

come off the production line. He remains a car lover to this day and at the time of writing his mount is a Ford Cosworth, max. speed 160 m.p.h. and he is 76 years old!

Talking of driving I thought it was high time I learnt to drive a car and the opportunity came in the shape of an old Austin Seven which was available because no-one seemed to own it. It was just standing around. It was a Cabriolet saloon, that is, above the waistline it was cloth-covered and most of this had gone, passers-by tearing off odd bits for odd jobs, like cleaning one's shoes etc.; also, I remember, on the back of the car the outlines of two handprints with the words 'self starter' printed underneath. By taking this Austin 7 out onto the perimeter track a few times I learnt to drive by the process of trial and error and on that basis took out a 'Provisional' driving licence and I have never, officially, had to prove my ability since.

Somewhere around this time Sylvia and I were married. I had wanted the crew to be present but unfortunately they were now spread all over the country and would have taken some mustering. Having put all the celebrations behind us we both set off on our honeymoon. We went by rail to Staines only to find we couldn't get a taxi to take us to 'The Anglers' a hotel alongside the River Thames. We had a heavy case apiece and Sylvia had high heeled shoes. Exhausted, we eventually arrived at the hotel having walked all the way.

We were looking around for a car when word of this reached the husband of my mother's sister - Uncle Aubrey. Uncle Aubrey along with his brother Stan owned a large garage in Penarth, S. Wales, and they had an Austin 10 (1934) available for £60 and what is more it had a re-conditioned engine. There was one condition attached to the deal - if ever I wanted to get rid of it they would buy it back at £60. Much to my shame I did eventually sell it but not back to Uncle Aubrey. This was indeed a good solid car, you could hit it with a hammer and it wouldn't dent. We went to Penarth to collect it and managed to get it back to Sylvia's home at Ashridge Crescent. En route we managed to get stuck on Gloucester Cross with an irate queue forming behind and then onto Chippenham where Sylvia's Uncle Bert did his best to teach me how to double-declutch. Only the first gear was syncromeshed.

We managed to obtain living-out quarters in the little village of Waddesdon close by Westcott in the shadow of Waddesdon Manor, one of Rothschild's many mansions. The landlord was a Mr. Long and he was a bit of a 'pain'. If we went out and left a bar of the fire on to keep the place warm he would nip into the room and turn it off, likewise if we left anything in the oven. It wasn't really our room, we shared it, with Mr. Long.

Flight Lt. Munro the New Zealander who took me on my '2nd. Dickie' to Berlin turned up on the station in an instructional capacity and soon became friendly with another pilot called Plutte (Pluto). They were a constant source of fun when they got together in the Officers' Mess. One night however they overdid it. The Station Commander, a Group Captain whose name escapes me,

was standing on top of three piled up tables giving his rendition of the French song 'Allouette' unaware that a piece of rope had been tied to a leg of the lower table. At the end of this rope were Munro and Pluto and at an appropriate moment they yanked on the rope with the obvious results. They were banned from the Mess for one month. We did miss them.

You will remember my comments on the young slips of girls of the ATA who delivered all shapes and sizes of aircraft to airfields all over the British Isles. One of their bases was just down the road from us at Thame. The much admired pub in Thame was the 'Spread Eagle' and it was here that we would sometimes meet the ATA girls. Thame was not easy to reach so lifts on private vehicles were the order of the day. Cars, piled up with RAF merry makers would wend their way back to the airfield at all times of the night. They must have had some very forgiving policemen in Thame.

One day in June when we were relaxing in Mr. Long's digs Sylvia and I heard this incredible roar. We wandered outside and the sky was full, yes full of aircraft. It was a sight never to be forgotten and we knew that, at last, the invasion of Europe was underway. This momentous event left us unruffled and the running of the station continued as usual. Jo Heames, another good friend of both Stan and myself succeeded in getting married and we attended the wedding. Jo and Joyce were planning to go abroad after the war and this they did. Journeying to Tasmania we never heard from them again.

On December 5th. I moved across to our satellite airfield at Oakley and this was a surprise. I had always assumed it was necessary to have taken the Bomber Command instructional course before this happened. Perhaps they had got their 'Joneses' mixed up or perhaps they hadn't because I stayed there.

We gave up our digs at Mr. Long's and managed to find accommodation in Oxford. We did not stay in Oxford very long and this was probably because Sylvia was now pregnant with a baby expected to arrive about July in the following year. We were both very keen to have a child and things were working out exactly as we had planned. I think, at this stage, Sylvia went back to live with her mother.

Now it was the more arduous task of actually teaching someone how to fly a Wellington aircraft. 'You are too high, get down a bit, do you want to drive the undercarriage up through the wings' 'You are too low, can you hear - too low' and somehow, except in dire circumstances, one resists the temptation to grab the controls and take over the flying. These chaps could all fly, they had their wings, but the Wellington sometimes proved a difficult beast to get used to, she was very heavy on the controls. So this pattern continued until February 17th 1945 when I was eventually posted to the Bomber Command Instructional School at Finningley, Yorkshire, Course No.3.

Once again I am racing ahead. The official record of my RAF service, recently obtained from RAF Innsworth, shows that in June, 1944, whilst I was still at Westcott, the RAF were made aware that I was asthmatic.

I remember the morning when I was scheduled for early morning flying and I was too ill to get up from my bed. Someone called the Medical Officer and on examining me immediately diagnosed asthma. I knew him well and on odd occasions I had drank with him at the bar in the Officers' Mess. He apologised, but said he would have to report the matter to a higher authority. For some days I was kept in suspense, knowing that I had signed that form on joining up stating that I had not had asthma.

I eventually received orders to report to the Central Medical Board at Kelvin House in London on whose doorstep I eventually arrived very much concerned as to what the future held. After some time I duly found myself in the company of a kindly senior officer of 'Air' rank. There was no mention of the signing of the 'joining up'- form, The interview centred round the fact that I had done a considerable amount of flying, including an operational tour, and asthma obviously hadn't interfered too much with that, so, did I want to leave the service or continue flying. I said, without hesitation, that I wished to continue flying. The kindly senior officer told me that this would be in order but that certain restrictions would be put on my flying and that I would hear of these in due course. My service records indicate that there were further visits to the Central Medical Board, possibly - for health check-outs, but these I don't remember.

Eventually the flying restriction came through - that I was to fly within Great Britain only, not abroad - As the reader progresses through the remainder of this record it will be evident that this ruling turned out to be one big laugh.

Where was I? Oh yes, I just arrived at the Bomber Command Instructional School, Course No. 3, at Finningley and it was here that I was told to do things with a Wellington that I had never done before. Every conceivable flying situation had been thought out and included in the course and a lot of these situations had been centred around single-engined flying. Flapless landings, cross wind landings and single-engined landings were all in the curriculum and sixty hours of flying were squeezed into just over a month of flying. Finally an air test by the Chief Flying Instructor which ended in a single-engine landing with a fully feathered propeller (no chance of an overshoot here), and we were sent back to Oakley to once again take up instructional duties.

Whilst at Finningley I was billeted out in a local private home and close by there was a water-filled quarry. There was a small island in its centre. One day we noticed a swan had crash landed on the island. It couldn't do much else, it had a broken wing and this was clearly visible, dangling at its side. Someone produced a gun and shot the swan - it seemed to be the humane thing to do. The country was into its fifth year of rationing and out there, on the island was a feast. We built a make-shift raft from pieces of board and old oil drums (not a very original idea) launched it and paddled out and recovered the dead body. This, we presented to our landlady who had volunteered to try and cook it in her limited oven space. Thus it was that quite a large gathering of RAF types and

friends of our hostess sat down to an unusual but delicious meal. Quite illegal of course, all swans are the property of the Queen.

My timing may be somewhat adrift but I think it was on my return to Oakley from Finningley that I became very interested in the purchase of a two-seater MG Midget sports car which was on the Station and up for sale. It was a Model J Series car with cycle-type mudguards wrapped around the front wheels and I was determined to have it. Second only to the business of teaching 'bods' to fly was the sale and purchase of second cars on the airfield. One day someone would own a specific car and the next day someone else. To raise the capital for the purchase it was necessary to sell the Austin 10 and sell it quickly and this I did getting the same sum for which I bought it. Even so, this was insufficient money and I had to dig deep to raise the asking price. My newly acquired father-in-law, when he saw it, thought it could do with a re-spray so in due course I drove it to London and handed the car over to the foreman in charge of the fitters' shop where all my father-in-laws' lorries were serviced.

It emerged in a British racing green strip and looked the part. Unfortunately, all that glistens is not gold and under the bonnet there was a heap of trouble. The clutch never worked satisfactorily and both the needles in the twin SU Carburettor were badly worn and almost impossible to replace. Also Sylvia was now in the advanced stages of pregnancy and very much against being bounced around close to the ground on the hard springing of the MG.

On one occasion I had borrowed an Irvin flying jacket belonging to Jock Irkskine, a fellow pilot. An open two-seater got pretty cold in those early spring days. On returning to Oakley I was greeted with the news that two Wellingtons on a training flight had collided and crashed when both approaching to land and all ten occupants were killed, including Jock.

At this stage of the war Irvin flying jackets were at a premium and I must admit I was tempted to keep the jacket. All deceased airmen's personal belongings were always returned to his next-of-kin but I did think, at the time, that Jock's Irvin would not travel very far down that road. However, my conscience got the better of me and I handed it in. Jock was sorely missed around the Flight Hut but his was but another name to add to the list of casualties which had formed since I arrived on the Unit. In addition to the 55,000 aircrew lost on operations the records tell us that a further 7,000 aircrew were lost whilst training.

The Station Engineering Officer at Oakley had been pestering me to sell him the MG for some time and as I already had my eye on a near-new Morris Eight I eventually let him have it. But with my conscience once again at work I did suggest that he first test drove it around the perimeter track. This he declined to do so I thought 'That's your hard luck' and took his £120 which was just enough to buy the Morris Eight. Before the war the price for a new Morris Eight was £137. I thought I had a good buy and it was, there was no mechanical trouble all the time I had it. Petrol was difficult to come by but my father-in-

law's company, busily engaged in clearing British cities of bombing debris, did own a large fleet of lorries and the MG was only a small car.

100 octane petrol fuelled our aircraft but it was not entirely satisfactory in motor cars. Plugs had a nasty habit of burning out at an inconvenient time, so every private car owner always carried a spare set of plugs.

One night, arriving back at the airfield in the early hours, I drove the 'Eight' across the airfield to the Flight hut, where by arrangement, a fitter had left for me to collect, a can of petrol. I found it, filled up my tank in almost pitch blackness and started out back across the aerodrome. About half way across huge white clouds of smoke billowed out from the exhaust and the car came to a rapid stop. I had filled the car with glycol coolant and I never did find out whether this was a practical joke or not. All I know was that I had to go back to the billet, wake up a couple of my buddies and cajole them to get up and go out onto the airfield and help me push the car to safety.

One day a story went around the airfield about a strange aircraft parked alongside the Flying Control tower. Apparently it didn't have any propellers and of course it was the Meteor. Later, we were to hear how successful it was in shooting down Flying Bombs. I don't think anyone on the Station had seen a Meteor and in no time hundreds were crowding around it for a closer inspection.

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On the 8th of May 1945 after 5½ long years Germany was finally defeated and it was Victory in Europe. I had taken no part in the invasion of Europe or in the 11 month battle across Europe. I had continued to instruct on Wellingtons throughout this period and although I have mentioned at some length our off duty activities I had, during my stay at Westcott and Oakley, added a further 336 hours to my flying total making 1152 hours in all.

Some time before the invasion of Europe Bomber Command's activities were switched from the bombing of Germany to the support of the invasion forces. Operation \*'Point Blank' had the whole of the Command's resources concentrated on railways and troop concentrations ahead of the British, Commonwealth and American forces. This support was massive and unquestionably saved countless Allied lives. Bomber Command losses at this stage of the war were considerably reduced, mainly due to the shorter trips and the ever decreasing defences of the Germans. Consequently, particularly towards the end of the war, there was an over-production of aircrew and many a budding pilot, navigator or other aircrew found himself occupied with a ground job. Sometimes they had the doubtful privilege of being transferred onto gliders. It kept them flying, but that was a tough job.

\*For 'Point Blank' read 'Transport Plan'. 'Point Blank' was the assault on night fighter production centres commenced in June 1943

The 8th. May was a day for celebrations and this the station did with gusto. To be frank I don't remember too much about this day but I do recall raiding Flying Control and pinching two large maroon rockets. Later that day with the

## Dacey Does at OTU's

"Harry" Broome recounts some of his experiences while based at RAF Westcott and Oakley with 11 OTU.

The second shaker came near the end of our stay at Oakley. This was at the end of a night cross country, we had just joined the circuit when up ahead there was an almighty flash, followed by fires on the ground. Evidently two Wimpy's had collided at the entrance to funnels, each with a crew of six and an instructor and as far as I can remember all fourteen crew were killed. Our last detail at Oakley was as part of the burial party. A few days later we were posted to 1653 HCU at North Luffenham and were glad to go.



'Rusty' Jones	Pat Malia	Harry Broom	Henry Hanson	Ray Pince
W/op	A/g	A/g	Pilot	B/A
RNZAF	RAFVR	RAFVR	RNZAF	RNZAF
	Les Pickersgill			
	Nav RAFVR			

Harry Broom's account of 'Dacey Does at OTU's' brought a few memories back for Eric Jones. He recalls; "I was stationed at Westcott and later at Oakley as an instructor having completed a tour of ops with 49 Squadron, 5 Group. Whilst at Westcott I had purchased a MG Midget roadster. It was painted in the British racing green. I was going on leave and 'Jock' Erskine, an instructor in our flight possessed a sidcot flying jacket. It was going to be cold driving that open top MG (the hood was u/s) so I persuaded Jock to lend me his sidcot. The leave over, I drove back to Oakley only to hear that Jock had perished in a crash involving two Wellingtons when on the final approach to land. There were no survivors. This must be the same crash to which Harry Broom's account refers. So I had a sidcot flying jacket with no owner. I was sorely tempted to hang on to it thinking that if it was handed in it would not progress very far down the line to its rightful owners whether it be Jock's family or the RAF, if it was their issue. However, my conscience got the better of me and I did hand it in. I wonder where it finished up? 'Jock' as you may have guessed was a Scot. He was easy company and much liked and sorely missed amongst his fellow instructors".

A few years ago I received this photo of F/Sgt Eric D Hitchins, who too was killed in this accident, from his sister in New Zealand and it is a fitting point to reproduce it here along with a few

Eric joined the Air Force aged 18, in 1942 and begged his mother to sign his papers allowing him to serve overseas at the age of 19 (otherwise he would have had to wait until 21). He left on a troop ship, to train in Canada but en-route there was an epidemic of scarlet fever on board and on arrival in Canada was sent to recover at the Calgary Tourist Resort and while there he witnessed "The Calgary Stampede". Once well, he started his wireless operator/air gunner training although having a slight stutter was teased by his brothers as to how he would cope with an emergency; perhaps why he became an air gunner. He never wasted any time and saw a lot of the country, even hitch-hiking during one leave across the USA to visit his younger brother's pen pal in Illinois Missouri. He talked to many church groups on his travels about New Zealand and was shocked so few knew the country existed and those that did thought that we lived in grass huts on stilts. On finishing his training he was transferred to Britain and the Oxford area.

Bill Chorley, the author whose excellent series of books on Bomber Command Losses has written in to give us more details of this incident: This tragic event took place in the early hours of 16<sup>th</sup> April 1945 and involved Wellington Xs LP609/E and LP651. The crew of the latter aircraft had been ordered by flying control to overshoot and it is thought the crew were complying with this instruction when the collision occurred. Five airmen died in LP609 and seven in LP651. The former was captained by W/O W Erskine and the latter by F/O C R Baker DFC RNZAF. Most were New Zealanders and they are buried in Oxford (Botley) cemetery.

The complete details of this accident, along with full coverage of every aircraft lost from the OTUs that supported Bomber Command, will appear in volume 7 of Royal Air Force Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War by Bill Chorley, to be published later this year. It is most fitting tribute to all those who lost their lives while flying or preparing to join Bomber Command in WW2.

*As a final footnote. On 11<sup>th</sup> November, there is a very moving service of remembrance held at Botley CWGC, with military representatives of many of the nationalities, who were killed while flying in the area and are buried there, attending. Afterwards refreshments are generously supplied by the ladies of the WI, in the nearby village hall.*

Morris Eight loaded with aircrew (these included a couple of New Zealanders, Kelly and 'Butch' Cullinane) and two large maroon rockets strapped to the roof of the car we headed East towards London. Their destination - the flesh pots of London's West End and mine to Woolwich where Sylvia was with her parents with the birth of our baby only a few weeks ahead.

Later that night with the aid of two clay pipes which I found in the garden I launched the two rockets out over Woolwich. They were guaranteed to reach a height of 800 feet and go off with one hell of a bang. They fulfilled their role and we had contributed to Woolwich's celebrations. Although I had only limited experience of the flying bomb terror, for Londoners this day also ended that particular form of warfare.

Because of a medical irregularity Sylvia had to go into Paddock Wood Maternity Ward earlier than expected. Our baby was duly delivered on July 20th and it was a boy. I was not at Paddock Wood at the time of the birth but I immediately obtained 'passionate leave' and was soon enjoying the extreme pleasure of holding the new arrival in my arms. Whilst at the hospital someone in authority took me to one side and told me that Sylvia must not have any more children. The reasons were given but I was never much good at absorbing medical jargon let alone remembering over so many years.

Although now a Flying Officer (one rank up from Pilot Officer) our finances did not run to keeping a car and starting a family so the car was sold. From the proceeds I bought Sylvia a fur coat, a 'thank you' for doing such a good job.

However, before leaving the Morris a few anecdotes come to mind. En route to Newent for a week's leave I fell asleep at the wheel, went off the road, mounted a bank and just avoided turning the car over. The front axle was bent and I proceeded to Newent in a crab-like manner. On the top lawn I stripped the front axle and took it to the local blacksmith to have it straightened. What with the fact that he took ages to do the job and my very limited mechanical skills I only got the thing together again by working late into the night - getting back to Oakley just in time to avoid going AWOL (Absent without leave).

Tony [redacted] was someone I got to know very well at Westcott and Oakley. He was a real ladies' man and as a result got himself into many a scrape and I was aware of most of them. He had a huge Old English Sheep dog and we took it for walks and it collected mud like no other dog I have known. Most of this mud plus all its moulting hairs would be deposited in my car and it was only after much cajoling that I could get Tony to clear it out.

One morning, I went to the car park only to find the car with a large dent in the front mudguard (we didn't call them wings in those days). Tony was the culprit, he had 'borrowed' the car the night before to go on a binge. I managed to get cash out of him for the damage which I never had repaired, I just pocketed the money. A coalition government had operated successfully during the war but as soon as peace was declared the political parties just couldn't

wait to hold a General election. I remember Tony standing on a table in the Officers' Mess and delivering his own version of a political speech, haranguing everyone to vote Labour. On July 26<sup>th</sup>, much to the surprise of the majority of the population, Labour won their way back into parliament and this in spite of Winston Churchill's wartime leadership. Continuing the saga of Tony [redacted]: Many years after the war I heard that one night, after indulging in a typical Bashford evening, Tony went into a Liverpool church and 'saw the light' and as a direct result of this happening wished to become a missionary. During his missionary training he had to become involved in medicine. This appealed to him more than going to distant places to preach the gospel and he eventually became a doctor and joined a practice somewhere in Norfolk. I omitted to tell you that he married a parson's daughter and that probably accounts for the fact that he no longer wished to be in touch with me after we parted in Oakley.

Talking of friends at Westcott and Oakley, (Stan Brew – we still see. Jo Heames – somewhere in Tasmania. Tony [redacted] – maybe a retired doctor somewhere in Norfolk) reminds me of Johnny. Johnny was a navigator who often flew with me. He was one of the Bennett's pathfinders and was shot down over Germany and became a prisoner of war. He suffered a serious head injury and a steel plate had to be inserted. At some stage of his imprisonment he had been savaged by a German shepherd dog. The combination of the two injuries coupled with a few beers caused him to often go quite berserk at the very sight of a dog. On a number of occasions we had to restrain him from attacking a dog and sometimes its owner. What is more the size of the dog did not deter him – more a question of man bites dog rather than dog bites man.

Johnny married the widow of a Wing Commander. There were two children by her first marriage, one quite young, so Sylvia and I both thought that Johnny had landed himself a packet of trouble. This was shortly to be confirmed. Somehow or another we all found ourselves on a week's holiday in Scarborough. Using our car, we had collected Johnny, his wife and children in the Midlands en route to the seaside resort. It was not long before (I forget her name) made a spectacle of herself in the hotel restaurant annoying the occupants of the surrounding tables. This happened on numerous occasions, it was most embarrassing and we soon got fed up with it. The last straw came when we were on the beach, she had been in the water and had lost her engagement ring. We had only been looking for it a few minutes before she insisted that Johnny take her to a jewellers and buy a replacement. We cut the holiday short, dropping them off in the Midlands. The only occasion I have had to do this through complete breakdown of relations. Needless to say my friendship with Johnny cooled quite considerably in the weeks that followed. He stayed on in the peacetime RAF and eventually became a Wing commander himself.

On August 6th. the first atomic bomb was dropped on Japan, on the 9th. the second and on August 14th. Japan surrendered unconditionally to the Allies and to Russia. So, our son, Keith was born in a very eventful year.

Once again there were great celebrations in the Mess and if I remember correctly the news of Japan's surrender came through in the morning and by midday, well, I regret to say, I was unable to take any further part in the fun, I was lying flat out on my bed. Westcott was chosen as the airfield to which all the released prisoners of war would be returned. Lancasters, now relieved of their wartime duties were allocated this task and I stood and watched many a Lanc off-load dishevelled and thin prisoners-of-war and see them driven off to the de-lousing rooms. Here they were dusted down before being fed and issued with fresh clothes. A sad/happy sight if ever there was one. Although I didn't see him, Bader was supposed to have flown into Westcott and rumour had it that he refused to be dusted down. I saw him many years later and should have asked him if this story was true.

After the collapse of Germany

My last flight at Westcott/Oakley was on the 23rd. July and sometime after this I was instructed to report to 1382 TCU (Transport Conversion Unit) at Castle Donnington. I had been on the unit for fifteen months. One never questions postings but I suspected that it may have something to do with that medical, although Westcott did not take me on flights abroad. What was more likely was the fact that the need for fresh aircrew was diminishing by the hour and all Operational Training Units would be gradually phased out.

Before I left 'Butch' Cullinane gave me very genuine offer of work in New Zealand. It was never taken up although after a few years of employment by Griffiths we did consider going to Australia.

The move to Castle Donnington meant a change of Commands, from Bomber Command to Transport Command and this meant a different type of aircraft to be mastered. This was the Dakota and what a beautiful aircraft it was. American built she was like a Rolls Royce of the air. Originally, back in 1933 she was designed as an air liner and boasted one of the most futuristic designs in the air and what is more she very readily converted to war-time use as a jack-of-all-trades - but not in a bombing role. I write of the Dakota in the past tense which is entirely wrong. There are still dozens of Dakotas still plying the airways today, most of them over 50 years old. Nothing in the air handled more delightfully than the Lancaster except, perhaps, the Dakota.

I was only at Castle Donnington long enough to become acquainted with the 'Dak' just over two weeks and I remember nothing of the airfield, only the aircraft.

Castle Donnington lay between Leicester and Nottingham, and Wymeswold, my next station, was a few miles down the road and still carried the same title, namely, 1382 TCU, but here my Dakota flying would bring me up to the standard of the British 'C' (Commercial) Licence. If, at the end of the course, I had taken Air Law and Administration and passed, these two subjects

along with my flying qualification would have enabled me to obtain a job as a civilian air-line pilot when I eventually left the Service.

You will all be familiar with the fact that when an aircraft lands flaps are extended to increase the lift and thereby reduce the landing speed. It was at Wymeswold that I tried and succeeded in doing the process the other way round. Not intentionally, of course. In a Dakota and taking off, the plane went up like a lift with the speed almost on stalling. It took a few seconds to work out what had happened. I had taken off with full flap. I instinctively reached down to select 'flaps up' and then stopped. If I had raised the lever I would almost certainly have gone straight into the ground. Instead I very tentatively eased the lever upwards, taking off only a few degrees of flap at a time. I am sure that on any other type of aircraft this incident would have ended in disaster but the Dakota, in her most forgiving mood, let me get away with it. I always used to think that a pilot was a bit like a cat, both granted nine lives. I must have got through quite a few on operations and this flap incident was another one gone. How many did I have left?

My last flight at Wymeswold was on December 6th. 1945 and the certificate in my Log Book pronounced me 'Proficient' which I assume is yet another way of saying 'Average'. I was no longer a Bomber Command pilot but a Support pilot in Transport Command. Outwardly I didn't change one little bit.

Ringway Airport, Manchester (now Manchester's International Airport) was the home of No.1 P.T.S. (Parachute Training School) and the purpose of my posting to this unit was to provide a kind of taxi service dropping trainee parachutists into Tatton Park, the only open stretch of ground in the area. Up to the present time it seemed that the flying restrictions imposed by the Central Medical Board were being followed. I had not become involved in overseas flying - not yet.

I was based at Ringway for ten weeks and although only a short period I remember it well. The fellows who used to tumble out of my Dakota over Tatton Park were Army types and it was the only time in my service life that I rubbed shoulders with the 'brown jobs'.

Sometimes, if we got the wind wrong, some parachutists would drop in the trees. When this happened we would adopt a certain method for entering the Mess in the evening - we would throw our hats in first. The RAF were outnumbered on this unit and suffered accordingly, but it was all good fun. The best of the local brews in Manchester was a fiery brew called 'Old Tom'. It was a kind of red beer and was it potent! Two pints of the stuff were the equivalent of at least five standard pints. Another very strong drink of the times was any Russian Stout. Care had to be exercised when drinking either of these two drinks, but the RAF must never be seen to 'chicken out' in front of the Army.

Whilst at Ringway I had the opportunity to fly the De Havilland Dominie, a delightful pre-war passenger aircraft. This was the only aircraft I flew without

dual instruction, I just got in and flew it. There was no room for anyone else in the cockpit, the instruments were simple and basic, so there were no high marks for this particular feat.

Shortly after the war my father and I took little Keith to the new London Airport at Heathrow and we all went for a joy ride in a Dominie. It was the only time my Father got airborne and it was a first for Keith. As a matter of interest the land at Heathrow was purchased in 1944 and started taking aircraft in 1946. It must have been around this time that we were there. Timber huts comprised the main airport buildings - look at it today, with over 50,000 employees. There is a picture of a Dominie facing page 90.

Also at Ringway I piloted an Anson for the first time, an aircraft I was see a lot of in the future.

I enjoyed my stay at Ringway.

I supposed being a 'Support' pilot meant that the 'powers that be' could push me around willy-nilly and over the course of the next few months that is exactly what happened.

On the 2nd. April 1946 I found myself back on Wellingtons at No. 1 HGSU Netheravon on Salisbury Plain. HGSU stood for Heavy Glider Unit and my job here was to tow gliders, large Horsa gliders. This was an interesting new experience and after a little practice I was busily towing Horsas off Netheravon's notorious hump backed airfield. It was a training station and one day I asked a Horsa instructor to give me a ride and he agreed. It was a peculiar sensation, being airborne and no noise and when the tow rope dropped away the sensation was compounded because we were airborne without any engines. The instructor, a fellow called Smith, said he was going to do a 'slash'. I didn't have the foggiest idea what he was talking about but I told him to go ahead anyway. I wish I hadn't. He stood the Horsa vertically on its nose, pointing straight at the ground, put on full flap (huge things) and stayed there. We went down like a parachute with the speed refusing to build up. I would have started to pull out of that dive much, much sooner than the instructor. At the very last moment he pulled the stick back and we came out of the dive and landed. The landing came as a surprise, I had forgotten we had no engines. A powered aircraft would never have come out of a similar dive that quickly. He had shaken me rigid, there was no doubt about that, and I hope I didn't show it when I told him I was most impressed and thanked him for the trip.

Before I left the station I had further flights in the Horsa and again flew in a Dominie and Dakota.

My RAF records show that my next move was to No. 17 ACHU for Pilot Reselection. I cannot remember where this was or what it was all about. ACHU probably meant Aircrew Holding Unit. No flying took place on this Unit, I was not reselected or if I was I was unaware of it and I left the Unit on the 25th. June after a three week stay.

This was a posting in my RAF records which I can't remember and it

\* Posted to Bournemouth  
on my return from Canada.

My Seven Year (Tw)itch ...

brings to mind a posting which I remember and is not in my records.

Because I didn't have much money it must have been in my early RAF days and we were billeted in Bath Hill Court near Bournemouth pier. A brand new restaurant was opening in an old chapel in Lansdowne not far from Bath Hill Court. A few of us thought we would splash out and dine at this grand opening ceremony. It was a bold move of the new owner considering the limited amount of food available. It should have made a change from the standard British Restaurants with their standard 2/6d. lunches but in the event we turned out to be the only customers. The owner, obviously fighting off his disappointment came over to our table and told us to have a great time and the meal was on the house. We had a great time and it didn't cost a penny.

A return to Syerston was the next move on my flying agenda. The Lancasters had gone and it was no longer a Lancaster Finishing School. They now had Dakota and called themselves No 1333 TSCU. Flying on this unit was a general 'hotch potch' of all the flying I had recently been doing. Paratroop dropping, glider towing and night glider towing etc. etc. As it was a training Unit and as I had done it all before I just couldn't understand its purpose. (They must have got me mixed up with some other Jones or else it was the chaos of having so many personnel on their hands with the war ended). I was there seven weeks and added a further 22 hours to my grand total. Once again I obtained a 'Proficient' commendation and I left on the 23rd July '46.

Some months previously (January 1946) I had been promoted to Flight Lieutenant and at this level my pay was pretty good. At this time I was becoming increasingly concerned about my prospects when I was demobbed. Before joining up I had been an office clerk and the pay that this kind of job could offer fell far short of the amount I would need as someone with family responsibilities. I was due for demob sometime in middle of '46 so I took the easy way out and applied for an eighteen month 'Extension of Service' and got it. At least this delayed the big decision for another year and a half. Somewhere in the distant background was the thought that I might be expected to join Sylvia's father's company but if I could continue to fly that thought was the furthest from my mind.

On high ground behind Bournemouth was Royal Air Force Stoney Cross and this was to be my next unit and I arrived there on the 7th. August. I hadn't been on a Squadron since I left No. 49. It had been training units and support pilot jobs all the way. But Stoney Cross contained, amongst other things, a Beam Approach training unit for No. 46 Squadron and this was my destination. Once again I had a Squadron number. I was disappointed, however, that this would be only a short posting. It seemed that I had been pushed from pillar to post for so long-and I was anxious to get to a Station where I could stay and get to know some of my fellow aircrew - if only semi-permanently.

This was my second Beam Approach course and once again on Oxford aircraft. Some kind of revision course I supposed, at the time I thought it

unnecessary, I was already quite familiar with the procedures. Thinking along these lines, I concluded that, once again, they had got me mixed up with another Jones.

I was there for just over two weeks and added another 17 hours to my flying total and once again they said I was 'Proficient'. I felt I could now fly an Oxford through the thickest, murkiest weather possible. The only trouble was, I never again flew in an Oxford aircraft.

For my next job I was to become a kind of flying haulier. I was temporarily attached to RAF Honington, still remaining with 46 Squadron. To my delight, I was back on Dakotas and the station produced, from somewhere, reconditioned Merlin engines, and it was my job to fly these to wherever they were required. Because of the urgency attached to the job we were required to fly in all weathers. It was an All Weather Flight and for this kind of work there could not be a better aircraft than the Dakota. Most of our deliveries were to Lyneham in Wiltshire where Transport Command were operating the new York aircraft. The York, a wide bodied transport plane, utilised the same wings as the Lancaster and was powered by the same four Merlin engines and it was these engines we used to ferry backwards and forwards from Honington.

Johnny turned up at this station and although our friendship had distinctly cooled he was an excellent navigator and flew with me on many occasions. He was still with his wife but her name was rarely mentioned.

On occasions this all weather flying was taken to the extreme and when this happened it was no laughing matter. I remember taking off one morning when it was difficult to see the sides of the runway, let alone straight ahead. We flew, almost by guesswork, into the murk but at 100 feet we were in bright sunshine with clear blue skies. Under normal circumstances one would have waited for the sun to burn the fog away. They must have wanted that engine pretty urgently.

Once again this was a short posting and in six weeks I was on my way again. Perhaps all the hassle created by these short postings was amply rewarded by my next move. It was to Hendon in North London and it was the kind of posting that all aircrew dreamed about, and I was to stay there for 14 months.

The Metropolitan Communication Flight was a 46 Squadron detached flight which operated Anson aircraft whose main purpose was to ferry Royal Air Force personnel around Europe and the British Isles. I had flown in Ansons in Canada on navigational trips; these were old aircraft, a coastal reconnaissance plane of the thirties. When I arrived at the Flight in October 1946 and saw their Ansons I could hardly believe my eyes. These were Anson XIX's and were fitted with a hydraulic retracting undercarriage and that in itself was a luxury because on the old 'Annie' (as she was affectionately called) it took 153 turns on a handle to wind up the undercart. That was by no means the only refinement. There were upholstered seats for the passengers, carpeted cabin floors and little curtains at the small oval windows and for the technically minded the plane was fitted with

variable pitch propellers. So I was going to fly Ansons around Europe - so much for those restrictions imposed by the Central Medical Board.

Shortly after the outbreak of war Sylvia's father had purchased a bungalow at Angmering on the south coast. This was intended to be a refuge should the bombing of London commence. I never could understand the logic of this because if the Germans had invaded England this part of the coast would have right in the line of fire. The beaches were already festooned with scaffold tank traps and barbed wire.

About the time of my arrival at Hendon or shortly afterwards Sylvia and I were asked by her Mother and Father if we would mind going to Angmering to look after Sylvia's grandparents who were already in residence at the bungalow. Grandpa and Grandma Williams were my mother-in-law's parents. So Sylvia moved down to Angmering from Ashridge Crescent with Keith. If I am correct with my timing Keith was now a toddler of 16 months and into all kinds of mischief.

One day Keith fell over near the front entrance hitting his head against the brickwork to the right of the front door and collected a nasty gash over his eye. Valuable blood was everywhere but the cut was duly patched up and it left Keith with a nasty scar for some time afterwards. In fact I think there is still a trace of it today.

He wasn't the only one to get into trouble. I was painting the bungalow eaves with white paint and working from a ladder when the ladder collapsed and the pot of paint fell on my head and white paint dribbled all over me. It took ages to get myself back to normal.

RAF Hendon was a famous RAF airfield with a long history steeped in flying tradition. Before the war it was well known for its famous flying displays. Every year thousands of Londoners would turn up to watch the Hendon Air Display. As a young lad I used to read with awe and wonder of the biplane fighter aircraft which used to carry out their aerobatics TIED TOGETHER WITH STRING.

Also the famous 601 (County of London Squadron) was based at Hendon and this squadron spawned many a famous Royal Air Force flyer, some achieving the highest rank obtainable in the Force.

But long before this, in the very beginnings of flight a man called Graham White was building early aircraft in a hangar at the edge of the aerodrome. Alas, Hendon airfield has now been obliterated by a housing estate but some of the old Belfast hangars were retained and now form part of the Hendon Royal Air Force Museum which houses a magnificent collection of aircraft, arguably second only to the Smithsonian Museum in Washington. On the list of one of London's 'musts', tens of thousands visit it every year.

Fortunately a Conservation order has been placed on the Graham White hanger so that should be there for posterity but not so the old 'black and white' Officers' Mess, originally built as a hotel for airport passengers. Sadly it looks

as though this building will be demolished in the interests of site development.

My apologies, I have given you an update on Hendon when I should have been writing on Hendon 1946.

I was introduced to the Anson XIX by 'One Fan' Tam Pearce, so called because of his alleged sadistic love of flying on one engine. Remember the Anson had two engines. 'One Fan' Tam was a kind of unofficial instructor in the Flight and he was the pilot called upon to take training flights as and when necessary and it was on these flights that he spent most of his time on one engine.

My initiation flight with Tam lasted one hour and twenty minutes and when I stepped from the aircraft I assumed I was a fully fledged taxi pilot capable of flying personnel of all ranks all over Europe in that delightful miniature air liner. Incidentally, this flight took place one day after my 24th birthday.

My next flight was one day after - to Stornaway in the Outer Hebrides. We flew via Turnhouse (Edinburgh's airport) but when we arrived at Stornaway the cloud was right down on the 'deck' and we had to return to Turnhouse. When we were told at Hendon that our destination was Stornaway, old hands on the station recommended that we brought back some Harris Tweed. When the weather improved we eventually landed in Stornaway. Having completed our business we enquired after the whereabouts of Harris Tweed and we were told we would have to move quickly because a boat was due shortly and it would be carrying Jewish buyers who would be there solely to buy up all the available cloth. The cloth was woven by the Highlanders in their own homes or 'crofts'. So this is where we headed and after considerable negotiation I secured a fair length of Harris Tweed from which was tailored a skirt for Sylvia and a sports jacket for myself and both lasted for years.

On the 12th, 18th and 19th. of November I succeeded in bursting an undercarriage tyre. Three in a week. Fortunately all three burst whilst taxi-ing never-the-less, it resulted in my receiving quite a ticking off. I was new to Ansons and apparently the thing not to do was to turn the aircraft with one wheel locked whilst taxi-ing. Do this, and sooner or later it would result in a blow out. Mine happened sooner, three times sooner.

Many months later our Wing Commander Flying decided to make me the station Accidents' Prevention Officer. They gave me an office with accident prevention notices pasted all over the walls and significant amongst these was one instructing all pilots never to turn the Anson with one wheel locked.

This Wing Commander was very popular on the station. His name was\* Langlois. During the historical escape of prisoners of war from Stalag Luft 111 (in which 50 officers were shot dead by the Germans) Langlois was one of the first through the tunnel. His job was to stay at tunnel mouth and warn of danger. He did not escape with the rest and in the light of what happened this must have been his good fortune.

Now in  
doubt

\* See addendum

W/Cdr. Langlois replaced W/Cdr. Ralph. Ralph and F/Lt McMeekan were on local flying in an Anson when something went wrong and they crashed a short distance from the airfield beyond the main Edgware Road. They were both killed and left the whole station in a state of profound shock. Rumour had it that they were carrying out one of 'One Fan' Tam's single-engined landings when they decided to overshoot, and in the process they failed to restart the 'dead' engine. Under-powered they continued straight ahead but were unable to maintain height.

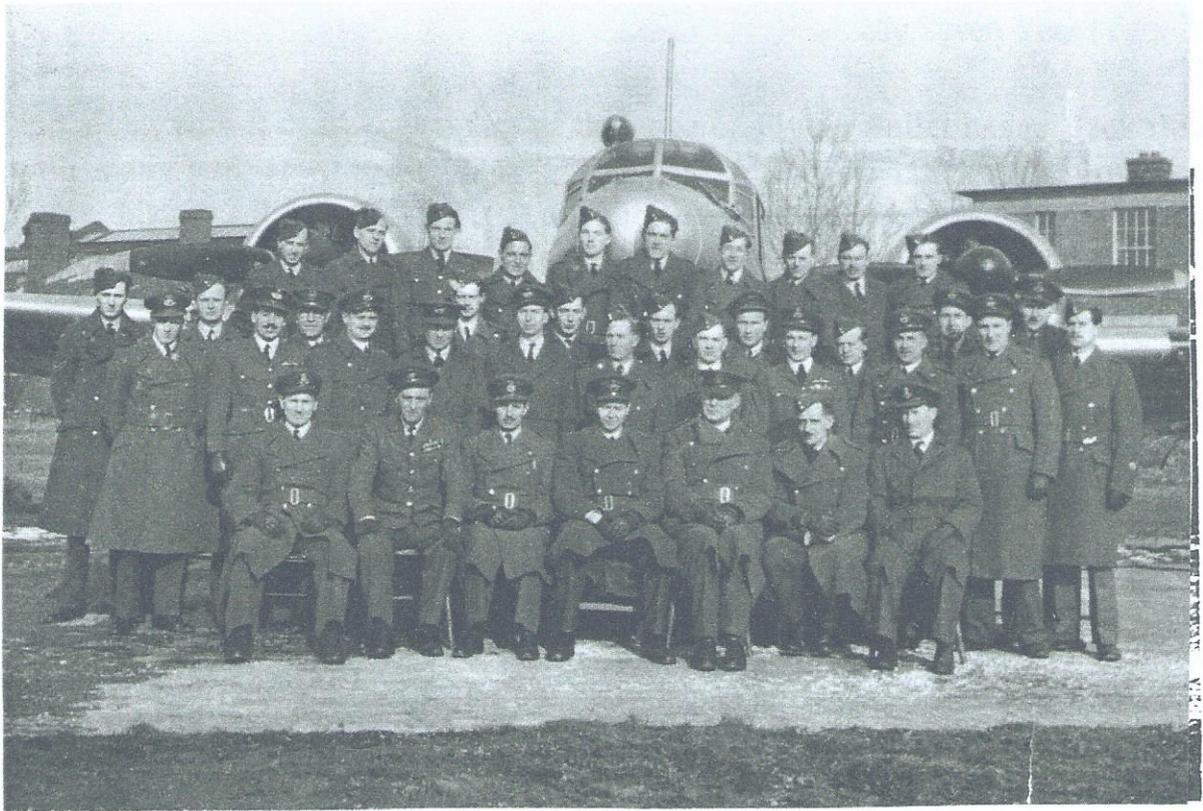
Also based at Hendon was a flight of single-engined Proctor aircraft. This unit was commanded by a Flight Lieutenant with a wooden leg – Bill Pendry. I heard it was great fun playing darts with bill in the local pub. One of his RAF mates would throw a dart into his wooden leg and Bill would carry on playing as though nothing was wrong much to the consternation and amazement of the locals.

In Bill's flight was a Polish Major with rows of medals on his chest and thousands of flying hours in his Log Book. Many years after the war was over I was listening to a radio programme called 'True or False'. The announcer told the story of a Polish flyer who was flying over solid cloud without any navigational aids and not even a map when he saw a small hole in the cloud circled and went down through it and there below was his destination exactly as he had calculated it. Was it true or false? I immediately shouted out "true" I know the fellow. It was true and it was the Major. It was a well known fact at Hendon that he did not carry any maps and was probably blessed with the powers of a homing pigeon.

When I first arrived at Hendon I was given a few hours familiarisation on Proctors but then for some reason, I was switched to the Anson flight. Perhaps they considered me too tall. Later, I did fly the Proctor on quite a few occasions without any trouble.

It was at Hendon where I met Jack Potter who was to become a life-long friend of mine. Jack tells me that he was standing, propping up the door jamb of the entrance to the snooker room, watching this new arrival potting snooker balls into the pockets with monotonous precision wishing he had just a fraction of these skills. We played a lot of snooker together and enjoyed each others' company. Jack was a navigator and although Johnny had come with me to Hendon Jack was beginning to fly with me more and more. He had been at Hendon for some time before I arrived and consequently I benefited from his local knowledge.

It was not Jack's first time at Hendon. In 1933 he applied to join 601 (County of London) Squadron for the job of Fitter. On being interviewed by the Commanding Officer he was asked a few pertinent questions including which sport was Jack interested in. When Jack told them he was a keen trails motorcyclist they told him they wanted him in the air not on the ground. So Jack became a gunner on Hawkers Harts, one of the with it latest bi-planes of its time



Metropolitan Communication Squadron, RAF Hendon. 1947.

'One Fan' Tam Pearce  
(2nd. from right sitting)



Gore (left), with Joan Nayler, at start of WAAF Volunteer Reserve, White Waltham, 1947

## Margot Gore

MARGOT GORE, who has died aged 80, commanded a busy ferry pool of the Air Transport Auxiliary during the Second World War.

Even among the ATA's legendary galaxy of intrepid women pilots, Gore stood out.

An unflappable character, she had a wise head beyond her years and a delightful sense of humour — these natural qualities of leadership brought her control of No 15 Ferry Pool at Hamble on Southampton Water in September 1941 in the senior rank of commandant.

Her team of some 30 women pilots — and a host of engineers, drivers, cooks and operations staff in support — held Gore in great respect. As a pilot she set them a high standard of airmanship.

She was probably the first woman to pilot a Boeing Flying Fortress and handled the bomber superbly — never more so than on the day she astonished Hamble by passing low over a hangar and landing on the tiny grass airfield.

Ferrying many types of new and repaired military aircraft between factories and operational airfields — often without radio — could be perilous in wartime Britain. Once, in the heavily

defended area of Southampton and Portsmouth, she was approaching Eastleigh in a Hudson bomber when an entire balloon barrage began to rise from the ground and enmesh her. Cables missed her by inches.

Margot Wyndham Gore was born at Worthing on Jan 24, 1913. She spent some of her childhood foxhunting in Ireland.

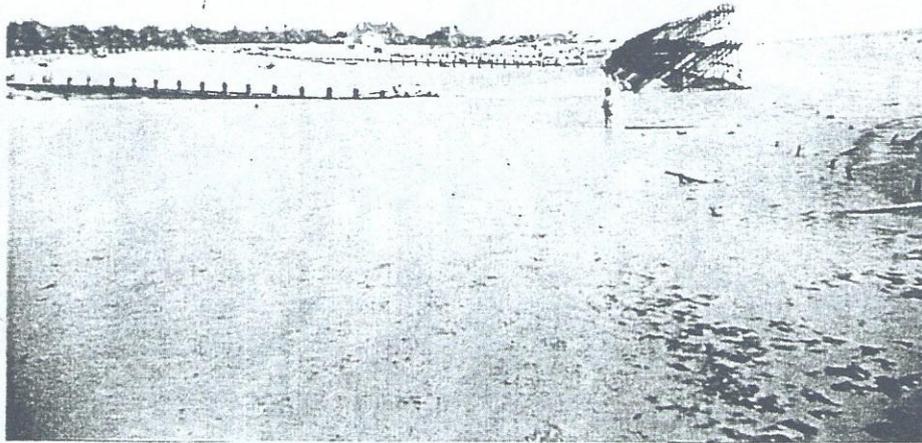
She began her working life as a stenographer at Smithfield Market, and saved up for flying lessons in the Civil Air Guard. When war came she was a flying instructor at Romford.

Afterwards she taught at the West London Flying Club and, together with her wartime colleague Joan Nayler, joined the WAAF Volunteer Reserve on its formation.

It was characteristic of Gore's determination that she decided to sit the School Certificate in her late thirties, in order to prepare for her studies as an osteopath.

She went on to win the London School of Osteopathy's gold medal and to become chairman of the British School of Osteopathy.

Margot Gore was an accomplished golfer and ladies' captain of the Huntercombe Golf Club. She was appointed MBE in 1945.

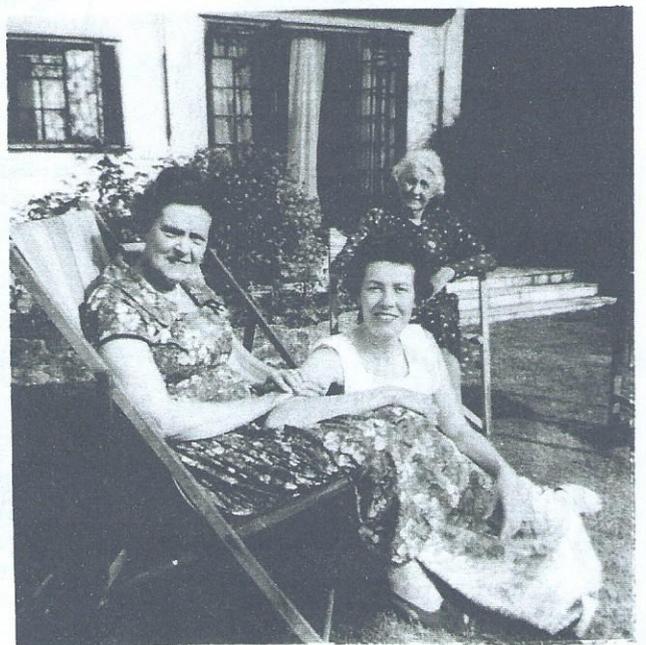


Keith wanders off to inspect Angmering's wartime beach defences.



On Angmering beach 1947.

Sylvia with her mother, and grandmother. Circa 1955.



and along with it came ownership of the coveted Flying Bullet badge. Jack flew with many a flyer who, in future years, was to become famous in Royal Air Force history. Roger Bushell, a prisoner of war who master-minded many escape attempts and who was to be one of the 50 officers shot by the Germans at Stalag Luft 111. Dermot Boyle, whom Jack knew as a Flight Lieutenant but was later to become an Air Chief Marshal of the Royal Air Force. These were but two of the famous names to pass through 601. Jack left 601 after a few years and rejoined the service during the war.

Initially, my flying duties at Hendon were a bit of a mixed bag, a flight to Northern Ireland, a flight to Hamburg in Northern Germany along with many internal flights up and down the country. Then in mid January I was off on an eight-day trip to the south of France and I notice from my Log Book that our passenger on this occasion was a certain Dickie Seligman who was the Group Fire Officer. This was not to be our only trip with Dickie to Southern France. We had our suspicions that Dickie arranged for the odd fire to be lit down there so that his services would be called upon. He liked the South of France did Dickie. On our return flight when flying in the vicinity of Carcassonne one of my engines started giving trouble and I had to make a forced landing at Toulouse. I recall coming in over the aerodrome boundary levelling off to land on the grass runway and I succeeded in making one hell of a heavy landing. I had obviously levelled off much too high, one does not make a habit of landing with one unserviceable engine but I suspect the real problem was the length of the grass on the runway, it must have been at least three to four feet long. Most unusual. Many years later, when the French built their Concorde at Toulouse, they must have already installed concrete runways.

At this time I was journeying down to Angmering for most week-ends and returning by Southern Railway early on Monday mornings, arriving at Hendon in time for flying duties. During the week I was billeted out with a very pleasant Scottish lady and her husband and their house was about a mile away from the airfield. For this I was paid the princely sum of £5 a week by the RAF and as I used the billet only infrequently my Scottish landlady would often take less than the £5 leaving me money in pocket.

Before I arrived at Hendon Jack Potter had rolled over in his little Austin Ruby saloon car only a few yards from this house. Although he was able to drive it away from the scene he had twisted the chassis, making the car somewhat unroadworthy. He then acquired a Ford Ten saloon which did yeoman service in ferrying us both around the local pubs.

That train from Angmering to London was one of the first to reintroduce the buffet bar. The menu was not very extensive but I was able to enjoy a coffee and toast which enabled me to stay in bed that little bit longer.

When I finally left my billet I decided to buy my Scottish lady a gift so I bought her some sheets and pillow cases (not that I had worn any out). I gave them to her and she also had bought me a gift and guess what - it was sheets and

pillow cases. Off duty distractions when in Britain usually centred around visits to pubs, mess activities, dances and visits to friends homes and approximately in that order.

Mess activities possibly need a little explanation. Of course there was the bar and the record player and, of course, the dining-in nights which were more or less compulsory. But quite often the mess evenings would deteriorate into a games night and these could be quite hectic. It could be 'high cockoloram' which I have already told you about (the piggy back one), then it could be 'the schooner race'. For this chairs were placed in a row with an equal number of bodies on each side and each one was given a pint of beer. At the word 'go' both number 1's would start drinking as fast as they could, empty the glass without spilling a drop and turn their glass upside down on the chair in front. Only then could number two start and so on down the line until all had finished. The first side to finish was the winner and they were immediately challenged by another team. If one team kept on winning - well?.

It is possible, because of this game, the 'Blue Pot' club came into being. The 'Blue Pot' was a one litre jug (about two pints) which had to be drunk, without spilling a drop, in a specific time and this escapes me at the moment. Anyway, I made it and I was a fully-blown member.

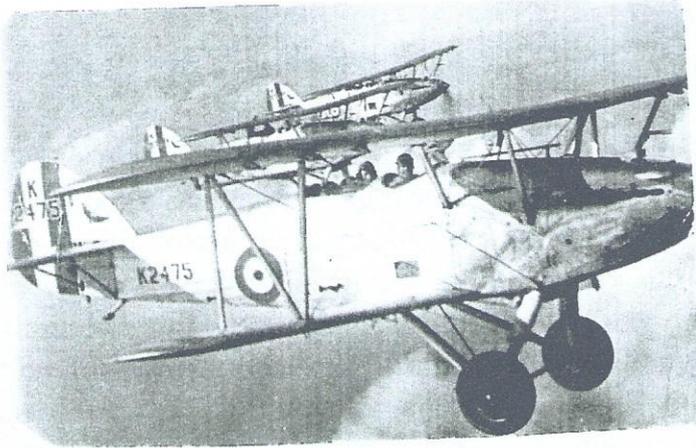
It was about this time that the national newspaper the 'Daily Mirror' was running a national contest to find out who could drink a yard of ale in the fastest possible time. That was the long glass tube with a funnel at one end and a circular bulb at the other and it was about a litre of ale. This contest had been co-ordinated with pubs throughout the country. I think some of our lads had a go. I didn't, I knew my limitations and I certainly would never have got anywhere near the winning time which I think might have been about eight seconds.

One night, playing 'high cockolorum' (if that's how it's spelt) someone, it might have been the Medical Officer, was rolled up in a carpet and deposited out of a first floor window. It was thick snow outside and the idea was for the snow to cushion his fall. It didn't, and the poor chap was still on crutches many months later.

On quieter evenings I always loved my snooker and often played with Jack, and still with quieter evenings we used to play liar dice. This was a favourite with our Commanding Officer - Group Captain Rodgers - and we all used to gang up on him and make sure he lost and he hated it - but still came back for more.

Getting away from the Mess for a moment, and not so funny. Two officers were brushing down the floor of Graham White's hangar (we were expected to do the odd chore when there was no flying) with PETROL. This was a crazy thing to be doing and even crazier, one of them lit a match, maybe to light a cigarette and they were both enveloped in flames and killed.

Still apprehensive about my future on leaving the Force I considered the

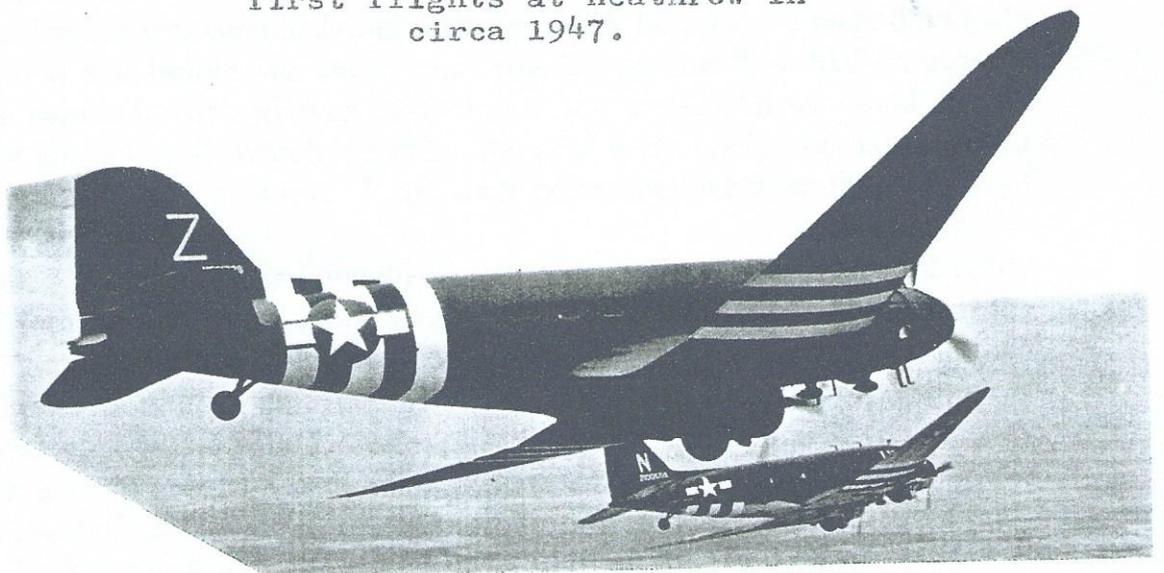


Jack 1947

Hawker Hart. Jack's mount when he joined 601 (County of London) Squadron. He would be sitting in the back seat with the gun.



The De Havilland 'Dominie'. It was in this type that both my father and Keith made their first flights at Heathrow in circa 1947.



The Dakota. What a lovely plane to fly.

## My Seven Year (Tw)itch...

Scheme whereby I could apply for a four year 'Extension of Service' and this to be effective after my eighteen month period had expired. The obvious follow-up to this would be to go for Permanent Commission and make the Royal Air Force my career. So I applied and with my medical record very much in mind I thought I stood little chance of getting it.

Our Flight office was in Graham White's hanger and when we were not flying or allocated to any other chore we would play 'uckers'. This was a somewhat complicated game of Ludo as we played in the Navy. Jack and I played together on one occasion, when we were on a winning streak, we had won thirteen games in a row. We lost the fourteenth with a large audience screaming advice.

Off duty distractions abroad were somewhat different. We flew fairly regularly to Paris where they had two currencies in operation. The old and the new. From memory the old one might have been around 2,000 to the pound and the new one around ten to the pound. All the time they wanted to get their hands on the English money or the English coffee beans. All very confusing but we managed.

If we had the money we would head for the Moulin Rouge night club. Not the Folies Bergere - I don't think I ever went there - perhaps it was too expensive. At the Moulin Rouge I think it was about a fiver for a bottle of champagne which also served as the entrance fee.

One night Johnny and I went to the Moulin Rouge and if my memory serves me correctly, I mislaid Johnny, for some reason he had disappeared. The platform, heralding the show for the evening, came up out of the floor but instead of dancing girls it was Johnny having a fisticuffs argument with a waiter.

Sylvia had asked me, on my next trip to Paris, to buy a length of special material for her so that she could make a dress. Once again I was in Paris with Johnny and we found our way to the 'Galeries Lafayette', one of Paris' largest stores. Our French was obviously not up to the mark because we were obviously misunderstood and before we knew what was happening they had arranged a mannequin parade for us and even thrown in a free drink. All we could do was to sit it out and enjoy it, which we did. We said there really was nothing that suited us and left - in a hurry. I still can't remember whether that length of material was purchased.

Before we leave Paris I would like to add that coffee beans were really their third form of currency. I don't know how Jack and I came to hear of the restaurant 'Lapin Frit'. It may have been through a Paris Gendarme who invited me to his home for dinner one evening. The 'Lapin Frit' (fried rabbit) was an out of town restaurant in the Ville D'Avray, a suburb of Paris on the Sevres railway line. Open a small gate in a wall adjacent to the restaurant and you were in the lovely parkland of St. Cloud. They took all our coffee beans and converted them into cash. In their bar and on the counter was a brass rabbit and when a lever

was pulled it peed vermouth into a glass which always had sugar distributed around its rim.

Some years ago Jack and I were holidaying in Paris with his wife Neen and his sister and we all decided to go the Ville D'Avray and try to find the Lapin Frit. It was still there but had obviously become up-market and as it was a Monday they were shut following a week-end when they were open for business.

Some years after that Barbara and I were in Paris and I wanted to show her the Lapin Frit. This time we did not go on a Monday and it was open. Sure enough the brass rabbit was still on the bar still dispensing vermouth in the same way. The proprietor turned out to be the son of the owner I knew from when Jack and I used to go there all those years ago. We stayed on and enjoyed an expensive meal. Somehow we got talking to a German a couple of tables away who said he flew Focke Wulf 190 ( a famous German fighter plane). He said he took part in the defence of Berlin and we both agreed it was a good thing we didn't meet over the city. A conversation which seemed to interest the surrounding tables. I wonder what they thought when, on leaving, he came over to our table and shook hands saying 'Here's to the next war'. When he left we noticed that his female companion, not he, paid the bill.

April and May in 1947 were spent carrying out internal flights and this may have been because of an unwritten privilege in the Flight. Pilots had the opportunity of declining, say, a trip to Paris or another short continental trip in the hope that something big might come up. Of course, if no-one volunteered for a trip then someone was detailed for it - someone had to do it.

Jack and I must have turned down a few such trips because when a five star trip came up we were elected to do it. We were to proceed to the Ferry Unit at Pershore in Worcestershire, meet up with eight Proctors and escort them to Fayid in Egypt and I had never been as far afield before. What a gem of a trip! There would be a three man crew in our Anson, Jack, a Wireless Operator called Wilf Hire and myself. Eight Proctor pilots of mixed rank would also fall under my command.

I still have an exact copy of the report I handed into Wing Commander Abrahams, Officer Commanding No. 1 Ferry Unit, Pershore at the end of the trip. This, of course, is the official report but as you might guess there were many unofficial happenings which could not be included in the report. The whole story both official and unofficial might be of interest to the reader but if you want to skip it, move over about twelve or thirteen pages.

Having seen the Proctor pilots leave for England, Jack and I took stock of the situation. We had completed our mission and although not entirely successful this was not our fault except, perhaps, that twisted fuselage which may have been acquired at the Tousseau air show. Our only commitment was to get the Anson safely back to England. All fuel and accommodation would be paid for and our only costs would be out of pocket expenses. We could choose

1st. Day. Saturday. May 17th. (Pershore)

A/B Pershore 0900 hrs. Z. Formed up and S/C according to plan. Weather good. At 1019 Z. Proctor 'U' reported spluttering engine, as we were then over 10/10ths. sea mist I ordered the pilot W/O Livingstone back to the English coast and also detailed F/O Taylor to accompany him because he was carrying a Navigator Over V.H.F. I kept in contact with these two aircraft until they were both landed at Tangmere airfield.

On striking the French coast weather deteriorated considerably and numerous electric storms were encountered. All aircraft landed safely at Tousseau. Signals were sent off via Orleans Control to Pershore, 46 Group, and Gloucester Control stating that we were unable to continue today owing to heavy thunderstorms en route. Orleans informed us Lyons would be unable to accept us and we were re-routed through Bordeaux. Proctor 590 developed slight engine trouble and we endeavoured to have same fixed before leaving Monday. Prospect of this aircraft being serviced extremely unlikely owing to lack of servicing facilities at both Tousseau and Buc. May proceed without this aircraft having been serviced and see if Bordeaux can fix same.

At 1500 hrs. Z. I was informed that F/O Taylor had landed fr Tangmere. W/O Livingstone landed shortly afterwards.

2nd. Day. Sunday. May 18th. (Buc)

Flying Control informed me that a civilian Air Display was to take place during the afternoon at Tousseau and thinking that the convoy aircraft may be too closely scrutinised by the public I obtained permission from Buc Control to fly our aircraft over to their airfield. This was carried out and all aircraft were again re-fuelled and re-serviced. Weather still very poor, numerous heavy storms passed over during course of the afternoon giving a cloud base of less than 1,000 ft.

3rd. Day. Monday. May 19th. (Buc)

Unofficial Continuous low stratus all day long giving intermittent drizzle and cloud base of 300'-1200'. Met forecast for Bordeaux area

Before we left Tousseau to fly over to Buc we were approached by the authorities organising the air show which was taking place on the Sunday. They told us there was no aircraft in the show representing the Royal Air Force. The weather forecast did not seem too good and would probably prevent us proceeding on the next leg of our journey so after giving it considerable thought I said 'OK but just for the morning. I got the other pilots together, discussed tactics and on the Sunday morning flew over to Tousseau. The organised fly-past which I wanted simply deteriorated into a shambles with radio communication having completely broken down. Planes were milling around the sky doing their own thing and I was pleasantly surprised no-one collided. When we landed, much to my amazement, the French said how much they had enjoyed it, just what they wanted, and would we do it again. I was reluctant but they gave us lunchtime champagne and I said 'Yes'. I took a Proctor up this time and the propeller got stuck in the fully 'fine' position and made appropriate screaming noises and a chap called Taylor was busily showing the French around our Anson which we left on the ground. We flew back to Buc with me wondering what would happen if there were any RAF personnel in the crowd. All this done without permission from above.

broken St. Cu. at 2,000' with numerous CB's in that area. On receiving this forecast I decided to delay our take-off until 1500 hrs. At this time the forecast was still very poor so I decided to give up any hope of reaching Bordeaux to-day. Servicing flight examined Proctor 201 for C.S.U. oil-leak and found same to be very slight, however the leak was patched up sufficiently well enough for the aircraft to reach Bordeaux where the necessary spares would be available. Repairs were also carried out on the trailing edge fairing of one of the Proctors. Anson accumulators were also ground-charged.

All arrangements were carried out for 0930 hrs. take-off in the morning. W/O Livingstone nominated by myself as Deputy i/c NCO's.

#### 4th. Day. Tuesday. 20th May. (Buc-Bordeaux)

Weather report again poor, I decided to postpone take-off until 1400hrs. At this time a favourable forecast was given by the Met Office.

A/B. Buc 1620 hrs (delay due to showers which were consistently passing overhead) On passing through an electric storm belt weather was found to be favourable with good visibility and cloud base. Landed Bordeaux 1855 hrs. All aircraft serviceable except for Proctor 'W' (pilot W/O Mackenzie) who returned to Buc three minutes after take-off with insufficient engine power. No news of this A/C available. Bordeaux Ops. are endeavouring to contact Servicing at Buc. Servicing N.C.O. at Bordeaux states that aircraft will be refuelled in the morning to ensure a take-off time of approximately 1000 hrs. To date trip is progressing satisfactorily if not quickly. Discipline in the convoy and also time-keeping have been very good. Convoy dispersed on orders to report at R.A.F. Transport Hotel, Bordeaux and to catch 0800 hrs. transport for the airfield.

#### 5th. Day. Wednesday. 21st. May (Bordeaux)

Convoy reported at Duty Flight at 0945. for take-off preparatic Met. report was poor however, a belt of rain approximately 90 mls. wide was spreading from Toulouse to Casserone and was giving a cloud base of 600'-800'. This weather condition existed throughout the day so I decided to abandon any attempt of reaching Istres

#### Unofficial.

So it had taken us four days to reach Bordeaux. I wasn't unduly worried because at the start of the trip I had been told that time was not the essence of the trip I just had to do my best to get all eight Proctors to Fayid.

Most of us knew Bordeaux quite well, we had flown there before. When I think of Bordeaux I always think of a drink called Armagnac. Much the same strength as brandy it was a very pleasant drink and I wouldn't be surprised if Jack hadn't introduced me to it. Jack used to like his glass of brandy.

The fuel recorded as being put into Proctor and Anson aircraft was found to be incorrect and report on this was given to the Station Commander. Details of this are recorded in special Recommendations report attached to this diary. Details are also recorded in this report of messing facilities at the 'Cap Horn' Bordeaux.

6th. Day. Thursday. 22nd. May (Bordeaux-Istres)

Weather report similar to that issued yesterday and again take-off was delayed, however after inter-pilot discussion it was decided either to fly above the bad weather or to fly beneath same should the afternoon weather report be suitable.

Departure from Bordeaux eventually took place during the afternoon and although ten-tenths cloud with a base of 1200' was forecast along most of route very fair conditions were encountered and it was not until Casserone was reached that Met. acquired any degree of accuracy. There, heavy rain was falling but cloud base kept considerably higher than the 600' - 900' forecast. All the convoy arrived at Istres safely. Two Proctors reported engine trouble. Proctor 237's engine ran roughly on the latter stage of the trip, apparently the engine cut but the pilot succeeding in maintaining control. I did not receive an air-to-air message concerning this owing to very bad V.H.F. reception. Proctor 601 had trouble immediately after landing, the engine cut and this necessitated the aircraft being towed to dispersal.

W/O Mackenzie arrived earlier in the day having flown directly down the Rhone Valley in very poor visibility. A good show. Convoy was now up to full strength.

7th. Day. Friday. 23rd. May. (Istres-Pisa-Rome)

Weather fair, scattered Cu Nb. reported by Met Forecast giving heavy rain but a good cloud base. Whole convoy airborne at 1100 h. 20 miles out from Istres bad weather was encountered, thick cloud covering hill-tops, these however were successfully negotiated and eventually better weather was seen ahead. Convoy landed at Pisa were re-fuelled and course was set for Rome at 1530 hrs. A few minutes later Proctor 590 reported engine trouble and return to Pisa where servicing was commenced immediately he was in dispersal. On take off from Pisa Proctor 224 swung very badly and had to make fresh attempt. The aircraft again swung but became A/B.

Unofficial

The route from Bordeaux to Istres (near Marseilles) was pretty well known to the Anson pilots and navigators of Hendon. There is fairly high ground near Carcassonne (I have spelt it incorrectly above) which seems to habitually attract low cloud and it was that I had in mind when we got airborne from Bordeaux. In the event it was OK. The last time I came through there was when I landed at Toulouse with the defective engine. On that occasion I flew past Carcassonne looking up at the castle as I kept beneath the low cloud.

About the only item which remained undamaged at Pisa airport (on the west coast of Italy) was the runway on which we landed. All the buildings were a mass of twisted metal and no attempt had been made to start clearing up the mess. We would very much have liked to visit the Leaning Tower but we had to satisfy ourselves with a view from the air. We were running behind time and it was rather important to get to Rome that day.

The convoy took the coast route as originally planned. Landings were made successfully at Campino airfield, followed half an hour later by W/O Mackensie, whose aircraft had been rapidly serviced by Pisa. It was decided that the next day be spent on the ground to allow aircraft plugs to be checked, as it is the general belief amongst the Proctor Pilots that the 100 oct. fuel tends to give plug trouble, which in turn has been giving excessively rough running in two or three of the aircraft, also W/O Livingstone placed his aircraft u/s in order that the tendency of his aircraft to swing to starboard be also investigated. Only Officers' accommodation available in Rome, W/O's accommodation only available at Rest Centre, three miles out of the city. Suggest this be investigated.

8th Day. Saturday. 24th May. ( Rome )

B.E.A. Engineering Officer decided safest plan of campaign was to take all plugs out of Proctor aircraft and check for burning of points, considering the continued rough running experienced. This appeared to be safest plan. Job was started early in the morning, but, due to slow progress made, it was obvious the job would not be completed before evening. Daily inspections were also carried out and I decided to make an early start in the morning. During the afternoon I was informed that the tail wheel of Proctor 590 was u/s, the valve of the tail wheel tube having become detached. Plans were made for a tail wheel to be sent out from England as quickly as possible, my intentions being to push on to Bari and hope that the Proctor would catch up with the main convoy. Another evening spent in Rome.

9th Day. Sunday. 25th May (Rome - Naples)

On telephoning Campino first thing in the morning, I was informed by the Engineering Officer, that W/O Livingstone had requested that he should be allowed to Air Test Proctor 224 with himself (the Engineering Officer) present. This was carried out and the aircraft was found to swing very dangerously. I decided to have the tail wheel removed from Proctor 224 and placed on 590, 224 to stay at Campino to have the whole aircraft thoroughly inspected, as it was suggested that either the engine mountings were loose or the

Unofficial.

So it was established that the use of 100 octane fuel in the Proctors was the cause of all the trouble. They should have warned us of this before we left Pershore. What was more, there would be no 80 octane fuel available throughout the trip. It would mean the constant changing of plugs and checking of points. A bit of a 'bind'. We had been lucky we had not lost a Proctor due to engine failure. Anyway, the plug and points problem gave us a full day in Rome and we certainly made full use of it. My first visit to Italy (and Jack's) and I was enjoying it immensely. We were in no hurry to get those aircraft serviceable and back into the air.

The framework of a Proctor is only made of wood and although I didn't say anything I was pretty convinced that W/O Livingstone had pushed his luck at that air show and succeeded in twisting the airframe of 224. This was our first casualty - he was left in Rome. However, we did make use of his tail wheel and switched it to 590.

aircraft structure was twisted. If aircraft could be made serviceable, W/O Livingstone was to catch up the convoy before any long sea crossing was attempted. If the Prector was classified unserviceable, W/O Livingstone was to take the necessary action and return to his Unit as quickly as possible. In view of this Pilot's considerable experience and ability, I thought this decision to be best. The convey, consisting of seven Prectors and one Anson, eventually became airborne for Naples. I decided on a night stop at Capedachino, in order that a straight run through to Athens could be accomplished tomorrow.

After half an hour's flight (1630 B) Prector 201 complained of engine trouble, same was running very roughly. This was causing the Pilot, W/O Watret, so much concern that he decided to coast crawl and "V" Victor, broke formation to accompany 201. All eight aircraft eventually landed safely at Naples, and the Consul, Mr Romanenko was at once informed. Accommodation and transport was immediately made available by telephone conversation. Arrangements were made for refuelling and servicing of Prector 201 in the morning, as the station closed down at 1700 hours B. Night stop made at La Fontane Hotel, under the direction of the Consul General.

10th Day. Monday. 26th May. (Naples)

Aircraft were not refuelled until 1100 hours B, owing to limited servicing facilities. By this time W/O Watret had air tested and checked his aircraft "T", and found same sufficiently serviceable to continue with the convey. The weather was not sufficiently clear for an attempt to be made ~~for~~ to fly through the G<sub>ap</sub> in the Appenines to Bari, as considerable amounts of cloud was forming over the tops of high ground due to a thermal air current blowing in from the Adriatic. Even had the weather been suitable to take-off, I would have still have debated leaving because I hoped to avoid a night-stop at Bari where conditions are apparently poor. My intention being to do the run through to Athens in one day. This I hope to do tomorrow and the arrangements have been made for an early start.

11th Day. Tuesday. 27th May. (Naples - Bari)

Unofficial. Despite considerable difficulty involved in getting financial matters settled with the British Consul -

We had been looking forward, very much indeed, to visiting Naples, and were hoping that something, somewhere, would go unserviceable to prolong our stay. You will notice that we really got service in Naples, a phone call to the British Consul and we immediately got transport and accommodation. The excuse to stay came from the weather forecast. Low cloud over the Appennines which we had to cross to reach Bari, our next stop. A whole day in Naples, so we immediately made for the Capri boat. We were in civvies. I wore a pair of slacks held up with a tie, hardly the right equipment for a first visit to Capri. We hired a boat to take us to the Blue Grotto and our oarsman had quite a voice and serenaded us with all the Neapolitan songs. When we left him we gave him a tip and he nearly fell out of the boat. Whether it was too much or too little we never did find out. (When we returned to UK I bought Joseph Lock's Neapolitan record and Jack actually memorised some of the words). Then we ran out of money and the British Consulate weren't quite so co-operative. We arrived on their doorstep and the gentleman i/c said he wouldn't see us. We said we would wait until he did. Eventually we acquired some money, enough to settle our bills and see us on our way. We left Naples with its hordes of begging children with some regret.

Mr Ramanenhe (Hotel bill having to be checked by the Consulate Accountant Officer), all convoy Pilots were assembled at Capadachino airfield in time to take off at an hour which would enable us to land at Athens during the evening. An early set-back was experienced however, when it was found that W/O Parsons had difficulty in starting his aircraft. A start was eventually made about 1300 hours (local) and a landing was made at Bari about 1430 hours. Whilst airborne F/O Tucker had reported that his engine was running extremely roughly, so the valley through the Appenines was followed should a forced landing have been necessary. On landing, F/O Tucker changed three u/s plugs, and W/O Mackensie, who had experienced similar trouble, also changed u/s plugs. On completion of these plug changes and refuelling, I realised it was impossible to make Araseos and Athens, and as there was no accommodation whatever available at Araseos, I decided to stay the night in Bari. The Consul - Mr Bertelli - was extremely difficult to find in spite of the fact that he had been informed earlier of an E.T.A. by the Rome Consul (Report made out specially re the above). Accommodation provided in Bari and transport to the airfield for the convoy Pilots arranged for 0900 hours on the following morning. Signals sent from Bari on arrival requesting news of W/O Livingstone and Proctor 224. Reply expected in the morning.

12th Day. Wednesday. 28th May. (Bari - Lecce-Araseos-Hassani)

No reply to my Champino signal so I decided to press on and get convoy through to Greece. I had assumed now that 224 was definitely out of convoy and that further news would be forthcoming from Hassani. We were airborne from Bari at approximately 1200 hours, local time, and after being on course for approx. half an hour, I realised we were encountering adverse winds, as a safety precaution I decided to put in at Italian diversionary drome of Lecce, where we lunched and aircraft were refuelled. Airborne again at 1500 hours and at 1710 hours landing was made at Araseos. On route, at approx. 1645 hours, W/O Darton (V.H.F.u/s) experienced engine failure whilst flying at 4000' and engine did not pick up again until he was 400' A.S.L. His aircraft was noticed to go down towards coastline (2 miles away) and as none noticed recovery, Proctor "P" was detailed by myself to search area aircraft was believed to have 'crashed' in, for a period not making his total flying time more than 3 hours (Safe endurance) Proctor

Unofficial.

We had left W/O Livingstone and Proctor 224 at Rome to have the airframe checked. He was swinging badly on take off and I suspected a twisted airframe. In spite of repeated signals to Rome we never heard any news about 224 until we returned to England.

I chose a valley route through the Appennine Mountains to Bari on the east coast of Italy. With most of the Proctor engines spluttering and banging I thought it safer than overflying the mountains. Eight aircraft landed safely in Bari where the arrival of RAF personnel caused quite a stir. Not expected, no accommodation, and when we did find a billet no-one to pay, at least not until a certain Mr. Bertelli at the British Consulate was brought under some pressure.

After I had left the Royal Air Force I received a bill for this night in Bari. It covered all the convoys billeting and food.

It was £63 and I never did pay.

Talking of food, we did dine that night in an excellent restaurant. I remember eating a sea-food salad covered with mayonnaise and it cost me 10 shillings.

Lecce, right down in the heel of Italy was quite an experience. It was an Italian military airfield and as Italy finished up as our allies at the end of the war we did not expect any problems. In fact

"Q", F/O Morgan, proceeded directly to Hassani, to make any rescue efforts as may have been necessary. However, on arrival at Araseos, Proctor 601 was found to have landed safely and all search arrangements were cancelled.

After conferring with W/O Darton, I thought it safe for him to proceed providing special fuel tank operations were carried out. and at 1900 hours convoy became airborne from Araseos. At 1905 hours Proctor 216 signalled me (V.H.F. u/s) that he was returning to Araseos, and once again "P" Peter was detailed to accompany distressed aircraft. I was informed that Proctor 216 had landed safely with "P" Peter and convoy proceeded to Athens. Landings were carried out at Hassani in half light and dusk. Full night landing lights were put into operation. One hour after convoy had landed 196 and 216 landed. Proctor 216 having been refuelled with oil, apparently all oil had been used up when I was informed of aircraft being unserviceable. I asked Flying Control to put through signal to Champagne to again request information regarding Proctor 224. Accomodation made available for all convoy at Hassani airport.

13th Day. Thursday. 29th May ( Hassani)

On presenting all aircraft unserviceability reports before the Station Commander this morning, slight ill feeling was prevelant. Apparently shortage of servicing staff necessitates that aircraft may have to remain here for a week or so before servicing will be completed. Practically all the aircraft were placed u/s with numerous troubles, the main one being plug troubles again. I pointed out I would like all plugs in all aircraft checked. It was decided at Hassani that accomodation for aircrew in convoy was not available so all officers and aircrew were displaced to the Transit Corps in Athens. Whilst I was conferring with the Station Commander in the morning, he suggested that if it were possible to get three of the Proctors ready, along with the Anson, I should fly on with them to Nicosia, and he would provide a further aircraft from his own Communication Squadron to escort the remaining Proctors. This I agreed to, providing he accepted full responsibility for the safe passage of the remaining Proctors to Nicosia. Officers were accomodated in Officers Transit Mess, N.C.O's Unofficial and W/O's in N.C.O. barrack rooms.

(contd) we were treated like royalty. We had arrived just before lunch and we were invited to eat in the Officers' Mess. We were placed on the Commanding Officer's top table and I sat on his right hand side. Jack was reasonably attired in his tropical gear, khaki shirt and shorts and looked pretty good. I didn't. My shorts were much too short and the only socks I could find were black and hardly came above my ankles. Hardly representative of the great all conquering British nation. There was much all-round camaraderie with Jack posing for a photograph in front of a large Italian bomber and when we took off for Araxos in Greece in the early afternoon many Italians gave us a rousing send-off.

This next stage of our journey was to be our first sea crossing of any length and the above record shows that it was not without incident. No-one was hurt, no-one crashed but it did result in two more Proctors being left behind in Athens. We were down to five Proctors.

Whilst in Athens I became a millionaire - in drachmas (the local currency). We had taken coffee beans to Paris and converted them into cigarette papers. Apparently guerrillas in the Grecian mountains were able to grow their own tobacco but they didn't have the cigarette papers to roll their own cigarettes. For some reason which escapes me, the Greeks were anti-British at this time so we were <sup>not</sup> too worried about accommodating the guerrillas in this way. In English money my total wealth was £73. A fair amount in those days

14th Day. Friday. 30th May. (Hassani)

During course of day Hassani contacted me on numerous occasions giving progress report on Proctor serviceability. In the early afternoon, I arranged for transport to pick up full convoy at 0815 hours in the morning, arranging also for a tentative take-off time at 0930 hours.

15th Day. Saturday. 31st May, (Hassani - Rhodes)

Transport did not turn up on schedule this morning and only after numerous telephone calls to Hassani M.T. did it eventually start out. The full convoy eventually leaving the Transit camp at approximately 0930 hours arriving at Hassani at 1000 hours. Taxi clearance from Hassani was asked for at 1030 hours but Proctor 590, on running up, found he had considerable mag-drop. I taxied back to dispersal and switched off telling the other Proctor aircraft to do likewise. Plugs were found to be the trouble and these were rapidly changed. Prior to this W/O Darton had attempted to start his aircraft in an effort to execute an air test and thoroughly test his fuel system, his engine failed three times on the run up however and Proctor 601 was placed u/s and considered unfit to carry on. We were eventually airborne at 1135 hours, leaving W/O Darton behind with orders to follow on with an escort (to be provided by Hassani) as soon as his aircraft was serviceable. Twenty minutes from A/B time, W/O Watret informed me over R.T. that his engine was running extremely roughly and he thought it unwise to continue further. I ordered him back to Hassani with similar orders as those given to W/O Darton. Now, both Proctor 601 and 201 were u/s at Hassani. Convoy landed Calato at approx. 1400 hours. Owing to the engine failing to start on the only bowser available, all refuelling had to be carried out by hand and on completion of same I decided it was too late to proceed to Nicosia, as last landing time there was 1930 hours and we had a full three hours flying time ahead of us. Transport was made available for us by the Greek Air Force and we were driven to Rhodes, where all the convoy found their own accommodation, none being available at Calato. The Greek Commanding Officer at Calato arranged for transport at 0930 hours in the morning.

16th Day. Sunday. 1st June. (Rhodes)

Although given until 1030 hours transport did not arrive and telephonic conversation was not possible with Calato owing to local restrictions. On endeavouring to contact Greek Military authorities

Inofficial

The route from Athens to Rhodes was one of the longest stages of the whole trip. It took us over the Aegean Sea and the airborne time was 2½ hours. The duration of the Proctor was only 3 hours so it was cutting it a bit fine. In fact it was this very low duration which caused us to make so many refuelling stops. We weren't worried, we were seeing more of Europe than we could hope to see in years. I think it was on this leg of the journey that Jack did not have to worry too much about navigation. When we were still a long way from Rhodes we saw an isolated storm cloud way in the distance and concluded it must be Rhodes. This type of cloud usually builds up over land. Our calculation was correct, when we arrived at Calato airfield there was the granddaddy of all thunderstorms sitting over the aerodrome. It made life a little more difficult but we all managed to land safely.

What was more scaring was the ride in a Greek army lorry from Calato to Rhodes, the capital of the island. I have already said that the Greeks did not think too favourably of the British about this time and this driver confirmed it. We hung on like grim death and tried to portray to the driver that we were actually enjoying it.

Once again things worked out favourably for us and we were able to spend a day in Rhodes. A combination of an unserviceable petrol bowser, delay in obtaining transport and then W/O Mackenzie blowing a cylinder gasket (on his Proctor) enabled us to do just that

with a view to securing transport, I found that on Sundays they ceased work. Eventually I secured transport from the R.A.F. Graves and Missing Persons Commission and we arrived at Calato about 1530 hours. On running up his aircraft however, W/O Mackensie found that his No. 6 cylinder head gasket had blown. This fault took some considerable time for find and I had to abandon any idea of getting to Nicosia that evening. The whole convoy returned to Rhodes, where the convoy again took accommodation at their own expense. I sent off a signal to Hassani asking them to send out gasket by the escorting Anson and then same aircraft could proceed to escort all aircraft through to Nicosia. Aircraft were air tested to ensure speedy getaway following day.

17th Day. Monday. 2nd June. (Rhodes - Nicosia)

Convoy, consisting of <sup>four</sup> five Proctors and Anson, airborne from Calato at 1400 hours approx., and the sea crossing to Cyprus was carried out, eventually landing being carried out at Nicosia two hours, fifteen minutes after S/C times Calato. I sent signals off to Hassani, on reporting to Flying Control, asking for full details on the two u/s aircraft and requesting approximate date of their despatch. Night stop was made at Nicosia aerodrome. As some of the aircraft have not had a Daily Inspection for some days I decided to stay over tomorrow and give servicing personnel time to give each aircraft a full inspection.

17th Day. Tuesday. 3rd June. (Nicosia)

Inspections were completed on all aircraft by 1500 hours, but as I wished to fly through to Fayid in one day, I put off time of departure until 0930 hours tomorrow. I received a signal from Hassani, stating that servicing was still being carried out on Proctors 201 and 601. We again stayed at Nicosia overnight.

The three unserviceable, at present at Hassani and Calato, will apparently have very little trouble in picking up an escort from here to Fayid.

Unofficial

Whilst billeted in the city of Rhodes some strangers joined us, also from the Royal Air Force. We had noticed a sailing boat enter the harbour and thought how lucky the crew were to be sailing in such idyllic waters. Well, these RAF chaps were the crew. They had a roving commission to search all the Dodecanese Islands for war graves of airman shot down in that area. They had already been doing it for months and still had a long way to go. What a job. We thought we had a pretty good job too.

With W/O Mackenzie's Proctor unserviceable with gasket trouble we were now down to four Proctors and I was beginning to wonder if we were going to arrive at Fayid empty handed.

The next stage, over the Mediterranean Sea, although a long one, was completed without any further trouble and we duly arrived at Nicosia on the island of Cyprus. Although we stayed a couple of days at Nicosia I remember nothing of it.

On the 19th day - the 4th. June - we flew to Fayid after making a refuelling stop at Aqir in Palestine. Aqir airfield was in a state of siege with armed British soldiers patrolling the perimeter and we were unable to leave the compound. Everyone in Palestine was Britain's enemy at this time. The Jews trying to illegally enter the country and the forces trying to keep them out. We were piggy in the middle. We were told we were damn lucky not to be shot at when we were flying in to land.