ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

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TITLE: BOB WADE INTERVIEWED BY LAURIE FIELD ABOUT HIS SERVICE IN 460 SQUADRON RAAF DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

INTERVIEWEE: BOB WADE

INTERVIEWER: LAURIE FIELD

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START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE 1

Laurie Field speaking to Bob Wade.

What were some of the highlights, Bob, of your civil life?

Really no hard life, just school, did my leaving then in '39. I applied for the air force, went down and was interviewed on 29 September. I didn't get in. And then I went down Christmas period - went out to xxx Barracks, applied there. Had to go in to Sydney and have a medical in there, and they said, 'Oh, well, you are in'. The dentist said to me, 'You've got to have a tooth filled. You go out to this mate of mine, he'll fill it for you - come back.' And then he walked out and one of the doctors came and said, 'Oh, Mr Mullins, you've been rejected, you've got a murmur in the heart.'

Anyhow, I went out then jackarooing xxx xxx to [Mulgawarria] out near Brewarrina and I went to see an old doctor in Nyngan. xxx xxx [wasn't here, how much time] - knock off smoking for a month and then go and have an application xxx. Well, it was hard, xxx cheat on xxx, go and hide behind the shed or something like this and have a smoke. I went down and got knocked back again.

For the same reason?

Yes, hadn't given up enough cigarettes. Anyhow, then towards the end of '40 I went down again to Sydney and I had to see an old friend, a [famous] solicitor, there. He said, 'What are you doing?' and I told him the story. He said, 'Why didn't you come to me first?' He said, 'Come in to my office' and he rang up Sir Keith Smith who was a friend of his and he told him the story. He said, 'Well, tell him to come down and see me.' I went down to see Sir Keith in his office - after a while of talking he rang up the xxx [Captain] down at Woolloomooloo. He said, 'Who is on duty?' - they told him so he wrote a letter to this bloke and I went down and he said, 'Make sure you give it to him first but don't let anybody else take it'. He said it had to be handed to this flying officer - he read it and he said, 'Come with me' - got some papers and so and away we went. He came to the head of the queue and he looked in and said, 'Sign these papers for me, Doc, will you?' and he went round and, oh, I suppose half an hour later - hadn't had any medical or anything - walked out, had my [reserves] xxx signed up. Oh, I went back very happy, the lessons were coming in, I was working away on those - and I got my call-up, and then the boss had it deferred, the [scouring] was coming on. Talk about bad tempered from then on, oh, gee - and the xxx came again, he went down to Bradfield and that was virtually it.

Where did you do your training?

Bradfield Park and then to Narrandera for the FTS, and then down to Portsmouth ...

For service training.

Yes.

Can you recall any particular episodes, incidents, at any of those three training

schools worth a mention?

Ah ...

xxx tragic.

One of the greatest flights I got in flying was the first flight with my instructor. He said, 'Now, you'll have to have your straps done up tight' - showed me how to tighten them up. Se we climbed up to 3,000 and without a word he pulled the nose right up in the air and stalled it. And the next thing, the nose went forward like that - there's no aeroplane and I'm out on the end of the straps, you know, out like this - ah! - what's going on here? That was one of the biggest frights I ever got in the air force and it taught me to do my straps up really tight.

Was that Narrandera?

Narrandera, yes. Had just the usual things. One time there was a big - everybody had cigarette lighters, everybody was saying, you know, these are better - big money was being bet on who's was the best lighter. Anyhow, we got the WOD to come out on to the parade ground and he was going to be the judge - and it was blowing quite strongly. One of the chaps, Billy [Locke], had an impregnated chord that ran through this cylinder and he just used to work this flint and it used to start off this chord burning, you'd blow on it then light your cigarette, and you had a cap that used to douse it. And, of course, the harder the wind blew the better this thing burnt. And Billy's standing there with this thing going and everybody else's lighter is blowing out just about after it was lit, you see, these small xxx xxx and things. But, of course, there was a big fight whether it was a cigarette lighter or not.

Anyhow, started xxx the WOD had a look at it, it said on it this is such and such a cigarette lighter and he said, 'Well, it appears to be a brand of cigarette lighter so Locke wins'. We had very hard dealing with him about that for a while.

At Point Cook we had a Corporal Ball at Narrandera. The poor old corporal, he used to try and get us to drill and so on, and if he said 'quick march' we would slow march and if he said 'slow march' we'd quick march. The he'd go away and get Sergeant Greg, he'd come back. As soon as he'd say 'quick march' we'd quick march, this sort of thing - 'There you are, nothing wrong with those blokes'.

Anyhow, we were all taken in to the river for a swim one day and, of course, the first thing we did was threw the poor old Corp in and it turned out he couldn't swim - he was an English chap that had served his time in the British Army and he spent most of his life up in China in the British Army there. And so everybody dived in and saved him and he thought we were the greatest bunch of chaps he'd ever seen, we'd saved his life.

Then, when we were getting the train down to Point Cook he saved up all his money and bought everybody a bottle of plonk to go with them - and that didn't do us any good, there were blokes climbing on the [footboard] outside - 'Have you got anything left?', you know - the train is thundering through on its way to Albury and this ...

Was there much loss of life at Narrandera when you were there?

No, no. There was one instance of one of the chaps put red on blue on a cross-country, went the wrong way and ran out of fuel, landed near a homestead, and they gave him lunch, and they had rabbit. And the owner of the place got a rabbit bone stuck in his throat and died, and it turned out it was the only casualty - [probably thought it was different].

A few went in there, a few casualties?

Well, yes, but generally speaking they were chaps low flying, midair collisions in formation, or climbing on top of cloud and letting down and running in to the hill and that. There was only one that you could really class as being the aircraft's fault was they were taking off xxx one night from Point Cook itself and a cowl came loose on the aircraft and it went in to the bay; and the both of them got out, and the instructor couldn't swim - the pupil was a champion swimmer - but they couldn't start the crash boat. He held the instructor up for about two hours and then he got too weak - and it was a pretty rough night and the instructor was drowned but the pupil swam ashore on his own. That was the only thing xxx xxx.

Did you have a final leave? Well, you had a final leave but did you have anything like we had in the bush, the big farewells?

No, no, no. I just got up to Deniliquin - we lived out about sixty-six miles out and then I just went home for that - xxx local xxx, hop down to xxx and from there away.

I guess you'd have gone through the same sort of schools as Bob Howell so I wont worry with that. So, well, you would have done all the same schools, wouldn't you, as Bob?

Yes, all the same curricula.

Now, do you recall how you formed your first crew?

Yes. When we went from - we'd been to xxx few flying officers, and then we were posted to Litchfield. And I got in the carriage, there's an Australian navigator there. We got talking, he was going to Litchfield so he said, 'What say we crew up?'

xxx xxx.

No, that was just before [flying] xxx. Then, when we got to Litchfield we just sort of were left alone in a room xxx xxx all the bods and they sorted themselves out from there. My first rear gunner was taken - there was some wing commander came through on a crash course - RAF wing commander - this chap that I'd crewed up with had come out top of his course. This wing commander looked through and said, 'Oh, I want this fellow' so the gunner came and said to me, 'Look ...' - I can't even remember his name now - we never forgot [to say goodbye together] - 'I'm sorry but I have got to go and fly with Wing commander so-and-so. But,' he said, 'there is another chap coming in, the course behind me, called Johnny [Ely] and,' he said, 'his marks leave mine for dead, he's really top draw stuff.' So I went and got him and when I asked him he said, 'Yeah'.

But with Brian, the navigator, he wasn't so hot navigating and we xxx decided we didn't feel happy with him. He was quite - he said no, he didn't feel happy at navigating and he eventually went out as a bomb aimer.

And then I was waiting around for donkey's ages for another navigator and one of the chaps who started off with me, [Shirley] Reynolds, he was having trouble because he was short in the legs flying the Wellingtons so they xxx [screw up] and there are a couple of other crews there short of a navigator. They wanted Arthur but I said, 'Well, look, I've been here longer than anyone' xxx xxx got Arthur as navigator.

One of the crews that wanted him rang - and they were all at Church Broughton - and the second crew that wanted him, they'd pranged in a Halifax at xxx and were all killed. Shirley Reynolds was made to go back and fly again and the only chap he had from his old crew was the wireless operator - they picked up another crew. Their rear gunner, when the crew had broken up, was put out as a mid-upper gunner straight to the Squadron and he was known as [Dinghy-Foot Davis] - he had tremendous feet - a little short fellow. They used to say, when Dinghy-Foot lay down he was taller than when he stood up - with the size of his feet. He was the sole survivor of the crew that he went with, the rest of them were killed. And Shirley Reynolds and his crew, they turned up on the Squadron and they went missing early in the piece. Out of the original crew there was only Arthur and Dinghy-Foot Davis that survived.

> Arthur was lucky.

Yeah, that was two crews, one killed on OTU, one at xxx, and then Shirley's crew xxx down.

> But your actual confirmation of your original crew's nucleus was done informally in a room?

That's right, yes, just all left alone together to sort of talk over and look at one another, shudder and pick xxx. Is this all they can get? (laughs).

> And how about getting your mid-upper and your engineer? Were they appointed to you?

Ah ... not really, no. When we got to Brighton they sort of looked around and - I saw Tommy there. I think, from memory, xxx xxx I think he and Harry were talking together or something.

> Tommy might have been xxx.

Yes. So we just got talking and we said, 'Would you like to join our crew?' - met the others - they said, 'Alright'. Ones as bad as the rest of them; what choice have we got? (laughs)

> Fair enough, okay. Now to a bit of incidental stuff. Can you remember how often Window was thrown out xxx started?

Ah ... I think we started about the enemy [cats] going in, didn't we?

Yeah, I think so.

And I think they Windowed more or less continuously. Old Vic used to be shovelling it out.

Every two minutes, wasn't it?

Yes.

I thought it was two minutes - Bob couldn't remember.

I can't remember. I know that Vic seemed to be shovelling it out all the time in his job and, of course, it got more and more [evasive] when you got in, you had a job to get in to the cockpit there was so much Windows packed up.

Vic used to go to sleep sometimes. I said to Harry, 'Throw xxx Window down on him and wake him up.' The next thing, 'xxx threw a bloody Window on me.'

Which brings me to a point; actually the bomb aimer wasn't all that critical in looking for fighters, was he? because you never had any xxx ...

No, no.

coming.

His main job during that period, I think, was to shovel the Window out, [straight down the nose].

So that front turret was really a xxx.

Yes. I can't think that head-on attacks were all that common. It was probably there for - they left it in there as a xxx xxx xxx.

Had more armament than you would ever need.

Cloud, Bob. I remember going in to cloud shortly after take-off and climbing through bloody thousands and thousands of feet of it. What would you say could be a typical cloud mass, base and tops? What would be a typical base, taking off on a raid.

Oh, I think mainly we had that North Sea stratus coming in mainly. You might climb into it at about 500 feet and get out of it around about six or eight. It used to be fairly xxx - it used to be always be as the light was getting brighter and brighter, as you were getting up there, the eyes were swivelling around. And you would break through and you would climb and there would be anther chap climbing up on a collision course with you. You would pull away from him and then find you were turning in to another xxx [breaking] cloud.

Did you see any collisions in that cloud?

Only saw one, that was [Ockey Scott], one of the chaps I was playing with. We were a couple of thousand feet above the clouds, all of a sudden it just erupted. Well, it was obvious what happened, a couple of them had run in to one another in cloud. It turned out Old [Ockey Scott] was one of them. They weren't from 460, they were from [Magnum Chelson], I think, crews from there.

> I remember seeing one collision one night, not too far away. It was a mess - swirling mass, just for a brief moment. Of course, there would have been no icing in that cloud, up to 6,000 feet.

No, no.

> But do I recall, Bob, talking about rime?

Oh, yes, a bit of rime ice and so on there.

> It was dangerous though.

Basically, at that stage of the game, the temperatures were a bit low to really have ice. What was it? I think carbie icing was probably, at that stage, was your worst problem; I think that was from about from -4 to +10 or something, that was the bad range for carbies. Then you had carbie heating - you lost power when you put the carbie heating on. It you started to run rough or anything it was just a matter of putting that carbie heating on for a few minutes and then cutting it off again. But generally speaking if we were in conditions where it was too cold it was super cold air which tended to form ice, unless you flew into a very wet [tempest] like a thundery [shower] that time - it was probably a warm front, I suppose, come in xxx. You got a little bit of ice, you see it on the leading edge. I really - the icing paste seemed to work fairly well on the wings, on the leading edge, and the only other time when you felt your controls xxx up it was just a matter of giving them a rock and you could feel the ice break like that.

> Did the Lancs - that first tour of yours - did any of them have the heading on the leading edge?

No, no.

> They did later, didn't they?

I don't know, I don't know that I ever had one of those. I think they all - they probably did, but I don't think I ever flew one with - I don't ever remember flying one with a leading edge xxx.

> We talked about [buying] meals and you've corrected me about one xxx ...

Well, as far as I remember on that, Laurie, that was ...

> No, it is logical, it makes sense. What sort of food did we get for the post-op meal?

Usually bacon and eggs, wasn't it?

> I thought it was too. So you got bacon and eggs before you went, bacon and eggs when you came back.

Yeah. I don't ever remember anything else really.

> Who addresses us at briefing?

Oh, well, you usually got the intelligence bloke giving you a run-down on the target, what it was, say, on Leipzig - you remember them saying xxx north to south. Was it xxx - I've forgotten who now, who was the senior intelligence bloke, but I remember him saying - he knew Europe very well and Leipzig was an old city with a lot of wooden buildings in it, and we were carrying eighteen incendiaries and bombing on the line of the city, and said, you know, it ought to burn pretty well.

> I remember that bloke xxx xxx it should burn well.

Yeah. Then, after that, it used to be the specialists, say, the engineer officer, the gunnery leader, wireless operator leader, and the nav leader would have their say about xxx - the bombing leader would discuss the bombing and explain the bomb load to you, and so on, like that. Cloudy Joe used to give you the run-down on the weather - old Jock, that Scotsman that used to put those things up. He used to say, 'Well, this is what Command say the weather is going to be like, but this is what I think it's going to be like, and if you see it going this way, this is what you'll get, but if it goes this way, this is what you'll get.' And he gave us a really excellent precis to figure out what's going to happen to the weather from the way Jock had explained it, whether you saw it going one way or the other, you knew what to expect. And then the wing co. would have his say then the [grouper] had his say, then it was a matter of filing up to the locker room, getting your gear, and xxx bus and that - then wait for the navigator who waited round to get the latest winds they could get.

> What was a typical wait out at the aircraft before take-off?

Ah, I think we started off at an all-off weight of 63,000 and then they gradually, after at about 67½-thousand ...

> No, I'm sorry, Bob, I meant how long did we wait? What was a typical waiting time?

Ah, of course, that depended entirely on whether they were going to put the take-off time back, didn't it. Sometimes we'd be out there for five or six hours. Now, if you were going to do a five-o'clock take-off, well, depending on the length of the trip, eight o'clock would be the deadline to return - of course, you would be in daylight - by probably [tossing] the undercarriage down even at eight o'clock, arrival back at base. So, say, on Essen, there's four hours, well, you would probably be held back till two or three in the morning waiting for take-off on Essen - of course, we could do it in four hours and you would be well back before daylight on that.

I don't remember many of them going past two, usually two o'clock there was a

[scrubbo] on two o'clock in the morning; when you set out to do a five-o'clock take-off there was a scrub at two in the morning. It would be a long, hard wait.

Do you remember coming back across the North Sea in daylight at all?

Only remember one - I can't remember which one it was - they told us - there had been a delayed take-off - they told us that we would be still over occupied territory, but not to worry, they would have several squadrons of Spits out there to supply top cover. But I never saw a Spit - they must have been a long way up. I was waiting round for the Spits, I had everything out and nose down, and all the revs I could get on the old girl going for home. But no, I don't remember ever coming back over the North Sea in daylight.

I remember landing a couple of times at dawn.

Yes.

But don't remember the North Sea - flying over the North Sea in daylight.

No, I can't either. I remember flying across at night - we were coming back one night and I was a bit worried about fuel, and I said, 'What's our ETA to the coast?' and he gave me an ETA about two hours on and Harry and I said, 'Oh, well, we can up the revs a bit and get home a little bit earlier'. So I poured on a bit more power and a couple of hours later, no sign of the coast. So I said to Arthur, 'What's that ETA to the coast' - he gave me about another hour on. 'Good God!' - off came the revs and the boost. He'd been asleep and when I woke him up he just gave me the first thing he could think of. I wasn't very happy about that.

I wonder if that would have been one of those double Berlins where we lobbed the Berlin on succeeding nights twice.

Could have been, and I just can't remember which one, but I remember Arthur, of course - his memory has faded a lot about that one.

Now, I asked you about the pilots [at the flight office]. What did you do up there? I remember I used to always wonder what did they do, but I guess you did much the same as we did in the sigs office, just sat around and waited.

Just sat around and waited for the phone to ring. And then if it was probably somebody from signals we'd say, 'Have you heard anything yet?' - or the nav xxx ringing on.

But if ops weren't on there's a chance there would be training.

That's right, yes. We used to get out the training program, but then the point was to get anybody - of course, as soon as there's a stand-down everybody used to fly back to their billets and jump in to the [5As] and rush down to the buss stop. To get crews together to fly I used to have to get out the [Linc] program and I'd go round all - the blokes that were supposed to be on Lincolns shot through - and I'd sit up at that bloomin' horror box and I'd be doing hours and hours of Lincolns, more Lincolns than anybody else on the Squadron, filling in for these blighters. God! there xxx very many in the Lincoln xxx. Generally speaking, you knew anyhow - the chiefly from the Flight - he'd say xxx to,

we'll probably need an air test or something like that, or any of the aircraft needed air tests. Well, the chaps knew that they'd have to make sure they had their crews to do an air test on it. There was always a bit of air-to-sea gunnery or xxx xxx. Each xxx had a little xxx xxx, particularly xxx fighter aircraft, they were detailed to go and - we had to make sure that he did turn up for it.

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE 1

START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE 2

Climbing for height over England; did you have any set pattern?

No, no, we used to just climb immediately in a wide orbit round the place, just going out there. Then after more or less say well, [it's time to set course] now and we will be able to talk at such and such a time - just climb on ....

How long would you have normally climbed?

I think we usually, by the time we got the xxx sorted out it would be about an hour, if I remember rightly.

And what height would you be when xxx xxx, roughly? Would you be at bombing height?

Oh, no, no. I did think at one time we were told to be at 21,000 across the coast - the enemy coast - but I think it was about 16,000 they used to say to cross enemy coast, wasn't it?

Bob reckons that usually he was climbing all the way to the target.

Oh, so did we, we climbed all night, yes. I'd say we'd probably be about 12,000. Sometimes we'd make out 16,000 - we used to change [blower] at 16,000 and that was usually just before we'd get to the enemy coast. Then we used to just climb; the only time we levelled out was when we were coming up for the bombing run at the target. As I'd run in I'd put my nose down, pick up speed, put the revs up to 2850, and then level out and do the bombing run. Then we always climbed out of the target - usually climbed to about 24-25,000 on the way home and held that across the coast - we'd let down as fast as we could, round about 360 on the way down all the time. What was Bob's ...?

He thought - he wasn't xxx - he thought probably 12,000 feet xxx xxx.

Yes, round about that.

And then gradually he'd reckoned he was climbing most of the way to the target, unless it was a very distant target - dog legs. He reckons he bombed about 16 to 18, but that was wrong, of course, as that book shows.

Yes, yes, more like 21, 22 - depending on how far you had to go. I always liked full tanks, even though they said 1800, I always used to take full tanks because I always reckoned, you know, I xxx bit of overload.

Did you start to pull up as soon as you dropped your bombs, or did you keep the nose down a little bit to get that extra speed until you cleared the target?

Oh, we'd speed up until we got clear of the target, and then as we cleared the target then ...

Step on it.

I didn't waste time in the target area.

Debriefing; how long would that have taken you as a rule?

Oh, quarter of an hour, twenty minutes, at the most.

[Usually.]

Yes. Some blokes, I know, used to go in there [and tell them terrible lies] but we always reckon, well, just tell them the bare facts and then you are back down in to bed that much earlier - and I refused to leave that beer out in the mess, and I used to go down and take a few bottles to bed xxx book. How many bottle you had taken, that would be on your mess bill - and have a few beers.

I don't think that applied to the sergeants' mess though.

I don't know.

I don't think so.

No.

So that's fair enough, so you could get yourself a beer.

I remember getting back late one time - what was the name? - Lily, our [vet] girl - and a chappie and I stopped on - we'd been right through breakfast - and we were wandering down and Lily had thought we weren't home. She was most upset. xxx was upstairs - room up above us - and only had seven there, the married quarters - he was in his underpants shaving, with a cut-throat - and she raced in and slapped him on the back and said, 'They are coming down the road! They are coming. Wait till I get hold of him.' And there's poor old Dusty didn't know what to do, he said he was lucky he didn't cut his throat, so he xxx xxx go on shaving. She [took that out] as we rushed out and she met [chappie] and I and didn't she give us a xxx xxx. 'You are drinking up there and I'm worrying down here worrying whether you are back' - oh, xxx do it again.

I think Bob talks about - were there a [Batman] or Jock there somewhere? - must have been a Jock or [Batman].

Not that I remember. About the only one of the mess staff I remember was [Broom], the barman who ran the bar. But mainly there it was - you'd have a chit system and I think they were starting to build that village inn just when we left the Squadron they were

coming in, you know, the cash over the bar. But prior to that it was five pounds for the POs, six pounds for FOs, seven pounds for Flight xxx and Squadron Leader and above, at their own discretion. And if you went over your limit you used to get a little note in your mail box - 'You've now reached £5-19-6' - and we had Jack Bird who didn't drink so then Jack had to buy us all our beer and it used to cost him £6 a month - and he never drank - and very often it would go to £10 but everybody knew that Jack didn't drink so they didn't say anything - he wasn't brought up before the xxx for xxx over his mess bill.

Did you pay for your messing?

Yes, yes, got a mess bill every month.

But there was also this, you could run up so much [before you drop].

That's right, yes - £5 for POs, £6 for FOs.

So there was no money ...

No money changed hands, no, you just got your ... Oh, I've forgotten, I suppose £10 and £12 a month was your mess bill - so much for condiments and so much for this, that and the other thing.

I've just forgotten that, I was there so briefly really before leaving the Squadron. I can't recall that xxx paying xxx mess bill.

Bob spoke of - I think it was Jock - said xxx wept when Bing Crosby didn't come back. He must have been one of his charges and he wept when Bing didn't come back.

Did you do a [nickel]?

No, no, we were going to do a nickel but the aircraft I had was US - and do you remember Sergeant [Duffy]? You would have remembered him, the chap that came through the windscreen at Church Broughton outside the xxx xxx.

Oh, yes, that's right.

Well, he was the sergeant in charge of the aircraft, he used to sign it as serviceable and I used to sign it as unserviceable, and we xxx xxx to about four nights and they wouldn't give me another aircraft. Eventually they said, 'Oh, well, somebody will have to do something about this' and they somebody went out and [ran it up] and agreed with me, and they took it back into servicing and they found that the plug leads had been pushed through the xxx - you know, somebody had packed it with grease and all the casing had rotted off the plug leads, and she was really rough. But [Dutton] kept insisting there was nothing wrong with it. By that time xxx came through and I didn't do any [more].

Now, your leave experiences. Now, once again, you got this address through the Lady Rider Scheme.

Yes.

Very early in your days in England?

Ah ... yes ... oh, no, no, not until we were crewed up at Church Broughton. Of course, prior to that we didn't have that much leave between forces. You know, it might be two or thee days and you were posted somewhere else. And I think the first, apart from when we first got to Bournemouth - I think we got a fortnight's leave then, disembarkation leave - and I think the first reasonable leave I got was when we left Church Broughton, I think we had, what, seven or eight days.

We had eight days.

I think at that stage of the game - if I remember rightly, I was on the Squadron when I first wrote to Lady [Francis Rider] - xxx xxx - and we went to Jack Morris, the mid-upper gunner in xxx xxx - then I went to these people, Mrs Steavens, at Tunbridge Wells. Then the next time I got this address of these people called Hill at [Brendown] out of Bournemouth, and that was where I spent the rest of my leave.

Would you spend all your leave there or would you spend a portion with your crew, say, or maybe with your crew and then you'd go there?

No, I normally went straight down.

Straight down there.

Might have an overnight in London and go down.

And the conditions there were pretty good, were they?

Oh, yes, fantastic place.

Fairly well-to-do people?

Yes, very well-to-do, they were in mines, coal mines and thing like that, in Wales and so on. I was the [only kid] - Mrs Hill was a semi-invalid and xxx looked after sort of thing. But there were a number of Canadians and New Zealanders, Australians and RAF, and so on.

There was one - xxx married - RAF chap - wife's name was Ann - and we were going off to the pub one Sunday morning, and he was driving the Hill's car and he and Ann were sitting in the front, and Mary and I are sitting in the back, and he was singing as he went past the church:

'I don't care if it rains or freezes,
I am safe in the arms of Jesus;
I am Jesus' little lamb
Yes, by Jesus Christ I am'

And all the locals around that knew Mary since she'd been a xxx, she was down on the floor of the car keeping out of sight. I can't remember his Christian name now; he was a wild man, that fellow.

So you got a lot of satisfaction, a lot of sort of comfort, out of being able to go to that family?

Oh, my word, yes.

You used to look forward to it?

Yes, it was home.

Drills and procedures. Now, I think you've got a lot of that in that thing, have you, what you did in and out of the aircraft?

Yes.

It's all in there, isn't it?

Yes. The only thing is, you know the pre-take-off check. Basically, when you got into the cockpit you did a left or right check and checked everything out, you know. But George is in a spin and you worked all your controls to full length to make sure the clutches were engaged, and then it was virtually a left or right check across. And the pre-take-off of the old TSB xxx xxx and gyro, all trims neutral, [air mixture] on take-off; pitch, is the pitch fully xxx; fuel, check fuel, all fuel gauges xxx xxx. [Yules]; well, in this case yules were radiator shutters closed, and gyro uncaged and set with the [P4] compass. From there on it was all go, go, go.

Now, okay, you taxied round for the take-off, you get the green light. What are your actions then?

Well, as soon as you got the green light, well, you opened your throttle. You always advanced your port throttle ahead of all your others with you hands - xxx throttles that came up and the two outboards met over the top of the inboards, and [the very] xxx. You kept straight with the motor till you can get your power up and you've got rudder control, and as you opened the throttles, keeping straight with your motors ...

Were you doing this or was [Barry] helping?

No, the pilot was actually operating the throttles to that stage. The engineer used to follow up behind, with his hand behind the throttles, and then when the pilot got rudder control he'd straighten the rudder, he used to hand over the throttle and say to the flight engineer, 'Righto, full power', or 'Through the gate' or whatever you wanted, and the flight engineer would then take the throttles over. From then on you just told the flight engineer what settings you wanted. When you got airborne you'd squeeze your brakes, that's the undercarriage up, and the flight engineer would lift your undercarriage.

I always put my own tap off because I could feel at about 500 feet you'd start milking your flap off - you took off thirty degrees of flap. Then you would say to the engineer, 'Righto, touch nine, twenty-eight-fifty' and he'd pull the throttles back through the [gate] to plus nine degrees and set your pitch to twenty-eight-fifty revs. And, oh, about 1,500 feet you would come back to plus six, twenty-six-fifty and that was our power settings for the rest of the night till we got to the target. And I'd push up the revs to twenty-eight-

fifty when we were running through the target, and bring them back to twenty-six-fifty afterwards - really never touched them from then on till we got back in to the [circuit].

Right, now, your landing procedure.

Well, we'd come back over the [punnet], if you could see it, you know, and call up there. You'd get - normally got aerodrome 800.

That was a beacon, was it, [800]?

Yes, the red one, flashed BK - [occult] was the white one, wasn't it? - the punnets had three positions, the occult always were made in the one position. You'd call up over the punnet and you'd get, say, 'Runway One, Number Three Aerodrome, 800' - and you'd enter the circuit on down-wind, throttle back to about, oh, between zero and plus two, revs back to 2,200, and select undercarriage down - actually, your throttle right off first, and throttle on, that was check the undercarriage [horn] was operating. Then dropped your undercarriage, and that brought you back to roughly a down-wind speed of 140. Halfway down wind you'd call 'Immediate bunker down-wind', then drop fifteen degrees of flap to check that your flaps were undamaged, that used to bring you back to about 135. Then you'd turn on to base leg and start your descent, and you'd drop flap to thirty degrees, and that brought you back to 130, 135 - 130. As you turned on to final in the funnels you'd call 'Funnels' and then you'd get 'Clear to land' or 'Continue, the runway is occupied'. And then when you were sure of landing it's straight full flap. On the final approach you'd say to your flight engineer, 'Unclamp' and he'd unloosen the friction nut on the throttles. Well, you could take over then and adjust your rate of descent to your throttles and your air speed [within] xxx, and cutting back to about 120, reducing to 110 over the fence and touching down round about 90 - floating like mad normally because you were such an empty aeroplane. To get them to sit down you had to be really, you know, really xxx. As you were clearing out the engineer used to sit with his both hands locked behind the throttles, and you felt the controls start to get wobbly and break you'd say to him, 'Cut, fall back' and bring his hand back and bring the throttles hard back on the stops. That's when all the beautiful banging, whirling, balling, wining - remember, the old Merlins used to come out - and hopefully you sat down on three points - hopefully.

Right, then taxied on the runway - when you taxied off you said 'Clear of runway' didn't you?

'Clear of runway' yes, xxx xxx normally.

That would be sufficient?

Yes.

And the controls tower would come back xxx xxx?

Oh, that just acknowledged us, that's all. But basically all our calls were not so much for the power, they were for the other aircraft following you. Of course, you'd hear, say, 'A Apple, down wind', well, you knew A Apple, you'd have heard him call over the punnet and then you might hear B Baker call over the punnet, and C Charlie call over, well, you

knew there were three xxx and you would probably get aerodrome xxx xxx - 1,000 feet for aircraft in distress - they gave us 200 feet separation. Considering these days 1,000 feet is a minimum ...

200 wasn't much, was it?

200 wasn't much. But you positioned yourself. As you were coming in, if you had a couple more, you would pull off power earlier so that you wouldn't arrive over the punnet with somebody else. And it was up to the pilots, more or less, to do their own control and sort themselves out and position themselves so that there was a steady flow of aircraft.

And was that done pretty well?

Very well. You'd hear some characters call up early, but on those old HF jobs you could tell that he wasn't close. And someone would say, 'You are a lying so-and-so, you haven't crossed the bloody enemy coast out yet' and he'd shut up. I think if didn't happen very often; there was one bloke used to try it occasionally but everybody else played the game because of their own interest.

Would you give your first call over the [RT] was over the [punnet]?

Yes.

Okay, shutting down. You are in your dispersal, what is the shutting down procedure?

Oh, very, very simple. It was just select bomb doors open, flaps down to take all the pressure off the hydraulics, and you had idle cut-out switches that just ... you'd tell the engineer 'Cut' and he'd just push the four switches down and if he did that you'd just open your throttles wide on the motors, and that was it, that was all you had to do. There was no run-down procedures or anything like that as you had on the Wellington - you had to do a run-down on the xxx xxx, with the Lancaster. The earlier model Lanc, the cut-out was on the fuel cocks. As you closed them, your fuel cock - oh, that was another thing you did; after you cut your xxx, your four fuel cocks were closed off. But on the earlier models, as you closed your fuel cocks off it had the cut-out attached to them, the fuel cock xxx xxx close the fuel cocks.

What was the general reaction when you cut those motors and there was silence at last? What was the common crew reaction?

One of great relief - 'He got us down in one piece again' (laughs).

That was more than likely the comment.

Well, one of the problems used to be - do you remember how well you pressed the [torque]? you'd hear that squelch come in, and my crew used to listen for that and I'd say, 'Now, shut up, I'm going to call the tower' and I'd press the torque and somebody would say, 'It will be the same bloody landing as it was last night, a write off' - and you'd come off - but the language, of course, was a bit rougher than that. They used to get me

furious with it - 'I want to call the bloody tower; shut up, for Christ's sake, keep off the bloody intercom' - and you'd press again and I'd hear xxx, 'Yes, you are right, he's got cranky again, he'll mess it up again, normal landing' and this sort of thing would go on. You felt like heading, [putting it in George], climbing to 10,000, going back and xxx each one of them a prang each, just to quiet him down. Oh, it was a relief for them, sort of a relief mechanism, I think, for the rest of the crew, to have a shot at the pilot.

Have a go, yes.

Maybe they tried to wake him up too so that he wouldn't foul up the landing any worse than normal.

Who'd be the main ones in this bit of comedy? xxx

No, no, I wouldn't say anybody was any better than anybody else.

They were all in on the act.

They were all in on the act.

Somewhere along the line you used to change over fuel tanks, didn't you?

Ah, on take off the navigator used to sit - you had on the end of the instrument panel there were two knobs, and you'd take off on your inboard motors and you had a red warning light on the instrument panel. And the navigator, on take-off, used to sit with his hands on those; if that red light came on you used to change immediately from inboards to the centres. Of course, that was a fuel-pressure warning light, and if that came on he would change immediately - just change the two tanks over from inboards to centres.

And then you'd fly for about an hour - you had your two outboard tanks, they were 154 gallons each, and you flew till you used about 200 gallons and then the flight engineer used to switch on the emergency pumps and pump 150 gallons out of the two outboard tanks - the wing-tip tanks - back into the centre tanks. From then on you used to fly so that you were using your fuel equally out of your centres and your inboard tanks so that if you did get holed in one tank you hadn't lost the whole (lot). If you flew on your inboards till they were empty and then went on to your centres, well, of course, if your centre tanks are holed you'd lose the lot. While switching back [in the evening] - and even at the xxx on the aircraft, it was basically so that if one tank did get holes you hadn't lost all of it, you could use some of it anyway.

This was common practice, was it?

Mm, yeah, yeah. That was the flight engineer's job, he kept a fuel-flow record - we didn't have flow metres in those days, but he just took readings on each tank and he kept his log up to date all the time - engine temperatures, revs, oil pressure, and oil temperature, and everything like that. He logged that every half hour - and fuel remaining - and so on, like that, so you could just look down and get an idea of your fuel flow from that.

Now, xxx xxx the supercharger. Did that operate all the time?

Oh, yes, yes. Uncharged batteries were normally aspirated then which just depends on the normal atmospheric pressure - 14.7 psi at sea level - and as you climbed the pressure consequently - fresh air is coming in, but on the more powerful motors there's a supercharger - ours were two-speed - [M blower] is always in, it was operated the whole time, forcing air in through the carbie sort of thing to keep the pressure up in the carburettor and fuel mixture into the engine. When you got to about 16,000 and your boost had dropped off about, say, +6 or +4 pounds boost, you'd throttle back and then the engineer would just select [S Gear] as it was known, and that was put in the second stage.

I think they peaked, those things, flat out, on maximum power and everything, they peaked about 33,000 revs a minute; they were mechanically driven. But turbo supercharger, I think, peaked, was maximum, about 40,000 revs. They put through a whacking great flame out the exhaust all the time so that was why we had the mechanical ... we didn't have all those flames spewing out behind us.

That was what a crew member would pick up, that change of blower?

Yes. Well, the first thing you would do, you would hear the power come off and then the [fuel] - you'd feel a bit of a jolt as it came in, the sudden increase in pressure, the sudden surge in the motors, as they got this increased power, you'd feel it through the aircraft and then you'd throttle, take your throttles back up +6 pounds of boost. But once that was done, as you gained altitude, so your boost would drop off - we kept [acting] our throttles till we had a wide-open throttle, there were wide-open throttles all the time. And you'd just then gain, really after you got down to about +2 pounds of boost, you were really only climbing as you used fuel up as your load lightens - sort of a cruise climb we did all night. But some of them - if you talk to other blokes - they were given a bombing altitude which they had to bomb at and stay at, things like that; but ours, no, they'd just ... whatever altitude you could make.

Did you ever change the angle of your airscrews?

Oh, well, you had constant-speed props. When you talk about settings of plus twenty-six-fifty, twenty-eight-fifty, and three thousand, that was changing the pitch on your prop. The constant-speed airscrew meant that you could set it at whatever speed you wanted to, and if you dived the airscrew itself coarsened off, or fined off, depending on the load that was placed on the prop so that it always remained at that air setting that you had - that was set with your pitch leavers.

I get it now - xxx.

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE 2

START OF TAPE TWO - SIDE 1

…first time we did a second dickie with Spike Marsh, and we got a head-on attack and a stream tracer came towards us and Spike and I both ducked and then the next thing the bomb aimer came and said, 'I'm sorry skipper, but I pulled myself up into the front turret and fired the guns by mistake'. It wasn't a head-on attack: it was Tony's guns going off and that was really the only exciting part of that.

The second one we did on 2nd December was a crew - that was when we were about twenty minutes south of the target and flew up - Arthur reckoned we had about another ten minutes to go, and we xxx that's it up there. So we flew up and flew around bombing from south to north and everybody else had bombed from west to east and gone home. Then the fighter xxx started to come down round us. They were turning to east all the time, they looked like going to Russia instead of England. Then decided, well, I've got to head west again if we're ever going to make it, then we saw this fighter above us. As I was turning my mid upper gunner, Tommy Walters, said … I said, 'Can you see him?', and he said, 'Yes, I've got him'. And he banked and I thought, oh no, no, no, here's the first one, you know, so soon, he's coming in. But he didn't, he banked the other way and he shot down over the target and left us. We got back and found that night that about five of the senior crews had been there on time and got the chop.

Did you know any of those fellows at all - those five crews?

Yes.

There was Pauser.

Yes, Eric Pauser.

Mitchell?

Bluey Mitchell, I came with Bluey Mitchell.

Alford?

Yes, Tommy Alford. Yes. He was another one I went over when with.

English?

Yes. He went over on the same draft. Bob English, wasn't it?

JHJ here.

I can't remember him. He might have had a nickname or something. But he was on the same draft going over.

And Edwards, CH Edwards.

No, I didn't know him.

So certainly three of those blokes you would have known quite well.

Yes, we all went over together. We all actually went to OTU together. We lost our navigator there, or we decided to scrub him. They went on and we were waiting around. Then we had a couple of things: a chappie was sick and then they were hanging the wellingtons and so on.

So you went over with Eric Pauser.

Eric Pauser, yes.

Bluey Mitchell?

Bluey Mitchell and, I sort of known him as Bob English. It couldn't have been.

And you went over with him too?

Yes. But we were all at OTU together initially. I was just going to say that dropping behind was no bad luck.

So that tremendous loss would have certainly made you think, you know, it was a pretty serious sort of show, wasn't it?

Oh yes. But I really don't know that it had all that much impression on me. I think we were still a bit stunned from being in the squadron.

You hadn't quite taken it all in.

No, no. No, I hadn't seen these blokes for a long while. So, it definitely wasn't any of the xxx attached to Owen, Bing Crosby or Jo Learer, Geets or any of those. Because then we'd been together on the squadron for so long then, and all running neck and neck and expecting to all finish up together then gradually, one by one, they fell out of the sky. You realised after a while that you, you know, of the people you really knew well, there was you and Bob Howell and Pop and his crew.

Did you think that this idea of self preservation, survival, was something that influenced your attitude a lot towards what was going on around you? The thing was that you hoped to survive.

I never did think that I wouldn't survive. It never entered my head that I would get the chop. I was scared at times without a doubt. And, you know, I had butterflies before we went and that sort of thing. And the Butterflies before you walked in to see where the target was and things like that. But deep down, I don't think I ever really felt that I wouldn't. But we worked very hard as a crew too to make sure that we were on the ball. They used to drive me mad if there was no off-sider. To get them to go out and do practice [dingies] and pitching drills and parachute drills and things like that. We had it down that we could get out on a dingy drill in twelve seconds, we could rotate the aircraft, and that wasn't bad going. No, we had to work hard.

And you did this occasionally when the ops weren't on.

We did it quite regularly. I made sure that they did it quite regularly. You know, the whole drill. Getting into and out of the turrets, to always get out of the turret in the proper manner so that they wouldn't lose time if they had to get out of the turret. And I always got into my seat in one way and got out of it the way that I would get out if I was going to bail out. Of course, this was standard practice taught to all pilots to do this, to get out the way the way that you would get out if you were going to bail out.

> You say a target identified by red/green sky markers and TI greens. Bomb centre of fires as the time of bombing no markers were seen. So you saw markers but then they went out and you bombed on the fires?

Must have done, yes.

> That wouldn't have been uncommon that the supply of markers wasn't always constant?

No. It wasn't … I think you would have found that too. Well, of course, you'd see an area where the previous aircraft had been hacked in the stream and the back is up. Well, you could usually if the previous aircraft was hacked because we'd see the TI streaming out of it as it went down. So in a lot of cases I should imagine that if the back is up it had been hacked. And, of course, the initial TIs had gone out and when it's back was up it was xxx and burn, you know, backed up xxx.

> Whick was the sky marking, Parramatta or [Wonganoe]?

I think Wonganoe. I could be wrong here with sky marker and Parramatta was ground marking.

> So, okay, you'd have seen those markers, you knew you were around about the target but no indicators when you were in the bomb zone. You bombed on the fires.

No. Bombed on the fires.

> So that was the second. When was ;your next one?

Well if that was the second one ….

> That was 2nd December.

Yes. Well, of course, by that time the raid was over, on 2nd December. That's when we were south of the target.

> Oh, okay. So, yes, yes. You were a bit late because …

About twenty minutes late.

> So there was a good chance ;you'd have been alone there.

No. There was one followed us up, one other further south than we were. Where he was or where he ended up I don't know. But I know he followed us in.

That would have been a pretty dangerous practice, being out on your own.

Well, I think in this case the fact that the five seater crews got chopped. They were on time and all the sprogs were lost and wandering around the sky willy nilly and the fighers were protecting the city. They were going for the aircraft that were actually bombing the city and by the time that we got there they were out of fuel and probably out of ammo. They were going back in to refuel and rearm. So in actual fact we were probably up there at the best time we could have been. The luck.

Next time was xxx. Did anything particular happen there?

No.

That was a pretty late bombing. You bombed at 4.08.

Yes. That would have been a midnight take-off I'd say. What time did we get airborne?

0026.

Yes, well that was twenty-six minutes passed midnight, wasn't it? That was why that was …

And you were down at 7.43 so …

Well the reason for that being was because we went to Berlin on the 2nd and we had to sleep the next day and then get ready and be briefed for the op the following night. And that's why it would be a midnight take-off.

No way in the world would you have been in at eight o'clock.

No.

So definitely you would have come home in daylight. It would have been daylight when you hit the coast of England.

How long did that took … seven hours twenty. That would be nearly eight o'clock by the time we got back in the morning. It would be getting very close to being daylight.

Intensive cloud up to about twelve thousand feet. The target identified by red/green sky markers. Bomb concentration red/green sky markers. Pilots remarks: the tack very well concentrated and the trip was really exciting with regards spiders.

Yes. That was [Lightsig]. Ah ha, it was Lightsig that we were … that was the one … no … we went on 19th February to Lightsig. I think that was the one we got attacked. But on one of those we were picked up and xxx was flashing. And we kept looking

around and changed altitude a bit and move and stop and pick up again. They we flew straight and level and I said to Johnny, 'Well, keep your eyes open for him'. As soon as we had flown straight and level for a while he came in definitely. He had us … he'd been following us and he made his attack. We did the normal dive and turn and got away. I think that would be the one on Lightsig, of course, that was night fighters.

The worst one I think was the next one, the next time we went to Lightsig. I think there was a fair bit of fighter activity around for everybody that night. But I don't remember … I'm sure it wasn't the one where we attacked over the target.

> You say the yellow TI route markers were too plentiful and lit up the aircraft unnecessarily. Who put down route markers? Did PFF do that?

Yes. PFF were marking routes. This was one of the ideas, you know, to concentrate the …

> What marking the route into target?

Yes. Or, marking the route to the target.

> Was that the normal practice?

No. It's just a thing they tried out I think, to see if they could concentrate the stream. With these markers they used to try and drop those spot fires on the ground. Remember the red spot fires they put down? I don't think we ever saw more than about one of those.

> Obviously you felt that they were a bit pessimistic because they …

Of course in that time, remember they had the flak belt along the coast, then the search light belt and then after that was the sort of … the fighters used to come in after that. They meet you, say, across the channel or something like that. But they had the flak belt, then the search light belt you went through and then the fighters followed you after that. And, of course, they'd change their tactics as we'd changed our tactics. And, I don't know whether that gave them the idea of fighter flares.

> Do you remember, or have you got recorded the first night you struck fighter flares?

No.

> We haven't either. It was pretty early in the tour, wasn't it?

Yeah. I think, if I remember rightly, after they started have the flak belt, the search light belt and then they put down the mass of fighter flares. But you flew over the top of them and you were silhouetted the fighter flares. Then after that they changed that tactic to marking the route with fighter flares. As you went along they followed the lead.

> I remember that quite well.

Those dame fighter flares would come down and all of a sudden you'd see fiz, fiz, fiz. They'd be way out. There'd be one burning just near you and, you know, pull away.

> What the next one. …. 16th December at Berlin. I know there's Rowley, Allan and Al are going together at this stage. Yes, 16th December. You comment here xxx flared up to about seven thousand feet. Target identified by red/green sky markers. Bombed TI green in centre of TI reds. They weren't mixed up: there were red markers and there were green markers were there?

Yes. I think if I remember rightly we were told a combination of coloured markers as we put down at xxx weren't we, so that we wouldn't be confused with spoks and things like that. Yes, I'm pretty sure they told us the combinations. But then the initial xxx then the backing up would be done xxx. Something like that.

> Judging by glow on cloud the fires were rather scattered. On landing the pilot said, 'A satisfactory route and a quiet trip. No definite results of the attack observed'.

Who went that time?

> This is when you had your loses xxx.

That was the 16th.

> Xxx Stafford, Archie Randel, xxx and the forth one that xxx

> Well, Archie Randel took off one time and at twenty-three or four hours was given permission to land at base. At twenty-three twelve the captain called to say, aircraft had hit a tree just below cloud. At twenty-three forty-eight he called to say he was firing Very cartridges as he could not see the aerodrome. No further messages were received but the aircraft crashed in an ammunition dump in markets at xxx. Time unknown and all the crew were killed.

Yes. He was on his last trip.

Diamond Jim xxx, he xxx and ran out of fuel in the xxx. Then Merv Stafford, if I remember rightly, he broke cloud and flew into the side of a hill.

> But Archie Randel was the bloke that you knew he was on his last flight.

> The next one … the details of our exploits in that xxx they had that night.

Ah, 20th December was Frankfurt.

> Frankfurt attacked at nineteen forty-six from twenty-one thousand. Target identified by TI greens and fires. The TI greens scattered over a large area. The target was very indefinitely marked. No route markers seen. On landing the pilots said: a quiet trip and reasonably good results. Obviously wasn't much happened.

No, it didn't.

> Were you out on the 24th?

No. That was the night I didn't get off. My rear gunner told me xxx.

It says here: 0413 916 Pilot Officer Wade was involved as pilot of a flying accident while on operation for aircraft type Lancaster xxx 315 on 21st/24th December 1943. Xxx xxx.

> You were out on the 29th, weren't you?

The 29th, that was Berlin again.

> Target identified by, once again, dense cloud. I suppose you were happy to see the xxx cloud, were you? What was your reaction?

Not really because it meant, you know … I would rather see a clear target from a bombing point of view. You could tell what happened, you could see what was going on. But bombing through cloud I felt was a bit of an anti-climax. What did you feel about it?

> Yes, that's pretty true. And how about the H2S things, they were a bit improved. But you probably felt that that H2S ….

Well we didn't have H2S in C Flight. No, not till right towards the end. Because there was talk of C Flight being taken off the xxx of squardrons. So A and B flight got H2S but C flight didn't, which in a lot of ways I think might have been a good thing. We got it, I suppose, around about … we got the first one that come into the flight xxx or something like that. But Arthur would probably know more about that, he would probably have it in his log book.

> But you were still PFF support despite the fact you didn't have H2S.

Yes.

> So how did you bomb normally?

We were PFF support, we'd only xxx so we would carry any xxx. We were off to light up fires at night, you know, throw the others off. Others might might have bombed thinking it was a target. So it was HE only. We'd carry thousand pounders and five hundred pounders and that wouldn't start any fires. If we bombed the right spot hopefully we did some good.

> Target identified by sky markers. Bombed centre of four red flares - well that's just another name for a sky marker, isn't it, a flare. Xxx fires seen from 130 miles, explosions at 2018 and 2019. The pilot on landing said: this was a very concentrated raid.

Then we went through to 20th January. I went on leave.

Missing then was Island and McIntyre.

Stan Island.

Stan Island, was it.

Now who was McIntyre. I don't remember.

S J Island.

Then we went on leave and the next off we did was January 20th, Berlin.

So you had leave.

We got seven days, but talking to Stan George in town, he was twelve months or so after us. He said they all got nine days leave.

I only got six.

I used to get seven. Seven days every six weeks, wasn't it?

That's right. I thought it was six days but possibly it was six clear days then extra for travel. I always figured it was six days.

Yes. Well we were entitled to a day off a week, weren't we? And as we worked seven days a week for six weeks, that extra day was the seventh week.

So you were on leave after the 29th. Your next one was when?

Next time I flew actually was on January 6th and I took Frank Arthur to North Holt. He had to go down to xxx. I had to fly him down to North Holt. It was very interesting. North Holt was a fighter wing - Spities. And we called up and, of course, being right on the edge of London, they had a huge balloon barracks around them. They could lower the balloons for a Spit to do a circuit in. And I came in a Lanc, trying to fly a Spit circuit with balloons going passed the start of wing tips. You know, blip, blip, blip, as I went passed. And two things, when I was landing, I was very cramped for room but I had to put down a good landing because after all I had the CO on board and it was a fighter drome. And I never concentrated hardered in all my life at putting down. Because Frank was a navigator, and he was quite surprised at my landing and so were the crew.

Did you ever hear what became of Frank Arthur?

I did hear a story that he went and he was living in Italy.

Arthur said to me that he got the chop.

No, no.

I disagreed because there no record here of him getting chop. Spike Marsh took over from you on the 15th January.

That's right.

END OF TAPE TWO - SIDE 1

START OF TAPE TWO - SIDE 2

The next stop was … have we done January 20th? I didn't put much in my log book, I just normally put in the bomber one by four thousand, thirteen xxx cc, petrol nineteen fifty-five and distance fifteen hundred miles.

I'll get those petrols of you later because I've got them nowhere else, the petrol loading. The bomb load is detailed but never the petrol load.

These were the official loads, not the ones I took.

You were able to manage to get a bit more aboard?

Yes. Well, I used to always ask the ground crew to give me full tanks.

And they always did.

Yes. Yes, see here …

Anyway, I'll get all those off you later.

Berlin, attacked at 1944 from twenty-one thousand feet. Target identified by red/green flares bombed in approximate centre of sky markers. Sky markers plentiful but no definite concentration. Two areas of fires glowing on cloud. On landing the pilot said: no troubles and the route was well chosen.

I suppose that you had a dilemma there when you came up and there were scattered markers as to where you would bomb.

Yes.

Did you usually go for the middle of the main concentration?

Usually to the middle of the main concentration and the marker.

Lynch was lost that night - A Lynch.

Yes. He was a C Flight pilot. And I think he was a fairly new one too. It could have been his first or second trip.

I'll work out all those things. CV Lynch. That wasn't Clay Lynch was it?

It could have been Clay.

> No, there's another Lynch. There's and A Lynch and a C Lynch. There's two of them.

Oh, well Clay Lynch, I think came later on. I think he might have finished his tour, did he? Long after we did. I'm not too sure.

> When's your next after that?

The 21st, [Magnaburg].

> Allan and Burt and the others are still going along at this time? Magnaburg: attacked at 9309 from twenty-one thousand. Target identified by TI greens, river and built-up area. So you couldn't have been in cloud because you could pick it from the river and the built-up area. You didn't have H2S then.

No.

> Bombs. Cluster of three green TIs just west of loop in river. Good concentration of fires on either side of the river. Some scattered load south of target. On landing the pilot said: broadcast winds were incorrect which caused many aircraft to attack on wrong headings. Arthur might be able to clear that up more.

> Have you got anything in particular in your entry there?

No. The next one we did was the 27th at Berlin. That would have been a straight in and straight out job because it only took us six hours forty-five. … Wait on, wait on. No, the 27th, no it would have been. No, that would have been a long route because it took us eight hours five.

> Eight hours five - 1735 to 0130.

Yes, the next one was Berlin. Yes, eight hours five on that one.

> Target identified by green/red flares which were bombed. Good concentration at twelve green flares. No xxx of bombing observed. On landing the pilot said: good concentration of sky markers, they should be successful. No opposition either at target or on route.

It must have been a good route but it was a long one. Then the 28th …

> I'm lucky I've got the routes. Old Sammie drew up all the routes. I've got them all.

Good, good. And then the 28th we went to Berlin again and that was a seven hour twenty-five minutes. That would be a late take-off too because it was tours …

> 0015 you wrote. Yes that was eight hours five minutes, that one, according to

this. What have you made it?

Seven hours thirty-five.

> Oh I beg your pardon, no that's right. It would be seven hours thirty-five. Target identified by red/green flares. Bombed red/green flares and concentration. Large orange explosion at 0314 and 0324. On returning the pilot said: very well carried out attack and excellent route. No troubles. Thank God for the wakey, wakey.

(Laughs) Well that would be because we'd done an eight hour flight the night before and a late take-off, seven hours thirty-five.

> When was your next?

The 30th, Berlin again. We did Berlin, Berlin, Litzig, Berlin, Frankfurt, Berlin, Berlin, Magnaburg, Berlin, Berlin, Berlin.

> Attacked at 2018 from twenty thousand. Not very often has anyone bombed from twenty-two. I thought we bombed from twenty-two mainly. It wasn't the case.

I often wonder, so would I. I often wonder whether they adjusted those bombing heights. I was firmly convinced we bombed from a lot higher. Whether in this they took in altimeter and things like that and readjusted the height.

> Target identified by red/green flares and TI greens. Now what's the difference there - red/green flares and TI greens?

Well flares are probably sky marking stuff …

> Oh yes, and the greens would be the ground. If there were both there what did you …

Well, we went for the TI on the ground.

> So you never used the term to refer to sky markers?

Not that I know of.

> Bombed three TI greens cascading through the cloud. Well they could have cascaded but they were on the ground but you could see it.

Yes, well the TIs usually need to burst and fall down, and cascade down.

> On landing the pilot said: attacked probably in north-west part of the city. It should be good, that moon was not cranky.

We must be getting on towards a moon stand-down.

There must have been a bit of moon somewhere.

Yes, that was a quick trip, it was only six hours thirty.

Probably because of the moon. It would have been almost straight in and out, wouldn't it?

Yes. Because the next one we didn't go. That was the 30th. That would be - because there's a ten day stand-down for the full moon period - and the next one we went on, February 15th to Berlin again.

Now, lost were Barry [Nibbet].

Yes, he went in on take-off.

Reg Rowley went that night. You didn't know Reg very well?

Yes, quite well, yes. A quiet bloke.

He used the bed next to me.

Yes. A very nuggety fellow. A fairly deep solid quiet man he was.

He painted a mural on the wall - he was right up against the wall there, I was next to him - and he ruled this big piece off on the plaster wall and with crayons he started to draw a bush scene of gum trees and a post and rail fence and horses. He often used to have a go at this. It was quite big, probably be about five foot to three or something. He finished it and he signed it and he said that will be my epitath. And went the next day.

I came back and that when the war first really hit me. I came back and there's the picture of his mother on the top of his locker. I suddenly bloody well started to think what this was all about. And then I was wakened up the next morning with the SPs coming and taking his stuff. It touched me because they were very quiet and full of reverence. They took the photograph and very carefully packed it up. But I think probably Reg Roley's loss hit me more than any of the other pilots because I slept next to him. So Reg went and who else … Squadron Leader HD Marsh assumed command of 460 Squadron.

And the next one …

Lynch went. This is the one. The 21st of the January at Magnaburg. One of these tried to take off while out of the remainder two did not carry out the duty. Lancaster aircraft NB366 cashed on landing, the crew consisting of Flight Sergeant T[Holingham], MacIntyre, Mansfield - Ronnie Mansfield went in with that one - so it must be later.

We've got Power was lost, McLauchlan xxx

Some of the crews you never even got to know.

Jarman.

Rickie Jarman. (short break)

Berlin 1543. Twenty-one and a half you bombed out there. Target hit indicated by sky markers and red and green TIs. Bombed sky markers. On landing the pilot said: a good route and should be very concentrated attack. He took a Flight Sergeant Proud who's xxx xxx.

Do you think that was a good idea, that system?

I think it was. I remember having to pull his crew into gear. They'd say, oh look at that, look at that, look at that and they were wanting to natter.

Full of wonder.

Yeah. We told them to shut-up because we always flew in dead silence.

Do you know if he survived?

No. He went on about his thirteenth, I think.

The next one.

What date was that?

It was the 15th.

19th, then there's Litzig. I've got a two hour twenty flight here in Y training H2S. That was our twelveth raid then on the 19th was Litzig.

I can't pick you up on the 19th at all. That was funny, you've never recorded it here. It was 19th February, Litzig. Eventful sort of trip or …?

Yes. …. tacted over the middle of the target and xxx just said (inaudible due to noisy dog) … just go to reach for the bomb door and Johnnie starts screaming out: go port, go port, go port. I went flashing down (dog barking) … opened up on us, the tracers just going across to the canopy. I remember thinking xxx (tells the dog to sit down). And I thought if I go any higher I'll bend the pole. I can't tighten any more. And, of course, he was getting a bit excited because he was looking straight into the bloody xxx barrels. And we were carrying about 6,000 xxx of the target. Then the fighter broke off his attack and we shot out of that bloody target, going like a bat out of hell.

As we were climbing out of the target on course I suddenly realised my flying boots were full of icy cold water. That was the first time I really realised what cold feet meant. I was too busy to be frightened until after then the shock hit me. And they were sopping wet the flying boots with this icy cold water. They were very uncomfortable. And, you know how we used to take our boots and things in to be dried and the WAF said next day: you must have had a bad trip last night.

She'd struck it before of course.

And I said, 'Yes, how did you know?' She said: 'Your flying boots were sopping wet. We can always tell when somebody's had a bad trip as the troop come in with very wet boots inside, they've had a rough trip'. Then it hit me, you know, why they've always said cold feet.

There's only one way to find out the truth about that one.

END OF TAPE TWO - SIDE 2

START OF TAPE THREE - SIDE 1

We're up to 24th March … no, before that. 21st February, Stuttgard. On the 21st attacked at 0300 from twenty-two thousand feet. It's the first one I've seen. Target hit, identified by TI red and green bombed visually on built-up area near TI red marker. Bombed visually, so that must mean that it was a clear night, doesn't it?

Yes.

You didn't have H2S there, did you?

No.

A large factory appeared burning north-east of the town. On his return the pilot said: an excellent route and a very quiet trip. It seemed that southern Germany had lapsed into false security.

What did we take on that? Seven hours thirty. There must have been a bit of a dog leg in that somewhere because of all the fighters. The 24th was Swynford. That was a ballbearing factory at Swynford we went for, wasn't it? Yes. I remember the air xxx they'd been that day and left the place ablaze and we'd have no trouble in finding it. It was as dark as the inside of a cow.

2310 from twenty-one thousand. Target identified by built up area and river. Green and red TIs. Bombed centre of five red TIs which appeared to be to east of river. So there you identified visually but you still bombed on the TIs which I suppose was what they would expect to do. On his return the pilot said: fires were very concentrated around the TIs, a few scattered lanes. Well how would you know the scattered lanes, you could see fires …

Yes, you could see the incendiaries burning in the ground. The 25th was Altsburg.

Yes. Anything special about that?

Not that I remember.

Visually identified aiming points in relation to rivers and fires. (inaudible)

I'm trying to think of which one it was Mick and I had the big fight over. I can't remember.

On his return the pilot said: best prange I've seen. Very well concentrated attack and fires were firmly established. Route without incident.

Stuttgard on … oh, March, we've done that. April.

Stuttgard. Yes, 15th March.

The 24th Berlin, we did that, didn't we?

No, we didn't. I just had the bomb loads on it. We're up to 15th March.

Stuttgard.

Anything special?

No, I don't think so.

Twenty-two and a half thou you bombed there.

Yes. Seven hours forty-five.

Excellent route, quiet trip, attack appeared scattered. Several loads of incendiaries dropped short.

The 26th was Essen. That was a short in and out. That was the one when we came back down … they routed us back down the coast to see what the flak situation was.

Well it was about this time.

It was. They told us to drop down. And I found out halfway down: well, I know a bloody enough about the flak that's coming up here, so I swung west and flew out of it. But what I noticed, there were a hell of a lot of blokes flying inland, three or four thousand feet above the xxx with the greatest contrails you've ever saw in your life. And there was fair amount of fighter activity around and no wonder because they were leaving themselves wide open. Bloody contrails.

So they were pretty high.

We dropped down. It wasn't till you dropped down to about twelve thousand or something, didn't they?

I thought it was lower than that but I could be wrong.

It would have been eight thousand or seven thousand. I know we came down fairly low. And as we were decending we went through a lot of contrail area. Johnnie let

me know when we were getting contrails and I'd change altitude and we kept on going down. Of course we picked up a lot of speed and we were speeding down the coast and they wanted to know what the flak situation was there. Trying to get an idea … I think they were the buz-bomb sites.

> I always thought it was in relation to the impending invasion to find out what was there - areas of concentration of ack-ack. I thought we were lower than ten thousand.

Yes. I can't remember now. Arthur might have some ideas on that. But I think that ….

> Anyhow, do you think that's the one?

I think that could be the one.

> Moe Stafford reckons there were three pilots routed low. He Howell was one and there was two others. Obviously you were one of them.

Yes. Arthur might remember but I now we had to go down and find out what the flak situation was.

> We went down low but we didn't find any flak.

It was opened up all the way and these blokes were out to the east of us and they were still high. They were steaming along leaving these flaming contrails. I thought what stupid idiots.

> So you struck a contrail at a particular altitude.

Yes, I can't remember what.

> It would vary?

Oh, yes, yes. It depended on the concentration of moisture in the air and the particles coming out of the exhaust sort of formed a hypescopic nuclei with the moisture and formed a contrail.

> So you had to be on the alert and change your altitude.

Change altitude, yes.

> Then you've got Nurenburg.

We had a quiet trip on Nurenburg but by crickey, there was a lot activity going on behind us.

> That's the night I remember we saw all these, what we thought were spoofs.

I remember Johnnie saying to me, for christ sake, have a look behind. And there were

combats going on all over the place there, our blokes going down, PFF aircraft shedding loads and things. Oh …

> But that was a mess up because we were [wing] fighting and they were sending back vastly different wings. But Arthur would probably have more on the wing sort of thing on that.

Then we go to April 9th. Xxx and Ganzy. That was interesting because when we ran through … after we came down over Sweden and then dropped down into the Baltic and then headed down as if we were heading down to Berlin then turned and shot back. We went from the town called Point Hel and there was one single light flashing on it. We used that for running into the town and dropped the mines there.

> Didn't you have to time your run from that point?

No. We ran in on the town towards that point. We more or less ran north. We came down as if we were heading back towards Berlin and then turned and went back, dropping down, and running through, over to the town on to Hel and then climbed out. And you could see all this activity going on down in the bay. As far as I remember they said there was some enormous number of submarines in there being fitted out with waterproof anti-aircraft guns to combat the xxx.

> That's right. They were just about to go out into the Atlantic.

Yes. And they wanted to bottle them up and they anti-sweep mines. And that was the night we swung on takeoff and hunted Marsh, Toohey and Air Commodore Ray away. But, you know, it was uneventful for us going through the target but when we were climbing out all hell had broken loose down there. Everything that had a gun was firing. All the ships in the harbour had opened up and everything. The Force defences and the town's defences, everything was going. And then, as we climbed out, this aircraft came with a fighter up his tail hammering hell out him and it turned out to be Tony Willis.

Then we were twenty-one, twenty-two thousand or something, going out over the Danish coast and Arthur said to me well we've crossed the xxx and as he said that there was bang, bang, bang. Arthur said afterwards he could see the flak ship on the screen. He must have been waiting for us. But he was a bit too good because he was so close to our altitude with the flak going up that way and I remember we were coming back, remember [Islebrook] that big multi-coloured fighter drom they had different coloured runway lights on it. And they had one of those master search lights there. They used to just go bang and have you, then the guns would start up. And we were going along passed there and you could see the fighers taking off on this thing. Evidently different groups used different coloured runways to take off on. The next thing there was bang, bang, bang, dead in front of me and as the xxx we flew into it and then we flew into the next one. We flew through them before I could even put my nose down and change altitudes. And the stink of cordite. It was funny that looking into these, when the explosion took place it seemed to go up and then drift in the middle. It seemed to come down in the middle like that. It was the closest I ever wanted to see.

Was that what you'd call vectored flak?

It would be with those master search lights on.

And usually wasn't there three burst together?

Well there were three burst of this one straight away I know because I went chong, chong, chong into it.

We struck the same when we broke out of the main force on our last trip to Essen. Howard decided to go straight home and vectored flak came up and there was three puffs: bang, bang, bang. You could certainly smell the cordite there. That's the night there were three lost. From here on Crosby and Merv's names don't appear.

I was very worried about having my tanks whole that night. I had Harry watching me engage because there was no way in the world I was going to continue across the sea with leaky tanks. I was going to head back, and if we were using abnormal fuel consumption and we couldn't make the coast, I was going to turn back and bail out over Denmark. I made my mind up firmly about that.

Then on April 10th was [Almyer]. Almyer, when was that? Was that that xxx grounds? Twelve by one thousand, four by five hundred. Yes it was …

Yes, the point of issue, eight by one thousand, four by one hundred and four by five hundred.

I've got here twelve by one thousand and twelve by five hundred.

Oh, that's right too because it's just that they were different compositions. On his returne the pilot said: a good concentration of markers and aircraft. Route home might have been more carefully planned to avoid Aboville search light and flak.

The on the 18th was xxx. I've got a note here: intruders at base, diverted to Chelston.

Diverted to Chelston. That would have been this fellow White I think. Bob talks about him as a little taylor, something white, and he crashlanded in the runway and it closed the runway anyhow. Everybody else …

That could have been it, yeah.

Anyhow, it says here: these mines were laid 5413 north and 1405 east, 0028 hours from fifteen thousand feet. Target gained by pinpointing a position at Griswald Island and set course. No cloud and no haze. A quiet trip and successful mining. Have you got any comments there?

The only thing, that was on Stetton, was it?

No, it was … it would have to be Stetton, yes.

No, the only thing that happened there was as we were taking off there was a raid on xxx area and intruders at base, I've got a note here … sorry. Intruders at base on take-off shown by our own searchlights. Yes, we were combed by our own searchlights which didn't impress us.

I thought you were going on the 18th, 19th on Stetton or was it …

No. Intruders at base, diverted to Chelston on Stetton.

That was Stetton. Intruders at base, diverted to Chelston.

Now, you've got on the 20th, 21st, intruders on take-off.

The 22nd was Dusseldorf. Combed the target, I've got a note here.

What being combed.

Yes. You feel so helpless.

How did you get out of it?

I just outran it.

Did you just stick her nose down?

I stuck my nose down but, you know, you couldn't pick up enough speed really to outrun them like you'd see xxx go zot and was out. But we were hit with one of the master searchlights and the others just zot onto us. And, of course, they started pumping the flak into the comb and then the flak stopped and, of course, that's when the worry came - the fighters came in then. Well, eventually, you know, we just kept going. But I had to get down pretty low and keep the speed up. With the flak stopping the worry started then about the fighters. But, anyhow, we survived it.

How many lights you they probably have got on you?

Oh, it's hard to say because in the event of where the searchlights were looking for us, the pilot dropped his seat to the bottom and only looked up. And as you'd see a searchlight moving towards you like this, you were looking up and watching the beam up here and you'd turn and fly through it. Of course, it was very hard to know if the size of the searchlight would turn back again. But if you turn this way, of course, they had the momentum up of swinging the searchlight, they could follow you. So you'd turn through the beam. But with the master, all it was was suddenly bang and they had you fixed. And as soon as that happened all the others came in and fixed on you. And if you looked down you were thoroughly blinded. So the thing was to get down and just fly on instruments and tell the gunners to keep looking up, so they weren't looking down into this massive light and losing their night vision. But of course when you were combed there was so much bloody light; the inside of the aircraft was lit up and, oh, it was brilliant. The only thing to do was keep down and just read you instruments and go.

You could be combed by up to forty searchlights if you're on your own. No, they knew their jobs those blokes: once they hit there was no time before they all swung on to you.

> An exception concentration of bombing, PFF were late but made up time by xxx sky markers. So if they were late, what would you have done? Bombed on H2S then. On no, you bombed one TI red and two TI green.

I think we were combed on the way into that, in there, and so it didn't make much difference to us. We were busy getting away from the combs and then we had to come back to the target. So really, it didn't make much difference. But I suppose others would have had to come back and gone through and come in again.

> Then you've got [Talsin].

Yes, the 24th.

> That wasn't the icy one, was it?

This was when we got our controls jammed on the way back. Then on the 26th was Essen again. That was interesting because we were bombed by another aircraft.

> What happened?

Oh, we lost our port-outer. We were lucky, the incendiaries went right through, didn't stop … and they went through and in actual fact one had gone through the port-header where the mounting right on the leading edge and it had taken away a complete junction - a hydraulic junction - you know the round junction box and the lines used to come out of it, it had taken this junction box completely out. And, of course, that was the end of hydraulics. And we didn't know that it was incendiaries at the time, we thought it was flak. Anyhow, of course, that was the end of our hydraulics. Our port-outer was slit and that was that. Of course that drove the rear turret. So the only way Johnnie could operate is turret was manual operation and then we got back to base and of course the bomb doors were jammed open and had no flaps. We were told to aerodrome for a while and we were flying around and round and I was losing height. I couldn't make it out. The port-outer was feathered and just turning very slowly. So I was down to about five hundred feet and I called them up and said, well, I'll reduce the bottles. On our first approach when we were coming and no hydraulics and a chappie pulled the bottle and the only chance, the starward leg came down, zot, bang and nothing happened on the port side. Of course all the air just blew out - it had to go through the hydraulic lines to operate it - and all the air for that side just blew out where there was no junction. Of course, the port wheel stayed up and once you used air your undercarriage was locked. You couldn't lift it or unlock it at all.

I said I was going around, go a bit around the circuit, keeping out of the way, letting other blokes in - you know, stay up as long as you can. Then I was losing altitude so I said well I'll come in on the grass. And we came in and landed on the one wheel but as soon as the port wing touched the ground we grounded and we ended up on the runway. There was a bloke on fire, so I called up and said: go round I've pranged on

the runway. And that meant everybody else had to go up, I think they went to Chelston again that night.

But afterwards I realised the port-headed had conked out too because it was just windmilling because there was no exhaust flames. I knew that there were no exhaust flames but it didn't register with me because everything else was normal. You see, with the windmilling, the pressures are up and everything like that and at this stage of the game probably a certain amount of panic was setting in and that was why … if I'd have feathered the port and woken up to it, well we would have been alright. We could have help off. But at that stage of the game, panic was number one I suppose. Because I was losing height I thought well I'd better get down as fast as I can.

> Your remarks here were interesting: if all marking was like this the bomb aimers life would be a piece of cake.

(laughs) It must have been good markings.

> Bombed on a single red TI.

On April 27th is xxx. Full tanks and sixteen hundred miles.

> Bombing a bit scattered. Fires started and smoke up to eight to nine thousand feet. Pilot said this seemed to be the tank.

That was eight and a half hours. Then the next one on the 30th was [Matnon], the bomb dock. They're at eleven one thousand and four five hundreds, fourteen hundred gallons and distance of eight hundred and ten miles. I think [Pobert] went in that night. I think Pop bombed ahead of us and he hit something, it was a bomb dump in a forest - or an ammunition dump - and according to Pop, when he dropped his load there was a God awful explosion and we were just on the run in and I think we went up about two thousand feet above our bombing height. We were just … xxx bombed from there.

> Bombed from eight thousand feet.

Yes. Well, if it was Pop that dropped it, he certainly hit something. There was the most incredible bloody explosion.

> Massive explosions and fire had blocked the spot fire out.

I saw the PRU photo the next day and it was a World War I battlefield picture there. It stripped every tree and blown them to pieces.

> That's as far as I go, but you must have another one.

One more, May 1st. That was an aircraft factory at Leon. We were told to go down to four different holding points and then wait … fly over the target then go to these four points and wait and give the French workers time to evacuate. But I was most upset there because there were a lot of blokes that didn't. They went down and as they did they ran in and dropped their bombs. They didn't go to that bloody holding point.

We went to our holding point and then made our run in. And I'd say mostly everybody else had bombed by that time.

END OF TAPE THREE - SIDE 1

START OF TAPE THREE - SIDE 2

….and everybody else was down on the ground and gone into briefing and then we came into circuit and landed. Dave xxx was the Y officer then; he had cases of grog set up for us and, oh, he was in a terrible state. And then I came in grinning all over my face, Mike wasn't pleased with me, and, 'why did you do that?' and I said, 'Oh well, I just wanted to be last.'

And Howe wanted to be first.

Dave xxx came up and, you know, … you rotten so-and-sos. And then we got stuck into the grog - (names colleagues) - it went on for three days. We ended up over at [Scottard]. And Dusty and Stone disappeared at this stage of the game. We were at Harry Master's place. I said to Dusty, 'You'd better go to bed' and even Dusty said, 'Yes, that's a good idea'. So he was taking his clothes off and he was going up the stairs and after we saw him, all his clothes draped up the stairs and here's this figure disappearing into the bedroom in his underpants. Oh, I could have told a few stories around Dusty's neck of the woods.

Overall what was your feeling about the bomber command tactics, if they were fairly successful?

I think so. And I think they did a lot of work to give the crew as much chance as they could. The only one I do think that was wrong was Nurenburg because we were briefed so long for that. Nobody can tell me that they didn't know where we were going. There were too many fighters congregated there. It just wasn't an accident that all those fighters - there's no way in the world any airforce if somebody congregated all those pilots there, you know, without a reason, and they must have been very very sure of where we were going. And, of course, we'd been briefed so many nights in a row to go there then it was scrubbed.

Wasn't there a [spoof] just off the track? I'm pretty sure I remember there was a spoof just off the track, somewhere near xxx. And the xxx flocked to that of course and it was just a matter of them directing them up the tail of the bomb stream. They followed us all the way in and out. I'm pretty sure that there was a spoof which was very close to the track.

Yes, there could have been. That Michael … oh, what's his name, Martin Middlebrook. We had a very quiet trip that night, of course, we were wing flying. We were up front and as far as we were concerned there was nothing untoward. It was a good trip. But that was the night, I think [Harry Keats] went that night, didn't he?

I'm not sure. He went about - by the time we finished it was just getting on towards ….

Yeah, I'm pretty sure he went on that night. But, you know, I find it a bit hard at this stage of the game. I got a bit upset because I'd been talking the Harry not so very many months before. I know I wrote that letter thinking of Harry and Johnnie and xxx and I sort of xxx off a lot after writing that because, you know, I got a bit upset reading back over it and I think probably … I dreamt a hell of a lot after that. I blew bloody tanks upside down and had nightmares about it. And then suddenly, because I really haven't had any sort of problem that way. During the war I never ever had one dream about an aeroplane. And I had a few after the war when I went back out to the west. One was a recurring dream: I was taking off and on the runway was one of the big maintenance vans and it was covered in boy scouts washing the paint off. And I thought why in the bloody hell are they sitting up there in the middle of the runway. But I never hit them, it always changed into something else along the way. But that was a recurring dream I had and why boy scouts I don't know. But I could see all these little kids.

And we had a Latvian housemaid in the barracks from xxx. God she was a worker. But she was always changing the room around. And one of the things I used to do, I'd jump clean out of bed, and this night - something, you know this abominable thing - I leapt clean out of bed and I'd hung my suit up in the wardrobe, and she'd moved the wardrobe onto the wall opposite the foot of the bed and I hadn't closed the bed. And I landed right in the middle of the bloody wardrobe and I couldn't get out. There I was, you know, in this … blimey, what a fright that gave me.

> I had a few of these dreams; they call them terror dreams. I read an article some years after the war by a RAAF medical officer and said most aircrew who had done a good tour was subject to terror dreams and also fits of depression. I was depressed a bit from time to time for maybe twelve months.

Yes. Well, I always thought afterwards that I should have … well, the first thing I should have done was apply to stay in that xxx off the base. The thing is to settle down over there and then come home or, stop a couple of years out here and gradually let down. But I got out and went home for just a short while and then on to the plane and out to Bourke and out to xxx. I was the only roo there then. There was Cecil Field who had been the head jackaroo, he was there as the overseer but he was married by this time and lived in the old Merryvale homestead. I was the only roo in the barracks. The old gents missus retired and there was a new manager there who was only four years older than I was and he was about six foot ten and built in proportion. He was suppose to be a great worker and this sort of thing. I felt you could have carried a flaming rifle or something and, you know, three months I was there without ever getting off the place. They worked you seven days a week. The first day back I was eight and a half hours in the saddle. The second day I was nine and a half hours in the saddle and I said, 'Look, if I have to get on a horse again for a week, I'm off'. They said, 'Oh, yes, of course, you haven't been on a horse for a long time have you?' and I said, 'No, not for a bloody long time'. And he said, 'Oh, I'll give you something better to do tomorrow', and so this Billy Watts and I got a job to go out and cut poles for a new tennis court. I got seventeen blisters on one hand and, oh, hard.

> Now it was a very quick change of scene that you put yourself into.

Yeah, too quick. And then I got the idea of … I wrote down to [Kobinson] in Macquarie Place and ordered a dozen mixed fruit to be sent up once a month. Five pounds including freight. And I used to sit there in the barracks and - the boss used to go away, he was away more than he was there - and I was alone in the homestead and I used to just sit there and drink. And the only thing they had - xxx used to send up … there was always two bottles of brew and then some gin, and it was eau de cologne. And the boundary rider, Les Turner, used to come in on Sunday to get his supplies. So I'd say, 'Les, you'd better come in and have a drink'. We'd sit there - we tried it with bore water, we tried it with everything, but nothing killed the taste. So we thought, oh well, we might as well drink it neat.

One time, there was a party over at xxx. I thought, you beaut, I'll get off the place. It was just coming up to shearing time because the woolclasser was turning up and the boss said, 'Oh I'm sorry you can't go to the party; you've got stop and draft those sheep up'. I thought, 'You sod'. Anyhow there were some fencing contractors there, Burt Brookman an ex-6 Divi block and his mate from Bourke were contacting there. And Burt come back on the Saturday with supplies for his camp and he had all this grog on board. And he said, 'Well, we'd better drink some of it because my mob out there won't be happy until it's all gone, so the more we can get rid of, the less they've got'. Anyhow we were lying under his lorry and the woolclasser turned up. He came down and kicked me on the leg and said, 'G'day, are you coming down to lunch?' But I was too far gone then. Then later on I heard this shouting going on and looked up and over the yards you could see the dust. I went over and Billie Walsh was drafting up the sheep and the other block pushing them up and so on. And I said to Billie, 'I'm suppose to be doing this', 'Alright, do it'. But I couldn't see what was coming or anything and then I said, 'You better to do it Billie'. 'Yeah, well I'll put all these back and start again' he said. So I said, 'I'll horse up'. I got in and I kept falling over and there were sheep all over the … eventually I said, 'I think I'd better go back to bed'. So I went back and Burt and I spent the weekend on the grog. And I thought, gee, when I came to on the Monday and the boss would be back, I thought, ah ah I'm in trouble, so I'll get in first; I put the resignation in. I wrote it out and put it on his desk and the next morning, on the Monday morning, he said to me, 'I see you've got the sheep drafted up alright'. And I said, 'No'. He said, 'Well, there drafted up' and I said, 'I don't know about it'. 'Well if you didn't do it, who did?'. I said, 'Billie did it'. He said, 'I told you to do it'. I said, 'I know you did'. 'Why didn't you do it?' I said, 'I was too drunk'. He said, 'What happened?' I said, 'Well Burt Brooks and I spend the weekend lying under his lorry drunk'. I said, 'Don't worry about it. Anyhow I've written my resignation out and it's on your desk', he said, 'Yes I've read it and I've torn it up'. And he said, 'It won't happen again will it?'. I said, 'I wouldn't guarantee it, if the opportunity arises I probably will'. (laughs) Got the sack.

But, oh no. Anyhow, another roo turned up, AlanWoodman. I'd been there about twelve months and thought, yeah, let's get out of here so we resigned. But it was too far out. You know, not enough social contact. After being so heavily involved with so many people, to go out there into the back of beyond and spend so much time on your own.

You couldn't have got a more direct bloody opposite if you tried.

No.

It was completely different to the world that you'd known for what, five years.

Oh no, it was the worst thing I ever did. But I think it made me worse.

And personalities on the squadron, do you have any recollections of the personalities, any characters? I think I've heard you on Hughie Edwards, the way you saw him. Spike Marsh too.

Yes, well I think Hughie was one of the best blokes I've ever met in my life, Hughie. He was a fantastic … I always look on Hughie more as the CO of the squadron than the station commander. And I think most blokes did, and I think Hughie looked on himself as CO of the squadron too.

Spike was definitely in a shadow, wasn't he?

Yes, very much so. But, no, I had the greatest admiration I could possibly have for Hughie and I don't know of anyone that didn't. Oh, the Air Commodore Ray, he was a tremendous bloke and he used to always, when he came into the mess to eat - it was a PO's depot - 'oh I don't mix with these multi ring blokes', he said, 'we one ringers must stick together'. (laughs) And he used to start up, at the time I thought, he'd start up a relay race, say six pilots, six navigators, six pints and he'd have a pint at the head of the table. And he'd down his pint and as soon as the pint hit the table the first pilot, first navigator went and so the navigators won, they finished before the pilots. Right now the six gunners, up you come and he'd down another pint, boom, and they'd go. Well, after you've just downed one pint and within, say, two minutes you're trying to drink another one, you might win twice but the mess that the third time. You'd see blokes going glug, glug, glug and it was just pouring down their uniform. But he used to get us on those nights pretty full pretty fast on a little bit of grog. And he'd always make sure that everybody was on beer. In other words, you got very high on a little amount of grog and consequently had less problems with a hangover. I didn't think so at the time, I thought he was just a bloody old boozer. But I thought afterwards it was a very smart thing because if the blokes settled down to really steady solid drinking, they'd have got a lot more beer into them.

And how does Spike mix in this?

Oh pretty well, pretty well. I must say that. But Spike was a very strong bloke and he liked to get involved in games …

Arm wrestles.

Yes, things like that. And tug-of-wars and things where he could excel and be top man. He never tended to talk to the junior officers very much in a social way. Wherever we saw him he was with Hughie or Air Commander or Wing Commander Riggs or somebody like that. And he liked to have the flight commanders sort of hanging around him. But I think being a cadet, you know, he went in at '38 as a cadet and of course he was far above these Empire Air Training types. I think he thought it

was a bit of a come-down to have to command them.

> He ended up with a DFC instead of a DSO which most squadron commanders got. I wonder if that was at his own request?

Oh, I wouldn't know. He only did I think he was twenty-four trips. Was it a CO's … I think they had a time limit if I remember rightly. Didn't they have six months? I think they had a time limit, six months and then they were moved on.

> Do you remember his gunners at all, Pat Hayden and Colonel Locks?

Oh Lord yes. If there were any characters on the squadron, they were the characters. I remember running into Colonel Locks in London one time, you know, …. He's got a big bump in the middle of his eyes, just over here, and it's like an H type cut on it. And I said to him, 'Hello Colonel, what are you doing? What happened to you?'. 'Bloody lamp post, drunk again'. And there he was, and off he went. I didn't see him for the rest of the leave.

> And Pat was a big gangling bloke, wasn't he; a big fellow.

Yes. Bloody Hayden.

> Were they xxx?

Yeah. I believe they quietened down very well after the war. They've properties out in Queensland somewhere. Pillars of society. It's hard to believe, oh God yes.

> Have you ever thought much about the system of declarations? Our system as opposed to, say, the Yankie system where you had air medals and things like that. In other words, declarations at different levels.

I didn't think muc of our system. In actual fact, I think the only bloke that deserves it is the one of the blokes that dies. They made the supreme sacrifice and we were the lucky ones that came home.

> Yet there were no postumus awards, DFCs.

No, a VC is the only possible award you can get, isn't it? But, no, I think that the families of the people that died should get the gong sent home. And I don't see any reason for the blokes who are still alive to get anything.

> I think there was a case for, let's say, Captain xxx to get a gong. There were three get gongs. I always accepted, okay, the rear gunner was good, the navigator was good, well, okay they should get gongs too. But what I couldn't make out was when they started to pick off - well Harry of course was an exception - when they started to pick off wop here and a wop there for a gong. A bomb aimer here, a bomb aimer there, for no obvious reason, just to meet xxx I don't know what was the basis.

No, I don't. And I'll tell you another thing too that your standing as far as xxx. Now

as far as a bomber was concerned, if anybody deserved a gong, he did. We used to put in sixpence each, that was three and six per crew, into a pool and the one closest to the alien point, they got the pool. We used try and get the money and hand it out. Usually it was passed on to the ground crew to have a few beers. And Buck called me into the office one time, he said, 'You've just won your last alien point pool'. And I said, 'Why?' and he said, 'Well, you've been winning it too often and from now on, it doesn't matter what you get, you're doing your money because we want to spread it around and give some of the junior crews a boost in morale. So you're finished'. Well that was Vic's bomb aiming that did that, because I was just flying the aeroplane to his instruction. But Vic had been a naughtly boy along the line and Chappie and Tommie, they were screened at twenty-four. But, no, I've often thought of this many times over the years, if one bloke in a crew … I always maintain there's no crew stronger than its weakest link. If you had a weak member in your crew, you had more chance of going. If the whole crew pulled together as a crew and worked together there's no friction. The mental attitude was free and easier and you were much more alive and alert. But if you had somebody that was, you know, there's fiction on the ground and in the air, well, then the whole crew was tense and they were distracted. I always thought if one bloke was worth it, the whole crew was worth it. I think a better thing would have been to give a crew medal, or something like that.

> I always thought the Yanks were on the right track. Okay, they had their DFCs and what not but they also had an air medal. If you survived a certain age you got a medal. The only resentment I felt about our crewmen came out was that Bill Shaw got one and Billie Hill hadn't. No Bill didn't fly with us on two raids, another two raids I brought him up and he sat along side of me all the way in and out. That was really four ops he missed. He got the gong and old Bluey, I'd say Bluey must have more attacks, he flew every raid yet Bluey got nothing.

I think gongs given afterwards, you know … well I know Bluey's upset about that, though it doesn't do any good. And as I say, the blokes that died paid the supreme sacrifice. You couldn't do more. You couldn't do any more.

> He could have done, say, twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-eight raids and went in and he got nothing at all.

No. And I feel that the blokes that died, the DFCs should have been sent to the families of them because they after all did … they gave their lives. Where I look at these days now, you know, we've had forty-odd years more than a heck of a lot of very good blokes, so what have we got to lose. I feel that I've had a very good run out of life. There are these blokes that came in at nineteen and twenty and went in and there was no future for them. It's the end result that I felt for.

> As I say, after I saw Reg Rowley's mother's photograph on that xxx it hit me like a bloody sledge hammer. I thought know probably tomorrow somebody's going take a telegram. There were telegrams going all over the place.

Yes. Well I feel, you know, she could have had his photograph up there with a DFC hung round it. Well what more can you do if you give your life - there's nothing more.

I think that was the worse part of the declaration system to give no postumus awards. No matter how close a fellah was to getting out of the war he didn't.

The only thing if it had been sent through and he was to get it, you know, it had been approved.

There were a few of those.

… it had been approved for something he had done beforehand. Frank [Cornelius] got xxx for xxx. He's still got that, it came through.

I noticed in here was three cases, but they weren't notified as missing believed dead, they were just missing, but there were three gongs came through. They went through. I don't know what became of the fellows. They were all at the missing stages and their gongs were on the way through.

Like the campaign medals and things like that, all right. I think for those that survived well they had all the luck.

What was your overall reaction to England?

Oh, I loved England, I really did. I thought it was tremendous, you know. They way they stood in the force with everybody else had gone. But it is something I find now that I think there is a lot lacking now. That wartime spirit that I thought was tremendous, absolutely incredible.

Yes, you can't help noticing the difference. A lot of people wouldn't know if there was any difference because they didn't live through it. But we were over there and could compare that England with today's England, there's a lot lacking.

They took it all in a smile. I have the greatest admiration for them and you hear people out here, you know, knocking the old pom but I always stick up for them.

Yes. I never join in in the general condemnation. I might have a bit of a dig occasionally but I'll still defend them.

You get a lot … the pommie comes out, you know, it's the like the ocker characters that go over there. It makes your blood curdle when you hear them. You think, oh, you can hear the Australian.

I subscribed for many years to the saying that the best Englishman was still in England.

Oh yes, I think that's true of any country. We had a chance of taking out further commissions to the RAF. You know that time they gave that talk on xxx and some of us went in to it. It was only suppose to be RAF and then the air commander said, 'Well, look, if you're interested in staying in', he said, 'I could swing you a permanent commission in the RAF if you would like to switch over'. I thought seriously about it

but then I thought, no, I'm a bloody Australian, I'd better go home. I came home and had a fight with all the family. Why the hell didn't I go back again?

But there was a thingy out here, when we got back, you know, all those cigarette report and so on like that on the boat coming out, nobody said cigarettes were as short as they were. And he said, 'Look here, have a packet', and another would say, 'Oh Bob's got plenty of cigarettes, give him half a dozen', you know, and all this sort of thing. And I didn't realise that people would get up, walk outside, come back in the room smoking. But they wouldn't hand them … I'd get out, I'd have a packet of fifties and hand them around, everybody would take a smoke. Well, when I ran out, nobody was handing cigarettes around. There was a selfishness out here.

> I noticed that. I noticed it very much. I was very disappointed. As a matter of fact, after six months out here, I felt like going back to England or going somewhere.

And the fact that I was secure in England. You were over there amongst the birds and the booze. You weren't fighting the tough war up in the islands. Oh no, you had the comfortable war.

> Yes, a bit of that went on. Many a time I had to apply for the casualty rates and what not.

Yes, I was invited to a party in Hay and I got most upset. The other blokes were Pacific. One chap was a Middle East chap and they sort of tolerated him because he'd been in the desert but, you know, but everybody was having a go at me. Oh, you know, 'Why didn't you come out and fight the real war', that sort of thing. And we were the ones that we wanted to be defended. They were anti. I ended up going and standing near the big bowl of punch. I went over there and stood there a moment. Oh boy and when … I was booked into the pub in Hay. The next morning I got up, the blinds were pulled and I opened them and then pulled them down again. Oh, it was about midday before I could even get out into the sunlight. No, I found that there was a fair bit of anamosity towards the new xxx character.

I remember reading Ross Tobin one time and making a meeting with him to go and have a beer. And then the girl that answered the phone said, 'It's one of your Anglofile mates speaking with his pommie accent'. Oh she was very anti. And Ross said when he came down, 'She doesn't like us'. That didn't help. But then again Johnny xxx he was xxx

> Doug Falcon.

Doug Falcon. He came back early and they put him in xxx with the blokes just of course, a sergeant. And they were all sergeants, all just off course, all just done the Acxxx and going off and Doug said, 'I'm not going'. He said, 'Look, I'm going to xxx, you're making me second wop to a bloke just off course. Xxx'. And they said, 'Neither do they, they've never been up there'. And he said, 'I'll fly with experienced pilot who knows what he's doing but otherwise … that's it'. And they said, 'Oh well, we think you've done enough, you'd better get out'. And he said 'No way was he going to fly …..'

END OF TAPE THREE - SIDE 2

END OF INTERVIEW