

# REMINISCENCES

PORTRAITS & INTERVIEWS BY MIKE STONE



ISSUE # 02  
JEWISH VETERANS of the RAF

# RAF

In the course of making a documentary for the charity AgeUK I had a most peculiar meeting.

At a care home outside London, I had just made a portrait of a former tank Captain who served in North Africa with Montgomery. I then moved upstairs to work with another resident. Originally a pharmacist, he had come over to England from Latvia as a refugee after the war, retrained as an architect with a long career designing homes for the Barnardo's charity.

Whilst sitting for his portrait he leaned over and cautiously opened his sock drawer, pulling out a small cigar box bound by elastic bands. With great care he opened the box and then led me through his early life in pictures. His childhood in Latvia, his days at university, his qualification in Riga as a pharmacist, and then a brief glimpse of a portrait of himself in uniform; very quickly shuffled to the bottom of the pack. I'm sorry he said, I don't show people that picture, they don't ever understand, you see we hated the Russians.

What had I been shown? A proud and formal portrait of my subject as a younger man, wearing a German officer's uniform. It wasn't any uniform. What I had caught sight of were the lightning bolt emblems of the SS on his collar.

Reflecting on this encounter It struck me that within my own Jewish community there is a generation, who if not immigrants themselves are of immigrant stock and unreservedly served their country through WWII.

Sadly, the war did not eliminate the old prejudices and the world remains a troubled place. At the end of their lives there is now a freedom for these veterans to speak about the past and to reflect back on a world that they literally fought for. As Jews it was an existential battle and their views on the past and the present are filled with character.

Through a family reunion I was introduced to an RAF veteran, Morris Hope-Stone, a cousin of my father's with whom he had lost contact for several decades. My conversation with Morris was the starting point for the five year journey of research, photography and interviews I made for this issue of Reminiscences.

At the outset of the project the youngest veterans were already 87 years old. As I publish this issue in early 2021 it is a sadness to report that of those featured, Morris, Norman, Harold, Joyce, Stanley and Milton, have passed away.

By an overwhelming majority over the other services British Jews volunteered to join the RAF, the only service that could actively strike Germany after the evacuation from Dunkirk in 1940. This issue of Reminiscences features Jewish veterans who served with the RAF, the following issue will add the Jewish veterans from the other services.

There are of course moments of great tragedy in every veteran's story but also a balance of comedy with that tragedy, a sense of humour, often at the extremes of what we might call political correctness but an honest self-deprecating humour that comes from surviving adversity. These reflections, over 70 plus years since the war ended, whether expressed through sadness at the loss of Empire, Britain's ability to influence the world, or more commonly at the changing standards in life, both public and private are fascinating.

We have now passed the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain and the 75th anniversary of D-Day. I want to acknowledge the privilege I have felt in recording the reminiscences of these modest heroes and I dedicate this issue to all those who have fought against tyranny for our freedom.

Mike Stone London January 2021

Cover: Alfred Huberman who completed 38 missions in Lancaster bombers as a rear gunner  
The average life expectancy for a rear gunner in WWII was five missions.

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ISSN 2634-7067

# Squadron Leader Lawrence “Benny” Goodman

Benny, age 98, was interviewed at his home in Guildford on 8th October 2018

I was born on 24 September 1920 in London. My father had served on the Eastern front during WWI and I was about to turn 19 at the outbreak of war. I saw this lorry load of chaps in army uniform and I thought it was the time for myself to do something, so I volunteered for aircrew.

I passed the aircrew medical in London and then waited for six weeks to be called up to for basic training and a posting to RAF Abingdon. Rather than the pilots course I expected I was sent to be a ground gunner, living for six months in a Nissen hut on the airfield in a gun emplacement with no blankets, no sheets, no pillows and having to dig my own latrine.

Finally, I was posted to the Initial Training Wing where we were almost treated us like human beings. We spent six very good and informative weeks. We learned navigation, meteorology, airmanship, and all the things we needed to know for a chance of survival. I was totally overjoyed to have passed but I was regrettably sent on an instructors course. Regrettably because if you were a flying instructor during the war that hadn't done any operations, people didn't think very much of you.

Then with very little warning we were told we'd been posted but not where, so we all got our kit bags together and of course rumours were rife. Everybody had a different idea of where we were going, in fact we were marched off to the railway station and got on a train that went up to the west coast of Scotland to Gourock and got on a boat. The group I was in got on a Norwegian cattle boat called the Bergen. It had no real accommodation just had one huge

deck below and you lived there, ate there slept there and if you were lucky, once every two days found somewhere to do your teeth.

We all had jobs, I was in the hold of the ship, hauling carcasses out of the depth of the ship onto a giant hook and it was pulled up to the kitchens. I think the worst moment for me during that 10 day crossing was the smell down in the hold of dried blood, I've never been sea sick before or since but that was the nearest I've got, the dried blood smell was awful and the rolling of the boat.

We realised we might be making for Canada after speaking to the crew, some of them had no more idea than we did. Because the Bergen did more than 14 knots we didn't go in a convoy, we were classified as a fast ship and therefore didn't need an escort. We weren't very pleased about that, but we did cross the Atlantic on our own and didn't get torpedoed.

When we got to Canada we disembarked at Halifax, Nova Scotia where we got some pay and the first thing we did was go into Halifax and have steak and chips. We hadn't seen proper meat for a long time. I think we spent a week's pay on having that steak and chips.

We spent I suppose a week in Halifax and then we were put on a train to RAF Carberry to fly Ansons. I'd only flown single engine aircraft and we all thought what a leap in the dark this was going to be. In fact, you couldn't find a more docile aircraft in the Air Force if you wanted to, they were really old aircraft and I think they got quite a

I was sent for after the training and my crew said to me “What the hell have you done now Benny?”... I wasn't in trouble, I'd been selected to go to 617 Squadron.





Avro Anson of the Royal Canadian Air Force in use with the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan

hammering in the hands of people like me but we did day flying and night flying and day cross-country's and night cross-country's and we had to do some of them as the navigator because they were quite long. Two or three hours in an Anson out on the prairies, you've very little in the way of pinpoints, it was just guess work for us, all we had was a wind on take-off, a predicted wind on the route around and another wind on landing so we just plotted one course, that was all we could do, but everybody seemed to get back. And of course, the whole thing seemed exaggerated at night because we'd never done any night flying in the UK.

The Canadian people were very kind, very interested in the war and very pro-British. I got to know quite a few well and I liked them very much. I got to know this one girl quite by accident when I went for a weekend to Montreal. Before dinner I went down for a drink and a chap came up to me and said you look lonely. I thought he was trying to pick me up. I said I'm not lonely at all and he said, well we thought you were pointing at the table opposite, my wife and I and our niece. I looked at the niece and thought I am lonely!

He invited me over to the table and it ran away with itself, this girl found out my parents' address, she wrote to them introducing herself because she was going to

be their daughter-in-law. I knew nothing about it. My mother nearly had a fit, of course my father got in trouble because of me, it was all his fault. Anyhow I didn't know anything about this, of course it was just letters going backward and forwards. In fact, I didn't know the whole story until I got home.

Of course, I had great fun with the girl, but I had no idea she had vicious intentions. I suppose fortunately I was posted to Kingston, Ontario. This was an RAF flying school, except there was a Naval Lieutenant Commander in charge and all the cadets were Naval airmen.

One of the Fleet Air Arm chaps was Canadian, he was one of the last off a ship sunk near Gibraltar, he was flying Firefly's, and he was the last one off and he got to Gibraltar. he landed at Gibraltar, but he couldn't get the undercarriage down, it had been damaged and because he landed undercarriage up, the Navy court martialed him. It's unbelievable their discipline. The Navy people weren't all that different really, I mean when you went into the CO's office you didn't salute, you took your hat off, that sort of thing. I understand why the navy took their hats off, in the old time ships your head hit the ceiling when you went in, there was no way you could salute, but our CO was a flight commander, so I never took mine off, I saluted him when I went in.

I told the Flight Commander; I know nothing about Navy flying but he said don't worry I'll teach you and after a few weeks I'd mastered pretty well all the exercises. They were lovely; I mean we did dive bombing; can you imagine the RAF doing dive bombing and not being court martialed. We did all the things that you would never get away with, so I enjoyed it very much.

There actually was a court martial at the station I was at, Kingston. They got officers from other places to try this poor chap and when it was over, I was told by the Wing Commander Flying that I was to fly him back to his base, about a hundred miles away. It was in a Harvard, so it was quite a snappy aeroplane. One of the chaps said, "when you go, beat up the watch tower because everybody does". I believed him, so when I got airborne, I really beat the watchtower up, really, I really did and when I thought I had done enough I went back the hundred miles to base.

As I taxied in to park the aircraft, I noticed the Wing Commander Flying was there and he had two young pilot officers with him. There weren't many pilot officers and I thought what are they doing? I felt bright and cheerful about it all, I'd got there and back with no problems, so I opened the canopy, got out. The Wing Commander, he was known as Hack'em because he hacked people off the course left, right and centre, no pity, he was a real bastard actually, he came to me as I was climbing out and said "Goodman" and I thought what have I done?

Then these two young pilot officers came up, officers of equal rank. Hack'em said "You're under arrest" and I couldn't think what I'd done.

My mate, so called, who said to me everybody beats up the tower before they leave had told the biggest lie of his life. When I'd beaten up the tower properly, they phoned Kingston and asked for the Wing Commander Flying and told him all about it. I was under close arrest, marched off to my room, with these two chaps marching

me and I wasn't allowed to leave it. Can you imagine. Dinner was brought to me, but I wasn't allowed to leave the room and these two blokes, poor bastards, had to stand either side of the door.

Luck was on my side because as this was going on the Air Ministry wanted officers right away for training for Bomber Command and I was one of them. The Wing Commander Flying nearly went berserk because I was definitely going to get court martialed and probably wouldn't be allowed to fly at all, he was livid, he made no bones about it. I was so lucky.

Two days out of Halifax the American destroyer that was escorting us was torpedoed and we were damaged. It was enough for the rudder to be made useless, we were going round in circles, the U-Boat must have used it's last torpedo because nobody else torpedoed us. We were told to have a bag packed and to go on deck with our raincoats. Someone had pinched my raincoat so I went on deck in uniform, I've never forgotten that, because we might have been sinking at any time or they might have come back with another torpedo, nobody knew, but we managed to get back to Halifax where we started, except nobody had anything, all the trunks had gone missing.

I had no clothes, so the Air Ministry gave me £ 20.00 to clothe myself. I got some second-hand things from Simpsons in Piccadilly, my greatcoat had Eagle Squadron on it, it had belonged to an American who had been shot down and killed before he could get his uniform. They said this poor chap has been shot down and you can have the whole lot for twenty quid because it was a dead man's uniform and that was all I had.

Back in England I had to get a new crew and my A1G1 full flying and full ground anywhere in the world. I had to work up to that to, so I did a stint flying a Martinet, making dummy attacks on Wellingtons and things, they were teaching rear gunners how to shoot planes down.

I flew the Martinet to get some flying in. The rear gunners



did it with live ammunition. Now some of these chaps weren't very good, I must say I never got hit, but flying up and down the North Sea, if I'd been shot down..... Actually, they started out shooting cine film and didn't get to shoot live ammunition until the RAF was happy.

I had to fly the Wellington for a bit then went on HCB, Heavy Conversion Bombing on Sterlings. They weren't half as bad as they were supposed to be. From there I went to the Lancaster Finishing School at Syerston.

I was fortunate to have flown all three of our four-engine bombers, the Sterling the Halifax and the Lancaster and there's no doubt about it the Lancaster was a peach of an aircraft to fly.

I was sent for after the training and my crew said to me "What the hell have you done now Benny?" They wouldn't believe that I was innocent. I went along to the Flight Commander; I opened the door and my heart went in to my boots. There was the Flight Commander, another Squadron Leader and one or two Wing Commanders and I thought I don't know what it is that I've done this time but I'm in it up to my eyebrows, I couldn't think what I'd done wrong. Anyhow they seemed quite friendly and they said your flying's good, your bombing's good and your crew cooperation's good. I thought to myself this doesn't sound like I'm going to get into trouble. I wasn't in trouble; I'd been selected to go to 617 Squadron.

The only person who went to 617 Squadron before me who hadn't flown on operations was Tony Iverson, but he'd been a Battle of Britain pilot. I was the first pilot who had never done any ops, and of course my crew were with me.

When I got back to the chaps, I said we've got a posting together, we're going to 617. I couldn't convince them we'd been selected, for a time they just didn't believe it because we were the first totally non-operational crew to be posted to 617.

It had been the Commander in Chief's idea to see if we could get some non operational crews in, we were the first experimental crew. We were excited about what we were going to have to do but a bit nervous about the people we were going to meet. 617 were the crème de la crème as far as we were concerned, all newspaper figures, household names all well known and we were just nobody's. Wing Commander Cheshire was just leaving when I got there, and Wing Commander Tait was taking over. Tait said, well you're now fully fledged except you haven't done an operation so you're going to one today with Flight Lieutenant Bob Knights as your captain.

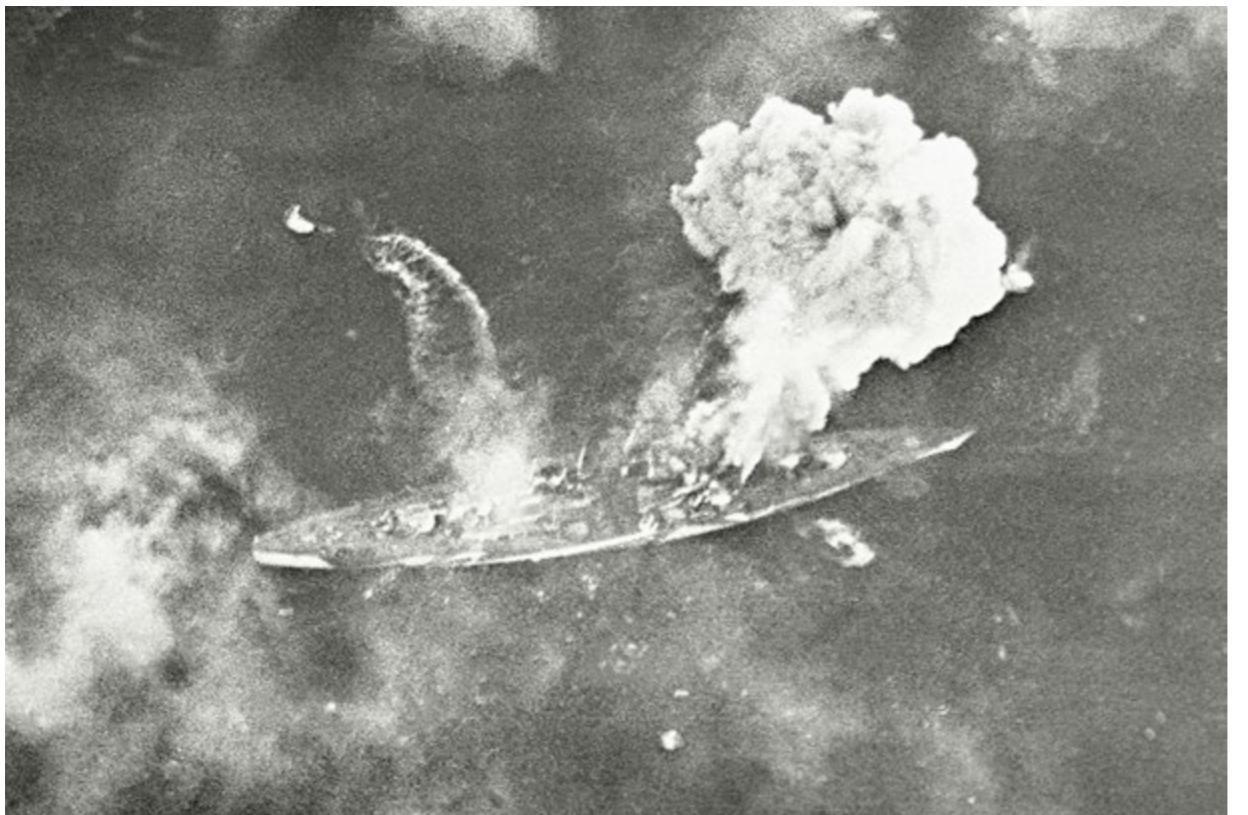
Bob Knights was a Flight Lieutenant who had a DSO, that's as rare as anything you can suggest for a Flight Lieutenant, so I went in the right hand seat with him which was a dickie seat really, did the trip and came back. He had a word with Tait to tell him what he thought of me and obviously it wasn't too bad because he said to me your next trip will be your first operation with 617. I could have hugged him, imagine how I felt, I felt part of the squadron then and of course the crew were delighted.

In bomber command the selection of crew was pretty haphazard, we were all put together in a hanger and we were told to pick your own crew. I was delighted with my crew all through the war. My navigator was gem, Harry Watkins, he came from Salford, Manchester, the rear gunner was from Wales, the mid upper Mike Leigh, was from London, Harry the wireless op was from London.

The pilots didn't socialise with the crew that much but that wasn't our fault. We lived in the officer's mess in Woodhall Spa and their quarters were near Coningsby, so it was a bit of a drag to expect to get together, but we were together in the air and we worked as a crew on the ground together as well. If you didn't have trust in your crew you might as well give up and find another one because if you can't rely on your crew, you're in trouble, if you didn't like anybody you would say so.

Once in the aircraft I was either called Captain or Cap. I always accepted Cap, they were NCO's, I was an officer, we were mates, but in the air, they would call me Cap and I would call Wireless Operator or Rear Gunner can you hear this? Bomb Aimer was a big mate of mine, but we stuck to the rules, much better to do that than be caught out, I don't mean by any of us, by the enemy and you don't know who you're talking to or if something goes wrong, it really is the right thing to do to follow the lines. It is. So, I had a damned good crew and we got each other through the war.

Our first operation was to Brest, against the shipping. We had a fire in the aircraft, a radio caught fire, I suddenly found the cockpit full of smoke, I opened the DV panel, that's the Direct Vision panel, and let as much air in as I could but it was full of smoke the cockpit and I was trying to fly. First operation, it always happens like that. The first thing was nobody panicked, the second thing was to ask the navigator and wireless operator if they were containing the fire, they were but it could have been nasty actually.



Tirpitz on fire after the attack on 29th October 1944

I didn't feel any fear then, not then, the fear comes later or beforehand. Sometimes you're sitting out, you're briefed for a trip, taken out to the aircraft at maybe ten or eleven o'clock at night in the winter and we sat on the frozen wet grass or frozen concrete waiting for a red or a green Very light.

The green Very meant get in the aircraft and get ready, the red Very meant the transport was on the way to take you back for something to eat. So, after sitting for 20 minutes with a wet arse you longed for a red Very, but it didn't come very often, you usually got the green.

Once everything got in motion, then the collywobbles vanished. By the time I was strapped into the cockpit there was too much to do, particularly as the Captain. Checks and drills to do and if you've got any sense you don't sidestep them or shorten them, you do the drills properly and you get the right answers and you know your crew are with you. You're always on oxygen before take-off.

Logbook entry for 29th October 1944, the Tirpitz raid to Tromsø, Norway

I came across fear once on the Squadron, the chap had done about nine ops and I don't know why he picked me to tell but he said "you know I've done nine ops and I just feel I'm going to be shot down" I said don't speak like that, you've no idea and your crew would be horrified if they heard you, the best thing you can do is think carefully and then go and see the boss, because of course you might be killing other people as well as yourself, you've got another six lives on board with you and they rely on you. I don't know what happened to him, but I think he went to the boss.

We had all this responsibility in our very early twenties, but it didn't stop us being young men when we finished flying but we were always fit for flying duties, nobody ever broke that unwritten golden rule. Whatever you did you presented yourself fit. There is a notion that all we did was drink, we did drink, but we weren't drunk all the time. The very best hangover cure in the world is to go to an aircraft, turn the oxygen on, plug in, put the mask on, take a few deep breaths of oxygen and your head will clear.

The Tirpitz was our fourth operation. The raid called for a lot of preparation for us and the aircraft.

It had been modified, with extra fuel tanks put in and the flight engineers had to know the system without any possibility of making a mistake. Inside the aircraft we had a Wellington and a Mosquito fuel tank. They had to know exactly how to cross feed everything, I think they had about 20 minutes to learn it, and they were fantastic, nobody made a mistake. Because we were flying with a fuselage full of fuel, there was this awful smell of petrol, so the ground crew went in to service the aircraft just before take-off they had to wear plimsolls. We didn't because we were flying into the Arctic for about 13 1/2 hours, you want to be warm.

We had a general briefing for everybody. Then after the general briefing the navigators had their own briefing and the bomb aimers had their own briefing, but nobody knew how the Lancaster would react with all this extra fuel on it.

The first one of us to see the Tirpitz was the bomb aimer, he was lying flat, looking ahead, we were about 20,000 feet up. He picked it up and right away and he would start to get all the switches in the right place. We had a system, an initial point and about a ten minute run in after that. We had to fly within 50 feet of the height,



A 22,000 pound 'Grand Slam' is manoeuvred onto a trolley by crane in the bomb dump at Woodhall Spa

within five miles an hour on the airspeed indicator and one degree accuracy. Now we had a bit of help because we had a bombing direction indicator, it was like our oil gauge turned sideways with a needle giving five degrees either side but it made one degree look big enough for you to make the alterations, which sounds impossible with a heavily laden four engine craft, but you did. The navigator assessed the wind speed, the height and the pressure height and he settled that with the bomb aimer and then I was locked into it. It took great skill, but you were selected to do this as a matter of course.

The bombs we carried were just about always the 10,000 pound Tall Boy and later in the war the 20,000 pound Grand Slam. They were designed by Barnes Wallis who designed the bouncing bombs used on the dams raid itself and he certainly knew what he was doing. They were aerodynamically designed so they should fall where you expect them to. For the dropping of the bomb itself, we had pretty small amounts to play with especially if we were being fired at. I used to think it's no use trying to dodge it because they may fire where you dodge to, we had to just stick to what we were told to do, that's why we were on 617 squadron and it seemed to work mostly.

Before we went off on the Tirpitz raid, our forward base was Lossiemouth, everything was pitch black, no lights were on. I was on the way to briefing and I walked round the hangar corner and almost knocked over a young WAAF, of course I helped her up and I realised what a pretty girl she was, I said I'm terribly sorry blah blah blah and she smiled. I said I'm afraid I won't be here for a few hours but when I come back could you meet me? She said yes, so I made a date with her for the next day and I thought what a bit of luck. When I got back, I told Tony, the bomb aimer, who was my great friend, he said you lucky bastard.

After landing we were debriefed. Before we did anything we all had to see the intelligence officer, there were steaming cups of tea waiting for us and a sandwich and then, and this doesn't vary, whatever country you're in, whatever time of day or night it is, the RAF flying breakfast of eggs & bacon and bread & butter. I knew I had this WAAF to meet and I'd arranged to meet her after I'd had a good long sleep and a shower. So, I said to Tony, whatever you do, if you wake up before me I've got to meet this girl, if you wake first, wake me up. I went to sleep contented.

I woke up 10 or 12 hours later and Tony wasn't there, and I thought Christ, what time is it? It was passed the date hour. I quickly got showered and dressed and went to meet her, but of course she wasn't there. When I caught up with Tony, I said why didn't you wake me? He said well, you were sleeping so peacefully I thought I'd keep the date for you. I think if I'd had a revolver, I'd have shot him. He'd kept the date for me and said it was very much worth keeping! We stayed great friends and you know; I'd have probably done the same to him.

I think I only dropped the Grand Slam once, the boss dropped three of them, of course there were only 43 made but I dropped mine on the Arnsberg viaduct. With the Tall Boy the plane didn't react but when I dropped the Grand Slam I felt the plane go up a hundred and fifty feet and I also heard the noise of the huge chains that fastened it, my flight engineer said there was a hell of bang, I didn't notice that so much but certainly the way the aircraft behaved, we shot up.

We had an idea that the Germans had something called the Raketen, it was fueled by Hydrogen Peroxide and highly dangerous, the fuel ran out within a few minutes and they couldn't stray far from the airfield because they had to glide back. I've seen one in the air and I'm glad to say it didn't attack me, it might have blown up and blown me up as well. They were a strange looking thing, and they killed a lot of first-class German pilots because they were very shaky on take-off. Hitler finally ordered Hanna Reitsch who was his personal pilot to go and teach his top pilots how to fly them. They were a bit niggly about this woman pilot teaching them, but she could fly it without any problem.

On one of the trips I saw one and it went like shit off a blanket, thank heavens they couldn't go far from their airfields because they would have caused havoc. Another time we were returning from a daylight on Germany and suddenly a lot of Messerschmitt 262's appeared. They were the latest twin jet German fighter, I really thought



A 22,000-lb MC deep-penetration bomb (Bomber Command executive codeword 'Grand Slam') released from Avro Lancaster B Mark I (Special), PB669 'YZ-C' of No. 617 Squadron RAF explodes on its target, the railway viaduct at Arnsberg, Germany



Avro Lancaster in flight 1941 by Charles E Brown

this was it. They each picked up an aircraft, I don't know what happened to my bloke, but he missed me, of course he missed me because we're still here, but they didn't do half the damage I think they should have done. I think because they weren't fully trained yet and hadn't got the right mixture for sighting and all the rest of it, they were completely new. Flying a jet is much easier by the way than flying a piston engine. I didn't see him first of all, the one that broke off to me, my flight engineer who never said one word if half a word would do, he sat by me and prodded me in the ribs, I looked down at his panel, I thought something was going wrong with the instruments. Then he jabbed me even harder in the ribs and I looked up and saw in horror one of these 262's on the starboard wing.

We had something called a flying group corkscrew we were supposed to do in the air to throw off the enemy, but I thought I might hit somebody else going down and that would kill two crews not one. On the other hand, can I outfly the latest German fighter in maneuverability or anything else. I was turning this over in my

mind and he was still sitting there, and I thought why hasn't he broken off and shot us down and it occurred to me that he'd run out of ammunition, he never shot at us. I might add that we never waved to each other as one hears that people do, we were just bloody glad to see the end of him. There was a moment when we were staring at each other, I thought he was more intent on killing me than waving to me.

Nobody wanted to leave 617 squadron, despite it being pretty demanding we all very proud to be on 617. We had to fly huge distances. Normally it would be hard to concentrate but not for me when I was flying. It took me thirteen and a quarter hours to do the Tirpitz trip, I didn't relax for one second, I didn't eat a pip, didn't need a pee or anything else. Talking of one's personal needs, in the aircraft we had something called an Elsan, it was sterilised and fumigated every trip but it was really a sort of brown bucket with a seat on that the whole crew could use, but I couldn't because I couldn't get out of my seat. What I did have was commonly known to everybody as a pee tube. Between the pilot's legs there

was a funnel, a big one so you didn't miss, you pulled it up and it wasn't easy, so you really needed to use it. It was a bit of a job fumbling around finding it in the first place. It was vented to air so as we were flying, we sprayed it, mostly all over Germany as a present!

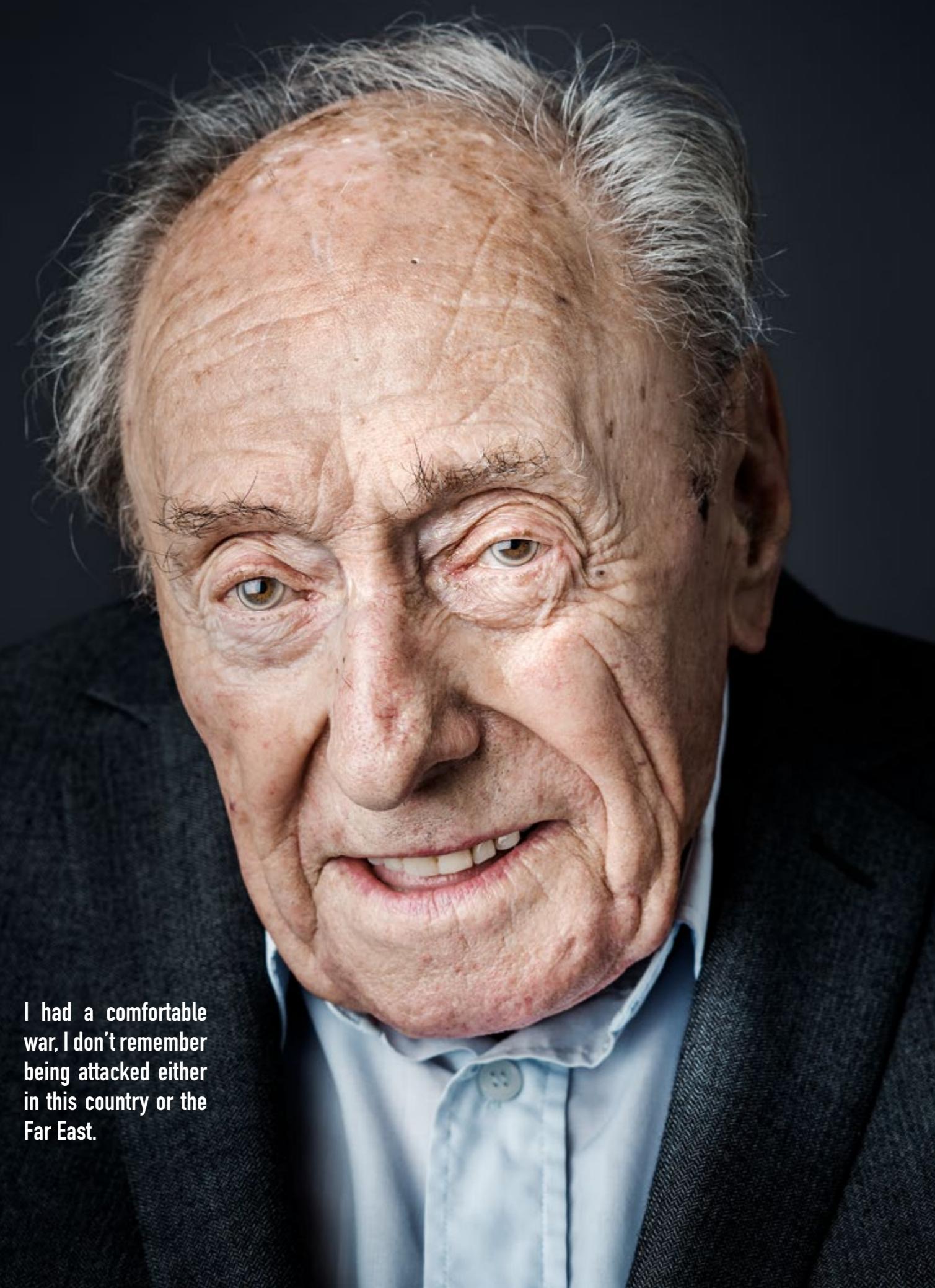
I did 30 trips with the squadron. The last sortie we did was Berchtesgaden, the Eagle's Nest. We didn't actually attack Berchtesgaden itself we bombed the SS barracks. Berchtesgaden was still standing when we left, I don't know if it ever got hit, but we wiped out the SS barracks and all those who were in it or standing outside it, a regiment of SS men, Hitler's bodyguard. There was symbolism in this. On my dog tag I carried my religion, Jewish, but I cared about all the people who were in concentration camps, who were being vilely treated. I wasn't being parochial; I didn't think it was just Jews who were suffering. I knew they were and they had before the war, but Hitler was a vile man, there's no doubt about it and the system he encouraged and built up could only come from somebody evil. He had some awful people in charge of the Gestapo, they were trained to be killers really. There was only satisfaction when we struck a military target, we never went for civilian targets. We never did. But sometimes a factory that needed bombing, particularly in France the factories were built close by the towns, nobody had a car, so if you bombed one of those factories you must have killed some people. The big German factories, the oil refineries like Stettin, I had absolutely no regret in doing, perhaps for every German I killed I saved the life of an Englishman, who knows? It never occurred to me that I could separate myself from being British, I was doing what I could but not just only for the Jews, for Europe and for the world as it turned out.

I think the people who have a negative view of Bomber Command, the people who criticise it weren't born during the second world war or weren't old enough to understand. The Germans did the most terrible things not just to us but to the whole of Europe, so it wasn't really retaliation so much as having to stop them doing it. We had to stop them, Hitler had conquered Europe

and made peace with Russia so there was nothing to stop him doing exactly as he wanted in Europe, except the British.

After Dunkirk, the Royal Navy was always on patrol, they were always there and fighting and they had the Fleet Air Arm which also operated, but we were the only arm of the service in the whole of Europe that could show that we could attack Germany. The RAF put an aircraft in the air, nearly every night during the 2 or 3 years in the build up to D-Day. I was proud to be a member of Bomber Command and I'll go further than that and say I was very proud to be a member of the Royal Air Force and I still am proud of it; I don't think we did anything that wasn't called for. If you've ever seen as I did, Cologne, the only thing left standing which was incredible was the cathedral and other German cities were like that, but they started it, London, Coventry, Newcastle, Birmingham, Manchester, they all went through it. I don't think we could just sit back and say it's too bad we can't do anything.

After the war I did a lot of flying in the Spitfire in 604 Squadron, Royal Auxiliary Air Force. It was wonderful. Flying a Spitfire, you felt you were flying yourself, just remarkably responsive and never let you down, it was beautiful. Flying the Spitfire and the Lancaster I flew the two great aircraft of the war and more than that I did a tour on Canberra's, the twin jet and that can more or less slot in with the Spitfire and the Lancaster. That's being unfair because the Hurricane, I think there were more Hurricane's than Spitfire's in the Battle of Britain and the Hurricane certainly took the brunt of the fighting. So, it's unfair, but the Spitfire, the PR boys during the war got whatever it was that was given to them as an encouragement and grabbed it with both hands and suddenly the Spitfire was "the" aircraft and the Hurricane boys got not a mention. It's a pity but then I suppose the Halifax and the Sterling suffered in the same way because nobody talks about anything except the Lancaster. I'm delighted that in fact I've flown the Sterling and the Halifax, but still the Lancaster's my favourite.



I had a comfortable war, I don't remember being attacked either in this country or the Far East.

# Warrant Officer Milton Brazil

Milton, age 93, was interviewed at his home in Glasgow on 25th August 2015

I'm Milton Brazil, born in Glasgow in 1922 the second son of Ben Brazil and Esther Joseph; my father was born in Glasgow in 1895, my mother was born in Leeds, we would go down and see my grandparents there. I have a younger brother who is two years younger than me and lives in America, there was a sister three years younger than my brother who lived in America and she died seven or eight years ago.

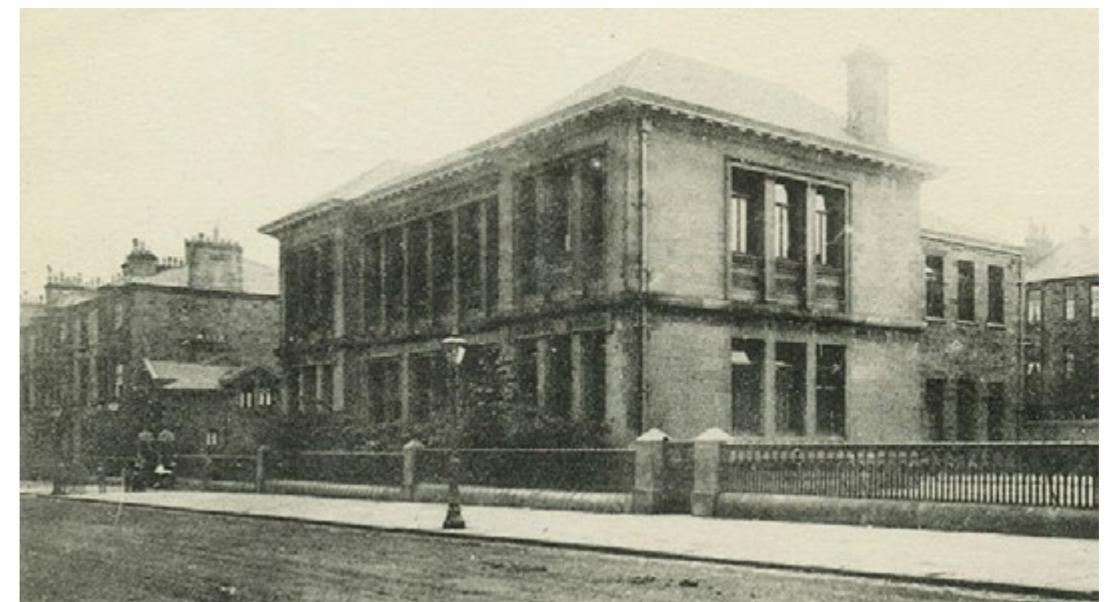
Other than my service in RAF from '42 to '46 I've lived in Glasgow all my life. I went to school in Glasgow, Albert Road Academy, which was in Pollokshields, I left there in 1940. I knew that I would eventually go into one of the services.

We were provision importers mainly eggs, probably the biggest importer from Poland, pre-war. We had fifty odd shops throughout Scotland at one time, selling only eggs, after the war there were ten left, although we did carry on

for another 10 years until my father passed away in '55, but it wasn't a business which could be sustained.

Before I was called up we were given a date in the future when our age group would have to register and I knew that if I waited then I would have no choice and would be put in to whatever the requirements were at that time so I volunteered. I was able to pick. I asked to be selected for aircrew. I do not recall any instance of any member of an aircrew not volunteering. Some may have been encouraged. We were all volunteers.

I volunteered in '41. I was called up for service in August '42 to report to the Lords Cricket Ground, which was the arrival place for all possible aircrew. We were stationed in London in St. Johns Wood for six or seven weeks and got basic training there, moved to Brighton, then up to Yorkshire to I.T.W. Initial Training Wing. That was a three month course and from there over to Harrogate awaiting



Albert Road Academy, Pollokshields, Glasgow



Handley Page Halifax MkII

disposal either to South Africa or Canada. They didn't do much training in this country, any training they did do would be fighter aircraft not bombers.

There was something to do with my eyes, which did not permit me to take a pilots course, naturally it was everybody's desire to be a pilot but nothing I could do about it. When I joined up I was just an Aircraftsman and finished my training as a Sergeant, Flight Sergeant, then Warrant Officer. I finished my service as a Warrant Officer.

Went out in '43 to Canada, sailed over on a big liner on its own, I think it was the Aquitania, no escort, into New York, from there train up to Moncton in New Brunswick which was the dispersal unit for the RAF.

After a few weeks I was sent down to Picton in Ontario to do my bombing course. Then I went out to Portage le Prairie the other side of Winnipeg and I was trained as a Navigator/Bomb Aimer. After that was finished, we sailed back on the Andes with the Canadian forces that were assembling in this country.

I crewed up in 1944 when I came back from Canada, the

pilot was the one forming the crew, somehow we were friendly and we got together as a crew, there was already a navigator, as I had done the dual course I elected to be the bomb aimer, it was probably the best crew man there was because apart from being bomb aimer I was a navigator, I assisted the pilot on take off and landing, I was trained as in gunnery and wireless so the crew wanted me because I was mobile in that sense.

I was sent to Dorset, to Tarrant Rushton. I was flying in Halifax's, right through. It was bomber training we had but for whatever reason my crew was to join 298 Squadron in Tarrant Rushton, which was not a bomber squadron, they were a glider-towing troop and supply squadron. In July '45 after the war had finished in Europe we were sent out to India. I saw some action, limited in this country, more in the month that I was in India, we did more runs out there, dropping supplies into the troops on the ground, we were more a support group than an attacking group.

Really I had a comfortable war I don't remember ever being attacked either in this country or the Far East. We did runs into Burma and China but never recall being in contact with enemy forces other than on the ground.

D-Day I was away from the squadron I was up in Yorkshire on a course and the funny thing was I was away from the squadron again on VJ day. In the middle of August '45 I was in Burma. I was in some airfield in Pegu which if I remember rightly was just north of Rangoon, we had taken some supplies in there and we going to bring some POW's back out when we heard the war over.

After VJ day our crew was sent to Ceylon to pick up nurses there and bring them all the way up to India and all the way down Burma to Singapore. We arrived in Singapore about eight days after VJ day. The runway was damaged, and we were stranded in Singapore for some seven or eight days and I remember that was a high point. To be in a country that had just been liberated. There were still Japanese around, they weren't free, they were in camps, we did have contact with them.



Liberated POW's abandoned by the Japanese at Pegu

Eventually we came back to our base, which was in the central provinces in Raipur in India; I was there for some time, then sent to Delhi to a crew flying Halifax's. This was the beginning of what became Air India. Flights were set up, we started a run from Delhi over to Karachi, down the coast to Bombay, Ceylon in the west and up the east coast, Madras, Calcutta and back into Delhi. I was there for a couple of months and then went back

to 298 squadron. They were thinking of doing something with 298 in Indochina because there was trouble there at that time. We didn't go, the squadron was transferred to Baroda up on the west coast in the far north, this was about July '46.

I knew I was due to move down to Bombay for possible transportation home. My father had taken ill and I made an application and in August 1946 I was flown home to Heathrow which was just a landing strip in those days. That was my final contact with the Air Force.

When I returned home the people my age I went to school with, they'd all grown up and had either gone into business or university. I can't remember who my friends were when I first came home but they did change, it was a different life to what I had before. My family didn't understand my experience in the war. I don't think anybody who has not done service would know what it was all about, particularly flying.

Again talking to army people, they wouldn't understand, their life was different to mine. We had a bed to sleep in every night, we flew from whatever base we were at and we came back and if it wasn't our own base, we had a bed so it was a different life.

I met my first wife in 1950; I think we were married in '51 that didn't survive. Maybe 10 or 11 years and that's it and we went our own way. I met up with Pat some years after that and we settled here, my two boys grew up, and went their own way, my younger son was killed in a car accident, he was a vet.

My elder son went into social service, went to university got a degree in economics and moved south. He lives in Kent; he will not come back to Glasgow. I've spoken to him and I think he knows my background, he probably knows me better than I know myself and that's the extent of it, I'm in touch with him regularly. I'm in touch with my brother in America; I speak to him every week. Those wartime days are not of any further interest to me.



I'd survived which was the main thing. Not through any cleverness on my part, just the way things turned out. I'll see my days out here and he is happy there.

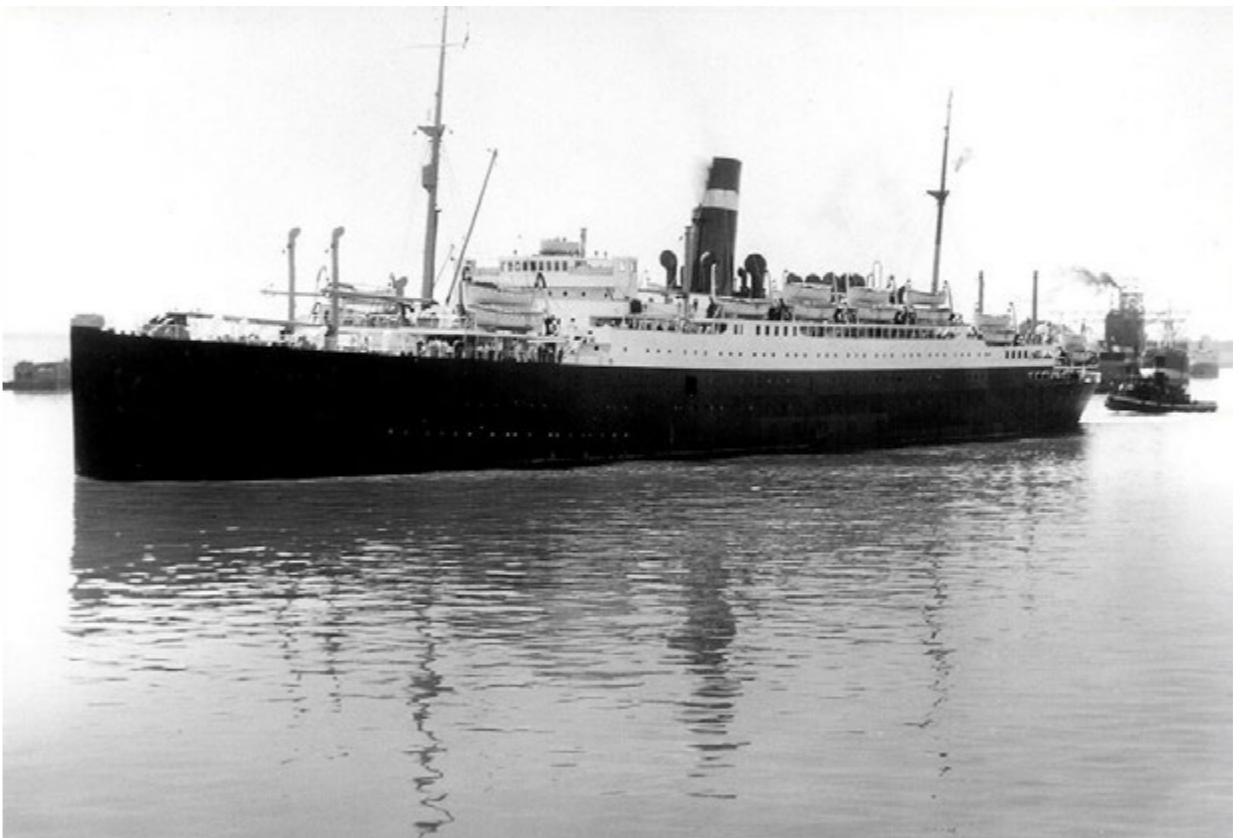
Funnily enough I was in Canada just before the outbreak of war and we sailed back into Glasgow the week before war broke out on August 29th. The following Sunday 3rd September war broke out and what was the first boat to be sunk? The Athenia. That was the boat we came back on. These were experiences; these were things you can recall if you think hard enough.

I'm not sure we were prepared for war; I was too young to start with. In 1939 I was 17, I was still at school. We knew there was bluster, nobody thought, or if they did, we didn't think in those terms and until '39. War didn't mean anything other than the fact that Germany was not a place for Jewish people to be in and that was the extent of it. In the service the only occasion I came across other Jewish people was when somehow or other I got to hear about a meeting in a Shul (Synagogue) in York and

I remember going there once. I can't remember if they were Air Force or not. I never encountered antisemitism and that made life a lot easier, the fact that there was no problem

Now I'm not political but I do not understand or like the way that this country is being run today. I'm not interested in other countries. I fought for this country. I'm a British subject, and what they've done here is something I do not understand and today, I wouldn't vote, and I've got no respect for David Cameron our current Prime Minister, although I can openly say I voted for the Conservatives all my life. Don't know why, maybe it's my background, I was brought up in very comfortable circumstance and probably that had a lot to do with it.

I saw the world, but I lead quiet life here. I go out one night a week to play bridge. I've lived a full life, probably much more I would like to have done, for whatever the reason I didn't, I'm still surviving one way or another.



SS Athenia in Montreal Harbour

# Sergeant Joyce Cesarani

Age 93, Joyce was interviewed at her home in Barnet, North London on Wednesday 15th July 2015

My name is Lena Joyce Cesarani and I was born on the 27th September 1923. I grew up in St. Gabriel's Road Cricklewood, went to Brondesbury & Kilburn High School from the age of seven until 16.

After school the war had just broken out and I had a part time job in a neighbors' office to try and teach me some sort of office work. In 1941 I volunteered for the Air Force, very stupid reason really. It was because I'd seen a girl dressed in the WAAF uniform and I thought, that's what I want to do.

Everybody at my age went in with the lowest possible rank, which was ACW. From there you could progress to LACW which was Leading Aircraft Woman. There were only two choices available at that time one was a driver, and one was a cook and I didn't really want to be a cook at 18 years of age so I said I would like to be a driver. They asked me if I could ride a bicycle and I said yes. It wasn't actually true, I had tried to ride a bike but not very successfully, but they said ok, if you can ride a bike you can be a driver. I had no idea how to drive, in those days, girls of 17/18 the last thing they thought about was learning to drive. Not a lot of families had cars in those days.

You were sent first to a reception depot which was near Morecambe, Lancashire. We were put into houses that had been taken over for the purpose and we were given instruction on when to salute, how to salute, how to march, where to go and every possible aspect of what was communal living amongst girls that you'd never met before, you learned to adapt.

I didn't enjoy keep fit on the sea front because at that time, and, this is true, they hadn't issued us with any equipment

i.e. shorts and shirts and we expected to parade on the sea front to do keep fit in our bras and knickers. I refused and got taken in front of the officers and confined to barracks for a week as a punishment.

Once you finished basic training you were sent off. I don't know how the selection was made; I was sent to a place in Wiltshire called Zeals for three months. Night and day instruction on every aspect of driving, every sort of vehicle, maintenance. You came out expected to be able to change a tyre on a 5-ton lorry if it were necessary, but I never had to do that, which was a relief. You had to become a competent driver and you were allocated to either drive a salvage lorry or a staff car or whatever. I got the camp ambulance that was in fact a glorified Jeep at that stage, I was at Zeals for a year and a half.

I was allocated to 54 Squadron MU, a maintenance unit so it was a gentle way of being introduced into the life that you were going to lead. It was ordinary everyday stuff really. You might drive a staff car one week; you might drive an articulated lorry another or there might have been, as was the case, a young girl had been found to be very pregnant on the camp, she was a little tubby girl, she said she had no idea she was pregnant, but it was so imminent that being at that time the ambulance driver I had to take her home. I was given strict instructions not to let her have the child in the ambulance. So, they were the sorts of everyday things that we did.

After that time, I was then sent to Portreath, a very large station on the Cornish coast, near Redruth, and there were a lot of Americans stationed nearby. By then I'd progressed to a much larger vehicle; a 5-ton with four stretchers.

They asked me if I could ride a bicycle and I said yes. It wasn't actually true, but they said ok, if you can ride a bike you can be a driver.





Portreath airfield looking north from the air 1942

In between ambulance driving there were occasions when maybe there was a staff car to be driven somewhere or aircrew that needed to be taken somewhere, whatever it was you learned to do.

was the great-great-great-granddaughter of Hogarth the painter. Friendships stay in your memory, when the war was over you lose contact but the memory stays and it's lovely to have that.

I must have been 20 years old, the first time I fell in love. He was a bomber pilot who had come to the station for rest and recuperation after he had been shot down over Germany and had got back. He belonged to this club, the Caterpillar club, which was a club for aircrew who had bailed out over enemy territory and had got back to this country overland.

The first thing he ever gave me was his little, tiny gold caterpillar broach, which they all wore. That was a big thing in my life to fall in love, brought to a very abrupt end by my parents because he wasn't a Jewish boy, but it's like everything, you get over it, because you have to.

The friendships that you made, you know, you came into contact with every sort of person, some of them you'd think you'd never make friendships with but you did. Some of the friendships were automatic, one of the girls that I got really friendly with was a Joyce Hogarth who

I was working at the station with Dr Earnest Anthony Cohen on the crash ambulance. He had to fly to the RAF station in Gibraltar because one of the men had some progressive illness and needed bananas to eat all the time and they didn't have any there. Dr Cohen said he would fly out with bananas and he asked if I wanted to come with, so I said yes please, and we went. We flew in a Dakota hospital plane; it seemed to take a long time. We couldn't fly over the continent of Europe because of the possibility of being shot down so we flew out over the Atlantic, the long way round. We had to stay on the station when we got there, I did see the monkeys! But I've never been back.

Sarah Churchill who was a WAAF officer had gone out to North Africa with her father to cheer the troops up, they didn't fly back in the same aircraft, but they came to our station. I don't know who took Churchill, but I was told to take Sarah. I was given the staff car, which was

our poshest car, and it happened to be a Hillman Minx, today that would be laughable but that was our staff car. Take her back to Air Ministry, you have to drive through the night, I was told, and you're not allowed to use your headlights. There were no road signs; they'd been taken down because of possible parachutists. I remember she sat in the back of the car and never spoke a word all night. We ended up at the Air Ministry in London in the early hours of the morning and I thought what do I do now? It was about 3 o'clock in the morning. So, I went home, I saw my mother, I had a bath, had breakfast and then drove back to Portreath in Cornwall, it's a long way. It was one of the things you did, so you didn't think about what it was or why you were doing it, you were told to do something, so you did it. That was one of the things that being in the forces taught me. If somebody gives me an order, they expect immediate response or action and that's what you did, you didn't question and that's sort of stayed with me over all the years. Very good discipline.

Seeing a plane blow up when it landed was a pretty low point for me. A lot of the boys you got to know, and I'd never seen anything like that or envisaged it or possibly

imagined it. You see a plane land and you think oh good, thank goodness and then it blows up, well that's terrible.

It was I think August 1946 when I was sent to Birmingham to be de-mobbed, I don't why it couldn't have been done here in London, but that's how they worked, you were sent to Birmingham in civilian clothes and handed in your uniform. You got a travel warrant to come home and you got paid the money that you had accrued for being in the forces. I had been in for four and half years and I got £ 90.00 from the Air Force. It felt like a lot of money, but everything is comparative, in those days. It was quite a bit of money because I remember I bought a silver cigarette case, which I had engraved for the man that I was getting engaged to. When I came out of the services and came home, I think my parents were keen for me to find a nice Jewish boy.

There was a dance being held at a local venue nearby, one chap asked, "Can I take you home?"

I said yes.



Over 10,000 gold and ruby Caterpillar Club pins were presented by the Irvin Company to WWII airmen whose lives were saved by their silk parachutes



If I'm 100% honest now, and I can't hurt anybody by telling this, I think I was actually in love with the idea of being in love, because that's what everybody did, and so eventually we got engaged and I gave him this cigarette case and he gave me a ring which thinking back, he'd got from my father who was in the business. I think it was a doomed relationship from early on, but it produced two wonderful children so that in itself was worthwhile.

When I came back home, I had to get a job. My family's neighbour was a lawyer, I went into his office, it wasn't satisfactory. I think that my time in the forces, having a bit of experience of being in command of something, being in charge of something. I felt I could be more, do more and that I was being held back, I really quite resented that I was just virtually a shorthand typist. I was being pushed into something I didn't really want to do.

We were fortunate in our family in that my father was running fairly successfully in his business and eventually set up a retail side. He was in wholesale watches, clocks and jewellery and wanted to set up a retail side, which he did. So, by 1950 he'd got control of a shop in Aldgate, which belonged to my grandfather and turned it into a retail business. I worked there with my brother for 30 odd years. I think we were privileged in a way; we were cushioned against what was going on in the world.

My parents were not politically minded so politics as such were never discussed and we were left really to fend for ourselves in that respect. Whether they were trying to protect us or didn't realise we needed to be shown both sides of a coin, I really don't know. They weren't that communicative to the children. Children were a separate entity in the household. Looking back on that I think how strange that we didn't have the confidence of the parents. I mean I can say and talk to my eldest son about anything and everything. I never had that with my parents but then that's what a generation does, the next generation teaches their children differently. I now see my son who's just become a grandfather how he treats his children and grandchildren.

It's so different, so much better. So maybe we have learned something along the way.

I must tell you if I may. I was in the Girl Guides for many years and the company I belonged to, because it was the local one and active was at St. George's Church in Kilburn. The uniform, which was the old uniform of the guides, which involved a navy-blue dress and a pale blue, tie and because it was St. George's, had the St George's cross on it in red ribbon. I remember going straight from there one day to see my grandparents and my grandmother took one look at this uniform and said "Take that tie off. You don't come into my house with a cross on your tie" I tried to tell her this is the cross of St George, but no way would she allow it. That's how it was, and you obeyed.

I don't think that's there's been that much improvement in the world today. If all those boys and some women gave their lives in all the various fields of activity, the world should be a much better place. So, I don't think we've really learned anything from it, which is so sad.

Is it down to greed or is it down to lack of knowledge or no thought? I don't know, but I just think the world is such a terribly sad place when it should be a happy place for everybody. Within your own little circle you can make a certain amount of joy and love and make sure your particular entity can be as good as it possibly can be.

The question I ask is, whatever I've done, has it helped the people who are nearest and dearest to make their lives better? I can only hope that that's yes.

So, if there's any legacy left behind it's that you've given them the will to do the best possible for their families. More than that I couldn't ask of them. They're all very supportive and affectionate. I get phone calls every day from my son and daughter-in-law and from the grandchildren.

I've very little to moan about apart from advancing years.



I need my hands to be busy, I'm a craftsman and that's the biggest problem now, all I'm left able to do now is paint.

# AC1 Morris Hope-Stone

**Morris, Age 91. Interviewed with his wife Betty at his home in Upton-upon-Severn on Friday 6th March 2015**

My Name is Morris Hope-Stone. At the moment I live in Upton-upon-Severn but I was born in Liverpool on 20 March 1923. The family name Hope-Stone comes from Hoppenstein when Poles were forced to have a surname by the Germans and in German Hoppen Stein is two words so the only way to keep them together in English was with a hyphen.

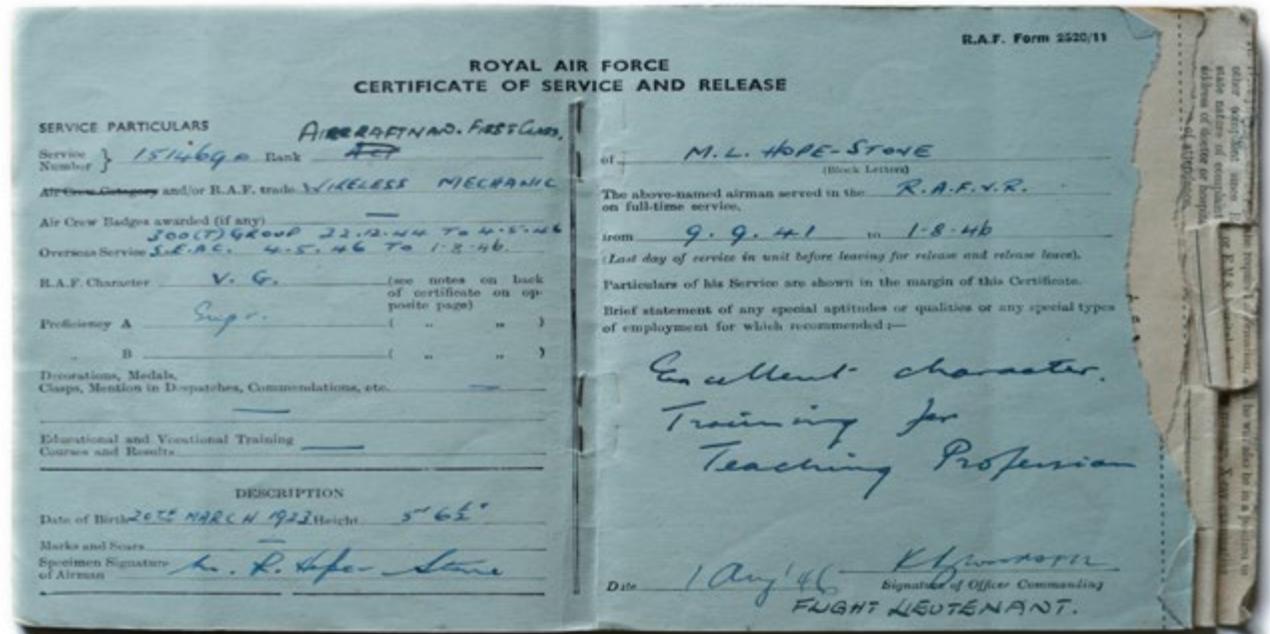
My father was born in Edinburgh and my mother was born in Liverpool. I grew up and went to school in Liverpool.

After school I became a clerk in the corporation. At the age of 18 I volunteered because I wanted to make sure I got into the RAF, because I volunteered, I had the choice of which service to go in to.

I didn't go with any rank and I didn't rise to anything, finished up purely as an LAC1 Leading Aircraftsman 1. That rank did not relate to anything to with my civilian life.

When I joined the RAF I was trained as a wireless mechanic in Glasgow, after that I had quite a lot of different moves, I can't remember them all now. The first place I can remember was Fraserburgh in Scotland near Aberdeen.

I didn't see any action at all, but one or two things come to mind, one is that going through the Panama Canal was extremely exciting at that time. Following from the Panama Canal the next experience was experiencing the Pacific being very pacific. I was off to Australia and the next thing that hit me of course was Sydney Harbour.



Morris's Air Force record noting his excellent character and training for teaching profession



Morris' view of Sydney Harbour Bridge as he overflew in a Douglas C-47 transport

I was three months in Algeria and towards the end of that time my mother was dying, I got special leave to get home before she died and unfortunately because of the way transport went I was a day late. It left me feeling very down, very upset... I didn't get to her bedside.

After the war I got demobbed quickly in 1946. At first, I returned to my job as a clerk and following that it had been recommended that I should go into teaching, so I had to wait to get to emergency training college which took place in 1948. I got to teacher training college and came out of college 1949.

The war was the defining point because everything changed, the whole of life changed. To start with I had to live in digs and went on living in digs until I met Betty in early 1952 and we got married in 1953. My mother and father were both dead, so I don't know if other cousins or anybody had thoughts about what I felt like, to a degree they were supportive.

I don't share my experiences with my children or grandchildren, not very often, no not very much at all. I don't think the generations after me think much about what went on. The world today does not rise to my expectations in any way

In this country there's far too much sex, it's celebrity driven, and politicians are far more interested in themselves and making their own way in life rather than running the country properly, religious intolerance is as rife as it ever was then. Though where I was concerned. I never felt any anti-Semitic feelings in the forces.

I can remember a man who was very rude to Betty, very, very rude. What did you want to marry a Jew for, wasn't an Englishman good enough for you? I'll never forget it, because you don't at all, a complete stranger she just happened to meet, had never met him before, I'm sure there's a lot of it I've just blacked out of my mind because I don't want to know and it's the best way of dealing with it.

I don't think I leave any influence on the world although I'm an artist, my daughter is a graphic designer, my granddaughter has an art degree, I can see I've left that. From the age of ten I was drawing and painting and really, I should have gone to an art school but my mother wanted me to go through school doing science because of the fact my father was a chemist and there were various doctors in the family, so I got the wrong education.

In actual fact and I don't know why, I didn't do any drawing whilst I travelled the world with the RAF. I Didn't do any drawing again until teacher training where my major subject was art. When I came out, I stuck my neck

out to become an art teacher in a secondary school, it was very foolish because I hated every moment of it, hated the kids, so I packed up teaching, took up pottery and started doing some locally. I went down to a pottery studio in Somerset in the belief that I could eventually start a pottery of my own. That failed simply because we got engaged and decided there was no money in it, there wasn't in those days as there is now. I've done a whole lot of craft work and decorative work in houses and fitted out a couple of boats, built kitchens. I need my hands to be busy, I'm a craftsman and that's the biggest problem now, all I'm left able to do now is paint, I've got one on the go upstairs at the moment.



Morris with family in the early 1940's



Morris in uniform 1941

I didn't really make friends in the RAF; I couldn't get on with the type of people I had to cope with. I suppose I was a bit of an intellectual snob in those days, I couldn't cope with the way in which the rest of my mates behaved. I'd rather sit and read a book than go out and drink with the boys, a different way of life.

Betty my wife isn't Jewish, and all my family treated Betty better than her own family, that's where I came up against something, it was her family who were bigoted, not openly but they dropped her.

Betty: I know I didn't please them, but Morris's family were not intolerant, I thought they treated me exceedingly well. It still even continues today, the whole of Morris's family is far more value to me than my own, perhaps one shouldn't say this but I'm old enough to be honest.

His family were really kind to me in every way and they accepted me as one of their own just like that. Even to the point of disturbing the entire rank of the front row of the ladies' gallery at a Bar Mitzvah. We turned up late and tried to creep in quietly at the back when all the heads turned round and shouted out "Oh Betty you've arrived, come down here we've got a seat saved for you" The service was momentarily stopped and the Rabbi's voice came up "When the gallery has finally settled down we will resume" What a marvellous family, they always made me feel one of them completely.

The younger generation don't appreciate that had there not been a war would none of them be living the life they do now, we would have been part of Germany, the whole of Europe would have been part of Germany. Heaven forbid.



Batty and Morris Hope Stone at home Upton-upon-Severn 2015

# Flight Engineer Harold Decent

Age 90, Harold was interviewed at his home in Barnet on 20th August 2015

My name is Harold Decent I was born in Hackney on 27th November 1924, nine months to the day after my parents were married. My father was born in the East End of London in 1890, two years after my grandfather came from Russia, they were forced out by the pogroms. My mother came from Romania, a place called Braila on the Black Sea, a port at the end of the Danube, it was quite a wealthy town actually and she came here when she was three years old.

My mother's parents, I don't know why they came because they were quite successful. Recently a niece of mine went over to Romania to trace our ancestry, she found the house in which my mother was born. It looked like a reasonably successful businessman's house, wide boulevard style road, so why they came here I do not know.

My maternal grandfather was quite a cultured man, he spoke four languages, read Marx, Engels, Dickens, so he was quite an educated man although I think that a lot of people in those days although they may have been artisans of different sorts, they were well read, no television, no radio, so books and reading were part of their culture.

In 1928 my father contracted TB and he spent time in a sanatorium, he was successfully treated although he lost one lung in the process and the doctors advised him not to live in London. As you know at the time it was called the smoke, the air was polluted so he said you should live outside of London.

My mother's sister was living in Purley, Surrey, so we moved. At first, we rented a house on the A23 Brighton Road for about two years. In 1931 my father bought a house, a brand new four bedroom house with large 150 foot garden,

a garage, and central heating on the ground floor all for the magnificent sum of £1,700.00 freehold. I went to a private school, a prep school from the age of 6 or 7 until I passed my entrance exam to Purley County Grammar and I stayed there until I was 16.

The Blitz was terrifying. I do remember in Purely in the first month of the war, before I went in the RAF. We lived near Croydon Aerodrome. It was the only aerodrome in the country that flew internationally and so we were attacked by the Germans. In October 1939 in the road where we lived, they dropped a bomb, just an isolated bomb, it destroyed a house. All the neighbours went to help, I must have been 15 then trying to schlep the people out from under the house, which must have been 200 yards from where we lived. I got a letter from Purley County Council thanking me for my efforts.

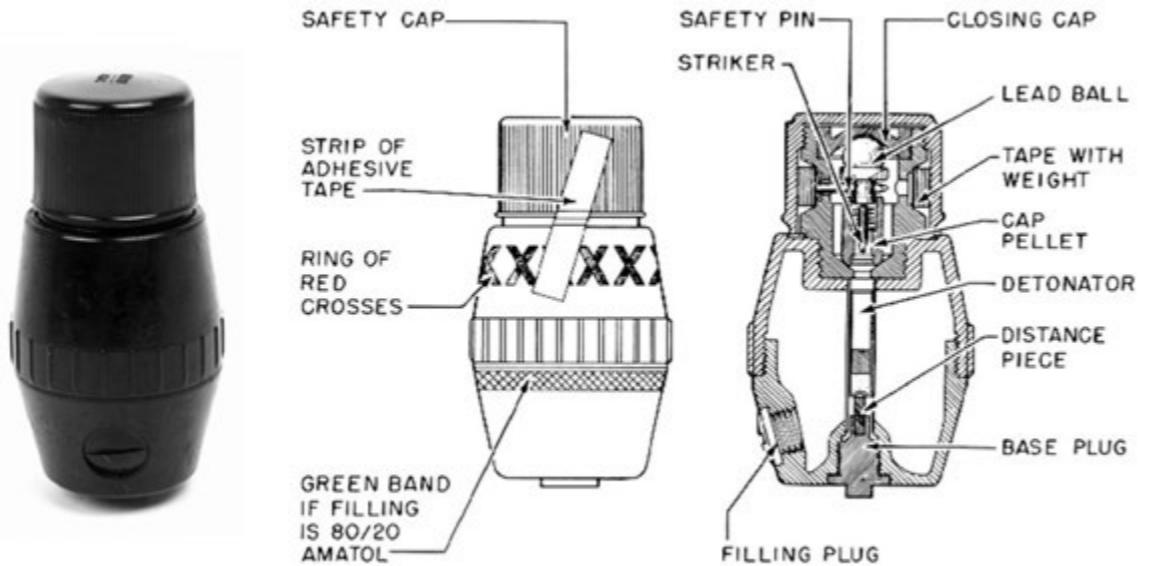
I had planned to go to university but unfortunately at the age of 16, that would be 1940, my father lost his business in Hoxton where he had a plant, a factory. Skin dressing, processing raw furs and animal skins into suitable material for making up garments. It was completely destroyed overnight, the whole thing went up in smoke, his living went. They had to sell the house, I had to leave school and go to work. So, they rented and lived in a factory in Edmonton because it was cheap. The factory has a sort of office area and they lived in this office area for about two or three years.

Once every couple of weeks he rented a van and a driver and he drove round the home counties to all the abattoirs buying up the sheepskins, because sheepskins were the only available furs you could get, there were no imports from places like Russia or Canada where furs usually came from.



I must have been a schmuck to volunteer, but when you're young you don't look at the risks, you look at the glamour and the RAF was the glamour.

There's no doubt about it



Bakelite bodied No 69 Hand Grenade

They set up a little workshop. My mother did all the manufacturing; and they turned the sheepskins into gloves, slippers, jerkins all sorts of garments and they sold them to the shops and they made a living. Not a fantastic living because it was wartime. My mother was the actual manufacturer, my father was a salesman.

At 16 I had the intention of going into chemistry. I wanted to go into research perhaps, at school my main good subjects were Maths and Applied Maths, English Literature, English Grammar, Physics, Chemistry and Latin which were all useful subjects for a scientific career. Unfortunately, this all came to nowt when my father's business disappeared so I got a job as a lab assistant at Euston, opposite the station, with the Wellcome Foundation. Now in this building they have a museum but on the top floor they had a research establishment into tropical diseases, and I worked for about a year in this for 25 shillings a week looking after the animals, guinea pigs and mice who were in small boxes and all infected with things like Yellow Fever and various other tropical diseases.

If any of the animals escaped, they had to be destroyed immediately because you didn't know what they had. So,

there was always a big bowl of Lysol disinfectant. You had to kill the mice by picking them up by the tail and banging their head on the edge of table. Then you had to put your hands into the Lysol straight away. By the way we were inoculated against all these diseases we were dealing with in these animals, all for 25 shillings a week. By the time I'd travelled from Purley to Euston, paid my fare money and had lunch there was not a lot left. I think I came home with five shillings a week or something. It was a tough time for my family. My brothers were evacuated, they were younger than me, they were sent to Northampton with a Jewish school, I don't know where from with ultra-frummers (orthodox Jews), they had to daven (pray) three times a day, it was forced down their throat and it put both of them off Yiddishkeit (Judaism) for years, all their lives.

The next job I had after that was in Birmingham, I got fed up with the mice, so I found a job with I.C.I. A big company with huge potential for working in the field of chemistry. This was a plant producing aluminium, it was testing the products as they came off stream. I was there nine months and my mother got a little bit alarmed because the Jewish community there were very welcoming, too welcoming and she thought I was going to be

hooked by these high pressured young Jewish girls. They were very nice, some of them.

So, I came back to London and got job in Walthamstow with De La Rue, not in the printing, but making hand grenades, lead casings in plastics. The cases were sent somewhere else where they were filled up with explosives. At the same time, they had trial plant where they were running something they called laminates; Formica. This was used experimentally in aircraft because it was light and very strong. They had a development setup and we were testing the products coming off it. They were going to move the whole plant to somewhere up in Scotland, far away from the bombing, setting up a complete factory to manufacture Formica. Those of us involved were invited to go there, I didn't fancy going to live up in Scotland.

I was 17, I thought no way, so I didn't go to Scotland, I volunteered as a V.R. a volunteer reservist, because in the Army and in the Air Force, certain functions were only served by volunteers like aircrew or paratroops. They wanted people with skills or potential skills, plus it was a very risky business because when I joined up in January 1943 the war was intensive. I heard that aircrew were being lost at a rate. 55,000 men, aircrew were lost in that period.

So, I must have been a schmuck (idiot) to volunteer, but I didn't want to go in as a nobody and when you're young you don't look at the risks, you look at the glamour, and the RAF was the glamour. There's no doubt about it because we didn't live the same sort of life as the Army, we had shirts, ties & collars. We slept with sheets and pillowcases; it wasn't rough.



Wartime aerial image of St. Athan No 4 School of Technical Training (SoTT)

Of course, it was highly technical, everybody was taught different trades, the RAF was full of technical people. I trained in aircrew, I volunteered for aircrew and we started our first six weeks in St. Johns Wood, all the blocks in Prince Albert Road were commandeered as billets for the RAF. The first six weeks were a testing time, physical and mental aptitude tests to see what you were best suited for. It was decided that I should be an engineer.

We were moved to a place out in Oxford, Kidlington, and we had to get in 30 hours of flying. We didn't have to fly but we had to be in an aircraft and none of us had ever been in an aircraft at all of any description. We had to go every day down to this airfield and they weren't big aircraft they were small trainers. We had a parachute, sat on the floor and then were flown by some meshuggeneh (mad) Canadians who had to make us airsick as quickly as possible. They were bastards, but the idea was to get you accommodated to flying, and flying in a military plane is quite different to flying in a civilian aircraft. Firstly, don't forget all the aircraft in those days were propeller driven, very noisy, smelly and it wasn't a pleasant experience. They did the loop the loop and tried to make you sick, sometimes you were sick. But this was part of your training, similar to what happened later in life where people deliberately try to wind you up.

We were there for a month and then we moved to RAF St. Athan near Cardiff. The main training place for technical people. There were all sorts of things to do with maintenance of aircraft, maintenance of radios and radar. The guys came from all over the world because we had the Free French Forces, Czechs, Polish all in their own uniforms who had managed to get out of Europe, but no Jews that I came across. I had a guy, a friend he was dark, came from Trinidad and we were doing the same course, became friends, he took me down to London once or twice on his motorbike.

Funnily enough I never experienced any antisemitism in the RAF at all, there might have been a snide remark

in the background, but that comes with their mothers' milk, they can't help it. I mean I never felt any antisemitism. I didn't come into contact with many other Jews, we were small in number. There were 100,000 Jews served the forces in this country from a community of 400,000 which was peanuts considering the RAF had two million men in their command, I think the army was five million. I didn't experience too much difficulty because I was one of the "Blue Eyed Boys" we were treated very well. The reason being they didn't expect us to live that long.

I spent 18 months training, the last 3 months in an OTU an Operational Training Unit where you fly every day. I trained on Lancaster's and being flight engineer on a four-engine aircraft, although you're not doing very much, you're there just in case, for example to close an engine down if it's on fire, the pilot can't do it from his cockpit, it has to be done by the engineer. If the pilot is incapacitated, if he's dead or shot and wounded, the only person that can fly that aircraft is the engineer, only in limited range, he can fly straight & level and he can land. The navigator does the navigating and bomb aiming; everyone has their particular role. So we were taught to fly straight & level and land, crash land in necessary and funny enough we did. One of the training sessions as we landed one of the tyres caught fire, we didn't know what it was but smoke was pouring out from underneath the aircraft so we landed and we discovered one of the tyres had burst and was burning and we had to get out quick in case it spread to the fuel tanks.

I didn't actually see any action, but we did do some trips over to Holland dropping food in late 1944, but that was only for about three or four months. When the invasion started in Normandy and towards the end of the year, we were dropping food to Holland because they were eating bulbs. The Germans had virtually destroyed their agriculture.

And then I heard a word I'd never heard before. I was made redundant. In other words, they didn't need us



3.156 Lancaster bombers from Bomber Command Groups 1, 3, and 8 took part in Operation Manna delivering 6,680 tons of food to starving Dutch in German occupied Holland. As the cargo did not have parachutes the drops were made from a height of 500 feet.

anymore. Because of the heavy losses they trained up more and more men and then in late '44 the bombing campaign in Germany was at its peak and was having its effect, the Russians were coming the other way, so they didn't need aircrew and we were made redundant.

We retained our rank and our pay, but we didn't retain our jobs, so we were given other tasks. I spent about eight months dismantling aircraft, there were a hell of a lot of aircraft that they'd accumulated. I'm not talking about bombers so much, smaller aircraft, training aircraft, fighters, which they didn't need, so we had to strip them down, take the engines out and store them. The airframes

were left on the airfield, tied down, and lashed down with tarpaulins and they were selling them off to these newly created countries that suddenly appeared on the scene in the late 1940's. That was for 6 months, see they didn't really need us. Then I was sent to RAF Gloucester which is the records office for the whole of the RAF. An absolute waste of time because as you know, in the civil service, you've only got to walk around with a clipboard, and nobody gives a bugger what you do. We were moved around a lot for no apparent reason, I remember we were posted up to Barrow-in-Furness but can't remember why we were up there. I can understand now looking back why they didn't want to discharge us straight away.

There were two million men in the RAF, to throw two million men on the employment market would be fatal so that's why we were kept on while they gradually reduced the numbers.

I got out as soon as I could, March '47 and I got engaged straight away. When I was 21 my parents had made a party for me at Cazenove Road in Stoke Newington. I got a weekend leave to come home, invited 30 people I knew, and some I didn't, friends of friends. David Samuelson was friend of mine, doing the same thing as me and he was posted to Germany. At my 21st birthday he came with his fiancé. Who was his fiancé? My dear future wife. We were destined for each other. It was love across a crowded room. I'd met the girl of my dreams.

When I asked her to marry me there was no hesitation, no give me a month to think about it. Yes, straight away and we got married in October. We had a song for each other from South Pacific, it's called some enchanted evening you may see a stranger, that's how we met.

She was in the RAF at the time and she lived quite near my parents in Stoke Newington. She got along very well with my mother and my mother got along very well with her, they were like two peas in a pod, they thought alike. She was closer to my mother than she was to her own mother who was a bit nebbish (timid), a good wife and mother but not much else you know, and certainly no culture which my mother had in spades. I don't suppose I'd had any Jewish girlfriends; they were all shicksas (not Jewish) and my mother was getting a bit worried you see. She met Edna and was very impressed with her.

I had a very good marriage; we had a few difficulties financially. Medically we had a few problems but otherwise it was the right decision. I suppose the war was the defining point in my life in a way because my future would have been different. See I wouldn't have met her if I'd gone in a different direction, if I'd gone to university and got a degree. You see when I was at school I'd matriculated, I'd started what was called the high school

certificate, which is equivalent to the first year or two of university, if I'd completed the high school certificate I'd only have needed 2 or 3 years at university to get a BSc.

Returning home after the war was a challenge because there was still rationing, not only in food and clothing, everything. My mother-in-law would hoard sugar, even when she bought it black market, she wouldn't use it. She had cupboards full of the bloody stuff. My father gave me a job in his shop for a few months, but it was just a token thing to help us get along. We lived with my parents for six weeks, her parents for six weeks. We had no money, the £ 100.00 I got when I left the RAF all went on clothes, I had no civilian clothes.

My children and grandchildren understand what we went through because it's not just me, it's their uncles, their other grandparents we all did the same thing. We used to make quite large Seders (Passover meals), 25 people. You know what it's like, men up one end, women up the other, the men talking about football or politics the women are talking about fashion. So, you grow up with this connection to the previous generation much quicker. Remember it's not like Christmas once a year. We had a table once a month either for family or friends, so the children grew up with these memories of what we did, the holidays, the food my wife made.

I'm not on a computer but I use the telephone. My grandson I speak to every couple of weeks, my granddaughter once a month. And I get phone calls, phone calls are part of my life. I spoke to a cousin of my wife Edna, who lives in in Groningen, Holland. She came from South Africa, they had escaped in the 70's, they're retired now, and she phones me every three or four weeks, this time it was for an hour we were chatting, we chat away.

I don't understand the world today. There's this complete obsession with the computer. People can't walk out in the street without something in their hand and I find young people aren't able to carry out a conversation on the telephone, they run out of steam very quickly they

can't bounce ideas of one another because I don't think they have enough life experience. They don't have the same skills we do to be self-sufficient.

When I came out of the RAF, the first ten years it was hard, we didn't have a life. I had to turn down invitations to weddings and Bar Mitzvahs because we just didn't have the money, we didn't have the clothes, we couldn't afford to send a present. Now I turn down luncheon invites because I just can't krikh (crawl) round to people. Four hours on a Shabbat (Saturday) for lunch and I'm exhausted.

When I look back on my life, we did things, we went on holiday, we had a month in California, then a month in Canada. We went to South Africa a couple of times, we had family out there, but we didn't stay with them the whole time. We went on cruises, we went to the theatre, to the opera. We had a reasonable income but now I see people in the supermarket wasting money, they pick up something and bung it on the trolley without even reading what it is or what price it is or its origin.

I find it sad in a way that people have lost their way, lost their values. My younger son is an operations manager at an engineering company. He occasionally has to interview youngsters and he finds it very difficult, they seem bright, but they don't have life skills. Years ago when kids left school at 16, by the time they were 25 they were men. I find today 50 year olds are still adolescents, that's my personal experience. It's a sad world because materially everybody is better off, well we are in the western world.

When I look back to my wartime experiences, I feel sorry for the youngsters because they can't get on the housing ladder, can they? It's like my cleaning lady. She's been here 10 years from Poland. Wonderful person, her husband is a plumber, he's got plenty of work and they've got two daughters. But they have to rent and what she tells me they pay for their house, it's unbelievable and they've got no hope of getting a mortgage. I bought my first house in 1960 with a £400.00 deposit.

I had a policy that my mother made me take out when I was 21, it cost me £ 20.00 a year. It doesn't sound much today but over the years it was worth something.

Look I suppose my legacy is my children and my grandchildren, I've got four great-grandchildren. I lost my eldest son 18 months ago, he died over in Australia. His two children my grandchildren, my grandson and granddaughter went out to Australia eight years ago to emigrate. Three years ago my son and daughter-in-law went to Australia to join them. Sadly, about two years ago he developed cancer in a kidney, they started to treat it but by then it was too late, it had spread and within nine months he was dead. It's very sad, I'm very happy my grandchildren are out there rather than here because they've got a far better quality of life. My grandson is 38 doing very well out there, got a nice home, works for the second largest supermarket chain in Australia in the finance department, he's an accountant.

In the last 40 years I've had to adjust a lot because every 10 years things would change. Someone once told me a useful thing, in life always expect the unexpected and you'll never be disappointed. I thought that was very good, because things do come and kick you up the back-side without you realising it. Somebody dies, you go broke, the boiler burst, things happen. What I do find strange is people must apportion blame, because something happened there must have been a cause and He upstairs is or is not responsible as the case may be. I'm very fortunate. I'm living here in my own place, I've got plenty of friends around, they're all very helpful.

Both my brothers are gone. I'm the oldest in my family, all my cousins are dead, why I'm still here I don't ask.

# AC1 Norman Davies

Age 89. Norman was interviewed at his home in Cheadle, Cheshire on 27th April 2016

I'm Norman Harvey Davies, place of birth Manchester July 24th, 1927.

I think both my parents were born in England, I don't know exactly where, could be Manchester and on my mother's side my grandparents came from Russia. On my fathers' side I've got no idea where they came from.

I grew up in Old Trafford, Manchester where I went to the local infant school. Trafford Park was the industrial area so that was targeted, that's where we lived and we were bombed out of our own house, so I went to live with my grandmother, she lived in North Manchester, Cheetham Hill. I don't know how long we were there but at that age you just go along with it, you had no control over it. They weren't good times really.

My father was a Special Constable at the time, a volunteer Policeman. he was killed near where we lived during the Manchester Blitz in 1940.

It was 22nd December 1940, there was a church near us and he went out in the incendiary bombs, to try and control them to some extent. A high explosive bomb fell, and he was killed, not directly, he was very badly wounded. They took him to Nell Lane hospital, and he died on Christmas Eve 1940.

It must be lucky that I survived, because when my father got killed, when the sirens started, we went into a shelter, a brick-built shelter with about 30 people. It was only a few yards from the church where father got killed and I'll never forget the boom. The whole thing shook it was a terrifying experience. Only by the grace of God that we survived, that's why I feel lucky even though I'm still married, don't tell her! No seriously I have been lucky, you need a bit of luck, so that's why I'm not complaining.

So, my mother was left with five of us and we had a small, little tailoring business, a shop and supplemented that with a Police pension. She got a full Police pension whatever it was, and we struggled on from there.

I went in as AC2 and when I left I was AC1, the next rank up. You couldn't go down any further so at least I went up!



Piccadilly Gardens ablaze 22nd December 1940, Reported to be the biggest fire in England since the Great Fire of London in 1666

I was 13 when he died, I had a brother and sister that were older, a twin sister and then I had a younger sister. My mother was one of eight and my father was one of nine so I had a lot of uncles to step in when my father was killed but in those days people weren't very well off financially so I can't recall anybody coming forward with financial support, we were just left to it.

I do recall one of my uncles who said, I haven't much money but if five pounds will help, you're welcome to it. At that age you didn't know the ins and outs of the finances but, put it this way, we didn't starve but it wasn't very good times. It wasn't very good times for anybody, things could only get better, which they did, slowly. Very slowly.

We had a shop on Stretford Road in Manchester, that was demolished and then we moved to Princess Road.

In those days there wasn't much of a business it was all men's clothing, made to measure stuff, but it was difficult because you couldn't get the material, only on quota from the government which was very limited at the time. Then when I was 15 she took me out of school, I was in Stretford Grammar School and they didn't want me to be taken out because it would disrupt my education, so

I went in to assist her, ostensibly. There wasn't much to assist and I didn't know anything about it, but that's what she decided, so basically I didn't get much further education, but that's what it was like in those days. That's what she decided, I had no control over it obviously.

My father was very patriotic so that's why he volunteered as a Special Policeman you see. He was in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers in the First War. Our original family name was Schniderman I think, but he changed it by deed poll to Davies. In those days you did it for business reasons. If you had your name Hyman Schniderman over the shop it was a bit counterproductive.

There wasn't much of Jewish community in that part of Manchester at the time and we belonged to a Shul (Synagogue) opposite the Manchester Royal Infirmary called the Oxford Road Hebrew Congregation and that's where we went, not too regularly. On the festivals we used to walk from the shop in Old Trafford where we

lived. My father was secretary of the Shul at one time. There were a few Jewish shopkeepers around the area but not too many. What a Shul, dirty old floorboards, very basic accommodation, it was sort of improvised, what an introduction to religion.

As a teenager I knew there was a war on, when the war started in 1939, I was 12 and as you get older you do begin to understand. I knew full well that if we lost war, and specifically as Jews we were doomed. I had that in my mind even from an early age and I knew why we were at war, of course not knowing all the exact details of it, I knew we were really fighting for our lives.

Even though I could see the end of the war coming, I could see we were winning I wasn't really prepared for going into the services, not really in any way. You didn't think about it you just knew that when your name came up you had to go and that was it, a bit of a bewildering time really. So that was what happened, I didn't choose the RAF they just put you into it and that was it. You got your papers, and you went in.

My older brother went in 1941 I think, and he was in India, he was in the RAF Regiment, an offshoot of the RAF charged with guarding airfields and that sort of thing, and then he was in Italy. He died a few years ago but he went right through the war.

I was 18 on July 24th. In August I was conscripted into the RAF as an AC2 (Aircraftsman second class) the lowest rank. I went to Padgate near Warrington to be inducted and then I went to RAF Cardington which was near Bedford and as I recall I did about eight weeks of training, square bashing they called it. Then from there I went to RAF Halton near Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire to become a medical orderly. I didn't like that, the idea of a medical orderly, so I re-mustered as a firefighter and trained as that. I went in as AC2 and when I left, I was AC1, the next rank up, you couldn't go down any further so at least I went up!



**This scroll commemorates  
Constable H. Davies  
Lancashire Special Constabulary  
held in honour as one who  
served King and Country in  
the world war of 1939-1945  
and gave his life to save  
mankind from tyranny. May  
his sacrifice help to bring  
the peace and freedom for  
which he died.**

Scroll commemorating the loss of Norman's father Hyman



Norman's father Hyman Davies outside his menswear shop on Stretford Road, Manchester

As a firefighter I was given specialist training. I went to an RAF station at Sutton-on-Hull for training and ended up at RAF Wyton which is a Bomber Command station not too far from Cambridge. We had Lancasters coming in and out so we had to be on duty, the fire section had to be on alert. So that was it, the war in Europe had just ended and I never left England.

When we first went in the RAF the wages were 21 shillings a week, you gave your mother 7 shillings a week to help out, so you were left with 14 shillings, about 70p in today's money. And then you went off to the pub with your 14 shillings, it wasn't my scene really, but you couldn't drink much on 14 shillings.

I still wasn't satisfied with what I was doing so when an opportunity came up to train as a PJI, Parachute Jump Instructor, I took it. The RAF used to train the Army to become Paratroops. The Paratroops used to have half a wing, like the air gunners, with a little parachute in it. So, I went to go on this course at RAF Upper Heyford. First of all, you had to be a PTI. Physical Training Instructor and then you had to go on to be a PJI. One of the first stages was you had to go up this ladder to jump from something about 40 feet high and land underneath. When I hit the ground I think I fell on my ear, I'd had an operation on my ear before I went into the RAF and I got such a bloody headache that I immediately came off the course and that was the end of the PJI course.

I never actually jumped out of an aeroplane. As a Jew, as a minority you always get tensions. You had to have your name and religion over your bed in the services, there were about 12 of us in a hut, it was 1945 to 1948 a time when there was a lot of tension in Palestine as it was called in those days before the State of Israel was declared and one fellow started going off about Jews, he started trying to fight with me. That's the only incident I can remember, it must have been 1947 which is a long time ago but I can still remember it because it wasn't pleasant as a Jewish person in the forces at that time when all the business was going on in Israel, it wasn't a good time really.



Para tower for PJI training



300 Gallon Crossley firefighting foam crash tender

National Service was two years but I had been conscripted in, so it was an indeterminate period, you didn't know how long, I think I was in for two years and nine months all together before they deemed I was ready for demob. I was demobbed near Blackpool at RAF Kirkham; I was 21 then. They gave you a demob suit, which I still wear for Shul every week, but they didn't prepare us for anything, they gave you a suit and that was it.

When I was demobbed, I went back home and back into the shop. When I started in the shop at 15 everything was rationed, it was just cloth, I looked around and there was nothing there in 1948. After the war when I went back nothing had changed.

The biggest challenge when I went back in the shop after the RAF was that I didn't know anything about it. I didn't have too much education it was all self-taught. I just got on with it, you can't think too much about it, you just say, well that's your situation, you don't over analyse it too much. Don't forget, years ago it wasn't like today, there was no proper communications, no television, gas lights in the streets, so we weren't vey au fait

with what was going on, you didn't know what was going on around the world or even in your own town.

I got no more education when I came out of the RAF, that was it, I stayed in the shop. My mother was in the shop and when she had enough and left, I stayed on. That was my career, that was what I did. I was a small shopkeeper and struggled on and on until the present day, but we survived anyway! I didn't retire until I was 76, I had to keep going because I had five children.

I don't really talk to my grandchildren about my experiences, I don't think it does any good because they can't really visualise what things were like. If they ask, I might do something sketchily but generally speaking I don't usually say much. It's out of their blooming era and understanding really so I don't talk, I don't say anything. They don't really know what I went through because I've never discussed it. It's difficult to imagine isn't it? You can't put yourself there. They're probably thinking oh poor grandpa and then they go onto what's on the next television programme and I probably don't want them to understand really.



Norman with his twin sister, his younger sister and his father Hyman

I doubt the current generation would be prepared for what we went through. Mind you I don't think we were prepared, things just happened. We didn't know anything different; it was just your life.

We had no option but to engage in the war at that time because they were hell bent on world dominations the Germans. Is war ever worth it? I don't know. The suffering on all sides, the slaughter, but we had no option it was do or die. I knew from the age of 13 with all the bombing that was going on, even in those days we would have the news, but the information was sketchy, but I always had in the back of my mind, especially, specifically as Jews that if we lost that was it as far as the Jewish people were concerned. So, it really was a battle for survival.

I survived and I'm still here so as I always thought to myself, things could only get better until I got married. Really it wasn't very easy for us, then when I got married it got even worse!

I didn't expect anything after the war because you didn't know what to expect, since the war ended, we've not had any battles on this actual island but worldwide I don't think things have changed much. People are still fighting aren't they and that's what people are like I suppose.

In 1955 I went to Israel and was on a kibbutz for about 15 months, I was Zionist, and I liked it in Israel. I was seriously thinking of staying there but things were very, very bad there economically and I'd have to leave my mother and family, so I decided against it. One of my daughters lives in Israel now.

I don't think I've made too much impact on the world. Well, I've got my family, I've got 5 children and 14 grandchildren and we're all good together, we're very happy from that point of view. Financially I've got enough to manage on so that's enough. I'm not greedy, as long as I've got enough, especially at my age, I'll be 90 next year. Well, you do leave a legacy of your family and friends who've got happy memories. You do your best don't you.

I was about 30 when I met my wife Paula. It was 1958 and one of my friends said there's a Jewish dance on in Southport, so I said alright I'll come with you, because actually where we lived wasn't a very Jewish area. I went to the dance and there she was. Her parents were from Poland, she's first generation, from Liverpool you see. So, we were married by Reverend Wolfson at Childwall Shul, I've never bloody well forgiven him for it, but we've had quite a good successful marriage. I'm lucky really, I met Paula. We moved to a house in Old Trafford, we were there for 10 years and there were a few Jewish people around, it was a matter of economics, being near the shop but in 1969 I thought there was a bit more Jewish life going on in Cheadle, we had a couple of kids, so we decided to make the move.

When you think about it, I had a very poor start, especially with my father getting killed, so I was very happy that things got better. I'm still here, mentally I'm all right, physically I've got prostate cancer and a growth on my lung, but I feel alright, I'm having tests and I've got to have radiotherapy in a couple of weeks, but I feel all right and I'm philosophical. None of us are going to stay here for ever. I'm booked into Christies (The Christie Cancer Centre) which I've read is one of the top ten hospitals for cancer in the world, that'll keep me going for at least another three weeks!

Any way I'm not so bad for all those complaints, so I'm very happy and positive. I know the treatment's not too pleasant, but I accept it. They're doing the best for me and I'm grateful for it. I said to the doctor, keep me going so the Queen can send me my telegram.

It's true I survived it all, so I'm very happy.

# Warrant Officer

## Bernard Carton

Bernard Aged 92 was interviewed at his home in London on 25th May 2016

I was born in the East End of London at 310 Brick Lane on the 23rd October 1923. You never forget the address where you were born. My parents were also born in the East End of London, my mother was a dressmaker, my father was a tailor, a tailors' presser in fact. My grandparents on my mother's side who I knew, had a delicatessen shop opposite Lansdowne Road in Tottenham.

Until I was twelve years old I went to Rochelle Street School in Shoreditch. Just before I was 13 we moved to near my mother's mother in Tottenham. I passed my scholarship and went to Tottenham Grammar School in White Hart Lane. I didn't go to university. My family were very poor so at 15 I had to go to work and earn a living, that's the reason I didn't have further education, but I joined the Air Training Corp. I knew that the war was imminent and that if I went into the services I would have liked to have gone into the RAF. I was told that if I joined the ATC then the opportunity to join the Air Force was much greater.

When I went to work it was first of all engineering, which I didn't like very much, then when I was 16 years old, I got a job in a shoe shop on West Green Road. Now at that time the war had just started, this was in 1939. After a couple of years all the managers of the shoe shops got called up. The person I worked for had four branches and he promoted me to manager of one of these shops in Lordship Lane. I was manager of that shop until I was called up in 1942; the 21st September 1942.

I didn't volunteer, I was called up to the RAF because of my background with the ATC. I went in as an AC2, progressed to an AC1 and then took my flying training. First of all I did my engineering, I wanted to learn about how engines worked so I was sent on a course at Rootes Engineering.

You don't start off by flying straight away, I was ground crew, looking after engines. You had to volunteer to be aircrew, it wasn't automatic, and you weren't told you had to become air crew, it was up to people what you wanted to do. I wanted to, so I volunteered and took a course on flying. As soon as you pass the course on flying you became a Sergeant automatically. This was because if you were captured by the enemy you would be treated better than if you had a lower rank. If you progressed, you became a flight sergeant then a Warrant Officer and that's where I finished up as a Warrant Officer in Italy at the end of my service.

I was initially at RAF Hednesford in Staffordshire. I did an air gunnery course which you had to do to be part of an air crew, so I went to Pembray in Wales where we flew as gunners and shot drones that were trailed behind other aircraft. When I was posted to the gunnery school, I remember distinctly, they gave me a ticket and on it was written, and I'll have to spell it out for you, L L A N E L L I, now to me that's pronounced Lane-elly so when went to the station master there and asked him which train I was to get from Lane-elly, he didn't know what I was talking about. I then discovered how to pronounce Llanelli.



I did things which I think were right during the war and I teach my children and grandchildren to do the right things in life.



London's Jewish East End in the 1930's

Initially it was a Halifax that I flew in, I did one pathfinder operation in Halifax's and then they wanted engineers on Liberators to fly in Italy.

So, I took a conversion course, which was 6 week course learning all about the Liberator and then I was posted to Italy with 37 Squadron, a place called Foggia which was an American base, near Naples.

I did about 18 operations in northern Italy. One operation, we were bombing a target in Austria, I believe the target was called Klagenfurt. To get to the target we had to climb the aircraft over the Apennines and then down to the target, so we had to drop down quite a few thousand feet. I was in charge of all the controls in the aircraft and when we got over the target the Bomb Aimer said to me "bomb doors open" no problem I said, and I selected the lever to open the bomb doors and they wouldn't open.

They were stuck rigid. I had learned about hydraulics, so I knew what to do in case of emergency. By my right-hand side was a pump and a valve. There were two valves in fact. One you opened up, then you closed the other and you selected the bomb doors and pumped on the hydraulics. I pumped the hydraulics, and nothing happened, the bomb doors wouldn't move. I said to the pilot we'd better get out of here; we can't drop the bombs.

So he turns the aircraft around and we were heading back to the Apennines to get over the top. The pilot says to me, he orders me, as I was in charge of the control's, "Give me full boost". So, I give him as much power as we've got and he's pulling back on the stick and the aircraft is not climbing. Why? I look at my controls and see that the flaps are full on. Now the flaps are for landing and they cause drag to slow the aircraft down. So as much as I'm trying to lift the aircraft up the flaps are pulling it down.

We're staying at the same height. Now we're in trouble, with a full bomb load and we can't climb over the mountains. I panicked at this stage. I opened the valve, closed the valve. First of all, I tried to select "flaps up" but the lever was jammed, it wouldn't move, I kept pumping the pump and eventually the lever becomes free and I'm able to select flaps up. We climbed 18,000 feet over the mountains and get back to base and we come in to land and it's very scary because we've got a full bomb load. If anything goes wrong the whole lot can blow up.

We crash landed.

We were two feet off the ground and the pilot thought we had landed, and we hadn't. We dropped down on the runway and the whole aircraft just twirled round, tipped on its side and the bombs started falling off in the bomb bay. They didn't go off. I wouldn't be here to tell you the story off they did, but that was the closest I came to any problems in the RAF.

We found out later when the bomb disposal squad came along to inspect the wreckage of the aircraft that one of the bombs was just hanging on. There's a fuse on the bomb and when the fuse comes off the bomb explodes. This fuse was hanging on by just a few millimetres, so we were very lucky and I think that's just how life has treated me, not all the time, but most of the time.

My brother was in the army and at the time was the same rank as me, he was a Sergeant Major, I was a Flight Sergeant, he was in Italy and we met each other. As the war was ending we used to fly troops from the Middle East and Italy back to bases in the UK. We used to fly back to a base in Herne just near Bournemouth and the pilot said to me he'd like to stay in Bournemouth for a few days. Can you arrange it? I asked him what he wanted me to do, so he said can you make the aircraft US (unserviceable). So, I messed the wiring up, reported that the aircraft had a problem and we had a few days in Bournemouth, which was very nice.



B24 Liberator in RAF markings. 37 Squadron based at Foggia was part of 205 Group. The only RAF Group to fly under American command in WWII



The control tower at Foggia

Then when they had no need for us to bomb Italy anymore, we were sent to Palestine to do nothing for six months and that's where I finished up my service before I was sent back to the UK.

It was up to our pilot when we came home, he didn't want to come home for some reason, and the rest of the crew had to force him to apply for us to leave. We stayed in Palestine longer than we should have. We wanted to get home, but he wasn't so keen. I haven't spoken to him since 1946, he wasn't my favourite. I enjoyed my service, but I missed my family very much, my parents and brother.

I had lots of friends in the Air Force. Not all good actually, I had one person who I thought was a good friend, I said to him I've got a little shop in Edmonton in North London, perhaps one day after the war you'd like to come down and stay with me a few days. He came down and stayed and I caught him stealing stock out of my shop, so I had to say to him, sorry you've got to go. That was sadness in my life, I was friendly with him in the Air Force and he was a Jewish and it

was unfortunate that he was tempted. Perhaps he had never seen stuff like that, it was watches that he stole from me, but that's life. I didn't come across any anti-semitism in the Royal Air Force at all. People knew I was Jewish because if one of the Rabbis came to visit the Squadron the Jewish boys would go to see him and pro-rata there were more Jews in the forces than in the general population.

When I came back, first of all, my mother had a business manufacturing blouses, my brother joined her. I didn't actually come into the business, but I did help out pricing and costing. I was very keen on mathematics and I could work out how much material a garment would take and how much machining and trimmings were needed.

I met my wife in 1947 and her mother said to me, why don't you get yourself a little shop? She found a little shop for me and I started working. Before I joined the RAF, I'd never learned any trade really and I wasn't very experienced in anything so it was a bit difficult for me.

I didn't want to go back into the shoe shop business, but I felt I should get back into retail. I didn't really want to work for somebody else, like none of us really do but sometimes you've got to if you haven't got enough capital for yourself. I got help from my family and my mother-in-law helped me and my wife worked with me. So my family was very supportive when I got back.

The shop was very unsuccessful, I couldn't make a living, so I decided to go to the markets and sell the stuff, ladies wear and odds and sods. That got me out of trouble. I was able to sell the stock. I'd go to Enfield market every week and other markets out of town. I built up quite a good trade. My son came into the business with me and eventually from being a small retailer I started wholesaling.

What I did was, I had people who came in from local factories and I used to give them stuff to sell in their factories. From that it built up and I got bigger and bigger, it just grew like nothing. So, I rented a Co-op building, which was much too big for me when we moved in. It was on two floors, the bottom floor I couldn't fill with anything, and the first floor still had lots of space.

My trading improved and after two years the place wasn't big enough. I was buying lots of stock, liquidation stock from companies that had gone bust. I knew a lot of people in liquidation who helped me. The business was building very nicely when unfortunately, my son Tony died. The saddest moment in my life and for my wife.



Bernard, centre row, second from left

CARTON, Bernard Lawrence			
NAMES (In Full, Surname First)			
BIRTH. Date 23.10.33 Nationality British		RELIGION 48 Employer Ind. 2P.532/2, Dis.190	
Place Town London Parish & County Bethnal Green, London		CIVIL OCCUPATION Shop Assistant Address	
MARRIAGE. Wife's Maiden Name			
Date		Place	
Reason and date Marriage or Family Allowance ceased to be issuable			
PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS.			
Unit.	Period From	To	Rank on Discharge
Former Service permitted:			
CURRENT ENGAGEMENT. D.O.P.P.E Date of Enlistment 21.9.42 Service Commences 21.9.42			
Reg. Service Exp			
PERSON TO BE NOTIFIED OF CASUALTIES. (To be entered in pencil.)			
Name <i>As Above</i> Address			
Relationship Date			
TIME FORFEITED.			
Authy. Came From To No. of Days			
DESCRIPTION.			
Height Feet Inch	Chest Inch	Colours of Hair	Scars, etc.
On Entry 5 6	33	Brn	Sal
Extn.			
Re-en.			
Transf.			
HOME ADDRESS. (To be entered in pencil.) <i>30 Beresford Road, Southgate, London N.11</i>			
TRANSFER TO RESERVE.			
Date	Para.	K.R.	
Mobn. Stn.			
Annl. Trg. Date			
Recall from Reserve (Date)			
DISCHARGE.			
Date	Para.	K.R.	
Cause			
Total Service	years	days	
" Qual. Service			
Pension Award			
Particulars of Medals, etc.	Authy. & Date	DATE Received Dispatched	Stock Bk Ref Page Book
1939-45 STAR	1/2	59 CONISTON RD	
ITALY STAR		TOTTENHAM	
W.W. MEDAL	4852	London N.17	
ANNUAL FILMING MAR <i>Rec'd for training as Hpt. M.</i>			
ANNUAL FILMING NOV			
RELEASED A			
RELEASE CLASS A			
EFFECTIVE DATE OF RELEASE 21.9.46			
GOOD CONDUCT BADGES.			
Authy.	1st	2nd	A. D. R.
99/45	157	1A	21.9.47
Typ H.F. Hicks, dkd Form 543A.			
1642652 P/CAG. 14/11/47			

Bernard's Service Record



MDA Ambulance in Israel

big family, children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, but I don't think they really understand. I'm worried for my grandchildren with the way the world is going.

Through my experiences I think I understand humanity in certain ways, I've got to understand people, I always like to help people. I feel in my own mind that it gives me pleasure to help people. My wife and I have been on charity committees for years, I was on the original committee to build the Synagogue in Southgate and after we'd raised enough money to build it we called ourselves the London Charities Committee, we turned our minds to raising money for any charity that needed help, Jewish or non-Jewish, we helped. To this day I still help a lot of charities in Israel. I've donated an ambulance to Israel which was a great pleasure to me. I'm a friend to Boys Town Jerusalem, we've helped them a lot and donated a lot to them, they're lovely people.

In a small way I think I've left my mark on the world. I've done things which I think were right and I did things which I think were right during the war and I teach my children and grandchildren to do the right things in life. I'm very; lucky to be alive at my age, 93 this year and I still feel I've got plenty left.

My grandchildren do ask me about the war, and I tell them what I did and what aircraft I flew in. I send them pictures and I've told them as much as I can do. I've got a

# Warrant Officer Stanley David

Age 91, Stanley was interviewed at his home in Littlehampton on 17th August 2016

My mother I think was born in Poland, my father I couldn't tell you, I have no idea where he was born, what he did, anything like that, he was a complete enigma, most peculiar. I think my father was Romanian.

I was born in Goulton Road, Hackney, under Bow bells. We left Hackney in 1928 and moved to Golders Green.

I went on to Christ College Finchley, I got a scholarship there, I did very well the first two years, but then the war started to come on to me, I lost interest. I just wanted to get in the war, that was my one and true aim, to get in the bloody war, and fight the Germans. When I was 18 I joined up in March 1943.

I went in to see the recruiter, I said, "I want to be in the Air Force, and I want to be an air gunner", and that was it, I knew the course was only three months. All the others were six months, a year; I didn't want that, I just wanted to get in the quickest way in to fight the bloody Germans.

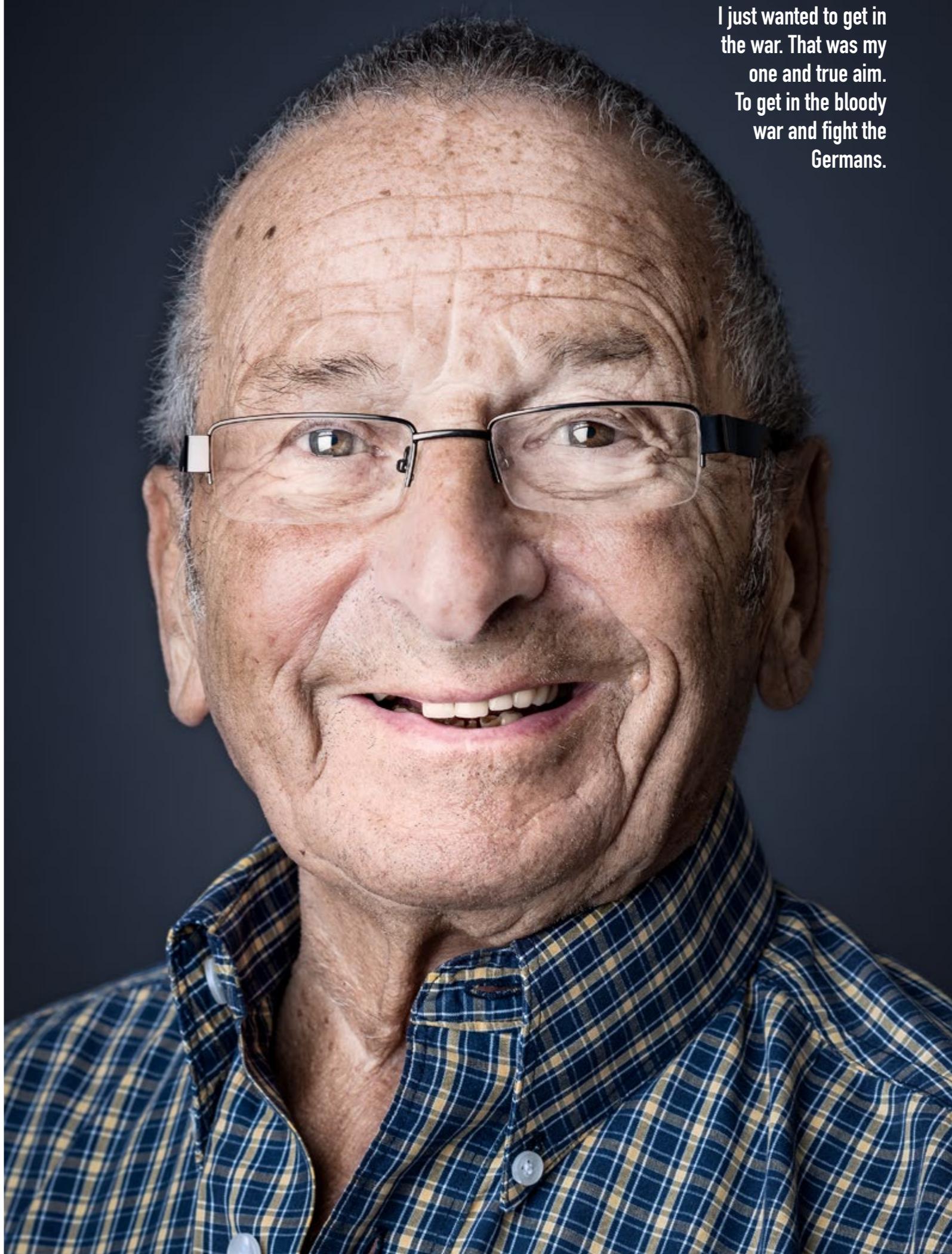
I got my air gunners badge in June '43. I volunteered for everything. I went to ACR (Air Crew Receiving Centre) then to train as an air gunner, I went to Stormy Downs in South Wales. I was on a course of 60 odd men and I got the fourth highest rating which was very good. We used to fire at the drogues, and I got the best percentage so I was happy, I was doing a good job.

We were crewed up in Rufforth, Yorkshire, then we started doing low level flying there. I was right in the front of the aircraft I used to love it. Low level through the rivers and in between the mountains. I didn't know at the time but I'm sure my skipper knew what was going to happen because that's what we went on to do. After Rufforth we flew on down to Blida in Algeria, North Africa. My first operations were in January 1944 with 624 Special Duties Squadron, flying Halifax's and Stirling's. They knocked out the mid-upper turret because we had an exit hatch to drop the agents and packages underneath.



Modified Halifax Mk.II S.O.E. Special

I just wanted to get in the war. That was my one and true aim. To get in the bloody war and fight the Germans.





Stanley 1943 with Air Gunners wings



Stanley (front row second from right) with flight crew, Tocra, Libya

We didn't know a lot of what was happening because we were completely cut off. We knew that it was important, but we weren't allowed to speak to anybody. You didn't speak to other crews about it, even my pilot didn't know where we were going, and the only person that knew was the navigator. It was agent dropping and supply over the Pyrenees.

A Maquis fighter said during a reunion in France "It was only the sound of the Halifax aircraft coming over at night that kept our spirits up when we were being hunted down and tortured. We knew they were bringing more guns and ammunition which we could use to fight, to free our families and liberate our country"

We had to go down to under 500 feet, sometimes under 300 feet which is quite low for a parachute drop. The French always used to choose the most difficult areas so the Germans wouldn't find them. We didn't get any trouble with fighters, but we got a lot of trouble with the Ack Ack.

I remember once we got caught in a master searchlight. We were on our own at about 12,000 feet and we got coned by about 10 or 12 searchlights and that's when they stared firing at us. Ack Ack, that was a little bit naughty, let's put it that way, you have to corkscrew out of it. My pilot was superb, he was a brilliant pilot, the navigator was second to none, he was brilliant, because to fly over the Pyrenees you didn't have any landmarks or anything to go by, everything looked the same.

We were due to drop one agent, a French Canadian. I've forgotten his name; we couldn't find the target so we didn't drop him. On the way back I said to him, I think I'm going into Algiers for a weekend on a 48-hour pass, he said if you don't mind I'd like to come with you. We went to this place in Algiers, the Sphinx. We had a few drinks and were both rather sloshed, as we left the pub come brothel I said you're pissed. He said "Pissed am I!" and he ran off up this side turning we were passing. I went back to the hotel, to my room, stripped off and flaked out.

When I woke next morning, I knew someone had been in my room, it had been searched. The landlady told me the Military Police had tried to waken me and couldn't, they were looking for my 48-hour pass, which they found to be in order. My friend had not been so lucky. He had no pass, was picked up and I never heard of him again. I couldn't say he was an agent, I hitched back to base on my own, in uniform. When I got back I couldn't say anything, I had to stay shtum (quiet), it was most peculiar.

We did our jump training with the Americans at Camp de Mar, it was a little place, but the food was out of this world. Oh my God, it was worthwhile doing it for the food. The Americans were so well fed. For four days I was so well fed, then to have to back, to go back to bacon, it wasn't even bacon it was bloody awful, corned beef.

I was jumping with some of these women that were training to be agents. The instructor said that I would have to be first to set an example to the rest. Standing at the door I was able to collect my thoughts. The instructor shouted "Ho" and slapped my back. My landing was far from brilliant; the American T-Type chutes were quite difficult to manoeuvre, but all I broke was a watch.

The next day I went in the second stick. I was able to observe the female agents jumping first. Unfortunately, one just slid out the door and was holding onto the ledge from outside the aircraft.



RAF Blida, Algeria with the Atlas mountains

The instructor stamped on her hands until she finally let go. They say that women can't stand pain. Women can stand pain more than men; by God they were tough sticks, really tough.

My last operation was a daylight in September 1944 and that was when we were disbanded because D-Day had happened, and they didn't need us anymore. After we finished operations I was a sighting instructor for a time, then when the war finished I became a Police dog handler for the RAF; I had a pit bull called Simon.

I called my first son Simon. When he got a dog, he called it Stanley, the bugger. My dog was beautiful; he was the second most ferocious dog in the squad and always the second from last to give an exhibition. We used to give exhibitions, attacking the suit. I went in the suit once, the padded suit, and you could feel his teeth go through but I enjoyed it.

I was demobbed in '47. Of course coming out the service like many others you find it very difficult getting back into a routine because everything was done for you in the service. I was living with my parents in Brookside Road, Golders Green, then some friends of mine and I got a big basement flat together in Hamilton Terrace, St. Johns Wood. I think my first job was £4/10' a week and that was in 1947 so it wasn't a very good wage.



Stanley with his pit bull Simon

I had a few jobs, but they weren't very interesting, until I joined with my brother who did quilting, dressing gowns and anoraks. We used to supply Dorothy Perkins.

We were up in Soho in Frith Street. I was there for a couple of years then I decided I didn't want to stay there anymore. The new managing director was a con man. I didn't like the away he was treating me and I couldn't stand living in London anymore, trouble is London was no longer the same but you know what I miss? Chraine (Horseradish sauce) with my chicken. Can't remember the last time I had salt beef, all these things you miss when you leave London. I used to go to Blooms for a salt beef sandwich and the Nosh Bar in Windmill Street. So I said to my wife we could get a nice little shop and we bought this delicatessen with wines and spirits in the corner. It was good shop in Croxley Green.

I bought the freehold for sixty thousand and made a nice profit when we sold it. My wife, she used to cook her own hams and people would come from miles for our bacon and her ham. After 11 years I'd had enough, I lost interest in her. I actually got on better with her mother and father than she did but then I was 26 years older than her.

After that my brother said why don't you get a job and come down to Littlehampton. Kinch & Lack were one of the biggest menswear shops in Worthing and they were advertising, don't forget I'd been in the business with the quilting, they took me on and I was there for six years. Then I was headhunted, and we opened up these stores in Rustington "Scorpio Man" that was until I had to leave because I had prostate cancer in 2000, I've been retired since then.



Stanley on his 80th Birthday



Stanley's Légion d'honneur

I didn't talk about the war until 1997, we weren't allowed to it was so secretive. In 2016 I was presented with the Légion d'honneur by the French Consul at the museum at Tangmere. I don't think I deserved it but still, these days they give peerages and knighthoods for doing bugger all. Actually, I think the world's bloody awful at the moment, in a hell of a mess. It went wrong straight after the war; we haven't got the good brains and we haven't got the armaments. We're not a big country anymore we're small and we've got no say in the matter. Putin, Merkel, Obama even Françoise Hollande, they've all got more say than us. I don't think anyone will take over after the Queen. Charles won't make a good king. I feel sorry for Harry, what's he going to do? I think he should have stayed in the service.

My son he's always trying to give me different things for my birthday. For my 80th birthday, he said "Dad I've got something for you, how do feel about making a sky dive?" I said I'd love it so; I did the necessary training because it's a bit different from a wartime parachute jump. You're with an instructor and you're strapped to him. We got out at 14,500 feet with a 40 second free-fall. Fantastic, out of this world and the weather was good.

My accomplishment was being in the RAF fighting for my country, you can't get any bigger than that. I'd hate to think I was a pacifist or a conscientious objector, but I've learned not to do anybody any harm and that you should give more than you receive. I love Littlehampton, it's a good place to die.

From: Air Marshal Sir John Slessor, K.C.B., D.S.O., M.C.

HEADQUARTERS  
MEDITERRANEAN ALLIED AIR FORCES

JCS.1307

Personal

10th September 1944

*My dear Stanbury*

I am writing to congratulate you on the fine work done by you and your squadron on operations to the South of France. You will realise that your job is now done, and, owing to the very pressing requirements in man-power at home and in other theatres, we are now having to begin rolling up squadrons for which we have no longer a need in this theatre.

It is bad luck that the squadron should have to be rolled up at a time when you are converting to a new type of aircraft, and when the process of conversion has not been as satisfactory as might have been hoped. However I feel sure that you and your chaps will well understand the reason, and I would like to take this opportunity of congratulating you all, air and ground crews alike, on the successful accomplishment of a difficult job which has gone far towards ensuring the success of the Allied operations in France.

The best of luck to you all.

*Yours truly*  
*Slessor*

Wing Commander C.S.G. Stanbury, D.S.O., D.F.C.,  
Officer Commanding,  
No. 624 Squadron,  
Royal Air Force,  
c/o No. 1 B.P.D.,  
~~G. M.~~ F. B. N. A. F.

# MIKE STONE PHOTOGRAPHER

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