CONSTANT WITNESS

RE-FRAMING IMAGES OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

We had wanted to show you truth, but truth photographs badly.
We had wanted to show you hope, but we could not find it.
(Brown 1945, p. 8)

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Thesis

Doctor of Philosophy (Communications)

University Technology Sydney

February 2015

CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature:

Date:

DEDICATION

For my sister and brother, Caroline and Jeff

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people provided inspiration, insight and support on the journey to completing this work but my first and biggest thank you must go to my supervisor, Professor Paula Hamilton, who always encouraged me to push a little harder and dig a little deeper and with whom I had many lively meetings, which always ended too soon.

A special thanks is due to the institutions who gave me access to their archives and the archivists who advised and guided me in the use of their collections—the Imperial War Museum, London; the Airborne Museum Hartenstein; the Australian War Memorial, Canberra; the Gedenkenstatte Bergen-Belsen; the Parachute Regiment and Airborne Forces Museum, Duxford (formerly of Browning Barracks, Aldershot) and the British Garrison at Hohne.

In particular, I would like to thank Suzanne Bardgett, of the Imperial War Museum for the opportunity of the Research Associate position; Kay Gladstone, Curator of Acquisitions and Documentation in the Film and Video Archive, Imperial War Museum, for having the foresight to initiate the oral history recording with my father and other AFPU cameramen; Dr Toby Haggith Senior Curator, Department of Research, Imperial War Museum for sharing his insights on the Belsen archive and many interesting discussions on the minutia of archival research. Special thanks also go to Dr Robert Voskuil, friend of the Airborne Museum Hartenstein, whose 'photographic battle tour' yielded surprising insights into the context of the Arnhem images my father took and battle photography in general; and James Barker, a researcher on the *Images of War* documentary for his knowledge and insights. Thanks too to Earle Hoffman of the Jewish Museum, Canberra, for providing information about my father's activities in relation to the Belsen archive after he moved to Australia.

I am also deeply indebted to those people who shared their memories with me, many of them extremely painful: Harry Oakes, Alan Moore, Peter Norris, Olga Horak and Mania Salinger. There were also many scholars and artists at conferences over the years of this project who enriched my thinking and provided friendship, thank you.

Final thanks go to family and friends who have lived with me, living with this topic, for so many years; but kept on supporting just the same: David Reid, a fine photographer, who digitised the War Diary and drawings for me; Fred Mitchell who heroically and consistently read and critiqued every draft; Frank Moorhouse who steadfastly discussed even the darkest topics and proof-read my copy; my family, Caroline and John Giddings and Jeff and Bid Lewis, who were always with me in spirit and the many dear friends who had faith and urged me on.

Many thanks …

ABSTRACT

As a member of the British Army Film and Photographic Unit, my father Mike Lewis, took some of the most important images of the Second World War including those of the battle for the bridge at Arnhem and the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Though these iconic images have been repeatedly used in books and documentaries he and his fellow Sergeant Cameraman have remained largely unacknowledged and anonymous. The focus has been on the images without a sense of the photographer, the framing and the photographer's role in the cultural production process or, indeed, the technology used to create them. Using my father's personal archive as a pivotal point of reference, I seek to re-engage these images with their original purpose and meaning through their creators; and explore how this re-framing changes our reading of them, particularly in relation to the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

Contents

INTRODUCTION

Constant Witness takes the form of a biography/memoir that in Maurice Halbwach's (1992) terms works at the intersection of autobiographical and historical memory; it blends the genres of biography, autobiography, auto-ethnography and memoir. The story unpacks my father's cultural identity as a child of Polish Jewish emigrants growing up between the wars in London and how this may have played out in his experience of war, particularly in relation to the filming of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

My father experienced the war as a soldier of the ranks and as a cinematographer, or 'screen journalist'[1], recording the events. The Army Film and Photographic Unit (AFPU) Sergeant Cameramen were not like their civilian counterparts, they were soldiers first and subject to military orders, some like my father were combat veterans. Their primary mission was to make a record of frontline events; selected sequences of film and stills were used for publicity and propaganda purposes but this was not their only purpose. It is not widely known that the film taken during the liberation and relief of Bergen-Belsen was used in the Belsen war crimes trial at Lüneburg[2] in September 1945, and was the first use of film as corroboratory evidence. A compilation of film, supported by affidavits from the Sergeant Cameramen, was screened in the courtroom.

Constant Witness also explores the trans-generational transmission of trauma as I unpick my own disturbing memories of finding Bergen-Belsen images at age six or seven and come to terms with my father's war experiences. Marianne Hirsch coined the term 'postmemory' to describe 'the relationship of children of survivors … to the experiences of their parents, experiences … so powerful, so monumental, as to constitute memories in their own right.' And she notes that this postmemory experience is also shared by the children of victims, perpetrators and witnesses. My father was also impacted by this trans-generational transmission of trauma and carried the memories of his parents who fled Poland as teenagers. He said the build up to war was particularly worrying for them: 'I suppose there must have been something like a race memory going back—how many generations?—of all the terrible things that had happened to people who were Jewish in other lands.'

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[1]Screen journalist is the term my father uses to describe his own work and the ability of being 'able to write a story with the camera'.

[2] The official name for this proceeding was the *Trial of Josef Kramer and forty-four others (Phillips 1949)*.

Integral to the telling of this story is the re-contextualising of the images my father captured within his memories and recollections; and the unravelling of certain generalisations and controversy surrounding both the images and the cameramen, particularly in relation to the images captured at the liberation of Bergen-Belsen. For example, Barbie Zelizer has described those involved in recording the liberation of the camps as: 'largely members of the U.S. and British liberating forces who *stumbled* through the camps over a three-week period and *randomly* took pictures' (Zelizer 2000, p. 247) [italics are my emphasis]. She also merges the media into chaotic melange of 'amateur, semi-professional, and professional picture-takers' (Zelizer 1999, p. 102). The Belsen images have been described as demeaning and dehumanising (Haggith 2006 p. 93); and, those that captured them have, by implication, been portrayed as transgressive and callous (Cesarani 2006, p. 5). Susan Crane has questioned the purpose of showing these images of atrocity and whether they have 'reached the limits of their usefulness as testimony?' (Crane 2008, p. 310). Susan Sontag's conflicted polemic in *On Photography* while acknowledging their impact, worried that they would aestheticise suffering, though she modified this position in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (1977, 2003).

Throughout the narrative I interrogate the images and their creators to better appreciate the role of these images as both historical evidence and artefacts; in fact to appreciate their aesthetic value. This aesthetic is not about notions of beauty and pleasure or the autonomy of art but what Michael Kelly has defined as: 'critical thinking about the affective, cognitive, moral, political, technological, and other historical conditions constitutive of the production, experience and judgement of such art.' As Caroline Brothers says, 'it is within their context that inheres their meaning' .

The resulting narrative is a Boetian plait of story, memory and meditation, weaving the personal, historical and cultural themes to refract the images, and their use over the intervening decades, through their creators. This re-framing unpicks some of the critical issues and assumptions that have gathered around these images, especially those of Bergen-Belsen and explores their symbolic and indexical traces in a contemporaneous context (Brothers 1997, p. 22).

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My father left a rich personal archive which comprises: screen, print and audio and other interviews with him; some written recollections; a Visual War Diary (War Diary); other photographs and sketches he made during the war; memorabilia such as his military

beret; and a small number of books that are contemporaneous or relate to the war years. His Visual War Diary forms the central spine of the timeline of events and locations starting with his first action in North Africa as a parachutist, then following his subsequent deployment in Europe as a combat cameraman through Arnhem, Bergen-Belsen, the crossing of the Rhine and his entry into Copenhagen at the liberation of Denmark (where he met my mother). The contemporaneous caption sheets (officially Secret Dope Sheets) that were submitted with film and photographs when it was sent for processing also provide an important source of triangulation and verification.[3]

I have also supplemented my father's archive with interviews with two surviving AFPU cameramen, Peter Norris and 'Harry' (Ernest Lauret) Oakes. Both were in the No 5 AFPU with my father, though only Harry went with him to Bergen-Belsen. I also interviewed Kay Gladstone, Curator of Acquisitions and Documentation in the Film and Video Archive of the Imperial War Museum (IWM) who conducted the oral history interview with my father; James Barker, who was a researcher on the BBC documentary series *Images of War* (an episode features my father); Alan Moore, one of Australia's official war artists who was at Belsen at the same time as my father and Olga Horak, a Belsen survivor.

Secondary sources have been used to provide the historical and military triangulation for the battles he fought in and filmed. To orient myself geographically and spatially I also undertook site visits (and research) at the Airborne Museum Hartenstein, Netherlands (a museum dedicated to battle at Arnhem) and the Gedenkstätte Bergen-Belsen (the memorial museum at the site of the concentration camp) in Germany. I did not have the resources, and it did not seem safe, to visit the sites of the several battles he fought in, in Tunisia and Algeria, which is something I regret as the other site visits have been invaluable in contextualising events and images. However, North Africa is where he began his career with the AFPU, so there are few of what I call 'personal images' (those taken by him or a colleague) anyway, and of those, all were taken after the war was over there. Nevertheless, his descriptions of what he experienced in battle are visceral, visual and revealing of my father and the man who helped create some of the most powerful narratives of the Second World War at Arnhem and Belsen.

Any project in which a daughter writes about her father is bound to be emotionally laden but one that is bound up with sites of atrocity and war further problematises the lens

[3] The caption sheets have been a largely untapped source of information and commentary and were officially handed over to the Imperial War Museum, together with film and photographs after the war. Where possible I use the captions my father used, especially for those images from his Visual War Diary, unless they require amplification.

through which the past is viewed. Wounds are exposed, perhaps revealed for the first time, and there are subconscious reverberations; there were many shaky moments on the research path, stories that I had never heard before; images I had not seen and dreams (some are in this story) in which I was clearly reaching for meaning, the meaning of my father. He died in 1986, long before this project was born and I regret our 'lost' conversations but am grateful for the archive he left behind and the oral history that the IWM gathered. Out of these sources I have been able to construct some sort of dialogue with him. Perhaps, in a sense, his archive anticipated this need. As I was writing a curious thing happened, I found myself referring sometimes to 'my father' and other times to 'Mike Lewis', reflecting, perhaps, the two sides of him, for me, as parent and also the historical figure of a British Army combat cameraman in the Second World War. In the interests of clarity, I have preferred the use of, 'my father' as much as possible.

1 FIVE PHOTOGRAPHS

> Now and again what appears to be a casually spoken word will suddenly acquire a cabalistic significance. It becomes charged and strangely swift, races ahead of the speaker, is destined to throw open a chamber in the uncertain confines of the future and to return to him with the deadly accuracy of a boomerang. … and he becomes aware of the force, both frightening and intoxicating, of the workings of fate. To lovers and to soldiers, to men marked for death and those filled with the cosmic force of life, this power is sometimes given, without warning; suddenly a revelation is conferred on them, a bounty and a burden … and the word sinks, sinks down inside them. (Boll 1970, p. 2)

Photographs of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, taken during the endgame of the Second World War in Europe, are some of my earliest memories. Though now I see that, for most of my life, the memory of finding them was mute and dissociated, as if it happened to some other child. I see her now. She is playing in a small cupboard under the incline of the stairs; a place where the bric-a-brac of family life is kept and the place of her imagining games. Today she is Lucy in the *Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* looking for a door to a magic land. She opens a battered, grey and blue metal suitcase, rifling the layers of papers and documents she finds there. She pulls out a brown foolscap envelope and breaks the seal; five huge[4], black and white photographs spill out. A desolate landscape populated with wasted people, skeletal dead and huge pits of bodies fills her eyes. She stares at each photograph and then returns them to the envelope, pressing down the flap and replacing it among the layers in the suitcase. She shuts the lid, clicks the catch shut and sits on the suitcase, hands pressed beside her. She makes no sound and her face remains a mask. She tells no one what she has seen.

Did she really sit like that on the suitcase, or did she kneel in front of it palms resting flat on the lid as if holding it shut? I am uncertain now. How do I know her face was a mask? I never saw it. I remember the monstrous images and an uncomfortable feeling, a guilty feeling, which is why I never spoke of it to anyone then. Thinking back, I cannot really remember how I came to know about Belsen or even when? Had I overheard my parents

[4] The photographs are unusually large, printed on 11R (279x356 mm) paper. The images do not quite fill the paper, because the aspect ratio of the negative is incompatible. Nevertheless, I am sure the large size magnified their impact at the time.

talk about it before I found the photographs? Was finding the photographs the beginning and if so, how did my learning about Belsen go on from there? Sometimes it seems as if I always knew. I suppose that eventually my parents did speak about it in front of me and my brother and sister who are older, but I cannot remember any specific conversations, just snatches. I do know that by the time I started high school I was aware of my parents war experiences, my mother in occupied Denmark and my father in the British Army as a parachutist and combat cameraman. I knew he had been assigned to film the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. 'I knew enough'. Over time my memory of finding the photographs became calloused over by iterations of memory, so that while it remained embedded I became barely conscious of its effect. It was all so long ago like the events of the Second World War themselves; and the monochrome of the images seemed to underscore this sense of temporal and, later, geographical remoteness. At age twenty-one, I left England to live in Australia. Years later, after my parents were both dead, the events seemed even more remote; half a world away and half a life time. But there was a latency in that memory which would be unleashed in a most unlikely way.

It was early spring and I was having breakfast in my garden in the hinterland of the far north coast of New South Wales. My mind had been drifting from scanning the newspapers to the garden. But a flash of a Swastika caught my eye and the curious title: *History on Trial: My Day in Court with David Irving*. It was a review of Deborah Lipstadt's book about her battle to defend herself against a libel suit brought by David Irving, then a controversial Second World War historian. Irving's suit followed publication of Lipstadt's earlier book, *Denying the Holocaust; the Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*, one of the first comprehensive accounts of the Holocaust denial movement in which she named Irving. So, he sued her and the publishers, Penguin UK,[5] losing, unequivocally. It was fascinating, a mix of law, history and historiography and I was intrigued by the notion of the truth of history being tested in a court of law. But with so much documentary evidence … with so many *images*, how was it that there was a case at all? It suggested an acceptance, even respectability, for Holocaust denial that I would not have believed possible and the reviewer, David Marr's comments sent a wave of apprehension through me. He said: 'The work of deniers is oddly easy. They don't have to prove much. All they have to do is cast doubt. But this requires they have public reputations as scholars'(Marr July 9-10, 2005, p. 18). I had to get that book.

[5] Deborah Lipstadt was a professor of Holocaust studies at Emory University in Atlanta and she could not be sued for what she said in her book in the US.

I was not aware of the oddness of my choosing to read *History on Trial* when, for most of my adult life I had managed to evade the Second World War and the Holocaust, in its many expressions. Not that I was ignorant; I remember sitting through most of the *World at War*[6] with my parents when it was first broadcast. But I had packed that memory away when I settled in Australia, along with my memory of the photographs, and my memories of growing up in England the child of a 'mixed marriage': father the son of Jewish émigrés from Poland and mother a Danish war bride—Yiddisher Vikings my father called us wryly. I had packed all this away and the death of my parents seemed to set the seal, so that my life began in Australia, at age twenty-one. But *History on Trial* would change everything.

[6] The *World at War* was first broadcast in 1973 and is generally considered a landmark documentary on the Second World. It was produced by Thames Television.

2 ENACTING MEMORY

How does one book puncture the skin of memory and call back to consciousness emotions packed away long ago?

I am reading Lipstadt's book on a flight from the Gold Coast to Canberra where I am going to work, writing and editing government reports. Tears gather in the corner of my eyes and slide down my nose. I feel embarrassed and blot surreptitiously but my eyes keep filling. I snap the book shut as if this might stem the flow. The tears seem unconnected to feeling. Certainly, Lipstadt's description of the Holocaust survivor who approached her at the end of her first day in court is touchingly rendered, she says:

> A small elderly woman had resolutely pushed her way through the crush. She had a heavily wrinkled face and very sad eyes. Dressed quite sensibly for a January day in London, she was wearing a plain light blue wool sweater, dark wool skirt and sturdy shoes. Her knitted hat was pulled tight over her gray hair. Ignoring reporters, she thrust her arm in front of me rolled her sleeve up to her elbow, and emphatically pointed at the number tattooed on her forearm. "You are fighting for us. You are our witness" (Lipstadt 2005, pp. 85-6).

Still my reaction seems disproportionate. I turn my head to the window and look at the silver flash of Lake Burley Griffin as we bank and descend toward Canberra airport and the tears recede. During the evening I test myself, reading the same few pages. I close the book, deciding it will be 'safer' to finish it when I reach the privacy of home.

Stepping out of the aircraft at Gold Coast airport, I am enveloped in the moisture laden air of the subtropics. It is soft and steamy after the desiccated air of Canberra though I do have a special affection for Canberra as my first home in Australia. Canberra was where my life started. I was twenty and had been backpacking with a friend in Europe the year before. We had made a pact to travel to South America together when she had finished her studies, but I could not wait. I was driven by a growing sense of discomfort with the country of my birth; a sense that I did not fit or belong there; and a fear that I would stagnate and never leave if I did not go soon. My sister had settled in Canberra with her husband who had just completed his doctorate at the Australian National University, so I decided a long working holiday there would occupy me until my friend was free. But life overtook me and my friend and I did not go back to England again except for visits, and we never did the trip to South America. Australia overtook me and I fell in love with its vast

and aged geography, its strange tangled trees and bush, and its eclectic mix of cultures still in flux. 'Still on my working holiday,' I joke to my friends.

As I walk across the tarmac toward the airport building I suddenly realise that I am thinking of these things, that the past is bubbling up uneasily. I went back to visit my parents five years after I left England. They had retired to a lovely property near St Lawrence on the Isle of Wight that looked across the busy shipping lanes to France. A large orchard had inspired my mother to try her hand at cider and elderberry wine, and it was pretty good. It was a wonderful holiday of hikes along the cliff top, horse riding in the English countryside, and afternoon tea watching the yachts at Cowes. They took me to a party with other retirees and though they had warned me what to expect, I was still astonished by the reaction of one of the guests when I told him that I would not be returning to live in England. He paused perplexed and then protested as if he might persuade me: 'But England is the centre of the civilised world.' I hope I did not stay too long with my mouth open. 'Ex-colonials!' my mother said later when I told her, as if that explained everything. 'I didn't think we still had any and anyway I thought he might be joking,' I replied. 'There's the Twining woman,' said my mother. 'Of the tea?' I asked. My mother nodded, 'Dad's managed to have a fight with her.' I cannot remember now what my mother said it was about but it was not uncommon for my father to take up 'causes'.

As the ferry pulled away from Ryde and I watched them growing smaller on the quayside, I felt melancholic. I told my parents that I had decided to become an Australian citizen. I wondered when I would see them again suspecting it would be a long time. As it happened, it was not all that long because, after my visit, they decided they would move to Australia and a year or so later they did, leaving only my brother in England. Canberra became their home too and they seemed to enjoy their new life, 'My third country,' my mother said as if she was an old hand now at changing countries. I suppose she was. My mother wrote some maths workbooks for a local tutoring service and my father did some work broadcasting on the local radio station. He died in Canberra, quite suddenly, but not unexpectedly, of a heart attack, age sixty-nine, in 1986.

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I am barely aware of the drive home from the airport until there appears round the curve of the road the distinctive profile of the 'sleeping giant' of Wollumbin[7]. His nose, upper lip

[7] Wollumbin is the local Indigenous name for the mountain that Captain Cook named Mount Warning because of its prominence in the landscape.

and curve of chin are drawn across the horizon. Seeing Wollumbin means I will soon be home in my sanctuary. I adapted well when I moved north fifteen years before, for a tree-change with my Macedonian-born spouse. Together we created a magnificent garden that sprawls around a large lake. My mother lived on long enough to see the start of it and I nursed her there through the last months of life. In many respects the tree-change was a success, though not perhaps our relationship. Our garden had gained a few awards and we opened it to the public, periodically; but a constant chaffing between us had been slipping slowly into antipathy. Still, I was looking forward to being home, working in the garden and catching up with friends. We were getting ready for a spring opening and alfresco concert and there was a lot to do.

Pruning and weeding are meditative activities for me when I need to think. It is as if the act of clearing the weeds and trimming the foliage helps to unclutter and clear my mental landscape. I potter about teasing out the tangled brush of thoughts as I work. Perhaps I mistook my feelings in Canberra; but the memories of what my parent's told me about the war continue to bubble to the surface. My mother's stories about living under German occupation; about 'curfew parties' that went all night; about singing in a Swing band like the Andrews Sisters; about skating on the frozen lakes; about being taken by her boyfriend to watch the aftermath of an explosion at a German fuel dump that he had engineered; about how King Christian often rode through the streets of Copenhagen to bolster the morale of his people; about meeting my father at a party organised by her boyfriend. Bad luck for the boyfriend.

I was sure she told me too, that King Christian wore a Star of David armband in a symbol of solidarity with the Danish Jews when the Nazi occupiers ordered them to be worn, but when I check the histories this turns out to be a fallacy. There was a British report during the war that the King had proposed such action if the need arose. Maybe the story leaked out, or was leaked and in the telling and retelling it became truth; perhaps that is what my mother 'remembered'; and leaving Denmark aged nineteen she would have had little cause to revisit that particular tale. It is a powerful symbolic story about resistance: the King of a small, weak nation riding out in solidarity with his citizens and in defiance of the overwhelming might of an occupying force.[8] Certainly my mother felt proud that Denmark had saved nearly all of the more than seven thousand Danish citizens who were Jewish.

[8] A Wikipedia entry reproduces a quote from the King's diary that supports this view: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_X_of_Denmark

I stand up from my weeding to throw another bundle of prunings onto the pile on the lawn, stretching my back and then stepping gently between the plants to the next section. Eastern Spinebills who are feeding on the nectar of the tropical salvias take off and flutter around my head like demented garden fairies before settling again. Fragments of my father's stories are here, bobbing in this dark current of memory, though stories of his six years of war seem scant. He told me how, in Denmark, he was invited to a party by a young man who turned out to be the boyfriend of the girl that caught his eye; the girl who was more beautiful than Ingrid Bergman. In the absence of a shared language they held hands. After two weeks he had to leave with his unit but arranged to have flowers sent to her. My mother said they came every week until he came back. Was it a year later? That is a long time to be sending flowers but it seems to fit my father. He sent flowers to a Mrs Selman every year until her death, though he never explained why. He told me a little about volunteering for the newly formed parachute regiment, his first jump from a balloon and the enthusiastic and vociferous welcome given to the Allies by the Danes. I know he was at Arnhem and Belsen. I know some of the Belsen film was used at a war crimes trial. I do not know much when I think about it. Once, when I was very young I asked him what he did if his parachute did not open. 'I'd go back and get another one,' he said. 'And what did you do when you landed?' 'I shot off all my ammunition at once so that I could run faster.' I did not believe him, but the flippancy of his responses somehow barred further conversation. I suppose that at first my parents thought we were too young to be told much about the war and later … perhaps, they did not want to look back.

I look up to see a satisfying line of clippings on the lawn waiting to be cleared. Rain has sent the humidity high and I am dripping with sweat. I retire to the swing seat under the roof of the jetty to rock slowly and fan myself with the cool air from the lake. I am nearing the end of Lipstad't book and pick up my reading. Then two sentences pierce me, Lipstadt says: 'For a long time after the court battle was over, I felt pain when I thought of the many people who had watched Irving ravage their memories. I could not fathom what if felt like to have one's experiences not just denied, but deprecated and ridiculed' (Lipstadt 2005, p. 289).

Abruptly the anguished sensation engulfs me and I am not sure what, or who, I am feeling this for: for the victims; for the survivors; for the people who had their memories 'ravaged'; or for my father? Across the lake the light bounces and flashes off the water and I think again of the 'old soldier' who told Lipstadt: 'Get this bastard, madam' after listening to Irving suggest that the Allies were responsible for spreading typhus and other diseases in the concentration camps. He had been in Belsen (Lipstadt 2005, p. 209). I see again the

elderly woman rolling up her sleeve to show her tattoo to Lipstadt and then a spectre of memory rises and I see myself a child ducking into the cupboard under the stairs. I am taking an envelope from the suitcase and sliding my finger under the seal. I tip the envelope and five photographs fall out in front of me. I look at each one for some moments and then return them to the envelope and put it away in the suitcase. It was not that I had forgotten, but that half of the memory, the feeling half, was missing. I cry myself to quietness. The turtles drift in hopeful of some bread, the eels too; an alarmed grebe rushes away to gather tiny specks of chicks onto its back, a light breeze ripples across the water cooling my face. Belsen has been a scary name for the terrifying images a child saw but did not really understand; in some ways it still is.

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A dusty piece of papyrus sits atop my bookshelf, a relic of my father's post-war career working for the BBC news team. He brought it back for me from Morocco, along with an autograph of Thor Heyerdahl, the adventurer. He had been sent to film Heyerdahl's attempt to cross the Atlantic in the papyrus boat, Ra, a voyage that had captured my imagination. The autograph and the hotel paper it was written on disintegrated some years ago and now there is nothing left to explain the presence of this strange object on my bookshelf except for my memories. But I keep it for that, for the memories of that famous expedition, my father's exotic globetrotting career and the wonderful presents and stories that always accompanied his return: an American Indian beaded purse from Canada, ebony Makonde carvings from Africa, tales of military detention and smuggling film in the Turkey–Cyprus war. Memorabilia are often like that, signifiers of the past that evoke reminiscence in the keeper but are impenetrable to outsiders unless shared. I pick the aged piece of papyrus off the shelf and dust it; its lightness still surprises me, a rusty pin sticks out from where Thor Heyerdahl's autograph was attached.

I have been searching for an episode of a documentary series, *Images of War: the cameramen 1939-1945,* that features my father. It was released in 1981, not long before my parent's migrated to Australia. I saw it once soon after but have not seen it since. It has been several days since I sat on the jetty and revived those childhood memories. I thought the experience would be cathartic but it has left me raw. I feel caught out, like the soldier who has fallen asleep on watch and allowed the enemy to infiltrate. It is difficult for me to comprehend how the denial movement could gain so much traction when I have lived, subliminally, with the proof all my life in the images of Bergen-Belsen, and the testimony of my father. I have ordered Lipstadt's other book, *Denying the Holocaust,* because I want
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to understand. I am not sure why I want to see *Images of War* again. Perhaps I am seeking to purge myself of Irving by listening to my father. It will be a little bizarre to conjure him up again; to see him and hear his voice after all this time. Rather like a séance, though a séance implies a conversation and the recorded image can only tell me what it told me before. But there will be traces of him there, his face, his voice and way of speaking, his mannerisms, his smile and his story. If *only* I had been a soldier caught out on watch; at least that would mean I had been aware there was something to protect, but I see that I have been a lotus-eater, living to forget[9].

Images of War is not in my office so I climb the stairs to the loft rooms where my spouse and I store the jumble of our accumulated life together. The past has been disturbed and events and conversations I have not thought of for years are surfacing. I remember meeting a young man of German descent who was a 'denier' in the early 1980's when I worked for the public service in Canberra. I cannot recall how we fell into conversation about these matters. What I do remember is my astonishment at his views. I never challenged his ideas at the time; it did not seem worth the effort. It was after all, just a crackpot view held by a few fringe extremists. Would it have made any difference if I had? Would showing him the photographs have convinced him of this error? I wonder now if not speaking out was a form of cowardice? Was there that split second of consideration of the consequences before I let his remarks pass unchallenged? Lipstadt says that she steadfastly refuses to debate Holocaust deniers, they are not, she says, the 'other side' and that while there are many questions that can be, and are asked, about the events of the Holocaust: 'There is a categorical difference between debating these types of questions and debating the very fact of the Holocaust' (Lipstadt July 1994, p. xiv). I could have—should have—said something before walking away.

I find the old grey and blue metal suitcase pushed into the angle of the roof. It passed to me after the death of my mother. She came to stay with me when she was diagnosed with

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[9] In the *Power of Witnessing: reflections, reverberation and traces of the Holocaust*, Goodman and Meyers use an exegetical and reflexive approach to explore the psychic scars left on those affected by the Holocaust. One contribution, in particular struck a chord with me, that of Sophia Richman, herself a psychoanalyst (Goodman & Meyers 2012, pp. 105-17). She describes how her father, a Jew, remained in hiding through the war in the attic while she and her mother were able to live openly with a Christian identity in Poland. After the war her parent's, perhaps in the belief they were protecting her, repeatedly told her that she was 'too young to remember' and she accepting this narrative was not able to integrate her early experiences till later in life. Richman says, 'The consequence of living out someone else's narrative is that certain aspects of self remain outside awareness, split off and dissociated and unavailable to experience life fully.' This certainly accords with my experience in recovering my emotional response to the images I found as a child. I too, in a sense, was faced with living someone else's narrative, a narrative contained in the images and my father's relationship to them that could not be understood by me then.

cancer so that I could look after her. During those last months, as if in some odd presentiment of this moment, I asked her if she still had any of my father's film and photographs and if he had given anything away. I wrote notes as she talked. I had an odd feeling of desperation about the task and suddenly realised that I was writing to avoid the second loss that would happen when my mother died; when I would lose him … them … finally; when he would slip even further away. 'You became close,' my mother said as if intuiting my state. 'Yes,' I said. 'We did.' I slipped the notes I had made into the suitcase with the rest of my father's things after she died, but I did not return to examine what was there.

I slide the suitcase out from the angle of the roof; it is fuzzy with fine cobwebs and I kneel in front of it, snapping open the catch. It seems a small container for the relics of one life, in the same way a cinerary urn seems too small to hold the corporeal remains. My father was not a big collector or keeper of things; he had always seemed unsentimental in this way, so when I look inside I am surprised to find it densely packed with manila folders labelled in my father's rough scrawl. It is eerie to see his handwriting after all this time but there is comfort too in this vestige of his physical presence. The list I made from the conversation with my mother is there on top and underneath a file labelled *Holocaust Address*. When I flick through the pages it is familiar, the Sydney Jewish Museum used it as part of their Fiftieth Anniversary Tribute[10] to survivors of the Holocaust and their liberators in 1995. My father was dead by then so an actor delivered his speech. There was a point during the event when the survivors in the audience were asked to light the small torches that they had been given as the house lights dimmed. Their tiny lights pin pricked the darkness, a testament to survival.

I delve deeper into the suitcase. There is very little about his thirty years with the BBC, mostly it is about his wartime experiences. There are a written recollections, contributions to books, correspondence with the Imperial War Museum about his oral history recordings, sketches of his comrades, press clippings and mementos too. Then I pull out a rather phallic lump of black rubber which I recognise as the rubber bullet he brought back from Northern Ireland; he did regular tours of duty there for the BBC during the 'troubles' of the 1970s. He wanted to illustrate to me that being hit by a rubber bullet fired from a gun was not the same as trading test tube bungs during chemistry class. The bullet was large, heavy and dense; it was obvious to me at once that there was not a great deal about

[10] The original Holocaust Address that my father wrote was for a Holocaust commemorative meeting in Sydney in April 1985.

a rubber bullet that was benign.[11] I put it to one side and continue to unpack the layers looking for *Images of War*.

The next thing I strike is a blue, hard-covered binder of war photographs, a sort of album; the photographs have been pasted down together with typed captions. The photographs begin in North Africa and end with a sequence of joyous images of Denmark. I remember my father saying that crossing the border into Denmark was like a beautiful dream after the destruction and devastation of the rest of Europe. Denmark escaped being a battle ground and the people greeted the Allies as liberators, heroes. The photographs show people lining the streets smiling and waving flags. I look for one of the girl 'more beautiful than Ingrid Bergman', but she is not there. Perhaps that particular dream did not belong in the ending of war but the beginning of peace. I put the binder aside with the rest of the material that I have unpacked. As I lift out the next few items I can feel something sliding from between two folders and look down as several, large format, black and white photographs fall to the floor in front of me. My breathe rushes out and seems to stop at the hideous materialising of memory. Yet it is not a memory, I fan out the five photographs on the floor and I stare at them as if they might disappear. I am riven again by memory and loss. When the calm of exhausted emotion rolls over me, I collect the images together and put them into a folder and begin to move the contents of the suitcase to my office where I can examine it more closely. *Images of War* is there at the bottom of the suitcase.

Later in the day, I go out into the garden to spread mulch onto the weeded and trimmed garden beds. It is a pleasurable 'finishing off' activity, an act of completion of the garden preparation process; a final mow, a final removal of spent flower heads and the garden will be ready. As I bucket the mulch between the plants and begin spreading it out, I start to laugh quietly at myself, at the topos of opening the trunk in the attic. I could be Pandora, or her 'sister' Eve, that other insatiably curious woman. I laugh too at my folly in thinking that the contents of the suitcase would provide solace. I laugh with relief. Questions hang in the air and spawn, one out of another and cluster round the slivers of memory, tantalisingly. In a quiet moment I pick up a file of newspaper clippings of interviews that my father gave in 1984.

In that year, the Imperial War Museum screened an unfinished documentary on the concentration and extermination camps at the Berlin Film Festival. They gave it the title *Memory of the Camps.* The documentary had been put together in the last months of the

[11] 'Troubles' is the common term for the conflict in Northern Ireland that flared up in the late 1960s and continued over several decades. The British Army first used rubber bullets there in 1970.

war in Europe but never completed or shown and had drifted into obscurity. It passed to the Imperial War Museum in the years after the war for keeping with the rest of the materials created by the AFPU, including the raw footage for the film. Its release created a flurry of interest because of its subject matter and also because of some of the names involved in its production, notably Sidney Bernstein and Alfred Hitchcock. It also drove interest, perhaps for the first time, in the cameramen. At his Canberra home, my father received a barrage of requests for interviews from around the world. He had always tended to be reclusive and had become more so after he retired, nevertheless he graciously complied with the requests for interviews, again and again and he was a natural raconteur. I called in to see him towards the end of his last interview. His face looked worn and his eyes watery and he kept dabbing at his nose with a handkerchief. It was unexpected; I had not realised until then that it still pained him that way. Now I think, how could I recognise his hurt when I could not see my own? As we sat together he suddenly asked me: 'Why do I have to keep telling this over and over again, isn't it enough I took the film?'

I tried to say something soothing about the importance of 'eyewitness accounts' and 'historic events' but it fell rather lamely and awkwardly into the silence that followed. Did I agree with him that the images said enough, that they made things clear? I think perhaps I did, at least naively, ignorantly, I believed the evidence was clear and the sentence handed down. A producer approached him with an idea for a documentary involving seeing *Memory of the Camps* and visiting Bergen-Belsen. He rejected it with hardly a thought: 'I don't need to see the film again and I don't want to go back. I wish I could forget. I *wish* I could forget.' As I recall his face crumpled by his memories and the passage of time, I find photographs of him in the file, taken for use with the interviews. There is the sad face that I remember, but there is another here as well, one that is new to me, but recognisable; him, but not him as I have ever known him.

He is in uniform, lying on the ground propped on his elbows, in oblique profile against a backdrop of barbed wire (Unknown circa 1943). His camera is held in both hands in front of him and he gazes intently to the left of the frame eyes cast slightly upwards. It must be a staged shot because he looks spit polished and relaxed. Even the wisps of grass seem carefully arranged so as not to intrude upon his face and the body of the camera he is holding. It has an archetypal quality. He is smoothed cheeked and handsome; I do not know this young man. He must have been about twenty-five and I realise for the first time how young my father was when he went to war. In a sense our parents are born to us with

our earliest memories of them and mine are of a father who had already thickened into middle age.

Mike Lewis with a De Vry film camera

It is as if he was preparing his publicity shot for posterity; visible are his sergeant stripes, his Parachute Regiment beret and cap badge. I look for the photograph in the Imperial War Museum's online catalogue and find it, but there is no date and the only credit is the No. 9 AFPU. The object description says: 'Cameramen in uniform: Sergeant Mike Lewis of the Army Film Unit posing with a De Vry, the camera most widely used by British combat cameramen. Mike Lewis transferred from the Parachute Brigade to the AFU, and filmed Arnhem and the liberation of Belsen.' Seeing him labelled in the catalogue like that is incongruous; my father is part of the public record, of history. I wonder who else has viewed his photograph and what they thought.

Below his photograph in the catalogue is one credited to him, actually a still from his Belsen film (Lewis 1945g). It is of women waving from behind barbed wire. The object description says: 'Women inmates of the German concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen wave through the wire to liberating British soldiers (including the cameraman Mike Lewis). The group includes Mania Salinger, the central figure in the group closest to the wire.' My father is not just part of history but recorded it: in *Memory of the Camps* the Belsen footage is almost half of the film.

I remember him talking about that first contact with the camp inmates at Belsen. He said they were peering through the wire at their cohort in wonder. 'Eating us up with their eyes,' was how he described it.

Women inmates of the German concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen (Mania Salinger centre)

My father tried to speak to them in mixture of Yiddish and German, neither of which he knew that well. But they understood that deliverance had come and their wonder turned to awe. 'You are a Jew and you are free,' they cried in disbelief. Was this the meeting he described? Is this his memory?[12] These women seem so full of life, healthy, not at all like pitiful corpses in the photographs from the suitcase but of course you cannot see what is behind them, you cannot see those too weak to stand or the corpses strewn everywhere. The women pictured here are some of the lucky ones, probably newly arrived, who had not yet succumbed to starvation and the noxious conditions at Belsen.

I know he was aware that there were people who denied what happened in the camps. Even when the first clips were screened, there were people who claimed that it was faked. But did he realise how far these ideas would travel with the passage of time. How down the years, when the buildings were gone and the grass grown over the grave mounds, when the numbers of those who had survived had dwindled, when still more atrocities

[12] Barthes said that: 'Photography has the same relation to History that the biographeme has to biography'(Barthes 2010, p. 30). In other words it is a fragment. This still from the film my father took is both history and biographeme and underscores the way my father's story intersects historical memory and helps create it.

continue to happen around the world, how then it would be possible to deny this one and gain for that denial a measure of acceptance. I wonder what he would have made of Irving versus Lipstadt.

'Why do I have to keep telling this over and over again, isn't it enough I took the film?' Even though he asked, I think he knew the answer was no, but it aches in me like a reproach, because I have not yet seen the film, some clips in *Images of War* but not *Memory of the Camps;* and not the unedited reels of film held by the Imperial War Museum. I wish I had better answers for him now. I wish I could ask him, who was the young man who became my father, who fought in North Africa and bailed out over Arnhem, who stepped through the gates into Bergen-Belsen?

Towards the end of his life, though he had only once set foot in a synagogue in my memory, for my uncle's funeral, he started to wear a gold Star of David: unusual for a man who never wore any jewellery or adornment. He also seems to have busied himself with various Jewish organisations, mostly about the Belsen, so perhaps I should not be surprised, but it is a side of him that was new to me. My father was angry at religion, particularly his own. He blamed it for centuries of human suffering. But perhaps something changed for him in later life though I do not think it was faith that made him wear a Star of David. Not long before his death from a heart attack, I challenged my father on his beliefs. He said: 'I'm what you call a foxhole believer.' In answer to my puzzled expression he explained: 'When you're stuck in some dug out being shelled by the enemy, you pray like crazy.' And then the conversation stopper, he said: 'Look here. There's no life after death. I know. I've been dead and there was nothing there.' He flashed that impish grin knowing that he had confounded me. He was referring to his recent resuscitation after a heart attack. I come out of this reverie as if awakening from sleep. I can no longer ask my father all the questions that now nag at me but I can listen to him. In the 1980s the Imperial War Museum recorded nine hours of oral history with him. I find the letter from Kay Gladstone, who conducted the interview. I feel an immense wave of gratitude toward him for his foresight because I am eager for answers.

That night I have a dream that I am with my father when he was a young man. We are holding hands standing on a high rampart looking down into grey cobbled streets. I have the dreamer's certitude that we are in the Netherlands. The night sky in the distance is lit up with fire. We know that war is coming. We are not speaking, this is understood between us. The ground tremors as if shaken by an explosion and we slip and fall into an ink-black hole. It seems to have no bottom. We are hurtling downwards the air is rushing

past my ears; I try to hold onto him. ‘Don’t let go,’ I shout to him. ‘Don’t let go.’ But our grasped hands tear apart and I lose him to the blackness.

3 THE PRIVATE PSYCHE

What are the contents of the suitcase; a 'private psyche'? An archive left for someone to find and curate? Is it a story wanting to be told?[13]

The rain, which held off for our garden opening and concert, has returned now with squally showers making working outside impossible and I am pleased to have the space to be able to return to the contents of the suitcase. The oral history recording and transcript has just arrived too from the Imperial War Museum in London. I have a vague memory of a school visit there; an imposing façade of columns topped by a cupola. I bought a reproduction of a First World War recruitment poster with a man, Lord Kitchener I think, in a military peaked cap pointing his finger at the viewer and emblazoned with the words: 'Your Country Needs You'. I liked museums and enjoyed the visit, but I did not connect it with my father or realise that the film and photographs he took were archived there. Now as I search the Imperial War Museum's collections on line I find his name crops up repeatedly in the production credits of hundreds of feet of film and against photographs too, though he was principally a cinematographer. Again he is catalogued and labelled there for others to see; a part of the history he helped to record. What had once seemed so long ago when I was a child has now come closer; and the monochrome images of war are now tinged with some quintessence of my father.

The Museum's collection is overwhelmingly vast and includes artworks, films, sound, documents, books, posters, photographs, objects and exhibits and exhibitions about conflicts from the First World War to the present day. Sifting through the items I retrieved from the suitcase, I see that they are composed of many of the same categories of items as those in the Museum's archive. The suitcase is, in fact, an archive too, my father's personal archive. As I open this archive of memories I am struck again by the tight focus on the six years of the Second World War and the scant attention to the forty odd years after. For a man who did not keep much this imbues those six years with added import—and it is understandable. War is the great crucible that alters the future of all those caught in it. Some futures are truncated; some are crippled and some, like my father's, are made new:

[13] In 'Tacit Narratives: The Meaning of the Archives', Ketelaar refers to Jacque Derrida's Freudian interpretation of the physical archive as an 'impression of the invisible private psyche'. He says: 'It belongs to the concept of the archive that it be public, precisely because it is located. You cannot keep an archive inside yourself – this is not an archive' (Ketelaar 2001, p. 132).

before the war he was a clerk, by war's end he was a cinematographer. But the war also made him something else too; at Belsen it made him a witness.[14]

I look for references to Arnhem and Belsen in the film catalogue and find some reels with their production date. There are cross-references to the film and photographs of other AFPU cameramen who recorded the same (or related) action. I recognise the names of Walker and Smith from a newspaper clipping in the blue binder (Barker 1944). It is a photograph and caption: 'Back in England are the men who recorded the Arnhem epic—three sergeant cameramen, whose magnificent battle pictures were yesterday printed in "the Daily Sketch." Left to right: Sergt. D. M. Smith of Manchester, who is 24, and was wounded in the shoulder: Sergt. G. Walker, of Bute, aged 28 and a veteran of five years' camera work on the battlefield, and 26-year-old Sergt. C.M. Lewis, a Londoner, who has made 18 parachute descents.'


Back in England are the men who recorded the Arnhem epic—three sergeant cameramen, whose magnificent battle pictures were yesterday printed in "The Daily Sketch." Left to right: Sergt. D. M. Smith, of Manchester, who is 24, and was wounded in the shoulder; Sergt. G. Walker, of Bute, aged 28 and a veteran of five years' camera work on the battlefield, and 26-year-old Sergt. C. M. Lewis, a Londoner, who has made 18 parachute descents.

The newspaper clipping from the blue binder

The clipping is not dated but the three of them certainly look dishevelled, as if they might be newly arrived from the battle field. I look for the photograph in the Imperial War

[14] Ketelaar contends that: '… archival fonds, archival documents, archival institutions and archival systems contain tacit meanings or narratives which must be deconstructed in order to understand the meanings of archives' (Ketelaar 2001). What is worth keeping, what is worth 'remembering' for institutions is affected by social and cultural factors; and while individuals too, collect and archive against a similar backdrop, I contend that their choices are also affected by the psyches remembering needs whether this be authentication, contradiction, verification, memorialisation or healing.

Museum's catalogue and when I find it I see that the newspaper cropped it top and bottom so you cannot tell its original format is square.

Left to right: Sergeants Smith, Walker and Lewis who covered the battle of Arnhem in September 1944

The uncropped image shows the building behind and I can see my father's pistol in its holster; he said it was the only weapon he took to Arnhem. The object description tells me that this photograph was taken by Lieutenant Barker at the AFPU Centre at Pinewood[15] on the day they arrived back. The label gives the date as 28 September 1944 and says: 'The three Army Film and Photographic Unit photographers who recorded the 1st Airborne Division's epic fight at Arnhem.'

So this is how the first cut of history is made, with photographs and captions and film. The battle for Arnhem lasted from the 17-25 September 1944 and was a monumental failure; a disaster really; ten thousand troops went there and about two thousand escaped; my father was one of the lucky ones. The label describes it as an 'epic fight', the newspaper, 'the Arnhem epic'. Just days after the survivors straggled home; the catastrophe of Arnhem has already been refashioned into a heroic stand. Of this labelling of the Arnhem debacle

[15] Pinewood studios was built in the late 1930s and requisitioned during the Second World War for use by the Crown Film Unit, No. 5 Army Film and Photographic Unit, the Royal Air Force Film Production Unit and the Polish Air Force Film Unit.

my father said: ‘All war is an epic in the sense that men are fighting to live and many of them are going to die’ (Conway 1981).

The blue binder seems to be central to the personal archive. A Tunisie franc hangs from a thread on the inside of the front cover and though the whole thing has the look and patina of age, it is not obvious when it was created. It reads as if it is contemporaneous, assembled between assignments perhaps. Images are at the core of the archive and the blue binder; they are a mixture of sizes; some may even be contact prints or stills taken from film. I suspect there are copies in the Imperial War Museum’s collection but I am not able to verify everything.

Apart from the photographs that feature my father, it is not clear whether the rest were taken by him. Members of the AFPU usually deployed in teams of three, driver, cine and stills, so perhaps they are copies of images that other cameramen took, as in the case of the Belsen photographs. That would seem logical, film being harder to copy and replay, especially then. While wondering how the military authorities would view this kind of ‘souveniring’ I come across an image in the Museum’s catalogue of a travelling exhibition of AFPU photographs in North Africa dated February 1943 (Unknown 1943b). The object description says that they could be purchased, souveniring was encouraged.

British Army North Africa 1943 A travelling photographic exhibition

The photographs and a few other items such as a Christmas day menu from Algiers dated 1943; cartoons clipped from newspapers; a pass allowing the bearer to enter Belsen ‘after

dusting';[16] are arranged chronologically, though some photographs and pages have become disordered in storage and through the loan of images. I find a short note from Lewis Golden, returning a negative of the 1st Parachute Brigade memorial in Tunisia which he had borrowed for his book *Echoes from Arnhem* (1984). The arrangement of images, artefacts and captions are an aide memoir, marking points on the timeline and trajectory of my father's war and constitute the blue binder as more diary than photo-album; a Visual War Diary of six momentous years in the middle of the twentieth century. The photographs with their captions read like postcards from the past: 'Gen. Eisenhower in N. Africa. He paused for a moment while getting into his car to enable me to get this picture. He asked if it was "O.K." and I said it was' (Lewis 1943).

Eisenhower, is this okay?

The five photographs of Belsen stand apart, stored separately, their place in the diaries visual narrative taken up by six smaller images of Belsen and a half page type written account. What do these five images say that is not said in the War Diary? Why were they kept separate, is it just that they are too large for the War Diary? Or is another meaning contained in this separation and their huge size? These images are outside the narrative of the War Diary even though their place is held by other photographs. Are these images outside the narrative of war? Was this how my father saw his experiences at Belsen? I start to play the oral history recording. After all this time it is disconcerting to hear my

[16] Typhus and other diseases were rife in the camp when the British arrived and everyone was dusted with DDT.

father's voice again; disconcerting to hear him telling me things about his early childhood that I had not known till now.

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By late afternoon the wind has dropped and the rain eased to a soft drizzle. I have arranged the contents of the suit case around myself on the floor and am examining copies of two 'Secret Dope Sheets', the caption sheets that were submitted with film when it was sent back to England for processing; one is from Belsen and the other is from Arnhem. The one from Arnhem begins: 'Arnhem Holland: On Sunday 17.9.44 at 11.25 am my plane with scores of other took off from an English airfield. The planes were Douglas C 47 and piloted by Yankees. At approximately 1.55pm I baled [sic] out west of Arnhem ... The importance of this operation is that it means outflanking the Siegfried Line and the main entry via the Rhine to Germany. The day was bright and clear. There was no opposition on the dropping zone. The Dutch were glad to see us' (Lewis 1944h). I look for the corresponding piece of film on the Imperial War Museum's website and find a description: '1st Airborne flies into battle in Southern Holland. The opening sequences are shot from the cockpit of a No. 46 Group RAF Dakota[17] as it flies over East Anglia towards Southern Holland on September 17 [1944]. During the flight, an anonymous cameraman takes over briefly to film Sergeant Lewis (who gestures at the camera while sorting out his kit) …'[18] I am stunned. It is an unexpected and dizzying moment of discovery. My father preserved on film for a few frames, a few seconds perhaps, on his way to film at Arnhem, an episode that I know about only from literature and film.

A Bridge Too Far was both a book and film and it is strange to think this story, this intertwining of history and memory and fiction is my father's story too. The images that he and Sergeants Walker and Smith captured at Arnhem are everywhere, I easily find more than thirty books about Arnhem with publication dates ranging from 1944 to as recently as 2010.[19] Their point of view, the Sergeant Cameramen's point of view, helped create the Arnhem narrative yet they are rarely identified; their voices largely unheard unlike their civilian counterparts. It is as if some omnipotent being strode the battlefields recording

[17] The Douglas C47 is also referred to as Dakota, an RAF designation.

[18] Imperial War Museum catalogue number A70 169-6: 1st Airborne Division Flies into Battle in Southern Holland

[19] For example: A Bridge Too Far, Cornelius Ryan, 1974; Arnhem, Urquhart, R. E., 1977; Arnhem Doctor, Mawson, Stuart R., 1981; Arnhem the battle for survival, John Nichol and Tony Rennell, 2011. I also found a website (http://www.market-garden.info/battle_of_arnhem_books.html) that lists 580 published pamphlets and books about Arnhem with publishing dates from 1944-2014.
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history and remembering (Haggith 2006). The personal commentaries contained in their oral histories and Dope Sheets, are largely absent from the histories (Cavan 2001, p. 227). They may have created the visual record but they did not create the public narrative and they did not tell their stories (Gladstone 2002, p. 316; Haggith 2006, p. 91). So this is how the second cut of history is made, with photographs and captions and film but no creators.

Just when I am beginning to think the cameramen will remain totally anonymous, I come across a photograph of war correspondents in *An Arnhem Odyssey*: *Market Garden to Stalag Ivb,* by Jim Longson and Christine Taylor (1991). My father is in that image but wrongly identified. He appears again in a later photograph but is correctly named this time. Again there is the slight vertiginous kick to reality as I recognise the historical figure of my father as a young man. I am surprised too by the inaccuracy of the caption and I wonder how the mistake occurred; whether it was carried through from the source material or whether it was an error introduced during writing and publishing. I do not know if it diminishes the authority of the book but it does illustrate how the images are incidental to many histories. Their role is to break the text up and provide a visual interlude not inform the narrative.

As I toggle between my father's archive and that of the Imperial War Museum, I begin to see the correlation between the two; the one housed in the suitcase and the other in the Imperial War Museum. I see how the personal and the public fit together. The personal archive is like a key to the larger public archive, borrowing from it, referencing it, pointing to sources and amplifying it with my father's personal point of view through his oral history and the interviews he gave. Both archives cover, the same events but my father's archive supplements the public archive and has elements of contradiction, verification, testimony and eye witnessing. It draws out the anonymous cameraman from behind the lens and says I was there; this is what I saw, this is who I am.

The contents of the suitcase spread across the floor are like a map of my father and his war. He was not the type to go to reunions or remembrance days or trouble much with retelling his war experiences, but it is clear that he had much to say. With each generation, the events of the Second World War recede further and eventually all those who bore witness will be gone. I see now that his story needs to be told and I cannot help but wonder, if in preparing his archive so thoroughly, he hoped for this.

It is two in the morning, the rain has cleared now and the Moon is very bright; I push back from my desk. Outside I sit down on the stone steps in the rockery, the night is still and warm, only the occasional nasal call of a wood duck intrudes upon the silence. A platinum

light illuminates the lake and the charcoal shadows of the palms intersect the lawn. It is an awakening, I feel fired with curiosity about many things: about the war, about my father, about his role in creating the visual narrative of war and the indelible narrative of atrocity. His agency in this process means that long after he is dead, I can use the map he left behind to recover traces of him, traces of the experiences that shaped him, traces of him from before I was born. I can make sure his story is heard. I have made up my mind to go to London to the Imperial War Museum to see his film.[20]

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In the months prior to travel I gather more items into my father's archive applying to the British Army Personnel Centre to get a copy of his service record, and finding books of his that have infiltrated my own library without me realising. I can only suppose that when my mother came to stay she bought them with her, along with the suitcase. Five books are contemporaneous with the war: *Arnhem Lift—diary of a glider pilot*, 1945; *Poems* by Harry Brown, 1945; *Into Action—the battle of Dieppe*, a narrative poem by Jack Lindsay, 1942; *Poems from the Forces*, 1941; the *Collected Poems* of Richard Spender, 1944; and a slim volume *Parachutist* by an intriguingly named author, Pegasus. It is undated but was produced to the 'war economy standard'. There is an inscription on the front end papers: 'To Lou (that mighty disciple of Wah-haw-Mahomet) + all best wishes New Year 1945 from Chris.' A short introduction explains that it was written mostly in North Africa to answer the questions most frequently asked of those early parachutists. Back then parachuting was still a novelty. The Parachute Regiment had been forged, at Churchill's behest, in June 1940 after the Germans graphically demonstrated the power of airborne troops during their *Blitzkrieg* of Western Europe. In the pioneering stages of its formation all the men recruited were volunteers. The introduction also explains the title 'Red Devils' that is often used in conjunction with the British Airborne Forces (and for their current display team): 'The title was given by the Germans themselves (Roten Teufel)[21] to those men of the 1st Parachute Brigade who held some of their finest troops at bay for several

[20] In the *Power of Witnessing: reflections, reverberation and traces of the Holocaust*, Sophia Richman observes that many of studies on the trans-generational transmission of trauma have focussed solely on the 'inevitable transmission of pathology' but that there are also opportunities for personal growth. She says, 'Recovery from trauma can be a springboard to further individual development. The term *posttraumatic growth* (Tedeschi, Park & Calhourn, 1998) has been used to describe this phenomenon' (Goodman & Meyers 2012, p. 115) I see mysef in this description. My revived memories of trauma as a child sent me on a huge trajectory of inquiry which is only now coming to a close as I complete this thesis.

[21] The German spelling is actually Rote Teufel.
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weeks and taught them to fear the strange battle-cry of "Wah-haw-Mahomet". I notice my father has annotated this with an asterisk and written below, 'Tamara Valley'. I try to imagine my father charging into battle yelling 'Wah-haw-Mahomet', a 'mighty disciple', but it is impossible. Even though I recognise him in that handsome, strapping young man, it is still the middle aged man that is foremost when I think of him. I do not know enough about the young man, and I suspect that my imagining is inhibited by this and the fact that, were I to picture him that way, I would also have to conceive of him killing.

It seems anomalous that poetry should feature so largely in his collection of books. But the Richard Spender collection proves to have an especial connection. Spender was in the same battalion as my father in North Africa, the 2nd Battalion, the Parachute Regiment and the biographical notes say he was killed there sometime during the night of 28-29 March 1943; at about the same time my father was wounded. It is as if the width of this slim volume measures the space and time that separate those that live and those that die on the battlefield. It could have been this close. The last poem in Richard Spender's collection reads like a presentiment:

> To-day some silent valley of Tunisia
> Shall tremble at their stroke from sky unsheathed,
> And with the night, perhaps some God looking down
> With dull, cold eyes, by the near stars, will see
> One lonely, grim battalion cut its way
> Through agony and death to fame's high crown,
> And wonderingly watch the friendless strength
> Of little men, who die that the great Truths shall live. (1944, p. 77)

I do not think it is a sentiment my father would have shared: little men dying so 'the great Truths shall live' would be a far too lofty a notion for him but it is likely that he knew Richard Spender, and if nothing else, they shared the experiences of the 2nd Battalion. There is also the possibility that what sounds somewhat mawkish to us now befitted the events then.

Perhaps too, poetry spoke more of his experiences than the histories that came out just after the war. Maybe, when you have spent six years staying alive through the war the last thing you want to do is read an analysis and dissection of the events. I remember how he loathed the Richard Attenborough film, *A Bridge Too Far*, when it came out in spite of its stellar cast which included: Dirk Bogarde, Michael Caine and Sean Connery. Maybe it was the stereotypical American Gung Ho Can Do and the English Jolly Cricket Bats Stoicism

that grated; maybe for someone who filmed the battle, it just bore no relation to experience. What is the best way to remember the losses and horror of war? Head bowed at remembrance ceremonies; marching with your ageing cohort, medals displayed; trading war stories at reunions; or like my father, alone, wishing to forget, but unable to do so.

There are only two histories in my father's collection: *Echoes from Arnhem* by Lewis Golden, a gift from the author[22]; and *The Red Devils—the story of the British Airborne Forces* by G.G. Norton (1984; 1973). Lewis Golden was a young officer in the 1st Parachute Brigade signals section at Arnhem. His book is a rebuttal of earlier accounts of the operation that cite signal failure as a major contributing factor to the disaster. Norton's book is history of the formation and early operations of the airborne forces and Norton was also the founder and curator of the Airborne Forces Museum in Aldershot. Perhaps you do not need to read history, if you lived it.

I, on the other hand, have started to gather books that fill the many gaps in my understanding of how this war unfolded and of the specific operations my father took part in: the libraries and bookshops are filled with them. They come to me through research, recommendation and some like, *The Red Beret* by Hilary St George Saunders will come to me by some kind of cosmic serendipity along the way (1950). More recent histories such as, Peter Harclerode's, *Para! Fifty years of The Parachute Regiment,* (1992) provide a useful contrast to the early histories and lack the eulogising tendency of Saunders's account. It has the perspective and distance of time but lacks a very special quality that Pegasus and Saunders bring to their accounts, the flavour and humour of the times. Pegasus must have volunteered a little after my father because he does not take part in the North Africa Campaign; but his narrative is rich in detail and ambience. His account of training, his first jump and exercises in the English countryside accords with my father's; his story of parachuting into battle for the first time is riveting. Saunders, who was on Admiral Mountbatten's staff during the war, is writing just a few years after its end, presumably from battalion diaries and first-hand accounts and his is the first and most detailed description of the First Parachute Brigade's part in the North Africa Campaign that I find, even if it is somewhat effusive in the recounting of what happened there.

Other books and articles come to me too, gathering around my desk in drifts as I realise that understanding the geopolitical and military history does not provide all the necessary context for the photographs in my father's archive because they have been reused, reviewed and reassessed many times since their first publication and broadcast and this is

[22] There is a hand written inscription of thanks on the title page.

especially true of the Belsen atrocity images. The circumstances of that concentration camps capture, intact; and the detailed record of its liberation and relief captured by the AFPU; have invested the images with iconic status. If people think of the Holocaust, the images they are likely to conjure, particularly if they are British[23], are images of Belsen (Haggith 2006). The scholar Toby Haggith goes further, saying that the images: 'have been so widely used in film and television programmes that they have become an icon not of just the Holocaust, but of the evils of the Nazi regime as a whole'(Haggith 2006, p. 89). Whereas the Arnhem photographs have been used to punctuate the narrative histories; the Belsen atrocity photographs have become it, and the story of what happened there gets lost in this redacted visual; Belsen is the Holocaust and the Belsen images epitomise Nazi evil (Barthes 2010, p. 80).[24]

While I was unaware all these years, the Belsen images and others Holocaust images, took on a life of their own, drawing down intense scrutiny and generating analysis that is both illuminating, and also disturbing. There are suggestions that we should not look at the photographs and film at all; or that we have looked enough; even that looking at images of atrocity somehow titillates our senses—schadenfreude—'pornography of the real'. Is such loaded terminology calculated to shock us out of our complacency to suffering or discourage and shame us for showing interest? (Crane 2008) And who has looked enough? The 'postmemory' generation? The one after? Try as I might I cannot see schadenfreude when I view these photographs; they are far too confronting. I still feel the visceral fear of them that I felt as a child realising the torture they intimated.

The charges against these images do not end here, they have also been described as demeaning and dehumanising (Haggith 2006, p. 93) and those that captured them have by implication been portrayed as transgressive and callous (Cesarani 2006b, p. 5); 'largely members of the U.S. and British liberating forces who stumbled through the camps over a three-week period and randomly took pictures' in a chaotic melange of 'amateur, semi-professional, and professional picture-takers' (Zelizer 1999, pp. 247,102). The choice of the words 'stumbled' and 'randomly' and 'picture-takers' is troubling. They suggest a generalised attitude of indiscipline and carelessness, as if all those involved were inured to

[23] Camps liberated by the Americans, for example Buchenwald, are more likely to be known to US citizens, although the iconic status of the Belsen images, have perhaps crossed this particular cultural divide.

[24] On the evidentiary power of photographs to speak to the viewer directly, Barthes said: 'I remember keeping for a long time a photograph … which showed a slave market: … I repeat a photograph, not a drawing or engraving: for my horror and my fascination as a child came from this: that there was a certainty that such a thing had existed … the historian was no longer the mediator, slavery was given without mediation, the fact was established without method.'

the atrocities before them. Yet, from the little I do know, the AFPU operations at Belsen were well ordered and thorough. The first team to arrive on 15 April 1945 consisted of my father and Sergeants, Lawrie and Oakes under the command of Lieutenant Wilson and they continued coverage until 26 April 1945, when another team took over. The Belsen images tumble about in this sea of contention, disconnected from their moorings; their creators phantom witnesses; their usefulness as artefacts, whether evidentiary or illustrative, doubted. The war photographer/cinematographer is a suspect creature 'shooting' the subject with his metaphorical gun and wounding again that which is already wounded, with his gaze (Hirsch 2000, pp. 231-6).

I wander into the garden and around the lake, pausing under the venerable Coolamon tree; the evening is still and the water like a mirror reflecting a silhouette of hills and trees and pale pink sky. Again I am leaving taking. What I do not know yet, is that another era of my life is ending as it did when I left England. I will not live here again.

4 A FAMILIAL ABSENCE

What is the web of connections we call family and where does it begin? What are family photographs—memories, anecdotes, history; imaginings of the past?

A veil of smoke has drifted in over Canberra from a fire out West, transforming the sun into a wan orange disk. Summer has ramped up and the grass on Mount Majura is crisp underfoot. In the middle of the day the bush is silent except for the almost sub-aural static of cicadas; the sound of the incendiary heat. I retire into the cool of my office, the sun striping through the blinds onto a trestle table of spread eagle books and documents, and fanned out photographs. More books, documents and DVDs are piled on the floor and on bookshelves. I have travelled a long way since I left my garden for the Imperial War Museum in London. I open the blinds a little and peer out into the front garden and across the street; the scene wobbles in and out of focus in the heat haze, like the past and present. Resettling in Canberra has been unsettling and at times it is unclear which decade of my life I inhabit; like a Billy Pilgrim fading in and out of the past.

I have been sifting through the small collection of artefacts that represent my father's early childhood to see what I can glean from these fragments. There exists a lacuna in his archive that stretches back in time from the North African Campaign. The records become sparser the further back I go, until all I am left with are four photographs of him, some school reports and a copy of Hans Christian Andersen's, *The Ugly duckling and other Fairy Tales*, a school prize. There are no family stories that I can draw on either; no trove of anecdotes passed down by relatives or siblings because, by the time I was really aware of the situation, my father was virtually estranged from his family and we rarely saw them. It is almost as if he had sprung up fully formed as parachutist, by-passing youth.

I trawl through a box of jumbled family photographs in different formats: black and white prints, colour prints, slides and even some Polaroids. It is a technological and cultural shadow box of a post war family. The album I remember from childhood with its neat photographic corners holding the black and white images in position has been replaced with a newer one with sticky plastic cover sheets. Although it holds some of our earliest family photographs the chronology is confused and some pre-war images of my father and mother intermingle with our early family ones; there are also a few other war time photographs and I wonder why they are not in the War Diary. What is most striking about this incomplete and disorderly family album is the complete absence of my father's family. By contrast there are many images from my mother's side—*mormor* and *morfar*, my

grandparents; *tante* Elsa and *onkel* Mogens, my uncle and aunt; Per and Jan our cousins and others too, some unknown. Even so we did not see our Danish relatives often as travel was not so easy or affordable then. We Yiddisher Vikings were a very isolated tribe; nuclear in very a real sense, separated from one family by antipathy and the other by geography. My father took me to visit his parents once I remember. I was very young, maybe four. We bought a box of food for them from a Jewish delicatessen; I had the impression that they were quite poor. My memory of my grandmother is like a faded photograph; she is a small hunched figure dressed in black, wearing a headscarf tied peasant style; she sits backlit against a tiny window and nothing exists outside her dark silhouette and its halo of light. A feeling of uneasiness attaches to that memory; was it just that I did not know her or was I channelling my father's ambivalence. My grandfather I barely remember at all; did he wear glasses and dress in brown slacks and a brown cardigan?

On my sixteenth birthday my father gave me copies of two images: one was of, my grandmother Rosa Englischer, age sixteen; and the other of him as a baby with his sisters, Edith and Nancy (Unknown circa 1903, circa 1920). 'You look just like her,' he said when he handed me the photograph of Rosa. It was true, my resemblance to my young grandmother was uncanny and strangely disturbing, as if looking at myself dressed for a costume drama I had forgotten. The photograph he took of me then 'for comparison' is lost and I am now old enough to be the young Rosa's grandmother but sometimes when I catch a momentary reflection of my face I still see a trace of her. I think of Barthes finding the 'truth' of his mother in a photograph of her as a child (Barthes 2010, p. 67) and Marianne Hirsh puzzling over her own grandmother and aunt asking if they could possibly be the people that she had known (Hirsch 2012a, p. 80). Every time I look at Rosa I am struck by a moment of recognition of myself, a younger self, which Rosa reflects; Hirsch's 'affiliative and identificatory' look (Hirsch 2012a, p. 9). It is a moment that dissipates as soon as my consciousness acknowledges the photograph's provenance; moments of recognition and dissipation strobe with each viewing.

Rosa Englischer aged 16, circa 1903

When and why was this photograph taken, and where? If my father is correct that Rosa is sixteen then it would be 1903 and she may have just arrived in England. He told me that his parents migrated in the same year; aged sixteen (though subsequently I found out that my grandfather, Leo Weizenberg, was a year younger than Rosa). The photograph could have been taken just before she left for England, or just after she arrived; a wave of pogroms started in 'the Pale of Settlement' in 1903 and is the most likely cause of their exodus to England, she from Warsaw and he from Lodz.[25] I have a copy of my grandparent's marriage certificate: Leo Wizenberg, 20, married Rosa Englischer 21 at the East London Synagogue on 9 August 1908. He is listed as a 'purse maker' and she a 'curtain maker'.

I try to read Rosa's expression, her eyes are directed to the left of the frame and slightly up as if she is trying to ignore something unpleasant; maybe having her photograph taken; as I did when my father captured my moment of likeness with her. I wonder if this is portrait as keepsake or portrait as travel document; is she shy or worried? Soloman Englischer, her father, appears on the 1911 census but there is no Mrs Englisher, he is a widower. Again an absence that begs many questions: when, why, how did Rosa's mother die? My father says she had a brother and that he went to Canada. Perhaps her look is the stupefaction of

[25] Pale of Settlement, a region of Imperial Russia where Jews were allowed to live and which was eventually abolished in 1917.

loss and being uprooted. There is a sense that sharing a family likeness with Rosa gives me some sort of right to know her, as if some essence of her is incarnated in me? In reading family photographs Hirsch observes that: 'This inclusion is an act of adoption and an act of faith determined by an idea, an image of a family: it is not an act of recognition. It is fundamentally an interpretive and a narrative gesture, a fabrication out of available pieces' (Hirsch 2012a, p. 83). Yet it is recognition for me, and also a desire for Rosa's story, yes, her history, that and it pleases me to imagine her; like propagating another self. It seems perverse that life entices us to seek these stories at the very moment when there is no one left to tell them. I know so little of her except her (mandatory) exceptional Golden Chicken Soup with Kreplachs (dumplings) and her Chulant (a slow cooked stew) which melted with flavour. I know she wanted to keep my father 'in cotton wool' and tried to stop him playing football in the street with other boys. I know she hid the offer of a place at an art school from my father because she wanted him to go out to work. I know that she could not reconcile with the idea that her daughter-in-law was a gentile and tormented my mother with endless petty nastinesses in the years before my birth when my family had to live with her and grandfather. My father found this hard to forgive, even many years later though my mother urged him to. Knowing all this, knowing only this; what does the bequeathing of this familial likeness from my father mean? What else do we share, Rosa and I?

The second photograph my father gave me, of himself and his siblings, has a very different quality. It displays the fact that it is a copy of a photograph and you can see the wall paper or tiles behind the torn corner of the propped photograph. It is so faded with age and iteration that the children look like apparitions, especially my father and Nancy who are dressed in light colours. I scan the image and digitally enhance it to bring out more detail, but still they persist as wraiths. Clearly my father's position, in the centre foreground, makes him the focal point of this family triumvirate. On my father's birth certificate Rosa has made an 'x' in lieu of her signature; he was her third child and only boy, born 6 February 1918, Colman Michael, (the Colman given after Leo's father, Colman Wiezenberg) in a maternity hospital in Vallance Road, Whitechapel, the only one of the three children to be born in hospital, perhaps Rosa had been ill during her pregnancy. The photograph has an awkward framing crowding out Nancy or 'Nellie', as her birth certificate tells; one shoulder is cut off and she seems to look down and to the right of the frame, as does my father. Only Edith appears to be looking at the photographer, perhaps she is being told to make sure Mike sits still because her hands are behind him and could be holding or supporting him as he sits on the low stool. He is looks to be about eighteen

months old which would make it 1919-1920; Edith would be nearly eleven and Nancy almost nine. My father said he was a sickly baby, perhaps this photograph was taken after fears for his survival were past. This infantile sickliness also explains, perhaps, why Rosa was over protective of her 'boychick', that delightful Yiddish term for favourite boy.

Mike and his sisters, Nancy (left) and Edith (right) circa 1920

The infrequent visits of Nancy and Edith over the years make it hard to recall their faces. I remember Nancy's explosive and unpredictable behaviour that seemed in keeping with the flaming, henna-red of her hair; and 'Edie's' musty, mothball smell and her: 'So, what's the news,' when she visited, as if she suspected my father created it rather than filmed it. These odd memories; these two photographs and a few documents are all I have of them. The familial absence, especially the absence of images is odd for a man who became so immersed in the visual. Of course there may not have been many family photographs taken when he was young but after the war when he and my mother lived with my grandparents for seven years, when their first child, my sister was born; there must have been plenty of opportunity. If there is, as Hirsh suggests, drawing on Walter Benjamin's work, a familial unconscious optic, then the absence of images are part of it (Hirsch 2000, pp. 116-7). Like tearing a photograph in two to remove the offending party, Mike elided his family through the absence of visual representation; they were dead to him. Giving me the two images was an aberration; or perhaps, a late attempt to remedy an omission that he came to regret, seeing my likeness to his mother, and perhaps reaching an age when his feelings had mellowed.

One story did get passed on however, from Nancy to me, on a unique occasion when she had been asked to keep me company while my parents were away. I was a young teen by this time and the arrangement did not last long before a quarrel caused her to leave. But she was there long enough to tell me a story that now seems hugely significant. I can still see her standing there making a tube of her left fist and holding it up to her eye while she makes winding motions with the other hand. She was demonstrating how my father pretended to be operating a camera while he directed his sisters in his imaginary films; it was one of his favourite games with them when he could persuade them to play which was often as the young Nancy fancied herself a 'film star'. My parents did not seem surprised that Nancy had left when they returned home.

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The heatwave has passed and after days of burning temperatures a soft grey sky teases the senses with possibility of rain. I open the blinds and window to feel the faint breeze that is shaking the leaves with a soft, papery sound; I catch a fine spray of drizzle. The heat made me fractious and I seem to have spent days re-reading and rearranging the meagre documents and images from my father's early life as if by taxing them they would somehow be made to reveal more. I put my father's 'one and only school prize', alongside his school reports which speak the pedagogy of the time in their classification of streams of learning: 'reading, arithmetic, mental arithmetic, composition, dictation, recitation, handwriting' and their remarks, 'fair' 'good', 'very good'. The prize too is of its time, a beautiful hardback edition with an embossed cover and colour plate illustrations. My father wrote in the frontispiece: 'My one and only school prize for composition or reading in Senrab St School Commercial Road, London, E1 in Primary class'. I have this notion that he started school late, at age eight, because of his mother's over protectiveness and that would make it 1926 which is one report I have (not all are dated). Its contents suggest my memory is right. He came thirty-seventh out of thirty-seven that year and was described as: 'Very backward but now improving'. By 1928 he is fourteenth out of forty-two, has topped the class in reading. By the end of his schooling he has excelled in recitation, drawing, reading, poetry and geography (*London County Council school reports for CM Weisenberg* 1926-1932). The last report dated 23 March 1932 is written as a letter with future employers in mind; a rather optimistic hope since the Great Depression was at its deepest then with unemployment in the millions:

> Michael Weisenberg, a scholar in the Third Year of this Senior Boys' School (Equivalent to Standard Ex. VII) leaves today on attaining exemption by age. His
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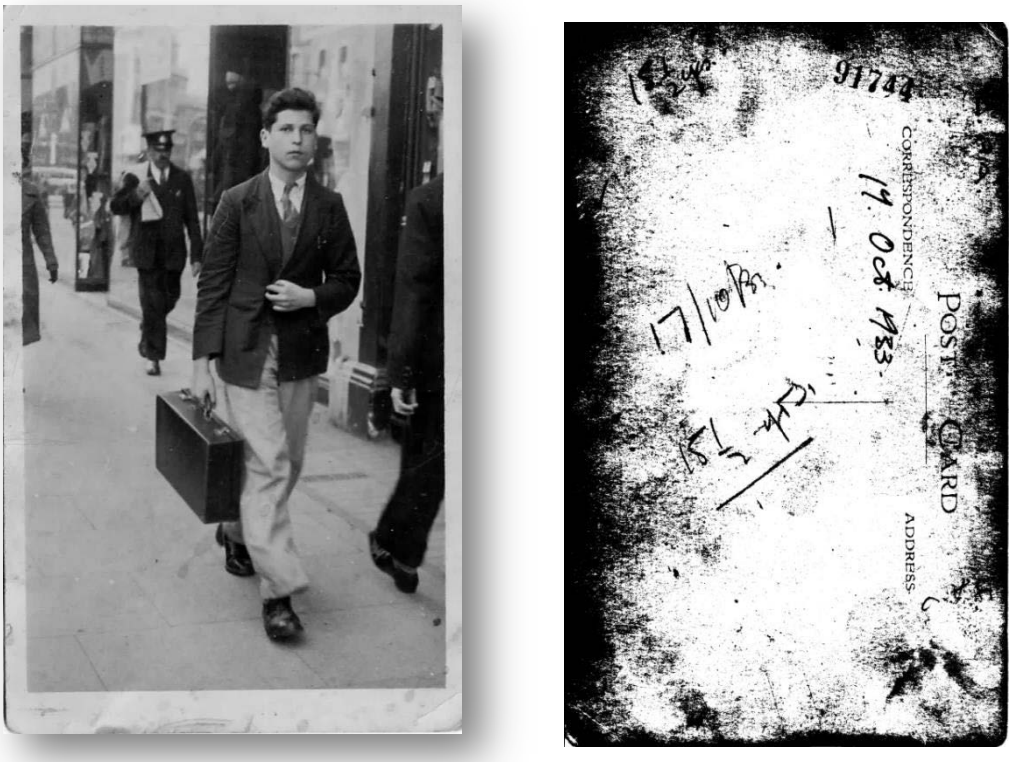
> conduct has been excellent and his attendances punctual and regular. I have always found him to be willing and trustworthy. He has good powers of conversation, and is gentlemanly in his manner. In his class work he has done good average work. He is a lad of outstanding merit in the direction of artwork especially in pen and ink sketching. I hope that it will be possible for him to use this undoubted gift in his life career. He is a good sportsman and takes a keen interest in the school sports. He should make a reliable and capable employee. E. Edwards Headmaster. (*London County Council school reports for CM Weisenberg* 1926-1932)

His gift for art must have been quite noticeable for the headmaster to hope that he would be able to use his 'undoubted gift' in his work in those difficult times. When he told me about missing out on art school because of his mother I was very angry with her on his behalf but he did not seem to bear a grudge. He said: 'my mother did not want me to go because there wasn't enough money in the house … They couldn't see any future in the [art] work … They were people who had always worked hard in their lives. And this art work was I suppose —I can't be sure now—must have been too much in the abstract for their hard world' (Lewis March 1981, pp. 1-2).

I suppose many able people had to leave school early to help their families in the 1930s; he never told me which art school made the offer. I have a photograph of him on his way to his first job. He told me he was fourteen in this photograph but when I turn it over, I find he has written the date, 17 October 1933 and that he was fifteen-and-a-half (Unknown 1933).



Mike on his way to his first job, 17 October 1933 and the postcard back

Maybe it took that long to get a job after leaving school. He says that the chemicals used in his first job making cinema posters made him ill: 'So I left. Millions of people out of work, everybody searching for a job' (Lewis March 1981, p. 2). The photograph is in postcard format and there are several in the family album; it was a format made popular by Kodak.[26] Did a street photographer snap him on the way to his first job, or a friend? It is hard to tell from his serious demeanour; perhaps he is nervous about his first day at work. His jacket looks shabby and the sleeves are too short as if he has grown out of it. His tie is skewed under his shirt collar and he is drawing his jacket together as if he is cold; or perhaps it is an act of self-consciousness in the face of the photographer. The shop windows reflect the scene that is out of view and what looks like a postman with a bag over his shoulder walks in the background. I smile at the skewed tie; even then my father could not quite wear his clothes properly; a trait that continued all his life. No matter what he wore, there was generally something awry and I find that it did not go unnoticed in the

[26] The Collectors Weekly website says: 'Though the first documented photo postcard was mailed in 1899, the style wasn't firmly established until Eastman Kodak began selling Velox photo paper with a pre-printed postcard back in 1902. The following year, Kodak released its No. 3A Folding Pocket camera, which used film specifically designed for postcard-size prints. Amateur photographers were now able to have their own images printed directly onto postcard paper and send them through the mail. The affordability and ease of producing these new photo postcards quickly made traditional cabinet cards obsolete.' http://www.collectorsweekly.com/postcards/real-photo

army. In his memoir, *Cameramen at war,* Ian Grant says: 'Mike Lewis, … was nicknamed Rag-Bag—he never could get battledress that fitted properly and invariably appeared on parade with his cuffs shot half-way up his arms and the collar of his tunic turned up to his ears' (Grant 1980, p. 35).

Despite the tough economic times, my father did find other clerical work and also went to night school at the Hornsey School of Art until he found the long hours of work and study too much (working hours in the 1930s were generally 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and Saturday mornings). But he stayed long enough to learn the rudiments of composition and commercial layout. I pull out a war time pencil sketch of a sleeping soldier, his rifle propped in the corner behind him (Lewis circa 1940-45).

Sketch of a sleeping soldier with rifle (1940-45)

It was this ability to capture so much with a few lines and shading that entertained me as a child; especially his gift for drawing cartoons. He encouraged us to draw as children and I spent a lot of time entertaining myself storyboarding my own intricate fictions. He was very disappointed that he had to give up his studies because he felt that he had discovered his talent. But he had discovered something else too, something profoundly satisfying and sustaining, a world of new ideas and thinking that expanded his horizons, he says: 'there were teachers that I had not previously met in my elementary education. They were able to extract and engender ideas and thoughts in a way that no teacher I'd ever met had managed to do before'(Lewis March 1981, p. 2).

It would have been hard not to get caught up in some of the fervour of the times. The decade of the Great Depression was one of clashing ideologies and direct action; a decade when for some, like my father, socialism and the Labour Party seemed to offer a better way; while others were drawn to the strong arm of Fascism. In this tumultuous decade my father began to reinvent himself somehow; changing his name from Weisenberg to Lewis; shedding the baggage of his obligations to religion, culture, class; and shedding his Cockney accent too. Listening to my father speak, with the vocabulary, grammar and unmistakable cadence of the British broadcasters of his time, it is hard to believe that he once had this accent, and that he left school at fourteen. He said that how you spoke 'marked you'. It was as if he had made a list of all the things he needed to change in order to transform himself and live the life he wanted; remarkably, he achieved this.

It is not clear exactly when he changed his surname to Lewis because he did not make it official until after the war; there is a statutory declaration of name change dated 1 May 1946 (Magistrate 1946). Surprisingly, he spent six years in the British Army with his 'assumed' name. He told me that he changed his name to make it easier to get work, a reality that slowly settled over him as the tide of antisemitism rose: 'I suppose it sounds pretty daft to say it, but I can recall in those days I had without questioning it this idea of a country—fairness, justice, integrity … bit by bit I found that this wasn't true … it didn't happen everywhere … I found many friends, I hate to put it this way, non-Jewish friends … it was a struggle, it was hard … and sometimes I have to say, ought to say, in my teens rather confusing and bewildering as to why people were like this … It's not something I care to speak about because the experience really … was terribly painful' (Lewis March 1981, pp. 7-8).

Age thirteen, I remember my own shock at hearing some crude and cruel jibes against Jews on the school bus. It was the first time I had heard antisemitism expressed; the shock was realising that it had not disappeared with the end of the war, that the war had not changed this despite the evidence of what such bigotry could unleash. But the antisemitism of the 1930s was of a different order altogether; explicit, strident, widespread; an integral part of the zeitgeist of the pre-war era. The 'Enlightenment and Emancipation' of the Jews did not guarantee their protection as playwright Ernst Toller, a German Jew opined in 1934:

> I thought of my terrible joy when I realized that nobody would recognize me for a Jew; of the first day of the war and my passionate longing to prove that I was a real German by offering my life to my country; of my writing from the front to the

> authorities to say that they could strike my name from the list of the Jewish community. Had it all been for nothing? Had it all been wrong? Didn't I love Germany with all my heart? Had I not stood in the rich beauty of the Mediterranean landscape and longed for the austere pine woods, for the beauty of the still, secret lakes of north Germany? And wasn't the German language my language, the language in which I felt and thought and spoke, a part of my very being? (Toller 1938).

Privileges granted, could be revoked and worse. You get this sweeping sense of terror from Edmund de Waal's evocation of the instantaneous effect of the Austrian Anschluss (annexation) on Vienna in 1938. His great grandparents lived in the centre: 'It is if a switch had been thrown. There are runnels of noise down the street, the Schottengasse echoing with voices. They are shouting, "*Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Fuhrer*" and "*Heil Hitler, Sieg Heil*". And they are screaming "*Juden verrecken*!" — perish Judah! Death to the Jews!" It is a flood of brown shirts. … There are trucks rushing along the Ring … And the trucks have swastikas on them' (De Waal 2011, pp. 238-9). The antisemitism in Germany was not exclusive, but it was certainly leading edge. At the Nuremberg Rally of 1935, Germany passed laws defining who should be considered Jewish, signalling an accelerating circumscription of Jewish life and a de facto sanctioning of hate crimes against them. Romania, Slovakia and Hungry followed with similar legislation.

In October 1936, events moved closer to home when the leader of the British Union of Fascist, Sir Oswald Mosley tried to march three thousand of his paramilitary black shirts through the predominantly Jewish East End of London. A petition to prevent the march had been rejected and protestors gathered to block the way. Estimates say six to seven thousand police, many on horseback, were sent to make way for the marchers. Instead, the 'Battle for Cable Street', as it became known, saw two hundred and fifty thousand protestors; including, Jews, Communists, trade union members, Labour Party members and Irish Catholics; stop the march by sheer force of numbers. I find a fascinating piece of newsreel footage on YouTube showing the crowd clashing with police.[27]

My father says he did not go to the Cable Street blockade but did go to a meeting to protest against the British Union of Fascist at the local town hall. A *Guardian* newspaper report said that the Communists and Fascist organised meetings after the blockade, the

[27] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-AQDOjQGZuA

Communists at Shoreditch Town Hall and the Fascists close by in Pitt Street.[28] It seems likely that this is the meeting my father went to. Though there was a solid police presence at both events, this did not save my father and his friend: 'Normally I don't go to these meetings. But this was a lively meeting; it was exciting to listen to the speakers and at the end of the evening we left and as we went down the narrow street on the way home … I noticed a group of youths who were not from the meeting at all. And they looked ugly and they began to chase us down the street. These must have been supporters of the British Union of Fascists, or sympathisers. … And we started running faster and faster and it was terrifying to hear the sound of so many running feet behind you. It was my first experience in terror.' The mob caught up with his friend Harry: 'I looked back over my shoulder … he had just gone against the school wall … and his head was bowed … and they were raining blows … and without thinking anything about it, at this terrible sight I rushed in amongst them and started hitting out. It was all confusion, a blur of fists. I think my arrival through them and behind them rather shocked them and somehow we both got away' (Lewis March 1981, p. 4).

He says it was not his first experience of antisemitism: 'one has always encountered hostility from people as I grew up. When I was small I was completely puzzled by this, and then you became used to it. You were aware of the wider meanings of this when you heard stories of what had happened abroad to Jewish people … one of my experiences which was upsetting to me … was not being able to, on occasion, get jobs' (Lewis March 1981, p. 5).

In this pre-war period, Adolf Hitler's expansionist ambitions had become increasingly clear as he chipped away at the Treaty of Versailles, rearming Germany and taking back territory that had been conceded. There was little resistance by those that imposed the terms and the League of Nations, established by the same Treaty to disarm nations and prevent wars, was powerless to halt the events that cascaded inexorably toward war. In November 1938, the assassination of a German diplomat in Paris unleashed a pogrom across Germany that became known as 'Kristallnacht', (night of the broken glass). The police were pulled back to allow an unfettered spree of terror and in the aftermath Hitler ordered the arrest of 20-30,000 Jews.

On 3 September 1939 at 11 am Chamberlain declares war on Germany and broadcasts to the nation. My father recalls: 'I was shaving on a Sunday morning, late … I heard Chamberlain's voice … say that as they'd had no reply from Germany we were now at … war. And suddenly I felt that everything had changed. I don't know why (Lewis March

[28] http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/1936/oct/05/fromthearchive

1981, p. 8). He says there was fear and a sense of irrevocableness: 'Because the events leading up to it were somehow inevitable … Czechoslovakia, Poland' (Lewis March 1981, p. 9). Perhaps there is relief there too that all the conjecture; the speculation is over.

There are two images of my father that seem to bridge this moment before war, and after the declaration. I call them Boy Soldier and Young Gentleman (Addy circa 1940; Unknown circa 1938). They are juxtaposed (alone) on facing pages in the middle of the family album.

Boy Soldier, circa 1940 Young Gentleman, sometime before the war

The Boy Soldier is almost certainly older than the Young Gentleman yet it is the Boy Soldier who looks fresh-faced and newly minted and a little lost; perhaps it is the uniform that accentuates his youth and the creased and sepia tones of the Young Gentleman's photograph; or perhaps the Boy Soldier's positioning on the left of the spread implies an earlier provenance. The Boy Soldier is a studio portrait taken by an F. Addy; there is no indication who took the portrait of the Young Gentleman but he has struck a sophisticated pose that references classical portraiture. The knuckles of one hand rest on a table while the other is in his trouser pocket holding back the flap of his jacket like curtain swag. A corner of a fire place is visible. This pose or variations of it appears in paintings, etchings and photographs; a figure stands, one hand resting on a table, in profile or three-quarter

profile. It is a pose struck by men of power or learning; Michael Faraday the natural philosopher, King Philip IV of Spain.[29] Gone is the shabbily dressed nervous boy on his way to his first job. His jacket is smarter now and his tie is neatly knotted, though the jacket sleeves still seem a little short. He is still serious, but there is more confidence. I wonder if this is Michael Wiezenberg reinvented as Mike Lewis. It is this young man I imagine listening to Chamberlain's broadcast. The Boy Soldier follows in April 1940, when he joins the Royal Fusiliers, aged twenty-two. The photograph maybe of him in his new kit; the uniform looks spruce and clean. The tightly clasped hands and crossed ankles give him a tense expression; perhaps he is wondering what to expect of the army. I suppose too that it is his first time living away from home. There is directness in his gaze that is disquieting; his eyes seem to engage mine out of the past and for a moment, I am sure I see a movement at the corners of his mouth, as if in the next second he will smile and speak to me.

After Chamberlain's declaration of war there was a strange hiatus before any major military battles begin, though there was some squaring up at sea. The Phoney War, as it has been called, lasted until May 1940. I am sure my mother would have objected to idea that the war was 'phoney' since it was during this time that the Germans occupied Denmark. Then things begin to move very quickly and by June 1940 Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium and France had fallen in quick succession to the German *Blitzkrieg*. In September the Blitz on London starts. My father remembers meeting his sister in the middle of an air raid while home on leave and also seeing London lit up from his barracks. From the Royal Fusiliers my father is then drafted into the Queens Royal Regiment 'en masse' with the rest of his troop. The next photograph in the family album shows him standing with fifteen fellow recruits (Unknown circa 1940).

[29]See portrait of Michael Faraday: https://pictures.royalsociety.org/image-rs-7909 ;an engraving of Edward Everett http://www.encore-editions.com/edward-everett-three-quarter-length-portrait-standing-facing-slightly-left-right-hand-gesturing-at-waist-left-hand-resting-on-table-painted-by-m-wight-engraved-by-h-wright-smith; and an oil portrait of King Philip IV of Spain by Velazquez. http://greatcollegeadvice.com/how-to-write-the-perfect-college-essay-paint-a-picture/

Mike (left) and fellow Royal Fusilier recruits, circa 1940

The format is landscape and he is to the left of the frame, the only one of those standing not partially obscured by those in front. He stands forward of the rest of those standing, hands clasped behind his back military style and seems to occupy a quarter of the frame; the wearing of his peak cap against the bare heads of the others draws attention. By their playful manner and casual state of dress and undress, it is clearly an off duty moment. The neat, serious Boy Soldier is gone and the bare chested Mike is smiling and looks leaner, fitter and more at ease. There seems to be some sort of caravan with serving hatch behind. Perhaps this is the basic training camp and they have stopped for tea; or perhaps this is one of the exercises he describes in the Kent countryside where the wise ones would somehow been seen by the enemy quicker than the others and leave the field as walking wounded, or if really lucky, by stretcher for the RAMC hospital to be given tea, 'While the others, heroes, fought the battle for several days more' (Lewis March 1981, pp. 17-8).

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I stare at the small, worn scrap of embroidered material in my hand. Blue wings flank a white parachute, the khaki background is frayed in places and a thread of grey cotton hangs from one edge; perhaps a remnant of the old stitching that attached it to his uniform. I gaze intently as if mere concentration can penetrate its meaning but it remains opaque. I sit them in front of me on the desk in my office. Of course they are opaque; they are his keepsake not mine, and were never shared with me. Finding them among his things was a surprise; my father, who had seemed so unsentimental about his war, had kept this
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memento. Peter Harclerode calls them the 'coveted parachute wings' (Harclerode 1992, p. 28).

Churchill had suggested an airborne corps of five thousand men and volunteers from infantry regiments were called for; my father was one. A Central Landing School was set up at Ringway Airport, near Manchester; a huge learning curve had to be surmounted. Norton says: 'We had neither the aircraft nor the parachutes: and perhaps more important still we were totally without first-hand knowledge or experience. Everything had to be designed, worked out and built from the beginning. Even such elementary matters as the best way to drop parachute soldiers from the aircraft … were a matter of trial and error' (Norton 1973, p. 2).

I was probably about ten when I realised my father had a fear of heights. I went with him to St Paul's Cathedral during one of those rare, privileged times when he took me to work with him. I cannot remember why we had come to St Paul's but we climbed to the Whispering Gallery, and then higher still to an outside balcony with an iron railing. It was an impressive view and I was occupied for some time trying to recognise landmarks until eventually I glanced around and saw that he was standing with his back pressed against the wall. For one moment, I thought he was just uninterested, but then he said: 'I don't like heights.' I was truly flummoxed, 'But you jumped out of aeroplanes,' I said. 'Yes, but I don't like heights,' he said again. He did not tell me then or later (and strangely I did not think to ask) why someone with such an anxiety volunteered to become a parachutist but now it appears he was bored. He recalls: 'it was a period of waiting for the invasion …The army had thousands of men; they had to keep them busy. So we were blanco-ing and polishing our shoes and polishing our rifles, Lee Enfields, doing parades. It went on week after week … I had really no intention of ever jumping out of 'planes. Because in my younger days I was even frightened of going on these funfair wheels, big wheels and flying chairs … But I thought it would give me two or three weeks off from the boring round' (Lewis March 1981, p. 18).

He had been stationed at Broadstairs on the Kent coast and transferred to the Parachute Brigade in December 1941. It must have been exhilarating, being part of something so very new; still in development. My father says: 'Men had come from all over the United Kingdom from different regiments to volunteer. I never saw so many hats and caps and tam-o'-shanters; regiments represented …There was a lot weeding out … physically and emotionally… People were RTU'd [returned to unit] … which in a way became a little bit of a defeat or disgrace' (Lewis March 1981, p. 19). The 'wings' were a badge of attainment.

The selection and training processes were exacting and extreme and Saunders says that three-quarters of the applicants were rejected at the interview stage (1950, p. 33). Harclerode says that volunteers had to undergo a course which included jumping from mock up fuselages, swinging from trapezes and an airsickness test: 'Each man was to possess a high degree of courage, self-discipline and self-reliance … The ability to cover long distances at high speed in full battle order became a matter of pride to the newly formed parachute units — ten miles in two hours, twenty in four and, ultimately fifty miles in twenty-four hours' (Harclerode 1992, pp. 26-9).

My father says: 'We had to do two jumps from the balloon during the day, one at night, five jumps from a plane. And then you got your wings: blue wings, white 'chute, which we proudly wore on our shoulder. Some of them wanted to wear it on their chest like the RAF. It was wintertime. A lot of them refused to wear great coats when they went home, so the wings could be easily seen. We still wore our old regimental berets, or hats, forage hats or peaked hats, whatever they happened to be' (Lewis March 1981, p. 25).

My fingers have found again the 'coveted wings'; the embroidery feels smooth against the rougher background fabric. How did he go through with this parachute lark and actually jump, the man afraid of fairground thrills? I bend down to sniff the fragile fragment of material, half expecting it to have some fragrance of khaki, of the army, of the past … but it is odourless; time has removed any trace. Then he says: 'There is something that helped me to go along with all this,' says my father. 'I became increasingly anxious, as some of us did, when the time came to either do it or go back to unit … I knew that some of the men in my room were taking bets against me doing it because it was the first time they met anybody Jewish … coming from different parts of the UK they were quite surprised to find that I looked just like them and didn't have the usual stereotyped long beard, hooked nose. But then I also found—a pleasant discovery—that a lot of the others had backed me … to jump and I determined to make those who had not backed me lose their money, which they did' (Lewis March 1981, pp. 20-1).

Such casual prejudice still confounds me. Did those men that were betting against him really believe that his Jewishness would make him incapable of jumping, or was it just a bit of thoughtless fun? My father seems forgiving when he says that it was, 'because it was the first time they met anybody Jewish'. He does not use the word antisemitism though clearly that is what it is, but perhaps this was mild compared to what he had already experienced and in any case he proved them wrong. His first jump remained a vivid memory:

> There was a silver barrage balloon tethered to the ground, with a box beneath it, with a hole in the centre … I could even almost recapture now that terrible feeling of tension … no amount of talking now … The balloon would slowly float upward to about 800 feet and from the bottom of the box would come a man, a body with a plume of yellow silk and there would be a crack as it suddenly opened … it being winter, daylight finished around four o'clock, jumping stopped … this I could hardly bear; the tension instead of being released had to go on till the next day … It was quite painful thinking about it and quite miserable too ... the next day I found myself sitting in that box … with the RAF instructor standing … and he said to us, "Look at the silver fabric of the balloon above you. Do not look down. Look at the balloon." And that I did … I felt a very slight movement and nothing more. Nothing seemed to be happening … although it was a cold winter's day my heart hammered … it hurt me … sweat began to poor down my face … I saw the man opposite me … I still remember him, his face … Suddenly he lost the struggle, his eyes went downwards with a jerk as if they had been pulled. And the look on his face when he looked down … I was lost; my eyes followed his … it was a terrible sight … The whole world was filled with the noise of my heart … and I heard the instructor roar out "Number one" … and then he was gone and his static line … snapped tight … made me think the man had been hung … and my turn came and in a dream … I was shooting downward at a tremendous speed … then I felt a sharp tug … and I looked up and saw the beautiful , gorgeous yellow silk … the feeling was exhilarating (Lewis March 1981, p. 23).

The fear in this memory is palpable, even forty years on and gives me a sense of the immense determination that it took to jump in spite of it. I stare hard at the small keepsake again, imagining it on his uniform, imagining him training, placing him in the photograph of a group of men, a 'stick', preparing to jump from a Whitley, trying to see the meaning of these wings; and then I do see … these 'wings' are not just about attainment, they symbolise something much greater— belonging, and the bond forged between men who are dependent on each other in that most fundamental of ways, as 'comrades at arms'. For my father this sense of belonging was of even greater significance, implying, as it did, a level of acceptance and inclusion that he had not previously experienced in his life. Though he had begun to move away from his orthodox upbringing well before the war, the war's arrival and his co-opting into the army facilitated the break he wanted to make. It must have been easier, away from his family and community. He told me he started eating bacon in the army. He was no longer an outsider but part of something. He says: 'this sense of

achievement, I think, probably drew us together. One didn't think about it as such. And we were I suppose being blended as I say and made into a cohesive new unit. And sharing this common danger, this common experience, I made some of the best friends I ever made during the war… But as it was war, they didn't last very long' (Lewis March 1981, p. 25). In a sense all men experience this special bonding in war, but the cultural barriers that my father had to overcome intensified his experience (Vettel-Becker 2002, pp. 83-4).

These wings are also a memento mori.

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By 1942, the prolonged Western Desert campaign that began with the Italian invasion of Egypt in June 1940 was coming to a head. Hitler sent Erwin Rommel with the Afrika Corps to bolster the Italians and Britain, Bernard Montgomery to take command of the Eighth Army. The Allies, having argued over and then discounted an offensive in Europe, began planning one for North Africa, Operation Torch. Churchill held that Tunisia would be the way back into Europe and provide a vital staging post for taking Sicily and then Italy, which he called the 'soft under belly of the Axis' powers. The Afrika Corps and the Eighth Army began a decisive battle in October 1942 at El Alamein. The plan was for the Eighth Army to push the Afrika Corps all the way back to Tripoli into the oncoming First Army of Operation Torch. The 1st Parachute Brigade was to be part of this offensive (Harclerode 1992, p. 30).

As the Eighth Army were breaking through the Axis lines at El Alamein and turning Rommel about, the Allies were assembling one of the largest amphibious landing forces in the history of war to take North Africa. It comprised over a hundred thousand troops and more than three hundred ships split into three groups. The Western Task Force was charged with taking Casablanca, the Central Task Force Orana and the Eastern Task Force Algiers. My father was destined for the Eastern Task Force aboard the Strathmore. He and his friends got one last opportunity for a day out:

> Before we left, Fred, he was about my height. He had curly, blond hair, light eyes. I always remember him. Straight as a dye. He had his home in Wiltshire. He said, "Come on Mike, Chalky as well, the three of us. Mum's expecting us for tea." And we got three bicycles and we rode through that summer countryside of Wiltshire, past the corn; the lovely Wiltshire downs with the sweeping mounds of green with little copses scattered here and there. And thinking about it now, it seems like a dream. We were young, I suppose. What were we, twenty-four, twenty-three? We arrived at
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his mother's house. And she had laid out a magnificent spread, cakes and bread and butter and jam and other goodies. Remember, it's hard to think of it now, but everything was rationed, butter a pat a week … She'd obviously saved it all up for Fred and his friends …we were treated like royalty. I think I've got a photograph of me and a friend standing outside his home with his mum … And well, I'm glad that happened, because shortly after that we went' (Lewis March 1981, pp. 32-3).

A glow emanates from this description, a feeling of exuberance and carefree joy, perhaps accentuated by the fact he is looking back and knows what is to come. I find one photograph that fits his description in the family album (Unknown circa 1942).

Mike and friends just before leaving England

My father stands to the right of the frame, arms crossed. He has been in the army for over two years now and the changes are noticeable. The Boy Soldier has gone and been replaced by a leaner, fitter and more worldly looking young man. I think the curly haired young man behind must be Fred as the resemblance to his mother is marked. But who is the other young man? Is this 'Chalky'? If it is, it is strange that Mike did not refer to the

image as, ‘a photograph of us’. I weigh up the chances that there was another occasion when Mike and Fred, and a friend went visiting Fred’s mother, it seems unlikely and there is something else too. By enlarging the image I think that I can just make out that my father and Chalky have a shoulder patch which helps to date this image. The now famous arm patch and red beret were commissioned in May 1942 and given to the paratroopers not long before they left for North Africa. There is a strange inflection in the words ‘well, I’m glad that happened’ which only becomes explained later as I unravel what happened to my father in North Africa. My father goes on: ‘Then we were racing one night through the Straits of Gibraltar, fast and the next morning … a blazing city appeared on the horizon. It was Algiers; my first glimpse of the Mediterranean, brilliant sun, all shining white, rising up out of the sea. I was struck by this amazing luminous spectacle. The war I had quite forgotten … all this existed out of a grey and murky England … the fog and the rain. There was this blazing land; it was a revelation to me’ (Lewis March 1981).

Suddenly I see this transformative vision refracted through my own first experiences of travel and that white, hot Mediterranean light, when our parent’s took us to Rovinji, in Croatia, on a camping holiday in 1966. For most of the young men shipped out to North Africa, as for my father, this would be their first taste of ‘going abroad’ and I sense a connection between the expression of exuberance in the Wiltshire countryside and his experience of the ‘luminous spectacle’ of Algiers. It is a last moment of boyish wonder that will inevitably be overwritten by war. North Africa would be a revelation to them all, though mostly in harsh, unpleasant and, sometimes, terrifying ways; a proving ground for the British Airborne troops and also a turning point in the war. During the five months that it took to vanquish the Axis forces, they would all be blooded, many would be killed and many more would be wounded. They would discover that this sun drenched land could deliver icy nights with piercing winds and that the winter rains created mud so sticky and deep that it could ‘pull a soldiers boot off’. Then it becomes clear to me why these images of my father in uniform are not in the War Diary; the War Diary begins in North Africa because North Africa is where my father’s war really begins.

5 Mythologising the Red Beret

How are heroes made—by fate, by circumstance, by the polity? Are heroes essential to war?

I have my father's red beret before me now. It is musty from storage and makes me sneeze and the first thing I note is that it is not red but maroon. It is made of what seems to be thick felted wool with a charcoal-grey cotton lining—maybe it was once black—the size, seven and three-eighths is still faintly visible printed in white. A leather strip binds the edge and provides a channel for a strip of material that still hangs down like a tail, presumably for tightening the brim. There are two black metal eyelet holes towards the back on the left side and a silver metal cap badge incorporating the wings emblem topped with a crown and lion, positioned slightly to the right of the centre front. The badge is oddly shiny and new looking against the moth pricked felt and faded lining. I pull the beret on, tilting it down slightly on the right side like paratroopers in the photographs and go to look at myself in the mirror. It fits surprisingly well, given my father was a large man and tall; at least 183 centimetres, I would guess. I wonder when my father last wore it and if it is the same one that he wore in North Africa and Europe.

A beret seems a strange piece of headgear to wear into battle, not very practical I think; but Wikipedia disagrees: 'Berets have features that make them very attractive to the military: they are cheap, easy to make in large numbers, can be manufactured in a wide range of colors, can be rolled up and stuffed into a pocket or beneath the shirt epaulette without damage, and can be worn with headphones (this is one of the reasons why tank crews adopted the beret)'. Wiki also tells me that: 'Berets have been a component of the uniforms of many armed forces throughout the world since the mid-20th century. [I suppose since the Second World War] Military berets are usually pushed to the right to free the shoulder that bears the rifle on most soldiers …' Wiki does concede, however, 'The beret is not so useful in field conditions for the modern infantryman, who requires protective helmets, and is usually not seen worn by infantry on operations.'[30] I also find YouTube clips on how to 'shave' and 'shape' your beret.[31]

I have looked for the arm patch but it is not among my father's things and I wonder why. It was designed by Major Edward Seago and depicts Bellerphon wielding a spear, mounted on Pegasus, the winged horse (Norton 1973, p. 116). The three items would seem to go

[30] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_beret

[31] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xLXQP-tulE

together as keepsakes; to ask to be kept together. Has it been lost? Did he ever keep it? It is puzzling. Does its absence mean that he disapproved of it? If the wings and the beret warranted keeping, surely the arm patch did too. Maybe he thought its heroic evocation too obvious and unnecessarily exalted.

And what of the paratroopers, were they destined to become legends by the branding of the arm patch? When I look at the Parachute Regiment's website I see that name Red Devils is virtually a trade mark now signifying the Parachute Regiment's free fall team.[32] After North Africa the Red Beret would become synonymous with exceptional prowess, but even before the distinctive headgear had been issued and battle honours won, a certain aura had attached itself to the fledgling forces. A soldier who encountered them and later joined observed: 'They wore the headgear of every known regiment in the British Army. … Generally speaking, they were admired. Some admired them enviously, some fawningly and some grudgingly' (Saunders 1950, p. 52). The press promulgated some highly exaggerated stories too. The author of Parachutist says: 'I do not know which particular journalist first coined the phrase 'intelligent but tough' but at one time we could not open a newspaper without reading it … in one weekly magazine a highly-coloured article by Our Special Correspondent … told how the British intelligent but tough umbrella-men like nothing better than to rise voluntarily at 5 a.m. in order to go for a run and have a cold shower before breakfast. Also that we are teetotallers and non-smokers to a man and spend our evenings, which, of course, the ordinary soldier spends in debauchery on his three shillings a day, in reading worthwhile literature' (Pegasus Undated, p. 95).

An army that could parachute into battle was still such a novel idea—only Russia and Germany had deployed parachute troops before this—and it was dangerous, of course, and there were accidents and deaths when they switched to jumping from American Dakotas as my father recalls (Lewis March 1981, p. 29). Perhaps the exaggerated stories of the Spartan-like qualities of the untried paratroopers were circulated to boost morale in a country that felt besieged. Certainly there were great expectations of the 'intelligent but tough umbrella men'; their selection process and training had ensured that. But their narrative would not have been nearly so compelling had not the German's dubbed them the 'Red Devils'. If the narrative of war is as about turning boys into warrior men as Patricia Vettel-Becker says; the narrative of the Parachute Brigade in North Africa is how

[32] http://www.army.mod.uk/infantry/regiments/23304.aspx

warrior men became heroes (Vettel-Becker 2002, pp. 80,2). It is strange to think my father was in the vanguard of this myth making and it is curious new territory to plumb.

I sit with the beret on looking out at the fading light of a late autumn evening in Canberra. Magpies are still carolling to one another as the shadows fade to black. I reach up with both hands to feel the beret on my head as if I might find memories trapped there in the felted fabric but somehow its meaning is so much more elusive than the wings. I wonder, is it harder for women to contemplate war than men? Do sons find it easy to imagine their father's as soldiers than daughters? Or is it just that I have never been required to face war so directly?

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Winter is setting in Canberra and on clear cold mornings I walk on Mount Majura with my dog Lily, a lively border collie cross. I can see the distant blue ripple of the Brindabella Mountains iced with the first falls of snow. In the rising sun their irregular scallop of white pierces the eye like loss. In the evening Lily and I share the couch, next to the wood stove that warms the house. She sleeps with a paw shading her eyes, snoring softly. I read about the battle for Tunisia switching between various histories and my father's account. He is in B Company, 2nd Parachute Battalion and I follow its fortunes, making notes on cards and dropping them on the floor next to me. I work hard trying to marry my father's account with the military histories to see what locations and actions I can identify. I plunge from the personal to the epic and from memory to history. My father is looking back after almost forty years; it is not that his memories have dimmed, they are vividly evoked, but they are more concerned with the sensory and psychic experience, rather than the materiality of time and place. At one point he even remarks that he has got his narrative 'out of sequence' and it would not have been hard to do (Lewis March 1981, p. 49). After their initial airborne operations the paratroopers fought as infantry for over five months in the Tunisian Campaign; it would be easy for time to become condensed and even conflated in the recalling. Military histories drawing on company and battalion diaries, focus on units of operation such as platoons, companies, battalions and brigades and the deeds recorded are usually those of officers and commanders. Rarely are individuals from the ranks identified. It seems of little significance to the military historian or strategist what soldiers from the ranks thought and what they experienced, whether they are alive or dead or wounded; it is the outcome of the battle that matters. Perhaps they do have little to offer in the way of insight, since in the thick of fighting their world is small, circumscribed by exploding shells, gunfire and the single purpose of survival.
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A thunderous crash outside intrudes into my reading as two possums drop onto the garage roof and begin threatening one another, each uttering that curious percussive gurgling sound characteristic of their territorial disputes. I push the curtain aside and open the door for Lily who rushes out into the cold stillness toward the two dark shapes crouched on the garage roof. They stop their argument to turn their luminous eyes toward her; then, even though they are well out of reach, they turn and shin up the overhanging tree. 'Discretion is the better part of valour', I think. Caught in the light from the house I can see the sparkle of frost beginning to settle. I shiver for my father and those cold African nights, he says: 'I didn't think African nights could be so cold … The wind never seemed to stop blowing ... We had those gas capes made of that hard plastic-like material, which were the only things [wrapped] round ourselves, as hard and inflexible as they were, would keep out that tearing wind' (Lewis March 1981, p. 41).

I settle back onto the couch and pick up Saunders again. Even though I am put off by his Boys Own Adventure view of war I find that there is a great deal of useful detail and of course his rhetorical style does reflect the mindset of the times. Unfamiliar words like 'enfilading' and 'debouching', are entering my vocabulary and I discover another form of military arcana, the naming of features such as hills and mountains. Local names, nicknames and numbers, are often used interchangeably, like Hill 648 or Djebel Mansour, or the Bowler Hat or Sidi Non Delaa. A number of the most prominent features are shown as tiny inverted vees on the maps and belie the fact that some are enormous obstacles. Then there are the curious nicknames and diminutives of the officers and men, 'Swifty' Howlett, 'Boy' Browning, 'Dickie' Spender, and 'Chalky' White. I now understand why there is a 1st Army and an 8th Army in North Africa even though there are no 2nd, 3rd, or other armies; apparently it confuses the enemy. Then there are the nicknames of the leading protagonists; the 'Desert Fox' aka Rommel; and 'Monty' aka Montgomery which are suggestive of comic book characters and are useful media tags that immediately shape a narrative; good old Monty up against the wily Desert Fox. Naming can also be a way of dehumanising and disempowering the aura of the enemy— Jerry, the Hun; or exciting a sense of adventure such as the exotic names for operations—Tuxedo, Wastage, Wild Oats, Beneficiary, Sword Hilt, Hands Up and Transfigure. These are just some of the planned and abandoned operations before Market Garden, which took my father to Arnhem. I wonder if there was a special unit devoted to the naming of military operations; the Office of Military Taxonomy, perhaps. Or maybe a marketing arm: the naming of operations being of course of some public relations value, though 'Wild Oats' left me smiling at this most obvious and, perhaps ill chosen, of masculine allusions.

The scholar Patricia Vettel-Becker's says that: 'War is a territorial game played by men to enact dominance.' War as a 'game' in particular resonates with the playful element of these nicknames and diminutives. They smack of boarding school and secret boys clubs. Maybe the subliminal suggestion that the soldiers are really eternal boys looked after by clever prefects (officers) and paternal masters (commanders) helps maintain discipline and morale in a situation where it is vital they obey orders. Vettel-Becker says that while boys who become 'warrior men' is a prominent motif of Second World War combat photography it does not prevent men from regressing to boyhood and a certain physicality in each other's company; freed by their warrior status from any suggestions of homosexuality or feminine weakness (2002, p. 84). The intensity and uncertainty of war permits men to be demonstrative with each other; nicknaming can be a term of endearment. If there is an allure to war, maybe it resides in this ardent devotion to one another, fuelled by the uncertainty of survival day-to-day.

I try to conjure up the Tunisian landscape and imagine my father's first parachute operation. The images of flat treeless plains with distant slopes in the War Diary could be somewhere in arid central Australia. A heat haze is visible in some and one shows troops marching past General Alexander, rifles presented, stirring the dust. My father says they landed in country that was: 'harsh, dry and rocky, empty of any human habitation, animal or plant life' (Lewis 1985a, p. 2). I try to 'put myself in the picture' but there are really no pictures. Considering, the paratroopers were destined to become legendry; there are surprisingly few photographs of them in North Africa in the Imperial War Museum's collection. I find none of B Company 2nd Parachute Battalion. Sergeant Wilson of No 2 AFPU did cover a parachute story on 16 November 1942 about the 1st Battalion on its way to Souk el Arba, but other images I find seem to have been taken later during the campaign when the paratroopers were used as infantry, and these are few (Army Film and Photographic Section 1942). Of the battle for Tamera, Colonel Frost commander of the 2nd Parachute Battalion, says: 'Throughout, nobody but the enemy knew we were fighting. Our presence in the forefront of the battle was not divulged and no reporters were allowed' (Cherry 2011, p. 238). I get a better idea of the terrain and weather conditions from a documentary on the campaign in Tunisia, which has a compilation of Allied and Axis film (Cromwell 2001). I see barren open plains, treeless hills, deep rocky wadis and driving rain with water sluicing over the landscape. The airfields are mired in deep mud, so deep that the aircraft have to be dug out and soldiers struggle to walk. It was the beginning of winter when my father's operation took place, cold; cold enough not to be able to sleep at night. They had been in North Africa only a few weeks and I wonder how they adapted to

the unfamiliar landscape, all their survival training having been in the done in the soft green English countryside. I remember how strange the dry bushlands of Australia were to me when I first arrived. For the paratroopers, it is not only an alien landscape that they are to face, but a hostile one as well.

I browse through pages of images from North Africa. All except for the one pasted over a map, seem to have been taken after 12 May 1943, after the North African Campaign had ended. This makes sense, since my father did not join the AFPU until then. The images are of street scenes, buildings and views; there is Eisenhower with troops parading past; gun placements at target practice and in a few my father is pictured gazing out over a view and in one playing carefree football on a beach; my father is second from the left about to go for the ball (Unknown 1943c).

Football on African beaches 1943

I return to the first page of the War Diary, there are two images. The first is of a young paratrooper in three quarter profile with one hand resting on a memorial (Unknown 1943f). My father identifies him as Sergeant Christie; his airborne insignia and sergeant's stripes are clearly visible but the plaques on the memorial are unclear.

Sergeant Christie at the 1st Parachute Brigade memorial in Tunisia, 1943

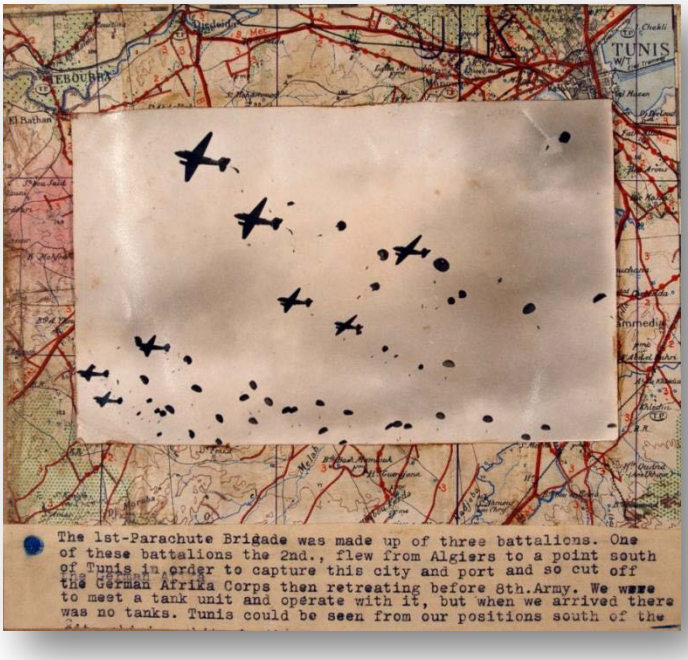
The second image is a close up of the memorial so the words can be read. The memorial is dedicated to the fallen of the 1st Parachute Brigade and lists the eight actions they were involved in at Bone, Souk El Arba, Depienne, Beja, Medjez el Bab, Djebel Mansour, Bou Arada and Tamera Valley (Unknown 1943a).

Close up of the 1st Parachute Brigade memorial in Tunisia, 1943

In September 1943, Sergeant Christie was a paratrooper but he is also shown on strength with No. 2 AFPU, North Africa under Major Keating, along with my father, perhaps they were recruited around the same time (McGlade 2011, p. 96). I surmise that he must be the

'Chris' who wrote the dedication to my father in *Parachutist* in New Year 1945. A few pages further on is an image of my father similarly posed though he is to the left of the frame and not touching the memorial; the caption says that Sergeant Christie was the photographer. They have posed for each other to mark the visit. These images are about loss and remembrance; they represent the aftermath of war.

In the captions accompanying the two photographs my father states simply: 'The 1st Parachute Brigade fought in the North Africa campaign. This campaign begun in Algeria and then for months in Tunisia was apart from the climax unspectacular in comparison with later campaigns. But in terms of the hardship and endurance for the individual participant it was great indeed … The paratroops undertook three parachute operations of which one was unsuccessful. In addition they fought as infantry. Their casualties were heavy.' Over the page a compilation of a map and black and white photograph takes up half a page (Lewis circa 1943). The photograph has been pasted on top of a coloured topographical map which shows the Lake of Tunis, Tebourra and very faintly Oudna. In the photograph parachutists discharge from planes like pollen dust against a backdrop of sky. The use of the map in this way is reminiscent of a filmic device of the time where an aircraft traces a broken line across a map to denote a journey.[33]

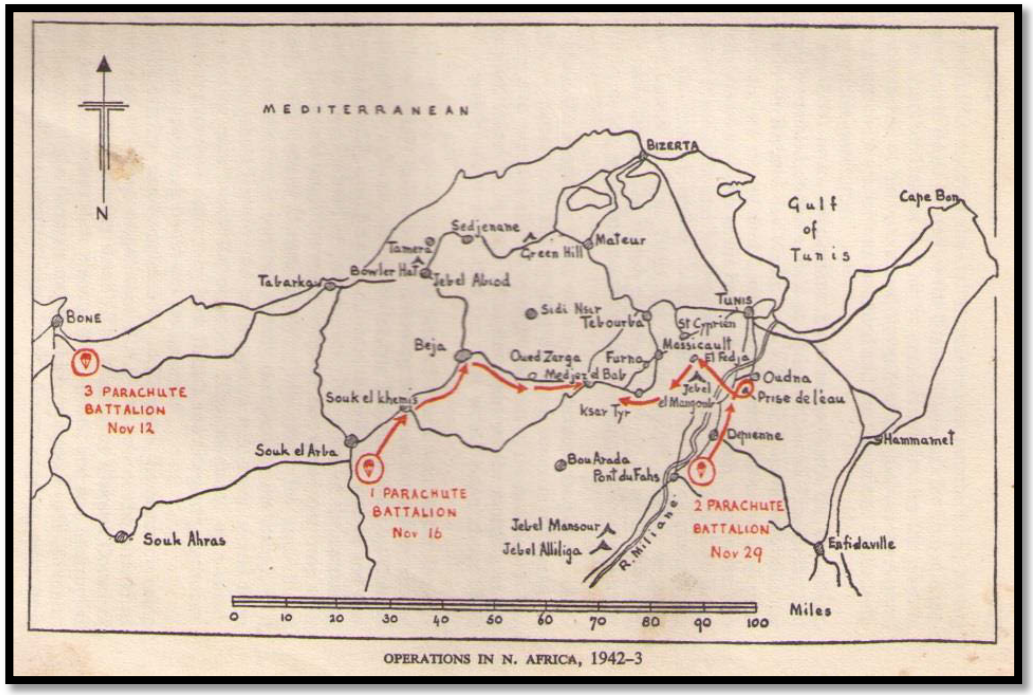


Topographic map and photograph compilation with part of caption

[33] An example is the 1981 film Raiders of the Lost Ark where it was used to help evoke that era: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0082971/

The photograph could have been taken anywhere but its positioning over the map suggests it is one of the three parachute operations that were part of Operation Torch; probably 1st Parachute Battalion on their way to Souk el Khemis covered by Sergeant Wilson. An extended caption outlines that fate of my father's battalion: ' the 2nd [Battalion] flew from Algiers to a point south of Tunis in order to capture the city and port and so cut off the German Afrika Corps then retreating before the 8th Army. We were to meet a tank unit and operate with it, but when we arrived there were no tanks. Tunis could be seen from our position south of the city shining white in the sun, a blue lake lay to the west of it. One third of the forces who took part in the para., operation returned to our lines some forty miles away. Later I heard that as our armour was not able to rendezvous with us as arranged the operation was cancelled. But by this time it was too late. We had taken off on a 300 mile flight and all efforts to recall us by radio failed.'

I find a map of the Mediterranean and its contiguous countries and another that shows the airborne actions. Northern Tunisia is like a clenched fist with a 'thumb' of land pointing toward Sicily and Italy beyond, separated by a narrow strip of sea. It is not hard to see why taking it from the Axis Armies becomes the goal of the North Africa Campaign. The Axis Armies are using the ports at Bizerta and Tunis to resupply from the Italian mainland.



Map of airborne troop actions in Tunisia 1942-43 (Saunders 1950, p. 79)

It is clear from this that the three drops on 12, 16 and 29 November 1942 at Bone, Souk el Arba and Depienne respectively, are aimed at leapfrogging the Allies toward Tunis as fast

as possible. But the success of this leapfrogging strategy is dependent on the 1st Army, catching up with them and the North African Campaign had hardly begun when problems arose. Saunders says that the commanding officer of the British 1st Army, Lieutenant-General Anderson was confronted by three difficulties: the weather, the small size of the 1st Army and a shortage of transport (Saunders 1950, p. 82). Even so the first two airborne operations at Bone and Beja were successful and the 1st Army made reasonable progress to Souk el Arba before the weather and transport problems slowed their advance on Tunis giving the Axis forces under General Von Armin the opportunity to regroup. It is into this rapidly turning tide that the 2nd Battalion is dropped. Paratroopers lightly armed and provisioned cannot survive long behind enemy lines without resupply. Ultimately they are in danger of being surrounded by the enemy and this becomes the fate of my father's battalion almost 50 miles behind enemy lines (Harclerode 1992, p. 39).

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It is late spring and I am walking in a rugged stretch of bush known as the Budawangs with an intimate from my past with whom I have reconnected. It is a place of barren plateaus fractured by narrow ravines and wide boulder strewn rivers. It is hard walking and we carrying everything needed for seven nights out. The physical demands of the walk clear the mind like meditation and draw us together. I have been grappling at the interface of memory and history endeavouring to overlay my father's memories on the history of the 2nd Parachute Battalion. Satisfyingly there are clues that link my father's account to the recorded episodes and with the help of maps I understand the strategies and logistics of the North African Campaign. But the execution of these strategies at the frontline; that strange and ferocious place where the battle losses are often quoted casually like sporting results and the objectives sometimes seem insignificant, require moral calculations that I struggle with. From having avoided thinking about war, I have done nothing else; yet still I sense that I am missing something that will round out my understanding of what my father went through.

If I had thought 'roughing it' out in the bush would bring me closer to his experience I soon realise the folly of that notion. My walk is, by comparison, pleasurable; the physical hardship 'rewarded' at the end of the day with a swim in a rock pool, a drink of whiskey as the last light slips away, and a warm, dry bed. The Australian bush can evoke strange moods; it can be alien and dangerous but it is not hostile in the sense that a war zone is hostile. We descend a deep cut down to the river below, the flow is low at the moment but a flood could quickly fill this place. From the bottom the sun penetrates through a narrow
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skylight. I have a slight sense of claustrophobia; the air is so still down here. Even though it is early we decide to camp as we are both exhausted. In the relaxation after the walk the mind crowds in again. War raises many questions and issues and according to Alexander Moseley: 'To begin a philosophical discussion of war draws one onto a long and complex intellectual path of study and continual analysis;' (Moseley 2014, p. 7). This is not very encouraging, I think, but he does clarify and summarise the questions for me in a way that makes them manageable: 'What is war? What causes war? What is the relationship between human nature and war? Can war ever be morally justifiable?' (Moseley 2014, p. 1).

Sleep usually comes easily after a day's walk, but tonight I feel that it is uncomfortably close in the tent. I zip the top of my sleeping bag down. I wish there was a breeze but realise that the steep sides of the gorge stop any movement of air. My face and neck feel damp and I wriggle my legs out. Perhaps I have a fever; I put the back of my hand against my forehead, it is damp but not hot. Even though the night is black down here I have a sense that the walls of the gorge are closing in. I unzip the tent and thrust my head and shoulders out, the night is cool and I gulp the air; a realisation rises, I am having a panic attack. I shut my mouth to slow my breathing forcing it through my nose. I lie down again; this place induces a sense of foreboding in me and I try to exorcise it from my mind by will; the symptoms begin to recede. It comes to me then, as I begin to quiet my mind and body, that this visceral experience of fear is part of war and that while I have been busy trying to authenticate my father's memories and pinpoint them geographically and temporally, the real story lay just where he located it; in his impressionistic montage. I had not wanted to be waylaid by the personal but I see now that it is at the intersection of personal and historical memory that a deeper understanding is to be had. Here the cost of war is counted differently, not merely in numbers, though that is bad enough as historian Lucy Dawidowicz's confronting statistical summary of the Second World War demonstrates. She writes: 'Over 35 million people were killed, more than half of them civilians. On the battlefields 1 out of every 22 Russians was killed, 1 out of every 25 Germans, 1 out of every 150 Italians and Englishmen and 1 out of every 200 Frenchman. The human cost of 2,191 days of war surpassed the losses of any previous war in the world. The war brought death to nearly 6 million Jews, to 2 out of every 3 European Jews (1975, p. xxxvi). The personal narrative measures the war in loss: lost comrades, lost fathers and sons, lost sweethearts, lost limbs, damaged minds and bodies and the numerous (for the civilian) unimaginable sufferings and hardships at the front. My father's summary of the events, so brief and factual—so military—does not reconcile at all with

the emotion that pours out of his oral account or its discursive nature. Now something else that Moseley said begins to make more sense: 'War typically involves killing or the threat of being killed, which existentialist writers have drawn on in their examination of wars phenomenology' (Moseley 2014, p. 6). Perhaps it should have been obvious that my questions about war are really bound up with the 'relationship between human nature and war'; my father's nature and how he negotiated war (Moseley 2014, p. 1). I wonder, as I lie here in the dark trying to control my own primal fears if those other questions about war are not *all* bound up in this one. Or is it just as the writer Antoine de Saint Exupéry once said that war is a 'disease'? It breaks out now and again; here and there; sometimes it becomes a pandemic.

Back in Canberra I luxuriate again in the comforts and conveniences of home and am amused that there is at least one experience I can in some respects share with my father. His most vivid memory of a rest period during the campaign is of a simple pleasure: 'what I do remember were the outside loos ... They were communal loos separated from each other by a simple strip. And it was a marvellous feeling to sit there in the sun. And to feel at peace with the world out of the sound of guns. And masses of mail from home reaching us. And everybody sitting on their particular throne, shouting along to each other, "Have you heard from your wife or your friend?" "No, yes, she's had a baby." "No, she's run off with the man next door." And all that chat, discussing it as we sat there, two heavenly exercises. Except for the flies which were big as planes and kept buzzing around us like mad, attracted, of course, by the human activity' (Lewis March 1981, p. 46).

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While I was in London at the Imperial War Museum I was lucky enough to connect with two surviving AFPU stills cameramen, Peter Norris and Harry Oakes, both now in their eighties. Norris, though he was in No. 5 AFPU, did not actually meet my father but Oakes went with my father to Belsen, so our meeting was highly charged and there were moments when I could not tell whether it was age that made his eyes seem so large and watery and his voice a little husky. Or was it remembering the utter shock of entering Belsen for the first time with my father? He said something then that stuck in my mind and puzzled me; that: 'Mike was a soldier's soldier'. I was not sure what he meant. But when I read Saunders account of the 'initiatives' of two 1st Battalion officers, Phillip Mellor and Stanley Wandless, I begin to understand something fundamental about 'human nature and war'. Mellor, after wiping out an enemy outpost, sent his patrol back and entered the local town, Mateur alone and 'spent some time wandering round the streets pistolling

Germans'. Wandless snuck into a German billet and threw a gammon bomb in the middle of some German officers who were dining, 'with one hundred percent results …' (1950). Saunders, whose language seems to express admiration of these exploits, says that Wandless was killed later as a result of ,'adventures of this kind' (Saunders 1950). These sorts of lone actions do not seem likely to influence the outcome of war and may even be detrimental. But it does illustrate that men faced this war in very different ways according to their nature, so that some men relished it, some found it terrifying and some did what they needed to do, hoping to get through. I think my father was in this latter category and that made him a reliable soldier to have at your side, 'a soldier's soldier' who would not take risks needlessly; and would not get *you* killed because of his own recklessness. He also understood that men did not always have control over how they reacted to the experience of war; anyone could suddenly lose their nerve for jumping, or suffer shell-shock. He recalled three men badly affected from being caught in a barrage, one who could not walk straight but zigzagged along; one who sweated profusely and continually; and another whose hair fell out (Lewis March 1981, p. 58).

I turn back to the first page of the War Diary where the Tunise franc tumbles against the cover. It hangs by a green thread from two photo-corners, opposing the two images of the memorial. Its mixture of Latinate and Arabic scripts locate it culturally and temporally as French North Africa (the French had been there since the 1800s) and its French colonial status was another reason why North Africa was an attractive proposition to the Allies. It was still part of free France, or Vichy France as it was known, and it had an intact navy.[34] The Allies hoped the French could be persuaded to cooperate with their plans; but there is initial resistance when the Allies land.

Caught between the titanic struggle taking place across their land and colonial rule were the local Arab population. Saunders seems rather indignant when he says that the Allies had to put up with more enemies than the Italians and Germans: 'the local Arabs were for the most part hostile, "looters and pests" as more than one parachute soldier described

[34] Vichy France was created because, in the early stages of the war in 1940, when it was obvious that France would fall, a rift occurred in the French Government. The Prime Minister Paul Reynaud wanted to move the seat of Government to the French colonies in North Africa so they could fight on, other members of the cabinet wanted to sue for peace. In the end, those that favoured a treaty with Germany prevailed and an armistice was signed that created a separate 'free' French State in south eastern France headed by Marshal Pétain. It was called the État Français but became known as Vichy France after the name of the regional capital. Vichy's legitimacy was contested by those French that chose exile and both the state and individuals were accused of collaborating with the Germans. It is likely that Hitler's agreement to the armistice was a tactical move designed to avoid the very thing that Prime Minister Reynaud had wanted, a French Government in exile, with its Navy intact, governing from one of its colonies, Morocco, Algeria or Tunisia.

them' (Saunders 1950, p. 90). It did not seem to count that the Allies commandeered their mules, donkeys and horses to move Allied supplies or summarily shot them if they were believed to be collaborating with the Germans and Italians. While on duty at Maison Carré my father witnesses an argument between two Arabs which ends in one of them being slashed with a knife. The victim is much surprised and alarmed to be bustled away by my father for medical treatment but my father thought that it raised their standing among the locals, as the released patient proudly displayed his bound hand. My father supposed that: 'unknowingly we had done ourselves a power of good. No one had ever been treated that well … they were a poor down-trodden, starved lot; generally … I saw them in the hills in villages, shivering in the cold of that winter, with thin blue limbs. I was surprised. I always thought that Arabs, like the films you know, were … riding white horses' (Lewis March 1981, p. 34). Proud Arabs riding white horses, the Boy Soldier is still evident in those words. Later in the campaign, when war has assumed a familiar grind of cold and mud and fear he recalls the grief of an Arab who is caught up in Allied artillery practice: 'an Arab came shouting, sweeping toward us in this wild, remote spot in the hills. One of the shell splinters had hit the only cow he had and it was dying, and what could he do for milk for his children, so it was interpreted to us. … To me this is one of the saddest things I've ever witnessed because I was so helpless' (Lewis March 1981, p. 50) My father's own experiences of being a cultural outsider must have given him a particular kind of empathy with the locals but it is not only the locals that he feels for. When a major attack by a mixed force of Austrian, Italian and German troops comes off in Bou Arada and my father is pinned down by shelling, he watches them attempt an out flanking manoeuvre which is repelled by Allied artillery fire: 'And I saw the men trying to throw themselves into the small bank lining the road on the hill leading upwards. And the explosions landed amongst them. I felt sorry for them. It was a terrible sight' (Lewis March 1981, pp. 52-3). Interestingly, Saunder's records a battalion historian as saying that: 'It was a pleasing sight to seek scores of Germans jumping out of the wadi to avoid mortars, and jumping back to get away from the machine gun fire' (Saunders 1950, p. 110). Men deal with war in very different ways and my father was not the only one who had empathy for his adversary. He describes a rather touching scene in which an injured Italian prisoner is fussed over by the men: 'We were bringing him [the injured man] tea and cigarettes and little drops of booze. Everybody came in turn. I suppose if you are in the enemy's hands you're always wondering … what's going to happen. To be having a cigarette or a cup of tea or a sweet is comforting not just for the sake of the items' (Lewis March 1981, p. 55). There is

something heartening about reading this tenderness toward the enemy; to see that these men are not so brutalised by war that they cannot find their shared humanity.

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On the morning of the 29 November 1942 my father boards one of forty-four Dakotas flying from Maison Blanche for his first airborne operation and his first experience of battle. The 2nd Battalion will drop at Depienne and walk about fourteen miles (twenty-two kilometres) to Oudna with the goal of destroying any enemy aircraft found at the airfield there. After that they are to link up with the 1st Army at St Cyprien near Tunis (Harclerode 1992, p. 37). The weather was rough and there was a lot of air sickness. Strangely, my father does not speak of pre-op nerves or his feelings about going into action for the first time. Though I do remember him telling me that there was a saying among the paratroopers that your face changes colour with signal lights on the plane, 'red for standby; green for go'. As soon as the paratroopers landed they formed up and moved out toward Oudna. They managed to commandeer some donkeys but a lot of their gear had to humped by the men who dropped exhausted at every halt; some even had to fall out (Cherry 2011, p. 143). My father is carrying grenades as well as his pack. He says: 'They're a terrible weight to carry, apart from being very dangerous in the haversack if you were hit. And I remember going, after our drop, and sweating up the mountain, over the hills. One of our sergeants said to me: "Mike for God's sake"… he could see me groaning with this on my back. I had a haversack full of them "drop it". And I thought no, the hell, I won't. I've carried them all this way. It was just as well I didn't. He was being sympathetic' (Lewis March 1981, p. 37).

By the time they reach Oudna and find no aircraft there, the German's have become aware of their presence; my father remembers the attack: 'They had Messerschmitts … swooping low over us … So I put my net scarf, made of painted green and black camouflage, over my face and looked through the meshes of the net at the aircraft, hoping he wouldn't see us. I heard him dive somewhere and fire. And all sorts of thing were whistling overhead and exploding around us' (Lewis March 1981, p. 36). The battalion commander Lieutenant Colonel John Frost moves the three companies back to the Prise de l'Eau well to wait for a signal about the rendezvous with infantry and tanks of the 1st Army. In spite of their exhaustion, the cold will not let them rest. In the early hours of the morning they receive word that the expected link up will not happen. It is now the 1st December and they become surrounded. My father remembers: 'sitting on that rocky hill looking out over the desert. It was a desert bare of trees and houses … I know I could see the Junkers taking off
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from El Aouana. The air was clean and bright … We had two men, stupidly, down on the road at the water well filling their bottles … when the German armoured column came along. And there was a shout in German and there was a sudden crackle of small cannon fire which shook me and the others. Somehow, this didn't seem like war. Terrible confusion followed' (Lewis March 1981, p. 35). That this was not like war, seems a strange thing to say. What could he have expected war to be like; could anything prepare you for the 'real thing'. Is it the confusion that follows that makes him feel this way or is it dissociation from shock?

My father says that he thinks the German's would have driven by without finding them if the men had not been down at the well. Most military histories say that Frost had been prepared to ambush the German column and though I am no military strategist, to me it does not seem sensible in the battalion's precarious circumstances. The paratroopers manage to drive off the attack and Frost, refusing to surrender, orders them to pull back to the northern slopes of a ridge called Sidi bou Hadjeba. The Germans come after them. In the afternoon they are attacked by tanks and armoured half-tracks. As my father said, it is just as well he did not jettison his grenades because ammunition quickly runs low. He sets up his grenade launcher unsure how to gauge the trajectory: 'And I put the first grenade in. And it lolloped out a few yards in front of me … And it exploded. How it missed us I don't know.' The next grenade seems to reach its mark: 'I saw the explosion behind the armoured car. I can remember it now. The effect was quite devastating. It surprised me because it landed amongst the men who were lying close to the ground … And when it exploded there was a sharp movement from all of them. Whether it hit them or not, I couldn't tell. But it must have been enough to stop them all coming forward' (Lewis March 1981, p. 37).

There is a sense in his narrative to this point that he is still dissociated from the events in some way; still at a distance but all that will change in one instance, after the grenades run out. Someone brings up what my father remembers as a Boys' anti-tank rifle, which had a long slim barrel:

> I said to my companion, whose name I still remember because of what happened, I said, "Look there's no cover. … we'll get below the curve of the hill. And when you're ready to fire, I'll hold it up and then fire. But don't waste time" … And I lay on my back holding it up. I said, "Right fire." And he took too damn long. And I said, "Well did you do anything?" Because I had my back to the armoured vehicle. So we brought it down. He reloaded. And I said: "Are you ready now?" I said, "Look let me

> take it. You're taking too long. You've got to keep firing at them." He said, "No, Mike. I want another go." So … I held it up again. So obviously it was only about a hundred yards away. You couldn't miss. I said, "For God's sake, fire it. You're too long in the aim … fire it." And I could see him because I was facing him with my back down against the ground … This is the first time I've ever spoken about this … I saw this cannon being moved slightly left and right. I knew he was lining it up. I said, "Fire it now. You're taking too long." And there was this tremendous explosion and I couldn't believe it, I just couldn't believe it, it was our first action. There were holes in my trouser legs, they were smoking … my flesh had been gouged. There were bits of him sticking to me and he had been cleft wide open from neck to legs and all the inside of him, all that blood and all that tissue, and all the horror of it right next to me and the officer, that was Crawley, who was behind watching, he was not a man to hold back. He didn't have to be there. But he was right behind us. He'd been blinded, his face streaming with blood. And he shouted to me: "Lewis, come back." We came back, that did stop the armoured car I suppose. Because it never came forward, nor did the men with it' (Lewis March 1981, pp. 38-9).

I was not expecting such horror in this part of my father's story, perhaps I had just assumed that all the horror of his war was bound up in Belsen. I am saddened too; wondering how he lived so long with this terrible event unspoken. Although he said that he remembers the name of the man who died 'because of what happened' he never does name him in this interview. I find it out later in a written account among his papers, it is Harry Wain (Lewis 1985a, p. 2). I imagine him falling back to the temporarily blinded Crawley; who is, perhaps, lucky that he cannot see the gore that the shocked Mike is desperately trying to clean from himself. I think of 'blooding' that unpleasant hunting rite of passage where initiates are smeared with blood signifying they have killed or been in on the kill. The war is real now.

At the peak of the battle Axis aircraft mistakenly attack their own troops providing some respite for the paratroopers and as night falls Frost orders each company to 'exfiltrate' 'independently'. I suppose this is a sort of, 'every man for himself' order. By this stage one hundred and fifty have been killed and wounded; and Frost loses another ninety of his small party when they are surrounded and attacked at a farm they pause at during the withdrawal. My father is among the walking wounded and they move separately:

> Night came and saved us and we had bound Crawley's eyes up … by that time my legs were beginning to stiffen … we began to hobble down the mountains with

> Crawley's hands on the man in front of him. It was very difficult going, at night across rough ground …We'd run out of water … and made our way westwards knowing the Germans were on the hunt for us; not knowing what happened to the others. During the day we slept amongst tussocks … of rough grass … and came nightfall and our Sergeant Major had gone, probably the only fit man in our small group of walking wounded. I suppose it must have been, that as he spoke German he thought with us, one man blind, others lame …he'd stand a better chance on his own. As it happened he was captured and we got away. I spent a short time in hospital; it was nothing very much compared to the others (Lewis March 1981, pp. 39-40).

In eight days the battalion lost sixteen officers and two hundred and fifty other ranks. Harclerode says that B and C companies, 'virtually ceased to exist' (Harclerode 1992, p. 41). The legend of the Red Devils has begun and the 'red' in their name seems more bound up in blood and death than the red of the beret.

Several of the accounts I have read mention the blinding of Crawley; none mention Harry Wain who died saving him and the others. It is only from my father's written contribution to a book, the *Jews in Wartime 1939-1945,* edited by Jack Lennard that I find this out (Lennard 1985). There is another document too, only four pages long, in which my father criticises certain operations and actions. His indictment of Frost as a leader during the North Africa Campaign is a real surprise and runs counter to every portrayal of Frost that I have read. Frost is the archetypal officer, the one who led the paratroopers in an heroic stand at the bridge in Arnhem; a bridge that was later renamed in his honour, John Frostbrug.[35]

My father writes: 'we got such a mauling … it was a shock to our confidence and a feeling of betrayal of being let down by poor planning and inept leadership in the field.' Certainly Harclerode, agrees that: 'The Oudna operation was a disastrous episode which had been badly planned and based on faulty intelligence. … 2nd Parachute Battalion was needlessly committed against a target which did not exist by the time it had been dropped … Moreover, once the battalion had been dropped little or no interest was shown in it' (Harclerode 1992, p. 42). But was Frost's leadership inept? The poor planning affected him too, but once in trouble was he a good leader? What were his obligations once he knew their objective was gone? Did he wait too long to withdraw back toward the British lines? He could have started out to meet the column. Maybe he should have surrendered when

[35] The Arnhem road bridge over the Neder Rhine was destroyed twice in the war and rebuilt. It was officially renamed the John Frostbrug on 17 December 1977

the Germans offered it and saved lives. 'What did he have in mind,' my father asks, 'when he positioned us either side of the road to Tunis, which lead to our discovery by the Germans?' (Lewis circa 1984, p. 2). He has more criticisms of Frost's actions too, but those events come later in the North Africa Campaign.

From what I read of Frost, I cannot imagine my father would have warmed to him; a leader who rallied his men with his hunting horn as if they were a pack of dogs. My father says that: 'Through the years of the war the conclusion was forced upon me that officers were chosen and promoted more for their political affinities than their military merit' (Lewis circa 1984, p. 1). A conclusion perhaps influenced by his and Fred's discovery of how the firing range results posted in the company office always corresponded to the rank of the shooter.[36] It was a conclusion that he was not alone in, according to scholar Geoffrey Field who says that during the war years there was: 'growing public discontent about the role of class in the selection of officers;' fuelled by the swelling ranks of men in the army who were better educated; more sceptical and less eager to go to war than their First World War predecessors; and who thought that striking was the appropriate action if conditions needed improving (Field 2011, pp. 2,122-3). It was an argument between those who thought that officers were born and bred and others who believed that certain men were naturally disposed by temperament and intelligence to lead, regardless of their background. I am sure it is not a novel thought that any officer can get men killed; but only skilled ones keep their men alive to fight another day.

I wonder again why my father never spoke of these things; of Harry Wain, to us, his family. I can only suppose that it was too hard to tell and too painful to remember. Then it occurs to me that perhaps my father did speak of these things in his own way through the literature and films he led me to: Jaravslav Hasek's, *The Good Soldier Schwejk*, which he serialised (and sanitised) for me when I was still young enough to be read to; the War Poets[37], particularly Siegfried Sassoon and his poem 'The General'; *All Quiet on the Western Front*, by Erich Maria Remarque; the film M.A.S.H; and Joseph Heller's, *Catch-22*, the book and film. There are shades of Snowden's death in the death of Harry Wain [38] and I wonder

[36] While still England and working in B Company office, my father and Fred, noticed that the highest ranked officers were always at the top of the list for the firing range results. They devised a way of cross-checking the results and found a more uneven picture. They published the results to the delight of the ranks but incurred the fury of a Major Cleaver who tore it down and ordered them to always show him the result before they were published (Lewis March 1981, p. 32).

[37] The War Poets refers to poets who wrote during the First and Second Worlds Wars.

[38] In Catch-22, Yossarian is haunted by the memory of tending to the mortally injured Snowden and opening his flight suit to findthat all his viscera pour out (Heller 1955, p. 463).

if it was in my father's mind when he took me to see the film. There are shades too of Catch-22's absurdist view of war in his anecdotes of the long months in North Africa, such as the Major, newly arrived at the front from England. To the men's amazement he enquired where the toilets were and finding none had one built among some thickets by his batman. My father said: 'And we waited for the first time for it to be used … And we saw him disappear into these thickets ... And we saw a flutter of white underclothes. And we all let out … I don't know what the German's thought about it, a tremendous cheer as he used it' (Lewis March 1981, p. 44).

As the last of the 2nd Parachute Battalion straggle in from the Oudna operation and regroup at Souk-el-Khemis[39], a decision is made to use the 1st Parachute Brigade as infantry. A 'static line' is developing from the Mediterranean in the north to Gafsa in the south. Eisenhower has delayed an advance on Tunis because of the weather and Axis troops have reinforced. The paratroopers will be sent wherever there are weaknesses in the line. It is during this time, according to Saunders, that the 2nd Battalion adopt the battle cry of 'Waho Mohammed' which soon spreads to the rest of the brigade. Saunders claims that the paratroopers noticed that the local Arab population shouted messages from one village to another and that they all seemed to begin with 'Waho Mohammed' which they copied (Saunders 1950, p. 105). This story, of course, has many versions and many claimants.

In February 1943, the 1st Parachute Brigade is deployed in the Bou Arada sector, in an area known as Happy Valley, named—not after the Happy Valley of *White Mischief* fame—but because for a fortnight or so there is not much action. After two months in North Africa, the men are veterans and have adjusted to the routine of soldiering and learned what is important to them though officers, especially those newly arrived, do not always agree My father remembers a newly arrived Major bringing them to attention: 'And he couldn't believe his eyes that we were covered in mud and we had several days' growth of beard … It outraged every military sense of propriety that he had, obviously. And I mean what could we say? And little Geordie said to him, "Well sir, we only had three razor blades when we invaded Africa." … Well we knew that the army would never be beaten. "Well, man," he said, "you could have sharpened them couldn't you?" Anyway he knocked hell out of us you see' (Lewis March 1981, p. 51). The veterans among the 1st Parachute Brigade have also become wary of the inexperience of new recruits and my father is horrified that the Major then exposes their position on a hill by driving his truck to the top and stopping.

[39] The battalion is brought up to strength here with reinforcements.

Later he takes two of their men on what my father considers to be a useless exercise to capture a machine gun nest. He is killed and the men get away.

On 26 February a big attack begins and will continue for almost nine hours: 'And we were looking across this long valley and saw groups of men, tiny against the dark green, brown earth, moving. And our mortars went into action. … I still remember it, our hands would blur as the bombs, trench mortars … flashed them into the barrel' (Lewis March 1981, p. 52). It is when Mike is sent to other side of the hill to spot for enemy activity and becomes pinned down by shelling (shelling that he, of course, blamed the deceased Major for) that his narrative takes a truly absurdist turn:

> And then Mack came towards us, crawling on his belly from the cookhouse. … And he heaved out of his battle dress jacket a tin of steak and kidney and a tin of rice … he had been crawling up the hill [to each group] even though everything was blowing up around us, to give us food. And he had already opened the tin. And we ate it with our fingers. I thought here I am eating food and watching that gunfire fall on those men … I thought this was madness. … I saw another group of men break out from those trees. And make for the road where the rest of the men were lying. And the gunfire, the explosions amongst them as they fell and lay. And luckily they were too far away to see what was happening in detail. And marvellous for a film camera if you're able to get your head up. But not marvellous for those poor people. They must have had the shock of their lives'(Lewis March 1981, p. 54).

It is as if my father's memory contains several dimensions as he looks back with a camera man's eye, a soldier's sympathy and a humourist's sense of the absurd. The absurdity continues after the battle has been won when my father goes out on a patrol led by Captain Stark aimed at 'mopping up' the Axis forces (Harclerode 1992, p. 46). He says: 'And we found a whole mass of weapons, of small wooden carts towing two-inch mortars, personal goods, masses of perfume, masses of religious coloured postcards with Mussolini and/or the Pope leading with a cross into battle, lying on the ground. Why do men want these things when they go into battle? As if they were going on holiday? (Lewis March 1981, p. 54). A sudden burst of gunfire up ahead sends my father into a large hole only to find out he is not alone: 'And I turned round. And there were about three Italians … watching me firing. And they could easily have shot me there' (Lewis March 1981, p. 54). A slapstick ensues in that small, crowded hole, in the dark, as my father tries to deploy his Lee Enfield rifle only to find it sticks out beyond the Italians and is quite useless: 'And they must have been terrified. … I remember him shouting, "Inglesi, Inglesi". It turned out later

they were afraid of falling into Australian or Indian hands. They'd had the reputation for finishing them off. … And he threw his arms around me, it was terribly embarrassing, and tried to kiss me. And then he pulled out of his pocket an egg-shaped thing … it was a grenade ... And I thought what's he going to do … this is ridiculous. And he unscrewed the two halves. And they were filled with cigarettes. And he offered them to me'(Lewis March 1981, p. 55). When they got out of the hole about thirty more Italians appeared out of the bushes to give themselves up. Saunder's claims that it is while searching the prisoners that pamphlets are discovered giving instructions on how to fight the 'Red Devils' (Saunders 1950, p. 110). I wonder about this pamphlet, why none are extant that I can find. It would surely have been worth souveniring. In one military history there is a copy of a signal from General Browning saying that they have 'reliable information' that the Germans gave them this title but no hint as to where it comes from (Cherry 2011, p. 245).

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The Axis offensive is failing all along the line except in northern sector, near Tamera and it is here that the 1st Parachute Brigade is sent to reinforce the Allied positions. I find Tamera on an operations map of North Africa. It is close to Tunisian coast between Bone and Bizerta. 2nd Battalion is trucked in during the night to a place called the Cork Woods. By the 8th March, the entire brigade has been deployed astride a road near the village of Tamera facing half a division of Axis troops. In spite of all they had experienced so far the Tamera Valley will prove to be 'one of the most savage encounters of all' (Cherry 2011, p. 220). They are attacked, at dawn almost before they are finished deploying. Among the cork trees and cacti, the paratroopers find a very different battleground from the barren hills of Happy Valley. The soldiers on both sides dig defensive slit trenches along their front lines. Mules ferry ammunition and supplies. Here the enemy can get up close without being spotted. The Axis and Allied troops are now wound round each other like constricting snakes and the weather is still cold and raining; as the days blur into one another: 'And we'd been going weeks then it seemed. I can't remember. In fact the world seemed far away, England … we were dirty and unshaven … It felt then, it is coming back to me now, as if the world had never been anything else but mud and shellfire, gunfire; standing in the cold. And this terrible tension as to whether you're going to be hit. And if you're going to be hit, whether it would be clean. Or whether it would be nasty. This was the big thing, I suppose we all felt; the uncertainty of the next hour, the next minute … we grew smaller in number. There were casualties every day' (Lewis March 1981, pp. 42,4).
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The fighting is almost continuous until on 17 March 1943 they are forced to fall back; 2nd Battalion has fifty-two dead and one hundred and fifty casualties (Saunders 1950, p. 115). They pulled back in daylight with German artillery picking them off as they waded along the course of the Oued el Madene River. Saunders said that the 2nd Battalion had a 'ghastly' journey (Saunders 1950, p. 115). My father remembers: 'nearly sliding into the river. We were too tired I think to be worried and scared. Occasionally a shell would land on the river and the water streaked red with blood … The braces we had supplied by the army were made of canvas not elastic and [my] trousers were heavy with mud and wet and equipment. And the braces broke and my trousers began slipping down so I could hardly walk as I slithered along the bank. And someone lent me their belt … anyway it took my mind off these things' (Lewis March 1981, p. 45). Later he finds out from Frost's batman that the signal to withdraw came through in the night, but that Frost had drunk so much they could not wake him to give the order till morning (Lewis circa 1984, p. 2). Frost's autobiography is titled, *A Drop Too Many*, and is an amusing play on words that could be taken as an admission of a fondness for liquor but of course the truth of this charge is unlikely to ever be established.

The 1st Parachute Brigade falls back to new defensive positions on three features known as the Pimples. The name suggests unpleasantness and perhaps with some reason as they were made of solid rock and made 'digging in' nearly impossible but they will not be there for long as the last battle in the Tamera Valley is about to begin. The largest of the Pimples, also called the Bowler hat, is held by 3rd Battalion and a black and white picture of it shows that it is more like a smooth bald pate than a hat. On 27 March 1943, at 10.00 hours, backed by artillery, the 1st and 2nd Battalion attack on either side of the Bowler Hat. My father says that, of those that came to North Africa together there was only a platoon strength left, less than thirty men; and they stuck together. Just before the attack, their officer tells them that the newly arrived Lieutenant Dover has asked for the honour of leading the attack with his platoon and that he had granted him that 'honour'. My father says: 'And we knew what he meant' (Lewis March 1981, p. 46). While they may have thought it madness to volunteer to lead, perhaps they had not quite imagined what would actually follow: 'And came the night. And we walked on the lower slopes of a tremendous hill that reared up through the darkness in front of us to what is called a start line. And at the exact moment we started to move forward. … all the guns … opened up a tremendous barrage. And shells whistled over our heads and crashed up the slopes ahead of us. And looking back I could see this horizon lit by the twinkling explosions of the guns as they went along the line, left and right … And they never ceased' (Lewis March 1981, p. 46A).

Lieutenant Dover's lead platoon walks into a mine field. My father recalls the awful feeling of hearing them and not being able to help: 'And to hear those men shouting, about their legs and shouting for help. And we all stopped dead. They were somewhere to the right. That could have been us if we hadn't allowed that officer the honour of leading the attack. And we couldn't help them, we didn't dare move our feet. Wanted the wings of a bird to lift us straight up' (Lewis March 1981, p. 46A). Discretion is the better part of valour and honour. The chaos of battle reigns: 'And that night there was confusion, there was firing in all directions. I remember somebody resting their rifle, so great was the crush at one place, I don't know quite why, on my shoulder. And I was saying: "For God's sake, you're blasting my eardrums out every time you fire it" (Lewis March 1981, p. 46).

At dawn on the 28 March they realised that what they thought was the top of the hill they were attacking is a false crest and that they are in a precarious position having to attack enemy positions up hill. While B Company carries out an outflanking manoeuvre, C company which had been in reserve lead the main assault up hill. Saunders describes the intensity of the battle: 'The German ring drew ever closer and tighter, the streams of bullets from their machine guns cut the branches of the trees, and the rain of mortar bombs and shells made it impossible to evacuate wounded and prisoners' (Saunders 1950, p. 117).

The disposition of the Axis and Allied troops is so close that at some point in the outflanking manoeuvre B Company gets caught between German artillery and their own advancing troops who believe them to be German because they appear to be firing at them. They try all manner of ways to convince their own troops to stop firing, calling out 'Aldershot' and 'Bulford Barracks' with no success and this desperate situation is only remedied by an act of extraordinary bravery: 'And then one of our NCOs took his life in his hands … He stepped out from behind a tree … and stood there upright in that confusion of firing. And that saved the day for us. They could see him clearly. But it was a brave gesture because he could have been shot down from back and front' (Lewis March 1981, p. 47). My father says:

> Well we went on through the woods that confusion having been sorted out … fighting in forests is always confusing … One man can hold up many…. And we were being fired on as we advanced … and it seemed to be coming in my direction mostly. So I threw myself down on the ground and put my head immediately behind the trunk of a narrow tree … And suddenly I felt a hammer blow on my leg. And I rolled with the sort of shock of it. And one of my friends, one of those that had come

> through all the way, Harry Bates, Yorkshire chap, nice cherubic face he had, he started to run over to help. I said, "Don't come over to me, Harry. They're all coming this way. You'll be hit." … And then another one went through my arm. And then I thought if I stay there, I'll never get out alive. I didn't quite know what I did. I think perhaps I rolled then slightly downhill. … And anyway that saved my life I think. Because I didn't care how badly hit I was I walked back down our slope. My leg was completely red and my boot was squelching blood. And I didn't give a dam, I was out of it (Lewis March 1981, pp. 47-8).

He makes his way to an Arab house being used as an aid post, a friend runs out and tries to give him whiskey on the way, but it is the tea he that he is given at the aid post that he savours most: 'I felt the cup of tea I had after my first parachute jump was beautiful. But this was nectar, this was — because suddenly I felt very tired and weak' (Lewis March 1981, p. 48). In the early hours of the next morning, 29 March 1943, a remnant battalion quilted together from survivors recommence their advance and find the opposition has melted away, the battle for Tamera is over. The cost had been enormous and the Roll of Honour of B Company 2nd Battalion tells the tale, thirty-two killed in two days. Among them is poet and Captain, Richard Spender, who was killed the same day as my father was injured. My father's flesh will heal, of course, but the war has not finished with him yet.

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As my father is being evacuated further down the medical line he meets Lance Corporal Thompson being stretchered out and is stunned to hear that his friend Fred has been killed: 'He just seemed to be one of those people you couldn't imagine ever being killed or wounded or injured in anyway. And I said, 'But how, why, what happened?' He said the artillery had fired; our own artillery and the shellfire had fallen amongst our own men.' The idea that he had been killed though, in this way was terrible' (Lewis March 1981, pp. 56-7).

My father says he kept in touch with Fred's mother until she died in the early 1980s but never told her what happened: 'You can't tell a thing like that; to know that your son had been killed by your own shellfire could not have been borne. It was pretty unbearable to know about anyway' (Lewis March 1981, p. 57). I follow his journey by truck from the aid post to surgery under canvas and speculate on the confused and scattered thoughts that must have belaboured a mind now muzzy from shock and injury and loss of blood. His relief at being out of it and not too badly injured, punctured by the tragedy of Fred's

useless death and the knowledge that only a handful of the group of men he started out with survives.

> The names on the list never die. They are always around us.
> We see them standing on corners or walking along a road.
> When we want them they are ready. They don't have much to say,
> But they say it when the time comes and they say it very well. (Brown 1945, p. 17)

These lines from the poem 'Soldier', in my father's volume of Harry Brown poems seem to capture that feeling of loss. My father says that Fred's mother eventually went to Beja to visit Fred's grave with the help of the British legion. Then it settles over me in moment of inspiration: the flowers sent to Mrs Selman every year; the small colour photograph of two women at a cemetery tucked into the back of his War Diary (Unknown 1970s). I study the photograph for a while. The woman in the blue dress and jacket is elderly and the other younger woman holds her arm. My father did not say whether Fred had a sister. I compare the woman in blue to the one with my father in the photograph taken before they left England. There is such a strong resemblance, I am sure it is the same woman. Only one thing remains; I check the roll of honour for Tamera Valley and find Private F. Selman listed there, on 27 March 1943. The photograph is of Fred's mother at the Beja war cemetery and it was Fred's mother that my father sent flowers to every year until her death; another fragment of the story; the history falls into place.

Mrs Selman (right) at the war cemetery in Beja

When my father wakes from surgery he finds an envelope with the bullets that had been removed from him. Next to him is Chalky White, the third of the party that rode into the Wiltshire countryside for afternoon tea with Fred's mother. My father says: 'And only his tremendous strength enabled him to survive having several feet of his gut taken out as the result of a mortar shell. They were giving him Guinness all the time' (Lewis March 1981, p. 49). I imagine they talked about Fred, the circumstances of his death, and that glorious sunny afternoon only a few months ago when they raced through the English countryside on their bikes. The memory now forever stained with the sepia tones of loss.

After recuperating, my father is released but not yet back on strength with his old battalion. He takes the opportunity to enjoy the simple pleasure of walking upright without fear and explore Algiers, a city that he: 'adored … because there was this unmistakable air of being French as well as Arab about it; palm trees and the sight of the sea' (Lewis March 1981, p. 60). He stops at a bar to have a glass of sweet muscatel and spends the time trying to come to terms with all that has happened, who was left: 'And as I sat there in the bar I thought I would never, never having got this far and survived, complain about anything, ever in my life again … but of course, I did' (Lewis March 1981, p. 60). With the North Africa Campaign over and his period of recuperation coming to an end he is thinking about how wretched it will be to go back to his old unit; to be one of the few survivors of the original company, a veteran at age twenty-five. There are other forces at work as my father sits sipping his glass of muscatel. A chance meeting with British Army cinematographer Captain Harry Rignold in the Hotel Aletti offers him an alternative. Harry tells him that the Army Film and Photographic Unit (AFPU) are establishing an airborne unit but have been unable to persuade serving AFPU officers to join and take their chances in gliders or learn to use a parachute. He tells him to see a Captain Fletcher at Divisional headquarters, if he is interested. My father acts immediately. He worries that if he is returned to his old unit he will not be let go because of his combat experience, even if the AFPU asks for him and he tries to persuade Fletcher to reassign him on the spot. He tells Fletcher that has knowledge of photography and feels sure he can adapt to film and at least he knows how to parachute. My father says that Fletcher finally agrees and sends him to join the rest of the AFPU at a little town near Tunis called Sidi Bou Said.

There are two photographs of my father that mark this period; in one the caption says he is looking toward Carthage and in the second that it is the 'same view from our billet', the AFPU's billet (Unknown 1943e) (Unknown 1943d). This is slightly confusing because

although it certainly looks like the same place from different points of view, the images are not in sequence in the War Diary and several pages separate them; though it is likely that they have become disarranged over time. Interestingly, he is wearing his beret in both images even though in one he appears to be off duty and is bare chested. Is the wearing of the beret regulation or sentiment, I think, perhaps the latter?

A picture of me looking toward Carthage

The same view from our billet in Sidi Bou Said. I believe that this is Arabic for City of the Rich

I pick up the beret from where it has sat on the corner of my desk over the months it has taken me to follow my father through the North Africa Campaign. Somehow it looks and feels different now, as if I am now familiar with its folds and contours; with its travels. In some way, North Africa has been as much of a proving ground for me as it was for my

father. It was his first experience of war, and in a sense mine also, so closely have I followed his trail and conjured the past.

There is one last image of Mike in North Africa at the memorial. I find it in Golden's *Echoes from Arnhem*, it is from the Imperial War Museum's collection.

Mike Lewis at the 1st Parachute Brigade memorial in Tunisia, 1943

My father is on the right of the frame, crouched down, a hand touching the memorial. His head tilts down and his eyes appear closed in contemplation; a young paratrooper caught in the act of remembering fallen comrades (Christie 1943). He has struck a pose of remembrance, yet I believe there is also genuine contemplation and sadness in that image. I understand now why the Parachutist book was dedicated: 'To Lou (that mighty disciple of Wah-haw-Mahomet)', and why my father annotated the reference to the 'Red Devils' in the introduction with the location, 'Tamera Valley'. The red beret is now a badge of survival. I had always thought that my father did not go to remembrance ceremonies and marches because he thought they glorified war and this may have been true. Now I think he just did not want to be reminded; it was too painful and there was no comfort there. As with the Belsen, what he carried around inside him was enough; he did not need, nor want to relive it all again. The battle for Tunisia ended on 12 May 1943 and the Red Beret began passing into legend.

6 SOLDIERS WITH CAMERAS

What do we want from images of war? Is it a record, evidence, proof … the truth?

My father always believed that his opportunity to join the AFPU arose because he was a trained parachutist, but unknown to him other changes to the British Army publicity machine had been slowly working in his favour. Though the British Army had been at war only twenty years earlier and had no doubt seen the power of images from the more recent Spanish Civil War, they seemed unprepared for the need for publicity at the onset of the Second World War. While Hitler industriously harnessed the power of film and photographs at home and abroad, the British Army dug its heels in. In his exploration of the origins of the AFPU, Kay Gladstone noted that: 'Publicity, especially in the form of films and photographs, roused or reawakened, instinctive military fears that British secrets would be revealed to the enemy' (Gladstone 2002, p. 317).

At the beginning of the Second World War, newspapers, radio and newsreels—short documentary compilations put together for cinema distribution—were the way most people received their news. Television had hardly begun and the BBC television service was suspended for the duration of the war. In his examination of mass communications during this period, Arthur Marwick found that by the late 1930s about three-quarters of the population, just over twenty-six million people, read at least one of the daily newspapers and three-quarters of British households had a radio set (Marwick 1982, pp. 136,40); and Gladstone says that filming and photography were clearly subordinate public relations functions for the British War Office. To meet their peacetime needs, the British Army had relied on a comfortable arrangement with the newsreel companies: Gaumont, Paramount, Pathé, Movietone and Universal; but all that changed with the issuing of blanket ban on the filming of things military on 10 September 1939. On 11 September, perhaps in response to the absurdity of this ban, Harry Rignold is appointed Official War Office Cinematographer, others follow. All have some form of professional experience in documentary or feature film but none have newsreel experience. They are given honorary ranks and taught to use pistols; they are subject to military orders and can be disciplined. The new recruits do not signal a softening of the military's attitude to publicity (Gladstone 2002, p. 317). It will take the appointment of professional publicist Ronald Tritton as War Office Publicity Officer to challenge the hardened military attitudes, which caused him to observe that: 'To some sections of the Army a cameraman is a more sinister figure than a whole regiment of Germans' (Tritton cited in Gladstone 2002, p. 319).

Tritton realises that to make a War Office film unit work, extra cameramen will be needed; and they would also have to overcome some criticism of the early material provided to the newsreel companies. The first recruits were not experienced in filming actuality—scenes as they happened with all their attendant technical and logistic difficulties—as were newsreel cameraman. Gladstone says, though it may have seemed more logical to recruit newsreel cameramen, the British Army did not want to damage its relationship with the newsreel companies by 'poaching' staff and speculates that experienced newsreel cameramen were generally older and not fit enough for the army. He says too that many had also acquired a reputation for stunts and evading regulations in the 1930s (Gladstone 2002, p. 318).

With allies Jack Beddington and Sidney Bernstein of the Ministry of Information (MOI) Films Division, Tritton works to convince senior War Office staff of the necessity of recruiting more cameramen with a screening of *Film as a Weapon*. It is a compilation of German newsreels with captions which explain how the Nazis are making use of propaganda and how the Allies could do the same. In his history of the development of the British AFPU, Dr Fred McGlade contrasts this attitude with that of Goebbels, Hitler's Propoganda Minister, who decided that the German publicity machine would not have war correspondents as such but conscript all those involved in the media industry and the arts into the Propaganda Division of the German Army (McGlade 2011, p. 21). Tritton's campaign is successful and he is authorised to recruit more cameramen from the ranks. During this time David MacDonald, a man with experience in directing Hollywood feature films is appointed director of the Army Film Unit and is joined by Hugh Stewart, a film editor of some experience. In January 1942, No. 1 Army Film and Photo Section, a group of twenty-seven, were hurriedly shipped off to Cairo with no special training. MacDonald goes with them leaving Stewart in charge of expanding operations and setting up training, which he does at Pinewood Studios. By the time the formation of No. 2 Army Film and Photographic Section had been authorised in August 1942 a course in battle photography, cine and still, had been running for two months and twenty trained cinematographers were ready to be included. Major Stewart is posted as commanding officer with three Captain Directors, Rignold, Glendining and Black. A section photograph is taken in September and past work is screened to give everyone an idea of what is expected of them. In October they are instructed in the use of a pistol and other weapons and by the 28 October 1942 some of the section is on its way to North Africa. Their Official War Diary records the efforts of Sergeant Wilson in covering the paratroopers and a letter of commendation is sent to Stewart saying that the initial coverage competed favourably

with the US Film Unit. The record also mentions the visit of Sidney Bernstein who was there with the Psychological Warfare Bureau of the British MOI to advise on making a film about the campaign (Army Film and Photographic Section 1942).

Gladstone credits Hugh Stewart with being influential in shaping the *modus operandi* and character of the AFPU and Stewart learned much from his experience filming during the North African Campaign about the problems and realities of filming actuality such as the difficulties in getting a clear view of the action because of danger, or because it occurred at night, or the fact that the landscape blocked the camera's view. He said that close ups were almost impossible (McGlade 2011, p. 74).

Stewart also had the job of inducting new cameramen who, generally, had no battle experience. McGlades cites Sergeant Reg Day describing how Stewart did this: 'It was his personal duty … to acquaint them with what confronted them and he would take us out in what we called … in a rather quaint way … blooding and he would expose us and himself to fire from the enemy and he would take suitable precautions to avoid and so on but he would present the cold hard truth of wartime conditions in the best possible way and to persuade us this was what we had got to meet and how to avoid getting ourselves killed' (Reg Day cited in McGlade 2011, p. 75).

Stewart's experience in North Africa seems to have confirmed his view that turning soldiers with combat experience and some prior knowledge of cameras into cameramen was preferable to recruiting professionals and trying to make soldiers of them, especially as the pool of pre-war cinematographers had been largely used up (McGlade 2011, p. 58). As to whose idea the airborne film unit was, or indeed any evidence of its existence at all, is hard to find because it did not seem to last long as a discrete entity. But there is one reference to Sergeant Lewis being attached to No. 2 Film Unit from No. 4 in August 1943 (*No.2 AFPU Official War Diary* 1943). Perhaps it was the brainchild of Stewart who left North Africa after the end of the campaign; perhaps Rignold and Stewart had dreamed it up together as a logical extension of the experience they gained during the North Africa Campaign and perhaps that is why Rignold told my father about it. Whatever its origins, the requisite skills of soldier, parachutist and cameraman were surely in short supply and gave my father an unusual opportunity.

A Sergeant Penman trains my father to use a DeVry camera while he is billeted at Sidi Bou Said. Shaped like an oblong box with a single lens and a mechanical winder, the camera takes a hundred feet of 35 mm film, about ninety seconds of running time.

DeVry camera circa 1943

While researching in the archives of the Imperial War Museum in London, staff allowed me to handle a DeVry and I was surprised by its weight and clumsy bulk; my father refers to it on one occasion as a 'coffee grinder'. It is hard for me to judge the technology of this artefact and others like it; they have all the look of medieval relics against the hand-sized, phone camera that is also a voice recorder and many other things. Yet this is what my father used to capture his portion of history. I did, however, find complaints about camera equipment logged in the Official War Diary of No. 2 AFPU, in April 1944. The diarist laments the unit's inability to compete with other Allied cameramen because of state of the equipment and a lack of suitable lenses: 'Whilst we were in the field in North Africa we had things very much our own way, as competition was practically non-existent. Since then the Canadians, Indians, New Zealanders and the Americans have entered the field. We are in the position to cope with all the people except the Americans who have superb equipment. As practical proof of this we can state that for the bombing of Orsogna we were in the same OP as an American Unit. Our longest focus lens was 6" theirs a 20" – there is no argument as to who would have obtained the best pictorial records. This is not an isolated case, but an example of what is happening daily' (*No.2 AFPU Official War Diary* 1944). There follows a camera wish list that includes a Newman Sinclair, an Eyemo and a full range of lenses.

On 10 July 1943, following camera training, my father is assigned to a night time airborne drop on Sicily. On boarding the DC3 he is appalled by the American pilot who tells them: 'I

want you guys to get out that door … get out as fast as shit. Because I am going to start climbing fast.' When my father points out that this will cause the tail to drop and that those jumping last may get caught up the pilot says: 'No Jesus … well I'm going to keep the tail up' (Lewis March 1981, p. 66). My father is doubtful of an aircraft's ability to gain altitude 'horizontally' but realises the pilot is inexperienced and the point becomes moot after they come under 'friendly fire' as they near Sicily. My father recalls: 'a stream of red and yellow bubbles floating beautifully up to us. And when they neared us they speeded up tremendously. And there was a crash as they hit us … And this was one of my first experiences of being fired at in the air … I was number thirteen too. And the plane shook violently in the air as more of those red and yellow bubbles struck … And the little door to the flight deck flapped open and one of the crew said: "Goddam it the pilot's dying, he's dying" And he staggered out and I turned him around and I ripped the back of [his flight suit] open. And I could see he wasn't dying. He'd been lucky. He'd been hit by a splinter … he was wounded but he would survive. So I gave him a boiled sweet which I had in my pocket' (Lewis March 1981, p. 66). My father says that they did not fly on to the drop zone as he expected because they would because they were so close, instead the crew turned the plane around and headed back. He says it was, a huge 'anticlimax'.

Now a strange series of events ensue that may well have saved my father's life although it almost ended his career as well. A Major Keating, recently arrived to take over from Hugh Stewart who returned to England to work on a film, assigns my father to another operation. He is to accompany Rignold on a seaborne landing, Operation Avalanche, planned for Salerno in Italy. A day or so before he is due to go, Keating takes him off the mission and sends Penman instead. When the attack goes in, Rignold is killed and Penman loses a leg. My father was perturbed by Keating's decision because he was not given any reason. He must have felt conflicted too by the knowledge that Keating's decision possibly saved his life. He says he got the feeling that Keating was jealous of him after they met and speculated as to why. He thought it has something to do with Keating's closeness to Montgomery. He said that he had experienced some resentment when he joined the AFPU but thought it natural reaction to the introduction of someone new, in a new unit, the airborne film unit. My father becomes really depressed when Keating finally issues orders that he be RTU'd, returned to unit (Lewis March 1981, pp. 63-4). The Official War Diary is frustratingly light on detail and the only thing that it records is the order and that he went from Sergeant back to Private (*No.2 AFPU Official War Diary* 1943).

I puzzle over what might have been the cause of Keating's jealousy toward my father and why he might have wanted to get rid of him. For there is no doubt my father had ability as

a cameraman as his later work and long career clearly demonstrates. My father thinks that Keating's antipathy toward him stemmed from the fact that he was one of the now famous 'Red Devils' that he had heard so much about. This may have been true and Keating might even have heard about them through his special friendship with Montgomery who had a great admiration for the airborne forces. But I think it might have gone a little deeper than that. Keating was one of what Gladstone calls, the 'first generation' of cameramen and had served with No. 1 AFPU in Cairo (Gladstone 2002). They were professionals recruited into the army and made officers; the next wave were recruited from the ranks and some, like my father, had combat experience. I think Keating's resentment is about class and rank. There seems to be no record of why No. 4 AFPU was absorbed into No.2 AFPU or whose decision it was, maybe it was Keating's. Perhaps it had been suggested that Keating learn to parachute and he had declined. I am struck by how Stewart's idea that a combat cameraman needed the 'qualities of self-reliance, initiative and courage' are much the same as those required to become a parachutist, a 'thinking soldier' (Lieutenant General Michael Gray cited inHarclerode 1992, p. 9). Gladstone comments: 'These personal qualities might typically be those of a non-commissioned officer, someone who had earned his spurs as a soldier, and were certainly not considered the prerogative of officers, who were no longer to be recruited into the Army as cinematographers' (Gladstone 2002, p. 326). I think it is this that Keating probably resented; the blurring of the line between class and rank.

My father discusses his situation with others in his section and Rickie Meyer suggests talking to a Colonel McCormack who is due to visit. My father did not hold out much hope that the decision would be reversed but goes to see him anyway and is delighted by McCormack's response: 'What I'll do with you Sergeant is I'll send you back home … to Pinewood Studios ready for D-Day' (Lewis March 1981, p. 64). The diary records McCormack's decision and that he is sent by train to Algiers (*No.2 AFPU Official War Diary* 1943). There is one final coda to the mindset of Keating, when MacDonald reports back to Tritton about Keating's command in Italy. McGlade says: 'Morale had shrunk and MacDonald reported to Tritton that Keating had not bothered with the day-to-day operation of the Unit, had latched himself onto General Montgomery and was "hobbnobbing in Cairo and left the Unit to its own devices" (Tritton cited in McGlade 2011, p. 103).

It was a slow journey back to Algiers by train for my father, three or four days, but he enjoyed it immensely. He said that those 'in the know' set themselves up in the freight cars where they could spread out and travel with the doors open. A young woman had been

saying goodbye to one of the French soldiers who were also on the train and as it pulls away from the station my father is affected by the sight her standing there behind the buffers: 'the tears were running down her face … And she was just alone on that white hot platform becoming slowly smaller in the distance. And this reminded me that about a year before I had seen another woman … on the railway station at Chesterfield … it was a rain swept day … And there was a young woman there seeing one of the men off. And the platform was empty but for her. And she was pretty … And she was crying too. And the tears were streaming down her face. Her face was as wet as the platform … as the train slowly puffed its way out. And it makes you wonder. There were these two women, miles apart … two individuals … out of how many … affected by war, millions? And yet of all the tears that I'd seen I always remember those two' (Lewis March 1981, p. 68).

My father recognised a powerful visual metaphor in these two women crying on the station platform. It is a visual symbolic of leaving and separation in an era that was much less connected then we are today; when transport was much slower and communication too. It suggests endings and death; the grief of an era played out in the image of a lone woman crying on a station platform as a train, billowing smoke, pulls slowly away and disappears. It is a trope that was repeated in both the First and Second World Wars where platforms swelled with uniformed men leaving, and women and children waving them goodbye.

A RAF crew joins those in their freight car and they decide to pool their 'compo rations'[40] and feast, stretched out on their sleeping bags. My father describes the journey:

> The big doors of the freight car were open. And we sat on the edge with our legs swinging. And then we could lie and stretch out, which those who unwisely took the ordinary carriages could not do. And we got a brazier from somewhere. And we put it in the centre … And we cooked our food. And we enjoyed ourselves there. And the mountains slowly rolled by. And night came … We were running a bit short of fuel. So some of the more enterprising men broke a piece off the thick wood sides off the freight car … And we hung it [the brazier] outside ... I looked out and I saw the line of the train, black silhouetted cars. And at the head of it the black steam engine puffing up smoke into the night air as it slowly climbed over a hill towards a black, purple sky … And all along those freight cars, everybody else had hung a brazier. And there was this long sinuous black line, lit by these brilliant patches of light flickering and flaring … winding its way up and down over the hills. It was magical, magical … And I

[40] Composite rations issued to soldiers in boxes.

> can still see it. And by the time we got to Algiers, all the freight cars were just skeletons (Lewis March 1981, pp. 68-70).

There is something beguiling in his description and I can easily imagine the silhouette of the train under an African sky as night falls; he has the ability to create pictures in words as well as on film.

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Another year has turned a corner and drifted into late summer as I decide to try and follow in my father's footsteps. He has left North Africa for England and ultimately Arnhem and I will go too, to tread the ground. I am settling in to Canberra now; another intimate from my student days has come back into my life. There is an unnerving sense of synchronicity and symmetry in our meeting and the facts of our intervening lives, not least of which, is that we both became gardeners. Now creating and building another garden becomes much more possible. I discover a parcel of land in a beautiful hinterland valley of the far south New South Wales coast. We drive out to the property and make our way to the top of a vast shoulder of granite on top of which another stack balances. A mop of creamy yellow rock orchids hang down from the top between thick green leaf blades. Sitting among them, as if in her boudoir, is an enormous lace monitor, nearly two metres long. We look out over the small stone cabin and across the valley and buy the place a few days later.

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My father is happy to be back in England honing his skills at Pinewood Studios under Sergeant Rottner. He says: 'He [Sgt Rottner] took a liking to me. I really didn't know why … you could still be returned to your unit there, as I found out when one or two others didn't please … their superiors either technically, professionally or personally … And in the Army you can't argue … One of them was a highly experienced newspaper photographer who thought his sheer experience would overcome any lack of military finesse' (Lewis March 1981, p. 70). He says he made many friends there and that it was a new life that he had wanted: 'So many I had known had gone … And the Parachute Regiment had been reinforced to the extent, as it had to be, that the few of us who were left from those who came out … had become strangers' (Lewis March 1981, p. 72).

At Pinewood Studios he learned to be a screen journalist and tell a story with a camera; and he was exposed to many interesting and instructive creative talents: 'There were so

many things to know about. They started to make a film, I remember … There was a director there named Garson Kanin and Carol Reed … they started to assemble some film … which was quite fascinating for me to watch technically. I even remember Dickie Attenborough … sitting on the camera dolly in the grounds of Pinewood. He was unknown … given a small part. How youthful he looks now when I remember him' (Lewis March 1981, p. 73).

His account of the film making seems to fit with the initial work on *The True Glory,* a joint production by the US Office of War Information and the British Ministry of Information. Production was begun in 1944 just prior to the Allied invasion of Europe and covered the period from the Normandy landings to VE Day. The collaboration caused much angst between the Allies; it is not hard to imagine why. The film went on to win an Academy Award (1945) for best documentary feature. Kanin was an American writer and director and Reed an English director. Both went on to have successful careers in the film industry after the war. Amid the tangled web of organisational and personal politics I sense an element that is pioneering and visionary in the work of those who drove the development in the MOI and Directorate of Public Relations, so that the War Office in its own strange way contrived a great convergence of established and new talent. Marwick asserts that: 'Without question, the war created the conditions for the first true flowering of the British film industry, a flowering that lasted into the early post war years. … British film makers could now handle topics they could not touch in the thirties' (Marwick 1982, p. 147). But it was not just films that attracted talent because among father's correspondence is a letter from Abram Games, now a renowned British graphic artist, then an Official War Artist for posters in the War Office's, Curzon Street building. In 1981 he had recognised my father in the *Images of War* documentary and sent a letter reminiscing about their chats and recalling too how Bill Stirling head of processing called him in to see the first reels of the Belsen film sent back for processing (Games 1981).

My father is still in an airborne unit, or at least an airborne group within No. 5 AFPU, with Sergeants Christie, Walker and Smith. No. 5 AFPU is sent on a six week 'refresher' course with the Guards at Hobbs Barracks in Lingfield, Surrey. It is far stricter than anything else my father has encountered so far in the army and he is a rather annoyed with Captain Evans for insisting he go, feeling his considerable combat experience should have exempted him and that his time would have been better spent doing camera work. He is caught out acting in a highly unmilitary manner, *asking* one of his men to sweep the barracks: 'a voice roared behind me, "Sergeant!" I went stiff as if I'd been struck by

lightning. It was a Guards officer, actually a nice man … "If I heard one of my NCOs speak to one of my men like that, I'd have him inside. Order him" (Lewis March 1981, p. 74).

There is a group photograph of No. 5 AFPU in the War Diary taken at the Irish Guards Barracks in which I think I detect a certain air of defiance in the set of my father's head (Unknown circa 1944b). He is almost dead centre in the photograph and perhaps that makes it more noticeable but while everyone is looking face on, his head is tilted to one side.

No. 5 Army Film Unit at the Irish Guard Barracks Lingfield (my father is in the second row sixth from the left)

Eventually he joins his old battalion, the 2nd Parachute Battalion, stationed near Grantham to wait for the Allied assault on Europe. To pass the time he decides to set up a photograph at a local factory where they make the parachutes. He asks men from the Parachute Regiment to demonstrate to the women who work there how a parachute operates. He says that it took a lot of organising: 'I asked them to let the girls put the harness on, and took a photograph and thought no more about it; sent it to the Ministry of Information. And next morning I woke up; there in the Daily Mirror was practically a full page spread … this girl, leaning back, quite pretty, wearing overalls and a peaked cap, wearing the harness with the rigging lines going away from her … one of the Parachute Regiment men hanging onto the rigging lines' (Lewis 1944e).

Factory girl tries on parachute with a little help from the men of the Parachute Regiment

This photograph is not in sequence in the War Diary; it has been pasted onto a piece of card and tucked into the back of the album, perhaps souvenired when he realised how successful it was. He says: 'And I must have just hit it right, sheer accident. Everybody by this time … had got tired of the boom-boom pictures and the big guns and so on. And here was something human, more to scale that everybody could appreciate. My stock in the Regiment went up no end. I was looked at almost in awe by some of the officers. And I said, "Well of course I knew …" I tried to make out that I knew, but of course it was a sheer accident of timing' (Lewis March 1981, p. 75).

Perhaps my father was being too modest about his news sense. He was after all trained to be a screen journalist; to know how to tell a story in pictures. For cinematographers who worked with 100 foot spools (90 seconds) of film under battle conditions, economy was essential. I can be pretty sure that this is where he learned the skills that later earned him the sobriquet, 'Cut-It-In-The-Can Lewis' from the BBC film editors. Anyway it was the perfect image to lighten the gloom of war and boost morale: the pretty young woman, representing the home front war effort; and the gallant paratrooper, the frontline; pulling together, literally, for Britain; those in the background clearly enjoying the spectacle. In communications parlance my father was 'on message' and I am sure the MOI, who were tasked with shaping and delivering the British Government's message at home and abroad, were very happy. Of course some would call it propaganda and these days that is an uncomfortable word but it was not always so. Words gather new inflections and nuances like the accretion of barnacles on a wreck. Once propaganda just meant pressing your

cause by disseminating information and creating good will and understanding; presenting yourself in the best light; only later did it come to have the more sinister meaning of giving misleading or false information.

Perhaps it does not matter too much since the Second World War was not contested in the sense that later wars like Vietnam were and in his analysis of class and politics in the British Armed Forces during the war, Geoffrey Field notes that: 'the line between combatants and civilians was constantly blurred by rhetoric that defined the home island as a battlefront' (Field 2011, p. 122). The home front and the fighting front were largely in sympathy and unison but there is always the contested space of historical truth. The scholar Toby Haggith thinks the work of the British Army combat cameramen has been largely ignored because of: 'suspicion that such work is propagandist and cannot be relied upon to provide a truthful record of war' (Haggith 2006, p. 91). It is paradoxical then that their work has been used so often but rarely accredited and then, generally, only to the Imperial War Museum; as if some omnipotent being had been roaming the battlefields capturing those images. Many civilian war correspondents achieved a sort of celebrity status, such as, Robert Capa, George Rodger and Margaret Bourke-White and became more widely known, as a result of their work during the war. The men of the AFPU faded from the story like phantoms.

I wonder what 'truth' we expect from battle pictures. If I were to pluck an image from my father's War Diary and exhibit it without context, it would have only the meaning contained within its frame; a soldier on a battlefield, somewhere, firing a weapon. An expert in military history would be able to place it within the context of the Second World War in Europe and determine the weaponry and even the branch of military represented, perhaps; but more than that would be unlikely. If by truth we mean proof through record and evidence then we need the creator to supply the provenance, but I am not sure that this is the truth we are looking for in battle images. Perhaps we want to know what really happened; what it was *really* like.

The No. 2 AFPU War Diary has some interesting things to say about the problem of filming 'actuality', real battle scenes and the diarist records that: 'The main complaint of London in the past is, that when there have been reports in the papers of fierce fighting, 2 AFPS has nothing to show for it. Going into it more carefully, one finds adequate coverage when the Allies are doing a set attack … but inadequate coverage when the Allies are on the defence … It should be realised that the photographs will never reflect the written word in battle without a certain amount of reconstruction. The camera cannot exaggerate as the written

account can nor can it photograph what is so often, all too often from the photographic poi … takes place in the dark and other unsuitable conditions for camera operation' (*No.2 AFPU Official War Diary* 1941-43).

These observations really highlight the limitations of the visual representation of war, I think and make sense. The flow of a set attack has been planned and is therefore predictable; the cameraman can perhaps anticipate the best position to film from, whereas an army on the defensive and retreating is reacting to circumstances and is unpredictable. The second notion seems to imply that when it comes to battles, filmed actuality does not in fact reflect the reality of war and the reference to reconstruction could mean the editing process but also re-enactment. *Theirs is the Glory* is one example of a powerful documentary reconstruction of the battle of Arnhem (Hurst 1946). It was made a year after the events on location there with survivors of the action and based on their stories. This and the fact that Director, Brian Desmond Hurst, intercut original footage with the reconstructions to create the finished feature film, gives this reconstruction a rather seamless appearance and a great degree of authenticity.

McGlade notes that: 'the practice of faking sequences or reconstructing events had been tried as early as 10 December 1942 when a group of AFPU men were assigned under a WO order to obtain material in this manner … but the experiment was short lived and the cine material produced lacked authenticity.' He also says that Hugh Stewart was against such fakery even though he realised that good battle pictures were the exception rather than the rule because of the nature of war. Stewart said that: 'if you are shooting a battle and get some real shots of the battle and you get some long shots of it, I don't think it is immoral to go back and shoot some close ups to put in to create a correct editorial effect. What I don't like at all is the idea of shooting entire battle scenes nowhere near the situation at all, completely phoney,' (Hugh Stewart cited in McGlade 2011, pp. 97-8).

My father always said that war is really a 'sound picture', that is hard to know more than what is going on immediately around you in a battle; in that respect the combat cameraman is really in no better position than the average soldier. My father said: 'You have a lot of experience of shellfire, of gunfire, of fighting at a distance, an enemy you hardly ever see. It's mostly sound anyway, mostly experience of ones feelings. Certainly not like the films … where the viewer is in the position of God. … At one moment you're looking at the enemy firing at your side. And then you see your side firing at the enemy. And never hardly a drop of blood to be seen. [perhaps more true of war films made in the first few decades after the war] And marvellous charges led by heroic officers and men

who engage the enemy and do marvellous individual deeds of valour and win battles. Well people do win battles of course. If you don't believe in what you're fighting in; … weapons are just wood and metal in your hands … But war is mainly won by firepower, overwhelming fire power' (Lewis March 1981, pp. 100-1).

Reading this I can see now why the AFPU's diarist may have thought that writing about battle is easier than capturing it in photographs and film. It is not so much that the writer can 'exaggerate'; although certain rhetorical flourishes are common, especially in the older military histories; rather it is that written accounts can synthesise and collate the bigger picture out of information gathered from different sources as well as first-hand experience. The written account benefits from the time to reflect and alter and to embellish too. The combat cameraman gets one chance to capture the actuality and it is fraught with difficulty and danger. I suppose a lot of what gets filmed, what we see, is the aftermath; the seconds after the explosion. Occasionally the camera is pointing the right way and running.

The scholar Toby Haggith explores the problems of battle photography in the Second World War at some length in, *D-Day Filming for Real: a comparison of 'truth' and 'reality in Saving Private Ryan and combat film by the British Army's Film and Photographic Unit*. He concludes that the viewer would probably find the AFPU film disappointing after seeing *Saving Private Ryan* and find that: 'the Speilberg version of D-Day is a more impressive account of the event' (Haggith 2002, p. 339).

7 A CAMERAMAN IN ARNHEM

What does 'actuality' show us? Can it convey what war is really like?

My father is now trained and waiting with the 'veteran' 1st Airborne to be mobilised; there seems to be a lot of waiting around in war. With the invasion of Europe finally begun, my father thinks that it will not be long before their small airborne film unit will be called into action. However, it takes until August for the Allied invasion force to break out of the Normandy beachheads; then they swiftly take Paris and Brussels. During this time the 1st Airborne Division is readied for action and stood down seventeen times and this leads to a fraying of nerves. My father says: 'As the war swept through Europe towards Paris and then Brussels, they were going to drop us near each of these capitals in turn. I began to get the impression they really didn't know what to do with the 1st Airborne Division, ten thousand men, keen as mustard' (Lewis March 1981, p. 76). I suppose like highly trained athletes these men were at a physical and mental peak that could be jeopardised by too much waiting. Many accounts of Operation Market Garden suggest that this concern caused those involved in decision-making to be too eager and accepting of Montgomery's plan; but things are rarely that simple. In reality there was a confluence of pressures; the idleness of the 1st Airborne being just one of them.

By the beginning of September 1944; when the Allies had liberated France and Belgium too, the German forces were in disarray, retreating, some claimed, faster than the Allies advanced. In *A Bridge Too Far,* author Cornelius Ryan captures the chaos among the German forces and their supporters as told to him by the Dutch civilians who witnessed their departure: 'Some believed the retreat began on September 2; others, the third. By the fourth, the movement of the Germans and their followers had assumed the characteristic of a rout, a frenzied exodus that reached its peak on September 5 … Every kind of conveyance was in use. Thronging the roads from the Belgian border north to Arnhem and beyond were trucks, buses, staff cars, half-track vehicles, armoured cars, horse-drawn farm carts and civilian automobiles … throughout the disorderly convoys were swarms of tired, dusty soldiers on hastily commandeered bicycles' (Ryan 1974, pp. 18-23).

The Dutch civilians are jubilant and expect the Allies to cross the border every day, but all reports turn out to be false. The Allies do not cross into Holland and the gap between the departing German forces and the Allies grows as the Allied advance finally pauses. As in North Africa, stretched supply lines are the problem; the Allies are still transporting everything some four hundred kilometres from the beach head and have not yet secured

closer ports. Heady with their successes thus far, the Allies still talk of finishing the war quickly and being 'home by Christmas', an often expressed and unrequited aspiration of many wars, it seems to me.

The way forward now becomes disputed among the Allies. Undercurrents of tension between the upper echelons bubble to the surface as the advance slows. General Montgomery believed that Allied resources should be concentrated in a single thrust that would cross the Rhine, outflank the Siegfried Line and break through into Germany to capture Germany's industrial heartland, the Ruhr. Naturally he wanted his 21st Army Group to be the one to lead that particular charge. His rival General Patton also thought that his 3rd US Army were in a position to make a concerted thrust into Germany via Metz and the Saar. And everyone wanted to get to Berlin first, and before the Russians. The decision was not to be a simple tactical one for Eisenhower. He knew that his replacement of Montgomery as Supreme Commander of the European Theatre of Operations was a blow to Montgomery that not even the conferral of the rank of Field Marshall could salve. He knew too that consenting to Montgomery's plan would mean diverting resources away from Patton's army, effectively halting his advance, which would not be well received on the American home front. Consequently Eisenhower held to his strategy of liberating the channel ports of Antwerp and Le Havre and moving ahead on a broad front; but Montgomery was relentless (Ryan 1974, p. 77).

Then Montgomery reveals that Germany has been launching a new weapon, the V-2 rocket against London from sites in the Netherlands. He proposes an immediate advance into Holland to put them out of action and establish a bridgehead over the Rhine. Operation Market Garden will use most of the First Allied Airborne Army to take and hold five key bridges along the Eindhoven–Arnhem road and open a corridor for the advance of the British 2nd Army. On successful completion the 2nd Army would be in a position to turn east and take the Ruhr.

Map showing the overall plan of Operation Market Garden of which the bridge over the Rhine at Arnhem was the most northerly objective[41]

Perhaps Eisenhower was completely disarmed by the epic proportions of the airborne part of the plan which would see more than thirty-five thousand men and their equipment deployed by air, making it twice the size of the Normandy airborne landings. Or may be Montgomery offered him just enough reason to give in to him at last. In any event, Eisenhower gave Montgomery approval with limitations; the Ruhr was off the agenda until a bridge head was established and he asked that the operation be launched as soon as possible. It was, in just ten days.

As I prepared for my trip to Arnhem I realised that I could not really appreciate what happened at Arnhem—what it was like on the ground there for those nine long days—without understanding the strategy and logistics that had put the 1st Airborne in such a dire position. Having no idea how military plans are usually assessed, I gather the facts and subject them to a management tool that I am familiar with, the SWOT (strengths, weakness, opportunities, threats) analysis. I want to assess whether the opportunities

[41] There a numerous books on Operation Market Garden that contain maps of the plan and especially the battle at Arnhem; this map was downloaded from the internet and put together by Major and Mrs Holt who author battle tour guides.

were great enough to risk so much, so many lives? I am scrupulous in my analysis using only those facts that were known at the time. When completed, the balance sheet does not look good; there are a lot of weaknesses and threats and certainly more then would point to a sound decision. On their own, each one of the risks may not have been sufficiently compelling to call off the operation but taken together, they constitute a sizeable weight of evidence that the strategy was fundamentally flawed, and a rushed affair; there were six months of planning for D-Day. Harclerode concludes that: 'Many bitter lessons were learned from the debacle at Arnhem [and] a number of factors mitigated against the success of the operation … dropping parachute troops eight miles from their objective appears little short of lunacy' (Harclerode 1992, p. 123).

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I run my fingers over the unglazed surface of a terracotta plaque that I found among my father's things. It was struck to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Arnhem. It is about the size of a bread plate and has a bas relief of the Parachute Brigade's Pegasus flash under the word Airborne and the dates 1944—17 September—1954. Small holes pushed through the clay allow for the plaque to be hung though there is no evidence that it ever was. Its provenance is uncertain as there is no maker's mark and when I examine it closely with a magnifying glass I see faint whirls pressed into some of the roughly scalloped edges and wonder if they are finger prints. The detail of the bas relief is fine and was perhaps stamped into the clay when it was soft. Alongside the rest of my father's memorabilia, it is a curious object, a memento of remembrance with no direct connection to the events; a memory of a memory. I add my own, a finally etched Pegasus trapped inside a block of clear glass; a souvenir of my visit to the Airborne Museum 'Hartenstein'.

I arrive in Arnhem in early September. Banners and other signs of the coming commemoration hang along the streets. The weather is warm and sunny and perhaps much the same as it was when my father bailed out over Oosterbeek on that 17 September 1944. I can hear him saying that the day was 'clear and bright' and describing it as, 'a pretty place of neat houses, tidy gardens and leafy streets' and it is. Under the soft September glow, Arnhem and Oosterbeek's elegant streets and buildings charm me; alfresco dining areas throughout the central pedestrian precinct and along the banks of the Neder Rijn are filled with people enjoying the beautiful early autumn weather; push-bikes criss-cross the town centre; a range of hills, the Veluwe, rolls down to the river where houseboats shoulder each other along its banks. About the city and its environs there is an interlacing of fields and woods. Germany is about 16 kilometres to the north-
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east. It is hard to reconcile this sylvan municipality with the photographs of smashed buildings, slit trenches and mortar crews in action in the War Diary; that time is long gone— but if you know where to look, there are traces still, and Robert Voskuil, one of the Friends of the Airborne Museum 'Hartenstein', shows me. A depression in the earth between the trees where the autumn leaves are gathering was once a slit trench; pock marks on the steps of the Hartenstein Hotel where sniper fire hit; bullets still lodged in buildings where they struck and the calloused over wound scars of the trees. There are other traces too in the preserved implements of war; in documents and memoirs; press clippings and radio broadcasts; and the photographs and film taken by both sides.

Robert emailed me while I was on my first trip to London after he heard about my research. Remarkably, he has an abiding and particular interest in the British Army's battle photographs which he shared with his father (his parents were caught in Arnhem during the battle). He thinks he has identified the locations where many of the photographs in my father's War Diary were taken and he is going to recreate for me, at least in part, the movements of my father and his fellow cameramen from the drop zone to their final escape across the Rhine. It is a generous gift in time and knowledge and I am in for a momentous trip.

It was through Robert that I learned that my father took stills as well as film at Arnhem. I was quite surprised by this; it was certainly unusual in the AFPU where photography and cinematography were normally discrete tasks and the *modus operandi* was generally to have a cinematographer paired with a stills photographer and a driver, but my father confirms this in his oral history. He said that he expected Sergeant Christie to accompany them but is told by Sergeant Dennis when the meet up that he had been taken sick at the last minute. I suppose this is the reason why my father was asked to take a stills camera as well. My father was not happy: 'And I was asked to take a still camera with me as well. Did I say asked? Almost ordered because it was the Army. I really didn't want to. Because still and cine were two quite different mediums; difficult to explain though to somebody who had only taken snapshots. I mean this in no derogatory way … With the stills all the elements had to be contained within the one picture. With cine it was a kind of mosaic; a jigsaw of many small pieces which together in sequence portrayed the scene or the event. It required two different ways of looking at it. Besides, to operate two cameras with two loads of film … I was most put out' (Lewis March 1981, p. 79). He did not like the stills camera either because it was a Bessa with a bellows front and had to be unfolded to be used: 'I really wanted to take 16 mil. with me. But there it was. I had to take the 35 mm

DeVry, pack it round me; took four hundred feet of film, several rolls of still film, and the Bessa' (Lewis March 1981, p. 79).

Robert and I were not able to go through all the photographs while I was in Arnhem so since returning to Australia I have been trying to clarify which images in my father's War Diary are his, and which are Sergeant Smith's. I had thought I would be able to cross-check them with the Imperial War Museums website using the thumbnail images but there are problems. With a collection as vast as the Museum's not everything appears online and not all images are displayed; and unfortunately for me, all the Arnhem photographs on the Imperial War Museum's website are credited to Sergeant Smith for some reason, even the ones I am sure were taken by my father.

The Imperial War Museum stores photographs in album sequences together with captions and sometimes going to this source is enough to verify their provenance. But there is another source of information about these images and that is the Secret Dope Sheets, the original caption sheets that the cameramen sent back with the rolls of film for processing. These were designed to provide such details as date, location, description and names of those pictured, if appropriate or known and references to the coverage by other cameramen. It was also the place where cameramen were asked to note if any sequences were re-enactments or mocked up in some way. The same system was used for the cine film sent back for processing. Because the caption sheets were hand written in the field, they were often typed up (perhaps by someone in processing) and then sent to the censor; if parts were censored sometimes they would be retyped, so that there could be up to three versions of the caption sheets. When I became aware of this, it made sense of a comment my father made to his interviewer; that he did not remember typing the Arnhem cine caption sheet. I noticed too while going through the Belsen caption sheets that mistakes could creep in; I found a Sergeant Morris had been transposed to Sergeant Norris. It highlighted to me the importance of site visits to archives in research, even with all the access granted by online technology. The caption sheets are also fascinating contemporaneous documents that often went far beyond their utility of verifying the provenance of the photographs and film, often containing commentary that provided a contextualising narrative for the images that at times is very moving.

In the end, with the information gained from my visit to Arnhem and copies of my father's and Sergeant Smith's hand written photographic Dope Sheets I am able to work out who took the images. As I toggle between the Dope Sheets I am immediately struck by how different the two sets are. The first page of my father's seems to be missing; it starts at roll

two on 23rd September and appears hastily scrawled; perhaps a sort of protest at being forced to take stills as well as cine because his film Dope Sheet is by comparison detailed, though I only have the typed version. By complete contrast, Smith's Dope Sheet is copperplate neat and would seem to give a scrupulous daily record of the images he captured.

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It is autumn now and I have retreated to the stone cabin in the bush with my dog Lily. When I need to get away from my desk for some perspective I can wander through the bush. This morning, I walk up to the orchid rock, now named Anna's Rock in honour of the goanna that lives there. I sit perched on a rock below the orchids, looking out over the valley pondering Arnhem and the epic it became.

The Terracotta Pegasus and the Glass Pegasus are objects of memory that mark intervals on a timeline of remembrance stretching back to the battle that ravaged the leafy streets and pleasant woods of Arnhem and Oosterbeek. The rough Terracotta Pegasus has given way to the sleek Glass Pegasus; the jagged edges of memory smoothed over. They are tangible reminders and like talismans can help us find our way back, not to the actuality of the events but to an understanding and imagining of what happened there. Of course, commemoration and remembrance can be fraught activities which too often dance on the rubble of someone else's loss and hurt; one person's victory is another's defeat. Arnhem was a colossal defeat for the Allies and a dreadful calamity for the civilians but it was transformed somehow into an epic of such heroism that it was almost a victory. Certainly Montgomery wanted to spin it that way when he said that Operation Market Garden was ninety per cent successful.

I have been wondering why it is that some battles, really only a handful of the many that have been fought, capture popular imagination—why the Allies loss at Arnhem did when the many bitter battles that the 1st Airborne won in North Africa did not. The numerous accounts of the nine days at Arnhem piled on my desk are testament to its enduring fascination and new ones are still appearing. Conversely, I have few accounts of the 1st Parachute Brigade's part in nearly seven months of fighting in the North Africa Campaign. Perhaps the duration is a clue to unravelling this conundrum. Arnhem was in some senses an 'intimate' battle; contained within a small geographic location and time span. It was intimate but it did have epic qualities: the huge scale of Operation Market Garden, the largest airborne assault ever launched; the heavy loss of life of both soldiers and civilians;
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the personal tales of daring, survival and escape for a lucky few; the solidarity of the civilian population with the paratroopers who suffered through the battle and afterwards at the hands of unforgiving occupiers. Importantly, the presence of the press corps ensured that it was recorded in detail, in words and pictures, although the first images were not published until 28 September 1944, a few days after the survivors were withdrawn. Images have a way of fixing events in memory and stimulating it and surely their publication and circulation helped cement the story in people's minds. Until the war was over, the only images available to the British public were those taken by the men of the AFPU. The story of Arnhem grew out of these images and the stories told by the civilian war correspondents and others; and the make-up of the press corps at Arnhem reveals a lot about how the how the British Army worked with them.

Although they were an unusual hybrid of soldier and war correspondent and might be given orders and requests (which was not the case in Arnhem) the men of the AFPU did have a great deal of autonomy once they were deployed. When asked if he was his own director at Arnhem my father explains it this way: '… it wouldn't be feasible to wait for someone else to tell me to duck … I don't think director comes into it. The whole place was so dangerous … And I'd taken all the pictures and all the film that I could. It was a matter of life … we got so tired, so exhausted, it was so fraught with danger … It was tempting to drop it all and leave … But I didn't. However meagre the outcome on film, I brought it back. But hell, I wish I had all film and not had a still camera'(Lewis March 1981, p. 95).

Film was sent back with the Dope Sheets for processing and the MOI would select sequences of film and stills for general release and also use in MOI films; an entry in No. 2 AFPU's Official War Diary differentiates the tasks of the film and public relations units and attempts to clarify the film unit's role: 'The function of 2PRS is to enable war correspondents to view the activities of fighting forces in these areas, and that of 2 AFPS to effect photographic coverage of the same. It can therefore be said that the functions of the two units are akin, but there are two differences in that: (i) To obtain battle pictures the main body of 2AFPS is permanently deployed in battle front areas, and (ii) No2 AFPS is virtually a unit of specialists' (*No.2 AFPU Official War Diary* 1941-43). The AFPS did have other duties, from time to time. In Italy one unnamed sergeant, a photographer, is recorded as returning from a mission with two rolls of film and instructions that it be treated as 'Top Secret'; perhaps he was reconnoitring some enemy dispositions; and there was also the notion that the cameramen were filming for the historic record as well as publicity purposes (Gladstone 2002, p. 318).

The press corps at Arnhem was commanded by Major Oliver, with Stanley Maxted and Guy Byam from the BBC; Alan Wood from the Daily Express; Jack Smyth from Reuters and the three cameramen of the AFPU—Sergeants Lewis (cine and stills), Smith (stills) and Walker (cine). There were also four signallers and two censors. They all went in by glider, except for my father who parachuted. Knowing how the press corps worked at Arnhem, I was quite surprised when there was a great deal of consternation about the embedding of journalist during the Iraq war in 2003, as if somehow this was a new idea. If they have a choice, the military never like war correspondents roaming freely in battle zones. It is dangerous and they do not want to be held responsible; and secrets can be revealed through ignorance as well as malicious intent.

In my father's War Diary is a newspaper clipping of Alan Wood that shows that these civilian war correspondents were not just embedded with the paratroopers; they were dug in. My father took the photograph when they had become boxed in at Oosterbeek. My father's caption says: 'Alan Wood "Daily Express" correspondent who came in a glider writing his story in his own dug out. The heavy shelling and mortaring necessitated almost constant occupation of foxholes' (Lewis 1944c). The image of Alan Woods typing stories in his dugout, under fire, underscores the immediacy of the battle around him and shows that a great deal of importance was attached to actually being there; being a witness.

THE GREAT STORY OF THE SKYBORNE TROOPS AT ARNHEM WAS TOLD TO THE BRITISH PUBLIC AT HOME : Mr. Ala
Wood, war correspondent who accompanied them by glider, typing one of his stories in the cover of a tiny trenc
When the First Airborne Army dropped out of the sky into Arnhem, photographers of the Army Film and Photographic Unit dropped wi
them : the result of their work is seen in the pictures reproduced elsewhere in this issue. Also with the airborne troops went Mr. Alan Woo
the only newspaper correspondent actually to witness the great adventure. This is how his work was carried out under conditions which mig
be described as a little difficult !

Alan Wood Daily Express correspondent writing his story at Arnhem

The newspaper's caption states that the AFPU's photographs were published elsewhere in this edition of the newspaper. There is no doubt that the civilian war correspondents wholly identified with the troops as evidenced by this quote from Alan Wood's report in the Daily Express on 26 September 1944: 'This is the end. The most tragic and glorious battle of the war is over, and the survivors of this British Airborne Force can sleep soundly for the first time in nine days and nights. Orders came for us on Monday to break out from out from our forest citadel West of Arnhem, cross the Rhine and join up with the 2nd Army on the South Bank' (Wood 1944). Impressed by the tenacity of the paratroopers, Alan Wood later wrote: 'if in the years to come, you meet a man who says, "I was at Arnhem", raise your hat and buy him a drink' (Wood cited in Hurst 1946).

In the introduction to the documentary *Images of War* the narrator says that the German's won the propaganda war at Arnhem; that the 'clumsy clockwork cameras of the British' were eclipsed by the superior equipment and broad coverage of the battle by the Germans. James Barker a researcher on *Images of War* told me that: 'An extraordinary amount was shot by German frontline soldiers because nobody was stopping them … The British did stop their troops filming … They had all sorts of restrictions.' But it was not just better equipment that made Arnhem a propaganda victory for the German's. Arnhem was a propaganda victory because Arnhem was where the German retreat after Normandy was checked and the Allied advance halted. Even though Germany was still in a state of collapse it would be another six months before the Allies finally crossed the Rhine and pushed into Germany. At the Airborne Museum Hartenstein I see some of this German footage and it is quite shocking. The streets are scattered with British dead in contrast to the AFPU footage where relatively few dead bodies are shown, and then only Germans. There are images of wounded men and stretchered men in my father's War Diary but apart from the Bergen-Belsen photographs there are few dead bodies, which is quite strange when I reflect on the huge losses at Arnhem.

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The sun has not yet risen and a fleece of cloud is draped along the ridge of the opposing range. As the day starts to warm, a mist expands out and up from the river to join it and within minutes the whole panorama disappears in a 'white out'. I take my tea and step outside into the mist that envelopes the cabin and its surrounds; at its edges spectral kangaroos graze. Sound is swallowed up and tiny beads of moisture wet my cheeks. I sit on a bench and watch Lily disappear from view; finding the deprivation of vision soothing and pleasurable; allowing me to pursue my musings on the 'inward eye'. The waiting is

over for my father and they have all gone up to Brize Norton in Oxfordshire for the briefing.

The plan is to drop the airborne forces over three days in daylight, an unprecedented deployment of airborne troops whose main strength is surprise and speed. Put simply there were not enough planes to get all the men on the ground at the same time. The RAF had suggested they would do night drops to speed up deployment but Lieutenant General Brereton ruled it out because of the inexperience of the American aircrews in flying at night (Parker 2002, pp. 103-4). At the time my father wondered what the general staff thought about the plan. Whatever misgivings they may have had, they seemed to keep them pretty much to themselves, though my father felt there were some hints made by the briefing officer who stressed that the two drops nearest the land army would be given priority because the aircraft were American and American crewed. My father comments: 'Well he need not, being the army, have given that little bit of information. He need have only explained the technical part of the operation … it always struck me that this was a most unusual thing in the army, to be given the reason. And I believe he was going as far as he could, this staff officer, to tell us of his criticisms, of his doubts as to what was taking place … So when we got back to our tent near the airfield I said: "Well this is going to be a disaster" Others agreed with me … The only thing I remembered us speaking about is how would we get out of this cock up. After all, I had the first two experiences to remember, the one in North Africa … And there was the one at Sicily where some of us had been shot down by our own navy' (Lewis March 1981, pp. 77-8).

Now that the official records and personal recollections of those involved are available it is clear that doubts were expressed and not everyone was enthusiastic about Operation Market Garden. Major Brian Urquhart, a twenty-five year old intelligence officer strenuously opposed the plan believing that the German forces were much stronger on the ground than everyone was predicting. He ordered a low level reconnaissance flight on 12 September 1944 that confirmed Dutch underground reports that two SS Panzer Divisions were in the area of Arnhem. His advice was ignored and he was sent home on 'sick leave'. But perhaps it is another Urquhart that best sums up the reckless and rather blind optimism that had overtaken those involved. Major General Roy Urquhart commander of the 1st Airborne at Arnhem recalls: 'There was a dangerous mix of ennui and cynicism slowly creeping into our lives. We were trained to a fine edge and I knew that if we didn't get into battle soon, we would lose it. We were ready and willing to accept anything with all the ifs' (In Harclerode 1992, pp. 98-9). Even so he was still worried that with the restrictions on the number of aircraft available he would not get enough men down on the

first day to seize the bridge and defend the landing zone. As Cornelius Ryan tells it, he too thought that the American lifts were being given unwarranted priority but when he put this to General Browning, deputy commander of the First Allied Airborne Army, he denied the American's were receiving any preferential treatment. At his briefing with Montgomery, Browning asked how long it would take 30 Corps (the land army) to reach the bridge at Arnhem. He was told two days and responded with the famous, perhaps now infamous, lines: 'We can hold it for four. But sir, I think we might be going a bridge too far' (Browning cited in Ryan 1974, p. 89). I tip out the last drops of my tea as the rising sun begins to bore through the fog like a search light. Filaments of mist break free and evaporate and the dreamy limbo starts to fade. Slowly the valley pulls into focus out of the mist and the sound of distant neighbours beginning their day intrudes.

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There were one hundred and forty-three troop carriers and three hundred and fifty-eight gliders in the first lift and my father is inspired to organise a tracking shot of the DC-3s 'lying nose to tail along the run way'. This is not a simple operation due to security that is designed to curtail movement on the airfield and because the driver has to be instructed carefully as to the distance from the plane and speed at which to travel: 'And you had to take note that the DeVry which had a spring motor would only last in its drive for so many seconds [approximately ninety seconds]. So you had to pan the camera … so there would be kind of natural cut' (Lewis March 1981, p. 80). I try to imagine this huge armada taking to the skies; what it would be like to be in the midst of it; to see aircraft 'stacked all over the skies', or to be on the ground as that roaring convoy passed overhead. They were also accompanied by Allied fighter and bomber aircraft in case of attack while flying over enemy-held territory. With such a conspicuous amount of noise heralding their arrival, the airborne troops could hardly sneak in unnoticed. Perhaps dropping in daylight was the least of their worries.

My father also took some film on the way over; at least an unknown cameraman filmed my father with his camera. It was quite thrilling to see him, this young airborne cameraman kneeling in the fuselage of a Dakota on his way to Arnhem, seeming to 'live' again for a brief moment, a few seconds of film. I order a still from the film.
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Mike Lewis on his way to Arnhem (still from film)

My father is on his knees at a box while others look on. They are laughing, maybe joking, because he turns to the anonymous cameraman and gives, what he would have called, 'a two-fingered salute'. It is impossible to know where they are on the flight path but in less than two hours' time they, and thousands of others, will be floating down and filling the skies over Renkum Heath like a strange school of sky borne jelly fish.

Accounts agree it was a near text book deployment with only light casualties; a few of the Hamilcar gliders had difficulty landing on the soft soil. A platoon of the 21st Independent Parachute Company dropped first to mark the landing and dropping zones. The gliders were next to arrive followed shortly after by the first of the paratroopers. My father had attached himself to his old battalion 'for comfort' and was one of the first to bail out. The tense jokiness that I noticed in the film en route would, I imagine, soon give way as they neared their dropping zone.

What is now the Airborne Museum Hartenstein, was then, in September 1944, the Hotel Hartenstein co-opted for use as headquarters by the British 1st Airborne Division. It is strange to walk up the steps for the first time, knowing my father was here all those years ago. There is a wonderful, slightly chaotic mix of curios: uniforms and weapons, photographs and explanatory panels and several life size dioramas. One shows Urquhart at his command post and another Sergeant Walker filming. It has the all the fusty, mysterious attraction of the museums of my childhood and Robert tells me that it will be

closing soon for refurbishment. I watch a short documentary about the battle that is synchronised with a three-dimensional model of the Arnhem-Oosterbeek locality. As the film's narrator describes the unfolding events, lights on the model indicate the movement of the Allied and German forces. Gradually the winking lights, representing the British positions, contract until they create a small horse shoe shape cordon around the Hartenstein Hotel, which contracts slightly again as they are pressed hard by the Germans.

The plan is to enter Arnhem by three routes that run west to east, more or less parallel to each other and the river. The Reconnaissance Squadron of about one hundred men are to use their jeeps to dash along a dirt track that runs along the railway line from Wolfheze and secure the bridge until the rest of the troops arrive. In this way they hope to prevent the bridge, which has been set with mines, being blown up once the Germans realise what is happening. The most southerly route (Lion), running closest to the river is to be taken by the 2nd Battalion whose task it is to capture the railway bridge and to take hold both the south and north ends of the road bridge. The 3rd Battalion approaching along the middle route (Tiger) is to assist by holding the north-east flank of the bridge while the 1st Battalion taking a route via Wolfheze (Leopard) is to take the high ground to the north of Arnhem.

Map showing the three routes to be taken from the drop zone to the bridge at Arnhem[42]

I travel out from Arnhem with Robert to begin our tour of the battle field at DZ X (drop zone X)[43]. It is at a place known as Renkum Heath. He is attempting to locate the images

[42] Map taken from internet site of Major and Mrs Holt, authors of battle tour guides.

from my father's War Diary in the timeline and geography of the battle and I am interested to test whether this contextualising of the images in the various locations and sequence of events aids in understanding them.

We I pull up on a dirt road running alongside a field bounded by woods on two sides and a road on the other. It is a vast expanse; in the distance are some farm houses. Robert tells me that it is much the same as it was when the first lift arrived more than sixty years ago. Both airborne troops and gliders need flat open ground free from obstacles that can snare a parachutist or overturn the glider on landing. Importantly they need to be safe from enemy attack. It certainly appears to be a good dropping and landing zone being open, flat and free from any obvious impediments. But our drive out has shown me clearly that it is long way from Arnhem and the bridge; 8 miles or nearly 13 kilometres; a pleasant but vigorous afternoon walk in the right conditions; which I later do. But laden with equipment and more than 60 miles behind enemy lines, it is a testing prospect, even for these fighting fit men. Robert says that a dropping zone south of the river and close to the bridge was considered, wrongly, by the British as too swampy to be a good dropping and landing zone.

My father's writes in his Dope Sheet that he bailed out west of Arnhem at approximately 1.55 pm and that there no opposition on the dropping zone. He did not move off immediately staying to film the descent of the incoming troops; as each wave arrived. My father recalls: 'I'd taken a position in the drop where I'd be near enough with the lead 'plane to get in on the operation at the bridge. [And to] be sure that after landing there'd be other men I could film dropping … And there I was suddenly on the ground, thousands of 'chutes floating around me. I got off my harness, wound up my camera again and pointed it up at the men dropping. I believe it jammed once. The darn thing was always jamming' (Lewis March 1981, p. 81). There is film of paratroopers floating down over Renkum Heath and regrouping on the ground and unloading containers of Sten guns and Bren ammunition. His Dope Sheet says that he put the jammed camera under a couple of jackets and put the exposed film in a tin which he gave to Major Oliver the next day (Lewis 1944b). My father's destination is the bridge too, his mission to film the drop, the capture and holding of the bridge and the triumphal meeting up with 2nd Army. But he did not move off immediately. Had he done so, it is likely he would have made it to the bridge and things might have turned out very differently for him.

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[43] DZ, dropping zone, refers to the area where parachutists landed; LZ, landing zone where the gliders landed

It must have been an impressive to see all those men and their equipment being marshalled across that huge open space: men sloughing off their parachute harnesses, assembling their kits and making for the various rendezvous points marked by coloured smoke; gliders broken open like Christmas crackers disgorging jeeps, radios, anti-tank weapons, Bren guns and other supplies. There is a photograph in my father's War Diary of men unloading equipment from a glider (Smith 1944d).

The gliders on the first day

My father says: 'I could see houses dimly and some smoke rising up … And across the other side of this vast DZ, dropping zone, I saw civilians coming out with … ancient bikes, those black ones with upright handle-bars. And I thought, "They're coming to greet their liberators." And they rushed immediately over to the masses of beautiful yellow silk 'chutes lying on the ground. And it was too far away for me to film. I was too amazed to point my camera at them. They bundled all this beautiful yellow silk up, crammed it into the baskets on the front of their bikes. And rushed off. They probably hadn't seen material like that for the whole of the war' (Lewis March 1981, p. 82).

Robert and I drive on, skirting the dropping and landing zones, towards Heelsum intersection from where the 2nd Battalion will start out along Lion route, which runs close to the river. We pull over next to what would have been the southern corner of the drop zone to look at an image from the War Diary. It shows a section of eight men gathered together; one is speaking on a radio and another on the far right of the frame is blurred as he manoeuvres what I think is a PIAT gun[44]; a large sunflower dominates the foreground to the right of the frame.

A section of men in radio contact soon after landing

As I look up from the photograph and map of the drop zone I spot a lone sunflower in the field that gives me a disturbing jolt as if I might turn and see my father composing the image we are looking at; placing this gaudy, festive flower in front of these young men who seem bemused and a little shy at being photographed. Only the man behind the sunflower looks directly into the camera and the way the helmet encircles his face seems to mimic the sunflowers girdle of petals. I get out and walk over to touch the flower; this artefact of the past; this artefact of innocence. I wonder if the young men pictured belong to the 2nd Parachute Battalion. They are as yet untouched by the coming battle and quite suddenly it strikes me that later this same day, or very soon, some of them will be dead and others wounded or captured. But for now everything is going by the book. There is a melancholy

[44] Projector, Infantry, Anti-Tank gun.

that attaches to these black and white images of war; a whispering of loss; a sadness at knowing what those pictured do not.

I ask Robert about the name Sinderhoeve which I saw on the side of a farmhouse in my father's film. Robert points ahead to a house on Telefoonweg, and says that this is Sinderhoeve, though the name was removed some years ago. After the initial wave of civilians who come out to collect the parachute silk, other more welcoming locals appear. My father's cine Dope Sheet records that: 'The Dutch were glad to see us, "having waited a long time for this moment" and they showed their appreciation by giving the troops fruit and cold clear water, all very welcome. Some of the men who were hurt on descent were taken care of by the Dutch' (Lewis 1944b).

We pull up outside the old farmhouse; now a renovated country residence. Robert shows me a picture of a woman offering a paratrooper water from a pail while others watch. This one does not appear in my father's War Diary. He believes that the woman and man pictured came from this farmhouse. The trees lining the DZ can be seen in the distance. I notice the back of another woman's head in the left hand corner and think I recognise her as the same one who appears in a photograph in my father's War Diary. She too offers water to the driver of a jeep laden with equipment and other men (Lewis 1944l).

Welcomed by the Dutch on landing

Again just visible in the background is the drop zone with its bare fields and encircling of woodland. Does she come from the same house I wonder, a relative, a daughter, perhaps? But water was not the only thing on offer as my father's cine Dope Sheet records: 'One

Dutchman who could speak very good English took myself and a couple of other paratroops to celebrate the occasion with whiskey from a bottle in his house which he had kept for 4 years' (Lewis 1944b). It is still early afternoon on the first day and everyone looks relaxed, you could almost believe that this was an exercise, not the prelude to a horrendous battle.

By 1500 hours the 2nd and 3rd Parachute Battalions have assembled at their rendezvous points and are moving out. At 1530 the 1st Parachute Battalion begins their march; and the 1st Airborne Reconnaissance Squadron in jeeps start their dash for the bridge to seize and hold it ahead of 2nd Parachute Battalion's arrival. When my father says that he pushed on after the paratroopers, I had assumed he meant those of the 2nd Parachute Battalion, his old battalion, who were following the route closest to the river. But he says that toward evening he met up with Smith and therefore he must have headed toward Wolfheze because the penultimate image in the series that Smith took that day puts him at Wolfheze covering the capture of prisoners and the last image he takes that day is of men of the 1st Parachute Battalion in a shell hole (Smith 1944b, p. 1). My father also takes two photographs of German prisoners being frisked and captured; one of the images appears in his War Diary. In it two German prisoners stand outside a building, it could be a house or a civic building, it is not clear. The German soldiers have their hands on their heads and the two paratroopers appear to be taking them captive; they are slightly blurred as if caught in movement. In the foreground two civilians watch. Where exactly my father and Sergeant Dennis met and what they did next is less clear.

Some of the first German soldiers taken prisoner

While my father and Smith are heading off from the from drop zone on foot, the Reconnaissance Squadron in jeeps turn right down a track that runs parallel with the railway toward Arnhem. At 1550 hours having travelled a short distance they are attacked by machine guns, mortars and snipers. The lead section of seven men is killed and the rest hold out until relieved around 1800 hours.

Robert and I break from our tour for lunch at the elegant Hartenstein Restaurant, which was the former Hartenstein Hotel's coach house in its glory days. We continue to pour over the photographs, Dope Sheets and the transcript of my father's interview teasing out the details, two detectives piecing the clues together. Robert's local knowledge and familiarity with the photographs is invaluable and I get a much better sense of my father's movements across the battlefield. I am also able to build the story of these images beyond their frames as I overlay them with my father's memories and other sources of information and verification such as the battalion war diaries.

After he meets Smith my father describes how they walk along a narrow road toward Arnhem and discover one of their jeeps with men lying dead across it: 'They'd already been caught. Helmeted, haversacks still on—it was a terrible sight to see; that it happened so quickly. And so we got hold of one of these jeeps. It was the only thing to do' (Lewis March 1981, p. 82). They remove the bodies from the jeep and begin to drive along a narrow country road. There is a light bulb moment for us as we connect what my father describes with the ambush of the Reconnaissance Squadron. After lunch Robert and I set out for Wolfheze and turn up the dirt track running beside the railway line. Just short of the point where the lead section of the Reconnaissance Squadron was attacked, we get out and walk. It is a pretty country lane, fine for walking and maybe biking, making it hard to imagine what took place here and the entry in C Company's war diary is matter of fact and without embellishment. The memorial on the gate is likewise simple and unadorned. Robert and I walk back to the car in silence.

The next scene my father describes helps to establish which way they went from there: 'And at the crossroads there was a German army saloon-type vehicle which had been ambushed by some of our men. And the men were lying there dead. One officer was half out of the car, his brains scattering all along the road' (Lewis March 1981, pp. 82-3). The intersection that my father describes is the Wolfhezeweg-Utrechtsweg intersection and is a well-established location historically, for the man killed there was the commander of the Arnhem Garrison, General Kussin. He and his men were caught by the first wave of airborne troops as they passed by the junction at about 1700 hours. His death is credited

with leaving the bridge undefended allowing a brief window for 2nd Parachute Battalion to get through. Smith photographs the dead Kussin the next day. For now they drive on toward Arnhem and at the next intersection they hear machine gun fire and someone shouts to them: 'The road's been cut off. You can't go any further.' I take this to be Koude Herberg where the 3rd Parachute Battalion, minus C Company who manage to make it into Arnhem, dig in. With enemy resistance strengthening and the light fading making it impossible to film and photograph, they turn back to find a place to stay.

In the *Images of War* documentary my father observes that: 'The crux, the heart if you like, of airborne operations is that they should achieve their objectives in a matter of hours' (Conway 1981). As I unravel the fate of the other two battalions after arrival, the truth of these words becomes acutely clear; the battle for Arnhem really was lost in those first few hours; all the action thereafter seems a determined but vain attempt to regain the lost impetus of surprise. A Company, 2nd Parachute Battalion does make it through to the bridge in the brief window provided by Kussins death. B and C companies get caught up in fighting around the railway bridge and the high ground called Den Brink.[45]

The 1st Parachute Battalion are met by an Officer of the Reconnaissance Squadron who tells them to expect German infantry to the east along the railway and tanks to the north along the road. R Company becomes heavily engaged near Wolfheze while the rest of the battalion manages to skirt around them but they also become held up at a place called Johanna Hoeve, less than halfway to Arnhem. Opposition is stiffening as enemy tanks and armoured cars appear and everywhere German opposition is much stronger on the ground then they were led to believe. The German's were surprised by 1st Airborne's attack but they regroup fast. This is not the rag tag mob that had been fleeing the Allies. The 1st Airborne Division were facing some very experienced German commanders, Field Marshal Walter Model who was staying at the Tafelberg Hotel in Oosterbeek and Wilhelm Bittrich, commanding the 2nd SS Panzer Corps, which Brian Urquhart had correctly identified as being in the vicinity from the reconnaissance photographs.

To complicate matters further, there are difficulties with communications. That the radio equipment was low powered and outdated had been known since the North Africa Campaign. That there might be difficulties in reception due to the terrain and reach of the sets had been advised (even today the Dutch Army still finds the iron content of the soil a problem). But then a series of odd decisions increases the fragmentation of the airborne

[45] There are many good analyses of the reasons this operation was such a disaster. Often cited is the fact that at Arnhem they were too far ahead of the land army and too far from the bridge.

forces. In the early hours of the first afternoon the command net frequency is changed to avoid interference from a powerful British transmitter. As the headquarters of the 1st Parachute Brigade had already moved off and are not in radio contact a dispatch rider is sent to deliver a message to that effect. It is never received.[46] General Urquhart who is still on the drop zone hears, erroneously, that the Reconnaissance Squadron had not started for the bridge because its jeeps had not arrived in the lift. He then drives out in search of Brigadier Lathbury, commander of the 1st Parachute Brigade, to give him the news and gets caught up with 3rd Battalion and is forced to hide. The net result is that at a critical time in the operation, divisional headquarters are without its most senior and experienced commander and remain so from the night of 17 September until the morning of 19 September. Differences of opinion between Hackett and Hicks in Urquhart's absence hamper decision-making as events spiral out of control (Golden 1984, pp. 142-53).

By nightfall on the first day, 17 September things are not going well; the objective of having the main defensive positions near the Arnhem bridge held by 2nd and 3rd Battalion with 1st Parachute Battalion holding an outer perimeter, are a long way from being achieved. The other airborne operations being carried out by US paratroopers along the corridor they hope to open are also being hard fought and 30 Corps has only travelled 7 miles and reached the Wilhelmina Canal (Harclerode 1992, p. 97). For the next two days the 1st Airborne continues to try to fight their way through to the bridge where about 600 men are holding out. A few more manage to make their way through to the bridge.

On the 18 September, my father films troops around the Arnhem-Utrecht railway line. An image in his War Diary taken by Smith seems to reflect the film, perhaps taken at the same time (Smith 1944f). Troops are deployed in a lightly wooded area on a road near a railway crossing; he has given it the caption: 'In the woods around Arnhem'. Smith's Dope Sheet is a bit more specific: 'Piat gun positions behind tree, covering road'; the Imperial War Museum's object description identifies the men as C Troop of 1st Airlanding Reconnaissance Squadron and that they are near Wolfheze.

[46] Golden's *Echoes from Arnhem* explains the organisation of radio communications for the battle and explores the problems in some depth (1984).

C Troop, 1st Airlanding Reconnaissance Squadron, near the Wolfheze railway crossing.

A little further on at a house in Wolfheze my father takes a photograph of a medic kneeling at a field grave. In my father's War Diary this appears as part of a collage, similar to the one he created for the North Africa Campaign (Lewis circa 1944).

Medic Corporal Mills kneels at the field grave of Trooper Edmond

The photograph is pasted down over a coloured topographical map so that the corner of the image points to Arnhem; a typed explanatory panel describes the objectives of

Operation Market Garden and a reviews the failure at Arnhem. The name on the grave has been censored and my father does not name him in his War Diary or the kneeling figure but his Dope Sheet gives the detail: 'One of the earliest casualties in this airborne operation Trooper Edmond no 3060103 of Recce Corps was buried in Dutch Soil. By his grave is Cpl. Mills of HARBORN (*sic*) BIRMINGHAM' (Lewis March 1981). I check the roll of honour and confirm that Trooper Edmond of the Reconnaissance Squadron was one of the seven killed on 17 September 1944. Perhaps his was one of the bodies that my father moved from the jeep.[47]

Robert and I drive the short distance from the railway track to a house in Wolfheze where Robert says Trooper Edmond was buried. We stop briefly outside; there is not much to see except a large white gate; it is a sombre moment. As I look at the image of Trooper Edmond's field grave again, some other understanding is revealed that personalises that image. I have traced his death and burial as my father did and I think I see my father's sadness in this image and understand why it is the focus of the Arnhem story in my father's War Diary—a medic kneeling beside the grave of a young trooper who died within a few short hours of landing; one of the first deaths of many to come; emblematic (perhaps as my father always intended it to be) of the carnage that was Arnhem but also universally emblematic of war.

I notice that the shadows are short in Trooper Edmond's photograph indicating in that it must be near noon. Not long after this, at 1300 hours according Walker's debriefing report, my father and Smith meet Walker near 1st Airlanding Brigade headquarters in a house in Wolfheze. The three of them set off to try and get into Arnhem and on the way film the 2nd Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment moving up to Oosterbeek. In my father's War Diary Smith's stunningly composed and dapple light vanishing point of men marching under the trees stands in for this sequence (Smith 1944e).

[47] I have not been able to date this photograph for certain, because it is actually undated on Secret Dope Sheet but 18 September is the most likely date due to its sequence in the roll of film.

Men of the 2nd Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment on their way towards Arnhem.

Other film taken that day shows troops marching past the dead Kussin, who still hangs out of the car like a torn rag doll; Smith captures this image too. The marching men seem relaxed and have not yet encountered much enemy resistance; but they will soon, and maybe D company leading the way already has. They do not make contact 'with remnants' of the 1st and 3rd Parachute Battalions until about 1900 hours. When I watched Walker's film I notice a phantasm on the left of the frame as the camera pans along the men marching under the trees; it is just for a fraction of a second: a subliminal presence. I wind the film back and forth till finally, frame by frame, I find him, first his shadow and then for an instant his profile, my father, flickering briefly at the edge of several frames.

Robert and I leave Wolfheze and pick up the route of the South Staffordshires. Utrechtsweg is still a cathedral of trees, though now the road is bitumen not paving. Robert slows the car and shows me the spot at Mariendaal where he thinks my father and the others would have turned back. The land rises steeply on the left of the road and there is tree cover, to the right are open fields. Walker says they made four attempts to get through to the town and bridge but the machine gun and mortar fire was too heavy: 'When we eventually turned to come back to the house where we had made our H.Q. (AFPU) in, the enemy had infiltrated behind us and we had to dash nearly half-a-mile through this part of the road to get back. We were amazed when we saw that our boys were so far behind us' (Walker 1944, p. 4). I think of my father and the others in their jeep trying to get into Arnhem to get their battle pictures. My father said: 'The situation was confusing.

You never really know when you are at our level of rank what really is happening in war. Generally, in fact always, in war when you're lying on the ground, you only know what's happening immediately around you, maybe a couple of hundred yards, depending on the terrain, how far you can see, how far you can raise your head … And so we didn't know what had happened; whether we'd been cut off permanently, whether there was another way through. And still the objective was to get to the bridge' (Lewis March 1981, p. 83). My father has two cameras and a pistol; I expect Walker and Smith were equally 'prepared', I wonder who was driving.

The embattled troops at the bridge use the command net to call for 1st and 3rd Parachute Battalions to reinforce them urgently but German opposition is too strong and the battalions are unable to push their way through. The second lift arrives five hours late due to bad weather in England and brings in the remainder of South Staffordshires who are ordered to move up immediately to join the rest of their battalion. The 4th Parachute Brigade under Brigadier Hackett also arrives. This time there is more opposition on the dropping and landing zones. The heath catches fire and wounded parachutists, unable to move, are caught. Walker says that they could not get back in time to film the second drop.

The last image that Smith takes that day is of my father and Walker sharing a meal, using the bonnet of the jeep as a table (Smith 1944c). My father is in the background eating out of a tin. A young Dutch woman is passing a cup to Walker. Another cup sits on the right hand corner of the bonnet. Robert and I drive back toward Oosterbeek to a point west of the Hartenstein Hotel where he thinks that the AFPU headquarters was situated. We stop in a narrow laneway and get out and walk along the leafy street to an attractive whitewash and thatch house. No sign of battle scars here. Robert tells me it was destroyed during the war but rebuilt to a similar design. There is some metal fencing that dates from that time and it can be seen in some of Smith's images. The area is a heavily wooded and lush, which concurs with my father's account, and the street has a quiet air of gentility about it; probably much the same as when my father and his fellow cameramen moved in. Did the young Dutch woman serving tea come from this house or nearby? Maybe they were sitting picnicking in this laneway, or close by.

British Army cameramen, Walker and Lewis, have a quick meal with the Dutch

With the advent of the internet, these images have been appropriated from various sources onto specific interest sites such as the privately curated Pegasus Archive. Additional information is sometimes appended to the images, as is the case with this one, though this site does not give sources. The caption reads: 'Sergeant Walker of the Army Film and Photographic Unit (note the improvised "AFPU" sign on the left of the Jeep) accepts a cup of tea from Miss S.L. de Meulenaar. His colleague, Sergeant Lewis, is eating compo rations directly from the tin. The pair had returned to this location, which they were using as their base, after making several failed attempts to get through to Arnhem Bridge on Monday 18th September. The commandeered Jeep, which had been left abandoned by other troops, bears signs of battle; note the bullet hole in the mudguard above the wheel.' [48]

By the end of the second day divisional headquarters moves from the landing zone to the Hartenstein Hotel in Oosterbeek. Troop movement into Arnhem goes on all through the night. The two US airborne divisions have made progress along the corridor; 82nd has captured the bridge over the Maas-Wall canal and 101st has captured Eindhoven; 30 Corps is still 45 miles from Arnhem.

[48] The Pegasus Archive is devoted to the British Airborne Forces and is curated by Mark Hickman at http://www.pegasusarchive.org/arnhem/

During the early hours of 19 September 1944, Urquhart is freed by the advance of the South Staffordshires and makes it back to divisional headquarters where he learns what has happened. He had heard that the bridge was held, but while he was in hiding he would have known little else of the rapid increase of German opposition and the unravelling fortunes of the other battalions. At 0900 hours divisional headquarters receives reports that the concentration of enemy is building up to the north of landing zone L. Later Recce Squadron passes on civilian reports of one hundred enemy tanks arriving from Apeldoorn. All available units are still pressing toward the bridge but the carnage is mounting as platoons and companies are virtually wiped out and stragglers regroup where they can. Things are grim at the bridge too. Overnight the embattled troops at the bridge have repelled another attack from the South but ammunition and supplies are dwindling and casualties mounting. As I read the battalion war diaries the huge losses hit home. The word decimates springs to mind until I realise it is much closer to one in three dead, wounded or captured. Yet it is the in the small numbers left that the poignancy resides.

My father goes to divisional headquarters to find out what the situation is at the bridge: 'I was informed by HQ that is considered impossible to get through to Arnhem and that even if I could the fighting is so confused and dispersed that photographically it would be out of the question. Still my father wonders if he will need to save some of the film he is carrying for the capture of the bridge. The desperation of their situation has not quite sunk in yet (Lewis 1944b).

Another blow to the beleaguered 1st Airborne is that attempts to resupply them are unsuccessful. The supplies are dropped in the right location but the area is in German hands and all attempts to get the RAF pilots to drop elsewhere are futile. Very little of the 390 tons gets through. My father captures an image of the drop. The aircraft and their supplies are specks in the distance. This image is not in the War Diary but the next one on the roll is: a group of six men gather up supplies; the collapsed parachute is in the foreground and its rigging lines spread out behind them (Lewis 1944f). Again extra information has been added to this photograph on the Pegasus website: 'Soldiers of No.15 Platoon, 1st Border collect .303" ammunition boxes which were dropped inside a parapack which landed in the garden of No.16 Van Lennepweg, possibly on the 20th September. From left to right: probably CSM Gerry Stringer and Corporal Jim Swan (who would win the MM the next day), Corporal Freddie Webster (smoking a cigar, and who, for his actions on this day, was awarded the US Silver Star), Private John Boow, Private Eric Blackwell (the Bren gunner), Unknown.'

The Divisional HQ War Diary records: '1630 – Resupply dropped on pre-arranged SDP 'V', which is in enemy hands. Yellow smoke, yellow triangles and every conceivable means were used to attract attention of pilots and get them to drop supplies within our line; this had very limited success' (Headquarters 1944). The situation at the bridge is becoming critical too. The 1st Independent Polish Parachute Brigade, due to land south of the bridge are unable to do so due to bad weather. The 4th Parachute Brigade who have been holding along the railway line from landing zone Y to Johanna Hoeve are ordered to pull back south toward the Heelsum Arnhem road. They do so with great losses leaving the third lift of the incoming glider elements of the 1st Polish Parachute Brigade completely exposed; the casualties are severe. My father remarks: 'You can't leave men coming down by parachute and glider exposed to fire, they will never reach the ground alive' (Conway 1981). I find an eye witness account in one of my father's books: *Arnhem Lift: diary of a glider pilot.* Like *Parachutist* by Pegasus, the author is not identified owing wartime restrictions:

> Just before four o'clock the first bombers appeared on the horizon. They came slowly towards us in a seemingly never-ending stream. There were Stirlings, Halifaxes and Dakotas, many of them with gliders in tow. The whole sky above us was filled, like a moving ceiling just below the cloud base. It was an awe-inspiring show of might; it seemed impossible that anything could deter this steadily

> advancing flow … The deep all-filing drone of their hundreds and hundreds of engines made you feel the spell even more. Then, as by a single word of command, scores of Ack Ack batteries opened up. The throb of engines was suddenly swamped by the furious bark of guns. The ear splitting fury of the attack from the ground was indescribable. The stately procession of bombers carried on without seeming to take any notice for a few seconds, then these giants began lumbering out of the way; diving, banking, climbing. It seemed so undignified and pathetically clumsy, somehow. They were so helpless: I have never seen anything to illustrate the word "helpless" more horribly. Now the sky was chaos: puffs of exploding shells, bombers alight, bombers plunging towards the earth, gliders casting off, and banking steeply and in between all this an irregular thick pattern of parachutes; men and supplies floating down. We of the first and second lifts, thanked God that we were already on the ground. (Uncredited 1945, p. 23)

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When radio contact is finally established with those remaining at the bridge on 20 September 1944, General Urquhart can only confirm what they must already have guessed, that all attempts to get through to them at the bridge have failed; they are on their own and will have to wait for 30 Corps, who are held up at Nijmegen. It must have been a terrible blow. Frost, who is wounded, tells Gough to take any able bodied troops and move to a new position. Away from the bridge, the troops who have been trying to reach them are similarly pressed and gradually begin to fall back around the Hartenstein Hotel. As Robert and I wandered along the picturesque street where the AFPU had been headquartered it is hard to imagine that anything bad happened here but as the German's pressed in on them this road would become the boundary of the western perimeter and it is here that an appalling incident unfolds; and to my surprise I find it was recorded.

My father says there was an anti-tank gun and crew in front of the house where they had their headquarters, part of the perimeter defences. Every now and then they would hear a screech and rumbling as German tanks manoeuvred and turned on the road. He goes on: 'one day from that direction there came a young officer. I don't know how I could identify him as a young officer. Because he was a terrible sight. And he walked like a man who was dead, without life. He staggered; he was one grey pall from head to toe, featureless. And from his hands hung what looked like strips of paper. He had been hit by a flame-thrower. And I couldn't bear to look at this sight. He staggered and weaved slowly towards us. And I turned away' (Lewis March 1981, pp. 87-8).

Smith, however, did not look away, as I discovered while studying his Dope Sheets. I find a caption that fits Mike's description and adds some wrenching detail: 'An airborne officer spotting for 75 mm guns, was caught by an enemy self-propelled gun, equipped with a flame-thrower. He stayed at his post untill hit by the flame-thrower and then with his clothes in flames ran along the road shouting for someone to shoot him. He finally dropped on the side of the road where sand was thrown on to him, to put the flames out' (Smith 1944b, p. 5). I had thought there was no image of the burning man; that his death throes existed only in my father's description and in the scene he evoked so vividly for me. Now I can hear him, screaming as he staggers along: 'Shoot me, shoot me. Please! Please, someone shoot me!' until falls to the ground where those on the spot smother the flames. I wonder if he survived long, neither my father nor Smith says anything about what happened to him. I wonder what happened to the image. It was probably never printed? Though he had no heart to capture that dreadful sight, still I am amazed at my father's capacity to be horrified. After all he had seen in North Africa, he was still not inured to the violence, which is at variance with the way combat cameramen are often assumed to be.

We walk to the top of the lane where it intersects with Utrechtsweg. Robert points to where he thinks the 75 mm gun was and where the burning man came from. I was surprised that Smith photographed the incident at all as Toby Haggith claims that the men of the AFPU practised a sort of self-censorship when it came to filming the dead, especially their own. This was graphically apparent to me when I viewed the short documentary at the Airborne Museum Hartenstein because the German footage of the streets around the Elisabeth Hospital, where some of the fiercest fighting occurred, were tangled with British dead. Haggith says this self-censorship was a sensibility born out of their sense of identification with men they regarded as their comrades as well as an understanding of what was acceptable; what would be used in the newsreels at home. The US combat cameramen felt no such constraints; and occasionally the British combat cameramen rebelled, as Sergeant Laws confessed when he filmed a charred German corpse after the Normandy landings: 'I shot this general scene of the German burnt, then I shot this close up of the individual right up, full-face. I didn't think it would hurt people sitting in their comfortable armchairs at Pinewood to see what some of the horrors were' (Laws cited in Haggith 2002, p. 347). Perhaps Smith was thinking the same way when he captured the image of the burning man; or maybe he was not thinking at all and it was one of those lightning reflex reactions to an event that most probably lasted just seconds; the instinctive reaction of a highly trained cameraman, on the spot with his camera ready.

As I identify, order and locate the images from my father's War Diary in the landscape and timeline of the battle I notice a change in them. It is hard to put my finger on at first but they are less composed and so are their subjects. Framing is tighter; many have a slight blur because of movement and the strain on the men' faces is clearly visible and there is urgency and tension in them. The battle that these cameramen have been trying to get to at the bridge has come to them. My father's Dope Sheet seems to confirm this: 'Things are confused here, pockets of enemy is everywhere' (Lewis 1944b). I wonder how the cameramen continue to operate under these conditions. Interestingly, Walker claims in his debriefing report that: 'we decided to pack in photography and start fighting ourselves' (Walker 1944, p. 5). But my father and Smith contradict him and it is clear from their Dope Sheets that they carried on covering what they could almost till the end (Lewis March 1981, p. 94; Smith 1944b).

At AFPU headquarters, they have dinner with the owners of the house: 'The Dutch people made us welcome ... and we heard distant gunfire. And they were troubled, but happy that we were there. And they had one child. And then day by day the situation in that house changed … And from living in the house they moved further down. Until in the end the only safe place was the cellar … they hadn't been out for days ... It was unsafe … to walk [anywhere]' (Lewis March 1981, p. 83). Later that evening, the wounded at the bridge are carried up from the cellars by SS troops under truce. Divisional headquarters hears that the bridge at Nijmegen has finally been taken; 30 Corps is edging closer but are still heavily opposed along the road.

By the early hours of 21 September 1944, the remnant force at the bridge is overrun. They had fought almost continuously for 80 hours. The remainder of the 1st Airborne Division reorganise into two forces under Brigadiers Hicks and Hackett on the western and eastern perimeters (respectively) around the Hartenstein Hotel with their backs to the river and fight on for another five days. In my father's War Diary there is a photograph of Hicks standing in a trench with another soldier, binoculars in hand. They hope that 30 Corps can reach them and establish a beachhead opposite them on the other side of the river. The perimeter is tight; in places only three-quarters of a mile wide and the criss-crossing barrage is intense and relentless; one account says fifty shells a minute (Harclerode 1992, p. 116). They nickname the area within this perimeter, 'the Cauldron'. Divisional headquarters records the onset of fighting that morning in three words that ache with meaning: '0650 – Morning hate begins' (Headquarters 1944).

The pretty village of Oosterbeek is being reduced to rubble and shell craters. Houses are demolished; trees shredded; and all the while there is a flow of wounded being stretchered for treatment, the dead lie unburied. The situation is so confused that my father risks going through the woods to the Hartenstein Hotel to check where the lines are and gets stuck there for a while because a sniper has infiltrated into the grounds around the hotel and his bullets could be heard thwacking against the walls: 'An officer said to me, "I am not going to stand here any longer I am going out". And we waited and we heard fire, and we heard him scream' (Lewis March 1981, p. 85). My father does not elaborate on this incident though it would seem to have been an irrational and suicidal action. What was he thinking; or was he just not thinking at all? Exhaustion is beginning to set in and nerves are fraying. Perhaps he did not really know what he was doing. Eventually my father is able to make his way back to the house over ruins and through the woods and the fallen trees, stopping to listen for gunfire. He says that he managed to take some film that day. There is an image in his War Diary of a three inch mortar in action. At first I thought it was a still from his film, the image is so similar in its framing but I find it listed on Smith's Dope Sheet. They must have gone out together, working their way through woods down to the river, because Smith's caption says that the mortar crew are firing at enemy positions across the Rhine (Smith 1944a, 1944b). The piece of film has been a popular choice for documentaries and films as has the still. I see desperation in these men, especially the central figure whose open mouth and drawn together eyebrows make him appear as if he is in physical pain.

3” mortar team in action, firing on enemy positions across the Rhine

Even though he was still thinking about filming, my father realised that it was no longer a matter of whether 30 Corps would get through, but whether they, the remnant 1st Airborne would get out. My father records in his Dope Sheet: ‘The only thing which is clear is that the enemy have prevented us from linking up with the 1st Parachute Brigade in Arnhem. We are now in a small box in Oosterbeek west of Arnhem with our rear to the Rhine River … 2nd Army are reported ten miles from here. It will be a close finish’ (Lewis 1944b). Later in the day the 1st Independent Polish Parachute Brigade land on a new drop zone just south of the river near a place called Driel. The drop is compromised by the weather and only fifty-three of the troop carriers reach their destination, the rest turn back or fail to make it. Only two-thirds of the force is landed and the Heveadorp ferry, which they had expected to use to get across to Oosterbeek is not at its moorings.

They have now been surrounded for five days and my father’s Dope Sheet for 22 September records: ‘Fighting is very close in due to the nature of the woody country; he [the enemy] is heard often and rarely seen. A self-propelled gun was 80 yards from me but I could not see it. Attack and counter attack is the order of the day and night … one vital crossroads has changed hands several times. The troops are very tired, little sleep and food; no time for either. Benzedrine tablets help in combating fatigue’ (Lewis 1944b). I think of Robert Capa’s famous quote: ‘If your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close

enough.' It seems so much bravado in the face of these conditions. Here if you could see the enemy, you were probably going to die. The days begin to slide one into another as the relentless pressure of the German bombardment starts to fray the nerves of men exhausted and strung out on Benzedrine. My father takes a photograph of an anti-tank gun post that day, it is not in his War Diary (Lewis 1944a). It must be the one that was opposing the self-propelled gun he describes above because the stills caption gives an almost identical description to that in the cine Dope Sheet.

6 pounder anti-tank gun position

My father recalls a statuette of a woman in the grounds of the Hartenstein Hotel, which like Dorian Gray's portrait seems to reflect the day by day disintegration; the grinding down of the besieged forces: 'first the head went, then the neck, then the torso, bit by bit it was being knocked off ... They were firing airburst and there were black clouds of explosions in the air as it showered ... And we would start running for any shelter we could find' (Lewis March 1981, p. 86).

As the casualties and deaths mount, the perimeter defences become weaker and more porous; easier for the enemy to infiltrate and Urquhart is forced to contract the perimeter. Ammunition is running low and food and water become scarce too. The caption of a photograph in my father's War Diary states simply: 'water became scarce' (Lewis 1944j).

Water became scarce

By contrast, I again find an extended caption on the Pegasus Archive: 'Two men of a 1st Border anti-tank gun crew in their foxhole. The men, Private "Taffy" Barr and Lance-Corporal Wilf Pridmore, are part of the gun crew of "Gallipoli II" position in the area of C Company.' If this caption is correct then it is most probably the same gun that my father photographed a short time before.[49] What is interesting is the brevity and generality of my father's caption. To him this is what is important about the photograph; the lack of water, the thirst as rationing is instituted. This image and its caption are an iconotext; their meaning inheres in each other and in my father's point of view (Burke 2001, pp. 143-4). Many of the captions in the War Diary's Arnhem sequence are like this: 'On the perimeter at Oosterbeek'; 'Searching for Germans'; '3" mortars go into action'; an impressionistic remembering; an aide memoir. I cannot be sure what factors other than choice affected my father's selection of photographs; it is obvious some stand in for sequences he filmed; others perhaps for things he witnessed and did not record; but the captions are peculiarly his own. Again I get the sense that these photographs and their captions are postcards from the past; describing moments in time.

The cameramen's movements would start to become more restricted as the bombardment continued and the perimeter contracted. The noise must have been torture, the tension

[49] This image is the third on that roll of film; the image of the Gallipoli was the first (Lewis 1944c).

without respite. My father says: 'The Germans were burning us out house by house ... along that little country road. … we knew we had to get out of that house ...' He goes down to the cellar where the family are hiding. The man indicates that somebody else is down there hiding and my father finds it is a paratrooper. He thinks the Dutchman is surprised that he does not order the man out. He says: 'I didn't say anything. I didn't know what to do. I thought it would seem natural to choose the safest spot that you could find. Because there's so much steel flying about, so many bullets. And even when it was a moment's quiet you couldn't be sure … that it wouldn't start … again' (Lewis March 1981, p. 86).

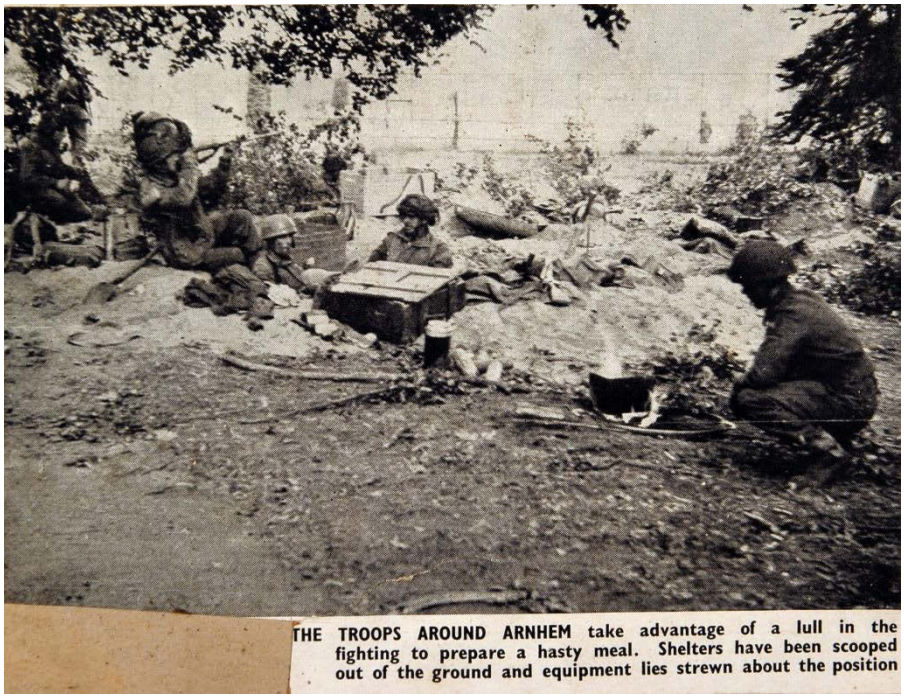
He does not say what happened to this man, but he did tell the people that they were leaving the house that night, to go to the Hartenstein Hotel, and that they should come with them. When night falls my father goes down to the cellar to bring the family out: 'And they must have had the shock of their lives when they emerged into the open. Even though it was nightfall they could see the debris, the ruined houses, the fallen street lamps. The last they had seen of this street it was a pretty little country lane ... what was so familiar to them suddenly being devastatingly changed frightened the life out of them' (Lewis March 1981, p. 87). My father warns them not to speak in case the sound brings down gunfire on them. They creep in and out of the rubble and over fallen logs until they reach the Hotel.

Robert and I walk back from the laneway where the AFPU headquarters had been to the Airborne Museum Hartenstein through the woods, a short and very pleasant stroll. Robert points out the scars on the trees and the remnant slit trenches along the way. The passing of time, nature and civic rebuilding have healed this place and left a leafy tranquil park where once there was a shattered landscape. I tell Robert that my father said that he felt bad about leaving the family behind when the time came to go (Lewis March 1981, p. 87). Apparently it was not an uncommon reaction among the paratroopers after the war. Robert said it took years for the survivors to come back to Arnhem. They felt so guilty; so responsible for what the townspeople had suffered during the battle and afterwards when they were forced to 'desert' them. I suppose they guessed that there would be retaliation for having given so much support to the British. The civilians suffered hugely through the battle and perhaps more afterwards when they were exiled by the German's who ransacked the town. About 450 civilians died during the battle and many Dutch people starved through that winter that followed.

In an unfortunate twist of fate, Robert's parents had fled to Oosterbeek not long before the battle began to prevent Robert's father being taken hostage. They never expected that the war would come to this quiet little retreat of retired civil servants. Robert's mother and

older brother were injured while hiding in a cellar when a grenade was thrown in as the German's were moving house to house clearing out any remaining opposition. An injured paratrooper threw himself on top of the grenade to shield them from the worst of the blast; he saved their lives, though Robert's mother always walked with a limp. Robert was born after the war and first heard this story as a teenager, when his mother was interviewed by Cornelius Ryan for *A Bridge Too Far*.

On 23 September 1944, my father is still taking photographs; I suspect by this time he had run out of film for his DeVry. He takes advantage of a brief pause in the shelling, though it is hard to imagine that there was a pause from the Headquarters War Diary. A newspaper clipping in my father's War Diary shows one scene he captured; there is no indication what the publication was (Lewis 1944i).


THE TROOPS AROUND ARNHEM take advantage of a lull in the fighting to prepare a hasty meal. Shelters have been scooped out of the ground and equipment lies strewn about the position

Troops take advantage of a respite from shelling to have one of the few meals they have had

On his Dope Sheet he writes: 'I have made attempt to get action pictures but it is hard. Our area is so laced and crossed by mortars and shells and small arms weapons. Men are hit by strays and ricochets. The troops are magnificent, doing deeds of valour as a matter of routine for which "ground" men would get a decoration. I am a little ashamed not to be actively alongside men like these' (Lewis 1944b). He also takes the photograph of Alan Wood in his dug-out and another of troops trying to attract the attention of those resupplying them (Lewis 1944c, 1944k).

Waving a parachute to attract the attention of supply aircraft in the grounds of the Hartenstein Hotel

It is now difficult for the RAF pilots to drop accurately in the shrinking zone and they become easy targets for the German artillery, my father describes it: 'I always will remember … our supply 'planes were coming over, dropping us containers of food and ammunition. There were DC-3s and there were Lancasters; and I could almost hear their briefing because of the low height at which they flew over us. "You must get those supplies in, those men are surrounded and cut off" … the bravery of these men … They were coming in so low. And there must have been all the ack ack of London in that small area around us. Because when it opened up, the ground shook beneath our feet. And I could see these 'planes black through the trees, large as houses, desperately holding their courses. And bursting into flames. One of the few times in the war I nearly wept, I really did; to see those DCs and Lancasters going into the Rhine through the black trees. And all for what?' (Lewis March 1981, p. 90).

The Divisional Headquarters War Diary records that only a very small quantity of supplies are picked up that day because roads are blocked by fallen trees and house debris and snipers are curtailing movement. On other side of river some elements of the 43rd Division succeed in linking up with Polish troops west of Elst away from main force. The Poles make another attempt to cross to the north side, only a few assault boats get through with a small number of men and a few supplies and 30 Corps has still not managed to punch its way through.

The penultimate image that my father takes this side of the river is probably one of the most famous of the Arnhem images and one of the most frequently recycled. It shows a section of four men moving through a house at Oosterbeek. It is difficult to be precise with

the dates of these photographs because, unlike Smith, my father was not so fastidious in recording these details. However, the intermittent dating of individual images that he does give and their sequence on the rolls of film does allow for some reasonably accurate assumptions as to their chronology. I think this photograph was taken either on 24 September 1944 during a truce organised to evacuate wounded to St Elizabeth Hospital; the strange chivalry of war; or on 25 September 1944 when the Divisional Headquarters War Diary records that 156 Battalion (who are pictured) were driven in by enemy activity as the German's infiltrate between their lines in the woods. It appears in my father's War Diary as a press clipping; again the publication it appeared in is not identified. It is easy to see why it is a frequent choice for books, it is a fine action shot, and the caption given in this publication universalises the image to represent all those who were there: 'These are the men, unwashed and unshaven, who held out for eight days against everything the Germans could fling at them' (Lewis 1944g).

PATROL OF BRITISH PARATROOPERS SEARCHING A RUINED HOUSE IN OOSTERBEEK. These are the men, unwashed and unshaven, who held out for eight days against everything the Germans could fling at them before the order for their withdrawal from Arnhem was given

Patrol of British Paratroopers searching through the ruins in Oosterbeek

But a cameraman experienced in war photography would question its authenticity because of the position of the cameraman in the path of the oncoming troops with, one assumes, his back to the enemy. As my father pointed out, most people would miss these

tell-tale details as we are accustomed to a cinematic representation of war where there are multiple and omnipotent points of view. This is in fact a 'staged' shot and Robert has spent much time identifying the location and collecting verification of the event. He has identified the building as the Hartenstein estate orangery (no longer in existence) which was to the east of the Hotel and its coach house and two accounts that make reference to the occasion: *A Sapper at Arnhem* by Harry Faulkner-Brown, who says that men stationed there 'gave them a few boos and cat calls ' and from *Delhi to Arnhem* by John O'Reilly who identifies the two men on the left of the photograph as Private Dugdale and Lance Corporal Rosenberg of C Company 156 Parachute Battalion (cited in Voskuil 2004, p. 2). Why was the photograph staged and does it matter? My father does not make reference to this specific image and the Dope Sheet, simply states: 'Patrol of paratroopers moving through the ruins of Oosterbeek' (Lewis 1944c). Perhaps he has been frustrated by his inability to capture the 'magnificence' of the troops and the 'valour' that he noted in his cine Dope Sheet. Considering the almost continuous barrage, to which everyone is being subjected and the rapidly degenerating situation, perhaps this photograph is not so much a fake but the simulation of an actuality that could not be filmed or photographed; an actuality that these men of the 156 Parachute Battalion had just experienced. Maybe the point is that at some time during the nine days, a group of paratroopers, much like these, did search through a ruined house for the enemy. As my father said in *Images of War*: 'War is really … more of a sound picture because the air is full of sound, of firing, of hot steel, of machine gun fire, sometimes the cries of men, sometimes the cries for stretcher bearers but always full of sound' (Conway 1981).

Of course there may be other much more mundane and practical reasons for staging a shot as my father admits of a segment of film he took of Urquhart outside the Hartenstein Hotel headquarters: 'I mocked that up. I thought I ought to do it … Shall I use the kindest words? I mean I didn't want to have him standing there looking at the camera, so I asked him to look at a map. … it was too dark inside, you see, dimly lit passage … I mean these days, with an ASA of four hundred which you could push to a thousand, you could probably have got an exposure'(Lewis March 1981, p. 92).

The last still my father takes on that side of the river is of an airborne soldier on the first floor in the ruins of the Hartenstein Hotel (Lewis 1944d). It is not in his War Diary. Robert and I go up to have a look at the present day balcony where this image was taken. This would have been a very dangerous place on the last day before their withdrawal.

An airborne soldier in the ruin of the Hartenstein Hotel

Although the Germans had now managed to cut the road behind 30 Corps advancing armour three times; they were now close enough to be heard and hearing them was huge moral boost to the embattled troops. My father recalls the feeling of relief: 'One night I heard a strange sighing over the trees which was coming from the river and going way beyond as it were inland. And then suddenly the crash, crash, crash of shells. The 2nd Army had got their artillery within range and for the first time the traffic in artillery was going the other way. It was the most gorgeous sound I'd ever heard; all of us had ever heard' (Lewis March 1981, p. 90).

Early on 25 September 1944 word comes to the 1st Airborne that 30 Corps cannot get through to Arnhem along the road. The new plan is to form a bridgehead opposite Oosterbeek on the South Bank, so that 1st Airborne can withdraw when it can 'no longer hang on'. It is dubbed Operation Berlin. A few hours later, at 0808, the time is very precise in the divisional headquarters diary, 43rd Division, on the south bank of the river, are told that: 'BERLIN must be tonight' (Headquarters 1944).

The operation begins at 2200 hours and those furthest away from the river leave first. The way through the woods to the river is marked with white tape. There are strong winds and heavy rain. A concentration of artillery fire from the South Bank is used to distract attention and provide protection. My father recalls: 'And men had been placed at intervals down to the river to guide us. Because this was at night, through the woods. You could easily be guided into the German lines. And I had this odd thought as I went past each one ... what happens to them, how do they get back? I mean, who's the last man to tell them, to say okay, now there's no one else to come' (Lewis March 1981, p. 88).

Robert and I drive the short distance from the Hartenstein Hotel to a laneway adjacent to the river. After emerging from the woods the men still had to cross an expanse of open ground. We stand at the gate looking out across the field. The river is hidden by the fall of the land. To our right the ground rises steeply and is wooded again. Robert tells me that there was a German position there that strafed the withdrawing soldiers causing many injuries. My father remembers: 'And we got down to the river banks. And it was mud flats, thick mud flats. And we lay there in the mud, and how exposed and vulnerable one feels … when you see what hot flying steel does to hard rock, vehicles, guns; one's flesh feel very weak' (Lewis March 1981, pp. 88-9).

Canadian Engineers brought assault boats across from the other side of the river to ferry the men across. The boats could only take fourteen at a time; it would have been a long night for those crouched in the sticky mud. Half the boats sank. Those men that wanted to, were given permission to swim the two hundred yards but the river was swift and the stretch of bank held by the British small. The men were exhausted and it would be an easy matter to be swept into enemy-held territory. My father remembers noticing that the narrow stretch of river bank on which they waited was delineated by tracer fire being put down by their own troops from the other side to protect them. He says wounded went first and there was suddenly was a lot more wounded then before: 'But what amazed me is how they could keep up this constant tracer fire without pause for all those hours and what the Germans had made of it. Then our turn came. I didn't know whether to ditch the film, ditch the camera. I was tired, exhausted, covered with mud, not knowing whether we could get across. Some men didn't believe they could and tried to swim. We could hear some obviously having difficulty in the water, perhaps drowning, crying for help. The BBC reporter Guy Byam said, "Are you coming with me?' I don't think we will get across this way. I'm going to swim. Come on." I am not a good swimmer ... and I don't think I could ever have … swum across the river. It was pretty fast flowing. I said, "No I am staying." He swam and got across. And the boat I should have got I missed somehow … Major Oliver took the boat I should have got and they were hit going across' (Lewis March 1981, p. 91).

Not everyone gets away that night and I realise now that the public relations party must have been some of the last to leave, which is why Guy Byam chanced swimming. The ferrying went on until 0530 hours when there were about three hundred left according to the divisional war diary. Smith, who gets a bullet in his shoulder on the way across, witnesses what happens to those left behind and records it in his Dope Sheet: 'about six hundred men were left on the Northern bank of the river. Unfortunately it was daylight & it was impossible for them to cross the river so they had no alternative but to surrender.

One officer climbed on to a man's shoulder with a white flag and was immediately shot down. Another officer tried it & he was shot down too. Then the enemy opened up with his machine guns & mowed the whole six hundred men down. The withdrawal was sheer slaughter' (Smith 1944b).

I look back along the river and see the bridge in the distance and the Rhine flowing peaceably underneath. Once on the South bank the men make their way back to Nijmegen in small parties and are able to rest for the first time in nine days. My father must have been one of the last to leave and he travels across with Alan Wood. I find two photographs taken in Nijmegen listed in his still Dope Sheet: one of Major Lonsdale, Second-in-Command of the 11th Parachute Battalion and Lieutenant David Polley; and another group photograph with some of the public relations team in which he features. His caption reads: 'Five of the lucky ones who got away' (Unknown 1944a).

Left to right: Sergeant Mike Lewis (AFPU); Squadron Leader Coxon (Radar); Major Oliver (Commander Public Relations Team); Stanley Maxted (BBC correspondent); and Flight Lieutenant Witham (Intelligence Officer)

There are two other photographs taken in Nijmegen in the War Diary, by an unknown cameraman; in one my father is greeted by a group of people, but they are not identified. The other is a photograph of my father and another man who is also not identified (Unknown 1944b). The caption says simply: 'In Nijmegen after evacuation.' But he and my father are exchanging a look that seems to express deep affection. I feel they know each other well. My father touches the man's chin as if he had just reached over and tilted his face so that he could look at him. Perhaps he is commenting on the man's need for a shave but there is an intimacy of the sort described by Vettel-Becker. They are happy to see each other alive on the other side of the nightmare they have just lived through. For no apparent reason; my mind has filled in the name of this man, at least his identity, as 'Little

Geordie' the man my father mentioned a few times in connection with the North Africa Campaign. I imagine this man to be him.

Sergeant Lewis greets a friend in Nijmegen

My father meets up with Smith and Walker in Nijmegen and they are flown back to England together, to Northolt. They are among the first to be flown home because their film is eagerly awaited. The three of them are surprised to find an AFPU photographer and cinematographer waiting to record their arrival and for a brief time they become minor celebrities; there are two newspaper clippings of photographs taken of them in his War Diary. The propaganda victory of Arnhem was covered extensively by the Germans. Images of captured paratroopers would have been reassuring to a German public worried by the Allied advance. Back in England the men who fought there were already finding their way into 'The Pages of England's Glory' according to a cartoon my father clipped. The coverage provided by the press corps at Arnhem in photographs and film and the first stories that Stanley Maxted and Alan Wood broadcast and wrote began to shape the narrative of the 1st Airborne Divison's stand at Arnhem. In an interview in the 1980s my father says: 'Looking back on it all, I suppose the whole operation was to me the modern equivalent of the charge of the Light Brigade' (Edwards circa 1983). Or as John Parker says: 'It was magnificent only in the effort, courage and sheer bloody-minded spirit of the men involved. Everything else *was* a disaster' (Parker 2002, p. 101).

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A series of wheezy growls outside my window causes me to start, as if I have been sleeping, so immersed have I been in the story of Arnhem and my memories of my visit there. In the twilight, a large mob of kangaroos have gathered on the cleared slope outside the cabin to graze. Two young males are boxing each other close by. For an instant they stop, dropping their arms; eyeballing each other before beginning again. They utter their peculiar growls with heads arched back and forearms locked as they try to kick with their back feet. It is a welcome distraction and I go outside to watch the mob. I sit down on a bench, sipping a glass of wine, Lily at my feet. Heads turn towards me and some stand upright to stare. Then they turn back to the business of eating and family. A young one thrusts its head inside its mother's pouch to suckle; a wallaby passes through, and a fox. When the light is almost gone, my eyes register a flicker of movement. With the binoculars I am able to see two interlopers joining the mob to graze, a fallow deer with a fawn trotting behind. Slowly the grazing animals fade into silhouettes. The moon has not yet risen and finally it is only my imagination that sees their faint outlines in the dark.
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8 READING HORROR

How should we read the images of Bergen-Belsen? Why should we look at such horror at all?

I am travelling back to Canberra for a meeting with a staff member from the photographic archive of the Australian War Memorial. While I delved deep into my father's early war years, I was able to rationalise not looking at the Bergen-Belsen images as a logical and chronological quarantining of thought and attention; but I cannot put off confronting them any longer, though I find 'going there' both a physical and emotional proposition. If it was difficult for my father to relive his memories in interviews over the years; it is still difficult for me too, in spite of reading widely in an attempt to understand what went on in that place and others like it; and what the images mean today. But my visit to the Australian War Memorial will turn up an astonishing and wholly unexpected connection that will open a way of understanding these images for me.

After looking through my father's War Diary, the archivist picks up the five Belsen images and slowly shuffles through them, stopping suddenly and holding one out toward me. 'This is one of ours,' he says. 'It was taken by Alan Moore one of our war artists.' There is a moment of confusion and puzzlement as I counter, that the image was taken by Lieutenant Wilson of the British Army Film and Photographic Unit. He goes away to fetch a copy of Alan Moore's photograph. We review them together. The similarity of the compositions is extraordinary but a slight difference in the framing shows that they are not the same image. The archivist's practised eyes pick the differences immediately; they were taken on different format cameras. I learn that Alan Moore was one of Australia's official war artists and that he spent three or four days at Bergen-Belsen taking photographs and sketching. On his return to Australia, he painted a number of canvasses. They are also held in the Australian War Memorial collection.

As the extraordinary coincidence of finding this antipodean connection sinks in, I realise that the similarity of the images suggest the startling possibility that Moore, having travelled to Bergen-Belsen independently, met the AFPU team there and perhaps tagged along with them as they moved around the camp in their jeep. If this is so, it is just possible too that he met my father; and that he might remember him because, Alan Moore, now in his nineties, is still alive. Later, as I scroll through the thumbnails of the photographs that Alan took, I spot a familiar profile in three quarter back view that I feel sure is my father. As I enlarge the image to see the detail, his sergeant stripes, his beret and camera emerge;

but he has been wrongly identified as a soldier of the Welsh Guards, the group that Moore travelled there with; part of the relief effort. But it is him, definitely, filming in the women's camp (Moore 1945a). I let the Australian War Memorial know.

Mike filming in the women's camp just after liberation

The photograph Alan Moore took of my father is not typical of those taken in those first two weeks of the camps liberation. The women pictured here are some of the lucky ones, probably relatively new arrivals who had not yet succumbed to starvation and the noxious conditions. Lieutenant Wilson, who oversaw the filming at Belsen, records in his Dope Sheet: 'Of the sixty thousand inmates, all but the very latest arrivals are suffering from starvation' (Wilson 1945b). In the photograph, my father seems to be filming a central figure to which the other women have turned. She has one hand raised as if she is explaining or expounding something. Somewhere, just behind them, are the bodies. Finding this photograph is a critical and exciting research moment. That Alan Moore is still living and may remember him is a tantalising possibility; what I cannot anticipate is the way that Alan's sketches and paintings will change the way I view the Belsen photographs and film. The Australian War Memorial contacts him on my behalf, and as a result he invites me to visit at his home in country Victoria.

For a man of ninety plus years, Alan is surprisingly engaged and a gracious host and though his frame is shrunken by age, he is still quite spry. I end up spending nearly two

days with him and our conversations go on for hours over meals and glasses of wine. I had planned to confine my questions to Bergen-Belsen but we soon ranged across the whole of his war, through New Guinea and Italy and finally Germany. Many telling moments seemed destined to fall between recording sessions; in moments of quiet reverie where he almost seemed to be speaking to himself. We look at photographs of his paintings and him as a young lieutenant, his sketches and works in progress and documents. We look at my father's War Diary and at Alan's photograph of my father. We go out to his studio where an unfinished portrait sits on its easel. Like most of those who went to the camp in those first two weeks after liberation, Alan had no idea of what to expect and nothing he had yet seen in the jungles of New Guinea or along the notorious Kokoda Track prepared him for the atrocity of Belsen.

As Alan frantically tried to sketch the acres of bodies and the wraith like remains of those barely alive, one of the soldiers involved in the relief effort stopped him saying that he was mad to be sketching: 'He said to me, "They'll think you made it up." That's why I took a photograph of everything I drew, so it's a definite reminder, or a recording of it.' Moore painted the Belsen canvasses after he returned to Australia and thinking them to be of huge historical importance offered them, along with the photographs and sketches to the Australian War Memorial. He is shocked by Director, Colonel Treloar's response: 'Colonel Treloar told me that he didn't want anything else except Australian troops. I was horrified' (Moore 2009). Later, seeming to relive his bewilderment, his says: 'He threw them [the Belsen photographs and sketches] back across the desk at me.' Alan's description of his meeting with Treloar's suggests a vehemence in his rejection of Alan's work that seems unwarranted, and his reasoning is inconsistent with the fact that Moore's paintings of Italian refugees and German prisoners of war were already in the collection.

The believability of the painted record and the question of whether it could convey the horrors of Belsen would come back to haunt Moore's Belsen work. When he continued to press Treloar to take the paintings, Treloar enlisted two Australian War Memorial Art Committee members, to appraise the pieces. McCubbin was scathing, saying: 'I felt that as works of art they failed — to my mind, not done with much conviction — gave little idea of horror and lacked drama. As records they might be worth while but in this respect, not nearly as effective as the photographs.' Moore's friend, William Dargie did not demur, but said: 'I think that as a record of horrors the photographs are much more affective than the paintings but possibly I would not go so far as to say they failed entirely as works of art. They are at least as good, as paintings, as most of the work that Alan Moore did for the War memorial.' Then: 'I do not think that these paintings convey any great feelings of

horror to the spectator' (Treloar 1944-1947). It is an extraordinary assessment given that Dargie said of his own service as an Australian war artist: 'I was being paid to create a record which would be more personal than photographs. … I think the war artist is lucky to be leaving memories that are often more immediate than photographs. We don't always identify with photographs, even though they are right and true' (Bevan 2004, p. 17).

I had known that there were war artists at Belsen but had not really focused on their role or the impact of their art. Certainly their works have not been subjected to the same forensic scrutiny as the photographers' and cinematographers' images; that is except perhaps for Alan's. It seems likely that Dargie and McCubbin were influenced by the wide circulation of film and photographs of Belsen and the other camps that had been liberated as the Allies made their final sweep across Germany. I look at Moore's Belsen sketches and paintings; and at his photographs and I feel something shift in the way I view them; as if I am seeing these images for the first time. For Moore, these paintings and sketches were as much a record of what he saw, as were the photographs but they also express something more about Alan's experience there. Perhaps in only looking to be horrified Dargie and McCubbin missed what else Moore's paintings had to say; and if that is the case maybe others have misread the photographs and film too. It took many years and the passing of Treloar for Alan's paintings to make their way into the Australian War Memorial's collection.

The passage of time seems to have polished some of Alan's memories and worn away others. He looked hard at the image of my father that he had taken; searching for the recollection of that moment but it eluded him. I see there is an embodied experience of Belsen which remains imprinted in him. I see it when he turns to me to say that it is good to speak with me about these things because, 'You get it '. Over the years there had not been many that did, or could 'get it', at least not, he tells me, until he met Belsen survivor Olga Horak again, here in Australia. Alan thinks it would be good for me to meet her.

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Alan arranges for me to meet Olga who lives in Sydney now and volunteers at the Sydney Jewish Museum. It will be the first time I have met a Belsen survivor and I feel apprehensive to meet a stranger under such circumstances; it is as if that sense of intrusion that I felt when I first opened the envelope and looked at the photographs persists. I have told Olga my story over the phone and she has asked me to bring the War Diary and the five photographs. We meet at the museum. She is slim and elegantly dressed
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in a blue suit, her grey hair swept up neatly; she welcomes me with the warmest of smiles. She tells me her story in softly accented English and my unease melts under the intensity of her story. Olga was thirteen when the war started and seventeen when German troops took Slovakia in August 1944. Separated from family and friends, Olga and her mother survived Auschwitz, a brutal forced labour unit; and in early 1945, being marched three hundred and seventy-five kilometres west toward Germany and away from the advancing Russian army. It was one of many so called 'death marches' where already brutalised prisoners were forcibly moved. Olga published a book about her experiences, *From Auschwitz to Australia: a Holocaust survivor's memoir* (Horak 2000). By the time Olga and her mother arrived in Belsen they were both extremely emaciated and weak. In her book Olga writes:

> Whatever body fat I had on me disappeared many months ago. My bones stuck out, my breasts had all but disappeared, my teeth were loose in my mouth, I was covered with open weeping sores and I crawled with lice. My eyes were sunken in their sockets, the little hair I had was patchy, and I could barely stand upright let alone stand straight. And yet I was not as sick as the inmates I saw standing before me in Belsen (Horak 2000, p. 67).

It is a little hard to grasp at first that after all Olga had been through others could be worse off; but her words underscore the misery and torment that leaches out of the Belsen images and perhaps helps to explain too why Belsen seems to have become some kind of benchmark of Holocaust horror. Olga and her mother soon succumbed to the diseases that had been ravaging the camps population since January 1945; typhus, diphtheria, tuberculosis and cholera; and Olga's mother dies just hours after the camps liberation. When Alan first saw Olga there he doubted that she would live and she says herself that it was sheer determination that stopped her from dying. She could not eat even the most meagre of rations and weighed only twenty-nine kilograms. Even after she was discharged from hospital, it took years for her eyebrows and eyelashes to grow back. There were many like her. After a long recovery, she meets and marries another Holocaust survivor John Horak and they migrate to Australia in 1949. There are many stories like Olga's, voices from an apocalyptic race war that changed the demographics of whole nations.

Olga takes me around the museum and over coffee we talk some more and then she asks to see the War Diary and the five photographs. Again I get a wave of discomfort, a sort of embarrassment or awkwardness; as if I am going to show Olga something that she had never seen before and I might shock her. I have this curious sensation, even though I know

she has lived it. I push the War Diary and the five photographs which I now keep between stiff cardboard towards her. She looks through the War Diary for a while, and then the five photographs. She looks in a concentrated way but without much comment, just a slight nod of the head as if affirming, yes … that is what it was like. The photographs lie between us on the table exposed and raw.

As we come to say goodbye, she echoes Alan, saying it has been good to talk with me. Perhaps the only way to live with such trauma is to keep speaking about it. I ask if she thinks that is true. She shakes her head as if she does not know. With a self-deprecating laugh she says that her daughters tell her that she talks too much about what happened; that she should not live in the past. 'I tell them, I don't live in the past, the past lives in me.' She says that she has been back to Belsen and when she hears that I have never been, she urges me to go. That Olga had been back was not something that I had expected to hear, I do not know why, maybe because my father never wanted to go. But it seems almost at that moment that the equivocal idea that 'one day' I would go to Belsen becomes a certainty.

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It is late afternoon and I am sitting on a bench above the cabin that looks directly along the east–west axis of the valley to the distant peaks. In a few days' time I will be leaving for London and ultimately Belsen. I will go to the Imperial War Museum and view my father's Belsen film again. Something tells me that I will experience it differently this time. My eyes travel over the panorama in front of me, focusing on different areas in my field of vision, noting the peaks and folds of the land, the cleared areas, the farm buildings, cattle grazing, glimpses of the river and even the infrequent traffic that travels along the dirt road below. I can take in more of the panorama merely by moving my eyes, and even more by turning or tilting my head slightly. With my binoculars I can zoom in on specific locations; a waterfall on the opposing mountain slope or an eagle circling fluidly overhead. The sounds of bird calls, cattle lowing, a tractor grumbling along in the distance and the movement of air in the leaves of the nearby trees play in the background and other senses fill in detail as I take in earthy scents and tastes and warmth from the winter sun. Above all though is a tremendous sense of arching space and light. Then something else happens as I drift into thought about my coming travels; my eyes carrying on looking without seeing. Then it comes to me that this is the way I have been engaging with the Belsen images, looking without seeing.
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I have just left Arnhem and am speeding across the Netherlands to Germany at between one hundred and sixty and two hundred kilometres an hour. I made a second visit there to follow up on a few research points with Robert and also to see the remodelled museum. Certainly the museum needed refurbishment but I found its new slickness disturbing; more theme park than a museum; the old dioramas were gone; destroyed, a reprehensible and incomprehensible decision since they had been there so long they were part of the history of the place. The display about the AFPU had gone too in favour of a blander exhibit that mentions only Alan Wood, the war correspondent who was there with the Daily News. There are moves to remediate these short comings but it makes me worry what I will find at Bergen-Belsen.

The train seems barely to move as we hurtle through the towns, villages and countryside and I spend the hours drifting in and out of thought except when I have to change trains. I would not have known that I had passed into Germany except for a message on my mobile phone. Borders have all but disappeared in Europe since I was a child travelling with my parents. I remember the border crossings as part of the excitement of travel; the waiting in queues for immigration and customs; the new stamp in the passport; the change of currency and language. As the countryside slides away from me and we penetrate further into Germany I think that somewhere out there my father landed by glider.

After his return from Arnhem, I left my father in England experimenting with ways that he might attach a DeVry to his parachute so that he can film while dropping. His next mission is Operation Varsity on 24 March 1945 when the Allies make their second, and finally successful, attempt to cross the Rhine. This time he will travel by glider with the 6th Airborne Division. Three weeks later he will be filming in Belsen. For the first time in his war an operation goes according to plan and most of the military histories seem to agree that this time the Allies got the use of airborne troops right. He re-joins the AFPU on the ground under Captain Evans. He says he is teamed with George Laws, who he said was a good cameraman and careful, and a driver whom he calls Blondy. The AFPU had many teams on the ground now following the advancing troops. My father says the German cities had been smashed by air raids to such an extent that you could only see where the streets were, or had been, because that was where the layer of rubble was least thick. The end of the war in Europe was just months away but conditions were still dangerous as they found when they approached the river Weser to follow the crossing that had been made during the night. It was a cold day and their jeep had canvas doors with plastic windows. My
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father said that they had 'got a nice fug on' in the jeep when he was struck by an uneasy feeling. As he is sitting in the middle he asks George to take a look: 'And he undid the buckle of the door. And pushed it open … And then he was gone, gone instantly. And I looked up. And I saw these MEs[50], just circling overhead. And I said: "Blondy, out, out." No question of cameras; we only had seconds.' All three dive for shelter under the jeep which is rocked by the attack and then into the basement of a house close by to find it: 'full of squaddies drinking tea and taking precautions' (Lewis March 1981, pp. 98-9).

They move on across the river after the aircraft have gone; they are now less than one hundred kilometres from Bergen-Belsen. Their next stop is Celle where they encounter a small concentration camp and I am struck by how this is the first point in my father's story that the fate of the Jews under Hitler's empire has intersected with the war. Yet the scholar Doris Bergen writes that by this time 'the peak period of killing' had passed and that seventy-five percent of the Jews murdered in the Holocaust were already dead by early 1943 (Bergen 2010, p. 104). Bergen says that the tendency for the events of the Second World War and the Holocaust[51] to be dealt with separately as if they were unrelated events might reflect the attitude of the Allied policy makers of the time who, 'considered the Holocaust to be separate from the conflict' … a 'sideshow'. Moreover the vastness and complexity of the both events have meant that they demanded their own historiography (Bergen 2010, pp. 107-8). In Britain there was knowledge that atrocities were being committed and principally against Jews but it was being carefully managed. Tony Kushner quotes a July 1941 Ministry of Information memorandum that urges restraint in the use 'horror stuff', it was to be used 'sparingly and, 'must deal with indisputably innocent people. Not with violent political opponents and not with Jews' (MOI memorandum cited in Kushner 2006, p. 190). Perhaps this was, as Kushner says, a preventative measure to avoid stirring home-grown antisemitism. My father, though he does not say much, had obviously heard the reports and it is possible that he would have heard stories about those who escaped, perhaps through his family back home. Even with this knowledge and all his experience of war, Bergen-Belsen still comes as a shock; a defining experience in which everything is reduced to what occurred 'before' and 'after', my father says: 'And something changed for me after I'd seen the camp although I'd seen the terrible things of war; to have treated ordinary people like this. And there were so many theories and reasons as to who

[50] Messerschmitts.

[51] It should be noted that some scholars prefer the term Shoah over Holocaust. Holocaust is a Greek term meaning burnt offering, whereas Shoah means catastrophe. The term Great Catastrophe is also used. I have preferred the term Holocaust as the one most frequently used and recognised.

was responsible … And I had to think hard about it … The terrible discovery came to me, a sort of revelation, a flash of lightening because it penetrated these terrible scenes to make me think. All the stories I'd heard about the persecution of people from my mother and father, here they were true' (Lewis March 1981, pp. 103A-4). It is a revelation that is being repeated again and again as the Allies penetrate further into Germany and beyond; but it will take many decades for the bigger picture to emerge and be comprehended and many decades for survivors to tell their stories.

At the concentration camp in Celle, a man so badly beaten he cannot see; staggers out of the building. Shocked by the sight of him, a brigadier of the RAMC becomes so infuriated that he grabs one of the German doctors there by the throat and shakes him; asking him how he could allow such things to happen; he has to be pulled off (Lewis March 1981, p. 103). Sergeant Lawrie, who they had met up with there, writes in his Dope Sheet dated 12 April 1945 that: 'This morning elements of 15 Scot Div overran the town of Celle … In this town the Germans had one of their famous concentration camps for political and civilian prisoners, incl Russians, Poles, Jews and even Germans. These people had obviously been very badly treated; many cases were beyond medical help. These people were apparently being methodically starved to death and hideously beaten up by their jailers. Wounds thus received were left completely unattended' (Lawrie 1945a). But Celle is just a hint of what is to come, twenty-five kilometres away at Bergen-Belsen, in Lawrie's words a: 'Sunday school picnic compared to what was happening further up the road' (Lawrie 1984).

The British took over the camp at Bergen-Belsen under a curious truce with the German's which saw the war flow on around the camp even as the survivors were being tended and the dead buried. Indeed, my father describes how there was a moment after the period of neutrality ended when the hospital tents were strafed by the Luftwaffe (Lewis 1945c). At the Imperial War Museum I found a sequence of film taken by cameraman Ian Grant on 15 April 1945, it appears to be at the gates of Belsen. German and Hungarian soldiers are watching the British armour go by. They salute one of their officers and when he turns to the cameras I see that it is Kramer, the commandant of Belsen, smoking nonchalantly, still neatly turned out in full uniform; not yet arrested and manacled. You cannot really see much beyond the gates except buildings and barbed wire. Grant writes in his Dope Sheet: 'The advance into Germany goes on, and on the way many large forests have to be cleared of the enemy. The procedure is thus: the woods on either side of the advance are set alight to keep snipers out. Then the tanks go through. Today's advance also passed through a two-mile neutral zone at Belsen' (Grant 1945). He says that he and Sergeant Norris did not stay long but moved on to other assignments. The assigned AFPU team of Wilson, Lawrie,

Oakes and Lewis arrived towards evening and perhaps, because the light was failing, entered the camp without their cameras. Haggith says that the commander of No 5 AFPU, Hugh Stewart also arrived on that first day and made a decision that the AFPU team should stay to ensure full coverage of the liberation and relief efforts (Haggith 2006, p. 98).

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The afternoon is dismally grey and miserable when I arrive in Celle and I take a taxi out to a guest house in the village of Bergen. The ashen skies and squally rain weigh me down and seem to underscore the eeriness of finally being here; I wonder vaguely how it feels to live in a place of such infamy. Until now I have told myself that there would be nothing to see, so there was no reason to go but now I fear that Belsen will be like Arnhem and that the topography of the place will resonate with its history.

It has been hard for me to unpick the controversy that clings to the photographs and film of Bergen-Belsen; uncomfortable, as it seems an indictment of the work my father did there; an indictment of my father as a man detached and inured to the scenes before him. I know he was not, nor were the others there with him. 'Pornography of the real' was the term one scholar used when I discussed these images with him, and like schadenfreude, I cannot help but feel that the linking of the word pornography to such images is calculated to discourage and perhaps shame those who would dare to look. [52]

I trace the phrase to film maker Jill Godmilow who uses it to describe the inherent problems and dangers in documentary film making. 'Pornography of the real' is she says: 'a powerful pornographic interest in real people, real death, real destruction and real suffering' masked by a projected objectivity and sincerity of the film maker (Godmilow). Important to understand here though is that Godmilow is not making some retrospective criticism of what others have done but is really critiquing her own methods of documentary film making and looking for new ways of telling important stories.

Perhaps it is hard to imagine now, but when those images of atrocity were first published and broadcast no one, including the cameramen, had seen anything like them and certainly not on the scale of what would be recorded at Bergen-Belsen. In his letter to my father in 1981, Abram Games remembers how the first reels of film were received. They were flown back and processed the same day. He says: 'Bill Stirling Head of processing came to my

[52] The scholar, Susie Linfield shares a similar view, and in her book, *The Cruel Radiance: photography and political violence*, the linking of the term pornography in this way is discussed at some length (Linfield 2010, pp. 40-1).

room and said that I must see something, still wet that he was putting through the editing box at that moment … Never will I forget what you photographed that same day. It was far worse than anything I saw published afterwards as you well know yourself since you took the scenes, and it has always haunted me' (Games 1981). This observation accords with Toby Haggith's research in this area, which identified that some of the most appalling sequences such as the bulldozer pushing the bodies into pits were not released at the time. Perhaps it was because they could have been interpreted by the British and German public as callousness on the part of the British soldiers (Haggith 2006, p. 91).

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The photograph frozen in time and the piece of film forever running through the same sequence are two dimensional traces of what the combat cameramen witnessed at Belsen and only a selection from the vast array of atrocity that assaulted their senses on entering there. In 1984 my father tells journalist Fia Cummins: 'I remember seeing all the raw unedited film when I was demobbed in London and I was amazed by one thing that film never does, can never show it the same way. You are removed from it, aren't you? It doesn't show the smell of death which was awful' (Cummins 1984). Even so, the viewer who comes to these images for the first time is likely to recoil and be overwhelmed. I realise now that simply glancing or even staring at such images will do nothing to aid our understanding. To understand we need to be purposeful in our looking—to interrogate the images and the image makers and engage with their original meaning and purpose to appreciate the role of the images as both historical evidence and artefacts; in fact to appreciate their aesthetic value. This aesthetic is not about notions of beauty and pleasure or the autonomy of art but what philosopher, Michael Kelly has defined as: 'critical thinking about the affective, cognitive, moral, political, technological, and other historical conditions constitutive of the production, experience and judgement of such art' (Kelly 2012, p. xviii). As Caroline Brothers said: '… it is within their context that inheres their meaning' (Brothers 1997, p. 16).

It is a striking image from my father's personal archive, one of the ones I found as a child, the one that is almost identical to Alan Moore's, and the discussion of the merits of Alan's paintings that has quite literally opened my eyes to the difference between looking, which is a mechanical directing of the gaze, and seeing which is a cognitive process; an intellectual and ethical digestion of the meaning contained within frame or sequence (Wilson 1945c).

The bodies of victims in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp

In this image of the pitifully emaciated, splayed man are references to Christian depictions of Christ crucified; implying innocence and terrible pain and suffering and, perhaps, even the Jewish identity of the dead man. One wrist seems to be bound and another man lies against him at a right angle, his head touching; the legs of another body are evident in the top right hand corner. The lighting is such that the parchment of skin left on the Christ figure appears translucent against the other man but death has also rendered them curiously twin-like in their sunken eyes and cheeks and their open mouths and bristle of beard and hair.

Clearly, there is an aesthetic in play in this photograph—framing, composition, exposure and the use of light and the classical allegorical references, combine to make this a powerful image which carries its own narrative—and, I would argue, that the aesthetic provides orientation to the viewer and a point of reference without which this image may be just incomprehensible horror. As, psychologists Nancy Goodman and Marilyn Meyers say: 'forms of symbolization allow for knowing that which is beyond comprehension in words alone' (Goodman & Meyers 2012, p. xxxix).

This photograph also individualises and personalises the suffering of its victim/s in a place where thousands of dead and dying lay strewn and where there were piles of corpses; estimates say there were up to 10,000 unburied bodies when the British arrived, 13,000 more died after the camps liberation. The photograph individualise the atrocities at Belsen; but the film does something else; it provides scale. I found a sequence of film my father took on his second day in Belsen showing another victim similarly splayed and then more film showing dozens of such men; so that the splayed form and the open mouthed death stare became some kind of horrific leitmotif.[53] The photograph is both individual and universal.

Father Morrison (left) and Father Kadziolka bless a mass grave

I find this aesthetic in play again in this still taken from film my father took of a mass burial at Belsen (Lewis 1945e). Mass burials were necessary because of the huge numbers of bodies and the dire risk of disease. Bulldozers were bought in to push the piles of decomposing bodies into enormous pits. The bulldozer sequences my father and Lawrie filmed are perhaps some of the most controversial of the Belsen images. For some of the sequences my father sat on the front of the bulldozer. If it is difficult to watch those

[53] These three sequences of film show this repeated vision of the naked dead splayed man: Cameraman Sgt Lewis 16 April 1945, A70 304/01 P 6A 35 (998 FT B/W MUTE ACETATE PRINT); Cameraman Sgt Lewis 16 April 1945, A70 302/01 P 1 A 35 (593 FT B/W MUTE ACETATE PRINT); Compilation, MGH 114/01-06 V1 (56" BETCAM B/W MUTE)

sequences now, it was unimaginably worse to film. My father says: 'the blade sometimes didn't catch the bodies cleanly … and they split open … the smell was terrible. I soaked a handkerchief in petrol and put it over my mouth as I sat in front of the bulldozer … I didn't know whether to bear the smell of the petrol, or take it off and bear the smell of death' (Lewis March 1981, p. 105).

This mechanical sweeping away of the corpses of those who had suffered so much in life was deeply troubling for my father and many who witnessed it. Thus this quiet and sombre moment of contemplation at the graveside provides a respite for the cameraman and the viewer and, as with the Crucified Man, pulls back from the overwhelming scale of the numbers of dead and the necessary desecration of human remains. A grave mound, a suggestion of a cross in the foreground and two padres reading a service relink the burial pit to universal and accepted norms of funeral rites and the treatment of bodies; there is reverence and respect. This framing was a conscious decision. My father says: 'there was a spade there, the kind of spade with a cross-piece … on part of the earth where the corpses were buried … it suddenly came to me—it was a grey and dreary depressing scene—that the spade looked like a cross … One does shots like that. But of course you don't know when you do them if those who view it later will see it the same way as you do'(Lewis March 1981, p. 106).

Of course the Christian references are incongruous given that the majority of the Belsen inmates were Jews and so was my father. He was not a practicing Jew and had of course been raised in predominately Christian culture; but the spade cross may carry another message. In 1984 he tells journalist Marsali MacKinnon that people should not think: 'it only happened to Jews. People who think, "Well I am not Jewish, it won't happen to me" are deceiving themselves.' The cross is message—it could be you (MacKinnon 1984, p. 7).

I think about Dargie and McCubbin's assessment of Alan's work and wonder again if the photographs that were circulating at the time affected their judgement. Against photographic images which were too horrific, Alan's paintings seemed, to his critics, not horrific enough. Yet Alan's study for the 'Blind Man in Belsen' shares many pictorial elements in common with the image of the Belsen landscape taken by Captain Malindine (Malindine 1945b; Moore 1945b). Malindine was at Belsen briefly on 17 and 18 April 1945 and his image is one of the five I found as a child.

The desolate scene in the camp as women inmates scavenge among the rubbish and filth for food

Study for Blind Man in Belsen

Yet the study is in many ways darker; darker in its palette and in the obvious signs of death; the tortured figure from the photograph can be seen in the bottom right hand corner. The faces of the living are in shadow. The central figure of the blind man dominates the foreground and leans toward us as he picks his way among the dead, unseeing. Blindness is a powerful Holocaust metaphor and in the final painting, where the camp pyjamas are gone and the blind man is no longer just an inmate blind to living among corpses and the lack of any privacy, the blindness becomes universalised (Moore 1947).

Blind Man in Belsen

There is the blindness of the camp guards, my father says: 'We'd gone across there [the guards barracks] and seen these marvellous kitchens, tiled, with huge stainless steel tubs for cooking food … how could they live like that, knowing what these people were suffering? Perhaps they didn't see it' (Lewis March 1981, p. 103A). There is the blindness of German civilians to the camps. Lawrie says that despite the perpetual haze over the camp and the fact that it could be smelled kilometres away the farmer they were staying with: 'swore blind he didn't know what was happening' (Lawrie 1984). There is the

enforced blindness of the Allies expressed in the British MOI memorandum of 1941 that Tony Kushner cites.

But McCubbin and Dargie did not see this in the painting. Perhaps they had been so overwhelmed by the confronting nature of photographs that the paintings did not seem real enough; seemed contrived. This may also explain why the work of the war artists at Belsen has not been subject to the same scrutiny as that of photographers and cinematographers; this, and the fact that their works were not so widely disseminated. The failure of Treloar and others to realise the value of Alan's Belsen canvasses at the time and their later acceptance in 1969 as: 'grim reminders of events which should never be forgotten'; perhaps reflect Australia's cultural and geographical remoteness from the events in Europe; few Australian's were directly exposed to the horror of the camps and Alan told me he was very much alone with his experiences until he met survivors who settled here in Australia (Treloar 1944-1947, pp. Director Lancaster to Moore, 4 February 1969).

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A wet and windswept morning slowly develops out of the predawn darkness as I lie wakeful, waiting until it is time to rise and make ready for my trip to the Gedenkstätte Bergen-Belsen, the memorial museum at the site of the concentration camp. I will not go straight there because I have an appointment at the British Garrison at Hohne, close by. It is the former Wehrmacht training facility, the one my father mentioned that had the big cooking vats. It has been in British hands since 1945 and part of it was used to house survivors from Bergen-Belsen. I meet a Mr Colin Albert at the gate and he gives me a guided tour of the facility. I am surprised at its size; it is a small town with quarters and facilities for the families of British forces stationed there, several schools and shops, swimming pools and medical and dental centres. We visit the military museum which he manages and the fourteen mass graves that are within the Bergen-Hohne training area. He tells me that they contain the bodies of Soviet prisoners of war who died there between 1941 and 1942. Historian David Cesarani says: 'The story of the Soviet POWs is a terrible one. … The Germans regarded them as barely human and did not observe obligations to POWs under the Geneva Conventions … They died at the rate of 100 per day.' It was, as he says, a 'chilling portent' of what was to come at Bergen-Belsen (Cesarani 2006a, pp. 13-4).

While leafing through the files of Dope Sheets in the Imperial War Museum, I find several foolscap pages containing a typed list of 'Concentration Camp Material'. It gives a serial
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number, a title, the location of the camps, the film's creator and approximate footage. There are over forty separate locations on one page. Reading the list is like taking an inventory of the Holocaust, or at least the camps. Belsen was one of thousands liberated by the Allies as they continued their advance into Germany and beyond; there were exchange camps, labour camps, transit camps, extermination camps; thousands of camps and millions of deaths and not just Jews but Roma, homosexuals, Slavs, socialists; anyone deemed an enemy of the Nazi regime or undesirable; this is the context of Belsen. After being used for Russian prisoners of war, Bergen-Belsen became an exchange camp where Jews thought to be 'valuable' were held as hostages. It was never an extermination camp but when it received a new commandant, Joseph Kramer (formerly commandant of Auschwitz extermination camp) in December 1944 conditions became much worse; and the influx of prisoners moved there, beyond the reach of the advancing Red Army in the last months of the war exacerbated conditions further (Cesarani 2006a, pp. 14-9).

Colin offers to drive me the short distance to the Gedenkstätte Bergen-Belsen. He tells me that the British Garrison here is to be withdrawn finally and the area handed back. After such a long occupation it will perhaps seem strange for those who grew up with the British Army base in their midst to see it go; a blow to the local economy too I think as we pass the local brothel. The mayor for the borough of Bergen, Rainer Prokop, sums up the relationship between the British Garrison and the local population: 'They started out as an occupying force that taught us democracy but over time they became military partners, neighbours, friends and even spouses and parents to children here in Bergen.'[54] As we pass by, Colin points out the farmhouse where broadcaster Richard Dimbleby stayed and I wonder if it was here that the AFPU were billeted too. It seems likely that those attached to the press corps would be housed together. A short distance further on we pass the old entrance to the camp. There is nothing much to see now except a low metal barrier; the grassed area beyond opens out into a wedge shape between deciduous forests, birch trees mostly. Nothing of the old camp structure remains except a few foundations and the grave mounds and memorials. The Gedenkstätte documentation and information centre was opened in 2007, part of the more recent evolution of memorialisation and remembrance at this site. The impressive, brutalist architecture of the building seems to fit its grim task. It is built just outside the grounds of the old camp but a seven-metre extension with a large window juts out over the former camp grounds and the exhibition is well thought out, sensitive; there are many first-hand testimonies.

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54 http://www.spacewar.com/reports/German_town_prepares_tearful_goodbye_to_British_troops_999.html

Belsen had not been set up for mass killings and cremations like the extermination camps at Treblinka, Auschwitz and Birkenau; but it became a death camp, through disease and starvation; and cruelty and murder; and indifference—fifty-five hectares of human misery. Sergeant Oakes, the stills photographer whom I interviewed, told me that on that first evening when they entered the camp an inmate had beckoned him to follow her between the long huts. She threw back a tarpaulin to reveal piles of bodies, stacked high and wide stretching the length of the long huts: 'all those bloodless bodies', Oakes said, as if he still saw them, as if he were still looking at them. He brought out a large bundle of photographs to show me and my brother Jeff, who had accompanied me on the visit. Later my brother asked me why anyone, including our father, would want to keep such horrific reminders. At the time I had no explanation; but now I think I am beginning to understand the need, even for those who lived through it like Olga. It was not just a bundle of photographs that Oakes brought out for us to look at; it was a bundle of memories. I do not think he kept them to look at; he did not need to look; but perhaps he kept them in case he ever doubted what he had seen; perhaps in case others ever doubted what he had seen … just in case.

Lawrie recalls how, after entering the camp that first evening, they went away to find a billet for the night. He says that they did not talk about it until the next morning: 'I don't think any of us realised what was happening to us … There was a terrible kind of horror, I can't explain it … When we did get back to Belsen the following morning I think it was even worse, these half dead people walking about, glazed eyes … there was hopelessness, despair, the appalling smell … Your first reaction was to give them something … cigarettes, chocolates biscuits but it soon became apparent that this was wrong … they became violently ill' (Lawrie 1984).

The initial Dope Sheets from these first few days of the AFPU coverage all share the same characteristic, a lengthy contextualising commentary before any shots or sequences are listed; as if the cameramen feel the need to explain what they are about to reveal.[55] My father says: 'With the advance of British Troops into Germany, confirmation comes to light of brutalities and horror unequalled in the memory of man' (Lewis 1945a). Wilson starts his first entry: 'One of the most shocking indictments against Nazi Germany has come to light ' (Wilson 1945b). The AFPU team are joined on the 17 and 18 April 1944 by Captain Maladine and Sergeants Morris and Midgely. Their Dope Sheets were combined, retyped and annotated 'Exclusive: It is requested by Field Marshal Montgomery and Gen. Dempsey

[55] See the Dope Sheets of Wilson, Malindine et al and Lewis (Lewis 1945a; Malindine 1945c; Wilson 1945b).

that these pictures receive the maximum publicity.' A direct contradiction of the cautious 1941 memorandum, though Kushner points out that much of the coverage at the time was 'deracinated'; the victims not identified particularly as Jews, though they made up the majority of the Belsen population; a fact noted by the cameramen in their Dope Sheets (Cavan 2001, pp. 209-10).

Prior to the arrival of the British, the already starved and sick inmates had been locked in their huts without food for nine days and water for four; some were ill with dysentery and typhus; some were unable to move. It explains why the inmates, when given the choice, would rather camp outside among the dead then use these filthy huts. In the cameramen's Dope Sheets, you can feel them struggling to find a way of framing what they are witnessing and explanatory captions become important: 'Roll 1, 1: Here is the foul smelling foetid water pool the only source available' (Wilson 1945b). 'Weak and dying they carry their dead to the heap past many who have gone to the heap to die. To save their … camrades (*sic*) carrying [them]' (Malindine 1945c). 'Photographing was not easy as the day became very hot and the hundreds of dead smelt to high heaven' (Lewis 1945a). 'The atmosphere about the whole camp makes the job extremely difficult – it is hope that some of the atmosphere has got into the pictures' (Lawrie 1945c). Lawrie says: 'There was no chatter among them [the liberated inmates] … It was very quiet, silent business. … Some of them were too far gone to move.' Lawrie says that Lieutenant Wilson would find what was happening each day and help the cameramen decide what to cover but that they also made their own decisions, if they felt that there was something that needed to be recorded (Lawrie 1984).

In 1984 my father tells journalist Robert Penfold that he was glad to be distracted by the difficulties and problems of filming every day: 'I think looking through a view finder of a camera tended to remove you a little bit from it, which was in a way a relief' (Penfold 1984). He also remarks in his oral history interview that the two inch lens of the DeVry slowed him down: 'I should have had a wide angle. It would have made composition easier by including more of the scene, and not having to get so far back … having to focus carefully all the time does slow you down' (Lewis March 1981, p. 105). Though the lens may create a sense of distance between the observer and observed, I think it also served to concentrates the observer's experience; the terrible images burned not only onto celluloid but also seared into memory with all its attendant colour and sound and smells and taste and feeling.

I spend some time in the museum's documentation centre before entering the grounds of the camp, though there is really nothing left to see there. The buildings were burnt after the camp was emptied and over time the remaining evidence of fences and watch towers have also been pulled down. Paths circulate past memorials and explanatory panels and the mounds of the massed graves. Trees crowd in at the edges and have colonised sections around the perimeter creating a wild parkland. The bleakness of the weather seems to fit the desolation of my feelings at being there. The film I viewed at the Imperial War Museum is still fresh and plays in my memory as I walk.

There sits the skeletal man picking lice of his clothes, sitting among the bodies of the dead as if he had already taken his place in the queue of death. Bodies are strewn next to the barbed wire fence and one of the 'dead' moves slightly, rolling over onto his side and then is still. There are piles of bodies everywhere, mostly naked, corpses having been stripped, clothes being more important to the living than the dead, and I think I spot what I now call the Crucified Man (Lewis 1945b). I see the women smiling from behind the barbed wire gate at their liberators; I see the open mouthed death stare everywhere. One dead woman with beautiful dark wavy hair seems to be hiding her face among the bodies. My father lingers on the elegant curve of her back. He gets the camera so close to the decay and degradation that the images become abstracted. Women cook out in the open; the living and the dead side by side; faces are sometimes ignored for hands; the hands of the inmates taking bread and soup and the hands of the camp guards who had been arrested turning out their pockets. The camera closes in on the guards until the grinning skull of the SS insignia becomes the central image. A white haze hovers in the background, always. Bodies are taken off trucks and thrown into the pits by the camp guards; women inmates are clapping and cheering; one woman is screaming and bunching her fists; her whole body is taken up with the effort, another simply cries (Lewis 1945d). There is the 'human laundry' where those individuals too weak from disease are taken to be cleaned and bathed before going to hospital. The continual flop and tumble of these tortured human forms onto carts and into pits is disturbing and it goes on and on; the trailing legs making wavy lines in the dirt; the tangle of bodies in the pits, an impossible knot. Finally there are the bulldozers rolling the bodies into the pits; the drivers with their masks. My father identifies them as Wrinn of Haddington, Scotland and Burridge of Todmorton (Lewis 1945c). I see my father ducking out of sight of Lawrie's camera while he films officials from Celle at one of the mass burials. My father captures Lawrie similarly as if they need to

verify each other's presence there.[56] Though the camera often lingers on and gets close to the faces of the guards and the officials from Celle, they betray no emotions. Eventually and slowly the scenes begin to change: women shower oblivious to the camera; oblivious to everything except the wonderful feeling of being able to get clean again (Lewis 1945c). Washing hangs on the barbed wire; people line up to get new clothes; girls comb their hair; soldiers push the children on swings; an inmate and a soldier hold hands; the toxic huts are burnt. There is a return of dignity and kindness and hope. The German soldiers from the barracks go back to their lines, still armed; a young woman seeing them off makes a face at the cameraman. The children from the camp go back to school; someone arranges a concert party and the children sit on the soldiers' knees to watch. Somewhere amidst this confusion of wretchedness and hope, Olga Horak is making up her mind to live.

I wind my way along the paths reading the memorials and the explanatory panels. Here was the two and a half metre high barbed wire fence that ran nearly four kilometres. There the nine metre high watch towers, patrolled below by guards with dogs. Here was a square where roll calls were made; a form of physical abuse. There was the water reservoir, 'the foetid pool'. Here were the administration buildings. Finally I find myself at the original entrance. I look back into the camp. Somewhere in there my father filmed a woman clutching the Australian journalist, Colin Wills's hand. She hugged it to herself, shaking her body in some kind of paroxysm of gratitude. Lawrie says there were many such incidents: 'Once they realised that we were a liberation unit instead of a different kind of oppressor … It happened one day to Mike Lewis and I thought we would have to break that woman's arm, to get her hands off … she just held on to him, of course she probably recognised Mike was Jewish … she grabbed him and held onto him and left bruises on his arm. Mike was a big fellow and he couldn't get rid of her, not that he wanted to get rid of her, but her grip was so tight, she was hanging on to hope and Mike was hope … not saying anything just looking at him' (Lawrie 1984). I could hear the emotion catch Lawrie's voice and I too am gripped by insurgent emotions at the image of the woman clinging mutely to my father.

Colin Wills goes on to work with Sidney Bernstein on the documentary. When the incomplete film was rediscovered and finally shown in 1984 it prompted my father to tell me a rather macabre, and most likely apocryphal, story about Alfred Hitchcock's involvement as treatment advisor. He said there was rumour going around while the film

[56] In discussions with Toby Haggith he said that he thought that this might have been a deliberate verification by the cameramen of their presence there.

was still in production that when the 'Master of Horror' first viewed the raw footage from the camps and particularly Bergen-Belsen, he was so disturbed by the material that he had to take leave for a few weeks. The Imperial War Museum has been restoring this film and it will be released early next year; I wonder how it will stand the test of time.

I turn back along the paths towards the mass graves running the typology of what I saw in the archives through my mind, contextualising the images in the War Diary and the five other photographs within this footage. Haggith says the AFPU took thirty-three rolls of film and more than two hundred photographs at Belsen (Haggith 2006).[57] Compared to Oakes's bundle, the images my father kept are few; perhaps because Oakes was a photographer and my father a cinematographer. There are eleven Belsen images in my father's archive, comprising six small images in his War Diary and the five large format ones that I found as a child. There are two other, non-Belsen atrocity photographs on another page in the War Diary. The caption next to the withered, shrunken men pictured says: 'These are the victims of German concentration camps. They were packed into river barges and set out from a Baltic port … The Nazis did not want the Russians to see evidence of their brutality. By good luck a barge landed in Denmark.'

The six images in the War Diary are arranged symmetrically on the left hand side of opposing pages and running the length of the second page, next to the photographs, is a typed panel describing the camps liberation under the truce. These photographs show bodies being loaded onto trucks; a dead girl, pretty, partially naked; a bulldozer pushing the bodies along; a man with haunted eyes looking through barbed wire; a woman with hollow eyes and skull face framed by a head scarf, staring vacantly; a hut being burned, smoke and flame issuing from the windows. Together with the typed panel, there is a sense of a narrative summary of events. I have tried to identify the creators of all five photographs I found as a child but have been unable to do so as yet. I think the separation of the five photographs from the ones in the War Diary, and even their unusually large size, reflect a wrestling with the place of Belsen in my father's war experiences as well as within his personal identity as a Jew. The Belsen images are both inside the narrative of the war and outside it; part of the war and yet something quite apart. It is the paradox of the Holocaust historiography that scholar Doris Bergen identified. The thing that has become obvious though, is that the images my father chose to keep, especially the five that I found as a child, act like place holders for the film he took.

[57] Haggith notes that this accounts for 33 rolls of 100ft rolls of mute footage but that there is also an additional two reels of film (2,000 ft) with sound in the Imperial War Museum's collection.

The scene is set by Captain Maladine's Belsen landscape, which shows the massive scale of the catastrophe that the cameramen found. My father says: 'This was on a scale that had to be organised. It had to be done, could only be done by a modern administrative service; could only be done by moving masses of people by rail. It had to be planned and worked for. It was a sort of death by administration, impersonal; so many thousands of people, so many cars' (Lewis March 1981). The noxious conditions and the dehumanising treatment the inmates had been subjected to are clear in this image. My father told journalist Philip Castle in 1984: 'I climbed to the top of a tower … and I looked down on Belsen and it just looked like a huge sanitation tip. The people did not even have the dignity of going to an area to clear their bowels' (Castle 1984).

Another of the images, also taken by Malindine, shows part of a burial pit with its tangle of corpses (Malindine 1945a).

Belsen burial pit with bodies

In the *Images of War* documentary my father says that there were: 'pits containing bodies of people as large as lawn tennis courts; containing babies, girls, youths, men, women, old, young and how deep we didn't know' (Conway 1981). He also said that no film that he ever saw conveyed the despair and horror of that place (Edwards circa 1983).[58]

[58] Producer John Edwards did some preliminary filming with my father for a documentary, They Made News, which was never completed.

The camp guards, men and women, were organised by the British to remove the corpses, work that had previously been forced on the starved inmates. Armed guards kept watch. Eventually, it was realised that the bodies were not being buried fast enough as thousands more died; that is when bulldozers were employed. My father said that many of the guards were old men in poor uniforms and he assumed that the original SS guards had left before the British arrived. I was not able to identify the creator of the image that shows this grim work (Unknown 1945a).

Belsen camp guards remove the dead

Wilson writes: 'In the early days of the struggles against the infamies of Belsen we were only able to segregate internees into three essential categories. These were: (1) Those who were beyond all medical aid. (2) Those, whom if moved immediately, might be saved. (3) Those who were fit enough to survive a week or more in the old camp and could wait while we moved the more pressing cases' (Wilson 1945a).

A nurse hurries by as camp guards load the never ending stream of bodies

In another of the five images a nurse appears to be running by a truck into which bodies are being loaded by the former camp guards. The relief effort must have been frantic if 13,000 more people died after the camps liberation—Olga Horak's mother was among this number. My father says German army doctors and nurses worked 'liked hell' alongside their British Army colleagues. He tells journalist Marsali MacKinnon in 1984 that: 'My impression was they were doing this as if they were grasping at the opportunity to pay penance for the terrible things that had happened — I was amazed at the hours they put in' (MacKinnon 1984).

The Crucified Man, the image that Wilson took, knits these four images together with its close up of death, its transfiguration. The prominent and painfully defined barrel of the man's rib cage is another *leit motif* of Belsen. It was hard to personalise the disaster in a place where every corpse, and every person near death was a tragedy; where the individual was overwhelmed by sheer numbers. My father's cultural identification with the inmates gave him no particular empathy, I think, other than that of a shared humanity. He remarks: 'And I was glad to leave the camp. The people in the camp wandered around apathetically, hopelessly, ill and sick. It's hard to gauge their attitude, their belief, their feelings. They had lost so much and been through so many horrors. I did not speak to them, if one could converse with them, because of the language problem. Because what

does one say to people who have been through hell? And probably that hell would continue even though they have survived the camps, in their awful memories' (Lewis March 1981).

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These images and the cameramen who captured them have much to tell us about what Belsen was like at its liberation and just after; but the building of the narrative of the Holocaust by censors, editors and others in the aftermath of liberation began the dislocation of these images and as Hannah Cavan notes: 'the personal, telling comments of the cameramen on their dope sheets were edited out leaving a less personal more literal presentation of the horrific facts' (Cavan 2001, p. 227). Their usefulness as artefacts, whether evidentiary or illustrative, became doubted and the Sergeant Cameramen, who recorded that pivotal point in history when the extent of the Nazi regimes brutality was graphically revealed for the first time, became nearly invisible. It was not until the 1984 screening of *Memory of the Camps* that media interviews with my father about his Belsen film revealed him to be Jewish.[59] The later work of Haggith, Cavan and Newman helped to redeem the AFPU from obscurity and define its role and work at Belsen but ethical questions about their work and the images remained. Paradoxically, the very ubiquity of these images through mass reproduction and circulation disconnected them further from their moorings. They drifted in time and space gathering about them controversy and contention and in some cases, deep misunderstanding about their genesis and purpose. Alain Resnais's conflation of Belsen footage with an exploration of Auschwitz and Majdanek extermination camps in *Nuit et Brouillard* (*Night and Fog*) is one example of how the images were misappropriated (Resnais 1955). I do not think it was a deliberate attempt to mislead; rather it was an early attempt (1957) to describe events which were still being processed by those that had experienced them and survived.

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In 1984, when Robert Penfold was interviewing my father for the Australian program 'A Current Affair', anchored then by Mike Willesee, he asked: 'In some funny way, I suppose, did you see it as an artistic piece as well, despite all the horror of it?' (Penfold 1984). It

[59] 'Memory of the Camps' was 'discovered' in the archives of the Imperial War Museum and released in 1984, at the Berlin Film Festival and then on PBS the following year. The film has recently been restored and the final reel completed according to the original shooting script by the Imperial War Museum. It premiered in Germany, Australia and England during 2014 as *German Concentration Camps Factual Survey* (Haggith 1945, 2014). Approximately half of the 72 minutes of this film is Belsen footage.

made me wince then; it seemed so blundering; the interview being intercut with horrific scenes of the camp. Now that I have interrogated these images myself; now that I can really see them, I have come to think that, perhaps, he was not blundering but reaching for an answer to a vague notion he had about their aesthetic qualities; about the aesthetics of horror. My father's response to Robert Penfold's question was: 'I don't think I was thinking of artistry. I think I was trying to show it the way it happened, the way it was' (Penfold 1984). Alan Moore echoes this sentiment: 'I knew this was important. I just wanted to record it to show what was there' (Bevan 2004, p. 47).

But I have seen in just these few images there is evidence of more than just record making, their training—Alan as an artist and my father as an artist and screen journalist—meant that for them it was impossible not apply 'artistry' to their work, and in some respects I think the act of engaging symbols, references, as they went about their grim work were necessary to help them make some sort of sense of a horror that both would carry the burden of for the rest of their lives. Alan says: 'I used to dream about it' (Bevan 2004, p. 70) My father: 'I wish I could forget. I *wish* I could forget. But it never leaves me' (Penfold 1984).

It is not widely known that the film taken during the liberation and relief of Bergen-Belsen was used in the Belsen war crimes trial at Lüneburg in September 1945, and was the first use of film as corroboratory evidence (Haggith 2006, p. 89). A compilation, supported by affidavits from the Sergeant Cameramen, was screened in the courtroom.[60] Though the cameramen may not have envisaged their work being used in this way it is clear, that like my father and Alan, they believed they were collecting evidence. Wilson records in his Dope Sheet for the second day: 'AFPU photographers (2 still – 2 cine) returned to the camp to obtain further photographic evidence of the incredible conditions under which the inmates have been living and dying' (Wilson 1945b). Lawrie writes in his Dope Sheet: 'In one of these shots can been seen Sgt Lewis of the Army Film and Photo Section who has been in this camp since the first day of our occupation and its liberation, collecting photographic evidence of the Nazi brutality for all the world to see. The atmosphere of a place like this is ghastly to say the least, but nothing has deterred this photographer from watching in his lens scenes such as never the wildest and most morbid mind could imagine' (Lawrie 1945b).

[60] The court proceedings say the film was shown on 20 September 1945 and describe it as 'an exhibit attached to an affadavit'. Affidavit No. 1770638 lists Sgt. Harold Haywood, No. 2985965 Sgt. William Lawrie, No. 6469132 Sgt. Michael Lewis all Army Film and Photographic Unit (Phillips 1949).

No one reading of these images can tell the whole story of Belsen; that can never be known; but the redacted images deflect reading even fragments of knowing. Nancy Goodman wrote: 'When a blind spot in the eye (and I) is constructed to hide from the inhumanities of the Holocaust, it is also likely to operate in obfuscating knowledge of other mass atrocities and traumas' (Goodman & Meyers 2012, p. 3). It is not incumbent upon any of us to view such images but if we do, we should not do so lightly. It is this difference, between looking and seeing, that engages a broader set of critical faculties.

As Alan Moore observed about viewing works of art when urging that the Belsen paintings be hung properly and viewed a few times before a decision was made: 'after numerous visits they [the viewer] begin to understand to look a little deeper into the artists thoughts, it is this work, that lives not the work of the surface value which leave no room for intellectual effort or stimulated imagination on the part of the viewer' (Treloar 1944-1947, pp. Moore to Treloar,18 January 1948).

What for me began as an exploration of my own trauma and a desire to be an agent of my father's memories gave me compelling reasons for confronting these images. Through facing my childhood fear of them and the dissociation I experienced for many years after, I have come to understand more about the circumstances of their creation. I have found that there is another way to view these photographs and film through an aesthetic that re-anchors the image to its creator and the milieu in which it was created. Such viewing opens a layered way of seeing that is about historical knowledge and understanding. For although Claude Lanzman eschewed the 'obscenity in the project of understanding' the Holocaust, it is human nature to try, to ask questions, even though many may still believe it is beyond representation (Haggith & Newman 2005). Without some understanding these Belsen images remain incomprehensible horror, and in our horror we 'shoot the messenger' as if they had committed these awful deeds. We can never know the atrocity of Belsen, we can only try to imagine and our imagining can transform our viewing into an act of witnessing (re-witnessing) and even remembrance. Two sisters, Ms Bruell and Peer, survivors of Bergen-Belsen, wrote to my father after his interview in 1984 and their letter frames my father's work at Belsen in an illuminating way:

> Dear Mr Lewis, Watching your documentary on the liberation of Bergen-Belsen on the Mike Willesee program brought back painful memories for us as well. I was there with my sister when you took those shots. Watching horror-stricken we dreaded the thought that we may soon recognise ourselves among the camp inmates. Your film accurately conveyed the horror of the place called hell. We both

> survived, not through hope because in a place like that you had none — but through sheer luck and the liberation of the British Army. We thank you for showing the world and telling about the real truth (albeit 40 years later, why? why?) You have condemned those who say it was all lies. You and we have proved that the unbelievable did happen in a civilized country. It must never be allowed to happen again (Bruell & Peer 1984).

The sisters dreading to recognise themselves yet thankful the images were shown, sharing my father's distress and wrapping him in the embrace of shared witnessing. Acknowledging that his film was a faithful record from the abyss; acknowledging him, the reluctant, but constant witness to a defining moment in history.

Now when I look at the image of the emaciated, splayed man, I see that it is not the photograph or the photographer, that demeans or dehumanises the tortured man, but what was done to him; this image seeks in some ways to reclaim his humanity with its unflinching focus and iconic referencing. Each new generation discovers the Second World War and the Holocaust anew; from a different standpoint in time, culture and geography; the sign posts remain in the film and photographs and Dope Sheets and collected memories of those who were there at the liberation; witnesses and survivors. It is an historical and evidentiary record but it is also a memorial of sorts, because the Belsen dead, without families to remember them and names and identity to mark their passing, have only these photographs, shocking as they are, to mark that they existed at all. Years later my father would write: 'For two weeks I filmed the horror of Belsen. When I left I thought that time and the war, which was still on, would make me forget. I wanted to forget. After forty years, I know now I will never forget. That the hell I saw in Belsen will never leave me. Down the years the dead still cry out to us. Remember us. Each of us like you had loves, ambitions and hopes for the future. Now, no more' (Lewis 1985b).

My father said that he did not believe in showing horror pictures but thought, perhaps, it was time that *Memories of the Camps* was shown. He told journalist Fia Cumminis that: 'People are apt to think, here's this beautiful country Australia and it is far removed from all the feuding and vendettas of the blood-soaked history of Europe. They are going to look at this and say, it happened in a far-away country, long ago, its history, it can't happen again. … It can' (Cummins 1984).

When I was younger I was somewhat bemused that my father bore so little animosity toward the Germans but he maintained that any nation could do what the German's did once it allowed itself to fall into unreasonable hate. He says it was a warning against all

prejudice: 'If people hate it will destroy them in the end because nature takes a kind of revenge, it becomes sick with it. It sounds fantastic but if you had seen the camp lots of things would have occurred to you. I don't go around making a campaign of it but I try to see that people are valuable in themselves' (Cummins 1984).

Later I came to understand that it was not just the appalling conditions of the camp that was, for him, life changing but also the shattering ordinariness of the men who carried out such inhumane orders. He says: 'The horrifying thing that I found … is that the people who did these things were ordinary people, that was the chilling part for me. Ordinary people, people that you perhaps pass in the street, or travel with, or work with, ordinary people' (Penfold 1984).[61] A victim may shrink inside all of us but a perpetrator lurks there too; we must be vigilant.

[61] Years later in 1963, Hannah Arendt would make a similar observation in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*.

9 CONSTANT WITNESS

> To observe, to remember, and to pass on to others what one has seen is already to take a stand against inhumanity …To know, and let others know, is one way of remaining human and, for that reason is an act with a moral dimension. (Todorov 1996)

I am twelve hours out from Sydney now; feeling a desperate need to be grounded at home after my visit to the Gedenkstätte Bergen-Belsen. I feel fragile, as if the skin that separates me from the outside has been stretched thin; as if I had poured all my energy and capacity for apprehending the moment of Belsen into those few days I spent there. I think of the AFPU team who my father said, 'steeled their nerves', to go in there day after day; under orders, but also convinced that it had to be done; that they must record what they saw there. The team of Wilson, Lawrie, Lewis and Oakes continued coverage for eleven days at Bergen-Belsen until 26 April 1945 when another AFPU team took over. The end of the war was close now but that was not yet clear to my father: 'the war still went on when we left Belsen and, in a way, it was not entirely unwelcome … it drove Belsen out of our minds' (Edwards circa 1983).

My father is again teamed with Laws and Blondy and assigned to a flying column of tanks, infantry and ancillary units that are to strike north across Germany into Denmark. He says that they were not too happy about travelling through enemy-held territory without flank protection. Near Lubeck they meet a contingent of German military cars with high-ranking officers full of 'loot and women', my father says it was a wonder the car could move (Lewis March 1981). He said it was obvious that they were fleeing from the east, from the Red Army I suppose, and that they were pleased to see the British. The flying column frees some British prisoners of war that had been languishing in Germany since Dunkirk and there are some images of these men in the War Diary (Unknown 1945c).

A group of prisoners of war talk to the men that freed them

The flying column pushes on into the rubble of Kiel and a photograph in the main railway station gives an idea of the destruction wrought by the Allied bombing raids on Germany (Unknown 1945d).

Main railway station Kiel

As they reach the Kiel Canal and proceed to cross the bridge a small farce unfolds. On the bridge a young German soldier steps from his sentry box into the middle of the road, rifle extended, bayonet fixed and tells them to halt in German. The column pauses; my father is bemused at the absurdity of the young man facing down the cannon of the armoured column: 'well this was terribly embarrassing … what were we to do with him. I wanted to say don't be a BF; it's too silly for words' (Conway 1981). 'I don't know who persuaded him to be sensible, to stand aside. But he did' (Lewis March 1981). There is a photograph in the War Diary of the column crossing the bridge and I wonder if the German standing with his back to the camera is the young man who challenged them (Unknown 1945b).

Crossing the Kiel Canal

On the page after the images of Kiel is a spread of four photographs that signal a change in the tenor of the War Diary. A single caption says: 'The defeat of the Wehrmacht. Seen on the Danish German frontier.' One photograph shows a pile of German helmets, suggesting perhaps the demise of those who had owned them, or maybe the discarding of them by those fleeing. The other three images are of German soldiers, exhausted, resting next to their packs.

A young German soldier sleeps on his pack

In one shot a solitary, fine-featured, young man is asleep on his back in the grass (Unknown 1945e). He has taken off his boots and socks and his head leans to one side in the crook of his pack, hands folded over his chest. The portrayal has a tender, sympathetic quality and is a peaceful image coming, as it does, after the images of Belsen; and the smashed German cities. Then, turning the page, I find that I have reached Denmark and the images change abruptly to celebration and exuberance (Lewis 1945f).

Liberated Denmark greets the Army of Liberty

My father recalls crossing the border: 'We had been through Europe, smashed, the misery and the pain, the grief, the death, the uncertainty … (Lewis March 1981): 'It was as if the sun had come out, houses intact … cheering, welcoming us; it was marvellous, it was a dream end (Conway 1981). They crossed by ferry to the Island of Zealand to enter Denmark's capital Copenhagen but stop on the outskirts for a tea break. All along the column, tommy cookers are brought out and tea is brewed —a powder of tea, sugar and milk that is sprinkled on hot water. My father and Laws sit together supping tea in the sunshine, enjoying the moment; it seemed that the war was over, though it had not been officially declared. Then from a distance came a group of young people on bicycles, the spokes of their wheels decked with red, white and blue streamers. My father said they stared in amazement at the halted column and asked in English: 'Why have you stopped? Copenhagen is waiting for you.' My father says that when it was explained that the column had stopped for a tea break, they are amused to find that everything they had heard about the British and their tea drinking habits was true: 'And so we entered Copenhagen which was filled with thousands of people hanging from windows and doorways and squares.

And unwisely I got out of the jeep to take a picture.[62] And the jeep immediately, having stopped, disappeared between waves of people who sagged the whole jeep down. They put its springs out of action. … And I was nearly swamped and mobbed. Oh it was lovely being a hero' (Lewis March 1981).

In the War Diary there are pages of their triumphal passage through Denmark and Copenhagen: in one image my father is signing autographs, in another looking back smiling.

[62] His reference to stopping to take a picture makes me realise that he is also using a still camera so that some of the images taken in Denmark could be his. However, as I have not able to verify the creator/s.

Sergeants Lewis and Laws on their way to Copenhagen

Somewhere on the thronging streets of Copenhagen, a young man invites my father to a party. He meets the young man's girlfriend, Lis Varnaae, (Unknown circa 1944a) she is singing in a trio modelled on the Andrews Sisters; he thinks she is more beautiful than Ingrid Bergman and without many words exchanged, they fall in love. The last image in the War Diary is of a café in Copenhagen; business as usual.

Lis Varnaae circa 1944

Is it a fairy tale ending? That is how the *Images of War* documentary concludes my father's story. The narrator says: 'It was a dream end … and a dream beginning, for it was in Denmark that Mike Lewis met the girl he was to marry and with whom he was to live happily ever after. (Conway 1981). The line strikes a strangely frivolous note in an otherwise serious documentary; maybe reflecting the writer's response to the terrible scenes of Bergen-Belsen that had preceded this moment.

After Denmark my father is assigned to an airborne assault on Singapore which fills him with a sense of gloom: 'I'd come through so much … I felt my luck might run out. And I went to my commanding officer. And I said that through an accident of age and demob numbers … I was going to Singapore when others who had done far less were being demobbed … I felt that my luck, which had held so far throughout the war, I suddenly felt very strongly would not last. So he sent me to see a psychiatrist, a major… I told him what I told my commanding officer… I really felt it, perhaps irrationally. And without any argument, any cross examination, he said: "I'll regrade you" (Lewis March 1981, p. 112). It is an unexpected and very humane anecdote of army administration. Perhaps the psychiatrist really thought he was unfit for duty; or maybe looking at my father's war record, he trusted my father's instinct, his experience; his red beret. He was posted back to London to work on *Soldier* magazine. I check the British Army website and *Soldier* is still in

publication.[63] I wonder whether being in love made my father feel more vulnerable. Or maybe it was just that, after celebrating the end of the war in Denmark, he had let go of the resolve necessary to carry on. He is demobbed in 1946.

Maybe this is where my father's story ends, where all war stories end if they do not end in death, in the return to civilian life. Then I realise that it does not end here either for those that survived; for them the story of war continues in memory, always. In 1985, a little less than a year before his death, my father wrote a third person account of his feelings at the end of war: 'Peace had come. Was it five or six years of war, he was not sure. The years of war passed uncounted, peace a dream in an uncertain future … it was as if he had been born into war and never known anything else. The war squeezed colour from his feelings … Now all that was past … he had to constantly think of peace to grasp the new reality … Why could he not feel the exulting joy of the cheering thousands … he was empty of feeling, a sad loneliness enveloped him; was it because he was a stranger in a now peaceful strange world … He had no answers, he knew only he had survived … Though he was nearing thirty there was the adventure of starting a new life, to bring new lives into a land at peace; he felt a sudden surprising desire to have children' (Lewis 1985c).

Of his thirty years with the BBC news service and the pioneering days of television news my father says very little and his archive might suggest that nothing much happened at all during those years; even though he went on to cover other wars and was wounded for a third time in 1973, during the Yom Kippur war[64]. He was offered other jobs too and tried out as a producer but he could not settle at a 'desk job' and went back to camera work. His working life seems to have had had a lot in common with that of a combat cameraman though of course it was not always dangerous. In between civil unrest, riots and wars there were visiting dignitaries, celebrities and art shows but he was always on the move; always in different situations and locations day-to-day; always chasing the clock to meet deadlines. What his archive does show is that Bergen-Belsen was a constant in his life. Though he never wanted to relive those memories, there is evidence that he did so on many occasions, for journalists and film makers; for Holocaust commemorations, for anyone who had interest. Olga Horak said: 'The past lives in me.' It lived in my father too and it lives on in the fragments of his memories caught on film and in photographs and in his recollections. Though a life time may pass; though you may spend your whole career

[63] http://www.army.mod.uk/soldier-magazine/soldier-magazine.aspx

[64] The Yom Kippur war saw Egypt, Syria allied against Israel. My father was injured while travelling through the Gaulan Heights and sustained a broken collar bone and shrapnel wounds. His instinct to take cover and the robust nature of his Arriflex camera saved his life.

recording stories; there is only one story that remains at the end; it is the war and Bergen-Belsen and Heinrich Boll's words come back to me with renewed force: 'and the word sinks, sinks down inside them' (Boll 1970, p. 2). The word, for my father, was Belsen.

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In August 2014 I am invited to the Australian premier screening and panel discussion of the restored and completed film *German Concentration Camps Factual Survey*[65] at the Melbourne International Film Festival. Restoration director, Toby Haggith of the Imperial War Museum provides a contextualising introduction before we view the film. He explains that for the restoration they went back to the original nitrate negatives and completed the sixth reel according to the production notes and a finalised script that are held in the Museum's archive. The film was originally intended to be screened in German cinemas after the war but by September 1945, British priorities for Germany had changed from de-Nazification to reconstruction and the film was not finished. The film covers ten camps and four sites of atrocity discovered in Germany, Austria and Poland. It includes scenes from Bergen-Belsen, Dachau, Buchenwald, Auschwitz and Majdanek in Poland. Haggith encourages members of the audience to stay for a 'debriefing' session at the end and also to leave, at any time, if they find the images too confronting. It is the Imperial War Museum's policy that the film should always be introduced and screened in this way.

Before seeing the completed film, I had worried about the wisdom of bringing it back to life but all my doubts and concerns are swept away when I see the finished film. It is a masterful piece of restoration work and a remarkable documentary; unflinching but empathetic, leaving spaces in the narration for silence and contemplation. The restoration and digitisation of the film removes the smog of time and gives the images a crisp immediacy that is more confronting, if that is possible; and though I have seen the images from Bergen-Belsen many times now, their awfulness never seems to diminish. The linking of Bergen-Belsen with other camps and sites of atrocity make this a relentless viewing experience and some of the last scenes in a warehouse stacked high with of bales of human hair bring home the scale of this catastrophe, this Shoah.

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[65] Originally screened as *Memory of the Camps* (the incomplete version of the film) *German Concentration Camps Factual Survey* consists of the restored footage with the addition of the missing sixth reel. The film was ordered in April 1945 by the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force. The production team consisted of Sidney Bernstein, editors Stewart McAllister and Peter Tanner; writers Colin Wills and Richard Crossman; and Alfred Hitchcock, who worked as Treatment Adviser. Some statistical inaccuracies in the script have been left, so that the restored film is also, as some have described, a time capsule of what was known about these camps in 1945.
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Afterwards, I am introduced to an elderly woman, bent with age, a Belsen survivor. She asks me whether my father is still alive. When I tell her no; that he died some years ago; she clasps my hand in hers, looks into my eyes and says: 'Well I will just have to thank *you* for him.'

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I set out to pursue several strands of practice and inquiry: to write a biography/memoir of my father's experiences as a British Army combat cameraman during the Second World War; to use images from his Visual War Diary and other sources as an integral and reflexive part of the narrative structure; and to explore how re-engaging these images with their original purpose and meaning through their creators might change our reading of them, particularly the images of Bergen-Belsen.

I wanted to refract some of the debates about Holocaust imagery through my father's story, memories and meditations on his experiences: to explore the ethics of creating and broadcasting such images; and whether depicting the conditions in the camp demeaned and dehumanised the survivors and the victims. I asked what purpose such images serve and whether we should look at them at all. As with any interdisciplinary work it invokes many themes and sub-themes and these are reflected in the questions that introduce each chapter, but the central theme that drives this work is how the life and experience of a combat cameraman can inform our reading of the Belsen images in different ways.

What emerges from my father's archives and supporting research is that the AFPU were directed to make a record of the liberation and relief effort at Belsen; and that this included the state of the camp as they first found it with thousands of dead and dying. It is clear that this was never intended to be a quick pass through, to grab a few images, but a thorough recording of the events that went on for weeks until the camps was completely evacuated. In the initial stages when there was so much happening, the cameramen were guided by their instincts and training and helped by Lieutenant Wilson who liaised with those involved in the relief effort each day. When Wilson Lawrie, Lewis and Oakes are joined by Captain Malindine's team on 17 and 18 April, there are five still cameramen and two cinematographers covering the camp; this is an intensive moment of coverage. It is clear from their Dope Sheets and oral histories that they were all deeply affected by what they saw there, in spite of their previous experience of war. It is not clear whether they knew that some of the images they were capturing would be used as evidence at the Belsen trial in Lüneburg but they did recognise that they were making an historical record and one that would always fall short of the excruciating actuality they experienced.

It is interesting then, that the cameramen are often missing from the debate about these images. In *Remembering to Forget* Barbie Zelizer says: 'Another way of turning images of the camps into symbols of a broader atrocity story was to provide them with few

accrediting attributes. Readers often did not know who had taken the pictures' (Zelizer 1998, p. 121). Yet she has not identified who took the Bergen-Belsen image that appears on the facing page; it is accredited simply to the Imperial War Museum; it was taken by Lieutenant Wilson.[66] We see this displacement of the cameraman again in Marianne Hirsh's, *the Generation of Postmemory; writing and visual culture after the Holocaust* where again a Belsen image, is credited only to the Imperial War Museum; it was taken by Sergeant Oakes (Hirsch 2012b, p. 116). The images, even in scholarly debate, are still detached from the cameraman in spite of Caroline Brothers' exhortation that the context of war photographs is the source of their meaning (Brothers 1997, p. 16).

Susan Crane makes her argument against the use of Holocaust atrocity images in the context of her role as an educator. She says that she has only once shown, 'the Allied Signal Corps film of the concentration camp' to students. Her main criticism seems to be that it is: 'a partial representation of a longer and more terribly diverse event'; and that, 'some images were never made'. However, the discussion slides suddenly into images taken by perpetrators seeming to conflate the two, asking in the next sentence: 'do we require death-in-process by gassing vans or gas chambers before we can "really know" the horrible truth?'(Crane 2008, p. 317). Again the problem here is the missing cameramen. Who were these Allied cameramen and what were their directions; who made the film and why; is it the film that was used in evidence at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial.[67] If we are to discuss the efficacy, or not, of showing atrocity images I think we need to be more specific in identifying which images are under discussion, and of course, who created them and why.

This impression of a camera, dislocated from the operator and an immaculately conceived image dislocated from its creator persist, I think, from earlier discussions of photographic images, most notably by Barthes and Sontag. The photograph was not seen by them as artisanal; a camera was not like an artist's paint brush. In his discussion of the message of the photograph, Barthes asserts that it is not like other forms of visual analogical reproductions such as drawing and painting which contain both a denoted, and connoted messages, he writes: 'When we come to the photograph, however, we find in principle nothing of the kind, at any rate as regards the press photograph (which is never an 'artistic' photograph)' (Barthes 1977, p. 18). Sontag writes: 'But being educated by

[66] There are six other unaccredited Belsen images in this book.

[67] The Allied Signal Corps film compilation, *Nazi Concentration Camps*, was presented at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial in November 1945.

photographs is not like being educated by older, more artisanal images' (Sontag 1977, p. 3). Both of these scholars distinguished the work of the photographer from the work of the artist.

Creator is a term that I have come to prefer in some instances when referring to the cameramen in this thesis. Using this term does two things: it reminds us that there was a person behind the camera; and it reminds us that the person did not simply point the camera mindlessly. In this way the creator is kept in the mind's eye when we examine his or her work. We can see the explicit choices they made of what to record and how, and the circumstances of the image's creation.[68] We must, in fact, be mindful of the aesthetic of the image and its creator, Michael Kelly's: 'critical thinking about the affective, cognitive, moral, political, technological, and other historical conditions constitutive of the production, experience and judgement of such art' (Kelly 2012, p. xviii).

In any given situation, screen journalists must engage or confront the situation that they have been sent to cover. In the case of Belsen this engagement was a unique and remarkable demand on the consciousness of the cameramen both as human beings and professionals. What was being witnessed was physical evidence of human behaviour at its worst. The cameramen had to apprise the situation from the point of view of their mission and their training and then identify the 'telling image' from amid the chaos; asking, 'What is it I am seeing here? How can I convey this? ' It required a set of set of aesthetic, and cultural judgements which we can assume had never been made before by anyone. It almost certainly required some technical considerations. Having narrowed down the visual chaos to the subject, the cameramen had to use their training to make the technical decisions about what they were filming. They had to consider the limits of their cameras, their film stock, and so on.

They also had to manage their own personal, human responses to the enormity of the situation and still make a functional record; something that might be regarded as beyond training and technique. One imagines that it required balancing being a witness and being a record maker and this is demonstrated by their Dope Sheets, which inescapably use words not only to record the time and place of the images in history but, to a degree, to convey the import of their work at Belsen.

If we keep the creator firmly in mind when using photographs, they can become more than ancillary artefacts used to break up the text or provide an interesting, illustrative spread in

[68] The Imperial War Museum's photographic collection search engine employs the category of 'creator' as a search filter, so that one can search by Sergeant Oakes, for example.

the centre of a book. Scholar Peter Burke, urges the use of images as historical evidence but notes that 'source criticism' of visual evidence is largely 'underdeveloped' compared to that applied to documents. He also said their use should not be limited to evidence. Images he claimed: 'bring home to us what we may have known but did not takes so seriously before. In short, images allow us to "imagine" the past more vividly' (Burke 2001, pp. 13-4). It is this ability to make us imagine more vividly that I think infuses some photographs with a human rights dimension that scholar Susie Linfield discusses in her book, *The Cruel Radiance: photography and political violence*. She says that how we read images and whether they have meaning for us really resides inside us: 'Photojournalists are responsible for the ethics of showing, but we are responsible for the ethics of seeing' (Linfield 2010, p. 60). The Belsen photographs and film have a place in reminding us, and future generations, of our shared barbarity, as well as our humanity. They are sources of evidence as well as sites of meaning if we read them conscientiously; apprehending them in their historical moment but comprehending them in the present.

~ends~

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