



RAF W/O Wireless Operator/Navigator Stanley Hope

Stan Hope was born in 1916 in Dublin, to English parents. Before the war he tried unsuccessfully to join the RAF but after the outbreak of the Second World War Stan volunteered and this time his application to the RAF was accepted. From July 1940, he undertook training as a wireless operator and navigator and started his service life on Blenheims, progressing to Beaufighters. A transfer to operations in the Middle East was cancelled when Stan's pilot crashed on take off. He was subsequently transferred to the Mosquito photo-reconnaissance unit and during his tape-recorded interview he speaks of this aircraft's tremendous speed. He photographed enemy airfields, marshalling yards and post-raid damage from 18,000-20,000 feet, flying from speeds of 250 mph when photographing, up to 400 mph.

A mission in December 1942 went wrong when first one engine failed over Austria and then the other started to show signs of failure over Belgium. Stan was ordered to bail out, having never parachuted before and remembers the silence as he descended. He landed gently, in a field of cows and managed to evade capture until 15 January when he and his companions were caught in the last stage of arranging a guided crossing of the Pyrenees. He spent months in prison, mainly at Fresnes prison in Paris, often in solitary confinement and subjected to physical and mental punishment by the Gestapo. In May 1943 he was moved to the first in a series of POW camps, enduring an horrendous 'run up the road' en route to one camp when the POW's were set upon by dogs and had their kit stolen. Stan was a POW for the remainder of the war and was one of those involved in the 'Black' March to the West. His meticulous notes and drawings of life in the camps started when he was given a notebook by the Red Cross and form an invaluable record of the daily life of a POW.

We are delighted to report that on visiting the Centre in September 1999 to be interviewed on tape by [Peter Liddle](#), Stan became interested in the Centre's work and offered his services as a volunteer. He now comes to the Centre every week to study and catalogue papers in the RAF section of the archive. His Red Cross book featuring autographed illustrations of fellow inmates, sketches, poems, songs and details of camp life, was featured in the first issue of the



Stan Hope discusses his donation with Work Experience Student Lindsay Dickinson



The Crew - Pilot Freddie McKay (New Zealander) on the left



The Second World War Experience Centre
Reproduction of an article from the Centre's website
<http://www.war-experience.org/collections/air/alliedbrit/hope/default.asp>

Centre's journal, [Everyone's War](#). This unique original document is preserved at the Centre alongside aerial photographs and Stan's RAF service book and flying log-book.



Airman's Pay Book



RAF Service and Release Book

The 8/11/42 was the only time when Stan Hope's aeroplane was fired at. His Mosquito was so fast that it gave the enemy no chance to target them. On this particular occasion, however, another aircraft had just been spotted in the vicinity and so the gunners were already set up when Stan's Mosquito appeared.



Two aerial photographs are superimposed to show the French Fleet in Toulon Harbour, 8/11/42, before the ships were scuttled



The Log Book covering the period when the aerial photographs were taken



Stanley Hope Audio Clip: Parachuting into Belgium.

The interviewer is [Peter Liddle](#)

Transcript of Audio Clip

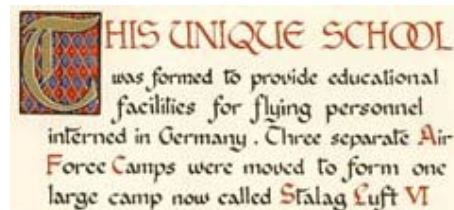
The Mosquito exit was very small but fortunately I'm fairly small myself, so, I remember Mac. . . I sat on the . . . kicked the door open, sat with my legs hanging out, shook hands with Mac, he kicked me on the shoulder and out I went. I was told to count to ten before I pulled the cord. I counted "one, two, three" and that was it, I pulled it! 'Cos we weren't very high - I'd say we were about 2,000 feet.

[Peter Liddle: Had you ever jumped before?]

No, never, no. We'd had lectures on it but never jumped before. No, we never did a practice jump, so it was a bit of a new experience. It was quite thrilling actually because I saw the plane disappear - just a glimpse of it, the 'chute opened with a jerk and the next thing I noticed was this eerie silence. After the plane engines everything was so quiet: I could hear a dog bark, I think I heard a train whistle somewhere in the distance and I was floating down in complete silence and it was dusk, there was no cloud about and I landed very gently in a field of cows who came over to see what this white thing was floating about. Anyway, I buried the parachute, stuffed it in a hedge and started exploring. I saw a light in a farmhouse, I was in Belgium. Now this is extraordinary. I landed not far from where my grandmother was born. She was born in Belgium and she was born in a place called Hal in the country and I finished up a few miles from Hal. The first signpost I saw was Hal and as soon as I saw that I knew where I was. I had no idea up 'til then.

Inventory of the Donation

- Tape recorded
- Yorkshire Post Kriegie Edition (POW magazine)
- RAF service book
- POW log book
- Flying log book
- Booklet, 'The Royal Air Force School for Prisoners of War'
- Letters from Comtess Andree de Jongh, G. M., Comet Line founder
- Articles about the Comet Line and its founder
- Photographs of people connected with the Comet Line
- Aerial photographs



An example of the very fine illuminated text from 'The Royal Air Force School for Prisoners of War' booklet



The "two Elizabeths" who helped Stan Hope in Belgium - they sheltered people while their papers were being forged



While trying to get back to England this brother and sister helped Stan (on the left). He even went to the cinema "with" them - walking a little behind so that if accosted they would not also be caught.



A portrait of Stan Hope from his POW log book



Kriegie version of Rudyard Kipling's "If"



"My Bed Space, Stalag Luft 4"



Prisoners were counted 'like sheep' when an escape was detected

Stanley Hope Audio Clip: "On the Loose" in Belgium, evading the Germans..

The interviewer is [Peter Liddle](#)

Transcript of Audio Clip

So I went and knocked on the door but I did scare them - they wouldn't help me at all, they were very frightened, so I - what did I do next? Oh yes, I went to the church, the Catholic church, it was early Mass and I went and sat at the back of the church until everybody had gone and then I asked the Priest could he help me and he was frightened too - he said he couldn't help me at all, so I went to a café. . .

[Peter Liddle: Still in uniform?]

. . . still in uniform - yes. I went into a café and I forgot a café in France is a beer parlour, a pub, and I ordered coffee and she said "no, we haven't got any coffee" so I ordered a beer then.

[Peter Liddle: In what language?]

In French, I had a little bit of French and I had some French money too. They gave us escape money, as they called it, so I ordered a beer and paid for it and it was getting light then and I thought I'd better get out of here into the country again so I started walking out of the village and I came across a railway line with a level crossing and I still had some sandwiches left so I sat on the embankment by the railway line and ate my sandwiches and while I was sitting there a train stopped just above on the line full of German soldiers and I thought "oh dear". I just sat there and didn't make a move, ate my sandwiches and the train pulled away and nobody said anything so I thought "good, another escape!"
