

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, ^{617 & 9} one such master bomber was W/Cdr Guy Gibson, Ve. of Darn 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 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 by thenwe 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 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 CO'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- Harnm- Munster- Wesel- Eindhoven- Turnhout- Ostende- Dixmunde- Calais- Cap Gris Nez- Folkstone- W. Malling- Brentwood- Base.
5.50hrs day.

Bert Adams.....

467 SQUADRON

R.A.A.F.

*Prepared for
Mendocorian reunion
c. 1995*

ATTACK on the "LUTZOW" at GYDNIA

18th December 1944

236 Lancasters of 5 Group attacked the port facilities, with 2 experienced crews from our squadrons to attack 2 pocket battleships anchored about 4 miles S.E. of the port.

We were to arrive just after the flare force lit up the port area and drop our bombs by the light of their flares. We arrived on time but couldn't see either battleship - our bomb aimer thinks a smoke screen was the trouble. We did our orbit, hoping to drop the next time around, but didn't see the ships until too late. However they were there, the "Lutzow" now lying almost N/S. just out from the jetty. We went around again, Bomb-aimer saying that we would turn west when 1 min past right angles to the red Target Indicators on the main target, which were now being bombed by the main force.

Our Pilot, a 'press-on' type, said we'd go in low level if we didn't bomb on our third run! This despite our being buffeted by exploding A.A. shells every few seconds since our arrival. (I had already put my parachute on!). Bomb-aimer said: "That would be bloody dangerous". But our run up was good, Bomb-aimer's words something like: "Left- left- steady- left a bit- steady- st-ead-y st-ead-y- bombs gone". Our pilot continued over the target until our photo flash flare went off (they were automatic if you bombed at briefed height and speed) then said "Let 's get out of here", nose down, turning ^{PORT} starboard out to sea for a low level trip home.

Our target photo was a beauty showing 3 of our 10 bombs exploding across the deck near the funnel and one in the water very close by. We never heard officially what damage was caused to the ships, but a rumour said both were towed to Stettin Shipyards and remained there to wars end. The main raid was judged successful with considerable damage to the port area.

*I've lately read
that 617 Sqn sank
her near Wars end 16 April
with a 10000 lb Fallbom*

[p.183 of Iverson's book]

BERT ADAMS

Navigator

467 Squadron

R.A.A.F.

From early September, 1944 until mid January, 1945 I was a navigator with 467 Squadron- one of two Australian squadrons based at Waddington, near Lincoln (no 463 was the other one). Our crew was typical- pilot and wireless operator from Queensland, mid upper gunner from W.A. bomb aimer and rear gunner from Sydney...all of us aged 20 except for the mid-upper gunner, an old married man of 25, plus our Scottish engineer, actually going grey, aged 44.

All 6 Aussies trained (up to the wings stage) in Australia. Our bomber, Syd (a scubbed pilot) and I were together all the way...3 months basic navigation at Cootamundra, flying Avro Ansons; 2 months bombing and gunnery at Evans Head, on Fairey Battles; 1 month Astro-navigation at Parkes, on Ansons again. There we became Sargents and got our Observer's Wings- qualified for navigation, bomb-aiming and gunnery. A

We travelled to America on the same ship, expecting to go on to Canada for reconnaissance training, then on to Britain for Coastal Command.... a fairly safe part of the war. However at San Francisco, plans were changed- we were off to Britain at once into Bomber Command. I did a 5 week Advanced Flying course in North Wales, on Ansons again. Syd did a similar course (for Bomb Aimers) on the Isle of Anglesey, just across the Menai Strait. Thence we went to Lichfield for 3 months Operational training on Vickers Wellingtons. There we had the first two days (and nights in the mess) for voluntary crewing up. Syd and I found our Queensland pair (pilot and wireless operator) mutually impressed,

Then the two gunners, who'd come 1st and 2nd in their advanced course, looking for a good crew, picked us!

Next we did about 6 weeks conversion (to 4-engined Short Stirlings) where we were allocated our Engineer completing the crew of 7. Then we did a 4 week Lancaster Finishing School before joining our squadron. The Empire Air Training Scheme worked well, providing a good supply of thoroughly-trained aircrew.

Seven other crews, besides ours, arrived the same day. Five of these were destined not to complete a tour of 30 operations. We were welcomed, enmasse, by the C.O. next day, and he kept our crew back for a private chat, after dismissing the others. The reason: our pilot's elder brother had been his rear gunner on one of his two tours! Then he went up with us, checked us out, and 2 days later sent us on our first raid, a short daylight trip to Le Havre, without our pilot doing the customary, second-dickie' trip with an experienced crew. Our pilot remedied that the next night on Damstadt. Then we had our first night 'trip' the following night on Stuttgart.

At that time our Navigation Officer endeavoured to check each navigator's log and chart after each trip, but as he was still going on some trips himself, he co-opted some of his experienced navigators to help the new chums with the more detailed check of their log and chart and advice on the harder decisions to be faced.

Our basic System of navigation consisted of getting accurate winds from good GEE fixes until the enemy jammed our reception soon after crossing enemy territory. Then we compared our winds with those forecast, considered the overall "Met" picture and

predicted what winds to use from there to the target for "dead reckoning". This was the critical area for judgement. My helper's name was Scotty (I didn't know his surname). He was nearly 30, and had done about 15 trips. He helped me for a couple of weeks, by which time an assistant navigation officer was appointed and the helper system abandoned. We had by then done 6 trips successfully and were no longer regarded as new chums.

Waddington was peace-time aerodrome. Our barracks were two storey brick, H shaped, having four dormitories on each floor. Each dormitory had 12 bunks; our crew (except the pilot who was now an officer) down one side, another crew down the other. The navigator of the other crew was Geoff Goodfellow, from Tooraweenah (his father ran the Mountain View Hotel). Geoff reckoned I was the only bloke he met in the Airforce who'd even heard of Tooraweenah, let alone been there, as I had. We were good friends, often playing crib or 500, or sampling a few beers together. Unfortunately they were shot down after two months- it was our 18th trip- about the same for them.

It was customary to give bomber crews 6 days leave after 6 weeks of operations (less if those above them on the leave-list went missing). This happened and we went to London after 11

trips in 5 weeks. While in London, I looked in at the BOOMERANG CLUB just out of curiosity- I had never been inside it. One of the first fellows I saw was Kirk Beddie, ... I knew he was with Coastal Command

.....4

" Hello Kirk"

" Hello Bert; what are you up to?"

"I'm on Lanes, on 467 squadron, at Waddington . This is our first leave . Done 11 trips. Where are you?"

"At ^{plym}Plymouth (No 10 ^{os}squadron) on Sunderlands . My first leave too, but we have to fly a lot of hours for it (500 I think it was) -takes about 6 months"

" It 's a bit of a coincidence, the only two airmen from Mendooran and we both on leave together and both come in here", I said

Kirk replied, : " Yes, but we're not the only two, Vernon Gall is over here in the Airforce too." .

I said, : " I don't know him."

" Oh, I forgot, " said Kirk. "You may never have seen him. He was in the Bank of NSW, but you were boarding in Mudgee while at High School, then working in Sydney until you got into uniform. So you were only in Mendooran on holidays or on leave. Your family would know him. Hey, there he is now ! I will go and bring him over and introduce you ."

Kirk walked about 20 yards through the crowd of airmen and sailors, and came walking back with

Scotty !.....

Neither of us had mentioned Mendooran, when he was helping me. Some coincidence now!

Scotty was on his second leave and went on to complete his "tour" . After the war, when I bought the Sports Depot in Mudgee, he turned up there as a teller at the Bank of NSW . His wife was MLC agent and sold us life insurance on each of our children .

On returning to Mendooran, I found that 3 other locals of my vintage had served in the RAAF... Ray Meers (Rear Gunner), Lindsay Francis (w.o.p.) both completed tours with Bomber Command, & Mark Hargraves (pilot?) who didn't come back.

Weaving, Corkscrewing & Banking Searches.

Prior to the introduction of WINDOW (July '43), the Flak & Searchlights were radar-guided & so "weaving" was the practice to prevent damage. After that the Germans soon resorted to barrage flak (they kept producing more & more AA guns & searchlights, & night-fighters, right up to War's end).

Our response was to fly straight through the barrage even though it looked more dangerous than it really was.

A lot of our training was "corkscrewing" with a fighter (often a Hurricane) trying to get enough deflection inside over turns... all recorded on cine-camera "guns". The corkscrew was our reaction to sighting an enemy fighter. It seems that German fighters liked to get "up-close" before firing & so if the bomber began corkscrewing, they'd abandon him & look for a softer target. We corkscrewed a few times after our rear-gunner sighted a night-fighter & we were left alone, not ever shot at by a fighter.

In Oct. '43, Schrage Musik was first used by German fighters... & it was used to destroy many many bombers. We were not told about it (even in 1944)... perhaps for morale? But our pilots were told to do Banking Searches while over enemy territory... our pilot did this religiously...

"Down Port... all clear Port; Down Starboard... all clear Starboard"... for hour after hour. Maybe we were lucky, but ~~so~~ our vigilance helped. Some of the German night fighters with Schrage Musik claimed over 100 kills.