
Pilot Officer Gordon “Ed” Deschaine DFC

RCAF Gunner and Bomb Aimer - Log Book Analysis

RAF 207 Squadron - RAF 619 Squadron - RNZAF 75 Squadron

04 August 1941 - 20 August 1945



Per Ardua Ad Astra
“Through adversity to the stars”

Introduction

The purpose of this exercise is to give some analysis and interpretation of the personal RCAF logbook of Pilot Officer Gordon “Ed” Deschaine as a gunner and bomb aimer in the Second World War so that his family can better understand and appreciate the incredible sacrifice he made for his country at a very young age.



I have used several sources to assist and shed light on the significance of each individual operation or (OPS) as they occurred chronologically during his time at the individual Squadrons. As well, I attempt to explain where and why Ed was during the training phases he went through before being placed at an “operational squadron”.

My main source for research was the National Archives of Great Britain and numerous websites associated with bomber command and 75 Squadron (NZ) as well as Facebook Groups. My thanks to the help I received from David Young of 75 (NZ) Squadron Facebook page, Ken Marshall from RAF Bomber Command Facebook page, Bomber Command Museum Of Canada website and Mike Jones son of P/O S.E.J. Jones RAF. I have to tell you the extent and breadth of courage that is exhibited in this record is almost unbelievable. Based on actual statistics for aircrew in Bomber Command during the Second World War, Gordon “Ed” Deschaine should have “met his maker” twice over.

John Desramaux

Reading The Log Book

Date	Hour	Aircraft Type and No.	Pilot	Duty	REMARKS (Including results of bombing, gunnery, exercises, etc.)	Flying Times	
						Day	Night
23.6.43	1945	LANCASTER	F/O JONES	BA	SPEZIA (FROM AIRCRAFT TO BASE) (8) OPS		9.45
25.6.43	2130	Z	F/O JONES	BA	GEISENKIRCHEN D.M.C.O. (9) OPS		2.25
<i>F. J. Jones</i> <i>w/c</i>							
LANCASTER							
2.7.43	1130	L	F/O JONES	BA	N.F.T.		20
4.7.43	1200	L	F/O JONES	BA	N.F.T.		30
7.7.43	1100	E	F/O JONES	BA	FORMATION X-CITY		1.00
9.7.43	2200	E 20	F/O JONES	BA	GEISENKIRCHEN (10) OPS		6.20
11.7.43	1100	E	F/O JONES	BA	N.F.T.		30
12.7.43	2200	E 20	F/O JONES	BA	TURIN (11) OPS		11.00
16.7.43	1200	E	F/O JONES	BA	NFT LOCAL		1.15
18.7.43	1200	E	F/O JONES	BA	NFT LOCAL		1.00
19.7.43	1800	E	F/O JONES	BA	NFT LOCAL		.45
20.7.43	1800	E	F/O JONES	BA	NFT LOCAL		1.00
21.7.43	1500	E	F/O JONES	BA	NFT LOCAL		30
23.7.43	1430	E	F/O JONES	BA	NFT LOCAL		30
24.7.43	2230	E 20	F/O JONES	BA	HAMBURG (12) OPS		5.00
TOTAL TIME....						281.30	157.25

The crews personal logbook were always left at the base and not taken on missions or training and for the most part would be stored in a central place on the base with the last name written in ink along the outside edge of the book. This was an important document and accuracy was important.

- 1) Date Of Departure. Bare in mind, most missions departed late in the evening at dusk or sunset and would return the following date early in the morning.
- 2) Time of departure in 24 hr clock.
- 3) Aircraft type. In this case the entire column is flown on the Lancaster. The letter designates the actual aircraft flown. The letter is prefaced by a two letter identifier of the Squadron. For example EM - 207 Squadron PG - 619 Squadron JN & AA- 75 (NZ) Squadron. Bear in mind, that as the aircraft were lost(destroyed) the individual aircraft letter could be recycled.

Reading The Log Book (Cont'd)

- 4) Pilot flying. Little know fact the Lancaster was a single pilot aircraft (no co-pilot).
- 5) Duty. Your assignment as crew BA - Bomb Aimer BAI - Bomb Aimer Instructor.
- 6) Remarks. Details of the flight/mission.
- 7) Flight time during the day
- 8) Flight time during the night (in red ink)
- 9) Certification entry. This is where a person with the authority certifies that the logbook is correct. In this case, signed by Squadron Leader Churcher.
- 10) Operations count. In red ink with a circle is the count of the actual mission flown. An aborted mission or (flight return) due mechanical, weather, icing etc would not count toward your tally. A tour would be completed after 30 OPS (Operations) however ,this numbering system was changed toward the tail end of the war and more missions where required to complete a tour.



Canadian Postings and Squadron Assignments

NO9 AOS (Air Observers Squadron) St. Jean Quebec 10-12-1941 - 26-03-1942

NO9 AOS was a flight training squadron in 3 Training Command of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) which were training schools for advanced flying courses. Initially I was confused as Ed refers to location as St John's when in fact the base was in St. Jean PQ. The first few pages of the logbook indicate various lesson plans he has completed to become certified as an air observer/ navigator. All of his flying here is being conducted aboard the Avro Anson aircraft (see aircraft fleet operated). He has 64 hrs 20 min total flying time on the Anson when he is finished at NO9 Sqn.

NO4 B&GS (Bombing and Gunnery School) Fingal Ontario 26-03-1942 25-04-1942

Ed is closer to home now in Fingal, Ontario SW of St. Thomas. This is one of dozens of airfields in SW Ontario connected to the BCATP. Things are getting a little more serious now as he is learning bomb aiming and gun operation techniques at bombing ranges located at Melbourne, Frome, Tempo, Dutton Ontario as well as a bombing range located on Lake Erie near Port Stanley. He is flying exclusively on the Fairy Battle aircraft. The airfield at Fingal is long since abandoned but the runways are still visible from Google earth.

Ed has now racked up a total of 95 hr 50 min of flying time and has completed his AB Initio bombing and gunnery training courses. Upon graduation Ed is promoted to Sergeant 25 April 1942.



Google earth image of RCAF Fingal



Aerial view of RCAF Fingal

NO2 ANS (Air Navigation School) Pennfield Ridge New Brunswick 25-04-1942 25-05-1942

Next stop in Ed's training is Pennfield Ridge to conduct a four week intensive course on astro navigation, designed to qualify students for night navigation. This training may seem inconsequential but many accidents did occur through all this aerial training. Many lives were lost during the five years the BCATP operated in Canada which resulted in 856 trainees losing their lives. Pennfield Ridge airport is long abandoned. Ed completes his Air Observers Advanced Navigation Course and is certified.



High Altitude Tolerance Test 22-06-1942 (Location unknown)

The very front page of Ed's logbook has a written entry that he received a high altitude tolerance test that could demonstrate an aircrew's ability to withstand the potential for hypoxia in a pressure chamber with a simulated altitude of 35,000 ft. Humans can not survive very long above 12,000 ft altitudes without supplemental oxygen. None of the Allied bombers of WW2 were pressurized including the Lancaster so aircrew had to use oxygen mostly above 10,000 ft as the cruising altitude of the Lancaster could be as high as 21,000 ft. Ed is certified to a max altitude of 25,000 ft.

United Kingdom Postings and Squadron Assignments

**NO1 AFU (Advanced Flying Unit) RAF Wigtown, Dunfries and Galloway , Scotland
09-08-1942 - 23-08-1942**

I do not have any record of how Ed was transported from Canada to the United Kingdom but he did have a bit of a break since Pennfield Ridge in New Brunswick. Ed will not be spending very much time at Wigtown, a total of just two weeks but he logs 14 hr 40 min all on the reliable Avro Anson. He practices en route navigation doing various "round robin" flights to points (cities) and Latitude and Longitude coordinates which will be good practice for what lies ahead. The preceding certificate in his log book indicated there was insufficient flying time to pass or fail. It looks like the RAF has other plans for Ed.

**NO19 OTU (Operational Training Unit) RAF Kinloss and RAF Forres Scotland
21-08-1942 - 03-11-1942**

Ed moved 250 miles north to Kinloss. This is a very busy airfield with both training and operational missions underway at two airfields that are only miles apart. Ed is now officially being trained as a bomb aimer as his log book indicates and is flying again on the Avro Anson. Bomb aiming at this point in the war for Bomber Command was atrocious. Bombs were coming within many miles of the intended target only 25% of the time and the bomber losses were staggering. Ed's arrival also coincides with the appointment of Air Chief Marshall Sir Arthur Harris also know as "Bomber Harris" and things were about to change significantly at Bomber Command. Ed is getting instruction on infrared pointing and precision bombing.

The most significant date to this point in his log book is 22-09-1942. On this date Ed flies with pilot Sgt Tomes for the first time. This is the first indication that he is now teaming up with a "crew". This could include a navigator, and gunners and of course Ed who is the bomb aimer on this "crew". Also of significance Ed is now flying in a larger bomber know as the Armstrong Whitworth Whitley a twin engine medium bomber. Across these three pages of the log book, entries are not in chronological order as he is moving back and forth between the Avro Anson and the his new crew on the Whitworth possibly between the two airfields at NO19 OTU at Kinloss and Forres. Total flying time for his stay at NO19 is 73 hr 40 mins for a total flying time logged of 205 hrs 30 mins.

U. K. Postings and Squadron Assignments (Cont'd)

NO10 O.T.U. (Operational Training Unit) RAF St Eval Cornwall, England
03-11-1942 - 08-12-1942

The war now is very real for pilot Sgt. Tomes and his crew as they are now in “harms way” in southern England. RAF St. Eval is also home to 102 Squadron which fly OPS bombing missions on a regular basis and RAF St. Eval has come under fire and bombing raids by the Luftwaffe. 102 squadron is operating the same bomber as Ed, the Whitworth Whitley.

Now the crew is putting all their training to work in an operational environment and on the entry 16-11-1942 Ed and his crew perform their first “Operational Fling” as an anti sub patrol. The war now is real as the German U-Boats are equipped with anti-aircraft guns. During their months stay at St. Eval they perform 6 anti-sub patrols and must be feeling like a cohesive crew. They are also getting a taste for long missions with several single patrols of over 9:00 hrs duration. During their stay here several aircraft from 102 Sqn have not returned from their missions. The next assignment for Ed and his crew will be a big one as it is now time to step up to the big leagues at a bomber conversion unit. Total flying time at St. Eval is 83 hrs. 25 mins with Ed racking up 74 hrs. 20 mins of “Operational Flying”.



RAF St. Eval Cornwall, England

U. K. Postings and Squadron Assignments (Cont'd)

**NO1661 HCU (Heavy Conversion Unit) RAF Winthrobe Nottinghamshire, England
05-01-1943 - 11-03-1943**

Ed has leave from the first week in December through Christmas and New Years and reports on January 05 1943. After all the training, this is the final leg for Ed before being assigned along with his crew to an operational squadron. With the introduction of new heavy bombers, the four-engined Lancaster for example, the Royal Air Force introduced heavy conversion units (HCU). The heavy conversion units began forming in late 1941 to qualify crews trained on medium bombers to operate the heavy bombers before final posting. No. 1661 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU) was formed as part of No. 5 Group, under the command of Squadron Leader John Nettleton VC (Victoria Cross).

As you can see by the pages in the logbook the training is intense often alternating days with two training flights per day. Initially Sgt Tombs and his crew are checked out on the Avro Manchester. The Manchester was supposed to be the heavy bomber for the RAF. The Manchester looks very much like a two engine Lancaster. It was quickly realized that Rolls-Royce Vulture engine was a disaster and at this point in the war they were designated to HCU for training. Sgt Tombs is checked out on the Manchester and Ed racks up 18 hrs 50 mins on the aircraft until 02 February 1943 when he makes his first flight in an Avro Lancaster. By 10 March 1943 Sgt Tombs and his crew are checked out on the Lancaster and they are ready to be assigned to their first operational squadron. After just 29 hrs 45 mins experience on the Lancaster they are ready to fly alone at night over German occupied Europe.

Bomb Aimer Position - Lancaster

It is important to explain that the position of bomb aimer on any aircraft can be different. On the Lancaster, Ed's compartment was situated in the front of the aircraft at a level below that of the main cockpit. Lying on his stomach and looking through the bombsight out the large perspex blister, the bomb-aimer would guide the aircraft to the target and release the bomb load. The bomb-aimer was also responsible for operating the front .303 Browning gun turret position directly above him, although this was not necessary on most operations.

207 Squadron RAF - Langar

14-03-1943 to 05-05-1943

14 March 1943 Ed and his crew arrive at RAF Langar located near the village of Langar, Nottinghamshire, England. The airfield is located approximately 6 miles east-southeast of Radcliffe on Trent and about 100 miles north-northwest of London, England. Over the next five days they are training on Lancaster ED-J consisting of day and night training. Their crew is made up of the following seven members.

Pilot : Sgt Tombs J.

Flight Engineer: Sgt Brooks A.E.

Navigator: Sgt Lance A.C.E.

Bomb Aimer: Sgt Deschaine G.E.

Wireless Operator: Sgt Faux R.G.

Mid Upper Gunner: Sgt Cook C.S.

Rear Gunner: Sgt Jones L.

OPS 1 - March 28 1943

28 March 1943 the Station Summary Of Events (SOE) states that the weather is "Fine" and that five Lancaster's have been detailed for a night bombing raid on the dry docks located at St Nazaire, France. This will be the first operational mission and they have been assigned Lancaster ED-B. They lift off at 2000 hr on a relatively short flight and attack the target at 2230 hr from an altitude of 12,000 ft on a heading of 180 deg (straight south) in good visibility . They drop 1 X 4000 lbs bomb and 12 SBC (Small Bomb Containers) containing 30 X 4lb incendiaries and 1 SBC (Heavy). Ed reports in Record Of Events (ROE) that "the target was identified visually and by red and green T.I. (**Target Identifiers**)" which were dropped by Path Finder aircraft. Ed also reports "red markers in bomb sight with large fires seen and photo shows fire tracks only due to violent bank" (after bombs dropped). SORTIE COMPLETED. The aircraft arrives back at Langar at 00:50 on the 29 March 1943. Ed marks the number 1 in his logbook in red with a circle with the remarks OPS. Ed Deschaine is 21 years old.

OPS 2 - April 2 1943

02 April 1943 SOE reports weather is "Fine" and six Lancs are detailed for OPS. Three to bomb St Nazaire again and three assigned to "Gardening". Gardening is the dropping of sea mines in the ocean. Ed and his crew will be "Gardening" tonight and take off at 2000 and although the Lanc identifier is missing it was ED-J. Ed reports "Veggies were laid at 2308 at a height of 600 ft heading 327 deg (NW) at a speed of 170 MPH at 6 sec intervals. It was a time and distance run from Corduan Island, France which was identified in good visibility."

OPS 2 complete. One of the three Lancs sent Gardening had to abort. As the result of "Gardening" during WW2 the RAF was responsible for sinking more warships than the Royal Navy. The RAF Bomber Command OPS reports "ST-NAZAIRE/LORIENT - Again at the insistence of the Admiralty (Royal Navy), both ports were now largely deserted by their former civilian populations. 55 mixed aircraft to St-Nazaire and a further 47 to Lorient to stir up the rubble in the last raids on these unfortunate French ports. "Bomber Harris" was finally able to get the Command released from the obligation to attack these ports on 6th April. The only report available was from St-Nazaire, stating that the local Fire Brigade HQ was hit and one person was injured. One of our aircraft failed to return:-
57 Sqn, Lancaster I, W4257, DX-?, Sgt. R. L. Pickup and crew crashed in the target area.

OPS 3 - April 14 1943

14 April 1943. This will be the first trip for the crew to Germany. Tonight's target is Stuttgart and eight Lancs are detailed for the mission. You would have to think the mood would be tense when they got their briefing. The ROE says departure time was 2210 in fine weather. Stuttgart was bombed at 0129 at an altitude of 17,000 ft on a heading of 210 deg (SW) at an airspeed of 190 MPH. Ed reports " No cloud just slight haze and smoke in good visibility. Target identified by green T.I. (Target Identification flares) and river detail (Neckar River). T.I. markers in bomb site. Our bombs not seen to burst - several concentrated fires with considerable smoke. Bomb load was 1 X 4000 lbs (cookie) and 12 S.B.C. (Small Bomb Canisters) SORTIE COMPLETED" They returned to based 0504 after a long one way trip inside Germany.

Boomerang OPS - April 16 1943

16 April 1943 This was to be a very long mission to Plzen Czechoslovakia at the Skoda Works plant where German tanks were being built. The weather is fine and ten Lanc are detailed for this important mission. Ed's crew launches at 2126 but sometime after take off their Lancaster developed a problem with the air or pneumatic system which controls brakes, flaps and had to abort their mission or as it is called a "boomerang". The aircraft would have been fully loaded with fuel and bombs and it's not clear if their bomb load was jettisoned or not but the aircraft landed at 0030. This does not count towards their OPS mission total. The remarks D.N.C.O.M. is an acronym for Did Not Complete Operational Mission.

Mystery OPS ? - April 30 1943

30 April 1943. This is one of the more interesting entries in Ed's logbook. It's a rainy night and ten aircraft are detailed for tonight's bombing run to the industrial town of Essen,

Germany. The ROE clearly shows Ed is a part of the following crew. **P/O Bottomer F.W., Sgt Russell A., F/Lt. Band M.J., Sgt Deschaine G.E. F/Sgt Clarkson J.F., Sgt Russell R., Sgt Kent.** There may have been a last minute change to the bomb aimer. Sometimes crews looked at this as a sign of bad luck to have a last minute change to your crew. A late departure of 0015 and Essen was attacked at 0310 from 19,000 ft on a heading of 150 deg (SE) in 10/10th cloud cover. Ed reports “ Bombed green flare with white. Saw red and green tracking flares from a distance.” The crew reports plenty of flak, heavy and light and their windscreen iced up! The camera had a technical fault. Bomb load 1 X 4000 lbs and 12 S.B.C. (90 X 4 lbs). SORTIE COMPLETED. For some unknown reason Ed does not add this OPS to his total but it defiantly was. This appears to be Ed first experience with flak and it probably was not very enjoyable. I will continue with Ed’s numbering system for continuity.

OPS 4 - May 4 1943

04 May 1943. Ed is now definitely with the P/O Bottomer crew and no longer with Sgt. Tooms. Nine aircraft are detailed for night bombing operations tonight with the target in the most dangerous area of Germany, the Ruhr Valley. Target Dortmund. They are airborne at 2142 and attacked at 0109 from an altitude of 19,000 ft on a heading of 190 deg (S) and airspeed 180 mph in good visibility and no cloud. Ed reports “T.I.’s in bomb site but not possible to see bomb burst. 16 bundles dropped.” P/O Bottomer reports “ Many searchlights operating in cones with flak. Had to weave to port before photo flash exploded. Camera fire tracks and searchlights” SORTIE COMPLETED. It’s been a long trip to the Ruhr Valley and they land back at base at 0455. The RAF Bomber Command report for that night states, “DORTMUND - 596 aircraft, 255 Lancasters, 141 Halifaxes, 110 Wellingtons, 80 Stirlings and 10 Mosquitoes in the largest 'non-thousand' raid of the war and the first major attack on Dortmund. Initial PFF marking was accurate but some of the backing up fell short. A decoy fire site also attracted many bombs, but half of the large force bombed within 3 miles of the AP and severe damage was caused in central and northern parts of the city. Sadly, 31 of our aircraft failed to return and a further 7 crashed on return in the bad weather which had closed in over the bomber bases. The total losses were 12 Halifaxes, 7 Stirlings, 6 Lancasters and 6 Wellingtons. 104 allied airmen lost their lives, 16 were injured in those aircraft which crashed on return to England and 62 were taken prisoner, to spend the next two years as 'guests' of the Luftwaffe. Total effort for the night was 628 sorties of which almost 5% were lost.”

This is Ed's last OPS with 207 Squadron. His log book shows a test flight and a repositioning flight from Predonock (Predannack) back to base, no doubt due to bad weather at Langar the night before.

619 Squadron RAF - RAF Woodhall Spa / RAF Corningsby

Woodhall Spa 20-05-1943 to 06-01-1943 Corningsby 06-01-1944 to 21-02-1944

After a few weeks leave Ed reports to 619 Squadron at Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire England. Five miles away is RAF Corningsby. These two airbases are probably two of the most famous bases in RAF Bomber Command history. 619 Squadron will share and alternate these two bases with the now infamous 617 (Dam Busters) squadron and sometime share in the same OPS. In four months time Ed and his crew will be ditching a Lancaster off the coast of Portugal.

Ed has a new crew and pilot Flight Lieutenant Stanley Ernest Joseph Jones DFM an experienced bomber pilot with 42 OPS under his belt. Ed has brought along three familiar faces with him from 207 Squadron. Sergeant Lance (Navigator), Flight Sergeant Robert Gordon Faux (Wireless Operator) and Sergeant Charles Smith Cook (Mid Upper Gunner). After a few initial training flights the crew appear to be assigned a specific Lancaster a Mk III. The squadron markings of PG-E Registration EE106 which they will fly on most of their upcoming missions. After almost three weeks of local flying training they are ready to do their first OPS with 619 Squadron, a night mission to Dusseldorf, Germany.

OPS 5 - 11 June 1943

There may be some confusion in the logbook on dates in the next two ops. Ed shows one operation on 12 June 1943 but all records I found show it was the night of the 11 June 1943 overnight to 12 June 1943. The destination that night is Dusseldorf and Ed reports it was bombed at 0128 from 20,000 ft with a large coverage area of fires when they left the target. Cloud cover was just 4/10th at 10,000 ft. If the T.I.'s were accurate this raid will have been successful. Photographic attempt - failure owing to electrical fault.

Enroute to Dusseldorf, British National Archives (AIR 50/218/180) have the following Combat Report from Ed's Crew:

“At 0050 hours on 12th June 1943, 5 Group Lancaster Mark III aircraft E of 619 Squadron was approximately 16 miles south of Rotterdam on route to Dusseldorf - course 100 and approximately true air speed 220 m.p.h. Visibility good, moon on starboard bow. No apparent searchlight pointers. No IFF in use. Mid-Upper Gunner saw unidentified single-engine aircraft on port beam down which came straight in. Pilot did a diving turn to port losing 1,200 feet and Mid-Upper Gunner fired a short burst when enemy aircraft was in to

200 yards. Enemy aircraft went away to port bow above and was not seen again. No hits claimed. Enemy aircraft did not open fire.”

RAF Bomber Command reports “ DUSSELDORF - 783 aircraft, 326 Lancasters, 202 Halifaxes, 143 Wellingtons, 99 Stirlings and 13 Mosquitoes in the first night on which more than 200 Halifaxes took part. The PFF marking plan proceeded excellently until an Oboe Mosquito inadvertently released a load of TIs 14 miles NE of the target city, causing part of the main force to waste it's bombs in open country. However, the main bombing caused extensive damage in the city centre, where 130 acres were claimed destroyed - the most devastating damage to Dusseldorf of the war.

The city reports that the fire area was 8km x 5km, covering the city centre (both old and new parts), the Derendorf district and the south of the city. 8,882 separate fire incidents were recorded, of which 1,444 were classified as large. 1,292 people were killed and 140,000 were bombed out of their homes. 42 industries connected with war production suffered complete stoppages and 35 more suffered a partial reduction. 20 military establishments were hit, 8 ships were sunk or damaged and the local government HQ was destroyed. This tremendous damage was caused at a high price however, with 38 aircraft (4.9%) being lost:- 14 Lancs, 12 Hallies, 10 Wellingtons and 2 Stirlings. 12 Sqn lost 5 Lancasters, 51 Sqdn lost 3 Halifaxes, 76, 78 & 158 Sqdns lost 2 each, while 100 Sqdn lost 2 Lancs and 429 Sqdn lost 3. 466 Sqdn lost 2 Wimpys and 467 lost 2 Lancs. 202 of our airmen lost their lives, 62 were taken prisoner while 4 evaded. Ed returns to base after a 5hr 10 min flight.

OPS 6 - 12 June 1943

The date in the log book shows 14 June 1943 but in fact it occurs the following night after OPS 5 on 12 June 1943 and the destination is the Ruhr Valley and the city of Bochum , Germany. RAF BOMBER COMMAND OPERATIONS “June 12/13th, Saturday night and early Sunday target Bochum - 503 aircraft, 323 Lancasters,167 Halifaxes and 11 Mosquitoes. This raid took place over 10/10ths cloud cover over the target, but accurate Oboe marking enabled the main force to cause severe damage to the centre of Bochum. The report from German sources says that 449 buildings were destroyed and 916 seriously damaged, with 312 people killed. Daylight photo-recce photographs showed that approximately 130 acres of the city were destroyed. Once again however this successful attack came at a cost - 14 Lancs and 10 Hallies failed to return (4.8% of the force). Squadrons losing more than one aircraft were:- 50 Sqdn who lost 3 Lancaster IIIs and 158 Sqdn who lost 2 Halifax IIs, 125 of our airmen lost their lives while 48 were taken prisoner. One evaded. At least 12 of the missing aircraft are believed to have been shot down by nightfighters.” Ed reports the target was attacked at 0143 hrs at an altitude of 22,000 ft with broken cloud of 3/10ths at 10,000 ft. Bombing appeared to be well organized and well hit if pathfinders and T.I. were correct. Photo failure again due to previous electrical circuit defect.

OPS 7 - 20 June 1943

This will be a historical night for Bomber Command as this is the first time they will use a new bombing technique that later was called the "Master Bomber" and as well will be the first time the bombers would perform a shuttle raid. They would depart England bomb the target deep inside Germany then proceed non stop to (in this case) Blida Airfield near Algiers in North Africa. RAF Bomber Command Operations states "Target was FRIEDRICHSHAFEN 60 Lancasters sent to attack the Zeppelin 'Wurzberg' radar factory on the shores of Lake Constance. This was a special raid with new and interesting tactics. Like the Dams raid, this attack was to be controlled by the pilot of one of the Lancs (later known as the 'Master Bomber' technique). The plan was formulated by 5 Group which provided the Master Bomber - Gp.Capt. L. C. Slee - and nearly all the aircraft involved. PFF (Pathfinder) sent 4 Lancasters of 97 Sqn. Slee's aircraft developed engine trouble and he handed over to his deputy - W.Cdr. G. L. Gomm of 467 Sqn. This raid, like the one to Le Creusot the previous night, was meant to be carried out from 5,000 to 10,000 feet in bright moonlight, but the Flak and searchlight defences were so active that Gomm ordered the force to climb another 5,000 feet. Unfortunately the wind at this new height was stronger than anticipated and this caused problems. The bombing was in 2 parts, the 1st bombs were aimed at TIs dropped by one of the PFF Lancs. The 2nd phase was a 'time and distance' run from a point on the shores of the lake to the estimated position of the factory - a technique which 5 Group was developing. Photo recce showed that almost 10% of the bombs hit the small factory and much damage was caused. Nearby factories were also hit and 44 people were killed in Friedrichshafen. The bombing force confused the Luftwaffe waiting for their return over France by flying onto North Africa in the first 'shuttle' raid. No Lancasters were lost.

Ed reports that the Zeppelin Sheds were bombed at 0258 hrs from 11,500 ft with good visibility over target area and large fires and smoke observed in the target. When passing over the Alps at 15,000 ft 20 min later moderate flak from defences within target area were encountered. Flight continued and landed at Blida near Algiers North Africa. Flight time an amazing 10 hrs 35 mins. Ed's crew now appear to be set s follows:

Pilot: F/L Jones, S.E.J., captain
Flight Engineer: Sergeant Brooks, A.A.F.
Navigator: Sergeant Lance A.C.E.
Bomb Aimer: Sergeant Deschaine, E.
Wireless Operator: Flight Sergeant Faux, R.G.
Air Gunner, Rear: F/O Cartwright, A.W.E.P.
Air Gunner, Mid-Upper: Sergeant Cook, C.S.

OPS 8 - June 23 1943

After two days in Blida near Algiers in I assume were not luxurious accommodations it was time to return the aircraft back to England which of course meant another OPS. On a night mission of June 23/24th Ed and his crew would be bombing in Italy for the first time at La Spezia Naval Base in northern Italy. RAF Bomber Command report is short and sweet "LA SPEZIA - 52 Lancasters from the force which bombed Friedrichshafen 3 nights ago flew from North Africa, bombed La Spezia and flew on home, without any losses! The Command claimed damage to an armaments store and an oil depot in this Italian target." Ed reports the target bombed at 0009 hrs from 14,500 ft. Clear visibility except for smoke over target area. Instructions were received to ignore Green T.I.'s but to bomb 500 yards north of a fire burning south of the Haral Harbour. Bombs released 5 seconds after this fire. Many incendiaries soon burning in the deck area. Another crew commented that there was considerable interference with radio communications which led to some confusion at time of bombing. Ed and his crew land back at Woodhall Spa at 0457 hrs 9hrs 45 min enroute.

OPS 9 ? - June 25 1943

After returning from Algiers the previous morning it's back to OPS tonight with a night raid on the Nordstern synthetic oil plant at Gelsenkirchen Germany in the Ruhr Valley. Perhaps the OPS was not meant to be. Firstly their normal Lanc PG-E was not available so they were assigned PG-L (EE-117). Ed's logbook entry initially looks like a "Z" but corrected to an "L" which is correct as per the ORB. Secondly they have an additional crew member on board a "Second Dickey" or training pilot Pilot Officer A. Sandison and this would have been his first OPS. The weather was cloudy at first with little rain visibility 3 to 4 miles with strong southwesterly winds but good visibility overnight. They took off at 2339 hr but about an hour or so after take off the sortie had to be abandoned due inability to gain sufficient height to join the main force because of oxygen failure. This was a "no-go" issue for sure as the crew would not be able to climb much above 12,000 ft. The aircraft turned around and jettisoned their bomb load at coordinates 53.35 N 01.06 E (just off the coast from Grimsby) from 12,000 ft and returned to base. Ed marked his logbook D.N.C.O. or (Did Not Complete Operation) however because of the air return it would not have counted to his OPS totals, hence the question mark. However if we add the Mystery Ops at 207 Sqn of 30 April 1943 we are still at 9 OPS. It was good luck for Ed's crew as those that pressed on to Gelsenkirchen it was a deadly night. Out of 473 aircraft launched that night 30 of our aircraft failed to return - 13 Lancs, 7 Hallies, 6 Stirlings and 4 Wimpys, 6.3% of the force! 18 of these were shot down by nightfighters and four were lost without trace. A further three crashed or were written off

back in England, only two of the three crews were killed. 166 of our airmen lost their lives and 35 lost their freedom for two long years. The "Second Dickey" A. Sandison on Ed's flight went on to an impressive tour of 26 OPS including 8 OPS during the battle of Berlin, he passed away in 2016 at the age of 96 years. The aircraft Ed flew this night PG-L (EE-117) would be shot down by a BF110 over Denmark 18 August 1943 killing all on board. It has been a busy June and C/O Ronnie Churcher has certified his logbook with a total flying for the month of 52 hrs. 25 min.



OPS 10 - July 9 1943

Ed and his crew have their normal aircraft back PG-E (EE-106) for a night raid again to Gelsenkirchen Germany. 8 aircraft from 619 Squadron are assigned for tonight's OPS. RAF Bomber Command Ops report that 418 aircraft, 218 Lancasters, 190 Halifaxes and 10 Mosquitoes. This raid was not successful (raids on this target never were until late-44 at the earliest). Oboe failed in 5 of the 10 Mosquitos and a 6th dropped sky markers 10 miles north of the target in error. Gelsenkirchen reports that it's southern districts were bombed and assumed that the main raid was on the neighbouring town of Bochum and Wattenscheid, both of which received more bombs than did the actual target, which only had 10 industrial firms lightly hit, including the Scholven synthetic oil refinery. Ten of our aircraft are missing (2.3%) and a further five either crashed in England or ditched in the Channel. Ed reports "the target was bombed at 01:15 from an altitude of 18,000 ft with 10/10th cloud cover. White flares were in bomb site at time of release. No results were observed." This was a bombing and nickelling raid. Ed reports the "nickels" were dropped. Nickelling was the dropping of propaganda leaflets.

OPS 11 - July 12 1943

Tonight is going to be a long night with a bombing raid of the Italian city of Turin. It's a long way from Droulliard Road in Windsor! On board tonight is another "Second Dickey" Hubert Clarence (Nick) Knilans a fam boy from Wisconsin who like many Americans crossed the border to join the RCAF. He crossed the border at Windsor with just a few pennies in his pocket and I wonder if Ed and Hubert exchanged stories that night. The aircraft took off 2228 on what would be an 11:00 hr mission. From the book "Bomber Barons" by Chaz Bowyer he writes "that on Knilans flight with S.E.J. Jones as they neared the Alps a burst of yellow streaking cannon shells came up over the port wing. Both air gunners Cartwright and Cook immediately opened up at an enemy fighter stalking the Lancaster, they registered hits and watched it explode. When they reached Turin the 7,000 lb high explosive bomb load was dropped from 14,500 ft and the bomber set course for southern France crossing the Bay of Biscay at less than 50 ft height to escape German radar." The ORB shows that the German aircraft shot down was a JU-88 (Junkers 88 night fighter). Pilot Kniland went on to a decorated career with the DSO DFC (RAF & USAF). This was an all Lancaster raid with 295 launched 13 of our aircraft are missing (4.7%) six of which were lost without trace - and another crashed back in England.

OPS 12 - July 24 1943

Two weeks since the last ops with 6 local flights recorded which was practice for tonight's target Hamburg, Germany. Tonight's mission will be bombing and nickelling, as well they have a "Second Dickey" on board again. They get airborne at 2226. Tonight 791 aircraft - 374 Lancasters, 246 Halifaxes, 125 Stirlings and 73 Wellingtons in the first of a series of raids which Bomber Harris has been planning for a while. This was also the first time the Command had been allowed to use 'Window'*. Window was strips of aluminium that were dropped to confuse German radar of inbound bombers which in fact were not there. Conditions over Hamburg were clear, with only a gentle wind. The marking, both H2S (radar) and visual was a little scattered but most of the TIs fell close enough to the city centre to allow a concentrated main force attack to develop. 728 aircraft dropped 2,284 tons of bombs in just 50 minutes. Bombing photographs showed that less than 50% of the force dropped their bombs within 3 miles of the centre and a 6 mile creep back developed. However, because Hamburg was such a large city, severe damage was caused in the central and north-western districts, particularly in the Altona, Elmsbittel and Hoheluft. Twelve

aircraft failed to return - 4 Hallies, 4 Lancs, 3 Stirlings and 1 Wimpy (1.5% of the force) and a further two crashed in England, none from Ed's squadron.

OPS 13 - July 25 1943

This is the second heavy raid in as many nights and a lucky 13th OPS for Ed with the target tonight the Krupp Works in Essen Germany. The RAF launch 705 aircraft - 294 Lancasters, 221 Halifaxes, 104 Stirlings, 67 Wellingtons and 19 Mosquitoes in an attempt to get a good raid on this Ruhr target while Window was still effective. Brigadier-General Fred Anderson, commander of the USAAF 8th Bomber Command flew on this raid as a passenger in an 83 Sqdn Lancaster. This Oboe (radar navigation) marked raid was a success, being recorded as hitting the industrial areas in the eastern half of the city and the Krupps Works suffered what was probably it's most damaging throughout the war. Surveying the damage the next morning, Dr. Gustav Krupp had a stroke from which he never recovered. 51 other industrial buildings were destroyed and 83 seriously damaged. Twenty-six aircraft (3.7%) failed to return, 10 Hallies, 7 Stirlings, 5 Lancs and 4 Wellingtons. A further 5 crashed on return to England. 141 of our airmen lost their lives, 37 were taken PoW and 1 evaded. Squadrons losing more than one aircraft were 51, 77, 103, 158 Sqdns all lost 2, while 620 Sqdn lost 3.

OPS 14 - August 7 1943

August is going to be a busy month for Ed and his crew no doubt taking advantage of better weather but it also means the start of the Battle Of Berlin. Tonight Berlin will have to wait as the destination is a long one, Milan Italy. They have a different aircraft tonight PG-G (EE-115) and they take off at 2101. Milan target was bombed 4 hours later at 0122 hrs from 15,000 ft in hazy weather conditions. Ed identified the target by red and green T.I.'s, bombs being dropped in centre of green T.I.'s .This would be an eventful night as the ORB reports that they hit some birds on take off from Woodhall Spa causing damage to the nose of the aircraft then prior to setting course the aircraft wireless went unserviceable. The wireless was repaired sufficiently to receive Group B at full strength. Things did not get better. The starboard inner engine oil pressure dropped on the way into the target but was not feathered. On the way back to base the port inner engine caught fire and was feathered (East Coast). They landed back at 0547 hrs. There were several targets in Italy this night with RAF Command sending 197 Lancasters of 1, 5 and 8 Groups were despatched, in response to urgent political orders, to attack Genoa, Milan and Turin. It is believed that all 197 reached the target areas and 195 crews reported bombing as briefed. G.Capt John Searby of 83 Sqdn acted as Master Bomber over Turin, in a trial for a maximum effort attack later this month, although the plan only met with limited success. Two of our aircraft failed to return and a

third diverted to N.Africa because of damage. Of note the aircraft Ed flew in tonight's mission would be lost later that month on the 31 August 1943 shot down near Höxter, Nordrhein- Westfalen Germany by night fighter pilot Leutnant Heinz Grimm of the Stab IV./ NJG 1, flying a Bf 110 G-4 from Leeuwarden airfield, the Netherlands.

OPS 15 - August 12 1943

Back we go to Milan Italy again tonight and again they have a different aircraft PG-A. Take off time was 2127 hr and they reached the target at 0119 hrs from an altitude of 19,000 ft with weather conditions of no clouds just some smoke and haze. Ed says target was identified by yellow, red, and green T.I.'s and built up city area seen. Bombs were dropped on two green T.I.'s in bomb sight. RAF Command reports that 504 aircraft - 321 Lancasters and 183 Halifaxes. The Command considered that this was a successful attack. Milan only had a general report which stated that during August 4 major factories (including the Alfa-Romeo works), the main railway station and La Scala opera house were all badly hit. Tragedy struck 619 Squadron this night as overall 3 of our aircraft failed to return, one crashed on take off, another on landing and two were involved in a mid-air collision over England while returning to base. The two aircraft involved in the mid air was from Ed's old squadron 207 and 619. The two aircraft which collided were:-

207 Sqdn, Lancaster I, ES361, EM-R, Sgt. R. Cartwright 1 crew killed.

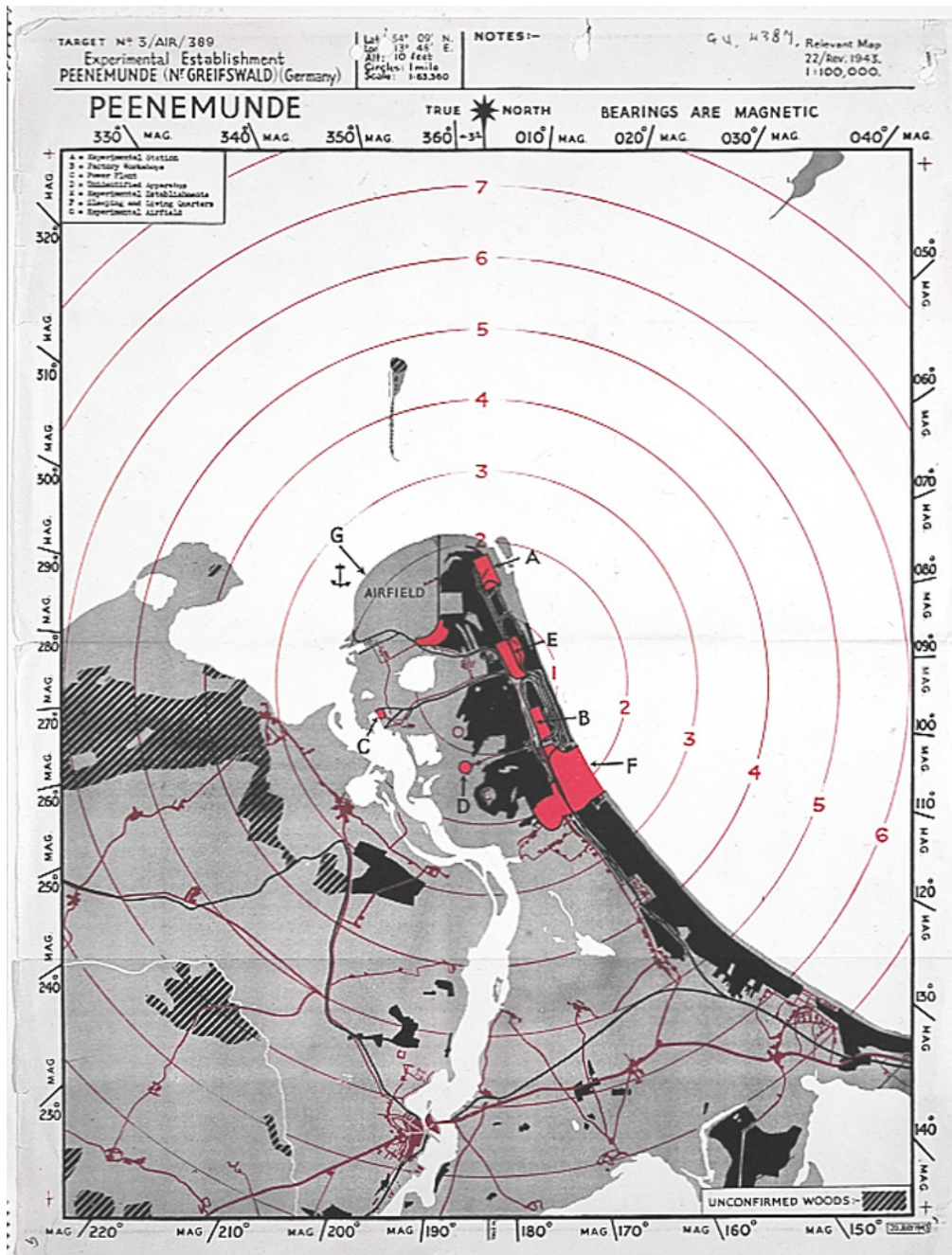
619 Sqdn, Lancaster III, JA844, PG-C, P/O. B. Arden 2 crew killed

OPS 16 - August 17 1943

Operation Hydra which is the attack of the Peenemunde Army Research Centre on the north east coast of Germany home of the V-2 rocket plants. Not everyone is coming back tonight.

RAF Bomber Command Operations send out 596 aircraft - 324 Lancasters, 218 Halifaxes and 54 Stirlings, in this, the 1st raid in which 6 Group(Canadian) operated some Lancasters. A special raid which was ordered by Air Ministry after a research group, including the Prime Minister's son-in-law, Duncan Sandys, decided the evidence that the enemy was producing and testing rockets with which to attack the UK was strong enough to warrant an urgent attack. It was the only raid during the war where the crews were told "If you don't destroy it tonight, you'll go back again tomorrow night and, if needed, the night after that until it is destroyed."

The crews weren't told what was going on at Peenemunde. Those that were told something were informed that the Germans were developing new radar which would impact on Bomber Command at a later date if the target was not destroyed. This raid had several novel features:- it was to be carried out in moonlight to improve the chances of a successful attack, it was planned to bomb at no more than 6,000 feet. It was the only time in the second half of



the war when the whole of the Command was to attempt a precision raid by night on such a small target and it was the first time that a Master Bomber was to control a full scale raid. The Master Bomber in question was Gp. Capt. John H. Searby of 83 Sqdn PFF. There were 3 aiming points, the housing estate where the senior scientists lived (to be attacked by 3&4 Groups), the V2 Production Works (by 1 Group) and the Experimental Works (by 5&6 Groups) and they were to be attacked in that order. 5 Group were also to use their new 'time and distance' method of bombing with the proviso that if they could clearly see the PFF markers then these were to take precedence over 'time and distance' calculations. PFF found

the target with no difficulty in the clear moonlight and Capt.Searby successfully controlled the raid throughout. A Mosquito diversion to Berlin drew most of the nightfighters and it was not until the 3rd and final phase of bombing that some of them managed to reach Peenemunde and get into the bomber stream. Most of the Commands casualties were incurred in this last wave. This was the night on which the Luftwaffe first used their 'Shrage Musik' upward firing cannons, resulting in the loss of 40 of our aircraft (6.7%), 23 Lancs, 15 Hallies and 2 Stirlings.

Ed reports they attacked at 6,000 ft with thin layers of cloud and smoke. Ed is using the new method of time and distance bombing as we see in his log book entry from 12 August 1943 when he performed "Time and Distance" training. Ed spotted the target visually and by T.I.'s. Bombs were dropped by time and distance run and the bomb load seemed to be concentrated. One 1,000 lb bomb failed to drop and was jettisoned at 54.25N 03.38E at 0318 hrs. Their photographs equipment failed to to a technicality, cause unknown. They land back at base 0427 hrs to bad news that three of their 619 Squadrons Lancaster are missing. 21 crew members of 619 are killed.

PG-L EE117 Pilot McGhie and crew shot over Denmark by a BF110 night fighter at 3500 m altitude.

PG-D ED982 Pilot Sgt Pearce and crew. Crashed in the vicinity of anklam-Lassan, Germany.

PG-P EE147 Pilot Officer O'Leary and crew. Crashed vicinity of Peenemunde.



OPS 17 - August 17 1943

Tonight will be the start of the Battle of Berlin and it will be the most deadly night for RAF Bomber Command so far during the war. They launched 727 aircraft - 335 Lancasters, 251 Halifaxes, 124 Stirlings and 17 Mosquitoes in the first raid of what was to be known as the Battle of Berlin. The Mossies were used to mark various points on the route to help keep the Main Force on the right track. A Master Bomber was used (or as they were known at this

stage of the war - "A Master of Ceremonies") and the man chosen by Don Bennett was the CO of 405 (Canadian) Sqdn, Wg.Cdr. J. E. (Johnny) Fauquier (later commander of 617).

The raid was only partially successful. PFF were unable to identify the city centre by H2S radar but marked an area in the southern outskirts. The Main Force arrived late and many bombers cut a corner to approach from the SW instead of the planned SSE, causing many bombs to fall in open country than would have otherwise not have happened. The German defences, both Flak and fighters, as one would expect, were extremely fierce. This was really the first use of the twin-engined nightfighters also being used in the 'Wilde Sau' role. Much of the attack fell outside Berlin (with 25 villages reporting bombs with 6 people killed) and in the sparsely populated southern suburbs of the city. In spite of this, Berlin reported its most serious raid of the war to date, with a wide range of industrial, housing and public properties being hit. 2,611 individual buildings were destroyed or seriously damaged. There was also some damage in the 'government quarter' of the Wilhelmstrasse where no building was undamaged! Bomber casualties were, as might be expected, heavy, with 56 aircraft failing to return (23 Hallies, 17 Lancs and 16 Stirlings) - 7.9% of the force. This was the Command's greatest loss in one night so far in the war and six more aircraft crashed in England, 2 on take off, 2 on landing and 2 (both 78 Sqdn.) collided over Leconfield.

Ed's crew takes off at 2006 hrs and reach Berlin 2351 hrs. in clear weather conditions. The target was marked by red and green T.I.'s and ground detail. Ed drops his bombs in the centre of the green T.I.'s and notices good fires around the markers. They also dropped nickels (pamphlets) as well. The crew reports fighter planes working with search lights over target, good route on return with no flak.

297 Allied airmen were killed (including Gp.Capt. B. V. Robinson DSO, DFC & Bar, AFC, Station Commander at Graveley), 109 were taken Prisoners of War

619 incurs another loss tonight with the shooting down and crash of Lancaster PG-V ED981 near Keil, Germany. The pilot Pilot Officer Douglas Coomber and Flight Engineer G.A. Stamper survive becoming POW's. The rest of the crew is killed.

OPS 18 - August 27 1943

Back to Germany again tonight with a mission to Nuremburg. RAF Bomber Command is sending 674 aircraft - 349 Lancasters, 221 Halifaxes and 104 Stirlings. The marking was again based mainly on H2S (too far away for Oboe) and 47 of PFF were ordered to drop one 1,000 lb bomb on Heilbronn while en route to the target. 28 of them managed to carry out that order. Heilbronn reports several bombs in the north of the town and the local officials assumed that

the factory area was the intended target as several bombs did fall around that area. No industrial buildings were hit but one house was destroyed, although there were no casualties. Nuremburg was clear of cloud but very dark and, while the initial marking was accurate, a creepback quickly developed which could not be stopped because so many Pathfinders had trouble with their H2S and the Master Bomber (un-named) could do little to persuade the main force to carry on further into the target. The Command estimated that most of the bombing fell in open country to south-south-west of the city, but local reports say that bombs were scattered across the south-eastern and eastern suburbs.

Ed reports over target at 0038 hrs and 20,000 ft and weather conditions of no cloud. Bombs are dropped in the centre of the green T.I.'s and Nickels were dropped as well. After being hit by heavy flak the starboard inner engine was shut down and feathered. The only ground details visible were fields but the green and red T.I.'s were concentrated. The crew reports that MONICA became unserviceable which was a tail warning radar system. They return to base at 0408 hrs with no losses at 619 Squadron however, 33 of our aircraft failed to return (11 of each type - 4.9%) and 2 more crashed back in England. A summary of allied casualties is as follows, 180 of our airmen were killed, 49 were taken prisoner and 15 evaded.

OPS 19 - August 30 1943

Tonights target is Monchenglagbach and Rehydtt Germany just west of Dusseldorf. Take off time was 2329 hrs and they were over the target at 0204 hrs at 19,000 ft. Weather was cloudy with 9/10th cloud. Ed identifies the target by red and green T.I.'s with bombs dropped on red. An explosion was seen in the area where the T.I.'s were burning and a large blue explosion was seen as well. Nickels were also dropped. They return to base at 0358 hrs.

RAF Bomber Command reports 660 aircraft: 297 Lancasters, 185 Halifaxes, 107 Stirlings, 57 Wellingtons and 14 Mosquitoes. This was a double attack with a 2 minute gap after phase 1 while PFF moved their markers from Monchengladbach to its neighbour, Rheydt. This was a serious attack on both towns in good visibility and the Oboe assisted marking of both targets was described as "a model of good PFF marking". Bombing was very concentrated with very little Creepback and about 50% of the built up area was destroyed in each town. Reports from Germany stated 1,059 buildings destroyed (171 industrial, 19 military and 869 domestic) with 117 people killed in Monchengladbach, while Rheydt reported 1,280 buildings destroyed with damage to the main railway station and other rail facilities. 25 of our aircraft failed to return (7 Lancs, 9 Hallies, 6 Stirlings and 3 Wellingtons), with a further 2 Wellingtons colliding north of Goole while outbound and five aircraft crashing on return to England.

Summary of losses as follows:158 of our airmen died, 28 were taken prisoner and 3 evaded. There were 4 injured in the aircraft which crashed in the UK.



OPS 20 - August 31 1943

Berlin is never a good nighttime destination at any time during the war. A big effort tonight from 619 Squadron including C/O Churcher aboard one of the 13 Lancasters dispatched. The ORB from Ed's mission is fairly benign in that they took off at 1952 hrs and reached Berlin at 2344 hrs at 17,500 ft with 8/10ths cloud at 8,000 ft. Ed delivers the bomb load on the centre of the green T.I.'s but bombing results not seen due cloud cover but glow of fires seen through clouds. Nickels dropped as well. They arrive back at base at 0332 hrs but two 619 Lancasters are not coming back. PG-R (JA-848) is shot down near Jüterbog, Brandenburg by night fighter pilot Leutnant Josef Kraft of the Stab II./NJG 5, flying a Bf 110 G-4 from Parchim airfield. Flt Sergeant G.W. Bower RCAF and his crew are killed and PG-G (EE-115) crashed near Hoxter Germany. Flt Sgt FG Metcalfe (DFM) RCAF and his crew are killed.

RAF Bomber Command paint a very bleak picture of tonight's OPS. 622 aircraft, 331 Lancasters, 176 Halifaxes, 106 Stirlings and 9 Mosquitoes in an unsuccessful raid on Hitler's Capitol. There was some cloud in the target area and coupled with H2S troubles and the ferocity of the German defences all caused the PFF markers to be well south of the centre of the target area and thus the main force bombing to be even further adrift. The bombing area eventually spread 30 miles back along the bombers' approach route. 85 houses were destroyed but there was only damage to industrial premises, 4 severely and 3 lightly. After this raid Gauleiter Goebbels ordered the evacuation of all children and all adults not engaged in war work. This raid saw the first use of fighter flares, dropped from higher flying German aircraft, to mark the bomber routes into and out of Berlin air space. These, coupled with the searchlight glare on the clouds had the effect of illuminating the bombers for the

nightfighters, both single and twin engined which were all using the 'Wilde Sau' method of interception over the target. It was reported (by those on both sides) that the bombers stood out like "flies on a table cloth" and the Luftwaffe had a field day with 47 bombers (20 Hallies, 17 Stirlings and 10 Lancs) shot down (7.6%) and about 2/3rds of those fell to nightfighters. Three more bombers crashed on return to England. The cold statistics on this raid are as follows:-234 of our airmen were killed, 51 were taken prisoner and 3 evaded.

Ed ends the month of August 1943 with 50 hrs 45 min night OPS flying time and 4 hrs 30 min day flying time. September will be a different story.

OPS 21 - September 6 1943

It may be time for Oktoberfest in Munich but Ed will not be stopping tonight. RAF Bomber Command sends 404 aircraft, 257 Lancasters and 147 Halifaxes, but PFF found the city mostly covered in cloud and neither their ground or sky markers were effective. Most of the Main Force could do no more than bomb on a timed run from the Ammersee, a lake 21 miles SW of Munich. The bombing was mostly scattered over the southern and western parts of the city. There is no report available from Munich. Sixteen of our aircraft failed to return (4.0%), 13 Hallies and 3 Lancs. A further Lanc was so badly damaged by a nightfighter that, although it made it back to base, it was written off. Another crashed on return to England and yet another ditched off Spurn Head, killing 2 of the crew. Statistics for this night are as follows:- 87 of our airmen died, 29 were taken prisoner and 6 were injured in crashes back in the UK. There were no evaders this night.

Ed's crew and nine other Lancs depart at 1946 hrs and arrive at the target at 2339 hrs. at 20,000 ft with 5/10th cloud at 6,000 ft. Target is identified by green and one red flares, Ed could see the built up area of the city but dropped the bombs on the green T.I.'s as instructed. Port outer engine failed and was feathered on leaving the target. Nickels were dropped on return trip when crossing the coast. ORB also says that enemy fighters were very active aided by flares but all of 619 Sqn aircraft make it back that night.



OPS 22 - September 16 1943 - "The Ditching"



Tonights mission is unlike anything else Ed has faced before. Up until now the bombing missions have been performed from high altitudes of 18 to 20,000 ft with the exception of the raid on the V2 installation at Peenemunde which was done at 6,000 ft. It is now apparent that Ed and his crew have been given specialized training for tonights mission as the target is the Antheor Viaduct in southern France and it is going to be bombed from 300 ft. Six crews from 619 squadron are assigned to this OPS, they are:

Squadron Leader Churcher R.G. in Lancaster PG-A (ED-977)

W/C Abercromby W. in Lancaster PG-D (JA-847)

F/L Jones S.E.J. in Lancaster PG-E (EE-116)

Squadron Leader Soorer G.B. in Lancaster PG-Q (EE-116)

F/L Aytoun R. in Lancaster PG-T (JB-131)

F/O Bell W.E.D. in Lancaster PG-W

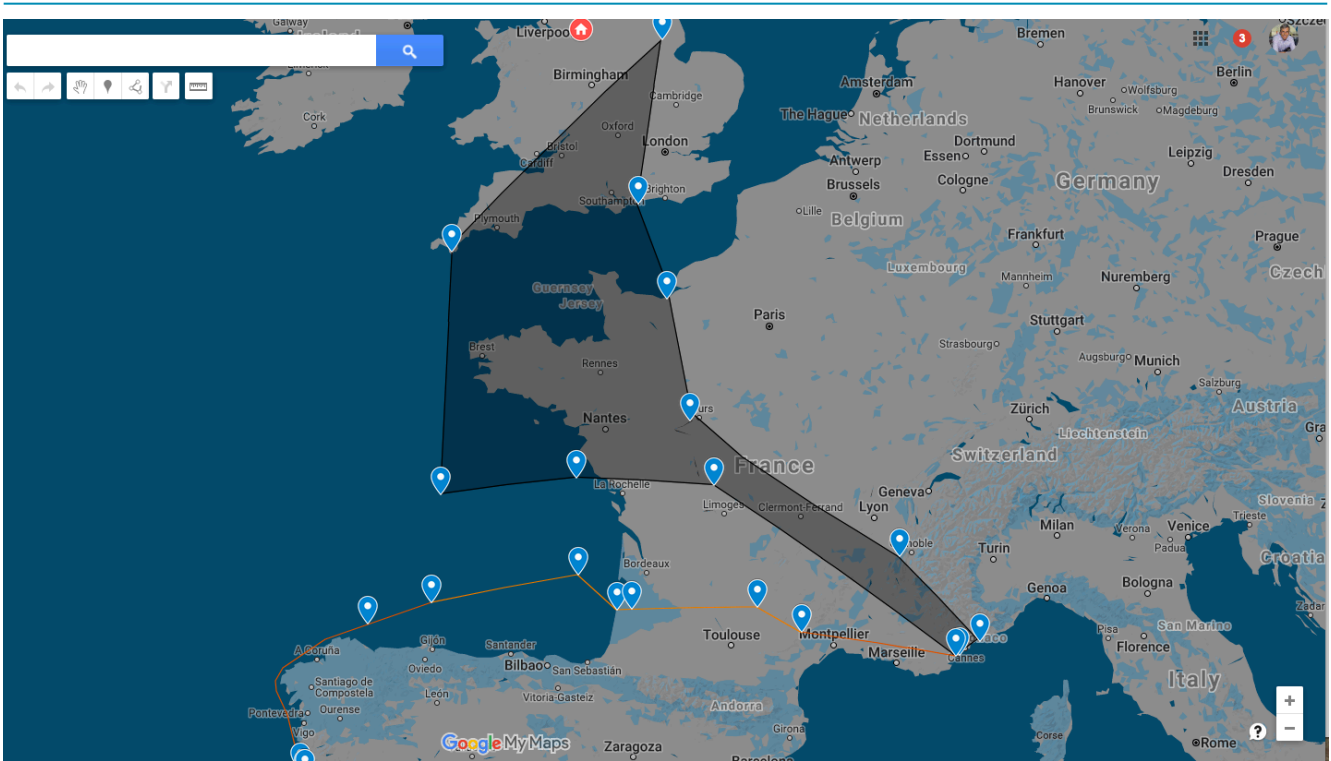
The only other squadron that was trained to joined this mission tonight are their brothers in arms just down the road at RAF Corningsby. Corningsby is the home of 617 Squadron "The Dambusters" . 617 Squadron was a hand picked squadron that were trained in low level bombing utilizing the specialized "Upkeep" dambusters bombs. Tonight each Lancaster will carry a combination of 4,000 lbs and 1,000 lbs conventional bombs. The previous night was a bad one for 617 Sqn as they had lost 5 of 8 aircraft sent out to bomb the Dortmund Canal in Germany including their Squadron Leader George Holden. Tonight they will muster 6 Lancasters for the joint raid with 619 Sqn. Four of the Lancasters will be piloted by veterans of the "Dambusters Raid".

F/L H.B.M. (Mick) Martin (RAAF)

F/L J.C. McCarthy (RCAF) U.S.

Flt/Sgt K.W. Brown (RCAF)

F/L J.L. Munro (RNZAF)



Here is a map depicting the route.

When Ed and his crew get their briefing they find this will be a long trip and as usual will take a circuitous route to the target and return to avoid built up areas and the associated flak and anti aircraft guns. The briefed route was as follows: Woodhall Spa Selsey Bill - Cabourg - 47.35N 00.45E - 45.12N 05.42E - Cap Ferrat - Antheor Viaduct - St. Raphael - 46.30N 01.00E - 46.30N 02.30W - 46.15N 05.50W - Predannack. The return route is designed to head northwest towards the west coast of France and straight north to England out of harms way. Due to fuel constraints and possibly weather the aircraft will return to RAF Predannack. **For the first time Ed's crew is changed. Their normal navigator Sgt Lance A.C.E. is not flying with them tonight, his replacement is F/O Holding A.D. from F/O O'Shaughnesay's crew.**

Ed's Lancaster is last to take off from 619 group at 2006 hrs. The trip starts out with difficulty as they report that their main navigational system (GEE) was unsatisfactory on the outward journey up to about 4° E when it came on and was serviceable as far as approximately 6° E when it again became unserviceable. GEE is a radio based parabolic navigation system used by the RAF. The alternative for the crew is basic time, speed, distance navigation combined with celestial (star shots) navigation (taken from the perspex dome located behind the pilot) and observed drift provided by Ed in the nose dome. When the GEE was working it showed the aircraft to be about 30 miles north of the track and the course was corrected. The Met forecast gave winds of 30-40 m.p.h. on the outward journey and light and variable at the target, but it was estimated that the wind was backing from westerly to southerly and

increasing to 70-80 m.p.h. The speed was kept at 155 I.A.S. as instructed for the outward journey and the compass was checked. Navigator F/O Holding has his hands full and this would be the beginning of navigational problems this evening.

The crew aboard PG-T piloted by F/L Aytoyn from 619 Sqn had to abandon their mission when they encountered severe icing covering their ailerons and rudder resulting in loss of airspeed until the aircraft almost stalled. The crew jettisoned their bombs at 4536N 0451E near Lyon France at 2356 hrs. from 16,000 ft and returned to base at 0605 hrs. The Lancaster has no anti icing systems.

About 4hrs 30 min after take off Ed and his crew cross the south coast of France at Cap Ferrat and circled the rendezvous island until the squadron had assembled. Ed was due at the rendezvous at 00.30 hours and the E.T.A. was 00.40 hours. The bombing of the target starts in good visibility with no clouds and bombs were dropped across the centre of the viaduct from east to west. F/L Abercrombie in PG-D was having radio problems and could not communicate with the other aircraft. Overall no crew could report any positive bombing results due to the low altitude and distance away from the target. Ed's aircraft was the last to bomb the target at 01:20 hours from 300 feet, the target being identified visually. A small amount of light flak was encountered but no damage was noticed at the time. Delayed action bombs were used and no results were observed. While over the target Ed's crew reports in the "Evade & Escape Report" filed when they returned to England that they were slightly hit by flak.

Conversations with Mike Jones son of F/L S.E.J. Jones RAF (in Italics)

I have had several message conversations with the son of pilot S.E.B. Jones (DFM) Mike Jones about his father's recollection of the bombing and ditching. With regards to the bombing F/O Jones recollection was *"that they were hit by flack from a flack ship just off the coast and Mickey Martin of 617 fame who he knew well flew alongside to check the damage. He advised not trying to fly back 800+ miles over enemy territory but instead head to Spain. He escorted them to the Spanish boarder then waved goodbye and set off home."* There are no comments from Mick Martin on this in the ORB however.

From the Combat Report Ed's crew report the following after the bombing run. "Height was gained over the sea to 6,000 feet and the compass was checked (method not given). Course was set 288 to allow for an estimated 60 m.p.h. southerly wind. There is some possible confusion here, in the story as told as to whether courses were "True" or "Magnetic". The Navigator said "True" while the pilot at first said "Magnetic" but they finally agreed that "True" was correct. The aircraft climbed to 12,000 feet for the homeward journey and entered

cloud at 8,000-12,000 feet, flying in cloud continually until the descent was made later at the estimated position of the French coast. GEE was unserviceable and the navigation was all by dead reckoning. As the winds to the north has been westerly and lighter on the outward journey, course was altered to 295 between Long. 2 and 3E. At the outward position by D.R. of 46.30N 01.08E course was altered to 270 at an estimated time of between 03.45 hours and 04.00 hours."

This is very critical to what will transpire next. The suggestion of confusion between "True" and "Magnetic" heading I believe is mute. The magnetic variation in this part of France is less than 2 Deg west and is insignificant to the incorrect flight path the aircraft took after leaving the target. The turning point coordinates were 46.30N 01.08E would have meant an "approximate" heading of 302 Deg. The pilot however, picked up a heading of "approximately" 288 Deg. This in my opinion may have put them further south of track than desired. Then at the turning point they flew straight west on a heading of 270 Deg. . The only way for the crew to navigate, as they were in cloud, was the use of "dead reckoning" because their GEE navigation equipment was unserviceable. We must understand that this is navigation at it's basics with often very poor upper wind data to compensate for drift. The navigator based his homeward course on the wind data they experienced on the southbound journey, a guess at best. In addition the outbound comment that they discovered they were north of track could suggest that there were compass problems with the aircraft which could mean an incorrect track heading back north. As well, the skipper is dealing with a new navigator tonight. There is also a possibility of compass error or an error in calculating the actual "track" the aircraft was to fly to get to the turning point. Flying along at night in cloud and relying solely on a magnetic compass to get you home is very risky as there is no cross checking of you position. Also of note, in the Combat Report is the comment that "Prior to the operation the aircraft had been on a three-day inspection and compass check". When the crew did have GEE available early in the mission they discovered they were 30 miles north of track. One could make an assumption that on the return leg the same potential compass error could but them "south" of intended track, exacerbating the problem.

Next the crew discovered they are not where they are suppose to be at the anticipated coast crossing before turning north to England. From the Combat Report the crew says "At the E.T.A. French coast (04.15 hours) they descended and broke cloud at 6,000 feet, expecting to cross the French coast. Instead they found themselves over a lighted town which they thought must be in Spain and it was realized for the first time they were off track. Course was altered to 330 for about 50 minutes and an M.F. fix was then asked for (approximately 05.05 hours). As Plympton was unable to plot they were given a Q.T.E. of 200 from Plympton (05.30 hours). At this time they were still inland. The coast was crossed at 05.50 hours and an S.O.S. fix was asked for. No reply was received except letter "K" reported. It is noted here that the

last was heard of E/619 by the home base was a fix at 05.55 hours, position [mutilated word] 43.N 06.17E which E/619 did not receive."

Finally the navigator is able to get an Astrofix as the upper sky cleared and they discover they are 120 miles west northwest of Santander Spain. The Battle Report surmises that "Back plotting from this would indicate that the course to the lighted town may have been about 50 DEG off the briefed route." "The Flight Engineer checked the petrol and it was found to be only sufficient to reach approximately 48 DEG N. Latitude, near the Brest peninsula. The captain decided that, rather than be forced down in enemy waters, it was preferable to proceed in the direction of Gibraltar, though he did not hope to reach it. As they had no map of Spain they followed round the coast about five miles off." From the "Evade & Escape Report" the crew says "We followed the coast till we reached Vila Do Conde north northwest of Oporto Portugal at about 0715 hrs and as petrol was then very low we came down in the sea about 200 yards from the shore." The slow stall speed of the Lancaster and the fact that the fuel tanks of the aircraft were empty should have made the ditching fairly survivable with the rest of the crew taking the crash positions with their backs against the main spar in the centre of the aircraft. They also report that the radio and navigation apparatus (VHF, IFF, GEE and MONICA) were destroyed. The crew would have put on their "Mae West" and access the lifeboat which is located in the starboard wing. The picture of the Lancaster on the beach shows that all four engines were shut down as only the bottom propellers tips are bent and damaged.

Referring back to the message conversations with the son of pilot S.E.J. Jones (DFM) Mike Jones about his father's recollection of the ditching and he says as follows: *"Dad told the crew to jump but on being told he was ditching rather than jumping they elected to stay! A lively discussion then went on about the possible nasty reception they might get in pro Nazi Spain and they decided to fly on to Portugal our oldest ally. He never mentioned Gibraltar. He had already ditched in the sea earlier in the war and so elected to put it down in the water off Porto. Again his recollection was putting the Lanc down and then the crew getting into the dingy." "Dad's story on the ditching, landing 200-300 yards off the town which was clearly visible, jumping into the life raft and being blown gently but steadily away from shore until the town of Vila Do Conde was no longer visible and then the chance meeting with a Portuguese fishing boat who brought them back to the port."*

So there seems to be a discrepancy as to where exactly did the aircraft ditching occur Villa Do Conde or Vila Chã? Or perhaps was the floating aircraft towed (by boat) to the beach at Vila Chã where we see the aircraft on the beach. The Combat Report says "The aircraft was washed ashore and some light flak damage holes were found in the port mainplane, probably from the Viaduct defences as the crew did not think they were fired at over Spain. The crew were soon taken in charge by the authorities and removed, but as far as they are aware no

attempt at salvage was made by the Portuguese authorities and they presume that the aircraft was allowed to lie and be broken up by the sea." Further Mike Jones adds from his father's story *"he clearly remembered Vila Do Condo and the building the fishing boat brought him to and where they docked and a couple of elderly port wine growers who entertained the crew at the Factory House remembered them coming from Vila Do Conde . The museum (at Vila Chā) dismissed this account and the letter from the captain of the boat that Dad received in 1957 , saying he was supposedly a story teller and liar ! I have no doubt the aircraft washed up there but villagers wading out to help the crew off the wings etc I would have thought would have been something the crew wouldn't have forgotten !! "* After being pick up by the fisherman F/L Jones recalls *"A fishing boat arrived and took them to Vila Do Conde where they were interrogated by Portuguese border police before being taken to the Factory House in Porto where all the British port producers meet to this day."*

The "Escape and Evade" report says "the crew was taken to military barracks until the next day (18 September) when we were taken to a hotel in Oporto (The Factory House) by the International Police. They were moved to Lisbon on 22 September at a hotel until 28 September when we were transferred to internment in a hotel at Elvas, Portugal. On the 18 October we were sent to Lisbon for repatriation. " Mike Jones recalls a story his father told about the a time in Lisbon when *"In the notes he made for the newspaper he mentions that in Lisbon they were put in an hotel and at breakfast they sat alongside a German U-boat crew . He says " no conversation " took place on either table !"*

Mike Jones recalls while being posted to Porto with British Airways many years later he revisited the area with his father, *"in 1979 and John Delaforce kindly showed me the visitors book that had their signatures (of the crew) in it. We also took him to Vila Do Codo where he quickly recognised the building he had been taken to. (After the ditching) They spent an idyllic couple of weeks in Porto being royally supplied with port wine and English food from the port families before moving on to an interment camp outside of Lisbon that was full of American fliers. Dad found himself as the senior officer there at the ripe old age of 21 and part of his role was to recommend men for repatriation. The port wine and food continued to flow and it was December when the British Embassy politely asked if he might want to offer his own name forward !!*

Back at Woodhall Spa the ORB Record Of Events on the 17 September states that Ed and his entire crew are listed as MISSING with no other information given. The same document indicates on the next day the 18 September that " News was received that F/L Jones and his entire crew, missing after operations on September 16/17th, has been picked up and landed in Portugal."

Ed and his crew depart Lisbon Portugal on 20 October 1943 and arrive in Bristol England on 21 Oct 1943. On that same day the crew is interviewed by Operational Research Section (O.R.S.) and the result is the Evade & Escape Report. This report is forwarded to MI9 which is Military Intelligence for resistance groups operating in Europe. The report is also forwarded to British Army Staff in Washington, D.C.

F/L S.E.J. Jones is 21 years old and has completed 59 OPS missions and was seconded to B.O.A.C. airlines and moved from Corningsby to Whitchurch in Bristol. Mike Jones says “*Met a girl on a number 64 bus and married her in 1945 joined BOAC then BEA when that started and as an aside in 1956 he flew the Queen to Lisbon and then Porto on her state visit. At Porto airport he was handed a letter written in Portuguese that turned out to be from the Captain of the fishing boat that had picked him up.*”

Ed is sent back to Woodhall Spa and 619 Squadron.

OPS 23 - November 23 1943 - Mystery Ops?

Ed reports back to his old squadron 619 at some point in November after his return from Portugal on 21 October 1943. I have been unable to track what happen to the rest of his crew other than his pilot having been seconded to BOAC airlines. Ed has his log book certified by Squadron Leader Churcher for his September totals then we have an entry for an OPS flown on 23 November 1943 to Berlin. The squadron and Bomber Command have been making a major effort on bombing Berlin. The 22 and the 23 of November especially with 619 launching 16 Lancasters on the 22 November and 15 Lancasters on the 23 November. Ed shows he flew the OPS with S/L R.A. Churcher but he does not show up anywhere on his crew list nor does it appear on any of the other aircraft that night. The bomb aimer for this flight is shown as F/S Kellett J. I have also checked the 22 November ORB with the same result. I suppose it is possible he flew the mission perhaps as a “second bomb-aimer” or perhaps he was a last minute scratch but because of the lack of a signature certifying the OPS below this entry confirming his November flying time, I think it’s reasonable to assume he did not partake in this OPS. I will continue with Ed’s numbering system for continuity.

OPS 24 - January 1 1944

Assuming that OPS 23 did not occur Ed has not flown since the ditching in September. On the 20 December 1943 Ed climbs back into a Lancaster and appears to have been crewed up with Pilot Officer Taylor G.G. and they do three test and training flights to finish out 1943. It looks like they have a week off over Christmas 1943 but the New Year will start out differently. New Years day and the destination is Berlin. Ed is with the following crew and for the first time is shown as a Warrant Officer W/O:

F/O Taylor G.G.

Sgt AliisonW.

F/O Ingleby P.

W/O Deschaine G.E.

Sgt Day V.S.

F/O Westad R.A.

F/S King G.G.

Fourteen Lancasters are dispatched and Ed launches just after midnight at 0004 hrs. and reaches the target at 0310 hrs at 21,000 ft with 10/10th cloud cover and target was marked by flares and green T.I.'s.. Cloud prevented observation of target and area markers were not very effective. MONICA (rear facing radar) did not respond to aircraft approaching from the rear. Consensus is it was not an effective raid. PG-R with F/O Langford return early due to three engines unserviceable!!. Ed returns with PG-J at 0805 hrs.

OPS 25 - January 2 1944

Back to Berlin again tonight and looks like it will be a favourite destination for 619 this month. Tonight Ed's crew gets Lancaster PG-G. There is a 22% chance that Ed and his crew will not return tonight. Again for the second night they are the first aircraft to depart from 619 at 2351 hrs and arrive at the target at 0253 hrs at 21,000 ft and it is solid overcast again tonight. The target is marked by the Pathfinders with wanganui flares and this is where Ed drops the bombs. Glow of searchlights could be seen in cloud. PG-H with F/L Cox J.K. and PG-D with F/O Hafferman J.A. take off and are never heard from again. 14 crews of 619 loose their lives. Ed returns safely at 0705 hrs. 10 aircraft launched that night, one returned due mechanical and two are missing, that is a 22% loss for the squadron tonight.

Squadron Move To RAF Corningsby - January 09 1944

09 January was a very busy day as the squadron moved down the road a few miles to RAF Corningsby without mishap.

OPS 26 - January 14 1944

This will be the first time RAF were sent to bomb Brunswick (Braunschweig) Germany. Tonight they will send 500 Lancasters on this target alone. 619 Squadron will add eleven to the bomber wave after almost two weeks off for Ed and his crew. This raid will be done mostly in daylight departing at 1627 hrs and arriving over target at 1918 hrs at 21,500 ft but the sky is completely overcast. Ed drops the bombs on the green T.I.'s. Overall the raid is unsuccessful but Ed's crew notices a large orange explosion at 1918 hrs. Reports were that the Lancasters faced a strong defence by German fighters. As a relatively small target, most of the bombing missed the city. All of 619 squadrons return to base at 2155 hrs



OPS 27 - January 20 1944

Tonight it's Berlin again for the third time this month and Ed is teamed up with a completely new crew as follows:

P/O Langford V.

Sgt Curson W.W.

F/S Lloyd

W/O Deschaine G.E.

Sgt Crookford W.

Sgt. Davis G.

F/S Sutton W.

13 aircraft are dispatched in another relatively daylight raid departing at 1644 hrs and arriving over Berlin at 1949 hrs t 21,500 ft. Overcast again over Berlin and target identified with red flares and green stars the bombs dropped in centre of three flares. All 619 squadron aircraft return and there was one air return PG-F with F/O Vickerstaffe due two engines on fire!! The rest of RAF Bomber Command did not fare so well. 495 Lancasters, 264 Halifaxes, 10 Mosquitos (769 aircraft) despatched to Berlin. Night fighter attacks were pressed home successfully; 22 Halifaxes and 13 Lancasters were lost, 4.6% of the force. The damage could not be assessed due to low cloud cover the next day.

OPS 28 - January 21 1944

Tonight the squadron is sending seven Lancasters to Magdensburg Germany and two Lancasters on a diversionary mission to Berlin to confuse the enemy. Again tonight Ed's crew has PG-R. They get airborne at 2004 hrs and arrive over the eastern German city at 2300 hrs at 20,500 ft and bombs dropped in centre of five green T.I.'s with numerous fires are observed. All of 619 aircraft return but they are very, very lucky. RAF Bomber Command report that more than 600 bombers took part in the first major raid on Magdensburg an important rail centre. The operation was a failure. Strong winds brought some of H2S (radar equipped) main force over the target ahead of the pathfinders. Many bombed before zero hour. Adding to the confusion, the Germans set several extremely realistic decoy fires which attracted large number of bombers. In all 57 aircraft nearly 9% of the force were lost. Halifax bombers fared the worst with 15.6% shot down due to their lower bombing altitude.

OPS 29 - January 21 1944

Berlin AGAIN! Ed will again be flying with a totally different crew. They are as follows:

F/O Hamilton T. T.
Sgt Roakes L.S.
F/S Jackson J.T.
W/O Deschaine G.E.
Sgt Thompson J.T.
Sgt Dodge J.A.
F/S Hamilgon D.
F/L Fuller (2nd Pilot)

Another earlier departure at 1743 hrs having arrived over Berlin at 2059 hrs at 21,000 ft. Overcast skies with tops of clouds at 6,000 ft and bombs dropped in centre of two wamganui flares. Crew reports the use of spoofing during the raid. RAF Bomber Command send 495 Lancasters, 264 Halifaxes, 10 Mosquitos (769 aircraft) despatched to Berlin. Night fighter attacks were pressed home successfully; 22 Halifaxes and 13 Lancasters were lost, 4.6% of the force. The damage could not be assessed due to low cloud cover the next day. 619 launch 14 aircraft tonight all return with one early return due to instrument failure.

OPS 30 - January 28 1944 - Final Ops?

At this period in Bomber Command a tour was considered 30 OPS missions. It was standard practice at this time for aircrew who completed 30 OPS missions to be moved away from operational duty, mostly to training squadrons in Britain to help in improving the standards of the new arrivals. This adds to the mystery of OPS 23 in Ed's logbook because technically he has only completed 29 OPS prior to tonight. Just to add to the situation he is off to Berlin again tonight. Fourteen Lancasters are prepped for tonight's mission from 619 SQN. They depart at 2337 hrs. and arrive over Berlin at 0316 hrs at 21,000 ft. Overcast clouds with some breaks and Ed has lined up with three green T.I.'s. They report seeing terrific fires in the area. RAF Bomber Command send 432 Lancasters, 241 Halifaxes, 4 Mosquitos (677 aircraft) despatched to Berlin. Western and Southern districts, covered by partial cloud, were hit in what the RAF records state was the most concentrated attack of this period. German records do not fully support this mentioning that there were 77 places outside the city that were hit. Deception raids and routing over Northern Denmark did not prevent the German air defences from reacting. 46 aircraft, 6.8 percent of the force. All fourteen of 619 Lancasters

return safe. The same aircraft they fly tonight PG-Q EE116 will be shot down and abandoned on fire on 11 April 1944 over Waarde Netherlands killing 5 crew with 2 POW's.

Operational Tour Completed - February 1944

Despite the OPS count that we see in Ed's logbook 29 OPS vs 30 OPS he has been told his tour is now complete. Ed has survived one of the most dangerous times for Bomber Command during the war. On completion of an operational tour the crew would be "screened" (taken off operational flying) and split up as they received their future postings. Individual crews would be sent to Operational Training Units (OTU) preparing the next groups of young bomber crews for their postings to operational squadrons. In the late spring of 1944 when operations were being flown to less distant targets often in preparation for Operation Overlord(the D-Day invasion) RAF high command temporarily changed the length of an operational tours by counting some targets as a half of an operation. In Ed's case he is posted to an OTU.

16 OTU RAF Upper Heyford - Oxfordshire England

After a month leave Ed reports to RAF Upper Heyford and 16 OTU which at this point in time is operating Vickers Wellington Bombers in a training role. Ed's assignment here is as a trainer for bomb aimers who's next step will be an operational squadron. Ed gets right to work on February 26 1944 and will be flying just about every day when the weather is operational logging training flights between 1:00 hr and 5:00 hrs duration. No doubt he is finding this flying quite benign compared to what he has just finished, but is providing experience and knowledge of what an operational flight is really like. All of Ed's flying time is done on the Wellington with the exception of 16 April 1944 when he logs :45 min on the Miles Martinet a single engine aircraft which is used as a target tug aircraft. While Ed is at 16 OTU something important has happened and that is the start of Operation Overlord. June 6 1944 is D-Day. This bomb aimer training role continues until October 5 1944 when Ed does his last flight at this OTU. He has accumulated over 125 hrs flying time both day and night. Ed is soon to be reunited with the mighty Lancaster Bomber.

3 LFS RAF Feltwell - Norfolk East Anglia England

Ed is about to learn the Kiwi accent very quickly. At some point Ed has decided to sign up for another Operational Tour, one of the bravest things I can think of. Ed has already beaten the odds of survival in Bomber Command and has decided to go back in the direction of where the danger lies. He is assigned to 3 LFS or (Lancaster Finishing School) and is also being “crewed up” with a group that will be headed to 75 NZ (New Zealand) Squadron. Ed arrives at 3 LFS at the end of October early November 1944. Things are moving fast and Ed is crewed up with the following airmen:

Pilot: F/O John Henry McDonald, RNZAF NZ414647

Flight Engineer: W/O John Dunn, RAFVR 528241

Navigator: F/S C. Aylott, RAFVR

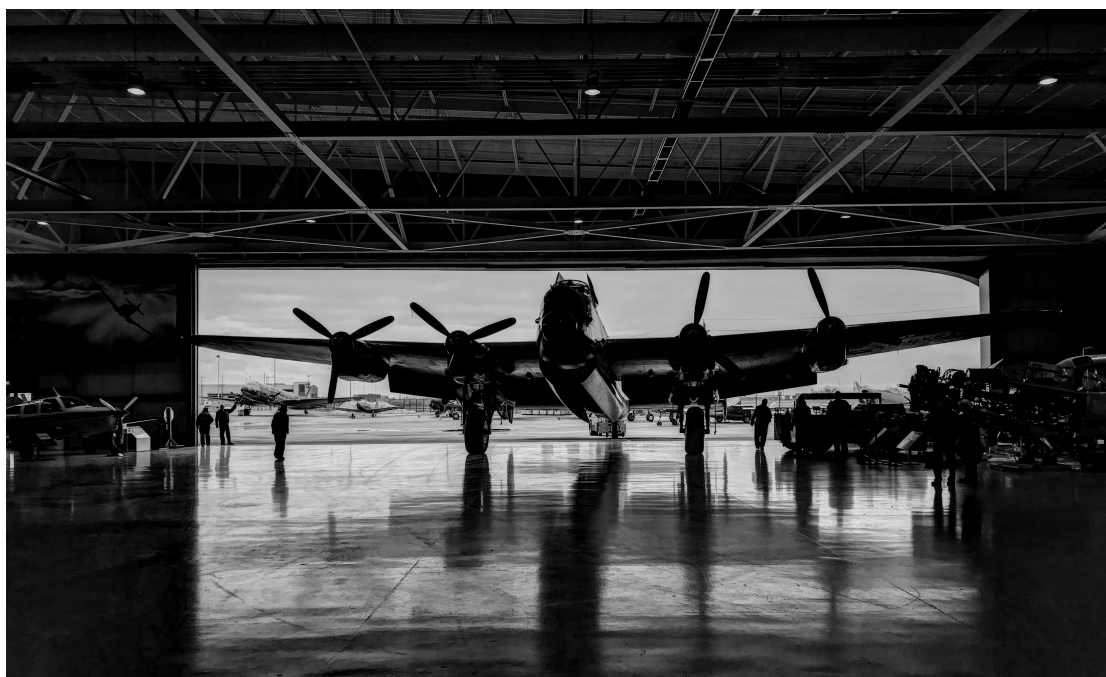
Bomb Aimer: W/O Gordon Edward ‘Ed’ Deschaine, RCAF R.109929

Wireless Operator: W/O E. Hughes, RAFVR

Mid Upper Gunner: F/S W. Davies, RAFVR

Rear Gunner: P/O H. Campbell, RAFVR

Ed is back in his familiar spot in the nose of the Lancaster and the task at hand is getting F/O McDonald checked out on the Lancaster. The first two log entries of 01 November and 03 November 1944 are Circuits and landing or (bumps and circles) and Ed shows in comments “Mac’s Checkout”. “Mac” is obviously checked out as this newly formed crew flies their first two training missions and a nighttime cross city stick bombing training mission. 10 hrs 40 min of flying later this crew is ready for the real thing and are transferred to 75 (NZ) SQN.



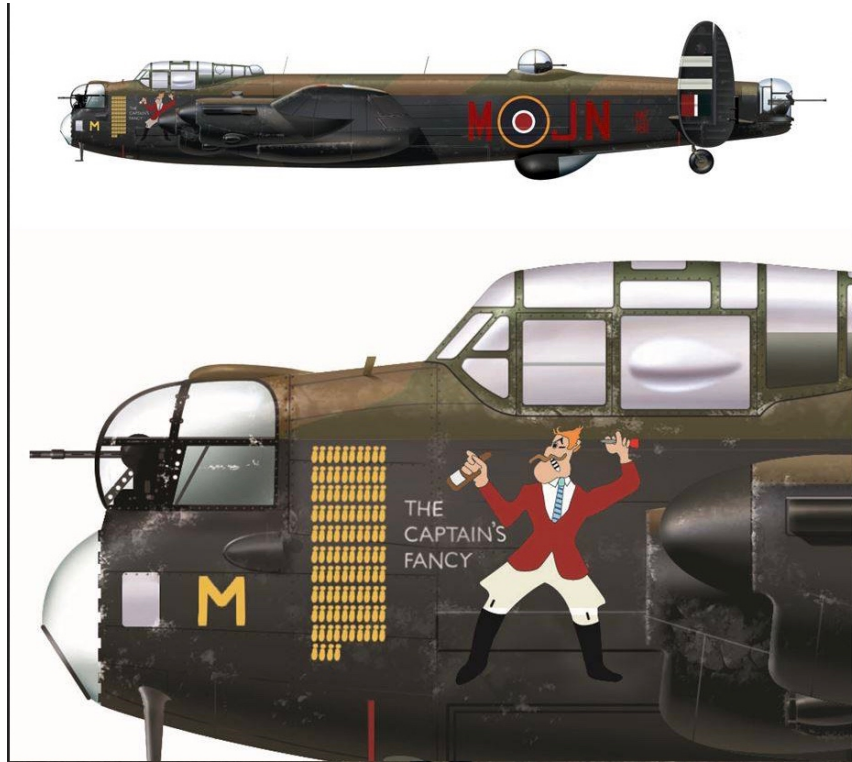
75 (NZ) Squadron RAF - Mepal Cambridgeshire England

On 4 April 1940, The New Zealand Squadron was renamed No. 75 Squadron with the letters (NZ) being added in brackets after the number. This was the first Commonwealth squadron to be so created in the Second World War. Although often referred to, then and since, as an RNZAF unit, 75 Squadron was equipped and controlled by the RAF until VJ-Day. Ed's crew has a Kiwi pilot but Ed is the only Canadian as the remaining crew are British. The McDonald crew perform their first training flight on November 18 1944 and the Squadron hands them the keys to the most famous Lancaster in the squadron " The Captain's Fancy".

Out of the 7,377 Lancasters built during the war 3,336 were lost or destroyed in accidents and only 35 Lancasters reached the century mark of 100 Operational missions and "The Captain's Fancy" is one of the 35. NE181 JN-M joins 75 Squadron of 20 May 1944 and by 29 January 1945 completes 100 Operations. The Lancaster on display at MOTAT (Museum Of Transport And Technology Auckland) in New Zealand has recently recreated and applied "The Captain's Fancy" nose art as a tribute to 75 (NZ) and RNZAF and certainly a tribute to Ed Deschaine as well.



Lancaster NE181 JN-M "The Captains Fancy"



OPS 1 - November 20 1944

Ed has marked in red at the top of the page "2nd Time Around" quite the understatement as he has signed on a second time to do something that could very well have been the most dangerous assignment in the history of warfare. The crew is set and they are ready to depart on tonight destination Homberg Germany. Ed's crew takes off 12:42 hrs in broad daylight aboard JN-M "The Captain's Fancy"

Twenty eight aircraft took off to attack the Oil Refinery Plant at Homberg. Twenty two aircraft in daylight attacked the target in ten tenths cloud with tops at 23,000 ft. which made formation flying very difficult. They carried 4,000 lb and 500 lb bombs. Results of bombing could not be observed, but it is considered that the raid was unsatisfactory. One aircraft AA-J returned early owing to icing trouble and two aircraft bombed last resort targets at Duisburg and Hamborn. Three aircraft failed to return. These were captained by 185116 F/O R. Gordon, AUS419328 and F/O P. McCartin and 152402 F/O H. Rees. This is a 15% loss rate for tonight. Ed's and his crew land late in the afternoon at 17:20hrs.

OPS 2 - November 21 1944

The previous night did not prove effective so in normal fashion Bomber Command send everybody back to get it right, this time during daylight. Tonight Ed's crew draws Lancaster LM266 AA-A that has the nose art "The Seven Sinners". A foaming beer tankard on shield flanked by bomb with a lion and kangaroo; above banner with 'Seven Sisters' in 'heraldic' script. This is another "lucky" Lanc as she will perform 78 missions. Twenty one aircraft took off to make another daylight attack on the Oil Refinery plant at Homberg, carrying 4,000 lb and 500 lb bombs. On this occasion weather over the target was clear, and crews reported the bombing to be quite good, both the target and town being identified visually. Several good explosions were observed in the target area. Flak opposition was moderate. Ed's crew returns at 16:42 hrs.

OPS 3 - November 23 1944

Prior to this mission Ed flies a training mission on November 22 1944 with comments in his logbook (H2S)which is airborne ground scanning radar system to identify targets on the ground for night and all-weather bombing. It has been used before by bomber command but mostly aboard PFF (Path Finder Flights) to mark targets for the bombers during raids. Now it is being installed and use on individual Lancasters to help bomb aimers during the bombing runs.

Tonight the crew is back aboard JN-M "The Captain's Fancy". Twenty five aircraft took off as detailed to attack Nordstern Oil Refinery Plant at Gelsenkirchen carrying 4,000 lb and 500 lb bombs. All aircraft attacked in formation bombing on navigational aids as the cloud was 10/10 with tops at 8000 ft. The attack was thought to be well concentrated, though it was impossible to observe the results. Flak opposition was moderate, but no fighter opposition was encountered. Ed's crew take off at 12:49 hrs and return at 17:07 hrs. Three daytime missions in a row.

OPS 4 - November 27 1944

More H2S training for Ed on the 22 November 1944 and back to OPS five days later. Talk about learning on the job. The Captain's Fancy again today but they have a substitute at rear gunner tonight Sgt J. Messer RAFVR a Brit. Twenty three aircraft carried out a successful attack on Cologne Marshalling Yard with 4,000 lb and 500 lb bombs. Flak over the target was moderate but accurate. One aircraft captained by F/O D.P. Leadley landed away at Manston. The crew were unhurt, but the aircraft was damaged. Take off time at 12:28 hrs and Landed at 16:59 hrs.

OPS 5 - November 30 1944

The crew draws Lancaster NN747 JN-O tonight with the nose art "Dogsbody Again" and F/O H. Campbell is back in the rear gunners position. Eighteen aircraft took off as detailed carrying 4,000 lb, 1,000 lb, 500 lb, and Incendiary bombs to attack the coking plant at Osterfeld. Seventeen aircraft attacked the target successfully through ten tenths cloud with tops 10,000 feet, and the raid was reported as being well concentrated. One aircraft captained by NZ411915 F/O J.A. McIntosh is missing and the aircraft is believed to have had its tail shot away. Ed's crew reports that they were hit by flak twice! Departure time was 12:28 hrs and return 16:50. Who said the Lancaster only flew at night?

OPS 6 - December 2 1944

"The Captain's Fancy" and normal crew again for some daytime flying. Seventeen aircraft took off to make a daylight attack on the Coking Plant at Dortmund. All crews were successful in attacking the target which was covered by 10/10 cloud, tops being about 12,000 ft. and the raid was thought to be successful, though the Bomber stream was not as concentrated as usual. Flak was moderate, but very erratic, and none of our aircraft suffered damage. Bombs carried on this attack were 4,000 lb H.C., 1,000 lb. M.C. and 1,000 lb ANM (American Made Bombs). Departure time was 12:46 hrs and return 17:05 hrs.

OPS 7 - December 5 1944

Back to Lancaster NN747 JN-O today and for the first time the 8,000 lbs bombs. Twenty one aircraft set out as detailed to attack the Railway Marshalling Yards at Hamm during daylight, carrying 8,000 lb H.C., 4,000 H.C., 500 G.P., 500 G.P. (LD.), 500 M.C., 4 lb I.B. bombs and Munroe bomb (leaflet bomb). Twenty aircraft attacked the target area through 10/10 cloud but a break in the cloud a little later disclosed bomb bursts to be rather scattered. One aircraft was led astray by the leader, and bombed a last resort target at Heintrop. Early morning take off for Ed at 09:16 hrs and early return at 13:52 hrs.

OPS 8 - December 16 1944

A week off with a bit of G.H. training and back at the daytime bombing today with Lancaster NF981 JN-Y and for the first time carrying the 12,000 lbs (Tall Boy) bomb. Eighteen aircraft took off to attack the crucial railroad yards at Siegen Germany in rather poor weather conditions, carrying 1 x 12,000 H.C., 8,000 H.C., 4,000 H.C., 1,000 H.C., 500 cluster 4 lb and 4 lb I.B. Bombs. Three returned early with icing trouble. The main body experienced dense cloud and were unable to formate until they reached 20,000 ft. All crews bombed the target with several being able to see a built up area through occasional gaps in the dense cloud cover. It is concluded that the attack was successful. Some fighter and flak opposition was noticed en route, but our aircraft experienced no difficulty. Take off time 11:17 hrs return 17:04

OPS 9 - December 21 1944

Looks like Ed and crew are hooked up with JN-Y as twenty aircraft are detailed to attack Trier Germany, carrying 4,000 lb H.C. 500 lb and Munroe bombs. Only fourteen aircraft were able to attack the target the rest (including Ed's crew) being obliged to jettison part of their loads on the return journey as the leader of their formation was unable to release his bombs over the target. Those crews attacking, report good concentration with smoke rising above the clouds. Fourteen aircraft were detailed to attack the above target in daylight. Landed 17:24 hrs.

OPS 10 - December 23 1944

Lancaster JN-Y again along with the twenty one aircraft detailed on the 22nd December (cancelled due to fog) took off to attack Trier Germany in improved weather conditions, carrying 4,000 H.C., 500 G.P., 500 M.C., 500 ANM., 250 G.P. bombs. The target could be identified visually and T.Is were aimed at by most crews. The attack was reported as being good with very few scattered bombs. Several explosions were seen as our aircraft left the target. Ed's crew report being hit by flak once during raid. Take off time 11:59 hrs and landed

at 16:27 hrs. There was to be bombing planned for Bonn for the 24 December but was scrubbed due to fog. Time for a Christmas break.

OPS 11 - December 28 1944

Lancaster JN-Y once more with twenty one aircraft were detailed to attack the Gremberg Marshalling yard at Cologne, Germany carrying 4,000 H.C., 1,000 ANM., 500 ANM., 500 M.C., and 250 G.P. Bombs. Nineteen aircraft bombed the target and one bombed short due to technical failure. One aircraft AA-S captained by NZ425292 F/O D. Sadgrove returned early owing to engine trouble. Crews were satisfied that the attack was successful, many reporting smoke rising well above the cloud tops. Slight heavy flak was experienced, but no fighter opposition. Departure time 12:09 hrs and landing 17:07 hrs.

OPS 12 - December 31 1944

Lancaster JN-Y and seventeen aircraft were detailed to attack Vohwinkel in daylight carrying 4,000 lbs H.C. and 500 lbs ANM and Munroe bombs. Moderate accurate heavy flak was met over the target, but all aircraft returned safely. A scattered raid was reported. These may now seem to look like milk runs but I can assure you they are not! Take off 11:41 hrs landed 16:32 hrs.



OPS 13 - January 2 1945

A new year and “lucky” OPS 13 and although the logbook shows Lancaster Y this is a different Lancaster NG113 AA-Y as 75 Squadron has the squadron markings JN and AA. A daylight departure but late in the afternoon at 15:17 hrs with nine aircraft attacked Nurnburg as detailed, carrying 4,000 H.C., 2,000 H.C., 500 M.C., 500G.P., 500Cluster No. 15

and Munro bombs. NZ403980 F/L K. McMillan in 'U', returned early owing to engine trouble. A good attack was reported and visibility was good. Crews reported a large explosion, Fires were seen 100 miles away. Arrival back at base at 22:52 so entered as night mission.

Of note the Lancaster they fly tonight will be lost on the 14th of February 1945 on Chemnitz Op. *Lancaster Mk.I NG113 AA-D was en route to the target over Germany when fire suddenly erupted in one wing aft of an engine. The blaze was thought to have started in a broken oil line. The pilot and engineer were unable to close down the engine or feather the propeller and with the fire continuing to grow, the decision was made to abandon the aircraft hurriedly. All the crew reached the ground uninjured but were soon captured and taken to a POW camp. One of the crew, Air Bomber F/S Chambers, later died when the train in which the prisoners were travelling, was strafed by RAF fighters. He was buried in the Durnbach War Cemetery.*

OPS 14 - January 5 1945

The crew draws Lancaster HK600 JN-K with nose art "Kiwi" a stylized drawing of a kiwi bird, wings outstretched with RAF roundels on each wing. Twenty one aircraft attacked the oil plants located at Ludwigshafen, Germany, carrying 4,000 H.C., 500 ANM., 500 G.P. 500 M.C., and Munro bombs. Visibility was clear. Heavy flak was met, but all aircraft returned safely. A scattered raid was reported. Ed's crew report they were hit by flak twice on another daring daytime raid. Take off 11:45 hrs and return at 17:45 hrs. All aircraft return safely and a scattered raid was reported.

OPS 15 - January 7 1945

Lancaster HK601 JN-D today for a raid on Munich, Germany. JN-D has nose art of "Dog/Snifter" which was a cartoon of a dog similar in style to the Disney character "Pluto". Eight aircraft detailed attacked Munich in ten tenths cloud carrying 4,000 H.C. , 1,000 M.C., 500 MC., 500 cluster 41b., 750 cluster No.17 and No. 15. Bombs. Crews bombed on flares. A mushroom explosion and red glow were observed through cloud. F/O Flamank in 'P' returned early through a technical failure. This was a night mission with departure at 19:09 hrs and return at 02:59 hrs.

OPS 16 - January 11 1945

Back to the regular Lancaster of JN-Y today for a daytime raid to Krefeld, Germany. Nineteen aircraft were detailed to attack Krefeld, carrying 4,000 H.C., 500AMN., 500G.P., 500 M.C., 250 G.P., and Munro bombs. Seventeen aircraft bombed the target in 10/10ths cloud with special equipment and two aircraft bombed last resort. Heavy flak was met over the target, but no fighters were seen. Departure ay 11:54 hrs and return 16:40 hrs

OPS 17 - January 15 1945

JN-Y again for a daylight raid into the Ruhr valley with eighteen aircraft detailed to attack Langendreer, carrying 4,000 H.C., 500AMN., 500 M.C., 250 G.P., and Munro bombs. One aircraft 'D' captained by F/O Leadley failed to reach the target owing to starboard inner engine failing. No results were observed owing to ten tenths cloud. Flak was slight over the target. No fighter opposition was encountered. Departure 11:43 hrs and Landed 16:40 hrs.

OPS 18 - January 16 1945

JN-Y on more oil refining targets tonight with a raid on Wanne Eickel, Germany. Seventeen aircraft attacked Wanne Hickle in ten tenths cloud, tops 6/7000 feet, carrying 4,000 H.C., 500 G.P. 500 ANM, 500 M.C. 250 G.P. and Munro bombs. Crews bombed with the aid of instruments and sky markers. Flak was moderate. The general impression was that bombing was concentrated on markers and red glow seen through cloud. The aircraft captained by NZ426235 F/S Wood, J, was attacked by a F.W. 190. The rear gunner opened fire, but no hits were observed and our aircraft suffered no damage. The aircraft captained by NZ414376 F/L T. Blewett unfortunately crashed in this country. The captain and Air Bomber NZ426234 F/O J. Wilson were killed. The Navigator 1398282 F/S Cornell, B.T. died later as a result of severe injuries. Not a milk run tonight as Ed's squadron suffers a loss. Departure time was 23:18 hrs and arrival 04:16 hrs.

OPS 19 - January 28 1945

Some time off for Ed and his crew but it's back at it with JN-Y to bomb the rail assets at (Gremberg) Cologne, Germany. Twenty aircraft attacked Cologne (Gremberg) as ordered, carrying 4,000 H.C., 500 ANM., 500 M.C. "50 G.P. and Munro bombs. Cloud broke to nil just before the target and crews were able to identify the marshalling yard. Accurate slight to moderate heavy flak was met over the target. No fighters were seen. Bursts were seen on the marshalling yard. All returned to base. Not a milk run today as Ed's crew report being hit by flak four times! Take off 10:14 hrs and return 16:09 hrs

OPS 20 - January 29 1945

This will be Ed's last OPS of the war and probably the last time he will ever be in a Lancaster bomber with their usual "kite" JN-Y. Nineteen aircraft attacked Krefeld, Germany marshalling yard in ten tenths cloud, carrying 4,000 H.C., 500 ANM., 500 M.C., and 250 G.P. Bombs. Aircraft bombed in formation with the aid of instruments. A good concentration was reported. Heavy flak over the target was the only opposition encountered. I wonder if Ed realizes on the trip home that this is his last mission? Take off time 10:05 hrs and touch down in a setting sun at Mepal at 15:29 hrs.

Ed Deschaine Commissioned 28 February 1945

The following is from the Bomber Command Museum Of Canada Website.

The successes of Bomber Command were purchased at terrible cost. Of every 100 airmen who joined Bomber Command, 45 were killed, 6 were seriously wounded, 8 became Prisoners of War, and only 41 escaped unscathed (at least physically). Of the 120,000 who served, 55,573 were killed including over 10,000 Canadians. Of those who were flying at the beginning of the war, only ten percent survived. It is a loss rate comparable only to the worst slaughter of the First World War trenches. Only the Nazi U-Boat force suffered a higher casualty rate.

Canadian pilot and author Murray Peden recalls: "The crews faced formidable odds, odds seldom appreciated outside the Command. At times in the great offensives of 1943 and 1944 the short-term statistics foretold that less than 25 out of each 100 crews would survive their first tour of 30 operations. On a single night Bomber Command lost more aircrew than Fighter Command lost during the Battle of Britain. Yet the crews buckled on their chutes and set out with unshakeable resolution night after night. They fell prey to the hazards of icing, lightning, storm and structural failure, and they perished amidst the bursting shells of the flak batteries. But by far the greater number died in desperately unequal combat under the overwhelming firepower of the tenacious German night fighter defenders."

Yet despite the chilling odds, the flow of volunteers never faltered. The price was known to be enormous, but it was a price which continued to be paid with unquestioning courage. If today it represents a debt which can never be repaid, it is at least a debt which must never be forgotten.

Ed Deschaine returned to Canada on 14 May 1945 after completing 50 OPS missions aboard the iconic Avro Lancaster bomber.

Gordon Edward Deschaine - DFC

The Distinguished Flying Cross is the third-level military decoration awarded to personnel of the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force and other services, and formerly to officers of other Commonwealth countries, instituted for "an act or acts of valour, courage or devotion to duty whilst flying in active operations against the enemy". Notification of this and other awards are publicly notified through the London Gazette. As I mentioned earlier when Ed arrived at 75 (NZ) Squadron he acquired the title Warrant Officer with the granting of the DFC he now has the title Pilot Officer. Distinguished Flying Cross award effective 10 May 1945 as per *London Gazette* dated 24 May 1945 and AFRO (Air Force Routine Orders) 1453/45 dated 14 September 1945. Here is the notice naming Ed with a typographical error showing 74 Squadron instead of 75 Squadron. *"This Warrant Officer has completed numerous operations against the enemy in the course of which he has invariably displayed the utmost fortitude, courage and devotion to duty."* As a result of Ed being awarded the DFC he became a commissioned officer with the title "Pilot Officer"

2670	SUPPLEMENT TO THE LONDON GAZETTE, 25 MAY, 1945	
John Alexander WELCH (Can/J.87445), 405 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.	Sidney Donald SMITH (Can/J.90218), 405 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.	
Charles Douglas Franklin WILLIAMS (Can/J.86975), 419 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.	Gus SUPERGIA (Can/J.90611), 431 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.	
Mervin Douglas WOODS (Can/J.19126), 166 Sqn.	Eric Travis TAYLOR (Can/J.93520), 7 Sqn.	
Lloyd William WRIGHT (Can/J.25937), 424 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.	John Alfred TURPIN (Can/J.92863), 102 Sqn.	
Stanley Grover WRIGHT (Can/J.26104), 514 Sqn.	Lloyd Jack WESTON (Can/J.92560), 419 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.	
Harold Foord WILLIAMSON (Can/J.27291), 431 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.		
<i>Acting Flying Officers.</i>	<i>Warrant Officers (1st Class).</i>	
Lorne Francis McGUIRE (Can/J.89084), 432 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.	Gordon Edward DESCHAIINE (Can/R.109929), 74 (N.Z.) Sqn.	
Albert Joseph MARTEL (Can/J.88173), 425 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.	Victor Hugh HORNER (Can/R.129968), 35 Sqn. (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.	
Irwin REBICK (Can/J.90642), 10 Sqn.	<i>Warrant Officers (2nd Class).</i>	
<i>Pilot Officers.</i>	William Edward ALLAN (Can/R.158333), 405 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.	
Jean Paul Raoul Conrade BENOIT (Can/J.93505), 433 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.	Robert Frederick McKENZIE (Can/R.142081), 7 Sqn.	
Ivan Duggan BENTON (Can/J.93253), 405 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.	Percy Carl ROACH (Can/R.224492), 405 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.	
Hubert George BISHOP (Can/J.92591), 431 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.	Alvin James WILLIAMS (Can/R.188286), 405 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.	
Joseph William CLIFTON (Can/J.90982), 420 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.		
William Robert CORNELL (Can/J.90498), 431 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.	<i>Distinguished Flying Medal.</i>	
Gordon Alexander COX (Can/J.92193), 405 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.	<i>Flight Sergeants.</i>	
Albert Henry DELONIE (Can/J.92283), 158 Sqn.	Can/R.221382 Donald James NELLIGAN, 428 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.	
	Can/R.210040 Dermot Ronald PYNE, 405 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.	
	Can/R.174405 William Rowland READ, 608 Sqn.	
	Can/R.220282 Clifford Manly ROBINSON, 405 (R.C.A.F.) Sqn.	

Aircraft In Which Ed Has Flown



Avro Anson



Fairy Battle



Armstrong Whitworth Whitley Bomber

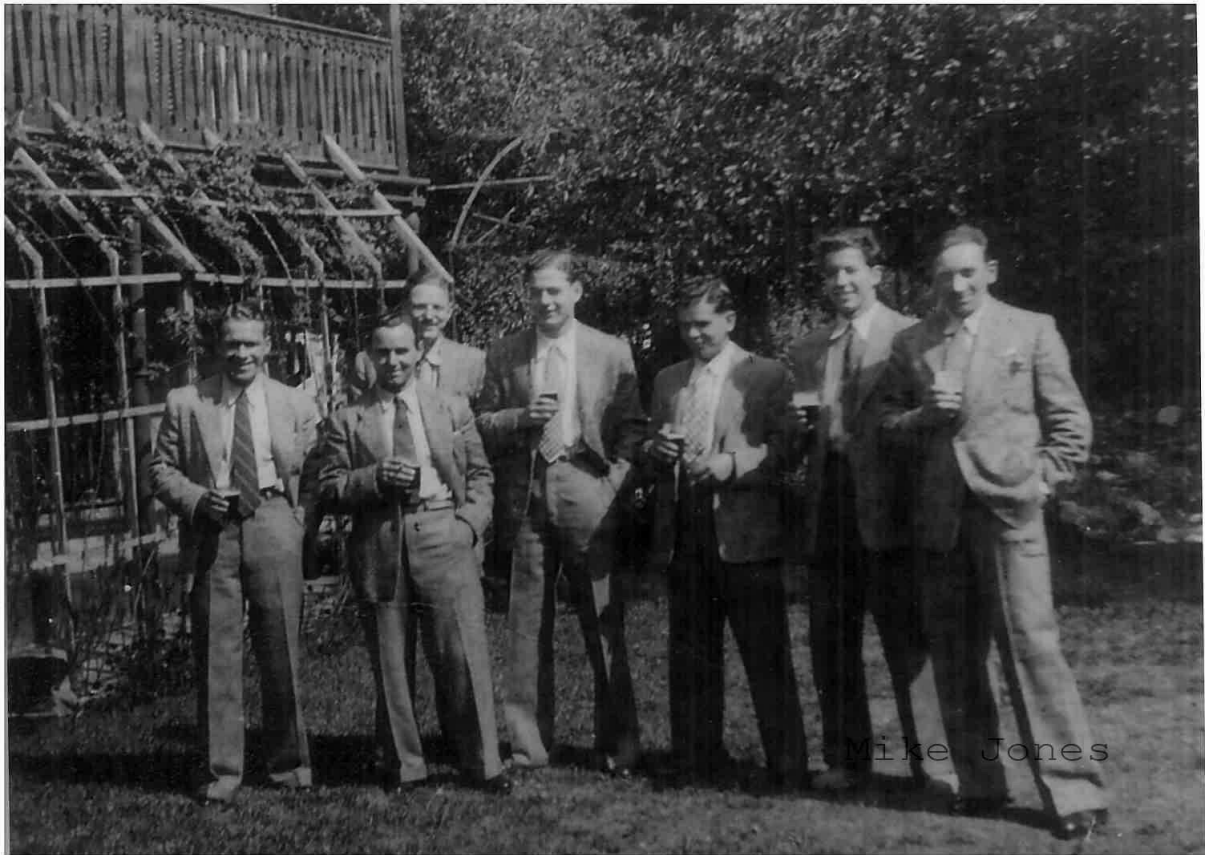


Avro Manchester Bomber



Avro Lancaster Bomber and Vickers Wellington Bomber





Ed's crew while being "captured" in Portugal (Photo Mike Jones)
The Factory House in Oporto, Portugal where crew was held





Bomb aimer position Lancaster (above) Pilot position Lancaster (below)



'Cooks' tour of Germany
Manchester Lancasters from

stay in Hampden
July 1941 - October, 1943

R.A.F. STATION
WOODHALL SPA
LINCOLNSHIRE

Telephone - Woodhall - 2195

Aachen.
Brest
Hamburg
Berlin.
Brest (daylight)
Essen.
Lubeck
Essen.
Dortmund (ditched)
Kiel
Kiel
Berlin
Cologne.
Essen
Bremen
Bremen
Berlin.
Duisberg.
Dusseldorf.
Mainz.
Dusseldorf.
Danzig (daylight).
Hamburg
Frankfurt
Hassel

Laarbrücken
Karlsruhe.
Bremen
Frankfurt.
Wismar
Berlin.
Wismar
Kiel
Cologne
Genoa
Le Creusot (daylight).
Dusseldorf
Boschum
Friedrichshaven
Spezia
Sellenkirchen
Kelsenkirchen
Turin (In. 88 des.)
Hamburg
Essen
Milan
Hamburg
Reuensmunde (In. 190 des.)
Berlin
Nürnberg
Gladbach
Berlin
Munich
Antheon Viaduct (ditched)
Berlin

"Cooks Tour" list of missions flown by F/O S.E.J. Jones DFM (Photo Mike Jones)

Conclusion

On the 4th of August 1941, 19 year old Gordon “Ed” Deschaine walked into No. 8 recruiting centre RCAF in Windsor Ontario and signed up for the ultimate sacrifice. Less than twelve months later he was on English soil and by the 2nd of February 1943 was climbing aboard a Lancaster Bomber at the age of 21 years. Statistically 21 years was the average age of airmen in Bomber Command during WW2. The 50 missions that Ed flew do not represent the danger he faced as many of aircrew lost their lives during training and aircraft conversion. Aviation during the war was evolving at a very rapid pace but unlike today the mission wasn’t about safety as much as it was getting aircraft in the air to fight. For every time they took off on one of these OPS there could have been hundreds of times that the crew would go to the briefing, find out their targets, have a bite to eat and then get out to their aircraft only to find out the mission was scrubbed for the night.

Statistically speaking Ed should not have completed more than 17 missions, yet he came back for a “2nd time around” as is noted in his logbook in November 1944. Lady luck has something to do with this but also Ed was lucky that he had excellent training along the way and was also fortunate to end up with experienced pilots like Sgt. J. Tomes, Flight Lieutenant S.E.J. Jones and Flight Officer McDonald. In addition he was fortunate to fly on the Avro Lancaster, a heavy bomber that was capable of flying higher and greater distances and was far more reliable than many others.

When you contemplate the environment that these men flew in, mission after mission, it is truly heroic. Taking off mostly at night, a few minutes between aircraft then joining up in wave after wave of bombers with all aircraft lighting off, no radio communication and setting out on a route with minimal navigation aids and weather information. Then consider the environment of flying in an unpressurized, very noisy, poorly heated cabin at 20,000 ft where the outside air temperature would be -20C even in the summertime, on oxygen and alone in your gun turret with only intercoms for hours on end. Mid air collisions between friendly bombers happened frequently and even dropping bombs on friendly bombers happened more often as well. The trip home was always the most dangerous because the German night fighters were waiting for them to pick them off.

It was my honour to share this story and hopefully shed some light on a true hero who was Pilot Officer Gordon “Ed” Deschaine.

John Desramaux

Glossary

AFU	Advanced Flying Unit
ANS	Air Navigation School
AOS	Air Observers Squadron
BCATP	British Commonwealth Air Training Plan
B&GS	Bombing and Gunnery School
C/O	Commanding Officer
DFC	Distinguished Flying Cross Medal
DFM	Distinguished Flying Medal
DSO	Distinguished Service Order Medal
D.N.C.O.M.	Did Not Complete Operational Mission.
F/O	Flying Officer
FLAK	German gun launch missile system
GEE	Radio navigation system
HCU	Heavy Conversion Unit
H2S	Forward looking radar system
IFF	International Friend or Foe device
LFS	Lancaster Finishing School
MONICA	Read facing radar alert system
Nickels	Propaganda leaflet drop
OBOE	British aerial blind bombing navigation system
ORB	Operational record Book
OTU	Operational Training Unit
OPS	Actual operational wartime mission flown
PFF	Path Finder Flight (Bomb marker)
P/O	Pilot Officer
QTE	Your true heading to my station
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAFVR	Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force
RNAF	Royal New Zealand Air Force
ROE	Record Of Events
SBC	Small Bomb Containers
SOE	Summary of Event
SORTIE	Mission
T.I.	Target Identifiers
USAAF	United States Army Air Force
VC	Victoria Cros
V2	German rocket missile

