

"Lorraine"
Le Bigard
Forest

Guernsey C.I.

5/2/89

Dear Mrs. Holm,

Thank you for your letter of the 17th. Jan. and the delay in replying is because it took some time to find the various papers, some of which I have had photo copied, and enclose them herewith. Unfortunately, I do not have any photographs of myself or crew, because in August 1944 it was almost impossible to buy film, and the photo section on the Squadron would not take pictures of crews until they had completed their operational tour, so they believed it unlucky to do so.

Now to answer your question I am 67 years old at the moment, but will be 68 this month. So we are both about the same.

With regard to Mehal, it is approximately 20 miles North of Cambridge, and about 5 miles

West
~~west~~ of Ely. Hope you can locate it on
your map. I enclose copy of a letter (26/1/1966) I
received from Bruce Robertson who, I believe researched
war time exploits, and perhaps you know of him.

A mistake in the letter states that I was piloting
Lancaster LM 594, because Mike Garbett, also a
writer, later informed me that the aircraft was
HK 594. He also stated that two Lancasters
which in 1971, when ^{not} he wrote the letter, had so
far defied identification, came down at
BASJÄD, SKÄLDERVIKEN 29/8/44 and
HULTABYGGET, GÄDDERÖ. 30/8/44 I do not know
if I landed anywhere near these places

I did have a newspaper cutting, showing
somebody standing in his window, with a bandage
round his head, ~~presumably~~ ^{probably} ~~presumably~~, relating
how an aeroplane nearly landed on his house, but
unfortunately I cannot find the cutting. Perhaps
it was your newspaper which carried this picture!

I cannot remember the exact cruising

speed of a Lancaster, but think it was about 200 m. h. h. As you will see from the copy of Robertson's letter which I enclose we took off at 21.15 hrs (G.M.T I presume) and it was still quite light as we left the coast near Lerum and proceeded low level ^{west} towards Denmark and thence to fly over Sweden.

Also enclosed is a copy letter from ~~the~~ G. Malmström, which may ~~be~~ be of interest to you. I wonder if he is still alive? He was the person who saw me in the lights of his car, and what a very kind man he was.

My stay in Sweden was very comfortable and we were well looked after, but of course it was not the happiest of times, as I very much regretted losing my crew.

You have no doubt already realised that I am not a very good letter writer. In fact I find it most difficult to think, as soon as I start writing and so the finished article is not very good, but I hope that it will be of some

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interest to you. If I had the ability to write in a more flowing manner, as you, as a journalist can, I could go on and on. I can only suggest that, if you wish to have a more detailed account, I will be pleased to record it onto a cassette, which you could then listen to, as no doubt the cassettes are pretty universal these days, and no doubt you have a player in your home.

Maybe you having a holiday in Jersey a few years ago. We lived in Jersey for a time before coming to Guernsey in 1955. I would have been only too pleased to meet you. Strangely enough in 1984 we went over to England for my ^{NEPHEW'S} nephew's wedding, and I said to my wife, how about taking the car over to Sweden, which we did, and had a short, but pleasant tour, visiting Vanersborg, Siljansgarden, Falun, Fallberg, Uppsala, Stockholm, Oscelesund, ~~Ekija~~ Ekija, Kosta,

Boras, and back to Gothenburg where we went back on the car ferry to Harwich. Unfortunately the hotel I stayed in whilst interned in Sweden, no longer existed as the whole area had been developed, although the town of Falam had not changed all that much. I think the address of the hotel was "Solliden", Korsnas, Falam.

I am going to finish off now, but would mention, that if you so wish I can send you ^{photo} copies of the relevant page of my flying log book showing the entry of my last flight with Bomber Command, and various copies of telegrams and letters sent to my parents. I am not prepared to send you the originals in case they go astray in the post. I am also enclosing copies of some newspaper cuttings, but I expect you have already seen these - perhaps they are from your newspaper.

Monday 6/2/89

I had to stop writing yesterday, but will try and finish the letter today and get it posted. To

1944

continue with my story I was flown back to England (actually we landed at Leuchers, in Scotland) in November 1944, and after being interrogated about my experiences went on leave, and was then transferred to Transport Command R.A.F. After further training I was posted to a Ferry Unit in South Wales, but did very little flying because the war in Europe ended and there were not any aircraft to ferry, but I did in fact get the opportunity to learn to fly Spitfires, and delivered one to Algeria after a lot of trouble en route. I can tell you it was very strange to fly, after the heavy aircraft I was used to.

In August 1945 I was posted to 232 Squadron based in Delhi, but we were sent up to Risalpur which was on the N.W. frontier, near Peshawar to convert on to Liberator aircraft, when after completing the course it was intended that we should learn to fly Skymasters, and then return to Delhi and then fly between India

and Australia.

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However it didn't quite work out like that, as the war with Japan finished and I was back in England by January 1946. I should perhaps say, as it may be of interest to you, that I survived another tremendous crash, when a Liberator, in which I was 2nd pilot, failed to leave the ground on its take-off run and ended up about one mile from the end of the runway, having lost propellers, wheels, wingtips and many other bits and pieces. The three of us survived without a single scratch, despite the fact that we were doing about 140 m.p.h. as we left the end of the runway. If the flying I did during the war taught me anything, it was that to survive you had to be lucky, because I had other crashes and incidents which could have had serious consequences.

I eventually left the R.A.F. in October 1946, did not settle down to my old pre-war job very well, so I became a civil A.T.C.O. (air traffic controller) from which I retired in 1983. I had hoped

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to find a job as a civil pilot, but there were so many ex-R.A.F. pilots seeking employment at that time, with more flying hours than I had clocked up ~~at~~ I decided on a different career.

I do very often think back to the time I spent in the R.A.F., especially to that night, which proved fatal to my crew. There are many more things which I could tell you, if you consider they might be of interest so please let me know. As you say perhaps if we might meet up one day. Unfortunately, should you visit Guernsey, I am not in a position to offer you accommodation, as my wife is in poor health, and not in a position to offer hospitality, but please do not mention this fact in any letter you might write.

I am going to finish now, and hope this letter has been of interest.

With kind regards

Yours sincerely

Douglas King