

James Reid

Date of birth 29th July 1920

Born in Glasgow, Scotland.

Higher school education at Albert Academy. Left school at 14 having gained lower school certificate. One years study in Business college. Three years evening study for gaining entry to the University. Appointed junior salesman after practical experience of manufacture of drawing office material.

The attached was written to give my children some idea of my experiences of the war period and my and may meet the requirements which you have.

You raise the question of the affect of war experience. It certainly changed my whole life style and meant that one day I was a boy and the next I was being taught how to kill. In relating to the men and women in the Air Force I was forced to change many of the views which I had previously held.

While in Egypt we were called on to the parade ground and the Commanding Officer advised us that the war was over. This brought to me a tremendous sense of relief for I had always had a deep desire to get home and commence my training for the ministry of the church.

On returning home there were many changes which I noticed. There was a great spirit of co-operation among the people. I discovered that the majority of my friends had been married during the war years and only a few bachelors were around.

On return I immediately commenced studies in Glasgow University and took on the five-year course for the Ministry of the Church of Scotland.

There were numerous photos in the original article I did for my children but I have only forwarded the story as it was written.

As a matter of interest I have served the Royal Australian Air Force as a Chaplain from 1961 to 1987 and am still on the Reserve holding the rank of Air Commodore.

1939 – 1946 THE WAR YEARS

This was the year when I anticipated I would be ready to apply for entry to the University, in 1940 and so commence training for the Ministry of the Church. September 1939 altered the scenario of many people's lives and I was one of them. After much thought I decided in October 1939 to volunteer for service in the Royal Air Force. My mother had grave misgivings having seen what the war did to her husband in 1918. Looking at the world scene I sincerely felt I had to go and fight for I could visualise what would happen to my mother and the girls in the church should Hitler overrun the country. In November I was given my physical and passed grade 1. It certainly cheered me to know that despite my earlier illnesses I was now very fit. By now we had all been issued with our gas masks, and had to carry them with us everywhere we went. The Anderson air raid shelter had been put into our garden and we had it well stocked for emergencies. As it turned out mother had to spend many nights there during the Blitz. It was recommended that all young men awaiting call up and all the young women in the community should learn first aid. I

immediately enrolled as did many of the young people in the Senior Bible Class. We all went for three months to the St. Andrew's Ambulance course. I remember I linked up with Lily Nicholls when we had to do trial bandaging etc. Towards the end of the course we spent quite a bit of time in one another's homes bandaging each other, putting on splints etc. We were successful in gaining our certificate.

Having been accepted as a volunteer in November, by December I was told I would have to report to the RAF early in the New Year. I t was with grave misgivings I prepared for the day knowing that I was leaving my mother as a semi-invalid and all alone. However I was sure that as God had provided for us over the past years he would be with my mother whatever the future held. I know Mrs Jardine, and her girls would keep an interest in mother and our neighbour two doors down (Mrs Hughes) stated that my mother had helped her through many problems and she would ensure that she and her husband Bernard would keep an eye on mother. What a wonderful neighbour she turned out to be. A devout Catholic she put up no barrier and although she received her weekly order of groceries from Walls, Mrs Hughes did all the other shopping. After Bernard was called up she often had one or two meals per week with mother. So in February 1940 I set off to join the RAF thinking it would be only for a couple of years at the most. I don't know if I would have felt so good if I had known it was to be a six-year sentence.

I left Glasgow by train in the late morning and arrived at our destination in the late evening. On leaving the train we were packed into lorries, and riven to RAF base Cranwell. It was now about 10pm and I received my first RAF meal. Toast, boiled tomatoes and hot Cocoa. The toast I tolerated, the tomatoes I loathed, Cocoa with tomatoes gave me a turn. However, not to complain for I would have even worse meals to put up with in the future. Cranwell was a training centre for new recruits. One was not allowed outside the camp for six weeks until one had been thoroughly drilled and disciplined and was considered fit to represent the RAF in the outside world. As there were hundreds of recruits it became increasingly difficult for the sergeants to occupy our time in a meaningful way. Just to keep us occupied we would spend a few hours each day filling sand bags at one side of the parade ground and then empty them at the other side of the parade ground. The Commanding Officer sure believed the old maxim that idle hands make mischief. The drilling and the discipline were rigid and woe betide anyone who was heard to complain. I soon learnt that Corporals were mini gods and Sergeants God himself. I think the NCOs of these days were much better than many who were made up during the war. They were all full-time Airmen and on the whole I found them to be very fair and some were quite sympathetic to young lads like myself suddenly being thrown into the War. My dishwashing skills were greatly enhanced as for the first time with four others I washed and dried all the plates, cutlery and pots and pans for 1000 people per meal. There were only human dishwashers in those days. On the whole, I did not mind the drill as I had had the elements of this in the Boys Brigade but when we came to carrying full packs on our backs I could have found better things to do. However I think we all realised we had to be very fit for what might lie ahead. When it came to rifle drill I was by now means happy, especially when

it came to bayonet practice. Coming from the very sheltered life which I had, it was not exactly enjoyable to find oneself being encouraged to gorge out someone's guts, but again one came to the realisation that one day skill in the use of the bayonet might save one's life.

Another searing experience was learning to live without any element of privacy. What a culture shock for one who had lived so many years with a mother and surrounded by friends who all held religious views. Here I was exposed to nature in the raw. Up to this point in time I had scarcely even heard a swear word, while for some of my companions expletives formed the largest part of their vocabularies. My immediate reaction was to despise these fellows and to carefully choose my friends from among those who had come out of a similar setting as myself. It wasn't long before I realised I was being a prig and certainly was not being very Christian. I began to widen my friendships and gradually learnt that some of those rough diamonds were the salt of the earth and would have shared their water and their last penny with you if you had needed it. I even found I could relate to some of the drunkards around the place and later on in Cyprus I used to pick up these kind of chaps and see they got safely back to camp.

Another issue which arose very quickly was the question of religious exercises. There was no problem so far as Sunday worship was concerned as we were all marched to the chapels, Catholics to theirs, Church of England to theirs, Protestants to theirs, any not wishing to attend to report for cleaning duties. It was amazing how deeply religious the men were with over 95% attendance at church. As I was living in a billet with another 24 men and again no privacy, the question of Bible reading and Prayer had to be faced. Some Christians told me I would be laughed at and have things thrown at me if I attempted personal devotions. Well, either I was extremely or, because I never tried to push my religious views on others, I had no problems. Before going to bed I simply took out my Bible and with the aid of Bible study notes carried out my exercises, and when I got into bed I said my prayers. This form of devotions I carried out all through my time in the services and at other camps where there were no religious parades I quietly went along to church morning and evening. On numerous occasions some of the lads (the most unlikely ones) would ask if they could come along with me.

While in Cranwell we learnt many things. One was the truth of the old saying NEVER VOLUNTEER FOR ANYTHING IN THE RAF. As I mentioned earlier, we were all confined to camp for six weeks, so when a notice went up asking for volunteers to go on a cross country run on the Saturday many of us volunteered believing it would give us a chance of seeing the surrounding countryside... what a hope... we did a three hour cross country run within the boundaries of the camp. Strangely enough I did volunteer for something a few days later and it worked out to my advantage. A notice was put up asking for anyone who could type to contact the sergeant. I did make contact and was quickly taken to work in the office which was severely understaffed... how some of the fellows envied me sitting in a comfortable office while they were paraded all round the place.

I had been accepted in the RAF for training as a wireless mechanic, but with tremendous pressure being put on the RAF by Germany the RAF announced they could not train anyone and so we would each be sent to a Base and expected to do the best we could. I was sent to Biggin Hill, which was at the centre of the Battle of Britain. One of my jobs was to check the radio circuits on the Spitfires, the fighters which were our main defence. On other shifts I was employed as a Radio Telephone Operator. This meant working a Transmitter/Receiver TR110 and so keep in touch with the pilots when they were flying. This was no easy task as the sets were ancient and one often picked up the saying with the background of music or the BBC News!! We also had to take bearings on the pilots voices and with the bearings received from three listening posts the operation room staff were able to pinpoint the position of the plane. Accuracy was absolutely vital as often the pilot relied on the bearings given by the Ops room to get him back to base. Radar was unheard of. One of the points in favour of the TR110s was the fact that they were made of steel and iron. With the sets placed on a table in a silence cabinet one had an excellent air raid shelter and could with a fair amount of confidence sit under them while the debris fell all around. They stood up to a lot of things except a direct hit. The German raids were very frequent so one spent a fair amount of time in the air raid shelters. During this time I received my first devastating shock. One of the petrol bowser drivers was in my billet. He was an older man and was very fatherly to us young ones. One this particular day the air raid sirens went. I was on duty in my silence cabinet and could see all the people rushing for the shelters. Near to one of the shelters was a petrol bowser. I could see my old friend getting in and driving it away from the shelter to a remote area on the aerodrome. Suddenly a German Aircraft appeared strafing the ground and the next thing I saw was the Bowser and my friend blown to smithereens. It took me quite some time to cope with that terrible incident.

One of the amazing things about this period, was our determination that the Huns were not going to stop us having some pleasure and so even when the night bombing started we would still go out to the pictures and when the sirens went we would have to make our way back to the camp as best we could. How mad we were to crawl through many of the streets of Lewisham and Bromley with the shrapnel falling all around. We had great faith in our steel helmets. Sometimes the bombing became so intense it would have been suicide to try and get back to camp and so we went into the civilian shelters, some of them being set up within the underground system. It was on these nights that we learnt to appreciate the wit, warmth and compassion of the Cockneys. Many of them would get out of their beds in the shelters and make us to go bed, for said many of the women, we can sleep during the day when you chaps are defending us. While it may be true we were defending them in the air it certainly was not true in terms of ground defence. The only defence weapons we had were three IRON PIKES per ten AIRMEN. You can imagine how effective our pikes would have been against a GERMAN MACHINE GUN. The Army did have rifles but the majority of them were obsolete models.

The Battle of Britain continued with greater ferocity and on one particular day the Germans managed to blow up the PBX (telephone exchange). All the girls working there were killed. This created a major problem as they were the only trained staff at the Base. The signals officer appealed for anyone who could work a P.B.X. as a reserve exchange was ready in one of the old mansion houses nearby. It turned out I was the only one in the section who had ever worked a small exchange so the Squadron Leader told me I would have to take over the new exchange. I pointed out to him that my only experience was with a four intake and ten extension exchange which worked by keys. You have the basic knowledge he said so off you go. Your meals will be brought to you so you will be there day and night. You can have a camp bed beside the exchange and try to get some sleep. In a few days we will get some men down for you to train. I sure was in for some shocks. First I found the exchanged worked by plugs not keys and this involved me in fitting the plugs into the incoming lines and then into the proper extension. You can imagine my feelings when I found there were 180 extensions, 20 incoming lines and five direct lines to Air Ministry in London. To say the least of it I was scared. Adding to my worries was the fact that I couldn't understand a lot of what the Cockneys were saying on the incoming lines and they sure could not understand my Scottish accent. We had fun and games for a few days.

I can assure you it was no fun being the only person in a 25 room mansion, especially at night when the bombs were around. I did ask if I could have a weapon of some kind so I was issued with a revolver. I must have had an intuition as to the future. I had two men with me during the day as I was training them how to use the switchboard. I was still on my own from 5pm and when things became quiet after midnight I was allowed to have a nap. One evening I was on duty and there had been a heavy raid over London and by 11pm everything had quietened down. There I was down in the basement about to have a cup of tea, when I heard a terrific scream. It sure scared me stiff and all I could think of was that one of the Germans had been shot down, and perhaps crashed through a skylight in the roof. With torch in hand and revolver at the ready I did a tour of the ground floor... nothing... then a tour of the 1st floor... nothing... then the second floor...nothing... then I went up the narrow stairs to the attic... reaching the landing I could hear voices behind one of the doors... with great bravery!!! I burst in... a chorus of screams burst forth as six WAFS had the fright of their lives. Evidently their living quarters had been destroyed in one of the raids and their Officer in charge had been given them permission to billet them in the attic of the new signals house. No-one had thought to tell me, indeed I doubt if anyone was aware that I was working in the basement. The girls explained that the first scream I had heard had come from one of the girls having a nightmare. By this time the girls were so scared they asked if they could bring their mattresses down to the basement and sleep in the exchange room. For the next ten nights, I was surrounded each night by six sleeping beauties. I must confess their presence made me feel more comfortable. After that more people arrived to work in the house and more WAFS were billeted in the top floor and the attic. During my time at Biggin Hill, and later at Ongar, I had a great friend, Colin Aspinall. His father was one on the wealthy merchants owning a large factory in Walsall. Colin's father had provided him with a nice little sports car and

kept him well supplied with petrol coupons. This enabled us to do quite a bit of sight seeing on our days off and when we were lucky enough to have a weekend off Colin took me up to stay at his parents house. They were very kind to me and really made me feel at home in their family. As the war progressed the rationing of petrol became much stricter, and soon it became evident that we could not travel very far on the coupons we had, so Colin's father sent someone to take the car back to Walsall and gave Colin a lovely new motor bike. This certainly gave us great pleasure for many weeks until we were parted by an RAF posting. One humorous incident comes to mind. Being the winter period it was very cold riding on the bike. Normally we did not go very great distances but this particular day Colin and I decided to go to Cambridge as neither of us had seen that famous town. In order to try and keep out the cold we decided to wrap ourselves up (over our uniforms) with brown paper. We must certainly have looked rather peculiar but that did not bother us. What neither of us knew however was that Cambridge was No.1 RAF initial training wing. That meant exemplary conduct and perfect dress for all RAF members. Blithely unaware of all this Colin and I drove down the main street. Two RAF Special Police were on duty at one of the junctions. Their eyes nearly popped out of their heads. Whistles blowing the two of them chased after us, so we decided we had better stop and face the music. The words spoken by the two Corporals were certainly not for book publication. They assured us we would both be on a charge and asked us to explain what we thought we were doing. We immediately replied that we were from Biggin Hill, an active service base, where great liberty was given regarding dress, indeed we had been dressed as we now were when we had signed out at the Guard Room and none of the SP's on duty had said anything. Oh, said one of the Corporals, so you are from Biggin Hill, do you know Sergeant so and so... sure, we replied... do you know so and so... and so... it turned out we knew at least half a dozen of their friends. Their attitude to us changed... in a threatening tone they told us we had five minutes to get down one of the lanes, and get rid of our makeshift outfits and report back to them in perfect uniform and they would forget the two sights they had seen. Gratefully we accepted the offer and disposed of our brown paper. We hid it away safely in order to use it on our return journey after we had left the strict disciplinary rules of Cambridge.

I should mention that one of the great pleasures we had during our stay in Biggin Hill, was provided by the Anglican Minister. He and his wife opened up their home to all of us who attended church and if we phoned telling them we would be coming we were allowed a bath once per week. It was a great treat, to have our bath in the allotted two inches of water for there were only showers at the base and many of them had been destroyed during the bombing and those remaining tended to provide only cold water. Many of us took advantage of the minister's generosity.

A few weeks after our visit to Cambridge we were posted to Ongar, one of the forward bases where our main task was to direct our Fighter Pilots to the Coastal area where the bandits (The Germans) were coming across at low levels. We really were attached to one of the front line bases, Gravesend in which a very interesting incident took place. On this particular day the fog was very heavy across the channel. One of the fighter planes came in at low

level and sought permission to land. This was duly given and the plane taxied along the runway to one of the bays. The ground crew on duty went to help the pilot out and thought it a bit strange that a few things seemed out of place on the lane. Suddenly the hatch opened and the pilot's head emerged... he took one look at the airmen, shouted... Guten Gott... slammed the hatch shut, revved his engines and set off down the runway. It was a German who had landed on the wrong side of the channel. These were still the days of chivalry and the Commanding Officer said "Let him go, he deserves to get away after such an incident". Needless to say Gravesend took a lot of ribbing for the next few days... Bringing in any Gerries these days?...

Before moving on to my next posting I must mention two things. The German rockets and the land mines. The effect of the rockets (unmanned) were devastating and whole areas of London were obliterated. The History books describe these events in great detail. Once again the Londoners stood up to the devastation in a most amazing way. King George and his wife refused to leave the Palace and day after day they were out on the streets of London consoling and comforting people who had lost their homes and loved ones. They were an inspiration to everyone. The landmines were also most destructive weapons but the blast worked in a most peculiar way. People standing next to the mine when it went off sometimes came away unscathed while people a couple of streets away could be killed by the blast. The street closest to the landmine could be undamaged while surrounding streets could have their houses demolished. We had a Commanding Officer who came up with a brilliant idea. The landmines which came down slowly on parachutes, were rather like 40 gallon drums. At the base of the drum was a piece of chord which acted as a detonator. As I say the landmines came down very slowly as they were attached to the parachute. Our Officer's idea, was that we should wait till the landmine was almost on the ground then gently swing it on its side so that the detonator would not touch the ground... the idea might have been great but certainly no one of us on the base was prepared to try it.

It was during my time in Ongar that I was placed on a very serious charge. I was working in one of the silence cabinets at the back of the building. My job was to listen out for aircraft on the move. I had recently been in the Operations Room where there was a fair amount of excitement as the Commanding Officer was expecting the arrival of some big wig. The red carpet was laid out at the front door. Now innocent me, was at work when there was a knock at my door... opening it I saw a few Army types and the boss (in these days I didn't know all the army ranks) asked me where the operations room was. In a most obliging way I took him along the side door and let him in... consternation and red faces inside... I had just let in a Brigadier General who had come to see how effective the security was at the Ongar Base. Our Commanding Officer was flaming mad and immediately placed me on charge. I was most fortunate that our young Signals Officer was a great type and stood up for his men. He took up my case, and declared that I was in no way responsible for security within the Base and if any high ranking Officer was inside the building any airman would presume that he had the right to be there, and certainly would not dare to question the right of the officer to go into the Operations Room. He claimed that the

person or persons to be put on charge were the Army Guards at the gate and within the grounds, who allowed someone to get into the grounds and enter the house by the back door. He demanded that the charge against me be dropped. Very reluctantly the Commanding Officer withdrew the charge. I can tell you I sweated it out for a few hours until everything was cleared up.

Air Force policy was promulgated stating that all who had served through the Battle of Britain were to be posted to a quieter Base near their home so that they could have a rest period. I was therefore posted to RAF Station Heathfield, Ayr, Scotland. I was absolutely delighted not knowing that before too many weeks were to pass I was to be involved in the Clydebank Blitz. The posting was an unusual one for when I arrived in Ayr no-one could tell me where Heathfield Aerodrome was. After trudging around for some time with my kit bag on my back I decided I had better report to the RAF Base at Prestwick adjacent to Ayr. No-one there could help me. Evidently I was taken to the Commanding Officer who said he had heard that a new aerodrome was soon to be opened but to his knowledge there was nothing there as yet. When I told him I was from Glasgow he told me to get off home for a week and then report back, in the meantime he would make some enquiries. I gratefully accepted the offer and had a lovely week at home. Once again I reported to Prestwick and the Commanding Officer told he had managed to get some information. The Base was soon to be established but I had been sent up a Corporal to take charge of a team to operate a flashing Beacon. We were the advance party for the Base and for some time we were to work out of Prestwick.

I was the Corporal in charge and I would have at least four men allocated to the team. The immediate question was where was I to live? I could not be billeted at Prestwick as I was not on the strength of that unit and as yet there were no buildings at Heathfield. I was given a letter by the Commanding Officer, Prestwick and told to take it to the Police at Ayr who would then be responsible for getting me accommodation. Complete with kit bag I arrived at the Police Station in Ayr only to be told that the task would not be easy as Navy, Army and Air Force were all seeking private accommodation for their people. The sergeant in charge produced a list of possible places for me to stay and told one of the constables to take me around in the car and see what he could do. We went to place after place only to be told FULL HOUSE. After 15 rebuffs I was feeling pretty sorry for myself. The constable had three names in Newton Ayr, and we set out for there... the same FULL HOUSE, but as we were leaving the last house the Lady seemed to take pity on my dejected form for she called us back and said she had two Navy Petty Officers in her front rooms but there was a small bedroom at the back and if I would accept it then I could stay.

Boy was I grateful and as the months passed I became ever more grateful. Self and kit bag were established with Mrs Gibson, 21 Springbank Road, Newton Ayr. A little bit of a rough diamond but with a heart of gold. It wasn't long till I settled in and felt really at home. Mrs Gibson's older sister Miss Galloway, stayed in the house as she had recently had an accident and had to give up her job as a housekeeper. She certainly did a lot to keep No. 21

spick and span. Mrs Gibson's older brother lived next door. He and his wife opened up their home to me. They had a daughter about 14 years of age. Betty was severely handicapped from birth with bone deformities and often had difficulty walking but she had a great spirit and over the 18 months I was there we had great fun together.

As I mentioned earlier my job was to take charge of a crew to work a flashing beacon. It was all very hush hush. Each night one hour before dusk we reported to the Transport section at Prestwick where a lorry was waiting to tow the massive beacon. I then went to the signals section where I was given a sealed envelope with special plates, which operated the letters to be flashed by the beacon. I then opened the envelope and told the driver which of five sites we were to go to that evening. He towed the beacon and we followed in the signals van. This meant obtaining a RAF permit to drive the vehicle for we were travelling along public roads. After two weeks it was decided that the site at Tarbolton was the most suitable so arrangements were made with the local farmer for the beacon and our van to be placed at the entrance to one of his fields. We were on duty one hour before dusk until one hour after dawn. That was not too bad in the summer, though even in summer it could be very cold during the night on top of the hill and although dawn was early morning we had instructions not to move out of the area until 7am. In the winter every night was a marathon. On duty about 3.30pm and not off duty until 9am. When I reached 21 Springbank Road I fell into bed and Mrs. Gibson would waken me in time for a quick dinner before I went on duty again. Sometimes we would be on duty for 14 or 15 days before getting a day off. The work was pretty monotonous as after we started the beacon flashing it continued to do so automatically.

We were of course in Radio communication with Prestwick and later Heathfield and had to call in every hour. For most of the year it was perishing cold in the van all night as we had no heating. We simply rugged ourselves up in blankets and drank hot tea or coffee from the thermos flasks with which we were supplied. We also had a supply of food which we picked up each night at the canteen, hot soup was a must. The farmer on whose ground we were stationed was a most kind and generous fellow. Quite often about 9pm in the evening he would arrive with steaming hot soup or tea and every morning he provided us with breakfast. The farm was about 1 mile from our site, so each morning I would take the van to the farm (quite against regulations as we were not supposed to move from the site) and the farmer and his wife would have a good supply of roasting hot bacon, eggs and rolls which I took back and shared with the men who had remained in the lorry attached to the beacon. On the milder evenings we would take turns to go for a good long walk along the country road and view some of the lovely scenery.

Within a few months Heathfield was opened and we came under the control of the Signals Officer there although for convenience the Beacon was kept at Prestwick. Needless to say with our long shifts we only appeared at Heathfield for pay, medical check-ups etc. Six months after Heathfield opened I was on the base and called in at Signals Headquarters. The Officer in charge asked to see me "Reid" he said, "I notice you are never on guard duty

nor do you ever seem to be rostered for any of the extra duties on this base, why is that?" "In fact" he said "I never seem to see you here at all. What's the explanation?" I told him the story of my arrival in Ayr, and being put up in private billets and that no-one had ever told me to move out of the billets although the base had been opened and living quarters set up. I also advised him that Air Ministry had continued to pay my landlady. "Lucky you", he said, "I won't mention the fact to anyone as it won't be too long before you will be going overseas and you may as well enjoy what time you have left in the private billet". Needless to say I was delighted and returned to my semi-civilian life and carried out Air Force duties as requested. Not very long after we had set up the Beacon we had a really bad night. The Clydebank Blitz was on. We could hear the German Bombers coming in over the coast and following up the coastline to Clydebank. How do you think you would feel with a 2,000,000 candle light beacon shining out to welcome them? We all expected to be shot to pieces and were in a pretty nervous state, when the Signals Officer contacted us on the radio telling us we were not to shut down the beacon and also assuring us that we need not be afraid of Gerry bombing us or firing on us for we were an excellent guide to their planes as they left Clydebank and made for Ireland on their return journey. We were, of course the only guide which our own fighters had as they returned to base at Heathfield.

A most interesting event occurred another evening. Heathfield made radio contact and told us that there was a single engine plane approaching from Ireland. It had been tracked from Europe so there was no hope of it returning there as the fuel would not be sufficient for the return journey. No attempt was therefore being made to shoot it down, and as it approached us we were to give it a homing direction to Prestwick. We duly did as we were told and it was not until we looked at the morning newspapers we discovered we had been bringing in Herr Hess from Germany. He crashed only a couple of miles from our site and had been captured by a farmer wielding a pitchfork. Evidently Hess had been on his way to see the Duke of Hamilton as Hitler believed the Scots could be encouraged to join with the Germans in defeating the English. How wrong Hitler was. Hess spent many years in prison.

Two other incidents are worth recording. One really tragic and the other rather amusing. I should have mentioned that I had been supplied with an RAF bike and so cycled to and from the base at Prestwick (about 3 miles each way). The tragic event took place one evening when we were on duty. We were told to watch for an American Transport plane taking off and heading South. Within minutes we heard a tremendous explosion. Evidently the plane had not risen sufficiently after takeoff and the landing wheels had clipped the bridge near Whittlet Village causing the plane to explode and all American Servicemen on board were killed. The second incident was amusing but could have been a disaster. A number of planes had been fitted with a new rocket type of machine gun. One of those planes was in for servicing. The first part of the service was carried out by the signals team and there were followed by the mechanics who carried out an inspection of the guns. Now the signals men when they were finished were supposed to disconnect the batteries and so make dead the electrical system. On this occasion the crew

had failed to do this and had left the aircraft. The gunnery crew then took over. One of their men decided to play funny so he focused the guns on the Officers mess, which was on top of the hill. He pressed the gunnery button and to his horror rockets began flashing across the aerodrome and through the Officers mess. The plane was electrically live. I believe the scene in the Officers mess was something to be seen...officers diving for cover under tables and anything else which was around. Fortunately no-one was injured but a fair amount of damage was done to the mess. The airman concerned with the firing was charged and sent to the glasshouse for six months. The members of the signals team were severely reprimanded.

With having no guard duties to do or Base fatigues I was able to enjoy myself as a semi-civilian and spent many happy hours in the Gibson's home. I was made part of the family and enjoyed meeting all their visitors and playing card games etc., when I had a night off. On my days off I hitch hiked to Glasgow. Most of the journeying was done on milk lorries heading for the city. It was quite something to sit or lay oneself out on top of the second layer of the milk cans. Sure could see all the scenery if one was brave enough to look. It was also a very chilly experience during the winter season. Travel however was cheap and that meant a lot especially as I had allotted one third of my pay to my mother. One of Mrs Gibson's kindly acts was to have my mother down for a few days holidays from time to time. She was able to put my mother up in the house as the two Naval Officers had been transferred and Mrs. Gibson had decided that an airman in the house was all she wanted. A frequent visitor to the house was Margaret Galloway from Glasgow. She was Mrs. Gibson's niece and lived with her parents in one of the very posh houses in the West end of Glasgow. I always enjoyed Margaret's visits as she was a highly intelligent young woman and we had many interesting discussions. If I had time we usually did a fair amount of walking along the beaches and the river. Soon after I settled in at No. 21 I had a look around the churches in the district. I found the Sandgate Church to have plenty of young people so I settled in there. I joined the Youth Fellowship and established many friendships and went on numerous outings. Danny Girvan kept in touch with me when I went overseas until he was called up. Milly Gunn wrote to me for quite a few years. Kay Leonard also wrote for years even after she was married. I had expected to visit here when in Scotland in April of this year (1991) but a few weeks before we left Sydney I had news from her daughter that Kay had died. The pen friendship had been maintained for almost 50 years.

Big changes were taking place in the signals branch, as more and more men were being sent overseas. I was no away from the obsolete beacon work and was attached to the new operations room, which had been opened at Rosemount House (about one mile North of the Monkton roundabout). The house had belonged to one of the wealthy merchants who had a business in Queen Street, Glasgow. I am sure he was none to pleased when it was commandeered by the RAF. By this time I was an acting sergeant. The entire staff within signals was made up of WAFS. This created numerous problems. Up to that point, our two remote transmitter stations had been manned by airmen. One man being on duty for each shift. The new girls were terrified of

being alone in such remote places so we had to put two girls on every watch and had also to arrange for guards to accompany them on and off duty. I realised the truth that in certain areas women are not able to do the jobs men do. Another major problem was the matter of discipline as there were no WAF non-commissioned officers. The new WAF Officer informed myself and the two other male sergeants (one for each watch) that we would be responsible for WAF discipline and for drilling the girls. We were not particularly enthused at the prospect as we each had thirty-six girls on our watch. Our protests were of no avail and so we had to take the girls on route marches one night per week. At first it was a real comedy act as the girls length of steps were very different from ours and we found it very difficult to keep in step. The march lasted for one hour and was along the main Prestwick to Glasgow road. Needless to say, we had some smart comments by passing motorists. We also had to inspect the girls on parade before they went on duty. All was going reasonably well until the WAF Officer instructed us we must check the girls stockings to ensure they were not outside in with a razor having been used to take away the seam. We were the envy of the other males not given the privilege of examining the girls legs but believe it or not all three of us were thoroughly embarrassed. We were also having some problems with the girls claiming sickness and expecting to be given time off. They usually had a few tears and related their sickness to their monthly upsets. Obviously it was extremely difficult for us males to ascertain the genuineness of their claim. With these two problems to solve we asked for an interview with the WAF Officer and explained the difficulties which we were facing and explained how we felt. We told her that we felt certain that discipline could be greatly improved if we had someone who understood the girls and could relate to them in a way we could not. We suggested that inspections were the job for the WAF. The old argument arose that as yet there were no WAF NCO's. We suggested that this could be overcome by appointing one girl as an acting Corporal and she could be with us on the various parades.

I am glad to say this suggestion was accepted and the three sergeants felt more at ease. The girls themselves had literally no idea of discipline. They had all come from very different back grounds and were all volunteers. Some of the girls came from very well off families and had been accustomed to maids attending to all their needs. It was hard to believe but it was all too true that some of the girls were greatly lacking in a knowledge of personal hygiene for at home they had had their hair done daily by the maid. Before long this lack of hygiene became all too apparent with head lice etc. One of the Doctors who attended these girls branded them THE LOUSY LOVELIES. We often had to report the girls to the medical centre for attention. DISCIPLINE was an unknown word to many if not all of the girls and this created very serious problems within their duties. It was a basic law of signals that while flying was in progress the Radio Operators on all frequencies had to listen with the earphones over their ears. On long shifts this was not the most pleasant or most comfortable of things to have to do and so many of the girls would hang the headphones around their necks claiming they could hear the voices of the pilots. After some harsh words and threatened charges most of the girls came to realise the importance of doing as they were told. The girl on

COMMAND FREQUENCY had the worst job as she had to maintain listening on that frequency all the time she was on duty as this was the National SOS frequency. After a few weeks I had all the girls on COMMAND accepting the discipline of such listening, all the girls except one...young Amy who came from a very well to do family and had obviously been thoroughly spoilt. I found her on numerous occasions when on the COMMAND frequency having the headphones around her neck. I took great pains to explain to her the fact that a pilot's life could depend on her hearing an SOS call. Still I found her disobeying the rules. I really did not want to put her on a charge, as otherwise she was a really decent little girl so I called her into the office and gave her the alternative of going on a charge or accepting a punishment from me (quite contrary to regulations). She decided my punishment would be preferable so I set her to washing the Grand Marble staircase running from the Entrance Hall to the first floor... about 50 steps in all. It was a mortifying experience for a girl who had never handled a cloth and bucket and also very humiliating for the stairway was used by all the girls going on and off duty. The punishment had the desired effect. Amy never again had the headphones around her neck.

In order to keep the balance right I must record the great achievement of another of the girls. On this particular evening she was on COMMAND FREQUENCY and buzzed for me to go along to the silence cabinet. She had been listening most intently and thought she could make out a slight sound. Together we listened and eventually picked up an SOS call and after a while managed to make radio contact with the Pilot concerned. We discovered there was a whole squadron of Americans who were lost. This was entirely their own fault as they had been instructed to fly from Newfoundland to Reykjavik in Iceland, refuel and then fly to Prestwick. Their stupid leader had decided they could get to Prestwick quicker by by-passing Iceland so there they were lost out at sea and running out of fuel. We managed to pinpoint their position as approaching Ireland and of course if they had had to land there they would have been interned for the duration of the war. I immediately phoned the Officer Commanding the Operations Room and he arranged for one of our fighters to take off and make contact with the American Squadron and hopefully get them back to Prestwick before their fuel ran out. This he successfully did and only one plane was lost and had to make a crash landing due to lack of fuel. THEN THE EXCITEMENT STARTED...The American Squadron Commander suddenly appeared at Rosemount House wanting to meet this wonderful girl who had saved all their lives. With typical American emotionalism he greeted Ella Davidson who to say the least of it was very uncomfortable. Arrangements were made for her to be Guest of Honour at the Officers Mess for an American Thanksgiving. This however was not the end of the matter. Within a few weeks she received a citation from the President of America conferring on her the Honour of the Purple Heart. As life was never meant to be easy the next hassle occurred...word was received from Air Ministry stating that Ella could not wear the Honour as there was no provision for a British WAF wearing an American Honour. This caused some tension with the Americans and so legislation had to be rushed through Parliament enabling WAFS to wear an Honour granted by any of the Allies.

Whilst most of the girls were decent characters living on the morale code on which I had been brought up, some of them were real ratbags. It was very easy to sort out that type every Friday evening. On Friday evening a bus came up from the main base and all the girls off duty could go out for an evening at the Officers Mess. The majority of the girls had a good night out and thoroughly enjoyed themselves but there were usually at least half a dozen who arrived back blind drunk. The bus driver simply deposited them inside the front door of Rosemount and so the sergeant on duty was left with the problem. We usually just carried the girls up to their various rooms, dumped them on their bed, covered them up and left them to sleep it off. Still very much an innocent about Sex, I found myself in a real nasty situation one evening. Whenever night flying was finished I would tell the girls to stand down. This meant they could have a few hours sleep before daylight flying commenced. Knowing this procedure most of the girls brought a couple of blankets with them and kipped down on the floor of the silence cabinet. On this particular evening the buzzer went indicating that one of the girls wanted to see me. I duly went along to the silence cabinet and on entering the door was met with Brenda minus blouse and bras with an invitation to join her on the blankets. In no uncertain terms I told her what I thought of her and got out of the cabin very quickly for had I been found with Brenda in such a state of undress I would have been in serious trouble and from experience we had found the word of the girl was usually accepted and the man was blamed for encouraging the incident. One of the other sergeants got caught up in the FREE SEX offer, and though he was never caught by the powers that be, he found himself being gently blackmailed to give privileges to the two girls concerned and before long he had a lot of discontented WAFS on his watch.

Around this time another tragic incident occurred. As I mentioned earlier we now had two girls on duty at the remote Transmitter stations and they were escorted to and from the site as they usually had to cross some fields after leaving the road. On this evening only one WAF reported to my section to be met by the escort. She told us the other girl was out in Prestwick for the evening and was making her own way to the Transmitter station. Some time later I had a phone call from the WAF who had been taken to the station to say that she was still on her own (about one hour after the other girl should have reported for duty). She was very upset and very afraid of being on her own. As I could not leave the Signals section I phoned the Special Police and asked them if they would escort one of our girls to the station. This they agreed to do and soon after I had a phone call from them telling me they had found the missing girl in the bushes at the side of one of the fields. She had been murdered. Within a couple of days the murderer had been found...an army type with whom she had been having an affair and had told him she was no longer interested in him.

Life in the RAF was very pleasant at this stage as I was on regular eight-hour shifts and was still enjoying living out in my semi-civilian status. All the males left in the signals section expected to be posted overseas at any tick of the clock. We were therefore not surprised when work came through that all the sergeants were to be posted. The three of us were called into the Signals Officer's presence, and told two would be posted overseas and one would be

posted to a new form of transmitter station which had just been built and was under the control of Heathfield. I was the lucky one to get that posting so complete with bag and baggage I arrived in Kilncadzow (about 2 miles out of Carlisle). There were no living quarters on the site so our team of six had to be put out to private billets. I was sent to a Mrs X whose husband was a farm worker. She had two lovely little girls and I enjoyed the family atmosphere there and the fact that I was only five minutes walk from the RAF site. There was however one snag. The good lady had a terrible temper and it was not unusual for her to vent her feelings on her quiet and unassuming husband. If he happened to be a few minutes late for his meal she quite often waited till he was at the table then threw the whole meal into the sink and on one occasion she hit him with a frying pan. I decided not to press my luck and more as she might turn her attention to me so I looked out for another place in which to stay.

I eventually persuaded Mr and Mrs Cadzow, a retired farmer and his wife to take me in. They lived in a beautiful bungalow in the village, were active church folk and were the essence of kindness. Mrs Cadzow had been a Matron of a hospital in Lanark prior to marrying Mr Cadzow and the house had the atmosphere of the hospital ward. Everything was in perfect order. Beds made in hospital fashion and room temperatures a little above zero. Despite these few problems my time with the Cadzows was very pleasant. Mrs Cadzow kept in touch with me when I went overseas and after the war she visited our home and mother and I would visit her as she was now a widow. The job of getting to the T/R was not easy. In order to get to the station we had to pass across fields owned by Mr Frame the farmer. Local opinion had it that his parents had bought him the farm to save him from military service as when the war broke out he worked in a hardware shop in Lanark. He certainly made it difficult for us when he saw any of our men coming along the gravel road to the farm, he would send out his dogs who were not the most docile.

We had to use diesel oil to run the generator for the station and the oil was delivered in 40 gallon drums. They were left on the main road at the end of the gravel path and we had to manhandle them up quite a steep hill and through the farmer's field. When he saw the delivery being made he would put his bull out in the field through which we had to pass. We put up with this kind of treatment for a few weeks then I went to the local police and reported the matter. Mr Frame was told to co-operate with us or he might lose his farm. Needless to say for the next year in which I was there relationships were not of the best.

This particular site was not suitable for WAFS so I had a team of men. With the increase in posting overseas we had a constant movement of staff. As the workload increased I was given extra help. This meant I had to find extra billets, by no means an easy task. Indeed I reached the stage where I could not get anyone to provide accommodation, as most of the homes in the area were very small. I found out there were some empty bedrooms in the homes of two of the local farmers, but to get my men in I had to get the police to issue a compulsory occupation order. This did not endear us to one of the farmers,

who although he accepted the airman into his home, did everything to make his stay uncomfortable e.g. he would only allow the airman to wash at the trough outside in the backyard. We took a dim view of those people who were sitting pretty in their homes and whose places we were defending. I am glad to say those were the only two cases where we received such treatment. Most of the civilians around were kindness itself and made us feel very welcome in the community. Mrs Gibson, who ran the local shop and who always took a couple of airmen to live in her home was wonderfully good to all of us. Her home was always open to all of us and we spent many nights in her place drinking tea and coffee and enjoying card games. She had a little daughter Grace who was spoilt by the airmen.

I became very friendly with the Mieklem family of Burnhead family. Mrs Mieklem told me to look on their farmhouse as a second home so I spent many hours there. Robert, her son, was close to my age, a little older, Agnes slightly younger and Isobel the baby of the family. I went with Robert or one of his sisters, to most of the barn dances, which were held in the surrounding farms and from time to time went to the pictures with one or other of the members of the family. Isobel went to work in the city of Glasgow and often visited my home and had tea with my mother. Mrs Mieklem kept mother and I well supplied with vegetables and eggs and the occasional pat of fresh butter, a great help in times of strict rationing. When I was off duty I always had some place to go. My father's cousin Mrs Greenshields, lived with her daughter Etta Dunlop on a farm on the other side of Carluke, about 5 miles from Kilncadzow. As I had an RAF bike I often went down to visit them. The local Doctor's two young daughters were regular visitors to the farm and somehow they always seemed to arrive when a certain airman was there. The Scotts girls (local jam maker) were also frequent visitors so I enjoyed myself doing odd jobs with them. In many ways I could scarcely believe I was in the RAF but knowing it could not last I enjoyed myself while I could. While the foregoing may suggest that we had a very easy time in Kilncadzow this was certainly not so. The weather conditions were often quite appalling and in the winter exceptionally cold with heavy falls of snow. Often the main road was impassable to traffic but we had to get on duty so it meant going on foot and being frozen to the marrow. When gales were blowing, it was some job climbing the last section of the hill on which the station was set as it was so exposed to the elements, and I hate to think of the struggles we had to change generator motors every eight hours. The turning of the handle to get the motor going, was a very heavy task in itself and making the trip from Station to Generator Room (approximately 400 yards) through mud and slush in poor weather conditions was, to say the least of it, unpleasant.

As staff shortages hit us we had to change from two on duty at night to one man on duty. Some of the fellows were very nervous about this especially as they had to make one of the generator changes in the middle of the night. Even with the aid of a torch, the atmosphere was spooky and eerie and there was the hidden anxiety of THE BULL. One man dreaded the experiences at night and became quite mentally disturbed. He set his mind on getting out of the RAF and did quite a few things which caused us some trouble and meant reports had to be sent in regarding his behaviour. His most bizarre act took

place one day when the LAC and myself were down changing the generator. As we made our way back to the station we could hear some banging going on. As we came near the doorway we saw the airman sitting there with a hand grenade in his hand. When I asked him what he was doing he glibly advised us he was straightening the explosive pin, which had become bent. Both of us dived for cover and carried out a shouting conversation until we were convinced he had stopped his suicidal tendency. The nervousness of the men led me to suggest to them we should get a dog for company so off I went to the Dog compound in Glasgow and with communal money purchased what looked like a fairly fierce animal. Fierce had may have been to others but due to the fact I had brought him out of the pound he simply doted on me, so much so that if he got away from the station he would find his way to where I was staying (over a miles journey). It took us quite a few months to get him out of this habit for I really did not enjoy getting up in the small hours of the morning to take the dog back to the station and my landlady certainly would not allow him to stay in her home.

On the whole we were a very happy group of men on the post, and as we seldom saw anyone from Headquarters in Ayr, I could virtually run the place as I liked. With that authority it made it possible for me to make deals with the airmen, all of whom I knew would soon be going overseas. I was particularly concerned to try and give the married men as much time as possible to get home and see their wives, so we worked out a system whereby when an airman had a long weekend pass I would allow him an extra day off on the strict conditions that he personally arranged a stand-in for his shift. The men greatly appreciated this and all went smoothly and happily until we had a rather arrogant Irishman posted to the unit. He was single but was given the same privileges as the others. He gladly took his extended leave but regularly failed to provide stand in and so on quite a few occasions I had to work the shift in order to meet the needs on the station. I explained to him how unfair he was being to the others and that he was in danger of mucking up the whole scheme and spoiling everything. It became obvious that he had no intention of co-operating and that he really looked on me as a softmark whom he could completely disregard. I had always tried to co-operate with the men rather than boss them, but I could see things were going to get out of hand so on the next occasion when he did not turn up for duty or provide a stand-in, I traced where he was staying with his lady friend and took action. I phoned the RAF Police in Ayr and asked them to go to the house and arrest Paddy. He was duly charged with absenting himself from duty and given three months in the GLASSHOUSE (RAF PRISON) where from morning to night every activity had to be done at the double. This was my first occasion of putting a man on charge and it taught me that some people only respond to force, they look on kindness as something soft and on which they are able to play. Certainly Paddy was a changed man when he came back and for the rest of the time he was with me I couldn't have had a better airman.

Towards the end of my time in Kilncadzow (pronounced Kilcaigie) there was an amusing incident. Under Air Force rules every airman had to fire so many pistol shots and rounds on the automatic rifles. A supply of weapons and ammunition was sent to me to supervise firing and complete my own quota.

The problem immediately arose as to where we were to fire off the rounds. I looked around for a suitable site and chose a small gully area quite close to the village and set up the targets. I thought this would be a very safe area and encouraged some of the villagers to come and see the shoot off. The gully seemed to be composed of fairly soft earth.. that was what I thought, but...when the airman fired off the first of the automatic weapons he missed the target and we quickly discovered that the background only had a loose covering of earth and underneath was solid rock. The result was bullets ricocheting off the rocks all over the gully...you should have seen the airmen...myself and the villagers dive for cover. As no-one was hurt everyone thought it a great joke. For me it was the closest I had been to a court martial.

During my time in Kilncadzow, I managed to get quite frequently to the services in my own church in Springburn and when on an early or late shift at the Station I would attend the United Free Kirk in Carluke of which the Cadzows were members or go to the Parish Church with some of the Miekles. I never therefore linked up with the Fellowships in the Carluke area.

Now the time had come for yours truly to get moving. I received instructions to report to RAF, Ayr with a view to an overseas posting. In November 1943 I arrived in Blackpool which was the centre for overseas postings. Once again it was private billets as most of the holiday homes and guesthouses had been taken over for Air Force purposes. I was sent with another ten airmen to this particular guest house and we were set up in what was virtually dormitory accommodation which was really a bit of a scam, for the government were paying at the rate of two men to the room. The payment was supposed to cover breakfast, dinner and supper and we were given a small allowance to cover lunch. The landlady was a youngish woman with a lovely young daughter as can be seen from the photo. The fact of having a young daughter made the mother extremely protective and very wary of the airmen billeted on her. She was a real tartar and wouldn't let any of the airmen near her girl. Really I could not blame her for I knew the attitude of some of the men. There was the minority group who knowing they were en-route overseas, didn't care whether or not they left a pregnant girl behind. The routine in the house was that all airmen were forced to stay in their rooms or meet in the common lounge into which the young girl was forbidden to enter. One could understand the attitude of the Mother as the average stay of the airmen was four to seven days. I however found myself in an unusual situation as I was in Blackpool for almost three months.

To explain the system...the thousands of airmen in Blackpool paraded on the Esplanade every morning at 9am. The officer in charge then began to call out name after name and directed those called to line up in one of the nearby streets. We discovered the street dictated which part of the world you were being sent. I duly arrived and awaited my name call. 1054876 SERGEANT REID, BUT DAY AFTER DAY NO SUCH NAME WAS CALLED. One by one my pals were all called but I was left. I certainly could not understand. It was a very nerve wracking experience and also a very lonely existence. The days were bitterly cold so when the parade was dismissed at about 11am, I went

along to the Tower Ballroom and paid my sixpence which allowed me to stay in the warm atmosphere until 4pm. I usually bought a sandwich lunch there. The place was packed with servicemen and the type of girl who was glad to relate to any serviceman. Most of the females were not my cup of tea. I thoroughly enjoyed listening to the theatre organ played by the famous Reginald Foote. Such was the way I passed my day. After being three weeks in Blackpool my landlady called me into the kitchen and told me she liked my manners and attitude and in my case she would make an exception so allowing me into their quarters after dinner in the evening so that I could listen to the Radio and play some card games. She assured me she had no fear of me abusing the privilege and making passes at her daughter. This privilege greatly brightened my time in Blackpool as I enjoyed some very happy evenings with the family and their friends.

No doubt our dear landlady had to try and cover herself financially but I think she took meanness a little too far for at 10pm every evening she came into every dormitory room and removed the light bulb. We went to bed early whether we liked it or not. With my privilege I had to purchase a torch to find my way into bed when I was later than 10pm in getting back to the bedroom.

On Sunday I went to the local Methodist church and attended the Fellowship. There were quite a few young women in the fellowship who offered to sew all our badges and ranks on to our new overseas uniforms. Although I had not been posted and received any overseas clothing, two of the girls invited me to join some of the other airmen at their home. This I did and enjoyed the company and the cups of tea. Noel seemed to become particularly friendly towards me. Now I had heard how keen many English girls were to get hooked on to Scottish men but I really thought it was an exaggeration. To my horror I found I was wrong. I received a letter from my mother asking me what was going on between Noel and myself, as she had received a letter from Noel expressing a wish to pay her a visit, and more or less indicating that we were on the point of becoming engaged. Needless to say I beat a hasty retreat and there were no more Tea evenings for me, or even visits to the fellowship. I learnt to be very wary of pushy English girls.

So the weeks passed and I was still in Blackpool. At the end of the second week of December an announcement was made that all personnel not posted were being sent home until the 4th January. What an unexpected bonus to have Christmas and New Year at home. That was to be the last I was to see my mother for three years. Returning to Blackpool I missed out on the first convoy being sent to Singapore. My name came up ten days later for me to sail on the next convoy. Someone up above must surely have been looking after me for all the men on the first convoy were captured in attempting to retake Singapore. Many of them suffered torture under the Japanese and one of the Scottish Chaplains whom I knew, was disembowelled in front of the men. A great many of my former friends were killed. Our convoy was three days out from Singapore when word was received that plans allowed just time enough for our convoy to change course and take us all to the Middle East. We were being shipped out on the *Sterling Castle* and the conditions on board were abominable. The ship had about three times the normal passenger

numbers so many of us had to sleep in hammocks hung from the ceilings in the rooms. In rough weather conditions many of the men were sick and the stench was something I never wish to experience again in my life. We were only allowed up on deck for two short periods per day and they were very precious. During our journeying, the convoy was attacked on three occasions by submarines. To say the least of it, it was very frightening to be on a ship taking evasive action from the submarines. Again my luck was in and our ship was unscathed but we knew other ships had been sunk.

So it was in FEBRUARY that we arrived in Port Said, Egypt and were immediately herded on to trains to be taken to Kasfereet Base. We were packed like sardines, and had to sit on the floor of the cattle like carriages. We certainly felt like cattle. We had been warned to sit on our kitbags and to sit on them very firmly for when the train slowed down at stations the Egyptian fellahin were so fast they could steal your kitbag from under you. One also had to watch one's top pocket where we kept our identity cards as they were a special target for thieves, as were spectacles. The fellahin could jump on to a moving train and steal the glasses off a man's face, often leaving a nasty scar, and jump off the train before anyone had realised what had happened. Eventually we arrived in Kasfereet and what a welcome, we got off the train into the midst of a sandstorm. One could scarcely see the man standing in front. The sergeant in command went to the top of the file and the man behind held on to his belt and so it went down the line. We all felt like blind men leading blind men. It really was very frightening, not only that but the sand penetrated into everything, clothes, eyes, ears etc. Twenty years later I still had not managed to get all the sand out of my overcoat despite the fact that it had been dry-cleaned twice. Everything in our tent was covered with sand and so we spent a most uncomfortable night. I am glad to say the storm vanished during the night and by morning we could all see the desolation of the area into which we had come. We really were in the desert. After breakfast one of the sergeants who was returning to the UK offered to sell me his collapsible bed for twelve and sixpence. The new men told me I was mad paying for a bed but the future proved them wrong. Every night I had a comfortable bed in which to sleep...no worries of sleeping on the bumpy sand and even more important, no ants or bugs getting at me as I had set my bed legs in jars of water. It sure was a good buy and I carried it with me everywhere we went in the desert and later took it over to Cyprus. Its only disadvantage was that I had to strap it onto my kitbag and carry it over my shoulder. It travelled many miles over the next couple of years.

As rookies none of us knew of the perils of the camp and the old boys weren't prepared to tell us as we were all worth a laugh e.g. the meal was served in one hut and had to be carried across a short space to the dining hut...to the newcomer the space proved to be a hazard...blissfully emerging from the first hut with one's meal on the tin plate one suddenly found oneself with nothing on the plate...a vulture had swooped down and cleared the meat. One quickly learnt to cover one's meals with another plate. On very few days could the food be said to be appetizing. At breakfast and tea we had to put up with wasps in the marmalade and the jam. Strange as it may seem, I can remember very few details of life over the next few months, I think it must

have been due to wanting to shut a lot of things out of my mind as they were most unpleasant. I well remember promising myself that should I be privileged to return home I would never again go camping or voluntarily accept being uncomfortable.

Some things I can remember...the rascally Egyptians who stole everything they could get their hands on. One could not even trust the boys who worked for us and did the cleaning...the sight of British Corporals whipping some of the Egyptian workers (I prophesied then that the day would come when the Egyptians would turn on us for the way they had been treated), mind you they were treated even worse by their fellow Egyptians who were overseers...the sight of Egyptian taxis running on aircraft wheels which had been stolen from the base...my first experience of seeing young girls being sold into prostitution (a thing I had never even heard of)...the very unhappy experience of being on guard duty at night...it was a terrifying experience to be alone on a patrol and knowing full well that the fellahin were probably behind one as they sought entry to the base and knowing they would use their knives if the need arose. It really was a frightening experience being out on the perimeter of the camp in the pitch dark with the eerie sounds of animals and the monotonous singing of the fellahin in the camps around the base. Being in signals I had never before done guard duty as within the UK we were exempt from guard duty and even from carrying guns. Our instructions being to remain on duty on the Radio until we were captured or killed.

The Commanding Officer of the Base would not believe that I knew nothing of guard drill and despite my plea put me on as Commander of the Guard. This involved taking the Parade and the change over of all the guards. You should have seen me the day before I was due to take over I spent ages in the boys tents and they took me through all the procedures. The night arrived and I marched on to the Parade ground. The Parade was standing at ease...I brought them to attention...shoulder arms...present arms at the lowering of the flag. The whole parade was at present arms and I could not remember the next command...my solution was to call out 'At Ease'...what chaos with rifles in the most unusual positions. The Commanding Officer was not amused and told me I would be sent on the first drill course that was available. Fortunately for me I was posted to Helwan Base before he could carry out his threat.

It was in Egypt that my sexual education was further completed...the word homosexual meant nothing to me so I was more than taken aback when one of the Egyptian Overseers made some rather peculiar advances, the only thing I knew was that there was something repulsive about the whole thing and I virtually booted him out of the room. Despite the unpleasant happenings by which I was often surrounded there were times of pleasure when one was granted leave.

My mother was aware of the approximate area in which I was stationed, for I had arranged that if I wrote in my letter that I was not too happy where I was then I was in the Far East and if I wrote that I was happy in my destination then she knew I was somewhere in the Middle East and within reach of the

Holy land. During my early spell in Egypt I was saddened by the deaths of some of the men in my unit, especially those whom I had known for a long time. The pleasant memories cover three spells of leave. One was spent in Cairo and Alexandria. Mosques there were truly sights to behold, so also was the poverty of some of the people. The beautiful Nile River certainly did not look beautiful as in many places animals bathed in it and the people used it as toilets. Rumour had it that if you fell into the Nile you were given seven injections to try and counteract the diseases. I spent another leave in Alexandria which was a very modern city for the times. Where there I visited the Church of Scotland school and met with all the members of the staff...thirty years later I was to run into Miss Leggo (now Mrs Hutchens) a member of my Congregation in Manly, New South Wales. While in Alexandria I was travelling on a suburban train...there were clear notices that one must not put ones head out of the window...one of our airmen refused to believe the notice and was decapitated. From Alexandria I went out on a trip to see the Pyramids. What a magnificent sight. It was there I had my first experience of riding on a camel and was almost seasick.

On one of my leaves I managed to arrange to stay in one of the Jewish Kabutz. It was a strange experience. Everything was communal. The men and women had separate dormitories, and ne'er the twain did meet except when the council of the Kabutz agreed that two people should be allowed to bring forth new life and privacy was given to them for the necessary procedures. The modern Kabutz is I believe very different from those early structures. In these Kabutz everyone had to work according to the needs of the Kabutz. Jobs were allocated daily or weekly. No one was allowed to handle any money and if one required any clothing or goods one received vouchers to go to the shops in town and purchase articles up to the price specified on the voucher. I found the people in the Kabutz very friendly. One lad and one girl were detailed to be my guides for the week. The girl was highly intelligent and could converse on almost any subject. She had decided to move into the Kabutz after finishing University. I greatly regret that a few years ago I destroyed the few photos I had of those trips believing they would be of no further interest to anyone. It was very difficult to obtain photos as cameras were forbidden. From Alexandria I managed a two-day trip to Beirut. I stayed at the American University. A wonderful building set in the midst of a great deal of poverty. One of the Professors made himself at my disposal and showed me all over the area. How saddened he must be today to see the whole University in ruins.

The highlight of my leaves was a visit of two weeks to the Holy Land. I was completely disgusted with the rank commercialism which existed (traders were actually trying to sell pieces of the original cross...what a colossal cross it must have been to still be available after 2000 years). I shall never forget Bethlehem and the Church of the Nativity. Again there was too much commercialism but if one could push that into the background one could gain great spiritual uplift by seeing and feeling that here was our Lord's birthplace. An interesting fact concerning the church is at the entrance. In order to keep animals out of the church, the main doorway was bricked up leaving on a very narrow and small entrance thus everyone entering the church had to bend

down, surely the proper posture for any Christian entering into the area in which Christ was born. Personally I would have preferred to see a typical manger scene rather than the ornate setting with priceless jewels etc...around the area in which Christ was reputed to have been born. The Bell was heard every year on Scottish Radio and television and its sound made me feel I was back in Bethlehem.

Another very interesting city was Damascus. I also did the journey from Jerusalem to Jericho (the story of the Good Samaritan) and had the strange experience of floating on the Dead Sea. One cannot sink on that sea but one can of course drown if one swings over with one's face in the water. The water is so salty one has to wash very thoroughly when one gets out. Jerusalem was the highlight of the visit though at first the visit was marred by violence. The police had to be called in to the church of The Holy Sepulchre to separate and Armenian Clergy from those of the Greek Orthodox Church. The two groups were involved in physical violence over some internal dispute. The interior of the church is quite magnificent but again too ornate for my liking. The building which impressed me the most was the Church of All Nations...it was very simply constructed and the ceiling was made up of many domes each one being gifted by one of 24 nations who had combined to build the church. I made a most touching pilgrimage down the Via Dolorosa (the way of sorrows) the actual path which the Lord travelled carrying his Cross on that final journey to Calvary. There are actually two sites which are claimed to be Golgotha...one within the church precincts and the other (which I accepted) being outside the city wall and the outline of the rock formation certainly looking like Golgotha (the place of the skull). I also spent a time of meditative peace and solitude in the Garden of Gethsemane. How wonderful it was to sit among the olive trees knowing that some of them were in existence when our Lord visited the garden in contemplative prayer. Another of the magnificent sights in the City is in the area of the old temple. It is now a Moslem Mosque, the dome of which defies description. The amount of gold in the dome of the Mosque has to be seen to be believed. This is the one place in Palestine which is sacred to a Jew, Moslem or Christian. In other areas such as the church of the Holy Sepulchre it is sacred only to Christians and Jews were not allowed entry. I found this to be a fact for as our party moved towards the entry one of the attendants approached us and looked over the group. He immediately pointed to one of the airmen and said...NO ENTRY you are a Jew. None of us in the group had the slightest idea that our fellow airman was a Jew. Everywhere we went one would sense the animosity that existed between Jew and Arab and I came to the conclusion that they would never become reconciled. What is happening in Palestine today seems to confirm that.

In many ways spending a leave in Palestine was a frightening experience for one had constantly to be on the alert for snipers. During my time there I felt I would rather have been in the firing line in Germany for at least one knew the enemy was in front while in Egypt and Palestine the shots could come from behind. We were never allowed to go out singly but in a group where one airman could keep watch at the rear and others to the sides. It sure was not the best for one's nerves. Only on two occasions did the group I was with

come under fire from snipers. In the centre of Jerusalem was a famous English Hotel but this was reserved for Officers only. While in the city I attended a service in the Scottish Church and years later met up with the Minister of the War years, when we were both attending a conference. I also managed to visit Jaffa one of the oldest towns in the country. Within the town were many interesting historical buildings...the Franciscan Church, the Greek Church of St. George and the great Moslem Mosque. I also spent a few days in Tel-Aviv which was the town to which airmen were sent for convalescence after illness. It was a very modern town and has since become the most famous holiday resort in Palestine. Racial tension could be felt throughout the city. From the enclosed map it can be seen how the city was divided into Christian quarter...Jewish quarter, Armenian quarter and so on. Early in 1945 I was posted to Cyprus and was stationed in Nicosia.

On the completion of hostilities in May 1945 a request was made for airmen willing to work under the EVT (Educational and Vocational) scheme. This scheme was designed for the running of short courses to enable servicemen to be prepared for return to civilian life, especially for those who intended to return to College or University training. I was chosen as a suitable tutor, and given the rank of Flight Sergeant. The courses for the whole Middle Eastern area were to be centred in Cyprus so I worked from Nicosia. I had given the Air Force a list of the subjects which I considered I could teach, most of them being related to the Business-Secretarial area. The Air Force acting to form, told me I was to be placed on a team which would run six weekly courses for men returning to studies in Forestry. With this in view I was told my subjects would be Forestry Book-keeping (with which I thought I could cope), Historical Cyprus (about which I knew very little), Botany (about which I knew practically nothing). Fortunately I had one month to prepare before the first class arrived so with the aid of some of the Forestry Dept. I read up on Botany and gained sufficient knowledge to keep ahead of the class. With help from the Museum and Historical Society I gained a fair knowledge of the background to this interesting and beautiful island. For the first few months in Cyprus before the EVT classes began I managed to see quite a bit of the island. Whenever I was off duty I would get out on my bike and visit the villages, which were not too far distant from Nicosia. On arriving in the village I always tried to get in touch with the Muktar (headman) who could usually be found in the coffee shop. Most of the older men and some of the younger men spent most of their time sitting in the coffee shop sorting out local and world problems. Language was a bit of a barrier as I knew very little modern Greek but it was amazing how one managed to communicate. All the Greek Cypriots belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church and when they realised that I was a student for the ministry they opened their circle to me and provided me with strong black coffee which I loathed. The local priest was usually with the men in the coffee shop. In these small villages I found the priests were often very ignorant and had simply been trained to carry out the liturgy of the church. Many of them were totally unable to interpret the scriptures. There were simply authority figures who kept the villagers in control (often through superstition). At that time they were under the control of Archbishop Makarios who was violently anti-British and was actually found to be training the Boy Scouts how to use fire arms and attack the members of the British Forces.

The Base at Nicosia was very comfortable and all the servicemen were housed in wooden buildings. Holding the rank of Flight Sergeant I was given quite a large room to myself. The only furniture was a bed. I was quite surprised when a few of the men whom I had known in Egypt told me they would organise furnishings. Using old crates etc. they made me a desk and an easy chair and from somewhere found two other chairs. They also produced enough packing material to lay on the floor as carpet. Two of the girls made me curtains out of some Hessian which they found. I soon had a very comfortable room. The people in my section know that it was an open door and I often had callers who simply wanted to get a short time away from the mob or wished to discuss some problem.

The base was a few miles out from Nicosia, which I visited quite often. Servicemen were allowed to go to the Cinema in the town and attend the various clubs run for the benefit of servicemen, some of which were not too savoury. I spent most of my evening visits in the English Club or the American Club (organised by the American Church). We had a Church of England Chaplain on Base and occasionally a Chaplain for other Protestant Denominations. All the services seemed to be very liturgically based and I was not too keen on them. If off duty on a Sunday morning I usually went to the Base service and then went into the American church at night. The service was strongly evangelically based. The people who attended were very fine people and there was a pleasant social hour following the service. One of the interesting aspects of my relationships with the men in the section was that they knew I was a regular church goer but at no time did I try to pressure them into going to church. I had numerous surprise when some of the most unlikely characters on the Base would ask me if they could come along to the American Church with me. Without seeking to set myself up as a paragon of virtue I think it was my practical living e.g. we had a Corporal on Base who claimed to be a great Christian yet who behaved abominably to the men. To get back from Nicosia to the Base at night one had to go by taxi which was very cheap. This fellow would see some of our lads lying at the side of the road drunk and would never stop to pick them up...Let them get picked up by the Special Police...he said...and be punished for their sin. My attitude was to stop and take them and deliver them to their hut in order to avoid their getting caught by the Police. I think it was by offering a helping hand that I sometimes had company when going to evening church.

There were quite a number of Cypriots attending the American Church, mainly from among the upper class and quite a few of them invited me to their house for an evening meal. One had to be particularly careful in terms of relationships. The Cypriots had a very strong cultural structure and etiquette had to be rigidly observed with regard to their daughters. Unsuspecting British servicemen would invite a girl to go to a social or to the pictures unaware of the fact that to be alone with a girl was equal to engagement in our culture. This facet of Cypriot life caused a few flurries among the servicemen who got caught and usually resulted in their being posted away from the island. It should be noted that many of the Cypriot father's encouraged the relationships for they were desperately keen on their

daughters gaining British Citizenship, so keen that they offered quite large dowries with their daughter. One could expect to receive at least one hundred pound sterling with the girl and much more from the higher class families and in some cases portions of land were thrown in. This inevitably resulted in some of the men marrying from entirely wrong motives and there were a number of occasions when I felt really sorry for the girls. One very lovely girl whose home I visited was full of excitement as she told me she was being married to a Scotsman. She described the lovely home they would be going to which would be overlooking the sea...poor girl, they boy had been brought up in Govan, one of the working class areas on the Clydeside and the only water she would ever see would be the dirty water of the Clyde shipyards. I wanted to tell her the truth but knew she would never believe me as she was so devoted to the boy. On the whole the upper class Cypriot girls were very pretty but lost much of their beauty when in their late twenties. They usually became very fat no doubt resultant of the food lifestyle. I made sure if I went to a social or picture two of the family were present...truly there were safety in numbers.

After being appointed as an eVT Instructor, I was told by the Commanding Officer that he was providing me with a Garry (lorry) and driver every Sunday and I was to take members of the course to see the various historical sights throughout the island. I arranged for us to get away fairly early on the Sunday morning and we were given a pack lunch then got back to the Base in time for me to attend the evening service. Needless to say I jumped at the opportunity of seeing more of this interesting island. The Deputy Forestry Officer who had helped me in preparing the course offered to come with us on those Sunday trips and over the months we became great friends. I visited Mr Michealedis in his home and met his young family. We kept up our friendship for many years and he actually managed to visit Scotland and stayed with my mother and myself for a few weeks. I shall never forget my mother's face when he brought out this gift for us...a very large smoked ham which had been boiled in wine for a number of days. He cut off a large slice for me and one for my mother and eagerly awaited our enjoyment to eating this delicacy...we didn't quite see it as a delicacy and had the greatest difficulty eating it. When we left we had this enormous ham, which neither ourselves or our friends wanted to eat. We took it down to our Grocer who told us it really was a delicacy and could be purchased in the posh London hotels for about one pound sterling per slice. Our friendship was maintained by correspondence until Makarios who was now the President and even more anti-British, made it quite clear that anyone fraternizing with British subjects would be severely dealt with so one day I received a letter saying it was much too dangerous for us to continue letter writing.

The situation between the Turks who occupied the top half of the Island and the Greek Cypriots who occupied the lower half was one of terrible bitterness. Speaking to some of the older Cypriots I was told of the terrible cruelty of the Turks when in bygone days they dominated the Island. Every Cypriot had to bow when passing a Turk, failure to do so meant a beating. The Turks used the Cypriot women as playthings. As soon as a Cypriot couple got married the Turks would take away the virgin wife and she was what would now call

pack raped. One can imagine the feelings of the young woman knowing this is what would happen on her wedding night. The Turks used every possible means to humiliate the Cypriots.

As mentioned earlier I had wonderful opportunities of seeing the Island through biking and with the Lorry. Sometimes it was quite frightening going along the narrow road especially through the Troodos mountain area. Troodos was one of the convalescent areas, so I had a few days there after being in hospital with Sandfly fever...not a pleasant illness I can tell you as for the first few days one spent ones time being sick and visiting the toilet. I also spent one of my leaves at one of the Holiday homes in Troodos, which is the summer seat of the Government being about 6000 feet above sea level. On my holiday I played quite a lot of tennis but it was really exhausting playing in the rarefied atmosphere. We had a terrible fright when one of my friends became very ill. Evidently he had had Tuberculosis and the strain of playing in the that atmosphere collapsed his lung. He was ill for months. It was about this time that I lost one of my best friends, Bill Gilroy of Newcastle. He complained of feeling ill and applied for light duties. The Medical Officer more or less indicated he was malingering. Bill became obviously worse but still the Medical Officer would not accept that he was really ill. The result was he developed pneumonia and died within a few days. I felt his loss most keenly, especially with the knowledge that it could have been avoided. I only had one other spell in hospital, and that was due to my bathing in the lovely warm seas surrounding the island. On the floor of the ocean were some very poisonous shells and I happened to stand on one which had numerous sharp prongs (I still have the shell). The result was a very swollen and painful leg for some weeks. I was told I was lucky to survive as the poison can often kill.

I spent two days living in the great Monastery (Troodhitissa). It was an interesting experience but I am afraid I did not get the full benefit of the pilgrimage as I could not understand the language. Cyprus is an Island of Monasteries and I visited many of them. In most the Icons were very beautiful (an Icon is a picture of some aspect of biblical life). In the larger monasteries they have an Icon for every day of the year and the Icon of the day is placed on a special holder in front of the Iconostasis screen. I visited the most famous of all the monasteries on the island. Kykko monastery which is world famous for its reputed to contain one of the three icons attributed to St. Luke. The earliest monastery on the site being built in 1365. One of the loveliest villages is Lapithos entirely surrounded by orange and other fruit trees. Within the village are four famous churches in which I spent quite some time. Not far away is the town of Larnaka where I spent a few days holiday. Just outside the town was an English tea room which had been run for years by two spinster ladies. It was the only place on the island where one could buy a drink of cow's milk. I can tell you that was a real treat after surviving on tinned milk for years. I spent an interesting few days in Paphos (visited by Paul) now called Ktima. The attached diagram shows some of the ancient sites. While there I was permitted to take part in an archeological dig and managed to unearth a small piece of ancient plate and a bone of uncertain antiquity both of which I still have. I also spent some time in the third City of Cyprus, Famagust whose origins went back to the third or second century BC. For

many years it was the richest town in the Island and was the most important port on the Island. It was from here that Britain received two great products to help sustain the war effort. Trees of massive dimensions to be used in the shipbuilding and Carobs to help feed the cattle in the UK. The city is surrounded by walls of which many stones are still perfect. On an average the walls are 50 feet in height and approx. 27 feet in width. It is a most interesting city and cater for the holiday maker as much as for the merchants. I visited many, many more villages throughout the island but I won't bore you with details as mostly the places were very similar (namely monasteries or churches). One thing of interest might be to explain the layout of every Orthodox Church...in Cyprus all churches stood due east and west, with the altar at the east, from the original tendency to turn towards the rising sun because the essence of God is light. The church is entered from the west through the porch. The nave has a pulpit on the North wall. Stalls or seats are ranged round the walls, and the throne of the Bishop which usually has a carved wooden canopy. At the west end of the nave is the gynaeceum or gallery for women and children, while in the centre of the nave stands the icon-table on which the icon for the day is placed. The outstanding feature of all Orthodox churches is the iconostasis or screen dividing the sanctuary from the choir and congregation and usually raised one or two steps above the nave. The iconostasis has three doors, the central one being called "the Holy, Royal or Beautiful door". In front of this is the step or platform on which the priest stands when administering the communion or addressing the people. Within the iconostasis stands the Holy Table. It should be remembered that the icons were originally designed for teaching the people most of whom could not read or write. The icon displayed a message, which they could understand. Unfortunately many people today seem to actually worship the icon believing that it can answer their wishes or needs.

One of the loveliest services which I attended was an Easter service. The large congregation gathered together in the late evening before Easter morning. All age groups gathered together and with no seats in the church it meant a long stand. In the centre of the church was a tomblike structure covered with flowers. At the crack of dawn the edifice with the flowers was lifted high and carried through the church with the priest calling out "Christ is risen" and the people shouting "He is risen indeed". The Easter music was magnificent and the church was pervaded with a real atmosphere of victory and triumph. I had a Cypriot friend with me and he acted as interpreter so I was able to understand all that was going on. Another interesting ceremony was the wedding service. Early in the service the bride and groom were physically united by ribbons being attached to each other's hair. At first it seemed rather amusing to see the pair being led around the church complete with ribbons.

Peace was declared in May 1945 and immediately our thoughts turned to demobilization and getting home. The order of demob was first in then first out except in some of the trades where it was difficult to find a suitable replacement. This was the order for B release. A release was also available. This was available for men or women who had guaranteed places in colleges, or universities or were urgently required in some kind of specialist jobs. I was

offered A release. This gave me a great deal of mental anguish for a couple of weeks as I tried to make a decision. If I accepted A release then I was guaranteed to be home by October in time for the opening of the University year. I would however lose out on Long Service leave payments and gratuity of a few hundred pounds. To wait for B release was an imponderable but meant I was paid for two months or more long service leave and also received the gratuity. I am afraid the hard cash won the day and I decided to wait for B release. This came in January 1946. What a thrill to board a French ship at Famagusta and know that one was on the way home. The accommodation on the ship was extremely cramped but not quite as bad as on the outward journey. Again most of us slept in hammocks hung from the ceiling. I can assure you this is the best way to feel every movement of the ship and ideal for seasickness. The vast majority of us succumbed but this time we were able to get up on deck and feed the fish. The journey home meant travelling through the Bay of Biscay which on the way out was as calm as a millpond. Now the Bay set out to show us what it could really do. It was the most frightening experience of my life. We were all battened below decks and felt the world was coming to an end. The ship rolled and rocked and it seemed to us as though at times it was literally flying through the air. When it came out of one of these leaps and hit the water every piece of timber creaked and we all thought the ship was going to fall to pieces. The Captain announced that conditions had become so bad that he would have to run with the storm and make for Toulouse in France. After what seemed like endless hours, the sea calmed down, daylight appeared and we were allowed up on deck. What a mess. The Captain's bridge had actually been broken off from the main part of the ship and some of it had been lost at sea. Boy were we glad to reach Toulouse. We were held up there until some repairs could be carried out. During the few days there we were allowed off the ship so had the chance to see some of the surrounding countryside.

What a relief when we sailed into the docks at Southampton. Then a journey by train to one of the demobbing centres in the Midlands. Each man received underwear, a shirt, socks, shoes and a suit. Then it was out the gate with a railways pass. What a feeling of freedom...a civilian once again with all the rights and liberties involved. It seemed a long slow train journey back to Glasgow. I blew some money and took a taxi to Balornock. How nervous and tense I felt approaching Balgraybank Street with the anticipation of seeing my mother again. I can tell you there were a few tears on both sides. As it was February and bitterly cold I faced the problem of trying to keep warm as none of my old clothes fitted me. Friends were very good in giving me spare clothing coupons so that I could purchase a coat and some warm jumpers and underwear. For the first few days I didn't venture out of the house I was so cold. The next problem was related to studies.