

Memories of the Royal Flying Corps years and early days of the Royal Air Force

As a young boy I remember well the many stories our Dad related to us about his adventurous times he had whilst serving in the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Air Force. On 1st April 1918, the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service combined to form the Royal Air Force. As its Centenary is celebrated at this time, I feel moved to write about those years our Dad served his King and Country so that readers of today will, hopefully, get some idea of the most interesting and challenging times experienced when man took to the skies!

In haste, my elder brother, Stuart, and I wish to extend our grateful thanks to Jasper Bouverie, film producer, for photographing our Dad's diaries, the surviving letters he wrote to his parents, all the photographs in two albums, his detailed drawings of aircraft and aeronautical explanations, etc, and other items. All these were sent to me so that I could transcribe them to produce this long account. The following extracts from Dad's little pocket diaries, measuring 3" x 2", have been specially selected. My brother, Stuart, has kindly supplied further information which is contained within square brackets at the end of certain passages. I have also made a few comments within many of the square brackets. Some items of information have been obtained from the Internet. Dad's writing was very small and he never bothered to dot the i and cross the t in many words! However, with the zoom button on the computer the enlargements on the screen have made it easier for me to decipher the words of which I had difficulty in reading straight from the tiny diaries.

Lionel Gordon Tucker (known as Gordon) was born on 7th February 1897. He saw man achieve getting off the ground like a bird and he lived long enough to witness man landing on the Moon!

He became so interested in the mystery of flight and it was not long before he started making model aero planes. As his younger brother, Fred, records in his autobiography: Gordon's scale model of 'Bleriot's' Channel machine won first prize at the first large model exhibition at Olympia and he made several successful flying models. There was a club for these activities on Wimbledon Common and Gordon's models always flew well.

Our uncle Fred also records: From time to time we enjoyed the sight of soaring Balloons in races, but the acme of excitement in Cottenham Park was the sight of the first aero plane. At the first sound of its engine, everyone ran from their houses for a look. It was a Henry Farnham machine flying from Hendon to Brooklands at about 500 feet. This type of machine was a Biplane with no cockpit — the pilot sitting precariously between the wings! There were flying races round pylons at Hendon every Saturday and Gordon often travelled to these displays.

He was also interested in engines and how they worked and when he became a teenager, he bought his first motor bike. It was, therefore, not surprising that he applied to become an Airman and was welcomed into the Royal Flying Corps on the last day of January 1916, a week before his 19th Birthday. As a new recruit he was given the number of 19782 and the rank of Air Mechanic 2nd Class, 16th Reserve Squadron RFC, South Farmborough, Hampshire.

He was kitted out with two tunics, one overcoat, one jersey, two pairs of boots, one pair of rubber shoes, breeches, slacks, puttees and cap besides a host of other small necessities including

underclothing. During off duty times many of the men went over to a place called The Soldiers & Sailors Rest Home, replaced in time by the NAAFI (Navy, Army and Air Force Institution), a place where they could chat and write letters and also attend services conducted by the Army Chaplain.

The men received a very short basic training at a place called Larkhill in Wiltshire. It was a terrible place and it reminded our Dad of a hospital or home for consumptives where everyone was coughing, spluttering, sneezing and making an awful row! However, from there they travelled by train on Saturday 19th February 1916 to Beaulieu (pronounced Bewley) and were met by a big motor lorry and driven to the Aerodrome Orderly Room, then to their new quarters. His was a one-time Studio owned, he believed, by Lord Montague. It was a very nice clean place with hot water, electric lights and a grand piano. After they paraded, they got the machines out of the hangars. The Commanding Officer had been awarded the DSO for having winged two German machines over France! Dad stated that they had fourteen aero planes and the Aerodrome was excellent — a vast stretch of absolutely flat ground.

There was plenty of flying including night flying going on over that weekend. One machine had to make a forced landing in a field outside the Aerodrome. Six mechanics jumped into a car with spares and raced round the roads into a ploughed field, in which they found it slightly damaged. He wrote: We had to completely dismantle it and bring it back to the Aerodrome on lorries. The next day we were busy repairing the damage and erecting it. He wrote also, "Think I shall like the life very much!"

On 28th February, he was informed that he was to proceed the next day to Cowes, Isle of Wight, where he was to go on a course of rigging for a week at a company called Sanders. He soon found digs which proved to be very comfortable and provided him with an excellent daily breakfast, or as he referred to it as a posh breakfast! Although it was very cold snowy weather, he took many notes as he walked around the workshops learning as much as he could. Having thoroughly enjoyed the course he returned to Beaulieu on the 8th March.

In his letter to home on 25th March he mentions that the 16th Reserve Squadron is becoming one of the biggest and most efficient of the Reserve Squadrons in the RFC. Every week more machines arrive and also more men. He also mentions that ten days ago they had a crash — the first since he had been there. The machine nose-dived to the ground and did a fair amount of damage. We were working half the night on it in the pouring rain and when finally we did get the body and engine on the trailer, the latter caught in a rut causing the latter to break its back. So after all that work, we had to leave it out there.

We had another smash, a much worse one last Thursday. It was a brand-new Avro Biplane — I was the rigger attached to it. The engine stopped when it was just rising over some cottages and it fell into the garden of one of the cottages — an absolute useless mess of wood and wire. It was a marvel to me that the pilot wasn't much more severely injured than he was. Our Dad also mentions a pilot called Hutcheon, a close friend of the family, who flew into a snow storm while making a cross-country flight and, being almost blinded by it, he ran into a fence on landing, smashing up the machine, but he himself quite unhurt!

Dad wrote home that on the 26th March could go down as one of the worst days in his life. In the morning they had a terrible smash. A Machine nose-dived into the earth, with the engine racing partially burying itself and absolutely smashed to smithereens. Everyone was still wondering how the poor pilot was still alive, and he was such a nice fellow too. The look on his face was awful

when we reached the wreck. Of course, this upset me— and indeed most of us for the rest of the day.

In the afternoon Dad was on Guard duty. In the evening it came on to snow. That turned into rain, and then with rain, snow and wind, such a wind that he should never have thought he could have experienced in England. Sometimes it could blow you over! You could scarcely walk against it, and I had to keep going around the canvas hangars which were getting more and more dangerous every minute. Then the six of us had to turn out and stand by them, but it was useless. If we had had the whole Squadron out, I am certain that nothing could have been done in such a gale. Some of the hangars were ripped to ribbons! The morning saw five of them blown to the ground and various planes wrecked — and we were out there practically the whole night, and it didn't cease for five minutes. You can guess what we were like! We immediately had a relief guard sent up and we returned to the Studio for a day's rest. I lay on my bed this afternoon and within five minutes fell straight off to sleep, hoping that we would not have another night like that again. Because we had been up all that night, we were given the next day off.

In his next letter he told his Father that he felt extremely lucky to have got into an extremely fine Corps as the Royal Flying Corps, for it was his absolute heart's desire, but if only it was at Wimbledon!! He explained that there were two Air Mechanics attached to each machine— the fitter who attends the engine and rigger who attends to the aero plane (controls and wires etc.). He added: 'No, the machine came down through the engine stopping when it was rising. So, I was in no way responsible!'

On Sunday 2nd April word was received that one of the machines had come down some miles outside the Aerodrome, so we jumped into a light car and went scouring the country for miles around at a speed of about 35mph, which made it deliciously cool for it was a very hot day. We eventually found it in a green meadow surrounded by a crowd of country yokels— and damsels, where in the cool of the evening we dismantled her and transported her back to the Aerodrome on lorries.

The next day a similar accident occurred but of a much more serious nature for the machine dived right into the forest crashing through trees to the ground where we found it in a terrible condition what was left of the plane smeared with blood! I am glad to say that the pilot is getting on very well though. Of course, we didn't finish up till quite late that night as well.

Every other day I have to go on night detachment, i.e. For night and early morning flying! We have to sleep up at the Aerodrome where we can. Some sleep in sheds, some in hangars, lorries, even an ambulance. This of course is only temporary for this month — we are going under canvas on the Aerodrome itself. You must remember Dad that the Studio is entirely commandeered for the RFC and that there are about fifty of us in it. It is situated in the heart of a thick wood, almost isolated and perfectly delightful. We used to have to walk to the Palace stables a few hundred yards away for grub, but we now have this under canvas up at the Aerodrome two miles away. Yes, I think I am heavier — being out in the open all day I get ravenously hungry, I consequently spend a good deal on grub though we do have quite fair meals here. We have half hour's Squadron drill every morning, though up to just lately no drill had been done since the Squadron had been formed.

An entry from his diary on the 13th April 1916 was titled: My First Flight. It was in an 80hp Avro, No.2897, piloted by Lieutenant Norman Brearley. Windy day! At 3pm we get in and start off. It simply lifted into the air and we climbed very steeply, engine running beautifully. The scenery was magnificent — the Isle of Wight, Southampton, Cowes clearly discerned. Hangars, Aerodrome look like midgets! A BE2c keeps passing and re-passing us. At 3000 feet we run into a bit of a snowstorm. At 3.20pm the engine begins to drop a bit. However, after a bit of coaxing we rise again to about 5000 feet. Sometimes against the wind, we are almost stationary, while at others we travel at about 100mph. At 3.30pm we began to descend in a slight spiral — simply magnificent. What an absolute sense of freedom. I watch the controls a fair bit. Severe gust make the joy-stick keel right over knocking my knees apart. At 3.30pm we swoop down over the hangars and make a very good landing despite the high wind. Petrol flow from the back tank seems to be the cause of engine failure. The next day the engine stops, a forced landing having to be made.

His second flight was five days later in the same machine piloted by Lt. Norman Brearley. On early detachment, it was a hot but misty day when he saw Lt. Brearley just about to take off, went up to him and asked, 'Taking a passenger, Sir?' He replied, 'Jump up!' So in I got with no tunic or cap on. It seemed a very hurried affair altogether and was over in five minutes. Only rose to about 500 feet, but we were beautifully steady and hardly a movement on the joy-stick. Good volplane and rather a bumpy landing.

Apparently, London has been having a pretty hot time with the Zeppelins. I note with very much pleasure and pride that the Royal Flying Corps has succeeded in strafing one and bringing it down. If you remember it was always my opinion that aero planes were the best weapons to use against Zeppelins. I think if the gas did actually ignite in one of the chambers of the Zeppelin it would be all up (or all down), but you must remember that Hydrogen does not ignite unless mixed with air which probably explains a good deal.

Sunday 23rd April — Easter Day. Dad records that they had a lovely Church Parade in the morning at East Boldre. He then proceeded to Cowes to go on another course which was to start the next day at the same company, Sanders. This time he was billeted at the Bell Inn. Once again, he had an interesting time on the course for which he was sorry to leave on 29th April to return to Beaulieu. For the next few days the weather was not good, so there was very little flying. On the 5th May they had to shift from the Studio to be under canvas on the Aerodrome. It was not too bad as six shared a tent.

He closed the letter by saying that while this life is healthy and enjoyable, it is one of anxiety and responsibility, responsibility for — yes — human life — and I daresay when I am back at the office again, I shall wish I was back in the RFC — yes, I am sure of it.

In May 1916 Dad wrote to his parents telling them not to expect long letters from him, nor quite so often, as they were terribly busy. In fact, they had to work from dawn to darkness with only a break for meals during which he was able to write a short letter. He went on to relate that he had had a rather exciting and enjoyable adventure a few days earlier. One evening when a number of machines were up, a thick mist sprang up in practically no time making it very dangerous for landing. At about 7.30pm they learned the news that a machine crashed down in the New Forest. The ambulance went to fetch the unfortunate pilot and as darkness was setting in, it was useless to send a breakdown gang to remove the wreck. Accordingly, two men were sent to guard the

machine during the night, including myself. It had come down in the most out of the way place miles from anywhere. There were just three cottages about a mile away.

It was an awful wreck in the middle of some extremely boggy ground over which of course we had to walk. Unfortunately, I went straight down almost up to my armpits in one of these bogs. Ugh! It was cold. I don't think I should have been able to extricate myself had it not been for my chum. I can tell you I felt jolly uncomfortable. He hauled me out with the aid of a broken tree branch which I grabbed hold of tightly with both hands.

When we got to the wreckage, we found three young 'flappers' of the country maiden type and one or two woodman. The girls were very sweet to us and said they would go and get some supper though they lived in one of the aforementioned cottages. While they were gone I lighted a fire of brushwood which soon blazed up and then I endeavored to dry, a bit at least, my wringing wet clothes.

The girls then came back with coffee, bread, butter, cheese and cake and we had a right Royal feast!

Fortunately, it didn't rain anything to speak of during the night, and we had waterproof sheets and one or two blankets. It was the first time I have slept in the open and I must say it was all right. To wake up and find all the beauties of nature surrounding you and to hear the numerous birds singing their songs, it was delightful. Still, it would have been better had I not had that unfortunate accident.

The next morning at 8am the girls came with hot tea, bread, butter and jam and kept us company until 11am when the breakdown gang arrived. We then worked with them, got the engine and valuable parts on a cart and tramped seven miles through the New Forest. No, I'm glad to say I'm not any the worse just a wee bit tired, but it's all in a day's work I suppose.

Sometime in May 1916, he wrote a short letter saying that they were having glorious weather, consequently heaps of flying and work. For security reasons he did not mention the Officer's name, but said that there was a Captain in the Squadron— one of the pioneers of flying, whom he had read a lot about, and he simply does anything he likes on his machine. The other night he had it brought out, took up a passenger, and looped the loop and did lots of other hair-raising performances and landed without the aid of flares or anything. He took an Air Mechanic up the other day for half an hour and fairly put the wind up him I can tell you! He doesn't want to go up with him again in a hurry.

On 22nd May, the weather being grand, there was plenty of flying. The Daylight-Saving Bill came in and all clocks had to be advanced one hour. The next day Dad felt absolutely rotten and went to bed early, but the next morning he felt worse and had to report sick and was placed in the Hospital tent with a temperature of 102.4 — He had the 'flu (Influenza). He was not the only one. And he paid tribute to Nurse Clayton for the wonderful way she looked after them. On Sunday 28th May; whilst still a patient in bed, a new Medical Officer came on the scene. During the day Avro 2897 comes down and smashes! The following day a Curtiss dashes into a hedge a few yards from the Hospital tent. Dad wrote: Rather exciting, I must say! The effects of the 'flu certainly made him very weak. However, on the 9th June the Medical Officer discharged him and sent him home on seven days sick leave.

For some time, Dad's father had been suffering from tuberculosis. Although he went away to sanatoriums at Hastings and Ventnor, Isle of Wight, he finally had to give up work. Dad's opening lines in his letter to his father on 8th June 1916 were: My Dearest Dad and Mum. Awfully sorry to hear of your having to leave the Alliance, Dad, but they have been good to you and no mistake. I am a convalescent — I forgot to tell you. I've been in hospital for just over a fortnight with a severe case of the 'flu.....Late, in the same letter, he wrote: Yes, it does seem strange Dad that those 'big little' boys that use to 'play' with model aero planes should be so much to the fore in the Air Services now, viz. Hutcheon - Lieutenant in the RFC, Barrs - Sub.Lt. RNAS, Slatter - Sub Lt. RNAS, Davis Lt. - RFC, Boniface 2nd AM RFC, Tucker - 2nd AM RFC. All who used to fly on the Common!

Later in the same letter a few words show how observant, caring and tactful Dad was in giving advice. And I quote: Twice, just before a pilot took a machine up, I discovered half worn through control wires; while one or two suggestions I have made with regards to construction have been carried out. [Hopefully, his advice was not to fall on deaf ears!]

Just before my illness Lt. Brearley, the one who me up for my first trip, took me for another lovely one on 18th May. I prefer him to any of the other pilots here. He is a fine chap — an Australian. Do you know, when he first came here to take his ticket, I knew he would make a good pilot. He has such a calm face and I would go up with him anytime I don't mind telling you. I went up with him in the strongest wind we have had here in which there has been any flying. It was terribly bumpy and reminded me of being in one of those yachts at Yarmouth on a rough sea more than anything, but I felt absolutely safe with him in the pilot seat. Some weeks later Lt. Brearley was posted to France to fight in the Great War. That was the last our Dad saw or heard of him. Well, that was what he thought at the time, until he heard that he was still alive some time later! Read on!

In June he wrote home thanking his parents for their long letters. Reading between the lines one can feel that they were somewhat concerned, but his answering letters re-assured them that he was looking after himself. He also welcomed long newsy letters he received from his colleagues in John Hudson & Co. Limited, a coal distributing company in the City of London. His father must have asked him if he saw any promotion in the RFC. Our Father replied: 'A1 Mechanic has no stripes, Dad, though a Corporal, which is the next grade, has two. I cannot say I'm really keen on getting 1st Mechanic rank, though I shouldn't be surprised if I did get it in a month or two. At any rate, though I speak for myself, I know a lot more about rigging than a good many 1st Mechanics here do. It means 28/- a week, 3/- a week more than I'm getting now, but a lot more responsibility, and once you do get it, it is most difficult to keep.' In the same letter he assures his grandmother, that he was not the Air Mechanic in the hair-raising flight piloted by the Captain!

From June onwards he often wrote on headed note paper provided by the Y.M.C.A. (Young Men's Christian Association). It was headed: For God, For King & For Country, H.M. Forces on Active Service. He expressed his good news by saying that they now have a new Flight Sergeant in their Flight and arrangements are altogether much better for he has what most others lacked, viz. 'System'. True, we have rather long hours, but we don't have to work quite so hard and furthermore we get one half day off a week and sometimes two. On one of my half days I cycled through the New Forest to Brockenhurst, from there I took a train to Bournemouth where I spent a most enjoyable time. It is a lovely place and there are quite a number of visitors there. I went on the Pier in the evening and heard a fairly good band. I arrived back at Brockenhurst shortly after

midnight and had a delightful five-mile ride back to Camp. It was, of course, quite dark through the Forest, numerous squirrels clambered from tree to tree. Rabbits ran across the road in front of me. Meanwhile, on either side of the road, there were a number of glow worms showing vivid green lights, the first I have seen of this wonderful little insect.

On 2nd July 1916, Dad wrote home to say that on the previous day he went for a lovely flight— the most enjoyable one he reckoned he had ever had. He mentioned that his hero Australian pilot had gone ‘overseas’, (for security reasons he did not mention his name, but it was Lieutenant Norman Brearley). However, the pilot who took him up yesterday was another absolutely ‘ripping’ chap and was their Flight Commander. It was in a brand-new Avro biplane. The day was perfectly clear though terrible bumpy. I spent my time picking out various houses, churches, roads, etc, that I was familiar with on the ground. That ride to Lymington, which I often do by bike, looked no distance at all and we got to Lymington in about 5-minutes, whereas it takes about $\frac{3}{4}$ hour by bike. Two or three times the pilot shut his engine off and spoke to me, very kindly pointing out well known landmarks.

When we got down he said, ‘I’m afraid it wasn’t very nice for you. It was so terribly bumpy. I could do absolutely nothing with the joystick (Control lever). If it is fine I will take you up in a BE2c tomorrow.’ I remarked that on the contrary I had enjoyed the trip immensely as indeed I had— but it is all like a dream. It seems to be all over in a minute and one almost forgets the delight and the sensation altogether.’

In mid-July, Dad wrote to his parents informing them that the previous day they drew their overseas kit which included a ripping little revolver, haversack, water bottle, cooking utensils, etc. A draft was to go in the next week and they have those big sun-helmets — but he didn’t think he would be on it just yet and told them not to worry. He also told them that an announcement was made on parade that NCOs and men wishing to become pilots were to give their names in. To his surprise, only about a dozen, himself included, were interested. He hoped his parents didn’t have any objections.

Toward the end of July his Flight Commander kept to his word and took Dad for a Flight in a BE2c.

Dad wrote: My Flight Commander was awfully good to me. On the way to Bournemouth, he kept shutting off the engine to point out certain places to me. Coming back, I turned round and had the nerve to ask him if he would take me over the Isle of Wight which he did, right from the Needles up to Cowes. It does seem strange that this time last year that I was spending my holidays in the Isle of Wight and this year flying over it, doesn’t it? Over the Solent we had a race with four Destroyers. We then rose to 10,000 feet and strange to say I didn’t feel at all cold, though I didn’t have a coat on. We then descended to 4,000 feet in very small spirals and got down just in time for breakfast.

I think that there are going to be drastic changes shortly taking place at Beaulieu, for forty new chaps have arrived and a new Reserve Squadron is being formed. What do you think of the War, Dad, now? There seems to be a general feeling now that it will be over by August! Let’s hope so.

He went on to say: Practically, I never have a headache now. The only way it affects me, as it does with everyone if they haven’t a proper flying helmet, is that after having been up for half an hour or more, you are terribly deaf when you get down, but this only lasts for about ten minutes. I have just heard that my Avro has been smashed! It’s always the way when I’m not there to look after

it. No, the noise of the aero planes never affects me now. Do you know that my experience in model flying has come in much more useful than I ever thought it would, for if a machine is found to fly left or right wing low, nose heavy, etc., I know exactly what to do. I think that some of the other Air Mechanics are a little surprised.

During the next few months life at Beaulieu was very mixed. Generally, the weather was fine. That provided pilots with plenty of flying time. But there seemed to be plenty of mishaps like planes having to make forced landings, there were numerous smashes, but worst of all fatalities occurred in which pilots were burnt alive when their aero planes crashed and caught fire. It is important, I think, for people to know that there were more pilots killed in these tragic and horrible accidents than there were pilots killed in actual Warfare, during the Great War.

As for the men's leisure time, they often went to the Pictures as they called them in those days, now referred to` the Cinemas. Occasionally, they would attend a concert, but by far the most popular form of entertainment were at the dances! That was when they made strong acquaintances with the local girls! Our Dad was no exception! It was not until I read about the numerous young ladies he met during his three years in the RFC and RAF, did I realize that they must have been a great support to him during those difficult times. I found their friendships very amusing! Sometimes one young lady said goodbye to him as he boarded a train, yet there was another who met him at the other end of his journey! His descriptions of some of them were equally amusing. He would often write: She's a very nice girl, but a bit common! I think he felt that some of them were getting too serious. Possibly in sheer desperation he would write, 'I think I shall have to throw this girl over!'

Dad was very good at school subjects, particularly Algebra in which the unknown has to be worked out. When reading his diaries, I found he applied the letter x (as one usually does in Algebra) to the unknown lady he sought and wished to marry. Well, he finally did find that chosen young lady. She was Miss Mabel Hall, known as 'Mabs', our dear Mother. When I was in my early twenties our former Vicar, Rev. Stuart K. Anderson MA (Oxon) in his retirement, told me one evening when I visited him, how our parents met. He said, 'When Gordon met your mother, he was absolutely swept over by her!' And it was not long before they got married on 16th October 1926 when Dad was 29 years old and Mother was 22-years-old. Personally, I have found that in writing this long article, aided with all the information our Dad left behind, has made me feel as if I have been re-living part of his life again. I have not only found it so interesting, but also most amusing. And to think that I have had to wait for just over eight decades to learn much more about Dad's Service years and the string of romances he had when he was stationed at Beaulieu, Hounslow and Wye.

When serving at all three places, Dad was in a good position to get home fairly frequently to 'Hollywood', 61 Lambton Road, West Wimbledon and spend time with the family and meet up with friends. When he was unable to visit them, he would often play tennis with various people at Mr. Massey's at Beaulieu. I think that this is a good place to mention that whenever Dad went home, he would always attend St Matthew's Church of England in Durham Road. Often, he would be accompanied by other members of the family. His father had been chief chorister there for many years. It was a beautiful Church and Dad used to get inner strength when he attended Holy Communion there early on Sunday mornings.

In October and early November things were not going very well which made Dad feel rotten and utterly FED UP! That is how he printed those two words so often in his diaries. Knowing my father as well as I did, I could tell how he was truly expressing his anger and sadness. Obviously, the state of the crazy War made him feel as he did and most people would have felt the same. On top of all that he was very concerned about the poor health of his father who was coming and going. However, it was found that the weather around Ventnor helped him with his breathing.

On the 22nd October he records that A463 smashes in Biddlecombs Meadow, so they have to go out to it, while 416 knocks a flagpole down. Consequently, we have two machines unserviceable. We have to work for all we are worth to get them done. Have to get up with detachment. Missing all parades! Half an hour for dinner and back again after tea working with electric light in new sheds till 8pm. Feel absolutely FED UP and am looking forward to a week-end's rest. On 30th October someone has done in my bike, so I can't go anywhere. The next day I apply for a transfer on to another Squadron.

On 1st November, I have an interview with Lieutenant Milling, our Flight Commander, on the subject.

Air Mechanics: Carter, Hall and Watkinson also apply for transfers — all this week!

On 9th November 1916, Dad had yet another flight with his Flight Commander. He wrote: We fairly put the breeze up another pilot by chasing him round the Aerodrome. I would well imagine myself attacking a bosche what with the dives and turns we did round him!

On 11th November: Fine day. Half day holiday, but can't go anywhere — no bike! The following day was a lovely day with plenty of flying. Capt. Westendarp is now our new Commanding Officer.

On 12th November 1916. Tragically, Lt. Byers is killed in a Curtis nose dive. [An official statement records that Lt. Henry Elliott Byers (22) appeared to be out of control at 3,000 feet and dose dived into the ground at Beaulieu. In 1915 he and his brother joined the Black Watch and served in France. The following year Henry returned to England to take a Commission in the RFC. He was buried in Grangegorman Military Cemetery, Dublin.]

On 18th November 1916. With snow on the ground, it was a very cold day. Kit inspection in the morning, Sergeants' Mess fatigues in the afternoon. I spent the evening in the YMCA with the thoughts of being posted to Hounslow tomorrow.

On Sunday 19th November 1916. Dick Boricher and I set off for Hounslow. It was a terribly wet and windy day. We called in at home at 1.30pm to have dinner then travelled on to Hounslow. We stopped in our hut and read. Went to Church in the evening. The following morning we reported to the C.O. I was posted to 'A' Flight and Avros. Then there were three days of disasters: On the 21st Major Greaves and passenger have a nasty smash in a De Havilland; on the 22nd November, Lt. Hatch crashes an Avro.

On 23rd November 1916 Lt. Dobbyn nose dives in a BE12 and it bursts into flames! Awful sight—burnt to death! [Official report stated that it was likely that at 70 to 80 feet he turned the plane downwind too soon after takeoff which caused the engine to stall and the plane to lose lift. It was witnessed by several officers who then attempted to rescue him, but were unsuccessful. He was buried in the Grangegorman Military Cemetery, Dublin.]

On 28th November 1916 it was an extremely cold day. Lt. Villiers completely smashes up another Avro, which I had to work on for all the next day.

On Sunday 3rd December. I arrived home at 3.30 pm only to find that Granny was not very well. But in the six hours leave I had I caught up my fellow aero modeling enthusiast, Hutcheon, who was home on leave from France. Three days later, when it was a jolly cold day, two Avros land in the same ploughed field. One gets off all right, but we have to work till 8pm dismantling the other. On 9th it was a fine cloudy day and I go for a 45-minute flight with Lt. Steenes in the AW and assist him with the wire.

On 22nd December 1916 I was transferred to 'B' Flight. Thank goodness I'm away from Captain Hagan! The next day I was allotted to AW 1461. On Christmas Eve we were very busy flying all day. In the evening I attended a Service at Hounslow Church.

On 25th December 1918 Christmas Day! Dismissed after Church Parade, so get home at 12.30pm, have dinner at Ardbracon, Granny's home, and have a relaxing time playing games, returning to camp at mid-night.

New Year's Day 1917 was not a good start for the year as Dad went down with the 'flu again and was admitted to the RFC Hospital, Hounslow Heath. Fortunately, he was not there for long. He records that on the 5th January, an RE8 goes up without a wheel and lands in the river — all the Squadron pull it out.

On 12th January 1917, Dad was taken up for a 45-minute flight by Captain Bowyer-Bower, from 2.15pm to 3pm in AW 5519, 90th RAF (Royal Aircraft Factory Engine), an Armstrong-Whitworth FK8, a British Training and Reconnaissance Aircraft. Father wrote: Rather cold and windy day, but have leather coat and cap, so feel OK. Capt. Bowyer-Bower is only a pupil, but quite safe! Ascend at 2pm and reach 4,000 feet. Fairly bumpy and we run into thick cloud. Try to pick out places I know, but find it extremely difficult. Land at 2.45pm and he asks me if I'd like to go up again, and gives me a pair of goggles. Quite a decent joyride of ¼ hour and we land at 3pm. Although it was rather bumpy, it was an enjoyable flight.

It was miserable snowy weather and whilst Dad was often on Flare duty, he also suffered a poisoned finger. He felt so absolutely rotten that he had to report sick, see the M.O. and attend hospital. On top of all that it appears that he had an intense dislike for a particular Flight Sergeant!

On 14th January managed to get home for an hour to be with his Father and also met up with Hutcheon again. Two days later Dad visited the Alcazar which became his favourite meeting place. There he was in conversation with 2nd Air Mechanic Stanley who offered to take him up for a flight. The next day, 17th January, poor young Stanley was killed in a RE8 nose dive. Dad found it hard to realize.

On 18th January, although it was a fine day, an AW crashes into a hangar damaging the plane. Then on the 25th an RE7 crashed. The next day we were busy rebuilding the RE7. But after tea

Hill and I have to go to Greenford 8-miles away to guard an AW all night. Have a topping supper provided at the farm, and then sleep the night in the nursery, going out at intervals. The next morning 27th January was still very windy. We have a topping breakfast, then Lt. Corfield arrives and we have to dismantle the AW. Get back at 4 pm after a very enjoyable outing. Work to 9.30 pm erecting it.

On 31st January, 1917 told by Capt. Young to go to Nilbourne with lorry to dismantle and bring back an RE8. Start at 3pm with M & T and spend the first night at home. The next morning we get up to London at 8.30am and start at 9am. Pass through St Albans, lunch at Dunstable, on to Northampton and Guisborough where we stop the night at a decent little inn. The next morning we arrive at Nilbourne at 11.30am and see Capt. T.....who tells me I'm to fly back with him instead. Run into Jannaway and we walk into Rugby 4-miles away. The next day was very cold and snowy working on the RE8 all day. Test the engine – unsatisfactory! Only 1350 revs. Stop in the hut. A very decent set of chaps! On 4th February Capt Young tests the RE8 which is unsatisfactory. Go to Church at Clifton.

On 5th February 1917 was absolutely the coldest day I have ever known. At 4pm took off in RE8 No.3409, (140RAF) for 25-minute flight. The RE8 a machine I detest more than any others. 2nd Mechanic Stanley and Capt Grey were killed in an RE8. Still it's a very very cold day and Capt Young and I set off for Hounslow at 4pm. We rise to 4,000 feet and follow the main road. Everywhere is covered in snow and the Midlands look most desolate. So what hopes have we of a forced landing, I don't know. At 4.15pm he says, 'Engine is dud' so we turn round and just get into the Aerodrome making a bumpy landing and breaking the tail skid. No, I don't like the RE8s at all. Still, awfully sorry we didn't get to Hounslow for I was looking forward to a really decent cross-country flight.

On 6th February, repair tail skid broken in landing and alter the rigging a bit. Stop inside in the evening. The next day was very cold and misty weather so do nothing but hang around the machine all day. Stop in, in the evening. On my return I hear that Capt Grey was burnt to death on RE8 on 3rd February. On 8th February, it being a fine day, Capt Young takes RE8 up for a test and takes it to Hounslow without me! Dirty trick! I follow by rail and call in at home and see them all there.

On 9th February. Fine cold day, fair amount of flying. Hear that I am going on another course. On 13th February, 2nd Air Mechanic loses himself and lands at Hendon in RE8. On the 14th leave Hounslow at 11am for Brom (Birmingham) on course on RE8s. Arrive Birmingham at 5pm and get topping billets with Crawford at Northfield. Next day go to Messrs Austin Works and look around the RE8 constructions making notes. Course at Austin's finished on 28th February. He proceeded to Upavon, Wiltshire, 'an awful hole' as he described it, and sat for the Exam satisfactorily, then returned to Hounslow.

On 3rd March he took on the duties of Flight Clerk. Although it seemed a cushy job, he'd rather have something more exciting to do. The weather continued to be very cold and snowy. He wrote: Getting FED UP with 42 RS. No passes issued before 6pm and parade at 7am now.

On the 11th March 1917 he learned that Lt. Lascelles was killed in RE8 No.3409. Joist stick found locked, nose dive from 100 feet. Although that was a tragic loss, it was very sad to read. Getting on better with Flight Sergeant Armstrong, I think. On 12th March Epidemic of Measles on

the Camp! On 13th Dad wrote: the whole camp ISOLATED. Rotten I call it. Four days later the Isolation was called off.

On 18th March 1917 he had a flight in AW. A 1496, (90th RAF) 9am to 9.25am. Simply a glorious spring morning and Lieutenant Weld, our Canadian Flight Commander, one of the best chaps I've known, takes me up. Start off with a 'zoom'. Follow the Thames to Hampton Court. The Palace is very clear, and then to Kingston over which we do a few spirals etc, at 4,000 feet. Pass Brooklands on the way. Later, Lt.Weld has a rotten smash in an RE8. [90RAF stands for 90th Royal Aircraft Factory Engine.]

On 20th March 1917, he writes: Fair day. Lt. Paynton, our Flight Commander, a funny sort of chap. Can't understand him! [It strikes me that Dad found the Lieutenant rather odd, but then some very clever people can give that sort of impression to others].

On 22nd March: A fine day, so fair amount of flying, but umpteen smashes.

On 23rd March 1917, Fine day, but occasional snow storms. A flight in AW. A 1496 from 10.15am to 10.25am. Pilot: Lt. Paynton. Very misty! Just go up to test aircraft with Lt. Paynton. Get up to 600 feet and do one or two steep banks and then a stall. My first one! Quite a nice sensation as she shoots up, stops, and then nose dives about 100 feet. Rather cold! Got caught in one snow storm whilst flying!

On 29th March 1917, a 15-minute flight in AWA 1501 (90 RAF) from 3.35pm to 3.55pm. Pilot: Flight Sergeant Nichols. Very bumpy, but Nichols is a very nice pilot. Go up mainly to take photos with my VPK. Take various photos of the Thames, round Hampton Court and Kingston way. Rise to 3,000 feet where we are in the clouds. Coming down take snaps of a cottage and also one of the clouds as we leave them behind. I wonder how the six photos will come out?

On 31st March Lt. Paynton pegs me for going off with the Returns last night, but as it is hardly my fault— lets me off. The silly ASS! However, F/Sergeant Armstrong —quite decent! [It appears that F/Sergeant Armstrong's attitude has changed towards Dad. Possibly he is now beginning to recognize Dad's ability and knowledge. Wise man!]

On 6th April 1917(Good Friday): Fine day, so plenty of flying. Lt. Paynton gets on my nerves, so thank goodness Lt. Welt is coming on 'B' Flight. Lt. C. S. Peach killed in RE8.

Sometime in April 1917, Dad took a 10-minute flight in AWA 1487 (90 RAF) from 10.45am to 10.55am. Pilot: Lieutenant Weld. Very dull and misty day! Get up to 500 feet taking photos of the Aerodrome just before zooming up. Do some sharp turns and stall about eight times. As we come over the Officers' huts, take a snap of them. Jolly cold up!

On 22nd April 1917. Lt Weld takes me up — comes on to snow and we get drenched!

On 23rd April 1917, we took a 1-hour and 25min flight from 4.50pm to 6.15pm in a BE2e No.7098. Pilot: Sgt. Henry Marvin. Simply glorious afternoon! He goes up for photography. Climb to 2,000 feet and circle around Hampton Court Palace and Kingston Bridge. See a BE on the ground with a crowd around. Then over to Worcester Park and Raynes Park which I easily recognize — Carters a good land mark. See 61 Lambton Road, and also the Dep in Dr Stevenson's garden. Descend to 300 feet on Wimbledon Common, but too many people around for us to land. Circle it for about 20-minutes and I get some snaps, then made off over Raynes Park and Wimbledon to Croydon

Aerodrome. Circle around his home for some time, but wind in wrong direction for us to land. Come down low and people wave to us. Pass an Avro and a 2C, come back over Hampton and Staines, very misty indeed. Made a fast landing rather! To date the most enjoyable trip I've had as yet.

[Further reading about Sgt. Henry Marvin is to be found in the last pages of this 3-year account. It is titled: *Reconnaissance Aircraft in the Royal Flying Corps*. The BE2e was a British Training and Reconnaissance Aircraft very vulnerable to enemy fighters. 'Dep' stands for Deperdussin, which is a small French aero plane. Carters was a vast seed growing Company. 61 Lambton Road was where Dad's family lived.]

On 23rd April 1917, Sergeant Marvin takes me up for a lovely trip over Hampton Court, Raynes Park, Wimbledon, Croydon etc. [Although he does not mention it here, it seems pretty obvious that they circled both their respective homes at quite a low altitude].

On 27th April 1917. My leave pass has gone through. Leave at 7 and get home about 9. One assumes that was in the evening and he writes: How ripping to sleep in my little room once more!

On 28th April 1917, Lovely day. Go to Rutlish School in morning. [That was the school at which Dad received most of his education. One can rightly assume that he was well received by staff and students and that they would have asked him many questions about what he was doing in the Royal Flying Corps.]

On 13th May 1917. Lovely windy day. Two De Havilland smashes. One killed. On 16th: Granny, Dad and Mum go to Ventnor. Much colder day. Two Curtiss machines flying! Very busy rigging up others so don't get out till 8 pm.

On 19th May 1917, Dull day, but plenty of flying. Lieutenant Nicholson gets into a spin on a BE2e No.5817, crashes in Staines Road, Hounslow and is burnt to death.

On 21st May 1917, a 25-minute flight in a Curtiss B1937 from 3.20pm to 3.45pm Pilot: Lieutenant Nichols. A lovely bright day! Testing new machine! First time up in a Curtiss, very nice — no draught— nice rhythm of the engine and very comfortable. Seem to wallow a bit though owing to excessive dihedral, I suppose. Take photos at 2,000 feet of Hampton Reservoirs, Railway Junction and Hayes munition factory from above the clouds. Get up to 3,000 feet and do a very steep spiral coming down which turns my inside out!

On 24th May 1917. Fair day. Wish I would hear something about flying. This is too tame as it is now. Still, I suppose I shall hear sooner or later.

On 29th May 1917. Fair day. Feel generally fed up with life. I don't know why. Wish I would hear something about going in for flying.

On 30th May 1917. A lovely day. Lt. Ramsey tries to knock over hangar with a Curtiss and consequently falls into the road — a complete write off!

On 31st May 1917. Lovely day and very hot! Being the end of the month all flying log books have to be made up, so don't finish till 9.30pm.

On Saturday 2nd June 1917. The new C.O., like a 'toff,' knocks us off at 5pm till Monday morning. On 4th: Lovely day and very busy making up weekly log books.

On 6th June 1917. Very windy day, so practically no flying at all. However, Lt. Nichols takes me up for 5-minutes in a Curtiss B1934 from 11.40am to 11.45am. Strong easterly wind blowing! Rise to 400 feet and almost stall — very bumpy, and engine starts losing revs and we do a sharp turn and race toward the ground. Won't describe my impression, but needless to say the worst 5-minutes I've ever spent. Do another sharp turn, about 50 feet from the ground. Narrowest escape we ever had probably and we have an awful time getting back into Aerodrome. [The Curtiss JN 4A was an American Training plane.]

On 10th June, Holiday: Go to Isleworth Church in the morning. Home for dinner! Walk on the Common. Meet the Kings and Dad. [Our Dad's elder brother, Mexborough, married into the King family later]. Walk home to supper. Feel rotten after last Wednesday [that's when they had engine trouble]. On 11th: Lovely weather, but very hot. Lawkes! All A1 for me to join the infantry! Only hope I can go in for flying before I go, for, after all, that's my ambition.

On 13th June 1917. Formation Flight in Curtiss B1940 for two hours and forty minutes, from 2.20pm. Pilot: Sgt. Lamb. Lovely day. Sgt. Lamb's first passenger. Two other machines. After getting into a decent formation, proceed over Richmond, Brooklands, Wimbledon and then round northwards to London Colney. Take various photos. Reach 3,500 feet. Land at London Colney. See young Hallett there. Fill up the buses, start the props and we set off for Northolt where we land and have tea there. We then set off for Hounslow, up to Staines where we take some photos and finally land at 6.40pm, quite the best trip I've had. Get back at 7 pm. Air Raid over London. The next day – Rumour of another raid, but nothing doing.

On 15th June 1917. Lovely day. Poor old Bond has a terrible smash on RE8 — planes drop off, he's dying poor chap! Devilish machines! [From the Internet, it is recorded that Lt. Hubert Samuel Emery Bond (28) was flying RE8 No.A3411, when the wings failed in a dive and he crashed on the 14th June. Sadly, he passed away on the 17th June 1917]

On 20th June 1917. Lovely day, feel generally fed up, for some reason or other. [Dad was probably not aware of it at the time, but I believe that on top of the World War the loss of so many of his comrades in aero plane crashes must have had a profound accumulative effect on him, hence the reason why he was often feeling so fed up.]

On 22nd June 1917. Fair day, but cloudy. Finish about 6pm, but feel fed up, especially with girls! Been over doing it I suppose! On 23rd: Rainy day. Lieutenants R & N ask if I'd take Corporals' stripes, but refuse them. [One could rightly assume that the two Officers were none other than Lt. Ramsey and Lt. Nichols mentioned earlier. Why did Dad refuse the promotion? When promotion is offered or made, it can often lead to that person being placed in another job and taken away from the work he or she has so dearly loved doing for some time, and the chums with whom they have worked. However, he changed his mind at a later date].

On 5th July 1917. A bit brighter today. Put in a week-end Pass to the Isle of Wight. Wonder what hopes! Stop late and get all my work up to date. On 6th: Glorious day. Pass gone thro'. Leave at 1pm. Have a chat on the phone with those at 22, Billiter Street, London. Get to Southampton at 6 pm, Cowes by 7pm. Stop at Mrs Colley's for the night. Have a lovely bed and don't get up till 9am and just miss the 10am train. So I wait on the front till 1 pm. Get to Ventnor at 2.15pm and see Dad and Mum. After dinner go for a stroll along the front — very quiet. Sunday 8th: Bad Air Raid on London yesterday (Saturday). Severe storm in the night and rather a dull day! Go to Church

with Dad and Mum. Have a walk in afternoon and evening. Feel rotten towards bedtime. Have a rotten night and am very sick.

On 9th July 1917, rainy day, leave Ventnor at 2pm and get back to Hounslow at 11.30pm. The next day is a lovely day. I naturally feel FED UP after coming back from leave and am very busy and don't finish till 11pm. On 12th: Do a record amount of flying 37½ hours. Go with my chum Rowe to Ealing, but he hasn't a pass and leaves me 9am. I look for 'x' the unknown, but no luck! On 19th: Pop into Ealing on my own and look for 'x', but no luck!

On 20th July 1917. 10-minute flight in Curtiss B 1015 from 9.20am to 9.30am Pilot: Lieutenant Corfield. Go up with Flight Commander of 'B' Flight, 42 Training Squadron, to test the aircraft. Absolutely lovely, and I am quite confident I could fly a Curtiss on my own now. Do a circuit of the Aerodrome and then land. Later that day, S/M (Sgt. Major, I think) pegs D and M and myself for not going on Parade. Go before the Adjutant, but of course get off as we have never been on before!

On Sunday 22nd July 1917. Grand day. Go to Roman Catholic Church in morning, but don't like it. Get home to dinner and we go to Les Rois. After tea go to Clapham Room (Plymouth Brethren Sect). Don't like that either. On 23rd: Lovely day. Very busy in the Flight, building up machines with broken longerons. Don't finish till about mid-night. On 24th: Lovely day. Some luck. Collision with two Curtisses, and then Lt. H..... gets into a spin and makes a write off. Marvel he wasn't killed.

On 25th July 1917. 15-minute flight in a Curtiss B 1934 from 12.10pm to 12.25pm Pilot: Lieutenant Corfield. DUAL. Go up primarily to test the machine after its having been rebuilt, but at his signal take control. Strike a bump and the wing goes down. Get it up all right and then try a turn, but I'm blown if the rudder doesn't puzzle me. Find myself doing small circles. However, it is really too bumpy to feel the controls very well. Take some snaps and make a bumpy landing.

On 26th July 1917. Glorious day so kept pretty busy. In the evening go up to London with Douglas and see 'Where are my children' at the Philharmonic Hall. Pretty good! Get back at 11pm.

On 27th July 1917. Lovely day — two Curtiss smashes. In evening go to Alcazar to see 'The Battle of Arras'. Not up to much.

On 31st July 1917. Wretched rainy day again. Go home to supper and see them before Granny and Auntie go to Ipswich to negotiate for the purchase of a Levis Motor-bike.

On 1st August 1917. Still raining! Think it must be the guns in France. No flying. On 5th: Fair day. Home for dinner! Pop round to Clare's and Hutcheon's on the motor-bike.

On 6th August 1917. Absolutely grand day. RFC Sports on the Aerodrome. About 10,000 present. Come 2nd in 4-legged race.

On 9th August 1917. Lt Wallen's De Havilland falls to pieces in the Air. A Glorious day! Finish at 6 pm and get home at 7.30pm. Motor cycle to John Innis Courts, and see Clare at Merton. Bike running OK, but goes wrong when I reach home — plug trouble I think.

On 10th August. Fine but very bumpy day! Fairly busy! Fred cycles over and I show him around the Aerodrome. Captain Colly comes up and has a chat as he is an old Blue. [The Captain and Dad's brother, Fred, were both educated at the Bluecoat School].

On 11th August 1917. 10-minute test flight in Curtiss B 1934 from 10.15am 10.25am. Pilot: Lieutenant Ramsey. Fine, but rather cloudy. Go up with Lt. Ramsey to test the machine which has been rebuilt. Get it up to 500 feet and it's rather bumpy and especially coming down over the huts. Seem to strike a bump as we flatten out, consequently making a somewhat poor landing.

On 13th August 1917. Poor old Creave — killed in the usual spinning nose dive on an RE8.

On 16th August 1917. Do some Dual with Lt. Corfield on De Havilland 6 and one fairly good landing.

On 17th August 1917. 15-minute flight, in De Havilland 6, A9616 from 12.15 pm to 12.30pm. DUAL. Pilot: Lt. Corfield. Our Flight Commander, Lt. Corfield, tells me I can do a bit of dual on the De Havilland. Absolutely safe bus, but unlike others the stick has to be kept forward, consequently at first I stall. However, after finding out my error, I do one or two turns and land her— my first landing. Flatten out a little too soon and don't keep the stick forward long enough. Not so bad on the whole though and no damage is done. [DH 6, Ultra safe training aircraft. 'Safe Bus' — the word 'Bus' was 1914-18 slang for an Aero plane.]

On 21st August 1917. Glorious day so fairly busy flying. Martingale lands on top of De Havilland 6 with amusing results!

On 22nd August 1917. Fine day, but awful for crashes. Capt Neale and passenger killed in BE2e in Staines Road. And Lt. Richard Keyser killed in usual RE8 spin. He died from his injuries. Numerous other crashes!

On 23rd August 1917. Very windy, but fine day. Ask F/Sgt Armstrong for half day which he kindly gives me. [Here's another further indication of the Flight Sergeant's appreciation].

On 25th August 1917. Fine day. Finish about 5.30pm so go to Raynes Park and call for my Levis, but he hasn't got it to go yet. Rotten! I call it!

On 27th August 1917. Fair day, but dull. Drill for funeral in the morning and go to the funeral of Lt. Keyser at 1.30pm. Both 19 and 29 Squadrons present — about 500 men.

On 28th August 1917. Fine evening, finish at 6pm. Go to Raynes Park at 7pm and call for motor bike. Ride it home, then it goes dud again! Decide to let the Malden chap have a look at it. Have supper and return to Camp.

On 31st August 1917. Lovely day. Martinsyde falls to bits in the Air and Lt. Arthur Dericourt Roberts MC is killed.

On 1st September 1917. Lovely day. Wash out at 6pm, so decide to go to Malden and call for my Levis which I ride home. Going much better! Have supper and return to Camp.

On 3rd September 1917. Bad Air Raid on Chatham and Sheerness!

On 4th September 1917. Finish about 6pm and get home at 7pm and take the Levis out for a spin. Running absolutely fine now! Come in and have some music and supper and then return to Camp. Air Raid on London! On 5th: Very hot misty day. De Havilland 4 comes a terrible cropper on our Parade Ground. On 6th: Get all my work up to date in the hopes of getting a week-end. On 7th: Hooray! Flight Sergeant Armstrong grants my week-end. Get to Hythe at 7.30pm and go to Achens

Farm where I spend the evening and then go to the Drummond Arms Hotel where I put up for the night in a lovely featherbed!

On 8th September 1917. A lovely day. Go to the farm and then bike over to Beaulieu. Have dinner at Biddlecombs and then go round to Massy's, who kindly offer to put me up. Cycle over to Ashens farm to tea and spend the evening there. Ride back and have supper at the Massy's and have a chat over old times!

On 9th September 1917. Drill morning. Have a ripping sleep in the night and Lulu calls me at 8.30am and after a posh breakfast go on Aerodrome at Beaulieu and have dinner with the chaps. Go up to Ashens farm and then to Church.

On 10th September 1917. Glorious day. Lulu calls me at 8.30am and after a posh breakfast say Good bye to Mrs Bull, the Biddlecombs, etc. Cycle to Ashens farm. Am seen off at Southampton and get to London at 6pm after a most enjoyable time. Take the Levis out for a spin. Feel very miserable over things at home. Go back to Camp.

On 11th September 1917. Lovely day, but feel rather fed up of course. A Curtiss overturns on the ground. Stop in 'B' Flight Office till 12 noon getting all the log books up to date. Severe thunderstorm! Feel absolutely fed up with this wretched War.

On 12th September 1917. Lovely day. Very busy getting all my work up to date after my week-end. On 13th: Lovely morning, but showery and dull evening. Get home at 7pm and take the Levis for a spin. Running A1 now! Have supper and return to Camp. Hear from Boniface who has been wounded!

On 16th September 1917. Fine day. Get home to dinner and run my bike round to Clare's, but it goes dud! Have a quiet time and feel unhappy. [Knowing my Dad so well, I would say that he was unhappy because his motor bike had gone wrong yet again.]

On 17th September 1917. Fair day and winter time commences and it seems to get dark very quickly, but I'm glad. Stop late and get everything up to date.

On 18th September 1917. Wretched rainy and windy day. Finish at 6pm. Go out with Smart to Ealing and then go to Chiswick Empire and see some pretty good turns including Brandsley Williams.

On 20th September 1917. Fine day so plenty of flying. Finish at 6pm and go to Malden, but he hasn't got my bike done yet. Go home and spend the rest of the evening there.

On 21st September 1917. Lovely day again. Rotten Wing Commander and nothing but hot air about all day! Go to the Pictures at Ealing with Smart in the evening.

On 22nd September 1917. Lovely day. All Curtisses going to Stamford tomorrow. I'm bobbing on that! So out on my own to Ealing and go to Girton Hall Dance for a little while, but no sign of 'x' yet!

On 24th September 1917. Finish at 7.30pm and go to Chiswick and get caught in a violent Air Raid. Wind up! Go to Chiswick Empire and see *Fulls and Dulls* — jolly good.

On 26th September 1917. A rather gusty day and it comes onto rain at tea time. Meet Beryl at 8pm and mystery of mysteries—someone has been impersonating me and ringing her up, quite upsetting the poor girl. Go to Alcazar and then see her home and return to Camp.

On 27th September 1917. 10-minute flight in Dehavsix A9615 from 2.20pm to 2.40pm. Pilot: Lt. Balden. Lieutenant Balden, our new Flight Commander, takes me up in one of the 'Cabs' to take photos of the Aerodrome. One of the most comical machines I have ever been on and sometimes simply sit on our tail or else do flat spins without any detrimental effect whatever. Secure 6 photos. Engine is running badly and starts knocking. So we come down.

On 29th September 1917. Lovely day. Meet Rosie as arranged at Hammersmith and we go to the cinema. Terrific Gotha Air Raid on and guns are quite close. The next day—another Big Air Raid!

On 30th September 1917. Lovely day. Finish at 12 Noon. Take the Levis out for a spin. Running OK.

On 1st October 1917. Lovely day though misty in the morning! Meet Ethel at 8pm and we go for a nice walk in the thick of an Air Raid. Leave her at 10 and get back to Camp at 11pm. On 3rd: Quite a change in the weather — very gusty all day so not a great deal of flying. Capt Rice seems to be a 'toff!' Sgt. Major Rootes resumes his duties. Meet Ethel at 8pm and we go for a walk. Have a bit of a tiff, but make it up. A very nice girl and excellent company, but rather young, I'm afraid. Only 17!

On 4th October 1917. Wretched rainy day! Shift into another hut and don't hear the Parade Bell. The Sgt. Major stops all our passes for a week. Fed up! On 6th: Fine day. Tell the Sgt. Maj. that as I didn't go to dinner till 1pm Thursday (two days ago), shouldn't have my passes strafed and he very generously lets me off.

On 10th October 1917. A 19 Training Squadron Officer killed on RE8. Lights fuse in shed, so can't work. Get home at 7.30pm. Call and see Leslie [I think that he is Leslie Stubbings, the next door neighbor], who is home on leave from France, poor chap. Got to go away again. Feel so sorry for him.

On 29th October 1917. A day of partings: Mex, who has been on leave, goes to Saffron Walden and Dad goes to Sanatorium at Hastings. Absolutely fed up! Rumour has it now that we are going to Beaulieu and not Farmborough. Go to Chiswick Empire and see some marvelous fantasies by the Great Raymond.

On 30th October 1917. Lovely day so fairly busy. Work till 7pm and then see concert in Church Army Hut. Quite good! Hear guns very long and loudly at midnight. Get up and have a look, but too misty to see anything. Big Raid!

On 3rd November 1917. The windiest day I've known. Half the Flight has to work all night filling bombs and ammunition to the De Havilland 4s. What is it? Italy? Ireland? Air Raid? No one seems to know and we are all confined to Camp. ½ of 19 Training Squadron go away with overseas kit. On 4th Six De Havilland 4s start out on a bombing raid and Lt Corfield on an RE8. Poor old Lt. Gordon Sallnow Cosgrove and Lt. Wilfred Frank King burnt to death through the usual RE8 (No.3893) spin. Confined to Camp!

On 6th November 1917. Lovely day so fairly busy flying. Finish about 7 pm, but CB (Confined to Barracks) isn't off yet, tho' there is a rumour that it will be off tomorrow. On 7th: Hooray! CB off

at last! What a relief. On 9th: Feel absolutely rotten. No sleep. Sore throat and earache! Sometimes feel that Army life is draining me physically and mentally.

On 15th November 1917, Glorious Autumn day, so plenty of flying. In evening go to see Zoman, an absolute marvel at TELEPATHY!

On 16th November 1917. Lovely day, but it turns rather foggy at night. Latest rumour: Going to Dover. On 27th: Windy day, so very little flying. Various rumours still floating about, but Wye is the most persistent.

On 17th November 1917. 15-minute flight, DUAL, in DeHavsix A9666 from 2.40 to 2.55pm Pilot: Lt. Ramsey. We go up to test the machine which has been rebuilt. Do a few turns and dives and then take control. Manage quite well and do about three circuits of the Aerodrome. Absolutely got the turn to a 'T', though I'm rather apt to let the nose down! Get up to a height of about 800 feet, but impossible to see outside Aerodrome owing to mist. Make quite a good landing.

On 22nd November 1917. We take a Special Weather Test flight for 15-minutes in DeHavsix B2610 from 9.15am to 9.30am. Pilot: Lt. Corfield. Have to go up to report weather conditions for the Wing Commander. Do two terrific zooms leaving the Aerodrome. Very misty around the precincts of Hounslow, but above 1,000 feet it is much clearer and not a single bump, though quite nippy. How absolutely glorious flying is! Do wish I could take it up— feel absolutely confident already.

On 28th November 1917. Windy and treacherous day. See poor old Cunningham fall and burnt to death in a b----y RE8 [That word would have stood for 'Bloody' and it is a known fact that, before parachutes were ever issued, some pilots chose to die by jumping from their machines rather than be burnt to death on the ground.]

On 5th December 1917, Glorious day after a ripping night in a featherbed! Rise at 10.30 am and cycle to Tooting to see Les Rois. Go back to Ardbraccon to dinner and then go up to London to see the boys at the office. Back to Hounslow at 8.30pm Big Air Raid during the night.

On 6th December 1917. Latest rumour: Beaulieu again! On the 11th: very misty all day. Hear that we are shifting to Wye on Sunday. Jolly sorry and mean to have a jolly good time for the rest of the time I am here. On 13th: misty early, but clears at midday and we send off all the De Havillands to Lanford and pack up ready to go to Wye in the afternoon.

On 14th December 1917. Practically no work doing as we've got no machines. Just ready to go out at 6p.m. when the whole Squadron has to fall in and we worked until midnight packing up stores. On 15th: lovely day, getting ready to go to Wye. Get out at 5p.m. and go to Bath Road Dance — me the only boy and 30 girls!

On Sunday 16th December 1917. Up at 4.30am and get to Wye at noon. Awful hole! No houses! No shops! No girls! Grub awful! Weather vile! On 17th: Lovely little 'drome situated in a valley surrounded by, at present, snow covered hills. Very cold! Get the place a bit ship shape. Our Flight is now 'A' Flight with 4 Avros. Capt Rice is still our Commander.

On 18th December 1917. Very cold and snowy day. So kept pretty busy, so don't finish till 6pm. Have a look round the village of Wye with Smart. Not so bad! Chat with one or two girls. Air Raid on! Have supper and get in.

On 19th December 1917. Very cold day and misty, so not much flying. Catch the 5.28pm train to go to Ashford 5-miles away. Very quiet place, but go to a tip top cinema with a lovely orchestra. Wait ½ hour for train which is late. Sometimes I feel I'm going absolutely rotten and I shall be an absolute complete wreck after the War.

On Sunday 21st December 1917. Misty and rainy day. Not so much flying. Go to a dance given by the villagers of Wye. Rather tame show, but have a good time and get off with quite a nice little girl for Wye. Get in at 12 midnight.

On 22nd December 1917. Sgt. Major plays hell because we don't get up for Reveille. Just the kind of thing that spoils the Army! Very cold and bitter day. On Sun. 23rd: Lovely day. Pretty busy, but go to a nice Service at Wye Church in the evening and then meet Nan and go for a nice walk. Asks me to tea on Xmas Day! On 24th: Misty kind of day, so not much flying, Stop in, in the evening to write letters. Have supper and go to bed. [Miss Nancey Dodd didn't waste any time in inviting Dad to tea in three days time on Christmas Day!]

On 25th December 1917. Christmas Day. Very windy day and two Sopwith Camels overturn. Have a very Merry Christmas dinner with the boys. Go to Nan's friends to tea and spend a jolly evening afterwards going for a nice walk. On 26th Boxing Day: Very cold and snowy day, so not much flying. Call for Nancy at 8pm. And go for a decent dance at Wye College. Afterwards I go to her home and spend a most enjoyable hour in an easy chair in front of the fire with her. How she can kiss! Tells me she is actually 28-years-old. [This was not uncommon for couples to fall head over heels with each other in the times of War. It was one of the natural things in life. From then on he referred to her in his diaries as Nancy, Nance or just plain Nan!]

On 28th December 1917. Still very cold weather. Kept pretty busy one way or another! Finish at 8pm and then have to go and help Sergeant Hare till 10pm. Worst of being able to write. On 29th: Very cold day, but fine and we do a record day's flying with 10-hours. Call for Nance at 8pm and we spend some very enjoyable 4-hours in front of the fire by ourselves. Never before have I seen a girl so passionately fond of me, but the ways of the Army spoil all.

On 30th December 1917. Miserable rainy day. Finish at 5pm and go to Church. Call on Nan afterwards and spend a lovely evening with her. On 31st: New Years Eve. Very cold, but still plenty of flying and one Avro crash! Finish at 8pm and go to an absolute topping dance at C.E.T.S. See Nan's cousin there. Have a topping time and finish at 1 am. [I think C.E.T.S. stands for: Church of England Temperance Society. It was probably something like the YMCA and the NAFFI.]

So ends another year of terrible Warfare. What will the next year bring forth? Will PEACE come? Please God it will. How thankful I should be then. [I believe that there are two small pages missing at this point] I don't deserve it. I know I don't. I often think with great sadness of the many chums of mine gone out of this life through this War — Askin, Chown, Goldsmith, Marvin, Stanley. So many! May this next year see the end of this terrible War? Amen.

On 1st January 1918. Here begins another year and still in the Army. Is it to be the last year of Army life? After work, go and spend a quiet evening with Nan. How loving and passionately affectionate she is. On 2nd: Pretty busy. As Sgt. Armstrong is away, I have to give lecture to the

Officers on rigging. Finish at 6.30pm and go round to see Nan and spend a nice evening with her till midnight. [For Dad to be chosen to give lectures to Officers shows how much they valued his knowledge, ability and experience.]

On 3rd January 1918. Fine day, so kept pretty busy generally. Finish at 7pm and then help Sgt. Hare till 9pm. Hooray! 4-days leave tomorrow. [This shows how efficient Dad was in his office work. In that regard the company he worked for always held him in high esteem. No wonder Sgt. Hare valued his help. Dad seems to have had a good break during which he accompanied his mother and brother Fred to St Matthew's Church at the Service of Holy Communion. I know how much that always meant to him, especially as he wrote about the Holy Trinity— 'How comforting to be in His Presence.']

On 4th January 1918. I have my first flight at Wye Aerodrome. It was very cold and misty and there were three smashes that morning. I accompanied Lt. Whelan for a 25-minute flight in a 100 Mono Avro No.4322. We took off at 9am. I do my first loop— a most thrilling flight! Lt. Whelan is a crack pilot— he takes the passenger's seat while I take the pilot's seat. Go straight up towards the hills in climbing turns. Keep my eye on the pressure gauge and other instruments. Tell him when we reach 2,000 feet. Then down goes the nose. The speed 130 mph, then back comes the stick into my chest and over we go! Hang upside down for a few moments suspended only by the belt. Then come down to 300 feet in a spinning nosedive. Do plenty of thrilling stunts over Aerodrome and village, putting wind up some people. Absolutely do the rigging in of the machine and strain it considerably. Come down absolutely frozen.

My leave started at 1pm and I get to London at 4pm and called in at my office in Billiter Street to see the boys. I arrived home at 7pm and find the family all well. [One morning when Dad went to work during the Blitz in 1940, he found that his office block had been bombed by the German Luftwaffe during the night. I remember seeing it in ruins some time later. Billiter Street is a side street between the main roads of Leadenhall Street and Fenchurch Street. John Hudson & Co. Limited immediately moved into 8 Lloyds Avenue, off the other side of Fenchurch Street, and remained there for many years after the Second World War.]

On 9th January 1918. Back to this beastly hole once again, but thank goodness everything went on all right in my absence. Finished at 8pm and go and see Nan. Have a nice time and supper. On 10th: Terribly busy all day long. Lt. Whelan, our instructor, is a topping chap. Old Goodmen ran for insolence to Sgt. Fisher! Finish at 10pm. On 11th: Lovely day. Poor Lt. Stewart terribly mutilated in Camel smash. On 12th: Feel absolutely fed up and depressed with everything and everybody— nothing but 'Wind' floating about the sheds all day. How we poor chaps have to work and no thanks for it! Finish at 9.30pm.

On 13th January 1918. Lovely day, but very cold. Terribly busy and do 14-hours flying, so don't finish till 8.30pm. Go round to Nan's and have supper and a nice two hours in front of the fire. Feel terribly fed up and tons of work to be done. On 14th: Absolutely up to my neck in work all day. More snow during the night, but it's a fine day, so plenty of flying and don't finish till 9.30pm. Still FED UP and MORE FED UP! On 15th: Oh, my hat! This new weekly progress report will drive me mad! On 16th: Fair day, but very cold. Do a fair amount of flying. News in the papers looks very black, I don't think we shall win this War.

On 17th January 1918. It was a snowy day, so not much flying. I hear that Paris, the Houndslow Adjutant, is coming here! The biggest Rotter under the sun! Wind up! Finish at 8pm.

On 18th January 1918. At 9.30am I accompanied Lt. Whelan again in a different 100 Avro Mono for a 15-minute flight to test the engine. It was a black stormy morning. Raining when we go up! Engine dud and we just wallow over the huts up to 1,000 feet. Chong-a-chong, chong-a-chong, bang, fiz! It nearly lets us down once or twice. Do two Immelmans and a spin and side slip into Aerodrome from the top of the hills in quite an alarming manner. Make a good landing however and then it comes on to pour with rain. [Immelmans turn is a half roll off the top of a loop. It was supposedly invented by the German pilot, Max Immelman, who was shot down in 1916. The term is still used today.]

On 19th January 1918. At 2pm I flew with Lt. Whelan for twenty minutes in a 100 Mono Avro No.4361 – photos and ground strafing. ‘Er...dear! Er...dear! Come on Tucker, let’s go up together!’ So, Lieutenant Whelan, the ex-actor, topping sport tho,’ takes me up! Take my camera and we start off, a beautiful day. See a huge flock of sheep grazing on the race course and do a terrific dive on them scattering them all over the show. Then fly after a train going to Ashford generally put the wind up people in it, poking their heads out. Swoop down on a cottage. More wind up! Wave to the farmer’s daughter who waves back, wind up more cattle and sheep! A proper ground strafe! Climb to 2,000 feet and take photos of Aerodrome. Do a loop, Immelmans, spins and all sorts of stunts. Absolutely the most enjoyable and thrilling flight I’ve had. Come down in the usual gigantic sideslip, just correcting it within a few feet from the ground. Er...Dear! Er... dear! (Some expression caught on lately by our Flight Commander.)

On 20th January 1918. Very windy and rainy day though much warmer. Two more Avros ‘go west’ i.e. crash. Talk about a breezy Squadron— 42 takes the cake! Still, glad to say I get on all right with the NCOs and men which is a lot to be thankful for. Finish work at 10pm.

On 21st January 1918. Fine day, so plenty to do. Most mysteriously Capt. Biheller, our Flight Commander, disappears on a Sopwith Camel! Hope he isn’t done in! Work till 12.30am on this wretched weekly progress report stunt. FEEL FED UP! 22nd: Thank goodness it is a rainy morning, enabling us to get a bit straight. Finish at 8.30pm so pop round to Nan’s and have supper and a quite enjoyable evening. On 23rd: Very misty morning, but clears at noon and there is plenty of flying. At tea time hear the startling news that Capt. Biheller escaped from Germany and is now interred in Holland. Now I recollect his telling me knowledge of Dutch Language. Don’t finish till midnight.

On 24th January 1918. Fair day, kept pretty busy! At tea time hear that half the Flight are going into HQ to form an ARS, me included. Poor old Flight Sergeant Armstrong goes crazy over me going and goodness know how he will get on. Finish at 8.30pm and have a decent evening at Nan’s. [For Flight Sergeant Armstrong to ‘go crazy’ because Dad is being moved, indicates to me that he has finally come to value Dad’s work more than ever before.]

On 25th January 1918. Lt Dixon asks me to get the ARS in running order and then I shall go out on the machines again. Take the job on as it seems all right. Finish at 9pm. Pop round to a dance at the school in Wye, but it’s not up to much. On 26th: Quite a cushy job comparatively in the ARS, though I expect it will be pretty busy later on. Finish at 5pm and go to the CETS and write home. Have a splitting headache and go round to Nan’s.

On 27th January 1918. Got a pretty cushy job in ARS, but I’m afraid it won’t last long. Finish at 5pm and go to Church and see Nan afterwards. Stroll down to the camp with her and then go back to her house for supper and have a nice quiet time.

On 28th January 1918. Glorious weather still prevails and it is quite warm for January. I'm getting on quite well with my new Officers: Lt. Dixon and Sgt.Maj. Howard. Help Flight Sergeant Armstrong with the weekly progress reports and finish at 11pm. Big Raid on.

On 29th January 1918. Fine day, finish quite early and call for Nan at about 7pm and we go for a nice walk to the CROWN on top of the hills. A perfect moonlight night until a big Air Raid! Have supper with her and depart.

On 30th January 1918. Glorious day. Very busy owing to several crashes. A Camel, piloted by Lt. Whelan comes a cropper through the fabric ripping off the plane. Marvelous how he escaped death! Very glad that he was not done in though! He's such a topping chap. 2 Camel write offs! Finished at 10pm. Lt Dixon, the E.O., asks me into his office for s whisky! [I think E.O. stands for either Executive Officer or Engineering Officer. This entry also shows how much the Officer highly regarded Dad and his expertise and 'on the quiet' invited him into his office at the end of the day for a drink when others were not around.]

On 31st January 1918. Have a very restful few hours sleep and have another very busy day. I shall be glad to have my day off. Finish at 9pm and go round to Nan's and spend a nice evening, but she is sentimental!

On 1st February 1918. Lovely day and very busy in the Repair Section. Armstrong tells me if I'd still been in 'A' Flight, should have had my stripes. Don't much care. Work in the sheds till 10pm. and go to bed. On 4th: Feel horribly depressed and have chronic indigestion owing to poor food.

On 5th February 1918. Fine day. Poor old Cobb does a terrible nose dive in an Avro, badly cut about the face. [According to the Internet, 2nd Lt. Francis Walter Cobb (19) was flying in Avro504J No. C4321 of the 42 T/Sqdn. when it stalled and dived off a turn. Sadly, he died from his injuries on 28th March 1918 at Wye.]

Finished at 6.30pm, write some letters and go round to Nan's. If she's going to be so beastly sentimental, afraid I shall have to stop going there!

On 6th February 1918. Wet and windy day. Manage to get work up to date. Capt Rice tells me he saw Capt Brearley MC, DSO at Gosport and, as a Lieutenant, he remembers me. [I consider this to be a very important entry although it is short. Now Capt Brearley had been awarded the MC for bringing down an enemy observation balloon and the DSO for attacking enemy aero planes. He was shot down in 'no man's land' in France and badly wounded. He returned to Australia on sick leave and when he recovered came to England again and became a flying instructor at the School of Special Flying at Gosport. One can imagine how the conversation ran between these two Captains on that day at Gosport and how they spoke so highly of Dad. There is much more to come!]

On 7th February 1918. Fair day, but not much flying! Medical Inspection for Scabies, etc. Go round to Nan's at 9pm and we then go to some girl friends of hers and play cards and have a topping supper. Don't get in till 12 midnight. On 8th: Not much to report except that the food is awful. Fish for dinner and!!?? On 9th: Feel very tired and depressed. Very windy day. Only 2 machines in ARS. Soon get them serviceable and then pop down to CETS and have a good feed and then answer Phyl's letter and a few more.

On 10th February 1918. Very windy day, so quite slack. Start making a model! Go to Church in the evening and afterwards meet Nan. Pop down to the Camp. Then call on Mrs Goddins and then have supper at Nan's and then spend one of the nicest evenings at her home. On 11th: Still very windy so no work to do. All machines serviceable! Get on with my model.[This is the first time Dad has recorded that he has started making a model aero plane. It was quite possible that up to this time he had not had the time to continue his boyhood hobby of aero modeling. So, he was making use of slack times at work. He may also have followed the saying, 'If you are not busy, then look busy!'] Hear that there's a new C.O. coming. Cheers! Stop in, in the evening and work on my model.

On 12th February 1918. Dull day and a little rain. Never felt so utterly depressed in my life. Call on Nan and we pop round to Ethel's and spend a jolly evening getting in at midnight. On 13th: Everything as usual. Plenty of hot air! Have to be up sharp at 6.30am. No matter how late we work. FED UP! Finish work at 9pm and go to bed. On 14th: Lovely weather, but very cold. New Troop Sergeant Major arrives. Pretty hot I believe. Anyway, shall have to get out of my cushy job next week. On 15th: Lovely day. Several Americans away through Mumps! So, a strong rumour floats about that we shall be isolated.

On 16th February 1918. Glorious day. Can't say I like the new Troop Sergeant Major much. Another Air Raid! Go home for the weekend. On 17th: Catch the train at 9.30pm and get back at 2am owing to another Air Raid. On 18th: I don't think in all my life did I feel so utterly down as last night. Feel a bit better and have a busy day. Spend the night in getting a machine out of a wood in the midst of an Air Raid. Finish at 2.30am. On 19th: Very busy rigging all day. Feel wretchedly tired—physically and mentally. Grubb and I put tail skid and plane on Camel and we don't finish till 2.30am again 'Er dear'.

On 20th February 1918. Low clouds, rainy and windy. Finish rigging up machine that came down in the wood. At 12 noon I accompanied Capt. Rice in Avro No.4477 for a 15-minute flight to test the rigging. Machine had previously come down in a wood and we had just rebuilt it. Get off quickly and she inclines to be a little right wing low. Also have to keep pressure up all the time. Run into some dense banks of mist and after a good test reaching 1,500 feet, come down, (bracing wire found loose).

On 21st February 1918. Fine day and fortunately no crashes. Finish at 6.30pm, pop round to Nan's, but feel absolutely too tired for anything. She makes an awful fuss of me. Really think I ought to give up going there. It isn't fair on the girl.

On 22nd February 1918. Dull and windy day, but plenty of flying! Capt Rice lands upside down in a ploughed field! Go out to it and dismantle and bring it back. On 23rd: Glorious weather. Major Henderson, the new C.O. is a 'toff', but the new TSM puts years on me. On 24th: Lovely day and lovely moonlight evening. Sgt Plotkin lets me off at 5pm. Have to work later and finish at 2am.

On 25th February 1918. Lovely day and pretty busy all day, but as I worked late last night, Sgt. Plotkin lets me off at 5pm, but oh, how tired I feel. Go round to Nan's, but feel too tired to go to the dance. So see her home and as she isn't very nice, say an abrupt 'Good bye' and leave her! On 26th: Go home for the weekend and take Mum to Wimbledon and buy the darling a new hat for 24/6d, but she's worth more than money. On 28th: Glorious day and plenty of flying — and smashes—and consequently work. Busy till 2am rigging up an Avro and it is d—n cold in those sheds.

On 2nd March 1918. Fair day, but unlucky for crashes and we're kept pretty busy working till 2am. Feel an absolute wreck. On 3rd: An absolute spirit of 'fed upness' prevails in the Camp. On 4th: When is this wretched war going to be over? I want to get back home again. I'm afraid no hopes yet though. On 7th: A glorious day. Oh, to be back in Civvies Life where I could enjoy it. Luckily no crashes!

On 9th March 1918. Glorious day, but ½ Squadron on leave. Only 5 crashes and me in charge of break downs! Have a very rough day of it and don't finish till 2am feeling absolutely 'darn and art'. On 10th: Glorious day feel absolutely tired out after a night of sleeplessness caused by cramp and sickness. 8 buses in the Despair Section! Sgt. Plotkin sick and everyone worked to death. On 11th: Still we go carrying on. Fine weather and very busy! Rumours of moving to Oxford! Hope it's true. On 12th: Lovely spring weather — what I would give to be back in civilian life, but the war shows no signs of ending yet.

On 15th March 1918. Very cold day and plenty of flying. One Sopwith Scout crash and umpteen engines to change! Finish work at 9.30pm and feel absolutely done up. On 16th: Lovely day. Cpl. Jack Crawford being i/c lets me off at 3.50pm. Get home at 7.30pm. Feel tired and in a rotten mood. How I wish this War over. Have supper and go to bed. On 19th: Lovely day. Hear from reliable source that almost every Air Mechanic is leaving Wye shortly and that Yanks are taking over. What hopes! On 21st: Nothing much to report. Jolly black news from The Front. Busy rigging all day and finish at midnight. On 22nd: Rumours of shifting overseas floating about. I'm sure I don't care. Hooray! Holiday tomorrow!

On 23rd March 1918. A perfect holiday. Get up at 9am and go to Canterbury by 10am Tender with Drake. Stroll around and visit the Cathedral. Come back to Wye after dinner and have tea with Nan. Go for a nice stroll over the hills and pop round to Brat's. Then go back and finish a Perfect day in a Perfect way. On 24th: Glorious day, but busy as ever. If ever I get back to Civvy Life, how I shall appreciate a Sunday! Feel fed up. Have a rotten cold. Finish at midnight and go to bed.

On 25th March 1918. Lovely day and bags of work to be done. Very bad news from The Front — losing heavily, I'm afraid. Busy putting longeron in Avro and don't finish till midnight. On 26th: Windy and cold day. What absolute MURDER! Having to finish an Avro with longeron broken in 36-hours. It doesn't give anyone heart to work at all. Sgt. Plotkin goes on leave. Work on Avro till 2.30 PM

On 27th March 1918. Windy and misty. So not much flying. Avro is still not finished till midnight after all. Finish at 9pm and pop round to Nan's. What a lovely girl she is! On 28th: Windy and rainy day and no flying, but still the Despair Section is as busy as ever with 2 Camels and a Sopwith Pup to re-build. Finish at 9pm and feel absolutely rotten. On 29th (Good Friday). It was a very windy day. Wind up owing to events over the other side. Finish at 9pm.

On 30th March 1918. Pouring wet afternoon. 3 crashes in the morning. So don't leave till 5.28pm and don't go to Hounslow as intended, but go straight home. On 31st: After a refreshing sleep got up at 10am and go to Holy Communion at St Matthew's with Mum.

On 1st April 1918. Fair day, not much flying! Don't finish work till 9pm and pop round to Nan's for a little while. The RFC and RNAS no longer exist now and I am in what's known as the ROYAL AIR FORCE.

On 2nd April 1918. Better day and a good deal of flying. Luckily no more crashes. Anyway, we have plenty to go on with. Finish at 9pm. On 3rd: Rainy and misty day thank goodness and we, at last, have a clear Shed. Finish at 4.30pm and go round to a party given by Mrs Tully. Spend a jolly musical evening with dancing and supper. On 4th: Rainy day! That's the stuff to give 'em. Finish at 5pm and go round to Nan's. Properly gets the breeze up when I tell her I went round to Mrs Tully's. Silly kid! Go for a long walk without a word. Feel inclined to go straight back to Camp, but she at last comes round and says she's sorry and we make it up! Some comedy! Aren't I a beast?

On 5th April 1918. Rainy and misty day so no flying. Clears at 6pm and in two hours they smash up four machines.

On 6th April 1918. Feel pretty tired and as it's my 12-hour washout, don't get up till 10.30am. Catch the 11.20 train to Canterbury and do some shopping. Have a posh dinner. Have some photos taken and get back to Wye by the Ration Tender. Call in at Goddins. Then to Nan's where I have tea and we go to the Ashford Pictures.

On 7th April 1918. Showery kind of a day! No crashes till 7.30pm when Sgt. Valentine gets an Avro into a spin and crashes to bits in a ploughed field. Go out to it. Nearest we can get a tender to it is ½mile and we have to carry all the stuff over. How we managed the engine I don't know. Pouring with rain and pitch dark. Get soaked through and feel an absolute wreck.

On 8th April 1918. Absolutely, the roughest time I've had for a long time, and don't get to bed until 2am, then up again at 7am to lay kits nicely out. Misty day, so not much flying. Finish 4pm.

On 9th April 1918. Rainy and misty weather. Not much flying thank goodness. Feel rotten and weak all day. Break a tooth. On 10th: Rainy and misty day. Not very busy in the daytime, but I work till midnight splicing aileron controls on a Sopwith Scout. On 11th: Fair day and a bit of flying— and smashing. Rotten News from The Front. On 12th: one or two crashes including an Avro, so I'm well away repairing it till past midnight. Hurray! Washout tomorrow! On 13th: Windy day in more senses than one. 4 machines in dock! Leave at 5.28pm. Nan sees me off. Meet Beryl at 8.30pm outside the Alcazar and we go for a nice walk. A nice little girl! Get home at 11.30pm. Hear that poor Bert Howell and Howard James are killed.

On 18th April 1918. A fine day, but umpteen smashes and we are consequently very busy. Work till 11.30 pm. On 21st: Feel pretty rotten. A new stunt night shift: I'm on first week. Work through the night till 8am. and then go to bed feeling rotten. Next day 22nd April stop in bed all day. Get up at 6 pm to tea and go to work at 8pm. What comics the Yanks are! 16 of us cramped into the office for dinner! Some Mess! Lawkes! Rig an Avro up and finish at 7.30pm. Next day 23rd April: Go to bed at 9.30am and don't get up till 6pm. Sgt Plotkin puts me in for Corporal. Gee! Not extra keen on it! Work all night. Rig another Avro up and finish at 7.30am, that being the 24th April. After a wash go to bed! Get up to tea at 6pm and go back to night work at 8 pm. Put Avro undercarriage on. Have a merry hour at dinner in the office and then commence work till 7.30am.

On 25th April 1918. Sleep all day—lovely day too. The most awful tragedy occurred today: Lt. Whelan and passenger in an Avro collide with Lt. Levy in a Sopwith Pup and are dashed to pieces! One thing about this topping fellow, Lieutenant Whelan, I shall never forget. On the occasion of my first flight with him, I asked why he always took the front seat, and he replied, 'Oh, because when I do a lot of stunting, there is a chance of the chap in the front seat getting killed and I'd rather get killed myself rather than live to know that I had been the cause of someone else's death.'

[According to the records on the Internet, the mid-air accident happened at 6.45pm when they were performing a fighting practice. Lt. Cyril Whelan (20) was accompanied by Lt. Edmund Douglas Marrable (24), who, having formerly served in the Royal Field Artillery, joined the RFC, and was observer on his first flight in their Avro 504 No.4394 of 42 Training Squadron. Tragically, they collided with the Sopwith Pup D.4079 piloted by Lt. Alwyne Gordon Levy (19). All three officers were killed outright. Lt. Marrable was buried in St Mary's Churchyard, Kennington, Ashford, near Wye. Lt. Whelan and Lt. Levy were first cousins. They were Jewish. Their respective parents recovered their bodies to be buried in London Cemeteries. Cyril was the youngest pilot in the RFC and had been advanced to stunt instructor with the Corps and was a very gifted aviator. As mentioned earlier, his father was Albert Whelan the great Australian Music Hall entertainer of the early 1900s known by his whistling signature tune. Their real name was Waxman. When Albert signed up with J.C. Williamson, the entertaining company in Melbourne, his surname was mistakenly printed on the theatre programme as 'Whelan.' From that time on, Albert decided to adopt that as his stage name and his son Cyril followed suite.]

On 26th April 1918. Get to bed at 8.30am and have a good rest, but impossible to get much sleep. Only myself and 4 Yanks on night work. Put plane on Camel, but rigging is in terrible condition which makes me very worried and I have a rotten evening and night.

On 29th April 1918. Windy rainy and cold day! I'm on 5 o'clock shift this week so that's better. Have supper with Eddy my Yank pal in CETS. On 30th: The same weather conditions. As there are only two riggers left, stop till 8pm working on a Sopwith Camel.

On 1st May 1918. Same weather conditions. No promotions through yet. Finish at 5pm; someone has stolen my camera! Go to Nan's at 8pm, but tell her I'm off somewhere else. Wind up! Go to Reynolds with Corporals Thompson and Davis and have a topping game of billiards and supper.

[Although Dad did not record this fatality in his diary, on 1st May 1918 Lt. Duncan McCarter (23) was piloting his Sopwith Camel No. B7334 of 42 Squadron when the aero plane suddenly inverted and the pilot fell out to his death at South Willesborough. After the fatal accident, Duncan's body was recovered by his parents and the burial took place at North Murchiston Cemetery, Edinburgh, Scotland with full Military Honours.]

On 6th May 1918. Lovely day. Poor Sgt. Forsdick burnt to death in a Camel. [According to official records Sgt. Horace Reginald Forsdick (18) recovered from a spin too late in his Camel No. B 9192 over Hinxhill. A local man named Tait attempted a gallant rescue, but was fought back by the flames. Sgt. Horace Forsdick was buried in Mitcham Road Cemetery, Croydon, Surrey.]

On 6th May 1918. Bring crash of SE5 in, in the evening and finish at 8pm. Go to Church Army Hut and have a good supper and return.

On 9th May 1918. Not very busy, though a fine day. Sgt.N.....reduced to Corporal for a petty offence!

On 11th May 1918. A dull morning, but grand later. Go to Canterbury by the 10 tender and buy another VPK. Have a stroll around and have two dinners. Hear the organ being played in the Cathedral— lovely! Go to the cinema and catch the 5pm train back. Take Nan for a lovely walk over the hills and have supper and return. [This second VPK camera that Dad purchased, ten days after his first was stolen, is still in existence although the bellows are a little worn. My brother,

Stuart, used it a lot whilst serving as a National Serviceman in the Royal Engineers in war-torn Hannover during the late 1940s, and I used it in the early 1950s during my National Service when I was an instructor at the RAF Police Dog Training Centre at Netheravon, Wiltshire. Netheravon had a most nostalgic charm about it as it was one of the first RFC Stations.]

On 12th May 1918. Have the day off as I'm on night duty this week. Get up at 6pm and go to work at 8pm. I'm in charge of the party — worse luck! Quite busy and have to buck their idea up! On 15th: Get into trouble by Sgt. Maj. for grub being pinched by night party in the Cookhouse. Vindicate myself however. On 17th: Go to bed at 9am and don't get up till 6pm. Fagged out! Go out to a Camel in an orchard and bring it in. 3 machines to get serviceable. Most worrying! Especially, as I'm in charge! Work hard.

On 18th May 1918. Go out to a smash at 6am, but can't find it. Go for miles into the country. Come back and find it's on quite a different road. How hot it is and we poor chaps —no strength after the past week!

[It is possible that Dad was so worn out by the next day that he forgot to enter this fatality in his diary. On 19th May 1918 Captain George Robinson MC of 42 Training Squadron RFC died probably in a flying accident near Wye. His Observer, 2nd Lieutenant C.H.P. Hughes, was injured. George was actually born in Eyemouth, Scotland on 23rd Jan. 1881. He formerly served in the Canadian Corps Cavalry Regiment (Light Horse). He was awarded the Military Cross for courage and leadership skills. He was buried at the Church of Saints Gregory and Martin, Wye.]

On 21st May 1918. Very hot day! Sgt. Plotkin returns from hospital. Fairly busy! Two more write offs! On 22nd: Very hot day. Pretty busy in the Repair Section! Looks thundery in the evening! Go to Nan's, but as she is getting too serious, think I shall have to leave. Poor old Lt. Biddle terribly mutilated in Sopwith Pup crash. Something wrong in this Squadron! [According to the Internet, 2nd Lieutenant Frank Henry Herbert Biddle (19) was killed on 22nd May 1918 when the Sopwith Pup No. 5288 of 42 Training Squadron he was piloting, spun turning after take-off and crashed at Wye.]

On 23rd May 1918. Pretty busy all day. I'm in charge of HQRS as all the NCOs are away. Grubb and I catch the 8.08am to Ashford and take two birds to the Pictures. Have a rotten time though! Walk back to Wye and get in at 11.45pm. On 24th: Sgt. Watson takes charge of HQRS. Sgt. Maj. strafes my pass, but get it again and catch the 5.28pm (Nan sees me off). Meet Beryl at 8.30pm and we go for a walk to Heston. On 28th: Showery day, not so very busy. Aerodrome vigorously raided by the enemy. We raid them and lose a Camel and one Avro shot through by very light (Main spar too). Finish at 8pm and go to CETS with Davis and have some eggs and chips.

[Although Dad does not record this fatality in his diary, on 31st May 1918 Lieutenant Desmond Macartney-Filgate was killed in a flying accident at Wye. He was buried in Wye Cemetery.]

On 1st June 1918. Lovely day. New C.O. and he stops flying daily at 7pm. Good. On 3rd: Go to bed at 8.30am and get up at 6.30pm. Cpl. Allen i/c party. Put new plane on Camel. A fairly easy night considering. On 5th: Get chewed up by Sgt. Plotkin for only just finishing Avro. Well, that's absolutely done me working my inside out to get a machine ready. I feel an absolute wreck and don't wake up till 6pm. Go to work at 8pm and do another Avro. Not so pushed thank goodness.

On 7th June 1918. Lovely day, pretty busy. At 8pm go to Faversham to a forced landing. Pilot gets off and crashes. Dismantle the wreck. Crowds of girls hanging on to us! Have a thrilling ride down the hills on top of the wreckage and get in at 1am. On 12th: Capt Taylor now i/c of HQRS. Things will be a bit better. I think. Finish at 6pm and do some running practice. Go round to Nan's and have a nice time, but she's so beastly jealous of me.

On 13th June 1918. Oh, Gee Whiz! Promotion to Acting Corporal without pay! Wonder how long I'll stick it. On 15th: Lovely day. Catch the 7am train to London. Call at 22 Billiter Street and have lunch with Mr Lyall. [He was the Manager of the Seaborne Dept of John Hudson & Co. Limited, and when he retired in the late 1940s, Dad was promoted to that position.]

On 17th June 1918. Very showery day, have to go and repair an Avro in a field, but I don't like the look of it. So, dismantle it and bring it back— and get chewed up by Sgt. Plotkin. Anyway, I'm in the right and it does take three days. On 21st: Ow! How rotten my pass goes through and the whole Camp is isolated with a curious epidemic of some kind of 'flu. Why didn't I have my washout yesterday? On 22nd: Lovely day, but very windy. Get crash in off Aerodrome in the morning. Go to dismantle another in the afternoon in the country— they forgot to send us a trailer. Have a posh time sleeping and waiting for it. Finished at 8pm. On 23rd: lovely day, but still isolated. Half the Squadron in hospital! So, we have half-day off to play football, much as I dislike it on Sundays, but must keep fit.

On 24th June 1918. Take on the duties of Orderly Sergeant for a week. A cushy job and quite a change, though you're confined to Camp for a week, as I shall not feel as we are still isolated. On 25th a lovely day. Up at 6am and have terribly busy morning with 40 sick cases. Men fall sick every day. Get on fairly well with my new duties. The next day I carry on as usual as Orderly Buff. Many sick cases and wonder if I shall get it. Feel generally fed up! On 27th: Sickness gradually dying out. Have pretty slack time as Orderly Buff, but have to keep an eye on the Hut Orderlies. Feel pretty rotten in the evening, but determined not to get it. On 28th: Still the Orderly Dog Stunt, not at all a bad job and get a snatch of sleep in the afternoon. Feel pretty seedy, but haven't got the 'flu yet.

On 29th June 1918. Glorious day. Only one more day after this on Orderly Buff, worse luck. Bust it though, I wish the war was over. The next day is a lovely day, have a pretty easy day of it, but the poor sick chaps have to do fatigues as they won't return to work.

On 1st July 1918. Finish duties as Orderly Sergeant at 9am, but uncle Bert won't let me go on pass as there're so many of us away. Poor Corporal Blake's Funeral! [Although Dad did not record in his diary anything else about this unfortunate Corporal, I feel that it is only right to state that Cpl. Edgar Blake, No. 14448, died in a flying accident on 27th June 1918. He was the son of Alfred and Emily Blake of 50 Batoum Gardens, Hammersmith, and was buried at Wye.]

On 6th July 1918, After a few days at home click on for Guard duty and come off it at 5pm after a pretty cushy time. Sgt. Plotkin returns on the 7th. On the 8th I have my first turn at drilling a squad of men at 1.30pm. Get on all right and make a fearful row. Go out to a crash in the afternoon. Finish at 8pm and go to CETS.

On 9th July 1918. Very windy day. Pretty busy all day building up Avro! Drill a squad of men at 1.30pm. Put new undercarriage on Avro in a field and Major Lacy flies it back. Finish at 9pm. On night duty for several days, nothing of any importance happened till 22nd July which was a showery day. Apparently, 'Plotty" (obviously Sgt. Plotkin) has wind up about me going on

washout, but fix it up all right. Have to square up all the jobs. At 5pm told I'm going on a 6-week instructor's course on physical training at Lincoln. Capt Taylor tries to stop it, but no good. Passed A1 by Dr. P. Sharples, but I'll have to go through it, by Jove.

On 26th July 1918. Rainy day! Leave Wye at 9.40am and get to London at 12 noon. Sleep at home that night and leave at 2.30 in the morning, 27th July. Get to Waterloo at 4.20am. Feel wretched. After 5 changes reach Cranwell at 3pm. Draw bedding! Sleep in tents. Tons of earwigs, Ugh! On 28th draw all our Gymnasium kit in the morning. Much better system at RNAS! Better grub and everything. Lounge about the Camp for the rest of the day. On 29th Lovely day and very hot! Everything at the double! Watch Heats for the Sports in afternoon. Bob on a Joy Ride in HP in evening, but no luck.

On 30th July 1918. Very hot day, PTI and boiling till 10am! Go to RAF Sports in afternoon. Absolutely posh and a posh contest in the evening! About 12,000 present. On 31st Very hot day. This PT stunt gradually getting stridier [not such a word, but I know what he means!]. Don't think I shall pass the exam. Too much cramming! Finish at 8pm. Feel tired out and go to bed.

On 1st August 1918. Very hot day. PTI Lecture and boxing in the morning. Squad Drill and Games in the afternoon! Shift tents in the evening. Dad's heading for this following passage is in large capital letters:

7 Flights in one — Cranwell Aerodrome and a Narrow Escape!

From 8.30pm to 9.30pm a flight in a twin-engine Rolls Royce Handley Page No.5361. Whilst on the course at Cranwell, methinks I'll have a flip in one of these giant buses. They are immense things too. Five others besides me on board! I'm in back seat. Quite a slow bus, but steady as a rock. Reach 2,000 feet and cruise about Seaford and Cranwell. Take several snaps. Make seven good landings just missing the big wood on occasions. By Jove, those engines kick up some din too. Last flight, misjudged our distance and just miss a brick wall and land in a field of very long grass, ½mile from 'Drome. Rise steeply out of the field till we get over 'Drome and almost lose flying speed. Point nose down, but starboard plane continues to drop. Brace myself for a crash, but luckily engines start up and right her just in time. Make a ghastly landing and am flung from one side of the cockpit to the other! Absolutely glorious!

On 2nd August 1918. A lovely day. PTI in the morning, also class taking and swimming. Attend lecture by our instructor in the evening. He's a topping chap and knows his work. Write letters and go to bed.

On 3rd August 1918. Wretched rainy day! PTI Class taking and boxing in the morning. Finish for the day at noon. Feel very stiff and go to sleep in afternoon. Wretched wet night and a host of nightmares. On 4th: Get up in the middle of the night awakened by a rat and find tent nearly on top of me. Knock the pegs in all round. Church Parade in morning, a most impressive sight. Such a vast number of troops! On 5th: Rainy day. In the morning: PTI swimming, Bayonets and games. Lecture on boxing in the evening. On 6th: Fine day, but my clothes got a soaking during the night. PTI, boxing and games. Go to Sleaford in the evening and meet a chum and take two girls for a walk.

On 7th August 1918. Fine day. PT Drill and swimming in morning! Mass and Squad Drill in the afternoon! Go to Sleaford to a Garden Party in the evening. Not bad! On 8th: Fine day. PT Lecture

and boxing in the morning. Squad drill, Bayonets and games in afternoon! Fix up boxing ring in the evening. About the same program for the next few days! But on the 10th wake up after a sleepless night and find I've twisted my knee. Don't know how. I carry on in the morning and once nearly faint with the pain, but stick it through and go to Sleaford in the evening to the Pictures. The rest of the time the days training was much the same with quite a lot of Bayonet instruction and fighting.

On 21st August 1918. The PTIs give a dance to the WRAF in the evening and I go, but they are a pretty hopeless lot of girls [This is the first time he has mentioned the WRAF. The service was only in existence from 1918-1920. Later it became the WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Force during WW2,) then it changed again to WRAF and in recent years all men and women serve in the RAF]

On 29th August 1918. Fine day. Squad drill in the morning! Examination Instructor tells me I did rather well in it. On 30th: Fine day. Have a pretty strenuous day of it, drilling games and fatigues. Owing to the Air Ministry — Anemotographers coming down. [Anemometer is an instrument for measuring wind speed].

On 31st August 1918. Fine day. Exam on Anatomy! Do fairly well in it. On 2nd September, the tent blew down in my absence. Cheers! Get stage ready for PTI Concert and go to same at 8pm. A fair washout in my opinion! Course drawing to a close and I'm almost sorry.

On 3rd September 1918. PT Exam also boxing and swimming! Do well (in my opinion) in all of them! On 4th: Fair day. Bayonet Fighting Exam! Don't do extra well. Go to PTI Dance in the evening. A washout as usual! On 5th: Don't do too much except to prepare to leave. Thank goodness we are leaving Cranwell. [For those who have never even practiced thrusting a bayonet, with the weight of a .303 Lee Enfield Rifle behind it, into a dummy stretched out on a vertical frame on an assault course, can be extremely upsetting to most servicemen, far worse, in fact, than shooting someone from a distance]

On 6th September 1918. Rainy day, leave Cranwell at 8am. Get to London at 2pm and call at the office, then a train home. [Having arrived home he was very proud to show his family his additional badges signifying that he had qualified as a Physical Training Instructor, one to worn on each arm. Made of brass, that required two extra pieces of brass to be cleaned daily! He never got around to wearing them, unless he had them attached to arm bands which could be slipped on or removed in a matter of seconds. To wear the crossed swords could have endangered the wearer getting them caught in the rigging of the biplanes. That was the reason why all their tunic buttons were concealed to prevent that happening. When I served in the RAF the PTI's badges were made of cloth. The crossed swords were thinner, surmounted by a crown and worn above the chevrons.]

The next day return to Wye. On 8th: See Sergeant Major about leave. Hooray! Tomorrow! Finish at 5pm. Have supper at CETS and spend a nice time at Nan's.

On 9th September 1918. Leave Wye at 7am. Reach Portsmouth at 3pm. Cross by boat to Ryde with a nice little WAAC. [That is what one might call *A Brief Encounter!*] Arrive Ventnor at 5.30pm. See dear Dad, Mum, Jennie and Arundel. Have tea, stop in and chat. On 10th after breakfast go down to the front! Go to Pier Concert in the afternoon. Take Mum and the children to concert on the Pier in the evening. The next morning was fine and we went for a walk along the front and leave dear old Dad for home with Mum, Jennie and Arundel, and get home at 6.30pm.

On 15th September 1918. It was Dad's first day back at Wye after leave. At 11.30am he accompanied Lieutenant Palmer on a 30-minute flight in Avro F2236. Low clouds and dull! Engine not good! Nearly come down over huts. Soon get in the thick of clouds. Do several loops, stalls, Immelmans, etc, and come down. He takes it up again. Engine conks and crashes on tennis courts. At 9am the next day, 16th September, just after repairs, the engine was vibrating horribly. Reach 1,000 feet. Perfect weather! Drift wire very slack. Take photos of surrounding district and come down in a sideslip. Slightly tail heavy!

[Although Dad did not record this fatality in his diary, on the 15th September 1918 Lieutenant David Hegler McGibbon (20), of the Canadian Forces, from Sarnia, Canada was piloting a Sopwith F.1 Camel No.B2469, Engine: Clerget 130 hp, when he pulled out too quickly causing the machine to crash. He was buried at Wye Cemetery.]

On 30th September 1918. Dull day of course. Feel fed up generally. Report sick with bad tooth. First time for 18-months. Finish work at 7.30pm and go to CETS for supper.

On 1st October 1918. The windiest day I've ever known. Have to be up at 6am every morning. Blinking Roll Call at 9.30am and I don't know what! Go to Canterbury to have a tooth seen to, but have to go again next week. Get back at 4pm and go round to 7, The Green, and spend a jolly evening. [This is where Nan lived, a small house in a long terrace. To be viewed on the Internet.]

On 4th October 1918. Splendid War News. On 5th: Rainy day. Busy splicing controls in a Camel all day. Finish at 5pm and go to CETS for supper and billiards. On 6th: Fine day Busy rigging a Camel all day. Finish at 6pm and go to CETS have supper and a game of billiards. On 7th: Take on duties as Orderly Buff for a week at 9am. Bit of a change at any rate. On 8th: Glorious day. Go to Canterbury to have tooth stopped and faint while he is doing it. So don't feel anything, but feel rotten for the rest of the day.

On 9th October 1918. Wretched rainy day! Up at 5.48am and carry on my tour of duties. Feel absolutely fed up! One or two cases of Spanish 'flu! So am afraid Camp will be isolated. Have to drill Officers in PT before a Colonel of the Royal Air Force. [This must have been a lift up for Dad to perform this drill in front of a high ranking Officer.]

On 10th October 1918. Feel very tired. Dull day! The blessed Hut Orderlies will drive me crazy! Have a very busy day of it. On 11th One of the windiest days out! C.O.'s Inspection! Still manage to get through it all right. Defaulters: 6 to 8. On 13th: Busy morning, but easier afternoon. Can't get my leave as 'morrow Preference being given to 2nd Air Mechanic! Feel awfully wild about it. Finish at 11pm.

On 16th October 1918. In office in the morning, catch the 1.05pm to London. Arrive home to find all in bed with the 'flu. Meet Rosie and go to the Pictures at Hammersmith and get back at midnight. More PEACE rumours! The next morning I had breakfast in bed, and don't get up till 1pm. After dinner, phone 22 Billiter Street and hear that Jack Pert is missing! After tea catch the 7.15pm and reach Wye at 10pm.

On 23rd October 1918. On washout! Go to Canterbury by lorry with Crosby. Have a stroll around and go to the Cathedral. Go to the Pictures in the afternoon and meet Phyl at Ashford and go for a 'snice' (another word made up and used many times) long walk. On 24th: Fine day though jolly cold. Don't finish till 8pm. Go to CETS with Davis and play billiards and have another posh supper.

On 25th: Fine day for C.O.'s inspection of the Camp and of course the Boys that gets into trouble and are all confined to Camp!!! Fed up with the job of looking after them! Finish at 8pm and go to the CETS with Davis and play billiards.

On 26th October 1918. Pretty busy. 3 crashes! Flight Sergeant P.... goes on washout and I am left in charge. [It looks like this P stands for Plotkin, furthermore, it looks like he has had a recent promotion to that of Flight Sergeant.] On 27th: Glorious day. Me i/c of ARS. Everything goes on OK. Crash at 6pm. So don't finish till 8pm. Go to Ashford and meet Phyl and catch the 9.30pm back. On 28th: Fine day. Finish work at 4.30pm and go to Ashford and meet Phyl. Go to the cinema and then for a stroll. Catch the 9.30pm back. Call at Nan's — Lily there!

On 29th October 1918. Rainy day. Pretty hard day, but finish at 5.30pm and go round to Nan's till 9pm. Fearful epidemic of the 'flu! All Picture Palaces closed to troops. Splendid War News—PEACE at anytime now! On 30th: Fine day. Finish work at 4.30pm and cycle to Ashford. Meet Phyl and we go to a RAF Concert which is quite good. Leave at 11.30pm and get back at midnight.

On 31st October 1918. Fine day, but wet evening. Finish work at 8pm and go round to Nan's —Lil, her sister, there and she makes a frightful fuss of me. Get in at midnight.

On 1st November 1918. Glorious Autumn day. Fairly busy and click on for Guard, don't much mind. Get to bed at 11pm and don't get up until 7am next morning. On 2nd: Finish at 5pm after an easy day. Catch the 5.28pm train and meet Beryl at 8.30pm and go for a nice walk. No doubt about it, a very nice girl, but.....! Get in at 11.30pm and sleep at 61, in MY ROOM! On Sunday 3rd after a restful night get up at 10am and go to Holy Communion at St Matthew's with Jennie. After dinner square up my room then call at the Hutcheon's. Have tea at 61 and go back to Wye at 8pm. Reach there at midnight. Received the news that Flight Sergeant Henry Vine (No.202720) had died of the 'flu.

[F/Sgt. Henry Charles Land 'Chum' Vine (32), was the son of Henry and Alice Jane Vine and husband of Letitia Alice Vine of 15 Wentworth Mansions, Hampstead. As an artist he always signed his name as 'Chum Vine'. Known as Harry, he formerly worked as an Assistant Clerk for the Board of Trade Seamen's Registry. Prior to joining the RFC, he was a driver in the RNAS. A photograph of his headstone at Wye is to be found on the Internet website. His name is alongside his brother, Edgar Vine, who died on 26th September 1916 who was buried at St. Stephen's Church, Hampstead. He had been a driver in the South African Service Corps.]

On 4th November 1918. Austria completely surrenders. HOORAY! Rainy day and a very rough night! Finish at 9pm. Have supper at CETS and get in at 9.30pm. Have to run a boy for Untidiness. 3-days CB [Confined to Barracks]

On 5th November 1918. Fine day, spend the day in the office and finish at 7.30pm and go to the CETS and then to 7, The Green and spend an enjoyable evening with Nan and Lil. On 6th: Dull day and in the ARS office and pretty busy. Hear something with regard to PT Instructors on this Squadron. Finish at 7.30pm and go to Nan's and spend a nice time — what a loving girl Lil is!

On 7th November 1918. Fine day, rainy evening, but fine later. Our Concert in evening: Jolly good! Assist behind the scenes. Meet Lil and Nan and take Lil for a walk and then have supper at 7, The Green. On 8th Nov. Rainy morning, but turns fine later. Germany crumbling away! PEACE in sight, thank God. Finish at 8pm and go to 7, The Green. Take Lil for a walk. She tells me she loves me,

Oh, dear. [At this stage it looks as if both Nan and her sister Lil, are both after our Dad! Well, well, well! What is he to do?]

On 9th November 1918. Frightfully cold crisp morning. At 9am Dad accompanied Lieutenant Meek in machine Avro 2236 for 15-minutes to test its new engine. Neither liked the machine owing to its vibration. However, they set off, Dad in the front seat. The tank and induction pipe were shaking badly. Lt Meek tells him to strap in and does 3 loops, two rolls and a spin. But above the clouds! A glorious sight! See many blimps and Camels. Sideslip into land. Later that day they have to go by tender to Chilham to inspect air fatality. Go back later by side-car and have exciting time. Finish at 8pm and go to Nan's. On 10th: Fine day, go by tender with 7 men to Chilham woods. Get horse and cart and after a hard time finally bring the wreck through 2 miles of wood to the trailer. Back at 4pm and finish at 5pm. Go to 7, The Green and take Lil for a lovely walk — I love her!

On 11th November 1918. PEACE. Go to Wye Station to collect Avro and the flag is hoisted on the village Church for Peace, thank God. Ructions and jubilations at the Camp! Don't finish till 8 pm and go to 7, The Green. Lil and Nan @ the dance. Go there. Absolutely packed, so come home with them. What a dear loving girl is Lil. On 12th: Showery day. Pretty busy rigging Avro Finish at 8pm and go round to 7, The Green and stop till 9.30pm. Miss dear Lil very much. Topping little kid! On 13th: Glorious day. In the office as the clerk is away. Finish at 4.30pm and go to Ashford. What a treat to see the lights and hear the bells once more. Meet Phyl and go for a long walk, but very bored.

On 15th November 1918. Glorious day! Umpteen crashes! Busy all day putting on c/s on a Camel. [c/s is believed to stand for Compression Strut]. On 16th: Fine day. Not allowed my pass as Flt. Sgt. Plotkin is going on leave. I'm i/c ARS. Finish at 7pm and go round to 7, The Green. Nan's former lover there! Black looks, so hop it! [It's now looking like a soap-box opera].

On 17th November 1918. Fairly busy and plenty of wind up! Finish at 6pm. Catch the 6.17pm and meet Lil (Nan's sister) in London. Go for a walk and get home at 11pm. Mex returned last night. Rotten luck! On 18th: Fine day (Sleep in my room). Get up at 11am. Have dinner and walk to Wimbledon with Mum and Jennie. Feel awfully fed up in the evening and I have a fit of depression and go to sleep in an armchair. [I imagine that this depression was the result of having lost so many of his chums, then the end of the War came and he was so sad and exhausted. All sorts of things must have been racing through his mind.]

On 19th November 1918. Dull morning! Get up at 7.30am. Catch 9.30am train arriving Wye at 12 noon. Umpteen crashes to repair. Don't finish till 8pm. Plenty of WIND! Finish at 6pm and run round to see Nan for a short while. On 21st: Fine day. Hooray! The Squadron is to washout every weekend. Click for Guard and go on at 5pm. Not sorry. Write letters. On 22nd: Fine day. On guard all day! Have to get up at 5.30am to scrub the Guard out. C.O.'s Inspection. A little dirt under the table! [Not surprisingly, that can happen when dirt falls from men's boots when they sit at the table.]

On 23rd November 1918. Fine day, tidy the shed up in the morning and go on C.O.'s Parade at noon. I'm marker, [an important position in a Parade]. Catch the 1.05pm train to Hounslow, arrive 5pm. Meet Beryl and go for a walk. Get home at 8.30pm and go to the King's. Mex is there. Spend a jolly evening. On 24th: Dull day, get up at 9am and go to Communion at St Matthew's. Have dinner at Ardbraccon. Meet Beat (short for Beartice) and Phyl with Fred and go for a walk in the

afternoon. They come to tea and we spend a jolly evening. Call at Mr Stubbings for ½ hour [He was their next door neighbour].

On 25th November 1918. Leave home at 8am and reach Wye at 11.15am. Go on C.O.'s Parade at noon. Return to work at 1.30pm and don't finish till 8pm. Go to CETS and have supper and retire to bed. On 26th: Go to CETS for supper and then go round to Nan's and spend a nice evening and leave @ 11.15pm. [Interestingly, this is about the third time Gordon has used the @ sign in his hand-writing. He probably noticed it on typewriters in his London office. The history of this sign is on the Internet. Now it is used daily in E-mail addresses.]

On 27th November 1918. Fine day, but what a day! Go to Canterbury to collect Camel crash. Poor chap (Clarke) dies from injuries. Flight Commander lands, breaks a prop! Lt. Thoroughgood cashes in the same field. Takes ½ hour getting him out, mangled in the wreckage! Go out in the afternoon to collect it. Back at 6pm. Go by sidecar to collect camera gun at same place and hand in at 10pm.

[Once again, although Dad did not record this fatality in his diary, on 27th November 1918 Lieutenant Ernest George Clarke (27) whilst piloting his Sopwith Camel No.F9576 of 42 Training Squadron and flying low, hit a fence and turned over at Canterbury.]

On 28th November 1918. Wretched rainy day! Not very busy! Have to give PT to Officers. Finish at 5pm and generally square up kit and go to Concert. Boys give a lot of trouble. Fed up! On 29th: Rainy day so no flying to speak of. Have to take Officers in PTI. Finish at 8pm. Go to CETS for supper and then run round to Nan's for ½ hour. Get in at 10pm.

On 30th November 1918. Fine day! Run in F and L for insubordination: 7-days C.B. Catch the 1.05pm train. Meet Lil and go for a walk to Hyde Park. Have tea at Corner House. Leave her at 6.30pm and meet Beryl at 7.30pm. Have tea and go to Alcazar. Leave her at 10.30pm and get home at 11pm. [Well, that is all rather amusing, isn't it? It must have been according to the saying: There's safety in numbers!]

On 1st December 1918. A rainy Sunday morning, have breakfast and go to St Mathew's with Jennie. L.D. won't look at me. Go for a walk after dinner and run into L.D. Have a cold chat. Blowed if I know what I've done! Have tea and go to Christ Church with Jennie. Go to bed at 11pm. On 2nd: Dull morning get up at 7.30am and leave home at 8.15am and arrive at Wye at 11.30am. A clear shed and nothing to do all day! Finish at 5pm and go round to 7, The Green and spend a nice evening. On 3rd: Dull day, so no flying, just tidying up. Go to Station to fetch new Avro. Take Officers in PT. Finish work at 7.30pm and go to CETS for supper. Back at 10pm! On 4th: Dull day. No flying. Take the Officers in PT. Hooray! I hear we are to have 12-days Xmas leave.

On 5th December 12918. Rainy and misty day! 2 Avros crash in adjoining field. Collect both in the afternoon. Get chewed up by M K Lacy, C.O. for slackness on men's part in marching. Fed up! Finish up at 8pm. [I witnessed this happen when I served in the RAF, when Officers or senior NCOs could not find anything wrong, they would make up that there was, just to keep everyone on their toes. It was a rotten trick and one just had to accept it and never let it get you down.]

On 6th December 1918. Very misty day! Take the Officers in PT. Hang it all. I think I'll hand my stripes in! Is it worth the extra responsibility and no chance now of further promotion? Busy rigging Avro till 7.30pm! Go to CETS and have a posh supper. On 7th: Finish work (in office as clerk

is on leave for 12 days) at 10.30am. Go on C.O.'s Parade! Get to London at 4pm. Have tea at home and spend a jolly evening at Salisbury House. Have to walk half way home and get in at 12.30am. On 8th: Rainy day! Get up at 9.30am and go to St Matthew's in morning. L.D. won't look at me. Go for a good walk with Fred in the afternoon. Phyl and Beartrice come to tea and we spend a most enjoyable evening. On 9th: Misty day! Get up at 7.30am and reach Wye at 11.15am. Go on C.O.'s Parade. Go to work at 1.30am and finish at 5pm. Have supper at CETS and go round to 7, The Green and spend an enjoyable time. On 10th: Rainy morning and we're pretty slack. In ARS office all day! PT at noon! Go on Guard at 5pm and get correspondence up to date and get to bed at 11pm.

On 11th December 1918. Rainy day! Get up at 7am to clear Guard Room. Hooray! No C.O.s Inspection now. Flight Cadets do Camp Police instead of Guard now. On 12th: Rainy day. In office! Take Officers for PT, Gym and Boxing. Do rigging on a Camel in the evening till 7.30pm. Go to CETS and have a posh supper. On 13th: Fine day. In ARS office! Take Officers in PT. At 4pm have to go to Reed Court about 12 miles away to bring in 2 Avros and don't finish till 9 am covered from head to foot in grease! On 14th: They have a fight going on to finish Avros. How absurd! Finish early Washouts stopped. Rotten luck! Go to Ashford Pictures with Davis. Get in @ 9.30pm. On 15th: Fine day. In ARS office! Pretty slack and finish at 5pm. On 16th: Do some shopping and send off some Xmas cards. Fetched out of CETS to work all night! C.O.'s orders! And then they say, 'The War is over!' Fed up and feel tired in the morning.

On 17th December 1918. Rainy day! Get to bed at 9am and sleep all day till 6pm. On 18th: Rainy day. In ARS office! Pretty slack! Commanding Officer accuses our men of having broken longerons in Avro to making a write off. The Rotter! [Once again, such an accusation may have been sparked off by the strain of War even though it was over.] On 19th: Gusty and wild day. On Guard! Have a pretty cushy time and get everything ready for tomorrow. On 20th Dull kind of day! Leave Wye at 7am for 12 whole days. Hooray! Get to London at 10am and call at 22 Billiter Street. Then meet Mum at 1pm, then go shopping and out to lunch. Get home at 4pm and after tea go to Boniface's and have a chat on old times.

On 24th December 1918. Go shopping in the afternoon with Jennie and Arundel. Run over to Salisbury House for a little while in the evening. [We don't know who lived at Salisbury House. It was quite likely that it was a young lady!]

On 25th December – Christmas Day. A perfect Christmas morning! Go to Communion with Mum to Christ Church and also to the Morning Service. Have a champion Xmas dinner at Ardbracon. Walk with Fred in the afternoon followed by a musical evening, but I have a rotten ear. On 26th: A lovely crisp day, but feel wretched and don't get up till 11am. Tatum calls round and I walk to Wimbledon with him. Go to Hounslow in the afternoon, but see nothing of Beryl.

On 28th December 1918. Mild and rainy day! Leave home at 8.15am. Reach Portsmouth at 11.30am. Cross to Ryde by boat with a charming WAAC, [another *Brief Encounter*]. Dad meets me at Ventnor Station. Have dinner at Victoria Restaurant. Go for a stroll in the afternoon. After tea, go to the Pier to watch skating. In @ 10pm. On 29th: Get up at 9.30am after a restful night. Go to Church with Dad in the morning. Go for a stroll along the front in afternoon and evening.

On 30th December 1918. A Glorious day! Get up at 9am and Dad sees me off at 10.20am. Feel very worried about future prospects of Ventnor. Reach London at 4pm and call at the office. Get home at 6pm and go to Hounslow and go for a nice walk with Beryl. On 31st: Gusty day.

Winnie, Raddin and Mex come home. Fancy! Mex getting married tomorrow! Don't do much at all. Get ready to return and leave at 6pm. So ends another year, but starting another with much brighter prospects.

[Our uncle Mex married Tress King in a Registry Office. By religion they were both Plymouth Brethren. Tress had three sisters: Phyllis, Beatrice (mentioned earlier) and their youngest sister Barbara.]

On 1st January 1919. A very cold and bumpy day! One slight crash! Mex gets married. On 2nd Jan. Rainy day so have a pretty cushy time on Guard. On 3rd Jan. Fine day. Capt Franklin MC asks for me, and I'm blown if it isn't The Tran KLM (?) in the Twickenham Model Aero Club. Have a chat on old times and he promises me a flip in a Camel. On 4th Jan. A showery day with bright intervals. Two crashes. So plenty of work! On 5th Jan. Too windy to go up with Capt Franklin. Very busy!

On 6th January 1919. Windy and rainy day. Capt Franklin takes me up for an hour in an Avro No. 8712 taking off at 2.30pm. A very squally and cloudy day! Capt. Franklin, the ex aero-model enthusiast of the Twickenham club takes the front seat and we set off. Jolly cold up! Follow the line up Ashford way to investigate some black clouds. At 2,000 feet (above clouds) with Lieutenant Woodlane, in another Avro, we have a proper scrap! Thoughts of Lieutenant Whelan's crash come back to me as we approach each other within a few yards! Snap him and we spin at 100 feet. And then go all over country ground strafing. Most thrilling! Get into a rain storm over Ashford at 2,000 feet and raced back to Aerodrome. Side slip in and make a topping landing, the storm immediately following. Quite the most enjoyable trip I've had and for clean flying Capt Franklin is hard to beat. Finish at 8pm and go to a dance at CETS.

On 7th January 1919. Windy rainy day, don't get up till 8am and don't go on Parade. Go to Ashford cinema in the evening with 2 chums. On 8th: Windy rainy day – no flying. 42 Squadron has a meeting re: Demobilization, but the Colonel addresses us pretty reasonably and 43 motions are thereby squashed. Finish at 5pm and go round to 7, The Green. On 9th: Very windy and rainy day. Busy all day dispatching two Sopwith Camels at Wye Station. Rumours floating around all day!

On 10th January 1919. Pouring wet thundery day. Test Avro D2118 with Lt. Nicholson during a bright spell for 15-minutes. Take off at 3.15pm. We test the machine which has been overhauled. Clouds present a wonderful spectacular. Do all sorts of stunts, but notice that she is left wing low. Immelmann into 'Drome and rectify machine. Later in the day go to a farewell dinner of the Boys of 42 Training Squadron at Kings Head Hotel, Wye.

On 11th January 1919. Pouring with rain all day. Knock off at 2pm and get to London at 6pm. Meet Beryl and go to Alcazar and spend an enjoyable evening. On 12th: Fine day! Get up at 9.30am have a posh breakfast and go to St Matthew's with Jennie. Walk with Fred in the afternoon. Stay in, in the evening and leave at 8pm when the Kings come over. Arrive back at Wye at 12.30am. 42 Training Squadron transformed to No.1 Distribution Centre for Machines from France. On the 16th we send the remainder of our machines to Eastbourne.

On 17th January 1919. Lovely day. On Guard! Pretty cushy time! Go to a dance at Ashford Drill Hall and have a good time. Catch the 12.50am train back. On 18th: Fine day, but nothing doing. Go for a Route March in the morning. Ashford dance later. On 19th: Fine, but misty day. Get up at 8am — whole Squadron goes to Church in the morning. Go to Nan's in the afternoon and find that CG (whoever she is) has told her all my carryings on, the mean despicable wretch of a girl. Have a

proper bust up, but more or less make it up. Have tea with her and leave at 10pm. On 20th: Rainy day! Get up at 8am. Nothing doing all day—just hang about. Go to the Pictures in the evening.

21st January 1919. Fine day, but no machines arrive. I'm in charge of road-making, if you please! Finish at 4pm and go to CETS and play billiards. On 22nd: Lovely day. Go for a Route March in the morning. Do nothing in the afternoon. Play Billiards at CETS in the evening.

On 23rd January 1919. Cold, but fine day. Go for a Route March to Godnersham in the morning. At 4 pm accompanied Lieutenant Nicholson in Avro No. 8875 for three-flights-in-one for 30-mins. As I have only a seconds notice, jump in rear seat minus coat, cap and goggles. Follow the road to Ashford at 100 feet and occasionally wave to pedestrians. Roam about over the town of Ashford at 150 feet, just above a pall of black smoke from the chimneys.. Turn round and rise to 3,000 feet Ugh! Nearly frozen! Do a loop, rolls and Immelmanns, spins and all sorts of stunts, side slip into 'Drome and make a ghastly landing, take off again with full left bank. Side slip in again and another bad landing! Take off again and do some stunts and finally make a good landing. A very enjoyable flight, but could have been better plus coat and helmet. [Immelmanns is a maneuver in which an airplane reverses direction by executing half of a loop upwards followed by half of a roll.]

On 24th January 1919. Lovely day. Go for a topping Route March to Brook in the morning. Finish at 4pm. Go round to 7, The Green to supper. Get back early. On 25th: Fine day. Clear up in the morning. Catch the 1.05pm train and get home at 4.30pm. Dad home from Ventnor! Go to Hounslow and meet Beryl and go to the Alcazar. On 26th: Rainy morning! Get up at 10am and go to St Matthew's. Go for a walk in the afternoon and have tea with Granny. Stop in, in the evening. On 27th: Get up at 7.30am and get to Wye at noon. Take on duties of Orderly Buff for a week. On 28th: Orderly Buff till 5pm when Lt. Dixon hands me to Stores. Go to CETS for supper and then go to see Nan.

On 29th January 1919. Posh job in the Stores, fine spring bed and a fire. Finish at 7pm and go to a dance in Ashford. Jolly good! And get in at 2am. On 30th: have a posh time squaring things up in the Stores. Finish at 7pm. and go to CETS and then to 7, The Green. On 31st: Simply posh sleeping in the Stores. Finish at 5pm and go to the Pictures in Ashford and afterwards to a dance where I spend a most enjoyable time. Get in at 2am.

On 1st February 1919. 6-inches of snow. Hooray! Told I'm for my ticket tomorrow. Sign various papers. Go to Ashford cinema on my lonesome. Call at Nan's, but no one in. [I wonder if she was at home, but did not wish to answer the door, because having to say 'Good bye' would have been too much for her. That would have been quite understandable].

On Sunday 2nd February 1919. 8" of snow. Stop in bed till dinner time. Leave Wye in a lorry and get snowballed furiously! Get home at 8.30pm turn my kit out and go to bed. It is with a tinge of regret that I leave the RAF for the good times I did have and bad ones.

On 3rd February 1919. DEMOBILIZED. Meet five others at Victoria and we go to the Chrystal Palace and are free men once more in 2 hours. Call at the office. Get home at 6pm and go to Granny's for the evening. On 4th: Fine day. Get up at 10am. Go shopping in the morning. Meet Beryl in the evening and go to the Pictures. Great Labour Unrest! On 5th: All electric Railways on strike. What a lot of trouble there is. Potter around all day doing nothing. On 6th: Railway Strike still on. Go shopping in the morning and go to the Wimbledon Theatre and see, *'A Little Bit Dee zuff'*.

On 7th February 1919. My Birthday. Get up at 8am. Have a ripping watch chain given me. Auntie Tan and Granny come to tea. Musical evening! On 8th: Meet Beryl at 3pm and walk to Richmond. Have tea and go to the Pictures. See her home and get in at 11pm. On 9th: Fine day. Go to St Matthew's in the morning with Jennie, walk on Common with Fred in the afternoon. Meet Beatrice and Phyl and watch skating. Miss Booth and Mr. Booth come for tea. Go for a walk with Fred. [I can't help feeling that as he walked across the Wimbledon Common with his brother, Fred, that they must have talked about the model aero planes which flew over that wide open space when they were younger not knowing that it would lead to so many young men volunteering for the Royal Flying Corps when the Great War came. Sadly, so many perished. We will remember them.]

After the Great War there was a tremendous amount of surplus equipment offered. The largest item Dad acquired for just £1. 0s. 0d., was a four bladed propeller which was 8½ feet from tip to tip and weighed 28 lbs. It was conveyed by horse and cart to his home in Wimbledon. It had never rotated on an aero plane. He attached a barometer to the centre of it. Naturally, it created much interest when people entered the house. Ten years later our family moved to a newly built house in Epsom, wherein the propeller was hung on the spacious wall of the stairs. As a baby, less than 2-years-old, I can remember that propeller as I was carried up and down stairs many times. Later, when I became even more observant, I noticed that when Dad walked downstairs at the beginning of the day, he would stop at the barometer and give a little tap on the glass face of the delicate instrument. Then when I reached the age of asking questions, I asked why he tapped the glass face. 'Oh, just to see what the weather is going to be like today!' Being so young I honestly thought that Dad controlled the weather everywhere on every day!! That propeller became a governing factor. Every property to which we moved, Dad always made sure there was a wall large enough on which he could hang the propeller. It is now in its fifth home. I honestly believe that that propeller was a constant reminder to Dad of his days in the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Air Force, and in particular those gallant men who lost their lives or became seriously injured in the course of their duties.

One of the funniest stories I remember our Dad telling us when I was so young, was about one of the airmen in his hut. His name was Fox. He was quite a funny chap and one day he was so fed up with things and told all the men in the billet that he didn't like sleeping in his rough shirt. He much preferred sleeping in his nice comfortable pajamas. They all laughed and said that they didn't find life so bad really and more or less told him to put up with it and that he'd soon get used to it!

Anyway, Fox wrote home to his mother and asked her to kindly send him his white silk pajamas. In about a week a parcel arrived for him containing his favourite night attire. He was so overjoyed in receiving them that he showed them off to all his mates in the hut. One of them asked him to put them on, which I think he did over his uniform. To add to the celebration, it was suggested that Dad should take a photograph of him with his mates outside the door to their hut. Those photos can be seen in one of Dad's RFC photo albums to this day. Dad never recorded the occasion in his diary, but the proof of the event was in the photographs.

One day Fox went out for the evening. Knowing that he would not return until very late, in fact after 'lights out', the boys, including our Dad, stitched up one arm of his pajamas jacket and one leg of his pajamas trousers and carefully replaced them under his pillow. They also made him an apple pie bed! They all retired to bed and some of them pretended to be fast asleep by snoring on purpose. When Fox returned in the dark and tried to prepare for the night, the men found it extremely difficult to contain themselves as they heard Fox cursing and swearing away as he attempted to get into his pajamas! He gave that up after a while and discarded them! Finally, he tried to slip into bed which he found equally difficult! By that time, he went stark raving mad and anyone could imagine the language uttered and heard in that hut and beyond in the Squadron! The whole situation was absolutely hilarious! To the best of my knowledge, this story has not been put into print before, but it just shows that it is never too late, even though it happened one hundred years ago! Then it was told to us when I was about 4-years-old.

In the English summer of 1973, my family and I flew back to England for a 6-week holiday. Whilst we were there, we visited the beautiful Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity, Chichester, Sussex. It was there that I saw a man pushing his wife in a wheeled chair down the centre aisle. He was smartly dressed in a blazer which I immediately noticed bore the RFC badge. We soon conversed and he was surprised that I recognized his Royal Flying Corps badge, because younger generations were unaware of what the RFC letters represented. I told him that my father served in the RFC and it appeared that they had both served at Wye at the same time. He kindly gave me his name and address which I was able to give to my father who wrote to him straight away in August 1973. Dad mentioned that he could quickly identify him from one of the many photos he had taken at Wye Aerodrome. He was Mr. F. G. Shepherd and his service number was 58876 and he held the rank of Air Mechanic 1st Class. Dad had written the names of the men in a photograph and where they stood in front of a biplane.

On the 12th February 1974, he answered Dad's letter with apologies for not writing earlier. He expressed how pleased he was to meet me in Chichester Cathedral and to receive Dad's letter after all that time — 55 years! So, this short story of such a chance meeting all came about by the recognition of the RFC blazer badge!

Earlier in this long account Dad recalls his first flight with Lieutenant Norman Brearley at Beaulieu on 13th April 1916, his second flight five days later and his third flight on 18th May 1916. Later, Lieutenant Brearley was posted to France and that was the last time Dad saw him and spoke to him.

In the early 1970s, my brother, Stuart, wrote to me to say that he had recently borrowed a book from his local library, titled *Australian Aviator*, written by a former pilot in the Royal Flying Corps. As Stuart became engrossed in the book, he asked our Dad, 'Did you ever happen to know an Australian pilot in the RFC called Norman Brearley?'

Amazed, my father replied, 'I most certainly did. He was the best pilot we had on the Aerodrome at Beaulieu. I was a mechanic and rigger, and Lieutenant Brearley would often ask me to fly with him to test the machines.'

'Well, he's just written this book I'm reading. He is now Sir Norman Brearley, CBE, DSO, MC, AFC. The Knighthood was conferred on him in 1971, 'For Services to Aviation.' He founded the Western Australian Airline in 1921, the first regular airline to carry airmail and passengers. He rose to the rank of Group Captain in the Royal Australian Air Force in the Second World War.'

Dad just couldn't believe it — the last time he saw or spoke to Norman was when he was about to be posted to France in 1916 to fight in World War I. Stuart wrote to us with this most extraordinary information and asked me if I could obtain Sir Norman's address so that our Dad could write to him.

I soon acquired his address from his son, Maurice Brearley, Professor in Mathematics in the RAAF Academy at Point Cook in Victoria, and sent it on. Whilst I was allowing time for them to correspond, I ordered a copy of *Australian Aviator* from our local Collins Bookseller. I wrote to Sir Norman, introduced myself and asked him if he would be so kind as to write something to my father on the front page of a copy of his book, which I was sending. I asked him further, that with the postage stamps I enclosed, if he would be so kind as to forward the book to my father in England. He kindly did all that and I received a very nice letter from him within a few days to say that it was on its way.

Father was thrilled to receive the book which we gave him as a birthday present. Sir Norman had written a whole page in the front of the book reminiscing over the wonderful thrills of flight over the beautiful English countryside decades ago. Father read the book with great interest and valued the message Sir Norman had written to him. Stuart and I continued to correspond with Sir Norman. In one of my letters I told him that I had only been to Perth once. That was when I was on a two-week tour of after-care for Guide Dogs in 1972. Had I known about him then, I would have made every effort to pay him a visit. Hopefully, such a meeting could eventuate for us in future.

It was not long before I flew to Perth again and I had the opportunity of visiting Sir Norman and Lady Violet Brearley at their lovely home in Peppermint Grove, Cottesloe. I telephoned and asked if it would be convenient for me to pay them a visit. A date and time was fixed, which I looked forward to very much. I was given a warm welcome by Sir Norman as he opened his front door, 'Ah, Michael Tucker! Do come in and make yourself at home.'

He led me into their main living room, which had a beautiful view of the large expanse of the Swan River and the city of Perth.

As soon as we sat down to talk, he opened up by saying, 'I well remember your father in our Royal Flying Corps days. He was always highly excited when I asked him if he would like to come up for a flight with me. We had some wonderful flights. Then later in that year of 1916, I was posted to

France to fight in WWI. Having shot down some enemy planes, eventually I got shot down myself! With Lieutenant Hallam, I was on patrol behind the enemy lines flying at 12,000 feet, when we saw seven German fighters abreast of each other coming towards us. Hallam and I signaled to each other — he picked the one on the extreme left and I chose the one on the extreme right. Closing within firing range, I cocked my gun, aimed at the enemy plane and pressed the trigger. Unfortunately, my gun jammed without me firing a shot. Suddenly, the first shots from the enemy plane shattered the propeller of my DH2 to pieces and a bullet passed through both my lungs. I was helpless! Somehow, I guided my plane down into no-man's land, the piece of land between the German and British lines. For one moment I saw Lieutenant Hallam in the melee of German fighters. As I landed at an angle, the entire undercarriage was completely ripped off. That was lucky for me, as I was able to slip out of the cockpit and on to the ground and crawl into a shell crater for protection, while the British soldiers gave me covering fire. I remained there all day. When it had gotten dark, I crawled to the British lines. They eventually got me back to England where I spent some time in hospital. Months later I heard that Lieutenant Hallam had crash landed his plane and had been taken prisoner.'

I sat there enthralled with the stories he told me. They were in fact a continuation of all the stories Dad had told us when we were boys. For me, our meeting was a link with the past. He was the first and only man, whom I had had the honour and privilege of meeting, who knew and remembered my father way back in 1916. Only because he had written his book, did we know that he was still alive. 'How strange it was', I thought at the time, 'that I should have to come to the other side of the world to find this most distinguished veteran. What a stroke of luck!'

In subsequent years I visited him many times. On one occasion he told me over the phone that he had not been too well and that his doctor had ordered complete rest and warned him not to have any visitors. But kindly Sir Norman added, 'You're different — I'd love to see you again!' So I accepted his invitation.

Sadly, his wife died in the mid-80s, and a few years later he moved into an aged care home in Subiaco, in which he had his own room. The last time I visited him was in 1988, when, during our conversation, I remarked,

'Sir Norman, I must say that you are looking remarkably fit!'

'Am I, old chap?' he replied with a lovely smile on his face, 'Well, I think that I've been around long enough now, and I'm ready to go!'

I couldn't help thinking what a wonderful approach he had to life, and now he was nearing its end with a total acceptance and thankfulness for a life, which had been so long and illustrious.

He was a great man and I am so glad that I was fortunate to have known him. I felt also that my father would have been so pleased to know that I was able to visit his old comrade on so many occasions and to correspond with him too. They must have been very exciting days for both of them when they served in the Royal Flying Corps. There was no doubt about it: Sir Norman was an officer and gentleman, for whom my father and I had the greatest respect and admiration. Six months later Sir Norman passed peacefully away in his sleep at the grand old age of ninety-eight.

[I have taken this story out of my own autobiography: *Patience and Trust – The Autobiography of a Dog Trainer*. Published by Busybird Publishing 2014.]

In August 2013 I decided to write an article about Sergeant Henry Marvin when he was stationed at Hounslow in 1917. This was duly published in the Newsletter of our Melbourne Branch of the Royal Air Forces Association in 2013. It included just one photograph of him taken by my father. There was another photograph of him in the same album with the caption below: Sgt Marvin – killed in France. No other details appeared. Below is the full text of my article.

My father, Gordon Tucker, served in the Royal Flying Corps which, as we know, became the Royal Air Force on 1st April 1918. He took many photographs which are preserved in two photo albums in my brother's home in England. The photos were taken with a small VPK camera which had an extremely good lens. During the few years of the RFC airmen had Army Ranks. Whilst most of the pilots were Commissioned Officers, aircraft were also piloted by Senior NCOs and a lesser number of Junior N.C.O.s

This photograph shows Sgt. H. L. Marvin at the controls with his right hand on the special camera attached to the side of this BE2e aircraft used for aerial photography. Note the four bladed propeller badge above the sergeant's chevrons and below his Royal Flying Corps shoulder flash. Also note the turnbuckles on the outside of the fuselage — all control cables were duplicated in case of breakages. And see how the fabric on the fuselage is firmly laced together.

One day Sgt. Marvin flew my father from their base in Hounslow to Wimbledon where my father lived. They landed on Wimbledon Common; from there my father had only a short walk to his home in Lambton Road! Could any of us imagine such a flight happening in the RAF today, yet alone ever having been permitted? Times change! As my father often reminisced, they were exciting days although there were more pilots killed in flying accidents during training than there were in actual war in the air.

Henry Leslie Marvin was born in 1895. He was the youngest of five children born to Henry Ward Marvin and his wife Ella. He left school at the age of sixteen and became a clerk in a wholesale leather merchants company. On 5th September 1914 he enlisted in the 28th Battalion, London Regiment (Artists Rifles). In February 1916 he joined the Royal Flying Corps. He was promoted to Temporary 2nd Lieutenant in 6th Squadron RFC and finally based at Abeele Aerodrome, Belgium, just meters away from the French border.

Tragically, at 11.35am on 26th October 1917, piloting his RE8 (A3850), the machine was brought down in a shell burst and went into pieces. The remnants crashed into the Salient. Lt. Marvin and his observer, Lieutenant Clarence Henry Barton RFC, were killed instantly. There were no other machines or shell bursts in the vicinity. On 16th November the 21st Division Artillery learned that two charred and unidentifiable bodies had been found in a crashed aircraft. The aircraft was identified by the number on its Vickers machine gun (A4587). Lt. Barton's body was identified by his identity disc and watch. The report also stated that Major C. A. Allen (11th Battalion, Royal Sussex Regt.) and Captain G. E. F. Hunt (12th Battalion of 116 Brigade, 39th Division) had found and buried the two gallant aviators.

In May 2007 Mark Gardiner, assisted by Neil Mackenzie, carried out a 3-day Tour of Ypres Salient, covering all the cemeteries south of Wijtschate to Mesen (Messines) running west to Loker and Dronouter, then made a late dash to Zandvoorde where the two are buried side by side in a British War Cemetery. With his detailed account, found on the Internet, he respectfully included a photograph of their headstones. Henry Marvin's name is also recorded on the War Memorial at Coulsdon, where he lived, and the Purley & Coulsdon War Memorial.

I would like to conclude by saying that Dad was very discreet in everything he wrote to his parents for fear that tragic flying accidents recorded in this long article would worry them and also raise their concern for his safety. He was demobilized in February 1919. He had served a total period of three years and three days.

In 1953, I had just arrived home on leave and mentioned to him, as we sat alone together over afternoon tea in the garden, that one of our Lancasters, with undercarriage trouble, had to make a forced landing last evening outside RAF St Mawgan, Cornwall. At first it was suggested that I should go to the crash site with my police dog and guard it all night until the aviation authorities arrived the next morning. That would have meant that the Airfield was not being patrolled. So, two airmen were detailed to stand guard over it. My father's immediate and anxious response was, 'Were any of the crew injured?' I was able to assure him that apart from being shaken up, they were all OK. It was then that he opened up for the first time and told me of the horrific times he saw biplanes crash on the Aerodromes. They burst into flames and the screams of the pilots being burnt alive had haunted him for the rest of his life. I guess that he felt that he could tell me, knowing that I would understand and that I was always ready to listen. I was so pleased and privileged that he was able to tell me about all those incidents, horrific as they were. Quite obviously he had bottled them up inside himself just as countless others have and still do. Interestingly, he never told anyone else in the family. I would like to conclude with adding the Dedication of the Royal Air Force.

In Friendship and in Service one to another, we are pledged to keep alive the Memory of those of all Nations who died in the Royal Air Force and in the Air Forces of the Commonwealth. In their name we give ourselves to this noble cause. Proudly and Thankfully, We Will Remember Them.

Michael Tucker

1st April 2018