

## **FG OFF ALBERT OSWALD MANN**

**via his son Geoff Mann**

Enlisted 9 Oct 40  
Sgt pilot Aug 41  
Flt Sgt '42  
Plt Off Jun 43  
Fg Off Dec 43

Joined 115 Sqn at Marham Nov '41 and joined Sgt Anderson's crew as second pilot. Completed 1<sup>st</sup> tour May '42 with a raid on Warnemunde. Detached to 1483 Target Towing & Gunnery Flight for rest purposes prior to conversion to Lancasters with 1678 HCU in March '44.

Went on leave prior to rejoining 115 Sqn and having mislaid his leave pass and unable to remember the date he should return to his squadron, he elected to do so immediately. On arrival he found he had returned one day early, but being conscientious he decided to report for duty as soon as required, a decision which sadly was to prove fatal for him.

So it was that he flew as second pilot to Flt Lt R C Anderson RAAF on the night of 22/23 May '44 on a raid to Duisberg. They failed to return having been shot down – only the wireless operator survived.

RAF Marham was in 3 Group. By 1941 the bomber campaign against German industry, including such targets as the Krupps steelworks at Essen, was building up significantly and 115 Sqn played its full part, losing many Wellingtons and crews to the often ferocious opposition from flak and fighters. The majority of crews did not survive their first tour of 30 operations, but those that did were then rested before being sent back into the fray.

On 30 May 1942 aircraft from Marham took part in the first thousand-bomber raid. Seventeen Wellingtons from 115 Sqn and 22 Stirlings of 218 Sqn took off that night. Some senior officers from 3 Group headquarters at Mildenhall accompanied the Marham crews, including AVM John Baldwin the Air Officer Commanding 3 Group.

1483 Flight in May '42 was equipped with eight Wellingtons in which air gunners were taken up to fire at targets towed by a fleet of 12 Lysanders. In June some Oxfords were added to enable air bombers to practice their skills against ground targets. Its normal duties consisted of flying over the ranges around The Wash, where gunners fired paint-tipped bullets at canvas drogues, of flew 'CCG' exercises using cine camera guns to photograph aircraft acting as their targets. A number of Defiant target tugs complemented the Lysanders from September '42.

1483 Flt contributed aircraft and crews to operations as follows. For the first 1,000-bomber raid on 30/31 May '42, three aircraft were despatched; Flt Lt Barratt in X9754 with Mann as second pilot, Flt Lt Ercolani in Z1080 (who would later become OC of 99 Sqn in India), and Plt Off Masters in R3232. All three successfully reached and

bombed the target, returning safely, albeit Masters' aircraft was described as being "slightly shot up". Flt Lt Ercolani then took part in both the second, when he stated his bombs were dropped on fires and searchlights, and third 1,000-bomber raids in the same Wellington. He was joined on the third raid by Flt Sgt Birch in R3232 (with Mann as second pilot) and the ORB records that his navigator W/O Binns, made an excellent effort with DR navigation, with the aircraft on track and ETA all the way, although no pinpoints were obtained after leaving base. Once again though, this unfortunate Wimpy was slightly shot up. The flight then participated in operations to Hamburg on 28 July and Dusseldorf on 31 July.

For 30/31 May 42 the second thousand-bomber raid on Essen on the night of 1/2 June '42, and later took part in a raid on Dusseldorf.

The airfield at Newmarket was a fair way south of the Norfolk coast where the target towing took place, so most of the tug aircraft were initially based at Langham, Norfolk. Later 1483 Flt relocated to Marham for around 12 months before returning to Marham.