

Thomas Drysdale

Telephone Numbers

HOME TEL

St.A 388

Graham House

Scots.2191

Rodger, Betty

Bearsden 1566

Wright, Connie

“ 1801

Empire Theatre

Doug. 3997

Tulloch, Sheena

Kilm’k 1554

Gregor, Norrie

Lochw’h 266

“Feed me Zeus, and thou Destiny, wheresoever you have appointed me to go – and may I follow fearlessly, but if, in an evil mind, I prove unwilling, still must I follow” ...

[CLEANTES HYMN TO ZEUS]

HOME ADDRESS:- LOMOND VIEW, KINKELL TERRACE
ST ANDREWS, FIFESHIRE, SCOTLAND

(Written sideways in the outer margin)

Should anything happen to me this book is to be despatched to Miss Lena MacIntyre via my parents.

T.Drysdale
14/6/41

(Also in between these pages are his Wings. Presumably they would come home to his parents with the journal and both the journal and the Wings had been passed on to Lena.)

Page for Jan 1st and 2nd missing.

Jan 3rd

Blue pen and ink doodle

Jan 5th

2 drawings

A cottage in the country

View over ploughed fields with a windmill? lighthouse? on the horizon.

Wednesday January 5th

I may fail in many a subject. But I know my flying will never let me down. Just as I used to throw a car about so do I now deal with a plane.

Confidence oozes from me as soon as my feet feel the rudder bar & my hand the stick; failure never occurs to me. And I can get from one place to another – today I navigated *Ibby(?)* round a long X.Country – with snow covering roads and railways, & making water impossible to see from the air. All I had to go on was hills and valleys.

A pencil in one hand & a map in the other, swearing this moment & laughing the next in sheer joy & ecstasy of youth & health & ability.

It is at these times I really feel grateful for my strength & quick reactions, and thanks to someone for bestowing such treasures upon me. Too often I have found I took it all for granted – never appreciated vigour and freedom from pain until something went wrong.

This career has already taught me much & I hope to go on learning.

Friday January 24th

Glasgow taught me quite a lot as regards fending for myself but each day in the RAF brings some new experience to teach me more.

We were granted leave – I'd no money, most of the lads could barely scrape the price of their own fare, let alone buy mine. But I knew my way around a bit more – I got a few to buy single fares & lend me the balance. By this method I scraped together 34/- to fetch me away from *Shawbury* (?)

People may offer advice & recount their experiences of how to work these things, but I still maintain that personal contact with tricky little troubles like these are the best way to learn so that you never forget.

Wednesday April 9th

Nothing really special about today – except that by dinner time I was wearing 3 stripes per arm & wings on my left breast.

9 months of Bullshit & bollockings!!!

But I've got them now & all these bewildering and shameful experiences are behind me.

Soon I'll be posted to an O.T.U. – no longer an L.A.C. Pupil pilot but a RAF man with wings – a senior N.C.O. by Jove!

Here's to me, whae's like me!?

Wednesday April 16th

So Bullshit is behind me is it? I'm and N.C.O. now am I?

Listen Tom (sucker) Drysdale, it's only starting! Having been an A.C.2 & L.A.C. – glamour boy, you are now under the ignoble heading of “Sprog Sergeant”!!!

I arrived at Bicester L.M.S, today at approx.. 10 hours: it took no little persuasion (sic) to convince M.T. that a 3 stripe man was fully justified in asking for transport – even then my kit only rode in style while I hoofed it.

At the barrier I was asked nicely to sling my respirator properly – 10 minutes later the Station Warrant Officer pulled me up. Seemingly a number of things were wrong about me:-

- A. I was wearing civvy shoes
- B. “ “ “ “ “ “ “ ” collar and shirt
- C. My coat was buttoned right up to neck
- D. I had a dirty and unshaved face
- E. My one redeeming feature – the curl – was threatened with extinction
- F. My cap wasn't balanced properly

It didn't matter that I was returning from leave after 20 hrs in a filthy train – no, I'm a sergeant now*!!!!*!!!!*!!!!*!!!!*

Monday May 26th

I met one of the types I used to prefer – the good listener who would flatter me with enrapt attention as I spun a yarn to show the wealth of my experience.

Her name is Mary, and everywhere....but only

Wednesday May 28th

I did an altitude test today with my crew.

I suppose, in a few weeks or months, I'll think this of so little importance that I'll be tempted to tear out the page.

But you see, when we were briefed the S/Ldr said "You're to climb up to 20,000 ft! I'm not going to say what boost, revs. or m.p.h, nor will I advocate rich or weak mixture, hot or cold air or give you any advice regarding the gills – it's up to you to experiment & find out for yourself!"

There were two of us – I kept a log for every 1,000' and got up to 22,000 in a plane that had never got above 18,000 before: I experimented, climbed slowly from 10,000 ft upwards, & made a good report of pressures v temperatures before setting course for a X.Country round the E. Midlands –

The climb had been too much for the old kite & all the way round, every 10 – 15 mins. my starboard engine would cut. Luckily I've had enough experience to fly on one engine & also to remedy the defect.

Anyway we flew for 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ hrs. with that engine U/S $\frac{1}{2}$ the time and landed late in the evening happy & pleased –
The other lad had stalled at 15,000 ft!

I guess the F/cmdr. liked our effort!!!

Monday June 2nd

Mull of Galloway

My first trip over the sea! 670 odd miles, 300 of them at F.A. over sea – nothing but sea! Fog, low cloud & mist obscuring all landmarks so that visibility is about ½ ml. at the most!

And after 2 minutes over the sea N. from Prestatyn I dip my aerial in the sea & and leave it there. The rest of the journey is done without wireless – we fly above cloud on D.R.Nav: twice we came down on E.T.As & find (1) Prestatyn & (2) Ellesmere.

Good stuff, each member of the crew trusting the other with a faith that pleases & and flatters one into utmost effort.

Ah, it was good! It tasted of opps (not so far away now surely). Over Mt Snowden north over the Isle of Man, catching a glimpse of the S.W Scottish Mts..

Only 3 crews out of 12 got right round this afternoon – we were one & without wireless too. I may have been silly going on without it but it shows what one can do if a like emergency comes up in the future.

I'm sure I've every right to say of my crew that short but potent phrase:-
..."We can cope!"

Friday June 13th

The return of the prodigal to Sywell

Saturday June 14th

Today gave great promise of pleasurable activities – a decent hour of parade (08.15); low cloud and rain but sent off on “*focal (?)/local(?)* W/T; converting that into low flying & and shooting up of trains, roads and villages – culminating in 5 runs over Sywell at F.A. feet.

No thought of getting lost, no fear of mis-judgement or badluck: so happy to be healthy & quick of mind, to know I was master of the plane & could put it where and when I wished – happy too in the knowledge that, up in the nose, sat Stan without a care, watching trees & houses & all sorts of things rush towards him & seemingly duck out of sight at the last possible moment. A great feeling that – he trusted me & had so much faith in my ability.

-Incidentally he gave me courses to steer which I accepted as impeachable (sic) and followed as he asked me to. Well may I write today gave great promise....

Then to have the evening off! Out of camp by 18.00 hitch-hiking to Oxford, looking forward to picking up something good & hot: finding that was easy & yet – maybe I’m slowing up a bit; perhaps 2 years in Glasgow drained a lot out of me, anyway the inclination and dash which used to be so very much of me in the old days of the *farm* (?) & Audrey had completely vanished leaving me indifferent and uninterested.

Not that it wouldn’t be a good thing to slow up in that direction, yet surely I’m not growing old at 21 years of age!!!??

Sunday June 15th

A little thrill chilled my spine in a very pleasant manner today.

We'd just landed after 4 ½ hrs of the bumpiest conditions I've ever experienced when I learned of quick postings – within the next two days!

For almost a year now I've been waiting for this – I've marched through I.T.W., worried my way at E.F.T.S., cooled my heels in bitter temper at F.T.S. because bad weather, rotten grub & lousy organisation held us back & retarded our Wings and stripes. Here I've bombed & flown & paraded & drank & and walked, each day wishing it all finished (this blasted training!) that I might go off with real "live loads", facing more than bad weather & inexperience....

And now the shock of knowing the chance is mine. It's all too sudden!! I've never had the opportunity of settling down to be an N.C.O., a pilot & and captain of A/C... What is all this anyway?

But I can cope, my crew can cope. I've been very serious at O.T.U. & worked hard to do my best of Stan and *Shaq* (?). They trust me and I trust them: our work is all so very much interconnected, each little bit so vital.

Let us hope we can be successful on opps. as we have been in training. No gloves now & no quarter.... Here's to a quick end to the War & may my little efforts help way (sic) the scales in favour of peace.

(At top of pages – as a banner headline)

Posted – Massingaham

107 Squadron

Monday June 16th

Today's forenoon was spent rushing about getting chits signed & log Books checked, operations never entered my mind – they didn't have a chance against the overwhelming bullshit that pervades as soon as one tries to get something done in the R.A.F. But soon all this saluting, & correct slinging of respirators, correct wearing of boots and clothes, will be over.

I am led to believe the W/C at 107 Squadron is one of the best and asks for results...if he gets them you may do as you wish (within logical and decent limits of course)....no petty disciplinary rules, shoes are permissible, respirators aren't worn in camp, all that sort of thing.

...We were free from 19.00 & it was in a very cheerful mood I went to meet Mary. A short walk across a few fields to a well-concealed spot in the grass. We pretty nearly went the whole hog too, 'cause if I was the marrying kind she'd be the one alright.

Finally, to bed, to lie & ponder & dream of a rosy medal-bestrewn future. Ah hope – the infinite God Optimism!!

Tuesday June 17th

How we laughed & joked. 4 crews on Bicester platform: half of us were tight – I'd spent the last two hours with Mary & was quite sober but after sending her away I drew a "Norrie(?)" cartoon on a *bare* (?) 3' x 2' poster & gained my quota of attention.

We were waiting for a train! A train to take us at the last minute to Leuchars: Leuchars!!

Of all places to go, after 11 months in England that had dispelled all hope of ever being posted to Scotland – far less a few miles from the Old Grey City!

I raved & wept & cried aloud in sheer joy: Scotland, Leuchars – I kept crackin' away wi Norrie in 'broad Fife', pointing out the landmarks as we crossed the border.

Never before had the sun shone so brightly on the beautiful coastline from N. Queensferry to Fifeness: never had trees & green fields looked so lovely: the Forth Bridge, with Fife itself my home, plans for short trips & X.Countries to Ben Nevis, hysterical quotations from Burns.

I was so happy, so very happy! "Next stop Cupa-ar!" I'd cry; now Dairsie, Dura Den" finally the Grand Hotel loomed red and magnificent away to the right.

I was home! The familiar junction phoning to the Camp, waiting, then at last inside as a member not as an Empire Day visitor!

Wednesday June 18th

-This has gone rambling on: yesterday we didn't get to Leuchars – in my enthusiastic ravings I completely forgot the fact that today was spent in London after a night's rest in Old Westminster Y.M.C.A.

The joyous jibberings on 168 – 197 (*the previous page*) really apply to Thursday 19th. But never mind I'll need the three pages to describe the different contrasting emotions that gripped me during that 24hrs. at home.....

...It was tonight at Leuchars we learned that a mistake had been made – not for me the happy convenience of Leuchars as a base.

Tomorrow we must start off again to Eng.! Norrie and I did manage to get clear of the camp by 22.00 & have Dad collect & deliver us to L. V. (*I think this must be Lomond View – his home. ALB*) After a meal, quiet and sober, we dressed up in trunks and shoes & made our way to the East Sands.

I laughed at the curious circumstances of my first dip of the season – wartime, midnight, barbed wire, being there yet not belonging.

It was cold & fresh & very salt: not 1941, it might have been any year from 1930 on – one day in that youthful period when we played sheiks in towels in the now vanished grass banks.

A quiet barefooted walk to L.V. finished the lovely interlude.

Thursday June 19th

We'd promised the orderly Sgt we'd get back to camp with the early bus, that meant rising at 06.30 but I didn't mind. The midnight splash had put a new vigour into me & brought good sound sleep during the 5 hrs I did have in bed.

The forenoon was spent playing snooker in the remarkably comfortable and spacious mess: definite "gen" was available just before lunch, & after eating Norrie and I hitched it to St A.

I might have been at school again! It was games day & most of the Madras population were there: the number of visitors was surprising and I shot back 2 -3 yrs to the days of peace when our gang, noisy and boisterous was a real asset to corporation. With a temperature of 61° the water stank as of old & I enjoyed it. A spot (of) larking about , a little swimming & a dive or two & there I was:- 1936-7-8 again!

Lots of familiar faces too – finally I spied Pat & sister Maureen. Norrie and I took them for tea at the 'Vic' & I shot a line at the now pretty & attractive younger sister, who, last time I saw her was all legs & a continual moan.

But all good things come to confusion & 7.20 saw us climb aboard the train, join the boys at Leuchars, & speed away watching the scenery retire in the opposite direction that it had 24 hrs before. ***!!!**!*?!?***

Friday June 20th

Another of these night train journeys (which I spent sleeping on the floor of a W.C.) ended this morning at 11.00ish when the local “express” staggered into Little Massingham.

With a mouth that felt like a sewer, hot sweaty feet, dirty sticky hands & face, dishevelled hair and heavy eyes, I took one look at the tiny platform before surrendering to a groan of despair.

No food either until we’d seen the C.O. & orderly room – 12.30 hrs. no sleep as beds had to be found & assembled – and Norrie in London having slept through Peterborough.

Not a very pleasant reception after the rotten setbacks and disappointments of the last few days.

But let it pass: here I am & here I stay! Any day now will see me on “opps” & it doesn’t matter where your base is – opps are just the same.

Funnily enough I don’t feel nervous or afraid – as a matter of fact I’m so tired & browned-off I’m just not bloody-well interested!!!

Goodnight!

Saturday June 21st

Promises today again *bolstering ?/boosting ?* our hopes & rekindling that enthusiasm the last few days had killed.

Then, after briefing me for a flight to Edzell via Leuchars, to carry Norrie up & collect his plane, they found out we'd no W/T kit!!! Loud alarms & excursions, hither & thither we were sped in hopeless hurry and bustle.

Needless to say nothing was accomplished & we gladly seized the opportunity of a Bus ride to Norwich. There we boozed in the *verylow* (?), but very pleasant, "Prince of Wales" before taking home some nice but rather loose women (one apiece)

** I forgot that though I'm not flying, the Blenheim Squadrons are routing the French, Belgian, Holland & Norwegian coastlines & their escorting fighters have today brought down 28 109s etc.

I'll be in on one of these shows pretty soon now!!!

Sunday June 22nd

I don't think we are wanted here at all!! One more briefing for Edzell before someone remembers we still have no W/T.

So I'm detailed to fly to Bicester & collect the mike & phones we left there – but no, that's cancelled just as I'm walking over to my own Blenheim, & we all toodle over to W. Raynam & this time successfully gather all necessary phones etc...

But by the time we come back, have tea & get the doings attached to the helmets it is 18.00 & the ground crews have shot off to the village: so when the evening sun is lowering behind the western woods, we pack up for the day.

As is my custom these days, I don my trunks, do a few *stinker* (?) flips - finish up by slightly buckling one ankle; I go to my room, strip, have a spray, look at the letter I meant to send to Mary, tear it up, shoot down to the Mess Bar, buy two bottles, some fags, a bar of chocolate, one glass & retire to the Ante Room & write this.

20.10 hrs.

22/6/41

While the old hands at the (107) my squadron are pasting shipping on the enemy coast, 27 enemy fighters were snuffed by the British escort fighters! A bloody sinch!!!!!!

Monday June 23rd

I did some really good formation with Norrie, *Leve?* & 167/comd. This forenoon.

He was very pleased with my efforts - & so was I for I'll be required to format very closely in the very near future!

In the afternoon we shot over to Cromer & bombed a wreck there - I've done the stuff before but without +g Boost. Stan was dropping the bomb & we didn't hit anything as it's his first attempt.....

.....After tea our busride to the seaside was cancelled & all crews stood-by. At 7p.m. "A" Flight took off for Maidstone to pick up a fighter escort before setting off on a *circus*(?). Fairbanks was in on it & Harrison, his crew. All agog with excitement they were, flushed, laughing a little over much & a little overloud but happy that their chance had come.

We watched them take off & then motored into Kings Lynn where we spent a normal evening.

It shook us to learn that on the way back 109s came out of the sun & put two of our boys down in the twinkle of an eye & and caused another to make a forced landing with a dead observer.....

Harrison *crumbled* (?) suddenly with the first attack - with the second Fairbank's machine was seen to fall away U/S into the sea....he was one of the two who didn't come back!! His first opp!!!...

Christ!

[we got 28 jerries]

Tuesday June 24th

And this morning "B" flight is standing by – the F/cmdr promised me my chance today, so I'd better say what I'd like done with my new photo's (sic) (arrived today from Norwich, 6 of them)

One, of course, goes home to Ma & Pa; Lena gets one & Ronnie one: Mary (Rosemary Baughan 3 Ladysmith Terrace, Bicester, Oxon) must have one too.

I'm not forgetting that Norrie shall have one if he so wishes, to remind him of the mug who's kept him company so far in his RAF career.

The sixth is Margaret Lindsay's! If my people think the Wrights & the Rogers ought to have one, then they must have some copied from a development, since the Negative is in Norwich someplace.

That's all – I hope it isn't necessary – that I live to get some more done, but the future looks pretty shaky right now!....

(The next page has had the date changed to Tuesday 24th and has "1st Opp!" in big letters and coloured in red at the top right hand corner)

Well – it's all over, that first opp. trip has been and gone and went. We landed about an hour ago after being over a small target south of Ypres.

It was a formation of 18 Blenheims & a colossal (sic) escort of "Spits" & "Hurries". I was flying as No.3 in the W/coms. flight - all the others were in a box behind, that is, between us and Jerry fighters. On the way over 4 dropped out and I, acting on signs from the leading AG (?) shot underneath and through the formation to take up my place in echelon right – that seemingly was wrong, for soon aldis lamps were flashing at me & I skidded under the W/cmdrs bus into my old position.

I never saw the fighters (Jerry) that hung around on our tail but refused to attack (Shaq says one shot across the formation showing its belly & he got a burst into it.

It was comforting to see our fighters circle around – I wonder what the wireless will say about the "I(??)" tomorrow & how many 109's went down?

I never saw any flack either. On the way back over the Channel & England I was so close that I could just see the W/Cmndr's head(?) – he afterwards congratulated me on it as did everyone else that flew.

Incidentally I released the bombs – Stan was writing his log when I saw the W/Cmdrs go, and left the controls to lash over the "Mickey Mouse" & hope for the best.

We'd beer & sgs (*sausages?*) & bacon at midnight & lay a long time talking things over – 4 turned back and one landed with a 40 pounder hanging by its nose.

(There is a little drawing of a plane plus bombs and bullets and a startled pilot on this page)

Wednesday 25th June

The B.B.C. announced our trip today as “bombing a power plant at Lille” ...we shot 9 109's down!!

Nothing doing today – weather u/s up north so “Edzell and Leuchars” is cancelled again!!! Promised a trip for tomorrow!!! I went to the seaside in the evening – got back about midnight to learn that briefing is at 7.30 tomorrow – that means flying to Portleith & waiting for favourable weather to attack Brest... the most heavily defended area on the coastline!!!!!!

Thursday June 26th

(has "2nd Opp!" in big letters and coloured in red at the top right hand corner)

Well we were briefed at 7.30 for the same trip as Tuesday's effort!

This time we'd to form to the rear of the formation of 2 doz Blenheims after joining them at *Wattisham* (?) It was one of the bumpiest days I've seen: everyone in front went up and down, up and down & several times I got caught in the slipstream. For that reason I was pretty uncomfortable & flew at least 1 - 1 ½ spans away most of the time. I recon (sic) I'm pretty good in formation but I just wouldn't risk going any nearer.

Maybe that is why I escaped the streaks of tracers that came up from *Fla??ships*, missing my tail (starboard) by a few feet before moving on to shoot up just in front of my starboard wing at the engine. If I'd been just that bit tighter I'd have stopped it.

Bad cloud stopped us from going in to Lille again, but no one can understand why we didn't ruin Dunkirk!!! It was only ½ a mile away and we almost flew over it as we turned to come home. All that effort & nothing done!!!

There was quite a load of flack, but since it was to the port I didn't see it.

Friday June 27th

[Our trip yesterday was announced as a “fighter sweep” Beh!!***??***!!***]

A stand-down today: flight tested a machine with F/Lt Wellborn before going to collect my pay.

Things changed round at 17.00 hrs – I’d been shaved & cleaned, all ready in my “best blue” to go into Norwich & have my photo taken (among other things) – then without warning my jaunt is cancelled: I have to stand by for briefing at 18.30!!! I got briefed alright – to Bremen, just about a Blenheim’s (7 ½ hr) limit: then of course we go in at F.A. feet through balloons & shit & thunder & come out over the sea densely packed with fighter drones. All in formation too!! At first I was to take over the Squadron lead if the W/C went down, but that responsibility has been set upon another’s shoulders. Night bombers (largest number yet) are to plaster the joint tonight in order to destroy as much A.A. defences as possible or at least exhaust both ammunition and men (so) that we shall have a less harassing time.

If we come through the balloons and through the AA, then there will be hundreds of 109s 110s to rout us before we get far enough away to meet our escort of “Spits” & “Hurries”.

I reckon my lucky star had better shine over me tonight, & my shadow trail along tomorrow.

Never mind: somewhere I hear a sweet voice singing “Her name is Mary” and I guess I could appreciate a spot of sentimentalising right now. Goodnight Mary darling & I hope your best boyfriend lives to hear the 13.00 news on Saturday!

Saturday June 28th

(has "3rd Opp!" in big letters not coloured in red this time at the top right hand corner)

Thud, thud, thud came the clattering footsteps to rouse us – 2.30, & all was not so well.

A hurried, rotten breakfast. And up to the lines for a final briefing at 3.30 – motor vans and lorries rush up to planes and we climb in dead on time, 04.00. I hear the W/Cs plane being started – I hear it, 'cause I can't see through the 75yards of darkness between us. I run up the engine, as usual everything perfect. & taxi towards Z's dispersal point. As I near it, a dark shape detaches itself & moves across wind – I guess it is the W/C & follow him until he stops and turns into the wind. I *shoot* (?) round & take up my position on his left – from this 30 yards range I can just make out 7?/Z?OM on the fuselage, & I'm pleased to think I've done O.K. so far.

Then he stops his engine and climbs out: so do we all. Half an hour to allow dawn to get a move on, then we pile in & start up – the W/Cs engines won't start so Edrich takes off in the lead & we somehow sort ourselves out. We reach Cromer, get down to F.A. feet and drone along at 160mph.

About 30 – 40 miles out & zip – up comes W/C Pettey into the lead. 10 minutes chasing & weaving & again we fit into a formation at least 107 was O.K.. One of our chaps went yellow, peeled off & disappeared home, the other squadron spread themselves out so much & one of our boys went up to 300 ft & gave the show away to a terrific convoy just off Helligoland – they'd wire our approach to A.A & fighter defences, so the W/C obeyed orders – once more "arse about face" & home.

4 ½ hrs formation at F.A. feet, nothing accomplished (apart from reporting a floating mine).

And now we're standing-by at 13.00 expecting another trip today. Christ!!!

Sunday June 29th

-We didn't go on another "opp" yesterday: instead we were hurriedly briefed at 18.30 for *Driffield* (?) & set off for that Base individually. I had Shaq & Stan & the ground crew & tool boxes & kit for the weekend.

Over Wisbeach I spied Norrie, &, knowing he had no maps, chased him with "+9", got in front & led him via Lincoln & *Goule* (?) to Driffield.

...,This morning, Sunday, the Group Captain told us what our job is to be, tomorrow, weather permitting, we shall aim to arrive over Sylt at lunch time, & paste it from nil feet – ten minutes later formation of Halifaxes (15 x 500lbs) will come over at 20,000 ft. Our getting there just a little earlier, will convince the Jerry D/F station that it was us they heard – meanwhile the high flying, high loaded kites carry on to Keil, Hamburg & Bremen.

We will draw off the few remaining fighters (all in Russia now) – they'll take long enough at dinner time to get engines started & chase us. By that time we ought to be well out into the North Sea & comparatively safe.

It sounds the best scheme yet, and I'm looking forward to it.

Meanwhile I'm donning my best blue & preparing to trot down to Hull.

The diary stops here.

Thomas Drysdale died on 30th June.