexual lives but are pretty foul – in any case I am not in the least interested... To frightfully faithful!"

On the 8th May, he finished at Skaw and was moved back down to Lerwick for nearly a month. This was another base, part of the Chain of Radar Stations that included Skaw, and seems to have been the centre of communications - Lerwick Filter Room - Naval Plotting Centre. He was desperately looking forward to leave however as it was to be delayed, he asked Joan to send his fishing rods.. Whenever his leave was to be, he was hoping Joan would get hers at the same time and asked her to prepare his Civvy clothes.

He wrote to Joan from Lerwick:

"Though quite busy at times - I do a dickens of a lot of dashing about on a motor cycle and odd spot or two of the things, but nothing very amusing." And then we have a wonderful description to Joan of what happens to her telegrams to him, which are duplicated a couple of times and read out over the tannoy system, for all to hear.

It seems that he had time to go fishing and to socialise with the locals.

Although there is little reference to her in his letters from Unst, it is clear that he got very friendly with a Mrs Helen Priest. This became apparent from letters between her and Joan in later years and also by the fact that Tony was ordering a considerable number of knitted items from her or other people locally. Judging from his last letter from Lerwick, Joan was considering joining the ATS or other military service and Tony indicated concern that not only would he not see her much but also, she would fall for another military fellow.

Suddenly at the beginning of June, after some secrecy Tony and his battery are moved to Stevenston in Ayrshire, ostensibly as a rest period but in fact for more duty. He then added that as he was near Edinburgh he may be able to get in touch with Donald (Haycraft) and Neil.

He was devastated to hear that Joan has now been officially called up and due for a medical for the ATS.

He got a date for leave – 16th June which seemed to be definite. Perhaps a good thing after his scathing opinion of the local girls. “The girls are all factory workers. And all those who are not actually ugly seem to be tarts – in any case I am not interested... But even as companions they are dull lot, and the Ayrshire males loathe we soldiers - sort of uniform glamour hatred!”

On 18th June he got his leave and came home for about 9 days before returning to Ayr. We can be fairly confident that I was conceived in this very leave and according to family reporting of conversations with Joan, the event may have occurred on Tooting Bec or Clapham Common.

On returning to Scotland, within days he was suddenly moved to RAF Lincoln, and was thrilled as he will be nearer Joan and will

look for somewhere for her to stop over nearby. However, as pleasant as all this would be he was aware that living in the RAF camp would increase his mess bills. Meanwhile during this period Joan has been called in for a medical and on the 9th July she received her call up papers for the ATS.

Back to Ayrshire

Whereas in the early days of their courtship letters would refer to glorious leaves, passionate times and grateful thanks for those idyllic day now we get now reference to the joy of leaves. Now it seems that nothing needed to be said. In one letter a little later on Tony makes it plan that as far as he was concerned, they were married from very soon after their first meeting. What a busy time was about to ensue. Joan was “called up” and Tony who had returned to Scotland within days of getting to Lincoln was about to embark on a series of moves around the Glasgow area, presumably managing men and guns and filling in as officer in charge where ever there was officer shortage. Joan was now training in Leicestershire and Tony was quick to encourage her to put in for commission as there was quite a shortage of officers in the ATS, and it seemed that this she did. Sadly we have no letters from Joan to Tony on this matter however it seems that what she did talk about the ATS reflected much of his experience in the forces. He now had the experience of working in a “mixed Battery” and this took some getting used to, however he notes that girls are very disciplined and yet have a good time with the blokes, although he is conscious of his added responsibility.

“Rather interesting as this is my first experience of a mixed Battery – must say the girls all seemed very happy - discipline seems to be relaxed a bit for them... And they have a very good time with the blokes. I don’t think you need worry overmuch darling. Once you are over the initial training, things will become very much easier and happier. I wish you all the very best luck in the world sweetheart look after yourself and apply for a commission.”

In a week or so he was move to Newton Steward. He continues to encourage Joan with the ATS. Still further advice: “This mixed Battery business seems to be quite a pleasant life for the girls. They have lots of fun, and especially if you come under the control of men! There is a lot to learn too and the life is quite interesting, I think!.... driving will be no use to you, it’s a hard job and very dirty.”

Over the next few months Tony continued to move around in the Glasgow area.

The Camps or areas that he frequented are; Stevenston, Newton Steward, Nitshill, Blantyreferme Camp, Uddingston Camp, Kinross, Larkfield Camp with a few days in Cheshire and then back to Scotland.

In Mid July he wrote from Blantyreferme Camp to Joan who was now on ATS training at Glen Parva Barracks, Sth. Wigston. He explained that he now had to go on a course to learn about a new gun. Also another new challenge for him. Once Joan is away from Pinfold Road there is an interesting comment from Mater to Tony “Have had a short line from the Mater on things in general, she is very sorry to lose you my dear – quite sad.”. Interesting in light of the dynamic that was going to develop over the next few years.

At the end of July he got a short leave with Joan “Am afraid I wasn’t terribly nice to you my darling, and so frightfully fond of teasing. But you did look wonderful and at times, very very beautiful. Every time I see you, parting becomes an even greater agony than on past occasions. You must wield a terrific influence or something in my life darling.”

In August he still encouraged her to go for officer training. There must be an added bond between them now that Joan is in the army, a place that neither of them really would like to be.

“Your stories of the Army and the O.R.’s are only too familiar; however I must say that all the girls in this Battery seemed a jolly nice... Though they do sing a bawdy song or three at times.”

After leave at the end of July Tony travelled back to Darnley Camp Nitshill near Glasgow.

“Thank you so much my darling for the few days, some of the moments were perfect, despite the nagging worry of your condition.

You look more than marvellous in your uniform... Am terribly proud of you and think you are doing a marvellous job of work - however as soon as it is possible, I think we ought to get you out of it... You seem so terribly unhappy my darling that my heart bleeds for you.”

So, by now Joan has realized that she is pregnant and has told Tony.

By the middle of August, life was becoming worrying for them both.

There is no background to the story; Joan was for some reason at Dr Wing HQ battery 217 AA DTR Bradbury Barracks Hereford. Contrary to advice from Tony she seemed to go into training as a motorcyclist, her version of this story is that at a parade all those girls that could ride a bicycle were asked to step forward and they were sent for training. This included, from notes in a notebook, details of the function and maintenance of a motorcycle. As it happens this experience was to be very useful, as she received with no test or training a full driving licence and also developed a confidence with motor mechanics, setting her up for a life in the motor trade. In Mid September action had to be taken and Joan informed the Guise family that she was pregnant and then phoned Tony to let him know that she had done this. He was not really

amused by this precipitation, however accepted that it was all for the best and having accepted the need to get married in a hurry, asked his mother to organise a wedding within three weeks.

At this time Tony was really showing signs of all the stress. He was working 24 hours a day dealing with men’s and women’s welfare, virtually on his own as other officers did not seem to care so much.

He phoned Yvonne to arrange a marriage in the local church within a couple of weeks. And then in his next letter to Joan, he was organising about a ring and the on the 25th September he wrote

“Preparing to marry Saturday, October 3. Am moving heaven and earth. Shall probably arrive early Saturday morning.

I have written English Martyrs”

And then on the 1st of October

“Darling

What about the jolly old gift for Matron of Honour ??

Who does that ?? Do something about it !! Love Tony”

After a 3 day honeymoon in East Grinstead, Tony returned to the Glasgow area and Joan return to motorcycling in Hampstead.

It is noteworthy that this issue of timing was never discussed between Joan and her son until one year before she died.

Somehow over many years, she never let slip the date of their wedding despite there being wedding photos around during the period before she remarried. However sometime during the 1970s or 1980s, she did speak freely to a young female member of the family, giving considerable details about the circumstances of my conception, Whereas I accept that the war lead to my conception, my survival must have been a measure of my tenacity as I seemed to have hung on during motorbike journeys over cobbled streets and rough terrain as Joan was still riding a motorbike for the ATS.

The Paradox of Marriage and Reproduction in Wartime

To the caring rational mind, it is bewildering that humans should fall in love and marry during war. The chances of death are considerably greater and so the possibility of leaving bereaved people at home to suffer very likely. Likewise why take the chance of bringing into the world children who may well be brought up fatherless. Strangely, it was explained to me during a chemistry class by an eccentric teacher that this was the norm as nature arranged things so that the population would not be too depleted. He even went further to point out that somehow under such circumstances the proportion of boys born increased to compensate for the loss of soldiers who in those days were generally male.

Perhaps Testosterone had something to do with it as well !

And so it was in this family:

Therese Batt, Tony's first cousin (a Guise descendant) married Vincent Poole his close friend from Camberwell Art College	1941
Joan Dibdin married Tony Guise	1942
Yvonne Guise married Neil Callow	1942
Paul Frankland married his first cousin once removed, Doreen Perrier	1942
Betty Perrier, Doreen's sister married Ben Wilson	1944
Anne Frankland married Alfred Stenning	1944

And soon after the war Don Haycraft married as did Jiminy Frankland.

Research shows that there was a similar pattern during the First World War.



Vincent Poole
and Therese Batt



Paul Frankland & Doreen Perrier,



Neil Callow and Yvonne
Marie on right hand side

Joan and Tony were married on 3rd Oct 1942 in Streatham and had a very short honeymoon in a hotel in East Grinstead.

On the 7th Oct Tony returned to Scotland, to the Anti Aircraft Artillery camp near Glasgow.

There is reference to Tony having leave in November and Joan settling in the new flat on 23 Nov 1942, although this was after Tony had returned to Scotland. Presumably while Tony was near Glasgow he could easily get home on leave.

Photo of the Wedding Guests

It seems that on Joan's side there is only her brother, Peter, her close friend, Jean, and maybe Jean's husband.



Coincidentally Joan, on 9th July 1942 was called up to join the ATS having had a medical on 23rd June 1942 and was put to work as a Motorcycle courier.

An enlarged and annotated version of this wedding photo is in Appendix 11



Tony Guise and Joan Dibdin wedding 3rd October 1942

Cutting from the local Paper **Guise - Dibden**

At the Church of English Martyrs Streatham on Saturday the marriage took place between Sec. Lieut. Anthony Benoit Guise R.A. only son of Mrs Jules Guise, Pinfold Road, Streatham and Miss Joanna Mary Dibden, the only daughter of the Mrs Louise Dibden and the Late Mr. Dibden of Carshalton.

Given away by her brother Gunner Peter Dibden the bride wore a frock and hat in autumn shade of brown and green with a spray of orchids. Her mother was dressed in a black frock with a cape and a spray of pink carnations.

The service was choral, and the organist played incidental wedding music.

A reception was held at the bridegroom's home and the honeymoon is being spent at East Grinstead.

Note the errors:

The name is Dibdin

Joan did call herself Joanna

There is no Louise Dibdin in the family

Her mother was dead