

EXTRACT from Diary compiled by Flight Sergeant Hatter  
No. 263 Squadron (Maintenance Flight).

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7<sup>th</sup> May, 1940.

Embarked on S.S. "Chrobry", a Polish Liner. Accommodation not too bad. This is an emigrant ship and smells like it. Sailed at 22.30.

8<sup>th</sup> May.

At sea with two destroyers - this ship goes well but rolls a bit - grub is foul - crew mainly Poles, some of whom have already been in shipwreck since war began. They seem scared stiff of possibility of air attack.

9<sup>th</sup> May.

At sea - not too smooth - glad I'm a good sailor. Anti-aircraft gun practice. It gets darned cold.

10<sup>th</sup> May.

Sighted land in distance about 19.00 hrs. - it seems all snowy peaks - picturesque but inhospitable looking. In the evening we were issued with cold weather clothing and plenty of it.

11<sup>th</sup> May.

Get up to find ourselves sailing slowly up a fiord - on each side snow covered mountains rose out of the water, which after the last few days seems unbelievably calm. Anchored off place called Harstadt. Eventually we were put on Norwegian fiord boats - they call 'em "puffers" - and went to another quay to collect rations. The Army people seem overjoyed to see us, though they don't know we haven't any aeroplanes yet - they seem to be having a rough time from Jerry's Air Force. Moved off and travelled for 5 ½ hours up and down fiords - beautiful country but we gradually got too darned cold to enjoy it. Arrived at place called Sjoveien, our destination. Had a bad five minutes just before arriving when 3 nasty looking seaplanes went over us - think they must have been Norwegians. Got our stuff ashore and were directed to billets by Norwegian Officers. I was put in the local Post Master's house along with Grant, James, Diggins and one or two more N.C.O's.

12<sup>th</sup> May.

Very cold. No sign of grub so wandered round and discovered a few Signals chaps, who fixed us up for some brekker. After this the cooks found a place to cook in, so we were all right. This is a tiny hamlet on the edge of a fiord. Sanitation nil - we are told not to drink the water. There are a couple of shops, but prices are outrageous.

13<sup>th</sup> May.

The weather is grand and incredibly warm for the Arctic Circle. Not much to do - boiled some water and washed some things. These Norwegians seem to like us but are scared of the Germans and seem almost to be convinced of their invincibility.

14<sup>th</sup> May.

Steamer arrived with load of stores so we have been busy unloading - its all hard graft. Two ships arrived in fiord very late. Three naval P.O's shared our billet - hear we get some vehicles to-morrow.

15<sup>th</sup> May.

Vehicles brought ashore from ships in fiord. Had our first air raid - most alarming business. No damage done though Jerry nearly hit one of the ships which we understood had a big load of T.N.T. aboard - very lucky miss. Loaded the vehicles for Bardufoss but had to unload them to send Polish soldiers out for parachute troops - false alarm. Loaded up again and away went lorries to 'drome - flight people went in some of the lorries.

16<sup>th</sup> May.

Loading and dispatching convoys to B. - hard work - more alarms.

17<sup>th</sup> May.

Loading etc. again. Jimmy James went in charge of convoy - received message about his finish - nasty business.

18<sup>th</sup> May.

Still convoying - heard that second party from Scotland have arrived in this country.

19<sup>th</sup> May.

Still convoying. I took convoy to B. - lousy roads, ruts 2 and 3 feet deep all the way. Had to go on to Sorreis to collect some petrol for B. Got back to Sjoveien after about 18 hours on roads.

20<sup>th</sup> May.

Air raids again. Bombs and machine gunning. Our chaps are getting to be expert and ultra swift climbers getting to a safe spot up the hillside. Grant went out with Sgt. Thompson and a few blokes to bring in a crashed lorry - they were attacked by a Heinkel out in the open and I hear Grant had a very narrow squeak.

21<sup>st</sup> May.

Finished loading. Remainder of Squadron went to Bardufoss. I had to stay with about 8 chaps to bring remnants. The villagers must have heard something - they've all left and gone Lord knows where. Aircraft arrived - two are missing, F/Lt. Mills and P/O Richards.

22<sup>nd</sup> May.

Nothing much doing. This place doesn't seem too bad - at least there are lavatories and one can sometimes get a bath.

23<sup>rd</sup> May.

Air raid alarm. 2 pilots missing, Craig-Adams and Sgt. Whall. Heard Whall is safe, he baled out over Harstadt. Heard P/O Richards is dead.

24<sup>th</sup> May.

Air raid alarm - Messerschmitt 110's. Got two Gladiators in for repair - rather badly shot up.

25<sup>th</sup> May.

Nothing exciting. Heard Kitchener had bagged a 4 engined Junkers and someone else a Heinkel. Understand we've 6 victories so far.

26<sup>th</sup> May.

Air raid by Heinkels; two machines damaged by bomb blast - no casualties though some chaps had remarkable escapes. Worked all night on damaged aircraft.

27<sup>th</sup> May.

Another raid early. Several of us nearly caught in old cement hangar which was hit by bombs - two airmen were killed. W/C Atcherley ordered us to clear out of hangar - went in to collect remnants of our kit. Fixed up engine cover as tent to sleep in. Lousy.

28<sup>th</sup> May.

Loads of work for Maintenance people. News from abroad vague but disquieting - hear situation in France is very serious.

29<sup>th</sup> May.

Air raid warning - no bombs dropped. Collared a ridge tent and fixed it up on hillside in safe spot.

30<sup>th</sup> May.

Weather bad - no flying - no fear of air raids. Had decent night's sleep.

31<sup>st</sup> May.

Nothing - one alarm but our aircraft intercepted and dispersed raiders.

1<sup>st</sup> June.

Nothing much - very little flying. 10 aircraft serviceable - one aircraft being stripped and used for spares.

2<sup>nd</sup> June.

Weather bad a.m. - good p.m. Our aircraft got 10 Jerries today and 46 got two, in Narvik area. One of ours did not come back (P/O Wilkie).

3<sup>rd</sup> June.

Nothing doing. P/O Jacobsen's aircraft is in a bad way - bullet holes all over and one in engine.

4<sup>th</sup> June.

Bad weather. Bad news about France. Rumours that we are being moved.

5<sup>th</sup> June.

Bad weather - working on P/O Jacobsen's aircraft.

6<sup>th</sup> June.

Weather slightly better - stronger rumours of move but don't know where. Idea seems to be move to Skaanland. 1<sup>st</sup> party left for somewhere - told kit will follow. All aircraft serviceable (10).

7<sup>th</sup> June.

Air raid - no bombs dropped - 4 Heinkels over 'drome and heard 3 were shot down or badly damaged. 2<sup>nd</sup> party left for unknown destination.

8<sup>th</sup> June.

Heard rumours of evacuation. Did wrecking work - destroyed all kinds of equipment and petrol. Sent machines off just after 23.00 hrs.

9<sup>th</sup> June.

Left B. at 01.00 hrs - lousy weather - 2 ½ hours in "puffer" and then got a destroyer. 1 ½ hours at full speed and then put aboard "Arandora Star". We were all fagged out, lack of sleep - wet through. Alarm at noon - rumour of Jerry battleships about. Air raid alarm at 23.00 hrs.

10<sup>th</sup> June.

This is a large convoy - lots of warships. Heard rumours Italy declared war.

11<sup>th</sup> June.

Heard "Glorious" had been sunk, also troopship "Orama" - we must have been just lucky. This ship is good - good food.

12<sup>th</sup> June.

Land about - everyone seems more cheerful. Weather good. Firth of Clyde p.m. Disembark to-morrow.

13<sup>th</sup> June.

Went ashore after breakfast. Seems we were not expected. Hung about docks all day. Went to Drem in evening by train. 46 went to Digby.