

Halifax Down

My Early Life and Career

Hugh Fielding Moore

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Hugh Fielding Moore : My Early Life and Career

I was born in Leicester, on 14th October 1922, I attended Alderman Newton's Boys' School from 1934 to 1938. My maternal grandfather, John Harris (born 1865), and a paternal great-uncle, George Harry "Musson" Moore (born 1869/70) of Anstey, were both "Greencoat Boys" who attended The Greencoat Boys School founded in about 1760. This school was the predecessor to Alderman Newton's Boys' School. The pupils wore a green baize jacket with a brass badge stamped with their name and a number. "Musson" Moore later ran a bus service between Anstey and Leicester using six Daimler buses.

In January 1939 I started at N Alton & Co, Chartered Accountants, then on the first floor of the Halifax Building Society in Granby Street, adjacent to Millets. I was tea boy and junior auditor, brewing up on a little paraffin stove in the reception room. The stove often smoked and filled this room with black smoke, which I hastily tried to get rid of by opening the window and trying to waft it out. I once had a neatly dressed man in his thirties call and ask me if I could spare fourpence for tea and a bun – such were the times in 1939.

In June 1939 I attended an interview in Leicester Town Hall for the post of junior typist in the City Surveyor's Architectural Section, which I obtained and had to start at night school at King Richard's Road school doing shorthand typing. I typed committee minutes and screeds of bills of "quantities" for building projects put out to tender by the City Surveyor.

The Local Defence Volunteers

In June 1940 I joined the Local Defence Volunteers at The Magazine in The Newarke and duly had my ID card stamped LDV etc. I was told to join the group being formed at (Winstanley) Braunstone Hall School. This I did and went on .303 exercises and firing practice at The Army Barracks, South Wigston with SM Lee Enfield rifles. Once they told us to defend the Hall against an enemy force of Regular British Army. I recall being with another 17 year old former Wyggeston School boy with one rifle for both of us and five rounds of blank ammo, hiding behind one of the trees in Braunstone Spinney. The Army umpires eventually told our Home Guard Detachment that we'd won. I believe we fired one blank round, chiefly to see if the gun worked. The Local Defence Volunteers name had been changed to Home Guard by then.

During this period I changed from the City Surveyor's Architectural section to the City Surveyor's Estates Office and started drawing and tracing plans and typing Estates and Burial Ground Committee and Allotment Committee Minutes. Our section had three men: the chief, Harold Ledger, whose son was an Old Newtonian (about 1930-1936); the deputy, William Thompson, who went out setting out hundreds of acres of allotments under the Wartime Allotment Scheme most of the time and me: *Jack of All Trades*.

Joining the RAF

This story starts at the RAF recruitment centre in Ulverscroft road in Leicester where I first enquired about joining the RAF. On 5th May 1941 I joined the RAF at Cardington,

Bedfordshire, where the Airship Hangars were situated, and came back to Leicester to be in on the "ground floor" with the Alderman Newton's Air Training Cadet Group. I still have a RAFVR badge which I was given at Cardington. At this time, I was also doing the neighbourhood watch duties at nights in Thurlington Road (in case of air raids or parachute troops being dropped) as well as nights on guard duty at Braunstone Hall School and, sometimes, nights on air raid watch at the Town Hall. Looking back, I wonder how we managed, but we did.

In spite of being in the RAF in May 1941, I was at home until called up on 18 August 1941. In this period, I was at Alderman Newton's Boys' school, formally I was in the Air Training Corps, Leicester Wing. Once a week in the evenings, I learned Morse code, drill and, I think, aircraft recognition with Mr Kestell, who was also an Old Boy. He arranged for me to be given a certificate, which I still have, to show the RAF that I had covered certain subjects. The officer to whom I showed this certificate at No. 1 British Flight Training School, Terrell, Texas, seemed only mildly interested.

On 18 August 1941 I joined No. 1 Air Crew Recruiting Centre at St John's Wood, London (5 Flight, P Squadron; Viceroy Court, Prince Albert Rd., London NW8) and did about five weeks being kitted out slowly. We were a motley crew at the start; some with only RAF trousers, some only boots and some only tunics. We all acquired blisters marching, inoculations and injections. We ate at the Lyons Cafe at London Zoo off the nearby Regents Park Road. We were then posted to different Initial Training Wings. I went to No. 1 ITW at Babbacombe, Devon, (30 Sep 1941, D Flight, 1 Squadron) and did aircraft recognition, navigation, King's Rules & Regulations, Morse code, Aldis Lamp and a spot of shotgun practice on the Downs. I also got a chest infection here which kept me off duty for a while.

Training in Canada and America

On 12 February 1942, I was posted to Canada via Liverpool. What a joy when we got on board ship to be able to buy as much chocolate and fruit as we could afford. I was sick on the first night out due to excessive consumption of chocolate. The boat took six days to get to Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, during which time I played innumerable games of pontoon and was ten shillings up at the end of the journey. We had one or two U-boat scares on the way over and some of our lads were asked if they could operate an Oerlikon gun with which the



Figure 1 Hugh ready to fly his Stearman PT18

refrigerated meat ship had been fitted. Our hammocks were slung between the meat hooks! We arrived at Halifax without incident and went by train through miles of snow and pine trees to the RCAF transit camp at Moncton, New Brunswick where we stayed for two to three weeks before being posted to our various stations. Mine was No. 1 British Flying Training School, Terrell, Texas. I travelled

there by train and on the way there I remember passing by the Mississippi river before crossing it. On the return I remember stopping at Chicago.

In Terrell I spent four months flying Stearman PT18 biplanes. I did approx 15 hours dual and 15 hours solo before I landed on our auxiliary airfield and encountered a shallow ditch which held the wheels and caused the plane to tip forward slowly onto its nose. This was held to be a cardinal sin and I was posted to Trenton, Ontario to be sent onto No. 5 Air Observer School, Stevenson Field, Winnipeg, Manitoba (14 July 1942, Course 55) where I did navigation. From there I was posted to No. 31 Bombing and Gunnery School at Picton, Ontario. I was on No. 64 Course, 3 Squadron and graduated on 19 Nov 1942. Then I went to Hamilton, Ontario (No. 33 Air Navigation School, RAF, 23 Nov 1942, Course 59A) for more navigation and bombing where we “passed out” on 29 Dec 1942.

In January 1943, we then returned to England, on the SS Andes via Moncton and Halifax again. I was officially in the USA and Canada from 12 February 1942 to 4 February 1943. Arriving in Liverpool we went first to Harrogate for two weeks and then to 4 AOS (Advanced Flying Unit) at West Freugh, Scotland (2 Mar 1943). Here I did some bomb aiming training in Manchesters, a two-engined precursor to the better know Lancaster. From there we went to Lossiemouth, 20 Operational Training Unit, 91 Group (23 April 1943) where we crewed up in an “Alice in Wonderland” self-selection process. Hundreds of newly trained aircrew were brought into a hangar and we were told to make up crews. I was asked by a wireless operator if I had a crew and upon my saying no, I was taken along to a pilot and navigator. We then looked about to find the other members needed to complete the crew. The planes we flew here were Wellingtons. These were two engined heavy bombers which were in process of being phased out of operations and hence used for training.

The pilot was Flying Officer Robert Atkinson, the navigator was Pilot Officer George Butcher, the wireless operator was Sergeant John Kirkby, the flight engineer was Sergeant Bernard Cockcroft, the mid-upper gunner was Pilot Officer Jock Brown, the tail gunner was Andrew Ridley and I was the bomb aimer.

Flight Training back in England

One day, while at “Lossie”, I was detailed to fly as supernumerary bomb aimer on bombing practice north of Lossiemouth. The cloud base was about 800 feet or less and we kept losing the target bombs which consisted variously of aluminium powder canister, fire float and fluorescent marker and losing these sea target markers when we circled to come in on the practice bombing run. Eventually we must have reached the Orkneys and the pilot



Figure 2 Bomb aimer's position in the nose of a Halifax MkIII

reported flak coming up – I presume from the British Navy. The crew embroidered the story when we returned and said it was German flak ships off Norway, which sounded better as a yarn.

On another practice flight our second turning point was the Isle of Man, approaching on a westerly bearing. The navigator told the pilot that we still had miles to go to reach the island, even tho' I was pretty sure that I had spotted it looking down from my bomb aimer's position. It was another 20 minutes and 60 miles out into the Atlantic before the pilot believed my sighting and we made a turn back towards Scotland. If we had kept going west we would have run out of fuel half way back to Canada!

Indeed, Lossiemouth was a jolly dangerous aerodrome, as it was at sea level adjacent to the Moray Firth, and we had aircraft flying into the sea because they hadn't got airborne in time.

On 28th May we moved to RAF Elgin as D Flight to continue operational training. After flying on Whitleys and Wimpeys (Wellington bombers) at "Lossie" and Blenheims at Elgin, we went on to No. 1658 Conversion Unit, 4 Group, at Riccall in Yorkshire (29 July 1943). The conversion meant learning how to fly and crew Halifax four-engined bombers. We had a slightly hairy moment at Riccall when the pilot was starting conversion and flying with an instructor. On doing circuits and bumps, the instructor was telling the pilot to turn more sharply on coming in to the circuit. The pilot told the instructor that he had the wheel hard over. When the latter looked out to see what was wrong, he saw the starboard wing from the outer engine was bending up at an unusual angle. He immediately told the pilot to level up and, after telling Control Tower, we came in doing very shallow rudder turns and landed safely. They discovered that all but two of the bolts holding the outer wing had sheared! We picked up the flight engineer and mid-upper gunner at Riccall before moving to 102 (Ceylon) Squadron, at RAF Pocklington, Yorkshire.

"Ops!"

The Squadron had been at Pocklington since August 1942 when it had moved from Topcliffe in exchange with 405 Squadron (RCAAF). We were allocated our Halifax, aircraft, serial number JB921, squadron code DY-B (Baker), shortly after arrival on 21st August 1943.



Figure 3 Twilight takeoff RAF Pocklington 1943. © IWM (CH 10331)

This aircraft had just been repaired after three months service with 405 Squadron, though we didn't know this at the time. (See appendix 1 for more details.) The previous B-Baker, Halifax JB909, was lost over Berlin on 31 Aug on its second op. Little did we know that the Squadron had been through a hard few months. Out of a nominal strength of 16 + 2 aircraft they had lost 7 aircraft in July and 9 in August – all of its strength in two months. Along with a lot of other newly trained aircrew, we were here to fill in the losses. We didn't know how brief our stay would be – just 17 days.

Prior to bombing operations, we went on an air/sea rescue mission searching for downed aircraft over the North Sea on 26 August, 1943 and then on a fighter affiliation and bombing practice the next day. This was both a lesson in flying and navigating out over the sea but also a lesson in the hazards of life in Bomber Command.

The pilot, Bob Atkinson, had extra training by flying as second pilot (second “dickie”) on an operational mission. This was normal practice. Bob flew on two operations, both with F/S B Moss on Halifax JD165 H-How. The first was on 23 August to Berlin and the second on 27 August to Nurnberg. Every new pilot did two second dickie ops and during the fortnight I was on ops between 4 and 7 crews carried an extra pilot in order to build up the squadron strength.

OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK							
DETAIL OF WORK CARRIED OUT							
By No. 102 Squadron							
FOR THE MONTH OF September 1943							
DATE	AIRCRAFT TYPE & NUMBER	CREW	DUTY	TIME		DETAILS OF SORTIE OR FLIGHT	REFERENCES
				Up	Down		
5.9.43	JD 467 "A" Halifax II	12 aircraft detailed to attack MANNHEIM P/O A. GIBSON P/O J. HAYES S/O F. H. FOWLER S/O J. H. CONLEY S/O D. J. VANCEY S/O D. E. LINDSAY P/O W. C. L. ROBE	PILOT NAV W/O W/O S/O S/O	1950	0012	Returned early port outer engine u/s.	ASB4
	Halifax II JB, 921 "B"	P/O B. ATKINSON P/O G. A. BURCHER S/O J. S. KIRBY S/O W. S. BROWN S/O R. S. GODFREY S/O R. F. MOORE	PILOT NAV W/O W/O S/O S/O	1947	0233	Returned early overload tanks u/s causing loss of height.	

Figure 4 102 Sqn ORB 5th September 1943. © TNA

Our first op was to Mannheim & Ludwigshafen on 5th September 1943. This was a major raid with 605 aircraft taking part. Because of the earlier losses, the squadron only flew 12 aircraft on this operation (of which 4 scrubbed or returned early). Somewhere, the other side of Aachen, one engine cut out, followed by a second on the same side about thirty seconds later. This caused us to lose a lot of height. Meanwhile the flight engineer was turning knobs quickly to transfer feeds to different tanks. Eventually, after several hair-raising minutes, both engines fired again. He then realised that we were very low on fuel – several tanks were empty! The pilot told me to jettison the bombs “safe” as he considered the citizens of Aachen to be on our side, morally, and desired them to continue to be our friends. This I did and I got a severe telling off by the Squadron Bombing Leader as the 2000-pounder had a new secret delayed-action device and he didn't want Jerry to find out about it. We were told, after inspection on our return to Pocklington, that the pressure equalisation valve in the petrol tank was faulty or had been fitted the wrong way round and the petrol had fed out into the atmosphere!

4943	44 aircraft detailed to attack MUNICH				1929	-	Aircraft missing no news after take-off.	12365
Halifax II	P/O. R. ATKINSON	PILOT						
JB. 921 "B"	P/O. G. A. BURCHER	NAV						
	Sgt. J. S. KIRBY	W/O						
	Sgt. A. PILLER	A/G						
	P/O. W. G. BRONN	A/G						
	Sgt. E. G. GOSWORTHY	A/G						
	Sgt. H. F. MOORE	BCM						

Figure 5 102 Sqn ORB 6th September 1943. © TNA

The next night, 6th/7th September 1943, we were told to go to Munich to bomb the BMW works. This was one of the longest trips possible into Germany and another big raid with 404 aircraft rostered. The squadron flew 11 aircraft (again 4 scrubbed or returned early) this night. We arrived safely near the target, which I could see about ten to fifteen miles off when the first target markers went down. About this time we had an attack by a Junkers 88 and the gunners fought him off after several bursts. The gunners reported that he'd sheered off with smoke coming from him. I was lying in the nose guiding the pilot to the markers - Wanganui or Paramatta – I can't remember which (these were the code names of the colours of flares used to mark targets, e.g. red in the middle surrounded by green flares) and dropped the bombs. I remember counting 13 seconds before I pulled the pin to let the "Mickey Mouse" continue and release the incendiaries. The "Mickey Mouse" was the bomb release mechanism which allowed a contact-maker to pass across about a dozen contacts to release the bombs in such an order that their weight was lost in an even manner. Almost immediately I had said, "Bombs gone," the pilot selected "bomb doors shut" and the gunners reported another attack by a Messerschmit 110. The gunners again caused this plane to break off with flames coming from him. There was some jubilation at this but seconds later another Ju 88 attacked and we were corkscrewing again.

Baling out

After we levelled out there was a dull thud like a four-pound lump hammer hitting the starboard wing and the pilot put the Halifax into a steep dive. I didn't realise that we had been hit in the port petrol tanks and set on fire. The pilot eventually levelled out and, after a minute, the rear gunner said, "The flames are going past my turret." At this, the pilot told us to bail out; first the navigator, then me, then the wireless operator out of the nose hatch. I had undone my harness because it was very uncomfortable laying

NON-OP.	YEAR	MONTH	DAY	HUNDREDS	TENS	UNITS	SQUADRON	TYPE OF A/C	CAUSE	N		
OC	DATE	TYPE	SERIAL NO.	GP	SQ.	L	TIME OFF	BASE	TARGET	E.T.A. TARGET	FUEL	A.U.W.
CAR.	REF.	MOD.	MOD.	SPC. EQUIP.	TIME OF FIXES	POSITION OF FIXES	ROUTE	ROUTE	ROUTE	ROUTE	BOMBS LOAD	
DAY	MISC											
SPC.												
R. OUT	CREW-NAME RANK NO.											
T.A.	PILOT	P/O ATKINSON, R.	47752	P/O	(wounded)							
R. HOBI												
R.												
SEA	NAV.	P/O BURCHER, G.A.	422254	P/O								
D.A.												
	W. OP.	Sgt. KIRBY, J.S.	123456	P/O								
	FE	Sgt. GOSWORTHY, E.	1066760	A/G								
	B.A.	Sgt. MOORE, H.F.	151716	P/O								
	A.C.	Sgt. BRONN, W.G.	1066760	A/G								
	A.G.	P/O ATKINSON, R.	47752	P/O								
	A.G.	P/O BURCHER, G.A.	422254	P/O								
	SPECIAL EQUIPMENT	SOURCES OF INFORMATION	TARGET									

Figure 6 Aircraft loss form for JB921 © RAF Museum Hendon

face down on the buckles on the hard surface for hours on end. I had a few moments of panic as I hurriedly put on the harness and then clipped on the parachute which was in a holder by my side. All this in the darkness and chaos of a plane out of control. I heard afterwards from the pilot that the starboard wing was bending up with the heat and he told the flight engineer to pass him his parachute, which he buckled on. The flight engineer went down into the nose to bail out of the front hatch when an explosion occurred. The pilot thinks that the flight engineer was badly injured or killed when leaving the hatch. He was found dead on the ground by the villagers of Antdorf in Southern Bavaria and was buried in the local Roman Catholic churchyard. Both gunners also died, in the aircraft, and were buried in Antdorf. The pilot received some flak in the groin and had five operations in Germany to repair him. He said he was going out of the hatch above him but cannot remember going or pulling the ripcord. He landed heavily and was made to walk two and a half miles, holding onto a bicycle, by a local man with a gun to the hospital at Antdorf.

The navigator landed in a field outside the village and was accosted by another local with a rifle. This man pointed to Munich in the distance and shook his fist at him. The next thing the navigator remembers is seeing stars. He never knew what hit him but assumes he was hit with the rifle butt. He was then marched to the police station at Antdorf. I seemed to pass out after I had pulled the ripcord. I was probably hit under the chin by the parachute pack as it was pulled out by the drogue 'chute. When I came to, I saw a dull red cross on the ground. After a while, I realised that it must be our "kite." I started worrying about whether I was going to land in water and was trying to guess whether the dark or light patches were water. Then I hit the ground. The last thing I remember seeing before losing consciousness was the parachute slowly collapsing in front of me. This all happened at about 1:00a.m. German time.



Figure 7 Crash site of Halifax JB921 near Breunetsried. 7 September 1943.

I came to being walked along by two men who were holding me up. The parachute had gone so they must have removed it. I seemed to be at a farmhouse door within

seconds. The farmer was standing just outside and I said weakly, "Ein Trink Wasser, bitte." He spoke to a young woman who turned out to be his daughter and she brought a jug of water and a mug, which the farmer filled and gave to me. I was then marched to Antdorf by these two men. It turned out one was a nearby farmer who was Nazi sympathiser and the other a Polish forced labour worker. We went to the police station and into a back room where I saw our navigator. One of the policemen went through my pockets and extracted the Ovaltine tablets, a tin of orange juice and a pocket watch (bomb aimers for the use of). When I arrived at Dulag Luft (10 – 12 Sept. 1943) in Frankfurt am Main, I was given a receipt, which I still have, for this RAF property.

Prisoner of War

In the Police Station I was interrogated by one of the policemen who produced a piece of paper with the words "Major Atlimson" on it and queried if I knew a person of this name. This was obviously our Flying Officer Atkinson. At that time I did not know how badly injured he was. But in accordance with RAF rules on becoming POW, I denied knowledge of him. Had I known of his plight, I might well have invented a subterfuge to try to see him. I was then taken to a cell under the police station, which had a stinking oil drum for any toilet needs. I was pleased to get out of this place about 6:00am on the 7th, when George and I were taken out to get into a Luftwaffe truck with a Luftwaffe private with rifle as guard. We were taken to Munich Airport where I was separated from George, the navigator, sat down in a room and given a plate of cauliflower and cheese sauce to eat. A Luftwaffe pilot, a captain (Hauptmann) came in to speak to me whilst I was eating and he said that our raid had gone badly for us and 90 of our craft had been fetched down. He said he had shot us down. I said I didn't believe him. After digesting this reply, he walked out without a word. I was allowed to use their toilets, which was a great relief. I can't remember having anything else to eat or drink that day.

Eventually at about 6:00pm, I was reunited with George and we were taken to Munich Railway Station where we were taken up some steps to a first floor room. There we joined several other raid survivors including quite a few badly wounded American Air Force men who had been on a day raid that day. After 30 to 40 minutes, we were taken down and loaded onto a train with compartments with wooden seats. We had a guard in the corridor but none in the compartment and I was considering my chances at opening the door and dropping onto the track but after looking at the activity on the station, decided against it. We had been given bread and sausage rations for our journey and German Red Cross women gave us drinks in cardboard cups of a sort of fruit juice. They did this in a very surly way and one could not blame them. Eventually we started and a flight engineer, whose parachute had caught up in a tree, asked if he could lie across the knees of George and me and a third RAF lad. It seems he thought he was about six feet off the ground, had twisted the quick-release and pressed it to fall about fifteen feet and injured his spine. We agreed and so we travelled to Dulag Luft at Frankfurt-am-Main. I met this flight engineer years afterwards and he said that not until 1985 had British medical staff had told him he had an old crack in one of his vertebrae that had healed up over time! He walked ever after in a stiff limping fashion both in prison camp and when I saw him again in the 1990s.

Interrogation

About thirty-five RAF and USAF aircrew were marched from the railway station to the Luftwaffe interrogation centre (Dulag Luft, Durschluger = transit camp) at Oberursel on the outskirts of Frankfurt. This was the 8th September. We were given a decent meal, which had been made from Red Cross parcel foods by a group of RAF aircrew POWs, who had decided that working in the cookhouse was a nice little number. We made our way to a basic barrack room with two-tier bunk-beds. The walls were covered with aircraft identification numbers and crew names by USAF aircrew who had previously occupied the barracks. I saw no RAF names on the walls. We were told by later arrivals at Stalag IVB that, when the Germans moved the Dulag Luft to the centre of Frankfurt, a Luftwaffe photographer had photographed all these numbers and names for their records.



Figure 8 Dulag Luft photo of Hugh
8 September 1943.

Prior to this meal we had been put in cells and given a form to complete which purported to be a Red Cross form. It asked for your name, rank and number and then went on to ask for your home address, type of aeroplane you were flying, squadron and similar information. We had been warned about this whilst at Operational Training Unit, Lossiemouth, so I filled in just name, rank and number. Presently a Luftwaffe man dressed like a padre came in and asked if I had filled in the form. I said, "Yes." He looked at the form and remonstrated that I hadn't. So I replied that I had filled in all that was required under the Geneva Convention. He grumbled and said that it would take a long time to let my people know that I was safe. He then left. I was also photographed and fingerprinted. All of this ended up on a record form, which I still have.

These cells were known as "sweat boxes" because in summer they would put the heating on and shut the windows to make the prisoner uncomfortable and in winter the opposite, turning the heat off and opening the windows. This was to try to make you fill in the forms to escape the conditions. Fortunately for me it was a mild period, up to September 10th, and so neither would have made much difference.

After the cells we were interrogated by a Luftwaffe Captain, who could see I was a Bomb-aimer by the half-wing on my blouse and asked me what was the daily pay of a Bomb-aimer. I said I couldn't tell. He then kept on saying, "You must know what the pay is." Eventually he said I was a spy, pulled a pistol out and slapped it on the table saying, "You know what we do with spies?" continuing into a long diatribe in German which I did not understand. After glaring at me, he got up and took me into the next room where I saw a man dressed as a British Wing Commander who said, laconically, "How do?" I asked him where he came down and he said, "In France, on a daylight sweep." I said I came down near Munich and we got to talking about how to make chrome boots shine. He said that when he was first in the RAF, they use to fill their boots with "wee" and leave them overnight before drying them out when they would take a good shine! Such were the intellectual heights of our small talk. I have since

wondered if he was another German dressed up as an RAF pilot to try to get information out of me but, if so, he spoke English very naturally.

Stalag IVB

After two or three days in Frankfurt, we were called to the cookhouse, given a ration of German sausage and bread and marched out to the railway station. There we were loaded into wagons labelled "8 horses or 40 men" together with Luftwaffe squaddies with rifles. It took us two days (12 September, 1943) to get to what turned out to be Stalag IVB (see appendix 7) at Muhlberg-am-Elbe which is about halfway between Dresden and Leipzig. We were marched from the little town up the hill about one and a half miles to the camp. The existing kreigies were out in force to welcome the new residents. I was astonished to see "Grapper" Storey who had been in my class in Folville Rise Junior School in Leicester, ten years previously.

Once inside we were given a very close haircut by two grinning Russians. One of them turned a hand wheel, which operated clippers with which the other sheared us like sheep. We were then photographed and details of our physical attributes taken for their records. We marched down the main street of the camp to the RAF compound. This comprised four timber-walled huts like Nissen huts each divided by an elementary ablutions block in the centre. In theory each half-hut held 150 men but, towards Christmas 1944, after the influx of American GIs from France, we were sleeping three men in two bunk beds. As a result there were about 250 men in the space meant for 150. These double-beds were three tiered and the men in the top bunks could barely sit fully up before hitting their heads on the ceiling planks. Half of the room was taken up by the bunks. A brick stove about 6' by 2' 6" stood in the middle of the hut, leaving an alleyway on either side of it and its flue, which ran for about ten feet to a central chimney. The stove had a steel sheet so that we could warm our skilly on top of it. Initially I was in hut 34B (second left of centre in Figure 9).

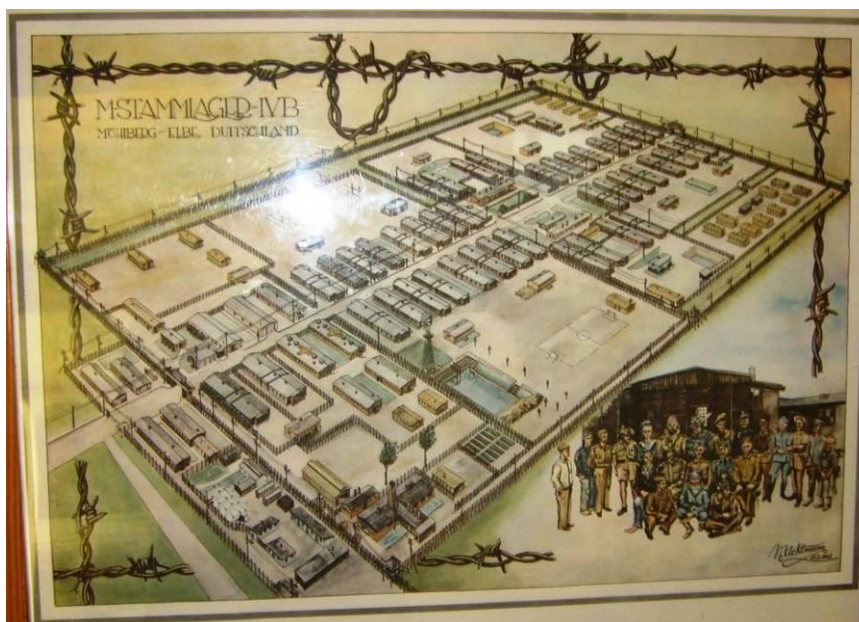


Figure 9 Diagram of Stalag Luft IVB © Yorkshire Air Museum

Rations

Until Christmas 1943 we had no Red Cross parcels and I remember lying on my bunk feeling half-starved at that time. The rations were:

- breakfast – a cup of boiling water with some horsemint in it
- dinner – between six and twelve small potatoes boiled in their skin plus a mugful of either boiled millet seed or reconstituted dried black vegetables with a little purple horsemeat or boiled swede with a little horsemeat. These alternatives came in approximately three-monthly cycles.
- tea was one round of quite heavy black bread with a teaspoonful of ersatz jam and about 1¼" square of ersatz margarine. Sometimes we had instead a small cheese, which was white and crumbly inside with a gelatinous orange skin around it. This stunk shockingly and many boys refused to eat it. We acquired home made knives from the Russians, who were starving, in exchange for a tin of sardines. These knives turned black when used to spread the jam on bread!

Trip to Munich

Shortly after I arrived at Stalag IVB, along with about 30 other POWs, we were taken to Munich! We left the camp on 12th October 1943 and returned on the 20th. We were accompanied by an English speaking Luftwaffe Captain, a Sergeant and eight airmen. We were taken to be shown the damage we had done. This was an exceptional event. Supposedly Hermann Goering was to come to address us, but he never appeared. Although this was meant to castigate us, we were all very please about the damage we saw and gave us more confidence that we would win the War!

Red Cross Parcels and letters from Home

Red Cross parcels started to arrive in early 1944 and we began to feel a bit better, so much so that we started a camp swap shop for lads to change their tins of Red Cross food or even buy food with the cigarettes, which were in the parcels. Cigarette parcels from home were few and far between owing to their being filched on the German railways.

I received letters from my parents and some from Eileen, my girlfriend, and one from Alderman Newton Boys School! We were given either postcards or single sheet, official POW letters to send home, about one a week or fortnight. I still have some of my letters home, which my mother kept.

The lads played football in the compound between the huts and the wire. One day, a Ju 88 from the adjacent aerodrome came flying very low, showing off and suddenly realised he would hit the guard tower behind the wire and pulled back on the stick. The aircraft's tail went down and struck two of the lads, killing one outright (RCAF WO2 Herbert Mallory)¹. They said the pilot was court-martialled and it was possible, knowing what sticklers the Jerries were for rules and regulations. The "Man of Confidence" (Vertrauensman) as the POWs' representative to the German Commander was known, reported this death to the Red Cross.

¹ This incident was (incorrectly) shown in the film *The Great Escape* which was set in Stalag Luft III.

Attempt to Escape!

In October 1944 I decided I wasn't going to spend another birthday in IVB if I could help it. I tried to escape on a working party by exchanging with another, American, POW who had just come into camp from the capture of a whole American Division at the "Battle of the Bulge" in the Ardennes.

To prevent these changeovers, the Germans locked the huts of soldiers being sent out on working parties about an hour after they had been informed as to where they were going. I asked my friend in the hut if he would join me in an exchange. He agreed and we quickly went to the hut and put the proposition to two American GIs who agreed to the exchange. Unfortunately, due to the time factor, I had to swap with a fair-haired boy from Route 1, Rome, Georgia whose name was Ross Miller Coker. I was dark-haired but about the same height. What I didn't know was that a stringent check on outgoing working parties was carried out outside the camp and we were confronted by a Sicherheitsdienst Offizier (Security Officer) with the details, photo and thumbprint that the American had given them. He had details of his grandma and so on, so I bluffed my way through the photo saying that someone else's picture had been put there by mistake. I think the thumbprints were too blurred for him to check on but when I was asked for his mother's maiden name, that floored me and I said I wasn't telling him. He replied, "But you've already told it to us." This work party was going to somewhere near where we crashed so I thought I would be a chance to make it to Switzerland (the crash site was 100km from the Swiss border).

In the Cooler

I was pushed to one side and I later found that my pal had also been flushed out too. We were put in the "cooler." This was a prison with 7'6" by 4'6" cells each with one wooden bed with boards and no mattress but two thin blankets discarded by the German Army. I discovered I was being bitten by bed bugs. Where they hid I don't know as I scraped every inch of the bed. I was there for seven weeks; two out of three days on bread and water and on every third day the German rations were restored. Eventually, Ross Coker got cheesed off with being in an RAF hut and gave himself up and I was sentenced to two weeks on the aforesaid bread and water diet. I weighed three stones less when I eventually got home. (Approx seven and a half stones.) I was moved to hut 23 in the British Army compound on discharge from the cooler and was later moved back to the central RAF huts.

Once the winter of 1944 was coming to an end we began to gain confidence that liberation was in sight, even though it meant that Red Cross contacts began to dry up. This meant no food parcels and mail from home. We began to get very hungry. The clandestine radio gave us the BBC news. Closer to home, for a few days we had a group of Polish women, captives from the Warsaw rising, billeted in the camp in one of the blocks cleared for the purpose. They were soon moved on westward away from the advancing Russians.

Night after night we heard our comrades in Bomber Command flying over to targets all around us. We could even hear the attacks on Berlin 80 miles away.

Released by the Russians

In March and April 1945, we watched daylight raids by Flying Fortresses bombing Leipzig and Dresden. Once, a raid on Lonnewitz Luftwaffe aerodrome near to the camp sent us running for the trenches, dug in the compounds. On another occasion we were strafed by American fighters and a boy in the next hut to ours was killed. We quickly painted "POW" on the roofs of the huts. A German supply train on the lines running through Muehlberg was bombed and provided an impromptu firework display, burning for nearly twenty four hours.

The end came unexpectedly for us. In the days leading up to April 22nd 1945 a fierce tank and gun battle took place around us and we cowered under anything that we believed would protect us. Then, at about 4:00am, a lad burst into the hut and said the Germans have fled. It seems some of the Russian POWs broke out and made contact with the approaching forces. The first we knew about it was when a Russian Cossack waving a sword came riding on a small horse through the camp. He was cheered loudly! Later more Russian officers came into the camp and spoke to one of our navigators who had a Russian mother. Although we were told to stay within the camp bounds because of the hazards of the war being fought all around us, most of the kriegies went scavenging for food in the surrounding neighbourhood. It was a comfortable rural area with farms and small villages with stocks of food both in their pantries and still growing in their vegetable gardens. One day I walked into Muehlberg and was astonished to see what looked like snow outside in building. It was a flour mill and there were trails of flour leading out of it in all directions, all over the road. We used to cook in small groups and I got a sack of flour for my mates. At the end of April, we marched out of the camp en bloc to a nearby marshalling yard town called Riesa where most of us stayed in German barracks but a bunch of eight of us, all Leicester men (both RAF and Army) were in an hotel. I met a family called Vogel & had meals with them. I still have photos of them. The long delay was because the local Russian commander was negotiating with the US commander to try to get all the Russian POWs back to Russia – many didn't want to go. (See Appendix 7)

The Russian Army called us to the barracks and took down our names and addresses, which were literally transposed, as spoken, into Russian, for the typist who typed it out there and then. I was "Huckhh Moo-ra, Lychester " We marched to a clearing in the woods near Riesa two days later and were picked up by Americans with large troop trucks². From there we went to Halle where we had bread that tasted like cake to us and as much food as we wanted. After another two days they flew us to Brussels in Dakotas where we were dosed with DDT dust down the necks of our vests against lice, which, fortunately, I didn't suffer from anyway. I was billeted at 48 rue Montoyer on 27th May.

Back Home to England

After two or three days, we were taken to the aerodrome and embarked into a Halifax for the flight back to Bicester, Oxfordshire (106 Personnel Resettlement Centre, 28 May 1945). They interrogated us at the RAF airfield, asking us to write down all the

² The release of prisoners from Stalag Luft III, IVB & VII was reported in *The Times* on May 5 1945.

things that we could think of that had happened whilst in IVB. Then we had a change into new RAF underwear and uniform with Warrant Officer's badges sewn on. While at the base, I was walking to the canteen behind an Administration Warrant Officer and a Flight Sergeant who were grumbling about the number of young aircrew who had been made Warrant Officers without having spent years acquiring the rank.

Because I had saved my life by baling out from a damaged aircraft using an Irvin Air Chute company parachute, I had been "enrolled" in the Caterpillar Club. You were entitled to a gold caterpillar brooch with garnet eyes. Once back home I wrote to Irvin to get my brooch.

I was given a train pass to Leicester where my mother had obtained a Union Jack, which she hung out of the window. I was seen by the local doctor, who prescribed Guinness which I didn't like. I had stomach troubles for quite a few months after coming home. I was finally discharged from the RAF on 28 November, 1945, having had sporadic correspondence with 104 Personnel Dispersal Centre, RAF Hednesford & 106 PRC, RAF Cosford.

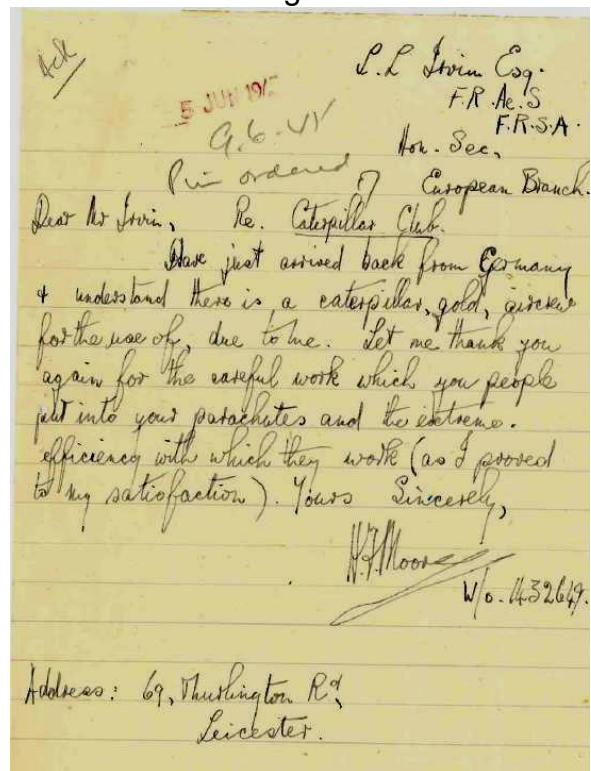


Figure 10 Letter to Caterpillar Club.

Life in Civvy Street

I resumed my courting of Eileen Smith, who had attended Alderman Newton's Girls' School from 1932 to 1938 and we married in June 1946. Eileen had been at a jewellery and metalwork class at Leicester Arts and Technology College. She made, among other things, a silver teapot, sugar basin and jug, two pairs of cufflinks for me and a bronze plate on a raised foot. A fellow student in the class was Peggy Shenton who attended Alderman Newton's Girls' School from 1933 to 1938. Peggy served in WAAF on the radar stations on the East coast.

When I returned to the City Surveyor's Estates Office in early 1946, I asked the Surveyor, John L Beckett, for a transfer from Clerical to Surveying. This was agreed and I started doing the exams for the valuation subdivision of the Chartered Surveyors Institution. I passed the finals in 1954 and was accepted as a Professional Associate at



Figure 11 Wedding day Hugh & Eileen, 18 June 1946

the end of the year. My salary rose to the princely sum of £750 per annum and we obtained a building licence for a semi-detached house being built at 24 Deancourt Road, Leicester.

My experience broadened as I valued and negotiated for properties on the site of what is now the Central Ring Road, through to Burleys Lane. I then started applying for jobs elsewhere and got the post of Senior Valuer at the City Estates Valuer's Office at Stoke-on-Trent. I moved to Stoke in 1956 and the family followed in 1957. I continued to work there until retiring as a Principal Valuer in 1982.

We had two sons, Peter born in 1948 and Roger born in 1952. Peter went to Sheffield University, taking a General Science course and is now retired having taught in a school for students with moderate learning difficulties. Roger went to Oxford University to study biochemistry and also retired having worked at the Open University.

Hugh Moore died peacefully, in the presence of his family, on 10th April 2015 at the age of 92. A life well lived.

Freedom is the sure possession of those alone who have the courage to defend it. But the bravest are surely those who have the clearest vision of what is before them, glory and danger alike, and yet notwithstanding go out to meet it. (Pericles)

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The Aircraft - Halifax JB921

Type	H.P.59. Halifax B.II Series I
Serial Number	JB921
Squadron	102
X1D	DY-B
Operation	Munich
Date	6 th /7 th September 1943

Further Information

Serial Range JB892 - JB931. 40 Halifax Mk.II.

Part of a batch of 350 HP59 Halifax Mk. II.

JB781-JB806; JB834- JB875; JB892-JB931; JB956-JB974; JD105-JD128; JD143-JD180; JD198- JD218; JD244-JD278; JD296-JD333; JD361-JD386; JD405-JD421; JD453- JD476. Delivered by English Electric Co. (Salisbury & Preston) between 31 March 1943 and 13 April 1943.

JB921 was probably modified (Special) with Tollerton ("Z") nose section & new radiators. (See picture of JB911, Figure 3). The dorsal turret was changed to a four-gun Boulton Paul Type A Mk VIII, and there were improvements to the bomb bay door sealing. Some aircraft were fitted with the H2S radar.

The aircraft movement card (AM Form 78) (see Figure 12) shows that it was originally delivered to 405 Squadron on 9 April 1943, repaired between 29 July and 15 August. It was never formally transferred to 102 Squadron – though 405 Sqn. were re-equipping with Lancasters in August 1943. It appears to be one of the surplus aircraft from 405 Sqn. who also operated from Pocklington. Presumably it was sent to 102 Sqn due to the heavy losses suffered during the summer of 1943. It was recorded as missing on the 11 September and *struck off charge* on the 13th.

Halifaxes were built at Cricklewood/Radlett, Salisbury (Preston /English Electric - who built JB921), Fairey Aviation (Stockport) and Speke (Rootes Securities).

For the Cricklewood/Radlett production, a whole range of companies were brought into the production to form the "London Aircraft Production Group" comprising the London Passenger Transport Board (Centre section, power units, final erection of aircraft), Park Royal Coachworks (outer wings), the Express Motor and Body Works (complete tail unit and intermediate wings), Chrysler Motors (rear fuselage sections) and Duple Bodies and Motors (front end fuselage). At the peak of production the "Halifax Group" comprised 41 factories and dispersal units, 600 sub-contractors and 51,000 employees, producing one complete Halifax every hour. Each aircraft comprised 30,000 different components. In one hour 256 airframe parts (excluding rivets) were made, fitted and inspected; two thirds of an acre of light alloy sheet was cut, formed and fitted, three miles of sheet metal rolled or drawn into sections; 5 miles of light alloy special extruded sections were cut, drilled and fitted; 700,000 rivets closed, 3 to 4 miles of electric cabling and one mile of piping fitted. (Information from Rob Owen, 2012, with thanks.)

I Type of Aircraft HALIFAX		Mark	R.A.F. Number JB 921	
Contractor English Electric		Contract No. alc 1408	Engine installed :- Mulin 20	
			Maker's airframe No. :- *	
Unit (or Cat'y/Cause)	Station of Contractor	Date	Authority	41 or 43 Gp. Allot. --
H.O.S. Sqd		9.4.43	1632/2	
H.O.S.	M. Page	29.7.43	CHO	
H.O.S. Sqd		15.8.43	CHO	
Cart. F.	Missing	4.9.43	FB/A97	
	S.O.C.	13.9.43	1623/188	
A.M. Form 78				

Figure 12 Aircraft Movement Form 78 for JB921.

Appendix 2

The operation.

This appendix contains information from the 102 Squadron ORB, the Bomber Command Operational Report for the night of 6/7 Sep 1943 (?342/5/ORS3), an MOD letter to HFM D/ABH(RAF)/8/27 of 4 Jan 1984 and two documents relating to German night fighter reports. One of these is in English & hand-written and possibly from Richard Danberger, an amateur German Luftwaffe historian with whom Hugh corresponded in the 1990s. The second is the *Kriegstagebuch* for *Luftgaukommando VII – Munich* dated 22 September 1943, possibly from Hans Grimminger also an amateur German Luftwaffe historian. You will note minor discrepancies between some of the accounts. These relate to incomplete research by some of the sources.

This was an average night for Bomber Command in late 1943. 404 aircraft were sent on the operation, 16 didn't return, 11 Halifaxes & 3 Lancaster over Germany and further two Lancasters ditched in the North Sea, one outbound. Of the 114 aircrew in the lost aircraft 83 died. 21 aircraft were damaged, 17 directly by enemy action and 4 by forced landings due to equipment failure. The main target was the BMW works in Munich.

Squadron ORB: JB921 Airborne 19:29hr, 6 September 1943. from Pocklington. Cause of loss not established.

On this operation JB921 carried a Mark 171 camera plus IFF equipment. The bomb load was 1 of 1000lb Medium Capacity (HE), 40 of 30lb incendiary, 450 of 4lb incendiary giving a total of 4,000lb. This was less than the maximum capacity, but Munich was a long sortie and a large fuel load would have been required. 7400 rounds of small arms ammunition was carried probably divided equally between the two turrets. Each turret would have had 2,000 rounds in the tracks (i.e. ready for immediate use) and the remainder in boxes outside the turret for reloading.

Zero hour for the attack was 23:30 GMT with the first of the pathfinder force (55 a/c in total) marking the target from Z-4. The Lancasters (which would have been flying about 2-4,000' higher) attacked first and the Halifaxes, in two waves over different parts of the target, attacked between Z+12 and Z+16. The attack finished at 23:46. The summary BC report says: A force of 404 Halifaxes and Lancasters made an attack on Munich, which was groundmarked and illuminated by Y-type aircraft. As the target was almost completely obscured by cloud at the beginning of the attack, aircraft detailed to identify the aiming point visually did not use their special markers, and many Main Force aircraft were obliged to bomb on fires.

And: The effect of the timing of the attack ... was to produce a high concentration of aircraft and losses were *below normal* although the Main Force attack lasted 15 minutes longer than it was planned to do. (My italics.)

About enemy defences the report says: It is possible that as many as 200 fighters were operating on running commentary control alone on this night, and there is evidence that some were drawn from places as far north as Ardorf, Withmundhaven & Stade. ... There were many reports of flares used by the enemy to aid fighters, almost entirely

within 40 miles of Munich and at the later stages of the attack crews described lanes of flares at bomber heights along the tracks in and out.

65 interceptions were reported, including 21 attacks and 21 other combats. All the attacks ... took place within the "flare area". ... It was estimated that at least 7 of the missing aircraft were shot down by enemy fighters.

The LGKVII KSB records 14 successful attacks, mostly by fighters but 3 including damage by Flak. The relevant one for JB921 is:

In der Munchen tagenden Abschusskommission wurden folgen Abschuss vom angriff auf Munchen am 6./7.9.43 zuerkannt:

1) 0100 Uhr Breinetsried b. Penzberg, ohne Scheinwerferbeteiligung, einstimmig fur XII.Fliegerkorps.

(1:00 am at Breinetsried near Penzberg, without search/flare lighting, wholly for 12th Flying Corps.)

The English document records 18 losses, including the N. Sea and UK crashes. For the 01:00 attack it records: Breinetsried/Antdorf; N/F Hptmn. Meurer II./NGJ 5, Halifax B.II, JB921, 102. RAF-Sqd. 3KIA, 4POW.

(Breinetsried is actually Breunetsried.)

If it was indeed Meurer who attacked JB921 then it was his second successful attack of the night. He was the 5th most successful WWII German fighter pilot. However, the list of NJG combat claims suggest that Meurer shot down two Lancasters (see appendix 3). As he was, by then, a very experienced night fighter pilot he is likely to have made correct identifications.

The aircraft crashed at the hamlet of Breunetsried, 5 km WSW of Penzberg, Oberbayern. This is close to the planned return course to turning point 4800N 1120E and about 45km SSW of the centre of Munich. Those killed were initially buried at Antdorf. Their graves are now located in Durnbach War Cemetery, Bad Tolz, Bavaria: Sgt Ridley at plot 6.C.12; P/O Brown 6.C.10 & Sgt Cockroft 7.G.12. (Breunetsried and Antdorf are two small villages near the slightly larger town of Penzberg in Upper Bavaria, approx 47.7°N 11.4°E.)

As well as the damage to the BMW works there were 204 deaths and 780 wounded. This included 43 men and women, foreign prisoners, working in the factory.

Appendix 3

Luftwaffe Night Fighter Claims 7 September 1943

From www.cieldegloire.com/njg_00X.php, 6 July 2014.

All on reference Film C 2031/II

NJG1

mostly flying He219 from June 1943.

1. Oblt. Werner Husemann, Stab./NJG1, Halifax, 30Km S Munchen, 4,000m, 00.37h, Anerk. Nr 2
2. Oblt. Eckhart-Wilhelm von Bonin, 6/NJG1, Halifax, SW Munchen, 4,500m, 00.45h, Anerk. Nr 9
3. Oblt. Eckhart-Wilhelm von Bonin, 6/NJG1, Halifax, SW Munchen, 4,600m, 00.47h, Anerk. Nr 10

NJG2 no records 7/9/1943.

NJG3

mostly flying xxx from yyy 1943.

4. Oblt. Stege, 8/NJG3, Stirling, W Munchen, 5,200m, 00.45h, Anerk. Nr 8

NJG4 no records 7/9/1943.

NJG5

mostly flying xxx from yyy 1943.

5. Hptmn. Manfred Meurer, Stab II/NJG5, Lancaster, S Munchen, 5,000m, 00.40h, Anerk. Nr 15
6. Hptmn. Manfred Meurer, Stab II/NJG5, Lancaster, 25 Km S Munchen, 4,000m, 00.50h, Anerk. Nr 2
7. Hptmn. Werner Hoffman, Stab I/NJG5, 4 motor flugzeug, Munchen, 5,800m, 00.24h, Anerk. Nr 1
8. Hptmn. Werner Hoffman, Stab I/NJG5, Lancaster, N Munchen, 5,800m, 00.45h, Anerk. Nr 2

NJG6

mostly flying xxx from yyy 1943.

9. Hptmn. Heinrich Wohlers, Stab I/NJG6, 4 motor flugzeug,, SW Munchen, 4,500m, 00.29h, Anerk. Nr 23

NJG101

mostly flying xxx from yyy 1943.

10. Oblt Bender, 7/NJG101, 4 motor flugzeug, SW Munchen, 4,500m, 00.30h, Anerk. Nr 1

11. Lt. Schulze, 5/NJG101, Stirling, SE Munchen, 5,600m, 00.37h, Anerk. Nr 1

12. Oblt. Gunter, Stab II/NJG101, Lancaster, SW Munchen, 7,000m, 00.40h, Anerk. Nr 1

13. Ofw. Jeschke, 6/NJG101, 4 motor flugzeug, 5-10Km S Munchen, 5,000m, 01.10h, Anerk. Nr 2

NJG102 & NJG 200 not operational 7/9/1943.

Stirlings were not operating on this raid and 4 & 11 are at altitudes suggesting more likely to be Lancasters. Ditto the 4MFZs 7, 9 & 13.

So, assuming the Lancasters were correctly identified (5, 6, 8 & 12) his means that any of 1, 2, 3 & 10 could possibly be the JB921 final attack.

The Pilot's story

Undated letter from Robert Atkinson to Hugh Moore, probably about 1985/6

My memory of the raid is not all it might be after so many years. I pass on the following bits of information which, perhaps, you can put together with any memories of your own or, from George or John.

I cannot imagine why anyone should want to read it though, from my experience of talking to other POWs during the war, most raids were much the same.

We started from dispersal which, if you remember, was a hard standing point opposite the officer's mess across the road to MarketWeighton. Gus Walker (*102 Squadrom commander*) came into the aircraft + wished us luck – that didn't help us a great deal but I doubt if it was his fault that things turned out as they did.

You have time of take off etc. and I believe we cruised at something around 165 mph after climbing to about 18,000 feet. I really cannot remember the details any more accurately than this Hugh.

The journey to the target is a hazy memory but I do recall the bombing run which seemed quite long especially when we include the time after bomb release until you took the photos. My impression is that we were hit in the Stbd wing at about the same time as the photos had been taken. A fire quickly took hold. I have always believed the hit was heavy flak but it is not possible to be certain.

After giving the order for abandoning the aircraft all seemed to go according to the practice drills. I saw you and George and John go through the forward hatch. I remember someone – George I think, saying "I'll see you in Switzerland" and he gave a thumbs up sign as he went out.

Next I remember Barney handing my chute up to me, I shouted something like 'Good luck' and told him to hurry. As he went out forward we were attacked by a fighter or fighters. I remember pushing my stick forward hard to dive away. I remember getting my harness loop caught in the bomb door lever (I think that was the offending lever) as I was getting down from my seat, and I had to struggle back to start again. As soon as my harness was released I made my way down to the hatch. It must have been about this time that the fire set off the other tanks or the overload tank exploded. There was an enormous explosion and, I do remember a great gust of scorching hot air at the same time as the aircraft seemed to be consumed by a hugh (*sic*) red glow of the explosion. It was all very sudden. My next memory is of the cold air and a flapping noise. The parachute had been damaged + was causing the noise.

Nothing more of the journey down is remembered. My next recollection is voices which seemed very distant but I gradually realised people were standing over me. Everything is very hazy about this part of my capture. I was made to walk and held onto the handle bar of a bike that was being pushed by someone. I remember someone searching me and saying something like "Nix pistol". It's all very dreamlike now and I find it hard to believe that it happened at all. I have no idea how long all this took but

we finished up at a sort of police station where I was allowed to lie down on a mattress that was bought in and laid on the floor.

Some hours later I was taken out and put in a car which was driven from one place to another trying to get me admitted to hospital – it wasn't until 14:00 hrs that they had any success. No one wanted me. I think that everywhere must have been full up.

I spent 3 weeks in Munich and then moved to Frankfurt for more specialised treatment. There I had a number of operations – 5 I think – and a blood transfusion direct from an RAF officer volunteer. He had only just been captured and had come from Dulag Luft in the town. I remember the transfusion, in a dreamlike way, we were on stretcher trollies side by side with a tube direct from my donor's arm via a hand operated pump to my right arm. A nurse turned the handle and doctors supervised the whole operation.

I was discharged from hospital on 2nd Dec 43 and sent to Ober Urgel until about the 13th Dec – from there we were moved to Stalag Luft I. Barthe, arriving on the 16th Dec 43.

The Russians over-ran the camp on the 2nd May 1945 and we returned by air direct from Barthe airfield. I flew back in a B17G 446591 flown by a 1st Lieutenant Barnsley. We took off at 20:00 hrs Russian Time and landed as Ford in Sussex at 23:00 British Double Summer Time.

Hugh,

I find it very difficult being any more accurate than this. It is a long time ago and I have probably made an effort to forget the worst aspects of the raid – subconsciously that is.

Bob



Figure 13 Bob Atkinson (left) George Butcher (right) and wives. About July 1943.

The Wireless operator's story

From John Kirkby to Hugh Moore, approx Summer 1986

Flight of 'B.Baker from POCKLINGTON on the night of September 6/7 – 1943 to Munich. By WOP/AG SGT. J.S. KIRKBY
Skipper Lt. R. ATKINSON.

Everything working normal, keeping radio silence. Not much for a Radio op to do but listen to Group Broadcasts every 15 mins, and watch the flak floating up towards up. We were on our way out when I saw the fire in the starboard engine. How it started? I don't know, but it must have made us a better target from the thumping we got.

When Bob gave the order to bail out I thought we might have been near Switzerland. Anyway orders are to be obeyed. George opened the hatch and let it go, then followed it out. I detached the ariel and let it go. I think I switched off, it didn't matter. I watched Hugh sit on the edge and disappear into the dark. I stuffed my torch into my boot and my escape kit (pandora's Box) into my blouse and sat on the edge facing forward, as I went out there was a thud behind me. As I felt my parachute came up and slashed my face, and I was knocked out by it. I came to floating in space, one boot gone and my torch with it. I could see the burning aircraft to one side, so pulled away from it and landed in a small field some way off, a dog barked somewhere, but there was no one around. I rolled myself under a hedge in my parachute, I felt very tired, so I waited till daybreak. I could make out a larger chalet type house at the other end of the field, so I skirted away from it going south until I came to a river – too wide to cross. So I followed it for some miles, going S.W. I came to a bridge over the river, but it was guarded and there were some people working in the fields opposite, so I back tracked to a barn I had seen further back, and there I stayed for the rest of the day. Knowing what I know now, I could have tackled the workers, as they would probably been foreign workers. I crossed the road away from the bridge and carried on until it was almost dark. I found another small hut and got a little sleep, but I remember the mist coming in and it being very cold.

By morning I was fed up to the teeth and getting rather hungry and decided to look for food. This was my undoing, I ran slap into a German couple who turned out to be a brother and sister and he was a soldier on leave from Albania. He asked me where I was going and I pointed over the Alps which seemed so close. He told me it was impossible and for me the war was over. Little did he know. He took a sack of straw from the open wagon which they had with them, and told me to sit on it. I did and lay down and went to sleep with exhaustion. I woke up with a big warm coat over me and was thankful for the show of friendship. It must have been almost lunchtime, an elderly man was approaching, with tyrolean hat and lederhosen complete. He had brought some food, cheese sandwiches and bottles of milk. The girl gave me all hers and I scoffed the lot. After the War I received a letter from the soldier and his name was Benedick Gehr and worked as a policeman in Penzburg. The place where we met was called Oschelsee Moor. After working, we all walked back to their farm, which I have later found to be at Sindeldorf village.

I must have looked a mess, blood on my face, and unshaven, so I had a general clean up and felt better, the father asked me if I drank beer, I nodded, he disappeared into the inn across the road and came back with a couple of pints. We had a meal of sliced potatoes, but I couldn't eat them for my bruises. The German soldier must have reported my capture while I was cleaning myself up, because it wasn't long before a policeman turned up, took his hat off and offered me a cigar from it. I declined for the same reason. He indicated that I should go with him, but it had started to rain, and only having one boot didn't fancy the walk, strangely he accepted this and left me in charge of the soldier. I stayed with them for the rest of the afternoon and then the soldier changed into his best uniform, got two cycles out of a shed, indicating that I take one. The mother had packed some sandwiches and apples into a bag for me, I wished them all goodbye, but first the father asked me to sign the back of a calendar and leave my private address. This was then covered up and was evidently the reason why I received the letter sometime after the war. We then cycled into the village of Penzberg where I was handed over to the S.S. That's when the rough stuff started. I was stripped and searched in a room full of typists. Strangely enough I didn't much care, they didn't miss much. I couldn't make something out of what they were saying, but they kept mentioning a Major Atlimson who I knew was my skipper, but no-one else was mentioned. After a while they gave up, and they gave me my things back, even the sandwiches and apples. I had lost all idea of time but it was dark. A lorry drew up outside and two soldiers and a dog got out and I was led out and had to climb into the back of the lorry, the soldiers and dog got in with me and sat on either side, the dog across my feet, that was the last of my sandwiches, the dog scooped the lot.

From there I was taken back to a prison in Munich and was interviewed by a Dr Zimmerman who asked me if I spoke any German. I told him – no!

From what I could make out they were trying to find someone else to hand me over to. I finally ended up in the Guards Room of Munich aerodrome. The treatment changed as I entered, I was treated as a fellow airman as all those in there were on charges for various misdemeanours similar to those on an English Guards Room. There was all kinds of ranks in there, and I was welcomed with hand shakes, and all trying to find me a comfortable empty cell, a few of them could speak English and tested the strength of the mattress of each cell "too 'F...g' hard he said, and went and brought another. They shared their food rations and cigarettes. I couldn't quite eat all the sausage they gave me and I have hated the taste of garlic ever since. We talked for quite a while and it appeared they had been on Bomber raids to England. – London, Manchester, Liverpool and others there was one lad in there who lived in Munich, and I felt a bit strange, having bombed it a few nights before, but there were no ill-feelings.

The following day I went to see the Medical Officer and had to line up with the rest of the sick parade. He checked my minor wounds and asked me how I felt, and dismissed me, and I was taken back to the guard room. Later that day I was taken under escort on foot through the streets of Munich to the railway station. I remember we stopped outside a place from which music was coming, typical German. Seemed quite cheerful.

From Munich to Frankfurt and Dulag Luft and interrogation, solitary confined for a while. All P.O.Ws know of this familiar routine, from there back to a compound in a park in Frankfurt – then on to Neubeuxdrof (*actually Neuberxdorf railway station*) and to Stalag IVB, processed again, then to the RAF compound & 34A.

The Navigator's story

George Butcher sent a letter to Hugh Moore in 1985 most of which was a transcript of the ORB and discussing other sources of information. The last para of the letter reads:

My only recollection of the raid is that we flew Base – Beachy Head – French coast (flying at 10,000 ft), to somewhere in S. Germany, when we turned and flew almost E. to Munich, climbing to 16000ft. If I think of anything else I'll let you know.

There is a second letter from George dated Nov 9th 1985 which mostly discusses the trip, by POWs, to Munich in October 1943.

Dear Hugh

Very many thanks for your newsy letter about your visit to Scarborough and the ACA Conference, and am so glad you enjoyed yourselves and found so much of interest.

Regarding our visit to Munich I'm afraid my poor memory is letting me down again, or maybe I was still somewhat concussed after my heavy landing!!

As far as I recall we must have made the journey in late September or early October, as my recollection seems to be that it was still warm and sunny. When the Germans announced the news I think the general opinion was that we were for the chop, as the SBO asked for an immediate meeting with the Protecting Power. In the event it transpired that our travel order called for return tickets, so we began to breathe again. There were only three of us, and we had our battle dress, we were loaned pukka best blues by some of the established Kriegies, and I travelled as a F/Lt Pilot (D.F.C.) - would you believe it!

We were guarded by an officer and 2 NCOs (or was it 3), and travelled 2nd class - it was rather nice to sit in great comfort and watch the common soldiery and civilian members of the Third Reich squashed together in the corridors. We travelled by local steam train from Sagen to Halle, where we picked up the electronic train from Berlin to Munich & had a very comfortable journey.

We had been given cigarettes, chocolate et cetera by our co-prisoners and I seem to recall that we feasted on corned beef, and on salmon sandwiches during the down trip, & left our official black bread and sausages Luftwaffe rations.

Now I can't for the life of me remember where we stayed in Munich - whether an army barracks or an aerodrome, but I think the latter, but where ever it was it was my first experience of a unisex loo - to my great embarrassment. You can undoubtedly remember as well as I that we travelled on a wood burning fuelled bus, guarded I think by Waffen SS. Whoever they were, they were very affable & kept saying words to the effect that "orders is orders", and seemed a bit bewildered as to the reason why Goering wanted to show us the cultural damage we'd done. Can't say I remember much, apart from the Opera House with its marble steps and statues of the great - including Shakespeare. I must say the place was a bit of a burnt out shell, which

probably accounted for the tears in the eyes of the lieutenant colonel in charge of the guards.

We were visited by about half a dozen Luftwaffe fighter pilots, who once again were a very jolly crowd. They said that they brought some Scotch along to make a party of it, but the officer in charge of the prisoners had refused to let them bring it in, which they considered to be the German equivalent of a piss poor show. Most of them had been shot down at one time or another by a Flying Fortress, one of them 2 days before our meeting. They said they always carried an overnight bag with them with their shaving kit, pyjamas etc just in case! They spent a very cheerful hour with us, and we departed - if not the best of friends - at least respecting our adversaries.

Now, would you believe me, but I just cannot recall where or what we ate, or where we slept during this time, nor can I even recall the journey back to Luftwaffe 3. I hope you have better memories of the visit than my disjointed recollections, but perhaps these will be enough to fit in a few more pieces of the jigsaw.

Kind regards, George

Stalag Luft IVB

Extract from *Footprints on the Sands of Time*, Oliver Clutton-Brock, (Grub Street, London, 2003). (pto)

Further information to be found in: *Piece of Cake*, Geoff Taylor, Peter Davies Edition, 1956.



Fig 14. Entrance gate to Stalag Luft IVB.

up to bomb Düsseldorf (25/26 May 1943). Both starboard engines were hit by flak and put out of action. Discomfited by the damage the mid-upper gunner, Sergeant E.I. Seabolt RCAF, received permission to bale out, and jumped a few kilometres south-west of Düsseldorf.²⁹

After the bombs were jettisoned the pilot had the greatest difficulty in keeping the crippled aircraft on an even keel. Rear gunner Sergeant Arthur Edgley RAF was almost out of his turret when he noticed that they were 'flying fairly level, so with one mighty effort I pulled myself back into the aircraft', and moved into the now vacant mid-upper.

Now down to 9,000 feet there was some hope that the Stirling would reach the coast, but when the Dutch border was crossed at barely 3,500 feet the pilot ordered the crew to bale out. Arthur tried to open the front hatch but the handle broke off. No sooner had the navigator and flight engineer jumped from the rear hatch when, at 0215 hours, the Stirling hit the ground a few kilometres west of the River Maas, Holland, and 'turned over and sideways a number of times before coming to rest'.

Of the four men still aboard the pilot and bomb aimer were killed. Wireless operator Sergeant S.J. Maxted and Arthur Edgley survived the crash and made their way to Paris. Betrayed to the Gestapo – possibly by Jacques Desoubrie (see Chapter 16) – they spent six weeks in Fresnes prison on the southern outskirts of Paris. After the obligatory grilling at Dulag Luft they joined a party of some seventy to eighty NCOs who were purged to Stalag IVB (Mühlberg), some 50 kilometres north-west of Dresden.

Arriving on 14 August 1943, they were the first RAF PoWs to be imprisoned there since the handful of RAF NCOs who had passed through in 1940. At the end of August 1943 105 airmen (with a few paratroopers) arrived from Stalag VIIA (Moosburg) whither sent for a few weeks in July and August to avoid the typhus epidemic that was raging at Stalag VIII B (Lamsdorf). As they approached the outer gate of this Wehrmacht camp – 'an imposing structure like a ship's navigating bridge' – PoWs read the inscription in the Gothic style '*M-Stammlager IVB*' across the top.³⁰

Conditions in the camp were poor, and sixty PoWs would die there by the war's end.³¹ Flight Sergeant K.A. Skidmore RAAF found that the food when he got there, in the first group of PoWs, was:

'shocking. They used to give us a lump of black bread and ersatz cheese. We didn't get it every day. It would often have to last for a couple of days. At night we got a skilly. It was supposed to be a stew. It wasn't very thick, occasionally you got some meat. On one occasion I got an eye . . .

'When the Red Cross parcels eventually came our food was supplemented. But it took eight weeks for the Germans to notify the Red Cross about us and for the first parcels to arrive. There was three weeks supply for the original seventy eight prisoners in the first batch of parcels. But, by then, the number of British prisoners had increased to one hundred and ten or twenty so the supply was inadequate.'³²

The airmen lived in a compound which was wired off from the soldiers' and, in the uncompromising words of the brief report made after the cessation of hostilities, were housed:

'in five large bungalows. These bungalows were sectional buildings of wood built of brick and cement concrete foundations. The doors were patched and covered with bitumen felt. The bungalows were in two sections, A and B, these sections being divided up, a fireproof building housing the ablutions to which there was access from each section. Both A and B sections had a day and night latrine attached to their extreme ends. Section A measured 82 ft. 10 ins. long, 40 ft. wide and 10 ft. high to the ceiling. There were five windows to each side. Section B measured 99 ft. 2 ins. long, 40 ft. wide and 10 ft. high and had six windows to each side. The night latrines were of the earth closet type.

Day Latrines

'These latrines were brick built and housed earth closets. They were situated approximately 30 ft. from barrack buildings and the occupants of four bungalows had to use one latrine.

Eating Facilities

'In each section there was one brick stove with an iron plate. Coal issue of 25 Kgs. per section was for use in the two stoves and the boiler in the ablutions. It was definitely insufficient to keep the bungalows warm and combat cold and damp.

Lighting

'The artificial lighting in each section consisted of five electric points. Four 25 watt electric bulbs were allowed. Lighting was insufficient.

Water Supply

'This was extremely poor and only a few sections had a constant supply. This resulted in occupants of other bungalows crowding in to use them. In the ablutions in each bungalow there were three taps, one of which supplied the boiler. The ablutions consisted of six cement concrete troughs for washing. Each trough having four row sprays, a total of twenty-four sprays. Very few of these sprays ever carried water.

Latrines

'Both day and night latrines were the usual German type and had to be pumped.

Drainage

'General drainage of the camp was exceedingly poor. The bungalow drainage was bad with continual floods through stoppages in pipes and trapped gulleys. These gulleys were not filled with grips. The waste water from the bungalows was carried down the main road. Very bad smells resulted.

Hygiene

'Conditions were far from satisfactory due entirely to the difficulties mentioned above and also to the excessive over-crowding of the bungalows making air supply demand very low. The average number of men per section of bungalow was 198. At one time there was a peak figure of 293 men per section. For sleeping three-tier beds were provided, but at times due to over-crowding, it was necessary for two men to sleep in each bottom bed and three men to two beds on the second and third tiers.'³³

For the prisoners still at Stalag IVB in the early summer of 1944 hopes were raised by the news of the Normandy landings, then dashed as the expected quick breakthrough failed to materialise. Thanks to wireless expert Sgt Eric 'Marconi' Gargini RAF,⁶⁶ though, they were kept up-to-date with the BBC News. Gargini had built the first wireless receiver in the RAF compound at Mühlberg from any old bits and pieces, but the vital parts, the valves, were acquired by the French. News of the Red Army's advances in the north and east had little effect on life, except to stimulate interest in when they would be free.

Following Operation Market Garden, the Allied airborne attempt to seize the bridges over the Rhine at Arnhem (Holland) in September 1944, a number of captured paratroopers and glider pilots turned up at Mühlberg: 'Standing by your barrack door, watching the airborne boys line-up for their mug of watery pumpkin soup (may you never see a pumpkin again), you ponder over the fierce fire that consumed the hearts and souls and minds of these men . . . which made them fight like devils possessed.'⁶⁷

As autumn turned into winter once again the prisoners prepared themselves for days and nights of bitter cold and little food. A year ago they had at least been able to augment the meagre fuel ration by thieving and by blackmarket dealings with the French in the coal store. Now there was nothing left. On some days it was colder inside than out. Everything was severely rationed, even the few Red Cross parcels. It was enough to drive one mad. A Dutchman apparently lost his reason one evening after curfew and ran down the frozen camp road babbling biblical quotations until he was shot dead by one of the trigger-happy guards.

The report of an IRCC delegation that had visited Mühlberg on 23 November 1944 stated:

'There have been no changes in the camp installations since the last visit. The prisoners are now very

crowded. According to the Camp Leader's figures, prisoners in the huts have 4 cubic metres space per man. Each hut is divided into two parts with 216 men on one side and 180 men on the other . . .

' . . . The British Camp Leader also attends to the needs of American prisoners. They arrive in the camp nearly destitute and the Camp Leader has not sufficient stocks to meet the needs of prisoners in transit since the invasion. More than 10,000 men have passed through the camp since last summer.'

Many of the US Army prisoners had been caught in the fighting in the Ardennes in December – the so-called 'Battle of the Bulge' – and had been badly treated by their captors. When they arrived in the *Vorlager* at Mühlberg on 23 December 1944 they were so tired that they collapsed in the snow where they stood. There was nowhere for them to go. In the morning the RAF made room for them.⁶⁸

The old kriegies were looking forward to their Christmas Day 'dinner' of food that they had been jealously saving for weeks, until someone mentioned the recent American arrivals who, poor sods, had nothing. There were a few dissenting voices amongst the RAF but the majority vote was that their Christmas delights should go to the Yanks – all of it. As Tom Nelson said:

'It seemed a lot to give up, an awful lot. But the decision had already been made for us, by circumstance, and we all knew it in our hearts. The Americans needed it so much more than we did. Having seen the condition of these poor people, we knew we could not eat our Christmas feast ourselves.'⁶⁹

The RAF did not, however, go without. Flight Sergeant Jim Noble enjoyed his Christmas 'feast' of:

'a piece of bully beef, some tinned German soup and a small piece of beef from a quarter of a cow shared between 1500 men. Dessert was a soggy biscuit with German jam made from turnips. Tea was mint tea "normally used for shaving" and the coffee was made from acorns. An airman knocked on the door to call in the guard, and invited him to join in the repast. The RAF type took the guard's rifle, laid it beside a bunk and they sat down for the meal. At the end of the meal he was given a British cigarette, his rifle was returned and he was then escorted outside to resume his sentry duty.'⁷⁰

For another unidentified prisoner it was too much. In the barrack next to Geoff Taylor's 'an RAF boy is found one morning hanging by his neck alongside the concrete troughs in the washroom.'⁷¹

So 1945 arrived, and with it the prospect of freedom in the not-too-distant future. Even though the Red Army was on its way, Warrant Officer S.K. Gordon-Powell RAF was not interested. He had given the Germans a hard time ever since being ambushed by the Gestapo in Paris in July 1943. After only four months at Stalag IVB he escaped, but was captured and sent to Stalag IVD (Torgau) in December 1943. He was returned to Mühlberg in August 1944.

On 21 March 1945, having been supplied with the name of a Dutch doctor in Berlin, he and a South African soldier, Private A.M. Kuhn, walked away from a fatigue party. With the good doctor's assistance they were able to get to Flensburg and, with the help of Frank Stitz, a violently anti-Nazi German, across the border into Denmark. In the hands of the Danish Resistance they were put aboard a trawler which sailed for, and safely reached on 17 April 1945, the Swedish port of Helsingborg.

At Mühlberg the news of the Red Army's approach was particularly worrying for Sergeant Winston Barrington RAF whose mother, Florence, lived not far away. An Englishwoman, she had married a highly decorated Luftwaffe officer and had come to live near Mühlberg after hearing of her son's capture. Her husband had pulled strings so that Winston was allowed out on parole once a week to see her. Aware of the Russian soldier's reputation for raping every woman who fell into his path, Barrington asked the camp's Escape Committee for help, which they gave.

Florence, or 'Jenny' as she was now called for security reasons, was smuggled into the camp on a work detail wearing an old army battledress. Her hair cut short and her Army uniform exchanged for RAF blue, she remained hidden in the camp until Mühlberg was liberated by the Russians at the end of April. Mother and son walked out of the camp together, and returned to England.⁷²

Sandwiched between the Russians advancing from the east and the Americans from the west the final weeks at Mühlberg were not without excitement. Bombing raids (including those on Dresden and Leipzig) and strafing increased, as the wood party returning just before midday on 17 April was to discover when it was shot up by a pair of American P-51 Mustangs. Four Americans, a Russian and a German were killed, as was a PoW in Hut 9A in the camp itself.

Then, late on the evening of 20 April, the SBO, Lieutenant Jessop,⁷³ was informed by Hauptmann König that the Russians had broken through about 50 kilometres to the north-east and was asked

whether he wanted the entire camp moved to the other side of the River Elbe. After consulting all the Men of Confidence bar the Russian, König was told emphatically that the British and Americans wished to stay put. The Poles, on the other hand, wanted to leave, away from the Russians.

The German guards left on the evening of 22 April. The next day a few dozen Russian cavalrymen arrived 'bristling with guns, pistols, ammunition bandoliers and sugar-sacks of rations, galloping through the camp'.⁷⁴ All prisoners were ordered to stay where they were. Flight Sergeant H.G. McLean RAF:

'The Russians did nothing for us, alternately telling us to go out and forage for ourselves one day, and threatening to shoot anyone who left the camp the next day. After a few days we got fed up with the shilly-shallying and left. I walked to Wurzen [20 kms east of Leipzig], where I met the Americans.'

Others appropriated bicycles and rode off towards the Americans and freedom, despite the orders of the senior RAF officer to stay put. Those who obeyed spent many frustrating days waiting to be repatriated.

On 18 May 1945 Supreme Allied HQ received a message from the US Ninth Army which described the deteriorating conditions and stated that the 7,000 or so remaining ex-PoWs were in need of 'medical supplies, additional medical attention and food'.

Discussions at the highest level, aimed at resolving the PoWs' immediate future, were already under way. Stalin was determined that all Russians in Allied hands should be returned to the USSR. Major General Ray W. Barker, the SHAEF Assistant Chief of Staff for Personnel, and Lieutenant General K.D. Golubev, representing the Soviet repatriation authority, met at Halle (Germany) on 16 May, the general principles of the Yalta agreement of 11 February 1945 providing the framework for their discussions. The meeting focussed on working out the administrative details for the prompt release and return to SHAEF control of all British and American PoWs using available air or motor transport.

The Soviet authorities, however, insisted that the prisoners be repatriated through the Black Sea port of Odessa, and prolonged the negotiations by citing practical and administrative obstacles and by tying in the rapid release of American, British, and other Allied PoWs to the repatriation of all Soviet prisoners and displaced persons in the West, many of whom did not want to return home.

Barker and Golubev finally signed the Halle Agreement on 22 May 1945, thus determining how and to which reception points both sides should send the former prisoners. They also agreed the daily transit capacities of each reception point, the transportation plans, and other details, in effect agreeing to 'the most expeditious overland delivery of Allied and Soviet ex-prisoners of war . . .'⁷⁵

The prisoners at Mühlberg knew nothing of this when told by their Russian captors that they were to be moved south across the River Elbe at Strehla and on to the town of Riesa. Grabbing whatever food they could they headed off in long, dusty columns down the country lanes. Once across the Soviet-built log bridge at Strehla, gaudily decorated with the Red Star and 'hammer and sickle', the men were herded off to Riesa:

'The boys billeted in the German barracks had a couple of lively nights with cheerfully drunken Ruskis hurling hand grenades into the air-raid water tanks on the parade ground outside their windows.

'For the next week the once-placid town was more like a gold-rush settlement in the Wild West with a rip-roaring population of armed, drunken and unpredictable Russians.'⁷⁶

Many, though, frustrated by their enforced inactivity could stand it no longer and headed off towards the American lines, even braving Russian bullets as they did so. Jack Dickinson left the camp with his friend George Laverick through a hole in the wire. They walked to Riesa, but were temporarily stymied by a bridge upon which stood four rough Russian soldiers armed with tommy-guns. Anyone without the correct papers was being turned back. There was nothing for the two airmen to do but show their PoW tags. These, together with the red triangle and letters 'K.G.' painted onto their uniforms, were sufficient, and one of the guards waved them through: 'It was not until we had safely crossed and had our feet on the other side, where a big olive drab truck with white stars painted on its doors and with its driver in his American uniform smiling at us, did we allow ourselves to believe that we were now really free and in safe hands.'⁷⁷

They were taken to Halle and flown from there to Rheims (France) by C-47 Dakota. Their final leg was by Lancaster to Bicester (not one of the designated airfields for returning PoWs).

The bulk of the Mühlberg PoWs, however, were taken by train to Halle (Germany) and flown from there to Brussels (Belgium) by the Americans in C-47 Dakotas. There they joined the large queue for the airlift back to England.

We shall remember them

COCKCROFT, BERNARD HAROLD

Rank: Sergeant
Trade: Flt. Engr.
Service No: 1605760
Date of Death: 07/09/1943
Service: Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
Buried: DURNBACH WAR CEMETERY
Grave Reference 6. C. 12.



RIDLEY, ANDREW

Son of Joseph and Grace Ridley, of Newcastle-on-Tyne; husband of Alice Ridley.

Rank: Sergeant
Trade: Air Gunner.
Service No: 1058367
Date of Death: 07/09/1943
Age: 21
Service: Royal Air Force Volunteer
Reserve
Buried: DURNBACH WAR CEMETERY
Grave Reference 6. C. 10.



BROWN, WALTER GOWANS

Son of Walter and Mary Wallace Brown, of Mid Calder, Midlothian.

Rank: Pilot Officer

Trade: Air Gunner.

Service No: 151776

Date of Death: 07/09/1943

Age: 27

Service: Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Buried: DURNBACH WAR CEMETERY

Grave Reference 7. G. 12-17.

They gave their lives that we might have our liberty