

Flight Lieutenant J B Smith DFC

466 RAAF Squadron

And

97 (Straits Settlements) Path Finder Force
Squadron



Peter Harvey

Forward

Flight Lieutenant Smith DFC was the pilot / captain of my late uncle's Lancaster, JB708 OF-J, 97 Path Finder Force (PFF) Squadron, which was shot down on the 11th May 1944 on a 5 Group bombing operation targeting the Lille railway infrastructure. F/L Smith was the Deputy Controller for this sortie and therefore the crew would have been one of the most experienced in the Squadron at that time. The crew were:

- 414691 F/L JB Smith DFC RNZAF, Pilot
- 537312 Sgt AR Rowlands RAFVR, Flight Engineer
- 134059 F/O AR Weston RAFVR, Navigator
- 138589 F/L LC Jones DFC RAFVR, Bomb Aimer
- 174353 P/O DED Harvey DFM RAFVR, Wireless Operator
- R/85522 W/O JR Chapman DFC RCAF, Upper Air Gunner
- J/17360 F/O SG Sherman RCAF, Rear Air Gunner

There are two websites dedicated to the crew:

<http://greynomad7.wix.com/a-97-sqn-pff-aircrew#!home/mainPage>

<http://tribalgecko.wix.com/lancasterjb708#ljb708>

The following data provides a short history of just one Bomber Command pilot and his crews. F/L Smith served with 466 RAAF Squadron at Leconfield in North Yorkshire, became a flying instructor after 29 operational flights and then volunteered to join 97 PFF Squadron stationed at RAF Coningsby in Lincolnshire. He was a member of the Royal New Zealand Air Force and carried out his flying training in Canada. The data is taken from varying sources listed in the bibliography.

I joined the RAF at the age of 16 and served for 9 years, 3 ½ of which was spent as a volunteer on the RAF Mountain Rescue Team at RAF Leeming in North Yorkshire. Peter Harvey (Dr)

With thanks to Errol Martyn of New Zealand for locating early data re Flt Lt Smith

Flight Lieutenant J B Smith DFC Time Line

The following data relating to Flight Lieutenant Smith DFC has come from a number of sources which are listed in the bibliography

SMITH, Flight Lieutenant John Baird, DFC. NZ414691

Born 5 Claremont Street, Dunedin 16th August 1916

Parents: Thomas Smith (Born Glasgow Scotland), Martha (nee Baird born Ballymena Northern Ireland)

Attended Southland Boys High School, Invercargill 1929 / 1933

Home address: 539 Broadway, Wellington E5, New Zealand

Occupation: Optician, Spear and Murray Limited, Wills Street, Wellington N2, 1939/1941

17/8/41: enlisted LAC A/Pilot RNZAF Levin/ITW

28/9/41: 3 EFTS [no 3 elementary flying training school]
No. 3 Elementary Flying Training School at R.N.Z.A.F station Harewood, New Zealand

No. 3 Elementary Flying Training School Flying DH82 Tiger Moths (see picture), this school was established in August 1940 to train new pilots. This became one of the largest flying schools in the country when, after No. 2 EFTS was closed down at RNZAF Station Ashburton in October 1944, its instructors and aircraft were absorbed into this school. **From:** <http://www.cambridgeairforce.org>



28/9/41: Embark for Canada

17 November 1941 Attached to RCAF

1 Dec 41, 4SFTS

No. 4 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) Course number 44

RCAF Station Saskatoon was a World War II British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) base operated by the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). It was located at Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. Soon after the Second World War broke out, the airfield became home to No. 4 Service Flying Training School (SFTS), one of dozens of military air training facilities created under the BCATP. This station flew Avro Anson and Cessna Crane twin-engine trainers (see pictures below) until 1944, when 4 SFTS was disbanded.



Avro Anson

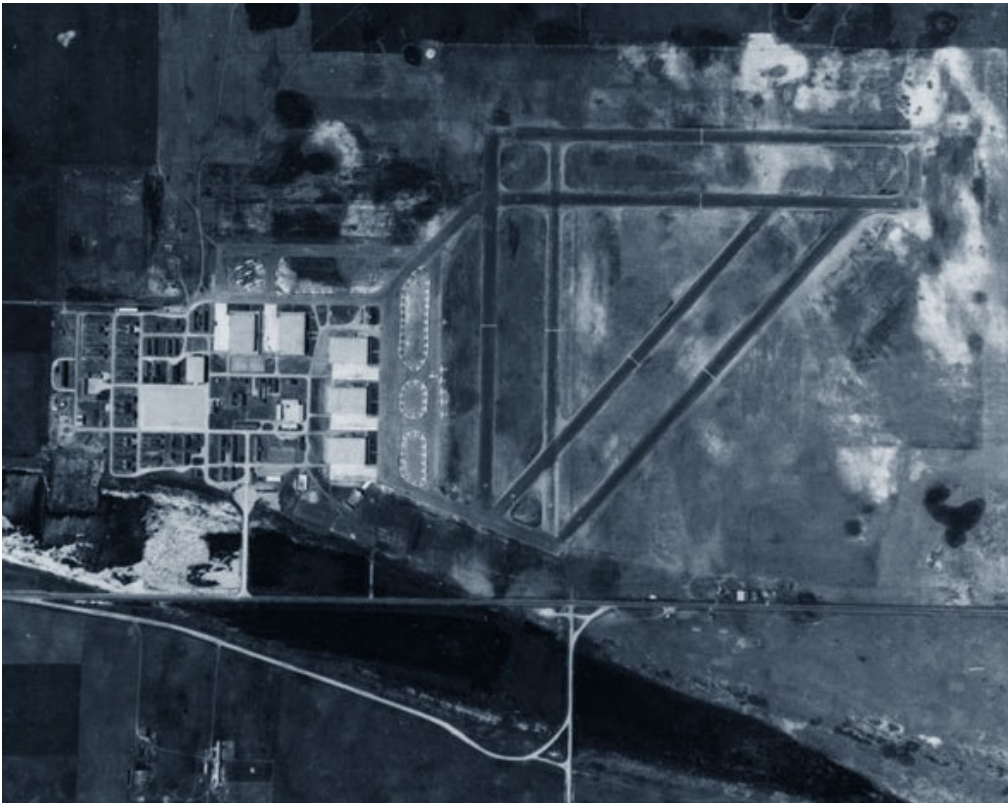


Cessna Crane

Course no 44 No 4 SFTS Saskatoon



From: <http://spldatabase.saskatoonlibrary.ca>



An aerial view taken vertically above No. 4 Service Flying Training School at Saskatoon. Close inspection of this photo reveals that the dotted oval shapes in front of the hangars are in fact 65 perfectly arranged training aircraft (probably Ansons and Cranes. In addition on the ramp in front of the upper hangar line are a dozen or more additional aircraft) RCAF Image. **From:** <http://www.vintagewings.ca/VintageNews/Stories/tabid/116/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/379/language/en-CA/Ghosts-of-Saskatchewan.aspx>

Extract from the end of course report at Saskatoon, signed by Wing Commander CF Newcome Commanding Officer, upon receiving his Pilot Wings:

This pupil has shown a high aptitude for learning of a high order and has progressed in a high average manner in all phases of his flying training. Is a confident capable pilot, light on controls, and handles aircraft very well both in the air and on the ground. Airmanship is good, high average in navigation ... instrument flying a high average. Will develop into a sound average service pilot.

Above average student, a willing and hard worker, a good sense of leadership and attitude towards service good.

From Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) Form T53A revised 19-8-41

5/12/41: Pilots Badge & Sgt/Commissioned

27/3/42: 1 Y Depôt

No. 1 Y Depot was a holding unit headquartered in Halifax, Canada, with detachments in several large Canadian cities, including Montreal and Toronto. It was more an address than a place of residency. Airmen on the move would be assigned to this unit for pay and rations, but could be and would be physically located just about anywhere. **From:** <http://www.rwrwalker.ca>

8/4/42: attached to RAF & embarked for UK

1/5/42: 3PRC – Personnel Reception Centre Bournemouth

13/5/42: 15(P)AFU – Pilot Advanced Flying Unit
RAF Ramsbury
(http://www.ramsburyatwar.com/Ramsbury_Airfield.htm)

RAF Ramsbury is a former Royal Air Force station located 5 miles (8.0 km) east-northeast of Marlborough, Wiltshire England equipped with Airspeed Oxfords (see picture), who taught the pilots the rudimentary skills needed to control multi-engined aircraft



24/6/42: [attached to 1516 BATF (Beam/Blind Approach Training Flight) for c.1 wk commenced or finished 19 Jul], 26 OTU (Wellington).



26 OTU's purpose was specifically to train crews for RAF Bomber Command's night offensive. Here they would fly practise missions; navigation exercises and generally to get to know their aircraft, their functions and to work as a close-knit team. When fully proficient they would be posted to an operational Wellington Squadron.

Photographs of 26 OTU aircraft are hard to find. The unit's aircraft used three different unit fuselage codes - EU, PB and WG, almost certainly to differentiate between flights, or aircraft based at the satellite airfield of Little Horwood. This Wellington, LR132 WG-V of 26 OTU was based at RAF Wing. source - RAF Bomber Airfields of WW2 by Jonathan Falconer. **From:** http://www.bansteadhistory.com/Memorial/2_F.html

24/7/42: 466 Sqn RAAF (Royal Australian Air Force) Wellington Bomber - 29 ops)
Last operation 2/8/43

No. 466 Squadron RAAF was formed at Driffield, Yorkshire, on 15th October 1942, as a medium-bomber squadron, equipped with Wellington aircraft and under the control of No. 4 Group. It moved to Leconfield in December 1942, but returned to Driffield in June 1944, and remained based there for the rest of the European war.



Beginning operations against the enemy on 13th January 1943, with a mine laying (or Gardening) mission off the Frisian Islands, the squadron continued with Wellingtons until the end of August 1943, and during this period dropped 620 tons of bombs and laid 330 tons of mines. Halifax B.IIIs replaced the Wellingtons (which were disposed of in September 1943), and with these No. 466, during the remainder of the European war, made 170 raids on 92 different targets. **From:** <http://www.raf.mod.uk/history/bombercommandno466squadron.cfm>

The Vickers Wellington was a British twin-engine, long range medium bomber designed in the mid-1930s at Brooklands in Weybridge, Surrey, by Vickers-Armstrongs' Chief Designer, R. K. Pierson in response to specification B.9/32.

Top speed 378 km/h

Wingspan 26 m

Length 20 m

First flight June 15, 1936

Designer: Barnes Wallis

Manufacturer: Vickers-Armstrongs



17/8/43: Citation Distinguished Flying Cross Gazette Issue 36135 published on the 13 August 1943. [466 Sqn RAAF (Wellington)] A cool, resourceful and determined pilot, this captain of aircraft has attacked most of the enemy's most important objectives. He has also successfully laid mines in enemy waters during adverse weather. His sorties include two daylight attacks on Emden and one in which his aircraft received very severe damage during combat with an enemy fighter. At all times Flying Officer Smith has displayed outstanding courage and a fine fighting spirit.

Note: see Appendix # for citations from 466 Squadron re DFC

22/8/43: 3 FIS Oxford 10 OTU (Whitley) as instructor

The **Armstrong Whitworth Whitley** was the main aircraft which was based and used by 10 OTU at RAF Abingdon until 1944. The Whitley first flew in March 1936 and entered service with the RAF in 1937. The A.W.38 Whitley was manufactured at Baginton near Coventry which was adjacent to the present day Coventry Airport. This was the first modern heavy bomber used during the early part of WW2. This aircraft was not always popular with aircrew and often referred to as the *Flying Coffin*. There is not a single example of the aircraft in existence today. In the Coventry Air Museum there is rear body and tail section of a Whitley. **From:** <http://rafabingdon10otu.co.uk/>



13/10/43 – 10/11/43: No 48 OTU Staff Pilots Course

14 /1/44: Citation Mention in Despatches London Gazette Issue 36329 published on the 11 January 1944. Page 13 of 28 Flying Officer JB Smith RNZAF

26th January 1944 – Dear Mrs Cross I have the pleasure in advising that your son, Flying Officer John Baird Smith DFC, has been mentioned in Dispatches for Meritorious Service rendered as a member of the royal New Zealand Air Force

23/3/44: PFF NTU (Path Finder Force Navigation Training Unit) RAF Warboys (picture from: <http://www.rafwarboys.co.uk/>) was a station near Cambridge and was home to the Path Finder Force Navigation Training Unit. The unit was set up to provide additional training to pilots and navigators for the Path Finder Force prior to posting to a PFF Squadron.



Note: 1st operation with 97 Squadron (Squadron ORB January to June 1944) 20/4/44

Flight Lieutenant J B Smith DFC Time Line with 466 Squadron Royal Australian Air Force

The data is from 466 Squadron (Sqn) Operations Record Book (ORB) From: <http://www.naa.gov.au> and John Dann <http://www.halifaxlv827.co.uk>

15/10/42: Official Formation date of 466 Squadron Bomber Command Letter BC/S 21717/5/Org dated 14/10/42

31/10/42: posted in to 466 Sqn at Driffield

31/10/42: the Sqn possessed 14 complete aircrews, 9 trained on Wellington 1c's. 3 on Wellington 111s remaining 2 on Hampdens

6/11/42: Wellington X3409 Wing Commander Bailey test flew this aircraft – the Sqn's first flight

8/11/42: Sqn code letters – HD

15/11/42: the Sqn Cdr and eight captains of crews visited 102 Sqn RAF Pocklington, these 8 went as second pilots on a raid to Geneva Northern Italy P/O JB Smith being one of the captains

21/11/42: Night flying practice P/O Smith and Sgt Babington

25/11/42: the first of the Sqn's new Wellington X (Hercules V1) arrived

6/12/42: the two remaining aircraft to complete the establishment of 18 were ferried by Sqn pilots from Harwarden near Chester, visibility fell to about 1200yds for their arrival but both pilots (**P/O JB Smith** and Sgt Ford) showed fine airmanship in locating and landing safely.

14/12/42: Mine laying

21/12/42: search for Halifax of 78 Sqn ditched in the sea in the area of Skegness; gale-force conditions. 3 of the crew rescued by ASR (Air Sea Recue) launch.

27/12/42: Squadron moved to RAF Leconfield

RAF Leconfield Data

<http://www.forgottenairfields.com/united-kingdom/england/east-riding-of-yorkshire/leconfield-s1018.html>

53°52'37"N

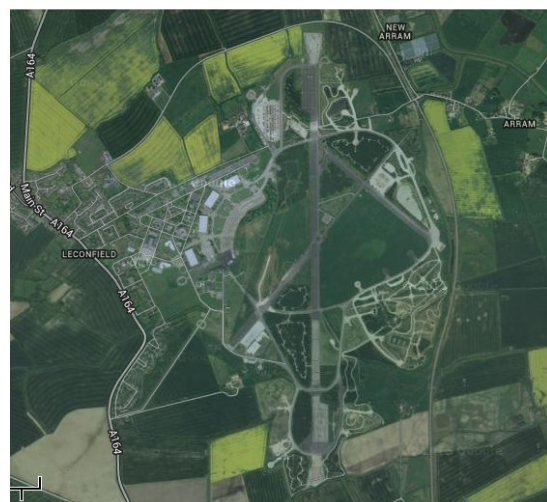
000°26'07"W

Leconfield air field (RAF Leconfield) located in Yorkshire near to Beverley. Construction of the airfield began in 1935 and was completed in December 1936. Designated a bomber airfield, it featured 5 large hangars. Four of the hangars were built fronting the 'bombing circle, while a fifth was placed to the rear at the south end.

The airfield reopened in December 1942 receiving 196 and 466 Squadrons, both flying Wellingtons. Australian manned 466 Sqn and flew its first combat mission on 13 January 1943, and 196 Sqn on the night of 4/5 February. However, 4 Group was re-equipping to become an all-Halifax unit, so the Wellingtons were phased out.



RAF Leconfield from the air in May 1945



From: <https://maps.google.co.uk/maps?hl=en&tab=w>

11/1/43: Sqn non-operational due to turret failure

14/1/43: mine laying off Ameland, visibility poor and only 21 aircraft hit target

Wellington X HE164 HD-B F/O Smith JB Pilot, Sgt Duckmanton HC 2nd Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 1603 – 2021 Mines dropped from 900feet at 1755 hours. Cloud base at 200 feet, raining and almost dark. Pinpoint Ameland and fix. Both mines dropped.

26/1/43: ten aircraft took off to attack **Lorient** in NW France, nine bombed the target

Wellington X HE164 HD-B F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 1714- 2339 7/10 cloud tops 3000. Visibility good. Bombed from 10,000 feet at 2024. Estuary and River Scorff and entrance channel to Port de Commerce identified with aid of flare. Big fires in target area and fires on both banks of River Scorff also on Keroman Peninsular.

Summary: at least seven aircraft found target and found not very concentrated fires. Visibility fairly good to a nd from target but cloud over target varied 3/10 to 9/10. Rear Gunner of aircraft HE-411 while over target at 2032 hours height 8500 feet saw enemy aircraft pass across tail of own aircraft from starboard to port in a dive of approximately 150 yds. Enemy aircraft did not appear to see own aircraft. Most aircraft report light flak from target and some inaccurate heavy flak. Heavily flak was also coming from Lannion and Guernsey. HE212 reported light flak from enemy coast to target and back. Balloons reported over target at 3/4000 feet. Only few searchlights over target hampered by cloud. Aircraft HE212 from height 10,000 feet at 2029 hours saw lighted flare path at 48 degrees 45 minutes N. 03 degrees 15 Minutes W. A great number of white lights on ground over whole section of the route. Concentration of light around Guingamp. Aircraft HE164 [F/O Smith] at 2014 hours height 10,000 feet just north of target saw a deep red ball of fire rise slowly to height of own aircraft then fall. Another aircraft at 2029 hours height 9000 feet just North of target saw a bright orange light burning for a few seconds at 600 feet. It then fell to the ground and disintegrated. Aircraft HE153 at 2036 hours height 10,000 feet just after leaving target area saw a large red ball of flame falling to the ground lighting the cloud as it passed through. Later there was a big white flash. Various [crews] suspected decoy fires were reported. In particular aircraft HE164 [F/O Smith] reports a rectangle of brilliant white lights S.E. of target on East Bank of river Blavet. Object: Bombing Attack on Lorient

30/1/43: 8 aircraft required for daylight bombing on **Emden**, this was to be done under cloud cover from a low level.

Wellington X HE164 HD-B F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 1116 – 1634. Bombed from 2000 feet at 1320 hours. 10/10 cloud base at approximately 800 feet. Spent 20 minutes in Emden area coming in and out of cloud. Could not locate primary and eventually bombed built-up area close to large wood, railway and canal. Believed Aurich. Bombs dropped from cloud – bursts felt and heard but not seen.

Summary: aircraft HE153 had total failure of port engine and returned early. Cloud base at target area approximately 800-1000 feet. The five aircraft which reached kept breaking cloud to pinpoint themselves and on most occasions experienced sharp and accurate bursts of light flak. Two aircraft (HE212 and HE514) broke cloud right on target and had an excellent view of Emden. They then shot back in cloud and bombed from 11 and 12 hundred feet respectively. Aircraft HE411 attacked through cloud on DR and HE389 got a fix. Subsequently confirmed by pinpoint. Aircraft HE164 [F/O Smith] was unfortunate and though spending 20 minutes in area breaking through cloud at intervals could not locate primary. Eventually built up area with woods and canal, railway and large road all running through it. Believed to be Aurich and bombed it. Two aircraft are missing (HE397 and

HE471). On way out Cu and S Cu 8/10 – 10/10 base 2500 tops 6000 with occasional rain showers. Base falling to 1500 and tops to 1200 over target 10/10 base 700 tops 6000. Visibility was good below cloud. On return journey cloud broke over Frisians then small amounts towards English coast. Light icing in showers. Light anti-aircraft fire was reported from Norderney and Schiermonnikdg. Aircraft HE212 reports merchant vessel 3000/4000 tons alongside submarine slips with cranes. Aircraft HE514 reports three lines of small tramp vessels about 15 in each line at S.W. end of Nuer Binnen Hafen also ships in Dollart Basin. Aircraft HE411 reports two groups of three ships each probably coastal vessels hove to just N of Norderney. Aircraft fired approx 800 rounds in three bursts. Ships returned fire without effect.

4/2/43: weather – visibility good – small amounts of medium cumulus cloud. Wind light NW veered to SW. Nine aircraft were requested for a bombing attack on **Lorient**. All aircraft successfully attacked the target and returned. Eighteen aircraft from this station were airborne in a period of seventeen minutes. A very good night's work with the exception of photography. No results were obtained due to incorrect loading of photo flashes.

Wellington X HE501 HD-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. Bombs were dropped from 9000 feet at 2111 hours. The weather was clear with good visibility. Bombs fell a little short, but end of stick thought to have fallen in north part of target area. River bend 3 miles north of target was illuminated by searchlights. The town and docks were well alight and the blaze of the fires was seen from the French coast on the way in. A better show than last trip – fires were larger and more concentrated.



Flt Lt J B Smith and aircrew 466 Squadron 4th February 1943 Wellington X HE501 HD-J
(Courtesy of J Dann <http://www.halifaxlv827.co.uk/>)

Looking at picture from the left: Sgt P E Pilborough (RAFVR) Wop/AG [Commissioned F/O], P/O Jeffrey DFC B/A [Squadron Leader S R Jeffrey MBE DFC], F/O Smith JB (RNZAF) DFC Pilot (KIA 4/5/44/ 97 Sqn), **P/O Vaizey DFC Navigator** (KIA 21/7/44), Sgt P J Moloney A/G

Flight Lieutenant John D Vaizey DFC

Posted to 37 Squadron, part of No 205 Group 231 Wing, based at Tortorella in Italy. The group was under the operational command of the 15th United States Army Air Force from its inception and was the only RAF bomber force to ever operate under foreign command. The 15th Air Force was the major component of the Mediterranean Allied Strategic Air Force (MASAF) which in turn was part of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces (MAAF).



The story of the daylight operations of the 15th USAAF is fairly well known and extensively covered by American authors (*Ploesti* by Dugan and Stewart, *Target Ploiesti* by Newby, *Those Who Fall* by Muirhead, *The War of the Cottontails* by Cubbins, *Into the Guns of Ploiesti* by Newby, and *Wild Blue* by Ambrose, are all excellent reading on this topic), however, the role of the RAF night operations over the same targets was, and is, largely ignored or forgotten. RAF veterans commonly refer to air operations in Italy as "the forgotten war". It's a term that was as true during WWII as it is now. The reasons for this are many, but the fact of it is especially tragic considering the incredible job the RAF aircrew did under the most unusual, and terrible, of conditions. From: <http://natureonline.com/37/2-37sqn-italy-1944.html>

Wellington Mk.X's of No. 37 Squadron on the airfield at Tortorella, Italy.



From: <http://natureonline.com/37/2-37sqn-italy-1944.html>

21st July 1944: The target was the Pribice Oil Refinery in Czechoslovakia. This was 37 Squadrons (and 205 Groups) first visit to Czechoslovakia. Twelve Wellingtons of 37 Squadron were detailed to fly, however two aircraft (those piloted by Squadron Leader Forsyth and Sergeant Taylor) did not operate due to problems with their overload tanks. To increase the Wellingtons range, two auxiliary self-sealing 140 gallon fuel tanks could be installed in the bomb cells. These were known as "overload tanks" and increased the normal flying time to about eleven hours. On this night one aircraft was found to have leaking overload tanks and another had problems with clogged fuel lines leading from these tanks. These two crews were perhaps lucky, because unlike the relatively tame operations, this operation encountered heavy opposition.

The tenth aircraft, Wellington Mk.X number JA521, failed to reach the target and did not return from this operation. On board were Flying Officer Francis B. Newmarch (RAF/pilot) age 20, Flight Lieutenant (and Squadron Navigation Officer) John D. Vaizey (RAF/navigator) age 33, Sergeant Ben Naylor (RAF/wireless operator) age 20, Sergeant Norman E. Green (RAF/air bomber) age 22, and Sergeant James T. Goodwin (RAF/air gunner) age 19. The entire crew was killed when their aircraft was lost to unknown enemy action en route to the target. They are buried at the Commonwealth War Grave Commission (CWGC) Malta Memorial located in the Floriana area of Malta.

Summary: all aircraft report an excellent show. The target was well lit up and visibility was excellent. Actual results of bombing difficult to assess as target was well alight, but all crews were well satisfied. Conditions on the whole were good but haze near base on return caused a little trouble, otherwise weather was ideal. At target area light and heavy flak was moderate – light flak was effective at 10,000 feet, occasionally reaching 12,000 feet. Some crews were impressed with the increase of searchlights, without a comparable increase of flak. Estimates of searchlights varied from 12 to 30 both in cones and in rows. No reports of aircraft going down over target. Air craft HE501 [F/O Smith] reported 2034 hours passing over cluster of lights, and presumed them to be ships. Bursts of heavy flak came from

amongst these. Aircraft HE411 reported gun flashes from 50deg N 03 20' W at 2033 hours. Several aircraft reported very bright rectangular decoy of white lights on west bank of river, 31/2 miles NNW of target. A bright square of lights also reported at Poulay 12 miles N of target, and bright yellow orange lights, described as a glowing fire and a beacon without characteristics at Pleubian on N French coast.

7/2/43: weather – visibility good with small amounts of cloud – wind N but backed later to NW. Seven aircraft requested for bombing **Lorient**. A large number of aircraft took part – 18 from this station. The raid was a great success – weather conditions ideal. One of our aircraft had navigation failure and returned early. Some photos were obtained.

Wellington X HE501 HD-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 1920 – 0100 bombs were dropped from 9000 feet at 2152 hours. No cloud but much smoke. Fires were visible from French coast and river Scorff identified. There were huge fires in the dock area on the west bank of the river. Saw gutted buildings and volumes of smoke. There were fires all over the town. Bombs believed to have fallen in the dock area on the east bank.

Summary: it was mostly reported that flak was a good deal less than on previous occasions. Both heavy and light flak spasmodic and slightly more intense at a little distance from the town. In the town itself defence appeared to have given up the struggle except for occasional outbursts, though two or three aircraft thought heavy flak was a trifle more intense than on previous raid. Flak generally was a deterrent barrage rather than aimed, searchlights were very few. One or two cones of up to half a dozen N of town and E of river. Some aircraft reported balloons between 3,000 and 7,000 feet in and around the town. Several decoys were reported near the town. HE153 reported aircraft with light in nose too far away to identify, at about 3 miles north of target.

7/8 Feb 1943 – Lorient

323 aircraft – 100 Wellingtons, 81 Halifaxes, 80 Lancasters, 62 Stirlings. 7 aircraft – 3 Lancasters, 2 Halifaxes, 2 Wellingtons lost. The Pathfinder marking plan worked well and the two main force waves produced a devastating attack (Middlebrook & Everitt p352)

17/2/43: Weather - poor visibility – less than 2000 yards – persisted until late afternoon. Varying strato cumulus cloud and light southerly winds. Three aircraft detailed to attack **Emden** in daylight with cloud cover. All aircraft carried out their tasks without opposition from flak, but two encountered fighters. HE150 flown by Flying Officer JB Smith had a combat with a ME110 and by skilful flying avoided extensive damage. The ME110 was beaten off by the rear gunner Sgt Robbins using his guns manually since the hydraulic systems had failed. The aircraft was landed at base without additional damage without flaps or trimming tabs and it was then discovered that the starboard petrol tanks had been holed and on fire. The oil tank punctured, both hydraulic services, intercommunications set, pitot head and dependant instruments were out of action. The rear turret armour plating was scored by an explosive bullet and the Perspex cupola blown out on the starboard side. None of the crew was injured. Following an SOS signal from the aircraft, four other aircraft of the Squadron stood by to make an immediate search, but this was fortunately unnecessary. Three other aircraft were detailed for mining operations but this was cancelled due to weather conditions.

Wellington X **HE150** HD-A F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, **Sgt Robbins S A/G**. It was clear over the target but hazy with poor visibility and 10/10ths cloud on outskirts of target area. Horseshoe Bay to south of town clearly identified also Ems river clearly



seen. Bombs were dropped at 1627 hours from 8000 feet. Bombs seen to explode and thought to have fallen in N part of town. **Aircraft extensively damaged by ME110** (pictured). A successful trip but the moon was too bright.

Summary: Cloud remained 10/10ths across the sea with tops approx 9,500 feet. Immediately west of target at approximately 1830 hours this suddenly broke completely. Aircraft HE156 reported aircraft stooging around 20 miles from Emden but evidently not seen them. **Aircraft HE150** (F/O Smith) was attacked by ME110 at 1845 hours at 9000 feet. Rear gunner opened fire but made no claims. Own aircraft dived into cloud and enemy aircraft being lost. Five minutes later when cloud cover broke another attack was delivered by an ME110 from port. Enemy aircraft crossed to starboard and attacked again. Although own aircraft dived to port into thin cloud at 6000 feet, yet another attack was made. Both attacks were continuous and a number of hits were registered, starboard wing petrol pipes being hit and rear turret was severely damaged. Aircraft landed safely but swung off runway due to a burst tyre. No claims were made. There was no flak whatever over target on Frisian. A solitary searchlight was seen on NE tip of Ems Estuary in cloud and one in far distance.

Combat report: Gunnery Leader 466 Squadron (RAAF)

Gunnery Officer No 4 Group

18th February 1943
466/2/31/Air

Combat Report of Wellington X – 466 Squadron

Wellington X HE-150 "A" of 466 Squadron, raid on Emden 17th February 1943, height 9000 feet, speed 160 MPH, course 287M, cloud about 5/10 at 8500 feet. The approximate position of the first attack was 53°47' N. 06°22' E at 18.45 hours.

The enemy aircraft a ME110 was first sighted by the wireless operator standing in the astro dome, the enemy aircraft was just visible in the tops of the cloud about 60 yards away on the starboard beam, flying on a parallel course. The enemy aircraft attacked from the beam later developing into a starboard quarter attack. The pilot turned to starboard and the gunner fired a 3-4 second burst, during the whole of the first attack the enemy fighter was firing from about 50 – 60 yards range. The attack was broken off when the enemy aircraft broke away to port and disappeared into the cloud.

The second attack followed about 5 minutes later when the cloud cover disappeared, the enemy aircraft came in on the port quarter and crossed to the starboard quarter again opened fire at very short range. Just after the rear gunner of the Wellington aircraft opened fire, the articulated joint and pipes on the R.H guns was shot away completely, the gunner as far as was possible manually operated the turret and guns for another 3 – 4 second burst.

The evasive action taken by the pilot was a steep spiral dive towards the little cloud cover available, during this the enemy aircraft fired one more short burst before breaking off the attack.

The rear gunner then moved to the beam position guns as the rear turret had become unserviceable, the side Perspex panel was shot away and the hydraulics had been shot away.

No injuries were sustained by the crew but considerable damage was done to the starboard wing, the starboard engine caught fire but later this went out on entering the cloud.

Hits were scored on the enemy aircraft during the first attack but no apparent damage resulted.

The gunner had difficulty in sighting due to the enemy flashes caused by cannon and MG [machine gun] fire of the enemy aircraft.

A total of 700 rounds was fired in the 3 attacks.

The gunner is to be recommended on his persisting with the attack under the adverse conditions prevailing.

Rear Gunner. Sgt Robbins, trained at No 15 OTU Harwell, No 4 AGS Dalcross

Gunnery Leader
For Officer Commanding
No 466 (RAAF) Squadron
RAF Station Leconfield

Note: See copy of original combat report at Appendix A. Sgt Robbins awarded the DFM, see citation (handwritten) at Appendix B. From: <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au>

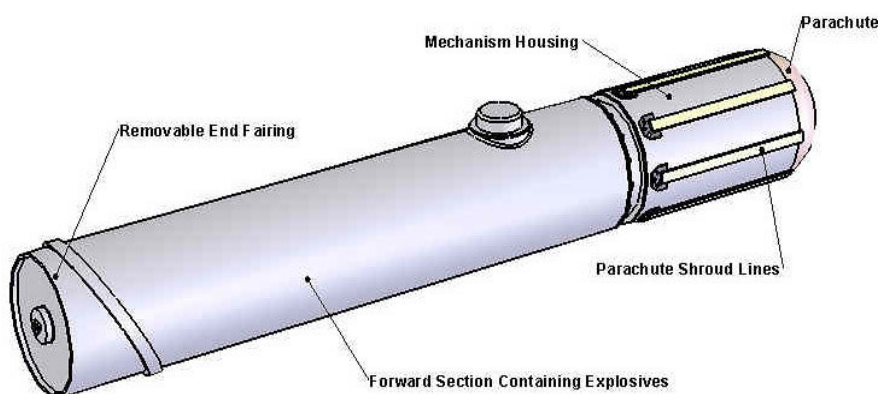
25/2/43: Weather – some smoke haze, light westerly winds and small amount of cumulous cloud. Eleven aircraft were prepared for an attack on **Hamburg**. This was changed at 1300 hours to **mining** (also known as gardening or dropping vegetables) by eight aircraft. Seven aircraft took off at 2000 hours. Six laid their mines successfully of **Schiermonikoog**. The seventh returned early having reported a possible dinghy sighting. This was supported by a report from another aircraft.

Sea Mines:

Mk. I-IV - 1,500 lbs. and 1,850 lbs

First introduced for Bomber Command Operations in April 1940, the Mk. I - IV was sturdily built and designed to withstand drops from aircraft flying at 200 mph at altitudes varying from 100 to 15,000 feet. Containing approximately 750 lbs. of explosives the mine could be detonated using various triggering devices depending on the application required. The type along with the Mk. V and VII became the standard mine used by the Command until being replaced by the Mk. VI in 1944.

From: http://www.lancaster-archive.com/bc_bombsmineincendiaries.htm



Mk.I Air Deployable Anti-Ship Mine

Wellington X HE501 HD-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, Sgt Ludgater AC 2nd Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 2013 – 0003. Target attacked by pinpoint on Schiermonikoog through gap in clouds. Mines dropped at 21.46 hours from 6,000 feet.

Summary: In most cases cloud prevented extremely satisfactory pinpointing. Weather was fair at first. Cloud was 5/10 to 8/10 up to 3,000 feet, increasing to 10/10ths with occasional gaps. It was similar on return.

26/2/43: Weather – Smoke haze, light westerly winds and small amounts of cumulus clouds. Eleven aircraft took part in a highly successful major attack on **Cologne**. All aircraft reached and bombed their objectives and returned to base without damage. One aircraft HE510 captained by F/O JB Smith beat off an attack by a JU 86 in the target area. Opposition from flak and searchlights was intense in the early stages of the attack and faded out within about fifteen minutes.

Wellington X HE501 HD-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 1851 – 0057. Weather clear but ground haze. Primary attacked but no TI markers were seen, which Captain considers due to being late on target. Town clearly identified by river Rhine and lake to north west. Bombs dropped at 2129 hours from 16,500 feet and believed to have fallen in north west of old town. Many fires seen, principally south of Cologne.

Summary: TI Markers do not appear to have been dropped at zero hour

26/27 February 1943 – Cologne

427 aircraft – 145 Lancasters, 126 Wellingtons, 106 Halifaxes, 46 Stirlings, 4 Mosquitos. 10 aircraft – 4 Wellingtons, 3 Lancasters, 2 Halifaxes and 1 Stirling lost. Most of the bombs from this large raid fell to the south-west of Cologne. Figures from Cologne itself suggest that only a quarter of the force hit the city. An increasingly familiar list of destroyed and damaged buildings was provided, much housing, minor industry, churches, historic buildings, public utilities and offices. The worst incident was when 40 to 50 people were trapped in several blocks of flats hit by a 4,000 lb bomb in the Einhardstrasse. The wreckage began to burn before the rescue workers could free the trapped people and most of them died. The total casualty list in Cologne was 109 people dead, more than 150 injured and 6,322 bombed out. (Middlebrook & Everitt p358)

1/3/43: Weather – some stratus cloud 3-6/10 variable cumulus. Visibility 4-9 miles. Westerly winds light. Five aircraft were required for mining operations in **Heligoland Bight**. One failed to return. The Captain was Sgt Barrow and aircraft HE376. Due to repair work only the north-south runway was usable and this made take-off and landing rather a problem with prevailing westerly winds.

Wellington X HE501HD-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 1911 – 0018. Vegetables not planted, but jettisoned safe at 52 57' N 08.00 E from 1000 feet at 2100 hours. Sea mist made pin pointing difficult, flak seen believed from Wangerooge, and run up to planting point started: before reaching same aircraft suddenly engaged by much accurate flak from several points on the sea and 4 searchlights exposed. Evasive action taken but as aircraft sluggish vegetable jettisoned safe. Aircraft got away after violent evasive action.

3/3/43: Weather – 10/10 Stratus cumulus cloud persisted all day and until midnight. S E wind 15mph, visibility good. Eleven aircraft took part in a heavy attack on **Hamburg** at about 2130 hours. All crews reported the raid a success and returned without incident.

Wellington X HE501 HD-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 1846 – 044. Bombs dropped from 17000 feet at 2125 hours. Primary attacked on Green Markers seen in bomb sight, two bursts seen. 3 big fires and many small ones seen just before coast was reached on homeward journey. An enormous flash was seen from target area. White marker flares very useful. Visibility good but much smoke from fires.

Picture below from: <http://www.halifaxlv827.co.uk/bomb%20runs/3-3-43.jpg>



3/4 March 1943 – Hamburg

417 aircraft, 149 Lancasters, 1223 Wellingtons, 83 Halifaxes, 62 Stirlings. 10 aircraft, 4 Lancasters, 2 Wellingtons, 2 Stirlings lost. Visibility was clear over the target area but the Path Finders made a mistake, possibly thinking that the H2S (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H2S_radar) indications of the mud banks in the Elbe which had been uncovered by the low tides were sections of the Hamburg docks. Most of the Main Force bombing thus fell 13 miles downstream from the centre of Hamburg, around the small town of Wedel. Even so, a proportion of the bombing force did hit Hamburg which suffered 27 people killed and 95 injured, and whose fire brigade had to put out 100 fires before devoting all its energies to helping the town of Wedel, which suffered so heavily. The damage at Wedel included a large naval clothing store burnt out as well as several important industrial concerns destroyed in Wedel's harbour area, and this illustrated another Bomber Command view: that bombing could usually be useful even if the wrong target was hit. (Middlebrook & Everitt p320)

10/3/43: Weather – 10/10 stratus cloud, S W winds 10-15 mph, moderate visibility. At 0810 hours two aircraft were ordered for a **sea search**. The detailed instructions were not received until 1000 hours but the aircraft were airborne at 1045 hours. Two further aircraft were required for mining operations. Instructions were received at 1030 hours but cancelled at 1320 hours. A deterioration of visibility and increase of cloud due to front approaching.

Wellington X HE501HD-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 1040 – 1341. Search completed – no incidents

12/3/43: Weather – clear and fine. Light southerly winds, strato cumulus cloud increased during the afternoon and smoke haze reduced visibility. Twelve aircraft were prepared for an attack on **Essen**, and all took off at approximately 1926 hours. One returned early due to oxygen failure but the other eleven bombed on target and returned. Sgt Treacher W.op/AG in aircraft HZ271 flown by Flt Sgt Tozer was injured in the arm by a piece of shrapnel. The attack, which was a major one involving some 450 aircraft, appeared to be successful.

Opposition was severe as was expected in the Ruhr area but was exhausted about half way through the attack.

Wellington X HE501HD-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 1926 – 0011. Bombs dropped from 16,000 feet at 2125 hours. Primary attack on TI's seen in bombsight. Many fires in works and Essen. About 2136 a terrific flash seen followed by orange and yellow flame with much greasy smoke. Later similar fire seen, burning debris thrown into the air. Visibility good but smoke haze.

Picture of Essen from <http://www.halifaxlv827.co.uk>



12/13 March 1943 – Essen

457 aircraft, 158 Wellingtons, 156 Lancasters, 91 Halifaxes, 42 Stirlings, 10 Mosquitoes; 23 aircraft, 8 Lancasters, 7 Halifaxes, 6 Wellingtons and 2 Stirlings lost. This was another very successful Oboe-marked raid (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oboe_%28navigation%29). The centre of the bombing area was right across the giant Krupps factory, just west of the city centre, with the later bombing drifting back to the north-western outskirts. Photographic interpretation assessed that Krupps received 30% more damage on this night than on the earlier successful raid of 5/6 March. Nearly 500 houses were also destroyed in the raid. The number of people killed is variously reported between 169 and 322, with 198 probably being the most accurate figure, made up of 64 men, 445 women, 19 children, 4 soldiers, 61 foreign workers and 5 prisoners of war.

German records say that one third of the bombs dropped on this night did not hit Essen and that 39 people were killed in other towns with Bottrop, just north of Essen, being the worst hit, but these towns were close to Essen and there was often no clear division between overlapping built-up areas. (Middlebrook & Everitt p368)

4/4/43: Weather – poor visibility during the morning with little cloud. Light S W winds. Three aircraft flew a sea search during the day, one remaining for 8 hours 37 minutes, at night 17 aircraft took off the attack **Kiel** and a further aircraft was sent to 196 Squadron (RAF Driffild). The attack was a large scale one using PFF method but results were difficult to assess due to the cloud conditions over the target. From the Squadron's point of view the 24 hours was a remarkable period. Twenty operational sorties were flown altogether and at night eighteen aircraft were airborne on the same attack. Aircraft HZ279 (Wellington X) flown by F/O Macfarlane on a sea search was airborne for 8 hours and 37 minutes and still had more than 1 hour's fuel left. This was unusual endurance or a standard fuel load of 750 gallons. The same aircraft flown by Flt Lt Renolds completed a sortie to Kiel taking off 1 hour and 56 minutes after its return from the sea search. During the 16 hours 47 minutes commencing at 1014 hours, the aircraft was airborne on operational missions for 14 hours and 51 minutes.

Wellington X HE501 HD-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, P/O Jeffrey RS B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 2052 – 0329. Bombs dropped from 16,000 feet at 2340 hours. No marker was seen. Bombed red glow due to marker on fire. Oxygen failed ¼ hour before reaching target and did not come on again. Sky marking method should have been used. 10/10 cloud.

4/5 March 1943 – Kiel

577 aircraft, 203 Lancasters, 168 Wellingtons, 116 Halifaxes and 90 Stirlings; on the largest raid so far to Kiel, more than twice as many aircraft as on any previous raid taking part. This was also the largest 'non-1,000' bombing force of the war so far. 12 aircraft, 5 Lancasters, 4 Halifaxes, 2 Stirlings and 1 Wellington lost.

The Path Finders encountered thick cloud and strong winds over the target so that accurate marking became very difficult. It was reported that decoy fire sites may also have drawn off some of the bombing. Kiel reports only a few bombs in the town with 11 buildings destroyed, 46 damaged and 26 people being killed. No commercial premises were hit, the only building hit apart from houses was a Catholic church. (Middlebrook & Everitt p374)

8/4/43: Weather 10/10 cloud base 3000 feet N W winds 15 – 20 mph. Visibility 5 – 8 miles. Eight aircraft were requested for an attack on **Duisburg**. All took off at 2125 and short following intervals. Weather conditions were extremely poor and severe icing caused the early return of two aircraft. The target area was completely obscured by several layers of cloud and no results of bombing could be observed. Flak opposition was scattered but two aircraft sustained fairly serious damage and one aircraft is missing.

Wellington X HE501HD-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, P/O Jeffrey RS B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 2135- - 2156. Trip abandoned and all bombs brought back as Goon and Artificial Horizon u/s.

10/4/43: Strato cumulus cloud 10/10 base 3000 tops 6000 feet, visibility good. Wind 15 mph. Thirteen aircraft took off to attack **Frankfurt**. Navigation was accurate and all aircraft reported reaching the target area but 10/10 strato-cumulus cloud made observation impossible and the PFF technique employed did not produce good concentration. Wellington HE570 flown by Flt Lt Reynolds collided with an unknown aircraft 50 miles from target on return but reached base with a badly damaged tail plane. One aircraft HE506 P/O Booy failed to return.

Wellington X HE501HD-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, Aus 408585 Sgt McMorrison LA 2nd Pilot, P/O Jeffrey RS B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 22330 – 0640. Bombs dropped from 16,000 feet at 0243 hours. Bombed glow of fires seen through cloud. No release point flares seen, though green flares were seen at three positions given at briefing.

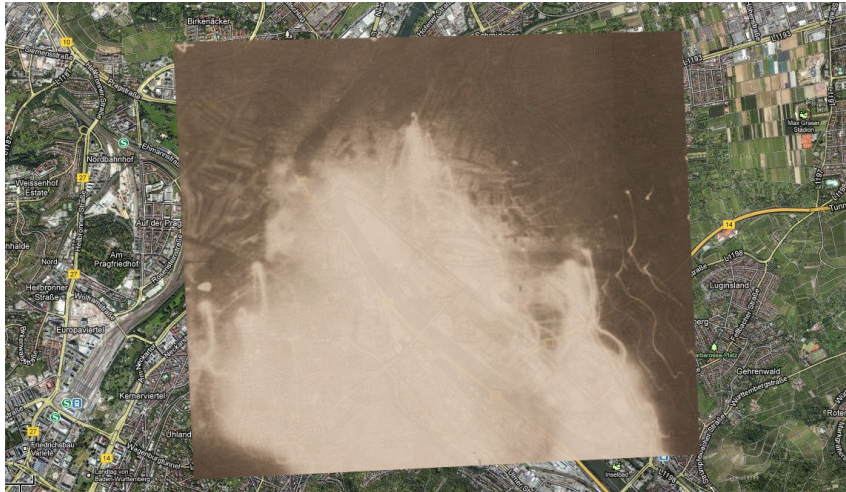
10/11 April 1943 – Frankfurt

502 aircraft, 144 Wellingtons, 136 Lancasters, 124 Halifaxes, 98 Stirlings; 21 aircraft, 8 Wellingtons, 5 Lancasters, 5 Stirlings and 3 Halifaxes lost. Complete cloud cover in the target area again led to a failure. The bombing photographs of every aircraft showed nothing but cloud and Bomber Command had no idea where bombs had fallen. Frankfurt reports only a few in the suburbs of the city, south of the river Main. The only damage listed was fires in a paper-goods store, and in the rafters of a few neighbouring houses. The Frankfurt report says that there were no casualties in the city, but another report says that 18 people died, presumably in country areas. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp375-376)

14/4/43: Weather – a warm front crossed the area during the morning producing rain and low cloud, but by evening it was fine and clear with S W winds 10 – 15 mph. Eleven aircraft were ordered for an attack on **Stuttgart**. All took off on time but one returned after three hours due to illness of the Air Gunner. The remaining ten carried out a very successful attack on the target. Wellington X HZ256 was attacked by a night fighter and the Air Gunner (Sgt RP field) was killed; three other members of the crew were injured. The aircraft crash landed at RAF Ford. All surviving members of the crew distinguished themselves by carrying on after the attack to bomb their objectives and successfully navigated their aircraft back.

Wellington X HE501 HD-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, P/O Jeffrey RS B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 2103 – 0505. Bombs dropped from 16,000 feet at 0059 hours, river Neckar clearly seen. Bombed concentration of green Tl's which were preceded by red Tl's and white flares. Many fires burning as aircraft left target area. Perfectly clear, no cloud. Pictures below from: <http://www.halifaxlv827.co.uk/bomb%20runs/14-4-43.jpg>





14/15 April 1943 Stuttgart

462 aircraft, 146 Wellingtons, 135 Halifaxes, 98 Lancasters, 83 Stirlings; 23 aircraft, 8 Stirlings, 8 Wellingtons, 4 Halifaxes and 3 Lancasters lost. The Path Finders claimed to have marked the centre of this normally difficult target accurately but the main bombing area developed to the north-east, along the line of approach of the bomber force. This was an example of creep-back, a feature of large raids which occurred when Main Force crews, and some Pathfinder backers-up, failed to press through to the centre of the marking area but bombed or re-marked the earliest markers visible. Bomber Command was never able to eliminate the creep-back tendency and much bombing fell outside city areas because of it.

On this night the creep-back extended over the suburb of Bad Cansatt, which was of an industrial nature, and some useful damage was caused, particularly in the large railway-repair workshops situated there. The neighbouring districts of Munster and Mulhausen were also hit and the majority of the 393 buildings destroyed and 942 severely damaged and the 200 plus civilian casualties were in these northern areas.

Only a few bombs fell in the centre of Stuttgart but the old Gedachtnis church was destroyed. In the district of Gaisburg, just east of the centre, 1 bomb scored a direct hit on an air-raid shelter packed with French and Russian prisoners of war. 257 Frenchmen and 143 Russians were killed. This tragedy brought the total death roll in Stuttgart to 619, a new record for raids to Germany. (Middlebrook & Everitt p377)

26/4/43: Weather – 10/10 cumulous stratus cloud dispersing later to 2-5/10. Good visibility, strong surface winds westerly 30-35 mph gusting to 50 mph. Fourteen aircraft were required for an attack on **Duisburg**. These were all airborne on time but two returned early due to technical defects; the remaining twelve joined in a heavy and successful attack on the objective made by about 550 aircraft.

Wellington X HE326 HE-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, P/O Lawson JW 2nd Pilot, Aus 400016 F/S Fyfe HL B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 0024 – 0546. Bombs dropped from 14,500 feet at 0233 hours. Bombed on red TI surrounded by Green seen in bomb site. Many fires seen in TA. Visibility good, ground haze.

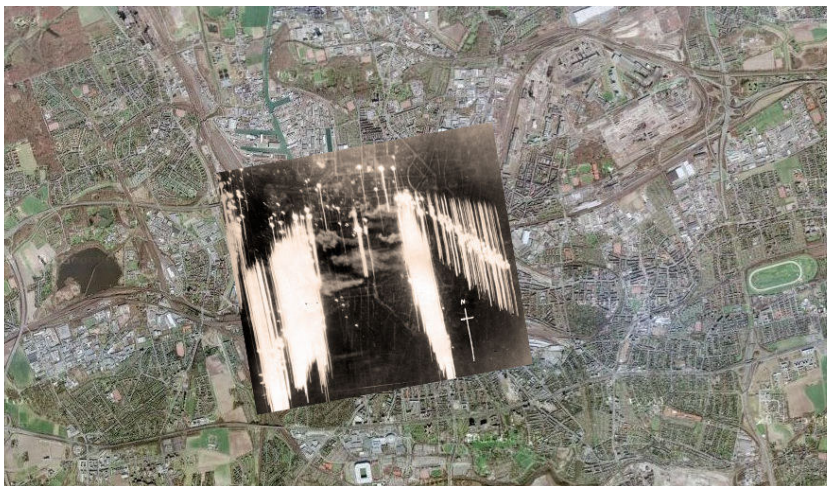
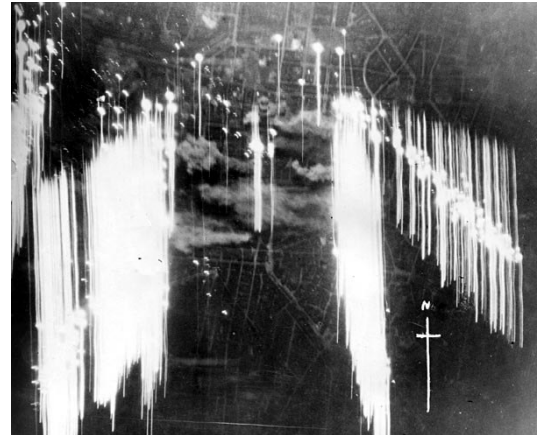
26/27 April 1943 Duisburg

561 aircraft, 215 Lancasters, 135 Wellingtons, 119 Halifaxes, 78 Stirlings, 14 Mosquitoes. 17 aircraft, 7 Halifaxes, 5 Wellingtons, 3 Lancasters and 2 Stirlings lost. This raid was a partial failure. The Pathfinders claimed to have marked the target accurately but daylight reconnaissance showed that most of the bombing had fallen to the north-east of Duisburg; the Main Force may have bombed too early or they may have been lured by early fires short of the target. However, Duisburg had more than

300 buildings destroyed and a death roll of between 130 and 207 (reports vary). 4 of the Mosquitoes taking part in this raid were from 2 Group; they bombed Duisburg 3 hours after the main raid, then dived hard and flew back to England at low level. (Middlebrook & Everitt p381)

4/5/43: Weather – small amounts of low cumulus cloud, visibility good. Wind light NE. Fifteen aircraft were prepared for an attack on **Dortmund**. One aircraft failed to take off due to ignition trouble. One returned early due to a faulty CSU. One aircraft missing – Sgt James Captain. The remainder completed a very successful attack on the target in spite of heavy opposition from the Ruhr defences.

Wellington X HE326 HE-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 22.53 – 0333. Bombed from 18,000 feet at 0128 hours on Red and Green TI's, centre of 3 Red TI's in sights. Big fires concentrated around markers. Two big explosions soon after leaving target area. Captain reports that he was fired at by presumably one of our own convoys, position 53.48: 01.26E at 2333. **Mandrel** used. Clear with ground haze. **Pictures of Dortmund** from <http://www.halifaxlv827.co.uk>



From: <http://www.halifaxlv827.co.uk/bomb%20runs/dort4-5-43-modern.jpg>

Mandrel – jammer for *Freya* and *Würzburg* radar used by 100 Group. No. 100 (Bomber Support) Group was a special duties group within RAF Bomber Command. It was formed on 11 November 1943 to consolidate the increasingly complex business of electronic warfare and countermeasures within one organisation. The group was responsible for the development, operational trial and use of electronic warfare and countermeasures equipment. It was based at RAF stations in East Anglia, chiefly Norfolk.

The group was a pioneer in countering the formidable force of radar-equipped Luftwaffe night fighters, utilising a range of electronic 'homers' fitted to de Havilland Mosquito fighters which detected the night fighter's various radar and radio emissions, and allowed the RAF fighters to home in onto the Axis aircraft and either shoot them down or at the very least disrupt their missions against the bomber streams. Other Mosquitoes would patrol around the known Luftwaffe fighter airfields ready to attack any landing night fighters they came across. **From:** http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._100_Group_RAF

4/5 May 1943 Dortmund

596 aircraft, 255 Lancasters, 141 Halifaxes, 110 Wellingtons, 80 Stirlings and 10 Mosquitoes on the largest 'non-1,000' raid of the war to date and the first major attack on Dortmund. 31 aircraft, 12 Halifaxes, 7 Stirlings, 6 Lancasters and 6 Wellingtons lost; a further 7 aircraft crashed in bad weather at the bomber bases.

The initial Pathfinder marking was accurate but some of the backing-up marking fell short. A decoy fire site also attracted many bombs. But half of the large force did bomb within 3 miles of the aiming point and severe damage was caused in central and northern parts of Dortmund. The city's report states that 1,218 buildings were destroyed and 2,141 seriously damaged, including the Hoesch and the Dortmunder Union steel factories and many facilities in the dock area. The old Rathaus was among 7 buildings of a cultural nature which were destroyed. At least 693 people were killed, including 200 prisoners of war, and 1,075 people were injured. The number of dead in this raid was a new record. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp383-384)

12/5/43: Weather – 10/10 Strato cumulus cloud 1000 – 1500 base with intermittent rain. Fresh SW winds 20 – 25 mph with moderate visibility. Fifteen aircraft were detailed to attack **Duisburg**. All took off according to plan and all attacked the target, so joining the greatest bombing raid of the war. All returned to base but rapidly deteriorating weather caused Wellington X HE530 (Captain, Sgt C Trinder) to lose the aerodrome and crash into nearby high ground with the unfortunate loss of the crew and aircraft.

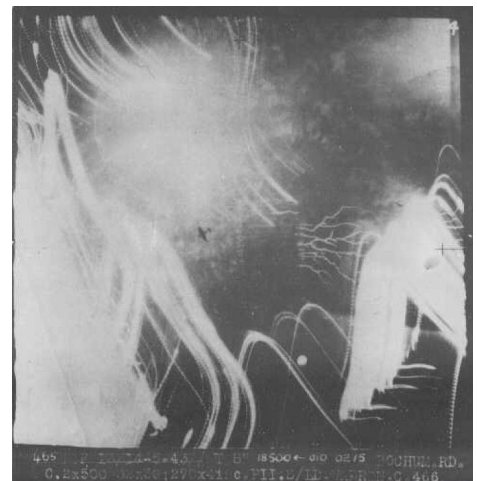
Wellington X HE326 HE-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 2340 – 0428. Bombed from 18,000 feet at 0208 hours on TI's in middle of 2 reds surrounded by greens in sights slightly to east of AP. Several fires seen in target area, but were just beginning to take hold. Mandrel used.

12/13 May 1943 Duisburg

572 aircraft, 238 Lancasters, 142 Halifaxes, 112 Wellingtons, 70 Stirlings and 10 Mosquitoes. 34 aircraft, 10 Lancasters, 10 Wellingtons, 9 Halifaxes and 5 Stirlings lost. This was the fourth raid on Duisburg so far during the Battle of the Ruhr, the first 3 raids having been only partially successful. The Pathfinder marking on this night, however, was near perfect and the Main Force bombing was particularly well concentrated. The centre of Duisburg and the port area just off the river Rhine, the largest inland port in Germany, suffered severe damage. 1,596 buildings were totally destroyed and 273 people were killed. 4 of the August Thyssen steel factories were damaged. Nearly 2,000 prisoners of war and forced workers were drafted into Duisburg to repair windows, roofs and other bomb damage. In the port area, 21 barges and 13 other ships totalling 18,921 tons were sunk and 60 other ships of 41,000 tons were damaged. It was not deemed necessary to attack Duisburg again during this period. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 384-385)

13/5/43: Weather – variable cumulus cloud, good visibility SW winds 10 – 15 mph. Fourteen aircraft detailed to attack **Bochum**. Thirteen aircraft took off and fourteenth was stopped by the runway collapsing. The raid was reported as very successful in spite of very strong opposition. One aircraft (Captain, F/O Sampson) failed to return, another (Sgt Hicks CGM) due to propeller failure had great difficulty reaching land after three of his crew had left by parachute; force landed in a field in Norfolk.

Wellington X HE326 HE-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 2354 – 0526. Bombed from 20,000



feet at 0228 hours. Identified by TI markers. Yellow markers seen on track, Green markers in bombsight. One explosion seen after target area had been left. No fires seen. Visibility clear, slight haze on ground. **Picture of Bochum from <http://www.halifaxlv827.co.uk>**

13/14 May 1943 Bochum

442 aircraft, 135 Halifaxes, 104 Wellingtons, 98 Lancasters, 95 Stirlings and 10 Mosquitoes. 5 Group did not take part in this raid. 24 aircraft, 13 Halifaxes, 6 Wellingtons, 4 Stirlings and 1 Lancaster lost. This raid started well but, after 15 minutes, what were believed to be German decoy markers drew much of the bombing away from the target. The only information available from Germany is that 394 buildings in Bochum were destroyed, 716 were seriously damaged and 302 people killed. (Middlebrook & Everitt p385)

29/5/43: Weather – fine and clear with NE winds. During the afternoon a demonstration of formation flying was given by the Squadron in connection with the “Wings for Victory” weeks in Hull and Beverley. Fourteen aircraft were despatched to attack **Wuppertal**. Three failed to return and the remainder were diverted due to weather conditions at base.

Wellington X HE150 HD-A F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Flt Lt Warren PS W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 2228 – 0343. Bomber from 18,000 feet at 0103 hours. Red and Green markers seen, bombed Green. Own results not seen. Good concentrated raid. Plenty of fires and smoke over the target. Searchlights and flak in Ruhr area very good and concentrated. Good visibility with smoke from fires.

29/30 May 1943 Wuppertal

719 aircraft, 292 Lancasters, 185 Halifaxes, 118 Stirlings, 113 Wellingtons and 11 Mosquitoes. 33 aircraft, 10 Halifaxes, 8 Stirlings, 8 Wellingtons, 7 Lancasters lost. This attack was aimed at the Barmen half of the long and narrow town of Wuppertal and was the outstanding success of the Battle of the Ruhr. Both Pathfinder marking and Main Force bombing was particularly accurate and a large fire area developed in the narrow streets of the old centre of the town. It is probably this fire was so severe that the first, small form of what would later become known as a ‘firestorm’ developed. Because it was Saturday night, many of the town’s fire and air-raid officials were not present, having gone to their country homes for the weekend, and the fire services in the town, in their first raid, were not able to control the fires.

Approximately 1,000 acres, possible 80% of Barmen’s built up area, was destroyed by fire. 5 out of the town’s 6 largest factories, 211 other industrial premises and nearly 4,000 houses were completely destroyed. The number of buildings classed as seriously damaged, 71 industrial and 1,800 domestic, indicates the high proportion of complete destruction. Various figures were given for the number of people killed but our expert on [the] Ruhr raids, Norbert Kruger, advises that the figure of ‘approximately 3,400’ is the nearest reasonable estimate

The above figures indicate that the property damage in this raid was about twice as severe as any previous raid on a German city, while the number of people killed in this comparatively unprepared backwater of the Ruhr was about 5 times greater than any previous city raid. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 394-395).

11/6/43: Weather – a weak cold front affected the area during the period. 10/10 medium cloud with varying strato cumulus with base 2000 feet. Southerly winds 10 – 15 mph, visibility 4 – 6 miles. Sixteen aircraft were required for an attack on **Dusseldorf** and all were prepared and tested. Over 800 aircraft took part in what proved to be a highly successful raid, in spite of the weather over this country. Fourteen of the aircraft of the Squadron attacked and the remaining two are missing. The Captains were F/O F Mackelden and Sgt Green.

Wellington X HE326 HE-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G, Aus 413826 Flt Sgt Colless GS 2nd Pilot. 2321 – 0449. Bombs dropped from 18,000 feet at 0150 hours. Bombed on Green TI's in bombsight. Green seen to cascade at the time of bombing. Identified target by TI markers. Very good fires and very large cloud of smoke above target area. **Mandrel** used. Visibility good with isolated patches of cloud at 7,000 feet, some smoke. **Picture of Dusseldorf** from <http://www.halifaxlv827.co.uk>



From: <http://www.halifaxlv827.co.uk/bomb%20runs/duss11-06-43-modern.jpg>

11/12 June 1943 Dusseldorf

783 aircraft, 326 Lancasters, 202 Halifaxes, 143 Wellingtons, 99 Stirlings and 13 Mosquitoes. This was the first night that more than 200 Halifaxes took part in a raid. 38 aircraft, 14 Lancasters, 12 Halifaxes, 10 Wellingtons and 2 Stirlings lost. The Pathfinder marking proceeded excellently until an Oboe Mosquito inadvertently released a load of target indicators 14 miles north-east of Dusseldorf. This caused part of the Main Force to waste its bombs on open country. But the main bombing caused extensive damage in the centre of Dusseldorf, where 130 acres were claimed destroyed, and this proved to be the most damaging raid of the war for this city.

Dusseldorf reports that the fire measured 8km by 5km, covering the city centre, both the new and old parts, the Derendorf district and the south of the city. No less than 8,882 separate fire incidents were recorded of which 1,444 were classified as large. 1,292 people were killed. 140,000 people were bombed out of their homes. The list of destroyed and seriously damaged industrial and public buildings covers 4 typed pages in the Dusseldorf report! 42 industries connected with the war effort

suffered complete stoppages of production and 35 more suffered partial reduction. 20 military establishments were hit. 8 ships were sunk or damaged. The Gau (province) local government headquarters was destroyed. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 396-397).

14/6/43: Weather – variable cumulus with much medium cloud above. Occasional showers with good visibility and south westerly winds. Four aircraft were dispatched at 0600 hours to search for a Fortress crew missing from an attack on Kiel. A further four proceeded to **St Eval** for mine laying operations, three at **St Nazaire** and one at **Lorient**. The search aircraft found only an empty dinghy and the mine laying aircraft all completed their tasks and returned safely to base.

Wellington X HE326 HE-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 0011 – 0538. Mines dropped as ordered from 700 feet at 0208. Belie Isle, Houat and Hoedic clearly seen. Parachutes seen to open. Mandrel used. Visibility very good.

28/6/43: Weather – 10/10 stratus cloud base 2-3000 feet with NE winds 10-15 mph. Fourteen aircraft were detailed for an attack on **Cologne**. Thirteen of these took off and attacked the target, the fourteenth being a non-starter due to a technical fault. The probable destruction of a night fighter (JU88) was claimed by Sgt Hicks CGM and his Air Gunner P/O Cairns. Another aircraft piloted by P/O young was damaged by flak over the target and had to land at Martlesham Heath

Wellington X HF481 F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Boyce KD Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 2327 – 0423. Bombed from 18,000 feet at 0202 hours. Identified by Ground and Sky markers. Two Red ground markers seen to fall through cloud and reflected glare, bombed at moment of release sky markers appeared in line of sight. Fires and explosions observed at 0210 on leaving target area. 10/10 cloud at 4,000 feet, visibility good above.

28/29 June 1943 Cologne

608 aircraft, 267 Lancasters, 169 Halifaxes, 85 Wellingtons, 75 Stirlings and 12 Mosquitoes. 25 aircraft, 10 Halifaxes, 8 Lancasters, 5 Stirlings and 2 Wellingtons lost. The circumstances of this raid did not seem promising. The weather forecast said that Cologne would probably be cloud-covered although there might be a break; the Pathfinders had to prepare a dual plan. The target was cloud-covered and the less reliable sky-marking system had to be employed. Only 7 of the 12 Oboe Mosquitoes reached the target and only 6 of these were able to drop their markers. The marking was 7 minutes late in starting and proceeded only intermittently. Despite all these setbacks, the Main Force delivered its most powerful blow of the Battle of the Ruhr. The result was Cologne's worst raid of the war. 43 industrial, 6 military and 6,368 other buildings destroyed; nearly 15,000 other buildings were damaged. Listed as completely destroyed were: 24 schools, 16 churches, 15 major administrative buildings, 11 hotels, 8 cinemas, 7 post offices, 6 large banks, 2 hospitals and 2 theatres. The cathedral was seriously damaged by high-explosive bombs.

The casualties in Cologne were 4,377 people killed, approximately 10,000 injured and 230,000 forced to leave their damaged homes. The number of dead recorded had thus increased nearly ten-fold since the opening of the Battle of the Ruhr 3 ½ months earlier. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 403-404).

3/7/43: Weather – small amounts of high cloud, otherwise fine and clear with light northerly winds. Fourteen aircraft were detailed for an attack on **Cologne**. All these took off as scheduled and twelve completed a very successful attack. One failed to return (Captain – P/O Edmonds, who was making his 30th and last sortie of his operational tour) and one returned early due to engine trouble.

Wellington X HF473 HD-A F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 2256 – 0417. Primary attacked from 18,500 feet at 0127 hours. Identified by Red and green Marker flares. Ignition of own incendiaries not observed. Fires beginning to catch nicely in target area on eastern side of river. Searchlights as good as ever. Flak much more intense. Visibility good, slight haze.

3/4 July 1943 Cologne

653 aircraft, 293 Lancasters, 182 Halifaxes, 89 Wellingtons, 76 Stirlings and 13 Mosquitoes. 30 aircraft, 9 Halifaxes, 8 Lancasters, 8 Wellingtons, 5 Stirlings lost. The aiming point for this raid was that part of Cologne situated on the east bank of the Rhine. Much industry was located there. Pathfinder ground marking was accurately maintained by both the Mosquito Oboe aircraft and the backers-up, allowing the main Force to carry out another heavy attack on Cologne. 20 industrial premises and 2,200 houses were completely destroyed. 588 people were killed, approximately 1,000 were injured and 72,000 bombed out. This night saw the first operation of a new German unit, Jagdgeschwader 300, equipped with single-engine fighters using the Wilde Sau (Wild Boar) technique. In this, a German pilot used any form of illumination available over a city being bombed, searchlights, target indicators, the glow of fires from the ground, to pick out a bomber for attack. Liaison with the local flak defences were supposed to ensure that the Flak was limited to a certain height above which the Wild Boar fighter was free to operate. RAF crews were not used to meeting German fighters over a target city and it was some time before the presence of the new danger was realised. The reports from this night from 4 bombers that they had been fired on over the target by other bombers were almost certainly the result of Wild Boar attacks. The new German unit claimed 12 bombers shot down over Cologne, but had to share the 12 available aircraft found to have crashed with the local Flak, who also claimed 12 successes. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 404-405).

13/7/43: Weather – 10/10 strato cumulus base 2-3,000 feet. Fresh SW winds 15 – 20 mph. Good visibility. Fourteen aircraft were required for an attack on **Aachen**. All aircraft took off and twelve completed a highly successful attack in conditions of very bright moonlight, greatly favouring night fighter opposition. One aircraft (Sgt Gunning – Captain) failed to return.

Wellington X LN292 HD-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G, Aus 416794 Sgt Thorpe RE 2nd Pilot. No attack made. Aircraft returned early owing to port engine failure and starboard air pressure very low. Aircraft was unable to maintain height. Incendiaries jettisoned safe at 0020 from 5,500 feet, position 53.38 N 00.25 E. Monica not fitted.

13/14 July 1943 Aachen

374 aircraft, 214 Halifaxes, 76 Wellingtons, 55 Stirlings, 18 Lancasters and 11 Mosquitoes; 5 Group did not take part in the raid. 20 aircraft, 15 Halifaxes, 2 Lancasters, 2 Wellingtons and 1 Stirling lost. A strong tail wind brought the first waves of the Main Force into the target area before Zero Hour with the result that, when the first Pathfinder markers were released, an unusually large number of aircraft bombed in the first minutes of the raid. The visibility was good and large areas of Aachen appeared to burst into flame at once. In the report from Aachen, 'A Terrorangriff' of the most severe was delivered (report from Hubert Beckers, private archivist in Aachen). 2,927 individual buildings were destroyed. These contained 16,828 flats/apartments and there was the familiar list of public and cultural buildings hit. Among those classed as severely damaged were the cathedral, the Rathaus, the town theatre, the police headquarters, the local prison, the main post office, two infantry barracks and an army food depot, and 8 large industrial premises including an aero-engine factory, a rubber factory, a tyre factory and wagon works. 294 people were killed and 745 injured and 28,500 people appeared to have fled the town and were still absent when new ration cards were issued nearly 7 weeks later. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 407).

24/7/43: Weather fine, no cloud. Wind light and easterly, visibility good. Two training cross country flights were organised for 0930 hours. Sixteen aircraft were required for a bombing attack on **Hamburg**. This number was raised to seventeen and all aircraft took off, completed the attack and returned to base. This was the Squadron's best performance to

date and this success was reflected in the outstanding quality of the operation as a whole. 791 aircraft took off and dropped over 2,000 tons of bombs. 12 were missing.

Wellington X LN292 HD-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, Aus 412787 Sgt Wills HC 2nd Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 2254 – 0400. Primary attacked from 20,000 feet at 0123 hours. Target identified by Green Tis. Markers seen at time of release and bombed between two Green Tis. Much smoke and many fires. 72 bundles of window released.

24/25 July 1943 Hamburg

791 aircraft, 347 Lancasters, 246 Halifaxes, 125 Stirlings and 73 Wellingtons. 12 aircraft lost, 4 Halifaxes, 4 Lancasters, 3 Stirlings and 1 Wellington. Window (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaff_%28countermeasure%29) was used for the first time on this night. Conditions over Hamburg were clear with only a gentle wind. The marking, a mixture of H2S and visual, was a little scattered but most of the target indicators fell near enough to the centre of Hamburg for a concentrated raid to develop quickly. 728 aircraft dropped 2,284 tons of bombs in 50 minutes. Bombing photographs showed that less than half of the force bombed within 3 miles of the centre of Hamburg and a creep back 6 miles long developed. But, because Hamburg was such a large city, severe damage was caused in the central and north-western districts, particularly in Altona, Eimsbuttel and Hoheluft. The Rathaus, the Nikolaikirche, the main police station, the main telephone exchange and the Hagenbeck Zoo (where 140 animals died) were among the well known Hamburg landmarks to be hit. Approximately 1,500 people were killed. This was the greatest number of people killed so far in a raid outside the area in which Oboe could be used. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 411-412).

25/7/43: Weather – early morning fog – clearing during the morning. Light southerly winds. Ten aircraft were required for an attack on **Hamburg** and six for gardening near Scharnhorn Island. These were changed to ten on Essen and six mining near **Ameland** at 1700 hours. All aircraft took off as ordered but two returned early from Essen due to technical defects and one was missing (Captain – Sgt Thorpe). The mines were laid successfully. Wellington X LN292 HD-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, Aus 409527 Flt Sgt Evans JE 2nd Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 2300 – 0225. Primary attacked from 700 feet at 0046 hours. Pinpointed on Schiermonifooog. Mines laid as ordered, parachutes seen to open. Clear visibility.

27/7/43: Weather – some medium cloud but otherwise fine and clear with light SW winds. Fifteen aircraft were detailed for an attack on **Hamburg**. All aircraft took off and attacked target and returned safely to base. Again the attack was highly successful and all crews reported an intense conflagration and [a] pillar of smoke rising to 20,000 feet.

Wellington X HE292 HD-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, Aus 416796 Flt Sgt Smart MJ 2nd Pilot, Aus 415197 Flt Sgt Trewern WC B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 2245 – 0347. Primary attacked from 19,000 feet at 0124 hours. Identified by Yellow and Green TI. Bombed on Green which were seen to cascade at 0123 hours. Many large fires and much smoke seen in target area up to 16,000 feet. Monica fitted. Good visibility with 3/10ths cloud. Very successful trip and well concentrated attack.

27/28 July 1943 Hamburg

787 aircraft, 353 Lancasters, 244 Halifaxes, 116 Stirlings and 74 Wellingtons. 17 aircraft, 11 Lancasters, 4 Halifaxes, 1 Stirling and 1 Wellington lost. The American commander, Brigadier-General Anderson again flew in a Lancaster and watched this raid.

The centre of the Pathfinder marking, all carried out by H2S on this night, was about 2 miles east of the planned aiming point in the centre of the city, but the marking was particularly well concentrated, and he Main Force bombing crept back only slightly. 729 aircraft dropped 2,326 tons of bombs.

This was the night of the firestorm, which started through an unusual and unexpected chain of events. The temperature was particularly high (30 degrees centigrade at 6 o'clock in the evening) and the humidity was only 30%, compared with an average of 40 to 50% for this time of year. There had been no rain for some time and everything was very dry. The concentrated bombing caused a large number of fires in the densely built-up working class districts of Hammerbrook, Hamm and Borgfeld. Most of Hamburg's fire vehicles had been in the western parts of the city, damping down the fires still smouldering here from the raid 3 nights earlier, and only a few were able to pass through roads which were blocked by the rubble of buildings destroyed by high-explosive bombs early in this raid. About half way through the raid, the fires in Hammerbrook started joining together and competing [with] each other for the oxygen in the surrounding air. Suddenly, the whole area became one big fire with air being drawn into it with the force of a storm. The bombing continued for another half hour, spreading the firestorm area gradually eastwards. It is estimated that 550-600 bombs fell into an area measuring only 2 miles by 1 mile. The firestorm raged for about 3 hours and only subsided when all combustible material was consumed. The burnt out area was almost entirely residential. Approximately 16,000 multi-storeyed apartment buildings were destroyed. There were few survivors from the firestorm area and approximately 40,000 people died, most of them by carbon monoxide poisoning when all the air was drawn out of their basement shelters. In the period immediately following this raid, approximately 1,200,000 people, two thirds of Hamburg's population, fled the city in fear of further raids. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 413-414).

1/8/43: Weather – occasional thunder showers, otherwise good visibility and SW winds 10 – 15 mph. Sixteen aircraft were required for **mining** – eight at **Lorient**, eight at **St Nazaire**. All aircraft proceeded to Harwell to refuel. Fourteen took off from there and twelve succeeded in finding the correct pin-point and laying their mines.

Wellington X LN292 HD-J F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 2245 – 0450. Primary attacked from 500 feet at 0142 hours. Pin-point on Pte.De Trevignon, checked on Raguenes. Laid as ordered, parachutes seen to open and strike water. Moderate to good visibility – 4 miles.

2/8/43: Weather – warm, no cloud, wind light SE. Severe icing conditions during the night. Fifteen aircraft were requested for an attack on **Hamburg**. Fourteen aircraft attacked the target, one returned from the enemy coast on one engine. Very severe weather conditions with heavy cloud and icing made the operation rather hazardous and results difficult to assess.

Wellington X HF485 HD-N F/O Smith JB Pilot, F/O Lax GT B/A, F/O Vaizey Nav, Sgt Pilborough DE W/AG, Sgt Moloney PJ A/G. 2355 – 0518. Primary attacked from 9,000 feet at 0221 hours. Owing to electrical storms in target area, and hail, Captain flew beneath. Green Tis were seen on run up, but were not burning when aircraft bombed estimated centre. Glimpses of water were seen, believed to be Docks and the Aussen Alster. There were a number of small scattered fires in the target area, but they were not burning very well. Many bombs had been jettisoned before the target was reached. Discharged 60 bundles of window intermittently from 10,000 feet.

Note: 118824 F/O Vaizey JD (Fit/Lt) DFC KIA 21st July 1944 aged 33, commemorated on the Malta Memorial. Son of Percy Vernon Vaizey and Daisy Vaizey husband of Rita Maud Vaizey, Bedworth Warwickshire. **See** appendix C letter of recommendation for F/O Vaizey DFC.

466 Sqn ORB August 1943

Leconfield.

	Sorties	Missing Aircraft
March	90	2
April	92	3
May	118	7
June	111	5
July	108	4
August	168	3

A record number of mines (236) were laid during August, establishing the Squadron as the leading mining Squadron in Bomber Command.

The following officers were posted from the Squadron: F/O AA Macfarlane (NZ 415344), **F/O JB Smith (NZ 414691)**, P/O WE Adams (Can J172355), F/O RS Bue (Can J11866), P/O DE Midgley (Can J 17310), F/O WS Gaunt (116793), P/O AW Coxall (142500), P/O CT King (142529), P/O WA Jones (146013), P/O DF Bateman (124383), P/O J Cummin (142891), **F/O JD Vaizey (118824)**, P/O RL Young (147314)

97 Path Finder Force Squadron

Formed on 1st December 1917 at Waddington in Lincolnshire as a training squadron, moving to Stonehenge in January 1918. In the 1st World War it was equipped with Handley Page 0/400 and sent to France as night bombers. In 1919 it was equipped with DH10 aircraft and sent to India and in 1920 the squadron was disbanded.

It was reformed in September 1935 at Abingdon as part of No 6 Training Group within Bomber Command but it was disbanded and eventually reformed in April 1940 at Driffield with Whitley bombers. It was again disbanded but in 1941 a large donation by the Malay Straits Settlement caused it to be reformed with Avro Manchester aircraft. It then became 97 Squadron (Straits Settlement



20/21 April 1944 – Paris (La Chappelle Marshalling Yards)

JB683C F/O J.B.Smith DFC, Sgt A.R.Rowlands, F/O A.W.Weston, F/L L.C.Jones, F/Sgt D.E.D.Harvey, W/O J.R.Chapman, W/O E.L.Wright. Up 2314 Down 0332. 5 x 4 x 7" flares, 4 x 1000lb GP, 5 X 1000lb MC. La Chappelle marshalling yards Paris. Weather clear. Attacked from 14,000' on centre of four red spot fires. Target was very clear. Green TIs were quite accurate but red spot fires obviously well on target as in general illumination these were clearly visible. General bombing was concentrated and definitely effective.

A raid on railway yards at La Chapelle just north of Paris was the first major test for the new **No 5 Group** marking method, with the group employing not only No 617 Squadron's low-level markers but the three Pathfinder squadrons recently transferred from No 8 Group. A few regular No 8 Group Mosquitoes were also used to drop markers by Oboe to provide a first indication of the target's location for the main No 5 Group marking force. 247 Lancasters of No 5 Group and 22 Mosquitoes from 5 and 8 Groups dispatched. 6 Lancasters lost. The bombing force was split into two parts, with an interval between them of 1 hour, and each part of the force aimed at different halves of the railway yards. There were a few difficulties at the opening of the attack, with the markers of the Oboe Mosquitoes being a fraction late and with communications between the various controlling aircraft being faulty, but

these difficulties were soon overcome and both parts of the bombing force achieved extremely accurate and concentrated bombing. (<http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/apr44.html>)

22/23 April 1944 – Brunswick (Braunschweig Germany)

ND706A F/O J.B.Smith, Sgt A.R.Rowlands, F/O A.W.Weston, F/L L.C.Jones, F/Sgt D.E.D.Harvey, W/O J.R.Chapman, W/O E.L.Wright. Up 2337 Down 0530. 12 x cluster flares, 1 x target flare, 1 x green flare. On arrival over Brunswick weather was clear with slight haze permitting visual identification of target. On first run in using H2S, picture was lost due to taking evasive action. On 2nd run two lanes of flares spread across target area were seen. Own flares were dropped in middle. When last flare was released, RSF was seen to fall. Good concentration of fires.

See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Braunschweig_in_World_War_II

24/25 April 1944 – Munich

JB708J F/O J.B.Smith, Sgt A.R.Rowlands, F/O A.W.Weston, F/L L.C.Jones, F/Sgt D.E.D.Harvey, W/O J.R.Chapman, W/O E.L.Wright. Up 2102 Down 0701. 12 x cluster flares, 1 x green TI no 4. Weather over Munich clear, very slight haze. Bombed on H2S picture and visually on town. Timed run from datum point. Target marking excellent and bombing round markers concentrated. Gunners report fires and smoke from 150 miles and consider raid best ever seen.

26/27 April 1944 – Schweinfurt

From: ND739Z W/C E.J.Carter, [Master Bomber] P/O G.Dunning, F/L R.J.Conley, F/O H.W.Rieger, F/L A.Chambers, W/O F.R.Watson, S/L M.Bryan-Smith. 6 x 7" hooded flares, 2 x green TI no 4, 6 x green RSFs. Weather clear. Bombed on H2S and visually. First flares undershot to south-west of built up area. First RSF also undershot. First flares 0207.6 hours – all bombing to the south of the TIs. Datum point markers seen in correct position. H2S limited range and poor definition. Through change of wind it was obvious that we would be 15 minutes late so instead of going on route detailed we cut through from 4820N 0725E to target (north of Mannheim) which made us arrive a few minutes early. Contacted Mosquitoes on VHF using Channel C as Channel B was badly jammed. Then sent out first order to the Flares Force to change to Channel C. Waited several minutes for Flares Force. When they dropped first flares, they were a slight undershoot. The smoke screen was in operation, the Marker Leader requested more illumination, I therefore, ordered Reserve Flare Force to drop their flares to the north of those already down. Marker 3 dropped a RSF which Marker 1 assessed as being south of the aiming point. Then Marker 1 dropped a RSF which should have been green and these were assessed as being on the aiming point. Due to smoke screen these were hardly visible and I, therefore, called in all the Backers-up, including the reserves, to bomb the northerly RSFs, which I believe most of them did, although one bombed the southerly one. Someone in the Flare Force dropped a green TI which fell to the east of the target – I don't think, however, that this affected the attack in any way. By this time (0224 hours) I called in the Main Force to bomb the northerly RSFs which most of them did, although some of the early bombs were aimed at the south end. I then called the Deputy Controller to mark the northerly aiming point with green spots, which he did. All markers were very quickly obscured by smoke from bombs and smoke screen but it was apparent that the bombing spread from the aiming point to the south spot fires. I, therefore, dropped all green TI, green spot fires, intending to re-mark the aiming point. These, however, fell approximately 1500 yards short. I, therefore, gave the Main Force the order to bomb the greens with 1000 yard overshoot. This they immediately did and I believe the bombing concentrated around target area. Main Force did their job very well indeed.

JB708J F/O J.B.Smith, Sgt A.R.Rowlands, F/O A.W.Weston, F/L L.C.Jones, F/Sgt D.E.D.Harvey, W/O J.R.Chapman, W/O E.L.Wright. Up 2130 Down 0606. 12 x 7" flares, 2 x green TI no 4. Bombed on H2S confirmed by visual. Huge explosion seen at 0224 hours. Target illumination rather widespread and whole attack was late. Green spot fires and green TI seen but no assessment of their accuracy was made, but bombing looked very concentrated. All flares dropped on one run as original 6 had not gone before orders to back up were received.

26/27 April 1944 Schweinfurt

206 Lancasters and 11 Mosquitoes of 5 Group, and 9 Lancasters of 1 Group, 21 Lancasters lost.

This raid was a failure. The low-level marking provided for the first time by Mosquitoes of 627 Squadron was not accurate. Unexpectedly strong head winds delayed the Lancaster marker aircraft and the Main Force bombers. German night fighters were carrying out fierce attacks throughout the period of the raid. The bombing was not accurate and much of it fell outside Schweinfurt. Only 2 people were killed in Schweinfurt. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 500).

28/29 April 1944 – Kjeller (Oslo)

From: ND739Z W/C E.J.Carter, [Master Bomber] P/O G.Dunning, F/L R.J.Conley, F/O H.W.Rieger, F/L A.Chambers, W/O F.R.Watson, S/L M.Bryan-Smith. Up 2115 Down 0434. 6 clusters 7" flares, 6 x 1000lb MC. (Controller). No cloud over target area. Visibility perfect. Bombed visually. Datum point markers accurate. Flares released on visual identification. Flares seen over centre of runway, ours dropped to illuminate buildings on northern edge of airframe works. TI seen on bombing run. Some smoke on north-west corner of building "E". Our own bombs went in salvoes approximately 200 feet north. Arrived target area 0103 hours having previously descended to 6,000' and found bombing wind 003-36mph. I then received bombing wind 330-30mph from "J" and next from D/97 350-35. I then broadcast bombing wind of 353-35mph and wind appeared to be accurate. Datum point was down approximately on time and was kept backed up throughout the attack. Flares went down on time at Zero and target area was immediately illuminated perfectly. First marker to go down was on target "B" and for some reason was a RSF which dropped 200 yards north of target "B". A green was then put down just south of target "B" and then assessor passed instructions to bomb between green and red spot fire. These instructions passed on to "Beetroot" Force. A RSF was then dropped between buildings 7 and 9 (Illustration S523) but as buildings shielded, I asked Marker Leader to re-mark. This he did very accurately and second RSF went through building 5. This burned inside building and was difficult to see. I, therefore, asked marker leader to back up on target "A", when he informed me that all other spot fires had hung up and that no more were available for marking. I, therefore, called in both forces A and B (0127 hours) to bomb. At 0133 hours most of the HE seemed to have been dropped and I called in the incendiary force. At the same time it was apparent that target "B" had been very thoroughly covered while very little bombing appeared to have been directed at target "A". The markers on this target had meanwhile completely disappeared. I, therefore, ordered all remaining aircraft with an HE or incendiary to overshoot target "B" by approximately 2000 yards due west in an attempt to cover target "A". The bombing then spread in the direction of target "A" and it is possible this was eventually completely covered but this was difficult to assess due to lack of markers. Note – markers took so long to mark target "B" that the flares had completely died before target "A" was marked. I, therefore, called in Reserve Force (0124 hours) who completely illuminated the whole of target area and enabled markers to mark successfully target "A". Conclusions Green spot fires too weak to be satisfactory. Single spot fires of any colour are not effective on targets of this nature, since if they penetrate or fall between two buildings, they are practically invisible. Very obvious dummy fire sites illuminated approximately 300 yards to north of target "B". I warned "Beetroot" Force at 0135 to beware of these dummies. ND764E S/L A.H.Lynch, Sgt J.P.Olive, P/O G.H.Wright, Sgt A.Dunae, F/Sgt J.R.Whitehead, Sgt J.Phillips, P/O J.W.Paige. Up 2106 Down 0431. 6 x cluster 7" flares, 6 x 1000lb MC. No cloud, good visibility. Target identified by flares and visually. Flares laid on time. Dropped own

flares in area covered by existing flares. Good concentration achieved. When making bombing run much smoke seen around RSF which tended to obliterate them and ground detail.

JB708J P/O J.B.Smith, Sgt A.R.Rowlands, F/O A.W.Weston, F/L L.C.Jones, F/Sgt D.E.D.Harvey, W/O J.R.Chapman, Sgt J.Peill. Up 2105 Down 0526. 6 x cluster 7" flares, 6 x 1000lb MC (Medium Capacity) (see <http://www.wwiiequipment.com>). Weather over Kjeller clear. Excellent visibility. Target identified visually by runways, river and sheds of factory. Every detail clear and a cluster of flares fell accurately before own. On instructions at 0115.10 hours, one RSF fell on west aiming point at 0118 hours approximately, then one green spot fire east of aiming point at 0120 hours approx. Second RSF seen eastern end of shed and western aiming point at 0130 but was not subsequently backed up. Aircraft was then called in to bomb this. Bombing excellent on western aiming point. Huge explosion in target area at 0138 hours.

29/30 April 1944 – Clermont-Ferrand

ND415B F/O J.B.Smith, Sgt A.R.Rowlands, F/O A.W.Weston, P/O D.E.D.Harvey, F/L L.C.Jones, W/O J.R.Chapman, Sgt J.Peill. Up 2203 Down 0440. 6 clusters 7" flares, 6 x 1000lb MC, 3 x 4.5" recco flares. Target identified by H2S (bombed visually). On approach to target white flares fell and continued in profusion for 3 minutes. Aircraft backed this up at 0115 hours, then flares ceased dropping at 0120 hours. RSF mostly accurate. Aircraft instructed to bomb centre of RSF with 200 yards overshoot. Huge red glow from fires.

1/2 May 1944 – Toulouse

JB708J F/O J.B.Smith, Sgt A.R.Rowlands, F/O A.W.Weston, F/L L.C.Jones, P/O D.E.D.Harvey, W/O J.R.Chapman, Sgt J.Peill. Up 2153 Down 0527. 6 clusters 7" flares, 3 x 1000lb MC, 3 x 1000lb MC (LD), 3 x 4.5" reco flares. Vis good, slight haze on ground. Target identified by H2S. Illumination at beginning was insufficient with a delay in dropping and assessing RSFs. Further flares requested, very effective, and RSFs appeared to be on aiming point. This attracted very good concentration of bombing and there was one large fire over the area

10/11 May 1944 – Lille

ND961N S/L H.B.Locke, (Controller for the marking / bombing) F/Sgt C.D.Hooton, F/L T.H.Makepeace, P/O J.M.Nedwich, W/O A.P.Boulton, F/Sgt J.W.McLaren, P/O M.J.Bridgman. Up 2207 Down 0118. 6 x 7" cluster flares, 3 x TI RSF, 2 x TI green No 4, 1 x 4000lb HC, 3 x 500lb MC, 3 x 4.5" reco flares. (Controller). No cloud, very hazy. Target identified on H2S. Good run in on RSF. Flares seemed very scattered but Mosquito managed to drop RSF which was assessed 60 degrees 150 yards. Winds received from wind finder and passed 001/26 to Director by VHF approx 2323 hours but only acknowledged by W/T at 2335 hours. Passed to Flare Force 2328 hours VHF. Bombing started at 2331 hours approx and smoke soon obscured RSF in direction of Main Force bombing run. Dircetion ordered the bombing to cease on W/T and fired red-red. Target then remarked and Main given no wind 336 degrees/13 at 2356 hours. We then went in to bomb. Interference on VHF and W/T made controlling very difficult and I failed to establish any contact with Director. No assessment of 2nd marker from Director. Main reason for delay was that heading chosen for attack seemed to be reciprocal of prevailing ground wind. After second marker went down bombing considerably improved. I consider that even without interference on VHF, there were too many leaders talking throughout the attack which is likely to produce chaos.

JB708J F/L J.B.Smith, Sgt A.R.Rowlands, F/O A.R.Weston, F/L L.C.Jones, P/O D.E.D.Harvey, W/O J.R.Chapman, F/O S.G.Sherman. Up 2201. 6 x 7" cluster flares, 3 x TI RSF, 2 x TI green No 4, 1 x 4000lb HC, 3 x 500lb MC, 3 x 4.5" reco flares. **Aircraft missing.**

Note: F/L Smith was the Deputy Controller for this sortie and therefore the crew would have been one of the most experienced in the Squadron at that time.

Flight Lieutenant Smith's aircraft was hit by flack, exploded in mid-air, and all the crew were killed, and the same fate befell the aircraft and crew captained by Pilot Officer Edwards (Bending 2005)

On the 10th May 1944, eighty nine aircraft of No 5 Group attacked a target at Lille, hardly a twelve minutes flying time from the Belgian coast, and experienced a similar delay to that which had cost No 1 Group so dear a week before. The initial target indicators were extinguished by bombs, and the aiming point had to be remarked. During the hiatus, twelve bombers were shot down – a loss rate of 13 per cent (Currie 1995)

The heaviest setback suffered by the RAAF squadrons was on the 10th / 11th May when Waddington provided 31 of the total force of 86 Lancasters which attacked Lille, near the Belgian border. Squadron Leader H. B. Locke of No 97 Squadron controlled this force and the bombing was very concentrated and effective. Gun defences were not unduly heavy but in numerous combats with enemy fighters Nos 463 and 467 [Squadrons] each lost one flight commander and two other crews, or 20 per cent of the crews sent out (From chapter 2 Air Preparations for the Assault on North-West Europe).

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An aerial view taken vertically above No. 4 Service Flying Training School at Saskatoon
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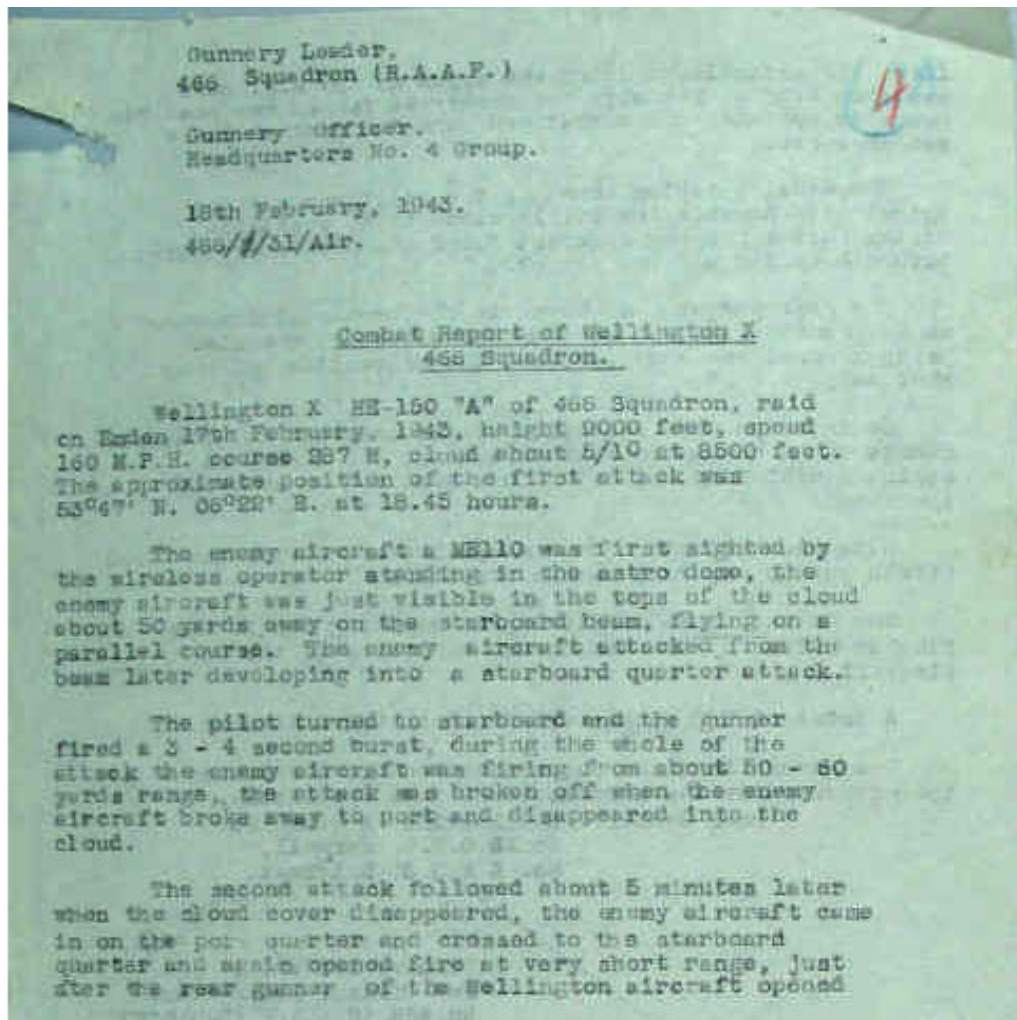
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Wellington X HE150 HD-A F/O Smith

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fire, the articulated joint and pipes on the R.E. guns was shot away completely, the gunner as far as was possible manually operated the turret and guns for another 3 - 4 second burst.

The evasive action taken by the pilot was a steep spiral dive towards the little cloud cover available, during this the enemy aircraft fired one more short burst before breaking off the attack.

The rear gunner then moved to the beam position guns as the rear turret had become unserviceable, the side perspex panel was shot away and the hydraulics had been shot away.

No injuries were sustained by the crew but considerable damage was done to the starboard wing, the starboard engine caught fire but later this went out on entering the cloud.

Hits were scored on the enemy aircraft during the first attack but no apparent damage resulted.

The gunner had difficulty in sighting due to the flashes caused by the cannon and M.G. fire of the enemy aircraft.

A total of 700 rounds was fired in the 3 attacks.

The gunner is to be recommended on his persisting with the attack under the adverse conditions prevailing.

Rear Gunner. Sgt. Robbins trained at
No. 15 O.T.U. Harwell,
No. 4 A.G.S. Dalcross.

F/Lt.
Gunnery Leader,
For Officer Commanding,
No. 456 (R.A.A.F.) Squadron,
R.A.F. Station, Leconfield.

Sgt Robbins Recommendation for DFM
<http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au>

KEEP YOUR MOVEMENTS SECRET

(8A)

ACF
 W.B. DIVISION

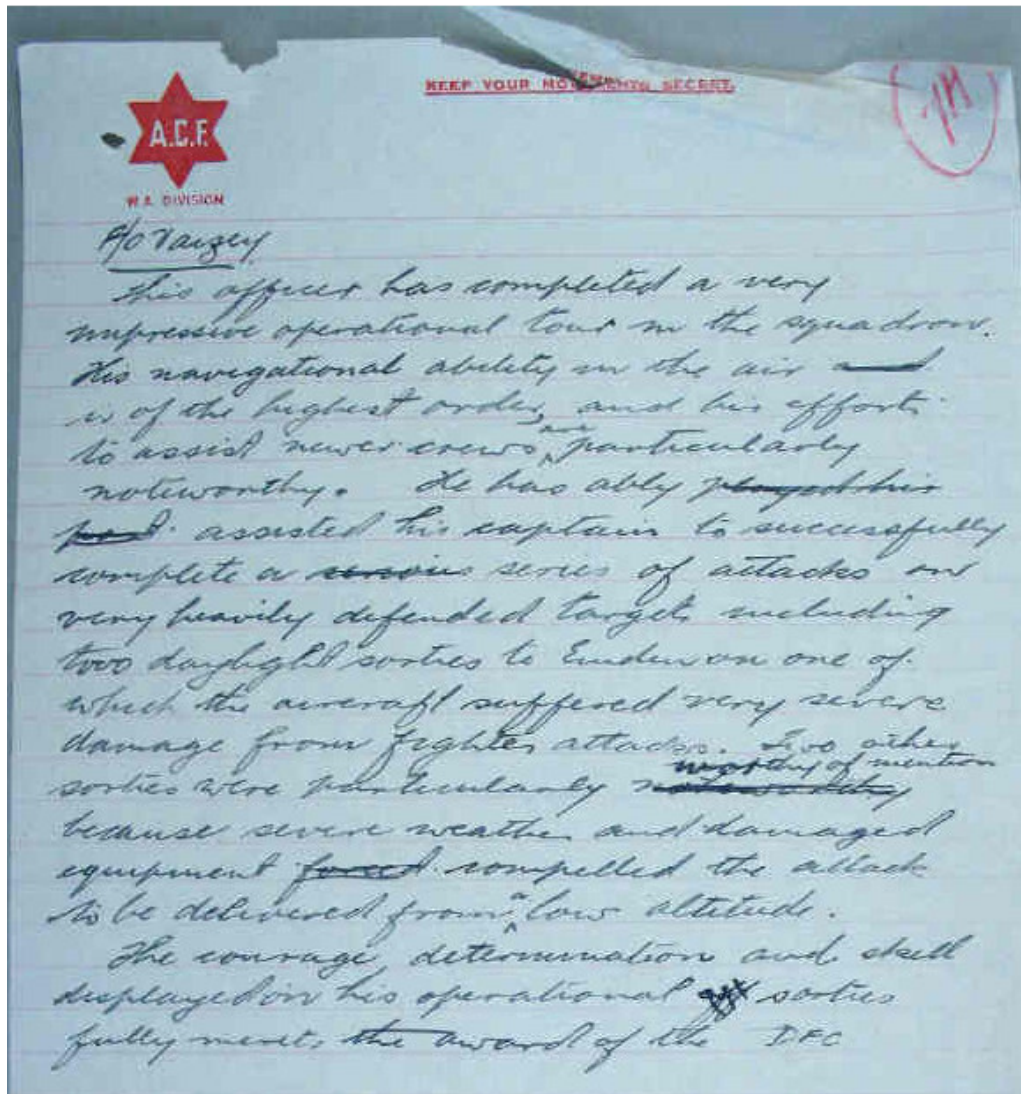
Sgt Robbins

His N.C.O. is outstanding in the squadron's
 courage and fighting spirit and efficiency
 in the air. Early in his operational tour
 he ~~materially~~ ^{established} assisted his pilot to escape
~~the~~ quality as an ^{air} ~~air~~ ^{gunner} ~~member~~,
 when his aircraft was hotly attacked by a
 ME 109 in daylight near the evening coast.
 Although his turret was hit and put out of action
 his ~~the~~ initial sighting and fire and directions
 enabled the pilot to evade the fighter and bring
 the badly damaged aircraft back to base.
 Subsequently he survived a serious training
 accident at night and later was forced to
 abandon a ^{by parachute} damaged aircraft returning from
 an operational flight to the Ribs.

His conduct as air gunner and sustained
 courage ~~provides confidence~~ gives additional
 confidence to his crew and merit the award
 of the D.F.M.

No photo used

F/O Vaizey Recommendation for DFC
<http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au>



F/O Smith Recommendation for DFC
<http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au>

