

RAF TRANSPORT COMMAND REVIEW

NUMBER FOUR

DECEMBER 1945



TRANSPORT LIBERATOR OVER PRESTWICK

Night scene at Gibraltar



TRANSPORT COMMAND REVIEW

ISSUED BY HQ TRANSPORT COMMAND
ROYAL AIR FORCE

No. 4 DECEMBER 1945

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CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE A.O.C.-in-C.

TRANSPORT COMMAND formations and units are scattered throughout the world, and I do not have the opportunities I would like of meeting all of you who serve in the Command. I am therefore glad to be able to send this personal Christmas greeting in the *Transport Command Review*.

A year ago our two major enemies were unconquered and the war was at its zenith. We have seen military victory this year but the fight is not yet over. A world torn by strife has still to be settled into a peaceful way of life, before we can say that our work is done and turn to other tasks.

Christmas finds us at the peak of our activities and making a contribution of major importance to re-settlement. Every Command in this war has had to wage a battle—Fighter Command the Battle of Britain, Bomber Command the Battle of Germany, and Coastal Command the Battle of the Atlantic. Now we in our turn are fighting the Battle of Reconstruction. To bring home from overseas those in the Services due for release, and take out their reliefs, is a task to which the Government ascribe the greatest importance. Air transport is one of the means of doing it. And hardly less important is to maintain lines of communication

for our military forces all over the world; communications have suffered severely in the war and air transport is a paramount necessity to the Forces of Occupation.

Although you serve in many different countries and climates, each of you is making an essential contribution to the vitally important tasks in which we are engaged, and each has a personal responsibility, in which we all share, for the safety of those we carry.

I wish to thank you all for your efforts in the past year, often in conditions of difficulty and discomfort, and say that I have every confidence in your ability to see the work through to a successful end.

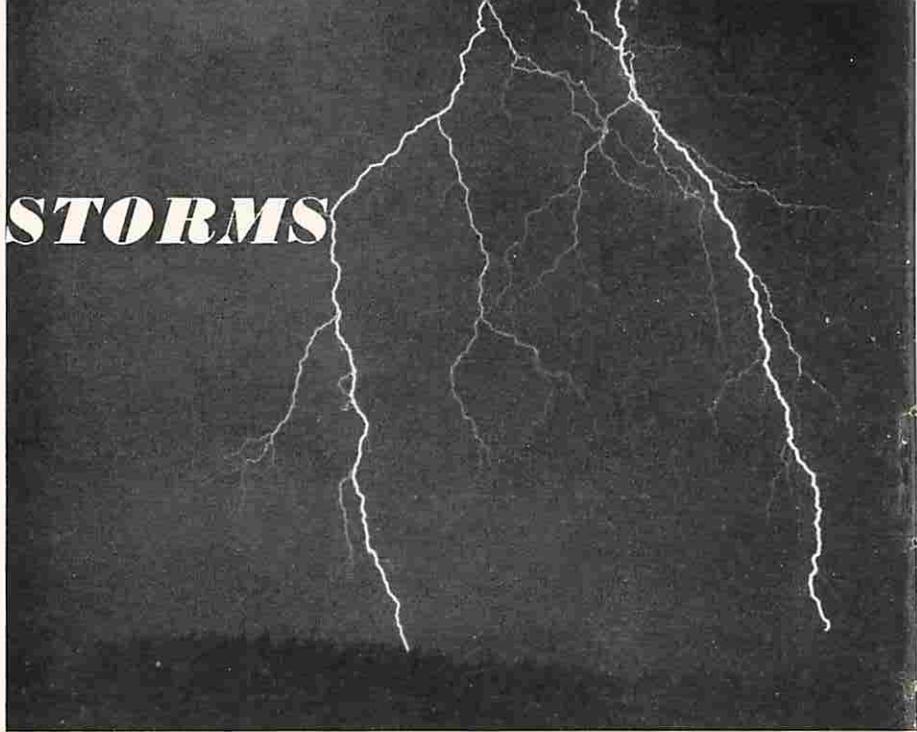
I send you my best wishes for Christmas and the New Year. May this coming year—the first full year of peace—be one of opportunity and promise to you all.

R. A. Cochrane

Air Marshal.

ON

THUNDERSTORMS



S. P. PETERS

*Head of Transport
Command Branch,
Meteorological
Office, Air Ministry*

AMONG the most important and interesting of the meteorological phenomena with which pilots normally have to contend are thunderstorms and fog. Though so fundamentally different in character and effects, there are one or two respects in which they have common features.

From a purely physical standpoint the ultimate factors on which the development of thunder and fog depend are the same, and these are twofold. The first is the nature of the change of temperature in the vertical and the second is the moisture content of the air. In the case of thunder a more than usually rapid *fall* of temperature with height over a considerable vertical distance is a prerequisite, while fog, on the other hand, is normally accompanied by an *increase* in temperature with height, from the surface up to the top of the fog. Although it is not impossible for the vertical distribution of temperature in the atmosphere to be at one and the same time favourable for fog at the surface and for high level thunderstorms, it is in general the case that these phenomena, although both largely governed by the nature of the change in temperature with height, are, in effect, manifestations of the two extreme types of such change, and therefore do not occur together.

Regarded from the point of view also of the forecaster, thunder and fog have a common characteristic. They are alike in that the general physical conditions under which they occur, and the synoptic situations, as shown on the weather charts, in which they are to be expected, are mostly well known and understood. In both cases, however, the factors which ultimately determine whether or not the phenomenon develops at any particular place, when the general conditions over

the area are favourable, may often be purely local ones, and the non-occurrence of the thunder, or the fog, at such a place may be due to the essential requirements as regards temperature, moisture supply, or air movement having just failed to exist or develop there. It is for this reason that area and route forecasts must often inevitably be phrased in somewhat general terms when the likelihood of either of these two phenomena occurring is expressed.

It may be remarked in passing that, in Radar and Fido, scientific development during the war has provided antidotes to thunder and fog which rob them of some measure of their ill-effects on aviators.

The features of a thunderstorm which render it a source of danger to an aircraft are the accompanying severe turbulence, and the icing conditions, though in tropical thunderstorms, and in some summer thunderstorms of temperate latitudes, the latter may be restricted to high levels. As already mentioned, the change of temperature with height and the amount of moisture in the air are fundamental factors in the development of thunderstorms, and the reasons for this may be briefly explained.

First it may be well, however, to remind the reader that as thunder is in itself but a consequence of lightning, so lightning is, in its turn, the result of a process of the breaking of the larger water-drops in a turbulent cloud into smaller drops, with the accompanying separation of positive and negative charges of electricity, which has proceeded to the stage at which an electrical discharge takes place within the cloud. It is, however, quite a common occurrence for the process of the breaking of the drops to occur in a cloud on a limited scale and insufficient to give rise to lightning discharges.



THUNDERSTORMS—see article on opposite page

BELOW: Typical cumulo-nimbus anvil, with foreground, developing its own anvil

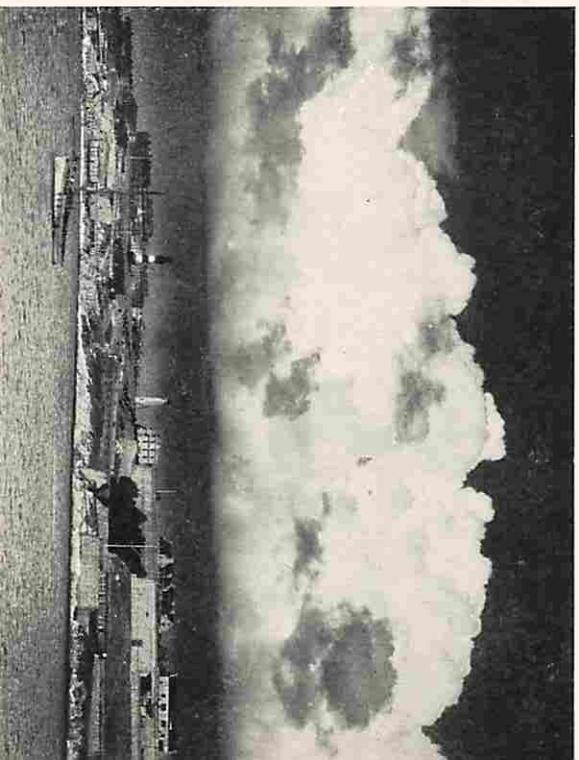
towering cumulus in

PHOTO: F. H. LEDBAM

ABOVE: Panorama of large cumulo-nimbus cloud formation

over FreeTown, West Africa

BELOW: Line of heavy cumulus over Plymouth



The type of cloud in which this process occurs is that known as cumulo-nimbus, and although such a cloud is potentially a thunder cloud it does not necessarily develop to the thunderstorm stage. Given, nevertheless, favourable conditions for the formation of cumulo-nimbus clouds, the occurrence of lightning and thunder depends only on the sufficient building up of these clouds. This in turn requires a plentiful supply of moist air which by virtue of ascent, and consequent expansion under reduced pressure, cools and condenses its water vapour into liquid drops. Such a process may, however, give rise to no more than the ordinary cumulus cloud of a summer afternoon in England, and there is an additional factor which is essential for the development to proceed to the stage where thunder and heavy showers result. This is that the rate of fall of temperature with height (known as the lapse rate) in the general air mass within which the ascent of the damp air takes place shall be greater than that which the rising air itself automatically undergoes with ascent, in accordance with definite physical laws. All the while this condition obtains, the ascending air will find itself warmer than its surroundings, and consequently lighter, and hence will continue to rise.

It is, therefore, essential in thunderstorm forecasting to have observations of temperature in the upper air, and steps are constantly being taken to increase the number and accuracy of such reports available to the forecaster. The use of such reports is not, however, confined to the forecasting of thunder, but is vital also in the forecasting of upper winds.

It was mentioned above that a cumulo-nimbus cloud will give rise to lightning and thunder providing that it develops sufficiently in a vertical direction. This will ensure ample opportunity for the rise and fall of water drops within the cloud, since the ascending air currents are not steady ones but flow in an alternation of gusts and lulls. Upward gusts of a velocity of 1,000 ft. per minute are probably fairly frequent in cumulo-nimbus clouds which reach to above 15,000 ft., while it is believed that in extreme cases upward gusts of over 4,000 ft. per minute may occur. In order, however, that there may be very abundant water drops within the cloud, and rainfall of normal thunderstorm intensity, it is almost certainly necessary that there should be some ice crystals present in the cumulo-nimbus cloud. The presence of ice crystals can be judged from the outline of the top of the cloud; before they exist, the cloud top has a typically cauliflower shape with hard, clear-cut outlines, but the development of ice crystals causes this hard outline to be softened and replaced by a veil or web, often having a somewhat windswept appearance. By observation of the development of the upper edge of a cumulo-nimbus cloud, it is, therefore, possible to obtain some indication of the state of the top of the cloud as regards water or ice content, and hence, both of the likelihood of heavy rain and of heavy aircraft icing.

As already stated, thunder clouds may give dangerous icing conditions, particularly with temperatures between 0° and -7° C. Ice formation may, however, occur in large cumulo-nimbus clouds at temperatures down to below -20° C. and sometimes as low as -40° C. Until recently it was considered that -18° C. was the lower limiting temperature for serious ice formation, and this is the value still given in much literature on the subject. There is, however, no temperature at which it can be said with certainty that icing in cumulo-nimbus cloud will not occur, and it can be serious down to temperatures below -20° C.

It is not proposed to deal with thunderstorms in relation to weather charts and forecasting, except to remark that the necessary rapid ascent of moist air not infrequently occurs in association with a front. On account of the fact that the arrival of a front often marks the onset of unsettled weather after a fair spell, there is a popular fallacy that thunderstorms cause a "break-up" in the weather. The fact is that the frontal thunderstorms simply mark the arrival of the new air mass which is the cause of a change in the weather.

A word may be said about the geographical distribution of thunderstorms. The area of greatest frequency of occurrence is in the East Indies where, during a considerable part of the year, thunderstorms occur on about one day in two. Mexico, Brazil and the Belgian Congo are close runners up. On the other hand, thunder is rare north of latitude 70° N. and south of latitude 50° S. It has been roughly estimated that the number of thunderstorms in progress over the earth's surface at any moment is of the order of 2,000. Whilst over land they occur mostly in the late afternoon, at sea they are most frequent by night.

The use of Radar in the detection of cumulo-nimbus clouds and thunderstorms is now being developed. Following the early discovery that clouds and rain areas give rise to Radar "echoes" of a different character from those of other targets, more recent investigations have shown that echoes are also given by such phenomena as fronts, squalls, and tropical storms, and that furthermore, each gives a distinctive type of echo easily recognizable to the practised eye. Radar equipments operating in the three-centimetre wavelength band are said to give the best results in this connection, although more restricted in range than the longer wave apparatus. A recent series of observations in this country has shown that echoes from meteorological phenomena are confined to occasions when the area of response contains cloud which is actually giving precipitation. Echoes were not obtained from large cumulus clouds which were not giving showers. This, therefore, promises to be a powerful method by which aircraft in flight might distinguish between convection clouds which are dangerous, and those which are not, or are merely potentially so. There is, however, much more investigational work to be done before all the facts are firmly established.



AIRCRAFT DELIVERY

WING COMMANDER G. P. SEYMOUR-PRICE, D.F.C.

DURING the wars in Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Far East, the continuous supply of aircraft of all types to the many fronts in engagements has been a major contribution to our victories. At the end of these long and sustained battles it is interesting to review the record of aircraft deliveries as performed by Transport Command, and for those who took part in this widely scattered enterprise it may be informative to explain briefly the machinery that has been built up to carry out the operations of flight delivery of aircraft.

Until March 25, 1943, Ferry Command was responsible for aircraft deliveries ex North America, while 44 Group was responsible for all those out of the United Kingdom. As from that date, the newly-formed Transport Command was made responsible for all flight delivery, and the first two Groups to be placed under it were Nos. 44 and 45—the latter having been formed out of what was previously Ferry Command. The success of Delivery Operations, which started at the beginning of the war as a relatively small expedient, but which grew into a commitment running into four figures a month, is indicated by the very low percentage of losses suffered on the world-wide routes being flown. When it is remembered that delivery flights have been made by young, inexperienced crews over distances and under conditions which would have rendered each one of them a Seven Days' Wonder as recently as 1939, and that what had been abandoned as an impossible task before the War (namely to fly

the North Atlantic throughout the winter) was undertaken with complete success, the achievement of Flight Delivery becomes the more remarkable.

The full chain of flight delivery operation, together with the training involved, is organised in the following way.

Firstly, the Air Ministry states a requirement to Transport Command in respect of numbers and types of aircraft, whether to be delivered by ferry or by refors crews, and details of theatre of destination. The Air Staff of Transport Command then issues the relevant instructions to the Groups concerned. The progress of each aircraft from receipt into Transport Command Groups, until delivery to final destination, is watched and recorded by a section of the Air Staff at Headquarters, Transport Command called "Aircraft Deliveries." On completion of the delivery flight, the aircraft is taken off the captain's charge by the receiving unit. Refors crews are then available for posting within the theatre, while arrangements are made for the return of ferry crews to their bases.

Refors crews always fly their delivery aircraft through to the theatre of destination, as do the ferry crews of No. 45 Group. In No. 44 Group, the UK based ferry crews do not proceed beyond the Middle East theatre; aircraft for MAAF are handed over at either Algiers or Cairo, and those for ACSEA at Cairo, to No. 216 Group. This Group is responsible for all ferrying within the Middle East theatre and for delivering ferried aircraft destined

for ACSEA to storage units in that theatre. No. 229 Group is then responsible for all ferrying within the South East Asia Command.

The delivery of naval aircraft is also a Transport Command commitment, and is carried out by RAF ferry crews in exactly the same manner as RAF deliveries. Such aircraft are delivered to Naval land establishments; RAF ferry crews do not land on aircraft carriers.

Aircraft Preparation

When an aircraft is received by a Ferry Unit belonging either to No. 44 or to No. 45 Group, it is given its preparation for flight delivery overseas, and a crew is allotted to it whose task is to deliver that aircraft to a specific destination. The crew either is being or will have been specifically trained and very particularly briefed for that precise flight, and the aircraft is prepared as follows. The Preparation Flight takes charge of it, and gives it an Acceptance Inspection. This is designed to ensure that it is in every way ready to proceed overseas; any modification outstanding but not embodied is carried out, and loose items of Column 9, Appendix "A"—this includes such articles as dinghies, fire-extinguishers, torches and other equipment—are installed. The crew assigned to it then flies the aircraft on a Consumption Test to ensure that the petrol to be carried will give it the range required for the delivery flight. On this test, all items of equipment such as wireless, navigation, guns, etc., are tried out. A final inspection, if this flight is satisfactory, and the aircraft is available for despatch. In the UK, separate bases known as Overseas Aircraft Despatch Units are established for this purpose, but in No. 45 Group, the preparation is done at the PU's (Preparation Units) at Dorval and Nassau and the aircraft are then despatched in the normal way.

Ferry Training

Special training is necessary before any crew which has not previously flown long distances, particularly over water, can safely be despatched on a delivery flight. This training is carried out at a Ferry Unit and it is divided into two phases:

- (a) The initial training given all delivery crews, whether "refors" or ferry, *i.e.*, whether they are merely going to make one trip, flying an aircraft out to an overseas theatre, in which they are to stay themselves as reinforcements, or are going to continue delivery, returning after each completed trip to the main base for another delivery aircraft.
- (b) The refresher training which is given to the latter category every three months to ensure that they are kept up to date with the continual changes in procedure, etc., in long distance flying, as well as to enable them to keep abreast of improvements in equipment and to practise flying techniques which they do not use every day.

Crews and single-engine pilots selected for initial ferry training are either pilots who have been put straight on to ferrying on completion of their flying

training, or experienced crews who have done one or two operational tours. They may or may not have flown the actual type of aircraft they are to deliver before, but in all cases in which they have not done so within the previous three months, a specified number of hours' flying on that type is required before they leave the FU. An intensive ground course is also given, lasting about five days, during which they are briefed in great detail on the route they are going to fly; topographical data along the whole route, the latest signals procedures and navigational aids actually functioning in those areas, details of each airfield they will use, lectures on the prevailing weather they may expect, and all other relevant information which will help them to accomplish their task. The instructors all have first-hand knowledge of the routes along which they are preparing their crews to fly; the whole object is to brief them on the flying of a particular aircraft along a particular route, not to impart a considerable amount of general information.

Refresher courses are given to ferry pilots and crews at a Ferry Unit in order to bring them up to date on all improvements in equipment on the types of aircraft they are ferrying, and to familiarise them with alterations in procedure—usually signals and navigational—and with changes in the airfields and the routes along which they are going to fly. A refresher course is also necessary when a pilot or crew is to fly a new type of aircraft not previously handled, and also to keep in flying practice on a type previously flown, but on which the crews have not had experience for some time. This training is carried out in the UK at a ferry unit and overseas at a check and conversion unit. Basically, this training consists of:

- Map reading in the air.
- Instrument flying under the hood.
- Exercises on the Link trainer.
- Lectures on such subject as Meteorology, Navigation and Signals.
- Practical experience in navigation.

Return Ferry Service

Wherever aircraft deliveries are made an organisation is worked out for the return of the ferry crews to their base by air, since it was found at the very beginning that to rely on shipping to bring them back was to impose an unnecessary delay in the onward despatch of aircraft coming off the assembly lines. This is known as return ferry service, abbreviated to RFS, and is not an inconsiderable part of the whole commitment of any flight delivery organisation. No. 45 Group alone, for example, operated two Coronado services a week across the Atlantic (Boucherville—Largs) and three Liberator services per week to India (Dorval—Karachi) when deliveries ex North America were at their height. And BOAC with their Liberators operated the North Atlantic RFS from Prestwick to Dorval regularly all the year round. No. 44 Group's crews returned to UK on the first available regular service, but if a backlog of returning ferry crews built up, as it occasionally did, a special service was organised to look after it.

DELIVERIES FROM U K

(including Flying Boats and P.R. aircraft)

DELIVERIES FROM CANADA

(not including Russian Catalinas)

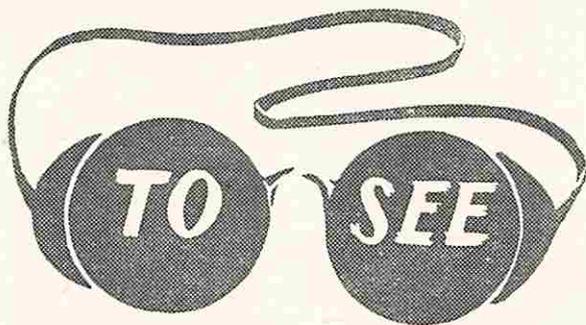
DESTINATION	TYPE	1943 (9 months)	1944 (12 months)	1945 (9 months)	TOTALS	1943 (9 months)	1944 (12 months)	1945 (9 months)	TOTALS
M.E.	Single	88	50	473	611	913	880	107	1,900
	Twin	1761	1855	533	4149	26	278	162	466
	Multi	97	191	10	298	—	—	—	—
U.K.	Twin	—	—	—	—	586	1,451	777	2,814
	Multi	—	—	—	—	131	481	464	1,076
ACSEA.	Single	28	61	96	185	90	251	200	541
	Twin	495	920	461	1876	94	409	76	579
	Multi	15	16	96	127	—	—	—	—
FLEET AIR ARM	Single	—	—	180	180	—	—	—	—
	Twin	—	56	17	73	—	—	—	—
CANADA U.S.A.	Twin	22	3	9	34	—	—	—	—
	Multi	—	4	36	40	—	—	—	—
WEST AFRICA	Twin	48	33	10	91	—	2	—	2
	Multi	33	38	7	78	6	4	—	10
SOUTH AFRICA	Twin	—	3	—	3	82	71	7	160
	Multi	—	2	3	5	—	—	—	—
EAST AFRICA	Twin	59	100	—	159	—	—	—	—
	Multi	2	—	18	20	—	—	—	—
FRANCE	Single	—	—	44	44	—	—	—	—
	Twin	—	—	19	19	—	—	—	—
AUSTRALIA	Twin	—	—	—	—	—	—	65	65
	Multi	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	..	2,648	3,332	2,012	7,992	1,928	3,827	1,858	7,613
MILEAGES FLOWN	..	13,551,000	19,020,920	11,936,860	44,508,780	11,266,331	21,041,200	9,005,500	41,313,031

SCHOOL OF NIGHT VISION

(See article on following page)

Trainee being tested on the Rotating Hexagon, prior to training. Various letters, figures and symbols have to be identified in "night light." Statistics for each pupil are worked out on the scores on the machines both before and after training.





or not to see . . .

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT L. KING

EARLY in 1944 it was decided to establish Night Vision Training in Transport Command for the benefit of all aircrew personnel.

At that time, Night Vision Training schools had been running successfully in Fighter and Bomber Commands, but their introduction into Transport Command was received with mixed feelings by aircrews. Typical attitudes seemed to be: "What, another binding course!" or "I've flown 600 hours at night, and you can't teach me anything." The idea was not, on the whole, very popular. It was not then appreciated that, at any time, the aircrews of Transport Command might be called upon to support the Army in supply by air, often under difficult weather conditions, and necessitating take-offs and landings in darkness or poor visibility. Nor was it realized that the policy of Night Vision Training is generalized to meet all requirements, so that aircrews in all Flying Commands may be given the opportunity of improving their Night Visual Capacity, thus fitting them to meet emergencies when the use of night vision might prove essential.

The central Night Vision Instructor's School at RAF Station Llandow was ready to receive the first course on June 8, 1944. The staff consisted of one Officer, one Section Officer orthoptist, one NCO instructor and a clerk GD.

The course arrived on June 11th, three officers and four NCOs, sceptical, but quite prepared to give the course a fair trial.

The sight of seven men walking around in dark goggles caused quite a sensation on the station. The course, on the whole, was considered to be a huge joke, and we got rather tired of the word "carrots."

Nevertheless, No. 1 Course was undoubtedly a success. The people on the course discovered that it was not as binding as they expected, as most of the work was practical, and the theoretical part was put to them as pleasantly as possible, with practical demonstrations.

There was a very keen competitive spirit amongst the trainees who organized sweepstakes on the various exercises, and really did maintain a whole-hearted interest in their work.

So No. 1 Night Vision Course departed, assuring us that it was a "very good thing." Gradually the Transport Command Night Vision School lost some of its immaturity and the staff were determined to make it equal, if not superior, to its elder brothers in Fighter and Bomber Commands.

The 50th Night Vision Course was completed at RAF Llandow on July 2, 1945. In all, 367 aircrews had received training over a period of about a year. The school was then transferred to RAF Ossington and the course was revised to give more comprehensive instruction, so that all pupils passed out should be potential instructors; a study of the theory of the subject and instruction in the training equipment employed was included.

Eighty-two instructors have now been trained at Ossington, and courses will continue until enough Night Vision instructors have been trained to ensure that each member of an aircrew in Transport Command will in turn receive training in the art of seeing at night.

With the cessation of hostilities, it might be thought that Night Vision Training has lost most of its importance. But let us see how Night Vision Training can help in post-war flying. In the event of wireless failure, even on an ordinary cross-country trip, the ability of the pilot or navigator to map-read confidently at night might mean the difference between reaching base safely and finishing up on a hillside with probable loss of lives. Also, with the increasing number of transport aircraft flying at night, the risk of collision still occurs, but can easily be averted by a pilot who knows how to use his eyes at night, and who would see the other aircraft more quickly than a pilot whose night visual capacity is low.

Again, valuable aircraft can be saved by a reduction in taxi-ing accidents, and as the majority of these accidents occur during the hours of darkness, Night Vision Training again shows its value. In the case of a night taxi-ing accident, the pilot's explanation is invariably, "Well, I just didn't see the obstruction." If that man had been trained in the proper use of his eyes at night, the accident might have been averted.

Theoretically, the improvement in night vision after a course of training should remain. It is up to the individual to see that it does, by keeping physically fit, adhering to a balanced diet, avoiding excesses of alcohol and nicotine, and, most of all, by practising the use of his night vision at every available moment, and noticing during his black-out prowls the importance of shadows, reflections and contrasts.

Finally, a word to all aircrews. Do not think your night vision is perfect, or that you will never have to use your eyes to get you out of danger. Make sure that if the necessity arises you are fully equipped to meet it, bearing in mind that the motto of the night flyer must still be: *He who sees first, lives longest.*



WHEN a senior officer at 216 Group Headquarters addressed half a dozen of us fresh out from UK and now posted to Nos. 43 and 44 Staging Posts at Bahrein and Sharjah, he observed—with remarkable restraint—that they were “not the best places in the Group.” Just how remarkable was his restraint we were shortly to discover.

It was then early April, and we moved off cheerfully to 151 Wing Headquarters at Habbaniya, refusing to be discouraged by accounts of the Persian Gulf which met us everywhere, and particularly at Habbaniya. True, my own enthusiasm was damped a few days later when recovering in the hospital there from an attack of sandfly fever and pharyngitis, and by a magazine article entitled “The Gulf of Hades,” which dwelt with relish upon the horrors of the Persian Gulf.

Number 151 Wing controls numbers 40 to 44 Staging Posts, three of which are known as “the Gulf Stations.” I found the men in the Wing fell into two categories—those who had completed a Gulf Tour and those who had not. Those whose Gulf Tour was yet to come evinced a gloomy foreboding at the prospect, while those who had been there displayed the conscious pride and satisfaction of one who had withstood a rigorous experience in a useful cause.

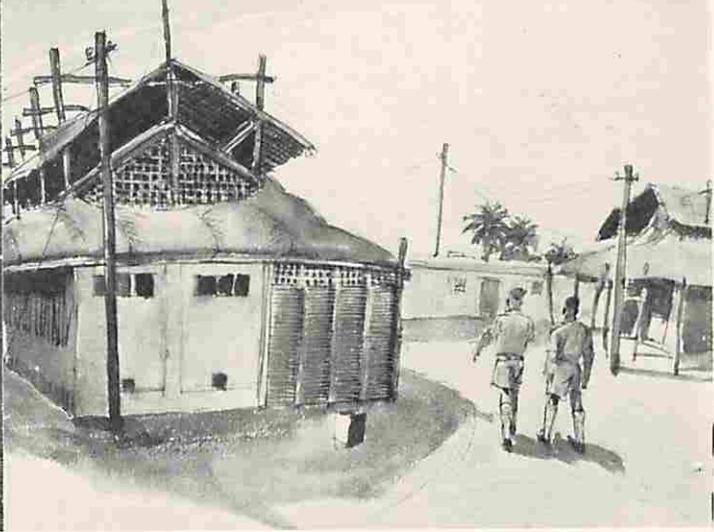
Just what are the rigours of the Gulf Stations, Shaibah, Bahrein and Sharjah? I think the inscription on a painted scroll which weaves through gaudy murals about the Officers’ Mess at Sharjah gets to the root of things: “It ain’t the heat, it’s the ‘umidity.” Although the stations experience temperatures up to about the 110° mark it is the very high degree of humidity in the atmosphere which renders one’s clothing almost permanently saturated with perspiration day and night throughout the hot season and which causes heat stroke, heat exhaustion and the quite inevitable “prickly heat” that forms the greatest part of the White man’s burden—a burden also shared by the

brown men. Also the humidity can be most harmful in a different way. The Medicals say that when there is a wet-bulb reading approaching the eighties, that is to say in conditions of a shade temperature above body heat and a relative humidity nearing the 100 per cent. mark, the human being finds himself in a highly dangerous bodily state. Last year someone who had visited Sharjah caused some chuckles in the Gulf when he described it in *The Listener* as being (I believe these are the words) “a cigarette paper’s thickness from Hell.” But the Persian Gulf is on the all-important trunk line to India and the Far East, and through it has flowed an ever-increasing stream of Reinforcement aircraft as well as the Liberators, Yorks, Stirlings and, of course, the Dakotas of Transport Command, so that the Staging Posts just have to be there.

Shaibah is No. 42 Staging Post and is the oldest of the Gulf Stations, the RAF having been there since the last war. Its fame (or infamy) has been spread about the Empire by the time-honoured RAF song “The Shaibah Blues,” which ends (in the politer version) with the graphic words, “I’m fed up, I’m tired out and I’m old!” The right to sing the ditty is jealously restricted to those who have been on the station’s posted strength. Situated at the north-western end of the Gulf, a little way inland, it does not suffer the humidity of the other two Staging Posts, but instead a considerably greater heat. It is also subject to very frequent periods of rising dust and sand, making the place “Unfit” and giving Flying Control a headache. In the cold season it gets a lot of rain, and last winter the airfield became one great mire and quite unserviceable for several lengthy periods. Basrah is not too far away for one who wants to get away from the arid desert environs of the camp, but the second city of Iraq is no Cairo or Tel Aviv, and the men at Shaibah rely for the greater part upon their own cinema, music



Camp Cinema, Habbaniya



Bahrein

circle and various sports clubs, which they have organised very well.

Some two and a half hours' flying in a Dakota from Shaibah will bring you to Bahrein Island beside the Qatar Peninsula, half-way along the southern side of the Gulf. To land in a Sunderland early on a summer's morning and to be ferried by launch to the island is an exciting experience. A slight sea breeze is blowing, the sky seems bluer than anything else you have seen, there is an incredibly clear visibility, great shoals of tropical fish of all sizes drift languorously about the boat in a glassy sea, huge vividly-coloured shells may be seen gleaming at the bottom of the crystal-clear shallows and the fringe of date palms at the water's edge are constantly quivering and disappearing in the scorching heat. But by the time you have disembarked you are finding out about the humidity and very soon your clothing is drenched about the waist line and back. Almost immediately you acquire the habit of wringing out your handkerchief.

A further two hours' flying and one arrives at No. 44 Staging Post, Sharjah, on the coast of Trucial Oman at the south-eastern end of the Gulf and a little way inside the Straits of Ormuz which separate Arabia from Persia. The flying boats land in Dubai Creek, twelve miles along the coast. (Dubai Creek I shall remember until I die because of its overpowering evil smell.) To the unpractised eye it is difficult to pick out from the air anything much of the camp at Sharjah except the oil-strips because of the yellow-gray dust which covers all, providing an effective camouflage. By the time the Dakota has taxied to its dispersal point the occupants are only too anxious to scramble quickly out of the aircraft which in just a few minutes has become a veritable oven. Besides the ground crew waiting to receive the Dakota there are usually a few knots of interested spectators about on the chance of there being a female passenger aboard, for Sharjah is reckoned by the men there to be "the end." Even people of 42 and 43 SPs can see a few European

women at Basrah and on Bahrein Island, but here the only females to be seen (one presumes they are feminine) are black shrouded figures hurrying past in the distance.

Life at Sharjah is very much akin to that at Bahrein except that there are even fewer diversions of interest. Even an official visit to the tiny town of Sharjah—in the summer, at any rate—is an exhausting business, and the place is out of bounds in the normal way. When there is a film and one is not on duty one usually goes to the "Sharjah Paramount," even if one has seen the picture before, because it takes the mind off things and is not such hard work as concentrating on a book. After the show we would walk slowly back to the Mess turning up our noses at the smell which always drifted across Sharjah town at night, the damp sand clinging to our shoes. At the Mess we would find the walls running with moisture and the mats soaked. A glass of "squash" (it was nearly always "squash"), then back to the *barasti* (basket work) hut to bed. In the afternoons we would lie naked under the fans without the slightest fear of "Gypsy Tummy" which would be inevitable in most other parts of the Middle East if one slept in this fashion; the covering of perspiration seemed in some way to insulate us from any chill—and from any appreciable benefit from the fan, for that matter. At the beginning and the end of the "hot" there is some excellent swimming in the highly salted waters of the Gulf, but in July and August the water temperature puts it quite out of the question.

The area, like Bahrein, is classed as "highly malarial" and there is a fair amount of dysentery, but the greatest and most wide-spread afflictions are heat-exhaustion and prickly heat.

The coast of Oman was formerly the lair of pirates, wreckers, slave and gun smugglers, but when the Truce with the various sheikhs was concluded it did much to suppress such activities, besides rendering the natives more co-operative with the RAF, the Royal Navy and

Europeans in general. It is still a primitive country, and a native convicted of theft by his ruling sheikh is still quite certain of losing a hand for his misdeeds.

In winter the weather is delightful, but when the rains come the greater part of the camp is transformed into a vast lagoon. In November, 1944, it only required a three hours' downpour to accomplish this, and it was preceded by a "softening up" process in the shape of a seventy miles per hour hurricane.

Despite the heat, the humidity, the flies, the boredom, the general discomfort and sickness, I find, on looking back, that there was a more cheerful, co-operative atmosphere about the camp than at any other station I know, and I believe the same spirit is to be found at Bahrein and Shaibah. For the most part we were thrown upon our own resources for entertainment and people fell to with a will. Hemmed in as we were, we came to know each other intimately and a splendid camaraderie existed, deriving from the fact that we all suffered in common "the fell clutch of circumstance." There was grumbling, of course, but it was not too serious and usually of a humorous nature; the conventional greeting extended to a newcomer at 44 SP was to enquire what heinous misdemeanour he had committed to merit his posting. A good grouse helped to pass the time away.

The purpose of the three Staging Posts is obvious to all who man them. They provide fuelling points, night stops, navigational aids and desert and air/sea rescue action for a ceaseless flow of Reinforcement aircraft proceeding eastward—UK based Dakotas, Liberator, York and Stirling transports, the 216 Squadron Dakotas from Habbaniya and Cairo, and some American C46s, C47s and C54s. At each place one could see the Servicemen on their way out and the weary men returning from prolonged tours in India and Burma. Now that the war is over, one meets also the returning ex-POWs giving a further reminder of one's usefulness. When at last that posting comes along one feels a physical relief, but, for myself, I left with a certain nostalgia for the place and my friends there. I spoke recently to a LAC who had spent eighteen months at Bahrein and he declared he had had a "fine time," When I enquired facetiously if he was prepared to return there, he replied: "Go back? Sure! Any time—any time we have some more trouble with the Nipponese. Otherwise, I'll make do with a spell in Greece or Italy—or even Blighty at a pinch!"

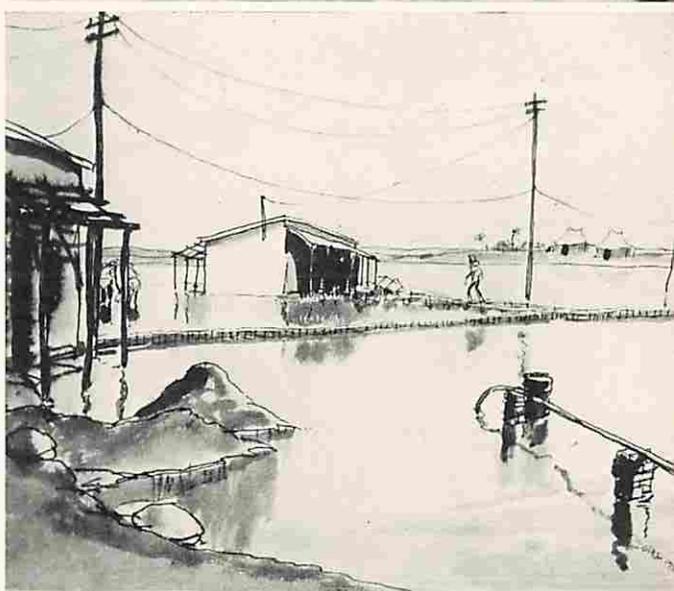
One conclusion I have reached is that the Persian Gulf is a place to go to as soon as one arrives in the Middle East, when the moral and physical resistance is at its highest. It is no plum to be saved until last.

TOP : *The Transit Mess at Shaibah*

CENTRE : *Sharjah after heavy rain*

BOTTOM : *Bathing pool at Bahrein*

Sketches by HAILSTONE





FLIGHT LIEUTENANT ROBERT RUSSELL

ATLANTIC PINPOINT

DURING 1943 one of the most remote small islands in the world became one of the most vital stages along the supply route to Africa.

About halfway between Natal in Brazil and Freetown in Sierra Leone, there breaks through the waters of the South Atlantic the island of Ascension, a tiny blob of volcanic rock, $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles long and 6 miles wide. The island takes its name from the day of its discovery in 1501 by the Portuguese sailor Juan da Nova. It was then a desert isle in the sense that there were no human inhabitants, and so, except for rare visits by early navigators, it remained for over 300 years, until the British established a garrison force there in 1815, owing to the detention of Napoleon in St. Helena, 685 miles to the SE.

When the recent war was in progress in North Africa the Americans were sending lend-lease aircraft by water, but the urgency of requirements clearly demanded the flight-delivery of any that could accomplish the ocean crossing. Ascension Isle offered an obvious staging post for the smaller twin-engined light bombers, and the Americans lost no time in laying down an airfield there. The RAF received the aircraft in Nassau and ferried them across to West Africa with a refuelling stop on Ascension. And so one of the quietest spots in the world was visited by noise, speed and activity.

The appearance of the island was always a very welcome sight to the ferry crews, for if it were missed the aircraft and crew would almost certainly be lost, as the chances of rescue in the wide wastes of the Atlantic were at that time pretty remote.

More often than not the island was hidden beneath a

blanket of cloud, and the approach was usually very low. Because of its volcanic origin almost the entire island is barren, ashy and waterless. But the highest peak, which rises to 2,800 feet, thrusts its head into the clouds and catches most of the little rain that comes its way, so that, climbing the grassless mountainside, you come quite suddenly into a fairyland of flowers, delicate ferns and shady woods. Green Mountain, as it is called, contrasts strangely with the surrounding bare brown peaks, which lie 800 or more feet lower and are almost untouched by any moisture.

In 1600, two Dutch ships fled to Ascension to escape the wrath of a Spanish caravel (which they had rashly provoked by cannonading her first) and found it "a fruitless green rock, without wood or water."

In those days sailors were in the habit of landing goats and chickens, and planting seeds on any islets that stood on their trade routes, so that on future voyages there might be supplies of fresh food. But Ascension Isle did not even attract them to this course, and the British occupation forces were probably the first men to live there for any length of time.

In 1922 the administration of the island was handed over to the Eastern Telegraph Company (subsequently Cable and Wireless, Ltd.) whose interests had long transcended those of the Naval authorities. The population of the island in 1939 was given as 169, all Cable and Wireless employees except for a handful of guano workers.

The most numerous inhabitants of Ascension are the Wideawakes, or Sooty Terns. These lovely birds invade the island in hundreds of thousands every year and lay their eggs, without the formality of a nest, on

the rocks. Pilots taking off from the runway describe the starting-up of the birds on the approach of the aircraft as "the entire surface of the land rising into the air." But of humans they have no fear and they can be easily picked up.

Undoubtedly, the oldest inhabitants are the turtles, which provide quite a sideline in sport and industry. It is from the man-made turtle pools on Ascension that the soup plates are filled at the Lord Mayor's banquets, and the shells provide the so-called tortoise-shell for expensive combs, cabinets and brushes.

Even in so small an island it was not easy for visiting crews to see much of the Green Mountain holiday retreats, or indeed to journey beyond walking distance since transport was always scarce and time short. Aircraft seldom stayed more than a few hours as accommodation and supplies were short. Crews would arrive before lunch and be away before darkness fell.

The urgent flow of aircraft by way of this Atlantic stepping-stone has, of course, now ceased. No. 90 Staging Post, RAF, was withdrawn during November of this year. The Wideawakes will suffer less disturbance, but Ascension is likely to remain a useful calling port for the air navigators of the future.

RIGHT: *The Turtle Ponds. Each season, as the turtles come ashore to lay their eggs, they are caught and put into these ponds. A consignment was shipped to England each month before the war.*

BELOW: *Approaching the runway on Ascension Island*



The Sooty Terns, or Wideawake birds, lay their eggs just beyond pecking distance of one another



Transport Command's V.C.

The late Flight Lieutenant **D. A. LORD, V.C., D.F.C.**

An Appreciation by GROUP CAPTAIN G. R. HOWIE, D.S.O.

- “ I don't want to be a Transport pilot. That's a civvie pilot's job.”
- “ I'm Bomber-trained—why do I have to be trained as a taxi-driver ? ”
- “ Fighters for me! Transport's too slow.”
- “ I want to get near the enemy : that's what I joined up for.”

YES, I heard all that when I found myself as Chief Instructor at a Transport Command O.T.U., four months before D-Day. I told all these crews I would be interested in what they had to say, to hear if they still felt they had not been near enough to the enemy, after they had done the job they were training for—the job that took them out over the Channel on D-Day, to Arnhem, over the Rhine on the greatest airborne operation of all time, tugging gliders, dropping paratroops, putting down supplies with pinpoint accuracy to enemy-surrounded troops. After the job was done they summed it up as : “ sitting on a piece of paper over a furnace.”

Surely enough has not yet been said about these Transport Support crews. Bombers, for all the hazards, at least have armour, guns and speed. The fighter pilot has a magnificent weapon in his hands. The men in the bombers and fighters have become famous, and very justly so, for their courage and determination. But the crews in the Dakotas and the gliders they tugged deserve no less. They flew with no more defence than the steel helmets they sat on, taking their Dakotas over the Dropping Zones as many times as necessary, flying low enough and slow enough to see the ground guns being trained on them. This work called for a type of courage that can be second to none.

Now a Transport Command captain in Support operations has been posthumously awarded the VC, and this award brings his type of work into proper relief.

F/Lt. Lord learnt his air support work in Burma, where he was awarded the DFC. On the afternoon of September 19, 1944, during the operations at Arnhem, he and his crew were detailed to fly supplies in to the troops fighting desperately to maintain their position. Aircrews were warned of intense opposition. They were ordered to fly at 900 feet when dropping their containers. The weather was poor, it was doubtful if fighter cover would be provided, it was even uncertain whether the Dropping Zone was still in the hands of our troops.

It was no new work to this crew—they had operated on D-Day, they had been to Arnhem before—they knew what to expect, and they went with their eyes open and with courage in their hearts.

F/Lt. Lord was approaching the Dropping Zone below the cloud base at 1,500 feet with a visibility of 2,000 yards, when, within three minutes flying time of reaching the target, his aircraft was hit twice and the starboard engine caught fire. He would have been justified in leaving the main stream of supply aircraft and continuing at the same height or even abandoning his aircraft ; but on learning that his crew were uninjured he said he would complete his mission.

By now the starboard engine was burning furiously. F/Lt. Lord came down to 900 feet, where he was singled out for the concentrated fire of all the anti-aircraft guns. On reaching the Dropping Zone he kept the aircraft on a straight and level course while supplies were dropped ; they were seen to fall right in the Dropping Zone. At the end of the run he was told that two containers remained. Although he must have known that the collapse of the starboard wing could not be long delayed, F/Lt. Lord circled, rejoined the stream of aircraft and made a second run to drop the remaining supplies.

His task completed, F/Lt. Lord ordered his crew to abandon the Dakota, making no attempt himself to leave the aircraft, which was down to 500 feet. A few seconds later the starboard wing collapsed and the aircraft fell in flames. The only survivor was flung out while assisting his comrades to put on their parachutes.

By continuing his mission in a burning and damaged aircraft, descending to drop the supplies accurately, returning to the Dropping Zone a second time, and finally, remaining at the controls to give his crew a chance of escape, F/Lt. Lord displayed supreme valour and self-sacrifice.

The details of this episode were seen and reported by the British troops below. On his return to the UK the Commanding Officer of the Glider Pilot Regiment at Down Ampney described it as a “ deliberate, magnificent action, and we on the ground felt truly humbled at having seen it.”



Flight Lieutenant D. A. LORD
in foreground : from a photograph taken in Burma

HOW TO EAT in Transport Command

ONCE, before the war, the writer of this article was waiting for an aircraft at Brussels airport on a drizzling day. He sat in a miserable heap, partly because it was cold and damp, chiefly because he bitterly regretted leaving a continent whose delights he had enjoyed at leisure for some months. With nothing better to do, he was listening with both ears and in mingled rage and astonishment to the conversation of three prosperous-looking English commercial gents who were gulping brandy at the next table.

"And another thing," the fattest and reddest of them was saying, "I know a little place in Prague where I can always get boiled silverside of beef and carrots. *None of this messed-up foreign stuff for me!*"

A pretty story this, the point of which need not be laboured. It is valuable as an illustration of a point of view by no means uncommon which we may call Travel Without Joy.

These articles are designed for those—fortunately they are many—who have enterprising ideas about Food. The war has sent many people on elaborate travels who might otherwise never have travelled at all. Although a large number of service men of all ranks have shown themselves to be of the same fibre as the commercial gents in the story, and have steadfastly refused to like any country or place they have come to because of its non-resemblance to Blackpool, there have been many also (the real adventurers) who have made very much the best of an enforced exile and have adapted themselves to new sights and ways of living, new foods and drinks, with gusto and alacrity.

With two-thirds of Europe on the edge of starvation, and with much local trouble all over the world to make the Peace look silly, this may seem an odd moment to talk about the pleasures of the table. Trouble, however, is even now not universal, and when the day's work is done you who find yourselves in the Middle East, in India, China, or Ceylon, and who care for good things, will set out in search of good food and drink. What, when you have put on your bib and tucker, do you expect to find in Egypt and the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean or in those countries eastward from the Suez Canal?

We speak, naturally, of towns since the best eating in foreign parts is done in towns, unless you happen to



be good at languages and can explore on your own the hospitable possibilities of native chiefs. Among the dramatic lights and shadows, the clamour and odour, of Cairo's streets are to be found numbers of restaurants representative of many cultures. For instance, Cairo has had, for long, a strong influence from France, and among the better eating-places are some that are French both in name and in the nature of their cooking. These still, as Baedeker says, repay a visit. But Cairo has suffered, with years of war and the occupation of alien forces, a general flattening in style, has even felt the pinch of shortages here and there. You can no longer count on being given a juicy fillet-steak in the *Petit Coin de France* or the *Taverne Française*. You will do better to enter, quietly and politely, one of the numerous cafés with tables on the sidewalk which are the preserve of respectable stout Egyptian gentlemen in black coat and scarlet tarboosh. Here you will be given a spread of hors d'oeuvre unlike any you ever saw before—a quantity of tiny saucers containing highly-spiced vegetables, fish, chicken and meat which you prong with a toothpick and anoint with a bright orange-coloured piquant sauce. That is for the kick-off. Afterwards there might be a superb dish of minced meat, shouting with garlic, broiled in a fig-leaf with, for vegetable, sweet potatoes and those fried baby cucumbers which the French call *courgettes*. This dish is first cousin to a famous Greek speciality, and indeed it is worth while, in Cairo or Alexandria, to visit the several restaurants which cater for a large and prosperous Greek community.

It will not take you long, if you are interested in experiment, to sort out the national characteristics of various forms of food. What Mohammedans eat is, of course, essentially different from the diet of Christians. If you visit a Mohammedan restaurant

in Singapore you will find much the same bill of fare as you would in Cairo. Invented in one hot country it does well enough in another. The same cannot be said for roast-beef-and-Yorkshire which, although it is just what is needed on a raw day at home, is intolerable at a temperature of 115°.

Even if their costliness and sundry rules about rank did not put most of the big hotels out of bounds to most of us it would be well to avoid them. In both the Middle and the Far East these are, almost without exception, cosmopolitan in the worst sense, in that they have catered for years for a floating population which has had more money than taste. You can get bad (and expensive) imitation French cooking at home; there is no need to endure it abroad. Neatly side-stepping, on the one hand, the emporia which have sprung up to supply that international favourite, "egg-and-chips," you can dodge, on the other, the "luxury" hotels which serve a five-course dinner of old flannel trousers thinly disguised, under French names, by sauces of flour and water.

Go, instead, for the smaller places—there are some in every large town—which are relatively clean and well ordered, and which cater for the respectable economical bourgeois of the place. Do not throw your weight about, nor greet the strange food with theatrical suspicion; just try it, and you may find something very much to your taste.

Thus, in Palestine, not long ago you could find good small restaurants in Jerusalem, Haifa and Tel Aviv, whose prices were not too astronomical. There were, in addition, various inns and country restaurants in villages and settlements, notably one at Shave Zion, near Acre, and another at Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee. Similarly in Syria you had a choice of Arab

cooking, or of French cooking which was really good. Local hysteria, unfortunately, has put a period to these pleasures for the time being.

Nicosia, in Cyprus, may no longer be the paradise of food and drink which the present writer found in 1942. But it must still possess some of its former excellences which, as regarded eating and drinking, were cleanliness, cheapness and an attractive variety. The hors d'oeuvre (Turkish style) are remembered with pleasure, as also are the kebabs (meat skewered with bay leaves on a wooden skewer and roasted over charcoal) preserves of very small birds like starlings, a pickle of pork with rosemary and red peppers, and a light pink wine called Muscat which prickled on the tongue. In Cyprus, for long under the Turks, you find that the blending of two cultures, Turkish and Mediterranean, makes for interest in food.

In the matter of "egg and chips" already mentioned, it is worth noting that the astute natives of every country in which British forces have been established have been far from slow in providing this staple of British diet. Demand creates supply. EG AND SHIPS—you see it chalked up everywhere from Takoradi to Chittagong. Those minuscule eggs, those flabby pale chips,—the statisticians should go to work on the amounts of them consumed in the last five years. Cheap they are, certainly, which is an important consideration in our armies. More important still, they are thought to be *safe*. They resemble, if only slightly, what we have known at home. They are a statement of fact, however unpalatable, which is more than can perhaps be said of "messed-up foreign foods"—curries and the like—where a chunk or two of nameless meat hides darkly underneath a rich and powerful sauce. That meat, what can it be? Who knows (there are rumours)—dog, cat? Horse, for certain, or perhaps even mule! The true eater would say, "Who cares?" So long as the dish is substantial and exciting to the palate and leaves no serious after effects, it is not of much importance what goes into it. The present writer has knowingly eaten horse on many occasions, goat frequently, frogs and snails in prodigious numbers. More than once he has suspected his dinner to be all that was mortal of Man's Best Friend, and has suffered no diminishing of appetite from the thought. Only in one or two countries like England where materials are (in good times) copious and of first quality does the food dare make its appearance unadorned. In most other countries where good meats are scarce it is the cooking that counts.

If then, we can bring ourselves to forsake the apparent safety of "egg and chips" for a more adventurous diet the chances are we shall acquire rich new experiences in eating which it would have been a pity to have foregone.

Transport Command, particularly in its Eastern and Far Eastern operations, gives many opportunities to its crews, passengers and posted staffs to enlarge their gastronomic horizon. There is a reasonable limit in



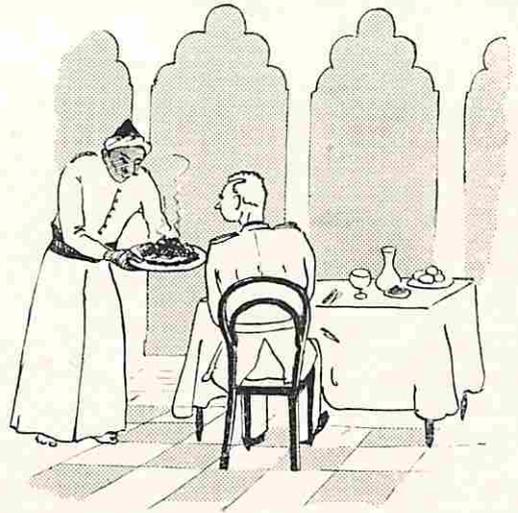
this, as in other things. You are not obliged to slice the tops off the heads of live monkeys and eat their brains with a spoon, a practice thought very highly of in parts of China ; nor need you devour live baby mice dipped in honey and held up by their tails as though they were asparagus. On the other hand there is a good deal of foolish Occidental prejudice against Chinese food in general, and in particular against such items as Sharks' Fins and Birds' Nests. Now Shark's Fin is delicious by any standards, though an expensive delicacy, and Bird's Nest, practically unobtainable outside China in these hard times, is as good to eat as it is unlike its name. The bulk of Chinese food consists of vegetables, cooked by steaming so that they retain their goodness (a practice which we should have adopted long ago), chicken, pork, beef and duck, with prawns and various kinds of fish. Bean sprouts and bamboo shoots, with noodles crisp or otherwise and numberless sweet or sharp sauces go to make up the elements of Chinese cooking. Nothing very sinister here, one would suppose, and yet it is sometimes as difficult to get the ordinary Englishman to approach those heaped-up bowls with their savoury steam as it is to persuade a horse into a blazing house. Unfamiliarity makes him shy ; that and the terror that, at the bottom of his bowl, may lurk something to which he cannot put a name.

Chinese restaurants are to be found, in numbers, in all the great Indian cities, and in Ceylon. If you acquire a taste for their cooking, you will find it the best possible change from the perpetual boredom of rations ; once acquired, this taste will lead you back and back again.

Finest of all the Chinese restaurants in India is the Nanking in Calcutta. To reach it you must run the gauntlet of all Chinatown, your rickshaw or taxi with difficulty threading the mazy small streets around Blackburn Lane. It is like driving along the corridors of a house, so abrupt are the angles, so narrow the openings. Dazed with heat and noise and the changing lights of little shops, you come suddenly to a large mansion, standing back in a courtyard, dark and somewhat forbidding. Inside, in sharpest possible contrast to the racket outside, is an imposing interior of polished mahogany cubicles (the Chinese do not care for publicity when eating) marble floors, quiet, agreeable waiters, cleanliness and efficiency. It is the best place in which to escape for an hour or two from the clatter, the ugliness and the squalid damn-your-eyes commercialism of Calcutta. Chinese commercialism is of a different order, and though you will pay a fair sum for your dinner at the Nanking, you will be served with incomparable food and drink. Particularly to be recommended are fried prawns—the fat prawns of Calcutta fried with a sweet-sour sauce and spiced with ginger. So much for Chinese food which, after all, to be found at its best must be looked for in China itself.

To speak of India is instantly to suggest curry, and it is curries of one kind or another that form the main diet of her peoples. Here it may be said that curry in

India is a very chancy thing. You may get a good one, or you may get one that is decidedly bad. If you are not sure of your curry, it is better to stay and eat in the



Mess, since a bad experience might easily spoil you for what, at its best, is one of the finest meals known to man. The small, stable, European population of India eats either at home, in clubs, or in the large hotels already mentioned. There is a very good tradition of domestic cooking amongst the British in India, and if you are invited to a private house you may almost invariably go in happy expectation of a first-class meal. There are exceptions, of course. The present writer has been treated to some samples of deplorable hotel-cooking in houses where everything else was, apparently, very well arranged. Even so, it is well worth risking, if only for the sake of variety, and no time should be lost in wangling one's way to a luncheon on Sunday, for it is then that the curry usually makes its appearance. Otherwise, you would be well advised to make friends with an Indian family, or with some long-established Briton who knows his way about, for it is only when you have got under the skin of the country that you will be able to enjoy the full variety of its native cooking. The kind of curry doled out in hotels and restaurants (except in those restaurants wholly frequented by Indians) is apt to be dull and unimaginative. To find it at its best you must go amongst the people whose proper feast it is, or have it "laid on" for you by an Indian cook who is really anxious to show what he can do.

Nothing has been said in this article of the many and fascinating kinds of drink which may be met with while travelling. Of these, together with further remarks on the curries of Ceylon, the *rijstaffel* of Java, the palm-oil chop of West Africa, and a discussion of tropical fruits and vegetables, something will be said in a later number of the Review.

W. B.

Padre's Page

A MERRY Christmas to you all. The wish is on our lips and in our hearts at Christmastide and it is not only convinced Christians who can and do open their hearts more widely at this season so as to embrace in their good will a larger number than is their normal habit.

Christmastide is immensely valuable as a time for deliberately cultivating and encouraging good will. Even in pre-Christian days this season had this social value: slaves and their owners in the Roman Empire made a conscious effort to overcome for the time of the festival at least the dreadful barriers between them.

But in those days when the feasting was over, the good will faded with the cessation of the conscious effort and merriment went from the lives of the under-dog.

With the Christian order there should be no fading of the effort, and joy in life should be the lot of all in the great Brotherhood of Man in the family of the God and Father of all; but I think that few will claim that we do really enjoy that constant sense of Brotherhood which would be an essential part of a truly Christian order of society.

Most of us give lip service to the Christian ideal of society and claim that our plan for our lives is to do unto others as we would have them do to us, but honesty compels us to admit that when by so doing we experience discomfort and loss of what we feel to be our due, we adopt a lower ideal. Our doing unto others as we would that they should do to us is conditioned by the proviso that this principle shall not be carried to such a point that what we consider our proper rights and privileges shall be sacrificed.

In other words, our general interpretation of the Christian ideal renders it very little above what a decent pre-Christian Roman accepted as his proper way of life.

I believe that in this generation we should look again at the Christian faith upon which alone a true working of the Christian ideal of life can be based.

It is upon belief in the Fatherhood of God that the belief in the Brotherhood of Man is based. Without the Fatherhood of God there is no good reason for believing in the Brotherhood of Man. Hitler was a realist. He did not believe in the Brotherhood of Man. He acted according to his lights. He endeavoured to make other races the slaves of their superiors. It was quite a logical result of not really accepting the Fatherhood of God. It is not only Hitler who has had that idea, and the danger of having it acted upon by others, in the same way, can never be discounted. Only with the acceptance of the Fatherhood of God and of the principle that we are "our brothers' keepers" and accountable to the Father of all for our behaviour in the family, can we be confident that a society of mankind will be set up in which exploitation of one section by

another with resulting strife and wars will be unknown.

Thus it is a matter of practical politics (to put it at the lowest level) that we should look again at the Christian faith. If it is true, then it is of the greatest value. If it is simply a pleasant story for the children with nice accompaniments of Christmas trees and Father Christmas, camels and Wise Men and moving stars, and yet does not really give us a proper basis upon which to build our beliefs and lives, then it is not of very great value and we are very much in the same position as keepers of the Festival of Saturnalia which our Christian Christmas has superseded.

And so your Padre takes the opportunity offered by this page to make it his pulpit for setting forth the faith he holds. He is not a very clever man but he asks you to believe that he does really find satisfaction and help in what he holds to be true. He writes as an average man to average men and women. The "five talents" will probably say that it is poor stuff that he writes, and the "one talent" may even call it worse than that; but this "two talents" addresses himself with complete confidence to his opposite numbers and asks for a careful consideration of what in all sincerity, he has to offer.

Is there any answer to the riddle of life?

This question is asked by all at some period in their life experience. It is surely fair that we should expect teachers of religion to give an answer. They do give answers; but only from the Christian comes an answer which makes sense to us in the stage of scientific and psychological knowledge which we have reached.

Here it is:

The Great First Cause is Love.

Love cannot exist without an object; hence we have creation—the object of love.

Love, to be complete, must be returned; hence we have at the apex of creation an object of love which is capable of loving.

Love, to be perfect, must be free; hence we find that the created object which can love can also refuse to love.

It is the essence of the purpose of creation (which is that there shall be ever more and more of perfect love) that the apex of creation—Man—is free with a freedom like that of the Great First Cause Himself. That is what is meant by the phrase that man is made "in the image of God."

This answer to the question "What is the purpose of Creation?" is the only answer yet offered by anyone which makes sense. So that there is that to be said for it at the outset, whether it be true or not.

I think that we can go on to find that it is indeed the gloriously true answer.

With renewed wishes for a Happy Christmas and New Year to you all, and may your happiness be founded upon the conviction that love is the power behind all.

PADRE.

NOTE: *The Padre will be glad to try to answer questions raised by correspondents.*

Any mail for me?



FLIGHT LIEUTENANT A. R. SCROPE-DAVIES

CHRISTMAS, the first peaceful one for six years. As our thoughts turn to home and friends, we get a twinge of conscience that many letters have remained unanswered, and every year we make a mental note that this will be an opportunity to make amends.

Before the war, and about this time each year, everyone was being told by the Post Office "TO POST EARLY FOR CHRISTMAS," so as to assist those employed in the civil postal service to cope with the heavy additional weight of mail carried. Few of us pause for a moment to consider that within the Royal Air Force we have our own postal service, manned by RAF and WAAF postal clerks, who are doing an exactly similar job.

It would not be out of place to mention at this juncture one or two facts and figures relating to the ordinary volume of mail—letters, parcels and registered items—which pass through the Post Offices and Post Rooms on home stations controlled by this Command. During the past three months a total of *five and a half million* items of small mail passed through Transport Command Post Offices in the United Kingdom—yes, that makes you think, doesn't it? But in addition, parcels to the tune of 131,740 were also handled, together with 201,364 registered items. Every parcel and registered package has to be entered up in its appropriate book and a signature obtained from those to whom they are addressed.

These stupendous totals have been handled by approximately 150 postal clerks, quite a job of work in itself, you will agree. However, the picture does not end here. In my tours of inspections of RAF Post Offices within the home portion of the Command I often hear it said that postal clerks have an easy time, and I have even heard it remarked: "Well, they only work from 10.00 hours to 17.00 hours." Can anyone really think that that is true?

Let me take you for a pen-picture tour of an average

postal clerk's working day. Away soon after 07.00 hours to collect the mail from the civil Post Office, back to sort the items, enter parcels and registered mail in the appropriate books and get ready for the opening of the Post Office itself. If the station has a Class "A" office there are the counter transactions to be conducted during the whole of the time the office is open. Savings Bank business, postal orders, stamps and stamped stationery to be sold, together with the weighing of ordinary outgoing parcels and the despatch of outgoing registered mail, all of which entails a large amount of clerical work. And also, there is the responsibility of the cash tills to be taken into consideration.

But that is just the beginning of the many headaches by which the postal clerks are surrounded. Many hours weekly are spent in the repair of badly tied or damaged parcels—repairs which involve much hunting about for paper and string to make the parcel secure before it can be re-directed to an airman's or airwoman's new unit. Much time is also spent in tracing to which section a new arrival on the station has been sent.

The Post Office closes at the end of the day, but are the postal clerks free to do whatever they please? Oh no! The stock and cash has to be balanced to the last halfpenny and has to be checked by the Accountant Officer or Unit Postal Officer, and when all is quiet the task of tracing and re-directing mail begins. Aunt Agatha, who has suddenly remembered her nephew, Willie, hunts out his last address which may well be months, or even a year, old. Willie in the meantime has been posted several times since using that address, and in consequence his Form 1677, or redirection card, has to be examined and his new unit traced ;

OPENING TIME
at the
Post Office.

a label is then affixed to the envelope or parcel stating his new location, the reason for re-direction, signed with the postal clerk's initials, and stamped with the Post Office date stamp—all additional work. This item may have to be forwarded by several RAF Post Offices before it eventually reaches the addressee. Over 307,000 such re-directions had to be made by Transport Command postal clerks on home stations during the past three months.

And what of the Savings Bank? On 28 stations where this type of business is carried out 8,329 separate deposits were made, 562 new accounts opened, and the sum of £43,899 5s. 3d. deposited in savings. In addition, 29,476 postal orders were sold with a gross value of £11,703 12s. 2d., and the sale of stamps and stamped stationery totalled £17,041 18s. 11½d. From this it will be seen that over the counters of 38 stations, where either Class "A" or "B" Post Offices exist, nearly £73,000 changed hands all in the short space of three months.

THE VICKERS VIKING

IN the November issue of the REVIEW, the power plants of the Viking were incorrectly described. The engines employed are BRISTOL HERCULES 130 engines developing 1,675 B.H.P. for take-off. These are 14-cylinder two-row radial air-cooled sleeve-valve type, with single-speed superchargers.

The withdrawal of the DRLS has in turn added to the work of the RAF postal clerks, especially in the case of certain types of correspondence, which now have to be despatched by registered mail. Some offices have reported an increase of 100 per cent to 150 per cent in registered items.

Incidentally, you probably consider it is an awful "bind" that you have to obtain registered mail personally, and give a personal signature for it. The RAF Postal Service also consider it a "bind," but it is for your own protection, and to ensure that registered items are treated with the greatest care right up to their delivery into your hands.

So perhaps now Christmas is approaching with its seasonal increase of letters and parcels, a word to everyone would not be out of place. Make certain that, should you be posted to a new unit, you obtain a clearance from the RAF Post Office on the station you are leaving, and make contact with the postal clerks immediately you arrive at your new unit.

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The circulation of the REVIEW is limited. Please let others see this copy.

DORVAL

A view of part of DORVAL airfield appears on the opposite page. Headquarters No. 45 Group (formerly RAF Ferry Command) have been established here since March, 1943. On the north shore of Lake St. Louis and about 12 miles west of Montreal City, DORVAL was cut from a great area of bush, farmlands and a racecourse. Construction began in 1941, following the decision of the USA to deliver aircraft to the RAF in Canada. The work was completed within twelve months and to-day DORVAL is rated one of the finest airports in the world, covering 1,350 acres, and with three runways each over 5,000 ft. by 200 ft. Even these were found inadequate under peak RAF Transport Command traffic conditions, and to meet the future requirements of civil aviation the runways are to be extended to 8,000 ft. immediately, and later to 10,000 ft. by 300 ft.

Snow, and ground temperatures as low as 30 degrees below zero, prevail for at least sixteen weeks in the year. Four Sicard snow blowers and three snow ploughs are used to keep the field serviceable in these conditions, and there has never yet been a non-flying day on account of snow or ice on the runways. Each year during the snow-fall 1,200 Christmas trees are cut from the Quebec bush and "planted" at 170 ft. intervals on both sides of the runways to provide readily visible markers in snowstorms.

In the spring and early summer, a south wind blowing off Lake St. Louis occasionally, but not often, causes early morning ground mists. As the airfield is only 20 ft. above the water level of the lake, the grass areas adjoining the runways become too soft for aircraft except during the hot

months. These are the only natural hazards of this airport.

With the exception of Mount Royal (950 ft.) to the east, DORVAL's surrounding land is level for 20 miles in all directions, and its air approaches are probably better than those to any other airport on the North American continent.

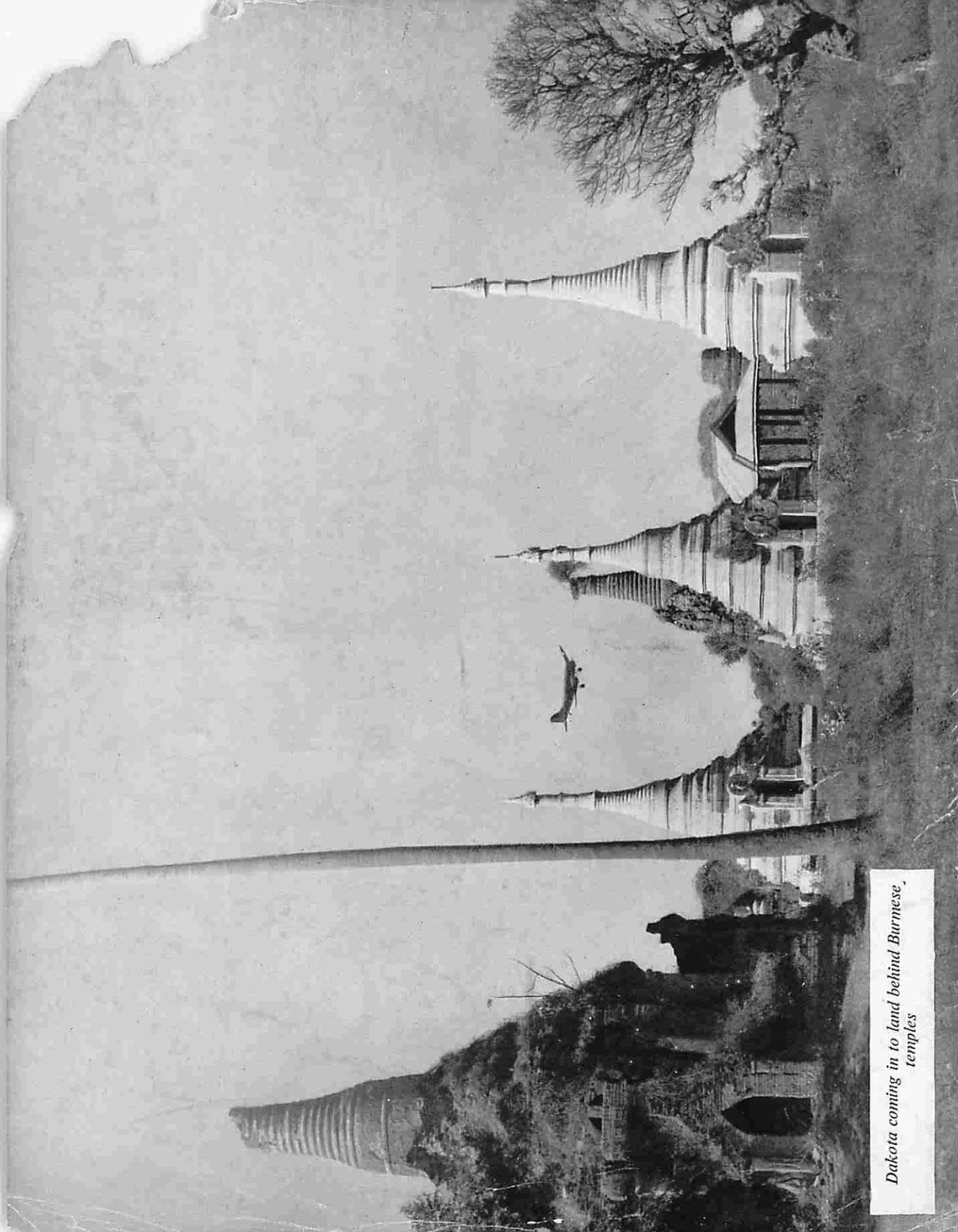
The airport has its own water supply from two drilled wells, its own sewage disposal system, and a complete fire-fighting organisation, with reservoirs and sprinkler systems, held to be the best equipped unit on any airfield in the world.

Approach and landing aids include instrument approach system (both S.B.A. and S.C.S.51) operated by the RAF and used particularly in bad visibility, which give pilots an indication in direction and azimuth of correct approach to the runway. Standard radio range and cone of silence marker is also in use with two fan markers on the east course, one 5 miles and the other 28 miles from the range station. The south and west legs have fan markers 28 miles and 25 miles distant respectively.

Up to the time of Japan's surrender, the RAF from DORVAL had delivered to Europe, Africa, India and Australia approximately 11,000 operational and transport aircraft, and made 20,000 flights of more than 3,000 miles east, as well as maintaining air communications between Newfoundland and Labrador and along the length of the United States.

In addition to RAF traffic, DORVAL handles roughly 1,370 aircraft per month, operated by four commercial airlines, and the traffic of the BOAC North Atlantic Return Ferry Service.





Dakota coming in to land behind Burmese temples