



***You Don't Need Brains
To Be a Pilot***

I “arrived” in Glasgow very early on 3rd March 1940. At 10lbs 4ozs Mum had a bad time and I’ve never been a morning person since! We lived in a room and kitchen in a standard tenement with shared toilet on the landing, wood seated, with squares of local newspaper adjacent. Each of the three apartments had a large key for entrance to the “stair heed dunnie” With two elder sisters and Father away at the war, early growing up was fine. Ignorance is bliss! One day while still a toddler I escaped from mum and followed a khaki clad man; my Dad was a soldier after all, quite a distance, as far as the local park. The park keeper recognised me and managed to take over from the soldier and stem my disappointed wailing by feeding me his lunchtime piece until my rescue.! We didn’t get bombed very often since our district, the Gorbals; was a few miles away from the shipyards. But when the air raid serene went off and the neighbours went down to the basement shelter underneath the building my Mum just put us to bed as normal, with a short prayer, thinking we’d be better off among the rubble than beneath it!

Mum insisted that our building was in Hutcheson town and she insisted that we spoke properly .She gave us all little housework tasks to perform each week to justify our existence. Our weekend task was to go and queue up at the local Cooperative bakery in a long line of other peasants and buy shan {old} bread, pies and some cakes for half price to last the week! A few years later I awoke to sense a different smell in the house and a sleeping figure in the other bed with a kitbag parked alongside. My Dad had returned from the war. He never responded to my request for gory details but was disgusted when he saw a camel at the local zoo and that proved that he'd been a "desert rat." in North Africa.

It was my turn to start school. St Bonaventure's where I started a great friendship with Frank as my bosom buddy and best pal but he annoyed me slightly by always wanting to play football when I wanted to play fantasy games with my model aircraft.

I picked up that his "unimportant" surname was Mc Winkle and argued vehemently with my mum who annoyingly insisted that it was Mc Klintock. He was in fact the very Frank who later Captained and then managed Arsenal F.C. winning an M.B.E. and commentating for the B.B.C. Wow!

My claim to fame at that stage was to achieve Senior sixer in the boy scout cubs and particularly enjoyed the "Grand Howl" at the end of the evening Meeting. The pack would form a circle and I would Yell out "Will you dib, dib, dib, dib, dib? And the boys Would answer loudly "We will dob ,dob ,dob ,dob, dob"

I would then one step into the circle and making the three fingered boy scout salute shout

"Aaa-Kaaay-LA We will do our best"

Great stuff at that age!

1947 was a long hot summer in Scotland and our name came up for a new house so off we went to Preisthill and a three bedroomed attached house, five in a row. I had my own room and we had a patch of garden each to grow vegetables, the rest to lawns with privet hedges. There was countryside around and plenty of park to have adventures in. There was a new school, St Roberts, three houses away and the school bell was very obvious if heard while still in bed! Quite a scramble! The church was close by and I became an alter boy and also sang in the choir. I think my Mum had some secret ecclesiastical fantasies about me! There was a boy scout troop which I joined and the local library a short march away. It was on one visit to the library that I

picked up a fateful book. On the front cover was a picture of a young man in flying suite with parachute, helmet, goggles and gauntlets and furry boots leaning on the leading edge of the wing of a biplane and gazing at the sky. They say don't judge a book by its cover but I was instantly a Biggles fan and knew what I was going to be. Magic !!

The scouts had their meetings in my school and the main treat was to go camping in Auchengillan Camp ground in the Blane Valley just south east of Loch Lomond. We'd stay for a long weekend and go trekking through the fields. A short distance away is the Whangie lookout, sometimes referred to as Queens view, where the view of the Loch is magnificent, with the Scottish highlands stretching away to the north east.

There was good camping in the grounds with an amphitheatre sporting totem poles and many a good sing song around the campfire we had with the attendance of the various scout troops. The Providor was a large dormitory where we could take shelter if the Scottish weather went really wild and a spring fed, ice cold swimming pool which the bullies could use to wreak initiation on the new boys after giving them a good coating of boot polish ! I used to frustrate them by jumping in first! As I became more senior the boot polish was dropped from the programme! The whole

setup was fantastic and it was just great to be there as often as we could. Much better than hanging around in the city.

Meanwhile at school a lovely lady teacher had appeared, Miss Reagan and I must have fallen in love with her! I worked hard to please her and was soon top of the class. She was bright and cheerful, doing pre class P.T end even teaching us to sing Die Lorelei in German which was kind of novel after the recent history!! I had a bit of a rough Christmas when having an excited frolic on Christmas Eve, playing bucking bronco's with my sister, I flew over her back and crash landed front teeth first into the bed head. Ouch! As my Mum came upstairs to calm the riot I hid in bed holding my broken teeth together, hoping they would mend! No such luck and It took about a year to finish treatment and fix me up with a pair of false teeth on a plate. During that time I was allowed to chew penicillin chewing gum in class! First week fitted and they fell out of my mouth on a sledge run! Took quite a bit of desperate searching between the runner tracks in the snow! I believe it was the year that the song came out "All I want for Christmas is my two front teeth! "And I could with you merry Crithmath!" The other item of festive joy was that my Dad stepped back from the radio and stood on my, Xmas present,

train set engine! Ouch! I was doing well at the scouts. One of the lads I befriended was the scoutmasters son and I was invited to join the guests at his house to watch the coronation. The year I was 12 we went to camp for two weeks on Fota Island, County Cobh in Ireland. I enjoyed the Irish accent and had adopted Patrick as my middle name because there was another Anthony Henderson in my class at school. I'd been baptised on St .Patricks day. So there I was ;030340 "the turd of the turd of the turd be jabours"! I hadn't yet learned to swim. I'd been to the local baths with my two sisters some years before and a big boy had held me under for quite a while so swimming was not for me. But I did remember that during my panic how scenic it was under the water so rightly I resolved to teach myself to swim. After two weeks of daily visits to and many swallows of the Irish sea I could almost do it but kept touching bottom with one foot. The Seamen on the Irish sea had a strike and hey presto we had to stay for another two weeks!! "dear Mum send mon" I got my foot off the bottom and by the end of the school hols. I could swim a mile, dive the dale and two lengths underwater was a pleasure!

Although the scouts was great I had an inkling that there must be an air cadets group in existence somewhere.

Then came a huge change of scene. I came to school after the summer holidays to start the most important eleven plus year and Miss Reagan was nowhere to be seen!

There was a man there in smart suite and dry, boring voice who seemed to delight in assuring us that we were all bound for the “pick and shovel brigade “ His insistence at staying on this theme and my disappointment at Miss Reagan’s total absence resulted in my failing the eleven plus exam and being sent to St Mary’s , Calton ;back in the depths of the city, where I learned almost nothing for the next three years; a few bits of technical subjects, a fear of being beaten up and a fast running ability! I recall that a few smaller boys were running a protection racket and after I had refused to pay I was suddenly grabbed and pulled into a close by a huge Teddy Boy for some “corrective treatment” Pretending to be calm ,I honestly explained that he would have to kill me because this bullying made me completely mad and I would definitely kill his little brother when we next met! He seemed to be confused by this knowledge and with nothing more than an invitation to f... off just pushed me away out of the close and allowed my

getaway! I was then apparently exempt from further threat! About this time I was told the address of an Air Training Corps squadron. What gigantic luck! It was 32F {founder} squadron which used the city headquarters of the old 602 City of Glasgow fighter squadron which had acquitted itself with honours in the Battle of Britain! This was the place for a young Biggles fan! By then I had read all the books!

The huge stone entrance to the drill hall was quite daunting when I pitched up at parade start time and as I poised between the two anti aircraft guns bordering the tall doors someone beyond yelled a command.

There was a great crash of many boots and I seriously considered running away! I opened the door as quietly as possible and stood waiting while the squadron drilled and announcements were made until the lads dismissed and went of to various classrooms. Then I was led to the office where I was told that being not quite 14 I could attend on probation until my pending birthday.

Soon I was recruited, uniform issued with record of service book and a reasonable standard of drill reached. The annual summer camp was that year at R.A.F. Cottesmore in England. It was

bomber station with twin jet Canberra bombers practising the summer war games. What an exciting din! We sat quietly listening in to the briefings then watched them roar off on their training missions. We were told that they restricted their full performance altitude during the exercises because the fighters could not match up. Then came the big day when we bundled into a truck and drove a short distance north to a grass airfield, R.A.F. Spitalgate. We were divided into groups of 5 and awaited our turn to board an Avro Anson; a light twin engined, six seater transport aircraft for an air experience flight. Before our 5 boarded I proposed to the others that we should compete to give the others a bumpy ride if we got to handle the controls! I was amazed and delighted at the sight of the ground with its large houses looking so tiny and how beautifully the sky stretched away. The pilot let me take control but when I made a pull and a push he waved me off and I wished that I hadn't! been so stupid. He later let me have another go when he saw my sorrow! It was truly wonderful and all too soon we landed back on the lovely grass airfield. After landing and exploding with many thankful comments which I think he found amusing I heard the wagon beeping for me to get out. They wanted to set off back to Cottismore. I didn't mention the competition! Though I reckon I'd won! "stupid boy"

The annual camp was the highlight of the year but there were many activities. The army drill hall was next door and we had the use of the .22 rifle range where we could keep our eye in practice after the introduction to shooting .303 rifles at the camp. Lectures on basic aviation subjects held our interest but drill was never ignored and we competed in the Glasgow Wing and Scottish Group championships. Our speciality was the continuity drill [drill without commands] which frequently won us the competition. Its amazing how much we enjoyed it ,striving for a really high standard which we obviously achieved. Visits to Renfrew, our local airport, came up a few times for another Anson flight. I used to cycle there and spend a few hours watching the Airliners taking off and landing. It was on one visit that I saw a Sabre jet; an F86, land and on touchdown his undercarriage folded up and he raced along the runway on his nosewheel and two fuel drop tanks until he smashed through the fence of the golf course and across the ditch, left the drop tanks, retracted the nose wheel and came to rest on the 13th green of Renfrew Golf Club! Within seconds the cockpit opened and the pilot scrambled quickly out and ran away! Scottish Aviation had a contract for maintenance for the American Airforce and the Sabre had flown in from Germany. I don't think the green keeper was too impressed! I

had on a few occasions crept into the hanger to have a “closer look” at the parked aircraft and in fact one day I was sitting in the cockpit of a Rapide; a lovely old biplane , very appropriate for a young Biggles, when a pair of strong hands grabbed me, lifted me out of the seat, out of the aircraft and propelled me out of the gate with the swift kick in the arse that I deserved! No grudge was held against that very strong little police sergeant!

It was approaching time for me to leave school but now that I knew what academics were required I got my Mum to negotiate a place for me at Holyrood Senior Secondary School where I would have gone had I passed my 11+Both my sisters had been there and left school already. Unfortunately I was put into the 4th year there having learned nothing for the last 3 years and It required more of an effort than I could muster to catch up. Coincidentally the Head master of my previous school was promoted to this one! I hope he did better than me! He didn't appear to check up on me. Just around the corner were a couple of back to back cinemas, entrance fees 6d and 9d where an exhausted young scholar could relax with a matinee! After seeing the Colditz Story” I asked around to see if

anyone would join me in Making a tunnel between.
No takers!

I was sitting with a few friends in the corner of the sports field when the P.T. master "Spud Murphy" came by and announced that the school mile was about to be run. So I thought I'd have a go. I nipped my fag and joined the others. They were keen and turned out in their track gear with spiked shoes. I managed to keep up and decided that I'd remain a few places behind until the final straight and If I could pass it was important to pass quickly for psychological reasons. It worked and I crossed the line first. Spud said the time was 4mins 59secs. The 4mins was exciting but the 59secs was disappointingly long. He said I should take up running. He had asked me once to demonstrate a few movements on the high bar in the gym. All I did was some long armed oran utan swings! He did select me for a place in the Scottish Schools Athletics Camp, at Helensburgh, which surprised me as there were some others keen to go who's parents were teachers. There was coaching on various sports. I'd taught myself to play golf but got some tips.

I did join the group for the rescue course at the local baths. We learned the methods of release and rescue on dry land but did the swimming in the freezing pool.

When we sat the test for the Bronze Medallion my “rescuer” grabbed me with both arms and his knee which should have rested on my chest crunched into my crutch with such a jolt that I really needed rescuing! I missed the short awards ceremony later as I shivered under a pile of blankets for a long time. I’d never heard of Hypothermia but I reckon I’d felt it!

I progressed in the cadets with a few more summer camps and airfield visits until I was given a Gliding course. R.A.F. Hawkinge was the Home Command Gliding Centre. A Battle of Britain grass airfield in Kent, just up the road from Folkstone. We were trained on Slingsby Cadet mark 3, tandem two seat basic gliders. We were winch launched up to about one thousand feet, released the winch cable and glided down in the circuit to land back from where we’d started.

We flew for 4 days with continuous instruction and after 39 launches my instructor got out of the back seat and off I went on my first solo! What a feeling.

A pilot at last!

Of sorts! There hadn’t been much time to admire the Scenery ,concentrating on accurate flying for each of the 3 minute circuits. The two following flights allowed me to look about and enjoy. I did one more

End of the day “fly in” flight with the Boss, F/o Ladley Scott to complete and win my “A” and “B” certificates. 2hrs 9mins in my new log book.

At this stage I reckon that I shrouded my very dumb school performance with my steady progress in the cadets. I used to try to make a visit to Farnborough for the air show and a few times scrounged a ride to London on a Dan Air York freighter out of Renfrew which was exciting albeit in the middle of the night. The next day weather was invariably hot and sunny and the flying in those days was risky and dangerous!

I remember marching through Soho with my friends, proudly in our cadet uniforms and we passed a beautiful young “lady” standing in a doorway. I couldn’t resist telling her how much she pleased me as I marched past when very suddenly I walked briskly into a bus stop!

Thank heavens it was Alloy and a bit slack so serious injury was avoided. She was very sympathetic as she helped to pick me up of the ground.! A mini bonus!

I had a milk round and a paper round and spent a lot of time cycling and footballing with our cadet team. I also used to get away and do a cycling tour of Scotland, Glencoe, Fort William, Inverness and down through Perthshire then back in time to go to the next summer cadet camp! The Commanding officer put me up for Flying Scholarship Selection. I went down to the R.A.F. selection centre at Hornchurch in Essex with another cadet and went through the medical and aptitude tests and to my astonishment the interviewing officer said “ We have decided to award you a Flying Scholarship”

I felt like reaching across the desk and giving him a big hug!

Unfortunately my companion Gordon didn't get one but I tried to cheer him up by suggesting a retry later. He was an engineering apprentice with Scottish at the airport. I wondered if he had any connection to the Sabre Jet on the 13th green?

I couldn't really believe my luck and shortly afterwards a big box was delivered and there it was; the flying suite, leather helmet, goggles, gauntlets and furry boots. Just like the young man on that book cover! Only ten years later!

I set off in the train to Perth early one morning and I fell Asleep; probably hadn't slept the night in my excitement.

When I woke up the train was stopped. All was quiet out in the country and for a long time we were stationary and I wondered if my dream had dissolved.

But never fear. We were off again and I duly pitched up that afternoon at Scone Aerodrome and reported to the Chief Flying Instructor, Tom Blyth, a tall thin man with a suntanned face and a thin moustache who made me feel welcome and issued me with my new power flying log book. Unfortunately He was going off on holiday for a few weeks and I was to report to Mr. Anderson in the morning to commence flying.

Andy Anderson was Swedish ,made many jokes and boasted his excellent mental arithmetic whenever he could. Unfortunately I found almost straight away that when he yelled into the intercom of a windy open cockpit of a tiger moth he wasn't very clear to me. And he yelled quite a bit! The De Haviland Tiger Moth was a lovely little biplane, tailwheel, two seat trainer and I looked forward keenly to do well and hoped after my progress at gliding to get solo soon and be an ace pilot. We were none radio.

After a few hours flying on the upper air exercises we began to concentrate on circuits and landings and I found that I couldn't settle down to Andy's instructions. When I'd open the throttle he would snap it shut or vice versa. A few times after landing I would go round behind the hanger to hide my tears of frustration! I'd never be an ace this way!

Airwork Aviation were training people from all over. One day It was "national costume day" and when the twin engine Airspeed Consul landed and taxied in a huge black African warrior climbed out and whooped loudly waving his African Knob kerri [club] in the air!

I must say that there were some interesting characters Attending Perth on their Commercial Pilot courses.

Aegon von Fustenberg a, German chap, used to the fly the Percival Prentice. He loved the aircraft because it looked and sounded slightly like a Stuka! I befriended a young Arab Chap from Saudi Arabia who let me have a little strum of his guitar. He told me that he was a sort of Prince and that he had flown some hours on Mig trainers and a few flights on Hawker Hunters in the Middle east. I was very glad we were friends because one evening his loud Arabic music stopped

abruptly and there followed some banging disturbance. I went to investigate and there he was knife in hand threatening another student who had barged into his room, snapped off the "music " and went back to his room. It had been a bit of a din, but there he was in apparent high danger. I hoped I would be lucky so with hands held high I just walked up saying "Salam Salam Peace my friend" It seemed to break the tension and after a few curse type mutterings at the infidel he went back to his room. The not very grateful student turned out to be one of the Glasgow University Air squadron pilots who had arrived for some flying at the weekends. One of the Uni pilots was hanging around the base without flying and with a sad look on him. Apparently he had been flying nearby and buzzing his girl friends house with some aerobatics ,had got it wrong and crashed into the river Tay!

Somebody said that the unfortunate was the nephew of a high politician. I hoped it helped!

I had seen a few RAF officers around the airfield during that week and I supposed that they were conducting an enquiry. There was a red headed highlander who took me up in the Chipmunk. He was going to do some aerobatics. Each time he looped he fell out of the manoeuvre and then I said, in my

infancy, Why don't you try a bit of rudder when you open up the engine on the way up? He did and it worked! One up for the ATC Cadets!

Another chap I befriended was big Bob Fyffe who was on a course after finishing his national service actually in the RAF but on a ground job. I had just narrowly missed the call up having stayed at school so long!

I was destined to meet big Robert later in the flying game!

One morning I slouched into the office, after two weeks, with 9 hrs in my log book and slightly dreading the days performance.

Tom Blyth had returned from holiday. 'How many hours solo now young Henderson? he asked. When I Explained "None Sir" He frowned and said "go and do your checks in 'NG" {November Golf} , one of the tigers sitting outside. He got in and after a few upper exercises we came back to the circuit .I flew two circuits and landings and he climbed out and shouted at me to get on with it! No problems and I did most of the rest of my course with him. Thank God! For Tom!

When I was flying a few evenings later Tom had told me to do 3 circuits and landings.

The surface wind was calm. I did my checks and my engine warmup checks but when I opened the throttle for take off the aircraft leapt into the air with hardly any ground run which was very odd? The downwind leg was very quick and my final approach was very slow. I realised that the surface wind had moved up from dead calm to over twenty knots and the windsock horizontal ! I hadn't been taught to do wheeler landings and at one stage I thought I saw something smoking on the ground? It was what was left of a Very signal fired from the control tower to signal me to return to the starting point. In other words "stay on the ground!" But I hadn't seen it so I continued to complete my detail much to the consternation of Tom and all other witnesses !!

Stupid boy! But I hadn't damaged the a/c and I think Tom was impressed and relieved with my make do landings!

One of my school friends Cedric Low ,who was very bright, sent me a letter with my school results. Three or 4 lower grades which were rather minimal compared to his many advanced passes!

So I came away from Scone Airfield with my Private Pilots Licence and a feeling that further flying would not come easily.

I advanced up the ranks and one of our best instructors, F/O Alan Sherry took me under his wing and gave me a lift through to Edinburgh's airport Turnhouse. Alan was a travelling salesman and came this way often. He introduced me to Flt. Lt Stan Drysdale who was the officer commanding the Air Experience base and I got a staff cadet job at the weekends when parties of cadets came for flights.

The job ranged from taking cups of tea to the pilots during turn rounds and briefing cadets on emergency parachute drills. Some of the lads were so small that it needed at least one greatcoat on them to fill the parachute harness! So much for the theory! Staff

cadets were then normally rewarded with a chipmunk trainer flight. Mostly the lads asked for aerobatics but I wanted circuits and bumps and a bit of instrument flying. One of our guys was at Edinburgh University so we could have a riotous evening in the beer bar where there was a grand piano with a linoleum top which could accommodate about a dozen singing drunks with a regular few falling off ! We reckoned that we did a social service dancing the appreciative "grimmies" afterwards. These festivities we discontinued when the plan changed and our flight was rescheduled to first thing in the mornings!!

One evening at cadets parade one of our old boys turned up dressed in R.A.F. uniform with pilot wings.

Alan Wickham was his name and he'd just graduated from R.A.F. college at Cranwell he challenged me saying "what are you waiting for" So I applied to the R.A.F. for pilot selection. Meanwhile I sat the Higher English Exam at Glasgow University. My teacher had only put me up for Lower English! He had wasted quite a lot of red ink on my homework because of my awful spelling.! But I enjoyed waving my Pass paper at him shortly afterwards. I'd ignored most of the grammatical stuff and written an essay on The Dam Busters! It was time to return to R.A.F. Hornchurch, Essex, the selection board, hoping my luck would hold out.

We did all the tests again plus some discussion and leadership exercises at which I considered I had performed well. One of the candidates told me that I was the best and in fact I'd chosen him! Till at the final interview one of the officers asked "why have you not put in second choice selections i.e. Navigator, Radio Operator etc."? Ouch!

I had to say " Honestly Sir. I am going to be a pilot and if not an R.A.F. pilot I'll have to be someone else's " I

was stating the truth but felt that I'd just jumped out without a 'chute! A week later my letter, a one liner, came offering me nothing. I reflected on the dilemma that might have been offered and what should I do now?

I had a job greenkeeping at a local course during a good summer and felt really fit. The greatest challenge there had been keeping up with "old Bob" at scything a bank. The time for cadets summer camp came round, this year at R.A.F. Leeming in Yorkshire. F/O Alan Sherry managed to wangle me, special request , a trip in a Meteor Mk 7 twin jet trainer. The pilot asked "have you done your pressurisation checks" and I Just nodded affirmative. I couldn't let "formalities" spoil this treat! So off we went wearing bone dome helmets and plugged into oxygen. We climbed swiftly to 30 thousand feet and the pilot went through his programme of aerobatics including 8 point roles and steep derry turns with lots of 'g' and Yorkshire tumbling about below! He gave me the controls and I asked him what I should do he said "just do me a few turns" I moved the stick over to the left and squeezed on some rudder. The aircraft did a kind of cartwheel and he yelled "What on earth have you been flying."? "Tiger Moths Sir" I replied. "Ah" he said "We don't use the rudder on these." As I then flew about then back to the airfield I thought how

beautifully easy it was to handle, sliding smoothly along with the sound like a distant vacuum cleaner coming from the engines. After re-joining the circuit he flew a few practise landings. I thanked him profusely for the trip but it had sort of rubbed in what I was going to miss. I hope that I thanked F/O Sherry as well. He was a gem.

Back home I started a night shift job at Wonder Loaf which was boringly repetitive feeding loaves into a slicing and wrapping machine with an isolated burst of vandalism when I'd re-feed a loaf back into the machine at a new angle before being wrapped! Hooligan! I'm sure it would have been a sacking offence. The new Clyde tunnel was being built and high rates of pay were earned by the men who worked in "the air".[compressed] Some were known to collapse after a shift but although I was not as strong as a "tunnel tiger" I knew that I was medically fit and it might pay towards more flying.

I was only given a surface job. What a job! I had to climb into the cement mixers; there was a yard full, which had half filled with hardened cement ,after continuous use in the tunnel.

Then clean them out with a hand pneumatic drill! I'm only slightly ashamed to say that after a week of ricocheting cement chunks I went away!

Then an idea came to mind. Why don't I try to get a job at the Airport? At least I'll be in among the action and see what's going on. I'd been in the modest control tower at Perth .So lets have a try at Renfrew's glittering edifice. Quite daunting it was with lots of glass offices on the ground, more on the next floor containing the approach control radar room, reaching up to be topped off with the huge octagonal control tower! I navigated my way haltingly to a glass door announcing the Air Traffic Control Officer i/c. To a "come in" I entered and announced "good morning sir. My name is Tony Henderson. I have a private pilots licence but want to work towards my commercial" then I dropped the bombshell. "Could I be a temporary controller until I built up the hours?" The man was called Eric Thompson and he nearly exploded with indignity! "Temporary controller ?" he said glaring at me. "You can go away now and if you study your Telegraph for the next few months you might apply for an assistants job." I made my escape and did indeed scan the newspapers until the advertisement appeared. I hadn't realised that the controllers considered themselves to be pretty up market guys! Most were ex navigators, some pilots and a few ex assistants who'd been slowly promoted.

After a fairly quick interview in London I was accepted and re-appeared at Eric's office; he gave me a fairly warm welcome! I sat in at to the various positions to familiarise myself with the staff and the duties for a week before starting a three week course at the Air Traffic Control School at Bournemouth in the south.

Accommodation was from a list of boarding houses and I shared a room with a chap from New Zealand and quite enjoyed the course. I needed to get some flying in to renew my P.P.L. so one Friday evening I went along to Christchurch Aero Club at the grass airfield nearby and met the Instructor Mr. Bernard. They had an Auster there. I needed a conversion to this side by side tail wheel trainer. After three circuits and landings he said to return on Monday for some more because he needed to get away. When I reappeared on Monday evening he said "Well you were o k the other day so off you go!!" I found this pleasantly surprising so I climbed in, did my checks {I thought} and taxied out for take off. Almost immediately on the take off run there was a big load on the stick as the aircraft tried to lie back and launch into the air without enough speed! I quickly looked up and discovered that the tail trimmer control that I'd MISSED was set fully back and I needed a third hand to reach the control. When I took my hand off the throttle it began to slip back.! I should have aborted

the take off but since my right leg wasn't doing anything I jammed it against the stick and that released my hand for a quick grab at the trimmer! The rest of the flight was uneventful and I returned, did a few more circuits then taxied in.

"First take off looked a bit ropey ?" He said when I came in. I confessed that I'd missed the trimmer but vowed never to miss that one again. I went back a few times in the evenings with a few of the other assistants on the course. They helped out with the finances and enjoyed some panic free flying sightseeing along the South coast!

Then back to Renfrew where I enjoyed settling in under supervision and found that I was more interested in the job than most of the others. In the flight clearance office where we would meet the crews and accept their flight plans. Big Robert appeared one day in second officer uniform. He had joined BEA, British European Airways. I preferred duty in the radar and approach control room where the three dimensioned operation unravelled or upstairs in the tower assisting the airfield controller. All very interesting except amending the documents in flight briefing! The national airlines, BEA and BOAC had started a flying college at Hamble a few years earlier but I hadn't applied because of my inadequate school

certs. Their graduated cadets began to appear as second officers and I studied them enviously.

I was still helping as a staff cadet which produced a few flights in the military chipmunk trainers but I was getting a bit long in the tooth to be a cadet. I did go for a weekends training with the Paratroopers Territorial Army up in the Gare Loch training ground with the thought of a parachute jump. We fired Bren guns, Bazookas, Sten guns and pistols. I blazed away with a pistol at a fairly close target and left it untouched! Much easier to saw it in half with a sten gun! It wasn't really my "cup of tea"!

Most dangerous but almost comical was the short visit to a concrete bunker where a short stocky Sergeant presented me with a hand grenade. My briefing was to pull out the pin, drop it and throw the grenade out of the wide open space window! As he stared at me suspiciously I nearly threw the pin out. You could tell that he was preparing to dive out himself! After this short visit to the Para's my mentor F/O Sherry introduced me to the c/o of the new cadets gliding school which had opened up at the Royal Naval Air Station ,H.M.S. Sanderling at Abbotsinch ,the next door airfield just a few miles north of Renfrew. I had been promoted to cadet Warrant Officer and helped out there at the weekends.

We used a winch or an Auto tow to launch the gliders to the restricted one thousand feet allowed by the Renfrew approach controllers. I did a circuit one day with an Instructor and got rather low and tried to circle and land by the take off point but really I was too low and slow and I landed the glider heavily. Just before landing I pressed both feet on the rudder pedals to protect my back but both pedals moved forward together and split the wooden skin of the glider slightly. I don't remember being actually sacked but there was a definite air of "non welcome". I think I had developed a slightly "bolshie" attitude after my R.A.F. failure!

Meanwhile I learned that my schoolmate Cedric Had failed his Officer training course, He had stayed in bed, missing a parade and had not paid enough attention to polishing his shoes! He had re-mustered as a sergeant air signaller ! I thought what a waste of good brains! Not to mention the wasted position on the pilot course that I would have happily given the rest of my teeth for!

Fortunately I'd kept on at the cadet air experience base which produced a few very welcome dual flights in the Chipmunk trainer. During that year [1960] I had visited Yorkshire Gliding Club at Sutton Bank. I was

made very welcome there during my short visits and worked for some free flying by driving the winch to launch the gliders. The bowl shaped cliff faces west and if the wind blows from the west you can stay up indefinitely. They even have a song which goes: "I've been flying in a tutor All through the night, Just because I cannot land it ,All through my fright"!

The resident flying instructor was Henry Doctor, a little Polish man who was a very friendly comedian and was immediately liked by all. He loved to fly with a ghetto blaster radio roaring out "compulsory" pop music to the Yorkshire countryfolk! One day when we were soaring the ridge his radio began to crackle as a huge black cloud darkened our sky. Suddenly hail belted down and Henry shouted "your having ze controls" and dived down under the cockpit coaming! As the hail battered me the vertical speed instrument [the vario] showed a steep rate of climb as this Cumulo Nimbus cloud began to suck us rapidly skyward.! The spoilers were insufficient to arrest this uncontrolled ascent so I rolled the glider over on its wing and FELL out of the darkness! When we levelled off and clear of the hail Henry reappeared and said "Are we all right?" with his comical expression! He was one of my favourite people! I wonder if he'd contributed to my "Bolshie attitude " It was a magic scenario though, even just driving the winch on a lovely summers day.

Launch the glider, gather up the cable, switch off and gaze at the countryside below. Some times even the crows would have a comical attempt at soaring!

That year I joined the Edinburgh flying club and the Turnhouse Air Centre who seemed to share a few aircraft. I managed a few flights with their instructors to supplement the few cadet flights. My last flight with the cadets was at East Fortune ,a deserted field while the runway at Edinburgh was being improved.

I had a few quid from my job in A.T.C. and was getting too old to remain a cadet! There was a civilian chipmunk there and I got checked out on a Piper Colt, high wing 3 seater, nose wheel aircraft. I was even, occasionally asked to ferry an aircraft through to Glasgow for maintenance. I was enjoying my A.T.C. job ,and had espied a pretty lady, also an assistant, I asked out for a date to the movies. I'd been neglecting my social life!

The crafty lady brought a friend along to sit between us while we watched her "look alike" in 'Breakfast at Tiffany's! I guess "Moon River" became our tune! My prospective lover was called Joan Vernon and the Lady "in between" was Jenny Warren. Both buddies and assistants ex airforce. Both had joined the ministry from the RAF quite recently before me. Joan had

spent an extra few months in the RAF to complete the athletics season .Jenny was keen on flying. Joan had joined the Bellahouston Harriers Athletics Club and went there training some evenings. One evening after meeting an ex cadet friend ,Ricky and slurping a few pints we went to visit the athletics club and view the activities. There was Joan throwing the javelin and the discus. I also noticed that there was a men's mile race about to start and lo and behold some of the runners were the fellows that I'd beaten at school a few years earlier! Here was a chance to show off! I joined the runners and off we went. Ouch! they set a cracking pace and it dawned on me that they had been training regularly for years. At the completion of one lap I ran off the track and collapsed on the grass. When I recovered and looked around there was no trace of Joan! Stupid boy! I didn't think to check their race time but it would have been a good deal quicker than that 4.59!

At this stage I had about 50 hrs in my log book and 10hrs gliding.

A new pilot appeared on the scene.

Capt. Duncan McIntosh AFC He flew a Piper Aztec for the Scottish Civil Engineering tycoon William Logan. I'd previously seen pictures of the Aztec and favoured it highly. It was a twin engined 5 or six seat executive machine and I lusted after a ride in it!

Very soon after this good news came some more .

"Mack", as everyone called him had also produced a high wing, nose wheel, three or four seater machine.

A piper Tri-pacer. Ideal for charter and club flying and really a larger edition of the Piper Colt which I had already flown. I made a beeline at the first opportunity to call round to his hanger hoping for a checkout! Mack happily showed me around the a/c and after two circuits and landings climbed out and I did two more. He was a jolly, friendly guy and although I was slightly in awe of him he was great to fly with and had the very typical "devil may care" attitude of the fighter pilots during the war. I happily paid for my flight and went away with the exciting knowledge that Mack intended to develop, in addition to the Logan executives flying, a general aviation airline "Logan Air" and some club flying . At my work place! Bingo!

Mack had previously been the chief test pilot for Miles Aviation at Shoreham who had developed the Miles 100. The Student. A high wing single jet, two seat,

executive trainer which he displayed at the Farnborough and Paris Airshows. Apparently the Jet Provost had pipped it in the procurement stakes.

About a week later Mack rang me in the briefing office. "Tony can you fly Austers?" Well it had been a year and a half ago but who would say no!

"I'm flying Mr Logan to Inverness. When you come off duty can you come with us, then I'll drop you off at Perth, you bring a non radio Auster down here and I'll radio you in." After confirming permission for this operation I managed to slope off duty and hurry round to the hanger. There I met Mr William Logan, Boss of Duncan Logan, Civil Engineering, Contractors who's registered office was at Muir of Ord, Rosshire. Just

West of Inverness. Willie was short, thick set highlander. I climbed into the back and with Mack flying and Willie in the right hand seat we were soon airborne and on course Inverness. Mack let Willie have control for a bit on the way up then me for a while down to Perth. I told the duty controller at Perth of our plan and climbed aboard the Auster G-AJIM. I didn't recognise then that this machine had a Glaswegian registration! JIM When I did the Mag drop, engine check, the drop in revs was too much. So there was a delay while one of the engineers cleaned out the spark plugs. For take off this time no problem

remembering the dreaded trim control but I did weave about a bit until becoming airborne and on the way to Renfrew.

Mack caught me up about halfway there and I followed him onto the approach where he went around and I landed fairly gently after. Success!

To preserve the continuity I flew 40 mins. the next day with Mack teaching me the use of the VHF navigation beacon receiver [vor] fitted to the tripacer. Then the next day I checked out a young off duty RAF pilot in the tripacer. I began to spend most of my off duty time at the hanger, washing aircraft and any odd job that I could do.

Flights started coming relatively thick and fast.

Mack took me on a Flight to the naval base at Lossiemouth where he picked up a charter to Newcastle and I was allowed to do most of the flying on the "empty" sectors. One of our local Business men Bob Bluck owned a Miles Gemini , a little tail wheel twin engined 4 seater and I scrounged a very "educational" flight with him. He didn't practise much so was a bit approximate! One of my typical outings was a flight to Inverness in the Tripacer again. This time with Jimmy Ingles who was a reporter/photographer for the Scotsman newspaper. Jimmy

was staying up there for some days and I had to go back for duty. So when we landed I scrounged a lift to Town then set off on the road south. Soon a little sports car appeared and I jumped in. The driver was a little American guy who, he drawled, was “doin Scotland” As we roared off down the road at high speed I wondered if perhaps Scotland might do us? He’d set off that morning from Newcastle and he dropped me off in Glasgow seeing not much more than the white line in the middle of the road which he fortunately remembered to keep left of! Speaking of driving I had just failed my first driving test {pilots licence concealed}! I’d done some lessons with British School of motoring. The instructor was fun, smoked my cigarettes and cracked a few jokes as I was allowed to zoom around Glasgow like a young hooligan !

Then one day a very different man appeared. He didn’t smoke nor crack any funnies and after a very short time told me to pull over. He then informed me that I must stop zooming, do things properly and that he had sacked the previous instructor!

When I was put up for the test my examiner was a pretentious, hyper formal, prat! “ Mr Henderson when I require an emergency stop I shall slap my briefcase”!

So later on as I cruised along at my 29mph I vaguely heard this slapping noise and wondered "What was that"?

Anyway the next test was ok with the examiners reasonable empathy. Life's progress revealed there were a few more prats lingering in waiting! Must try not to be one myself!

My girl friend had a Morris Minor and occasionally she risked it in my control! After some local test flying in another Auster G-AHHP I flew it up around the highlands to Inverness. Both Austers were owned by the Caithness flying club who operated between Inverness and Wick.

I vowed to join and take advantage of the 4pounds, 10 shillings per hour at some later stage. There was a good connection for some free flying as the maintenance was being done by Loganair at Renfrew.

After ferrying HP up to Inverness I had a ride down to Renfrew with Mack who had our tripacer there. As we flew along the cockpit began to fill with smoke so after pulling some circuit breakers to cut out the radio the air cleared and we landed at Perth and had the electrics checked out and put right. Thank God for engineers!

Having first flown with Mack at the beginning of September, it was two months later and Mack surprised me by saying " Would you like to borrow the Tripacer and take Joan home to the Isle of Man for the weekend". What a treat. We had the weekend off so Joan duly waited in best bib and tucker to be picked up on the Tarmac at the front of the Airport. I don't think she was too impressed when I came proudly, chugging and rattling around from the hanger to do the ceremonial pick up! Anyway the weather was good and we flew over Prestwick, down to the Mull of Galloway and across to RAF Jurby on the north west of the island. My passenger repeatedly demanded of me to report my position! Air Traffic Control were following us quite happily without me making a nuisance of my self! There was a customs man there ,specially from Ramsey about ten miles away, to supervise our arrival as the regulations required and after parking our machine in the RAF hanger we jumped onto the two bikes that Joan's mum had left in the hedge for us to ride the few miles down to Ballaugh Cronk! A slick if parochial operation! On future flights there we overflew Jurby and touched our wheels on the Ronaldsway runway," touch and go" to obviate the customs inconvenience! And report our "nothing to declare" on the radio! In those happy days landing fees were free to club flying aircraft.

Mr. and Ms. Vernon ,Sam and Leah ,were a pleasant couple and made me feel at home in their small cottage. They'd had a 20 acre smallholding which they had reduced in size over the years. Sam had been a turner in Lancashire until his health demanded a change and they had retired to the island with their two daughters Joan and Sadie. Sam's previous job was made obvious by the precision of his vegetable garden where he grew champion standard veggies. During the weekend stay Leah tried hard to overface me with her excellent cooking and I pleased Sam with the amount of driftwood planks etc. I'd retrieved from the beach during my local rambles. I noted a red telephone box across the road for possible future romantic communications! After a very pleasant stay we paid a small hangarage fee to the RAF and flew back to Renfrew bearing bags of produce. I'd about 70 hrs now in my log book.

My next venture into the air was to fly Mr Shroeder and his nurse to Islay in the west. We had to keep him at low level, not above 3 thousand feet and his nurse fed him lots of pills and frequently. He delighted in pointing out the various distilleries around the island that he owned and if you managed a nice smooth trip

he would give his awaiting driver the nod and he would present you with a lovely bottle of single malt Islay Mist. I very soon learned that scotch was not for me especially if downed with several pints of McEwans export beer!. I now knew the meaning of “shouting for Hughie on the big white telephone”!

I took JIM down to Prestwick where Scottish Aviation fixed the Radio and the next step was to deliver it back to the Caithness club at Inverness. I'd a few days off for the task. Jenny , who had by then taken up office duties at Loganair wished to come with me .I checked the weather and was assured of clear conditions but just the chance of a few small flurries of snow so off we went fortunately planning the low level route to the east around the hills. About halfway to Perth the snow “flurries” started thick and dense blotting out any forward visibility and with the complete lack of blind flying instruments I was hard pushed to maintain control. Turning back by then was not any safer option so with just a bit of sight of the ground vertically underneath we turned right when reaching the river Tay .I thought of landing at Errol where I'd been before. Tom Blyth had taken me there during my Tiger training to practice a few runway landings. Jenny was very good not to panic and I was trying to make

comforting noises though not sure how convincingly! Errol appeared and I then changed the plan to following the river and land at Riverside Park at Dundee where there was some civilization. I did and landed with a sigh of relief in between the goal posts and the large pools of frozen water. We taxied in and as darkness was threatening soon in this February weather we parked the aircraft nose into the recessed pavilion and stayed there to guard the aircraft through the night. The next day was clear and I had to spend most of it trying to hand swing the propeller with Jenny working the controls. But JIM wouldn't play and we had to wait until Mack arrived in the Aztec with Bob Foster, his engineer. Bob removed the aforementioned plugs, and after put them on the electric heater to thaw them out and hey presto JIM awoke and I could continue with the delivery. Jenny sensibly elected to fly back to Renfrew with the chaps! The dreaded snow had another attempt at me nearing Aberdeen and I followed the coast at low level using "vertical sight" navigation. I suddenly flew very close to a lighthouse and It wasn't until later that I remembered two white blobs at the window which suddenly went flesh coloured. It was two white hats changing to two astonished coastguard faces looking up as flashed over their tower! After a bit the snow stopped and I finished off the delivery. The Controller

at Inverness, Dalcross airport Bunny Crane was an instructor in the club and welcomed me, listened to the tale of my adventures and informed me that most of east Scotland had been blotted out with snow. I had arranged to stay with Bunny for about a week to fly

JIM around Scotland to boost my 100 hours now in my log book. My Mother had somehow managed to save 400 pounds to "lend" me to advance 'Biggles' progress! So with Mack's help in using me and whatever non judicious scrounging I could muster up I was progressing. I'd asked Mack's advice on log book entries. Pilot in charge, second pilot, pilot under training? All had official annotations but Mack was probably the wrong guy to ask! "Well" he said "your doing all the flying so stick it in as P1 {in charge} "

No one at the Ministry of Civil aviation had objected so far until later someone picked it up and a flurry of blotted byro smudged my log book. Reminded me of my erstwhile home work! But at least it wasn't red!

That afternoon I met David Smart who was the Chief Flying Instructor at Wick and worked at Doonray power station. David flew JIM up to Wick and I returned the aircraft to Inverness with a genuine one hour P3 [pilot under training] and a good nights sleep

at Bunny's after my adventures. The next morning I laughed when Bunny showed me the newspaper, Scotland blanketed by snow!

Tony is saved by the Tay! and Only a fire engine stood by! Eh? I didn't see one!

I spent the next week popping in and out of Dalcross, Aberdeen, Newcastle etc. without further drama. I felt adventurous one day and flew out to the Hebrides.

Benbecula and on to Stornaway. The wind sprang up to at least 30kts and the controller, Jill; also a pilot, said to hold for a few minutes and she turned out the stalwart fire men. They formed a circle down into which I flew the Auster, full flap, minimum safe speed with power and as I landed they reached up and held me down on the ground! Great team work! Jill had a bunch of girl guides visiting and they scanned the horizons for other traffic with forlorn hope! Jill at some later stage actually took a command on Comet aircraft with Danair. After a cup of tea and another very short ground run I flew back to Wick where I picked up David and on down to Inverness and yet another official P3 hour in my book! Another day or so's solo venturing and I fitted in with Mack on an Aztec flight from Inverness to Renfrew via Dundee. Dundee was rapidly becoming a recognised airport

and now I believe is Dundee International. Mack demonstrated to me the short field take off technique at Dundee. Fine pitch, half flap, full power and you could drag it off the ground at very slow speed while it hung ,just in the air, until speed built up then away it would go. A great little aircraft for rough, short field operation where Loganair would test it to its limits.

Apparently I was beginning to test my on duty watch time to its limits! I had on more than one occasion managed to asked a colleague to stay on duty for me to cover my absence. I always gave a good bargain for these swaps but one or two of our senior lady assistants didn't approve and I was reported to "guess who" That's it! My boss Eric. This resulted in me having to show my actual presence on duty at shift beginning! I came off an early watch one mid day and Jimmy Ingles had flown off to the Isle of Sky with one of his photographers. The island had erupted in an extensive bush fire. When I arrived at the hanger two others, Movie Tone News and the BBC, had arranged to repeat the trip and I was the available pilot. When Jimmy returned he had taken some good shots but, he complained, mostly from fairly high altitude. Anyway off we went and to break their monotony on the way the photographers took some picture of yours truly! In fact the flight up to Skye was quicker than I expected because of the very strong tail wind. The Scottish flight

Information service were broadcasting radio warnings of severe turbulence below 6 thousand feet. Soon we arrived, the Cuillin mountains still visible in the smoke. To please the two photographers I descended to 5 thousand. Then 4; no turbulence then cautiously down in continuous descent until we were flying through the raging smoke and fumes as the bracken and gorse crackled and raged around us! It was quite exciting but I kept an eye on any available spaces where we might need to put the machine if the engine suddenly stopped! Also It crossed my mind not to stay too long because it might be a long flight back to base? We climbed back up to about 7thousand feet on the way home, pleased at the scoop photography but not at the obviously slow ground speed. Fortunately my two passengers were happily unaware of what might become a problem!

As we began to clear the high ground I descended again to get out of the headwind and flew very low up the Clyde estuary to arrive on a short base leg and expeditious approach and landing on Renfrew's welcome Tarmac. It had been a successful mission but flying low burns more fuel and It might have been an embarrassing calculation to prove a better plan!

My duty that day had been an E.N.T. ie. Early, night, tower. A morning shift ending at lunchtime. Followed by a night shift in the Control Tower starting at 9pm. I'd been on duty for less than half an hour when one of the phones on my desk rang. A bit of a surprise. It was my Boss Eric in his usual explosive mode. "The next time you fly commercial flights on that private pilots licence Tony. Do not be photographed!!

It seems that I'd pitched up on the 9 o'clock BBC news! and disturbed Eric's tranquillity at home. Oh well we'd got better pictures than the Scotsman! Next day in the hanger, the engineer Bob said "there wasn't a lot of fuel in the tripacer when I refuelled it last night?" In fact there had been about 4 gallons. Not too bad after a 3hrs 20 min trip.

A few weeks later one of my friends said that he'd seen me in the cinema on some newsreel. Oh well

Fame at last!

For the next month I concentrated on cross country flights around the UK in the Auster. Log book figures now looked like 120. Then after another month I had flown lots of trips in the Aztec with Mack and in addition to flights in the Tripacer. I had some instruction with Bob Drummond at Edinburgh in the civilian chipmunk. One exercise would start off with

amber screens fitted and me wearing blue goggles which prevented me from seeing out of the cockpit.

The drill was have checks complete, line up on the runway, pull on the goggles and last of all uncage the directional gyro to help accurate indications to help steer down the centre line . I forgot to uncage the D/G

After a few seconds I realised, my boob! I'd seen the turn and slip instrument move to show a slight turn to the right so I corrected an estimated amount to the left. Both hands were too engaged for any other moves and I was glad when I unstuck into the air and began my turn into the circuit. Then I stupidly asked Bob "What heading do you have now Bob"? He realised then the reason for my slightly zig zag departure and yelled "are you trying to bloody kill me?" The rest of the flight was completed without further drama. I really learned a lot with Bob doing these instrument flights. Sometimes we were flying for two hours on instruments doing recovery from unusual attitudes where Bob would put the a/c upside down, falling without airspeed etc. Anything to confuse.! And I'd have to pull or push to get airspeed then level off under control and await the next manoeuvre! We'd usually finish off with a practise radar app which Bob would simulate from his visual

position in the back seat. Hard work! But very good value.

On one of my Edinburgh visits usually ferrying a club aircraft I had a quick checkout on a Champion Tri Traveller. I can't remember what one looked like but it was still another a/c in the book! Yet another educational trip in the Bluck Miles Gemini and lots more flights with Mack in the Aztec.

There was an Auster at Sunderland's Airfield, Usworth

So I travelled down in various trains to pick it up and fly it back to Renfrew for maintenance. Then It would go North to Caithness. After a short test flight in the evening I night stopped and took off in the morning to land at Carlyle. The plan was to meet up with two pilots from Wick and fly south to the Annual Air Rallye

at Jersey In the Channel Islands. I needed a x-country of over 300 nautical miles as one of my Commercial Licence requirements. As I cleared the runway at Carlyle there was a man busily hoeing potatoes just clear of the runway and when I pulled open my window and yelled "Is this Carlyle Crosby"? he briefly nodded the affirmative and carried on hoeing!

David Smart and the other club member, Andrew, dually arrived and after securing the other Auster in the hanger we three set off for Bristol Lulsgate where

we would do a customs cleared departure for Jersey. Conditions were a bit bumpy and poor Andy was sick most of the way. The flying went into my log book as instructional and we crossed the finishing line at Jersey just a little behind our flight planned schedule. I'll never forget taxiing in and as the propeller stopped and I opened my door someone handed me a pint of beer! Magic!

The weekend continued much in that jolly atmosphere as more and more assorted aircraft arrived. I don't think we scored very highly for the 'hors concours' as Andrew had rather painted our scruffy, old fashioned little Auster with his long jettisoned highland breakfast! The airfield was covered with an amazing assortment of Aircraft from all over UK and France. A lady called Sheila Scott who had arrived in a top of the market Piper Commanchee won most of the honours . The next day as we wandered around St Helier lots of a/c were airborne circling the island. Suddenly ,as it regularly happens, the sea fog clamped a thick blanket on the island and lots of machines had to divert from their circuit and land in France! I remember the picture of the celebration banquet which had many blank places at table! It didn't deter our party mood and next day instead of leaving we voted for another evening in Jersey.

The Jersey Control Zone was normally Instrument flight rules only ,this formality dropped for the Rallye, however our Auster G-AJIM only had a radio with 4 channels. So it was incumbent of me to go and ask the ATC watch supervisor for permission to have a special VFR [visual rules] clearance until we departed the Jersey zone. Our snag was the lack of a Jersey frequency in our small selection. I pointed out that we did have 121.5 which is the international emergency frequency. "No problem old boy " the jolly man exclaimed! Give us a shout on 121.5!" A man after my own heart. I wonder what "you know who" would have said? So we got taxi, take off, on route clearance and a farewell adieu on the sacred 121.5 !!

We had a good flight back to clear customs at Bristol.

Then the next leg to Carlyle was uneventful with Andrew more comfortable! The "highlanders" then went off in their machine and I flew the leg to Renfrew, ears ringing with engine noise, in time to go on my nightshift duty having completed my required 300+ kn mile trip.

Later that month an Information circular appeared in our Briefing Mail. It was titled The misuse of 121.5 by light aircraft crossing the English Channel! As I quietly

and conscientiously filed it in the appropriate folder ,I hoped that Boss Eric didn't read it!

Things were happening back in the hanger shortly afterwards. Mack had secured a few contracts. One with the Army for flying at Benbecula and a contract with the newspaper group to transport the daily papers to Stornaway. Another Aztec was being delivered and another Pilot was due to arrive.W.T.L. John, a Welshman, pitched up shortly. Lynne had been employed by Mack previously at Shoreham and he considered him a first class pilot. Lynn was a friendly fellow, sympathetic to my requirements and straight away allowed me to accompany him on one of our more exciting trips. We flew up to Benbecula, picked up an army quartermaster and ,loaded up with essential supplies, set off to the Island of StKilda about 40 miles North West. The luggage compartment in the Aztec had a flap, upward opening ,door and if opened in flight it maintained the horizontal position in the slipstream allowing packets to be jettisoned out to freefall. The first few runs had been done from about 300ft. The progress reports were not good for accuracy since it took some soldiers about a day to climb down a rocky chasm to retrieve the supplies. Somebody remarked that the package was toilet

paper! But hopefully that was a joke! It was then tried at almost ground level climbing over the grassy top of the island, the drop zone, with half flap and slow speed. Accuracy was such that really essential supplies such as a couple of heavily wrapped bottles of scotch were dropped successfully at Christmas!

Another exciting ride was to pop down to the South Uist Rocket range nearby and provide the radar trackers with some practise. This meant diving down to pick up speed then pull up steeply to simulate a departing rocket! Lynn enjoyed these swoops and dives but I was glad he didn't insist that I performed any! Just flying the Aztec back to Renfrew and a smooth landing was a big enough treat for me.

The other Outer Hebridean mission was delivering the papers. I would pop out to the airfield very early and load the bundles of papers into the Aztec behind the front seats always hoping that the load would allow me to go along! On arrival at Stornoway I would off load the papers, refit the seats which were then on offer for the ride to Renfrew, one way 5 pounds! The few customers we had loved the scenic trip which was often varied slightly by popular request! Each bundle was marked with a wt. mark of 10 or 20lbs. One day when the operation was cancelled due to thick fog the bundles were to be delivered that evening by B.E.A.

the scheduled airline. The bundles were weighed and proved to be much heavier! After sorting that out with the newspaper despatchers the little aircraft leapt of the ground with newfound energy!

I now had nearly 200 hrs in my book and thought was given to picking up some official qualifications.

Lynn still had his course notes which he lent me. He'd done a correspondence course with Avigation College in Elstree, London. Without corresponding I could sweat out the exercises and check the problems with the answers.

But swotting had never been my forte. Especially after crack of dawn reveille for a hopeful flight. The main blessing was that I could have two resits on each subject for examination. I did utilise this facility more than once. My trusty girl friend Joan had sold her car and bought a two roomed tenement apartment [this with bathroom!] in Linthouse which was on the bus route to the Airport and I spent most of my swotting time there, snoozing over my notes, when she and her good friend Jess were out ,working or at the movies etc. Coincidentally Jess, who had been buddies with Joan in the RAF, actually came from Muir of Ord where Logan's headquarters were. She was sometimes given a lift up home on one of the frequent

Loganair visits. The Aztec would be skilfully landed on local sports ground which was quite short.

The surface was hard with a mossy covering, frequently wet and sometimes in calm conditions a special technique was used to avoid running off the end. On touchdown the brakes would be applied but only on one side and the opposite engine given a burst of power. This would swing the sturdy little machine round to face the opposite direction. Then the application of "forward power" arrested the landing distance! I'll bet that some of the locals would think that to be "operations normal"! I've witnessed this feat once when Mr Logan was getting anxious and calling out "turrn it rrrroon" "turrn it rrrroon!". To add to the comical aspects was that close on either side of the landing run were the sports ground, brick built toilets. Gents on the left Ladies on the right! I'm glad I was never asked to perform this manoeuvre.

Lynn had told me about friend at Shoreham who owned a Gemini aircraft and who'd probably let me fly my 'B' rating exam quite cheaply. So after my next night shift in the tower I jumped on the early flight to London. I had to stand on the train ride to Shoreham, strap hanging in the train with the weekenders. By the time I reached the flying club I just wanted to sleep so curled up in a chair in the corner hoping not to be

noticed. No such luck! Someone gave me a shake and said "You must be Tony?" It was the owner of the machine Frank Hewitt.

A friendly chap but wanting to get on! We climbed into the Gemini GAJZO and as we did our checks I was very glad of the couple of trips I'd had with good old Bob Bluck. We did some circuits and landings and some asymmetric flying. Essential practise on a twin when one of the engines fails. Though in the ancient Gemini single engine flight was mostly downhill! Frank seemed reasonably happy so he introduced me to the aged examiner Mr. C. L. Pashley. I never found out the old boys age but as I very carefully slid him up the sloping surface of the low wing, tail wheel little twin I reckoned that his PPL number wouldn't have been much more than one! Anyway in he got and off we went for some circuits, landings and the almost downhill single engine flying.

He was quite a nice man to fly with and when we returned and we climbed off the aircraft he said "That was OK. I'll sign you up for a "B' licence. That was old fashioned terminology for a twin rating. I'm glad he didn't examine my log book to see all the "in charge" entries I had in my twin flying. Mind you since he knew McIntosh I think he would have understood!

With the paperwork out of the way I paid my small fee. Suddenly I was introduced to another pilot, I can never recall his first name ; either Piwi or Kiwi Judge and I was welcomed as one of "Mack's boys." I didn't know whether to feel imposter or proud. I tried to start explaining that I was just a "hanger on" when he said "sorry old boy, I'm just off to do some flying"! and off he rushed.

Shortly after that came a jet engine whine and a beautiful little aeroplane taxied out and zoomed into the blue to perform a very excellent aerobatic display .

We had quite a party in the clubhouse then, during which I learned that he had been Mack's assistant test pilot on this ,the Miles 100. The Student.

Frank Hewitt kindly invited me to stay with him that night and told me that there was a pilot coming to pick up an aircraft to fly back to Scotland the next day. He might give me a lift. Hospitality indeed!

Next late morning I wandered into the club house and said hello to a chap in a suit leaning against the bar.

I introduced myself and asked if he was flying could I bum a ride back to Scotland ." Have you got any maps" he said and I assured him I had. He said OK you

can navigate. Do you want a drink? When I said no thanks he shrugged and ordered another whiskey.

He then picked up the 'phone and dialled a number for Prestwick Air Traffic ,I think , and said we would be there at 3 o'clock! Then we walk the short distance to the hanger where the engineers were just finishing off their checks on the aircraft. A Prestwick Twin Pioneer!

Wow! Big stuff after yesterday's Gemini. A few minutes later as we taxied out one engine ran down followed by the other one. "F... it" He said. "I told the Buggers not to turn that off" He climbed into the back and returned shortly to restart the engines and without further ado we got airborne and set course North. Strangely enough I felt quite relaxed. It was a lovely clear day and the route home was quite obvious. He very soon said "well you can fly it"

And I did for the next 2.5 hours all the way flying to the North, around the Manchester control zone, visual rules all the way to Prestwick. 3 more hours in the book. I did entered it as second pilot. Legal! When he bumped the machine onto the runway at Prestwick it was exactly 3-oclock! I later learned that he was the Bill Bright ,the pilot who ferried a twin Britain Norman "Islander "out to Australia on a sales mission! I think he sold some.

One short trip had an abrupt ending. I was just finishing my shift in the flight clearance office and a helicopter pilot gave me his flight plan to fly out to the north. All ok and I went off duty. As I crossed the tarmac on a short cut home I saw him starting up. I gave a low level wave and indicated to take me up. He waved an agreement and off we lifted with that standard helicopter lounge forward and off over the fields. When I'd got the taste of it I asked to be let down. He promptly popped down into what I took to be a small field ,I popped out and he leapt off again on his way.

Then I suddenly thought “ big house, big garden, What have they usually got? Big Dog! So I took a quick run and vaulted over the gate and got the next bus safely away!

During that year I flew a little French aircraft, an Emeraude which was in for servicing. Nice machine with elliptical wing tips which gave a very crisp rate of roll like a spitfire. Just a few flights but I was to fly one again years later.

Another aircraft appeared. A Piper 180 Cherokee for club flying and local transport. It was a beauty with plenty of power and short take off ability even with 4 people.

We had another trip to Joan's with some colleague friends to split the cost so with all this activity and the Aztec trips my total hours were above 250.

I was still finishing off my written exams for the commercial licence but went out straight from my work for an evening with my friends; guys I'd known in the cadets. We had a love of modern jazz and we spent a good time at a place called the "Cave" It was an old deserted, probably condemned tenement building ,where in the late evening the musicians from around town would congregate after their gigs and relax by playing their favourite music.

We had consumed a lot of beer and when we set off to go home we came passed a late night coffee stall.

After a burger and coffee I thought of a "good" contest . How high can you kick a plastic coffee cup up in the air? They were quite robust cups and seemed to go undamaged. After a few rounds I suddenly realised that we hooligans were horrifying the small collection of late nighters at the stall so I called a halt ,collected the cups and returned them to the stall with an apologetic cringe at the vendor.

I awoke next morning, or later that morning with a nasty hangover. Then the real horror struck. I had come away from the airfield to meet my friends with

my small briefcase which was never far from me, containing my precious log book and licence! It had vanished! While I was conducting a search around the pubs we'd been in I made my second mistake. I told Joan of my misfortune! Stupid boy! She was more than "not amused " After a full search including the "cave" I was despairing but called by the coffee stall at opening time that evening to grovel and check out the last straw, the vendor. He gave me a very long look then slowly reached under his counter and very slowly produced the briefcase! "Your bloody lucky you collected those cups or you'd never have seen this again" he scowled! I thanked him profusely and made my way thankfully home. I later found out that my lovely lady had seriously considered dumping me.

Mack was using me more frequently to fly short photography trips which I enjoyed and I remember pleasing the photographers by getting into good positions for their shots. Sometimes we'd be low level over the middle of Glasgow with the cameras clicking away and I would be studying some side street which would come in handy if the motor stopped!

The Ark Royal aircraft carrier was anchored in the Gareloch and as I flew along a few feet above the deck with a young lady photographer hanging out of the

Tripacer I was sorely tempted to touch the wheels for a deck landing!

Strangely enough I hadn't thought of applying to the navy to fly fast jets onto carriers. Perhaps the nautical bit hadn't appealed. One weekend I flew to the Naval base at Arbroath for photography of the Scottish Parachute Jumping Championships. The competitors stood by the door of a Dragon Rapide; like the one I had been ejected from at Renfrew, awaiting their turn to jump. They gave quite astonished looks at the Tripacer formatting just outside the door! I met some navy officers when I was having lunch in the ward room but seemed to puzzle the Captain by refusing a glass of gin, saying "Sorry Sir but I'm flying later". Eh?

A new pilot had joined us to help Mack with the increased business. Ken Foster from the RAF. Ken was a helpful guy and, although keen on the photography, seemed to understand my position, so didn't mind me doing some of the photo flying.

I wandered into the hanger on morning before my duty later and all three were sitting around looking slightly board. Most unusual I thought.

"There is one short flight you can do Tony" somebody said. "Take that box and dump the contents over Govan" There was a green metal box with a label announcing someone's cremated remains. So the

mission understood I marched off with the box containing "Joe Bloggs" [sorry Joe for the familiarity!] and after my checks on the Tripacer set course for Govan, 5 minutes flying away. I trimmed the aircraft carefully so that it would fly sideways, opened the window just the correct amount and when over the target I opened the box! There was a kind of explosion; perhaps implosion would be more appropriate and almost every bloody molecule of Joe came in with a rush, dusting me with a good coating which left me peering through the gritty fog! I can still feel the grit between the teeth! Sorry Joe! I hoped some of him made it but there was a fair bit to dust off the aircraft and me when I landed. There were a few not very well concealed smiles around the hanger. Stupid boy!

Still 'another 10 minutes in the book.

As I arrived at the hanger one morning Lynn was preparing the Aztec for flight and he said to me "can you ring up Fort William and tell them were coming"

We were to pick up Mr Logan and the phone call was necessary to get the farmer to move the highland cattle off the landing strip. I had the controls as we

passed by Oban and I started to turn to prepare an approach. Lynn said 'Where are you going?' Suddenly the penny dropped. I had phoned the wrong airfield. Anyway we were soon approached the strip at Fort William. Logans were working on the Fort William Pulp mill and a short strip at Camiskey on the Great Glen Cattle Ranch had been bulldozed "Level". There were lots of highland cattle lying about! Lynn began to buzz them at very low level with the propellers out of synchro for the extra noise. But all we got were slow raising of heads as the big shaggy beasts gave their bovine look of disapproval as they munched the cud!

We soon gave up and set course back to Oban where after landing I trotted off to find a telephone and send the correct message. We managed to be in position for Mr Logan in time to meet his arriving car. I think there was always a worry that the aircraft might not be available at short notice for Mr Logan or one of his executives. I called by one day and Mr Logan was there but no pilot there for the task. So I got the Tripacer out and Willie I think reluctantly climbed in. When we were on course for Fort William, having made the correct phone call, I asked if he wanted to handle the controls as he frequently did. But not on this occasion! The strip there had been bulldozed clear near some sloping ground and after a period of rain some streams had formed across the strip making it

very uneven. I managed to touch down short of one then get partially airborne again over the next shallow stream at very slow speed and come to a halt before the next! I think Willie was relieved, jumped into the awaiting car and off he went before witnessing my departure.

I performed the reverse hopping procedure and flew thankfully away. Jenny later told me that Mack had arrived and asked where the Tripacer was. When she told him that I had left with Mr. Logan to go to the infamous Fort William strip he was horrified and exclaimed "Good God he'll prang it"

I wonder why he said nothing to me when I returned quietly triumphant!

Not long after that Mack was to take Mr Logan and two others to a business conference in Dublin and Willie asked Joan if she would like him to drop her off in the Isle of Man on the way. They would be returning in two days and could pick her up. Lovely! So off they went. As I walked past the marshalls hut at Renfrew on my way to park Willie's car I heard a discussion on the control tower radio. Apparently the Ronaldsway airport on the island would be closed and they re-planned to overfly on to Dublin. So Joan was

stuck with a night in Dublin and poor Mack had to fly her to the island next morning instead of having a day off. Mack thought I would be annoyed and wondered if I might take Willie's jaguar out for a vengeful spree.

Not I. The Dublin night stop went by OK and the conference resulted in Logan's winning the contract to build the Tay Road Bridge!

I wondered if a new bridge would effect Mack's amazing procedure for finding the airstrip at Dundee's Riverside Park when the east coast was blanked out by the Harr; the almost ground level fog which comes of the North Sea in the early summer. He demonstrated this one morning as we went to pick up a charter ;the Mayor of Medicine Hat ,no less.

Mack called up RAF Leuchars who would oblige by giving Mack a talk let down using their precision approach radar. The difference was that he would be guided out to sea until visual with the sea, usually at a few hundred feet when he would then do a shallow turn left back to the Tay estuary. He then flew along the right bank until the rail bridge came into view, close up almost hitting it, pop up into the low cloud, count about 3 seconds, pop down and Hey Presto the landing strip! A magic piece of flying not to be

attempted by any less skilled ,perhaps ordinary mortals!

Since my courtship with Joan , now well over a year, had suffered no more hiccups we agreed to tie the knot and enter respectability!

We borrowed 500 pounds from Joan's Mum, reckoning we could pay it back with one years salary and survive on the other one. So once again it was the room, kitchen and bathroom. Ideal for starting off. This one was upstairs from the one she had shared with her friend Jess. Another colleague joined Jess. When the arrangements were looking good Joan flew

off home the day before on Aer Lingus with two of the bridesmaids,

I followed in the Cherokee with my best man, colleague Brian and two others. On the wedding morning Mack arrived with my family and we managed to get together for the service, conducted nicely by the Rev. Mr. Platt at the tiny old Church, St Mary's de Ballaugh at the cronk which was about a hundred yards from Joan's family cottage. She walked hand in hand with her Dad as the local kids held ropes across the road for them to step over! The tiny church was fairly full with three bridesmaids and about twenty congregation. The Reverend Mr Platts conducted the ceremony. The organ was played by a local friend. All went smoothly and the sun shone brightly for a 25th of January day.

We then had the wedding breakfast at the small hotel, the Ravensdale Castle up in the glen and the usual speeches were enjoyed [I think]. I was in a bit of a daze but managed to stumble through various thanks to the team!

Good old Mack had helped greatly driving the hire car as well as the flying. I was really enjoying my second pint of beer when my new father in law reminded me with a shock that I had to fly back to Renfrew!

So off we went to Ronaldsway to depart for home. My wife sat in the back with Ricky ,a good friend and Brian and I in the front.

One of our friendly Manx controllers had amended our Cherokee call sign GASFL to “honeymoon foxtrot lima”! ‘F L’ ?

The weather forecast was dreadful from the North west coast to the Mull of Galloway, low cloud base but then good weather up to Prestwick and on to Glasgow. As dark had fallen I briefed Brian where to look out for the lighthouse and from our level he should look up! It dawned on me years later that we should have worn life jackets for the 20 mile crossing because there wouldn't have been much time if the engine had stopped. I did catch a sneak glance behind and ‘the wife’ was smiling contentedly The Mull of Galloway lighthouse shone suddenly. The weather opened up and the rest of the flight was beautiful. When we arrived there were a few reporters asking questions of our flying honeymoon plans to which Joan replied “touring Scotland by car.” I recollect spending most of our week off in our new pad and in bed.

One evening in bed we were discussing the boarding house that I had stayed in on my ATC. course and we found that not only had I picked the same house to

stay in but had picked the very same bed that she had used while on the course! How was that for a bit of pre destiny?

My Mother's contribution to the nuptials was to let me off with the 400pounds she'd loaned me for flying; very gratefully accepted!

Soon it was back to the routine mixture of flying the various types when not at work.

I scrounged a good trip with Ken. We flew down to Warton in Lancashire to pick up some B.A.C. executives and flew them to Wisley in the South. The VC 10 aircraft was being worked on. The aircraft had to be removed from its hanger, the wingtips fitted then after a short test flight it returned

and the wing tips were removed so that it would fit back in. I reckoned that its competitor the Boeing 707 would probably have taxied in and out its hanger!

But the VC10 was a magnificent machine, a real pilots aeroplane. It was designed for the hot and high airfields. However its fuel burn figures were much more than the Boeing.

Back at Renfrew I was flying a lot co-piloting the Aztec and checking out visiting pilots on our aircraft. Young Gilbert Fraser, a mechanic from Logan's northern base was learning to fly and I had a few trips supervising as he practised some cross country. A fellow called Charlie Ross worried me quite a bit as I checked him out on the Emeraude. It wasn't the fact that he had tin legs but the way he insisted on lighting up fags and the petrol gauge ,two feet in front of us bubbled away! I didn't think criticism would achieve much. He flew the aircraft well enough and we didn't blow up! I had an interesting Tripacer trip to assist Charlie a few months later. He had flown a glider from Scotland to Ulster and I had to take a pair of Gerry cans of petrol across to refuel the tiger moth which would tow the glider back. I landed on Toome Airfield, just on the west bank of Loch Neagh. In the triangular middle of the airfield was a brick factory with bricks stored high and

dusty. In among this stood a brand new Cessna aircraft covered in dust and one of the chaps there told me that the owner ,who owned the airfield also was learning to fly by asking any passing pilots to take him up for a go! Well ! much as I'd always want to help out a fellow aviator I dropped off my cans off fuel and scarpered without delay. There was just something a bit weird about the scenario. I never did hear but I'm sure Charlie got back.

The photographic scene at Edinburgh was getting busier as work on the Forth road bridge advanced

My hours in the log book were coming up to 300 and I went back to Perth to do a few trips with the Airwork instructors in their chipmunk in preparation for my Commercial Licence test. I had looked in on the ground school to polish off a few mysteries in the written papers! Which were now resits completed.

Another flight of infamy cropped up when with another assistant I flew the Cherokee up to Aberdeen to fly some young ladies in the Women's Junior Air Corps for air experience. The girls enjoyed the short flights which went off happily but as there had been an outbreak of cholera in town my visit was frowned upon. There were no repercussions.

Meanwhile back at Loganair Lynn John had decided to marry his girl friend Avis and a great binge was enjoyed in the office that evening.

Two weeks later my flight test date had arrived. I flew the tripacer over to Edinburgh then on up to Perth.

Late morning I had short flight with an Airwork instructor rehearsing some instrument manoeuvres.

Then I met the examiner C.S. [Charlie] Spence who seemed friendly enough! As I went around the chipmunk I was rattling off the checks like a machine gun until Charlie stopped my tirade and told me to relax and slow down. Checks complete and off we went on a cross country flight ,setting course for Prestwick. Half way to Prestwick he ordered a diversion to Edinburgh where after we took some bearings from Air Traffic for homing purposes we fitted the amber screens and goggles for some instrument work. That seemed to pass OK and we set course back to Perth for a couple of circuits and landing to finish our 1hr.50min trip. I'd passed!

He then asked me if I had noticed en route that the engine revs had dropped slightly a few times. I had but had eased on a tiny bit of power to replace this. Then I had removed it shortly afterwards.

“There was probably some carburettor icing in the air today” he said and warned me to always look out for that possibility and use some carburettor heat. I thanked him profusely; some other guy might have failed me. Back at Renfrew Lynn confirmed this presence because he’d had some ; very unusual in the Aztec, when flying nearby.

The next step on the qualifications trawl was the night rating. I hadn’t done much night flying but found it simple enough. Perhaps the hours I had spend in the control tower looking out at the airfield’s runways had simplified it. The Ministry of Aviation pilots, the CAFU [Civil Aviation Flying Unit] had recently declared that night flying in single engine aircraft was not a good practise so the test had to be conducted in in their De Haviland Dove machine at their base at Stansted Airport. My booking was at the end of a planned two weeks holiday in the Isle of Man. I found an old set of pilots notes for the Dove and jotted down some numbers. Boost setting for the throttles and RPM setting for the propellers. I hadn’t flown boost before but reckoned it was only numbers! And off we went to Joan’s place for the two weeks hols.

When the due date arrived I set off and caught the really early boat from the island. The bad news started with pretty dense sea fog and as the boat crawled

along towards Liverpool there were two crewmen at the front staring into the fog. I thought all they were going to see was what we would hit! Anyway we arrived at Liverpool safely but after many hours. When I reached London I telephoned to apologise and estimate my late arrival for the test.

My examiner Mr. Whitehead suggested that after such a journey I should find accommodation that night and sit the test tomorrow. With my best grovel I explained that Mack was picking me up next day at Blackbush Airport and If he didn't mind could we possibly fly the test tonight? He kindly agreed. So I arrived very late! I'd never been in a Dove before so while my examiner went around to do the outside checks I sat in the left hand seat and looked around the cockpit. When I found the undercarriage lever I had to find out how to operate it so I looked back into the rear cabin where another CAFU pilot sat and caught his attention. "How do I raise the gear? Do I pull it and twist or do I twist it then pull? I asked. I think I was in his bad books already with my late arrival. He just frowned at me then looked away! Thanks Mate! I placed my notes up on the coaming and when my examiner sat in I read out the checklist and we started the engines. When we started to taxi out I found the steering very tricky with pneumatic brakes quietly hissing and a fully castoring nose wheel.

In fact at one stage the aircraft slowly castored all the way round until we faced the opposite direction!

I asked "do you mind if you taxi it Sir" "Yes I think I will" he agreed! I felt that I wasn't doing very well! When we got take off clearance from the tower I slowly opened up the power and my bit of paper with the numbers on took off and gently flew away back in the cabin. Oh well I thought I'll do it by sound!

When we left the ground I found out how to retract the undercarriage and settled the propellers to a reasonable noise. As soon as we climbed to circuit height and turned to start my circuit of the airfield It felt lovely to handle and I called out loud. "Wow this is a beautiful machine" A few after take off checks and begin to start the approach for my first landing. Checks complete I lowered flap and lowered the wheels and started down to the huge, well lit Stansted runway. Props. Into fine pitch and settle down the power for the landing. As I neared the ground I began to gently ease off the power, back with the stick, wait for the ground contact. After quite a wait and the speed very slow the stick was way back almost in my chest and it dawned on me that we had been on the ground for quite some time!! A complete greaser!!

Off again for another two circuits and landings; this time good but not quite as smooth. I felt fairly happy

and maybe I'd rescued the earlier shambles as I sat in the back while the other pilot did some asymmetric practise. Then we returned to the apron ,shut down the aircraft and headed for the office. The other pilot went away. Mr Whitehead sat opposite me in the office and said:

"Mr. Henderson If you can tell me what you were doing wrong you'll have passed. If you can't you've failed" What a question. The whole outing had been a shambles apart from the actual flying but I suddenly remembered him tapping an instrument on his side of the panel. It was the Instrument Landing System indicator and the glide path needle had shown that we had been very low on the approach to the huge Stansted runway and I had touched down in among the red lights of the very first few yards instead of about one third along the available length!

I told him that we had some very short strips at the places we used in Scotland and had to touch down early.

He frowned at me and than quietly said

"It's a very bad habit.! Stop It ! YOU'VE PASSED!

I thanked him for his patience; what a good bloke, then found a camp bed to sleep on in the office and Mack duly picked me up the next morning at

Blackbush. We then flew back to Renfrew via Islay where I think Mack might have picked up the usual bottle of Islay Mist single malt!

The hours in the book move up quite rapidly now

With various flights. Checking out visiting pilots on our single engine aircraft I enjoyed; the first signs of the Glasgow Flying Club. Photography very much on the increase. Hunterston Power station was being built and as the Forth Road Bridge neared completion the media were competing for the best news shots.

After one flight with the Evening Citizen we got some good shots and perhaps they used them a few days later because the dreaded east coast Harr came down to play. It might have been the opening day of the Bridge. I got airborne in the Tripacer with the Glasgow Herald. I'd told the photographer that the fog was in and there wasn't much chance of a clearance. He insisted so off we went. We were soon followed by some others; Scottish Television I think, in the Cherokee flown by Lynn and we arrived to see the towers of the bridge rearing up majestically from the thick grey blanket. Lynn and I exchanged some words on our company radio frequency suggesting that we should return to Renfrew but competition was very keen they would not abandon their vigil! Half an hour

later they conceded and we flew home in formation [so that they could remain in sight]?

I was sent off one evening down to a short strip at Strathaven just South of Glasgow to fly the Scottish Parachute Club and after a short chat three of their chaps clambered aboard. I did notice that they were wearing thick boots and a reserve "chute". I didn't like the way one young hooligan was grabbing onto the wing strut and commenting that the flimsy little tail would be great to hang on to as they "left". After I dissuaded him of this plan their Instructor asked me to set the parking brake on when we got airborne.! The idea was that as one of the students was frequently a little reluctant to jump and if the instructor gave me a nod I should suddenly let off the wheel brake as he stood on it considering his fate. As we lined up on the strip for the take off I dismally considered that I was the only one on board not wearing a "chute". I also wondered if we were going to make it as the end of the strip was fast approaching and we needed a few more knots to pull off into the air! We did just clamber into the air and I knew I'd pushed my luck quite far and that we would do the next take off with one less body on board!

Later as it was getting quite dark I was to climb as high as possible so the brave young men could free fall.

It was gloriously unusual to be in such a position, in the zone of my own Renfrew Airport in the dark climbing up above departing airliners in the little Tripacer. Once clearance was received my "passengers" dropped off into the night and I celebrated with a practice Radar talk down approach into my home airfield. By this time I think I had gained the trust of my superior colleagues.

Mack also gave me lots more good trips. Picking up a Lord and Lady from Islay to take them to land at Belfast Aldergrove. Picking up Mr. Logan at Dundee where he was spending more time on the start of the Road Bridge. A trip to Kirkwall to pick up a BBC crew to fly to Edinburgh. One afternoon the telephone exchange put through a call to the tower where I was on duty. They sometimes did when there was no one in the office. The fellow asked to charter an aircraft to take him right away to Bristol Lulsgate. I worked him out a price for the Aztec twin and then one for the Cherokee which he favoured. I checked the weather, filed my flight plan then came off duty and went round to the hanger to meet the young man. He had a very sporty car adorned with Scottish Unionist decorations and after making sure he was parked safely we took

off and headed south. After a bit a asked if he wanted to take the controls. He happily did and as we chatted on the way I found that he was ex RAF and he had lots more hours than I had! The Cherokee had a radio compass which I tuned in to the Lulsgate beacon and homed in effortlessly to the circuit and a nice smooth landing after 3 hours. He marvelled at the navigation but it really was just a straight line track. We were met by a very pretty lady and repaired to the bar where I accepted a lemonade and made him out a cheque for the change from the huge bill he handed me.

I was soon airborne again and although I enjoyed the flight I had an odd feeling of loneliness as I passed along above the Blackpool Illuminations.

One morning I had a short flight up to Connel Bridge, Oban with some executives in the Cherokee. They planned to return in a few hours. I settled down on the grass by the aircraft for a short nap for it was a lovely balmy morning. I was awakened by a chap who was out walking with his young sons on their holidays. He asked was it my aircraft and if so could I take them for a flight. I assured him that I could so of we went with one boy in the right hand seat then swop over and let the other have a go both having a gentle touch of the controls. Then Dad scrambled in for the landing back. The Cherokee was 8 pounds per hour so he was

delighted to part with 6pds for the short flight which had delighted the boys and really made their holiday quite memorable as it was for me as I resumed my nap! Another memorable day out was with best man Brian and another assistant Elizabeth. The visit was to see the T.T. which thrilled but our main thrill was to announce to Joan's parents that we were "with child" E.T.A. mid December! Joan planned to work on as late as possible if she felt fit.

My log book had passed 400 hrs. and lots of flying was happening. During the last few years I had written to some airlines with sponsorship enquiries to no avail.

Suddenly Mack told me that the chief ground instructor at Airwork Services at Perth had been in touch to say that I might get sponsored with British United Airways and he would put in a good word for me. He had witnessed my visits when I'd popped up to the college to clear up some points in my 'studies'!

B.U.A. allowed me an interview at their base at Gatwick. Luckily Mack was planning a visit there which fitted in. The interview was very brief with Chief Pilot Capt. Jennings and I was to be sponsored for my instrument rating at Perth and repay 25% of the costs from my salary. This was exciting stuff but I reflected

that Mack didn't have need of another pilot at that stage. I decided to check the market by phoning BEA who gave me a short interview where I asked if they would finish off my qualifications at their college at Hamble but they didn't respond agreeably. I found out later that they occasionally got their numbers wrong and discontinued some cadets' courses. I met an interesting chap in the waiting room. He was good looking with side burns, softly spoken but looked slightly spivey in a silvery blue suite. He said he was with another airline but wanted to checkout BEA. So I told him my story and said cheerio!

Just a few months earlier my boss Eric had moved to another position in England and I handed in my notice to Mr. Hall, my new boss. He wished me well but did say that if things didn't work out he could offer me a course to become a controller! Mmmmm!

During the next month I had some trips in a new link trainer[a sort of elementary simulator] which Mack had installed for procedural instrument training.

Then early December I started at Perth. The aircraft were Cessna 310 twin engined 4 seat and a few of the instructors I had met previously. I liked the charming old chap "green light Hamilton". Before giving him landing clearance the controller would always ask did he have a green light. I wondered had he once landed

without? We did flights around the Scottish Terminal Area and even a few flights to the Hebrides. Airwork had gained the Army contract that year so I witnessed the St Kilda run, ala Airwork! I don't know who paid for that one. The Army or .BU.A.? I didn't ask! However my planned destiny was to join the car ferry operation at Ferryfield at Lydd on the south coast flying Bristol Freighters carrying cars across the channel to France.

When I noticed that B.U.A. had Dakota aircraft at Blackpool operating on the Irish Sea I posted a request to be stationed there. A sharp note replied that I would go where I was told and that I would now pay 30%!

I was at this stage without any income and although Joan had stopped work but seemed to manage I had to dream something up. Unemployment pay wasn't on because I had volunteered resigning. I tried calling in to the citizens advice bureau. The lady said that there was a fund for young people bettering themselves. then she said "you're not a catholic are you"? The fund had been left by a Gentleman who was bigoted !! quietly said that I had become rather agnostic recently and left the office with 50 quid! For my sin! Madame was fit but becoming extremely lumpy as the first junior Henderson approached!

My test date was 17th Dec. at Perth.

However on the evening of the 15th Madame calmly declared that we should phone the hospital and be checked in! Lots of activity and contractions becoming more frequent. When the ambulance arrived the driver seemed to be a bit excited compared to Joan. We trundled into the Queen Mother hospital and by 11 pm were prepared for the performance. I had been allowed to stay and as I witnessed the long wait and the closing stages through until about 6 am I marvelled at Joan's low pain barrier shown by only occasional quiet moans and groans! He Presto! The young man arrived. Nearly 9 lbs. What a feeling! I wouldn't have missed it for worlds! I wouldn't have volunteered either! My son Mark.

Joan would be in hospital for a couple of days and I had an important date with an aeroplane that very morning. Bill Hamilton was picking me up at Renfrew at 9.30 to fly to Perth, Instrument rating test next day.

I did one short training flight next morning with the chief instructor Bob Critchley and then met my C.A.F.U. examiner Mr Winch that late afternoon.

He seemed a pleasant chap and we were soon up and on course to Prestwick for the first bit of the test.

The word had got out among the Air traffic community about the new arrival and lots of people from various control points in the area were asking on the radio about Joan, the weight, the cigars etc. without realizing the seriousness of this operation.! Mr Winch just smiled at my embarrassment. After about an hour we were established on the instrument landing system into Renfrew. The blind screens were in place. It was dark. It was warm. The cockpit lights were glowing deep red and I was glued to the centre line and glide path as we descended. All of a sudden a quiet voice beside me said "I think we better overshoot" I'd flown straight through the critical breakoff height which is the time to power on and climb away. Flying through that 200ft height by even a foot is a serious fail point. I must have been mesmerized. I wonder if I would have continued down till we hit the ground? So we climbed away and set course for Perth. When we shut down at Perth Mr Winch regretfully explained that although it was one of the best bits of flying that he'd seen there was no way he could pass me. He gave me a partial pass.

After a few days off for fatherly duties; Madame was out of hospital in time for Christmas preparations, we were back in the Cessna for a few more trips with another test booking looming on the 22nd.

This flight was from Prestwick to Perth. Mr. Dryhurst was tall, stern and dressed in black. He reminded me of Wilson, the deadly gunfighter in "Shane" and I was thankful that the unofficial enquiries on the radio had ceased. I can't remember the details very clearly but he severely announced that I'd "scored" another partial. The CAFU were then on Christmas hols. And I had a trip with Bill Hamilton on a Benbecula army ride which I enjoyed albeit becoming a little embarrassed at my lack of total success.

Mack had taken delivery of another new Aztec C and I joined him to Belfast and return. Next trip was with Mr. Logan but as we passed over the Grampian Mts. the engines did a lot of coughing and surging and Mack had to keep them clear by banging the mixture controls open and shut. We reckoned that the newly designed air intakes were icing up. We returned to Renfrew on the lowland route via Dundee.

With a Loganair trip or two and another practise in the Cessna it was time for another Test. This time we were setting off from Edinburgh and as luck would have it my examiner was Mr Winch. I did the outside check, started up and taxied out. We were planning an ILS at Prestwick then on to Perth and we had another Instructor with us. As soon as we were airborne the oil pressure on starboard engine dropped and black oil

spewed out of that engine. Mr. Winch took over and landed the aircraft back. We think that when I had checked the oil I had not screwed the filler cap tight enough! I apologised profusely not imagining being so stupid and spent an hour or so cleaning up the mess while the others went for a cup of tea.

With that little omen in mind we were off again per plan A. I remember not enjoying and being a bit behind the eight ball just keeping to the limits with little to spare. I almost couldn't wait for the critical height to overshoot! When we landed back at Perth Mr winch gave me a handshake and announced my Pass!

My pilgrimage to qualification was achieved but my resits had made it a slightly inglorious completion. I had nearly 500hrs now and had enjoyed almost every minute. I said cheerio to my fellow students, including a new friend Alan Purvis who was finishing off his Instrument rating. He had self financed the course, with family backing I think and I wished him best of luck. He was quite a posh sort of chap who's family had lived in Mull. I think he too was going to join BUA.

Now I thought I would be learning to fly a Bristol Wayfarer and relocating to Lydd on the South coast.

Mack was flying down to Gatwick and it would be my last Loganair Aztec trip. I reported to the British United Offices where I was given my new uniform with one stripe and was instructed to report to Blackpool for training on the Dakota!!

My starting salary was 1,250pa and I would be paying back my training costs at 33 and a third %.

I said nothing.

Just smiled at good old bureaucracy!

Back home to tell the good news and the family tree swung into organisation. Joan had an Uncle John who lived in Blackpool and in addition his sister in law had a house at Squires Gate Lane across the road from Blackpool Squires Gate Airport and the family connections promised accommodation across the road! Brilliant luck! It was nearing the end of January 1965.

So with fond farewells completed I set off one evening on a less glamorous journey by night train to Preston, the bus to Blackpool and after a fairly sleepless night another bus along the 'Golden Mile' to Squires Gate. It might have been my tiredness but in the cold, grey foggy morning I was unimpressed as I looked down from the top of the bus on sideshow stalls and

amusement arcades through the grey fog. The entrance into the airport was similarly drab, with just a collection of huts and the sight of a frost covered Dakota just by the building. I wandered into this, the terminal building and into the café style restaurant. Two pilots wearing coats and hats were sitting having a cup of coffee and stifling a few early morning yawns.

I introduced myself to their reluctant interest and found that they were awaiting a weather improvement before flying the Dak to the Isle of Man.

They directed me to the crew room and as it was too early for an office appearance I went there. The room was a bit of a dump but one big old Dakota cockpit seat proved comfortable. I collapsed into it and there was a hot plate heater on the wall which soon put me to sleep. The next thing I knew was someone shaking me awake and large man in Captains uniform introduced himself as Eric Skemp and asked if I would like to look over a Dakota! So off we went and climbed into the parked machine where I was unexpectedly invited to sit in the left hand seat and Eric proceeded to explain all the knobs and levers. I noticed that there were no flying instruments in the right hand side, just a few engine instruments. After taking in most of the lecture we climbed out as the two pilots were preparing to board for their trip.

Eric showed me the office and I met the chief pilot

Capt. Johnny Johnson, an oldish bald man who seemed to peer at me through his spectacles. He checked my details and told me that my next step was to pass the A.R.B. [Air Registration Board] exam on the DC3, the Dakota. Then he scratched about on a few shelves behind his desk and produced an old BEA manual on the Dc3,the Dakota for me to study. He would fix up an exam for me ; to be at Liverpool soon and that I would be doing some supernumerary flights before then.

When I left the office I noticed that the crew room had been underneath a notice declaring that the building above was the Blackpool and Fylde Gliding Club, The Kite!

I headed across the road to the Greenwoods house where I met Irene Greenwood. A very pleasant and friendly lady. She showed me to my room and also to the front room parlour where I could relax and study my manual if I wished. I wished but spent most of the time asleep again until meeting Mr George Greenwood was very pleasant and wished me good luck in my new job. He was a partially retired plumber and they both kept some huge greenhouses ,market gardening ,growing lettuce and tomatoes. They were a smashing couple it was no surprise to learn that they

had both been Scout and Guide leaders. I thanked them for their accommodation help and marvelled at the idea of being about 4 minutes walk to work!

My first flight observing was luckily up to Renfrew standing behind the pilots. Frank Sankey was the skipper and their schedule passed through Renfrew back to Blackpool next evening which gave me a chance to go home and relate my progress to the family. Baby Mark seemed to be settling down ok.

Next day I popped out to the airport about mid day and guess what? Jenny came out of the office and told me that this young American Airman needed to get down to Prestwick. Say no more! We were off in the Tripacer, dropped him off and back to Renfrew to await the BUA crew! I didn't enter that short flight in my book until a while later! I flew with Frank for a few days which included a couple of Isle of Man trips.

Then I was rostered to fly with a Capt. Watkinson on a multi sector day Bournemouth ,Prestwick ,Abingdon, Manchester, Blackpool. When the Captain turned up he looked slightly familiar and when he took off his hat I recognised him as the blue suited man I had met in the BEA interview waiting room.! Bill Watkinson. He turned out to be a gem. Tony Brown, the co-pilot took some turns standing while I sat in the right hand seat for some familiarisation. Bill at one stage asked me if I

was going to join BALPA , the British airline pilots association. In my ignorance I said that I didn't plan to. Anything I'd heard about unions was usually bad news. Bill left the subject for a while.

Two days later I was again to meet Eric Skemp who was the base training captain, this time for my circuits and landings introduction. My friend Alan Purvis had arrived from Perth having finished his course. I congratulated him. He was coming along for the look see so we three got in and commenced the cockpit checks.

I was in the left hand seat which surprised me. I had done most of my Aztec flying from the right so didn't really care. Anyway we taxied out. I'd learned the checks by now and finishing with the tail wheel lock we took off and started our first circuit. I came into land, held off slowly and the wheels gave a very gentle grunt as we touched down!

Check the trim , props to fine pitch, landing flaps up and off we go again. I felt good and we repeated that performance 5 more times. I noticed that Eric's only expression was to look blank and smoothly stroke the side of his face with the palm of his hand. I think I'd done surprisingly well.

After a few hours off which included a briefing on the afternoon programme we were back in action. This time flapless landings, single engine overshoots and landings. All went well. Alan just had to stand between us and watch. So after a really good day I left and headed "home" across the road.

At tea that evening Mrs. G. re-appeared with a large cake. White icing with; would you believe a blue Dakota on the top surface! "Didn't you do well" she declared. She had watched the Dakota landing performance from an upstairs room with a commanding view!

Alan and I found some concentrated notes on the Dc3 which we swotted up to pass the technical exam.

The next few weeks were spent mostly supernumerary learning the co-pilot duties, which didn't amount to much on the Dak!

I then flew with chief pilot Johnny Johnson one day to do an asymmetric flying check and instrument let down which seemed to go ok.

I was now posted on the roster as co-pilot flying with Eric sometimes and I began to meet the various different captains on the fleet. I remembered back in Loganair that we had all read "Fate is the Hunter" the classic aviation book by Earnest K Gann and his

descriptions of the various characters the new co-pilot had to fit in with, mostly observing and not saying very much! In one episode the captain was lighting matches and holding them in front of the co-pilot's face to see if it would effect his flying the approach to the runway. Mack had done this to me one night and all I did was to laugh! and hope that he didn't drop one on my crutch! Well there I was and the task was fitting in. When I'd been an assistant at Renfrew we met the pilots filing their flight plans and some amazing tales were in that history. One comedian, Capt. Johnny Welford had pulled a number of tricks on his unsuspecting "punters". Being led out to the cockpit using a white stick I'm sure had impressed them! Better still when he boarded the aircraft wearing a smart tweed suit and sat in the cabin making impatient comments. 'If these bloody pilots don't turn up soon I'll fly the bloody thing myself" And a few minutes later he would charge into the cockpit and away they would go!

Most of our flying was covering the Irish sea, sometimes like a horizontal yo-yo back and forth to the Isle of Man. 8 sectors looked a little repetitive but every trip had a little variation and I was never bored.

One aspect which I didn't enjoy was the almost complete lack of having the controls to fly the aircraft.

In Loganair I'd flown the machine most of the time. I wondered if they were worried because the being a "tail dragger" could "do things" to you if you got it wrong! I flew a few times with a Scotsman Bill Niven and soon noticed that he always three pointed the landing. All three wheels touched at once. Everyone else did "wheelers", two main wheels and let the tail come down gradually. Much easier and more reliable!

It reminded me of my adventures at Perth with the Tiger Moth!

One regular trip was late night newspaper delivery to Belfast. My first one was with Capt. Camile Vors, a Frenchman who didn't say much. So when we landed at Belfast we climbed out of the Dak and I followed him as he strode along in his thick boots until we came to a glass walled hall, the deserted customs hall and Camile lay down on one of the large cushioned seats and went to sleep on his back still with his hat on and his boots pointing at the ceiling! Some other crews appeared and did the same. About 6 am we all stirred and in robotic style marched out to the aircraft which had been unloaded on our arrival and start up the engines for the flight back to Blackpool. Camile

surprised me by letting me have the sector and away we went. I found almost right away that the empty Dak was very light and skittish to control. I managed a probably average performance but without comment from my boss! I was grateful for the chance. As I look through my log book I see I had 10 flights handling in the next 5 months! This WAS boring. One weekend I saw a glider being launched and I wandered over and asked if I could have a ride. I had one winch launch with an Instructor. It was a T21 trainer, a Sedberg we called them in the cadets. It was one of the last flights the gliding club was making as they were moving out of Squires Gate because of the increase in powered traffic. They were leaving the Kite club bar in situ. They moved off to Blackburn Samlesbury for a while and later the members bought some land at Bowland Forest and began soaring on the Fair Snape Fell. So my quick trip was fairly historical. The Kite Club bar was our regular watering hole where we could slurp in uniform after landing. If we were the last landing, as we cleared the runway the controllers whom we knew usually enquired "do you need the taxiway lights?" When we said "Thank you no" They would close down the control tower and beat us to the bar! And set them up! I was beginning to enjoy the finer points of Squires Gate!

The late weekend newspaper ride became a regular feature for 3 or 4 aircraft. Some trips we would pop into the Isle of Man in the morning and the aircraft were loaded with three layers of sheep carcasses to transport to Blackpool. It was a very delicate feat to hang on to the luggage rack and gently step ones way up the cabin to the cockpit without a foot disappearing in between the ribs!

Ozzie Weisz was an amazing Polish guy. I did the trip with him one night and as were flying straight back to Blackpool he gave me the leg. I'd always enjoyed night flying and it sure made a change to land back at Blackpool at 2.20 am. The night flying in cloud was interesting when the Dak entered icing conditions.

The propellers were de iced with an alcohol spray turned on from the cockpit when chunks began to hit the side of the aircraft. When the hits became sloppy sounding then the setting was correct. Soft ice lollies instead of hard chunks! The wings had rubber strips along the leading edge and when the ice looked from the cockpit to be about a third of an inch thick the control sent compressed air expanding every second rubber strip and the ice would crack and drop off!

It was a skilful night operation with the torch from the cockpit but some aircraft had inspection lights fitted. Best plan was to change altitude from the icy one!

I had the pleasure of being rostered with Bob Bradshaw who was a gentle gem of a man and one of the two Captains who gave away lots of legs to the co-pilots. He and Bill Watkinson were like the two unofficial trainers!

Little Alec Watson , a Scotsman and character. People called him trotter Watson ! I thought maybe he looked a bit piggy ;maybe because he always seemed to be trotting about! Years later I found out that he owned a pig farm! He gave me the night return flight when we met. I developed two secret ambitions about him. We sometimes played golf together on day stops and I couldn't beat him! One of his specialities was to wave for undercarriage retraction and then snuggle down in his seat and go to sleep leaving me to quite happily fly the aircraft to destination, fly the approach let down then prepare to land. But as we approached the runway he would snort awake, grab the controls and land! Most annoying! My ambition, to this day, was to grease one on in the dark , switch off the engines and steal quietly away! If he wasn't sleeping he would be reading a paperback. He had been reading a book

most of the day as we cruised along with me “watching the shop” when he shocked and amused me by suddenly opening his sliding window and throwing it out with a gruff “F.....g rubbish!

I was unaware that the worst landing of my life was coming up. Alec let me fly the leg into Blackpool and I trundled in towards the ground expecting a gentle touchdown. The main wheels hit and the aircraft reared up into the air again. I then pushed the stick forward and we smacked into and then off the ground , banging the tail wheel and I tried to recover from the next crash without success. After two more out of sequence attempts Alec grabbed the controls and after one more crunch we stayed on the ground. I was horrified and as I thought about it later[for a long time!] I realised why the captains were slightly reluctant to let us new boys have a go! As I think back it was a blessing that we didn't have a passenger address system. Some grovelling apologies would have been much in order!

Thankfully Trotter didn't fuss too much. And we became good mates either on the golf course or asleep in the cockpit.!

Another notable Captain was Leck Lascovitch the other Polish pilot who enjoyed some fun with the aircraft. One trick he had was to taxi the Dak out to

the runway using the brakes and with a bit of power applied he would hold the control column forward so that the tail was up in the air and the passengers would all be leaning forward instead of sitting back!

One morning he said in his nice, slightly funny accent, he had hangover; "Today we have nice quiet trip to Isle of Man" As I wondered what this meant he put the throttle levers on third way open and his big hairy fist screwed the friction nut tight.

"We do not touch trottles till we land at Isle of Man"

We taxied slowly out using some brake then along the runway slowly at first with the speed building gradually until we just achieved enough speed and he gently eased the stick back and we were airborne, staggering over Pontins Holiday Camp at the end of the runway. Not long later we were cruising at our normal height of 2500 feet and the speed and power settings were as normal. When we approached the island he side slipped down and using flaps and undercarriage we gently touched down on the runway! He closed his "trottles!" A nice quiet trip. I should think that some of our passengers hadn't even noticed taking off!

There were a few more adventures in the pipeline with Leck and I must say I wouldn't have liked to have either of them on my tail during the Battle of Britain!

I was flying on approach to Ronaldsway one day with Leck and the wind was 040/20 kts. We were cleared to land on runway 04 [straight into wind] and I mistakenly turned in on short finals for runway 36! Leck allowed me to continue until he said to the tower. "Are we ok on 36? The tower confirmed ok and helpfully warned us with another wind check and I realised that I had given myself quite a challenging x-wind. I held on to it and managed to land good and keep straight on this actually narrower runway! Leck just smiled! Phew!

I'd heard that Leck sometimes "went fishing" on low level approaches and he would ask if he could climb up and land! The runway was about 50feet above sea level!

My contemporary Alan asked me to come with him on a trip by car to Oxford Kidlington Airport. There was an Emeraude for sale that he wanted to look at. His smart car got us there quite comfortably and after a chat with the sales person we got airborne and I checked him out. After a few circuits he set me off to

fly it back to Blackpool rather than trust me with his car! Nice trip ,nice little aircraft and I left it for him safely in an appointed corner of the hanger. It made a change to put P1 in my log book instead of the few P1u/s entries which had to be signed by the supervising Captain.

I flew an annual C of A air test with Eric Skemp which I enjoyed with engine shut downs and timed climbs.

I'd previously done some with Mack in the Aztek.

Joan and Son had arrived and we stayed for a while with her Uncle John not far from the airfield while we looked about for a house. Fairly soon one came up and having sold the Glasgow one we settled for a small semi detached Accrington brick two up two down next to Squires gate lane after a very boring debate with some mortgage chaps.

Uncle John would baby sit for us sometimes and we could pop round to St. Anne's tennis club and have a game of tennis or sometimes squash.

However Joan soon announced that we were expecting another addition to the family. We had earlier agreed on close grouping!

We had recently been to investigate the ladies cricket Club. Joan had played in the air force. After introductions I had asked the captain if Joan could have a few test bowls she agreed. Joan's first run up she CLEAN BOWLED the Lancashire top Bat! Pity that with the latest news those activities had to go on the shelf for a bit.

It was summertime and the flying was busy with quite a few 8 sector days. ie Blackpool, Manchester, Abingdon, Bournemouth, Glasgow, Bournemouth

Abingdon, Manchester, Blackpool. We didn't need taxiway lights after that day out! The passengers for RAF Abingdon were scientists visiting Harwell Nuclear Power station.

Sometimes our schedule was from Bournemouth to Jersey and return but occasionally we would day stop at Bournemouth and Trotter and I would play golf. Frank Sankey had a reputation for "creeping on" at the Isle of Man course just off the airfield and I might join him for a few holes! This was Castletown championship course and I would enjoy many a proper round with some of the airport staff.

One of the almost regular problems with Ronaldsway was Sea Fog. When the wind from the west gently backed round to almost south the air would fill with fog off the cold sea and without much warning creep over the coast and blanket the airfield. There was an instrument landing system on the westerly runway which could guide the approach down low but not all the way. Some pilots were more daring than others!

But daring could be dangerous! Usually after two attempts at becoming visual we would overshoot and set course to the north and head for Jurby. It was always amazing to see how quickly the fog would clear as we travelled over the land on that short distance.

My introduction to this procedure was almost last light and when we switched off the engines at Jurby Captain Bill Niven elected to night stop. We parked the aircraft and when we fixed up a coach for the Passengers we rode with them into Ramsey. They continued to Douglas and we three crew stayed in a small hotel called The Isle of Alanis on the Mooragh Promenade to start the operations in the morning. Bill Surprised me by peeling off right away to his room which surprised me so after a quick couple of beers with the stewardess we retired. It was the quietest Manx Airline night stop I was ever to have!

On one occasion we had 4 or 5 Dakotas and one Dart Herald on the ground at Jurby. Lots of punters over to see the T.T. We could HEAR the T.T. but had no way of getting to the circuit. So after a pleasant stroll around the airfield in the sunshine we gathered up our "load" and took off again for Blackpool!

Fog really is a pilots curse. Very often when we arrive in the sunshine after the fog has cleared the passengers cannot believe that its been foggy.

I used to wonder why Jurby, which had been a master diversionary airfield for the R.A.F. hadn't been picked for the main airport. Ronaldsway was closer to Douglas. But not on sea fog day! Perhaps the old bureaucracy had played a hand?

A few years later a famous champion racing car driver crashed his aircraft while trying to land in the fog at Biggin Hill Airfield. He was killed and soon after the Ministry of Aviation applied an approach ban on conditions below 200ft. height and 600 mtrs visibility. New runway lights were being introduced and the number of lights an observer could see were reported to the control tower by radio. Usually the airport firemen did the observing. Eventually the system became automatic and aircraft were not allowed to fly below 1000 ft of their published break off height in

lesser visibility. The new rule probably frustrated the ace of the base but also undoubtably saved lives.

Another new Captain appeared on the base. Mike O'Connor soon we were good golfing mates.

One day as we sat watching the punters cross the apron to board there were suddenly a bunch of really rough looking guys with their even rougher looking Ladies marching out to board. "They're wrestlers" said Mike. "Off to give a performance". The forecast was not very good for the flight with strong winds and lots of cloud and no good for Jurby either. When the stewardess came up with her cabin checks she described how one huge guy who couldn't fit into his seat gently broke off the arm rest and placed it under his seat! When we got to the Island we had to fly the ILS to break cloud then fly a circuit around the airfield over the sea. Over the sea was not good. The big dark waves were reaching up very close and the clouds above very low. After two circuits without success Mike decided that we should divert back to Blackpool so off went. We had been airborne well over two hours when we got back. Mike bounced the landing in the windy conditions and we taxied in and switched

off. We sat and waited for quite some time. We expected a huge fist to smash through the cockpit door but nothing happened and a bit later two uniformed figures could be seen climbing out of the aircraft and sneaking around the hanger to the car park! Some performance!

The youngest Captain on the base was Roger Naylor who had been made up quite recently. He was a pleasant chap and shortly seemed likely to join the small rank of “kind” captains for landings! In fact shortly afterwards we had my first engine failure; that is with me in the left hand seat and guess who? Roger in the right! No panic. He shut the engine down while I prepared a circuit and after trimming the aircraft and having a quick word with control softly landed back on the runway. This was at Bournemouth where I had done my course with air traffic control. We had to nightstop and as we awaited the next move Roger did grumble gently that he would have rather preferred to have been the handling pilot. I “sympathised” but beggars can’t be choosers where fate is concerned!

It does come to mind that when there’s a drama in an aircraft the possible effects are masked quite a bit by the pilot by concentrating on doing a good job and not making a pigs ear of it!

“My” next engine failure was with Trotter on the leg Manchester to Blackpool; the 8th leg off our normally longest day. There was a loud bang and extreme vibration but as we checked the engine gauges they were reasonably aligned. [As good as usual on the old Dak] As we looked around for further clues I looked out at my engine; the left as I was in the left hand seat. What a sight! The front row of pots[cylinders] appeared to have come apart from the rear row and was banging away quite happily but revolving around separately from the rest of the engine and looked as if it wanted to take off on its own! I’d never before seen metal cowlings flexing and bending in rhythm. My next realisation was that Alec had jumped out of his seat and was yelling at me to get out of mine. I scrambled out. He scrambled in and we shut down the “failed” engine and descended into the circuit at Blackpool and landed. Bit of a change from with Roger! I’m sure we had our post landing “briefing” in the Kite club! I can’t remember if I told Roger. Maybe my previous bouncing episode with Alec had played a part.!

There were a couple of oldish co-pilots on the base and I later learned that they didn’t have the senior licence necessary for command on heavy aircraft.

The Airline Transport Pilots Licence required passes in technical exams, again with resits allowed! and the necessary experience. So my next step was to purchase a correspondence course. I decided not to correspond as I didn't want to be round at the post office sending mail. Too easy to call in at the Kite on the way! Also I reckoned that I could work out the answers to the problems by looking at the answers in the question papers which had been my procedure for the Commercial. So rather than attending the Avigation College I spent days in my front room swatting ,between games with my Son who was marching about by then.

In fact the next course I was destined for was for training on the Dart Herald.

A small group of us went down to the British United Base in Jersey for about a week for the technical course which was classroom "chalk and talk". I had trouble understanding the electrical lecturer constantly referring to this bus bar and that bus bar. I gave up and hand in the air confessed that I didn't know what a bus bar was. I 'm sure I heard a sigh of relief in the room and the instructor explained that it was just an electrical distribution point for the various connections. We all had trouble following the flight systems instructor who definitely spoke in funny

electronic terms. However when we got the results that we had scored a 'D' in the exam we laughed when we found that the 'D' meant for distinction!

We enjoyed the hotel in St Brelads bay. The manager allowed us an honesty box while free use of the bar.

On the evening before our return we met the night stopping crew who would fly us over to Gatwick in the morning. I managed to scrounge the promise of a jump seat ride in the cockpit of the B.A.C.1-11.

Well! That was impressive as we really roared along the runway, rotated and zoomed up into the sky.

I was instantly a 1-11 fan.

Back to Blackpool and after our usual Dak flying and a couple of observing flights in the Dart Herald it was time for base training with Eric Skemp on the Herald .

I observed while John, an older co-pilot flew three circuits and landings. I then sat in the right hand seat; the cockpit was dual instrumented and after my first landing Eric commented that I should get onto the nose wheel steering a bit quicker. The system was electric/hydraulics and the runway was just a little damp. On the next landing run when I started using the steering tiller there was a skidding screech and we swung off to the side and left the runway onto the

grass. The tower controller asked if we needed any assistance and Eric said no as he reached for the throttles to taxi back onto the runway. John fortunately called "ground fine" referring to the propeller pitch lever which must be selected to ground fine pitch, normally selected at the end of the landing roll, or the engines could be wrecked! Very well done John! Much discussion failed to reveal the cause but I thought that the nose wheel steering should be left until taxi speed. It may have been my heavy handling of the control which could have caused a skid or was there a malfunction but the mystery remained unsolved. On chatting later to Bill Watkinson he assured me that he always left the steering until very slow. About a week later the circuits and landings were continued without further drama and then the asymmetric flying exercises and an instrument rating to follow.

Then after several flights on the normal routes with a qualified co-pilot monitoring I was "turned loose"

A very noticeable change from the old into modernity was felt when after a few sectors in the Dak we would have a cup of tea during the turn round then strap ourselves into the Herald for a few more sectors.

We used check lists on the Herald. One guy calls the check and the other responds and selects. The prompt

and response system works well but although most of us had a Dak checklist rotting in the bottom of our nav bags we knew the check list religiously and never missed an item. However when we started using check lists people started missing Dak checks.

I found that a heavy , flapless, water methanol take off at night was quite exciting. As the throttles are advanced the pitch lever clicks forward to flight fine pitch. Then when the torque is sufficient check the water meth valves open for the extra power we call "take off power", rotate and we unstick and begin the climb out. Gradually everyone on our base were converted onto the Herald and I noticed that the co-pilots were getting more of a share of the flying. Probably because the Herald was less likely to do things unwanted on the landings. I did mistrust the steering tiller though and never touched it until we were very slow. The passenger address system was new to be perfected. The little Frenchman Camille used to give me the P.A. because he reckoned that people might understand my Glaswegian delivery better than his.!

At home my dear wife was close to arrival time for baby two and it had been decided and approved that she should have a home confinement. When we called for the midwife it was very late in the evening and soon there was a great loud knocking on the door as the bell rang and a loud female voice shouted through the letter box! Sister Deacon had arrived. She reckoned that when she was up “everyone should be up”.

When I asked if I should start boiling water [hoping to be useful] as she started up the stairs she just laughed and said “No! bring up a case of beer” Well! She was a real character but was very skilled and handled the whole event with maximum help for the patient who displayed her customary stoic performance. A large baby arrived! 10lbs. 4ozs and bawling for food!

Both Mum and baby were very well and it was my birthday at the same weight! We called my birthday present Jane and I went shopping in the morning for some baby food!

Joan’s mum had volunteered to come across from the Island and I passed her boat at least three times as it surged its way through that day’s rough sea from

Douglas to Liverpool. When she was due to fly back we talked her, against her wishes, to fly. When Joan and her Mum arrived at the airport there were no passengers in sight and Joan told her to rush out to the aircraft. Off she went across the apron on her own until one of the crew rudely told her to go back to the building until the boarding announcement. Then she had to scurry back across the apron. She wrote back to describe her unwelcome adventure with comical snippets; on reading the emergency card she conscientiously removed her false teeth and when the engines started she closed her eyes for a long period and awaited the landing. However when she ventured a peep at their progress she discovered that they hadn't started moving yet! Anyway she had arrived in one piece but vowed never to fly again. It's a pity that I wasn't on the trip but a good reminder that some of our "punters" really were nervous of this possibly pleasurable experience. Many years later we actually organised some "fear of flying" flights and we did some short trips where everything was explained and gentle passes through cloud were demonstrated with visits to the cockpit to meet the ordinary lads who were flying the plane! Ho! The good old days!

It had become a pleasure of mine to welcome visits to "The office" and show youngsters the controls. As time went by a few of my enthusiasts did become

aviators. Since our arrival Blackpool had proved to be a very pleasant situation and we had many visitors who we enjoyed and there was invariably a show at one or two of the constantly busy theatres. It was also a busy domestic time with two young people to entertain. We also spent some time helping with the harvest at the Greenwoods who had become very good friends.

Around this time I had a day free in Glasgow and visited my Mum who had just started Parkinson's disease; she shrugged it off in her usual stoic fashion, saying at least it wasn't painful!

I had to call in at the Loganair hanger hoping to see Mack and the chaps. Ken was the only one about and preparing to fly off in the new Aztec G-ASYB and when he kindly invited me to come along how could I say no? He flew it up to Dundee where we picked up a passenger to Prestwick and then he let me fly it back to Renfrew it was a great little aeroplane. I did miss the Loganair scene but of course I was enjoying the life at Blackpool and the variety of characters I had to co-pilot.

I was never very surprised by anything that Leck got up to but when he said "Tony we fly model aircraft in

the field on Saturday. Come and see.” So I dutifully pitched up at a large nearby field to watch the performance. There were several modellers and all except Leck and Ozzie had nose wheel machines. Just like the difference between the Dak and the Herald it was instantly obvious that the nose wheel machines were much easier to control when taxiing out for take off. Just as I expected Leck came up with one of his ubiquitous ‘treats’. “Can you see pigeon flying there”? When I confirmed that I could see a pigeon flying across the field he said “I keep pigeon in field for 5 minutes”! I couldn’t believe what I witnessed as Leck’s radio controlled model tumbled about surrounding the bird with loops and rolls without touching it for a very long time! I could imagine him doing similar pranks in a fighter aircraft.

He was probably the best Capt. to have to cope with the engine fire on take off from Leeds Yeadon airfield later that summer. The fire warnings, bell and red lights, came on just as they rotated for take off from the short runway. Rather than retract the undercarriage, which would fold away under the burning engine, Leck staggered the fully laden Herald around the circuit to a smooth single engine landing.

According to his co-pilot it was a very skilful performance. With the landing gear down and a full load on a summers day It had to be!

But it was my nose in the books time again as I swotted the 4 or 5 necessary subjects for the senior licence. Astro navigation had been dropped from the syllabus because the inertial systems were being introduced. I was disappointed because I fancied having knowledge of the planets but knew that I'd need the threat of an exam failure to overcome my laziness and make me study that science. A few of the senior chaps had been sitting these exams for ages without success and I sympathised and hoped for better luck. As usual the tests were conducted in London and we would sit in an enormous room with a very obvious fast moving clock timing us.

I remember a loud crash and swearing as one of our seniors had an accident and his papers and navigation

equipment all fell on the floor. Poor Stan. He was a jolly old boy and had flown Typhoon fighters earlier.

One test was aural and using a large wooden model aircraft we would demonstrate swinging a compass. It's a way of calibrating the magnetic errors. I'd already helped out on real aircraft so it wasn't too mysterious! This test was conducted ,one to one with an examiner who definitely didn't try to help!

We used slid rule computers for the calculations and It was always amusing when we'd come out of the exam rooms and instantly ask each other the usual questions. Like "What did you get for number 4 ,etc." and you'd end up with several answers ranging from thousands through units to decimals! The examiners must have wondered what sort of morons pilots were becoming ? I guess maybe it hadn't been so scientific in their day.

Our base at Blackpool was excellent for swotting because at the end of the short holiday season flights radiating from and around the Isle of Man were reduced to a few and most of us were on standby at

home for a great deal of the time. Much against what Bill Watkinson's union based ideals would have preferred. By then I had the necessary hours experience so the senior licence was mine when I completed the exams although a command vacancy was not in view.

A career pattern for pilots would be to apply for a posting to fly the bigger jets which B.U.A. operated at the main base Gatwick . Then return after a few years if a command vacancy came at Blackpool. Capt. Frank Sankey had already moved to Gatwick and was now flying VC10's on the world wide routes.

I discussed this dilemma with some of the others.

Alec Watson reckoned I should take advantage of the life style change and check out the international network scene with its associated sophistication. As a young family we were at that stage fairly free to relocate. After the '67 season I applied and was accepted for a course as co-pilot on BAC 1-11's at Gatwick. My friend and contemporary Alan Purvis did likewise. Joan's mum came over [on the boat] for a few days and we came down to Sussex to look around at property. Just before setting course back home we found a little house to rent in Copthorne just a few miles from the Airport.

Before the course started I wandered into the airfield to look around and spied a 1-11 sitting on the tarmac outside the hanger. I climbed aboard, as I had done in my youth at Renfrew. I had enjoyed the short flight experienced before and I fell instantly in love with the cockpit which seemed brilliantly designed for an easy fitting two man crew.

The levers and gauges were clear and well defined and even the fire control handles were neatly positioned on the coaming with control switches easily reached on the roof.

When the technical course started we were straight away into the "chalk and talk" classroom scene with about an equal number of about 6 Captains and Co-pilots. They were a mixed bag of chaps coming from the different aircraft fleets in the BUA outstations.

One guy was writing non stop all through the chat and I wondered if I should be writing also and would it better my chance of success. I later found out that he had been in the RAF and had flown with the black arrows Hawker Hunter aerobatic display team. I looked forward to flying with him in the future. I noticed that one Capt. kept staring at me, perhaps slightly lovingly I vaguely thought?

At the end of the technical course we met up with our Training Captain Phil Davis, a pleasant, quiet ,cultured sort of guy and we journeyed over to Dublin to have some training in the Aer Lingus 1-11 simulator. This training was for cockpit familiarisation and a run through some of the emergency checks before flying our actual aircraft at Gatwick. Aer Lingus aircraft were all christened with Saints names i.e. St Patrick etc. painted on the sides of the aircraft. The simulator was christened St. Thetic! The Irish international identification letters were EI and I had seen a registration painted on a Boeing 737 which said EI-EIO! I saw one registration of EI ADO! Close!

After two days it was back to Gatwick and before base training to be rostered on flights sitting on the jump seat and observing the procedures as we flew back and forth into Europe. We watched the co-pilots, some of whom were ex Blackpool. One Captain was Chas. Hellewell the Capt. I'd scrounged a jump seat ride when returning from my Herald course in Jersey.

Then it was time to commence base training. I was paired up with Alec Ferguson a pleasant middle aged co-pilot originally from New Zealand. When we reported to begin flying our rostered Base Training Captain was John Kelly.

He seemed a bit formal and unsmiling. We boarded the aircraft, did our checks and proceeded to start up and taxi out. Fergie was in the right seat and I was on the jump seat. A welcome change from standing between the pilots. The take off drills had been discussed. Fergie flew three circuits and landings and then we swapped seats and it was my turn. The first take off was fine and after a circuit I landed and kept the aircraft straight as John reset the trim, raised the landing flaps and we ran along the runway at the steady landing speed getting ready for the next take off. Suddenly John called "rotate" which is the call when we have the correct speed and the handling pilot eases back the control column to raise the nose.

That didn't sound quite right I thought so I did nothing. [When in doubt do nothing]

"Rotate" he again called. I began to glance around and I realised that he hadn't set take off power so I called "POWER" as I looked at the remaining runway and guessed it was enough. John opened the throttles and we accelerated and raced at the runway end. "Its OK " he called and I silently agreed or I would have had the brakes on fully. We did get airborne before the runway end but only just! I don't know what Fergie was thinking but he was witnessing the performance. I hope! The detail was completed without further

drama and that was enough for that day. Strangely John didn't say a word about his touch and go brain failure. We were with Capt. Phil Davis for about ten days flying completing the rest of the circuit and upper air work which we enjoyed.

The rest of the training pattern was similar to my Herald training doing several flights as supernumerary on the jump seat or we would operate as co-pilot in the right hand seat being watched by another co-pilot.

About this stage we were all shocked to hear that the company was going to restructure and apart from the main base at Gatwick the outstations of BUA would become separate entities and the Gatwick pilots would all be issued with personal contracts. The personal contracts included a pay rise but which would not be effective until about two years. This would be done without any blessings or guidance from BALPA the British Airline pilots union. We attended a meeting where we were introduced to a new company director Mr Alan Bristow from Bristow Helicopters who appeared to be running or responsible for the new arrangements.

This was a bit of a shock to hear that one's career plan was not to be. Joan and the children had just arrived at our new rented house in Copthorne. Another surprise came when some BALPA chaps appeared to

at the door to check if I would be willing to strike in refusal of the new contracts. I was not in favour. I attended a union meeting and noticed that it was easy to put a hand up to be counted to strike but different when invited to a personal interview in the management office! I believe that I accepted the management contract in favour of the apparent security. It dawned on me that any future decisions would best be served by a private or postal ballot.

During the training there was an engine failure on take off on one of our 1-11,s at Milan. Unfortunately the crew mucked up the shut down drill and the wrong engine was switched off resulting in the aircraft crash landing in a field up the road. No one was injured but It didn't help the political atmosphere that all three Captains, including the training Capt. were all active BALPA members! We'd always doubted the sense of having more than one Captain in a cockpit! But three?

One good aspect that emerged was that the pilots at the outstations would continue to be given the option of transferring to Gatwick as vacancies came up.

This didn't alleviate the destruction of the Henderson master plan!

One's number on the dreaded seniority list would be on the rise [to the bottom]for the foreseeable future.

I now had 2,000hrs. and my Airline Transport Pilots licence.

My last flight on the Dak had been a base check with Brian Armstrong 18/9/67. I had experimented with the single engine climb and found that raising the 'dead wing' could increase the climb quite noticeably and well below the single engine safety speed[96kts] the old Dak would hang on to its propeller and climb like a homesick angel! Well quite well anyway!

My last trip on the Dart Herald 8/11/67 was with Capt. Cliff Mehuish who used to wander through the airport holding his hat containing his fags and matches at the shake. I never did see him wear his hat. He made me laugh when he described a short tale about picking up a party of BOAC. First class passengers who had diverted into Manchester and they flew them up to Prestwick in an old beat up Bristol Wayfarer. Their plan was to connect with a BOAC jet to fly to America. When he went back to the cabin to apologise for the turbulence rain and ice ,some of which was leaking in, this old American lady looked up from under her

umbrella and asked “are you really gonna fly us all the way to New York in this plane? Happy days!

The next couple of days flying was with Route Check Captains watching my co-pilot performance and Capt. Plunkett ;called “Boffin”. I don’t know why. Signed me off as a qualified right hand seat co-pilot.

Now it was time to study and fit in with the new group of characters I would serve! They were a good bunch of guys whom I mostly enjoyed but it was learn and polish my performance without any suggestion that I would actually fly the aeroplane! It felt like pilgrims progress for the next couple of months. !

We got airborne one morning, Capt Matthey handling on an Edinburgh flight and as we climbed up through the London Terminal control area there was a crackle and a fizz and my front windscreen crazed over! We put the seat belt signs back on and began our descent calling control for permission and advising them of our action. We were expecting a possible wind screen disappearance ! Not good at more than twenty thousand feet altitude; I had my harness firmly fitted! London control rather surprised me as they just told us to change frequency to someone else who followed up with the same response. Anyway when we levelled off at about 9,000 feet ;windscreen fortunately still attached, we requested clearance back to Gatwick

which came without much fuss. My Captain had played it in a nice relaxed manner but although we had kept a sharp lookout during the clear air descent through a busy terminal area we had been very much left to D.I.Y.!

That was my introduction to the 1-11 windscreen which was three layers thick and the outer layer had fractured. There were gold layers between which were heated for flexibility and demisting but the electrical charge had done a bit more than that!

Shortly after that we were approaching Palma, Majorca, one of our longest trips. As we established on the localizer beam of the I.L.S. I happened to glance out of my right side window and there was another aircraft a few feet away and virtually in formation! As we turned left and broke off for an orbit there was a burst of excited gabbling in Spanish then a quiet "sorry" in English and clearance to continue our approach without further complications. It began to become obvious to me that the Spanish controllers were well behind the advance in technology which produced aircraft which could pop down to the Mediterranean in under three hours depositing a British armada of holiday makers.

I remembered that during my Renfrew days in ATC a small group of young men had come from Cyprus for a course combining Air traffic control with English language. A good investment before the rush! It was also my turn to get behind. On a short flight back from Glasgow to Gatwick with Capt. Cliff Ashley, a quietly spoken chap, We couldn't reach visual contact and we had to overshoot. He applied power and said "flap 18" which was the flap setting for the start of the overshoot and my job to move the lever. But I didn't hear him speak and did nothing. He moved the lever himself without any fuss but I squirmed in my boots with embarrassment. I mentally noted that when I wanted some response from my "mate" I would speak very clearly! Three months since my base training and I hadn't had the pleasure of a landing! However suddenly I was rostered with Capt. John Kelly on a Glasgow and back and John offered me the first leg which I thankfully accepted and we started up and taxied out . When John announced "rotate" I eased back the stick for a gentle lift off and the stick shake, stick push and stall warning horn system bellowed out!! I managed to override the system and we climbed away without further drama! When we reported this to our ground engineers on the radio they assured us that that couldn't happen! Anyway we completed the flight there and back without any

further problems. The 1-11 had quite a complicated system to avoid the deep stalls that could be terminal in a high tailed aircraft. One had crashed on the development test flights deep stalling into the Salisbury Plain. The protection system was complicated. I was destined to meet up with this later in my time on this otherwise lovely aircraft!

I met up with John a few weeks later and during those next few days he gave me most of the flying. I realised that I had been allocated to him for checking me out because after this I was given mostly 50-50 with all the other guys!

Soon I had the pleasure of a diversion to London Airport because of the Gatwick fog. Quite interesting after 5 hours night flying to Alicante and return. We popped back to Gatwick in the early hours when the fog cleared sufficiently! I learned that after a humid summers day Gatwick quite regularly had a foggy night! A few more treats in store for later!

The next time I flew with John K he was training a new captain and my job was to be a legal requirement and to keep an eye on the operation! Capt. Tony Weber who, I think, had come from Bristol 170's.

My 6 monthly check flight came up with a fairly senior Capt. Robinson, local flying at Gatwick with the usual

engine out approaches and overshoots, happily passed without any drama!

A few more of the Blackpool captains started to appear. It was a pleasure to fly and have a laugh with Ozzie Weisz. I noticed that he didn't get up to any funny tricks now, on the jet but he did like to ask control for "direct talla" as soon after take off as he could. Talla was a beacon in Scotland and nearly at the destination. A few controllers actually approved !

I had the pleasure of meeting Len Levene a dapper, pleasant chap who actually operated a Lear Jet for the Guinness Company by special arrangement and usually recruited suitable co-pilots as crew. I had no fantasies on that score when deep in family activities.

He had immediately shared the flying with me and I did wonder if I was under revue? A few years later he crashed in the Austrian Alps near Innsbruck. It was winter and search parties were delayed for months before discovery. I never did hear more of it but believe the co-pilot was John who had been on my course. I thought of them a few years later as I drove North through the Brenner Pass.

Bill Watkinson appeared on the flight deck one day. He was on his course and had come along for a look see on a quick Rotterdam. And very welcome!

The route structure out of Gatwick was really varied with lots of trips to the main cities around the Mediterranean , Gibraltar the furthest south and Dubrovnik to the east. Spain usually had a challenge awaiting.

I was rostered with Bill Niven on an evening flight to Alicante. Bill had recently moved down from Blackpool and Alicante was a new destination for both of us.

As we were under Madrid control it began to sound a bit muddled on the radio and when we passed the sub control centre at Seville there was a lot of confusion on the descent towards Alicante. When we changed to Alicante approach the picture became slightly clearer. On the ground ,control communications didn't appear to be working from Seville and Madrid. There were two aircraft on the ground clamouring for airways clearance and take off clearance but the controller didn't seem to be able to get them airborne and on a northerly departure. There was also a Dan air Comet underneath us who wanted descent for landing Alicante. To break this apparent jam I thought I'd better use my rough knowledge in order to get things moving! I asked the first aircraft waiting to take off

‘What would be your minimum rate of climb up to flight level 100’ He replied ‘1500 ft per minute’ I then told him ‘after take off climb on a heading of 230 [missing the high ground] until passing ft. lvl. 100.’ I then called the second awaiting aircraft ‘Can you climb on a heading of 200 at maximum climb rate of 1,000ft/min until passing ft. Lvl. 100.[10thousand feet]He agreed and then I told them both to take off at their discretion and call Madrid control when on course and through ft lvl 100.They duly followed each other on take off and the Danair comet descended with us following him down on the other side of the airfield. I was beginning to think that we’d cracked the situation when he suddenly broke off his visual approach and began to climb up again! We broke off and cleared out of his way until he seemed to change and continue his approach! I was thanking our lucky stars that it was a clear sky for all this performance to remain reasonably safe. So we duly landed and breathed a sigh of relief as the controller muttered a grateful thanks in his broken English.

We taxied in and while we were reflecting on the impromptu controlling over a cup of tea! It did make me think “what would my old boss Eric think of my unlicensed performance?” We never heard from the departed aircraft so assumed that Madrid control had sorted out the shambles.

During the turn round the Danair co-pilot suddenly appeared on board to have a word. He was a neighbour of mine ; he hadn't been transmitting on the radio ,or I might have recognised his voice. He explained with due apologies that during all the shambles they hadn't changed the gear for their flying controls. Comets have a high speed gear when at altitude and fast and must change to a second gear for slow speed on the approach.

When we had taken on our return passengers and were refuelled and set to go Air traffic appeared to have sorted out their problems and we departed for Gatwick without any fuss! No amateur controlling required!

About a month later I had the surprise of another stick push during take off. I was almost getting used to this and I noted later that it was the same aircraft that was acting up!

We had moved into a nice Wates Dormy house at Ifield. on the west side of Crawley which was just a few miles south of the airport. You could hear the aircraft starting up and taxiing about but nothing obtrusive. and next door to the Golf course. Other pilots moving down from Blackpool seemed to favour Horley which was well to the south west and away from the noise [they thought]. We settled into the

Gatwick experience and started the new noise abatement procedures. Very shortly after lift off the power was dramatically reduced and the aircraft staggered through the first few thousand feet until the power was replaced on achieving 3,000 ft. On our mostly southerly departures the aircraft engines would be pointing down almost directly at the Horley area when the climb power was reinstated and the engines would roar their presence! I think noise transference would have been a better title!

My next door neighbour , Vic Bissel was a pleasant chap. A quantity surveyor who travelled off to contracts in the Gulf area and did an extended tour of duty at Bahrain. His two boys were always keen to listen to my flying stories when I'd meet them on return from work. I enjoyed taking them on occasional visits to the airfield especially showing them over an aircraft or a visit to the control tower. I much later learned that they had both become pilots! When Vic went off to be based in Sydney, Australia he put his house up for rent and Bill Niven moved in. I talked Bill into a few holes of golf and although he hadn't played for years he showed me his magic touch. He didn't hit the ball far but he always arrived on the green in regulation figures and turned in a single figure handicap score! His magic touch at three pointing the Dakota without fail had been no accident!

We did have a “few” neighbourly drinks together and Bill liked to drink until almost falling down. I used to only drink beer and many buckets later I would be slightly mad but still be fit and ready for more. I realised then why Bill had retired sober, quiet and early on our impromptu Ramsey, Isle of Man night stop years before.

Meanwhile it was just past our fifth wedding anniversary and my second daughter Lisa was borne. Mum and baby did very well and it was my third time to witness the proceedings. Joan was in the local hospital and the nurse i/c went out to visit her other patients and the assistant and I coped with the short notice arrival!

A few months later my name had come up on the roster for a West African trip; four days via Lisbon to Las Palmas for a night stop. Then on to Bathurst in the Gambia, Freetown in Sierra Leon and on to Accra in Ghana. After one more night stop return back in two days. Very exotic stuff. The most “African “ atmosphere was our arrival in Yun Dum airport Banjul.

The runway was called Summerfield tracking; basically a steel net surface sunk into red earth which did its best to paint the aircraft with red dust. During our turn round the rest the crew went off to the Managers

hut for tea and I prepared the paperwork for the next sector.

When I arrived at the top of the steps to go and join the others there was a bunch of native dancers in full leopard skin outfits dancing and a witch Doctor shaking bones to bless [I assumed] the big silver bird on its next flight. I did my best to thankfully acknowledge the ceremony.

I'll never forget the scene and many years later when I rather jocularly got some business cards printed I had the letters DBMB and FDSM added which amused a few. Driver Big Metal Bird and From De Sky Man! Silly Boy! I'm sure the Ju Ju Man would have approved. Anyway the spell seemed to work and we completed the short tour with every success! Soon another slightly outrageous outing occurred when on arrival at Amsterdam we were required to change the plan and pop down the road to Rotterdam to pick up the cast of the rave musical called 'HAIR' We had sufficient space to accommodate them and to add to the interest my Capt. was Eric Rowly. The guy I'd noticed on our course who seemed to be studying me intensely. Eric was gay and I learned this by the way he tut tutted disapprovingly as I gazed out of the window and made Wow noises at the pretty ladies boarding the flight. He made lots of funnies but insisted that funnies were ok

as long as he had made them. Well! The troop of Dancers, comedians or whatever took over from the cabin crew and served the poor unsuspecting normal passengers, apparently quite well and we were visited by lots of beautiful young people who danced in and out of the cockpit in various stages of undress. Eric managed to enjoy it all and we had a whacky but successful flight back to Gatwick. Happy days!

I had the unexpected pleasure of an evening with Eric later. At Edinburgh we started the engines before our return to Gatwick on an evening Interjet flight the start motor broke down and we had to stay the night while the engineers fixed it. After arranging that the passengers would fly down with other operators we checked out accommodation which resulted in only three rooms available. Two of the junior stewardesses would share and the senior one, a beautiful South African lady, went off to another hotel. Eric and I duly repaired to the bar and had a gentle several during which I politely explained that there was no way that I'd end up in bed with him. He sadly accepted this and we had an interesting chat about life in the homosexual mode! I must say that as I was driving home to my happy wife and family next morning that I felt sorry for Eric as his plan for that morning was to repair to his favourite sauna and hope to find some "acceptable company"!

A few days later I was rostered to fly with Roy Tappenden, the Black Arrows, Hawker Hunter pilot.

I was rather in awe of Roy considering his elevated past but soon found out that we had a similar sense of humour and I enjoyed being with him in the ideal relaxed but “with it “ atmosphere. Good old Gatwick gave us a momentary fright when we arrived back from Palma at four in the morning and the weather reported calm conditions with occasional mist patches. As I approached to carry out the landing the whole runway was to be seen but when I touched down a thick bank of fog completely blotted out the lights. Roy had selected the reverse thrust and the speed brakes and I quickly went back onto the flight panel and kept the aircraft on the centre line using the I.L.S. localizer needle while gently using the brakes and nosewheel steering to keep straight and slow down. The localizer gets more critically accurate as you run along the runway towards the transmitter. Quite interesting that would have been in the simulator but not to be played with for real! With the reverse thrust roaring at maximum as we raced through the early morning fog it was more than just interesting! So much for the visibility report. Roy took it all ok in his stride but I did feel it was one of those occasions when Pilots are under paid!

A few days later we were fated with another short burst of excitement. Roy and I were flying a Gatwick, Glasgow, Southampton, Glasgow, Gatwick.

The day passed well with lots of humour in the cockpit as the relaxed but professional operation approached completion. I was handling the aircraft with the auto pilot engaged cruising just south west of Manchester heading South. Suddenly we heard the controller say “Canadian Pacific Turn right ,right immediately. Avoiding action” We both stopped talking and the controller said “British United Juliet Charlie” [us] I didn’t need to hear the rest of the transmission. I had my hand on the control column so pressed the auto pilot disconnect button, rolled the aircraft to the right and pulled hard back. Then we looked out. A huge silver and orange stretched D.C.8 on our right was standing on his wing tip and coming straight at us! Its amazing how long 3 seconds takes but we had done all we could and waited for the crunch. Roy had reached across and turned the auto pilot master control knob to turn the auto pilot but that had been redundant as I had disconnected it. It would have taken perhaps another half second to displace the aircraft. As we stared and waited the big machine

roared past; we had best used the space by both being vertically on our wing tips. We felt a short shock as we looked at his undercarriage doors and various panels and away he went. I reached across and punched Roy on his shoulder "F... me ! We're alive! Few seconds later a deep North American voice said "Hey Fellas! That was real close"! I turned the aircraft back on course and put the Auto Pilot back on. I asked the controller

"Was that the system or did somebody boob" He replied rather quietly "I think It was the system".

I reckoned that if he'd left us we would have missed each other by a mile but with the radar he was looking at he only saw two blips merging and had given us the standard avoiding action instruction which had turned us into each other. Fortunately we had turned just inside each other and had avoided scattering about three hundred people across the Cheshire plain! In those days when aircraft didn't climb very rapidly they did a cruise climb which took a lot longer and could easily have escaped continued attention. We weren't heavily into reporting drama's in those days and just enjoyed being alive! Later technology advanced and aircraft had their altitude recording ,continuously, which showed on the control radar screens.

A fun little trip we had was the Gatwick to Le Touquet and return. Because we flew the short flight across the channel very low we were supposed to fly slowly at 250kts in case of turbulence or a birdstrike but on a smooth day we hopped along at 350. We would sometimes see an old Bristol 170 Freighter chugging across at about 155kts with his cargo of motor cars from Lydd, Ferryfield to France. My previous destiny! When we zipped past him we could say to our passengers "Ladies and Gentlemen. If you'd like to see an old fashioned aircraft flying backwards look out to your left!"

My next four sector day was going to be noisy with two check Captains, Plunkett and Bowles checking each other on two sectors each. This took the form of both announcing loudly the details, dotting eye's and crossing tee's. Almost a competition to see who checked what first! Gatwick, Jersey, Manchester, Jersey and back to Gatwick. On the approach to Manchester the ILS was selected and both loudly announced that they had identified the coding. The weather was clear but we always put on the ILS and used it to monitor our rate of descent on the normally three degree glide slope. When I listened to the coding it didn't sound quite right. I was expecting to hear da dit dit [DD] but it was coding something else; I think da da dit[ww]. So I asked the controller "Is your

ILS ok on runway 24;" the one we were planning to land on. He said "standby" and after a short interval he came on and apologised that the engineers had been doing checks and must have forgotten to switch it back. So I replied " I was expecting and hoping to hear Double Diamond [dd]" a very popular bitter brew at the time! This spot of humour dispelled the obvious mistake that the frantic route checkers had made. It was my landing so I had to make certain it was a good one since I had been a bit smart ass.! It was ok. The route checks continued, terminating back at Gatwick with a few complimentary remarks!

I had over 3,000 hrs. in the log book and was aware that my promotion hopes were receding as the outstation pilots kept arriving at Gatwick. Since I'd heard that Gulf Aviation were looking for pilots for their Bahrain base and they had 1-11s. I wrote them an enquiry but only received an offer to join them as a Dakota co-pilot. With a thousand hours on jets I considered this a bit retrograde. The salary was very good but relocating to live in Bahrain with a young family didn't attract.

They actually re-equipped shortly afterwards with Tri-Stars which would have been a new destiny!

Then I heard that BEA [British European Airways] were looking for pilots and I arranged an interview with them. On the second interview I was asked which aircraft I would like to go on. I told them that since I didn't know Heathrow very well and I had never flown 3 man crew that Vanguards or Tridents would be best. They agreed that would be sensible. In fact they had started doing some base training at Gatwick with some new 1-11's and they needed experienced co-pilots for those. On that morning before I left the house a friend phoned me to say "have a look at your newspaper" The telegraph had in large print " BOAC to buy British United" A crystal ball would have been most useful !

Within a few days we had checked out property and schools and had a house selected at Thorpe near Heathrow and put names down for the local school. I remember on return to our home in Ifield the post was in. My job with BEA was secure and I would be based at Manchester on I-11's ! Good old bureaucracy was alive and well! When I called in to see my Flight Manager he confided in me "between these four walls" that he reckoned I was doing the right thing but if it didn't work out that he would slot me back into my place on the list! I reckoned one couldn't do better than that. So a pop up to Manchester to sort out a suitable house and school was next . We found a new

development with an ideal little detached four beds with garden in High Legh Cheshire once again in the Manchester circuit! School was two minutes down the road. Sadly house at Gatwick had to go on the market and we had to stick to our guns and exceed the agents suggested price and manage to do well on the sale.

I was slightly sad to leave B.U.A. The 'esprit de corps' was quite high and we knew that we gave the national airlines some excellent competition. Our 'Interjet' service up and down the UK with a hot meal, a bar and very smart young ladies in their light blue uniforms, mini skirts and slightly gangster soft hats were way ahead of the opposition. One evening when we'd climbed out of the crew bus for a night stop at Glasgow. I thought it would be fun to startle the locals. It was Friday night and the Glaswegian growling din was in full chorus! In the attached public bar. We marched straight in, in our uniforms and the din chopped abruptly silent like the scene from a western as the men gaped, mouths open, in amazement with drinks held high but not swallowed!

We had a quick drink but as the chat recommenced we beat a hasty retreat to the foyer to check in as normal before any friendly attachments developed!

My very last flight on the BUA 1-11 was to Jersey and as I walked past a British Midland aircraft on the tarmac the captains window opened and there was my old mate Mike O'Connor ,ex Blackpool, giving me a smile. After a short chat when he learned of my departure to BEA he retorted “ It’s a bloody waste”!

I later learned that Captain Mack of Loganair, to whom I was eternally grateful ,said something similar. His outfit was busy giving BEA a good run for their money on the local Scottish scene. With the continued absence of a Chrystal ball and the hopes of an early command depleted I reckoned that security of BEA would be most appropriate for a guy with three youngsters! .And a magic Mum doing her best!

Around then I learned that the chief flying instructor at the Blackpool flying club had been killed in a crash with an Auster. Something to do with the tail trimmer!

Another reminder that ‘fate is the hunter’ but a few bursts of good luck are always very welcome! I then toyed with the idea of asking the training chief if I could go straight on the line after some short introductory training. I did have more time on 1-11’s than anyone in BEA. I fell shy of this idea and decided not to take on the might of the BEA training empire.

to use the full course as a refresher. The 500 series aircraft was different in some respects. BEA in their technical arrogance tended to “do things” to aircraft which entered their stable. One of the big changes in the cockpit was the flight system. BEA had done lots of engineering research on their Trident aircraft resulting in an approved Autoland system and they seemed to expect similar results with the BAC 1-11. No exams were necessary as I had the aircraft on my licence. ha ha. Just handling the flight system automatics was a big enough challenge.

So it was back to the look see flights to catch and familiarise on the operational differences. And they were more than just a few! How about off/on switches going the opposite way to the normal 1-11?

There were eight guys on the course; four from the RAF and four from other airlines or “self improvers” we were termed. When we met up on day one we were given a few introductory talks from flight management guys. The first one ; an oldish fashioned chap with short haircut double breasted suit and polished oxford shoes started by saying “I’m glad to see that none of you are ‘with it’ ie long hair, beards, etc!” I was relieved that I had shaved off a beard the night before though I’d vowed never to do that again.

Later that day we were chatted to by the chief training instructor; Big guy, big sideboards, fully draped suite , psychedelic tie and swede shoes. I wondered if he and the previous guy ever met up?

The course got under way with the usual chalk and talk. Taff Hiscox was our usual instructor and was sensible fun with a host of jokes between subjects to dispel any budding boredom. I think I was taking most of it in as a good refresher.

I was paired up with Robin Baguley who was from Danair and Donaldson airlines. Our most comical couple of days were in the route ops trainer which tried to train us on the cockpit and paperwork procedures which were very different to anything we'd experienced and we were not very good at this new and rather flamboyant way of operating. The gadget was like a non flying simulator. There were two identical switches; one controlled our height, the other the transmit switch for the radio. I remember hopelessly trying to deflect Robins hand off the altitude switch which was unwinding our altitude rapidly as he thought he was transmitting a message. I just caught him before we "hit the ground".

Our instructor was a bolshie little guy who rightly reckoned that we were the worst pilots he'd ever seen. Based on our performance on this gadget I

tended to agree but then he finished off his bollocking by claiming that he'd only crashed twice before.! We nearly fell off chairs with laughter!

After week or so the others had the exam and I had started look see flights. When these were not rostered I would scrounge a ride on flights up to Manchester to catch up on the family progress. On one of my arrivals one of the admin staff told me sternly to report to the flight manager because of these non rostered flights. I duly did this and was told to wait outside the office. After a while the admin bod came out and said that the Flight Manager had said not to "do it again"!

To have 3.5 thousand hours in my book at the age of 30 I was so incensed at being treated like a Dickensian Schoolboy that I was tempted to march into his office and tell him where to stuff his bloody job! I didn't but I was rather disappointed at the poor ,non welcoming treatment. Maybe it was a bit of ad libbing by the admin bod.?

So the 'official' look see flights continued during these a visit to see the Berlin operation was very interesting. The very first trip Robin and I had was to position out to Frankfurt and then up the south corridor to Berlin Templehof. The co-pilot we met at Frankfurt was John Scullard who gave us some top tips on how to behave at Berlin; tipping in the hotel and always to be

punctual for the generally slick operation. He was an exciting character who turned out to be ex RAF Hawker Hunter pilot who'd taken the sword of honour on his course at Cranwell and was obviously a top class bod. The flight to Berlin proceeded and halfway his voice came on the p/a giving us the expected weather and E.T.A. at Berlin. This was followed almost instantly in German! Then the Captain repeated this in French followed by John's voice once again repeating the announcement in Spanish!! We were in fact flying a route which principally belonged to Air France but the other aspect must have been taking the mickie out of the two "self improvers". Robin and I just stared at each other. I did vow to learn the announcements in German. The routes into Berlin were all in the low level amount of sky allowed by the Reds through East Germany which had been established for the Berlin Air Lift. When we arrived I congratulated John on the performance and we learned that his father had been an ambassador in South America! We did a short tour observing the flights in the three corridors. Hamburg and Bremen up the north corridor, Hannover, Dusseldorf and Cologne in the west via the middle. and the south to Munich, Frankfurt and Stuttgart.

My first evening in Berlin I took a walk from our hotel along to the Tiergarten. It was a misty grey. evening which seemed to emphasise the historical, menacing

history of this part of the town and being on one's own made the atmosphere feel quite eerie. Then I walked through the park parallel to the Unter Den Linden which is the main street heading East. I came to the Russian War memorial featuring a tank ,guarded by a couple of Russian armed soldiers looking very serious! Then I arrived at the border with its barbed wire fencing. Beyond was a wide sanded strip which I later learned was called the "death strip". The sand contained all sorts of gadgets like trip wires and automatic firing machine guns. Next was the 8 to 10 foot wall with a fat circular top which would be impossible to hold on to [If you got that far]

Looming out of the gloom was the Brandenburg gate, the historic entrance to East Berlin. The death strip was repeated on the other side of the Wall and watch towers with East German Border guards in evidence were spaced at intervals along.

I walked back feeling very sombre and suitably horrified. When I came to pass some buildings I noticed the damage from bullets and shells that the Russian army had used on their way into the city in the final days of the war. Just at the edge of the park there are some large houses with similar scars and apparently abandoned but each had some small more modern apartments and a notice stating that they

were the property of various Foreign Embassies. It invited me to think of spies and safe houses.

The whole short outing screamed the sad seriousness of the place to a new boy.

Shortly later we were rostered for our base training at Prestwick which being fairly under utilised was the traditional airfield for circuits and landings training. We met up with our Base training Capt. Dennis Emmerson who was a friendly, practical guy. Robin did most of the flying and I did a little because of my previous experience. After a few days Dennis went home and we were rostered to fly with the Chief Training Capt. so we expected to be scrutinised closely! He turned out to be Tug Wilson the big guy we'd found quite comical on day one!. He seemed more interested in our completion of the paper work than anything else? When we practised single engine

flying we found that he was introducing a new system where the non handling pilot would use the throttle to make power adjustments while the handling pilot flew the aircraft. This seemed stupid to me because whatever you do to keep the aircraft balanced you do with your feet on the rudders and therefore know how much power is required. Anyway we did what we could! Since I was on the jump seat observing I stepped back to the galley behind the cockpit and made the coffees. While doing this and we were ready to taxi I heard Tug ask Robin for 90 [taxi power] then 95 Taxi power! The aircraft was roaring and shaking a bit and as I stepped into the cockpit carrying the drinks Tug was asking for 10thousand !! The handbrake was on! I shouted

“THE BLOODY HANDBRAKES STILL ON !” Tug leaned forward, let the handbrake off and I disappeared back into the galley distributing the drinks, but not in the cockpit! The rest of the day passed without further drama but we were spending a lot of time on the same engine and with the almost freezing low cloud I began to wonder how long it would take until the engine decided to stop. I called up Glasgow tower on The other radio and asked for their latest weather. It was unusually clear.

So I reported this to Tug with the obvious intention and after another circuit on that engine he declared that we would pop over to Glasgow to finish the detail. So 5 minutes later we landed on Glasgow with two engines. Tug did the landing and after touch down he applied the brakes, pulled out the spoilers, pulled on the reversers and turning round he said to this other Capt. on the second jump seat [who had come on the 5 minute trip across to Glasgow] "Piece of cake these little 1-11's"

MM I thought "could you call that double standards"

So that completed our base "training". Robin had flown quite well. The next stage was line training which would be done with London based Captains in Berlin flying up and down the corridors.

My first tour was with a bumptious little Scots Guy Called Jimmy whom I didn't enjoy. I had met him the night before in "Flanks Bar" which was a pub a few yards along from our hotel ;The Kempinski which was quite famous just off the Kurfurstendam in the middle of Berlin. "Flank" was a pleasant little Chinese man and a bunch of senior Cpts . sat around slurping beer and complaining about the airline management [as you do]! So I matched Jimmy pint for pint [as you do] Until we retired at a respectable hour.

On our next trip up to Hamburg The radar controller left us rather high on finals so I put the undercarriage down, closed the throttles and having assessed that we'd just make it ok Jimmy announced "do it on automatics", leaned forward and switched on the auto throttle which gave me just what I didn't need ; a great burst of power. There was no way I could continue so I went into the overshoot mode and carried out an embarrassed circuit and landing. Jimmy chided me with the remark that I should stay within my limitations. I assumed he was referring to the relatively quiet evening we'd "enjoyed" in "Flanks"

The next tour I had was with Duncan who was quiet but rather superior to his Henderson pupil! I made an unexpected boob on one take off. When we started to roll with my Capt. opening up the throttles I thought I saw both engines going passed the temperature limits and called stop before the speed built up. Even at this stage the colour scheme of the gauges were different to what I was used to. After an engineers check we proceeded as normal. So I reckoned that was one I wouldn't do again!!

My next Capt. was Roy Pigden who had been a Path Finder on Mosquitoes during the war and we operated well . The only small boobs were his for a change!

He seemed more interested in my choosing the correct wine when we went out to dine together! Bit of a major test for a peasant from the Gorbals!

When we finished the tour back in London Roy said "That was ok Henderson but since you haven't been to Heathrow very much would you like to do a few flights from here for familiarisation to finish off.?"

"Well Sir" I said. "Its really been a good course but I much prefer to get on up to Manchester to settle in and catch up with my young family" Roy kindly said

That's ok then I'll sign you off and let you go". Great!!

The some time later and I was passing through Heathrow I met up with Capt. Holdstock who was top

Manager of the training empire and he said " Oh your Henderson! We wondered for a while whether to give you a short briefing on our procedures and let you go straight on the Line". I cursed myself then for not having the cheek to ask! I could have saved myself from all the past few months nausea.

So there I was off to my new base at Manchester.

After a couple of days off joining the family fun I was rostered for standby at the airfield. When the flight managers secretary saw me she explained that I had a pidgeon hole in the crew room and I even had some

mail. Curious I thought. It was a letter from Capt. Johnnie Johnson my old Blackpool boss offering me a command on Dakotas and Heralds!! Ouch!

That could have been quite a dilemma but the out stations that used to be part of British United were now small separate companies at more financial risk than the national corporation. So I went for the security but resolved to go over to Blackpool and thanked Johnny for his offer.

I stooged around the BEA set up and eventually sat back in the crew room hoping for some action. An oldish guy wearing an anorak and jeans came in, gave me nod and went through and into the Captains room. I thought he must be a tradesman come in to mend something.? A little later someone came in from operations and announced that I had to do a flight to Glasgow and return with Captain French so I went into the flight planning room and started on the paperwork and Met reports. Shortly after that Capt. Alf French appeared, transformed in his uniform. He was the guy that I'd seen in the crew room! So we got introduced and went down to the aircraft. I did the checks while Alf chatted with the Cabin crew. Then we put on our headsets and Alf spoke to the Tower. As soon as he spoke I recognised this pleasant sing songie voice that I'd heard over the years flying around the Northern

U.K. I had even heard him saying “nighty night Preston” control as he changed frequency to Manchester! He didn’t show any surprise when I reached across the cockpit and shook his hand! Alf turned out to be a very pleasant slightly eccentric old Manchester character. He built a hut in his garden that he planned to move into and let his family live in his house. Later one of my contemporaries told me that as he and Alf walked across to the aircraft one rainy day he told Alf that he’d lost his pack -a -mac lightweight rain coat to which Alf replied “Yes Pete I lost mine. I think it must have blown off my rhubarb.”!

Anyway he was a pleasant guy to fly with and I steeled myself to “enjoy” the rest of the staff. The captains were as usual quite a pleasant bunch, one or two outstanding and the usual couple of P.I.T.A.s

One improvement was that I had usually 50% of the Flying. The route structure was similar to what I’d flown with British United with occasional trips down to the med. and a four or five day tour about once a month based in Berlin flying the corridors. Some of the Captains I remembered from Renfrew days and gradually some new Capts. appeared . I enjoyed flying with Al Baldwin and must have performed well with him as he always gave me an A on my annual route checks. I think I much impressed him on day when we

had to reroute our flight plan home from the south corridor and return via the middle corridor from Frankfurt due to thunderstorms and I scrounged a lift on the engineers van and navigated through the labyrinth of the airport to the briefing office and put in a new flight plan. My old job after all! The 1-11 base was moved from London to Manchester and became the "Super" 1-11 division for some reason. The flight manager was Bob Preston, a low handicap golfer, and he became the Director. I only flew with him once or twice but he was in charge of the golf section so I got to know him through that especially since at the next Golf section AGM he "elected" me to be the new secretary! Working with the treasurer was not always easy so soon I combined the roles and was in charge. I set about recruiting more members from the other employees. Previously it had only been pilots and engineers playing at Wilmslow Golf club [a rather up market [tum te tum] established course. Later, in addition, we joined Didsbury Club by the Mersey river where normal mortals would fit in! I made a point of passing on a few etiquette tips to the new guys and we helped the club out at the annual Wilmslow open. Green fees were half price and I'm sure that operations on the airfield benefited by the friendship. I ran a tight ship on the small annual fee and even the Director had to promptly pay! The BEA silver wing cub

had a club house and sports field nearby and after a while My wife ran the ladies squash team and I the men's although I had to occasionally drop out to let a better player play number 5.! Ladies match night was Monday and Joan would have a night out with the ladies and I would be chief babysitter and after a few bed time stories I'd relax with a few pints of Madame's home brew!

The job of testing the aircraft for their annual Certificate of airworthiness was transferred to Manchester and I was invited to join the small group of pilots to assist on these flights. This involved taking the various systems to their limits and check everything functioning up to scratch. I'd enjoyed doing this type of flying before so I looked forward to a few adventures doing that. The stall warning system on the 1-11 was an intricate piece of gear. High tailed aircraft could get into a deep stall and when they were introduced one crew had been killed on a test development flight when the aircraft plummeted into the Salisbury Plain. Flying veins were fitted each side of the forward fuselage and they floated in the airflow to detect the angle of attack of the wings when the nose came up at slow speed. First the engine igniters would come on then engine fuel was dipped because a full injection of fuel at stall speed would burn out the engines. Then the control column would vibrate for

quite a few seconds then just before the aircraft stalled the control column would be pushed quickly forward and get the airspeed up in a dive. So we'd get airborne with two flight test observers; one from BEA and one from the Air Registration Board and we had some extra angle of attack indicators fitted in the cockpit. So we would set airspeed bugs to stall speed and the observers would watch the angle developing on their indicators and we pilots watched the airspeed indicators as the nose was slowly raised. Approaching the angle i.e. the speed, the stick would begin to shake. Then the briefing was to call out "push" when the stick should be pushed all the way forward to ensure a dive with increasing airspeed. Roy Pigden came up from London fairly regularly to fly the tests until one of our Manchester Capt. Dave Street began to fly them. One day we got airborne for the third time in GAVMS "mike sierra". We couldn't get the system to work properly and the Manchester engineers skilfully refitted the floating veins. During the morning over the North sea had been busy with the R.A.F. doing exercises and the R.A.F. controller must have been getting used to us. On this flight he said "One of our chaps might come up and have a look at you" So there we were hoping for success and Roy began the exercise raising the nose slowly up, the Igniters came on we watched our instruments and then the stick

began to shake. I suddenly saw ,just outside my side window, a Lightning fighter come alongside with his nose in the air with a huge black plume of smoke behind as he tried to fly as slowly as us. The stick shook and as we all shouted "PUSH" he fell out of the sky and tumbled away below! as we began to dive. He must have thought " these B.E.A. chaps fly a bit funny?" On a few of our flights a senior Capt. would come up from London to fly the test and show a slight reluctance in carrying out the test. They might have been a little bit rusty or showing a bit more sense than me! An interesting thing to see was the operation of "The Scotsman" as some of the guys called the Mach Trimmer We used to normally cruise on the auto pilot at Point 74 mach [.75 speed of sound] but if we exceeded this the mach trim would begin to overcome the aircrafts tendency to reverse the controls as point 84 was reached and corrected the autopilot. If we switched off the Scotsman and the auto pilot it was interesting to see the effect as we approached that speed.

Roy and I taxied out one day and before take off we pulled over while I exercised the manual pressurisation dump valve. This is on the co-pilots side and allows manual control when required. As I opened it there was a slight obstruction which released on a bit more gentle pressure. When reset

and checks complete we took off. Later in the flight I admired the Isle of Man in the middle of the Irish Sea; how tiny from 34,000 feet. We began checking the safety release valve which should open if the cabin pressure exceeds 8.5 psi. Our normal operation at 7.5psi gives a cabin altitude of 8,000ft when the aircraft is at 35,000ft, our normal ceiling. The body of the aircraft creaks and groans a bit as 8psi is passed and on this occasion the pressure continued to rise slowly with a great deal of creaking but no release at 8.5 So It was time to slowly open the dump valve. As the valve began to open the cabin rate of climb went to the top of the scale as the pressure began to release but suddenly the control was stuck but when I used a slight pressure to open it there was a twang ,the valve slammed shut and the cabin rate of climb dived down and the pressure increased.! There was slight panic in the cockpit from the engineer observers and Roy began to reach for the flight manual at the back of the cockpit. The manual is for normal operations and this was anything but!. I don't believe in doing anything if you don't know what to do but on this occasion I just reached up to the air conditioning and switched off the air feed. The rate of climb gauge swung round from max descent to max climb and the pressure began to drop and we all breathed a sigh of relief. I'd actually got my instinctive snatch right!

When we landed we opened up the hatch under the aircraft where the dump valve is displayed and the broken control wire hung uselessly on its mountings! Perhaps another puff and the "balloon" might have burst! The testing programme was successful and shortly after we were allowed to only test 6 aircraft per year taking 3 years to cover the fleet.

Another interesting bit of flying was to sit in the cockpit as safety pilot during some base training especially when the RAF pilots were practising. Dave Street was the base training Capt. and the pilots were from the RAF VC10 fleet. The political situation required that in the event of some "difficulties", like the corridors being suddenly closed, flying from Berlin to get back to the west side of the "iron curtain" then we BEA guys would position as normal passengers [in civvies] back in the cabin and the airforce would fly the aircraft! So they would practice circuits and landings at R.A.F. Gatow airfield, at the north end of Berlin. They were a good bunch and seemed to enjoy flying the 1-11 which handled very much like a miniature VC10; the beautiful 4 engine aircraft they normally flew. Dave Street was a tidy golfer and I had many a good 18 holes on the outskirts of Gatow, spraying my ball around but usually having a fairly equal score. I liked Dave. On day one of a 4 day tour Dave did a particularly smooth landing and as we

slowed down he announced “that’s the start of the landing competition” Right mate I thought. I’ll do my best. DYB dyb dyb. His daughter was one of the stewardesses on the flight. But when we finished the tour back in Manchester I said “ well Dave I won’t ask who won that competition!” He looked a bit preoccupied with something else? The course at RAF Gatow was a 9 hole golf course with separate tees to use and make it 18 . There was another civilian one at Vansee which we called the American course and we were given freedom to use that. Some times when you played you could hear the squeaky rattle of tanks moving about beyond the trees! Russian or East German [?] The British Officers club, The Marlborough was our main watering hole. We would crowd the bar while the restaurant manager would uselessly nag us to come down and sit at our tables while a small group would saw away on their instruments creating some almost comical hi class music. It was a very quaint attempt at a British ambiance! We would occasionally take some cabin crew up there for a treat[?] The German girls were fascinated and thought it very British and probably quite comical! We hardly ever met any Army people there so I think we were the main source of income for the club. During the evening I used to go down and talk briefly to old Herr Stennart. He was an ex Prussian

Cavalry Officer who was very charming and managed the entrance to the club. He usually preferred "ein glass Mozel Bitte" We would also meet some strange sounding people who might have been involved in the various political dramas which no doubt haunted the background scenario. One of our Manchester Captains used to play snooker at the 6th Mess where on our occasional invited visit we would meet quite a range of people some of whom had "escaped".

The officers club had a super swimming pool and tennis courts. Squash courts were also available and that was a great way to recover from a "festive " evening. On one of these evenings a group of us were waiting for taxis and stood outside under the street lamp beside the next door mental hospital. It was Xmas and the temperature was minus about twenty and with snow on the ground we sang " God rest ye Gerry mentlemen" Until I stood on a patch of ice under the snow and collapsed on my ankle which fractured. We continued the party in my room at the Hilton and hung a wet towel out of the window, put a cold compress on the wound! Having left it there for more than two minutes it was frozen like a sheet of corrugated iron! I reported unfit the next morning. Later that day Herbert one of our drivers took me round to the nearby Krankenhaus where after much discussion a huge concrete wellington was fitted for

the trip home. Initially they wanted to operate and fit me up with metal pins but I had to argue them out of that idea and told them I had an angry frau who had ordered me home immediately.

They understood and allowed my escape!

When I arrived back in England and told my doctor about the threatened operation he laughed and said that he would fit me up with a walking plaster and that would be sufficient. I asked "would that be strong enough?" He said "well mine didn't break until the 12th hole"! Anyway after a few weeks I was fit and flying again. One of my favourite places was the Berlin Philharmonie, a short walk from our hotel and there were always people selling cheap tickets outside the door. One evening I bought a ticket and sat down to be joined shortly by the chap who'd sold me the ticket. During the interval he told me that his wife wasn't feeling well and as we chatted; his English was quite good as he told me he had been a prisoner of war near Manchester! That evening we listened and much enjoyed Daniel Barenboim conducting and playing a Beethoven piano symphony finishing at 10 o'clock. I once asked my Capt. Dave Wilkie would he like to come along but he surprised me by saying the it would be far too late for him to come out at 10 o'clock! I had planned to come out and then start the evenings

eating and drinking ! Good old bad old days! We enjoyed quite a high status in Berlin and we were given honorary membership of the French Officers club up at Tegal lake The Pavilion du Lak where many an excellent lunch we enjoyed. I took my old Capt. up there one day; he had been coming to Berlin for many years but had never found his way there. He found it quite a treat but we took great care, as we walked back across the frozen lake, not to breath on the ice!

We actually had two cars for our use but I seldom used them for the taxi service and the U -bhan trains were very good. The cars had quite a history of sometimes getting lost during the evenings festivities! Sometimes we would cram in several bodies; the record was about 7 or 8! We trundled slowly through the freezing fog ,one evening from the club, one chap driving and I was navigating with warm thumbs melting the ice inside the car on the windscreen and directing the driver left or right like a radar controller. All was going well until suddenly a huge German policeman stepped out and held his hand up for us to halt! When we managed to open a window he took one sniff and shouted “ “BEYA”? [German for BEA.] Rouse! zu fuss ge en” which means all get out and walk! Which we quietly did! having noted where we were. I would have thought that our breath would have melted the ice on the windscreen! I remember

one afternoon as we were being driven back to the hotel we were partaking of a few beers in the BEA van and as we came to the traffic light red a police van; same make as ours, stopped alongside and the cops stared at this collection of striped uniform sleeves holding up beers I held up my beer to toast the officers good health! from my seat at the front. The officer raised his hands sorrowfully indicating that he had no beer to return the toast .

So at the next traffic light when we stopped many beers were transferred from our van window to theirs to complete the toast! Whoever said that the Krauts have no sense of humour? Actually I think we were treated well in West Berlin by the authorities. They perhaps forgave our night time transgressions because after wrecking their beautiful city with bombs we had supplied them well with food and fuel during the Airlift when the Russians isolated the city behind the wall. What a stupid planet!

Flying in and out of Templehof was very interesting as we used both parallel runways there was a line of apartments where the non handling pilot could catch a swift glance into the windows as we swept passed. Because of the nearness of the buildings there would be quite severe turbulence as the wind swirled about.

I used to add on about twenty knots to our finals speed without objection from any of the Captains. You won't fall out of the sky if you have the speed!

One evening in the nearby pub I was with a group of our pilots but there was a chief flight manager present and as we discussed the turbulence I stated that I quite enjoyed it as long as I added the additional speed although "the book" recommended only an additional 5kts. which I thought was stupidly dangerous! There was a hush and when he left our table I was severely reprimanded by the others "You don't tell THEM that". About a week later a notice came out. instructing us that after much consideration it had been decided that we may add an additional 5kts to our speed in conditions of severe turbulence!! Big deal!

We suddenly became British Airways on the 1st April '74

And merged with our "big brother" B.O.A.C. [British Overseas airways Corporation] our long range overseas airline There were a few operational differences. B.E.A. had used the monitored approach system ie that the non handling pilot looked out for the runway while the other pilot flew the instrument approach. Quite good in foggy conditions. At the critical height handler would call either "land" ,when

the non handler would take the controls' or "go around" and the flyer would put on power and climb away. I don't think big brother adopted that system. I think we did more foggy/low cloud landings than them. Another difference was that we used QFE for landing and our altimeters would read zero on the ground whereas big B used QNH which showed the altitude above sea level after landing. Later in my progress I noticed when flying an Instrument approach into Nairobi as I passed 500 ft height my altimeter was telling me that my altitude was 5,500!! Something to beware after a long flight to get there! The debate /argument eventually ceased when we began to use radio altimeters when approaching mother earth! I used to consider it the electric altimeter. Quite a few aircraft had crashed at NIAROB I in the earlier years.

Also we became "Speedbird" on the radio instead of our B.E.A. "Bealine" callsign.

So I settled into B.A. and enjoyed the various routes we flew. Probably the Berlin short tours were most fun.

I enjoyed trying to speak a good German P.A. to the passengers. The other U.K. regional airlines Cambrian and Northeast were being integrated and their aircraft

retired which unfortunately delayed ones promotion yet again but It didn't worry me too much. I thought of my colleagues who'd come from being Captains in the Airforce to start again in the right hand seat. I was doing very well at annual route checks without making too theatrical a performance! I remember flying with Moose D. on line continuation "training". I don't know why he was called Moose. He was large and noisy so I settled for that. He was good company in the bar after flying; maybe a bit boastful but unfortunately a definite P.I.T.A. in the aircraft. I loved his story about as he flew around Yorkshire in his Meteor jet he circled around a young maiden sunbathing on her lawn and after making it very obvious that she was the "target" of his frolics he landed and after going off duty to call by her house! I thought he wanted to know my knowledge of the various manuals so when he quizzed me about something I would look it up instead of just rattling it out! As I probably could better than him. WRONG! He was also nagging me into trying out some of his landing techniques usually ending up with a crunch landing. Until at the end of the two days, when Mike one of my favourite Cpts. was positioning on the jump seat and when I ignored Moose and did a smoothie he looked at the other Capt. and said "Humph! Showing off!" Mike replied " He always does those"!

We landed in Brussels one day and the engineer came into the cockpit and told us that one of our trident aircraft had just crashed after take off from Heathrow.

Very soon after take the aircraft had stalled and fallen out of the sky just west of the airport near Staines without survivors.

An extended enquiry followed . The aircraft had a history of spurious stall warnings and the crews had developed almost a habit of cancelling the warning which you did by quickly pressing the warning light.

Also the crew were very often an old Captain and assisted by two low experience co pilots. Also an almost criminal positioning of the flaps and leading edge droop control levers. The control levers were side by side. The leading edge wing droops allowed flying at slower speeds and needed an additional 50kts before retraction and it became understood that they had probably been retracted in error! Also industrial relations were not in a happy state and the cockpit harmony was in doubt. Later on we were given courses for "cockpit resource management". When I went on the course I remember on day one as I entered the building I held the door open for a pretty young lady who turned out to be our lecturer that day. Soon after she began to speak on lecture one I had to raise my hand and politely inform her that I

couldn't hear her. So the guys at the back of the room had no chance but didn't appear to mind!! Lesson ONE!

I privately thought that in each fleet the P.I.T.A's in the air should get most benefit from these short courses

But very much depended on self recognition! I actually caught up with my training report! Quite accidentally.

"A little disappointing , considering his previous 1-11 experience. However a good standard has been achieved with smooth accurate instrument flying"

These guys should have been politicians! I felt like phoning the training boss and suggesting he put some of his line trainers on the course! So here I was doing CofA test flying ? Hadn't they done well!!

Anyway life progressed and I was enjoying my flying with almost all of the Manchester Captains. The corridor flying in and out of Berlin was fun with an occasional Mig Russian fighter having a look at us. One came towards us and passed quite close going in the opposite direction. I gave the pilot a wave which he returned! Then he disappeared behind .The American controller called us to belatedly report the Mig to which I replied " What's he doing now please" But he'd gone away. One morning as we flew above a half cloud cover I saw a fast moving bunch of spots in front

of my eyes [I thought] looking down through the gaps at the ground. I began to tell my Captain and as I spoke there was a WOOSH as a bunch of about seven Migs roared vertically up all around us and disappeared upwards into the blue. No report from American Control! They had probably been low level below the radar. We wondered if the mig jockeys had seen us?

Night life was good too usually starting off with meeting of the chaps in our crew room in the hotel to discuss where to that evening? I usually finished up the evening, going to my favourite pub; The Folk Pub in Leibnitz Str, just off the Kudamm. There were often visiting groups playing music from many lands but mostly Rock and Roll. It was very good normally and some times I did stay "rather late" Early even!!

One of our trips was to Cologne which was the post war capital of Germany. This flight was really crack of dawn stuff and by the time we landed we were all hungry so I would march off to the staff canteen. In the canteen would be the usual que of hungry airport worker and I would march to the head of the que shouting "Entshultigen sie bitte! Ich habe nicht viel zeit" [I beg your pardon! I don't have much time"]

The people would just stand there and stare ,some with mouths open, at this rude , noisy person . I would throw down some Deutch Marks and grab a handful of eggs and sausages and quickly march out again smiling “Danke shone” {Thank you}

We would all have a small snack to keep us going.

One morning as one of the girls adjusted her make up I said that I would show them how bovine the Cologne people were and asked her to make up MY face! Which they did and when they finished I looked quite pretty [?] wads of tissues were thrust into my shirt “breast” pockets and by the time they had finished the job by fitting a stewardess apron the passengers were approaching the aircraft to fly back to Berlin.

My Capt. was in the cockpit ready to start up so I took up position at the entrance with a bundle of newspapers.

As they boarded I said in a shrill voice “Guten Morgen, Mochten zie ien Zeitung? Some accepted a paper and wished me good morning until about passenger number 10 who stared at me and gave a shrill scream! I then dived into the cockpit and away we went! My Capt. That morning was Willy Wilson who I enjoyed flying with. I’d first met Willy years before doing a bit of flying at the Edinburgh flying club. He

had appeared in the clubhouse like a happy schoolboy wearing a blazer sporting a badge of the Airlines Hamble college which I noticed with admiration and a touch of envy.

Strangely we didn't really get to know the Panam pilots who did seem to be a permanent fixture based in Berlin. Having a beer one evening in their club I mentioned that I'd been based at Crawley near Gatwick for a while and he obviously had night stopped there because he quickly said "Oh yeah by creepy Crawley!" We occasionally met Charlie "wheel chocks" Morgan. He told me his story over a few beers. He had been flying a Boeing Stearman biplane as a student and on one of his x-country flights the engine suddenly stopped. Charlie glided down and successfully landed in a field. In the relief of his success he suddenly noticed that the machine wanted to roll down the slope of the field and with out brakes Charlie leapt out and dived under the wheel and saved the day! Unfortunately it took a good deal of the day to find Charlie and by then he had earned a permanent back injury. One of our Captains, Ron Summerton, had a bad back for a while but we got around this problem when I got a wheel chair and pushed him gently out to the aircraft looking quite grand in his 'throne'. We occasionally met the American pilots at their club at Templehof airfield.

They never failed to ask us to “please put on lights when we flew around the daylight circuit” as an aid to seeing us. Sounded good sense to me but it wasn’t our policy. I don’t know why so I did try to oblige by putting them on without “Tut tutting” from Capts. We changed frequency to Berlin one night as we entered the corridor and listened to quite a shambles going on. The airfield had suddenly closed while they quickly swept the runways after a sudden snow storm and we could see in the distance what looked like a very lively Christmas Tree. Some aircraft were mistaking some of their call signs and going through occupied levels. Straight away I suggested to my boss that we should orbit in our present position which was about 50 miles short of the circuit until the “Snow clo” was cancelled and normality returned. Some people did get unnecessarily excited. It reminded me of my earlier Spanish “education”

So life in B.A. went on with a good mixture of local, continental and internal German flights. Each six months we were checked in the BA simulator near Heathrow. I’d not done much after my earlier introduction to the Air Lingus 1-11 St. Thetic and a few annual instrument rating tests which were unfortunately rostered on the first of January! What

an ignominious “Hog Maney” for a Scotsman going off to bed early after minimal beer! and lie listening to the happy paddies celebrating ner’day. The BA simulator I found to be rather unstable and if you took your eye of the blind flying panel for more than an instant the beast would go into a spiral dive! I did not enjoy the nervous atmosphere. Perhaps slight paranoia ? I did however get my revenge during one exercise when suddenly the controls began to lash about with the rudders cycling back and forth and the stick lashing forward and back almost bouncing off the panel! Trying to climb out was not an option. As I looked about the cockpit I suddenly saw for the first time a red button above me on the roof and, in my ignorance, punched it. The whole machine did a kind of dying groan and flopped to a silent stop. We climbed out and as we were having a cup of tea the engineer came and told us that we had just honked several gallons of hydraulic fluid all over the basement. Nobody worried me over it and I reckoned “Rather hydraulic fluid than blood”! One lovely gentlemanly old training Capt. would set us up for the exercise and go away and leave us to it. When he came back from the pub down the road he would just appear and say “Well chaps, did you enjoy that and learn some?” We did! One enjoyable manoeuvre was to get the aircraft out of

flight level 350 [35,000ft] and under 10,000ft in less than 3 minutes in case of an emergency decompression. We had no drop-out oxygen and people don't live very long without O₂. I sometimes wondered how we would get down at maximum speed if we had a large hole in the fuselage?

Anyway as life in Berlin continued to be enjoyed an enemy to our happy scene threatened. Since the 1-11 headquarters had moved to Manchester the Boeing 737 was growing in Heathrow numbers and began to make its appearance in our Berlin. And the excuse was that the 737 was quieter. Actually I reckoned it was about one decibel better but the dreaded *beaurocracy* was making moves. Besides, with about 9,000hrs on the 1-11 and the reduction of German tours I began to think of trying a new toy! With no command in near sight I considered that a bit of time on the Jumbo Jet; the beautiful Boeing 747, would surely be a pleasure and also a look around the planet would be good. So in 1984 I pitched up in London to begin my course. I wasn't good at courses and considering that some of our earlier chaps had failed it sounded like a challenge. On the first day we met some of the hierarchy instructors one of whom looked at me and having found that I was now 44yrs old said "You will have difficulty on this course" I thanked him for his encouragement much to the amusement of the other

chaps. Almost all from BEA and I must admit younger than me and all from college! So having read the novel "1984" I felt they should call me Winston! We had all mugged our way through the large book "Handling the big jets" As usual the day before the class room I went to the airfield and approached a 747. I noticed that painted on the nosewheel mudguard was an abbreviated registration NO!! [more encouragement] As I sat in the cockpit looking around a Captain appeared; I think he planned to fly it? He gave me a dirty look when I said I was just familiarizing myself so I exited. Already the BOAC/BEA animosity was becoming clear. One of our chaps had previously said "they are ok; they called me one of the FEW" He didn't realise that they actually meant "Flat earth wankers" !

I was allocated to share the visual slides machine with two others from 1-11,s Clive and Phil. They were good blokes[ex college] and a lot brighter and quicker than me! As we proceeded reading through the systems printed questions were asked and I had to ask the others not to shout out the answers until I put my thumb in the air! As I was learning nothing just following them. They kindly agreed to help the old boy in his struggles! Since I knew that it would be a struggle I had bought myself some good running shoes and a track suite so that a jog each day would waken

me up. When one of my friends heard that I was only having 2pints maximum per evening he laughed and shook his head at my “stupidity”. So when I narrowly failed a few off the exams I had to resit. One afternoon as I was wrestling on my own with a resit exam problem, **the fire warning bell sounded and everyone in the college had to evacuate and wait in the car park.** I looked across and saw a bunch of 747guys standing outside the simulator I rushed over and asked them about the numbers 3 and 4 hydraulic systems. They just stood and stared and said they didn’t know. Either they didn’t or they recognised that I was one of the few. Anyway I passed my resits 100% and my instructor asked me if I’d been taking the Micky. No way! I had just feared a small note ordering me to go away.

After a few days sessions of emergency procedures including a slide down the escape shuts. It was good to note that instead of lying back on the slide you could prevent yourself from quickly accelerating if you sat upright . Next we’re off to the simulator! The simulator instructors were a mixed bunch ; not all funny! Our first one; a senior co-pilot, unfortunately junior to us! Not good politics. My partner, in the sim, George was from Tri Stars; at least long haul. Any way I got in the seat and got “airborne” and flew this beautiful machine around from one heading to

another level on another heading and made very happy noises about how it handled. It reminded me of my night rating flight in the Dove when flying the aircraft after all the preparatory drama! The young instructor said nothing but I later noticed that he had written "No problems YET on handling"! I remembered that outside the building on the wall there was a painted line showing that it was 70 feet from the 747 cockpit to the lower end of the boggie wheels to the ground. A good challenge perhaps relying on a good imagination?

The next instructor was a good workmanlike bloke. Captain Tom Mc Cosker. When it came to my turn in the right hand seat to practice an emergency descent I did my usual steep bank to port while shoving the control column forward to begin the dive; we had done this on the 1-11, the simulator made a loud groaning noise and stuck from further movement! Inelegantly up at the top of its spindly hydraulic legs. Whatever we tried it wouldn't move so we all climbed out, crept carefully down the ladder to the ground and went for a cup of tea! Rapid descent was not as critical as the 1-11 because the Jumbo had dropout oxygen. Anyway no permanent damage and the engineers had it fit shortly for the training to continue. I vowed secretly that any more breakage of flying machines would continue to be simulators. No hydraulic fluid

this time! The simulator training was interrupted a few times with short looksee flights before base training. On my first trip observing ,London New York London I managed to catch Salmonella food poisoning fortunately without huge problems! Next trip was with Capt Mark Vardy an elegant, quiet chap. On the way to Toronto he sat me in the right hand seat and let me gently fly it for a while in the climb. We had an enjoyable evening together which finished quite early for a Berlin chap and I stood at my window and reflected on the day. Across the way from the Hotel Lowes Westbury was a block of flats and I spotted what looked like a naked creature lying on a bed. The person arose, came to the window and stared at me across the gap so I gave my normal friendly wave! As I briefly waved I realised that it was a young man. My phone rang and when I answered the question came; "Are you cabin crew?" I replied that I was one of the drivers and briefly apologised if I'd spoilt his evening ! and he hung up! A few seconds later as I reflected on this social absurdity my phone rang again and another voice enquired. I pulled a large cupboard over the door, left the phone of the hook and settled for my early night!!

The next morning as I walked about I discovered a shop selling Scottish tartan and bought myself a Henderson Tie and a Family crest with the motto "Sola

Virtus Nobilitat” meaning Virtue alone ennobles. It might be a strain keeping up with that! My next not so virtuous move was to call in at the Zanzibar Pub that the flight Engineer had recommended as a must for breakfast! He hadn’t said that the troop of young ladies there provided a table dance as one dined. Who was I to object? Not virtuous! Later on my solo travels I came to a building which sported a couple of young soldiers guarding the ornate entrance. I asked what it was and the reply was “This is our House of Representatives sir” and he permitted me to go in. Sitting in the public gallery I witnessed a young Lady who appeared to be causing trouble with repetitive, embarrassing questions was marched out by a sword bearing “Black Rod” character! When I asked I was told that this was historically unique! The next day Capt. Mark let me fly again for a bit. He did ask me how I had spent the previous day off and I think he was suitably impressed when I told him of my cultural Visit. What did he think when later he must have overheard me telling the flight engineer how I had enjoyed my Zanzibar breakfast! I’ll bet he thought “crickey these BEA guys are really something else!” So on with our simulator exercises and a few more characters to contend with. Little Benny Ostler who shouted a bit and frequently mentioned that he didn’t have any o levels! Why? I didn’t ask but I think I could

almost matched him with my few. He kept running down the Concorde and saying they should scrap it as a waste of fuel! On of our exercises was doing overshoots [go arounds] on 3 engines and he said "Don't worry when you start to lose directional control and drift sideways." This sounded rather strange to me. What happens when you are in a narrow valley? Any way, when it was my turn I followed my old Dakota trick of raising the "dead" wing and we climbed up straight ahead without drifting as I expected. He made no comment! The final stage of the simulator programme was an instrument rating exam flight and both George and I were a bit below par. The examiner was a sensible bloke and said that he'd sign us both off because if we repeated the test even a few times it would be a waste! So there we were "ready" for base on the actual aeroplane! There was a rumour about that we might not be kept on the course because some other pilots were being trained on the 747 for Virgin Atlantic and we might be stood down. We wondered. However when we pitched up for the next lecture with Capt. Phil Hogge; a training manager and pleasant with it, he was drawing circuit diagrams on the white board and we breathed a sigh of relief. Then at the end of this lecture he explained that we would have a short break of a week or so before the base training. That break

was very welcome but I did spend some time studying my manuals in case my brain went into the dumping mode while I caught up on the family fun. The next rostered session was with Capt. Macmillan Bell who seemed to want to test my eyesight as he simulated too high/too low variations while I called out the appropriate comment . This reminded me that one of my short haul friends had failed this particular test although I'd never seen that he had a problem with this. Our new examiner much reminded me of my almost comical "training Guru" at Prestwick!

So came the day and we 4 trainees climbed into the aircraft with Mac Bell and a pleasant first officer and flight engineer to head for Prestwick the corporations historical training airfield. I had earlier checked the weather which gave low cloud at Prestwick and gin clear at Stansted and I informed my leader of this to no avail. I was given the checks to do on the aircraft so got on with it in the cockpit and when completed took my junior place in the cabin and off we went.

Phil Flew the 55 minute trip up to Prestwick and when we came out of the cloud rather low, following the Instrument landing system , he landed with a great crunch. We then took turns taxiing the huge beast around the runways which requires a careful speed management using the inertial navigation system

which shows speed on the ground and doing 180 turns during which I risked repeating my plea that it was nice day at Stansted! To my relief and amazement the declaration was made and we took off and flew the 55 mins return south to-----Stansted! After the others had done their share of the take offs and landings and it was my turn the aircraft was soon due back at Heathrow to fly a service and I nearly missed out , but for my two amigos Phil and Clive that I'd started the course with, gently complaining to our leader that it was unfair so I was invited up to perform! I jumped in and completed 4 average to good landings. NO COMMENT

So all set for route training. I was lucky I reckoned to be flying with Capt. Tom Mc Cosker, who seemed to have forgiven me for "breaking" his simulator previously, with co pilot Allan Marsden watching me and flight engineer Adrian Dalton. The trip was 4 day London Seattle, Vancouver Seattle London. I was enjoying the flight straight away and when we called the busy Seattle approach control the controller instantly asked "What speed can you give me downwind Speedbird" I immediately called 300! To Tom who didn't seem surprised because that's exactly what the controller wanted. A quickie to fit in with his busy parallel runways traffic. We then called visual and as I started turned final and called for the landing

gear and flaps to get rid of the speed. As I closed the throttles near the ground with the 70 feet in mind the engines made a lovely shhhh noise and we caressed the runway! As we ran into town in the crew bus Tom told me that he loved that nice “ground cushion shhh noise” that the aircraft made on a smooth landing. This was news to me so I hoped to hear it again a few times over the next few days! I liked Seattle. The next days flight was up to Vancouver and again the shhh noise as we gently groped our way onto the ground. I reckoned that the smooth noise was just my slowly closing the throttles and the engines intake compressor blades going into fine pitch but I didn’t tempt fate by disagreeing! Then it was back to Seattle on the third day where I once again was lucky to repeat the performance. My monitoring copilot Allan assured me that I’d passed with flying colours and on the way home to London Capt. Tom took me into the galley and showed me his report which stated “absolutely no problem on the aeroplane” So it looked like I’d struggled through! As we approached London he said “do me an automatic “I’ve seen enough of your landings” We didn’t get the shhhh this time!

Next trip was a 4 day trip to San Francisco which I found good fun and played golf with my Capt. During the next day I wandered about the town and came

upon this Theatre. There was a picture of a large group of men and I realised they were a choir. Yes it was the poster advertising the Gay Men's choir of San Fran.! MMMM I imagined a few possible encores!

On one of my trips to the west coast as we crossed Northern Canada the auto pilot suddenly turned from our westerly heading through about 90degrees left and set itself a course of south easterly? I disconnected and turned back onto our correct heading and looked at the Inertial navigation system to find out why? Ah! It had been my job earlier to feed the machine with more co-ordinates and I hadn't. the route consists of way points made up of geographical co-ordinates and when we passed over the last set of co-ordinates the panel was empty and actually reading 000degrees by 00 degrees [unfed!] When I fed the beast with its next on track numbers and reset the autopilot I considered where would it have taken us? Well! The 0 degree meridian crosses the 0 degree equator just south of Ghana in West Africa. When the fuel had run out we would probably be still over the Atlantic off the North West coast! Who ever talked about the Jumbo's Graveyard! I never did that one again!!

Next trip was a 5 day outing; London Muscat in the Oman, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and return with Capt.

Ted Coldwell, a serious and sensible bloke. I found the visits to these amazingly different cultures quite a bit to take in. As I wandered around Muscat I came to an ancient Fort. The gate was locked but when I peeped through I spotted an old Arab chap having a sleep in the shade so I banged on the door and asked to see inside the fort. A couple of the other crew members caught up with me by then so we all enjoyed a little tour around this amazing historical edifice! When we left I passed the old boy a few shekles and he went back to his place of rest! I made a few enquiries after a couple of our retired chaps who were flying for the Ruler and when we returned to Muskat a few days later they entertained us to a jolly evening in the officers mess! After a quick shuttle to K.L. we were back to Singapore. I had been "most impressed" with the sexy Chong Sams that the staff in the hotel wore. Very pretty! High collars and a long slit up the skirt as their little legs marched quickly about! My word I thought "my little Madame at home would look pretty WOW in one of those" So one was ordered. It seemed the style that someone would come out of a shop and welcome you in and as you protested "no thanks" he would be measuring you and promise to deliver the article that evening to the hotel later that day!

Ted gave me the last sector from Muskat to London and I'd noticed in the performance manual a note about temperature inversion in the evening. At the end of a hot day the air on the mountains cools down and the Katabatic wind slides down onto the coastal plane; the airport, and raises the hot air at sea level up a few thousand feet creating a temperature inversion. So just after take off when I was expecting a reasonable climb we just thundered on through the night unable to climb for quite a long worrying time! Fortunately over the gulf. Ted looked quite unworried and after a very long 5 minutes we flew out of the area of the warm air! and homeward bound without further drama. Until I later learned that the Chong Sam was much too small. I vowed to change it on my next visit .

The next route training trip was LHR, Johannesburg ,Nairobi with Capt. John Owen who tended to shout when excited. I had found out years before that shouting tended to flatten my learning curve. Perhaps these colonial guys had got better service when shouting at the natives? It was a long ride in the dark shouting into the ether on the HF radio and no one answering from leaving the Mediterranean until calling Joburg on their VHF Tower radio. A long several hours calling. Funnily enough the only one who might answer would be good old Bombay Radio in whom

you had no interest !I even heard a few rude people inviting Bombay to Shut up! What a way to reward keenness ! Anyway it was quite a relief to talk on the VHF and be told the weather and runway in use etc. There was quite an odd system of getting a chitty from Emigration Authorities , noting your entry, because having entry stamped on your passport apparently endangered your political security! In the other states. Joburgh was clean, neat and tidy but I did note that some buses were non whites only. We weren't there long enough for any studies but it looked promising. After take off on the next sector, me flying John started yelling at me "V2 ! V2! I stared and after a few seconds I realised that I was flying a bit slowly instead of accelerating. Not dangerous but not quite right. I think in the dark I always tend to get away from mother earth as soon as pos. With some time to go to Nairobi John gave me a briefing for arrival "It's a big black hole and its not that long so don't hang about and don't use the brakes much after landing because the wheels overheat" So with these pointers of encouragement I thought DYB DYB DYB! It was just over 3hrs and successfully penetrated the black hole without too much fuss and smoothly landed with minimum braking, maximum reverse thrust and no shouting! It was high, hot and very dark. So dark that on my walk round the aircraft I saw the red wheels.

The tyres are supposed to have relief plugs which melt at 500degrees so I wondered how hot was glowing in the dark.? On the engineers panel in the cockpit there are wheel temp gauges and you can monitor the cooling [or the heating up !] of the wheels. Its important not to approach the red wheels from the side or you can have a loud bang and a very hot metal wheel shot at you!

The walk around town was very interesting although the whole place looked rather neglected. It was 1984 and the Brits had been long gone if that was a clue. The security at the hotel was a bit frightening; a gang of guys chatting at the end of the corridor dressed in helmets and carrying large clubs! The town still had a certain old world charm as I walked about next morning. The message tree was cute ;a large tree on the side of the road with various letters, jammed in the branches, awaiting pickup by their intended! The pickup for our flight to London was 11 in the evening which gave a day free to perhaps visit the game park near the airport on my next trip. On take off that night with a temperature of 30degrees and at 5thousand feet altitude it was a long ride. Acceleration was very slow, the engine temperatures soon reached 1,000 degrees with the engineers juggling the throttle levers to prevent overheating

and the runway end red lights apparently slowly approaching! Eventually V1 speed called out[that's the "safety" speed before which you can safely stop[?] and after which you must not try ! About twenty knots later "rotate" and then you gently raise the nose to unstick and slowly climb into the black sky! Phew! One of those occasions when aircrew are underpaid! On a much later visit when my wife and I had several hours in the game park I thought that on an unsuccessful take off perhaps the animals would help tidy up the mess if the cockpit drills were not done very precisely! About a year later Phil Hogge, our training manager, did a trip to Niarobi to inspect the runway and discovered that the runway end surface was badly corroded for about the last 500metres. Obviously torched by 4 big engines blasting the surface as the jumbo was about to unstick! His horrifying report was titled "Into Africa"

My next trip a4dayouting London,Antigua,Barbados and repeat return. Capt. Mick was OK and I enjoyed the Caribbean scene although he flew the trip Into the island and I duly called out the height numbers off the radio altimeter;100,50,then 30. On the first evening at Antigua the manager of the hotel gives a welcome party and the rooms are never ready so we could sit in the foie slurping rum punches for a while and then report to the party full of good cheer! Mick flew the

next trip to Barbados and we enjoyed that visit which gave us a day off there. I was given the night sectors back to London via Antigua. I felt quite relaxed as we approached and on short finals Capt. Mick called out the numbers. I don't know how the numbers were working out but round about call 50/30 there was a bloody great crunch and we were on the ground. My worst landing since my Dakota bounces at Blackpool many years ago! Well ,while Mick went into the office to sign the paperwork and as I sat and smouldered in deep shame one of the stewards came up to ask me what had happened and did the aircraft need a heavy landing check? When I asked him if we had a "rubber jungle" he assured me that we hadn't. The rubber jungle is when during a real crunch the drop out oxygen can deploy with the g force and all along the cabin you have a sea of masks dancing about! Well perhaps my idea of a crash could be worse but I did wonder why Mick had done the daylight landing a couple of days before and left me to "enjoy" the dark one? Nothing else was said and when we approached Heathrow once again in the dark he asked me to do an automatic landing. All part of the training? Or did he worry that I would try a crash landing at Heathrow? Apart from trying to sink it I reckoned that Antigua was going to be my favourite Island. Yeah Man! Next trip was a 5 day jaunt off to the Orient. London,

Bombay, Hong Kong, Manila and return. Basil Baldock was my boss. He was a pleasant old boy who liked to explain interesting points about the British Raj. I had some time to wander about Bombay and when I approached a small tented building, which was covered in many lights, a young man came and asked me if I wished to visit his God? I agreed and followed him into the edifice and inspected the various artefacts. He then offered me a small bowl of strange looking coloured soup? And since I had plenty of time before the next flight I slurped the strange beverage without ill effects and continued the short tour. Basil had warned me about tipping people in public saying that one could be quickly surrounded by the rest of the gang, family or whatever. Later I looked in some shops and was tempted to buy a smart Dotie shirt but found that I didn't have the right face! But the curious Bombay would be worthy of further study. On the next sector to Hong Kong we discussed the instrument guidance system at Kia Tak. It's the same as the instrument landing system with a localiser and a glide path but it guides you to be facing a large red and white checker board on the hill short of the airfield where the runway appears about 50 degrees off to the right and you steeply turn the aircraft right. Quite exciting at 300 ft. When we had a couple of hours to go I was looking down at China noticing

paddy fields and terraced farms on the hills when there was a military airfield at Kunming with a dozen or so Mig fighters parked around the perimeter. When we got to Hong Kong Basil demonstrated the arrival which I enjoyed and looked forward to hopefully have a go . The town is amazing and I knew I would enjoy further visits but the next day was a quick shuttle across the South China Sea to Manila for a short turnaround when we stayed on the aircraft for lunch and then back to Hong Kong. Basil allowed me the approach and landing. I found that the shuttle-on arrival pattern following the other traffic required some concentration but when it came to following the I.G.S. and doing the steep turn on to the runway centreline I enjoyed and only just didn't shout out YEEHAAA ! during the turn. I know that Basil would have disapproved. I think? For those manoeuvres its helpful to be quite happy "on the pole" that probably my Scottish experience had instilled. Basil told me that there was a café on the hill just below the chequer board and I vowed to have a visit sometime wondering how enjoyable lunch might be with a Boeing 747 threatening to fly in the window? After a day or so it was back to Bombay[called Mumbai these days]where Basil explained that landing westerly in the morning usually had a katabatic tailwind off the Western Gahts . Good route training stuff Basil.

Thanks! I had noticed that there was a temperature inversion which tended to keep a lot of smoke trapped in the air. I had carried on jogging for exercise during my course but reckoned I'd give it up in India! I could feel it on my chest. The trip back to London was a tiring 9 hours.

The next trip was a quickie. 3 days, New York and back. Its a slick operation with a lot of speedy talking and aircraft coming and going from all angles. On the arrival evening we went round to "Beefsteak Charlies" where the beer served with the meal is free and then round to Eddie Condon's jazzclub where the music was great modern jazz but you had to nurse a very expensive beer! The next day off and I enjoyed a quick visit to gaze in the window of Tiffanies; the famous jewellery shop which had famously featured in the film I'd enjoyed in the company of my first date with Joan.[and her friend Jenny!] I think munching a hamburger was appropriate as I gazed at the sparklers and reminisced ! Next day a drama free day with no shouting from John. The next trip was New York, Detroit, Washington and return where I got involved in some route checking. Who was being checked I don't know but just did my best and no comments were made? The evening out at Detroit was spent at Ann Arbour; a University town nearby where all the people at our Pizza place, including the staff were

very young. I did go jogging the next day and found that when passing through some doubtful looking areas it was a bonus to be running at a good pace! Good Glaswegian training!

Now I was on a San Francisco 4day trip with Capt. Ricky Free and I was free! Nobody checking me and just Dave the flight engineer to look after the ship. A pleasant crew. Ricky gave me the trip and I remember charging up the runway at London feeling free. It was clear over Greenland so I talked to the passengers on the cabin address and pointed out how beautifully the glaciers ran down from the mountains and still visible into the ocean. Suddenly the C.S.D. [cabin service director] [sometimes jokingly called the chief sandwich dispenser] appeared and asked me if the aircraft was flying at an angle, right wing down? I thought he was just joking but when I told him 'No?' He said that about two hundred people had crossed over to the right side of the cabin to see the show!

Funnily enough Ricky had not checked out Alcatraz prison before so next day off we went on the ferry across the bay to have a tourist looksee. We checked out the infamous slammer and a short period in the darkness of solitary confinement [together!] With a look around the mess hall and view of the Golden Gate bridge across the bay it sure made you think of

the films of the bad guys who'd spent time there and the hopelessness of the fantasy to swim ashore. So there were plenty of places to see on some of the next trips to San Fran.

My next quickie was New York and back with the chief management/training Capt. Peter Royce but there were so many different people changing seats and being checked it was once again head down ,dyb, dyb, dyb ! and hope not to be noticed!

I didn't notice how much of a biggie the next trip was going to be but off we launched with Capt. Tom Weller Flight Engineer Derek Pereira who seemed to be a lively pair of confident characters. I think Tom had been on the first Hamble course and had so far avoided any training or management positions. He kicked off the trip by giving me the first leg to Bombay. An hour or so out of destination I got the weather report which was not good with low cloud and mist over the airfield and about 2 or 3 knots of tail wind on the approach to the westerly runway. Since it was time to talk about the landing I stated that the best way to get in was to overfly the airfield and follow the I.L.S. to runway 25 which had a breakoff height of two hundred feet and accept the small tail wind which was within limits. Both Derek and Tom almost together stated "Oh we always go straight in" The break off

height on the beacon approach, this way, was about 500ft and well above the reported cloud base so I expressed my doubts about any chance of success and to keep them primed I ran through the over shoot drills and said not to raise the undercarriage if we went around because I didn't wish to frighten the punters. After that I finished the short debate by repeating that we'd be far better to overfly the airfield and fly the ILS. to rwy 25. Anyway I mentally prepared for some fun and the controller cleared us to land straight in on rwy 07. All belted in. checks complete and down we went. At break off height 500 I reduced the rate of descent and we searched for a visual clue. Still in cloud 350 , 250 and Tom said "I can see the AIR INDIA hanger". I'd no idea where that was but stared out into the grey! Suddenly I yelled "GOT IT-FLAPS 30 - FULL FLAP as I banked the aircraft steeply to the left - then to the right and gently raised the nose and we touched down! I hadn't heard any "100,50.30!" We were all too busy staring out! As we gently slowed to taxi speed ,fortunately not too far down the runway, Derek punched me on the back and loudly said "That's the best bloody bit of flying I've ever seen on these! Tom said nothing and as I exhaled I quietly said "I wouldn't want to make a habit of it"! On the bus into town one of the stewards asked me That was a good landing but why were we weaving about? I just

said that we were adjusting our runway position for perfection !! Which seemed to satisfy him! When we checked into the hotel I asked room service to bring me up several bottles of India Pale Ale which I thought appropriate and this was wheeled into my room on a trolley with the traditional Indian aplomb. When a few of the crew responded to my invitation Capt. Tom entered to join the party and announced that he liked my style! I'm not sure whether he meant the beer selection or the approach and landing!

After the next day off for looking around were off to Hong Kong and Tom gave me the sector, the approach and landing which I enjoyed without any drama. Next day we flew a shuttle up to Peking, had lunch on board and returned to Hong Kong.

Next day Hong Kong to Columbo on Celon [now called Shri Lanka On the way to the Hotel there were lots of little shrines along the road which gave me the impression that perhaps it was a race of mixed religions hopefully living in harmony. We had a late start out of there so we went to the golf course which had quite a few small lakes dotted around. At the side of each lake we usually found some native wearing shorts who would hold up some golf balls [some times ours] which he had recovered from the lake and would happily exchange for a few rupees! The lakes also

provided some swimming facility for some huge water buffaloes wallowing in the mud. As we passed a nearby house there was a tiny boy smiling at us and as we passed he held up his hand; no golf balls but pointing down to the even smaller little girl standing beside him ,probably his sister, who ,he appeared to be showing us, as worth a few rupees also! I gave him a big frown and smacked my bottom. But that didn't remove his smile!

Next morning back to Hong Kong for another approach on the I.G.S. and a good landing. I was finding Kia Tak no problem but noted that it might be very interesting in bad weather! Next day we were off on a trip to Delhi then Dubai in the Arabian Gulf.

I was first through customs at Delhi and stood awaiting the crew outside the terminal. As I reached for a cigarette I suddenly saw a young man standing by the entrance he had a small bag strapped to his chest but shockingly no arms on his sides. He gave me a friendly but sad look. I gestured to him " do you want one? And when he smiled and nodded I lite one and placed it between his lips. The rest of the crew began to arrive and as we stepped over towards our mini bus I glanced to check that he was coping with his treat and not dropping it into his begging bag. I mentioned this to some crew who confidently

explained that his arms would have been removed to enhance his begging appeal and that various other outrages were common in poor families! Could I believe it ?

A few days later I awoke feeling very Jet lagged or just tired and feeling that this particular roster would never end and when I crossed my room to look out I didn't feel sure which part of the globe we were at! Suddenly a camel walked past! We were back in the Gulf again. Our final arrival was Kuwait and when I stepped off the aircraft the heat hit me like a wave. We were using a new hotel who had a red carpet fitted in order to impress and welcome us The bad news was that among the splendour there was no beer. And we had to stand around making polite chat to the various Arab clad dignitaries welcoming us with lemonades and fruit squash. This "treat " was at lunch time and the crew sloped off to bed for a mid day nap until I found out that there was another welcoming reception in the early evening and it became my task to ensure that the crew abandoned their nap and appeared on parade to endure another session of very small talk , much polite smiling and no alcohol ! I think I felt a little home sick since this 13day outing was vastly longer than a parochial pilot was used to. I had ventured down the souk [the market] in the afternoon and after making a polite enquiry I bought an arab

outfit which I knew would come in very handy for future fancy dress parties. Could an infidel really be forgiven if seen slurping pints of beer while wearing it??

Our last sector was positioning in club class from Kuwait to London. A few other crew members were on the flight and Capt. Tom sat beside another Capt. having a chat which looked a bit animated as Tom demonstrated some manoeuvre, left turn, right turn and land.[sort of demonstration of what?] Maybe I was becoming a little paranoid but the other Capt., a training Capt., was a guy who had definitely disapproved of me previously in the simulator. About a week later a notice came out from the chief training Capt. definitely disapproving of people from smaller aeroplanes throwing the Boeing 747 around like a fighter jet!! mmmm? I wonder who would dare?

Almost a week later I had recovered and the next trip was a quickie Boston, Philadelphia and return almost without drama until I got an unusual clearance by the Oceanic controller to be level at flight level 390 by 50west ,based on the Inertial navigation log, for separation and I climbed a little too slowly and hadn't quite made 390. My fault but my friendly Capt. Dick told the controller that I was new on the route and that seemed to satisfy him so I think it hadn't been too

critical. A previous air traffic man [me] should have done better. It actually was my first visit to 39,000ft! I may have been ascending a bit slowly because I might have had "coffin corner" in mind. That's when aircraft can slow speed stall or high speed stall; the margin gets smaller as they reach their designed ceiling. But maybe it was just finger trouble?

Next trip was into Africa again. 9.50 hrs Lhr.

to Harare For 4 days then Cape Town, Johannesburg, Nairobi back to London. I liked Harari almost immediately. It was clean, in good condition and the people, Black and White seemed to be in Harmony.

We stayed at the Monomitapa hotel initially then moved to the Intercontinental which seemed a bit more European. The food was good, good beer and plenty of activity available; a few good golf courses and Victoria Falls a short flight away to note for a future trip. Also another great surprise was a Gliding Club at Warren Hills, a short car journey away which had a steady invitation to the B.A. crews especially if we invited a few of our girls along for the day out! I suggested we go right away to spend the next day off. So off we went. I had an hour soaring in an L13 Blanik with Doug, Peter or Tony ;the instructors, on an aerotow which at 5,000ft with a very close look at

some trees following the small single engine tow plane, at fairly high temperature. We always wait, ready for the tow rope to break, with a swift course of action pre planned to get the glider back onto the ground, hopefully in one piece. I could imagine the low level rope break and having a landing run through the trees shedding wings etc. while trying not to run directly into a tree trunk Once up and away with decent altitude we can disconnect then sit back and find thermals in which to climb. After a few beers at the end of flying we would pop back to Harari with promises to return soon! We eventually positioned a glider of our own there, courtesy of the B.A. recreation club.

The nearest golf course was the Royal Harari Who let us play for a small green fee and the Secretary was keen on inviting us for dinner to his house. It helped if we brought some pretty ladies along [would you believe] And if you wanted a holiday sometime you could use his nice little bungalow at the bottom of his garden. Treats like that were no surprise in Zim. but usually followed with an arrangement back in the U.K. with a contribution to their bank account because taking local cash out of Zim. was very restricted. After a few times using the local black caddies as custom seemed to require, I asked the secretary if I could have a four ball round with two caddies and two of us. We

had befriended and enjoyed a few of the local guys. But this request went down like a lead balloon! A bit later when I brought my wife out on a trip we were standing on the tee at Chapmans course, my wife had driven off and as I prepared to drive there was a shout and a big black lady said "wait there! I've just got to change my shoes " I few minutes later she reappeared and after short introductions off we went on our round! She was school teacher and played well. Afterwards I considered inviting her to a round at the Royal but decided that maybe discretion was the better part of valour! Chapmans was another pleasant course but apparently a couple of South African chaps had come back from holiday a few years ago and deposited two small crocodiles into one of the ponds on the course. That story definitely made you look around before playing your shot. A brief drama occurred one evening when we had finished and a crowd of people were sitting with lots of beer talking noisily about their round when a chap walked past and threw a large snake in among the bodies! Loudly shouting "SNAKE! Well! Chairs, bodies and beers erupted in total panic! It was a rubber one. Just a short sense of humour check ! Another beautiful course , Rhua had a few native style houses but when you finished playing instead of sitting looking at the view we would sit and look at the beautiful old

thatched mansion clubhouse that some chap had spent his life building. There was a dogleg hole and as we approached the corner stood a tiny black African boy ,totally motionless like a statue, standing on top of a huge, round Zimbabwe stone. How he got up there was a total mystery and as we carried on into the distance he remained quite motionless and intriguing. On one of our rounds when I stepped into the rough I saw a light coloured spot and as I began to reach down to retrieve my ball it moved slightly. A small head lifted up and stared at me. I tightened my grip on my six iron, considering a full swing but stood motionless and exchanged stares with this creature for quite a long time before it slowly turned away and glided off into the longer grass showing its two meters of speckled green body. "That was a Mamba master" my caddie Gifford quietly said in his steady deep voice. I reckoned that just standing quite still was a good idea!

Whenever you walked about Town it was not unusual to suddenly hear police sirens and Mr. Mugabie would pass by in some lordly limousine with two armoured personnel carriers escorting. Apart from that there was an air of peacefulness and I looked forward to my next rostered visit. Over the next few days it was off home via Johannesburg , Nairobi to London. We had a bidline system in operation by then

which gave pilots a choice of their roster using their seniority. A few people had asked me what I was doing in Africa; unusual for a senior first officer [my rank] to be with the "Africa Corps". The long term senior people apparently seemed to bid for trips with high allowances. I was already forming the opinion that Africa and the Caribbean would be my favourites.

I was back to North America for a few trips. A quick New York and return. December had come round and I remember being not very impressed by the very commercial Xmass development with lots of Yo Ho Ho and bell ringing by old men outside illuminated stores. It looked like it gave the old hoboes a chance to earn a few bucks. Soon followed a Boston ,Philadelphia trip which threw up an unexpected challenge. On the return take off from Boston a senior management pilot Capt. Royce had appeared in the left hand seat. He must have been route checking or returning from a meeting? I think he was the man who talked to us on our induction day who had stated that at my age I "would have trouble on the course" All was normal on the first trip Philly to Boston but there was snow falling, minus 2 degrees and of course building up on the runways for our Boston take off. I checked the performance manual and noted that at temperatures above minus 3degrees our book considered the snow to be wet [slush] and take off on

wet would require a weight reduction of 80 tons. I stated this in my best ambassadorial manner and then asked on the r/t "Boston are you considering this snow to be wet snow or dry snow?" There was considerable delay waiting for an answer. I doubt if they had been asked that one before. "Ah Speedbird we're calling it dry snow" "Thank you" Capt. Royce said "it'll be OK." Not being a big book man myself and being aware that our load wasn't critical, I agreed but when we taxied out and just before take off I said " Sir. If we stop accelerating on this one I'm going to close the throttles on you!" It sounded almost mutinous but I was thinking about a previous occasion in history when BEA had killed a lot of people, including about half of the Manchester United Football team, on a failed take off from Munich in slushy conditions. He just nodded! Anyway the big beautiful beast performed as expected and we lifted off as planned. I heard no come back later.

Since I was settling in to the operation I began to take my wife on some trips and when possible with the kids. But since that made 4 in addition to me up front ; to take wife and one other prevented blocking up the first class cabin ! One visit took Joan to Hong Kong and because there had been a Royal Visit by her Majesty all the welcoming signs were still adorning the streets etc. for welcome dramatic effect. How's that

for class. I got one of our kids to sit in club class in order to offer the seat to the wife of my senior captain who had used up her trip allowances who happily accepted! Our kids were old enough to behave but on one trip the Capt. who was a really nice chap had a couple of very young excited ones who we could hear screaming in first class during our take off. The first class cabin was immediately below the Flight Deck Unsurprisingly a notice came out soon after that kids under 12 would not fly staff travel in the first class cabin!

I went off on a 7 day trip to Anchorage and Japan. I found Anchorage an intriguing place with some yards full of Aeroplanes old and new like a second hand car sales. I spotted the fine arts museum and looked around. Suddenly I turned a corner I was shocked to see a huge portrait mural facing me and it was one of my favourite pictures in a book I remembered from years ago. "The Trapper" it featured a hunter ,carrying a tomahawk and a musket , facing a wolf with one of its legs stuck in a trap and staring at the hunter. It was by the famous artist who's name escapes me. But made me feel that I was there in the impasse , a bit like the snake and the six iron! As I wandered about the town I mentioned to an old lady that my visit was too short to go on a trip up country. She directed me immediately to a cinema where she insisted that I

would see better views of Alaska than looking at the real thing! This had to be investigated so I sat and watched this wonderful display of aerial photography done from helicopters beating up the mountains, Mount Mc Inlay included, narrowly missing the tops by a few feet and the cliffs and valleys suddenly falling below without the normal G effect. After about 20 minutes of this amazing G less display I began to feel airsick for the first time in my life! I don't think I told the old lady. It might have put her off flying B.A.

Another picturesque scene was at the Alaskan Bushmen's Club popular with the visiting crews! The main attraction were some curvaceous young ladies who danced and sang as they marched around the tables instructing the drunks to deposit the dollars neatly in their crevis! It turned out I was told, that they were mostly university students between terms enhancing their allowances! One evening I swopped beers with a young Inuit Eskimo who had a plastered broken leg and he promised to look after me if I ever returned. I was welcome to stay at his fathers house. Dad was the tribal chief[?] Heap big pub talk!

We were of to see Japan, Tokyo and Narita where we briefly night stopped. Not long enough for any adventures but I felt very Foreign there and doubted that it would be far up my favourites list. The allowances were very good. When I was on the apron

once I heard the name Tenno Heika. Banzie and Willy Miyaaka Whichever it was the engineer explained that the man we were speaking of, one of his colleagues, had been a trained Kami Kazie Pilot who hadn't been scrambled before the war ended! Lucky boy! I hope he hadn't been too disappointed ?

On the final leg of this trip Phil Hogge the chief training Capt. pitched up to operate the last sector. Early on the trip he asked me how I was going and in this short exchange he said that I'd had a bit of a baptism of fire on my trip around the orient with two strong characters, undoubtedly referring to Msrs. Tom and Derek a month ago! No mention of the guy from short haul who'd been splitarsing his lovely big aeroplane! By this time my paranoia had worn off so we had a relaxed departure from Anchorage to London. It was a lovely evening with an odd hue in the sky as we settled on our route up into the high arctic latitudes. As it rapidly darkened I said to Phil that it looked like a lot like northern lights. Phil agreed reluctantly with an expected "I've seen it all before" touch. Soon I said that I thought that this was going to be a biggie. it was certainly going to amaze me having seen the lights only from my flat earth. Well! After a bit he agreed it was a big one and allowed me to tell the passengers about it and soon to invite them as directed from the cabin crew to come up for a look. It

was like being wrapped in a psychedelic shower curtain that someone would shake frequently and the colours would move from one fold to another with light. fast and slow shining all around from above. The crew thought that by the response of the punters it was worth the short shift in and out that we spent for several hours. The very last lady to come for a look was one of our stewardesses, a pretty little Japanese lady who “ooed and aaad” appreciately. like the others. When she turned to go I asked her to say for me “AURORA BOLIAROUS” She tried bravely but was led away later gibbering “alola blola ; ablola lola etc. Not easy but trying hard. Phil Hogge reckoned I was a dreadful person but he had smiled quite a bit. It was only a fun thing and would have been a lot better than my Japanese. I saw this little lady some time later at the airfield and when she saw me she marched over, bowed as they do and said quite immaculately “Aurora Borealis” Wow! I bowed low and called out HOCHO Hocho hocho! She smiled and as she went marching away I wondered what on earth “hocho hocho “ meant? Stupid boy! Soon after that trip I took Joan on another Hong Kong . This time via Bahrain in The Arabian gulf. It was a great pleasure to meet an old mate Barney O’niell who had been an engineer at Manchester and a good competitor on the golf course as he played in our section. It was always

fun and interesting to see people that you'd known on the "flat planet" over the horizon in a foreign land. I brought my wife Joan and daughter Lisa out on a 4 day Caribbean trip and the Captain was Doug Steven who I recognised from way back. I had passed through the terminal at Prestwick when I was on a flying visit with an Auster in my air traffic days and I spotted a young BEA copilot trying to find his way around so I guided him to the briefing office and helped him file his flight plan. His flight had diverted into Prestwick because of bad weather at Glasgow. So here was Doug, my Capt. taking the big bird to Antigua. Another surprise was Taff Lewis from shorthaul who was coming on a looksee trip. Doug surprisingly gave me the sector which I totally enjoyed. We could see the Island on the weather radar, swoop down and join left hand downwind for runway 07; the wind was always a gentle easterly and there was a long drawn out procedure to let down which one could normally ignore and have a fast circuit which was blind to anyone who wasn't familiar. In fact I'd had to assure one or two flt. engineers that soon all would be revealed. As we turned easterly the runway would appear when we completed our 180 degree turn to line up. I think a hole had been dynamited out of the hill to make a passageway to the runway. I completed the turn lined up and touched down gently avoiding

the crash landing I'd made on my "route training". We had the usual pleasant day showing our visitors around but I blotted my copybook when I stayed out rather late that evening chatting with the blokes as we enjoyed "moon bathing" on deck chairs on the beach. During this chat Doug and I exchanged reminiscences about our early days flying at Perth in Scotland. He astonished me by saying that he had enjoyed flying with Andy; the little Swedish instructor that I'd hated flying with, who had cost me several hours wasted yelling at me in the circuit ! I couldn't believe this effect possible with a mismatch of different characters? On my first visit there I had been amazed to see a number of small yachts flying the three legged Manx colours. Rather small to have taken on the unforgiving Atlantic. Nelson's harbour was an intriguing place to visit where the British fleet had done maintenance to their ships while sheltering from the open sea. There was a restaurant on top of the hill. The lovely boss man played beautiful gentle classical music and I'll never find a better place to sit back in the gentle easterly wind enjoying a late delicious lunch. Definitely my favourite place. What a shame to have horrible slaving history.

There was plenty of water sport activity and my Daughter and I had an introduction to Scuba diving. Quite relaxed entry walking into the water instead of

back flipping off a boat! Our Daughter amazed us one day as she glided past on a para glider towed behind a motorboat! We just hope that the boatman kept his distance from the nearby trees.

My next Caribbean visit was a handling check trip with Phil Hogge and after a few days it was my short sector Antigua to Barbados. I was in high spirits; possibly in the blood as in the mind, and as I raced towards Barbados I was manually handling the aircraft and telling the Pax the E.T.A and the weather when I suddenly noticed that our vertical speed in the descent had dwindled to a few hundred feet per minute instead of the required 1500fpm! In other words we were suddenly too high for the approach ! Just the thing on a handling check.! No great problem. I gently flew an orbit while descending more steeply and the short final and landing were quite smooth. No comment from my boss until the following morning when he rang me and asked me to come to his room for a chat! He gave me a half hour lecture on descent profiles aided with little diagrams that he drew. I was horrified with this happening because being a short haul man all my previous life I had probably flown more let downs, approaches and landings than he had had hot dinners! Anyway I rightly deserved this and accepted my being taken down a peg. Stupid boy! I told Phil of a particularly good singing duet at a nearby

pub and he surprised me by saying that he'd come along with the Engineer and I. The duet were an oldish man and a young lady who just stood at the end of the bar and sang a beautiful assortment to gentle twin guitar playing. Phil agreed that they truly earned their "Velvet" title. Two days later it was the usual late evening pickup to fly back to London and after a morning wind surfing ,with my Son that I'd brought along, we headed up to the hotel to join the rest of the crew. The long haul chaps usually had just a few beers etc. at lunch time before retiring for the preflight sleep. Some even called their uniform their black pyjamas because this was quite normal. It was a habit I'd no wish to acquire because with my previous Berlin training I reckoned that being an insipient drunk I would probably be there, still slurping ,at pickup time.! As we all chatted and Phil enjoyed a couple of wines a company car came zooming into the car park and the duty manager rushed over to tell us It was a "squadron scramble" because tropical revolving storm "Gloria" was rapidly approaching the Island. The company rang round all the hotels etc. and warned the passengers that the aircraft was planned to leave very soon and immediate emergency transport to the airfield was being arranged. This was a new one to add to ones experience. As we can't leaving several millions worth of Jumbo ,plus several hundred

passengers, waiting for the storm we were off to London within about two hours. On arrival at Heathrow Phil commented that the tour had been very nice but when I said "pity about my orbit"? he just smiled and said that he had already written his report! I did like Phil and reckoned he meant no evil.

The next trip was of great interest. The Falklands war had been done and won but not quite dusted and we had the contract to transport troops ,sailors and airmen there and back via Ascension Island. So we met up as usual at Heathrow and were bused up to Brize Norton for departure next day. Captain Ted Coldwell and Flight Engineer Chris Baxter seemed a pleasant crew so we enjoyed getting together at a local pub with the cabin crew and studied a few of the various characters involved in the 9day outing. After a few military type briefings we were off to Ascension on our first leg. I think Ted planned to do the two outbound sectors and possibly let me drive it back. Ascension was a very unusual place with different authorities based there doing weather and communication duties but away from the accommodation huts the ambiance felt like straight out of 'Treasure Island' Many years earlier someone had deposited a load of earth up on top of the central hill and over the years the vegetation had crept down the sides with an obvious plan to cover the island! A

very windy road took us to the top where a local joke was to stamp your passport to register your attendance. I found driving the guys up there was more stressful than flying! Also on day on a short walkabout we came to an ancient grave with plaque commemorating the life of some young apprentice surgeon who had died of the fever! An amusing trick when we swam was to stick a piece of meat on your underwater mask and enjoy examining the teeth of the tiny piranha like fish as they swiftly gnashed the meat away! The R.A.F. chaps there promised to take us out fishing when we returned. A few days later we took off with the south bound detail for the Falklands or Islas Malvinas as I'd learned to say in order not to annoy anyone. We were working a few Argie frequencies enroute. On the way there a rather gruff ,noisy fellow who had a superior sound about him arrived in the cockpit and said hello to Ted and gave me a look. I learned later that it was Rear Admiral Sandy Woodward who had been boss man during the conflict. He did sound pretty warlike talking about shooting people down but I rather pictured him right for a buckling sailing ship captain in a previous century! "Shiver me timbers Jim Lard"! It was very interesting arriving on this Hebridean like place full of military people The new runway At Mount Pleasant was almost complete. We went off to our

accommodation at the Falklands Goose hotel, crew sharing rooms, the Capt. on his own. Chris said that would be no problem as long as I didn't snore. I soon found out that after about two beers Chris insisted on making rhinoceros impressions until I got up and went and turned him over! The flight crew were invited to dine at the officers mess which I found rather austere. Somebody fixed us up with a young volunteer army chap who took us around the local scene pointing out the sites of some of the battles and explaining the behaviour of the foe. Putting a shot through the feet of some of their young troops to prevent them from running away did sound a bit harsh. After a few nights which were quite festive we mutually decided that an early night was overdue and Ted and I repaired to the base cinema and Chris headed for bed promising to give me a decibel free night! After a couple of hours as we left the cinema we were accosted with a bunch of R.A.F. guys who were complaining that we had not had a visit to the senior N.C.O.s mess and we were being thought of as rather rude so we had to rectify this and followed them in. We had spent the previous two evenings at the F.I.G.P.U [The Falkland Islands Garrison Police Unit] for an intriguing study of the stories that were told. When thousands of military move around the globe they have closely in their wake several different police forces with just as many

horrendous stories to tell. These evening had become quite late and a booze up in the N.C.O.'s mess was the last thing we wanted or were fit for! After hearing all about the way were tracked and "shot down" for gunnery practice on our approach and arrival the drinking slipped into an impromptu schooner race. That's when you drink as many large beers at one side of the field [table] and across stood some young members who appeared drinking for the other team. Their appearance wearing bibs and sleeves rolled up immediately spelt to me that they were the squadron champs and Ted and I were in trouble! Anyway dob, dob, dob, my previous training and large capacity helped us to post a respectable score! I didn't notice any rhinoceros noises that night. We had befriended a jolly Hercules crew and spent sometime with them but our pre-flight briefing had instructed us not to divulge our salaries to the military chaps in case any jealousy developed. Capt. Lynne actually joined the airlines a few years later. They were friendly with a gun boat Captain who was patrolling around the coast who invited us along for a ride while he intercepted some Russian "fishing fleet" for a routine inspection. Some top crew came aboard and a few vodkas were exchange with a few nods, Russian smiles and noises. During this ambassadorial exchange Lynne in his Hercules treated us to a beat up type fly past. The

Hercules co-pilot later presented me with a penguin egg a memento of our trip! Could I wash it down with a pint of the local Penguin Ale? But it had been blown [emptied] but fitted neatly in a pewter Falklands mug! On one short work around Port Stanley I heard an old lady telling her friend that she had recently phoned up the Wing Commander Flying about the aircraft jet noise. She'd had some difficulty explaining to him that there wasn't enough!

Soon it was time to depart to the UK via Ascension. As all of our almost 400 assorted soldiers, sailors and airmen were aboard we began discussing the apparently traditional military departure of performing a beat up of some sort to say Adios! Since I wasn't practiced at "performing" I invited Capt. Ted to do so? He shrugged it off as it was my sector. So I devised a brief plan to fly low through the gap, Tumbledown Gap which we could see followed by a low fly past over Port Stanley. Chris set about pulling those circuit breakers which gave low level warnings and I told Doug, the C.S.D. about the departure plan.

Eventually The Admiral appeared and strapped himself into a seat at the rear of the cockpit we started up and taxied out with a "cabin checks complete" from Doug. At sea level and a cool temperature the take off was not critical and with

checks complete I opened the throttles and we accelerated along the runway. As we were going through about 115 kts still not quite at V1 BAAP BAAP BAAP! The loudest warning of all [the take off configuration warning] suddenly bellowed at us and I with my hand on the throttles just about to shut down! Just as suddenly silence! I decided to continue! BAAP BAAP BAAP again!! I yelled STOP and closed the throttles, selected reverse thrust and hit the brakes. As I assessed that we were OK to stop I eased off on the brakes suddenly asking my myself "where could we get 16 new tyres at this end of the earth? When we trundled gently to a halt Doug came into the cockpit and I told him that we were ok but as we monitored the wheel temps to prepare his team quietly for a possible evacuation. He nearly stumped me by asking "where's the wind "? A good question if there's a fire. But there wasn't any . As he left he was closely followed by the Admiral who quietly went back to his seat in the cabin. When the ground engineers plugged in I was flooded with questions which of course was always awkward and to avoid any confusion I asked Ted we should revert to our rank positions? He nodded agreement but all he did say was that I'd kept it good and straight but was that easier than in the simulator.? I said " everything's easier than in the sim."! We waited while Chris

monitored the temperatures on his selection box which rose for a while then stabilised then began to drop. Before preparing to go again we pulled some more circuit breakers and even more closely cross checked our take off checks which had in fact been correct before. I decided to skip the low pass through Tumbledown and just waggled our wings a bit as we climbed past Port Stanley. I reckoned that we had brought enough attention to ourselves ! To say nothing of the Admiral! The flight to Ascension was quite routine and we prepared for a few days fun there while our passengers continued on to the U.K. I discussed our adventure with Ted because it s a mortal sin to pull circuit breakers in the cockpit for non essential purposes but He seemed to indicate not to worry. indeed I never heard any more about it but it made me examine my diminishing faith in Automatics and electronics. During the time in Ascension our RAF mates took a party of us out fishing. Ted and I and a young Army Capt called Mark. The drill was ;if any one got a catch they would shout "strike" and the others would reel in and to get the various lines clear. Mark did suddenly shout strike and as I began to reel in I had a load on my line; "STRIKE" so there began a tug of war with these evidently large fish and a great deal of dancing round the boat in order not to tangle the lines and the fish diving under

the boat and doing their best for a tangle. Quite far out and in they went for a couple of hours and diving deep . Mark got his alongside the boat and we managed to load it aboard it in a combined effort with gaff hook and net while mine seemed to still want to fight. About half an hour later my “catch” suddenly ,like a new lease on life sped away and kept going till ,at the end of my reel, something snapped and it was gone! When I reeled in the hook and connections were absent and the guys reckoned that a big shark had probably grabbed him and charged off. The boat and the surrounding water had a lot of blood around. When we returned to shore we weighed this huge Tuna. 188 lbs , the one that ‘got away’ must have been bigger. They always are aren’t they? It didn’t sadden me that such magnificent creature had got away but it made me wonder what size the shark must have been! We made several parcels to distribute around the Island. The trip back to Brize Norton was fairly routine.

I did a trip which reminded me of the parochialism which still haunted the scene. Capt. John did the flight to San Francisco and next day when I landed the 74 at Los Angeles with a slight bump John said “you didn’t round out” and Peter the Flt. Engineer echoed “you didn’t round out” to which I quietly answered “Sorry chaps. I did round out but not quite enough” I went for a walk with Peter next day and when we sat for a

while he suddenly stamped his foot down and firmly declared "When its my last trip I shall wear my B.O.A.C. hat" I wanted to say "I don't give a bugger" but I think I settled for a quite MMMMM! We did some positioning on that trip .Short hops between LAX and SAN FRAN. John didn't appear to want to join us socially. I did a nice landing a few days later; no comments. When I flew with John a week or so later I greased it on several times and he accused me of showing off! Some times I think you can't please some people any of the time. Best thing to do with people like that is to take them out, fill them full of good ale and give them a serios lecture. So far my airline life had been subject to various airline mergers with the consequent lack of promotion. Anyway why should Flt. Engineers take the hump? We weren't feeding them in from other airlines! I think a lot of people weren't as happy as I was flying aeroplanes.

Next trip had a Funny touch to it. We were off to Dehli and routing across the U.S.S.R. Many years before I had been flying in the London area and an Aeroflot came on the frequency. "London London this is Aeroflot 315, goodbye! He sounded quite friendly and we all laughed so I'll see how I'd make out. "Moscow, Moscow this is speedbird 195 Das Vidanya" ! My crew all laughed and we waited for the reply. The controller just answered back normally wishing us good evening

but we could hear a lot of people in his control room laughing so I reckon it had been a success! I don't know the Russian for "stupid boy"! Another evening as we followed the same route The radar controller called us "Speedbird 195 you are 20 miles north of track" and I answered "Roger Correcting" Well! With 3 I.N.S systems criticising each other and a medium frequency beacon showing us to be on track. I asked my Captain to leave the correction for a few minutes. After several more minutes I asked the controller "How is our track please?" A deep, satisfied voice said "it is very good". So I wondered what sort of rubbish equipment he might be looking at. The slight worry was that not long before ,the Russians had shot down a Korean airliner cutting through the edge of their airspace! When we arrived in the Delhi area the weather was marginal and at breakoff height with no visual contact we went around. During the overshoot I asked the controller for a left hand circuit so that my Capt. Tim Slater could fly a good visual with the runway in sight? The answer came back "Oh no no no you must do a right hand circuit. I wished that I hadn't asked! He wanted to protect his town from aircraft noise; I would have preferred to give my Capt .a decent view out of his window. Anyway we joined downwind right hand and because I could see the runway threshold I had to just gently start to tip the

wing over to tighten the circuit because If we didn't turn we would have ended up in the same position as before! I repeated this slight motion on base leg, which must have surprised Tim again but got him turning on to short finals and with the runway in sight he landed fine. He must have been surprised at this apparent mutiny. However that evening after we had slurped a fair bucketful of ale he suddenly congratulated me saying "what you did to tighten my circuit was actually bloody good airmanship."! I wondered if a real long haul co-pilot would have done such a thing?

On our next trip out to Singapore and home through the gulf I was supervising Malcom Elliot, one of our Manchester copilots who was joining the fleet. Malcom kept asking his training Capt Steve Muir to give me a sector! Maybe he wanted to watch my efforts. But Steve wouldn't play. Anyway Malcom was doing O.K. As I look at my old log book now I can see a definite preference in my bids for either Afrika or the Caribbean. I had invited one of my old golfing friends from Manchester to come out and I'd show him around Harare, have a few games of golf and a short trip up to Victoria Falls . We flew Air Zimbabwe the one hour trip and when we arrived at the old Victoria Falls Hotel said hello to the famous doorman who wore a jacket covered in Badges of all descriptions. I

vowed to bring him some on the next visit. It was importantly a low water level on the Zambezi and the mist was not too much so the views were excellent! On the way down to the falls a pair of local guys were selling wooden ornaments, made by locals and I particularly liked a big wooden Elephant. One man looked at my Nike blue trainers, which I had bought for the course. He said in his lovely deep voice "I love your shoes master! I will give you the big wooden elephant for the shoes? My Father is our chief and would love them." I laughed at his offer but he didn't mind too much. During our short walk down to the falls and back we saw some light aircraft circling overhead, obviously doing photography or just pleasure flights. In our airline arrogance we said "no way" and "they must be mad" etc. We had enjoyed the magnificence of the place. As we sat having a leisurely breakfast next morning an old gentleman came to our table and excusing himself for interrupting, explained that he and his wife had bought tickets for the Flight of the Angels and as they had decided not to fly we would do them a great favour by using them up! Well we didn't snap his hand off but agreed to oblige and after getting out of sight we ran to catch the pickup transport for the flight! We were loading into, of all things a six seater Piper Aztek. I stood back and let all the other passengers

,who had cameras, board first and I could sit in the front and enjoy watching the operation of my treasured steed. As we rolled along the short nearby strip I looked and was shocked to see the position of the mixture controls which were nearly at cut off! The penny dropped soon afterwards. At 5,000ft altitude the air was so fine that the mixture had to be very lean for the take off. Phew! That was a fright. I later laughed with the pilot. The flight was a dream that I'll never forget. Roaring across the falls and down the Zambezi River watching bunches of crocodile running and splashing into the river at our low level approach. Hippo's too raised their heads in disapproval and the flight finished across a paddock beating up a huge old elephant who didn't seem to mind. Well that really made the whole outing. The old gentleman caught up with us later and we told he and his wife that the flight had been awfully turbulent and so many tight flying turns were quite hard work. You could see their relief for sensibly not joining!! Next day before our pickup for the Airport I nipped down with my Blue trainers and said ok to the man with the big white elephant! The cheeky bugger then said that he needed my socks to go with the shoes for his father the Chief. I said no, picked up the big white elephant and scarpered! The next evening when we were doing our pre departure checks I saw the same old gentleman and his wife

headed for boarding our London bound aircraft. Wow! I nipped back and explained to the C.S.D. the story. The crew did them well with a move up to club class for the flight and it was a pleasure to invite him up to the cockpit for our arrival which he found intriguing. A truly Champagne outing!

Occasionally We flew a shuttle service to Malawi, a one hour flight North East of Harare across the Zambezi in Mozambique and land in Lilongwe. A very picturesque bit of short haul in Africa! Joan just spent the day by the pool in Harare. Harry Hutchings was my Capt. and as we approached he said "are you going to do one of those big procedural let downs or a B.E.A. quickie" I was glad of the [invitation] so I joined downwind in the visual conditions and touched down gently after a quick circuit. The rest of the day WE sat around our pool until evening! Harry was flying the leg back so off we went. The take off run was very lumpy and he looked as if he was going to stop so both the engineer Barry Jones and I loudly called "its ok" We simultaneously reckoned that after sitting in the sun all day the tyres had got flat spots. In fact at the end of the ground run we had smoothed out. When I changed frequency to Harare the controller said that we must hold overhead on arrival for one hour. I asked him for the reason. He proudly announced "Mr. Mugabe is taking off" We were then about 100

miles to run so I immediately said "Roger We will hold in present position" Harry gave me a surprised but approving look. I guess he was thinking S.A.M. missiles as I had done! Half an hour later Mr M. was airborne and on course. We got permission to proceed. I was thankful that the controller hadn't asked WHY! It reminded me of the runway closure at Templehof when a shambles was developing during a short runway closure . We had stopped short of the chaotic exmass tree in the distance. The previous day we had and very much enjoyed the ambiance of the Vic Falls Hotel. They had a band there who gently played popular music on their Marimbas; a sort of wooden xylophone, and in varying sizes. The sound they made was quite enchanting. That evening someone said had we seen the big tree? We hadn't so we borrowed the hotel bikes and sped down the hill to see this popular beauty. We swept round the bend at the bottom and suddenly stared at the large gang of baboons that were marching up the road towards us, filling the road, led by what looked like big chief frowning at us and displaying his large mouthful of Fangs. There wasn't room to stop and turn around so I just started yelling " I belong to Glasgow" in my loudest and deepest and aimed straight at the middle. Perhaps he'd heard about the Gorbals because the gang split off the road and we sped through.! We

admired the amazing site but waited at the big tree for a while and then carefully proceeded back to the hotel. There were a few notices around warning stupid people like us that the animal play time did commence at sundown! These guys had been just a little early. It reminded me 'you must keep your wits about you in Afrika man!'

Quick wits came in useful soon after. The trip was an evening flight Bombay to Hong Kong. We all climbed aboard the crew bus, always driven by the driver; I never found out why he always had a 'copilot'? I wondered did he have a stick to prod his mate with if he looked a bit sleepy? Any way it was dark and suddenly there was a multitude taking up all the road coming towards us and led by a team pulling and pushing a huge wooden effigy. I never did like 'multitudes'. They tend to get a bit excited and there may have been some 'non British' fans among them I jumped up and shouted at the driver to take the next side street. He responded surprisingly quickly and after a few more turns we were back on track for the Airport. The drivers assistant told me that the wooden statue would be taken to the river for blessings. I had been shown a small copy of this God, the lady with a collection of arms raised in a fan shape around her shoulders and head. It had definitely demanded priority on the road I reckoned. We arrived in Hong

Kong and had a late bed time. Next day I received the usual newspaper under my door and when I gave it a cursory glance 'horrors of horrors'! the headlines shouted that in Bombay as the large effigy was going into the river it had toppled over and crushed about twenty people.

Another Hong Kong started on a more happy note. When we arrived it was my birthday and we booked a large table at the British Yacht Club to celebrate. Most of the crew came along, the service was great and I ordered some venison which I hadn't tasted for many years. We'd started the evening quite early and as we set off on the short journey back to the Excelsior Hotel I decided to split from the group and go round to the Shakespeare bar to meet little Charlee ,a pleasant local, I'd had a few laughs with before. There he was and we had an hour or so swapping beers and funny stories. All was well but suddenly I got very hot and slowly dizzy so I excused myself from Charlee and headed for the toilet. By the time I got there I knew that I was going to faint. What should you do ? Lie down before you fall down! Unfortunately I was wearing a light grey suite and there was about a two inch layer of mucky "fluid" all over the floor! When I came to and looked about a few little Chinese guys were stepping over me as they came in and out. It looked like I could have spent the rest of the evening

this way. When I got to my feet I wasn't too dizzy so I came out of the toilet and stepping sideways I manoeuvred to the exit and gave Charlee a friendly goodbye wave without letting him see the layer of filth on my back. When I got to the hotel I turned on the shower and stood under it for a long time ,laundering my suite! I remembered a Cary Grant film where he did exactly the same. I went to bed and remained there for the next 36hrs when it was time to fly a quick Manila Shuttle. I think the moral was 'don't order venison so far away from home? One of the stewards said he thought he had seen me walking sideways through the foyer.! I thought maybe we should have a system where we during a longish stay at places we should check that nobody had died?

Approaching Christmas 1986 when I mistakenly put in my bid to work too much I got "wiped" and had to take whatever was rostered. So my allocation had me in Tokyo for that big family day! One daughter declared that she'd never speak to me again if I couldn't change but I didn't even try. Someone had to do it. So off we went on this fairly short tour; Anchorage, Narita, Anchorage and return. When we arrived in Japan we checked in at the Airport Hotel where we were met with a team of staff presenting small seasonal gifts and telling us that a party for the Airline Crews was being held for a few days in the

main dining room. It was a very impressive display of famous Japanese hospitality. As we remained at the party and the drinks flowed and the party seemed to "improve" it was fun to watch the newly arriving crews from various places in the world join in ,while yawning and scratching , looking like they'd rather go to bed but witness them thawing out and becoming jolly as they imbibed ! A really charming display was performed when xmas music came on and a small group of Japanese ladies in long green velvet dresses carrying candles and quietly singing xmass carols in English processed slowly through the room and continued their recital for quite a time on the stage. It was really lovely and even more amazing when in a non Christian country. Next day we were off back to Anchorage. Before pickup when I found out that the party was still on I had breakfast there, without booze before going on duty! Anchorage was like a ghost town by comparison.

Our next trip was to Los Angeles and before departure the cabin crew were in turmoil Because we had Boy George and his "Culture Club" group boarding. The problem was that they were not quite conforming to the international dress code for travel in first class. In fact they were fairly outrageous some with the bottoms of their jeans hanging out and displaying a great line in purple underpants! It was decided that

they would have to sit down at the rear. This they did happily without any fuss while distributing signed photographs of themselves to any fans in the crew. I took a picture of the Star himself for my daughter. About half way across the ocean the boys came up to have a chat. Their visit was going well but Boy did twitch a bit whenever I reached for anything on the control panel. I heard a Panam aircraft reporting extreme turbulence and unable to maintain his altitude. So we strapped in, seat belts signs on and the boys went off back to their seats while we negotiated a lower level to cope with the danger ahead. Even at a few thousand feet lower down it was the roughest ride I'd had for years! Later as we crossed Canada near Winnipeg I asked the others; Mike and Rob what Winnipeg Airport was like? They both assured me that it was good; they had been there on VC10's. Since I was still the new boy I always checked on the new geography. Ever since coming onto the 74 I would have a look in one of my kids school atlas to get an idea of where we were going. Anyway we got to L.A. in one piece. I hoped we hadn't scared Culture Club too badly! I reckoned that the boys had been quite magnanimous especially having been "disciplined" on the dress code.

Two days later as we cruise along homeward with Capt .Mike having a sleep in the crew bunk behind the

cockpit one of the stewards ambled in and had a chat. After a bit he said "Oh well I'd better wander back. They're quite busy down there" It was the middle of the night when all should be tranquil. I just caught him before he disappeared I said "What's keeping them busy"? He solemnly said "Oh there's a guy 'whose had a heart attack and their working on him!" I couldn't believe it so I started the auto pilot going downhill and said to Rob "Quick! Get the Captain" He said "were not supposed to leave only one guy in the flight deck" In other wards he wasn't going ! I said "Oh well I'll have to go!" Leaving him?? As he disappeared out the door to pull Mike out of the bunk I declared our descent to Control and as we were in fact nearing Winnipeg I asked for priority clearance for further descent and straight in approach at Winnipeg. Further on as Mike appeared and I briefed him, we requested an ambulance ,etc to meet the aircraft on landing. The temperature on the ground was minus20 so we hoped the paramedics wouldn't let our patient get too cold. Mike didn't object to my precipitous action so I hope he would have done the same[?] After landing we had to refile our flight and stop to refuel at New York. Unfortunately our patient died later in hospital. I didn't hear anything further but wondered at the coincidence of my earlier enquiries about Winnipeg?

I had a fun time at Hong Kong when just about to leave. I'd heard the story of why the Noon Day Gun was fired at precisely 12. Long time ago the Jardine Company, a major trader startled a high British officer when coming into the harbour and insisted that it should be fired every day as a sort of tradition/punishment, The Governor or the Admiral had established the tradition. In fact it became a world wide idea that the harbours people would fire at precisely 12 and the mariners could synchronize their clocks before sailing. It was our pickup time for the airport at 12.30 and as I prepared to leave I looked out and saw the little uniformed man who would fire the gun, approaching from my window in the Excelsior Hotel I was in my Uniform, with only 3 stripes! However I dashed down and gave him a salute and asked gently and eagerly would he allow ME to fire the gun? He smiled broadly, I thought I had a chance and he said NO. Too bad but don't give up! I stood a little back from him and began counting some Hong Kong dollars so that he could see. and when I asked him again he smiled again, looked at his watch, smiled again at me and said NO. I turned away and began to think any possible plan C? I nearly jumped out of my skin when suddenly there was a loud bang as this small cannon exploded a few yards behind me and when I looked the little man smiled.!

He had enjoyed his joke so I gave him a smart salute and marched away. You wait mate; I'll try again when I'm a Captain. But maybe an Admiral's outfit would fare better? Stupid boy! I told this short tale to the Capt. as we got on the transport and he said he had seen an officer chatting to the gun man.

We were climbing out of Los Angeles and cleared up to 16,000 ft. Or flight level 160. The Captain was someone I'd met on my course in the simulator and he didn't appear to like me. Strangely enough he gave me this sector back to London He had been in Short haul previously. Anyway halfway through the climb the engineer noticed that his number 3 engine fuel and oil temperature were running high. We levelled off at 160 and reduced power. Capt. Keith and Terry the engineer debated this problem for a while and as they did two more crew came into the flight deck and joined the discussion. We had some additional crew with us . I didn't join in but noticed that the no3 had settled down ok at cruise power. When control cleared us for further climb Terry instantly reached out and put climb power on all 4. Eventually Capt. Keith asked me. What would you do about this? Having been invited to join the discussion group I said "When we next want to climb why not leave the no3

at cruise power and climb on the good engines 1,2and4 “? “And what about Greenland” He said. Crossing Greenland could have been tricky if we had been on just 3engines and had to drift down over the high mountains. I said “Well if the engine remains acceptable until we pass abeam New York ,that is by Churchill on Hudson Bay, we should carry on and if its not we should hang a right and slowly descend as we divert to New York.” That answer silenced the debate and we did exactly that! The engine was kept at just cruise power and we had an uninterrupted flight to London.

My next trip was Bombay, Hong Kong ,Delhi, Hong Kong, Bombay then home. I wasn't expecting to fully enjoy since it wasn't my favourite theatre! And if my command came up on the 747 I could be going there regularly as a junior Capt. Joe Pridal was my Capt. and the Monsoon season was just commencing. We just managed a Game of golf at Royal Bombay Club but in the clubhouse I had the feeling that people were looking down their noses at us! On my previous visit to India I had brought my wife out and we managed to get on a bus for the ride down to Aggra to visit the Taj Mahal. Very beautiful but the ride down there was dodgy. One of my colleagues had advised “ take a case of beer. Sit in the middle of the bus and don't look out”! Well I don't approve of lunchtime

boozing but we did sit in the middle. About halfway there we hit some poor guy on a scooter but the bus just continued!

Anyway here we were, golfing at Bombay and as I strode down one fairway a large bird dropped a piece of something which on inspection looked very like a human bone! When I asked a caddy he explained that it would have come from the Tower of Silence just North. It's the cemetery where dead people are laid out on high stretchers either permanently or for burning. The rain began next day and was going to be on for a long time. Joe ordered a car with driver and we set off to see the city delights. I'd noticed that when shirts came back from the laundry they were beautifully presented like new ones with a little paper bow tie attached but they had a most strange, aromatic pong to them! We arrived at what looked like a huge pig sty like yard which was fully of water up to the waste extending to cover the whole area and in every small pen would be a washer, dhobi walla, beating the clothes against the low walls and rinsing them in this blueish coloured lake! For the next part of this treat Joe gave the driver instructions and we slowly drove along this street which had buildings of three floors with large unglazed windows. At each window there were six to eight unhappy looking ladies staring with a lost and hopeless look. If

one wondered about these “establishments” there were v.d. clinics at fairly regular intervals along the road.

One trip I had with a new Capt. Terry Morgan started with a small mystery. We were off on a 4 day quickie to Miami and Tampa. Terry was flying on auto pilot and the radar controller gave instructions to maintain heading. After a while he cleared us to continue on course which ideally required about a 30degree left turn. When Terry set the heading bug the aircraft just continue straight. We wondered for a moment then he took out the auto pilot . He then looked at me and said it wouldn't turn. I had a go and sure enough no response? I said “lets try a little force” and I shook the controls left and right and with a jolt we had control [we hoped]! There were no further problems but not a nice thing for a new Capt. to get “stuck” with. I reckoned that during the radar heading we might have flown through some icy conditions that had frozen the ailerons on the wings. A few days later on the return, as we passed about 10degrees west, I thought I could suddenly hear a boom boom noise and wondered if someone was mucking about in the first class cabin which is directly under the flight deck. When I checked nobody had heard it so after a bit I had an idea. I called London Control and asked If the

daily Concorde flight to New York had passed recently and when they said yes the mystery was solved!

I was definitely becoming a fan of the western half of the planet but at one stage my number came up to have the choice of an Australian posting. There was a 747base in Sydney and people went out there for three months and flew around OZ and short visits to the far east. I had fancied this experience and no doubt my wife would have loved to come out for at least one or two months but my kids were teenagers now and it just ain't sensible to leave them uncensored for long periods! So that had to go by the wayside with the promise of an adventure to Oz later in life. Another gem might have been to take a command on a turbo prop small aircraft based in Glasgow. Imagine operating out of Glasgow competing with my mates and mentors in Loganair? I don't think I had the gall! Regular commuter flights between towns was a flourishing activity at this financial stage. The other thing one doesn't do is to move teenagers to new places to live so that option wasn't on. Another thing discouraged me. Earlier the airline had bought a few Short's Sky vans and on one visit to Glasgow I popped across, during our turn round to inspect one. When I climbed in it felt that I was sitting in a garden shed! Definitely not a cool craft!!

Bermuda ,Miami came up soon and Madame came along to admire the scene. Very colourful houses to admire, some golf to play and best treat for madame a scooter to ride about on. Cars are not an option and since she just has to be in control I would sit on the pillion with my helmet on ,towering over the driver and looking ,I'm sure like a huge special needs child! Compulsory afternoon tea , curtesy of the Grand Hotel ! During Madams stay we did a quick Miami shuttle. Then after a day off back to London.

On the next Vancouver, Seattle my boss was Mike Murray with wife Barbara and his plan was to go skiing at Whistler Mountain. I'd done skating and sledging but this was my introduction to the sport and I thoroughly enjoyed and definitely intended to do some more. It came up very soon because after a day we relaxed with a days flying doing a shuttle Seattle Vancouver with , yes you've guessed it! a days skiing at Chrystal Mountain near Seattle! Some of the crew came along, the sun shone and my only job was to try to safely drive the bus there. At 46 yrs old it was hard on the legs skiing fast and badly! I was very aware of my responsibility on a later trip when I got elected to drive the bus when most of the crew came along for the days skiing at Chrystal Mountain.

Earlier that year I took the Missus on a long trip Heavy crew to Rio de Janeiro. We were positioning down on the last British Caledonian VC10 to fly the route. The aircraft went on to do a shuttle to Sao Paulo. I only Co-piloted the 10hr.flight when returning to London , Len Mitton the Captain. We were taking over the route from B.Cal . they were returning the route which they had inherited from B.O.A.C. years before. Quite a few of the BCal stewardesses were upset. During the long flight down I was sitting beside a slightly younger co-pilot who wanted to check me out. He seemed to think that I didn't really qualify. "You haven't done any navigating have you "I confessed that this was true. When the new college boys had come into B.O.A.C. they did about two years navigating. He dug himself a bit of a hole when he asked "How many hours have you got?" I rendered him speechless when I answered " About ten thousand"! After a longish pause he said "I suppose that's quite a lot of sectors "? I said "Oh about ten thousand". I danced past him about a week later after slurping many beers and quietly said "never wanted to be a navigator anyway"! He was experiencing the feeling I'd been putting up with for years as these flat earth people invaded his planet.! Well! With the heavy crew and some family people there must have been about 30 of us milling about as we checked into the Excelsior Hotel We had a special

room prepared for us to avoid jamming up the check in for normal visitors. I came up to the cockpit to witness our arrival and Len said to look out for the big man who might appear in the cloud with his arms out saying "Not this way" He was referring to the Corka Vada, the huge statue of Christ with wide open arms on the mountain overlooking the town. In fact the statue did appear among the broken cloud and looked very spiritual. We had some room parties and some outings. It was a bit like the Carnival going to a few shows. The poor people were much in evidence, especially the children who regularly came up to the hotel fence and pointing to their mouths to indicate hunger. A bit like India where if you gave a few coins to one beggar suddenly a couple of dozen would appear .

My next trip was a fairly quick Dubai, Abu Dhabi with Capt. Dick Martin. We usually managed a few hours wind surfing. Talking about the wind reminds me of our return as I was doing the home run. The wind at Heathrow was unusually strong at 180/30, gusting 40 and aircraft were landing on runway 23. With a gusty 35 kt breeze I invested in a good speed of about 20 kts above the target threshold speed. The maximum x-wind on the 74 is 30 kts but as the wind veers round in our hemisphere in the gusts we would be legal. With the extra speed frequent adjustments are not

necessary which keeps the punters calm and unsuspecting! I closed the throttles, eased off the drift and squeaked it on! Dick said it was the best one he'd seen for a long time. The 74 handles beautifully but you mustn't put the wing down more than a few degrees, as you ease off the drift, or you risk a pod-scrape . That's when you touch the ground with the outboard engine. I walked past a Pan American jumbo years ago and one of the outboards was bent up pointing at the sky. Someone had ruined their day! In case you are a student with aviation plans and you are reading this rubbish? A gust of wind veers in the northern hemisphere and backs the opposite way in the southern. To remember veering and backing? All three hands of your clock veer, never backs and if your clock is digital your in trouble!! I've always been mystified at the number of northern hemisphere pilots who say the like their x-wind from the right!

After all these years when my annual bidding time came round I had reached the seniority to bid for my command. I wanted basically to get back to Manchester. I had commuted while on the 74 and we had a small apartment in Fulham. We had a bid line system and If I stayed on the 74 as a junior Capt. I would be flying to all my non favourite places eg. Bombay and Delhi in the monsoon and the east coast of America in the winter which I'd always considered

slightly dangerous. The bidline system wouldn't be too bad at Manchester. Some junior London guys spent most of their "flying" sitting around on standby bored stiff! So it was back to Manchester for me in a couple of months and back on the 1-11. That reminds me of climbing on a Concorde on day and the cockpit was very similar to the 1-11. A lot of the instructors were ex 1-11's so that crossed my mind. Very tempting! The main problem with that beautiful machine was that it only went to New York and back!

Next flight was a nice romp down to Nassau with a quick shuttle to Montigo Bay, Kingston, Nassau. A strange site at Nassau was the number of serviceable aircraft that had been dumped by the 'visiting' drug runners!

One of my last trips before I went on my command course was a quick shuttle London - Manchester. There was a new Capt. training so I didn't realise my hope that I might do the flight and grease one on to the Manchester bump! On runway 24. It was well past time that somebody levelled it off!

We enjoyed a week long trip via Bahrain to Seychelles and Mauritius. Captain Dave Porteous was pleasant guy who had his family along. Joan enjoyed the trip. I rather put my foot in it when I described the island of Socotra as we passed by. One of the stewards came

up and said that he'd enjoyed the description but one gentleman had asked him to go up and tell this pilot to shut up! I celebrated this faux pas by inviting him up. I apologised to the chap telling him that I'd forgotten that he had been trying to sleep all the way from London. He forgave me, we had a good chat about the aircraft and he departed quite happily! Stupid boy! We had some good times with cabin crew but Joan was a bit horrified when in the room party on the third night of the trip some of the crew still managed to produce a bottle of wine or two that they'd 'borrowed' from the Galley! I frequently pinched a couple of beers for a slurp on the transport but 3 days later was a bit out! I vowed that we'd return, staff travel, to the Seychelles for our silver Wedding Anniversary. It was a nice trip but we had a strenuous evening when we volunteered to baby sit David's charming but precocious children so that they could have a break! I played a blinder when I borrowed one of their books and sat in a big chair in the corner of the room, facing the corner of the room and made a point of reading 'my' story and totally ignoring them. After quite a time the hubbub ceased and two little faces slowly appeared at my sides silently begging me to include them. I read 'my' story in a quiet, interested voice and we had a peaceful couple of hours until bed time! So I wasn't that much

out of practice! We had a little mystery on the return trip. We had been airborne out of Mauritius for about 5 minutes when Control asked us to call the company. We immediately did and learned that someone had seen two guys exchanging a small case after one had passed through customs. The message was rather garbled and David and Mike the Flt Eng. had a discussion between them as usual ignoring the moron in the right hand seat! After they had agreed that it wasn't a security problem and that we'd press on I having studied the debate added my reasoning and they both agreed that risking it was not an option and we'd return. The landing weight would be slightly exceeded so a smooth landing was required and after a short but vague speech to the passengers David nicely squeaked it on . When the ground crew searched the hold and found the small case it turned out to be completely empty! We agreed that the gamble had been worth it and departed shortly afterwards No one came forth to claim that small case but I was glad that we weren't going to make a big bang as we headed north for Socotra over the Indian Ocean! One of my last trips on the 74 had 1 day off which I spent in tourist mode; a trip round Manhattan Island on the Blue funnel line listening to the very funny tour guide as he described the famous people's houses and the various happenings there. Also a pop

up the Empire State building, the magnificent view only spoilt by the fences and nets to collect the “jumpers”!

I had a short Montego Bay, Kingston and return with Capt. Eric Moody and Ian Wilshire, a jolly little guy who didn't seem to mind me extracting some aspects of Eric's adventure, gliding his 380tons 747 down the Malacca straits in the dark with all 4engines shut down! Eric had been in the first class cabin chatting to the punters when he noticed some electrical flickering. So he excused himself and went upstairs to see what was going on. Imagine his horror to see the co-pilot and engineer battling to restart the engines which had flamed out when they flew through a thick layer of Volcanic dust. Eric joined in with their efforts but as they approached 10,000ft. he began to think about briefing the Passengers and cabin crew to prepare for a night ditching in the shark infested ocean! In addition the windscreens were glazed over so the landing would have been while looking out of the open side window! Definitely an underpaid operation! The fortunate part of the drama was that the engines were wind milling sufficiently fast to keep the generators on line. Eventually, Ian told me, number 3 began to light up and that was followed much later by the others. They had managed to reach destination and land safely at Singapore with dry feet!

I didn't ask about the underpants!! Eric gave me the trip out. I enjoyed flying over Cuba which felt a bit weird and on to Montego Bay ,then the short visual trip across Jamaica to Kingston. Eric flew the last sector to London and the only excitement was when Ian told me that Shirley Bassie was gracing our first class. But when I ventured down to say hello it could have been anyone; all wrapped up and fast asleep!

My bid had come through and I had a date to start my 1-11 command course. I went off For my last jumbo trip with Les Millgate and Ian again Bermuda Miami. There was a smart American Ship in the harbour and when I told Les that I had met this young lady officer [a sea person!] He said that he'd love a look see trip around the ship. I went back and mentioned that and the young officer fixed an invitation up with her Captain. So next afternoon off went Les for his tour round the ship. Ian and I repaired to the nearest bar and a bit later a bunch of young sailors came in. I've no idea what Ian said to these chaps after the beer had been flowing but suddenly a scuffle broke out and the biggest seaman was poised to attack Ian. The timing was exquisite for just then the two Captains came ambling in and I had managed to intercept the incipient mayhem and quickly told this large attacker that his boss had just entered ! He came to a stop, mouth open ,with all the heat of the argument

instantly cooled! Ian and I joined the two Capts. Les and Hank for a while. Les had really enjoyed his tour and I had a really enjoyed the comical timing and the saving of international relations! Also I'd never spoken with a Sea Person before! When we arrived back at London Les and Ian both gave me their cards saying get in touch sometime. One of the snags with long haul was that you seldom ever flew with the same people again. I reckon I was a parochial guy and I preferred getting to know people better and enjoying flying with them. It had been a privilege flying that magnificent big bird and having a look around the world. As I prepared for my 1-11 course I received the standard letter from Phil Hogge thanking me for my efforts on the 74 which seemed to indicate that he approved of me at last. I had achieved a few 2's with the odd 3 for my route checks over the last couple of years so I must have improved over the three years!!

I climbed into good old BA 012 ,the simulator that you couldn't take your eye off or it would tumble out of the air! A few different instructors supervised our efforts , Richard Bennison was my co-pilot and he had spent the last couple of weeks doing the technical course and test I was glad to not require since I had it on my licence. I can't remember if Richard was college or self improver, probably the later. I had a very instructive incident when I was " flying " and the

exercise was a complete generator failure with lots of failure lights would appear and only a few emergency lights would tell you that battery power was the only electrical power you had for a short while and all the blind flying instrument had failed As I flew along I racked my 'brain' thinking "What should I be looking at" A few bells began to ring, the stick shaker started, and the controls went forward and we had apparently crashed. I'd done this exercise before and flying from the right hand seat had no problem? So what was the mystery? I then saw that the small emergency blind flying panel, for just this emergency, was completely obscured by my fist holding the right hand side of the control yolk! I reckoned that this was a design inadequacy and rather shocked the instructor by bursting out with laughter! This draconian lesson was specially noisy with the stall warning and high speed warning and various other bells yelling and hooting at me. I think if that ever happened the noise would render you immobile. I'm sure Richard would have taken over?

I'm sure that looking out at a bit of sky would have helped! Anyway the rerun was smooth and easy! Next day at the briefing Richard was asked "What's the minimum oil pressure on take off"? He couldn't remember and as I was out of instructors peripheral scan I mimed 40. Best that Richards lip reading could do was 50? Close! After 5 days we both had an Instrument rating test checking our accurate procedural flying was ok and the one day of pre base training which we planned with Capt. Hector Maclean. So next morning we met up and prepared for a short flight to Lille in Northern France, making a change from Prestwick to do our circuits flying the actual aeroplane! About 4 of us were coming along and my contemporary Tony St. John who'd come from Tri Stars was first in the left hand seat and Capt Hector in the right. Before we left we underwent a boring, useless non instructive briefing, by another Capt; Management I think. Off we went and when we arrived at Lille Tony was first to have a go. I was sitting back in the passenger cabin and Tony Landed with quite a crash! Unfortunately he'd burst a tyre and after we did an on the spot exchange we retired to London and planned another day tomorrow. When I fortunately landed ok Tony said loudly "Thank you for showing me how to land a 1-11! That was his loud

protest at our 'training'! Its quite a change to land in a cockpit height of 10ft from a few years of 70ft.. I didn't know how high Tony's tri-star had been. The next 7 days with route training Captains set me up for my final command check. The Manchester base manager David Wright was the route checker and my "co-pilot" was Captain Dave Street. Both guys that I'd flown with several times before so it felt like we were pretending a stern cockpit atmosphere with a few Henderson variations! We flew a quickie to Belfast and return. back in the Manchester circuit the cloud tops were about 3.5thousand feet so when the controller gave us descent to 3thousand I asked to maintain 4 to keep the passengers above the turbulence. This was no problem and we completed the exercise with another smooth landing. Capt. Wright asked me if I had any questions for my co-pilot. Just to play the game I asked Dave "Did I see you listening to the weather details while I was on the P.A."? He very indignantly denied this. But I knew that this was habitually done and it wasn't a good habit because we should always have one pilot listening to control. Anyway I was congratulated for passing my check flight and Dave said "remember to take enough fuel that keeps you happy" I assured him I would. So there I was Capt. Henderson 47 after all these years. That evening when I got home I got a call from Capt. Tony Greaves

of Renfrew days. He was also the last guy I had flown in 1-11s before I went on the 74. Tony congratulated me and followed up by asking if I'd like to do his Rome flight next day? How could I refuse? My co-pilot was Ian Carrick and I enjoyed the flight. Hadn't been to Rome for a while and I looked forward to a nightstop there. I loved the Italian voices on the radio calling up Roma Bon Pommeriggio This was an archaic word meaning 'good afternoon' and said with the happy sing song voiced from Alitalia etc. sounded like music. The next day came a surprise. My co-pilot was Big Bob Fyffe! From my Perth tiger moth days. Bob had unfortunately not picked up his senior licence so remained a co-pilot. I almost offered him the left hand seat but thought better of it. The joke might not have gone down too well. I didn't find operating as the Skipper any strain. A new system called S.W.O.R.D. System for world wide operational route data had been developed. The routes had been calculated very efficiently and some genius had published a paper showing how much extra fuel was being used when carrying extra fuel. Most sensible people were carrying more than the sword Flight plans so the management had started keeping a list of names of the "greedy" captains. I remembered when the Capt. on the jumbo gave you a leg very often the flight engineer would be standing behind him raising his

hands ,imploing you for sensible fuel. Some times the sword diversion fuel was calculated on Gatwick when returning to London from Los Angeles. Very stupid as Gatwick is just next door and met forecasting was far from good and the sky was getting busier every year. There was one occasion when an aircraft was told to hold before landing and the pilot said that he couldn't because he was on a sword flight plan. A lordly voice from above said "he who lives by the sword may die by the sword" I used to up the fuel on a trip like that covering Manchester which passed many places in the UK. As time went on I looked at the list and I was second greediest! I used to take extra fuel then try to cut corners and fly visual approaches which save time and FUEL! I even suggested to some management guys that they should record how much fuel that people actually used on their flights. I'm sure I would have been near the bottom of the greedy list. The sickening thing was that some idiot in the Management would send out a paper saying rubbish like "have a diversion on me" I would much prefer to land my punters at the place they had bought a ticket for! Bad thing was that some young junior Capt. would end up short of fuel or having to divert to some stupid place to impress the management. In my opinion the junior management were 'check valves'[a Boeing expression] a one way valve which allows the shit to

flow down but not to flow up! So now my programme was to get used to another bunch of various characters back at Manchester. My mate on the course Richard arrived and we were destined for a few adventures together. I enjoyed revisiting all my old haunts around Europe. Very different from long haul with few night stops in comparison. About two weeks on the line and I was on a trip Manchester Milano. We were having a laugh at something with the cabin crew as we began to cross the ALPS but I suddenly became aware that there was some confusion and difficulties in the Po Valley which had some thunderstorm activity on the forecast. So we cut the cackle and listened out closely to the progress. The Po valley was full of large cumulonimbus clouds giving quite violent thunderstorms. We managed to scrape our way in between heavy rain and turbulence but when we landed we kept the pax on board until the heavy rain stopped momentarily. While the mechanics were refuelling us I had a walk into the Air Traffic briefing office to have look at the radar screen which covered the whole district and noted that the weather was storm free just south towards Rome. The weather where we were was solid storms and I delayed boarding of the pax until the rain stopped again. When we eventually had the pax on board I left Chris in charge and went back up to look at the radar.

There was what looked like a narrow corridor running very straight south easterly towards Rome and after checking that there wasn't a pole or something causing this blank corridor on the radar screen I arranged with control that they would let me take off and route south along this corridor until we could climb above the storms. We got started and taxied out. As we lined up and began our take off the rain came on heavily and the windscreen wipers thrashed about, not really achieving much. The wipers made quite a din and I'd always wondered, if they ever broke off, end up in the engine! I felt like a submarine commander, staring through the water but we lifted off and turned right towards this corridor which I'd banked on finding. The sky began to lighten up and then suddenly we broke out. It looked like the grand canyon as we climbed along this narrow corridor between tall towers of cloud on either side. When we reach level with the tops at about twenty thousand feet I called control for clearance to turn right again and get on course to the North West. By the time we passed 32,000ft and it looked clear I said to Chris. "well mate I think we've cracked it!" What an unfortunate comment because suddenly a crack appeared and slowly ran across Chris's windscreen. "Get your harness back on Chris" I said as I reached for the pressurisation control which was registering a

differential pressure of 7.4 psi which is nearly a ton force on the large windscreen I set the cabin to a very slow climb and we started the aircraft on the autopilot in a gentle descent and told Control that we had a problem and were descending slowly to about 12,000ft. My plan was to bring the cabin altitude up and the aircraft altitude down, all very slowly to disturb the big glass windscreen as little as possible. We had to descend slowly also because we weren't all that far from about 17,000ft of Mt. Blanc. After I was pretty sure we were well clear we carried on down to 10,000ft and managed to get the cabin to about 7,000 which was slightly lower than normal but maybe a little noisier than normal because the seals in the fuselage work best when the pressure is high. The windscreen seemed to be willing to stay but I told Chris ,probably unnecessarily "best keep your harness on"! I had a word with the C.S.D. that with this problem we'd best keep everyone belted including his team. I also said that we might divert into Paris, which would be half way home. I had problems telling the French controller that we had a cracked windscreen. I should have got a translation from one of the cabin crew but it slipped my mind and I wanted to avoid anyone wandering about the cabin in case the windscreen decided to go, even at this low altitude. I only knew the word "securitay" which is the lowest

form of emergency A little bit further on he told me to squawk the full emergency code on our transponder which is for a full emergency but I couldn't be bothered discussing it! It was his airspace anyway! When we got near Paris with the windscreen holding I decided to press on to London where the passengers could be shuttled up to Manchester and the aircraft could have a new windscreen. B.A. Paris I told to pass that on and we continued. When we eventually changed to London the Controller spoke in a very serious ,worried voice, asked me If I could tell him the problem ; when I did he gave me a different transponder code. And the rest of our flight we finished without further drama. Except that when we switched off the engines the ground controller asked me to telephone a number. The company were going to tell the cabin crew to stay on duty and operate the shuttle to Manchester, I refused that because they had been under stress and we all went off to the pub for a quick several without any complaints! And night stopped. When I phoned Control I was gently told that they had been getting the troops organised because they thought ,with our not quite correct squawk were being hi-jacked! I apologised of course but said that I couldn't face arguing with a French man! During our "refreshments" one of our girls told me that an old lady on board had said to her "what a rude Captain

that was telling everyone to sit down and belt up!"

Next day we all flew back to Manchester and normality except that we did have an air system failure which fortunately reset ok. So I had completed 3ASR,s air safety reports, in two days one of these was reporting the fact that French Air traffic control had told me to squawk the hijack code which had excited a few people. My boss did comment that I had been having a baptism of fire as a new commander! I didn't find the job too strenuous but one slight inconvenience was sitting in the office scribing a report while the rest of the crew were off to the pub! One of my joys was to gently do some weaving between large cumulus clouds to give the pax a smooth ride. With permission from control of course! I detected one or two bolshie characters among the co-pilots. Wayne was a pain. Especially when I showed up for a quick trip and there was no trace of him. So after searching around and checking our destination weather I ordered some fuel and went out to the aircraft and found him sitting back chatting with the cabin crew! Great way to treat a new Capt. As we approached the hills on the Belfast approach the stick gave a little shake crossing some turbulence and then settled steady and Wayne started exclaiming that we had to write an ASR. I quietly acknowledged this but considered off loading the P.I.T.A. before going off on

our next trip. I didn't but was thankful for this when on our later Paris night stop he confided in me that his girl friend had been murdered! So I sympathised and realised that any reprimands would not have been helpful. Another bolshie guy had been Dave. We had to put up with a 40 minute hold before landing at Frankfurt one day and his lack of patience was a slight worry. The rest of the guys were generally very good. I had another Frankfurt trip soon and one of my mates Pete Read was positioning out in the cockpit. Pete was doing a temporary posting to fly for Lufthansa as co-pilot on the Boeing 737. which he enjoyed with his experience around Europe for a couple of years until Lufthansa filled in their shortage of pilots. I enjoyed flying with Francis Dudley who was one of our smoothies which was appropriate description for his handling of the aircraft. I checked him out on our next Jersey landing. H.M.S. Jersey we called that short runway and its frequent sudden fog. So the mission was to find it then try and sink it!! Which lots of pilots seemed to be trying to do. Of course Francis squeaked it on as expected. A few R.A.F. pilots were beginning to appear. Paul Field use to take a great interest on scanning the North sea as we'd cross the coast on our way to Amsterdam or Copenhagen and after asking him about his catlike gaze he "confessed" to having been a Lightning instructor at R.A.F. Binbrook, which

was just underneath us. In realising that I would have to treat him with great respect I did wonder if he might have been the guy who had tried to formate on our test flight as we were just about to stall?? An A.T.C. cadet, Andrew Speak came along with us on one of our short trips and I enjoyed showing him the operation. Around that time we were practising Cat.3 approach and landings as B.E.A. tried to catch up with the trident on the autolands for foggy landings. So we would sit and very closely monitor the controls and report on the possible success. It did seem to be trying to make a silk purse out of a pigs ear! But the engineers were slowly getting there. The UK shuttles were causing a few chaotic performances out of Heathrow particularly when we advertised reduced fares some evenings. One long que which tailed back into the building had gone around the corner during a delay and when they moved forward the people round the corner didn't notice with the result that the flight went without them! One delay created the emergence of a loud mouthed sea lawyer who talked our passenger into trying to stay on board on our arrival at Manchester until they were given a refund! After the ground staff failed to get their agreement I had to consult them [hat on of course] that we were just about to switch off the A.P.U. The little engine giving electricity. And we would have to leave them in

the dark as we disembarked and leave them to explain the situation to the police who had been sent for!

Our next shambles took some rescuing. The luggage had been put on the wrong aircraft and I had to go to the loaders who were looking forward to setting course for the pub. They responded to my grovelling [especially when I removed the hat]? And switched the luggage. I managed to send Wayne off to the next door 757 to scrounge some ice. It happened to be Wayne's birthday and in his absence I apologised for the delay, opened a free bar and explained to the pax that we should have been on our way to Wayne's birthday party and he would be back on board soon with ice for their drinks. By the time we had got airborne and landed [happily] in Belfast the pax were singing "Happy birthday dear Wayne"!

Our next little surprise was a GPWS warning going off at 26,000ft! That's the ground proximity warning horn but as we were nowhere near mount Everest we tripped the circuit breaker before landing at Manchester.

The next interesting conference with the passengers came at Brussels. Just as I prepared to sign the ship's papers, loading complete, passengers on board, there was a loud woosh noise and the aircraft leaned over slightly to the right! This was a new one? I popped out

of my seat and witness that the emergency escape slide had somehow got deployed probably by the luggage doors closing. There was a fair chance that it was damaging itself or the airbridge so I popped back into the cockpit and retrieved the fire axe. One quick swipe with the spike on the back and the beast relaxed and the aircraft returned to level. We completely flattened the slide and stowed it in the hold. On return to the cockpit Geoff my mate had the manual out and sadly informed me that we must reduce the number of pax. That started the pantomime! There were quite a few U.M,s [unaccompanied minors] on board. Kids going back UK. And most of the Mums of the Ums were watching us from the terminal building. This was a 'hat on' grovelling job so I went up to the terminal and gently suggested that perhaps the little dears would rather go on a later aircraft and go to school tomorrow? No response! When I returned to the aircraft asked the pax. on the PA if anyone would like to stay the night in Brussels at a good hotel and have dinner on us? No response! I then made the mistake of asking the traffic despatcher to phone London for a dispensation to fly with one slide u/s. Fortunately he returned and said that he couldn't contact anyone to advise! When I got back to the aircraft the cabin crew reported that a "gentleman" down the back was creating and

complaining and making a fuss. I invited him up to the cockpit and gently explained to him that I needed volunteers to get off and there was a fair chance that he would be first! He went away quietly. We had a small conference with the cabin crew and worked out a new drill using the escape rope and manual handling and went on our way. An abbreviated ASR reported the damage to the slide.

A few mornings later my phone rang and when I answered gentle Gerry from ops quietly asked "Are you coming in today Tony?" My alarm had failed. I told Gerry to get the co-pilot to check the weather, put on sensible fuel and I'd be there soon as pos. When I arrived it was Richard who seemed to be relaxed in control but when I looked at the weather it was intermittent low cloud and I glanced at the information plaque on the coaming which announced that the aircraft was only Cat I. In other words no good for automatic approach! Anyway we departed on time and awaited the latest up to date Copenhagen weather. It turned out to be more suitable for a cat 3 aircraft but I knew that Richard would do his best to fly accurately as we used the old fashion monitored approach manual technique. Richard glued himself to the needles of the ILS and I just got glimpse of the lights at very low level and gently plonked it on. We carried on to nightstop at Gatwick and next day going

back to Copenhagen in better weather we managed a successful practice Cat 3 to upgrade the aircraft.

Shortly after that we approached Dusseldorf and in the clear weather we elected a visual approach which the controller approved but as we came halfway downwind there was a Tristar aircraft slowly taxiing out and as he approached the runway the controller cleared him to take off hoping that he would speed up. As we came on to base leg we were cleared to land but the Tristar was still on the runway. As we approached the fence the large aircraft was just about getting airborne. I studied this for a few long seconds then decided that the turbulence on the runway might be too much so I put on overshoot power and climbed away just above the jet wash and turned to fly a circuit. John ,my co-pilot said "I was wondering when you were going to overshoot" Quite a surprising remark from a guy who was not on my short list of ace pilots! Fair enough. Then when we landed and taxied in the controller said "I did not think that your go - around was very necessary" I think I said that I did. I didn't say what was on the tip of my tongue " I'll fly my aircraft and you fly your control tower" If I'd had time I would like to have gone up to the tower and have a chat about large aircraft jet wash turbulence.

On our next trip to Milan strangely enough we noticed a large delamination on our windscreen and flew back low level to Manchester without any drama! Shortly afterwards I did my first route check in command and scored a V.G. Happy days! Some new airforce pilots were coming on the strength. Slight snag was that they were helicopter drivers and weren't too smooth at scalping mother earth! I'd have loved the job of taking them up to 'bash' the circuit and iron out their attempts. One day I was going to Dusseldorf and young Peter Brown was my co-pilot. I wanted to give him the Dusseldorf landing it was 30 kts but down the runway so on the way there I gave him a lesson. I started off by telling him about my wrestle with a Dakota at Blackpool and he laughed but I advised him not to laugh too much. The main thing was after the first touch just hold the nose in the steady attitude just above the horizon and wait. He did that and we did a good one. He wangled his Dad Tony a look see flight in the cockpit a few days later. Tony was a controller at Manchester ,famed for his pleasant relaxed voice. Peter did some nice ones so I reckon he felt sorted! Funnily enough one of the Captains said to me that Dave Street our base training Captain had told him to watch Peter as he was a bit ropey. Why hadn't he told me? When we did a double night stop at Paris, with a day off in the middle, Joan came along to

see the sights and Paul field, the lightning man did the tour with us. Our hotel was the Holiday Inn in the Place de la Republic; a dramatic name for a place with a horrible history where Madame Guillotine had been the centre of attraction! I was told that the Hotel had been a Gestapo Headquarters. Just round the corner and up the road was the Folies Bergere. My favourite restaurant was Chartier a comical place where the waiters draw your bill in pencil on the paper table 'cloths' and dashed about in their long aprons and large moustaches and will say and do anything to entertain their customers. On day two we went walking up the hill on the Rue Chivalie to the Place de Tetre where the artists sit around painting. A young man came to us and began to sketch Joan and although I tried to wave him away he continued as he walked backwards before us. This was the standard operating procedure. When I looked at his drawing it was very good, he told me some ridiculous price and I said that I didn't want to pay that much.

Unfortunately Paul surprised us and made a lounge at the chap which I only managed to deflect. Not exactly R.A.F. officer behaviour. That I wouldn't pay anyway I explained to the artist and I offered about half of his price which he accepted with a smile and handed me the picture. At the top of the road is the beautiful old cathedral, Sacre Choer which we enjoyed. A quiet

prayer for world peace would have been appropriate! I still enjoy the picture. Near the Hotel there is a side street where an old building with large windows can be interesting to stare at. Behind each window is a dance studio. Each studio has a variety of dancing from Ballet to Flamenco and outside a fleet of various high class motor cars, some chauffeured ,awaiting their privileged student.

As Christmas approached we started Father Xmas reindeer flights out over the Irish sea almost to Isle of Man and back. They were much enjoyed. The aircraft was dressed with horns attached and a smiley mouth curved just below the black radar 'nose' as the pax boarded . Then when doors closed the appendages would be removed to be refitted on return. With xmas gifts, from a cabin crew wearing Santa dress during the flight it was particularly good to have a layer of stratus cloud that we could skim along just above the 'snow ' layer, turn round and back to Manchester, land after about 25 minutes and have the reindeer gear quickly fitted before opening the doors. I didn't hear anyone ask about the appendages and sometimes wondered what the other pilots would think of people calling themselves "Santa One", "Santa Two" etc. on the radio! Four flight per day was the norm. Good practice for the new boys. You couldn't imagine bouncing a sledge?

Another good idea was the “fear of Flying flights”. A crew from London ,Peter and Douggie organised these short flights which were rostered and flown by our crew. It was explained to the passengers that that it would be a bit bumpy as we flew through selected bits of cloud and into smooth air in the local area and people would have a short visit to the cockpit to meet the drivers and have a chat! They were a great success and presumably boosted revenue a little.

I remember my co-pilot having a laugh as we climbed away from Aberdeen after a very windy turn round. When I asked him he explained that on the way into land I’d told the punters the it would be “a wee bit waggly “ as we approached. I’d unconsciously slipped into the vernacular. Probably most of the punters were from London!

Francis was my co-pilot into Beauvies on a charter with motor car people and I flew the let down using their local beacon. I came into view and realised I had left us a bit high so had to do a short orbit. A small failure with old smoothie looking on! Tut tut. Anyway I had my annual route check and Pat Keen gave me a V.H.S.!

After a nightstop at paris I gave John the trip back to Glasgow. The weather was fog but clearing later and I wondered why John selected 8,600 Kgms of fuel . A

strange number which I didn't question because it was more than enough I thought. When we neared Glasgow and the fog was still thick in the valley we asked the Radar controller if he could keep an eye on us and took the pax for a tour of the highlands which was better than orbiting continuously. The rest of Scotland was beautifully clear and we enjoyed the flight at various heights pointing out the features and arrived back in time to catch the Fog clearance for our landing. It was a few years later that I learned that 8,6 was full tanks on a boeing 737! John had been flying 737.s with Airtours!

My log book has Mum 31st in the column that year she passed away. She'd done well "I think 'dragging me up from our Gorbals beginning with some help from the cubs, scouts and cadets. Hope she's not still watching me? I flew into Amsterdam and fortunately we had a few runways to select because it was one of the roughest weather days I'd ever flown in. When I asked young Bruce If he'd like the trip back I was glad he said no thanks and he'd prefer to leave the wrestling to me! Around that time we had a few captains retiring and I happened to say to one of our less sensible flight managers that we should offer them to stay on as co-pilots. He exploded at me in his superior manner with questions like "What do we pay them, What do they wear on their sleeves etc? " I told him I was only

suggesting the idea and not the details but shortly afterwards the idea seemed to catch on and a few did re-muster and spend a few years in the right hand seat. One old boy[55] did fly with me on a quick Glasgow in the early morning winter darkness and I did actually feel for him for he was way behind the eight ball. But yes ;you've guessed it, Tony Greaves of Renfrew days joined me on a few flights which I found to be milestones. One flight to Copenhagen and Tony was handling and for quite a long time he was engrossed with his flight plan and fiddling his computer and after a while he said to me "When do you think we should go down Tone" I replied "About now Tone" We were about 5minutes after our top of descent[about 50miles] So down we went and a bit later he said actually "Tone I've left it a bit late" I replied "no worries Tone We'll have a look at Malmo on the way round"! Fortunately with a bit of skill the 1-11 can come down very smartly so there was no drama! The ballpark was 100 miles out. On the way back in the dark I noticed that Tony was fiddling around on the Auto pilot control box, situated between our elbows and when I took a look I could not see the setting control markers which are luminous. I couldn't see any lines but when I groped about I found a large quite heavy black spirit level sitting on top of the controls. Tony was using it to

balance the aircraft level? It would have been quite a lethal weapon if it took off for a bit of local flying around the cockpit ! I lifted it up and ceremoniously slowly handed it to "Tone" Nothing was said! I lost track of Tony when I changed aircraft a few years later. But noticed when I returned that when Tony retired he had bought a house right on the western end of the airfield and had joined the Noise abatement society with the result that after take off on runway 24 we all jinked left for a few miles and later jinked back on our preferred track. The Greaves "manoeuvre!" He was a very pleasant man but in the amazing mix of various characters flying aeroplanes Tony was on the edge of the envelope!

I had a Frankfurt flight with Richard B. and they had quite a hold up which resulted in us holding for 20 Minutes at 9,000ft. So as we orbited around we discussed Frankfurt which I'd always considered the 'Heathrow' of Germany. They had two parallel runways. If we landed on 25left it took about 10 to 15 minutes to taxi in but only about 5 from 25right and it was flagrantly obvious that Lufthansa were landed mostly on the right. So obvious that the eventual question was asked from some British Pilot; Why? After a few inadequate but slightly snotty noises from control a German pilot said in perfect english. "Because I got up very early and put my towel on the

runway” referring to the internationally recognised holiday hotel procedure that the holiday Germans followed! I felt like saying on the radio “one day someone threw them all in the pool! But I managed not to point out this truth. Maybe I wasn’t quick enough. A very naughty response once when start up delays were bad. And Lufthansa were given start immediately, he responded in a sad voice, “We have lost 200 passengers” an unfortunate American voice said “Have a look in the ovens man” Ouch! “I do not think that is very funny” was the response! I took off for Geneva one day with Chris [of windscreen fame] one day and he commented that he couldn’t transfer fuel from the centre tank. The indicators had a yellow blank symbol showing that the refuelling panel was not shut properly and I responded “circuit breaker 207” without even thinking. I was just as amazed as Chris! The number must have stuck in my head. One pull of the breaker and the fuel flowed!

A few young ladies from Air Traffic Control turned up for look see flights. And It was good showing them the operation. And a few lady co-pilots began to appear on the base. Yvonne Burford was first to fly with me. Very conscientious as expected. Then a quick Amsterdam for my annual check which went ok. Almost every airline had Boeing 737,s and I considered it a good idea to get that on my licence in

case I needed to fly after my retirement. So I volunteered to select 73,s in my next bid.

So August 18th my last flight on 1-11,s; Amsterdam and H.M.S. Jersey. Last chance to sink it. I can't remember who did the Jersey landing probably me but my co-pilot was Rick Heron, ex navy helicopter driver so sinking Jersey would have been appropriate ! I would return to commuting to London until the 73's arrived in Manchester. Captains could scrounge rides which made commuting much easier. My total hours flying was now about 12,300 including 8,650 [about a year]on my old friend the 1-11!

After the dreaded technical course [not too bad] the "flying" was zero flight time on the simulator! Fortunately it was a good one and was easy enough to operate. So on 07th October.90 I set off on my first flight on the 73 with big John Moss , my route training Captain. John was a good relaxed guy. When I did my welcome on board speech to the pax. I was dying to say "I've never flown one of these before" but they had already shut the front doors so I desisted! The good old rostering staff had put me on a flight to Leningrad! Where? I'd had to consult one of my kids atlas's to find it across the gulf passed Finland in Russia. They could have put me on any one of dozens of European destinations that I knew well. Oh well! off

we went! It all started getting a bit shambolic the nearer we got with the control difficulty with English and my Russian isn't too good! It was great to hear that there was a light x-wind and that the Runway was slightly icy! Big John was flying the let down and half way through this I pointed out that an amber warning light had come on, steady warning us that we had a flap problem! We had the leading edge droops extended and the main flaps at half way so we decided to carry on and increase our landing speed by about 20 kts. John carried on to allow me the landing which I did thinking "do I really need a smoothie ? Anyway that worked out ok and we spent the turn round visiting the electronics panel in the front hold, pulling and pushing circuit breakers to try to discover normality! The comedy of this part of the operation was that we had a couple of Russian soldiers "guarding" the aircraft or preparing to shoot us as we popped in and out , up and down ,in the most unusual fashion which must have had them completely confused. We had to literally push their rifles out of our way as we nipped in and out! They may have had to please some observer watching them watching us! I think I got a slight smile once when I said my "das vidania" word! No problem on the departure and when we called the company frequency the engineers told us that they had previously had problems

reported on “delta golf”. Two days later it was Gotenburgh and Naples [yes Atlas consulted] until a short visit to Berlin . On 1st of November Graham Fisher, a good guy, signed me off with a final check and a welcome to the 737 fleet. ! About three weeks later I went off for an Istanbul night stop with a day off and I had my good lady on board for a look see. My co-pilot was quite an old guy Cedric Platts who used to fly a business aircraft into Renfrew and I’d met him at the Loganair hanger. We had a most interesting tour around with visits to the Top Kappie museum and the ancient old underground reservoir that the Romans had built, having seen the films that had featured them. I had to use my new authority threatening a couple of our cabin crew who were chasing each other around having a water fight! ,during our room party and ended up out on the balcony. The report would have been complex explaining their short flight from the 6th floor balcony of the Istanbul Hilton! A short visit to the gambling casino was enough to catch the horrible “James Bond atmosphere’ of these boot faced people trying to get rich! On the way back we had quite bad turbulence and we had to climb up to about flt. Level 370 into the smoother air but I did see a brief flicker of our flap light which went out and I consulted my log book and yes ,there it was ”Delta Golf” again! Worthy of another Air Safety Report. We

were up near coffin corner and I think the leading edge flaps wanted to creep out!

A few days later on a London to Toulouse we were suddenly informed that that we couldn't land at destination because the fire men were having an industrial action and were parking their fire engines on the runway. I was tempted to carry on and perhaps beat them up and squeeze in on any short runway if possible. "Behave yourself boy"! We diverted to Bordeaux and as soon as we got there we were given clearance to continue to Toulouse! Pity; we should have done the beat up! B. French!

A few days later I had a flight London Oporto and back I hadn't been to Oporto in Portugal before and my mate was Big Bob Fyffe who was coming back from Berlin. Once again that feeling that I should let him fly in the left hand seat passed my mind! I just made up by asking him for some briefing on Oporto and off we went. About seventy miles short of the airfield we were cleared to the beacon and hold at 3,thousand feet until the Air France ahead of us had landed. I said to Bob " Tell them we have Air France and the field in sight"! Bob did this and we did a visual without any delay Bob did a reasonable landing and as we taxied in he said " We played a blinder Tony but they must think we've got bloody good eyesight!" Air France was

parked by then! Bob flew it back to London and when I did a smoothy landing he exclaimed " Jammie bugger"! A few days later I had an Amsterdam night stop with one of our new lady co-pilots. Sally was efficient as expected until we got to the hotel and Sally asked me to come and help her turn on her radiator. When I did managed this, without great difficulty, she gave me a quick goodnight kiss. Mmmmm! I behaved and boringly went off to bed! I enjoyed co-pilot compliments but didn't want to start a reputation as a co-pilot kisser!!

I met up with Keith Trowbridge on 5th Nov. and enjoyed his company on a Berlin- Stuttgart night stop. Keith was a big Chunky guy with a low, gravely almost drunk sounding voice which slightly reminded me of Lurch in the "Adams Family" ! He had flown a lot of different aircraft in the R.A.F. and I enjoyed watching the way he gently caressed the controls with his big hands. When we got to our hotel in the late afternoon rather than going to bed early I suggested that we repaired to the Bier Stubbe next door. The chief stewardess was Ingrid Kolk. She had always been one of our jolly party girls when I had known her previously but she seemed rather boot faced now and tut ,tuted when we said we were going next door for a few beers before turning in. Anyway she appeared later and joined us as I enjoyed Keiths

entertaining tales. After we dined Keith and I returned to the Stubbe and Ingrid left us sternly, disapproving! Shortly afterwards the late crew appeared; we would be taking the aircraft that they had flown in, back to Berlin. We all walked back to the hotel and I split and quietly entered via a side door and took the lift to my room. I never ask for a wake up call when I'm late and have had drinks. I don't think Keith had that particular religion. I set my get up time on my big alarm clock and had a good sleep. When the phone rang in the morning it was Ingrid in a panic saying that it was pickup time and the driver said he couldn't wait because of the busy traffic. I told her to calm down and go and we would catch them up. Then I realised that I had tragically not advanced my alarm clock to Germany time. I nipped down to Keiths room and found that he'd had his call but had fallen back to sleep. So I told him I'd meet him downstairs in 5 minutes. We caught a cab right away and arrived at the airport at almost take-off time. Met the ops manager in the office and he gravely told me that the crew didn't think we were fit to fly. That was Ingrid and her two colleagues sitting quietly in the corner. I said "that's rubbish!" and I lifted my two bags, one in each hand and standing on one foot said "I'm fine and fit, lets get the paperwork and the weather." But we obviously had a problem and Ingrid wouldn't look in

my direction. This was a new experience! If we hung around the airfield we could get breathalysed and had to avoid that! So I pretended to throw a wobbler and said to Keith "right that's it! lets go back to the hotel" and without another word we marched out and caught a cab back to the hotel! When we arrived back I phoned Berlin and apologised to Mel who was the ops manager and a good guy. He said that there was a message that we had to remain in the hotel and the company would send round a local doctor to check us out. I the told Keith to drink as much water as he possibly could and meet me downstairs in 5 minutes wearing good walking shoe's. We marched swiftly around the park for about an hour then returned to drink some more water and await the visiting Doctor. He turned out to be a nice little guy and we filled in his visit giving him some easy ways to keep his hours up and be able to renew his pilots licence.! Our breath was never discussed! Eventually we got instructions to position as pax. back to London on the evening flight. When we arrived back we were met by a flight manager who informed us that we should file a report and gave us a time for a court of enquiry! I had found out the Bier Stubbe did sell non alcoholic lager!! and I informed all useful attendees of that fact. I had remembered that I had grabbed a tray of Clauste Halle beer once leaving to go home and had asked the

chaps “what’s this Clauste Halle like” and the reply’s were shrouded in laughter at my ignorance! When I reported for the inquiry I took with me a file of very good reports that I had amassed over the years wondering if they would ever come in handy and here we were! I asked one of my friends and confidants for any good advice and he said “why not just tell them that you’re an alcoholic.? They’ll just put you on a drying out course then bring you back” When I told my wife of this consideration she exploded and told me not to be ridiculous, of course I wasn’t! Well how nice to hear her so definite in my defence after all these years and I tried to visualise the size of the lake of ale I had consumed over the years? Anyway enquiry date came round and I was fined with 3 months suspension and 1 month for Keith. I was relieved at Keith’s shorter sentence because with two youngsters at private school he could have been in deep trouble. Any reference to alcohol would have caused summary dismissal. My sentence was “awarded” for behaving in a manner not up to the expected standard of a Captain. Secretly I knew that when “cornered” I had made one of the best command decisions of my life!

When I had been on 747,s I had missed out on the 3month posting in OZ because of unsuitability with the kids so here we were with a chance of a tour down under. Our old friend Vic. From Sussex had Invited us

several times to come out for a visit so I rang him up and said we'd be there in a couple of days. My Staff Travel had remained untouched and what would be a more suitable place than Botony Bay for a sinner? So off we went and enjoyed some first class treatment to arrive in Sydney and enjoy new year drinks with Vic and his Wife and watch the fireworks on the Bridge from his patio!

We were almost instantly impressed with Oz and our previously agreed plan to frequent Spain in our retirement began to waiver. We popped about Sydney, Brisbane. The flight to Cairns was good but as they loaded the Pax one of the happy crew came up and asked me Capt. Henderson? When I said yes she politely informed me that I'd have to get off because now the flight was full! But as we passed the cockpit on the way out I glanced in and there were a couple of jump seats on this 727. So I called in and asked the Capt. could we ride in the cockpit. He happily agreed and we had a lovely flight up the coast with a few features being pointed out. There had been some industrial juggling in Australia with the airlines and the senior co-pilot on this flight had been a Captain previously and had in effect changed places with his mate in the left hand seat! After a few days in Cairns we moved on down to Alice Springs. We stayed in the Red Centre Apart Hotel which had just opened a few

days before. We went out walking in the gathering gloom of the evening and were amazed at the Kangaroos having their evening hop about and as we passed a few dry creeks we could see some black fellas having a meet. They were quite happy to exchange a friendly wave with us white fellas but I decided not push our luck and went back to the hotel for a good nights sleep. What a joke that was . There was an air conditioning system which actually roared slightly and when I laid a mattress on top of the grill it floated off the ground with force of the cold air! In the morning we commented to some Scandinavian people who'd had a similar nightmare and were sitting outside in the sun trying to thaw out! We found out from the management that the a/c was turned on for the whole camp but had only been selected on for about three rooms and they would sort it out by next evening. We then retraced our steps along the track which might lead to the Spring. And hey presto there it was , a beautiful little Billabong surrounded by a natural collection of round boulders and apart from the occasional visiting kangaroo we felt like the only two people on the planet. Absolutely magic!

Our next hop was a short flight down to Ularu ,Ayers Rock another magic sight best seen from a few miles away on a red evening sunset. A huge round boulder

sticking on its own out of the flat desert. As you come close there are notices warning you that If you wish to climb up you must take about 4litres of water with you. Which sounded a bit excessive even to a drinking man like me! However we were allowed to climb up in those days. one slender hand grip to save you if you lost your footing on the slippery looking smooth pathway. The view from the top is forever but the only litter there are many ,many plastic bottles of water!. The next collection of rocks are the Olgas not faraway but not quite as magnificent. We had planned to fly home from Sydney but I liked the sound of Perth in Western Oz and Joan had her cousin Jane from Blackpool days living there. So we flew over to Perth once again in the cockpit. The co-pilot was a young lady and she was flying this sector. She put the undercarriage down just a bit early and her old boss man tut tutted and ranted on a bit. What a pity. She landed it well and as we got off I gave her an understanding look with my eyes to the heavens and she gave me an understanding smile! The P.I.T.A.s were still thriving world wide! Cousin Jane and her husband Snowy lived in Rockingham on the coast about 50 Kms south. They were most accommodating and very pleasant and insisted that we stay a good while and indeed return in the future. We found that the high temperatures there were relatively

comfortable because of the low humidity. And each day a short walk up to the beach for a swim was perfect. Snowy was a smashing old timer with amazing tales of his buffalo and crock hunting days up in the N.T. The northern territory. He was actually a successful prospector but he tended to rant a bit about the bigger companies that he had sold out to. Churchill Park was a beaut. with its planted trees by the beach and Gas fired ,brick built barbeques for public use. A very active sailing club busied the bay several times per week. Our plans for Spain had no hope! A great tour.

Back home I was rostered for a few days in the simulator as a refresher. I noticed a few of the nicer management chaps in the crew room as I passed through Heathrow. Some saying bad luck and a few almost congratulations for my minimizing the sins committed ! When I was back in the swing I kept an eye open for Ingrid but that pleasure didn't happen. I'd liaised with Kieth during our holiday!

About a week later I was on a Munich night stop and when we arrived back at the aircraft in the morning our tarmac engineer was smelling quite strongly of booze and since it was a frosty morning I took particular care to check that the aircraft was clear of frost. I was horrified to see that there were quite a

few bad patches with almost icicles hanging off. I ordered a complete respray and had a word with the mechanic and privately warned him to be more careful on his morning inspection or he could get in big trouble. I knew! My old mate Bob Fyffe was retiring and had a party in the Irish pub where he entertained us with one of his Irish country skip , arms by the sides, dancing. I'd miss him and had enjoyed his company airborne or pubbing!

On my next German tour from London my Co-pilot Richard Price spent quite a bit of time in the cockpit explaining to me that he wasn't all that interested in aircraft which struck me as a new approach! He had a big interest studying clocks and compasses. You can see him even now on T.V. in "Antiques Road Show". Anyway he operated well and on our Dusseldorf night stop. we repaired the Alt Statt [old town]and after eating we found a disco where we enjoyed a good bop around but were quite busy fending of some of the local lads from the pretty lady who had come along with us! We were on the early flight back to Berlin and were surprised to see, when we returned to the Hotel that the reception area was full of people and the late crew who were explaining some disturbance. One of our Captains was telling the receptionist that he saw his television set dancing across its cabinet. Some others were telling of similar observations. I told

Richard to quietly repair to our rooms. It was quite late and I'd got the impression that the remonstrating Capt. seemed a bit superior! I don't think our credibility would have been sufficient if I'd suggested that a second bigger quake was possible and we should all sleep in the park?? During our bopping disco session we hadn't noticed the earth quake. I don't think we'd caused it ! 5.8! we noticed some damage on the way to the airport in the morning [on time]!

We had 737 400 series in the fleet now so after a short few days technical course on the differences. After 6 sectors, to places that I knew for a change, I did a final check. I was pleased to see that it had rain repellent fitted so I wouldn't have noisy windscreen wipers uselessly banging about! We had a couple of 300 series at Berlin so our conversion on the 400 covered that for our licences. The 1-11 pilots were changing their opinion of the 73. We had previously called it the F.L.U.F [the fat little ugly flugzeug] ! I remember saying to my mate wow! as we passed 30.thousand feet climbing at 2.000feet per minute. We'd never have done this on a 1-11! I then realised that he was ex RAF and this would be nothing to him. He actually replied that the jets he had been on were ground attack machines and wouldn't be able to get this high!

We had an unusual night stop at Leipzig and we visited Colditz Castle, of P.O.W. wartime fame but I was disappointed that it wasn't the towering, forbidding, dark edifice of film character. It was a mental hospital.

On a Jersey night stop I had a walk along the beach with young Gavin my co-pilot who had brought his mate along on the trip. We suddenly came upon a car, parked on the sand, engine running and were horrified to see a hose pipe fixed on his exhaust pipe and draped into the rear window. The driver was slouched back in the seat and unconscious. We found a large rock to smash the window and I reached in and began pumping his chest which rattled horribly and judging by his colour he looked as if he could have been dead for quite some time. As I switched off the engine I noticed that the fuel was nearly empty so he may have been here for a long time. We had the ambulance there quite soon and as we walked away we could see the body lurching around violently as the paramedics tried shocking the body to respond. I think he'd been dead for quite some time. We found out later that the young man was known to have had mental problems.

Shortly After that I had a flight from Lisbon and as we prepared to leave a Captain arrived in the cockpit and asked if I could help him out. His wife was epileptic

and would almost certainly have a fit during the flight. The ground staff were being a problem allowing her to fly but we had a word with the cabin crew who were willing to cope by laying his wife out on the floor of the galley out of view. So with this arranged we departed and the lady duly did spend the second half of the flight happily unconscious stretched out on the floor with the cabin crew deftly stepping over her! My only problem was that I was commuting back to Manchester and would wish to scarper rapidly on arrival off the aircraft to catch the last flight! As I "escaped" I noticed a couple of policemen climbing on the back entrance. I had briefed everyone so could only imagine that they must have been informed by the staff at Lisbon. I thankfully heard nothing more!

We had a night stop at Brussels. The co-pilot John was a quiet elderly chap and we had a quiet evening sat in the main square chatting and turned in fairly early. In the morning we had a quick turn round at London and as we loaded the passengers the traffic man said that he had two staff passengers who needed to get to Oslo but the flight was full. I jokingly said "I hope they're not too large If they want to squeeze in up here" It turned out that the man was a duty officer from Miami and was very worthy of being squeezed. Miami was historically a base where staff travel was frequently a back log of desperate staff needing to get

back to London for duty and this chap would have had quite a history of fitting people in. His partner Steffie was Norwegian. We had a few laughs about the seating arrangements! John could fly the trip and Steffie could sit on the top of my back rest with her feet on my lap because the 400 737 had very restricted space behind the left seat. Quite a large tank was the rain repellent ! I put my rudder pedals as far forward as possible but had to practise moving my feet in case I had to actually use the rudders! Anyway the folks arrived expressing great thanks to us for “the seats” and off we went. On the way the chap explained to me that they were going up north on arrival and were taking over the management of a cruise on an ice cutter exploring the northern fiords with some rather well off senior citizens and hoping to catch some northern lights. They would be in trouble if they missed the boat! We had a few good laughs and the trip up the fiord into Oslo was as beautiful as ever. John did a nice landing but as we taxied in he said “You better park it boss” The manoeuvre into the parking bay was quite comical at Oslo. They had lights of various colours tapering up to a point like an elaborate xmas tree which had to be read from the left hand seat so I took the steering tiller and I could use the brakes. I said “thanks John you can give me marks for artistic interpretation” As we came to a

gentle stop alongside the loading gallery a British Airways Capt. suddenly appeared at the window with two large white boards saying 5.8! That was our score out of 6.! I still wonder what our visitors must have thought? Anyway they thanked us for the ride and we wished them Bon Voyage! We had a short chat with the new Capt., admired his sense of humour and went off to the hotel.

We had a trip down to Turin but the trouble was that no one had got in there for days because of severe fog in the Po valley So it was our turn to try to avoid the diversion to Milan which was almost as bad. On our first attempt the runway visual range dropped and we went around and waited for an improvement. After circling about for a while I thought "lets play Murphy's law" So we climbed away and set course for Milan . I explained the plan to my mate and as he handled the aircraft I talked to the Controller at Turin. After a while the vis. on the runway popped up. To just above our limit! I took control and dived down for a high speed or "rushed approach" as the Management disapprovingly called it! I got to within 8 miles ,slowed down and handed it over to my mate when established on the I.LS. He flew it on automatics and I watched out for the lights.

Bingo! the lights just appeared as we touched the critical height . I grabbed it and we were in ! The very effusive Italiano Station Manager virtually pranced about in delight as this was the first aircraft on the ground for some days and he had quite a few punters to get rid of. He presented us with some bottles of wine which we enjoyed emptying when we got to the hotel!

With the vagaries of the British weather I did find that Heathrow was some times unprepared. One morning it was in full shambles mode. It was busy morning time and most aircraft required de-icing but the de-icing vehicles were few and far between and peoples start uptime was being suggested by ground control but couldn't be accepted because the aircraft weren't de iced! When we were ready to depart for Lyon in France there was a 757 next door being de-iced and I nipped out and asked the de-icer Boss could he please do us next? He happily agreed and I got back in and called ground control with an unusual request! I said that we would take any clearance going south when one came up. The timing was magic for as we were completing our de-icing the young Lady called and said "Who was the aircraft that said they would take any clearance"? The radio went surprisingly quiet at this apparently ridiculous transmission but she passed us a clearance going south to where? I can't remember but

all went well and after we got on course to cross the channel I called up and refiled our flight plan to Lyon! This came through without any delay. The only problem late was that having “escaped “ from London we had some delay in getting back in again with the back log from the earlier shambles. I used to enjoy Lyon, particularly the magnificent cathedral there where they used to play beautiful classical music there and I would sit and enjoy, totally on my own, for some time. There was also a Roman amphitheatre just outside. It looked particularly super for friends, Romans and countrymen! ?

My last visit to Berlin was coming up as I was soon to return to Manchester and I found it sad to be deserting my favourite European town. I didn't have too long an evening on my last visit but had just enough time for dinner at the British officers club and a last visit to the folk pub to say adios to Pete Wyoming and a few other musicians. The wall had come down in '89 and They were working on the Reunification of Deutschland and Berlin would soon become the capital again.

My return to Manch started off with a trip to Madrid and my co-pilot was Jenny Fray. The young ladies had arrived in the north! No probs. I thought? My next night stop was Paris and Andy and I had an average to

quiet evening. Unfortunately he felt ill on arrival back at Manch and I hoped that fate hadn't followed me up with return history! so I had to swop for another Andy for the next trip. A quick Amsterdam and back home for tea! My next Co-pilot was Chris Parkin. The name didn't ring a bell until he told me that he had once come to my house with a friend for some career advise! My Wife and his Mum had done some duties in our local church. His mum was a Mary and my Wife was a Martha ! Mary's arranged the flowers and any other up market tasks and Martha's did the scrubbing and cleaning; lower rank but necessary. When I wanted my wife's attendance on the golf course I was a temporary Martha [no uniform or hair scarf]! Anyway years ago Chris wanted some gen on flying and Martha and Mary had sent the boys round for a chat. I'd told them about my good and bad ideas about getting into flying and Chris ,who's Dad had been a Doctor, had achieved what I had wanted and was a jet fighter jock before joining B.A. at Manch. and an instructor I think. We had a smooth trouble free Paris and return and when we switched off back at Manch. he took of his head set and looked at me seriously and said " have I passed "? I smiled at him and said " Have I ?"It was worth a hand shake! It kind of reminded me of many years ago and on our last leg back from a German tour as my Captain routinely

filled in a confidential co-pilot report form he looked across at me and seriously asked “are there two s’s in Pissed”? I was horrified and hoped he had been joking! I worked my way steadily through the co-pilots. They were a good bunch of young chaps. Some of the old Capts. used to complain that they were too bumptious. I didn’t mind as long as they were on the right track and striving to reach a high standard without a fuss. The Helicopter guys had smoothed out their arrivals and it was a pleasure to let them do the smoothy check on H.M.S. Jersey! I had the pleasure of a Paris night-stop with Jenny Fray. We pitched up at Holiday Inn and popped across the way for a few beers. I then suggested that we go to whichever restaurant she liked for dinner. She asked me and I immediately suggested my favourite “Chartea” of course! She thought the place was a scream and as the evening progressed we began to discuss flying with the various characters at Manchester. After a few notables she then said “I must say Tony that I find flying with you is a little disconcerting” I was slightly shocked and asked “why”? “Because your very laid back and informal “ I then told her a bit about my experiences with uptight Captains and P.I.T.A.’s . I reckoned that I loved the job, thoroughly enjoyed it and hoped that everyone I worked with was having a good time too. I’d do the job for nothing, but don’t tell

the management!! “Anyway don’t worry. I’ll give you a good bollocking in the morning”! How’s that? I think I strategically forgot!

In late 93 we suddenly tried a direct Manchester Berlin which was sensible as Berlin was becoming capital again after the reunification of Germany. We didn’t stop but carried on to Birmingham. It was a hideously early start and rather than P.A. I asked them to visit the cockpit if they wished . I was horrified to hear that all three passengers had been directed to London when they enquired about the flight. I put in a report on this when we returned hoping the Airline would waken up and do something about this. The loads began to slowly increase and we started doing reciprocal flights from Birmingham. After about a year when the loads had got up to 40% or 50 % they took the flight off the schedules without any obvious reason! We had also started a direct Manchester New York and then that was stopped. I was getting a bit disenchanted with “Heathrow Airways”. When my retirement was in sight I attended a meeting and voiced some questions to the Management detachment who had come up to Manch. to grace us with their presence. After the meeting one of the young “Managers” asked me why I appeared to be unhappy with their performance? I asked him where had he got his aviation experience?

He proudly stated that he'd been head hunted from Mars Bars!! I just walked away. Its only been recently that I heard that there was a Mars Bars headquarters just down the road from B.A,s centre. There was probably an old boy network festering in the local pub!

Our next Paris night stop gave me a reintroduction to freezing rain. That had been when I came out of the Irish Harp to go back to the hotel and as I stood in the doorway and noticed the rain I could hear distant crashing noises from various parts of the town. It wasn't until I began slithering on my way that I realised the noises had been fast moving drivers discovering too late that the whole town was covered in a coat of ice. The French driver to the Airport was very slow and when I checked with him he said "It is the Ice" as we entered the Airport you could see some parked aircraft covered in ice and the forecast gave no foreseeable improvement . After a brief chat with the traffic people I called a halt and the whole crew checked in at the airport hotel. I didn't comment that it would have been a good idea to leave our pick up until later in the day and preserve our duty time. We didn't take off until the evening but in fact were not required later.

On the last day of March on finals to our usual runway 25 left at Frankfurt I asked the controller could we please switch to the right and he surprised me by saying yes! So I said "danke sere [thanks very much] and popped across. No towel necessary!

Not much drama as the Summer arrived . Young Paul D was left very high on the approach into Geneva and we had a quick discussion and demonstration how to get out of the sky rapidly. I think the 1-11 had been better than the 73 for plummeting!. Steep descents were very much becoming a thing of the past as the Ground Proximity Warning System would announce your sin! Paul,s Dad Roger retired next month and we duly trundled him off the apron into the building in a wheel chair; a procedure I had introduced years before. One

year we couldn't find a chair so we had to make do with a wheel barrow! Would never have happened in B.O.A.C.! I had my final route check but had to fly a different route due weather which left us with minimum fuel of which I didn't approve. No problem said my checking Captain Graham who probably approved! And may have enjoyed my unusual slight anxiety ! As my retirement approached some of the co-pilots were asking me about my plans and some suggested instructing. I took that as a compliment but

I had the feeling that the Memsab would have had enough of my aviating!

I gave myself a slight fright when I was leaving Rome shortly after when I turned in on an early line up point. As we got airborne I noticed that there wasn't as much runway left as I would have expected. There was plenty but I was glad that I wasn't attempting this little "faux-pas" with a 747! A warning to keep alert! I did save some time shortly after by asking the Amsterdam radar controller who was taking us on a wide circuit to land to the north. If we could turn in visually and land on his runway 27 He happily agreed and we saved about 5 minutes and some taxiing time! B.A. needs Lerts!

We had a meeting with Air Traffic Control at Manchester to discuss the operation and shortly afterwards one of their controllers, Fiona, came for a looksee flight to Paris. She was keen and said she could help out on our Santa flights which were about to start. She came along, complete with Santa costume, to help on three trips on our Isle of Man routine on Christmas Eve!

The next short shock was as my mate and I were taxiing out as passengers to Brussels and there was a shockingly loud knocking noise from, we guessed, one of our engines. Our pilots closed down the engine and

on inspection on the tarmac we found that a plastic bag had been sucked in. We'd always thought that the low slung 737.s engines were a bit like runway hoovers! The bag was causing cavitation in the compressors which could have been expensive or even disastrous!

Approaching Manch. one evening I asked my mate Charlie did he not fancy a visual approach ? When he said he didn't care I was slightly disappointed. I later told him over a beer that I liked to practise visuals to keep skilled because you never knew when you might suddenly need to do one! Anyway it saves time, fuel ,money and its fun!Anyway Charlie was good with my Camcorder which I had just obtained. And you know what early camcorder people are like! Slightly illegal but its nice to have a movie of yours truly flying the plane even if like most recordings it ends its life sitting on a shelf covered in dust! "Una Vello de Madrid" I actually had a week flying out of Glasgow which was nice but my old boss and kindly mentor Mack had retired by then. He is one of those people I would love to met again but have great pleasure in remembering.

So it was the end of February and it was my time for retirement. The offer of co-piloting wasn't being used at that time so I was age 55 and didn't really wish for that dilemma. We had done a few more Australia

`trips by then and were buying a little unit by the sea in Rockingham, W.A. using a bit of pension. The plan was to spend UK winters there using our staff travel allowance to start off. After 30 years Airline flying and 15.000 hrs I looked forward to the change of scene. My rostered duty on retirement day was a Dusseldorf and return with an Amsterdam to follow. One of the assistant flight managers took it upon himself to pinch my Amsterdam, to get himself out of the office! Bloody cheek! So off we went to Dusseldorf and I gave the outbound flight to young Tim Jervis and I would do my final landing at Manchester. The word got out after I thanked the German controllers for their service. When we approached Manch. The controller said "There's nobody about Tony" obviously expecting me to perform a beat up. I replied that a smooth landing would suffice in the 40knots wind! Maybe disappointing but they hadn't bought tickets for an air show! A few of the pax. came in and presented me with flowers then it was my turn for the wheel chair. I had only sat down and done a few yards when some idiot started splashing champagne over me! A gesture I've always detested. It was the moron who was about to do my next trip without having asked! Anyway I rescued the bottle for a few swigs on the way in but on one picture that someone took later I look as if I had been crying. Fizz gets in your eyes? I

had Anne, the flight managers secretary on my knee which brightened up the picture. We all met up with a few invited others in the Romper, the little pub on the other side of the airport and had a party. One treat that I tried to organise was to spend the last two days of my roster on a trip to New York on Concorde but their management couldn't fix me up with a crew visa. I tried to bypass this by saying I'd stay on board and help with the cleaning in order not to "land" in U.S. but this idea fell upon stony ground. It might have been fortuitous because the pilots were a couple of ex 1-11 mates and they might have given me a few minutes "on the pole"! So I missed going out with a double BANG!