TEDDY'S CAREER IN THE RAFVR 9TH SEPTEMBER 1939- 11TH OCTOBER 1941.

Teddy recorded in his address book that as War was declared on 3rd September 1939, he volunteered in the RAF . He went to the RAF Depot on Saturday 9th and passed his medical on the 11th, Grade 1.

He then tells us he was posted to No3 RAF Depot in Padgate, Lancashire on 12th September where he was given a further medical exam and passed as fit for flying. After an educational test, he was accepted and sworn in as a pilot under training. He was given the service number 968259 Ground drill followed and full equipment issued and on 3rd November, left Padgate for Evanton in Scotland on the 4th. On the 6th of November, he was posted to a small detachment at Tain Ranges " doing all sorts of menial tasks but several interesting ones". This was the 8th RAF detachment MURRICH MHOR, Tain in Rosshire.

On the 29th November 1939, he was posted to the 4th ITW (Initial Training Wing) of the RAF in Bexhill on Sea and was based at the Metropole Hotel, Sackville Street, Bexhill on Sea, Sussex , where he says he learned more drill, P.T., Morse, navigation and armaments and passed his maths exam with 98%. He noted that he was home on leave February 23rd- March 3rd 1940.

Sadly, Teddy's account finishes there but we have subsequently been able to fill in more gaps which we'll go into detail, later.

After a stint at Evanton which was specifically for instruction in night-time bombing, Teddy was assigned to the 51 Group Pool from Odiham in Hampshire. 51 Group Pool was an Elementary Flying Training School based at Moorfield House, Alma Road, Leeds . He was then moved to No 1 Receiving Wings at Babbacombe, Devon in July 1940 and from there, sent in September 1940 to No 5 Bombing and Gunnery School . From there, he was sent to No 40 AACU- (Anti-Aircraft Co-operation Unit) and spent the winter there before being moved to No 6 AACU IN January 1941. In April of that same year, he was sent to Bassingbourne in Cambridgeshire as part of the 11 OTU (Operational Training Unit). This is where he met up with the Canadian James Douglas McKnight who was his best mate and who helped return his personal effects to Teddy's family. This was also where the men crewed up before finally being assigned to a squadron. In this instance, Teddy, along with James became members of 12 Squadron, Group 1; Bomber Command based at Binbrook, Lincolnshire from 13th July 1941.

No 3 Depot- Padgate, Lancashire,- from 12/ 09/1939.

(Teddy was listed as AC2- Aircraftman 2nd class- and suitable for Air/ Observer School.)

4 ITU- Evanton, Scotland- from 3/11/ 1939.

Tain Ranges, Scotland- from 06/11/1939.

4 ITW- Bexhill on Sea, Sussex from 29/11/1939.

Teddy was promoted to LAC- Leading Aircraftman 01/01/1940.

51 Group Pool from 24/07/1940.

No 1 RW from 12/08/1940.

51 Group Pool from 15/09/1940.

No 5 Bombing and Gunnery School from 15/09/1940.

110 AACWa (Anti Aircraft Crew) 25/01/1941.

40 AACWa 26/01/1941.

6 AACU (Anti Aircraft Co-operation Unit) based at Ringway, Manchester from 15/04/1941.

11 OTU (Operational Training Unit) based at Bassingbourne, Cambridgeshire arrived

12 Squadron at Binbrook arrived 13/07/1941.

Killed in Wellington II Z8397 on the Norfolk Coast near California Gap on 11/10/1941.

LIFE AT ITW- (INITIAL TRAINING WING)

All aircrew stayed here for approximately 12 weeks, attending classes in armaments, aircraft recognition, hygiene, mathematics, basic meteorology and LDAO- Law, Discipline, Administration and Organisation in the Air Force. This solid, theoretical, grounding was essential. Apart from that, the young men would have physical training sessions involving PT, Parade drill, route marches, parachute training and drill on anti-gas procedures.

Would be pilots also had classes in aerodynamics, airmanship and the principles of flying. Navigators tended to be more academic than the pilots. They learnt basic map reading, bomb-aiming and basic bombing procedures. Wireless Operators learnt basic Morse code.

AIR OBSERVER SCHOOL.

After ITW, Navigators were sent to Air Observer School and trained in map reading, armaments, guns, turrets, astro and practical navigation, Morse code, aerial photography, instruments and radio direction finding, compasses, radar, meteorology, maps and charts, reconnaissance and practical navigation. In the air, navigator trainees got their first taste of navigation through dead reckoning by calculating the aircraft's position without external aids. Navigators would also chart their position using navigation computers like complex slide rules using graphs and direction finding radios.

According to Wing Commander C.G.Jefford, the syllabus for the 16 week Air/ Observer/ Navigator School in April 1940 (Teddy was there in early July) involved;

MATHEMATICS- 30 HRS TRAINING

ADMINISTRATION-16HRS

FORM OF THE EARTH-20 HRS

DR LECTURES- 60 HRS

DR PLOTTING EXERCISES-40 HRS

MAPS AND CHARTS-25 HRS

MAGNETISM AND COMPASSES-28 HRS

INSTRUMENTS-20 HRS

METEOROLOGY-40 HRS

O/F W/T-16 HRS

PHOTOGRAPHY-20 HRS

AIR RECONAISSANCE-16 HRS.

SIGNALS-30 HRS

HYGIENE AND SANITATION-2HRS

FLYING- 67 HRS

FLIGHT PLANNING AND EXERCISE ANALYSIS-30 HRS

EXAMINATIONS-20 HRS

TOTALLING 480 HRS OF TRAINING.

BOMBING AND GUNNERY SCHOOL.

As the trainee aircrew man progressed, he would have come to one of the B&G Schools where he would attend lectures on bombs, bombing theory and pistols as well as going on firing ranges and firing mounted machine guns. There was also a simulator trainer which as you pressed a button, it would stop the map moving along so you'd discover where the destination of your bomb was going.

Some trainees flew over the bombing ranges of the Yorkshire Moors, dropping 25lb smoke bombs over practice targets, usually flying in Ansons, Whitleys or Fairey Battles. Ansons were small, with a pilot and four trainees, but were fairly old fashioned and had a fixed undercarriage. A navigator gave the wind speed which the trainee set on his bomb sight. Accuracy was difficult when flying from a height, so at 1000ft up, you'd hope to be within 50-100yds of your target. Some targets were even at sea but all the while, the trainees would be monitored.

Trainees had to practise Morse until they could transmit 12 words per minute. Wireless Operators also learnt " Q" codes. 3 letter words beginning with "Q" were used to transmit radio signals between aircraft and air traffic control, rather like shorthand. QBZ was short for, " report

your flying conditions in relation to clouds," while QFO was used by crew to ask if they could land immediately. All codes had to be memorized.

Thereafter followed instructions on how to use radio equipment and parachute training. By the time the trainee was at the Advanced Flying Unit, he was able to type Morse at 18 words a minute.

Weapon training involved learning how to fire guns while flying, handling Lewis guns, gas operated guns and Browning machine guns. At this stage the recruits flew mainly Bristol Blenheims and Boulton Paul Defiants which was largely an obsolete fighter plane with no forward firing armament and was vulnerable to attack from the front.

Gunners were given a comprehensive training in the theory of gunnery and were taught how to strip weapons down and load them (sometimes whilst blindfolded) and introduced to electrical, hydraulic and pneumatic turrets.

Pilots, navigators and bomb aimers were largely drawn from Universities, Public and Grammar Schools. The experience of working together as a crew meant that previous class preconceptions became redundant as each man had to rely on his friend's ability to do his job well to guarantee his own and his crew's survival.

OTUs - OPERATIONAL TRAINING UNITS.

Once initial training was completed, recruits were sent to OTUs, coming together for the first time. Crews were largely self chosen according to who you got on with or deemed the best at his job as your life was in his hands. Crews usually flew together in Whitleys, Sterlings and Wellingtons. Sometimes they went on" nickel raids" where they flew over a site and dropped propanda leaflets. Teamwork was pivotal as you had to trust each other.

The poor rear gunner sat at the back of the plane by himself so every ten minutes or so, the pilot would use the intercom to check he was ok.

The pilot was more experienced in flying so it was his job to create a bond and confidence in each other. Sometimes, the crew didn't gel so they were able to change.

The OTU syllabus was complicated, marking the biggest leap from training to being prepared for operational flying. There were specific lessons and exams in parachuting, dinghy drills, aircraft layout, fuel systems, low level flying, dummy bombing raids and gunnery practice out at sea.

At Heavy Conversion Units, crew progressed to heavy bombers such as the Halifaxes and ultimately the Lancasters. Competence was improved on landings, overshoots on the runway, cross-wind landings and night flying.

HCUs had a 2nd gunner on board and a flight engineer who ensured there were sufficient fuel available and sorted mechanical problems. On longer sorties, such as to Berlin, fuel allocations were high. Engineers were trained to fly the aircraft in case of emergencies. It took 9 months to train as an engineer and there was only one School, at St Athan. They were expected to manipulate the

undercarriage, flaps, inter-com and engine as well as coping with leaking pipes and faulty wiring. Naturally, they were also schooled in emergency situations and preparing for crash landings, for example how to climb into an upturned dinghy in full flying gear.

Another exercise involved being driven around in a coach with blacked out windows and being dumped in the middle of nowhere and having to get back to the airport, whilst evading other airmen pretending to hunt them down.

Sometimes, their levels of endurance were stretched. Occasionally, the crew could be put into an oxygen chamber and be given a pen and paper to write on. Gradually, the level of oxygen was reduced but it was only when they re-emerged that they realised what effects the lack of oxygen had on their ability to write coherently.

Another training method involved being spun in a simulator to demonstrate G Force effects. Sadly there were many casualties - some 5,327 which was about 10% of all Bomber Command losses. A further 3,113 were injured.

Poor flying conditions were responsible for most of the crashes in training units, usually in night time flying. East of the Pennines were all of the Operational aerodromes and to the West, were all the training units where you had the mountains of Wales and Scotland. Flashing beacons were positioned all over Britain flashing two letters in Morse code to indicate their position. This was invaluable if lost but flying low enough to see them led planes to crash into mountains.

Training units often used old aircraft taken off frontline duty. Whitleys flying on one engine couldn't maintain height and there were several losses in Kinloss. They were also quite slow and used to leak oil over the wheels which would cause them to rot. Add into this mix that German fighters also used to infiltrate trainee flight paths so quite a few were killed that way too. Veteran Bomber –crew, Fred Stearn, said that on Operational training, morale was very high but the loss of life was far greater than they realised. Crew were young, carefree and oblivious to what lay ahead in the Squadron.

BOMBING OBJECTIVE IN 1941.

In 1941, Bomber Command's main objective was to destroy Germany's synthetic oil plants but the early months of that year brought a particularly bad run of poor weather and missions were hampered when aircraft had to turn back. To compound this, the British Airfields were fogbound.

Subsequently, Sir Richard Pierse had to suspend missions and bomb Cologne instead as it was within range and at the time, outside the main concentrations of flak and searchlights that had been in the Ruhr.

By March, Sir Winston Churchill who was appalled at the loss of almost 900 British and Allied neutral ships asked the bombers to protect the British Convoys in the North Atlantic who were carrying vital supplies, from German U-boat attacks. So by the time Teddy was flying from Binbrook that summer of 1941, Bomber Command were concentrating attacks on industrial sites which helped the Germans control the oceans. Thus the ship-building yards of Kiel, Hamburg, Bremen and

Vegesack were targets as well as the marine diesel engine factories at Mannheim and Ausburg. Similarly, aircraft factories at Dessau and Bremen, U-Boat bases at Bordeaux, Lorient and St Nazaire and any German airfields from where the Focke-Wolf Kondor flew were legitimate targets. Later in July, as the threatto the Atlantic subsided, Bomber Command were to concentrate attacks on German Railway installations and the well defende cities of the Rhine to include Cologne, Dusseldorf and Duisberg and if the weather was poor, Hamburg, Frankfurt and Stuttgart.

THE WELLINGTON BOMBER.

During 1941, the Vickers Wellington was the latest piece of equipment at the bombers' disposal. Designed by Sir Barnes Wallace, it had a unique geodetic framework covered by canvas, making it strong and lightweight. Described as a twin engine medium bomber, it was a quantum leap in plane construction and bomb-load and armaments, cited as being able to fly at 15,000ft at a maximum speed of 245mph with a bomb load of 4,500lbs.

Veteran flyer Robin Murray said that the smell of the dope was the first thing that hit you when you got in one and as soon as it moved there was a flapping noise but he found it very comfortable and safe and said that it was an aircraft which could take an enormous amount of punishment and still come back! He called it a wonderful aircraft and said it was very forgiving. Another veteran, Roy Finch, who was a 2nd Pilot also liked the Wellington very much, calling it fairly docile, comfortable and in the days before the Lancaster, was a big aeroplane, adding, " we knew we'd got the best bomber in the world!" he also said that the noise was horrendous and likened it to a lot of old tin cans rattling!

THE WELLINGTON BOMBER CREW.

The Wellington was designed to be flown with a crew of six; a Pilot/ 2nd Pilot/ Observer-Navigator/ Wireless Operator and a Front and Rear Gunner who had to work as a team.

The Captain and 2nd Pilot flew the plane.

The Observer navigates and drops bombs,

The Wireless Operator helps the navigator and

The Gunners do the fighting.

A Pilot on Bomber Command had to show great physical and mental endurance as he often had to fly for up to 12 hours in hostile surroundings. When pilots were selected, their flying ability as much as their temperaments were taken into account. Bomber Pilots were far more methodical and responsible for their team had to hold their nerve for much longer than Fighter Pilots who flew for individual glory and were rather impatient and daring.

Key man in a Wellington crew was the Navigator as his role was threefold;- to give the pilot directions to target, to aim and release bombs and most importantly to bring his aircraft and crew

back to base safely. To do this, he needs to be aware of the speed and direction of the wind in order to calculate and check his position. He might have at his disposal a radio position, and map readings as well as using astronomical navigation. However, his radio might be limited by distance and his map useful only if landmarks can be seen and pinpointed and stars are only useful when visibility is good. An experienced Navigator, like Teddy, would have made judicial use of all three. Not that his working environment was conducive to achieving accurate calculations ; a cramped space, in bulky clothes whilst wearing an oxygen mask!

Another task was to aim a bomb from a moving plane. Air resistance acts as a brake but the bomb moves forward as well as downwards in a curved path so if a bomber flies at 10,000ft at a speed of 200mph, a 500lb bomb strikes the ground more than 1.25 miles ahead of the point it's released. And so a Navigator will use a bomb sight on which he's set the height, air speed, size of bomb and other factors so that the instrument gives the correct aim, despite the distraction of searchlight and flak. The strength and direction of the wind in which the aircraft travels can affect the bombing and the Navigator has to cope with the additional problems of the weather such as air currents, electrical storms, fog and even the possibility of ice forming on the aircraft.

Electrical storms can cause the aircraft to be a conductor and increases the chances of fire on board. Compasses could then be unserviceable and then ice can form when going through a cumulus cloud. Condensation forms on the wings and a sudden drop in temperature causes them to freeze. Ice on the wings deprives them of lift and ice in the carburettor may choke it.

A bomber would carry just enough fuel to get it to the target and back and a pilot would have been trained to fly a Wellington on one engine but that would also make demands on the fuel tank making a return home less likely. Similarly, survivors from the Wellington have said that although the plane could fly up to 500 miles on one engine, it depended which one was damaged. Hopefully it wasn't the port engine as this meant the Wellington lost height rather too quickly and it also controlled the hydraulics to lower the landing gear which guaranteed a crash landing. Although the hydraulics could be worked manually, the time it took to do was not often a luxury the crew had.

Wellingtons became the mainstay in the fleet but after time, they became somewhat unreliable and there are numerous reports of engine failure before the actual plane has gone into combat. By late 1941, a new generation of heavy bombers such as the Manchesters, Stirlings and Halifaxes had superseded them and ultimately the heavy Lancaster would be best remembered.

TEDDY'S LIFE AT BINBROOK, LINCOLNSHIRE, SUMMER 1941.

Binbrook was one of the later airfields to be built in the Lincolnshire Wolds, an area that became synonymous with the RAF and was nicknamed Bomber County. Opened in 1940, Binbrook initially didn't have a concrete runway and was home to 12 Squadron before they moved to Wickenby in September 1942. The squadron operated Wellington Mark I and II but the delivery of aircraft in December 1940 coincided with a bad winter with exceptionally deep snow and crew had flights suspended and frequently either had to clear snow off the plane or dig the plane out if it sank in the mud!

Waiting to get airborne, life must have been fairly normal for the airmen. Luckily, the locals treated the men as heroes and were very welcoming as by now the crew often had men from the Commonwealth who hadn't hesitated to enlist at the outbreak of the War, so they were quite a novelty! Life would have involved trips to the local pubs like the Marquis of Granby or The Plough for a sing-along and a pint or possibly trips into Lincoln to go to the cinema.

There was a sense of excitement that the training you'd undertaken sometimes for up to almost two years was finally coming to fruition. Youths became men and felt they had a need to prove themselves. You also relied on each other as your life depended on it. The RAF, which previously had been an establishment rife with class distinction echoing society at the time where Pilot Officers ate separately from the likes of the most likely working class gunners and didn't associate with them in leisure time, now found class distinction faded as teams were built from all ranks in society. They not only flew together but also ate, slept, and socialised together even to the point of all going out together if one of the team was on a date! An incredible camaraderie was forged between the men and losses were felt hard.

Crews may be on Operational sorties every three days. A Tour of Duty was 30 Ops. By the end of 1940, this was considered to be 200 hrs of flying time. Following a 6 month break, a second tour was expected but a third was optional. Bomber Harris amended a tour to be 30 sorties and then a subsequent tour of twenty. Usually it took most airmen 6 months to complete a tour because of poor weather conditions.

Although aircraft normally took off at 8pm, preparations for it went on throughout the day and involved crew briefings, aircraft checks, sleep, showers, clean clothes and a 2nd briefing to find out the precise location- usually between 4-5pm before a meal of bacon and eggs, a luxury afforded to few people in a time of rationing. During the briefing, red tape was used to indicate the route crews were to follow. The briefing room was very closely secured with guards on the door and windows blacked out, inside and out. On the entire back wall was a massive map covered with curtains. As the Commander came out, the curtains opened. Intelligence Officers filled in the detail and Meteorological Officers would explain what the weather would be and someone from Air Control may visit.

There was a hierarchy in targets. French targets were" easy". The Ruhr was a "hellhole" as it was heavily defended and awash with searchlights. Once the target was ascertained, the time after briefing was apprehensive. The Pilot briefed the crew who relied more than ever as being a tight-knit unit.

Following their evening meal, the crew would pick up their parachutes and kit before a wagon ferried them to the aircraft in order to do final checks leaving time for most likely a swift cigarette prior to take off!

Once all the crew were in their aircraft, final checks were completed before confirming all was ok to the Pilot on the intercom. Sometimes, crew would have a superstitious ritual before takeoff. A common bonding session was to all pee on the tail wing! Elsewhere, crews wore lucky scarves or carried religious medals, crucifixes, rosaries or mascots and treasured possessions given to them by family or sweethearts.

If the crew were unlucky and suffered engine failure, the aim was to turn back, but if the port engine failed the plane would get lower and lower and everything was ditched to lessen the weight, bombs and even parachutes!

Those like Teddy who took part in the early part of the War suffered the highest number of casualties as they were essentially being the guinea-pigs for the aircraft and had to cope with all the problems that come with having a hand built aircraft. Some just felt and handled better but it seems the Wellington was rather too prone to suffer engine failure as it was pushed to the maximum in weight and bomb load and far too many, particularly from the 12 Squadron lost their lives, needlessly.

Teddy's dear friend and colleague, Sgt James Douglas McKnight who flew alongside Teddy on what was to be Teddy's final mission, also suffered great injury. He was piloting Wellington II W5585, on a mission to Hannover when it took off at 6.15pm from RAF Binbrook on 26th January 1942 but had barely got airborne when part of his bombload fell out and exploded, damaging 4 other aircraft and killing all his crew apart from himself and front gunner Sgt H G Scholes. James suffered horrific burns and was repatriated to Canada where he became a very successful flying instructor in No 5 SFTS in Ontario. He flew 900 hours, 500 as an instructor and was commended for his outstanding level of flying, intelligence, judgement and devotion to duty. This was a man, who, not long before had said he admired Teddy's stark heroism and devotion to duty and called him one of the most brilliant Observers in the Squadron. High praise, indeed.