**Interviewee: Ian Paterson**
**Interviewer: Martin Eastwood**
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ME: Today we are interviewing Ian Paterson in the New Library of the College on April the 5th 2004. Ian was Consultant Surgeon in Fife from 1948 to 1980 and whilst he was in the army he reached the rank of Major.

ME: When were you born?

IP: December 1914.

ME: Right.

IP: 2nd of December.

ME: And where were you born?

IP: In Edinburgh.

ME: In Edinburgh. Right, and where did you go to school?

IP: Eventually to the Academy.

ME: And presumably you went to medical school in Edinburgh?

IP: I did.

ME: Yes. And what year did you graduate?

IP: '38.

ME: '38. And then what happened?

IP: I did a job down in Sutton, Surrey as a House Surgeon. Then I went to Bristol where I was a House Surgeon in the Orthopaedic department and there got a lot for orthopaedics and it was a very happy unit and a very interesting unit. A House Surgeon was given a certain amount of responsibility, [Purdie], who was my chief, was an excellent teacher… and a wonderful enthusiast. After six months there, I went up to the Royal where I was the first house surgeon for Professor [James] Learmonth. That was hard work because the war had started. The sub-chief, assistant chief, would join up straight away. The registrar, whose… J, Mr [Jeffery]… was called up immediately. There was only one House Surgeon and so for the first three months there was Professor Learmonth and me running the, a very busy, [professorial] unit. I left that unit in March, April, and went down to Oxford, again to an orthopaedic department. There was Professor [Gurleson]. Again, a superb fellow and again a wonderful enthusiast. The whole hospital ran round him. It was said that the hospital would sleep gently until they heard the feet of Mr [Gurleson] coming in to the front door and then would be alive and they would work flat out till he left round about six o'clock. Again, a very happy unit. And I stayed there until Christmas. By then, the war had reached its… by then the war was becoming active, it had been fairly quiet for the first year. About that time there was the Dunkirk. I was still in Oxford for Dunkirk… but it was astounding how, in Oxford, the war passed you by - nobody was worried there. We were going to win anyway in the end [smiles]. And then I felt it was about time I did some honest work and I joined up and almost immediately was posted to a unit in Hatfield, no sorry, Holmfirth. Now I could go on to happenings there but I think if we can… [inaudible]

ME: Just go on a bit… That's where you did your basic training was it?

IP: Basic training in the army?

ME: Yes.

IP: Ooh, that was probably a fortnight.

ME: [laughs]

IP: Well all we had to do… [laughs] I'd been [inaudible] at school… So that I would know how to turn left and right… and how to tell a unit to march, and do all the minor things that you'd have to do. Which came in useful when I found I was I charge of a unit as an [inaudible] and I had perhaps 12 men under me to look after. The troop ships were travelling out to Egypt.

ME: That was your first appointment, was it?... You went to Huddersfield?

IP: I was at the hospital for a short time before. I think you can leave that out because I came back to the hospital…

ME: Yes. And then you went on the troop ship out to…?

IP: To Suez

ME: To Suez. And came back again?

IP: And came back.

ME: And then what happened to you after that?

IP: After that I was in a hospital down at Southampton. A huge hospital. We weren't really busy, the fighting hadn't started. We were for the attack on Dieppe and all the wounded from Dieppe, all of the wounded came back to us and that was the first real experience of war certainly.

ME: And after that where did you go?

IP: There's a little bit about Dunkirk, [shakes head] Dieppe was interesting because you really began to realise what you could do and what you couldn't. They were crammed together in boats going there and about 20 [tough] Canadians were in one unit and going over they still had three or four hours before they reached Dieppe. When they were going over, a boy who was cleaning his uniform, cleaning his weapons, dropped a hand grenade and he dropped it in this crowded bit of about 20 men all packed together. And he yelled, 'Take care boys!' and dropped, threw himself sideways but he didn't do anything about the hand grenade and it went off and there must have been 10 with very serious wounds and a lot of abdominal wounds. And they had to wait until the boat went to Dunkirk, then while the fighting took place and then, while it came back and so it was about 24 hours before they got any treatment. And that was a real awakening…

ME: This was your first experience of military…?

IP: That was the first experience of… a serious experience. And I can remember sorts of these cases at that time.

ME: Yes. Well, Dieppe was a real muddle, wasn't it?

IP: Sorry?

ME: Dieppe was a real muddle.

IP: It was an appalling muddle, yes. They landed in a well defended area. They landed without real knowledge of how difficult it would be to land under fire. They hadn't any help. They didn't have enough air cover. The only good bits were the third commander, yes, the third commander landed a bit beyond and captured a hill there which defended… and I think pulled back some of the preparations for v-bombs there but I don't really know… anyway…

ME: So after you finished at… when you left Southampton, where did you go to?

IP: Left Southampton, ooh, just before D-Day, and landed in… in Normandy. The main fighting was over. We landed in a period of pretty near quiet but within a couple of miles of Caen, where there was fierce fighting coming. And that's when we started, of course, receiving wounded from Caen.

ME: The Northumberland Fusiliers were there, weren't they? The Northumberland Fusiliers were at Caen.

IP: Don't remember them. [smiles]

ME: Do you not? [laughs] Anyhow, you then moved inland…

IP: Moved very quickly inland and joined a CCS. Now a CCS was just the job for a young surgeon.

ME: What does CCS stand for?

IP: CCS is really, is called casualty clearing station, it's really just an operating centre. The field ambulance brings the wounded to the CCS. The CCS operates on the wounded and cleans the wound, removes dead tissue, operates on all chests and the abdominal wounds, and makes them into… so they can be left happily. In other words, the abdominal wounds [inaudible] you exteriorise the bits of the gut that are damaged. You can drain that and you then… a patient, within 24 hours, will be fit to go down the line for final definitive treatment. Now, that means going probably to a base hospital in France. But all the immediate work has been done.

ME: What would make up a CCS, who, what personnel would there be in a CCS team?

IP: Two surgeons, two anaesthetists, a physician and about four general duty personnel and eight nurses. So they were a solid little unit and an excellent team to be with. Because you did all the immediate sort of things.

ME: Yes. And at what stage did you hear about Belsen?

IP: I'd been on leave, and I came back to find that, by this time we'd been travelling up the line and we were just across the Rhine.

ME: That's actually into Germany then?

IP: Mmm. So I was told, 'Belsen has been relieved'. It had been relieved that day. 'You'll travel up there tomorrow and join the unit'. The whole unit had been inoculated against typhus. Your typhoid injections were checked. We knew very little about Belsen except that it was a horror camp and there was great number of prisoners there. There had been up to a hundred thousand dying there.

ME: But you didn't know that at that stage?

IP: I didn't.

ME: And you went up, two of you went up initially, didn't you?

IP: What happened was there was a brigadier charged with a medical unit, in charge of all the medical units in that area, he was Glen Hughes. He and a regular general soldier, who I never met, I didn't hear of, but he was in the, he was high up in the Ack Ack. They had been called up because the German army had realised that Belsen, the conditions in Belsen, were out of hand. I think they got a terrible shock when they realised the SS had been in charge and they had let the situation slip. I'm also quite sure, because they said so repeatedly, that a lot of the trouble in Belsen was ours, we were responsible for it. Hamburg had been flattened, hundreds of people had fled from Hamburg. Anybody with any doubtful loyalty to the SS or Hitler were… and anybody who had any connection with any Jew, were captured, were taken and added to the people in Belsen and suddenly it grew into a massive camp.

ME: And you were invited with Colonel Hughes?

IP: We were invited up to see the situation. They were invited because they said that it had got beyond [them]. They were invited because typhus had broken out and they realised the end of the war was coming soon and they couldn't control things. They realised that, unless they did something, a hundred thousand infected people might be spreading all over North Europe and the sooner we did something about it, the better. And with that sort of atmosphere, we went up…

ME: This was the two of you, wasn't it?

IP: Well, it was about four people…

ME: Right. And you went in a vehicle…?

IP: We went and talked…

ME: Before you got there tell me about the going up, along the road.

IP: That comes later, because I went back…That [inaudible], that first conference… The Germans were very much on their defensive and blaming us entirely for the situation.

ME: Had you seen anything of the camp as you arrived?

IP: We hadn't been anywhere, we'd just been in and you couldn't help but smell it. You couldn't help but see dying skeletons about.

ME: And what was the smell of?

IP: What was the smell? Human, just human… nothing [inaudible] just dirty humans just have a smell.

ME: And that permeated a long distance, didn't it?

IP: That remained for quite a while. Not for a long distance, miles…

ME: No. So you went into this area…

IP: We were at this conference when we began to realise just what was happening, and it was then that we heard a shot outside, and Glen Hughes shot out to see what was happening and there was a guard with a smoking rifle a there was dead internee still moving. What did he do? He walked over that fence to get at the rubbish bins there. He's not allowed to do that, he knows it's wrong, he knows that the penalty is death and so I shot him. So Glen Hughes got out his pistol and shot the guard and said, 'You can't kill people like that' [laughs] and came back into the conference. After that the Germans were very much, very subdued, and more or less say, 'We can't handle this, please, what can you do to help?'. That's roughly what they said.

ME: Tell me more about Glen Hughes. What was he in civilian life?

IP: He was really a GP with a wealthy practice. He was a sportsman, had always been a sportsman, he used to come up to St Andrews and play golf from London quite regularly, once a year possibly, he was quite a good golfer. He had a practice in Kensington, which probably means it was quite a wealthy practice. He was a territorial, that was he had the rank of brigadier. He knew everybody and he was a forceful character who would get things done.

ME: And then what happened after the meeting, what happened then?

IP: Then I didn't see the next [inaudible] to the unit for 12 hours and came back again, alone with a driver. The driver didn't know the way for the Germans had led us [more or less]. The driver didn't know the way, he stopped to ask the police, 'We're going to Belsen…'

ME: This was the military?

IP: Red caps. And they said, 'Well, there was fighting here the day before, I'm told this road is quite clear, I'm told it's quite safe to go on to Belsen but it's another 12 miles, can't guarantee all the way'. So off we went. It was then around the corner we suddenly met a whole platoon of about a thousand men, marching towards us.

ME: German men?

IP: Fully armed, each with a rifle. We were travelling quite fast, they were coming in the other direction. They didn't see us until we were fairly close to them. They took no notice of us at all although I must say I was expecting to be shot up any minute and perhaps two miles on we said, 'Well, we're out of that we better go back and see' and the driver said, 'I'm quite sure we should have turned round to the right just when we were passing these men' so we turned and we went back and went up that road, met nobody at all until we got to the camp. Now the camp was incredible. Nothing you've ever seen, and nothing you've ever heard exaggerates the situation. There were ten thousand unburied dead lying about the camp. There were sixty thousand prisoners held in wooden huts. The dead were lying round the huts, or lying in the huts or lying by the road. The incredible thing was that nobody took any notice of [of them]. I could show you, I'd hope to show you, some pictures just of the internees walking past, not even looking at the dead people, they were so used to death. The prisoners, and there were, I think, sixty thousand there, and… the prisoners were completely apathetic… they weren't interested in us… It was so different from travelling through Belgium where people were wildly enthusiastic, these people were just so deprived of food or any of the normal joys of life that they couldn't think of anything… they were mere skeletons, and I mean that, they were just bones covered by skin. They hung around. They all had dysentery, they all were crawling with lice… They had had no water because the water had failed for six days. Well, they must have had some water but they had no official water. They'd had no food for four days and they were starving and they'd been starving anyway. This was not a death camp – this was a camp, a holding camp that was there almost entirely for Jews but it had got out of hand, they'd lost, they hadn't bothered to get food for all the extra people. They hadn't taken the trouble to look after them.

ME: Now there were funny anomalies, weren't there? There was the room with the spectacles and the clothes and the like.

IP: Sorry?

ME: The room with the spectacles. Where they classified everything, everything was classified, wasn't it?

IP: No, I don't think so.

ME: Could you tell me about the… There was a room which had spectacles.

IP: Oh! Sorry I beg your pardon I got that thing quite wrong. I didn't hear that. Alright, we'll go a wee-bitty more about them. They, if you asked them their names they would put up their sleeve and show you a number tattooed in purple ink which everybody had. You'd ask them their nationality and they'd look sort of puzzled at you and then they'd look to say, 'Juif'. 'Cause that's all they were allowed, they were a Jew and that was all. And if you'd say, 'What's your name and where do you come from?' to start with they'd just laugh, they'd just say, 'No'. They, there were no records that

we ever found of the numbers of people there, on the other hand as I told you, valuables were taken from them and stored… and there was a room, I suppose 20 feet by 20 feet and, oh 10 feet high in which wristwatches were stored, not spectacles, wristwatches, hundreds of wristwatches, each with a man's number and some of them with names and they were packed up, up to the roof, there were hundreds of them. These people had been housed in huts.

ME: And what was it like in the huts?

IP: The huts, were, wooden huts like a Nissen hut but smaller and lower and wooden. Beds were two tiers, sometimes three tiers, touching the sides, touching the roof if they were three tier, touching each other. There was a very narrow path. You could go between the two rows, a central path. There were no windows, it was dark inside, there were no lights, there was no sanitation. There was then, no water, and I never saw any taps. They'd fought for the beds. I saw, I talked to a doctor who'd been a woman who'd been kept alive to operate on people, she said that, 'I was civilised, before I went here I lived well, when I found the first day that I was fighting for a bed. I saw one person was obviously dying so I stood by her for about three hours and when she died I pulled her off the bed. But I found somebody else at the other end, pulling her the other way. And so we fought for the bed and we both went onto it.' There were two to most beds and sometimes three. There was no sanitation, they just messed on the floor. The stench inside the huts was appalling. If they went outside, again, there was no, they hadn't strength to go to any lavatories, there wasn't any lavatories I ever saw. And even to start with, when thing were getting a wee bit better, the only lavatories they had would be a deep trench and sitting on a tree trunk.

ME: Which they had to move across above the latrine?

IP: That's right. No, long ways, the trench was this way [gestures] and the tree was here. And it took quite a time before that [inaudible]. The first obvious thing to do was to get the dead removed and to feed what living there were. To get the dead removed was really, difficult because, one: a lot of them were diseased… there was no… a lot of them were diseased. The only labour we had was the SS and so the SS were put to remove the dead that were lying around. And it took about seven days before all the dead were removed. Partly that was because the huts were so dark, the dead inside the huts, one you couldn't realise they were dead at first because some were asleep. But a lot were dead… and it was about a week before all the ten thousand unburied dead were found.

ME: Tell me about the SS guards…these were guards…

IP: The guards were strict, the guards were the only… it's not fair to say they were guards, they were SS personnel. The guards had been, were just ordinary German soldiers, Wehrmacht, and they were marched out of the camp pretty soon. They were allowed to go with their weapons because we didn't want to take prisoners, we had enough people to look after. The only labour we had to deal with the dead were SS guards. Later, we found that there were 2,000 Hungarian troops which the Germans used again for mainly labouring work and so they came and they were a terrific help. The SS were not, they were still, they didn't see why they should be made to do anything. They were… these were prisoners of war, they were prisoners and should be treated as such. The feeling of our general soldiers was very hostile… the feeling was… the SS too would carry the dead and throw them in a pit. The dead were buried, at first, in two huge pits.

ME: Who dug the pits? The SS? Or did they bulldoze [them out]?

IP: They were… most of them, well the pit was pretty well dug when I saw it. It was very sandy with soil. Bulldozers weren't very useful to dig it because the sand was so soft. To start with, SS picked up the dead and carried them and threw them into the pit.

ME: They weren't very enthusiastic, were they?

IP: The troops, our troops, had bayonets and they used the bayonets to encourage the SS and as I said once, 'Next day [inaudible]'. We must have had 20 SS with sizable bayonet wounds in their bottom where they'd been encouraged to hurry with the dead. The SS were about now beginning to realise that they were not on the winning side and for the next three or four days we would find SS hiding in different parts of the camp. And quite appreciable numbers hiding and saying they were Jewish prisoners or they were no longer wearing SS uniforms, they were wearing ordinary German clothes. And there was no doubt there was an awful lot of sadistic stuff going on. I saw one man who was obviously been beaten around and I said, 'Why do you have a black eye like that?' and he said, 'Oh, the guard hit me.', 'Why?', 'I don't know', 'You mean he hit you just for doing nothing, just because he was a German?', and he said, 'Yes and I'll show you some more damage not because I'd said anything or done anything just they like a hit'.

And again there was no question they were still terrified of the Germans even though we were there and two months later in Nuremburg, I was at the trial there, and when the SS came in for, to be tried, you could almost feel the shiver that went round the court as they recognised the people. One woman, I remember, they particularly hated and said she's the woman with the dog, and she had a Doberman apparently and they went round the camp with the dog who quite happily set it on the people. The dead didn't decompose quickly because there was nothing of them except bone and skin. Sometimes there were a few but most of them were just dried up. At one stage they used bulldozers to remove some piles of dead bodies. We didn't obviously like to do that but there was no other way. There weren't enough, even SS to go around. The SS women were relieved fairly quickly from that job 'cause it wasn't quite, it was pretty horrific work. Even the SS were so shocked that they got exhausted quite quickly and several died not from bayonet wounds but because of the horror they were enduring. The… [inaudible] dead as I say, in about a week they were…

ME: So the other thing about the, some of the SS, they had not been inoculated against typhus.

IP: Sorry. I'll come again to that I think because the next thing was to get the people that weren't dead into some sort of accommodation. There we were very lucky because two miles away from the camp there was a vast training camp. It had been for, a tank training camp and altogether there were about 20 barrack areas. The barrack areas would have 20 [parade grounds], quite big [parade grounds]. They'd been surrounded by barracks, there were three barracks that held about… well with us, about 800 people. They were meant for about 400. So there'd be 400, 400, 400 [gestures] and the fourth side held 200 and a cook house. That, because there were about 20 of them, made a hospital where we could put people and so once you got rid of the dead, at the same time obviously, you took, and this was particularly the CCS's job, you took the people who had a chance of living, there was no point in the people that were dying, you took to start with the people that had a chance of living. Tore off their clothes, wrapped them in a blanket, put them in an ambulance and [motored] them up the mile and a half to this barracks where there was a huge [inaudible] with perhaps 20 tables, metal tables just with four legs and a top simplest things you would [inaudible]. Tables they had obviously been doing PMs [post mortems] on and so were easily cleaned. They brought the women first and took up in stretchers.

ME: Were the women frightened?

IP: They, sorry?

ME: Were the people frightened, were they fearful?

IP: They were very frightened a little later on shall we say. They were taken and when they realised that they were taken to safety, they were wildly enthusiastic and excited! Their clothes were taken off, they took them off. They put any valuables they had on one side. There weren't any valuables but they were personal things. They then were wrapped in a blanket and put in an ambulance and taken up six or seven at a time, taken into this [inaudible] place, laid on the tables, washed, shaved, scrubbed and powdered with DDT [Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane] and we lived in DDT. As soon as they were shaved and washed and cleaned, they were taken off the table, wrapped in a blanket put into a clean ambulance and taken to the… camp number two, shall we say, that we were making. At the first day we only got through the day 400. On the third day we got 700. The people that did the washing and the shaving were German nurses. They had been protected from typhoid but they hadn't been protected from typhus because of the language difficulty. Apparently in Germany one is called typhus [*exupthamtus*] and the other one was typhus [*dominalis*] and they thought it was the same thing, or at least the people asked thought it was the same thing and they were, the German nurses weren't protected from typhus. And as I said the place was just crawling with lice and before the nurses would be covered with DDT, that wasn't enough. It was the same with the German guards and the SS, they hadn't been protected and again, not many but a few Germans SS then died as a result of the mental, I think, trauma that they were, and the horror that they actually became alive to. Quite numbers died. Of the nurses, a few died.

What was astounding was the prisoners, if, when the nurses took them and washed them and then, if they were not strong enough, took them on a stretcher, put them in the ambulance, quite a number died as a result of the trauma of washing and the trauma of travelling a mile and a half, on the other hand the morale of the women, these first women, was astounding, they were mad to be chosen, when they are taken you'd find that the person you had chosen was standing by and somebody had torn off their own clothes and jumped onto their stretcher, they wanted to get there and the excitement when they got to the camp that we had made, when they all had a bed to themselves was exciting, it was wonderful.

The trouble we hadn't enough ambulances and it was taking quite a bit but as the nurses got better they were more gentle and the [inaudible] got faster and we started taking them in trucks instead of in the ambulances. The trouble was to get into the trucks. The people who were able to walk, walked in, but they couldn't get up steps and so you had great [gestures] big planks to walk up because [broad backed] because they'd need a person on each side. But apart from the fact that quite a number died from the travelling that was quite good.

We… the place we put them [inaudible] double the number of beds that the rooms had been made for, but there were lavatories and there was water and these first lot were people who we expected to live. They didn't all live, there were quite a number dying every day. 40 I think out of the first 400 died and they thought, and we thought, they were going to live. But they were all wildly hungry and they were all screaming for food. Now people that had been starved for months can't just take food and expect to live. And food had to be guarded because they stole everything they could see. We had a guard on each hut, [shakes head] not on each hut, sorry, on each of the new wards. Of the eight about 400 in these… and there'd be a guard at each end and they were to prevent people going out.

Because the first day when I came back in the morning, the wards that I was so pleased with, there was just nobody in it. There were no chairs and no tables any longer and when I asked what had

happened and where the people were they said, 'Some men came in and we were turned out of their beds and everything wooden was broken up and burned in the sink there, in the fireplace there, and they'd been round the countryside and stolen half a dozen hens and they had a terrific party and we never saw them again'. And so after that there was a guard at the door. The same always was said, the same happened to the people we couldn't take at once because they had to be fed. You got [inaudible], I said that there were the four big blocks and there was a kitchen. In the kitchen they could make food and so anybody that could walk carried the food to the people that still couldn't even stand and fed them, or that was the idea. They said that about 50 per cent got nothing because the people that were carrying their, ate it on the way. They… the people that were… to start with, you couldn't give them any diet except a fluid diet. There was a huge dairy that we [tapped] and it became the CCS bar, we had so much milk you couldn't do anything with it. Until we knew a little more about dieting, milk and fluids were about all we could feed, or we knew enough.

ME: You started them off with milk?

IP: We started them off with milk. But they didn't approve of milk, they wanted solid food, and they yelled for potatoes. And I can hear still the cry of, '*kartoffel*!, *kartoffel*!'. It was potatoes. And if they could steal potatoes, they stole potatoes. Gradually as they got stronger and better they were fit for potatoes and the kitchen, after a month, the kitchen was peeling 10 tonnes of potatoes a day, some vast number. I'll just [smiles, inaudible, reaches for paper and sorts through it]. Figures that I have here… the estimated death rate after we were there was something like 400 a day, just from the trauma of shifting them and getting something to eat. Even the German ex-soldiers, now prisoners of war, who volunteered to help were no good because the horror of the situation so shook them that they couldn't do things. 30 tonnes of potatoes per day were eventually used so you do appreciate that they like their potatoes.

ME: Did you find it difficult to eat your normal diet while you were watching this happen?

IP: No

[both laugh]

ME: Now Janet Vaughan came in here and tell us about Janet Vaughan.

IP: Janet Vaughan came from the [inaudible] department here with a team and she had been experimenting with proteins and getting the absolute minimum good out of proteins and simplifying proteins and came with vast stocks of this modified protein and they were given to the people that were really ill, sorry, worse than the rest. But it passed straight through them, their diarrhoea became worse and she had to stop after three or four days and go back to the old fashioned milk.

ME: Right… And at what stage did people introduce meat to their diet?

IP: I can't tell you that [laughs]. I wasn't doing that. It was such an immense thing that you could only do little bits at a time. Things were happening all the time. These Hungarians that I said were useful, they were a nice lot, they were a happy bunch. They weren't hated by the Germans, they obviously had never been guards, they'd just done menial duties. Our [inaudible], and we had one on the CCS, used to go down every morning to one of the parade grounds and the Hungarians, two or three hundred of them, would be paraded on two sides of the square and they'd be called to attention, the right marker would come and salute… our [inaudible] would say such and such a ward needs three helpers, such and such ward needs 30 and give them their jobs for the day. This was going

quite happily. When peace came we were still working quite hard and nobody bothered very much about peace but I was told that the [inaudible] just checking on the Hungarians that morning so I went down and sure enough they were paraded and then eight o'clock struck, the day was starting and then all the Ack Ack guns gave the 21 gun salute and the Hungarians knew what Ack Ack guns meant and you looked round and of the 200 on the two sides, there was nobody, there was the [agent] and their chief and the rest of them were flat round the edges [smiles]

ME: [laughs] And then, one of the things you said was that SS guards, SS soldiers from elsewhere were brought to Belsen, weren't they?

IP: Yep.

ME: … with typhus.

IP: Yep. But they weren't, oh sorry… alright… prisoners…

ME: Nobody would accept them, would they, when they were brought?

IP: No. They, this must have been perhaps three [weeks] later we'd suddenly heard that there'd been an outbreak of typhus and they were amongst the SS troops and they were SS individuals and the fever hospitals weren't keen to take them and so we heard there was a… truckloads of them coming to be nursed in the typhus ward with the Belsen… But the hostility to the German SS was still such that when the trucks came, the drivers left, the men were left lying in the huts and told they could walk to the beds that had been made for them. And they couldn't walk, they had to crawl. And such was the madness that infected us all, that I thought this was quite justified and to see ill people crawling when we should have been able to carry them… it was a very bad thing.

ME: Amongst the prisoners, the Jewish prisoners, there were pregnant women and children, weren't they?

IP: Yes.

ME: And was the mortality rate high amongst them?

IP: Babies, and I had a ward for babies, they just didn't live. I don't remember any being fit, I don't remember any of them living. They were quite healthy and fat while the mothers could still feed them but the mothers didn't have much milk and they didn't… One way or the other the babies died. They, at one time there was no water in the camp at all and the babies got very dirty and I said well surely Marie Antoinette would bath in beautiful creamy milk [laughs] and we could wash the babies in creamy milk, we washed three or four babies in the milk, the smell! [laughs] The milk turned sour and there was no water to wash it off with!

What I haven't mentioned at all yet is there were a lot of folk from Hamburg who arrived in what was called camp two, it was really just part of the old barracks, the good barracks, but they were Jewish and they were prisoners from Hamburg. But they hadn't been long in the prison camp and they were healthy and once they were fed, within a week, ten days, they were beginning to look quite reasonable again. The RAF [Royal Air Force] cottoned onto this very quickly but no British soldier was allowed to fraternise with any German and the British soldiers took this quite hard because there were sometimes good looking girls but the RAF said well the Jewish girls, a lot of them are getting quite, getting back their sensitivity again and becoming… That's one thing I said, earlier on I didn't mention it. When the prisoners, when they came first, the prisoners just didn't know if

they were male or female, they had no modesty at all, they were just quite happy to go about naked because there wasn't anything else to do! But as they got fitter and put these folk in camp two where they hadn't been long in, well they wanted some decent clothes, they didn't want the torn rags, and the rags were white with black lines on them and they were, everybody wore those but once they had been worn for a bit they just tore. The girls from Hamburg were quite happy to fraternise with the RAF. Every night the RAF, or three nights a nights a week, the RAF had a train coming from some of the big RAF camps and two or three hundred RAF people would arrive and to fraternise with the girls from Belsen.

ME: And the nurses presumably?

IP: And the English nurses, yes. And the girls wanted clothes [if they could get them]. And so we made clothes and I had 21 girls with 20 electric sewing machines and the only cloths we had were sheets and blankets and so they made these girls short skirts which were fashionable anyway then, about knee-length, from blankets. They looked very like shorts and they looked like neat… English girls' uniform. Some of them actually made [inaudible] jackets from, and all of them made bra and pants from triangles of sheets and we had plenty of that. [inaudible] And it was just the Belsen uniform, all the girls looked jolly nice [laughs].

ME: And there was a Jewish band, wasn't there?

IP: Yes, there was hundreds, at least three parade drums and probably four or five had a band of three people, four people. No pianos of course but they had fiddles, [inaudible] and cellos.

IP: Sawing away at the [mimes, laughs]

ME: Now, one of the big facilitators was the acquisition by various colonels that helped you, weren't they?

IP: Yes. Well we made clothes for the girls, we got toilets from the chemist. There was a quota made of things that we needed for children, girls, prisoners from the local towns and all the local people had to give up. But before that the children had no toys and so David Waterson who [inaudible] a wonderful laddie, they came, [one of the chiefs] in Great Ormond Street of [vascular] surgery. He and I went round the big houses and [went in]. 'Could we speak to the lady of the house?' She came and we said we are collecting toys for our sick children that we had in Belsen and she said, 'Jewish children?', 'Yes, Jewish children, they're in Belsen' and she said, 'No children of mine will give any toys to these' and then we said, 'Well in that case we'll just look for them' and she brought in all the children and said, 'These men are officers from the British army and they want to steal your toys to give to the Jews in Belsen' and she was fuming and we said, 'Yes and we'll force these by necessary' and she looked at our pistols which were still luckily in our, in the holsters and she said, 'You wouldn't dare' and we said, 'Take us please to the children's room' and so there was a pile of toys and they were well received.

What I didn't say, I'm sorry, potatoes, I can remember still the prisoners yelling, '*kartoffel*'. It got quite fierce, they said, 'You're worse than the Germans, we're being starved', they said, 'We must have something solid to eat'. There was a physician here who was in Belsen, he, I'm sure was a registrar but he may have been sub-chief, but he was in charge of one the wards. The wards in ward two, which was for the fitter people, they were mainly Russians and they had a Commissar, because Russians always have a Commissar, to act as a political advisor. And the Commissar, he drew his pistol and said to this English doctor, 'You will come round with me and see the pitiful amounts of food that you're giving to my patients. Well he'd been supervising the food for a week by now but he

solemnly was forced to go round the ward at pistol point and so after that we gave the Russians their own autonomy and they could choose what food they liked and they could make their own rules. And it was then, and when things got better the Russians said, 'We would like to leave the camp and go back to Russia' and so the train was filled with Russians and they went with great excitement, flags waving and all sorts of flowers. And they went down to the railway station, got in the trucks and I saw them there. Eight days later the trucks hadn't moved and all the flowers were dead and all the excitement was gone, and I don't know how serious their situation was when they went back to Russia but you got the idea they might very well be shot.

[recording paused]

ME: One of the funny things that happened was in the kitchen and the vats, wasn't it?

IP: After [recording mutes] the episode of the picnic in the wards and the destruction of the wooden furniture we worked so hard to do I did a ward round late at night usually, between 11 and 12, and there was a fair amount to do, and we went round the kitchen one night and the lights were on which was unusual now there was a guard on the food that was allowed, that was necessary. But there was a noise, and a happy noise of people enjoying themselves and we went round the corner into the kitchen. Now in the kitchen there were the ordinary ovens, there were the ordinary fires, and there was, I don't remember any fridge, there almost certainly was, but as their stock food, even in their [bad days] was huge amounts of soup. They used to say, ' All we got was a [mud] soup, mainly water and that was supposed to keep us alive' and so there were tubs in which they made the soup, the diameter was bigger than that, it must have been [gestures] about…

ME: 6 foot?

IP: 4 feet, the diameter and almost as deep. And in two or three of these big soup terrines I found the Hungarians enjoying a hot bath and the soup [laughs] came up to there [gestures]. They were hooting with laughter, they were enjoying it immensely! I unfortunately laughed too and so I couldn't really curse them too much but they showed me they would clean it up carefully before the next time.

ME: How did the people leave the camp, what was the disposal of people after they had been…?

IP: Well you see, as I said, they were taken from the camp and they were put into two other types, two other camps. One, the people that were relatively fit and walking about. After they'd been dusted with DDT after they'd cleaned up, after they'd got clothes they came back to the almost fit camp and from there they were encouraged to go home and they were only too keen to go home. And if you went through the town of Celle, which was within a couple of miles of Belsen, and I suppose was within 10 miles of Hamburg and Hanover. If you went into Celle you'd find crowds of men just sort of hanging around. But there was a holiday atmosphere about the place. And they'd stop you and they'd say, 'You're from the British camp', and I'd say, 'Yes', and they'd say, 'Can you tell me the direction of Warsaw from here?' and I'd say, 'Warsaw… I think it's that way' [gestures] and then they'd say, 'And show us the direction of Paris', 'I think it's that way' [gestures]

[both laugh]

IP: They'd say, 'Thank you very much, we'll just start now' and they did, and they started going home. And some of the them would walk, some of them managed to [inaudible] and there were some lovely horses… And they would go riding home [gestures]. Some of them, particularly who had found some sort of family and sometimes there were some quite young children amongst them,

where they came from, they hadn't as far as I know come from the camp 'cause I don't remember them. Some of them would take their children and they'd go in quite a big farm cart, not with high sides but still could carry along.

[recording paused]

ME: Sorry can we go on then?

IP: Okay?

ME: Yes. The farm carts…

IP: One of them was pulled by a cow and a huge shepherd dog too, the two of them pulling together. How they managed, how far they managed, I don't know but they left full of beans going strong in the right direction. Then there were 20 men who'd annexed a big lorry run by producer gas and I said, 'How are you going to get to Poland with that', and they said, 'Oh it's easy, we'll stop at every big forest we come to and we'll knock a tree down and we'll saw it up and we'll put it into this stove here and it'll produce our gas and we'll go on. And away they went, I don't know what happened to them! But I'm sure they'd get there, they were really keen people.

ME: Yes. Was there much talk of going to Israel among… was there talk of going to Palestine…?

IP: No, none that I saw, none that I heard.

ME: And then there was the reunion.

IP: I didn't know enough about the politics again at that stage, probably to encourage them in that direction. What I also didn't say was [inaudible] one of the smells of Belsen was DDT because you lived in DDT. You dusted your clothes in the morning, you dusted your, all your clothes. Every time you washed, you dusted your hands, every time you ate you seemed to eat DDT. I can still taste it now, if I think hard enough… and I certainly can smell it… And nobody though it was a dangerous stuff until much later [laughs] [looks through paper]

Oh, oh! That's another thing, I said that they were… the women particularly, were most excited at the thought of getting out of the place and they would steal their places in the queue so to speak. If anybody… if their place had been reserved by anybody else you had to give them another place and be absolutely sure they had it because otherwise they were so disappointed and so depressed afterwards they thought they would never get away.

But the way some girls would sort of push their way in when they were more or less undressed. The other thing was hundreds of people used to come to visit in the last, after a fortnight or after a month, there were still a lot of people not fully clothed. And one of the, I was going to say joys almost, was the women started to get modest and they protested strongly at people coming to see them, and particularly to see them semi-nude because there weren't clothes for them all at once. And so eventually there was a limit put on the people that would come sightseeing, even journalists – you were allowed six a day, six different… because the papers wanted to see that we weren't exaggerating and they wanted to see what we had described was happening and so six were allowed a day.

ME: Yes. And after it was all finished…

IP: Sorry?

ME: After it was all finished you had a, that you would… Glen Hughes had you to a reunion, didn't he?

IP: Yes… [talks under his breath] [looks through paper] Now I said at one stage there was a general levy of all the towns nearby in which stores, blankets, sheets, food were demanded by the burgomaster of the town and they were given, well they were forced to give… When Glen Hughes was still in the area he used to come back and say, 'Now you boys have been pretty cut off from war for the last three weeks or the last month or the last two months, if you just sit quiet for a minute I'll tell you how peace is going on', and he was wonderful he would sit back and tell what all the units we were from, how they'd been doing, what advances we'd made. This was perhaps in the months before peace. And he would just keep us up to date with things. He said to me once, 'Look if you do happen to run across a…' Oh! He was always saying, 'What do you need just now? You say you need more sheets to make some more clothes', and I'd say, 'Yes', and he'd say, 'We overran a sheet factory in such and such place the other day' and then again, 'We overran a blanket factory' and he would write down, say, 'two thousand blankets required for Belsen' and arrange for it to be done and it would be done. Good man. He once said to me, 'I don't know what I'm going to do when I go home because the Americans took over my home and when I went back I found that all my golf clubs had gone and I feel like the Germans here, they'd been liberated by somebody. Would you have a look at the next golf [course you pass] and if you see a nice set of clubs just mark it for me [laughs]…

ME: [laughs] But when the war finished…

IP: I hadn't the courage to do it! [laughs] When the war was finished and perhaps two years later, no five or six years afterwards, he rang up and said, 'You know I met some Americans in London the other day, or I met them in America, and they said they were coming over and they're in London now, and they were prisoners that we liberated from Belsen, so I'm sending an invitation to all the members of the CCS and the ambulance unit that was with us, and I thought we might meet for coffee and sherry at my house on such and such a day'. And so about a week later I came down to Kensington to his place, I can't remember where it was, but I saw a man looking at all the numbers and going up to the [inaudible] and peering at them because it was getting dark and I said, 'Golly that must be one of the CCS looking for the place too' so I caught up and sure it was so we went up together. And there were a lot of us there, perhaps 20, 30 almost, no, 20, and we talked together while the prisoners which were, the ex-prisoners, which were all ladies were upstairs and so he said, 'Now, you gentlemen, would you like to come up and see your ex-prisoners?' and I went in eventually and one very well dressed woman, in beautiful English, took me round the neck and said, 'Ian I'm so pleased to see you, you haven't changed a bit over these years, I'd have recognised you anywhere' and I said, 'Golly I couldn't remember at all' and exactly the same thing happened to the next [girl] and they were both about 40, 45, and so when the next girl came forward, or at least I came forward [to the next girl], she was bit younger and a lot more beautiful and so I said, well I thought I'd I better get in first and said, 'I'm so pleased to meet you again, by Jove you haven't changed a bit' and she took a step back and said, 'Well a bit strange, I was only six or seven when I was in the camp'…

[both laugh]

IP: …16 or 17, well she was about 25 by then.

ME: Can we go right back now? Right the way back to the beginning of your army times and your time in Huddersfield and the 'Tiger Rag'?

IP: One more stage by the way, I went back to Belsen 10 years ago, at least 30 years after it had been freed, and it's astounding how much and how little it's changed… There's one central stone, a pillar, with thousands of names on, which must contain some of the people… The graves are just big mounds, huge mounds, covered with heather… It's lovely countryside, very like Cairngorm country except there aren't any hills. The original barracks, headquarters, there's a big house still there with a lot of the photographs of the time, if you can imagine, patients that you couldn't remember seeing are there. But the peace and the quiet and the beauty of the countryside are there.

ME: Yes.

IP: Alright, now when I'd been a very young soldier I was posted as an MO [Medical Officer] to the [Tenneck] or the [Sumeria], I forget, which is a big White Star Line… American Atlantic… passenger ship and we took the RAF and the HAC, Honourable Artillery Company of London, a thousand of each, and odds and ends coming to about three thousand and it was an entertaining pleasant journey, except there wasn't an awful lot to do, people would play bridge all day and cards, yes. But the OC [Officer Commanding] troops, and again I was very lucky, he was a delightful man, he had been a brigadier in the general army and he was always odd, he'd started medicine and then he'd gone into the army, he enjoyed life and he had all sorts of stories about it, he said, 'Been having medical treatment, medical training, was very useful to me. I remember once they called me in because the elephant was upset and I could see straight away from my medical training that all that was wrong was that the elephant was constipated and so I told them and they said, 'What do we do?' And I said, 'Well, I should think an enema would be a good thing'. So they got the fire hose, 'You can laugh' said he, 'but if you could see the result of the fire hose you wouldn't' [laughs] So, he was a grand old boy. And he kept on telling stories of life at that time and he said, 'I knew [Rudyard] Kipling well and my friends used to say I was the original Kim and certainly I used to go away during leave for three or four weeks at a time and dye my skin and wear Indian clothes and I could talk Hindustani at that time pretty well and so I did do a certain amount of gentle intelligence work. It came in useful later on. I fell in love up the hills in Darjeeling way where we were for the summer and she was a lovely girl. But after we'd met for about a fortnight I felt things were getting a bit serious and she said, 'Now, this has got to stop I'm engaged to a boy who left the army and is back in England and so I'm not going to see any more of you' and so I got posted and we were parted for about six months and then quite unexpectedly, and quite without any effort on my side or on her side, we met again and we realised that our love hadn't changed a bit and we were still madly in love each each other. And so she broke off her engagement, I got engaged to her, I was very unpopular in the unit for that because they knew the other boy and thought I was doing everything wrong but we felt that life without each other was much worse [than the little problem] so we got married and about a year or two later she became pregnant, a year later she was pregnant, and it was very hot and it was very difficult, it was a difficult birth, and she was so keen to have a boy and it was a girl and she just got very disappointed and disheartened and she died about three months later and it was just because she'd lost heart. If it had been a boy I think she would have made it but she died.

And so I was left with a baby of about one and after a year I decided the only thing to do was to take her back to England and so I applied for six months leave, took her to England, took her to my parents. I hadn't a lot of money but every penny I had I gave to my father just to help him to look after her and if there was anything left to give it to her and I decided to go, and I tried to get home and then I released I didn't have a ticket and I couldn't afford one so I changed, I dyed my skin again and I went round to London docks, dressed as an Indian and applied for a job in the engine room as

a labourer, and I got the job. I got the job in a troop ship going to the Far East and so with great joy I signed on.

When we'd been out for about three weeks, I realised, I heard, that they weren't going to India at all, they were going to Australia, but they would call in at Ceylon. I thought the only thing to do was to jump ship and so when we got to Ceylon I attempted to get down the gangway but unfortunately there was a guard on just to prevent Indians doing that but I'd got to know one of the nurses aboard the troop ship pretty well and explained to her it was urgent that I got back home, she didn't realise I was an Englishman anyway. And so she agreed to flirt gently with the guard and next night I slipped down the gangway while the guard was otherwise engaged. And I jumped onto the nearest train going up to Calcutta and travelled the cheapest possible way and reached Calcutta quite happily. I went to where I'd left all my luggage. I wrote a note saying, 'Please will you give the luggage that I left here last September to my faithful servant, [Jen], signed J. H. Bateson'. I got all that luggage, with no difficulty, the signature was correct, and I put it aboard with me. Train going up to Darjeeling, oh no, up into the hills anyway, and I sat on that luggage in the guard's van until they stopped the town before, shall we say Darjeeling. I took everything off, I went into the nearest, cheap hotel. I washed and shaved and took the colour away, got into my best uniform, repacked all my luggage, took it down to the train and arrived home as Lieutenant J. H. Bateson again and drove first class up to my camp and reported. But that's the only time that I used my ability to change and live as a ninja for myself, for my own use.' He was a nice man, he had a gallbladder and had been quite ill on ship and I used to go and sit in his room at night and he would tell lots of stories like this about his life.

And his other tale was… oh yes, sorry, 'When we got as far as Cape Town, there was trouble and we ran against it. There was a coloured boy from Jamaica who, when he heard that we were fighting the Germans and the war wasn't entirely going entirely to our way, that he had thought it would be only correct for him to come to England and to fight for king and country because he was a wonderful follower of royalty. And so he came to England and there tried to join up to a good regiment and he was laughed at and they said, 'Do you think a nigger would be allowed into to this regiment? Ah, go away home!' And he was terribly upset and ran against the most horrid colour bar that you can imagine and things got worse. And while he was at his lowest he'd got [tight] in a fight and he damaged a white boy quite badly who'd been rude to him and he was shipped out straight away to South Africa, which wasn't possibly the best place to be shipped out to, but he had nothing and when he got to South Africa again he tried to join a regiment to fight for his king and again he ran into trouble and again he got into a fight but this time he damaged the boy quite badly. It was all the other boy's fault, he had started the fight and [the man] was very upset by the coloured boy and his inability to fight for his king. And so he was tried and he was condemned and he was given either five years in jug or he could be sent up to the front as a soldier expecting to die. And we found that he was taken up into our boat and put in the prison cells there, right in the front of the prow of the boat where there was just nothing but the metal side on each side of the cell so that in the heat, particularly when you are going north, sorry, particularly at midday I suppose it got very hot indeed. We saw him going aboard in handcuffs and he was a… nobody knew the story about him but he was just looked on as a prisoner. And then… when the RAF were looking after the prisoners he escaped and the ship of course was crowded and they said, he said he was going to escape and that nobody was going to take him into prison again and that if any officer tried to arrest him he'd jump overboard with the officer and kill the officer and himself but he wasn't going into prison again and the hell of that little cell must have been pretty awful anyway and he was so upset by the treatment he'd had from the British that life was not worth living. And so we were warned that we were in danger and the man might easily jump us and that we weren't to sleep on deck and that we must go about with care and be always armed to protect ourselves from him. And then next day, oh yes that night, it was very hot and I was allowed to sleep on my hospital roof - I don't know whether I was

allowed to or not but I did - and suddenly at about four in the morning, wide awake, I saw a black man slink past me, he stopped and looked down at me in my bed, my sleeping bag, and I kept my eyes shut and then opened them and he moved away. So I slipped out fast and followed him, on the idea that I'd better get him before he did any damage. And he went down a deck and I went down a deck. And then he went along the deck then he found another ladder and went down that, so did I, and then he suddenly disappeared into the engine room and I realised he was a member of the crew. Wasn't very clever of me. But next day Colonel [Basin] said, '[Gabe] heard about it and went up alone to see this man,' Sorry, the next day the man gave himself up and was put in the cells again. And [Basin] went up alone and talked to him and got the whole story out of him and said, 'Well I think you've been badly treated. I can't do anything about the sentence you've been given but I can make life possible for you in this ship. You'll be my servant 'til the end of the voyage and I'll speak for you, if you've behave yourself, I'll speak for you to the authorities in Cairo'. And so I saw him quite often. Nice man.

ME: Yes, lovely. What about Huddersfield and the tiger?

IP: Just before we went to America, oh yes the first thing I did, the first job I did was as an MO, a very young soldier, as an MO to an Ack Ack battery. The Ack Ack battery had been very heavily engaged for about three months in London with fighting every night and they were quite shattered and morale was very poor indeed and they were sent up to Yorkshire, a place called Holmfirth, a lovely place in the country. Now they still hadn't anything to do and they had no idea what to do with themselves except march and whiten the stones round the place, quite useless toil, and I said to the Colonel, 'Great pity we can't get some games going for them' and he said, 'Yes' and so he said, 'What can you get?' and I said, 'Well some boy scout tracking games, that sort of thing' and he said, 'Well, you arrange it'. So for the next two days we had, we divided into teams and tracked each other and did mock battles amongst ourselves and it went very well, because it was a glorious day. And then two days later they had a concert, a troop concert, and everybody was invited. And the soldiers, the sergeants, had quite an efficient band, about five, six sergeants and they played very well but their stock tune was 'Tiger Rag', 'Where's that tiger?'. And in the concert they had a poem which they sang about all the characters in the officers' mess including one about the doctor, not a bit complementary to anybody, the usual fun song.

And that day, or that next morning, I was walking through Holmfirth village and I saw a tiger being taken for a walk on a long chain and I did nothing about it, I didn't think anything of it until about an hour later at lunch and I said, 'Golly I wonder if I can borrow that tiger' so I went round and tried, I was preparing to try, three or four different houses, I knew it must come from one of them and I knocked at the door and said, 'Excuse me do you have a tiger in the house?' and they said, 'Yes come in and see'. So we went in and in the hall there were three doors, she opened one of them and said, 'In there' and so I went in and sure enough a huge tiger, full size, was at the far end of the room and [inaudible], I heard the door shut behind me and realised I was alone with it. And I just prepared to jump for the nearest chair when she opened the door again and said, 'It's alright, he's quite tame' so I said, 'Please, we've got troop [inaudible] could I borrow, to show the sergeants tonight?' and she said, 'Yes certainly' and I said, 'Will you come down and keep them on the train?' and she said, 'Yes' and so that night she said, 'How are we going to take him down?' and I said, 'Well I've got an old Hillman Minx four seater open door, if you hold him in the back I'll drive the car' and she said, 'Fine' and so that night I went round to the house, she was dressed, or undressed, in her state uniform and had a huge chain, or at least it had a strong chain, round the beast's neck. Full of beans though and we drove about two miles down to the hall where the concert was. The tiger seemed to enjoy the open air very much and stood on the back seat with its hind legs and its front legs, one on each of my shoulders or just about my head looking and seeing everything as we passed. We drove through the town, down for about a mile and a half or two miles and came off at just where the concert was

going nicely and sure enough, the sergeants started their band again we'd ascertained that they would still play 'Tiger Rag' and sure enough they started, 'Where's that tiger?' singing it and we said, 'Here he is!', pushed him in from the side and the sergeants behaved beautifully, they just, they moved off sideways very [inaudible]. It worked nicely, they… that was all I saw of the tiger until, about a month later, I was again in Liverpool going on another tour, I did two tours on troop ships, another tour on a troop ship and the last paper I got before we left had a huge picture on the front saying, 'Holmfirth tiger, holds up funeral'. And the funerals then were usually taken by horses, not hearses, and they'd had two black horses pulling the horse, the hearse, and had met the tiger coming through a bridge and the tiger had got quite restive and the funeral couldn't go any further, they couldn't pull the tiger away and were a bit frightened of it. [inaudible] But the poor brute was shot after that. It was a great pity. It had been newly born when war was declared and there were two daughters in the family, and there were two butchers in Holmfirth and so one worked for one butcher and one for the other and so there was no shortage of meat for the tiger! [laughs]

ME: [laughs] Can you tell us about the bridge and the collapse?

IP: Oh! Yes. They built the Forth Bridge in our back garden, one of the pillars comes very close to the front garden. And at that time there were no other houses except ours nearby and so we got to know the people that did the bridge fairly well and I was in the hospital when they said, 'Please can you come and help, because there's been a collapse of the bridge, of one of the little side bridges holding one of the small roads joining it and two men are stuck'. And so I went up and the two men were caught with a big iron bar across both their legs and they couldn't move. And it was quite difficult to get to them, it was like caving, and you sort of went along narrow little passages. And sure enough they were and their legs were completely [stuck]. What had happened was they had built an archway in wood over which the arch could be built. When they had built half of the bridge they built that half and then they were going to start this second half and they thought, 'Well, there's no point in not taking the arch we have done, the wooden arch we have done, and then just transferring it over, that'll save us a lot of expense because the side we have is beautifully stable'. So they started in building the second side with nothing holding the first side, and the first side naturally fell down and it fell down across these two men and that's how it was difficult to get at it because it was just in bits. They, it was obvious that the men couldn't move unless the steel bar was divided and moved and then they could get out but no other way could it be done. And they had already started to cut with a gas flame under pressure and they were about halfway through and the men started squealing because it was so painful and it was getting hot near their legs and they couldn't stand it. And they'd called the local GP and he said, 'Oh I'll come and help and I'll give them some chloroform'. When we get up sure enough there was one man, asleep, coughing a bit, but his legs completely stuck by this thing. And we smelt just a wee bit harder and I said, 'That's not chloroform that's ether'

ME: [laughs] Along with the oxy acetylene.

IP: And he'd mixed, the doctor had mixed up his bottles, and the chance of an explosion going off was very high and I presume it was just too strong a mixture and not enough oxygen, nothing happened. But I moved away very quickly and suggested we got things ready for the man in the hospital in case he got there before we did but nothing happened, he got out alright.

ME: And went you went to, as an orthopaedic surgeon, to Fife, that was quite an experience, wasn't it?

IP: Yes.

ME: Just the workload?

IP: Oh sorry, in Fife at that time when there weren't a bridge you were like living on an island and it was difficult to get any help. And although a surgeon had come across from Edinburgh to do outpatients, once a week sometimes, when they appointed surgeons, as they did after the Health Service, they were supposed to take over Fife and the people stopped coming over but by that time they were used to having specialist treatment and they wanted it every day. And the rate, the habit at that stage was that if the surgeon came just once a day he never put a limit on the patients he saw, he saw anybody that turned up, and I started doing that, only I had now seven days in which they started coming and as there was a surgeon in Fife the GP started sending them to the surgeon in Fife rather than sending them over to Edinburgh. In actual fact, in the first year I saw as many patients in my outpatient department as the six surgeons in Edinburgh would see in their… my numbers were the same, they weren't as difficult cases, obviously, I was seeing them far too often instead of just seeing them once. But you had all the emergencies, all the [inaudible], the cold cases and you had an immense outpatient department going daily. And I did clinics in Cupar, St. Andrews, Wemyss, Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy. And I'd never ever suggest that people do that again because you don't spend time with each case, you're always pushed.

ME: And the queue went across the… sometimes a queue went across the car park, wouldn't it?

IP: Sorry?

ME: The queue…

IP: [laughs] Yes, the queue, there was a pub opposite, people would have to wait for me because I'd be at another hospital, they'd wait an hour before they could finish. When I got there once, one day there was a queue [inaudible] the waiting room, filling the car park, running across the car park, running across the road outside, running into a pub that was immediately opposite there and running back from the pub back again to the car park [laughs]. Wonderful.

ME: I think we should stop there…

IP: They were quite happy, they weren't objecting. [laughs] I think we should stop there too.

ME: Brilliant.