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The saga of
"106 Sqdn - Happy days ~ & others"

move tomorrow to RAF Metheringham ()
of Lincolnshire.

We had joined the Squadron

11th 2005

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Mar 11th 2005



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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, WHITEHALL SW1A 2HB

Written year 2000 By Peter Perry DFC

106 Squadron -- Happy days - & others!

Dateline - 9th November 1943, RAF Syerston, Notts.

Stand down today so final preparations are made for our move tomorrow to RAF Metheringham (RAF where?) in the wilds of Lincolnshire.

We had joined the Squadron in June. My crew Les Blood, F/E, John Boarden, Nav, Dick Toogood, B/A, Doug Cannison, Wop/AG, Eddie 'Taff' Davies, Mid Upper Gunner & Dennis 'Shorty' Groombridge, R/G.

'Twas not long before we had our 'own' aircraft. Firstly ZN-T 'Admiral' Dumbo (the flying elephant & it was!) then a brand new ZN-Z 'Admiral Shyte-Awk'. Why the 'Admiral' prefix?

At that time 106 was still the 5 Group designated ship attack Squadron & we had two Fleet Air Arm Observer Lieutenants attached to us. Everytime we bombed a Port they came along to identify what German Naval ships were there. (Bloody RAF don't know their bows from their sterns.)

By now (November) we were two-thirds through our first tour. We'd visited a variety of targets - the Ruhr (hotly defended); three trips to Italy (where the weather en route was more hazardous than the defences!) & a variety of selected targets throughout Germany.

Dateline We were attacked by a Ju 88 over Nuremburg which 'Shorty' shot down & by a Me210 over Kassel which was damaged by 'Shorty' & 'Taff'.

We'd had our moments, of course, but our Lancaster flew as well on three as on four engines (bit slower though) & on one occasion coped well on two (bit lower as well as slower still!).

But now it was "so long" peace-time Station Syerston. Adieu Nottingham - 'Airborne Nag', 'Barley How' & all. No more the enterprising restaurant where first class steak or enormous Dover Sole was regularly available - when the authorities weren't closing it down which I was quite often!

Leaving there one night with Les Blood & heading for the bus station I realised that he was no longer beside me. (Full

black-out still in force & his night vision not of the best), I said " Bloody where are you?" Whereupon a No. 8 torch shone on me & an old ladies voice said " Young man , I can see by your uniform that you are doing a good job but do you have to use such language?"

I tried to explain but we had a bus to catch!

Farewell escarpment to the River Trent that saved 'Ginger' Crowe's life when he lost his port outer engine on take-off. He disappeared over the edge, gathered speed & by first class flying & airmanship he brought his fully laden Lancaster around to make a perfect three engined landing.

Said escarpment did its life saving act for a P/O Scott, 61 Sqdn who, returning from ops, stalled on the approach, slid down the slope & finished up in the Trent, nose gently embedded in the far bank! The crew climbed out, barely got their feet wet & were entertained by the farmer & his wife whilst waiting for the 'gharry' from Syerston to collect them!

But enough memories. It's party time tonight in the Mess 'cos we're only flying to Wetheringham tomorrow afternoon.

When we returned, and the coke stove had gone out:
Dateline november 10th, RAF Syerston. 1030hrs.

My slumber is disturbed by my batman who insists on telling me that I'm required in the briefing room as I'm on ops. I invite him to go away as there aren't any ops today - we're going to Netheringham. He is very persistent & finally convinces me that there may be some truth in his message.

He was right. Higher authority required us to attack the Mont Cenis tunnel at Modane & render it useless for supplies to the German troops in N Italy.

Sooooo - instead of a gentle hop to our new home it's a full load, full moon, gin clear . We cross france at 7000ft, find the valley, ignore the puny flak(which rapidly ceased under the weight of bombs) & make our way home. Piece of cake.

Dateline November 11th RAF Eyerston. - Early pm. 'Admiral' byte-ask'

We really are moving. My faithful ZN-Z fully laden - at this time with bodies (air & ground crew plus a couple of hitch-hikers), suitcases, kitbags, bicycles & various impedimenta stashed in the fuselage. Checks away - & so are we. Two friends of mine, Johnny Forsyth & Colin Storer were to formate on me & we proposed to announce our arrival with a gentle 'beat-up'. Netheringham R/T callsign was 'Coffee-stall' so we intended also to broadcast a rendering (literally!) of the 'Java Jive'. The new Station Commander was not amused - & said so! Directions were given by Flying Control to reach our dispersal & we warily made our way around the perimeter track taking great care not to go off the edge. Liquid mud awaited anyone who put a wheel off the tarmac! aircraft up in the afternoon.

Then to our billets - Nissen huts, coke stoves, no hot water - but plenty of mud. We had to unpack the aircraft was required to unpack, clean up then to the mess for dinner - a quarter of a mile away. It was raining when we walked up & still raining when we returned. And the coke stove had gone out! quick about it! The Ce la guerre proved a success - we bombed Berlin from 25000ft (the next day the Squadron & Station started 'working up'. We did an hours local flying, checking new landmarks, noting our proximity to Coningsby, Woodhall Spa, Bardney & Waddington. whilst 106 Sqdn had moved as a whole the administrative Staff were from other Stations & it would take a little while for the varying disciplines to 'gel' & become a cohesive unit. Our new Station Commander decided to inspect the airfield, the ground crew Flight Offices & the aircraft. remember that the aircraft 'names' were prefixed "Admiral" & all Senior Officers had the mid-upper. Unfortunately they were shot down near Munich & all killed. in view of the experience of the two gunners I am

'scrambled egg' on the peaks of their caps. My 'Admiral bhyte-awk' was no exception. The 'Groupie' as a Senior Officer took umbrage at the crest & ordered my ground to remove it. As soon as he had moved on my Sgt i/c rang me for help. I reminded him that he should obey his last order - & then ordered him to leave it on. (A P/O countermanding a GC!!!). I hastened to my Squadron CO & what he later said to the Station Commander I don't know - but my crest stayed intact. Command 'scrubbed' the ops later in the day.

Flying continued: ammunition, bombs & fuel stocked up & then we were ready to go on November 18th. I was told that I was not flying that night but a brand new Lancaster was at Waddington awaiting collection. I could 'take a day off' & collect same. Taking Les & Doug we duly arrived at 'Waddo' & it than being lunchtime arranged to pick the aircraft up in the afternoon. Our tour

I had barely started my meal when I was called to the phone & my Flight Commander informed me that the aircraft was now required for ops that night & that I was to fly it. I protested that if I was on ops I wanted my own 'Z'. To no avail. I could do the NPT (night flying test) on the way back & be quick about it! The new aircraft proved a success - we bombed Berlin from 25000ft (the higher the fewer) & came back at 27500ft. as though.

A year 'Miff' (P/O Mifflin - his F/E Norman Jackson later won the VC) who had taken 'Z' that night had the pilot's side window blown out. He said that it was a bit chilly! (A) & 'Maddy' Sanford (NW).

All A flu epidemic hit the Station & the Squadron was forced to operate with 'scratch' crews. Whenever possible crew replacements were made with members of comparable experience. Whilst I was laid low, P/O Jack Hoboken, a Dutch pilot, needed two gunners so in his rear turret was the Squadron Gunnery Leader & 'Taff' Davies including the mid-upper. Unfortunately they were shot down near Munich & all killed. In view of the experience of the two gunners I am

convinced that it was flak that got them & not fighters.

Squadron efficiency quickly returned to normal - first class. The weather didn't! The airfield was still being completed. Going in to the briefing room one rare sunny afternoon the window was open. We were amazed (& shaken) when three Irish workmen looked through the window & commented on "them pretty red ribbons on that map".!! They led straight to Berlin! We were not sorry when Command 'scrubbed' the op later in the day.

Conditions improved. We got hot water so could shave & shower in comfort. we learned how to manage the coke stove.

Forays were made to Hartin & Wetheringham where the good folk were coming to terms with the influx of bodies & the 'roar of mighty Merlins'.

The next two months passed quickly & we finished our tour. next item on the agenda - a tour as an instructor. wherev

Some of my crew went to OTU's (Operational Training units) at Bruntingthorpe & Silverstone. Les & i were posted to - Syerston, by now the home of 5LFS (5 Group Lancaster Finishing School). Needless to say we were delighted to continue to fly Lancasters & to return to Syerston & 'ops on Notts':

We weren't finished with 106 & Wetheringham though. A year later I put together my second tour crew. Les Blood, Doug Gunnison & 'Shorty' Groombridge said that they'd come back along with 'Dixie' Dean (Nav), Pete Lynch (B/A) & 'Sandy' Sanford (MU). All second tour & all commissioned. what a team!

we returned to Wetheringham at the end of March '45 & what a transformation. No mud, a lot of activities & we would not be needing the coke stove much longer!

We only managed three ops on our second tour (including our one & only daylight) when VE was upon us.

I applied for a posting to Transport Command to fly Avro Yorks - to be refused on the grounds that my crew were earmarked for 'Tiger force' the code name for the twelve Squadrons who would go to the Far East & bomb Japan!

Training started for the new venture - formation flying, new navigation aids, Radio Range flying, fighter affiliation exercises. Then on leave in early August when the news of the 'A' bomb came through & by the time we got back to base 'Tiger force' had been cancelled - to everyones relief.

My CO said that he had resubmitted my application for Transport Command & in early October it came through.

Meantime we did some trips to Italy bringing troops home on the 'Python' scheme. 'Cooks tours' were arranged to let all personnel see the damage caused by the bombing. We flew at 5000ft around the Ruhr - Cologne, Essen, Bochum, Wuppertal, Welsenkirchen, Müsseldorf etc & the devastation was appalling. Time then to say "Farewell" to 106, RAF Metheringham & Martin, this time tinged with sadness & a host of memories which, as time goes by, the good & happy ones push the less pleasant to the dim confines at the back of the mind.

Thank you 106, it's been a pleasure to serve with you. And so to Yorks. But that's another story.

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