

Walter Morris - 1939/45 War Record.

My story begins in 1923 when I was born in Kettering, the elder son of Charles & Ethel Morris. My father served in the Army during the 1914/18 war, although he rarely talked about it, so I do not know any details of his service, except that he had a very hard time serving in the trenches, in terrible conditions. When he returned to Kettering he worked in a Boot & Shoe factory where I believe he met my mother Ethel May Smith who also worked there, & they married in 1922 at Carey Baptist Chapel. I was born in 1923 & my brother Peter followed two years later. I attended Park Road Infants school when the family moved to the other end of Kettering. Peter & I went to Hawthorn Road Junior School. In 1935 I moved on to the Central School (& Peter followed 2 years later). It was here that I first met Pauline in 1938. For a while we walked out together, & although we drifted apart, we were both in the same circle of friends, & I was still greatly attracted to her.

After 4 years I left School & obtained employment as a Junior Clerk at Stewarts & Lloyds, Corby. I started to work there on the 26th August 1939, just 7 days before the war began. I don't think that many people at the time thought of war starting, & it was quite a shock on the 1st September when without notice a black out was imposed. All street lighting in the Country was switched off, householders were ordered to black out their windows etc, no lights should be visible. These orders were put in place because of the probability of German aircraft making bombing raids over Britain. At 11 am on 3rd September the Prime Minister (Neville Chamberlain) broadcast to the nation to advise that Germany had ignored our ultimatum regarding their plans to invade Poland, & consequently a state of war existed with Germany. That day I recall my father, brother & I spent the afternoon digging a large hole in the garden so that an air raid shelter could be erected, & where we could go if Kettering was ever bombed. In fact we never did get an ARP shelter, & in Kettering only one or two bombs were dropped.

Conscription to the forces was quickly introduced, & men between the ages of 18 & 40 had to register, & were soon allocated to serve in either the army, navy or air force. The only exceptions, other than ill health or disability were men employed in essential war work. Later women were also required to enlist, to join one ATS (army) WAAF (air force) or WRNS (navy). Being just 16 this did not concern me at the time - many people said that the war would be over by Christmas, there was little enemy activity around this country in 1939, & life for me life went on as normal. How wrong we were - there were some food shortages, but rationing was still some time ahead. It was soon to alter, in the Spring of 1940, Hitler's armies swept through Europe culminating with British troops being evacuated from Dunkirk. In preparation to invade Britain Germany launched ceaseless bombing raids on airfields etc in England in an effort to decimate the RAF fighter strength. However the Spitfires & Hurricanes of the RAF defeated the German bombers & in September 1940, Germany cancelled the plans to invade, & instead turned their attention towards Russia, although their Air force commenced bombing raids on many cities & towns in this Country. Earlier Chamberlain resigned as Prime Minister, & was succeeded by Winston Churchill, many believe that he was the man who won the war for our country.

For me 1941 was rather decisive. At the beginning of the year the Government announced the formation of the Air Training Corps, which would train lads between the ages of 16 to 18, for enlistment in to the RAF. The response was overwhelming towns & cities all over the country formed squadrons. Volunteer instructors were enrolled from local people including School teachers, who would train the lads in basic requirements when the cadets reached the RAF. By this time I was 17 years of age - I knew that as the war dragged on, I would have to enlist & I desperately wanted to join the Air Force, so I was one of the first to enlist for the Kettering Squadron. In all over 200 boys enrolled at Kettering initially, & I was fortunate to be appointed to be a sergeant. It was a great adventure, we paraded at Stamford Road School two nights a week, & went through our routines & lessons, everything from drill, marching, to Aircraft recognition learning morse code, & much more &

which was to hold me in good stead when I eventually joined the RAF. We also played at sports, including having a football team in the local youth league. A big thrill that year was a week end camp at RAF Wittering which included a flight in Dragon Rapide an old bi-plane, which at the time was a great thrill. At the end of the year having reached 18 years I volunteered for the RAF & was accepted for aircrew training - at that time I wanted to be a pilot. On February 12th 1942 I received my "Calling up" papers, & told to report to the Aircrew Receiving Centre at Lords Cricket Ground London on the 23rd. I was in fact the first cadet from the Kettering ATC to be called up. At the time I was still working at Stewarts & Lloyds in the Traffic Department, & was given immediate permission to leave, with an assurance that I could return after the war ended.

So for me, AC2 Morris W. 1623896, my war service started when I left Kettering for London on a cold February morning. I duly reported & registered at Lords Cricket Ground. There were many new arrivals & after signing in we were marched to billets about a quarter of a mile away. The billets were one time luxury flats which overlooked London Zoo. About 20 of us were allocated to each flat, which was to be our billet for the next 2 to 3 weeks. We were issued with mattresses & blankets, & had to make our beds up on the floor. For our meals we were assembled & marched to the Zoo Restaurant for our meals. During the next days we were issued with Air Force uniforms & clothing, & each given a Medical & received inoculations etc. Also we had lectures about life in the RAF, & what was expected of us as Airmen. We also took tests to ascertain our education etc. It was all very exciting. In mid-March I along with 40 or so others were posted & sent to the Grand Hotel, Scarborough Yorkshire which was an Initial Training Unit (for Aircrew training). At this time I & all the other new recruits held the rank of AC2 (the lowest of the low) & we were all, at that time being accepted as trainee pilots. The course was hard, discipline was strict, we marched, & subjected to a great deal of physical exercise, as well as attending lectures daily in our quests to finally become fliers. Most of us cadets on the course were about the same age, 18 & 19 year olds, & it was really a great adventure. Graduating in June, we were then posted to a civilian air field, at Brough near to Hull, where we were given some instruction how to fly Tiger Moth aircraft, delightful old bi-planes. My instructor was a first world war pilot, & although he never allowed me to fly solo in a plane, did recommend that I should receive pilot training. So after 6 weeks at Brough, those of us who were selected to continue in our quest to be pilots, were sent to Heaton Park, Manchester to await our next step. Most of the aircrew training was overseas, either in the USA, Canada, South Africa or Rhodesia, & in late September 1942, I with several hundred others, received inoculations, further medicals, & sent to Glasgow to be shipped to Canada. What a thrill as the train pulled up on the dock, where the SS Queen Mary was waiting to embark us, a pre-war luxury liner it was a beautiful vessel, weighing in at over 70000 tons. The vessel had retained much of it's pre-war glory, & after the austerity of war time Britain, it was like living in a wonderland. There were only a few hundred airmen on board, cabins had extra bunks built in, but it was never crowded. The catering arrangements were excellent, & the food was great, no worries about rationing, as the vessel was stocked up by the USA, who had joined with Britain to fight Germany & Japan in December 1941 after Japan attacked Pearl Harbour. Ships to & from the war zones at this time sailed in convoy, protected by the Royal Navy, but the Queen Mary was too fast for convoys, & indeed could outrun & out manoeuvre German U-boats, as it zig-zagged it's way across the Atlantic. So she slipped out of port quietly on her own. For 5 days we airmen lived in this seemingly unreal world, bags of lovely food, cinema shows, lounging on the decks as the ship took a southerly & warm weather course. All too soon we arrived in Boston USA, to a great welcome by the locals who treated us as heroes. But we had a shock as we marched by the front of the ship when we saw a massive great gash of some 12 feet in the bow just at the waterline. On enquiry we were told that in fact the Queen Mary had sliced a British Destroyer in two, on a previous journey back to Britain, being unable to cancel the pre-set zig-zag course in time, such was the force of the great ship. However, we were told that the hole had been filled with concrete, to enable her to get to the States for repair. From Boston we went by train through the New England states to Canada, & it was one of the most unforgettable journeys of my life before or after. In beautiful warm autumnal weather the magnificence of the

scenery was unbelievable, the trees with their red & brown leaves on the tree lined the route, small lakes with blue waters, neat & well manicured houses. Even for a nineteen year old it was a truly memorable experience. After a 15 hour journey we arrived in the Canadian state of New Brunswick shortly after reached RCAF Moncton - this was a "Holding" station, where groups of cadets were selected for various courses, being run in Canada & USA. I cannot recall how many training Centres there were in the USA Canada, they were situated mainly to the west of the Continent, & guessing I would think about ten in Canada & the USA for pilot training, whilst in Eastern Canada navigators & Air Bombers were trained. I spent some three weeks here waiting for a posting, with little to do, except walk to nearby Moncton or go to the camp cinema, write home etc. I was anxious to get on with my training. By the end of October, I with 40 or so other cadets received our posting to RCAF Bowden, in Alberta. After kitting up with winter clothing, we left Moncton early one morning, on our way to the other side of Canada, a journey which would take 5 days. We stopped for a few hours in Montreal, to change trains before proceeding on to Alberta a journey that took us alongside Lake Superior, & on to Winnipeg, where we given a lovely welcome by a Ladies organisation, who supplied refreshments, magazines etc - you would think that we had just won the war, not raw recruits. Eventually we arrived at Calgary, on a sunny but cool November day, & already the first of the winter snow had arrived. A further 100 miles of train travel followed, as we made our way north to Bowden, which is near to Innisfail, midway between Calgary & Edmonton, & some miles to the west the mountain ranges of the Rockies could be seen stretching into the sky. Bowden was a small airfield, with one runway. The billets were very good & well heated, but we did make the mistake of opening some of the windows because it was so stuffy, & did we regret it in the morning when we were nearly frozen. I recall that the days generally in Alberta were sunny but there was a dryness, which somehow made the below freezing temperatures bearable. Snow already covered the countryside when I arrived at Bowden, & more snow followed, to give a deep frozen surface, which lasted throughout the winter. To cope with the conditions, some of the aircraft were fitted with skis. It was not long before flying lessons started, but I was soon to be disappointed, as both I & my instructor, soon realised that I was pretty useless handling an aeroplane, & not surprisingly I was taken off the course. Whilst I loved flying in the old Tiger Moths, I just could not handle the controls, or land the aircraft without a lot of bouncing & bumping about, on reflection it was the right decision, although I was very upset at the time. I had been at Bowden for about 6 weeks, & loved it out there. This all happened about Christmas 1942, & two weeks later I & another 4 or 5 "failures" were posted to RCAF Trenton, Ontario, for Aircrew re-selection. The journey back east lasted some 3 or 4 days, as we travelled via Lake Superior & Toronto to our destination. Trenton was a huge station, seemingly full of Aircrew cadets, many like me for re-selection or waiting to be trained as navigators, wireless operators or Air Bombers. It was so different from Bowden, even the weather. The cold was more penetrating, as the wind picked up moisture off the nearby Lake Ontario & it was most unpleasant. It was a waiting game at Trenton, I was interviewed & decided to re-muster for training as an Air Bomber, & (I think) about a month later was seconded on to a Bombing & Gunnery course, at RCAF Picton, a small aerodrome nearly 100 miles further east. Arriving there I saw that Picton was an island in Lake Ontario joined to the mainland by a causeway, & the aerodrome was built on the top of a hill. It was a nice friendly station, & my course members were a good bunch of lads, mainly about my age. The course was a Bombing & Gunnery course, which commenced in March 1943. We were taught the theory of bombing, & of air gunnery, the composition & fusing of bombs etc, & later I flew some 50 hours in Ansons & Bofingbroke aircraft dropping countless 4lb practice bombs & firing guns. It was I most enjoyable, for a 19 year old. As Spring arrived the weather changed, everywhere was white when I arrived & it seemed that overnight during April the weather became sunny & warm for the rest of my stay. I was to be with many of my course mates until I got back to England 6 months later, & I made a number of good friends. We had some delightful evenings out, in the small town of Picton, or swimming in the lake. The population were very friendly & hospitable, & we were well looked after. The course lasted until early June, & looking at my log book see that I passed both the bombing & gunnery elements each

with a 73% grading. I had passed this part of my conversion to an Air Bombers role & then I with rest of the course members moved on to an Air Navigation Course at RCAF Mount Hope. This station was to the west, near to Hamilton Ontario, & nearly halfway between Toronto & Niagara Falls (which luckily I was able to visit, together with a trip into USA.) During my six week course I learnt a little about navigation & air photography, both in the lecture rooms & by flying, some 45 hours all told, the flying was quite excellent as flights were of about 3 hours duration flying the length & breadth of Ontario. There followed a final examination, which I passed, classed as an Air Bomber & promoted to the rank of Sergeant. How proud I was as I sewed the stripes on to my tunic. What a celebration we all had that night in Hamilton, a city I enjoyed greatly. But time was not on our side, & all too soon we were on our way back to Moncton, to be sent home to complete our training & to fight our war. How different to 10 months earlier, then an untrained airman, & on my return a fully fledged Sergeant. By this time America was sending thousands of servicemen to Britain, so space on the troop ships was full & consequently we had to wait a month before we could be accommodated. Eventually, at the end of September 1943 I & several hundred newly trained aircrew personnel were sent to Halifax, Nova Scotia, to embark once again on the "Queen Mary" en-route for England. Unlike my trip out it was very crowded with some 19000 troops (mainly Americans) aboard. It meant that we had a bed bunk for 24 hours & then 24 hours we had to sleep on the deck floor. Luckily the journey lasted only 6 days, before the vessel docked at Birkenhead. I was given two weeks home leave, to be re-united with family & friends. It was during this time, that I met up again with Pauline, & our romance commenced.

After my two weeks leave I reported to Harrogate before being posted to Whitley Bay, near to Newcastle, for a (Commando type) fitness course, before being sent to Scotland for further flying training, & on completion was sent to Silverstone, here in Northamptonshire, at the end of 1943, an Operational Training Unit where Pilots, Navigators, Air Bombers, Wireless Operators, & Air gunners were present. Here we had to form crews, who would later go on to the Squadrons. It was all rather haphazard, as some 200 of us wandered round a large hanger, trying to form crews. I didn't know anyone else, other than Air Bombers, but eventually found a Pilot, a Navigator, a Wireless Operator, & two Air Gunners, (we would get a Flight Engineer at a later stage). Actually as a crew, we quickly became firm friends, & apart from one of the gunners dropping out, we completed our tour of operations together, with enormous respect for each other, & really we became as close as family. At Silverstone we trained in twin engine Wellingtons as well as attending loads of lectures as we trained for the fight ahead. From Silverstone we were posted to RAF station Swinderby near Lincoln, for our first taste of flying in four engined aircraft. It was here that we met our Flight Engineer. The aircraft were Stirlings, big & ungainly machines, which proved to be a failure operationally - they could not fly any higher than 12-14000 feet, & easy prey for the enemy, but they were ideal for training purposes. Our next step was to convert to Lancasters at another station RAF Syerston, some 30 miles away. Our first experience of flying in a Lancaster was hardly encouraging, for as we took off with an instructor in charge, a tyre punctured & the aircraft swerved off the runway with one wing tip embedded in the grass. We made a very quick escape from the wrecked plane. But that apart, we soon appreciated the Lancaster bomber. 15 hours flying followed, & we were adjudged to be ready to go to a Squadron. On 5th June 1944, we were posted to East Kirby, 10 miles north of Boston to join 630 Squadron. My first memory of East Kirby, was the next morning, which was D-Day, 6th June 1944 when Britain & America & their Allies invaded France. The aircrews who had flown to support the ground troops were so excited by the scale of the invasion forces, the number of ships involved - it all seemed so impressive. The station was built only a year or two earlier, & was quite primitive, spread over a large area, our billets were nissen huts nearly a mile away from the airfield, the Sergeants & Officers' Messes half a mile away, but strangely we soon loved the place. For the next few days as we settled in, we were introduced to the Squadron C.O. Wing Commander Bill Deas, a South African & a great character - sadly he & his crew were killed on a raid a few weeks later. At this time we met our replacement Rear gunner, Flying Officer Geoff Bate who still had half a dozen missions to complete his second tour of operations, we were well pleased. Our

first mission was a night raid to Normandy, & was supposed to be in support of the Ground forces in the invasion area near to Caen. However on arrival over the target, we were ordered not to drop our bombs, as the ground armies had made a quick advance, & the target was now in their hands. So all the aircraft had to turn about & go back to base. When we did arrive over East Kirby, we were then sent off over the North Sea, where I had to drop our bombs because it would be unsafe to try to land the aircraft because the overall weight was over the permitted limit. So out we flew to the dropping zone, & naïvely I dropped the lot, some 12000 lbs of high explosives, & back we went to base, where we were debriefed, given breakfast, which included a fried egg & bacon (a real treat, eggs were very scarce in war time Britain, but aircrews were always given one after an op.) But that was not quite the end of my first mission – the next morning I was called to the Bombing Leaders Office, & given a telling off for dropping all the bomb load when I or the Flight Engineer should have calculated what weight of bombs to drop, to get the aircraft down to the safe landing weight, but no one had ever told me that. However I never heard any more about my “faux pas”. After our first mission others followed in quick succession & by the end of June we had notched up 4 more raids, including a rather hair raising trip to Germany, where some 37 Lancasters were shot down out of a total of 133 sent out, but luckily we were. Geoff, our Rear gunner had by the end of June completed his second tour, we valued his experience in those first few trips & were so pleased when we heard later that he had been rewarded with a DFC. During July we flew 10 further missions, including our first daylight raid – but only three over Germany. With the Allies invading Europe in June the role of Bomber Command changed, & support of the Armies was the first priority, by bombing Railways, Marshalling yards, Oil depots, to hamper the Germans. Also with the threat of Flying bomb attacks on England, a number of raids were against the launching sites, hence missions against German targets were reduced. July 18th was to prove the most horrendous trip we were to face, when we were hit by a German night fighter on our way home. Fortunately we escaped into cloud, & the attack was discontinued. However our aircraft was diving steeply, & out of control. The pilot gave the order to prepare to abandon aircraft, as he tried to regain control, & when it looked that this was beyond him. However with the help of the Flight Engineer, Alec & Doug managed to pull the aircraft out of the dive, to regain control. A relieved crew were on their way home, thankful of the skill & calmness of our skipper, Alec Swain. When we saw the damage sustained by our Lancaster, with part of the wing missing & a hole just behind the Wireless Operators position, we wondered how we had survived. It said something for the skill of our pilot, & for the mighty Lancaster. But we had little time to feel sorry for ourselves, 12 hours later we were off on mission no 10 – our first day operation, thankfully a quiet trip. At the end of July we were allocated our own Lancaster, NN702 J(fg), in which we would end our tour. Nine more missions followed during August, three of them by daylight – it was much the same pattern as we supported the land armies, or raided Flying Bomb sites, attacked U-boat installations on the coast, & bombing an enemy fighter based aerodrome, to put it out of action, prior to a bombing raid to be made that same night. Sad part of this daylight raid, when I witnessed a Lancaster bomber being hit by bombs dropped from another Lancaster flying above – particularly gruesome when we learned later that the doomed pilot, was a Dutchman, on the last mission of his tour, & the aerodrome under attack was in Holland. Sadly I saw no parachutes from the stricken plane. We were given two weeks leave on the 18th August with 26 trips completed. Returning to base, we still had 9 missions to fly to complete our tour of operations, & during the rest of September we completed a further 8 mainly against German industry, & one of those found me over Germany on my 21st birthday, thankfully it was an incident free journey. It was a bit of a change on raid number 33, when with 6 other Lancasters we dropped mines in the German sea-lanes outside of Heligoland, I recall it was quite boring flying for 4 hours over the North Sea. We flew our last mission on the 5th October a daylight raid to Wilhelmshaven, although at the time we did not know we had reached the end, & until the next day when we were air testing an aircraft, & Alec, our pilot, told us that Bomber Command had reduced the number of operations from 35 to 34 with immediate effect, so our battle was over. I remember that when he told us there was a great rush about the aircraft, as we all donned parachutes – we were not taking any unnecessary risks.

That night our crew, & the ground staff who looked after the plane, & were wonderful caring guys, all made our way to a pub in nearby Boston, where we had a whale of a party I'm afraid I do not remember too much about it, but that was excusable. A day or two later our crew left East Kirkby for good, & sent on leave, the seven of us boarded a train from Boston to Peterborough, & it all seemed so casual, we exchanged addresses, promised to keep in touch, but in an instant we went our separate ways. For nearly a year we had been together, living & flying & truthfully had become closer than family, as we supported each other during that period, & in a few seconds on the railway station it all ended & we all went our separate ways. Over the years Alec, Donovan, Doug & I met up a few times but some of the crew I would never see again. Now in 2010 as far as I know just Doug & I survive, although neither he nor I have any knowledge of what happened to Smithy our navigator or our first rear gunner, Geoff. Alec, Donovan & Jock (mid-upper gunner) have all died, but we remember them with great affection, & wonder about the others.

To sum up my tour I flew 34 missions from 12th June to the 5th October 1942- 26 night & 8 daylight missions, flying 200 hundred hours. During that time we attacked industrial sites in Germany, Submarine depots, Oil terminals, Marshalling Yards & Railway Junctions, flying bomb sites & supported the Army by attacking enemy lines. On two missions we were instructed not to bomb on arrival in the target area. I do not have a complete record of bombing loads carried but estimate that in all we dropped over 150 tons - the average bomb load carried was between 9000 & 12500 lbs (depending on the distance flown to the target) & the range of bombs dropped were 4lb incendiaries, 500lb, 1000lb, 2000lb & 4000lb. I would describe my tour as fairly quiet, twice the aircraft came under fire by night fighters, (the most serious I have detailed), & we did sustain slight flak damage. I have been asked whether or not I was scared, I don't think I was, apprehensive - yes, but there was little time to think about those things, there was so much to do all the time. I was thrilled some weeks later when I heard that our skipper, Alec had been awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross-so well deserved.

After completing a first tour Aircrew were expected to have a 6 month break from operations before being recalled for a second tour & so three weeks after leaving East Kirkby, I was posted to RAF Westcott, near to Aylesbury, to await training as an Air Bomber instructor, but there was little to do, as there were a number of men in the same category as me, & there was little to do. Whilst at Westcott, I received the most harrowing news, going home on a day off, my father handed me a telegram which had arrived earlier in the day, advising the death of my brother Peter. Returning from a raid on Dusseldorf, his aircraft was coming into land when it crashed just short of the runway, & tragically all the crew were killed. Peter had joined the RAF just a few months earlier; he had been selected for training as a Flight Engineer, & after qualifying was posted to 166 Squadron at Kirmington, Lincolnshire near to Grimsby. He was killed on 4th December 1944, & was just 19 years of age. We were all devastated, particularly my Mother & Father, who had no idea that he had started his operational tour - he had told me that he had, but being only a few weeks after the end of my tour, didn't want our parents to know to cause them any concern or worry, - instead it was a more profound shock to them when it happened. I do know why the aircraft crashed, had it been attacked to cause damage or loss of fuel I don't know, the Squadron records the crash with the remarks "cause unknown". He was a cheerful lad, good sense of humour, & liked the girls. Unlike me he was mechanically minded, & a after leaving school, was training to be an Engineer. I often wonder if he wanted to follow me into the Air Force, because I think the job he was doing might have exempted him from joining up. We shall never know. He was buried in Kettering Cemetery, with the local Air Training Corps (of which he had been a member) in attendance. Peter's crew were all Canadians & are buried near to RAF Kirmington. So very very sad. My parents were devastated, & it was something my father particularly never recovered from. To try to give them some comfort, I was able to get a compassionate posting to RAF Desborough, like Westcott an Operational Training Unit, & served there for about 6 months, although I was sent to a Air Bombers' instruction Course at RAF Manby in Lincolnshire for three weeks early in 1945, & graduated from their as a fully fledged

Instructor. I stayed at Desborough for a few weeks, not much to do, but it was nice living with my parents, & biking or going by bus, to the base. In May the war against Germany had been won, & there were great celebrations, & we wondered what would happen next. I was soon to find out, aircrew were supposed to fly two tours of duty, the second after a 6 month rest period, so I was not surprised when I was included in a crew made up of instructors who like me were eligible to fly operationally. I do not remember much about my fellow crew members the pilot was from Edinburgh - a Flight Lieutenant Christie DFC, & that's about all. We were posted to RAF Luffenham, near to Stamford, arriving there in mid-June. The war in Europe was finished, but Japan was still fighting, so I & countless other aircrew were being retrained & refreshed for service in the Far East. The course lasted a month & after just 36 hours flying training we were judged to have passed, & then sent home on leave to await a posting to the Pacific war zone. Again fate was to take a hand, when early in August, the Americans unleashed two atom bombs on cities in Japan, causing catastrophic damage they surrendered. My second tour would not happen, & my "career" in aircrew was over. Two days later I was sent to a unit near to Gainsborough, for re-mustering to a ground trade, for the rest of time. I was not alone many more ex-aircrew were there, but no one I knew. During my week there I was interviewed & given lists of various Ground staff vacancies, nothing really interested me, but having to make a decision, I opted for a RAF postal course, preferably near to home. I was given 7 days leave, after which I was posted to an Aircrew Holding Unit, near to Elgin, in Scotland, this was in fact a RAF Coastal Command Station, & no one knew why I, a Bomber Command person was there, & after 2 weeks doing nothing, I was sent to Haverfordwest in, over 400 miles from Elgin, in the South west of Wales. The date was 22nd September 1945, & by then Pauline & I had set the date of our wedding for October 6th, so after just a week in Wales, I was on my way back home for the big day. Despite the war, with food rationing etc we had a lovely wedding, the service was at Fuller Baptist Church, followed by a reception at a Trades Union hall in Club Street. I think there were about 60 people there. Pauline's father had plenty of contacts, & despite all the shortages & rationing managed to provide lots of food & refreshment. Pauline had resigned as a nurse at Kettering General Hospital, when her mother was seriously ill 2 months previously. We left the reception in the early evening, spent the first night in London, & on to Bournemouth for a week, & we recall how unseasonably warm & sunny that second week was, we had a lovely time. Alas by the 18th I was on my travels again, this time to RAF Kirkham, Preston for my course to convert to a Postal Officer. It was a short & intensive course & I qualified early in November. During my service to date I had acquired the rank of Warrant Officer & although now a postal Officer I still retained that rate of pay. Like most wartime servicemen, with the war over I was thinking only of demobilisation - the Government had worked out a scheme for the constructive release of personnel & I learned that I would have to serve for nearly another year. When I agreed to train as a Postal Officer, I was asked where I would prefer to serve, & I specified either RAF Desborough or RAF Luffenham, & wasn't too pleased at Kirkham when I was informed that I was to be posted to India!!!. Accordingly I was given embarkation leave, & at the end of November sent to Blackpool, to await shipment. After 12 days I was one of a train load of airmen, many just raw recruits, who were despatched to Plymouth, where we embarked on to HMS Devonshire, a destroyer, converted to troop carrier - we were on our way to the Far East. On the 15th we set sail. It was quite pleasant, the ship was manned by the Royal Navy, there was a Warrant Officer's mess for the RAF, & we had little to do or the 15 days journey. In the traditional Navy way, a daily rum ration was served to us, although this stopped n a few days when it was discovered that some of the younger RAF personnel, were selling their ration to the Sailors. I was very seasick as the ship ploughed through the Bay of Biscay, & as I laid on my bunk felt even worse, when the radio announced that the Sunday service was being broadcast from Fuller Baptist Church Kettering, where 2 months earlier Pauline & I were. Since 1939 all servicemen going to the Far East were transported round South Africa, but the Devonshire was sent through the Suez Canal, & what a thrill that was, as we stood on the deck to see the ship negotiate a water way that appeared to be only just wide enough. By this time the weather had become warm, & did not really change for my time in India. We arrived in Bombay on New Year's Eve, & all of the airmen were transported by road to a Reception Camp a few miles away, called BRD Worli. A few days later, I was

posted the Base Post Office in Bombay, where for 3 months, I was in charge of sorting incoming mail for RAF personnel stationed in India, & then arranging despatch of post bags to the various destinations. It was not a very demanding duty, & I recall sitting around in the rest room, drinking countless cups of tea, or minerals, to quench my thirst in the hot & sticky conditions in the to await the sea, & well looked after the Indian staff. In May/June I was transferred to the Base Post Office at Calcutta, where I was still overseeing the redirection of mail etc. The Office was a large detached house, on the outskirts of the city, & in which the twenty of us lived with our own mess. The food was supplied by the nearby American garrison, & was very good. To get to the canteen we often hired rickshaws, rather than walk a mile or so, & it was good fun chasing along the roads, urging our drivers to race each other. I also had to escort lorries to carry mail to or from the Calcutta Airport, I recall being issued with a revolver for this duty, but cannot remember being given any ammunition!!!! In June I received notice of my demobilisation & was sent back to RAF Worli to await shipment back home. It was not a long wait, & I was soon on my way to Bombay, where I boarded a troop carrier, the SS.Georgic a pre-1939 vessel, but it was a pleasant 14 days voyage, as we returned via Suez (which we navigated at night with the ship's spot lights trained on the sides of the xcaal - quite a thrill) to Liverpool. I didn't really want to go to India, but having spent a few months there, I am pleased I had that experience - there is a certain fascination with the country, which as a young man I enjoyed. From Liverpool we were sent to RAF Kirkham, near Preston for demobilisation. I suppose it was quite clinical when the following day an endless file of separating airmen a made their way into an old hangar, where we were given choice of civilian clothing, ration books, six weeks pay, & a travel warrant, & out we come - I don't recall anyone in authority thanking us or wishing us well, we just went in one door as airmen & out the other side into vehicles to take us to the local Railway station. But it was all forgotten a few hours later, I caught a train to Northampton, & hitch hiked to Kettering - my war service was over.

Pauline's parents had provided rooms for us in their house in Charles Street, & for the next few weeks, it was a period of adjustment, gone was the routine of the RAF, after nearly 5 years, it was a new experience for me, but together Pauline & I got used to it. I had received 6 weeks termination pay from the RAF, so took advantage of that before returning to my former employment at Stewarts & Lloyds on the 26th August 1946, just 3 weeks before my 23rd birthday. After serving in some 40 different locations in the RAF it took quite a long time to settle in to work, not helped when received my first pay advice from S. & L. which equated at the princely sum of three pounds, seventeen shillings (£3.75) per week -my Air Force pay was equivalent to approximately £11 per week plus my food. I was shocked & on querying this, I was told that under the rules of the Company, until I reached my 25th birthday, I was on the "junior scale", but as my birthday was in September I would get a birthday rise. I did get an increase of just six shillings & three pence a week

December 2010.