

ROYAL AIR FORCE - INITIAL TRAINING IN ENGLAND 1943/1944

2.7.43 Interviewed at No. 1 Aircrew Selection Board, Doncaster.

Recommended for commission and training as PNB(3) 'A'

Service Number 3040524. Rank AC.2
Medical grade 1

The interviews lasted for two days but I can remember very little about them. I know we were given thorough medical and intelligence tests. We also had colour blindness and eye examinations, and I was amazed to find that my sight was below the standard required. Fortunately it was agreed that I could fly with corrective lenses in my goggles. The PNB grade meant that we would become either Pilots, Navigators or Bomb Aimers. I, with the confidence of youth, assumed that I would eventually be chosen for training as a fighter pilot, and so it was.

I was instructed to see my dentist before I was called up and was horrified to discover that I required 12 fillings. These were all replaced later at Scarborough ITW as the RAF dentist said they were not suitable for high flying and would give me intense pain.

9.8.43. Posted to No. 1 Air Crew Recruiting Centre, Lords Cricket Ground.

Service life started here. I was surprised that the ACRC was located in London when one bomb could have wiped out hundreds of potential aircrew. On arrival we were immediately issued with our kit and uniform, and then had to march to our billets carrying our civilian suitcase, two kitbags, back pack, side pack and gasmask case. We soon realised how unfit we were. The accomodation was in flats in St. Johns Wood. They had been stripped of all their luxuries, but at least we had decent bathrooms and toilets and sheets on our beds. White sheets were one of the perks of aircrew and we had them until we were withdrawn from flying training in September, 1945. On the second

day we all had a compulsory haircut. No comb and scissors affair, electric clippers straight over the top whether or not you gave the hairdresser a sixpenny tip. One airman was processed every 90 seconds.

The food was good, but the discipline irksome and at times farcical. I remember one day coming out of the mess and putting my forage cap on as I stepped through the door. The RAF Sergeant waiting outside promptly ordered me to report for an hours punishment drill that evening for appearing in public bare-headed. You soon acquired a healthy respect for the powers of NCO's.

Church parade was compulsorily every Sunday, but it did at least ensure that the local churches had good congregations. After a few days we were allowed out into the city and I remember enjoying several free concerts by distinguished musicians. There were a few air raid warnings but I don't remember any activity in our area.

We were subjected to large doses of square bashing and my previous experience in the OTC and ATC came in useful. Everyone had to try and swim a length of the baths and those who couldn't received a crash course. Numerous tests were used to confirm our fitness to fly, including a night vision assessment. In this you were seated in a dark room on a chair with a restraining collar round your neck. You had to name the objects or shapes which appeared momentarily on a small screen in front of you.

28.8.43. Posted to No. 11 Initial Training Wing,
Prince of Wales Hotel, Scarborough.

The food was excellent as the original chefs still worked in the kitchen, but it was a pretty tough place. Wakey wakey at ten to six, breakfast at twenty past, and on parade at seven o'clock. Before you could go on parade you had to strip your bed and pile up your kit in a neat pile at the foot. Blankets, sheets, greatcoat, gas mask container etc. had to be absolutely square, achieved by inserting sheets of cardboard in the front. Lectures were given in the Spa buildings at the foot of the cliff, and square bashing at the top so we had to march at the double several times a day

Alice and Uncle Charlie and five cousins, so you can guess where I went at night.

10.3.44 Posted to Aircrew Despatch Centre, Heaton Park,
Manchester.

I was remustered as U/T Pilot (2) as a result of my performance at Brough. There was still a long way to go as only two out of five of those selected for pilot training eventually got their wings. Unfortunately, my posting to flying training was delayed as the special goggles I needed had not arrived. Perhaps this saved my life as I never reached operations. Heaton Park was a very bleak place. We were accommodated in Nissen huts and it was so cold that your breath froze on the blankets at night.

25.3.44. Posted to No 12 Initial Training Wing, St. Andrews,

We were sent here until the RAF could decide what to do with us. Presumably they were not needing as many aircrew replacements as expected. My memories consist of salty porridge and route marches through the snow up the hills.

5.4.44. Posted to R.A.F. Bomber Station, Leconfield, Yorks.

Sid Wybrow and I were assigned to the Signals Section. We built valve radios for use in the billets and on one occasion Sid built a radio transmitter which caused havoc in the control tower. One of our jobs was to log in the Lancasters as they returned from bombing raids - could be a sad task.

I got leave occasionally and used the Humber Ferry from Hull to get to Lincolnshire. Unfortunately there were always military police on duty at the ferry so it was impossible to get across on unofficial leave. The alternative was a long journey up the river to Goole and back down the other side.

9.7.44. Posted to Aircrew Despatch Centre, Heaton Park,

Manchester, followed by 4 weeks embarkation leave before we were posted overseas. My special goggles hadn't arrived so I was not on the boat.

10.8.44. Posted to 101 Lancaster Squadron, Ludford Magna. This RAF station was only eight miles from Louth, so I acquired an old cycle and frequently went home. We helped to load incendiary bombs and did menial tasks around the site. I remember one night being stationed at the beginning of the runway with a red Very pistol and a telephone. I can't remember what my duties were, but suddenly the fog came down and to my amazement lines of fire roared up on either side of the runway. I was seeing one of the first demonstrations of FIDO, a fog dispersal system. 101 Squadron was a special duties squadron and the story was that they carried German speaking radio operators who attempted to fool the German night-fighters with spurious messages.

22.11.44. Posted to Aircrew Despatch Centre, Heaton Park, Manchester. Sid and I were billeted with an elderly lady about half a mile from Heaton Park. She had a ginger haired daughter and obviously saw us as excellent suitors but we didn't take the bait. There was very little training at Heaton Park and we were given four weeks embarkation leave.

6.2.45 Tue. Things are moving at last. This afternoon we had a Yellow Fever jab, and it certainly had a kick. For a few minutes I thought I was going to faint, but fresh air revived me and I had no after effects. In the evening the boys and I went out to the Griffon for a lively evening.

7.2.45 Wed.

Miserable day. Usual Manchester rain. Most of the day was spent exchanging u/s clothing and in the evening we went to the Squirrel for tea. The old waitress was in a bad mood as some of the boys didn't sit at her table, so the bill was heavier than usual. As we had two teas each that wasn't surprising. Afterwards the boys went to the Union, but I wasn't in that mood at all as I hadn't recovered from the previous night. So I went to the flicks to see "Between Two Worlds" instead. Not a bad show.

8.2.45 Thu.

The prospects are getting brighter every day. Today we have been issued with flying kit and tropical clothing and all our laundry has been brought up to date. Looks as if we shall be on the move pretty soon. However I'm not particularly excited yet.

9.2.45 Fri.

This morning we've had a lecture on Southern Rhodesia and South Africa. The old Air Commodore was rather boring, but he did give us a little gen. I'm going to Southern Rhodesia and we may fly from the Middle East to Bulawayo. Also there is a good chance that I may return to England when I get my wings. In the evening we went to the Union to celebrate our draught overseas.

10.2.45 Sat.

Day off today. Supposed to be our last free day. We were marched out of the gates at 10 o'clock and the boys and I caught an electric train to Victoria. I wasn't hungry. but the others were so we had breakfast and then went to do a little shopping. I managed to buy a "Brownie" camera for 10/-. It isn't very versatile but it will serve its purpose. We had lunch at the YMCA, Spam and veg. with a horribly sad date pudding. But as it only cost a shilling one can't grumble.

The afternoon was spent at Birch Park roller-skating rink and we had a good time in spite of the crowds of children. I wrecked two pairs of skates and tired myself out thoroughly, but the girls made me lovesick for Winnie. I was too exhausted to skate in the evening, so Geordie, Geoff and I went to the Odeon to see "Double Indemnity".

11.2.45 Sun.

Bad news today. Draft postponed for a week. We paraded at 10 o'clock and were dismissed for the day. The Halle Orchestra was playing at the King's Hall so decided to spend the afternoon there. I reached Belle Vue at 2.40 pm and just as I was about to buy a ticket a civilian came up to me and gave me a 3/6d ticket he didn't want. He wouldn't allow me to pay for it and I had a pleasant afternoon six rows from the orchestra. Unfortunately it was at the back near the kitchen department, but that didn't prevent me falling asleep three times.

14.2.45 Wed.

On the Sten gun range this morning. As usual we spent three hours firing 20 rounds of ammunition. In the afternoon we each threw a grenade. It's much easier than one would imagine and no mishaps

occurred. I wasn't feeling too well in the evening so stayed in and did a little washing the Rinso way.

15.2.45 Thu.

We left the Regiment this afternoon and were marched out of the gates at two o'clock for our last evening out of camp in England. It wasn't particularly exciting, an hour's roller skating at Birch Park, tea at the Squirrel and a party with Dan and the rest of the boys at the Union.

16.2.45 Fri.

Confined to camp. Very lazy day spent in exchanging laundry and boots. Early to bed after a good supper in the NAAFI.

17.2.45 Sat. 17.2.45

The great day has at last arrived. Draft no. 9903 embarked at 11pm on the S.S. Samaria at Liverpool. The size of our sleeping quarters was a shock when we realised we had to eat there as well and we wondered how the hell we should manage. The lucky ones got a hammock, I didn't and spent three weeks sleeping on a table on a pile of life-jackets. When we left port we immediately ran into a raging storm, The waves were higher than the deck and most of us were promptly seasick. I was never actually sick but felt rotten and then caught what felt like dysentery. Food was awful. Sausages like rubber, spam or stew with potatoes and vegetables. The plates frequently ended up in a pile at the end of the table as the storm was so violent. We went far out into the Atlantic and didn't see land until we passed through the Straits of Gibraltar. I then remember stopping at Algiers, but not being allowed on shore, and passing Malta. We had one submarine alert. The weather was hot in the Mediterranean and we had to shower in salt water. This is not to be recommended - you feel dirtier afterwards than when you started. The troopship was so crowded that exercise was almost impossible and during the latter part of the journey, when the weather improved, we spent most of the time lying on the deck.

3.3.45 Sat.

We disembarked at **Port Said** at 11.30 am. by means of boards laid over a series of empty petrol tanks. Sweating beneath the weight of our full packs and kit-bags we went straight on to the train which was on the quay beside the ship. I was suffering from stomach trouble, a cross between acute diarrhoea and severe constipation.

The train was quite decent for the Egyptian State Railways, and although it was only third class we at least had wooden seats. We even

had a crude lavatory on board - a hole in the floor with a tap. The train drew right up to the ship which was anchored on the side of the Suez Canal.

After dumping our kit on the train we located a NAAFI on the line side, but as we had no money except English currency we were in a pickle. Luckily the tea was free, and the NAAFI, or EFI as it is called, gave us a free bun. After chugging up and down the line for half an hour, with hordes of WOGS aged 7 to 70 screaming at us from behind the wire fence, we set off on the first stage of our journey to Cairo. Not fast enough however to prevent some of those disreputable WOGS from climbing on board with fruit and leather goods for sale (and dirty postcards).

After searching through my purse I found a 10/- note which one of them changed for me. I bought a wallet and a cigarette case as well as some oranges. All the time we were travelling alongside the canal one of the ships we saw was a Free French battle cruiser called the "Valeur". The chief thing I remember about it was that it's funnel was square and tilted at 45 degrees.

Occasionally we saw camels toiling in the fields and asses carrying huge loads on their weak looking backs. Also there were oxen turning the age old water wheels which irrigate the precious soil. Most of the view however consisted of bare sand except for pear shaped cacti lining the rail side.

After about two hours we came to Ismailia and by now we had dislodged most of the WOGS. They were a surprising set of rogues, and you could tell they had been amongst the 51st Division because many spoke English with a Scotch accent. I remember very little of Ismailia except for tall tumble down tenements and mud walled slums.

We turned west here away from the canal and headed for El Suq-a-Suq. Now the countryside was beginning to get a little greener to the north of us, but it still seemed very precariously verdant. The WOGS had gone and it was comparatively peaceful and warm. It hardly seemed credible that 14 days ago I was watching the dome of the library at Liverpool disappear as we backed down the Mersey. At El-Suq-a-Suq we had free tea and a hard ship's biscuit. I also had a banana to eat, my first for five years, but I can't say I was thrilled by this war time delicacy.

We journeyed on and now the country side was coated in luxurious green. A road ran alongside the track and we passed every conceivable form of transport from the ancient camel to the latest American car. Eventually the lights of Cairo appeared and after 15 minutes we found ourselves drawing into Bab Al-Hadid (The Iron Gate). We were loaded on to a lorry, and by being rather crafty I managed to get into the cab beside the driver. Just my luck! He was a very broad Scotsman and I couldn't understand a word he said.

Eventually we reached 22 P.D.C., Heliopolis, without running into any of the numerous nightshirted WOGS strewn in our path. We were given tents and after a quick supper and a scrounge round for beds and hurricane lamps we went to sleep until 6 o'clock next morning.

4.3.45 Sun.

I'm in Heliopolis, Egypt, although the atmosphere is just the same as that to be found in any RAF camp in Blighty. It's hot this morning and we parade at 8.30 for "gen". The so-called "gen" is forthcoming and we are told that we shall all move within a week. Actually it was ten days and my name was second from last on the list, but I'm getting used to that now. At this camp there is a parade every evening at 8.00 pm for Air Movements, and this meant we had to lounge away the day time and see Cairo late in the evening.

I went into Cairo after a scramble for my pass which stated that I was a Liberator Pilot. I wonder if that's an omen. In Cairo all the shops were closed so we just walked around the town, called in at the YMCA, and caught the tram back to camp. And what a tram! There's not one in England to touch them except possibly the Green Goddesses of Liverpool. They are cut down to 45 mph in wartime to prevent accidents, but in pre-war years they touched 60 mph.

5.3.45 Mon.

Some of the chaps flew to Rhodesia this evening, but I didn't. I was on guard. They gave me a mile of wire fencing to cast my protective eye over, and with the aid of Larry Durrans I passed a fitful night. I wish that guy wouldn't talk so much. I was positively rude to him but he gabbled on incessantly. Before the sun set I wrote to Winn.

6.3.45 Tue.

Day off today, but confined to camp until 8 pm because of those blasted Air Movements. When we eventually did get down to Cairo we had supper in the Tedder Club. For 9 piastres we had 3 eggs and chips

and iced fruit salad. Afterwards we wandered around the town, but all I can remember is a shop in which sundry workers aged from 10 to 60 were making leather belts and similar goods, The front of the shop was open and some of the work was actually being done on the pavement. Clearest in my mind is the smile of a cherubic little boy threading strips of rawhide down the edge of a wide hide belt.

7.3.45 Wed.

Wash day today, but my efforts with no soapflakes and cold water were only partially successful. But even if they didn't look clean they felt more comfortable.

In the evening we had supper in the Tedder club. My chief memory of the evening is a visit to a low nightclub called the "Sweet Melody". We arrived at the entrance about 10.30 pm to find the place locked and barred, but by surreptitious enquiries we discovered that there was a back entrance. However further progress was barred by the presence of two amiable S.P's who strongly recommended us not to enter, in fact they forbade us to. However, undaunted, we hung around for a few minutes and eventually a waiter opened the door and called in the S.P.'s to deal with a little trouble between some of the soldiers inside. We nipped in smartly behind the S.P.'s and found ourselves in this disreputable den.

There was a band screeching behind a barrier ten feet tall, and we soon saw the reason for the ten feet. Luckily we had struck on a quiet night, but bottles were liable to fly any minute, and the GIRLS - well words can't describe them. They were the most horrible mixture of low bred natives it was possible to meet. One couple in particular were simulating the nearest approach to seduction that I think is possible with your clothes on, and one or two more were halfway there. We had arrived at the end of the so-called cabaret show, so after a short while the place closed and we made our way back to camp, considerably enlightened.

8.3.45 Thu.

Put quite a large part of the Egyptian desert into sand bags today, and with them built a wall round a tent. I was considerably bucked up by a sing-song we had with some RAF Regiment lads in the NAAFI at night. They had just come back from a pretty tough time in Greece, and their opinion of the people in England who deprecated their actions was pretty low. That's not surprising when you consider that the ELA rebels slit the stomachs of 150 women and girls, and marched prisoners and hostages barefoot into the mountains. Even little children

were taught to use hand grenades and captured one particular H.Q. on their own. In one other instance the girls who had been amusing and sleeping with the officers at another H.Q. were the ones who later captured the place.

9.3.45 Fri.

I'm a dustman today and, together with six other bodies, picked up rubbish from alongside the road down by the Sick Quarters and took it about a mile into the desert on a lorry and dumped it. On the way we passed about 50 yards from some wild dogs. They look like brownish white terriers and make a horrible noise barking at night.

My hopes were raised when I was told to get my kit weighed this afternoon but it turned out to be a false alarm.

10.3.45 Sat.

The only thing worth recording today was the meal in the Tedder Club. We 'have become well known to one particular waiter and by surreptitious tipping we receive double helpings of everything. We only paid 6 piastres plus 5 piastres tip and this is what we had.

Soup

Roast lamb, cauliflower and white sauce, peas and roast potatoes.

Wild strawberry trifle

Ice-cream, coffee and rolls.

11.3.45 Sun.

Day off today, but we were disillusioned. We were detailed on the 9 o'clock parade for the job of putting up tents for some paratroopers who were expected that night. We worked like slaves until 1300 hrs and then the CO kindly gave us the afternoon off. As usual my name wasn't called out this evening and I was so cheesed off that after supper in the NAAFI I went to bed.

12.3.45 Mon.

Continued putting up tents all morning, but I was so tired by lunch-time that I didn't go on parade at two o'clock. Let some of the other lazy devils do some work. My patience was at last rewarded this evening as I was the last name to be called for flying down to Bulawayo tomorrow morning.

13.3.45 Tue.

I should be unusually excited this morning, but for some peculiar reason RAF life stifles ordinary enthusiasm and you are liable to become a semi-automaton taking events with a sort of docile acquiescence.

We were called at 4.00 am and after scrambling half asleep for breakfast we loaded ourselves up like pack mules and reported to the Movements Office. At 5.00 am a lorry drew up and after throwing our kit in the back we climbed aboard for the short ride to Almaza aerodrome. Then came the most annoying part of the day. We found that we were not scheduled to depart until 8.00 am and for three hours we stood around like lost sheep until the captain of our aircraft ordered us aboard.

At last we were about to begin our journey across Africa, and after warming up his engines, the captain taxied the Dakota out to the runway. In a few minutes 22 PDC was rapidly disappearing behind us as we headed down the Nile. The Giza pyramids were visible to starboard but soon all traces of civilisation practically disappeared and the only signs of human beings were solitary dhows tacking upstream against the breeze.

We stopped once for fuel at Wadi Halfa and after a short rest took off again. The ground was still barren, but along the Nile occasional patches of cultivation could be seen showing dark against the lighter sand. Eventually reached Khartoum at 14.00 hrs where we were to spend the night. The weather becomes very bumpy in the afternoon and if possible aircraft stay on the ground then. I didn't see any of the town as I was stony broke. I couldn't even pay for a mug of NAAFI lemonade in the airmen's mess. We saw these WOGS with a pail of lemonade and naturally though it was free. So we filled our mugs and then spent an embarrassing ten minutes explaining our pecuniary circumstances.

The heat seemed terrific although it was really a cool day for the district. We were billeted in huts made of woven straw and they were miraculously cool. We saw a C Type flying boat land on the Nile. After tea I had what seemed to me the most wonderful swim I have ever had, and after reading for a while (Lady Chatterley's Lover - unabridged version bought by a friend in Cairo), I went to sleep.

14.3.45 Wed

Up with the lark at 04.30 hrs and airborne at 6.00 hrs. Today our destination is Kisumu in Kenya. A short while after taking off a great difference was noticeable on the ground. From the height at which we were flying it looked as if the whole area had been daubed with great streaks of lumpy brown paint. When we came lower we saw that it was grass and trees, and more marvellous than that, we saw a herd of wild elephants, thirty strong, feeding in the bush. Also there were various kinds of deer roaming in their natural state. We had engine trouble at Juba and stayed for three hours. It's the hottest place I have ever been to, and at night lions and leopards roam over the camp and elephants roar in the distance. The guards are posted on top of the aircraft hangars for safety. We finally reached Kisumu on Lake Victoria at 17.00 hrs. (2000 miles from Cairo) and bedded down for the night in a straw hut with lizards scuttling through the thatched roof.

15.3.45 Thu

Took off at 07.00 hrs on the last stage of our trip to Bulawayo. There was a wonderful sunrise over Lake Victoria silhouetted against the dusky blue of the surrounding mountains, and the wonderful green of the grasses and unfamiliar trees surpassed the most glorious Technicolour. We left Lake Victoria after an hours flying. The trees are getting denser and have more of the aspect of semi-jungle, with here and there forbidding swamps. We touched down at Intava which was more like England than anything I've seen so far. We are now in Rhodesia and our next stop is Bulawayo. We landed there in a rain storm, the last rain we were to see for several months.

ROYAL AIR FORCE

FLYING TRAINING - SOUTHERN RHODESIA 1945

(Extracts from my diary and pilot's log book.

I was 19 years old.)

16.3.45 Fri

We have been billeted at the Hillside camp in Bulawayo. After being inoculated I volunteered for fighter pilot training. We were allowed out of camp at 16.00 hrs. and I spent half my pay buying a pair of shorts (19/6d) and various fruits.

17.3.45 Sat

Took some photographs of the boys today outside our hut. If they come out they should be pretty good, especially the one of me falling from a tree.

We went swimming at three o'clock, but unfortunately the sun decided to go in and it was quite chilly. After tea we had a drink and then saw Gordon Harker in "The Return of the Frog".

18.3.45 Sun

Went to the Methodist Chapel at the junction of Main Street and 11th Avenue. Quite a homely service and exactly the same as in England. What appealed to me most was the electronic organ.

In the afternoon we went to the Municipal swimming baths and had a grand time until five o'clock. After coming back to the camp to change and have tea, I went to chapel again.

19.3.45 Mon

CO's Passing out parade at 09.00 hrs. Went off with no apparent hitch and was followed by the usual pep talk. We were allowed out after lunch and Sid Wybrow and I went down town to buy a couple of films. After considerable wandering about I eventually bought two and at 16.00 hrs we went to the swimming pool. It was rather cool and there wasn't much sun, but Ken took a photo of Sid and I diving into the pool. Afterwards we managed to scrape up enough money for tea in the Services club and returned to camp. I was extremely tired and got into bed at 9 o'clock.

22.3.45 Thu.

Posted to No 22 S.F.T.S. Thornhill for four weeks awaiting transfer to No. 26 E.F.T.S. Guinea Fowl. Sid and I were allocated to the Gunnery section and spent our time processing and analysing cine film from gunnery exercises.

NO MORE ENTRIES IN DIARY UNTIL

20th April, 1945 - FRIDAY. POSTED TO GUINEA FOWL.

**No 26 Elementary Flying Training School, Guinea Fowl,
Nr Gwelo, Southern Rhodesia**

20.4.45 Fri

Arrived at No 26 E.F.T.S Guinea Fowl today to start my Flying Training Course. On arrival there found Geordie and Larry already billeted. I shared a room with Sid, but it's a little dilapidated. One leg is broken

off the table, the cupboard doors are knocked in and my locker is falling to pieces. Otherwise, except for the dirty floor, it's not too bad. We spent a merry evening in the canteen swapping yarns about our escapades in England at the bomber stations. Larry, Geordie, Geoff, Dicky, Miff, Jock, Sid and myself are the only ones of the original 25 here. Heard today from Winn that her grandmother had died.

21.4.45 Sat

Quite a busy morning. At 06.00 hrs we paraded for a lecture by the padre. This was immediately followed by the usual form-filling and then another lecture by the Chief Ground Instructor. Then we went to the Orderly Room and Accounts, had our interview with the Chief Flying Instructor.

Geoff, Geordie, Larry, Jock, Miff, Sid and myself asked to be put in the same flight and we were put into D Flight, Group 4. The afternoon we spent swimming and the most amusing part of the day was when Miff got a tick on a most embarrassing part of his body.

22.4.45 Sun

After an excellent breakfast I bathed and washed my clothes. The rest of the day was spent in reading and writing.

23.4.45 Mon

We went down to the Flights today and after hanging about all afternoon I didn't get a flight. I did see my instructor Sgt Colmer however, and I liked him instantly. He shook hands and chatted informally and hopes we shall enjoy our stay here. Then he showed us over a Cornell (Chipmunk) explaining all the instruments and gadgets and promised to fly us tomorrow. He is young, tall, thin, dark and quite handsome.

24.4.45 Tue

Rushed up to Flights this morning at 5.30 am but had to wait 15 minutes until the aircraft were ready to be pushed out. At 6.0 am my instructor suddenly called me and by 6.15 we were airborne. For nearly an hour we stogged around seeing all the landmarks and getting used to the feel of the machine. Sgt Colmer is an excellent instructor and I think I shall do well with him.

26.4.45 Thu

Sgt Colmer - stalling, turns, taking off into wind, glide approach and landing.

28.4.45 Sat NO FIVE DAY WEEK ON THIS STATION.

Sgt Colmer - taking off into wind, glide approach and landing.

1.5.45 Tue

Sgt Colmer - climbing and gliding turns, taking off into wind, glide approach and landing.

2.5.45 Wed

Sgt Colmer - climbing and gliding turns, taking off into wind, glide approach and landing.

3.5.45 Thu

Sgt Colmer - Stalling, turns, taking off into wind, glide approach and landing. SPINNING.

Sgt Colmer - taking off into wind, glide approach and landing.

4.4.45 Fri

F/O Cartwright. taking off into wind, glide approach and landing.

F/L Whaites. Solo test.

FIRST SOLO 18 MINS

8.5.45 Tue **PEACE DAY (in Europe)** (Far East for us now)

We had a church service in the hangar at 10 am and I enjoyed the padre's sermon. Otherwise just a normal day. Rather an amazing reaction after years of war!

10.5.45 Thu

Lecture by CO at 3.00 pm re brawl between police from detention barracks and airmen from Guinea Fowl. The police are part of a small Dutch minority who are pro German. Action has been taken against them and tonight Gwelo was fairly quiet. Caught transport at 4.00 pm minus pass. Had a few sherries and a Pym's in the Midlands, did a little shopping and saw "Kismet" at the cinema.

11.5.45 Fri

Flying solo again this afternoon. After one circuit with F/O Cartwright I was sent on my own. Made one fairly decent circuit and as it was only 5.10 pm I made a dummy approach and went round again.

12.5.45 Sat

Flying with F/O Cartwright again at 6.30 am. Climbed to 9,000 feet and practised starting engine in flight, spins and stalls. Just before we started these exercises the recall signal went up but we continued for half an hour in spite of the fog rolling in. When we eventually did try and approach the aerodrome it was difficult to spot its exact position. We circled above and in the fog for 10 minutes and then decided to come down as the fog on one side of the field was thinning a little. We came right down to the deck, and after carefully avoiding the telegraph wires we made a safe landing 70 degrees out of wind.

14.5.45 Mon

Sgt Colmer. Climbing and gliding turns, taking off into wind, powered approach and landing.

F/O Cartwright. Taking off into wind, powered approach and landing.

15.5.45 Tue

Sgt Colmer Taking off into wind, powered approach and landing.

SOLO Taking off into wind, powered approach & landing.

16.5.45 Wed

Sgt Colmer. Taking off into wind, powered approach and landing, instrument flying

SOLO. Taking off into wind, powered approach and landing

17.5.45 Thu.

Sgt Colmer Taking off into wind, powered approach and landing, side-slipping, steepturns.

SOLO Taking off into wind, powered approach and landing

18.5.45 Fri.

Sgt Colmer SPINNING, side-slipping, steep turns instrument flying.

SOLO Taking off into wind, powered approach and landing

“We carried revolvers when flying and the reason was that a cadet pilot force-landed recently. He was taken in by natives who fed him and gave him a bed in their kraal. During the night they murdered him

because the food he had dined on was giraffe meat, and giraffe was royal game. They were afraid he would report them and so committed the crime. Unfortunately for him one of the natives took the pilot's wrist watch before they disposed of the body and that was how they were eventually caught by the British South African Police."

19.5.45 Sat

In the evening went into Gwelo and had a drink at the Cecil with the boys and then saw "The Phantom Lady" at the Royal.

20.5.45 Sun

VICTORY CELEBRATIONS IN THE BUNDU

Decided to go Bundu bashing. (Bundu is the name given to the Rhodesian scrub land). At 14.45, after borrowing Sid's bush jacket, I booked out of camp and headed westwards along the Selukwe road. After I had walked for half an hour I decided to climb ——— Kop which lay over to my left. I followed a path for a short distance and then decided to take a short cut through the trees and long grass. At first it wasn't too bad, I found a miraculously coloured butterfly and tried for 10 minutes to catch it in my topee, but it was too quick for me. Eventually I reached the top of the hill and had a wonderful view of the Sekondi range laid out before me. I could hear a native band beating out a wild rhythm in a large kraal on my right and decided to investigate. I descended the hill by a different route disturbing on the way some kind of deer. It rather startled me for a moment but it soon disappeared in a hurry. I just caught sight of its head but couldn't identify it. It must have been 5 feet tall.

After a few minutes I reached the Selukwe road and met another airman gazing with interest at the "meningi ndaba". Apparently he knew a few of the natives and a little of the language, so after deliberating a few minutes he eventually said he would come with me. We wandered along the native tracks behind some unfuzio and eventually came to the clearing in which the ndaba was in progress. We didn't relish going too close at first but one of the native boys beckoned us on and led us to a sort of decorated shelter covered with a Union Jack and containing a table and chairs. My pal declined to sit down in there as it was in fact the throne for the local chief in whose honour the festivities were being held. Dancing was in

full swing, the women forming an inner circle next to the native band of drums and whistles and the men forming an outer circle.

There were three drums, one of which had to be heated occasionally over a small fire in order to keep the skin tight. Of the other two, one was a sort of kettle drum and the other about five feet long in the shape of a horn. You could see the resemblance to ancient war dances, and if it hadn't been for the semi-europeanised nature of their clothes, the ndaba could have been quite a frightening affair. As it was, one or two who were half drunk on Kaffir beer were definitely looking dangerous and brandishing clubs.

After a time a procession started to form on one side of the clearing headed by a drum-major and three Union Jacks. The chief himself had arrived in a large red lorry and when everyone was in order the procession began. Behind the flags came the band, consisting of two drums, a bicycle bell and a tin whistle playing the "British Grenadiers. Following this came the chief dressed in white panamas and smoking a cigarette in a curved holder about a foot long. On his right was a personage who may have been the local witch doctor. He was wearing a crown and a richly ornamented robe. All around were the chiefs, other councillors, relations and wives (2 or 3). They marched solemnly once round the compound and then came towards the decorated shelter. A drunken native prostrated himself in front of the chief's seat presenting him with money and showering earth over his head. Other natives also had gifts of chickens to offer. After the chief and his wives had been seated, a picture frame containing a photograph of King Edward and an advert for Lions Beer was held up for silence. A native then pretended to read a proclamation from an ancient copy of the "Picture Goer". The local prostitute was making a general nuisance of herself yelling and dancing in front of the chief and everyone seemed to be having a good time.

I took a reel of photographs and as the sun was setting we set off on our way back to camp. The other chap left me after a while and I finished my walk by getting a lift with an old man who knew the late Colonel Fenwick of Stenigot. (My grandfather had been his gamekeeper).

21.5.45 Mon

Sgt Colmer Taking off into wind, powered approach and landing.
 LOW FLYING, Cross wind take-offs and landings,
forced landings

22.5.45 Tue

Sgt Colmer Taking off into wind, powered approach and landing.

23.5.45 Wed

SOLO Side-slipping, steep turns and forced landings

24.5.45 Thu.

Sgt Colmer Taking off into wind, powered approach and landing
SPINNING, instrument flying.

SOLO Stalling, SPINNING, steep turns

SOLO Taking off into wind, powered approach and landing

25.5.45 Fri.

Sgt Colmer Instrument flying, low flying, stall turns and loops.

SOLO Steep turns, stall turns.

26.5.45 Sat

Geoff has been scrubbed, so tonight we went into Gwelo for a last night out, and what a night. Sid and I were the only ones sober when the Cecil closed at 8.30 pm. We had a devil of a job getting the others round to the Princes Theatre. Eventually we gave up and went on our own. After a few minutes the others came in making a great noise and swearing. I couldn't keep them quiet and after a time they mercifully had to go outside. Geoff and Geordie stayed outside and when the others returned they promptly fell asleep. I have painful memories of them in the back of the lorry throwing beer bottles in the air.

26.5.45 Sat.

Sgt Colmer Stall turns and loops. Formation flying.

SOLO Steep turns, stall turns, compass turns

27.5.45 Sun.

Very quiet today. Wrote to Winn and went to church in the evening.

28.5.45 Mon.

My first cross country this morning - Chatsworth, Umvuma, base. Sgt Colmer flew all the way and I was able to identify most of the landmarks and write a decent log. In the evening I had my first hour of night flying, and although I flew the circuit perfectly I was unable to land. I checked too low and ran into the deck hard, forgetting to open the throttle.

Later I went up again and did much better. Sgt Colmer says that one more circuit and I shall go solo. Altogether flew 10 night circuits and landings. Wizard !!

29.5.45 Tue.

Sgt Colmore Low Flying, Cross wind landings and take offs.

30.5.45 Wed.

Sgt Colmore Cross country - Umvuma, Chatsworth.

31.5.45 Thu

Cadet nearly killed today by tail wheel of kite landing on top of him.

F/Lt Whaites Progress Test

1.6.45 Fri.

Payday £8.(2 weeks)

Sgt Colmore Forced landings, aerobatics, formation flying.

SOLO Steep turns, slow rolls, SPINNING.

2.6.45 SAT.

Dull day. Spent the evening with Jack and Sid eating bananas and sardines on toast with a glass of beer.

3.6.45 Sun.

Went for a walk in the Bundu this afternoon, but saw nothing interesting. Very tired when I returned, but after tea went to church.

4.6.45 Mon.

SOLO Spinning and slow rolls

Sgt Colmore Instrument flying (this was done underneath a hood over the cockpit.)

5.6.45 Tue.

First solo cross-country flight. Base, Cotapaxi, Shobani, Base.

Impossible to get lost and returned safely. Aircraft swung across me on take-off causing me to turn four feet above the deck.

6.6.45 Wed.

Sgt Colmer Instrument flying, low flying, crosswind take-offs and landings.

Forced landings.

7.6.45 Thu.

Sgt Colmer Taking off into wind, powered approach and landing.

SOLO Cross country - Base, Induna, Base. No problems.

Another cadet pilot who flew this cross country solo in a Tiger Moth did have a few problems, got lost and had to force land. The next day ten aircraft, flying half a mile apart in line abreast, searched for him unsuccessfully. Three days later he turned up at a District Commissioner's house way out in the bush. Apparently he had been uncertain of his position and had turned to find the Bulawayo railway line so that he could "Bradshaw" his way back.

Unfortunately, in turning to find the railway line, he had not realised that he had already crossed it, with the result that he became more off course. He eventually landed in a field and after a while natives appeared, looked at him through the long grass and went away. He was afraid to contact them, having heard about the murdered pilot.

He spent the day emptying one tank in to the other using the cover of the upper identification light and stayed in the aircraft at night. The following day he took off but as he had no idea of his whereabouts and was running short of fuel, he landed again, damaging the aircraft. This time he persuaded the natives to take him to the nearest white man with the offer of one pound then and another pound when they reached safety. They set off at dusk and ran through the night, the pupil having to stop every mile to recover and terrified by the strange noises in the bush. Eventually they reached the District Commissioner's Office who radioed FAFHQ to report his safe arrival.

Unfortunately the Tiger Moth had to be cannibalised as it was too damaged to repair on site.

7.6.45

Sgt Colmer Night flying - 4 landings.

SOLO Night flying - 4 landings

According to the airfield controller I was so low on one approach that he had difficulty in giving me a red owing to the trees being in the way. Luckily I saw the red and opened the throttle, being until this time totally unaware that I was just above the trees. After opening the throttle I caught a glimpse of the trees just below my port wing tip. Afterwards F/O Cartwright called me into his office and asked whether I

wanted to die young or was I trying to read the time on the Gwelo clock tower.

21.6.45 Thu.

Sgt Colmer Steep turns, crosswind take-offs, forced landings and aerobatics.

22.6.45 Fri.

Chief Flying Instructor's Test today.

I blacked us both out in a steep turn and found flaps half down after take-off. Otherwise O.K. and passed.

22.6.45 Fri

Cadet crashed in low flying area today. Forgot to change over to reserve petrol tank. Broke his leg. Lucky he wasn't killed.

23.6.45 Sat.

D Flight went into Gwelo tonight and I remained reasonably sober. I spent the first half of the film show looking after Jack outside the cinema. I kept him out of the S.P's clutches and twice attempted to take him back to the transport. Eventually, during the interval, Rap helped me and we half carried him there to sleep and cool off. After the film I was so sick of drunkards that I crept away and walked around a small park until the bus went.

24.6.45 Sun.

Miserable day. Went with Heady, Wally and Laze into the Bundu. Shot at a tree unsuccessfully with Laze's .45 revolver and wandered about aimlessly.

In evening went to last church service on camp with Heady.

Junior went through the hedge today, silly fool. Got away with it himself, but damaged the undercarriage and one wing tip.

25.6.45 Mon.

Passed exams in ground subjects. Sid and Geordie failed in navigation - dim types!.

Saw Olsen and Johnson in "Crazy House". Whizzo !!!!

27.6.45 Wed.

STATION DANCE.

Remember Sam Williams in the trifle?. Also the fight between two cadets because they couldn't remember each other's names.

28.6.45 Thu.

Sid got drunk at rugby party tonight.

TRAINING AT GUINEA FOWL COMPLETED.

Assessment of general ability 55.9 %

Ability as pilot 360/600 Proficient

Ability as navigator 32/50 Proficient.

Total flying hours to date.

Day dual - 49.15 Day solo - 25.35 Night dual - 4.00

Night Solo 1.00

Link Trainer - 12 hours

Previous hours on Tiger Moth. Dual - 11.55 Solo 00.15

POSTED TO NO 22 Senior Flying Training School, Thornhill, Nr. Gwelo, Southern Rhodesia.

29.6.45 Fri.

Arrived at 10.30 am. Wizard billets.

3.7.45 Tue

Introduced to the North American Harvard today. My instructor, Sgt. Moffat, spent 45 mins familiarising me with the controls and handling of the machine. Quite a powerful beast compare with the Cornell, Unfortunately the large radial engine stops you from seeing straight ahead when taxiing and you have to zig-zag continuously to avoid other aircraft.

We have a proper tarmac runway here with a flight control caravan and radio communication although only a few Harvards had radios fitted.. Training is beginning to be serious.

4.7.45 Wed.

Sgt Moffat. Medium, climbing and gliding turns, taking off into wind, powered approach and going round again. 60 mins.

5.7.45 Thu.

Sgt Moffat. Taking off into wind, approach and landing.

6.7.45 Fri.

Sgt Moffat. Taking off into wind, approach and landing.
FIRST SOLO - Rather surprised to be going solo so soon. Circuit was uneventful, but I burst a tail wheel on landing and had great difficulty controlling the aircraft. Did a big 'S' down the runway.

20

7.7.45 Sat.

Sgt Moffat. Flapless powered approach and landing, steep turns, stalling off steep turns, high speed stalls and cross wind take-offs and landing.

He crammed a lot into 90 mins.

10.7.45. Tue.

Sgt Moffat. Taking off into wind, approach and landing.

SOLO. Taking off into wind, approach and landing.

Sgt Moffat. Flapless landings, steep turns and forced landings.

14.7.45 Sat.

Flew to Cranbourne with Sgt Moffat. Cranbourne is close to Salisbury and is the S.F.T.S. for bomber pilots. Pleasant trip. Booked into the Services Club, Saw Joe, Bill and Ricky Reed.

15.7.45 Sun.

Had lunch with Sgt Moffats friends, Mrs Kinfoil and her daughter Geraldine..

Very pleasant day and flew back to Thornhill at 3.30 pm.

16.7.45 Mon.

Sgt Moffat. Crosswind take-offs and landings.

SOLO. Taking off into wind, powered approach and landings.

17.7.45 Tue.

Sgt Moffat. SPINNING, steep turns and forced landings.

SOLO. SPINNING, steep turns and forced landings.

18.7.45. Wed.

Sgt Moffat. Instrument flying.

19.7.45 Thu.

Sgt Moffat. Precautionary landings.

SOLO SPINNING, Steep turns, forced landings, aerobatics.

20.7.45 Fri.

Sgt Moffat Instrument flying.

21.7.45 Sat.

Sgt Moffat Precautionary landings

SOLO Precautionary landings

24.7.45 Tue.

Sgt Moffat Precautionary landings

Flew horribly and threatened with circuits because of my bad landings.

25.7.45 Wed

Cold coming on. Slight temperature and stuffy nose.

First Pilot Navigation Test. Got lost. Missed Golden Ridge, missed Nkai and ended up at Queque. **FAILED TEST.**

Also in trouble over my trip to Cranbourne. Apparently I made a mistake in my log and Group H.Q. Navigation Officer saw it. He calculated we had flown at speeds of 500 mph and 50 mph, both of which are not possible on a Harvard. Sgt Moffat, my instructor, was reprimanded.

Sid has also failed his 1st P.N.T. so he isn't very popular with his instructor either.

26.7.45. Thu.

Sgt Moffat took me over the Nkai route this morning and I found the pin-points easily. Best of all I made a really wizard cross wind landing at Thornhill, the best ever.

SOLO. SPINNING, Steep turns, cross wind take-offs and landings, forced landings, aerobatics.

27.7.45 Fri.

Took my P.N.T. again today with F/L Loewe and passed.

PAY DAY

28.7.45 Sat.

Flew down to Cranbourne this morning with Sgt Moffat. Uneventful and didn't make a mess of my log this time. After booking in at the Services Club, we bought tickets for the "Merry Wives of Windsor" and stuffed ourselves with coffee and cream cakes followed by

strawberries and cream. Afternoon was spent watching a rugby match. Bit too hot for me, but the game was worth watching. Evening of course was spent at Shakespeare's play, and despite my tendency to fall asleep I enjoyed it immensely.

29.7.45 Sun.

Wonderful weather. Went to Kinfoil's for lunch and managed to take half a dozen shots of the park.

Returned to Thornhill by air at 3.45 at low level chased by Butcher in another Harvard. Whizzo!

31.7.45 Tue.

Handling check this morning. Just passed. Instrument flying, aerobatics and forced landing O.K. Boobed on flapless landing and joined circuit at 7.50 am. Moffatt far from pleased.

FIRST ATOMIC BOMB DROPPED TODAY. I wish the bomb had never been discovered because I am sure that the world today is not fitted to control such a mighty weapon. If we are not careful we shall destroy ourselves and all civilisation.

1.8.45 Wed.

Sgt Moffatt. Spinning and aerobatics.

SOLO Stalling, steep turns and aerobatics.

2.8.45 Thu.

F/L Nicholson Aerobatics and low flying.

Passed signals test. It was quite easy.

3.8.45 Fri.

SOLO Steep turns and forced landings.

5.8.45 Sun.

Church parade at 9.00 am. The padre is leaving next week and we shall miss him. He's a grand fellow.

7.8.45 Tue.

F/O Mendham. Preliminary handling test.

10.8.45 Fri.

SOLO Stalling, spinning, steep turns, aerobatics.

11.8.45 Sat.

Disgraceful exhibition of instrument flying this morning. My take-off under the hood was a duel of strength between Moffatt and myself owing to a misunderstanding.

Sgt Moffatt. Instrument flying, flapless approach and landing.

SOLO Stalling, crosswind take-offs and landings, steep turns, aerobatics.

12.8.45. Sun.

Quiet day. Fred Allen and 25 others have come up here from Cranborne to finish their training. **Apparently the engines are dropping out of the Mk V Oxfords and two instructors have been killed.**

13.8.45 Mon.

SOLO. Stalling, spinning, steep turns, aerobatics.
mins.

65

Trouble on take off this morning. Revs slipped back and I only had 1800 unknown to me. However I managed to get airborne at the end of the runway and then realised what was the problem. Also trouble with engine cutting out during aerobatics.

15.8.45 Wed. **PEACE DAY**

I got a lift into Gwelo at 6.30 pm and went to the Cecil Hotel as I knew the rest of the boys would be there. I found them in the lounge chatting to a Mr. and Mrs. Horden, who turned out to be a gold-mine owner and his wife. (Apparently Ken had been in the services and invalided out. The government had then given him a grant of £5000 to start his gold mining venture). As it was Victory night I relaxed my resolution not to drink until the end of the course and had a couple of brandies and ginger. This livened me up somewhat and we all decided to go to the Victory Dance, but first Mr. and Mrs. Horden begged us to run over to the mine with them and have a drink and something to eat.

They asked Geordie if he would go first with Kitty (Mrs. Horden's sister) and Grandma to take the children home and put them to bed, and then return to pick us up. Well we waited until about half past eight but still no sign of Kitty and Geordie with the car, so Ken (Mr Horden) began to get really annoyed. He swore he would never lend her his car again as she always wrecked it. So we went down to the clock tower and sat on the kerb to wait for a taxi. We were all pretty

merry then and I couldn't help laughing to myself at the sight of seven of us squatting there and passing the brandy bottle round.

The first taxi to come wouldn't take all of us despite our threats to the native driver, so eventually we got out again. Larry, who was beginning to feel rather pleased with life, began to stop any other passengers getting into the taxi. Eventually he became a darned nuisance and I had to shut him up or there would have been a fight. At last a taxi came along that would take the lot of us, so we piled in and set course for the Lost Donkey mine.

After what seemed an endless ride along what were no more than car-tracks we came to Geordie and Kitty in the other car stuck at the side of the road. Kitty was rolling drunk and Geordie wasn't much better. Apparently they had lost a tyre and ridden on the steel hub for about a mile entirely oblivious to what had happened. Eventually they couldn't understand why the car wouldn't climb a hill. When Geordie got out he discovered that they had hit a rock and the tyre was missing. I don't think they were particularly worried and as far as I could make out they had occupied their time necking in the back of the car. However we carried on up to the mine in the taxi and then sent it back to pick them up.

The "house" was a long low white building built of mud and sticks with a thatched roof. The floors were of mud and where the legs of the furniture stood great holes were made in the floor. The only light available was an acetylene miner's lamp and a candle, and as the lamp soon died out we were left only with a candle. When Geordie and Kitty returned they sent back the taxi before we could stop them and so we were marooned for the night. No car or telephone was available for at least six miles.

Then the row started. There was Kitty (a horrible bitch by the way) rolling about helpless, swearing she hadn't touched a drop and trying to give a reasonable explanation to Ken and his wife of the accident. Larry was about all in and we took him outside and gave him a dose of Worcester sauce to make him sick. We left him asleep in the garden for an hour to cool off. In the next room the old grandma, who was partly insane, was screaming and swearing at the top of her voice cursing everyone in the vilest language imaginable. Kitty went into her to explain and then we heard a terrific rumpage as if there was a fight going on and eventually Kitty returned rather the worse for wear. I was cold sober by this time and fascinated by this insight into the way

some people live. They all started drinking again now and although I had a little drop I was determined not to let myself go as I could see they needed someone to look after them. (I bet I was a pompous prig in those days). After a time the native brought some fried eggs, bacon, sausage and chips
a little persuasion got them sat at the table and gave them a plateful each. Very nice it was too.

By now it was pretty late so Ken brought a mattress in and some blankets and left us for the night. I pushed a couple of armchairs together for Larry and managed to topple him into them so he was quite happy. The other boys started singing with Kitty on the sofa so I laid down on the mattress and left them to it.

I woke up about 5 o'clock and they were sprawled about the room in various attitudes. Geordie was on the mattress beside me breathing beery fumes down my neck and making horrible snorting noises. I couldn't stand it so got up, had a drink of water, and wandered into the garden for a while, Then I returned, made him face the other way and laid down again for another half hour. The grandma came in cursing about how many cadets there were and cleared out again muttering to herself. About 6 o'clock I got up and went for a tramp in the Bundu. It was wonderfully clear and fresh and it was grand to watch the golden clouds scudding across the horizon as the sun rose. For a few moments I was able to forget everything but the beauty of it. The so-called gold-mine seemed to be a large hole in the ground with a wooden superstructure over it. Then I retraced my steps to the house to find everyone still in a state of stupour. Next door Kitty and her mother were having a most glorious row and I was shocked to see three small children sleeping in the same room. What effect must such a life have on the minds of those children.

A little later Ken came in and told us a piece of news so sordid that it seemed unbelievable. Apparently Kitty's husband had been seriously ill and was dying. She knew this and her husband had actually died while she was getting drunk and making love to Geordie in the car they wrecked. Have you ever heard of anything so ghastly! You wouldn't believe people could sink so low, and what made it worse still was that the row continued most of the morning with not a mention of the poor chap that had died. The argument was about the car chiefly and I've never heard such a display of beastliness in all my life. Five small children, all under seven years of age lived in the house and no attempt was made to feed them until about ten o'clock when we managed to

get some eggs, bacon and sausage from the native boy. Even then Kitty wouldn't allow them to eat decently at the table, but gave them a piece of meat or toast in their fingers and told them to clear off outside. It nearly broke my heart to see them and to know that I could do nothing except be kind. Later in the morning Ken managed to get a car from a friend and took us back to camp. We arrived back twelve hours overdue but nothing was said at the Guard Room as it was Victory Day. Ken and his wife asked us to go back with them for the evening and the other four agreed, but I didn't feel I could bear the sight of that house again.

17.8.45 Fri.

Went with Fred into Gwelo for the Victory celebrations. At three o'clock there was a garden party in the park and we stood listening to the band enjoying the happy crowds and sunshine. After a while a jovial old man came up to us and we spent an interesting hour chatting to him about Rhodesia. As he had spent forty years here he knew what he was talking about. An old lady then came fussing up to us with cups of tea and cream cakes, all free, and we had a grand tuck in. I managed to get a snap of the band and a couple of the tiny tots queueing up for their free lemonade and cakes. About five o'clock the band packed up and marched over to the Municipal buildings, There they stood on the portico of this impressive semi-circular white stone building and played the "Retreat" as the Union Jack was slowly lowered in the red rays of the setting sun. I photographed this too and also the local OTC as it marched past.

That was the end of the garden party, but now the real fun of the day started because in the Drill Hall grounds a barbecue and braivellaise was being held. I've heard of them in England, but this was the first time I had ever participated in one. They consist of roasting a whole oxen over a slow wood fire, and when it is ready slices are cut off and given to everyone present. There were six of the wood fires in long shallow pits and at a long trestle table a couple of local butchers were giving away sausages and steaks in prodigious quantities to be roasted on the end of a pointed stick in the hot embers. You've never tasted anything so scrumptious in all your life. In another corner of the grounds was the largest bonfire I've ever seen and round it all the boys and their sweethearts stood perfectly happy basking in the warm flickering rays.

Fred and I had booked for the pictures, so at eight o'clock we walked slowly down to the cinema, full of hot juicy steak, and took our seats. The film we saw was "Seven Days Leave" featuring Lucille Ball and Victor Mature. And what a laugh too! The performance was rather marred by the showing of an atrocity film at the end of the show, but perhaps it was fitting that in our rejoicing we should not forget those who suffered so intensively for this final victory.

18.8.45 Sat. BACK TO TRAINING

SOLO. Stalling, spinning, steep turns, aerobatics, forced & precautionary landings.

This morning we had a talk by a Government lecturer on the government's plans to resettle us in civilian life after we are demobbed. There are some excellent schemes in operation and the one that affects me most, I think, is for chaps with the Higher School Certificate to be sent to University absolutely free of charge. All fees will be paid plus a living allowance of £160 a year. There is an additional grant of £110 if you are married.

I had been seriously considering joining my father's bus service until I heard of this scheme, but I still long for a really good education. What exactly I could study I don't really know, but I can't make any definite plans until I return to England and see what vacancies there are. (I subsequently got a place at Belfast University, but as I was then married I decided instead to join my father's business.

If I had known that he was going to sell the business in 1950 I would probably have decided otherwise).

20.8.45 Mon.

Flew for four hours today.

Sgt Moffat Low flying and aerobatics.

SOLO. Steep turns, aerobatics, forced and precautionary landings.

SOLO. Cross-country. Enkeldoorn and Seignury Drift. Lost Brownie Box camera north of Enkeldoorn while trying to photograph Varley. I pulled the hood back and flew with my knees but the slipstream tore the camera out of my grasp. Rather scared him I believe by doing stall turns around him.

WHAT AN AIRFORCE. This evening we were told that flying training was to be stopped and we were all returning to England. If we wished we could sign on for three years and complete pilot training, or be demobbed in due course. Out

of perhaps 300 cadets, 20 signed on. I often thought I should have completed my training, but I later learned that it was 1948 before those who signed on received their wings. Most of their time had been spent on menial tasks as Aircraft hands, General Duties, on RAF stations around the U.K.

21.8.45 Tue.

Formally taken off flying training today and returning home in the near future.

It's going to be grand to see Winn again and now that the disappointment is wearing off I am getting really excited at going home.

22.8.45

Went into Gwelo today with Fred and bought several things for Mum and Winn. Practically broke, and not much hope for me on 7/- day(35p). Saw the "Thin Man Comes Home" in the evening. Really enjoyed it. Sat next to the padre and according to him there is a rumour that our boat goes in a fortnight's time.

7.9.45 Fri.

7.00 am **Left Gwelo for Capetown by train..**

9.7.45 Sun

Reached Capetown 7.00 pm after a three day railway journey. Scenery fantastic. Heard of the "Relief of Mafeking"?. The train stopped there and we all relieved ourselves in the gents loo.

Arrived **Westlake** camp 8.30 pm.

Lived mainly on bread and jam

Thank goodness the town more than makes up for everything.

I've never received such hospitality in all my life. Bought a length of silk for Winn and a watch for John. Spent evening at Mayor's Garden eating and dancing.

11.9.45 Tue.

Swimming in sea at Muzemburg. Glorious. Dancing again in the evening.,

12.9.45 Wed.

Social at Mayor's Garden. Picked up by SP's for not wearing cap.

13.9.45 Thu.

Pals not interested, so walked across Cape Peninsula alone. Long walk, fantastic scenery, scared by snake on mountain footpath, but finally reached other coast and returned by a different lower route.

WE SAILED THREE WEEKS LATER FROM CAPE TOWN ON THE S.S. REINA DEL PACIFICO.

I had a hammock this time. The sea was absolutely calm, the food reasonable and of course we were in good spirits as we were on our way home and peace had come at last. Saw flying fish and porpoises in abundance.

We called at St. Helena and Freetown but were not allowed off the boat. After three weeks we docked at Liverpool and were sent home on four weeks leave.

ALAS, NOT WEARING RAF WINGS.

8.10.45 Posted to 27 ACHV, Bircham Newton, Norfolk.

This was a prewar RAF Station with proper barrack blocks but still only heated by open fireplaces. I had been separated from most of my old friends but Sid was still with me. For four weeks we did very little. Aircrew were an embarrassment now that the war was over.

28.11.45

Posted to RAF, Dunholme Lodge, only fifteen miles from Louth, my home town. This was a Lancaster bomber station, a satellite of Scamblesby, and our task was to update the aircraft maintenance manuals. I don't think anyone looked at them, but it was an attempt to keep us occupied.

A bus to Louth stopped at the station entrance so I was able to spend most weekends at home. We spent a very cold winter living in Nissen huts, simply passing time until demob day arrived. We hoped that it would be soon, but the government was in no mood to flood the employment market with unemployed servicemen.

28.3.46 Posted to No 264 Maintenance Unit, Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon.

This was a bleak station erected hurriedly during the war. The hangars were now used for the storage of surplus equipment, and our task was to maintain the stock records. The bright spot during my eleven months stay was that I proposed to Winn and to my delight was accepted. I asked her father for permission to marry, and suspect that

he was delighted. He was working as a gunnery instructor at RAF Kirkham, near Blackpool, and was anxious for his wife to join him.

We bought a solitaire ring from Patience, the jewellers in Louth Market Place, on Easter Saturday and so confirmed a partnership that has lasted for over 50 years. It has been a rocky ride at times and if it had occurred in the present day might not have survived. But we have stayed together, mainly because of Winn's tolerance, and I have no regrets that I married my lovely wife on the 21st November, 1946. The wedding took place in the ancient parish church, a magnificent building with a 300 feet spire. I have an abiding memory of Winn walking gracefully down the aisle with her Royal Marine father, proud and upright. All brides are beautiful, but she was exceptionally so, and still is.

We lived in her parents rented house at 20 Southlands Avenue as her mother had now rejoined her husband in Blackpool. I was able to travel home from Abbots Ripton most weekends as my father had bought me a BSA 250 motor cycle.

Thus continued my life in the Royal Air Force until it ended on the 5th February, 1947 at No. 101 PDC, Kirkham near Blackpool. I was kitted out with a complete set of civilian clothes including overcoat and trilby hat, and given a train ticket to Louth and a leave pass for 46 days. I also received 400 cigarettes. and sweet coupons

The weather was very cold, it was snowing and I was pleased to spend my first night of freedom with Winn's parents in Blackpool, only five miles away. The following day I caught the train to Manchester and then via Sheffield and Grimsby to Louth. It was still snowing heavily and I began to wonder if the train would get through, but eventually I reached my destination and reunion with my bride of three months.

RECORD OF POSTINGS

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| 3.7.43 | Posted to No. 1 Aircrew Recruiting Centre, Lords Cricket Ground. |
| 28.8.45 | Posted to No 11 Initial Training Wing, Scarborough |
| 1.12.43. | Posted to No. 4 Elementary Flying Training School, Brough, Yorkshire. |
| 10.3.44 | Posted to Aircrew Despatch Centre, Heaton Park, Manchester.
Remustered as U/T Pilot (2). |
| 25.3.44. | Posted to No 12 Initial Training Wing, St. Andrews, Scotland. |

- 5.4.44. Posted to R.A.F. Bomber Station, Leconfield, Yorks.
Assigned to Signals Section
- 9.7.44. Posted to Aircrew Despatch Centre, Heaton Park, Manchester.
4 weeks embarkation leave but no embarkation.
- 10.8.44. Posted to 101 Lancaster Squadron, Ludford Magna, Lincolnshire.
Assigned to bomb loading operations.
- 22.11.44. Posted to Aircrew Despatch Centre, Heaton Park, Manchester.
4 weeks embarkation leave.
- 7.2.45 **Draft No. 9903 embarked on S.S. Samaria at Liverpool**
- 3.3.45 Arrived Port Said and travelled by rail and lorry to NO 22 PDC,
Heliopolis, Cairo.
- 13.3.45 Flew by Dakota to Khartoum via Wadi Halfa.
- 14.3.45 Flew to Kisumu via Juba.
- 15.3.45 Flew to Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia, via Intava. Posted to Hillside Camp to
await allocation to flying training.
- 20.4.45 Posted as trainee fighter pilot to No 26 Elementary Flying Training
School, Guinea Fowl.**
- 29.6.45 Posted to No 22 Senior Flying Training School, Thornhill, Nr Gwelo.
- 7.9.45 **Flying Training stopped. End of war. Atomic bomb dropped,**
Posted to Westlake Reception Centre, Capetown.
- 5.10.45 **Sailed on "Reina Del Pacifico" to Liverpool.**
- 28.10.45 Posted to 27 ACHV, Bircham Newton, Norfolk.
- 30.11.45 Posted to RAF Station at Dunholme Lodge, Nr Lincoln
- 28.3.46 Posted to No 264 Maintenance Unit, Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon.
- 4.2.47 Demobbed at 101 RDC Kirkham, Lancs.**