

P.E. Walshe.

As
Paul was
out 237
LANCASTER
He came
top of all
his classes
ND
568
12/44
A.M.S. 2019

1. BERLIN. Familiarisation with P/O Wright.

Approached Berlin at 22,000 ft. There was a 10/10 layer of low cloud which showed white when lit up by photoflashes and flack layer. The flack was in the form of a box barage at about 18,000 - 19,000 ft. Spinning shadows on the cloud layer were not those of falling A/C according to P/O Wright but I was not fooled. They were. It was all very new. The crew were quiet except during the occasional check and for me except over the target it was almost boring, there being nothing for me to do.

2. SCHWEINFURT. First solo operation. *R/S BAYDEN - claimed fight*

24.2/44

ME
631

Briefed to knock out Ballbearing Works. Operational meal of egg and chips. (The only time we had eggs.) Drawing parachutes and flying gear seemed a muddle on this first trip but only because we were unfamiliar with the routine. Getting onto the crew bus the first signs of apprehension (Tension) began to appear. At the A/C were met by our wonderful ground crew. They couldnt do enough for Having checked and run the A/C we had to wait about ten minutes or so as was to be the usual practise. This was the worst time for nerves. Feeling the need to spend a penny it was surprising to find just a few drops issueing forth. Three minutes to go we were our seats and ready to start up. Easier from now on, as there wa something to keep us busy. Taking off for the first time with a

2 contd.

Billy laden A/C I missed the ease of control. (On the climb NE J or J Jig as we knew her, behaved like a soggy log and it was a bit like trying to climb a greasy pole. I found bar controls very stiff. The automatic pilot would not stay in gear due to the excess strain. We never did get the reason why, so George was never used. NE J (20 50 100) We were attacked by a fighter on the way to the target. The rear gunner shouted VIVE FORT but the wing was up and rudder over before he finished saying DIVE. At the moment when our wings were almost vertical a stream of tracer poured beneath our belly. Later the rear gunner claimed a nightfighter shot down. Approaching the target I did feel a bit apprehensive and warned the gunners to keep a good look-out as we would be above the flack and in the fighter belt. Could see fires on the ground. As it turned out the American Fortresses had attacked during the day and set fire to a forest 1 1/2 miles from the target. Most of us bombed those fires so that the damage to the ballbearing works was almost nil.

R.S. Boyden claimed fighter.

*ME
531
25.2.*

3. ~~REKKAUGSBERG~~
4. AUGSBERG except for a fighter attack similar to the last one our trip was uneventful. Rear Gunner claimed another fighter.

R.S. Boyden claimed fighter.

4. SWITCHART. Once again uneventful except for a fighter attack.

*ND
518
ME K*

1.3.44 This time as we climbed Stbd. in the corkscrew pattern we found ourselves flying level with the fighter about 40 yards away. It was in flames and we could see the pilot in the flames of the cockpit.

5. BATTIGUAYE. ME-J NO 522

15-3-44

Our old rear-gunner promoted to gunnery instructor he had a new rear gunner who did not see a fighter until our 2nd and last trip. (He may not have seen that one either.)

Conventional trip.

6. FRANKMUTH. Just another op. ME-J NO 522

18-3-44

7. WIRTSBURG. ME-J NO 522

30-3-44

Bogged in dispersal while being marshalled out to base. By the time we were out of the mud we were 20 minutes late and were given the choice of go or stay. We decided to go. It was wonderful to see all the flack positions lit up so that we indeed in and out between them getting out of trouble. The big idea was that chosen crews should radio the vint (wind) back to base. From base would work out the mean of those received and then pass the supposedly accurate wind back to the main force. We were to turn onto target at a given point to ~~SE~~ the North ? of the city. (I think it was only about three minutes flying time.) We came to the turning point and I could see colored flares going down and an attack taking place there. They were not our flares however, as ours were red. Then in the far distance (30 miles) I saw our red flares. After an argument with the navigator I

7 cont. which I said "We are going Joe. You just keep a plot of our course we headed for the flares. Being late the flares had gone out by the time we got there, but could see a few fires in the city which we bombed. Next day when the navigators work was replotted it was found that we were one of forty crews to come back on track. The main force had gone too far North on the way in and got caught up in the Happy Valley defences which we were lucky enough to have lit up for us.

3. TOULOUSE. First of our lower level attacks. 7,000 - 10,000 ft.
 5.4.44 Quiet and easy trip. Having spotted the railway and found our target, (Marshalling yards) we bombed and saw a fuel tank explode

9 Danzig Bay. Mining. X

7.4.44 A quiet trip but on the way back a good example of A/C versus single flack gun. Flying back across Denmark over 10,000 ft. there was a single flack puff about 50 yards to starboard. We began a gentle corkscREW pattern and the next puff was where we would have been if we'd not altered course and height. We had another three shots with the same result before we were out of range.

Note. At about this time we were recommended for Pathfinders but after a long discussion with the crew, refused because the Navigator would not have a go and I didn't want to split the crew

10. TOURS.

10.4.44 Much like the Toulouse trip and uneventful.

11. PARIS. (Juvisy marshalling yards.)

18.4.44

A short and easy trip. A good view of the yards and good results. One photo showed 180 craters touching each other in the middle of the yards.

12. LA CHAPELLE.

20.4.44

Uneventful and much the same as the last one.

13. BRUNSWICK.

22.4.44

A murky night over the target of which we caught only glimpses. We were bothered by the fact that the pump which operated the instruments and BOMB Sight was U/S. The emergency pump could operate either the instruments or the bomb sight but not both. I decided to make the approach on instruments then switch to the bomb sight at the last minute. The plan worked out well enough but with no horizon, the mass of cloud, A/C, photoflashes and flack the return to flying instruments was a tremendous relief. It was a really mad situation from the flying point of view.

14. MUNICH. Low level.

24.4.44

A wonderful flight across southern France, the lakes and Switzerland and Northern Italy up to Munich. Approaching the target we were coned by searchlights but by throwing the A/C about we were able to get clear and make a good run onto the target. This was a successful raid. The Window (Metallic strips) worked well against the radar controlled searchlights.

15. SCHWEINFURT.

26.4.44

This time low level to Schweinfurt and uneventful .

Knocked out 2/3 of the factory.

16. CLERMONT FERRAND.

29.4.44

Target obscured and we returned with bombs.

17. MAILLE LE CAMP.

1.5.44

The plan was that W/Cr Cheshire should mark the factory with red flare from his Mosquito. Backers up to mark a point ten miles from target. 100 A/C in ^{east of} three waves to attack in turn. We were in the first wave and began to circle the white (yellow?) flare. After what seemed a long wait we were called in to bomb, but half way in were told to return and wait. The white flare went out and was not replaced due to the back up A/C being shot down. It became a madhouse. Imagine 300 A/C circling an unknown point. Their orbits became more and more erratic until with the arrival of the night fighter force in full it reached the stage where A/C were coming at us from all directions and once more we had our trailing aerial torn off. Tracer from fighters and our own A/C everywhere. After what seemed an eternity we were called to bomb once more, which we did and knocked the factory off its foundations. We immediately climbed high then at full throttle set off for home. Woodroffe put his nose down and hedge-hopped home as I found out later. (Later G/Cpt J. Woodroffe DSO and 3 bars.)

2?

18. CLERMONT FERRAND.

3.5.44 This time a clear target and operation successful.

19. BOURG LEOPOLD.

11.5.44 Another short quiet trip. Was bothered by seeing an A/C shot down by a single light flack gun then two more immediately flying over the same spot and suffering the same fate. Why didnt they alter course ?.

20. AMIENS.

19.5.44 Uneventful.

21. KBIL BAY. THE FINAL LESSON

21.5.44 Discretion the better part of valour.

If two fighters attack at the same time then do tell the pilot

See details in story.

*R.G. Simpson's account suspect?
I saw no trace of fighters.
In 88. upward firing guns ??*

Notes.

- a. No 17 Maille le Camp we lost 50 out of 300 A/C.
Book said 42
- b. By the time we'd done 10 ops were one of four senior crews.
- c. At a guess the average number of ops was about seven, so that the chance of surviving a tour of 30 was small.
- d. By the time we had done ten ops we could guess very accurately the number of ops a new crew would do. Quite often three rarely more than ten. Dicipline/Morale ??? then ability, mixed with a bit of foxy cunning and luck.

When vis radar was operating we made sure to keep other A/C on either side as cover.

Notes contd.

- e. Over Stuttgart target area well lit up and A/C above. Ahead we watched as two A/C were finishing their bombing run. One dropped his bombs and immediately turned sharply to stbd. to crash right into the other. No violent explosion but a tangled mass falling almost vertically to earth.
- f. When an A/C received a direct hit there was often an expanding red ball of fire (Smoky red) with incendiaries dripping from it. One standard load was :- I 4,000 lb cookie (Blockbuster)
24 Canisters of incendiaries.
- g. Was shot up at 0300. Shot down at 0330. Having walked ashore to sit on haystack noticed the time was 0600. Suppose was dragged through ocean ^{by parachute} for nearly 2 hours and walked through water for about half an hour.
- h. In Swiftcurrent a U/T pilot walked out to his A/C which was waiting with engine running. He walked into the propellor. His head hit a hangar door 200 yards away.
- i. At Spilsby sitting in the officers mess the building was rocked by an explosion. Armament staff fusing bombs must have made a mistake. We found the bits that remained scattered over a wide area.
- j. At Swift current, caught out in a snowstorm, Instructor and I found a fence we knew opposite runway. Followed it and landed almost blind on runway

- k. At Neepawa a solo U/P pilot almost landed on main street of town, mistaking it for the runway.
- L. At Swift current went up with instructor to 10,000 ft to do stalling practice etc. Having finished the exercise he said "Let us do some low flying." He put the nose down and we descended at a fast rate. On the way down he rubbed his forehead between his eyebrows. I felt a kind of prickly sensation in the same place. At about 500 ft he suddenly slumped forward against the control column. I grabbed the wheel and heaved back. As we levelled out I noticed the wheat stalks and seed heads 20 odd ft. below. Climbed to 3000 ft. and he slowly recovered, groggily pointed saying "Home". He said afterwards "I should not have been flying with a head cold.
- m. In a Wellington at Bruntingthorpe we did a cross country and over Irish Sea opposite Liverpool passed through the top of a Cu. Nimb. cloud. The airspeed indicator suddenly began to fall back so put the nose down to regain speed but quickly realised this was all wrong and flew on using artificial horizon and engine revs. Back at base I called up the tower and asked for advice, to be told to land. Rather than risk landing at a low speed and stalling too soon I kept the speed up. When the first flarepath light flashed past I realised we were too fast. We were still doing at least 30 as we screeched round onto the taxi track but the *wheels stayed on.*

Notes contd.

n. ~~NY~~ On operations taking off at dusk we saw on big raids the hundreds of other aircraft circling, waiting to set course at the planned time. Then after setting course we would see them all around us fading into the darkness at the sun went down. From then on sometimes a dark shadow as one came too near, or as seen on the radar screen. We tried to remain on course yet keep other aircraft on either side of us. The idea being that if there was a fighter attack he would tend to pick out a straggler. Fish in a shoal must have the same idea?. We lost three trailing aeriels wiped off by other aircraft.

o. The crew said I always sounded bored over the intercom except when we were in trouble when I sounded as if I were awake and interested. Little did they know that at least on one occasion when approaching a target the wall of flack seemed so solid as to impenetrable. My stomach muscles were tied in such a knot that they hurt.

p. Crossing Sweden to Danzig Bay there was such a wall of light flack coming up that it looked solid. As we were about to penetrate it suddenly stopped and let us pass unmolested thank God. *very friendly flack*

q. Uncle Babe (Eugene Walshe) said go into battle knowing you will survive. (Have faith?). The Mid Upper Gunner and I had that feeling (faith) and we were the only ones to survive. FIN.