Save me an egg.

Geoff Copeman. 1976.

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To Bill,
With best
Wishes,
Geoff.

SAVE ME AN EGG

People passing on the Sleaford-Skegness road may scarcely notice East Kirkby, whose chief point of interest, the little church, stands off the main road hidden by a few trees.

The R.A.F. arrived in the spring of 1943 in the shape of No. 57 Squadron, the 'Heinz Varieties', and with more and more crews and aircraft arriving one half -'B' Flight - had been formed into a new squadron, No. 630, by the following November.

Little now remains to show where the small town sprang up, literally within this little place, to house many hundreds of airmen and women. Or of the workshops and other buildings that existed to maintain the Lancasters across the fields, where concrete replaced the fine crops from the rich Lincolnshire soil.

The village hall has hardly changed since the WAAFs ran the last of their 'ninepenny hops', and on the corner the 'Red Lion' looks just the same, although inside, where airforce-blue shoulders jostled in that five-to-ten last rush, the passage and the little rooms have been merged. Juke-box and 'bandit' take pride of place, the old round table with its scratched and carved graffiti long since banished to an outhouse.

A warehouse forms a monstrous eye-sore, replacing the hangars that stored potatoes on their 'demob'. The Sergeants' Mess and the gymnasium stand forlorn by the church. Elsewhere, one who knows where to look will find ruins of huts, air-raid shelters, and, away up the road, all that is left of the hospital.

At the time, Air Force buildings seemed to me to fit well into their rural surrounds, a view since modified. East Kirkby has never laid claim to beauty, but none of us returning thirty-odd years on could fail to feel regret for what was done to this village. It was, and remains, a 'nice little place'.

My recollections of the middle six months of 1944 are of long summer days, leafy green, one of the songs we sang, 'Whispering Grass', told it all. Nevertheless, bad weather had delayed D-Day, and almost brought disaster to the Mulberry Harbour plan. This cleared as June went by, and the twenty-first dawned bright and sunny. Dawn was not observed by the aircrews on the station, most of them staying with their heads well between the bed-clothes until the last minute, before a quick wash and a dash from the Nissen-hutted sites to the Officers' and Sergeants' Messes to catch the tail-end of breakfast, - stiff porridge, and a war-time sausage with fried bread, washed down with a mug of tea.

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With Nigger, the pooch.

By nine o'clock all would have arrived at Squadron H.Q. on the main aerodrome area. Some would have leaped onto their bikes and made their way round the village, but most would have climbed the stile that marked the path through the long grass and taken the short cut over the meadow to the Guardroom.

The morning passed slowly, each of us having joined his colleagues of similar trades, I with the flight engineers. First a technical film and a lecture, then we spent our time on relevant discussion - and irrelevant banter - interrupted by Naafi break on the arrival of the khaki-coloured van.

By noon, most crew members were making their way to the Messes. Pausing to look in the mail-rack on the way in, I joined the bomb-aimer and wireless operator of my crew. The former, Flt./Sgt. Philip Baker was at thirty-six the oldest aircrew-man on the station, and with his very fair hair was known to everyone as 'Snowy'. A New Zealander, he had known our pilot from the time they had sailed for training in Canada. The 'W/Op.', Fred Foster of Birmingham, had met them at Operational Training Unit, along with our original gunners, whom we had lost over Schweinfurt two months earlier, the rear-gunner badly wounded and the mid-upper now a prisoner after bailing out on a mistaken order. Their places had been taken by Jack Hobbs of Luton and John Johnson of Northampton, who now walked into the Mess looking pleased with themselves, having spent a pleasant couple of hours on the air-field at the clay-pigeon traps. We chatted for a few minutes then joined the queue at the hot-plate. Wednesday usually produced savoury mince or shepherd's pie - that's how we knew it was Wednesday! As a rule, people would eat with their own crew-mates and conversation would flow, but this lunch-time the talk was quiet and almost forced, the atmosphere throughout the station, and probably the village as well, influenced by the fact that the Squadrons had not operated since the previous Friday, a long 'lay-off'.

As most were finishing their meal an airman was seen to approach the notice-board in the lobby - Battle Orders. We craned our necks to look at the two rows of foolscap sheets listing the crews. "Full strength, we're top of the list. Main Briefing 20.00 hrs."

We had long run out of enthusiasm for ops., and nobody said much as we sought ante-room arm-chairs and settled for the daily ritual of 'listening to the News'. The announcement that "Eight of our aircraft are missing" was something to be shrugged off, and we launched into a debate full of advice to Eisenhower and Monty.

Half-an-hour later we were passing the Officers' Mess as our Skipper, Pilot Officer A.E.Nicklin, and F/O Bill Martin, the Scots navigator, were leaving. Together we strolled across to the airfield and, being early,

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missed the usual scrum in the locker room as we collected helmets, harness, and 'Mae West' life-jackets and lined up at the counter of the parachute section where the atmosphere was always well spiced with the smell of canvas and moth-balls. A short wait for transport, and soon we were on a lorry that ran slowly round the perimeter track, the WAAF driver memorising the aircraft letters shouted to her, and stopping to drop crews at the appropriate dispersals. As we jumped down by 'A-Able', ND 471, the oldest Lanc. on the station, we were greeted by the ground crew who cared for her. The engine fitters, Ron and Alec, were removing the oil-proof covers from the six-foot tyres, whilst Taffy the airframe fitter polished the windscreens, seated astride the nose, one foot dangling by the forty little bombs painted on 'Able's side.

Whilst Nick paused to chat to 'Chiefy', the Flight Sergeant in charge of maintenance on this section, I walked slowly round to do a 'visual check' - cowlings secure, control locks off, and so forth. I climbed the ladder and checked my way forward inside the fuselage . . . fire extinguishers 7, axes 6, portable oxygen bottles 5, spares for the main fuse board : as usual, all was in order. Over the dreadful obstacle of the main spar, and I reached the cockpit. Fuel pumps and gauges functioning and everything in its place.

As Nick heaved himself into his seat and tightened the straps I turned on the fuel cocks and switched the power over to ground supply. A look down the fuselage and I could see that the doors of the rear turret were closed - sure sign that Jack was installed - and back through the Perspex Johnny sat on top of the world in his turret.

Nick pulled on his helmet, switched on the intercom. and said "Let's go". I called "Contact" to Ron standing out in front of the starboard wing. A signal to Alec, who stood up inside the wheel housing and primed the Ki-gas pump as I closed the magneto switches and put my finger on the starboard inner starter button. 'Able' rocked as the engine turned and fired, smoke billowing over the flattening green wheat behind. I 'caught' the engine with the throttle and the others were started in succession, with a pause as Alec jumped down, ducked under the bomb doors, and climbed inside the port under-cart.

As I ran each engine up in turn and tested the magnetos, Nick checked the freedom of the controls and called up each member of the crew to test intercom. and call-lights. Everyone answered and as the bomb doors closed, Ron and Taffy pulled away the trolley-acc. - a portable generator used to start the engines, so saving the aircraft batteries. Nicely warmed up in a few minutes, the Merlins ticked over quietly as Nick waved his hand

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high from side to side and the chocks were removed. He released the brakes, eased the throttles forward and 'Able' crept from her dispersal to set off on our Night Flying Test.

The 'N.F.T.' was intended to test every system on the aircraft that would be used on an operation and in twenty minutes time we were twelve hundred feet above Skegness and heading east. All controls and instruments functioned, and as I turned on the oxygen supply and called around to see that everyone could detect its cold, rubber-tainted freshness, Nick hauled us round in a hard 180-degree turn, losing height slowly. The acrid stench of cordite swirled forward as the guns were tested, their chatter plainly heard 'up front'. Snowy came up from the nose, where he had been running the rule over the bomb-sight, and I flattened myself to the side to let him squeeze by to rejoin Bill at his table, where the H2S revealed the outline of Gibraltar Point and the Wainfleet bombing range.

In six minutes we joined the circuit and were given permission to land 'Number Three'. A mile away on the down-wind leg Number Two had her wheels down, while Number One was turning into the approach. We followed them round and with propellers at fine pitch dropped into the funnel. As I put on full flap Bill started to call out the airspeed, Nick juggling the controls to correct the swing, and as we came over the boundary I took over throttles, keeping the port-outer advanced. Twenty feet above the peri-track he shouted "Cut" and I hauled back on the four levers with both hands, bracing my feet where I could as 'Able' dropped. The engines crackled and backfired and the tyres squealed a protest in a cloud of blue smoke. A touch of brakes twelve hundred yards on and we turned left, saving a mile of taxiing and beating Number Two back to the 'A' Flight area. As we crawled into our dispersal on outboard engines Nick kept to the left, then putting on hard rudder opened both port throttles. Jack's head nearly hit the turret roof as the tail-wheel described an arc on the rutted grass and 'Able' was home.

The bomb doors opened; I closed the fuel cocks, cleared each engine and switched off. Nick broke the silence by suggesting to everyone's astonishment: "It's a nice day. I think we'll have a Dinghy Drill!" A moment's hesitation and we dutifully agreed that this was a splendid idea. I stuck my head out of the window and told the waiting ground crew that everything was working well and what we were going to do. They looked at me, then at each other, scratched their heads, and went off to put the kettle on.

Carefully removing escape hatches, we went through all the motions, and eventually we sat on the starboard wing in an embarassed circle, clutching various packs and ignoring such ribald remarks as "Don't get your bum wet!" and so on from crews passing by on the truck.

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"...we grinned and bore it..."

Johnny, Fred, Bill, Jack,
Myself and Snowy.

By the time we had put everything back in place, a Bowser tanker had backed up to the port wing, the earthing rod had been driven into the ground, and two hoses dragged across the top surface. TWO hoses looked a good sign as it meant we would not be using the third tank in each wing, thus shortening the trip duration by at least a couple of hours.

Then a crew 'bus arrived, travelling fast to overtake the long trains of bomb trolleys, and we boarded, a good deal lighter, having left 'chutes, harness, etc. behind.

2

Tea was a hurried affair, the apparent lack of appetite being due to the desire to leave room for the usual 'Flying Supper'. As we left, our places were taken by some of the ground crew N.C.O.s snatching their first meal since breakfast before rushing back to work.

Back at our billets Nick insisted on taking a crew photo, although it was well known that such things were unlucky. We were not superstitious, of course, but had we not the photos taken on the afternoon before Schweinfurt? However, we grinned and bore it.

Around the hut site people occupied themselves in various ways, some snatching forty winks, some writing letters. The shower rooms were full but few bothered to shave. Across the room from me a teen-aged Canadian wireless op. played patience and sang his only song 'Mairzy Doats and Dozy Doats' pausing once to shout "Optimist!" to his Aussie bomb-aimer who was busily polishing the buttons of his best blue ready for a date the next afternoon.

Later, we all put on white woollen sweaters beneath the battledress blouse, and pockets were cleared of wallets, diaries, letters, and such security contraband as cinema and 'bus tickets. These things were replaced by field dressings, pencils, and assorted mascots. Many wore scarves, of various colours, but never regulation blue. These were of sentimental as well as practical value, though some swore by a silk stocking to fill the gap between helmet and shirt-collar, if it were the property of the right girl.

By about 18.00hours we made a move and set off down the rough track to the Mess, sniffing the rural air of the farm as we passed. Paces quickened as this was replaced by the scent of egg and bacon. With plenty of bread and butter, the noisiest meal of the day was soon over, and Thermos flasks were filled. As we made for the airfield we passed a lucky trio waiting for the Boston 'bus by the 'phone-box, now padlocked. Our instructions to them, such as "Have a pint for me", were answered by "Can we have your eggs if you don't come back?"

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3

The crew-rooms were a hub-bub for a while until the captains and navigators left for their briefings, the latter hugging their chart-bags off to the large Nissen hut that served as the Main Briefing Room. We engineers settled to work out permissible landing weights and other 'gen' that might be needed in a hurry. Now we got another clue to trip duration - the 'rate of drop'. This referred to 'Window', metallised paper strips released to confuse enemy radar. Shortly, the call came for Main Briefing and the crews joined pilots and navs., passing the S.P. with his dog and having names ticked off by a WAAF corporal as we entered.

All eyes went at once to the large map with its tape-marked route on the wall behind the low dais at the end. "The bloody Ruhr!" said someone, but it was in fact some miles to the south, along the Rhine, that our objective lay. Fags were pinched out as Wing Commander Humphreys entered and mounted the platform. We knew that his first words would be "Gentlemen you may smoke" but we had to be a bit regimental at times.

Briefing commenced: Bomber Command was to attack targets at Gelsenkirchen in the Ruhr valley, and at Wesseling, 15 miles south of Cologne.

Objective: to destroy enemy synthetic oil plants.

The total force involved was expected to be 228 Lancasters fom 52, 53, and 55 Bases, assisted by 26 aircraft from 54 Base and 4 from 8 Group (Pathfinder Force).

Our Base, No. 55, which included No. 207 Squadron at nearby Spilsby, were to contribute 58 Lancs., to the Wesseling attack, an all 5 Group affair.

Petrol load: 1,500 gallons, minimum.

Bomb load: 1 x 4,000 lb. High Capacity, 16 x 500 lb. General Purpose, (4 x 500 lb. to be fused long delay) Distributor settings 0.2 seconds, to give crater spacing of 20 yards.

Bombing was to be from high level, to marking by the 'Newhaven' method. That is, targets would be marked by illuminating with flares, and the aiming points marked by red spot-fires dropped by the 54 Base Mosquitoes.

The bare facts were followed by a look at detailed target maps and photos. The latest intelligence reports told us that USAAF heavies had been in the area that day and had been attacked by black-painted night-fighters, so it was expected that fighter opposition would be less than usual. Flak would remain a problem but the chosen route would avoid some of it at least. 'Serrate' Mosquitoes - night-fighters equipped to detect enemy fighter radar transmissions - would be in the stream.

The weather forecast followed and as it finished, the Station

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"Cookie"

Commander walked in. He spoke briefly, wished us all "Good Luck and Good Bombing", saluted and left. The party broke up.

4

I joined the melee in the locker room to put on my flying boots and collect helmet and gloves. I paused as I remembered the Met. Man's comment about Icing Conditions and for the first time that summer climbed into my flying suit. I collected my tool-kit and, as we filed out, head-phones and mikes. were tested by a radio-mechanic and we collected escape packs containing silk maps, Horlicks tablets, etc., along with about twelve pounds in foreign bank-notes.

On the tarmac there was jostling for places on the transport and eventually all were away, rear-gunners lugging along their bulky buoyant suits and mid-uppers sharing out the 'Flying Rations' - chewing gum, a few boiled sweets, a couple of bars of not-very-nice chocolate, and an orange. Iron rations to us, unheard-of luxuries to 'civvy street' at the time.

The Lancs. sat lower on their dispersals as we passed, tyres and oleo legs compressed by their loads. Bowsers were returning to the fuel dump, drained of the last of their 50,000 gallons, but a final bomb train streamed by to where armourers waited to complete the arming and loading of what was left of the 185 tons of bombs that had moved around the peri-track in the last eight hours.

Jumping down from the truck we looked up at the 'Cookie' nestling among the 500-pounders in 'Able's belly, and, having time to spare, joined Taffy, Ron and Alec for a smoke and a chat on the dewy grass. Shortly, Nick and I rose and climbed aboard. After the extensive checks of the afternoon there was no need to look at anything now, but as we walked up the fuselage we stamped on each of the 'bomb slips' in the floor. These covered the hooks that held the bombs and had been known to make independent circuits of the fuselage when the bomb doors opened in flight. Nick waited as I stowed some of the twenty-pound parcels of 'Window' out of the way, squeezing the last two or three under Bill's seat. Helmets on, a shout from below, and the engines roared, to join the growing chorus. Flames belched until the throttles were drawn back to tick-over point. Running his finger along the switches, one by one Nick checked the lights; cockpit, compass, navigation, upward and downward recognition, and a sudden glare as landing lights dropped and rose again. Ten minutes warm-up left us twnty-five to spare before take-off, and we switched off for a last cigarette with the others.

As our neighbour 'H-How' restarted, we threw away the fag-ends, said "So-long" to the boys and climbed aboard, giving Jack a leg-up the

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ladder and a shove over the Elsan, to start him off down his tunnel without raising too much of a sweat in his heavy gear. By now, the top half of his face was thickly coated with lanoline to protect him from the sub-zero gale that would shortly tear at him through the open face of his turret, where no rear-gunner would trust Perspex - a reflection might hide the faint image of an enemy until it was too late. He and Johnny had donned electrically-heated inner suits, but still they would shiver.

Daylight lingered with Double British Summer Time, but dusk was gathering quickly on this, the longest day, as 'C-Charlie' rolled by. Thomas and Jones, the Welsh pair up front, gave us a 'thumbs up' and we waved to them, and to their gunners who had flown with us on a couple of trips. Nick waved 'Chocks away', closed the bomb doors, and the brakes hissed as he released them. We crept forward to follow 'Charlie', and slowly the queue moved on round the peri-track. At 23.00 hours precisely 'Charlie' turned onto the runway and, as the engines roared, a green Aldis lamp from the chequered caravan swept the cabin. The tail unit shook and DX-C swept forward, the gunners returning the waves of the little group of well-wishers that always gathered at the take-off point.

As 'Charlie's lights diminished into the twilight we turned and crept forward along the white line. Brakes on and a quick cockpit check: propellers fully fine, fuel pumps on, superchargers in 'M' gear, mike switched on, oil pressures O.K.

The cockpit glowed green and Nick moved the throttles forward. I took them over as the tail began to bounce and he pulled the control column to his chest. The brakes came off and 'Able' broke away, the crew lurching in their seats. I carried the throttles forward, opening the gate to take them through to the maximum power position. In five seconds the thirty tons was rolling at sixty miles per hour. One second more and the tail was air-borne. Bill read off the airspeed and slowly 'Able' accelerated, but swiftly the remainder of the two thousand yard runway swept beneath us. Still leaning on the throttles with my right hand, I clutched the undercarriage control with my left, and to Nick's yell "Wheels up" I pulled. Almost imperceptibly 'Able' sank, but by now we were flying and a cushion of air kept us off the last hundred yards of tarmac. I breathed again. The dotted line ended, we swept over the place where the fence had once been and crossed the Stickney road and the Station sewage works with forty feet to spare.

"Flaps in" and by degrees I inched the lever up, giving Nick time to compensate for the loss of lift. "Plus nine", and the levers came back through the gate, well inside their three-minute limit. As we climbed away in a sweeping curve we could see, high above among the scattered cirrus

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clouds other Lancs., glinting in the last of the sun. Slowly we circled to reach them. Heavily laden, the bombers would have been over the target area long before reaching operating height but for this 'Radius of Action'.

Unseen and unknown to us, far below, a Royal Navy launch had slipped her moorings and left Great Yarmouth, heading south-east. R.M.L. 514 had been assigned by C-in-C. Nore to Air-Sea Rescue duties the previous year. During the first week she had picked up the crew of a USAAF Fortress, but throughout winter and spring the long dreary hours of sea-time put in by her two officers and crew of fourteen had been unrewarded. Now her year was up and they looked forward to the next week, when they were due for leave, whilst the torpedo tubes were refitted and as an M.T.B. they could sail down the Channel and rejoin the fray.

5

In an hour we were at eleven thousand feet and still climbing as we left the Norfolk coast behind. While I turned on the oxygen supply and adjusted the black-out curtains around the chart table, Nick switched off the nav. lights and went through the routine of checking the crew members, one by one. As usual at these times, Snowy made some little joke which would lead to back-chat all round until Nick's Kiwi drawl came in - "Cut the natter!" Silence would then reign. Silence that is, in the head-phones, for still one's head would be filled with the engines' roar, although by now the power was reduced. With propellers nicely synchronised, 'Able' gained height steadily as we approached the first turning point.

I changed fuel tanks to trim the aircraft and by the glimmer of light from the pin-hole in my torch I filled in my log, then folded my seat away. Nick's next remark was "Let's get comfy" and I reached for the flare cover we kept beneath his seat as a 'gozunder'. 'George' the auto-pilot looked after things whilst we attended to nature. By the time I had closed the lid of the 'Window'-chute and fought with buttons and zips, Bill had set a new course and as we turned towards the south I logged the changed engine settings.

Soon after midnight I opened the first parcel of 'Window' and prepared to start this monotonous chore. The first rate of drop was to be three bundles a minute. It was impossible to use a watch, but as timing was important to the effectiveness of 'Window' one had to work out a little routine. A look across the instrument panels, a long, slow, search up and down on the starboard bow, and a bundle slipped into the chute, the cheap brown paper tearing off the string in the fierce suction, releasing a cloud of glittering tinsel.

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Two parcels gone and the rate went up to ten a minute as we approached the Dutch coast, ten miles south of Over Flakkee. The area never failed to live up to its quaint name, and we saw the pale orange specks sprinkling the sky before us.

6

The evening's events were getting under way as we flew across Holland, and to left and right we saw a number of aircraft going down in flames. Fighter flares glowed all around, and soon mysterious bright lights were seen darting across the sky. These, we decided, must be rockets, fired by day fighters, new to us but faced regularly by the USAAF.

At 01.00 hours we turned east, between Dusseldorf and Aachen on a course leading directly to Cologne. This was intended to mislead the enemy, and fifteen miles from the city we took another line, leading us a little more southerly on our run-in on Target No. GR 1510, Union Rheinische Braunkohlen Kraftstoffen A.G., (Annual Output 240,000 tons) on the banks of the Rhine.

As we continued to run the gauntlet, with things getting pretty hot, we listened to instructions on the V.H.F. radio. Jerry was doing his best to jam these with a gramophone record of 'Old Father Thames' - we knew we were never that far off course! Well before we reached the point to begin the attack the Master Bomber had assessed the changed situation. With full cloud below, he dismissed the 54 Base Mosquitoes and ordered the target to be marked in 'Parramatta' fashion, whereby bomb-aimers would aim at sky-markers dropped on the clouds. One more change of course from Bill and we turned into the attack, the markers glowing in the clouds below and silhouetting the whole force to any fighters above. For an eternity, Nick held the controls steady, correcting to Snowy's instructions. Then came his shout of "Bombs away!" 'Able' leaped, the bomb doors closed and we took a slowly descending turn to the right as I shoved the throttles forward. For a few minutes we continued, the pile of 'Window' growing less, and as we levelled out we set a course that would take us back to the track we had covered on the way in, well below any stragglers heading for Wesseling.

The compass had scarcely settled when 'Able' was lit by a glow, and as Johnny called a warning, Nick pushed the nose down and a rocket streaked by a few feet above us, whilst another passed below. These had started as orange lights, appearing stationary for a few seconds before approaching at a terrific speed.

A little later as we crossed the Belgian border, I was down in the nose, clearing some of the 'Window' stowed there by dropping it through the

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opening in the Perspex below the bomb-sight, and ready to get up into the front turret if needs be. Suddenly 'Able' did another dive, this time of her own accord, and I was lifted from the floor. Jack saw a puff of smoke from below the starboard wing, but thought little of it at the time.

Cruising steadily we covered the last few miles to the coast, sitting quietly as we searched the sky, above, below. The only sound through the intercom., Jack's voice as a faulty microphone switch leaked the faint strains of 'Deep in the Heart of Texas'. We were dead on track as I prepared to unplug intercom. and oxygen to go back 'upstairs'. Then, another dive, this time much more violent, and I was shot right up into the gun-turret, coming down covered in Snowy's parachute which had become caught and opened. I fought my way out of the billowing silk and started to tell Nick about it, but he interrupted to tell me that the starboard engines had cut. I made my way up to the panel and found that the tanks in use were empty, instead of holding some two hundred gallons. By this time the port inner engine had also stopped and the last was coughing badly. However, a glance at the gauges showed that the main tanks were intact and held about six hundred gallons - ample for the journey home.

As soon as I changed the tanks the engines burst into life once more and Nick asked Bill for the most direct course to the English coast. Before Bill could reply, more splutters, and the glow of the exhausts died away again. With the gauges still showing fuel, it was evident that supply lines were damaged. Further attempts to restart were rewarded by nothing more than half-hearted bursts of power as the pipes were drained. We were left with no choice but to feather the three propellers, leaving the port outer running to give a little more time for the inevitable ditching.

7

Usually Bill had to give Fred a nudge if anyone wanted to speak to him, but this time he was plugged into the intercom.. In the circumstances it was just as well, as it didn't come as quite such a shock for him to hear Nick say, for the second time since lunch, "Dinghy, dinghy: prepare for ditching."

After releasing the forward escape hatch and seeing to the jettisoning of the fuel, I went forward to see if I could find a one-man type dinghy, thinking it might be handy. However there was no hope of finding anything in the tangle of the opened canopy of silk, so I decided that the nose was no place to hang around as we were descending quite fast. Seeing that all was well in the cockpit, I left Nick and went back to my crash position on the rest-bed, just as Fred was leaving his set after sending out S.O.S

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signals. Later, we could find no evidence that these were picked up.

Reaching the rest-bed I plugged into the intercom. and called Nick, telling him that the rest of the crew were in their positions - Snowy, Jack and Johnny aft of the rear spar, Fred with Bill between the spars. He replied to tell me that we were down to two thousand feet, and I warned the rest of the crew. It was an odd sensation to be lying there, braced against the bulk-head, left hand gripping the fuselage and a fire-axe in my right to free the dinghy if the various releases failed to operate. With the last engine now stopped, the only sounds were the rushing of the wind over the open hatch above and Nick's voice in the head-phones as he kept us informed of the height: "1,500 ... 1,000 ... 800 ... 600 ..." At last "200 feet" and I pulled off my helmet shouting "Brace for impact!"

For never-ending seconds we hung on, then with a crash that flung me upwards and banged my face on the roof, we hit the North Sea. There was a horrible crunch as the tail broke off, accompanied by the smashing of glass and the hissing of air and oxygen from the torn pipes. We had been told that aircraft usually bounce when they hit the sea, so we held on tight for the second bang, but this time it was surprisingly gentle, perhaps fortunately for Snowy, who by now had Jack and Johnny on top of his adequate form.

I jumped up and stuck my head out of the hatch, and as I did so a wave broke over me, filling my mouth with a vile mixture of oil, salt water, and blood from my cut nose. I climbed onto the wing as Johnny arrived from the rear hatch and we checked that the dinghy - now inflating fast - was not fouled in any way. As we boarded it we were joined by Jack, Snowy with the pack of supplies, and Fred with the dinghy radio. Then Bill stepped in, still dazed from cracking his head on the bulk-head door, followed by Nick, whose face and head were badly lacerated. He told us later that the hole his head had made in the Perspex canopy when we 'crunched' was large enough for him to climb out of, rather than the escape hatch.

By the time we were all on board the wing was awash, and the dinghy afloat, so that it slid over the front of the wing when Johnny cut the securing line. As we floated off, the engines submerged, and it seemed that the whole wing was threatening to overturn on us. The best we could do was to plunge our arms into the water and paddle towards the wing-tip. We drifted clear and watched as the last of the 'plane - the mid-upper turret - disappeared from view, and 'Able' was gone to her resting-place in seventeen fathoms. We all felt a little sad.

It was a dark night and the sea was quite rough. A small slit in the bottom of the dinghy let in enough water to soak our feet and legs. After plugging this we raised the weather-sheet around the sides and tidied

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the bottom of the dinghy, pausing to fire a vain distress flare when one of our bombers flew over.

As the hours of darkness passed, we spent some time being sea-sick. My previous sailing experience had been confined to the Great Ouse at Bedford, but here was a nautical subject at which I excelled. We made some recovery after being afloat for about an hour and a half, and found that we had drifted clear of the petrol that had spread on the water, so decided that it would be safe to light a cigarette apiece. This had to be done by smothering Snowy to keep the wind and water off while he lit the first.

9

All this time another East Kirkby aircraft was in trouble as F/O 'Blue' Rackley pressed on in 630's 'S-Sugar'. Piloting was very much a crew job, the Aussie skipper's part being to hold the rudder bar fully over while the bomb-aimer and engineer struggled together to keep first one wing and then the other from dropping, the control column having been lashed back. Their situation was the result of continued attacks by a fighter as they returned over Holland.

As they flew on across England it became evident that a landing was not on the cards and so they prepared to bail out, only to discover that an enemy shell had damaged the rear-gunner's parachute.

Bravely, the bomb-aimer offered to take him and so they were tied together. But the make-shift lashings failed and the gunner - sole survivor when his previous crew had crashed - fell to his death. The rest landed safely, except that Blue got his 'chute caught on a train as he touched down. Fortunately the harness released him, and he was picked up to start his journey to hospital in a guard's van.

10

Back at Base, the quiet of the Control Tower was disturbed as the Flying Control Officer dimmed the lighting and drew the black-out curtains. As he opened the doors onto the balcony a chill breeze stirred the smoke-filled atmosphere. A WAAF cleared a tea-cup and 'Picture Post' from her desk, then hurriedly replaced her head-phones as the unmistakable sound of four Merlins approached. The Drem system of lights round the airfield was switched on but the sound passed over and faded to the west. As the clock moved to 03.15 hours more sounds were heard from the direction of the coast, and, suddenly, the sky seemed filled with aircraft, some high, some low. The R.T. receiver crackled and a Welsh voice came over the air: "Hello Silksheen, this is Aquire C-Charlie; over." The reply was immediate: "Good

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morning Aquire Charlie, this is Silksheen. You are clear to land, Runway One, Pancake One." Thomas thanked her and as his microphone switch clicked other voices clamoured for attention. Each was welcomed and accepted, 'pancake' numbers increasing as the Lancs. were stacked higher on the circuit.

With a dozen or so down the rush slowed, but as the last of these called "Clear of Runway" another called in, and the process continued at a slower rate.

In 57's Briefing Room crews grabbed cups of coffee, and sat around tables to give their reports. General opinion was that the raid had been a success, but all spoke of heavy flak, continuous fighter activity, and an abundance of flares, even rockets. The crews of 'Item', 'Peter', 'King', and 'Baker' told of fighting off running attacks by fighters, and the gunners of 'Fox' were put through the third degree process for daring to claim the destruction of a Me 109. The early rush of crews abated shortly and the de-briefing officers compared notes as they waited.

Half-an-hour later, the Base and Station Commanders left the Briefing Room, walked into the silent control tower, and studied the black-board on the rear wall. Thirty-seven aircraft were listed for the two Squadrons, but in twelve spaces the 'Time Landed' column was empty. The lights on the R.T. set still glowed as the sky brightened in the east and the Drem system was switched off. The WAAF picked up her knitting whilst the Duty pilot and engineer walked slowly up and down on the balcony, watching as the fire tender and ambulance drove up to park. All heads turned as a telephone rang. The F.C.O. answered it, and a moment later he walked over to pick up a chalk and complete the line of entries for LE 'Sugar' with a large 'C'. "That was Henlow", he explained.

In the Messes, crews ate their breakfasts in a babble of noise, studiously ignoring the empty seats. Six dozen eggs remained uncracked.

11

For us, dawn came at 04.30 hours when we had been in the 'drink' for about two and a half hours. Daylight gave us a chance to look around and to deliver a few well-chosen phrases to a pair of gulls that wheeled above, looking for scraps. Some-one cheerfully likened them to vultures that follow a man lost in the desert.

By this time Nick was pretty weak and Snowy spent a bit of time patching his face and stopping the flow of blood, while the rest of us stepped the mast and bailed out some of the water. This helped a little, but we were soaked by the endless waves washing over us. To make matters worse, the water was stained green by a tablet of 'Fluorescine' dye which

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LM 624

Our second "Able" in daylight trim – yellow edges to identity letters and red "Flight Leader's" stripes on tail,

was trailed behind to catch the eye of anyone flying over.

Fred had his hands full getting the dinghy radio together, and it was then we found we had a problem. In his dazed state immediately after the crash, Bill had omitted to give the pack containing the kite-aerial to anyone, but had merely passed it over the side. In the pack were two rockets, which could be fired to release a kite carrying a length of wire. Though we were still left with the mast, the range was considerably reduced. For some time we transmitted but soon the mast broke at the Bakelite joint. The only way we could keep it up was to unhook the cord stays from the sides of the dinghy and hold them, pulling one way or the other to keep the top of the mast upright as we rose and fell with the swell.

Around eight o'clock a couple of Thunderbolts were seen away to the south but they were too far off to see our signals. A little later a Mosquito was spotted in the same area but this also missed us. We thought it likely that this 'plane was on its way to photograph the results of the raids. After breaking into one of our precious packs of rations, we ate a couple of Horlicks tablets and renewed our chewing-gum, then spent some more time sending signals. Although we had no way of telling if these were being picked up, at least the radio kept us warm, as the power was supplied by winding a dynamo.

12

At Moreton-in-the-Marsh, in Gloucestershire, S/Ldr. Hall left the Mess after an early breakfast and soon took off, leading a group of six Wellingtons. The other pilots and the crews were under training, and what had been intended as navigation exercises were now converted, on Bomber Command orders, to an Air-Sea Rescue sweep. Despite facing a 150 mile haul to the coast the crews were glad to be away from Moreton that day, avoiding the 'bags of bull' that would accompany the arrival of A.O.C. 91 Group and a host of lesser brass-hats on a routine visit to No. 21 Operational Training Unit.

Back at East Kirkby, Ron, Alec and Taffy swept the tarmac and tidied their dispersal in readiness for a new occupant. It was a job they had done before (and were to do again) but their hearts were not in it. They had little to do that morning and less to say as they watched ferry crews flying-in replacement aircraft and taxiing up to the hangars, where a few 'mods.' would be carried out to the brand-new Mark I's. Of these, it would be LM 624 that would emerge next day with DX-A painted on her sides.

Others too were counting the cost. As the Orderly Room clerks were wading through the list of cables and telegrams to be sent, all beginning 'Deeply Regret to inform you ...', the teleprinters at 5 Group

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Headquarters, Moreton Hall and at Bomber Command H.Q., High Wycombe chattered continuously.

Reports from Bases came in:

Dunholme Lodge:-	44 Squadron,	6 aircraft lost.
	619 Squadron,	6 aircraft lost.
Fiskerton :-	49 Squadron,	6 aircraft lost.
East Kirkby :-	57 Squadron,	6 aircraft lost.
	207 Squadron,	7 aircraft lost.
	630 Squadron,	5 aircraft lost, 1 crashed.

The 5 Group Summary to Bomber Command was assembled and reported:

Night 21/22 June '44. Wesseling Oil Plants.

Detailed	:- 121 Lancs. + 6 Mosquitoes.
Took Off	:- 120 Lancs. + 6 Mosquitoes.
Successful	:- 75 Lancs.
Last Resort	:- 1 Lanc.
Abortive	:- 8 Lancs. + 6 Mosquitoes.
Missing	:- 35 Lancs.
Outstanding	:- 1 Lanc. Crashed at Henlow.

And continued: (With a neat adherence to accuracy which presumed that anything that didn't come back had never even gone.) 75 Lancs. took off with 67 x 4,000 lb. High Capacity, 3 x 100 lb. AMN 65, 87 x 500 lb. Medium Capacity, 76 x 500 lb. AMN 64, 689 x 500 lb. General Purpose, 207 x 500 lb. G.P. Long Delay, 13 Red Target Indicators and 4 Green, and attacked. Weather (10/10 cloud, tops 2/6,000 feet) prevented visual marking by Mosquitoes. Bombing was carried out on red and green T.I.s dropped blind on H2S following instructions from the Controller. Assessment was impossible owing to cloud. Explosions were reported at 01.46 and 01.51. Defences consisted of intense, heavy flak, accurate for height, mainly north of target. This included some rocket type in barrage form up to 20,000 feet. Some light flak up to 16,000 to 17,000 feet, approximately 40 searchlights below clouds. Fighters very accurate and fighter flares from enemy coast to target and homewards to 03° 30' E. Fighter flares of unusual type fired from ground, possibly rocket propelled and accurately followed track all the way over enemy territory, leaving orange/yellow/white trail.

Last Resort:- 1 Lanc. (57 Squadron) attacked searchlight concentration south of Köln - Navigator ill.

One aircraft reports:- "02.00 hrs. 13,000 feet, 52° 20' N, 06°02'E, Rocket on parallel course moving at approx. 210 mph. Lanc. overtook rocket

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which followed straight course for 14 mins. then died out."

Summary from 100 Group:-

Serrate Patrols. 15 Mosquitoes carried out patrols, uneventful in the main, in support of Bomber Forces attacking Gelsenkirchen and Wesseling. While the former appeared to be well scattered, that at Wesseling gave the impression of being well concentrated. Intense heavy flak was experienced in the Ruhr, particularly over Aachen and Köln.

Weather was 10/10 cloud with a low base over a wide area.

N/239 Sqn. Chased and destroyed Me. 109.

S/141 Sqn. Hit by flak. Bailed out over Swaffham.

14

Around eleven-thirty the clouds began to break up and the sun came out. The sea became less rough and fewer waves came over the fat, flexible sides of the dinghy. A bit of steady bailing with the drinking cup and Snowy's boot soon reduced the level to a mere inch and we packed ourselves under the weather-sheet and felt a bit more comfortable.

Most of this time Nick had been lying very quietly but he later recovered a little. Suddenly, about noon, he struggled onto one elbow and said "I can hear a 'plane!" No-one else had heard anything but just as he decided it sounded like a Wellington it was spotted. Sure enough, we saw a 'Wimpy', and then two more on the horizon to the north. From then on all was action. The radio was set to send automatic signals and the handle was cranked with a will, whilst Bill sent up red flares every time one of the 'planes turned towards us. Two more fluorescent tablets were thrown over the side and the green patch spread for yards around.

Gloom settled over us as the aircraft disappeared, but quickly lifted as they came once more into view, this time from the east, and we realised that they were covering the sea in a 'square search'. At last, one by one, they turned towards us and as they flew closer Bill made sure that they would not miss us by firing a succession of Very signals, the last one nearly hitting the leader.

After an hour or so an Aldis message was flashed to us - "Help coming" - and they circled once more and left. (Some time later we were able to meet one of these crews and thank them in a somewhat boisterous manner at the 'Red Lion'.)

Early in the afternoon, Hudsons 'J-Jig' and 'H-How' of 279 Air-Sea Rescue Squadron took off from Bircham Newton, Norfolk. They had been scrambled by No. 16 Group, Coastal Command, and in a few minutes they were crossing the coast, heading east.

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It was about this time that the Post Office in the little Bedfordshire town of Shefford re-opened for business. People in the town that morning had been talking of the Lancaster that had crashed nearby in the early hours and of the good fortune of six of the crew. However, the elderly gentleman who served in the wartime capacity of telegraph 'boy' was more concerned with misfortune as he looked at an orange 'Official Paid' envelope and flatly declared "I'm taking no more of those!" And so it was that the Postmistress, his daughter, delayed the afternoon opening and cycled along the Clifton road on her unhappy duty.

15

Not long after the Wimpys left us, three more came to have a look and in a few more minutes two Hudsons joined the circuit. All this looked most promising and workmanlike, but just after three o'clock one of the Hudsons did a long, low run towards us and dropped a 'Lindholme' dinghy nearby. This was a large, boat-shaped inflatable, complete with sail and packed in a yellow container, to which were attached, by lengths of floating rope, four other packs. These contained food, water, and other supplies, including waterproof suits. When we saw this 'gift from heaven' arrive we were apprehensive rather than cheerful, as we took it as a sign that we were to spend the night at sea. To make matters worse, when we pulled in the ropes we found that the dinghy had broken free, along with one of the packs, and we could do nothing but watch as they drifted by. It appeared, however, that the pilot had seen this.

Around three-thirty the Wimpys turned away and left, and after dropping smoke-floats the Hudsons followed. We were alone once more, though unknown to us their wireless operators were continuously transmitting on the 385 Kc/s 'Rescue' frequency, and as they headed home they soon made contact with a vessel. Circling, they would have flashed the A.S.R. call-sign 'MHB' and R.M.L. 514 replied, and headed towards us.

16

Since our first sighting of the aircraft, the clouds had literally rolled away and the sea had become calmer, so we put down the weather-sheet and let the sun dry our clothes. With our spirits lifted, it became quite pleasant to be riding the waves, and after drinks all round of canned water the cigarettes came out again.

At about a quarter to five I thought I could see a mast, but said nothing until I'd had a second look. In a few minutes, what looked to us like a battleship was closing in. I stood up to wave and a rope was thrown.

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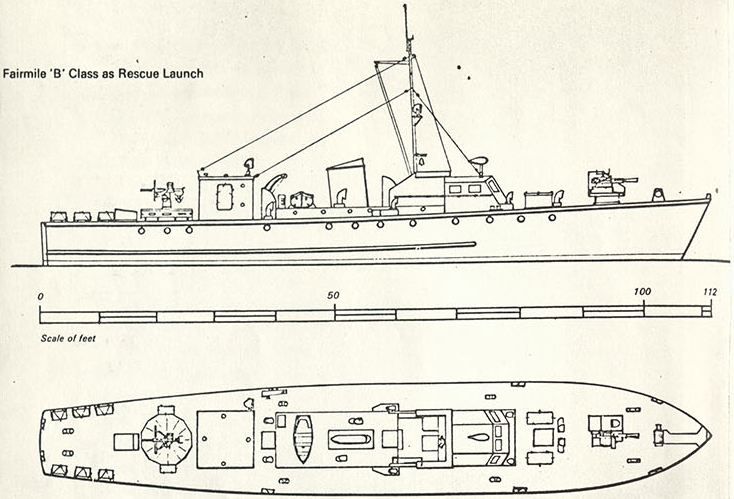
Fairmile 'B' Class as Rescue Launch



80/ Type of Aircraft	Mark	R.A.F. Number
LANCASTER	III	ND 441

Contractor	Contract No.	Engine installed :— Merlin 38. Maker's airframe No. :—
A.V. Roe.	9/c/807	

Unit or Cat'y/Cause	Station or Contractor	Date	Authority	41 or 43 Gp. Allot.
	Stop	[illegible]	HD 16/1	
Cat	E (Missing)	22.6.44	FB/A 469	
	S.O.C	25.6.44	16/3/45	

A.M. Form 78

"Able" is "Struck Off Charge".

It was wet and heavy with a knot in the end, and I caught it - on my left ear!

A scrambling net was dropped over the side and we quickly discovered how it got its name. One foot on the bottom rung and the roll of the boat threw me over the rail and I was spread-eagled on the deck. With Nick, now much recovered, I was put into the little sick-bay on the afterdeck and we were given dry clothes. After the dinghy and packs had been picked up the boat was soon under way. As the engines opened up I fell against the wash-basin and cut my forehead on the water-tank above it. I had long decided that this was definitely 'one of those days', but by the time Nick and I had shared and emptied two tumblers, one of Scotch and one of rum, the world seemed a happier place. This was certainly drinking on an empty stomach.

As the sixty-odd miles home were eaten up we went below to join the others in the P.O.s' Mess to dine on soup and buttered toast, made, to my surprise, on an old-fashioned coal range.

It was nearly seven-thirty that evening when the engines died down and 514 came up to her berth in Yarmouth Harbour. A short trip in an ambulance followed, and at last we got our egg, with bacon and all the trimmings, as we sat like seven lords, waited on by seven WRENs.

Later, Nick, Bill and I were taken off to 'dock' to get our various cuts sewn up, the skipper a clear winner with about twenty-two stitches.

17

The following morning, as the wards of R.N. Hospital, Great Yarmouth, were prepared for the Surgeon Commander's 'morning rounds', Shefford's ancient telegraph boy puffed as he pedalled at full speed with his glad tidings: 'Happy to inform you ...', and on the other side of the world Nick's wife, and Snowy's, puzzled as they read their cables that said 'Am safe and well', because they had not yet received any official cable to cause them to think otherwise.

Later in the day, transport collected the rest of the crew and they set an erratic course across East Anglia, heading for base. Snowy had money, they called at various hostelries 'en route', and eventually four N.C.O.s arrived with a very realistic seaman's roll.

One more day of luxury, in the care of those very pleasant Nursing Sisters, and we three also returned, 'Mac' McKellar and Tom Brooks kindly dropping in to give us a lift from an abandoned airfield nearby. We, too, received quite a welcome home, especially from the Wing-co., incongruously attired though we were, in Navy jumpers and bell-bottoms, I clutching all my worldly goods - razor and toothbrush - in a carton with the rest of the kind

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End of Tour.

Myself, Ron, Johnny, Nick, Alec, Taffy,

Fred, Jack, Bill and Snowy.

padre's duty-free Pall Mall.

The next morning, Sunday June 25th, Nick and I, with slightly sore heads, attended an informal 'Court of Enquiry'. Jerry flak got the blame, we got a pat on the back and some leave.

18

Lazy days at home soon passed, and in due course I got off the train at Stickney Halt, spotted a camouflaged Hillman with the familiar 'B/5' on the wing and hitched a lift back to camp. As we passed the end of the main runway 630's Lancs. were taxiing round to the caravan.

I booked in at the Guardroom and made my way over the meadow and up the path to the deserted hut-site, watching the labouring bombers high above.

The doors at each end of Hut Thirteen were open and I walked in. The breeze stirred the paper lying by the empty stove. I put my kit down by my bed, and turned as a coat-hanger, swinging to and fro, rattled against the curved, corrugated wall. The beds on that side of the room stood bare, except for the mattresses, and the shelves above had been cleared. Nothing remained but a pack of grubby cards.

No sign of the best blue with the shining buttons.

No sound of 'Mairzy Doats'.

Another new crew moved in next morning.

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Extracts from 'V Group News', July, 1944.

21/22 June. Z/44 Sqdn. was hit in the starboard elevator from extreme range by a night fighter over enemy territory. The aircraft dived sharply with the elevators jammed and when over the vertical the pilot considered he had no hope of recovering and ordered the crew to abandon. The Air Bomber was jammed against the rear of his compartment. The Rear Gunner was caught in his turret and trapped by piles of ammunition in his lap, caused by a runaway servo feed. Four members bailed out and their parachutes were seen to open. The Captain eventually regained control and flew the aircraft back to Base, navigated by the Air Bomber.

21/22 June. S/630 Sqdn. was badly shot up by a fighter. Wings and fuselage were riddled and the Rear Turret so badly damaged it was a wonder the gunner escaped injury.

With the assistance of two crew members the pilot flew the aircraft back to this country, where, due to damage, he could not turn, so was forced to bail out his crew. It was discovered that the Rear Gunner's parachute had been damaged by a cannon-shell. At the risk of grave personal injury the Air Bomber allowed the Rear Gunner to attach his parachute clips to the 'K' Dinghy 'D' rings of his (the Air Bomber's) harness, and the two went out together. Unfortunately, the 'D' rings tore through the webbing when the parachute opened, and the gunner was lost.

A/57 Sqdn., on the same night was returning across the North Sea at 7,000 feet when all engines failed, apparently through shortage of fuel. The Captain immediately warned his crew, and ordered the Wireless Operator to transmit S.O.S. The Wireless Operator switched I.F.F. to 'Distress' and transmitted 'S.O.S.' and the aircraft call-sign about ten times before being ordered to his ditching station.

The aircraft ditched ten minutes later. The pilot made use of his landing light to judge his height, but having no power the aircraft struck the water very severely, breaking off the tail. The Captain's 'Q' harness had not been tightened sufficiently and he was flung upwards, making a large hole in the Perspex and cutting his face deeply. The pilot left the aircraft by means of this self-made hole. The Flight Engineer was also flung upwards and cut his nose on the fuselage roof. The gunners were flung over the flap-jack but were uninjured, falling on top of the Air Bomber, who was also unhurt, and the Navigator cut the back of his head.

Exit was made 'exceptionally quickly' and all the crew members were in the dinghy almost before they knew it. The kite container was lost in transit, but all the other equipment was transferred to the dinghy - a para-

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chute also found its way in but was afterwards lost in the excitement of getting clear of the aircraft which was keeling over and threatening to come over on top of the dinghy.

This crew merely got their feet wet in boarding the dinghy but later got the seats of their pants wet because of a small hole in the dinghy which was subsequently plugged.

The pilot was weak from loss of blood, and shock, so the Air Bomber took charge and bullied the rest of the crew into activity. They say this did them the world of good. The aircraft floated for about ten minutes.

The dinghy mast was broken when being stepped, but the Wireless Operator managed to connect the aerial to the dinghy radio and almost continuous transmissions were made with other crew members holding the mast erect. Some hours later they were spotted by 91 Group Wellingtons which brought in an A.S.R. Hudson. A Lindholme dinghy was dropped, but failed to inflate though the crew managed to collect three of the ration containers. About fourteen-and-a-half hours later a Naval Launch picked up the crew and took them to Yarmouth.

This crew had done a practise dinghy drill the day before the incident, and attribute much of the success of this ditching to that fact.

Public Record Office, AIR 14 2325

Fortresses of the USAAF had attacked Wesseling in August 1943 without much success. The refinery was undoubtedly hit hard by the 5 Group raid, though perhaps less, proportionately, than the Group. A further raid was carried out on 18/19 July, when 183 'planes dropped 711 tons, and yet another on 30th October, 527 tons being delivered by 102 aircraft.

Photographs taken on 18th November showed total destruction.

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Date	Aircraft Type & Number	Crew	Duty	Time Up	Time Down	Details of Sortie or Flight	References.
		BOMBING OPERATION NIGHT 21/22nd JUNE, 1944. Target - WESSELING Oil Plant					
		18 aircraft were detailed to attack the Oil Plant at Wesseling. All took off. The markers were punctual and W2S confirmed their accuracy. There was 10/10ths cloud at the target but crews had no difficulty in seeing the T.I.'s. There was a large explosion at 01.45 hrs. Enemy action was strong and sustained both on the ground and in the air. Fighter interceptions began on the coast going in, continued all the way round and out to sea on the way back. Heavy flak was accurate. 6 aircraft were at first reported missing but one crew (Capt. P/O. Nicklin) was picked up in the sea having ditched at 02.10 hrs on 22.6.44. 1 aircraft bombed a searchlight concentration and the remaining 11 aircraft - 2 of which were shot up - returned safely.					
21/22.6.	LANCASTER. III ND.471	P/O. NICKLIN.A.E. Sgt. COPEMAN.G.D. F/O. MARTIN.W.E. F/S. BAKER.P.S. Sgt. FOSTER.F. " JOHNSON.J.B. " HOBBS.J.	Pilot. F/Eng. Nav. A/B. Wop. M/U. R/G.	23.02	02.10	Sortie completed. On homeward flight after crossing enemy coast all four engines cut, the petrol tanks having been holed, apparently by flak. The aircraft was ditched at 02.10 hrs and the dinghy sighted by a Hudson aircraft at approx. 13.30 hrs on 22nd June, 1944. The crew were later picked up by a Launch and landed at Yarmouth, having spent about 15 hours in the dinghy. The Capt. and Nav. were moderately injured and the F/Eng. Air Bomber and W/Op mildly injured but they were not admitted to S.S.Q. or Hospital. Bomb load :- 1 X 4,000 lb H.C. : 16 X 500 lb G.P.	
	LANCASTER. III LM.582	P/O. FINDLEY.S. Sgt. SPENCER.T. " NIXON.R.K. " HORTON.J. " CLARKE.W. " WEAVER.V. " CARTER.D.	Pilot. F/Eng. Nav. A/B. Wop. M/U. R/G.	23.07	03.56	Sortie completed. Bomb load - as above.	
	LANCASTER. III LM.517	F/O. THOMAS.O.G. Sgt. JONES.R.P. F/O. YATES.A.J. F/S. GREATHEAD.H.A. Sgt. CARNALL.F. " DUNKLEY.J.M. " THOMPSON.A.	Pilot. F/Eng. Nav. A/B. Wop. M/U. R/G.	23.01	03.27	Sortie completed. Bomb load - as above.	

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