

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

The End of the War in Europe.

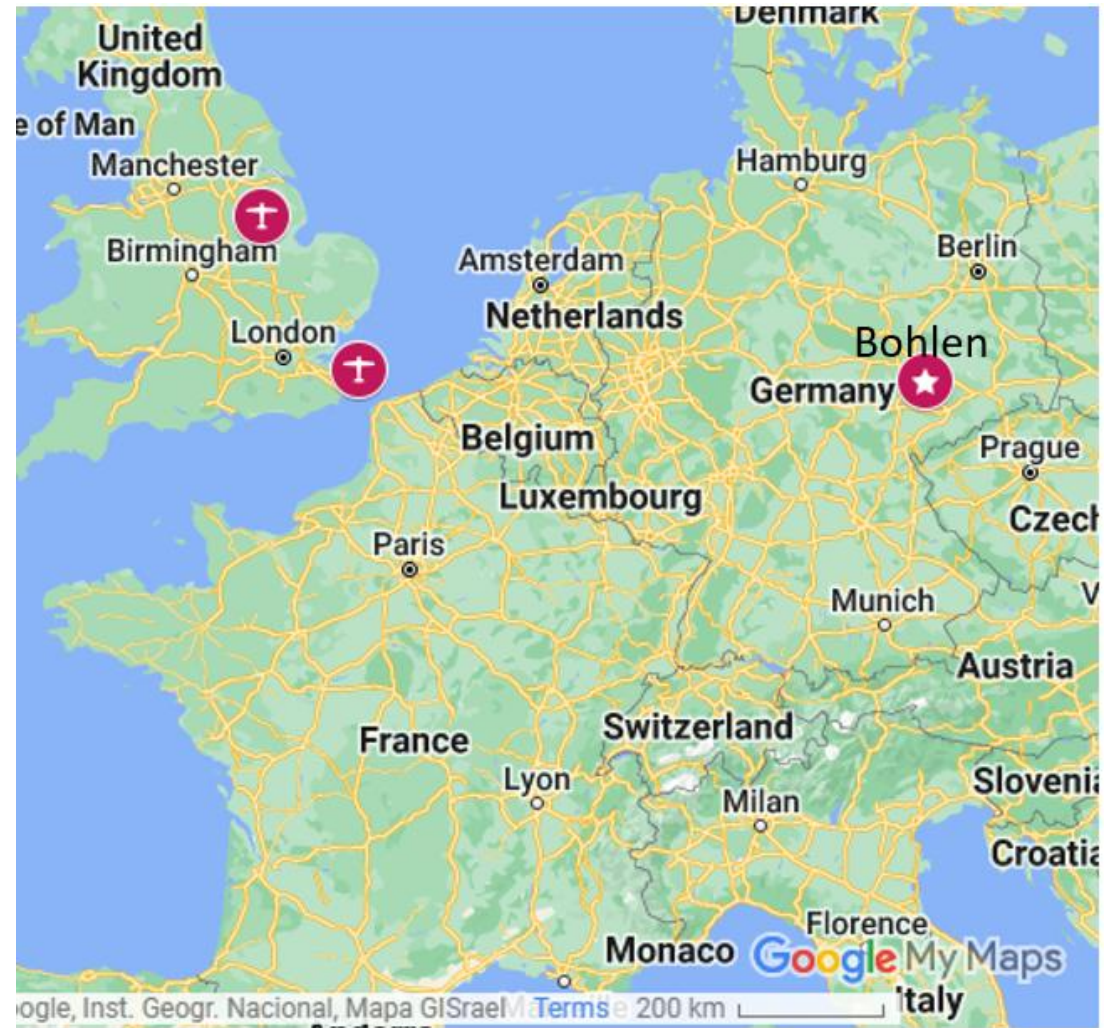


AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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5th-6th March

- The U.S.A.A.F. attacked Bohlen in daylight on 2nd March but again the installations escaped fairly lightly.
- On 5th-6th March No. 5 Group again set out with 248 Lancasters against this obstinate target.
- There was 10-10ths cloud in layers from 2,000 to 11,000 feet and again six of the 30 R.A.A.F. crews did not bomb because they could get no reliable point of aim from the ephemeral sky markers dropped by pathfinders.
- Successful crews bombed from varying heights and reported the glow of fires beneath the flare pattern but could give few significant assessments of results although some low fliers claimed they saw the target through breaks in the cloud and several bursts were observed on the plant itself.
- On the return journey, severe icing was experienced which forced some aircraft to leave the bomber stream.
- Some aircraft were damaged by ice thrown off the propellers, Flying Officer Hyland of No. 463 losing both fixed aerals and having his Lancaster's mid-upper turret perspex shattered.
- F-Lt F. E. Hyland, 425941; 463 Sqn. Labourer; of Jandowae, Qld; b. Toogoolawah, Qld, 20 Jan 1922.



5th-6th March

- Flying Officer Belford's Lancaster of No. 463 was hit by heavy-calibre flak over the target which shot away the starboard aileron, almost severed the rear spar and dislodged one of the petrol tanks.
- A large hole was also torn in the fuselage, the Loran navigation gear was jammed, both fixed aerials were severed and the elevators, fin and rudder were also hit.
- The Lancaster rolled to starboard and lost 1,500 feet in altitude before Belford could regain control.
- He ordered the crew to prepare to abandon the aircraft, but as both his mid-upper and rear gunners had been wounded, the former requiring morphia injections, he determined to attempt to fly at least to Alsace where the crew could bale out over Allied-held territory.
- Navigation by Flight Sergeant Wheeler, using what aids remained undamaged, brought the Lancaster to Alsace but Belford then felt confident enough to press on and attempt a landing at Juvincourt.
- On his first attempt he overshot, but on the second touched down on the starboard wheel.
- The flak-damaged undercarriage collapsed but Belford kept the aircraft moving on the port wheel until this was torn away in a shell hole.
- By this time speed had slackened and the Lancaster came to a standstill without further damage to itself or injury to the crew.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL UK2731
1945-04-09. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Army, Mr Forde, visited RAAF bomber squadrons at Waddington. He stayed on to meet returning crews of No. 467. In the background, 427891 Flying Officer Belford is telling Mr Forde how his Lancaster evaded two enemy fighters for five minutes as it was beginning its bombing run. In the foreground Flight Sergeant Jowitt is being interviewed by Mr Forde's Press Officer.

7th-8th March

- One more heavy raid designed to disrupt rail communications on the Eastern front was made on 7th-8th March by Bomber Command against Dessau, a city of 120,000.
- This target had the added attraction that it housed a Junkers jet-engine factory and testing base.
- Twenty crews of No. 460 claimed good bombing results and an uneventful trip, but some other squadrons criticised the route, which ran across the Ruhr and skirted close to Brunswick and Magdeburg, several bombers being shot down on the outward journey.
- Target weather was fine and early arrivals claimed that they were able to bomb the jet airfield because the runway lights were still alight.
- Fires were soon ablaze throughout the city which was successfully eliminated as a target on this initial raid .



Source:

AWM 237 (65) NAA : A705 166/29/222 Commonwealth War Graves records
W R Chorley : RAF Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War, Page 121,
Volume 1945.

Aircraft Type:	Lancaster
Serial number:	ME 503
Radio call sign:	BQ – R
Unit:	550 Sqn RAF

Summary:

On the night of 7/8th March 1945, Lancaster ME503 took off from RAF North Killingholme, at 1708 hours, detailed to bomb Dessau, Germany. Nothing was heard from the aircraft after take off and it failed to return to base.

Crew:

RAAF 2678 PO Nielson, S W Captain (Pilot)
RAF Sgt A Finnigan, (Flight Engineer)
RAAF 433793 Flt Sgt B M Trowbridge, (Navigator)
RAF Sgt R Kerr, (Air Bomber)
RAF Sgt J K Stuart-Ritson, (Wireless Air Gunner)
RAF Sgt C A Delaveleye, (Mid Upper Gunner)
RAF Sgt R F Stevens, (Rear Gunner)

A Missing Research & Enquiry team stated : “ Thr aircraft was attacked by an enemy night fighter and crashed in a wood one mile east of Sollnits on the 7th March 1945.

Sollnits is approx five miles south of Dessau.”

Five of the crew were killed and Sgt’s Finnegan and Stevens were POW’s.

Those killed are buried in the Berlin 1939-1945 War Cemetery. After the cessation of hostilities, the body of Belgian born Sgt Delaveleye was re-interred in the Uccle (Drieweg) Communal Cemetery, in the southern outskirts of Brussels.

A POW report by Sgt Finnigan stated : “ The outward trip was normal and the target successfully bombed. On the camera run immediately after the bombing, the aircraft was attacked from below believed to be flying on a reciprocal course, The port inner was hit with cannon shell and burst into flames which reached the Rear turret and fuselage probably from burning petrol, and smoke filled the central fuselage. The Captain ordered “prepare to bale out” and instructed the Flight Engineer to feather the port inner. This was not possible owing to the failure of all pressure. The Captain said “bale out chaps, I can’t hold her” No drill acknowledgement was heard by either the Fli Eng or the Rear Gunner A violent explosion then occurred, and both the Rear Gunner, who had reached the draft proof doors on his way to the rear escape hatch, and the Flt Engineer who was in the Bomb Aimers compartment were blown out. of the aircraft. and felt themselves falling. Both rip cords pulled satisfactorily. Prior to the bale out, the Flt Engineer saw the Bomb

Aimer in the nose of the aircraft in front of him, and he believed that the bomb aimer was not wearing his chute. The aircraft was seen to crash and burn. Both landed about 10kms south of Dessau. The Flt Eng hid his mae west and chute in some bushes, walked about 60 yards and due probably to shock remained there til dawn. Hr then consulted his escape map and used his compass. He decided to get out of the wood, but he only proceeded for a short distance when he was accosted by a forester who took him into custody and led him to the Burgomaster of the village nearby. There he met the Rear Gunner.”

A POW report by the Rear Gunner stated “ I lost my flying boots when I descended and landed in the branches of a tree, injuring two ribs and muscles in the leg. At dawn I examined my escape maps and compass, and proceeded out of the wood and walked eastward. I was accosted by a Polish land worker, who by signs escorted me to some German foresters. The Pole was not going to give any assistance. The foresters took me into custody, and escorted me to the local village, where I met the Flight Engineer.”

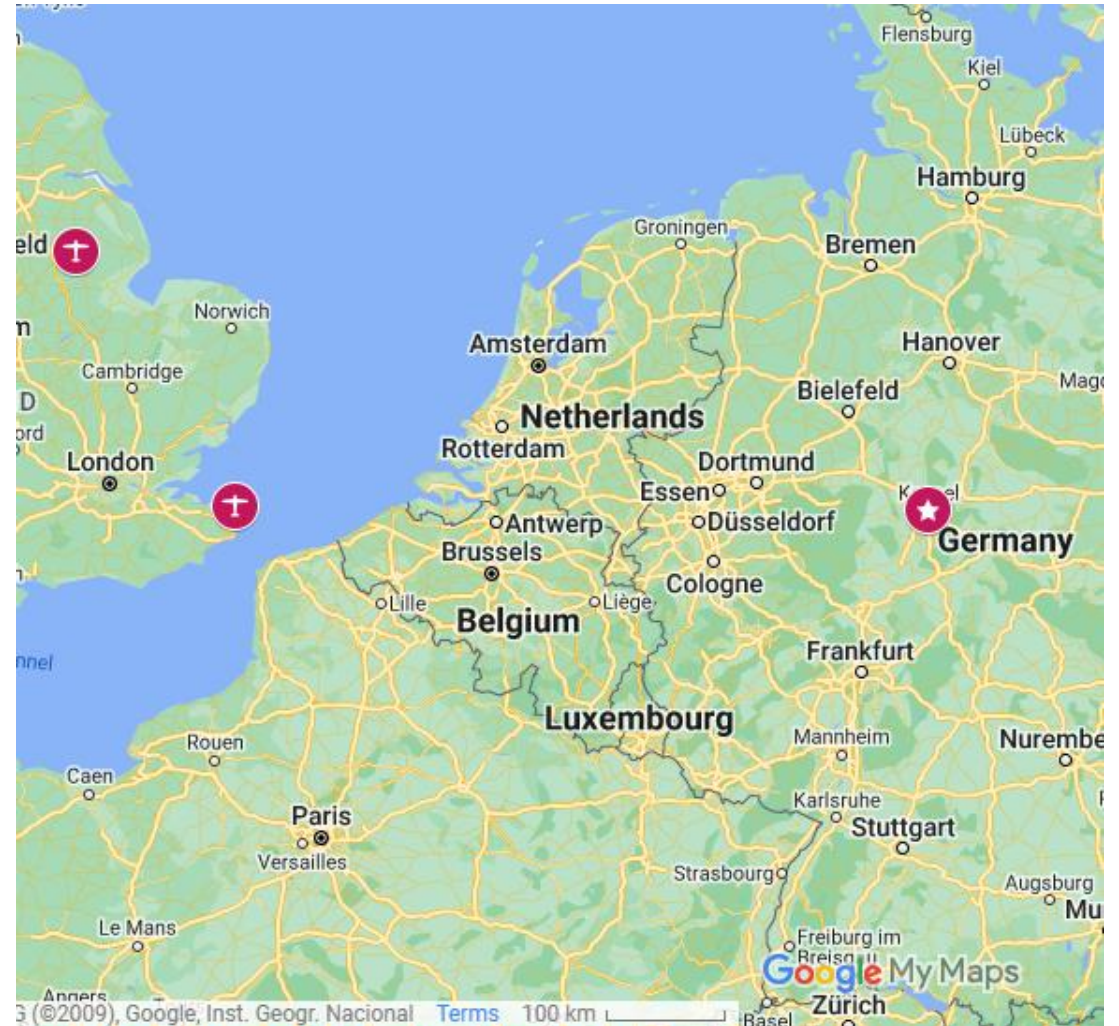
7th-8th March

- On 7th-8th March the Waddington squadrons sent 27 Lancasters against the Rhenania Ossag refineries at Harburg, a raid which met especially stiff opposition from enemy fighters both at the target and on the withdrawal route.
- Pilots commented on the exceptional number of searchlights cooperating with the fighters and flak teams.
- All crews of Nos. 463 and 467 managed to avoid combats, but Flying Officers Jetson (No. 44), Stark (No. 49) and Farren (No. 61) were among 13 Lancasters shot down and all three were killed.
- The enemy failed to disorganise the bomber stream and explosions and large fires were quickly caused at both refineries, a result which many attributed to the excellent work of the marking force.
- The same night Halifaxes attacked the Heide refinery. Fighters were again active and five bombers were lost, but the 12 crews of No. 466 reported no combats. Unfortunately RT instructions from the master bomber could not be heard clearly by most crews and an attack that began well degenerated into a haphazard, scattered raid.



8th-9th March

- Striking deeper into Germany by night on 8th-9th March 250 Lancasters (20 of No. 460) after struggling through heavy cloud found the skies surprisingly clear over Kassel, with the result that railway locomotive works, other rail facilities and the Henschel factories in that city suffered heavily from the bombing.



11th March

- Harris was planning a really gigantic blow against Essen. This city, which had already sustained 14 major raids, still typified for Bomber Command enemy heavy industrial capacity.
- The Ruhr was being threatened on two sides by Allied ground offensives, so that it had importance also as a supply and communications centre.
- The raid was staged in daylight on Sunday, 11th March, when No. 460 provided 19 crews and Nos. 463, 466 and 467 14 each to a force of over 1,000 Lancasters and Halifaxes.
- There was a heavy overcast but the pathfinders made good use of new blue flares and red smoke-puffs to direct the attention of bomb aimers in the 100-mile bomber stream to primary objectives such as Krupps and the rail centres.
- It was all over within 30 minutes during which an unprecedented 4,680 tons of high explosive rained down.
- Australians reported that they could see no ground detail because of the cloud layer at 8,000 feet but that, after the bombing started, smoke from fires was seen forcing its way through this cloud to form a ghastly pall above it.
- There was no fighter and very little flak opposition from what, since the first major raids in 1943, had been regarded as the best-defended target in Germany.
- This record bomb tonnage ensured that Essen's industrial capacity and administrative value as a supply centre was neutralised in advance of projected ground battles.



Aerial photo, taken from an artillery observation plane of Ninth U.S. Army's 79th Division, shows the damage to the Krupp's tool plant at Essen, Germany, which was pounded by Allied air attacks and artillery of the Ninth Army before the city fell April 10, 1945, to troops of the 17th U.S. Airborne Division.

12th March 1945

- The PoWs from **Lamsdorf** reached **Gorlitz** by 3rd February only to move on once more with the Gorlitz prisoners to **Meiningen** where the column split into three parts, airmen moving on to **Ziegenhain**, 220 miles from Gorlitz, by 12th March.



12 March

- On 12 March an even more shattering blow was aimed at Dortmund.
- Conditions for the 1,100 bombers (20 from No. 460, 16 each from Nos. 463 and 466, 15 from No. 467) were practically the same with very few breaks in the sheet of low cloud covering western Europe, but with fine, clear and "surprisingly warm" weather above cloud (as some crews reported).
- Again an efficient fighter escort kept the Luftwaffe away from the bomber stream and again flak opposition was negligible.
- Three out of every four aircraft carrying at least one 4,000-lb block buster in the average (Lancaster) bomb-load of 11,000 pounds.
- The attack began at 4.30 p.m. with an aiming point in the south of Dortmund, but switched just before 5 p.m. to the centre of the city where high-explosive bombs were used to crater roads and railways and bring down on them those buildings still standing.



Reconnaissance Photo of part of the city center area around Liebfrauen church in 1945.

14th March

- Further projected attacks on Bielefeld failed on 9th and 13th March because of adverse weather, but an outstanding success came on 14th March when No. 617 dropped the first 22,000-lb Grand Slam bomb and it destroyed no fewer than seven spans of the bridge.
- Air attack against communications during March became progressively selective in favour of Twenty-first Army Group requirements.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

SUK14015

The railway viaduct after the attack by RAF Bomber Command on 1945-03-14 with 22,000 lb and 12,000 lb bombs and attacks by US heavy bombers earlier in 1945-03. The huge size of the craters can be seen when compared with the house close by.

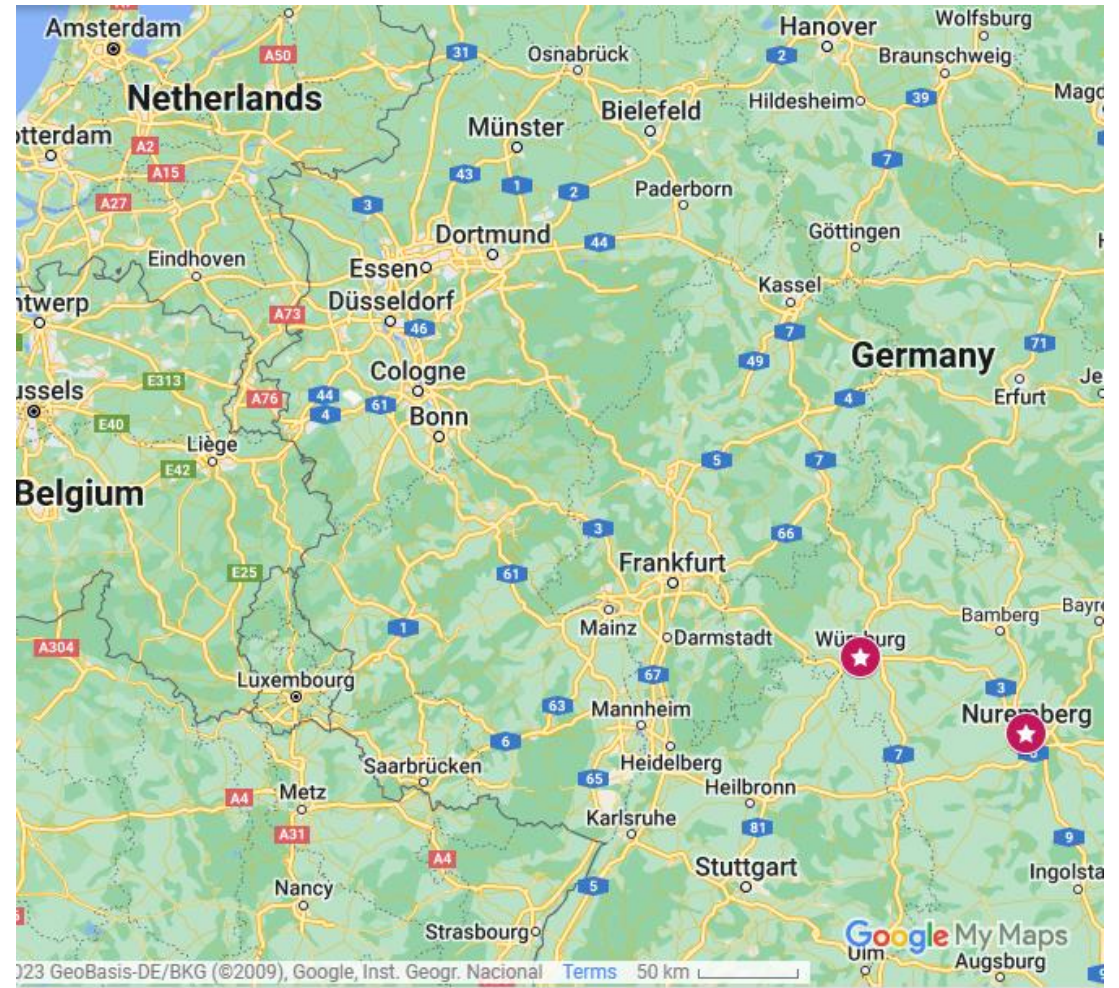
14th-16th March

- Only partial success was gained by No. 5 Group on 14th-15th March at Lutzkendorf when a large proportion of bombs fell not on the refinery but on the adjacent synthetic plant which was already inoperative.
- But No. 1 Group scored a spectacular success the next night when the NeragDeurag refinery at Misburg received its ninth and heaviest attack.
- Raid reports handed in by pilots of No. 460 refer to fires raging over a wide area and smoke rising to 10,000 feet after one very heavy explosion.
- Refinery records show that only 7 out of more than 1,000 tons of bombs were estimated as falling in critical parts of the installations but that their effect was decisive. The boiler and power house at Nerag were damaged while the ethyl-blending section, cooling tower, power lines, tracks, tanks and control buildings at Deurag were heavily damaged. The record ends: "This attack caused an indefinite shut down."



16th-17th March

- Bomber Command on 16th-17th March attacked both Nuremberg (for the eighth time) and Würzburg (for the first time).
- Sixteen R.A.A.F. Lancasters from Binbrook went to Nuremberg and 33 from Waddington bombed Würzburg, one crew failing to return from each raid; both attacks were successful.
- These raids in Bavaria were of importance to the transportation plan.



18th-19th March

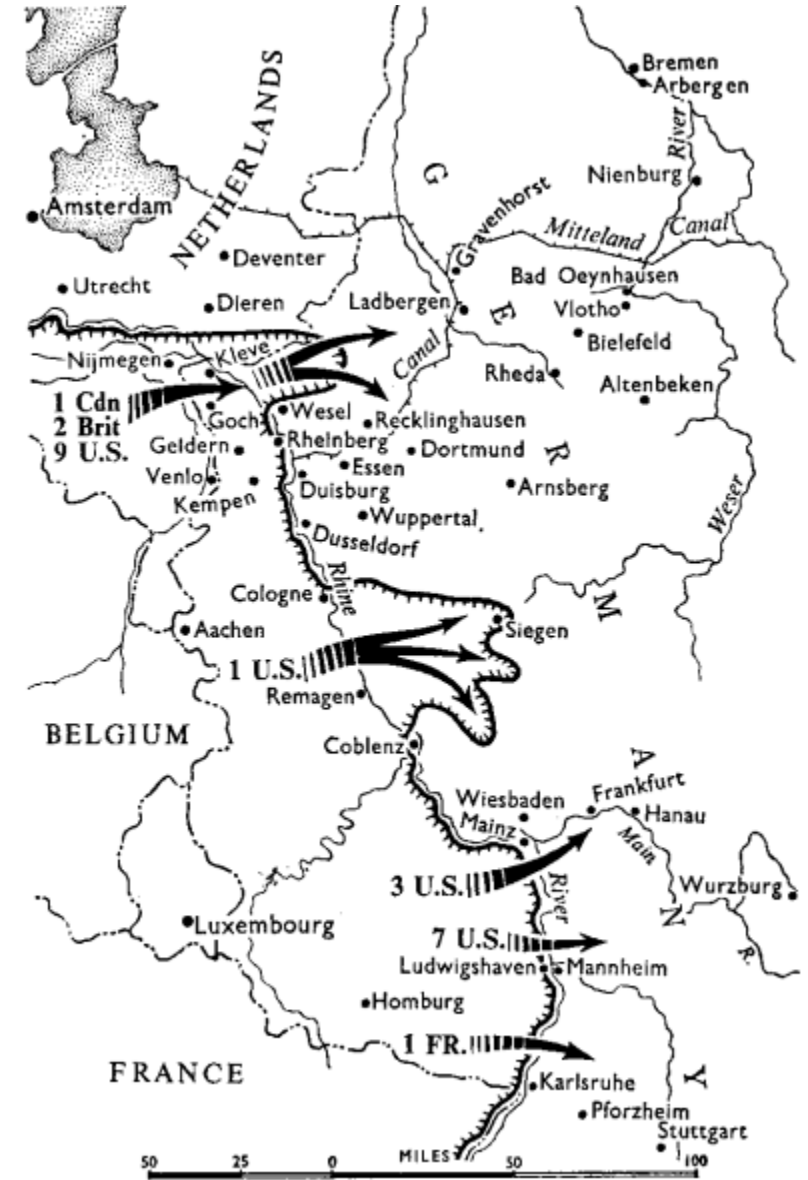
- Smaller targets of importance to the general plan of attack on all forms of enemy road, rail and sea communications were allotted to individual groups of Bomber Command.
- On 6th-7th March each of the Waddington squadrons sent 10 Lancasters to bomb the harbour and port installations at Sassnitz in the Baltic.
- No. 460 four times during February and three times early in March sent out five or six aircraft at a time to drop mines in the Heligoland Bight or along the Mecklenburg and Pomeranian coasts.
- The same unit on 18th-19th March attacked Hanau, a rail junction east of Frankfurt, with 22 aircraft and gained good results.
- On this raid the crew captained by Flying Officer Worsley claimed as probably destroyed an Me-262 jet-engined fighter, of the type which six months earlier had appeared to pose a grave threat to relatively slow flying bombers but which had been rarely employed in significant force.
- Production of jet aircraft remained satisfactory throughout this period, but the inter-related factors of lack of fuel, insufficiently trained crews and combat leaders, insecure operational bases, and misuse of these fighters as ground-attack bombers, made the German jet units largely ineffective.
- F-Lt C. F. Worsley, DFC, 413066; 460 Sqn. Postal assistant; of Penshurst, NSW; b. Marrickville NSW, 19 Nov 1921.



Me 262 A in 1945

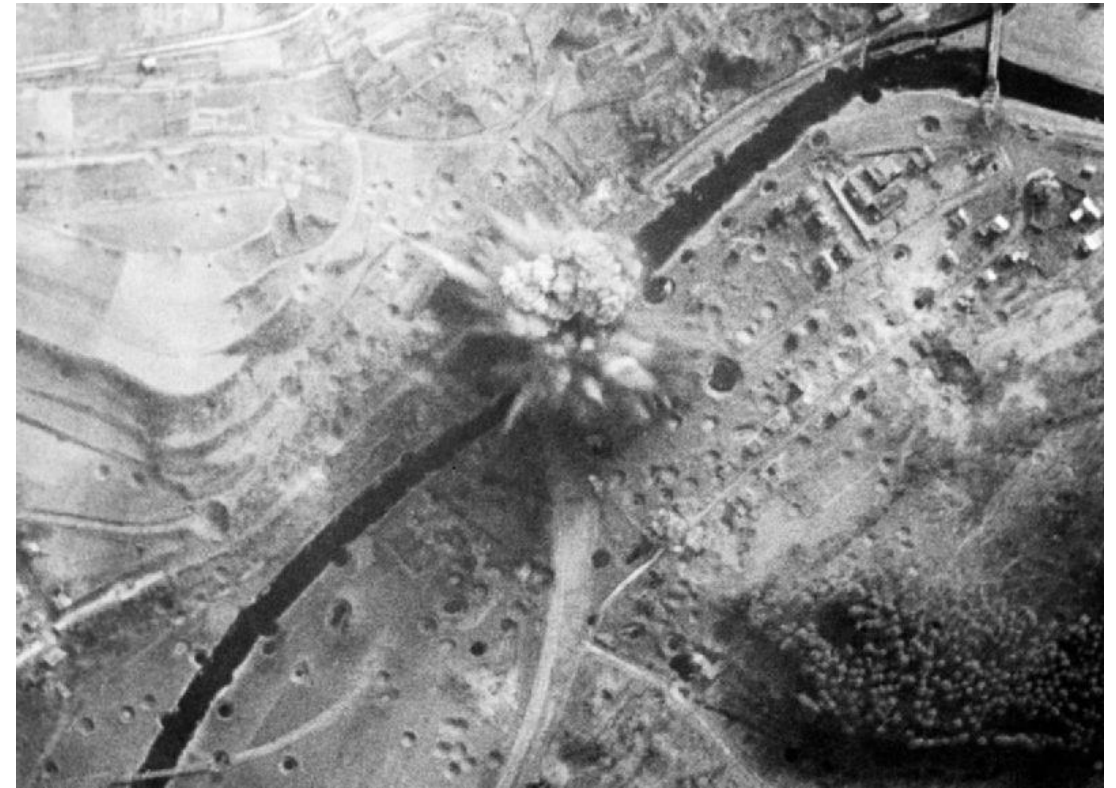
19th March 1945

- Bomber Command in mid-March attacked six more important bridges within 10 days to create favourable conditions for Montgomery's drive across the lower Rhine timed for 24th March.
- On 13th, 14th and 15th March No. 9 Squadron hammered away at the Arnsberg viaduct but made no direct hits, most of the bombs falling on the east side with only minor resultant damage.



19th March 1945

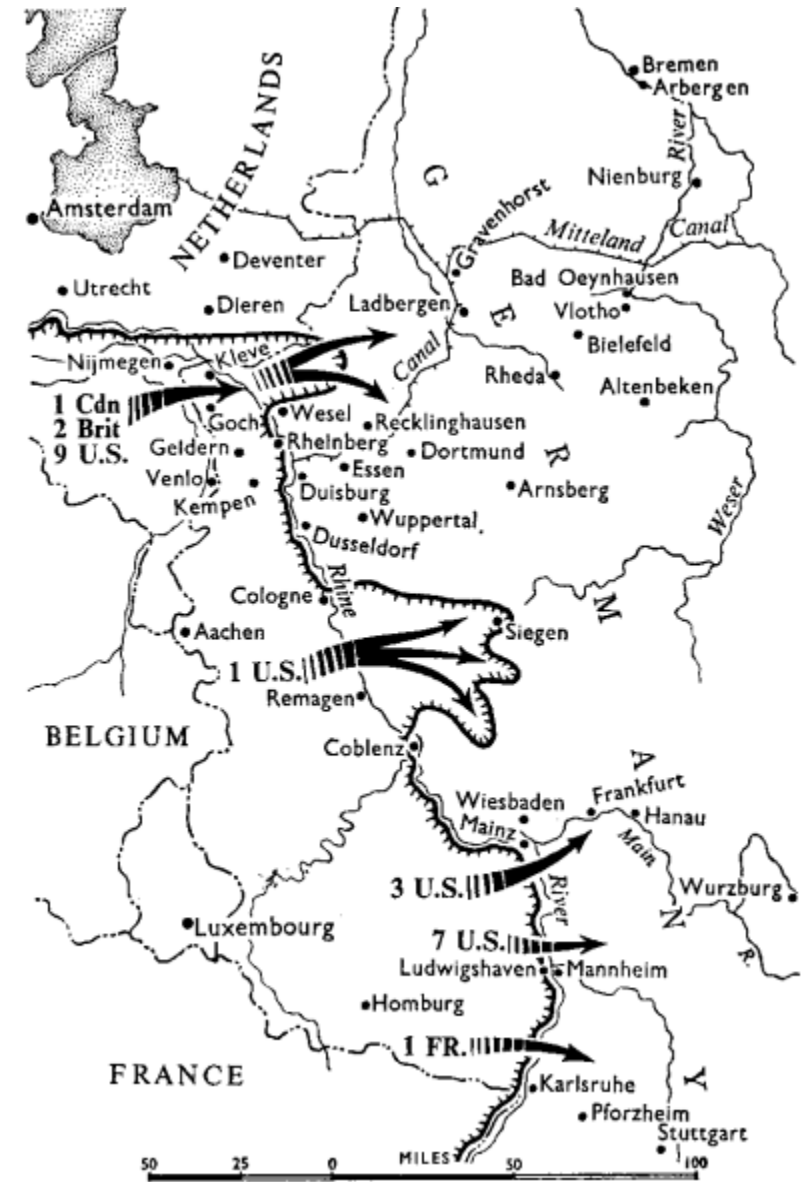
- No. 617 took over the Arnsberg viaduct task on the 19th and dropped 13 Tallboys and 6 Grand Slam bombs which straddled the viaduct with six direct hits.
- Flying Officer Speirs saw his bomb hit the right side of the bridge at the tunnel end; another 12,000-lb bomb pierced the 20-foot thick limestone roof of the tunnel through which the railway approached the viaduct. Cameramen in the accompanying film unit aircraft piloted by Flight Lieutenant Perry of No. 463 filmed a Grand Slam bomb on release and as it struck the western span of the viaduct.
- Two spans were completely cut while railway tracks were extensively damaged along the built-up embankment.
- F-O J. W. Speirs, DFC, 21639. 467 Sqn, 617 Sqn RAF. Clerk; of Lidcombe, NSW; b. Lidcombe, 4 Apr 1921. Killed in aircraft accident 16 Jul 1951.
- F-Lt T. A. Perry, DFC, 418872; 463 Sqn. Bricklayer; of Elwood, Vic; b. Windsor, Vic, 111 Oct 1914.



A 22,000-lb MC deep-penetration bomb ('Grand Slam') released from Avro Lancaster B Mark I (Special) (PB996 'YZ-C') of No. 617 Squadron, flown by Flying Officer P. Martin and crew, explodes on its target, the railway viaduct at Arnsberg, Germany.

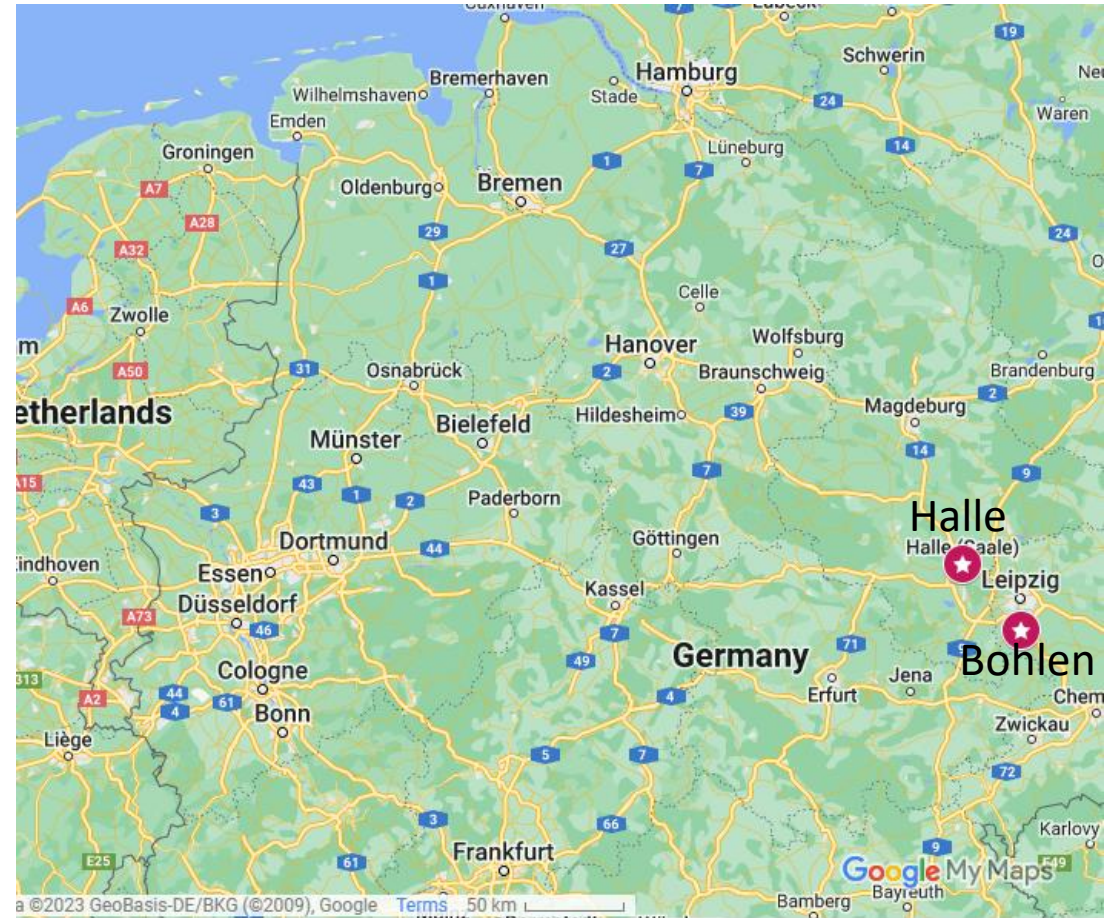
19th March 1945

- Also on 19th March No. 9 attacked the Vlotho railway bridge which spanned the River Weser some 20 miles north-east of Bielefeld, now fully repaired after American attacks with medium-calibre bombs.
- Fifteen Tallboys aggregating about 80 tons were dropped but only near misses were achieved although pilots went down below cloud (at 14,000 feet) in an attempt to gain bombing accuracy.
- However, one span of the Vlotho bridge was forced off its rollers and fell on top of the pier creating a difficult repair task; this was an acceptable level of damage in view of the short time before the Twenty-first Army Group was due to attack.



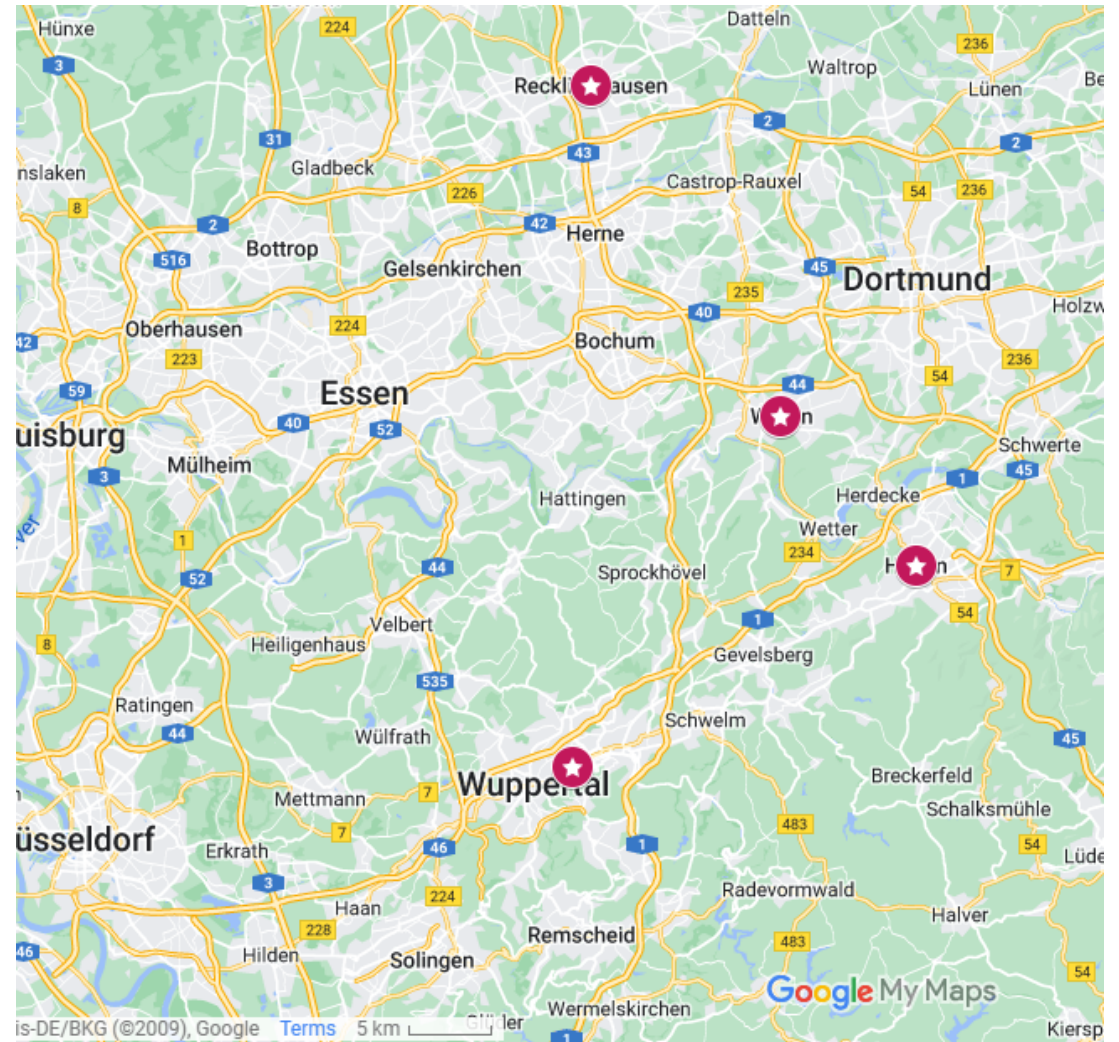
20th-21st March

- within a fortnight of the previous raid Bomber Command assessed that some units at Bohlen were again in operation.
- On 20th-21st March No. 463 sent 16 and No. 467 17 crews in a force of 224 which in much better weather dropped 946 tons of bombs in the most concentrated of the series of attacks against Bohlen.
- Photographs, obtained 12 hours after the attack, showed fires burning in various parts of the plant; apart from severe and widespread damage to vital units the internal marshalling yards had been heavily hit and it was estimated that Bohlen was unlikely to be substantially operative for at least two months.
- This attack was relatively costly as 10 bombers were lost, including one of No. 463 and one each piloted by Australians of Nos. 50, 57, 61, 97 and 207 Squadrons, while another Australian pilot failed to return from a small feint attack by 12 aircraft against Halle which was intended to divert enemy fighters from Bohlen.



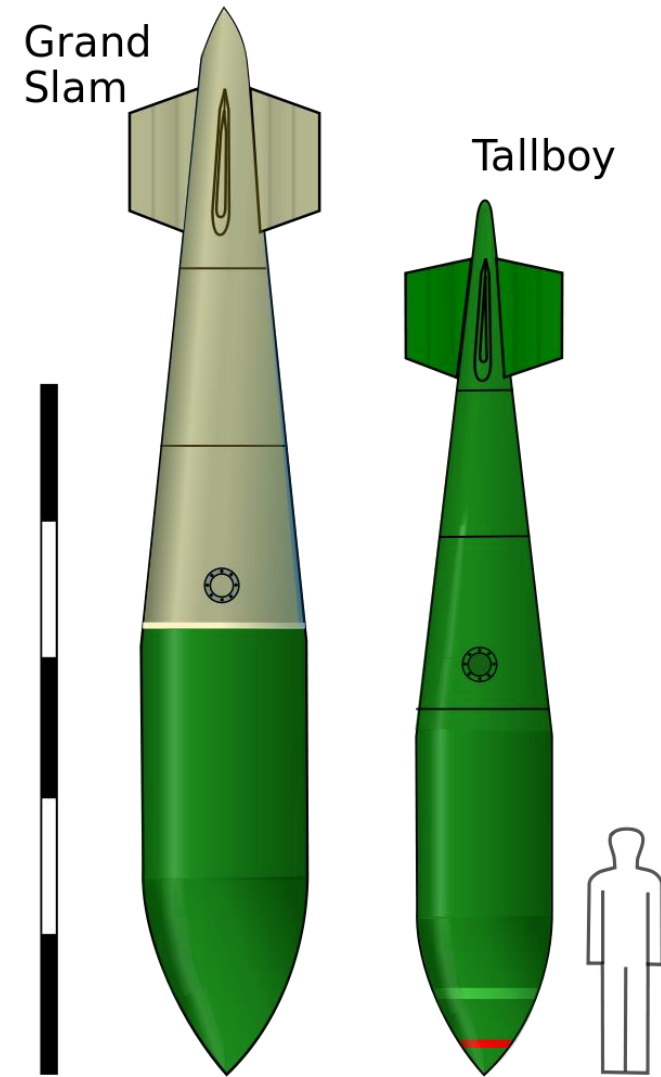
21st March

- the Halifaxes of No. 466 were called on most frequently against transportation targets in western Germany.
- On 8th-9th March 11 crews bombed the Blohm and Voss shipbuilding yards at Hamburg.
- On the 13th the squadron made its fourth daylight attack of the month when 16 Halifaxes attacked the industrial and rail centre of Barmen at Wuppertal.
- Reverting to night raids 10 crews attacked Homburg on the 14th-15th;
- 5 bombed Hagen on the 15th-16th,
- and 14 Witten on the 18th-19th.
- As the time for Montgomery's trans-Rhine offensive grew nearer 12 Halifaxes attacked railway yards at Recklinghausen in daylight on 20th March
- and a similar number bombed marshalling yards at Rheine next day.
- All these raids were successfully conducted without loss and often against weak opposition, although at Rheine very accurate flak damaged 9 out of the 12 R.A.A.F. Halifaxes.



20 - 23 March 1945

- No. 617 attacked but failed to knock out the Nienburg bridge with 1,000-lb bombs on 20th March but returned two days later with 5 Grand Slams and 12 Tallboys which destroyed the bridge and the greater part of the approach viaduct.
- On the intervening day the same squadron had destroyed two sections and damaged a third section of the overland approach viaduct of the Arbergen bridge with 2 Grand Slams and 18 Tallboys.
- Finally on 23rd March No. 9 Squadron attacked Bad Oeynhausen, the twin of the Vlotho bridge, with 10 Tallboys, destroying a train and the whole railway track on the western approach.
- Another bomb undermined a pier on the downstream side causing one span to collapse; later erosion caused the parallel span to collapse.
- R.A.A.F. pilots prominent during this series of bridge attacks were Flight Lieutenants Gavin and Sayers and Flying Officers Carey and Speirs of No. 617 and Flying Officers Williams, Arndell, Ayrton and Wiley of No. 9 Squadron .



22nd March 1945

- On 6th February 1945 the PoWs withdrawn from Stalag Luft VI at Heydekrug, were moved again, this time marching from **Gross Tychow** to **Fallingbistel** which was reached on 22nd March.



23 March 45

- No. 462 Squadron flew 83 sorties on 13 nights during the first three weeks of March.
- Operations were more varied during March, with Kaiserlautern, Emden, Rostock, Bremen and Munster appearing as spoof targets in addition to the familiar Ruhr cities.



23rd-24th March

- Operation Plunder, Montgomery's plan to cross the lower Rhine at Wesel, began well during the night of 23rd-24th March with the 1st Commando Brigade slipping across the river and waiting on the outskirts of Wesel under cover of a tremendous artillery bombardment until R.A.F. Bomber Command arrived overhead to drop more than 1,000 tons of bombs on the town.
- Sixteen Lancasters from each of the R.A.A.F. Waddington squadrons operated on this raid and crews returned confident that all resistance in the town had been at least temporarily paralysed.
- This massive air bombardment, unlike earlier assaults at Cassino and Caen, was not wasted, because the commandos were ready to advance immediately through the shattered defences of Wesel and quickly overran the whole town.
- Meanwhile two divisions of the Second Army and another two of the Ninth American Army dashed across the river in the wake of the commandos and fanned out on the east bank of the Rhine on each side of Wesel, meeting only very light opposition.



The city of Wesel lies in ruin after Allied bombing.

24th March

- An airborne operation to land two airborne divisions over the Rhine was given the code name "Varsity".
- 387 (92 per cent) of R.A.F. aircraft successfully released their gliders shortly after 10 a.m. and within five and a half hours the 6th Airborne Division had captured all its objectives, including six undamaged bridges over the Yssel, taken 600 prisoners and established firm contact with the 15th Scottish Division.
- Flying Officer Jungwirth RAAF, reported: "The R.A.F. Dakotas towing their gliders came in three gigantic streams. Over to one side we saw the American Dakotas carrying paratroops. Ahead and below were the Typhoons blasting German flak positions while above us were the Tempests, Spitfires and Thunderbolts. . . . We released our gliders, pulled up sharp to dodge the pieces of another Dakota which blew up right in front of us, and then turned back. "



C-47s and CG-4A gliders before take-off, 24 March 1945.

- So great was Allied air potential at this time that R.A.A.F. squadrons were by no means unusually active on 24th March.
- Only one bomber unit operated in daylight, No. 466 sending 12 Halifaxes to Gladbeck;
- none operated the following night.
- Nor were the Australians very busy the next week

26 March 1945

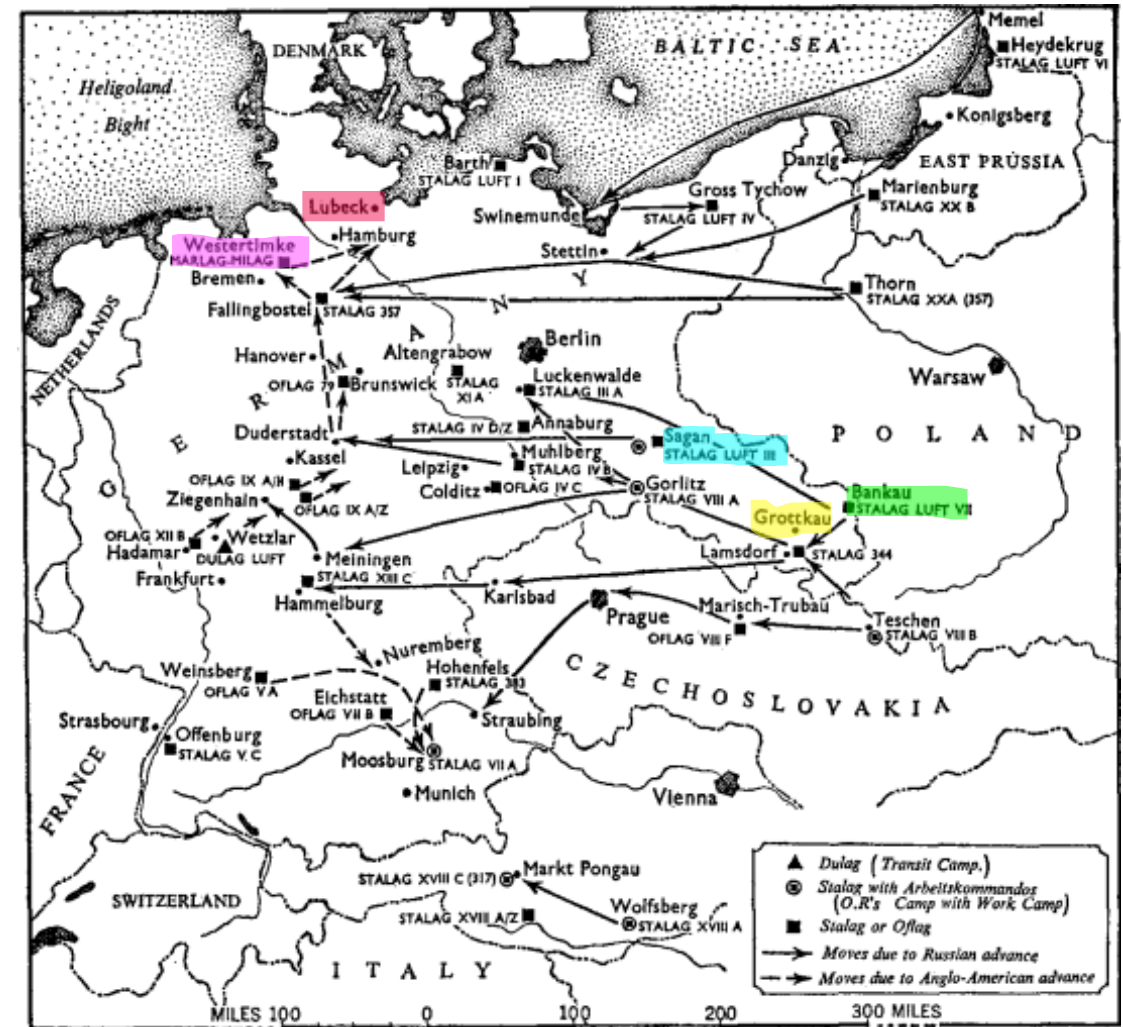
- The PoWs from **Lamsdorf** and **Gorlitz** reached **Meiningen** where the column split into three parts, airmen moving on to **Ziegenhain**, 220 miles from Gorlitz, by 12th March.
- After only a fortnight at Ziegenhain the column turned eastward again.



31st March

- On 31st March came an official announcement of the end of the Empire Air Training Scheme.
- In fact very few R.A.A.F. aircrew had arrived in the United Kingdom during the preceding nine months so there was little impact on the position of R.A.A.F. units overseas, although in Australia it inevitably produced large surplus stocks of both semi-trained aircrew and of instructors.
- This announcement showed confidence not only that victory in Europe was impending, but that adequate reserves of trained aircrew were already available for future needs in the Pacific.

- The main column of 2,000 British PoWs from Grottkau and Bankau and from Stalag Luft III at Sagan marched to Bremen, where, after some time at the Westertimke camp, Marlag-Milag, originally for naval and merchant seamen, they moved again towards Lubeck.



March 1945

- The light night striking force campaign against Berlin continued relentlessly throughout March until the night of the 27th-28th which marked the thirty-sixth successive raid without a single night's respite for Berliners from the wailing of air-raid sirens, the sound of anti-aircraft guns and the intermittent explosion of 4,000-lb bombs.
- The March total of bombs dropped on Berlin by Mosquitos was 1,800 tons, and prevention of this repetitive form of attack was beyond the capabilities of the Luftwaffe because it was heavily committed against other raids mounted almost nightly by Bomber Command.
- The experienced crews of the light night-striking force included many Australians who had shown a preference for Mosquito operations during their second bombing tour.
- Crews began to regard this mission as the "Berlin milk run" .



A De Havilland Mosquito B Mark IV (modified) of No. 692 Squadron RAF of the Light Night Striking Force, at Graveley, Huntingdonshire, showing the enlarged bomb-bay, fitted to accommodate the 4,000-lb HC bomb.

28 March

- On 28 March, in a memo to General Ismay for the British Chiefs of Staff and the Chief of the Air Staff, he wrote:
- It seems to me that the moment has come when the question of bombing of German cities simply for the sake of increasing the terror, though under other pretexts, should be reviewed. Otherwise we shall come into control of an utterly ruined land ... The destruction of Dresden remains a serious query against the conduct of Allied bombing. I am of the opinion that military objectives must henceforward be more strictly studied in our own interests than that of the enemy.
- The Foreign Secretary has spoken to me on this subject, and I feel the need for more precise concentration upon military objectives such as oil and communications behind the immediate battle-zone, rather than on mere acts of terror and wanton destruction, however impressive.



29 March

- On 29 March, Air Chief Marshal Arthur Harris wrote to the Air Ministry:
- ...in the past we were justified in attacking German cities. But to do so was always repugnant and now that the Germans are beaten anyway we can properly abstain from proceeding with these attacks. This is a doctrine to which I could never subscribe. Attacks on cities like any other act of war are intolerable unless they are strategically justified. But they are strategically justified in so far as they tend to shorten the war and preserve the lives of Allied soldiers. To my mind we have absolutely no right to give them up unless it is certain that they will not have this effect. I do not personally regard the whole of the remaining cities of Germany as worth the bones of one British Grenadier.
- The feeling, such as there is, over Dresden, could be easily explained by any psychiatrist. It is connected with German bands and Dresden shepherdesses. Actually Dresden was a mass of munitions works, an intact government centre, and a key transportation point to the East. It is now none of these things.



March 1945

- March 1945 had proved a fantastic month for air operations.
- Tactical air forces under Eisenhower's control dispatched nearly 94,000 sorties that month of which some 88,000 were rated as effective.
- Bomber Command dropped 68,000 tons of bombs, the largest monthly total of the war.



A 617 Squadron Lancaster dropping a Grand Slam ten ton bomb on the Arnsberg viaduct, 19 March 1945.

3rd April 1945

- On 3rd April 1945 the PoWs withdrawn from Stalag Luft VI at Heydekrug via Gross Tychow to Fallingbommel set out again towards the Elbe River.
- Apart from hunger and exhaustion, they were now pinched into the rapidly-narrowing gap between Russian and Anglo-American armies and suffered machine-gun attacks from aircraft which mistook them for German troops.
- This nightmare continued until 16th April when they were overtaken and cared for by units of the Second British Army.



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

417049 Flight Lieutenant CAWTHORNE, Philip Edward DFC

Source:

AWM 237 (65) NAA : A705,166/7/844 Commonwealth War Graves records
W R Chorley :RAF Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War, Page 155,
Volume 1945.

Aircraft Type:	Lancaster
Serial number:	PB 949
Radio call sign:	F2 – T
Unit:	635 Sqn RAF

Summary:

On the night of the 4/5th April 1945, Lancaster PB949 took off from RAF Downham Market, Norfolk, at 2204 hours, detailed to mark the Rhenania Oil Plant at Harburg, Germany. Nothing was heard from the aircraft after take off and it failed to return to return to base.

Crew:

RAAF 417049 Flt Lt Cawthorne, DFC Captain (Pilot)
RAF Flt Sgt B R McMaster, (Flight Engineer)
RAF PO Wilson, G (Navigator)
RAF PO Roberts, B G (Navigator)
RAF FO Williams, F M (Visual)
RAAF 429266 WO T Reid, (Wireless Air Gunner)
RAF Flt Sgt R V Moore, (Mid Upper Gunner)
RCAF WO 2 I J Kinney, (Rear Gunner)

A Missing Research & Enquiry team later reported ; "The aircraft crashed and became submerged in Peak Bog."

Four of the crew lost their lives and Flt Sgt McMaster, PO Roberts and FO Williams were POW.s while PO Wilson evaded capture.

Those killed are buried in the Becklingen War Cemetery, Locality Soltau, Niedersachsen, Germany. The cemetery is 13kms south east of Soltau on the side of the road from Hamburg to Hanover.

At the age of 18, WO2 Kinney was among the youngest of Canadians to be killed on Pathfinder duties in 1945.

Citations :

A General Citation for the DFC awarded to Flt Lt Cawthorne was published in the London Gazette 22/5/1945, Page 2625

7th April 45

- In desperation the Germans turned to their benzol plants for alternative supplies of liquid fuel.
- The Allies relentlessly widened their bombing programs to include the relatively small benzol, tar oil and alcohol units dotted throughout the Ruhr and other colliery districts.
- Bomber Command made 6 raids during January 1945, 9 in February, 18 in March and one in April against 24 separate plants.
- Altogether 3,851 aircraft dropped 15,867 tons of bombs in this period against this type of target.

11th April 1945

- By September 1944 arrangements were complete for a special P.O.W. Section at No. 11 P.D.R.C. Brighton to be staffed as far as possible with men who had flown on operations themselves.
- This plan envisaged a progressive flow of men returning as Allied troops advancing into Germany overran the various camps, but this did not happen because of the German determination to keep control of prisoners to the very end.
- The P.O.W. Section at Brighton did not therefore begin its formal work until 11th April 1945 when the first liberated prisoners arrived.
- Thereafter the intake rate was approximately 10 per day Reception formalities of medical examinations, re-kitting and personal interviews normally took two days, and, in accordance with advice already given to the men by the field representatives with SHAEF, they were then offered 28 days' leave.
- With few exceptions this was (after using free cable facilities to advise their next of kin in Australia) the prisoners' main wish, and, armed with double ration cards, special N.A.A.F.I. entitlement forms and issues from the R.A.A.F. canteen of delicacies in short supply in civilian shops, the men departed to stay with personal friends or holiday hosts chosen from the Lady Ryder or Nuffield hospitality lists.

Aircraftwoman Gladys Mary Lola PARKER

Service No: 111747

Born: Katanning WA, 25 May 1925

Enlisted in the RAAF: 25 August 1943

Unit: No. 4 Service Flying Training School, Geraldton WA

Died: Illness, Wooroloo WA, 15 April 1945, Aged 19 Years

Buried: Karrakatta War Cemetery WA

CWGC Additional Information: Daughter of William Frederick and Dorothy Louisa Parker, of Muradup.

Roll of Honour: Unknown

Remembered: Panel 117, Commemorative Area, Australian War Memorial, Canberra ACT

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

Having her place of death recorded as Wooroloo, it is likely that Aircraftwoman Parker may have died from Tuberculosis (TB) or associated complications.

References:

Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour On-Line Records

Commonwealth War Graves Commission On-Line Records

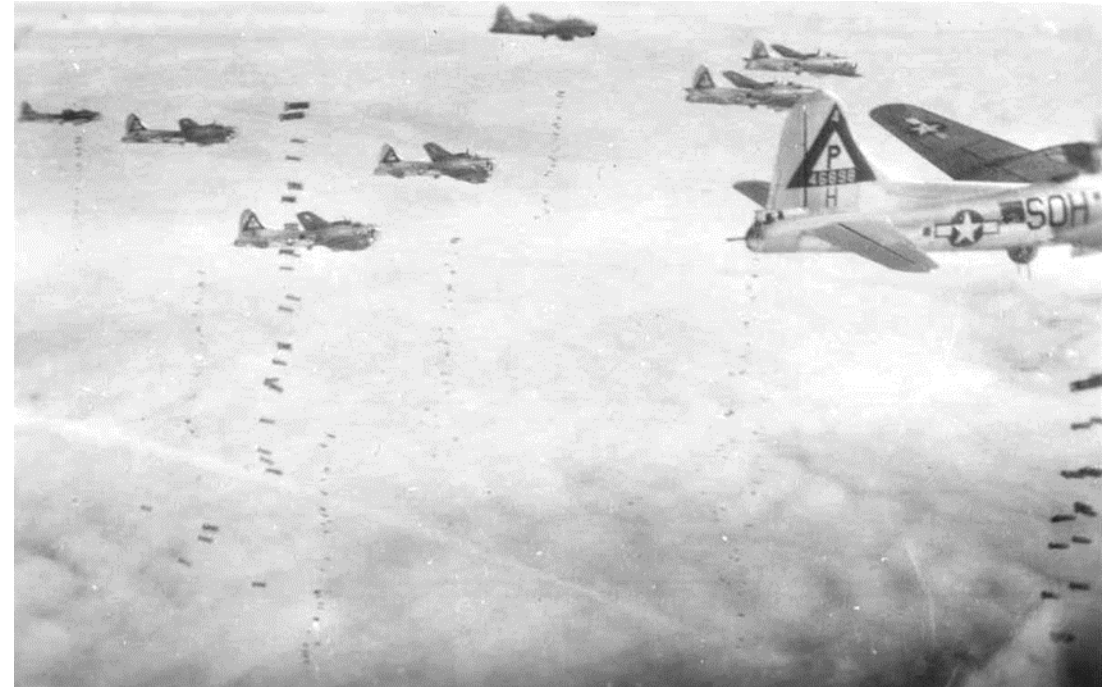
Department of Veteran's Affairs On-Line WWII Nominal Roll

Metropolitan Cemeteries Board (Perth) On-Line Records

National Archives of Australia On-Line Record A705, 166/32/746

17 April 1945

- There was a further raid on the Dresden railway yards by the USAAF on 17 April, when 580 B-17s dropped 1,554 tons of high-explosive bombs and 165 tons of incendiaries.



18 – 25 April

- Late in the month the first of No. 462's specially modified Halifaxes designed as flying radio counter-measure units became available.
- Special jamming patrols were flown with main forces attacking Heligoland (18th) and Wangerooge (25th) in daylight and Lubeck on the night of 23rd-24th April.

25 April 45

- Anzac Day brought No. 460 another tactical target, but one of particular appeal.
- Throughout the month as Allied armies swept in from east and west, German propaganda had repeatedly claimed the existence of an impregnable "National Redoubt" in the Harz Mountains area into which German armies would retreat and be able to hold out indefinitely.
- Although largely false these claims led to requests for a very heavy bombing raid on the Fuehrer's notorious "Eagle's Nest" and the S.S. barracks at Berchtesgaden the probable headquarters of the Redoubt.
- Twenty crews of No. 460, who made the long afternoon flight, bombed with particular care the tiny speck of the Eagle's Nest lying amidst Czech forced-labour camps in the snow-capped mountains.



The Eagle's Nest, 2017.

RAAF FATALITIES IN SECOND WORLD WAR AMONG
RAAF PERSONNEL SERVING ON ATTACHMENT
IN ROYAL AIR FORCE SQUADRONS AND SUPPORT UNITS
424312 Flying Officer TERPENNING, Robert Patrick DFC

Source:

AWM 237 (65) NAA : A705, 166/43/1334 Digitised. 166/39/552

Commonwealth War Graves records W E Chorley : RAF Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War, Page 171, Volume 1945.

Aircraft Type:	Lancaster
Serial number:	PB 983
Radio call sign:	60 – A
Unit:	582 Sqn RAF

Summary:

On the 28th April 1945, Lancaster PB983 on a training flight, iced up after flying into a snow cloud and lost power on both port engines. At 100 feet, all control was lost and the aircraft crashed at 1150 hours near Deenethorpe airfield, 5 miles ENE from the centre of Corby, Northamptonshire, UK. Two of the crew were killed in the crash, and the other five were injured.

Crew:

EAAF' FO Terpenning, R P DFC Captain (Pilot)
RAF Flt Lt Barrett, A R (Navigator 1)
RAF PO Newman, R A B (Navigator 2)
RAAF 426001 WO A A L Anderson, DFC (Wireless Air Gunner)
RAAF 428885 WO A W McIlrath, DFC (Mid Upper Gunner)
RAAF 424485 PO Watson, J G DFM (Air Gunner)
RAF AC2 R G Lloyd, PAX

Both FO Terpenning and PO Watson who were killed in the crash are buried in the Cambridge City Cemetery, Cambridgeshire, UK. The cemetery is known locally as the Newmarket Road Cemetery.

WO McIlrath survived the crash and the war, and was discharged an FO on the 14th March 1946.

Citation :

The Citation for the DFC awarded to the then FO Terpenning of 582 Sqn is as follows :
" In December 1944, FO Terpenning was detailed to take part in an attack on Cologne in daylight. When approaching the target the aircraft was hit by ack-ack fire. Severe damage was sustained. The port inner engine was set on fire and the propeller had to be feathered; the port outer and the starboard inner engines then began to fail. Despite this, FO Terpenning continued his bombing run. Shells were bursting all around but he pressed home his attack. On turning away from the target the aircraft was attacked by five fighters. Although both gun turrets had been put out of action and all but one gun were unserviceable, FO Terpenning and his crew conducted a gallant fight. The aircraft was repeatedly hit by cannon shell and the situation became extremely serious. Nevertheless, FO Terpenning succeeded in his resolve to reach Allied territory. It became necessary to leave the crippled aircraft by parachute. Even so, this brave Captain ensured that all members of his crew got clear before jumping themselves. This officer displayed coolness, courage and captaincy of a high order. " (London Gazette 2/3/1945 Page 1206)

April 1945

- At Muhlberg, Barth and Luckenwalde, the prisoners remained until the tide of liberation reached them.
- Even then there was some disappointment, for though the camps in eastern Germany were overrun during April, Russian advanced units had no adequate relief services, and, apart from improving the food, were almost as strict in guarding the camps and conducting searches for radios as had been the Germans.



April 1945

- Under cover of impressive tactical air cover the Allied ground armies surged forward without serious interruption throughout April.
- the Second British Army headed direct for Hamburg, captured Bremen on 26th April, crossed the Elbe with surprising ease on 29th April, then moved against Kiel and Lubeck.
- The First American Army, south of the Ruhr, headed through Kassel, Nordhausen, Halle and Leipzig, making contact with Russian troops at Torgau on the Elbe on 25th April.
- Hitler suicided in Berlin on 30th April.

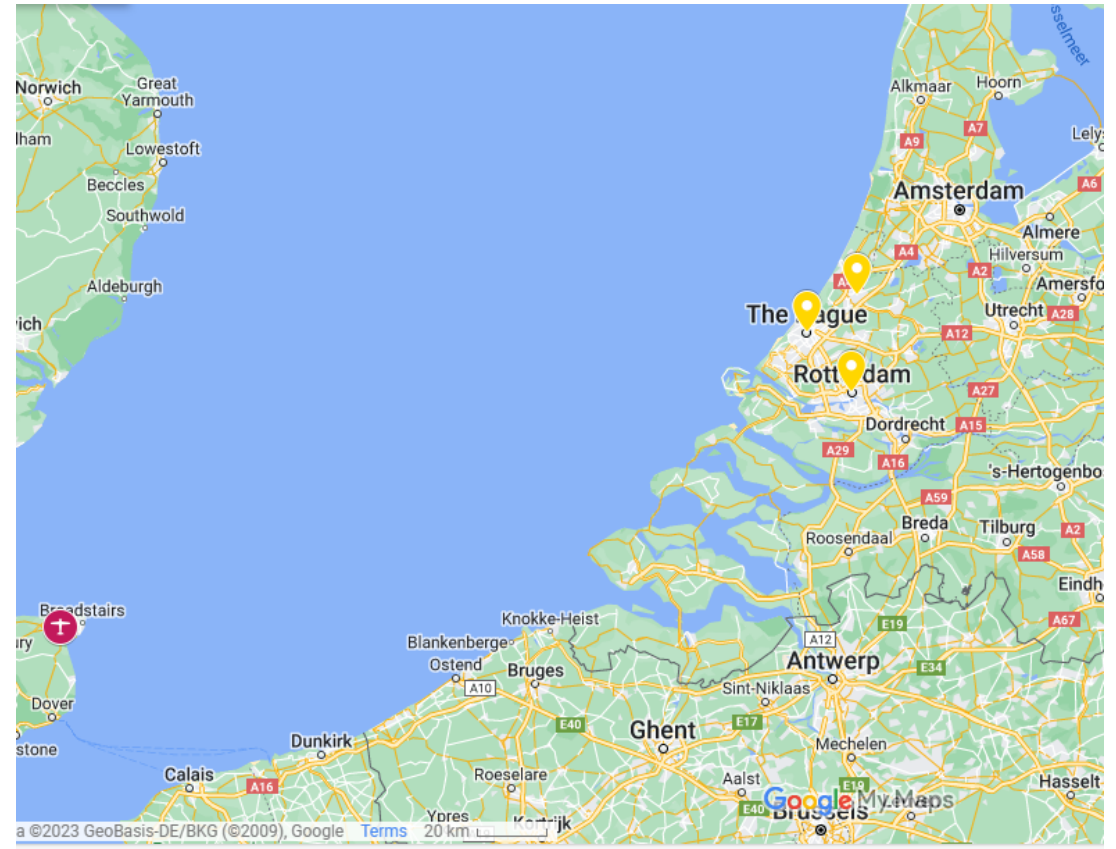


April 45

- With the general realisation that the strategic mission of Bomber Command was almost completed, strong forces operated on only 11 nights and 10 days in April, with some minor bombing activity also on 23 nights and 4 days.
- The total bomb-fall was nearly 35,000 tons, approximately half that of the record achieved the previous month.
- Naval targets (ports, installations and shipping) attracted 14,000 tons; tactical army targets 6,500 tons; railway centres 6,000 tons, and oil 5,000 tons, while the night striking force of Mosquitos dropped a further 2,000 tons in widespread forays which included 15 nuisance raids on Berlin.

May 45

- For the last 10 days of the war the Lancasters were employed on the peaceful tasks of ferrying back to England prisoners of war already liberated, and of dropping food and medical supplies to civil communities in Holland.
- No. 460 brought back 181 former prisoners of war from Melsbroek on 28th April and
- then on seven consecutive days from 30th April made 139 sorties to drop food packages at The Hague, Rotterdam and Leiden (north-east of The Hague), which were still cut off from Allied ground forces.
- Another 599 prisoners were safely ferried home by No. 460 on 10th and 11th May and
- both Nos. 463 and 467 repatriated over 1,000 prisoners, each Lancaster carrying 24 men instead of its normal bomb-load.



May 45

- No. 462 squadron was the only R.A.A.F. unit of Bomber Command to operate during May, when on the 2nd-3rd six aircraft made a simulated full-scale bombing raid in the Flensburg area while
- four others completed a radar-jamming mission near Kiel.



VE Day

- Germany surrendered on 7th May 1945.
- After VE-Day liberated prisoners reaching Brighton increased to an average of 35 per day, until a total of 980 were attached to this unit.

VE Day

- The 13 R.A.A.F. units based in the United Kingdom on 1st May 1945 held only 2,646 Australian air and ground crew members compared with 2,563 spread among some 220 operational R.A.F. squadrons in the same area.
- Another 1,960 Australians were instructors or pupils at O.T.U's or H.C.U's; 154 were sprinkled among 67 R.A.F. stations; 605 were at No. 11 P.D.R.C. Brighton; 662 were at Training Command A.F.U's; and 2,015 at other training units or in staff appointments with miscellaneous R.A.F. units.
- The problem of quickly unscrambling such a large proportion of the R.A.A.F. force from so many different R.A.F. units and locations was made more difficult by acute shortage of accommodation at the personnel reception centre at Brighton, which at this very moment was also trying to meet the needs of over 900 released prisoners, and by lack of priority for shipping berths.

VE Day

- Nearly 3,000 Australians were still "missing" because of lack of actual proof of death, and although many were presumed to have been lost at sea, it was considered imperative to solve as many cases as possible.
- Volunteers were called for, and from 300 aircrew who responded, 23 were chosen to spend two years in mobile search teams on the Continent as members of the Missing Research and Enquiry Service.
- The work was difficult because, although in some cases the International Red Cross or German sources had given lists of identified or unidentified bodies found in crashed aircraft or washed ashore, these were far from complete and contained many discrepancies.
- News had also trickled in from agents, escaped European civilians, enemy prisoners of war and the various national resistance organisations.
- Repatriated prisoners also helped to clarify some cases, but the main task involved a meticulous re-inspection of all known graves and interrogation of countless local military and civic authorities in Europe.
- Throughout France, Belgium and Holland lonely but beautifully tended graves were found, some bearing the name and number of an airman, the date of his death and a suitable inscription; or simply "Aviateur Britannique inconnu. Mort pour la patrie."
- Some 70,000 RAF aircrew (including Commonwealth aircrew who fought with the RAF) had been killed in WWII.
- Of these, some 57,000 were from Bomber Command alone, and more than two thirds of these Bomber Command crew had no known fate.
- Around the world, 41,881 men and women had simply disappeared and were listed as missing, believed killed. The bulk of them, some 37,000 of them were missing believed killed in Europe.
- The approximate break down of missing aircrew personnel, which influenced the initial manpower make up of the MRES, was:
 - RAF 69%
 - RAAF 7%
 - RCAF 17%
 - RNZAF 3%
 - Allied (Polish, French, etc) 4%



Jerry McBrien 2023

Where they went.

- Günther Radusch (11 November 1912 – 29 July 1988) was a World War II Luftwaffe pilot.
- He claimed 65 enemy aircraft shot down in over 140 combat missions.
- He claimed one victory in the Spanish Civil War and 64 aerial victories in Defence of the Reich all of which were at night and included the destruction of 57 four-engined bombers.
- In August 1943, Radusch was appointed Geschwaderkommodore (wing commander) of Nachtjagdgeschwader 5.
- Radusch reentered military service in the Bundeswehr in 1958 and retired in 1971.



Where they went.

- Heinz-Wolfgang Schnauffer was a Luftwaffe night-fighter pilot and the highest-scoring night fighter ace in the history of aerial warfare.
- All Schnauffer's 121 victories were claimed during World War II, mostly against British four-engine bombers.
- Already a glider pilot at school, he joined the Luftwaffe in 1939. After training at various pilot and fighter-pilot schools, he was posted to Nachtjagdgeschwader 1 (NJG 1), operating on the Western Front, in November 1941.
- He flew his first combat sorties in support of Operation Cerberus, the breakout of the German ships Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, and Prinz Eugen from Brest.
- He claimed his first aerial victory on the night of 1/2 June 1942.
- He was appointed Geschwaderkommodore of Nachtjagdgeschwader 4 (NJG 4) on 4 November 1944.
- Schnauffer was taken prisoner of war by British forces in May 1945.
- After his release in 1946, he returned to his home town and took over the family wine business.
- During a wine-purchasing visit to France on 13 July 1950 Schnauffer sustained injuries in a road accident and died in a Bordeaux hospital two days later.



Where they went.

- Doleman and Bunch's final and tenth victory came during the night of 14th/15th March 1945 with another Ju88 destroyed.
- They survived the war.



Where they went.

- 400735 Flight Lieutenant (Flt Lt) Leonard Stanley Reid.
- Flt Lt Reid enlisted on 13 October 1940 and completed training through the Empire Air Training Scheme in Canada before serving with the 185 Squadron RAF in the United Kingdom.
- He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) in 1942 for displaying great leadership and courage.
- Flt Lt Reid was discharged at the end of the Second World War and went on to serve in the Victorian and then the Federal Parliament.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P11352.001

Where they went.

- Leading Aircraftman (LAC) Thomas Frederick Wong See, the first Australian of Chinese extraction to serve in the RAAF, on the deck of SS Largs Bay about to depart from Sydney.
- LAC Wong See was a member of the first group of RAAF aircrew trainees to complete their basic training in Australia under the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) and then complete their training in South Africa and Rhodesia.
- Wong See completed his training in Africa returning to Australia 18 May 1941 before sailing for the UK on 16 June 1942.
- After more training at No 4 Operational Training Unit he served in No 461 Squadron RAAF, flying Sunderlands, No 357 Squadron RAF, and No 224 Squadron RAF, flying Liberators.
- Flying Officer Wong See returned to Australia 8 August 1945 and was discharged on 4 October 1945.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

004341

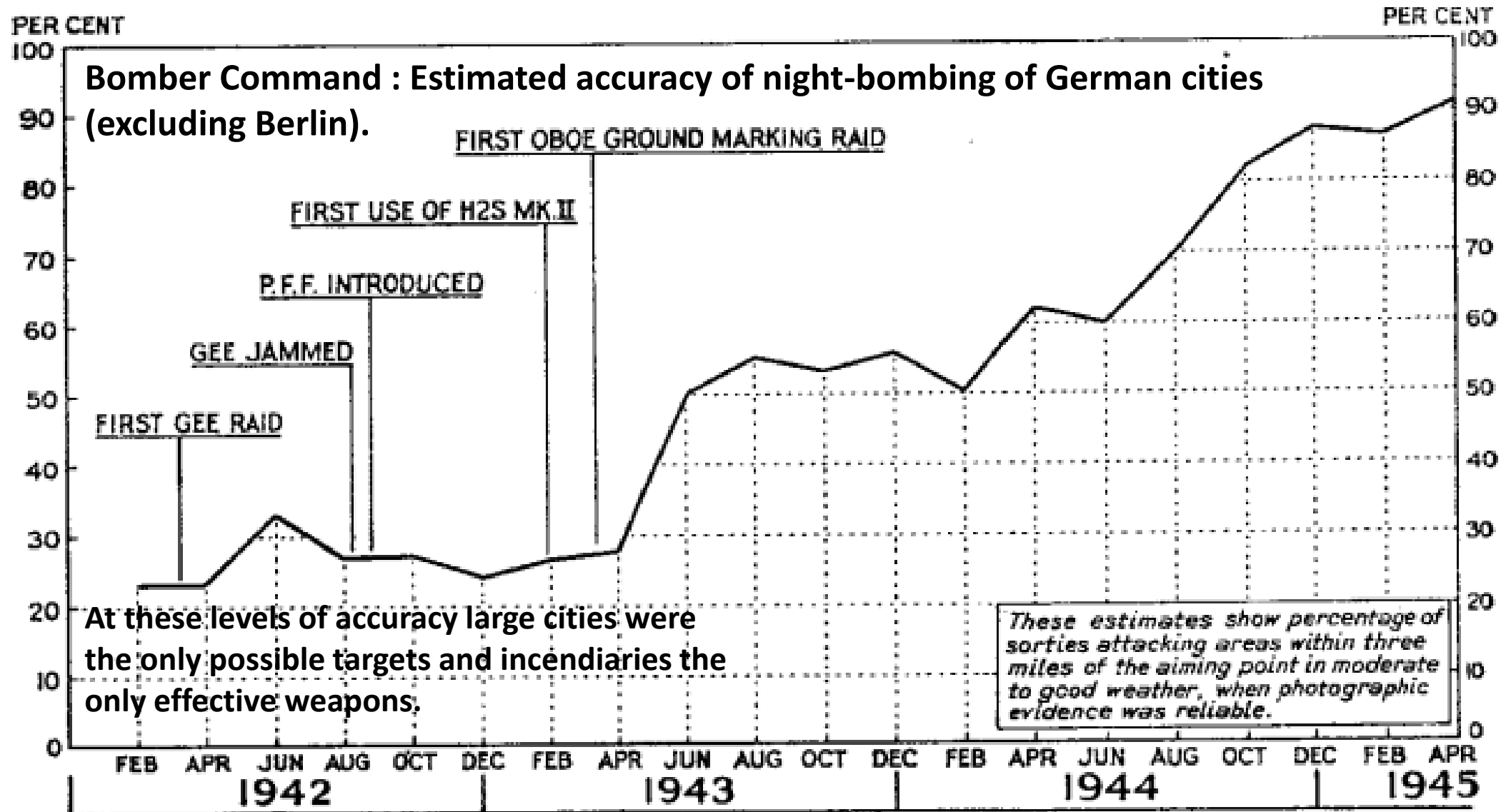
Where they went.

- Hughie Idwal Edwards
- With the end of the European campaigns in sight, Edwards was transferred to the Pacific theatre, first to Ceylon as Group Captain, Bomber Operations then S.A.S.O. at Headquarters, South East Asia Command until the end of the war.
- He was the most highly decorated Australian serviceman of the Second World War.
- He continued in the RAF until retiring as an Air Commodore in 1963.
- In 1974 he was appointed Governor of Western Australia.



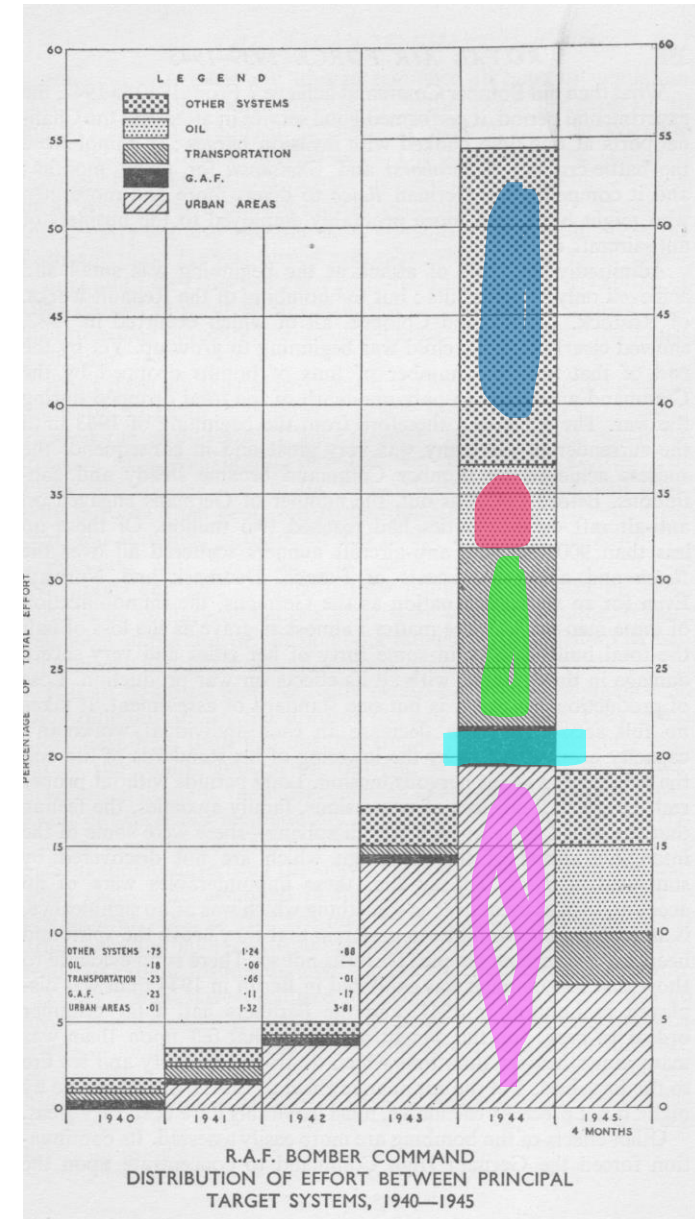
Edwards with his wife, left, and mother-in-law, right, leaving Buckingham Palace after attending an investiture ceremony.

Accuracy



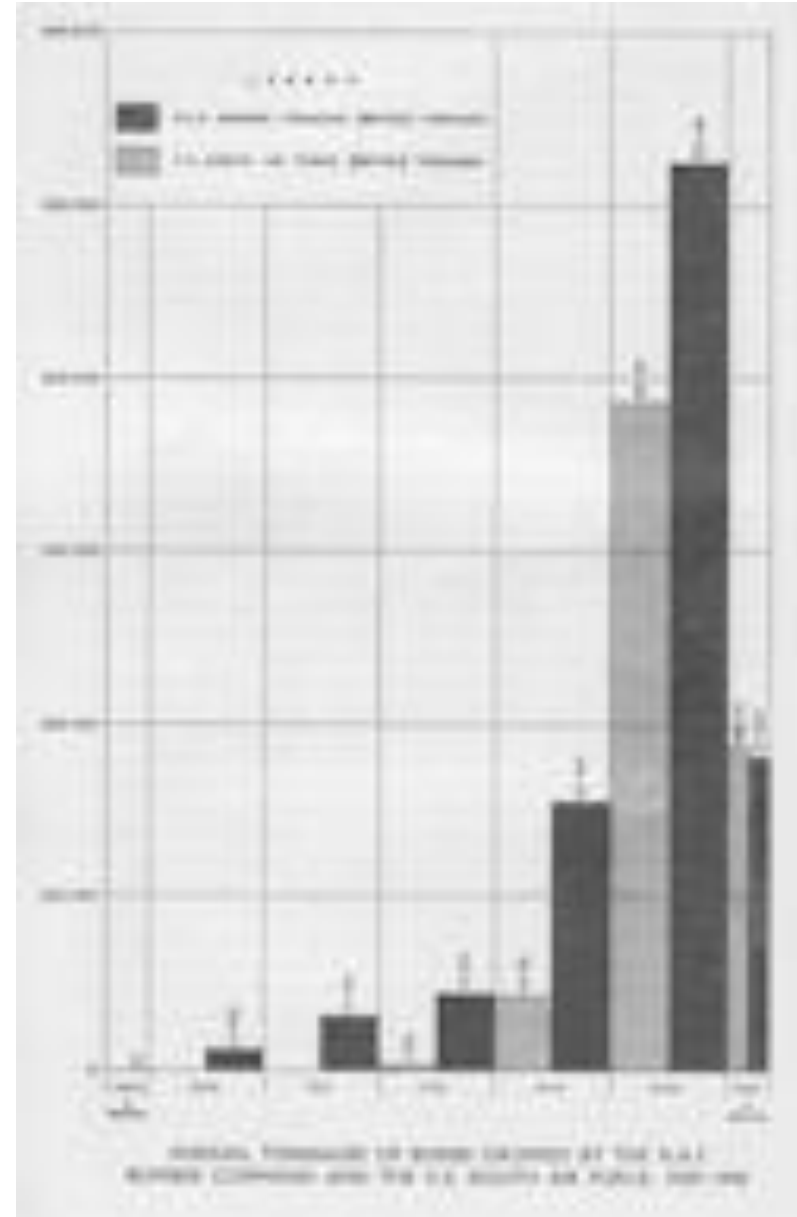
Targets

- Bomber Command effort
 - Urban Areas
 - German Airforce
 - Transportation
 - Oil
 - Other Systems



Tonnages

- ANNUAL TONNAGES OF BOMBS DROPPED BY R.A.F. BOMBER COMMAND AND THE U.S. EIGHTH AIR FORCE, 1939-1945.
- When the tonnages are adjusted by the estimated accuracy 1944 was ten times more than 1943 and 30 times more than 1942.
- 1945 tonnages were at the same rate as 1944 but with substantially better accuracy and all dropped on Germany. A huge percentage of the 1944 tonnage was dropped on France.

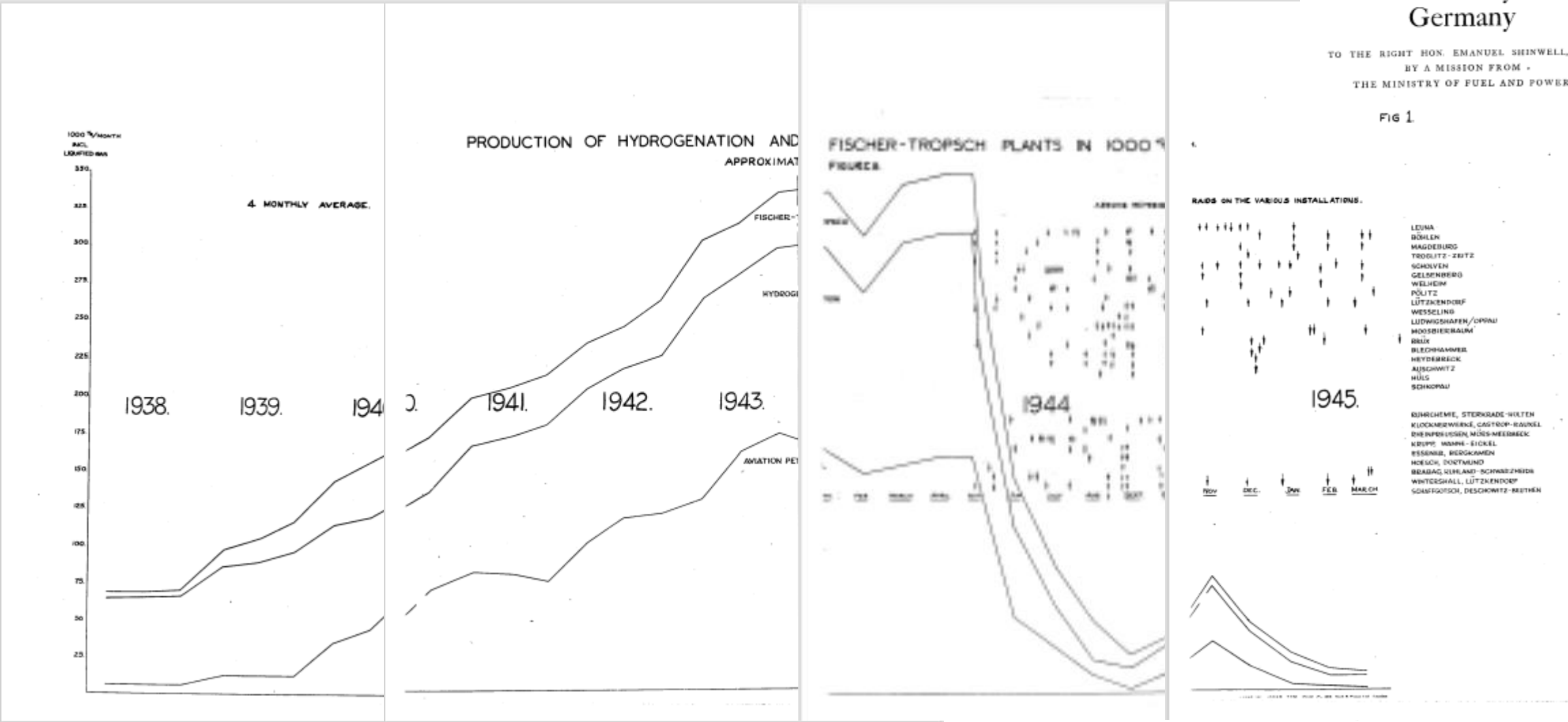


Effectiveness

Report on the Petroleum and Synthetic Oil Industry of Germany

TO THE RIGHT HON. EMANUEL SHINWELL, M.P.
BY A MISSION FROM
THE MINISTRY OF FUEL AND POWER

FIG 1



Dresden

- The bombing of Dresden
- The best estimate of the fatalities is between 22,700 and 25,000.
- Most of the deaths were caused by a firestorm.
- Damage and casualties were effected by weather conditions, lack of previous bomb damage, degraded defences and inexperienced civil defence organisation.

City	Population (1939)	Tonnage			Tonnage per 100,000 inhabitants
		American	British	Total	
Berlin	4,339,000	22,090	45,517	67,607	1,558
Hamburg	1,129,000	17,104	22,583	39,687	3,515
Munich	841,000	11,471	7,858	19,329	2,298
Cologne	772,000	10,211	34,712	44,923	5,819
Leipzig	707,000	5,410	6,206	11,616	1,643
Essen	667,000	1,518	36,420	37,938	5,688
Dresden	642,000	4,441	2,659	7,100	1,106

U.S. Air Force table showing tonnage of bombs dropped by the Allies on Germany's seven largest cities during the war,^[7] the final column shows that of the seven cities, the tonnage dropped on Dresden was the lowest per capita.

Analysis

- The Official Historian insists that:
- The Bomber Command interpretation of the POINTBLANK objective—"the progressive destruction and dislocation of German military, industrial and economic systems"—with its marked bias towards morale bombing of industrial cities, was accepted without question because it had been the focal point of training since the individual joined his first Bomber Command training unit.
- But also that:
- Squadrons and groups vied with each other to demonstrate superior ability to attack any kind of target allotted to them.
- And that:
- Many of these "diversionary" tasks, emergent from the invasion of France, had been glitteringly successful, and in some aspects such as daylight and precision bombing had revealed undreamt of capabilities.

Training

- On 3rd September 1939, the RAF possessed an operational strength of 2,600 aircraft and 173,958 officers and airmen. By May 1945, that strength had grown to 9,200 aircraft and 1,079,835 R.A.F., Dominion and Allied officers and airmen, of whom 193,313 were aircrew.
- Training such an enormous number of new aircrew to the point where the expanded service was an effective force was an extraordinary achievement.
- Incorporating the training capacity of Canada, Australia and New Zealand and their Air Forces into that effort was a very significant contributor to the extent of the results achieved. Over 175,000 aircrew graduated from Service Flying Schools in these three countries the majority in Canada.



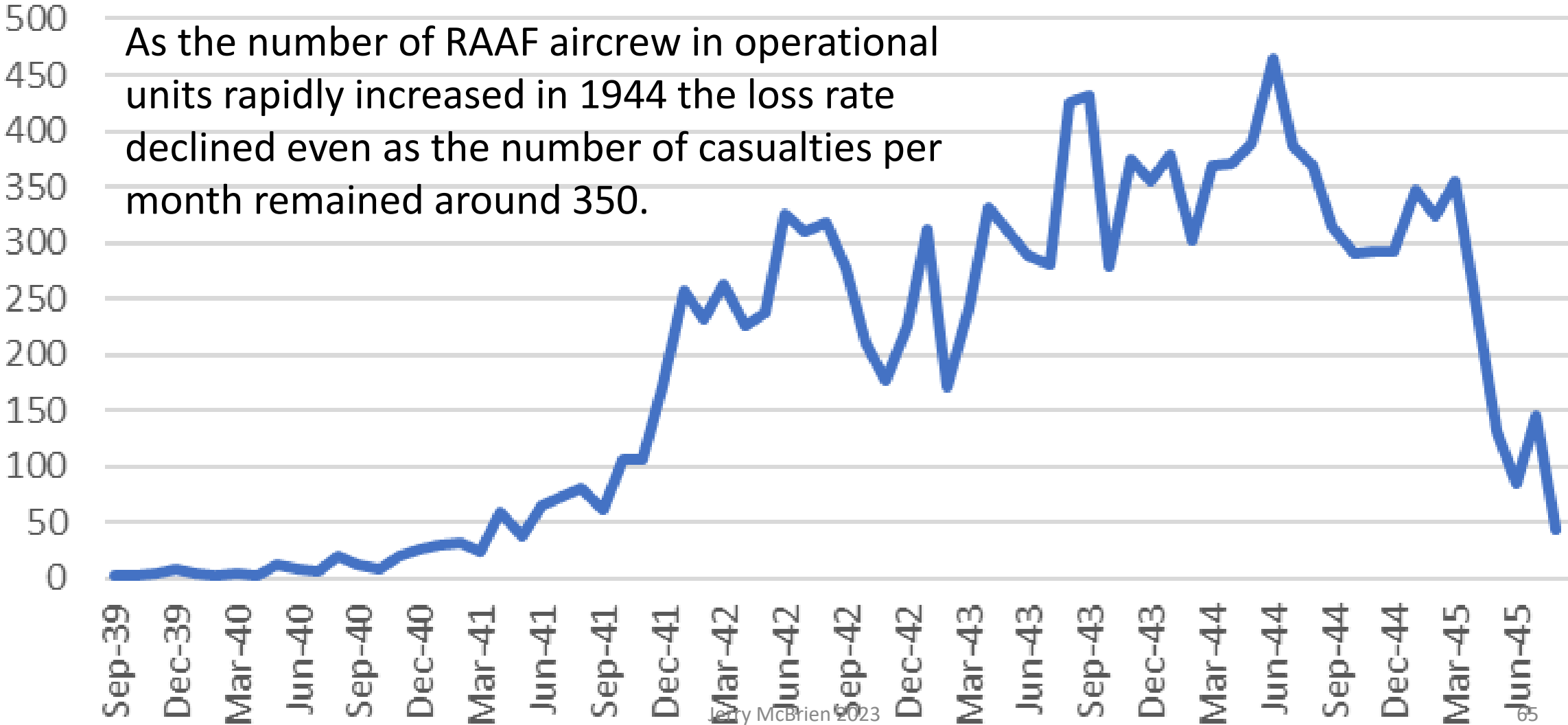
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

044167

Formal portrait of members of No. 460 Squadron RAAF, commanded by Wing Commander C. E. Martin, in front of and lined up on the wing of Lancaster Bomber 'G for George'. This aircraft carried out 90 operational missions over Germany and occupied Europe. 'G for George' is now on display at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra.

RAAF Major Casualties per month (overall 77% fatalities)

As the number of RAAF aircrew in operational units rapidly increased in 1944 the loss rate declined even as the number of casualties per month remained around 350.



Prisoners of War

- The character, range and time of the operations produced ever-changing factors, but in general, of every 12 R.A.A.F. men who failed to return, 8 would be killed, one would evade capture and 3 would become prisoners of war.
- 996 members of the RAAF became POWs in Germany, Italy, Rumania and Bulgaria.
- 971 returned safe
- Forty-one Australian airmen succeeded in escaping from German prison camps but only five reached England through neutral territory.
- None of the five succeeded at his first attempt, and of the others some made up to seven fruitless attempts to regain their liberty.
- Four Australians—Sqn Ldr J. E. A. Williams (of Sydney) ; Sqn Ldr J. Catanach (Melbourne); F-Lt R. V. Kierath (Killara, NSW); and W-O A. H. Hake (Haberfield, NSW)—were among the 50 Air Force Officers murdered by the Germans after the great escape from Stalag Luft III in March and April 1944.
- In total 25 members of the RAAF died while prisoners. 2 Killed by Allied bombing or strafing, 3 Killed attempting to escape from prison camps and 20 Died of wounds, illness, murder or ill-treatment.



The Cost and What was Achieved

- Out of a total of 125,000 Bomber Command aircrew 55,573 were killed (a 44.4 per cent death rate), a further 8,403 were wounded in action and 9,838 became prisoners of war.
- Albert Speer, Hitler's Minister of Armaments, noted that the larger British bombs were highly destructive. 15 years after the war's end, Speer was unequivocal about the effect,
- “The real importance of the air war consisted in the fact that it opened a second front long before the invasion in Europe ... Defence against air attacks required the production of thousands of anti-aircraft guns, the stockpiling of tremendous quantities of ammunition all over the country, and holding in readiness hundreds of thousands of soldiers, who in addition had to stay in position by their guns, often totally inactive, for months at a time ... No one has yet seen that this was the greatest lost battle on the German side.”

The Enemy's View.

- The combination of the Pathfinders' operations, the activities of No. 100 Group, the British advantage in radar, jamming and Window techniques, combined with intelligent attacking tactics, as well as the discipline and bravery of the RAF crews, have been remarkable. We had our (sic) severe problems in trying to defend Germany in the air
- — General der Jagdflieger, Adolf Galland., Lancaster - the Biography
- Photo: Galland (l) and Albert Speer (r).



- The Air Forces Memorial at Runnymede commemorates by name over 20,000 men and women of the air forces, who were lost in the Second World War during operations from bases in the United Kingdom and North and Western Europe, and who have no known graves.



Runnymede Memorial Service 2022

- Thanks for your attention.