

BOMBER RAIDS on the DORTMUND-EMS CANAL

Our Squadron (467) belong to 5-Group, the 'specialist' group of Bomber command. Whereas the other 5 groups mostly flew together on 'big' targets, with pathfinders marking for them, our group generally acted alone-in our "Tour", 24 of our trips were purely 5 group efforts. We had our own markers and master-bombers, these usually from our two special-operations squadrons-one such master bomber was W/Cdr Guy Gibson, VC. of Dam Busters fame, who was killed while directing us over Munchen-Gladbach (on the fringe of the Rhur Valley)....it was our 5th trip.

Between 23.9.44 and 3.3.45, 5 Group made 10 raids on the Canal system, breaching the walls (at places where canals crossed above streams...not many places) 8 times- bad weather prevented bombing on the other 2 raids.

We flew on the first of these, arriving at the target on time at 10000'. Two minutes before drop time, the master bomber told us; "bomb 150 yards N.W. of target indicator (flare)", but we were all in thick cloud. and began cautiously orbiting to lose height. Then he told us " cloud base 8000', come down and bomb". We orbited again and got clear of the cloud at 6300' and bombed successfully. Only 136 planes had gone out- 13 failed to return.

The next raid was 6 weeks later (when they'd finished its repair). A report from Albert Speer to Hitler Dated 11.11.44 was captured at wars end, stating that "The raids on the Dortmund-Ems Canal and the rail system produced more serious setbacks to the German war industry at this time than any other type of bombing"

We were on the 3rd raid, 2 nights later, to a different place- the junction of the Ems-Weser and Mittleand Canals. 235 Lancasters took part, but only 31 bombed before the raid was called off due to bad visibility. We circled the target for 15

.....2 Bomber raids Dortmund-Ems Canal

minutes ,then had to bring our bombs home

Three weeks later we were on the next raid to the original Dortmund-Ems 'site'....they were quicker at repairing it now....we heard that they had 40,000 'Todt' workers camped nearby. Also knowing that the barges were running again, they were expecting us with more A.A. guns and fighters. Our trip went well except that we had to descend quickly through cloud from 11,000' to 3800' just before bombing.

On New Year's Day 1945 we did our 4th trip there, in daylight, using only 100 planes, and breeched the canal again.

5~~8~~ Group made 5 more raids there in February and March, 3 of them successfully (the other two abandoned due to bad visibility at the target- but that usually meant 'orbiting' and losing height, and so exposing the planes to more danger.) In those 5 raids our base lost the C.O.'s of both squadrons, our Flight Commander, and other crew in just 4 weeks- we were glad to have finished our "tour" in January. Another report at that time stated: "5 Group had bombed the canal system so often that the German A.A. gunners could leave their guns aimed ready for the next raid!"

Photos taken of the Dortmund-ems Canal taken on a 'Cooks Tour' of bombed areas on 19.6.45.

Wigsley(base) Brentwood- W.Malling-Folkstone-Cap Gris Nez-
Dixmunde-Maastricht-Aachen-Duren-Cologne-Krefeld-Duisburg-Essen-
Hamm-Munster-WeselEindhoven-Turnhout-Ostende-Dixmunde-Calais-Cap
griz Nez-Folkstone-W Malling-Brentwood-Base. 5.50hrs day.