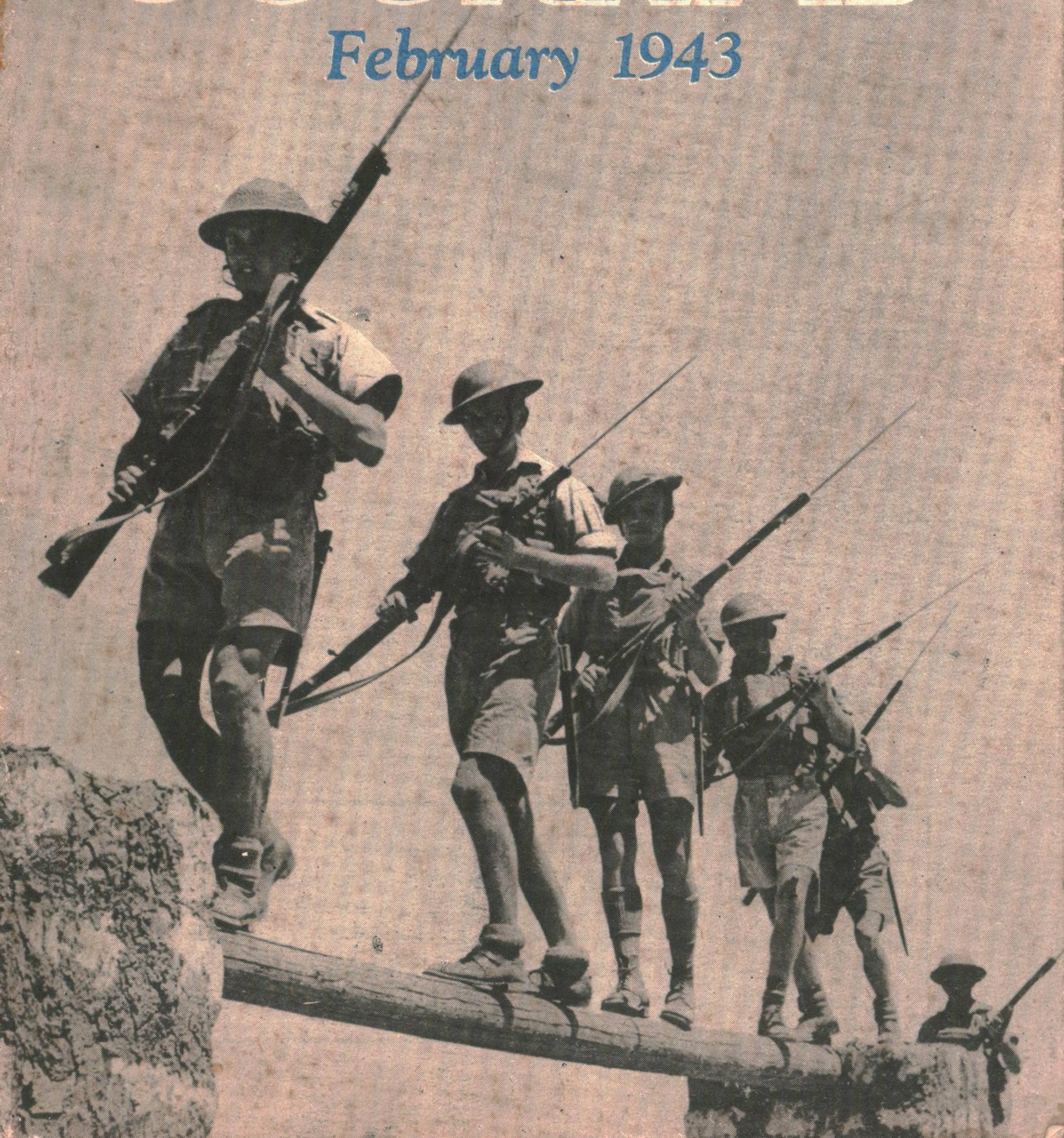


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# ROYAL AIR FORCE JOURNAL

February 1943



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The photographs on the cover and on page 9 are of airmen of the Royal Air Force Regiment training in the Middle East. The drawing on page 19 is by Miss Olga Lehmann.

## NOT TO BE PUBLISHED

The information given in the Royal Air Force Journal is not to be communicated either directly or indirectly to the Press or to any person not holding an official position in His Majesty's Service.

The circulation of the Journal is limited. Please do not put this copy in your pocket but leave it for the use of other readers.

# ROYAL AIR FORCE JOURNAL

FEBRUARY, 1943

NUMBER 4

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## THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT

THE Royal Air Force Regiment celebrates its first birthday, and looks back upon a year of endeavour and constructive hard work in making itself an integral part of the R.A.F. and worthy of that splendid Service.

Keeness has been the key-note ; without the real enthusiasm of all ranks we could not have approached the standard already attained. The Regiment is now a well-armed, organized body of efficient, fit, trained men. Their exploits in the Middle East and North Africa with the 1st and 8th Armies not only show "battle worthiness", but prove the value of well-trained airmen operating as ground forces to occupy and hold forward landing grounds required by our operational squadrons in support of advancing armies.

There is still much to be done in putting the final polish on these fighting units, which will take their place in all Expeditionary Forces. Stern discipline, intensive training, absolute fitness to stand up to any fatigue, with perfect knowledge of weapons and, beyond all, every man a good shot, must be our goal.

We have laid the foundations well and truly. Let us complete the job !



Major-General,  
Commandant, The Royal Air Force Regiment.

# Editorial

## Don't Kill Time—Use It

MANY people have lost the art of living because they have forgotten how to do things for themselves. This was one of the things, so wise men tell us, that was wrong with the Pre-War World.

C.E.M. Joad has said, "Science has won for us powers fit for the gods, yet we bring to their use the mentality of savages. We live a press-the-button existence. We no longer walk; we ride. We no longer climb; we use the lift. We no longer converse; we turn on the wireless. We no longer sing or make music; we put on a record."

We all have varying incomes of money, but we all have the same incomes of time. Time, being money, should be spent as carefully.

Many of us take it for granted that because we are in the R.A.F. or the W.A.A.F., we have no time. But it may be said that you have some twenty-five hours a week to use as you like (subject to the inevitable exigencies of the Service). Have you ever seriously considered what you do with these odd hours? Do you use them or do you kill them?

*Recreation* does not mean *relaxation*. It means what it says, *re-creation*. Your work on duty uses one set of brain cells and muscles. If you simply permit yourself to be idle "off-duty", your other brain cells and muscles will never be used. They will rust.

The war is giving you the opportunity of using your spare time profitably. Those of you who are taking advantage of these opportunities are enjoying your leisure more than ever before.

Station concert parties can teach you to act, sing and dance. Voluntary bands and orchestras can help you use your musical talent instead of wasting it. Discussion groups are reviving the lost art of conversation. Station sports and gymnastics can help you to participate rather than watch. Garden schemes are showing that you get more fun (and healthier livers) out of growing your own vegetables than eating those grown by someone else. Station Libraries can teach you to read good books instead of bad ones.

This does not mean that film-going, ENSA shows, dancing and watching football haven't their right place in a plan of spending time. They have. But you can watch other people at work, intelligently or unintelligently.

To enjoy films, books, music and games, you need to know something about them. It is only when you try to understand these things that you begin to learn how to appreciate them. Don't be doped by films, shows and books. Be inspired by them.

And another thing. Apart from the fact that you're learning something all the time, it is much more amusing to do things yourself, whether they are sketching, or model-making, or writing an article or making a drawing for the R.A.F. Journal.

Use time—don't kill it.

## News from Air Ministry

ALTHOUGH petrol is precious and civilians have had to put up their cars and join ever lengthening bus queues, cases are still occurring of improper use of service transport by officers and airmen.

This practice is a serious offence, but in many cases the fact does not appear to have sunk in.

A warning has been issued (A.M.O. A.1361/42) to all ranks that if anyone uses Government petrol when on an unauthorized journey in a service vehicle, they will not only be guilty of misusing the vehicle, but may also be charged with stealing the petrol as if they had taken it from a service vehicle and used it in a private car.

This may mean, if the evidence justifies it, that the accused, on conviction by court-martial, could receive a prison sentence.

**I**T will hardly be necessary to remind Airmen of the Air/Sea Rescue Service that they are now entitled to wear "ASR" badges. (A.M.O. A.17/43.) The blue-grey badge is to be worn on the right sleeve of the service dress jacket and the blouse of the heavy-duty dress, and the red badge is to be worn on the tropical service dress. N.C.O.'s and leading aircraftmen are to wear the badge immediately above the chevrons or propeller badge. Aircraftmen 1st and 2nd class are to have the badge fixed so that its centre is nine inches below the sleeve head seam. The badges are not to be worn on greatcoats.

**W**HILE on the subject of badges we should like to draw your attention to the fact that the desire of personnel connected with the Colonies to wear shoulder badges has been met by the publication of A.M.O. A.1303/42.

But we still see shoulder badges being worn for which there is no authority. Examples of these offending badges are B.L.A.V., Eire, Northern Ireland and U.S.A.

We would advise you to remove these unauthorized badges immediately before you are stopped by the Royal Air Force Police.

Anyone who wishes to put up shoulder badges should first find out whether the conditions for wearing them are fulfilled.

**W**INGS for Victory campaign opens in March. The article on page 4 will tell you about it. We hope you will do more than just read the article. No matter how small your contribution may be, it will help towards the grand total. It will, at the same time, provide a nest-egg for the future. At the moment, there is very little you can buy. You are being clothed, fed and housed and you are in a position which offers you the best opportunity you have ever had for saving money. You will be glad, when the war is over, that you had the good sense to use this opportunity.

Make Wings for Victory week a reason to begin regular savings.

**O**UR prize competition has brought in quite a number of serious and humorous drawings and paintings.

Considering the number of entries we receive and their standard, we are convinced that the total effort is in no way representative of the hundreds of artists there must be in the Service.

Apart from the prize scheme, we should like to feel that art in the service is not a dead thing, and that the new opportunities, the action, the whole local colour of the Service all over the world are providing material for experienced artists, and are acting as a spur for those thousands of others who have always felt the urge but have never had the opportunity.

We wish to encourage men and women in the Service to take up drawing and painting and fill their leisure hours profitably. The profit at this stage will lie mainly in the achievement and the pleasure it brings; but it may well bring in something more tangible in the way of hard cash in later years.

# WINGS FOR VICTORY

## A GREAT CAMPAIGN AND WHAT IT MEANS

THERE was a measure of hidden wisdom in the remark of the Cockney Aircraftman who, when his recently joined mate was somewhat gingerly carrying a bomb of a useful size, observed, "For heaven's sake, Bill, don't drop it. It ain't paid for."

He was right. The bomb had to be paid for and so had the aircraft



*"Careful: it ain't paid for."*

standing by, the petrol to drive it through the air, the station buildings, the airfield, all the impedimenta of service in the R.A.F., the men's clothing and food and the men themselves—in fact the whole shooting match required money, and money in abundance.

The cost of running this war is prodigious, so prodigious indeed as to beggar the imagination. Statistics don't interest the average airman but at least he can apprehend something of what he sees. With even elementary thought and adequate vision he can appreciate that the Royal Air Force involves a huge expenditure. The British Government is spending something approaching over fourteen million pounds every day and a large slice of it goes to equip and maintain the R.A.F.

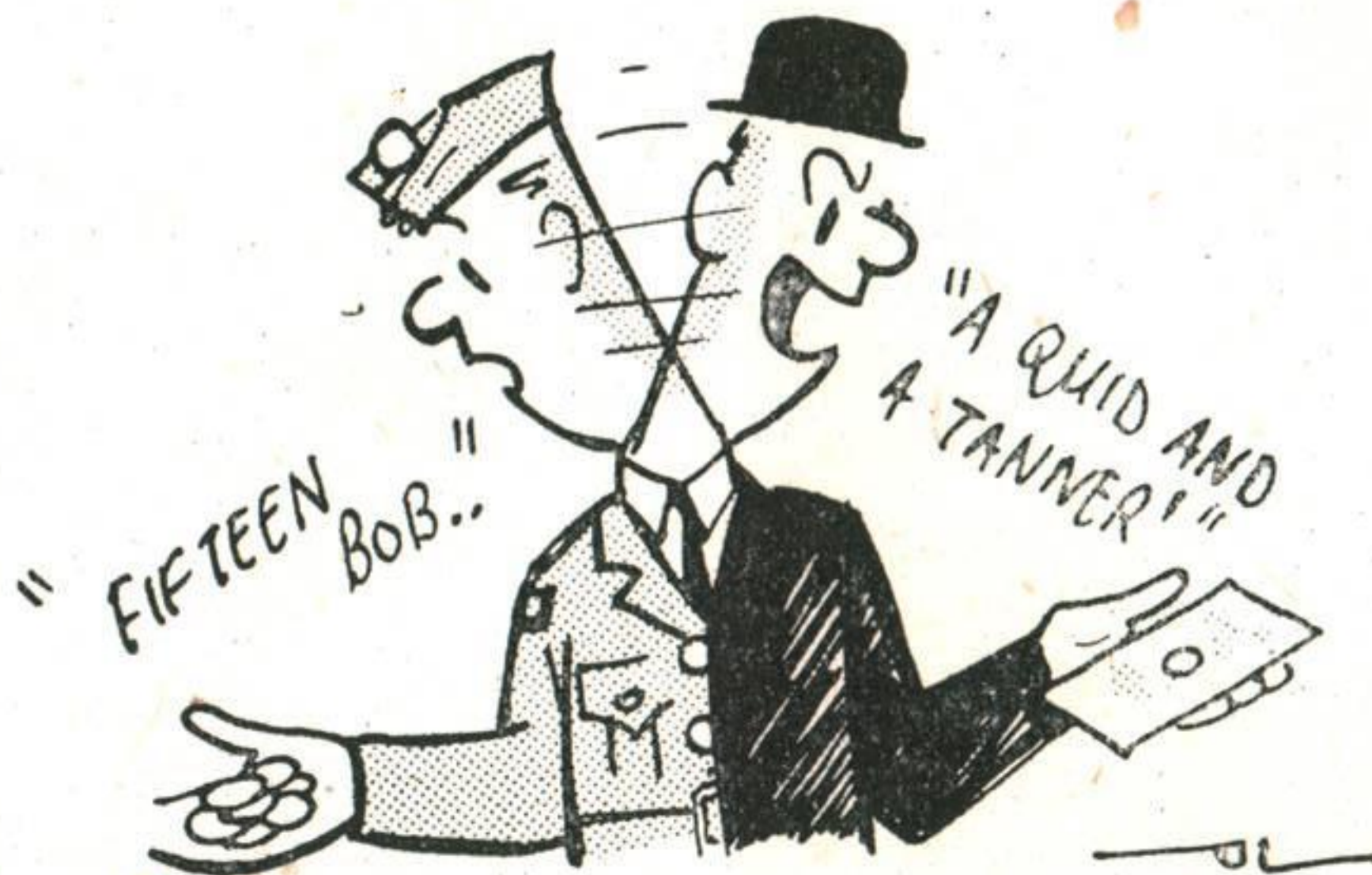
Now, where is that money coming from? It is coming from the people of Great Britain either in taxation or in loans. They are scraping and screwing so that the R.A.F. may have the very best in abundance. They are paying for the

material, they are finding the wages of those who make the aircraft, the bombs and everything else, they are finding the money which you draw regularly—or as regularly as circumstances permit—at every pay parade, they are finding the daily millions—and they are not grumbling any more than the average Briton does in the ordinary course of life.

The peculiar thing is that while our people at home are providing so much they are saving more and more. They are accumulating nice little nest-eggs which will be available for them when the war is over. The world will need a deal of settling then and it will be useful to have a reserve of money in times which, for all we know, may be difficult for some men and women. Sixteen million people—more than a third of the whole population of Great Britain, men, women and children, are saving through Savings Groups and millions more are depositing money regularly in the Post Office and Trustee Savings Banks. They are people of all ages and circumstances. It is amazing how the small amounts grow. The school-children are saving over twenty million pounds a year—for you.

And incidentally, the youngsters are saving for themselves. The money will be mighty useful when education or even marriage comes to be considered and every 15/- they invest in a Savings Certificate is worth 20/6d. in ten years' time.

There is nothing miraculous about all this. It is merely that the Government is borrowing a great deal of the money required to pay for the war and is paying a good rate of interest for its use, at the same time guaranteeing the repayment of the principal and the accumulated interest whenever it is required. It is all quite simple.



*Ten years.*

No training in economics is necessary to understand the position. You, who see the fruits of these investments by our people of all classes, you whose lives are, for the moment, spent with the great engines of warfare bought by the savings of the public, should be, and will be, the first to appreciate what the financial sacrifices of the home front really mean.

There are some people who fail to realise that the State is simply a collection of individuals. They say airily and thoughtlessly "Oh, the Government will pay for it," imagining apparently that the Government has a bottomless purse out of which it can produce millions at will. They do not understand that the Government must get its money from the individuals, and in doing so it must strain every nerve to keep the financial front sound and prevent inflation which would send the prices of everything sky-rocketing. In Germany, after the last war, they had to pay a matter of millions of marks for a pair of shoes—if they could get them at all.

Now what is all this leading to, you may ask. Well, in the months of March, April, May and June of this year the R.A.F. is destined to play a considerable part in this business of Saving.

A great "Wings for Victory Week" campaign is being organised, based on air-power in general and the R.A.F. in particular, and the 600,000 voluntary workers of the National Savings Movement are determined that, in its results, it shall eclipse even the splendid figures of Warship Weeks.

This is no light task for it must be remembered that taxation has been tightened up and that millions of people who never paid Income Tax before have been drawn into the taxation net. And more men have gone into the services—family incomes have often been reduced, living costs have certainly become no lower. Yet the Wings for Victory Campaign must be the best of all. The R.A.F. cannot play second fiddle to either of the sister services.

The plan of the campaign is an interesting one which should appeal to the general public as it will certainly

appeal to the Service. An area will set itself a target in terms of money—usually at least as high as the total sum raised in the district during its Warship Week. This will be translated into terms of aircraft and the place will aim to find sufficient to produce and equip a certain number of bombers or fighters. The sky verily will be the limit on this occasion.

If a town attains its target it will win its Wings and the feat will be marked by a permanent record. A beautifully designed trophy will be presented to it as a perpetual reminder, and in return the area will present to the Air Ministry



"Good show—Good luck!"

a certain number of specially prepared Log Books in which will be recorded the achievements and exploits of the aircraft which are allocated to the town. The aircraft and the town or area will thus have a permanent contact, each book will contain the signatures of the original crew, and after the war these interesting volumes will go back to the area to be preserved permanently in the Town Hall, Municipal Offices, Public Library or in some other suitable place.

It is a simple scheme which will have the advantage of definitely linking squadrons with cities, towns or other areas and which will give the people of such areas an even greater appreciation of the R.A.F. than they now possess—and already that appreciation is very marked.

There is a good deal more in it than this. The campaign, primarily, of course, designed to raise money, must put the R.A.F. well on the map. Warship Weeks made Britain Navy-conscious and for the moment, perhaps, the other services went out of the limelight. Now the R.A.F. is to have all the limelight and, with that spirit of comradeship which ever marks the relationships of the

services, the Navy and Army are going to help in the good work.

The British people have been starved of colour in these war years. The Wings for Victory Weeks are going to provide some. There will be parades, bands, flags, exhibitions and the like; from thousands of platforms the story of the R.A.F.—your story—will be told, the press will be full of the Service, the cinemas will join in the chorus, here there and everywhere there will be some spectacular evidence of the greatness of air power. Here is the opportunity to make Britain, in very truth, air-minded.

You may and probably will ask "Well, that is all very well, but how does this affect me personally? What am I expected to do?" Well, if the great British public is going "all out" to help the R.A.F.—by a huge nationwide endeavour—if it is going to turn out its pockets and contribute almost the last stiver in loans to the State, specifically on your behalf, it will, at least, expect your interest and sympathy and, when occasion offers, your help as well. There will indeed be many occasions when the men of the R.A.F. and the women of the W.A.A.F. can give a hand in this great campaign. Saving is not always easy, but already the Service has done some remarkable things in the way of thrift. But, even there, greater things can be accomplished. Units both at home and abroad have Savings organisations and, if only in gratitude for what the country is doing for you, you will naturally want to see that those organisations are supported to the very greatest possible extent, within the limits of Service pay.

It is possible that men and women stationed in Britain will be asked to take some part in the more spectacular side of the campaign in areas close at hand; R.A.F. bands will certainly be asked to provide that martial music which the public at large like so much and hear so little. In many ways, which will evolve as the campaign approaches, the men and women of the Services will be able to assist.

Your enthusiasm will have the cordial goodwill of the Secretary of State for Air, the Air Ministry and those high in the service. They

themselves are enthusiastic and they are co-operating in every possible way. The R.A.F. is acting in full concert with the National Savings Committee.

The campaign will not be limited to England and Wales. Scotland and Ireland are taking a hand in it. And it will have the support of our Allied Air Forces. Already a great many districts have fixed their targets which,



"Well, for evermore!"

in the aggregate, represent huge sums. The Secretary of State for Air, Sir Archibald Sinclair, announced that Greater London, in its week from March 6th to 13th is determined to raise no less a sum than £150,000,000, which is four millions more than it secured in its Warship Week. These are enormous figures but the campaign is going to be an enormous one—probably the biggest of its kind ever launched in this country. Those who are responsible for it do not doubt that the public will answer their appeals with the greatest generosity. Likewise they are confident that they will receive the fullest measure of support and co-operation from the Service itself.



"Five 'undred Savin' Stickifits and a 2½d. stamp, please."

# SLIPSTREAM

**B**ELIEVE it or not.

"I was riding along Blank Street," runs an accident report handed in by a D.R.



"when I came in sight of two men walking across the road ahead of me. The one in front was *pulling* nothing, and the other (about six feet behind him) was *pushing* nothing.

I then drove my cycle in between the two men and discovered they were carrying a sheet of plate glass."

\* \* \*

**A** SQUADRON of the R.A.F. Regiment were advancing through the desert and were running short of food and water. After a further forage of ten or eleven days the squadron was beginning to show signs of thirst. ("Even the Regiment" writes our informant, "cannot go without water for an indefinite period.") On the fifteenth day they arrived at a water hole "with their tongues hanging out," whereupon the squadron commander threw his hands in the air and cried, "Water, water, thank heaven! Now we can get our equipment blanched!"

\* \* \*

**S**TEPPING smartly out of a London restaurant near the Air Ministry where we had an afternoon appointment, we were more than a little shaken to receive a salute from a Flight Lieutenant who was a complete stranger.



We were chiding ourselves on our bad memory for faces, thinking his salute was merely the friendly acknow-

ledgment of an acquaintance, when up came a Squadron Leader, and he saluted too.

Then a horrible thought struck us, and a rapid eyes left and right at shoulder-level confirmed it. We had picked up a Wing Commander's great-coat instead of our own P.O. one.

It gave us ideas: which we skipped.

\* \* \*

**W**E passed a lonely searchlight post in the country the other day. A D.R. who had just delivered some mail caught up with us.

"Rum post that," he said. "Entirely manned by women. The only male there is the cook."

\* \* \*

**F**UMBLING for our elusive 1250 this morning put us in mind of one of the tragic moments of our career. After battling against wind and sleet for two miles one day we turned up at the airfield barrier and discovered with sinking heart that we'd left our 1250 in our other tunic. No amount of cajoling or identity probate would soften the stony core of the LAC on barrier duty.

By the time we'd walked and been blown there and back that LAC went through many processes and transformations in our feverish mind. Stumbling up to the barrier again we saw him through a red haze, but he disarmed us with a cheery: "There you are, sir; it'd saved all that trouble, wouldn't it, hey?"

We silently wished him a long way. He's a sergeant now, we hear.

\* \* \*

**P**ROBLEM. You are buying a ticket at the Odeon when two men in masks push you politely to one side and give the cashier the alternative of her money or her life.

What do you do? (Answer on page 13.) D. L.

# THE ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT GOES INTO ACTION

THE R.A.F. Regimental Gunnery School in the Middle East is as tough as any R.A.F. Training Establishment. It is here that men of the R.A.F. Regiment who are in that Command have, for some time past, been receiving the final polish to their training.

The Course provides training and experience in all weapons available for airfield defence, the organization of Station defence, field work, tactics and, above all, general offensive action.

The training is intensive and it has stood the Regiment well now that it has gone into action for the first time.

This kind of training does more than fit a man for the battlefield. It develops his initiative and ingenuity. Only recently an airman who had been through the Regimental Gunnery School was able to wipe out the crews of some "E" Boats. He was on duty at a desert landing ground near the sea when he sighted the "E" Boats approaching. Unable to engage them because his gun, designed for anti-aircraft use, could not be deflected low enough, he improvised a crow-bar, bent the tripod of the gun so that he could get the boats in his sights, and systematically picked off each member of the crews. He was under constant fire from the "E" Boats during the whole of this time.

As yet, little news has come from the Front line of the actual details of the Regiment's operations. It is possible to say, however, from a hint here and there, that they have withstood their baptism of fire well and that they have begun their offensive operations excellently.



The first action in the Middle East was when a Flight of the Regiment moved up to the airfield at El Daba which was to be used as an advanced air base. The Flight, which was among the first British Forces to reach the area, found some enemy still in occupation, attacked them and captured 200 prisoners, mostly Germans.

At Fuka, the Regiment found the landing grounds were

littered with wrecks of enemy aircraft. Among these wrecks were Ju. 88's., troop-carrying gliders and stores-carrying gliders, big enough to carry a truck, many Me. 109 fighters and communication aircraft of all kinds.

After one or two landing grounds had been cleared of opposition the advance parties of the Allied Air Force squadrons, following hard on the heels of the R.A.F. Regiment, moved in to clear up the wreckage. With the help of the Royal Engineers they made the airfield serviceable for our air striking force to continue its offensive.

It must be remembered that when the R.A.F. Regiment was first formed, it was primarily a defensive unit and was trained specially to defend our airfields against attack from the air, both by bombing and by paratroops.

The defensive phase is over and the Regiment has made tremendous progress in its training. It will now be of the greatest use in securing our air bases, wherever they may be.

At one time, it was feared that Rommel might have moved out too soon and too fast to enable the R.A.F. to follow up quickly enough to maintain their maximum harassing tactics. This



has not been the case, however, and it is partly due to the work of the Regiment in co-operation with the Army, together with the magnificent efficiency of the Maintenance units, that these fears have proved groundless.

Squadrons of the R.A.F. Regiment have also played their part in the North-West African Campaign.

After months of secret planning at home and in the United States, the R.A.F.'s part in the campaign in North Africa began in the small hours of Sunday, November 8, 1942. At one a.m., the American assault teams went ashore in landing craft from the convoy which had taken the Expeditionary Force safely into the Mediterranean. As dawn was breaking an A.A. Flight followed the assault teams on to the beaches, east of Algiers.

When other Squadrons of the Regiment were about to disembark, one of their transports was torpedoed. A Senior Officer commenting on this later, said, "I have everywhere out here had nothing but praise for the good behaviour and fine discipline of the R.A.F. Regiment Units, but on this occasion I have been told by the O.C. R.A.F. on board that the behaviour of officers and men of the Regiment was magnificent and an example to everyone in the ship."

The Commanding Officer marched his men twelve miles in the blazing heat to Maison Blanche. Owing to a freshening wind and rough sea it was not possible to land his second-in-Command, drivers, vehicles and guns. They put into Algiers where they disembarked and rejoined the main body the following day.

Another Unit was landed and went on to Bone. At this airfield they were

attacked during the night by enemy bombers and during the day by two daylight cloud-hoppers. A corporal clerk was killed and another corporal was slightly wounded by bomb splinters.

When they arrived at the airfield they immediately got their guns into action. During the day attack they claimed to have shot down two Macchis and were officially awarded one and a half. Two days later they hit a Ju. 88 very hard—it made off pouring smoke and was believed to have gone into the sea—another half to their credit.

The Commanding Officer was killed a few nights later. A bombing raid began and he immediately set out in his "Jeep" to go round his guns as he always did when in action. He had not long reached the first gun when a bomb dropped a couple of yards away. He and the gun crew were killed and the guns and vehicles destroyed. At one time, during this action, the men were ankle deep in spent cartridge cases.

The French newspaper "La Dépêche de L'Est" paid tribute to this Commanding Officer. "Not for him the thrills of flying a Spitfire. Humbler but no less fine was his job of protecting his comrades and the aircraft on the ground."

This tribute could well sum up the work of the entire R.A.F. Regiment. Members of the Regiment have had to do a vast amount of training. They have not flinched from hardship. Now, at the time of their first anniversary, they have proved themselves in actual battle. They look forward with confidence to more successful actions in the near future.

## Joe



# The WALLOON

By *FLIGHT LIEUTENANT L. KARK*

"**M**ET.", says the Station Commander at the briefing, and up rises Congo Pete, grinning, shiny and about the size and shape of Humpty Dumpty, by Tenniel.

Nobody knows why he is called Congo Pete. He has never been to the Congo and his name is not Pete but Odon Hector Rousseau. Pete is pure Walloon, born in the Province of Hainaut, Belgium.

At the Stirling station to which he was attached Congo Pete made for many weeks no impression at all, except one of general friendliness.

Nobody in the ante-room paid particular attention to Pete. When the weather was sunny they said, "Nice work, Pete", and he was always careful to laugh as though no-one had ever been so witty before. And when they went off on leave they used to say, "Keep it good for the next seven days, Pete," and he would grin happily.

One day it was like this with Pete and then the next day it was different. Someone on the station had learned who he really was and the men in the ante-room were uncertain how they should take it.

Unconsciously Pete began the revelation himself in a letter to the Higher Powers, through the Station Adjutant. "Sir," began the letter, "I have the honour to ask for a permission. The permission is for me to deliver a lecture. The people who will hear the lecture will be the International Scientific

Workers' Conference in London next month. It is the International Scientific Workers who have asked me to give them an address. The subject of the address will be Cosmic Radiation in the World of Lemaître. I have the honour to be, Sir, Your obedient Servant, O. Rousseau P/O.

When the lectures were ended and the junketings over, and after Odon had delivered a very serious paper on the resistance of European culture to Nazi cruelty, Pilot Officer Odon Rousseau returned to the Stirling station and took his turn as Duty Forecaster in the Met. Office.

"Was it O.K., Pete?" someone asked in the ante-room. "Yes, thank you," said Pete, "it was O.K., SIR." Pete had a loud voice and he always said SIR in capital letters, even to officers who were his senior in rank only by the smallest fraction of an inch in the width of their braid. Try as he would, he could never make his SIRS sound as if they had anything to do with the rest of his conversation. They sounded ill at ease, like parsons in a pub.

Curiosity about Congo Pete was gentlemanly, but general. Officers who had never paid the least attention said they always knew that Pete was different. "Would the great scientist like a glass of beer?" some-one asked and Pete gave his penetrating laugh far up the scale and said, "Thank you, SIR."

The true story about Congo Pete slowly emerged.

It was noticed that whenever he hears a discussion on the official atrocity reports by the Soviet, Polish and Czech Governments, Congo Pete chips in. He interrupts to say that he knows that they are true.

The natural reaction to an atrocity story, he says, is one of immediate disbelief. You hate to believe what you don't want to be true. So you say, "Ah, look at the atrocity stories of the last war," as if that ended the argument. In the last war there were some atrocity stories which were concocted in newspaper offices. So the Germans could say, "Ah, you see where your atrocity stories come from!"

Scientific approach, says Congo Pete, to an atrocity story is almost the same as scientific approach to a ghost story. You say, "Ah, did you see it yourself? Well then, how can you know it's true?" A million people are murdered in Poland; tens of thousands of girls are taken to Nazi brothels. Were you there? Did you see it yourself? Well then.

Poland is far away. Who would know except the people who are murdered and can't speak and the Poles who see it and daren't speak? So the Nazis say, "Prove the stories," and laugh. The Governments interrogate witnesses who survive. The interrogation committees include judges who know how to learn the truth—men of probity. Dozens of photographs, some taken from the pockets of sadist Nazi prisoners, are published with the reports. The people who see the horrors, the people whose organs have been smashed inside them by Nazi soft truncheons, the committees who interrogate the witnesses—all these people know they are true and believe them. But still the reader's reaction is, "Were you there? Well then."

A navigator says, "Aw come on, Pete. Have a beer." And Pete laughs up the scale and says, "Thank you, SIR."

Someone in the circle has been listening and seeks to put him in stride again. "O.K. Pete. Get it off your chest. We'll listen."

"It happened to me," says Pete, "when I was three. So I'm not first-class evidence. It happened to me, but I can't remember it. I can only remember what my mother and my brother Edmond and my sister Nelly told me. They were there too, and it also happened to them. Edmond was thirteen, Nelly ten. We lived on the edge of the industrial area, the Pays Noir by the River Sambre.

"When the Germans came to Montignies in the last war me and my family went down a coal-mine. We knew what had happened when the Germans came to the village nearby. The village was Tamines. They took all the men and shot them. But first they made them dig their own graves. You have heard of the Germans shooting men and first making them dig their own graves? Ask the women of the village of Tamines.

"Also perhaps you have heard of the Germans taking women and children and marching them in front of their army to prevent their opponents shooting at them. An atrocity story, of course.

"In the last War the Boche came after us—all of us who had run to hide in the coal-mine. Then they took us, the women, girls and children, and they marched us in front of them when they attacked the French at Charleroi. My mother carried me in her arms. After 15 kilometres the Germans released us. We lay in a field and slept. Then we walked back and found that most of the houses in the Rue de la Montagne had been burnt down. Ours was left standing."

On other nights, in other conversations, a picture of Congo Pete's life came out. Inevitably they were wild children—the Belgians of 1914–1918. Most of them in the village had lost their fathers. Their games included trying to cut the tassels from the swords of German officers and smuggling copies of "La Libre Belgique" into the raglan pockets of their great-coats.

They would take up wooden swords and stand in ranks. The oldest would cry, "Nach Brussels!" and the company would march forward. Then he would shrill, "Nach Paris!" and the

children marched backwards. The Germans would stand and glower.

By the time of the Armistice young Odon Rousseau was old enough to understand what he saw and remember what he understood. My country, he says, is like a big village. One woman talks to the next and in half an hour the whole country knows the news. So they knew of the Armistice even before the aircraft trailing a white flag flew across Montignies.

The Rousseaus were a family of musicians and Rousseau Père's brow furrowed when he found that young Odon Hector had no aptitude for the violin and no understanding of counterpoint. In despair he allowed his apparently witless son to enter the Catholic University of Louvain to study mathematics. Pete absorbed mathematics as a cat laps milk.

So Pete became a figure at Louvain and entered the exalted mathematical circle around Georges Lemaître.

As a fair reward for his academic brilliance Doctor Odon Rousseau was appointed assistant to Lemaître at the salary of £200 a year. From that point there is no knowing how far he would have gone but for the intervention of the second war. Indeed Pete was a guest professor in the United States when he joined up.

It was inevitable that in the R.A.F. in England, Pete should gravitate to the Accounts Branch. Nor is it any reflection on the Accounts Branch that the mathematician Odon Rousseau found himself completely unable to cope with the system of accountancy and figures. There are few abelian or elliptical functions about marriage claims. So in time he became Congo Pete the Met. Man. He enjoyed studying the use of barometers, wet bulbs and dry bulbs, anemometers and the checking of balloon drifts with theodolites. They are the tools of a scientist and on the quiet Pete is carrying out his own researches into such matters as the theory of turbulence. Also he likes to fly and says that he enjoys "looking at the clouds from upstairs."

Not long ago Pete had a serious accident on a motor-bike. He broke his shoulder, his leg and his skull.

Pete's shoulder has twinges of rheumatism and in the inexact science of weather forecasting he gets a deal of fun from his sensitive joint.

"Gentlemen," he says at the briefing, "on your way to Mannheim you will pass through a severe cold front. This starts over the English coast and is approaching base. We are certain of this partly because of the implications of the isobar charts, but mainly because of the rheumatism in my shoulder."

The crews remember Pete's rheumatism as they climb through the cold front on their way to Mannheim, and are cheered by the echo of his remarkable laugh.



Have you seen A.M.O. A.978/42 ?



You bet I have !

**A.M.O. A.978/42 gives details of the important new job of Flight Engineers, wanted urgently in large numbers.**

**A**NSWER to Slipstream problem, page 7.

You ask the men for their identity cards.

Then, centuries later, you hear someone saying from far off, yes, we *think* he'll live . . . . .



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Men trained for this duty will be promoted to Sergeant Air Gunners.

Apply now!

# ‘Hey, Airman!’

By D. L.

**R**EMEMBER the song: “From the top of your head to the tip of your toes, you’re wonderful . . .”?

Well, are you?

Take a look at your cap. (If you’re a good type you’d use your toecaps for a mirror.) How does it look? Has it got character? By that we mean will it merit a glass case all on its own in the Imperial War Museum?

If it has, then get it cleaned or get it changed and treat the new one like you would a fur-felt Homburg.

Another important thing. You wear it at all times while you’re out in public (make a note of this); but how do you wear it? Au Napoleon, or centred fore and aft as though you’ve never taken it off since that day at Cardington when the Storeman bashed it on your head, saying “That’s yours!”

Or is it balanced on the ear so that you walk about with your head on your shoulder to keep it earborne?

There’s only one right way, the old one inch from the right eyebrow. It’s smarter, it costs nothing, and it’s the way it should be.

We’re working downwards but we’ve got caught up in your moustache; or is it Ronald Colman’s? Will you make up your mind about it?

We shan’t mention the slightly rough crossing over your chin. We’re looking at your collar. Nothing looks as smart as a clean collar (unless it be a clean set of buttons or a clean pair of boots, or a clean airman generally). You can skip a pint some time and go to town on your laundry. A clean collar pays dividends. Incidentally, the practice of tab-cutting has caused more haemorrhages among N.C.O.’s at R.C.’s than anything we know. It contravenes K.R.’s, and seriously, is it really necessary?

Your tie, we can say with confidence, would make a good bootlace in an emergency. Careless wear will ruin a Spitalfields cut-from-the-square in a week, and issue ties aren’t that good (we wish they were better than they are). But worn carefully (rolled overnight and not left knotted) it will help to look like a tie and not something the dog brought in. As a last resort, Stores will always

cheerfully replace any item of clothing made u/s through fair wear and tear.

Generally, we can’t complain about your jacket; we don’t expect Savile Row, but we do expect it to be serviced occasionally. A drop of thawpit works wonders even if the adverts. do say so.

What’s wrong with the issue pullover, you who favour rainbow creations like a St. Moritz winter-sporter? Or with the issue scarf? True, it’s not made to go four times round the larynx and then two feet over the left shoulder like some of the scarves we see. We warn you. You’ll be caught up in a propeller one of these bright days. If it’ll just unwrap the scarf without wrapping you up—well, it’ll be your lucky day.

Are your trousers more like funnels than boards? And do the bottoms look like the top of the smoke-stack of the Robert E. Lee; jagged and ragged? Do you think it looks tough to ride a bike without clips or even elastic bands? It’s tough all right on your trouser bottoms, and we think it should be made just another offence. You agree. We thought you would.

We’re touching down now. Do you walk the Barratt way? That is, on your own two feet, with your hands well off the ground? In other words, are you human? Then be human to your boots. We can say a whole lot about them. About the criminal habit of drying them in front of the stove so that the uppers yawn wide open. About how it’s just as criminal to let them wear so down at heel that you get hard skin and gravel underfoot. It is an offence to let your boots get into such a bad state of repair that the cobbler takes one look and gives a hollow laugh. You have another pair to wear while they’re being repaired, so raise a leg backwards now and look at your soles over your shoulder. Don’t raise more than one at a time; it isn’t safe.

There, we’ve run the rule over you, and we hope it has shaken you a bit. We pass on to the next man.

Hey, airman! Yes, you!

Remember the song: “From the top of your head . . .”?

Well, we know you’re not wonderful. But, at least, are you a good type?

## Half-a-day's pay—a year

By Flight Lieutenant C. H. Ward-Jackson.

*" . . . . a young staff officer enquired of Sir Arthur Wellesley just before the battle, 'How, Sir, do you think the day will go?' Sir Arthur pointed to a shakoed, dusty private soldier twenty yards away and said, 'Captain, it all depends on him' . . . ."*

WE were in a railway station bar. I was on leave, in civvies, reading while waiting for my train. The place was thick with smoke and talk. Just along the bar were two airmen: one tall with props up, the other short.

" . . . and the sarge said he wanted us all to cough up half a day's pay a year," said Props. "You know, the old guff about every one in his flight subscribing—wanted to get on the right side of the Old Man, I suppose."

"Yes, we had the same sort of lecture," replied Shorty, sinking half a glassful. "Only a few of the lads signed on the dotted line. I didn't myself—they asked me at Blackpool if I wanted to but someone had told me it was a racket, and I wasn't having any. After all, it's the Government's job to look after wallahs who're down on their luck."

"What browns me off," said Props, lighting a Player, "is that the only time you hear about it is when they want something. It's all put and no take."

Then a third party butted in. Apparently, like me, he'd overheard the conversation. He was a Flight Sergeant—a Class "E" Reservist by the look of him, tubby, cheerful, friendly.

"If you two chaps are talking about the Benevolent," he said "you're talking through your titfas. Now let's have a beer, and I'll tell you a thing or two."

To the A/Cs' surprise, chiefey bought the drinks, and settled down to it. "Now I'm a Fitter One on a squadron, and there isn't an erk in my crowd who doesn't pay up. And I'll tell you for why. Whenever a new boy is posted in, the pay-bob has to tell the Old Man if he's not doing his bit. The Old Man then sees the lad personally. And he's never had a refusal.

"Voluntary compulsion? Not a bit of it. He pitches them a yarn about an old pal of his—had known him since

he was a sergeant in Karachi. I knew because I was there too as a corp. Well those two were like David and Jonathan, as you might say—proper buddies. Went everywhere together.

"Well, in the Battle of Britain the C.O.'s pal went for a Burton, and left a widow and three kids. The Old Man was proper cut up. He tried to help them but he'd already got two old folks of his own to look after. Someone suggested the Benevolent Fund, and a letter was sent in by the Station Master.

"You lads may like to hear that they paid the school fees of the boy—he was 14, and a very promising kid—and helped to keep the two girls at a boarding school. Also they cleared all the widow's debts—including a good deal for furniture; and they helped her till she found a job.

"Pension from the Service? Of course she did, but that didn't keep her and three nippers! You blokes aren't married but you're pretty dim if you can't see how those kids' futures are going to be influenced. And, mark you, if the father hadn't ever paid a penny to the Fund it would have made no difference—they'd still have been helped."

Said Props, ordering another, "Well, Flight, you don't often hear about anyone getting anything out of the Benevolent Fund."

"And what of it?" asked chiefey, "You've only been in the Service five minutes. They can't broadcast about the people they help. And you don't expect the dependents to talk about it themselves, do you? Why the Fund is still helping cases from the last war.

"I get so brassed off with all you fellows who think it's big to talk down a damn fine thing. 'Boom' Trenchard, who, by the way, has been visiting many R.A.F. stations recently, did a first-class job when he started it up after the last show—but of course you wouldn't know about that. Now there was the case of Corporal . . ."

I looked at my watch, and dashed for the train.

\* \* \*

Yes, it was in 1919 that Marshal of the Royal Air Force The Viscount Trenchard, as he is now, founded the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund. He had heard of so many hard cases in the last war that he determined to do something about it. Since then the Fund has been a monument to his foresight.

It originally provided help for past and present members of the R.A.F. and their dependants, and now includes in its scope members of the Auxiliary Air Force, R.A.F.V.R., W.A.A.F., and Princess Mary's Nursing Service. But it does *not* include members of the Dominions and Allied Air Forces, who have—and support—their own funds.

Broadly, the policy of the Fund is to enable dependants to carry on some semblance of the life to which they are accustomed, and to help children into careers that their fathers might have expected them to follow. Thus it supplements state pensions and ensures that incomes are reasonably sufficient.

It relieves distress of almost every sort—general maintenance, education, medical, dental, maternity, sickness, convalescence, debts—it aids the maintenance of widows and fatherless children, the education of children of personnel disabled or killed, and it also helps to re-establish ex-Service personnel in civil life.

Now, if you can take it, let's look at some figures. In 1920 the Fund paid out £919 to needy cases. By 1939 £22,919 was being paid. By 1942 payments out were nearly double that figure!

In 1938 there were only 1,509 cases on the books. In 1940 the number had jumped to 3,327. And in the first nine months only of 1942 5,293 cases were assisted.

Since the Fund was founded just after the last war, it has helped over 20,000 cases!

In the first nine months of 1942 £13,662 was paid to serving personnel (apart from dependants, who received £24,663), of which £11,738 was granted to the ranks and only £1,924 to officers.

The problem to-day that constantly claims the attention of the Fund's Council is that at the end of the war, with income slumping due to demobilisation, shall we be able to meet our commitments and continue our good work?

Under the scheme introduced by Commanders-in-Chief in 1938, a subscription of half a day's pay *a year* is invited from every member of the Service. It is automatically deducted by the accountant officer from the pay of those airmen and airwomen who agree to subscribe; in the case of officers it is debited on mess bills.

It is a fact that on most stations 100 per cent. of officers subscribe their half-a-day's pay a year. But the same cannot be said by a long way for the ranks. Yet one day you and yours may want the benefit that the Fund affords. In such times as these, you never know. Is it your idea to let the other wallahs pay up for you?

What can *you* do to help the Fund?

See that any deserving case comes to the attention of the C.O. through a member of your Station Welfare Committee. If you're in doubt consult the Padre; he particularly should know all about the Benevolent Fund. If you haven't a committee, apply to see your C.O. about it.

How little is half a day's pay? As the Duke of Wellington said, it all depends on you.



"Go on, Joe! 'ave a go!"

# Odd Man or Admirable Crichton

By SQUADRON LEADER E. FLETCHER-ALLEN

THE title of this tale is not mine. The material is little more original: I have been interviewing an ACH/GD.

He is a scholar of repute. He has a sense of humour. In fact, he interviewed *me*, if the truth is honestly to be told.

"What is an ACH/GD, exactly?" I said, by way of introduction.

Without pausing for breath, he told me most of the things an ACH/GD is, or should be, at some time or other. He took me through the early dismay that most of us know, to the pride of his job in the R.A.F. His own desires and the requirements of the service did not coincide. Physical reasons barred him, as temperamental reasons bar others, from certain courses of training. And, until man and job can be married, "ACH/GD" takes care of the pool of willing manhood.

My particular ACH/GD went from his disciplinary course to a wireless school. He had hopes of becoming a radio-operator. His eyes let him down, so, with the fault at nobody's door in particular, instead of being A.C.2 u/t Radio op. he became A.C.2 ACH/GD, pending remustering to a trade.

His week is illuminating. On Monday he reported to the wing orderly room and found that they were short of a runner, duty, for the day. As a quarter-miler he smiled inwardly; it was just up his street—until he discovered that running was no major part of a runner's duty. He carried D.R.O's., chits and official documents to the wings, Station H.Q., Officers' Mess, Sick Quarters and other outposts. As the station was well dispersed, ACH/GD ended with visions of marathons and liniment; but he had learned where all the places were.

Besides which, he was already on nodding terms with the orderly sergeant.

On Tuesday, linimented and supple, he reported again as runner, having forgotten that "general" is the operative word. He was set to work to sweep and polish the orderly room floors, wash crockery for the mid-morning tea, chase up half a dozen of

the sergeant's pet buns from the canteen, and, in the afternoon to do a bit of gardening.

"I used to smile at Mr. Middleton," he told me. "But not now!" Gardening for ACH/GD began at the beginning. The hummocks behind the cookhouse block needed to be levelled, and a good layer of topsoil deposited on the flat and even space. Did the station provide the soil ready for laying? Not for ACH/GD. The station provided a wheel-barrow and the sergeant indicated where the soil was . . . the fire trench just down the road. Just the old quarter mile away, and ACH/GD had not used liniment on his back. He did, after duty.

On Wednesday he acquired a kindlier thought for Corporation dustmen, and studied sanitation. It is possible that the sight of a hut, with a complement of 30 men, is not strange. ACH/GD had two such huts to deal with. It would appear that the drill is for thirty men to wash and shave before breakfast, to preserve a neat appearance. It would also appear that they use tin bowls, and are always in a hurry to get *through* before breakfast. ACH/GD wondered how all the water on the floor could ever have been contained in the bowls, and he marvelled at the ingenuity of the R.A.F. when he analysed a variety of "other devices" which replaced the plugs that earlier inhabitants had "organised" as souvenirs: toilet roll, another fellow's sock (which he believes is the origin of "put a sock in it"), doorstops, empty shaving soap tubes. Salvage benefited, and there still remains a suggestion that ACH/GD is more adept with his respirator to this day.

Thursday brought the sweeter smell of new mown grass, for general duties extended to trimming the green borders of Station Headquarters. ACH/GD welcomed the scythe and shears; he comes from the West Country. The C.O. seemed pleased also. At least he made appropriate noises, and ACH/GD had hopes of tackling the perimeter next day.



He had reckoned without the sergeant, who knows what is good for ACH/GD, and whose words were brief and pointed.

“Cookhouse for you!”

ACH/GD now knows his potatoes and has the satisfaction of an inner contentment. He knows now that without the potato-peelers life in the R.A.F. would come to a standstill. Cookhouse fatigues are the foundation of the men on the ground who keep the kites in the air. No cookhouse fatigues, no cookhouse; no cookhouse, no meals. No midday dinner for the sweating riggers and fitters and armourers—not to mention aircrews—and the squadrons would first be browned off and later u/s. Men u/s, aircraft u/s; aircraft u/s and—what have you?

Saturday brought relief. ACH/GD was a temporary assistant receptionist to a new batch. He knew the station, he knew some of the snags, and he went to it with all the assurance of an old-timer and snugged the new boys in. As a semi-voluntary (his word) usher at the camp cinema in the evening he got a free show and a bit of extra pay.

“Fair week,” I suggested, and ACH/GD replied with a conscious, definite pride that the range of his

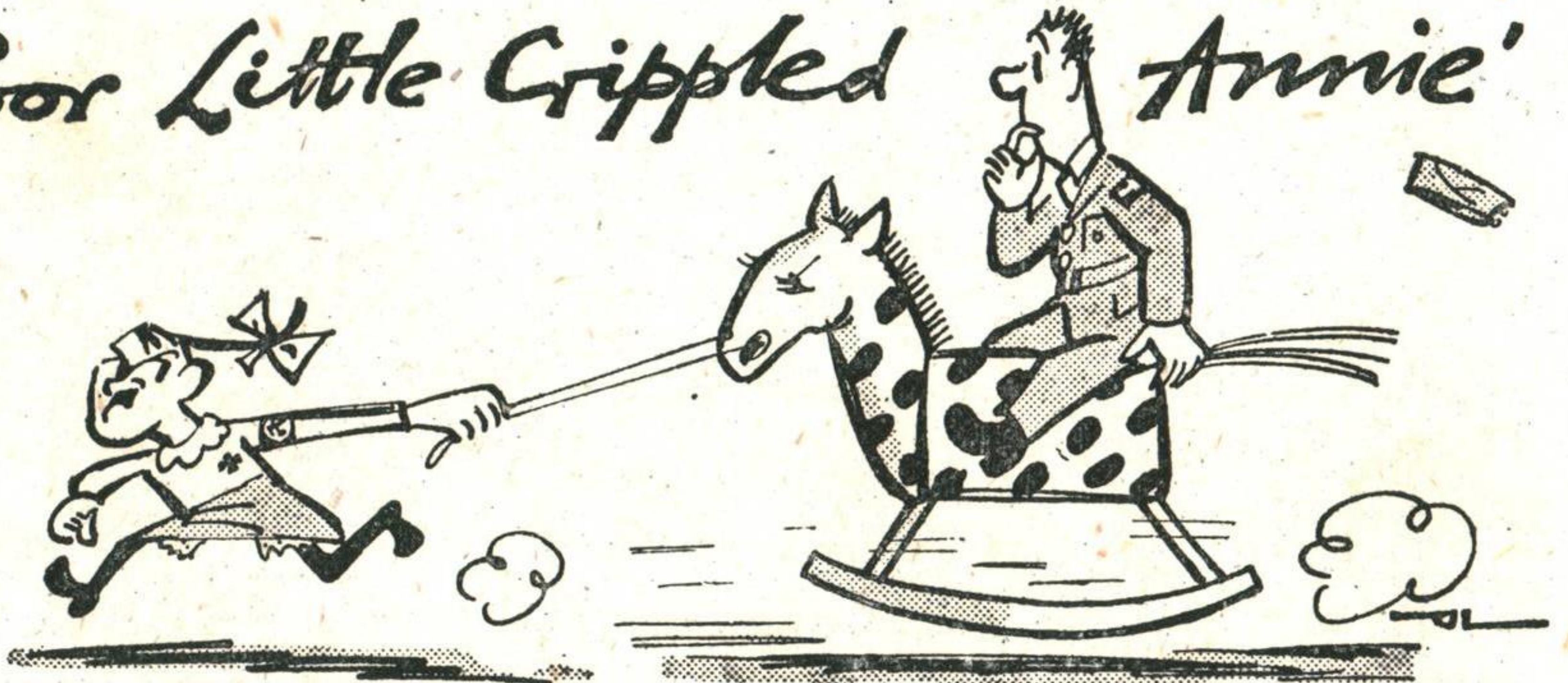
duties included far more than camp fatigues of this sort. Indeed yes!

There are permanent unskilled jobs, I learned, which run close to those demanding specialised skill, by which the recruit masters the way of the R.A.F. and has a chance to look trades over before he chooses. ACH/GD has a place whenever aircraft are moved from hangars, fuel delivered and taken aboard, when guards are mounted over airfields and stores. There are meals to be served in the cookhouse, the N.A.A.F.I. needs orderlies (and these jobs carry welcome perquisites). If the airfield has taken a knock because of enemy action, then the hand that is used to a spade and can lay a turf is almost beyond price. In ACH/GD's mind, for a brief moment it is important even compared with the hand on a control column. Many other people agree.

ACHs/GD must be adaptable, as most of those who finally remuster have learned to appreciate. They are not just men running in the sticky groove of an exclusive occupation, but have mastered something of the broad base of the R.A.F., in which the needs of men, as well as of machines, must be met.

ACH/GD is given the right and time to choose his own final job.

# 'Poor Little Crippled Annie'



By SQUADRON LEADER H. E. BLYTH

SOME years ago, on a Wednesday early in June, I got into a train at Victoria for the purpose of visiting my cousin, Algernon Webster, who lives in a cottage at Epsom.

The train was full, for I discovered afterwards that it was Derby Day, but I managed to secure a comfortable seat in a first-class compartment.

Opposite me was a delightful fellow in a rather loud check suit, a bowler hat which he wore on the back of his head, and, in his button-hole, a very large and very pink carnation. It was not long before we had got into conversation, and he had told me that he was, in point of fact, a missionary but recently returned from the Congo Basin.

Next to him, on his left, was a sallow and wizened little man in a cloth cap (and other things, of course) who looked rather like a dejected ferret, and who was, so my missionary friend assured me, the senior church warden at a Baptist Church in Upper Footing.

On my left was a big, jolly man with a loud and hearty laugh and a yellow scarf. He, so I learned from my missionary friend, was an undertaker from Clapham, who was taking advantage of the delightful weather to go on a busman's holiday, being anxious to assist at the internment of a distant relative who lived at Morden.

In the far corner was a mournful individual whom the others all alluded to as "Joey." For the first part of the journey he gazed lugubriously out of the window and said nothing.

Hardly had the train started when the missionary, with the most engaging *bonhomie* imaginable, produced a pack of cards and invited my participation in a harmless little game to which I was a stranger, but which he assured me was played frequently in missionary circles, being known as "Find the Lady."

He had been accustomed to play it, he said, with the negroes he was converting on the veldt; and indeed had spent many happy hours in their Kraals or Wigwams, playing for beads, marbles, button-hooks and other such worthless trifles.

I readily agreed to his suggestion that we might in this way avoid the tedium of the journey, and announced my intention of investing the sum of 4d. on my first prognostication.

My missionary friend was somewhat taken aback by this, and hastened to assure me that this was only a friendly game, and that he had not intended to play for such high stakes.

The church warden, when appealed to, said that he personally (the c/w) was opposed to all forms of gambling, especially with strangers, but in view of the fact that the gentleman (me) had such an open and honest face, he (the c/w) felt there could be no harm in him (the missionary) indulging in a few friendly hands. Indeed he (the c/w) felt almost tempted to participate in the game himself.

In the end we all played—all, that is to say, except Joey, who continued

to look mournfully out of the window and say nothing.

The game went on uneventfully, and I must candidly confess, without line-shooting, that I played rather well. I began winning from the word "go."

At the end of half-an-hour I was nearly 4s. 9d. up, and was already beginning to feel a little guilty at the way I was taking money from these capital fellows.

It was as we were nearing Epsom, and the end of our journey, that Joey spoke up for the first time.

In a voice filled with emotion, he asked me if I would object if he sought to share in my good fortune, so that by staking his own few pence on the cards which I was so successfully choosing, he could win enough to take a few small delicacies to his family at home.

I agreed. I even suggested that he shared my winnings, and with that the game took on a more serious aspect. The stakes rose from coppers to shillings, and I continued to win. Joey, with a lump in his throat, paid eloquent testimony to my skill and generosity, and it was when he was nearly 5/- to the good, and I had pocketed more than twice that sum, that he suddenly bethought him of poor little crippled Annie and her rocking-horse.

Little Annie, it seemed, was doomed to a life on crutches. She was languishing, pale and worn, and the sunshine had gone out of her life. There was only one thing said Joey, that could bring the light back to her eyes, the bloom into her cheek, and the smile to her lips, and that was a rocking-horse, with red rosettes on its ears and tail.

"How much are rocking-horses?" I asked, not being a family man.

"About ten pounds," said Joey, giving me a rather strange and penetrating look.

I thought of Joey's family, and poor little crippled Annie. I thought of the rocking-horse, dappled, with rosettes on his ears and tail, and of Annie's face when she saw it.

"All right," I said "for Annie, I'll do it." And turning to the startled missionary, I announced my intention of having a tenner on my next attempt to find the lady.

\* \* \*

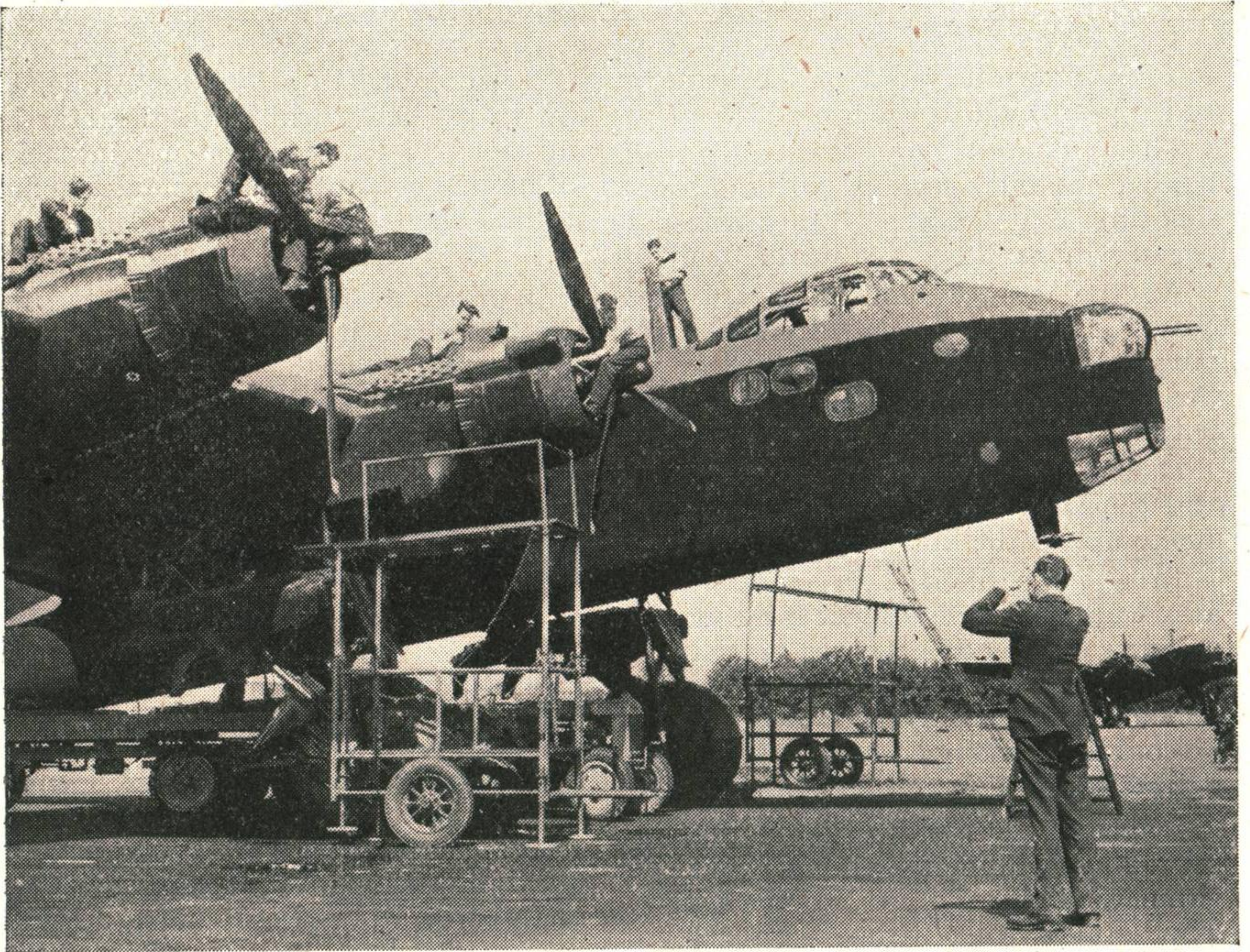
I prefer to draw a veil over the rest of the story—it is too painful to relate. Suffice it to say that when we reached our destination I had lost not only my ten pounds, but also all my loose change, my wallet, a wrist-watch, both cuff-links, and my gold collar stud (a birthday present from my Aunt Matilda), and only my inherent modesty prevented me from parting also with my waistcoat, braces and jacket, which Joey implored me to throw into the scales in a final desperate effort to stem the tide of my misfortunes.

You will have been touched, I know, by this tale of disaster, but you will also be wondering what is the purpose behind its telling, for as you know, I am always one who seeks to Point a Moral. A Security Moral.

The Moral is this. That in Security, as in life, it does not matter being a mug, so long as you *know* you're a mug, and take adequate precautions to protect yourself, and others, from the consequences of your muggery. But to imagine yourself to be infallible when you aren't is merely asking for trouble.

The Enemy Agent, when he is trying to get information, will try all the tricks of the crook and confidence trickster, for, like them, he is a psychologist (though few of them would know the meaning of the word) and, like them, he knows exactly how to handle a mug when he meets one.

Now the mug's only defence is the knowledge that he is a mug; and by mug I don't necessarily mean a complete sucker, but anyone who through conceit, sentiment or thoughtlessness is liable to spill the beans and give away more than he should. If you know you're vulnerable in any of these respects, you can guard against them; but if you reckon that you are far too smart to be caught out by anyone, you're a mug just the same without the safeguard of knowing it.



# MAINTENANCE BACKS THEM UP

By LAC. S. CHESWORTH

I was in Maintenance Flight when the first 1,000 bomber raid was planned. The fortnight before the raid was the busiest time of my life.

We knew that something was in the air, but no gen filtered through the fog of hush-hush that surrounded our activities. A cautious Chiefy merely told us that we could expect plenty of work and then some more work. He need not have wasted his breath, we knew that already. A steady stream of kites began to appear in number 2 hangar.

On my Squadron, A and B flights look after the daily servicing of aircraft, minor and running repairs, and adjustments. The aircraft are turned into Maintenance with strict regularity for periodic inspections. We were not always very hard pressed. Although the aircraft were busy, we managed to cope with the work comfortably. Now, however, we realized that we should really have to

get stuck into it, if our Squadron was going to do its share in the forthcoming "do".

"Wheel 'em in and let's get cracking" was the order of the day.

The aircraft were wheeled in with such good effect that we had turned out as many in the first three days as in a normal week.

There was an increased flow of periodic inspections due to extra flying. Besides this, initial inspections had to be made on new aircraft that were constantly arriving to swell our strength. Everyone was busy from the harassed store keeper to the active figure with gold on his cap, who strolled quietly round one day to see how things were going. He was not disappointed.

A great change came over everyone. A fellow who in the past seemed just an ordinary "erk" suddenly became purposeful and determined. He knew that this job depended on his best

efforts for success. He seemed to realize that no matter how courageous the crew of the aircraft might be, guts would not help them if their engines packed up.

There was an expectant feeling in the atmosphere. Still no one knew what it was all about. The influx of kites went on. Each one was promptly seized by a small army of fitters, riggers, W.T. electrical and instrument people.

My crew finished one aircraft about lunch time. They heaved a sigh of relief as it went out of the hangar for its ground run. Before its engines were cold we had the cowlings off another. While I was checking the magnetos, my hoboe was doing things to the propeller. Riggers were dope spraying and armourers testing the turrets. Yet another machine was made ready.

So it went on, until the big day arrived. It began with no inkling of the events that were to happen before the sun rose again. It was not until 11.00 hours that we received any gen at all. Even then, it was scrappy enough.

The whole of the squadron turned out to watch the take-off.

It was a grand night with a nip in the air. Standing on the edge of the tarmac, I thought of just such a similar night not so very long ago when I stood looking regretfully at what had once been a very smart little Morris 8. Behind me was my badly-scarred house with its back door blown off by a Jerry 500-pounder.

Those civvy street days seemed deep in the past. Seeing the bombers ready to take off, gave me a feeling, however, of great satisfaction. We were giving it now and not taking it, and I was helping to do it. It rather evened the score.

The first kite started up at dispersal. Others followed its lead. The airfield seemed suddenly alive with the heart beats of four-score engines.

The flare-path had been going for some time. Now more lights appeared as the first kite taxied out for the take-off. A minute or two later, the C.O.'s J for Johnny came down the flare-path, with engines roaring at top revs as she left the deck, climbed and then circled.

The second aircraft was already half way down the flare-path and before she was air-borne another had started.

Soon the night sky was filled with a challenging note of many well-laden Wimpeys. One by one they disappeared, until the last had gone.

The Mechs and Riggers gathered round the cosy stove in the dispersal hut, smoking and yarning with their thoughts on one particular soap-box and its crew. Just about now it would be crossing the French coast. The fire-tender and crash-ambulance would be standing out there, just in case.

Well, there was nothing more that we could do. Our job was done and we could turn in. We were tired, but we had the satisfaction of knowing that every aircraft was right on the top line. I learned later that we had actually sent more aircraft than was ever expected. In Chiefy's own words: "It was a good show."

Maintenance flight takes a big share in these bombing operations. It means hard work and not much time off. It is worth the grind when you see the kites roar off to shatter the German war machine, knowing that you have made them engine perfect.

Our work is more varied than at dispersal and consequently more interesting. There are magnetos and carburettors to check, contact breakers to adjust to the finest degree, props to go over and so on, varying with the type of engine.

Now and then, in the course of an inspection, we come up against a real teaser. I remember one particularly difficult case when F for Freddie came in for an overhaul. We checked her over thoroughly and apart from one or two items of minor importance, we found her Wiz-oh. She went out for the test run up and we thought that we were finished with her.

We opened the throttles wide and watched the rev needle creep round to the maximum revs and the boost needle indicate the correct boost. Then we throttled back to check the magnetos. This is done by switching off first one magneto and then the other on each engine and checking the drop in revs on the counter which should not exceed 50. The port engine was all right, but when

we ran on the port magneto of the starboard engine, we found that we were dropping 100.

A process of elimination is the only way to correct this fault. Usually the cause is a duff plug. We don't take the plugs out one by one and test each separately. That would take too long. We draw a new set of plugs from the plug-bay and return the suspected set for checking while we are getting on with the job.

We still got that 100 drop.

The next move was to check the magneto. We had the cover off and examined the contact breaker. We inspected the distributor block and rotor. We also gave each lead a continuity test with the lamp and battery. There was nothing wrong

with them so we had to check the leads for insulations. Although we knew that there was no actual break in any of the leads, that did not mean that the H.T. current from the magneto was getting to the plug.

If the insulation was weak for some reason, then current would short back to earth via the harness. And after further tests, we found this to be the case. It did not take long to put that right, now that we had tracked down the fault. On the following day, another painted bomb was added to the already impressive collection on F for Freddie's port side.

It is things like that that add interest to the job. That and the fact that it is a great chance to get a whack at Public Enemy No. 1.

### A word in your ear

*IT is customary for airmen to make friends with families in the town or village near their station and to visit them during off-duty hours. And very nice too, so long as the airmen use discretion and do not make their visits too frequent. People like to do their best to make the lads in the Services feel welcome. Some of them have sons or daughters of their own in uniform and gladly offer a "Home from home" to airmen stationed nearby.*

*It is to be regretted that some airmen accept these humble offerings to the full without giving a thought to the sacrifices they entail, for their visits can mean real hardship to a humble homestead.*

*For example, all the principal foods are rationed or on points, so someone must go short of what the airmen eat and drink and the more frequent their visits, the greater the chunk which comes off their benefactor's weekly allowance. And there can be no return visits!*

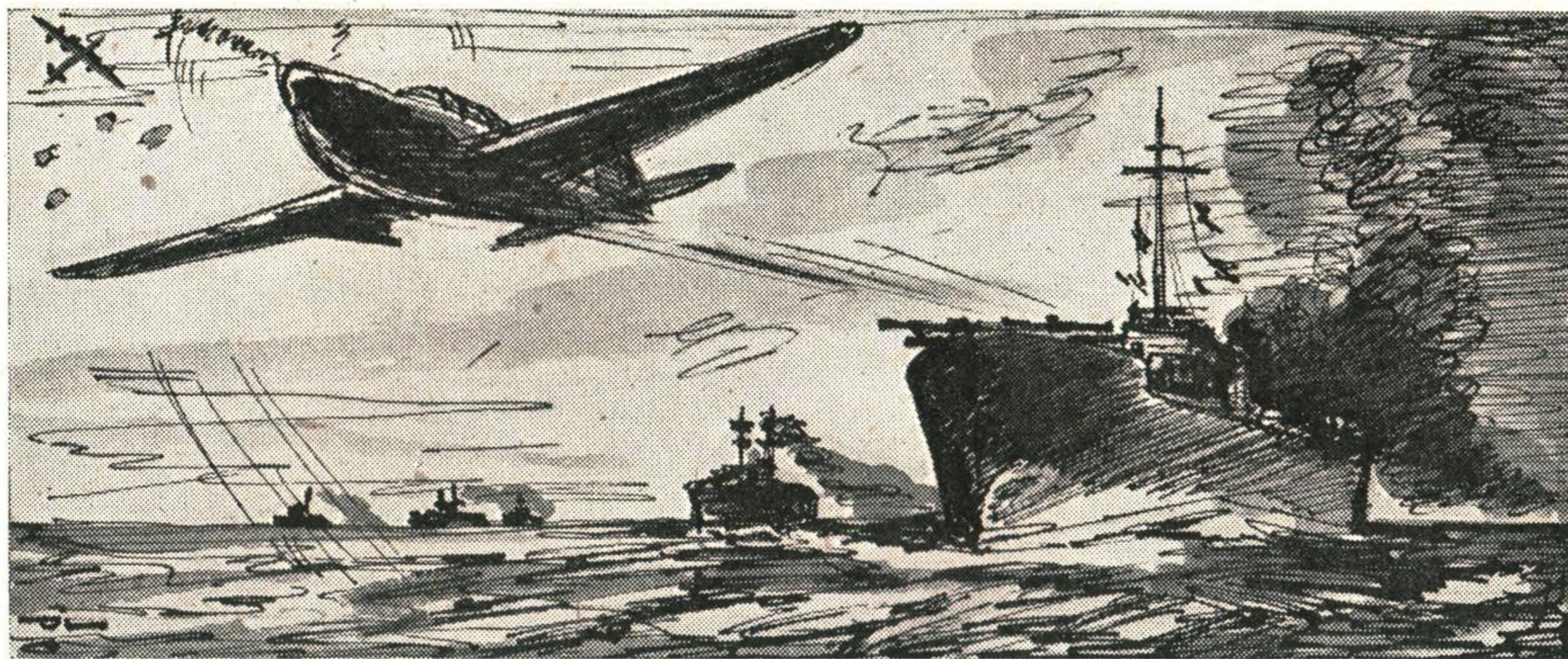
*An airman will not perhaps realize that by keeping his friends up late at night he is causing them to consume extra coal and lighting, fuel that can ill be spared, especially if those friends live in a small village where coal and paraffin may be difficult to get.*

*They may play games which they hate like poison, if they give him pleasure, and will turn a deaf ear to the clock which so steadily ticks out the warning that they will be feeling very tired when they get up to begin work early in the morning.*

*You may say "Why, then, do they do it? Why don't they tell him not to come or to clear out?"*

*It's just that they remember their own sons in uniform, stationed far away and know how they would feel if they could not find a welcome somewhere and were left to their own devices and, perhaps, to the influence of comrades of doubtful qualifications.*

*It's up to everyone to make the most of circumstances and get the greatest value out of life. But it should not be at the expense of the other fellow. It should also be remembered that he gets most out of life who puts most into it.*



## Flying with the Red Duster

By FLYING OFFICER  
D. LANGDON

WHEN the boys came down to the Mess from dispersal there was Taffy holding up the bar already, with a guest. The guest was an F/O., a very fit-looking chap with a tan that you thought you could get with the sunray lamp at SSQ but never did.

"Meet Pete," said Taffy, "Pete Fisher."

The boys met Pete Fisher. A good type, they decided right away. The boys were usually quick on a phoney, and soon, over their lime and sodas and half cans, they felt right about their first impressions.

"Pete's the boy I've been binding you about for weeks," said Taffy, "M.S.F.U. Remember?"

"M.S.F.U.?" queried Chuck, "What! more mysterious initials?"

"M.S.F.U." said Taffy, "stands for Merchant Service Fighter Unit. Pete flies a kite from a barge or something. Catapulted. Wooooomph! Bags of fun and excitement, eh Pete?"

Pete smiled. The boys had heard Taffy go on about this before. It had been his pet line for some weeks now. But his keenness stuck out a mile and now that this M.S.F.U. chap had shown up, the boys were keen to get the gen from him.

"I didn't come here to press gang all of you into M.S.F.U.," said Pete, "but as Taffy has been interested for some time I promised I'd drop in on my next leave and have a word with him and anyone else who likes the idea. Actually —" (*Ectualleh!*)

chorused the boys, breaking the party up for a few moments—"Okay," Pete went on, "Ectuelleh, M.S.F.U. always want good pilots so if I can spread the gospel I daresay I shall be doing my good deed for the quarter."

The Adj. and two more pilots joined the party at this stage and Pete made a crack about being unaccustomed to public speaking, but took the floor again at the noisy request of Taffy and the others.

"Well, of course," said Pete, "you've got to like the set-up. If you like the idea of sailing in convoy up and down the trade-routes, if you like the sea at all, M.S.F.U. is your baby. Our ship carries one fighter aircraft with a crew of two officer pilots, one R.N. Fighter Directing Officer — the Effdeeh — a fitter, a rigger, a R.T. operator, an armourer and a seaman torpedoman. This is the chap who operates the catapult which shoots you off the rails whenever Jerry is sighted. The job is to get airborne, have a crack at the Boche and then get back to the ship if you're too far away from land or you're running short of juice. The normal way is to bale out and wait to be picked up by the old tub whose job is to spot your fall and send the boat out. This they do like a shot, even when they're in action. Four to seven minutes is the maximum time you're in the drink. Your kite of course goes for a burton, unless there's an aircraft carrier handy. Very often you are

able to fly ashore, and there's a pretty extensive homing organization to help you do this."

"Seems rather a waste of aircraft," said the Adj.

"Not at all," said Pete, just as Taffy was about to tear into the discussion. "The Navy reckons that millions of pounds worth of ships and cargoes protected against long-range Jerries and the U-boats they're spotting for are well worth a Hurricane or two."

"Sorry," said the Adj. "I wasn't listening properly." The boys seized him firmly by the undercart and deposited him quietly under the counter.

"Can anyone play or do you have to have influence?" asked Chuck.

"Aha!" said Pete, "Question time! No, Chuck, all the pilots are experienced men from Fighter Command, and all, if I may say so, are first-rate material and good in combat, for very often you may have to go up for a scrap after long periods without having flown. Bags of money have been spent fitting the steel runway over the fo'castle head and servicing and all that, and success finally depends on the johnny in the cockpit.

"When you join the unit you get your training. You're taught catapulting on a land-based catapult and also deck-landing for putting down on aircraft carriers, and by the time you link up with an F.D.O. and crew and join a ship you're pretty well a veteran at the art. And it may surprise you to know that the catapulting business is child's play and many hundreds of launches have been carried out without a single boob. You learn live parachute descents until it's like falling off a log. It's great fun, and anyway I like it."

"What sort of digs do you get, and how about the leave and pay and so on?" asked the Adj., who had wormed his way to the middle of the party again.

"The living quarters are invariably comfortable," said Pete. "Generally on the bridge and sometimes sharing with your number two. As for the food, I've always found it tops, quite up to a peace time passenger

liner and that's no line-shoot. Streets ahead of anything you get ashore these days."

"And the pay?" asked Chuck, who was still waiting for his last month's allowance.

"Two and nine a day ration allowance and two bob servant allowance. You can draw up to fifteen quid a month from the ship's master against your normal pay. Your victualling account works out at about three-and-six a day but I've been on boats where they'd spit in your eye if you so much as dared to ask for your bill.

"Oh, and leave. You get leave at the end of each voyage and then you go back to your Unit and get a short refresher course. After my fourth trip I'm volunteering for another basinful.

"That's the set-up, and as I say, it's right up my alley. When you put to sea you're virtually a Unit Commander, responsible to the Captain for your crew and the operation of the kite. You have to keep on your toes and keep the boys on theirs too. Things don't always go smoothly and you've got to use your loaf all the time. It's a man-size job anyway.

"You'll probably ask what we do in our spare time. I usually get the Old Man to put me on a turn of watch-keeping and occasionally take a hand at painting. You can study all sorts of things. The airmen get a chance at swotting for remustering or reclassification, and you can always gen up on Navigation from the ship's officers."

"How do you find the Navy?" asked Taffy, as if he didn't know.

"First-rate," said Pete. "A finer bunch I'd never wish to meet. Yes, those boys are good types all right."

"Adj.," said Chuck, pulling the Adj. to him by the lapel, "we'd like all the gen on M.F.U.S. or whatever you call it as soon as you can lay it on."

"And me too," chorused the others. Then Taffy took the spotlight. He waved a scrap of paper. "It's in the bag, fellers," he said.

"Hullo!" boomed the C.O.'s voice just then, startling everybody. "What goes on?"

Taffy introduced Pete and looked rather shy about the whole thing.

"I overheard something about M.S.F.U.," said the C.O. "Were you laying on about it?"

"Well, sir," said Pete, "that was the general idea."

"And I suppose you sold it. Half my ruddy flight will want to join now. You blokes are a menace. As a matter of fact," the C.O. toned down to a whisper, "I've been thinking about it myself, but I don't want the Stationmaster to get wind of it. I wouldn't mind a spot of flying with the red duster."

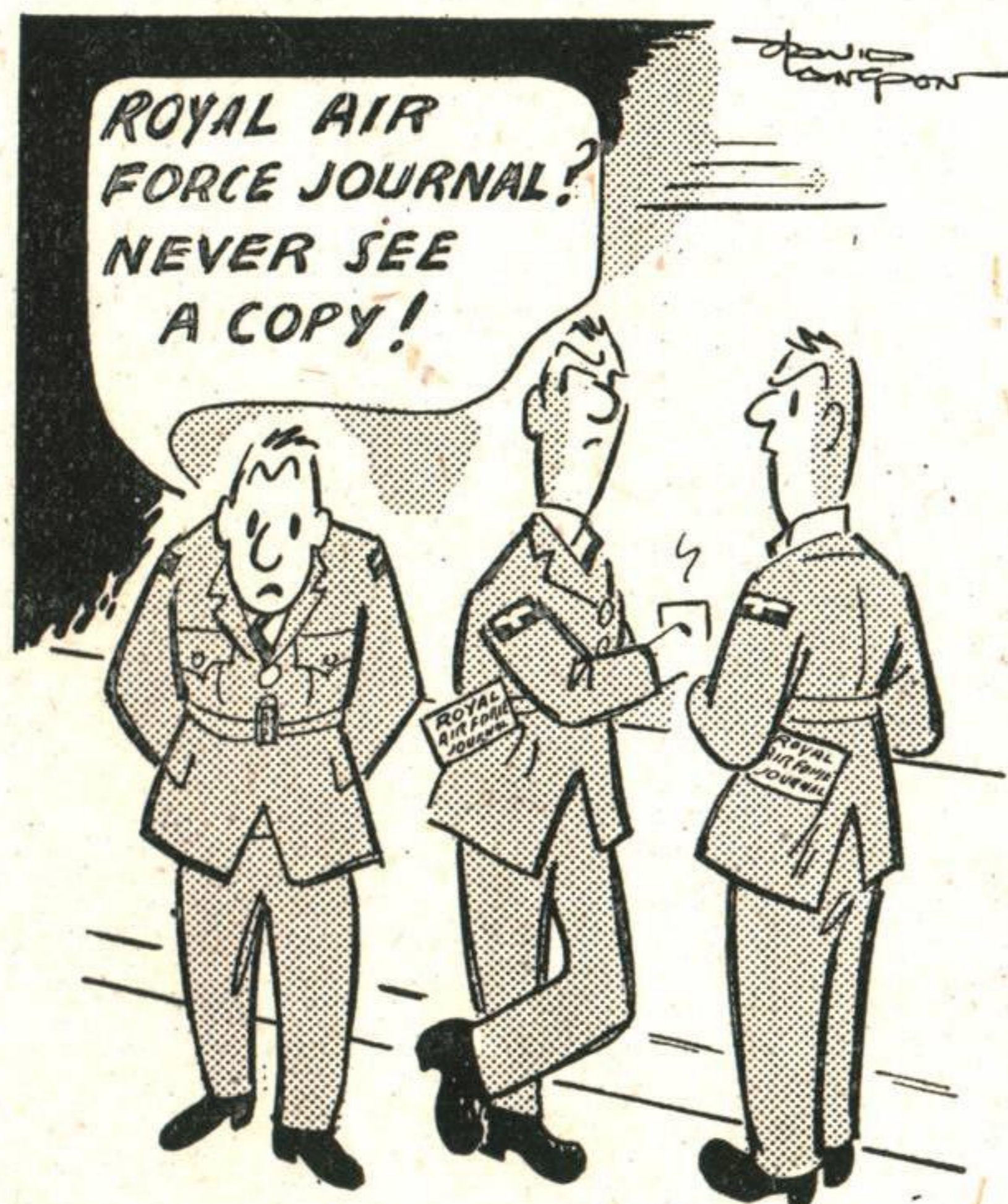
"Do you mind if I put in for a basinful, sir?" said Taffy in a flash.

"No trouble at all," said the C.O.

"No trouble at all."

"Yippee!" said Taffy, "Watch me do the nautical roll, fellers."

They watched him. It was funny all right.



**PLAY THE GAME! LET 'EM CIRCULATE—**

**IMPORTANT**

**A NOTE TO COMMANDING OFFICERS**

The *Royal Air Force Journal* seeks to appeal primarily to non-flying personnel. It is therefore important that all ranks should have the opportunity of reading the *Journal*.

It has come to our notice that a considerable number of airmen and airwomen have neither seen nor heard of the *Royal Air Force Journal*.

We are aware of the difficulties entailed in devising a system of distribution on individual stations and units particularly within the circulation limitation of one copy to every fifty personnel. It is, however, felt that if a little more attention were given by adjutants to the problem, a more equitable distribution would result. Copies of the *Journal* remain too long in pending trays. Quicker circulation will ensure that more people will see the *Journal*.

On investigation, it has been found that some stations have not increased their demands for the *Journal* as requested. (A.M.O. N.1530/42, pars. 5 & 7.)

Much work and effort goes to the production of the *Journal* which contains information of value to the men and women of the Service. It is therefore hoped that Commanding Officers will ensure that their adjutants have applied for additional copies and are distributing them in the widest possible manner.

# Paper Tale

By LAC BERNARD SMITH

**E**NOUGH paper must have been saved in the R.A.F. to paper the Great Wall of China. For long after the War we shall retain a feeling of guilt whenever we use a new envelope, or write on paper which hasn't already got something on the other side. Like the black-out and doing without bananas, paper saving has become a habit.

Despatch Clerks who have grown grey in the Service will tell you how beautifully simple sending off the mail used to be in the days when a stack of virgin envelopes lay always ready to hand. In this, no doubt, they err, for it is inconceivable that despatching mail by Service procedure could ever have been really simple. But relatively simple it undoubtedly was.

For consider the plight of the Despatch Clerk to-day. The time is 16.15 hrs. and he has before him the usual pile of correspondence, of assorted sizes, shapes and destinations. This pile has to be sorted out and battened down before the D.R.L.S. zero hour at 17.00. To those who merely sign letters, this must seem a reasonable time for the operation. And so, in favourable circumstances, it might be. Unfortunately, circumstances to-day are never favourable: the best that can be said about them is that sometimes (though not often) they are somewhat (though not much) more favourable than others.

We will skip the initial stages—the feverish scribbling in registers, the frantic scrawling of 247's—for age cannot wither nor custom render any more stale their infinite monotony. These preliminaries



*Paper Saving habit*

accomplished, all that remains to be done is to put the sorted and docketed correspondence into envelopes, address the latter, and send them off. All? The little more, and how much it is!

The next step is to choose the envelopes. The Despatch Clerk takes a pile of them from the cupboard and, having discarded those which are too small, those which disintegrate in his hands like fragments of ancient papyrus, and those of the pernicious "window" type, he eventually selects the required number. It is a motley collection, in various stages of decrepitude. Some of the envelopes have accumulated so many labels that they are now many times their original thickness. Peeling off the uppermost strata it is possible to discern the fossilised remains of ancient addresses, which the expert will be able to place as dating from the palaeo-Stirling era. But the Despatch Clerk has no time for archaeological surmises.

His next concern is to stick still more labels on the appropriate places. In this connection his chief bugbear is the envelope which, like Gaul, is divided into three parts: front, back and flap. The reassembling of such a wrapper from its constituent parts will consume four strips of gummed paper and three minutes of precious time. There are, too, other enormities, such as the envelope which has become holed in the course of repeated transit, or the one which tears apart when a wad of Interceptions/Tactics reports is inserted. In both cases there is delay while First Aid is applied.

When the contents have



*Labels. Ugh!*

been put in, the labels stuck on and addressed, references annotated and the SECRET stamp applied, there is still a further step to be taken. Each envelope will bear, on an average, some eleven addresses, and unless ten of these have been effectively obliterated, complications are liable to ensue.



What of other forms of paper saving? Here again much has been accomplished. Faced by the admonitory notice on every typewriter, clerks are careful not to use a bigger sheet than is needed, to type on both sides of the paper, to single-space, and to leave not more than one inch margin. Forms and file-covers have shrunk to such a degree that the only further possibility in this direction would be to learn the art of microscopic writing, in the manner of those who engrave the Lord's Prayer on threepenny bits. If this were to be done, we could have 295's the size of tram tickets. Since, however, it would then be necessary to issue Officers, Clerks and Service Police with magnifying glasses the idea has little to commend it.

Such wastage of paper as still occurs can be largely ascribed to the duplicating process. The Gestetner is a sort of Moloch into whose insatiable maw whole reams of paper are fed, to emerge all too often mainly as waste product. If the equipment is in proper order, and the operator careful and experienced, the number of sheets spoiled even on a long run will be only small; but if the roller and the silk are worn, the stencils badly cut or the operator is careless or unversed, the number of dud sheets will be nobody's business. They will become "Secret Waste" in more senses than one. The remedy is to ensure that only experienced personnel operate the machine and to keep it in good working order. It is false economy to put off even major repairs or replacements.

Just one more point.

A little austerity is called for in the matter of opening new files. There are people who delight in opening whole new series of files at the slightest provocation. This is the sort of thing that happens. Suppose a new type of equipment—code word Gremlins—is being tried out. When the first letter on the subject comes to hand, somebody seizes the filing list gleefully, selects a number, and inscribes:—"00361—Gremlins—Policy." A few days later preliminary reports arrive, and another new file makes its appearance:—"00361/1—Gremlins, Reports on." This is followed in quick succession by:—

- 00361/2—Gremlins—Trials.
- 00361/2/1 — Gremlins — Trials — Reports on.
- 00361/3—Gremlins—Conferences.
- 00361/4 — Gremlins — Operational, Use of.
- 00361/5—Gremlins—Failures.
- 00361/5/1 — Gremlins — Failures — Reports on.

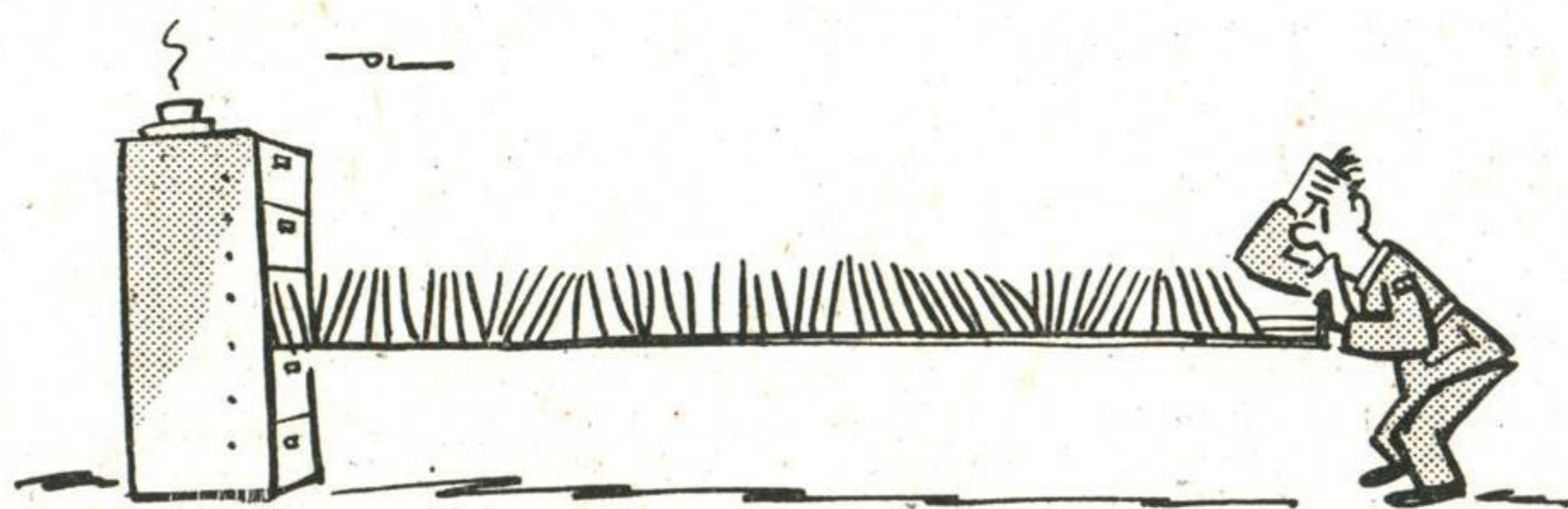
By this time there are eight brand-new files in the cabinet, containing altogether a sum total of not more than fourteen enclosures. It then transpires that Gremlins are a flop. So the whole subject is speedily dropped, its only memorial a row of slim files littering the cabinet. This mania for excessive classification wastes not only file covers, but also time and temper. For supposing an officer, morbidly desiring to exhume the subject, asks for a letter about Gremlins. He who classified the correspondence is now exercising his ingenuity overseas and his harassed successor has to look through not one file but eight. And very often one of these eight, as happens with cadaverous files, has slipped down beneath others out of sheer malnutrition, or has been swallowed by one of its more corpulent brethren.



295's like tram tickets

There is much more that could be said about saving paper, but it won't

be said here in case we're accused of wasting it.



## IN THE DARK

By E. S. Lewis

**H**OW would you like to work in a total black-out all through the day? Even miners in the pits have lamps to see by. Imagine working all day and every day without a glimmer of light . . . .

Hundreds of women are doing this willingly; probably you've never given them a thought. They are the girls who work on the photograph films for R.A.F. cameras.

It's hard to convey the dismaying effect of a first visit to one of their workshops.

The outer entrance is flanked by a maze of zig-zag walls, painted with a broad white line to guide you through the gathering dark. Inside, a faint red glow only just indicates the lines of the passage. Somebody guides you towards an unsuspected doorway hung with heavy leather curtains. Squirming round this impediment, you find yourself standing inside a jet black space, completely blind. Machinery is whirring close by, you don't know where or what it is. But, you are conscious that this pitch-black cavern is full of silent people.

Hands push you forward to safety, it's an ineffable relief to feel you are out of the way of those spinning belts and wheels.

Something clatters by—a trolley pushed by an unseen ghost. If anyone comes in here unexpectedly, they must either whistle or sing out "Mind me!" as a warning of their passing presence.

There isn't a gleam anywhere. Voices come and go, people seem to

move, but you remain rooted thankfully to one spot. After perhaps twenty minutes, if you look upwards, you begin to discern an elusive suggestion of something overhead. They've told you there's some light up there, but you can't believe it at first. Presently you realise it's just a kind of thinning of the gloom that traces the aisles between the machines in that utter dark below. If you venture forward with that as a guide, you will find yourself standing behind someone working a machine, though nothing shows but the luminous dial of a watch by which the girl is working.

These girls reel, cut, and seal the film with gloved hands in the dark more easily than you could in broad daylight. They make no fuss about their peculiarly trying job, and no new hand has ever been known to apply for a return to the light of day. The work is far less trying to their eyes than that in some of the other rooms where a dim red light can be shown. The air in film work-rooms must be absolutely free from dust. It is very carefully conditioned and perhaps accounts for the high standard of health of dark-room workers.

But are these girls downhearted? Not on your life. They seemed surprised at the idea that they were doing anything at all out of the way.

They just said it was "all right".

I thought so too. I thought they were all right, and that Britain would be all right as long as it had girls like those.

# “Calling

## all

# WAAF”

**C**OOKS! I wonder how long I can go on writing about them before something disastrous happens to my reading public. Probably haven't got one anyway. Perhaps I'm writing to myself? Ah well . . . New breath. Start again. Cooks! In their neat white—like nurses. Tending to the morale and welfare of the inner man and inner woman. With the best stove-side manner. Men are slaves to their stomachs. So are women. Count me out. We are all slaves to the cooks. And as far as I can see they are the ones who are going to live happily ever after—when this is all over. It's a short step from the war-time kitchen to the post-war home.

I don't like cooking. I'm very bad at it. I always take avoiding action on any call to the kitchen front. But I'm afraid I'm coming round to the disturbing decision that a woman without that side of her attractions very well in hand is not an attractive woman. So now I'm at it. In a small way, mind you. Potatoes and carrots and simple frying and that sort of thing first. No blue-riband candidate, me—yet. But I've learnt my lesson from the movie, “Woman of the Year.” The sequence which takes place in the kitchen is funny but—oh dear! Katie (to her admirers) Hepburn proves that as America's Woman of the Year she hasn't quite made it. In the realms of literature and public affairs and whatnot she is lengths ahead but in the realms of domesticity she is an also-ran. And it all ends in tears. So take a tip from K-k-katie. And You'll find opportunity waiting at the K-k-k-k-k-Kitchen door.



*FROM the Outside Looking In.*

You probably never see a newspaper. And if you do—only one at a time. So you don't get a complete picture of what the public are saying about the WAAF. But every day in every newspaper the WAAF make news. Once or twice a week they make headlines. Collectively, when the Press visit R.A.F. Stations and record with enthusiasm the activities of Balloon Operators, Flight Mechanics, Parachute Packers, and—yes!—*Cooks!* And individually, when such stories

crop up as the A/S/O who distinguished herself by diving out of a moving train into a river to rescue a drowning child.

I thought you'd like to know. It might serve to remind you, if you needed reminding, that you are in a perpetual limelight. The smallest thing you do makes news—good or bad. You are conspicuous in uniform. And when you walk in the streets or go into shops you want to look as if you were making some sort of attempt to live up to the headlines. Treat civilians to your best manners always. Look your brightest and best. And be at your most courteous. And everybody will be on your side.

\* \* \*

*TOO Clever For Me.*

A WAAF was asked why she didn't attend a lecture on her station. She replied that she didn't think she would be interested as it seemed to her that "ANTI-GAS TALK" was a contradiction in terms. Lecturing Officers have to put up with a lot of this sort of thing. They have to have all their wits about them with so many "wits" about them. Spare them.

\* \* \*

*YOUR Obedient Servant.*

I'm not going to write about the way some WAAF (especially in London) don't salute their officers—or anybody else's officers for that matter when they pass them in the street. I could write a long history on the origin of saluting and Why you salute and all the rest of it. But people are always doing that and it's just like water off a duck's back—it goes in one ear and gathers no moss. I could repeat over and over again—like a hurdy gurdy—that it offends the dignity of things in just the same way as not standing up when they play God Save the King. But I think that the only result would be that it would draw people's attention to the worst things about the WAAF. And that wouldn't do. For, apart from anything else, the R.A.F. might read it.

There is a popular song, isn't there? which goes something like this—

*Arm in arm together  
Through every kind of weather  
Stepping out to something, some-  
thing, something.*

Anyway. This is absolutely FINE. But not in uniform. Walking arm in arm with your boy friend or whoever makes saluting difficult. Correction! Impossible. Besides, it's indiscreet. And you want to be discreet about your affections. Remember—Discretion is the better part of Glamour.

J. N.

PORTRAIT.

Pencil drawing by  
AC A. M. GALT.

Awarded First Prize for  
the best serious drawing.



# THE IT IN A SPIT

By ACW1 A. M. Douglas

I wonder if it has ever occurred to other R.A.F. personnel to consider what is the It in a Spit, and who puts it there. Why is it that the Spitfire seems to have more personality than any other Kite in the Service; if personality, that strictly human quality, can be applied to an object which is actually inanimate, which is composed of rubber and dural alloy, oil and screws, instruments and sparking plugs, armament and ammunition, in intricate combination.

What is the mysterious It in a Spit which inspires the film producers to "The First of the Few", eulogising the beauty and grace of this fighter plane, in union with the skill of its pilot? Could it be its epic battle prowess, its swift strength, its symmetrical lines? Could it be the skilful blending of all these qualities to form a perfect whole, a complete one?

And who puts the It in a Spit? Could it be the designer, the builder, the pilot? . . . or all three? I did not know. I wanted to find out.

Our camp is an O.T.U. dispersed to a remote region of rural England. We train a large number of prospective pilots, and, believe me, we are kept very busy.

On fine days flying is continuous from before dawn till after dusk, and I often think that, if the Spits were animate, they would sometimes wonder if the flap of the Battle of Britain was not a "piece of cake" in comparison with the non-stop hard work they have to do on this O.T.U.

I work in Operations so my job never takes me near the hangars or dispersals. They say one half of the world does not know how the other half lives; perhaps it is ever more true to say that one Section of a big Station does not know how the other Sections work.

I had a free afternoon so I decided to cycle round the perim. and try to discover who put the It in a Spit.

It was a nice day, of course; personnel in snug offices do not usually

yearn for the free open spaces of the perim. when winter winds blow sleet or snow across its unsheltered flatness.

The vast, green expanse recalled to me vivid memories of canteen work in the bitter weather of last winter. It brought back visions of the snowbound wastes of bleak Norfolk airfields, of stiff, dead kites frozen down to "ice-rink" dispersals, the chill, dreary flapping of their icicled tarpaulins, the only sign of movement about them; of perished blue Erks, grinning a brave joke about the heat wave as they thawed their stiff hands round the cup of tea you handed them. Of Flight Mechs. fighting the dreadful, foot-stamping war, day in, day out, against the bitter winter, chilled to the bone by the north-easterlies which blew a ceaseless white blizzard, for nearly three months, horizontally across an equally white, glacier-like, airfield, its iced dispersals receding into a shroud of cutting snowflakes.

But to-day I was tempted to dawdle, especially as I was on a quest. I spoke to an Erk, busy on a Kite. He said he had worked on Spits for seven years. He told me, as he handled an oily plug lovingly, that he thought the Spit was the most beautiful Kite in the Service, and he hoped he would be able to work on it for another seven years.

I chatted to a Sergeant-Instructor who had been reading "Fighter Pilot." We looked at all the Spits dispersed round the airfield.

"Yes," he said. "The Battle of Britain. Four months, and his engine never missed a beat . . . there's *ground* work for you!"

I stopped at the outermost dispersal to watch a Spit being refuelled from the travelling petrol pump which trundles round all day. The tractor driver, pumping vigorously, confided to me, above the noise, that he took as much pride in his Spit as did its Pilot and Flight Mechs.

I wanted to speak all afternoon to these grimy, oily Erks, but they were

much too preoccupied with their Spit even to notice me. As I watched them it seemed to me that there was something almost unusual about these Flight Mechs. and the Tractor Erks; they were so busy, so keen on their job, so engrossed in their precious Kite.

As the Spit taxi-ed away on to the runway, we watched it, the Flight Mechs., the Tractor Erks, and me . . . and we all agreed that she was a beautiful Kite. They told me, as they moved away to the next dispersal, that they loved their work.

One, a Durham ex-miner, lingered. I can think of no greater contrast in jobs than coming from the black depths of a coal mine to work on an open dispersal in the green depths of the country.

We talked about the Spit, me and the Flight Mech., as we watched the pride of his heart take the air and fly freely away, folding up its wheels, gladly relinquishing all association with the restricting earth.

"Yes," he said, "she's a grand Kite.

She's got everything. Lovely lines, tip-top engine, strength and speed."

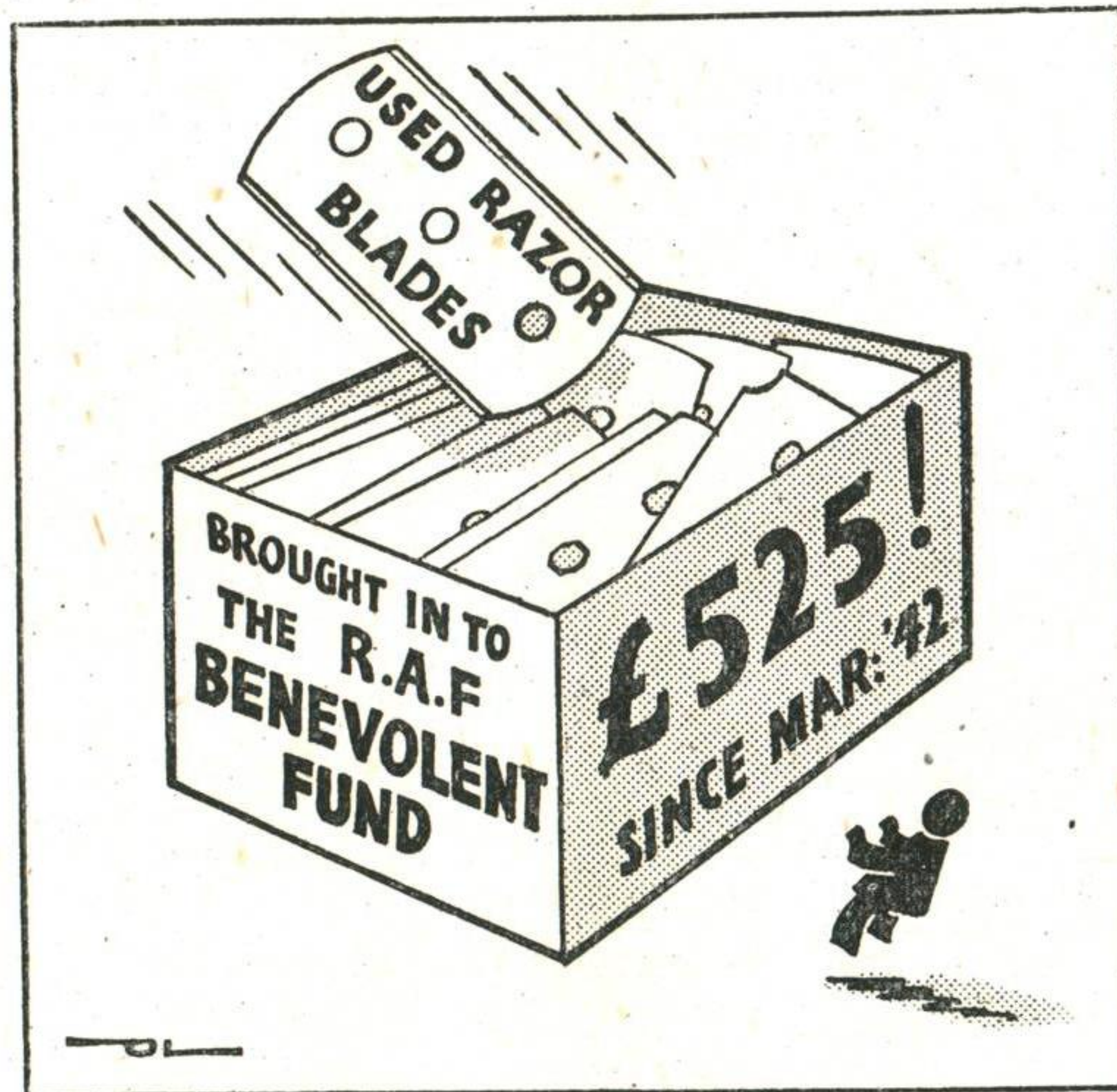
"Yes," I thought, "and her Flight Mechs. and Tractor Erks are worthy of their charge. Hard work, dawn till dusk, rain or shine, . . . and no wings. Only a few props or two grimy hard-working stripes," and I looked at another half-dozen Spits receiving their It from these few Erks.

"Per Ardua," I said to the Flight Mech., as we watched his Kite disappearing into the blue distance.

He picked up his grubby tool bag and grinned at me. "Ad Infinitum," he said, as he trudged off to the next dispersal.

I called at the Education Office on my way back. The duty Erk kindly looked up the Latin book for me. It said that "Ad Infinitum" meant seven days a week from dawn to dusk—all day.

As I cycled back to WAAF site for tea it seemed to me that I had spent a very profitable and satisfactory afternoon. I had discovered, I felt, who the men were who put the It in a Spit.



# Book Reviews • By W. GORDON-WILLIAMS.

'Signed With Their Honour' by James Aldridge (Michael Joseph 9s. 6d. net).

'Coastal Command at War' by S/Ldr. Tom Dudley Gordon (Jarrolds 7s. 6d. net).

THE game of Last Across is on the wane. All the last Foreign Correspondents out of Germany have written all their last impressions. All the evacuees from Paris have held autopsies, inquests and Courts of Enquiry on Why France Fell. Now comes the turn of those who are actually in the fighting services.

Several books of this kind have already been published. Naturally many have come from the Royal Air Force. Speaking from memory as a reviewer of War Books for the *Sunday Times* after the last war, the average standard of these is very much higher than it was, even though this war has not thrown up a poet of the quality of Rupert Brooke nor a novel as outstandingly good as Mr. H. G. Wells' *Mr. Britling Sees it Through*.

We have, however, had Richard Hillary's superb autobiographical study *The Last Enemy*.

Here are two others which make a very definite contribution to the literature of this war.

In *Signed With Their Honour*—a somewhat sloppily sentimental title taken from a poem by Stephen Spender—Mr. Aldridge gives a grand picture of the R.A.F. in Greece and Crete. Were one describing this book as a film publicist, one would say in increasingly large letters—Thrills, Laughter, Tears, Romance.

There is so much in it to appeal both to R.A.F. readers and to the general public. It is written in a breezy style with the pen of youth and enthusiasm by a man who really saw, knew, and felt what he was writing about. From it one can appreciate what the R.A.F. were up against in Greece; one can share the enthusiastic reception they got from the Greeks. There is too the pathetically humorous

account of that magnificent Greek hero, Nitralixis, flying his 1918 Bréguet on reconnaissance. The thrilling account of the R.A.F. officer crashing on the wrong side of the enemy lines and his escape with Nitralixis, and a primitive mountain dweller with a passion to possess a revolver which makes him quite ready to commit a couple of murders, back to devastated Janina. And then the journey to Crete; the fighting there and eventually the arrival in Egypt. Threading through it all (for this book is in the form of a novel), is the love story of the R.A.F. officer for the Greek girl.

*Coastal Command at War* is in a rather more serious and historical vein with a foreword by Air Chief Marshal Sir Philip Joubert. Coastal Command is known to a few as the Cinderella of the Air Force for the limelight of publicity on the R.A.F. has gone to the Fighters and Bombers. Indeed it may be called the super-silent service. Much of its work is dull, dreary reconnaissance over thousands of miles of sea; U-Boat hunting; the laying of mines in enemy waters; convoying ships, and met. work. It calls for the steady, reliable type rather than the brilliant, spasmodic character. But it had its share in the Battle of Britain; it has taken its part in bombing raids on the continent. It found the *Bismark*; it crippled the *Lutzow* and drove her back to the Kiel Canal. It actually captured a U-Boat intact, it damaged the *Gneisenau*. And it goes on and on and on in its tiring, harrowing job of guarding our ships at sea in all weathers, in all conditions. Never getting browned off! never wearying.

*Coastal Command at War* is a valuable contribution to the history of the Royal Air Force.

## AIRCRAFTHANDS (G.D.)

IT is of the utmost importance that all suitable ACH's/GD2 should remuster to a trade. For your guidance we have set out below a list of trades for which aircrafthand trainees are required. Although it is not possible for this list to be entirely up-to-date, it will give you a good indication of the requirements of the Service.

### TRADES IN WHICH AIRMEN TRAINEES ARE REQUIRED

TRADES IN APPROXIMATE ORDER OF PRIORITY	MEDICAL AND AGE RESTRICTIONS	REMARKS																								
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## PRIZE WINNERS

### Officers (R.A.F. and W.A.A.F.)

1st Prize : FLIGHT LIEUTENANT  
C. H. WARD-JACKSON  
for *Half-a-Day's Pay—A  
Year* (Page 16)

2nd Prize : SQUADRON LEADER  
H. E. BLYTH for *Poor  
Little Crippled Annie*  
(Page 20)

### Airwomen

1st Prize : ACW. A. M. DOUGLAS  
for *The It In A Spit*  
(Page 33)

2nd Prize : No other article received  
from W.A.A.F. reached  
the required standard

### Airmen

1st Prize : LAC. B. SMITH for *Paper  
Tale* (Page 28)

2nd Prize : CORPORAL C. R.  
WOODWARD for *T. T.  
Flight\**

### Serious Drawing

1st Prize : AC. A. M. GALT for  
*Portrait* (Page 32)

2nd Prize : LAC. W. A. CONNOR \*

\* Held over for lack of space.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

The Royal Air Force and the Women's Auxiliary Air Force abound with talent. In the past it has been difficult to persuade even a few of these bright types to write or draw for the Journal. We want articles on every branch and trade of the Service. We want to print the experiences and activities of Aircrew, Tradesmen, the R.A.F. Regiment, Administration and so on. If you can write a good letter you can write an article.

## PRIZES

To encourage you, we are offering a number of prizes for the best article that we receive before **March 23, 1943.**

**1st Prize £3 0 0      2nd Prize £1 0 0**

The above prizes will be awarded to *each* of the following groups :—

**Officers (R.A.F.)      Airmen.      Officers and Airwomen (W.A.A.F.)**

We will also give a prize of £2 0 0 and a second prize of 10s. for the best serious drawing.

- RULES :**
1. Contributions should be addressed to :—The Editor, Royal Air Force Journal, Directorate of Personal Services, Air Ministry, Adastral House, Kingsway, London.
  2. Please indicate under which of the three prize groups you are competing and write "Prize" in the left hand corner of your envelope.
  3. The greatest care should be taken that your article does not infringe security regulations. If you are in any doubt, you should ask the Security Officer of your Unit.
  4. Articles should not be longer than a thousand words, should be either a serious or humorous contribution on any angle of Service life, and should not have been published elsewhere.
  5. The Editor reserves the right to publish any article or drawing and to make such alteration as he may think necessary.
  6. All contributions must be received by March 23, 1943. As many as possible of the prize winning groups will be announced in the April issue of the Journal.
  7. Public Relations Officers may not compete in this competition.

# A.C.2 BILLY BROWN



## SALVAGE.

**S**ave every piece of string and rag  
And put it in its proper bag ;  
Metal, paper, every scrap—  
Put Station Salvage on the map.

You'd be surprised if you but knew  
How many tons you can accrue :  
So be a Salvage Scrounger NOW  
(The Salvage types will show you how.)

87,168 TONS OF SALVAGE WERE  
COLLECTED IN THE R.A.F. LAST YEAR.