

Chapter Three

Going To War

In previous two chapters I have used Bill's actual words but this chapter and any subsequent ones will be my words and my recollections of Bill's stories and accounts of his flying experience. This is a very poor substitute indeed and I only wish Bill and I had spent more time talking and recording his actual words; I thought he was going to live forever. But, I will try and do justice to his remarkable experiences.

Bill had three books recording his flying record. First one was issued by The RAF, second by the USAF and the third by the Royal Canadian Air Force.

I will talk about his experiences through these records and take them chronologically.

His first log book was issued Bill by the RAF and is entitled "Pilot's Flying Log Book". Bill's name W.G.Foskett 1323050 is completed in his hand. Inside the cover page is a page headed "Cockpit Drill", giving instructions what needs to be done and checked before Taxying Out and Before Take-Off. There is also three certifications to Bill's having been instructed on how to "airscrew swing"; instructed in Petrol and Oil system and Flying Controls and thirdly, instructed in the action to take in case of fire in the air. These were all dated and signed by Bill on 3rd April 1942.

Bill's initial training started with Tiger Moths on 27th March 1942 to the 5th April 1942. His trainer was Sgt. Bearsby throughout, for a grand total time of 12 hours 35 mins. His proficiency as a pilot was stated as "Satisfactory Progress" but with nil special faults which must be watched. It was signed off on 7th April 1942 at the No. 3 EFTS (Elementary Flying Training School), at Shellingford, Oxfordshire, England.

Bill's training resumed in the USA at the Atlanta Municipal Airport, Hapeville, Georgia and he took his first solo flight on 25th July 1942, five days after his 21st birthday. The airfield was known as Souther Field but today is called Jimmy Carter Regional Airport. His training started on the 8th July 1942 in a Boeing-Stearman PT17 and between July 8th and July 20th 1942 he flew for 9hrs 6mins. By the 30th July, Bill had accumulated 16hrs 25mins, of which 1hr 48mins were solo.



By August 8th 1942 Bill's had racked up 27hrs 42mins with 8hrs 34mins solo. Bill continued to train on this aircraft and by the end on his time with the PT17 he had, including his initial training back in England, 72hrs 39mins of which he had flown solo for 29hrs 36mins. He was signed off on his Primary School with the AAFTD, this I assume to mean American Air Force Flying Training Department, on Sept 1st, 1942.

Bill copied all of his USA flying training records into his RAF Pilot's Flying Log Book, so as to show his continuous training and flying records.

On September 9th, 1942 Bill resumed his training at Cochran Field, Macon, Georgia, later known as Middle Georgia Municipal Airport.

On 3 June 1941, 97 cadets from Class 41-H arrived after completing primary training at Souther Army Airfield in Americus; Turner Army Airfield in Albany and Arcadia Army Airfield, Florida. The AAF named cadet classes for the projected time of finishing training during a particular year. Since the barracks had not been completed, tents provided initial housing. Flight training began on 4 June, three days ahead of schedule from an unpaved area at the southeast corner of the field, away from the runway construction. Anticipating that the runways would not be completed, tents also provided the cadet squadron quarters and an operations office. This situation slowly improved with the paving of the base's streets. The operations building and cadet squadron building reached completion at the end of June followed by the opening of the runways in early July.

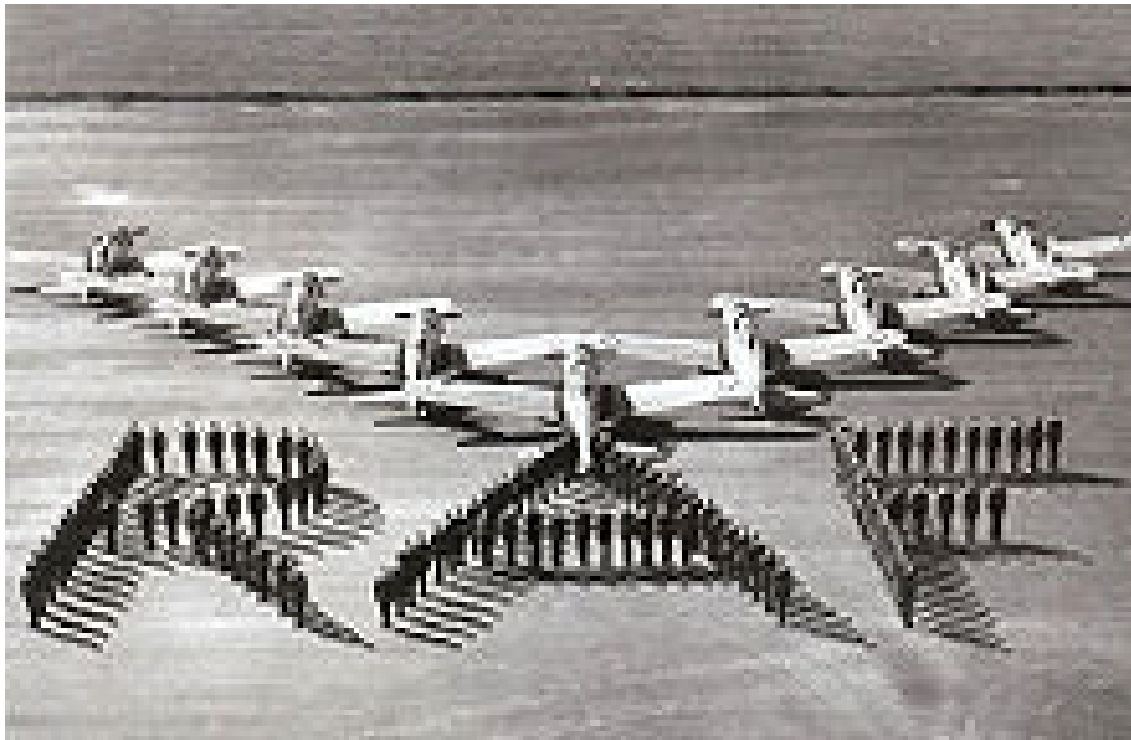
The predominant aircraft used for basic training during the war was the Vultee BT-13 Valiant. The Valiant was a fixed gear monoplane powered by a 450 hp (340 kW) Pratt and Whitney R-985 radial engine. When Pratt and Whitney fell behind in R-985 production, Vultee substituted the Wright R-975 engine. The 1,693 Wright-powered models built received the designation BT-15. By early 1945, most of the Valiants were worn out after three years of constant use, declared obsolete, and replaced by the AT-6 Texan in the basic training role.



Cochran Field in 1943



BT13A Training Aircraft



RAF Cadets in 1942. Maybe Bill is one of these men!

“On 17 August 1941, the first class of British Royal Air Force cadets arrived at Cochran Field. Until June 1942, Cochran was used exclusively for British training. Liaison was maintained between the RAF and the Army Air Force through a Royal Air Force Administrative Officer. British cadets differed significantly from American cadets. Firstly, British physical requirements were much lower than for American cadets. The British were either from 17 to 21 years of age or over 27 years old. Many of the older cadets, married with children, worried about their families back home. The giving of tactical training and attendant discipline, along American lines and pursuant to traditional American policy, concerned and irritated the British cadets.

They believed that if they had to be trained in the U.S., they should be subject to British discipline and be taught British tactics — the Americans should handle flight training only. In addition, unlike American cadets who grew up operating a farm tractor or automobile, the most complicated device operated by the average British cadet was a bicycle. Some training bases reportedly taught British cadets how to operate a motorcycle before attempting any flight training. The last British cadets completed training in the U.S. in March 1943.

With the last British class graduating in early 1943, the War Department constituted and activated the 27th Flying Training Wing (Basic) at Cochran and assigned it to the (redesignated) AAF Eastern Flying Training Command as a flying training unit. Peak training took place during 1943. From the beginning of 1944 flight training steadily diminished.

Cochran ended basic training on 15 March 1945. The AAF used the cantonment area as a convalescent hospital and as a separation center after the war ended. The Air Force inactivated the base on 15 December 1945. Cochran Field, however was used as communications base until finally being closed on 1 January 1947.”

This time the Vultee B13A Valiant was 450HP compared to the 220 HP of the PT17, so Bill’s trainers were becoming more powerful and harder to handle, no doubt.

The Cochran Field training ended for Bill on October 2nd, 1942 and his accumulated flying time was 89hrs 09mins, of which 29hrs 36mins were solo. He also had clocked up 02hrs 35mins on instrument flying; night flying was 03 hrs 05 mins.

After completing his pilot training in the USA, Bill was to commence various other necessary training but this time in Canada. I have mentioned already how Bill told me his tale of going AWOL for two weeks before reporting for duty in Canada. He was put on report and had to suffer two weeks of drill and fatigues as punishment. However, Bill said it was well worth it, as he got to see the eastern seaboard of the States and parts of eastern Canada.

The RCAF (Royal Canadian Air Force) at Picton, Ontario was to be where Bill gained his training as an Air Bomber (Navigator) and Gunner. He was with Unit 31 B & G, Picton, Ontario. He qualified on 19th February 1943. It al started on 6th November 1942, on Course 66 and on 6th January 1943 he had completed for bombing 22hrs 05mins day and 2hrs 45mins night. His gunnery was 7hrs 15mins day and 2 hrs 05mins night. He flew in Ansons, Bolingbrokes and Battles aircraft.



Typical Avro Anson



Bristol Fairchild Bolingbroke IXT



Bristol Fairchild Bolingbroke



Fairey Battle



Bomb aimer in Battle aircraft



Air Gunner in Battle Aircraft



Now abandoned barracks at Picton Airfield

In Bill's RCAF Flying Log Book are certificates for Gunnery and Bombing Courses. His hits were less than 10% but this was about normal. However, Bill scored 84% in his examination.

For his Bombing Course his average error for bombs dropped was about 150 yards, again quite normal. His examination result of 84% placed Bill 1st in his class of 72.

Next came Bill's Navigation Course for Air Observers, Air Navigators and Air Bombers, held at 31 A.N.S. Port Albert, Ontario, which is on the coast of Lake Huron. From 26th Jan 1943 to 18th February 1943 the course meant Bill acted as Air Bomber with navigational requirements. His plane was the Avro Anson clocking up 49hrs 54mins of day and 11hrs 34mins of night time flying. In his Ground Work Bill scored 80.33% and for his Air Work 81%, which made him 1st in his class of 32.

On completion of his training in Canada Bill sailed back to England on the Queen Mary in first class accommodation as befitting an officer.

Stationed next at Millom, Cumberland with the No.2 Observer and Advanced Flying Unit, Bill was to hone his skills as an Air Bomber, Gunner and Navigator. During which time he flew a further 22hrs 05mins of day and 4hrs 45mins of night time flying, bringing his running total to 71hrs 59mins of day and 21hrs 26mins of night time flying.

Next was Bill's O.T.U. (Operational Training Unit) Course, which was designed to ready aircrews for heavy bombers. For Bill this course started on 26th June 1943 with No. 15 OTU, "A" Flight, at RAF Harwell in Berkshire. He completed the course on 9th August, 1943, with the rank of Pilot Officer, though, due to Bill's kangaroo hops on landing, was deemed not likely to be a good pilot in charge of a heavy bomber. This training was in Wellingtons, as Bomb Aimer, with Squadron Leader Packe and Flying Officer Heney. This brought his flying times up to 128hrs 14mins of day and 42hrs 06mins of night time flying.

This was followed by a Stirling Conversion Unit, again as Bomb Aimer from 27th September 1943 to 19th October 1943, with his skipper Squadron leader Packe. Now Bill had 148hrs 09mins of day and 69hrs 06mins of night time flying and still had not dropped a bomb in anger.

Another conversion course, for 5 days, followed this time called H2S Special Navigation Course but this time as Second Navigator. **H2S** was the first airborne, ground scanning radar system. It was developed in Britain in World War II for the RAF and was used in various RAF bomber aircraft from 1943 to the 1990s. It was designed to identify targets on the ground for night and all-weather bombing. The early variants of the transmitter/receiver equipment were officially known as **TR3159** (H2S Mk I/ASV VIB) or **TR3191** (H2S Mk II).

On January 30, 1943, H2S radar was used by RAF bombers for navigation for the first time and so became the first ground mapping radar to be used in combat. Initially it was fitted to Stirling and Halifax bombers and provided ground mapping for navigation and night bombing.

Now Bill had 163hrs 44mins of day and 69hrs 06mins of night time flying and still no bombs dropped in anger.

The real time for action came when Bill was assigned to 214 Squadron of Bomber Command in November 1943. Time to drop bombs in anger.

On 18th November 1943, eleven days after completing all the training, Bill was truly at war. The squadron used the Fortress Mk II and Mk III and Stirlings. They used the jamming system codenamed "Airborne Cigar" (ABC) to block German night fighter communications. German speaking radio operators would identify and jam the ground controller's broadcasts and also pose as ground controllers themselves with the intention of steering the night fighters away from the bomber streams.

No.214 "Federated Malay States" Squadron spent the entire Second World War operating with Bomber Command. Like many similar units it had a quiet start to the war, and offensive operations did not start until 14 June 1940, well after the start of the war in the west. It remained part of the main bomber force from then until January 1944, first operating the Vickers Wellington and later the Short Stirling.

In January 1944 the squadron converted to the Fortress II, and joined No.100 Group, carrying out radar counter-measures for the rest of the war, before disbanding on 27 July 1945.

Aircraft

May 1939-April 1942: Vickers Wellington I, IA and IC

June 1941-January 1942: Wellington II

April 1942-January 1944: Short Stirling I and III

January 1944-November 1944: Fortress II

November 1944-July 1945: Fortress III

Location

12 April 1937-3 September 1939: Feltwell

3 September 1939-12 February 1940: Methwold

12 February 1940-5 January 1943: Stradishall

5-12 January 1942: Honington

12 January-1 October 1942: Stradishall

1 October 1942-10 December 1943: Chedburgh

10 December 1943-16 January 1944: Downham Market

16 January-16 May 1944: Sculthorpe

16 May 1944-27 July 1945: Oulton

Squadron Codes: UX, BU

Duty

1939-January 1944: Bomber Command main bomber force

January 1944-May 1945: No.100 Group radar counter-measures.

On the 18th November 1943 a 30 min NFT (Navigational Flight Test) in a Short Stirling III with F/S Gilbert and Bill acted as Bomb Aimer, just to check out things before starting the serious stuff.

The first operation was the next day taking off at 1830hrs and returning 3 hrs 30mins later. The operation was called Friesians and carried 6: 1500lbs bombs. Six days later it was off to Biarritz, Spain with 2: 1500lbs, this time a night flight of 8hrs 05mins.

December 4th at 2335hrs with Sgt. Jackson as pilot Bill acted as second navigator on a H2S Cross Country flight for 3 hours. So by the end on 1943 Bill had accumulated 165hrs 14mins day and 83hrs41mins night time flying but had probably dropped his first few bombs in anger.

S/Ldr Packe had to be replaced and so a short hiatus occurred before a new skipper could be assigned to Bill's crew. But, by January 25th 1944 they were ready with F/O Corke. January was taken up with familiarization of their new aircraft, a Fortress 'F' and Bill was the Bomb Aimer. Bill's flying time for January 1944 was 4hrs 30mins, a quiet month for this crew.

February was different when they were kept busy training in their Fortress under their new skipper. Bill acted this time as Mid Upper Gunner and by the end of the month now had 179hrs 09mins of day and 86hrs 51mins of night time flying.

March 1944 saw still yet more training for this new crew, with Bill acting sometimes as Mid Upper Gunner and other times as Second Navigator. This month saw a bit of excitement for the crew as on 10th March 1944 at night while on a cross country run were forced to land with engine No.1 on fire at Ridgewell. Essex. But, the plane was fixed to resume flying three days later. On the 22nd March 1944 the second event occurred when a tyre burst on landing. March accumulation times were 190hrs 54mins day and 100hrs 06mins night.

During April 1944 Bill went on his 3rd operation "Karlsruhe" which proved to be an enduring event for him. Dignified Karlsruhe is located on the northern fringes of the Black Forest and connected to the Rhine River by a canal. Karlsruhe was founded in 1715 by Karl Wilhelm, Margrave of Baden- Durlach. After 1771, it was the capital of the duchy of Baden. The old part of Karlsruhe was laid out as a vast semicircle with the streets converging radially upon the elegant 1752 ducal palace. The city has an old and esteemed university.

135 air raids aside, the first large scale British attack on the old college town of Karlsruhe damaged its Rhine port and military station. Then the attacks got personal as the second attack destroyed the federal state library resulting in a loss of 350,000 volumes. The third attack levelled and burned the western residential part of the city. In 1942, the first 8,000 pound British "blockbuster" bomb was dropped on Karlsruhe. After "Butcher" Harris took control, the city experienced longer and more and prolonged civilian attacks.

Karlsruhe became the pilot project for the so-called "Christmas tree" bombs, and on September 25, 1944, the housing in the suburbs as well as the eastern part of the city were bombed. On September 27, the city centre was bombed. From April to December, 1944, Karlsruhe suffered 13 incendiary bomb attacks. In total, more than 10,000 tons of bombs were dumped on the city. Of 17,134 family homes, only 3,414 remained. 1,745 civilians were dead, and 3,508 injured.

After occupation, Karlsruhe was intentionally set on fire and photos were staged to make the arson seem like part of battle scenes. Plundering and rape took place for days. Eyewitnesses reported that every passer-by was stopped at gunpoint and physically searched, mostly by French colonial soldiers from Morocco, Algeria and

Tunisia, and their watches, rings, and valuables were stolen. Bicycles, radios, cameras and weapons were tracked down and taken as well. Small gangs of troops moved relentlessly from home to home, threatening, raping and stealing all they could carry. In the County Women's Clinic in Karlsruhe alone, 276 terminations of pregnancies after rape were performed in April and May, 1945.

Karlsruhe had a bad war but Hitler needed to be defeated.

Bill's crew, as Bill has told me, did not drop any bombs for the rest of his wartime flying. Instead the bomb bays were fitted with huge electronic countermeasure equipment and together with H2S ground radar; their task was to mark the bombing sites with coloured flares or to jam German radio and radar at the target site. This meant being around for the duration of the attack, which could be a little hairy to say the least.

On this attack on Karlsruhe on 24/25th April 1944 it was reported and I quote: "No.214 Squadron – One of our crews, captain F/O Corke, had a shaky do over the target when his gunner reported aircraft on their tail and the pilot went into combat manoeuvre, only to find himself on his back and spinning down towards the flak and flames. Everything spun, instruments, Corke's crew and the universe, but at 10,000 feet they managed to come out with fortunately the stars above them instead of the target."

This report was aptly named, CORKSCREW WITH DEATH.

Bill noted in his log book lack of oxygen, 3 times kite upside down. Bill had been pulled away from his oxygen supply attached to him at his waist gunner position. This affected his hearing in later life.

End of April 1944 Bill had 190hrs 54mins day and 100hrs 06mins night.

May 1944 saw for Bill resumption in actual warfare and probably Bill's first experience of losing a plane from his squadron. Fortress "A" had been flown by F/O Hockley when it was lost on "Antwerp" operation, 24th May 1944. Their 4th operation was "Paris" (Gennevilliers) on 9th May 1944 for 4hours night time. The target would have been the Ford factory which made panzer tank repairs and built snow plough vehicles for use in Norway and Sweden.

On the 22nd May 1944 operation "Kiel" was aborted due to "GEE", a device for counter measures, was not working. Similarly, 21st May 1944 saw another aborted operation due to Navigation equipment errors. It was on this operation that P/O Hockley's plane came down in Antwerp.

Their 5th operation was "Saumur" (near Tours) on the last day in May. This may have been an early attempt to bomb the Operation Crossbow site, which later saw the Tallboy 12,000lb bomb being deployed by 617 Squadron on the 24th June 1944.

Thus, at end of May 1944 Bill's score was now 199hrs 24mins day and 113hrs 11mins night.

June 1944 Bill was engaged in two operations, the first one was aborted due to a runaway propeller which they could not feather and so were forced to land at Woodbridge. The true 6th operation "Gelsenkirchen" and Bill's log book reported Cassan Lost and Peden Shot Up these were fellow fliers of 214 squadron and probably well known to Bill.. Gelsenkirchen was a coal mining area and also home to the infamous Buchenwald concentration camp.

End of June, Bill had 208hrs 59mins day and 119hrs 06mins night flying.

In July 1944 Bill was second navigator on three operations. No bombing involved but use of special measures such as "window" and radio and radar jamming. Window is a means of confusing the enemy into seeing on their radar what looks like a large number of aircraft in flight. On 23rd July 1944 Bill has labelled the operation as 6 ½, why the ½ I am not sure. The operation was called Goes (Holland) and was window spoof for Kiel. I recall Bill telling me they flew up around the Hook of Holland and threw the Window aluminium chaff out at various times and locations.

The next operation 7 1/2 , called Stuttgart (Germany) was an 8 hr night flight. During World War II, the centre of Stuttgart was almost completely destroyed in Allied air raids. Some of the most severe bombing took place in 1944 carried out by Anglo-American bombers. The heaviest raid took place on 12 September 1944 when the Royal Air Force bombed the old town of Stuttgart dropping over 184,000 bombs including 75 blockbusters. More than 1000 people perished in the resulting firestorm. In total Stuttgart was subjected to 53 bombing raids, resulting in the destruction of 68% of all buildings and the deaths of 4477 people.

The third July operation was to Mandrel (off Friesian's) again at night for 4hrs 15mins.

The bomber squadrons of 100 Group utilised various specialist electronic jamming devices to disrupt enemy radio communications and radar. During 100 Group's existence over 32 different devices were evaluated and used. Specially equipped 100 Group aircraft would fly within the bomber stream. Much of this equipment was developed at the Telecommunications Research Establishment (TRE).



Lancaster B I NG128 dropping its load over Duisburg on 14 October 1944. The aircraft is carrying Airborne Cigar (ABC) radio jamming equipment, as shown by the two vertical aerials on the fuselage.

Special equipment used included **Airborne Cigar** (ABC) jammer, **Jostle** (jammer), **Mandrel** (jammer), **Airborne Grocer** (jammer), **Piperack** (jammer), **Perfectos** (homer), **Serrate** (homer), **Corona** (spoofer), **Carpet** (jammer) and **Lucero** (homer), and were used against German equipment such as Lichtenstein, Freya, and Würzburg radars.

“ The combination of the Pathfinders' operations, the activities of No. 100 Group, the British advantage in radar, jamming and Window techniques, combined with intelligent attacking tactics, as well as the discipline and bravery of the RAF crews, have been remarkable. We had our (*sic*) severe problems in trying to defend Germany in the air..... *General der Jagdflieger*, Adolf Galland., Lancaster - the Biography

Bill claimed the jamming equipment was a secret and even the crew didn't know what it did or how it worked but had been trained to twiddle the knobs and flick the switches at the right time.

On 28th July 1944 another operation to Stuttgart was abandoned and Bill's log book stated "Engine Fire. N0.3 feathers, No.2 No power – cutting. Force landed at Shipdham, Norfolk, which was an American Air Base. The flight lasted only 20mins but at night that must have been a scary experience. F/O Corke saved their bacon that night, just as he had when his plane corkscrewed in an inverted spin.

July 1944 brought Bill's flying time to 215hrs 54mins day and 133hrs 36mins night time.

August 1944 saw three operations, No.9 was Frankfurt (Russelsheim) and lasted 4hrs 20mins.

No.9 ½ operation was Mandrel jamming off Denmark. This lasted for 4hrs 35mins.

No. 10 operation was scattering Window spoof off Friesian's, during a 3hr flight.

August totals gave Bill 224hrs 09mins day and 145hrs 31mins of night time flying.

September 1944 Bill was very busy and this may have been the peak of his operations. There were 8 operations:

No 11 was window spoof towards Emden, on the German north coast. It must have been to distract the German defence from the real attack elsewhere. Flight lasted 3hrs.

No 12 was operation Darmstadt (near Frankfurt, Germany). Bill notes in his log book of the loss of "A" on Frankfurt, F/Lt Fillies on 12th September 1944. Bill also attached to his log book a newspaper cutting which read:

"200 Planes Wipe Out a Town in a Single Night – Darmstadt, a town with a population of 115,526 in 1939, 15 miles south of Frankfurt, was practically

obliterated by just over 200 Lancasters on the night of September 11. The attack shows, says an Air Ministry report, how comparatively small forces using improved tactics, are doing as much damage as was done in very heavy attacks not long ago. Darmstadt was a centre of the German chemical industry and a supply base for the armies defending the Upper Rhineland. During September Mosquitoes dropped more than 100 of their 4000lb "blockbusters" on Berlin."

No 13 was operation Wissemburg, France, this lasted for 5hrs. Number 13 but Bill with his lucky horseshoe aboard, he was safe.

No 14 was operation Big Ben over Holland but was recalled at dawn. No fighter escort and fog. In September 1944 the squadron was given *Big Ben* equipment, which was mistakenly believed to be able to jam the guidance system of the V-2 Rocket. The first *Big Ben* patrol came on 17 September. The *Big Ben* sorties involved four hour long night time stints off the Dutch coast, but it soon became clear that it was having no effect, and the equipment was removed in November.

No 15 was also Big Ben over Holland for 5hrs 30mins. These were the only two operations Big Ben was used.

No 16 operation Karlsruhe lasted an epic 6hrs 30mins.

No 17 operation Heereveen, Netherlands lasted a mere 2hrs 45mins.

The final operation of September was on the 30th Treban Trabach during which Bill reports Engine Fire No1 feathered over Germany.

So Bill's running total was now 237hrs 39mins day and 183hrs 26mins at night.

The months rolled on and in October 1944 Bill completed 4 operations. The 18th took him to Fischbach dropping window for Saarbrücken.

19th operation was Bischwiller which lasted 5hrs 25mins.

20th operation was to Bochum which lasted 4hrs 35mins. Bill noted Starboard wing bearer fractured by heavy flak. Bullet holes in both wings. This must have been a nervous flight but Bill lucky horseshoe did it's job.

21st operation was double window on Cologne and Mannheim for a 6hr 40mins ride.

During the Bombing of Cologne in World War II, Cologne endured 262 air raids by the Western Allies, which caused approximately 20,000 civilian casualties and almost completely wiped out the centre of the city. During the night of 31 May 1942, Cologne was the target of "Operation Millennium", the first 1,000 bomber raid by the Royal Air Force in World War II. 1,046 heavy bombers attacked their target with 1,455 tons of explosives, approximately two-thirds of which were incendiary. This raid lasted about 75 minutes, destroyed 600 acres (243 ha) of built-up area, killed 486 civilians and made 59,000 people homeless. By the end of the war, the population of Cologne had been reduced by 95%. This loss was mainly caused by a massive evacuation of the people to more rural areas. The same happened in many other German cities in the last two years of war. At the end of 1945, the population had already risen to about 500,000 again.

By that time, essentially all of Cologne's pre-war Jewish population of 11,000 had been deported or killed by the Nazis. The six synagogues of the city were destroyed. The synagogue on Roonstraße was rebuilt in 1959.

The operations on which F/O Corke and his crew applied window and other jamming measures, no doubt made it possible to confuse the enemy and make the bombing of these cities safer and more effective for our bombers.

By the end of October 1944, Bill now had under his belt 21 operations with 242hrs 19mins of day and 204hrs 51mins of night time flying.

November 1944 saw three operations No. 22 was window North of Essen. Bill reports Me110 at 1000yards, no attack made.

No. 23 was window at Saarbrücken. This time Bill reports Very successful. A.O.C's congratulations. See attached copy (I cannot find it, so it must be lost).

No 24 was a double window on Koblenz and Gladbeck, centres for the enemy coal industry.

Flying time at end of November 1944 was 245hrs 49mins day and 219hrs 26mins night time.

December 1944 was the last month Bill would be flying and risking his life for King, Country and you and me. In 5 days he flew 4 operations. No 25, on the 2nd December, was window for München Gladbach and Krefeld.

Operation No 26 was window for Dortmund Ems Canal.

The last operation was No 27 to Giessen, and Bill noted Heavy icing. J88 attacked, Stikes observed.

Bill's final count of flying hours amount to 246hrs 14mins of day and 238hrs 51mins of night time.

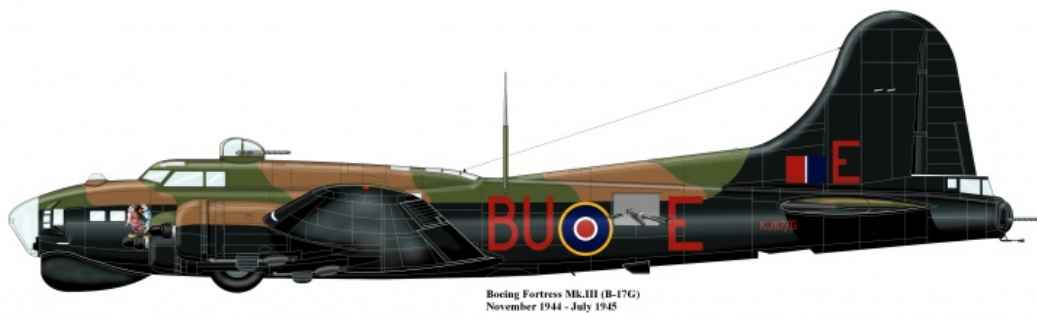
Bill had completed 27 operations and 32 sorties. His log book was "Certified One Tour Completed" and signed by B Davies S/Ldr O/C "A" Flight and W/Cr O/C 214Sqn D D Rogers.

(Bill recounted the number of sorties and operations from his log book and came up with 35 sorties and 30 operations. I MUST check this, as Bill corrected the "error" in his log book in a later life)



The photo above is of P/O Bill Foskett taken at the flying control tower at Udine in North Italy. (After 8 September 1943, when Italy surrendered to the Allies in World War II, the city was under direct German administration, which ceased in April 1945, I am not certain what took Bill to Italy but I should imagine it was for support following the surrender of Italy. His time in Udine is not mentioned in his log book).

This photo is one of my personal favourites because it so perfectly depicts that mental image many have of the young, dashing, devil may care, airmen of these times. An image the RAF did much to foster and perpetuate I might add. Boys being boys, those that the RAF Recruiting office couldn't convince to join for the sake of their country, they snagged through subtle propaganda by convincing them that the girls swoon over a man in an RAF Uniform. (I can assure you however that the latter never entered Bills mind.)



Flying Fortress in RAF livery



One of Bill's Fortresses in which he flew.

NOTE: The original of the Fortress picture above is held by Plt/Off Bill Foskett. Researcher, Ian Hunt reports that an identical photo has already appeared in at least one book, stating it is a SR384 (which was also coded BU-A) in which Fg/Off Hockley was lost on 24 May 1944.



Pilot Officer William G. M. Foskett RAF retd.

Note Bill's excellent idea of framing his service medals and badges, not to mention it is very professionally and tastefully done. In this format it makes a wonderful family heirloom that will be treasured and can be passed down through the generations. I hope others will follow Bill's lead. Too often these priceless family treasures end up in the hands of collectors who prize them only for their monetary value and they are never seen again by the public.

ALL PHOTOS AND DOCUMENTS COPYRIGHT Plt/Off William G. M. Foskett

DATE 1944	HOUR	AIRCRAFT TYPE AND No.	PILOT	DUTY	REMARKS (Including results of bombing, gunnery, exercises, etc.)	TIME CARRIED FORWARD—	
						199.24	193.11
						FLYING TIMES	
						Day	Night
JUNE							
12 th		FORRESS C 376	1/0 CORKE	WAIST GUNNER	FORMATION FLYING.	1.00	
17 th		FORRESS F 381	1/0 CORKE	WAIST GUNNER	HEIGHT, AIR TEST & N.F.T.	1.55	
17 th		FORRESS F 381	1/0 CORKE	WAIST GUNNER	'OPERATION' - AULNOYE. <small>(BOMBING PLAC. CHAIN OF FORRESS. FIRE LINES. WOODBRIDGE.)</small>		1.45
18 th		FORRESS F 381	1/0 CORKE	WAIST GUNNER	WOODBRIDGE TO BRISLE & N.F.T.	.50	
19 th		FORRESS W 382	1/0 CORKE	WAIST GUNNER	N.F.T.	.45	
20 th		FORRESS W 382	1/0 CORKE	WAIST GUNNER	N.F.T.	.50	
21 st		FORRESS W 382	1/0 CORKE	WAIST GUNNER	N.F.T.	.45	
21 st		FORRESS W 382	1/0 CORKE	WAIST GUNNER	'OPERATION' - GELSENKIRCHEN. <small>(CROSSING FORRESS. FIRE LINES.)</small>		3.10
27 th		FORRESS X 767	1/0 CORKE	SECOND NAVIGATOR	H/S EXERCISE.	1.00	
30 th		FORRESS Y 381	1/0 CORKE	WAIST GUNNER	FIGHTER AFFILIATION - DURNHURSTON.	1.00	
TOTAL TIME...						206.29	118.06

DATE 1944	HOUR	AIRCRAFT TYPE AND No.	PILOT	DUTY	REMARKS (Including results of bombing, gunnery, exercises, etc.)	TIME CARRIED FORWARD—	
						245.49	219.24
						FLYING TIMES	
						Day	Night
DECEMBER							
2 nd		FORRESS W NO 785	1/0 CORKE	SECOND NAVIGATOR	'OPERATION' (WINDOW) MÜNCHEN GLADBACH & KREFELD.		4.45
3 rd		FORRESS W NO 785	1/0 CORKE	SECOND NAVIGATOR	N.F.T.	.20	
4 th		FORRESS W NO 785	1/0 CORKE	SECOND NAVIGATOR	'OPERATION' (WINDOW) MÜNCHEN GLADBACH & KREFELD.		3.40
5 th		FORRESS W NO 785	1/0 CORKE	SECOND NAVIGATOR	'OPERATION' (WINDOW) DORTMUND EMS CANAL.		4.45
6 th		FORRESS W NO 785	1/0 CORKE	SECOND NAVIGATOR	'OPERATION' GIESSEN } <small>HEAVY ICBM. 2 ICBM ATTACHED. STAKES OBSERVED.</small>		6.15
TOTAL DECEMBER FLYING TIMES—						.25	19.25
SIGNED <i>[Signature]</i> 1/0 CORKE							
N ^o OF SORTIES - 32 N ^o OF OPERATIONS - 27							
TOTAL OPERATIONAL HOURS -						4.00	155.20
SIGNED <i>[Signature]</i> 1/0 CORKE							
SIGNED <i>[Signature]</i> 1/0 CORKE							
TOTAL TIME...						246.14	238.51

The summary in Plt/Off Foskett's log book states that he did 32 Sorties equalling 27 Operations. It is important to note, and not well known, but ops and sorties were

two different things. As progress was made in the ground fighting in Europe; the RAF began to specify that certain ops only qualified for a half op. (No doubt this was a way of stretching tours)

EVERY NEW PLANE NEEDS A PILOT

And this is where you come in, you who are 17½ and not yet 31. Your country has a job for you — a job that calls for fitness, dash, initiative, intelligence, responsibility. A young man's job — a war-winning job. We're getting the planes — we must get the men!

If you are 17½ and not yet 31 go to the R.A.F. Section of the nearest Combined Recruiting Centre (address from any Employment Exchange) and say you wish to volunteer as a Pilot. Observers may be accepted up to 31. Certain reserved men can now volunteer for Pilot and Observer duties. Men aged 17½ but not yet 31 who are suitable for flying duties as Pilot and Observer but require tuition to pass the educational test will be coached in their spare time, free of cost.

Fly with the RAF

To Air Ministry Information Bureau, Hingway, London, W.14. Please send me further leaflets giving details of flying service in the R.A.F.

NAME _____ AGE _____
ADDRESS _____

E. 13.5

Newspaper Advertisement, 1939



Bill with hat at a jaunty angle.

Bill wrote the following, which was published on the 214 Squadron's web site.

“I was born in Gt. Yarmouth where the family had a small beach chalet in East Mersey, Constable country. Lived most of his life in Hampstead. As a youngster, spent time in the sea scouts on board the "England" every weekend which was an old ferry boat that was permanently tied to one of the two bridges over the Thames at

Kew. Currently living in Seaton in Cumbria close to the shore that overlooks the Solway Firth and Scotland

SERVICE CHRONOLOGY:

Air Observer Training Programme for 1323050 leading aircraftman WGM Foskett at Pickton and Port Albert Ontario Canada.

- Picton 31 Bombing & Gunnery, Qualified (1st) 10 January 1943
- Port Albert Navigation, Qualified (1st) 19 February 1943
- Commissioned March 1943

England, AFU Course Completed May 1943

Harwell, 15 OUT Course Wellingtons (For India posting, later cancelled)

Course 9 August 1943

Stirling Conversion Course 19 October 1943

H2s Special Nav. Course Mid November 1943



Bill as a Cadet Officer

I did my ITW in Newquay and was stationed in one of the big guest houses on top of the cliff. That was in the first 3 or 4 months of 1942. (No.11 flight "C" squadron) It was all "bags of swank & B.S., Stand by your beds Officer on parade" stuff. I loved it so much that I helped our flight to win the Drill Cup & the PS Cup. If I remember right the latter was rifle drill without any verbal orders just the whistle now and again. In later years the Yanks did it almost like a music hall act. Anyway we were the first and possibly the only flight to bring off the double.

As far as India was concerned, we were fully trained and operational on Wellingtons at 15 OUT Harwell. Our posting was to India and at that time we were with Squadron Ldr, Packe AFC as our pilot (he trained in Canada, and stayed on as an instructor which earned him his gong.) After receiving tropical inoculations Plt/Off Foskett was informed that he would not be going to the Middle East. Bill wrote:

ENGLANDS LAST HOPE

NeedlesNewsNothing

A short story by P/O Foskett

As far as India was concerned, we were fully trained and operational on Wellingtons at 15 OTU Harwell. Our posting was to India and at that time we were with Squadron Ldr, Packe as our pilot. In keeping with all overseas postings, we were given 9 different jabs (needles) before we left Harwell and told to report to the London Hospital of Tropical Diseases on the way home, to receive the yellow fever jab. That one was in the backside, the others were in both arms and titties. (*Barbarians - the very thought makes one cringe*) When I finally arrived at the Hampstead underground station with two fully loaded kit bags strung round my neck, I had a very high temperature and felt knackered. Tossing my bags onto the train, I still remember to this day the train guard calling to his mate "Fred; here comes England's last hope" The next three days were spent recovering! Then over the following six days I received 7 telegrams (in those days it was by a uniformed lad on a bike) and each one was a different posting. Although it was reassuring to feel needed everywhere at once, The RAF's wisdom came seriously under question when I opened the 7th telegram informing me to revert to the status quo. All those jabs were for nothing!! “

Our crew did our conversion course from Whimpies (Wellingtons) to Stirlings at Straddishal in the back end of 1943. In fact my first two ops were in them; one to the Friesians with 6 1500 lbs mines and the second to Biarritz with 2 1500 lbs mines. The difference in the load was due to the distance; a 3 hour trip in the first instance against an 8 hour one on the second. In the Stirling, my position was in the second pilots seat then after take off in the mid upper turret and approaching target laying flat in the nose for bomb/mine release then back to the turret; and finally back in the seat for landing. The crew's first operation was on 19 November 1943 Piloted by FS Gilbert, the second operation followed on the 25th piloted by S/Ldr Jeffries. The crew makeup at this time was Flying Officer Bill Foskett (B/A), Flight Sergeant Ted Bonner (WOP), Flight Sergeant Fred Barber (ENG), Flight Sergeant Jack Podger (NAV).

After that we were now fully trained, and waiting for our own skipper to complete his final trip as second pilot before we were integrated as a fully operational crew.

Around this time our skipper literally disappeared. It was all very hush hush.

Allegedly LMF. (See ref in Murray Pedens (RCAF) A thousand shall fall book; page 429, paragraph beginning 'Another chap'.)

Although the Crew were now operationally trained - having lost our Skipper, we had to re-train with a new Skipper who was Flying Officer John Corke.



Fg/Off John Corke at the controls of Fortress A for Able

In January 1944 we converted to Fortresses and were billeted at Blickling Hall - Oulton - Norfolk, together with the American Air Force who were flying daytime operations. In addition to our ex Sterling crew when we converted to Fortresses, there was Len Roose, Ray Delisle, WO Hepton, Sgt Stelling, Sgt Gregory, and others.

In the Fortress, we carried no bombs, only a full load of jamming and electronic equipment which we took to the target and of course had to bring it back. These operations required us to be between the pathfinders and the mainstream, and to be operating before, during and after the timed course of the raid. This of course meant that the aircraft was dangerously over or near the target for a great length of time. Sometimes a boffin was with us but I have no record of the different toys we had to play with. I vaguely remember Gee H2S ABC but I doubt if I could recognise them now. Note that the US Air Force flew Fortresses with a 10 man crew, as did others, but they were carrying bombs etc. I don't think that there was a norm for us involved in the countermeasures role. We were doing all sorts of other things. Jamming & scanning equipment was in its infancy, and sometimes, we were accompanied by the boffin involved. To say exactly what everyone was doing is beyond me, but the point I make is that it would be difficult to pin down the crew at any given time, as the actual number varied. The only permanency would be the regular mainstay crew members.

Our third Op (first with Johnnie Corke), was on 24/25th April 1944 Karlsruhe. Note the amusing intel report that was issued following this operation on the 24th (The debriefing staff obviously found the incident hilarious, but I suspect Bill and the boys didn't share the humour and made straight for the bar for a few stiff ones. All would have been well aware how lucky they were and that very - very few ever walk away from an INVERTED SPIN).

CORKSCREW WITH DEATH.

KARLSRUHE.

24 / 25 APRIL
1944

No. 214 SQUADRON.

One of our crews, captain F/O. Corke, had a shaky do over the target when his gunner reported aircraft on their tail and the pilot went into combat manoeuvre, only to find himself on his back and spinning down towards the flak and flames. Everything spun, instruments, Corke's crew and the universe, but at 10,000 feet they managed to come out with fortunately the stars above them instead of the target.

Bill not surprisingly comments, "I am still experiencing problems over this one".

Our sixth Op was on Gelsenkirchen on the night that we learned on our safe return that Murray Peden and Cassan had been lost. It later turned out that Peden had crash landed at Woodbridge, and again there is a special chapter on this in Peden's book. "It makes grim reading". Just as a point of interest, on the 11th September 1944, we were on an Op to Darmstadt in our Fortress A (Able), not knowing then that it was our last trip using that aircraft. It was lost the next day on a raid on Frankfurt, piloted by a Flt/Lt Fillieul. (This loss would have been taken very seriously by all the crews as Flt/Lt Fillieul was a two tour veteran of the squadron).

On the 9th/10th November 1944, which was about my 27th and I was reaching the end of my tour, we carried out a spoof window attack on Saarbrücken, and for this we got a pat on the back from the AOC.

The five mainstay members of Corke's crew are seen in these next two pictures. Other ad hoc operators including sometimes a boffin would join us for the odd operation.



In the wedding picture above from left to right are :
FS Ted Bonner WOP
FS Fred Barber Engineer
FS Len Roose Air Gunner & Bridegroom
????? Bride
Plt/Off Bill Foskett B/A S/D
FS Jack Podger Navigator

After numerous incidental experiences, we flew our last Op on the 6th December 1944 after completing 32 Sorties. The certification that the tour of duty had been completed is signed by B.D. Davies, Sqn/Ldr A Flight and D.D. Rogers Wg/Cdr O/C 214 Sqn.



CORKE'SCREW

The crew above was humorously known as Corkescrew after the pilot Fg/Off Corke. In the front line from left to right are: FS Fred Barber, FS Len Roose (holding their lucky horse shoe; which Plt/Off Foskett still has) and FS Jack Podger. At the back are Plt/Off Bill Foskett, FS Ted Bonner, FS John Stelling, unknown and at the very back

FS Ray Delisle.

NOTE: Site researcher Ian Hunt reports that according to the Orbs the crew generally consisted of Corke, Podger, Bonner, Foskett, Roose, Hepton, Barber, Delisle, Gregory and Stelling (with, on another occasion, Boanas and Hoffman instead of two of these), but could not determine crew positions all their crew positions. However, often, in the ORB, crews seem to be listed in the order of: Pilot, Navigator, W/Op, Air Bomber, 2 gunners (M/U and RG?), F/Eng, 2 more gunners (waist gunners?) and Spec Op.

Bill recalls that FS Fred Barber was an extremely efficient man who knew his job inside out, and expected everyone on the ground crew to be likewise. They certainly "popped to" when he was about, he was really meticulous. One incident regarding Fred he remembers occurred on a flight test prior to the Gelsenkirchen Op on 21st June 1944. As we got off the bus the ground crew were hovering, and one of them was heard to say " watch it lads; here comes Ali Barber and the 40 clangers" I've not heard from him since we finished our tour, but the last thing he mentioned to me was that he was going to set up an estate agency in south London."

After having survived his tour of duty, Bill attended a training course with the RAF at RAF Northolt. He may have done a MET Course (meteorology) or perhaps an air traffic control course, I do not know. However, after completing his time at Northolt he had the choice of either going to Rhodesia or Italy. He chose Italy, as his sister Vena was in Italy serving as a nurse. His post was Udine, Italy where he was in the control tower for about fourteen months. He managed to meet up with Vena after a long journey, perhaps in Florence or Venice.

THE BRETTO ATROCITY (March 23, 1945)

The power station at Bretto, near Udine, in Northern Italy, was guarded by a unit of the Italian Carabinieri consisting of twelve men commanded by Sergeant Dino Perpignano. While returning to his barracks, Sgt. Perpignano was captured by a gang of Italian Communist partisans under the orders of the 1X Yugoslav Corps. At this time the Yugoslav partisans were being supplied by air-drop by the British who had transferred their support from the Cetniks (who were fighting for the restoration of the Monarchy) to Tito's Communists because they were killing more Germans than the Cetniks. Threatened with torture, Sgt. Perpignano was forced to reveal the unit's password, thus allowing the partisan gang to enter the barracks and overpower the Carabinieri, some of whom were already asleep. After having ransacked the barracks, the partisans herded their prisoners into an upstairs room and after a while were given food which contained a mixture of caustic soda and black salt. As they started feeling sick they realized they had been poisoned. In severe pain, crying and begging for their lives, they were forced marched to an alpine refuge in the mountains, there to face a terrible death. The Carabinieri were then stripped, tied up and brutally murdered by pickaxes and kicks to the body. Some had their genitalia amputated and stuck in their mouths, eyes were gouged out. One had a photo of his five sons stuck into his heart. The corpses were eventually found and interred in a medieval tower at Tarviso. The remains of the twelve Carabinieri, Sgt. Perpignano, Pasquale Ruggiero, Lino Bertogli,

Domenico Del Vecchio, Antonio Ferro, Adelmino Zilio, Fernando Ferretti, Ridolfo Calzi, Pietro Tognazzo, Michele Castellano, Primo Amenici and Attilio Franzon, lie forgotten by their countrymen and by history, under the merciful care of some nuns, living in a nearby convent.



Bill on left and Skipper John Corke on right.

Sadly Bill passed away at 01:15hrs on the 21st December 2011 after a brave fight with cancer, aged 90.

This is a brief account of Bill's RAF life, which was exciting, scary at times and gave him sense of patriotic pride. We are so indebted to him and the thousands of brave young men who gave their lives to keep us free. He was offered a "gong" perhaps an OBE for his work on periscopes, but he, in the typical Bill fashion of modesty, declined the "gong". Bill would have felt, seeing that he had survived the war, did not deserve such credit and that his comrades who died were the ones to get the "gongs".

Bill had a full life after the war, some 70 years worth, and there are stories to tell about that too but that will be at another time and by another author.
