

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 ~~two~~ 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. Luckily 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 display 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.

Instructions.

1. This log book is an official document and the property of H.M. Government.
2. This log book is to be maintained by all members of air crew other than pilot. An accurate record of all flights undertaken on service aircraft is to be inserted.
3. Results of ab initio courses will be recorded on either pages 2, 3, 4 or 5, for which purpose a rubber stamp is available.
4. Proficiency assessments will be recorded on the appropriate page at the back of the book on posting or on attachment to another unit for flying duties.
5. Bombing and Air Gunnery records will be entered in detail in the appropriate pages at the end of the book immediately after each practice.
6. Monthly totals will be entered on a single line in red ink and initialed by the Commanding Officer or his deputy.

Certificates of Qualification.

(to be filled in as appropriate)

1. This is to certify that 187994d Potter P. L.
has qualified as RAF GUNNER
with effect from 1.2.44 Agd
Date 1.2.44 Order 1.2.44
2. This is to certify that _____
has qualified as _____
with effect from _____ Agd
Date _____ Unit
3. This is to certify that _____
has qualified as _____
with effect from _____
Date _____

4. Where "Control" is entered, we had to make a report on the sp. which Tom Ford (as he was a reporter in civilian life) had to combine into a controlled journalistic format. We were not told what use it was put to. AF

Date	Hour	Aircraft Type and No.	Pilot	Duty
MAY 1944		WELLINGTON		
3	21-35	M	F/O FORD	AIR GUNNER
7	21-45	A	F/O Ford	Air Gunner

TYPE A/C
WELLINGTON

Time carried forward		38-45	23-30
REMARKS (including results of bombing, gunnery, sighting, etc.)		Flying Time	
		Day	Night
PARIS, NICKEL. attacked by ME 109.		6	9-40
X Country			3-50
SUMMARY FOR			
TOTAL FLYING TIME AT			
30 OTU			
DAY 38-45			
NIGHT 32-50			
TOTAL 54-40			
Squad <u>Springall</u> F/L			
FOR O/C C FLIGHT			
TOTAL TIME		3845	32-50

Time carried forward —						66 15	*71-25
Date	Hour	Altitude Type and No.	Plane	Crew	REMARKS (including results of bombing, gunnery, exercises, etc.)	Flying Time	
						Day	Night
Aug 1st	13-30	Canastota V ²	3/10 Ford	Air Gunner	Rufforth - to Base	2:00-30	
" 4	13-30	A ²	3/10 Ford	" "	Panillac Synthetie Oil Plant	7-55	
" 6	13-30	A ²	3/10 Ford	" "	4 engs Harford Bridge + Tangier	2-15	
" 7	12-00	H ²	3/10 Ford	" "	Fontenay De Massion		3-45
" 8	22-00	H ²	3/10 Ford	" "	3 engs Concentration		
" 8	22-00	H ²	3/10 Ford	" "	Air (Abolition) Hit C.P. cloud		
" 10	11-50	R ²	3/10 Ford	" "	Load: 12500 ft A/C U/S		
" 11	12	LMIT'S F ²	3/10 Ford	" "	Laume Red Forestal		
" 11	12	F ²	3/10 Ford	" "	Flying Bomb with	3-45	
" 14		F ²	3/10 Ford	" "	Lighter Affel (Spiffie)		
" 14		F ²	3/10 Ford	" "	to to (actual)	1-40	1-40
" 15		F ²	3/10 Ford	" "	OWAY (to Faliase)	3-45	
" 15		F ²	3/10 Ford	" "	Valkel (Holland)	3-30	
" 15		F ²	3/10 Ford	" "	Birdsme V. 80		
" 18		F ²	3/10 Ford	" "	Ghent (Belgium) TAC MAUZEER	3-05	
" 21		F ²	3/10 Ford	" "	Oil		
" 21		F ²	3/10 Ford	" "	8 engs + bombing	2-40	
TOTAL TIME						95-20	75-10

					Time carried forward	83-20	195-10
Date	Hour	Aircraft Type and No.	Place	Day	Remarks (including results of bombing, primary, secondary, etc.)	Flying Time	
						Day	Night
Aug 26		Sanchez 62	3/0 Ford	in Gunner	ops. Cal		5-25
27		A ^c	3/0 Ford	" "	y storage and bombing	3-05	
28		F ^c	3/0 Ford	" "	ops. Blttn (via radio)		9-15
					Summary for August	38-10	18-45
					On 31-8-44 1300 Hancock		
					Unit 620 Squadron		
					Signature P. P. H.		
Sept. 3		D ^c	3/0 Ford	in Gunner	OPS C Kindhovan airfield D.K.	4-00	
4/8		Q ^c	3/0 Ford	" "	OPS C Le Hove	3-20	
4/8		F ^c	3/0 Ford	" "	Le Hove	3-45	
9		D ^c	3/0 Ford	" "	y storage and bombing	3-00	
					Total Time	112-30	59-50

Date	Hour	Aircraft Type and No.	Pilot	Duty	REMARKS (including results of bombing, gunnery, exercises, etc.)	Time started forward -- 112-30 59-50	
						Flying Time	
						Day	Night
4/10		F ²	3/0 Ford	Air Gunner	Ops La Haine	3-50	
4/11		B ²	3/0 Oram	Air Gunner	Ops Kiel Area Mining	5-40	
4/12		F ²	3/0 Ford	" "	Ops Frankfurt attacked by fighter? Smashed tail.	7-35	
26 4/16		F ²	3/0 Ford Control	" "	Ops Calais Area Cap Eric Neg	3-10	10-50
27		F ²	3/0 Ford	" "	F/A and air G. men	2-40	
Summary for Month 4-00						144-30	103-5
Date 30-4-00, 2 ops 3/0 forward							
Unit 626 Squadron							
Signature. P. H. Potts.							
P. H. Potts. F/45							
3/0 Oram single							
TOTAL TIME							

OK D/L F/LT
7-0/8 R Single

122-30103-5

Date	Hour	Aircraft Type and No.	Pilot	Duty	Remarks (including results of bombing, gunnery, sightings, etc.)	Flying Time	
						Day	Night
4/3-8-44	0-00	1 Lancaster F ²	F/O Ford S Control	Air Gunnery	OPS. Westkapelle Breaking the sea wall ✓ on Walcheren Island	1-00	
4/5-10-44		F ²	" "	" "	OPS. SAARBRUCKEN. (Aborting) Bl.E gone. No sightings. Frostbite.	2-55	
4/7-10-44		F ²	" "	" "	OPS. Emmerich (German) Flak quite good. heavy and accurate. (saw 6 kites shot down 9 of the fellows jumped)	4-20	
4/14-10-44		F ²	" "	" "	OPS. DUISBURG (RUHR) (Flak really concentrated over target)	4-55	
4/16-10-44		F ²	" "	" "	OPS. DUISBURG (RUHR AGAIN) GAGS OF FLAK. Attacked by JU 88.	5-00	
Total Time							

Time carried forward —

Date	Hour	Altitude Type and No.	Fleet	Duty	Remarks (including results of bombing, gunnery, exercises, etc.)	Firing Time	
						Day	Night
14/10-46	1700	Lancaster F 2	NO FORD	AIR GUNNER	OPS - STUTTGART Heavy Flak attacked by 3085? 262? (Wanganui)	6-20	
15/10-46		F 2	"	"	OPS ESSEN - (KRUPPS) A.S.J. U/S. Cloud is 25,000 chronic icing conditions	5-20	
							19
16/10-46		F 2	"	"	OPS ESSEN (KRUPPS) VARIO Heavy Flak.	5-00	
Total For Oct.					Summary For Oct.		
Day 17-15					Date 31-10-46 Type Lancaster		
Night 17-40					Unit OAC Sqn		
					Signature R.L. Pith		
					O.C. & Flight		
					15945 120-465		

Time carried forward -						13.0-15	18.0-25
Date	Year	Aircraft Type and No.	Pilot	Duty	REMARKS (including results of bombing, gunnery, evasions, etc.)	Flying Times	
						Day	Night
NOV							
17	46	F ² Lancaster	F/O Ford	air gunner	OPS Geleen/Kieken	000	
18		F ²	" "	" "	SD. " MINERAYING Kiel Canal		6-35
19		F ²	" "	" "	OPS DUREN	4-50	
20	41	F ²	" "	" "	OPS ASCHAPPENBURG		6-30
21	49	F ²	" "	" "	OPS DORTMUND	5-05	
RED FLAK FLAK							
Summary For Nov.						14.00	17.05
Date 30 th Nov.							
Type A/C Lancaster							
UNIT 626 Sqn							
Signature <u>PA Potts</u>							
o/c A Flight <u>McLennan</u>							F/LT
Total Time -						156-40	133-50

Date	Year	Aircraft Type and No.	Pilot	Duty	REMARKS (including results of bombing, gunnery, missions, etc.)	Flying Time	
						Day	Night
20/	6-12-44	F ²	F/O Ford	Air Gunner	OP ^s Merseburg		8-00
			Control				
21/	12-44	F ²	F/O Ford	"	Formation Flying	1-50	
24/	12-44	F ²	F/O Ford	"	OPS Essen		5-40
					BOMBED ON WANKRANUI		
25/	12-44	F ²	F/O FORD	"	OPS Ludwigshafen		6-30
31/	12-44	F ²	F/O Ford	"	OPS Ulm		9-05
					By last trip on this tour.		
					Summary for Dec	1-50	86 18
					Date 18-12-44		
					Type A/c Lancaster		
					Unit 616 Squadron		
					Signature P/L Potts		
					O/C A.F.L.T. <u>P/L Potts</u>		
02/1	1-45						

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 570 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 5th October 1944, Saarbrücken, 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 reclining 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 fighting sixes' instead of 'Friga of -----'. Whoever gave 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 Saarbrücken on 5th October 1944 did we have real problems with icing 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 JU88 I smashed my lower jaw and was placed sick. The rest of the crew then had two abortives and became convinced I 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 I was in agony, but at least the pain kept me awake. Bone splinters from the jaw were still working their way out 40 years later. I was still unable to eat properly for many years and on occasions my jaw would lock solid for weeks at a time. Jaw and Larynx damage causing speech to be impaired and loss of voice if projected for more than a short period. Damage also caused a loss in inflexion 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 lit up areas. We used cloud cover at times, but not if our 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 Squadron.

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 Stu 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 Pilot and also Nav, but every one of us practised at all other positions. I was the only one to land the aircraft which I only did 3 times with a very nervous skipper hovering and the rest on tenterhooks too. What would have happened if I had needed to do it with a dodgy aircraft I have no idea. Landing occasions were on August 1st, V2 on return from Rufforth, August 21st F2 and 29th F2, September 9th Navigated whole trip, September 27th, Navigated whole trip.

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