

# My family's Cuneo war story

Lt Col. Mike Dolamore (Retd). MBE.

Mike Dolamore served as an officer in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps and latterly the Royal Logistic Corps between 1979-2004 attaining the rank of Lt Col. Mike remembers the original Terence Cuneo oil paintings in the Officers' Mess at Deepcut, particularly the Sword Beach D-Day battle scene and that depicting the horse Sefton, as well as a Mess Scene with the mouse heads. However, as he relates, this wasn't the start of the story...

I was always attracted to the Cuneo works as my maternal grandfather had an association with Terence Cuneo during WW2, whilst the latter was involved with providing drawings of tanks and armaments factories for the War Ministry as Sapper No. 2378919.

At the time my grandfather was Terence Cuneo's commanding officer, Major Armitage RE. He was the Officer Commanding HQ Company, No. 1 (SME) DB RE, Harper Barracks near Ripon, Yorkshire. This was around 1941/42 having temporarily relocated from Chatham due to its proximity to the docks and therefore its vulnerability to German bombing raids.

At some point (the postmark cannot now be read but it must be in 1941 or 1942) whilst serving at Ripon, my grandfather appears to have received an envelope containing a number (13) of photographs of sketches made by Terence Cuneo of Tanks, Workshops, etc.. Twelve of these all have typed inscriptions on the reverse describing the scene and what was going on. The thirteenth (of a *Mosquito* aircraft's guns being aligned) has a handwritten ink description and is signed by him.

It was, of course, also at this time, that Terence had his book 'Tanks and how to draw them' published by Studio Publications. In 1943, whilst at home in East Molesey, Surrey, my grandfather received a complimentary copy of the 'Tanks' book with a covering letter from Terence asking him to accept the book as he 'entirely wrote and illustrated it' whilst under his command in HQ Company.

I also have a folded-up centre page sheet from the Illustrated London News of 4 September 1943 with two of Terence Cuneo's drawings with an ink signature - the Press Shop and Churchill IV Undergoing Final Tests.

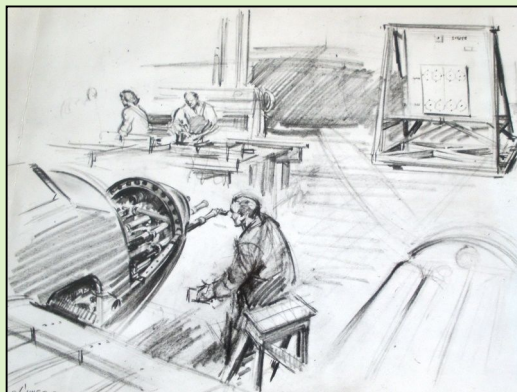
I hope that the above information is of interest to you as I am aware that Terence Cuneo left few written records. He was a very fine painter; one of the UK's finest, if not the finest, in his particular field; a fact I am not sure is yet fully recognised in this country but will be no doubt be at some point. If this information provides any additional useful knowledge about his earlier work during the war then I am glad to have written this for the readers.

This is the way in which the 4 Brownings are lined up in the nose of the "Mosquito" fighter. By peering through a sort of periscope, placed inside the barrels, the exact alignment of the gun can be checked by a mark on the base of the periscope coinciding with the "ball" on the targets opposite.

The four upper targets are for the 303 Brownings, the lower, for the 20 MM Cannons.

While this operation is in progress all other work is suspended on the plane owing to vibration. I was the only exception; & I had to promise to sit as still as a mouse so as not to cause the slightest movement.

The sketch was made, sitting on the wing top, immediately behind the starboard engine.



201 Ember Lane,  
East Molesey,  
SURREY.  
31/3/43.

Sir,

Enclosed is a copy of my book on tanks which I should be very pleased if you would accept. They seem to have been an age getting it on the market, which accounts for the exclusion of some of the more modern models, but as I entirely wrote and illustrated it while under you in H.Q. Company I felt you might be interested to have it.

Yours obediently,  
*T. Cuneo*  
Sapper.  
No. 2378919

P.S. The drawing on pages 54-55 was actually sketched on the bridging ground at Bishop Monkton on the occasion of the visit of the Commander in Chief Home Forces.