

# Target **TOKEN**

AIMING POINT



## TARGET

LE MAYRE

## DATE

10 - 9 - 44

## CREW

F/L Bennett

F/O Atkinson

F/D Lynch

Sgt Weatherill

Sgt Andrews

Sgt Farrish

Sgt Hall



*Oru McSway*  
AIR VICE MARSHAL  
AIR OFFICER COMMANDING  
NO 6 (RCAF) GROUP

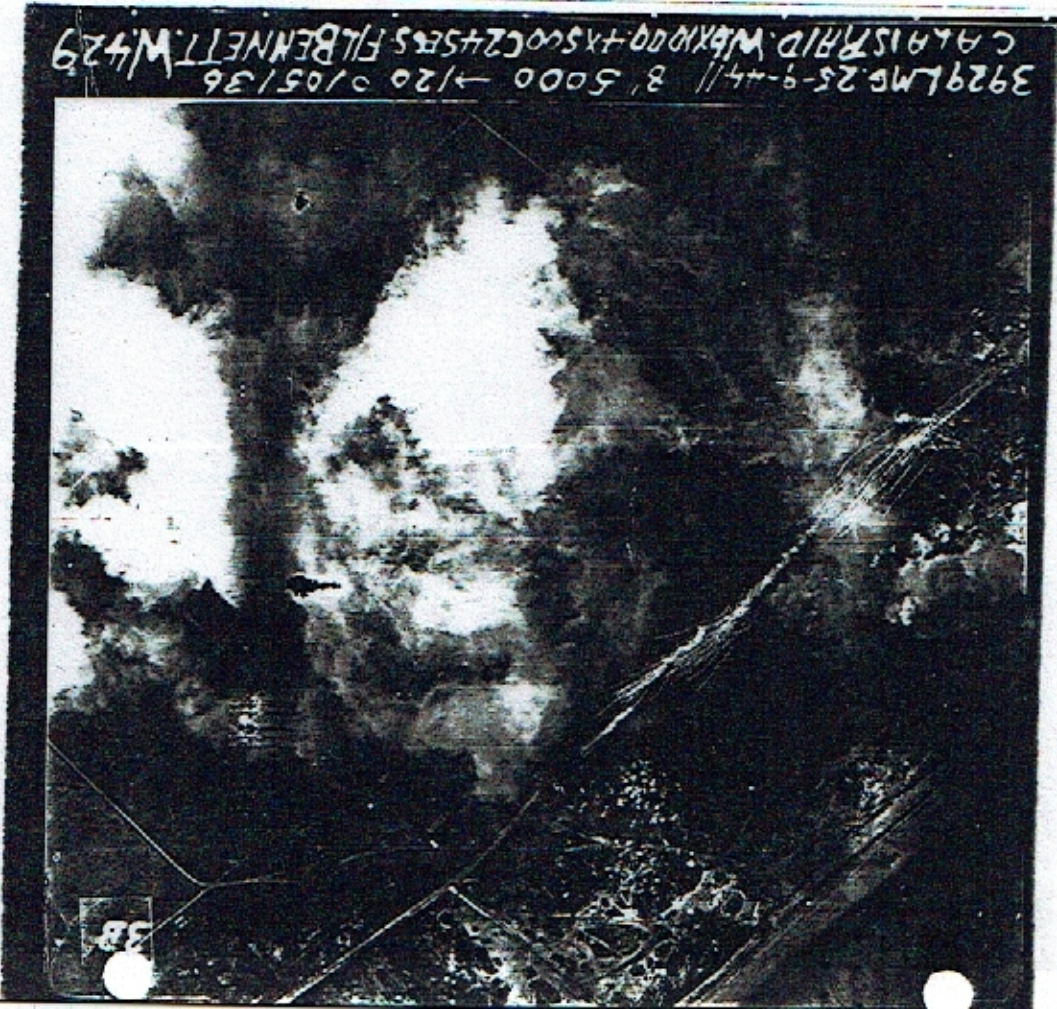
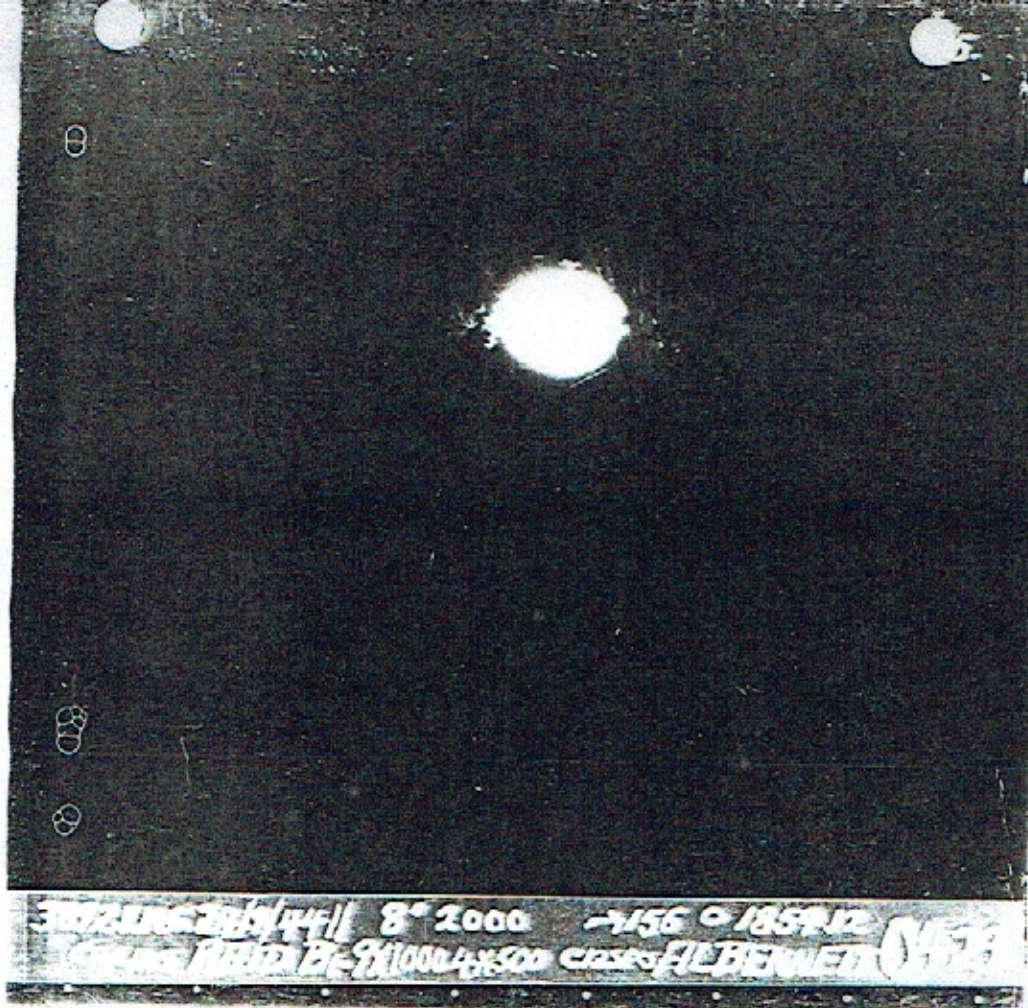
Our next trip was to bomb the shipyards in Kiel where submarines were being built. This trip on 15 Sept was fairly quiet and quite successful.

On 17 Sept a crew was seen bailing out over the North Sea and Search and Rescue were directed to the area. We were ordered to carry out a search in the area to make sure all the downed crew were spotted and rescued. We did not see any crew but were later told that all were picked up.

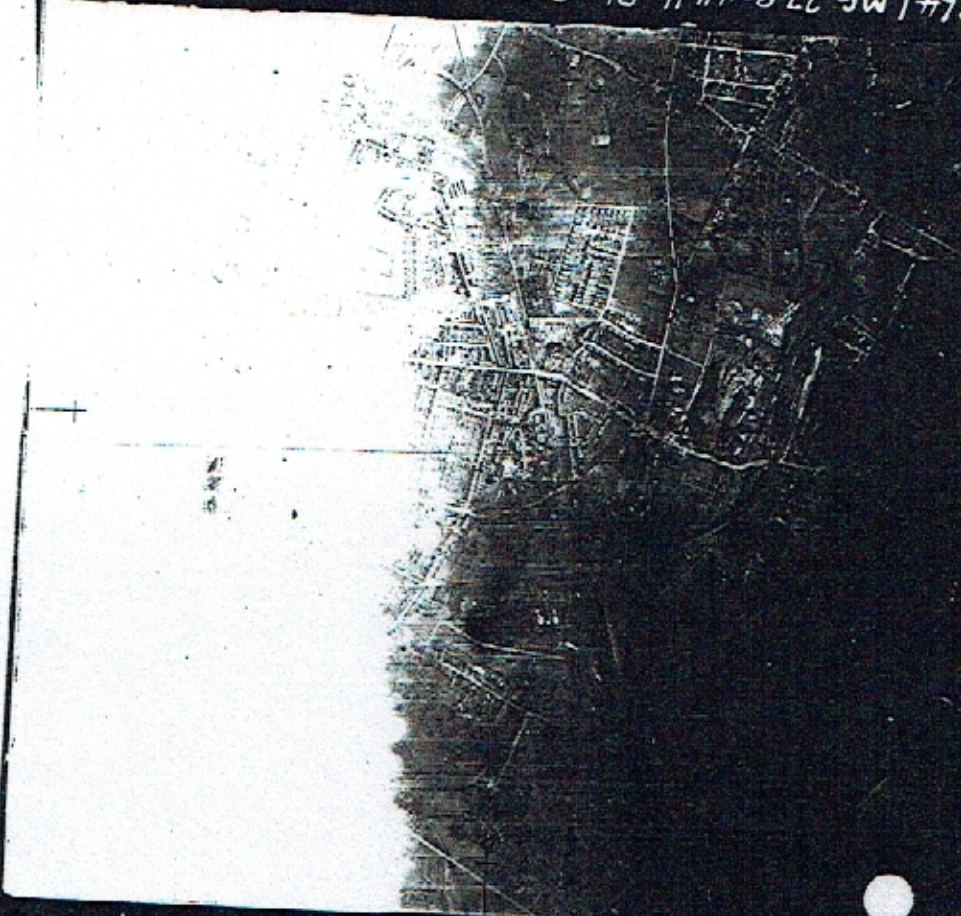
On Sept 24 we bombed German troops in Calais. We bombed the target visually from 2,500 ft. At this height we had to fly through what looked like a solid wall of small arms fire and it seemed miraculous that we were not hit. Back at base we found a five inch hole through one wing. This must have been a shell which passed through without exploding. If it had exploded it would certainly have removed the wing.

The next day 25 Sept we did another attack on Calais. This time from 5,000 ft clear of small arms fire. Because it was a small target area we were unable to drop all our bombs on the first run and had to go around and do a second run. Although the Flak was heavy we were not hit.

On Sept 27 the target was Sterkrade a factory city in the Ruhr. As we reached the target it was covered by broken cloud and we could not see the aiming point. We did a circuit and another run into the target area. Since the target marking was over I asked the bomb aimer to pick out a large factory and do a bombing run on it. We dropped our bombs and returned home. The intelligence section studied our photograph and advised us that we had bombed the largest steel works in Europe in Gelsenkirchen.



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Sept 28 our next trip was to be another flying-bomb site. However, cloud covered the target and the master bomber cancelled the raid and sent everyone home. My time on target was the last on the squadron and I was closest to home when recalled. I was therefore the first back and landed with my full bomb load of 11,000 lbs. I had never been told that on a recall the bombs should be jettisoned in the North Sea because landing an aircraft heavy with bombs was considered dangerous. I realized that the aircraft was very heavy took the necessary precautions and landed safely.

On 9 Oct the target was Bochum. Red T.I.'s were bombed. A twin engined fighter passed across in front of us but no combat occurred. Over the target and at our height 17,500 ft., a yellowish-orange tear-shaped ball of fire appeared 300 yds to port and continued parallel at aircraft speed for about one minute and then dived earthwards.

On 21 Oct we were briefed for night attack on Hanover. We set course but before we got to Hanover the raid was cancelled. We jettisoned 5,000 lbs bombs and returned to base.

23 Oct the target was Essen in the Ruhr. This time the target was covered by solid cloud and we were required to bomb sky markers (Wanganui Flares) from 20,600 ft. This means that the PFF drop flares floating by parachute and the bombers are required to aim bombs at the flares while flying on a predetermined heading. If this is done very precisely by all concerned the bombs should land on the target or very close.

On Oct 24 we were detailed to drop mines in the Oslo harbour. These mines were very large. Only four could be carried and then we could not fully close the bomb-bay doors. The mines were a highly secret design to explode after being passed over by a preset number of times. They were dropped from 12,000 ft by

parachute. The Oslo harbour is a long narrow fiord and to make sure the mines do not end up on land the navigator has to be sure that they have measured the wind very accurately and that we are on the right heading when the mines are released. Also at 12,00 ft you are a perfect target for the anti-aircraft batteries. To complicate things still more we were over solid cloud and had to rely on radar to aim the mines. On the first run in the bomb aimer was not satisfied with the radar reading so we did an orbit and did a second run in. This time the bomb release button malfunctioned and we had to go around and do another run.

As we left Oslo and began the long trip home the rear gunner reported that a stream of sparks was coming from the starboard inner engine. The engine instruments indicated that the engine was operating normally but I watched it closely. The stream of sparks continued and a few minutes later the whole engine became a bright red colour as if on fire. I feathered the engine and continued on three. All evidence of fire disappeared and we continued on three engines. It is a long haul across the North Sea to England so I decided we should land at the closest airfield which was Kinloss in Scotland. At safe landing was made at Kinloss.

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The next morning ground crew checked the engine, started it up and there seemed to be nothing wrong with it. I took off and headed back to Leeming. Very soon the rear gunner reported that the starboard inner engine was streaming heavy black smoke. Something was obviously wrong with the engine so I feathered it again and we returned to base on three engines.

The ground crew at base found that the bolts holding the propellor housing had loosened and oil was sprayed out on the cylinders. If we had not shut down the engines an engine fire would very likely have started.

Dropping mines was referred to as "gardening" in official language.

On the 30 Oct our target was Cologne. The target was covered by solid cloud and we bombed Wanganui from 19,000 ft. Three minutes after bombing we saw an aircraft go down in flames. On return our base was fogged in and the squadron was diverted to Spilsby where an uneventful landing was made.

On Nov 1 our target was Oberhausen. Again it was a Wanganui attack from 19,500 ft. Just as we entered our bombing the port inner engine started to seriously shake and lost power. I feathered it and continued the bombing run. A little later, at a much lower level we saw an aircraft coned by 5 searchlights and engaged by 6 light Flak guns. It was not seen to be hit and finally evaded the lights. We returned home on three engines and landed safely. There was no apparent Flak damage to the airplane but the ground crew found that piece of Flak had entered the air intake of the engine and stripped the blades of the supercharger impellor. On this trip we had a 2nd pilot, F/L Walkey who was doing his first trip.

On Nov 2 Dusseldorf was the target and was bombed visually from 20,500ft..Many fires and several big explosions were seen. There was a great deal of activity to be seen in the air. A fighter was seen going down in flames after an exchange of gunfire. Another aircraft was seen exploding after a tracer exchange. We had a quiet return trip.

On 6 Nov the target was Gelsenkirchen but it was covered by a large cloud and the Master bomber instructed us to bomb any factory that was visible. Our bombs were aimed at a large factory and we returned home safely.

On 16 Nov we bombed a small town, Julich, which was holding up the army advance. The town was completely destroyed and could no longer have held up the army.

Munster was the target on 18 Nov. This was another Wanganui attack and seemed to go well. The cloud over the target was solid and our radar, H2S, indicated that the bombs fell on the southern part of the city. This was an easy trip with no defense to speak of.

On Nov 21 we were detailed to do "gardening" again at Oslo. As we approached Oslo the navigator was not happy with the wind that we had and we spent a few minutes before reaching Oslo getting a better reading on the wind. As a result we were the only aircraft in the area when we went in to drop the mines. There was no cloud and as we were the only aircraft we were subjected to heavy anti-aircraft fire. We could see the guns fire and a few seconds later hear the shrapnel hitting the airplane. On the first run only three of the mines went down so we had to do another run in to drop the fourth mine. This was done and we began the long run home. The trip home was uneventful until as we approached base we were advised that Leeming was fogged in and we would have to land at Middleton St. George. The next morning we were eager to get back to Leeming since we were due to start some leave that day. The maintenance officer said he would not allow us to take our aircraft since it had many holes in it. (over thirty). After some discussion he agreed to let us go after he patched two or three of the largest holes. Of course we had been lucky that none of the hits had been vital to the operation of the airplane. We got back to Leeming with our airplane and got away on leave by noon.

On Oct 28 we had a somewhat different trip to Cologne. The pilots escape hatch opened on take off and remained open. The flight engineer struggled to get it closed with no success and it broke off and disappeared. I knew it would be very cold with the large opening over my head but I reasoned that none other of the crew would be as cold as I was and if I could manage they could.



Fortunately the auto pilot worked very well and I was able to sit on my hands to keep them from freezing. Normally, in the daytime you see the Flak as sudden puffs of black smoke appearing round about and at night you saw flashes as the Flak exploded. On this trip with the roof open over my I heard the Flak exploding which was a new experience. We dropped our bombs from 20,000 ft and set course for home. There was a great deal of activity of fighters and anti-aircraft fire but we were unscathed. As soon as we were clear of the target area I descended to a lower altitude where it was warmer and we had a comfortable trip home.

On Dec 2 the target was the industrial city of Hagen. The flight to the target was uneventful, we did a Wanganui bombing and we should have hit the target. Shortly after leaving Hagen the tail gunner saw a fighter approach and open fire. As soon as he was within range the tail gunner returned fire. There were no hits but as soon as the fire was returned the fighter broke off and disappeared. It was common practice for the German fighters to break off rather than fight if they knew they were spotted. Later I noticed the engines becoming quieter and the air speed was dropping. It being night I could see nothing outside but concluded that the aircraft was becoming loaded with ice. I immediately started to descend to warmer air and ordered the crew to prepare to bail out if the aircraft went out of control. Fortunately, the air became warmer, the ice melted and we returned to base safely.

The next morning I was informed that my crew and I were transferred to 434 Squadron at Croft where I was to be "A" Flight commander.

I have described the various operational flights but I should state that when a crew is not detailed to go on a bombing flight practise flying of some kind is required. This flying may

be cross country flights for the navigator and bomber to practise working their various pieces of equipment, fighter affiliation for the gunners and the pilot to practise gunnery and evasive action and bombing practice for the bomb aimer and pilot. Also there may be a flight test of an airplane that has undergone repairs or maintenance work.

As a flight commander on 434 Squadron I would have new duties such as organizing the training flights and drawing up the "battle order" which is the list of crews detailed to go on a raid.

The first work for the crew do do on this squadron is the training to operate a different aircraft, the Lancaster.

Our first operation on 434 Squadron was a Wanganui attack on the factory city of Scholven. It was a rather routine flight bombing from 20,000 ft. The date was Dec 29.

On Dec 30 the Target was Clogne bombed by Wanganui flares from 19,500 ft. Our rear turret was unserviceable but it was quiet trip and we did not need it. We had with us a new pilot, F/O Purnell, doing his first trip.

On Jan 2 we went on a raid to Nuremberg. I cannot say we were detailed as I am now the one who details. It was a long flight, over nine hours, made more difficult as our radar and DRC (compass) were unserviceable. However it was a good trip

On Jan 14 the target was Merseberg and we were PFF support. Again we had to fly with unserviceable rear turret. Bombed Wanganui. This was along trip of over nine hours.

Our next target was Stuttgart on Jan 28. As a flight commander I was allowed to do only two or three operational flights per month. This was the policy so that the most use could be made of your experience before you finished your tour. We encountered very strong winds on the way to Stuttgart and we had to increase our speed considerably to reach Stuttgart at our assigned time. The target was under solid cloud and we looked for Wanganui markers. There were no markers to be seen nor any other aircraft. We did three orbits around Stuttgart and then sky markers appeared. It was acknowledged later that the PFF was late. A rare event. We dropped our bombs and set course for home. On the way home we were informed that base was fogged in and instructed to divert to Spilsby.

At this time a tour of operations was considered to be 30 bombing trips at which time a crew would be "screened" and members would return to Canada or be given another job in England. Our crew had done 30 trips but two members had missed one trip each and the crew would have to do one more trip and everyone would have the necessary 30. We decided to take a week's leave, come back, do one more trip and be finished.

Such was not to be. While we were on leave the powers that be decided that such trips such as flying-bomb site raids should not count as much as the more dangerous flights. As a result we learned when we returned from leave that we would have to do five more raids.

Our next trip, on 13 Feb, was the "infamous" raid on Dresden. We were briefed that we were bombing because the city full of retreating German army. As we bombed we could easily see the front line where the Russians were driving back the Germans. Although we are criticized for fire bombing, my bomb load was 1 x 4,000 lb and 7 x 500 lbs.

On this trip we carried no incendiaries.

The following is a verbatim quote from the official records of the Dresden operation. "J9180 S/L G. Bennett, piloting aircraft "A" took off at 2056 hrs. last night and landed at 0810 hrs. being airborne for eleven hours and fourteen minutes. All aircraft claim to have attacked the primary. Visibility over the target was clear and the attack was assessed as very good by returning crews. Three aircraft which landed at Snetterton Heath to refuel returned to base later in the morning. At approximately 1030 hrs. this squadron was called for a maximum effort. Seventeen crews were offered. By the time crews returning from operations this morning had had a meal and returned to their billets it was 0930 hrs. at the earliest. Twelve of these crews were on today's battle order so they were pretty sleepy looking when they were called to rise and eat at 1215 hrs. Navigation briefing was at 1330 hrs. and Main at 1430 hrs. Sixteen aircraft took off successfully at 1722 hrs. for an attack on Chemnitz."

My crew was one of those taking part in the attack on Chemnitz. On arrival at Chemnitz at 14,000 ft. the target was covered by cloud but I knew the cloud base was above 10,000 ft. so I descended to 10,000 ft. and did another run in over the target. I asked the bomber to select the largest factory building and we bombed it. We were below all cloud, visibility was excellent. there was little Flak and no other aircraft were in sight. As soon as the bombs were released I did a steep turn and told the crew they could look down and see our 4,000 lb. bomb exploding. This was the first opportunity for the crew to actually see this happen since the very large explosion was certainly our bomb. We had a quiet return home but one of our squadron crews was missing.

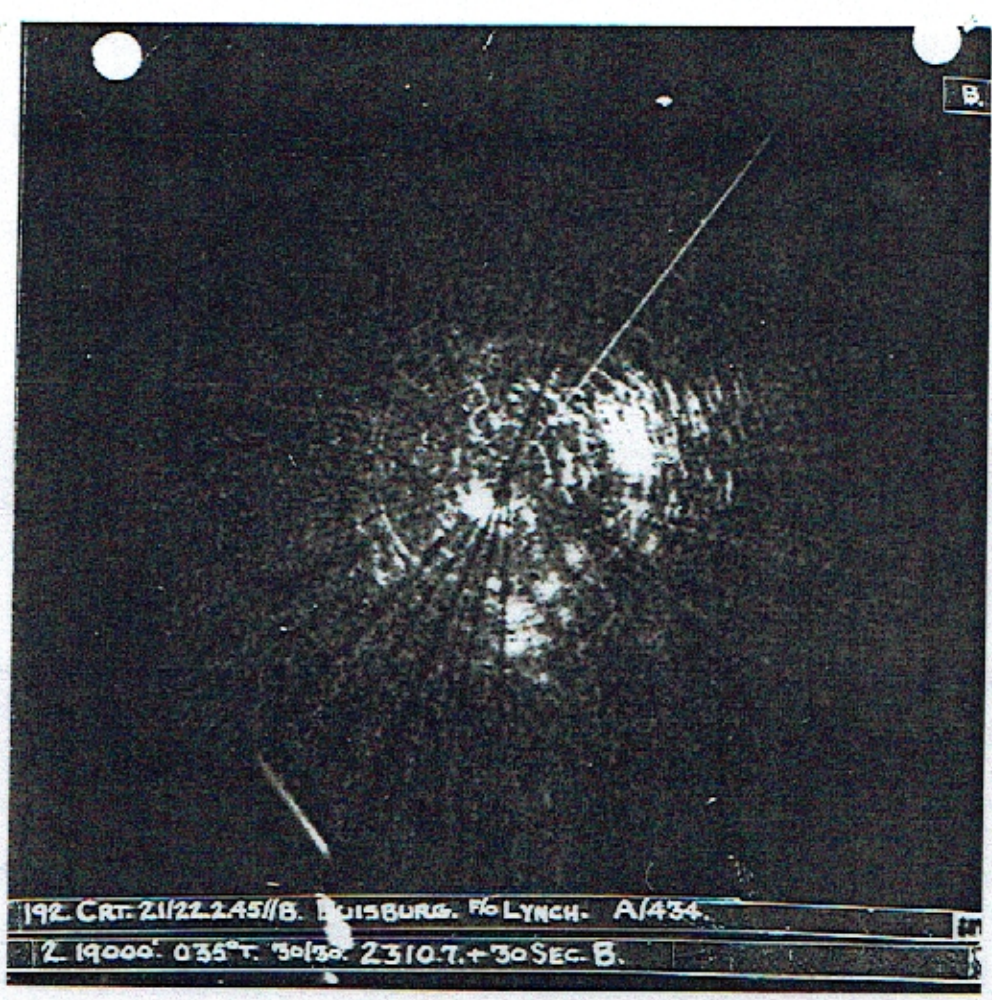
Our next trip on Feb 21 was a Wanganui attack on the factory city of Duisburg. On this trip we had the pleasure of taking along one of the intelligence officers. These officers do a lot of the preparation for an operational flight and do the interrogation of each crew on return. F/L Millar the intelligence officer really enjoyed the trip. We had an uneventful and safe flight home. I omitted to tell you the target was Zweibrucken.

On the 14 March we did our last trip with 434 Squadron. It was a good attack with fairly clear weather and visibility was good. Another intelligence officer came along and had a very good trip. The Flak was fairly heavy and he saw some aircraft shot down. However our trip was very quiet and we arrived safely back at base.

At this point my crew had done 34 trips and I had done 37 trips. We could probably have been screened with one more trip and gone home to Canada or to some other employment. I had a very good crew. The navigator and bomb aimer were possibly the best team in all of bomber command. The other crew members were excellent also which is why we had survived and done so well. Having all this in mind I succeeded in persuading the crew to volunteer for transfer to Pathfinder Group. The fact that the commanding officer of 405 Squadron, the pathfinder squadron, already knew us since he was the CO of Leeming when we were there, certainly helped and we got transferred very quickly and went to Warboys to undergo the brief pathfinder training. to warboys to undergo the brief pathfinder training.

At Warboys we did three flights and some practise bombing to satisfy the supervisors that we could do the job.

On 24 March we were transferred to 405 Squadron at Gransden Lodge. We were categorized on the squadron a blind crew, which



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doesn't sound very good but actually means that we were qualified to drop the Wanganui markers when the target is under solid cloud.

Our first operational flight was to Plauen which was a small town containing a synthetic fuel factory. Our duty on this flight was to go in first and drop illuminating flares so that the marker aircraft could visually see the target and drop marker flares to burn on the ground. It was a cloudless night with no moon and nothing could be seen on the ground. We were required to drop the illuminating flares over the target at the designated minute plus or minus fifteen seconds. As we approached the target area I was assured by the navigator that all was going well but I could see nothing. At the designated time the bomb aimer called "flares gone" and I looked down. Suddenly the countryside lit up and I could see that there was a small town below. Within seconds I saw the regular ground markers light up in the town I realized that we had done our job perfectly. We then did a circuit, went in and dropped a regular bomb load. We had an uneventful trip home. The date of this flight was April 10.

April 14 was the date of our next flight to Potsdam. We were detailed to go as supporter which required us to fly over with the master bomber and then do a circuit and drop our bombs. In doing the circuit we passed over Berlin with all the searchlights and anti-aircraft batteries. For the first time in all our flights we were coned by searchlights. This is a remarkable experience. The aircraft is suddenly lit up as though in bright daylight and you expect to get lots of Flak and possibly a fighter attack. I immediately took evasive action by turning the airplane on its side to present a smaller target and dive rapidly to change the altitude. Fortunately this worked and we escaped the searchlights. We did our bombing run and set course for home. In doing his checks the bomb aimer found three bombs had failed to drop. We jettisoned them in the North Sea.

Bremen was the next target and we were detailed to go as supporter. We arrived over Bremen to be informed by the master bomber that it was impossible to mark the target and we were to take our bombload 5 x 2,000 lbs home. We had a quiet trip home.

On April 25 we were detailed to go as supporters on a daylight raid on Berchtesgaden. This was a very interesting exercise. The procedure then for daylight attacks was to have a vic formation of three aircraft lead the flight and all other aircraft, about three hundred, would follow loosely behind in what was called a "gaggle". We were instructed to fly beneath the gaggle until nearing the target we would pull ahead of the gaggle to arrive at the target with the master bomber. The route to the target was a path passing south of Berchtesgaden to a point some distance south east, then north east a short distance and finally a north west heading into the target. All went as expected. We pulled ahead of the gaggle and turned to the north east. I could see the gaggle behind us and they were not turning. I asked the navigator if he was sure we were on the right course. He said he was sure and I replied that if he was right there were three hundred crews behind that were wrong. We carried on and soon there were no other aircraft in sight. We approached the target right on time with no aircraft in sight. However, at exactly the designated time the markers appeared on the ground apparently dropped by a Mosquito aircraft high above out of sight. We had done our job perfectly. All the other aircraft were late. We flew a circuit did a bombing run and returned home. We saw no fighters and there was very little flak.

On April 30 we did the most pleasant flight of the war, dropping food to the Dutch in the Hague. This was our first trip as a PFF marker as we were to drop markers to keep the target area, the Hague racetrack, marked for those following. We had a load of food to drop as well as the markers.



On all operational flights we were issued a small package of refreshments to take along. These refreshments consisted of some fruit juice, chocolate, chewing gum, biscuits and maybe some candy. We decided before taking off for the Hague to put all this together in a piece of rag and have the rear gunner throw it out at an opportune time. As we approached the Hague flying at about three hundred ft. the countryside was covered by thousands of people waving at us. As we drew near a fairly dense large crowd I suggested to the rear gunner that he throw out the bundle. He watched it go down right into a greenhouse roof. I am sure somebody would get it.

All the Dutch people were waving vigorously and must have had sore arms at the end of the day. We could see a few Germans carrying guns sulking about but none fired at us.

A few days later I was ordered to report to RCAF HQ in London. I was advised that having been in England over three years I was due to go home. If I waived repatriation it would be understood that I was volunteering for the occupational force. That was the last thing I wanted to do since Stella was already booked to sail to Canada. Therefore I was transferred to a holding unit at Warrington to await sailing home. I waited and sailed for home in July.