

## MAIN OPS – With crew only

3-5-44

Wellington. Wimpey M. Paris. T.O. 21.55 5 hrs. 40 mins. Cloudless, moonlit sky. Height 16,000. Just before drop attacked by ME 109. Seen in plenty of time by M.U.G John Moore and myself, Jimmy Jackson had also moved to the astro hatch and kept an eye on him whilst the MUG and myself took turns to search the rest of the sky, the other keeping watch on the 109. ~~Comms~~ John Payne, having climbed into the front turret reported that he was also watching. The 109 suddenly banked towards us and I told the skipper, Tom Ford 'Go'. Tom already knew the 109 was Port, slightly below, so dived hard to port and as there was no bomber stream turned back and then after 5 seconds returned to track. There was no further sighting and we returned without incident.

On reporting the attack at interrogation the Waaf Intelligence Officer told us there were no enemy aircraft in that area and we must have been mistaken. We told her quite forcibly there was no doubt. Later when we were at Hemswell we had a message to confirm there was a squadron of 109's close by.

Neither aircraft fired their guns. To fire your guns was to give away your approx position. Having planned evasion tactics for all the situations any of us could think of was much more effective and far less risky. We tried to make it too difficult for a fighter to line his guns on us and so struck lucky every time.

Due to the reaction of the Intelligence Officer we decided only to report anything if it was different to anything we were already aware of.

OPS.**3-8-44**

Passenger: Creil. Trossy St Maximum ..... Rocket ? . Flak Moderate A/C C2  
FT 4.15.

**3/4 - 8-4**

Pauillac Synthetic Oil Plant. 13.30. Flight time ~~2.55~~<sup>7.55</sup> Light flak. W.M.A2

**7-8**

Fontenay De Marmion (Nr Caen) FT. 3.45 H2

**8-8**

Aire. (Abortive) CUMM FT 2.15. H2 H2 written off. Twisted and torn apart by  
Cunim Cloud. Fell from 24000 ft to 4000 ft. Pullout. Chadwicke & Dobson -  
AVRO. "Must have reached at least 570 mph to incur such extreme damage". H2  
the fastest bomber in WWII to survive. Was cut apart to remove bombs. Tom Ford  
"Shaky Do".

**10-8**

Ferme De Forestel. Flying bombsite. Direct hit. R2. 13,000 lbs H.E.  
Flak moderate. FT 3.45.

**14-8**

Ouilly (Nr Falaise Gap) Successful drop but info' from Army Intelligence wrong.  
Nr Canadian lines. FT 3.45 F2 Signals from ground avoided us bombing our own.  
Heavy flak. F2

**15-8**

Volkel (Holland). Enemy airfield. Spot on drops. 3. Moderate Flak. FT 3.30 F2

**18-8**

Ghent (Belgium). Oil yards (G) FT 3.45 F2

\*FT = Flight Time

**26-8**

Kiel. Very heavy flak . LGH (Cookie) FT. 5.25 G2. ? Ponderous aircraft (compared to F2) sluggish responses. Searchlights everywhere.

**29-8**

Stettin. Very accurate flak 5/10 cloud. Target identified through cloud but bombing results obscured. Sweden both ways. FT 9.15 F2.

**3-9**

Eindhoven (Holland). Airdrome. 4/10 cloud. FT 4 hrs D2  
Very little defence. (Awful aircraft compared to F2)

**5-9**

Le Harvre: Bombing G troops . 3-20 G2  
Results satisfactory apparently but not much info' from Army. Something odd!

**8-9**

Le Harvre: No bombing. Cloud obscuring target. Danger of hitting own troops.  
3-45. F2 thank goodness. What a difference, F2 trying to lift off half way down the runway.

**10-9**

Le Harvre again; this time a very successful Prang. 15,000 lbs of bombs. Felt sorry for the poor devils down there. Like us they didn't start this, unlike us they don't have any comforts at all. It must be hell for all the soldiers down there. All brought on by a madman.

**12-9**

Frankfurt. Extremely intense and accurate flak. Searchlights everywhere, aircraft coned all around, us too but evaded quickly. Attacked by JU88. During pull out smashed my jaw and slight <sup>Hip</sup> ~~to~~ wound. F2 superb. 7.35 hrs.  
Off sick with jaw. Dentist removed teeth and splinters. Treatment <sup>Hip</sup> wound myself quite clean.

**25-9**

Crew unhappy. They have had two abortives. Tom asked if I could sign myself fit even with my jaw strapped up. The others said 'please Pete' and so I said yes. Spent ages getting oxygen mask on in the least painful fit. (It's new). The old mask and mike were destroyed at Frankfurt Op. Talking proved a real problem but went out to F2 and was understood on the intercom. They bought my beer. Only 2 pints as had to use a straw to drink. Living on liquids.

**26-9**

Calais area. 13,000 lbs. Excellent drop. A perfect Op. I can't help feeling sympathy for the enemy troops, and our own. Hitler and his top brass should be executed when this is over. All the death and chaos is their fault. 3.30 F2.

**3-10**

Westkapelle. Breaching the sea wall. CO told us to leave bombing as long as possible and if no breach make a special attempt. This was because we were in the final wave. However, breach was made and so we bombed as normal. Good drop. F2 3.00 hrs

**5-10**

Saarbrucken. Engine failure over base, no heating all frostbitten. Could not open doors to jettison so landed with 62,000 and only 3 engines. No problem with F2. 2hrs 55 min. The two Johns and Stuart said it was because F2 doesn't like strangers in the crew. (We had a 2<sup>nd</sup> Dickie with us). I don't like the trend towards superstition. It could mean a lack of self-belief and slacking in efficiency. I pointed out that we had several times taken a passenger, including a WAAF, to Calais and they conceded the point but I still feel uneasy.

**7-10**

Emmerich. Really heavy accurate flak. Saw two Ju88's or perhaps one twice. Slowly angled away from them to safer spot outside stream. FT 4.20. F2

**14-10**

Duisberg. Flak like a carpet, so concentrated at bombing height! Searchlights coned several kites. Have seen lots of kites coned and shot down on Ops yet we've always evaded when caught. I believe it must have something to do with the immediate response of F2 to the controls, no pause, almost as if she can tell what is needed. Getting out of the beams quickly is essential otherwise too many beams converging make it almost impossible. FT 4.55. F2

**14-10**

Duisberg again. Two in one day. We couldn't have silenced many flak batteries as the barrage seemed as intense as ever. Saw enemy aircraft below and to starboard. Told Tom to move slowly to port so as not to show our exhausts. 20 mins later saw J.U.88 to starboard about 30 degrees above, took turns watching him so we could keep lookout as much as possible. Started to edge away but he saw us and started his attack. Evaded attack but did not lose him as he came from port under. However, we banked hard to port in a steep climb then dived and circled and lost him. Our evasion techniques were not standard procedure. Tom and I spent many hours discussing tactics, and a code, everyone as short as possible. Starboard became Right. Orders such as Right climb, Port circle. This order meant enemy aircraft on starboard, Side going in the same direction, Level with us, circle away in a slight climb to hide our exhaust from him. This manoeuvre would put us behind the enemy and as they mostly flew faster would put increasing distance between us. The enemy knew our standard tactics and compensated for them, so we tried to avoid the most vulnerable times as much as possible, but of course we still needed luck, and we had it in full measure. FT 5 hrs. F2.

**19-10**

Stuttgart. Heavy cloud, cumulus, making up to Cu Nim. Very cold and damp. Bombing was on Wanganui. Heavy flak over last 70 miles or so. Completely at odds with what we understood from the briefing. A very unpleasant Op, but then I can't remember one I enjoyed. FT 6.25.

**23-10**

Essen. 13,000lbs, all high explosive. Quite unusual. Normally incendiaries would be carried on this sort of Op. Airspeed indicator U/S whole trip except first 5 minutes. Arrived at target several minutes before the master bomber, had to wait some time for markers. Also had to wait for airfield runway lights on return. Landed on ~~AEV3~~ and hope. Luck again. Perfect landing. Heavy cloud to 25,000 ft. Chronic icing. Target Krupps. Would have thought it was flattened by now. Dodgy Op. FT 5.20 F2. Usual flak for return.

**24-10**

Essen again and Krupps. Must have missed it last night. Extra heavy flak accurate. On run home saw twin engine A/C below and across our track. Not identified. We watched carefully for rest of trip but no other incident. FT 5 hrs. F2

**6-11**

Gelsenkirchen. The usual heavy flak. Several times saw gunfire but did not see anyone shot down for a change. Good run up drop appeared to be right on markers. Good prang. No problems except the cold. FT 5 hrs F2. Saw two fighters going away from us though.

**11-11**

Kiel Canal. Dropping 6 x 1,800 lb mines into the canal, one at a time and at varying intervals from 500 ft to prevent mines breaking up upon entry of water. At 500 ft we were subjected to intense and horrendous flak from every calibre of weapon from both sides of the canal, and the ships in it. So much fire as to rival a brilliant sunny day. Route was Sweden - Stettin direction, drop to 500 ft sharp turn to starboard and line up to the canal. I understand it was very successful but I would not like to chance it again. Only luck and our speed got us through. We were hit but not seriously. By far the most hazardous Op so far. On the way back we were accompanied by an A/C on our Port side at about 400 yds. We could not identify it but thought it was a Mosquito. Nevertheless we took turns watching it. When we were well into Swedish territory it left us. The rest of the way back, apart from the heating playing up was uneventful.

**16-11**

Duren. In support of the U/S Army. Flak damage to Port wing quite severe. The flak and searchlights together with the fires and flares gave an effect of a red sky in the morning and lit up the smoke from the flak bursts which were all at the level of the bombing height and lay like a carpet with ants moving across it. I was glad, and relieved, when the bomb run was over. During the bomb run we had another ~~MARKER~~ directly above us, and looking up into an open bomb bay at a Cookie and 13 other bombs is not the most welcome of sights. We edged to one side of them just before they dropped their bombs which fell just to the port and just outside our wing. They had bombed too early, only seconds, but they would not have hit the target if the markers were right. FT 4.50 F2

**21-11**

Aschaffenburg. Flak damage repaired just in time for bombing up. We were able to take off on time. We dreaded taking off late as Jerry could concentrate everything on us and at a time they were most efficient. Trip quite usual for the area. The searchlights at Mannheim were up to their usual high standard. Flak as expected. Bombing very accurate. Johnny Payne is as good as you can get. Not always popular though, going round 3 times to get it right is not a pleasant positive but John is a perfectionist. We might think he does it too often but it's his right and of course to make sure satisfies us all. Apparently our photos make us the best on the Squadron. Commended by the C/O and Groupie. FT 6.50. F2

**29-11**

Dortmund: A quite normal trip. Usual flak, searchlights etc. Only one thing out of the expected, the flak was red. Jerry must be using a new explosive. FT 5.05. F2.

**6-12**

Merzeburg. (LEUBA). Oil and chemical plants, cookie and incendiaries. Johnny excelled himself, 4 times round. He got it right though. We kidded him the commendation had gone to his head. Trip not too bad but exceptionally cold. Even Stu noticed the difference. FT 8.00 F2. Tom very tired. Jimmy took over from me and I spelled Tom for an hour and a half. Flak moderate, not as many searchlights. Good trip. 8 hrs in extreme cold is very exhausting.

**12-12**

Essen. Krupps again. The locals must be experts at repairing their equipment. The place is flat. They must have everything underground. Flak and searchlights as intense as ever. Saw a twin engine A/C but was unable to identify. Bombed on Wanganui. FT 5.40 F2

**15-12**

Ludwigshaven. Longish trip. The cold intense. The heating is not sufficient. Very glad to be near end of the tour. Moderate flak and not as many searchlights as usual. Spelled Tom 20 mins. FT 6.30 F2.

**17-12**

Ulm. Our last Op. Apart from being just moderate everything went like a pleasant dream. Just what we hoped for. Even the heating was just that little bit better. Tour completed. FT 7.05. F2



The next day took all available booze out to F2 and had a few drinks with our ground crew. Joined by C/o and a succession of servicing bods from the hangars etc. Gave ground crew 2000 Sweet Corporal and McDonald Export cigarettes between them and all the cash we had on us. (We could draw our pay daily if we wanted to). Said our goodbyes to everyone. Anointed F2 with the dregs of the drinks (Friga) and blessed her. We all kissed her to cheers from the gathering. Last of all we kissed the WAAF who painted 'Friga' for us. The other WAAF had been promoted and posted.

The above is the history of our tour together. I completed 3 other operations. One official and two standing in for bods unable to get back to the station in time for the operation. Also to Creil (3-8-44) Passenger. F/O Spurlin officially unofficial. C/O knew.

A few days later we said goodbye to each other and those on leave. Goodbye Wickenby, for many years, but visited frequently since.

626 Sqdn. ~~WM~~ F2 was the Lancaster flown by T.H. Ford, J.C. Moore, J. Jackson, R. Wood, S. Tween, J. Payne and myself on operations over enemy occupied territory and Germany during World War II.

F2 was an excellent aircraft, one of only two on 626 squadron to survive the war with the squadron. She was faster, more manoueverable, higher ceiling and more economical than any other Lancaster in which the crew flew.

The painting is of F2 at taking over, just after the Lady was painted and before the caption of 'Friga of the fighting sixes' was added.

The crew following were told to remove the naked lady, which they did, but replaced her with a sparsely clad one, standing, and the caption 'Friga' replaced with 'Frigger'. There were no further orders.

The naked lady was painted for us by two lovely WAAF's who told us they took turns modelling and painting but refused our offers to hold the paints etc when they did the next nude!

It is strange how humans can have a deep lasting affection for a machine. We all talked to F2 as to one another. She was as one of us.

I believe F2 completed over 100 operations.

Clarks

20-1

The 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2010 was a very special occasion for World War II Veteran Airman, Peter L Potter, when a painting of his aircraft Lancaster **VM F2** of 626 Sqdn. was hung by the artist Maurice Clark in Peter's home.

The event was attended by a small group of friends who have helped Peter over the years and made for a very pleasant social occasion.

During the evening Peter presented the Squadron Shield of 353 Sqdn. to Richard Turner the Chairman of the Boxted Airfield Historical Group for the Museum. Also presented was the personal Flying log book of Ray Pryor who flew with 353 Sqdn on many operations delivering arms ammunition and provisions by parachute to allied forces such as the 'Chindits', operating behind Japanese lines. This was a very hazardous occupation and Ray flew some 1500 hrs to do this. The presentation was on behalf of the Pryor family who were unable to attend due to sudden illness.

The Museum would welcome any memorabilia or reminiscences of Boxted Airfield anyone can present to them.

To: R Turner, 11 Dunthorne Road, Colchester, CO4 OHZ. Tel: 01206 865275

Photos included. Detailed.

8th Aug. 1944

Weather. Fair morning and afternoon, thunderstorms in evening.

Orderly Officer. F/O Fitzsimmons. 626 Squadron.

1045hrs Operation postponed as the Americans are going to our target.

1600hrs U.S.A.A.F. bombed the wrong target, therefore the original operation is to be carried out.

#### Operations

25 Lancasters were detailed against oil storage facilities at AIR-SUR-LYS. They were part of a force of 170 Lancasters and 10 Mosquitoes attacking 2 oil storage targets.

#### 12 Squadron

W/C Nelson, F/L Vernon, F/O Leuty, F/O Thompson, F/O Magee, F/O King, F/O Henry, F/O Newman, F/O Lowry, F/O Thompson, S/L Brown, F/O Buchan, and F/O McLean.

#### 626 Squadron

F/L Hicks, F/O Cram, F/O Thorpe, F/O Campbell, F/O Lone, F/O Ford, F/O Bennett, F/L Spruston, F/O Whetton, F/O Bennett, F/O Gauvreau, and F/O Hewitt.

Take off commenced at 2150hrs.

#### Weather.

En route. A large thunderstorm lay on our track just East of Lincoln on the outward track causing course alterations.

Target. No cloud, visibility moderate to good.

Bomb load. 13,000lbs. 11 X 1,000lb and 4 X 500lb.

#### Opposition.

Single engine fighters were active with searchlights being used as assembly points. They had little success.

#### Marking.

Mosquitoes marked the Aiming Point with Red T.I.s at H-4. Other PFF backed up with Green T.I.s. The Red T.I.s were scattered, falling to the East and South of the Aiming Point. They were however followed by accurate Green T.I.s.

#### Assessment of attack.

Bombing was accurate. A large Orange explosion at 2334hrs was followed by a dense column of black smoke. The glow of fires was visible for 75 miles. FRU. Many bombs in the target area. All the buildings had the roofs stripped. Hits on the canal wharf and rail tracks.

*My Lanc. 541-42*

Abortive.

12/X F/O D.W. McLean

Unable to get out of cu-nin over base.

12/G F/O J.E. Thompson

Starboard outer C.S.U. U/S.

X 626/H2 F/O T.H. Ford

Returned after dropping 12,000' in cu-nin.  
*42 WASTEN OFF. RAT A/J. U/S*

Damaged

12/W F/O K.J. Newman

Hit by flak.

Combat

12/Q F/O C.H. Heary

2336hrs 7,000' 5039W/0025E Target area.  
A warning indication on "Fishpond" of a possible  
attack from astern was reported by the wireless  
operator Sgt. J.K. Penrose.

Corkscrew Port was ordered and the rear gunner  
Sgt. G.S. Young fired aburst of 200 rounds without  
seeing the attacker. The enemy aircraft did not open  
fire.

Route.

Base-Orfordness-5106W/0233E-Target-5034W/0225E-5030W/0000-Reading-Base.

Bomber Command loss rate on this target Nil.

Visiting aircraft  
Martinet HP3LS

Pilot. F/O Starr

Base. Ingham

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9th Aug. 1944

Weather. Cloudy, with intermittent rain in the evening.

Orderly Officer. P/O Winder. 626 Squadron.

Discipline - All personnel will wear respirators at the "Gas" position from  
1100hrs to 1130hrs.

Squadrons stood down from operations.

Training. 1 X practice bombing.

1 X "Bullseye".

21 wireless operators. Instructional film "Boomerang".

Visiting aircraft  
Wellington V  
Halifax J2873

Pilot. P/O Smith  
F/L French

Base. Ingham  
Newmarket

16th Nov. 1944

Weather. Cloudy, visibility poor early becoming moderate.

Operations

28 Lancasters were detailed against DUREN to aid an attack by the American First and Ninth Armies. They were part of a force of 485 Lancasters and 13 Mosquitoes.

12 Squadron

F/O Nash, F/O Buchan, P/O Smart, F/O Marison, F/O Felgate, F/L Butcher, F/O Hann, F/O Crabb, F/O Walters, F/L Nisbett, F/L Monk, F/O Henry, F/L Somerville, and F/O Small.

626 Squadron

F/L Lane, F/O Oram, F/O Holloway, F/O Ford, F/O Wilson, F/O Fisk, F/O Vidler, F/O Hall, F/O Rodger, F/O Grindrod, F/O Patterson, F/O Smith, F/O Tierney, and F/O Titmus.

Take off commenced at 1231hrs.

Weather.En route. Outward 9/10ths cloud. On return 10/10ths cloud with fog over Base.  
Target. No cloud, visibility moderate.

Bomb load. 13,500lbs. 1 x 4,000lb, 6 x 1,000lb and, 7 x 500lb.

Opposition

Heavy flak over the Dunkirk area en route. Moderate accurate light flak over the target. Fighter cover by 23 Squadrons of Spitfires and Mustangs of 11 Group.

Marking.Red T.I.s at H-5 backed up by Red and Green T. I. s.  
PFF were prompt and accurate which was necessary due to Allied forces being within 5 miles of the target area.Assessment of attack.

Bombing was concentrated on the aiming point and soon obliterated the T.I.s. The Master Bomber then ordered bombing of the upwind edge of the smoke, which reached 8,000'.

PRU The centre of the town is destroyed. To the South and East buildings are largely gutted and all roads are impassable.

Abortive

12/Y F/O R. C. Nash

Damaged

12/R F/O C. H. Henry

Bomb sight U/S.

Accurately engaged by heavy flak to which the blast of a nearby exploding aircraft was added. The pilot only regained control of the aircraft with some difficulty.

626/D2 F/O L. A. Titmus

An aircraft alongside exploded after a direct hit causing extensive damage, including smashed windscreen, Perspex on rear and mid upper turrets and both outboard engines feathered.

The aircraft landed near Brussels. The crew were all unhurt.

Route.

Base-Cottesmore-Bradwell Bay-5050N/0300E-5026N/0540E-Target-5050N/0640E-5030N/0640E-5030N/0540E-5110N/0300E-Orfordness-Base.

Bomber Command loss rate 0.6%

Training. 3 x Lucero practice.

Once in the air, we would have another crew check and job check of equipment over the intercom to give the other bods the chance to say if something had been missed. All guns were tested once over the sea, this with caution, and much searching of the sea below, as if there was any vessel below with a gun, they would almost certainly fire at us when hearing us firing.

If flying low over the sea, we were quite often fired at. Several sailors told me that they had little time to recognise low flying aircraft and they relied on the sound of Merlin most of all. If the wind and sea were rough, they couldn't be sure, so acted on the principle of self-preservation. After hearing their explanation, I felt very glad to be flying in Lanc's.

On a short op., we took one of the ground crew with us and were fired at by a ship. He was most annoyed and swore soundly. When Ron Wood asked him what he was swearing for, he said he had two brothers in the Navy and they could be the ones shooting at him – not us, just him –

Our C.O. was usually watching the take off when not flying, as were the Section Commanders and Padre, it was, I think almost a ritual. On return, they would be at interrogation, often with a hot cuppa.