

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

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

DIARY - Vol. III

Apr. 21/45 to June 23/45

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of the day reading it. It turned a little cooler to day & clouded over so stayed inside near the fire

Sat. Apr. 21. No day we went into town early at 1.00 pm. & met Vera at the station. From there we took a tube up to Baker St. & went in to the famous Madame Tousseaud's where we spent a very interesting couple of hours - quite a lot bigger scale than the one in Montreal. After that we went to a show to see a "Tree Grows in Brooklyn" which was very good & then to dinner at the Queen's Brasserie again & drinks & dancing afterwards. We managed to have a lot of fun with Vera & I getting along very well together.

Sun Apr. 22. Vera came down on the 9.00 o'clock train this morning & I got up to meet her & have breakfast. We caught the 10.00 a.m. train to Clatham & changed for Dover after a very nice trip. Arrived at Dover at noon & walked down to the sea coast & of course the famous "White Cliffs". The place sure is a mess due to the very heavy bombardment of large calibre shells heaved over by the big guns at Calais for the past 5 years. The town is about 75% ruined - not so much that the buildings & houses are all knocked down as they are in London & vicinity with just heaps of rubble left standing but here, the four walls are still standing & the roof on but the interiors are all gutted & floors piled in one on top of the other due to the blast & concussion effect of the explosive shells. - of course all the doors & windows including frames are missing. From a first look, the town doesn't look very badly damaged at all except where a few direct hits were made but on closer inspection, very few of the places are habitable at all & will have to be torn down & rebuilt. We climbed up the White Cliffs to get a view of the harbour & of course, the French Coast. Then we had lunch & wandered around some more before catching a

bus to Canterbury. After an interesting & restful ride we arrived at that quaint old town - one of the best preserved old fashioned places I have seen yet. We went to the Cathedral first & was duly impressed with its size & age & looked around it quite quickly - then we had dinner & caught the train back to Blonkitt, arriving about 1000 pm. We had a great time with lots of hilarity & laughing all day & so were beginning to feel a little tired. Vera decided to stay overnight at Renee's in spite of the fact that she was due back at 1100 o'clock but she phoned in to explain that she had missed her train (which she hadn't, of course) & got away with it ok. We opened a bottle of Mr. Nutt's gin, had something to eat & then to bed to finish off a great day.

Mon April 23. Slept in this morning & spent the day finishing off this good book I had started. It turned rather cold out but still no rain. Went up to the pub again tonight with Bill & Renee & then came back to pack for the early train in the morning.

Tues April 24. Said good-bye to all & had an uneventful trip back up to the station where I arrived about 4.00 pm. Checked up on the ops which had taken place while I was gone. April 16th was a night operation on Swannooof East of Nuremberg with 15 ac on from each squadron - successfully completed with no non-starts or early returns. However 1 of 433 landed in Belgium with one engine shot up with flak. April 21st was a small mining "do" in the Hellegat with 5 on from each squadron & no failures.

April 22 there were 10 from each sqdn. on Bremen which didn't turn out so good since the Allied armies were so close they had instructions not to bomb unless they could see the target visually. Since there was heavy cloud, most of the pilots brought all their bombs back with them rather than run the risk of bombing our own troops. We also had our only failure so far this month with an early return in 433 due to a U/S. E.S.U. We also got one Cat B out of the effort when a piece of flak cracked the main spar of the mainplane centre-section on 5 of 424 Sqdn.

Wed. Apr. 25. Was busy all day getting my work caught up again & also on ops - 100% from each sepn. on the little island of Wangerooze near the ~~Wangerooze~~ ^{Wangerooze} Bay. It was such a good attack, the boys say they nearly sank it! We had a little excitement getting them back on the deck again since it was quite foggy & they were bouncing all over the place. Also Wc Norris' kite "O" Oboc of 424 was badly shot up with flak & the flight lng wounded in the thigh. The navigator had a very lucky escape since the "O" was just climbing past him when the flak hit & it stopped in the meaty part of his thigh instead of the small of the Nav.'s back.

Thur. Apr. 26. - Got 15 from each ready to-day but later scrubbed. Kept busy working on our new mod. we introduced here to get emergency brakes from the Ne bottles.

Fri. Apr. 27. No ops for to-day - Berlin being attacked from all sides by the Russians & rumours of a look up between the Americans & the Russians. Poor old Germany is on its last legs too & about time apparently after all we've heard & pictures we've seen of the terrible conditions in their prison camps where thousands are dying daily from starvation & brutality.

Sat. Apr. 28. No ops to-day. Heard a good one to-day where a kite over at Leaming was seen to have its bombing record painted on the side of the nose. Along with the usual bombs devoting bombing sorties & a couple of wastebags indicating German fighters shot down was the unmistakable outline of a "teacup" of all things. It appears that the ac overshot on landing the other day & ran over a covey workman on the aerodrome who hadn't moved fast enough to get out of its way - what a sense of humour!

Sun. Apr. 29. No ops to-day & things very quiet. I think we have made our last bombing operation over here by the looks of things - Berlin is pretty well devastated by now & the Americans & Russians have definitely looked up now to cut Germany in half - it sure won't be long now.

Mon. Apr. 30. No ops to-day & with 100% serviceability on the station we are all on edge waiting for something to happen & they are sure doing so - thick & fast - the Germans are collapsing fast & it looks like the Russians are trying to make it a May Day victory.

Tues. May 1st. No ops again to-day - Unless we are really finished now. Berlin has almost fallen & the scorching headlines in to-days papers told of Hitler's death & Mussolini & his gang being shot. Himmler, it appears has taken over command of the German army.

Wed. May 2. Hitler is definitely dead now according to all reports. Von Rundstedt has been captured, Himmler offered to surrender unconditionally to the U.S. & Britain but not to the Russians & so was turned down & the whole German army in Italy has surrendered unconditionally with more than 6 million men. Things are rapidly coming to a close & they happen so fast it is hard to keep track of it all.

Thurs. May 3. Berlin has fallen & the British & Canadians have cut off Denmark from the rest of Germany with the rest of it being quickly mopped up. We have been going ahead with intensive plans to use our a/c for dropping food & supplies to camps all over captured territory & are also planning on bringing out 24 p.o.w. at a time in each a/c to get them over here in a hurry - they are very much afraid of the food shortage & also disease etc. in the camps over there now. All the signs point to a surrender at any time now.

We were on a very disappointing gardening operation tonight with 8 from 424 & 9 from 433. To mine the Kattegat we got them all airborne well before ^{their} take-off time - a major achievement too since ^{it is} the biggest mining op. we have ever done. However, panic word came through that the whole issue was scrapped & we had to contact them all individually by RT to send them on a cross-country detail to burn off enough petrol so they can land safely. I'm waiting up for them now to return.

we don't know yet why it was scrubbed - either bad weather or maybe the war is over.

Fri. May 4. I don't know what's holding things up so long with this war since the Germans are surrendering all over the place now. No further word about ops to-day.

Sat. May 5. To-day the armies facing Montgomery with the British & Canadians surrendered to our boys including Denmark & Northern Germany but not Norway yet - Admiral Doenitz has been appointed Fuehrer in place of old Adolf & he still says they will fight to the last but nobody actually believes him.

Sun May 6. Everything quiet to day with the unconditional surrender news expected at any minute. Planning on going down to Leeds tomorrow in my capacity of Bar Officer to try & buy some beer for my boys to drink on VE-Day.

Mon. May 7. Went down to York & Leeds this afternoon to get beer & managed to buy 2 doz. bottles of Whiskey & 10 bags of beer so figured it was fairly successful! News came through this afternoon that the Germans were going to surrender unconditionally tomorrow & that Churchill & the King would be speaking tomorrow afternoon so it looks like the long awaiting day is here at last. Got back to the station tonight & found things in a panic with 13 bites required from each squadron tomorrow to go over to B. 58 aerodrome near Brussels ~~tomorrow~~ to pick up 24 released POW's in each bite & bring them back here. We had to arrange Mae Wests for them all, paper "sick" bags, cushions & rations. Moreover, found that there was a servicing bite to go over too, complete with ground crew, tools & equipment & most important of all - an engineering officer! - boy am I in here like a duck.

Tues May 8. Got up bright & early this morning with lots to do before take-off time at noon. The war is definitely over now too with a complete surrender all around - cease fire is at 1 minute after midnight tonight & Churchill will speak at 3.00 o'clock this afternoon. Got everything organized for the other bites to take off at 12.40 & we got airborne at 10.30 a.m. complete with

10 ground crew including myself + 8 aircrew - plus all our tools & equipment, it made quite a load. The ~~very~~ day was very warm & bright & I enjoyed the trip a lot from the nose of the aircraft in the bomb-aimer's position where I could see all there was to see. The trip was fairly monotonous at first & out over the channel but when we reached the other side we came down low to about a thousand feet. We flew in over the much bombed & badly devastated Dutch Island of Walcheren which the Canadians had such a tough time taking. We could see very plainly the places where over 12000 lb. bombs had breached the dykes and pretty well inundated the whole area - about 5x10 miles. We could still see a few people out on the roads but about 95% of the area was under water & in places reached the second floor window sills so it was pretty deep. In other spots, some houses on little knolls were just out of water with all the farm animals crowded up in the back yard & people still living in the places one could see by the washing out on the lines etc.

After getting over to the mainland we passed over close to Antwerp, circled Brussels and finally found our aerodrome - B.58 at a little town called Melsbroek. We made a good landing but bounced very heavily about 3/4 of the way along when we hit a repaired patch left by some preceding bombs no doubt. On taxiing around the perimeter track - conducted by some army types in a jeep - we saw huge graveyards of all types of old aircraft. There were literally acres of old Hurricanes, Mustangs, Corsairs, Spitfires, Libs, Mosquitos etc. with the odd German He 111 amongst the wreckage. This aerodrome was one of the ones camouflaged by Jerry to look like a village. The flying control building looked like a school house - complete with tower & bell. The area was laid out in streets with what resembled houses & stores along both sides. However upon close inspection the buildings were all shells housing hangars, workshops, garages & billets etc. The fronts were of wood & all painted to represent windows, doors & signs etc. but actually these were big doors which opened out when in use. It sure looked like a lot of work for what they got out of it. We also saw a building which had a big

sign p.o.w. lettered on top of it but which actually held petrol & oil stores - those Jerrys didn't play fair at all.

We finally reached our parking strip & got out to be confronted with approx. 3000 p.o.w.s of all nationalities, types & colour & dressed in every sort of cast off clothing imaginable with khaki being predominant of course. We had to wait about an hour for the first of our kites to come in so we talked to groups of them. There were Aussies & New Zealanders, Canadians & Americans, English & Poles & Russians etc. of Army, navy & Air Force. Several Canadians came up to speak to us having recognized our a/c letters. Even some out of our own Sqdn were there with a Nov. from 90. Wray's crew & a Flg from W/c. Blain's crew - also one from 433 M which was shot down in Feb. when I was there. Another coincidence that occurred later on was a pilot who had baled out of a Wellington in 1943 over Italy when 424 Sqdn. was in N. Africa - his aircraft was lettered QB-G for George & sure enough when he was put on a kite it was a Lancaster also QB-G - the boys were really thrilled about it. The P.O.W.'s all had marvellous experiences to relate & some had been imprisoned for 5 years - maybe they weren't glad to see us too. They all carried trinkets etc. which they had made by hand to fill in the long hours e.g. rings made out of silver paper from cigarettes & old toothbrushes, carved walking sticks etc. They didn't look to be in too bad a condition but their camp (Stalag 3) I guess was one of the better types. However, they were all half starved & for every one of them who could be moved, they said there were 3 left behind who were too weak to moved or were in hospital etc.

As soon as our a/c started to land, the work really started & we spent all afternoon rushing up & down the long line of 75 to 100 planes getting them loaded with 24 p.o.w.s each, fixing snags & getting them off again. As soon as one kite moved out of line, another would land & take its place so it really was quite a major effort. It was hot grueling work & I sure began to get tired. There was no place to eat or drink except a NAAFI canteen with a queue about a mile long for which we didn't

have time to ~~wait~~ wait, so about 2.45 P/S Mr Intyre & I
seeing this little village off to the side of the aerodrome.
Decided ^{to} walk out & see what we could find. We had no
Belgian money but I had a spare pack of cigarettes which
I thought we might trade for something. We hadn't gone
far along this little cobbled street in Melbroek
until we came to what looked like a pub with a
horse & wagon outside. The wagon was piled high with
cases of wine etc & we decided that this place looked
interesting & wandered into a little covered courtyard
along side. Here was a typical Belgian woman complete
with big wooden "sabots" washing down the cobbled
court. She couldn't speak English so I started off half
heartedly in my very weak French & not knowing quite
what to say. However she seemed to understand very
well & took us each by the arm & conducted us into
their kitchen where her husband & two other men & a boy
were seated around the radio listening to Churchill
speak at 3.00 o'clock - it was being re-translated for them
as he went along. They all greeted us happily with big
smiles, violent arm waves & much jabbering out of which
the expression "le guerre est fini" came out very frequently.
The lady bustled around & got us a glass of beer apiece -
stuff called "Kerstel Biere" & tasting faintly of cider.
It turned out that the boy could speak a little English so
he acted as interpreter for us & we got along quite well.
Next out came the Cognac & we had two glasses of that
& then the old boy got out a box of cigars & handed them
around so we were all quite happy. I was struck
with the cleanliness of the place, it had an inlaid tile floor
with quite a colourful design, a very clean & polished wood
stove of a peculiar design for both heating & cooking & oven
attached. All the fittings in the room appeared strange
& foreign but otherwise was quite comfortable. We said
goodbye & left shortly after & went back to the aerodrome to
get cracking again. About 4 o'clock, one of our aircraft was
- Q burst a tyre on the runway just before take-off. The
four POW's were very disappointed that they hadn't got away

but were soon back in another one ready to go again. We had no jacks or wheels with us but I finally located a set brought over by a kite from 8 Group. However I couldn't use them until they were sure they didn't need the stuff themselves. Our last kite took off (the one we came over in) loaded with p.o.w.'s & of course we volunteered to stay & bring back O'Quinn's when we got the tyre fixed. We decided to make a start about 7 after the last 8 group kite had gone. In the meantime we went up to the Sgt's Mess for a wash & dinner. The meal was very good too since we had had nothing since breakfast. Making plans for an evening in Brussels we changed some English money to Belgian francs at 176 francs to the pound. At 7 we took all the stuff out to the kite, started to jack it up & were making good time - figuring to be done about 8.30. However, the wheel was in soft earth off the runway & we had just removed the old wheel but hadn't put the new one in when the jack started to sink in the soft earth, the leg of the jack collapsed & the kite was down on the ground again with the old legs digging into the earth & the tail fin about 6" off the deck. There was nothing else we could do until we got some more jacks so I went in to Flying Control to arrange for more jacks & to get red lights put around the kite. Then we headed for Brussels.

We were directed to the nearby tram line but instead climbed a ride on an R.M.F. truck which deposited us near the famous Botanical Gardens in the centre of Brussels. 1/5 M. Jutyn & I then headed for an hotel whose address had been given us before we left & arranged for a room. Then we started out to see the sights. By this time it was about 10 pm. & there was lots to see. First of all were the terrific crowds of people milling & weaving around in all the streets & squares celebrating VE-Day. "La guerre est fini" was the popular cry & many tears of rejoicing were seen too. Long snake dances were formed of soldiers & girls tearing around, huge American trucks were loaded to capacity with people perched all over the place on them, careening wildly up & down the streets.

Everyone was shouting & singing, throwing streamers & confetti
girls would rush up to kiss us & then tear on again - what
a wild place it was! The most big thing I noticed were
that all the lights, neon signs & flickering advertisements
were on full blast - The first lights I've seen like that
for 2 1/2 years & it sure did make me a little homesick
for the moment. About every other shop seemed to be
a cabaret with a band playing, sweating dancers
crowded inside & cool-looking drinkers sipping their
Champagnes & Cognacs out on the sidewalk fronts separated
from each other by canvas awnings. We started visiting
these cabarets one after another & trying all new drinks until
it appeared that our money would run low so we stuck
to beer after that - very poor stuff actually - more like
coloured water. There were innumerable occurrences &
happenings during the evening but all in all we spent a
very gay & happy time arriving back at our hotel around
2:30 a.m. tired out & very much in need of a sleep. We
tumbled right in to bed & so to sleep with the sounds
of revelry still going on strongly till well after 6.00 a.m.
A couple of the funny things that happened were: once when
we were in a cabaret, two women came in & sat down with
us - very much the lady of the street types - insisted that we
buy them drinks & offered to spend the night with us free
since it was VE-night idea - however they looked tough
for me & were quite angry when we walked out on them.
Another incident was when we were down in a lavatory in
one place getting rid of some beer - on turning around
there was a young lady melanchantly waiting for her boy
friend to finish - he was in the next stall to me - it
seems to be quite a natural state of affairs over there!

Wed. ~~May~~ May 7. Got up about 8.00 a.m. & set out to find
our way back to the aerodrome. Some revelers were
still going strong when we got out. After trying my
French out several times we finally caught a train &
got back out about 10.00 a.m. By dint of great exertions
& the use of two more mosquito jacks, we finally got
the wheel changed & started it out of the mud in time

for lunch at 1.30 - ~~was~~ only my second meal since I got over here. I went up to the Officer's Mess & really filled up. Bought a bottle of Champagne for 140 Francs & we got airborne at about 3.30 p.m. I slept most of the way back & we arrived here about 6.00 o'clock in time to tell all our stories to the boys around the bar for the rest of the evening. It turned out that 11 of each sqdn. were away to-day picking up more P.O.w.'s at Juvin-court. France (near Rhims) but no arriving party required this time.

Thur. May 10. V.E. Day or not, we still seem to be very busy with 15 a/c from each sqdn. away to-day to Juvin-court for more P.O.w.'s. It is very hard on the pilots landing them over there with their bad runways & cutting tyres etc. We had to work all night tonight in preparation for tomorrow.

Fri. May 11. The op for to-day was cancelled at the last minute so it gives us a breather to sit back & relax & realize that finally the war is over! - It sure is a wonderful feeling! I read in the papers when the folks at home really had a wild time especially in Halifax & also Toronto where 500,000 damage was done - I bet the WC took a beating. I guess they will be quite happy now knowing Canon is out of it all & that we shall all be able to get home soon. Had a big armament party tonight.

Sat. May 12. Nothing doing again to-day so I gave all the Cads a day off which they will deserve. The armament party last night was very good & we had a swell dinner & lots to eat of it. I liked it even though they called on me to give a speech which I made short & sweet. Went in to Herrogate tonight & met Betty. Went to a show & then went for a long walk in the big park & gardens there & had a good quiet time.

Sun. May 13. Got up at 7.00 a.m. this morning to catch the train back. Found that there was still nothing doing so I slept all afternoon, went to the show tonight & then had a big feast of canned corn, sausage, eggs, peaches, toast & hot chocolate before going to bed.

Mon. May 14. Slept in this morning until 10.30 & still nothing doing so am planning on taking life easy for the next few days while they decide on what is going to happen to us.

Tues. May 15. Things are still very quiet so slept in again this morning & went to a show tonight

Wed. May 16. Worked for a couple of hours to-day to clean up the "beef" in my in basket & then down to the local pub tonight for a few beers & dart games. Came back & fried two eggs before going to bed - it's a great life but very boring.

Thur. May 17. Having a hard time keeping the boys happy with so little to do & yet Group won't make up their minds or tell us what to expect so we can't formulate any plans or organize things properly until we get some "gas" - just have to sit & wait for it I guess.

Fri. May 18. Everything very quiet again, rode 12 miles to Northallerton & 12 miles back tonight on bicycles as the start of an exercise program to get back into shape again.

Sat. May 19. Nothing doing again to-day, Slept in this morning, played tennis from 1400 to 1900 hrs. on our new tennis courts & then played softball from 1830 till 2000 hrs. & then to the show with a bit of a binge afterwards to celebrate % George Reynolds award of D.F.C. for flying his kite V of 424 sqm. back with the rear turret on fire on Apr. 10.

Sun. May 20. Up early this morning to a meeting held for all the boys to outline the training scheme to be inaugurated tomorrow - more to keep everyone busy than anything else.

Mon. May 21. Weather very bad to-day with a cold fog & drizzle - it looks like a bad start for our training program.

Tue. May 22 - More rain + more drizzle - still I say - what a country! - it's so cold these evenings that a fire is required but no fuel available. Went to the WAAF M.T. party tonight + had a good time.

Wed. May 23. Stood down to-day + carried out our big clean-up program this afternoon. Made plans for our big formal party to be held on June 9. + being Bar Officer I have to lay out 100 bottles of whiskey + 25 of gin - all on the house too with all the beer the boys can drink - should be quite a do. Rode up to Newton this afternoon on the motorbike to see Betty + the family. Treated me royally as usual + after a pub crawl in Helmsley finally got to bed up there about 2.00 a.m. - - one way of celebrating Grandma's Birthday!

Thur. May 24. Got up late this morning + went for a walk with Betty before lunch. Phoned down to the station + found there was nothing doing so decided to stay till evening since this is probably the last time I will see them all. Went cycling this afternoon up to the beautiful old ruins of Riveaux Abbey (1000 A.D.) north of Helmsley. It sure was a beautiful place tucked away in the bottom of a valley with high wooded hills all around it. Finally left at about 9.30 pm. + made the 22 mile trip home in 27 minutes - not bad going.

Fri. May 25. Sudden panic to-day with Far East Despatch forms to fill out for everybody + get in to HQ by June 1st. - I guess things are really starting to move now - I volunteered for the Far East - maybe I'm crazy but I have a feeling that it is the best thing to do. At 4.30 this afternoon, Tiny Smith from Group HQ, came in + out of a blue sky asked me if I wanted to go home. Of course I said sure + he said "Ok. pack up - you are posted to Croft + will be home before the end of June." That was all there was to it, so I immediately started getting clearances signed.

Sat. May 26. Arranged to get airborne this afternoon on a

six hour trip over to Germany to see the bomb damage from 1500' - a really weird trip so they tell me. However it was scrubbed at the last minute due to bad weather so all my luck isn't good. Went to an engineer's brawl tonight at a pub down near Waterby & met all the old gang again including Bob Bales & Willy Boone - we had a great time & Terry Smith gave us all the gen about the Far East - needless to say - I was regarded with much envy by most of the gang who won't be able to get home nearly so soon.

Sun. May 27. Finished packing this morning & said good-bye to the gang. Arrived in Croft about 3:00 pm. - the same station I was on two years ago at this time. - Got settled in in short order.

Mon. May 28. - Found all the a/c in the last stages of being packed up with spares & parts to take back to Canada - they are all Canadian built - Lancaster I's. Things are rather indefinite yet but after all the packing is finished, the first a/c are due to leave on June 2nd. next Sunday. They are to fly to Cornwall, refuel there & thence on to the Azores & refuel again for Bander & finally end up at Dartmouth just outside Halifax. Unfortunately, they won't let me fly with them, altho' two engineer officers are going along with them since I will have to stay to set everything right on the station. The main party has to be ready to get going on June 14th & embark on June 20. with all the ground equipment and supplies for two whole squadrons - what a big job that is going to be!

Tues. May 29. Got around to meet all the boys & found a good many who have been with me before. Carried on with the air pack & started to get really organized on the sea pack.

Wed. May 30. Finished practically all the air pack to-day - we have more than 40 tons of equipment up in the bomb

boys of the a/c now which is quite a lot of stuff. Cycled down to the Craft Spa tonight for a dart game & a few beers. The weather has been horrible for the past week making it very difficult to get the training flying all done in time.

Thur. May 31. Went back down to Skipton to-day hoping to get my trip over to Germany in but found it had to be scrubbed due to bad weather. The boys held a big party for me tonight as a going away affair. Ivan Nelson provided a crock of issue Navy Rum & it sure did go down well. Played poker most of the evening & got to bed after a big feed about 4.00 a.m.

Fri. June 1st. Came back on the motor cycle this morning & was very busy all day getting ready for our first five we taking off tomorrow. Found out tonight that it is to be postponed for 24 hours due to bad weather at the Azores which is holding things up. Middleton got fifteen away yesterday & 15 again this morning so I guess the aerodromes there are getting too plugged up to take any more.

Sat. June 2nd. Sat around all day with it pouring rain all day - Boy will I be glad to get back to a civilized climate. Went down to the Craft Spa Hotel tonight for a little entertainment but had a very quiet time since they ran out of beer before 9 o'clock.

Sun. June 3. Still more rain & fog all day to-day so the proposed trip postponed another 24 hours - the boys sure are getting fed up with waiting around. We have all the sea packing pretty well organized now & they are starting to fill the hangar full of stuff.

Mon. June 4. At last the weather cleared enough to-day so that Middleton got their last ten aircraft away while we got our first five off - practically the

whole station turned out to give them a good send off.

Tues. June 5.

More bad weather again to-day - this climate over here is the most exasperating thing I've ever had to put up with. The work of the Air Force has been more than doubled I know - just due to weather alone & now it is finishing things off in true form by preventing us from going home. Got the news this morning that one of the Middleton kites had to ditch in the sea just off the Azores about two miles - it was the one $\frac{1}{2}$ loaded with spares & supplies to stock Bandar for the a/c coming through & of course all the stuff was lost. The crew & passengers (including old Frank Cordick - the engine officer of M.S.G.) were picked up ok. from their dinghies. Now there is bugs of flap getting a further supply of spares together & a new a/c from some 140 down south to be loaded up in a hurry to take the required stuff over.

Wed. June 6. Weather cleared for a while this afternoon & we got 15 more a/c away at 4 o'clock - (they were due to leave at 10 a.m.) so that leaves 20 a/c of 434 Spds to go yet now that all of 431 are away. Unfortunately the weather looks doubtful again for tomorrow morning.

Thur. ^{June} May 7. No luck to-day in getting our kites away but the news is through about our draft going home it looks like we are to have Sun. or Wed. next week - I sure hope the rumour is right. Went down to York to-day to say good bye to Betty & stayed the night with friends. ^{I'm glad shall be} ^{very well} ^{provided}.
Fri. ^{June} May 8. - Got 15 more aircraft off to-day & I amused myself getting a whole roll of film used up on the take-off. I suppose I'll have to wait until I get home to get them developed now.

Sat. ^{June} May 9. - Weather was dull to-day so our six remaining a/c weren't able to go. $\frac{3}{4}$ Selchrist left to-day for Skipton

so I'm on my own here now olth' ^{1/2} Herb Wilson, Ross Davidson & Fred Duke all got posted up here to 'day from Skipton to go home on the draft so we are keeping the old gang together.

Went down to a final big party at Skipton tonight but took things very easy in preparation for a big day tomorrow.

Sun. ~~May~~ ^{June} 10. - Very busy all day to-day - our last six aircraft finally got airborne at noon & proceeded to shoot up the place in one of the best exhibitions I've seen yet - everything from low level attacks at about 40 feet to sudden pull-ups & barbs right off the end of the runway & all aircraft were firing off coloured Vercy pistol cartridges as fast as they could load them. Our draft was made up to-day so I finished packing pretty well & we entrain on Tues or Wed - starting to get a little excited now.

Mon. ~~May~~ ^{June} 11. All the packing pretty well finished off now down at the hanger & things in pretty good shape. Everyone rushing around like mad to get clearances signed, attending muster & pay parades etc & generally all in a big flap - lots of disorganization due to trouble down at #6 Sq. HQ. (finger trouble). Sailing dates all set now & it looks like I will be entraining tomorrow night & I believe the boat sails on Thursday - I hope! Wrote more letters tonight trying to say good bye to all my friends.

Tues. ~~May~~ ^{June} 12. Found out for sure that we are leaving tonight - got all packing & last minute letters finished & mailed. I have been put in charge of the second train leaving at 0355 hrs. tomorrow morning. Tonight I went down to see the first train off from Darlington & also to get a line on what my job entailed - it left at 11:30 pm. complete with a band playing & the Mc waving good bye - I got quite a kick out of the whole show.

Wed. ~~May~~ ^{June} 13. Good old thirteen - once again it pops up

with something good for me. Continuing from last night, I went back up to the Mess where I had a good Bacon & egg meal at 1.00 am. Then I got my 200 odd men sorted out complete with luggage & loaded on trucks at 2.00 a.m. Everything went very smoothly & the train pulled away sharp on time. Next we called in at Denisdale where about 200 got aboard from M. E. D. Co. C. of the whole train. I got a compartment to myself & two helpers so didn't fare too badly. Some of my boys had apparently scooped some very pistols & lots of cartridges since they were shooting them off in all colours from the train all the way up to Edinburgh. I was a little worried about starting fires in farmers haystacks & on roofs etc. but couldn't do much about it since I couldn't get up to their part of the train with a baggage car in between. We dozed off and on & finally got to Edinburgh at 0940. Stopped 10 minutes for tea & pushed on to Glasgow. We all had a whole of a time leaning out of the train windows & hollering to everyone & waving etc. as we passed through sites, towns & villages. They all knew who we were of course & gave us a great welcome. At about 12.30 we arrived at Bouchard - the very port where I arrived at 2 yrs & 4 mos. ago to-day. The Queen Mary was floating majestically in the harbour but it wasn't for us. However, the one we were ferried out to - the "Isle de France" is also one of the biggest & fastest ships so we didn't mind too much. After lots of bustling around, getting luggage arranged etc. we finally got settled down in our respective rooms - 16 army officers & 4 R.C.A.F. officers in my room. Slightly overcrowded but not too bad. After getting settled I went up to the Officer's Lounge where I met hundreds of fellows I knew from all over #6 Group. We had lots of great reunions & a swell time was had by all. Being on the 1st meal sitting I went down to eat at 5.00 pm I had a wonderful meal - Chicken-a-la-king etc. It was really good & I fully enjoyed it too not having eaten since 1.00 am. This morning. After dinner, I turned in early about 7 p.m.

to get some much needed rest.

Thur. ~~14~~ ^{June} 14. Got up for 1st breakfast sitting at 7.00 am. - a little early but the breakfast of bacon & eggs was well worth it. After a short walk on deck - we were still in harbour of course. I went back down to the lounge & played knock rummy & bridge all day since there is very little else to do & it's too miserable outside for walking on the prom deck. We finally finished loading this afternoon & after another swell dinner at 5.00 again (we eat twice a day with 4 sittings at each meal), we pulled up anchors & got away at 19.30 hrs tonight. We sailed down the Clyde toward the Irish Sea, had our first boat drill & found out we are still travelling under war-time rules & regulations - such as observing all blackouts, no smoking on deck after dark, carrying life belts at all times etc. I got to bed early again tonight & since I'm going to try & push in as much sleep as possible on this trip.

Fri. ~~15~~ ^{June} 15. Up bright & early again this morning at 6.30 a.m. & had a good breakfast. We are heading down the Irish Sea & through St. George's Channel where the water is notoriously rough & the boat is pitching & tossing quite a bit. I feel fine so far but a lot of the fellows are getting sea sick already. Heard to day that a paratrooper a few decks below got shot last night by one of the other lads cleaning his gun. That's fate for you & on his way home too! He died this morning. The bad, rough, weather continued all day & about 50% were sick. I still haven't been sick but I do feel squeamish, a little. Went down & had a good dinner again tonight but was feeling well enough to really enjoy it. Only about 1/2 the boys turned up at all. Tonight I went up & walked around the deck for a couple of hours to get some exercise & again went to bed early.

June

Sat. ~~May~~ 16. Sea not quite so rough this morning & enjoyed a swell breakfast. However it looks like the wind is freshening again & no doubt will be rough again before long. Spent a very monotonous day alternating between sleeping, reading & walking on the prom deck. It stayed fairly calm all day after all. Had a magnificent pork dinner tonight & played cards most of the evening - at the same time got embroiled in a small party during which my carefully harbored bottle of Scotch seemed to disappear.

June

Sun. ~~May~~ 17. Sea quite calm again to-day & increases joy. Still very windy & cold out though. Played bridge all afternoon, had a great turkey dinner at 5:00 o'clock & played knock rummy all evening to fill in the day - incidentally, won 12 bob. The meals sure are the redeeming feature on this trip since they would be hard to beat even though there are only two a day.

June

Mon. ~~May~~ 18. Sun shining brightly this morning & sea calm - it looks like it's going to be a swell day. Rumour has it that we will be in Thursday night or early Wednesday morning. Don't hope they let us go or leave right away when we arrive. Saw two ships this morning heading toward England - the first we've seen so far. Stayed out on deck all afternoon to pick up some tan.

June

Tues. June 19. Another nice day & found out we dock for sure before noon tomorrow. Got paid to-day right up until the end of July so I guess I'm going to be able to get my leave in OK. Played knock rummy most of the day & night.

June

Wed. June 20. Came in sight of good old Canada early this morning & pulled into dock at 10:00 a.m. They gave us a swell welcome with whistles & horns blowing, planes flying low overhead & the fireboat displaying its streams of water. The dock was crowded with people, bands playing & all in all we had a lot of fun. The boys amused themselves tossing small souvenirs & coins to the kids & girls on the wharf. The army started to

disembark tonight & we ended up playing cards again

Thurs June 21

Waited impatiently all day for our turn to get off & finally managed it at 4:00 pm. Checked our big luggage through to Toronto & got our train reservations. Being senior I shared a compartment for the trip home which was very nice. The Red Cross were out in force giving us oranges, cookies & doughnuts & everyone treated us swell. It sure is good to be home at last.

Fri June 22

Spent the day just watching the scenery - you can't beat it & it sure is terrifically different from the English countryside. We got swell meals too which helped out a lot & late this afternoon were able to buy beer at Megantic Que so we did all right for the rest of the day. Sent a telegram to Ray saying I would be in in the morning & also phoned Ruth tonight from Sherbrooke for a couple of minutes while we stopped for water.

Sat June 23

Everyone excited as we neared Toronto & recognized familiar landmarks. Found out by the papers that we are to have a reception given us at the Coliseum in the Exhibition Grounds - its a wonder they wouldn't tell us these things. Got into Union Station at 9:30 am. & waited patiently for 20 min. & then on to the Ex. grounds. Here we piled out, formed into lines & got the old band playing & thence ~~into~~ marched into the Coliseum with all the friends & relatives cheering & waving. It was quite thrilling but I didn't see anyone I knew until Ray & Trudy came bursting on me followed by Grandma Nona & Stuart, Lenore, Dorothy, Bob, Bruce & Jean Merrill. What a reunion that was!