

WILLIAM'S WAR

My Father, William Gibson, was a London policeman. Although this was a reserved occupation, in 1942 he volunteered to join the RAF, at a time when things were going badly.

He was posted to Canada where no doubt he had a good time, and learned to fly, although ended up as a Navigator.

Once back in England he was posted to 170 Squadron and flew in Lancaster's in the later part of the war, his last 'op' being to drop bread over Holland.

From the navigators position in the aircraft, he could not see out, although he told me that once when it was 'all happening' he moved his position so that he could see out, and what he saw was so terrifying, he never looked out again.

He was fortunate enough to come through without a scratch, although they did have several 'incidents'. One entailed the crew having to 'pee' into the hydraulics reservoir after airborne repairs, so that they could lower the landing gear. Another time they landed with no brakes, overshot the end of the runway, crossed a road and a field and ended up in a farmyard. Another time, somebody forgot to remove the cover from the pitot tube, meaning they had no idea of how fast they were flying. They had to land the plane at a high speed, so that they could be sure they were above the stalling speed.

My Father was very critical of the Air Ministry with regard to the use of large, slow planes, saying that two Mosquitoes could carry the same bomb load as a Lancaster, used the same number of engines, 3 less crew, and due to their high speed, reduced size and manoeuvrability, were rarely shot down. He felt many lives could have been saved if more Mosquitoes had been produced instead of the heavy bombers.

The attached photos are from a scrap book my Father kept, illustrating his experiences during both training and hostile operations. The newspaper cuttings relate to ops he went on.

The last photo shows a greeting card with a picture of a painting that was sold by The Royal Air Forces Association, and although the artist painted a typical Lancaster, the identification lettering he painted on the aircraft, happened to be that of the aircraft my Father flew in.

Rodger Gibson.