

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

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

in our outdoor "hangar". However, we have about 5 serviceable aircraft now so things are slowly progressing. I went in to Darlington this afternoon to get a haircut since our station barber is on leave & I can't wait for him to get back. It was market day in town & the place was really crowded - especially with a great preponderance of women, baby carriages & kids of all ages & sizes. You'd hardly think England's birth-rate is falling off seriously to see the number of children around. I met a couple of the boys I knew so had tea & then went to a cinema. We came back on a bus & of course had a couple of beers in a local pub while waiting for it. In the course of our talking we branched into various experiences we'd heard & seen & you do hear some peculiar ones. For instance, last week a kite from 449 Sqdn. at Middleton St. George came back with an unexploded incendiary bomb imbedded in its wing. It was quite a coincidence that it was even hit by a bomb from a kite above it over the target but it was even more so that it didn't go off & set fire to the kite - the crew were sure lucky. Then there was the Wimp at 427 Sqdn. that came back minus the whole tail turret including the tail gunner & part

of the rudder - received a direct hit from flak which is very unusual. They of course quite frequently come back with holes punctured in them like a sieve from flak bursts near by but very rarely direct hit.

The two lads I met had just finished their tour of ops out in Tunisia so had lots of other stories to tell about Alexandria, Cairo & Tobruk etc.

June 1st. Tues. More rain to-day & our first 7 crews to train arrived so we will have to be ready to fly by the end of this week - lots of work yet to do. Tonight Bob & I went down to the Craft Spa to dinner on the invitation of Mr. Blaxall - our Dowty representative on the station. It was very nice too what with a session in the bar with the rest of the boys from the station here after our dinner. Its funny when the boys get together they always talk shop & very little of anything else - its usually the pilots asking us questions about the aircraft since of course we are supposed to be the "gen" men & know everything there is to know about them - However they are very rarely too tough to answer. Of course the other favourite topic is their own various operational trips & I've heard so much about bombing Essen, the Ruhr, Berlin, Stuttgart etc. etc.

& how to take violent evasive action from night fighters, how high to fly & when, how to escape flak barrages, barrage balloons & avoid being "coned" by scores of searchlights etc. that I could almost pilot a trip to Berlin & back by myself. However, it is all very interesting & I never tire of listening altho' it does make me envious not to be able to discuss my own experiences. Another thing of course when old friends meet in the pub is a general check up on mutual acquaintances to see who has "gone for a s ---" as the saying is or "gone for a burton" since their last information. They all know many who got shot down or went missing in various stages of their tours.

June 2. Wed. To-day I got a swell parcel from Mother full of candy, gum, socks & all sorts of swell things - it sure does make you feel good & brings a lot of comfort to us - sort of a Xmas spirit. I went down to the dance at the Spa tonight & met Audrey Nelson again. She certainly is pretty nice, doesn't smoke or drink but is a good dancer so we had a good time. I saw her back up to her train at 10.30 & then came on home here on my bicycle. Made a tentative date for a show next week some

time. Bob & Don Carr-Harris went to an engineering conference this afternoon & drove into the Spa about 1000 o'clock both rosy-eyed drunk. So unusual for Bob since he is so quiet & rarely over takes a drink. However he was going strong tonight & will probably have to take tomorrow off (not being used to that sort of thing).

June 3. Thur. Wilco's expected. Bob was off most of the day but was O.K. tonight. We played softball tonight as the first game of our league & won 9 to 7 & were lucky at that - however it was good exercise. I got another nice big parcel from Ruth today so am doing all right.

As I sit here now I can hear a formation of bees passing overhead on their way to dig another load on Jerry. It never ceases to give you a little thrill in spite of them going over so often & so regularly almost every night. I sure would like to go with them some time & may possibly get the chance yet. I've heard of it being done on very rare occasions though.

June 4. Fri. The weather is still pretty poor, being quite cool & dull with the occasional shower to dampen things up a bit. The old sun doesn't seem to shine very much up around here.

There was a dance on at the Sqts. Mess to-night but it was raining so hard I stayed in to write some letters.

June. 5. (Sat). Well, we are to start our actual training flights on Monday, so we are working hard to get all the kites tied up as much as possible. Tonight Bob & I went on another bicycle trip & found a cute little village named Moulton about 5 miles from here. One of the most amazing things I've found about England is that it is exactly like the things you read about it in story books. This little village was typical. There is not a scrap of wood to be seen in any of the homes from the outside. They are all little old stone & brick buildings with high stone walls, hedges, beautiful flower gardens in front, red-tile roofs with lots of chimneys & most of the bungalows were overgrown with ivy or vines & brightly coloured flowers - some famous kind - I've just forgotten their name. All the houses have little outbuildings, stables, sheds & barns which are also stone & brick. Overlooking the whole was a beautiful old & typical manor house where the lady something or other lived. Bob & I, not being very backward, got talking to some

of the folks & learned a lot about the history of the place. They seem quite interested in us as soon as they see our "Canada" badges. We had a beer in the local pub - "The Black Boar's Head Inn" if you can imagine it & spent an interesting half hour watching the local Saturday night champions play off their dart games - the regular ritual in every pub in England.

June 6. (Sun) - Well, we flew a little to-day to get primed for tomorrow & saw a movie in the mess to-night. Nothing else of excitement happened.

June 7. (Mon) We started off with a bang to-day & flew 6 a/c with no unserviceabilities - It was quite a thrill to see the station come to life with men busily working all over the place & planes flying around the drome & landing & taking off & knowing that I had quite a hand in getting things going from practically nothing to start with. I went into Darlington tonite on the bus & met Audrey to go to a show & we had a swell time - I also gave her a couple of chocolate bars & became her friend for life. Things like that are few & far between over here.

June 8. (Tues). We flew 6 more to-day & had a few minor troubles just to make things interesting.

Bob & I went on a real long bike ride to night  
I got some valuable exercise. We always have  
the knack of ending up in the darndest places.  
This time it was the big estate of Sir Guy  
Newham & his huge old manor home. We  
wouldn't have gone in only we happened to see  
this interesting old bridge over a beautiful little  
river called the fees. It had a sign on it saying  
that it was private & trespassers would be  
prosecuted. That was enough for us & we promptly  
went over it & all through the huge park surrounding  
his place & finally around the outside of the house  
itself - it is just exactly what I've seen presented  
so many times in the movies as a typical old  
English Manor House. We were rather hoping we'd  
get caught & so maybe have a chance to see a  
real "Sir" but unfortunately we only met his  
gardener who didn't pay much attention to us.  
We ended up at the Croft Spa for a game of darts  
& a beer when we listened to more stories -  
this time of miraculous escapes the boys had  
heard about. It all started when it was  
mentioned that a badly shot up Stirling had  
managed at Middleton last night. He just made  
it that far & then was forced down. The bet



was practically ripped to ribbons with flak but only the pilot was hurt badly with part of his face shot away. We also heard about the lad at 408 who was piloting a bomber back when hit by flak & had his one foot practically severed. One of the other boys who had never flown before took over & brought them back over the channel o.k. while the rest of the crew gave the pilot first aid. Then when they were near their home airport again they got the pilot back in the seat, tied his good foot to the rudder pedals so he could both push & pull & he was able to land the plane with only a minor prang before passing out. He will most likely get his "gong" (DFC) for that & he really deserves it too.

June 9. (Wed). Well, to-day I got another cable from Kay saying that Morden was getting worse & now has a day & night nurse in attendance. It is beginning to look pretty bad & I hope & pray she will be o.k. & not be invalided in bed - she would never be happy that way & I would much prefer to die quickly when her time comes. I'm praying that this isn't it altho' Kay does sound pretty worried. I have been making inquiries as to how to go about arranging a compassionate leave & flying

Home & to-day the Ady. phoned to Air Ministry in London for me to try & make it as quickly as possible. The w/c there said it is pretty hard to do but was quite sympathetic & said he would see what he could do & phone me back.

I went to the regular dance at the Craft Spa to-night & met Audrey again - she sure is a swell little kid but doesn't give me much of a come-on. I think she must have been warned against getting too familiar with Canadians.

June 10. Thur. - Well to-day the blow fell. I came up to the Mess at noon & found a cable from Ray in my pigeon hole mail box saying that Mother had passed away at 10.30 a.m. on Tuesday June 8th. I was of course terribly shocked & feeling very regretful that I would never get a chance to see her very dear face again. It is quite hard to bear the thought of it but I sure do feel sorry for Ray having the whole responsibility of everything on her shoulders with me not there to help out. I went around in a daze most of the day but managed to get off a long cable to Ray & also some flowers which I managed through the kindness of the Knights of Columbus people at York.

I was supposed to go to a party to night for one of the boys who is getting married but not feeling much like it, I stayed in & wrote an aurograph to Ray & went to bed early.

June 11. (Fri). I took my half day to - day & slept in until noon & feel a lot better now. I'm trying to be very fatalistic about the whole thing & persuade myself that if it had to happen there is no use lamenting the fact. Bob & I cycled 6 miles into Darlington tonight to a show & then back again. We heard that there is to be a diversion in the morning at 4.00 a.m. when the Vikings from 419 will land here from ops instead of their parent station so that means I'll have to get up for interrogation of the crews - it should be interesting at that.

We had some more excitement when an urgent call came through that there was a Halifax pranged near here with full crew & bomb load but no one seemed to know just where. I would just as well stay clear of prangs knowing what they are like but being a good little engineering officer I set out to try to find it on my motor-bike. However after a long search the only information I could get was a big plume of smoke over near Middleton way so that being out of my territory I came back

have to bed since as I'll have to get up early to morrow.

June. 12. (Sat) Well, I was up at 4:00 a.m. this morning but since the engineering officer came over from Middleton to do the interrogation, I went back to bed. I was quite surprised to see that it was almost daylight out so that means they only get about 4 hours darkness over here in the summer time. The prang we were worried about was about two miles from Middleton & it blew up with the full bomb load. The whole crew with the exception of the pilot were killed outright but the pilot was blown clear out of the aircraft still strapped in his seat & lived for about four hours. However he was pretty badly bashed up & died this morning. We are going strong now & have about 10 Spit's serviceable & so far have put in about 80 flying hours which isn't too bad.

June. 13. (Sun) Bob was feeling ill to-day so I was quite busy looking after everything - I don't mind at all being busy these days since it keeps my mind off Mother & the folks at home. I went to a movie in the Mess to-night & then came back early to read.

June 14 (Mon) - Well Bob & I heard that our F/L's came through to-day & will most likely be back dated to May 10 when this unit opened up. It sure is a help as far as money goes. I forgot to mention that yesterday being the 13th. I went up flying to test W.991 - D Donald for about an hour and a half just for a little change. We had a baseball game last night too & won 9-7 so are doing all right in the league.

June 15 (Tue) - I went over to Middleton to-day to fix up my pay accounts books & do a little scrounging & then came back for our 3rd. baseball game - we were badly trimmed this time at 11 to 5 so will have to break up on our playing.

June 16 (Wed) - Well, the hits were going 4/5 one after another to-day & we worked plenty hard all day long to keep them going - the work is pretty tough with such a lack of spares & so much to look after. It will take a while before this place gets to the stage it will run by itself more or less like Topcliffe did. There was a show on tonight in the Mess and a dance in at the Craft Spa but I didn't get up from the flights until after 9:00 o'clock so decided to stay in and write some letters. A girl friend

of Audrey's phoned up & invited me & any friends I wanted to come in to a N.A.A.F.I dance being held at the Masonic Hall in Darlington tomorrow night so of course I accepted with pleasure.

June 17. Thur. Tonight Bob & I cycled 8 miles to Darlington, danced until midnight & then cycled back again - dead tired at that - it was a very pleasant evening & I had a good time with Audrey - it was also the first time I had gone out with my F/L stripes up which also helped to make it more exciting. I invited Audrey to a dance we are having at the Mess Saturday night but she says she has already been invited so I'll probably see her there. That's the trouble with these real pretty babes - too much competition.

June 18. Fri. Still no word from home since that fatal cable - I sure wonder a lot how things are going & how poor Kay is making out. We had a softball game to night which we won to bring us up near the top in the league. The station is really developing now & we have about 15 kites serviceable so have got quite a bit of praise from Command for getting started off so well. I hope it keeps up.

June. 19 (Sat.) Well we had our party to night on the Mess & it went over very well except that Audrey didn't get here at all so I had a very

quiet time of it. I'm getting ready to go on leave Monday night so was making inquiries as to how best to get over to Belfast. It seems I have to go from Croft to Darlington, & then to Newcastle. There I change trains & go over to Carlisle. Then I change trains again & catch the boat train to Stranraer Harbour in Scotland. From there it is a 3 hour boat trip & then I land at Little place in N. Ireland where I catch a train to Belfast & from there to Bangor - it's going to be a real trip. Got a nice letter from Bessie who is expecting me & I should have a nice time.

June 20 (Sun). Things were very quiet to-day after the party last night & very little flying was done. We had a movie in the Mess to-night & then as there was a test flight to make on a kite for tomorrow  $\frac{1}{2}$  Bob Booney & myself as engineer went up for 1/2 an hour in "E" Eddy to make sure she was O.K. & then we went back to the control tower to watch the take off of our night cross-countries - six of them.

June 21 (Mon) Well, I'm supposed to be off tonight on leave but instead of that it was cancelled on me at the last minute - Bob Babo got posted to fill in down at 405 Sqdn. Bransden Lodge in place of Ting Smith - Halys on Potholide.

work so as he is leaving tomorrow I couldn't go on leave. Bryce Dickey is coming up from 427 Sqdn. at Leaning to take his place. Also S/L Scott got posted here from Middleton - St. George as Station Engineer so things are moving in a hurry. I had to send a telegram to Bessie letting her know I couldn't come & I certainly am disappointed but I may be able to make it next week or so.

June 22. (Tues) Well, I'm in my own to-day - Dickey is on leave & won't be here for a few days so I've got a big job to handle everything by myself. However we had 18 serviceable to-days & have put in over 400 hrs. so far this month so that's a start anyway. We had a tire burst on take-off to-day & the poor pup flew around for about half an hour before deciding to come in & try for a landing. He did very well & held her up for a long way down the runway & then she really hit hard & did a partial ground loop off the runway - ruined the str. wheel, brake drum & radius rod but was otherwise OK.

June 23. (Wed.) - The gang went down to the Craft Spa torite to the dance so I went along too. However it was pretty hot so I didn't do any dancing



even though I saw Audrey from afar. We flew over 60 hours to-day for a record so far in any one day but of course nowhere near Topcliffe's record of 88 hours yet - maybe next month we'll come closer.

June 24 (Thur) To-day I got my first letter from home since Mother died. There was an air letter from Ray mailed on June 3 & one from Aunt Aggie mailed June 16th & I still haven't got the ones in between - it's a little aggravating at times when I'm so anxious to learn what's happening. I went down to the Spa again tonight to another dance & this time had a few with Audrey again as well as with another gal named Vera or Verna Race - I just forget which now. Anyway I had a pretty fair time at that.

June 25 (Fri.) We had another casualty to-day - one of the armourers doing a DI on E pulled the Very pistol out of its storage & it was loaded - strictly against orders - it caught & went off inside the kite - whizzed around & finally settled in a corner of the engineer's cockpit where it burned three holes in the skin as well as a lot of electrical wiring cables. Luckily no one was hurt & nothing

caught fire although it was just beside the oxygen bottles & just below the storage rack for all the flare cartridges. Someone will be getting it in the neck for that no doubt.

Tonight I went to a movie in the Airman's Mess & decided to come back early to my quarters here to write letters. It is now 12:15 and for the last hour this has been the steady drone of Galaxies & Vikings on their way over again. There must have been 50 go by so far & I've been watching a few in formation since it is just getting dark out now. We turned out our first four completed crews on Monday & last night the first one went for a s... in the effort over Mannerheim - it sure doesn't take long after they leave here before they are right in the thick of it.

We heard today that the w/c - o/c of 408 sqdn. at Sebring was sent to hospital for a nervous breakdown & small wonder - he has seen two complete squadrons form up under him & last night the last crew of the last one went the way of all the others & failed to return from ops. That means he's lost about 40 aircraft in all & a total of 320 good men - most of them

close personal friends so I guess he's due for a rest after the strain of all that. We actually aren't losing many in comparison to the number we send out - it's always been less than 5% so far, but nevertheless it seems pretty steep at times & peculiarly enough it usually seems to centre on one squadron to take the beating. Most of the others seem to coast along & only lose one now & again but poor old 408 having been losing as many as 4 at a time.

June 26. (Sat.) I'm really busy at work these days doing both my own & Bob's job too so it's really keeping me hopping to get everything done. However now that Sgt Bob Scott is here he will be able to take part of the load & I expect Deeky will be in by Monday to take over Bob's place.

June 27. (Sun) Well to-day we had our first prong - nobody hurt but it sure made a mess of the site. It was a beautiful warm day and at 1100 hrs. this morning, Pfa Peter was making a regular landing. He started to swerve a little & in correcting for it the pupil & instructor were sort of fighting the controls & they ran off the runway. Did a big sweep back across the runway & into a very violent ground

loop. Both undercarriages folded up sideways & were pushed up into the wings when it came down on its belly, the port wing & port tailfin scraped the ground, the port outer engine fell out of its mounting head first on to the ground & the tail gave such a swing when she turned so sharply that it broke its back just aft of the L.E. & main spar - a catat with a vengeance. One wing was still overlapping the runway so we had to start getting it cleared right away. A lot of our crash equipment isn't here yet so we borrowed some lifting bags from Middleton & some pipe lines from Seemung came back early after lunch & started in. First we picked up the loose engine & carted it off to workshops, then with a little lift under each wing with the lifting bags we hooked a bouser on to each w/c in turn & pulled them away from the wreckage. Then, with a bouser to anchor the tail we started the slow process of small lifts, building up supports & then more lifts until about 10 o'clock at night we got one 4-wheel bogey under the stbd wing root. It ain't laid down that they are to go under the engine nacelle but I got the brilliant idea to put them in the new location & it worked.

well. We got the other side up by 10.30 & had her wheeled away to a dispensary by 11.00 o'clock at night after 12 hrs. solid work. We had our meals carted out by truck & were quite satisfied with the job. Now we should be able to get a few spares anyway.

June 28 (Mon). Seeing as I didn't get much office work done yesterday & really had to get to town to-day to catch up - it being close to the end of the month. Dickey arrived to day so he'll be able to start pulling his weight soon too, I hope. Tonite I played tennis for the first time in two years at Capt. Parlour's home in Craft - a rich old scoundrel who owns all the pubs for miles around. Anyway, it was very pleasant playing in his own private court & sipping his beer between sets.

June 29 (Tues). Very busy again to-day - no time to even write letters & I guess I'm falling quite a bit behind but it can't be helped - I've received quite a few letters so far in sympathy for Wath. but none from Kay yet who probably had so much to tell me she has used ordinary mail. It was another very nice day to-day for a change.

June 30. (Wed) - To day, I had one of the most interesting days so far over here. I heard through the equipment officer at Middleton-St-George that there were 10 complete dual control sets for us down at #25 M.V. at Hartlebury just outside Birmingham which is about 220 miles from here. They suggested we send a truck down for them since we were rather in a hurry to get them. However, it would have taken at least a day & a half to get them by truck & bring them back so I got on to the C.O. & suggested we fly down in a Halifax to pick them up. He was quite happy about it since he hadn't had a chance to fly for quite awhile, so I got busy & made all the arrangements. We picked out a nearby aerodrome called Castle Bromwich field & I had the M.V. deliver the stuff to the control tower there.

We got away at 1330 hrs. & it was very dull & cloudy, altho' visibility wasn't too bad. It was a very interesting trip down, almost due south from here & as we kept very low I got a very good view of Leeds, Sheffield, Nottingham & finally Birmingham as we passed. Then as we circled around trying to locate this aerodrome we found it to be a very small grass covered drome with no runways - an old Spitfire station & it didn't

look much bigger than a seaplane. However as  
our stuff was supposed to be there, W/C Clark  
who is a very good pilot decided to put her down  
there anyway & he made a very smooth landing  
although it took up pretty near the whole field  
to stop. Everybody came running out to see the  
Halifax as though they had never seen anything  
bigger than a Spit before & on that field they  
probably never had! Our stuff wasn't there so I  
got on the phone to the M.V. & closed them up and after  
about an hour it finally arrived so we loaded  
it on & were ready for take-off. We had had a  
whole hour to talk over the pros & cons of the take-off  
& it sure didn't look any too safe but we all volunteered  
to make the try anyway & not wait for the wind to  
change direction to give us the longest run of the  
field. The drome is surrounded by industrial suburbs  
on all sides, with a row of trees & at the end to  
which we were pointing a high railway embankment.  
The total length of the field is 1200 yds in that direction  
& a Halifax takes about 1100 yds to get off the  
ground with real runways & it was much  
closer to 1200 yds with just bumpy grass so  
anyway you looked, it was quite a shabby do.  
George Burnstead (the navigator), the wireless op &

myself sat back in the rest position as the most advantageous weight position & the C.O. taxied over right to the very edge of the field as far as he could get & turned into the wind.

I was very interested in watching my own reactions since in my more or less uneventful life I had never come up against a real serious danger or threat to my life & I wanted to know how I'd react. Except for a tense feeling in the pit of my stomach I was quite happy & content & not worried in the least having taken the fatalistic viewpoint that if we were going to make it we would & if we didn't well that was all there was to it. The C.O. suddenly opened all the throttles right through the gates & kept his brakes on till the last second - we started off like a catapult & then settled down to a steady gait careening down the field. It seemed ages before the tail started to lift & that old railway embankment & row of trees was getting closer by leaps & bounds. I looked at George Bumstead & he was sitting there very rigid & with a very worried look in his face. The wireless ops. face was working slightly from nervousness but otherwise was OK. & I was so busy taking everything in I didn't have time to feel nervous. Both of the others had been



through a whole tour of ops & so had a right to feel any way they liked. Anyway we suddenly felt ourselves airborne as we hit a bump & then a sudden sickening sensation as we floated down & hit again not having obtained quite enough speed & a couple of more lurches & we were actually off just at the edge of the aerodrome. It is fortunate there was no train on the embankment just then or we'd never have made it but as it was we missed it and the trees by a very few feet & finally sailed away safe & sound toward home. After the tension we all burst out into broad smiles & took up our regular positions. I climbed into the second pilot's seat beside the C.O. & held the stick while he was busy wiping the perspiration from his face & everybody seemed quite happy. After a few minutes the weather closed in so we went up & up trying to get above the thick layer of clouds & finally broke out into clear & brilliant sunshine at about 7000 feet. The C.O. asked me if I wanted to take over so of course I jumped at the chance even though there was no dual controls & I'd never flown from the left hand seat before. Anyway, we started the tricky procedure of him getting out of the seat from

behind the controls & me in with always one of us hanging on to them in case of trouble. However we didn't have much trouble & when I finally settled down, he got the course from the navigator & told me to continue climbing at ASI of 160 mph. & level off at 10,000 ft & then carry on straight and level at 160 & on a gyro compass course of  $31^{\circ}$ . My link training instructor came in very handy for this and after watching me for a few minutes he appeared quite satisfied & wandered up front to talk with the navigator leaving me entirely on my own. I got along very well this way for about an hour when we were almost home & he took over again. He also complimented me on my flying & I had a hard job persuading him that I'd only had about a half hour previous dual time in a Halifax & only a couple of previous hours dual in other aircraft. Anyway he said I steered a remarkably straight course for a beginner & promised me some more dual later on. All in all, it was a very satisfactory day.

July 1. (Thur.) - No-day, I got back to my more normal work & was very busy all day - otherwise nothing much to report.

July 2. (Fri.) - Work the same as usual & a real

nice day for a change - there is sure not many hot days around here compared to those at home - it's like Fall weather all the time with lots of rain & many cool damp days.

July 3 (Sat). Work as usual to-day & a WAAF party up at their quarters to night where I had a very quiet time after playing a few sets of tennis down at Capt. Parlous nice home in Craft.

July 4 (Sun) - Had a baseball game to night but got rained out & so came up to a movie in the Mess. A new engineering officer Frank Candler - 15th entry & just over here 2 weeks from Canada was posted here to-day so I'm at last getting a little assistance although I've had to break in all three now one at a time.

July 5 (Mon) - Very busy all day to-day especially with this charge on - the lad who set the Verez pistol off in the aircraft with me as a No. 1. Witness. I had to appear before W/C Clark & then before G/C McGregor again this afternoon to give my evidence - It's good experience for me but I do feel a little sorry for the lad.

Played another softball game tonight & won very handily to put us in 3rd place in the

League & then came up & wrote letters tonight.  
July 6. (Tues) Got permission to go on leave a week from tonight so hope nothing else happens in the meantime to stop me this time. Had to appear before the officials for a summary of evidence on this case - took an oath on the Bible & then signed my statement - more damn fun.

I still haven't had a word from Kay yet since Mother died & am getting rather anxious but I guess I'll just have to be patient. Also got a cable from the Trust Co. wanting to know if they had my permission to sell the house at not less than \$4000 since apparently Kay approved. However, I'll wait till I hear further from her.

There is a dance to-night in the Airmen's <sup>mess</sup> so I think I'll look in & see what's doing.

July 7. (Wed). Things went along normally at the station to-day & to-night Bill Tait - the little Scotch electrical officer from Edinburgh & I went down to the dance at the Craft Spa - we had a fair time & got back early for good sleep.

July 8. (Thur) Another quiet day with very damp & cold weather - I hope it all clears up before my leave starts. I got two swell parcels to-day - one from Eric Cook full of cakes, candy etc & one from '43 with the same

plus raisins, honey butter etc. I'm really doing well these days. Also got an airmail letter from Ray telling me all about Mother's death etc. - the first direct news I've had from her since it happened.

July. 9 (Fri) Still another cold & wet day - I took a very dim view of this weather here in July. Spent the evening in the Mess playing darts & table tennis.

July. 10 (Sat.) I heard to-day they are having a lot of accidents lately up at Topcliffe. Two days ago they had a prang on an overshoot with two of the crew killed. A week ago Buck Snider pranged his minch site (he is a real ace now!) - no one hurt but it was very lucky since the o/c was completely wrecked & yesterday a site blew up just after take off - I suspect a starter spark with petrol vapour not cleared out of the wings properly.

Anyway - all seven were killed in it so they are sure having their troubles.

I had a busy day to-day - tried two cases and admonished both & then went over to the G/C as witness in the Vasey pistol case - however it was postponed till Monday. We were supposed to go down & play tennis to-day but it rained again & so called it off. Bob Scott went on leave yesterday too & they are thinking of scrubbing my

leave again. However, I think I can talk them out of it with Bruce Dickey & Frank Candler both here to take care of things while I'm gone.

July 11. Sun. - Had another quiet day to-day. Played a softball game to-night with the local observer corps & had a lot of fun teaching them the game since none of them had ever even seen a game before. Saw a movie in the Mess to-night - Ray Cooper in "Sgt. York" which I had seen back home a year ago.

July 12. Mon. - Was supposed to leave this Very Pistol case this morning but it is postponed again so I had to lay low all day & keep away from the C/O in case he cancelled my leave. He'll probably be mad when he finds I've skipped out on it but may not call me back since he has my signed statement taken at the summary of evidence. Took this afternoon off, packed my bag, had a bath, got 600 more cigarettes in the post & caught the 6:00 pm. bus for Darlington. I waited around the station there until the train for Newcastle left at 8:00 pm. & finally got under way. I had a very interesting trip up there & on the way saw the great Durham Cathedral & Castle overlooking the town of Durham. On the train, I met a Canadian Sgt. Pilot & we arrived in Newcastle-on-Tyne at 9:30 - just too late for a beer at the pubs. I spent my time

walking around the city & seeing what I could see. I tried to get Mrs. May's Mother & sister on the phone but apparently they haven't got one & as it was so late I didn't attempt to look them up personally. I rested for a while in a Y.M.C.A. canteen & then caught a train to Carlisle at 12.55 a.m. I was able to get a fairly good seat & slept till we arrived there about 2.45 a.m. Here I very sleepily changed trains catching the boat train to Stranraer harbour Scotland where we arrived about 6.00 a.m. I then went thru all the red tape of getting permits on & off the boat & proceeded on board the "Princess Margaret". It was pretty crowded but I managed to get breakfast, watched them load up & we finally left the dock for Larne N. Ireland at 8.30 a.m.

July 13. Tues. I sat down in the saloon lounge to start with once we left the harbour behind since it was bitterly cold out with an icy wind & some rain - all in all, not a very pleasant prospect. We were no sooner clear of the harbour than the little ship started to pitch & toss with the odd sickening roll as we wallowed between waves. I was quite happy about the sea sickness part of it since having crossed the Atlantic at its roughest time without any trouble I figured that this short two-hour jaunt

couldn't be so bad. However, we weren't out five minutes before many of the passengers in the saloon were calling the steward for the little tents to be brought out in a hurry & people were starting to be sick all over the place. I stuck it out for quite a while & even noticed a few sailors being sick but I gradually began to feel a little squeamish & a little more so with each roll of the ship. Consequently, I figured it was time I got out of there & putting on my coat went out on deck for some fresh air. I never saw such huge waves in all my life - I think the whole weight of the Atlantic Ocean was trying to force huge volumes of water thru the comparatively narrow Irish Channel in big surges. It gradually got worse as we approached the centre but by this time the fresh air & standing on deck counteracting the roll of the ship by leaning one way or the other had driven off the slight nausea I had & I began to enjoy the experience. The ship repeatedly buried its nose deep into the huge waves so that the whole forward end was well under water, then it would rear up again almost on end, it seemed, flinging water in all directions with streams of it about



a foot deep coming down the deck. Menist would  
smash down into the trough with a shuddering  
crash & then repeat the process all over again.

However, I enjoyed the trip & we soon landed  
safe & sound at Larne where I immediately  
boarded another train for Belfast. The trip  
down was very pretty with the sea & gippled  
coast on one side & rolling green hills on the  
other. I saw many little farmer's cottages with  
typical thatched roofs, neat as a pin, double  
door at the front & whitewashed all over - most  
of them had a hedge around the front & ivy or  
climbing roses over the door & window in the  
front wall. Very pretty & just like the pictures  
I'd seen of good old Ireland. I got to Belfast about  
11:30 & immediately phoned Bessie - grabbed a taxi  
to the B.C.D.R. (Bangor & County Down Railway) station  
across the river & caught the next train out  
to Bangor. This was a very pretty trip too through  
Carnahua, Helon's Bay etc. right along the edge of  
Belfast Lough all the way & faced with the  
imposing hills across the lough back of  
Carrickfergus & Whitehead towns. Nora  
met me at the station & I recognized her right  
off from her trip over home 8 years ago.

We caught a bus to the house where Cousin Bessie welcomed me most heartily & introduced me to Herbert Troughton (her second husband) who seems to have plenty of money, a swell big house & a marvellous disposition. He is very nice & I like him a lot. Bessie herself is swell too & knowing Mother so well from when she & Dad were married, she is a great comfort to me at the present time. We immediately sat down to a swell big dinner & then spent the afternoon talking which isn't hard to do with Bessie around. After afternoon tea they decided suddenly that we should go visiting so we jumped on their bicycles - quite the accepted mode of travel over here now - & went over to a Mrs. Corbin's home. Before she was married she was called Sadie Morrow & her sister who stays with her named Daisy - both knew Grandma well & we had a great old talk. The son Ernie Corbin is a Pte in the R.A.F. Coastal command on Fortresses & since he was also home on leave, we arranged for a game of golf tomorrow morning with Noah & a girl friend of hers named Muriel Johnston.

July 14 (Wed). Well it was raining this morning so I wrote some letters & we postponed our golf game until Friday. The folks here are very swell

to me and can't do enough for me. Bessie is also a marvellous cook & so I'm having the best meals I've had since I left home. This afternoon it cleared a little so Bessie, Herbert, Noak & I caught a bus for Donaghadee & travelled around the coast that far. The scenery all the way is quite marvellous & rugged & is certainly very beautiful. While there we met Mrs. Abernethy & her daughter Noak - the wife & daughter respectively of Bessie & Noak's younger brother Victor. That is, little Noak & I are 2nd cousins the same as Mabel Staffada's daughter & I, or the same relation as my children will bear to Donald Dawson's children - it's quite involved but I'm slowly getting it figured out. We came back on the bus from Donaghadee & ate again, sat around in the evening & talked.

Had tea & went to bed early. They seem to be always eating here - breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, supper, & finally high tea so it's small wonder.

July 15 (Thu). It rained again this morning & was quite cold so we stayed very close to the fire this morning. I sure hope the weather doesn't stay this way for the rest of my leave. However, this afternoon it cleared up a little so Noak & I walked to Craufordsburn & Helen's Bay along Belfast.

Lough which is very pretty all the way with the vast panorama of hills & sea spread out at your feet. It was so very clear that we could see right across the Irish channel to the coast of Scotland whose crags & hills showed up dimly in the distance. At the "Old Craufordburn Inn" we met Bessie & Herbert who had come out by bus & there had tea. It is a very quaint old Inn with thatched roof & all & quite a history which is contained in a little booklet I got there. There is also a big hill there which we climbed to get an even more beautiful view of the Lough. At night when we got back, Nora & I went for a long walk along the Bangor waterfront to watch the sunset - the best I've ever seen. At the time, they pointed out the old Abernethy house & studio where Dandine & Stuart visited when they were over about 30 years ago & also where the little Irish boy "clodded a clobber" at Stuart down on the beach in front of the house. I forgot to mention that at noon to-day Nora & I went in for a very refreshing swim in the sea down at the end of the street here. It was a little cold but OK once you got under. However, I still can't get used to the terribly salty taste whenever I happen to get any in my mouth.

July 16. (Fri.). To-day the sun shone out in all its glory & it was certainly welcome. They are certainly feeding me well here as I get bacon & eggs for breakfast & various cakes, cookies, & pies etc. - I feel ashamed to think that poor Bessie has to stretch her rations so far to do it but she won't listen to anything I say & keeps right on - her cooking is very good too. This morning Earnie Corbett & I & the two girls went golfing & had a swell time. It was the first time in my life I had ever played but didn't do too badly at that and liked it a lot. This afternoon Bessie, Norah & I cycled around past Donaghadee along the coast & then came home by another roundabout way & it sure was nice. The scenery everywhere around here is quite beautiful. At night we walked around town here to see the sunset again across Belfast Lough with its very blue water, little sailboats & big steamers, the distant hills of County Antrim all combining to make a perfect picture.

July 17. (Sat) To-day again was very bright, sunny & warm & the four of us took a train for Newcastle down near the Mourne Mountains. They are really one of the most scenic sights in Ireland & are well worth visiting especially with people like these who know all the old stories & yarns that go

with the history of each place. Here we took a bus <sup>south</sup> ~~farther~~ along the coast to Killybegs, had lunch & returned to Newcastle where we wandered around seeing the sights including the nice sandy waterfront the huge mountains, a girl doing typical Irish jig & clog dancing & finally tea in the famous Slieve Donard Hotel. It was very interesting & we had a wonderful day.

July 18. (Sun) This morning I went to the Methodist Church here with Herbert & Nora & this afternoon Nora & I took our bathing suits & cycled way around past Donaghadee to Ballywater where we had a lovely swim & passed for tea & sandwiches. It was another swell day & I proceeded to get a good layer of tan. Then we turned inland & went to a little village called Grey Abbey beside the ruins of an old historical abbey founded around 1100 A.D. We prowled around the ruins for awhile & then went along the edge of Strangford Lough past Mount Stewart, the home of some Earl or other & back to Newtownard & thence to Bangor again - a round trip of about thirty miles & very interesting it was.

July 19. (Mon) This morning Nora, Bessie & I got up early & caught the 8.15 train to Belfast. At first it looked as if our luck had deserted us since it was raining a little but it soon cleared up nicely & we had swell warm & sunny <sup>weather</sup> all the rest of the day.

At Belfast we caught another train for Portrush way up in the Northern tip of Ireland - a famous summer resort & lovely beach & scenery. Here we caught a little electric "Honeyville Trolley" - supposed to be the first in the world & went out to the Giant's Causeway. We had ~~the~~ lunch first & I had a drink of Bushmill's famous Irish Whiskey - made just a few miles from there - then we walked down around the Causeway & a great sight it was too of the most peculiar rock formation I've ever seen. We had a quaint old Irishman to guide us all around to the Wishing Well & Wishing Chair etc. & I took a few photos there as well. We got the 3.00 o'clock train back after a swell tour & full of the marvellous scenery thereabouts. On the way we stopped off for about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour while I dragged Bessie & Nora in to see the famous old Dunluce Castle ruins & that really tickled me since I am really interested in tramping around such old ruins. It was in pretty good condition & dated way back from about 900 A.D. - a natural rock island with perpendicular sides & the castle's walls built right ~~into~~ up from these sides - I read that it was practically impregnable up until the time that artillery & gunpowder started to be used.

and you could certainly see why. I also took some pictures there - one from the moving tram in particular which I hope turns out all right. At Portrush we had tea & stopped a bit where I got some souvenirs & handkerchiefs for the folks at home & then we made for Bangor here arriving quite late at night July 20. (Tues). To-day was relative visiting day in Belfast so we went in the morning, looked around the stores & went in to the City Hall. Here we looked at the marvellous marble reception rooms etc. & then got talking to an attendant who seemed quite anxious to please the Canadian uniform & introduced us to the Lord Mayor's valet. The Lord Mayor apparently was out to lunch so he showed us all thru his richly appointed parlours, assembly room & dressing room etc. He even brought out his formal robes & hat etc. & all in all showed us around thoroughly. - Even Bessie & Nora had not been in there before. Then we had lunch in Robinson - Cleaver's big department store & went to visit Grandma's sister Madge. Another sister Agnes was supposed to be there too but apparently there had been some tiff between the two old ladies & this Agnes who it appears is a little queer at times wouldn't come over to the other's house so I missed her. However, I got along great with Treat.



Aunt Mudge who reminds me very much of  
Grandma being very small & quick & coming out  
with several very witty remarks while at the same  
time being very quiet & shy. Her features ~~also~~ look  
a great deal like Grandmas. She was very glad to  
see me & asked me all kinds of questions about Grandma  
& then gave us tea. She is living alone with her  
unmarried son Maxwell who is about 30 years old. I  
wanted to take a picture of her but she wouldn't pose for  
one so Bessie & I worked it up between us that when we  
left, I would go out the door first & Bessie would get  
her out while I took the picture. It worked fine but  
she jumped like a scared rabbit just after I took  
it - I hope it turns out O.K.

From her place we took a tram & got off where we  
could see the old Abernethy mansion "Hillview" in  
Blenfield district of Belfast - it is a great old place &  
is now being used as a girls' school. Then we stopped  
in at the younger brother Victor's (Abernethy) place for tea  
- he has a very charming wife called Mabel & the daughter Nora  
I had met previously in Donaghadee. Victor is chief R.R.P.  
warden for one of Belfast's districts & so had to go to a  
meeting at night. However, before he left, he took  
Nora & I up to see Harry Dawson - a nephew of  
Grandpa Dawson & a brother of Maggie Ryerson of

Newark. I met his wife & son & daughter also who are again the same relation to me as the little Norah Abernethy & Mabel's little girl. They were quite interested in me & wanted me to come & visit with them next time I come. We left then & got back to Bangor quite late again at night after a very interesting day.

July 21, Wed. I forgot to mention yesterday that in looking through an old album of photos at Grandmas sister (Madge's) place I came upon an old photo of Dad taken when he was about 17 or 18 years old. Neither Bessie or Norah recognized it but I did & Aunt Madge confirmed it O.K. To-day it was dull this morning but cleared up soon & was bright & sunny by noon. I had a real thrill to-day & slept in until 100 o'clock for a real rest. Then after a nice lunch, ~~Bessie~~ Norah & I cycled to Newtonards & then past Comber to the old Abernethy farm about 14 miles from Bangor. Here I met Norah & Bessie's cousin Willie Abernethy & his wife & two daughters - also second cousins of mine. They were very hospitable & gave us a grand supper & showed us around the farm. I got in good with them by helping to stack up sheaves of hay for about an hour while we finished off the field he had been working on. Here I came

on an old picture of Grandma & also one of Aunt. Edith in his family album - it sure is strange to see these familiar faces way off over here in dusty old family albums. We left about 7.00 o'clock with a lb. of fresh churned butter as a present & got back to Bangor around nine. Sadie (Morrow) Corbin, her daughter, Ida & her sister Daisy Morrow were at Bessie's when we arrived, so after tea Ida & I went dancing & had a very pleasant time until midnight when I took her home & then got lost in the blackout getting back to Bessie's place. However I finally managed to make it O.K.

Thursday July 22. This morning was another swell day - I sure have been lucky & Muriel, Norak & I went golfing again. I managed to make out very well on the drives etc. but fell down near the green, however 95 for 14 holes wasn't too bad a score for the second game in my life & I really enjoyed it. This afternoon, Norak & I went for a long swim & to-night Gordon & Marjorie Stevenson - ~~his~~ <sup>his</sup> ~~brother~~ <sup>brother</sup> of Muriel Johnston took me sailing in Bangor Bay. Gordon wasn't along at first so Marjorie & I went along first to get the boat ready & of course, they were all kidding me about going out with a married woman. However she is by far the prettiest girl I've met over here & we got along fine together. There wasn't much

wind for sailing so we spent most of our time catching jellyfish floating in the water since I'd never seen them before. After the sail we went back to Bessie's for tea & sat around talking until midnight.

Friday July 23. This morning Lily (Dawson) Page & her daughter made a special trip down here from Belfast to see me after Bessie had dropped her a line saying that I was here. She is another sister of Harry who I met on Wednesday & also of Maggie Ryerson. They were very nice too & seemed very glad to meet me. This afternoon we went in early, met Herbert & Daisy Morrow at Robinson Cleaver's for tea & then I said my hasty goodbyes - thanked them all for a marvellous time, received a present of candy & sandwiches from Daisy & caught my train at 4.50 to Larne. I got the same steamer back & it was as calm as a millpond this time. Caught the train again at Stranraer & thence to Carlisle thru the rugged hills & crags of bonny Scotland - it was still daylight this time so I got a good view. & finally arrived back in Newcastle-on-Tyne at 3.15 a.m. I had to wait 4 hours in the station so went to sleep in the station tea-room & caught the 7.15 a.m. to Darlington.

Sat. July 24. Arrived at Darlington at 8.30, fell in with a couple of other lads from the station & took a taxi all

the way back out to the aerodrome - very reasonable at 10 bob & got here just at 9.00 a.m. & too late for breakfast. I was very disappointed in not having any mail yet from Ray - only one letter ~~from Ray~~ since Mother died but I guess there are lots on the way. I came down to the quarters, slept until noon & then got to work this afternoon - there are so many <sup>new</sup> faces around I hardly know anyone it seems. However things went very well & we only had one prang while I was away - another ground loop & folded undercarriage - one wing ruined & Cat A.C. However no-one was hurt so it wasn't too bad.

July 25 (Sun) - Got sort of organized again today & found lots to keep me busy. We moved to our new Mess - much bigger & better & then went to a movie to night after a rip-roaring softball game which we won 13 to 6.

July 26 (Mon) - Today I was kept going pretty strongly trying to break 1000 hrs. flying this month - I think we're going to do it too if the weather holds out. Tonight I wrote letters & went to bed early.

July 27 (Tue) Our Adj.  $\frac{1}{2}$  Stanley is starting to get in my hair with his attempts to run my business so I was throwing my weight around a little today to keep control of things & keep him where

he belongs. Tonight we were supposed to play softball but the opposing team didn't show up so Bill Tait & I went in to Darlington on our bicycles to see a show and it was very good too.

July 28 (Wed) Things were really busy today since serviceability started to drop way down & I kept the boys going till late tonight trying to get it back up again. We were also standing by for ops tonight for another big <sup>do</sup> tonight - there was a 2000 ton raid last night and Middleton had 31 bites away & didn't lose any - however it was scrubbed due to weather just because we slaved to get nine of our best bites ready. They've stopped the dances Wednesday nights at the Craft Spa so we have to go to a place called Piercebridge about 10 miles from here & just past Darlington. We are having our Mess house warming party this coming Saturday night so I've invited Audrey Nelson to come & also to go dancing tonight. Bill Tait, Bryce Dickey & myself cycled over on our bikes but it's a little too far on a warm night especially with all the hills in the neighbourhood. However, we had a good time, met the girls etc. & got fired up for Saturday night.

July 29, 1943 (Thur.) Had a few more arguments with the flight commanders & the Adj. to-day but things are gradually coming around O.K. Serviceability is also getting better after a lot of hard work. Stayed in tonight to write some letters & get to bed early.

July 30, 1943. (Fri) To-day was very hectic with one thing going wrong after another & tonight we got an invitation to go over <sup>to MSGR.</sup> and have dinner with Air Vice Marshal Ferrier the Air Member for Aero. Engineering in Canada so that didn't help matters much. The weather had apparently closed in over at Middleton last night after ops & 13 Halis were diverted here last night so it was a panic all day trying to get them ready to fly back to Middleton & be ready for more ops tonight. Anyway the dinner went off O.K. & Mc Miller complimented me on 1664 having obtained over 1000 flying hours this month - that's the second month after our birth so that helped. We went down & watched take-off with 27 bikes lined up ready to go but at the last minute they apparently decided the target was too hot for so many bikes so 17 were scrubbed & only 10 left the deck.

July 31, 1943 (Sat.) Tonight was our house-warming party in the new mess & we had a whole of a time.

I had invited Audrey Nelson again from Darlington & we did have a swell evening. The bus took the girls back to town again at 1.30 a.m. & I got back here to the station at 4.00 a.m.

Aug. 1st. 1943 (Sun) Well we got 1064 hours flying last month which wasn't bad - this month were going to try for 1500. The day passed very quietly after last night, we saw a show in the Mess & I was undressed & in bed by midnight - going to have a day off tomorrow. Suddenly Bill Tait - my hotel friend came barging in saying a kite was bogged down in the mud near D flight, was blocking the runway & Flying Control wanted it out as soon as possible. That really fixed it so I got dressed, went out into a pitch black night which didn't help matters much. I commandeered a light van & went careering around in the dark looking for stuff to help lift the kite out. I got a jack & pad from the contractor's cat AC kite in the hangar, broke into Servicing flight stores for a spanner, swapped B flight's tractor & finally got the kite out at 3.30 a.m. Then we went up and had an aircrew meal of bacon & eggs at the sergeant's mess & came back to bed.

Aug. 2. (Mon) Slept in till noon & then cycled into Darlington to meet Audrey Nelson & Helma Clark with Bill Tait. The girls said they had to be back early for fire watch.



so we scrubbed our proposed cycle trip & went to a show. Then we left the girls & Billy & I cycled way out about 4 miles north of Darlington - couldn't get anything to eat at the pubs and so drank beer instead. Then it started to rain so we got soaked & headed for home & stopped at every pub we passed on the way for a pint of beer. After 6 miles & 5 pints we arrived at the Croft Spa & of all things found our two fire-watching girlfriends in there at a dance. They explained things nicely by saying that they got out of it OK after we had gone but I'm not so sure.

Aug. 3. Tues. Today was a great day since I got two parcels, a magazine and 10 letters all at once. - one letter from Bill Harvey my best pal at Kingal who just got over & is up in Scotland on Gairloch and another from Ross Doubt who just arrived over & is still in Bournemouth - the whole gang will be over here soon if this keeps up. I also got more news from Kay & a couple of her long overdue letters which must have been lost temporarily on the way so now I feel a bit better. Today we had our third big prang & of all things - another ground loop - M for Mother DG. 280 - nobody was hurt but the ~~stabiliser~~ port wing, props, undercarriage, fin & tail plane were

all smashed - another Cat AC. I turned the whole lifting business over to Dickey since it wasn't too hard & he had never had much experience before in cases like this so he finally got it away at 10 o'clock last night.

I have had a slight toothache recently so ~~yes~~ on Saturday last I went over to Middleton to the dental office there & he fiddled around, decided it couldn't be saved & finally pulled it out after breaking it up into little pieces. However it didn't hurt too much it is perfectly OK again now. Also on Saturday, we needed a Morris radiator for a bite so I located one at Leaning, got on to the wingco. & persuaded him to fly me down in the Moth. I know he likes an excuse to get out on these little trips & it sure helps me a lot too. He decided he'd show me some aerobatics so being an open cockpit he warned me to strap myself in securely & away we went. It just feels like a jack rabbit after flying a Halifax but we went through the whole sequence of snap barrel rolls, slow rolls, spins, loops, vertical wing overs & inverted flying so I had a whole of a time & thoroughly enjoyed it. He let me fly it after we were about half way

there & I found it a lot more difficult to hold in the very bumpy air than a Halifax. However, we got our spares & then I flew all the way back by myself although we took over to land - I still have never landed an aircraft myself yet but hope to one of these days.

Aug. 4 (Wed.) Today the wing commander wanted me to go down with him to look over the new station at Wombledon where we are supposed to be moving to soon. It is way up in the Cleveland hills near Scarborough & although pretty, is a very poor location for our unit - it isn't anywhere near finished & is miles from any big towns. It seems a shame after we have worked so hard to get this station built up from practically nothing that we are going to have to start in all over again just as we get things going more or less smoothly here. However, I guess it's just one of things. We spent nearly all day there & had a nice trip out of it getting back here at 4 o'clock. I'm staying in tonight to try & catch up on some of this correspondence.

Aug. 5 (Thu.) The news about the invasion of Sicily is coming in thick & heavy these days & the boys are really going strong. People here are very optimistic now that big things will be

happening in the near future - I sure hope so anyway. Now that Mussolini has backed out of the axis, it is beginning to look like we have passed the hump and are on the last half of the battle now.

We are flying hot and heavy these days with an average of about 50 hours per day - if we can hold it for the month we might get our 1500 although it is beginning to rain much more frequently these days & I guess our summeres past. They are also after us these days about our 50% operational aircraft so it begins to look as if we will be called on for ops any day now.

Aug. 6. (Fri) It rained to-day & was quite miserable so we didn't get much flying done. Had a movie in the Mess to-night.

Aug. 7. (Sat) Nothing exciting to-day - another show in the Mess to-night - Desert Victory about the 8th Army in Tunisia & very good it was too.

Aug. 8. (Sun) - Sunday seems to be our unlucky day since we flew hard all day & then tonight had our fourth big prang - C for Charlie DK115 - for some reason I haven't been able to find out yet the port w/c folded up just after he had made his landing & he came down on one wing right in the centre of the runway about 5:30 to-night. We had

night flying on & scheduled for 11:00 p.m. so it was up to me to get it lifted and cleared in time. Bill Spitz & I ordered midnight supper & set to work with lifting bags and jacks & finally got a boggy under her & towed her away to a dispersal by 10:45 just in time since the aircraft were beginning to warm up in preparation for take-off. It damaged the port outer mainplane, aileron and flap, ruined the undercarriage, the port tail fin and rudder & bashed in the bottom of the port outer engine - also the two port props. This makes another Cat AC. for the contractors to work on & a total of three gonged up in the hangar at the present time.

Aug 9. Mon. To-day I got a line on a new room in a Mission hut on 5<sup>th</sup> st. next door to Bryce Dickey so I borrowed a van from the M.T. & moved over bag & baggage this afternoon. It is a single room with a small stove, table, dresser & washstand & looks as if it will be a lot more comfortable than my other room. I spent all of to-day getting Q-Queenie out of a bog mud hole. The port wheel was down in it up to the hub & with 30 tons of aircraft to move it takes some handling. However I rounded up the jacks, Sommerfeld boards & with the wrench on the Petrol bowser finally got her out after a lot of back breaking work. This is

two days in a row I've been doing real manual labour & so was pretty well tired out tonight, wrote a letter & went to bed early.

Aug. 10 (Tue) - It was dark, cloudy & raining all day to-day - this is the typical English weather which everyone hates. It cleared up towards evening and at five o'clock Bill Hait got an urgent telegram from his home in Edinburgh to rush home immediately - he phoned up & it was some old trouble between his mother & father & so he was quite worried. However, we got on to the G.C. - borrowed his Tiger Moth & he set off at 8:00 p.m. for Edinburgh with S/Lt. Bob Boosey (DFC) at the controls - there is never a dull moment around here.

Aug. 11 (Wed) Things went more or less quietly to-day since the weather was dark & dull, very cold & with occasional rain to dampen everyone's spirits. I'm going to try & get some letters written tonight since I've seen the movie on at the Mess.

Aug. 12 (Thu) Another dull, quiet day. I'm beginning to think it's time I got off the station for a change since I'm getting as the saying is here - a little browned off. I wrote more letters tonight & decided to take tomorrow morning off & sleep in till noon.

Aug. 13 (Fri) - Good old Friday the 13th. I was hoping

that to-day being lucky, I would get a whole heap of mail. However none from Kay - just an inventory of Mother's estate from the Trust Co. - \$17,425.92 it says - however I'll bet it won't be that much for very long after all the taxes, duties & Trust Co. fees come out of it. I slept in till noon, exchanged my dirty old battle-dress for some new & went over to Pay & Accts. at Middleton-St. George to try & straighten out Kay's assignments - again since I got another letter from H.Q. - Accts. section. I rode over on my motor-cycle between rainstorms & got a flat tire just as I was entering the gates at M.S.S. - very fortunate it didn't happen out in the country some where. Arrived back here at 8 o'clock, wrote some letters & went to bed.

Aug. 14 (Sat) - It was sunny most of to-day for a change with the odd rain storm just to keep things wet & muddy - still no mail so I'm not very happy about that. We got our serviceability jacked up again to-day & sent 5 cross-country goon bikes on a Bulls-eye - practice operational sortie tonight. I saw a movie in the Mess & then came back to the quarters here & wrote three more letters - I'm gradually getting caught up & only have about 8 left to answer out of the ones that came from all the folks after Mother passed away. Kay sure ain't no worried - I wish I'd write more often.

Aug 15 (Sunday) - Well, wonders will never cease, we had a very quiet day to-day for a change on Sunday with no orange or ground loops. Movie in the Mess to night.

Aug. 16. - (Monday) Well, it looks like the end of things in Sicily now & people here are quite excited about the immediate future. There is something in the air all right since the whole countryside seems alive with soldiers on the move. The south coast towns have been made restricted areas now & we have heard faint rumours of troop concentrations which I don't dare even put down on paper here. Not only that but from our point of view things are picking up since both Air Ministry & 6 Group have recently been pressing us harder to get our bikes fitted up & fully modified for operations - it must be going to be a real effort if com units are to be used too. Even the targets we are hitting these days are different since now we are hitting manufacturress making completed assemblies of tanks, guns & aircraft engines & now they have been ordered to blast away at basic industries & supplies. Even the screened instructor aircrews here are getting a little jittery for fear they will be called out for ops one of these nights - none of them are very anxious to go naturally, but no doubt if they asked for volunteers they'd all want to go. They are like that - they all grouse around about having finished their tours & not wanting to fly any more but when the time comes



none of them stay back.

I'll risk a prediction here & say that I think that by the middle of September we will have established a bridge-head in France, captured Sardinia & Corsica & be fighting the Germans in Italy along the Po valley. Later on we will go through from Italy to Greece & the Balkans to join up with the Russians & that by September next year, Germany will capitulate but not on an unconditional surrender basis. Also I think there will be some more heavy bombing of England here before very long.

Aug. 17 (Tuesday) - This big conference in Quebec City between Churchill & Roosevelt is on everyone's mind here at the present time - on the success of it depends how long the war will last & we all hope the end is in sight now. To-day was a bad day for us - 41 a/c lost on a new target up near the Baltic - six from Middleton alone - two of them some of our first trainees on this unit. - it sure doesn't take long after they leave here. We are off this super daylight saving now & it gets dark around 9:30 - there have been plenty of searchlights around here lately & tonight I watched about 50 of them coming various aircraft just east of here - it looks like it might be a raid.

Aug. 18 (Wed) It rained all day to-day but cleared.

up tonight. The gang of us went to Peasebridge to a dance & had a fair time. I met Audrey but have decided she is too hard to get along with even if she is pretty so I didn't even ask her to dance but went the rounds of the stag line instead. We came back by taxi & watched the best searchlight show I've seen yet. It turned out there was a raid last night just east of here & this looked like another. There must have been a hundred on at least weaving & coning all over the sky.

Aug. 19 (Thur) - Rained most of to-day & this weather is really starting to cut down our flying hours. Played knock rummy tonight & won a whole 2d. Also installed a bed lamp on my bed here with the help of Bill Peit & Lew scrounged bulbs, fixtures & lengths of wire.

Aug. 20 (Fri) - Did a little flying yesterday, I forgot to mention - O orange had been reported with a violent tailswimming so the W/C & I went up to test it & she really did go. I logged about 1.00 hr. second decky time & also got about a half hour dual as well as did the 2nd pilot assistance in take off & landing. While I was handling the kite the W/C got me to do various turns, climbs, glides etc. & also my first experience with three engine flying - first we cut the 1st engine, then the stbd inner & finally the stbd outer

engine feathered in turn. They sure are hard to hold & tend to yaw a lot - especially on the outer. However with a little strength & judgement it didn't seem too hard to do & the W/C complimented me again on my air sense etc. - more damn fun.

Tonight we had the Flight Engineer's party at a little club in Craft. It cost 10<sup>5</sup> with free beer & chicken sandwiches which went very well - a good time was had by all although as usual I sweat very easy.

Aug. 21 (Sat) - It was very miserable rain all day to-day - very cold, wet & muddy. I spent my whole day in rubber boots & really needed them. We tried to get to town tonight for another dance but couldn't get taxis so stayed in & saw a good movie in the Mess. We broke 1000 hrs. flying yesterday which is a lot better than last month but still not up to Topcliffe & some of the other Con Units. However, we are gradually getting closer.

Aug. 22 (Sun) - to Aug. 29 (Sun). This week went by very quickly since we were tremendously busy all week trying to cope with all the inspections that are piling up. We broke 1500 hrs. day (the 29th) so are safe on that score. With all the rain we have been having lots of trouble with kites bogged down

in the mud, getting up at all hours of the day & night to pull them out. Friday night Bill Jait, Bryce Dickey & I stayed in to play knock rummy - finished off my bottle of rum which I've kept religiously for 9 months - I've still got the big 40 oz. for Mac but Ruth writes to say he has gone out to N. Africa & Sicily so I guess it's mine now. We had a great time anyway, lit a fire in the stove in my room & finished off with a real midnight snack from my pile of groceries which have gradually been accumulating. Thursday night I was in to a dinner & party at the Royal Observer Corps in Darlington & Sat. night the gang of us went to Piercebridge again to the dance - I saw Audrey but didn't dance with her - met a new one named Mary Whittington & took her home on the train - she's quite nice & seems quite interesting. I found out that the old grandfather clock in the lobby of the hotel - the "George" hotel at Piercebridge is the same one mentioned in the famous old song about the Grandfather Clock & there is a plaque there telling all about it - supposed to be a true story.

Aug. 30. (Mon) - blew very little to-day due to rain but it cleared up tonight so I cycled into Darlington & took Mary to a show & had a fair time - got back here around midnight. Had a letter from Bert King

to-day - first twinkling I'd had that he was  
anywhere on this side of the water.

Aug. 31 (Tues) - There was a big do on Berlin last  
night & we lost 52 bombers - 5 from Middletown.  
There are quite a few crews from here who have  
been lost already - they sure don't waste any  
time. We flew pretty hard to-day & should end up  
with a good figure but these inspections are sure  
piling up fast. Our fairly large losses these days  
are due to night-fights since flak is diminishing  
all the time. I got some inside gen. to-day on the new  
bombing technique they are using with these very heavy  
raids of 2000 tons in anywhere from 20 minutes to half  
an hour over the target. First the pathfinder squadrons  
locate the target & light the whole with great clusters of  
slowly falling flares - at the same time a fast-moving  
mosquito flies in at about 5000 feet locates the specific  
points they want bombed & then proceeds to direct traffic  
by radio to the heavy bombers coming in anywhere from 74  
to 18 thousand feet - They tell them to bomb just this side  
or that of a certain colored flare or certain fires etc down  
on the ground etc & in this way can really pick off  
the targets they want. It also helps to prevent  
collisions over the target & dropping bombs on one another.

Sept. 1 (Wed) - Well we got in 1654 hours this month

to break all previous records so I guess we are doing all right altho' if we don't get some more men pretty soon I'm afraid we won't be able to cope with the inspections. I got a letter from Bill Harvey my pal from Bengal to-day & he is going to spend next week-end up in Edinburgh so I guess I'll take a 48 & go up to see him for the first time since he arrived. I also got a letter from Ruth to-day saying that she was leaving for holidays with Pinkie - going up to a summer resort near Arnprior for swimming etc - begins to make me a little homesick for some decent weather again - it rained all day to-day.

Sept. 2 (Thur) Arranged for my 48 to-day after a big parade they are holding here tomorrow to solemnize the anniversary of the start of the 5th year of war - it sure doesn't seem that long.

Sept. 3 (Fri) Well we had our parade with all the drills - inspection, march past & salute & a prayer by the padre out in the airdrome - it was quite a sight at that. I was a flight commander & was a little rusty on my orders but it soon came back altho' I haven't done any of it since I left home. We also got the good news that the 8th Army under General Montgomery landed on the toe of Italy this morning to start the invasion of continental Europe - they sure picked a good day to do it & I hope it is the

beginning of the end.

I grabbed a taxi out at noon, caught the 2.50 train at Darlington & arrived in Edinburgh about 6.30 p.m. Met Bill in the lounge of the North British Hotel & had a great old visit along with a few beers. We couldn't find a room in any of the good hotels but finally got one in a sort of dive called the Argyll Hotel. As far as I could tell, it was mostly full of American soldiers with women they'd picked up in the streets. However, I'm just being fussy over here so we made out all right.

Sept. 4 (Sat) This morning we got up about 10 & toured the business section to do some shopping, then we climbed up castle rock to go thru Edinburgh Castle & the famous Scottish National Shrine for the last war casualties. It was very interesting & we got a swell view of the city & the hills surrounding the Firth of Forth. Then we visited a few pubs - this Scotch beer is the best I've tasted since I left home & had lunch. Went to a show & then met a few of Bill's friends from Grangemouth where he is stationed - all Spitfire pilots - & visited more pubs. Finally we ended up at a dance at the Cavendish Hotel & had a swell time. Two of the lads didn't have a place to stay so we told them they could sleep on the floor of our room. In the shuffle of saying goodbye to our girls etc. we lost one

of the boys but the other three of us finally got back to our room. Here the missing bloke (another one of these wild Canadians) turned up again in bed with a girl he'd picked up at the dance. We were all feeling pretty good but we finally got rid of her & then decided we would try and find another bed for the two boys so they wouldn't have to sleep on the floor. We roused the proprietress & she finally remembered one empty in a room near us already occupied by a couple. However that didn't matter to us so we knocked on their door & hearing no answer walked in & turned on the lights thus rudely interrupting an American soldier & a girl in one of the beds - it was very funny to see the two rather flustered heads pop out from under the covers. However, excusing ourselves, we walked in & took pillows, sheets, mattress & springs from the other bed & walked out turning out the light & shutting the door behind us! What a night - however, we had a lot of fun & no harm done.

Sept. 5 (Sun) This morning it was raining - quite the usual thing in Edinburgh - & nothing would do but for me to go up to Bell's station for a party they were having that night. I had good intentions of looking up Ruthie's Uncle & Aunt in town but they finally persuaded me so we caught a bus to Sangermouth - about an hour run from Edinburgh. We arrived there around 3.00 pm. while I looked over the set-up of a Spiffere station then we



site and went up to the billets for our party. We had a fair time - six of us with four W.A.A.F.s. & then turned in Sept 6. (Mon). I said good bye to the boys, caught a bus back to Edinburgh, reserved a table for lunch in the Royal British Hotel - you have to reserve one a few hours ahead of time these days or else you don't eat & then went for a walk, looked in the stores & bought a few souvenir handkerchiefs for the folks at home & caught the 1.10 train back. Got out to the station in time for dinner & went to bed early.

Sept. 7. (Tues) Flew pretty heavy to-day & worked hard to get things straightened out after being away for 3 days - it's surprising what a muddle it all was & even the C.O. complimented me by saying he was glad I was back to get the aircraft sorted out again. They have started the invasion of Italy now in earnest & it looks like things will really be happening thick & fast now.

Sept. 8 (Wed) Well, we've gone quite a while now without a prang but to-day we got another. Q for <sup>DG. 342</sup> Queenie swerved on landing & tore out the stbd. c/c on the ground loop - that seems to be the favourite method around here. It's a Cat AC. with stbd c/c, wing, stbd outer engine, 2 stbd props & the stbd tail fin & rudder all buckled up

It happened about 4:45 and ended up right on the runway so we had to set to work right away to get it clear for night flying. We worked all thru supper time and had it lifted with the bags out by 9:15 which was pretty fast work. I'm getting so experienced on lifting these crashes now that we don't have nearly the trouble we used to. About half the boys in the Mess got tight to night celebrating the fall of Italy - they capitulated to unconditional surrender so now we are really getting places.

Spt. 9 (Thur) We had another good day to day, saw a show tonight & were having quite a drinking bout celebrating the gongs (D.F.C.) awarded both W/C Clark & the Kingfish - S/L Kenney when about 10:30 the phone rang & it was another prang off the runway - a bad one this time - they say these things always happen in threes - so I guess we've got another to go ypt. The W/C & I jumped in his car right away & raced down to the airrome in the pitch black. It was B for Beer (DG.339) - according to the pilot's story, he had just taken off on his second solo circuit when the S.O. engine started vibrating & rearing so rough it started to shake the whole aircraft.

He was at about 100 feet at the time & so couldn't have hit anything as we at first thought. He tried to feather it but apparently wasn't able to so he made a low circuit, got sort of panicky & brought her in for a belly landing - I think he could have brought her down safely with wheels down on the runway but as it was he headed for the grass, just missed a couple of parked aircraft & just touched down on the edge of the runway. At the first smack he bust up all four props & tore off a few engine cowlings & radiators, then the stbd. outer engine fell out on the ground bashing a big hole right thru the wing in passing. This threw the nose up & the tail down which promptly tore off the tail wheel & oleo & incidentally broke the pilot's back just aft of the T.E. of the wings. When the nose came down again & the port outer engine fell out & she finally came to rest with debris strewn all over the field for about two hundred yards behind it - what a mess - Cat E definitely & fortunately no one was badly hurt. The tail gunner hit in face on his panel & had a bloody nose & lips & loosened a few teeth - other than that - no casualties - boy, are we

lucky on this unit. 1659 at Topcliffe had five prangs last week & killed 7 men again. They seem to do that about every two weeks. I investigated things as best I could in the dark, checked the controls etc & we came back to the Mess while the boys finished their party. I stopped right then & went to bed since I figured I was going to be pretty busy in the morning.

The Allies landed in Italy way up around Naples to-day & still have a lot of opposition from the Germans even though the Italians are finished.

Sept 10 (Fri) - It started to rain at ten o'clock this morning & hasn't stopped since - now 12:30 a.m. - what a country. It was so hard to work out in the rain that the C.O. gave everyone the day off from noon on as a present for breaking the flying time record last month. It was so cold & miserable this afternoon I lit a fire in my stove altho' we are not supposed to have them until November due to lack of coal & wrote a few letters, then went to sleep. Tonight Bryce & I, the Padre & Jacob Guy played knock rummy all evening around the fire - made tea & had a good time - I ended up losing thruppence. - we really play for high stakes!

Sept. 11 (Sat) - Rain & more rain - I never saw anything

like - we didn't have a bite off the ground to-day & it's very discouraging for trying to break flying hour records. Played billiards in the Mess to-night & went to bed early.

Sun. (Sept. 12) - Bill Tait went to hospital yesterday with a bad head cold & left his dog Scruffy in my care - so far I've lost her 3 times & seemed to have spent most of the day looking for her off & on. I've got her trained now so she sits on the petrol tank of my motor-bike & rides around as happy as can be. Tonight about 7 o'clock I was out off the end of No. 2 runway when I saw the nearest thing to a bad penny I've seen yet. It didn't rain much to-day but was just a heavy fog instead - it lifted around noon so seven cross-country aircraft took off, then about 4:00 o'clock it closed down thick again & they couldn't see to land. Things started to happen thick & fast then. First a 405 Spdn. bite radios that they had to make a forced landing, since one of their engines had started to vibrate and had finally fallen completely out over Nottingham & in doing so had broken one of the other propellers so he only had two engines really working. He finally got in all right after a lot of fuss. Next a bite ran off the perimeter track after nearly colliding with another at the end of the runway & got bogged in

the mud very badly after all this recent rain. We pulled  
 & dug & pulled again & finally got it out. In the meantime  
 the cross-countries had been diverted to various other  
 stations - 4 to Popcliffe, 1 to Seaming & 1 to Linton-on-Ouse  
 & one was left still flying since he couldn't find Popcliffe  
 in the fog. Just as we got this kite out of the ~~the~~ mud  
 he found our airfield & decided to try a landing so he  
 circled around, overshot a long way & landed downwind about  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way down the runway & going like a bat out of  
 hell. Here we were with our aircraft perched right  
 on the end of the runway & the first thing I saw was this  
 kite heading straight for us at about 90 miles an  
 hour out of the fog about 150 yards away. We immediately  
 took to our heels & ran as never before to get out of  
 the way. At the same instant, the pilot saw us,  
 swung off the runway, ran through two hedges, across  
 the perimeter track with brakes full on & still doing  
 about 50 mph; through a heavy barbed wire fence,  
 across a farmer's field where there was a herd of  
 grazing horses & past the farmhouse not fifty feet  
 from his wing tip, past the barn, through another  
 wire fence, then through a pile of oil drums, starter  
 batteries & tool kits & finally ended up right smack  
 in the centre of a dispersal point. As soon as I saw that  
 we were clear, I jumped on my motor bike & sailed after

him as fast as I could go, expecting to have to pull a few bodies out of the wreck. However when I got there they were just shutting the engines down & the jittery shabby crew were climbing down out of the kite. - what an experience & of all the coincidences first of all there was no damage whatsoever to the aircraft except a few dents in the belly, second he hadn't knocked over a single fence post since the aircraft luckily straddled them all, third he went right through this pile of oil drums, tool pits etc & missed everything except one starter dolly which had tipped over and smashed & last of all the dispersal he ended up on was the correct one for that aircraft & he brought her up right where it belonged - that really amazed the whole thing & that pilot sure must have been born with a few horses hooves around his neck - I hope that is the third of our series of 3 prongs this time even though it ended up O.K. - to all intents & purposes, it should have been a prong and a bed one at that - a little better than our usual Sunday doo.

Mon. (Sept. 13) - To day it rained steadily all day & we didn't do a bit of flying - very poor for trying to break records - this is really the rainy season with a vengeance. I stayed in tonight & wrote 5 letters so that wasn't bad.

Tues. Sept. 14. Rain & fog all day to-day - still no flying - what a country - to make things worse things aren't going so well in Italy & we are getting beaten back at Salerno near Naples - I sure hope it is only a temporary set-back.

Wed. Sept. 15. Well, for a change, the weather cleared to-day & so we were flying just about everything we had. I guess that near prang we had on Sunday was not our third in the series since we had a real one to-day - our first fatality since the unit was started. Just about 1.00 o'clock the W/C came up & said that he had just heard that one of our bites ZU - D for Donald - EB. 198 had gone down somewhere near East Moor - actually it was Stillington Yorks. The two of us immediately set out to find it in his car so we drove down through Northallerton & Thirsk to Stillington. After asking a few of the farmers around we soon found the smoking remains in a potato field & what a mess it was. We found that the pilot had been badly burned up in the bite but the other six had baled out & were O.K. These six soon came straggling in from all directions where they had landed & were rather tattered & minus shoes etc. but nevertheless whole & mighty glad to be safe on the ground -



none of them had ever made a parachute jump before. It appeared from their stories that the pilot's escape hatch blew open & banged it up a bit before they could grab it. Consequently when they finally got it closed it wouldn't lock since it was now bent. They tore off neckties & so forth to try & tie it down but that didn't hold very long before it blew right out & unfortunately hit the stbd. tail fin in passing. This caused the rudder controls to be practically non-operative so the pilot - an Aussie P/O - told the crew to bale out - a little Negro P/O from Trinidad was first out & the rest followed suit in short order. A couple of them were so close together they even talked to each other on the way down & we heard all the first hand stories of their experiences. From then on of course things are more or less obscure. The pilot didn't seem to be in too much difficulty since he got in touch with the nearby bombing range by RT & told them he was finished bombing. Then he called them <sup>again</sup> & said he was going to try & make base with the damaged tail. The Observer Corps boys saw the lads bale out & the a/c carried on straight & level for about five minutes. Then it slowly turned into a vertical

bark almost over on its back & dived straight down about 2000 feet. Next he apparently got control again & flew along straight & level for another few minutes & finally went into a slow spin & crash landed in the centre of the field. Both the outer engines were thrown out about 50 yards on each side of the kite & there were oil tanks & cowling scattered all around. The rest caught on fire & burned up completely except for the tail which was untouched & gave me the chance to investigate the various stories & hand in the report. The pilots remains showed that he had lost most of his head on impact while his remains were badly burned & they never did find one leg & one arm - rather gruesome but at any rate he was dead before the fire got to him.

After investigating we went on to East Moor while the M.O. doped up the lads who had baled out & were still a little weak at the knees. Here I bumped into 7/6 Summers - my old C.O. at the engineering school in Montreal & he seemed quite glad to see me & we had a great old visit. Then we made for home here & brought the boys back with us. Flur - Sept. 16. Well we flew 10425 minutes yesterday in spite of the pump for a new record.

4 to-day I spent most of my time answering questions about what we'd found. It started to rain again tonight & is still going strong altho' it must be going to clear since we saw the Middleton buses going off about 7.30 on ops & there must have been about 30 of them so it must be another big do - the first this week because of the poor weather.

Fri. Sept. 17. 1943 - Nothing very exciting happened to-day although things still look serious for us in Italy - I sure hope the Allies get going there pretty soon. The weather was a little better to-day so we are starting to catch up on a little flying.

Sat. Sept. 18. 1943. Maflew hot & heavy to-day & put in quite a few hours. Tonight, Bryce & I cycled to Darlington & then caught a taxi for Piercebridge for the dance. I met Mary there & we had a swell time, then came home by train. I cycled back here about 2.00 a.m. all worn out.

Sun. Sept. 19. 1943 - Well we got thru this Sunday without one of our regular prangs for a change. Tonight I cycled into Darlington again & took Mary to see a concert. Then we walked home to her place & went in for coffee & sandwiches - it was very nice too & the first time I've been invited to anyone's home since I got over here - other than friends, relatives

disconnections of course. I cycled back here again about 1.00 a.m. this time.

Mon. Sept. 20, 1943 - The weather stayed good to-day & we did lots of flying. Had one minor prang when a visiting Spitfire ran off the runway into the long grass & nosed over burying its prop in the ground. I wish our prangs were as easy to clear as this - all we did was throw a rope over the tail & pull it back upon the wheels again by manpower & then pushed it off the field - also by manpower - nothing to it compared to the hours it takes to move a Halifax. I seem to be catching a little cold so stayed in tonight & went to bed early.

Tues. Sept. 21, 1943. P.m. day we got word that things were going a little better in Italy so we all felt better about that. Tonight at 5.00 p.m. we heard that there was a special big practice bombing raid or "bullseye" tonight & we had to get 8 bikes ready for it - take-off at 8.00 p.m. The whole command was in on it & it was to give crews an idea of what to expect over on the other side on a real raid - complete with searchlights, night-fighters, flare targets & the whole works - in fact everything except real bullets in the guns & flak. I've been waiting for one like this for a long time & so got permission from the W/C to go with St. Jacobs converting here. We went to the special

secret briefing at 6:30. First the navigation leader pointed out the course on a big map with the heights to fly at & times to beat certain places, places to pick up navigation & goon signals etc. Then the Met. officer gave the forecast as to wind, visibility & cloud all along the route. Next the intelligence officer gave the exact target for practice bombing, locations of searchlights, where to expect night-fighters, what special types of flares, signals & lights were to be used etc. & then the W/C gave his usual little pep talk to the crews. I was busy trying to get bits ready right up to the last minute & rushed around, got my warm gloves, put my ski-jacket on under my battle dress, drew out parachute & harness & got my flying helmet, intercom & oxygen equipment out of the office just in time for take off. I was in EB.202 - ZU-G for Georgie. After take off, we climbed right up to 12,000 feet & set course for the coast near Bristol channel. We had to use oxygen of course but it wasn't too cold since the hot air heaters were working well. I watched the W/op. use his I.F.F. & wireless sets for work & then watched Sammy Mc Dougall navigating by goon sets - those very secret but amazing instruments for getting dead reckoning as to position by radio. Hey you all so secret that I won't say anything more about it except that they all carry enclosed

detonators for blowing it up in case of a landing in enemy territory. As we finally reached height I went up to the bomb aimers position where I could see everything there was to see. There were hundreds & hundreds of searchlights weaving all over the sky & it sure makes a marvellous spectacle. The boys were saying that it compared very much the same as anything they had ever seen on a real operational trip. We got picked up several times by searchlights & as soon as one gets you, about 12 or 15 others all swing over on you & "love" you. The light is so dazzling, you can't see out through the perspex at all & of course this is when you are easy meat for nightfighters & flak. However, we managed to get out of a couple of cones by taking violent evasive action. However they don't like to do too much of that near the target since there is danger of collision with so many aircraft around all converging on one point. There was about 250 heavy bombers alone on this exercise. After Bristol we turned along the south coast & reached London which could be just made out in the moonlight although the blackout was very good we noticed. Just around here it got exciting since suddenly all searchlights in sight started to do the same thing - moving in a steady arc from

vertical to a horizontal position pointed northwards. It was amazing to see them all cooing us northward frantically it seemed - it was what is known as a visual homing & was one of the signs prearranged to indicate that there was a real enemy bombing raid in progress & we were to get the h. out of there in the direction of the searchlights as quickly as possible. This was necessary since wireless silence was maintained throughout the trip so as to not tip off Jerry. They have to be very careful about such things over here being only 40 or 50 miles in some cases from the enemy even though it's only a practice. We turned about, circled for a while to see the fun but got chased off by a night fighter - probably one of ours - a Beaufighter as I saw in the silhouette against a searchlight beam. Then we made off up the east coast & home four hours after take-off. On the way incidentally, I caught my first glimpse of the French coast across the channel on our way back. After arriving here we went up and had an ops breakfast of bacon & egg (real, by the way) & so to bed.

Wed. Sept. 22, 1943. I slept in until 10:00 am this morning but then went down to the flight. My cold seems to be a little worse & I guess

last night's flip didn't help it much. Tonight I was busy till 11:30 whipping around the air dome in the pitch black on my motorbike organizing the boys or fixing up a flat tire on one runway, a blown tail wheel on another & a violent ground loop on a third - just one darn thing after another.

Thu. Sept. 23, 1943 Well, I guess last night's effort was worth it since we broke all records in yesterday's flying with 106.25 minutes - 59 of which was done at night. & flew 26 different aircraft during the day and night - not too bad, I figure. I went to the show in the Mess tonight & went to bed early.

Fri. Sept. 24, 1943 - My cold seems to be reaching a peak to-day - it would since tomorrow night is our monthly Mess dance & I've already invited Mary. However, I went to bed this afternoon & early tonight so hope I will be better tomorrow.

Sat. Sept. 25, 1943 Well, we flew hot and heavy again today & then quit early to get ready for our Mess party tonight. We brought the girls out from Darlington again in the bus & I had made arrangements for Mary to come so we had a swell evening with lots of dancing, eating & drinking. I didn't drink much thinking of all the work ahead of us tomorrow & neither did Mary but we did enjoy ourselves. The girls



left shortly after midnight & Paul Metwicer & I managed to scrounge a seat in the bus ~~home~~. However it turned out that the one we caught was going all the way to Bishop Auckland about 10 miles past Darlington so we had a nice long ride & dropped the two girls off on our way back so managed to do all right by ourselves. We got back around 3:00 a.m.

Sun. Sept. 26/43 - There weren't very many people in good condition to-day but we managed to put in quite a few hours at that. Last night after I got back I found Bryce Dickey in a funny predicament with two girls left on his hands - they had both missed the last bus out & we didn't know what to do with them. However, luckily Bill Hait is away on leave so we stuck them in his billet for the night. Poor Bryce worried all night about what to do with them in the morning but solved the embarrassing situation by conveniently forgetting all about them & leaving them to catch the bus out on their own hook. nothing more has been heard from them.

Mon. Sept 27/43. To-day we broke over 1500 lbs & are about 150 up on last month so are managing O.K. Tonight it is bitterly cold out with a raging wind & rain storm. I've got my stove going full blast on some scrounged coal but can still see my breath