CONVERSATIONS WITH TED MERCER

MILTON KEYNES 8 JULY 2003

Key: TM – Flight Lieutenant Ted Mercer DFC, enlisted Aug 41. Lancaster 1660 HCU. 83 Sqn Wyton Lancaster, then 44 Sqn Dunholme Lodge Lancaster.
SB – Steve Bond

TM – "I joined in 1941, and reported to various parts of London. I reported to lrd's cricket ground, and there the catering arrangements in and around that northern part of Regents' Park was rather abysmal. Breakfast time the tea was terrible, the story being that it was laced heavily with bromide to keep us quiet, if you know what I mean!" *(Laughter)*

"I did my ITW at Newquay *(8 ITW)*, trained in Florida *(5 BFTS Clewiston Florida),* came back across the Atlantic, and was put straight into quarantine. We came with a bunch of Americans, and one of them came down with suspected smallpox and spent two weeks under canvas at Padgate. That was a good reason to get back."

"After that my training went forward; Oxfords at Grantham *(12[P]AFU)*, Wellingtons at Cottesmore *(14 OTU),* Halifax and Lancs at Swinderby *(1660 HCU).* Initially I went to a PFF – 83 – not as Pathfinder crew, because I had only just finished training. It was just an idea to see how we fitted in. I never operated with that crew because I went down with appendicitis."

"When I came back, I was flying with a squadron leader, and at that time I was still only a sergeant, and they all went missing. Shortly after that I did a bit of flying and odds and sods around the station, and then went to Dunholme Lodge and joined 44 squadron, where I met a great crew and we got on very well, and finished our tour."

"After that it was an instructor's course at Lulsgate, Bristol *(3 FIS),* then instructing on Stirlings *(1654 HCU Wigsley),* and then posted to Syerston to the Lanc Finishing School *(5 LFS).*"

"Returning in the end to 44 squadron again as squadron instructor, and with the end of the war we were mucking about doing nothing in particular; taking ground crew around looking at the Ruhr, going to Italy to take troops back. So I opted for another instructor's course at Finningley *(Bomber Command Instructors' School),* hoping that I would be an instructor on Lancs., again, with a better qualification."

"But no, it was back to the Wimpy again, and I finished up at Silverstone *(17 OTU)*, but it did me a little bit of good because I got my instructor's category regraded up to A2, which helped me later in civil flying, which I did until I retired at the age of 80. I saw a fair bit around the world during that time, but of course the background of the RAF fitted me for that job."

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