

A 97 (Straits Settlements)
Squadron, Path Finder Force
Aircrew.

27th April 1943 – 11th May 1944



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Foreword

I started carrying out research some time ago regarding my late uncle, Pilot Officer DED Harvey DFM RAFVR who was a Wireless Operator with 97 Squadron. It 'snowballed' and I started to obtain information, from a variety of sources, the details of other crew members who served with him. This is a short history of one particular aircrew of 97 Path Finder Force Squadron, and the personnel changes that took place. Their final fateful flight was in Lancaster 111 JB708 OF-J, on the 11th May 1944, when it exploded in flight over Vendville and crashed within the limit of Lille-Vendeville airfield, then used by the Luftwaffe. All the crew lost their lives.

The original crew are introduced and this involves the service histories of the original crew members, and those who joined and left, which have been acquired to date. Throughout the 'life' of the crew, three members remained as a nucleus: Sgt JR Chapman RCAF, Sgt DED Harvey RAFVR and Pilot Officer LC Jones RAFVR. There were two pilots/captains: Flying Officer WN Roberts DFM RAF (who survived the war) and Flight Lieutenant JB Smith DFC RNZAF who was the pilot on the 11th May 1944.

The data is taken from a number of resources, which are listed in the references. The data is centred upon the various operations that the crew, and new crew members, were involved in and this information originates from the various Squadron Operations Books. All the data, other than that provided by Mr A Riches, comes from identifiable sources. However, I have used a number of extracts from Middlebrook, M. and Everitt, C. (1985) to add more detail to the various raids that were undertaken by the crew members, both when serving with 97 Squadron and other Squadrons prior to and after their engagement with the squadron. I have assured Penn and Sword that this 'book' is not to be published and I will receive no financial gain from it. There has been no attempt to make this a 'story'; I hope the data speaks for itself.

During the course of the *research* I have located some of the relatives of the crew members:

Peter Roberts, son of Flying Officer WN Roberts DFM RAF - Pilot
Pat Chapman, daughter of Warrant Officer JR Chapman DFC, RCAF – Mid Upper Gunner
Howard Chapman, nephew of WO Chapman
Paul Richardson, nephew of Flight Lieutenant LC Jones DFC, RAFVR – Bomb Aimer
Jean Burdett, daughter of Sgt JD Tinsdeall RAF – Flight Engineer
Ann Fry, daughter of Flight Lieutenant AW Weston RAFVR – Navigator

I contacted two of the late WO Wright's daughters in order to obtain permission to apply for his RAF Records; however, having waited for some considerable time I have not received the appropriate paperwork and therefore his RAF time-line cannot be included. It was stated that he served with another bomber squadron prior to being posted to 97 Squadron, where he completed a second tour. He survived the war and settled, so I believe, in Swansea where he died on 22nd September 2000.

Richard Jozefiak, a former Police Officer at Lesquin airport, has carried out extensive research into the crew and the night of the attack. His 'story' is attached at Appendix J.

Peter Harvey

The Original Crew

The formation of the original aircrew was on the 25th April 1943 at No 81 Operational Training Unit, RAF Ashbourne, Derbyshire:

- 972388 Sgt W.N. Roberts (Pilot) RAF crewed up with the Mid Upper Air Gunner,
- R/85522 Sgt J.R. Chapman (RCAF) Air Gunner.

On the 5th May 1943 two other crew members joined:

- 138589 P/O Jones (RAFVR) Bomb Aimer and
- 1072007 Sgt Harvey (RAFVR) Wireless Operator.

They were flying training in the Whitley Mk V bomber, a twin engined heavy bomber.



From: <http://www.wiivehicles.com/unitedkingdom/aircraft/bomber/whitley.asp>

On 7th May 1943 658210 Sgt S.J. Peek (RAFVR) Navigator joined the crew.

They spent almost 3 months at this base before being posted on 15th June 1943 to Number 1655 Heavy Conversion Unit, RAF Lindholme, near Doncaster. This was a Heavy Conversion Unit formed for crews to convert from medium to heavy bombers, prior to a posting to an operational squadron. They flew in the Halifax Bomber

(<http://www.wiivehicles.com/unitedkingdom/aircraft/bomber/handley-page-halifax.asp>).



On the 6th July 1943 they flew their first training sortie in the Lancaster 111. On the 23rd July they were posted to 97 Squadron; however, before operational flying could take place they were sent, on the 27th July 1943, to RAF Upwood, a PFF Navigational Training Unit. The unit's purpose was to train crews which had been selected from Main Force Squadrons for duties with the PFF. This crew came straight from their respective initial training units.



RAF Upwood crest from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Upwood

The crew now consisted of:

- Pilot: 972388 Sgt W N Roberts RAF
- Flight Engineer: Sgt J.D. Tinsdeall RAFVR
- Navigator: 658210 Sgt S.J. Peek RAFVR
- Bomb Aimer: 138589 P/O L.C. Jones RAFVR
- Wireless Operator: 1072007 Sgt D.E. Harvey RAFVR
- Mid-upper Gunner: R/85522 Sgt J.R. Chapman RCAF
- Rear Gunner: 10601625 T/Sgt H B Stedman (USAF)

Note: P/O Jones, Sgt Chapman and Sgt Harvey remained together throughout their stay with 97 Squadron.

The picture below shows the crew with Air Vice Marshall Donald Bennett CB, CBE, DSO with Geoffrey Lloyd, the Minister for Petroleum Warfare. The picture was taken at RAF Bourne.



From front left: Sgt WN Roberts Pilot, PO L C Jones Bomb Aimer, Sgt Chapman Air Gunner Sgt DED Harvey Wireless Operator, leaning on his left elbow. The three crew members at the rear, one with the forage cap is Sgt J.D. Tinsdeall the other two are yet to be identified, however it is believed that Sgt SJ Peek is the middle person at the rear and the other T/Sgt H B Stedman (USAF).
From: Grey. J - <http://www.ww2-pathfinders.co.uk/index.html>

The crew made 11 trips / sorties to Berlin

97 (Straits Settlements) Squadron

The Squadron was 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 O/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). Below are the airfields the Squadron was stationed:

Waddington : Feb 1941-Mar 1941

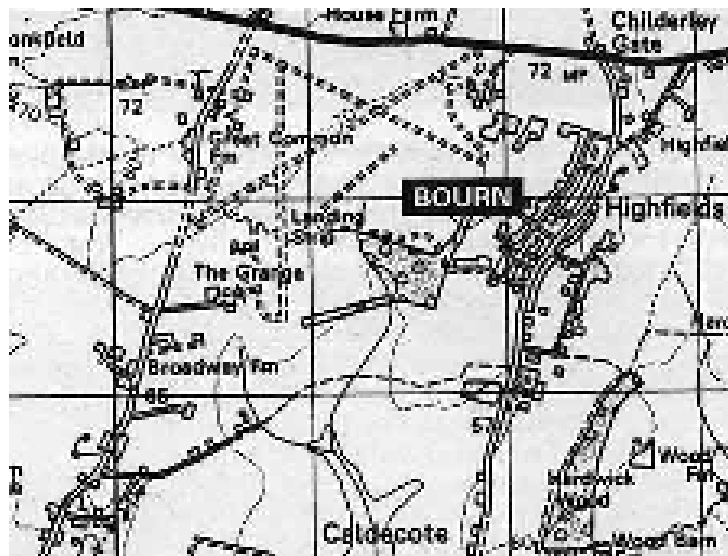
Coningsby : Mar 1941-Mar 1942

Woodhall Spa : Mar 1942-Apr 1943

Bourn : Apr 1943-Apr 1944 - A", "B" & "C" Flights detached to Gransden Lodge, Graveley & Oakington, respectively, during Aug/Sep 1943.

Coningsby : Apr 1944 onwards

The crew were initially stationed at RAF Bourn, near Cambridge. The RAF acquired a piece of land near Bourn Grange 1940, and the airfield was completed at the end of 1941. The airfield consisted of temporary buildings and the only permanent fixture was the control tower. The accommodation was stated to be rather bleak and very cold during the winter months. (Bending 2006). See also: <http://97squadronassociation.co.uk>
<http://www.97squadron.co.uk>

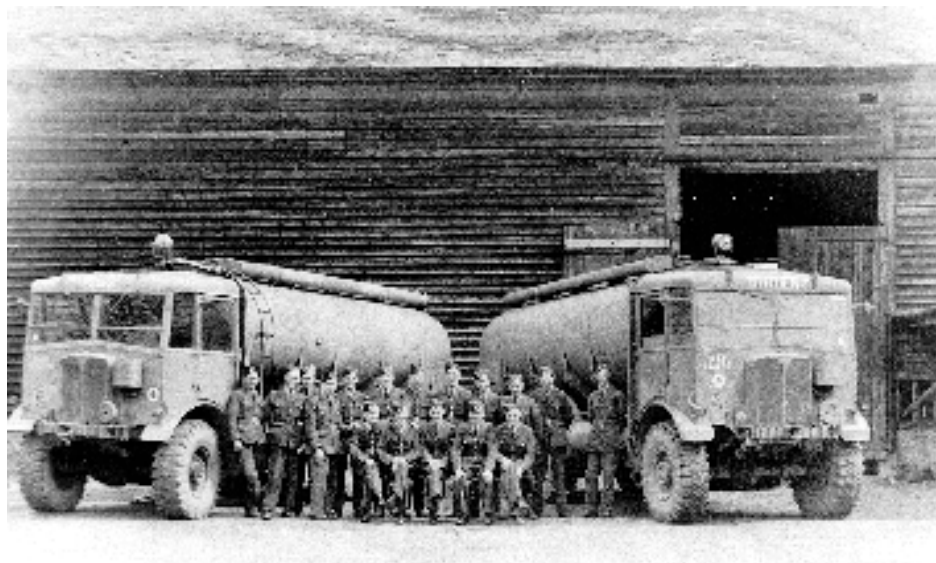


RAF Bourn, Cambridgeshire from 18th Apr 1943 to 18th Apr 1944



From: <http://www.airfieldinformationexchange.org/community/showthread.php?514-Bourn>

The pictures below shows refuelling vehicles with Ground Crew personnel, who were a vital part of the station at Bourn. The wooden structure is an old barn, demonstrating the temporary nature of the buildings which the personnel had to endure.



From: <http://www.97squadron.co.uk/Bourn%20photos.html>

Original Individual Crew Members

Pilot: 972388 Sgt W N Roberts
Flight Engineer: Sgt J.D. Tinsdeall
Navigator: 658210 Sgt S.J. Peek
Bomb Aimer: 138589 P/O L.C. Jones
Wireless Operator: 1072007 Sgt D.E. Harvey
Mid-upper Gunner: R/85522 Sgt J.R. Chapman RCAF
Rear Gunner: 10601625 T/Sgt H B Stedman (USAF)

972388 Sgt W N Roberts Pilot/Captain

Details obtained from Peter Roberts, son of F/O Roberts

Flying Officer WN Roberts DFM Service Time Line

DOB 10.03.16 Birkenhead

NON-COMMISSIONED SERVICE

14/11/39: Enlisted for the duration of the emergency as No 972388 Aircraftman 2nd Class/Aircraft hand/General Duties in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

29/8/40: Remustered Aircraft hand/Tele Op Aircraftman
1st Class
1/10/40: Leading Aircraftman
1/4/41: Temporary Corporal
6/5/41: Remustered Under Training pilot
28/11/41: Remustered Under Training pilot (2)
9/10/42: Sergeant Remustered pilot
22/8/43: Acting Flight Sergeant
9/10/43: Temporary Flight Sergeant
24/11/43: Discharged to Commission



APPOINTMENTS AND PROMOTIONS

25/11/43: Granted a Commission for the duration of the emergency as Pilot Officer on probation, in the General Duties Branch of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
25/8/44: Confirmed in appointment - promoted Flying Officer
3/11/45: Released
8/1/46: Last Day of Service
1/7/59: Commission relinquished retains rank of Flying Officer (Navy, Army and Air Force Reserves Act 1954 and 1959)

POSTINGS

14/11/39: No 3 RAF Depot - 3RC (Recruitment Centre) RAF Padgate just outside Warrington in Cheshire

3/1/40: RAF Station Debden (see below)



From: wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Debden



From: <https://maps.google.co.uk> – RAF Debden

15/5/40: No 21 Aircraft Depot - 21 Aircraft Depot, was at Chateau-Bougon about 15 kms N E of Nantes. It was almost certainly an a/c repair facility and many battle damaged a/c ended up there. Those that were not repaired were often abandoned when the Germans overran France in 1940. From: <http://forum.12oclockhigh.net>

22/5/40: No 15 Service Flight

21/7/40: No 4 Squadron - Following Germany's invasion of France and the Low Countries on 10 May 1940, 4 Squadron was frequently forced to change bases by the approach of the advancing German armies, being withdrawn to the UK on 24 May. Losses had been heavy, with 18 aircrew killed, while 60% of the ground crew were lost. It continued in the coastal patrol and air-sea rescue role while training for its main army co-operation role after returning to the UK. **From:** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No. 4 Squadron RAF](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._4_Squadron_RAF)



15/9/41: Aircrew Reception Centre

4/10/41: No 8 Initial Training Wing, Newquay, Cornwall, approximately 10 weeks of training which included maths, navigation and signalling

23/12/41: **23/12/41:** No. 6 Elementary Flying Training School & No. 6 Air Observer School:

Opened near Prince Albert on 22 July 1940 under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, with relief landing fields located near Hagen and Emma Lake. The school closed on 15 November 1944. The aerodrome is now the Prince Albert Airport. Among the tenants of the airport are the National Aviation Centre, providing servicing and facilities for aircraft and the National Aviation College, providing flying training.

From 17 March 1941 to 11 November 1942, the station doubled as No. 6 Air Observer School. All that remains of the former No. 6 EFTS is the central hangar with the control tower. A monument was erected to pay tribute to the 17 airmen and one civilian who died in training accidents at the school.

Nothing remains of RCAF Detachments Hagen and Emma Lake.

Source material: National Aviation Centre/National Aviation College web site – <http://citylightsnews.com/nac.htm>, information provided by Vintage Wings – www.vintagewings.ca, "The Canada Flight Supplement" 1999 & "Wings For Victory" by Spencer Dunmore.

From: <http://svwm.ca/no-6-efst-no-6-aos-prince-albert>

An Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) gave a recruit 50 hours of basic aviation instruction on a simple trainer like the Tiger Moth, Pilots who showed promise went on to training at a Service Flying Training School (STFS). Part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan Arnold Scheme, see below.

ARNOLD SCHEME 1941 – 1943

During the dark days of World War II, the uncertain British weather and ever present threat of the German Luftwaffe meant that the skies over the UK were no place for eager young men to learn to fly.

To overcome these problems the British Government sought to establish Aircrew Training Schemes in a number of locations both within, and outside, the British Empire (Commonwealth). The United States of America was one of the locations identified and negotiations commenced to enable British Airmen to undertake flying training in the (then) neutral USA.

The negotiations were successful, and a number of schemes were established, amongst them the **Arnold Scheme**.

Run by USAAC (the United States Army Air Corps), the scheme took its name from its instigator, General "Hap" Arnold., and was based in the SEACTC area (Southeast Air Corps Training Centre), one of three large geographical training centres established by the Americans. Its aim was to train 4000 British pilots alongside USAAC cadets, and plans were swiftly put in place to send the first contingent of trainees over in time for the June 1941 intake, with subsequent contingents arriving every five weeks until March 1943. Unfortunately nearly 50% of British cadets did not successfully complete pilot training under the scheme, being eliminated ("washed out"), usually without the right of appeal.

Between 1941 and 1943, some 7,885 cadets entered the scheme and of the 4493 who survived training, most were returned to the UK as Sergeant Pilots, with many being posted to Bomber Command.

BFTS was administered by the RAF and despite the use of USAAF Primary, Basic and single engine Advanced Trainers the syllabus was almost identical to that used in BCATP Elementary and Service Flying Training Schools. Except for a small echelon of RAF (and later AAF staff) the schools were operated by a civilian contractor. Most of the bills were paid from Lend-Lease Funding. As these were RAF schools there are the usual, if incomplete, Operations Record Books. Some contain reasonably complete lists of each course of students, though little is recorded from 1941 and 1942.

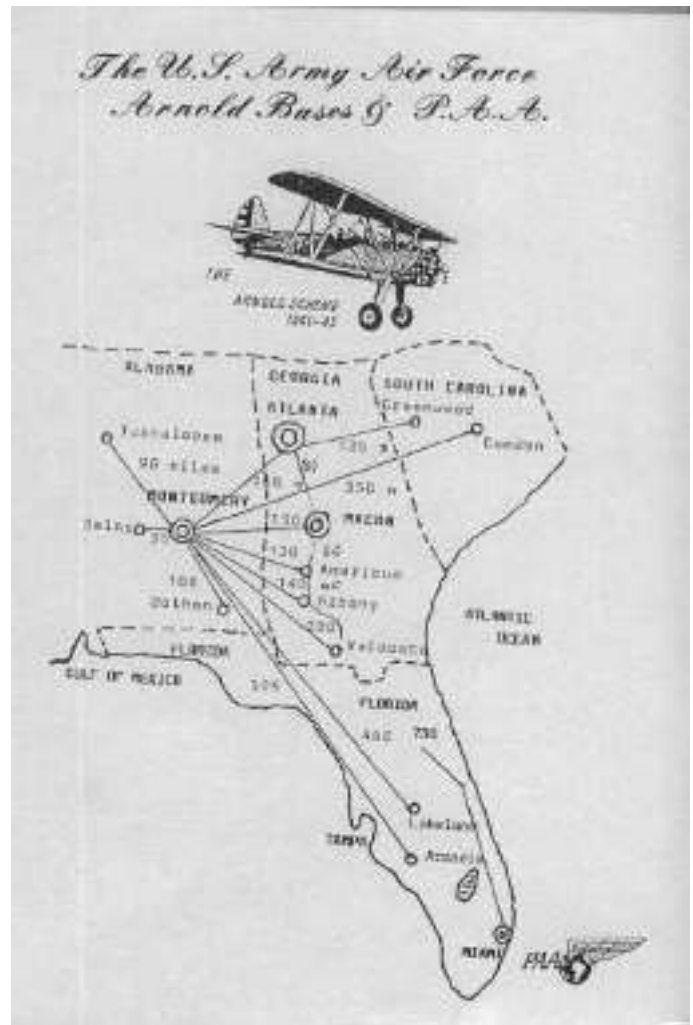
The Arnold scheme was administered by the USAAF and the RAF Cadets passed through the Army's Primary, Basic and Advanced Schools. The syllabus, tradition, discipline, bullshit, etc., were pure US Army (except where the British cadets could corrupt it!). One cock-up and you were on the train back to Moncton, N.B.

Cameras were not permitted and thus you rarely find an Arnold veteran with many mementoes of his stay in the USA. As there was no permanent RAF staff there was no one to write up the ORB.

"Wings over Georgia" by Jack Currie DFC gives an interesting insight from the point of view of one of the RAF Arnold Students.

From: <http://www.arnold-scheme.org/bases.htm>

See also: <http://www.rafcommands.com/archive/04942.php>



Arnold Scheme flight training was a three-phase training plan.

Training took place in separate **primary**, **basic** and **advanced** flying schools within the SEACTC area.

Each training centre headquarters was assigned a rated RAF administrative officer, and each school had a subordinate non-rated RAF administrative officer who handled discipline and pay.

Primary flying courses took place over nine to ten weeks (sixty hours) at civilian contract schools. The schools, equipped with Stearman (Boeing) PT-17 biplanes, were located at: Camden, South Carolina; Albany and Americus, Georgia; Arcadia and Lakeland, Florida; and Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Courses were run by experienced American civilian instructors.

Basic flying training took place over a nine to ten week, seventy-hour course at either Cochran Field, Georgia or Gunter Field, Alabama. The schools were equipped with Vultee BT-13 low-wing monoplanes. Courses were conducted by USAAC and RAF flight instructors.

Advanced flying training schools conducted single-engine or multi-engine courses. The single-engine courses took place in Alabama at Craig Field, near Selma or Napier Field near Dothan. Initially multi-engine training took place on single-engine North American AT-6 aircraft (due to the shortage of twin-engine aircraft) at Maxwell and Napier Fields in Alabama, and Turner Field in Georgia. However, in 1942 Maxwell became a Central Instructor's School and Moody Field, Georgia took over multi-engine advanced flying training. At this point Turner and Moody were then equipped with twin-engine AT-7, AT-10 and AT-17 trainers. **From:** <http://www.arnold-scheme.org/bases.htm>

2/2/42: Moncton – 31 Personnel Depot (PD)

It appears at some stage the role of No.31 P.D. in the storage of RAF and FAA personnel from the U.K and their transmission as u/t aircrew to the various training schools - and their eventual return as graduate pilots - was taken over by the RCAF's No.1 "Y" Depot at Moncton or Halifax. **From:** <http://www.rafcommands.com/forum/showthread.php?14738-No.31-Personnel-Depot-Moncton-and-its-successors>

Over a four-year period more than 130,000 personnel from Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and other countries in the Commonwealth graduated from 107 training schools across the country. Moncton, which already had an airport and was along the main railroad line, was selected not only pilot training but also a main processing station for airmen who landed in Halifax and were en-route to other schools by train. Most of them were in their late teens or early 20s and found themselves a long way from home learning a trade that would prove to be very dangerous.

Moncton was home to the No. 8 Service Flying Training School, the No. 1 Wireless School, the No. 1 Y Depot, the No. 31 RAF Personnel Depot, the No. 18 Equipment Unit, the No. 15 Recruit Depot, In the summer of 1941, a large piece of land by the CN Shops (near the present location of the YMCA on Vaughan Harvey Boulevard) was turned into a "town within a city" to accommodate the incoming flyboys. Some of those buildings built in haste still stand today. Other New Brunswick communities affected by the training plan included Salisbury, Chatham and **Pennfield Ridge** near Saint John. Planes based in nearby Debert, N.S., also made regular runs over Moncton. **From:** http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nbpennfi/penn8b1NewspaperStories_No8SFTSMoncton1.htm
See also: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/17/a7189617.shtml> Also the following for the training plan in Africa: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/37/a1122337.shtml>

23/2/42: Turners Field – Darr Aero Tech Georgia – flying in the Boeing Stearman PT 17: see picture.



Darr Aero Tech, Albany Georgia (a civilian flying school taken over by the U.S. Army Air Corps). America at that time was a neutral (it was before Pearl Harbour) so trainee RAF Pilots were kitted out with grey suits, as we were to travel to America as civilian “Aeronautical Students.” **From:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/45/a2261945.shtml>

Boeing Stearman PT 17 **From:** http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stearman_Aircraft

Completion of flying training at Turners Field:

DUAL-CONTROL AIRCRAFT				SINGLE-ENGINE AIRCRAFT						TASO MILES	INSTRUMENT FLYING (Dist. in Miles (11.3.42))																															
Dist.	Time	Dual	Solo	Dist.	Day Pass	Night Pass	Dist.	Day Pass	Night Pass		Dual	Solo																														
27	24																																									
<p>This is to certify that 972388 Cpl Roberts has successfully completed and flown</p> <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">DARR AERO TECH</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th>HRS</th> <th>MINS</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>DUAL</td> <td>27</td> <td>24</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SOLO</td> <td>32</td> <td>41</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TOTAL</td> <td>60 HRS</td> <td>5 MINS</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>in a STEARMAN PT 17, at the AAF Training Detachment <u>DARR AERO TECH, ALBANY GEORGIA.</u></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u>Francis K. Wood, O</u> 1ST LIEUT. AAF.</p> <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">DARR AERO TECH</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th>HRS</th> <th>MINS</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>DUAL</td> <td>27</td> <td>24</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SOLO</td> <td>32</td> <td>41</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TOTAL</td> <td>60</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p style="text-align: center;">1942.</p>													DARR AERO TECH				HRS	MINS	DUAL	27	24	SOLO	32	41	TOTAL	60 HRS	5 MINS	DARR AERO TECH				HRS	MINS	DUAL	27	24	SOLO	32	41	TOTAL	60	5
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From: Royal Air Force Form 414 Pilot's Flying Log Book, WN Roberts 1st June 1942

2/6/42: No 31 Personnel Depot – Moncton

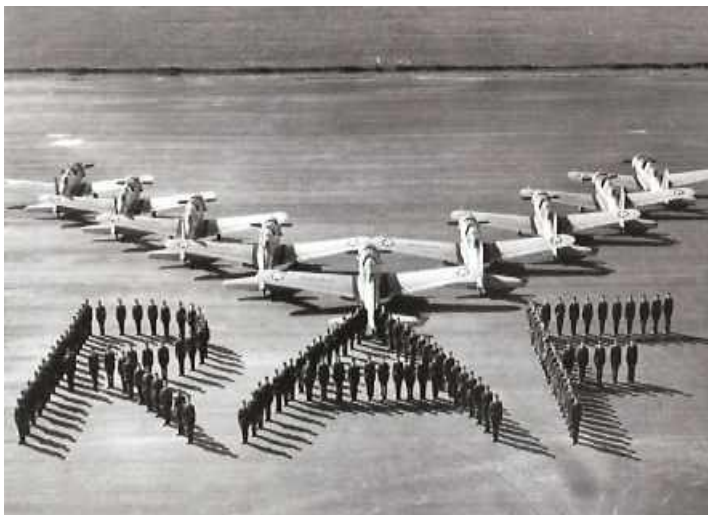
4/7/42: Cochran Field Macon Georgia

Flying single engined Vultee BT 13A, picture
opposite From: <http://www.google.co.uk/imgres>



Below are pictures of the airfield and the RAF detachment 1942

From: <http://museumofaviation.wordpress.com/2010/12/23/cochran-field/>



Completion of flying training at Cochran Field, 3rd August 1942. See Log Book entry below :

Flew in the following twin-engined aircraft:



Curtis-Wright Corporation AT9. **From:** <http://nhungdoicanh.blogspot.co.uk/2011/05/curtiss-wright-cw-25-at-9-jeep.html>



Cessna AT17. **From:** http://military.wikia.com/wiki/Cessna_AT-17_Bobcat

6/11/42: No 7 Personnel Reception Centre - Harrogate

29/12/42: No 11 Advanced Flying Unit (AFU)

No. 11 Service Flight Training School (S.F.T.S.), R.A.F. Shawbury, Shropshire, flying the Airspeed Oxford Mk 1, see picture. **From:** http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Airspeed_Oxford



26/01/43: 11 AFU Condover (Shrewsbury)

19/2/43: Flight 1521 BAT Course RAF Stradishall

Flying Oxfords and including navigation training



Picture and crest (above) **From:** http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Stradishall

23/3/43: No 81 Operational Training Unit –
 RAF Ashbourne, flying Whitley Mk V (see picture.
From:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armstrong_Whitworth_Whitley
 Y)



Picks up first members of his crew, Sgt Chapman (RCAF) Air Gunner then P/O Jones (RAFVR) Bomb Aimer and Sgt Harvey (RAFVR) Wireless Operator;

05/05/43: see log book below:

YEAR 1943		AIRCRAFT		PILOT, OR 1st PILOT	2ND PILOT, PUPIL OR PASSENGER	DUTY (INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)
MONTH	DATE	Type	No			
TOTALS BROUGHT FORWARD						
<p>This is to certify that I fully understand the petrol and oil, hydraulic systems including emergency system of the Whitley V aircraft that I have operated the emergency landing carriage lowering system at Salt since.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">L. G. Roberts</p>						
APRIL	25	WHITLEY V	411	FORBENSSON	SELF	C+H
"	26	WHITLEY V	411	FORBENSSON	SELF	C+H
"	27	WHITLEY V	479	FORBENSSON	Sgt Chapman (RCAF)	C+H
"	27	WHITLEY V	479	FORBENSSON	SELF	C+H
"	27	WHITLEY V	479	FORBENSSON	CHAPMAN (RCAF)	C+H
"	27	WHITLEY V	479	FORBENSSON	SELF	C+H
"	28	WHITLEY V	444	SELF	CHAPMAN (RCAF)	C+H SINGLE ENGINE FORWARD
"	28	WHITLEY V	444	SELF	CHAPMAN (RCAF)	C+H
"	28	WHITLEY V	479	FORBENSSON	PASSENGER	N F T
"	29	WHITLEY V	479	SELF	CHAPMAN (RCAF)	C+H
<p style="text-align: right;">L. G. Roberts</p>						
<p>SIGNED OC 'D' FLIGHT.</p>						<p>SUMMARY FOR APRIL 1943</p> <p>UNIT 81 OTU</p> <p>DATE 1.5.1943</p> <p>SIGNATURE L. G. Roberts</p>

YEAR 1943		AIRCRAFT		PILOT OR 1ST PILOT	2ND PILOT, PUPIL OR PASSENGER	DUTY (INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)
MONTH	DATE	Type	No.			
						TOTALS BROUGHT FORWARD
MAY	1	WHITLEY V	770	S. W. ROBERTSON	SELF + CREW	1 C-2
	8	WHITLEY V	770	SELF	SELF + CREW	C-2
	5	WHITLEY V	770	SELF	SELF + CREW	BOMBING
MAY	6	WHITLEY V	702	F. D. ORMOND	SELF + CREW	H. B. BOMBING
"	6	WHITLEY V	702	SELF	SELF + CREW	H. B. BOMBING
"	8	WHITLEY V	702	SELF	SELF + CREW	BOMBING
MAY	11	WHITLEY V	702	SELF	SELF + CREW	H. B.
"	11	WHITLEY V	838	F. B. L...	SELF + CREW	X.C. 2 BOMBING
MAY	10	WHITLEY V	338A	F. H. STEVENS	SELF + CREW	C+B (NIGHT FLYING)
"	10	WHITLEY V	338A	F. H. STEVENS	SELF + CREW	C+B
"	11	WHITLEY V	770S	SELF	CREW	X.C. NO. 3 LINE BOMBING
"	11	WHITLEY V	338A	F. D. B...	SELF + CREW	C+B (NIGHT FLYING)
"	11	WHITLEY V	338A	SELF	CREW	C+B (NIGHT FLYING)
"	12	WHITLEY V	344 F	SELF	CREW	C+B (NIGHT FLYING)
"	12	WHITLEY V	344 F	SELF	CREW	C+B (NIGHT FLYING)
"	13	WHITLEY V	700D	SELF	CREW	C+B (NIGHT FLYING)
"	13	WHITLEY V	344 F	SELF	CREW	NIGHT BOMBING (D.M.C.)
"	14	WHITLEY V	700D	SELF	CREW	NIGHT BOMBING
"	15	WHITLEY V	702H	F. H. GEORGE	SELF + CREW	X.C. 2 BOMBING
"	19	WHITLEY V	678 C	F. H. GEORGE	SELF + CREW	X.C. 1 BOMBING
"	20	WHITLEY V	938 Y	F. H. GEORGE	SELF + CREW	FORMATION
"	20	WHITLEY V	411 X	SELF	CREW	NIGHT BOMBING
"	21	WHITLEY V	705 K	F. H. GEORGE	SELF + CREW	1 BOMBING
"	23	WHITLEY V	705 K	SELF	CREW	X.C. BOMBING

15/6/43: No 1655 Heavy Conversion Unit, RAF Lindholme -
1656 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU) - Formed by merging 103 and
460 Squadron Conversion Flights.

With the introduction of the new heavy bombers, the 4-engined Short Stirling, Avro Lancaster and Handley Page Halifax, into service, the Royal Air Force introduced **Heavy Conversion Units**. The Heavy Conversion Units began forming in late 1941 to qualify crews trained on medium bombers to operate the heavy bombers prior to assignment to an Operational Training Unit to gain experience before final posting to the operational squadrons.

RAF Lindholme crest from:
<http://www.rafweb.org/Stations/Stations-L.htm#Lindholme>



Flying in Halifax Bomber. **See:**
<http://www.yorkshireairmuseum.org/halifax-360vr-tours> for virtual tour of interior of aircraft.



06/07/43: Flying the Lancaster 111 (Pilot's Log Book WN Roberts). Sgt Tinsdeall (RAFVR) Air Engineer joins aircrew (see picture below). Extracts from his Log Book are in Appendix F, donated by his daughter, Jean Burdett.



1675658 Sergeant JD Tinsdeall Flight Engineer

Born 1921 in Wakefield, mother's maiden name Grasby.

Married in 1950 to Ada Greenhough in Wakefield

Died March 1977 – Wakefield

See extracts from Sgt Tinsdeall's Log Book, **Appendix F**, from Jean Burdett, daughter of Sgt Tinsdeall

21/6/43: Qualified as Flight Engineer at 4 School of Technical Training

6/7/43: Lancaster 111 Flt Lt Graham, Sgt Roberts, P/O Barton, Sgt Tinsdeall. 1656 CU (conversion Unit)

8/7 to 12/7/43: Lancaster 1B Sgt Roberts, Sgt Tinsdeall. AE and Bombing

15/7/43: Lancaster 1B P/O Fahy, Sgt Roberts, Sgt Tinsdeall

15/7 to 17/7/43: Lancaster B1 Sgt Roberts, Sgt Tinsdeall X Country

19/7/43: Lancaster 111 Sgt Roberts, Sgt Tinsdeall. X Country and bombing

28/07/43: Lancaster S X country training at RAF Upwood

29/07/43: Lancaster M country training at RAF Upwood

31/07/43: Lancaster C AE & DCO

Sgt Roberts Continued:

3/7/43: No 97 Squadron

27/7/43: PFF Navigational Training Unit (NTU) RAF Upwood

The Pathfinder Force Navigation Training unit was under the control of No. 8 Group and was established at Gransden Lodge on the 10th April 1943. The units task was to train crews which were selected from Main Force Squadrons for Pathfinder duties. Equipped with Stirlings, Halifaxes and Lancasters and in late 1944 Mosquitoes and Oxfords. The unit moved to Upwood on the 17th June 1943 and an air party being established at Warboys.

15/2/44: P/O Roberts awarded the DFM: London Gazette 15th February 1944

23/3/44: No 83 Operational Training Unit
RAF Peplow (Childs Ercall) Flying the
Vickers Wellington.

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.

Designer: Barnes Wallis

Manufacturer: Vickers-Armstrongs

Picture of Wellington from:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vickers_Wellington_LN514

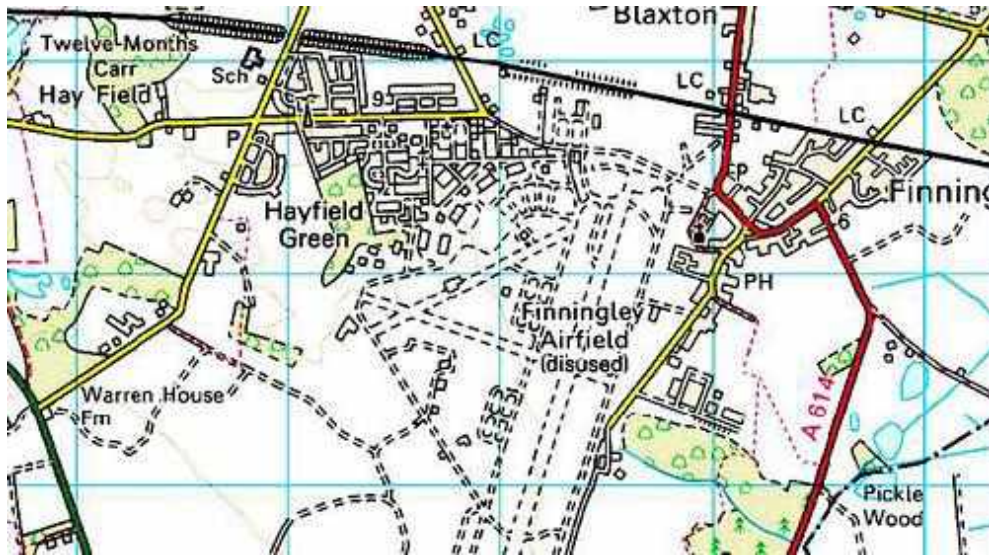


Site of former airfield RAF Peplow, **From:**

<https://maps.google.co.uk/maps?t=h&hl=en&ie=UTF8&ll=52.803034,-2.500398&spn=0.006058,0.009313&z=16>

12/4/44: No 3 Flying Instructors School, RAF Lulsgate Bottom - Flying Airspeed Oxfords. A short course re deployment to Flying Instructional School

28/1/44: No 18 Operational Training Unit, RAF Finningley, Doncaster. In May 1944 No 18 OTU returned from RAF Bramcote, trainee pilots flying in the Vickers Wellington (see above)



From: <http://www.rotherhamweb.co.uk/features/finningley.htm>



From: <https://maps.google.co.uk/>

- 28/07/43:** Lancaster S X country training at RAF Upwood (from Sgt Tinsdeal's log book)
- 29/07/43:** Lancaster M country training at RAF Upwood (from Sgt Tinsdeal's log book)
- 31/07/43:** Lancaster C AE & DCO at RAF Upwood (from Sgt Tinsdeal's log book)
- 2/2/45:** 20 Operational Training Unit at RAF Lossiemouth to train night bomber crews using the Vickers Wellington

From: A.Riches

The following extract is from an interview Mr Riches had with the late F/O Roberts DFM, from his posting to Flying Training Instruction, then being posted to 635 Squadron:

Meanwhile at RAF Peplow, in wildest Shropshire, Robbie Roberts was starting a seven-month spell of instructional duties at No. 83 OTU. His task was to impart his hard-won operational skills and experience to newly qualified pilots. Their aircraft was the Vickers Wellington, once the mainstay of Bomber Command's night operations against Germany, now honourably retired from front-line - service: nevertheless it proved a useful introduction to flying heavies. Early on Robbie complained to his C.O. that he knew nothing about instructing, so the Wing Commander agreed to send him on a course.

No: 3 Flying instructors' School was at a field called Lulsgate Bottom, on the Weston-super-Mare road out of Bristol. The four-week course flown on Airspeed Oxfords was a potted version of the central Flying school syllabus. The aim, as stated, was to imbue students with the standard methods of instructing the correct techniques, the proper 'patter', but Robbie had an inkling that another purpose was to eradicate the bad flying habits they were thought to have picked up while flying their tours with Bomber Command. Whatever the principles of the School, Robbie found it all rather tedious and he was glad to return to Peplow.

To men who had recently been engaged in the hazardous business of bombing the heavily-defended cities of the Reich, instructing came as a distinct anticlimax. All through the summer of 1944 Robbie Roberts pounded the Peplow circuit and the neighbouring Welsh airspace, supervising sprog pilots in landings and overshoots, cross-country and beam approach exercises, air-firing and bombing. It was repetitive and dull, and yet at the same time dangerous: the accident rate at OTUs was appalling. Tour-expired Instructors like Robbie soon found that flying ham-fisted pupils in tired and often under-maintained aircraft was anything but a rest cure. Robbie longed for the thrill and purpose of squadron life, and made frequent applications to return to operational flying. But at this late stage of the war the output of Training Command was more than sufficient to supply the demands of the operational squadrons.

In October Roberts did receive a posting, but only to another OTU, No. 18 at Finningley near Doncaster. This was followed in February 1945 by a posting to No. 20 OTU at Lossiemouth in Scotland. By March Robbie had endured a whole year of instructing and, with the end of the European war in sight, despaired of ever flying operationally again. Then, out of the blue, came the news that he had been waiting for: - Flying Officer W N Roberts DFM was to report to **No. 635 Squadron on 2nd March 1945 to commence a second tour of operational duties.**

21/3/45: RAF Wyton - No. 635 Path Finder Force Squadron

No 635 Squadron was formed at Downham Market, Norfolk, on 20th March 1944, from "B" Flight of No 35 Squadron and "C" Flight of No 97 Squadron. Equipped with Lancasters, it formed part of the Pathfinder Force (No 8 Group) and during the period March 1944, to April 1945, took part in many major bombing attacks. Following its final wartime bombing mission it helped to drop food to the starving Dutch, repatriate British ex-POWs to Great Britain and ferry British troops home from Italy.

From:

<http://www.raf.mod.uk/history/bombercommandno635squadron.cfm>



Operations with 635 Path Finder Force Squadron

8/4/45: Hamburg

Lancaster 1 PB922 F/O WN Roberts, P/O E Thorp, F/S W Williams, F/S C Fitzsimmons, Sgt W Ryder, Sgt DT Williams, Sgt BJW Spaul. 1950 – 0120. On approaching target we saw 2 flares R/G ignite at position 5348N 1020E at 2223hrs, they appeared to be jettisoned. On approaching target we saw one set of TI's Red at 2224.05hrs, followed immediately by two other sets in good concentration. At 2225hrs we saw a stick of illuminating flares. MB (Master Bomber) not heard. Skymarkers seen (no time) after leaving target and bombing seemed well on skymarkers. No results seen.

On the evening of 8 April 1945 he took off in Lancaster PB922 U-uncle for his first operation in over a year. The target was the shipyards at Hamburg, the scene of his first, sortie with No. 97 Squadron in August 1943. Altogether Bomber Command dispatched 440 bombers, of which only six were lost. Things had certainly changed for the better since the bitter winter of 1943-44 when the odds against, a crew completing a tour were long indeed. Since D-Day the Allied armies had liberated most of Nazi-occupied Europe and were now fighting inside Germany itself. The time a crew spent over enemy territory was therefore minimal. In addition, thanks to the massive daylight raids mounted by the B17s and B24s of the United States night air Force and in particular to the efforts of their escorting Mustangs, the Luftwaffe fighter force was now a shadow of its former self. Robert's, acting as a Blind illuminator, marked the target with pin-point accuracy through partial cloud and returned unscathed to Downham Market after five and a half hours in the air. It was the last major raid on Hamburg of the war. **Mr A Riches**

8/9 April 1945 – Hamburg

440 aircraft, 263 Halifaxes, 160 Lancasters and 17 Mosquitoes of 4, 6 and 8 Groups. 3 Halifaxes and 3 Lancasters lost.

This attack was intended for the shipyard areas but partial cloud caused the raid to become dispersed. Some damage probably caused to the shipyards but, as an American raid on the yards had taken place a few hours earlier, damage seen in the photographs could not be allocated between the two forces. Other areas of Hamburg, particularly the Altona district, were badly damaged and 292 people were killed. This was the last major Bomber Command raid of the war on Hamburg. (Middleton and Everitt p692).

9/04/45: Kiel

Lancaster 1 PB922 F/O WN Roberts, P/O E Thorp, F/S W Williams, F/S C Fitzsimmons, Sgt W Ryder, Sgt DT Williams, Sgt BJW Spaul. 2005 – 0110. On approach to target illuminating flares were already down, so we dropped ours then orbited to port and at 2226.07hrs Red TI's seen going down. On 2nd run in at 2230hrs Red and Greens were seen already down in good concentration and was being backed up by greens which were well placed. Bombing was well concentrated on TI's. Smoke was rising from the target when we left and fires could be seen for 80 miles on homeward journey.

The next night, 9 April, the target was Kier Harbour. PB922, with Robbie at the controls, was one of 599 bombers detailed to blast U-boat pens, shipyards and shipping. The Visual Illuminators (of which Robbie was one) marked the target accurately in good visibility, and widespread damage was done: three pocket battleships the Admiral Scheer, Admiral Hipper and Emden - were sunk. Only three Lancasters failed to return. **Mr A Riches**

9/10 April 1945 Kiel

591 Lancasters and 8 Mosquitoes of 1, 3 and 8 Groups. 3 Lancasters lost.

This was an accurate raid, made in good visibility on two aiming points in the harbour area. Photographic reconnaissance showed that the Deutsche Werke U-Boat yard was severely damaged, the pocket battleship Admiral Scheer was hit and capsized, the Admiral Hipper and the Emden were badly damaged. The local diary says that all 3 shipyards in the port were hit and that the nearby residential areas were severely damaged. 81 civilians were killed; there were probably naval casualties as well. The Kiel diarist comments on the effects of shortages, the shoes removed from the body of a dead woman, the flesh cut from a dead horse. (Middleton and Everitt p692).

10/04/45: Plauen

Lancaster 1 PB949 F/O WN Roberts, P/O E Thorp, F/S W Williams, F/S C Fitzsimmons, Sgt W Ryder, Sgt DT Williams, Sgt BJW Spaul. 1845 – 0236. When we arrived over the target no flares or Red TI had gone down, so we made an orbit to Port and came in on a second run. By this time the target was well illuminated and there was too much smoke to warrant further illumination, so withheld our flares. The M/B was clearly heard. A very good attack.

10/11 April 1945 – Plauen

307 Lancasters and 8 Mosquitoes of 1 and 8 Groups. No aircraft lost.

The bombing fell around the railway yards in the northern part of the town. The railways were hit and 365 acres, 51%, of the town's built up areas were also destroyed. (Middleton and Everitt p694).

13/04/45: Kiel

Lancaster 1 PB929 Y F/O WN Roberts, P/O E Thorp, F/O AE Reid, F/S C Fitzsimmons, Sgt W Ryder, Sgt DT Williams, Sgt BJW Spaul. 2034 – 0215. On approach to target MB was heard saying "Stand by for alternative target". Red TI was seen cascading at 2334hrs. Green TI's were observed at 2327hrs. A/C did an orbit and bombed on the greens as instructed by the M/B. As A/C left target area the glow of fires could be seen reflected on the clouds. No other results observed

13/14 April 1945 – Kiel

377 Lancasters and 105 Halifaxes of 3, 6 and 8 Groups. 2 Lancasters lost.

The raid was directed at the port area, with the U-Boat yards as the main objective. Bomber Command rated this as a poor attack with scattered bombing. The local diary states that the main bombing was in and around the suburb of Elmschenhagen, 2 miles from the port area, but some damage was caused nearer the harbour, including a hit on an ammunition depot and the northern end. 50 people were killed. (Middleton and Everitt p695).

14/04/45: Potsdam

Lancaster 1 PB922 U F/O WN Roberts, P/O E Thorp, F/O AE Reid, F/S C Fitzsimmons, Sgt W Ryder, Sgt DT Williams, Sgt BJW Spaul. 1835 – 0245. We identified ground detail as we ran in clearly seeing the lakes. We heard the M/B call for illuminators. At 2240hrs we saw the first RTI (Red Target Indicator) at 2342 and this fell in the built up area. Green TI's went down at 2249hrs, others fell close to the reds. Bombing was well concentrated on the TI's and at 2251hrs the flash of an explosion was seen. As we left the target area fires were seen taking hold.

Following a raid on Plauen on the night of the tenth, Roberts returned to Kiel on the thirteenth. The target was marked visually, but the bombing was scattered. Little additional damage was done, but at least only two of the 482 bombers taking part were lost. Next night Bomber Command four-engined aircraft -entered the Berlin defence zone for the first time since March 1944 when 512 aircraft attacked **Potsdam**. The raid recalled for Robbie the horrors of the Battle of Berlin, but this time only one Lancaster was lost. Severe damage was done to Potsdam and the Northern and Eastern districts of Berlin, and over 5,000 people were killed. This was the last raid of the war by a major Bomber command force on a German city. **Mr A Riches**

14/15 April 1945 – Potsdam

500 Lancasters and 12 Mosquitoes of 1, 3 and 8 Groups. This was the first time that Bomber Command 4-engined aircraft had entered the Berlin defence zone since March 1944, but the approach across parts of Germany recently captured by Allied troops, and the Cuxhaven diversion led to only 1 Lancaster being lost; it was shot down by a night fighter.

This was the last raid of the war by a major Bomber Command force on a German city. The aiming point was the centre of Potsdam and the intention was to destroy the local barracks (depot of the old German Guards regiments) and the railway facilities. The attack was reasonably successful and severe damage was caused in Potsdam, but bombs also fell in the nearby northern and eastern districts of Berlin. No information is obtainable from Potsdam (now in Eastern Germany) but a figure of 5,000 dead has been mentioned. This high figure, if true, was caused by the fact that the people of this community had seen Berlin and not themselves bombed so often that they failed to take proper cover when the sirens sounded. (Middleton and Everitt pp 695 - 696).

22/04/45: Bremen

Lancaster 1 PB915 M F/O WN Roberts, P/O E Thorp, Sgt HM Smith, F/S C Fitzsimmons, Sgt W Ryder, Sgt DT Williams, Sgt BJW Spaul. 1635 – 2107. On approach 5/10 cloud was over target. A/C did two orbits, M/B was heard to say "I am going home". At 1913hrs DMB (Deputy Master Bomber) replied that he was going to mark the A/P, which he did at 1916, they were well on A/P. A/C bombed last seen TI Red. Smoke was seen rising near the RTI and South of the A/P fires could be seen burning from previous waves.

On 22nd April Roberts took PB915 M-Mother to Bremen. This raid, in daylight, was part of the preparation for the attack by the British XXX Corps on Bremen. 767 aircraft of Nos. 1,3,4,6 and 8 groups took part, of which only two Lancasters were lost. The raid was hampered by cloud and by smoke and dust from bombing as the raid progressed. The Master Bomber ordered the raid to stop after 195 Lancasters had bombed, and the whole of 1 and 4 groups returned home without attacking. Bremen fell two days later. **Mr A Riches**

22 April 1945 – Bremen

767 aircraft, 651 Lancasters, 100 Halifaxes and 16 Mosquitoes of 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups. 2 Lancasters were lost.

This raid was part of the preparation for the attack by British XXX Corps on Bremen. The bombing was on the south-eastern suburbs of the city, where the ground troops would attack 2 days later. The raid was hampered by cloud and by smoke and dust from the bombing as the raid progressed. The Master Bomber ordered the raid to stop after 195 Lancasters had bombed. The whole of 1 and 4 Groups returned home without attacking.

The Bremen officials were, amazingly, still recording the effects of the raid in great detail, even though the city would be in British hands within 5 days, and the intervening period would be filled with a continuous artillery bombardment, fighter bomber attacks and the British assault! 3,664 houses were carefully listed under 5 categories of air-raid damage, from destroyed to broken windows. At least 172 civilians were killed, of whom 26 died in a concrete shelter whose side was blown in by a heavy bomb exploding just outside. There are, unfortunately, no notes on casualties to German troops or the effect

upon their defences, but Bremen soon fell after 3 days of ground attack, with 6,000 German troops surrendering. It was the first major German port to be captured. (Middleton and Everitt p699).

25/04/45: Berchtesgaden

Lancaster 1 PB915 M F/O WN Roberts, P/O E Thorp, P/O HM Smith, F/S C Fitzsimmons, Sgt W Ryder, Sgt DT Williams, Sgt BJW Spaul. 0553 – 1317. We arrived over target at 0941.05hrs and identified A/P visually. We then orbited as instructed and on 2d run bombed centre of smoke covering A/P on MB's instructions. No TI's were seen, but bombing appeared to be well on the A/P.

25 April 1945 – Berchtesgaden

359 Lancasters and 16 Mosquitoes of 1, 5 and 8 Groups, 2 Lancasters lost.

This raid was against Hitler's 'Eagle's Nest' chalet and the local SS Guard barracks. Among the force were 16 Lancasters of 617 Squadron dropping their last Tallboys. 8 Oboe Mosquitoes were also among the bombing force, to help with the marking, but the mountains intervened between one of the ground stations transmitting the Oboe signals and the Mosquitoes could not operate even though they were flying at 39,000ft! There was some mist and the presence of snow on the ground also made it difficult to identify targets, but the bombing appeared to be accurate and effective. No other details are available. (Middleton and Everitt p701).

On 25 April 375 aircraft, including PB915 B-Beer flown by Robbie Roberts, attacked Hitler's Eagle's Nest chalet and the SS barracks at Berchtesgaden, escorted by Mustangs of the US Eighth Air Force. The raid was uneventful and Robbie returned unscathed to Downham Market after seven and a half hours in the air. Operation orders for attacks on Heligoland on the 26th and 27th, were each cancelled in turn and then, suddenly, it was all over. On 4 May German officers came to General Montgomery's headquarters on Luneburg Heath and signed a surrender document for all German forces in NW Germany, Denmark and Holland. Various local surrenders took place elsewhere. On 7 May General Eisenhower accepted the unconditional surrender of all German forces on all fronts, to be effective from midnight on 9 May. But the fighting was effectively already over. Bomber Command was stood down on 1st May and V-E Day was celebrated in riotous fashion. At one station a pipe-band marched round followed, according to the Squadron Operations Record Book, by the station personnel in various stages of intoxication. **Mr A Riches**

3/05/45: Operation Manna

F/O Roberts and F/O Moore engaged on X country and bombing runs.

The war in Europe was over, but in the Far East the fighting was as bitter as ever. Many of the bomber squadrons were now earmarked for Tiger Force, to continue the war against Japan, but the dropping of two atomic bombs three months later brought the surrender of Japan and the end of the Second World War before Tiger Force left England. Whether committed to serve in the Far East or not, all Lancaster squadrons had several tasks to perform in the immediate aftermath of the war in Europe. The first was Operation EXODUS, the repatriation of prisoners-of-war from Germany. Roberts flew two EXODUS trips to Juvincourt on 15 and 26 May, bringing back 25 men each time. Altogether 74,000 ex-POWs were brought safely home by the time the final evacuation was carried out on 28 July. Another task was Operation POST MORIEM: enemy radar was manned and mock raids were conducted to assess the efficiency of German radar. Robbie flew one such operation on 3 Ju1y. There was also operation DODGE, the repatriation of Eighth Army personnel. Home had seemed very far away to the Desert Rats who had fought through the North African campaign and driven the Germans back into Italy, but home was reached in just seven hours by air using the airfield at Bari. Lancasters flew across France to Britain taking 24 men at a time with their kit-bags stowed in the bomb bays. Robbie took PB929 Y-Yorker to Bari and back on 23 August. In addition to these official duties, many aircrews were permitted to take their ground crews on sightseeing tours of bomb-damaged German cities. These trips, called Cook's Tours, were an appropriate reward for the unsung endeavours of the squadron fitters and armourers on whom the aircrews' safety had depended. Robbie flew four Cook's Tours, taking six ground crew at a time. It was, he felt, the least he could do. **Mr A Riches**

8/05 45 VE Day

15/05/45: Operation Exodus Juvincourt

15 aircraft detailed for operation Exodus – Juvincourt, returned same day with 359 repatriates. Lancasters: PB950 AF/L RK Westhorpe, PB953 K F/O WH Jackson, PB936 B F/L RS Bishop, PB931 W F/L TD McMillan, PB927 X F/L HWW Parkes, PB922 U S/L GC Hitchcock, **PB979 F F/O WN Roberts**, PB 935 Z F/O JA Thrasher, PB 928 J E/C JW Fordham, PB933 M F/L DR Ware, PB929 Y F/L ED Harper, PB975 S F/L CL Ottaway, PB913 D F/O CGH Kennard, PB926 M F/O L Moore, PB 940 O F/L DA Boards.

Note: see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/user/46/u542446.shtml>

26/05/45:

2 aircraft on 'cooks tour' which was cancelled at 1060.01hrs. Aircraft PB916 C G/C Cox as controller on Exodus Operations at Jurincourt. 11 aircraft on Exodus operations, 266 repatriates brought back. PB929 Y F/O WN Roberts

28/05/45:

CO's parade. 2 aircraft on 'cooks tour'. 10 aircraft on X country training, PB949 T F/O WN Roberts. 8 aircraft formation flying.

31/05/45:

2 aircraft on 'cooks tour', PB975 S F/O WN Roberts, PB922 U F/O P Rowland

20/06/45:

2 aircraft detailed for 'cooks tour', each carrying 6 ground personnel: Lancasters 'L' F/O WN Roberts and 'W' F/O JA Thrasher.

3/07/45:

5 aircraft detailed for Operations (Post Mortem) [including] 'N' F/O Roberts

4/07/45:

Cooks tour 'B' F/O Roberts and 'H' F/O Millar

9/07/45:

Training programme carried out by 10 aircraft [including] 'Y' F/O Roberts

12/07/45:

2 aircraft detailed for cooks tour, each carrying 6 passengers, 'Z' F/L Mercer and 'V' F/O Roberts. Former aircraft 'Z' turned back after reaching English coast owing to engine trouble.

13/07/45:

The following aircraft carried out night cross-country and bombing flight: [including] 'T' F/O Roberts

16/07/45:

First time WAAF personnel included in a cooks tour.

17/07/45:

Flying training carried out during the day (bombing and fighter affiliation) [4 crews including] F/O Roberts

19/07/45:

5 aircraft carried out Fighter Affiliation, bombing and cross-country flights [including] F/O Roberts

20/07/45:

6 aircraft detailed for night Bulls-eye [including] 'S' F/O Roberts

22/07/45:

No flying, 8 crews inoculated and vaccinated at SSQ (Station Sick Quarters)

24/07/45:

Two crews inoculated

25/07/45:

Two crews inoculated

26/07/45:

Three crews inoculated, 10 crews now complete.

27/07/45:

Afternoon flying consisted of Loop swinging trips by 5 crews [including] 'S' F/O Roberts

29/07/45:

[A total of 15 crews] inoculated and vaccinated

30/07/45:

5 crews detailed for Loop Swinging in the afternoon [including] 'S' F/O Roberts

1/08/45:

5 aircraft detailed for country and bombing training [including] 'W' F/O Roberts

7/08/45:

6 aircraft detailed for **Operations Dodge** [including] 'T' F/O Roberts. These crews were briefed at 1800hrs but operation was cancelled at 0400hrs on the 8.8.45

Note – Operation Dodge:

After the European and Far Eastern hostilities were finished an interesting operation called "Operation Dodge" was instigated. This was the means of using a huge fleet of Lancaster Bombers and the attendant aircrews who were now "out of a job" in order to transport soldiers of the 8th Army back home from holding units in Italy - especially those who had been away from home for 4-5 years. The pick-up points in Italy were Bari on the South east coast towards the bottom of the country and the second one was Pomigliano, near Naples and close to Vesuvius. **From:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/38/a2241938.shtml>

15/08/45:

VJ Day. Cessation of hostilities against Japan, declared a public holiday. The Squadron paraded under S/L Ashworth DSO. DFC. To attend a service of thanksgiving in No 1 Hangar, after which four crews were detailed to stand-by for duty and all other crews given two days off. Restrictions placed on flying (Operational Flying). 4 a/c detailed for operations Dodge and took off for Bari at 0700hrs.

18/08/45:

Squadron Leader IW Bazalgette DFC posthumously awarded the **VC** for conspicuous gallantry on air operations on 4th August 1944.

On 4 August 1944 at Trossy St. Maximin France Squadron Leader Bazalgette's Lancaster III ND811¹ of No. 635 Squadron RAF was among a formation tasked to mark German positions for the main bomber force. When near the target, his bomber came under severe anti-aircraft fire from the ground, putting both starboard engines out of action and causing a serious fire. As the deputy 'master bomber' had already been shot down, the success of the attack depended on Squadron Leader Bazalgette, and despite the damage to his aircraft he pressed on to the target, marking and bombing it accurately. After the bombs had been dropped the Lancaster dived, practically out of control. Bazalgette regained control, but the port inner engine failed and the starboard mainplane was on fire.

He then attempted to bring the burning aircraft to safety, having ordered those members of his crew (F/L Charles Godfrey DFC, Sgt George Turner, F/O Douglas Cameron DFM, and F/L Geoffrey Goddard) who were able to do so to bail out. He attempted to land the crippled plane near Senantes (Oise), it immediately exploded, killing him and his remaining two wounded crew members, F/L Ivan Hibbert DFC and F/S Vernon Leeder. **From:** http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ian_Willoughby_Bazalgette

23/08/45:

3 aircraft detailed for operation Dodge, 'S' F/O new, 'Y' F/O Roberts, 'C' F/O McDonald, aircraft took off at 0705hrs.

1/09/45: 635 Squadron disbanded at Downham Market

3/11/45: 100 Personnel Dispatch Centre – **discharged from active service.**

Robbie was posted to the RAF Station at Wyton, until recently the headquarters of the Pathfinder Force. Here he spent six weeks engaged in routine administration, patiently awaiting his demobilisation. Finally, on 3rd November 1945 at No. 100 Personnel Dispatch Centre, Uxbridge, Flying Officer W N Roberts DFM was released from service. After -six years in the Royal Air Force, Robbie Roberts was back on Civvy Street. **Mr A Riches**

R/85522 Sgt J.R. Chapman RCAF Air Gunner

Service details from Patricia Ann Chapman, his daughter

DOB: March 1922 in Toronto; home in St.Thomas, Ontario
(stock clerk, delivery driver)

11/12/40: Enlisted Toronto for General Duties; classified
as Clerk, AC2 (Air Craftsman 2)

1/07/41: Promoted to AC1

28/8/41: No. 1 Manning Depot, Toronto,

11/12/41: No.1A Manning Depot, Picton,



Camp Picton (picture below) was first used in the fall of 1938. Following the start of World War II, the area was expanded as part of the Commonwealth Air Training Plan. The buildings and runways were built during the summer of 1940. Construction was completed at lightning speed and by November 1940 the RCAF had moved in and was using the base for military training of commercially licensed pilots. In April 1941 the British RAF moved in and by early 1942 had taken over the base. The camp was an excellent training installation. It had several hangars, 2500 foot runways, five bombing ranges and facilities to house close to 1000 officers and airmen. **From:**
www.youtube.com/watch?v=9c4Ncn6JTnQ

March 1941 at No.4 BGS, Fingal. RCAF Station Fingal Ontario Canada



1 /1/41: No.4 BGS, Fingal. RCAF Station Fingal was a Second World War British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) station located near Fingal Ontario Canada. Picture below courtesy of Pat Chapman, John's daughter, taken March 1941



21/1/41: No.1 GRS, Summerside, located in St. Eleanors, Prince Edward Island, Canada, now part of the city of Summerside.

1/7/42: Promoted to LAC (Leading Aircraftsman)

24/10/42: Remustered for aircrew, and posted to No.9 BGS, Mont Joli.

In the summer of 1940 the Royal Canadian Air Force selected a flat area of farmland between Mont-Joli Station (on the Montreal-Halifax Canadian National Railway mainline) and the Saint Lawrence River for a military airfield. Construction on the aerodrome began in October 1941 and was completed by April 1942. Inaugurated on April 15, 1942, RCAF Station Mont-Joli was used as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan for a bombing and gunnery school until the end of World War II.
From: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RCAF_Station_Mont-Joli

25/10/42: Qualified as Air Gunner,

22/1/43: Posted to "Y" Depot, Halifax,

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>

6 /2/43: Disembarked in Britain

17/3/43: No.81 OTU – RAF Sleaf, (see pictures of airfield below)

Formed on 10 July 1942 at Ashbourne, within No 92 Group as a half strength bomber OTU, equipped with Armstrong Whitworth A.W.38 Whitley.



Armstrong Whitworth Whitley. **From:** <http://www.raf.mod.uk/history/armstrongwhitworthwhitley.cfm>



From: <http://www.controltowers.co.uk/S/Sleap.htm> **From:** http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sleap_Airfield

23/3/43: Crewed up with 972388 Sgt W.N. Roberts Pilot

5/5/43: Two other crew members joined - 138589 P/O L.C. Jones Bomb Aimer and 1072007 Sergeant D E D Harvey Wireless Operator

15/6/43: No.1656 Conversion Unit RAF Lindholme – flying in Halifax

3/7/43: No 97 Squadron – PFF Training Unit RAF Upwood

6/7/43: Flying in the Lancaster 111



Lancaster 111 Mid Upper Gun Turret. **From:** http://www.ian.com.au/contact/images/lancaster/turret_u.jpg

3/7/43: No 97 Squadron – PFF Training Unit RAF Upwood

22/7/43: Posted to No.97 Squadron

22/8/43: 1st operational flight with crew -
Bomb load 5 x TI, 1 x 4000lb, 6 x 1000lb unless
stated

15/6/43: Promoted Flight Sergeant,

22/1/44: Promoted WO2

9/5/44: **Distinguished Flying Cross.**
Award effective 9 May 1944 as per London
Gazette dated 21 December 1945 and AFRO
155/46 dated 15 February 1946

20/05/44: Awarded Path Finder Force Badge.
See copy of certificate at **Appendix G**



Picture: John with F/O Roberts and his wife
Amy

Time Line: 1072007 Sergeant D E D Harvey Wireless Operator

Service details: Air Ministry Form 543 Record of Service 174353
Pilot Officer D E D Harvey and Air Ministry Form 1406 Record of
Service 174353 Pilot Officer D E D Harvey

DOB: 9/8/22 at Hunslet, the fourth child of Donald and Madeleine
Maude Harvey; photographs below of his siblings, left to right, were:

- Robert George Hunton Harvey born 30th June 1911 (served in
RAF as Observer / Navigator in India and Burma WW2 flying in
Dakotas)
- Marguerite Harvey (Peggy) born 1916
- Madeleine Agnes Harvey born 1920
- Colin Wishart Harvey born (1935)



Donald aged 18 years



From: <http://www.airfieldinformationexchange.org/community/showthread.php?8793-Padgate>

16/11/40: 1 RC (Recruitment Centre) Uxbridge



22/11/40 2 Wg (Wing) 4 RC (Recruitment Centre) Bridgnorth

On 6 November 1939, RAF Bridgnorth began its life. Although located at Stanmore, near to Bridgnorth, it couldn't be named RAF Stanmore. **From:**

<http://www.rafbidgnorth.org.uk/planmont.html>

10/12/40 AM Unit Staffordshire House

31/12/40 AC2 ACH/Wop (wireless operator)

13/1/41 10 (5) RC - (Signals) Recruits Centre, Blackpool, later No. 13 Radio School.

Morse Code training took place at different locations in Blackpool and trainees had to achieve 12wpm (words per minute). The tests for WOPs were above the Burton's Menswear shop and the phrase 'gone for a Burton' [meaning dead] may have been derived from failing the test. It was taking up to 9 months to train WOPs and Air Gunners. They would spend 3 weeks at a Recruit Centre, 8 weeks at an initial training wing, 20/24 weeks at Radio / Signals School followed by 4 weeks at Gunnery School and another 4 weeks at an Advanced Flying School. Early in the war some recruits were assigned to ground W/T duties, possibly in other parts of the armed forces.

12/4/41 Admitted to ACD Blackpool *Airmen's Convalescent Depot, Blackpool*, formed March 1940 (ACD UK)

7/3/41 Absence 2230hrs

9/3/41 [returned] @ 2230hrs

16/6/41 R&D Unit -recuperation maybe?

12/7/41 Discharged ACD Blackpool **Note:** in 'hospital' for 3 months

28/9/41 **Form 58 – medical board – fit for all aircrew**

3/10/41 No 2 Signals & Wireless School at Yatesbury (see crest), the school was equipped with Dominie and Percival Proctors
<http://www.rafweb.org/Stations/Stations-Y.htm>
 No 2 Signals School (26 Aug 1940 - 1 Jan 1943)



30/12/41 RAF Valley – AC2 Wop/AG (Air Gunner)

6/2/42 No 10 AGS (Air Gunnery School)

The air gunners course, was short and there was no flying. They were instructed on the 303 Browning machine gun which included stripping and re-assembling, gun turrets, turret manipulation, sighting, aircraft recognition, types of ammunition pyrotechnics, fuses and dinghies. Part of the course was firing from a gun turret on a range for one day.

28/3/42 Discharged 1 ACD (*Airmen's Convalescent Depot*)

17/8/42 Middle Wallop (see picture of airfield below)



From: <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/AAC+Middle+Wallop>

- 16/10/42** RAF Exeter – (probably a holding station prior to posting to RAF Madley)
- 29/10/42** RAF Madley Hereford No 4 Signals School (SS) - RAF Radio and Radar Signals Training School, see picture and description below:



Location: Astride the Roman road, Stone Street, between the villages of Madley and Kingstone. Hereford city is about 6 miles to the north-east. Construction of Madley Airfield and its 20 or so dispersed sites was commenced in 1940 by Mowlem and took about one year to complete.

The role of **RAF Madley** was to train wireless operators and the site was occupied by **No. 4 Signals School from August 1941 to November 1946**, when the School moved to Swanton Morley in Norfolk. The aim was to train 2,800 ground wireless operators and 1,200 aircrew operators during the life of the School at Madley. The School operated 60 Percival Proctor Ivs and 18 De Havilland Dominies for this purpose, but much of the training was ground based and an extensive instructional site was provided about a quarter of a mile to the south of the airfield. The first trainees arrived on 28 November 1941. A small detachment of No 8 AACU operating Lysanders to train Army personnel divided its time between Madley and Shobdon, near Leominster (see SMR no. 12531).

The airfield at Madley had grass runways until October 1943, when Summerfield tracking was laid by an RAF Airfield Construction Flight. At some stage three 100 yard concrete runways were provided but the date of this has not yet been established. The main hangars provided are of some rarity and historic interest, with three of pre-World War II Hinaidi type site on the main technical site and two Callender Hamiltons on the north side of the airfield. These still exist and are in good order, although the Hinaidi hangars are being adapted for industrial use which compromises their historical value. Apparently 13 Blister hangars were also provided but so far there is no indication of where these were sited, (for further information on hanger types see: World War II Hangers – guide to Hanger Identification. Technical Bulletin 02/02). **From:**
http://htt.herefordshire.gov.uk/smrSearch/Monuments/Monument_Item.aspx?ID=12530

6/2/43 WOP / UT / AG

14/2/43 Leading Aircraftsman (LAC)

19/3/43 Promoted to Sgt – WOP (Wireless Operator) / U/T AG
(Air Gunner)

23/3/43 81 OTU (Operational Training Unit (see badge). Formed on 10 July 1942 at Ashbourne, within No 92 Group as a half strength bomber OTU, equipped with Whitleys (see picture below). Between 1 September 1942 and 21 January 1946, the airfield (RAF Tilstock) was used by No. 81 Operational Training Unit and No. 1665 Heavy Conversion Unit Royal Air Force for the training of pilots and crews in the operation of Whitley Stirling and Halifax heavy bombers



05/05/43 Crewed with **Sgt WN Roberts, Sgt J Chapman and P/O LC Jones.**

15/6/43 1656 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU) - Formed by merging 103 and 460 Squadron Conversion Flights. RAF Lindholme (Doncaster) with Avro Lancasters and Manchesters

9/7/43 **WOP /AG Grade 1**

6/7/43 Lancaster 111 training

23/7/43 **97 Squadron:** NTU RAF Upwood PFF training until 29/07/43

2/8/43 **First 'raid' with Path Finder Force (PFF) aircraft No ED839C, Lancaster Bomber**

RAF Coningsby from 18th Apr 1944

31/12/43 Promoted A/F/Sgt

19/3/44 Promoted T/F Sgt

24/3/44 **Appointment to a Temporary Commission – Pilot Officer.**

5/10/43 Temporarily awarded the Pathfinder Force Badge



23/5/44 Permanent Award of Path Finder Force Badge Air Ministry Form 1406

21/12/45 Awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM) – LG (London Gazette)

Note: I asked one of my uncles (Christopher Westerman) who knew Donald if he had any recollections of him. He stated that he had seen Donald in a village pub during Christmas 1943 and that he looked worn out / exhausted, and that in his opinion Donald should not have gone back to the squadron.

138589 Pilot Officer LC Jones DFC, Bomb Aimer RAFVR

Service details obtained from: RAF Disclosures Room 14, Trenchard Hall, RAF Cranwell, family details from Paul Richardson, the nephew of Flt Lt Jones, and Richard Jozefiak of Lille France

Born: Aldershot
Father: Albert Edward
Mother: Gertrude Lillian Jones
Brother: Albert Edward Jones
Brother: Sydney Ernest Jones



Brothers Albert and Sydney

His father was in the armed services and served at Valletta, Malta

Married Jessie Margaret Jones, of Leytonstone, Essex



The former wife of F / Lt LC Jones.

After a few years of widowhood, she remarried and was called Mrs. Jessie Margaret Bainton, 79 years. Photograph and details obtained from Richard Jozefiak of Lille France

19/11/41: Number 1 ACRC (Air Crew Recruiting Centre)
Oxford AC2 Service Number 1602114

10/1/42: ACDW (Air Crew Dispersal Wing)

10/1/42: 11 TW (Training Wing) Prince of Wales Hotel,
Scarborough



Wakey wakey at ten to six, breakfast at twenty past, and on parade at seven o'clock. Before you could go on parade you had strip your bed and pile up your kit in a neat pile at the foot. Blankets, sheets, greatcoat, gas mask container etc. had to be absolutely square, achieved by inserting sheets of cardboard in the front. Lectures were given in the Spa buildings at the foot of the cliff, and square bashing at the top so we had to march at the double several times a day up and down the cliffs. We had physical training on the beach, route marches, cross-country runs up and down the Mount. In between we were taught the principles of flight, navigation, aircraft recognition, morse code, the elements of service law etc. **From:**

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/02/a2855702.shtml>

10/4/42: Promoted to LAC (Leading Aircraftman)

23/7/42: Number 3 ACDC (Air Crew Dispatch Centre) Heaton Park, Manchester
(<http://www.lancashireatwar.co.uk/ww2-heaton-park/4571773535>)

9/8/42: 1 EANS (Elementary Air Navigation School)

No 1 Elementary Air Navigation School was Headquartered at the Sandhurst Hotel on Grand Parade in Eastbourne, and had the use of five other hotels in the resort as well as classrooms at Eastbourne College

23/10/42: 1 (O) AFU (Observer Advanced Flying Unit)

1 (Observer) Advanced Flying Unit - RAF Station Wigtown, Dumfries & Galloway (see picture of airfield below) , Avro Anson. Advanced training of both navigators and bomb Aimers with some additional training of air gunners and wireless operators.

See: <http://www.secretscotland.org.uk/index.php/Secrets/RAFWigtown>



Site of RAF Wigtown, from: <https://maps.google.co.uk/maps?f=q&hl=en&geocode=&q=54.85,+4.44&ie=UTF8&ll=54.852847,-4.440022&spn=0.019616,0.05785&t=h&z=14>

9/3/43: Commissioned – Supplement to the London Gazette 9th March 1943, effective 2nd January 1943

23/3/43: No 81 Operational Training Unit– RAF Ashbourne, flying Whitley Mk V. Joins up with first members of his crew, Sgt Roberts (RAF) Pilot, Sgt Chapman (RCAF) Air Gunner and Sgt Harvey (RAFVR) Wireless Operator

15/6/43: No 1655 Heavy Conversion Unit, RAF Lindholme - 1656 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU) - Formed by merging 103 and 460 Squadron Conversion Flights.

2/6/44: **Awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Supplement to the London Gazette 2nd June 1944**

658210 Flight Sergeant Samuel Joseph Peek DFM Navigator

Service Time Line

Service details obtained from RAF Form 543 RAF Disclosures

DOB 29.10.14 Bromley London

Civilian Occupation: Clerical Assistant, Library

Oct / Dec 1937: Married to Emily Sarah Amos in London (from ancestry.co)

Electoral Register London 1937 / 1938 & 1939 shows Peek Samuel Joseph and Peek Sarah (from ancestry.co)

19/11/1940: Date of Enlistment, Transferred from Territorial Army, 148 Field Regiment. Rank Gunner

14/7/1941: ACRC (Air Crew Recruitment Centre) Rank AC2

26/7/1941: Number 12 Initial Training Wing St Andrews 1941 May - 1944 Apr
Morse code; navigation and meteorology; theory of flight; engines; aircraft recognition.

5/10/1941: Promoted to LAC

1/11/1941: Number 1 Air Observer School, RAF Wigtown Dumfries and Galloway, (see <http://www.secretscotland.org.uk/index.php/Secrets/RAFWigtown>). Pictures below show airfield location.



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From: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/94519/wigtown-baldoon-airfield>

12/2/42: South Africa – Navigation Training

7/4/1942: Number 75 Air School located at Lyttelton in the outskirts of Pretoria, South Africa

23/4/1942: Number 45 Air School located at Oudtsshoorn, about 200 miles east of Cape. Aircraft Types: Anson, Oxford and Battle

8/8/1942: Number 43 Air School located at Port Alfred, Eastern Cape, South Africa. Aircraft types: Battle, Northrop, Oxford, Anson and Rearwin.

29/8/42: Promoted T/Sgt Navigator

26/9/1942: Disembark UK

27/9/1942: Number 3 Personnel Reception Centre, Bournemouth

“The function of 3 P.R.C. was to orientate airmen as they arrived, have the airmen medically checked out (again) along with a battery of night vision tests, organize refresher courses, take in lectures given by experienced aircrew, and to act as an agent for the air ministry in arranging postings. There was a training exercise in an outdoor pool where, wearing our bulky flying clothes, we learnt how to inflate a dinghy and then to restore it to an upright position if it became overturned. There were several sessions on aircraft recognition in the hope that we could tell friend from foe. We had a couple of afternoons of skeet shooting to sharpen our reflexes and learn how to lead a moving target. We practiced below the bluffs along the English channel where there was a great assortment of concrete and steel obstacles in place to ward off any invasion by the Germans.” (http://hubertbrooks.com/1_3HubertBrooks_TrainUK.html)

13/10/1942: Number 81 Operational Training Unit, RAF Ashbourne (see <http://www.airfieldarchaeology.co.uk/raf-ashbourne.html>)



From: <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/Ashbourne>

15/6/1943: Number 1656 Conversion Unit, RAF Lindholme. Joins up with other members of the crew (see F/O Roberts Log Book on page 19)

23/7/1943: Posted to 97 Squadron

29/8/1943: Promoted to Temp F/Sgt

16/12/1943: Killed in action

HEBE, SAMUEL JOSEPH	Pilot Sergeant	490270	19/12/1943	Royal Air Force	United Kingdom	Green Hill Site 14 Grave 4888.	CITY OF LONDON AND LOWERS HAMLETS CEMETERY
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16.12.43 21 aircraft detailed to attack Berlin. Good concentration of bombing in early stages falling off later. No results seen only reddish glow. 10/10ths cloud tops 3/5000', vis good. Defences H/F moderate to 22,000' and moderate L/F 14,000' – S/Ls ineffective. Many fighter flares and scarecrow flares. F/L Pelletier in Lancaster JA960 was attacked by an enemy fighter JU88 and claims it damaged. One aircraft, F/L Brill and crew failed to return – no news heard since. On returning to base aircraft encountered bad visibility over England and **the Squadron had a disastrous night in aircraft losses and 28 aircrew being killed.** The following is a brief summary of the return. 8 aircraft landed safely at Bourn and 3 at Graveley. One aircraft landed at Wyton. F/Sgt Coates after being hit by another aircraft's incendiaries and having two engines put out of action on the same side by flak, put out a ditching signal when not far from the Danish coast. With great skill he flew the aircraft back on the two engines and landed safely without further damage at Downham Market. Two crews, P/O Smith and F/O Mooney the captains, bailed out safely over Ely and Wyton. All the crews were uninjured but one aircraft is missing and untraced. S/L Mackenzie DFC crashed at Bourn on the edge of the airfield. Three were killed – S/L Mackenzie, F/O Colson, P/O Pratt, the remainder are either in hospital or sick quarters. F/O Thckway and crew crashed near Bourn airfield, killing all except Sgt Mack who is in hospital and Sgt Laver who escaped uninjured. S/L Deverill DFC DFM and crew crashed at Graveley, all being killed except for W/O Benbow who is in Ely hospital. **F/Sgt Scott and crew crashed at Graveley**, all being killed. P/O Kirkwood and crew crashed near Gransden, all being killed. Total loss of aircraft, 8. Aircrew killed – 28, injured 7.

Note: one of the original crew members from JB117C, Nav: F/Sgt S.J.Peek was killed in action; see below:

Berlin 16 / 17th December 1943

JB117C F/Sgt I.W.Scott, Sgts E.W.Collishaw, J.Peek, D.R.Irvine, S.G.Parrott, K.Foxcroft, S.L.Hope. Up 1650 No down time. 5 x 2000lb. Aircraft crashed on return to base due to fog and low cloud. All members of the crew were killed

F/Sgt Samuel Joseph Peek DFM normally a crew member of **JB117C**

CREW

Pilot: F/S Ian Macdonald Scott

Flight Engineer: Sgt Charles William Collishaw

Navigator: Flt Sgt Samuel Joseph Peek

Killed 17-Dec-43, buried in City of London & Tower Hamlets Cemetery

Bomb Aimer: Sgt Douglas Raymond Irvine

W/Op: Sgt Sidney George Parrott

Mid-Upper Gunner: Sgt Kenneth Edgar Foxcroft

Rear Gunner: Sgt Clifford Lionel Hope

Details

Flight Sergeant Scott's Lancaster came down one and a quarter miles north-east of Graveley not far from the Cambridgeshire village of Papworth St Agnes, at an unknown time. The wreckage was not found until just after seven o'clock on the morning of 17th December. After crashing, the aircraft had caught fire. There was no one to help and there were no survivors. It was the Australian pilot's second operation; he was only twenty years old.

Samuel Joseph Peek

The photograph to the left is the only known photograph of Samuel and shows him as a boy of about 10 years old. He is with his brother and mother, and is on the left-hand side, the taller and older of the two boys.



This is a very sad picture. Samuel's brother, Charles Frederick, also served in the war, in the army - he was injured and sent home. However, when Samuel was killed, he felt it his duty to go back and sadly he did not make it home either. He died on 6th April 1946 of an unknown cause whilst serving with the Grenadier Guards 3rd battalion, and is buried in Bengazi.

From: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/23/a5202523.shtml>
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/81/a5202181.shtml> and
<http://www.firebynight.co.uk/Crew%20Scott.html>

Samuel usually flew with the crew of **JB117C** was as follows:

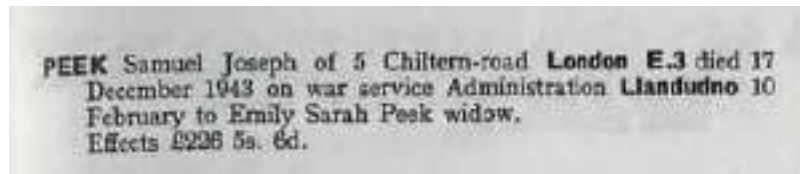
Pilot:	F/Sgt W.N.Roberts
Flight Engineer:	F/Sgt V.A.Davis
Navigator:	F/Sgt S.J.Peek
Bomb Aimer:	F/O L.C.Jones
Wireless Operator:	Sgt D.E.Harvey
Mid-upper Gunner:	F/Sgt J.R.Chapman
Rear Gunner:	F/Sgt E.L.Wright.

It appears that the crew (above) were on a month's leave - they flew on the 3/4 December raid on Leipzig but do not appear in the ORB again until the 14/15 January 1944 raid on Brunswick. On 16/17

December 1943, for some unknown reason, Samuel was still on the station and chose to fly with Scott on the fatal Berlin operation.

15/2/1944: Awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal (Supplement to the London Gazette 15th February 1944)

Copy of National Probate Calendar 1944:



From: <http://www.ancestry.co.uk>

Note: to date I have been unable to locate any family members of F/Sgt Peek, other than the details that appear on 16/12/1943 where details of the fatal air crash is given.

No. 8 (Path Finder Force) Group Motto: "We guide to strike".

Badge: A mullet of eight points surmounted by an arrow enflamed, point downwards, in bend sinister. The eight-point mullet, or star, suggests the number of the Group and symbolises astro-navigation, and the flaming arrow the target markers dropped by the pathfinder aircraft to guide the main bomber forces.



Authority: Queen Elizabeth II, March 1955.

The Pathfinder Force came into being on 15th August 1942, with headquarters at Wyton, Huntingdonshire. It was formed at the direct request of the Air Ministry and initially comprised five squadrons - one from each of the operational Bomber Command Groups: No. 1 Group contributed No. 156 Squadron (Wellingtons), No. 2 Group No. 109 Squadron - then "special duties" - (Wellingtons and Mosquitoes), No. 3 Group No. 7 Squadron (Stirlings), No. 4 Group No. 35 Squadron (Halifaxes) and No. 5 Group No. 83 Squadron (Lancasters). The squadrons were located on adjacent airfields within No. 3 Group (No. 7 at Oakington on the outskirts of Cambridge, No. 35 at Graveley, a new airfield between Huntingdon and St. Neots, Nos. 83 and 109 at Wyton and No. 156 at Warboys), but under the direct control of Air Chief Marshal Harris, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief Bomber Command. This prime organisation allowed picked crews from the operational bomber groups to transfer without the delay of conversion to new types of aircraft, but it soon expanded into a completely new Group - No. 8 (PFF) by 8th January 1943¹, and eventually re-equipped with Lancasters and Mosquitoes, the most suitable aircraft for the task.

The idea of using a corps d'élite of crews of high navigational ability was nothing new, and was in fact a necessary stage in the evolution of the technique of strategic bombing. Much earlier the Germans had employed Kampfgruppe 100 to precede the main force on each raid, and with the aid of navigational beams (Knickebein, X Gerät and Y Gerät) accurately lit up the target area with incendiary fires. These German methods had been quickly appraised and defeated by counter-measures, but in December 1941, Bomber Command had pressed for

"the formation of specialist squadrons to initiate raids". No. 3 Group, equipped with Gee apparatus, had already acted in this manner and, by August 1942, when the enemy first began to jam transmissions, had raised the average of the main force aircraft reaching the precise target in favourable weather to 40 per cent, compared with 26 per cent in the three months previous to February 1942. This was not sufficient, however, to ensure ultimate success by night bombing, and Harris, though strongly opposed to the formation within Bomber Command of a corps d'élite, with its inevitable disadvantage of fostering jealousy, and himself advocating a specialist squadron within each group, finally agreed to the formation of the new force to be commanded by Group Captain DCT Bennett. Bennett, an Australian pilot in the RAF and a former CO of both Nos. 77 and 10 Bomber Squadrons, commanded the Pathfinder Force throughout its entire fighting career. The Pathfinder Force began operations within a few hours of its formation and continued its work of leading the main force against the enemy until the bombers' offensive ceased, shortly before VE Day. **From:** <http://www.raf.mod.uk/history/bombercommandno8group.cfm>

20/4/44: 97Squadron moves to 5 Group with 83 and 627 Squadrons with Group Captain Cheshire VC and his Mosquito target indicating aircraft.

General Facts Regarding Air Crews

Each crew member volunteered for aircrew duties. None were conscripted into their jobs. A crew was formed by the pilot picking out each crew member from those available and the Operational Training Unit (OTU) they were posted too. OTU's were one of the final steps in an aircrews' training period before they reached an operational squadron.

An Operational tour for a bomber crew consisted of thirty (30), non-aborted, operational sorties. Upon completion of their tour, the crew would normally be broken up and rested by being assigned to various conversion or other non-operational units as instructors. It was not uncommon for a rested crew member to volunteer for a second bomber tour. The exception to the thirty (30) operations tour applied to the crews of Pathfinder Force (No. 8 Group) Squadron's. These crews were required to complete forty-five (45) operations before being rested. The additional fifteen (15) operations being required due to the high rate of training and practise that was required in order to become proficient in target marking. More than not Pathfinder crews continued on; in the hopes of reaching the magic sixty (60) operations, or the equivalent of two full bomber tours.

Generally speaking the standard Lancaster crew was seven (7) however, some crews (Pathfinder Force) were increased to eight (8) members. These crews often had an extra Navigator/Radar Operator on board, who operated the H2S blind bombing radar. **From:** http://www.lancaster-archive.com/lanc_crew_positions.htm

Aircrew Positions:

Position	Location
Pilot	Seated on the left hand side of the cockpit. There was no Co-Pilot
Flight Engineer	Seated next to the pilot on a folding seat
Navigator	Seated at a table facing to the port (left) of the aircraft and directly behind the pilot and flight engineer
Navigator/Radar Operator	Seated next to the navigator and also facing to the port (left) of the aircraft the Special Equipment Operator operated the H2S radar set
Bomb Aimer	Seated when operating the front gun turret, but positioned in a laying position when directing the pilot on to the aiming point prior to releasing the bomb load
Wireless Operator	Seated facing forward and directly beside the navigator
Mid-Upper Gunner	Seated in the mid upper turret, which was also in the unheated section of the fuselage
Rear Gunner	"Tail End Charlie" seated in the rear turret this to was in the unheated section of the fuselage and was also the most isolated position. Most rear gunner's once in their turret did not see another member of the crew until the aircraft returned to base, sometimes 10 hours after departing



Pilot



Engineer



Bomb Aimer



Navigator



Wireless Operator

Aircrew Positions. From: <http://s374444733.websitehome.co.uk/lanc/main.htm>

97 Squadron Operations Record Book August – December 1943

These extracts relate to the crew members that served with Flying Officer Roberts DFM RAFVR and later, Flight Lieutenant Smith DFC RNZAF

Note: there are a number of extracts which are from Mr Alan Riches (ex RAF Squadron Leader) of Manchester. He interviewed F/O Roberts when he returned the DFC which had been stolen from F/O Robert's home. These extracts were provided by Peter Roberts, the son of F/O Roberts. There are also extracts re the bombing raids from: Middlebrook, M. and Everitt, C. (1985) *The Bomber Command War Diaries. An Operational Reference Book 1939 – 1945* Pen and Sword

2/3 August 1943 Hamburg – Bomb Load 5 x T1, 1 x 4000lb, 3 x 10000lb unless stated

ED839C S/L E.E.Rodley, **Sgt W.N.Roberts** (2nd Pilot), S/L K.J.Foster, **Sgt S.J.PEEK**, F/L E.H.Parrott, **Sgts D.E.Harvey, H.B.Stedman**, F.Edwards. 4 x T1, 1 x 4000lb (Cookie), 3 x 1000lb. Up 2315 Down 0400. Hamburg not reached. Furthest point Wesermunde. 19,000'. Unable to get through thick cloud and lightning. Port inner engine failed. No results of bombing seen

Squadron Leader Rodley was unable to get through thick cloud and lightning, hampered by the failure of his port inner engine; the furthest point reached was Wessemude, where the bombs were dropped before a course was set for home. All this made a rather worrying introduction to operations for Sgt William Roberts who flew as second pilot with Rodley's crew, having joined the Squadron direct from a Heavy Conversion Unit on the 23rd July 1943. Bending (2005).

Roberts' (Sgt W.N.Roberts) first operational sortie was an eventful one in many ways. On 2 August he flew as second pilot to Squadron Leader E E Rodley in Lancaster ED8 39 "C" on a marking trip to Hamburg. Eighteen Lancasters from 97 Squadron formed part of a total force of 740 bombers detailed for this, the final raid of Operation GOMORRAH, a series of four major attacks intended to destroy the second largest city in the Reich, Altogether, 8,62L tons of bombs were dropped on Hamburg of which half were incendiaries. This high proportion of fire bombs, together with the unusually high degree of accuracy and concentration achieved thanks to the use, for the first time, of Window, caused the wars first firestorm which engulfed twenty-two square miles of the city, destroyed over 300,000 houses, shops and factories and killed over 40,000 people.

The raid of 2/3 August was to be the coup de grace, but appalling weather conditions conspired to spoil it. Even the redoubtable Rodley, who had flown alongside Nettleton on his Victoria Cross-winning trip to Augsburg in April 1942, was unable to reach Hamburg. En route to the target the Lancaster's port-inner engine failed on reduced power, Rodley found he could not climb through the thick cumulo-nimbus and lightning to the cloud ceiling of 20,000 feet, and the bombs were dropped blind on what was thought to be Wesermunde. After five hours battling through the elements, Rodley finally brought the Lancaster safely back to Bourn on three engines. It was a tough baptism of fire for Robbie Roberts.
Mr. A Riches

2/3 August 1943 Hamburg

740 aircraft, 329 Lancasters, 235 Halifaxes, 105 Stirlings, 66 Wellingtons and 5 Mosquitoes. 30 aircraft, 13 Lancasters, 10 Halifaxes, 4 Wellingtons and 3 Stirlings lost.

The bombing force encountered a large thunderstorm area over Germany and the raid was a failure. Many crews turned back early or bombed alternative targets. At least 4 aircraft, probably more, were lost because of icing, turbulence or were struck by lightning. No Pathfinder marking was possible at Hamburg and only scattered bombing took place there. Many other towns in a 100 mile are of Northern Germany received a few bombs. A sizeable raid developed on the small town of Elmshorn, 12 miles from Hamburg. It is believed that a flash of lightning set a house on fire here and the bomber crews saw this through a gap in the storm clouds and started to bomb the fire. 254 houses were

destroyed in Elmshorn and 57 people were killed, some of them refugees from Hamburg. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 415 - 416).

Target Indication

Bombing Accuracy: PFF crews were trained to accurately follow the agreed navigational route, marking the “turning points” with coloured flares. Having reached the target area, they marked the start of the bombing run with flares and then dropped flares and/or coloured markers on the target. Bombers in the main bomber stream were able to use these indicators to identify their turning points and bombing targets. Pathfinder techniques changed considerably throughout the war as new technology became available.

Types of marking: Three types of target marking were developed by the Pathfinders. These were known by the codenames Parramatta, Wanganui and Newhaven - the names coming from locations in Australia, New Zealand and the UK which had links with Pathfinder staff. If the Oboe system was used to determine the release point then the word "Musical" was used as a prefix, e.g. "Musical Parramatta".

Parramatta: Parramatta used navigation aids such as H2S radar or Oboe radio signals to drop the markers.

Newhaven: Newhaven used illumination flares dropped above the target area to light it up sufficiently for a visual marking by the Pathfinder aircraft.

Wanganui: Wanganui was used when the target was obscured by cloud, industrial haze, or a smoke screen. Oboe or H2S was used to release the markers over the unseen target. The target indicators used were on parachutes to give an aiming point that could be seen by the main force. This was also known as "sky marking".

Each Pathfinder aircraft was assigned a specific role for each mission, based on their skills and experience. These roles were dependent on the method(s) being utilised for the mission.

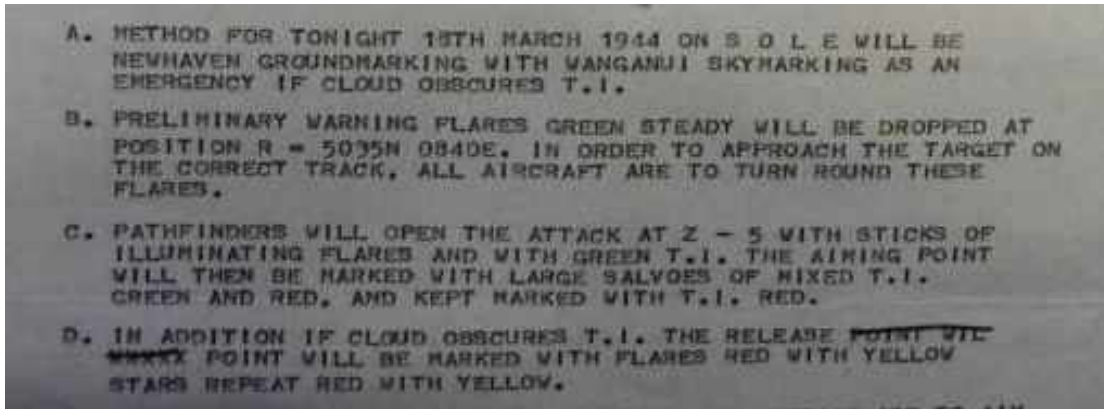
Parramatta required “Blind Markers” and/or “Visual Markers” to drop coloured target indicators (TI) to identify the aiming point. “Blind Markers” utilised navigational aids to identify the target, “Visual Markers” utilised visual contact through the bombsight to identify the target.

Newhaven required “Blind Illuminators” and/or “Visual Illuminators” to drop flares to light up the target area. When the area had been lit up, “Visual Markers” would visually identify the target and drop their coloured target indicators (TI) to identify the aiming point.

Wanganui required “Blind Markers” to drop coloured parachute flares (skymarkers) to identify the aiming point. As well as being a standard method, it was used in an emergency if cloud cover, smoke screens etc obscured the target on arrival.

The following is an example of part of a 1944 briefing outlining the Pathfinder method(s) to be used:





As the flares and target indicators only burned for a short while (approximately three minutes), Pathfinder aircraft were spread throughout the main bomber stream to repeat the marking process. These were known as “Backers Up” or “Visual Centerers”. To gain experience, new Pathfinder crew would be assigned the role of “Supporter”. They would fly as part of the initial wave of Pathfinders to “support” the markers.

The raid would be co-ordinated by a “Master Bomber”, circling above the target. He broadcast instructions to crews advising them on where to drop their flares, target indicators and bombs based on his view of where the target was in relation to the coloured indicators on the ground. Target indicators were specially adapted 250lb bomb casings containing sixty coloured pyrotechnic candles (red, green, yellow). At the designated height, the casing would explode, releasing the ignited coloured candles which would float down to the ground on individual parachutes. These would burn for about three minutes, providing a coloured “aiming point” for the main bomber stream. Sky Markers consisted of an encased candle flare attached to a large parachute. When released it would float down to the ground, igniting at a designated height; pieces of the candle would fall off, creating a vertical chain of light.

4,000 lbs (Cookie) HC (see picture below)

Although over 400 of the type had been dropped, the type was not officially part of the Command's inventory until January 1942. Used primarily against built up areas, the bomb effectively destroyed or heavily damaged everything within close proximity to its impact point and was often used in the opening stages of a major attack in order to open up (blow roofs off and windows in) the buildings within the target area. This in turn allowed for the incendiary bombs dropped in the following attack waves to have ample fuel in which to ignite and burn.



From: <http://www.stelzriede.com/ms/photos/planes/lanacs19.jpg> & 20.jpg

Range for Lancaster: Range with standard fuel and 10,000 lbs (4,540 kg) bomb load 1,040 miles (1,670 km). Range with one 400 UK Gal (1,818 l) Aux. fuel tank and 7,000 lb (3,180 kg) bomb load 2,680 miles (4,310 km)

3.8.43 Circuits and landing. No other flying.

4.8.43 Fighter affiliation and air tests.

5.8.43 Air firing, fighter affiliation. Dual and solo circuits and landings.

6.8.43 All aircraft grounded for inspection for 3 to 4 hours by Station Engineer. Five aircraft on Bullseye exercise at night.

7.8.43 Day cross countries and bombing practice. 5 aircraft detailed for ops, Milan being the target. All aircraft were visual markers. No cloud, no moon and visibility good. Raid was concentrated and considered satisfactory. Large explosions seen and big fires developing. All returned to base.

7/8/43 Milan – Bomb Load 4 x TI, 1 x 4000lb unless stated

EE107F F/L D.Mackenzie, Sgts J.T.Pratt, R.Marshall, W.Stevens, **D.E.Harvey**, W.A.Laing, F.Kirby. Bomb load as S/L Sauvage, Up 2141 Down 2310. Mission abandoned – navigator sick, returned early

12/8/43 Milan – Bomb Load 4 x TI, 1 x 4000lb, 1 x 1000lb

ED814D F/L R.F.Clayton, **Sgts W.N.Roberts**, A.S.Palmer, F/O F.W.Chandler, Sgt A.C.Newbegin, F/Sgt W.A.Halsey, Sgt R.C.Haviland, F/Sgt P.O.Bone. Bomb load as S/L Sauvage. Up 2125 Down 0535. Target Milan attacked. 14,000'. $\frac{3}{4}$ moon. No cloud but ground haze. Bombed yellow and red TI markers, overlapping in bomb sight. Own results not seen. Large concentration of fires – glow seen from Turin.

On 12 August Roberts was second dickey to Flight Lieutenant P F Clayton in Lancaster ED814 D, bound for Milan. The trip was uneventful, if eight hours flying out and back across the Alps can be so termed. **Mr A Riches**

13.8.43 Standown from operations. Flying clothing parade and sort out in the afternoon.

14.8.43 9 aircraft and two reserves detailed for ops against a target at Milan. Two aircraft on visual marking, 5 aircraft B/U and one non-marker. The raid was considered very successful with no cloud over target. There was ground haze and moonlight. Defences slightly increased since previous raid. Fires were seen. One aircraft returned early after crossing the French coast due to engine trouble.

14/8/43 Milan – Bomb Load 10 flares, 1 x 4000lb, 3 x 500lb unless stated

EE107F F/L **D.Mackenzie**, Sgts J.T.Pratt, R.Marshall, W.Stevens, **D.E.Harvey**, W.A.Lang, F.Kirby. 4 x TI, 1 x 4000lb, 3 x 500lb. Up 2136 Down 0550. Target Milan (works and aerodrome) attacked. Bright moon, no cloud, visibility hazy. 15,000'. Built up area visually identified. Bombed on yellow TI markers. One very big fire seen in bombed area and smaller scattered ones.

Note: 16/12/43 - S/L Mackenzie DFC (see picture: Grey, J. 2012) crashed at Bourn on the edge of the airfield. Three were killed – S/L Mackenzie, F/O Colson, P/O Pratt, the remainder were either in hospital or sick quarters.



15.8.43 Training carried out and stand down from operations.

16.8.43 Some training flights in the morning. In the afternoon all aircrews were paraded, after which all NCOs changed quarters in order that A,B, and C Flights should be allotted sites 1,2 and 3 respectively.

17.8.43 Cross countries, air firing and bombing. 20 aircraft detailed for ops and 2 aircraft reserve. Three aircraft did not take off. One returned early from the operation due to instrument failures. The remaining 16 aircraft attacked the target at Peenemünde in the Baltic. Weather was fine with small patches of cloud over the target area. Numerous bomb bursts were seen and buildings burning. Fires were seen in the distance on return. Many enemy fighters seen. All our aircraft returned safely to base.

17/8/43 Peenemunde – Bomb Load 16 Flares, 4 x TI, 1 x 4000lb, 3 x 1000lb unless stated

ED868A F/Sgt L.Stevenson, **Sgts Roberts** (2nd Pilot), J.Brett, R.G.Christie, J.D.Bradford, H.A.Mitchell, J.Mallaber, T.G.Pugh. Bomb load as P/O Munro. Up 2130 Down 0422. Primary target “B” bombed. Full moon. 10/10ths thin cloud over target. Bombs released on concentration of red and green TI markers. Big explosion seen at 0048 and several fires observed.

On 17 August, 597 aircraft were sent to Peenemunde on the Baltic, the German V-weapon research establishment. The crews were sobered to be told at briefing that this was a vital radio-location laboratory and aircraft testing site and that if they failed to destroy it they would be sent back again and again until they did so. They bombed after a timed run from an offshore island to the target, and the concentration was exceptional. Widespread damage was done to the workshops and scientists living quarters, thereby setting back the V-2 experimental programme by several months and reducing the scale of the eventual rocket attack. The enemy night, fighters, diverted by a Mosquito spoof raid on Berlin, were slow to grasp the British intentions but caught up with the last stages of the attack on Peenemunde. Forty bombers failed to return. 97 Squadron were lucky: as Pathfinders their seventeen aircraft had gone in with an early wave, and all returned unscathed including ED858 A in which Robbie Roberts was flying as second dicky to Flight Sergeant L Stevenson. **Mr A Riches**



From: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/14/Peenemunde-165515.jpg> and http://regmedia.co.uk/2006/01/17/v2_site_after.jpg

17/18 August 1943 Peenemunde

596 aircraft, 324 Lancasters, 218 Halifaxes and 54 Stirlings. This was the first raid in which 6 (Canadian) Group operated Lancaster aircraft. 426 Squadron dispatched 9 Mark 11 Lancasters, losing 2 aircraft including that of the Squadron Commander.

This was a special raid which Bomber Command was ordered to carry out against the German research establishment on the Baltic coast where V2 rockets were being built and tested. The raid was carried out in moonlight to increase the chances of success. There were several novel features. It was the only occasion in the second half of the war when the whole of Bomber Command attempted a precision raid by night on such a small target. For the first time there was a Master Bomber controlling a full-scale Bomber Command raid; Group Captain JH Searby of 83 Squadron, 8 Group carried out this task. There were three aiming points, the scientists' and workers' living quarters, the rocket factory and the experimental station, and the Pathfinders employed a special plan with crews designated as 'shifters', who attempted to move the marking point from one part of the target to another as the raid progressed. Crews of 5 Group, bombing in the last wave of the attack, had practiced the 'time and distance' bombing method as an alternative for their part of the raid.

The Pathfinders found Peenemunde without difficulty in the moonlight and the Master Bomber controlled the raid successfully throughout. A Mosquito diversion to Berlin drew off most of the German night fighters for the first 2 of the raid's 3 phases. Unfortunately, the initial marking and bombing fell on a labour camp for forced workers which was situated 1 ½ miles south of the first aiming point, but the Master Bomber and the Pathfinders quickly brought the bombing back to the main targets, which were all bombed successfully. 560 aircraft dropped nearly 1,800 tons of bombs; 85% of this tonnage was high explosive. The estimate has appeared in many sources that this raid set back the V2 experimental programme by at least 2 months and reduced the scale of the eventual rocket attack. Approximately 180 Germans were killed at Peenemunde, nearly all the workers' housing estate and 500 to 600 foreigners, mostly Polish, were killed in the workers' camp, where there were only flimsy wooden barracks and no proper air-raid shelters.

Bomber Command's losses were 40 aircraft, 23 Lancasters, 15 Halifaxes and 2 Stirlings. ... Most of the casualties were suffered by the aircraft of the last wave when the German night fighters arrived in force ... This was the first night on which the Germans used their new Schrage Musik weapons (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schr%C3%A4ge_Musik) found the bomber stream flying home from Peenemunde and are believed to have shot down 6 of the bombers lost on the raid. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 422 - 424).

18.8.43 Air test, no further flying.

19.8.43 Air firing, NFTs. 21 aircraft detailed for ops which were later cancelled.

20.8.43 Day cross countries and special bombing training. Bullseye exercise at night cancelled.

Note: Bullseye training was a navigational and bomb-aiming training exercise

21.8.43 Air test, no other flying – weather unfit.

22.8.43 Bombing and **Y exercises** (see below). Air firing and high level bombing. 14 aircraft detailed for ops, also 2 reserve aircraft. One aircraft did not take off, the remaining 13 aircraft attacked Leverkusen near Cologne. Weather was fine over England but 8-10/10ths cumulous over the target. Bombs were dropped on glow of fires through the cloud, no results seen. One aircraft returned early owing to compass and repeater failures. All returned safely to base.

Special Order of the Day by Air Commodore D.C.T.Bennett CBE, DSO, Commanding Path Finder Force "To all ranks of the PFF. On the 15th August 1942, five squadrons, each representing a group in Bomber Command, assembled on allotted aerodromes to form

the PFF. In one year the PFF has played a large part in showing the enemy how effective bombing can be as a direct means of breaking his morale and thereby winning the war. It is conceivable that he can crack up tomorrow. On the other hand his Gestapo rule may make it possible for him to continue indefinitely. Bombing is our most rapid and effective method of preventing his continued struggle but only if it is effective. The PFF have done much but they must do more. The quality of our bombing is in your hands. Keep at it and good luck to you all."

Y Exercises – use of H2S:

H2S was the first airborne, ground scanning radar system. It was developed in Britain during World War II for the Royal Air Force, and was used in various RAF bomber aircraft from 1943 through to the 1990s. It was designed to identify targets on the ground for night and all-weather bombing. The early variants of the transmitter/receiver equipment were officially known as **TR3159** (H2S Mk I/ASV VIB) or **TR3191** (H2S Mk II).

On January 30, 1943, H2S radar was used by RAF bombers for navigation for the first time and so became the first ground mapping radar to be used in combat. Initially it was fitted to Stirling and Halifax bombers and provided ground mapping for navigation and night bombing.

This development using ten-centimeter radar, (actually 9.1 cm) was possible thanks to the development of the cavity magnetron. Later versions of H2S reduced the wavelength, first to 3 cm and then 1.5 cm at which wavelength the system was capable of detecting rain clouds.

On a raid to Cologne on 2/3 February 1943, a Stirling Pathfinder was shot down over the Netherlands. The H2S set it was carrying was damaged but not beyond repair (fortunately for the Germans it was only the second operational use of H2S), and, known as the *Rotterdam Gerät*, Telefunken was able to reassemble it, with the exception of the PPI display that had been destroyed. Eventually this led to the development of the Naxos radar detector, which enabled Luftwaffe night fighters to home on the transmissions of H2S. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H2S_radar)

22/8/43 Leverkusen – Bomb load 5 x TI, 1 x 4000lb, 6 x 1000lb unless stated

ED839C Sgts W.N.Roberts, J.D.Tinsdeall, S.J.Peek, P/O L.C.Jones, Sgts D.E.Harvey, H.B.Stedman, J.R.Chapman. Bomb load as F/O de Wesselow. Up 2133 Down 0230. Leverkusen area. 16,700'. 8/10ths cloud. Bombed on fires seen through breaks in cloud and ETA. Fires in bomb sight. Bursts seen in centre of fires aimed at. Three large scattered fires seen.

Note: this is the first time the crew are operational with Sgt W N Roberts (Pilot). They were in A flight.

Having been blooded on three second dickey trips, Roberts was allocated his own Lancaster, ED839 C, and left Bourn on the evening of 22 August 1943 with his own crew and a bomb load destined for release over the I G Farben chemical works at Leverkusen near Cologne his crew's first sortie in anger. Once over German soil Robbie's bomb aimer, Pilot officer L C Jones, slung out bundles of Window with gusto, then guided Roberts over Leverkusen on a good bomb run. The trip home and landing were uneventful. **Mr A Riches**

22/23 August 1943 Leverkusen

462 aircraft, 257 Lancasters, 192 Halifaxes and 13 Mosquitoes. 3 Lancasters and 2 Halifaxes lost.

The IG Farben factory at Leverkusen was chosen as the aiming point for this raid and it was hoped that some of the bombs would hit this important place. But the raid was not a success. There was thick cloud over the target area and there was a partial failure of the Oboe signals. Bombs fell over a wide area; at least 12 other towns in and near the Ruhr recorded bomb damage. Dusseldorf was the hardest hit of these other places; 132 buildings were destroyed and 644 seriously damaged. Solingen

reported 40 people killed and 65 injured. Only a few bombs dropped on Leverkusen, where 4 people were killed. The IG Farben factory received only superficial damage, in the acid department; 5 Germans were injured in the factory and 1 foreign worker was killed. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 424 - 425).

23/8/43 21 aircraft and one reserve have been detailed to operate against Berlin. Early briefing and take off at 0815 hours. 21 aircraft took off, 2 aircraft abandoned their sorties, in one case the rear turret was u/s and in the other the mid upper gunner was very sick. All the remaining aircraft attacked the target at Berlin. Large area of fires seen in target area after bombing and were well concentrated. Moon was just rising – no cloud and visibility good. W/Comdr Burns DFC was selected and acted as Master of Ceremonies over the target. Bundles of windows were dropped. P/O Fairlie and crew failed to return. Sgt Chatten was attacked by enemy intruder when over Norfolk and was shot down, the aircraft catching fire. All the crew baled out except for the mid upper F/S Kraemer (Aus) whose body was found later in the wreckage. Sgt Chatten landed safely, but was wounded from gunshot in the leg and ribs and was taken to Ely Hospital – he is progressing favourably. The remainder of the crew baled out safely and were uninjured beyond minor bruises. P/ Dawson was hit by enemy flak which damaged his aircraft. The brake pressure which was damaged caused the aircraft to overshoot beyond the roadway and into a cornfield on landing. The undercarriage did not collapse and there were no injuries, but the aircraft was made Cat A.C. The remaining aircraft landed safely at base. The raid was considered very successful – much damage reported.

23/8/43 Berlin – Bomb Load 4 x TI, 1 x 4000lb, 3 x 1000lb

ED839C Sgts W.N.Roberts, J.D.Tinsdeall, S.J.Peek, P/O L.C.Jones, Sgts D.E.Harvey, H.B.Stedman, J.R.Chapman. Bomb load as Sgt Chatten. Up 2032 Down 2242. **Mission abandoned.** Rear turret u/s. Burst oil pipe, bombs jettisoned safe.

Next night the target was Berlin known to bomber crews unaffectionately as The Big City. An hour out from Bourn Robbie's rear gunner, Sergeant J R Chapman, reported a problem with his turret: an hydraulic oil pipe had burst, rendering the turret unserviceable. To Robbie and the crew of 8D839 C this presented a dilemma: whether to continue the mission with their four rear guns jammed in the fully-aft position or abort. It was a difficult decision: no crew relished an early return, which did not count towards the completion of a 30-trip tour. On the other hand the skies above Berlin - the most heavily-defended city in Europe – were not the place to be in a Lancaster deprived of the use of its main defensive armament. In the end Robbie chose the only sensible alternative and, reluctantly, turned for home. **Mr A Riches**

24.8.43 Standown from ops – no flying.

25.8.43 Weather unfit for flying.

26.8.43 Weather unfit for flying.

27.8.43 22 aircraft and one reserve detailed for ops tonight. 1 aircraft, F/L Jones did not take off due to last minute failures. There was not enough time left to transfer to the reserve aircraft. The remaining 21 aircraft took off to attack a target at Nuremberg. No moon, no cloud, visibility haze and smoke. Bombs were seen to burst in built up area – fires were beginning and glow was seen from about 100 miles away. F/Lt Robertson and crew and F/Sgt Pond and crew failed to return – the remaining aircraft returned safely to base. Intense flak was directed at markers. Red Star vareys were shot off by enemy fighters who seemed to do this on sighting or attacking bombers. Many aircraft were seen to fall at target and as far as Mannheim on return.

There is no further record of ED839C in 97 Sqn's ORB. The aircraft went to 619 Squadron and was damaged on 9/10/43, Robertson (1967)

27/8/43 Nuremburg – Bomb Load 4 x TI, 1 x 4000lb, 2 x 1000lb, 1 x 500lb EE107F P/O W.H.Roberts, [mistake in ORB Sgt W.N.Roberts] Sgt J.D.Tinsdeal, **S/L K.J.Foster (Capt)**, Sgt S.J.Peek, P/O L.C.Jones, Sgts D.E.Harvey, H.B.Stedman, J.R.Chapman. Bomb load as S/L Sauvage. Up 2117 Down 0436. Nuremburg attacked. No cloud, visibility fair. 16,500'. Built up area identified visually. Bombed centre of group of red TI markers, one red in bomb sight. On target too early for results to be apparent.

On 27 August 1943 Robbie and his crew, with Squadron Leader Foster in the right-hand seat to supervise, flew EE107 F to Nuremburg. The target was the north-west quarter of the city, where, the crews were coolly told at briefing, the density of population was the highest in all Germany. Over the target there was no cloud and the visibility was good: bomb-aimers reported a concentration of big fires. Later they were told that the attack had fallen south-east of the aiming point, among the temporary homes of refugees from bombed Berlin. But the calamity was not all one sided: two of the twenty-one Lancasters dispatched by 97 Squadron failed to return. **Mr A Riches**

27/28 August 1943 Nuremberg

674 aircraft, 349 Lancasters, 221 Halifaxes and 104 Stirlings. 33 aircraft, 11 of each type lost on the raid.

The marking for this raid was based mainly on H2S. 47 of the Pathfinder aircraft were ordered to check their equipment by dropping a 1,000lb bomb on Heilbronn while flying to Nuremberg. 28 Pathfinder aircraft were able to carry out this order. Heilbronn reports that several bombs did drop in the north of the town soon after midnight. The local official assumed that the bombs were aimed at the industrial zone; several bombs did fall around the factory area and other bombs fell further away. No industrial buildings were hit; one house was destroyed but there were no casualties.

Nuremberg was found to be clear of cloud but it was very dark. The initial Pathfinder markers were accurate but creep back quickly developed which could not be stopped because so many Pathfinder aircraft had difficulties with the H2S sets. The Master Bomber (whose name is not recorded) could do little to persuade the Main Force to move their bombing forward; only a quarter of the crews could hear his broadcasts. Bomber Command estimated that most of the bombing fell in the open country south-south-west of the city, but local reports say the bombs were scattered across the south-eastern and eastern suburbs. The only location mentioned by name is the Zoo, which was hit by several bombs. 65 people were killed. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 426).

77915 S/L K J Foster DFC and Bar:

From www.97squadron.co.uk

23/24 September 1943

JA708 OF-P F/O Fletcher R Pilot, F/S Nelson J Flight Eng, **S/L Foster Navigator K J** (killed), F/S Beesley Bomb Aimer, Layne W W/Op, S/L McKinna R Mid Upper Gunner (killed), F/S Page H Rear Gunner (killed)

DETAILS

On 23rd/24th September 1943, Bourn's crews were briefed for two separate attacks, against Mannheim and Darnstadt. Flight Lieutenant Fletcher's crew were one of those listed for the Mannheim trip. Squadron Leader Ken Foster took the place of the regular navigator and Squadron Leader McKinna, the Squadron's Gunnery Leader, replaced James White (who had just finished his tour) as mid-upper gunner. Robert McKinna, nicknamed "Red" by his chums owing to his distinctive hair colour, had arrived at Bourn at the beginning of July from the Pathfinder Navigation Training Unit at Upwood.

There was a mix-up in the targeting of the raid and the small town of Frankenthal, just north of Mannheim, together with the neighbouring town of Ludwigshaven, was the



place which received the bomb loads. The little town was devastated and the historic town centre totally destroyed. Bob Fletcher's crew did not know of this mistake as it was not common knowledge until many years after the war, and as James White writes, "The sad thing is that our crew was shot down being unaware until their dying day that, along with the rest, they had failed to bomb the correct target".

Five minutes after dropping the bombs the crew were picked up by the blue-tinged radar-controlled searchlight master beam and immediately coned. Bob put the aircraft into a tight corkscrew rapid descent and eventually got free. He then started to climb again to regain lost height. It was then that a night fighter that had apparently followed them down attacked and set the aircraft on fire. Bob ordered "bale out" and seeing the Bomb Aimer and the Flight Engineer exit through the forward hatch and checking over the intercom that no one was left, believing that the rest had left via the rear escape hatch, baled out himself.

Unfortunately he did not know that Wally Layne had gone down the fuselage to check on the two gunners. Finding them both dead in their turrets, Layne returned to the front of the aircraft, passed the dead body of Squadron Leader Foster, to discover that he was alone in a blazing aircraft. In his own words, he said the shortest prayer possible and jumped.

All four of the crew who baled out survived to become prisoners of war, although Wally Layne remained on the run for ten days before being captured.

As a young boy Ken moved with his family to Southport, where he was a student at King George V School.

Ken enlisted in the Royal Airforce Volunteer Reserve on 31 July 1939.

He loved music and dancing; Ken was an expert dancer, and you could almost say he had a "passion" for dancing. Fishing was a hobby. Ken married Eileen and had a daughter, Karin. He was in 78 Squadron, June 10, 1940.

June 12, 1940 he was posted to 51 Squadron, stationed at Dishforth in Yorkshire.

Awarded DFC, gazetted 18 July 1941, flying as Navigator with 51 Squadron, "raids on Berlin and other German targets, carried out in very bad weather. On his 29th Sortie a direct hit on the target at Ludwigshafen was proven by a Night Photograph taken at the same time. Foster has throughout shown great courage and devotion to Duty, as well as skill in Navigation and has been an excellent example to Observers in this Squadron."

In 1941 he went to an Astro Course in Canada. His return to England and to 51 Squadron was via Bermuda from where, on Feb 2, 1941, he flew the Atlantic Ocean as Navigator with a British crew ferrying an American bomber plane, the PBY flying boat, to Pembroke Dock, England.

Awarded Bar to DFC, gazetted 10 April 1945. Sq/Ldr Kenneth Jack Foster 77915, with effect from 23rd Sept 1943. "He has taken part in numerous operational missions which have included most of the major operations against German targets. On three occasions, he has rendered valuable aid to the squadron by acting as captain of inexperienced crews. He is a very keen captain of aircraft and a skilled and experienced navigator ..."

Note:

It is thought that Ken died after jumping from the aircraft with his parachute, but there are three differing versions of how he lost his life. His body was found in a forest district called "Bösenberg" (on a hill which itself also has the name "Bösenberg) and is located about six kilometres from the village of Maikammer in Germany. Ken Foster was the only member of the crew ever to be buried in Maikammer. **From:**

<http://www.97squadron.co.uk/Crew%20Fletcher.html>

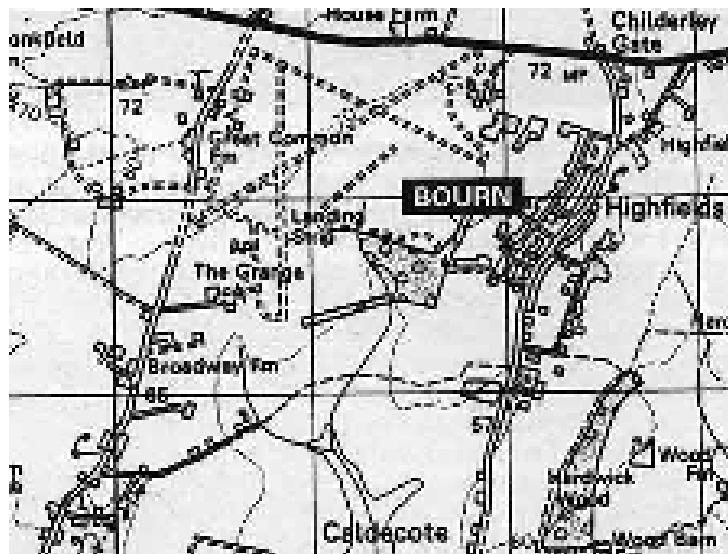
28.9.43 No flying – stand down from operations

29.8.43 Bourn aerodrome will be unserviceable on the 30th August for approximately 4 days owing to the runways being reconditioned. It is therefore necessary for the squadron to operate from other airfields during this period. Each Flight will constitute a separate detachment under the Flight Commander who will act as the detachment commander as follows:

"A" Flight	W/Commander Burns DFC	RAF Gransden Lodge
"B" Flight	W/Commander Nind	RAF Graveley
"C" Flight	W/Commander Alabaster	RAF Oakington

Aircraft and crew took off from Bourn this morning for their respective airfields. Duty was carried out according to plan. No ops detailed.

RAF Bourn Cambridgeshire



From: <https://www.google.co.uk>

The crew move to RAF Gransden Lodge **See** Sgt Tinsdeall's log book, Appendix F.

30.8.43 Squadron detachments were detailed to put on 16 aircraft for ops. 1 aircraft did not take off – remaining 15 aircraft attacked Munchengladbach. No moon and 10/10ths cloud (cumulus) up to 6,000'. Visibility good above cloud over target area. Some fires seen to start but very little result could be seen owing to cloud. All aircraft and crews returned to their respective bases.

30/8/43 Munchen Gladbach – Bomb load 4 x TI, 1 x 4000lb, 6 x 1000lb, 2 x 500lb

EE107F Sgts W.N.Roberts, J.D.Tinsdeal, Peek, P/O L.C.Jones Sgts D.E.Harvey, J.R.Chapman, H.B.Stedman. 1 x 4000lb, 6 x 1000lb, 6 x 500lb. Up 0041 Down 0427. Target Munchen bombed. 15,000'. 8/10ths cloud. Bombed on fires south of concentration of TI markers. Area seemed well on fire, definite results not seen.

30/31 August Muchen Gladbach

660 aircraft, 297 Lancasters, 185 Halifaxes, 107 Stirlings, 57 Wellingtons and 14 Mosquitoes. 25 aircraft, 8 Halifaxes, 7 Lancasters, 6 Stirlings and 4 Wellingtons lost.

This was a double attack, with a 2 minute pause after the first phase while the Pathfinders transferred the marking from Munchengladbach to the neighbouring town of Rhyedt. It was the first serious attack on both towns. The visibility was good and the Oboe assisted marking was described in Bomber Command's records as 'a model' of good Pathfinder marking. The bombing was very concentrated with little creep back. Approximately half of the built-up area in each town was destroyed.

Only short reports are available from Germany. Monchengladbach recorded 1,059 buildings destroyed; 171 industrial, 19 military and 869 domestic, with 117 people killed. The town's telegraph office is the only building mentioned by name. The number of buildings destroyed in Rhyedt was given as 1,280 with damage to the main railway station and many rail facilities being stressed, and with 253 people being killed. A further 2,152 were injured and 12 were missing but these last figures are combined for the two towns. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 427).

31.8.43 Squadron detachments again detailed 20 aircraft for ops. The target was an area in Berlin. Weather was 9/10ths cloud, visibility good, no moon. Bombs were dropped as detailed but too early for many results to be seen. Incendiaries were seen burning and scattered fires started. Moderate heavy flak rather more than on previous raid, when eased off searchlight and fighter co-operation was attempted. Many enemy aircraft seen. 4 aircraft and crews returned early, 3 due to crew personnel being sick and one due to mid upper turret u/s and intercom u/s. W/C Burns DFC and crew are missing, no news since being received. The remainder all returned to their bases. S/L Rodley's aircraft had the bomb aimer's panel shattered and a hole in the rear of the fuselage at Malenburg.

31/8/43 Berlin - Bomb Load 4 x TI, 1 x 4000lb, 6 x 500lb unless stated

EE107F Sgts W.N.Roberts, J.D.Tinsdeal, S.J.Peek, P/O L.C.Jones, Sgts D.E.Harvey, J.R.Chapman, H.B.Stedman. 1 x 4000lb, 8 x 500lb. Up 2012 Down 0331. Berlin attacked. 18,000'. 7/10ths cloud. Visibility good. Bombed concentration of red TI markers. A few scattered glows seen under cloud

After attacks on Munchen-Gladbach and Berlin on the last two nights of August, the first of September's raids and Robbie Roberts' eighth - was an all-Lancaster attack on Berlin made in good weather from 20,000 feet during the last hour of the 3rd. 295 aircraft, amongst them Roberts' EE107 F, bombed Berlin, flying in one concentrated wave. The BBC reporter who recorded his impressions of the scene from a Lancaster cabin chose a good operation for his broadcast, as it turned out to be the most successful of the summer attacks on the Big City. However, Bomber Command lost twenty-two aircraft. **Mr A Riches**

31 august / 1 September 1943 Berlin

622 aircraft, 331 Lancasters, 176 Halifaxes, 106 Stirlings and 9 Mosquitoes. 47 aircraft, 20 Halifaxes, 17 Stirlings and 10 Lancasters lost. The Stirling losses were 16% approximately two thirds of the bombers lost were shot down by German fighters operating over or near Berlin. The use of 'fighter flares' dropped by German aircraft to mark the bomber routes into and away from the target was noted for the first time in Bomber Command records.

The raid was not successful. There was some cloud over the target area; this, together with difficulties with H2S equipment and probably the ferocity of the German defences, all combined to cause the Pathfinder markers to be dropped well south of the centre of the target area, and the Main Force to be even further away. The main bombing area eventually extended 30 miles back along the bombers' approach route. 85 dwelling-houses were destroyed in Berlin, but the only industrial buildings hit were classed as damaged, 4 severely and 3 lightly. The only important public buildings hit were the headquarters of the Berlin inland canal and harbour system, the state police hospital and some market halls. 66 civilians and 2 soldiers were killed, 109 people were injured and 2,784 bombed out.

After this raid, Gauleiter Goebbels ordered the evacuation from Berlin of all children and adults not engaged in war work to country areas or to towns in Eastern Germany where air raids were not expected. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 427 - 428).

1.9.43 Stand down from operations

2.9.43 Weather unfit for training – a few air tests only.

3.9.43 Runways at Bourn now serviceable – all detachments returned this morning to base from Oakington, Graveley and Gransden. Twenty aircraft detailed for operations against Berlin. All aircraft took off and 18 aircraft attacked the target. Weather was cloudy en route – target area was only clear gap. Early aircraft could see red TIs in good cluster and some fires already taking hold. The attack is considered well concentrated and fires were seen by crews homeward bound from 200 miles away. Defences were moderate and quickly died away and then many searchlights were operating in conjunction with fighters. Two aircraft returned early, one with oxygen supply u/s and another due to rear gunner's oxygen supply failing, rendering him unconscious. After jettisoning bombs, a TI exploded, causing fire in bomb bay which was eventually put out and the aircraft landed safely. Sgt Nordhoff, the rear gunner of F/O Riches crew, was killed by cannon fire from an enemy fighter when over the target. Rear turret and hydraulic system were rendered u/s through damage caused by the fighter. All aircraft returned safely to base. Sgt Nordhoff's body is resting at Oakington and will be conveyed by rail to Liverpool for private funeral.

3/9/43 – Berlin

ED107F Sgts W.N.Roberts, J.D.Tinsdeal, S.J.Peek, P/O L.C.Jones, Sgts D.E.Harvey, H.B.Stedman, R.J.Chapman. Up 2005 Down 0421. 1 x 4000lb, 7 x 500lb. Target Berlin bombed. 16,500'. No cloud, vis good. Bombed between two red TI markers not actually in bomb sight. Own results not seen. Several fires seen from run out north.

4.9.43 Standown from operations today.

5.9.43 19 aircraft detailed to attack Mannheim – 15 of which successfully attacked the primary target and 4 returned early due to various technical failures. Weather – clear sky, visibility good, some haze. Bombing was concentrated and well placed. Fires seen to be taking hold and were visible for 100 miles on route home. The raid is considered to be well placed and effective. Defence, heavy flak moderate and some searchlight cones over town. Many enemy aircraft seen and several aircraft seen to fall in flames. All aircraft returned safely to base.

3/4 September 1943 Berlin

316 Lancasters and 4 Mosquitoes; because of the high casualty rates among Halifaxes and Stirlings in recent Berlin raids, the heavy force was composed only of Lancasters. 22 Lancasters were lost, nearly 7% of the Lancaster force. The Mosquitoes were used to drop 'spoof flares' well away from the bombers' route to attract German night fighters.

This raid approached Berlin from the north-east but the marking and bombing were, once again, mostly short of the target. That part of the bombing that did reach Berlin's built up area fell in residential parts of Charlottenburg and Moabit and in the industrial area called Siemensstadt. Several factories were hit and suffered serious loss of production, and among utilities put out of action were major water and electricity works, and one of Berlin's largest breweries. 422 people were listed as killed; 255 civilians, 24 servicemen, 18 men and 2 women of the air raid services, 123 foreign workers, 92 women and 31 men. 170 further civilians were missing. The Berlin records also mention the deaths of another soldier and 7 criminal assistants, when the 2 delayed action bombs on which they were working exploded; these criminals could earn remission of their sentences by volunteering for this work on unexploded and delayed-action bombs. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 428).

5/6 September 1943 – Mannheim

19 aircraft detailed to attack Mannheim – 15 of which successfully attacked the primary target and 4 returned early due to various technical failures. Weather – clear sky, visibility good, some haze. Bombing was concentrated and well placed. Fires seen to be taking hold and were visible for 100 miles on route home. The raid is considered to be well placed and effective. Defence, heavy flak moderate and some searchlight cones over town. Many enemy aircraft seen and several aircraft seen to fall in flames. All aircraft returned safely to base.

ED839C Sgts W.N.Roberts, **J.D.Tinsdeal**, S.J.Peek, P/O L.C.Jones, Sgts D.E.Harvey, H.B.Stedman, R.J.Chapman. Up 1948 Down 0216. 1 x 4000lb, 9 x 500lb. Primary target Mannheim bombed. 15,000'. No cloud, visibility good. Bend in river visually seen. Bombed centre of cluster of red TIs – bombs fell north west of railway marshalling yards. Large area covered by fires and developing well

Note: 1675658 Sgt J D Tinsdeall (Flight Engineer) replaced by Sgt C Baumber; changed crews.



Mannheim <https://www.google.co.uk>

On Sunday 5 September, Roberts took EDB39 C to Mannheim. The trip was uneventful but it was the last time Robbie's original crew flew together: on their return flight engineer Sergeant Tinsdeall was posted away, and Robbie had to make do with a succession of spare engineers until Flight Sergeant V A Davis joined the crew on their fourteenth operation and remained with them until the end of their tour. Davis had come to 97 having already completed a successful tour with No. 50 Squadron. He was a highly efficient engineer and wore the ribbon of the DFM to prove it. After the Mannheim mission, bad weather caused the cancellation of an operation on the 9 September, and then the crew were stood down for a fortnight while their navigator, Sergeant, S J Peek, learned to use the latest radar aid, which was code named H2S. **Mr A Riches**

5/6 September 1943 Mannheim / Ludwigshafen

605 aircraft, 209 Lancasters, 195 Halifaxes, 111 Stirlings. 34 aircraft, 13 Halifaxes, 13 Lancasters and 8 Stirlings lost.

The target for this double attack was clear of cloud and the Pathfinder marking plan worked perfectly. Ground-markers were placed on the eastern side of Mannheim so that the bombing of the Main Force, approaching from the west, could move back across Mannheim and then into Ludwigshafen on the western bank of the Rhine. The creep back did not become excessive and severe destruction was caused in both cities.

Mannheim's normally detailed air-raid report does not give any specific details of property damage or casualties. It is probable that the raid was so severe that the normal report gathering and recording process broke down. The Mannheim records speak only of a catastrophe and the general comments on the activities of the air-raid services and the behaviour of the population which are both described as 'vorbildlich' (exemplary).

More detail is available from Ludwigshafen where the central and southern parts of the town were devastated. The fire department recorded 1,993 separate fires including 3 classed as fire areas, and 986 large fires; 139 of the fires were in industrial premises. 1,080 houses, 6 military and 4 industrial buildings were destroyed, and 8 more industrial buildings were seriously damaged, including the IG Farben works. 127 people were killed and 568 injured; 10 of the dead were Flak troops. A further 1,605 people are described as suffering eye injuries. The relatively small number of deaths may be an indication that many of the German cities were evacuating parts of their population after the recent fire-storm disaster at Hamburg and other heavy raids. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 429).

6.9.43 17 aircraft detailed for operations against Munich. 2 aircraft were withdrawn due to rear gunner being sick and engine trouble in the other aircraft. One aircraft returned early, the navigator being sick – oxygen supply u/s. The remaining 14 aircraft attacked Munich but owing to 9/10ths medium cloud, tops 12-14,000' – vis moderate, the results of bombing were generally unobserved. Reflection below cloud was seen of some HE bursts and glow of scattered fires. Moderate H/F inaccurate and many searchlights illuminating cloud. Fighters were very active. F/Lt Berridge's aircraft was damaged by enemy flak. Enemy aircraft made paths of three lines of seven flares each at regular spaces denoting route taken by bombers. One aircraft landed at Upper Heyford, the remainder returned safely to base.

22/9/43 – Hanover

ED814D F/Sgt W.N.Roberts, Sgts C.Baumber, S.J.Peck, P/O L.C.Jones, Sgts D.E.Harvey, H.B.Stedman, R.J.Chapman. Up 1916 Down 2116. 6 x 2000lb. **Mission abandoned – port inner engine u/s.**

Roberts returned to operational flying on 22 September when the target was Hanover. His Lancaster, ED814, D-Dog, was just approaching the Dutch coast when, without warning, the port-inner engine became enveloped in flames. Within seconds the flight engineer had feathered the propeller and extinguished the fire, but the engine was now useless. Robbie was faced with the same decision as he had been a month earlier on the way to Berlin, namely whether to go on or to return to base. Again discretion was the better part of valour, and D-Dog limped home on three engines. **Mr A Riches**

23.9.43 F/O Wilson on NFT had trouble with undercarriage when coming in to land. Aircraft was circled round the airfield for some while trying to lock the undercarriage. Owing to operations taking place the aircraft was diverted to Newmarket where F/O Wilson carried out a successful landing without damage to aircraft. Sixteen aircraft detailed to attack Mannheim and five aircraft on Darmstadt. Both targets were successfully bombed – flak was negligible but many searchlights were operating with fighters. Visibility was good. Two crews are missing from the attack on Mannheim. F/L Fletcher and crew and W/O Stevenson and crew. S/L Foster and the Gunnery Leader S/L McKinna were with F/L Fletcher. No news has been received since leaving base. All other crews returned safely.

23/9/43 – Mannheim

ED814D F/Sgt W.N.Roberts, **Sgts C.Baumber**, S.J.Peek, P/O L.C.Jones, Sgts D.E.Harvey, H.B.Stedman, R.J.Chapman. Up 1032 Down 0136. 4 x 2000lb, 6 x 500lb. Target Mannheim. 17,000'. Clear sky, vis good. Target identified visually. Bombs hung up for 4 seconds and TIs not in bomb sight. Built up area still in sights. Several good red fires burning – **glow seen 100 miles away.**

Next night the same ED814, its faulty Merlin repaired, took Roberts back to Mannheim. On this occasion the flak was heavy and numerous night fighters were seen prowling among the searchlights. Nevertheless, D-Dog brought Roberts and crew safely home in a shade under six hours, though two 97 Squadron crews were not so lucky: one of those missing was Warrant Officer Stevenson who had taken Robbie to Peenemunde. **Mr A Riches**

Note: ED814 went to 625 then 300 Squadron (Polish Bomber Squadron); lost 1/7/44

23/24 September 1943 Mannheim

628 aircraft, 312 Lancasters, 193 Halifaxes, 115 Stirlings, 8 Mosquitoes and 5 B-17's also took part. 32 aircraft, 18 Lancasters, 7 Halifaxes, and 7 Wellingtons lost.

This raid was intended to destroy the northern part of Mannheim, which had not been so severely hit in the successful raid earlier in the month. The Pathfinder plan worked well and concentrated bombing fell on the intended area, although later stages of the raid crept back across the northern edge of Ludwigshaven and out onto the open country. The following buildings were destroyed in Mannheim: 927 houses, 20 industrial premises, 11 schools, 6 public buildings and a church. A large number of other buildings were damaged and approximately 25,000 people were bombed out of their homes. 102 people were killed and 418 were injured. There were more than 2,000 fires.

Local records (provided on this night by Herr Erwin Folz and not from the local authorities) saw that the later stages of the bombing crept back across the Rhine to the northern part of Ludwigshaven, where the IG Farben factory was severely damaged, and then to the smaller outlying towns of Oppau and Frankenthal. Ludwigshaven suffered 47 people killed and 260 injured. A further 8,000 people were bombed out, of whom 4,289 were foreign workers. The centre of the small town of Frankenthal was completely burnt out and 38 people were killed there. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 432-433).

1072598 Warrant Officer Cyril Baumber DFM RAFVR

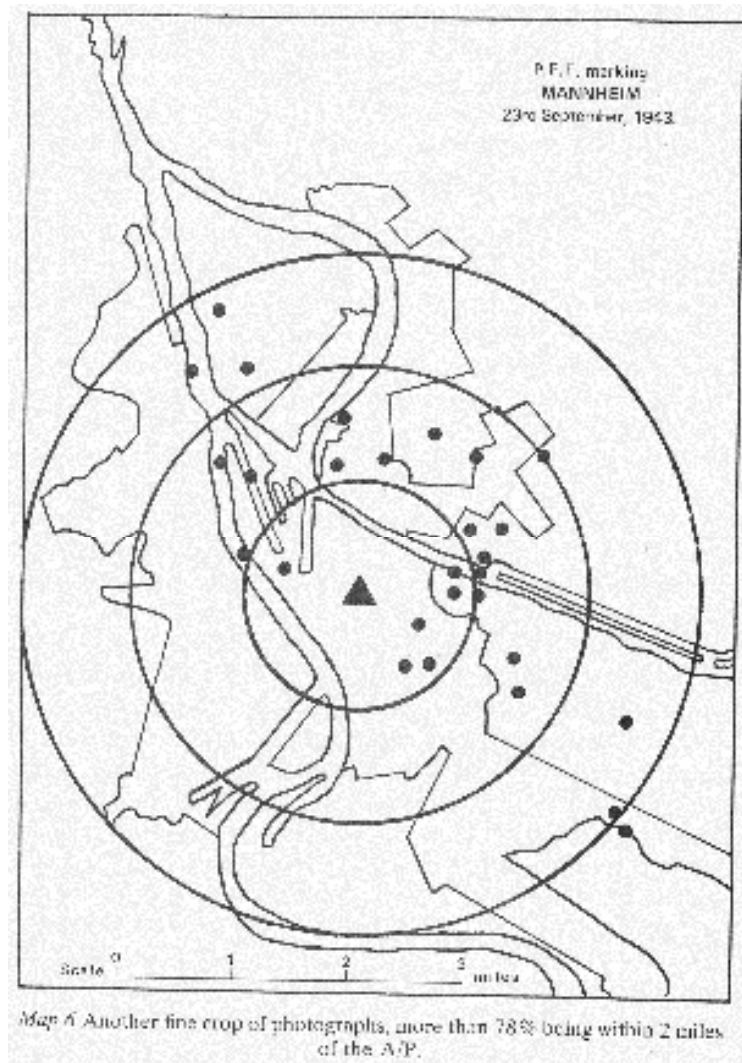
Cyril Baumber pictured with his young son. Baumber's eventful tour of operations with 97 Squadron was described in the recommendation for his award of the DFM - "Flight Sergeant Baumber is the flight engineer in the crew captained by Flt Lt Chatten. He has now completed 34 successful operations and has attacked such targets as Berlin (9), Frankfurt (2), Schweinfurt (2), Brunswick (2), Stuttgart and Nuremburg. On the night of 22nd/23rd May 1944, the aircraft in which F/Sgt Baumber was flying was detailed for an attack against Brunswick. En route to the target, the aircraft was attacked by three fighters. These enemy were driven off but only after our bomber had sustained severe damage to all the navigational equipment. On the return flight the aircraft was badly damaged by flak when flying over Hanover, and F/Sgt Baumber was badly injured in the face. In spite of his wounds, F/Sgt Baumber bravely remained at his post and gave his captain every assistance in nursing the crippled aircraft to base. Throughout the operation, this NCO displayed great skill, courage and determination. For his unswerving devotion to duty, his skill and gallantry, he is recommended for the award of the Distinguished Flying Medal." **Later commissioned to 196210 Flying Officer C Baumber DFM**



23/24 August 1943 Berlin – Bomb Load 4 x TI, 1 x 4000lb, 3 x 1000lb

EE105Q Sgts C.S.Chatten, **C.Baumber**, P/O L.R.Armitage, Sgts Standen, W.A.Reffin, F/Sgt J.R.Kraemer, Sgt L.V.Smith. 1 x 4000lb, 9 x 500lb. Up 2015 Down 0300 (approx – shot down). Berlin bombed. 19,000'. No cloud. Slight haze. Bombed centre of three red TI markers. Built up area and big white buildings were seen visually. Bombs believed on aiming point. Fires seen after bombing, numerous and well concentrated and visible about 40 miles away. On reaching English coast were shot down by an intruder. All safely baled out except mid upper gunner who was killed. Captain received leg injured. Aircraft a total loss. **From:** 97 Squadron ORB August to December 1943

Map of bombing on 23/9/43



From (Musgrove, G. 1976 p74)

24.9.43 No flying today. Operational stand down.

25.9.43 "Y" cross countries, fighter affiliation and bombing training. 12 aircraft detailed for ops, after time of take off being altered, the operation was cancelled.

26.9.43 High level bombing and "Y" bombing runs carried out. 22 aircraft detailed for operations – cancelled during briefing, the weather report being bad.

27.9.43 14 aircraft detailed to attack Hanover and 4 aircraft (one of which was cancelled) on Brunswick. These targets were successfully bombed. Visibility was good. Many fires were seen by crews on return over enemy coast. There was one early return – P/O Dawson reporting faulty rear turret. All aircraft and crews returned safely to base.

28.9.43 Training consisting of “Y” cross countries, bombing, fighter affiliation, air firing and blind approach was carried out. Operational standown.

30.9.43 “Y” training, bombing, fighter affiliation and beam approach training carried out.

1.10.43 13 aircraft detailed to attack target at Hagen. Owing to 10/10ths cloud over the area this raid was hard to assess. Defences were slight and most searchlights ineffective owing to cloud. All aircraft and crews returned safely to base. “Y” training, bombing and fighter affiliation were carried out in the earlier part of the day.

1/10/43 – Hagen

JB117C F/Sgt W.N.Roberts, Sgts W.J.Whitbread, S.J.Peek, P/O L.C.Jones, Sgts D.E.Harvey, H.B.Stedman, R.J.Chapman. Up 1853 Down 2338. 1 x 4000lb, 6 x 1000lb. Target Hagen. Vis good apart from 10/10ths cloud. 19,000'. One red TI in sight on bombing. No results observed.

1 / 2 October 1943 Hagen

243 Lancasters and 8 Mosquitoes of 1, 5 and 8 Groups. 2 Lancasters lost

This raid was a complete success achieved on a completely cloud-covered target of a small size, with only a moderate bomber effort and at a trifling cost. The Oboe sky-marking was perfect and severe damage was caused in Hagen. There was the usual housing damage but 2 of the town's 4 industrial areas were severely hit and a third suffered lesser damage. Hagen reports that 46 industrial firms (not individual buildings) were destroyed and 166 damaged. In his post-war interrogation, Albert Speer stated that the destruction in Hagen of an important factory making accumulator batteries slowed down the output of U-boats considerably. Speer did not mention this raid specifically but Hagen was not heavily attacked again until December 1944.

Other details from the Hagen report: 3,480 fires of which 100 were large and 715 medium sized, 241 Germans and 25 foreigners killed. 2,386 Germans and 135 foreigners wounded, 30,000 people were bombed out. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 434 - 435).

2.10.43 21 aircraft were detailed to attack the target of Munich. Visibility was good and early reports states that the attack was well concentrated. Generally the raid has left the crews with a feeling of satisfaction. All aircraft returned safely.

4/10/43 – Frankfurt

JB117C F/Sgt W.N.Roberts, Sgts G.Winter, S.J.Peek, P/O L.C.Jones, Sgt D.E.Harvey, **F/Sgt R.H.Marston (see below)**, Sgt R.J.Chapman. Up 1835 Down 0030. 1 x 4000lb, 5 x 1000lb. Primary Frankfurt attacked. 18,500'. Clear sky, vis good. Target well lit up by flares and TIs. Built up area visually seen. Own results not seen. Red TIs and built up area in bomb sight. Good size fires in marked area.

After a trip to Hagen on 1 October, when he was forced to bomb through 10/J.0ths cloud, Roberts took JB117 C (by now his regular Lancaster) to Frankfurt on the 4th. **Over the target the Lancaster was hit in the fuselage by heavy flak:** though none of the crew was hurt and the aircraft suffered no serious damage, there were still some anxious moments for Robbie during the two-hour return flight to Bourn. Several of the twenty-two Lancasters dispatched by 97 Squadron were also damaged, and one (Flight Lieutenant Brown) failed to return. **Mr A Riches**

4/5 October 1943

406 aircraft, 162 Lancasters, 170 Halifaxes, 70 Stirlings, 4 Mosquitoes and 3 B-17s also took part. 10 aircraft, 5 Halifaxes, 3 Lancasters and 2 Stirlings lost. This was the last RAF night-bombing raid in which American aircraft took part, but individually B-17s occasionally carried out bombing raids in following weeks.

Clear weather and good Pathfinder marking produced the first serious blow on Frankfurt so far in the war, with extensive destruction being caused in the eastern half of the city, and in the inland docks on the River Main; both of these areas are described in the Frankfurt report as having been a 'sea of flames'. Many city-centre type buildings are also mentioned as being hit; the new Rathaus had its roof burnt out. No overall figures are given for casualties, the only mention being the tragedy at an orphanage housed in a former Jewish hospital, where a bomb scored a direct hit on the basement shelter killing 90 children, 14 nuns and other members of the staff. In the following days, the main railway station was packed with people trying to leave Frankfurt. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 436).

ED875R 2nd Lt J.E.Russell, Sgt H.J.Lazenby, 2nd Lt R.Wright, F/Sgt L.W.Golden, Sgts J.P.Dow, B.W.Bark, **F/Sgt R.H.Marston** Up 2034 Down 0441. 1 x 4000lb, 6 x 500lb. Berlin bombed. Clear sky, some haze. 20,000'. Target identified by red TIs and bend in river. Bombed cluster of red TIs – in bomb sight. Fires and explosions seen among red markers.(97 Squadron ORB August to December 1943)

As 2nd Lt J.E.Russell (USA) swung his Lancaster on course for base he saw a twin-engined aircraft on the starboard bow. He told the mid-upper, Sgt E.W.Bark, to look out for it but got the reply 'Sorry skipper, I have one in my sights on the port quarter and another behind him queueing up. He's coming in skipper, dive to port, go, go, go'. Bark's fire was more accurate than the enemy's and he saw his tracer enter the nose of the fighter, which broke away and was not seen again. Seconds later the sky seemed to light up as **F/Sgt R.H.Marston**, the rear gunner, shouted 'Corkscrew, corkscrew'. A second fighter was attacking from the port quarter and 50 to 60 searchlights were trying to help it. Marston opened up at 500 yards but fighter pilot pressed home the attack and scored hits on the Lancaster; however, he too had no stomach for a second encounter. (Musgrove p70)

7/10/43 – Friedrichshaven

JB119P F/Sgt W.N.Roberts, Sgt C.Baumber, F/Sgt S.J.Peek, F/O L.C.Jones, Sgt D.E.Harvey, **F/Sgt G.Woolf**, Sgt R.J.Chapman. Up 2042 Down 0330. **4 x TI**, 4 x 2000lb. Friedrichshaven bombed. 5/0ths cloud. 19,500'. Bombed on single and only red TI in target area – in bomb sight. Own TIs seen to cascade. Large number of flares seen after bombing – too many flares

Note: 1/2 January 1944 – Berlin **JA960E** F/O J.Mooney, Sgts F.B.Gray, G.A.Johnson, F/Sgt J.Woesdale, Sgts N.D.Cameron, **F/Sgt G.Woolf**, F/Sgt G.E.Smith. Up 0051 – **missing**. 421345 F/Sgt Woolf RAAF (19 years), buried at Rhienburg War Cemetery. Aircraft hit by flak near Aachen

First time aircrew dropped TI's (Target Indicators), it was their 10th sortie

JB117 C-Charlie was still under repair when, three nights later, Roberts was briefed for a raid on Friedrichshafen - his crew's first marking operation. This was his thirteenth trip, and it seemed an ill omen that it would have to be flown in an unfamiliar Lancaster, JB119 P Peter, instead of his usual C-Char1ie. But it proved to be a quiet trip all round for the 97 Squadron crews, and all twenty Lancasters returned safely to Bourn. **Mr A Riches**

8.10.43 21 Lancasters detailed for operations with one aircraft reserve. One aircraft was withdrawn, the navigator being sick, another returned early due to oxygen supply being u/s. 19 aircraft attacked the target at Hanover in clear sky and some haze. Good concentration of fires seen. Generally the raid would appear promising but later smoke and haze prevented observations. Slight to moderate H/F and fighters not so active. 17 photos attempted. P/O Nicolls and crew failed to return from this operation. No news has been received.

9.10.43 F/L Pelletier on night circuits and landings. Operational stand down.
10.10.43 "Y" training and cross countries carried out and some air tests. Weather closed in.

11/12.10.43 Training programme arranged but cancelled due to bad weather. Lectures and conferences took place and aircrews took part in recreational games in the afternoon of the 12th. The following message has been received from AOC-in-C Bomber Command, "The last attack on Hanover was an outstanding success for us and another major catastrophe for Germany. Good show. A few more like this and the Boche will break." German information states the P/O E.G.Dolby DFC died of internal haemorrhage on 1.9.43, missing on 31.8.43. NZ416161 F/Sgt Pond arrived safely in UK 14.9.43. Reported missing from Nuremburg on 27/28 August 1943. G/C N.H.Fresson was awarded the immediate DFC on 7.10.43.

13.10.43 Training programme arranged covering "Y" training, bombing, fighter affiliation and ground training. W/O P.Scott and Sgt W.G.Peel, missing 27th/28th August 1943 are reported prisoners of war. F/L Robertson and remainder of crew are reported killed – information from German source. Further message from AOC in C Bomber Command, "The whole of the centre of Hanover and much else besides has been burnt out. Some of it is still burning. Well done."

14.10.43 Training programme covered "Y", bombing and fighter affiliation. Flying duties not carried out owing to weather u/s. AOC 8 Group lectured the aircrews in the morning, arriving at 11.30 hours. Stand down in the afternoon.

15.10.43 Bombing, air firing training carried out as per schedule. "Y" cross countries in the afternoon.

16.10.43 "Y" training, fighter affiliation and bombing carried out. Weather fine.

17.10.43 Training programme detailed. Weather u/s in the morning. "Y" training, bombing and air firing carried out in the afternoon. Weather fine.

18.9.43 Training as per schedule in the morning and NFTs. 15 aircraft detailed for operations. Briefing at 1500 hours. 15 aircraft attacked Hanover. One aircraft – F/L Moodie and crew is reported missing. Weather 9/10ths cloud tops 15,000', vis good. Defences moderate, H/F (heavy flack) predicted up to 22,000', heavy at 12,000', searchlights mainly ineffective, fighter opposition reported great. Generally, owing to cloud, success of raid cannot be assessed. Crews reported glow of fires on cloud and fires were seen as crews were leaving target under cloud.

18/10/43 – Hanover

JB117C F/Sgt W.N.Roberts, F/Sgt V.A.Davis, F/Sgt S.J.PEEK, F/O L.C.Jones, Sgt D.E.Harvey, F/Sgt E.L.Wright, Sgt R.J.Chapman. Up 1740 Down 2238. 4 x TI, 1 x 4000lb, 6 x 1000lb. Primary objective attacked. 18,000'. 10/10ths cloud. Green TI markers in bomb sight at time of bombing. TIs very scattered. Big explosion seen at 2016 hours. Incendiaries appeared to cover a large area.

Note: F/Sgt Wright DFM replaced Sgt Stedman (USAF), F/Sgt Wright came from 50, via 10 OTU (Operational Training Unit) Squadron where he served a full tour. 10 OTU was at RAF Abingdon where aircrew were trained prior to posting to train night bomber crews (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._10_Operational_Training_Unit_RAF)

On 18 October, over Hanover, he had just settled into his bombing run at 18,000 feet when the rear gunner, Flight Sergeant E L Wright reported a ME 109 high on the port quarter. Roberts threw the Lancaster (a rejuvenated C-Charlie) into a series of corkscrew manoeuvres, and at the same time Wright opened fire with a short burst of tracer. To the relief of the crew, these measures succeeded in throwing the fighter off the scent, and the operation was completed without any further scares. **Mr A Riches**

18/19 October 1943 Hannover

360 Lancasters; 18 Lancasters lost.

The target was covered by cloud and the Pathfinders were not successful in marking the position in Hannover. The raid was scattered, with most bombs falling in open country, north and north west of the city.

The raid concluded the current series of raids on Hannover. Bomber Command had dispatched 2,253 sorties in 4 raids and 10 American B-17 sorties had also been flown. 1,976 aircraft claimed to have bombed in the target area. Only 1 raid had been completely successful but that had caused severe damage. 110 bombers were lost on the raids, 4.9% of those dispatched. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 439).

Aircrew of JB117C

Pilot:	F/Sgt W.N.Roberts
Flight Engineer:	F/Sgt V.A.Davis DFM
Navigator:	F/Sgt S.J.Peek
Bomb Aimer:	F/O L.C.Jones
Wireless Operator:	Sgt D.E.Harvey
Mid-upper Gunner:	F/Sgt J.R.Chapman RCAF
Rear Gunner:	F/Sgt E.L.Wright. RAFVR

F/Sgt J R Chapman DFC Air Gunner Combat Reports:

18 October 1943 - Lancaster C/97, JB117; target Hanover. Action at 18,000 feet over target area, 2025 hours; 6/10 cloud with good visibility; no moon and no searchlights. Ranges were 25-300 yards. Chapman described as a Sergeant. His fellow gunner was a Flight Sergeant Wright. Lancaster "C" over target at 18,000 feet on bombing run. Rear Gunner [Wright] reported Me.109 (see picture) on port quarter up. Instructed pilot to corkscrew to port and the rear gunner opened fire with a short burst. The fighter positioned himself dead astern and evasive action was continued. The fighter was then lost to sight.



Copy of Combat Report, see Appendix A

1172743 Warrant Officer Victor Allenby Davis DFM

Service details from RAF Disclosures

DOB: 23/11/1918 Chorlton on Medlock, Manchester

Enlisted: 16/07/1940

War medals sent to: 59, Southampton Street, Farnborough, Hampshire

16/07/40: 2 RC (Recruitment Centre) Cardington

20/07/40: 1RC RAF Uxbridge

09/08/40: Number 6 School of Technical Training RAF Hednesford (see picture below), Staffordshire

In 1938 a Royal Air Force training camp was established to train technicians in maintenance and repair of airframes and engines. No. 6 School of Technical training became better known as RAF Hednesford. <http://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/units/1651/raf-hednesford/>



From: www.forces-war-records.co.uk

10/03/41: Number 37 MU (Maintenance Unit) RAF Burtonwood, Warrington Cheshire



From: wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6d/Burtonwood-1945.jpg

15/03/41: Number 30 MU RAF Sealand (see <http://www.disused-stations.org.uk/s/sealand/>). Promoted to Cpl

21/03/42: Number 10 AGS (assumed Aircrew Grading School – other abbreviation Air Gunnery School)

24/04/42: 97 Squadron (both 50 and 97 Squadrons formed part of 5 Group at this time)

30/04/42: 50 Squadron RAF Skellingthorpe

01/12/42: Promoted Sgt Flight Engineer

09/05/43: 1654 Conversion Unit RAF Swinderby

02/06/43: 1660 Heavy Conversion Unit RAF Swinderby

- 26/08/43:** 97 PFF Squadron RAF Coningsby
- 25/03/44:** PFNTU (Path Finder Force Navigation Training Unit) RAF Upwood
- 31/12/43:** Promoted Flight Sergeant
- 13/08/43:** DFM London Gazette 13/08/43
- 23/06/44:** 582 PFF Squadron RAF Little Staughton
- 04/02/44:** Promoted to Warrant Officer
- 12/09/44:** Missing in action

50 Squadron RAF Skellingthorpe

The RAF Bomber Command Station, RAF Skellingthorpe, opened in 1941 on a field previously called Black Moor, approximately 2 ½ miles (4 km) south-east from the village of Skellingthorpe. The airfield consisted of the standard pattern of three runways, with one Type B1 and two Type T2 hangars. Nissen huts were used for accommodation.

No. 50 Squadron RAF, equipped with Hampdens, was the first squadron based at Skellingthorpe, with the first detachment of personnel arriving shortly before the runways were complete. They were followed by No. 455 Squadron RAAF (also flying Hampdens), however this squadron moved to RAF Wigsley shortly afterwards.

The 50 Squadron Hampdens were replaced with Avro Manchesters in April 1942, then, in June 1942, Skellingthorpe was closed for runway extensions to cope with the Squadron's conversion to new Avro Lancaster aircraft.

In November 1943 a further bomber squadron, No. 61 Squadron RAF operating Avro Lancasters, arrived at Skellingthorpe, and remained until February 1944 after which it transferred to RAF Coningsby in order for accommodation to be built on the Doddington Road side of Skellingthorpe airfield (see picture below). **From:** wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Skellingthorpe



From: www.airfieldinformationexchange.org

Operations with 50 Squadron, 5 Group

Note: Sgt Davis completed 32 sorties with 50 Squadron

25/06/42 Folke-Wulf Factory Bremen

Lancaster L7401 P/O Bunbury JS, Sgt Davis VA, P/O McDonald AG, Sgt Mitchell, Sgt Dabbs A, Sgt Simpson TD, Sgt Tomlon N. . 2337 – 0418. Unable to identify primary target owing to cloud, bombs dropped on ETA on a large red glow. No opposition
25/26 June 1942 Bremen



The 'Thousand Force' was reassembled for this raid, although only 960 aircraft became available for Bomber Command use. Every type of aircraft in Bomber Command was included, even the Bostons and Mosquitoes of 2 Group which, so far, had only been used for day operations. The force was composed as follows: 472 Wellingtons, 124 Halifaxes, 96 Lancasters, 69 Stirlings, 51 Blenheims, 50 Hampdens, 50 Whitleys, 24 Bostons, 20 Manchesters and 4 Mosquitoes. Bomber Command never before, or after, dispatched such a mixed force.

After Churchill had intervened and insisted that Admiralty allow Coastal Command to participate in this raid, a further 102 Hudsons and Wellingtons of Coastal Command were sent to Bremen but official records class this effort as a separate raid, not under Bomber Command control. 5 further aircraft provided by the Army Co-operation Command were also added to the force. The final numbers dispatched, 1,067 aircraft, made this a larger raid than that on Cologne at the end of May.

Parts of the force were allocated to specific targets in Bremen. The entire 5 Group effort, 142 aircraft, was ordered to bomb the Focke-Wulf factory; 20 Blenheims were allocated to the AG Weser ship yard; the Coastal Command aircraft were to bomb the Deschimag shipyard; all other aircraft were to carry out an area attack on the town and docks.

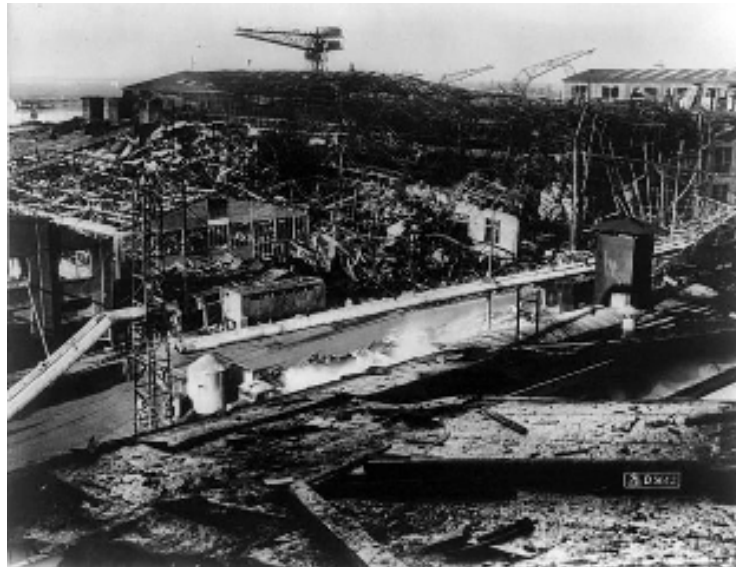
The tactics were basically similar to the earlier 'Thousand' raids except that the bombing period was now cut to 65 minutes. Bremen, on the river Weser, should have been an easy target to find and the inland penetration of the German night-fighter belt was only a shallow one. There were doubts about a band of cloud which lay across the Bremen area during the day, but this was being pushed steadily eastwards by a strong wind. Unfortunately the wind dropped in the evening and the bomber crews found the target completely covered for the whole period of the raid. The limited success which was gained was entirely due to the use of Gee, which enabled the leading crews to start fires, on to the glow of which many aircraft of later waves bombed. 696 Bomber Command aircraft were able to claim attacks on Bremen.

The results in general terms were not as dramatic as at Cologne but much better than the second 'Thousand' raid to Essen. Bremen reports a strengthening wind at the time of the raid, which fanned the many fires started throughout the town, increased the extent of damage and, according to the diary provided by the Bremen Stadtarchive, left whole areas of dwelling-houses in ruins. 572 houses were completely destroyed and 6,108 damaged. More than 90% of these were in the eastern quarters of the town's four air-raid areas. 85 people were killed, 497 injured and 2,378 bombed out.

On the industrial side, the diary stated that the RAF's plan to destroy the Focke-Wulf factory and the ship yards was not successful, although an assembly shop at the Focke-Wulf factory was completely flattened by a 4,000lb bomb dropped by a 5 Group Lancaster. A further 6 buildings at this factory were seriously damaged and 11 buildings lightly so. Damage was also experienced by 4 important industrial firms: the Atlas Werke, the Vulkan ship yard, the Norddeutsche Hutte, and the Korf refinery, and 2 large dockside warehouses.

The Bremen report concludes with the estimate put forward by the senior local air-raid official at the time that only 80 RAF bombers had attacked Bremen. The subsequent BBC broadcast that over 1,000 bombers had been sent was judged to be a propaganda bluff and a device to explain away the heavy casualties suffered by the bombing force. The Germans claimed 52 bombers shot down. This figure, said the official, would not appear too serious to the British public if seen as part of a 1,000 bomber

force. The actual losses of the Bomber Command aircraft involved in the raid were 48 aircraft, including 4 which came down in the sea near England from which all but 2 crew members were rescued. This was a new record loss. It represented exactly 5% of the Bomber Command aircraft dispatched. This time, heaviest casualties were suffered by the OTU's of 91 Group, which lost 23 of the 198 Whitleys and Wellingtons provided by that group, a loss of 11.6%. The relevant reasons for this may be the fact that the OTU's were usually equipped with old aircraft retired from front-line squadrons, that the Bremen raid involved a round trip of 200 miles longer than the Cologne and Essen raids, and that extra time had been taken up searching for the target in cloudy conditions of that night. The trainee crews of 91 Group suffered accordingly. 5 of the 102 Coastal Command aircraft were also lost. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 280 - 281).



From www.626-squadron.co.uk The construction yard of A.G. 'Weser' (Deschimag) in Bremen. 162 U-boats were built there in WW2.

23/07/42 Gardening Trefoil Area. Gardening

see <http://www.bombercrew.com/Mining/bombercrewgardening.htm>

Lancaster R5725. F/O HW Southgate, **St VA Davis**, F/Sgt CA Shirley, Sgt GV Price, Sgt SH Parker, Sgt KGT Summerville, Sgt WJ Donner. 0158 – 0504. This aircraft identified the target by TR and lake inland from pinpoint. Vegetables were dropped in the allotted area from a height of 600ft, and were seen to strike water. Dark, visibility good. No opposition encountered.

29/07/42 Saarbrücken.

Lancaster R5725. F/O HW Southgate, St VA Davis, F/Sgt CA Shirley, Sgt GV Price, Sgt SH Parker, Sgt KGT Summerville, Sgt WJ Donner. 2337 – 0455. This aircraft identified the target visually and confirmed with TR Fix. Bombs dropped from a height of 5,500ft, and were seen to drop on a factory which blew up completely. Many fires observed. Opposition slight with no searchlights.

29/30 July 1942 Saarbrücken

291 aircraft of 5 types on the first large raid to this target. 9 aircraft, 3 Wellingtons, 2 Halifaxes, 2 Lancasters and 2 Stirlings lost.

The defences over the target were not expected to be strong and crews were urged to bomb at lower than normal altitudes. 248 aircraft reported accurate bombing, three quarters of them doing so from below 10,000ft. Bomber Command claimed severe damage to 2 industrial targets, an iron works and an engineering works. Saarbrücken's records show severe damage and casualties in the centre and

north-western districts. 396 buildings were destroyed and 324 seriously damaged, with 155 people being killed. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 291).

01/08/42 Dusseldorf

Lancaster R5725. F/O HW Southgate, St VA Davis, F/Sgt CA Shirley, Sgt GV Price, Sgt SH Parker, Sgt KGT Summerville, Sgt WJ Donner. 0027 – 0426. The target was identified by loop in river and docks on south side. Bombs were released from a height of 6,500ft, and were seen to drop right in the centre of the aiming point. Aircraft caught in searchlights on return journey. Three [lights] put out of action by gunners, others damaged. Engine caught fire also, but went out when feathered. **Aircraft returned on three engines.**

31 July /1 August 1942 Dusseldorf

630 aircraft, 308 Wellingtons, 113 Lancasters, 70 Halifaxes, 61 Stirlings, 54 Hampdens and 24 Whitleys. This was another raid in which Bomber Command's training units provided aircraft, though it was not an attempt to reach the 1,000 aircraft figure. It was the first occasion when more than 100 Lancasters took part in a raid. 484 aircraft claimed successful bombing although their photographs showed that part of the force bombed open country. More than 900 tons of bombs were dropped.

Dusseldorf's records are very detailed (page 16 of the report gives details of a cow with an injured udder caused by a bomb splinter!). Most parts of the city and of Neuss, the suburb town over the Rhine, were hit. 453 buildings in Dusseldorf and Neuss were destroyed and more than 15,000 damaged (12,192 only lightly). 954 fires were started, of which 67 were classed as large. 279 people were killed, 245 in Dusseldorf and 34 in Neuss; 1,018 people were injured and 12,053 were bombed out.

The casualties of the Bomber Force were again heavy; 29 aircraft, 16 Wellingtons, 5 Hampdens, 4 Halifaxes, 2 Lancasters and 2 Whitleys were lost. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 292).

05/08/42 Gardening Deodar Area

Lancaster R5726. F/O HW Southgate, St VA Davis, F/Sgt CA Shirley, Sgt GV Price, Sgt SH Parker, Sgt KGT Summerville, Sgt WJ Donner. 2348 – 0548. This aircraft pinpointed ILE DE RU point DE LA course and made a timed run from there to allotted area. Vegetables were dropped from a height of 800ft, four parachutes being seen to open. First veg hung up and when jettisoned was seen to explode in the water. Very hazy, visibility poor. No opposition encountered.

06/08/42 Special Aiming Point – Osnabruck

Lancaster R5735. P/O JS Bunbury, P/O AG MacDonald, Sgt P Simpson, Sgt VA Davis, Sgt AT Mears, Sgt DJ Penfold. 0033 – 0435. This aircraft found target area by means of TR and ETA. When over target area a flare illuminated built up area, but unable to obtain definite pinpoint. Bombs were dropped from a height of 8,000ft, observed 4,000lb bomb burst in built up area. Very dark, no opposition encountered

09/08/42 Special Aiming Point – Osnabruck

Lancaster 1 R5747. F/O HW Southgate, St VA Davis, F/Sgt CA Shirley, Sgt GV Price, Sgt SH Parker, Sgt KGT Summerville, Sgt WJ Donner. 0030 – 0442. This aircraft bombed from a height of 9,000ft, visually after recognising river. 4,000lb bomb seen to burst in W end of town. Numerous fires observed in the target area. Flares dropped by previous aircraft very misleading, having been dropped in open spaces. No opposition.

9/10 August 1942 Osnabruck

192 aircraft, 91 Wellingtons, 42 Lancasters, 42 Stirlings, 19 Halifaxes, 3 Halifaxes and 3 Wellingtons lost.

Visibility was good but the initial flares were dropped over a wide area. Osnabruck's report shows that 206 houses and 1 military building were destroyed and nearly 4,000 other buildings were damaged, mostly lightly. Among industrial buildings hit were a vehicle works, a gas-meter factory, a textile factory and an iron foundry. The Herz Jesu church was hit. Much damage was also caused in the town's dock area where 10 canal barges were damaged. 62 people were killed, 40 civilians, 17 foreign workers and 5 service or air-raid men, and 107 injured. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 294).

10/08/42 Gardening Silverthorn Area

Lancaster 1 R5747. F/O HW Southgate, St VA Davis, F/Sgt CA Shirley, Sgt GV Price, Sgt SH Parker, Sgt KGT Summerville, Sgt WJ Donner. 2223 – 0418. This aircraft pinpointed Danish coast and Farnoos and made a timed run from there. Vegetables were planted from a height of 2,000ft in the allotted position, 5 parachutes being seen to open. No opposition.

12/08/42 Centre of Mainz

Lancaster 1 R5747. F/O HW Southgate, St VA Davis, F/Sgt CA Shirley, Sgt GV Price, Sgt SH Parker, Sgt KGT Summerville, Sgt WJ Donner. 2242 – 0434. This aircraft pinpointed river and bombed the target from a height of 6,000ft. Many fires were seen to be burning in woods and fields around town. Severe opposition on way home near Calais. Fix obtained and aircraft landed safely at base.

12/13 August 1942 Mainz

138 aircraft of 4 types followed up on the previous night's raid. 5 aircraft, 2 Lancasters, 1 Hampden, 1 Stirling and 1 Wellington were lost.

More damage was caused in the centre of Mainz and also in industrial areas. The main railway station was seriously damaged. Again there is some confusion over casualties; figures of 40 and 163 are quoted for number killed. Bomber Command estimated that 135 acres of Mainz were destroyed in the two raids. The roof of the cathedral and the bishop's palace were both burnt out, but it is not known on which night this happened. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 295).

15/08/42 Aiming Point X Dusseldorf

Lancaster 1 R5725. F/O HW Southgate, St VA Davis, F/Sgt CA Shirley, Sgt GV Price, Sgt SH Parker, Sgt KGT Summerville, Sgt WJ Donner. 0032 – 0429. Under conditions of poor visibility this aircraft bombed the target area from a height of 13,000ft on Gee fix, few small fires seen burning. Disappointing trip, unable to pinpoint.

15/16 August 1942 Dusseldorf

131 aircraft of 5 types, 2 Lancasters, 1 Hampden and 1 Wellington lost.

Visibility was poor and the bombing scattered. Dusseldorf and Neuss reports only a light raid, the most serious incident being in the centre of Neuss where a 4,000lb bomb caused much blast damage to buildings, including the Rathaus, the police station, the telegraph office and the hospital at the Herz Jesu convent. 1 person was killed in Neuss, none in Dusseldorf; 13 people were injured. No industrial production of any kind was lost as a result of this raid. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 296).

24/08/42 Bad Kreuznach, Frankfurt

Lancaster 1 R5725. F/O HW Southgate, St VA Davis, F/Sgt CA Shirley, Sgt GV Price, Sgt SH Parker, Sgt KGT Summerville, Sgt WJ Donner. 2127 – 0310. The target identified by pinpointing and map reading down Rheine and by railway and river at Kreuznach. Bombs were dropped from a height of 8,000ft; no actual results seen except a terrific white flash, followed by a pall of smoke. No fires seen and no opposition.

From 1939 to 1940, Kreuznach became the seat of the Army High Command, was time and again targeted by Allied air raids because of the Wehrmacht barracks on Bosenheimer Straße, Alzeyer Straße and Franziska-Puricelli-Straße as well as the strategically important Berlin-Paris railway line, which then led through the town. **From:**
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bad_Kreuznach#Weimar_Republic_and_Third_Reich

24/25 August 1942 Frankfurt

226 aircraft, 104 Wellingtons, 61 Lancasters, 53 Stirlings and 8 Halifaxes, 16 aircraft, 6 Lancasters, 5 Wellingtons, 4 Stirlings and 1 Halifax lost. 5 Pathfinder aircraft, including that of the commanding officer of 7 Squadron, were among the aircraft lost.

This was the second Pathfinder led raid and the Pathfinder crews again experienced great difficulty in locating the target in cloudy conditions; most of the bombing fell in open country north and west of Frankfurt. Local reports say that some bombs fell in the city, with 17 large and 53 small fires and with moderate property damage. 5 people were killed, including 2 Flak gunners, and 95 people were injured. The Frankfurt report describes an incident where a 4-engined bomber crashed on the edge of a metal-works and its bomb, load exploded. The prisoners of war, whose nationality is not recorded, in the factory barracks nearby behaved 'splendidly'. The outlying villages of Schwalbach and Eschborn were heavily bombed.

3 Lancasters of 5 Group were sent to bomb specific targets in the town of Bingen, Mayen and Bad Kreuznach, all on the approach route of the main bomber force to Frankfurt. Bad Kreuznach was believed to be the location of the German Western Army Headquarters. All 3 Lancasters bombed and returned safely. The town records of Bingen describe the explosion of their Lancaster's 4,000lb bomb near the famous Ehrenfels mountain overlooking the Rhine. 225 houses in Bingen were damaged by the blast! (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 302 - 303).

28/08/42 Nuremburg – Special Aiming Point

Lancaster 1 R5725. F/O HW Southgate, St VA Davis, F/Sgt CA Shirley, Sgt GV Price, Sgt SH Parker, Sgt KGT Summerville, Sgt WJ Donner. 2110 – 0340. This aircraft pinpointed autobahn, wood and identified town. Bombs were dropped from a height of 8,000ft. 4,000lb bomb seen to burst among buildings. Five large fires seen burning. Visibility very good, no cloud.

28/29 August 1942 Nuremburg

159 aircraft, 71 Lancasters, 41 Wellingtons, 34 Stirlings and 13 Halifaxes. 23 aircraft, 14 Wellingtons, 4 Lancasters, 3 Stirlings and 2 Halifaxes lost.

Crews were ordered to attack Nuremburg from as low as possible. The Pathfinders found their aiming point and, for the first time, marked it with target indicators (TI's) adapted from 250lb bomb casings. Photographs showed that these were placed with great accuracy and the crews of the Main Force claimed to have carried out a good attack.

A report from Nuremburg does not quite confirm this. Bombs were dropped as far away as the town of Erlane, nearly 10 miles to the north, and 4 people were killed there. In Nuremburg itself, the number of bombs would indicate that approximately 50 aircraft hit the town. There was some damage in the

Alstadt, where about 10 historic old houses were destroyed, and the castle and imperial stables were damaged. In the south of the city, where the great pre-war Nazi rallies were held, the Kongresshalle and the wooden Kraft durch Freude town (the Strength through Joy colony) were both destroyed by fire. 137 people were killed, 126 civilian and 11 foreigners. An express train halted during the raid on an open stretch of line in the south of Nuremburg and a bomb falling nearby damaged a sleeping car, killing 3 people including a general. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 304).

1/09/42 Aiming Point A Saarbrucken

Lancaster 1 R5725. F/O HW Southgate, St VA Davis, F/Sgt CA Shirley, Sgt GV Price, Sgt SH Parker, Sgt KGT Summerville, Sgt WJ Donner. 2351 – 0448. Target pinpointed on river by Gee fix and town identified visually, aiming point seen. Bombs dropped from 11,500ft, bursts seen in built up area. Three main fires and other smaller ones observed. Very successful operation, no flak or fighters encountered, and no searchlights observed. Good visibility.

1/2 September 1942 Saarbrucken

231 aircraft of 5 types. 4 aircraft, 1 Halifax, 1 Lancaster, 1 Stirling and 1 Wellington lost.

The Pathfinders illuminated and marked a town which they believed to be Saarbrucken and the Main Force bombed it vigorously. A total of 205 aircraft claimed good bombing results. But the town bombed was Saarlouis, 13 miles to the north-west and situated in a similar bend of the river Saar. The small, non-industrial town of Saarlouis and the villages immediately surrounding were heavily damaged. The exact extent of this damage is not recorded, but 52 civilians were killed. The report from Saarlouis adds that the number of deaths would have been much higher if many people had not been able to take shelter in the unoccupied concrete positions of the Westwall (the Siegfried Line), which ran around Saarlouis. The report also says that this community was enraged to be bombed so heavily. No bombs fell on Saarbrucken. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 305).

14/09/42 Wilhelmshaven – Aiming Point A

Lancaster 1 W4161 F/L GA Wilkins, P/O Stringer, Sgt JW Bagley, Sgt VA Davis, Sgt DA Gurney, Sgt A Pearson, P/O HR Clarke. 2004 – 0042. This aircraft identified target area by breakwaters, docks and shape of Jade Bussen. Bombs were dropped from a height of 9,000ft and 4,000lb seen to burst, results not seen. Considerable glow over target area. Dark, no cloud, ground haze.

14/15 September 1942 Wilhelmshaven

202 aircraft of 5 types, 2 Wellingtons were the only aircraft lost. The 4 aircraft of 408 (Canadian) Squadron on this raid represented the last operational efforts by Hampden aircraft with front-line squadrons.

The Pathfinder marking was accurate and Wilhelmshaven reports its worst raid to date. Housing and city-centre type buildings are listed as being the hardest hit. 77 people were killed and more than 50 injured. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 309).

16/09/42 Essen – Special Aiming Point

Lancaster 1 W4161 F/L GA Wilkins, P/O EHG Stringer, Sgt JW Bagley, Sgt VA Davis, Sgt DA Gurney, Sgt A Pearson, P/O HR Clarke. 2026 – 0109. This aircraft found the target area by Dortmund canal and bend in river. Bombs were dropped from a height of 9,000ft. HC seen to burst. Visibility good, no cloud, dark.

16/17 September 1942 Essen

369 aircraft, including aircraft from training groups. 39 aircraft, 21 Wellingtons, 9 Lancasters, 5 Stirlings, 3 Halifaxes and 1 Whitley lost.

Although much of the bombing was scattered, this was probably the most successful attack on this difficult target. There were 33 large and 80 medium fires. 8 industrial and 6 transport premises were hit. The Krupps works were hit by 15 high explosive bombs and by a crashing bomber loaded with incendiaries. There was much housing damage. In Essen and its immediate surroundings, 47 people were killed and 92 injured.

Many other towns were hit, in particular Bochum with 50 fires and 4 people dead, Wuppertal with 13 dead, Herne with a large fire in a lorry garage and Cochem, a small town on the Moselle, 90 miles south of Essen, which received 1 bomb load destroying 4 houses and killing 15 people. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 309 - 310).

18/09/42 Gardening – Elderberry Area

Lancaster 1 W4161 F/L GA Wilkins, P/O EHG Stringer, Sgt JW Bagley, Sgt VA Davis, Sgt DA Gurney, Sgt A Pearson, P/O HR Clarke. 1959 – 0350. This aircraft reached allotted area but the bomb doors would not open. Vegetables brought back, and aircraft landed at Hinton.

23/09/42 Dornier Factory near Wismar

Lancaster 1 W4161 F/L GA Wilkins, P/O EHG Stringer, Sgt JW Bagley, Sgt VA Davis, Sgt DA Gurney, Sgt A Pearson, P/O HR Clarke. 2245 – 0550. This aircraft pinpointed on Samsø Island. Very cloudy over target area. Caught in searchlight and evasive action taken. Bombs were dropped from height of 11,000ft, bursts seen on quayside. Pranged AARHUS on route home. Dense smoke and large explosions in harbour.

23/24 September 1942 Wismar

83 Lancasters of 5 Group; 4 lost.

This was judged to be a successful attack on the Baltic coastal town and the nearby Dornier aircraft factory. Many crews came down to less than 2,000ft. Numerous fires were seen including a large one in what was believed to be the aircraft factory. Wismar reports 32 houses and 8 industrial buildings seriously damaged; 67 people were killed and 109 injured. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 311).

05/10/42 Aachen – Aiming Point A

Lancaster 1 W4161 F/L GA Wilkins, P/O EHG Stringer, Sgt JW Bagley, Sgt VA Davis, Sgt DA Gurney, Sgt A Pearson, P/O HR Clarke. 1921 – 0020. The night was dark with no cloud and a slight ground haze, and conditions were difficult. The first clutch of flares were dropped but no bursts were observed. On leaving the target area two fair sized fires were seen to be burning and large clouds of black smoke were rising. Return to base was uneventful.

5/6 October 1942 Aachen

257 aircraft, 101 Wellingtons, 74 Lancasters, 59 Halifaxes and 23 Stirlings. 10 aircraft, 5 Halifaxes, 2 Stirlings, 2 Wellingtons and 1 Lancaster lost. A further 6 aircraft crashed in England, possibly in thunderstorms which were present when some squadrons took off for the raid.

The weather continued to be bad over Germany. There was little Pathfinder marking at Aachen and most of the bombing fell in other areas. Aachen reports that the raid on this night was carried out by

an estimated 10 aircraft, and that the centre of the attack appeared to be in the southern suburb of Burtscheid, where a 4,000lb bomb severely damaged a hospital and two nearby churches. 34 fires were started, 5 of them being classified as large. A moderate amount of housing was hit and, rather surprisingly, 22 industrial buildings were damaged. 5 people were killed and 39 injured.

Many of the bombs intended for Aachen fell in the small Dutch town of Lutterade, 17 miles away from Aachen, and it seems that most of the Pathfinder marking was over this place. The Mayor of Geleen, the Dutch district in which Lutterade is now situated, reports heavy bombing and much damage on that night. More than 800 houses were seriously damaged; 83 people were killed, 22 were injured and 3,000 were made homeless. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 313 - 314).

06/10/42 Osnabruck – Aiming Point D

Lancaster 1 W4161 F/L GA Wilkins, F/L EHG Stringer, Sgt JW Bagley, W/Cdr RJ Oxley, Sgt VA Davis, Sgt DA Gurney, Sgt A Pearson, P/O HR Clarke. 1925 – 2358. The night was dark with a good deal of ground haze, plus smoke from fires. A pin-point was obtained on Dummer See and Wesser and bombs started a good fire on being released. A number of deep red fires were burning in the centre of the town and numerous incendiary sticks were burning some miles N of target. A very successful trip.

6/7 October 1942 Osnabruck

237 aircraft, 101 Wellingtons, 68 Lancasters, 38 Stirlings, and 30 Halifaxes; 6 aircraft, 2 Halifaxes, 2 Lancasters and 2 Stirlings were lost.

The Pathfinders succeeded in illuminating Drummer See, a large lake north east of the target which was used as a run-in point. The town of Osnabruck was then found and marked. The bombing was well concentrated, with most of the attack falling in the centre and the southern parts of the target. Osnabruck's report shows that 149 houses were destroyed, 530 were seriously damaged and 2,784 lightly damaged. 6 industrial premises were destroyed and 14 damaged. Other places hit were 6 public buildings, 5 churches, 4 schools, 1 hospital and the local gas works. 65 people were killed, 45 civilians, 16 policemen or servicemen and 4 foreign workers, and 151 were injured. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 314).

17/10/42 Le Creusot – Schneider Factory

Lancaster 1 W4161 F/L GA Wilkins, F/L EHG Stringer, Sgt JW Bagley, Sgt VA Davis, Sgt DA Gurney, Sgt A Pearson, P/O HR Clarke. 1200 – 2220. The trip to the target was a very exhausting affair due to too much slip stream from the leading sections who were flying much too low. The target clearly seen and this aircraft's bombs were seen to burst across the Northern end of the Factory, in the centre of the target. After the bombing the factory became obscured by smoke but fires were seen to start and blue flashes were observed from the Power Station. The return journey was uneventful and the aircraft landed at Hinton as the weather further north was not worth the gamble.

17 October 1942 Le Creusot

This famous raid was carried out against the large Schneider factory at Le Creusot, situated more than 300 miles inside France. The factory was regarded as the French equivalent to Krupps and produced heavy guns, railway engines and, it was believed, tanks and armoured cars. A large worker's housing estate was situated at one end of the factory. Bomber Command had been given this as the highest priority target in France for a night attack but only in the most favourable of conditions. Harris (AVM Harris) decided to attack by day, at low level, despite the fate of the force sent to Augsburg exactly 6 months earlier, 7 out of the 12 Lancasters dispatched were shot down. The task was given to Air Vice-Marshal Coryton's 5 Group and its 9 Lancaster squadrons carried out a series of low-level practice flights over England.

After a favourable weather report, 94 Lancasters set out on the afternoon of 17 October. The force was led by **Wing Commander LC Slee of 49 Squadron**. 88 aircraft were to bomb the Schneider factory; the other 6 were to attack a nearby transformer station which supplied the factory with electricity. The Lancasters flew in loose formation over the sea around Brittany, and crossed the coast of France between La Rochelle and St-Nazaire without any fighter escort. For 300 miles the Lancasters flew at tree-top level across France. No German fighters attacked the bombers during this flight. The greatest danger was from birds; 4 aircraft were damaged and 2 men injured in bird strikes.

After a fine piece of work by Wing Commander Slee's navigator, Pilot Officer AS Grant, the force reached its last turning point near Nevers and gained height for bombing. There was practically no flak at the target and bombing took place in clear conditions at heights of between 2,500 and 7,500ft. Nearly 140 tons of bombs were dropped. The Lancasters returned home safely as darkness closed in. The only casualty was one of the aircraft of 61 Squadron which bombed the nearby transformer power station at such low level that it crashed into a building.

The 5 Group crews claimed a successful attack on the Schneider factory, but photographs taken later showed that much of the bombing had fallen short and had struck the worker's housing estate near the factory. Some bombs had fallen into the factory area but damage was not extensive. It has not been possible to obtain a report from France on the casualties suffered by the local people in this raid. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 317).



Low-level photographic reconnaissance photograph of blast-damaged buildings at the Breuil steelworks at Le Creusot, France, following the special low-level daylight raid by Avro Lancasters of No. 5 Group, Bomber Command, on 17 October 1942. **From:** bomber-commands-operation-robinson-hits-le-creusot-works#sthash.bSvjZMLu.dpuf

06/11/42 Genoa – Aiming Point C

Lancaster 1 W4161 W/Cdr WM Russell, F/S J Medani, Sgt BG Murtough, Sgt VA Davis, P/O J Armour, Sgt WA Connor, Sgt G Cruickshank. 2130 – 0741. The journey out was uneventful and the target identified perfectly in the excellent visibility by the breakwater, the harbour and the town. The primary target was attacked and seen clearly in the bomb sights. The bombs were seen to explode in the town and start a number of fires. Further fires were seen burning well in the area, and in particular one large fire N of the aiming point. Navigation on this trip was excellent and Nickels (leaflets) were dropped over Rhodes (Rhodes?) [other aircraft dropped their leaflets over France]. A completely successful operation.

07/11/42 Genoa – Aiming Point C

Lancaster 1 W4161 W/Cdr WM Russell, Sgt VA Davis, F/S WJ Farrelly, P/O JA Armour, Sgt MG MacDonald, Sgt GB Murtough, Sgt DP Williams. 1744 – 0205. Visibility was good and there was no cloud and the target was easily identified by the jetties. Bombs were released and seen to explode in the built-up area causing good fires. Pathfinder Flares were very helpful in recognising the target and were actually on time. This aircraft circled the vicinity for 15 minutes and several large fires were developing. 60 x 4lb incendiaries hung up (cause not known) and were brought back to base. **On the journey out the aircraft was attacked by 2 FW (Fokker Wolf) 190's at 1855 hrs.** These attacks were made towards port bow, using cloud illuminated searchlights as background. Corkscrew evasive action was being used and no hits were registered. This was a successful operation.

13/11/42 Genoa – Aiming Point A

Lancaster 1 W4161 W/Cdr WM Russell, F/S G Stevens, Sgt GB Murtough, Sgt VA Davis, P/O A Armour, Sgt NG McDonald, Sgt NE Beattie. 1815 – 0240. In good visibility this aircraft pinpointed by the docks and the target was clearly seen and identified. Bombs were seen to explode on the primary target and numerous fires were seen burning around aiming point. The Path Finder Force did good work on this trip, and flak at the target was in greater volume than usual, but decreased again in proportion to the bombs dropped. This was a very successful raid and the target was really well hit. 1 x 1,000 GP (general purpose bomb) hung up.

28/11/42 Turin

Lancaster 1 W/Cdr WM Russell, Sgt VA Davis, W/O G Stevens, P/O A Armour, Sgt NG Beattie, Sgt E Hough, Sgt DJ Penfold. 1910 – 0305. In very good visibility, this aircraft ran down the river from N to S, did a right hand turn over the town and identified the target by the racetrack in the centre. Bombs released but our own results were not observed. The town was severely hit, with numerous fires over large area, and the glow could be seen until the aircraft was well over the Alps. A feature of the trip was the good navigation, and an aircraft (presumed) seen to crash at Molaretto (45.10 N 07,00 E) at 2200hrs. An excellent and most successful trip.

28/29 November 1942 Turin

228 aircraft, 117 Lancasters, 47 Stirlings, 45 Halifaxes and 19 Wellingtons. 2 Stirlings and 1 Wellington lost.

Part of the force bombed before the Pathfinders were ready but the remainder carried out very accurate bombing, some of it around the Royal Arsenal. Wing Commander GP Gibson and Flight Lieutenant WN Whamoud of 106 Squadron dropped the first 8,000lb bombs on Italy. Turin recorded 67 people killed and 83 injured.

During the raid on Turin, a Stirling of 140 Squadron came down to 2,000ft in order to establish the exact position of its target. The Australian captain of the crew, Flight Sergeant RH Middleton, made 3 runs across the city and his aircraft was hit by light anti-aircraft fire, a shell exploding in the cockpit. The two pilots and the wireless operator were all seriously wounded. Flight Sergeant Middleton became unconscious temporarily, but the co-pilot, flight Sergeant LA Hyder, managed to keep control and the bombs released. The Stirling was hit again over Turin and also over France on the return flight.

The coast of England was reached but the captain decided there was little chance of landing safely, mainly because of a shortage of petrol, but also because of the damaged state of the aircraft, and the injuries of the two pilots. Flight Sergeant Middleton himself had been badly wounded in the head, was

very weak and could hardly see or speak. He turned parallel with the coast and ordered his crew to bale out. 5 men did so and survived, but Middleton and 2 other men were still in the plane when it crashed into the sea.

Flight Sergeant Middleton was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross; he was the second Australian in Bomber Command to win the VC. The co-pilot was awarded the DFM and 4 other members of the crew were decorated. Middleton's body was washed up on the Kent coast and was buried at Beck Row, Mildenhall, near his home airfield of Lakenheath. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 327 -328).

07/12/42 Gardening – Elderberry Sector

Lancaster W461. W/C WM Russell, Sgt VA Davis, W/O G Stevens, P/O JA Armour, P/O WC Grey, F/O CW Walker, Sgt J Eastwood. 1653 – 0138. Gardening in the Elderberry area was successfully accomplished by this aircraft and mines were dropped in the allotted position from a height of 900ft and parachutes seen to open. Weather was bad on the homeward journey, but navigation was excellent and the loops were found to be very helpful after leaving the target. The pilot reports that Biarritz was very poorly blacked out and the Spanish cities were fully lighted up, and note was also made of the Steel Works at Bilbao which appeared to be working very hard, judging by the blast furnaces. Definitely a completed operation.

02/01/43 Gardening – Deodars

Lancaster W461. W/C WM Russell, Sgt VA Davis, W/O G Stevens, P/O JA Armour, Sgt NG McDonald, F/S I Fraser, Sgt DJ Penfold. 1708 – 0206. Visibility was very poor and there was 8/10ths cloud with a base of 800ft. PTE De Grave and Ile de Cordouan were clearly identified by this aircraft only after 50 minutes search, and the veg were planted successfully in the allotted positions from a height of 1,000ft. This was an uneventful trip and the pilot remarked that 2 or 3 500lb bombs could be carried as many useful targets can frequently be seen on gardening trips when flying at low altitude. A completed operation.

16/01/43 Berlin

Lancaster 1 R5687. W/C WM Russell, Sgt VA Davis, W/O G Stevens, P/O JA Armour, Sgt WA Miller, P/O NE Beattie, Sgt DJ Penfold. 1650 – 0040. The target was identified by the PFF Red marker bombs. There was a half moon at the time the attack developed, and visibility was clear with breaks in the cloud. This aircraft orbited Strausberg Wood waiting for the PFF marker bombs and finally ran up on a large fire in a built-up area. The PFF apparently used this to find their own position for they dropped their marker bombs right across it. The target was well illuminated by a large fire with black smoke up to 5,000ft. No other fires appeared to have gained any hold while this aircraft was over the target, and the captain expressed the opinion that the raid was not a triumph of saturation. Aircraft were observed being shot at at Kiel and Lubeck. A completed operation.

16/17 January 1943 Berlin

201 aircraft, 190 Lancasters, 11 Halifaxes from the Pathfinders and 1, 4 and 5 Groups were dispatched on this interesting raid; the first attack on Berlin for 14 months, and the first use of proper target indicators, and the use of an all 4-engined bombing force. Stirlings were withdrawn from an original plan so that only the higher-flying Lancasters and Halifaxes would participate. Most of the force was provided by 5 Group.

The raid was a disappointment. Berlin was well beyond the range of Gee and Oboe, and H2S radar was not yet ready. Thick cloud which was encountered on the way to the target hindered navigation, and Berlin was found to be covered by haze. Bombing was scattered, mostly in the southern areas,

with the greatest concentration in the Tempelhof district. The report from Berlin contains some interesting items among the usual details of buildings destroyed etc. The German air-raid warning failed to report the approach of a large bomber force, only of a few single aircraft. The Lancasters and Halifaxes arrived over Berlin in the evening when a lot of people were away from their homes. The first bombs coincided with the sounding of the sirens and there were many scenes of panic until the police could control the crowds attempting to find shelter. Goebbels, the Gauleiter of Berlin, is reported as having been most angry and he ordered an overhaul of the procedure. Because of the failure, an unusually high number of people were killed, considering the weakness of the bombing: 198; but this figure includes 53 prisoners of war, 52 Frenchmen and 1 Englishman, and 6 foreign workers. Another event was that about half the personnel of the Berlin Flak units were away from the city, taking part in a course; this resulted in a very much lighter barrage than normal.

The next day the whole of Berlin was talking of a 'miracle' which occurred at the Deutschlandhalle, the largest covered hall in Europe, with 10,000 seats. The raid had started in the middle of the evening show of the yearly circus in the hall, a major event in Berlin's social life. The air-raid police and the fire brigade managed to supervise the evacuation of every person and all the circus animals to open ground in the parks around the hall. 21 people were slightly injured in the crush as the crowds left the building. Just after the last person had left, a large number of incendiary bombs fell on the hall and it was completely burnt out, becoming the largest ruin in Berlin so far in the war. None of the 10,000 people in the open nearby were hurt!

The RAF casualties were also light. Only 1 Lancaster from 5 Group was lost. The Bomber Command report mentions the lightness of the Berlin Flak defences and assumed that the greater altitude of the bomber force surprised the German gunners. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 345 -346).

14/02/43 Milan

Lancaster 111 ED 482. W/C WM Russell, Sgt VA Davis, W/O G Stevens, P/O JA Armour, P/O NE Beattie, F/S DJ Penfold, Sgt JG Hanby, Sgt Pickens. 1843 – 0339. This was a very good trip and there were no snags at all. The built-up area was very clearly seen in detail and the target was in the sights when the target was attacked at 22.44hrs, from a height of 9,000ft. The bomb was seen to burst slightly SE of the aiming point. There were a large number of fires scattered in the town and one large oil fire was burning well on the Eastern edge. No bombs were seen to fall outside the built-up area. The Red TI flares were seen only after the bombing and they appeared to fall mostly in the Northern half of the town. A completed operation.

14/15 February 1943 Milan

142 Lancasters of 1, 5 and 8 Groups attacked Milan and carried out concentrated bombing in good visibility. Fires could be seen from 100 miles away on the return flight. No report is available from Milan.

Italian defences were unusually weak. And only 2 Lancasters were lost on this raid. An unusual story is available, however, about a Lancaster of 101 Squadron, which was attacked by an Italian CR42 fighter just after bombing the target. The Lancaster was set on fire and the two gunners seriously injured, although they claimed to have shot down the fighter. The pilot, Sergeant IH Hazard, had to dive 8,000ft to put out the fire and 1 member of the crew mistook instructions and baled out. The remainder of the crew completed the extinguishing of the fire, tended the wounded and eventually reached England. The only officer of the crew, Pilot Officer FW Gates the wireless operator, was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and Sergeant Hazard and the other members of the crew who helped to bring the Lancaster home all received Conspicuous Gallantry Medals, an unusually high number of awards of this decoration.

Sergeant Hazard died with his flight engineer and navigator when their Lancaster crashed in a flying accident in Yorkshire less than a month after the Milan incident, and Pilot Officer Gates died when the Lancaster in which he was flying, with another crew, crashed when returning from Dortmund on 5 May 1943; the two air gunners in the crew appear to have survived the war. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 353 - 354)

26/02/43 Cologne

Lancaster 111 ED 415. W/C WM Russell, Sgt VA Davis, F/S MR Felsen, Sgt FC Brown, Sgt R Goldstraw, Sgt AG Chapman, Sgt S Hatton. 1937 – 2337. The Pilot reports that this was a very good trip. There was no cloud over the target and the attack was made at 2126Hrs from 15,000ft. Bombs were released on the centre of the TI (Target Indicator) markers but the results from these bursts were not seen. There were some really big fires and numerous small ones, which were well concentrated. A most successful operation.

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)

Note: same raid as F/O Smith [captain of the crew of JB 708 OF – J which crashed 11/05/44 with all the crew being killed] when he was with 466 Squadron

27/03/43 Berlin – Aiming Point B

Lancaster 111 ED 478. W/C WM Russell, Sgt DA Duncan, Sgt VA Davis, W/O G Stevens, Sgt WJ Evans, Sgt RL Hayter, Sgt ICV Dooley, Sgt KD White. 2016 – 0343. Primary target attacked at 2310hrs from 17,000ft. **Port inner engine hit by flak.** Pilot states excellent trip. Flashless bursts were observed.

27/28 March 1943 Berlin

396 aircraft, 191 Lancasters, 124 Halifaxes and 81 Stirlings. 9 aircraft, 4 Halifaxes, 3 Lancasters and 2 Stirlings lost.

This raid was basically a failure. The bombing force approached the target from the south-west and the Pathfinders established two separate marking areas, but both well short of the city. No bombing photographs were plotted within 5 miles of the aiming point in the centre of Berlin, and most of the bombing fell from 7 to 17 miles short of the aiming point.

The Berlin report confirms that the damage in the city was not heavy, although the bombing was slightly more widespread than the bombing photographs indicated. The local report, however, contains several interesting aspects. Only 16 houses were classed as completely destroyed but many further buildings, including public utilities and factories, suffered light damage. These were typical results in a scattered raid; the local fire services were able to contain fires quickly. But 102 people were killed and 260 injured. The majority of these casualties occurred when two bombs at the Anhalter Station hit a military train bringing men on leave from the Russian front; 80 soldiers were killed and 63 injured. Our researcher in Berlin, Arno Abendroth, states that the damage to Berlin would have been heavier if approximately one quarter of the bombs dropped had not turned out to be duds. 'The English factories must have been under some stress,' he writes. Further out from the city centre, stray bombs hit several Luftwaffe establishments. 3 planes were destroyed and a Flak position was hit at Tempelhof airfield; the flying school at Staaken airfield was damaged and a further 70 service personnel were killed or wounded. These casualties are in addition to those in Berlin.

But the most interesting story concerns a secret Luftwaffe stores depot in the woods at Teltow, 11 miles south-west of the centre of Berlin. By chance, this was in the middle of the main concentration of

bombs and a large quantity of valuable radio, radar and other technical stores was destroyed. The Luftwaffe decided that this depot was the true target for the RAF raid on this night and were full of admiration for the special unit which had found and bombed it so accurately. The Gestapo investigated houses nearby because someone reported that light signals had been flashed to the bombers. This theory was still current when our research into this raid was carried out in 1983! (Middlebrook & Everitt p371)

04/04/43 Kiel – Aiming Point B

Lancaster 111 ED 478. W/C WM Russell, Sgt VA Davis, W/O G Stevens, F/O JA Armour, F/O NE Beattie, Sgt E Hough, Sgt JW Brant. 2115 – 0329. Primary target attacked at 2335 from 17,000ft. One HC (high capacity bomb) seen to burst over target, through cloud which was 10/10.

4/5 April 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)

Note: F/O JB Smith 466 Squadron on same operation.

13/04/43 Spezia – Aiming Point A

Lancaster 1 W 4161. W/C WM Russell, Sgt VA Davis, W/O G Stevens, F/O JA Armour, F/O NE Beattie, Sgt RL Rutherford, P/O A Smith. 2049 – 0628. Primary attacked at 0204 from 8,500ft. The coast line and town were clearly seen in the light of the flares. Bombs were seen to burst in the vicinity of the dock area. Quite a few fires were observed in the town, but most appeared to be among the woods and hills around the town. Sortie completed.

13/14 April 1943La Spezia

208 Lancasters and 3 Halifaxes bombed the dock area of La Spezia and caused heavy damage. 4 Lancasters were lost and 3 more, either damaged or in mechanical difficulty, flew on to land on Allied airfields in North Africa. It is believed that this was the first occasion that the recently captured North African airfields were used for Bomber Command aircraft in distress. The 3 Lancasters flew back to England later. (Middlebrook & Everitt p376)

26/08/43: 97 PFF Squadron RAF Coningsby

First operation with crew of F/Sgt Roberts 18/10/43 to Hanover, the last trip was 18/03/44 to Frankfurt. He completed 19 sorties with the crew.

23/06/44: 582 PFF Squadron RAF Little Staughton

582 Path Finder Force Squadron – RAF Little Staughton

On the border between Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire, Little Staughton village is in Beds, with the airfield itself just over the border into Cambridgeshire in the area known as Staughton Moor.

During WW2, Little Staughton airfield was built in 41/42 to Class A standard. In 1942, it was handed over to the USAAF who later decided that the supporting road network wasn't good enough. After using it for a couple of years, they handed it back to the RAF.



The RAF officially took over Little Staughton on March 1, 1944. On April 1, the 'C' Flights of No. 7 Squadron at Oakington and No. 156 Squadron at Upwood were transferred with their Lancasters to Little Staughton to form No. 582 Squadron. Next day, No. 109 Squadron with its Mosquitos came in from Marham. These two squadrons were to be the only occupants of the station for the remainder of hostilities. No. 582 flew its first raid on the night of April 9/10, 1944 and its last on April 25, 1945, a total of 165 raids during which it lost 28 Lancasters.

From: <http://www.derelictplaces.co.uk/main/showthread.php?t=12497#.VOTWBy5WSFo>

Operations with 582 Path Finder Force Squadron

16/07/44 St Philibert Ferme Construction Works

Lancaster 111 ND 438. F/L PR Sherlock Captain RAF, J35934 F/O KE Lane RCAF Navigator 1, J35902 JR Gorman RCAF Navigator 2, W/O EB Hazlehurst RAF Wireless Op, F/L RK Simmonds RAF Mid Upper Gunner, P/O HE Jacobs RAF Rear Gunner, W/O VA Davis RAF F/Engineer. 1430 – 1730. Target identified by smoke puff and attacked at 1556hrs from 16,000ft, heading 054 degrees T. IAS (Indicator Air Speed) 145 knots. Bombs dropped: 16x500 GP. Arrived on target about 200yds behind formation, but bombed immediately below smoke puff. 2x500 GP bombs brought back, hung up. Weather over target 10/10ths S/Cu. Tops about 8,000ft. Bomb load 18x500 GP

16 July 1944 St Philibert Ferme

30 Lancaster and 3 Mosquitoes of 8 Group bombed the flying-bomb launching site through thick cloud. No aircraft lost. (Middlebrook & Everitt p544)

19/07/44 Mont Candon Construction works

Lancaster 111 ND 438. F/L PR Sherlock Captain RAF, J35934 F/O KE Lane RCAF Navigator 1, J35902 JR Gorman RCAF Navigator 2, W/O EB Hazlehurst RAF Wireless Op, F/L RK Simmonds RAF Mid Upper Gunner, P/O HE Jacobs RAF Rear Gunner, W/O VA Davis RAF F/Engineer. 1435 – 1715. Successful A. Attacked 1600hrs from 15,000ft, heading 120 T degrees 150 knots. Bombs dropped 18 x 500GP. Smoke puff observed but no bombs seen to fall at the time we came abeam of it, so we withheld ours. Four bombs seen to fall, 3 seen after passing smoke puff; we were rear aircraft in attack. Most of the bombs appeared to be North of the A/P (aiming point). Weather over target; break in 8/10ths cloud immediately over target. Bomb load 18 x 500 GP.

19 July 1944 Flying Bomb sites

132 Lancasters and 12 Mosquitoes of 5 and 8 Groups attacked sites and a supply dump. All targets were partially cloud-covered but the targets were believed to have been hit. No aircraft lost. (Middlebrook & Everitt p546)

20/07/44 Foret de-Croc Construction Site

Lancaster 111 PB120. F/L PR Sherlock Captain RAF, J35934 F/O KE Lane RCAF Navigator 1, J35902 JR Gorman RCAF Navigator 2, W/O EB Hazlehurst RAF Wireless Op, F/L RK Simmonds RAF Mid Upper Gunner, P/O HE Jacobs RAF Rear Gunner, W/O VA Davis RAF F/Engineer. 1425 – 1720. Attacked 1618hrs from 15,000ft, heading 120 degs T, 135 knots. Bombs dropped 16 x 500 GP. We were about 100yds behind rest of formation so delayed release. Believe bombing was a considerable undershoot. Formation dropped and leader was seen carrying on for about 30 seconds before dropping and firing smoke puff.

20 July 1944 Foret de-Croc

A small raid by 20 aircraft on the Foret de-Croc [V-Weapon] site where the Oboe leader Lancaster was shot down on the bombing run and the bombs of this force all missed the target. This was the only aircraft lost. (Middlebrook & Everitt p546)

22/07/44 Foret de-Croc Construction Site

Lancaster 111 JA673. F/L PR Sherlock Captain RAF, J35934 F/O KE Lane RCAF Navigator 1, J35902 JR Gorman RCAF Navigator 2, W/O EB Hazlehurst RAF Wireless Op, F/L RK Simmonds RAF Mid Upper Gunner, P/O HE Jacobs RAF Rear Gunner, W/O VA Davis RAF F/Engineer. 0720 – 1020. Successful A. Attacked 0912-35hrs from 15,500ft, heading 110 degrees T 140 knots. Bombs dropped 16 x 500 MC, 2 x 500 GP LD (Low Drag). Nothing seen of results. Weather over target 10/10ths S/Cu, Tops 6/7,000ft. Bomb load 16 x 500 MC, 2 x 500 GP LD.

24/07/44 Stuttgart

Lancaster 111 NE140. F/L PR Sherlock Captain RAF, J35934 F/O KE Lane RCAF Navigator 1, J35902 JR Gorman RCAF Navigator 2, W/O EB Hazlehurst RAF Wireless Op, F/L RK Simmonds RAF Mid Upper Gunner, P/O HE Jacobs RAF Rear Gunner, W/O VA Davis RAF F/Engineer. 2155 – 0505. Attacked at 0138hrs from 19,000ft heading 127 degs T 159 knots. Bombs dropped 1 x 4,000HC MINOL 4 x 1,000 MC. The 1st Wanganui (Green/Yellow) went down at 0137.36hrs, this was followed by another 15 secs later. A Red TI was seen burning on the ground when we bombed. Photo flashes seemed to be well concentrated but we were too early to observe results of attack. Weather over target 9/10ths thin cloud, tops 8,000ft. Bomb load 1 x 4,000HC MINOL, 4 x 1,000 MC.

24/25 July 1944 Stuttgart

461 Lancasters and 153 Halifaxes. 17 Lancasters and 4 Halifaxes lost

This was the first of three heavy raids on Stuttgart in 5 nights and the only report is a composite one for the 3 raids. The 3 raids caused the most serious damage of the war in the central districts of Stuttgart which, being situated in a series of narrow valleys, had eluded Bomber Command for several years. They were now devastated and most of Stuttgart's public and cultural buildings were destroyed. The second of the 3 raids, on the night of 25/26 July, was the most successful. Total casualties in Stuttgart during this series of raids were 1,171 people killed and 1,600 injured. (Middlebrook & Everitt p548)

27/07/44 Chateau Bernapre Construction Works

Lancaster 111 NE140. F/L PR Sherlock Captain RAF, J35934 F/O KE Lane RCAF Navigator 1, J35902 JR Gorman RCAF Navigator 2, W/O EB Hazlehurst RAF Wireless Op, F/L RK Simmonds RAF Mid Upper Gunner, P/O HE Jacobs RAF Rear Gunner, W/O VA Davis RAF F/Engineer. 1750 – 2105. Attacked at 1955.48hrs from 16,000ft, 090 T degs 144 knots. Bombs dropped 16 x 500MC, 2 x 500 GP LD. Slight tendency to overshoot in bombing seen. Weather over target 7/10ths cloud, tops 10-12,000ft. Bomb load 16 x 500 MC, 2 x 500 GP LD.

30/07/44 Battle Area

Note: Probably part of Battle in Northern France 9 July – 30 August 1944, see https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/30059/ww2_normandy.pdf

Lancaster 111 NE140. F/L PR Sherlock Captain RAF, J35934 F/O KE Lane RCAF Navigator 1, J35902 JR Gorman RCAF Navigator 2, W/O EB Hazlehurst RAF Wireless Op, F/L RK Simmonds RAF Mid Upper Gunner, P/O HE Jacobs RAF Rear Gunner, W/O VA Davis RAF F/Engineer. 0645 – 1005. Attacked at 0816.48hrs from 2,000ft, heading 180 deg T, 155 knots. Bombs dropped 17 x 500 GP N Inst. At 0805 hrs M/B (Master Bomber) instructed to bomb on Red TI's and descend to 2,000ft. Bombing very concentrated and a large column of smoke rose to at least 2,500ft and we were in this at the time we bombed. Gee release point exact at bombs gone. M/B faint but clear. Weather over target 9-10/10ths cumulus, tops 5,000ft, base 2,000ft, visibility good below cloud. Bomb load 18 x GP M Inst.

30 July 1944 Normandy Battle Area

629 aircraft, 462 Lancasters, 200 Halifaxes and 30 Mosquitoes were sent to bomb 6 German positions in front of a mainly American ground attack in the Villers Bocage Caumont area. The presence of cloud caused many difficulties and only 377 aircraft were able to bomb, on to Oboe markers, and only 2 of the 6 targets were effectively hit. 4 Lancasters were lost. (Middlebrook & Everitt p553)

03/08/44 L'Isle Adam Constructional Works

Lancaster 111 NE140. F/L PR Sherlock Captain RAF, J35934 F/O KE Lane RCAF Navigator 1, J35902 JR Gorman RCAF Navigator 2, W/O EB Hazlehurst RAF Wireless Op, F/L RK Simmonds RAF Mid Upper Gunner, P/O HE Jacobs RAF Rear Gunner, W/O VA Davis RAF F/Engineer. 1215 – 1525. Attacked at 1403.12hrs from 16,000ft heading 125 deg T 155 knots. Bombs dropped 11 x 1,000 GP, 3 x 500 GP, 1 x 500 GP LD. At 1403.06 hrs the TI's cascading saw a trail of smoke from TI's cascading. Target area was obscured by smoke on arrival. We first heard the M/B instructing M/P (Master Path Finder) to undershoot reds by 100 yards. Then to bomb his own TI's. When we arrived instructions were to bomb the centre of the smoke. Bombing was concentrated on target. Some sticks across river. Weather over target nil cloud, target visibility good. Bomb load 11 x 1,000 GP, 3 x 500 GP TD, 1 x 500 GP LD.

3 August 1944 Flying-Bomb Storage Sites

1,114 aircraft, 601 Lancasters, 429 Halifaxes and 21 Mosquitoes carried out major raids on the Bois de Cassan, Foret de Nieppe and the Trossy-St-Maxim (sometimes spelt Maximin) flying-bomb stores. The weather was clear and all raids were successful. 6 Lancasters lost. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 554 - 555)

04/08/44 Trossy St Maximin Construction Works

Lancaster 111 ND 438. F/L PR Sherlock Captain RAF, J35934 F/O KE Lane RCAF Navigator 1, J35902 JR Gorman RCAF Navigator 2, W/O EB Hazlehurst RAF Wireless Op, F/L RK Simmonds RAF Mid Upper Gunner, P/O HE Jacobs RAF Rear Gunner, W/O VA Davis RAF F/Engineer. 1120 – 1500. Attacked at 1316.42hrs from 14,000ft, heading 120 degs T 155 knots. Bombs dropped 11 x 1,000lb GP, 3 x 500lb GP TD, 1 x 5000lb GP (LD). At 1312hrs Master Bomber said bomb Red TI's and this was repeated 2 or 3 times. One Red TI was down on arrival, surrounded by smoke, and this we bombed. Bombing accurate, and no undershoot seen. Weather over target 3/10ths CU, tops 8,000ft approx. Bomb load x 1,000lb GP, 3 x 500lb GP TD, 1 x 5000lb GP (LD).

4 August 1944 Flying-Bomb Storage Sites

291 aircraft, 169 Halifaxes, 112 Lancasters and 10 Mosquitoes of 6 and 8 Groups attacked the Bois de Cassan and Trossy-St-Maxim sites in clear visibility. 2 Halifaxes of 6 Group were lost on the the Bois de Cassan raid and 2 Lancasters on the Trossy-St-Maxim raid. (Middlebrook & Everitt p555)

12/08/44 Russelsheim

Lancaster 111 JA 673. F/L PR Sherlock Captain RAF, J35934 F/O KE Lane RCAF Navigator 1, J35902 JR Gorman RCAF Navigator 2, W/O EB Hazlehurst RAF Wireless Op, F/L RK Simmonds RAF Mid Upper Gunner, P/O HE Jacobs RAF Rear Gunner, W/O VA Davis RAF F/Engineer. 2155 – 0240. Attacked at 0008.15hrs from 18,000ft, heading 069 degs T, 150 knots. Bombs dropped 6 x 2,000lb. 2 sticks of illuminating flares were dropped as we bombed. 0009.30hrs TI Green went down, Red seen through cloud after leaving but nothing further. Weather over target, Cirrus to 17,000ft round target. Clear patches over target. Bomb load 6 x 2,000lb.

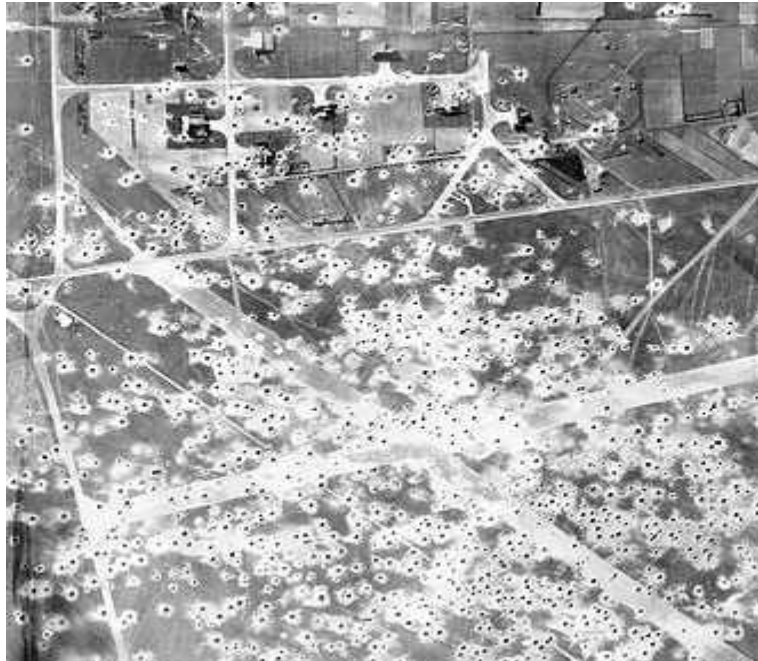
12/13 August 1944 Russelsheim

297 aircraft, 191 Lancasters, 96 Halifaxes and 10 Mosquitoes. 13 Lancasters and 7 Halifaxes lost. The target for this raid was the Opel motor factory and normal Pathfinder marking methods were used. The motor factory was only slightly damaged; the local report states that the tyre and dispatch departments and the power house were hit, but most of the bombs fell in open countryside south of the target. 9 people were killed and 31 injured. (Middlebrook & Everitt p561)

15/08/44 St Trond Brustem – Volkel Airfield

Lancaster 111 PB 378. F/L PR Sherlock Captain RAF, J35934 F/O KE Lane RCAF Navigator 1, J35902 JR Gorman RCAF Navigator 2, W/O EB Hazlehurst RAF Wireless Op, F/L RK Simmonds RAF Mid Upper Gunner, P/O HE Jacobs RAF Rear Gunner, W/O VA Davis RAF F/Engineer. 1015 – 1320. Attacked at 1201.30hrs from 17,000ft, 100deg T 155 knots. Bombs dropped 10 x 1,000lb MC 2 x 500lb GP 2 x 500 GP TD. Red TI's were seen cascading as we ran in, falling very slightly to west of AP (aiming point). Our bombs fell slightly south of the AP. Master Bomber could be heard instructing Main Force to bomb Red TI's at intersection of runways and ordering them to increase speed. Main Force were late and very little bombing was seen while we were over target. After leaving however, a large pall of smoke was rising from the A/P. Weather over target, nil cloud, very good visibility. Bomb load 10 x 1,000lb MC 2 x 500lb GP 2 x 500 GP TD.

Note: see picture below of airfield and damage.



From: [wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8c/Daylight_raid_to_Volkel_airfield.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Daylight_raid_to_Volkel_airfield.jpg)

15 August 1944 Luftwaffe Night-fighter Airfields

1,004 aircraft, 599 Lancasters, 385 Halifaxes, 19 Mosquitoes and 1 Lightning attacked 9 airfields in Holland and Belgium in preparation for a renewed offensive against Germany. Visibility was perfect and all raids considered successful. 3 Lancasters lost.

The invasion of Southern France started in the early hours of this day. The landings were only lightly opposed and the Allied troops advanced rapidly. The Allied breakout from Normandy was also taking place at this time. (Middlebrook & Everitt p563)

27/08/44 Marquise Mimoyecques – Construction Works

Lancaster 111 PB 246. F/L PR Sherlock Captain RAF, J35934 F/O KE Lane RCAF Navigator 1, J35902 JR Gorman RCAF Navigator 2, W/O EB Hazlehurst RAF Wireless Op, F/L RK Simmonds RAF Mid Upper Gunner, P/O HE Jacobs RAF Rear Gunner, W/O VA Davis RAF F/Engineer. 1915 – 2115. Attacked at 2019.24hrs from 16,000ft heading 160 degs T 150 knots. Bombs dropped, 1 x TI Y, 3 x TI Y, 4 x TI Y (LB), 6 x 1000lb MC. 2013 hrs Master Bomber heard instructions M/F to bomb Greens. 2016hrs Yellows went down and Master bomber told M/F to bomb yellows. Later yellow went down, backing up previous TI's accurately. Smoke covered target as we ran in, but TI Yellow visible through smoke. Bombing appeared well concentrated round TI's and Master Bomber came through very well. Weather over target Nil cloud. Haze, visibility good. Bomb load 1 x TI Y, 3 x TI Y, 4 x TI Y (LB), 6 x 1000lb MC.

27 August 1944 Mimoyecques – Flying-Bomb Site

226 aircraft, 176 Halifaxes, 40 Lancasters and 10 Mosquitoes of 6 and 8 Groups carried out an accurate attack on a flying-bomb site without loss. (Middlebrook & Everitt p574)

29/08/44 Stettin

Lancaster 111 PB 123. F/L PR Sherlock Captain RAF, J35934 F/O KE Lane RCAF Navigator 1, J35902 JR Gorman RCAF Navigator 2, W/O EB Hazlehurst RAF Wireless Op, F/L RK Simmonds RAF Mid Upper Gunner, P/O HE Jacobs RAF Rear Gunner, W/O VA

Davis RAF F/Engineer. 2110 – 0620. Attacked at 0156.00hrs from 19,000ft 250 degs T 155 knots. Bombs dropped 3 x 2,000lb HC 1 x 1,000lb MC 1 x 500lb GP. No instructions heard from Master Bomber except Basement 12,000ft. Flares went down just as we bombed. Master Bomber heard calling for flares. Weather over target 9/10ths stratus, height about 14,000ft, occasionally target clear, generally thin. Bomb load 3 x 2,000lb HC 1 x 1,000lb MC 1 x 500lb GP.

29/30 August 1944 Stettin

402 Lancasters and 1 Mosquito of 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups. 23 Lancasters lost.

This was a successful raid, hitting parts of Stettin which had escaped damage in previous attacks. A German report states that 1,569 houses and 32 industrial premises were destroyed, and that 565 houses and 23 industrial premises were badly damaged. A ship of 2,000 tons was sunk and 7 other ships (totalling 31,000tons) were damaged. 1,033 people were killed and 1,034 were injured. (Middlebrook & Everitt p575)

31/08/44 Raimbert

Lancaster 111 PB 120. F/L PR Sherlock Captain RAF, J35934 F/O KE Lane RCAF Navigator 1, J35902 JR Gorman RCAF Navigator 2, W/O EB Hazlehurst RAF Wireless Op, F/L RK Simmonds RAF Mid Upper Gunner, P/O HE Jacobs RAF Rear Gunner, W/O VA Davis RAF F/Engineer. 1310 – 1553. Attacked at 1445.00hrs from 5,000ft heading 310 degs T 170 knots. Bombs dropped 4 x TI Yellow, 4 x TI Yellow LB 6 x 1,000lb MC. Master bomber clearly heard from 1415hrs. Instructed Main Force to hold off at approximately 1430hrs as he was going to mark. Master Bomber brought markers down to 7,000ft, Master Bomber then gave instructions to back up TI's. We made one run in at 1435hrs (approx) and bombed on third run. Unable to identify exact A/P or see concentration of TI's. Bombing quite well concentrated and on A/P. Just after we had dropped Master Bomber instructed Main Force to undershoot TI'S slightly, 1435hrs approx. Large explosions seen. Weather over target 7/10ths, own base about 5,000ft, tops about 12,000ft, good visibility. Bomb load 4 x TI Yellow, 4 x TI Yellow LB 6 x 1,000lb MC.

31 August 1944 V-2 Rocket Sites

601 aircraft, 418 Lancasters, 147 Halifaxes and 36 Mosquitoes to attack 9 sites in Northern France where the Germans were believed to be storing V-2 rockets. 8 of the sites were found and bombed. 6 Lancasters lost. (Middlebrook & Everitt p576)

06/09/44 Le Harve

Lancaster 111 PB 120. F/L PR Sherlock Captain RAF, J35934 F/O KE Lane RCAF Navigator 1, J35902 JR Gorman RCAF Navigator 2, W/O EB Hazlehurst RAF Wireless Op, F/L RK Simmonds RAF Mid Upper Gunner, P/O HE Jacobs RAF Rear Gunner, W/O VA Davis RAF F/Engineer. 1640 – 1921. Attacked at 1803.30hrs from 7,000ft heading 115 degs T 155 knots. 1808.00hrs from 6,500ft heading 115 degs T 155 knots. Bombs dropped 4 x TI Red 4 x TI Red (LB) 6 x 1,000lb MC. 1759hrs M/B said overshoot Green TI by 3 secs. 1800hrs M/B 'overshoot Reds and Greens by 2 secs'. 1801hrs M/B 'overshoot Reds by 3 secs. TI Reds seen on ground, but unable to assess exact position with regard to A/P. Own Reds undershoot First Reds. 1804hrs, M/B gave 'overshoot cascading Reds by 4 secs'. 1806hrs TI Reds seen to cascade between two loads of Reds already down. A/P Visually identified and own bombs fell accross A/P. Only one aircraft bombed after us. Target area seen to be well cratered with slight undershoot back to edge of small wood west of A/P. Weather over target; 10/10ths Straus (thin), base 7/8,000ft. Good visibility. Bomb load 4 x TI Red 4 x TI Red (LB) 6 x 1,000lb MC.

10/09/44 Le Harve

Lancaster 111 PB 377. F/L PR Sherlock Captain RAF, J35934 F/O KE Lane RCAF Navigator 1, J35902 JR Gorman RCAF Navigator 2, W/O EB Hazlehurst RAF Wireless Op, F/L RK Simmonds RAF Mid Upper Gunner, P/O HE Jacobs RAF Rear Gunner, W/O VA Davis RAF F/Engineer. 1630 – 1905. Target identified visually on run up. Confirmed by TI and attacked at (a) 1736hrs from 10,000ft heading 125 degs T IAS 155knots, (b) 1739hrs from 10,000ft heading 125 degs T IAS 155 knots. Bombs dropped (a) 4 x TI Red, 4 x TI Red (LB). (b) 6 x 1,000lb GP. 1734.30hrs M/B instructed to undershoot Reds by 100yds. These Reds were in the wood just off the A/P. 1737.30hrs undershoot by 200yds of Reds. The Reds were starting to overshoot. 1738.30hrs Undershoot Reds by 600yds. About same time LONGSTOP heard saying he was going to cancel Reds which had overshoot and Yellow Puff seen. Otherwise bombing was good. Weather over target, nil cloud. Bomb loads (a) 4 x TI Red, 4 x TI. (b) 6 x 1,000lb GP (N Inst)

11/09/44 Castrop Rauxel

.F/L PR Sherlock Captain RAF, J35934 F/O KE Lane RCAF Navigator 1, J35902 JR Gorman RCAF Navigator 2, W/O EB Hazlehurst RAF Wireless Op, F/L RK Simmonds RAF Mid Upper Gunner, P/O HE Jacobs RAF Rear Gunner, W/O VA Davis RAF F/Engineer. **Aircrew Lost**

11 September 1944 Synthetic Oil Plants

379 aircraft, 202 Halifaxes, 154 Lancasters and 20 Mosquitoes carried out attacks on Castrop-Rauxel, Kamen and Gelsenkirchen (Nordstern) plants. The first 2 targets were clearly visible and were accurately bombed, but the Norstern plant was partially protected by a smoke screen which hindered bombing and prevented observation of the results.

The 3 forces were escorted by 26 squadrons of fighters, 20 squadrons of Spitfires and 3 each of Mustangs and Tempests. No German fighters were encountered. 5 Halifaxes of 4 Group and 2 Pathfinder Lancasters were lost from the Nordstern raid, and 1 Lancaster was lost from each of the other raids. These losses were caused by Flak or by 'friendly' bombs. (Middlebrook & Everitt p580)

Comment: Airborne on 11 Sep 1944 from Little Staughton (no time recorded, but approximately 16:00). Cause of loss not established. Crashed circa 18:40 near Bergbossendorf, 3 km from the centre of Haltern. W/O Davis, whose DFM had been gazetted 13 Aug 1943 for outstanding service with No.50 Sqdn, is buried in the Reichswald Forest War Cemetery. F/L Shurlock was repatriated, arriving at Liverpool aboard the Arundel Castle 6 Feb 1945.

- Flight Lieutenant PH Sherlock Pilot Injured
- **Warrant Officer VA Davis DFM Flight Engineer Killed 1172743**
- Flying Officer KE Lenz RCAF Navigator Prisoner of War
- Flying Officer JR Gorman RCAF Bomb Aimer Prisoner of War
- Warrant Officer WB Hazlehurst W/Op AG Prisoner of War 1187336
- Flight Lieutenant RK Simmonds Mid Upper Gunner Prisoner of War 120184
- Pilot Officer HE Jacobs Rear Gunner Prisoner of War 128225

From: Former / Ehemaliger Website lostbombers.co.uk www.cwgc.org

Continue with operations with crew of F/Sgt Roberts

19.10.43 19 aircraft detailed for operations. Cancelled in afternoon. Weather forecast bad. Letter received from next of kin of F/O Canham, navigator in F/L Covington's crew, missing 11.8.43, states that letter received from F/O Canham, unhurt, bailed out. F/O Ayton and F/Sgt Chandler, missing 11.5.41, also S/L Sherwood DSO DFC, missing on the Augsburg daylight raid are in the same prison camp.

20.10.43 16 aircraft detailed for operations against Leipzig. 14 bombed the primary, one returned early and one aircraft, P/O Painter and crew, are reported missing. Owing to weather, reports are conflicting, some fires were seen and scattered incendiaries. It is doubtful whether all aircraft actually attacked the primary, the raid being scattered. Defence was reported as moderate. S/Ls (search lights) seemed to assist fighters – one aircraft had three combats.

20/10/43 – Leipzig

JB117C F/Sgt W.N.Roberts, F/Sgt V.A.Davis, F/Sgt S.J.Peek, F/O L.C.Jones, Sgts D.E.Harvey, R.J.Chapman, F/Sgt E.L.Wright. Up 1756 Down 0016. 7 x TI, 1 x 4000lb, 3 x 500lb. Primary target Leipzig bombed. 18,000'. 10/10ths cloud. **Target located by H2S** (see picture from <http://website.lineone.net/~norman.groom/h2s.htm>) and ETA. No TI markers seen, bombs dropped blind. Big reflected red glow seen, visible for 60 miles after leaving target.



Note: first mention of crew using H2S

Robbie had the kind of trip that gave bomber crews nightmares. C-Charlie was cruising at 20,000 feet towards their target, Leipzig, when Ted Wright again reported from the rear turret the presence of an enemy fighter this time a FW 190 on the starboard quarter and it the same height. Roberts decided to take no immediate evasive action, not wishing to attract the enemy pilot's attention if he had not yet spotted the Lancaster. Instead he asked his two gunners to keep a careful watch on their unwelcome escort. For some minutes the Focke-Wulf continued to fly a parallel course; then all of a sudden it swooped behind the Lancaster and positioned itself dead astern. Wright shouted to his skipper to corkscrew starboard, and simultaneously he and Sergeant Chapman in the mid - upper turret opened fire. Bullets were seen to enter the enemy fighter, which itself opened fire with its cannon and machine guns. They exchange of fire continued until the Focke-Wulf suddenly dived down to port and disappeared into cloud. Whoops of joy and relief filled the intercom, but they were silenced when Robbie reminded his crew that there was still a long way to go. The time was 19.45 hrs.

The excitement of the Focke-Wu1f attack had just subsided when, at 20.32 hrs, there was another shout from the rear turret. A JU 88 had dived down from cloud cover onto the Lancaster's tail and was sitting at no more than 75 yards range. Roberts immediately flung C-Charlie into a violent corkscrew and both gunners opened -fire. The Junkers replied with a burst of cannon fire and then broke off to starboard and dived away. This time nerves were too strained for exultation, and the crew of C-Charlie flew on grimly silent.

At two minutes to nine and with the target approaching there was yet another cry from Ted Wright. In the glow of dozens of fighter flares a twin-engined enemy fighter, soon identified as another (or the same?) JU 88, could be seen closing in on another Lancaster 300 yards on the starboard beam. Wright and Chapman opened fire and strikes were observed around the enemy's fuselage. Again the Junkers broke off the attack after a short burst and disappeared into the night. The remainder of the trip passed off quietly, anticlimactically. When Robbie brought C-Charlie back unscathed to Bourn four hours later the crew were exhausted and relieved, but above all jubilant; after all, not many bomber

crews who had been attacked by night-fighters three times in the course of one trip survived to tell the tale. For Robbie there was the added satisfaction that, with his trips now totalling fifteen, he had reached the halfway point in his tour. **Mr A Riches**

F/Sgt J R Chapman DFC Air Gunner Combat Reports:

20/21 October 1943 (1) - Lancaster C/97, JB117; target Leipzig. Action at 20,000 feet, 1945 hours, position 53° 53" North 07° 40" East; 10/10 cloud below at 16,000 feet; visibility good; no searchlights and no moon but many fighter flares; airspeed 215 mph true. Wright was again rear gunner and Chapman mid-upper. Other crew identified as Flight Sergeants Roberts, Davis and Peek, F/O Jones and Sergeant Harvey. Lancaster "C" outward bound to target (Leipzig) at position as above and on course. Rear Gunner [Wright] reported FW.190 on starboard quarter at same height, range 300 yards. No evasive action taken at the time and the enemy aircraft positioned himself dead astern.

Instructions were given to pilot to corkscrew to starboard and rear and mid-upper gunners opened fire; hits were seen to enter the enemy aircraft. The fighter then opened fire with cannon and machine gun. The fighter was next seen diving down to port and was lost to sight when going through cloud. Damage to own aircraft - not known as two more combats were encountered on same trip. Claim - enemy aircraft as possible.

20/21 October 1943 (2) - general details as above; position 52° 30" North, 12° 00" East, time 2032 hours, course 146° True 151° Magnetic; height 21,000 feet; 10/10 cloud at 15,000 feet; visibility good; no searchlights or moon and a few fighter flares. Airspeed 215 mph. Lancaster "C" outward bound at height and on course as above. Rear gunner reported fighter dead astern at a range of 75 yards, having dived from cloud cover above. Immediate evasive action was taken and both gunners opened fire. The aircraft was identified as a Ju.88 and returned fire with cannon and machine gun, breaking away to starboard and was no seen again. No claim made.

20/21 October 1943 (3) - general details as above; position 51° 50" North, 12° 38" East; time 2058 hours, course 200° True 203° Magnetic; height 19,500 feet; 10/10 cloud at 17,000 feet; visibility good; no searchlights or moon and no fighter flares. Airspeed 210 mph. Lancaster "C" outward bound at height and on course as above. Rear gunner reported JU.88 (see picture) following another Lancaster on starboard quarters up at a range of 200 yards. Rear and mid-upper gunners opened fire and evasive action was taken. Hits were observed to enter enemy aircraft. Enemy aircraft opened fire and broke away to starboard, not being seen again. No claim made.



Copies of Combat Reports, see Appendices B to E

21.10.43 Stand down from operations.

22.10.43 16 aircraft detailed to attack Kassel and two aircraft detailed to attack Frankfurt as spoof target, one of which returned early. The raid on Kassel was highly successful, 4/10ths cloud, tops 10,000', vis good, some haze. Marshalling yards were visually identified and many fires were seen. H/F was encountered, S/L cones – some scattered. Fighter opposition did not seem so active. 16 photos attempted. Fires were seen to start at Frankfurt. All aircraft returned safely.

22/10/43 – Kassel

JB117C F/Sgt W.N.Roberts, F/Sgt V.A.Davis, F/Sgt S.J.Peek, F/O L.C.Jones, Sgts D.E.Harvey, R.J.Chapman, F/Sgt E.L.Wright. Up 1837 Down 0017. 6 x TI, 1 x 4000lb, 4 x 1000lb. Target Kassel attacked. 18,500'. Clear sky, vis good. Bombed on red and green TI in tight cluster – in bomb sight. Own TIs seen to cascade. Many fires, some large observed. Much smoke up to 6,000' all round TIs.

22/23 October 1943 Kassel

569 aircraft, 322 Lancasters, 247 Halifaxes. The German controller was again successful in assessing the target and 43 aircraft, 25 Halifaxes and 18 Lancasters were lost.

The initial 'blind' H2S marking overshoot the target but 8 out of the 9 visual markers correctly identified the centre of Kassel and placed their markers accurately. Although German decoy markers may have drawn off part of the bomber force, the main raid was exceptionally accurate and concentrated. The result was the most devastating attack on a German city since the firestorm raid on Hamburg in July, and the results at Kassel would not be exceeded again until well into 1944. The fires were so concentrated that there was a firestorm, although not as extensive as the Hamburg one.

It is impossible to list all the damage. 4,349 separate dwelling blocks containing 26,782 family units (flats/apartments) were destroyed and 6,743 more blocks with 2,463 'units' were damaged. 63% of all Kassel's living accommodation became unusable, and 100,000 – 120,000 people had to leave their homes. The fire services dealt with 3,600 separate fires. The intensity of the destruction is illustrated by the fact that more buildings were completely destroyed than those classed as 'lightly damaged', and there were more large fires (1,600) than small ones (1,000); in most raids the lightly damaged buildings and small fires outnumbered serious incidents several times over.

In addition to the dwelling houses, the following properties were destroyed or badly damaged: 155 industrial buildings, 78 public buildings, 38 schools, 25 churches, 16 police and military buildings (including the local Gestapo), 11 hospitals. The Kassel records do not provide any further detail about the industrial damage caused, but RAF photographic reconnaissance showed that the Kassel railway system and its installations were severely hit, and all 3 Henschel factories seriously damaged; as these were making V-1 flying bombs at the time, this was a most useful result of the raid and had a major effect upon the eventual opening and scale of the V-1 campaign, comparable to the recent raid on Peenemunde which set back the V-2 rocket programme.

The Kassel records give the number of dead recovered up to the end of November as 5,599, of which 1,817 bodies were unidentifiable and the records go on to add that the Missing Department (the Vermisstensuchstelle) was still trying to trace 3,300 people. 459 survivors, however, had been recovered from ruined houses after many days of heavy work. 3,587 people were injured, 800 seriously, and a further 8,084 people were treated for smoke and heat injury to their eyes. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 440).



German soldier and a civilian observing fires ravaging Fieseler aircraft plant at Bettenhausen, a suburb of Kassel



From:

<http://histclo.com/essay/war/ww2/air/eur/sbc/43/tar/tkas-oct43.html>

23.10.43 Heavy rain, no flying. Stand down for most aircrews.

24.10.43 Weather unfit for flying. Conference in afternoon and ground training. Bullseye exercise arranged for tonight but cancelled later due to weather.

25.10.43 Training programme cancelled owing to misty weather. Organised games in the afternoon.

26.10.43 Weather u/s, training programme cancelled. In morning demonstration of fog clearance apparatus at Graveley. **FIDO** (see below) Lecture and film in afternoon.

FIDO:

Fog Investigation and Dispersal Operation (FIDO) (which was sometimes referred to as "Fog Intense Dispersal Operation" or "Fog Intense Dispersal Of") was a system used for dispersing fog from an airfield so that aircraft could land safely. The device was developed by Arthur Hartley for British RAF bomber stations, allowing the landing of aircraft returning from raids over Germany in poor visibility by burning fuel in rows on either side of the runway.

The device consisted of two pipelines situated along both sides of the runway and through which a fuel (usually the petrol from the airfield's own fuel dump) was pumped along and then out through burner jets positioned at intervals along the pipelines. The vapours were lit from a series of burners, producing walls of flame. The FIDO installation usually stored its fuel in four circular upright tanks built at the edge of the airfield with a low brick bund wall in case of leakage. The tanks were usually encased in ordinary brickwork as protection from bomb splinters or cannon fire.

When fog prevented returning Allied aircraft from locating and seeing their runways to land, they would be diverted to FIDO equipped aerodromes. RAF night bombers which were damaged on their missions were also diverted to FIDO airfields due to the need to make certain they could land when they arrived. When FIDO was needed, the fuel pumps were started to pour flammable liquid into the pipe system and a jeep with a flaming brand lashed to its rear drove fast down both sides of the runway to ignite the fuel at the outlets in the pipes. The burners were sometimes ignited by men on bicycles or by runners on foot. The result was a row of flame along the side of the runway that could be seen for a great distance from the air (see picture below). The heat from the flames evaporated suspended fog droplets so that the Allied aircraft could have suitable visibility to find the airfield and land. Once landed, the crews would find shelter where they could, and their planes would be refuelled and, if needed, repaired before flying back to their normal bases the next day. **From:** (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fog_Investigation_and_Dispersal_Operation)



From: <http://www.stelzriede.com/ms/photos/planes/lancs18.jpg>

27.10.43 Weather u/s for flying. Flying training cancelled. Conference in morning and in the afternoon organized games for aircrew.

28.10.43 Weather u/s. ground training and organized exercises in the afternoon.

29.10.43 Weather u/s. Ground training, lectures and conferences. Stand down in afternoon.

30.10.43 19 aircraft and one reserve detailed for ops also three aircraft for night cross countries. NFTs and training carried out in the morning. After briefing, ops were cancelled, also night flying.

31.10.43 Weather unfit for flying. No operations detailed.

1.11.43 Ground training. Weather unfit for flying

2.11.43 Ground training. Weather unfit for flying. Instructional film shown in the afternoon.

3.11.43 NFTs and flying training in the morning. 16 aircraft detailed for operations tonight. P/O J.K.McAvoy DFM and Act W/O R.J.Williams reported POW (were missing with W/C Burns crew 31st Aug). F/Sgt T.Lancashire and F/Sgt S.Powell reported POW (were missing with F/L Covington's crew 10th Aug). Operations : 7 aircraft to attack Dusseldorf, 9 aircraft to attack Cologne. At Dusseldorf 6 aircraft bombed the primary target, 1 aircraft returned early due to turrets being u/s. The attack was made in good weather – clear sky, vis good, ground haze with slight to moderate H/F and L/F. S/Ls ineffective. Fighters not reported over target. Fires reported but generally the attack is considered scattered. At Cologne (spooft target) the attack was made in good weather. Defences – desultory, H/F and S/Ls mainly ineffective – no fighters reported. Ground detail was not seen owing to haze or smoke. 14 photos were attempted in all. All crews returned safely.

3/11/43 Dusseldorf

JB117C F/Sgt W.N.Roberts, F/Sgt V.A.Davis, F/Sgt S.J.PEEK, F/O L.C.Jones, Sgt D.E.Harvey, F/Sgt J.R.Chapman, F/Sgt E.L.Wright. Up 1735 Down 2121. 4 x TI, 1 x 4000lb, 6 x 1000lb. Primary Dusseldorf attacked. 18,500'. Moonlight, clear sky, hazy. Bombed on centre of concentration of 4 green TI markers. Many scattered incendiaries seen. Several fires observed with smoke pall rising.

3/4 November 1943 - Dusseldorf

589 aircraft, 344 Lancasters, 233 Halifaxes and 12 Mosquitoes, 18 aircraft, 11 Lancasters and 7 Halifaxes lost.

The main weight of the raid fell in the centre and south of the city, but it is difficult to obtain precise results of the outcome; like some other German cities. Dusseldorf's records start to show a deterioration under the pressure of the severe raids of 1943. There was certainly extensive damage both to housing and to industrial premises, but a detailed resume is not possible. The same problem exists with casualties. An early local report says that 23 people died but this appears to have been altered to 118 at a later date. The United States Bombing Survey gives a figure of 622 dead and 942 injured for the whole month of November; there were no more attacks on Dusseldorf in that month.

38 Mark 11 Lancasters, 13 from 3 Group and 25 from 6 Group, which took part in this raid made the first large-scale test of the G-H blind-bombing device and attempted to bomb the Mannesmann tubular-steel works on the northern outskirts of Dusseldorf, while the main raid was taking place. 5 of the G-H Lancasters had to return early and 2 more were lost; the equipment in 16 other aircraft failed to function leaving only 15 aircraft to bomb the factory on G-H. The Dusseldorf records do mention this factory, stating that 'several assembly halls were burnt out'; G-H later became a most useful blind-bombing device when it was produced in sufficient numbers for a major part of Bomber Command to be fitted with it. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 441 - 442).

Note: See photographs below of damage to steel works

Gee-H, sometimes written **G-H** or **GEE-H**, was a radio navigation system developed by Britain during World War II to aid RAF Bomber Command. The name refers to the system's use of the earlier Gee equipment, as well as its use of the "H principle" or "twin-range principle" of location determination. Its official name was AMES Type 100.

Gee-H was used to supplant the Oboe bombing system, both of which worked along similar lines. By measuring the distance to a radio station, the bomber was able to navigate along an arc in the sky, dropping their bombs when they reached a set distance from another station. The main difference between Oboe and Gee-H was the location of the equipment; Oboe used very large displays in ground stations to take very accurate measurements but could only direct one aircraft at a time. Gee-H used much smaller gear on board the aircraft and was somewhat less accurate but could direct as many as 80 aircraft at a time.

Gee-H entered service in October 1943 and first used successfully in November against the Mannesmann steel works at Düsseldorf on the night of 1/2 November when about half of the sets failed leaving only 15 aircraft to bomb the factory on Gee-H. Gee-H remained in use throughout the war, although it was subject to considerable jamming from the Germans. It also remained a standard fixture of post-war RAF aircraft like the English Electric Canberra. **From:**

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gee-H_%28navigation%29



From: <https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=bomb+damage+pictures+dusseldorf+3+november+1943>

4.11.43 Weather unfit for flying. Ground training and organised games.

5.11.43 Ground training and flying training carried. No operations.

6.11.43 Flying training and ground as scheduled. 9 aircraft and crews detailed for Bullseye exercise tonight. No operations detailed. Night exercise carried out as detailed.

7.11.43 19 aircraft detailed for operations tonight, 7 of which will attack a spoof target. NFTs carried out. Operations were cancelled late in the evening.

8.11.43 19 aircraft again detailed for operations tonight, 5 of which will attack a spoof target. Operations were again cancelled late in evening due to weather conditions.

9.11.43 Operations detailed. Training carried out in morning. Operations were cancelled after briefing.

10.11.43 Training programme detailed. Letter has been received by the next of kin of W/C Burns DSO DFC stating that he is in hospital in Germany. He has lost his right arm from the elbow downwards. Order was given by him for the crew to bail out, the aircraft being out of control and on fire. 18 aircraft detailed for operations tonight. Some flying and training in the

morning. 18 aircraft attacked the primary target at Modane in good visibility and clear sky. Red TIs were well placed and bombed – incendiaries were reported very scattered round the area but generally a good attack is considered to have been achieved. Defences very slight. Most crews report seeing no flak or S/Ls and no fighter activity.

10/11/43 – Modane [France]

JB117C F/Sgt W.N.Roberts, F/Sgt V.A.Davis, F/Sgt S.J.Peek, F/O L.C.Jones, Sgt D.E.Harvey, F/Sgt J.R.Chapman, F/Sgt E.L.Wright. Up 2134 Down 0440. 4 x TI, 1 x RSF, 7 x 1000lb. Target Modane attacked. Bright moonlight, no cloud. Mist in valley. Bombed on centre of cluster of red TI markers. Own TIs seen to fall on reds. One big fire seen and a number of smaller ones well concentrated.

Note: the raid at Modane was to assist the Allied offensive in Italy (see Bending 2005 p81)

At Modane, the railway ran from Grenoble to Turin deep under the Graian Alps. Through the tunnel German reinforcements passed from France to threatened Italy. Bomber Command's task was to block the tunnel. Roberts, flying C-Charlie as usual, enjoyed an almost unopposed bomb run and, along with the other Pathfinders, succeeded in illuminating the tunnel entrance perfectly with a combination of Target indicator flares and high explosive bombs. Main Force did the rest, and the supply line was put out of action for some time. Twenty-four hours later Roberts bombed another tactical target, this time the railway yards at Cannes in the South of France. Both Modane and Cannes were soft targets compared with the cities of the Reich, and 97 Squadron suffered no losses. **Mr A Riches**

10/11 November 1943 Modane

313 Lancasters of 5 and 8 Groups to attack the railway yards on the main line to Italy. The Pathfinder marking, in difficult conditions, was slightly beyond the target but 200 aircraft brought back photographs to show their bombs fell within 1 mile of the target, and the railway system was seriously damaged. No report is available from France. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 443).

11.11.43 Operations detailed for tonight. 10 aircraft attacked the primary target at Cannes. Weather – full moon, clear sky, vis good. Fires reported – particularly the railway repair shop was to be seen on fire. An explosion was reported near the entrance to tunnel and another about the same area. Generally the raid is considered successful. Defences were very slight in target area – 3 light guns and two S/L to south. No fighter activity in target area. All aircraft returned safely to base.

11/11/43 – Cannes

JB117C F/Sgt W.N.Roberts, F/Sgt V.A.Davis, F/Sgt S.J.Peek, F/O L.C.Jones, F/Sgt D.E.Harvey, F/Sgt J.R.Chapman, F/Sgt E.L.Wright. Up 1842 Down 0236. 5 x TI, 6 x 1000lb. Primary objective attacked. 15,000'. Moon light, clear sky, vis good. Red TI markers in bomb sight at time of bombing. Own bombs seen to burst among TIs. Own TIs seen to cascade. One good fire burning giving off a lot of black smoke.

11/12 November 1943 Cannes

124 Halifaxes and 10 Lancasters of 4, 6 and 8 Groups to bomb the marshalling yards and railway installations on the main coastal line to Italy. 4 Halifaxes lost.

The night was clear and the pathfinders marked the target from 5,000ft but the railway yards were not hit at all and the railway workshops suffered only blast damage. A report from Cannes states that the local people were at first thrilled to were the 'fireworks display' of the Pathfinders, and could even see the RAF aircraft in the moonlight; but the bombing, 'like a typhoon' mainly fell in the working-class suburb of La Bocca, where 39 people were killed, and in the village of d'Agay, where casualties were not recorded. A local newspaper, under German control, writes of the resentment of the local French

people at the inaccurate bombing, particularly as the British had been such popular pre-war visitors to Cannes. The British were, writes the newspaper, 'pure savages' and the raid was 'nothing but murder for British glory ...too much like sport'. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 444).

12.11.43 Y cross country and air firing training.

13.11.43 Y cross countries, air firing and fighter affiliation.

14.11.43 Y training and air firing.

15.11.43 Y training and bombing. S/L Dunncliffe carried out circuits and landings. BAT training.

16.11.43 Y cross countries, HL Bombing and NFTs. Operations detailed and cancelled.

17.11.43 P/O Fairlie, Sgt Ball and S/L Parrott reported by IRCC was killed. W/C Alabaster DFC, S/L Rodley DFC and S/L Sauvage DFC awarded the immediate DSO. Y bombing training, SBA and fighter affiliation. 15 aircraft detailed for operations tonight, target being Mannheim. The attack was carried out in 2/10th cloud, vis good, hazy. PFF Group operated with **blind bombing**, no markers being used. Explosions were seen and fires started and seen on return 30 miles away. From reports of fires and explosions generally it would appear that a fairly good margin of success had been achieved. Defences slight. H/F inaccurate and many S/Ls ineffective. Many fighter flares but no fighter activity seen otherwise. All aircraft returned safely to base. G/C Fresson DFC carried out night training.

Blind Bombing – the use of the H2S radar to identify the target area as it was obscured.

17/11/43 – Mannheim

JB117C F/Sgt W.N.Roberts, F/Sgt V.A.Davis, F/Sgt J.B.PEEK, F/O L.C.Jones, F/Sgt D.E.Harvey, F/Sgt J.R.Chapman, F/Sgt E.L.Wright. Up 1719 Down 2220. 5 x 2000lb. Target Mannheim bombed. No moon, no cloud, slight haze. 18,000'. Bomb bursts in bomb sight at time of bombing. Five good fires were seen in approximately the same area. 18.11.43 17 Lancasters detailed for tonight's ops. Berlin was attacked in 10/10ths cloud tops 18,000'. Vis good – hazy. Explosions were reported but raid was scattered and no good concentration achieved. Owing to cloud, crews saw little or nothing. Defences weak to moderate, slight H/F – S/Ls ineffective. 16 photos attempted. One aircraft and crew failed to return – F/Sgt Johnson and crew. No news received at base, all other aircraft returned safely with little damage.

Sir Arthur Harris, C-in-C Bomber Command, in a minute to Sir Winston Churchill wrote of wrecking Berlin from end to end if the United States Army Air Force and the Royal Air Force jointly attacked the German capital, and that for a price of 400-500 bombers it would cost Germany the war. The USAAF at that stage was not ready for such long daylight flights well over 1,000 miles for the round trip over enemy territory. Harris apparently decided to go it alone, for the RAF delivered sixteen major operations against Berlin between 18 November 1943 and 30 March 1944, and this became known, retrospectively, as the Battle of Berlin. Altogether 9,111 sorties were mounted against Berlin as well as 11,113 sorties against other cities, notably Mannheim, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Nuremburg, Leipzig, Brunswick and Schweinfurt. Bomber Command lost 1,047 aircraft missing 5.1% of sorties dispatched and a further 1,682 damaged or written off. For the crews of the bombers, predominantly Lancasters, the Battle of Berlin was a nightmare. Northern Germany seldom enjoyed clear weather in mid-winter, and that year conditions were exceptionally bad. Night after night Bomber Command took off through the rain, sometimes through the snow, into the upper atmosphere's freak winds and sudden icing conditions, loaded to the aircraft's limits with bombs and fuel for the seven-hour round trip. If that was not bad enough, the heavily-laden bombers were now meeting the German night-fighter force at the summit of its wartime effectiveness and strength. Ingenious counter measures were employed, but none of them were successful consistently to protect the bombers. Again and again the fighters broke

into the bomber stream and inflicted punishing casualties. Berlin, above all, was a very difficult target to conceal. For the last hundred miles of the route it was clear that Bomber Command could be going nowhere else. The sky was lit by exploding aircraft as frozen -gunners, numbed in their turrets, missed the shadow slipping below the fuselage that a few seconds later consigned then to oblivion. **Mr A Riches**

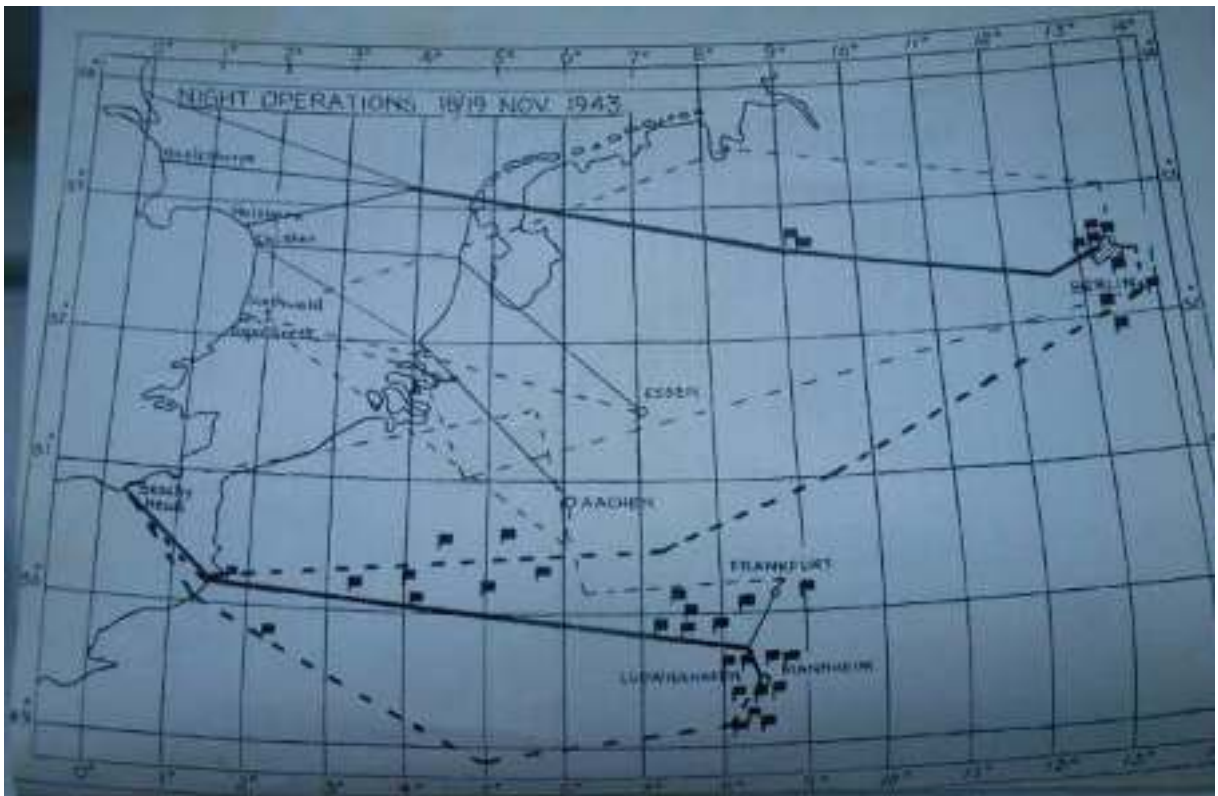
18/11/43 – Berlin

JB176K F/Sgt W.N.Roberts, F/Sgt V.A.Davis, F/Sgt S.J.Peek, F/O L.C.Jones, F/Sgt D.E.Harvey, F/Sgt J.R.Chapman, F/Sgt E.L.Wright. Up 1735 Down 0125. 6 x TI, 1 x 4000lb. Berlin attacked. 20,000'. Vis good. Reflection of an explosion seen giving a red glow. Cloud rendered observation of results impossible

18/19 November 1943 Berlin

440 Lancasters and 4 Mosquitoes were dispatched. Few German fighters intercepted the force. 9 Lancasters were lost.

Berlin was completely cloud covered and both marking and bombing were carried out blindly; Bomber Command could make no assessment of the results. The local Berlin report shows that bombs fell in most parts of the city and no main concentration (Schwarpunk) could be detected, although more southern districts are mentioned than others. 4 industrial premises were totally destroyed and 28 damaged; 11 explosive works and 4 chemical plants were among these figures. 169 houses were destroyed and 476 seriously damaged. Casualties were: 131 people killed, 14 missing and 391 injured; 27 of the killed were foreign workers or prisoners of war. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 452).



Route to Berlin (Cooper p42)

19.11.43 No operations detailed – stand down for all aircrews.

20.11.43 No flying today – very foggy. Ground training as detailed.

21.11.43 Information from IRC states that J18137 P/O G.D.Nicoll has been captured (reported missing 8/9 Oct 43). Weather unfit for flying.

22.11.43 20 Lancasters detailed to attack targets in Berlin. Weather 9/10 – 10/10ths cloud at 7,000' – visibility good. Bombs were released from approximately 10,000'. All TIs were reported as fairly well concentrated and a good and continuous marking was kept up during the attack. Some fires were reported but bomb bursts could not generally be seen. Observation was hampered by clouds but the attack is considered scattered. Defences – heavy and light barrage over target with box barrage at 16,000'. No fighter flares. Two aircraft and crews have failed to return from this operation – they are JB227J F/L Munro DFC (Can) and crew and JB238A P/O McEgan (Aus) and crew. All remaining aircraft returned to base, a few of them with minor flak damage.

23/11/43 – Berlin

JB117C F/Sgt W.N.Roberts, F/Sgt V.A.Davis, F/Sgt S.J.Peek, F/O L.C.Jones, F/Sgt D.E.Harvey, F/Sgt J.R.Chapman, F/Sgt E.L.Wright. Up 1730 Down 0010. 4 x TI, 1 x 4000lb, 4 x 1000lb. Bombs released on aiming point in Berlin by aid of TIs red. Route markers effective and well backed up. Several fires observed burning well.

22/23 November 1943 Berlin

764 aircraft, 469 Lancasters, 234 Halifaxes, 50 Stirlings and 11 Mosquitoes. This was the greatest force sent to Berlin so far, but it was also the last raid in which Stirlings were sent to Germany. Bad weather again kept most of the German fighters on the ground and the bomber force was able to take a relatively straight line in, straight out route to the target without suffering undue loss. 26 aircraft, 11 Lancasters, 10 Halifaxes and 5 Stirlings were lost.

Berlin was again completely cloud covered and returning crews could only estimate that the marking and bombing were believed to be accurate. In fact, this was the most effective raid on Berlin of the war. A vast area of destruction stretched from the central districts westwards across the mainly residential areas of Tiergarten and Charlottenburg to the separate suburb city of Spandau. Because of the dry weather conditions, several firestorm areas were reported and a German plane next day measured the height of the smoke cloud as 6,000 metres (nearly 19,000ft).

It is impossible to give anything like full details of the damage or to separate completely details from this raid and the smaller one on the next night. At least 3,000 houses and 23 industrial premises were completely destroyed, with several thousands of other buildings damaged. It was estimated that 175,000 people were bombed out. More than 50,000 soldiers were brought in in to help from garrisons up to 100km distant; these were equivalent to nearly 3 army divisions taken from their normal duties. Interesting entries among the lists of buildings destroyed or severely damaged are: Kaiser-Willhelm-Gedachtniskirche (the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church which is now, half ruined, half restored, a major attraction in West Berlin), the Charlottenburg Castle, the Berlin Zoo, much of the Unter den Linden, the British, French, Italian and Japanese embassies, the Ministry of Weapons and Munitions. The Waffen SS Administrative College, the Barracks of the Imperial Guard at Spandau and, among many industrial premises, 5 factories of the Siemens electrical group and the Altek tank works which had recently moved from the Rhur.

It is difficult to give exact casualty figures, an estimated 2,000 people were killed, including 500 in a large shelter in Wilmsdorf which received a direct hit, and 105 people were killed in another shelter which was near to the Neukoln gasworks, where there was a huge explosion. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 453).

Note: see <http://ww2today.com/23rd-november-1943-terror-of-devastating-air-raid-on-berlin> and the following for more Bomber Command stories: <http://www.626-squadron.co.uk/photos.htm>



Route to Berlin (Cooper p68)

24.11.43 Some air training for u/t crews, all other crews stood down for rest.

25.11.43 19 aircraft detailed for ops and night training cross countries which were carried out. **The following signal has been received from AOC-in-C** – “I have received the following message from the Secretary of State, please convey together with my reply to all ranks”.....”My warmest congratulations to you and to all ranks serving under your command on two crushing attacks on the Nazi citadel. Berlin is not only the home of Prussian militarism and the capital of the Nazi government, but it is also the greatest single centre of war industry in Germany. Often before, your squadrons have hit it hard. The most convincing measure of this success has been the huge deployment of the enemy’s resources for its defence. Nevertheless your attacks these last two nights have reached a new level of power and concentration and have proved that however much he may marshal his guns, searchlights and fighters, the enemy cannot match your skill and determination of your crews.” **AOC-in-C’s reply** “On behalf of all ranks of Bomber Command I thank you for your encouraging message. The Battle of Berlin progresses. It will continue as opportunity serves and circumstances dictate until the heart of Nazi Germany ceases to beat.

Out of the 19 aircraft detailed for operations, which were to attack Frankfurt, three aircraft were withdrawn. Remainder bombed in 9/10ths cloud top about 1,800’ in thin layer – vis good. Defence – H/F moderate – barrage bursting 16-18,000’. S/Ls ineffective, some enemy aircraft fighter activity. First TIs were fairly well concentrated, later flares were seen wide of target and scattered bombing followed. Fires were scattered over an area of some 8 miles radius. Fires were seen reflected in the clouds from 40 miles away but a good concentrated attack was not achieved. F/L Brown (Can/USA) and crew failed to return. This crew was operating for the first time with this Squadron.

26.11.43 19 aircraft detailed for operations. 9 of them to attack a target in Berlin and 10 to the secondary target at Stuttgart. 8 aircraft attacked Berlin, 1 aircraft having been withdrawn due to bomb trouble. Weather clear and vis good. Defences – moderate H/F, inaccurate, S/L cones. Some 150 S/L to south-east in outskirts. Much fighter activity. Attack opened up well on time, but for some scattered markers, a good concentration was maintained. **Glow of**

large fires seen 100 miles away on homeward route. Attack considered to have been very scattered. All crews returned safely to base. 9 aircraft attacked Stuttgart, one aircraft returned early, the mid upper gunner being sick. Vis good but 7/10ths cloud up to 10,000'. Defences slight, H/F inaccurate owing to cloud – fighters not conspicuous. Fires were seen to glow beneath clouds which were visible 60 miles on route home. Crews report much activity at Frankfurt of flak and fighter flares. The attack is considered successful, all returned safely to base.

26/11/43 – Berlin

JB117C F/Sgt W.N.Roberts, F/Sgt V.A.Davis, Sgt S.J.PEEK, F/O L.C.Jones, F/Sgt D.E.D.Harvey, F/Sgt J.R.Chapman, F/Sgt E.L.Wright. Up 1735 Down 0010. 4 x TI, 1 x 4000lb, 8 x 500lb. Berlin attacked from 20,000'. Vis good. Target identified by a salvo of red and yellow TIs. A huge pall of smoke was seen on leaving target area. Glow of fires seen as far away as Hanover.

26/27 November 1943 Berlin

443 Lancasters and 7 Mosquitoes. The Berlin force and the Stuttgart diversionary force flew a common route over Northern Frankfurt before diverging. The German controllers thought that Frankfurt was the main target until a late stage and several bombers were shot down as they flew past Frankfurt. Only a few fighters appeared over Berlin, where flak was the main danger, but the scattered conditions of the bomber stream at Berlin meant that bombers were caught by fighters off-track on the return flight and the casualties mounted. 28 Lancasters were lost, and 14 more Lancasters crashed in England.

The weather was clear over Berlin but, after their long approach flight from the south the Pathfinders marked an area 6 – 7 miles North West of the city centre and most aircraft bombed here. Because of Berlin's size, however, most of the bombing fell within the city boundaries and particularly on the semi-industrial suburb of Reinickendorf; smaller amounts of bombing fell in the centre and in the Siemensstadt (with many electrical factories) and Tegel districts. 38 war-industry factories were destroyed and many more damaged. The now routine destruction of housing and public buildings also took place but not on as great a scale as on the 2 previous raids to Berlin. The Berlin zoo was heavily bombed on this night. Many of the animals had been evacuated to zoos in other parts of Germany, but the bombing killed most of the remainder. Several large and dangerous animals, leopards, panthers, jaguars, apes, escaped and had to be hunted and shot in the streets.

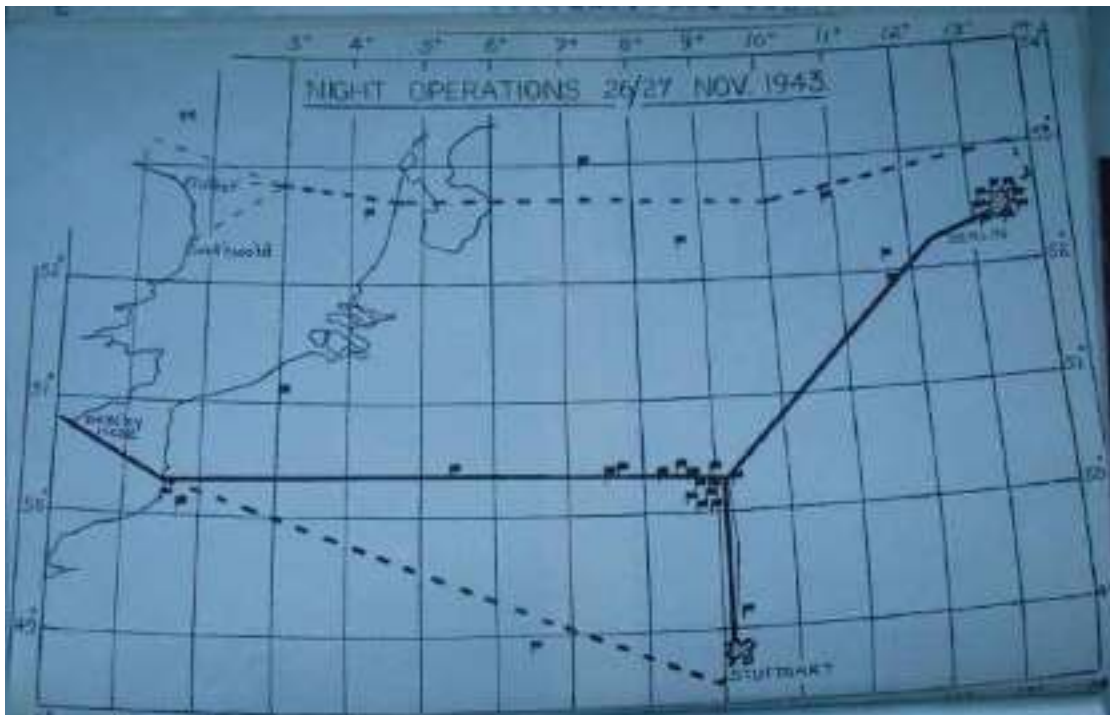
Because of the confusion of so many raids in a short period, it was only possible for the Germans to record an approximate number of people killed, on this night, of about 700 – 800. The local officials did, however, produce a report in January 1944 giving details of the combined casualties of the three raids of 22/23, 23/24 and 26/27 November. 4,330 people were killed, of whom the bodies of 574 were never recovered. The district with the most deaths were: Tiergarten, 793, Charlottenburg 735, and Wedding 548. 157 of the dead were foreign workers and 26 were prisoners of war. The property damage was extensive, with 8,701 dwelling buildings containing 104,613 flats/apartments destroyed, and several times that number damaged. 417, lost their homes for more than a month, and 36,391 for up to a month. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 455).

Note: see picture of bombdamage below



From:

<https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=picture+of+bomb+damage+in+berlin+27+november+1943&tbm>



Route to Berlin (Cooper p78)

2/3 December 1943 - Berlin

JB117C F/Sgt W.N.Roberts, F/Sgt V.A.Davis, F/Sgt S.J.Peek, F/O L.C.Jones, F/Sgt D.E.D.Harvey, F/Sgt J.R.Chapman, F/Sgt E.L.Wright. Up 1715 Down 2305. 5 x 2000lb. Berlin bombed from 19,500'. Bombs released in centre of red TIs. No results of bombing seen but incendiaries seemed well scattered.

2/3 December 1943 Berlin

458 aircraft, 425 Lancasters, 18 Mosquitoes and 12 Halifaxes. There were no major diversions and the bombers took an absolutely direct route across the North Sea and Holland and then on to Berlin. The Germans identified Berlin as the target 19 minutes before Zero Hour and many fighters were waiting there. Incorrectly forecast winds scattered the bomber stream, particularly on the return flight, and German fighters scored further victories here. A total of 40 bombers, 37 Lancasters, 2 Halifaxes and 1 Mosquito were lost. 460 Squadron (RAAF) lost 5 of its 25 Lancasters on this raid, including the aircraft in which two newspaper reporters were flying. These were Captain Greig of the Daily Mail and Norman Stockton of the Sydney Sun. The body of Mr Stockton is buried in the Berlin War Cemetery.

The inaccurate wind forecast caused great difficulties for the Pathfinders, who were not able to establish their positions correctly. The bombing photographs of the Main Force suggested that the attack was scattered over a wide area of Southern Berlin and the countryside south of the city. The Berlin report confirms this but adds that some useful damage was caused to industrial areas of the eastern and western districts, with two more of the Siemens factories, a ball-bearing factory and several railway installations being badly hit. Damage elsewhere was light, only 136 buildings being destroyed. 36 people were killed and a further 105 were classed as missing (It is noticed again and again that, as the war progressed, German reports became more erratic or incomplete. The final report Schlussbericht, for this raid is missing from the Berlin archives). (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 456 - 457) and

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070706011932/http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/de/c43.html>

3.12.43 16 aircraft have been again detailed for operations tonight. The crews have been briefed to attack targets at Leipzig. The attack took place 7-9/10ths cloud tops 5,000'. Vis good. Defences – moderate predicted H/F, S/Ls about 50 mainly illuminating cloud base. Considerable fighter activity. Owing to cloud, no definite results were seen. P/O Coleman and crew failed to return, no news having been since received. One aircraft returned early due to rear gunner being sick. The remaining aircraft returned safely to base.

3/12/43 – Leipzig

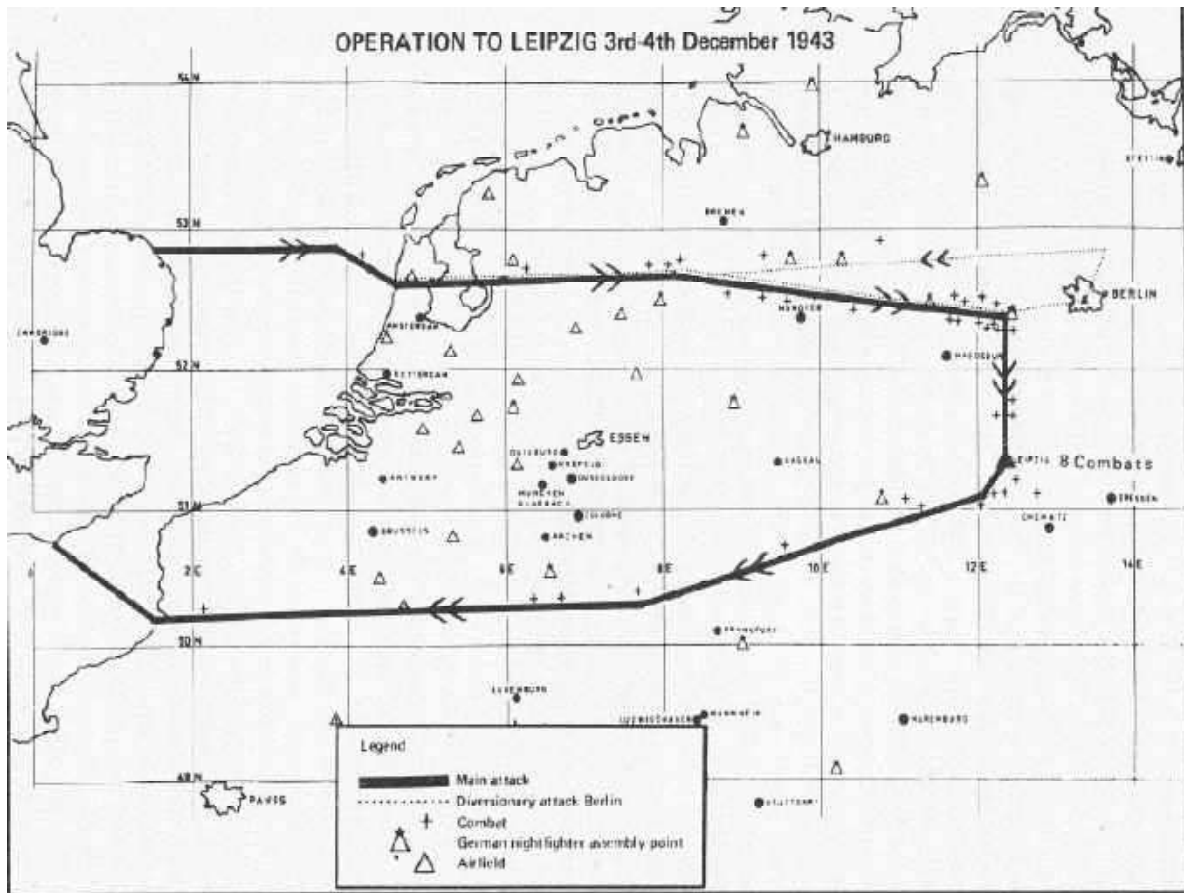
JB117C F/Sgt W.N.Roberts, F/Sgt V.A.Davis, F/Sgt S.J.Peek, F/O L.C.Jones, F/Sgt D.E.D.Harvey, F/Sgt J.R.Chapman, F/Sgt E.L.Wright. Up 1735 Down 0010. 1 x 4000lb, 4 x 1000lb, 1 x 500lb. Leipzig attacked from 20,000. No results of bombing seen. Large explosion, yellow in colour – repeated 5 times, observed

Robbie Roberts, now a Flight Sergeant and one of the senior captains in his squadron, participated in no fewer than eight of the sixteen major operations against Berlin. When the battle opened on 18 November JB117 C-Charlie, with Roberts at the controls, was one of seventeen 97 Squadron Lancasters dispatched to the capital of the Reich. Roberts went again on 23 November, and again three nights later, and again on 2 December. Four consecutive trips to the most heavily defended city in Germany within a fortnight! 97 Squadron lost three more crews in the course of these four raids. Within twenty four hours of the last Berlin trip, Roberts was off again, this time to Leipzig, the scene of his diciest trip six weeks earlier. On each occasion the faithful C-Charlie brought Roberts and his crew safely home.

By now Robbie Roberts had successfully completed twenty-five sorties against some of the toughest German targets and now, belatedly, his skill and courage were recognised. On 25 November his Squadron Commander, Group Captain Fresson, recommended Robbie for the award of the Distinguished Flying Medal, mentioning in particular his skill and coolness in evading three night-fighter attacks on the way to Leipzig. The award was eventually promulgated in the London Gazette dated 15 February 1944. In addition, Robbie Roberts was commissioned Pilot Officer (with effect from 25 November 1943) and granted two weeks kitting-up leave. It was a leave which possibly saved his life. On 16 December 97 Squadron dispatched twenty-one Lancasters to Berlin. When the crews returned in the early hours of the 17th they found a treacherous low-lying fog over East Anglia. Only nine aircraft landed safely back at Bourn: four landed away; two crews bailed out when they ran out of fuel; five

crashed when trying to land, and one was missing. Thirty-five aircrew members were killed and a further six were seriously injured. Amongst the dead was Robbie's navigator, **Sergeant S J Peek**, flying as a spare bod with another crew. Their Lancaster JB117 - Robbie's faithful C-Charlie crashed in the middle of the airfield at Graveley. **Mr A Riches**

Below: route of crews to Leipzig from (G. Musgrove 1976 p92)



3/4 December 1943 Leipzig

527 aircraft, 307 Lancasters, 220 Halifaxes. Despite the loss of two pressmen on the previous night, the well-known American broadcaster, Ed Murrow, flew on the raid with a 619 Squadron Lancaster crew. He returned safely.

The Bomber Force took another direct route towards Berlin before turning off to bomb Leipzig. German fighters were in the bomber stream and scoring successes before the turn was made but most of them were then directed to Berlin when the Mosquito diversion opened there. There were few fighters over Leipzig and only 3 bombers were believed to have been lost in the target area, 2 of them being shot down by Flak. A relatively successful raid, from the point of bomber casualties, was spoiled when many aircraft flew by mistake into the Frankfurt defended area on the long southern withdrawal route and more than half the bombers shot down on this night were lost there. 24 aircraft, 15 Halifaxes and 9 Lancasters were lost.

The Pathfinders found and marked this distant inland target accurately and the bombing was very effective; this was the most successful raid on Leipzig during the war. A large area of housing and many industrial premises were severely damaged. One place which was hit by a large number of bombs was the former World Fair exhibition site, whose spacious buildings had been converted to become war factories, the largest buildings being taken over by the Junkers aircraft company. The British Official History (Vol. 1V, p.267) quotes the Leipzig city records as giving a figure of 1,182 people killed, but a German local police report compiled a week after the raid gives a different figure; 614 people killed and 464 injured. It is not known which report is correct. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 457).



3/4 December 1943. Vertical photographic-reconnaissance aerial showing very severe damage to buildings of the Trade Exhibition Centre. **From:**
<https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=pictures+of+leipzig+3+december+1943>

- 4.12.43** Stand down for operational crews. Some flying training in the afternoon.
- 5.12.43** Weather misty – flying training cancelled in afternoon – some ground training.
- 6.12.43** Weather unfit for flying. Ground training and lectures.
- 7.12.43** Weather unfit – misty. Conferences and ground training. P/O Saunders Nav and Sgt Andrews A/G reported prisoners of war, Sgt Angel F/E killed, all of P/O Painter's crew, reported missing 20/21st October 1943.
- 8.12.43** No flying, weather unfit. Ground training and aircrew recreation.
- 9.12.43** No flying, weather unfit. Ground training and aircrew recreation.
- 10.12.43** No flying. Some officers and all aircrew, pilots and flight engineers, are paying a visit to RAF Engineering shops at Henlow. Stand down in afternoon.
- 11.12.43** "Y" training, flying in afternoon and ground training.
- 12.12.43** Flying training programme carried out. "Y" training and cross countries and bombing.
- 13.12.43** Flying training, cross countries, fighter affiliation. Two night cross countries and two aircraft on dusk and dark circuits landing.

14.12.43 Ground training - weather unfit.

15.12.43 Ground training, weather unfit. S/Ldr C.M.Dunncliffe assumed command of the Squadron from G/Cpt N.H.Fresson DFC on posting to RAF Snaith.

Note: F/O AW Weston (Navigator) who joined the crew of P/O Roberts for the operation on 41/1/44 was originally a member of F/L Brill's crew in JB963Q

F/L D.Brill	Pilot
Sgt J.Stone	Flight Engineer
F/O A.W.Weston	Navigator
P/O R.Butler	Bomb Aimer
Sgt H.Chappell	Wireless Operator
P/O C.J.Little	Mid Upper Gunner
F/Sgt E.Battle	Rear Gunner

The crew were detailed for the raid to Berlin on 16/12/43 where all the crew perished. F/O Weston was receiving medical treatment and was substituted by P/O McIntyre

97 Squadron Operations Record Book January – June 1944

2/1/44 - Berlin

JB191A P/O V.S.Flack, Sgt G.H.Hare, F/O A.P.Rand, F/O R.C.Boston, Sgt R.Ferguson, F/Sgt H.Dunnett, **W/O E.L.Wright**. Up 2345 Down 0613. 1 x 4000lb, 5 x 1000lb. Primary target attacked. Bombs released by H2S. Good concentration of Wanganuis around aiming point. Too early on target to observe results

Note: an extra 'trip' for W/O Wright

14/1/44 - Brunswick

JB683C P/O W.N.Roberts, F/Sgt V.Davis, **F/O A.W.Weston** (navigator), F/L L.C.Jones, F/Sgt D.E.Harvey, F/Sgt J.R.Chapman, W/O E.L.Wright. Up 1658 Down 2215. 1 x 4000lb, 6 x 1000lb, 4 x 500lb. Brunswick bombed from 20,000'. Target identified by wanganui flares. 8/10ths cloud tops at 8,000'. Vis good. Incendiaries observed spread over target area.

When Pilot Officer Roberts returned to operational flying on 14 January 1944 it was with a new navigator, Flying Officer A-W Weston, and a new Lancaster, JB 683 another C which the crew christened Charlie-Two. The target was Brunswick, and 97 Squadron contributed twenty-one aircraft to the 498 taking part (all but two of them Lancasters). The raid was a complete failure: most of the bombs fell in the surrounding countryside and only ten houses were destroyed, killing fourteen people. To make matters worse, thirty-eight Lancasters were lost (7.62%) including two from 97 squadron. But Charlie-Two brought Roberts and crew safely back to Bourn. **Mr A Riches**

14/15 January 1944 Brunswick

496 Lancasters and 2 Halifaxes on the first major raid to Brunswick of the war. 38 Lancasters were lost, 7.6% of the force. German running commentary was heard following the progress of the bomber force from a position only 40 miles from the English coast, and many German fighters entered the bomber stream soon after the German frontier was crossed near Bremen. The German fighters scored steadily until the Dutch coast was crossed on the return flight. 11 of the lost aircraft were Pathfinders.

Brunswick was smaller than Bomber Command's usual targets and this raid was not a success. The city report describes this only as a 'light' raid, with bombs in the south of the city which had only 10 houses destroyed and 14 people killed. Most of the attack fell either in the countryside or in Wolfenbuttel and other small towns and villages well to the south of Brunswick. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 465).

Time Line - 134059 Flight Lieutenant Arthur William Weston RAFVR Navigator

DOB: 08/05/1910 in Tynemouth, Co. Durham, England

Father: Alfred Robert Weston aged 30, Brass Finisher, Marine Engineering Worker, Mother: Mary aged 28 Certified Midwife. Arthur William Weston aged 11 months. **From:** Census of England and Wales 1911

Married: Margaret (nee Blair) 01/08/1934

Children: Anne Margaret 09/06/1936
Claire 17/06/1940

Civilian occupation: Teacher

7/7/41: Volunteer Reserve attestation at RAF Padgate, 1535671 AC2

13/7/41: ACRC (Air Crew Receiving Centre) St John Wood No3 London

22/11/41: Babbacombe No 1 ITW (Initial Training Wing) [ACRC 1 ITW Cambridge] Leading Aircraftman

Note: RAF Regents Park consisted of an area in north-west London which incorporated large areas of Regents Park, St John's Wood and Lords Cricket Ground. Throughout its life it was known as Aircrew Receiving Centre (ACRC), 1 ACRC and 3 ACRC. Babbacombe came into the equation because there was a bottleneck to get into the Initial Training Wings so an ITW "Receiving Wing" was set up in Babbacombe to act as a funnel. **From:**

<http://www.rafcommands.com/forum/showthread.php?12988-B-amp-Ham-No-1-ACRC>

14/2/42: Eastbourne No 1 EANS (Elementary Air Navigation School)

28/4/42: No 2 PDC Wing (Personnel Dispatch Centre) Wilmslow

8/5/42: Aircrew Dispersal Centre, Manchester

17/5/42: M/S Becton to Canada. Picture of Sgt Weston in Canada; the white band on the forage cap denotes trainee aircrew

Note: sketches below by Flt Lt Weston, on troop board ship to Canada

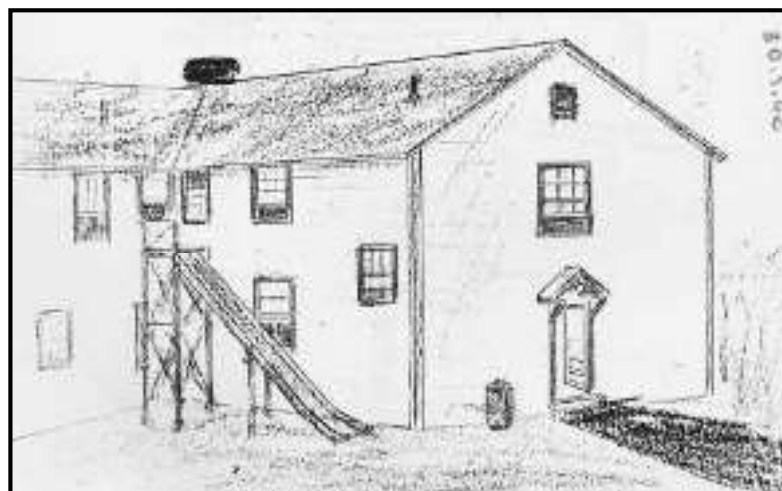


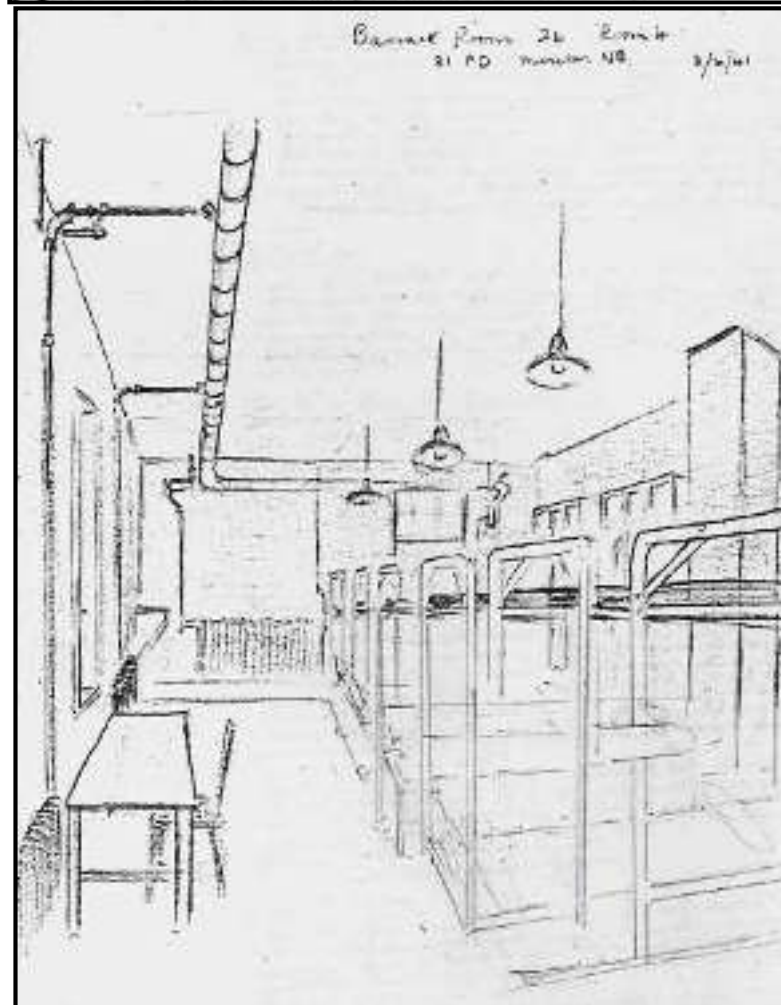
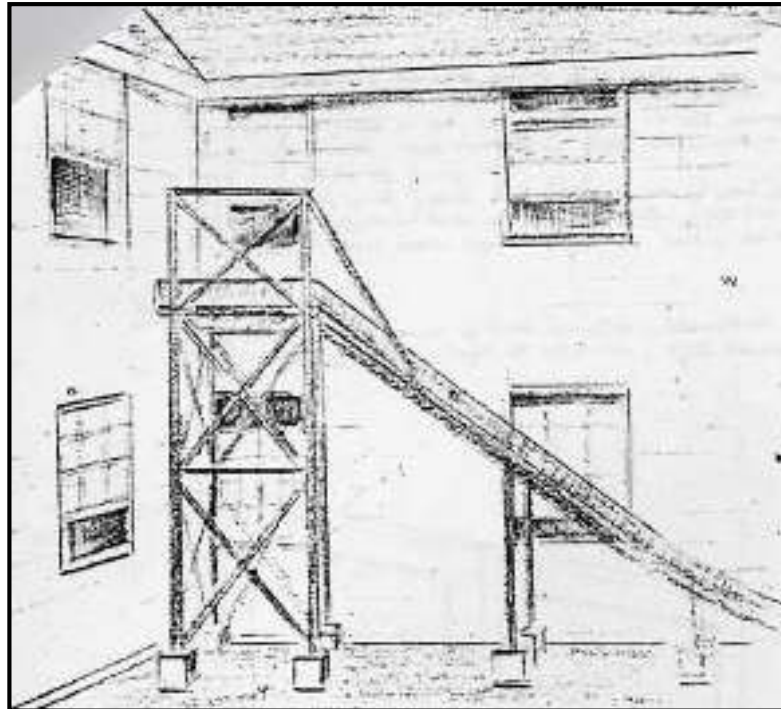


Sketch AW Weston On the troop transport ship carrying trainee aircrew from England to Canada 17/05/1942 & 17/07/1943.

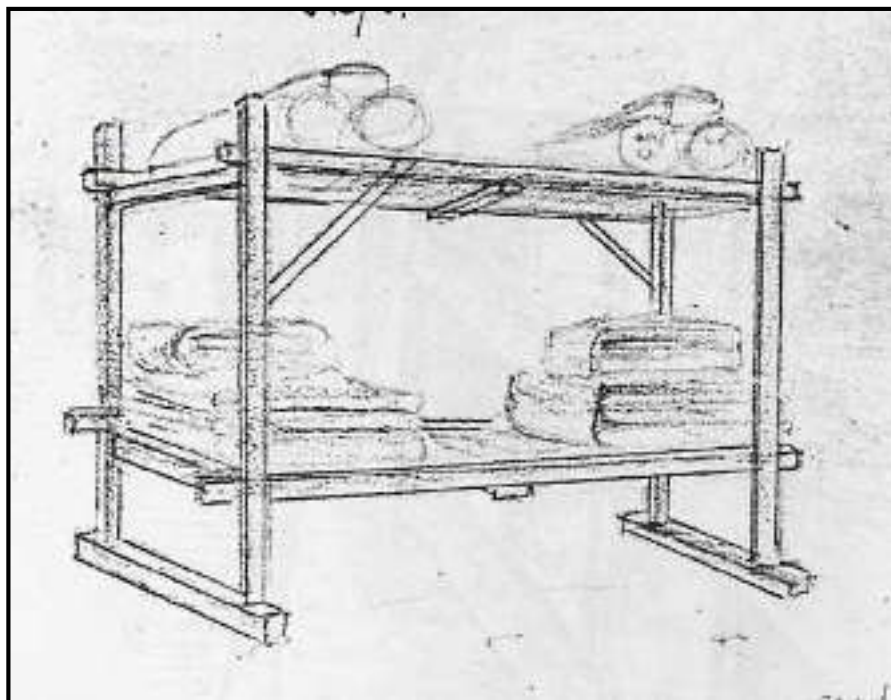
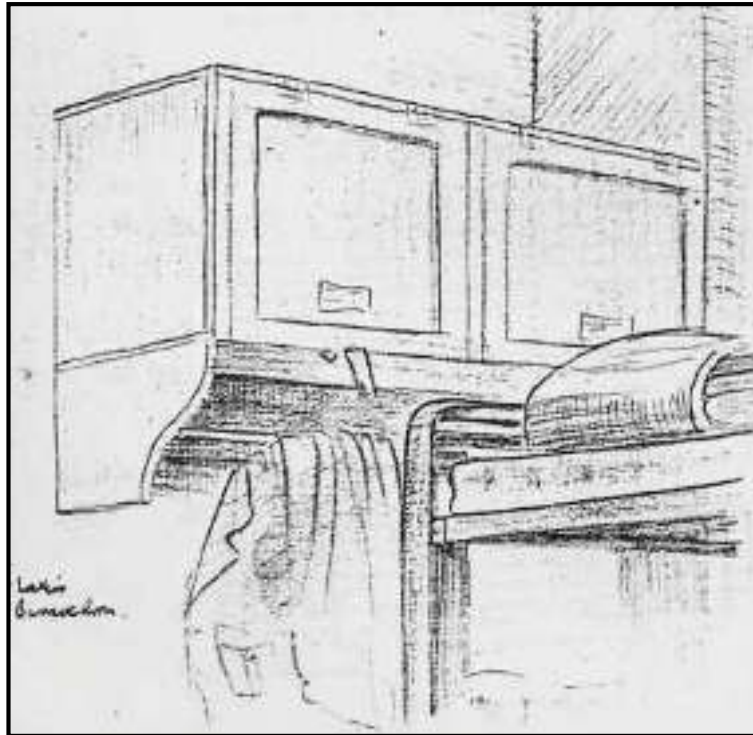
25/5/42: No 31 RAF PD (Personnel Depot) 1 Squadron, Moncton, New Brunswick

Note: sketches below by Arthur are of the base living quarters at Moncton, showing clothing storage space and fire escape shute.





Barrack Room 24 Room 4, 31 PD Moncton NB



2/7/42: No 31 ANS (Air Navigation School) Port Albert, Ontario. Flying in Avro Anson. Promoted to Sergeant



Port Albert Air Field Ontario. **From :**
<https://www.google.co.uk/maps/preview#!data=!1m4!1m3!1d11503!2d-81.7059121!3d43.8868768!2m1!1e3&fid=7>

- 23/10/42:** Commissioned Pilot Officer
- 28/10/42:** No 31 PDC (Personnel Dispatch Centre) Moncton
- No date:** No 7 PDC Harrogate
- 6/4/43:** 29 OTU (Operational Training Unit)

No. 29 OTU was formed in April 1942 at RAF North Luffenham as part of No. 7 Group RAF Bomber Command to train night bomber crews using the Vickers Wellington



From : www.google.co.uk/maps/preview#!data=!1m4!1m3!1d16814!2d-0.6072696!3d52.6257435!2m1!1e3&fid=7

- 13/5/43:** RAF Woolfox Lodge 1665 HCU (Heavy Conversion Unit) Number 3 Group Bomber Command

- 30/5/43:** RAF Bruntingthorpe No. 29 Operational Training Unit RAF (OTU) operating the Vickers Wellington to train night bomber crews. From: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Bruntingthorpe
- 17/7/43:** RAF Moncton Hall Swinderby
- 20/7/43:** RAF Winthorpe 1661 HCU, Nottighamshire flying Lancaster and Halifax
- 21/8/43:** Crewed up with F/O DJ Brill (Pilot) and P/O P Butler (Bomb Aimer)
- 30/8/43:** RAF Bardney No 9 Squadron

Note: At Appendix I see diary excerpts made by Flt/Lt Weston in a hand-made diary. These were obtained from his daughter, Anne Fry (nee Watson)

From 9 Squadron Operations Record Book

From: National Archives AIR/27/127 Image references 19 and 21 and http://www.9sqn.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/AIR27_127.pdf 9 Squadron



27/8/43: Nuremburg. Lancaster 111 ED 499 F/O DJ Brill, Sgt J Stone, **P/O AW Weston**, P/O R Butler, Sgt H Chappell, P/O CJ Little, Sgt FJ Battle. 2133 – 0515. Primary attacked at 0102hrs 23,000ft. Route markers seen at position “X”. Green TI’s seen over target. Centre of concentration of green TI’s in sights at time of bombing, seen to cascade at 0100hrs. Good fires burning round TI markers. Glow could be seen 90 miles before reaching target.

Same operation as Sgt WN Roberts and crew

30/08/43: Munchen Gladbach. Lancaster 111 ED 656. F/O DJ Brill, Sgt J Stone, P/O AW Weston, P/O R Butler, Sgt H Chappell, P/O CJ Little, Sgt FJ Battle. 0013 – 0537. Rhydt attacked at 0235hrs at 20,000ft. Flares and red TI’s seen on approach. No green seen. Red TI seen burning on ground and another cluster cascaded at 0234hours. Bombed [on centre] of 3 red TI’s. Good concentration of fires to North so that it was believed that first [target] was well bombed, but southern target was very widespread and fires extended only xxx to south

Same operation as Sgt WN Roberts and crew

3/9/43: Berlin. Lancaster W 4158 WS-O, F/O DJ Brill, Sgt J Stone, P/O AW Weston, P/O R Butler, Sgt H Chappell, P/O CJ Little, Sgt FJ Battle. 1957 – 0431. Primary attacked 2337 1/2 hrs at 22,000ft. Identified by red and green markers in southern area of sights. Many fires concentrated around TI markers. At 2322hrs in target area terrific explosion lit up the sky for 10 seconds.

Same operation as Sgt WN Roberts and crew

5/9/43: Manheim. Lancaster W 4158 WS-O, F/O DJ Brill, Sgt J Stone, P/O AW Weston, P/O R Butler, Sgt H Chappell, P/O CJ Little, Sgt FJ Battle. 2018 – 0316. Primary attacked at 2339hrs at 22,000ft. Red TI markers seen on track. Red and green TI’s seen over target. Centre of concentration of red and green TI’s in sights at time of bombing. Good fires concentrated round TI markers, appeared to be a tendency to undershoot.

Same operation as Sgt WN Roberts and crew

23/9/43: Manheim. Lancaster W 4158 WS-O, F/O DJ Brill, Sgt J Stone, P/O AW Weston, P/O R Butler, Sgt Culley, P/O CJ Little, Sgt FJ Battle. 19131 – 0149. Primary attacked at 2204 hrs at 20,000ft. Identified from green TI's. On running in some buildings could be in the light of flash from 4000lb [bomb]. Centre of cluster of green TI's in sights. Results generally considered better than on last attack. Fires were quite impressive and all that were seen within an area confined by the flares being dropped around the target area, presumably for fighters.

Same operation as Sgt WN Roberts and crew

27/9/43: Hannover. Lancaster DV293 WS-Y, F/O DJ Brill, Sgt J Stone, P/O AW Weston, P/O R Butler, Sgt H Chappell, P/O CJ Little, Sgt FJ Battle. 1924 – 0052.. primary attacked at 22151/2hrs at 21,000ft. Timed distance run made from lake. PFF TI's red, yellow and green seen. MPI (Marking Point Indicator) of PFF TI's green seen in bomb sights. Results of own bombing not observed. Explosion from bombs of other aircraft seen and fires were building up around the TI's.

27/28 September 1943 Hannover

678 aircraft, 312 Lancasters, 231 Halifaxes, 111 Stirlings, 24 Wellingtons and 5 B-17s also took part. 38 Bomber Command aircraft, 17 Halifaxes, 10 Lancasters, 10 Stirlings and 1 Wellington lost; 1 B17 lost.

The use by the Pathfinders of faulty forecast winds again saved the centre of Hannover. The bombing was very concentrated but fell on an area 5 miles north of the city centre. No details are available from Germany but RAF photographic evidence showed that most of the bombs fell in open country or villages north of the city. (Middlebrook & Everitt pp 433 - 434).

29/9/43: Bochum. Lancaster ED 654 WS-W, F/O DJ Brill, Sgt J Stone, P/O AW Weston, P/O R Butler, Sgt Culley, P/O CJ Little, Sgt FJ Battle. 1811 – 2255. Primary attacked at 2059hrs at 21,000ft. Time and distance run made from green markers at position X. Red and green TI's over target. Centre of concentration of green TI's in sights at time of bombing. IT's seen to cascade at 2015hrs. Quite good fires burning in target area, some scattered incendiaries. Appeared to be quite a good concentrated attack.

29/30 September 1943 Bochum

352 aircraft, 213 Lancasters, 130 Halifaxes and 9 Mosquitoes, 9 aircraft – 5 Halifaxes and 4 Lancasters lost.

The Oboe-assisted Pathfinder plan worked perfectly and led to accurate and concentrated bombing. In the Bochum air-raid area, which included 3 small towns nearby, 527 houses were destroyed and 742 seriously damaged. The Altstadt is mentioned as having being particularly hard-hit. 161 people were killed, including 33 foreign workers and prisoners of war, and 337 people were injured. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 434).

1/10/43: Hagen. Lancaster ED 656 WS-V, F/O DJ Brill, Sgt J Stone, P/O AW Weston, P/O R Butler, Sgt H Chappell, P/O CJ Little, Sgt FJ Battle. 1823 – 0022. Primary attacked at 2100hrs at 20,000ft. Identified by red and green TI's. One red TI in bomb sights seen to cascade at 2059hrs. Own 4,000lb HC seen to explode on the red TI. Glow of fires on cloud seen after leaving the target.

Same operation as Sgt WN Roberts and crew

3/10/43: Kassel. Lancaster ED656 WS-V, F/O DJ Brill, Sgt J Stone, P/O AW Weston, P/O R Butler, Sgt H Chappell, P/O CJ Little, Sgt FJ Battle. 1833 – 0048. Primary attacked at 2131 hrs at 20,000ft. Identified by red and green TI's. Centre of cluster of 3 green TI's in bomb sights, seen to cascade at 21301/2hrs. Two red TI's seen burning on the ground partially obscured by smoke. The three green TI's in bomb sight were seen to fall in the same position as the two red TI's. Bombing well concentrated and very good fires seen. A particularly big explosion seen at 2206hrs from 5040N 0750E.

3 / 4 October 1943 Kassel

547 aircraft, 223 Halifaxes, 204 Lancasters, 113 Stirlings and 7 Mosquitoes. 24 aircraft, 14 Halifaxes, 6 Stirlings and 4 Lancasters lost.

This raid did not proceed according to plan. The HS2 blind marker aircraft overshot the aiming point badly and the visual markers could not correct this because their view of the ground was restricted by thick haze. German decoy markers may also have been present. The main weight of attack thus fell on the western suburbs and outlying towns and villages. But, even so, large fires were started at both the Henschel and Fieseler aircraft factories, at the city's main hospital and at several other important buildings. The eastern suburb of Wolfshanger was devastated. Kassel's casualties were 118 dead, 68 civilians, 12 military and 38 foreigners and 304 injured. Musgrove, in his excellent book Pathfinder Force, records that a large ammunition dump at Ilhringshausen, just north of Wolfshanger, was hit by a chance bomb-load and resulting explosions attracted further bombs; photographs taken later showed 84 buildings at the military location destroyed and a great mass of craters. The outlying towns of Bettenhausen and Sanderhausen were also severely hit but details for these places are not available. (Middlebrook & Everitt p 436).

4/10/43: Frankfurt. Lancaster ED656 WS-V, F/O DJ Brill, Sgt J Stone, P/O AW Weston, P/O R Butler, Sgt H Chappell, P/O CJ Little, Sgt FJ Battle. 1820 – 0114. Primary attacked at 2147hrs at 20,400ft. Identified by PFF flares yellow and red and green TI's MPI of approximately 5 green TI in sights. No red seen on bombing run. Good fires seen at Mannheim and at target particularly well concentrated. Orange explosion at approximately 2131hrs. But also fires seen at Darmstadt.

Same operation as Sgt WN Roberts and crew

05/10/43: No 97 PFF (Path Finder Force) Squadron.

Note: Flying Officer Brill's complete aircrew volunteered for PFF duties.

From 97 Squadron ORB August to December 1943

10/11 November 1943 – Modane

JA963Q F/L D.Brill, Sgt J.Stone, F/O A.W.Weston, P/O R.Butler, Sgt H.Chappell, P/O G.J.Little, F/Sgt E.Battle. Up 2120 Down 0444. 8 x 1000lb. Modane bombed. 19,500'. Full moon, clear sky, vis good. Target identified visually. Bombed on single red TI marker. Own results not seen. One very good fire seen with much rising smoke.

Same operation as F/Sgt WN Roberts and crew



25/26 November 1943 – Frankfurt

JA963Q F/L D.Brill, Sgt J.Stone, F/O A.W.Weston, P/O R.Butler, Sgt H.Chappell, P/O C.J.Little, F/Sgt E.Battle. Up 0030 Down 0630. 1 x 4000lb, 4 x 1000lb. Frankfurt attacked from 19,500'. Target marked by 8 TI red. A red glow was in bomb sight as bombs were released

1/12/1943: Non-effective – sick – admitted to SSQ (Station Sick Quarters) and transferred to General Hospital wef (with effect from) **5/12/43**. Placed on 12 followed by 11 days sick leave, 'no prognosis comment on' Air Ministry Form 1406

Following are entries from 97 Sqn ORB re F/L Brill and crew:

26/27 November 1943 – Berlin

JA963Q F/L D.Brill, Sgt J.Stone, P/O A.P.Rand, P/O R.Butler, Sgt H.Chappell, P/O E.Little, F/Sgt E.Battle. Up 1730 Down 0020. 1 x 4000lb, 3 x 1000lb, 4 x 500lb. Berlin bombed from 20,000'. Vis good, clear sky. Coned by searchlights over target and encountered some inaccurate heavy flak. Could not evade searchlights so jettisoned bombs on outskirts of town

3/4 December 1943 – Leipzig

JA963Q F/L D.Brill, Sgts D.Coates (2nd Pilot), J.Stone, P/O T.Campbell, P/O R.Butler, Sgt G.H.Townend, P/O G.J.Little, F/Sgt E.Battle. Up 1730 Down 0020. 4 x TI, 1 x 4000lb, 3 x 1000lb, 1 x 500lb. Bombs dropped on Leipzig. Routemarkers well placed on route in and out. The effect of the attack could not be judged owing to 10/10ths cloud over target area.

16/12/43 Berlin

JB963Q F/L D.Brill, F/L J.Handley (2nd Pilot), Sgt J.Stone, P/O T.McIntyre, P/O R.Butler, Sgt H.Chappell, P/O G.J.Little, F/Sgt E.Battle. Up 1655 – **missing**.

16.12.43 21 aircraft detailed to attack Berlin. Good concentration of bombing in early stages falling off later. No results seen only reddish glow. 10/10ths cloud tops 3/5000', vis good. Defences H/F moderate to 22,000' and moderate L/F 14,000' – S/Ls ineffective. Many fighter flares and scarecrow flares. F/L Pelletier in Lanc JA960 was attacked by an enemy fighter JU88 and claims it damaged. One aircraft, F/L Brill and crew failed to return – no news heard since. On returning to base aircraft encountered bad visibility over England and the Squadron had a disastrous night in aircraft losses and 28 aircrew being killed. The following is a brief summary of the return. 8 aircraft landed safely at Bourn and 3 at Graveley. One aircraft landed at Wyton. F/Sgt Coates after being hit by another aircraft's incendiaries and having two engines put out of action on the same side by flak, put out a ditching signal when not far from the Danish coast. With great skill he flew the aircraft back on the two engines and landed safely without further damage at Downham Market. Two crews, P/O Smith and F/O Mooney the captains, bailed out safely over Ely and Wyton. All the crews were uninjured but one aircraft is missing and untraced. S/L Mackenzie DFC crashed at Bourn on the edge of the airfield. Three were killed – S/L Mackenzie, F/O Colson, P/O Pratt, the remainder are either in hospital or sick quarters. F/O Thckway and crew crashed near Bourn airfield, killing all except Sgt Mack who is in hospital and Sgt Laver who escaped uninjured. S/L Deverill DFC DFM and crew crashed at Graveley, all being killed except for W/O Benbow who is in Ely hospital. F/Sgt Scott and crew crashed at Graveley, all being killed. P/O Kirkwood and crew crashed near Gransden, all being killed. Total loss of aircraft – 8. Aircrew killed – 28, injured 7. **From:** 97 Squadron ORB

Note: Also, on this same raid the Navigator from P/O Robert's crew, **Sgt SJ Peek**, was killed in action having volunteered to fly with:

JB117C F/Sgt I.W.Scott, Sgts E.W.Collishaw, J.Peek, D.R.Irvine, S.G.Parrott, K.Foxcroft, S.L.Hope. Up 1650 No down time. 5 x 2000lb. Aircraft crashed on return to base due to fog and low cloud. All members of the crew were killed.

Picture of Richard & Yvette Jozefiak with Anne Fry (nee Weston) and husband Ken. Anne is Arthur Weston's daughter.

Picture below of Anne with Canadian Lancaster KB726 VR-A in 2014 at Middleton-St-George, former RAF Station

Note: Kenneth E Fry married Anne Fry (nee Weston) September 1956 Durham



Continue with P/O Roberts' crew:

14/01/1944 Brunswick

JB683C P/O W.N.Roberts, F/Sgt V.Davis, F/O A.W.Weston, F/L L.C.Jones, F/Sgt D.E.Harvey, F/Sgt J.R.Chapman, W/O E.L.Wright. Up 1658 Down 2215. 1 x 4000lb, 6 x 1000lb, 4 x 500lb. Brunswick bombed from 20,000'. Target identified by wanganui flares. 8/10ths cloud tops at 8,000'. Vis good. Incendiaries observed spread over target area.

14/15 January 1944 Brunswick

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