**Guy Liddell, 1868–1954 [Draft]**

Lieutenant-Colonel Guy Liddell, who first trained as a civilian engineer, was subsequently an officer in the Royal Engineers, a patent engineer and inventor, and lastly an amateur painter, only seriously taking up the last activity in 1942 at the age of 75. He was thereafter briefly known for portraits of those involved in the Second World War – including many who were casualties of it – often working from photographs.

A portrait by him of Air Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder (1st Baron Tedder) in the Shetland Museum was accepted there as a gift from a donor who had received it from Liddell’s widow, for reasons of Tedder’s Shetland background. Although showing Tedder in civilian dress it is probably derived from a Cecil Beaton photograph taken of him in uniform in 1942, when he was AOC in Cairo. Liddell also painted a number of portraits of Field-Marshal Montgomery whom he claimed was one of the easiest and quickest subjects to repeat, and Tedder himself owned one of these.

There is an informative article about Liddell in the *Eastbourne Herald* of 16 December 1944, which provides a rough overview of his earlier career. He had by then spent five months at the Slade School in 1943 and the piece was written after the *Herald*’s unnamed reporter encountered him in the Towner Art Gallery and discovered that – partly because finding German ‘doodlebugs’ (V1 flying bombs) ‘somewhat trying’ – he had moved to 4 Ivy Terrace Eastbourne and enrolled in Eastbourne Art School for the last three weeks of the 1944 summer term. By December he was still attending two days a week and had ‘rigged up’ a studio in premises on Silverdale Road. He was by then doing portraits and figures in oils and pastel, and landscape watercolours, and he paid specific tribute to ‘the late Mr Oliver Senior’ (1880–1944), who taught painting at the School, for all he knew about ‘the mixing of colours’. He subsequently also painted landscapes in oil, in a modern slightly ‘cubist’ style, of which one of Crail harbour, Fife, has been sighted.

Liddell was born in Madras (Chennai) on 8 November 1868, as second son of William Byam Liddell, a tea-planter and merchant also born there in 1836 (d. Flushing, Cornwall, 8 October 1901) and his Scottish wife, Joan MacLure (1840–1917): they had married at Madras in 1863. Their first son was later Major-General Sir William Andrew Liddell (1865–1949) and Frederic, the youngest child, was born in Kensington late in 1870. At the 1871 census the family were living at Ryde, Isle of Wight, though their father almost certainly returned to India before later home retirement. The boys’ maternal grandfather was Andrew Maclure (1812–85) artist, painter and lithographer, who with Archibald Grey MacDonald founded the Glasgow engraving and printing firm MacLure & MacDonald in 1835. They invented a power-driven lithographic printing press in 1853 and were believed to be the first in the UK to use steam-power for lithographic printing, notably of stamps: in 1886, under Joan’s brother Frank, the firm became ‘Ornamental Printers to the Queen’ and it survived until taken over in 1992.

Between 1879 and 1884 Guy was educated at the Royal Naval Academy, Southsea, the Institution Aubert Savary, Paris, and finally for a year at Clifton College, Bristol. From there he became an apprentice with the Anderston Foundry Co., Glasgow, and for the next six years attended Anderson’s College, Glasgow, and classes at Glasgow University in steam, heat, general mechanical and civil engineering. After a six-month placement with the Caledonian Railway Co. in Glasgow, Anderston’s sent him to their works at Middlesbrough as Chief Draughtsman and Assistant Works Manager. He was there for seven years to 1897, spent 1898 in Madras as manager of the Engineering Department of Leighton & Co., and 1899 as assistant engineer in erecting the girders of a bridge for the East India Railway. From January to June 1901 he was in Cuba as Resident Engineer for the Cuban Central Railway, and Acting Chief Engineer for part of that time. In the latter half of the year – when he applied to become a member of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers – he was on the staff of Imperial Military Railways, in Victoria Street, London. In 1902, aged 32 – already with over 17 years professional engineering and management experience – he volunteered for the Royal Engineers and was commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant.

The 1944 article summarises what seems to have followed and as he became

…a civil engineer specialising in harbour construction. He was in India for many years and had a lot to do with the harbour works at Madras. In [the First World War] he played a conspicuous part in the designing of sea works at Boulogne, Rouen, Dieppe and Corfu. He was also concerned in the preparing of plans of the harbour of Piraeus…. He designed the Liddell hut which was taken up by the war departments in this country and America. He was Assistant Director of Works to the British Adriatic Commission for the relief of the Serbian Army. He commanded the Royal Engineers at Dunkirk at one stage of the last war, and was later C.R.E [Commander, Royal Engineers] at Lemnos, in the Aegean, where he was concerned with the mounting of heavy guns on the hill-tops.

(Probably late in the war, he also appears to have been a member of the Intelligence Corps and on the General Staff in France, according to his medal record, though other detail is lacking.)

After he left the Army in 1919, Col. Liddell went to Yugo-Slavia on behalf of certain British firms and was successful in negotiating a large concession.

In between times, when home again in England, “I had a whack at polo and hunting in the West Country.” One of Col. Liddell’s strong points in the past has been his inventions. While still at engineering apprentice stage, he designed an outboard motor. This was six years before another type… was brought out by a Swede named Evin Rude [*sic*: but presumably rather earlier than that, since the Norwegian American, Olav Evinrude, produced his outboard engine – the first widely successful one – from 1909]. “Mine,” said Col. Lidell, “was for an electric rudder worked from batteries in the bottom of the boat.” He has fifteen inventions to his credit, some of them being still in use.

Lidell’s first marriage engagement in 1894 appears to have been broken off. On 29 June 1908, in Dublin, he married Lydia Katherine Little (b. 1873), daughter of James Little MD, Regius Professor of Physics at the University of Dublin. Their address in 1911 was 36 Buckingham Gate, London, and the 1939 register places them at Palmer’s Green House, Taunton, where Liddell described himself as ‘Civil Engineer, Harbour, Railway Works, Practising Patent Engineer, Lt. Col. ret. late RE’.

The marriage appears to have been childless and how it ended is not yet clear: it may have been divorce. In the first quarter of 1946, Liddell (then 77) remarried to Mrs Bertha Mercer (aged 52, née Langwill), an American, reported to have previously been a botany lecturer in Calcutta. The marriage took place at Eastbourne, suggesting they had met while Liddell was pursuing painting there.

They subsequently moved to Fonab Cottage, Pitlochry, Scotland, and from 17 December 1953 to January 1954 sailed on a long holiday to South Africa. Just over five months later, on 1 July 1954, Liddell died in Perth Royal Infirmary, aged 85. He left published heritable estate of £1033.

*Summarised from Art UK discussion on Liddell’s portrait of Arthur Tedder, and data there cited available via Ancestry (notably UK Mechanical Engineers Records, 1901)*

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