

Patrick Kelly Wyatt, a British subject, was born on 3/3/1919 in Paddington, London. In February 1939 he became a driver/gardener to Mr F Ballard of The Butts, Newchurch, Sandown on the Isle of Wight for around 3 months before he enlisted in the RAF on 30/5/1939 for a 7 year term of service, due to terminate in 1946 but service life obviously suited him and he extended this to a full Long Service 24 year career, due to terminate on 29/5/1963.

His service number was 645417 and his physical description shows him to be a slight man, 5' 5" tall, with a 30" chest. He had dark brown hair and hazel eyes and a fresh complexion. He had a distinguishing mark, a scar, on his left leg.

Patrick started his service life in the usual way, at an initiation or induction centre, in his case Number 3 Depot at Padgate, near Warrington, Cheshire on 30/5/1939. After successfully passing out from his 8 week training course here, Patrick started his RAF career in the rank of AC1 (Aircraftsman) and was posted on 28/7/1939 to the No 3 School of Technical Training (Mechanical) at Blackpool for his basic mechanical training course.

It is interesting to note that the weekly pay parade for a recently trained airman at that time was around 5 shillings (25p) per day plus a small family allowance. The ration allowance was 5s 3d. (26p) per week, or alternatively, meat and bread twice a week, and 2 bags of sugar and tea once every week. A Community Ration Allowance of 12 shillings (60p) a month was also available.

From Blackpool, Patrick was posted to No 3 Wing at St Athan, on 4/9/1939, the day after war was declared on Germany. No 3 Wing gave specialist aircraft mechanical training and, in Patrick's case, I believe that this would have been for Wellington training. Although the writing on the record is faint, it appears that an ongoing posting to RAF Stradishall, Suffolk, was cancelled, due to the outbreak of war. RAF Stradishall was unsuitable for heavy bombers (particularly in bad weather when the mud rendered the runways useless) and its Wellingtons were moved to Harwell and the station itself was, in fact, closed whilst it became the first station in Bomber Command to have hardened runways. It reopened in January 1940 and became home to 214 Sqn's Wellington bombers.

Patrick was, therefore, posted back to No 3 School of TT in Blackpool, for an intensive 10 day course before going back to No 3 Wing at St Athan. 6 months later he was posted abroad, to Aden in Yemen. Aden was vitally important to the Allies -three-quarters of Middle East Command aircraft were based at RAF Khormaksar, its main flying station. Khormaksar was a joint user airfield – that is, it was Aden's civil airport as well as an RAF station, the RAF providing airfield, navigational, meteorological and communications facilities to the many civil airlines operating from and through Aden. Patrick had, by this time, been promoted firstly to LAC (Leading Aircraftsman) then to Corporal.

Broadly, RAF Khormaksar's tasks could be grouped under two main headings – tactical and transport. On the tactical side, its main jobs were to defend Aden and the Protectorates from external attack and to maintain law and order within the territory. The units based there were also called upon to operate, as required, elsewhere in the Command's area of responsibility. Also included in this side of its duties were control over sea communications within the area, responsibility for the search and rescue organisations in the Command and the maintenance of airfields, navigation aids and facilities extending from Hargeisa in Somaliland to Masirah Island at the entrance to the Persian Gulf.

It could very well be that he worked on the Wellingtons of No 8 Squadron (although No 8 flew several types of aircraft, such as the Bristol Blenheim and the Lockheed Hudson Patrick was trained on the Vicker's Wellingtons). If so, Patrick would undoubtedly have referred to a Wellington as a 'Wimpy', its popular nickname taken from the character, J Wellington Wimpy from the Popeye cartoons!

No 8 Sqn was called 'Aden's own squadron' for, apart from a brief interval immediately after the war, it had been connected with Khormaksar ever since 1928. No. 8 was formed at Brooklands in 1915 as part of the Royal Flying Corps and took an active part in the campaign in France. It was disbanded in 1920, but reformed in Egypt a few months later and was then posted to Iraq. It was transferred to Aden in 1928 and based there for the remainder of the inter-war years. Coastal reconnaissance flights and anti-submarine patrols were its main duties through the war – though it was in action continuously through the 1940/41 East African campaign and the extremely small number of ships lost in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden is testimony to the success of its work. In May, 1945, the squadron was disbanded but its number-plate was transferred to No. 200 (Liberator) Squadron, stationed at Minneriya, Ceylon, as a Special Duty Unit supply-dropping to clandestine agents in Malaya and Sumatra. It was disbanded in November, 1945.

Patrick's diary, which ran from 4th March 1941 through to 19th May 1941, gives the events that were recorded at the time in the official War Diary a much more personal feel to them. He also recorded them very accurately, without exaggeration. His diary ended on the day that he was admitted to hospital, 19 May 1941. He had first been admitted to hospital on Xmas Eve in 1940 and was released 3 weeks later. Little did he know it at the time but this would be the first of many hospital visits:

Admitted	24/12/1940	Discharged	14/1/1941
Admitted	19/5/1941	Discharged	?
Admitted	1/7/1941	Discharged	9/7/1941
Admitted	15/8/1941	Discharged	4/9/1941
Admitted	24/7/1943	Discharged	26/7/1943

The record is unclear here as to whether or not Patrick rejoined his original section when discharged from hospital on 4th Sep 1941 but the record shows that there followed a posting within the AC Section in Aden (the letters are not very clear but could be E&SD) until his next hospital admission.

Patrick was then sent back to the UK as the next entry shows HE (Home Embarkation) but without a date given. He next appears at RAF Ibsley, near Ringwood, Hampshire.

Opened in 1941, it was used by both the USAF and the RAF. During the war it was used primarily as a fighter airfield and, after the war, it closed in 1947. Before Patrick's arrival on 7/1/1944 RAF Ibsley had a varied role and it was decided, after the arrival in July 1943 of the USAF who wished to use the base for tactical fighters, to strengthen the runways and undertake further construction work. RAF Ibsley was then allocated to the Ninth Air Force.

48 Group then arrived from South Carolina with their Republic P-47D Thunderbolts which used the base to mount operations prior to the invasion of Normandy. This must have been an exciting time for the RAF personnel at Ibsley. Patrick's time there was brief, however, as he was posted to RAF Colerne in Wiltshire on 21 Feb 1944.

RAF Colerne was planned as a major base. A survey was done in 1936 and construction began in 1939. By mid-1940 it was sufficiently advanced to become operational within 10 Group Fighter Command as a subsidiary of RAF Middle Wallop, and fighters rotated through it daily, but no squadron was based there until June 1941 when 125 Sqn with Defiants arrived. After that, up to a dozen fighter squadrons were based here for significant periods of time, while 18 more fighter squadrons were here for shorter periods, a couple of days up to a couple of months. There was also a big maintenance presence, with 39 MU being joined by 218 MU from March 1942 and it was here that I imagine Patrick's role was (there is nothing mentioned in his record. Patrick was at Ibsley for just over a month when he was posted to RAF Colerne.

After a few months at RAF Colerne, Patrick was admitted to the RAF hospital at Melksham for just over a month before returning to Colerne until an entry in his record shows Patrick at 5 PDC (Personnel Despatch Centre) which was based at Heaton Park near Manchester.

There is then another Home Embarkation entry for Patrick until he appears at RAF Holmesley on 13/10/1945. The Station was the base for Number 1359 Flight, which operated 'PAMPA' weather reconnaissance flights using the Mosquito PR XVI. They flew from Holmesley South to RAF Lyneham then flew daily along the transport routes sending back observations of wind, temperature and general weather conditions for use by the transport crews in planning their flights. This service ceased in May 1946 when the Flight was disbanded.

In July 1946 we see Patrick at 100 PDC (Personnel Dispersal Centre) based at RAF Uxbridge. Patrick was here because he had decided to re-enlist. From here, Patrick was posted to RAF

Thorney Island on 19/11/1946. RAF Thorney Island was home to the newly reformed 42 Sqn. It had reformed with Beaufighters in October 1946 as part of Coastal Command's Strike Wing, but disbanded again a year later.

Stations served UK:

Padgate, Manston, St Athans, Blackpool, Ibsley, Colerne

Abroad:

South Africa, Ceylon, Bombay, Aden, British Somaliland, Yemen, Southern Dessert, Kamaran Island, Perin Island, Abyssinian Campaign, Hadrqmut, Egyp, Germany, Syltt and Iceland.