

Extracts from letters written by Ft/Sgt. R.W. Rush to Margaret Harris from 1941-1944 re his RAF experiences. R.W. Rush and Margaret married after the end of the war. Dates are based on the postmark on his letters, as far as possible. They first started correspondence around October 1941.

13/11/41 RAF Pershore nr Worcester.

....This camp is foul. It is situated in a saucer-shaped bit of land, soil is clay and as a result is full of utterly delicious mud. Makes the task of cleaning your boots delightfully easy. Only thing about it is that if I get a few hours off I can pop off to B'ham and see Ma and Pa.

23/12/41 Sgts Mess, RAF Waltham, Grimsby (142 Sqdn)

I am writing this letter from Binbrook although I am living at the address above. I arrived here last night after a nightmarish journey – lasting about 12 hours. I had 2.5 hours wait at Derby, 2.5 hours at Nottingham and 2.75 hours at Lincoln, finally arriving in the middle of the night (11.30pm) and having to find a bed at that time. However I had a good meal (egg and bacon!) and then went to bed.

??/03/42 Sgts Mess, RAF Waltham, Grimsby (142 Sqdn)

You are not alone in the re-organising – our squadron has just been re-organised and all people from overseas have been formed into crews by themselves, so that I am now bereft of my old captain and temporarily at any rate, without a crew. So am busy sucking my thumbs and doing nothing.....

Life here lately has been pretty dull except for a wee bit of excitement about a Paris raid. I have now seen the actual photographs of it – they are naturally much clearer than the newspaper ones and everyone is highly delighted.

12/06/42 Sgts Mess, RAF Station, Thrupton nr Andover, Hants

Just a hurried few lines to give you my new address. We moved here on Sunday. I hope to be back in Grimsby in about a fortnight or three weeks. Sorry I can't stop and write more as I want to get a wash and brush up before I go night flying.

22/06/42 Sgts Mess, RAF Station, Thrupton nr Andover, Hants

All leave here is still cancelled so do not know when I shall be seeing your smiling face again.....

You ask about Cologne – yes I was on that do, also Paris, Essen (2), and Bremen. Bremen was easily the worst of the lot and we were rather fortunate to get home without injury....

This place is an absolute dump – no other word for it. I often wish I was back in Grimsby and a spot of leave would be very welcome!

05/08/42 Sgts Mess, RAF Waltham, Grimsby (142 Sqdn)

Since I last wrote to you I've been having a bit of a time, been in two crashes and am now off flying - permanently I hope. I am not well yet – my nerves have been shaken up a lot and I get very moody so that I have not written letters for weeks to anybody.

28/12/42 Birmingham (on leave)

Anyway here I am once again. Am glad to say that I am quite well again or perhaps you did not know I'd had a short spell in hospital with my eyes, but they're Ok again now. Have also travelled a lot lately and now I'm going somewhere near Shrewsbury – Whitchurch. I've had lots of adventures and disappointments but will tell you more when I see you again.

28/06/43 RAF Waltham, Grimsby (100 Sqdn)

Have done several trips over there lately and am pleased to report that H for Harry has done her part well and truly in pranging the Third Reich. We haven't had much fun on the trips but have been hit

(only slightly though) several times. Once a fighter stalked us but our gunners were wide awake and we lost him! Shall run a Cooks conducted tour over the Ruhr for a job when the war is over!

06/07/43 RAF Waltham, Grimsby (100 Sqdn)

...Am afraid the camera will not be of much use as due to enemy causes I have a most delicious black eye (all colours of the rainbow guaranteed) and also a swollen face – however it's going down now.

31/08/43 RAF Waltham, Grimsby (100 Sqdn)

“H” for harry has changed it's letter to “T” for Tommy. Same plane but just changed it's letter.

24/08/43 RAF Waltham, Grimsby (100 Sqdn)

Have done one trip since I came back from leave and should have gone to Berlin last night but on take off something went wrong and the net result of my pain-staking labours of the previous eight hours was no doubt a lot of dead fish in the North Sea....Have just been notified that my name is appearing on the next batch of promotions which is good news. Also that seniority will be back-dated 6 months.

02/09/43 RAF Waltham, Grimsby (100 Sqdn)

On Monday I was promoted to Flt. Sgt. Am rather disappointed as I was recommended for my W.O. But some rule has come out lately limiting back-dating of promotions to 6 months and as you have to be a Flt. Sgt. For 12 months before being eligible for your W.O. I now have to wait until next February before I'm due that..... Have now 6 more trips to do. I did one on Monday- a piece of cake as we lads say though weather was not too good but I think we pranged the place good and heavy.

08/09/43 RAF Waltham, Grimsby (100 Sqdn)

Have not done much since last Friday night when I paid the Big City an initial visit. It turned out to be a piece of cake type of trip but was very tired when I got back.

10/09/43 RAF Waltham, Grimsby (100 Sqdn)

St. Christopher and the locket are going on fine and have accompanied me on two trips. Incidentally you had a kiss over Ludwigshafen the other night at 21.30 hrs.

29/09/43 RAF Waltham, Grimsby (100 Sqdn)

So far have done little work – the boys are out again tonight but yours truly has to stay at home and watch them go. I'd much rather be with them.

05/10/43 RAF Waltham, Grimsby (100 Sqdn)

Have done two trips since I last wrote to you dear and I'm on again tonight. There is no rest for the wicked just now. Anyway I hope to have only two more to do after tonight then we will be ok.... I am feeling a bit strained. The last few trips are always the worst – so far as anxiety goes.

08/10/43 RAF Waltham, Grimsby (100 Sqdn)

Just another few lines to let you know that I'm safe. However I can tell you that you have accompanied me twice over Germany – once to Hagen and the other one to Ludwigshafen. On the latter trip we were doing a spoof attack while the main force went to Frankfurt. Just as we started our bombing run we were coned by about 20-50 searchlights and it took us about 10 minutes to get out of it. We were hit deveral times by flak and were lucky to get away with it. However all ends well as we got home ok but had to land without any brakes. I was not flying with my normal crew and skipper that night.

On the 15th we are moving from here to RAF Kelstern. Bang go my evenings in Grimsby. Still shall not be long now in finishing I hope.

14/10/43 RAF Kelstern (625 Sqdn)

Just a few lines to tell you I've moved. This camp is very isolated – miles from anywhere. Louth is the nearest place 6 miles away. It is also very rough and ready as it is still under construction. Seems very damp and is definitely reminiscent of Flanders mud! The CO is a very decent type however and we should settle down and enjoy ourselves eventually.

16/10/43 RAF Kelstern (625 Sqdn)

I'm afraid words fail me about this place. I shall just be a hermit when I've finished with it. The mess furniture is the only good thing about it – we have some comfortable chairs and need them judging on the number of evenings we shall have to spend sitting in them- twiddling our thumbs. The food is plain lousy and no where else you can feed.

21/10/43 RAF Kelstern (625 Sqdn)

The new camp is very dull and dreary. Today we've made a new acquisition. Our hut is overrun with mice and rats so Ricky our Flt. Engineer found a lovely black and white kitten. We promptly christened him Jo after the skipper and brought him down to the bunk. I managed to scrounge some tinned milk from the kitchen and fed him. By the way he fed he had not had anything to eat for a while. He's very clean and fastidious about his appearance and knows his manners!... Haven't been flying lately as skipper "Searchlight Jo" has a terrible cold.

23/10/43 RAF Kelstern (625 Sqdn)

I should have gone to the "local" tonight but after last night's effort on ops I felt so tired. Last night's do on ops was one of the shakiest do's I've been on. The weather was awful and worse still when we got back to England. We very nearly crashed into some trees due to our altimeters being all to blazes. Only the smart work of a local S/L crew prevented us from hitting some trees. We had just come out of cloud about 30-40 feet above the deck when they illuminated the trees with their beam for us. It shook us all!... I've only two more to do so keep your fingers crossed for me dear. I need it nowadays. Jerry has woken up tremendously over there and no trip is easy nowadays.

05/11/43 RAF Kelstern (625 Sqdn)

Well I did one more trip last night – a nice easy one to Dusseldorf. It was very quiet too, hardly any flak and although we saw plenty of fighters they did not consider us worthy of their attention. We landed just after 9pm.... Today we have a stand down so I am catching a special bus they are running to Grimsby at 5pm.

08/11/43 RAF Kelstern (625 Sqdn)

I must confess I am torn in mind in two different directions 1. towards you and 2. towards the skipper. I can't make up my mind yet and I've pondered hours on the matter. Maybe the next day or two will help me in that respect. I must say all the crew (skipper excluded - he hasn't expressed any opinion just said how pleased he would be if I kept on with him) say I'll be a fool to go on and not to tempt fate.

09/11/43 RAF Kelstern (625 Sqdn)

As a consequence stayed in bed until 10.45am before being dragged fly a new aircraft across to our 'drome. The air speed indicator was useless when it took off and we had a few anxious moments while we landed but "Searchlight Jo" brought us in safely enough.

13/11/43 RAF Kelstern (625 Sqdn)

I've kept you waiting in this letter up to now for the news you've been hoping for – I've finished my operations. I did it last Wednesday – Modane this time. It was a very easy trip – no trouble at all and the French and Swiss Alps looked perfect in the moonlight. .. They looked – well words can't describe it – I was spellbound by their rugged beauty. However work called and I had to go behind

my curtain and get the lads home again.. So far my official screening hasn't come through but the Winco has taken me off operational flying. It's also on the cards that one day you might accompany me on a visit to a largish building in London, but that's rather in the air yet too.

04/12/43 RAF Kelstern (625 Sqdn)

The day before yesterday I took four photographs, two of the crew and two of the old kite "H" for Harry. Now I'm waiting on some more fine weather to take the Ground Crew. Our photographic result for the raid on Kassel came through today and we got a photo of the area 1/2 mile away on a bearing of 120 degrees from the aiming point. A very good effort.