

Our First and Last 'Trips'

We'd only been at Waddington for 3 days when we did our first trip to Le Havre, as part of a big raid (992 bombers) on 8 different strongpoints near Le Havre (which had been by-passed by the army). On our run-up to the target we lost one engine, but no other damage, and bombed successfully. No planes were lost. On the way home, our flight-commander, mindful that we were on our first trip, brought his Lancaster up to our wingtip and proceeded to shut down 3 engines and keep with us ... a bit of reassurance!

Of our first 21 trips we did 13 in D (Dog) ... 'our' plane (except when we were on leave, or it was being serviced). While on our 2nd lot of leave, 'Dog' was crash-landed on an emergency 'drome' with lots of damage - wing, engine, tail (rear-gunner killed), and we were told it was a 'write-off'.

However, Dog reappeared, repaired, for our last trip ... a long one to Brux (Czechoslovakia) ... an oil refinery with POW camps next to it!

A crew on their last trip were 'expected' to be first home - it was OK to open the throttles a bit and cut a corner maybe. And 'Dog' was regarded as a 'fast kite'. But the repaired Dog was nothing like its former self. It took much longer than usual to climb; when we did our usual banking searches (looking for fighters below us) it put its nose down on one bank, nose up on the other, and we could see wrinkles in its metal skin! Then when we pressed the button to release our bombs nothing happened! We did 2 circuits, madly changing fuses etc, but still couldn't drop them, so headed home (with bombs) 20 mins late and 20mph slower than the others. We had an anti-handling-fused bomb which we had to take out to a jettison area in the North Sea for manual release (a wire hook through the floor), so by the time we got home we were over an hour late ... most of the others thinking what bad luck to 'get the drop' on the last trip.