

692 Mosquito Bomber Squadron



Mike Cox

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All proceeds from this book will be divided
equally between the RAF Benevolent Fund, and
the Mosquito Museum, London Colney.

This book is dedicated to the men
and women of 692 Squadron, Royal
Air Force, in recognition of their
service, bravery and sacrifice
during World War Two.
We owe them so much.

Acknowledgements.

In the preparation of this book, a huge debt of gratitude is owed to the late Barry Blunt, whose extensive and exhaustive research into the Squadron was crucial in gaining an insight into the lives of the men and women who served, and their actions and deeds in those dark days.

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Introduction

I first became interested in the Mosquito Squadrons of World War Two when I learnt that my wife's uncle served with 105 Squadron. I had grown up as a boy reading the exploits of "Braddock VC" in the Victor comic, and was introduced to the Mosquito then.

As I researched into the history of the wartime squadrons I became aware of the Squadron books written by the late Barry Blunt, which were a superb record in every way; and having realised that he had done the research for 692 Squadron, but had sadly passed away before he had the chance to write this book, I resolved that I would do so in his honour, using much of his original work.

I soon realised that I would not be able to match the standard of his original work, but nevertheless, am proud to present this book to you as my attempt to tell the story of the brave men and women who served in this Squadron, during the dark days of the Second World War.

RAF Graveley

The airfield was built in 1941-42 to the west of Graveley village, which lies 4.5 miles south of Huntingdon, in Cambridgeshire.

It was used initially by No.161 Squadron with Lysanders and Wellingtons, from March 1942, and then at the beginning of August, Graveley was re-allocated to the Pathfinder Force which brought in No. 35 Squadron and its Halifaxes from No. 4 Group at Linton-on-Ouse. Their first operation from Graveley took place the night of August 18/19, 1942. On New Year's Day 1944, No. 692 Squadron formed at Graveley to fly Mosquitos for No. 8 Group, undertaking its first sorties exactly a month later, the squadron becoming part of what was known as the Light Night Striking Force. In March, No. 35 Squadron exchanged its Halifaxes for Lancasters, which it operated until its final sorties on April 25, 1945.

No. 692 Squadron Mosquitos carried out their last raid on May 2/3, 1945 with an attack on Kiel. In 310 operations from Graveley the squadron lost 17 Mosquitos.

A total of 150 Bomber Command aircraft were missing or crashed in the UK in operations flown from this station: 83 Halifaxes, 32 Lancasters and 35 Mosquitos.

Acknowledgments to: Bomber Command Bases Then and Now

Martin A. Freeman

The Light Night Striking Force (LNSF)

The Mosquito Squadrons of 8 Group, the Pathfinders of Bomber Command, undertook many roles, from developing accurate navigation and bombing systems and flying bomber support sorties. They also flew diversionary raids to the Main Force, becoming known as the **Light Night Striking Force**. Martyn Chorlton details the history.

The story of the LNSF is one that began in late May 1943 when 2 Group ceased to be a part of Bomber Command. thanks to the foresight of Don Bennett, two of the group's Mosquito units, 105 and 139 Squadrons were transferred to 8 Group, better known as the Pathfinders. The seeds were now sown for a new approach to the bomber command offensive making use of the Mosquitos' speed, range and ability to pack a relatively undetected punch against an enemy who was often unaware of their presence until it was too late. Mosquitos had been a part of 8 Group since August 1942 when 109 Squadron was transferred to it from the WIDU. The squadron had been quietly working in the background developing and testing Oboe, the blind target marking system, initially using the Wellington IV, but the equipment did not like the transition to the Mosquito. Problems with the equipment were not fully resolved until June 1943 but Bennett's impatience and the keenness displayed by the crews of 109 Squadron resulted in Oboe entering service before it was completely shaken down. At 1755hrs on the December 20, 1942, Sqn Ldr H E Bufton and his navigator Flt Lt E L I Fould led six Mosquitos against the Lutterade power station. On approaching the target, it was Bufton who

dropped the first Oboe-aimed bombs along with two other crews from the small formation. The Oboe transmitter in the remaining three aircraft failed to work properly and they bombed elsewhere, a familiar story to those who had been working on the project for many months. Post attack reconnaissance flown the following day over Lutterade was unable to establish whether the Oboe attack had been successful because of craters from a previous raid. However, local reports stated that nine bombs fell in open country approximately a mile from the power station and very close to a large area of housing. The system would prove to be invaluable as the war progressed and, by June 1943, 8 Group introduced 105 Squadron as its second Oboe-equipped unit. 139 Squadron's motto 'We destroy at Will' was very appropriate since receiving its first Mosquito IV back in June 1942. Twelve months later, the squadron was doing just that and, on June 13/14, 1943, 13 of them set out to bomb Berlin, Dusseldorf and Cologne for its first operation for 8 Group. The raid was a little bit of an anti-climax as all three cities were cloud-covered and only estimated positions were bombed. What was significant about the raid was the fact that all returned safely, without harassment by night fighters or flak, in half the time that a four engined heavy aircraft would have taken.

After gaining further experience flying 'nuisance' raids during June and into mid-July, 139 Squadron was tasked with dropping Window (a system devised to thwart enemy radar) ahead of a large raid for the first time. The target was Essen on July 25/26 with 705 aircraft taking part including 19 Mosquitos at the front, flying alongside the seasoned PFF crews. As the target was approached, the Mosquitos began dropping Window (thin strips of metal foil) on their first run

and then went around again to bomb the target. Four nights later, the squadron's Mosquitos went one step further and dropped Window over Hamburg ahead of the marker crews.

Another new tactic thanks to the increased involvement of the Mosquito was the introduction of the diversion raid or 'spoofing'. The first time this was tried out was on the night of August 10/11 when the main force of 653 attacked Nuremberg. Meanwhile, just nine Mosquitos carried out their 'spoof' on Mannheim, dropping Window on the run in and also, for the first time, dropping TIs (Target Indicators) as well. The small force then made two extra runs on the target, dropping HE (high explosive bombs) as they went. While losses were average on the Nuremberg raid, the effect of the diversion could not be fully gauged, but on the night of August 17/18, the spoof certainly made a difference. The target on this occasion was Peenemünde and if the enemy's night fighter controllers got a sniff of this target being attacked, then most of the Luftwaffe's finest would be directed towards them. 596 Lancasters, Halifaxes and Stirlings headed for the German Research Establishment while eight Mosquitos set course for Berlin. Once over the German capital, the first two of three waves were already preparing to attack Peenemünde, completely unmolested by the enemy except for local flak defences. This could be credited to the highly successful diversion by 139 Squadron who had duped the enemy fighter controllers into thinking that Berlin was the main target. To the enemy's credit, they reacted extremely fast when they had realised their error and the third wave of bombers would bear the brunt of the night's losses; but it could have been so much worse. Even 139 Squadron did not completely get away with it, losing two

aircraft by the end of the night. Fg Off A S Cooke and Sgt D A H Dixon in Mosquito IV DZ379 were intercepted by a night-fighter and shot down near Berge, killing both crew instantly. The second loss was more fortunate for the crew when Flt Lt R A V Crampton and Fg Off P L U Cross were both injured after DZ465 crash-landed at Swanton Morely. When it was the turn of the bombers to hit Berlin again on the night of September 31/1, several of the crews reported seeing white flares along the route in and out of the target. These were presumed to be enemy fighter flares to help guide the Wild Boar crews towards the main bomber stream. A dangerous game of cat and mouse had been initiated, so to counteract the threat the Mosquitos on the next trip to Berlin on September 3/4 dropped their own White Drip flares at intervals, effectively marking a false route away from the main force.

This tactic worked well and the Mosquitos were now being stalked by night fighters but the performance of the aircraft and crew were more than up to the job of out-manoeuvring the enemy.

Throughout September 1943, the Germans were well aware of how the Mosquito was being used by 8 Group. Because of the aircraft's habit of operating at higher altitudes, the enemy quickly developed flak which could burst at up to 30,000ft. Two of 139 Squadron's Mosquitoes were coned by searchlights over Dusseldorf and the subsequent barrage meant that both had to return to England on a single engine. Sqn Ldr D A Braithwaite was coned over Brandenburg on September 14/15 en route to Berlin. The Mosquito was hit at least 10 times by flak but, typifying the spirit of 139 Squadron, Braithwaite continued on to bomb Berlin and then returned home safely to Wyton.

By late October, Bennett found himself with a surplus of Mosquito crews which were more than sufficient to form a third flight for 139 Squadron. However, Bennett decided that the surplus would be best used to create a new unit. Eight crews were transferred from 139 Squadron to create 627 Squadron on November 12, 1943 at Oakington.

The New Year brought another new squadron to the 8 Group fold when 692 Squadron was formed at Gravelly on November 1, 1944 under the command of Wg Cdr W G Lockhart. The new unit did not manage to contribute to the fight for most of January but 139 and 627 Squadrons managed 184 successful sorties between them. One of these was a particularly effective spoof on Berlin where TIs and window were dropped causing the bulk of the night fighter force to assemble over the capital while the main force plastered Stettin.

The GH and H2S target marking systems.

By this time, 139 Squadron was being slowly steered towards becoming 8 Group's main marking squadron for the LNSF.

Experiments with GH had been disappointing but one Mosquito was modified to take H2S and this flew operationally for the first time to Berlin on January 27/28.

Five days later, the same aircraft led a small force of Mosquitos, including one from 692 Squadron on its first operation, on another raid to Berlin using H2S. The biggest raid of the war so far on Berlin on February 15/16 owed part of its success to Sqn Ldr S D Watts and an accomplice. Watts was busily laying a false route out of the target and, while checking to make sure his flares were being backed up, was amused and surprised to see a German aircraft reinforcing the flares behind him.

The Mosquito was continually being experimented on to find out the limit of its capabilities which were still a long way from being completely exhausted. A proposal was put forward in April 1943, suggesting the Mosquito was more than man enough to carry a 4,000lb single bomb load; namely a 'Cookie'. The bomb bay was easily modified but the centre of gravity, thanks to the extra weight, was causing a few headaches, and in the case of the Mosquito IV and IX, was never completely eradicated. Regardless of the C of G issues, a pair of modified Mk.IVs were delivered to Oakington for 627 Squadron but for some unknown reason **were immediately transferred to Graveley for 692 Squadron**, which had recently formed. The two converted Mosquitos were ready for action and, on February 23, 1944, Sqn Ldr Watts and Fg Off C Hassell took off for Düsseldorf at 1903hrs. Right behind them was Flt Lt V S Moore and Plt Off P F Dillon, setting the stage to see which crew would be the first to drop a Cookie from a Mosquito. 105 Squadron provided the small marking force and, at 2045.30hrs, Watts navigator/bomb aimer pressed the bomb release first, followed one minute later by the bomb from Moore's aircraft. With still only three squadrons making up 8 Group's LNSF, the Mosquitos still managed to fly 509 sorties of which 489 of them were successful. One particularly successful spoof operation was flown by 627 Squadron on March 1/2. While the main force attacked Stuttgart, 11 Mosquitos created an elaborate diversion all the way to Munich, resulting in just four bombers being lost out of a force of 557 aircraft.

The LNSF continued to swell when 571 Squadron was formed at Downham Market on April 5, 1944. The squadron was to be a two-flight setup at first but some of its intended

aircraft were transferred to 105 Squadron which was now at Bourn. 105 Squadron now gained 'C' Flight as there was now a higher priority being placed on smaller targets within Oboe range and Bennett was well aware of the pressure being placed on his two Oboe-equipped squadrons.

571 Squadron took part in its first operation on April 12/13 when two crews were among 39 Mosquitos in an attack on Osnabrück. This size of raid was now becoming the norm for the LNSF and April 1944 in particular included some very large Mosquito raids. 35 attacked Hannover at the beginning of the month, followed by 41 against Cologne and another 40 attacking Essen on April 8/9. The raid on April 13/14 saw Mosquitos carrying Cookies to Berlin for the first time. The extra fuel needed was carried in a pair of 50-gallon drop tanks which were neatly fitted under each wing.

On April 15, the LNSF shrunk slightly when 627 Squadron was transferred 5 Group to see the remainder of its wartime service out at Woodhall Spa. Despite the drop in manpower, the LNSF still managed to carry out 553 sorties with only the loss of a single aircraft.

As D-Day approached, Bomber Command were becoming increasingly pre-occupied with targets in Northern France. This did not stop the LNSF continuing to carry the fight to Germany which included another seven attacks on Berlin. With still only three squadrons, the LNSF managed to fly 661 sorties but this figure would be on the rise again with the arrival of another squadron on August 1, 1944. 608 Squadron was re-formed at Downham Market with the Mosquito XX and was destined to operate from the Norfolk airfield for the remainder of the war. Only four days later, Sqn Ldr J D Bolton flew the squadron's first operation to Wanne-Eickel. 608 Squadron were in the thick of the action from the start

and one very successful attack on Cologne on August 23/24 saw 'an enormous explosion lasting 45 seconds lit up streets and buildings'. It did not go all the LNSF's way that night, with one 692 Squadron aircraft crashing en route, killing both crew and Flt Lt S O Webb in 608 Squadron Mosquito XX KB242 being attacked at least four times by a night fighter. Webb and his navigator, Plt Off Campbell, were lucky to make it to Woodbridge uninjured.

The LNSF expanded again on September 5, when 128 Squadron joined the fold after re-forming at Wyton. Just five days later, the whole squadron joined the fight when it was part of a 47-strong force which attacked Berlin. The capital was attacked by the LNSF again the following night with another 47 Mosquitos led by 139 Squadron. It was not a good night for the Upwood-based unit which only managed to drop TIs from two of the nine aircraft designated. Enemy flak was also alarming accurate this night, resulting in the loss of Flt Lt J A F Halcro and Flt Lt T J Martin, both RCAF; their Mosquito crashing in the Horst Wessel district of Berlin. Another 139 Squadron aircraft, flown by Plt Off H A Fawcett was hit by flak during his bombing run which knocked out an engine and damaged the hydraulics. Unable to open the bomb doors or lower its undercarriage, Mosquito XX KB227 limped back to Woodbridge where Fawcett executed a perfect crash landing with only minor injuries to himself and his navigator, Fg Off P L U Cross DFC.

With its Overlord commitments declining, the heavy squadrons were now back in force against Germany and the LNSF were called upon to continue 'spoofing' and dropping Window on targets for 8 Group. Kiel and Frankfurt were among the targets attacked with a raid on September 15/16 being particularly successful. While 490 aircraft attacked Kiel,

nine Mosquitoes ‘spoofed’ Lubeck with Window and TIs and followed this by bombing the port. Another 27 Mosquitos attacked Berlin, not to mention 7 others which Windowed Kiel in front of the main raid.

142 Squadron was the next unit to be reformed with Mosquito XXVs at Gransden Lodge on October 25, 1944. Two aircraft were part of a 59-strong Mosquito force on Cologne four days later and two more were over Berlin, joining 60 other Mosquitos in a two-phase diversion. Poor weather disrupted operations during November but this did not stop the LNSF from attacking Hanover nine times in favour of Berlin. Oboe-guided raids, thanks to the advancing allies, could now be extended further east putting cities such as Stuttgart well within range. On November 5/6, 65 Mosquitos, led by Oboe and backed up by 139 Squadron, hit the city in two phases 3½ hours apart. Many of the crews involved, all of whom returned safely, reported huge fires and large explosions throughout both phases.

By early December, an average of over 60 Mosquitos were attacking main targets and this was set to increase, with the addition of another squadron on December 16, 1944. 162 Squadron was re-formed at Bourn and along with several new crews for 139 Squadron were the first to be sent on ‘Siren Tours’ to gain H2S experience. These tours covered every corner of Germany and involved dropping a single 500lb bomb on three or four separate targets. While all crews benefitted from these long trips, it also resulted in keeping ground defences on continuous alert and resulted in many lost man hours in the enemy factories without causing a great deal of damage. The first sirens were flown on December 23/24 against Bremen, Hanover, Münster and Osnabrück. The same

night, 52 Mosquitoes attacked Limburg rail yards and another 40 attacked Siegburg while the heavies rested.

New Year's Day 1945 saw a classic example of the Mosquito in action when 17 of them attacked railway tunnels between the Rhine and the Ardennes battle area. The object of the exercise was to prevent German forces from being reinforced and in broad daylight and with a 'cookie' apiece, the Mosquitos dived to 200ft dropping their short-fuse delay bombs into the entrances of the tunnels. One crew, Plt D R Tucker and Sgt F A J David, of 571 Squadron, found three tunnels and after making a dummy run on each, in full view of the local villagers, dropped their cookie perfectly into the entrance. Tucker banked round to view his handy work and saw that the whole tunnel had erupted, causing the hillside to collapse into the path of an approaching train.

The final piece of the 8 Group Mosquito jigsaw was in place on January 25, 1945 when 163 Squadron was reformed at Wyton. This now meant that Bennett could easily muster 150 aircraft at a moment's notice without putting up a maximum effort.

The ever-increasing strength was put to good effect on the February 1/2, 1945 when 176 Mosquito sorties were flown on eight separate targets. Ludwigshafen, Mainz, Siegen, Bruckhausen, Hanover, Nuremburg and Berlin were all hit; the latter involving 122 Mosquitos. Berlin would suffer mercilessly at the hands of the LNSF during the final months of the war and, from the February 20/21, the capital was attacked on 36 consecutive nights. Averaging 60 Mosquitos per raid, 2,538 sorties were flown to Berlin of which 2,409 were successful. 855 cookies were dropped on the city during this period alone and the LNSF continued to bomb Berlin right up to arrival of the Russian forces in late April 1945.

The Mosquitos of 8 Group had performed exceptionally well and, since its formation, they had flown 28,215 sorties with the loss of just 100 aircraft (0.4%), 70 of which were lost by 139 Squadron alone. Approximately 26,000 tons of bombs, of which nearly 10,000 of them were cookies, were dropped on Germany; a remarkable achievement for a small unarmed twin-engined bomber made of wood.

“The value of the Mosquito attacks as a supplement to the attacks by heavy aircraft is unquestioned and their contribution to the success of the combined bomber offensive was both significant and praiseworthy’ Bomber Command Review 1945.

Excerpts from the 692 Operations Records Books (ORBs)

01/01/1944 692 Squadron officially formed.

43 airmen and 3 Senior NCOs arrived, and by 12/01 another 20 personnel had arrived.

Flight Commanders E J Saunderson and S D Watts (Steve), and other senior staff were attached to 139 and 627

Squadrons, until Station was up to speed and aircraft arrived.

On 15/01 two Mosquito Mark 1V were allocated to the Squadron from 139 and 627 Squadrons.

On the 22nd the Senior NCOs, who were receiving six days Mossie training at 139 and 627 returned.

Acting Wing Commander A G Lockhart was in command.

01/02/44 First operation carried out – one aircraft to Berlin, followed by two aircraft to Frankfurt on the 4th, and 2 aircraft to Berlin on the 5th.

Berlin on the 1st was bombed in spite of adverse weather conditions at 2100 hours from a height of 27,000 feet, using the Gee direct reckoning technique. Moderate predicted heavy flak was experienced over the target.

On the Frankfurt op. Steve Watts collected shrapnel in his aircraft.

Frankfurt was again bombed on the 7th, 2 aircraft, followed by Brunswick on the 8th, 1 aircraft and Berlin again on the 10th, 2 aircraft, although 1 bombed Kiel due to being low on fuel.

Brunswick was the target again on the 11th, and F/L Moore collected a few pieces of shrapnel in his aircraft.

The single aircraft attack on the 15th to Berlin was carried out in conjunction with the heaviest raid of the war so far on

Berlin. A “spoof” lane of flares was dropped to confuse the German night-fighters.

Five Squadron aircraft attacked Berlin again, on the 19th, with Mosquitos from other squadrons, and this raid resulted in the Squadron’s first loss. The aircraft of F/L W Thomas DFC, and F/O J L Munby DFC, failed to return. The raid was a diversionary attack on Berlin, the main force attacked Leipzig. Stuttgart was bombed on the 20th, 4 aircraft, and then, on the 23rd, the Squadron dropped three 4,000lb bombs (“cookies”) on Dusseldorf, the first to be dropped on Germany by Mosquitos. These were carried by Mosquito Mark XVI aircraft which was modified by having a larger bomb-bay to accommodate the size of the bomb. This target was marked by 105 Squadron, who dropped target indicator flares (TIs) to “mark” the target, for the following planes to follow up and bomb.

A diversionary attack on Kiel was carried out on the 24th by 4 aircraft. This was followed by 2 aircraft bombing Mannheim, 1 aircraft bombing Saarbrücken, and 2 aircraft bombing Augsburg on the 25th.

Three aircraft bombing Dusseldorf on the 29th brought the first month’s operations to an end. Both aircraft of Grainger and Riley suffered damage by shrapnel splinters.

March 44 started with 5 a/c bombing Stuttgart on the 1st, 3 aircraft to München-Gladbach on the 2nd, 2 aircraft to Berlin on the 3rd, - route markers for this raid were dropped by 139 Squadron. 3 aircraft went to Dusseldorf on the same night.

Attacks continued with 2 or 3 aircraft until the 10th, when 6 aircraft bombed Duisburg, which was Oboe marked. Oboe was a blind bombing technique developed to improve the accuracy of bombing.

Frankfurt was bombed by 7 aircraft on the 13th, marked by Y equipped aircraft of 139 Squadron. Y equipment, I believe, was H2S, a form of radar, that again was developed as a bombing aid.

Nine aircraft dropped “Window” and bombed Stuttgart on the 15th in advance of a heavy bomber attack on the city.

“Window”, the dropping of foil covered strips of paper, was developed to confuse the enemy’s radar.

During the month, Acting W/C Lockhart left the Squadron, and F/L S D Watts (Steve), a New Zealander took command.

Two attacks on Cologne occurred on the 16th and 17th, 6 a/c on each of the raids.

Two aircraft undertook a Spoof attack on Kassel the next night, the 18th March. S/L Saunderson’s aircraft was hit. The shell splinter passed through the cabin and perforated F/L Clarkson’s leg. On the same night 6 aircraft attacked Frankfurt. Unfortunately , the aircraft of F/O J Leithead and F/O? J Burke failed to return. F/O Leithead was heard calling base on the VHF radio when over the North Sea on the way home, with no indication that anything was amiss. F/L Moore was forced to jettison his bomb over the North Sea on his way out due to an engine failure.

A very successful raid was carried out on the 23rd to Dortmund, 7 aircraft. Good Oboe marking. S/L Watts was delayed for 20 minutes on take-off, but made up 17 minutes by flying at 1,000 feet, instead of 20,000. When he arrived

the TI markers had gone out, but he dropped his bomb at the centre of three fires, and a very large explosion was heard. The flak was very intense by this time however, and his aircraft was holed in several places.

On the 24th, Dusseldorf, owing to a unexpected change in wind direction, some of our aircraft were blown considerably off course, and bombed Hamburg instead. The defences were very active in the area.

On the 29th, we sent 11 aircraft of 30 to Kiel.

1st April 1944 11 aircraft went to Hannover, where they bombed TIs but they were found to be dummy TIs so this was a waste of effort. F/L Moore realised, and was coned for 15 minutes, but managed to bomb in the right place. His aircraft was slightly damaged.

The operation on the 4th was more successful, to Cologne, but 3 aircraft were coned for a considerable period.

12 aircraft went to Hamburg on the 6th. Visibility was not good on the return due to low cloud, so the decision was taken to turn on FIDO (the fog dispersal system at base), which helped the aircraft to land safely.

On the 10th, the squadron went to Hannover, where a fire started south of the TI markers. F/L Moore considered it to be a dummy, to confuse aircraft to bomb in the wrong place.

13th April, the target was Berlin. It was the first time that cookies had been taken so far. Wing drop tanks had to be used to provide extra fuel. Searchlights and flak were moderate to intense, and 5 aircraft were coned for some time. Two were damaged by shell splinters. Also, on the outward leg the aircraft had to pass over thunderclouds at 28,000 feet, or alarmingly, fly through them.

Three more trips were carried out to Cologne, one more to Berlin, two to Mannheim, one a spoof, two to Dusseldorf, again one a spoof, a raid on Essen, and another spoof to Hamburg.

The month ended with raids to Stuttgart and Friedrichshaven, Hamburg, and Saarbrücken.

1st May, the target was a chemical works at Ludwigshaven. One aircraft was coned but no damage. A disappointing raid.

2nd May, Leverkusen, again a chemical works. A much more successful raid. F/O Richardson bombed on one engine which was u/s due to a coolant leak. The escaping vapour formed a white trail so he was picked up by searchlights and coned for 20 minutes. He escaped with just a small hole in the nose of the aircraft. F/O Macdonald's aircraft was coned for 30 minutes.

3rd May, Ludwigshaven chemical works again. It was intended that 2 aircraft would mark, and a "Master of Ceremonies" would be used to pinpoint the target by broadcasting on VHF, but the weather intervened and cloud made this virtually impossible.

4th May, Ludwigshaven again. On return several aircraft were off track and were engaged by Aachen defences. One aircraft was hit, and the navigator, W/O B Skinner was wounded in the head.

5th May, same target. Slight heavy flak. Again some crews were off track on return, and were coned by searchlights and shot up over Cologne, no damage fortunately.

7th May, Leverkusen. One aircraft, F/L Moore, jettisoned his bomb before the target due to two attacks by night-fighters.

8th May, Osnabruck, Master Bomber used. One aircraft, F/O I H S Macdonald, lost an engine on the way out, jettisoned his bomb and returned.

9th May, Berlin. Two aircraft were slightly damaged. Several aircraft became involved with the defences of the North German ports on the way out and return.

10th May, Ludwigshaven. Again, a Master Bomber was intended but did not happen. Moderate heavy flak at target.

12th May, 13 aircraft went to the Kiel Canal mine-laying. Crews to drop at 300 feet. Flew at 10,000 feet and then dived down to make attack. The southern stretch of the canal was practically undefended, although there may have been one or two light flak guns. The aircraft of P/O D M T Burnet and P/O G W Hume was missing. Crews further up towards Kiel reported many guns firing at point blank range from the banks. Also, guns from two ships were involved.

14th May, Cologne.

15th May, Ludwigshaven. A reasonably successful attack.

16th May, Berlin.

19th May, Cologne.

20th May, Dusseldorf rail marshalling yards. Adverse weather spoiled attack, - thunderclouds and immense lightning flashes.

21st May, Hannover, a spoof attack.

22nd May, Ludwigshaven. A tremendous explosion near the main markers was reported.

23rd May, Berlin, Ludwigshaven and Dortmund

24th May, Berlin

26th May, Ludwigshaven

27th May, Berlin, quite a successful attack.

28th May, Ludwigshaven, Master Bomber used to direct bombing, which was good. Started a large fire that could be seen 100 miles away. The enemy used dummy TIs to confuse bombing.

29th May, Hannover

30th May, Leverkusen, very successful attack, including a large explosion.

1st June, Mine-laying op. 5 aircraft dropped mines between 700 and 1100 feet.

3rd June, Ludwigshaven chemical works again.

4th June, Cologne, one aircraft crashed after take-off, which resulted in the death of F/O E? Talbot

5th June, Osnabruck

6th June, Ludwigshaven

7th June, Cologne, total force of 30 Mosquitos. Contrails were very persistent, - showed all crews were on track. Flak was very intense and accurate. Two aircraft were hit, one of which, piloted by F/L P K Burley DFC returned on one engine.

9th June, Berlin, a successful attack.

10th June, Berlin again, difficult conditions. Enemy used dummy TIs which may have attracted some bombs. The most dangerous part of a Berlin trip seems to be aircraft straying over ground defences of other areas. The aircraft of F/O I H S Macdonald and F/O E B Chatfield was posted missing. An aircraft, possibly theirs, was seen to explode on the ground, after bursting into flames in the Osnabruck/Munster area.

11th June, Berlin, enemy again put up some dummy TIs. Several crews were shaken by predicted flak in the Emden area on the way home.

12th June, Cologne, spoof attack, main force attacked Gelsenkirchen.

14th June, Gelsenkirchen, the Scholven Synthetic Oil Works, resulted in a fire, and a large explosion.

15th June, same again.

16th June, Berlin, a disappointing raid.

17th June, Berlin, a much better attack.

21st June, Berlin, Enemy used dummy TIs and dummy fires. 3 aircraft were hit. Sgt Ballard's aircraft lost an engine due to technical failure on return, and he landed at Coltishall.

22nd June, Hamburg, this raid went off well.

23rd June, Bremen, another good op.

24th June, Berlin, F/O A Mackinnon reported that he had been attacked by a night-fighter while in a searchlight cone leaving the target. The fighter made two attacks, and chased him for about two minutes. An aircraft from another squadron was thought to have been shot down following another fighter attack.

25th June, Homburg Synthetic Oil Plant, marked by Oboe aircraft. 500 lb. bombs instead of Cookies. This meant that a stick of bombs could be dropped over the target area ensuring a greater number of effective hits to be scored. Small fires grew and were seen 50 to 80 miles from the target.

26th June, Gotingen, a completely unsuccessful attack as most of the H2S marking aircraft failed. The weather en-route was very severe, and on return, base was out, so aircraft were

diverted to bases on the coast. The aircraft of F/L J P Farron DFC DFM and F/O C R Strang failed to return.

28th June, Saarbrücken. Again all the H2S aircraft had failures, so the Master Bomber instructed our crews to bomb the fires of the railway marshalling yards at Metz. Six aircraft did so. Then he instructed the rest to bomb the original target, which they did, despite but possibly aided by a fierce concentration of flak.

30th June, Homberg, a good attack in clear weather. A violent explosion followed by fires that could be seen from the Dutch coast. One aircraft returned early.

1st, 2nd, and 3rd July, Ops were cancelled.

4th July, Buer Synthetic Oil Plant. 500 lb. bombs were used, very poor weather conditions.

5th July, Buer again, this time a very successful raid. Intense heavy flak, and searchlights. One aircraft hit in the port radiator, and returned on one engine, landing at Woodbridge.

6th July, Gelsenkirchen. Not a good trip, a smoke-screen was used to obscure the target.

7th July, Berlin, a first-rate attack, although one of aircraft was missing, that of F/L P K Burley DFC and F/O E V Sanders DFC. F/O F N Plum DFC and F/L G E Bradbury crash-landed at Weston-Super-Mare whilst carrying out Mine-laying exercises in conjunction with the Naval authority. Both were slightly injured, and were admitted to hospital.

10th July, Berlin. On this raid the Squadron were unfortunate to lose the Commanding Officer, Wing Commander S D Watts DSO DFC. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him. His navigator F/O A A Matheson DFM was also lost.

14th July, Hannover, a very good raid.

15th July, Berlin, 12 aircraft set off but two were unable to reach the target due to mechanical failures. One bombed Dusseldorf, and one Duisberg. Four aircraft saw fighters and one was attacked.

16th July, Homberg, a moderately successful raid.

17th July, Berlin, clear and dark. Searchlights active, but no flak. Fighters instead. The aircraft of F/L Moore was attacked ten times just after he had bombed, and was coned by searchlights. Only by taking evasive action of a most violent nature did he manage eventually to shake off his dogged pursuer. The enemy used dummy TIs and a ring of dummy fires around the city.

18th July, Buer. An easy trip for us. We went in ahead of the heavies to draw off the fighters. We encountered very little opposition except searchlights. The raid by the heavies was excellent.

Berlin, in good weather. One aircraft attacked by a fighter. F/O S G A Warner had to take extreme evasive action.

19th July, Bremen

20th July, Hamburg. Windowing for heavies and bombing. One aircraft returned on one engine.

Bottrop. Windowing and bombing for heavies. 500 lb. bombs. Lots of fighter activity.

21st July, Berlin. A successful attack.

22nd July, Berlin again.

23rd July, Kiel. Three aircraft covered heavies by windowing and bombing.

24th July, Berlin. Bombing was good. This was F/L Moore's last trip with the squadron, and made his ops total a formidable figure of 120. While tendering our congratulations we realise his experience and keenness will be greatly missed in future.

24th July, Frankfurt. A spoof raid, and then on to Stuttgart to window for heavies.

25th July, Berlin. Due to mechanical failures, only seven aircraft bombed Berlin, and two attacked Bremen.

Mannheim, and widowing Stuttgart.

26th July? Hamburg.

27th July? Stuttgart.

28th July, Hamburg. Windowing and bombing for heavies. Two aircraft "fire-watched" after the attack, i.e. overflew the target to assess the bombing.

Two aircraft also fire-watched Stuttgart.

29th July, Frankfurt. Bad weather. Only two aircraft saw the TIs. The rest bombed on dead-reckoning.

5th August, Wanne-Eikel synthetic oil plant? 500 lb. bombs used. Two aircraft were hit by flak, which was intense.

6th August, Castrop-Rauxel synthetic oil plant. One large fire was seen after attack. Two aircraft were damaged by flak. One aircraft returned early due to mechanical trouble.

8th August, Cologne. A first-class attack.

10th August, Berlin. Quite a successful attack. One aircraft had to jettison their bomb due to engine trouble, and one aircraft bombed Hanover.

11th August, Berlin. Twelve aircraft attacked. There were dummy TIs and fires to try to confuse us, but it was a good attack.

12th August, Kiel. Widowing and bombing. The opposition was quite frantic, but not too effective. Many rockets were fired up to 28,000 feet, and there was heavy flak that was quite accurate.

13th August, Hannover. A fair trip.

14th August, Berlin. 10 aircraft attacked. Practically all were coned by searchlights, and F/O Mephram was attacked by a night-fighter, but he evaded successfully. Jet fighters were seen on the way home, and the route was too close to heavily defended areas. Aircraft were coned for 15 minutes on the way past Munster. A pretty stiff trip.

15th August, Berlin. Many spoof TIs but our bombing was well concentrated around the genuine TIs.

16th August, Berlin. A spoof raid for heavies. F/Sgt Ballands had to jettison his Cookie in the Hamburg area, one of his petrol tanks having been hit by flak.

Kiel. Three aircraft windowed and bombed, ahead of heavies.

17th August, Mannheim. A very good raid.

18th August, Berlin. A spoof raid for heavies. Some fighter activity. S/L G McKeand came all the way back to Coltishall on one engine.

Sterkade. Windowing and bombing ahead of heavies.

23rd August, Cologne. A very successful raid, marred by the tragic fact that W/O G T Collinson's aircraft crashed shortly after take-off, the crew being killed. His navigator was Sgt L Youens.

25th August, Berlin. A not entirely successful raid. Scattered bombing, fighters active, following our aircraft for 30 miles beyond the Dutch coast. Dummy TIs and fires as usual. F/L C H Burbidge jettisoned his 4,000 pounder over the sea due to undercarriage trouble. S/L W D W Bird and Sgt F W Hudson crashed, and were both killed not far from base, on their return from the mission.

26th August, Berlin. A raid to distract fighters from the main force attack on Konisberg

Kiel. Windowing and bombing opening, for the heavies.

27th August, Mannheim. A straight bombing trip, marred by the loss of F/O S G A Warner and F/O W K McGregor DFC whose aircraft was shot down over the target. F/L Galloway and Sgt Morrell “swung” on take-off and crashed, setting the aircraft and Cookie on fire. Neither of the crew were injured and escaped successfully.

28th August, Essen. An Oboe-marked attack. ORBs state: NOTE: F/O B D McEwan returned with Cookie still on board – Finger trouble!!!

29th August, Berlin. Spoof attack to draw fighters from the heavies attack on Konisberg.

Hamburg. A spoof attack for heavies on Stettin. F/L A W Lockhart AFC contacted by air interception (AI) radar, giving a yellow boozier, down to 8,000 feet before shaking off. (The Boozier was a warning light that came on when an enemy aircraft’s AI radar was detected).

30th August, Frankfurt. A spoof attack for heavies raid on Mannheim. Dummy TIs and fires were seen.

31st August, Dusseldorf.

1st Sept, Bremen. Early bombing showed up ground detail. Dockside and waterways were visible. The opposition was a few “clueless” searchlights and quite heavy accurate flak. Fires were visible from 50 miles.

4th Sept, Karlsruhe. An excellent raid.

5th Sept, Hannover. Weather not good.

7th Sept, Karlsruhe. All bombed except F/L Wadsworth who had an engine cut just after take-off and they crash-landed at Wrattling Common. Both F/L Huggett and F/O Plum landed at Manston on one engine.

8th Sept, Nuremberg. A very successful raid. F/L Don saw a jet fighter.

9th Sept, Brunswick. A first-class attack. Three fires were seen.

10th Sept, Berlin. Rather a poor raid. The flight plan was the longest in the Squadron’s history, and three crews had to land at Woodbridge due to being short of fuel.

11th Sept, Berlin. A first-class attack in the teeth of bitter opposition. Cones of searchlights, moderate heavy flak and an attack by a fighter.

12th Sept, Gelsenkirchen, and Wanne-Eikel. The first daylight attack in the Squadron’s history. Windowing and bombing ahead of the heavies.

Frankfurt. Windowing and bombing ahead of heavies. Owing to technical failure F/O Brennan was unable to release his bomb, and had to bring it back.

12th Sept, Berlin. Another successful attack. The “dummy” city was, as usual, well to the fore.

13th Sept, Berlin. A successful attack, but unfortunately P/O G R Thomas and F/O J H Rosbottom went missing. Two other aircraft were damaged.

15th Sept, Berlin. Fairly successful, but bitterly contested. Searchlights, flak and fighter activity. The aircraft of F/O Dell landed at Woodbridge.

Lubeck. Windowing, opening a raid for a heavy attack on Kiel. Only F/O Plum made it to the target, the others having to turn back with aircraft trouble. F/O Mackenzie bombed Sylt on one engine.

16th Sept, Brunswick. Owing to high cloud it made it difficult to bomb. F/O Mackenzie had technical trouble and bombed Koblenz.

17th Sept, Bremen. A first-class attack. F/L Don's aircraft was hit by a fighter.

18th Sept, Berlin. Several factors combined to make this a very poor attack.

23rd Sept, Bochum. An excellent attack. Three big explosions were seen.

25th Sept, Mannheim. Thick layers of cloud prevented the accurate observation of TIs. F/O L J Brennan and F/O T J Bolger failed to return.

26th Sept, Frankfurt. A very successful raid.

27th Sept, Kassel. 10/10 cloud over target, so difficult to assess. Slight flak and some fighters.

28th Sept, Brunswick. A fair attack.

29th Sept, Karlsruhe. A very effective raid, minimal opposition.

30th Sept, Hamburg. Good marking and bombing. Some fighter activity at target. F/O J P Mackenzie returned early and crashed at Warboys. He received some injuries in the crash, but his navigator Sgt H Welch, was unhurt.

1st Oct, Brunswick. Unsatisfactory attack, as TIs were late, and disappeared almost immediately into cloud.

2nd Oct, Brunswick. Much better raid, Marking and bombing were good.

3rd Oct, Kassel. An unsuccessful raid. Two crews saw a jet fighter in the Essen area.

5th Oct, Mining the Kiel Canal. From low-level, 150 to 250 feet. Each aircraft carried 1 x 1000 lb mine, plus one aircraft had a 1500 lb mine. Defences were light flak guns, and one or two searchlights. The operation was a great success. See report elsewhere.

5th Oct, Berlin. Bombs were somewhat scattered. A long flight again, and two aircraft had to land at Woodbridge as they were short of petrol.

9th Oct, Wilhelmshaven. A successful raid. Marking was good, and a good bombing concentration.

10th Oct, Cologne. Target covered by layers of cloud, so difficult to assess results. Generally light flak, but one aircraft encountered heavy intense flak over target.

11th Oct, Berlin. One aircraft swung on take-off and aborted. F/L Batten, short on fuel, bombed Hamburg. Most aircraft bombed on GDR as markers were late. Two aircraft landed at Coltishall to refuel before returning to base.

12th Oct, Hamburg. A successful attack, despite bad weather on route. Several aircraft had air speed indicators freeze up. It was fine over the target so a good concentration of

bombing. A new crew, F/O N H Hornby, and Sgt. W A Crail did not return.

13th Oct, Cologne. Cloud over target obscured results. A slight to moderate barrage of predicted flak.

14th Oct, Berlin. A small-scale attack. Most crews were away from the target when the defences got going, but F/O F H Dell and F/O R A Naiff did not return.

Hamburg, Another small-scale attack, but quite successful.

Duisberg, Windowing and bombing for a big heavy attack.

15th Oct, Wilhelmshaven. Window openings for heavies. F/L L Shackman AFC sustained slight damage from flak.

Hamburg, another small -scale attack. Markers late so some aircraft bombed on GDR. F/L C Batten bombed Wilhelmshaven, his bomb doors opening on take-off and reducing his air speed due to drag.

16th Oct, Cologne. Two attacks – First attack, all aircraft bombed on Gee. F/L G D T Nairn crashed on the circuit on return in bad weather. Both him and his navigator, Sgt D Lunn, were slightly hurt. Second attack, a good concentration of bomb bursts. The enemy set up a dummy city to the west of the target.

18th Oct, Mannheim. Small-scale and quite successful.

19th Oct, Wiesbaden. Two small attacks. Doubtful if the first was successful, but the second was.

Stuttgart. Windowing and bombing for heavies. Both crews bombed on Gee.

22nd Oct, Hamburg. A master bomber was used. No Searchlights but heavy flak. F/O A Mackinnon and F/O J P

Morgan's aircraft both received slight flak damage on their tail-planes. "F.I.D.O" used on return.

23rd Oct, Wiesbaden. Small attack, Windowing and bombing for heavies.

Essen. Small attack, Windowing and bombing for heavies. Slight heavy flak, and a fighter seen.

23rd Oct, Berlin. A very successful raid.

24th Oct, Hannover. Difficult to judge results. Moderate flak and several jet fighters seen near Osnabruck. Some in formation but no contact made. Due to weather all crews landed at Coltishall.

27th Oct, Berlin. Two phases . First not very satisfactory. Second, the weather conditions obscured the markers. Two crews unable to bomb the main target due to technical problems. F/L G C Crow bombed Munster, and F/O A Mackinnon bombed Osnabruck.

28th Oct, Cologne. A very successful raid. The weather was clear over the target, and fires were burning from the afternoon raid by the heavies. On the way out, some crews saw jet aircraft.

29th Oct, Cologne. Successful again. Fires were still burning. Several jets were seen.

30th Oct, Berlin. Two phases. First unsatisfactory, 10/10 cloud obscured markers. Crews bombed on GDR, and S/L Wadsworth bombed Cologne. A jet fighter was seen. Second phase, Unsatisfactory again. Crews bombed by Loran. F/L Batten bombed Cologne. A twin-engined fighter and a jet were seen over Cologne.

31st Oct, Cologne. Windowing and bombing for heavies. Jet seen by both crews, and a rocket bomb in the Rotterdam area.

Hamburg, a good attack but flak was heavy and accurate and fighters were seen. The aircraft of F/L L Shackman AFC and Sgt A B McGlynn failed to return.

1st Nov, Berlin. An excellent raid. Two jet aircraft were seen.

2nd Nov, Osnabruck. Not a very successful raid. One jet fighter was seen later.

3rd Nov, Berlin. Only two TIs were dropped, but all crews saw and bombed. Moderate flak with usual dummy TIs. Fighter flares were numerous, and one JU88 was seen.

4th Nov, Hannover. Quite a successful raid, target was clear with some light haze.

Bochum, small-scale. Windowing for heavies. Good bombing was seen, although there was a smoke screen over the target. Two heavy aircraft were seen to collide at 1855 hours (on the way to target?)

5th Nov, Stuttgart. A successful raid, - bombing and marking were good. Heavy flak, clear weather.

6th Nov, the squadron was stood down, and a party was given by the air crews for the ground staff. The party went well, and it was good to see many former air crew members of the Squadron. This was the first Squadron party and it was a huge success.

9th Nov, Hannover. 10/10 cloud made this difficult to assess, although it did seem to be a success.

11th Nov, Hannover. A successful raid. Clear skies over the target. Many searchlights in cones, moderate flak, no fighters, - a good night out!

11th Nov, Kamen. Oboe marking went u/s. No TIs were dropped. Crews bombed on DR or on the glow of the heavies attack on Dortmund. Not a very successful raid. F/O Smith

had trouble with his aircraft, and had to turn back. This was bad luck, but he didn't miss much!

15th Nov, Berlin. Most of the crews managed to drop their bombs on the TIs before they disappeared. The lack of opposition was staggering, two crews reporting light flak, and the rest nothing at all.

18th Nov, Wiesbaden. Quite successful. Opposition almost non-existent again.

18th Nov, Wanne-Eikel. Windowing and bombing for heavies. No opposition again.

21st Nov, Hannover. Not very successful, marking being late and scattered.

Castrop-Rauxel. Two aircraft Windowed and bombed for heavies.

23rd Nov, Hannover. Marking scattered. Weather made it difficult to assess.

24th Nov, Berlin. Only four crews saw the markers. The rest bombed on GDR. Very little flak.

25th Nov, Nurnberg. Good bombing, and a large fire was started. One aircraft bombed Mannheim due to technical trouble.

27th Nov, Berlin. Four crews had technical difficulties. One bombed Osnabruck, one bombed Hannover, and two returned early. One crew was coned and received moderate flak. Apart from that, defences were almost non-existent.

28^h Nov, Nurnberg. A successful raid. Excellent marking. Concentrated bombing. A large explosion and a large fire were reported. Searchlights were unable to pierce the 10/10 cloud layer.

29th Nov, Duisberg. The Squadron's first raid in daylight. Also in formation. Markers failed to appear. Crews bombed visually, but not very successfully. Flak was slight, the chief worry for the crews being the difficulty of staying in formation.

29th Nov, Hannover. A fair attack.

30th Nov, Duisberg. A second daylight raid, much more successful. Bombed in formation, led by two markers. No opposition.

Hamburg. Not very successful, the marking was late, and not concentrated. Three crews did not take-off.

1st Dec, Karlsruhe. Excellent raid. One aircraft brought their Cookie back.

2nd Dec, Giessen. A change of operation. A pinpoint target bombed from 6,000 feet. Quite successful. Good marking and bombing. Slight ineffective opposition.

4th Dec, Hagen. Not very successful. The marking was scattered. One crew reported two small fires. Two aircraft returned early with technical trouble.

5th Dec, Ludwigshaven. A very successful raid. F/O J Trotman's engines overheated on the way to the target. They lost one but continued, losing height. On return, he landed at Lille, after his navigator, F/O Tubbs had baled out. Both got down safely.

7th Dec, Cologne. No results seen due to 10/10 cloud, but crews bombed on reasonable markers. Slight opposition which warmed up at the end of the raid.

9th Dec, Berlin. Clearer over the target, but the marking was scattered. The dummy city was in full evidence. The aircraft of F/O W B Smith and F/Sgt L G Williams was missing, last

heard of over the North Sea on return. Fighters were present (over target?), indicated by white Boozer warning light.

11th Dec, Duisberg. Another daylight attack in two waves, each formation led by a marker aircraft. No results seen, 10/10 cloud.

Hannover. Not a very successful effort. Only one marker was seen, and most aircraft bombed on GDR.

12th Dec, Osnabruck. Quite a good prang. Concentrated bombing, as far as can be ascertained, 10/10 cloud.

Essen. Windowing and bombing for heavies. Two scarecrows? were seen. Also numerous fighter flares.

15th Dec, Hannover. 10/10 cloud, but may have been successful.

Ludwigshaven. Windowing and bombing for heavies. The raid was going well when crews left. Several large fires, obscured by a column of smoke.

17th Dec, Hanau? A spoof for heavies. The aircraft of F/L S P Brunt and F/Sgt R? J Sutherland crashed on landing, tragically killing both crew..

18th Dec, Nurnberg. A fairly successful attack. The opposition was slight. One aircraft bombed Stuttgart.

21st Dec, Bonn. Windowing and bombing for heavies.

23rd Dec, Seigburg. Daylight, a formation attack on a new target. One aircraft got lost when it got dark, and bombed on time broadcast. The rest bombed on Oboe. No results were seen.

Limburg. Another new target. Crews described the marking as “wizard” and bombing bang on.

28th Dec Frankfurt intended target, but possibly bombed Wiesbaden. One marker was seen about ten miles to the east – correct target?

Bonn. Windowing and bombing for heavies. The heavy attack seemed very successful.

30th Dec, Hannover. A fairly successful raid. One crew saw a JU88 over target.

Cologne. Windowing and bombing for heavies. The opposition was moderate. Spoof TIs were seen to the north.

Berlin. 10/10 cloud. The marking was well concentrated. The flak was moderate, and no fighters were seen.

1st Jan 1945. The New Year opened with the Squadron detailed for a new type of operation. Six aircraft took off at dawn to attack railway tunnels in the Cologne area from low level. In spite of the difficulties of the terrain these attacks were successfully completed, but the aircraft of F/L G D T Nairn and F/Sgt D Lunn was shot down by light flak in the target area. This crew had escaped when their aircraft was badly damaged in a crash landing near base in October, and had gone on to complete forty operational sorties. Their loss is deeply regretted. Three of the four attacks seemed to have been successful.

Hannover. The rest of the Squadron went to Hanover. A very successful raid.

2nd Jan, Nuremburg. Windowing and bombing for heavies.

Berlin. Mixed results. The opposition was nil. One aircraft landed at Woodbridge.

4th Jan, Berlin. Two waves. First wave – indifferent marking. One aircraft bombed Emden. Second wave – Tis scattered, plenty of dummy TIs, master bombers times all wrong, but a wizard explosion reported.

5th Jan, Berlin. A better “Big City” raid. One aircraft landed at Woodbridge due to engine trouble. Two other aircraft had engine trouble, and bombed the secondary target.

Hannover. Our aircraft bombed the fires from the previous raid.

7th Jan, Nuremburg. No bomb bursts were observed, but marking was good.

Hannover. Difficult to assess due to cloud.

10th Jan, Hannover. Clear conditions over target, good concentrated bombing. A large column of black smoke was seen to be rising from the middle of the marked area. On return to base a snowstorm at 500 feet made landing very difficult. S/L Wadsworth landed at Bourn on one engine. F/L Crow landed at base on one engine. Also at base, F/O Girvan crashed on the runway due to an under-carriage leg collapsing, due to hydraulic failure. The crew were uninjured. Another aircraft landed at Bourn, two at Oakington, and one at Wyton.

14th Jan, Berlin. Two waves. First wave, excellent results although two aircraft bombed Bonn and? Second wave. On the whole not a bad prang, marred by the fact that two of our aircraft failed to return. One crashed in this country, with the pilot's body nearby. In F/O J F Morgan, the Squadron lost an excellent Captain. There is no news of the navigator, Sgt J A M Sturrock whose opened parachute has been discovered. The crew of the other aircraft are F/O G R F Chaunby DFM (Captain, second tour), and F/Sgt G F Ayre, also excellent types.

16th Jan, Magdeburg. Early Windowing for heavies. Excellent raid.

18th Jan, Magdeburg. A follow-up raid. Fires were still burning from the previous raid. Marking good, bombed avoiding dummy TIs. Moderate heavy flak.

19th Jan, Sterkrade. 10/10 cloud up to 25,000 feet over target. Two crews bombed the target, the rest bombed on Gee over a wide area of the Ruhr.

21st Jan, Kassel. Marking and bombing were quite good. F/L Green had an engine failure on way out, bombed Koblenz, and returned on one engine, landing at Manston. F/L R J Momo and F/O P B Doran both had oxygen trouble; F/L Momo bombed Cologne, and F/O Doran jettisoned his bomb and returned.

22nd Jan, Hannover. A good raid. F/L R H Hawken had excessive vibration in his starboard engine, jettisoned his bomb load and returned on one engine.

28th Jan, Stuttgart. Early Windowing and bombing for heavies.

Berlin. Ten aircraft resumed the offensive against the “Big City”. 10/10 cloud, but good marking and bombing. Moderate flak, also some fighter activity reported.

29th Jan, Berlin again. F/O Evans had engine trouble and landed at Hethel, and most other aircraft had to land at other airstrips on return.

1st Feb, Berlin. 18 of our aircraft attacked the city. F/L G C Crow DFC landed in France with port engine trouble, as did F/O J F Hayes. F/L A W Waugh failed to get away in the first wave, but caught up to the second wave. The opposition was the lightest yet.

2nd Feb, Mannheim. One aircraft bogged down on the runway, holding up a second aircraft. They were able to bomb on Gee though.

Magdeburg. A very good prang.

3rd Feb, Wiesbaden. The fires were still burning from the heavy attack of the night before. One searchlight seen. A very good raid.

4th Feb, Dortmund. Not a very good raid. 10/10 cloud to 15,000 feet over target.

Hannover. No searchlights and light opposition. Numerous bombs fell in target area.

5th Feb, Berlin. Two aircraft bombed Osnabruck on Gee due to engine trouble. Not a very good raid as 10/10 cloud to 15,000 feet again. One aircraft bombed on Loran. F/L Hawken landed at Coltishall short of fuel.

7th Feb, Mainz. F/O P B Doran and Sgt D H Beckett were unfortunately reported missing, which took the shine off a very good raid.

8th Feb, Berlin. One aircraft bombed the secondary target. The ORB states that it was a successful raid as far as 692 went: although other and inferior Squadrons apparently dropped some bombs on the “dummy” city.

10th Feb, Hannover. TIs were good, and bombing was good. All aircraft bombed the target and returned safely. Very good photographs were obtained.

12th Feb, Stuttgart. This should have been a good raid. Defences were negligible. NOTE: this seems to have been the case more and more at this stage of the war.

13th Feb, Magdeburg. F/O Harker found his drop-tanks weren't siphoning, and bombed Osnabruck. Again, defences were practically nil.

Bonn. A small Windowing effort. Defences nil.

14th Feb, Berlin. Weather was 10/10 cloud to 15,000 feet, but most crews bombed TIs before they disappeared into the cloud.

Frankfurt. A spoof raid for the heavies.

18th Feb, Mannheim. F/O E C Edgar was unable to release his bomb and had to bring it back. – Scary at landing!

19th Feb, Erfurt. A new target for the Squadron. Fairly good weather conditions, the crews were enthusiastic about the success of the raid. TIs were good, and crews were also able to bomb on the fires started by earlier bomb blasts. One aircraft bombed Osnabruck due to fuel siphoning issues.

21st Feb, Berlin. Two attacks, both good, but defences were slightly more active on second, although it has to be said that they are relying more on the dummy cities. F/O Back bombed Bremen, siphoning issues again, and F/O Peterson bombed Osnabruck and landed at Brussels/Melsbroek airfield owing to fuel shortage.

22nd Feb, Berlin. Patchy medium cloud over target, and little was seen of the bombing. Slight to medium heavy flak, and a single engine fighter was seen in the target area. W/C B S Jones DFC bombed Osnabruck due to siphoning problems.

23rd Feb, Berlin. 10/10 cloud but seems to have been successful. Slight opposition.

24th Feb, Neuss. Two of our aircraft took part in a small-scale attack on this strategic target, in the line of the

advancing allied forces. Fires were seen to be burning when we left.

24th Feb, Berlin. Yet another Berlin “Stooge”. Really good visibility over the target area. Defences were more active than of late. A successful raid.

25th Feb, Mainz. Another strategic target

Erfurt. Some bombing was well concentrated but later was more scattered. Defences nil.

26th Feb, Nurnberg. Quite a satisfactory raid.

27th Feb, Berlin. Bombing appeared well centred on the markers. Defences negligible.

28th Feb, Berlin. Appears to have been a very good raid.

1st Mar, Erfurt. A good attack although most of the crews overshot the target initially.

2nd Mar, Kassel. Should have been a successful attack. Moderate heavy flak, in most cases bursting above the aircraft.

3rd Mar, Berlin. One aircraft was coned for five minutes. Moderate predicted heavy flak.

Wurzburg Rail Centre. Some crews saw TIs through gaps in the clouds and bombed on them. The TIs were judged to have been slightly south of the railway. A good concentration of bombs around the TIs.

4th Mar, Essen. Due to bad weather only three aircraft were sent. Bombing was reported to be good.

5th Mar, Berlin. TIs were scattered, and dummy TIs did attract some bombs, so this was a somewhat scattered raid.

7th Mar, Dessau. Windowing and bombing for heavies.

Berlin. A scattered raid. Strong winds affected the raid, causing crews to arrive early. Two aircraft bombed Dessau.

8th Mar, Hamburg. Windowing and bombing for heavies.

Hannover. The raid appears to have been quite successful.

9th Mar, Berlin. 12 of our aircraft were among the force of nearly 100 Mosquitos which raided Berlin. A Master Bomber was used. Quite a good raid. Defences only slight to moderate heavy flak.

10th Mar, Berlin. F/O J F Hayes had engine trouble soon after take-off, so he returned to base with the bomb still on board.

11th Mar, Berlin. Crews were enthusiastic as to the success of the attack. Unfortunately though, F/L A W Waugh had an engine fail shortly after take-off. He jettisoned his Cookie successfully and returned to base. In making a single-engine landing he came in too fast and overshot. On hitting a hedge the aircraft burst into flames. The crew were released but F/L Waugh died shortly after. His navigator, F/O L R? Corrigan was removed to hospital with extensive burns.

12th Mar, Berlin. Cloud conditions marred the attack, although some reasonable bombing was seen.

13th Mar, Berlin. Six aircraft took part, and bombing was good.

Bremen. 10/10 cloud, hard to assess.

14th Mar, Berlin. A very successful raid. F/L R Bailey AFC returned early with engine trouble.

15th Mar, Berlin. 4 aircraft took part. Defences were more active than of late. One aircraft was actually hit.

Erfurt. A successful raid, no opposition.

16th Mar, Hanau. A spoof attack by two aircraft.

Berlin. Eight aircraft bombed the primary target. F/L Trotman bombed Osnabruck, and F/O Peterson had to swap aircraft at the last minute, so bombed Kassel.

17th Mar, Berlin. Five aircraft took part. A poor attack. The TIs were late and were scattered. F/L Vale landed at Shepherd's Grove owing to the failure of electrical instruments.

Nurnberg. 4 aircraft took part. It appears to have been successful.

18th Mar, Nurnberg. 4 aircraft again. Another good attack.

Berlin. A good attack. Slight accurate heavy flak.

21st Mar, Berlin. 20 of our aircraft took part in the biggest yet attack, which was considered quite successful. The aircraft of W/O I M Macphee and Sgt. A V Sullivan failed to return, nothing being heard from it after take-off. F/L Bailey landed at Brussels on one engine.

Berlin. Second attack. Total. 19 successful sorties for the night.

22nd Mar, Berlin. Clear weather, lots of searchlight cones but no flak.

23rd Mar, Aschaffenburg. A new target for the Squadron. Good visibility. A very successful attack. No opposition.

Berlin. "Mail run" again. Usual dummy marking, and four cones of searchlights. Slight flak, but F/O M V Sloman's aircraft was hit in the main plane and main spar.

24th Mar, Berlin. Bombing was good. Two unidentified aircraft in the target area, believed to be fighters. The aircraft of F/L J A R Leask was hit by cannon fire. Practically the whole of his rudder was shot away, tail plane and elevators damaged and aileron controls nearly severed. Despite this,

the pilot brought the damaged aircraft back to base, and made a perfect landing, displaying a very high degree of airmanship and courage.

26th Mar, Berlin.. 18 aircraft took part. A few searchlights and slight heavy predicted heavy flak. W/O R Manners on his first sortie, had his artificial horizon u/s, and as there was no reserve aircraft had to wait for a new instrument to be fitted. Consequently, he took off 20 minutes late, but he reached the target and bombed. F/O J L W Dunn, also on his first trip, saw TIs 5 minutes before his expected ETA, but thought it might be a spoof raid. On arrival he orbited for 15 minutes and bombed on fires. He landed at Swannington on return owing to petrol shortage.

27th Mar, Berlin. Clear weather over the target. Defences were light flak with numerous searchlights, but these raids are meeting with more opposition than is apparent, probably from fighters, as evident from the loss of another crew, an experienced one this time. F/L E S Vale, who was on his 23rd trip and F/O F J Manning. Nothing was seen or heard of the aircraft after take-off.

29th Mar, Berlin. 4 crews reported jet fighter activity over the Hamburg/Bremen area. F/O G F Finnerty had engine trouble. He turned back but did not bomb due to the uncertainty of the allied spearheads. He jettisoned his bomb in the jettison area (over the North Sea?).

30th Mar, Berlin. Clear weather, good bombing. The aircraft of F/Sgt W Campey and F/St J Rabiner is missing, nothing being heard of it after take-off. Defences were slight heavy flak, numerous searchlights, co-operating with fighters.

Erfurt. 6 aircraft. Marking and bombing were excellent, and crews were enthusiastic about the success of the attack. Defences were nil.

2nd Apr, Magdeburg. 21 aircraft took part, the Squadron's biggest effort to date. Thin cloud over the target. Quite a successful raid. Slight flak and few searchlights. 12 months ago, 12 sorties was an achievement, a month ago, 18, and now 21, with over 37 tons of bombs. 692 Squadron has really come of age!

3rd Apr, Berlin. 14 aircraft bombed. 3 arrived late and bombed on fires left by the earlier bombers. One aircraft bombed Bremen due to fuel siphoning issues, and one aircraft had Gee u/s and returned.

4th Apr, Berlin. 6 aircraft. Searchlights numerous, and hindered observation of attack.

Magdeburg. A good attack. Defences were negligible.

8th Apr, Berlin. The LNSF returned to the Big City after allowing continental based Mosquitos to "have a go" on the night of 7th April. Tonight Oboe was used for the first time on Berlin. Bombing was well concentrated, and initially defences were negligible.

Dessau. This was one of those unfortunate raids when everything goes wrong. Few aircraft saw the route-markers, adverse winds made them late on target, and to crown it all, all Y Marker aircraft (H2S) were u/s and no genuine markers were dropped. Also 100 Group Spoof markers were dropped closer to Dessau than planned. 3 aircraft bombed on these, and 4 aircraft, after orbiting the target for some minutes, and seeing no markers, joined in the main group attack on Lutzkendorf. Our remaining 5 aircraft bombed Dessau on GDR. All together, a disappointing result.

9th Apr, Berlin. 8 aircraft. A successful Big City attack.

Flaven. 6 aircraft. A very successful raid. F/L Solomon had a starboard engine failure shortly after take-off. He jettisoned his Cookie at 2500 feet some 7 miles from the aerodrome and some 200 yards from a farmhouse. Damage was done to buildings but fortunately no-one was injured. The crew made a successful landing back at base.

10th Apr, Berlin. Two attacks? First, accurate bombing. Second, Visibility poor due to haze. Defences were negligible, but F/L Solomon was hit in the tail-plane, and starboard main plane.

Chemnitz. 6 aircraft. A scattered raid. F/L Woodward jettisoned his Cookie near Erfurt due to a siphoning problem, but unfortunately the jettison was on the wrong side of the bomb line.

11th Apr, Berlin. Two attacks. A very good raid, clear over the target.

12th Apr, Berlin. Two attacks, good again. Numerous searchlights, very slight heavy flak.

13th Apr, Hamburg. A softening up raid. Bombing was well concentrated, defences nil.

14th Apr, Berlin. 15 aircraft. Clear over target. A good raid. The heavie's attack on Potsdam was seen by all crews, many fires reported.

15th Apr, Berlin. Three waves. A very successful attack. Defences were nil until the third wave.

16th Apr, Berlin. 12 aircraft. P/O Hill found that his drop tanks would not siphon, so jettisoned them over the North Sea, and proceeded to the target. He had to land at woodbridge on return due to low fuel.

Munich. 4 aircraft. First time visited by the Squadron since March 44. Initially it was thought an aircraft was missing, but belatedly we heard that FL Solomon had landed at Brussels after an engine failure.

17th Apr, Berlin. 5 aircraft.

Ingoldstadt. 10 aircraft. Weather clear and crews reported that the marking was the best they had ever seen. One large explosion sent black smoke up to 6,000 feet. A good raid.

18th Apr, Berlin. Another satisfactory raid. Defences practically nil.

19th Apr, Berlin. 14 aircraft. Defences active.

21st Apr, Kiel. With the centre of Berlin under shell-fire of the Russians, we were switched to Kiel. Four waves. 7 aircraft of ours took part. It should have been a very successful attack. 8 aircraft took part in the 3rd wave, also successful.

23rd Apr, Rendsburg. A communications centre and rail target in the Jutland area was the target. 6 aircraft, a good raid.

Kiel. 14 aircraft. F/L G C Woodward had a starboard engine failure and jettisoned his bomb. He made a safe return to base.

24th Apr, Munich. Pasing Transformer Station. 14 aircraft. Bombing and marking were good. Defences at target were nil, but all crews reported light flak bursting at 17,000 feet in the Karlsruhe area, presumably fired by our allies, to which our crews are reported to have “strongly objected”!

24th Apr, Munich.. 10 aircraft. Repeat attack on Pasing Transformer Station.

26th Apr, Husum airfield. Seems to have been a reasonable raid. Defences nil.

2nd May 45, Kiel. 12 aircraft, 4 attacks. First attack. 8 to 10/10 cloud, but appears to have been successful. Second attack. 12 aircraft. A good attack. A large explosion was seen, and a fairly big fire was reported burning near the TIs. Nil defences both attacks.

The End of 692's War.

Other notable entries in 692 ORBs

March 44 Cpl T L Daly ACH/GD? Sentenced at Bow Street Police Court to undergo 3 months imprisonment with hard labour for larceny.

April 2nd 44 F/L A/S/L S D Watts DFC NZ appointed to acting role of Wing Commander. F/L G McKeand appointed to acting rank of Squadron Leader.

May 13th 44 ACW2/LACW D M T Bailey DF died at the US Army Hospital Diddington as a result of injuries received in an accident in which she was struck by a motor vehicle whilst cycling back to camp. This airwoman was very popular in the Squadron and her loss is deeply regretted.

May 16 44 Cpl Davison Pigeon Keeper was posted in from RAF Leicester East. F/O A/F/L V S Moore DSO DFM NZ Pilot ceased to be attached to this squadron for operational aircrew duties on the successful completion of his third tour of operations.

May 25 44 Commendations made following the Kiel Canal mining operation:

F/L A/W/C S D Watts - DSO

F/L A/S/L E J Saunderson - DSO

F/O C Hassall DFC – First Bar to his DFC

All awarded DFC:

F/O D N Riley

F/O J Page

F/L A/S/L G McKeand

F/L J P Farrow DFM

F/O V P B Hill

F/L D N Grainger DFM

F/O E B Chatfield

F/L J H Barron

F/O S Ainsworth

June 6th 44 F/O A/F/L V S Moore DSO DFM (NZ) re-attached to this squadron for an additional tour.

June 26th 44 Missing in action: F/L J P Farrow DFC DFM, and F/O C R Strang. This crew did fine work in the Squadron, completing 43 operational sorties. The loss of so valuable a crew is deeply regretted.

July 8th 44 Missing in action: F/L P K Burley DFC, and F/O E V Sanders DFC. One of the most popular crews on the Squadron are missing from the op on the night of the 7th July.

July 10th 44 F/L A/W/C S D Watts DSO DFC, Commanding Officer of this Squadron, and F/O A A Matheson DFM, also a New Zealander, were reported missing on an attack to Berlin. Five aircraft of this Squadron were airborne at 0830 hours the next morning to search the North Sea, but failed to locate the aircraft or the crew. It is with deep regret that the loss of the Station Commander has to be recorded. His personality and leadership have been an inspiration to all who have served under him.

F/O D N Riley DFC posted to RAF Upwood on completion of his tour of ops. He was very popular in the Squadron.

July 17th 44 S/L A/W/C J Northrop DFC AFC posted in to be Station Commander.

Aug 18th 44 F/O A/F/L V S Moore DSO DFM awarded the DFC.

Aug 27th 44 F/O S G A Warner and F/O W K McGregor DFC are reported missing. Also, the mosquito piloted by F/L T H Galloway DFM crashed on the runway whilst taking off and burst into flames. The crew escaped unhurt, and later the

Cookie exploded, but only slight injuries were sustained by members of the ground staff personnel assisting with the fire-fighters. Very little damage was done to the surrounding buildings.

Sept 7th 44 F/L Wadsworth carried out a very successful crash landing at RAF Wrattling Common after his port engine failed shortly after take-off at about 300 feet. He and his navigator were unhurt.

Sept 8th 44 F/L A/S/L G Mckeand DFC completed his tour with the Squadron.

Sept 11th 44 F/L A/S/L E J Saunderson posted to HQ No. 91 group. He was one of the original members of the Squadron, and had been a most successful and popular flight commander. F/L R H Smith completed his second operational tour. F/L R H W Clarkson DFC completed his second operational tour.

Sept 13th 44 It is reported that F/O E V Sanders DFC who was reported missing on July 10th is a POW.

October 24th 44 Hannover raid? His Majesty the King approved the following immediate awards:

F/L A/S/L Brodie DFM, awarded the DSO.

F/L K R Triggs DFC, a bar to his DFC.

F/O J R Wood, F/L A W Lockhart AFC, and F/L W I Drinkall all awarded the DFC.

Nov 5th 44 Congratulations to F/L A W Lockhart DFC AFC and F/O J R Wood DFC who have both completed 50 operational sorties with the Squadron, the former completing his first tour, and the latter the second.

Nov 8th 44 F/O W J Mephram and W/O W G Crookes also completed a 50 ops tour.

Nov 20th 44 The Squadron was honoured by a visit from ACM Sir Arthur T Harris

Nov 23rd 44 F/L G D T Nairn was taking off on a night-flying test when the aircraft's port engine cut and caught fire. With his cool actions he avoided any serious consequences, but the aircraft was written off? Categorised AC.

Nov 29th 44 P/O A A Chandler was forced to crash land due to engine failure. The aircraft was later Categorised AC.

Dec 4th 44 F/L J E L Gover DFC has completed his tour and has done much useful work in assisting new crews.

Dec 10th 44 News received that F/O W B Smith and F/Sgt L G Williams had baled out near Romilly, south-east of Paris, after being reported missing on Dec 9th. They are reported to be safe and uninjured.

Dec 17th 44 On return from their sortie, F/L S P Brunt and F/Sgt R J Sutherland crashed on overshoot and were both killed. F/L Brunt was a pilot of outstanding experience and ability, and both he and his navigator were very popular in the Squadron, and their loss is deeply regretted by all.

Dec 19th 44 F/O A Mackinnon completed 80 operational sorties with the Squadron.

Dec 23rd 44 P/O W A Maxwell and F/Sgt C V Hooper completed their 50th trip.

Dec 30th 44 F/L C Batten and F/L B Menage completed their second operational tour.

Jan 1st 1945 The New Year opened with the Squadron detailed for a new type of operation. Six aircraft, along with planes from other squadrons, took off at dawn to attack railway tunnels in the Cologne area from low level. In spite

of the difficulty of the terrain these attacks were successfully completed, but the aircraft of F/L G D T Nairn and Sgt D Lunn was seen to be shot down by light flak in the target area. The crew had escaped when their aircraft was badly damaged in a crash landing near base in October, and they had gone on to complete 40 operational sorties. Their loss is very deeply regretted.

Jan 3rd 45 W/O W G Crookes had completed 50 ops with the Squadron.

Jan 4th 55 F/L P J Trotman awarded an immediate DFC.

Jan 8th 45 F/L W I Drinkall DFC completed his first tour with the Squadron.

Jan 10th 45 F/L T H Galloway DFM and T/Sgt J S Morrell completed their current tour of ops.

Jan 14th 45 Op to Berlin. On return there was low cloud at base. F/O J P Morgan NZ had radio trouble and was unable to land. He eventually stated that the crew were baling out, and the aircraft crashed 4 miles north of Newbury.

Jan 15th 45 News received that F/O Morgan was killed when his aircraft crashed. His navigator was Sgt J A M Sturrock DFM. His parachute harness was found 12 miles south of Newbury. The aircraft of F/O G R P Chaundy DFM and F/Sgt G F Ayre AUS? was posted missing from tonight's op.

Jan 17th 45 News has been received that the body of Sgt J A M Sturrock had been found some 3 or 4 miles away from his harness.

Jan 18th 45 The following honours and awards were granted to members of the Squadron:

S/L Wadsworth DFC - DSO

F/L Galloway DFM - DFC

F/L Crow - DFC
T/Sgt Ramage - DFM
F/O Plum DFC - Bar to DFC
F/L Bradbury - DFC
F/L Batten - DFC
F/L Burbidge - DFC
F/O Earl - DFC
F/L Gover DFC - Bar to DFC
F/O Mackinnon - DFC
P/O Skinner - DFC
F/L Menage - DFC

On a sadder note, the bodies of F/O Chaundy and F/Sgt Ayre were buried today at Hoboken Cemetary, Schoonselhof, Antwerp.

Jan 19th 45 The funeral of F/O Morgan at RAF Regional Cemetary at Cambridge.

Jan 21st 45 S/L R G St.C Wadsworth DSO DFC and F/L R E Scholes DFC completed their 50th successful sortie with the Squadron.

Jan 22nd 45 S/L A/W/C B S Jones DFC posted in from 142 Squadron to command, on Vice S/L A/W/C J Northrop's posting to PFF MTU Warboys.

Jan 27th 45 The funeral of Sgt Sturrock took place.

Jan 28th 45 F/L C H Burbidge DFC and P/O I L H Ramage DFM commenced their 50th successful operation with the Squadron.

Jan 29th 45 W/C J Northrop left today. He had been in command of the Squadron for just over 6 months, during which time the squadron had worked at high pressure and had carried out several special missions in addition to the normal

night bombing. He takes with him the best wishes of the Squadron. F/L Garroway left on completion of his second tour of ops.

The summary for Jan 45: Owing to exceptionally bad weather conditions the Squadron was able to operate on 14 nights only, but 145 operational sorties were flown, and 256 tons of bombs were dropped on enemy targets.

Feb 1st 45 Feb got off to a flying start with 18 sorties to Berlin. The ground crews put up a very good show in servicing 3 of the aircraft between the two attacks.

Congratulations to P/O J G Howell and W/O C Carton on completing their first tour.

Feb 2nd 45 Congrats to S/L W C Brodie DSO DFM and F/L K R Triggs DFC on completing their 50th trip. They have now flown a total of 83 sorties together.

Feb 4th 45 Congrats to F/L G C Crow DFC and F/O C E Earl on completion of their current operational tour with this Squadron.

Feb 7th 45 The aircraft of F/O P B Doran and Sgt D H Beckett failed to return. The loss of a very popular crew of the Squadron is deeply regretted.

Feb 16th 45 DFC's were awarded to the following Officers: F/L Earnshaw, F/L Momo NZ, F/L Huggett, F/O Mephram, and P/O Crooks.

Feb 19th 45 F/L G H Burbidge DFC and P/O I L H Ramage DFM completed a successful first tour with the Squadron.

Feb 12th 45 Congrats to F/O P J G Back and F/O D T N Smith DFC on completing their current tour of ops.

Feb 24th 45 F/L A R Galbraith DFC NZ posted to 139 Squadron. He had done a very good job with the Squadron as

Navigation Officer, and operationally as navigator for W/C J Northrop DFC AFC.

Mar 1st 45 On return from op F/L G R Green with ASI u/s, and having difficulty getting his undercarriage down. He made a heavy landing, the undercarriage collapsed, and the aircraft caught fire. The crew escaped un-injured but the aircraft was extensively damaged.

Congrats to F/O A A Chandler and Sgt A T Wood who completed their 50th successful sortie with the Squadron.

Mar 5th 45 Congrats to F/L G R Green and F/L J A Perry who completed their 50th op.

Mar 6th 45 In the afternoon a football match was played between the aircrew and HQ Flight versus A and B Flights in the Station League. A keen game resulted in a win for the ground personnel by 2 goals to nil. In the evening the second Squadron party and dance was held in the Station Dance hall. Official guests included A O C Donald Bennett (No. 8 PFF Group) and Mrs Bennett and the Station Commander. A number of former members of the Squadron were able to attend.

Mar 9th 45 F/L A/S/L W C Brodie DSO DFM left on a posting to HQ 92 group (unit) in addition to completing a very successful second tour, during which he gained an immediate DSO. He had been a Flight Commander for 6 months, carrying out the duties with a high standard of ability and leadership. He takes with him the best wishes of all members of the Squadron.

Mar 11th 45 One aircraft had an engine failure soon after take-off. The bomb was jettisoned successfully, but on making a single-engine landing the aircraft overran the

runway and burst into flames on hitting a hedge. It is with great regret that the death is recorded of F/L A W Waugh. The navigator F/O L R Corrigan was removed to hospital suffering from extensive burns.

F/O W E Evans and F/Sgt S F Stockwell completed their 50th op.

Mar 12th 45 Caterpillar badges were today given to F/O B H Tubbs DFM, F/O W B Smith and F/Sgt L A Williams who had successfully bailed out in November last.

Mar 13th 45 F/O P J G Back left on posting to 139 Squadron, for op. aircrew duties. A very keen and capable young pilot. F/L Momo NZ posted to No. 12 P D RC pending repatriation. The Squadron wishes him a safe and speedy return home.

Mar 1st 45 The funeral of F/L A W Waugh was held at the RAF Regional Cemetery at Cambridge. F/O D T N Smith DFC left on posting to 16 OTU for Instructor duties.

Mar 19th 45 F/L K R Triggs DFC left on posting to 16 OTU. He had been with the Squadron for 9 months, and had been Bombing Leader in addition to completing a second successful operational tour with S/L W C Brodie DSO DFM.

Mar 21st 45 One aircraft failed to return.

Mar 22nd 45 W/O I M Mcphee and Sgt A V Sullivan posted missing from last night's op. The loss of this crew after such a short time with the squadron is much regretted.

Honours and Awards notified today: DSO to W/C J Northrop, DFC to F/L Hill and P/O Maxwell, DFM to P/O Hooper. Congrats to all concerned.

Mar 24th 45 P/O A T Wood has completed a successful tour of ops.

Mar 26th 45 F/L G R Green and F/O A A Chandler NZ both completed a first operational tour.

March 27th 45 F/L F Hill DFC and F/O J Simkin DFM completed their second operational tour. They are the first crew to complete the increased tour of 55 sorties. One aircraft reported missing after ops.

Mar 28th 45 F/L E S Vale and F/O F J Manning posted missing from last night's op. The crew had settled very well with the Squadron and had completed 22 sorties.

Mar 30th 45 One aircraft reported missing.

Mar 31st 45 F/Sgt W Campey and F/Sgt J Rabiner posted missing. The loss is deeply regretted of this popular crew.

March Summary: 22 nights this month we were over Berlin, and whilst the ground defences were relatively light, there is no doubt that the enemy has his fighters waiting for us during this moonlight period, and this probably accounts for the 3 aircraft which failed to return.

Apr 5th 45 An aircraft of this Squadron today added a new type of sortie to its history, completing a Met flight, manned by a crew of 1409 Met Flight, whose aircraft went u/s after arrival at the Station for an early morning take-off.

Apr 10th 45 The Squadron learnt with pleasure that F/O F H Dell who was reported missing on Oct 15th 44 had now returned safely to this country. He had got down safely by parachute after his aircraft had broken up when hit by enemy fighter fire, and he had escaped capture.

Apr 17th 45 F/L B Boothright completed his second tour of ops, and has been awarded the DFC.

Other awards today: Bar to DFC to F/L Scholes, a DFC to F/O Hammersley and P/O Morrell.

Apr 24th 45 F/L R H Hawken and F/O S I Finkelstein completed their first operational tour.

May 8th 1945 The Squadron was stood down, - Victory in Europe Day. Most of the aircrew took advantage of the special 48 hour pass, and departed to celebrate victory in their diverse ways.

May 21st 45 Congrats to W/C B S Jones DFC on his marriage.

May 22nd to May 31st 45 Most days 2 aircraft took part in “Cook’s tours” flying ground crews over the bombed areas of Germany.

692 Personnel (i)

F/O Derek Smith Navigator Temp Civil Servant 18 in Nov 1940 DFC 43 Bar 45 F/L Jul 45 Father Mechanical Engineer
See notes elsewhere..

F/O Philip Back Pilot Sept 44 to Feb 45

“AVM Bennett wanted only experienced pilots with 1000 hours total time for his squadrons, and tasked Group Captain T G “Hamish” Mahaddie with recruiting volunteer aircrew from the Main Force bomber groups. Sometimes pilots literally came knocking at his door.

In June 1944 Philip Back and “Bing” Bingham, fed up flying Blenheims at Spittlegate, and itching to fly Mosquito night-fighters, hitchhiked down the Great North Road to his office in Huntingdon. Philip was educated at Harrow School and had joined the RAF in 1942 on a six month university course, reading engineering at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. He and Bingham found Castle Hill House, entered, and knocked on a door marked “Group Captain H Mahaddie, SASO”. Philip recalls:

There sat an imposing fellow with many “gongs”. We saluted.

He looked up over his glasses and said “What do you want?”

I said “We want a job Sir.”

“You’d better sit down. How many night-flying hours?” he asked.

“Thirty!” I said.

“Thirty? You mean 300, don’t you?”

“I simply said, “Yes Sir!”

“He asked us what was going on. When we had finished he said he would see what he could do. Two weeks later we were posted to 1655 Mosquito Training Unit at Warboys!”

Other memories include the incident with the car, - see Derek Smith's account, his navigator. Swinging on take-off and going through the F.I.D.O pipes: a complete Dispersal area full of Lancasters of 35 Squadron, and taxi-ing back for another takeoff, and completing the raid, albeit a bit late on target. Also, a dead stick landing (no engines) from 25.000 feet over the sea. We landed at Woodbridge, - with a deadly hush when we finally stopped at the end of the runway.

Cyril Northover Bank Clerk 33 in 41 F/L Mar 45 Admin clerk for squadron Father Post Office Clerk

I joined 692 in Mar 44, I took over an established routine which was usually based on a call from Group giving the number of aircraft required for the night's operations, making sure the serviceability position was up to date for the CO., and then laying on the necessary transport, catering, etc. With only two crew and few losses, changes in personnel were limited, but, later on, as crews finished their tour, such matters took up more time. There were always a number of "station" files circulating and often seemed to be special events, such as working on a Squadron crest, which also kept one busy. It was basically a 9 to 5 office job, and evenings were filled with station duties & social activities, but when there was something special on I would attend de-briefing and if there was a "stand-down" join in any party which might develop. For much of the time the crews had already done one tour of duty so were not all that much younger than I was. I suppose I regarded my main duties as saving the CO. from as much paperwork as possible and keeping an efficient organisation to back up the aircrew.

Squadron officers. C.O.s

1/1/44 – 24/3/44 W/Cdr William Guy Lockhart, a very press-on type who had a mixed career including a spell with 161 squadron Special Operations Executive S.O.E, Was apparently considered more suited to “heavies” – went to 7 Sqd. and was killed on operations 28/4/44

23/3/44 – 11/7/44 A/Cdr S D Watts. He was a splendid New Zealander and very highly thought of. Missing on Berlin raid – Both AVM Bennett (AOC 8 Group) and G/C Menaul (Station Commander) flew on “search” mission.

11/7/44 – 23/1/45 W/Cdr Joe Northrop, an ex-Halton apprentice

23/1/45 W/Cdr B S Jones

Kiel Canal Operation

I assumed it was a Command or Group idea. AVM Bennett did use his mosquitos on missions of his own devising but he doesn't seem to claim this one.

Tunnels Operation

My note at the time says 6 squadron aircraft were on the mission, and one failed to return. The flight commander who led the raid for which he got a DSO was a S/Ldr Wadsworth.

Visits

AVM Bennett was a fairly frequent visitor to the squadrons particularly if there was anything special on. He and his wife attended Officers Mess dances, and station concert parties from time to time. I think the King had also visited Graveley but it was before my time.

The Squadron Crest

As far as I remember it was W/Cdr Northrop who said all squadrons had a crest and he and I worked on “a dagger striking at the heart of the enemy”. It was altered by the College of Heraldry and they produced the official copy in colour of course and signed by the King which was hung in the CO’s office. He and I also produced a Squadron song which began “when the heavies are grounded and dining, 692 will be flying” but I can’t think this did much for the aircrew morale!

24/7/44 F/Lt Val Moore finished after 120 missions – 30 on heavies and two tours PFF Mosquitos (I think).

7/11/44 Squadron photo

20/11/44 Fellowship of the Bellows Presentation. I was never very clear about the background to this but it did mean a full Squadron parade and lunch for A.M Harris (C in C. Bomber Command). See elsewhere for explanation.

F/L John Page Pilot Australian? Flew 38 ops from April to July 44, previously 13 with 139 squadron, and 12 with 408, and 7 with 78 squadron. 18 in 1940 Student joined 692 April 44 DFC May 44 Father merchant marine engineer Navigator was F/O S? Ainsworth

The operations role we were required to fulfil was pretty interesting, consisting of mainly diversionary and nuisance raids rather than direct targeting. On one trip to Berlin we were briefed to drop “window” strips on the run up, and then switch on our landing and navigation lights over the city, to try to draw the fighters up to us, and away from the main bomber force. We were at 28.000 feet with the main force at

about 20,000 feet and a few minutes behind us. We never found out how effective this was, but not one of the 12 Mosquitos was attacked, as far as I can recall. We only had to show ourselves for a couple of minutes, and then got out of the way fast.

692 was the first to load a 4000 pounder bomb, but they didn't make a great deal of difference to the handling of the aircraft, only about 100 yards longer take off run. We used auxillary wing tanks for all trips to Berlin (not drop tanks). In fact we needed the wing tanks for any trip over 3 hours. Mine-laying the Kiel Canal was exciting. We only had a few days to practice, and used various canals in Lincoln. It was the only raid out of 71 when I was absolutely certain that I got the target!

Citation from newspaper states: The King has also approved the following awards for gallantry in these circumstances: - One night in May 44 several crews of Mosquito aircraft were detailed for a difficult and dangerous mine-laying mission. The operation called for the highest standard of skill and accuracy. In the face of intense anti-aircraft fire, balloon defences, and considerable searchlight activity, the attack was pressed home with great precision from low level. That complete success was achieved in spite of such hazards is a high tribute to the calm courage and iron determination shown by the following officers who participated in various capacities as leaders and members of aircraft crew:

DSO W/Cdr S D Watts DFC RNZAF and S/Ldr E J Saunderson RAFVR 692 Sqn.

Bar to DFC F/OC Hassall DFC RAFVR 692 Sqn.

DFC F/L G McKeand RAFVR, F/L J H Barro? RAF?, F/L J P Farrow DFM RNZAF, F? ? ? Grainger DFM RAFVR, F/O S Ainsworth ? RAFVR, F/O E B Chatfield RAFVR, ? ?

? Riley RAFVR, F/O V P Hill R?, F/O J Page RAFVR, all of 692 Squadron.

Woodbridge was a specially equipped 3 mile runway right on the Essex coast, and was used for emergency purposes by returning aircraft. With no brakes there was always a chance of overshooting the runway at Graveley and damaging the aircraft, so I used the extra length of Woodford on that occasion.

F/O Thomas Grieveson Navigator/Bomb aimer enlisted 43 aged 18, father was electrician, home town, Spennymoor Durham time with 692 Jan – Jun 45 Flew 30 ops with pilot F/L L J Judson DFC DFM in Mosquito XV1

W/C Northrop was succeeded as CO by W/C Basil Jones, and F/L Earnshaw became S/L Earnshaw, senior navigation officer. In fact it was he who interviewed me and recommended me for a commission “after a little more experience”. Incidentally, my second interview was with the Station CO – Group-Captain Grant? – who, when he found out who my pilot was, remarked (and I can still see his face!!) “Anyone who flies with that mad b..... deserves a commission”!!

.. - The oxygen situation rang a bell. It was after we had bombed Berlin and were on the return leg that my pilot asked me if I was feeling alright ‘cos he was feeling “lightheaded” and had checked his oxygen supply which showed “empty”. Mine was reading empty too with the same effect, so it was a case of “hold onto your nose” and down we went flying back at 12 to 15000 feet, if memory serves me right. Ground crew swore it was all full when we left, so we never did get to the bottom of it.

As for the raids on Munich on 24th and 25th April, I remember them very well for two reasons. We were briefed to fly out at about 12000 feet for about two thirds of the way because the allied forces were pushing forward on the ground, and then climb to bombing height on the last third. Unfortunately, while flying on the lower level we were fired on over what was supposed to be safe territory, and we learnt on the next day, after reporting this at de-briefing, that it had been the Americans! The target at Munich had been the railway marshalling yards to endeavour to stop reinforcements being sent to the front; but as there was ten tenths cloud cover over the target at bombing height, my pilot decided to go down to have a look! Daft thing to do really, but we did. As a result we were able to report back that the target had not been badly hit, cos we could see it from really low level. De-briefing officers were not too happy at the lack of discipline, but a much larger force was sent out the following night, and destroyed the target.

S/L Joe Reed DFC Nav/Observer schoolmaster at enlistment, 20 in 1941, father engineer, home town Skelton in Cleveland

50 ops with 692 squadron, Tom Beal was his pilot. W/C Steve Watts, a New Zealander I think, was the CO when I joined the Squadron in April 44. Unfortunately he went missing and was replaced by Joe Northrop. S/L Saunderson was OC A flight. I remember operations as very much routine, two nights on, and then one off, perhaps, and very much quicker than my time in heavies.

On one occasion we lost the cockpit canopy on takeoff, and were quite unaware of what the consequences would be, but

glad to say that although we operated at 16000 feet we were quite unaware of the loss. There was no draught, no frozen fingers, - perhaps a little more noise!

Another operation that broke the monotony was being one of the crews to do a follow up raid on Stuttgart. We were despatched to be on target maybe a couple of hours after the Main Force, presumably to get the sirens sounding again and just create bad nuisance.

On the eve of D Day we bombed Osnabruck – at briefing we were told we might encounter unnamed activity as we returned to base, but no mention of invasion. Needless to say there was nothing untoward on our return, but at the debriefing we were each given a copy of General Eisenhower's proclamation of the invasion of Europe and requesting God's help in this vital undertaking. In conclusion, having completed our 50th operation (Kiel), Tommy Beal kept his promise made in the early days, that after the final sortie he would come with me to church. We went the following Sunday evening – it was a happy thanksgiving service.

The 50th Op.

On joining a Mosquito squadron, aircrew looked forward to two things – the glamour and privileges of life on the squadron and the completion of their 50th operation. The frequency of operations ensured you were not on the squadron for long. My own tour extended from the 9th April to the 14th August 1944. Almost all my flying was done on but three aircraft – F for Freddie, A for Apple and B for Beer (18, 3 and 23 trips respectively) FAB carries more significance now than it did in 1944, but our Mosquito was indeed a fabulous aircraft..

My final operation was to Kiel on Saturday August 14th. It was our first visit to Kiel by Mosquito, although I had previously been there by Halifax on April 14th of the previous year, and it had taken 6 hours. Our 49th operation had taken us to Berlin the night before, returning at 0300 hours, or 3 am, so after debriefing it was about 4 am before we got to bed. We were up again by mid day scanning the battle order, and sure enough we were there – B F/L Beal, F/L Reed. The target of course was not disclosed until briefing. There was no need for a NFT (night flying test) and a run up on the ground was the only requirement as last night's sortie had been trouble-free. Briefing was held late afternoon. Would it be Berlin again? It was a regular target at the time. "Tonight's target" announced the briefing officer "is Kiel". Good, a sigh of relief, - a lot of water and not much land, and not a long trip. These were the immediate thoughts, bearing in mind it was our last one. There'll be flak from the offshore Friesian Islands and neighbouring flak ships. A fairly hot target but you are soon away from it after bombing – still, much better than Berlin or the Ruhr. All these images flashed through the mind as the briefing continued. The route, the Met. Report, the time on target, time to be airborne, TIs (target indicators) Green, and finally " Any questions?" "Have a good trip, boys"

The next half hour was spent drawing up the flight plan, and then back to the billet for a couple of hours of relaxation on the bed, and a theoretical appraisal of the trip ahead. Then to the mess for the customary pre- flight egg and chips. Navigation instruments and charts were then packed, parachutes drawn and to the crew bus for conveyance to dispersal and B-Beer, and a last cigarette.

As we hauled ourselves aboard through the underside hatch, Tom said, quite seriously, "Get us back from this one Joe, and I'll come to church with you tomorrow". Once airborne at 21.45 this 50th trip became just like any of the others. A steady climb to operational height, 22,000 feet, a good "Gee" fix before getting out of range, and an uneventful crossing of the North Sea until near landfall. The flak expected from Terschelling, and Borkum and the offshore flak ships duly came, but deviations from direction and height, and evasive action that experience had taught, enabled Tom to bring us safely towards the target, duly marked by green target indicators. I took up my prone position then in the nose, Tom opened the bomb doors, the bombsight adjusted, we made our approach run, straight and level, as searchlights swept the sky and flak burst all round. Then "bombs gone" and the significant jolt as the aircraft became 4,000 lbs lighter, - bomb doors closed, nose down and a hasty exit from the area. It had been a good approach and the bomb blast would have been photographed automatically by our camera. Then we were on course for base, Graveley. It was an uneventful return journey. Time was slow in passing, but eventually the airfield beacon, flashing out in red the letters of the day, enabled Tom to fly visually to base where he joined the circuit and was given permission to land, which he did with the same skill and gentleness as he had on the other 49 occasions. After taxiing to dispersal engines were switched off and I made my way out through the hatch at precisely 01.35 hours followed by Tom. " Thanks Tom " I spoke with joy, as Tom knelt and kissed the ground. We had been in the air for 3 hours and 50 minutes but that was the 50th op successfully completed.

It was a strange feeling to wake up later that Sunday morning, and for the first time in 4 months know that you would not be on the “battle order” of 692 Squadron that evening. There was also the immediate prospect of leave, to be followed , in some respects, sadly, by a posting. But first, I had to remind Tom of his promise to attend Evensong. This was done, and at 6.20 that Sunday evening, we were in the congregation at the village church, just down the road. We had cycled there. In fact, we seemed to cycle everywhere in those days. It was the perfect summer’s evening, peaceful, sunny, warm and relaxing. The villagers showed no surprise at having two servicemen in their midst, and were most friendly. It was a joyful finale to a chapter in our RAF service, and as the vicar, on our departure, wished us “God speed”, we felt a humble gratitude for our good fortune, and a hope that it would continue well into the future.

A footnote:

It was 1200 hours on the 17th April 1945, when the European War was virtually over. I was sent to MTU Barford St. John, when I took off with F/Lt “Pop” De Vigne on a dive-bombing exercise, in Mosquito K for Kitten. I think, although I am not certain, that “Pop”, as we called him, had probably spent time on fighter aircraft. Anyway, after a few exhilarating dive-bombing runs, he asked me if I fancied doing a roll. Having great confidence in pilot and aircraft, I said, “ Yes, certainly”, and in a moment the earth was upside down. The operation appeared so simple, but so thrilling, and the feeling of utter disorientation was fantastic. Actually we did two rolls. “Pop” was such a brilliant pilot that when he said “ What about a loop?”, I replied without hesitation, “Yes”. We gained a bit more height , down went the nose, then

up, round and over, so smoothly and nonchalantly. It was the greatest thrill in my flying career. Just fancy, aerobatics with Bomber Command!

Anyway, soon afterwards a message from Flying Control spoke of “scrambled eggs”. It wasn’t a reference to the lunch menu, but a coded signal that the Group-Captain was doing his rounds, and in the eyes of authority such wayward behaviour in the sky was not expected. We landed and what an exhilarating 40 minutes that had been. There were more occasions when “Pop” entertained us with his aerobatics, Mosquito wise – he was a delight to watch.

S/L William I Drinkall DFC Jun 44 – Jan 45 50 ops Pilot

His navigator was W/O Coe, from London. Enlisted 1939, aged 19, clerk.

Started off with two long operations to Berlin. Thrown in at the deep end, so to speak. I took part in the raid mining the Kiel Canal, which was the only low-level operation in which I took part. I remember crossing the North Sea at about 150 – 200 feet, and being greeted by lots of light flak and tracer, something to which I was completely unaccustomed. All my other ops were high level (27,000 feet) bombing raids, the majority to the “Big City”, Berlin

On the 5th of July we had just left the target when the port engine caught fire. Fortunately, when the engine was switched off, and the fire extinguisher operated, the fire went out, so I had to feather the prop and return on one engine. I decided to land at Woodbridge, which is on the coast, and was used as an emergency landing field for such occasions. We then found that a lump of shrapnel had gone through the radiator of the first engine, about 2 feet from my legs!

On the 8th September the Met briefing had promised good weather to the target and back. The target was Nuremberg, which was one of our longest trips. Shortly after leaving the target, we ran into a very severe electrical storm, which was rather frightening. We went up to about 33,000 feet, but couldn't get above it, and we tried to get under it without success. Eventually we ran into clear weather, but by this time we were well off course, and running short of fuel, so we had to make for the nearest landing field, which was Manston.

I enclose the Battle Order for 5th October 1944, which was for the mining of the Kiel Canal, as described elsewhere. This was for 12 aircraft, which included two reserves, which included the Flight Commander of A Flight, S/L Brodie. (The Flight Commander of B Flight at the time was S/L McKeand). This operation was the only low level operation that I took part in, the rest were high level (27,000 feet) raids, mainly to Berlin, the Big City. So, as for Kiel, I remember crossing the North Sea at about 150 to 200 feet, and being greeted by lots of light flak and tracer, something to which I was completely unaccustomed.

Our usual bomb load was a 4,000 lb "Cookie" but we did have a different bomb load for two operations, to Buer and Gelsenkirchen, probably due to the fact that we were bombing a different target, - possibly synthetic oil plants.

F/L John Ernest Lloyd Gover Pilot enlisted 1940, aged 21, Solicitor, from Wallington, Surrey.

50 ops 692, March to November 1944

Sir Arthur Harris was obsessed with attacking Berlin, but for some time it was thought that it was out of range for the

Mosquito Mk XIV carrying one 4,000 lb bomb. However, on the 13th April 1944 it was decided to have a go and I see from my log book that it took me 4 hours and 15 minutes to get there and back.. This was obviously much better than sending a four engine bomber which took about 7 to 8 hours to get there and back. From then on Berlin was often the target when the weather was suitable, and out of 50 ops I did with 692 squadron, 13 of them were to Berlin. Considering we only had enough fuel for 5 hours flying, and considered ourselves lucky if we could do the round trip in 4 hours and 30 minutes, we were always tight on fuel when we went there.

My navigator, Flying Officer E Talbot appears in the Squadron's Roll Of Honour, as he was killed on the 5th of June 1944. Shortly after takeoff on that night our port engine failed without prior warning. While a mosquito flew quite happily on one engine in the ordinary way, to ask it to do so while carrying a 4,000 lb bomb and 600 gallons of petrol was asking the impossible. I did not dare jettison the bomb in case I destroyed a village as it was 1 am in the morning and of course I could not see the ground. I hit a muddy field at 155 miles an hour. I was saved by my harness but poor Ted Talbot only had a body belt and his head went straight through the instrument panel, killing him instantly. The aircraft caught fire and I need hardly add that the bomb did not explode. However, after three weeks in hospital where my burns were given the famous "McIndee treatment", I was passed fit for duty. As a result of the accident, all navigators were fitted with Sutton harnesses, ie. straps coming up through one's legs, and over one's shoulders, so virtually tying you to the aircraft. I am afraid however that this was too

late to help Ted. Pilots already had these harnesses and why navigators did not have them before I do not know.

Presumably the reason was that they had to go to the nose of the aircraft to aim the bomb when over the target, but this was no reason really.

Another name on the Roll of Honour is Wing Commander Watts who was our C.O from about April 1944 until he was shot down over Berlin in July 1944. He won an immediate DSO in respect of the mining of the Kiel Canal. Steve Watts was a quietly spoken New Zealander, and an absolutely first class man.

When I got back to operations after my accident I flew with navigators who were for some reason short of pilots, or had flown on fewer operations than their pilot, so had to make up the deficiency. I did not have a regular navigator for my last 18 operations therefore.

Our aircraft was hit twice, both times over the target, over Berlin. Once, on the 17th Sept 44, when we were coned by searchlights and shot at very accurately over the target, but I did not find out until the next day, that the aircraft was holed.

The second occasion was actually later that day, the 18th Sept 44. We were coned on route, both ways, and then encountered searchlights and flak at the target, and the aircraft was damaged by flak.

Our maximum fuel load at the time was 600 gallons, made up of 500 gallons in the main tanks and 50 gallons in each wing tank. The aircraft burnt about 120 gallons an hour so we could only remain airborne for five hours which left us very little fuel on the long flight to Berlin by the time we got home.

One op on the 18th of April, my wing tanks were not working

for some reason, with the result that I was desperately short of fuel and just scraped into Coltishall. To make matters worse, my radar equipment was also not working on the return journey.

My aircraft latterly was MM 181 which was one of the two on the squadron fitted with double bladed propellers. These propellers, combined with a different Mark of Merlin engine gave the aircraft concerned a much better rate of climb than the others, and a better performance at altitude. If I was flying with a new navigator in MM 181 he always used to stare disbelievingly at the altimeter when I told him we were at 28,000 feet and levelling out. These paddle-bladed propellers were alleged to be sluggish near the ground, but I did not notice it, and in any case, we always operated at high altitudes where they were at their best. I used to swear by MM 181 and was most anxious to do my last operation on it. This I did, thanks to the courtesy of the Warrant Officer in charge of maintenance who knew I was fond of the aircraft and saw to it that I had it for my last trip. Airmen, like sailors, were inclined to be superstitious although I always denied I was.

Dr R.H James Australian?

With 692 from 11/03/45 till 02/05/45, having completed 21 raids, 12 of which were over Berlin.

That is all the info we have on him at the moment.

S/Ldr A R Galbraith

Nothing at present, living in New Zealand in 1988

F/L Robert G Evans DFC Pilot

Served with 692 as a pilot from the end of January 45 till the end of May 45. He was a New Zealander and had a Canadian navigator called F/O Mc Cleary. While he was with the squadron W/Cdr Basil Jones was the C/O. "A" Flight Commander was S/Ldr Barnes, C Flight Commander was F/Lt Bailey. I believe the Deputy Commander was S/Ldr Hunter.

The squadron had a mixed lot of crews, with some Australian crews too. Naturally enough, some British too.

We took part in 18 of the 33 consecutive raid on Berlin, and I took part in the last raid on the Kiel Canal.

I lost touch with my Canadian navigator who came from Toronto. I do keep in touch with another Kiwi, one Malcolm Peterson, who lives in New Zealand.

F/Lt Anthony Thomas has apparently written a story of 692 Squadron.

692 Personnel (ii)

F/L Malcolm Peterson RNZAF DFC, Croix de Guerre avec Palme, pilot

19 when joined up in 39. November 44 went for Mosquito conversion training, and then joined 692 until war's end.

His navigator was a Canadian, F/O Seymour Baum

He remembers another Canadian, Jim McCready, who was a navigator to his very good friend and fellow pilot in 692

Squadron, F/L Robert G Evans, a New Zealander.

George? Small, pilot,

Pre-war was a trainee Hotel Manager

Joined 692 in Feb 45, after flying 37 sorties with 142 flying Wellingtons

Flew 20 missions with 692 from Graveley, from 11/03/45 to 02/05/45

His navigator was Ken (Curly) Jones

F/L Bertram Menage DFC, navigator

20 in 40 when joined up, born in Wimbledon, was an Insurance Broker, his father was a printer.

With 692 from July to Dec 44, flew 50 ops. His pilot was F/L Batten

Remembers S/L W Drinkall who was an acting Flight Commander

W/C Joe Northrop was Squadron Commander at the time he was there , and he became quite a good friend for some time after.

I do not recall having a photograph taken of me and my pilot, F/Lt Batten. It was considered unlucky by some to have photos taken in front of aircraft.

As regards operations, I remember on 11th Sept 44, on the way out to Berlin we realised the undercarriage was still down, and despite trying to tie up the selector lever it remained down. This affected our speed, and also the height we could attain. It also meant we used fuel a lot quicker, and over Belgium our petrol gauge was indicating zero. Although we had occupied most of Belgium by this time, we decided to try to make it back across the North Sea. We were told to land at Woodbridge, an emergency landing strip in Essex, and no sooner had we landed, and were unsure if we had enough fuel to taxi, were told that a Heavy was coming straight in with a full bomb-load, and Control was coolly asking us to clear the runway as quickly as possible!!

With regard to the Kiel Canal mining raid, I can remember doing practice runs on the Bedford river. On the night of the raid we had to change aircraft twice on account of being unserviceable and in the hurry to catch up on time taxied off the perimeter track and got stuck in the mud.

My wife has kept all the letters I wrote her at the time, and one thing that does come through is the sense of monotony apart from the operations. There are the usual problems about money; we seemed to be hard up in those days, although apparently we were allowed three and four pence? a day ration money whilst we were on leave! A lot of the time seemed to be spent in the camp cinema. My pilot had a car, so there are accounts of trips into Cambridge,- I think it was the Red Lion and a dance hall called the "Dorothy". Other times we went to the Caxton Gibbett (and that is still there), St Ives, Huntingdon and the Brampton Hut. Eaton Socon is also mentioned together with a farmer? at Great Paxton who gave us a meal.

There are also mentions about the flying-bombs when my wife and I were staying at Morden in Surrey. I persuaded my wife to stay for a short time with an aunt in Banbury. We must have done some low-flying exercises over there during a N.F.T as there is mention of our daughter's eiderdown being aired from a bedroom window!

My pilot F/Lt Batten was killed in a flying accident after he left the Squadron. Although we did 50 trips together I really knew very little about his background or if I did I have forgotten. He was not married but he was a super and professional pilot.

My wife and I were quite friendly with W/C Northrop. When the war in Europe was nearly over, we rented a property in Bruntingthorpe, and he came to visit us there.

Barry Blunt, in his letter of reply to Bertram raised some interesting points:

The Log Book data you sent me provides a mass of detail. It gives a good idea of the amount of time spent on various flying activities, and of course their frequency. The mining practice you did on the Bedford canal lasted, for instance, 50 minutes. No doubt upsetting some of the locals and making the livestock frisky.

Your return from Berlin on the 11th Sept certainly ranks as one of the longest bombing ops that I have recorded at 4 hours and 45 minutes. There could not have been a great deal of fuel left in the tanks at this point. Returns like this must have been somewhat tense as exact calculations were not always possible, and a number of crews who chanced it finished up a couple of miles off the runway in the fields, usually with fatal results. Then of course there was the

possibility of something unexpected happening at the last minute. Glad to see you made it safely back to Woodbridge. I noted several formation flying practices in November, in preparation for daylight attacks on Duisburg and Siegburg. I see that you were involved in two of these attacks.

Lionel Woodhead, Senior NCO in charge, the Instrument Section

Joined in 40, aged 29. Born Uckfield, Sussex, formerly a bank clerk.

With 692 from its inception 01/01/44 till it moved to Gransden Lodge in June 45.

My work in the Instruments Section at Graveley consisted of allocating jobs to my section members (48-50 men) who then carried out the necessary repairs or replacements on 36 aircraft, 18 mosquitos and 18 Lancaster bombers. It was my responsibility to ensure that as often as possible 32 aircraft were available each day for operations as far as their instruments were concerned. I also had to decide whether the failed instrument was repairable on the station or marked u/s and returned to station stores kept for exchange. I also had to order instruments for use as a standby. Men were also detailed by me for night duty. On top of this I personally calibrated Mark XIV or Mark XIVa Gyro bombsights. Two or three times a week I attended the de-briefing of aircrews to obtain first hand information on instrument performance. I also had the unpleasant job of secretly fitting a small camera in the bombsight computer in the aircraft of any crew suspected of not going to the target which recorded height and time of bomb release, and if these did not tally with the crew's later story they were grounded and off the station by early morning and classified L.M.F – Low Moral

Fibre! Our boss was of course AVM Bennett who would not have anyone in the Pathfinders who did not give his all. This applied just as much to ground crews. However he equally would not have his members put on paltry charges.

8 Group Pathfinders was known as “Bennett’s Air Force. “ This probably came about in various ways, one of which was that when we got amendment instructions from Bomber Command HQ in many cases the signal was followed by one from Pathfinder HQ saying “ignore Bomber Command amendment Number so and so”!

All told, Graveley was a very happy station.

Ronald Vere, AE (Air Efficiency Award), pilot

Born Fulham, London, formerly an Insurance Clerk, 20 when joined up in 41. With 692 from 15/09/44 till 05/03/45, 33 ops, his navigator was John Archbold

Enclosed with his Log Book copies was the following newspaper clipping (source unknown I am afraid)

Mosquito Men Load up Again For –

The 36th Berlin Express

By Basil Cardew

RAF MOSQUITO STATION

Tuesday night – The Berlin Express left dead on time again tonight, the 36th consecutive night of the service. It is Bomber Commands nightly mail service to Berlin, the mail being 4,000 lb bombs and the carriers Mosquito planes. It is run by a few hundred of the RAF’s most skilled pilots and navigators, average age 26.

“It is a bit of a bind” they said tonight, “It’s the same thing every night.”

Over Berlin, flak rarely opens up now, but the searchlights come up in hundreds. Night fighters waste their time in fruitless chases.

The 400 mph mosquito planes often drop more than 100 tons of bombs on Berlin in a single night. From 30 to 140 of them go over.

Pathfinders lead them to their objectives, flares mark the target, and all planes arrive and leave Berlin within five minutes. More than half of their loads are made up of 4,000 lb block busters. They deal with individual plants left standing by the heavy bombers.

When the Germans are known to have rebuilt a factory the Mosquitos push it down again.

Footnote: Berlin’s achtung service last night counted 71 Mosquitos over the capital.

F/L Percy Willson DFC, navigator

Joined in 40, aged 20, born East Ham, London, bank clerk, father was a Drapery Manager. Was with 692 from 06/03/44 till 30/08/44, completed 56 operations - 50 ops with pilot F/Lt Charles R Barrett, and 6 ops with F/Lt Glover

I well recall our first trip on 06/03/44 which was to Kiel acting as a decoy for the main force. We flew to the East coast of Denmark at 500 feet, and then turned south for Kiel climbing to 30,000 feet, and pushing out as much “window” as possible. As we approached Charles said “are those flashes the flak that I keep hearing about?”

On April 13 we raided Berlin and it was the first time Mosquitos had taken 4,000 lb Cookies to that target..

On another occasion, May 6 44 the target was Ludwigshaven. After bombing and turning for home Charles complained that he could not attain the usual speed at which we normally returned. Furthermore, fuel consumption was very high and we only just made Graveley. Upon taxiing round to dispersal the airman with the torches dropped them and he and the aircrew bus vanished rapidly. Upon getting down from the aircraft Charles and I found the 4,000 lb bomb hanging on its canvas loading belt with all the fuses live. It transpired that the corporal armourer had failed to remove the loading belt on completion of bombing up, and of course all our tests in the air indicated that the bomb had been dropped. The corporal was court-martialled and we had quite a fight with Group for the operation to be counted towards our tally of ops. After that incident one of the pre-flight checks was to ensure that the canvas belt had been removed.

The other item that comes to mind is that after our first three ops we complained to the Medical Officer that our stomachs were swelling whilst in flight, and that it took physical pressure on the stomach to expel air from either end to achieve comfort. The MO said that it was the fried egg, beans and bacon from the pre-flight meal so, after that, we were only given two boiled eggs, and had to wait for the afterflight meal before getting the traditional “fry-up”. As we shared the Mess with 35 Squadron, you can imagine the sarcastic and rude comments, since they consumed fried bacon and egg, with us only getting boiled!

Apart from these personal experiences, I well remember how from 30,000 feet, we could see the main force some distance underneath and thought their blackout was not good. Lights from the navigators showed the entire length of the stream

and we often commented that the German night fighters did not need radar.

Once we had completed our tour of 50 ops Charles was offered the post of Flight Commander with a new Mosquito Squadron 608, with promotion to Squadron Leader. He very much wanted me to go with him with the view to becoming Squadron Navigation Officer. Much as I was tempted, I felt that with a wife and year old son and having completed three tours of operations, I should decline and I requested a transfer to Ferry Command. Whilst waiting I did a further six operations with F/Lt Glover. Charles went missing in September, and having heard no more I assumed he had been killed.

Harry Hughes

“692 was a very mixed Squadron, - Canadians, South Africans, New Zealanders, Australians, as well as British. There were also a number of Jewish aircrew. 692 was called 692 Bellows Squadron as aircraft had been subscribed for by the Bellows Club in Buenos Aires. I was taken there to lunch a few years ago and was surprised to see a picture of a 692 Mosquito and the Squadron Crest. I had forgotten the connection. The President and the Committee were called out and I was received with much hospitality.”

F/L Richard Clarkson DFC and Bar, navigator.

I served in 8 Group on 627 and 692 squadrons, the latter having been formed from 627, and established at Graveley in Spring 44. I flew as navigator with two Flight Commanders; first with S/Ldr J Sanderson with whom I completed some

35? operations, and after my return to the squadron following hospitalisation for a minor injury, latterly with S/Ldr J McKeand. The ops I took part in were on either side of D Day.

Some two or three weeks before D Day 692 Squadron carried out the low-level mining of the Kiel Canal. Flying with S/Ldr Sanderson in the last of the 12 Mosquitos we encountered stiff opposition and had to make four attempts before we could be sure of getting the mine into the Canal. I gather over one million tons of shipping was obliged to stay in Kiel Bay , and in clearing the Canal I understand a great deal of damage was done. The Admiralty were extremely pleased with the result and all the aircrews who survived were decorated – S/Ldr Sanderson receiving a DSO.

After D Day the Squadron flew almost nightly to Berlin to keep the Luftwaffe fighter Squadrons deployed through northern Germany. On my final and 50th operation with S/Ldr McKeand we lost an engine over Berlin, and returned on one to make an emergency landing at Coltishall.

I left 692 squadron in August 44 and went to Transport Command.

One highlight of my Mosquito experiences was to fly as navigator to the AOC – Air Vice Marshall Bennett, when he came to Graveley to flight test a Mosquito which could not achieve altitude with a 4,000 lb bomb on board. He coaxed it up to about 20,000 feet and then timed the fore and aft and lateral movements to discover how the aerodynamics were affected. I took down the timings and other details and the aircraft was sent off to Hatfield for rectification as soon as we landed!

S/L Samuel Thomas (Tom?) Beal DFC pilot, S/L from August 44

22 on enlistment in 38, born Leicester, warehouseman, parents occupation shoe manufacturers.

On 692 from Mar 44 to Sept 44

His navigator was Joe Reed

Personnel (iii)

F/L Leo Joseph Judson DFC DFM Czech War Cross, Czech Military Medal. Joined up in 1938, aged 18, farmer's son. Place of birth, Easingwold, Yorks.

As regards those killed with 692 Squadron, F/L Waugh, an Australian. His navigator was Tubby Goodhew. They crashed at Graveley having returned on one engine after dropping their Cookie, overshot, running through the hedge at the end of the runway. Tubby was badly broken up but lived.

F/Lt Vale, - he was a late arrival on the Squadron with a small Canadian navigator. We lost him the next night.

With regards the F/Sgt we lost I do not recall his name, but he was put on Berlin for each of his 5? Ops, and he was getting very touchy about it. I had a heated argument with W/C Jones pointing out he should have been given an easier few first targets as this was the done thing. He told me to mind my own business. We never saw the F/Sgt on his last trip.

As far as I can remember we were not attacked by night-fighters over Berlin, and I do not recall ever seeing one, but I tended to fly 1,000 feet above or below the main stream, so that is possibly why.

I am sorry I cannot assist further, but my Log Books are very sketchy as I was of the opinion the next trip would be the last. I'm sorry now that I was so pessimistic but there it is.

Patrick Dillon F/L DFC, navigator,

enlisted 1940 aged 20, bank clerk, born Bournemouth, father was a sea captain, from Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada Served in 692 from Jan 44 to Oct 44, did 52 missions in 6 months.

Flew 52 ops between Jan 44 and Oct 44.

Recalls 11 Feb 44 shot up by flak over the Ruhr

23rd Feb 44 S/I Watts, with F/O Hassell, F/Lt Val Moore and myself, and F/Lt McKeand took off for Dusseldorf carrying 4,000 lb bombs for the first time operationally. They did not know for certain that we could get off the ground with a full load of fuel, drop tanks, and the bomb. Geoffrey de Havilland was there to see the take-off, but all went well. There was a dispute between Steve Watts and ourselves as to who was the first to drop their 4,000 lb load!!

18 Mar 44 Port engine on fire. This happened very shortly after takeoff, with a full load of fuel, wing drop tanks, and a 4,000 lb bomb. F/Lt Val Moore managed to douse the fire, feather the prop, and we flew out to the North Sea to drop the wing tanks and the bomb, returning to Graveley on a single engine. On the whole flight we lost only about 500 feet in height even on the one engine, even fully loaded. Cannot recall cause of fire, but assume a fuel leak of some sort.

29th Mar 44 Instruments u/s soon after crossing English coast. All instruments, - air speed indicator, artificial horizon, turn and bank, etc. failed and being pitch black we had no idea as to whether we were the right way up or upside down, so reported trouble. Coltishall sent up a couple of fighters to fly alongside us and escort us to their airfield. Not the wisest thing to do over the North Sea with navigation lights on, etc. but the only way we could tell we were the right way up!

7th May 44 Leverkusen. Attacked by a couple of fighters. We were at 20,000 feet in the target area and had to jettison our bomb.

26th June 44 Gottingen. Bombing height was 6,000 feet, exact reason I cannot remember, but can recall we felt the blast

from our bombs which threw the aircraft all over the sky! I can only assume that the reason we landed at Woodbridge was a weather clampdown at base.

8th July 4 N.F.T. Diving to 250 feet. This was a Practice for “throwing” bombs into railway tunnels (into the mouth of the tunnel). Whether the squadron actually carried out such raids I do not know, as I was not on the squadron at the time. (We now know that such a raid was carried out, on the Ardennes tunnels on 1st Jan 45). Patrick continues. When I was on Hampdens we used to use the Wash as a bombing practice area, and on many occasions we used to dive down onto the dykes and canals around the area frightening the life out of the bargees, who even used to throw stones at us!!

17th July 44 Berlin. Attacked by a fighter. Over the target at 26,000 feet, just released bomb, and was still in the nose at bomb sight when Val Moore yelled for me to get back into my seat to get advantage of the armour-plated back as tracer bullets were shooting past.

Despite “weaving” the attacks continued, mainly from behind, so we did not see the aircraft, only his tracer bullets.

Eventually Val said “hang on tight”, opened the throttles and put the nose down. The air speed indicator went well past the 700 knots mark! The tracer initially followed us down, but when we pulled out of the dive sharply, he lost us. As we pulled out of the dive, a packet of “Window” came up from the nose of the aircraft, landed in my lap, and then lifted off again and returned to the nose. First thing next morning at Graveley, Geoffrey de Havilland was there as he could not believe that the aircraft was in one piece!

Frederick Hill Pilot DFC 55 ops Oct 44 – Mar 45

How did I come to be flying Mosquitos? In 42 and 43 competent instructors were at a premium and more or less tied down to the Operational Training Units. When in 1944, the opportunity came to move to Mosquitos I took it (and sacrificed an acting rank to do so). Jack Simkin was a bombing instructor at Husbands Bosworth, having done a tour with 5 Group on Lancs. He was a first-rate bomb-aimer with the Mark XIV sight, and offered to join me, so we paired up.

After the Wellington, which was like flying a double-decker bus, the Mosquito was a delight. 692 was equipped with Mark XVIIs which had a deepened bomb bay to accommodate the 4,000 lb bomb – which was pretty much all we ever carried. With the drop tanks taking extra fuel we were greatly overloaded at take-off and needed most of the 2000 yard runway, but once off, and with wheels and flaps up it climbed smoothly and quickly. It was comforting to know that we could climb through any sort of weather we were likely to meet (and often did). Our usual operating height was 25,000 feet, and with an outside temperature down occasionally to -55C we never needed more than flying boots and a sweater. After the Hampden days, I felt pampered! And not only with regards to creature comforts. On my first tour the main instrument of navigation was the eyeball, but I don't believe Jack ever looked out, - he was so busy with the Gee set or the Loran. I didn't have to wait until I saw the gun flashes to know we were under attack. Now I had an instrument with a little red light which glowed at half-strength when we were being tracked by enemy radar, and glowed brightly when the

gun-laying radar picked on us. Not that the flak was nearly as bothersome at 25,000 feet as it had been at 13 or 14,000 feet. Another useful device lit up when a radar-carrying night fighter located us. It came on when we were on our way home one night and I spent the next 45 minutes corkscrewing like mad with Jack watching the tail. The light was still on when I taxied to dispersal – an instrument fault!

The real threat from fighters was, of course, the Me 262, the jet which we knew was operating. The Mosquitos were all equipped with V.H.F R/T equipment and we could hear each other when a considerable distance apart. We had an arrangement that if any aircraft was attacked he would call “Snappers” on the R/T as a warning to everyone else. None of us had ever seen a jet, and there were quite a few false alarms when V2 rockets were sighted on their way up. With their fiery tail, it was a natural mistake. On most nights at 25,000 feet we left condensation trails which often lasted for a long time. I suspect that if Jerry had tried a few FW 190s on interception, they would have had some success, by simply following the trails.

So many of our trips followed the same pattern that they tended to become routine, and I tend to remember only the unusual ones. You will know the system, no doubt. If all went according to plan, the target would be marked by H2S-carrying aircraft, or, perhaps by Oboe at an arranged time, called H-hour. If our navigation was accurate (and it was rarely anything else) we would arrive between H plus half a minute and H plus 4. Jack would move from his navigating position where he was seated, to lie prone in the nose at the bomb-sight, sometimes before the target indicators were sighted.

On one occasion, he did this, and when the target indicators burst I called as usual “ T.I.s down, bomb doors open” , but Jack, most unusually, did not answer in confirmation. I waited for course corrections from him, eg.” Left, leftrightSteady”, and so on, but not a word, and no response at all when I asked if he was O.K. We had overshot the T.I.s before I spotted that his oxygen dial was reading zero. He had, somehow, when moving to the bomb-sight, turned with his clothing, the wheel which controlled his oxygen supply, shutting off his supply completely. I turned it on again. He recovered consciousness, and we went round again and managed to bomb the target before the T.I.s went out. He was no worse for the experience.

The H-hour could be adjusted by a Master-Bomber if necessary, eg. if the wind turned out very different from the forecast, and the adjustment would take the form of a broadcast on the R/T such as “ So -and-so One to all so- and-so aircraft; H plus 5”. The T.I.s could then be expected 5 minutes later than arranged. We didn’t hear the broadcast one night and so got to Berlin 8 minutes before everybody else. There was nothing for it but to go clean across the city and go round again, giving us the defences to ourselves until the rest arrived.

The op I remember the most vividly was the one we did at ground level on 1st Jan 45, the only one we did at less than 20,000 feet. On reporting in on the morning of 31st Dec, we were told to go to the bombing range and practice bombing from 50 feet, - no explanations given. This was at the time of the German Ardennes offensive when our army needed all the help that could be given, which wasn’t much because Bomber Command was fog bound most of that time.

It turned out at briefing that afternoon that the squadron, along with aircraft from other squadrons, was to attempt to put bombs horizontally into railway tunnels at such places as would most interrupt enemy supplies to his army. The bombs were not the usual 4,000 lb blockbusters, which had a thin casing, but 4,000 lb jobs of the traditional sort with 11 second delay fuses. Two aircraft were to attack each tunnel. The attack was to be at first light, since we had to be able to see what we were doing. We went to the target at a couple of thousand feet, as far as I remember, and I still have the most vivid memory of seeing out of the corner of my eye something one was always on the lookout for - something moving relative to oneself, ie. another aircraft. It turned out to be a V1 on a converging course. It passed about 50 feet below us. We could do nothing about it of course.

We carried on and attacked our tunnel. The pilot has to release the bomb on an occasion like this, and Jack was a spectator. I think what made the biggest impression on him was seeing a gun-post on the embankment wall above us. Luckily it wasn't manned, or their crew was asleep or something. We didn't hang around to give them a second chance! We did see smoke come out of the other end of the tunnel, so assumed we had hit the target. Now we were faced with an unusual situation for us; it was now light and we were a fair distance inside enemy territory, and of course, we had no defensive armament. We settled for 5,000 feet at maximum speed due west. As it happened the enemy had made a last fling attack on our airfields in the near vicinity at dawn. He did quite a lot of damage as I remember. We saw something of it in the shape of copious light flak from one of the airfields under attack

Himself (A.V.M. Bennett) was at the de-briefing, wanting to know all about it. We lost one aircraft from the Squadron. His tunnel had a train parked just inside it, with the flak-wagon just outside the opening; - the flak crew got him. The second aircraft claimed to have hit the flak-wagon with his bomb. I have no clear memories of many other ops. apart perhaps, from a daylight one when the Squadron flew in formation, led by a Lancaster that had GH, and we released when he did. The C.O had given us the tail-end position (we were in a long double-line formation) with orders to keep everybody up to scratch; - he himself was leading. Can't say I was impressed by the compliment, since I would be the first to be picked off by any marauding fighters. We were supposedly being covered by a Squadron of our own fighters, but we saw nothing of them; - luckily, nothing of the enemy, either. We occasionally played decoy by flying ahead of the Main Force, at their height and speed, with the aim of drawing off the enemy night-fighters away from the crowd, and then opening up to our speed and height. It was always pleasant when that moment arrived. Our losses were quite light. I imagine we lost as many to the weather as we did to the enemy. We operated quite often when the heavies of 8 group were grounded, and of course, Graveley had F.I D.O, the fog dispersal system, which meant that we could fly in practically any conditions. It was a sobering experience to use F.I.D.O for the first time, with the knowledge that if you were to swing, as Mosquitos were prone to do, you would go through that line of flame, and fracture the pipe carrying the fuel. Remember, the flames were feet high, and the plane was made of wood! On the other hand, it was rather nice to know that the system was there in case of need; it was visible from the air at a distance

of about 40 miles. On the ground you could read a newspaper 200 yards away on the darkest night!

You will note an entry in my Log Book that we had to put down at Woodbridge, which you know to be an emergency landing strip (similar to ones at Manston and Carnaby). It had a 4000 yard runway of tarmac, with 500 yards of cleared, level ground at its eastern end, and 1000 yards of cleared, softened ground at the western end. We were obliged to put down there that night because the fuel refused to siphon out of the drop tanks, so we had to get down to re-fill before going on to Graveley.

C Foard (Butch) Sergeant Fitter II (Airframe and Engine)

Joined RAF as apprentice aged 15 and a half in 1933.

Posted to RAF Graveley to help form 692.

A day in the life of an airman on an operational squadron during wartime:

Wartime working was not an 8 till 5 job. When the CO said he wanted 12 aircraft for operations at such and such a time, he got 12 aircraft even if we worked all day and night.

You might start your day waking in your old “Macdonald bed” affectionately known as your Charp (abbreviation for Charpoi, a light Indian bed). You will almost invariably be in a Nissen hut with 11 other airmen. The wash house is also a Nissen hut, cold water only in most cases, some 30 yards from your “billet”. Just the job to get rid of the cobwebs from the night before, especially in winter. It’s off to the cookhouse for breakfast taking the knife, fork, spoon and a drinking mug. Interesting to know that although issued with a china mug, everyone is using an enamel mug. Funny how two people in a hurry always seem to lead with the mug hence plenty of breakages or enamel mug well chipped.

On an operational unit the tradesmen did not march to work because the aircraft were at dispersal, and each was issued with a push bike. So it was off to dispersal complete with knife, fork, spoon and mug. Each person knew the score and was never late, except by some problem, puncture, etc.

Arriving at dispersal they would check into the flight office, again a Nissen or wooden hut. The Form 700 was the serviceability sheet, and it was on this form that the pilot could make his complaint, and place the aircraft unserviceable. It remained u/s until the fault was cleared, and

the F700 signed off by the airman doing the repair, - the senior NCO checking etc.

Additionally on the squadrons where I was a senior NCO , we used to use a “snagsheet” for reporting faults which did not put the aircraft u/s, but nevertheless needed attention.

In the majority of cases fitters/riggers were assigned their own aircraft, so that they knew it like the back of their hand.

The senior NCO would tell the tradesmen of any problem on their particular aircraft and in most cases what to do. Spares were covered by the storeman. He would have to draw the spares from the general stores, although it was usual to hold spares at dispersal and replace them, saving a lot of time.

Normally the SNCOs would know from the Flight

Commander of operational requirements early in the day.

Those requiring just a daily service were progressed, serviced and put on standby. An estimate was then made of the prospects of serviceability of the remainder; - maybe one wasn't going to be ready in time. So if there was a spares problem with one or more of the aircraft we would rob Peter to pay Paul.

A daily inspection of the engines involved the inspection of cowlings before removal for indications of oil leaks, and with cowlings removed, check exhaust stubs for security, damage, etc., ignition system, leads, plugs, etc. All hoses, radiator, top up with oil, coolant, rotate propeller and listen for noises from supercharger bearings. The rigger would carry out a visual check of the outside faces of all parts of the aircraft, bullet holes, etc., tyres, no cuts or flat, brake pressure, function of controls from the cockpit, any drooping of hydraulically operated components, flaps, bomb doors. The rigger was usually finished before the fitter, so it was he who filled up with petrol and signed the F700.

When servicing was completed each tradesman would sign the F700 and when all trades had signed, the SNCO would sign off "aircraft serviceable". If a test flight was required by the pilot this was arranged and when the aircraft landed the tradesmen would do a "between flight inspection" which was just a visual of the aircraft generally, for any damage and the only thing to sign on the F700 was petrol. If it was to be a long operation, drop tanks had to be fitted, tested and filled up. While the aircraft was on the ground a cover was placed over the pitot head on the leading edge of the fin and tyres, main wheels had covers to prevent deterioration by sunlight, and of course chocks in front of the wheels, locking bar on undercarriage.

On those aircraft when some problem had arisen, it was a recognised thing that the tradesmen would work on even over the lunch time. It was usual for half the crews to go on early lunch and the others later, (complete with utensils and mug). During the morning and afternoon that enamel mug came into use. When the NAAFI van arrived and the airmen would purchase their "char and wads", tea and cakes. It was a recognised break lasting 10 -15 minutes..

Aircraft were run against the chocks to maximum revs, constant speeding, boost, magneto engine rev drop, each mag, each engine, hydraulics, but not feathering the propellers, slow running. It was during the slow running period that the fitter would check for black smoke emission from the exhaust, a sure sign of rich mixture. Similarly at night time when engines were being run up to maximum revs the flame colour from the exhaust was noted.

When the 12 aircraft are serviced and are serviceable, oxygen checked and bombs loaded we can relax. If time was available and sometimes between flights, a type of football

was played with the hangar door as goal, this obviously well away from the aircraft. Or perhaps the time was passed reading a book, in all probability a “hot” one passed on from hand to hand.

If work was still going on with other aircraft an assessment would be made of the necessity to carry on working, and if needed meals were arranged for those working on. The remainder of the lads would retire with an instruction to those required for night flying what time to report back to dispersal, usually about half an hour before take-off time, although sometimes when take-off times were “iffy” because of weather conditions, either by base or over the target, the lads would be hanging about some little while. Sometimes, ops would be cancelled, then it’s all knock off, either back to the NAAFI, or billet or down to the local pub, depending on time. Assume now that all aircraft had taken off, it is only then that we get an idea of where they have gone, because we are given time of return. Depending on the time, a skeleton crew is maintained at dispersal, in case of any aircraft returning (operational failure); the remainder gone to the cookhouse for supper, returning to dispersal at an arranged time. Should there be an abort, and all aircraft return, you could be assured that there would be enough crews to see them in because the sound of those Merlin engines overhead was unmistakeable, and was like a siren to the ground crew.

Assume operation normal, the ground crews would be at dispersal half an hour before the aircraft were due back. Then you would hear the unmistakeable sound of the first one coming home. Then the count would begin, one to twelve hopefully, maybe one missing, but hopefully it has landed somewhere else, this information would filter through later. The night crew was approximately one third of the total crew.

As stated before, a “crew”, fitter and rigger, was assigned to a particular aircraft . The crews would then carry on all night, servicing their own particular aircraft, assuming there was no major damage. If there was, they would service some other aircraft requiring a “daily” service only. In fact, if operations finished early, the ground crew would service their own aircraft, and any others they could complete in the time. They would work through until the day shift reported at 8 o’clock, and would then go for their breakfast, returning to the dispersal immediately afterwards. They would then continue to work until 12 o’clock, and would then be free until 8 am two days later. This was not a recognised RAF procedure, but one adopted on operational units where I was involved, to the satisfaction of all concerned, - the airmen, to supervision, and to the O/C. Refuelling was not carried out at night due to the obvious dangers, so all aircraft had to be refuelled in the morning.

Life was a happy one at dispersal. Everyone helped each other. I cannot remember one instance of “aggro” arguments, yes, but fisticuffs, never. If we could let the night shift crews off earlier than the 12 o’clock, say at breakfast time, we would do, and it was much appreciated by the “lads”, who you will have gathered, would work all hours to get those twelve aircraft off the ground on ops, and took it personally if there was a failure on their aircraft. “Esprit de corps” is the definition of loyalty and devotion, but no words of mine can define that inner feeling of pride in achievement.

If we were not on night shift ourselves, we used to knock off about 5 o’clock and go straight to the Sergeant’s Mess for the main meal of the day. It was then back to the billet, wash and shave, Spruce up, (remember, we are the Brylcream Boys), and back to the mess to meet up with your mates. Darts,

dominoes, gambling (mainly poker) with a beer up, or out to some local pub, - anyone that had beer because it was in short supply, and there were no spirits, whisky, rum, gin etc. In the Sergeant's mess, spirits were available, but nearly everyone drank beer.

We went to any local dances that we could get to on our pushbikes, and, let's face it, everyone lived for tomorrow, so a good time was had by all. At Graveley we used to cycle to Buckden for a dance at the village hall. There was a big hall where what we called "fruit pickers" used to come from the bombed areas of Kent and London on a rest period. They were all women and you knew very well what went on! They worked by day picking fruit out in the Fens, and at night we would meet up in the favourite pub, The Vine. The yard outside had barrels for tables, boxes for chairs, and the walls of the pub fairly bulged. The ladies were free and wanted a good time, and the airmen were only too glad to oblige. The dance hall was just the intermediary. We worked hard, we played hard!

Although airmen were not allowed in the Corporal's or Senior NCO's messes there was a common meeting place, the local pub. Before we finished at the eventide, there would be a brief discussion as to which pubs still had beer, and often we used to cycle quite a few miles to meet up for a drink together. The golden rules were no politics, no religion, no work, full stop, - anyone breaking the rules was very rapidly shut up. The Sergeant's mess did invite pubs/clubs into the mess for a social/games evening, usually a glorious "beer up". It was during one such evening when we had invited the local British Legion club that, because of my repertoire of barrack room ballads, I was asked to "give us a song". I had often threatened to recite " Daffodil Time" in the past and on this

occasion I did stand on that grand piano, and start to recite that well-known poem. The barman, a friend of mine, took a cartoon from the “London Illustrated” showing a Sergeant Commando, underneath were the words “Sergeant Butch So and So, of the Commandos, will now recite “Daffodil Time”. He crossed out the “So and So”, inserted the name Foard, and posted the cartoon so that all could see adjacent to the bar. So we now had “Sergeant Butch Foard of the Commandos will now recite “Daffodil Time”. I was already trained as a Two Group commando, so it was quite appropriate I have been known as “Butch” from that day to the present.

Words must be written regards the “Service Police”, a necessary evil. It was not the policemen on the Station that were the bugbear, but the ones on the railway stations stopping the airmen, asking for leave passes. Our lads on Stand-down did not have a pass, and if one was reported, he had to be charged, but in every case, it was case dismissed. An airman had to do something really serious before anything was done about it because we just could not afford any of our labour to be reporting to the guardroom, doing fatigues, confined to camp – “jankers”. We needed them all the time. You never knew what the next day’s requirements would be. I remember the “Sky pilot” – Padre, was a special sort of chap. Some you never saw or heard, others came out to meet the troops, - their flock.

One chap we had, wanted to meet his flock out at dispersal, and being a bit of a character, he used to ride around the perimeter to dispersal on a horse. Of course all the lads saw him coming a mile off and disappeared. When the Padre got to dispersal and asked where all the lads were we had to tell him the truth, “They saw you coming a mile off”.

The Padre, not to be outdone, decided on speed to catch them before they could disperse; but again, on arrival, at dispersal, - nobody, and again we had to tell him the truth. "They heard you coming a mile away".

But our Padre was a tryer. There was a break, morning and afternoon, when the NAAFI van came around. One Sunday morning, when the lads were sitting, backs against the hanger wall with their Char and Wads, the Padre appeared on a pushbike. "Okay lads, carry on with your eating and drinking." He then gave a little talk, spicy with a moral, involving a WAAF. No bible reading, no hymns, no sermon, just this talk with a moral. From then on, you couldn't keep the lads away from that Padre, and always the talk, different subjects, but always involving the WAAFs. But he always asked if anyone had problems.

With the number of aerodromes which opened up during the war years it was obvious that they were built short-term. The Nissan hut was the building utilised in numerous ways on such aerodromes. A Nissan hut was basically a concrete base, corrugated iron roof and walls attached to steel bands anchored each end in the concrete. Usually there was a stove with stack pipe in the middle for accommodation buildings, a door with windows either side at each end of the hut.

Depending on size there would probably be 10 to 12 Macdonald beds, a wooden bedside locker to each, and a 6 foot table with 4 chairs. The floor was usually covered with linoleum.

There was usually a Corporal to each hut, and his responsibility was to ensure the airmen were up on time, and that the place was kept hygienically clean and tidy. Each man made up his own bed in the morning but in turn, one man used to sweep out, polish, etc. after the others had left. With

10 to 12 people in such a primitive type of “home” there was no room for the isolationist, all had to muck in together.

The Nissan hut could be adjusted to have side windows for offices, be coupled to another for size such as general stores, cleaned and internally altered for sick bay; in fact it was adjusted to whatever use it was required for, Officer’s Mess, Sergeant’s Mess, Airman’s Mess, cookhouse, NAAFI, Guard Room, Church, Ops Room, Crew’s quarters – anything. The Nissan hut, along with the Mosquito helped win the war!

I was a Sergeant, I was Fitter II, Fitter and Rigger, although I tended to bias towards engines. I was billeted in a Nissan hut with other Senior NCO’s. We each looked after our own bed space, but usually had an ACH (aircraft hand) unskilled, to clean out the hut daily. We would rise about 7 am and proceed to the wash hut to be clean shaven every day. The wash place was a Nissan hut with a main water pipe running down the centre supplying approximately 10 wash spaces. Running parallel with this pipe was another pipe conveying hot water when available. A couple of shower units were at each end. A cold shower did wonders, but it certainly made one hardy.

Breakfast was taken in the Sergeant’s Mess, which again was Nissan huts joined, so that one formed the cookhouse and the other the bar. We sat at a table and were served by WAAF mess waitresses. It was then off to work to be on site by 8 o’clock. First thing to do was to check all F700 forms to see which aircraft had been placed unserviceable and for what reason. Then, a check on the snag sheet and the report left by the night-shift, or a verbal report if they were still around. A check on labour available, - Fitters, Riggers, Instrument repairers, Armourers, Electricians, Wireless Ops, Photographers, Radar mechanics, etc. Detail the airmen and

Corporals to specific jobs. The Engineering Officer would receive information regarding operational requirements for the night, and we could then plan for which aircraft we could get serviceable in time, this information was passed on to each ground crew.

I had a drinking mug in the flight hut for use when the NAAFI van arrived. We waited till all the airmen and Corporals had got what they wanted before we got ours. Firstly so that they had maximum time and secondly so that they would all be available for a check up on how things were going.

In all probability one or more of the pilots on ops last night would come out to dispersal to discuss some point, or to find out the answer to a problem they had. Also to let us know whether they were doing a test flight or did we wish them to do one. Good relationships existed between ground crew and air crew. They had to!

F/O Derek Smith DFC + Bar

Incidents on ops:

- 1) A swing on takeoff at Graveley, where we had “FIDO”, with a Mosquito fully loaded for Berlin. We started to swing at about half way down the runway at around 90 knots. It was fine judgement of throttle back or push it right through the gate, and Phil Back, my pilot, chose the latter. We left the runway at an angle of about 30 degrees, bounced over the Fido lines, and I still vividly remember looking down on 35 Squadron Lancasters in dispersal, seemingly inches below. That, I believe, was my closest call as 4000lb “cookies” make a nasty mess when an undercarriage collapses on them.
- 2) Returning from that same trip, we decided to go up a bit in a straight line from the target to home, so that over the North Sea we were at 30,000 feet when both engines died on us and remained that way. At that height we had time to examine our options and we were about 15 miles out from Woodbridge, the emergency landing strip. We considered bailing out but 5 miles looks a long way down so we abandoned that. Phil considered that with all our height he could get us down, so I offered up a small prayer, and decided to give him my support. We entered the approach at about 7000 feet, and he put it down right in the middle of the runway with little more than an average bump. However, we were pursued down the runway by a Lancaster with no brake pressure, but fortunately he missed on the starboard side by just a few feet. When our engines were examined in the morning they started and ran up without trouble, and we flew it back to Graveley. The theory was that our fuel supply had frozen at some point as the temperature had been well below minus 50C.

3) On another occasion, also returning from Berlin, when only Mosquitos were operating because fog was forecast, we found FIDO was u/s and we were told to get down where we could. Minutes later a flare came up through the fog, and being over East Anglia with no height problems, Phil did a quick turn to port losing height rapidly and there, ahead of us was a Liberator on its final approach to an airfield illuminated like the Crystal Palace. Knowing it was our last and final chance as we were short of fuel, Phil went in over the Liberator, hit the runway past halfway, shot off the end and into a row of tree stumps felled to a height of some seven feet. Again fortune was with us as we were still moving at about 20 to 30 knots, our nose went between two stumps about 10 feet apart, and the wings brought us to an abrupt stop. We were unhurt apart from my having a cut forehead so we went through the top fairly rapidly, only to find that a public road ran along the other side of the stumps and we had a car underneath the plane. Further examination revealed four occupants who apparently had been sitting watching the aircraft land! The car was a write-off and one occupant had come near to being scalped, but he recovered in hospital, and the others were only suffering from shock and were shaken up.

4) Our narrowest escape during our tour was in something we did not do, - the first of January 45: The dropping of bombs in railway tunnel entrances. The battle order was in two parts. One of more experienced pilots, and the other for a normal operation. We appeared in the former, and were told of the tunnels op. Just before we were due to be briefed, George Nairn, who had more experience than Philip, my pilot, returned from leave, replaced us on the battle order, and we were relegated to the Berlin op, much to our disgust. Of

course, it was an op which required the more experienced pilots, but sadly for George, it was his last. Such was the fine line between being a survivor, or one of the 55,000!

F/O Ian Macdonald and F/O Ted Chatfield.

Ian writes “ his face was familiar when we paired up at Marham in Jan 44 as a mosquito team. We converting pilots and gambling navigators were herded together in the crew room and, after a brief of what was to lie ahead of us, we were invited to pair off. Ted came over from the other side of the room, and said “ you were on 51(squadron), weren’t you”? I recognised a familiar face (the only one in the room) and so the two ex-Whitley boys teamed up. He didn’t seem too enthusiastic at the time, but what I didn’t know was that this was to be his first go at operations since his near fatal prang!

Our first flight together was purely routine, drifting sublimely around the countryside while Ted played with his nav. gear – especially the new fangled GEE set. Then, as a demonstration of the aircraft’s capabilities, I quietly feathered the starboard engine while Ted had his head down behind me. Then, when comfortably asymmetric I drew Ted’s attention to the feathered prop. He nearly jumped out of the aircraft. After a few seconds he settled down, and said ”Now I will show you something. Lower your seat, put your head down, and I’ll put you 1500 feet downwind in the circuit for landing”. So saying, he gave me a few courses to steer from his GEE screen with appropriate descent instructions and after a few minutes said “ you can lower your undercarriage now and have a look” and lo and behold, there we were abeam the duty runway and in position for u/c down for the landing. Incident : Quite a few mosquitos were put u/s following violent swings to port with subsequent u/c collapse on take-off. So much so that the word went round that culprits in future would find themselves back on “heavies”. One night

we, Ted and I, were lead of the queue for take-off when away she went to port, so the take-off was aborted and I taxied round to the end of the queue. This time I was doubly careful but alas, the same result. When I arrived back at the taxi point the CO poked his head in to say “ Better make this your last try – you will be too far behind the others”. After a shame-faced “ Roger, Sir” I tried again – but again the same result. Disconsolately we returned to dispersal and had an early night. It was found in test next morning that there was a supercharger malfunction on the port engine, which limited power output. So, it was a case of all’s well that ends well. The second incident occurred a few weeks later. Our takeoff was normal enough, but on the climb out the port engine started to pour out a huge tongue of flame that swept back over the wing. Apart from looking like Haleys Comet, which German night-fighters would see miles away, I was of the firm belief that a wooden wing and that blow lamp could only have one result, so, after feathering and getting well over the North Sea, we jettisoned our bomb load and headed back for an uneventful one engine landing. Next, the CO W/C Steve Watt had me in to get my story and to advise me of something I should have guessed, but was certainly never told, the wing is adequately protected from just this blow torch effect. Can’t help but feel that had we pressed on some German night fighter pilot would have been licking his lips. It transpired that the problem was a collapse of the exhaust baffles on my side of the engine.

Ref. the Kiel Canal raid, without doubt this was the highlight of my operational career. There were a couple of others of course, but this I consider the gem. We were preceded by flare-carrying Lancasters (35 squadron, I think), whose job it was to illuminate the canal area for us, - only the wind

used was way out. On our rapid descent from 20,000 feet at the coast we got down to 200 feet as planned and on levelling out flew through the illuminated band of countryside, (we flew low over a farmer desperately trying to put out a flare in his courtyard), while ahead of us lay a very flat bit of country – and no canal in sight. Thinking the Pathfinders right and we had overshot, I was all for doing a quick 180 when Ted said “no, we have another 10 – 12 seconds to go yet”. So on we went into gathering gloom when immediately to our starboard some light flak opened up at someone slightly ahead and about a mile distant. At that moment Ted shouted “There it is “, and just in front of me saw a couple of ships, the larger about 4 – 5000 tons, tied up nose to tail with the incredible expanse of the Kiel Canal beyond. I say incredible, because during our training runs on canals in Norfolk none were more than perhaps 100 feet wide, whereas this monster at this point must have been half a mile or more.

One other thing about this raid: After reaching the dubious safety of the North Sea with the enemy coast fast receding behind us we were quietly stooging along at 200 feet when a burst of tracer passed under our port wing. The immediate response was a split-arse turn to port and a search for our attacker, but could see nothing, so we settled down again on course for home. A couple of minutes later the same thing happened, - a quick burst of tracer under the port wing, the instinctive hard turn to port, but again no attacker sighted. With dawn beginning to lighten the sky, damn me, the same “attack “ didn’t occur again, - and it dawned on me, I must be mistaken. And sure enough it happened again – only the “tracer” was coming from the port engine exhaust ports, and naturally were going the wrong way anyway. Such can be the effect of mundane things on jaded senses.

10/11 June 44: the mysterious bangs in the aircraft during the climb, the shattered windscreens, etc.

We were trudging along at 25,000 feet way behind the others, for the first time on ops, didn't weave, we were already several minutes late and Berlin was a long way ahead, when I noticed what I thought were a couple of flak bursts slightly in front, - two on each side, but not that close; and the next second what seemed like a terrific boot up the tail.

Immediately the port engine caught fire and the controls went unresponsive. The Gravinier? had no effect on the fire so I feathered the engine and we at once started a sharp swing to port – even with the starboard engine throttled back this near wingover continued. It was only when I feathered the starboard engine also that the aircraft settled down on a relatively even keel. Then it was time to get rid of the 4000 lb bomb (cookie) but it wouldn't release. While all of this was happening, Ted had jettisoned the the escape hatch door and was sitting facing me ready to go. He seemed quite agitated over something, however he came up to give me a hand on the jettison toggle and between us, with my feet up on the desk, we finally broke something and yards of wire came out – but the bomb was still on board. Ted now resumed his abandon aircraft position pointing madly towards the tail. We were now through 20,000 feet. Realising there was nothing left to be done I turned to tell Ted to go – but I was on my own. After another futile look around the cockpit (I remember seeing 17, 000 unwind) I too went to the escape position and as I faced out I could see what had so excited Ted – the entire rear fuselage was a mass of flames. So out I went too and my last view as I went over onto my back was the cookie in the middle of the fiery inferno. I must say here, that as I left the aircraft I had a vivid impression that Ted's

chest pack chute was still in it's stowage above the escape hatch. This impression haunted me for days. Some 30 or 40 seconds after leaving this flaming meteor of an aircraft, wallowing in a generally straight path except that the nose would drop and as speed increased, the nose would come up again to the stall. It did this twice, after I had settled in my harness and, as it reached the top the second time it seemed to stop and the most spectacular ball of flame and oily smoke surrounded by shooting red, silver and orange stars – the whole seemed to fill half the sky as I looked; strangely, I never heard any bang but a few moments later I felt a momentary rush of air as I swung in my chute.

We were above 10/10th cloud when hit – in two layers, the top one fairly thin above 8,000 feet, the second thicker at the base about 1500 – 2000 feet. As was the German practice in these conditions searchlight beams were pointed straight up to give any prowling night-fighter a background to see possible prey. We were claimed I believe by a 109 pilot and probably were his victim, but at the time I thought it was flak. It is of course only academic interest – either way we were well and truly “done”. When I finally broke clear of cloud, having lost gloves and flying boots when my chute opened, I was only a few hundred yards from a searchlight battery; saw with delight that I was over a large cultivated field (oats, I think), saw that it was pretty close to harvest, and – thud! I was down. Only damage, a bit of skin off my left shin. I was quickly surrounded and made prisoner – one chap swung a hefty kick at me, which I saw coming, and a glancing blow on my thigh was the result.

I started shouting Geneva Convention, and this fellow was restrained by a couple of his mates and, after searching me and the ground around marched me off to the local police

station where I was locked up for the night – plank bed and blanket. Next day I was picked up by two Luftwaffe members and taken by car to an airforce base near Munster. The following day I was taken by train to the Dulug? Interrogation centre at Frankfurt - on - Maine where I spent 10 days in solitary before transferring to a holding camp at Wetzlar? And so to Sagan Belaria. The three things the interrogator wanted were squadron identification and aircraft letter (ours was P3B), the aircrafts R/T callsign and the ground station call sign – all changed from time to time. For their intruder operations presumably! I managed to hold out but, as it turned out, there was very little they didn't know already.

Imagine my surprise and delight when, on the 5th day, who should be standing outside the interview room was, a very moth-eaten, but very much alive and well, Ted!

Smith and Back - letters home

14 August 1944 We move over to Wyton on Wednesday. My pilot is a very decent chap who looks very like Gordon, my pilot on my tour on Lancasters. A good omen maybe.....

16 August 1944 I have moved over to Wyton so I thought I ought to give you the gen. This is a peacetime Mess and absolutely wizard. There are two of us to a room, about the size of a large office and as my pilot is not coming over till tomorrow or Friday, I have it to myself at the moment. It has two chests of drawers, a built-in wardrobe, two chairs, tables and reading lamps. The food is terrific; tonight for dinner we had soup, a choice of rabbit or cold meat and salad, plum pie, stewed plums, trifle or rice and plums and cheese and biscuits. We are waited on at table and the messing is only a shilling a day.

21 August We haven't flown here yet, this bad weather is holding us up. I can see our chances of a day off slipping badly. This station is certainly bang on. The batman brings us a cup of tea in the morning to wake us up. I thought that sort of thing finished in September '39. One of these days we are coming over to beat you up in our Mossie so keep your eyes open.

24 August Well, I have been flying in a Mossie at last. They are wizard aircraft and Phil is a very good pilot. There isn't a lot of room after a Lanc though. Yesterday afternoon we did two hours stooging around. This morning we did a cross-country which took us out over the Isle of Man and the North of England. It was wizard up at 25,000 feet; at one time we could see England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. After flying we had the rest of the day off but as it has rained ever since it wasn't much good. What lousy weather! Anyone would think it was November, instead of August.

1 September (parents were staying with an aunt in Burnley) Got up at 5.30 and then Mark (local taxi) did not turn up. Typical! So I had to get him up, and just saw the 7.05 pull out and had to wait for the 7.40. Luckily it was on time and I caught the train to Bedford ok. I hitched from Bedford and was on camp by 1 o'clock. I might as well have had another day for all I have had to do but still, I was lucky to get 3 days. We finished our training here on Monday night. We flew 4 days and nights in a row, so I think we earnt that 48. I was just about on my knees with 24 hours flying in 6 days. It was not so much the hours but the fact that 12 hours were at 25,000 feet. Navigation at high speeds soon came back to me and I finished as well as anyone on the course. PS. 2 September, We are posted to Graveley today. It is a dispersed camp but only 10 miles from Cambridge. Not Pathfinders I'm afraid.

4 September This is a good squadron but not such a good station I am afraid. We sleep in huts again and the food is average. We haven't flown so far as it has not stopped raining yet. A good point is that we get 9 days leave every 6 weeks. We get our first lot in two or three weeks.

9 September We have done two trips now so I can just about call myself operational again. It's good to be back on the job again. On Tuesday night we went to Hannover. It was a very easy trip and we had no trouble at all. On Wednesday night all the squadron aircrew departed for Cambridge and we had a good time. Thursday night we went to Karlsruhe and had very little opposition. Of course, now we have got most of France we don't spend a lot of time over enemy territory when on southern targets. As we did not get to bed until 6 o'clock yesterday morning we spent last night on Camp. We went to Camp Cinema and saw Bette Davis and Paul Lukas

in “ Watch on the Rhine” which was very good. These kites are absolutely wizard: bags of height and speed. It will be good having Eileen up here. I hope I manage to get a few nights off.

14 September I have now done 5 trips (or should I say 35, including first tour). Saturday night we went to Brunswick and it was certainly a good raid. Sunday we went to the Big City (Berlin) and again had a good trip. After two nights on we were off on Monday and I was able to meet Eileen.

Tuesday morning we did a daylight to Wanne Eickel in the Ruhr. We were supporting the “heavies” and were allowed to attack targets of opportunity. It was absolutely clear and we could see for about 100 miles. I put our “cookie” (4,000 pound bomb) on a lovely big railway yard. I consider it my best trip ever and I realised my ambition of seeing Germany in daylight. We also made history, being the first Mossies to carry cookies in daylight. I was lucky and had the evening off with Eileen. Yesterday Phil had a cold so I was with Eileen from 3.30. I expect we shall have tonight off as well as his cold is not much better.

1 October We went to Brunswick last night and had an easy trip. I have got a cold today and will have to go sick tomorrow if it doesn’t get better. It’s not that I feel that bad but I couldn’t fly at altitude as it is at present.

8 October I got back ok. When I changed at Hitchin I found half of the squadron was on the train so I had some company from there. The train was half an hour late at Offord but we managed to get to the crew conference ok. Our trip was scrubbed last night when we were out at the aircraft. Phil and I went to the Camp Cinema and saw Swing Fever which was quite good. I was asleep by 11.30 and didn’t know a thing until 8.30 this morning. I certainly feel better for that.

12 October Last night we went to Cologne and were back by 9 o'clock. That was our first since I came back. We were only about 5 minutes over Germany so it was a piece of cake. On Saturday and Sunday the ops were scrubbed so we went to the Camp Cinema. Monday, Phil and I went to the flics in Hunts and had dinner afterwards.

15 October Since I last wrote we have done two trips. On Wednesday night, or should I say Thursday morning, we were on the "milk run" to the City. (Berlin). It was an easy trip but we took off at 01.45 and landed at 06.20 so we were rather tired. Take off was rather shaky as we had a cross wind of 30 knots. We thought we should be doing our 13th trip in Friday the 13th but as we did not take off until this morning it was the 14th. We were briefed for Cologne at 8.30 last night and then went to bed until 1 am. We had our ops meal at 1.30 and took off at 4 o'clock. The take off was shakier than ever, cloud was down to 500 feet, raining, and a cross wind again. It was a piece of cake once we got airborne. We landed at 6.40 this morning, on our knees! We were in bed by 8 and up again at 1 pm. Luckily we aren't on the battle order tonight so Phil and I are going into Hunts.

18 October They certainly put us to work yesterday. A bombing detail yesterday morning, an air test in the afternoon, and Hamburg in the evening. Quite a day. It was a good raid and we were back here at 10.30.

23 October I met Phil at Kings X on Saturday. The train was on time for a change and we were on Camp by 1.20. Ops were scrubbed on Saturday night which was a good thing because I was on my knees and had a bad throat. I slept from 9.30 till 8.30 and felt much better for it. We went to Hamburg last night and found the native as hostile as ever. That was

my sixth visit there. We took off at 5 pm and were back here by 8.30. It was a very pleasant trip all round. My throat is ok again now.

27 October Since I last wrote I have done one OP to Wiesbaden. It was a spoof (diversionary) raid for the “heavies” who were attacking Essen. We came down over Reading and the sky was absolutely full of Lancs and Halifaxes. I have never seen anything like it. It was a very easy trip for us; no trouble at all. Tuesday night we were taken to the theatre by the wife of the MP for Cambridge and her daughter. Phil knew them very slightly. We saw a wizard play, Sir Cedric Hardwicke in the “House on the Bridge” and after that we went up to their house for supper. In fact, a very nice evening. For the last two nights ops have been scrubbed. This morning I flew in the Oxford on some special equipment training. Yesterday afternoon we had to do one of our operational takeoffs (12 in 10 minutes) for the benefit of a De Havilland film crew who are making a film about the Mossie. All the squadron were involved and we enjoyed doing some low-level passes across the airfield which they filmed from the tower. They also took some shots of briefing in the Briefing Room. The low level included some formation at 50 feet which was much enjoyed by those of us involved.

30 October Just a line to let you know that I have got to go and see George and get my gong on the 21st November. It’s a poor show because I shall be on leave and will not get a 48 out of it. On Saturday night and again last night we went to Cologne. What is known as a short sharp bash! We had a very pleasant trip both times, clear and almost a full moon. Last night we saw a jet fighter but he didn’t worry us. The heavies made a fire raid on Saturday afternoon and the place

was still burning last night. They were my 6th and 7th trips to Cologne.

2nd November Last night we went to the Big City. My twentieth trip this tour and it completed my half-century. It was a wizard trip with a full moon and we saw the Kiel Canal, Lubeck Bay and all stations east quite clearly. We were very clear it was Berlin because we could see the streets and the bridges over the river. The opposition was far from City standard. It was a long route, and took us 5 hours and 20 minutes which is a long time in a Mossie.

9th November As you see I got back okay. We were very shaken when we found we were on ops last night. We took off for Hannover at 2 am this morning and landed at 05.30 absolutely on our knees. (Phil only had 5 hours sleep the night before). We got to bed at 7 this morning so I had been up for 25 hours. It was quite a good trip, but we got shot at a bit over the target. We got up at 4 o'clock this afternoon. We weren't on the battle order tonight, but anyway it was scrubbed.

16th November We haven't flown since last Saturday but we were liable to early tomorrow morning. I spent two nights in Cambridge at the expense of Phil's father. We had a very good time and he would not let me pay for anything. I will give you the rest of the gen when I see you.

30th November Just a line to let you know we got back OK. Met an ex-squadron type at King's Cross who was going off to Warboys so I had someone to travel with. We started work again last night, and had a very easy trip to Hannover. Phil had trouble with his ears and is grounded for 48 hours. I take a dim view of it as I like to operate a lot when I come back from leave. Tonight I have been to the Camp Cinema and

saw Bing Crosby in “Going my Way” which was very good. There was also a very good newsreel of Churchill’s visit to Paris and the parade.

5th December The Doc said Phil was fit yesterday morning, so we went off and did some practise bombing in the Wash from 10,000 feet. When we came down Phil could not clear his ears again, so we had to come off the battle order and he is grounded for another 48 hours. I’m getting horribly cheesed off with all this hanging around. We went to Huntingdon in the Chariot yesterday evening. We had tea and then to the flics and saw Ginger Rogers In “Tender Comrade” which was very good. After that we went to the George and had dinner.

8th December We haven’t flown yet but we should be on the Battle Order tonight. Phil was ok yesterday but they did not put us on. It will certainly be good to get back to work again after so long. Eileen and I had a very nice day in London. It was much better than spending another day hanging around this dump!

11 December Saturday night we made our comeback on the best of all targets – The Big City. My eighth visit and the 6th of this tour. We had a very easy trip apart from a few fun and games near Munster. A fighter got on our tail and sat there for 4 or 5 minutes. We did some violent weaving and threw him off without him getting a chance to fire. The reason was that we got held up on take-off and were about 15 minutes behind the main force. Last night we were stood down but stayed in as we knew we had to be up in the middle of the night. We were up at 6 am and took off for Duisberg at 9. The trip was a piece of cake. We were in formation so there was no work for me to do. It was good to do another daylight

and that made our 27th trip. It took 57 minutes from the target to Base! Not bad? We were on again last night but did not get off owing to an engine failure. Just our luck on a short trip like Hannover and anyway, we wanted to do two in twelve hours.

17th December This is the first night we have been off the Battle order for 9 nights. We have now done 29 trips. We were on every Battle Order from last Friday until last night but only got off 4 times. Friday night we went to Mannheim dropping the window (silver paper strips) for the Heavies. There were only three experienced crews from here on as it needs precision, the others went to Hannover. We went in and dropped the window six minutes before the Heavies, and then circled and waited for their markers to go down which we bombed on. It was a very easy trip. We have just a brand new aircraft, straight from the works. This is another T – Tommy; our old one is somewhere in France. Phil and I have just got a room to ourselves which is very pleasant.

22 December I got back on time on Thursday. Luckily we were not on the Battle Order last night so I was able to get some sleep in. My next leave will be from the 18th to the 26th so we shall be getting married on the 19th – the busiest day for the Laileys I'm afraid.

28th December I have had a very good Christmas. It was very lucky having this fog as it prevented us flying from the 23rd until tonight. Last night we almost went. The time on target was 6.55 this morning so we went to bed from 9 until 1.30. When we got up we had our meal and were briefed. We got into the aircraft at 4.15 and then, just to finish off a beautiful night, they scrubbed it! What a life! We went to bed until

11.30 today and then got up for tonight's briefing. We actually got off and went to Frankfurt , number 32. It was a very easy trip and we were back here at 8.30

3 January 1945 We have done three trips in the last three nights to Berlin, Hannover and Nurnburg. It's a nice way of spending New Year's Eve, going to Berlin. One thing, there was a party in our Mess so when we got back we had a wizard meal.

8 January We weren't on the Battle Order last night and not again tonight but are standing by on camp. Phil and I have been to the Camp Cinema and saw Edward G Robinson in "The Destroyer". It wasn't bad but a bit corny. Phil fetched our kite back from Woodbridge yesterday and it is quite ok once more.

13 January We haven't done an op since I came back; the weather has been too bad. Phil's Mother has pleurisy; I don't know if that will affect his coming to the wedding. I wish I had a few more clues as to what goes on at a wedding! Do you realise I haven't been to one I can remember!

14 February Since I last wrote we have done two trips so that leaves us four to do and it should be three by tomorrow. I think we should finish sometime next week with any luck at all. On Saturday night we went to Hannover. It really was a wizard trip; the best we have had this year. We took off late and landed second, all in 2 hrs and 56 minutes. Last night we went to Magdeburg which was also quite a good trip except that we had to fight a 120 mph wind coming back. Monday night we went into Hunts and saw "English without Tears" which is a very good film. I expect I shall be home on the 19th, we should have one trip to do by then.

2 February (out of order) Last Sunday and Monday nights we went to the Big City. On Monday our own 'drome closed

down and we were diverted to Bradwell Bay but as we were very short of petrol we went into a Yank 'drome, Hethel near Norwich. They gave us a wizard time. A Jeep wherever we wanted to go. Pineapple, ice cream, whisky, cigs and tobacco and would not let us pay a cent. I've never met such wizard types. We spent one night at Phil's place. They gave us a Jeep to take us the 12 miles, and fetched us the next morning. We came back yesterday morning and went to the City again last night. It was an easy trip but we had an engine out after we crossed the coast and had to land at another Yank 'drome, Bury St Edmunds. We had to come back by train today as the kite wasn't flyable.

8 February (from Woodbridge to Eileen). Last night we had a very easy trip to Mainz, a new one for me. We came in here as we had no air pressure to operate the brakes and therefore could not land on ordinary runways as we needed 3000yards. We had none as we took off but said nothing as it was an easy target. We were just going to get them to fill our air bottles up and then go back to base last night but then our bad luck caught up with us. We had a meal and then went out to get cracking but the ground crew hadn't a clue about starting a Mossie and burnt the starter motor out on one of the engines. They said they could fix it until after lunch today when they decided they must have a new motor so here we are for another night – all because of a little thing like brake pressure! This place has certainly improved a lot. The food is quite good. This evening we have been to the cinema and saw "The Eve of St. Mark".

Smith and Back ops, etc: (told by Derek Smith)

08/08/44 Crewed up with a chap called Derek Back. We crewed up on a diving board of the Leys School swimming bath in Cambridge. We were required to jump in, in pairs, wearing borrowed clothing, so we had no idea if we were pilots or navigators. We did sort that out on the bus afterwards, so became a crew.

14/08/44 My pilot is a very decent chap. Looks a bit like Gordon (my Lancaster pilot). A good omen, maybe.

24/08/44 Well, I have been flying in a Mossie at last. They are wizard aircraft and Phil is a good pilot. There isn't much room after a Lanc though. Yesterday afternoon spent two hours stooging around, and this morning did a cross-country out over the North of England and the Isle of Man. It was great up at 25000 feet – at one time we could see England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

01/09/44 We finished our training here (Wyton) on Monday night. We flew 4 days and nights in a row so I think we've earnt our 48 hour pass. I was just about on my knees after 24 hours flying in 6 days. It wasn't so much the hours but the fact that 12 of them were at 25000 feet. Navigation at high speeds soon came back to me and is no problem.

05/09/44 Hannover, I think Phil only once doubted his choice of crew and that was on this trip. Thinking back I suppose I must have been a bit blasé about it all, flying at that great height in the fastest aircraft around, which was luxury after a tour in Lancs, and having screened on Wellingtons, while Phil must have been keyed up for our first op. Anyway, we got above 10/10 cloud up above 20000 feet which persisted right to the target. I got good Gee fixes nearly all the way so we were spot on for position and time when a

solitary Wanganui marker went down right ahead. I was in the nose, the bombing run took about one and a half minutes until I said something like "Bomb gone, - let's go home on to 270 degrees." We had seen nothing apart from the marker, no flak, nothing apart from a thick blanket of cloud. Philip said "Is that it then?" and when he found it was, seemed a little sceptical about our having been to Germany at all!

07/09/44 Karlsruhe, Boring trip mostly over friendly territory. Everything according to plan. Opposition very slight. Beginning to settle down in the cramped space. Beautiful aircraft to fly.

09/09/44 Brunswick, Very pleasant trip. Raised some fires in the target area. Well concentrated on well-placed T/I's. Opposition nothing to worry about.

10/09/44 Ops Big City (Berlin) According to reports should have been pretty hot. Nothing to worry about. Hamburg throwing up quite a lot of stuff. Some route markers but no T/Is on target. Stooged around for some time waiting for them. Bags of searchlights. No 3 here.

12/09/44 Ops Wanne Eickel. Achieved ambition and got green ink in my log book. Windowed for heavies and dropped Cookie on railway yard at Gelsenkirchen. Very clear day and saw all the old familiar places. Opposition to heavies intense but to us, light. First Mossies to carry Cookies in daylight. My first visit. We were supporting heavies and were allowed to attack targets of opportunity.

17/09/44 Ops Bremen. A very good raid. Route markers and targets bang on. Opposition moderate. About 20 searchlights on target. Another first.

18/09/44 Ops Berlin. A poor raid. Route markers ok but no T/Is. Got shot at over target. Came over Hannover on return and got more than our share of flak. Landed Woodbridge

short of juice. One hole in starboard aileron. Came out well south of track – wind change No 4.

30/09/44 Ops Hamburg. Not what it used to be. Markers and T/Is on target. Quite a lot of searchlights. An easy trip. No 4.

01/10/44 Ops Brunswick. 10/10 cloud most of way. No T/Is seen so dropped on GDR. Came out over Emden. Had quite good fun dodging bursts. No 2.

03/10/44 Ops Kassel. No route markers or T/Is. 10/10 cloud over target. Spent ten minutes over area waiting for something to happen. Wind change and most of force came smack over Ruhr on return without getting shot at. Jet fighter seen by most of us. Bags of twitch! NO 1

10/10/44 Ops Cologne. Nice short sharp bash. Back here by 9 o'clock. Bombed on glow of T/Is. 10/10 cloud most of way. Up to 32000 on the way back. Practically no opposition. 5 minutes over Germany. No 3.

12/10/44 Ops Berlin. Off at 2 am. In on southern route near Leipzig, No trouble all the way round. T/Is very scattered. 139 squadron should get their fingers out.

14/10/44 Ops Cologne. Took off 04.05. Target 0520. Landed 06.40. What a night! To bed from 2100 and then pressed on. Tired as hell. 10/10 most of the way and over target. No 4.

15/10/44 Ops Hamburg. Over target early. 10/10 flak but not hit. Found downward ident. Lights on as crossing coast out. Route markers and T/Is seen. Bombed on second run. No 4. George Nairn pranged on return but got away ok.

16/10/44 Ops Cologne. Front right over target. Bombed on Gee. 10/10 cloud most of way. No T/Is seen. No 5.

22/10/44 Ops Hamburg. A good trip. Route markers and T/Is seen and bombed. Quite heavy opposition. Almost 10/10 cloud so no searchlights. Another aircraft missed us by about

200 feet off enemy coast flying at 90 degrees to our course. Achtung! Achtung! No 5.

23/10/44 Ops Wiesbaden. Spoof attack for heavies on Essen. 10/10 heavies on way out. Wizard sight. 10/10 cloud and no opposition on target. T/Is seen ok. Mossie missed us by 100 feet at last turning point. No 1.

28/10/44 Ops Cologne. Clear on target. Almost full moon. City blazing from heavies attack in afternoon. T/Is seen and bombed without bombsight. No 6.

29/10/44 Ops Cologne. Again clear. Jet fighter seen on way in. Called Snappers? Oboe marking in bend of river. Seen in light of moon. Bomb fell 300 yards from T/Is. Second back! No 7.

01/11/44 Ops Berlin. No20. Good trip with a full moon. We saw the Kiel Canal, Lubeck Bay and all stations east quite clearly. We were very sure it was the city because we could see the streets and bridges over the river. The opposition was far from City standard. It was a long route, and took us five hours 20 which is a long time in a Mossie.

08/11/44 Ops Hannover. 23 Took off at 2 am and landed at 5.30 absolutely on our knees (Phil only had 5 hours sleep the night before). We got to bed at 7 this morning so I had been up or 25 hours. It was quite a good trip but we got shot at a bit over the target.

29/11/44 Ops Hannover. 25 Very easy trip but Phil had trouble with his ears. He is now grounded for 48 hours. I take a dim view of it as I like to operate a lot when I come back off leave. Note: That was me, all heart and sympathy!

09/12/44 Ops Berlin. 26 Made our comeback on the best of all targets, the Big City. My eighth visit and the 6th of this tour. We had a very easy trip apart from a few fun and games near Munster. A fighter got on our tail and was around for 4

or 5 minutes. We did some violent weaving and threw him off without him getting a chance to fire. The reason was we got held up on take-off and were about 15 minutes behind the main force. Last night we were stood down but stayed in as we knew we had to be up in the middle of the night.. We were up at 6 am and took off for Duisberg at 9.

11/12/44 Ops Duisberg. The trip was a piece of cake. We were in formation so there was no work to do. It was good to do another daylight, and that made our 27th trip. It took us 57 minutes from the target to base! Not bad! We were on again tonight, but did not get off owing to engine failure. Just our luck on a short trip like Hannover, and anyway we wanted to do two in twelve hours.

15/12/44 Ops Ludwigshaven/Mannheim. 29 Dropped Window for the heavies. There were only three experienced crews from here on it as it requires accuracy, while the others went to Hannover. We went in and bombed the window six minutes before the heavies, and then circled and waited for their markers to go down which we then bombed. It was a very easy trip. We have just got a brand new aircraft, straight from the works. It is another T-Tommy – our old one is somewhere in France.

28/12/44 Ops Frankfurt. 32 Last night we almost went. The time on target was 06.55 this morning so we went to bed from 9 until 1.30. We then got up, and had our meal and were briefed. We got into the aircraft at 4.15 and then, just to finish off a beautiful night, they scrubbed it! What a life. We went to bed until 11.30 today and then got up for tonights briefing. We actually got off, and when to Frankfurt, No 32. It was a very easy trip, and we were back here at 08.30.

31/12/44 Ops Berlin.

01/01/45 Ops Hannover.

02/01/45 Ops Nurnburg. It's a nice way of spending New Year's Eve, going to Berlin. Still, there was a party in the Mess when we got back, so we had a slap up meal and a good time.

07/01/45 Phil fetched our kite back from Woodbridge, and it is quite okay once more. Cannot recall how it got there.

28 and 29/01/45 Ops Berlin. 39 and 40. On Sunday and Monday nights went to Berlin. On Monday our own drome closed down and we were diverted to Bradwell Bay, but as we were short of petrol we went into a Yank drome, Hethel, near Norwich. They gave us a great time. A Jeep wherever we wanted to go, pineapple, ice cream, whisky, cigs and tobacco and would not let us pay a cent. We went to the City again last night. It was an easy trip but we had an engine out after we crossed the coast and had to land at another Yank drome, Bury St Edmonds. We had to come back by train as the kite was not flyable.

10/02/45 Ops Hannover. 45 A really first class trip – the best we have had this year. T – Tommy was on top form; we took off last and landed second, all in 2 hours 56 minutes.

13/02/45 Ops Magdeburg. 46 Quite a good trip except that we had to fight a 120 mph head wind coming ack. Four to go – we should finish sometime next week. Which of course we did, with Frankfurt on 14/02, Mannheim on 18/02, Bremen on 21/02 and Berlin on 22/02. Nothing like finishing a momentous tour in style!

F/O H Terry Goodwin DFM

In Feb 44 I was posted to 692 squadron at Graveley, Hunts, about 18 miles west of Cambridge. 35 squadron were already there with their Halifaxes on Pathfinders. I was an original member of 692 and my navigator was F/Lt Hugh Hay. We initially operated Mark 4 Mossies, and were there when the first modifications for 4000 pounders were delivered.

Hugh Hay was doing his third tour. Originally on Hampdens, then Lancs at 61 squadron with Peter Casement in 5 Group. He was an Oboe controller before he came to 692. He got his DSO flying with me.

Graveley was well known for FIDO as one of the initial stations to be fitted with it. (For the uninitiated this acronym meant Fog, Intensive, Disposal, Of). It was a real comfort to know that IF needed it could do the job but it was like “into the jaws of death, into the mouth of hell”! FIDO did its job by means of pipes parallel to the main runway. One pipe brought the petrol in while the two below had holes so that when lit it heated and vaporised the incoming petrol. A real blow torch effect lifted the fog 400 or more feet so one flew into a tunnel to touch down.

We were chased on our first trip in brilliant moonlight, as we were making contrails at 28,000 feet.

Swinging on takeoff.

This could be dangerous. The way to avoid it was to be sure you were lined up correctly and rolling straight. But when the full length of the 6000 feet runway was required the throttles had to get open as quickly and safely as possible – the port one or more inches ahead of the starboard.

Close to the end of March '44 we had 17 or 18 trips in.

Probably that was part of the problem. For our 20th trip we

were briefed for Happy Valley, Essen. We taxied out, got our green, lined up, started to roll and opened the throttles as usual. But this was not usual. There was a magnet pulling the aircraft slightly left from the centre of the wide runway. I tried to nudge it back to the centre but – because I did not want to over control or burn out the brakes or fishtail – the aircraft just wanted to continue on the left. Hugh said to hold it. I said that I was trying. About halfway down the runway we were off the runway and heading for the FIDO pipes which were not lit. I heaved back hard on the wheel, jumped the pipes, then put it on to the grass, missed a Halley in dispersal and got into the air. Wheels up, bleed off the flaps, get the speed up and settle back for the climb. I asked Hugh to go forward and look at the landing gear. I put it back down because I knew that we had hit something. He looked and then said there was a gash in the starboard tyre. It was bad but we didn't know how bad. He came back to his seat. I retracted the wheels, and we went on our way to the usual reception in Happy Valley.

When we got back, I asked for permission to be last to land explaining about the right tyre. I touched down oh so gently and let it run, no brakes, just easily and stopped. Then taxied off the runway to the track. So far so good. In dispersal a torch showed the angry slice on the tyre. We had hit one of the Tannoy speakers used to tell the men to turn on or off the FIDO.

Was there a magnet pulling the Mossie off the runway? Of course not – just plain pilot error. Hugh had had grey hair since he was sixteen he had told me, now at about 27 he had even a few more from that night. We were lucky. Did I catch a blast from the CO for going off the runway? He and maybe a dozen more were watching in the control tower ready to

send the meat wagon and fire equipment, so it was not secret. And I didn't get a blast at all. The CO himself had swung a few weeks earlier, stopped, and returned to try again. Several weeks later I was not flying and about 11 pm I walked back along the paved road back to the billet in a Nissan hut. It was north of the west end of the runway about a third of a mile, and 50 feet lower. I got ready for bed, turned out the light, opened the blackout curtains and opened the casement windows. "Whoom" in my face, -no glass, no damage. Someone had had trouble on takeoff but had cut power and tried to correct. The Mossie fishtailed and just at the end of the runway lost its gear. The crew were members of the 4 seconds club out the top as it started to burn. Fortunately the 4000 pound Cookie did not detonate, it burned and then "fisshushed" just like a broken firecracker.

We had an "adventure" on our 30th trip.....

We did the Kiel Canal before D Day. Hugh got his DSO for that. After he finished I did a third tour, mostly with Sammy Saunders.

I should make it clear that 692 was not a marker squadron.all ranks were acting and you lost them each time you moved. We had 14 F/Lts, some of whom had given up their "scraper" as S/Ldrs to come to the squadron. The old song was "there's no promotion this side of the ocean" was very true. It didn't bother me at the time because I knew that Jerry was no respecter of rank when he sent that flak up.

The cookie coming to the squadron – we were the first unit to get them – First, it was a modified Mark Four Mossie, and only as far as the Ruhr or thereabouts. It was only after the Mark Sixteens came that the range was gradually expanded, and drop tanks later added, because it took lots of extra fuel to haul that kind of load.

You were flying Mossies, Dad, what did you do for D Day? Nothing, I was on leave. When the BBC announced that the invasion had started I was mad because I had missed the big show. Mad that is, until I read the end of the announcement “Mossies attacked their usual targets in Berlin”. I missed nothing. What we did for our share was a month earlier.

First thing on May 12th we were told to do some low-level on the Great Ouse Canal that was not too far away. We were told nothing else, except we would be dropping something from 50 feet. The briefing itself, later in the day, was from a high level . A/V/M Bennett was there, as was his flak expert, the chap dressed in Army brown. He was an artillery officer from the Army. He had told us to avoid flak at 20,000 or 28,000 feet to fly straight and level for 20 to 25 seconds, then turn, not just weave the way we were doing. He was crazy! Much later I tried it, and had all kinds of fun watching Jerry waste his shots high to the left or other times to the right of me.

It was explained that Jerry had kept his “E” boats, - fast motor launches armed with light flak, in the Baltic instead of in the North Sea or Channel ports where they could be attacked. They could create havoc with the coming invasion. The Navy and Air-force had mined all around the north end of Denmark leaving only a small channel open. This had just been closed. The only route out was the Kiel Canal which ran from the Baltic to the North Sea. Our job was to drop anti-shiping mines in it. They would fit into our large bomb-bays. The proper time for attack was Almanac dawn we were told. Flares would be dropped overhead, and other Mossies with cannon, (we had no guns on ours), would beat up the gun positions. We would drop from 50 feet into the relatively narrow channel. The “brown job” as we came to know him,

explained where the flak was, mostly at both ends, but every so often along the canal itself. There was a gap, so he said, just east of the bridge. That was where we would drop. Privately I was not optimistic. The briefing was over. It did not happen quite that way. Almanac dawn to a night bomber pilot is like being in Piccadilly with your pants down. Then I questioned the “brown job”, whom by now I really respected, about the position of the guns along the canal. It appeared that they were every 200 metres or so. If nothing else, Jerry was methodical. There should be a gun right at the drop zone. “Brown job” said they could not see it in the photos. I was dubious.

We took off to reach the coast at dawn as briefed. There were no markers and no flares. (It was too bright for them to have done any good), no apparent action from anyone beating up the flak positions. We stepped down as briefed, and then suddenly saw the railway bridge. I did not feel confident about making the run and swung to the right, crossing the southern end of the bridge. A light flak opened up. It was just pitiful. But unbriefed there was a balloon inflated but not up. I swung south and then back north across the drop zone. It was daylight though the sun was not up yet. On the north side of the canal between us and the bridge was a larger ship, a minesweeper? tied up in a passing bay. Although likely armed, it did not fire at us. Live and let live? I turned left in a large circle, came back to the canal and started the run. The first gun missed but the second one, - the one “that was not there” was sure putting out. From a distance light flak and its tracers look lazy and decorative. Up close, -coming right at you, - NO. And for every tracer there are likely six shells you don’t see. I acquired great respect for the army co-op pilots who looked down the throats of such cannon every day.

It seemed like an eternity for Hugh Hay, the navigator/bomb aimer to get rid of the mine, then a sharp turn left as more guns opened up on us. The “not there” gun followed us and I shrunk between the trees and hedgerows as its shots went overhead.

We did get home. 692 had sent 13 aircraft, we got 12 back. The canal was closed for two and a half weeks. Because it was anti-shipping mining, “gardening” we called it, nothing was said publicly or even privately. 3 DSOs and 10 DFCs were awarded. Hugh got his DSO, well deserved.

We heard later that 21 of Jerry’s backroom boys tried to salvage one of the mines, and disarm it. They were not successful. It did its job, and took all of them.

F/L John Trotman DFC & Bar

My first operational tour was in Wellington bombers. Then I moved to to Warboys to the 1655 Mosquito Training Unit. After two hours on the new aircraft I went solo, and then picked up my navigator, Flying Officer Bernard Tubbs, known as “Tubby” despite being tall and thin. In view of his experience on his first tour of Lancasters, he was appointed Squadron Navigation and Bombing Officer, which behoved us to set a good example to the rest of the squadron in terms of navigation and bombing and ensure we attained a high standard of accuracy.

We flew daylight, night bombing and cross-country exercises, becoming well acquainted with the Mosquito B XVI. Our first operation was to Cologne, and thereafter to many other German cities, and of course, the many trips to the German capital, Berlin, 19 in total.

The trip to Ludwigshaven was quite eventful for both Tubby and me. It was early December 44, and we were required to mark the target for the heavies. At 5000 feet I did a routine check of the engines, and found that the oil temperatures on both engines were high, and the pressures low. I throttled back and levelled out, and after a few minutes , the temperatures had dropped to just above normal, and the pressures returned to just below normal. I opened the throttles again and after gaining a few more thousand feet, the temperatures rose and the pressures dropped. Again I throttled back, and levelled out. After some minutes when things were more normal, I then climbed, and the performance was repeated until we reached 17,000 feet. By now we were just beyond Calais and I let the plane cruise for a while, whilst watching the engines closely. Everything

seemed to have settled down, so we decided to continue with the mission., despite being late. We would be too late to drop our target markers, but at least we could drop our 4,000 lb bomb.

Some 40 miles from the target, we could see a glow in the sky ahead, indicating that the raid was already in progress, and it was just then the port engine gave a cough. The engine temperature as off the high end of the dial, and the pressure was showing almost zero. I immediately cut the engine and feathered the prop, to prevent the engine seizing up and catching fire. Normally under these circumstances, one opened up the other engine to maintain power and height, but, bearing in mind the state of the starboard engine, with its temperatures and pressures, this was not possible, so the starboard engine setting was left as it was. We continued to the target, but we were slowly losing height.

In the end we arrived at Ludwigshaven at a height below 5,000 feet, to find the city ablaze. We were so late in arriving that the raid was over, the RAF bombers were on their way home, and the “all-clear” had sounded below. We flew over the city, found our target and dropped our bomb; while there was some light flak, we had seemingly taken the city by surprise. The German radar would have picked up our approach to the target but their sound equipment would have picked up the sound of only one engine, and allied single-engine aircraft were not seen that far south at night.

We turned for home, and now, having dropped our bomb, the aircraft was much lighter, easier to handle, and, in fact, was now climbing. We slowly managed to reach 18,000 feet, keeping a sharp eye out for German night-fighters, and I settled for that height, constantly checking the engine. As we crossed the Belgian border, I found the temperature had

suddenly shot up, and the pressure had dropped. There was no way we were going to get back home.

The night was pitch-black, with no sign of light on the ground. I throttle back the engine, then called “May Day” on the emergency radio frequency. I repeated the call three times, but with no success. There was complete silence. We had no choice – we would have to bail out by parachute. I gave the order, Tubby clipped on his chute and went down to open the lower-exit hatch. It was jammed! He came back up and pulled the lever above my head, at which point the emergency overhead hatch blew away into the night. And now, because the aircraft was pressurised, air was sucked out of the cockpit to equalise the outside pressure, taking with it Maps, charts, pencil and toffee-papers. As I reduced the speed of the aircraft to as low as it could possibly go, Tubby stood on his seat, facing forward, and eased himself up into the slipstream. His foot caught in the hatch-opening. I stood up, gave his ankle a pull and then he was gone into the night. I sat back in my seat, ready to close down the engine, switch everything off and follow him, when, for some reason I will never understand, I once again put out a “May Day” call. Instantly, a voice came back, “Aircraft calling emergency – what is your problem.”

“Oh hell!” I thought, “my navigator has baled out, and now my emergency call is being answered.”

I reported my problem, requesting immediate landing facilities. There was a quick response. Off to my right, six searchlights, forming an inverted cone, thrust into the sky, and I was informed an emergency airfield was underneath and asked if I could make it. I said I would try. I had to keep the starboard engine ticking over, because it drove the hydraulic pump that lowered the flaps and undercarriage, but

also thereby risking the engine seizing up and catching fire. Additionally, if I got below 5,000 feet and couldn't reach the airfield, I would have to bale out anyway.

Fortunately I reached the airfield, and started to make what was in effect a "dead-stick" landing. There would be no second chance and, as I came in over the airfield boundary, I had a shock! In the light of the searchlights I could see that the aircraft parked on either side of the runway had black crosses marked on them – was it a trap? Then I realised they were indeed German aircraft but had been bulldozed off the runway to keep it clear. My plane ran to the end of the runway and I turned off onto the perimeter track and stopped. A light RAF van picked me up and took me to the control tower, where I met the chap in charge of the airfield; he was a Flight Lieutenant, the same rank as me. He informed me that I landed on an emergency forward airfield primarily meant for the use of fighters and tactical aircraft. It had a small maintenance unit for repairing aircraft.

After identifying ourselves and having had a coffee, I asked to send a signal to Graveley, to tell them where I was. George, the Flight Lieutenant said, "No chance, chum – all signal traffic across the Channel is military priority and I am afraid that does not include you" With that, I was found a bed, with the promise they would examine my aircraft the next day, if possible.

The following day, the mechanics found metal particles in the port engine, which meant it either had to have new bearings or be replaced. I was asked if I could fly a Wellington bomber, as they had one they needed to get back to England, to Odiham in Hampshire, funnily enough, which as it happened, I was born just ten miles from there. I jumped at the chance and next morning was on my way back to England,

ferrying a spare engine, and two airmen who were going on leave. I had no maps, and nor did they, - mine had been sucked out of the cockpit of the Mosquito, which meant I was flying back by guesswork! I did find the airfield with no problem, and identified myself at the control tower. I phoned Graveley and spoke to the CO, who said he would send a plane for me to pick me up. Mind you, I couldn't leave the airfield until Customs officials had checked the plane. It appeared that many RAF crews flying from England to the Continent were taking tea, coffee sugar, bicycle tyres, etc - which were very scarce in Europe at the time, and swapping them for crates of wine and champagne.

But what had happened to Tubby? I later found out that after baling out, he had landed heavily in a ploughed field, giving himself a black eye. He buried his parachute in a ditch, and made his way to a village looking for a house with a Doctor's plaque on it, as his eye was giving him a lot of pain. Luckily he had his navigator's penlight torch on him as it was pitch-black. He found the house, and banged on the door. A window opened and in his best schoolboy French Tubby explained the problem. The reply was "no, no, go away!". He banged hard on the door again, the window opened. The same reply, but this time a double bared shotgun was poked through the window! Tubby turned away, shouting naughty English words to the doctor, and suggesting his father should have married his mother!

A few miles down the road, he heard the sound of approaching vehicles, and hid in a ditch. He did not know if these were Germans or the advancing allies. They lumbered by, but just as he was going to get out of the ditch, he spotted a stationery vehicle just above him, silhouetted against the stars.

Then a voice above him said "Charlie, gimme a cigarette, will ya". Tubby was out of the ditch in a flash, and stepping into the headlights of a Jeep, he heard the command, "Hold it right there, Mac!" and saw two automatic pistols pointed at him. He identified himself, was told to place his hands on the hood, and "spread 'em", was searched, put into the passenger seat, and driven to the nearest American Military Police Post. After interrogation, he was given a meal of ham, eggs, french fries, canned peaches and ice cream, and found a bed. Tubby then tried what he could to get home, but after two days of pestering the Intelligence officer, he pounced on a Captain in the mess, and was told he was flying supplies to England, and agreed to give him a lift home. The next morning Tubby found himself aboard a Dakota aircraft, sitting on crates of wine and champagne, on his way home. They landed at Eastleigh, and having obtained a rail-pass and money from the American adjutant, made his way back to Graveley, with a stop to see his parents on the way. Needless to say, I was heartily glad to see him.

We later found out the initial cause of our problem was that a fitter had left too much radiator blanking in the leading wing edge, and so the engine overheated. The fitter confessed to his error, and arrested pending a Court Martial, but since we had returned after a few days, and retrieved the plane from Belgium, we persuaded the CO to reduce the charge against the fitter to 28 days confined to camp.

On another occasion, when we were taking off for another op, the port engine spluttered and coughed and suddenly lost power. The aircraft could not maintain height on one engine, being fully loaded with full fuel tanks, overflow tanks, and a 4,000 lb bomb and full radar equipment. Unless immediate action was taken we would crash and explode. I thrust the

mixture and throttle levers on the port engine back and forth and, by good fortune, must have cleared the blockage in the fuel system as the engine suddenly burst back into life giving full power at 1,000 feet, and we climbed away, much to our relief.

On another occasion, on take-off the aircraft “swung” violently to the left, and despite my efforts to try to control the swing, carried on, heading for the FIDO pipes. Again by part skill and part good fortune we managed to hop over them, luckily.

One moonlit night over Germany, returning from a raid, I spotted a Messerschmitt 110 night-fighter. It was converging on our path, and was in the perfect position for me to attack, but luckily for the three man crew aboard, we carried no guns, so I peeled off to the right and lost sight of him.

I also remember another incident. Early on in my time at 692, I acquired a small Beretta automatic pistol which I thought would be just the thing to defend myself with if shot down over Germany. On a trip to Hamburg Tubby had to keep altering our course, but we reached the target and bombed, and headed home. On our return I dropped back down through the clouds, and again found we were many miles off course. By this time we were low on fuel, so I sent out a “Mayday” and was advised to land at a small emergency grass airfield, Friston, on the top of Beachy Head. This we did, stayed overnight, re-fueled, and flew back to Graveley, complaining once we landed about the accuracy of the compass. However, I subsequently realise that the inaccuracy was due to my having the pistol tucked into my flying boot, adjacent to the compass! The metal of the pistol had caused the compass to give faulty readings, and needless to say, I left the gun back at base in future.

In the circuit at Graveley, on the down-wind leg, there was a small hill with a flat top, on which the Forestry Commission had grown some young pine trees. One night, returning from an op, one of our crews forgot to change his altimeter, flew into the trees, whereby the aircraft lost its engines and wings, but the fuselage continued, landed and slid to a halt leaving its two-man crew totally unharmed. A lucky escape!

At the airfield was a compound, in which cars belonging to pilots and navigators who had gone missing, or had been killed, were kept. Since my old Ford had given up the ghost, I needed another car, so I wrote a tactful letter to a pilot's widow asking if she wished to have her husband's car returned to her, making it clear that if she did not, I would be interested in buying it. She agreed to sell me the car, and after some work, it proved very reliable.

On one of our last trips to Berlin, we were suddenly illuminated by German searchlights. I turned the aircraft in a tight turn to the left and, looking back, realised that we had been leaving a vapour trail behind us, which had been picked up by the Germans. At that time, we had become aware that the German Air Force had started to use the Me-252 Schwalow Jet Fighter, armed with four 30mm cannon, and this was a formidable adversary. I put the aircraft's nose down, and quickly gathering speed and, with the help of a high westerly wind, headed eastwards towards the Russian-occupied area, gaining a ground speed of over 400 mph. I turned North and headed home, thankful to have escaped attack.

Our last trip was to Kiel and immediately afterwards came VE day. I had been fortunate enough to have survived two operational tours, for which I was extremely grateful.

692 Squadron excerpts from The Mossie; the magazine of the Mosquito Aircrew Association

From Issue No. 2

Mosquito Outward Bound

I looked ahead. Eastward the night;
Stabbed only by the stars so bright.
I looked again; there flashed a gun;
A challenge from the waiting Hun.

I looked above; the moon was flared,
Soft shining on my flight that dared
To speed across the Heavenly dome
And penetrated our Maker's home.

I looked below, and there quite proud,
Reaching high, a towering cloud,
Moon-rays upon her snowy breast,
Quietly unveiled my deadly quest.

I looked behind, Westward to home,
Far across the North Sea foam;
And thought of all I have loved so dear.
I gathered courage to conquer fear.

A poem by Ron Vere 692 Squadron 1944 – 45

New Year's Eve at Graveley (dedicated to the wives who waited)

A few will still remember the New Year's Dance at RAF Graveley. The raid on the Ardennes tunnels on January 1st

1945 took pride of place in the annals of the Light Night Striking Force, but two small events occurred on the 31st December.

Most crews had been “stood down”, so that they could make arrangements to attend the dance. My wife had travelled up from London and was staying at a small Public House in the village. Just after lunch the Landlord entered to tell me that someone from the camp wanted to see me. In an empty room, save for the Flight Commander, I was told to report for briefing later that afternoon. He knew that my wife was in the adjacent room and said “ I cannot tell you any more but you will be given the fastest aircraft so that you can make it in time to see the Old Year out.”

Later , we were airborne in MM224. My wife watched from the Pub. In due course our 4000lb bomb was dropped on “the Big City”, and returning over the East coast we gave our “recognition sign.

Unknown to me a Warrant Officer who was in the Control Tower at the time jumped on his bicycle and pedalled hard to the village, and told my wife that we had safely crossed the coast line and would be landed shortly.

We danced until dawn but little did we know if it had not been for our Flight Commander’s decision to change crews we would not have gone to the ball. Instead we would have been sloping along with the other crews prior to takeoff on the low level raid on the tunnels.

For me the thoughtfulness and kindness of a Squadron Leader and a Warrant Officer remain the foremost in my memory of that eventful time.

Ron Vere

(The Tunnels attack involved several 8 Group Squadrons including 692, 571, and 128 Squadrons. 6 aircraft were despatched by 692 Squadron).

Berlin Express

Nigh fifty years since they last flew, in wooden aircraft held by glue;

When drop tanks helped to get them there, and head winds often caused a scare:

When Gee charts saw them on their way, and Navigators ruled the day.

A silken pocket handkerchief, with Union Flag to prove their brief,

To Russian soldiers from the East, that they were British born; at least:

“Ya Anglichahnin” it was felt, would aid them, as spelt.

A “Cookie” cradled in the rack; four hours-thirty, there and back.

But often when the winds were strong, five hours were getting mighty long.

So Coltishall it was for tea, or bathing somewhere in the sea.

These thoughts are from a bygone age, retreating as we turn the page;

With numbers slowly growing less, and vacant places in the Mess;

Are memories of “Mossie” men: for those who’ve passed three score and ten.

Ron Vere

The Joy of Flight

Try if you can, to understand the joy of flight
To speed across the fields of corn when days are bright.
At sunset, see its eyelid close on shafts of light:
Then climb above the clouds and soar into the night.

To twist and turn, and roll on high with sudden grace,
And dive and loop, and leave contrails like tangled lace:
Discovering the secrets of the sky, to trace
A path to God, and feel his breath upon your face.

Try if you can, to understand that ecstasy:
When skimming low above the waves, across the sea.
Those men we knew, those men who flew so gallantly.
Why young men die and old men cry;
In memory.

Ron Vere

50 Years on – A nostalgic return to Graveley. Philip Back and Derek Smith 1994

“ Philip still holds his flying licence, and is part owner of a Cessna 172. He flew down to meet up with me recently, and during this trip we decided that we should mark the 50th anniversary of the first Op. we flew together to Hannover on the 5th September 1944 in an appropriate manner by revisiting Graveley where we were based with 692 Squadron. So, on the 5th September 1994 we set out, and first went to the church at Graveley which has a memorial to 692 and 35 (Lancaster) Squadrons, overhung by a R.A.F standard. Here we paid our respects to the 55,000 dead of Bomber Command. We then went to the site of the airfield for a nostalgic drive down the residual part of the main runway at a sedate 20 mph,

which we had last traversed rather more quickly on the 22nd February 1945 enroute for Berlin. Finally, we remembered our less fortunate friends and colleagues who took-off from, but failed to return to Graveley, at a memorial to the dead Of 35 and 692 Squadrons which stands at the former entrance to the airfield.

R.A.F Graveley was built west of Graveley village, about 4 miles south of Huntingdon, Cambs., and it opened on the 1st March 1942. The runways were 6,000 feet, 4,000 feet, and 4,125 feet long, and the station was fitted with FIDO, the fog dispersal system to assist 8 Group aircraft returning in poor visibility. In August 1942 No. 35 Squadron Pathfinder Force, moved in with their Halifax II's .

692 Squadron Mosquitos moved in on the 1st January 1944, and in February the Squadron received its first Mark XVI Mosquitos. These could carry the 4,000 lb bomb, the "Cookie", and the first one dropped operationally was on Dusseldorf on the 23rd. Feb 44 by S/Ldr Steve Watts, and F/L Cyril Hassal.

During the course of the war, 692 Squadron dispatched over 3,100 sorties, 41 aircrew were killed.

"Cookie" at large.

April 1945, recounted by a navigator of 142 Squadron, Ted Jenner: Watching take-off with the Wing Commander Later that evening, we were startled by a very loud explosion nearby. A Mossie of 692 Squadron had felt obliged to jettison their 4,000 lb bomb ("Cookie") in the circuit!

An evening or two later the crater was observed on a “Liberty run” into Cambridge: - an impressive tribute to the power of the 4000 pounder.

A Mosquito Bombing Mission (A trip to the “Big City”, Berlin)by S/Ldr J.F.P. Archbold

This story was written in 1945 when I was grounded because my pilot was ill with pneumonia. It is a story, from a Navigator’s point of view of a typical Mosquito bombing sortie, an op to Berlin on 31st Dec 44.

“ We were laid on again tonight, unexpectedly; crew conference at midday and navigation briefing at 13.15, before the main briefing, so there was just time for a meal before getting ready. Our aircraft is K-King (MM224), Burbidge and Ramage’s kite. Rumour has it that everyone who flies K-King except those two has something happen to them; let’s hope that we’re the exception! After the meal I go down to the billet to pick up my old blue sweater, check scarf, and flying boots, and then bike up to the crew room for briefing. Phil Earnshaw doing the Nav. Briefing, and a hell of a route too! Maximum effort tonight, twelve kites on the Battle order. There’s something else in the air too; Wadsworth. Burbidge, Crow, Nairn and the two others hanging about as if waiting for a briefing after we come out. Ron (my pilot, P/O R.H.M Vere, affectionately known as “Percy” – think about it)has been out to the kite to ground run it and put in the kit; I didn’t have the time.

Well, here we go. The route out was via Cromer, over the North Sea, with a turn at 6 degrees east towards Heligoland. Then North of Lubeck before turning south east to Berlin. The return route was south of Magdeburg, through the gap

between Osnabruck and Munster to 7 degrees east before turning west to the English Coast.

This is a route I do not like; we're going in north of Hamburg and the gunners there are pretty hot – they get bags of practice anyway – so let's hope its 10/10ths there (full cloud-cover). Now we are all hard at it, plotting tracks, working out courses and times, and recording them in the log; sorting out maps and charts. Then, after about three quarters of an hour we can check our work against the Master Log for any errors (on either side), and then sit back and wait for the main briefing to begin.

Ah, here comes the Met man; he starts drawing in his cloudscapes on his briefing board. Doesn't look too good o me; 8/10ths Stratocumulous over the sea, clearing over the Third Reich. Looka as if we could be shot at! Now the driver's airframe drift in and sit down with their navs, and the C.O. follows them. We get on with the main briefing; it's 14.15. First, Flying Control (S/Ldr "Lemnos" Hemming – e was a pioneer in photographic reconnaissance in 1940 with Sidney Cotton; we know him as " Popeye" because he wears an eye-patch). He tells us the runway will be 270 degrees, the long one; no obstructions, no other comments. Then Met gives his story: target will be clear; no cloud from the time we cross the coast until we come out again. Base will be clear for the return. Forecast winds are up in seventies and eighties; my guess is that they may be a little stronger than he tells us. Now Intelligence: "Usual place chaps, you've all been there before, so I can't tell you anything you don't already know; target height 170 feet."

Now the C.O. (W/Cdr "Joe" Northrop, DSO, DFC, AFC) in his slow methodical way tells us the tactics and the types of the Target Indicators (TIs) to be dropped. The experienced

“Y2 markers (139 Squadron, with H2S)will go in at H-hour minus 4 minutes, H -3, H -2, H -1; they will drop reds dripping green at 18,000 feet, and plain reds at 13,000 and 10,000 feet. The u/t (under training) markers will go in at the same time, but dropping TIs green dripping red at 18,000 feet, and plain greens at 13,000 feet and 10,000 feet. H hour is at 18.55 GMT and we are to attack at this time. Route markers – long burning Verey cartridges – will be fired by the Marker Leader at the following places a yellow at 5418N 0830E (just before crossing the enemy coastline); green at 5404N1050E (north of Lubeck); red at 5330N 1230E (at position G, the last turning point before the target). Then, coming out, a green will be fired at 5151N 1110E (SW of Magdeburg). WINDOW is to be dropped at ten second intervals from position G to the target. We are to bomb the highest concentration of red TIs, or failing that, the highest concentration of greens, or on dead-reckoning. We are to lose 2,000 feet of height, at H +4, and gain 2,000 feet at H + 15. Finally the C.O. details take-off times for each aircraft; ours is 16.08, and the full number of aircraft will set course at 16.17.

Well, it all seems pretty straightforward so far. I catch Percy’s eye and grin; he’s a bit cheesed-off because his wife has come down for the New Year’s Eve party, and we were only put on this trip at the last minute. I can see us belting back tonight!

Well, that’s the end of the briefing; it’s about 14.45, and we all troop out to the crew room where old Chiefy Tite (the Squadron disciplinary NCO) has organised tea and sandwiches for us. Having munched these we go to the locker room and collect Mae Wests and navigation bag, sign for the escape kit pack, and struggle out to the crew buses waiting to

take us to our aircraft. Our dispersals are at the east end of the airfield, south of the main runway. The bus duly deposits us at K –King. First thing to do is to stow the WINOW bundles in the nose, while the skipper goes to sign the F700 sheet, to signal all is well with the aircraft; then cram the nav bag in on top. After this I have to check the DR compass master unit is serviceable, that the oxygen cocks are turned on and the camera magazine is fitted; all this is in the rear hatch. Next, see that the navigation lights are working and that the safety pins have been taken out of the “Cookie”, the 4,000 lb bomb – awkward job, this – you have to use a torch and peer through a small circular hole at the lug. All done, time for a last smoke.

Percy is round the back having his operational pee, which he never misses. The usual curious hush has settled on the aerodrome just before the kites start up. There just isn't a sound. A train whistles in the distance, and then the silence descends again. I look at my watch: 20 minutes to take off, time to get in. I take a last drag at my cigarette. Ron is getting himself strapped in – takes some time to do this – and I put on my parachute harness after slipping a piece of gum into my mouth, and get in myself. “ Have a good trip, Sir” says the rigger as he stows the ladder and shuts the door – good lads they are, our ground crews. Bill Brodie, the duty CO, comes round to each kite in turn to see if everything is okay; we give him a thumbs up, and he goes to the next kite. We are eighth off, so it's about time we started up; the first kite has already done so. Ron runs up the engines and I check the Gee and Loran to see if they are working; all okay here, and I switch them off until we are airborne.. There goes the first kite, taxiing out in the dusk of this December afternoon. After a while we waddled forward , check the brakes and

move slowly out onto the perimeter track and on in the queue to the take off point. A last check: petrol on outers, pitot head heater on, nav lights and oxygen on, radiator shutters open. We get a flashing green Aldis from the ACP's caravan and taxi on to the runway. We can see the tail light of the kite in front climbing away. Ron taxys forward a little to straighten the tail wheel, and then says "Ok, boy, here we go."

And you're off. The next few seconds are pretty tense. We have the maximum load of fuel and bomb aboard. You hope she won't swing or burst a tyre, because you have a rather unpleasant companion about six inches underneath where you are sitting. Then the tail comes up and you watch the airspeed creep up to 120 knots; full boost and 3,000 revs now. The red light at the end of the runway comes rushing up; the kite heaves herself off the deck (you can almost hear the grunt) and then the skipper gives the word to raise the undercarriage. You listen anxiously to the engines – a misfire now would be decidedly unpleasant – but they don't miss (you have a damn good ground-crew), and we go climbing away to the delay pattern. We pass over Little Staughton, 10 miles from base, at 1500 feet before turning back towards base, still climbing, to set course with the others.

1617 Base s/c A 10,000 feet ETA 1641.3 course 052' (M). Take the first Gee fix at this time. We go at 10,000 feet to 04.00E then climb to 20,000 feet by 5415N 0600E (Posn. C) , continue at 20.000 feet to 5420N 0750E (D) and then climb to operational height, 7,000feet by 0930E (E) . I take a string of fixes at 5 minute intervals now , check ETA, still 1641.3

1641 Crossed coast at Cromer. Bomb selected, fusing switches on, all external lights off. Getting south of track; I'll wait till I've got some wind and dead reckon ahead and alter

course. First wind is 345' /76 knots – seems a bit high for 10,000 feet but we'll use it. Alter course 047'(M) for position B at 1659, ETA 174

1712 B s/c C. Climbing to 20,000 feet. More fixes, another wind, another ETA check. We're gaining a lot of time; the kite won't go less than 190 knots at 10,000 feet; that's 15 knots too fast and we now have 9 minutes in hand and will have to lose some time. We decide to orbit (circle) to lose 4 minutes of the 9. Rate 1 orbit goes in the Log.

1744 back on course. 10 minutes later start to climb again, to 27,000 feet. During this time we transfer fuel from 100 gallon drop- tanks to the outer tanks; this is done automatically, and a red light comes on when the drop tanks are empty; you switch off the transfer switch. Not much time to look around yet; the Met Forecast seems pretty accurate so far, with 6 to 8/10ths Scu (stratocumuloous cloud) below at about 6,000 feet, and nothing else. It's quite dark now!

Levelled out at 1804 and got a faint but clear fix on Eastern chain at 5413N 0755; that's slap ban over Heligoland, watch out, Ah, there it is – 6 rocket shells rise up on the starboard beam about 2 miles away; we alter course slightly to the north and press on. (NB. This is a good illustration of the inaccuracy of Gee at maximum range and why it is no use as an accurate bombing aid – Editor).

1805 yellow route marker goes down dead ahead and fairly close: good, that means we are pretty well leading the stream behind the markers. No more Gee available now; I work feverishly to average a wind velocity to apply to courses ahead, and write these amended courses in the Log, plus ETAs, to the target and out on the other side.

1808 Just crossing the German coast 25 miles NW of Brunnsbuttel. All cockpit lights out now; both of us keeping

our eyes skinned for flak and searchlights. Very dark now, and the low cloud has completely dispersed. The kite is going like a bomb – wizard. Aha: there are the first searchlights, ahead and to starboard, and there's the flak too, 88 mm stuff and rockets; you can see the rockets coming up as little red points of light moving very slowly at first, then they suddenly speed up to your level and burst with an angry red flame. Not near us though; the searchlights are coning over to starboard, too far off to see if they've got someone, but it looks like it.

1814 Just crossed the Kiel Canal, and we're right in the searchlights belt now. A master searchlight picks us up and three or four others swing over on to us immediately. The bright red lamp of the Boozer comes on, indicating that we are being tracked by radar-controlled flak. Ron sticks his head well down in the cockpit, and does a "corkscrew" manoeuvre while I keep watch aft. Wow! Just as well we did that; - a burst of rockets comes up just where we were a few seconds ago. No sign of any fighters, though, touch wood. Hello: someone else coned to starboard: looks like a Mossie, too; I'll bet they're twitching like we were a moment ago. We've lost the searchlights now, or they've lost us; we seem to be getting past the worst of it, and the time is 1820. There go the green route markers, ahead and a little to port. We seem to have lost a bit of ground doing avoiding action; we still have to get past Lubeck. At 1825 the Marker Leader broadcasts a "Zephyr" message: wind 345'/90 knots; I made it 340'/95 knots – not far out.

1835 s/c for position G, the last before the target. Lubeck comparatively quiet, thank the Lord. Just past there, on course, when someone yelled "Snappers" – enemy fighters spotted. Another colossal corkscrewing and bags of rubbernecking, but we see nothing. Resume course; try to get

some Loran to check position, but no signals visible, only grass. No joy on Loran. Should see the red route marker any minute now. When I do I'll switch on the bomb-sight (must be done at least 15 minutes from the target so that it can warm up.) There go the reds, it's 1840, and we've just crossed over 10/10ths cloud below which looks like going all the way to the Big City – so much for the Met briefing, but a bit of luck for us. I switch on the bomb-sight, and get the Window ready to push out, push the wooden Window chute down through the small hatch in the floor (this is made of wood and is about 3 inches square, and about 18 inches long.) 1847 Position G set course for target. Our ground speed for this leg will be 338 knots (about 390 mph). Began Windowing, 8 minutes to go. The chute is on the floor between your feet; you have to bend almost double to drop the bundles. You can hear a crackle on the R/T as the bundles open up in the slipstream. Back breaking job, this, makes you sweat like blazes. 5 minutes to go; should see the first TI in a minute. There goes the last Window bundle; I stretch up and have a look out. Still over 10/10ths cloud, good. There's the first TI, slightly over to port. I dive into the bombing position – dive is a misnomer; with all the kit I've got on it's more like a wrestling match! I switch on the sighting head, and put the final wind velocity on the computer box, and wait for the TIs to come into view. All the nose is frosted up except for the optically flat, heated bombing window, so I can't see very far ahead. A couple of minutes to go now. "More TIs down – red and greens", says Ron; "bomb doors open". "Bomb doors open" I repeat, and hear the rumbling roar as they open and the wind whistles in the bomb bay. "I'm running on a bunch of three", says Ron; can you see them yet?" I crane my neck close to the window and look ahead sideways. "Yep, I

can just see them. OK now, left-left, left-left, steady; we're running up nicely. Keep weaving a bit, we've a minute or so to go yet". I get the TIs up on the centre line of the graticule and thumb the release switch. I will press this when the markers reach the cross line. A couple of big white flashes under the cloud up ahead show that the first two Cookies have gone down; I notice them almost subconsciously. "A little bit of flak to starboard," says Ron. "OK, keep going", I say. Right-right a little – steady now, steady Bomb gone!" and I press the tit. There's a thud underneath us as the lug springs back and releases the bomb. The camera whirs and the red light on the selector box comes on. We have to keep straight and level for 45 seconds to get a photo of the bomb burst in relation to the TIs so as to be able to plot the accuracy later. I scramble back into my seat and look down the window chute. The wait seems endless. "Bomb doors closed" says Ron. The camera green light comes on. "Hold it", I say; there is a great flash under the cloud. "There she goes: OK, let's get the hell out of here", and we turn south-west to get out of the target area. I turn off the bombsight and bomb selector switches, and look aft. Some flak is coming up now and some searchlights are on under the cloud; it must be pretty thin, but they're quite ineffective. More bomb flashes appear as the TIs drift slowly down into the cloud tops. Looks like quite a concentrated effort.

1900 s/c 277' (M) for posn. H. Just after turning we see a kite shoot over us in the opposite direction leaving a contrail – possible a cats-eye fighter, a 190 or 109. He doesn't appear to have seen us, but we keep a sharp eye out just in case there are any more. Things being quieter now, I enter the time, height, and heading of when we bombed: 1855 Target. Bomb gone. Ht. 27,000 ft, Hdg. 1100000 (T), Ias 175 knots.

Ron said; “check the petrol, will you?”, I do so and find we have about 330 gallons left, a little less than we expected, but OK. At 1919 I try to get some Loran, but the signals were very weak and I discard them. Try again later. Just then the expected green route markers appear ahead, so we are ok and pretty well on track. At 1924 we alter course for posn. K about 35 miles south-west of Hannover.

1931 I get some Loran and fix us south of track at 1940 (9 minutes to get a fix – too long). We reach the vicinity of K at 1947 and have another fuel check. Ron decided that as we were a little short of fuel we will steer straight back. So we keep going on 277°, and soon after this I get a couple of Gee fixes on the Rheims chain which puts us between Dortmund and Munster. We see no sign of hostility from the natives, however, and keep on going, weaving either side of the course from time to time.

2005 I get my first fix on the Eastern chain just on the Rhine, about 60 miles east of Rotterdam. We cross the Dutch coast at 2022 and alter course slightly to the north for Woodbridge, a nearer airfield to ours as fuel was low, keeping our height to 23,000 ft. At 4°E we switch on the IFF and “identify” on channel D, making a VHF broadcast, “Lounger K King identifying, out”. This is for the Fighter Command plot so that we are not mistaken for an enemy aircraft). I get a string of fixes across the North Sea, the crossing to me always seems to be one of the longest parts of the trip. The Scu cloud as reappeared over Holland near the coast; here it was about 4-5/10ths, but it dispersed completely before we got to Woodbridge, leaving a clear night. I work out the ETA coast as 2049, and Ron increases speed a little. At 2038 he says he can see lights ahead, and when I look out for a minute or two later I can see the semi-circle of sodium lights which mark

the Woodbridge circuit dead ahead. We coast in at 2046 and begin to lose height slowly, switching on the navigation lights as we do so. We are really moving now, with a ground speed of 260 knots; ETA base is 2100. I begin to relax a little. Ron changes frequency from Channel D to Channel A, base frequency, to listen out for other aircraft. All the way in from the coast are airfield after airfield, each with its DREM system of lights illuminated, and one or two searchlights (called Sandra lights) over the top, forming a sort of canopy. Someone once said that airfields in East Anglia were as thick as fleas on a dog's back; he was right. We begin to look for the base lights, and I set up homing co-ordinates on the Gee. At 2056 we sight two Sandra lights in an inverted V with a flashing white light in between them (this was the station identification letters GR in front of flying control; all station lights were lit, but ours was the only one in this area to have them flashing). As soon as we see this Ron prepares to call up Flying Control and I start packing up my kit. As we do this, two other kites call up almost simultaneously – Chandler and Ginger Wood in J Johnny, and another kite. We come tearing up behind them. As we arrive over the airfield, Chandler calls: “J Johnny, funnels”, and lands; the other kite calls “downwind”. Now we call up: “Control from Lounger K King over”. Control replies: “Lounger K King, prepare to land, runway 270, QFE 1029, over”. We reply “K King, preparing to land, out”; which means we acknowledge permission to land and are listening out. Someone else calls up just behind us.

I switch on the downward identification light and open the radiator shutters. We reduce eight to 1500 feet and turn downwind; Ron lowers the undercart, puts down some flap and calls: “K King downwind, out”. This is not

acknowledged by Control, instead they call the next aircraft and tell it to prepare to land.

Now we are turning across wind and one quarter flap is lowered. Two green lights show that the undercart is down. The circuit lights are visible over the port wing tip, and the funnel lead-in lights appear, with the Station ident. Letters GR illuminated on the outer circle at their head. We turn into the funnels at 900 feet and call: K King, funnels, over”. Control replies: K King, land, out”. Had the runway not been clear we would have been told to overshoot and come in again.

The runway lights appear now, narrowing into the distance. Two flashing lights either side of the threshold are the glide path indicators, or GPIs, which show the correct glide path. Now Ron hunches himself over the stick, puts down full flap, and concentrates on his landing. We go sliding in at 125 knots. The runway lights come up quickly at the end, and we give the usual heave as Ron checks her and closes the throttles, touching down on the main wheels at about 95 knots, and trundling down the runway to the accompaniment of the usual crackles and pops from the exhausts of those wonderful Merlins. We turn left at the end of the runway, pull up the flaps, and call: K King clear”, and then taxi back to dispersal with the engines purring away as if they’d only just started up. At dispersal we are waved in by the ground-crew, stop, open the bomb doors (you get reproachful looks from the ground-crew if you forget this, for they then have to pump them down by hand; a tedious exercise), and pull the cut-outs. The engines rumble to a stop; we switch everything off and climb out stiffly, with a mutual grin of congratulation at completing another trip safely. This was our 27th. We collect our kit and stalk over to the waiting crew bus laden

with parachutes and harness, nav. Bag, camera magazine and the rest, and are driven back to the crew room for interrogation.

Back at the crew room we dump our kit and go in to be interrogated. First, the CO has a word about the trip in general, then Intelligence. They want to know in detail about the bombing: how concentrated was it; was there much opposition; what were the relative positions of the TIs you bombed – draw a sketch of them as you saw them please – and a host of other details. While this is going on coffee and rum is brought in and the second cigarette lit – and, boy, did the first one taste good! Following this the navigators have to hand in their maps, charts and logs, and pass on details of radar coverage, Gee jamming, hand over signals flimsies and camera magazine, while the pilots sign the Form 700 and tell the engineers about any snags. At last all is done, and it's away to the Mess for bacon and eggs and the New Year's Eve party.

Footnote – the next morning (1st January 1945) at first light 18 mosquitos of No 692, 571 and 128 Squadrons attack railway tunnels at low level, dropping 4,000 lb bombs into the tunnel mouths. 12 tunnels were blocked in the Eifel and Ardennes area, holding up German lines of communication. From 692 Squadron F/L George Nairn and his navigator Sgt Danny Lunn were shot down while attacking their tunnel; they did not survive. The remaining Squadron crews returned safely. K King was used in this attack by its own crew, F/l Burbidge and F/Sgt Ian Ramage.

K for King (MM224) came to an untimely end on 2nd February 1945 when, returning from a Berlin sortie it was

diverted in bad weather to Rougham, an airfield operated by the USAAF, and home of the 9th Bomb Group flying B 17's; K King overshot the runway and collided with a civilian car; no one was hurt badly. The crew were F/O Philip Back and F/O Derek Smith:

Derek Smith Nav tells the story:

In January and February 1945 the weather was not the best, but 692 squadron continued to operate, on 18 separate occasions. The weather however did bring problems of returning to base.

On 29th January we had been to Berlin, and returned to be greeted by the news that the fog dispersal system (FIDO) at Graveley was not working, and we should “get down where you can”, which we did at Hethel, a USAF base near Norwich. We were treated with the usual American hospitality but memory of the operational meal remains in both our minds – it was roast pork with gooseberry jam! Next morning our aircraft, T Tommy came up with a very bad magneto drop, so we were Taken by jeep to Philip's home at Brundall for lunch, and the weather closed in so we stayed the night. Next morning Philip's father took us by car to Norwich where we were picked up by American transport for a run-up of the now serviceable T Tommy. We had to stay at Hethel for another night due to the continuing bad weather.

On 1st February, we woke to a sunny morning and after a good breakfast at Hethel were back at Graveley by 0940 to find ourselves on the Battle Order for Berlin that night. Because of the problems at Hethel, T Tommy had to be checked, so we were in K King, Burbidge and Ramage's aircraft which had an indifferent reputation put about by them, I suspect, to keep it out of other hands!

The trip was fairly routine until we lost an engine near Hannover, and again the weather was bad with low cloud and snowstorms over East Anglia and the 8 group area, so once more it was a case of getting down where we could. The Mossie flew very well on one engine, but could be tricky to land at night and in the poor weather conditions, so we proceeded with care losing height gradually knowing we were over East Anglia. Eventually we saw a rocket come up through the low cloud and, losing more height, spotted a runway very well illuminated by wartime standards, - (Rougham). Phil was quickly into the approach only to find a Liberator being landed, hence all the illumination. However, short of fuel, on one engine and in a snowstorm it was no place for the faint-hearted, so Phil went in over the Liberator with rather too much height and speed so we hit the runway past halfway, but with barely a bump, shot off the end over a wide grassed area and ditch, to be brought to a halt by a row of tree stumps, one of which impacted with the starboard wing and slewed us around by around by 90 degrees. Apart from two small cuts on my forehead neither one of us was hurt, so we were very smartly out and taking off at speed in case of fire, only to be halted by the sound of voices behind us. We returned to find the aircraft was across a road with an Armstrong Siddeley car between the port engine and drop tank. We found four very lucky occupants, badly shocked, but not too badly hurt, although one did need hospital treatment for a head wound requiring 40 stitches. Then, almost immediately we found ourselves surrounded by GIs brandishing rifles as they thought us to be a Messerschmitt 410 intruder.

On this occasion we did not receive the usual American hospitality, probably due to our unannounced arrival, and

were left to make out own way back to Cambridge by train, to await being collected by car. Of course, we were lugging all our flying gear, and received some odd glances from other passengers. However, we made our way to the University Air Squadron, and were lavished by their hospitality. Of course we were not very popular with Burbidge and Ramage, but everyone was pleased to see us in one piece, especially the Wing Co who put us on the Battle Order the next two nights! However they were to Wiesbaden and Dortmund, rather easier than the six to Berlin up to that ending at Rougham. This latter Philip described as being due to the bad judgement of a single engine approach. Many Mossie aircrew did not survive to tell the tale of single engine landings, so in my view as the only witness, to land from a steep approach at night, in a snowstorm, and be able to walk away, was a small miracle aided by airmanship of the highest order.

The story then died for 50 years until we were invited to attend the launch of Martin Bowman's book "The Men who flew the Mosquito" at Swanton Morley on 2nd February 1995. Philip still had his licence so we flew in together from his home at Sisland, east of Norwich, in his part owned Cessna 172. Of course, this generated considerable interest, especially as it was exactly 50 years on from our Rougham experience. After the launch we were interviewed by Anglia television and the Eastern Daily Press with the interview appearing on "Anglia Tonight" that evening. This item was seen by Dick and Sybil Rayner, two of the occupants of the car, living at Holland-on-sea who got in touch with Anglia which wanted to get us all together.

I had returned home to Oxfordshire that night, but Philip met them on 3rd February at the Flying Fortress pub, formally the Rougham control tower, where Martin Bowman had first discovered details of the event during his researches. This get together was again featured on “Anglia Tonight”, and the Rayners were able to give us copies of press cuttings and pictures which had been taken by the Americans.

Terry Goodwin DFC DFM

Terry crewed up with his navigator Hugh Hay DSO DFC for his first Mossie trip over Germany with 692 Squadron at Graveley on 8 Feb 1944. Hugh had already completed two tours with Bomber Command, staying with Terry until he had completed his third tour. However, on Terry’s last trip in a Mossie to complete his own tour with 692 Squadron he had a rather anxious time!

“After my navigator, Hugh Hay, had finished his tour I had several good navigators with nothing to worry about, However, when my last trip was coming up there was a new navigator posted in. He was a Warrant Officer with no trips in at all. I just could not figure that out when all crews at that time had a tour under their belts and knew what the score was. I took him for a cross-country flight which was not satisfactory as he had trouble with the Gee set. I did not know whether my last trip was going to be a long or short one – either Berlin or the Ruhr. It turned out to be Berlin, the “Big City”.

It was 10th Sept 1944. The night was clear. The take-off with the 4,000 pounder “Cookie” was good. The aircraft was singing right along with all gauges ok. The track was out over the North Sea towards Denmark then a sharp turn right south-

east to a point just west of Berlin then straight east for the bombing run. When we were approaching this turning point it was clear with no moon. I could see the coast outline right from Denmark south. The tram trolleys of Hamburg were still making their blues sparks before they shut down fully. Then the sprog navigator said to me “ I don’t know where we are!” I told him to get the course from the turning point and I would tell him when to start all over again. He did and got us west of Berlin on time, or at least I thought we were on time. I told him to log the time, then go and dump the “Window” down the chute. There was no action outside as we ran up looking for the TIs. Jerry was playing it very carefully giving nothing away. Where was the Pathfinder type? The TIs should be going down!

Then, all hell broke loose. Every searchlight in the city came on right on us, and the flak was too damn close. I turned sharp right and dived 2,000 feet, straightened out back on course, held it, turned left and climbed and got more flak, but further away. And this kept on and on. Finally the lights were bending east, so I thought we should be through the city. I turned back west but still no TIs.. I told the navigator to drop the Cookie (I don’t think we got a proper picture) because the flak was hard at us again. Then the TIs went down right ahead of us so we were pretty close. But the flak kept on and I twisted and dived and climbed, and kept that up . Suddenly I saw the light flak opening up – you know it is pretty if it was not so damn serious – so I knew we were down to about 17,000 feet. I turned and climbed out on the west side of Berlin. I told the navigator to log the time. We had been in it for 11 minutes with Jerry’s un-divided attention. Were there any fighters? Not that I saw, maybe I was just too busy. It

would not have been a safe place for them with all that flak around.

We did get home and logged four hours and thirty minutes. The next morning the flight – sergeant found me, then showed me the aircraft. It was full of flak, the main spar of the tail plane was getting an eighteen inch splice to repair it. He dug a piece of flak out for me. One piece had just nicked the inter-cooler radiator, then the fairing for the main radiator, but not the tubes, but was spent as it bounced around the engine.

My last trip in a Mossie!”

Ralph Wood DFC

From Moncton, Canada, who completed a second tour with 692 Squadron. Ralph, along with his pilot, Andy Lockhart, also from Moncton, received the DFC for a particularly hazardous mining operation of the Kiel Canal on the night of 5 October 1944. They were part of a group of six Mosquitos dispatched to carry out the mission.

Terry Goodwin - Going to sleep on the job?

“ We were at 28,000 feet in a Mossie Mark XVI on the bombing run up to Bremen carrying a 4,000 lb “ Cookie”.

My navigator, Sammy Saunders was up forward.

“Left – left – steady, ri....right – steady ...”

And silence, “Sammy?” , more silence. I leaned over and hit his backside, no response.

Instant flashback. May 1941 No. 1 ITS Toronto, in the decompression chamber. Five trainees on one side with four trainees and an instructor on the other. All had our oxygen masks on except for the one next to the instructor. He was told to keep his mask off, write a sentence, and then repeat it

several times. As we went up through 23,000 feet his writing became a scrawl and then stopped. We continued to 25,000 feet and then back down again. At about 23,000 feet he started writing again, then could not remember being out at all. This fits the present case, - Sammy was OUT.

I pressed the bomb button, stood the Mossie on the port wing tip and headed straight down. At 19,000 feet Sammy said “ I don’t see the TIs”. “ Check your oxygen, you have been out”. He did and came round slowly. Maybe he knelt on his tube, I don’t know”.

How’s that then? A tribute to Philip Back DFC from his navigator Derek Smith DFC*

“ I have many thoughts of when Philip might have given me such a look. When we had first got together at Warboys in August 44, I had done a tour on Lancs with 61 Squadron in 5 Group while Philip was very much a new boy. On reflection, doing our first op. together from Graveley on 5 Sept 44, I was probably very blasé about operating in a Mossie at 27,000 feet, while Phil must have been a little on edge to say the least.

For me, it was very much routine, and we arrived at the target exactly on time only to find it obscured by 10/10 cloud. A Wanganui marker went down exactly ahead so that we were on it in seconds. I said “ Bombs gone – OK Phil, let’s go home, steer 270 degrees.” He looked around and said “ Is that it then?” I replied on the lines of “ Yes, that’s all for tonight”, but I wonder if he really believed me as there was a complete absence of flak at our height.

The look came again when we landed at Woodbridge with no engines. We were about 12 miles out when the second engine stopped and after looking at the options he said, “ I think I

can get it down at Woodbridge, are you with me?2 To which I must have replied along the lines of, “ Well, I’m not staying out here on my own!” Having made a perfect landing, after losing 12,000 feet in the circuit, he would have looked round and said, “ How about that then?”, only to find me more interested in a Lanc bearing down on us at a very high speed. Fortunately, it just missed us on the starboard side having landed without any brake pressure.

Again, it could have been when we were passed by a German jet, fortunately going in the opposite direction, or when a V2 rocket went up extremely close to our starboard wingtip. Another occasion was when a piece of flak passed right through the canopy in front of me and just behind Philip, or possibly it was when we were bracketed by two AA shells much too close for comfort. All our Mossies were fitted with “Boozer” which glowed pink if radar-controlled AA was operating in the area, and red if we were the object of their attention. Both were frequent occurrences, so it was a matter of familiarity breeding contempt when we ignored it. However, we suffered a rude awakening when, at 27,000 feet the red was followed immediately by the shell bursts – one on either side. It was a valuable lesson, well learned, and we never ignored it again.

Philip said of our crewing up, “ Not only did I feel extremely honoured, I felt extremely lucky that you had chosen me!. This was because he was a new boy, and had seen my DFC ribbon . In turn, I was to find I had been extremely fortunate in my choice, as I found him to be a very skilful and courageous pilot equal to, or in most cases better than, those I knew with a great deal more experience. In all our 246 airborne hours together there was never a sign of “twitch”, panic or indecision in the cockpit we shared. We soon

became a very professional team in the air and on the ground which led to our friendship which has endured for 58 years”.

The Flying Field Ron Vere

Then! But now,
Green changed to gold;
Furrowed by the plough.
We, who remain, grow old.

Bombers’ prayers,
Disguised with laughter,
hid their cares-
Thereafter.

Merlin’s voice, no more
From dusk to dawn.
Its silent roar
Is cradled in the corn.

Wings once soared high
among forgotten years;
Yet loved ones waved good-bye
And we have shed our tears.

The Mining of the Kiel Canal Newspaper Reports

From The Times:

Kiel Canal Mined

Daring Operation by Mosquitos.

Shipping delayed for Ten Days.

About a month before the landings in Normandy, Mosquitos of Bomber Command, in bright moonlight and from a very few feet above the sea, laid mines in the Kiel Canal, the most heavily defended waterway in the world. As a result the Canal was closed for 7 days, reopened, though to less than the usual traffic, for three days, and then closed again for three days.

It is estimated that at a critical time when it was important to block every possible route for German supplies, 1,000,000 metric tons of cargo were held up. The cargo included iron ore from Sweden, coal with which to pay for the ore, and Military supplies to Norway.

All this was done by a single Mosquito Squadron. The planning and preparation was a good example of swift but careful staff work. All the defences were plotted. To lay mines accurately in the canal, the aircraft would have to fly very low, and four-engined bombers, which normally do this work, would be in great danger from the ground defences. The Mosquito had the right speed and manoeuvrability, but no Mosquito had ever carried mines before.

Technical experts found that if ordinary airborne mines were modified, Mosquitos could take them. The mines were ready just in time. The Mosquito crews were instructed to keep rigidly on course to avoid the balloon cables. Navigation was perfect and there can be no doubt that the mines were laid

right in the middle of the Canal. Some of the Mosquitos had to make three runs, before they could get through the defences on a steady flight. None hit the balloon cables. Only one was missing, and there is reason to believe that this aircraft hit the ground when flying very low.

The Mosquitos were led by Wing Commander S D Watts who received an immediate award of the DSO for his part in the raid.

From The Daily Telegraph:

Kiel Canal Twice Closed

Seaman's account

From our Special Correspondent

Stockholm Friday

Further details of Britain's new acoustic mine which blocked the Kiel Canal for six days were given to me by the deck hand of a German freighter.

Not even a rowboat was allowed to risk the passage of the canal from May 13 to the evening of May 19, when the ban was lifted, he said. Three days later the canal was blocked again, this time for ships going east.

“ Shipping was piled up higgledy piggledy at both sides of the canal,” he said. “There were about 70 of us lying at Brunsbittel, and probably the same number at Kiel. ”Several of the mines fell on the land alongside the canal,” said the German sailor.” The experts took the mines to the Naval Depot at Kiel where men worked day and night to find out their secrets.”

692 Airmen Operations Flown

Lockhart W C W/C DSO DFC 10
Saunders E J F/L DFC 45
Saunderson E J S/L DSO DFC 52
Clarkson R H W F/L DFC 50
Watts S D S/L DFC 34
Hassall C F/O 30
Moore V S F/L DSO DFM 51
Dillon P F F/O 52
Thomas F/O DFC 3
Munby J L F/O DFC 3
Goodwin H T F/O DFM 75
Hay H B F/L DFC 46
Grainger D N F/L DFM DFC 49
Barron J H F/L DFC 45
McKeand G F/L DFC 50
Matheson A A F/O DF 46
Riley D N F/O DFC 52
Hill V P B F/O DFC 52
Burley P K F/L DFC 33
Sanders E V F/O DFC 36
Dennis A G H F/L DFM 52
Cairns H H E P F/L DFC 52
Barrett C R F/L 54
Willson P E F/O 60
Hume G W F/Sgt 21
Talbot E F/O DFC 36
Strang C R F/O 47
Farrow J P F/L DFM DFC 45
Gover J E L F/L DFC 55
Leithead J C 1

Burke J Y WO 1
 Richardson W C F/O DFM 57
 Smith R H F/O DFC 55
 Clarke D J F/L 51
 Chatfield E B F/O 39
 McDonald I S H S F/O 39
 Ballands A Sgt 51
 Mackinnon A P/O 84
 Farr D J F/O 54
 Burnett D M T W/O 14
 Skinner B W/O 51
 Richardson S P/o 47
 Page J F/O DFC 51
 Ainsworth S F/O DFC 51
 Beal S T F/L 54
 Reed J F F/L DFC 53
 Plum F N F/O DFC 50
 Martin E K F/O DFM 13
 Jones D W F/L 1
 Nicholl E S F/O 1
 Bradbury G E F/O 46
 Dickinson T F/O DFM 11
 McGowan T C F/O 15
 Bradford C S F/O 15
 Warner SG A F/O 45
 MacGregor W K F/O DFC 41
 Brodie W C F/L DFM 51
 Triggs K R F/L DFC 51
 Drinkall W K F/L 52
 Coe D M W/O 52
 Buckley L J F/L 8
 Sheild H J F/L DFC 7

Whipp L P F/O 7
Bertenshaw C P/O 5
Taylor F A F/L 3
Copestake C S W/O 3
Wadsworth R G St. C F/L ASL 52
Scholes R F F/O dfc 52
Lockhart A W F/L AFC DFC 52
Wood J R P/O DFC 52
Wilkinson N D P/O 12
Dale W B Sgt 12
Farrell A W F/L AFC 2
Halpin F J F/L 2
McHardy G L S F/O DFC 17
Duncan G R P F/O 17
Mephram W J F/O 51
Crooks W C F/Sgt 52
Collinson GT W/O 10
Youens L Sgt 10
McEwan B D P/O 19
Harbottle J F/O 19
Don R S F/L 34
Allan G I P/O 34
Batten C F/L 53
Menage B F/L 52
Burbidge C H F/L 53
Ramage I L H Sgt 54
Maxwell W A F/Sgt 53
Hooper V C Sgt 53
Huggett W D F F/L 52
Hammarsley R F/O 52
Howell J G W/O 53
Carton T C F/Sgt 52

Northrop J S/L AWC DFC AFC 13
 Galbraith A R F/L 18
 Crow G C F/L 54
 Earl C E F/O 54
 Nairn G D T F/L 42
 Lunn D Sgt 40
 Kitchen L W F/L 1
 Hudson F W Sgt 2
 MacKenzie R I P F/L 6
 David F A Sgt 3
 Bird W D W S/L 2
 Boxall E M Sgt 3
 Galloway T H F/L DFM 52
 Morrell J S SGT 52
 Momo R J F/O 50
 Hughes R H F/O DFM 51
 Dell F H F/O 14
 Naiff R E F/O 14
 Earnshaw J E F/L 44
 Back P J Q F/O 53
 Smith D T N F/O DFC 53
 Shackman L F/L AFC 27
 McGlynn A B Sgt 27
 Welch H Sgt 4
 Thomas J R P/O 3
 Rosbottom J H F/O 3
 Brennan L J F/O 6
 Bolger T J F/O 6
 Green G R F/L 54
 Perry J A F/L 54
 Vere R H M F/Sgt 35
 Archbold J F P W/O 35

Chandler A A P/O 53
 Wood A T Sgt 53
 Evans W E P/O 52
 Stockwell S F Sgt 52
 Morgan J P F/O 30
 Sturrock J A Mc? Sgt 31
 Way B A W/O 22
 Fossitt K A P Sgt 22
 Hornby N H F/O 1
 Crail W A Sgt 1
 Brunt S P F/O 20
 Sutherland R J Sgt 20
 Hill F F/L 56
 Simkin J F/O DFM 56
 Girvan R A H F/O 45
 Massie J C F/O 45
 Wild C F/O 12
 Ketley P Sgt 12
 Trotman P J F/O DFC 39
 Tubbs B H F/O DFM 39
 Hunter D G S/L 36
 Withers K J Sgt 36
 Harker L L F/O 50
 Melbourne F E F/O 50
 Boothright B F/O DFC 39
 Clark C R F/Sgt 39
 Smith W B F/O 44
 Williams L G F/Sgt 44
 Crawford P J F/O 37
 Brumhead J Sgt 37
 Doran P B F/O 15
 Beckett D H Sgt 15

Hawken R H F/O 51
Finkelstein S I F/O 51
Chaundy G R P F/O DFM 14
Ayre F F/Sgt 14
Edgar E C F/O 37
Clark W R F/O 37
Finnerty G P F/O DFM 42
Naiman A I F/O 42
Crossman J A W/O 32
Barnes R G Sgt 38
Waugh A W F/L 14
Corrigan L R F/O 14
Vale F S F/L 22
Manning F J F/O 22
Evans R G F/O 29
McLeary J S F/O 29
Hayes J F F/O 27
Bagot C G F/O 29
Bailey R F/L AFC 18
Sawyer T G F/O 18
Jones B S W/C DFC 11
Judson J J F/L DFC DFM 29
Grieveson T Sgt 29
Peterson M A F/o 27
Baum S F/O 27
Hill C W/O 27
Liversidge W Sgt 28
Barnes J M S/L 15
Jenkins A H H F/L DFC 14
Campey W F/Sgt 12
Rabiner J F/Sgt 12
Small G K F/O 20

Jones K F F/O 20
Kempton E A W/O 21
James R H F/O 21
Macphee I M W/O 3
Sullivan A V Sgt 3
Stuart-Smith L P F/O 13
Chambers H Sgt 13
Keogh A S F/O 14
Hope C E F/L 14
Fry K O F/O 14
Irwin L W F/Sgt 20
Smith D F/O 13
Pugmire J B F/O 13
Woodward G C F/L 13
Jones W H F/O 13
Solomon M V F/O 16
Forsyth C W F/Sgt 16
Leask J A R F/L 13
Tomlinson D F/O 13
Dunn J L W F/O 12
Clarkson K B F/Sgt 12
Manners R W/O 13
Rodney A St. G Sgt 13
Alford J W L F/ 10
Murphy J F/Sgt 10
Carrington J F c F/L 15
Chown E W F/O 15
MacLucas M H G F/O 13
Singyard G A W Sgt 13
Jennings E N W/O 1
Stedman A S F/O 1
Dickinson C A F/O 1

Robertson J Sgt 1
Coe H R F/O 1
Stapells A C Sgt 1
Ilsden P W/O 1
Laken E J Sgt 1

692 Squadron Mishaps

27/4/44 ML 977 pilot on approach flashing landing lights, on landing collided with parked Lancaster.

6/5/44 ML 944? Belly landing in field near Warboys, engine failure, fire.

8/7/44 MM 129 Heavy landing at Weston super Mare, tried to go around again and starboard engine failed.

22/8/44 PF 384 pilot lost control with 4,000 lb bomb on board, after port engine failed. Crashed near Norwich.

27/8/44 MM 143 Graveley, swung on take-off, undercarriage collapsed.

26/8/44 MM 135 crashed into ground near Old Warden, misreading of altimeter.

30/9/44 MM? 141 overshoot at Warboys.

17/10/44 ? on oval circuit, misread altimeter by 1,000 feet.

17/12/44 ML 959 Graveley, going around again, selected flaps up? instead of u/c.

2/2/45 MM 224 at Roughan, overshoot.

1/3/45 ML 969 Graveley, heavy landing.

692 Squadron Losses (includes failed to return)

19/02/44 Berlin raid F/L W Thomas DFC and F/O J L Munby DFC, MOS IV DZ612, buried in extension to St-Sever Cemetery at Rouen

18/03/44 Frankfurt raid F/O J C Leithead RCAF and W/O J Y Burke, MOS IV DZ647, shot down by night-fighter and crashed in the general vicinity of Hannover. Buried in Hannover War Cemetery.

12/05/44 Kiel Canal mining P/O? D M T Burnett RCAF and P/O? G W Hume, MOS IV DZ638, Thought to have fallen victim to a night-fighter, crashing near to the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal. P/O? Burnett is commemorated on panel 249 of the Runnymede Memorial. P/O Hume is buried in Hamburg Cemetery, Ohlsdorf.

26/05/44 Ludwigshaven raid F/O T C McGowan RCAF and F/L C S Bradford, MOS IV DZ649. Crashed in the vicinity of Heinerscheid and Hupperdange, two small villages in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, some 35 KM NNW of Diekirch. Buried in Hupperdange Cemetery.

04/06/44 Cologne raid F/L J E L Gover DFC and F/O E Talbot DFC, MOS XVI ML971. On return the crew tried to land at Warboys airfield, but on approach the port engine failed and the Mosquito crashed into a field. F/O Talbot is buried at Stretton-cum –Wetmoor (St Marys) churchyard. F/L Gover survived the crash.

10/06/44 Berlin raid F/O I H S Macdonald RAAF and F/O E B Chatfield DFC? , MOS IV DZ608. Both became POWs.

26/06/44 Gotingen rail workshops raid F/L J P Farrow RNZAF DFC DFM, and F/O C R Strang RNZAF, MOS XVI MM139> Hit by flak. F/O Strang is commemorated on panel 263 of the Runnymede Memorial.

07/07/44 Berlin raid F/L P K Burley DFC, and F/O E V Sanders DFC POW, MOS XVI MM147. Crashed to the west of Granzow, 9 KM WNW of Kyritz. F/L Burley lies in the 39/45 War Cemetery at Berlin.

10/07/44 Berlin raid W/C S D Watts RNZAF, DSO DFC MID, and F/O A A Matheson RNZAF DFM, MOS XVI PF350. Lost without trace. Both commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial.

23/08/44 Cologne raid W/O G T Collinson and Sgt. L W Youens, MOS XVI PF384. Crashed outbound at Waferhill Farm near Norwich. W/O Collinson rests in Stoke on Trent (Fenton) Cemetery. Sgt Youens lies at Melcombe Regis Cemetery, Weymouth.

25/08/44 Berlin raid S/Ldr W D W Bird and Sgt F W Hudson, MOS XVI MM13. Crashed at Park Farm, Old Warden, 6 miles SE of Bedford. S/Ldr Bird was taken to his town, while Sgt Hudson is buried in Cambridge City Cemetery.

27/08/44 Manneim raid F/O S G A Warner and F/O W K McGregor RCAF DFC POW, MOS XVI ML965. F/O Warner is buried in Rheinberg War Cemetery.

13/09/44 Berlin raid P/O G R Thomas and F/O J H Rosbottom, MOS XVI MM126. Reported to have come down in open country some 7 KMs S of the remote village of Linum, 16 KM N of Naven. It is presumed they were buried locally. They are both commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial.

25/09/44 Mannheim raid F/O L J Brennan RNZAF and F/O T J Bolger RAAF, MOS XVI PF353? Crashed at Mignault (Hainaut) 18 KMs ENE of Mons. Both laid to rest at Mignault Communal Cemetery.

12/10/44 Hamburg raid F/O N H Hornby and Sgt W A (D?) Crail, MOS XVI MM184. Lost without trace. Both on Runnymede Memorial

14/10/44 Berlin raid F/O F H Dell evaded and F/O R A Naiff, MOS XVI MM184. Shot down by FW190. Crashed in the Duisburg – Munster area. F/O Naiff panel 208 Runnymede Memorial.

31/10/44 Hamburg raid F/L L Shackman AFC and Sgt A B McGlynn, MOS XVI MM181. Both rest in joint grave at Hamburg Cemetery, Ohlsdorf.

09/12/44 Berlin raid F/O W B Smith RCAF and F/Sgt L G Williams RAAF, MOS XVI MM180. Abandoned, out of fuel, S of Romilly-sur-Seine, SE of Paris. No reports of anyone hurt.

17/12/44 Hanau raid F/L S P Brunt and F/Sgt R J Sutherland RCAF, MOS XVI ML959. On return to base, overshot and crashed amongst trees. Aircraft caught fire and was completely destroyed. F/L Brunt is buried in Cambridge City Cemetery. F/Sgt Sutherland CAF rests at Brookwood Military Cemetery.

01/01/45 Ardennes Tunnels raid 5027N0653E F/L G D T Nairn and Sgt Lunn, MOS XVI PF414. Hit by flak and crashed with both engines blazing into hilly country SE of Schuld, and towards Adenau. Both rest in Rheinberg War Cemetery.

14/01/45 Berlin raid F/O J P Morgan RNZAF and Sgt J A M Sturrock, crashed on return, navigator missing. MOS XVI MM150. Ran low on fuel and crew baled out near Greenham Common airfield in Berks. F/O Morgan struck the fin and failed to open his parachute. 19 year old Sgt Sturrock for unknown reasons released his chute before reaching the

ground. He rests in Great Northern London Cemetary, East Barnett. His pilot is in Cambridge City Cemetery.

14/01/45 also Berlin raid F/O G R P Chaundy DFM and F/Sgt G F Ayre RAAF, MOS XVI M128. The crew are buried at Antwerpen in the City's Schoonselhof Cemetery.

07/02/45 Mainz raid F/O P B Doran and Sgt D H Beckett POW, MOS XVI MM182. F/O Doran is buried in Rheinberg War Cemetery.

11/03/45 Berlin raid F/L A W Waugh RAAF and F/O L R Corrigan, crashed at base, MOS XVI PF 454 (450?). F/O Corrigan in hospital with extensive burns. Lost power on one engine, and crew headed back to airfield, overshot the runway, crashed into a hedge, and caught fire. F/L Waugh is buried in Cambridge City Cemetery.

21/03/45 Berlin raid W/O I M McPhee and Sgt A V Sullivan, MOS XVI PF392. Claimed by Me 262. Both are buried in Berlin 39/45 War Cemetery.

27/03/45 Berlin raid F/L E S Vale MID and F/O F J Manning RCAF, MOS XVI PF466. Lost without trace. Both on Runnymede Memorial. F/L Vale was believed to be flying his 70th operational sortie.

30/03/45 Berlin raid F/Sgt W Campey and F/Sgt J Rabiner RCAF, MOS XVI RV341. Lost without trace. Possible Me 262? On panels 270 and 282 of Runnymede Memorial.

47 airmen failed to return from Ops, out of a total of 228 airmen (although some subsequently were found to have evaded or were taken prisoner)



692 Squadron crest



5 x Mosquito B Mark XVI of
692 Squadron at Graveley

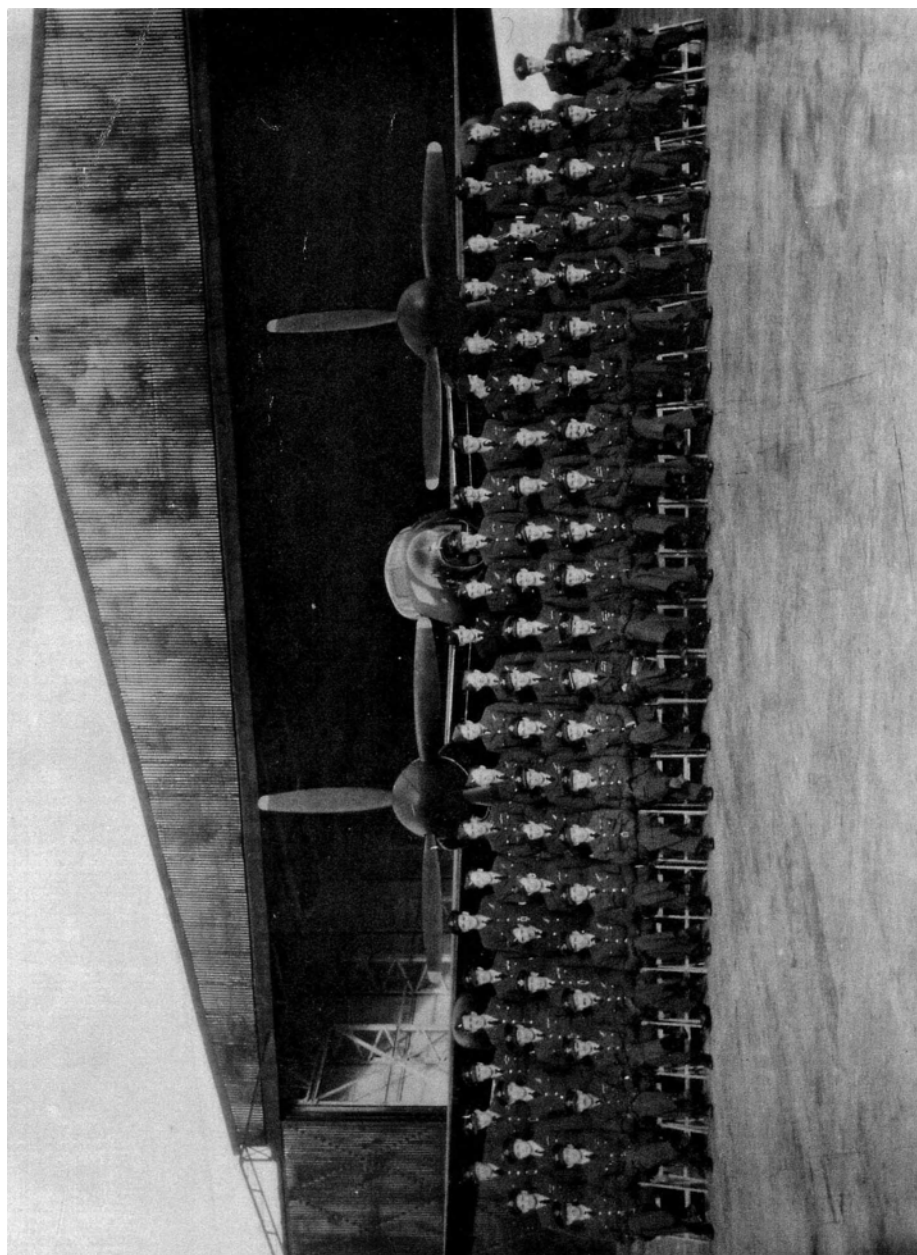


Bombing up with a
4,000 lb “Cookie”

Pictures supplied
by P F Dillon

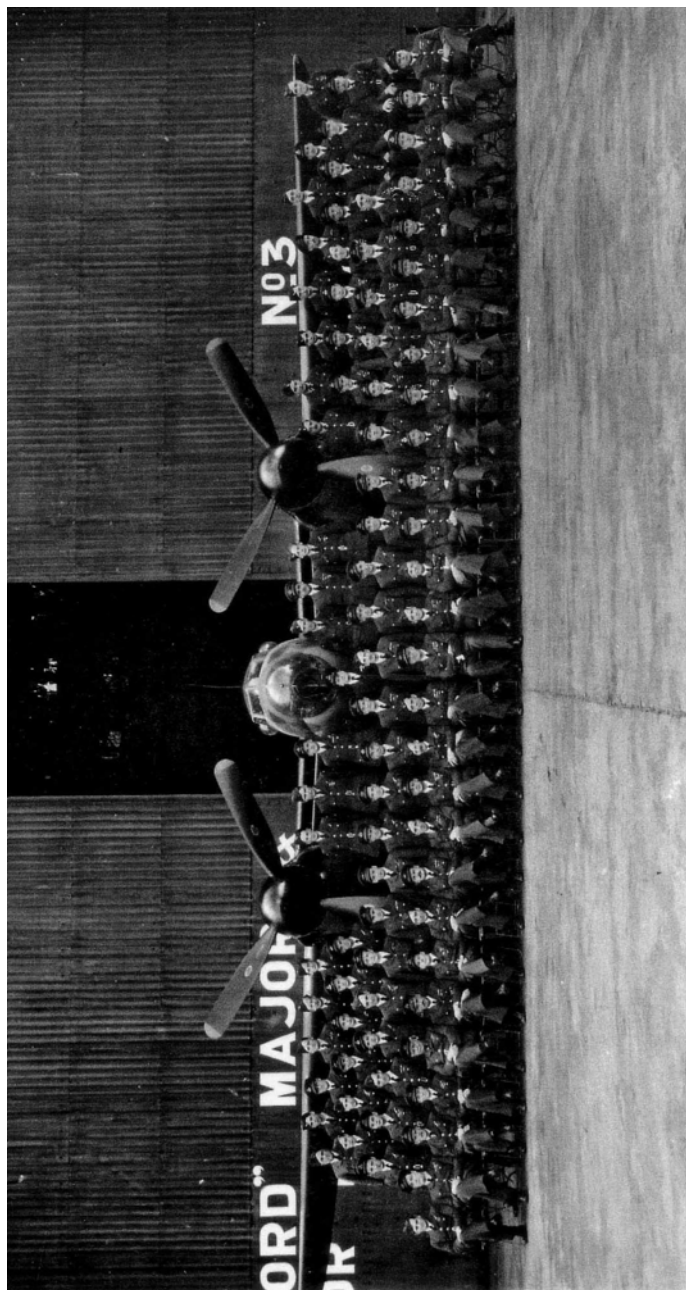






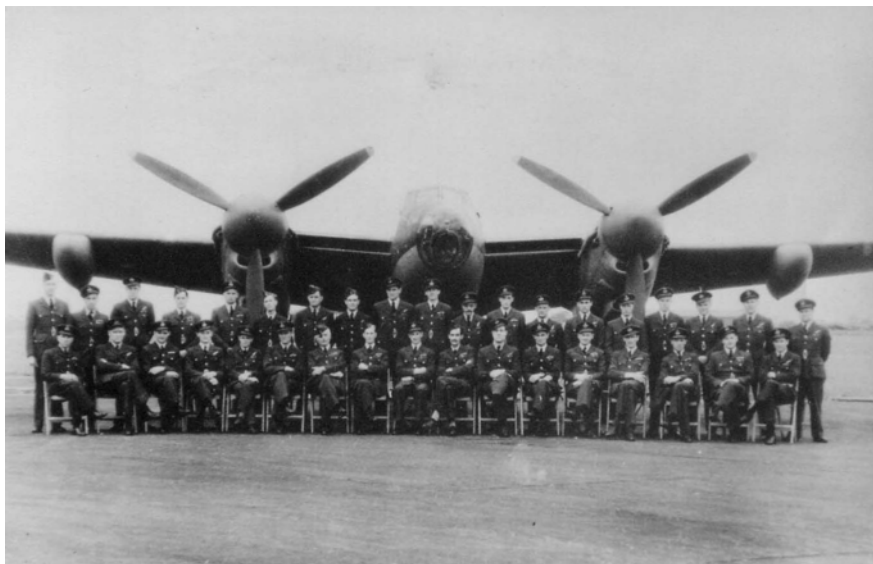
692 Squadron Nov 1944 personnel listing of previous page picture

Back Rows - F/O. Maitlond, F/O. Girvan, W/O. Crooks, W/S. Sutherland, Sgt. Sturrock, F/O. Boothwright,
 F/O. Scholes, F/O. Massie, W/O. Garton, F/O. Harter, Sgt. Wood, Sgt. Beckett,
 W/O. Doran, W/O. Archbold, Sgt. McIlroy, F/O. Tubbs, Sgt. Stockwell,
 F/S. Clark, F/S. Vere, W/S. Williams, F/O. Ewart, Sgt. Linn,
 Centre Rows - F/L. Drinkall, P/O. Maxwell, F/L. Triggs, F/O. Wild, Sgt. Ramage, F/O. Smith,
 F/L. Hill, Sgt. Fossitt, F/O. Wood, F/O. Hughes, P/O. Chandler, F/O. Morgan,
 F/O. Earl, W/O. Way, F/O. Smith, F/O. Howell, F/O. Hooper, Sgt. Morrell,
 F/L. Kitchen, Sgt. Withers, F/O. Back, Sgt. Hooper, Sgt. Morrell, F/L. Bradbury,
 Front Row - F/L. Northover, F/L. Perry, F/L. Galloway, S/L. Hadsorth, F/L. Nairn, F/L. Furbidge, F/L. Green,
 F/L. Momo, F/L. Galbraith, S/L. Brodie, F/L. Gover, F/L. Lockhart, F/O. Mapham, F/O. Horner,
 F/L. Higgett, F/L. Earnshaw, G/O. Menaul, F/L. Crow, W/O. Northrop, F/L. Batten, S/L. Euter,







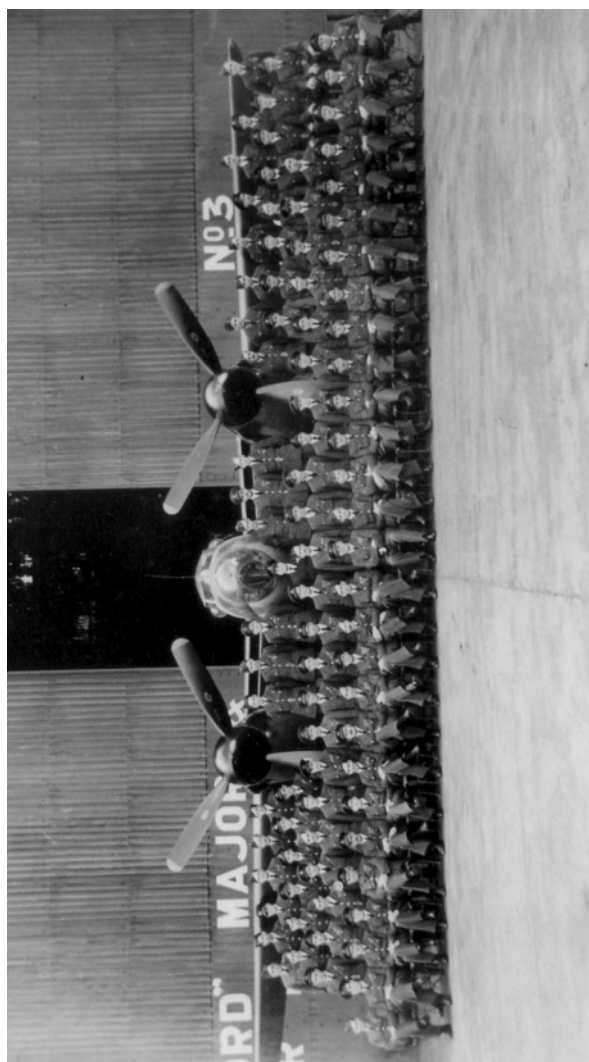


The Squadron at the time
of Wing Commander
Steve Watts

Probably May 1944 -supplied
by Cyril Northover

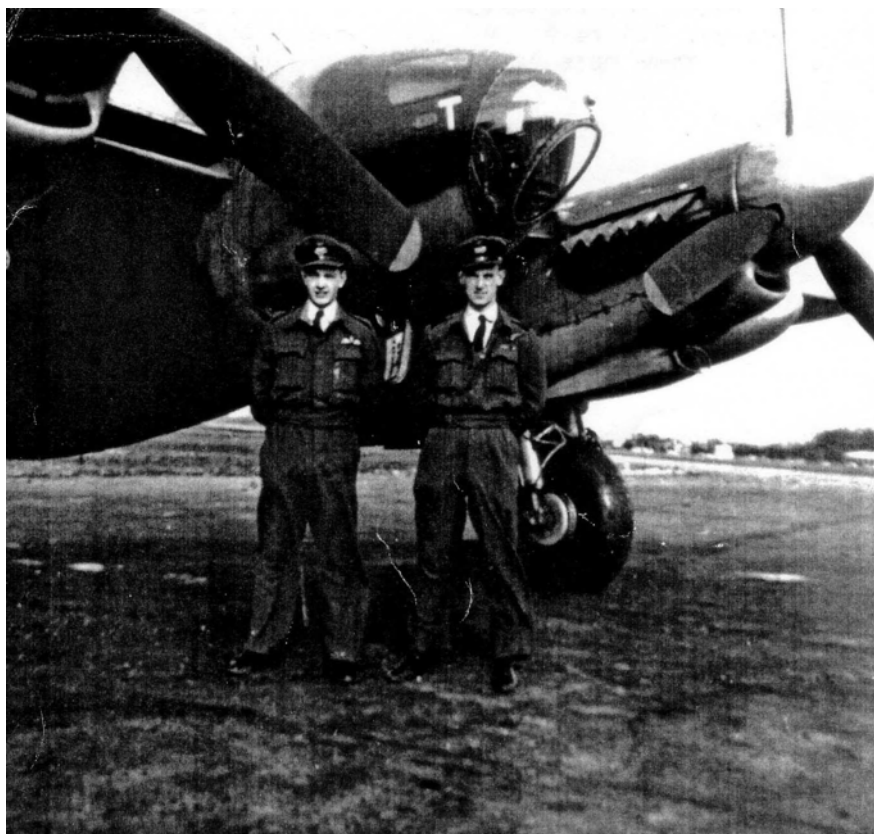


Bottom picture includes S/Ldr Joe Reed

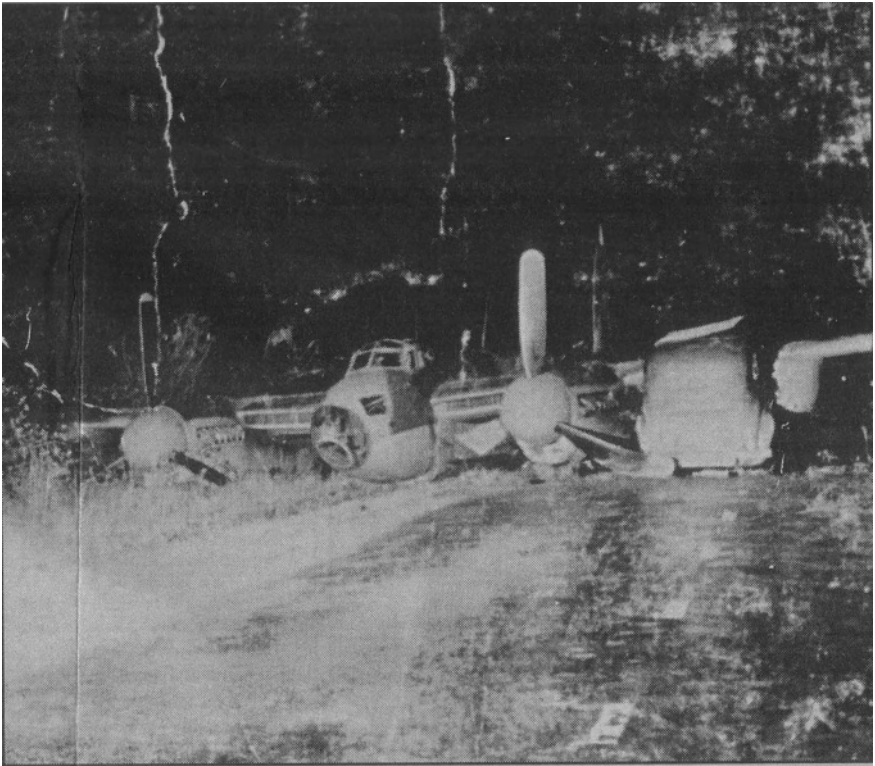




Picture showing Squadron ground staff?



Flying Officers Derek Smith
DFC and Philip Back



■ 'A miracle': the De Havilland Mosquito with the Armstrong Siddeley hire car squeezed under its wing

The aftermath of their “crash”
with the car.



692 Squadron
Memorial Stone at
the airfield



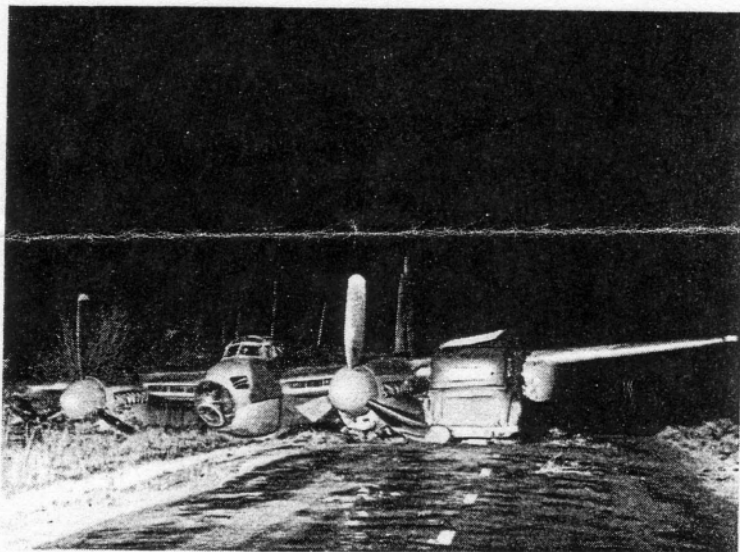
The main runway in 1994



The plaque in Swanley Church



Bombing photo Back and Smith



I'M PROUD OF THIS PICTURE

THE Mosquito bomber in this unusual British highway accident had its brakes shot off by antiaircraft fire over Berlin. Trying to make an emergency landing at our USAAF bomber base in Eastern England, it shot past the end of the runway, hit a ditch and bounced into the air. Then one of its wings hit a tree, and it swung sharply around and made a rasping belly landing on a highway

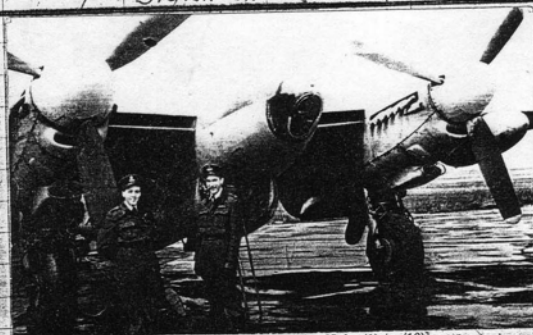
bordering the airdrome. An English motorist happened along just in time to crash into its wing. Hearing the crash, I ran from my barracks near by and snapped the above picture before the pilot and his one crewmate climbed from their crippled plane.

Happily, both fliers and the three civilians in the automobile were only shaken up a bit.

—LARRY GRAEBNER.

Another picture of “the crash”

YEAR 1944		AIRCRAFT		PILOT, OR 1ST PILOT	2ND PILOT, PUPIL OR PASSENGER	DUTY (INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)
MONTH	DATE	Type	No.			
TOTALS BROUGHT FORWARD						
Dec						
	9	HL959	MOSQUITO	SELF	Sgt	NFT 4,000 lbs
	11	MH172	MOSQUITO	SELF	W/O ARCHBOLD	OPERATIONS 1155 FUR TAYNE 4,000 lbs.
"	12	MH172	MOSQUITO XVI	SRAF	W/O ARCHBOLD	OPERATIONS OSNABRUCK 4,000 lbs.
"	17	MH172	MOSQUITO XVI	SELF	W/O ARCHBOLD	OPERATIONS HANNING 4,000 lbs.
	22	MH172	MOSQUITO XVI	SELF	W/O ARCHBOLD	OPERATIONS SIEBEN 4,000 lbs.
	28	MH172	MOSQUITO XVI	SELF	W/O ARCHBOLD	OPERATIONS FRANKFURT 4,000 lbs.
	28	PF430	MOSQUITO XVI	SELF	W/O ARCHBOLD	NFT and Low level BOMB 4,000 lbs.
	30	PF430	MOSQUITO XVI	SELF	W/O ARCHBOLD	OPERATIONS HANNOVER 4,000 lbs.
	31	MH124	MOSQUITO XVI	SELF	W/O ARCHBOLD	OPERATIONS BERLIN 4,000 lbs.
SUMMARY DECEMBER UNIT 692 SQUADRON DATE 31.12.44. SIGNATURE <i>[Signature]</i>						
51st Bombardment Group <i>[Signature]</i> <i>[Signature]</i>						
GRAND TOTAL (Cols (1) to (10)) 1,447 Hrs. 25 Mins.						
TOTALS CARRIED FORWARD						



Warrant Officer John Archbold
and Flight Sergeant Ron Vere

