

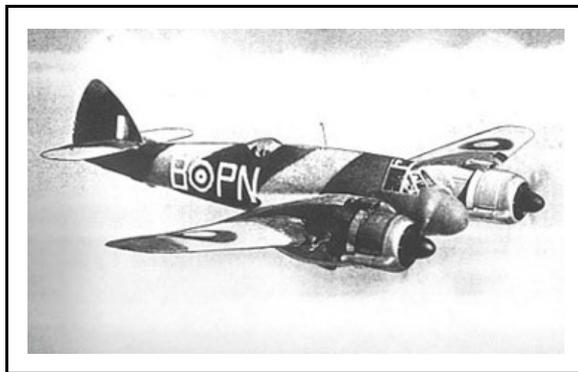
Chapter 23

125 Squadron - Fairwood Common & Colerne

I was asked to join 125 Squadron because they had a problem Flight which needed sorting out. It was a Defiant Squadron where discipline was sloppy, record boards non-existent and the crew room dirty and untidy. I found the ring leader as far as the ground crew was concerned, looked at his records and found out that he wanted to be aircrew. I told him straight that he had no future if he did not sort himself out; I made him march the other lads to and from work, which seemed to work. I put the usual systems in place so that the pilots knew what was going on and generally got the place in order which wasn't very difficult. I had trouble persuading some of the aircrew that the



Boulton Paul 'Defiant'



Bristol "Beaufighter"

crew room should not look like a dump but fortunately the CO backed me up. At this time we were still at Fairwood Common but then came the news that we were off to Colerne in Wiltshire to re-equip with Beaufighters. Betty wrote to say that she had gone home to Chatham because it was lonely without me so I looked around and found another farm and some lovely people again. It was here that we found John one day walking about among the cows. The farm overlooked the city of Bath and we were there when Bath was bombed.

At this time I was recommended for a commission but, as it was going through, I was posted overseas at 48 hours notice. This was May 1942 and there was no time to look

after Betty or John. The Squadron sent me up to Ringway by Beaufighter but the pilot couldn't find it and landed on a dispersal field which was too small. He realised his mistake and had to take off again by putting the brakes fully on and revving the engines to max boost before releasing the brakes. We took off, just, and headed back to Colerne. As we approached the airfield, the pilot could not get the undercart down. This engendered much discussion between pilot and ground control, part of which was:

Pilot: *"We still have Flight Sergeant Turner on board, should he jump or crash land with us?"*

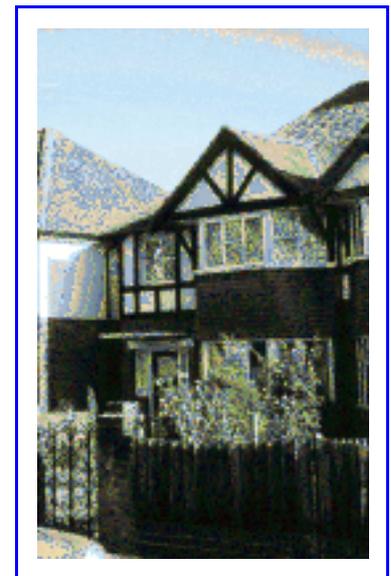
Ground: *"Oh, belly land with you on the grass; get the Navigator to hold him tight!"*.

The Pilot did a perfect landing and the next day I went to Wilmslow by train! There I met a chap called Bill Tyson who was destined to go with me wherever that was, so we repaired to the Sergeant's Mess and got fairly tiddly.

Early in the morning, and still hung over, we marched to the station en route to Greenock.

I shall pause here to record the movements of my parents. As I have said, when I was at Pembrey they moved to Manchester but not many months later they moved to Canterbury and 9, Clifton Gardens. Dad, for a short period, had to serve at an RAPC office in South London but his health deteriorated and he was invalided out. He took a job as Barrack Warden in the Army Barracks at Canterbury. I believe he was recommended for an MBE

but this was not awarded. It was during this time that my sister Betty took a job as a postman. For further details see her pen portrait which follows.



**9 Clifton Gardens
Photographed in 1988**