

REMINISCENCES OF SERVICE IN THE ROYAL AIR FORCE - 1937 TO 1945

BY

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These are some of the flying memories of Denis Clyde-Smith. After school years followed by learning agriculture and tea planting in Ceylon I



joined the R.A.F. at the age of 21 on a short service commission of four years and six on the reserve. It was May 10th 1937 that instructions came to report to Sywell aerodrome near Northampton for initial flying course. Our accommodation was four to a small bungalow; the meals and lectures were carried out in the old flying club house; civil flying did go on during weekends. The aeroplane we were taught

on was the famous bi-plane the Tiger Moth. The instructors were all service pilots with ranks of Flight Lieutenant or above. No uniforms were worn; as civilians we did not come under service discipline and there were very few regulations. The hours of work were nine to five with flying and lectures. The first morning the chief instructor in his speech of welcome made it quite clear what was expected of us and said there was no reason why we should not all successfully complete the course provided we carried out three rules:-

1. All students must fly solo within ten hours
2. Wantonly breaking His Majesty's aeroplane would result in dismissal
3. Anyone seen flying over the nudist camp three miles away would require a very good excuse.



Fairly straightforward instructions but even so five students managed to qualify for dismissal.

Each flying instructor had four students; my instructor had been an aerobatic specialist. After getting me to fly solo in six hours and an hour or two of circuits and landings, I seemed to spend my time flying upside-down with him shouting instructions down the talking tube. It was very good fun and one soon became over confident; on one occasion by not looking below me before practising a spin dive I very nearly finished up amongst a formation of heavy bombers practising for the Hendon air display. After Sywell all successful candidates had to report to Uxbridge for military training which meant parades and lectures. I managed to get excused parades. After falling out of a window during revels at the last night at Sywell, I collected a very badly sprained ankle and had to walk



with a stick. Also at Uxbridge the London tailors came along to fit us with uniforms. Before being allowed to wear them the oath of allegiance to King and country had to be taken. We then received the very lowly rank of Acting Pilot Officer on probation. With this rank went a salary of £15 per month, out of which £10 had to be paid to the Officer's Mess for board and lodging, and if not paid by the 10th of the month the officer would be cashiered. There were ten Flying Training Schools in the R.A.F. spread all over the British Isles. Twenty cadets would form a course. My lot went to Sealand near Chester.

Here one was taught the services' way of doing things; probably quite unique but without doubt the services know the most reliable and efficient way to tackle any problem, and flying presented no difficulties. Every manoeuvre would be tabulated and appeared in black and white under the all-embracing King's Regulations and Air Council instructions. The types of aircraft were Hawker Harts and Audax and Hawker Furies - the fighter version. All splendid bi-planes powered by Rolls Royce Kestrel engines. After the Tiger Moth these were very powerful machines.

The R.A.F. Wings were presented to all the pilots who successfully completed the first term. Among the tests was included a long cross-country trip with two turning points. The success or otherwise entirely depended on the pilot's map reading ability.

As the paper cuttings reported (see Appendix I) I missed the first turning point and finished upside down in a field near Bournemouth, having run out of petrol. The real facts were that I lost my way and came over the Isle of Wight, so I came back and made for the nearest aerodrome which was



Christchurch, but I could not find it and so hovered about until I found a suitable field. Just as I was going to land I saw a line of wire across the field. I opened up and hopped over the hedge to the next one which was not large enough. I landed O.K. but found I was heading for some cows so turned away and saw I was heading for a huge tree, so I had to apply the brakes hard and the machine dug its nose in and shot over. The propeller and half the engine were torn off and the tail badly smashed. Surprisingly no black marks were awarded for this error and the course was completed. In the second term advanced flying was taught, such as firing the guns and bombing with smoke bombs. It was a great time with so much to do, particularly with the sporting arrangements; trips all over the British Isles were arranged to play squash or rucker matches, and always flying with instructors who enjoyed the trips as much as the students. There were a number of flying tests given to students to assess their progress and also to grade their abilities; a final test was the forced landing competition held on the aerodrome, an area being marked out to represent the field to be landed in, also a string suspended about six feet high representing the boundary hedge to land over. By the string the Chief Instructor and others would station themselves to see that the aircraft did finish its landing within the area. I watched the first six or so all overshoot the area and receive no marks. I was determined not to miss the area and my approach was good crossing over the string with a foot to spare, but the marked boundary was rapidly approaching, so I quickly pulled the nose up and stalled which was fine, the only snag being that I was just too high and dropped five feet like a stone breaking part of the undercarriage, but it was within the area; this gave me very good marks and much to the fury of those who hadn't broken their aircraft, I passed out 'above average' while they were merely 'average'. After the passing out parade, which we had been practising for weeks, and was performed in front of the Air Chief Marshall of Training Command, we became full Pilot officers and were duly posted to different assignments, mine was to Henlow to fly Tiger Moths as the safety pilot, while the boffins experimented with the automatic pilot, not exactly exciting for a young pilot; but there were other things going on at Henlow including parachute jumping and testing

the parachutes. Volunteers were always wanted and junior officers were expected to go forward; my turn came and I reported to the aircraft, an enormous twin-engined ancient biplane bomber; I had a parachute on my chest and one on my back. Jumping was not done from inside the aircraft, but one took off standing between the wings holding on to the strut which kept them apart and facing backwards clung on. The aircraft would take off and circle round till it had reached 1000 feet. When it was in exactly the right position over the aerodrome the pilot would signal you to turn round when the slipstream would wrench you off into space. You had to count to three and pull the cord. I was very apprehensive about the whole affair, but there I was standing on the wing watching the ground crew start the engine. I could hardly believe my good luck, it refused to start! I quickly got off. It was a near shave, and I never believe in volunteering more than once.



The automatic pilot in the Queen Bee was just about perfected by the spring of 1938. A flight was formed of a Senior Officer, a Flight Lieutenant and myself, plus about 25 troops, and was sent to Watchet where the anti-aircraft battalions held their summer camps and fired 4.5 guns at drogues towed behind aircraft from Weston Zoyland. The Queen Bee with engine set to full

power would be launched by catapult fixed to the cliff edge which gave the aircraft a flying speed after leaving the catapult. The Queen Bee was also fitted with floats to land on the sea and be recovered by a large fishing trawler that was hired for the summer and was fitted with a crane to hoist the aircraft aboard. There was also a high speed R.A.F. launch manned by R.A.F. Marine Air Sea Rescue personnel. I was rushed to the scene of the landing by this boat, jumping aboard the aircraft and waiting until the trawler came alongside to fix the hoist on the aircraft. Very simple if the landing was good, but more often than not the landing was heavy, breaking the struts that held the floats and leaving the machine half submerged, but we never completely lost one. It was a most entertaining summer; everybody got on well and the liaison with the army was excellent. They would be invited for a trip on the launch etc. with parties galore. A bonus from this job was that I got sent on a seaplane course to covert to flying boats and seaplanes should it be necessary to fly the Queen Bee off the water. At the end of September the army left and we broke camp.



After a short period at Farnborough I went to Biggin Hill to tow targets for the army, flying Swordfish type machines. This must be the most monotonous of all flying jobs, going up and down a three mile course for one and a half hours, not knowing if there was anybody watching or not, returning to base 'Very bored and cold and repeating the dose in the

afternoon. Fortunately I got an invitation to join my C.O. of the summer and another officer for a skiing holiday of three weeks in Switzerland. The spring of 1939 saw us at Weston Zoyland still towing targets, but we had much faster machines, Hawker Henleys, a larger version of the Hurricane. We could tow at 160 mph, and the army used real shells. On other occasions the R.A.F. would book us for Air to Air firing. Some of them didn't know, which was the target from the towing aircraft; fortunately no pin pricks! After declaring war on the Germans in 1939 the Ministry thought it desirable to collect up all civil aircraft that the R.A.F. did not require, to make sure no other undesirables could use them. I was sent to Ringway, Manchester, and from there would be flown or driven to wherever a machine might be stored. There was a very strange six-seater passenger aircraft used to take people to the Scillies. This one had been dismantled and bits were hanging from the roof rafters of a barn; the two small engines were on the ground with the propellers propped up against them. The only person present was a very cheerful but very rural character who kept the grass cut and did odd jobs. We inspected the aeroplane's pieces together and he told me to come back the next afternoon. He assured me he would have it altogether, he knew a lad who would give him a hand. Sure enough next day it was there, a strange looking machine, a high-winged monoplane with two small radial engines, which had to be kept at full revs. The fuselage had six single seats, some of the windows were missing and the whole apparition was painted red and yellow. I saw my Devon friend pour a little petrol into each tank, and hoped I wasn't going too far as he hadn't got any more. The aircraft flew quite well, except every gust of wind would make it shudder a little. After refuelling at Weston Zoyland I had a good journey to Manchester. After the ferrying was over an Army Major required flying from Bournemouth, all round the coast line to Bristol. He was looking for sites to lace pillboxes. This little job took a whole month, flying nearly every day.



We did it in a Magister aircraft, a monoplane trainer which succeeded the Tiger Moth, an excellent machine but very cold, one has to remember all these aircraft had open cockpits.

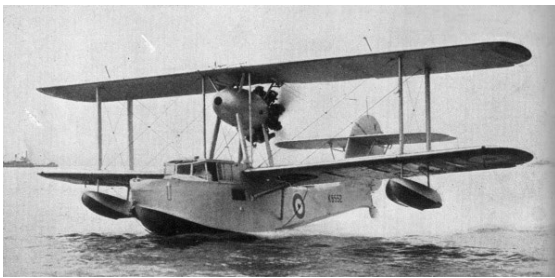
This was to be my last specialist job before being caught up in the war and getting posted to R.A.F. Benson, near Oxford,

to learn operational flying on Fairey Battles, a heavy single-engined and underpowered light bomber, which was quite useless being too slow and unmanoeuvrable; many were lost in France. My posting after the course was not to a Battle Squadron but, having done a seaplane course, I was sent to Plymouth to fly Coastal Command



Personnel from Plymouth, around the coast of the British Isles to their various Coastal Command stations. Very often I flew them in the amazing

amphibious Walrus. A senior officer had to make a call at Pembroke dock, where there was a squadron of flying boats including the Sunderland, the newest and the best flying boat built in this country at this stage of the war. The Sunderland had just started the



eleven hour Atlantic Anti-U-Boat Patrols it was their duty to help escort the convoys by endeavouring to spot the U-Boats might be just below the surface and to bomb or let the escort vessel know. Leaving here flew on to Stranraer, a lovely estuary sheltered from all winds, except from the North when the sea became extremely rough.



and that them we

flying boats were the older types like London's and Stranraer's, which were large bi-planes, had open cockpits, and were difficult to keep safely at the moorings, particularly if the seas became choppy. The night after we arrived and put our Walrus away on its wheels in the hanger, the weather turned very bad very quickly, and by daylight all the flying boats had sunk at their moorings; the water was shallow at low tide and the tops of the wings and engines were visible. We did not stay for the salvage; no doubt the squadron was re-equipped with Sunderlands.



By October 1940 Bomber Command was being expanded as quickly as possible to keep the enemy at bay, while the army rebuilt their units after Dunkirk; hence a posting to Harwell for a conversion course on Wellingtons. Apart from the pilots getting to know the Wellington, crews were made up and, as a crew, would be posted to a squadron. By chance I got

a rear gunner who wanted to be a pilot but somehow missed his course and became a rear-gunner. He had two full blues and three half-blues at Cambridge playing in various sports; he also played cricket for Kent. He became a master of his machine-guns in the rear turret; he had two German fighters to his credit while protecting us. His name was Pilot Officer Chalk and was a marvellous asset and a great friend off and on duty. Our crew was posted to 115 Squadron stationed at Marham, Norfolk, not far from Kings Lynn. It was a pre-war bomber station well-endowed with excellent accommodation and hangers. The area of the grass aerodrome was the largest in the country. For night flying aircraft were confined to the flare path strip; for testing in daylight, take-offs and landings could be spread over the whole area, which saved quite a bit of time. This sounds a bit haphazard but there were no accidents, at least not until a new body of aerodrome controllers took over! Another big advantage of such a large landing area was that at night-time the flare path was laid out with paraffin lamps, large naked flame contraptions. Should an aircraft come to grief on the flare path, it only took a very few minutes to move the line over to a fresh place. Our bombing operations started very soon after arriving at Marham. For the first two trips an experienced pilot accompanied us to advise on the best way to enter the target area. One's first impression of enemy gun fire is that there can be no way of not being shot down. I remember being astonished at the cool way our pilot appeared completely to ignore shells exploding around about us and calmly gave orders to the bomb aimer to take him over the target. The time taken by the bomb aimer calling out 'left left' or 'right right' then 'steady steady' 'bombs gone' seemed to take ages, but in fact it probably wasn't any more than a minute. As I have remarked, our pilot was a cool customer and was in no hurry to leave the area. He just kept looking down to see what effect our bombs were having; being our first trip we could not understand why he didn't immediately turn for home and get out of the area, and it wasn't until we were being debriefed by the intelligence officers that we appreciated he could tell them more or less accurately where our bombs had landed. He led us on the next operation to Hanover and, after a successful attack, there was nothing more he could show us, so from then on we would be on our own. Our first target was Hanover again; we were pleased, having been there before, and felt quite confident, but the weather forecasters made a mistake with their forecast. The cloud which was over the British Isles

would break up as we crossed the channel when we returned to base. This was the prediction, but actually the cloud never broke and after flying for three hours we decided to return. It was difficult to know exactly where we were, not having seen any landmarks, so our new navigator was put to the test taking shots of the stars with his astro-sight and trying to make out where we might be. After three hours he didn't think we were over Norfolk but close to the English Channel, so I said we would fly north for ten minutes, then break cloud and have a look. This we did. As the clouds thinned out it was fairly black below and it could have been the sea. Suddenly the front gunner shouted 'balloon barrage dead ahead'. I was very relieved that we must be over land, and seeing an aerodrome beacon with a flare-path lit up, was able to land. On reporting to the control tower we found that we had landed at Tangmere and that it was the Southampton balloon barrage that we had seen ahead of us. We were very fortunate; others were not so lucky and there were forty-two aircraft lost that night, either forced landing or running out of fuel and crews baling out. In the early morning the officer on duty in the control tower decided the runway at Tangmere was not long enough for a Wellington with a full bomb load to take off safely, and gave orders to the Armoury Section to de-bomb the aircraft. On a fighter station the Armoury Section have little call to handle bombs on aircraft, and not surprisingly the armourers found removing the incendiaries from their containers a bit confusing. From the control tower the officer watched the proceedings of de-bombing the Wellington with some misgivings and phoned me to ask for assistance. My knowledge of the job was limited to knowing how to release the incendiaries when airborne. I quickly collected our bomb aimer hoping he would know the drill. We arrived at the scene too late to help but we did see an airman walking along the grass verge a little distance away from the aircraft with twelve incendiaries cradled in his arms to a heap of incendiaries piled on the ground. Apparently as each section in the incendiary case was released (there are three sections containing twelve x 4 lb incendiaries) he had to catch them in his arms, walk away and let another airman very gently lay them on the ground; one small tap and they would all be up in flames. Our bomb aimer was able to release the empty containers, and we were glad to take off before the armourers tried to repack the containers. Hitler had decided to invade this country, and to do so he mustered large quantities of barges in the Channel ports. A lot of night operations were directed against them, or laying sea mines at the entrances to the harbours. These operations were quite popular with the crews; the whole business could be over by 9 p.m. giving time to get to the pub in Kings Lynn before closing time, a journey which was just as hazardous as the operations! Marham was a particularly happy station, possibly because two squadrons operated from it, which meant a large number of personnel including W.A.A.F .s who started taking up their various duties while we were there replacing batmen with batwomen, a conversion that took place without comment by 99% of the officers, the

odd one being a dental officer, an excellent fellow in every way his contributions to a party were without parallel. He made it quite clear, however, to everybody including the C.O. that should a female enter his bedroom, she was there for one purpose only. It was just about after the third morning's cup of tea had been delivered that his posting back to Civvy Street came through!

Air crews had a number of problems to endure and probably the greatest was the cold during January and February. Flying at 15,000 feet for many hours with temperatures of minus 25° inside the aircraft could be very serious. There was no form of heating apart from clothing and, as always, it is the extremities that suffer most; hands which had to be used needed gloves with separate fingers, one pair of silk, one woollen and a gauntlet was the most one could wear and still use the fingers. Legs had to be well covered and excellent flying boots were provided but no silk stockings; girl friends were asked for their cast-offs, but being in short supply the cast-offs were pretty thread-bare; two pairs and thick long woollen stockings helped a lot. The air gunners were often in extreme discomfort and the guns would sometimes freeze up. Everyone wore leather helmets with earphones and a microphone strapped across the face which also held the oxygen mask. It was not uncommon to have a sheet of ice forming from the mask to your chest as your breath would freeze on the way out. The other problem brought about by the cold was drowsiness. As a crew no one spoke unless he had something important to report; this stopped a lot of idle chatter. The exception in the extreme cold was to call up the various members to make sure they were still awake.

At this time there was a large searchlight zone which started in Holland and went down to Northern France, a continuous line about fifteen miles wide. There must have been thousands placed quite close together; as one held you the adjoining lights would also fix on the aircraft making a beautiful target for the night fighters. Various tactics were thought out to confuse the lights; dropping of empty beer bottles was favoured by some, apparently they whistled on their way down like a bomb and one hoped the crews on the lights would run for cover. We preferred to increase speed by losing height and get across as quickly as possible. Crews were most likely to be caught on the way home; it would be all dark and then suddenly six lights would come on and the aircraft could be held for a long time, and one felt very exposed to fighters. On non-flying days at nine o'clock each morning Group Headquarters informed the squadron of the target for the night and how many aircraft were required, or the order might be 'stand down', which meant aircrews were allowed to disperse for the day. However should the 'stand down' order occur on subsequent days or continuous bad weather prevented flying duties, the officers in charge of the various sections, such as navigators, wireless operators and air gunners would be responsible in furthering the proficiency of their members. Also various crew drills were organised, such as how to evacuate the aircraft and launch the dinghy in the event

of having to land in the sea. The dinghy was launched from its housing in the wing by pulling a cord, and in no circumstances should this be done during a practice drill as replacing it took a long time. But every squadron has its Pilot Officer 'Prune'. Pilot Officer 'Prune' was the name given by Bomber Command in its monthly magazine to the type of character who can be relied upon to do something unbelievably stupid on almost every occasion, totally defeating everything in the nature of directives however clearly worded or orders of any kind. He can be found in all the services and indeed in all walks of life, and when something particularly idiotic had been perpetrated in Bomber Command it would be reported in the monthly magazine and attributed to Pilot Officer 'Prune'. Our Squadron was no exception to the general rule and had its Pilot Officer 'Prune' who, during one of the ditching drills, pulled the cord to release the dinghy which should have sprung out of the wing and inflated itself but on this occasion remained in the wing. Word got around of the failure and other crews tried their aircraft with poor results. A report was immediately phoned through to Group Headquarters asking for advice and a reason for the failure of the dinghy release as the aircrews had rapidly lost confidence in their survival at sea. Headquarters quickly replied that when the aircraft hit the water the dinghy would be forced out by the water or words to that effect. We were glad not to have to prove whether their assumption was correct. As aircrews were excused all routine station duties, as they had to be available for flying duties at all times, it was difficult to establish discipline in the crews, particularly when a crew was made up completely of Sergeant Pilots; there can be little doubt that a number of aircraft were lost through lack of discipline. March 1941 was a busy month as recorded in letters home mentioning Hamburg which appeared the best defended town visited, and the excitement of the first Berlin raid (see Appendices IT and ill). With more experience of bombing targets and the difficulties of spotting the aiming points, the use of flares dropped by aircraft became more widespread. We would co-operate with other crews and try to make as much light as possible; a dozen flares burning at the same time gave a very good light.

No. 218 Squadron, the other squadron stationed at Marham, lost its Wing Commander and a Flight Commander at the same time. As replacements took a little time our crew was changed from 115 Squadron to 218 Squadron and promotion to Squadron Leader came my way and I took over 'B' Flight 218



Squadron; there were nine bombers in each flight. Quite naturally there was the usual friendly rivalry between the two squadrons and the move could be embarrassing to our crew in the new flight, so we needed to produce an ace card. The chance came all too soon, a Wellington MK II arrived; this was the same air frame

but fitted with Rolls Royce engines developing more power than the Bristol Pegasus engines and the bomb bay had been deepened to house the new 4000 lb. bomb. I quickly volunteered to take this machine on its first trip. The main bomber effort was a target in the Ruhr Valley, but we went alone to Hanover as the armament division wanted to assess how much damage the new bomb could achieve. After flying in the morning to make sure everything was working and to get the feel of the new engines the briefing was at 6 p.m. and take off at 10 p.m. The exhaust pipes of the Wellington MK II were short stubby pipes that protruded a few inches outside the engine cowlings. In day-light no flames could be seen but at night the flames were very bright and billowed out by a foot or so from their housing. While being quite attractive to watch they also made the aircraft extremely easy to be detected by night fighters. The U-Boat menace on the shipping lanes was becoming very serious. To try to reduce their launchings, operations to Kiel to bomb the U-Boat pens were ordered. The difficulty was insufficient darkness, the first two hours up the North Sea had to be done in daylight. We were assured we would have fighter cover and this must have been very effective as no enemy fighters were seen.

It was quite dark at the target only, being so far North, it wasn't dark for long and one needed to be away to clear the Danish and Dutch coasts and Frisian Islands before dawn. A British convoy might be seen travelling up the coast in the dawn light with its destroyer escort. The navy's aircraft identification wasn't always too hot and if one flew too near or low a few shells could be expected. One morning having been nearly hit by their shells we replied with a burst from the front turret across their bows. This produced a naval officer at our next briefing explaining their difficulties and hoping we would not continue to be so inconsiderate! A tour of operations was thirty sorties and on July 7th an attack on Munster was to be our last effort. I believe all the crew were glad it was not a long trip and very relieved it turned out to be uneventful. This was followed by a week of ground duties and handing over the flight to somebody else. The crew was posted to various operation training units. I have memories that the night before leaving Marham a dance was being held in the Sergeants Mess and we had invitations to be present. The hospitality in their mess is well known in the R.A.F., and what with this and the array of attractive W.A.A.F.s that had been mustered, my memories of leaving Marham remain a bit dulled. 27 Training Unit at Lichfield was my next station to form a new flight as the demand for air crews was growing. Unfortunately for me I arrived before the flight had been organised and, there being no post for a Squadron Leader, my rank was reduced to Flight-Lieutenant, which happened quite frequently during the time of acting-ranks and one had to put up with demotion with as good a grace as possible. But it did not go down too well after holding the senior rank in an operational station. Being sub-servient to a non-operational Flight Commander was bound to cause a clash of personalities.

A new satellite aerodrome was completed in February. I had my rank restored and became the supremo of the place. The instructors were all ex-operational types including an officer from my old squadron, and together we ran a very successful training unit turning out more operational crews than the main station. The danger was over enthusiasm to increase the number of crews trained and gambles were taken with the weather. One night a crew came back from a short cross-country flight to find the aerodrome closing down with fog. We could hear them flying round and round and, thinking they couldn't see the flare path, we fired off very lights and rockets to attract their attention. When they did land safely they said the flare path was quite visible and thought we were firing the rockets to send them away. Night flying was kept to better weather after this hair raising incident. Orders came from the main station to have six aircraft and crews ready to report to their control tower to make up a maximum Bomber Command effort. One experienced pilot was included in each trainee crew. On June 1st the first one thousand bomber raid was launched against Cologne. Our six aircraft all returned safely, two were missing from the Main Station and altogether Bomber Command lost seventy-six aircraft, which appeared to be very heavy casualties, but actually the percentage losses was the normal for a raid. A few nights later another one thousand raid was organised against Essen, with much the same result. Shortly after this raid I was posted to 9 Squadron for a second tour of operations. My rest period was not finished but my removal was hastened by my making rather pointed remarks in the Mess on how some senior officers had missed the opportunity to break their operational duck. My contempt for the C.O. was becoming very close to insubordination.

9 Squadron was formed during the First World War and was one of the original R.F.C. bomber squadrons, its crest being a sinister looking black bat with the Latin words 'Per Noctem Volamus' written below. I was to be the new 'B' Flight Commander, relieving a jolly war time character who had just completed his first tour and was popular with the aircrews by encouraging familiarity without due respect for rank. I realised I should have to become unpopular at the start of my duties but the fact that I had done a tour and received a decoration made the job much easier. If I could have an early exciting trip and survive I should be accepted; this was to come sooner than I thought. The first operation with a scratch crew made up of spare personnel around the squadron was to Bremen. We carried incendiaries plus three thousand five hundred pounds with six hundred gallons of petrol. Owing to low cloud it was difficult to see the target, but we released the bombs amongst the greatest concentration of anti-aircraft fire, hoping we were not too far off, and landed back after a five and three-quarter hour journey. The mine laying operation off St. Nazaire Harbour is recounted in a letter home of June 28th, which read as follows:-

"We went on the big Bremen raid but owing to much cloud we didn't see anything. The next night, Friday, I had the nearest shave of my life and the most exciting trip. I had to go mine laying just off St. Nazaire, low level, that is just skimming along over the trees in France and then just over the water to the allotted mining area. That part we did quite O.K. but coming back I felt a bit aggressive and decided to beat up a destroyer and an anti-aircraft ship. We machine gunned them and definitely woke them up, but very foolishly I turned away over a very heavily defended harbour and town and they beat us up, dozens of search-lights and machine guns and light guns all got us, stuff was flying in all directions, we too were firing for all we were worth to put the searchlights out. We got away still flying but the undercarriage flaps and bomb doors were all hanging down dismally, also petrol pouring from the starboard engine. We staggered back across France only to run into another defended area on the North coast. I had had great trouble to reach two thousand feet and we had to lose it all to get clear, so we started our 180 mile sea crossing just above the water with many disadvantages. Well we got to our coast line by Seaton when the starboard engine stopped. We struggled along on one engine to Abingdon near Oxford. Just as I was about to make a circuit of the aerodrome area the port engine stopped, so I had no choice but to glide into the darkness to where I imagined the aerodrome was. We almost did a good job of it, only I saw a wooden Nissen hut between us and the aerodrome, so we went through it and crashed onto the aerodrome just stopping before hitting a hanger. None of us was really hurt, only bruises and I got a black eye, otherwise all is well. But we were extraordinarily lucky."

The success of the forced landing stood me in good stead with the squadron; my flying capabilities were no longer in doubt, but behind the scenes a small reprimand came from the Chief Engineering Officer of the station. He reminded me had I used the petrol balance cock correctly, I should have switched over the leaking petrol tank to use it up without using the good tank and then turned it off and turned on the good tank; this would have given enough fuel to return to base. My only reply was to mention that the undercarriage could not be lowered and he would then have had the job of clearing up the mess!

The fuel system of the Wellington was arranged so that the petrol in each wing could be used up equally or either wing tank used individually. This was done by turning a round wheel-type cock from the central position to either wing. It was situated behind the pilot's seat out of sight and also out of reach unless the pilot got out of his seat. Rather naturally it was never used, except in some unforeseen event. In the present circumstances its very existence had been forgotten. Hence the reprimand from the Engineering Officer. The hydraulic system was out of action, the undercarriage could not be lowered and neither did the air

brakes work, so a crash landing somewhere was inevitable. The only war wound I received occurred during this forced landing. A small splinter from the Nissen hut pierced my left eye lid; it was nothing at the time but after a week a sort of wart appeared which grew downwards and affected by sight a bit. One evening enjoying a beer with the M.O. he suggested the eye specialist at Ely Hospital would soon fix it and he made an appointment. Within two days I was lying on the operating table having the wart removed by one of the finest Harley Street specialists. The operation was completely painless but the clanking of the scalpels etc. etc. as he threw them back into the tray did nothing for my imagination and I quite believed my entire eye lid had been removed. After he had finished I sat up on the table not feeling too good. The specialist quickly noticed the symptoms and instructed the nurse to bring two large brandies. We chatted together and, after two more, I was released with one eye bandaged and the other seeing double. Nine operational sorties were successfully completed by our crew in July and these were to be the last carried out flying Wellingtons as 9 Squadron had been transferred to 5 Group, which was being re-equipped with the new four- engined Lancaster. We all knew about the Stirling and Halifax, which had been proved but no information could be obtained about the Lancasters. Before taking over our new aircraft and moving to Waddington in Lincolnshire, the squadron went on a conversion course to fly the Manchester, which was a large two-engined bomber the same size as the Lancaster, but so under-powered it had to be converted to four engines. The course took about three weeks, chiefly through the difficulty of keeping the Manchester serviceable. Take-offs and landings are extremely wearing on any aircraft, more so on one that is under-powered.



But once we got to the Lancaster we all felt it was the best machine in the world with no faults or vices. By this time I had got a permanent crew; up till then crew members who had a few trips to finish their tour came along. I was a bit concerned about the new navigator; I was assured he was the best possible navigator and a charming man, the only difficulty might be his nerves. His last trip had ended in disaster and he had been badly burnt. We did twenty trips together and he was magnificent; he had got

over his nerves or controlled them bravely. The Lancasters having a much longer range than the Wellingtons enabled the bombers to attack targets much deeper into enemy territory; also being able to fly much higher with three times the bomb load could cause a lot more damage. The Germans invented the VI or flying bomb which was very destructive when it first attacked London; the anti-aircraft (AA or ack-ack) defences and Fighter Command soon made them less effective. The V2 rocket was a real menace and there was no way to stop it landing on London except by destroying the place of manufacture which was chiefly done at Peenemünde. The Lancasters made a very successful low level attack on the town and stopped production for a while. Attacks on Italy were comfortably within

the Lancasters range and carrying a very good bomb load. A typical load might consist of two 1000 lb bombs plus six containers of 4 lb incendiaries. If the intention was to set the place alight thirteen containers of incendiaries would cause a good blaze when delivered by five hundred bombers and the fire could not be put out for some days. It was a strange sight to see Geneva, being neutral, with all the street lights on. We were not allowed to fly over the town but one had to have a good look as most air crews had not seen a town lit up at night. The towns in Italy given special treatment during October and November were Milan, Genoa and Turin. A great deal of equipment for the North African forces were supplied by them. A letter home (see Appendices VI, VII and VIII) relates our day-light raid on Milan. That night the Halifaxes dropped high explosive bombs to help spread the fires. The height at which the crews attacked a target was left to the discretion of each crew. The majority favoured flying as high as possible, between 20,000 and 23,000 feet. We didn't like it up there chiefly because oxygen had to be used and also the heavy guns would explode their shells around you; on the other hand flying below 9000 feet put you amongst the Beaufort type guns with all their hundreds of shells and tracer bullets, so we favoured between 12,000 and 13,000 feet. Probably the greatest danger would come from being bombed by ones friends above. Whether it was luck or good judgement we shall never know, but our Lancaster never got hit by anything. Nearly all aircraft had some form of picture painted on the side as a mascot or just to show off the artistry of the crew, and some were extremely good. Apart from the number painted on the aircraft, each one had its squadron's letters and the call sign letter; 9 Squadron was W .S. ("William Sugar") and our letter was Z ("Zebra"). At that time the Daily Mirror ran a strip cartoon and the heroine was a tall ravishing blonde with very shapely legs. We wrote to the Mirror to see if they would send us a large picture of her to stick on our aircraft and behold before long it arrived and she looked very fine. We changed our call sign from Z-Zebra to Z-Zola, this being her name. The last operation of our second tour came on Nov. 18th, 1942, a low level attack on the Fiat works in Turin. We dropped the bombs from 4000 feet and the photos from our camera showed them going through the roof of a large shed. This was a satisfactory finale. Sadly, we thought the picture of Zola should stay with the aircraft, but after six more operations she was shot down in the North Sea; also our navigator still had a few more trips to finish his tour. He was put with a new crew, who would not heed his advice; after three trips he lost his nerve and jumped out over Germany and became a P.O.W. As a form of postscript to our bombing operations, in our experience all German targets presented very similar conditions of defence, some might have been easier to find and identify by the coast line or a large river but the actual defensive systems were much the same, a large number of light Beaufort type guns with heavy 4" guns to form a barrage, and these were accompanied by searchlights in great



numbers. Up to the end of 1941 the number of aircraft actually over the target at one time was small, perhaps five at the most, and each one could be given individual treatment from the defences, the bomb aimers would insist on circling the target to make sure they had come to the right place and seldom making a good bombing run, the peppering from the barrage guns also dodging the searchlights exhausted the crew's patience or nerves and the bombs would be released as 'near enough'. On one of our early operations this did happen to us and from then on we would examine the map of the target area very carefully before taking off and decide the course to set on arrival at the area, set the course and fly straight in letting the bomb aimer give slight corrections where necessary. It was not a bad moment for the pilot or bomb aimers as they were fully occupied, but the rest of the crew had to twiddle their thumbs and wait for those magic words 'Bombs Gone'. During 1942 the Pathfinders force came into service. It was a great asset to all bombing operations and we, of 9 Squadron, maintain its formation was due to our efforts. On all bombing sorties every aircraft would carry one flare which could be dropped over the target to help identify it, but to see the result of the flare the aircraft would have to circle around, and it was always much easier to see the ground from somebody else's flare. We decided all our aircraft on arrival at the target would drop its flare and, if we had timed ourselves to be over the target at roughly the same time, the illuminations were good. We got our Station Commander to request that all 3 group aircraft would do the same thing. !though this was effective it was too haphazard with flares being dropped miles apart. The Pathfinders were formed carrying flares only and arriving over the target at the same time. The target area was so lit up that the allowing bombers could see the target from miles away. The second operational tour being over my C.O. inquired if there as any particular job I wanted. Not knowing what the choices might be, I sked for anything that did not involve training air crews. In hindsight this may have been a mistake as had I gone to a training unit I would have been a Wing Commander; as it was I went to Boscombe Down to learn the tricks of test pilot dealing with heavy bombers. It sounded quite glamorous but I soon found it meant flying on a performance testing job with civilian technicians taking notes of speed and temperatures at every 1000 feet flying absolutely straight and level for 5 minutes at a time. It took quite a time to learn how to maintain an exact speed and height for 5 minutes, and without any doubt it is the most difficult of all flying.

A large number of the motor-car factories in England were turned over to the production of heavy bombers. To make sure that in mass producing these the standards were maintained I landed the job of testing every hundredth bomber produced, and for this I had a technician and my own car. We would be notified when an aircraft had been delivered to an operational station and we would test it with full bomb load conditions before the squadron took it over. The job was rather monotonous but it did involve visiting all the operational stations and staying two or three nights. All the aircraft tested came within the limitations set by the Air Ministry. We did this for about a year which satisfied everyone concerned that the aircraft were O.K., and so the job stopped. Apart

from the routine performance testing, other interesting jobs were included. The Lancasters used for the dam-busting raids had special bombs; this meant removing the bomb doors because of their peculiar shape, and their performance might have been affected; two of us had to test a Lancaster carrying one 12,000 lb bomb which was designed to break the submarine pens at Kiel, and was fixed to the aircraft with one bolt. There was concern about the strain put on the wings when pulling out of a dive at the maximum speed of 360 m.p.h. We decided it was safe provided the machine was pulled out gently. After we had taken off the Air Ministry had phoned Boscombe to limit the diving speed to 300 mph, but it was too late to tell us! Towards the end of the war the minds of the manufacturers of four-engined aircraft were directed towards ways of converting them into passenger aircraft. Avros, who made the Lancaster, produced the York, which was quite good and Handley Page the Hermes. Handley Page were concerned how the Bristol engines would operate in a very hot climate, and I managed to collar a nice trip taking a Halifax to Khartoum in the hot season. We stopped at Naples and Cairo on the way out, spent two months in Khartoum and went right on down to Cape Town landing at Nairobi, Ndola, Bulawayo, Johannesburg and Kimberley. We would stay a few nights at each place to show off the Halifax, receiving the treatment as if we were the top brass. On the return journey we landed at difference stops, one was Salisbury where we were attacked by a plague of locusts; they ate everything except the aircraft. Another place was Malta; one had to be careful here as the runway was still covered with bomb holes. The final landing was at Lynham to pass customs; although the bomb bay was full of loot it would have taken so long to unload that the customs charged each of us a nominal fee. The invasion of Europe was imminent in 1944 and heavy aircraft were needed for other jobs besides carrying bombs. The towing of gliders had been developed as far as possible, and dropping of equipment, and special bomb bays had to be designed and tested; most of this work came our way. The one we would have liked but did not get was the dropping of a jeep from a Halifax Bomber. The boffins had estimated one large parachute could be sufficient; everybody on the station watched as the jeep dropped from 1000 feet above the aerodrome hardly reducing its speed very much from the normal pull of gravity. The parachute was salvaged but not the jeep; later three parachutes were used with great success. 1945 brought peace and rapid demobilisation. At Boscombe the jet aircraft had been tested and the Meteor was in service. It was obvious to the Chief of Staff that a new type of Airforce was need with pilots who had been trained in quite a different technique; the power of the engines would keep them airborne and the wings were only needed as stabilizers. So all the other flying types of pilots were quickly given their de-mob orders. Sir Frederick Handley-Page did offer a test flying job with his civil airline projects, but after the many opportunities offered by the Services his work did not hold many attractions.

APPENDIX I

NEWSPAPER REPORTS OF DENIS'S FIRST FORCED LANDING

CRASHED AT 70 MPH UNHURT

Clyde-Smith, 21-year old pilot, is one of this world's lucky men. His plane crashed at 70 miles an hour into a field near Poole, Dorset, yesterday - and he lived to tell the tale, unhurt.

In making a forced landing the plane's wheels touched rough ground and the machine turned over. As it rested on its back Smith, loosened his straps and climbed out.

CRASHED UNSCRATCHED

When he crashed near Poole, Dorset, yesterday in an aeroplane which turned completely over, a young R.A.F. pilot named Clyde-Smith escaped without a scratch.

"I had to make a forced landing" he said, "and as the wheels touched at 70 mph the machine shuddered when the nose stuck into the ground. I felt myself going over. There was a crash and I found my head touching the ground. The plane was 011 its back. I could hardly believe that I was still alive".

PILOT CRASHES AFTER LOSING HIS WAY UNHURT IN 70 MPH SMASH

After losing his way an R.A.F. Pilot-Officer, Clyde-Smith, aged 21, crashed into a field at 70 mph yesterday, but escaped unhurt.

He set out from Chester to fly to Netheravon, near Amesbury, Wiltshire, a distance of about 150 miles. The scene of the crash was near Poole, about 40 miles beyond Netheravon.

Finding his petrol supply nearly exhausted, Smith decided to make a forced landing. When the wheels of his machine touched the rough ground the nose went down, dug into the ground, and the machine turned completely over.

The pilot climbed out unhurt before anyone arrived on the scene. The machine was considerably damaged.

Monday, 27th September, 1937

APPENDIX II

LETTER HOME

3rd March, 1941

On Monday had to test three machines, two all right, and the third as he was landing the undercarriage collapsed just as he touched the ground which left him in a heap on the aerodrome, luckily no one was hurt.

Wednesday, raid orders came through, which was the big city Berlin, which is every bomber boy's Mecca. So off we went, unfortunately the wind changed half way across Germany, and we passed over many hotly defended towns. We had done four hours flying and were feeling a wee bit eye sore and so not quite alert! But the Jerry had heard us coming and waited until we were directly overhead and then let fly with every gun he had at us. We did an instantaneous sharp turn and managed to get away, but the machine was tossed about like a feather in a high wind, the black puffs of HE bursts were solid over the town, it was a miracle that we were not touched. Well, as you can imagine, it shook us all pretty badly but we staggered on to go through several more defended areas, but they did not get too close, and finally we reached the big City. We were the second machine there and no fires had been started, and while the guns and searchlights were giving another machine a hearty welcome we sneaked in and gave them our full load right in the centre of the town. Of course as soon as the bombs went off, they realised we had done our worst and they made every effort to catch us, but we were ready for them and dived away doing just under 300 mph. When we were away from the heat we turned to look at the result of our attack and two very heartening fires were just starting up which developed very well. There were no more instances that night and we got to bed at six o'clock and were truly glad of it after 8½ hours flying.

Next day I was up at 10 o'clock and wandered down to the flight to see what was on, and the operation room said "They want a maximum effort for Hamburg, the hottest town in Germany"! So we worked all morning and afternoon to get the aircraft ready and away we went at 9.30 p.m. Our real worry was we still had the previous night's horrors only too clearly in our minds. Well, we got caught in search lights 30 miles south of Hamburg. They did not fire any shots at us, which meant the fighters were sculling round to knock us out, but none appeared although we were lighted up and blinded the whole time, and short of the target we escaped them. We saw the A.A. guns simply pouring shots into the air non-stop, from ground level to 16000 feet, which did not look at all inviting! We climbed to 15000 feet and I decided to quietly glide over the target. All went well and I was about a quarter of a mile from the centre of the target when one search light got us which I ignored, seeing that it was the only one: we went creeping on and I had my head out of the cockpit window to get a better look at the target. The next bit I am a little hazy about 'cos the next moment I found myself on the other side of the cockpit away from the controls. A shell had burst just outside the window and had blown me out of my seat, so I told the boys we had had it and to let the bombs go and we raced away, but not until they had fired some

very close parting shots at us, but we were still breathing and got away again and to bed but not until 5. 30. We lay in bed till 11.00 next day. Friday night was free, so we got one night 1 s rest. Saturday night we were off again to Lorient, which was a very pleasant quiet trip and we had no horrors, but unfortunately it was too dark to bomb accurately. Owing to fog we had to land in Cornwall, and to spoil a good trip my brakes failed and we finished on top of an iron fence with mile of army coiled barbed wire tied round us. The only damage was two chips out of one of the fans which will have to be renewed.

This finished the week. My nerves are just settling down, but after Berlin and Hamburg two nights running I must admit my nerves were nearly cracked.

Hope to get leave shortly but at the moment much too busy to get away. This job holds one in an incredible way. One can't help feeling nervous about the trips but at the same time one hates to miss a single trip. But I must admit I shall be relieved when they are all finished.

APPENDIX III

21st June, 1941

Dear Ma,

Chalk and I are feeling very pleased with the King because a telegram arrived on Friday saying his Majesty the King approves of the immediate award of the D.F.C. for both these Officers; it was because last Sunday we went to Hanover with this largest bomb and put it down fairly squarely in the middle of the high street, the A.A. Fire was intense, to put it mildly, the whole sky was covered in shell bursts, the wind screen was holed twice, but no real damage was done, so we sat back and set course for home; over the Dutch coast line, I saw shells pouring through my left wing, going horizontally and I knew it could only be a fighter, and Chalk hadn't time to tell me as he was busy firing also; but the machine, a ME110, overshot us and went round the front where we gave him a pasting with the front guns. He made two more attacks from behind and the last one he did a steep climbing turn with his right engine on fire. We *did* not actually see him crashing, as we went into a cloud. I had to do this because the second pilot who was in the dome amidships said our wing was on fire and bits were falling off, so I decided it would be wise to get into the wet cloud to put it out, also a spot of hide and seek is a good policy when your opponent is firing cannon shells at you. The fire went out fairly quickly and we got home. Our petrol tanks that side had very large holes in them but the self-sealing stuff worked well and we did not lose more than about fifty gallons, but it was very exciting and has given me quite a bit of confidence in my gunners.

This D.F.C. I find is rather an expensive affair. The Air Officer Commanding came last night to a boxing match we held here and afterwards he saw us and of course we had to celebrate, Chalk and I being in the chair most of the evening. At two o'clock this morning we retired to bed having done ourselves a wee bit too proudly!

We went to Kiel on Friday but had a poor trip owing to too much cloud but we let them have a reminder we were still about the skies. The Russians coming in should make their defences a bit better for us.

These short nights make our raids very tricky; half of them are done in daylight, which doesn't at all suit my idea of night bombing in large black bombers.

Yours etc.

Denis

APPENDIX IV

THE TIMES, Thursday, July 3rd 1941

Act. Sq. Ldr. Denis Clyde-Smith, 218. Sq. One night in June, this Officer was the Captain of an aircraft which took part in an attack on Hanover. Over Amsterdam on the return journey, the aircraft was attacked by a Messerschmitt 110. He manoeuvred his aircraft so skilfully that he enabled both his front and rear gunners to bear on the attacker and it is believed that the enemy aircraft was seriously damaged if not destroyed.

P/O F. G. Chalk, 218 Sq. One night in June this Officer was the rear-gunner of an aircraft which took part in an attack on Hanover. On the return journey over the Amsterdam area the aircraft was attacked by a Messerschmitt 110. P/O Chalk fired two steady bursts which entered the enemy aircraft causing it to break away with flames coming from the starboard side. (Chalk was Denis's rear gunner.)

APPENDIX V

30th May, 1942

Dear Ma,

This week we have been preparing and rehearsing for the big raid on Cologne. It was difficult to keep it secret but all went well.

We ourselves had a very quiet trip: the only worry was, when going over the South Coast outward bound, one of the engines had lost half its oil pressure, and when we got to the target it showed nil! I expected the propeller to fall off at any minute, but all was well and we staggered home. The gunfire and fighters were not so much our worry as collision with our own aircraft.

It was very funny seeing some of the old hands getting ready to operate again, some of them had been off for two years, but all went very well and we lost nobody from here.

Must stop now and get some sleep in case Churchill wants another effort! You never know and, thank goodness, nor do the Germans!

Denis

APPENDIX VI

25th October, 1942

Dear Ma,

Having got back here after my leave, I have been fortunate to achieve my Mecca, in that I was able to cross the Alps by moonlight and sunlight and what's more all for nothing!

We went on the first Genoa raid on Thursday night, and had a great success; the ice cream merchants never had a chance. We were there about first and ordered to do a view of the raid, which meant flying round and round while the raid was on to see how it went. Within ten minutes of the first bomb falling the whole town was a sheet of flames from end to end. It would have been a good example for our A. R. P. Chief to have seen, he would then realise that telephones and small boys aren't much value.

The Alps by moonlight were absolutely magnificent with Mt. Blanc shining in the moonlight, also all the other snow-capped peaks. A grand sight, but a sure death for anyone who had to force land amongst them, you would never find your way out alive.

We stood down on Friday, but were all called early on Saturday morning for a daylight job, and behold it was Milan! It seemed rather a long way in daylight, over 1750 miles return. But all went well, France looked perfect, much greener than England, all those tall poplar trees, and as we went further south the vineyard district, superb country side, farmers ploughing with oxen, most educational trip I have ever done yet. We saw the Alps miles away in the sun looking immense. I never thought we should be able to climb in time to clear them, as we were flying over the roof tops all the way, French men and women waving handkerchiefs all the time.

There were only three of us together all the way, as the rest had gone on ahead or were twenty miles behind unknown to us. I was just about to order my machine gunners to machine gun a train in France when the driver jumped on top of the coal department and began waving frantically, so we let him off.

When we got to Milan it was very awkward because it was covered in cloud. We saw all the first people drop their bombs above it, but that didn't seem good enough to me having come all that way, and having taken great risks not to see the thing burst, it was more awkward too as we had strict orders not to bomb below 6000 feet and the cloud was down to 4000 feet, but I couldn't help that, and took a chance of being blown up by our own bombs, I was determined to see Milan get my share of bombs; so down we went at 350 miles an hour, it must have been a terrifying noise for the people below, but of course that was all to the good, and we broke cloud right over a hospital with its red cross. We let our load

go and they went smashing right across the heart of the town, most satisfying. Then the long trek home, which was really nearly as good by night with the full moon, a grand trip.

So you see that is how I have spent my first three days back from leave. I have no other news at all, but I hope I get a few quiet trips to finish off my tour, as now I have been to every part of the continent within bomber range at the moment, and feel that "Ops" can't offer me anymore, and the sooner I retire for a short while the better, in case I begin to get over confident.

Will write again soon, the report on the news by a Squadron Leader was mine if it's of any interest.

APPENDIX IX

1st November, 1942

Dear Ma,

I would like known quite clearly that, apart from my actual name and a few remarks, those rather awful stories which appeared in the "Daily Express" were not originally by me. How they got hold of my name is still a bit of a mystery. We had fourteen press reporters here on Sunday afternoon, and I was well away from them, as I had a lot of work to do. I believe somebody else did mention something about my trip. I haven't quite lowered myself to go to the papers for glamour! We try to leave that to the fighter boys.

APPENDIX X

16th November, 1942

Dear Ma,

H.M. The King made a surprise visit to this station on Thursday the 12th November At 9.30 a.m. The King stepped out of his car and proceeded to inspect all the crews, speaking to each one, he did not speak to the flight Commanders but after the parade we were told to go to the Airmen's dining hall and have tea with him and believe it or not I found myself sitting down with the King alone having a cup of coffee and a cigarette together. A very informal affair, in fact we discussed most topics; to this day I can hardly believe I did it!!

We operated last Monday to Hamburg but the weather was against bombing. Friday the 13th we went to Genoa, only a few experienced pilots, as the wide spread fog made the return journey to this country very difficult. We all managed to land back at base, which was fortunate.

My total operations for this tour now is 30, making 61 in all, and I think I shall very shortly be drawing stumps.

I have arranged that I get a fortnight's leave on the 5th December, and hope to get married on the 8th December.

(Later the wedding was fixed for the 14th December.)

ROYAL AIR FORCE.
GENERAL DUTIES BRANCH.
July 1937.

The undermentioned are granted short service commissions as Acting Pilot Officers on probation with effect from and with seniority of 5th July 1937: -
Denis CLYDE SMITH.

NOTICE is hereby given that by a deed poll dated the tenth day of September 1937 and duly enrolled in the Supreme Court of Judicature on the eighth day of November 1937 we, FRANK CLYDE-SMITH of Netherclay House, Bishop's Hull, Taunton Somerset Gentleman and ANTHONY CLYDE-SMITH, HELEN ENID CLYDE-SMITH, and DENIS CLYDE-SMITH, children of the said Frank Clyde-Smith all natural born British subjects, have added to our original surname of Smith tide additional surname of Clyde.-
Dated the tenth day of November 1937-
H. G. D. MOGER, Somerset House, Taunton, Somerset, Solicitor for and on behalf of all (177) parties.

The undermentioned Acting Pilot Officers on probation are confirmed in their appointments and graded as Pilot Officers on the dates stated:-
10th May 1938.
Denis CLYDE SMITH.

The undermentioned Pilot Officers are promoted to the rank of Flying Officer on the dates stated: - .
10th Dec. 1939.
Denis CLYDE-SMITH (39856).

The undermentioned Flying Officers are promoted to the rank of Flight Lieutenant: -
10th Dec., 1940.
Denis CLYDE-SMITH (39856).

Air Ministry,
4th July, 1941.
ROYAL AIR FORCE.

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the following awards in recognition of gallantry displayed in flying operations against the enemy: -

Distinguished Flying Cross.
Acting Squadron Leader Denis CLYDE-SMITH
(39856), No. 218 Squadron.

One night in June, this" officer 'was the captain of an 'aircraft which 'took part in an attack on Hanover. Whilst over Amsterdam, on the return journey, the aircraft was attacked by a Messerschmitt 110. Squadron Leader Clyde-Smith manoeuvred his aircraft so skilfully that he enabled both his front and rear gunners to bear on the attacker and it is believed that the enemy aircraft was seriously damaged, if not destroyed. He then took cloud cover and ultimately flew his aircraft safely back to his base. Since February, 1941, this officer has

completed 22 operational missions and his leadership and skill have been of great value.

Marriages Q4 1942

Clyde-Smith Denis Naomi R Broughton Bridgwater 5c 779

Air Ministry, 9th February, 1943.

ROYAL AIR FORCE.

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the following 'awards:

—

Distinguished Service Order.

Squadron Leader Denis CLYDE-SMITH, D.F.C. (39856), No. 9 Squadron.

Transfer to reserve (and called up for Air Force service): —

Flt. Lts. (temp. Sqn. Ldrs.): —

10th May 1943.

D. CLYDE-SMITH, D.S.O., D.F.C. (39856).

The Somerset and/or Taunton Family History Societies may be able to give you a lead as it looks as if the Clyde-Smiths were strong in them parts!!

HTH

Peter Davies