

Empire Air Training Scheme & Bomber Command's Strategic Bombing Campaign

January, February & March 1945.



26 December 1944

- Considerable quantities of men and materials were slipping through St Vith at night, so Bomber Command was tasked to destroy this hub of communications sufficiently to prevent any fast traffic and thus give even greater opportunities for day attack by tactical forces.
- On 26th December 294 Lancasters and Halifaxes attacked St Vith.
- Both Nos. 460 and 466 took part and the R.A.A.F. crews had no difficulty in identifying their aiming point and dropped 95 tons of bombs (out of 1,139) before returning to base without being involved in any significant incident.
- Their estimates of heavy damage were confirmed by Ninth Air Force reports that every road radiating from St Vith was blocked and the cratered area within the town was so extensive that no direct passage through was possible.



27 December 1944

- Late on 27th December the spearheads of Manteuffel's Fifth Panzer Army near **Dinant**, short of supplies and reinforcements, were beaten back into **Rochefort**, and the assault which was to have retaken Brussels and Antwerp was thus halted short of its first objective—the River Meuse.



Corporal Robert William BROWN

Service No: 67268

Born: Rozelle NSW, 12 February 1908

Enlisted in the RAAF: 14 July 1942

Unit: No. 8 Elementary Flying Training School, Narrandera NSW

Died: Injuries, Gladesville NSW, 27 December 1944, Aged 36 Years

Cremated: Rookwood Crematorium, Sydney NSW

CWGC Additional Information: Son of William Henry and Clara Jane Brown; husband of Daphne May Brown, of Gladesville

Roll of Honour: Gladesville NSW

Remembered: Forces Memorial Wall, Rookwood Crematorium

Remembered: Panel 115, Commemorative Area, Australian War Memorial, Canberra ACT

On 27 December 1944, the body of Corporal Brown, a Carpenter General, was found by his wife in the garage at their home in Gladesville, Sydney. He died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

References:

Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour On-Line Records (RAAF Casualty Information compiled by Alan Storr (409804))

Commonwealth War Graves Commission On-Line Records

Department of Veterans' Affairs On-Line WWII Nominal Roll

National Archives of Australia On-Line Record A705, 166/6/867

27 December 1944

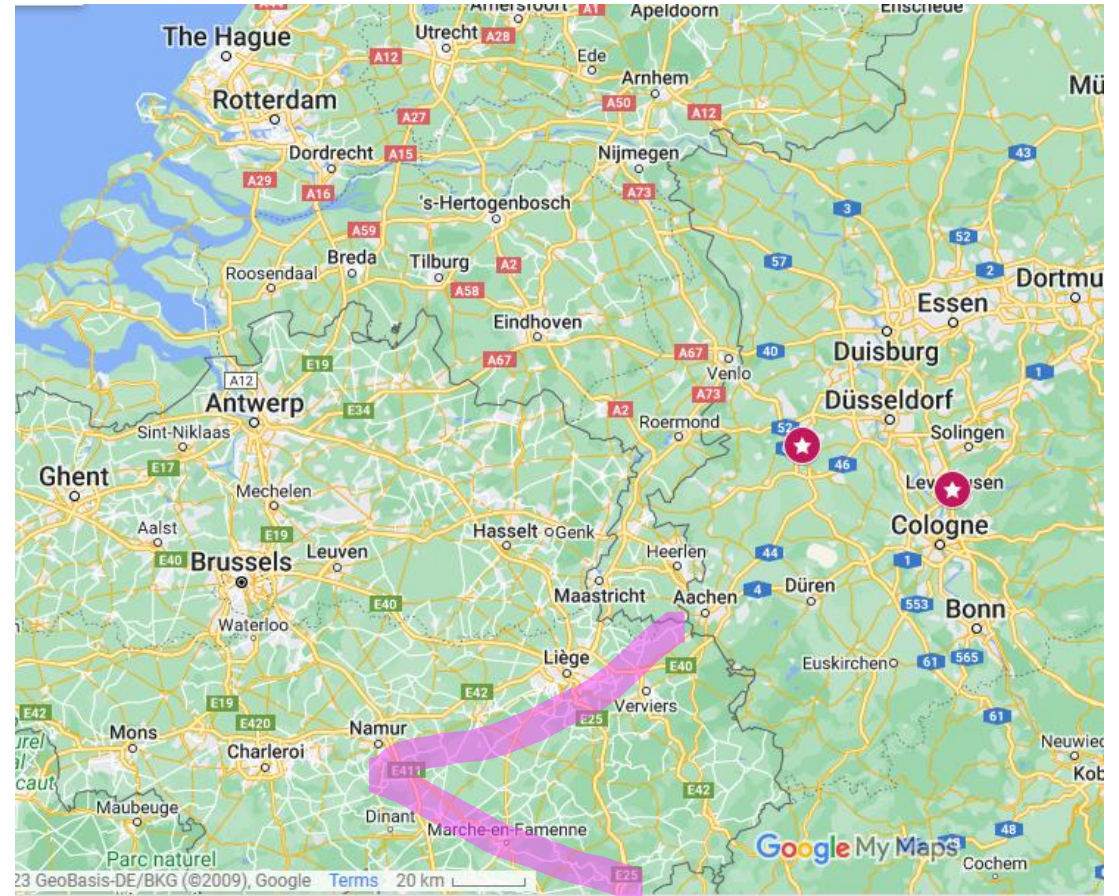
- On 27 December 1944 No. 462 Squadron RAAF was relocated to RAF Foulsham and became part of No. 100 (Bomber Support) Group RAF.
- This group specialised in electronic warfare both to jam and confuse enemy radar and to detect and kill enemy night fighters.
- No. 462 Squadron's aircraft were to be modified with radar jamming equipment and other countermeasures.
- The squadron mounted small diversionary attacks to deceive the Germans as to the location of Bomber Command raids using its special equipment and Window.



An electronic warfare Fortress III of 214 Squadron with nose-mounted H2S radome.

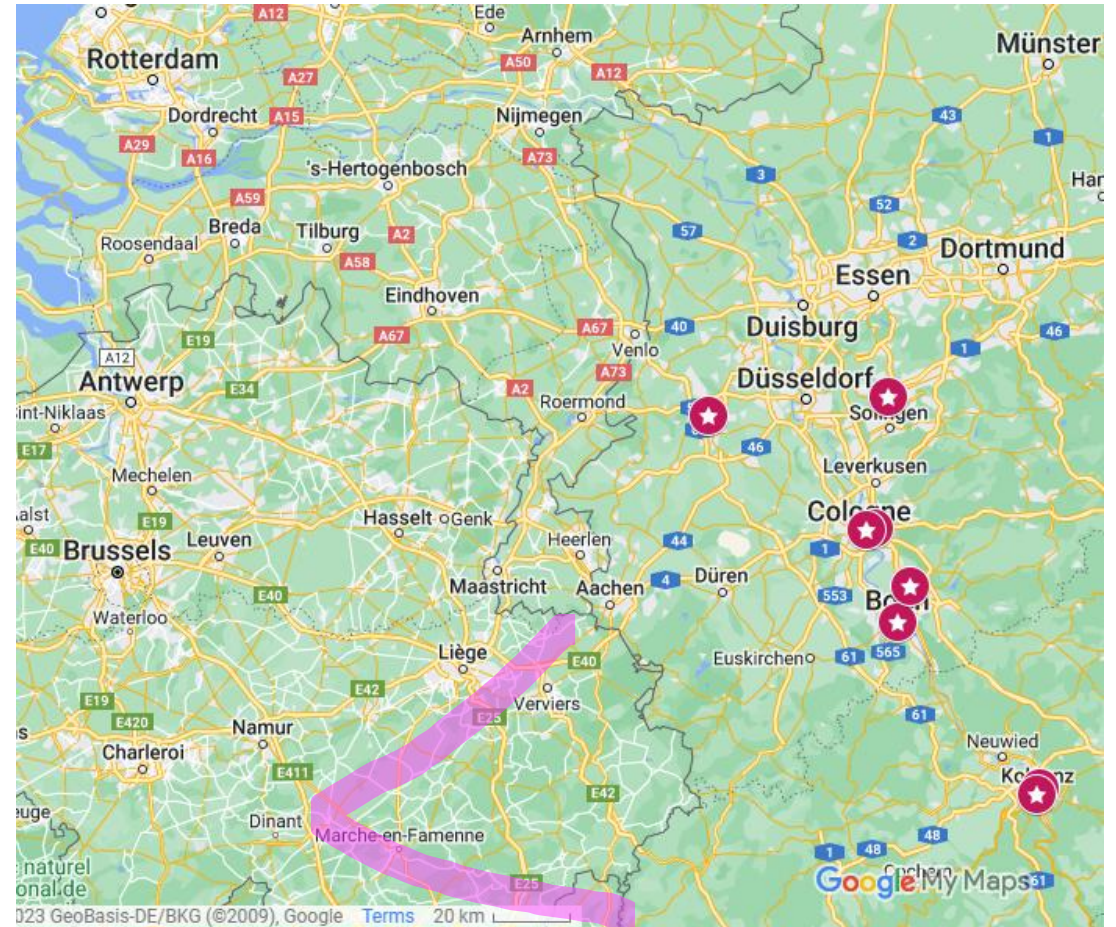
27/28 December 1944

- Australian squadrons of Bomber Command resumed their offensive against German rail centres in daylight on 27th December when 211 Lancasters attacked the Rheydt marshalling yards near Munchen Gladbach.
- This force flew in group formation with seven aircraft of No. 460 acting as lead aircraft for No. 1 Group, and Nos. 463 and 467 providing 27 out of 44 aircraft contributed by No. 5 Group.
- The target was free of cloud and, although a few bombs overshot into the town area, bombing was well concentrated on the main marshalling yard.
- Damage was particularly severe at the junction to the south of the goods depot and north - bound sorting sidings. All through-lines were temporarily blocked and rolling-stock was heavily damaged.
- That same night 18 Halifaxes of No. 466 flew to Opladen in a force of 328 aircraft, larger than normal against railway targets at this period. This attack, though bombing was more scattered, was successful as both large railway workshops at Opladen were seriously damaged, main and shunting tracks were badly cratered and much rolling-stock derailed or damaged.



28th-31st December 1944

- On 28th-29th No. 460 bombed the main yards at Munchen Gladbach. Another bad weather cycle had begun, and heavy cloud obscured the target. The pathfinders were late in arriving and their sky markers did not appear well placed to main-force crews already orbiting.
- Most R.A.A.F. crews considered the attack was scattered and indefinite.
- Finally, in the dying hours of 1944, No. 466 sent 16 Halifaxes when 470 aircraft showered 1,750 tons of bombs through heavy cloud covering the Kalk Nord marshalling yards at Cologne. Target photographs showed only cloud but crew reports confirmed that there were heavy explosions and many good fires.
- During this last week in December there were six other Bomber Command attacks against Bonn, Gremberg (Cologne), Lutzel (Coblenz), Mosel (Coblenz), Troisdorf and Vohwinkel.
- Only individual R.A.A.F. crews joined in these raids, most prominently in the No. 3 Group daylight attack against Vohwinkel on 31st December when no fewer than 33 of the attacking Lancasters were piloted by Australians.



29th-30th December

- No. 460 ended the year with an attack on the Scholven-Buer synthetic refinery at Gelsenkirchen.
- Previously attacked by No. 4 Group in daylight on 6th October 1944 and by the U.S.A.A.F., this plant was one of the most important still in partial production.
- A relatively large force of 337 aircraft from Nos. 1 and 6 Groups was dispatched on 29th-30th December in clear weather.
- Punctual well-concentrated marking was maintained by the pathfinders so that main force crews, unhindered by fighters or flak, could press home a deliberate attack.
- Explosions and fires were seen through the low thin-lying sheet of stratus cloud below the bombers and one very large explosion sent flames shooting upwards and was followed by a mushroom of black smoke which rose to 12,000 feet.



December 1944

- By the end of October 1944, No. 7 EFTS at Western Junction near Launceston was equipped with approximately 60 Tiger Moths, and had trained 1801 pilots.
- Training was suspended in December 1944, and all flying ceased on 28 March the next year.



Two airmen assigned to No. 7 Elementary Flying School with two of the unit's Tiger Moth aircraft at Western Junction Aerodrome

Dec 44

- The total duration of training in the SFTS varied during the war as demand for aircrew became more or less urgent.
- In October 1941 it was raised to 12 weeks (including 100 hours flying time), and again to 16 weeks in December 1941.
- It continued to increase after this, peaking at 28 weeks in June 1944.
- The RAAF had ordered a general reduction in aircrew training, after being informed by the British Air Ministry that it no longer required EATS graduates for the war in Europe.
- Significant reserves of trained Commonwealth aircrew had been built up in the UK early in 1944 prior to the invasion of Normandy, but lower-than-anticipated casualties had resulted in an over-supply that by 30 June numbered 3,000 Australians.
- No. 1 Service Flying Training School (SFTS), Point Cook, Victoria.
 - 1 May 40 to 15 Sept 44 – almost 3,000 graduates
- No. 2 SFTS, Forest Hill (Wagga Wagga), NSW.
 - 1 July 40 to 3 April 42 – just over 550 graduates from 600 entrants people & planes to No. 5 & No. 7.
- No. 3 SFTS, Amberley, Qld. Twin & single engine
 - Sept 40 to March 42 - ?? People & planes to No. 1 & No.6.
- No. 4 SFTS, Geraldton, WA twin engine
 - 10 Feb 1941 – Dec 44 – over 1,000 graduates
- No. 5 SFTS, Uranquinty, NSW single engine
 - Oct 41 – Nov 45 – 1515 graduates, 42 deaths
- No. 6 SFTS, Mallala, SA twin engine
 - Aug 41 – Sept 45 – 2,178 graduates, 39 deaths
- No. 7 SFTS, Deniliquin, NSW single engine
 - June 41 – Dec 44 – 2,206 graduates, at least 29 deaths
- No. 8 SFTS, Bundaberg, Qld twin engine
 - Dec 41 – Dec 44 - ??

Dec 44

- No. 10 at Temora and No 11 at Benalla were the only Elementary Schools continuing in operation into 1945.
- No. 1 EFTS Dec 39 Parafield then May 44 to Tamworth closed December 44.
- No 2 April 40 Archerfield closed March 42 people and planes transferred to EFTS 5 & 11.
- No. 3 Jan 40 Essendon closed May 42 people and planes transferred to EFTS 11.
- No. 4 Jan 40 Mascot closed April 42 people and planes transferred to EFTS 6.
- No. 5 June 40 Narromine closed June 44
- No. 6 1940 Tamworth closed Dec 44
- No. 7 Aug 40 Western Junction, Tas closed Dec 44
- No. 8 Sept 40 Narrandera closed Dec 44
- No.9 late 40 Cunderdin, WA closed Dec 44
- No. 10 May 41 Temora closed Feb 46
- No. 11 June 41 Benalla closed July 45
- No. 12 Oct 41 Bundaberg then Jan 42 Lowood closed April 42 to 8 & 10.

December 44

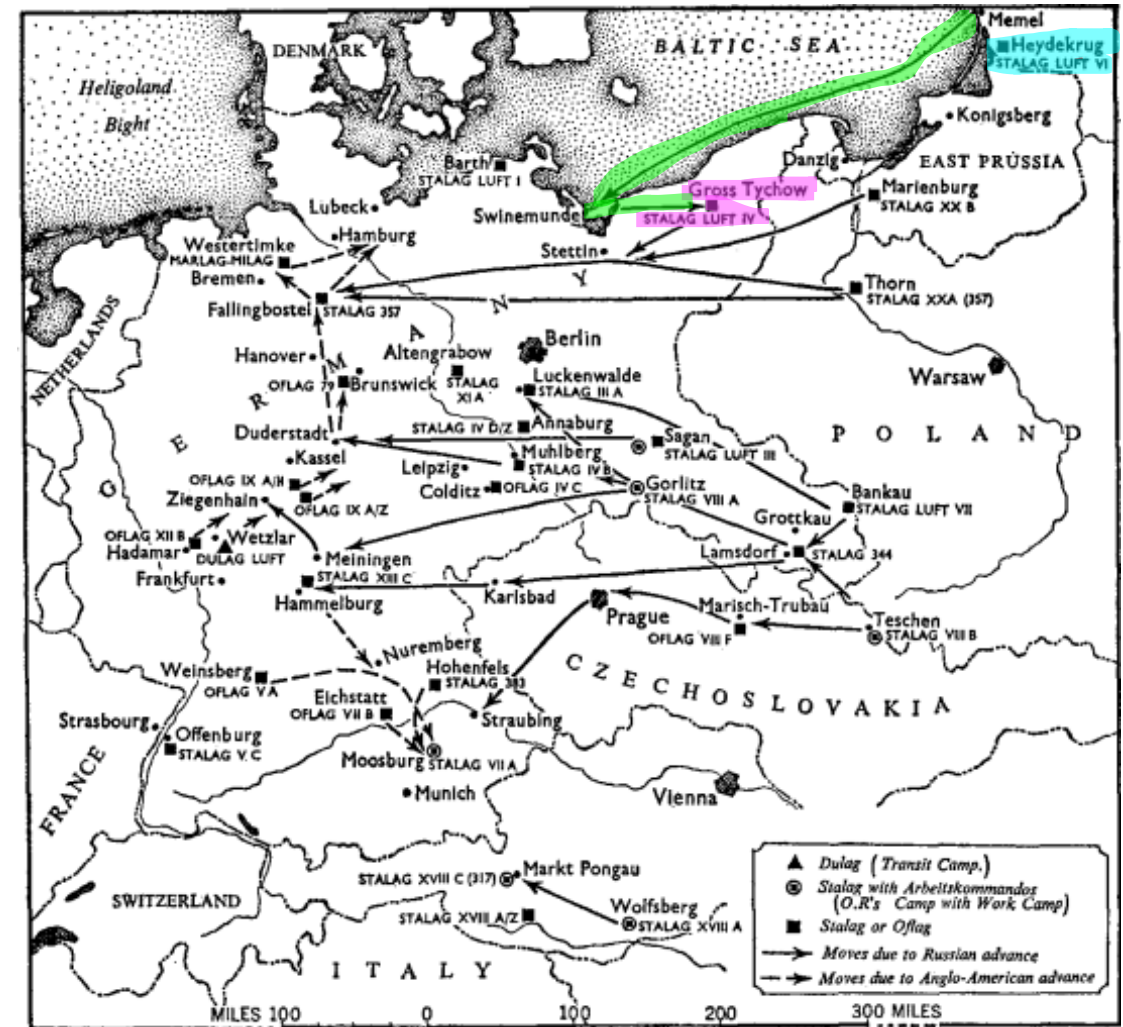
- The last commander of No. 8 EFTS was W Cdr C. E. Martin, DSO, DFC, 402059. 57 Sqn RAF; comd 460 Sqn 1943, 1 EFTS 1944-45 , 5 OTU 1945. Grazier; of Cassilis, NSW; b. Wellington, NSW, 19 May 1910.



LONDON, ENGLAND. 1943-09-23. OUTSIDE BUCKINGHAM PALACE AFTER RECEIVING HIS DSO IS 402059 WING COMMANDER C. E. MARTIN DSO DFC, CASSILIS, NSW. WITH HIM ARE MISS VIRGINIA LEES (LEFT) AND MISS JULIA LEES. WG CDR MARTIN WAS COMMANDING OFFICER OF NO. 460 (LANCASTER) SQUADRON RAAF OF BOMBER COMMAND.

Late in 1944

- The Germans had no intention of losing hold of prisoners of war, especially airmen, who were withdrawn deeper and deeper into Germany with every Allied advance.
- One of the first camps to be affected was Stalag Luft VI at Heydekrug, which was evacuated late in 1944 as the Russian armies advanced on Memel.
- The prisoners were herded into the holds of ships for three nights and two days for the Baltic crossing.
- They could sleep only by crossing their legs over each other and had only the food they were carrying and no water except seawater.
- At Swinemunde they were transferred to cattle trucks and taken to Stalag Luft IV, Gross Tychow.
- From Kiefheide railway station at Gross Tychow, handcuffed in pairs, the heavily-laden prisoners were ordered to march at the double to the camp itself about two miles and a half away.
- Attempts to discard heavy packs resulted in worse confusion because of the handcuffs, and although the guards cut away some of these impediments the prisoners were stumbling over jettisoned bundles all the way.
- If a man fell through exhaustion, sickness or after stumbling over a pack, he was either jabbed in the leg with a bayonet, clubbed with a rifle butt or savaged by dogs until he resumed the march.
- The discarding of packs left many of the prisoners with only the clothes they were wearing to cover them during a cold winter in a very poorly-equipped camp.



December

- During December only the Fifteenth Air Force could maintain a steady effort against its allotted oil targets;
- the Eighth mounted only three raids and
- Bomber Command only five,
- because the desperate German ground offensive launched towards the Ardennes in mid-December immediately forced the substitution of tactical for strategic roles for the bombers.
- Bomber Command's contribution to the oil campaign was noteworthy in that only five of its 20 attacks against the Ruhr plants in the last quarter of 1944 were at night.
- Some daylight raids were mounted in good weather using normal pathfinder and navigation techniques, but it was the ability of No. 3 Group (whose Lancaster squadrons were receiving a steady proportion of aircraft equipped with G-H) to operate in weather hitherto regarded as impossible which permitted pressure to be maintained until the full list of Bomber Command oil targets had been "neutralised".
- The G-H system could handle up to 80 aircraft at a time; it had a range of the order of 250 miles, and as a precision blind-bombing device could achieve an accuracy of a quarter of a mile. It was thus very suitable for the medium-sized forces used against the Ruhr, and by flying in formations of three aircraft of which only the leader would have G-H, a consistently high standard of bombing was practicable.



Year End 44

- In September 1944 German actual production of aviation gasoline (90 per cent of which came from hydrogenation plants) was down to less than 5 per cent of planned production; motor-transport fuel output was 43 per cent of planned production and diesel oil output was 50 per cent.
- In the next three months the Eighth Air Force cascaded 22,602 tons, the Fifteenth 15,646 tons and Bomber Command 22,770 tons of bombs against the oil industry.
- Despite the strenuous efforts made by Germany, her aviation fuel output rose only to 8 per cent of planned production in October, 22 per cent in November and 11 per cent in December.
- Production of motor-transport fuel remained fairly static at 45 per cent of required output, and only diesel fuel showed any substantial recovery, rising to 70 per cent by the end of the year.

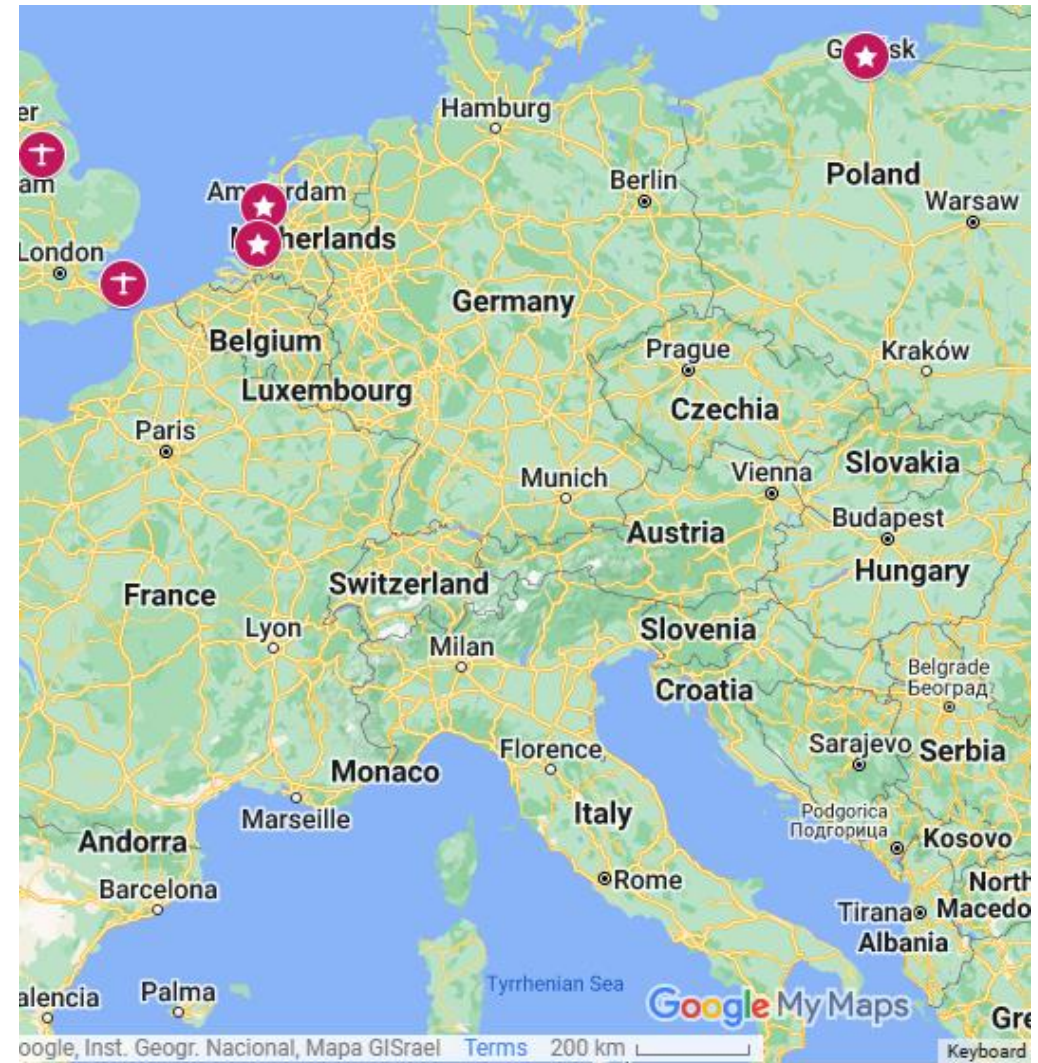


US Air Force photo

Remains of the Merseburg-Leuna synthetic oil plant,
10 April 1945

December 44

- No. 5 Group was also required to make five attacks on port areas and shipping, and two on E-boat and R-boat pens during the critical phase of the Ardennes battle.
- The raids by No. 617 Squadron against enemy light naval depots at Ijmuiden (15th December) and Rotterdam (29th December) had direct relevance to the problem of protecting Allied shipping using Antwerp.
- At Ijmuiden Flying Officer Martins saw his Tallboy land in the south-west corner of the target while Flying Officer Ross reported that his bomb fell 20 yards short of the entrance to the massive concrete shelters.
- Ross also claimed a direct hit during the attack on Rotterdam, while Flight Lieutenant Gavin scored a near miss on the entrance side of the underground docks.
- Severe damage was caused at both ports and, although not even direct hits by 12,000-lb bombs could demolish the shelters, gaping holes were torn in their roofs, and adjacent stores and loading areas were wrecked.
- Less conclusive results were gained by a series of three raids against naval and merchant shipping in Oslo Fiord on 13th-14th, 28th-29th and 31st December. The largest raid in this series was made on 18th-19th December by 236 Lancasters against Gdynia in Poland. both the New Shipyard and Naval Dockyard were badly cratered, and a floating dock and at least two ships had foundered during this raid.



1 Jan 45 RAAF Aircrew in RAAF Squadrons

Squadron	1st April 1944			1st June 1944			1st January 1945		
	RAAF	Others	%	RAAF	Others	%	RAAF	Others	%
10 (C)	177	—	100	190	14	93·1	210	—	100
451 (F)	—	—	—	—	—	—	23	—	100
453 (F)	23	—	100	23	—	100	26	—	100
455 (C)	31	39	44·3	43	28	60·5	60	9	87
456 (NF)	34	14	70·8	35	16	68·6	42	7	85·7
460 (B)	129	98	56·8	176	189	48·2	245	162	60·2
461 (C)	131	42	75·7	153	57	72·8	149	55	73
462 (B)	—	—	—	—	—	—	135	150	47·3
463 (B)	96	70	57·8	107	84	56	180	109	62·3
464 (Second TAF)	14	39	26·4	23	44	34·3	34	27	55·7
466 (B)	131	74	63·9	153	76	66·8	147	133	52·5
467 (B)	85	88	49·1	83	78	51·5	202	92	68·7
	851	464	64·7	986	586	62·7	1,453	744	66·1

1 Jan 45

RAAF Aircrew in RAF Squadrons

	1st April 1944		6th June 1944		1st January 1945	
	Pilots	Other Aircrew	Pilots	Other Aircrew	Pilots	Other Aircrew
Bomber Command	183	467	210	637	362	1,131
Coastal Command	80	422	90	492	78	529
Second T.A.F.	84	23	95	30	148	96
Fighter Command	94	16	107	16	91	21
No. 38 Group	34	83	46	93	54	111
	475	1,011	548	1,268	733	1,888
RAAF Squadrons	851		986		1,453	
Total RAAF Aircrew	2,337		2,802		4,074	

1 January 1945

- Operation Bodenplatte was an attempt by the Luftwaffe to cripple Allied air forces in the Low Countries during the Second World War.
- The goal was to gain air superiority during the stagnant stage of the Battle of the Bulge so that the German Army and Waffen-SS forces could resume their advance.
- The operation was planned for 16 December 1944, but was delayed repeatedly due to bad weather until New Year's Day, the first day that happened to be suitable.
- Over 1,000 Luftwaffe aircraft attacked 18 Allied airbases in Holland and Belgium achieving tactical surprise.
- A great many Allied aircraft were destroyed on the ground but replaced within a week. Allied aircrew casualties were quite small, since the majority of Allied losses were grounded aircraft.
- The Luftwaffe lost 143 pilots killed and missing, while 70 were captured and 21 wounded including three Geschwaderkommodore, five Gruppenkommandeure, and 14 Staffelf kapitäne—the largest single-day loss for the Luftwaffe.
- This counter attack reinforced in planning circles the impression already given by the main Ardennes offensive that the war might be protracted because of the unexpected ability of the Germans to mount counter-offensives.



Fire crews attempt to save an Avro Lancaster from burning at Melsbroek, Belgium following the attack on the airfield by Luftwaffe fighter-bombers, (Operation BODENPLATTE). This aircraft had landed at Melsbroek with the number 3 (starboard inner) engine out of action, its propeller feathered. January 1945

Date of Crash : 1 January 1945.

Source:

AWM 64 (1/428) (1/432)

Aircraft Type:	Lancaster
Serial number:	PA 169
Radio call sign:	PO – S
Unit:	467 Sqn RAAF

Summary:

Lancaster PA169 took off from RAF Waddington at 0734 hours to bomb the Dortmund-Ems Canal near Ladbergen. Bomb load 11 x 1000lb and 4 x 500lb bombs. 10 aircraft from the Squadron took part in the raid and one of these PA169 failed to return.

Crew:

RAAF 434095 FO Bache, M G Captain (Pilot)
 RAAF 433646 FO Patison, L E (Navigator)
 RAAF 20254 Flt Sgt S H Nelson, (Bomb Aimer)
 RAAF 434978 Flt Sgt C J Dreger, (Wireless Operator Air Gunner)
 RAF Sgt E Wilson (Flight Engineer)
 RAAF 418634 Flt Sgt L G Court, (Air Gunner)
 RAAF 432810 Flt Sgt J M Jay, (Air Gunner)

The Pilots report in the ORB records the following “Took off at 0734 hours. Waddington to bomb Dortmund-Ems Canal near Ladbergen. Aircraft hit by flak nearing the AP but continued with attack and bombed at 1117 hours from 11,700 feet. Turning away the aircraft hit for a second time this time in No1 port petrol tank. Despite his skills in cross feeding fuel supplies Sgt Wilson unable to prevent both port engines failing. A valiant effort by all the crew ensured that the aircraft regained the allied lines where it was abandoned and crashed near the hamlet of Hasenberg (Limburg), 3kms north west of Venray. Both the Flt Engineer and WOP spent time in hospital at Eindhoven but all the others OK.”

On 17/2/1945 the then Flt Lt Bache received an immediate award of the DSO.

467 SQUADRON RAAF, WORLD WAR 2 FATALITIES

Date of Death: 3 January 1945.

Source :

AWM 237 (63) (64) W R Chorley : RAF Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War : Page 29, Volume 1945.

Aircraft Type:	Lancaster
Serial number:	NF 908
Radio call sign:	PO – C
Unit:	467 Sqn RAAF

Summary:

Lancaster NF908 took off from RAF Waddington at 1430 hours on 3 January 1945 on a fighter affiliation training exercise. At approx 1600 hours the aircraft flew into high ground that was shrouded in cloud some 4kms NNE of Leek, Staffordshire. All the crew of seven were killed and they are buried in the RAF Cemetery, Chester, UK.

Crew:

RAAF 428516 FO Allamby, W V W Captain (Pilot)
RAAF 424391 Flt Sgt G J Dunbar, (Navigator)
RAAF 421047 Flt Lt Pritchard, J I (Bomb Aimer)
RAAF 430484 Flt Sgt R Emonson, (Wireless Operator Air Gunner)
RAF Sgt N Lees, (Flight Engineer)
RAAF 430728 Flt Sgt T E H Wright, (Air Gunner)
RAAF 434547 Flt Sgt C C Watson, (Air Gunner)

467 SQUADRON RAAF, WORLD WAR 2 FATALITIES

Date of Death: 8 January 1945.

Source:

AWM 64 (1/428) (1/432) AWM 237 (63) (64)

Aircraft Type:	Lancaster
Serial number:	JB 286
Radio call sign:	PO – L
Unit:	467 Sqn RAAF

Summary:

Lancaster JB286 took off from RAF Waddington at 1707 hours on the night of 7/8th January 1945 to bomb war industries at Munich, Germany. Bomb load 1 x 4000lb bomb, 14 x No14 x 4lb Clusters. Nothing was heard from the aircraft after take off and it did not return to base. Eleven aircraft from the Squadron took part in the raid and one of these JB286 failed to return.

Crew:

RAAF 426422 FO McNamee, W A Captain (Pilot)
RAAF 427218 Flt Sgt H J Williams, (Navigator)
RAAF 430372 Flt Sgt J D Gloury, (Bomb Aimer)
RAAF 434029 Flt Sgt S Servos, (Wireless Operator Air)
RAF Sgt H W Kirsh, (Flight Engineer)
RAAF 431186 Flt Sgt L J Saulwick, (Air Gunner)
RAAF 431195 Flt Sgt M B Bruckner, (Air Gunner)

The aircraft crashed at 5238N 0010W on the Eye-Grewland road, 5 miles north of Peterborough, UK. All the chutes were missing and it was considered that all the crew had baled out over the sea They are listed as missing and their names are commemorated on the Memorial to the Missing, Runnymede, Surrey, UK..

12 January 1945

- Air planners, both American and British, who early in December had prophesied total enemy collapse under strategic bombing by the spring of 1945, now became cautious or even pessimistic.
- The Ardennes had taken the Eighth Air Force entirely and Bomber Command largely away from their professed strategic objectives to undertake purely tactical duties during the first fortnight of the land battle.
- The "bogey" of new enemy rocket and jet-propelled aircraft, of new closed-cycle engined U-boats, and of possible new reprisal attack weapons, all posed threats to Allied capability to destroy German industry or inventiveness by air action alone.
- Planners began to talk in terms of a war extending at least into late 1945, and to rephrase their strategic bombing objectives.
- Neither the oil targets nor rail transport targets could be abandoned even though both had proved apparently resilient to previous attacks.
- Ordnance targets, including tank and armoured vehicle production plants, were given third priority under a new directive of 12th January 1945 because of the unexpected weight of armour Rundstedt had been able to deploy in the Ardennes: this commitment was interpreted by the U.S.A.A.F. as requiring precision attacks and by Bomber Command as requiring area attacks against industrial cities.
- Enemy aircraft production, which, like ordnance, had been dropped in October 1944 as too long-range an objective for the quick victory then envisaged, was nominated as fourth priority, and enemy submarine-construction yards also reappeared on the approved target list.
- The general mood early in 1945 was that, although during 1944 Bomber Command had dropped no fewer than 500,000 tons of bombs on enemy objectives (three times the 1943 total and more than double the 1939-43 total) and the Eighth Air Force had dropped another 386,000 tons, even this colossal scale of bombing must be stepped up and distributed more widely if German industry was to be critically weakened.

Warrant Officer Robert Hawkins STRACHAN

Service No: 413040

Born: Lawson NSW, 15 July 1918

Enlisted in the RAAF: 15 August 1941

Unit: No. 3 Refresher Flying Unit, RAF Station Poona, India

Died: Aircraft Accident (Beaufort aircraft NE650), India, 16 January 1945, Aged 26 Years

Buried: Kirkee War Cemetery, India

CWGC Additional Information: Son of Alexander Copeland Strachan and Grace Strachan, of Lane Cove, New South Wales, Australia

Roll of Honour: Unknown

Remembered: Panel 131, Commemorative Area, Australian War Memorial, Canberra ACT

On 16 January 1945, Beaufighter NE650 took off from Poona and was carrying out a non-operational low flying cross country exercise when it crashed into a lake, near Ashti, 40 miles south east of Alimednagar, India, at 0550 hours. The aircraft was under 15 feet of water in the lake and the Pilot's body was trapped in the plane and the Navigator was slightly injured in the crash. The crew misjudged the surface of the lake and hit the water.

The crew members of NE650 were:

Warrant Officer Robert Hawkins Strachan (413040) (Pilot)

Flight Sergeant R G Whiting (1607145) (RAFVR) (Navigator/Wireless) Slightly injured

17th January 1945

- The intention had been to make No. 462 a radar counter-measure squadron with aircraft fitted with the latest equipment to jam not only radar but W-T and R-T traffic also, but the Halifaxes could not be quickly modified and, as an interim measure, the unit was rostered with others of No. 100 Group for Window spoofs.
- From August 1944 the Mandrel screen was supplemented by special Window feint attacks which became bolder and more ambitious in confusing the enemy as to which apparent threats on any given night were genuine raids; they also kept enemy defences without rest by operating on nights when no actual attacks were scheduled.
- Coincident with the move to Foulsham Wing Commander Shannon was notified that he had been selected for special duty with Qantas Airways and would be repatriated to Australia.
- Before he handed over command on 17th January 1945 to Wing Commander Paull the squadron had made "spoof" raids on seven different nights to Bremen, Nuremberg, the Ruhr (3 times), Mannheim and Sylt.
- Beginning on 7th-8th January each aircraft carried 1,000 pounds of bombs in addition to its cargo of Window.
- This practice was to spread to other Halifax units of No. 100 Group and also gave rise to a more ambitious scheme whereby the Window force would simulate a normal No. 5 Group attack, complete with flares, markers and a spoof master bomber using No. 5 Group frequencies.
- W Cdr P. McC. Paull, DFC, 270815. 7 and 462 Sqns; comd 462 Sqn 1945. Jackaroo; of Bowenville, Qld; b. Woking, England, 7 Oct 1917. Photo.



Leading Aircraftman William Thomas Francis NEVILLE

Service No: 82566

Born: East Fremantle WA, 18 November 1924

Enlisted in the RAAF: 4 December 1942

Unit: No. 4 Bombing and Gunnery School RCAF

Died: Aircraft Accident (No. 4 Bombing and Gunnery School Bolingbroke aircraft 10019), Ontario, 20 January 1945, Aged 20 Years

Buried: St. Thomas (South Park) Cemetery, Elgin County, Ontario, Canada

CWGC Additional Information: Son of Thomas Henry and Jenny Julia Neville of East Fremantle, Western Australia.

Roll of Honour: East Fremantle WA

Remembered: Panel 133, Commemorative Area, Australian War Memorial, Canberra ACT

Remembered: Cenotaph Undercroft, State War Memorial, Kings Park WA

At 1600 hours on 20 January 1945, Bolingbroke 10019 crashed near Inwood, Ontario, following a mid-air collision with Bolingbroke 10213, while engaged in a gunnery exercise. The crew of three was killed.

The crew members of Bolingbroke 10019 were:

Flying Officer James Davidson Allan (J/29114) (RCAF) (Pilot)

Leading Aircraftman William Thomas Francis Neville (82566) (Trainee Wireless Air Gunner)

Leading Aircraftman Lawrence Joseph Charles Watt (441609) (Trainee Wireless Air Gunner)

The two RAAF members of Bolingbroke 10213 were:

Leading Aircraftman Barry Edward Lawson Buck (441611) Discharged from the RAAF: 29 November 1945

Leading Aircraftman John Stephen Mullins (54718) Discharged from the RAAF: 29 September 1945

Bristol Bolingbroke



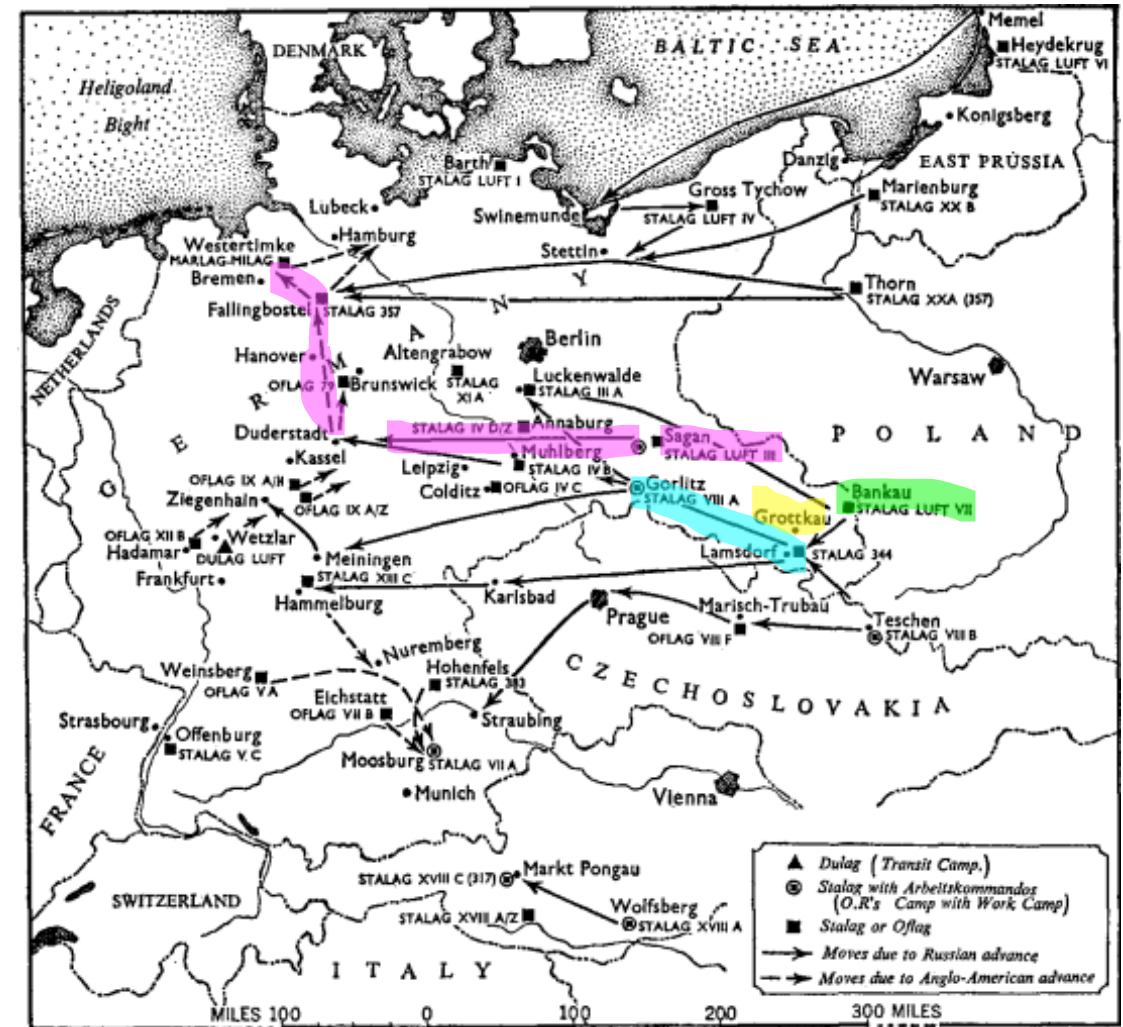
The Bristol Fairchild Bolingbroke is a maritime patrol aircraft and trainer used by the Royal Canadian Air Force during the Second World War. Produced by Fairchild-Canada, it was a license-built version of the Bristol Blenheim Mk IV bomber.

22nd January 1945

- 793 Australian aircrew had arrived home from Canada by 22nd January 1945, when both Canada and the United Kingdom asked for cancellation of the arrangements for the remaining 931 men.
- This was because of the possible extension of the duration of war in Europe, but it was a considerable embarrassment to the Air Board whose plans had been fully recast by this time.
- After an interchange of views it was finally decided that most of the men would be repatriated, only the numbers and categories urgently required in the United Kingdom being fed forward.

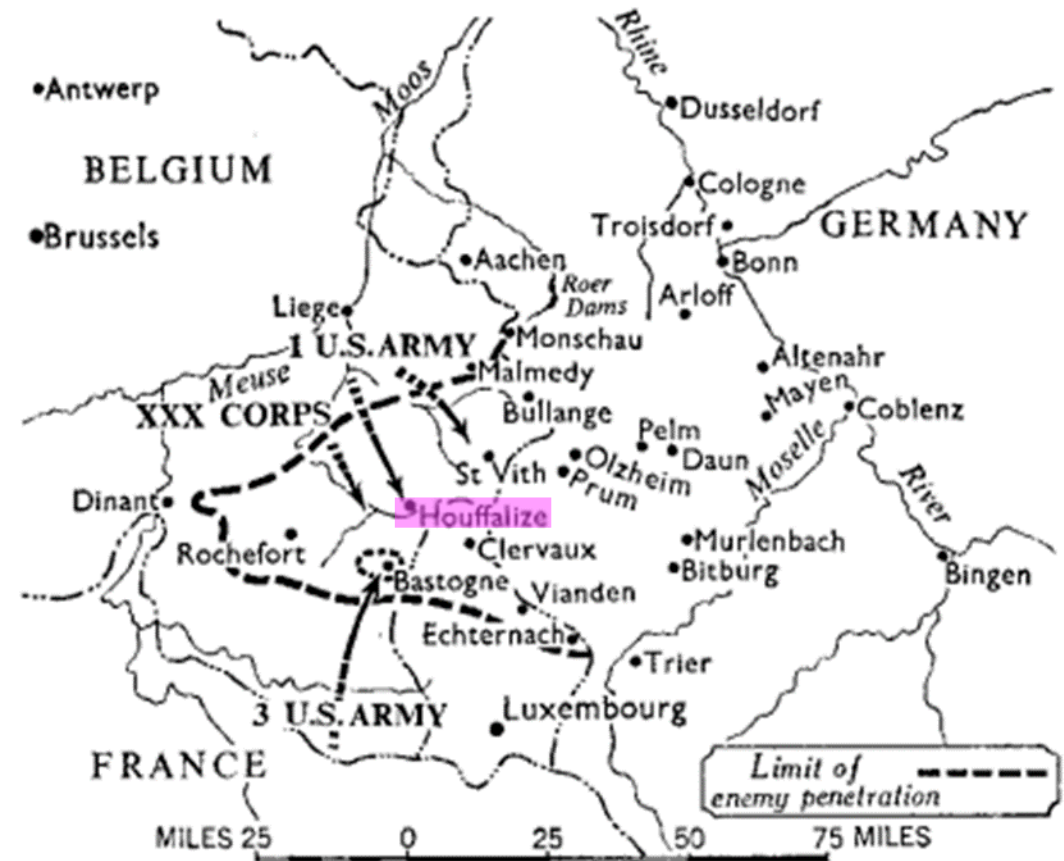
22nd January 1945

- On 22nd January the PoWs at Lamsdorf began to march to Gorlitz 170 miles away.
- During the march to Gorlitz an R.A.A.F. compound commander was threatened with shooting because he refused to allow some 80 sick and frostbitten men to continue the journey, but he, like other column leaders, found a useful lever in threatening to hold the guards individually responsible for casualties, and all the columns continually shed their quotas of sick as well as of escapers some of whom found refuge with German civilians.
- Men at Grottkau and Bankau began similar journeys late in January; of primary importance to R.A.A.F. prisoners, Stalag Luft III was evacuated from Sagan and, while American airmen went to Nuremberg and some of the British to Luckenwalde, south-east of Berlin, the main column of 2,000 British airmen set off for Bremen.
- Frequently the prisoners were given no clear idea where and why they were marching and suspected they were being kept as possible hostages to enable high German officials to secure their own safety.
- During the early stages of these marches the prisoners were able to secure some cooperation from the guards but, as administrative and supply problems mounted, all suggestions were met with a wearily repeated "it is necessary".
- Where possible the marchers were accommodated in barracks, but usually barns, empty factories, village halls or even the open air became their sleeping places—even though much of their route lay through snow and slush.



January 1945

- Bomber Command was faced in January 1945 with the worst month of night-flying conditions for at least two years.
- In such conditions the main bomber force, eager though it was, could operate only on 11 nights.
- The monthly total of 33,000 tons of bombs dropped was easily the lowest since March 1944.
- Two attacks against the Ardennes key point of Houffalize dropped nearly 1,000 tons and one against the almost-forgotten enemy garrison in the Biscay port of Royan were made in support of ground forces.
- In daylight on 1st January a force of 104, in fair weather and good visibility set out for the Dortmund-Ems canal at Ladbergen the same night a force of 152 Lancasters made a similar attack on Gravenhorst. Both canals were breached and drained.
- More than 9,000 tons of bombs fell in twelve night and two day raids against priority oil targets. Speer reported: My Fuehrer, Since 13th January 1945 a new series of heavy attacks on the oil industry has been introduced, which has already led to prolonged shut-down of the great hydrogenation plants of Politz, Leuna, Brux, Blechhammer and Zeitz



January 1945

- During the month Bomber Command dropped more than 7,000 tons of bombs on specific railway yards and traffic centres in nine night and seven day attacks in pursuit of the "transportation" objective.
- Bomber Command, still followed its own bent in dropping 11,000 tons on German industrial cities during January 1945. Targets included Nuremberg, Ludwigshafen, Hanover, Hanau, Munich, Magdeburg, Gelsenkirchen and Stuttgart.



30th January

- On 30th January at Malta the Combined Chiefs of Staff called on the strategic air forces to attack major transport centres in eastern Germany.
- Second priority for attack was given to "Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, and associated cities where heavy attack will cause great confusion in civilian evacuation from the east and hamper reinforcements".



Combined Chiefs of Staff in Quebec – August 23, 1943. Seated around the table from left foreground: Vice Adm. Lord Louis Mountbatten, Sir Dudley Pound, Sir Alan Brooke, Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal, Sir John Dill, Lt. Gen. Sir Hastings Ismay, Brigadier Harold Redman, Comdr. Coleridge, Brig. Gen. John Deane, General Arnold, General Marshall, Admiral Leahy, Admiral King, and Capt. Royal.

467 SQUADRON RAAF, WORLD WAR 2 FATALITIES

Date of Death: 1 February 1945.

Source:

AWM 64 (1/428) (1/432) AWM 54 779/3/129 Parts 29,16 and 20.
Commonwealth War Graves records.

Aircraft Type:	Lancaster
Serial number:	NG 197
Radio call sign:	PO – G
Unit:	467 Sqn RAAF

Summary:

Lancaster NG197 took off from RAF Waddington at 1557 hours on 1st February 1945 to bomb marshalling yards and town of Siegen, Germany. Nothing was heard from the aircraft after take off and it did not return to base. Twenty two aircraft from the Squadron took part in the raid and of these only NG197 failed to return.

Crew:

RAF Flt Lt Livingstone, J K DFC Captain (Pilot)
RAAF 432138 FO Eagle, R W G (2nd Pilot)
RAF Sqn Ldr Sands, D O (Navigator)
RAAF 412818 FO McMahon, W D (Bomb Aimer)
RAF PO Prendergast, J (Wireless Operator Air)
RAF FO Parsons, E G (Flight Engineer)
RAF FO Bronne, R N (Mid Upper Gunner)
RAAF 418931 Flt Lt Ellis, E C (Rear Gunner)

It was later established that all the crew were POW's with the exception of Flt Lt Livingstone who was killed. He is buried in the Rheinberg War Cemetery in the town of Rheinberg, Germany, 24kms north of Krefeld and 13kms SW of Wesel.

In a later report FO Eagle said "Just after leaving target stbd wing peppered by small explosions and larger one in the SI engine which immediately burst into flames. Order put on chutes acknowledged by all. Fire drill carried out but unsuccessful. Nav gave us distance from the front and we were told to jump. Before I left the B/A, Engineer, Rear Gunner, WOP had left. Pilot, Nav and Mid Upper in plane when I left. Seen Nav and Mid Upper in POW camp since. We were approx 6/7000 feet and A/c in control. Nobody was injured. A/s crashed near Moscheim. Whole crew landed safely and in POW camps except Pilot."

FO McMahon reported "Hit by cannon shells in stbd wing and set gas on fire. All signals from Captain to abandon recd and acknowledged. Baled out at 8000 feet. A/c flying straight and level but burning fiercely. Crashed about 20 miles from Bonn near River Rhine. All OK except Pilot. Captured and interned 3.5 months."

Flt Lt Ellis the Squadron Gunnery Leader reported "After bombing returning at 8000 feet. 1 x 1000lb bomb hung up which attempted to jettison. Hit by fighter starting fire in stbd inner motor and wing. Abandon order given. I followed WOP and Mid Upper out escape door. Aircraft under control flying straight and level but dived and turned to starboard. Crashed in flames east of Bonn and Koblenz. Hid in railway truck but found by footprints in snow. Released on 29 April by US Army."

3rd February 1945

- The PoWs from Lamsdorf reached Gorlitz by 3rd February only to move on once more with the Gorlitz prisoners to Meiningen



3rd-4th February

- No. 466 was the most active R.A.A.F. unit against synthetic oil installations, making five raids, beginning on 3rd-4th February with an attack on Wanne-Eickel.
- This plant had already suffered seven Bomber Command attacks (the last by No. 3 Group on 16th-17th January) but had just been repaired sufficiently to begin production at half its normal output.
- Of 16 crews of No. 466 who attacked through the overcast on 2nd-3rd February, 4 aimed on the glow of T.I's, which quickly disappeared below cloud, while the rest bombed on radar fixes.
- A large fire developed during the raid and crews claimed that, despite what had virtually been blind bombing, a fair concentration of bombs had been achieved.

4 - 11 February

- The Russians gladly accepted the eastern transport centres plan at the Yalta conference from February 4–11, 1945.
- The Eighth Air Force had already struck in daylight on 3rd February when 1,000 Fortresses dropped 2,250 tons of bombs against railway centres in Berlin, while 400 Liberators attacked Magdeburg.



From left to right: Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Joseph Stalin. Also present are Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov (far left); Field Marshal Brooke, Admiral Cunningham, Air Marshal Portal, RAF, (standing behind Churchill); and Fleet Admiral William D. Leahy, USN (standing behind Roosevelt).

Flight Sergeant Christian Henry GERNER

Service No: 433206

Born: Waratah NSW, 8 December 1924

Enlisted in the RAAF: 27 February 1943

Unit: No. 4 Wireless School (RAF), RAF Station Madley, Hereford

Died: Aircraft Accident (No. 4 Wireless School Proctor aircraft LZ595), Herefordshire, 6 February 1945, Aged 20 Years

Buried: Blythe (Cowpen) Cemetery, Northumberland

CWGC Additional Information: Son of Christian Henry and Isabelle Gerner, of Singleton, New South Wales, Australia

Roll of Honour: Singleton NSW

Remembered: Panel 122, Commemorative Area, Australian War Memorial, Canberra ACT

Remembered: Singleton War Memorial, Singleton NSW

On 6 February 1945, Proctor LZ595 took off from Madley on a non-operational day wireless telegraph exercise. The aircraft crashed at 1110 hours when it flew into high ground in bad visibility, and the crew was killed. The aircraft had become lost in the bad weather and the Pilot in endeavouring to make a forced landing in bad visibility stalled the aircraft during the final part of the approach and the aircraft crashed.

The crew members of LZ595 were:

MAT F S Boucris (1087) (Free French Forces) (Wireless Telegraph Cadet)

Flight Sergeant Christian Henry Gerner (433206) (Pilot)

Percival Proctor



467 SQUADRON RAAF, WORLD WAR 2 FATALITIES

Date of Death: 8 February 1945.

Source: AWM 64 (1/428) (1/432) AWM 237 (63) (64) AWM 65 (4888)

Aircraft Type:	Lancaster
Serial number:	NG 455
Radio call sign:	PO – H
Unit:	467 Sqn RAAF

Summary:

Lancaster NG455 took off from RAF Waddington at 2102 hours on the night of 7/8th February 1945 to bomb the Dortmund-Ems Canal at Ladbergen. Nothing was heard from the aircraft after take off and it did not return to base. Thirteen aircraft from the Squadron took part in the raid and one of these NG455 failed to return.

Crew:

RAAF 403564 Wg Cdr Douglas, J K DFC AFC Captain (Pilot)
 RAAF 410113 PO Stuart, H M S (Navigator)
 RAAF 419332 PO Nanscawen, J B (Bomb Aimer)
 RCAF FO Baines, L W E (2nd Bomb Aimer)
 RAAF 419231 PO Strickland, J A (Wireless Operator Air)
 RAF Sgt B H Parker (Flight Engineer)
 RAAF 429444 Flt Sgt B O Bean (Mid Upper Gunner)
 RAAF 426783 Flt Sgt M G Thompson, (Rear Gunner)

Wg Cdr Douglas, PO Nanscawen and PO Stuart were killed. They are buried in the Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, Cleves, which is 40 miles north west of Duisberg, Germany. Wg Cdr Douglas was CO of the Squadron and on 13th trip of his second tour. PO Strickland evaded capture and returned safe to the UK, while the other four crew members were POW's. PO Strickland later reported "On 7 February we took off from Waddington to carry out a bombing raid on the Dortmund-Ems Canal. Fifteen minutes after we had bombed the target I felt the aircraft give a terrific lurch and then the pilot gave the order 'bale out' 'bale out'. I baled out about 10,000 feet and landed in a ploughed field some 30 miles south of Munster. I got rid of the chute, harness and mae west which I hid in a ditch. With the aid of a compass I made off in a westerly direction. This was around 0020 hours on 8th February." Thereafter PO Strickland walked until 12th February reaching Winterswijk where he received assistance from a Dutch family, and was directed to a safe house in Varsseveld where he found shelter until 30th March. He was then brought back to the allied lines by an advanced British recce unit. Flt Sgt Bean later reported " About ten minutes on return from target and flying straight and level, the aircraft shook. Port wing burst into flames. The Rear Gunner and I saw nothing. Presume an upward firing fighter which came out of the cloud below. Skipper ordered 'jump jump'. Not acknowledged. Think Bomb Aimer hit as he looked dazed and made no attempt to get out. I was first out the rear door and saw WOP right behind me. Pt wing ablaze from main petrol tank. A/c under control but crashed 12 miles NW Munster. Germans said three killed. Think Nav tried to help Bomb Aimer and waited too long. As I descended saw A/c on ground to west of me. Half hour after landing heard explosion from direction of aircraft Caught by German farmer after dawn broke."

7th February

- Harris was not satisfied with the attack on Wanne-Eickel on 3rd-4th February, and ordered a repeat attack by No. 3 Group in daylight on 7th February.
- This took place in conditions of sleet, severe icing and poor visibility, and with only three out of every four crews making any attack at all, resulted in very scattered bombing.



7th-8th February 1945

- General Eisenhower took up again his proposed three-pronged attack eastwards across the Rhine which had been in preparation before the Battle of the Bulge.
- For the initial attack on 8th February by XXX Corps in the direction of Kleve, Bomber Command was called on to make an air bombardment of the key centres of Kleve and Goch during the night of 7th-8th February.
- No. 460 contributed 21 Lancasters to the raid on Kleve, and, although two crews failed to attack, the remainder bombed well and returned without loss. Eighteen Halifaxes of No. 466 went to Goch, but only seven crews bombed as the master bomber instructed later arrivals to return to base. Again all aircraft returned safely.
- Bombing, especially at Kleve, was too devastating. High-explosive bombs were used and these, while effectively destroying the centre of the town, blocked roads and caused extensive cratering, which impeded the progress of British troops who arrived 24 hours later.
- This factor, together with a sudden thaw which brought floods and quagmires along the only two routes of advance, delayed the fall of Kleve until the 11th, and the Reichswald area, a forest near Kleve, was not cleared of enemy troops until 13th February.



8th-9th February

- The major, well-defended oil target of Politz was again heavily raided on 8th-9th February, by two waves of bombers.
- The attack began in clear weather with concentrated bombing by 227 Lancasters of No. 5 Group (16 of No. 463, 15 of No. 467) which caused numerous fires and columns of characteristic oil smoke.
- Enemy fighters were active and nine bombers were shot down, despite the apparent success of a small force led by Flying Officer Laidlaw of No. 106 which made a concurrent "spoof" raid on Neubrandenburg which lured part of the night-fighter force away from the true target.
- Fires from the No. 5 Group attack were still burning when 241 Lancasters of Nos. 1 and 8 Groups arrived to bomb against much weaker ground and air opposition.
- Twenty crews of No. 460 aimed at abundant, well-placed red and green markers and, after attacks from between 12,000 and 15,000 feet, saw several oil tanks disintegrate and numerous other explosions which gave place to a trail of smoke approximately 10 miles long and rising to 8,000 feet.
- Assessment of bombing photographs showed that all important units had been damaged and at least 30 storage tanks destroyed. It was obvious that even if the enemy made a maximum effort to repair Politz it would take several months before significant production of oil would be practicable.



8th-9th February

- In spite of recent attacks Wanne-Eickel was still producing at quarter rate when 220 aircraft (mainly Halifaxes of Nos. 4 and 6 Groups) made a final attack on 8th-9th February.
- Again No. 466 dispatched 16 crews of which one returned without attacking because of fire in the Halifax's port-inner engine.
- Only thin low cloud lay over the target, markers were plentiful and well grouped and a concentrated attack followed; large fires and explosions were observed. Wanne-Eickel was successfully eliminated as a target.

13th-14th February

- Harris now turned Bomber Command's main force against Dresden, a city never before rated an important enough target to justify such a long range strike but important now because it was an administration and communication base for German armies on the southern part of the Eastern front.
- The attack was in two waves. No. 5 Group (including 15 of No. 463 and 17 of No. 467) attacked first with 244 aircraft while Nos. 1 and 3 Groups later in the night attacked with 529 Lancasters (24 of No. 460) against an already burning city.
- A total of 2,650 tons of bombs and incendiaries laid waste whole sections of the city, fires spreading among timbered buildings at a rate which defied the efforts of the air-raid wardens.
- The U.S.A.A.F. on 14th February sent 310 Fortresses to shower another 750 tons of bombs through the vast pall of smoke still rising to 15,000 feet above Dresden.
- Casualties were very high among the civilian population, thousands being trapped in cellars and suffocated in the heart of a fire storm, while many more died when caught in the open by the dreadful hail of bombs in the second attack while they were attempting to flee the city.



Dresden from the Rathaus (city hall) in 1945, showing destruction.

13th-14th February 1945

- Bomber Command then turned against Bohlen, a synthetic refinery south of Leipzig which had a capacity comparable to that of the larger Ruhr installations.
- It had been bombed several times by the Eighth Air Force commencing on 21st April 1944 but never previously by the R.A.F.;
- since the last U.S.A.A.F. raid on 30th November 1944 repair squads had brought most of the plant back into operation.
- Against this fairly distant target an above-average main force of 326 Halifaxes (Nos. 4 and 6 Groups) and 42 pathfinders set out on 13th-14th February 1945 in indifferent weather.
- With heavy cloud obscuring the target, the master bomber instructed the illuminators not to drop their discriminatory flares and directed the Halifaxes to bomb the near edge (and later the centre) of the glow from the preliminary green target indicators.
- Enemy dummy target indicators were seen but all 15 crews of No. 466 were confident that they attacked the true aiming point, although they reported that, despite one large explosion and fire which lit up the area for five minutes, the general attack appeared to be rather dispersed.
- All R.A.A.F. aircraft returned safely, but two had to land away from base because of petrol shortage, as did several aircraft of other units.



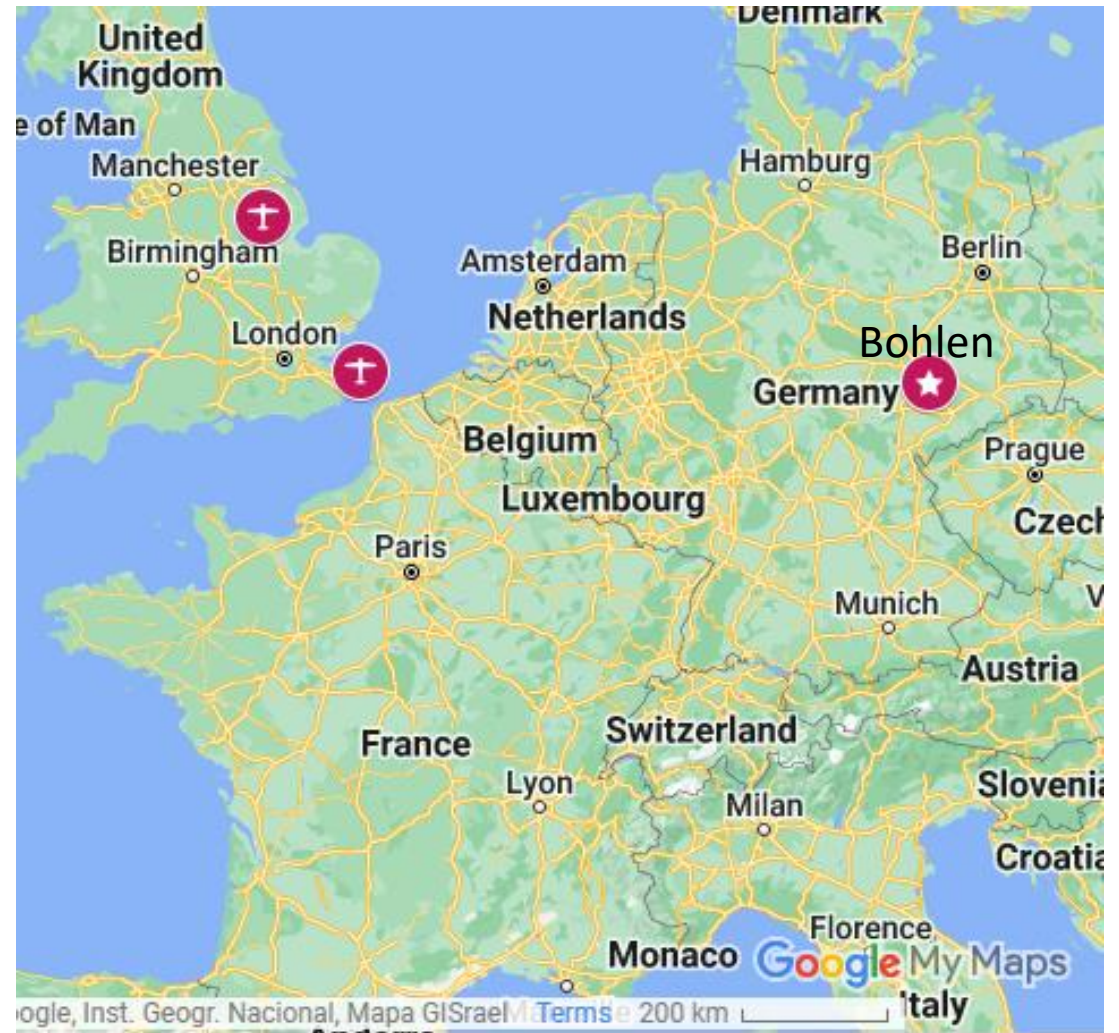
14th-15th February 1945

- Bomber Command made a similar two wave attack the following night (14th-15th) against Chemnitz, an alternative major traffic centre feeding the same battlefront.
- Halifax squadrons operated in the first wave; No. 466 sent out 16 crews of which 15 claimed attacks against industries and rail facilities within the city while one, because of a navigational error, bombed an unidentified target.
- Later in the night Lancasters, including 18 of No. 460, rekindled and spread the fires raging in Chemnitz.
- On 15th February in daylight the Eighth Air Force made a complementary attack.
- Civilian and industrial property suffered very badly during this series of raids but the rail facilities at Chemnitz were relatively unscathed, nor was civilian panic or general administrative breakdown as marked as at Dresden.



19th-20th February

- Bohlen was too distant a target for Halifaxes in bad weather, even with a reduced bomb-load so subsequent attacks against Bohlen were made by Lancasters of No. 5 Group beginning with a somewhat disappointing raid on 19th-20th February.
- Bad weather and a very efficient ground smoke-screen faced the attackers who made individual approaches from altitudes varying from 7,000 to 17,000 feet, aiming at the glow of scattered red ground markers.
- Waddington units contributed 35 Lancasters to this raid; six failed to attack but all returned safely.
- Although not concentrated directly on the Bohlen plant, nearly 1,000 tons of bombs fell in this raid—an average of 4 tons per aircraft.



22nd February 1945

- The U.S.A.A.F. advocated the mounting of a one-day coordinated strike by every available Allied aircraft against rail, road and canal targets throughout the greater part of the Reich.
- This operation (Clarion) was carried out on 22nd February, 7,964 sorties were flown by the American Eighth and Fifteenth Air Forces, R.A.F. Bomber Command and Second T.A.F.
- Nearly 200 communications targets were hit, scores of them for the first time, but although much temporary dislocation of the enemy rail organisation was evident Clarion failed to achieve the complete breakdown in military traffic which had been hoped.

22nd February 1945

- SHAEF in early February proposed a line of interdiction drawn in a southward curve from Bremen to Coblenz with the object of isolating the Ruhr area.
- Along this line there were 18 important rail bridges or viaducts whose destruction would cut every main line running out of the Ruhr. The three most vital lines went through Altenbeken, Arnsberg and Bielefeld and between them they carried nearly half the Ruhr traffic.
- These targets were, however, strong in themselves and strongly defended.
- The problem of eliminating them fell by natural selection to Nos. 9 and 617 Squadrons the two units specially trained and equipped to carry the monster "Wallis" bombs.
- No. 9 Squadron went out on 6th February and again on the 14th to attack the Altenbeken railway viaduct but both times had to return without bombing because of heavy, low cloud. In good weather and clear visibility on 22nd February, however, 16 Lancasters dropped 86 tons of bombs, including a good concentration of 12,000-lb Tallboys, close to the viaduct.
- No. 617 had similar experiences with abortive strikes against the Bielefeld bridge on 6th and 14th February, followed by moderate success on the 22nd when damage was caused to the bridge, its approaches and railway tracks at the south-west end.



22nd 23rd February

- Bomber Command had by no means forgotten transport targets. The inland waterway systems in particular the Dortmund-Ems and Mittelland canals were prime targets.
- On 7th-8th February No. 5 Group was sent again to bomb the Dortmund-Ems canal at Ladbergen where repairs had finally been made after the raid on New Year's Day.
- 188 aircraft dropped 820 tons of bombs during opportunist glimpses of the target through breaks in the cloud or on the glow of ground markers. much of the load consisted of delayed-action bombs to hinder repair work.
- Unfortunately Wing Commander Douglas, who had led No. 467 since October 1944 and had previously commanded No. 460 during the invasion of France, failed to return from this operation.
- On 21st-22nd February a force of 154 detailed to bomb the Mittelland canal at Gravenhorst brought their bombs back because the target was obscured by cloud.
- The very next night 167 aircraft dropped 816 tons of bombs in good weather. Subsequent photographic assessment confirmed that bomb fall had been concentrated on a vital area where the canal retaining wall was damaged for a distance of 500 yards; a bridge had collapsed and fields on either side of the canal were again flooded.
- No. 463 lost three of its ten Lancasters.



Squadron Leader John Keith Douglas DFC, "A" Flight Commander, 1662 Conversion Unit RAF. Aged 22, he became the youngest Australian squadron commander, and one of the youngest in Bomber Command.

24th-25th February

- No. 462 Squadron flew 155 sorties on 15 nights and one day during February.
- The combined Window-dropping and bombing raids during February were all in the Ruhr and Rhineland, mainly as decoys from the true target chosen that night but sometimes purely to confuse enemy raid reporting systems when no actual attack was contemplated.
- By its very nature this "coat-trailing" was hazardous, but crews intruded and withdrew safely with conspicuous success until 24th-25th February when four out of ten Halifaxes sent to the Ruhr failed to return.

25 February

- On 16 February, the German Propaganda Ministry issued a press release that claimed that Dresden had no war industries; it was a city of culture.
- On 25 February, a new leaflet with photographs of two burned children was released under the title "Dresden—Massacre of Refugees", stating that 200,000 had died.
- There is good reason to believe that later copies of—or extracts from an official police report were leaked to the neutral press by Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry ... doctored with an extra zero to increase [the total dead from the raid] to 202,040"

February 1945

- The relatively slow progress made by Montgomery's forces during February appeared to justify pessimistic views that the war could not be won before the autumn.
- Both the R.A.F. and U.S.A.A.F. had already made plans to transfer large forces to the Pacific and now saw these plans jeopardised.
- The answer of the air commanders to the stubborn enemy ground resistance was simply heavier bombing both in degree and extent.
- Improving weather, permitted Bomber Command to drop nearly 45,000 tons of bombs during February 1945, three times as much as in February 1944 and nearly every ton was falling inside Germany proper.
- Enemy communications, although not formally elevated to an overriding priority, in practice received the greater part of the Allied bombing effort.
- British and American heavy bombers from England and Italy attacked the larger enemy rail centres and a number of important bridges; medium bombers concentrated on bridges and railheads near the front line.
- As this bombing campaign created choke points, Allied fighter-bombers and fighters on their daily sweeps found increasingly favourable opportunities to attack rolling-stock and locomotives thus further temporarily blocking tracks and slowing the whole tempo of enemy supply lines.



Hawker Typhoon gun camera photo of a rocket salvo fired at railway wagons in a siding at Nordhorn, Germany (1945)

February 1945

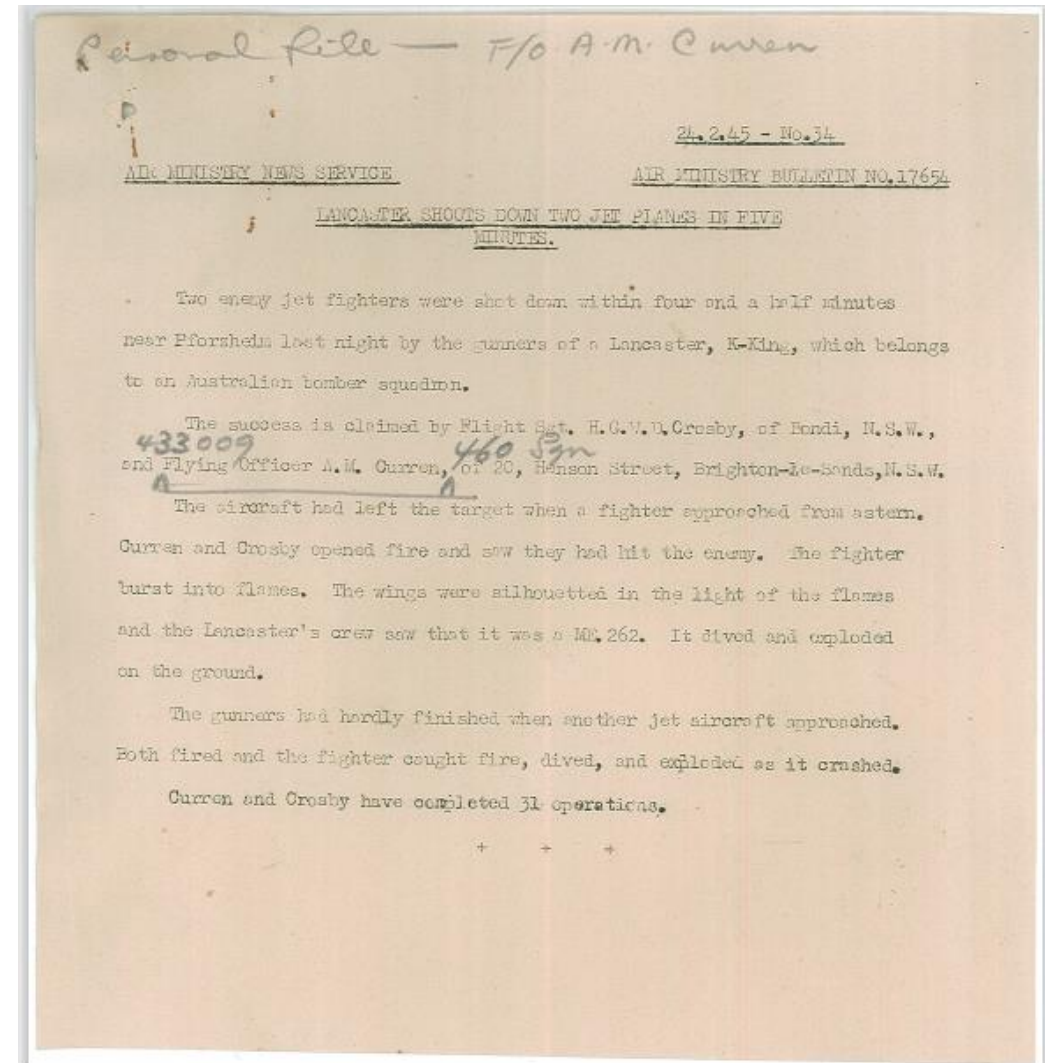
- Shell, HE, 60 lb, SAP
 - Semi-armour-piercing high-explosive warhead.
 - Variant No. 1 were fitted with a time delayed base fuze that allowed them to penetrate into a target before detonating.
 - Variant No. 2 were fitted with a non-delayed base fuze which made them detonate almost instantly on impact.
- Shell, HE, 60 lb, "F"., No. 1, Mk. I
 - Fragmentation warhead for use against unarmoured vehicles and personnel. Converted from a 4.5 in howitzer shell with a ("direct action") Fuze fitted to the nose, the whole warhead was 22 in long and weighed 50.5 lb. The relatively thick wall (0.85 inches) and 4 lb high explosive (TNT or RDX/TNT) filling produced "heavy fragments" which inflicted damage at "considerable distance".



A late production Typhoon with full RP-3 armament, on the later aluminium Mk III rails, using a mix of SAP/HE 60 lb warheads (outermost rail and third) and the HE fragmentation head introduced in early December 1944 (2nd and 4th rail).

February 1945

- The industrial and support capacity of towns in close proximity to the Rhine became more important to the enemy after each successful Allied air attack.
- This assessment was very acceptable to Bomber Command which made area raids nine times by night and twice by day during February against cities in western Germany previously attacked as industrial targets but now having added importance as communication centres or as holding centres for troops and supplies. The targets were Ludwigshaven, Wiesbaden, Dortmund, Duisburg, Pforzheim, Mainz twice, Essen as part of the Clarion operation, Siegen and Karlsruhe.
- Flying Officer Curren and Pilot Officer Crosby, gunners in the same crew, claimed the destruction of two enemy jet aircraft which attacked their Lancaster during a raid against Pforzheim.
- The campaign was favoured because February was the best month for night-flying operations since September 1944.
- F-O A. M. Curren, 433009; 460 Sqn. Clerk; of Brighton-le-Sands, NSW; b. Sans Souci, NSW, 22 Jun 1919.
- F-O G. W. D. Crosby, 430547; 460 Sqn. Actor-producer; of Bondi, NSW; b. Sydney, 29 Oct 1924.



February 1945

- Raids against Rhenish cities were conducted only during the first and last weeks of the month, being interrupted by new requests to bomb cities behind the active eastern battlefront, and by several large raids against oil targets.



February 1945

- A raid by 1,200 American bombers was made on 26th February against Berlin and in the meantime the Eighth Air Force had also attacked Dresden and Chemnitz.
- Bomber Command's light night-striking force of Mosquitos bombed Berlin on 14 nights during February, including the last 8 nights of the month when some 600 tons fell on the Reich capital.



B-17 Flying Fortresses from the 398th Bombardment Group flying a bombing mission to Germany, 1945.

27 February 1945

- RAF Station Hornchurch.
- First Empire Air Training Scheme trainee from Australia to gain his Wings, 405111 Wing Commander (Wing Cdr) John Richard Ratten DFC of Tasmania, Commanding Officer of No. 453 (Spitfire) Squadron RAAF beside the aircraft "Tikkie".
- Wing Cdr Ratten died of illness on February 27 1945 in the United Kingdom while Commanding 11 Personnel Disposal and Reception Centre, RAF.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

SUK1 2085

**RAAF FATALITIES IN SECOND WORLD WAR AMONG
RAAF PERSONNEL SERVING ON ATTACHMENT
IN ROYAL AIR FORCE SQUADRONS AND SUPPORT UNITS**

405111 Wing Commander RATTEN, John Richard DFC

Source:

AWM 237 (65) NAA : A705, 166/35/456 Commonwealth War Graves records

Aircraft Type:	
Serial number:	
Radio call sign:	
Unit:	ATTD Royal Air Force 11 Personnel & Despatch

Summary:

On the 27th February 1945, Wg Cdr Ratten, a Pilot, died of an illness in Middlehurst Hospital, UK. He was cremated in the Downs Crematorium, Brighton.,UK.

Citation :

The Citation for the DFC awarded to the then Sqn Ldr Ratten of 453 Sqn RAAF, is as follows : "This officer has completed a large number of sorties and has led the squadron and often with the greatest of skill. He has rendered excellent service, setting a most praiseworthy example. Sqn Ldr Ratten has destroyed one and shared in the destruction of another enemy aircraft. (London Gazette 15/6/1943 Page 2729).

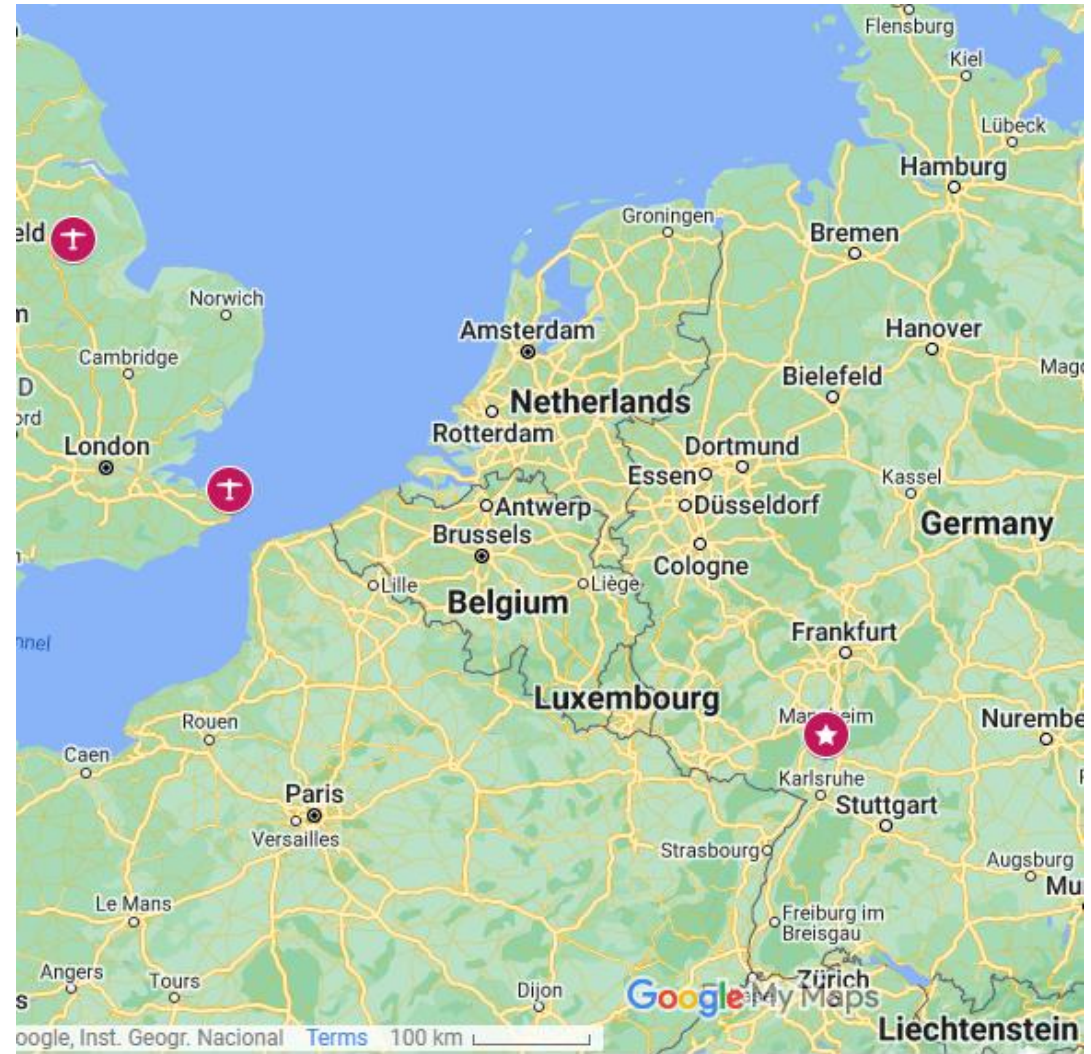
February 45

- R.A.A.F. squadrons made two raids on crude oil refineries in February.
- The Deutsche refinery at Rositz was extensively damaged despite adverse weather when Nos. 463 and 467 attacked in a force of 220 bombers on 14th-15th February.
- Again in bad weather No. 4 Group raided Reisholz on 20th-21st February and, although only a scattered general bombing pattern was achieved, it was seen that the boiler house and control building were destroyed and without these key points the refinery would be out of action for six to eight weeks.



1st March

- Bomber Command raided Mannheim in daylight on 1st March.
- Crews were awakened at 3.30 a.m. but did not take off until nearly noon on what for the vast majority was the deepest daylight penetration raid so far.
- No. 460 sent 25 Lancasters in the total force of 405 and, although crews had a monotonous seven hour flight almost entirely over thick cloud, their patience was rewarded by subsequent reports of considerable and widespread damage in Mannheim, the main trans-shipment port on the upper Rhine.



2nd March

- There was even less sleep that night for crews were alerted at 1.15 a.m. and airborne before dawn on 2nd March in a raid by 620 bombers (22 from No. 460 and 14 from No. 466) against Cologne designed to block the retreat of the enemy towards the bridges and ferries across the Rhine.
- Weary crews were heartened by much improved weather as they crossed into France at Boulogne.
- None had trouble in pinpointing themselves over the familiar "bend" in the Rhine, and some clearly identified the cathedral and the Hohenzollern Bridge as their bombs crashed into the heart of the city.
- Heavy damage resulted and this raid was adjudged a significant factor in disorganising enemy resistance before the city fell to the VII American Corps on 6th March.



RAAF FATALITIES IN SECOND WORLD WAR AMONG
RAAF PERSONNEL SERVING ON ATTACHMENT
IN ROYAL AIR FORCE SQUADRONS AND SUPPORT UNITS

432486 Flight Sergeant CONLEY, Graham Richard

Source:

AWM 237 (65) NAA : A705, 166/8/892 Digitised Commonwealth War Graves records.
W R Chorley : RAF Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War, Page 100,
Volume 1945.

Aircraft Type:	Lancaster
Serial number:	HK 769
Radio call sign:	GI – D
Unit:	622 Sqn RAF

Summary:

On the 2nd March 1945, Lancaster HK769 took off from RAF Mildenhall, Suffolk, at 1301 hours, detailed to bomb Cologne, Germany. Nothing was heard from the aircraft after take off and it failed to return to base.

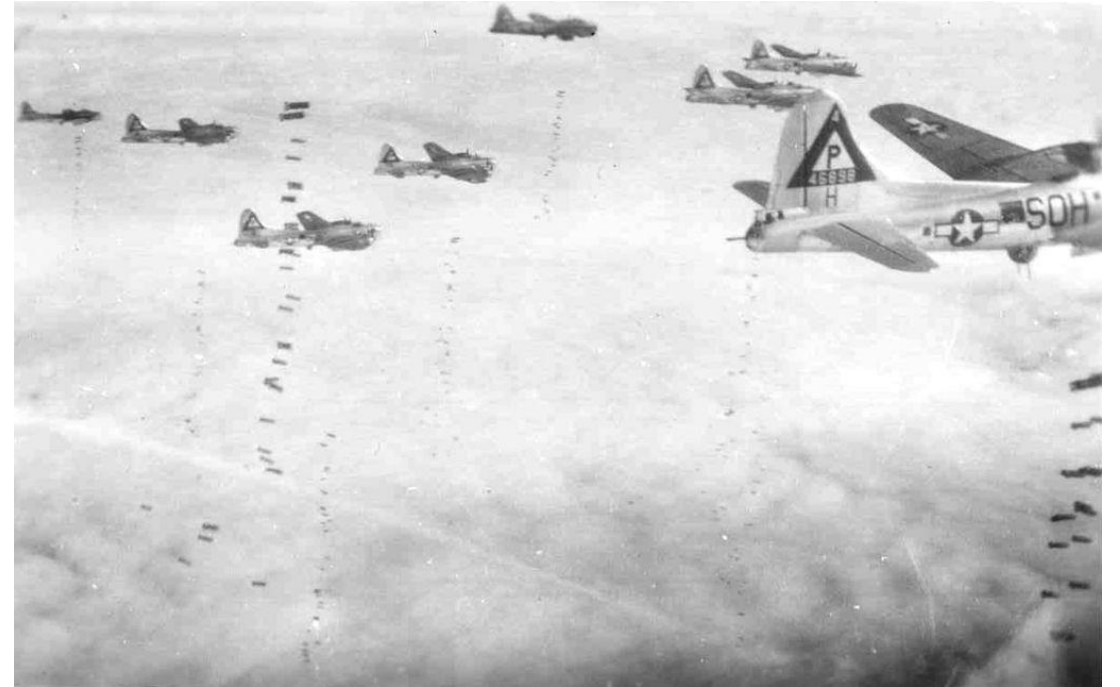
Crew:

RAF FO Ray, H B M Captain (Pilot)
RAF Sgt W J Ormshaw, (Flight Engineer)
RCAF FO Boyle, C P (Navigator)
RAF Flt Sgt D G Lewis, (Air Bomber)
RAAF 432486 Flt Sgt G R Conley, (Wireless Air Gunner)
RAF Sgt P S Armitage, (Air Gunner)
RCAF PO Boyce, E B (Air Gunner)
RAF Sgt W F Heywood, (Air Gunner)

The aircraft was flying in formation and was seen to receive a direct hit by flak, and crashed at Pulheim, Germany. All on board were killed and they are buried in the Hotton War Cemetery, Belgium. Hotton is located south of Liege on the N86.

2 March 1945

- There was a further raid on the Dresden railway yards by the USAAF on 2 March 1945, by 406 B-17s, which dropped 940 tons of high-explosive bombs and 141 tons of incendiaries.



3rd-4th March 1945

- A further strike against Ladbergen was ordered in daylight on 24th February but they found 10-10ths cloud over the target and the master bomber abandoned the raid.
- On 3rd-4th March 222 aircraft from No. 5 Group set out with 1,000 tons of bombs.
- Weather was again poorer than expected at the target and the preliminary markers fell over a wide area. Good raid discipline in the face of apparently strengthened defences led to concentrated bombing of the most favourable cluster of target indicators, assessed as being close to the true aiming point.
- Each R.A.A.F. squadron sent 15 Lancasters, and, although crews were satisfied with their attacks, they suffered relatively heavily, the units between them losing four of the seven aircraft missing from the whole operation.
- The bombers faced a further hazard on return to base. The Luftwaffe dispatched 140 night fighters on long-range intruder missions over Bomber Command bases.
- They attacked 43 RAF aircraft.
- Of these 22 were destroyed and 8 damaged.
- One Lancaster of No. 460 on a night-flying exercise was shot down and two crew members killed.



3rd-4th March 1945

- Kamen, a Fischer-Tropsch unit last attacked on 11th September 1944, now suffered four major raids within eight days.
- Nos. 4 and 6 Groups attacked in daylight on 24th February with 1,030 tons of bombs but, as this was a blind-bombing raid, Australian crews of No. 466 were not confident that real success had resulted.
- Next day and again on 1st March No. 3 Group made daylight attacks through cloud with the help of G-H, and at last on 3rd March photographs were obtained covering all three raids.
- Fairly heavy damage extended throughout the plant but not to a degree likely to prevent resumption of production in a few weeks, so No. 4 Group was immediately ordered to strike again that night.
- The raid opened punctually with good marking and accurate early bombing which started fires and gave a natural aiming-point for later crews, who saw large explosions.
- There was only minor enemy ground or air opposition at Kamen, but the Halifax crews returning triumphantly were met over their own bases by the Luftwaffe intruder force.
- Of the six aircraft of No. 466 still airborne, when the intruders appeared two were shot down and it was necessary to divert the others to more distant airfields. Another Australian pilot was shot down near Woodbridge.

Jerry McBrien 2023



467 SQUADRON RAAF, WORLD WAR 2 FATALITIES

Date of Death: 3 March 1945.

Source:

AWM 64 (1/428) (1/432) AWM 237 (64) AWM 54 779/3/129 Parts 2 and 22

Aircraft Type:	Lancaster
Serial number:	PB 806
Radio call sign:	PO – W
Unit:	467 Sqn RAAF

Summary:

Lancaster PB806 took off from RAF Waddington at 1845 hours on the night of 3/4th March 1945 to bomb the Dortmund-Ems Canal at Ladbergen. Nothing was heard from the aircraft after take off and it did not return to base.

Crew:

RAAF 416685 Wg Cdr Langlois, E LeP DFC Captain (Pilot) CO of the Squadron.
 RAAF 421050 FO Reid, A F DFC (Navigator)
 RAAF 420418 FO Willmot, J H (Bomb Aimer)
 RAAF 409437 FO Patten, E C DFC (Wireless Operator Air)
 RAF Flt Sgt J Scott, (Flight Engineer)
 RAAF 434868 FO Cameron, C J (Air Gunner)
 RAAF 25299 FO Taylor, R E (Air Gunner)

Five of the crew were killed and FO Willmot and FO Taylor were POW's. Those killed are listed as missing and their names are commemorated on the Memorial to the Missing at Runnymede, Surrey, UK.

In a later statement the then Flt Lt Taylor (Rear Gunner)said "A/c on fire in bomb bay. Captain orders bale out & all acknowledge. No one seemed injured and A/c in perfect control. Fighters set us on fire. Destroyed the enemy aircraft ME110. Saw it burning on the ground when we landed. Crashed about two minutes from the target on German side of canal. Bomb Aimer and I know that one other member of the crew (believed to be Engineer) landed between B/A and I, as I saw him walking away from his chute but not heard of since. Fate unknown rest of crew. They should all have got out as had plenty of time to do so. Baled out from Rear Turret and only the Captain left when I went out. Was told by French worker that four Australians and 1 Englishman were shot by German SS near Dortmund. Now this seems to be the fate of my missing crew. Flt Eng. known to have baled out and got to earth safely but unknown of since. Captured at 8am on 4/3/45 by two German Home guards and put in Rhine Airfield Jail. Finished in Stalag V11A and released by American Army on 11/5/45."
 FO Willmot reported "Hit by cannon shell from enemy aircraft. Ordered put on chutes. Find mine very large. Baled out at 9000 feet. A/c under control but diving slightly. Uncertain re fate of crew as probably first clear. Met Rear Gunner in Rhine Airport Jail Could only walk with difficulty. Went to farm house for assistance and handed over to civil police. Released from Mooseburg by British army on 29/4/45."

5th-6th March

- On 5th-6th March Bomber Command staged a repeat area raid on Chemnitz, raising the numbers of attacking aircraft from 670 (14th-15th February) to 1,100.
- No. 460 (21 Lancasters) and No. 466 (15 Halifaxes) were the only R.A.A.F. squadrons engaged.
- No. 460 lost one of its experienced crews headed by Squadron Leader Holmes (photo) during this raid and there were contradictory reports at debriefing concerning the relative success of the attack.
- One Australian air gunner of No. 550 Squadron wrote in his diary: "It proved to be the longest trip we had ever made. Unfortunately cloud conditions prevailed over most of the route and the target was also covered in 10-10ths cloud. P.F.F. had the target well marked and good fires were started but we couldn't see any results. A rather disappointing trip after going all that way and we were all very tired when we arrived back at base. One P.F.F. kite blew up over the target and emitted a tremendous shower of markers. . . ."
- This crew was airborne at 4.52 p.m. on 5th March and landed at 2.12 a.m. on the 6th—a flight of 9 hours 20 minutes.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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- Thanks for your attention.