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FLYING LOG BOOK

The following are Photostats of pages from my flying log book. They are a record of the operations made by me over enemy-occupied territory in 1944.

Although the completed missions were obviously very dangerous, those we were unable to complete (abortive) nevertheless remain the clearest in my memory. There were two.

The first on the 8th August, was an op to Aire, a short trip which meant we had a bomb load of 12,000 lbs. However, shortly after take off we were faced with a massive thunderstorm. We attempted to fly above it, but it built and rose as fast as we did. Eventually we entered the cloud and almost immediately flew into the downdraft. We fell from our ceiling, approximately 24,000ft like a stone. At approximately 12,000ft we began to pull out of the dive and the controls began to respond. Our impetus took us down to 4.000ft before we pulled out and climbed to 12.000ft. At this time we realised we were losing height again even with the twe engines at full power. We decided to return to base as it was obvious we could not complete the op. As we were above the North Sea it was decided to jettison the bombs. This proved to be impossible as we were unable to open the bomb bay doors. The maximum speed we could maintain was about 140 mph and we were gradually losing height. We found out later that both the outboard engines had torn away from their side mountings and they were pointing down about 15 degrees, pulling us down even though we were at full power.

We reached Wickenby with a few hundred feet to spare and made a perfect landing. We had to. We could not have gained height again for another attempt. As we touched down on the runway the photo flash, equivalent to a 500lb bomb, fell out and came bouncing down the runway behind us, sparks flying everywhere. Luckly it didn't explode. We were directed to the most remote area of the airfield and evacuated the aircraft in record time.

During the descent in the cloud we were entertained by a most brilliant digner of St. Elmo's Fire. The whole aircraft was covered with balls of fire running about. We took photographs but none showed the fire. However, parts of the plane showed as clear as if the photographs had been taken in sunlight.

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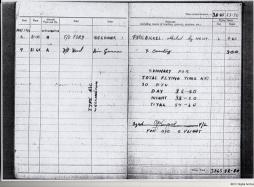
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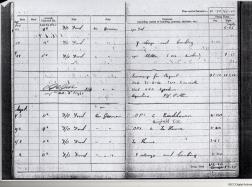
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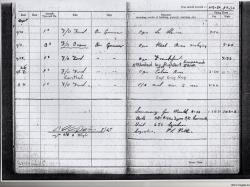
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The plane had been almost torn apart in the encounter. The rivets had been torn from the leading edge of the wings and tail-plane. The wings were twisted as was the body. The engineers from AVRO said they could not understand how the plane had remained airborne as long as it had. In their report after tests we received a letter from them stating that to sustain such damage the plane had to exceed \$70 mph. If that was the case I believe we flew the fastest bomber in World War II. The tests on UMH2 were carried out under the supervision of Roy Chadwick and the letter to our Navigator was written in long hand, not typed and the original was kept by Jimmy. We all had copies unfortunately mine was lost when moving.

The second abortive was on $5^{\rm th}$ October 1944, Saarbrucken, when we hit icy conditions so bad that we lost two engines and all suffered some degree of frostbite.

We were routed over the edge of the mountains so were unable to lose height for some time. We were unable to climb and so aborted. We all suffered, also in later life. One engine re-started once we descended.

My most memorable successful operation was when dropping mines in the Kiel Canal from 500ft. We flew straight along the canal dropping one mine at a time in what was one of the most heavily defended targets of the war. There was so much firing along the canal that we could see almost as clearly as in daylight.

We all felt fear at times, but it affects people differently. For me it was a stimulant and when a civilian I was unable to settle until I became a fireman.

I flew on two other ops to cover for bods who could not get back to the station in time and their crews asked me to help out to save the absentees getting into trouble. On one op the C.O. knew what was going on as that morning he called me to his office to offer me a commission (which I had to refuse owing to putting my age up to join the RAF). He recognised me at briefing and knew I was with the wrong crew. However he did nothing except to say that he needed to know if I did it again.

After surviving a few trips we were given our own aircraft, UMF2, already a veteran of many ops. She proved to be a most dependable aircraft. Apart from the number of bombs painted on the side we also had the nude lady which I understand was repainted by the next crew after we completed our tour. The lady was no longer reclaiming but standing partly clothed. At a reunion a chap said it had been ordered to be removed, which it was, but repainted standing and captioned 'Frigger of the lighting sixes' instead of 'Friga of ---... Whoever gove the order must have got the message as it survived. It was a special aircraft in that for some reason it had a much better performance than the vast majority of Lancs. She flew faster than others on

the same revs and boost and it didn't make any difference when engines were changed. Fuel consumption was better, a lovely plane. We never found her ceiling and she performed well in all weather conditions. Only once when on an op to Saarbrucken on 5th October 1944 did we have real problems with iding and engine failure with loss of all heating. We all suffered from frostbite and had to abort.

However, on 12th September 1944 target frankfurt, when evading a fighter JUSB I smashed my lower jaw and was placed sick. The rest of the crew then had two abortives and became convinced was their luck and pleaded with me to sign myself off which I did and flew with my jaw strapped up, hardly able to talk and still living on liquids. Wearing my oxygen mask was in agony, but at least the palm kept me awake. Bone splinters from the jaw were still working their way out 40 years later. I was still unable to at either property for many years and on occasions my jaw would look solid for weeks at a time. Jaw and Larynx damage causing speech to be impaired and loss of yoice if projected for more than a short period. Damage also caused a loss in inflesion ability.

Once the bombs had gone we either flew high or very low on our way home, preferably very high and as on the outward journey, weaving about all the time to allow us the greatest chance of seeing anyone underneath us, a method that stood us in good stead twice. On a moonlit night we flew high, on dark nights low, avoiding it up areas. We used cloud cover at times, but not four shadow was thrown.

UMF2 survived the war. I was told she completed over one hundred ops, but have not confirmed it. She was one of the only two aircraft to fly from beginning to end of Squadron Ops period and had been on C Flight 12 Squadron before C Flight became 626 Souadron.

Like many other crews we all learnt as much as possible about each others jobs and agreed amongst ourselves who was the best substitute for who. It was decided that Sur Tween W/OP was best gunner, Jim Jackson, N, was best B/A, Johnny Payne B/A, best F/E, Johnny Moore, MU/G best W/OP. I was best Plot and also Nav, but every one of us practised at all other positions. I was the only one to land the aircraft which lonly did 3 times with a very nervous skipper hovering and the rest on enterthooks too. What would have happened if I had needed to do it with a dodgy aircraft have no idea. Landing occasions were on August 1°, V2 on return from Rufforth, August 21° F2 and 29° F2, September 9° Navigated whole trip, September 7° Navigated whole trip.

I had been taught to fly and navigate by a First World Wartpilot, my father also and tried to keep up-to-date as I grew older.