

One day, **Glyn** received an envelope through the post. It wasn't from one of his brothers. He would have recognized the writing. No, it had a local postmark on it. When he opened it, he discovered there was no letter inside. Just a single white feather. His heart missed a beat when he looked at the feather firmly gripped between thumb and index finger. Who could have sent this? And why? As it transpired, number four, the Welsh Guardsman, was a POW following Dunkirk. Number five was in training and was as likely as any other soldier to be sent to the front line while number seven was in a field hospital, having been hit by shrapnel in the Western Desert. Hadn't the Jones boys given enough?

The feather may have been light, but it laid heavily on his mind. He could not sleep for days after. He talked it through with his beloved mother and unsurprisingly, she did not encourage him to go, saying "The person who sent this must be from the village, they are not in the forces, they are not a prisoner. It's all very well for them to be doing things like this. They are the cowards, not you my son." She was right. But **Glyn** was an honourable man so he couldn't do nothing. It was early 1943. Of all three arms, the RAF was particularly engaged with the enemy and was suffering grave losses. Within a fortnight, he was a raw recruit wearing the uniform of an airman. Among his other trainees, he stood out: partly because of his strong Welsh accent, partly because of his diminutive stature, but mostly because of his relatively advanced age. His first day in uniform had been his thirtieth birthday.

Glyn was initially trained as an aircraft fitter, but although he enjoyed the work, it was essentially a safe option. The image of that white feather never left him. He knew his mother would not be at all pleased with his decision, but he later applied for aircrew training. Unsurprisingly, the RAF board found him suitable for re-training as an Air Engineer. He knew that would probably mean Bomber Command, taking the war to the enemy, being personally involved in the fight for his nation's survival.

After a number of postings to various training units, and having racked up those all-important flying hours under the watchful eye of those who had survived the rigours of operational flying over hostile territory, he finally graduated from the Heavy Conversion Unit to be posted just sixteen miles away to his first Operational Squadron.

Sergeant Glyn Jones 2209509, Flight Engineer, arrived on 23rd March 1944 at RAF Elvington in Yorkshire and reported to the adjutant of **No 77 Squadron**, a Halifax bomber squadron.

He was feeling very proud of himself. But he was also experiencing the inevitable mixed emotions of doing something so completely unfamiliar, so completely unnatural, allied to the obvious knowledge that it was an exceptionally precarious profession that he was about to embark upon. But he had arrived in the Second World War. He was now part of it. The white feather had been answered.

The very next day, he was introduced to his new crew only to learn that the squadron was so short of flight engineers that he would attend the briefing that afternoon and almost certainly be on operations that very evening. **Glyn** had no time to think about it, his training kicked in and he did exactly what he had been trained to do.....react like the part of a well-oiled machine. He didn't even have time to call his mother or brothers to let them know where he was, and in any case he would not be able to share with them the fact that that very night he was going to war. Careless talk costs lives. His crew could see he was a little apprehensive but reassured him by saying that as they were laying mines off the coast of Denmark, it was far less dangerous than bombing missions over the Ruhr or deep into Germany to Berlin. He thought little more about it, just got on with his job and hoped he would not make any mistakes in front of his new comrades in arms. **Halifax LW 270 KN-P** took off from Elvington at 2105, around about the same time that his mother Jane Jones had gone to bed, 165 miles away in Llanfairfechan. Less than three hours later, a Messerschmitt 110 night fighter had found them and within moments the Halifax was plunging towards the coastline in a ball of flame. At 2350, Jane Jones suddenly shot up in bed, assumed she had been having a nightmare and heavily lowered her weary head back on the pillow. In doing so, the stitching slightly widened and a feather escaped from the cotton case in which it had been captured for decades. The feather, a white feather, floated gently to the bedroom floor. At that same moment, seven hundred miles away, **Glyn** hit the ground in a gravel pit, not gently like the white feather, but heavily. Lifelessly. He was dead. The next morning, Jane Jones remembered the sudden awakening just before midnight, but could not recall the contents of the nightmare. She made the bed, saw the feather on the floor and picked it up between index finger and thumb. For some unknown reason, she put it out through the window. It floated gently to the ground, just missing the policeman who was about to knock on the front door with his right hand, while his left tightly clutched a telegram. **Glyn's** feathers flew no more.