

**These are first
person accounts,
and are in original
format.**

**Some written
passages offer
imagery
that may not
suitable for all
readers.**

DIARY

Vol. I

Jan. 16/43 to Jan 31/44

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TRIP to Ireland - Page 66 on:

Jan. 16th. 1943 (Sat.) A year ago to-day I was enlisted in the R.C.A.F. as a P/O in the Aeronautical Engineering Branch. I took my course at the Aeronautical School in Montreal - passed first in the 13th entry ^(867.) and proceeded on a week's leave the first week in July, 1942. I was then posted to No. 4 B & G. School at Fingal Ont. where I acted as O.C. Servicing Squadron with about 105 men under me. On Dec. 21st, 1942 I received my next posting for overseas duty & was certainly happy to have the chance of getting over & reliving some of the excitement. In the meantime, I received my first promotion to F/O & dated July 16, 1942. I spent my two weeks embarkation leave at home in Toronto & very enjoyable it was too since it was the longest I had been at home in almost two years. No. night I boarded the 11.00 p.m. train on my way to Halifax & said good-bye to all the folks at the station. Stuart, Aggie, Don, Kay & Mother were there & it wasn't too bad except for the last few minutes with Mother but she was pretty wonderful as usual.

Jan. 17th. 1943. (Sun). Arrived in Montreal this morning, met Ruth MacMichael & went on

to Drummondville at noon. We had quite a party & saw a lot of old friends who were very good to me as usual.

Jan. 18th. 1943 (Mon). Said good-bye to the Mac Michaels & de Verteuil's - Kimbie's 21st. Birthday & also acquired a 40 oz. bottle of 35 O.P. rum which I have been commissioned to take overseas to Mac who it seems is practically dying of thirst.

Jan. 19th. 1943 (Tues) - Travelled all last night & to-day by train & met John Bridge of the 14th entry, Gordon Turner & Norm Cuke all engineers & all on their way to "Y" Depot. Played Bridge etc. & finished off a small bottle of liquor to help pass a very dull day.

Jan. 20th. 1943 (Wed) to Feb. 2, 1943 (Thurs). (2 weeks)

I'm putting these two weeks under one item due to lack of interesting events. The stay in "Y" Depot was very boring & dull, the meals were poor & organization bad which did not make for a very pleasant stay. Bill Boone & Bob Bales of the 13th entry are here with me and that helps some. After the initial signing in and getting all clearances signed, there is nothing to do but sit around & wait.

for something to happen. Bill & I went to a few shows & spent a lot of money on good meals down town but I guess they were worth it at that. We play cards, read & sleep all day & night, - the weather has been bitterly cold with high winds & that keeps us indoors too.

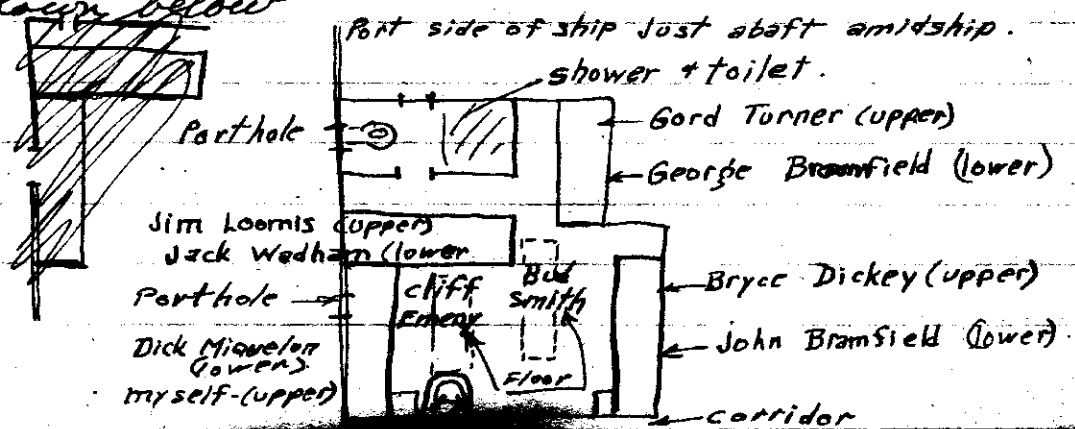
It looks like tomorrow is the big day for us to get under way & everyone is thinking it's about time. I phoned Mother last Friday night but didn't again to night since I can be safely across before my next letter is due & there is no need to worry her unnecessarily.

Feb. 3, 1943 (Wed) This morning we carried all our baggage over to the parade square where it was loaded on trucks to be taken down to the docks. at 1230 hrs. we paraded again with full web equipment including gas mask, anti-gas cape, water bottle, steel helmet, pistol holster & ammunition pouch & haversack which I have stuffed full of cigarettes & soap. There are about 450 officers and 2000 men - the largest no. of airforce personnel to go on one ship yet. To the accompaniment of a band we are marched out the gates & down the three mile hike to the docks & it forms a long parade as far as I can see

in both directions. It is quite a thrilling sight & I am really proud to be a part of it - people wave & whistle at us all along the way & from all the houses & buildings so that adds to the excitement too. At last we reach the docks, pick out our luggage, stagger up the gang-plank & are allotted our rooms. It is a nice looking ship formerly called the "Empress of Japan" but now changed for obvious reasons to the "Empress of Scotland". It has 3 funnels and 7 deck above the water line - god knows how many there are below that - & displaces about 26,000 tons. It used to be a luxury cruiser between Vancouver & Tokyo & Australia & is owned by the C.P.R. system. Our room no. is 149 on B deck and there are 10 of us assigned to it - in peace time it had 2. There is an adjoining bathroom between us & the next stateroom (Bill Boone is in it) & a wash basin so it's not too bad except for lack of space to store luggage & move around in. The bunks are double tiered with a single thin straw mattress between us & the board bottom so they are not quite as comfortable as they might be but what can you expect in wartime.

There are only 8 bunks so two of the lads are assigned to the floor but they all take it in good part.

We are served a very nice meal at 6.00 o'clock - the troops eat twice a day in 3 shifts. - 8.00, 9.00 & 10.00 in the morning & 4.00, 5.00 & 6.00 at night. The cooks & practically the whole crew including waiters are Chinese & none of them can speak much English so we have quite a time. Most of the boys are quite hungry so make up sandwiches to take away for a midnight snack. The Chinamen are very firm about second helpings since you can't get a repeat on the same order. However as there are always at least two choices, they don't seem to mind if you start at the top of the menu & work right through as long as you don't try & get the same thing twice. Our cabin looked somewhat as shown below



George Broomfield is a dry wit fellow - equipment officer, Cliff Emery a red-headed New Zealander with very radical ideas, overseas twice before & a year younger than I - a pilot. Bud Smith a pilot & John Bramfield & Jack Wadhams - Y.M.C.A. men in airforce uniform.

I have a pretty bad cold & the ship is damp & cold so I turn in early for a slightly uncomfortable sleep.

Feb. 4. (Thur.) Slept till 1000 hrs. & then stayed in bed most of day trying to get rid of cold before we set out. The ship is pretty well loaded & in the afternoon we pull out into the harbour & manoeuvre around all afternoon setting compass etc. We have our luggage pretty well stowed by now leaving out just the bare essentials. Also rigged up ropes all over the place for hanging up clothes etc.

Feb. 5. (Fri.) We pulled out of the harbour early this morning (0400 hrs) & when I get up we are out of sight of land. Also there is a terrific gale blowing & the sea is very rough. The wind just whistles & shrieks thru the ship's rigging & is stronger than I've ever experienced before. The waves are very high (approx. 40') since they

are often up level with us when standing on the top deck. It is quite thrilling being up on deck & gives one a great respect for those who travel the oceans in these small tramp steamers & corvettes etc. - it must be quite a life but one which I don't think I'd enjoy. Old Columbus must have had quite a time with his sailboats. There are plenty of fellows seasick already & it's getting worse all the time. I really feel sorry for the airmen & army troops below decks in their crowded dormitories with no place to lie down etc. - they sleep in hammocks which are slung at night only. As a matter of fact, I feel a little squeamish myself & don't like the look of the greasy bacon & fried eggs for breakfast & so content myself with cereal, toast & coffee (that is what the Chinamen call coffee - I'd been out two days before ~~which~~ I could decide whether it was tea or coffee). Almost all of us stay in our bunks with an occasional stroll on deck for some air. Jack Wadham has been sick about 4 times & still looks slightly greenish, Gord Turner also emptied his stomach 'is in bad shape - also Bob Bales & Bill Boone have both been sick so I feel as though I'm doing all

right. About noon I go up on deck for some air & nearly get caught short as I begin to feel decidedly ill. I immediately hastened back to the stateroom but couldn't get in the bathroom which was already occupied. Cliff Emery (an experienced sailor who thoroughly enjoyed himself at our expense) handed me a dry Arrowroot biscuit which I ate & immediately felt a lot better. It was a close thing but happily averted & I never even felt seasick again on the whole trip. The pitching, tossing & rolling was much easier to take lying down so we all spent most of the day in our bunks reading & sleeping. By 6.00 p.m. I was still feeling poor & could only go for some chicken soup, bread & tea but it was more than a lot of fellows did since more than half the places were vacant & about half of those present got up suddenly at dinner & hurriedly got outside. It was a poor place for a dining room anyway since it was right at the stern of the ship where the rolling & tossing was the worst. It was also badly ventilated & always smelled of cooking & old stale food so it took a good stomach to

- sighted a patrol plane (Digby) from Halifax, who was out keeping a watch on us.

stand it all things considered. Even the plates, cups & crockery were sliding all over the place so a trick they used was to dampen all the table cloths with water to reduce sliding & breakage. I got away as quickly as possible just to be on the safe side & turned in early.

Sat. Feb. 6. It is still raining a lot & blowing but is not quite so rough. However there are still plenty under the weather - Bob Bales is among the worst & can't keep anything down. I feel fine to-day & begin to enjoy my meals again. Played knock rummy to-night & lost.

Feb. 7. (Sun). As we are now in a submarine danger area we have to start lookouts. As I forgot to mention, we are all alone with no convoy or escort at all. We are pretty fast & cruise at 20-22 knots so can outrun all submarines. The main danger is in those lying in wait ahead of us. Jack Adams Flt is in charge of gunnery crew who go on 4 hr. watches & "Mike" Miquelon is in charge of submarine lookout so the whole cabin is a centre for arranging crews, odd meals, etc. The gunnery have to be on constantly so there are fellows getting up & going to bed all the time. George Bramfield is Baggage Master & is

constantly being sought so our stateroom is in quite a hubbub most of the time - never a dull moment. Jim Loomis & I take our first two hour watch on submarine lookout from 8.00 to 10.00 this morning & as it is very nice out we enjoy it very much. The sea is quite calm & we are heading way south - we can follow our course by the compass on the bridge. We also have a map in our cabin & with a few peeks at the captain's charts occasionally, we can get our position & plot our course. We are down now only a few hundred miles above the equator - quite a roundabout way to get to England. Even Bob feels better to day & ate a little so our spirits rise considerably with the belmy weather. The only roll we get is when the ship changes course every five minutes or so & we heel way over - they travel a constant zig-zag course. The naval gunners came up to day & stowed our R.C.A.F. gun crew how to operate them in case of emergency & also fired a few practice rounds from each. There is one large 6" rifle on the stern, 2-3" guns on each side of the bridge, 2-12 pdrs. near the stern, 8-20 mm. A.A.

guns along the sides + several rocket guns to pull up wire screening + cables for aircraft protection - also some depth charges. I managed to collect one of the fired 20mm. shell cases for a souvenir. Got my haircut this afternoon.

(Mon) Feb. 8. Moved clocks ahead ^{1.5} 1820 minutes to keep on time + start heading northwards again - getting a little rougher but not bad + played knock rummy most of day - ended up 25¢ ahead. Went on lookout again as usual.

Feb. 9. (Tues.) - Quite rough to-day + still lots sick but having got my sea legs it doesn't bother me a bit. Very cold + wet up on lookout + bad weather for subs. Captain seems quite worried. Still heading NE. but spending a lot of time turning corners.

Rumour has it that there are subs ahead.

Feb. 10 (Wed.) Submarine lookout doubled as word received that one of our a/c parties attacked a wolf pack of subs just 40 miles ahead of us. We spent all day cruising up + down the North Atlantic + not far from Ireland but not going ahead. Word is that we are going to make a fast run in to-night through the submarine infested waters + try to

reach the comparative safety of the Irish sea by daylight. We are heading for Glasgow, Scotland & thus must pass around the Northern tip of Ireland. We also have to watch for enemy a/c now as well as submarines. Bob & Bill both sick still & Bob hasn't eaten for two days - he sure looks bad. Increasingly windier & rougher tonight.

Feb. 11. (Thur). Moved our clocks ahead 40 minutes again the night before last & two hours again last night making 4 hours in all so our 8.00 o'clock watch this morning begins in darkness. I hadn't been there for more than $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour when I first saw a light twinkling faintly on our starboard bow - good old Northern Ireland! Another $\frac{1}{2}$ hr. & there is another on the Port bow - Scotland! - we made it at last. As it gradually got lighter we came quite close to Ireland & it sure did look pretty in the early morning sunlight with the haze just lifting away from the shore & revealing the light green hills & valleys. It is quite rugged but pretty & truly called the "Emerald Isle". Scotland comes into view next & for a while we see both shores & then

Ireland fades as we enter the Firth of Clyde. It was very pretty too & very rugged, with scraggy rocks etc. & just what I'd imagined it looked like - we all sing "Roamin' in the gloamin' by the bonnie banks of Clyde" just to get in the spirit of things. There is lots of shipping about & aircraft flying around which we busily try to recognize & the time now passes very quickly. At 2.00 pm. we anchored at Gourock - about 10 miles from Glasgow. Exactly 8 days since we got on board & 6 1/2 days since we pulled out of Halifax - if we had come straight instead of cruising all over the Atlantic, I believe we could have made it in less than 5 days. We stay on board tonight & hope to get off tomorrow.

(Feb. 12.) Fri. It is very windy & rough to-day with a heavy rain so the harbour is so rough the tenders cannot get along side & our disembarkation is cancelled until tomorrow. We are all a little disappointed since the beds get harder all the time & we really feel the lack of exercise. However we are safe anyway & a lot of the understandable tension has passed away. We played knock

rummy all day & I won about \$2.00 for a change. There are about 40 ships of all sizes & shapes in the harbour with ours being about the largest transport. However there are also three huge aircraft carriers, a light cruiser & a couple of submarines as well as PBV's & Sunderland flying boats.

Saurock is a quaint looking little town perched right on the side of a steep hill overlooking the harbour. The houses are in long rows of 15 or 20 all joined together & all looking the same - built of square stone blocks & corrugated slate & red tile roofs. Each house has the same look & even the same no. of chimney pots on the roof. There are literally hundreds of these.

(Bat) Feb. 13. - Good old lucky 13 again - the water & wind calmed down to-day & they started unloading at dawn. All the army troops went first & then the R.C.A.F. It was raining hard when we were taken off by tender at 4.00 p.m. & we walked on to the dock & immediately in to one of these cute little English trains - small but fast & quite streamlined. We pulled out at 4.30 sharp & headed for Bournemouth on the

central south coast of England - about 25 miles from Southampton. We saw the outskirts of Glasgow & saw our first barrage balloons & also our first signs of bomb damage. They still had these same long rows of little houses but here & there was one missing with the skeleton of former rooms & staircases still imprinted on the walls of the adjacent houses. We also saw an occasional building skeleton still standing but with heaps of rubble all around. All the way from Douroch to Glasgow the people were hanging out windows & waving to us & giving us a hearty welcome. We in turn tossed out Canadian coins & cigarettes etc & watched the kids scramble for them. It soon got dark however & we had to settle back to a sleepless night since there was no pullman service provided. However, we ate as soon as we got on again about 9.00 p.m. so that helped. We played knockrummy again until about 3.00 a.m. & then tried to snatch a little sleep which of course was practically impossible sitting up & crowded as we were. Incidentally, I forgot to mention that we sent our "arrived safely" cables home from

the ship on Friday
Feb. 14 (Sun). Arrived in Bournemouth at
11.00 a.m. stiff & sore but happy that our
journey was at an end. We saw a lot of
the English countryside this morning & were
particularly struck with the beauty of the
towns & villages as a whole. They are really
marvellous & it is no wonder they are fighting
so hard to save such a pretty little country.
Most of the houses are built of grey stone &
all have numerous little chimney pots on top.
The streets are narrow & twisting but spick &
span & neat as a pin, plenty of trees, gardens,
hedges & stone fences, little squares & alleyways
- everything quite crowded but not cluttered up
if that makes sense.

After arriving we immediately got in buses
& came up to our respective hotels - mine is
the Hazelwood & is quite nice but not the best
by any means. It is 3 floors high & has long
winding corridors. It is made of white stucco
plaster & is quite a modern looking building.
Bill Boone & I have a room together with two
beds & a wash basin & that's all. Still no
place to put our stuff & I'm getting very

tired of living out of a suitcase. We have
 batman service which helps some & also a
 bathroom across the hall so are quite comfortable.
 This afternoon after lunch we were paraded &
 got information taken down for our R.A.F. Identification
 Cards & also got pictures taken. Tonight we
 turned in early to get a much needed rest.

I still have some cold but it is starting to go.
Feb. 15 (Mon.) My Gladstone bag came up this
 morning & gave me a chance to have a complete
 change of clothing. On board the ship, strict
 orders had been issued that we were to sleep
 in our clothes & consequently I haven't had
 some of my stuff off my back for over a week.
 We had dental parade & lectures on Security,
 Blackout & A.R.P. - also got our postal addresses
 fixed up. Tonight a bunch of us went out in
 the blackout to visit a few pubs & have
 some fun.

Feb. 16 (Tues) Sent 3 airographs to-day.
 finished our documentation & had the afternoon
 off to look over the town. Bournemouth is quite
 a place with about 150,000 people so it is not
 small by any means. Our hotel is in the
 downtown section which has been completely

taken over by the R.C.A.F. I never saw so many hotels in my life before & in these streets around here, it is all hotels with no private residences at all. They range from small oversize ~~hotels~~ homes to huge, modernistic structures which I could more easily imagine out in California or down in Florida. The large ones are all white, pink or yellow with rounded glass corners & very modernistic balconies etc. About half are this ultra-modern type & the other half are rustic old types with very few in between. Apparently this town is one huge summer resort & all these hotels are necessary to handle the crowd in peace time. Now of course it makes a splendid P.R.C. (Personnel Reception Centre) for the R.C.A.F. & almost every hotel is being used for something. Outside this modern central section however the town reverts to the typical small English type. Almost all the hotels are within sight of the ocean too which makes it very nice. We also have a good, double-decker, electric bus service right to our door. There are well over 5000 R.C.A.F. personnel here alone without counting the R.A.F., Army & American Army here.

Liquor is scarce & very expensive & they usually run out by 7.30 or 8.00 o'clock but there is plenty of beer such as it is - I'm afraid I don't like it very well. There are several good movies or cinemas here but they start at 6.30 & finish at 10 p.m. & are very expensive - anywhere up to 4s for a good seat. There are several dances in town but they are very crowded & close at 10.00 p.m. too - mostly because of the blackout regulations I guess. We have been issued with clothing coupons & clothing is pretty cheap but limited. Air force uniforms & great coats for \$30-35 which is a lot cheaper than in Canada. Food of all kinds of course is expensive but not exorbitant.

Our meals are good but missing a few things. We only get butter or margarine once a day for breakfast, tea once a day & coffee once a day. The bread is a grayish brown colour & is heavy but doesn't taste bad. Desserts or sweets as they say here are very limited - puddings, pines & apple turnovers so far. We are getting to understand the English money system a little better now - I guess it just takes time to get used to it.

This afternoon we were marched down to a Lady Frances Ryder organization which finds homes for Canadian boys who want some place to go on leave. They treated us very well & we filled out forms as to our preferences. Then we had tea & cookies & danced with a few of the town girls who had come down to welcome us - not very exciting but nice anyway. Tonight Bill & I played billiards & table tennis in a nearby hotel which constitutes part of our mess.

Feb. 17. (Wed.) Finally got my kit bag to day which up to now has been lost - unpacked it to air out some of the stuff. & try to get a few of the wrinkles out. The weather here is very mild - about like ours in May. The trees are all in leaf, the grass is green & the flowers including tulips & roses are out so we don't even have to wear coats. However, indoors it is quite cool, especially in the evening & we have quite a time keeping warm. There is supposed to be central heating in this hotel but the radiators are never even warm so we have to go down to the lounge & stand in front of the open fire to soak up some heat.

Bill & I spent the afternoon in a War exhibit & saw parts of German planes, bombs etc & it was very interesting. We usually have one or two air raid alarms a day here but so far haven't had any bombs. When the sirens go sounding the alert, nobody does anything until the sound of bombs or A.A. guns is heard & then they race for the shelters & slit trenches. So far we have only had the alarms so it hasn't bothered us much. We had one Monday night & another again last night. Then there was one at noon to-day & again tonight after dark. This afternoon the Sr. Aero Engineer of the RCAF Overseas S/L Brearley came down from London to see the nine of us - Bob Bales, Bill Boone & myself, Miguelon (Mike), Jim Loomis, Bryce Dickey, John Bridger, Gord Turner & Norm Cuke. We are to be posted up North in Yorkshire in the RCAF Bomber group. (Thank goodness it's not RAF) & may be on Spitfires, Halifaxes or Wellingtons. We will probably have to report on Mon. March 1st. which is pretty quiet considering that most of the aircrew boys have to hang around here anywhere up to 3 months.

Feb. 18. (Thur) We finished up all our procedure & issues etc. this morning so got the afternoon off. Bob, Bill, Bridger & myself went up to the village of Christchurch (a suburb of Bourne mouth) & went through the old Cathedral there - built around 950 A.D & it sure looks it but was very interesting anyway. We also saw the remains of an old Norman Castle & the original old Saxon's house with thatched roof & all. This afternoon I bumped into Ho Bill Sprinkle from Fingal on the street - he's been here about two months & is still awaiting a posting. Found out from him that Menzies & Lanner are here too but unfortunately have gone on leave so I guess I'll miss them. We had 3 air raid alarms to-day but still no excitement.

Feb. 19. (Fri) To-day we got turned over to the despatch squadron so all we have to do is wait. Sat in the sun on the cliffs by the sea-shore & went to a show tonight.

Feb. 20. (Sat.) With characteristic speed we were told this morning that we had seven days leave as of noon to-day so it meant a lot of rushing around. Repacked all my stuff & carted it down to storage, paid my men

bill, gave up our room, got our free transportation warrants signed & just caught the train to London at 2.30 p.m. We got tickets to Cambridge on spec knowing that we have to go to London to get there & don't know whether we'll go on or not. We arrived at Waterloo station at 5.30 p.m. & as luck would have it they are having one of the thickest pea-soup fogs they have had this year.

Blackout doesn't start for another hour and a half & yet we have to use flashlights to see our way around & quite ineffectively at that. We had phoned from Bournemouth for rooms but being the week-end everything was full up so we came anyway & thought for a while it would be the park benches for us however we threw ourselves on the tender mercies of the Y.M.C.A. who finally got us a place to stay at 10 bob opiers bed & breakfast. We set out by tube & found our way by signs O.K. until we came up to the street again & then it was really something. We had about four blocks to walk - one along Piccadilly & then up Park Lane but where from there we didn't know. We were all strangers lost in the largest city in the world

after dark in the blackout & with one of the heaviest of fogs in the bargain - what a predicament. Piccadilly was very wide at this Hyde Park corner where we came up from the tube & there were big buses & cars rushing all over the place so that we were scared to attempt a crossing. Somebody advised us to go back underground & come up the other stairs on the other side of the street so we did & then were lost again. Finally after milling around awhile, a tottering old lady of about 85 took the five of us across the street in safety which was hard on the ego & finally a kindly old tramp took us in hand & led us to the place we wanted for which we rewarded him with a meagre 6s apiece - it was well worth £1. After washing up we ventured out again - well equipped with lights & directions this time to get a bite to eat & then back again to bed.

Feb. 21, (Sun). We set out to-day to see some of the town. We went down Park Lane to the park - crossed it to Buckingham Palace where we were just in time to see the changing of the guard - very interesting too. Then we walked on down

Pall Mall where an old gentleman fell in with us & kindly pointed out all the important buildings & homes as we passed along with some of their histories. The homes of the Duke of Gloucester & St James Palace where Queen Mary is still living were the most important. As we passed through the Whitehall district we saw the Foreign Office & the Admiralty buildings & thence thru the Admiralty Arch to good old Trafalgar Sq. with all the pigeons & good old Nelson still the centre of the Empire. We called in at the Empire Overseas Club to register for various conducted tours in the next few days & then went to the Canadian Officers club on Cockspur St. for lunch where I bumped into Lt. John Hilton of Victoria College who I knew when I was there.

Next we shopped around & moved our stuff to the Dominion Officers Club at 46 Grosvenor St. which was much cheaper - 5^s for bed & breakfast & more central as well as providing good recreational facilities & a very helpful information bureau. Tonight we ventured out in the blackout & went down Piccadilly to a News Theatre & then came on home to bed. It sure is dark out & is quite an experience finding your way about. However - lots easier with no fog.

Feb. 22. Mon. This morning we walked down town via Picadilly Circus, Leicester Square & Oxford Circus - lunched at the Officer's club again & then went on a tour through the Tower of London. When I say we, I mean Bill Boone, John Bridger & myself. Mike McQueen & Bob Bales separated from us & are living at the Strand Palace Hotel. On looking at the register in the Canadian Officer's Club I spotted Roy Jupp's name who is over here on a lieut. in the R.C.O.C.

A "beefeater" showed us around the Tower & recited all its history with all the gruesome details - it seems that anyone of any importance had his head chopped off here & was buried & imprisoned within the walls. It was built around ~~the~~ 1000 AD & sure looks it. We were down in the dungeons where hundreds died & saw the place where all the executions took place - Mary Queen of Scots, Lady Jane Grey & various familiar Kings, Queens, Princes & Lords etc. The place where Sir Walter Raleigh spent 30 years, the tower where the young Princes were smothered to death & the bloody tower where Mary Queen of Scots is supposed to "trod with er iad tucked underneath er arm". It was exceedingly interesting & I enjoyed the trip.

very much. Tonight we were all tired out so after a game of billiards, went to bed early.

Feb. 23. Tues. This morning we got out bright and early & visited the Houses of Parliament. Saw the old hall where all Kings & Queens were seated for hundreds of years & the beautiful chapel which Oliver Cromwell desecrated by stabling horses in it for a long time - this oldest part was built around 1100. The House of Commons room in one wing was demolished by a bomb completely & we went through the famous doors & stood in the gutted hall with half the walls standing & no roof - all rubble of course has been cleared away. The H. of C. now sit in the wing where the House of Lords used to be & the H. of L. now sit in a large room which used to be the King's Robing Chamber. I sat in Mr. Churchill's chair just for the fun of it & stood in the exact spot in front of the despatch box where he always stands to deliver his speeches to the Assembly. We also visited one of the Supreme Court chambers & watched a case being tried with all the bewigged & robed lawyers & judges etc. - just like the movies.

At noon to day I looked up Bill Woodley who is at 3 Cockspur St. in Oceanic House. He invited

me to lunch with her & his fiancée at his club & we had a great old visit.

This afternoon we went on another tour through St. Paul's Cathedral. Up to this time, signs of bomb damage had been comparatively slight with only about one bombed out building per block. However, down around St. Paul's it was pretty bad. On three sides of it there was nothing but bombed & shattered buildings for about as far as you could see while there were plenty of others gutted even on the fourth side. It sure is remarkable how it ever escaped with only a few small hits. Inside it was very beautiful altho most of the valuable & historic items had been put away for safe keeping. As it was, we saw all the graves & tombs of just about every famous name I'd ever heard of in English history. We also climbed the 300 odd steps to the renowned whispering gallery which was just a circular balcony around the dome about 150' in diameter. The peculiar acoustics allow even the faintest whisper to be heard clearly all around it & back again from the other direction - quite remarkable. Coming back from this tour we passed Downing St. so asked the

guard at the entrance to the street if we could go in to see the famous No. 10. He let us do it saying we could approach as far as a plain clothesman from Scotland Yard whom he indicated on guard just across from the house. It is quite an unpretentious, black, dirty old house & very plain & although it is apparently quite small from the front, it is actually quite a huge place with over 80 rooms. Incidentally we noticed where two bombs had hit not 50 feet away from two different sides of the house so you could see where Jerry was evidently trying hard to get it. As we were standing there talking to the guard, the door opened & an imposing gentleman with a cast in one eye came out. He was a man named Sinclair who handled all the Prime Minister's press interviews etc. & had just been in to see him. Winston Churchill was sick in bed with the flu at the time. He looked at us & then came across to see us, shook hands all around & then took us around outside the house to show us the bomb damage & then into the courtyard of some important government buildings where Churchill's office was. He was very kind to us & spent quite a while telling us various stories re. the prime minister & the

guard told us we were fortunate since very few people ever got in that far.

Feb. 24. (Wed). The streets are so dark during the blackout that it is very difficult for a stranger to find his way about & consequently we haven't done much at night but stay around the club. However, last night we heard of a big dance being held out in a suburb called Hammersmith so away we went to see what there was to see last night. It turned out to be a "duff" as they say here as we couldn't get in without membership cards so we proceeded to do some "pub-crawling" & went into three or four places for beers. This being unsatisfactory we went to a place called the Ployer's Club at 13 Albemarle St. to which the three of us had received exclusive invitations through the Empire Overseas Club (the one which had previously arranged our tours - they really treated us well). Here the club met every night in the week & members of the club as well as outside professional entertainers put on a variety show of skits & songs etc. just for their own entertainment. Everyone joined in with the master of ceremonies & on the chorus of all the songs so a lot of fun was had by all. They stopped

the show about every fifteen minutes while everyone went to the bar - entertainers & all - to stock up in a few drinks. Of course as the evening progressed, the entertainment got better & better & it really was good. Finally after the show, they moved out the tables & chairs and danced till midnight. It turned out as we found later that it is a very exclusive club, with a waiting list a mile long. Sort of a Greenwich Village affair down in the cellar of an old building, in which all sorts of famous radio, stage & screen stars as well as writers & painters etc. frequent. It is hundreds of years old & several famous writers & poets etc have left poems etc. written on the walls.

It was only a few blocks from our club just off Berkeley square so was quite handy. ^{It was one of Shakespeare's famous haunts.}

This morning we went down & through Westminster Abbey which was very beautiful & old. This afternoon I met Bill Woodley who had to do some military M/T work outside of town & was driving so I went with him to see more of the town. Lieut. Sandy MacArthur was also along representing the R.C.O.C. so we had a great old visit during the trip. We went to Pindie's for dinner & then "pub-crawling" to about 5

different spots in down-town London & then
home to bed - quite a satisfactory day.

Feb. 25 (Thur) This morning went up to
Canadian R.A.F. H.Q. at Lincoln's Inn Fields to see
the Sr. Engineering officer - Mr Brearley. & this
afternoon went to a matinee variety show - "News
comes to Town" in the old Palladium theatre at
Oxford Circus. Tonight I met Mac. under Nelson's
statue in Trafalgar Sq. & we went to a nearby
bar for a visit - unfortunately, I left his rum
back in Bournemouth not knowing I would be
able to see him in London so I guess he's out of
luck this time. There, he had arranged to meet
a girl friend he has managed to pick up named
Connie Ogburn - not that he has gone back on Pinkie
at all but just to fill in spare time - she is
a very nice girl too. Then we went to a
couple of other bars & had a great time talking
over old times & so on home to bed again.

Feb. 26 (Fri). Today we got up early & took a
train up to Cambridge where we arrived shortly
after 10.00 a.m. We walked around the quaint
little old town seeing all the Universities &
Colleges & then went to a place called the
"copper kettle" for lunch. Everyone boards in here

and each college man wears a huge long scarf knitted in his college colours - one end dangles to about the waist in front, then twice around the neck & down to the seat at the back - quite an affair - especially since the recognized method of locomotion here is on bicycles & it is quite a sight to see them all steaming along to classes with these scarves waving in the breeze.

Just before lunch a girl dressed in slacks & an old sweater & riding a bike stopped us on the street - seeing our Canada badges - and said she was over here at University from Saskatchewan & would we like to come to her boarding place for tea? we found out after, she is over here getting her Ph.D. in Philosophy so I guess is a lot smarter than she looks. She directed ^{us} to our restaurant & also to a Red Cross Club which arranged tours for visitors through the colleges which we immediately took advantage of. It certainly is a wonderful spot with the famous Avon River curving around among the colleges & ~~many~~ ^{many} little stone arched bridges which with the buildings are just the same as they were centuries ago. First we went through Magdalene college which is one of the oldest famous for having had Samuel Pepys as a student

as well as many other famous men. Directly across the narrow street from the college entrance was a rickety old pub with thatched roof and all. It was just exactly what I have seen reproduced so many times in the movies - an old road house with cobblestone court yard & stables right at the side. It was sort of a white stucco with traces of old beams & logs showing through here and there & completely trimmed from top to bottom with flat wood strips painted black & forming the front area into large rectangular panels. There were a host of chimneys scattered all over the roof - each one twisted and bent & no two leaning at quite the same angle. Our guide mentioned that it was one of the oldest buildings in town & was there before the colleges were started.

Next we went up to old Trinity College & were conducted through by its headmaster - one of the most famous of present-day writers and historians (I've ^{Traveler} forgotten his name) but it was quite an honor anyway we found out later. Trinity has had many famous men including Sir Isaac Newton there & their small museum is full of some of their early inventions & discoveries altho' most of the valuable ones have been taken away for safe keeping.

We also ducked into King's College & saw the beautiful old King's College Chapel but unfortunately all the famous stained glass windows have also been removed for safe keeping. Shortly after 4 we went to tea (Nelly Calvert) was her name & there were a lot of people there who treated us royally & were very hospitable & invited us back to stay if we could ever get away on leave. We caught the 7.00 o'clock train back to London & so to bed.

Feb. 27. (Sat). Caught the early train to Bournemouth & reported in just under the deadline at 12.00 noon. We got installed in rooms in a new hotel - the famous Royal Bath Hotel right on the cliff looking over the sea. We had a swell room on the third floor with fireplace, wash basin & a wonderful view - I took some snapshots from here & hope they turn out. We have been lectured incessantly on what to do in case of one of these tip-and-run raids where Jerry comes over & shoots up the streets & the main idea is to dive for the nearest cover & lay down flat keeping your stomach off the ground to lessen the concussion from nearby bombs & keep your head covered for protection from falling pieces of flash from our own guns & enemy

seem to get killed & injured from the barrage
let loose by our own guns. Anyway this
afternoon we had an air raid alarm & of course
didn't pay much attention to it as usual until
suddenly we heard A.A. guns on the Isle of Wight
- which we can see dimly from our window & then
our own guns started just west of us. From the
window we could see flashes but nothing else
& then a spitfire came roaring along just above the
rooftops & he was really moving (about 400 mph. at
a guess). Shortly after we saw two specks
tearing away toward France with the Spitfire
hot after them but we never heard whether he got
them or not - anyway it ^{was} quite exciting for a while
but rather disappointing in a way.

Feb. 28 (Sun) - Our posting came in to-day as we
expected & we are to leave again for London tomorrow
morning & then on up to No. 6 Group H.Q. (Bombu Command)
at Henton-on-Ouse - Yorkshire. We hastily repacked
again which is getting to be a tiresome job & got our
papers all signed & travel warrants, cleared etc.
Two more air raid alarms to-day.

March 1st Mon. Caught the 9.00 a.m. train & arrived
at Waterloo station at 2.00 pm. - had lunch &
transferred our luggage to King's Cross station where

we are to catch the famous Flying Scotsman train which goes to Edinburgh & passes through York. I let the rest of the boys look after my luggage while I hopped on a tube & found my way back to our club where I had left my rubbers. We were all posted to Linton except Mike Miquelon, Jim Loomis & Gord Turner who stayed at H.Q. in London. Mike & Jim went to different squadrons. The remaining six of us arrived in York about 7.00 p.m. in the midst of the blackout. Checked our luggage & took a taxi to Linton - about 10 miles out. Here we arranged supper & got a place to sleep.

March 2nd (Tues). It turns out that Linton is just a station & not H.Q. at all - it has been shifted to Allerton about 15 miles away in an old baronets' castle so we aren't finished our travels yet. We got M.T. this time & travelling through some very pretty rolling country we arrived at Allerton & the castle - this one wasn't very old but was quite a place anyway with the remains of an old moat & everything. Here we saw Sgt. Jimmy Millar who gave us our separate postings - I'm to go with Norm Cuke to 1659 conversion Unit flying Halifaxes while Bill Boone is going to 408 Sqn. as electrical engineer - both these squadrons are on the same station at Leeming, Yorkshire so we still

are sticking together. Bob Balas goes to Middleton -
St. George. & Bryce Dickey to Topcliffe - 405 Sqn. & I
can't remember the others but they are all only
10 or 15 miles apart. We had lunch here &
got back to York by 3.00 pm. Caught another train
heading north & arrived at Leeming Bar eventually,
where we took more M.T. to the station. At last my
travelling will be over for a while & I'll be able to
unpack completely again. Bill & I got accommodation
in the married quarters & I've got a nice little
room to myself. The Mess is very comfortable
& the meals excellent so it looks pretty good to me.

March 3rd (Wed) - This morning we reported to $\frac{3}{4}$
Burrill the RAF-C.T.O. & he seems very nice. Norm
Coke is to be Nat. Adj. & I have charge of the
16 dispersals in Servicing Flight. By a coincidence,
the O.C. Servicing Flight is Harry Dawson who
was at Aero. School - tenth entry, so we are
both in the same office & it becomes very confusing
with two F/O Dawson's but we have a lot of fun
anyway. We spent the day wandering about
& getting the lay of the land. There are five Sqn.
- 408 have two, 1659 have two & contractors have one.
Our sqdn. is to put crews through a set course
converting them to Halifax Bombers & feeding the various

operational squadrons around here so it is tough work doing "circuits & bumps" & takes a lot of maintenance on the aircraft which were not built for such treatment. These Halifaxes are certainly huge after having worked on Dolges which are our largest training a/c in Canada. They have a wing span of 98'-10" & are 70'-1" long. Carry a bomb load of 6½ tons & a crew of 8 making a total all-up weight of 60000 lbs. or 30 tons. They have 8 machine guns - 4 in a tail turret, two in a mid-upper turret & two in a nose turret & the crew is composed of pilot, observer & second pilot, Bombardier, Navigator, Radio operator, Flight engineer & two gunners. It has 4 Merlin V8 engines & cruises at around 200 mph. so is quite an aircraft. It takes at least two days to do a minor inspection & about two weeks for a major so entails a lot of work. Our Unit is composed of two flights each with 8 aircraft in two separate dispersal areas situated on a perimeter taxi strip around the outskirts of the field & we have 23 a/c altogether. The maintenance set up is very much like what I have been used to so it won't take me long to settle down altho I'm going to find it hard to get used to sizes & quantities - for instance a fill up with oil means 110 gals & a filling

with petrol means well over 1500 gals!

March 4. (Thu). To day I got introduced to the C.T.O. & a lot of the boys I'll be working with. Norm Luke is going to be Tech. Adj. while I'm going to be in Servicing Squadron & doubling with No. 4. Dawson of all people. He was in the 10 entry at Caro school & we were always getting our mail mixed up there. I see I mentioned this yesterday but it's still going to be confusing. Norm & I are sharing a large double room in the married quarters and it isn't too bad - especially after we get through scavenging chairs, tables, mirrors etc. which I've found is quite the thing to do in the Air Force. The day was spent mainly in roaming around, & getting acquainted with the N.C.O.'s & men. I know from experience that first impressions are very important and a good & pleasant front should be shown to get the liking and co-operation of the men later on. Consequently, I was very careful to turn on the personality so to speak (what there is of it) and of course to be natural at the same time. It works like a charm as I've found so many times before and I believe most of the lads liked me right off the bat - they seem like a swell bunch of men. I also went over the aircraft from stem to stern to get the general layout but it's going to take a lot of study & experience

to get the details

March 5 (Fri.) I got an airmail letter and St. Valentine's Card from Ruth to-day but still none from home. Travelled all over the dispersed to-day on the back of Harry's motorcycle. 408 Operational Squadron is here with us on this station & are carrying out ops. just about every night - 8 & ten aircraft at a time. They sure are doing a terrific amount of damage over the channel. They were in the big raid on Essen last night & lost one - along with other squadrons they have dumped 2000 tons in the last two nights & you can imagine the damage when the terrific pasting Coventry got which almost wiped out the town was only caused by 185 tons. It is very interesting in the Mess, hearing the aircrews talk about their various experiences with flack, dodging night fighters & having miraculous escapes. Our A flight commander is S/L Langton - a swell RAF pilot with D.F.C. while B flight is S/L Hill - 22 yrs. old & RCAF. ^{DFM} - both have done over 30 ops. & are on their rest period. Our Sqdn. C.O. is W/C Turnbull - D.F.C. - 24 yrs old & went from Sgt. to W/C in 9 months - quite a lad & the same age as I - the ground crew don't get any breaks as far as promotions or honour goes & I get a little envious at times but realize that I am

doing the job for which I am best trained & I guess that's the only way to win this war. We had a muster parade this afternoon & the Group Captain C.O. came down to congratulate the Con Unit on establishing a record for the whole Bomber Command in number of hours flown last month - just over 950 hrs. which is really remarkable considering the usual February weather. This is the mildest winter they have had over here in 40 years & yet last winter the Canadian boys say it was really terrific - so damp & cold. It is still damp & cold here in the mornings and at night but isn't so bad during the day. I notice it mainly in that my hands & feet seem to be cold all the time & it is usually colder indoors than out - there is of course no central heating & coal is rationed so much that there are very few fireplaces lit. However, I'm wearing my long underwear again - I gave it up while down in the balmy Bournemouth - & I'm surviving

O.K.

March 6. (Sat) To-day was a red letter day since we had an egg for breakfast - my first since I arrived in England. We don't do too badly for meals but notice the lack of fresh meat, milk & vegetables. There is always bread - a sort of heavy, tan coloured kind made largely from barley & oats flour. We get no butter

But there is lots of margarine & altho' it is quite tasteless, it serves the purpose. Meat is quite scarce & each portion is only a few square inches & boy I really do miss it a lot since I usually eat so much of it. There are lots of potatoes & the staple vegetable is boiled cabbage & Brussel Sprouts with the odd serving of carrots. There is practically no milk & no fruit at all. But tea & coffee aren't so bad. The desserts or sweets as they say here are mainly ^{steam} puddings or rice etc. with a sort of custard sauce which is always present. We get prunes occasionally & sometimes rhubarb which are very welcome & very occasionally a small piece of cake. All in all, we do probably twice as well as the average civilian so I guess can't pick much - especially when my long looked for parcels start arriving from home - I know mother will think up a lot of swell surprises as she always does.

I spent the day getting down to work & learning something about these aircraft & am now starting to pull my weight with the squadron.

March 7 (Sun) - Went to church on the station here this morning to hear Dr. Stuart Parker of St. Andrews United Church in Toronto give a very good sermon. Then we heard a lecture on V.D. which is about the 5th so far - it is very predominant over here & is getting to

be a serious handicap to the war effort.

The rest of the day was spent as usual - work from 9.00 a.m. till 12.30; & then again from 2.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. when we stop for tea & sandwiches at the mess. If we are busy we go back again to work, but more often stay right in the mess until dinner time at 7.00 p.m. Then we can go to the station show showing ancient Hollywood pictures, play billiards or table tennis, or sit in front of the fire & read papers, magazines or books which come in quite frequently - they are usually old but very acceptable.

March 8 (Mon). Worked as usual to-day & went to a movie tonight. We lost another a/c in the big raid last night - this was the pilot's 29th trip & he only had one more to go but that's the way it is - the mess was a little quieter tonight since he was very well liked & the boys spent a lot of time recounting how he was last seen spiralling downwards in flames.

March 9 (Tues). Work progressing very nicely. To-night we had an air raid - my first up in this district. We were just sitting quietly in the mess talking when suddenly all the lights went out & the girl's voice over the loudspeaker system located in every building was heard - "Broadcast control calling, broadcast control calling, - enemy aircraft

overhead, enemy aircraft overhead - take cover immediately - take cover immediately! End of message. Everyone quietly filed out & down the stone steps to the underground shelter & there we sat for almost an hour before the welcome all clear sounded. I was quite disappointed at not seeing or feeling anything but maybe it was just as well. All our aircraft returned safely from ops. last night - eight of them over Laurent.

March 10 (Wed). Well, up till today everything has been quite rosy but this afternoon I unfortunately witnessed one of the most appalling sights I ever hope to see & I'm sure I'll never forget it as long as I live. About 2.30 pm. there was a scurry out in the hangar & suddenly the sergeant dashed in with the news of a bad crash which had just taken place just off the end of No. 4 runway. Harry, & I & our two sergeants immediately jumped on our bikes & hastened out to where a large crowd was collecting & a plume of ^{black} smoke was rising high^{ly} just behind a fringe of scrub trees about 3 fields over from the outskirts of the aerodrome. There were fire-engines, ambulances & rescue crews coming from all directions but in a more or less orderly rush. When we arrived out at

the scene of the crash, the service police with
drum guns had dispersed the crowd back to
the hangars & the only ones allowed near were
officers & others who had legitimate business there.
We, of course, have to investigate all crashes & so
had no difficulty getting close. I remember questioning
an eyewitness who told of seeing the aircraft spin
in from about 300 feet after stalling on a turn
- making two complete spirals before hitting with
a terrific crash & bursting out into flames.
It was one of my ships in B flight - "Q for Queenie"
with eight Canadians on board. The whole thing was
just a seething mass of flames, all four engines were
half buried in the hard ground, the wings had
folded back & the fuselage had a broken back. All
the front section was just a mass of junk but was
not on fire. Rescue workers were busy burrowing
around & finding bodies. I saw the pilot's remains
taken out first & laid on a stretcher - the head was
gone completely except for part of the lower jaw &
the cockpit was splattered with bits of blood,
bone, hair & brain tissue - he had hit his head
with terrific force against the instrument panel.
Next they found the flight engineer & the tail
gunner both badly battered. The rest of the crew

must have been in the rest position in the central part of the fuselage & it was blazing from end to end in spite of the huge streams of foamite extinguisher fluid being poured on but gradually was brought under control. In the meantime, rescue men in asbestos suits & helmets were burrowing around in the flaming debris. One suddenly waved excitedly & both the Group Captain & the Wing Commander who were nearby dressed in regular uniforms decided in & worked side by side with the other men lifting red hot sections of panels & stringers with their bare hands while they extricated another black charred body. It was pretty horrible all right & several of the boys got so sick they couldn't work. I then watched the other four bodies located & removed one by one & layed out on stretchers - they were horribly grotesque since they were "cooked to a frazzle" as someone put it in various sitting & crumpled-up positions. It affected me a lot, being my first experience with sudden death, but I remember calming myself & trying to investigate the position of various control & trim tabs etc instead of letting my eyes wander to the rescue work. The three things that shook me the most were first

the very peculiar, penetrating & sickly nauseating odour of burning flesh. The second was when the M.O., walking around, ~~for~~ nudged a blob of bloody looking stuff on the ground with his foot & then said matter-of-factly - "Hmph - brain tissue" - nearby was a charred piece of a leather flying helmet with tufts of human hair lining the inside of it. The third was when the stretcher bearers were carrying out the last body, a blanket covered the remains except for the black, knarled looking hand which projected past the blanket. In traversing the rough ground this hand fell off just above the wrist & lay there still smoking on the ground until someone kindly doused it with a shovelfull of earth. We couldn't do much until the crash cooled off so went back to work & tried to look normal but nevertheless, there was a great rush for the bar in the mess when we quit that night. I went to the show th^e night to stop the visions of the various bodies from appearing before my eyes every once in a while.

March 11. (Thurs) To-day we all got back to work as usual ~~to-day~~. We went out to investigate the crash but couldn't decide much. It didn't look so bad to-day but that smell was

still there & the splattered cockpit along with pieces of charred & burnt uniforms, burst open shoes etc. were bad enough so that we didn't stay any longer than necessary. I know one thing, I won't be so curious next time & will take care not to arrive on the scene too soon after a crash.

We lost another kite last night on operations but it was a very successful raid at that on the "Happy Valley" of the Ruhr. We also had another air raid tonight but instead of going inside the shelters I went outside to see the fun - strictly against orders but who is to know in the Blackout? They put on a good show & dropped flares first which lit up the ground as bright as day & as far as you could see in all directions but more particularly over toward the city of York about 20 miles from here. We could see the flashes of the AA. guns, & the tracer bullets as well as the bursting flak - looking very much like the fireworks at the CNE. on a much grander scale. There were about 30 searchlights too but I never saw any o/c although occasionally heard them. Once in a while I'd see a very bright flash on the ground & then I'd feel the ground shake a

little & then would come the muffled thud of the bomb explosion. It only lasted about $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour & was very interesting (from this distance away anyway).

March 12. (Fri.) We had 10 a/c. out again snops last night & all came back safely except that one folded up on the runway & came quite a cropper but no one hurt. It had been badly shot up with flak & one UC was broken.

We found out to-day that our whole unit is to move lock, stock & barrel to another station at Popcliffe about fifteen miles from here while 405 sqdn. flying Wimpies (Wellingtons) are coming here. As a result we had quite a binge in the mess here to-night. Red Dawson went out of the room during the height of the fun & then came back with two fingers badly mashed up & he still doesn't know how he did it - probably caught it in a door somewhere.

March 13 (Sat.) We started moving to-day & I, helping to get things rounded up, borrowed 3/4 Langton's motorcycle & tooted around on it most of the day & had a lot of fun - I've never driven one before but had no trouble learning.

March 14 (Sun). We moved all the a/c to-day - flew over the whole 23 + had 100% serviceability for about the first time in history + were roundly congratulated for it. Some of the a/c of course weren't in A1 condition + there was one old kite we had for instructional purposes only + not used for flying - but rather than strip it down + tow it over by road, the W/c C.O. volunteered to fly it over as it was - we kept our fingers crossed the whole time + he finally made it OK.

I'm still rooming with Norm Cake in the married quarters here at Topcliffe now. The meals were better back at Leeming but are fair enough here + we have much greater access to nearby towns etc. since we are only 10 minutes walk from the railway station.

March 15 (Mon) We spent the day getting settled down, looking after the aircraft, arranging offices + it was a hard day of work but got a lot accomplished.

Went to the show on the station here tonight for a rest.

March 16 (Tues). To-day Harry + I got our office painted up - the system here is every man for himself + the more stuff you can steal or scrounge the more comfortable you are - incidentally our office is very nice + is the envy of even the flight commanders so we didn't do too badly. There was a heavy fog all day so no flying.

done & give us a chance to catch up & get most of the bikes serviceable.

March 17 (Wed). St. Patrick's day but you'd never know it around here - fog again to-day - strange as it seems - I've been over here for a month & 3 days & still haven't seen a drop of rain except for one little drizzle when I was down in London & this is supposed to be the rainy ~~spring~~ season - however they seem to get plenty of fog. There is always a ground mist in the morning, - sometimes it lifts & sometimes not but it sure does cut down our flying times.

Harry's hand was giving him trouble to-day & was swollen up twice normal size - the M.O. had to lance it. - he hasn't touched a drink since.

We had an engineering staff gathering to-night at the local pub in Popcliffe - the first time I've been off the station. S/L Huys & his wife, Ralph Doehler of 424 Sqdn. Can Brown (electrical engineer) of our 13 thentry, Norm, Harry, Freddy Darlich & myself. The pub is called the "Leg of Mutton" & is very old & quaint. It is about 3 miles from the station & we travelled to it on our bikes. Since we were the sole guests we all went out to the kitchen to keep warm around the old fashioned fire place - complete with pot hook, attached oven & all & had a good time sitting around & talking

& drinking beer.

March 18 (Thurs): Things went along much as usual to-day although it has turned very cold & raw & no flying was done. Every time I go to bed I remind myself of Kay since besides my pyjamas I am wearing a pair of white wool socks & my heavy red & grey sweater-coat & sometimes even spread my coat over the foot of the bed. It really gets cold & no fooling - especially if I am sitting around writing or reading. To-day was another red-letter day in that we had another egg for breakfast - we should get them more often here since we have a flock of our own chickens.

I went to another show to-night for something to do.

March 19 (Fri.) To-day we swung a deal & got a motorcycle to facilitate travelling around to the dispersals. There was more fog this morning but we flew some this afternoon. Tonight my Sgt Lumsden in servicing flight phoned us up & invited us to a station dance being held at their Mess. We went & I danced a couple of times - the first time since I left Toronto - with a couple of W.A.A.F.S. - nothing very exciting. However, there was lots of beer & we ended up with a great old sing-song. I have to learn.

an entirely new batch to keep up with them over here.
March 20. (Sat.). We flew to-day a little but it
wasn't very good & I spent a lot of time dashing
around on the motorcycle. I've also driven a couple
of the English cars here - little Austers' & Hillman's.
On one the gear shift is exactly the same as ours
except that it is on the left side & it didn't take
me long to get used to it. The other has 4 forward
speeds & so was a little more difficult but I find
that the novelty of the left-hand side of the road
traffic is wearing off & it comes quite naturally.
I suppose by the time I get home again, driving on
the right side will look funny to me.

I still haven't had any mail from home but
look expectantly every day for some to come. - I sure
hope I get some news (& parcels) soon - I'm down to
less than four packages of cigarettes.)

March 21. (Sun) - The first day of spring & it really
turned out lovely & warm & we flew everything we
had all day. WO, McMaster arrived to-day fresh
from home & will take over from Sgt. Lumsden, who is
very good but will probably be posted out soon since he is
R.A.F. His F/s. came thru to night.

Went to the show again to night for entertainment

March 22 (Mon). I went on ops last night & all came back safely. Met Jack South to-day whose brother I knew at Levidale, also since his been here two lads in my flight have asked me if I came from Toronto since they seemed to recognize me altho' I couldn't say the same for them. One of them lived on Doel Ave. so I guess he knew me all right. I also bumped into another pilot I knew at Pingal. We flew hard all day to-day & tonight about 25 of us went back to Leeming to see a special boxing exhibition being held there. Also had quite a reunion with the boys who came over on the boat with us including myself, Bill Boone, Bryce Dickey, Norm Cook, Jack Adams, George Broomfield & Jack Bramfield. The show was pretty good & it was good entertainment for the night.

March 23 (Tues). We had 9 & Leeming 25 out on ops last night & all came back safely. Out of 380 ac altogether in the raid, only one Lare. was shot down which is quite a remarkable feat & all to the good. They are certainly keeping up a heavy blasting these days. It's Lunden come back from a day off. & brought us each an egg so we will have them cooked for us in the mess for breakfast - he got them from his girl friend - a farmer's daughter - It's a good racket - I think I'll try it one of these days. To-day was more like

spring than ever altho' there was a fog this morning
We got 7 a/c away on ops to-night but the fog
has closed in so I guess they'll have to be
diverted to some other station down south when
they come back. I spent the evening darning socks
& then went over to the Mess for a game of billiards.
Incidentally the ADC. in chief of the R.C.A.F. Overseas
was visiting here to-day but didn't inspect our
hangars just because we had them all cleaned up
& ready for him - such is luck. He is Air Marshall
Edwards.

(Wed) March 24. Last night we had about 8 bites
from W24 squadron (Wellington's) on ops & all got back
safely but had to be diverted to various airfields
all over the country since we were closed in here - it's
risky business since they carry so little spare fuel -
just enough to make the trip & that's all, the rest is
loaded up to capacity with bombs. We did very little
flying to-day since it was damp & cold & threatened
rain all day.

To-night I came up from the hangars early, had
a bath & shave & set out with Harry & Jack Adams
for Harrogate - about 40 mins. train ride from here.
We had a nice dinner of fish & chips & set out to get
acquainted with the town before dark & blackout.

difficulties. It is a very pretty place with narrow & hilly cobbled streets & large old hotels & "spas" all over the place. In peace time it is a famous spot for its mineral baths & hot springs etc. for rheumatism & so forth & so is laid out very nicely. Now it is the H.Q. for part of the Air Ministry & is full of girls - stenographers & secretaries etc. - who outnumber the men about 5 to 1 - that's the main reason we went there of course - we'd heard so much about it.

We went to about 3 different pubs & then to a dance at the Salisbury hotel where everyone goes stag & had a very nice time. I had two dances with a very pretty dark haired girl named Jeanna - I don't know the rest of it yet - but made a date with her anyway for Sat. night - a big dance being held at the Royal Bath & it should be good - I also got her to get a girl for Harry to make up the party. I just got that arranged & then had to dash off to catch the last train back here again at 10.30 so it was a very successful but short evening. Harry got tomorrow off so is probably still dancing as he is staying there for the night.

March 25 (Thur). Well, we had our first English rain to-day & it kept up a steady drizzle all day long - not heavy - just a very fine penetrating drizzle which soaks everything in short order & makes everything

damp, cold & miserable - However it gave us a chance to catch up on our serviceability a lot.

We were getting lots of news to-day about the big battle going on in North Africa & it looks like we are doing all right. The morale of the average person I've met here is very good & most, surprisingly enough, are quite confident that the Germans will be finished by this time next year. It seems very optimistic to me & I give it at least two more years but I guess there is no harm in hoping. It also sets me wondering as to just when I'll be able to get home again - it seems so darn far away - especially with no letters arriving yet. It should be a lot better when they start getting here.

March 26 (Fri.). We had a very busy day to-day with lots to keep us busy so it went very quickly - I like it best that way. The weather was very good & is starting to warm up quite a bit - cold is still quite raw in the mornings. Went to the show to-night with Jack Clark (P/O) who has been out in Africa for the past 18 mos. flying Hurricanes & he had lots of very interesting stories to tell.

March 27 (Sat.) 1/2. Bill Boyce got posted here as C.T.O. for the Con Unit to-day & I hear rumours that I will soon be getting moved to Dalton - 428 sq. ft. flying Wirpico (Wellington - aft. J. Wellington Wirpy the

hamburger fanatic in Popeye cartoons). It's all right with me
 as long as I get a more responsible position. It was
 a real spring day to-day & I took the opportunity to get
 a lot of air by frequently finding reasons to sail out to
 the dispersals around the perimeter track on the motorcycle.
 Tonight was our date in Harrogate & usually we quit
 work at 4:30 in time to get cleaned up & catch the
 5:30 train. However tonight I was very busy getting out
 the "Q" form at that time so we decided to take the
 later train at 6:45 which, F/S Lumsden assured us, was
 running every day altho' we had never heard of it.
 After tea we got all cleaned up, went down to the
 station at 6:30 & found no train - it runs every day
 except Saturdays - Now we were really stuck - I only know
 Jeanna's first name for one thing (her last one was long &
 hard to pronounce & she wouldn't spell it for me when I asked -
 I believe she is Italian descent but very nice anyway.)
 - I don't know where she lives & she has no phone. Also
 I was supposed to meet her on the corner in front of the
 post-office at 7:30 p.m. & there was no way to get in
 touch with her & tell her I couldn't make it.
 We thought of hitch-hiking & tried to get a bus but all
 to no avail so here I'm stuck with the day off
 tomorrow & no transportation off the station - also
 standing up the first date I have made in England.

To make matters worse, I gave her 10^s for tickets for the dance & so that's gone too - what a life! I'll have to get in touch with her Monday & apologise. Instead, I came back here, had supper & went down to the pub with the rest of the "plumbers" as we are nick-named & drank beer & talked all evening - very uninteresting as compared with a date for a swell dance.

We sent 15 a/c out last night & all came back ok. fortunately - the target was St. Nazaire the submarine base. To-night we sent 15 more off quite early & right now I hear two of them back already (2.30 a.m.) - no 3, here comes another - they will be coming back one at a time. spaced over the next hour or so & I hope they all make it - I think it was Essen again to-night. March 28 (Sun). All came back safe & sound last night again, - we have been very fortunate lately. Nothing very exciting happened to-day except that we got in 5 new aircraft bringing our total strength up to 27 kites. We also got in about 150 more Canadian ground crew which are gradually taking over from the R.A.F. as they get posted out a few at a time. We went to the show to-night & saw a very good picture about the invention of the Spitfire.

as played by Leslie Howard in "The First of the Few". Also received 3 letters to-day which of course I was overjoyed to get especially the one from Miltie - the first one direct. The other two of course were nice to get too from Reeth & from Aunt Aggie.

March 29. (Monday)

Nothing very exciting happened to-day since the weather was very poor. We are trying with might & main to break our flying time record of last month which was 950 hours & the highest in #6 Bomber Group. We are close to it now so want to try & break 1000 hours if possible & it all depends on the weather in the next two days.

March 30. (Tuesday) - We had 15 a/c out on ops last night and last one. They took part in a big raid on Berlin with about 500 a/c of which 33 were lost which is pretty high as it always is when Berlin is the target. One crew which I knew at Seeming were also missing but we got word to-day that they had made a forced landing in Sweden & were interned there. The weather was a little better to-day altho' very windy & we only have 35 hours to go to break the 1000. One of our bites (B-beer) came back to-day with one prop smashed & holes & cuts in the under side of the fuselage with the marks of some sort of a

cable. We haven't been able to tell yet whether it hit a balloon cable, or was low flying & caught a radio antennae or clothes-line but the crew were pretty lucky at that. I got a letter from Gina to-day with my 10^s enclosed & she sounds a little put out about being stood-up Sat. night & I don't blame her a bit.

March 31. (Wed.) I decided to take tomorrow off & go to Harrogate so packed my haversack & caught the 5.30 train with Norm Green. We had dinner & a couple of beers & then went to the dance at the Salisbury Hotel where I met Gina last week. Her full name is Gina Marchini & she is Italian descent. Her father is in an internment camp so I sure pick great company! However she is very pretty with jet black hair & flashing eyes & a decided English accent & is really very nice. I met her again to-night & explained the whole situation & altho she was a little leery at first, I think I fixed it up O.K. Tomorrow I'm going to sleep in uncut moon for the first time since I left home & boy am I going to enjoy it.

April 1st (Thurs) I slept till 12.45 to-day & since it was raining, I went to the show & saw Mickey Rooney in a "Yank at Eton" which was very

good. After that, I walked all over town seeing the sights & met Jim to night for dinner to get fully re-instated in her good books. She was on duty as fire-watcher at 8:00 so we couldn't go anywhere but spent the time talking - mostly about Canada in which she was very interested. I caught the 10-30 train back here & am now all set to go to work again. Norm Cuke tells me that we ended yesterday's flying with 999 hours & 25 minutes so last night S/L Langton took Harry Dawson & Bill Boggs up for a flip after dark just to break the 1000 hour mark - I wish I'd been here to get in on it.

It was sure dark out to night with no stars out & not a light to be seen anywhere. I'm getting to be like a cat in finding my way in the dark - especially in a strange city like Harrogate with its narrow twisting streets - it's quite an experience but I'm sure glad I brought my flashlight as it is indispensable - It's funny how one misses the lights so much & it's almost a major effort to go anywhere after dark due to all the difficulties involved. Incidentally I made two purchases to-day a large scale map of England so I'll know where I am & a wedge cap costing 30^s in order to save my

good one while working around the aircraft.

April 2nd. (Fri.) Well, we had another crash or "prang" as they say over here to-day. A H24 again. Wellington came in too hot & overshot the runway. He touched down about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way along ran off the end, ballooned over a ditch, through a wooden fence & ended up on his nose in a farmer's field just outside my hangar - nobody hurt but the aircraft is practically a complete wash out. It appears that the pilot had not checked his alt carefully enough & the Pitot head cover was left on giving him no instruments & thus no I.A.S. - He touched down doing about 135 mph. Then one of our pitot burst a tire at the end of the runway & had to be fixed & moved out of the way in a hurry while F. "Freddy" was circling overhead with only one wheel down - everything happens at once. He made two approaches & got a red flare O.K. & then came in safely at last on both wheels - the emergency up lock had been left on! Lots of excitement to-day.

April 3rd. (Sat.) To-day a Wiggly came in low shooting up our field & sailed down the runway about 5 feet off with no wheels down - very dangerous fun. Shortly after a big Black

plume of smoke appeared on the horizon & it turned out to be another bad prong - the same plane (from 428 at East Moor) still low flying hit a high tension wire & then the top of a hill & rolled down and over and catching on fire at the same time. There were 5 regular crew & 2 ground crew passengers & all were pretty lucky - 4 very seriously hurt & burned & the others walked away from it. Two women in a nearby field very bravely dragged them out safely one by one. I didn't see it myself but heard all about it at the Sat. night "Plumbers Meeting" at the "Shoulder of Mutton" pub in Topcliffe to-night. We raided Exon last night again with 12 aircraft - all safe.

April 4th (Sun) - Harry Dawson left for 9 days leave to-day so I'll take over while he's away - I've just been aching for a chance to show what I can do. Sixteen ac took off to-night & it's quite a thrilling sight to see them all take off one by one & circle around until the whole squadron is lined up & then away they go. It looks like Hamburg to-night but don't know for sure.

April 5th (Mon) - Well, all the bites got back ok. again last night. - I guess it was a pretty big show since there were 21 missing altogether from

other stations - we were just lucky - the target was Essen & it really got a posting from the accounts going around to-day. It's great to have a real part in the news and know all about it before the BBC news broadcast at noon & know that it is the same thing the people back home will be hearing that night. I worked pretty hard to-day & went back again tonight just to keep the boys cracking & get our serviceability up. Spent the rest of the evening playing knock rummy & won 25/6^d

April 6. (Tues) - To-day we had gale warnings and a heavy wind came up making it necessary for us to keep a close watch on our aircraft. We put in 69½ flying hours yesterday which is the record so far. This morning at ten o'clock E-Edward was making a 3 engine-landing but due to the wind, he overshot & touched down about ¾ of the way down the runway. Then I guess he "panic'd" a little & decided to go around again so he hauled up the undercarriage before he had flying speed & slithered along for about ¼ of a mile on his belly in the grass beside the runway. It was a Capt AC. crash with no one hurt. Three props "went for a Burton" & one

broken blade flew up & through the flight engineer's position but fortunately missed the bloke standing there. The belly took quite a beating & it will need a complete new nose section.

We didn't try to lift it with our special emergency lifting bags due to the high wind so just dragged it, as it was, the rest of the way into the hangar with 2 of our hefty petrol bowzers & about 4 towing cables which broke about every 100 feet - more darn fun. Also got a letter (no. 10) to-day from Kay & written on March 31st. which is very good timing.

April 7 Wed. - The wind continued more strongly than ever & reached 60 mph. in bursts. I had to keep all available crews ready to keep facing the kites into the wind as it changed direction. All controls had to be locked & everything movable tied down. It lifted the roofs off several sheds & the tops off the engine stands & I was worrying a good deal about how to hold down the kites since once they got started rolling it would take more than mere ropes & manpower to stop them. However, they are so darn big & heavy they road out the gate ok altho' one jumped a crotch, rolled

Loft elevator

around sideways & bashed in the L.E. of the
stbd. tail fin & the stbd flap, on a truck parked
nearby. We didn't fly at all of course to-day
& had a little bit of a beer binge to-night
even flying was scrubbed.

~~March~~ April 8, 1943 (Thu) Well to-day was Mother's
birthday & I've wondered about her a lot & how
& what everyone at home is doing - could be slightly
homesick I guess but nothing serious. Things
were rather hectic to-day or "scratching" as
they say here with the boys flying everything
they could lay their hands on. I had to start
throwing my weight around a little to-day
since inspections are starting to pile up & I
want a good showing made while Harry is
away. I have about 350 men directly under
me so it is quite a job, but ⁱⁿ good experience
& very interesting. Spent the evening at a good
movie here on the station. 424 Sqdn. have 10
bites out to-night with all their best bites &
crews for something "special" - I don't know
what but will probably find out tomorrow.

April 9, 1943 (Fri) Well, to-day I really got the
boys cracking down there & we really piled up
some flying hours. We actually had more bites

serviceable than they can fly. I also had the opportunity to-day to buy a dozen fresh eggs from my flight Sgt. on the black market scale - 4⁵ a dozen. However, I figured it was worth it & got them so I should be able to have fried eggs for breakfast for the next week - thrill of a lifetime! Tonight I played brock running again & found I'm getting to be quite a shark at it - sat in with three of the local experts & won 10 shillings which wasn't bad altho' I must admit, I was very lucky. The weather was sunny & warm to-day & I believe I'm going to enjoy this English summer coming on. I certainly arrived at the right time of year.

We have gone on super daylight saving here now so it is daylight until about 9.30 pm. - it sure helps a lot - the darkness hours seem much shorter over here than at home.

April 10, 1943 - (Sat.) We flew 72 hours yesterday for an all-time record so far & seem to be doing pretty well. I rushed around tonight & got away early to go to Harrogate. We had something to eat first, visited a few pubs & then went to the Salisbury Hotel again to the dance. We had a lot of fun since the girls still outnumber the boys 4 to 1. - In one girls' tag dance I had to dance with 5 different

ones all in a row - that really shows how scarce men are! I met the girl I walked home last week (not Dina, who wasn't there last night) & also picked another very pretty girl for a couple of dances. All in all, we had a very enjoyable evening & then came back on the 10.30 train.

April 11, 1943 (Sun) I was very busy again to-day getting things whipped into shape down at the flights & they are beginning to run fairly smoothly now altho' we have bags of new kits & new men coming in for our big expansion coming soon. We have 33 aircraft now with more coming & well over 1000 men.

Went to the show to night & saw 'Honky-Tonk' which was quite good. To-day there were a few visiting aircraft landed here to refuel so I took the opportunity to look them over - a Boston bomber with American 14 Cyl. twin row Cyclone Engines & also two of the newest Spitfires with 2 cannons & six M.G.'s - the first time I've seen one up close & boy do they look like toys beside these Halifaxes - you could put about 3 under each wing but they are really speedy looking. When they took off they shot up the air-drome several times about 10 feet off the ground & doing about 400 mph. & then zoomed up to go into acrobatic manoeuvres which

are certainly very pretty to watch.

April 12, 1943 (Mon) Nothing very exciting to-day - just routine work. Am starting to organize a softball league amongst the flights to help keep the lads happy.

April 13, 1943 (Tues) Harry Dawson came back from leave to-day so I guess I take a back seat again until I move again - I hear vague rumours that I'll be getting posted out to a squadron soon.

April 14, 1943 (Wed) - Sixteen Wimpies took off to-night for operations & it sure was quite a night seeing them get away.

April 15, 1943 (Thur) The target was Stuttgart last night & we lost one crew - all Canadian by the way whom I did not know. It was a pretty successful raid from all accounts although 24 were lost from the whole operation. I received my first parcel to-day from Ruth & was sent to me in "Y" depot chocolate bars, tea etc. & is very nice. Also went for my first ride in a Halifax to-day - DK 127 - G (Seagull) one of our new Mk I kits with Merlin XXII engines & with only 5 hours off time. It sure is a smooth bite. S/L Langton was pilot. I was flight engineer & did the starting, operation of fuel cocks & temperature adjustments.

Two pilots - Clark & Ross were the mid-upper and rear gunners altho' neither had ever operated a turret or fired a gun before. What a crew! - it certainly would have been funny if we had met up with a Jerry F.W. 190 or something since I imagine our goose would have been cooked right there. Anyway we had a lot of fun - wise cracking over the inter-com system etc. I also managed to spend some time up in the bomb-aimer's position just to get a good view. The countryside sure looks a lot different from the air than ours since I don't think there is a square or rectangular field in existence over here. Everyone is a different shape & it makes quite a confused but interesting pattern.

Six Wiggins got away to night for mine laying - taking it easy after the big effort last night.

April 16, 1943 (Fri.) Nothing very spectacular happened to-day. All our kites got home safely last night. 8 took off again to night bound for Stuttgart. I spent the evening playing billiards & back rummy.

April 17, 1943 (Sat.) - The work went the same as usual to-day & we are certainly piling up the

flying hours - it looks like we'll break all records again this month. I heard to-day that I have been posted here to the base station of the clutch. It is an F-10 posting to be in charge of the inspection & repair (I&R) flight. However, this I&R flight has been scrubbed from #6 Graye Bomber Command H.Q. so I am temporarily in charge of a non-existent flight. I guess I'll stay right where I am attached to 1659 Con Unit till they get things straightened out. The organization of this ~~unit~~^{group} is pretty bad & you never know what's coming next - it's mostly due to the fact that it is so young having been formed only a few months ago on Jan-1st.

There was one of our pilots reported missing from ops last night but he fooled us all & reported back safely late this morning.

To night we had a big going-away party for S/L Keyth's an C.T.O. here who has been posted & everyone got a little pie-eyed at the local pub. However, I stopped as usual before it was too late & enjoyed watching the antics of the rest.

April 18th (Sun) Well, we ran into more trouble to-day. S/L Hill our 22-year old flight commander of B flight crashed this morning in L of London - our oldest kite only 25 hours off its second major

4 were one was killed - 8 of them. I had become great friends with Howie Hill and it really shook me to think of him going like that - he was always so lively & ready for anything - he had gone his whole tour of ops, won the D.F.M. & then ended up like that. Only a couple of nights ago I remember talking about what we were going to do after the war & he was saying that he really didn't have very much to go back to.

Bill Boygs over ^{near} C.T.O. wanted to know if I'd help investigating the crash but I declined - I don't mind so much if it's fellows I don't know but when it comes to my best friends I'd rather leave it to someone else. They took off at 9:45 & crashed just south of York at 10:12 am. He was supposed to be doing two engine exercises with his pupil screw but from eye witness accounts, all 4 engines were going nicely when it happened. He was at about 1500 feet just south of York when suddenly one elevator started to flop up & down as if the linkage controls had broken. Then, obviously out of control, the plane did two complete rolls & dived straight down while the one elevator came off & landed about 150 yards away from the debris. It ploughed straight into the ground & fortunately, the boys would

never know a thing after that first smash. There were three holes in the ground. One for each of the outboard engines & one large one for the fuselage & two inner engines - these engines were almost down out of sight in the earth so they really hit hard. The fuselage had folded up like an accordion & then when it caught fire it just melted it all down into a molten mass at the bottom of the hole. They got parts of the eight bodies out but not much at that so I guess it was quite a mass. The investigation shows that one of the torque brackets on the main elevator shaft must have failed causing the plane to go out of control.

We were all pretty quiet around the mess to-day - especially since Howie was so well liked. I was supposed to see him to-day at noon when he was going to lend me a few hundred cigarettes to tide me over until my own start arriving - that's just the way it goes & tomorrow it will be more or less forgotten & no one will speak of it again if they can help it - that's the way it has to be in war-time.

To-day I got my first copy of Life Magazine which was quite welcome & to night we had another little farewell party to Sgt. Huytto who leaves to-morrow - besides after the crash, we all felt in the need of a

few drinks just to help forget.

April 19. (Mon). Things got back to normal a little to night. The investigation of the crash indicated some sort of mechanical failure - especially since one elevator was seen coming down apart from the aircraft & landed about 150 yards away. We had a special inspection of all the kites to-day and found five with torque brackets on the elevator datum hinge cracked - it's a possible cause of the crash & doesn't make us engineers feel any happier since you can't help feeling a certain sense of responsibility even though everyone knows that you can't check everything on all the aircraft all the time or they'd never have time to fly them. All the pilots were a little jittery to-day & Buck Snieder who has been through two crashes - his last a very serious one - all his crew except himself were killed while he broke an arm, a leg & 4 ribs & also smashed up his face quite badly. - had a narrow escape when one aileron seemed to lock in a downward position & he couldn't bring it up. He lost a lot of altitude & just missed a few trees before he was able to get it loose.

April 20. Tues. We broke our 1000 hour mark set last month to-day so we should do very well this month. 424 Squadron moved out to-day to Leaning

in place of 405 sqdn. who have moved down south as pathfinders - the first flare droppers who first locate targets for the heavy bombers. As a result, I moved out of the married quarters & over to the mess where I have a large double room with sink, wardrobe & all & find it a lot more comfortable. My room-mate is P/O Tommy Barracough an armament officer who has been over here two years & just got his commission. He seems like a nice fellow.

To night I was out knocking a softball around in the field just off the end of no. 4 runway & saw the closest escape I've ever seen. A new pilot on his first solo was coming in to land & we first noticed him because he seemed so high for a landing. He overshot badly & touched down very hard about half-way down the runway. He bounced up about 30 feet (my poor poor aircraft) & then down again & so on for four bumps then he decided to keep on going again & gave her full gun. By this time he was off the runway & heading straight for us with a low brick wall & hedge between us. He just cleared the wall with inches to spare & us too. I was getting all nerved to dive into the wreck & try & get a few bodies out but he fooled us & just made it - thank goodness. But it was a close thing.

April 21. Wed. - To day the weather was foggy but it didn't matter so much since flying had been called off for Howie Hill's funeral anyway. I didn't go since someone had to stay behind to be in charge down at the flights & I don't like funerals anyway. 424 Squadron have moved to Leaning now so we won't be seeing anything of the ops. for awhile except probably a few diversions. Went to the show tonight

April 22. Thur. Nothing much happened to day except that down in the Adj's office I saw a small parcel of all the personal effects of the man found in the wreck of L. I recognized Howie's cigarette case all bent & ~~crushed~~ charred but with his initials in the corner - many is the cigarette I've had out of it. We found out to day that there are 3 new squadrons opened up in the group & we are losing 96 men to help staff them - that will mean a lot more work for the boys around here. I hope it makes an opening for me too.

April 23. Fri. This is Good Friday & I really mean good since I got 12 letters all at once to day. Five from home including a lovely card from Mother & two letters from her - a letter from Don & also Aggie's letter, a card & photos from Ruth & a card from

Mrs Mac so I did all right - no parcels yet
though.

April 24th. Sat. Well May is ²⁹30 to-day & it
hardly seems possible the years are going by
so quickly - I still feel like a kid but I guess
I'm not any more. I spent the evening playing billiards
& then wrote a long letter to Ruth.

April 25th. Sun. Last night, I forgot to mention, we
received a gale warning from the Met. office so
I had to work till 10 o'clock turning all the bits
around into the wind, blowing up brake accumulators
& staking down a cat-bit & a wing on trestle.
Had to rout out the whole duty crew & 3 trestlers
to do it, but had 3/4 Knight's little Hillman van
to run around in so made out O.K. It was very
stormy & blustery all day so I'm afraid we didn't
get much flying in. Wrote a long letter home
to-night after waking up from a sound sleep after
supper. Harry Dawson got his F/L through to-day
way ahead of others who have been here a lot longer
- just because he was lucky enough to get posted to
this job where the establishment calls for a F/L.
I hope I'm as lucky but knowing me, probably
won't be able to have the chance. 424 Sqdn. aren't
going to Leeming after all but are packing up ready to

go to Tanisia (very secret gen). Also there is a big shake up at #6 grp. H.Q. with a new com unit, & two new squadrons - a Halifax & a Wimpsey sqdn forming. I hope I get a posting to one of them & get really cracking instead of playing storge to Harry - I know I'm just as good or better than he is so am anxious to have a free hand & show what I can do.

April 26. (Mon) The weather was still very poor to-day & we did very little flying. We broke our 1200 hr. mark so are working for 1400 but it looks a long way away.

April 27 (Tues) Well, I got a nice surprise to-day & got a nice big box of candy, choc. bars, gum, 1/2 doz. oranges dipped in wax, 1/2 lb. coffee, cream, & thin etc. from Ruth - It really comes in very nicely for 'midnight snacks' which I have been missing more than anything over here. I also received a couple of letters - one from Bessie Abernethy - inviting me over to Bangor for leave in June so I think I'll try it out & meet all the folks - Nora will be coming up from Dublin then too so I should be able to see her again too.

April 28 (Wed) To-day, a W/C of 424, came back to visit the unit - he was in mufti & it appears

that he was shot down over France about 5 weeks ago & just arrived safely back here to-day. Every one had given him up for lost long ago. He must have had quite an experience since he was smuggled out to Spain by the French "Underground" channels. altho' he couldn't tell us much about it. Needless to say he is screened from any further ops in this sector in case he fell into their hands again & they tortured him to find out how he got away last time.

April 29 (Thur) Well, we broke our 1400 hours to-day & are trying for 1500 but I don't believe we'll quite be able to make it. I was going to take to-day off but decided to wait until next Wednesday. - another week won't hurt. I was able to buy a battle dress tunic to-day off Ralph Doehler who is moving out to the middle East so all I need is the trousers to make a good working uniform & thus save my good ones.

April 30 (Fri) We flew everything but the petrol bowsers to-day trying to break the 1500 & I think to night we are only 10 hours shy. We were in a mad panic all day long but couldn't cope with the weather which closed in several times. Given a good day we would have easily made it. Ralph was showing me his ~~khaki~~ khaki clothes to do

- pit helmet, shorts & all for the middle east
zone - probably Tunisia - It looks as if it
might be fun & I wouldn't mind going too.

I got the trousers to my battle dress from
Bill Boggs who is going too so now I have my
complete outfit. Tonight I played brock rummy
& won 10^s which is just enough to pay for the
trousers - good business!

May 1st. (Sat) Things went along normally to-day.
I hear rumours about the new Con Unit (1884) starting up
at Croft and am hoping for an opening there - if I get
it, I should get my F/L OK.

May 2nd. (Sun) The boys at 408 Learning took a real
beating & lost 4 out of 12 on ops last night to Dusseldorf.
It wiped out their whole B flight & was quite a blow.
We are definitely losing more & more bites & crews all
the time in payment for the increased target area
& total tonnage of bombs dropped. Some of those cities
over there must be a real shambles by now.

May 3rd. (Mon) Tonight we had our first softball game
& had a lot of fun - it certainly is good exercise.
We are suffering a slight relapse now with bags of
bites etc. having driven them so hard the latter
part of last month.

May 4th. (Tues) - The weather was really wicked to-day

with a very fine penetrating drizzle & a very cold wind. I wasn't warm all day. Played knock rummy to night & lost 2/s

May 5 (Wed). We all worked hard to day trying to get things in shape again but with all these squadrons moving out to the Middle East we can't get much stuff through stores & are consequently being held up since they are so busy. ^{3/4} Langton, Fred Barlick, Jack Clark & myself swiped some cycles tonight & rode into Topcliffe - visited a couple of pubs & then came back to the Mess for a sing-song after & had a good time. I was planning on taking tomorrow off & going to Leeds with Jack Adams but he got posted this afternoon so we scrubbed it again.

May 6 (Thur) I decided to take to-day off after all & so slept in till noon - thrill of a lifetime. Then this afternoon I went up to Leamington to an engineering conference. It was quite interesting & I found out I'm to go up to Croft to start the new con unit. Bob Bales is here for a few days getting the gen on Con Units & is also going there so we should make out all right. Hope I can get my Fk out of it soon. I just got a serious letter from Kay describing how ill Mother is & I'm not too happy

about it. I sure hope she is going to be all right as I feel more or less helpless being so far away.

I met Hugh Lamb, for the first time since I've been over here, at the conference to-day & he seemed much the same as ever.

May 7. (Fri) To-day went by very quickly with much scurrying around to see if we can leave for Croft to-morrow without our official postings. We have decided to do it by getting verbal permission from Drags H.Q. I did all my packing again to-night & hope I can get away tomorrow.

May 8. (Sat) This morning as is just my luck, it was raining cats & dogs. We got our permission to move O.K. & I spent all morning tearing around & getting my clearance papers signed. I jangled out a transport truck for us to go to Croft altho' actually we are supposed to use the railway on postings. However, it was much easier as far as luggage goes etc. to go by van.

When we got up here to our new Unit - 1664 Conversion Unit - I found an old friend named Stanley as unit adjutant so that helps a little. It is a brand new unit starting from scratch & is actually still in the process of construction. The mess is very small & there are only about

12 officers here including Bob & I. Our living quarters are in these little half-cylindrical Messen huts. We have a small room each with a dresser, a stove and a wash stand in each. There are electric lights but no running water & outside "two-holers". We just dumped our stuff in & sat in the Mess all evening getting acquainted with the boys. Being such a small unit the meals are very good especially as there are still a lot of rations on hand left over from 427 Squadron (Hugh Lamb of Kingalae engineering officer) who were operating Gimpies from here temporarily. Since everything is all new & contractors still digging all over the place it is very wet & muddy everywhere & sure looks as if it is going to be tough on uniforms & shoes etc.

May 9. (Sun): Well it rained all day to-day & things certainly are in a mess. I just about ruined my shoes & battle dress splashing around through the muck. It is certainly going to be valuable experience to me in starting up our complicated Servicing and Maintenance organization with nothing whatsoever to start with. There are about 130 of our men wandering around doing nothing. There is no equipment here at all yet but there

are 5 Mk V Halifax a/c. just standing here waiting for acceptance checks. We started out this morning with our C.O. - Wk. Clarke - a very nice New Zealander who showed us around.

Then we started to get organized. Settled in a vacant squadron leader's office, set up & detailed the men to various jobs & started to close up equipment. It is certainly tough sledding & we are left entirely on our own as to organization etc. However that makes it doubly interesting. We worked right through to 10 o'clock to night but didn't seem to make much headway out of the chaos around here.

(Mon.) May 10 - We started out at 8.00 o'clock to day & worked steadily right through arranging with contractors about new buildings, arguing & rearranging to suit our plans better, getting ancillary trade sections located in their shops & trying to get them stuff to work with. There is certainly a lot of work ahead of us with a terrific amount of long distance planning to do but I think we will be able to do all right once our equipment gets here. Right now there is no ground handling equipment & not even a screwdriver on the station to take cowlings off for P.I.'s. We managed to

get one kite over to Middleton to-day & a crew to start an acceptance check using their tools and stands etc. I was able to get a motorcycle for myself too which helps a lot in getting around this widely dispersed outfit. It almost scares us with the sole responsibility of setting up this com unit which will be a regular heavy bomber com unit equivalent to two operational squadrons & with a total of 32 kites on our strength. We will have about 800 men directly under us so it certainly isn't going to be easy.

May 11. (Tues) It has been very cold, wet & miserable ever since we got here which has made things very difficult. To-day was the worst of all since it actually snowed hard for about 4 hours leaving a thick coating of muddy slush all over everything & what a mess it is trying to get anything done. We haven't even got paper to write on & not a single useful piece of equipment arrived yet. It is very discouraging but somehow or other, I like it when the going is tough. There are a few more officers arriving now including some that I know at Popcliffe & Learning. The meals are still excellent & we have had 5 eggs in the last

three days which is quite remarkable.

This snow was really amazing over here in May especially when February & March were so nice & I think it broke all records with regard to unusual weather. The 1st & 8th Armies as well as the French & Americans seem to be really going places in North Africa & at last have the Jerries on the run - at least that's something to make our hard days work worth while.

May 12. (Wed). This afternoon the weather at last turned nice & I could stop shivering for a while - I took a transport & went on a scrounging trip to Topcliffe & Leeming to get some spare woods, paper, forms & stationery etc. & it was quite successful since everyone seemed to be quite anxious to help us get started. Our two flight commanders - S/L Boosey who I knew at Topcliffe & S/L Kenny arrived to-day so we went on a little party down to the Croft Spa Inn, had a couple beers & then came back.

I ~~recently~~ wrote letters home to-night to Kay & Mom - I'm very worried about her I can't help thinking about her a lot & wondering if she is all right. I'm hoping & praying she will be.

(May 13. Thur.) This place is really a madhouse now that some of the equipment is arriving but there is gradually a semblance of order appearing but there is so much to do & so many different ideas & thoughts buzzing through my head it is very difficult to get everything sorted out at once. However, that is where I'm getting the valuable experience for future use. It rained again all day & I finally got a pair of knee-high rubber boots to wade around in. They will help a lot in saving my shoes & battle dress. I went to a dance to-night down to the Croft Spa but strangely enough for our here, the girls were quite scarce so I didn't do much dancing. However it was a pleasant change.

May 14 (Fri) Well, the weather was fine again today which was our first lucky break since 230 more men - new Canadians fresh from Canada - none of them have ever seen a Halifax before either, which we take a very dim view of from our standpoint - arrived in a bunch & had to be sorted out & assigned jobs. It's fortunate we have some very good Flight Sergeants already here to help us out. Hugh Lamb came up to-day to see how we were making out

We have shops set up for our sections now altho
as yet there is very little in them. The hard
part to arrange is the maintenance & servicing
especially where there is only one small, flimsy
tin hangar built like a barn with no lean-to
offices & no nothing. I guess I'm going to have to
operate my flight from an open air dispersal
until the other hangar is built. It will
be pretty tough but I guess we can do it if
we can only get our ground equipment in.

May 15 (Sat). The weather turned nice for a change
to-day & we seemed to accomplish quite a bit
around the place. Still no equipment however.
To-night Bob Bales, Dick Schon. & I went on a bike ride.
We had seen the dim outlines of an old castle from across
the air-drome so we set out to find it. We had to go
right into the town of Ript before we could find a
road leading anywhere near it. We finally got there
O.K. after cycling down several of these charming little
country lanes - hedges around all the fields, many stone
walls & plenty of old stone farmhouses etc, hundreds of
little peak-roofed haystacks all over the place. There
is wild life galore around with all kinds of
strange new birds which I don't know with their
strange & peculiar calls. The cuckoo is one which

pronounces his name very distinctly just as the sun is going down & it begins to get dark. Each field is dotted with what looks like a cross between a starling and a crow - they call them rooks here and there are millions of them around.

We found the castle occupied by the army as most of the large old homes in this country are now. This castle wasn't very old & was built on somewhat the same lines as Sir Henry Pellet's place at home. We got past the guard anyway & met a few men who treated us very kindly & showed us around.

May 16 (Sun) Well, strange as it seems, we had another nice day - to-day & got a lot accomplished altho' it hardly makes a dent in what we have to do. At night I went to the Cinema show in the Mess the first one I've seen in a couple of weeks.

May 17 (Mon) - No day was really a gala day since I received 4 parcels all at once - 900 cigs. altogether from Ruth, Grandma & Can. Clarence, also a two lb. box of Laura Secord's from Kay in lieu of an Easter Egg. These are the first smokes I've received & boy, didn't need them. The weather was swell & quite warm with temps. up in the 70's. Notice my face & neck getting as brown as a berry with tan from riding

- also took some snapshots tonight of Bob & I on the motorcycle.

my motorcycle & bike around in the warm breezes. Tonight, Bob, Jack & I went on another tour in the opposite direction & found another ancient old feudal baron's home - somewhat like a castle with battlements & towers etc but not so large. It had had a moat around it & was complete with watch tower, main building and church & looked very nice - I was wishing I had a camera along to get a picture. This place was also occupied by army & after identifying ourselves as R.C.A.F. officers we got in to see the Orderly officer & he showed us around.

On the way home, we called in for a little country pub for a beer & found all the townsfolk gathered around drinking a little beer, gossiping & playing the inevitable dart game. After arriving home, Bob & I had a game of cribbage & then I wrote some letters of thanks for the cigarettes.

May 18. (Tues) - I got two more letters to-day - one from Ruth & one from Mother so things are really picking up. Things are gradually taking shape around the camp now & we have our first bite - A - apple serviceable & ready for flying. We are also doing three acceptance checks so are doing all right in spite of the great lack of equipment. There was a little station dance here tonight

so I went over for a while to brush up on my dancing - danced most of the time with one of the W.A.A.F. M/T drivers who I got to know on some of the long trips we have taken. I noticed to night there was great air activity around & searchlights weaving all over the place - I guess the Jerries must be hitting back a little in retaliation for the beating up of their army in N. Africa. All the people here are of course quite enthused at our great victory over there & are really looking for something big to happen soon.

May 19 (Wed) - The weather was nice & summery again to-day which was certainly not hard to take. I found out there was a raid last night at Middleboro just a few miles from here & we had an air raid warning on the camp to take shelter. However it seems I must have slept through the whole thing since I didn't know anything about it altho quite a few heard the bombs going off. To night Bob & I & a few of the boys cycled down to the Croft Spa to the dance there & had a very good time. I met a very pretty girl named Audrey from Darlington so made a date for next Wednesday night - she looks as if she is very nice. Bob was feeling pretty good since he doesn't drink as a rule. However we did have a pretty good time.

May 20 (Thur). Well last night we got those two big dams & flooded the Ruhr & old Jerry is really hopping mad - there were anti-aircraft guns going off all around us to-day in the distance but we didn't see anything for them to shoot at. I guess the boys who got the dams will get VC's since it was really a good job. Apparently Mosquitos did the pathfinding by flying on ground beams to the target & dropping their flares. The squadrons who made the attack have done nothing else in the past two months but practice a new wrinkle in bombing technique just for this one raid. They used Lancasters with a searchlight mounted on the underside of each wing & set to focus at a point just 50 feet below the kite. Then the bomb fuses & sights etc were adjusted previously for this exact 50 foot altitude. Naturally it was a very dangerous trick to pull so they only used 16 kites fitted up this way with one 9000 lb. bomb apiece specially constructed. At the briefing before the raid, they were told that it was a volunteer business & none were expected to get back. As it was, we lost 8 of the 16 crews - real hand picked men at that but it was well worth it with an estimated 120,000 people made homeless & about 3000 casualties as well as inundating a good

part of the industrial Ruhr valley.

I went up for a flight to-day in Kippie with 3/4 Boosey & acted as second dickie - it takes two to get these bits off the ground - I operated the throttle & propeller rpm. while he made the take-off - it was good experience. Then he turned it over to me & I had complete control for about half an hour. I flew around up to Topcliffe & Teeming & tried a few turns etc so had a grand time. This was my first experience at handling a four engine job & I really liked it a lot. Then he took over again & I moved up to the bomb aimer's cockpit for a better view while he shot up the dome - diving in from about 2000 feet & pulling out at less than 50 feet - more damn fun!

May 21 (Fri) - Nothing much happened to-day as it was very dull & rained most of the time. We are slowly but surely whipping some semblance of order into this maintenance set up & since the W/C expects to start flying by June 1st. we've really got our work cut out for us.

May 22 (Sat) - To-day some inspection platforms arrived & we were able to pitch in and get some acceptance checks started. Things are beginning

to break now.

This was a real red-letter day too in that we had two hard-boiled eggs apiece for supper tonight - thrill of a lifetime. To night we had a party staged at the mess & had a good time altho we couldn't bring girls due to transportation difficulties. We had saved quite a supply of liquor for the party so the boys did all right. I still find I can drink a lot of rum with very little effect so during the evening had $14\frac{1}{2}$ drinks of rum & a quart of beer & still was comparatively sober after most of the boys had gone over the top.

May 23 (Sun). Didn't feel too badly to-day after last night - slept in this morning & went to the cinema show in the mess at night. The boys are really starting to crack now & I broke up my A & B flights to start a servicing flight in its outdoor hangar. Conditions are difficult but I think we can cope. To-day is Grandma's birthday - wonder how she is doing?

May 24 (Mon). We really forged ahead to-day since it was nice & warm & completed a lot of work. There are so many small items to remember that it begins to get tougher trying to cope with everything but things are gradually taking shape. I spent this evening writing letters & will get to bed before

1200 for a change in preparation for a real days work tomorrow. Here it is eleven o'clock & still broad daylight out - it doesn't get dark here until about midnight due to our super daylight saving system.

May 25. Tues. It was a little cooler to-day but we went ahead as per usual & now have 3 aircraft serviceable with another five on acceptance checks.

May 26. Wed. Tonight I went into the dance at the Craft Spa & had about 3 dances with this gal Audrey - she is so much prettier than all the rest of the girls on the floor that she sticks out like a sore thumb & there was so many Canadians trying to get a dance with her that I did well to even get three. However I may get a chance next week - I had a good time anyway.

May 27. Thur. There was a cable here this morning from Ray saying that Mother had a slight stroke & could I get compassionate leave. It really shook me a lot & now I'll just have to sit & wait for more news since it has to be a life & death reason to be able to fly back home from here. I sure hope it isn't too bad & that she is going to be O.K.

Wing Commander Miller was down to-day to look over our set-up & seemed quite satisfied

with the way we were working which was certainly good news coming from him - the Chief Eng. Officer of #6 Grp. He also wondered why we didn't have our F4 rings up so I guess it is just a matter of waiting for official confirmation - Thank goodness it's here at last. I sent a cable home to Kay to-night asking about Mochu to let her know I'd received hers O.K.

May 28. Fri. Well, I got lots more mail to-day so business is really picking up. Work was the same as ever & to-night Bob & I took a bus into the city of Darlington - about nine miles from here to see a show. Afterwards, we walked around to look the town over & spent an enjoyable evening.

May 29. Sat. More Mail to-day but still no more news about Mom. It is sure hard to keep from worrying about her but there is so little I can do. I at least showed the Adjutant Mays cable & inquired as to how to go about flying home in case of emergency. It is rarely possible & has to go right through Air Ministry ~~but~~ sometimes a person is lucky. I sure hope it won't be necessary though.

May 30. Sun. Spent a very quiet & rainy day to-day & had a cinema this evening.

May 31. Mon. - Weather has turned very cool & wet which makes working conditions very difficult