

Report on Loss of Aircraft on Operations

Aircraft: Lancaster III No. J.A.707 "Y" of 97 Squadron

Date of loss: 27/28 August, 1943 Target: Nuremberg

Cause of loss: Fighter

Information from: F/Sgt. Pond H.A. Pilot on 13th operation

Reminder of Crew:

Navigator	Sgt. Rainsford J.E.	on 1st operation	believed evading
W/Operator	Sgt. Kenny J.	" 12th "	" "
A/Bomber	F/O Peters V.C.	" 11th "	killed
F/Engineer	Sgt. Gillman E.J.	" 17th "	believed evading
M/U/Gunner	Sgt. Ramsden O.	" 12th "	wounded, probably P/W
R/Gunner	F/S McGrath T.W.	" 11th "	killed

Narrative

1. The briefed route was Base - Beachy Head - 5005N 0125E - 4915N 0825E - 4900N 1100E - Target - 4940N 1050E - 5005N 0125E - Beachy Head - Base. The Lancaster which was detailed to act as a backer up in the last wave took off from Bourn at about 2100 hours carrying 1x4000, 3 x1000, 4 T.I. Marker and 1 T.I. Red and 1 Red Spot Fire. The weather was fine and only small amounts of thin cloud were encountered on the outward journey which was completely uneventful.

2. The Lancaster reached the target area 7 minutes late. Nuremberg was found to be largely covered by cloud at 10,000 feet and the attack appeared to be somewhat scattered. Only slight opposition from ground defences was encountered and the T.I.s. and markers were dropped visually on what was thought to be the centre of the town.

3. On leaving the target area the pilot increased speed and lost height in order to regain time. About 10 minutes later he saw an aircraft approaching on the starboard quarter showing two lights. These were extinguished just as he noticed them and the aircraft came in from almost dead astern and level with the Lancaster. Flight Sergeant Pond took immediate evasive action consisting of a corkscrew starting with a steep diving turn to starboard. The Lancaster was now down to about 14,000 feet and seeing that there was some cloud at about 10-11000 feet he dived towards it. Before he could reach it a second attack developed from the same direction.

4. In the first attack the trimming controls were put out of action and the ailerons also sustained some damage and Flight Sergeant Pond had great difficulty in pulling the Lancaster out of the dive. He saw the enemy's yellow tracer coming over the mainplanes. He believes that it was during the second attack that both turrets were hit. The rear turret was jammed on the beam and as nothing was heard from the gunner, Flight Sergeant Pond thinks that he was probably killed. There was a large hole in the mid upper turret and the gunner was seriously wounded in the face and neck.

5. The port inner engine was hit in the second attack and set on fire. Flight Sergeant Pond feathered it immediately and the fire went out without it being necessary to use the extinguisher, but he did not try to use this engine again. He believes that the port outer engine was also hit as it ceased to give full power and the revolutions showed a tendency to fluctuate. The ailerons had been further damaged in the second attack and the aircraft

/was.....

...very difficult to control and the pilot was quite unable to wave  
the engine oil system completely unserviceable for about 5 minutes and for  
the rest of the flight communication was very indistinct. However, the  
Lancaster successfully gained cloud cover and shook off the fighter.

6. The Lancaster was now down to about 5-6000 feet and it continued to lose height gradually as the pilot sought the shelter of such cloud as was available, which was mostly very thin. The Mid upper gunner was assisted from his turret and placed on the rest bed. He was suffering from severe injuries to the face and neck.

7. The Lancaster had reached the vicinity of Luxembourg when the Wireless Operator, who was in the astrodome, reported that they were about to be attacked by a fighter from astern. The Lancaster was quite unable to defend itself or take evasive action, but Flight Sergeant Pond noticed some thin cloud below him at about 2,500 feet. He, therefore, asked the Navigator whether there was any high ground in the vicinity and on getting the reply that there was not he dived into the cloud.

8. The next thing Flight Sergeant Pond remembers was a terrific crash and he thought that they had collided with another aircraft. Actually the Lancaster had flown into the ground. It made a pancake landing in a field on some high ground and came to rest very quickly as there were obstructions about 50 yards beyond and behind the aircraft.

9. Flight Sergeant Pond grabbed his axe and made his way out through the top exit. The aircraft was beginning to burn in both wings and he ran round to the tail to assist the rear gunner should he still be alive. He found that the rear turret was completely gone and there was no sign of the gunner. He therefore returned to the front of the aircraft on the port side and found that all the rest of the crew had extricated themselves and were assembled except the Mid upper gunner and the Bomb aimer. The wings were now well alight and petrol was streaming out of the port tanks and running towards the nose. He saw the head of the Mid upper gunner at the escape hatch so ran to him and assisted him out. He then heard the Air Bomber calling from his position in the nose. He made towards him, but by this time the front of the fuselage was burning furiously and it was impossible to get near it. The rest of the crew now left the scene of the crash and sought the shelter of some nearby woods. Flight Sergeant Pond, who was considerably dazed, remained behind for a time, and when he called to his companions he got no reply. He therefore made his escape independently. The crash occurred close to the village of Sibret about 4 miles S.W. of Bastogne.

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