

Trevor Jones (1921-). Royal Air Force Letterston & Cardiff

West Wales Veterans' Archive

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Interviewer: Hugh Morgan

Early Years

Trevor Jones was born in Letterston, Pembrokeshire, on 26 September 1921. After leaving Letterston NP school at 17 years, Trevor commenced a 3-year apprenticeship at Star Supply Stores in Fishguard.

Trevor's father, James Jones, worked in the granite quarry in Treffgarne between Letterston and Haverfordwest. He later became the gardener for SSASO Richards who was the officer in charge of the Royal Navy Armaments Department (RNAD) in Trecwn (which had opened in 1938). Known colloquially as 'Jockey Jim' because of his renowned skills as a horse trainer and rider James had been a dispatch rider in the Royal Welsh Regiment during WW1. The night James died he relived his Great War experience in the Dardanelles and told Trevor's brother to "*watch out for the Turks in the hills.*" James sat up in bed, saluted the photo of the regimental goat on the wall, and promptly died!

On 2 July 1940 Trevor enlisted in the Royal Air Force and was posted for basic training to RAF Bridlington on the East Yorkshire Coast.

RAF Regiment

As a member of the RAF Regiment, Trevor was posted to the RAF station at White Waltham, near Maidenhead in Berkshire. In 1928 White Waltham had been opened by De Havilland but shortly before the outbreak of War the airfield was taken over by the RAF and from 1940 White Waltham became home of the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA). Trevor was stationed there for around one year and recalls his duties including "*guard duty and general muck about.*"

Radio Operator

Trevor describes that he then "re-mustered" and went to RAF Cranwell in Lincolnshire for training as a radio operator. He then served as an operator mostly on direction-finding at RAF Ouston, near Newcastle upon Tyne, where he remembers "*being stuck in a ploughed field in a direction-finding van.*" Here he gave bearings to any aircraft which was in trouble and needed a bearing to reach home.

Re-mustering as an Air Gunner

Seizing the opportunity to re-train as an Air Gunner, Trevor was posted to RAF Dalcross, near Inverness, for a gunnery course. Successful completion was followed by courses at an Operational Training Unit (OTU) and then Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU) where he first met

Flt Lt Tommy Wright who promptly asked Trevor to join his crew flying the Avro Lancaster. The crew were posted to a Lancaster Finishing School and then onto their first operational squadron, as members of 'C' Flight of No. 625 Squadron stationed at RAF Kelstern near Grimsby. 'C' Flight then re-formed to become No. 170 Squadron on 15 October 1944 before moving to RAF Dunholme Lodge for a short period and then on again to RAF Hemswell, both stations located in Lincolnshire. Equipped with the big four-engine Lancaster bomber the Squadron was soon operating as part of Bomber Command's offensive over Germany through the winter of 1944/45.

With Tommy Wright's promotion to Squadron Leader, Trevor found himself in the Flight Commander's crew. This meant they were flying in the lead plane of a flight of three aircraft on each operational sortie. On the audio recording accompanying Trevor's account, he talks about his experiences of flying on operations, being shot up, needing to extinguish engine fires, the sheer terror of suffering a mid-air collision, and on each occasion making the long and arduous journey back to base. Trevor describes the anxiety-loaded moment every crew member faced immediately after the bombs had been released by the bomb-aimer and dropped towards a target below: *"those 22 seconds were like years, endless. The bomb-aimer would 'say bomb-doors shut, camera-off,' and I used to say to myself 'oh that's another done' and we'd make it for home and hoped not to have anything happen on the way – but of course things did happen."*

"Night Bombers" film

Remarkably, the young Trevor Jones can even today be spotted on a famous wartime British film *Night Bombers*. This unique film is the only known colour film in existence of an RAF Bomber Command raid on Germany. Filming was set-up and directed by the former Station Commander at Hemswell, Air Commodore H.I. Cozens. Having landed back at base in RAF Hemswell Trevor can be seen in the debriefing scene as can the rest of his crew including the pilot, Squadron Leader Tommy Wright.

What is also especially interesting is that most commentators on military and film history refer to *Night Bombers* as being a raid on Berlin in 1943/44 (as the narration claims), but in fact this was not so. The original film reels are held in the Imperial War Museum and are of the real-life raid dated 23.02.1945 which was carried out on the south-western German city of Pforzheim. Reference to Trevor's Logbook on this date confirms:

Date	Aircraft Type and Number	Pilot	Duty	Remarks	Flying Times (Day/Night)
23-3-45	ME 302	S/DR Wright	Air Gunner	OPS. Germany. Pforzheim. Moderate flak. No cloud.	8.20

Following the War, the film was withheld from public release, but since its release in the mid-1980s, it has been widely distributed – including being shown on television – and can be easily sourced today.

Trevor remembers the director of the film very well, for Air Commodore Cozens was a member of the commissioning board in front of which Trevor found himself. Just before this

auspicious day, Trevor had been told that he was being considered for a commission and was duly sent from Hemswell to RAF Scampton for the interview. Not knowing the outcome of the interview, Trevor was posted home to Pembrokeshire on leave. Whilst on leave his father ran up to him with a letter which had come from the RAF. It was addressed to 'Pilot Officer Trevor Jones' recalling him immediately back to RAF Hemswell. It was only at that very moment that Trevor realised that had been made a commissioned officer in the Royal Air Force.

During late 1944 and the first months of 1945, Trevor flew 27 bombing missions plus another two supply missions dropping food at very low level to the starving Dutch population in Rotterdam, thereby completing a total of 29 operational sorties which at that stage was considered a full operational tour.

VE Day, Cook's Tours and Transportation of POWs.

Trevor remembers VE Day, 8th May 1945, being celebrated at Hemswell by the whole station with a huge parade. Air Commodore Cozens took the salute. This was followed by a lively night in the mess.

Trevor then flew Cook's Tours to Germany. Cook's Tours (so-called after the famous Travel agency) were regular features of RAF Bomber Command life in the days and weeks immediately after the end of the war in Europe. Bomber crews flew their ground crew and other station personnel at low-level over the bombed-out towns and cities in Germany, providing them with the opportunity to see the outcome of their own efforts towards the Allied defeat of Germany.¹

The many Allied prisoners of war in Northern and Southern Europe needed repatriating and Trevor flew several missions to Belgium and Italy to collect POWs and return them back to Blighty.

Preparation for the War in Japan

With the war in Europe over, Trevor volunteered to go with the squadron to the Far East to play its part in the continuing battle to defeat Japan. He crewed up with a new pilot called Ted Close who was the elder brother of the future England cricket captain, Brian Close (1931-2015, who even today remains the youngest player ever to have been capped by England). Trevor and his new crew carried out their flying training for the Far East in the all-white Lancasters stationed at RAF Dunkeswell, near Honiton, Devon. It was here that they heard that the Atom Bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the Americans and the war in Far East was over, bringing an end to WW2. The squadron was disbanded.

¹ Trevor's account of Cook's Tours coincides with Mary Griffiths from Llanelli whose recollections as a Women's Auxiliary Air Force member of 150 Squadron, also based at RAF Hemswell at the same time as Trevor, are contained on the West Wales Veterans' Archive. Mary was one of those provided with a Cook's Tour in one of the squadron's Lancasters over the German towns and cities so devastated by the Allied bombing.

Post WW2

Trevor was posted for re-training to become an Air Traffic Control Officer, followed by a significant posting to RAF Takoradi in Ghana, then known as the Gold Coast. This was a very busy period as Takoradi was a key staging post for the many WW2 RAF aircraft being transported as they were surplus to requirements.

Trevor was then re-assigned back to the UK to become an Air Traffic Controller at Lakenheath in Suffolk and then onto Cottesmore in Rutland and finally to the two Mosquito squadrons (109 and 139 squadrons), based at RAF Coningsby in Lincolnshire. Trevor spent a couple of years at Coningsby before resigning his RAF commission with the rank of Flying Officer. He then applied to go back out to Africa as an Air Traffic Controller and spent the next “seven or eight years” back in Ghana. Trevor occasionally met up with his former wartime pilot Squadron Leader Tommy Wright who went on to work for British Airways and they met in London Airport as well as in Ghana.

At that point, Trevor decided that he had had enough of serving as an Air Traffic Controller and returned to Wales to attend a resettlement course at Coleg Harlech. He then became a director for a successful private hire taxi firm in Cardiff with whom he remained for the next thirteen years. For the final ten years of his working life Trevor worked in the security department within the National Museum of Wales, eventually retiring, and today continues to live in Cardiff.

Trevor was an enthusiastic member of the Cardiff branch of the Aircrew Association. It was at a meeting of the Aircrew Association that Trevor was both amazed and delighted to see himself in the film *Night Bombers* some 40 or so years after it had been filmed at RAF Hemswell in February 1945.