

One Mans War

Flying Officer Hugh Grant Stevenson D.F.C.



The individual record of an RAF Bomber Command Navigator set against the wider scene of World War 11.

Compiled by Gerry Stevenson

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	1
INTRODUCTION	2
OPERATIONAL SQUADRONS and RAIDS	4
THE PATH FINDER FORCE	28
OBOE - A SIMPLIFIED EXPLANATION	31
H2S - HOW IT WORKS	32
AVRO LANCASTER HEAVY BOMBER	34
DEVELOPMENT OF THE AVRO LINCOLN BOMBER	36
RECORD of SERVICE	39
PATH FINDER CERTIFICATE	41
DFC RECOMMENDATION	42
LANCASTER LOCATION MAP	44
BOMBER COMMAND AND ITS TARGETS	45

FOREWORD

This account of my father's service as a Bomber Command Navigator during World War II is the result of several elements and opportunities coming together over a period of time. The first element was my father's reluctance to talk about his experiences during his lifetime, which had always generated a level of curiosity in me and other members of the family. This was fed by the existence of his flightlogbook which gave basic information about his training and operational flights, sometimes spiced with Odd comments that hinted at a much wider story.

The opportunity to put this account together arose when, with more time available, I discovered The Bomber Command War Diaries compiled by Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt. These had been put out as part of a display in the Barbican library to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the outbreak of World War II. By looking up the dates and targets in the flight log book I was able to extract the relevant details from the Diaries so that the individual sorties could be viewed against the wider operations. With appetite whetted I followed a number of leads to the RAF Museum Hendon, the Aircraft & Armaments Experimental Establishment at Boscombe Down, the Public Records Office at Kew, the MOD RAF Personnel Management Centre and the Crown Inn at Little Staughton. The result is, I hope, something that will be of interest to the existing and future generations of the family. Whilst it answers many questions about Hugh Stevenson's involvement, there remains one central puzzle. What was it that motivated a man with a young family - my brother and I were six and four respectively - to leave protected employment as a policeman, falsify his age by one year and volunteer for one of the most hazardous jobs in the war? The nearest we will ever be is to take the words of another volunteer Pathfinder, also in a reserved occupation, Wing Commander William Anderson O.B.E. D.F.C. A.F.C. in his 1946 book entitled Pathfinders. He wrote "People have told me that to have left Mary was wickedly selfish; that it was- done on the spur of the moment without considering my responsibilities; that it was just vanity, seeking after "Honour & Glory" Surely if a man marries a woman to look after her and fend for her and for the children of their love, he must be prepared to join with other men when the lives of those he loves are at stake, and to fight for his and all their families." Whatever Hugh Stevenson's reasons were, I hope that this account will serve as a small recognition of the contribution that he made to a conflict, that was fought in a way that will never be repeated.

Gerry Stevenson
Merriemoors

November 1991

INTRODUCTION.

Hugh Stevenson joined the RAF as a volunteer Aircraftman 2nd Class, Aircrafthand/ Observer on 20th June 1941. After extensive training, including six and a half months in South Africa, he flew his first sortie over Germany on 14th January 1944, some two and a half years in to his service.

His entry to Operations was part of the build up of Bomber Command that is reflected in the availability of four engine bombers, the number of Squadrons and aircrews. In January 1944 these stood at 774 aircraft, 725 aircrews and 61 Squadrons. By April 1945 they had increased to 1429 aircraft, 1398 aircrews and 80 Squadrons. Add to this the fact that the overall Bomber Command aircrew casualty rate was nearly 60%, you can appreciate the need for volunteers.

The overall strategy for the Commanders of the British and U.S. Bomber Forces was defined as part of the Casablanca Conference by Churchill and Roosevelt and their staffs as:-

“Your primary object will be the progressive destruction and dislocation of the German military, industrial and economic system, and the undermining of morale of the German people to a point where their capacity for armed resistance is fatally weakened.”

Within this general aim, primary objectives "subject to the exigencies of weather and of tactical feasibility" would be in the following order of priority.

- a. German submarine construction yards
- b. The German aircraft industry
- c. Transportation
- d. Oil plants
- e. Other targets in the enemy war industry.

Other targets of military or political importance were mentioned i.e. U boat bases on the Atlantic coast and the City of Berlin and "that when the Allied Armies re-enter the continent you will afford them all possible support in the manner most effective."

Sir Arthur "Bomber" Harris, then C-in-C Bomber Command, was always at odds with specific targets believing that area bombing was more effective in disrupting the German economy by de-housing and killing workers and generally attacking morale. He believed this to the extent of arguing that the invasion of Europe would be unnecessary if only he was provided with the required level of resource. Overall the Bomber command war operation absorbed some 7% of the total War effort.

Bomber squadrons flew from the very first day of the war to within a few hours of the end more than five and a half years later. Nearly 9,000 bomber aircraft were lost, more than 50,000 airmen killed with many more taken prisoner, wounded or just worn out. The campaign produced a scale of devastation in the cities and towns of Germany wildly beyond any pre-war conception of what a modern bomber force could achieve.

As Hugh Stevenson joined the offensive in January 1944 the tide had begun to turn although the long range operations were still a feature of the bomber offensive they were soon to be replaced by preparations for the invasion of Europe and the subsequent support during the battle of Normandy. This over, there followed a return to Germany which ran until the end of hostilities. Not content with having survived these experiences Hugh Stevenson volunteered to test fly prototype Lincoln bombers which were a development of the Lancaster he knew so well.

He was demobilised on 13 February 1946 by which time he had achieved the substantive rank of Flying Officer with temporary promotion to Flight Lieutenant from 1 November 1944 to 26 March 1945.



Operational Squadrons & Raids

The information in this section has been drawn mainly from Hugh Stevenson's flight log book and The Bomber Command War Diaries. Additional data such as aircraft registration numbers, crew members, take off and return times and extra background details, come from the Squadron log held in the PRO at Kew.

Hixon & Seighford 30 OTU

30 Aug 1943

Wellington

Pilot F/ Sgt Gipson

3565K

Nickel DNCO

Late on target

576 Squadron Elsham Wolds

Service

Formed in 1 Group on 25th Nov 1943 and flew Lancasters from Elsham Wolds and Fiskerton until the end of the war.

Operations

576 Squadron Flew 2,788 Lancaster sorties and lost 66 aircraft (2,4%) in 89 bombing and 2 mine-laying raids. 9 further Lancasters were destroyed in crashes.

14 Jan 1944

LANC.III Q

Pilot & Crew F/Sgt Gipson, Sgts Randall, Gregory,
Stevenson, Walker(RAAF), Lalor, Robinson.

ND 362

576 Sqdn Elsham Wolds

BRUNSWICK 5hrs.55mins.

1640 - 2235hrs.

496 Lancasters and 2 Halifaxes on the first major raid on Brunswick of the war. 38 Lancasters lost, 7,6% of the force. The German running commentary was heard following the progress of the bomber force from a position only 40 miles from the English coast and many German fighters entered the bomber stream soon after the German frontier was crossed near Bremen. The German fighters scored steadily until the Dutch coast was crossed on the return flight. 11 of the lost aircraft were Pathfinders. Brunswick was smaller than Bomber Commands usual targets and this raid was not a success. The city report describes this only as a light raid with bombs in the South of the city which had only 10 houses destroyed and 14 people killed. Most of the attack fell either in the countryside or in Wolfenbuttel and other small towns and villages well to the South of Brunswick.

20 Jan 1944

Pilot F/ Sgt. Gipson
576 Sqdn Elsham Wolds.

Lanc III Y2
JA 868

BERLIN 7hrs.40mins 1620-2350hrs 10 out, all OK
769 aircraft - 495 Lancasters, 264 Halifaxes, 10 Mosquitoes. 35 aircraft - 22 Halifaxes 13 Lancasters - lost, 4.6% of the force. 102 Squadron from Pocklington lost 5 of its 16 Halifaxes on this raid, 2 more crashed in England and the squadron would lose 4 more aircraft in the next nights raid. The bomber approach route took a wide swing North but once again the German controller managed to feed his fighters into the bomber stream early and the fighters scored steadily until the force was well on the way home. The diversions were not large enough to deceive the Germans. The Berlin area was, as so often, completely cloud covered and what happened to the bombing is a mystery. The Pathfinder sky marking appeared to go according to plan and crews who were scanning the ground with their H2S sets believed that the attack fell on Eastern districts of Berlin. No major navigational problems were experienced. No photographic reconnaissance was possible until after a further 4 raids on Berlin were carried out but the various sources from which the Berlin reports are normally drawn, all show a complete blank for this night. It is not known whether this is because of some order issued by the German authorities to conceal the extent of the damage, or whether the entire raid missed Berlin.

21 Jan 1944

Pilot F/ Sgt. Gipson
576 Sqdn Elsham Wolds.

Lanc III Y2
JA 868

MAGDEBURG 7hrs.15mins 2000-0315hrs 10, one failed to go. 9 OK.

684 aircraft - 421 Lancasters, 224 Halifaxes, 3 Mosquitos - on the first major raid to this target. The German controller again followed the progress of the bomber stream across the North Sea and many night fighters were in the stream before it crossed the German coast. The controller was very slow to identify Magdeburg as the target but this did not matter too much, because most of the night fighters were able to stay in the bomber stream, a good example of the way the Tame Boar tactics were developing. 57 aircraft - 35 Halifaxes , 22 Lancasters - were lost, 8. 8% of the force; it is probable that three quarters of the losses were caused by German night fighters. The Halifax loss rate was 15.6%! The heavy bomber losses were not rewarded With a successful attack. Some of the main force aircraft now had H2S and winds which were much stronger than forecast brought some of these to the target area before the Pathfinders Zero Hour. The crews of 27 main force aircraft were anxious to bomb and did so before Zero Hour. The Pathfinders blamed the fires started by this early bombing, together with some very effective German decoy markers, for their failure to concentrate the marking. No details are available from Magdeburg, but it is believed that most of the bombing fell outside the city. An RAF man in hospital at Magdeburg at the same time reports only, "bangs far away"*.

20 Feb 1944

Pilot F/ Sgt Gipson
576 sqdn Elsham Wolds

Lanc I A2
LL 748

STUTT GART 5hrs.55 mins. 2330-0525hrs. 11 out, all OK.
Returned early Rear Gunner sick.

598 aircraft - 460 Lancasters - 126, Halifaxes, 12 Mosquitoes. The North Sea sweep and the Munich diversions successfully drew the German fighters up 2 hours before the main bomber force flew inland and only 9 aircraft - 7 Lancasters and 2 Halifaxes- were lost, 1.5% of the force. 4 further Lancasters and 1 Halifax crashed in England. Stuttgart was cloud covered and the bombing became scattered. The local report states that considerable damage was caused in the centre of the city and in the North Eastern and North Western suburbs of Bad Canstatt and Feurbach. Several important cultural buildings in the centre of the city were badly damaged the Neuss Schloss, the Lamdag (regional parliament building), the state picture gallery, the state archives, the state theatre and two Old churches. In the Feurbach suburb however, the Bosch factory which produced dynamos, injection pumps and magnetos and was considered to be one of the most important factories in Germany, was badly damaged. 125 people were killed and 510 injured.

24 Feb 1944

Pilot F/ Sgt. Gipson
576 Sqdn Elsham Wolds

Lanc.III N2
DV 365

SCHWEINFURT 8hrs.50mins 1820-0255hrs. 15 all OK.
30lb Inc(Incendiary) through kite.

734 aircraft - 554 Lancasters, 169 Halifaxes, 11 Mosquitoes - carried out the first Bomber Command raid on this target, home of Germany's main ball bearing factories. 266 American B-17s had raided the factories the previous day. Bomber Command introduced a novel tactic on this night. The Schweinfurt force was split into two parts - 392 and 342 aircraft - separated by a two hour interval. Part of the German fighter force was drawn up by earlier diversions. The first wave of the Schweinfurt bombers lost 22 aircraft, 5.6%, the second wave lost only 11 aircraft, 3.2% and it is believed. that only 4 bombers from the second wave were shot down by night fighters. Total losses were 33 aircraft - 26 Lancasters, 7 Halifaxes - 4.5% of the force. Both phases of the bombing suffered from undershooting by some of the Pathfinder backers up and by many of the main force crews. Schweinfurt records refer to nominal damage in the RAF night raid and give a combined figure of 362 people killed by the American raid the previous day and by this RAF raid. No breakdown of this figure is available.

25 Feb 1944

Pilot F/ Sgt. Gipson

576 sqdn Disham Wolds

Lanc III E2

DV 386

AUGSBURG 8.35hrs.

594 aircraft - 461 Lancasters, 123 Halifaxes, 10 Mosquitoes - on the first large raid to this target. The various diversions and the splitting of the main bomber force into two waves again reduced casualties still further. 21 aircraft 16 Lancasters, 5 Halifaxes - lost, 3,6% of the force; at least 4 of these casualties were due to collision. The bombing at Augsburg was outstandingly successful in clear weather conditions and against this virgin target with only weak flak defences. The Pathfinder ground marking was accurate and more than 2000 tons of bombs were dropped by the 2 waves of the force.

This RAF night raid became controversial because of the effects of its outstanding accuracy. The beautiful Old centre of Augsburg was completely destroyed by high explosive and fire, with much less than the usual spread of bombing to the more modern outer areas, where some industry was located. 2,920 houses were destroyed and more than 5,000 were damaged; 85,000 - 90,000 people were bombed out. Among the main public and cultural buildings destroyed or seriously damaged were the Old Rathaus (completely destroyed), 16 churches and 11 hospitals, but all the patients in the hospitals were safely evacuated, except for two women foreign workers. The total value of lost works of art was estimated to be 800 million Reichmarks (880M). Among the buildings destroyed was the famous puppet theatre - Heimbühne Puppenschein - of Walter Oehmichen Oehmichen re-created his puppets and, exactly 4 years later, opened the Augsburg Puppenkiste (packing case theatre), now well known in Germany and often seen on television. There were 246 large or medium fires and 820 small ones; the temperature was so cold (minus 18 Celsius) that the river Lech was frozen over and many of the water hoses also froze. Between 678 and 726 people were killed and approx. 2,500 were injured. The Germans publicised it as an extreme example of 'terror' bombing. Part of the bombing of the second wave of aircraft did spread to the Northern and Eastern parts of Augsburg and damage was caused to an important aircraft component factory and to some former paper and cotton mills which had been taken over by the M.A.N engineering company.

8 GROUP PATHFINDERS

156 Squadron Upwood

Service - Formed in February 1942 as a Wellington Squadron in 3 Group, flying from Alconbury. Transferred to 8 Group in August 1942 and flew as a Pathfinder Squadron until the end of the war. Converted to Lancasters in January 1943. Based at Warboys and Upwood whilst with 8 Group.

Operations

Raids flown

3 Group Wellingtons - 38 bombing, 4 mine laying, 1 leaflet.

8 Group Wellingtons - 40 bombing.

8 Group Lancasters - 230 bombing.

Total - 308 bombing, 4 mine laying, 1 leaflet.

Sorties & Losses

3 Group Wellingtons - 346 sorties, 22 aircraft lost
8 Group Wellingtons - 305 sorties, 17 aircraft lost
8 Group Lancasters - 3,933 sorties, 104 aircraft
lost (5.6%)

Individual Operations with 156 Squadron.

24 Mar 1944

Pilot F/ Sgt. Gipson

Lanc III W

ND 502

156 Sqdn Upwood

BERLIN (Supporter) 7hrs.20mins. 1848-0209hrs.

811 aircraft - 577 Lancasters, 216 Halifaxes, 18 Mosquitoes. 72 aircraft - 44 Lancasters, 28 Halifaxes - lost, 8.9% of the force. This night became known in Bomber Command as the night of the strong winds. A powerful wind from the North carried the bombers South at every stage of the flight. Not only was the wind not forecast accurately but it was so strong that the various methods available to warn crews of wind changes during the flight failed to detect the full strength of it. The bomber stream became very scattered, particularly on the homeward flight and radar predicted flak batteries at many places were able to score successes. Part of the bomber force even strayed over the Rhur defences on the return flight. It is believed that approximately 50 of the 72 aircraft lost were destroyed by flak; most of the remainder were victims of night fighters. The Berlin report says that 14 bombers were shot down over the target area. The strong winds caused difficulties in the marking at Berlin with, unusually, markers being carried beyond the target area and well out to the South West of the city. 126 small towns and villages outside Berlin recorded bombs and 30 people were killed in those places. The majority of the damage in Berlin was in the South Western districts. As usual, much housing was destroyed and about 20,000 people were bombed out. Approx. 150 people were killed. No industrial concerns were classed as destroyed but several important ones were damaged. 5 military establishments were badly hit, including the depot of the Waffen SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler Division in Lichterfelde. This was the last major RAF raid on Berlin during the war, although the city would be bombed many times by small forces of Mosquitoes.

Also see reference in Pathfinders at War page 78; Night of the Jet Stream, for a navigators first hand account of this raid.

26 Mar 1944

Pilot F/ Sgt Gipson
156 Sqdn Upwood

Lanc III T
JB 667

ESSEN (Supporter) 4hrs.50mins. 1949-0037hrs.

705 aircraft - 476 Lancasters, 207 Halifaxes, 22 Mosquitoes. The sudden switch by Bomber Command to a Ruhr target, just across the German frontier, caught the German controllers by surprise and only 9 aircraft - 6 Lancasters, 3 Halifaxes were lost, 1.3% of the force. Essen was covered by cloud but the Oboe Mosquitoes marked the target well and this was a successful attack. 48 industrial buildings were seriously damaged and 1 , 756 houses destroyed. 550 people were killed, 49 missing and 1,569 were injured. The figures for killed and missing are broken down in the Essen report as follows: Germans - 192 women, 155 men, 27 children, 6 soldiers, 4 policemen and 2 Hitler Youth. Foreigners - 74 forced workers and 1 prisoner of war. The remaining 138 victims were mixed German and foreign concentration camp prisoners, large numbers of whom were now providing the labour forces in German factories.

Total effort for the night; 899 sorties, 9 aircraft lost (1%)

SUMMARY OF BOMBER COMMAND OPERATIONAL STATISTICS

18/19 Nov. 1943 to Mar. 1944

(134 days/nights)

Nights with operations 100; Days with operations 5; Night sorties; 29,449 from which 1,117 aircraft (3.8%) were lost; a further 113 aircraft crashed in England while setting out or returning from operational flights. Daylight sorties; 10, from which no aircraft were lost. Total sorties; 29,459 from which 1, 117 aircraft (3.8%) were lost. Approximate bomb tonnage in period; 78,417 tons: averages per 24hrs; 219.8 sorties, 8.3 aircraft lost, 585.6 tons of bombs dropped.

INVASION PREPARATIONS - 31 March to 5 April 1944

At this point the war took a different turn and Bomber Command was directed to support the forthcoming invasion of occupied France. Thus the following raids shift from area bombing in Germany, to specific targets in occupied France and Belgium in preparation for the mainland invasion. Targets included railways, military camps, ammunition dumps, explosive and armament factories and towards the actual invasion gun sites, radio and radar stations.

582 Squadron Little Staughton

Service

Formed as a Pathfinder Squadron in 8 Group on 1 April 1944 and flew Lancasters from Little Staughton until the end of the war.

Operations

582 Squadron flew 2, 157 Lancaster sorties and lost 28 aircraft (1.3%) in 165 raids. 8 further Lancasters were destroyed in crashes.

Points of Interest

Victoria Cross: Captain E.E. Swales posthumously. Pforzheim,23/24
February 1945.

9 Apr 1944

Pilot & Crew F/ Sgt. Gipson,
Sgts Stevenson, Navigator 1
Gregory, Navigator 2
Walker, Wireless Operator
Hodges, Mid Upper Gunner
Robertson, Rear Gunner
Randall, Flight Engineer

Lanc III F
ND 714

582 Sqdn Little Staughton

LILLE (Supporter) 3hrs 2310-0210hrs.

7 out, all OK

The Squadron log records 'Target attacked at 0052.12 from 16000 ft. Heading 038 deg M. IAS(initial air speed?) 153 knots, by the aid of Red TIS (target indicators), 2 or 3 secs before aircraft bombing first reds down on ouv attack. Good concentration after bombing. terrific explosion as a/ c bombed Fires seen to West of Tl'S . 1x1000 MC bomb hung up over target and jettisoned position 5115N 0230E at 0104 from 10,000ft. Weather over target 4/5 tenths thin cloud. 4/5000 ft. Vis good slight haze. Bomb load 12x1000MC 2x500MC.

Diary entry.

239 aircraft - 166 Halifaxes, 40 Lancasters, 22 Stirlings, 11 Mosquitoes - of 3,4,6 and 8 Groups. 1 Lancaster lost. A full description of this raid is available from a French researcher, Phillipe Lerat, who now lives near Lille. The target was the Lille-De1ivrance goods station, which was hit by 49 bombs. Much damage was caused to buildings and tracks and 2, 124 of the 2,959 goods wagons in the yard were destroyed. Unfortunately for the local people, much of the attack fell outside the railway area and 456 French people were killed. More than 90% of these casualties were in the suburb of Lomme, where more than 5,000 houses were destroyed or damaged. M. Leratfs report continues; The cite de Cheminots, the housing area in Lomme where all the railwaymen lived in pleasant but frail houses, was completely destroyed. Fortunately the full moon permitted the search for the wounded. The inhabitants were very resentful of the British at the time. My own bookseller was living near by and remembers Frenchmen and women walking as lost among the bomb holes and shouting "bastards, bastards!" They had lost everything. Many inhabitants of other suburbs felt they were living their last hour, such was the intensity of the bombing.

Total effort for the night; 697 sorties, 1 1 aircraft lost (1.6%)

10 April 1944

Pilot F/ Sgt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III F
ND 714

LAON (Supporter) 3hrs.45mins 0145-0530hrs. 6 out, all OK

148 Lancasters and 15 Mosquitoes of 3,6 and 8 Groups. 1 Lancaster lost. The marking was not completely accurate and only a corner of the railway yards was hit.

Total effort for the night; 908 sorties, 19 aircraft lost (2.1%). 25 Mosquitoes each marked two targets but only 25 sorties have been counted for these aircraft.

20 Apr 1944

Pilot F/ Sgt Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III F
ND 714

COLOGNE (Supporter) 3hrs.30mins. 0015-0345hrs. 13 out, all OK

357 Lancasters and 22 Mosquitoes of 1,3,6 and 8 Groups. 4 Lancasters lost. This concentrated attack fell into areas of Cologne which were North and West of the city centre and partly industrial in nature. 192 industrial premises suffered various degrees of damage, together with 725 buildings described as dwelling houses with commercial premises attached. 7 railway stations or yards were also severely damaged. More general city buildings were also heavily bombed; 46 churches and chapels, the Opera House (partly burnt out), the city market halls etc. The Capitol cinema, the largest in Cologne was destroyed by fire. 1,861 houses or apartments were destroyed and more than 20,000 damaged. There were 1,290 separate fires 664 people were killed and 1,067 were injured. The Cologne report mentions high explosive bombs of new calibre which penetrated the normally safe basement shelters. 80% of the dead were in those shelters.

Total effort for the night; 1, 155 sorties, 15 aircraft lost (1.3%)
The number of sorties flown was a new record.

22 Apr 1944

Pilot F/ Sgt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III F
ND 714

LAON (V.B.U.) 4hrs.05mins. 2215-0220hrs. 7 out, 1 missing

181 aircraft - 69 Halifaxes, 52 Lancasters, 48 Stirlings, 12 Mosquitoes - of 3,4,6 and 8 Groups. 9 Aircraft - 4 Lancasters, 3 Stirlings, 2 Halifaxes - lost, 5% of the force. The attack on the railway yards was carried out in two waves and severe The aircraft of one of the Master Bombers, Wing damage was caused. Commander A.G.S. Cousens of 635 Squadron was shot down and he was killed.

Total effort for the night; 1, 116 sorties, 42 aircraft lost 3.8%.

24 Apr 1944

Pilot F/ Sgt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III H
ND 816

KARLSRUHE (V.B.U.) 5hrs.35mins. 2210-0340hrs. 14 out, all OK

637 aircraft - 369 Lancasters, 259 Halifaxes, 9 Mosquitoes - of all groups except 5 Group. 19 aircraft - 11 Lancasters, 8 Halifaxes - lost, 3% of the force. Cloud over the target and a strong wind which pushed the Pathfinders too far North spoiled this attack. Only the northern part of Karlsruhe was seriously damaged and most of the bombs fell outside of the city. It has been difficult to obtain details from this target. One report says that 23 people were killed, 133 injured and more than 900 houses were destroyed or badly damaged, but another report gives the number of people killed as 118. Mannheim, 30 miles to the north, recorded a raid by approximately 100 aircraft on this night and Darmstadt, Ludwigshafen and Heidelberg were also hit by aircraft which failed to find the main target. It must be assumed that many bombs fell in open country between Karlsruhe and Mannheim; another German report says that bombs fell in 120 parishes.

Total effort for the night; 1, 160 sorties, 30 aircraft lost 2.6%

26 Apr 1944

Pilot F/Sgt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III J
ND 812

ESSEN (Supporter) 4hrs.15mins. 2255-0310hrs. 13 out, all OK.

493 aircraft - 342 Lancasters, 133 Halifaxes, 18 Mosquitoes - from all groups except 5 Group. 7 aircraft - 6 Lancasters, 1 Halifax - lost, 1.4% of the force. The Bomber Command report states that this was an accurate attack based on good Pathfinder ground marking. The only report available from Essen states that 313 people were killed and 1,224 injured.

Total effort for the night; 1,060 sorties, 30 aircraft lost (2.8%)

27 Apr 1944

Pilot F/ Sgt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III C
ND 502

AULNOYE (Vis.Illuminator) 3hrs 0035-0335hrs. 10 out, all OK.

223 aircraft 191 Halifaxes, 16 Lancasters, 16 Mosquitoes - of 4, 6, and 8 Groups. 1 Halifax lost. Bombing was concentrated and much damage was done to the railway.

Total effort for the night; 961 sorties, 35 aircraft lost (3.6%).

6 May 1944

Pilot P/ O Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III J
ND 812

MANTES GASSICOURT 3hrs.10 mins. 0045-0355 11 out, all OK.

Listed in the operational diaries as MANTES-LA-JOLIE. 149 aircraft 77 Halifaxes, 64 Lancasters, 8 Mosquitoes - of 4 and 8 Groups attacked railway installations in the Gassicourt suburbs. 2 Lancasters and 1 Halifax lost. Bomber Commands records state that "stores depots and locomotive sheds" were severely damaged but the local report shows that some of the bombing fell outside the railway objective. The Western part of the town - including Old Mantes, the suburb of Gassicourt and the hamlet of Dennemont - were all bombed. The church, the Old town hall and the school at Gassicourt were destroyed, together with 128 houses, 740 other houses, were damaged. 54 civilians were killed.

Total effort for the night; 380 sorties, 5 aircraft lost (1.3%).

9 May 1944

Pilot P/ O Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III J
ND 812

CAP GRIZ NEZ 2hrs.30mins 0245-0515hrs 14 out, all OK

The operational diary shows 30 Lancasters of 3 Group and 8 Pathfinder Mosquitoes located the gun position but no hits were scored. No aircraft were lost. However it is clear from the Squadron log book that at 14 Lancasters of 8 Group were involved in the raid.

Total effort for the night; 452 sorties, 12 aircraft lost (7.2%).

27 May 1944

Pilot P/ O Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III Q
JB 345

RENNES 3hrs.50mins 2340-0330hrs 16 out, 1 missing.

78 Lancasters and 5 Mosquitoes of 8 Group attacked the airfield (described in the Squadron log as St. Jaques) in good visibility. The marking was good and the bombing very accurate. Much damage to the airfield installations was caused and there was a large explosion, probably in the bomb dump.

Total effort for the night; 1,111 sorties in 17 separate operations, 28 aircraft lost (2.5%).

31 May 1944

Pilot P/ O Gipson

582 Sqdn. Little Staughton

MONTCOUPLE 2 hrs

2255-0035hrs

11 out, all OK.

Lanc III Q

JB 345

115 aircraft - 60 Lancasters, 51 Halifaxes, 4 Mosquitoes - of 6 and 8 Groups bombed a coastal wireless transmitting station (described in the Squadron log as a radar jamming station) and destroyed 4 of the 6 masts. No aircraft lost.

Total effort for the night; 820 sorties, 1 aircraft lost (1.3%).

6 June 1944

Pilot P/O Gipson

582 Sqdn Little Staughton

LONGUES/GUN SITE/D DAY

2hrs.5mins.

0420-0625hrs.

Lanc III Q

JB 345

2 out, both OK.

Listed in the diaries under 5/6 June under the heading Normandy Coastal Batteries. 1,012 aircraft - 551 Lancasters, 412 Halifaxes, 49 Mosquitoes - to bomb coastal batteries at Fontenay, Houlgate, La Pernelle, LONGUES, Maisy, Merville, Mont Fleury, Pointe-du-Hoc, Ousterheim and St-Martin-de-Varreville. 946 carried out their bombing tasks. Three aircraft were lost - 2 Halifaxes of 4 Group on the Mont Fleury raid and a 1 Lancaster of 6 Group on the Longues raid. Only two of the targets - La Pernelle and Ouisterham - were free of cloud; all other bombing was entirely based on Oboe marking. At least 5,000 tons of bombs were dropped, the greatest tonnage in one night so far in the war. Worthy of note is the diversion operation on the same night designed to conceal the true location of the invasion for as long as possible. 16 Lancasters of 617 Squadron and 6 G-H fitted Stirlings of 218 Squadron dropped a dense screen of window which advanced slowly across the Channel, to simulate a large convoy of ships approaching the French coast between Boulogne and Le Havre, North of the real invasion coast. These flights required exact navigation; both squadrons had been practising for this operation or more than a month. The second diversion was carried out by 36 Halifaxes and Stirlings of 90, 138, 149 and 161 Squadrons. These aircraft dropped dummy parachutists and explosive devices to simulate airborne landings over areas not being invaded. 2 Stirlings of 149 Squadron were lost while carrying out this duty.

Total Bomber Command effort for the night; 1,211 sorties, 8 aircraft lost (0.7%). The number of sorties flown was a new record. British, American and Canadian divisions landed on five Normandy beaches early next morning.

8 Jun 1944

Pilot P/ O Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III Q
JB 345

FOUGERES 4hrs.25mins. 2211-0237hrs 12 out, all OK.

COMMUNICATIONS. 483 aircraft - 286 Lancasters, 169 Halifaxes, 28 Mosquitoes attacked railways at Alecon, FOUGERES, Mayenne, Pontabault and Rennes to prevent German reinforcements from the South reaching Normandy. All of the raids appear to have been successful. 4 aircraft were lost, 2 Lancasters from the Pontabault raid and 1 Lancaster and 1 Mosquitoe from the Rennes raid.

Total effort for the night; 585 sorties, 4 aircraft lost (0.7%)

11 June 1944

Pilot P/O Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III Q
JB 345

TOURS 5hrs.20mins. 2157-0317hrs. 8 out, all OK.

RAILWAYS. 329 aircraft - 225 Lancasters, 86 Halifaxes, 18 Mosquitoes - of and 8 Groups attacked railway targets at Evreux, Massey-Palaiseau, Nantes and TOURS. All of the raids appear to have been successful. 3 Lancasters and 1 Halifax - 1 aircraft from each raid - were lost.

Total effort for the night; 405 sorties, 6 aircraft lost (1 , 5%).

15 Jun 1944

Pilot P/ O Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III E
ND 880

LENS 2.50hrs.

RAILWAY S. 224 aircraft - 184 Lancasters, 30 Stirlings, 10 Mosquitoes - of 3 and 8 Groups attacked railway yards at LENS and Valenciennes. The raids took place in clear visibility and both targets were accurately bombed. 6 Lancasters were lost from the Lens raid and 5 Lancasters from Valenciennes.

Total effort for the night; 527 sorties, 12 aircraft lost (2.3%). 2 Lancasters and 1 Halifax lost.

23 June 1944

Pilot P/ O Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
PB 199

COUBRONNE 2hrs.10mins 14 out, all OK.

No specific mention of Coubronne in the diaries but it seems likely to have been one of 4 flying bomb sites attacked by 412 aircraft 226 Lancasters, 164 Halifaxes, 22 Mosquitoes - of 3, 4, 6, and 8 Groups. All sites were hit but 5 Lancasters were lost. The Squadron log describes the target as constructional works.

Total effort for the night; 714 sorties, 8 aircraft lost (1.1%).

28 Jun 1944

Pilot P/ O Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
PB 119

WIZERNES (*Master Bomber*) 2hrs.20mins. 0605-0824hrs. 2 out, both OK.

The first daylight operation to be recorded in the log. 103 Lancasters of 4 Group with 5 Mosquitoes and 2 Lancasters of the Pathfinders (8 Group) , one of which must have been as shown in the log, attacked the V weapon site without loss. No report of the bombing results was filed. Again described in the Squadron log as a constructional works. The Squadron log also records; NW of St Omer approx 071 hrs. at 14000ft, 140 knots, hit by heavy flak. Port outer engine hit, electrical circuit to bomb sight, tanks in both wings. Other damage not assessed.

30 Jun 1944

Pilot P/ O Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc 111 A
PB 141

VILLERS-BOCAGE Panzer Div.Ch0ke. 2hrs.50mins. 1832-2117hrs. 14 out, all OK.

The second daylight raid in the log. 266 aircraft - 151 Lancasters, 105 Halifaxes, 10 Mosquitoes - of 3 ,4 and 8 Groups to bomb a road junction through which the tanks of two German Panzer Divisions, the 2nd. and the 9th. would have to pass in order to carry out a planned attack on the junction of the British and American armies in Normandy that night. The raid was controlled with great care by the Master Bomber, who ordered the bombing force to come down to 4,000 feet in order to be sure of seeing the markers in the smoke and dust of the exploding bombs. 1, 100 tons of bombs were dropped with great accuracy and the planned German attack did not take place. 1 Halifax and 1 Lancaster lost.

18 Jul 1944

Pilot F/ Lt. Gipson
582 sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
PB 141

CAGNY 3.00hrs. 0437-0737hrs. 10 out, all OK.

No specific entry in war diaries.

20 Jul 1944

Pilot F/ Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
PB 141

FORET DU CROC 5hrs.25mins. 1422-172 lhrs. 2 out, all OK?

Listed in the diary as V-WEAPON SITES.

174 Lancasters, 165 Halifaxes, 30 Mosquitoes - attacked 6 flying 369 aircraft - bomb sites at Wizernes. All raids were successful except the small raid by 20 aircraft on the Foret Du Croc site where The Oboe leader Lancaster was shot down on the bombing run and the bombs of this force all missed the target. This was the only aircraft lost. The unsuccessful attempt on Hitlers life at his headquarters in East Prussia took place on this day.

The Squadron log gives more detail of the loss of the Oboe Leader; Leader 582 Z released at about 1618hrs being then in flames, went down with port inner smoking.

22 July 1944

Pilot F/ Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
ND 880

LINCEUX 3hrs.10mins. 1400-17 IOhrs. 8 out, all OK.

No specific entry in the war diaries.

23 Jul 1944

Pilot F/ Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
ND 880

KIEL 5hrs.25mins 2230- 0355hrs. 8 out, 1 missing.

This was the first major raid on a German city for two months. 629 aircraft - 519 Lancasters, 100 Halifaxes, 10 Mosquitoes - were despatched. The elaborate deception and R.C.M. operations, combined with the surprise return to a German target completely confused the German fighter force and only 4 aircraft - all Lancasters - were lost, a rate of 0.6%. Kiel suffered heavy heavily in this first R.A.F. raid since April 1943 and it's heaviest R.A.F. raid of the war.

The bombing force appeared suddenly from behind a Mandrel jamming screen and the local radio warning system only reported it as being a force of mine- laying aircraft. 612 aircraft then bombed in a raid lasting only 25 minutes. All parts of Kiel were hit but the bombing was particularly heavy in the port areas and all of the important U- boat yards and naval facilities were hit. 315 people were killed and 439 injured. The presence of around 500 delayed action bombs or unexploded duds caused severe problems for the rescue and repair services. There was no water for 3 days; trains and buses did not run for 8 days and there was no gas for cooking for three weeks.

Total effort for the night; 1, 188 sorties, 5 aircraft (0.4%) lost.

24 Jul 1944

Pilot F/ Lt. Gipson

582 Sqdn Little Staughton

STUTT GART 6hrs.55mins. 2210-0505hrs 16 out, all OK.

Lanc III A

ND 880

461 Lancasters and 153 Halifaxes. 17 Lancasters and 4 Halifaxes lost, 4.6% of the force. This was the first of 3 heavy raids on Stuttgart in 5 nights and the only report available is a composite one for the raids. The 3 raids caused the most serious damage of the war in the central districts of Stuttgart which, being situated in a series of narrow valleys, had eluded Bomber Command for several years. They were now deviated and most of Stuttgart's public and cultural buildings were destroyed. The second of the three raids, on the night of 25/26 July, was the most successful. Total casualties in Stuttgart during this series of raids were 1, 171 people killed and 1,600 injured.

Total effort for the night; 1,088 sorties, 25 aircraft lost (2,3%)

28 Jul 1944

Pilot F/ Lt. Gipson

582 Sqdn Little Staughton

HAMBURG 5.00hrs, 2235-0335hrs. 6 out, all OK.

Lanc III A

ND 880

Total effort for the night; 1, 126 sorties, 61 aircraft lost (5.4%).

29 Jul 1944

Pilot F/Lt Gipson

582 Sqdn Little Staughton

BATTLE AREA "E" 3hrs.35mins. 0645-1020hrs 13 out, all OK.

Lanc III A

ND 880

No specific entry against this date but against 30 July is recorded:-

NORMANDY BATTLE AREA.

692 aircraft - 462 Lancasters, 200 Halifaxes, 30 Mosquitoes - were sent to bomb 6 German positions in front of a mainly American ground attack in the Villers Bocage - Camont area. They were able to bomb, on to Oboe markers, and only two of the six targets were effectively hit. 4 Lancasters lost. The Squadron log records some confusion in this raid; "Master Bomber said Lemonade at 0820. What this meant we did not know, Orangade was the code word for abandon mission and red TIs to port is a lemonade, was to mean disregard marker indicated. Master Bomber and his Deputy held a conference on correct code word."

4 Aug 1944

Lanc III A

Pilot F/Lt Gipson

ND 880

582 Sqdn Little Staughton

TROSSY STE MAXIMIN 3hrs.20mins. 1130-1450hrs. 13 out, all OK.

FLYING - BOMB STORAGE SITES

291 aircraft - 169 Halifaxes, 112 Lancasters, 10 Mosquitoes - of 6 and 8 Groups attacked the Bois de Cassan and Trossy-St-Maxim sites in clear visibility. 2 Halifaxes of 6 Group were lost on the Bois de Cassan raid and 2 Lancasters on the Trossy-St-Maxim raid.

A posthumous Victoria Cross was later awarded to Squadron Leader I. W. Bazalgette of 635 Squadron, captain of one of the aircraft lost on the all 8 Group raid on Trossy-St-Maxim. Bazalgette's Lancaster was hit by flak and set on fire while approaching the target but the pilot carried on to release his markers and bombs on target. (The statement in the V.C. citation that Bazalgette was Master Bomber for this raid is not correct, although he had acted as Master Bomber on earlier raids.) On leaving the target, the Lancaster dived steeply, almost out of control, but the pilot was able to recover from this and 4 members of his crew were able to bale out. Bazalgette then made a good crash landing in an attempt to save his wounded bomb aimer and the mid-upper gunner who was overcome by fumes or smoke, but the Lancaster exploded and all three men still inside were killed. Squadron Leader Bazalgette and his two comrades are buried at the small village of Senantes.

5 Aug 1944

Lanc III A

Pilot F/Lt Gipson

PB 202

582 Sqdn Little Staughton

ST. LEU DESSERT 3hrs. 10mins. 1135-1435hrs 8 out, all OK.

FLYING BOMB SITES

742 aircraft - 469 Halifaxes, 257 Lancasters, 16 Mosquitoes - of 4,5, and 8 Groups attacked the Foret de Nieppe and St-Leu- d'Esserent storage sites. Bombing conditions were good. 1 Halifax lost from the St Leu-d'Esserent raid. 31 Lancasters and 8 Mosquitoes of 8 Group attempted to carry out small Oboe leader raids on 4 launching sites but only 4 aircraft succeeded in bombing, None lost. Again described in the Squadron log as constructional works.

Total effort for the day; 1, 148 sorties, 3 aircraft lost (0.3%)

7 Aug 1944

Pilot F/Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
ND 880

MARE DE MAGNE 2hrs.55mins. 2215-0110hrs. 16 out, 1 Missing.

NORMANDY AREA (Totalise in Squadron Log)

1,019 aircraft - 614 Lancasters, 392 Halifaxes, 13 Mosquitoes - attacked five aiming points in front of Allied ground troops. The attacks were carefully controlled - only 660 aircraft bombed - and German strong points and the roads around them were well cratered. 10 aircraft - all Lancasters - were lost, 7 to German fighters, 2 to flak and 1 to an unknown cause.

Total effort for the night; 1,117 sorties, 10 aircraft lost (0.9%).

THE RETURN TO GERMANY

18 Aug 1944

Pilot F/Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
ND 880

BREMEN 5hrs.05mins. 2130-0235hrs. 14 out, all OK.

288 aircraft - 216 Lancasters, 65 Halifaxes, 7 Mosquitoes. 1 Lancaster lost.

Visibility over the target was clear and the Pathfinders provided perfect marking throughout the raid. Bremens own records show this to have been the most destructive raid of the war, although only 274 aircraft attacked, dropping just over 1, 100 tons of bombs. The whole of the centre and the North-Western parts of Bremen, including the port area, were devastated. The 10 page report from Bremen is a more emotive and erratic document than normal, much of it describing the effects of the fierce fires (described as a firestorm), the condition of the packed bodies of victims later found in shelters (300 bodies were found in the Lesmona public shelter), the distress of the rescue workers and the suffering of the bombed-out people. At least 1 ,058 bodies were recovered, of which 375 bodies could not be identified. The number of people classed as "missing" far exceeded the 375 unidentified bodies. 8,635 "dwelling-houses", as usual in German cities, many of them being blocks of flats, were burnt out and 611 were severely damaged. The official who compiled the report made no attempt to list the commercial and industrial buildings hit, " it would be endless", he wrote, but he did stress the severe damage caused to the port area, mentioning that 18 ships were sunk in the harbour 61 seriously damaged alongside wharves. Special ration cards were issued to the civilian population after this raid to help restore morale - 100 grammes of real bean coffee and 2 half bottles of spirits, 250 grammes of sweets for the children.

Total effort for the night; 1,069 sorties, 4 aircraft lost (0.4%).

6 sept 1944

Pilot F/Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
ND 880

LE HAVRE API 2hrs.55mins. 1635-1925hrs. 8 out, all OK.

344 aircraft - 311 Lancasters, 30 Mosquitoes, 3 Stirlings - bombed German fortifications and transport without loss.

A raid on the previous day was described as the first of a series of heavy raids on the German positions around Le Havre which were still holding out after being by-passed by the Allied advance.

8 sept 1944

Pilot F/Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
ND 880

LE HAVRE AP14 2hrs.25mins. 0639-0905hrs. 6 out, 1 missing.

333 aircraft - 304 Lancasters, 25 Mosquitoes, 4 Stirlings - of 1,3 and 8 Groups attempted to bomb German positions but the weather was bad, with low cloud base, and only 109 aircraft bombed, with indifferent results. 2 Lancasters were lost. The 4 Stirlings on this raid, all from 149 Squadron based at Methwold, were the last Bomber Command Stirlings to carry out a bombing operation. It is believed that Stirling LK 396, piloted by Flying Officer J.J. McKee, an Australian, was the last Stirling to bomb the target.

12 sept 1944

Pilot F/Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
ND 880

FRANKFURT 5hrs.45mins. 1935-0120hrs. 14 out, all OK.

378 Lancasters and 9 Mosquitoes of 1,3 and 8 Groups on the last major R.A.F. raid of the war against Frankfurt. 17 Lancasters lost, 4.5% of the Lancaster force. The local report says that the raid occurred when many of the city's firemen and rescue workers were away working in Darmstadt. The bombing caused severe destruction in the Western districts of the city, which contained many industrial premises. Property damage was extensive. A troop train was hit at the West Station. 469 people were killed, including 172 inside a public shelter in the Bockenheim district, the 2 metre thick concrete side wall of which was blown in by a high explosive bomb. The last fires were not extinguished until the evening of the 15th. The next entry in the Frankfurt diary, for mid-September, says that members of the Hitler Youth, the Reichsarbeitsdienst (a labour service) and the Organisation Todt were being sent to work on the strengthening of the Westwall (Siegfried Line) fortifications, a sign that Allied troops were approaching the German homeland.

Total effort for the night; 901 sorties 23 aircraft lost 2.6%

15 sept 1944

Pilot F/Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
ND 880

KIEL 5hrs.15mins. 2225-0340hrs. 16 out, 1 missing.

490 aircraft - 310 Lancasters, 173 Halifaxes, 7 Mosquitoes - out of 1,4,6 and 8 Groups. 4 Halifaxes and 2 Lancasters lost. The evidence of returning crews and of photographs caused Bomber Command to record this as a highly concentrated raid with the Old town and modern shopping centre devastated. The local report confirms this as a heavy attack, and records damage in the centre and port areas, but describes how much of the bombing fell outside Kiel. Unusually low numbers of 12 deaths and 28 people injured were recorded.

Total effort for the night; 856 sorties, 1 aircraft lost (1.3%).

17 sept 1944

Pilot F/Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
ND 880

BOULOGNE AP3 2hrs.20mins. 1035-1255hrs. 10 out, all OK.

762 aircraft - 370 Lancasters, 351 Halifaxes, 41 Mosquitoes - dropped more than 3,000 tons of bombs on German positions around Boulogne in preparation for an attack by Allied troops. The German positions surrendered soon afterwards. 1 Halifax and 1 Lancaster lost.

Total effort for the day; 952 sorties, 2 aircraft lost (0.28).

23 sept 1944

Pilot F/Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
ND 880

NEUSS 3hrs.25mins. 1949-2314hrs. 3 out, all OK.

549 aircraft - 378 Lancasters, 154 Halifaxes, 17 Mosquitoes - of 1,3,4 and 8 Groups. 5 Lancasters and 2 Halifaxes lost. Bomber Command's report states that most of the bombing fell in the dock and factory areas. A short local report only says that 617 houses were destroyed or seriously damaged, and that 289 people were killed and 150 injured.

Total effort for the night; 923 sorties, 22 aircraft lost (2.4%).

5 Oct 1944

Pilot F/Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
ND 880

SARBRUCKEN 5hrs.10mins. 1945-0044hrs.

531 Lancasters and 20 Mosquitoes of 1, 3, and 8 Groups on the first major R.A.F. raid to this target since September 1942. 3 Lancasters lost. The raid was made at the request of the American Third Army which was advancing in this direction; the intention was to cut the railways and block supply routes generally through the town. The bombing was accurate and severe damage was caused in the main town area North of the River Saar, the area through which the main railway lines ran. Damage was particularly severe in the Altstadt and Malstatt districts. 5,882 houses were destroyed and 1, 141 were seriously damaged. 344 people were killed, a figure which suggests that much of the population may have been evacuated from this town, which was situated right on the Siegfried Line.

6 Oct 1944

Pilot F/Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III C
PB 475

DORTMUND 4hrs.50mins. 1726-2215hrs.

523 Aircraft - 248 Halifaxes, 247 Lancasters, 28 Mosquitoes - of 3,6, and 8 Groups. 6 Group provided 293 aircraft - 248 Halifaxes and 45 Lancasters, the greatest effort of the war from the Canadian Group. This raid opened a phase which some books refer to as the "Second Battle of the Ruhr". 5 aircraft - 2 Halifaxes of 6 Group, 2 Lancasters and 1 Mosquito - lost, less than 1% of the force raiding this Ruhr target on a clear night. The Pathfinder marking and the bombing were both accurate and severe damage was caused, particularly to the industrial and transportation areas of the city, although residential areas also suffered badly. Civilian casualties were 191 dead, 38 missing and 418 injured.

Total effort for the night; 947 sortie, 12 aircraft lost (1.3%).

23 Oct 1944

Pilot F/Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
PB 630

ESSEN 4hrs.05mins. 1718-2126hrs.

1,055 aircraft - 561 Lancasters, 463 Halifaxes, 31 Mosquitoesc This was the heaviest raid on Essen so far in the war and the number of aircraft dispatched was also the greatest number to any target so far these new records were achieved without the Lancasters of 5 Group being included. 5 Lancasters and 3 Halifaxes were lost. 4,538 tons of bombs were dropped. More than 90% of this tonnage was high explosive (and included 509 4,000-pounders) because it was now considered that most of the burnable buildings in Essen had been destroyed in earlier raids. The greater proportion of high explosive, against all the trends in earlier area bombing raids, was now quite common in attacks on targets, which had suffered major fire damage in 1943.

A report from Essen states that 607 buildings were destroyed and 812 were seriously damaged; 662 people were killed, a figure which included 124 foreign workers and 569 people were injured. Other details from Essen and Bomber Command's own claims for bombing results are given in the report for a further raid on 25 October, which sets out details of the severe damage to the Krupps steelworks. The companies own records report "an almost complete breakdown of the electrical supply network and to complete paralysis. The Borbeck pig iron plant ceased work completely and there is no record of any further production from this important section of Krupps. The point is also made that much of the industrial production had been dispersed and that the city had lost its role as one of the most important centres of war production.

25 Oct 1944

Pilot F/Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
PB 630

HOMBERG 3hrs.30mins. 1348-1728hrs.

243 aircraft - 199 Halifaxes, 32 Lancasters, 12 Mosquitoes - of 6 and 8 Groups attacked the Oil plant at Meerbeck. The target was covered by cloud. Bombing was scattered in the early stages of but later became more concentrated on the sky markers. The results of the raid are not known. No aircraft were lost.

31 Oct 1944

Pilot F/Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
PB 338

COLOGNE 3hrs.50mins. 1851-2242hrs.

905 aircraft - 438 Halifaxes, 435 Lancasters, 32 Mosquitoes. No aircraft lost. This was an OBOE marked raid through cloud, and Bomber Command estimated that only "scattered and light damage was caused in the Western part of the city". The local report shows that enormous damage was caused in the suburbs of Braunsfeld, Lindenthal, Klettenberg and Sulz, which were "thoroughly ploughed up", by the huge tonnage of high explosive dropped (3,431 tons of high explosive and 610 tons of incendiaries were dropped). A vast amount of property, mostly civilian housing, was destroyed but railways and public utilities were also hit There was little industry in the area that was bombed. Among the buildings destroyed or seriously damaged were Cologne University, the local army garrison headquarters and the 1,000 year Old St. Gereon church, struck by a heavy bomb which blew "an enormous hole"; the damage took 35 years to repair! 497 Germans were killed and 57 were missing. The number of foreigners is not known but a prisoner of war camp in the Heliostasse was destroyed.

Total effort for the night; 1,072 sorties, 2 aircraft lost(0.2%) .

2 Nov 1944

Pilot F/Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
PB 388

DUSSELDORF 4hrs.15mins 1656-21 IOhrs.

992 aircraft - 561 Lancasters, 400 Halifaxes, 31 Mosquitoes, 11 Halifaxes and 8 Lancasters were lost, 4 of the losses being crashes behind Allied lines in France and Belgium. This heavy attack fell mainly on the Northern half of Dusseldorf. More than 5, 000 houses were destroyed or badly damaged. 7 industrial premises were destroyed and 18 were seriously damaged, including some important steel firms. At least 678 people were killed and more than 1,000 were injured. This was the last major Bomber Command raid of the war on Dusseldorf.

Total effort for the night; 1, 131 sorties, 19 aircraft lost(1.3%).

11 Nov 1944

Pilot F/Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III P
PB 120

DORTMUND 4hrs.15mins. 1658-2114hrs.

209 Lancasters and 19 Mosquitoes of 1 and 8 Groups. No aircraft lost. The aiming point was the Hoesch Benzin synthetic-oil plant in the Wambel district. A local report confirms that the plant was severely damaged other bombs hit nearby housing and local airfield. 83 people were killed and 85 injured.

20 Nov 1944

Pilot F/Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
PB 558

KOBLENZ 4hrs.20mins. 0055-0514hrs.

43 Lancasters of 8 Group made an unusual Pathfinder solo raid on Koblenz without loss. The purpose of the raid was not recorded. It is possible that either the large road and rail bridges over the Rhine and Mosel or the local railway yards were the targets. Only high explosive bombs were carried. Koblenz was completely covered by cloud and all bombing was by H2S from 15,000ft. The local report states that some bombs fell in the town, blocking several roads and railways and scoring hits on a road and rail bridge, although these remained usable. Part of the bombing fell well outside the town. 62 civilians, 1 female Ukrainian worker and 5 or 6 German soldiers were killed and 48 people were injured.

30 Nov 1944

Pilot F/Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
PB 558

DUISBERG 4hrs.25mins. 1743-2210hrs.

576 aircraft - 425 Halifaxes, 126 Lancasters, 25 Mosquitoes - of 1, 4, 6 and 8 Groups - 3 Halifaxes lost. The target area was completely cloud covered and the attack was not concentrated but much fresh damage was still caused. Duisberg reports 528 houses destroyed and 805 seriously damaged, but no industrial buildings are mentioned in the report. 264 people were killed, including 55 foreign workers and 12 prisoners of war.

Total effort for the night; 733 sorties, 4 aircraft lost(0.5%).

12 Dec 1944

Pilot F/Lt. Gipson
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III A
PB 558

ESSEN 6hrs.55mins. 1717- 2132hrs.

540 aircraft - 349 Lancasters, 163 Halifaxes, 28 Mosquitoes - of 1, 4, and 8 Groups, 6 Lancasters were lost. This was the last heavy night raid by Bomber Command on Essen (though 2 day raids were still to come in 1945). During the post-war interrogations of Albert Speer, Whistlers Armaments Minister, he was asked which forms of attack were most effective in weakening the Germans war effort. After referring to the effectiveness of daylight raids and to some of the OBOE Mosquito attacks, Speer paid a compliment to the accuracy of this raid on Essen, "The last night attack upon the Krupps works, which was carried out by a large number of four-engine bombers, caused a surprise on account of the accuracy of the bomb pattern. We assumed that this attack was the first large- scale operation based on OBOE or some other new navigational system." (The Speer interrogations are recorded in the British Official History, Vol. IV, pp378-95). A report from Essen shows that, besides the industrial damage caused on this raid, 696 houses were destroyed and 1,370 seriously damaged. The fatal casualty details are unusual. The total number of people killed was 463, made up of 160 German civilians, 89 prisoners of war, 13 foreign workers and 201 prisoners who were killed when the city prison was hit; a further 39 prisoners were "missing".

Total effort for the night; 675 sorties, 6 aircraft lost(0.9%).

23 Dec 1944

Pilot F/Lt. Cairns
582 Sqdn Little Staughton

Lanc III Z

?? ???

GREMBERG 4hrs,30mins.

Cologne/ Gremberg. 27 Lancasters and 3 Mosquitoes of 8 Group to attack the Gremberg railway yards. The raid went very badly. The force was split into 3 formations, each led by an OBOE equipped Lancaster with an OBOE Mosquito as a reserve leader. During the outward flight, two Lancasters of 35 Squadron collided over the French coast and their crews were all killed. On approaching the target, it was found that the cloud which had been forecast had cleared and it was decided to allow the bombers to break formation and to bomb visually; this move was made because the formations would have been very vulnerable to Cologne's flak defences during the long straight OBOE approach. Unfortunately the order to abandon the OBOE run did not reach the leading Lancaster, a 582 Squadron aircraft piloted by Squadron Leader R.A.M. Palmer, D.F.C. (on loan from 109 Squadron), who continued on with his designated role, even though his aircraft was already damaged by flak. German fighters, who were being directed to intercept an American bomber force, also appeared and attacked.

The bombs from Sq.Ldr. Palmer's aircraft were eventually released and hit the target but his plane went down out of control and only the tail gunner escaped by parachute. Sq.Ldr. Palmer, on his 110th operation, was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross, the only OBOE V.C. of the war; his body is buried in the Rheinberg War Cemetery with the other men who died in the Lancaster. The formation suffered further losses when another Lancaster and a Mosquito were shot down by flak and fighters and a further Lancaster had to be abandoned by its crew over Belgium. The losses were thus 6 aircraft out of the 30 dispatched.

4 Feb 1946

Pilot Sq. Ldr. Williams
582 Sqdn Little Staughto

Lanc III D

SW 260

BONN 4hrs.30mins. 1836-2304hrs.

238 aircraft - 202 Halifaxes, 20 Lancasters, 16 Mosquitoes - of 4, 6 and 8 Groups. 3 Lancasters lost. This was a poor attack, with most of the bombing falling to the South of the target or over the Rhine in the Brie area. 19 people were killed.

This was the last of 55 operational flights (43 night 12 day) totalling 244hrs 05mins. The duration of a tour of operations appears to have varied during the war but what is clear is that this was at least a double tour, the considered norm for Pathfinder crews. Survival rates also varied as the war progressed and those joining later on clearly stood a better chance of survival. Even so it was no picnic.

Between September 1943 and September '44, which covers the majority of Hugh Stevensons' operational sorties, 16,483 Bomber Command aircrew were recorded killed or missing presumed dead.

THE PATHFINDER FORCE

The RAF entered the war with a bombing policy which envisaged daylight operations by aircraft in formations which would defend themselves by the combined and mutually supporting fire of their power-operated gun turrets, Heavy and sustained casualties disproved this theory and from the Spring of 1940 most bombing was conducted during the hours of darkness. As a natural corollary to daylight bombing the RAF anticipated little difficulty in accurate navigation to and identification of, its specifically military targets. Night flying and navigation had, of course, been practised before the war but such exercises naturally could not include blackout or anti-aircraft measures nor was it conducted at the increased operational heights which avoidance of flak defences necessitated.

It was little wonder, therefore, that when an assessment of Bomber Command's performance was made in Summer 1941 the results were found to be woefully below what had been expected of its tireless and unstinting effort.

The Butt Report acknowledged that only 20% of crews released their bombs within 5 miles of the target. In response to this unsatisfactory performance Bomber Command adopted the methods that Kampfgruppe 100 had used during the Blitz, namely identifying the target with reconnaissance flares and illuminating it with incendiaries. These makeshift measures met with some little success but they still could not provide a distinctive and precise aiming point.

The necessity for 'raid initiating squadrons' within Bomber Command was perceived by all but there were severe disagreements as to what form these units should take and particularly as to whether they should be concentrated as one Group or split amongst the whole Bomber force.

Portal and the Air Staff eventually decided in favour of the single Group to perform this function and the Pathfinder Force was set up in August 1942 with units drawn from each of the five Bomber Command Groups. No. 156 Squadron with Wellingtons came from 1 Group, No. 109 with Mosquitoes from 2 Group, 3 Group provided No. 7 Squadron with Stirlings while the Halifaxes of No.35 Squadron were transferred from 4 Group and No.83 Squadron with Lancasters came from 5 Group.

The force was posted to Oakington, Wyton, Graveley and Warboys, all in the Huntingdon-Cambridge area and was put under the command of Group Captain (later Air Vice Marshal) D T C Bennett.

Within a short time it became clear that the experiment was working and Main Force bomber crews, were able to recognize and respond to the showers of pyrotechnics laid down to guide them. This success and the ever increasing scale of the Bomber Command offensive against Germany led to an increase in the Pathfinder Order of Battle. By December 1943 three more stations had been taken over - Bourn, Gransden Lodge and Marham - and the force had doubled in size. One of the newcomers was No.405 Squadron Royal Canadian Air Force reflecting the contribution of 6 Group which had become operational on 1 January 1943.

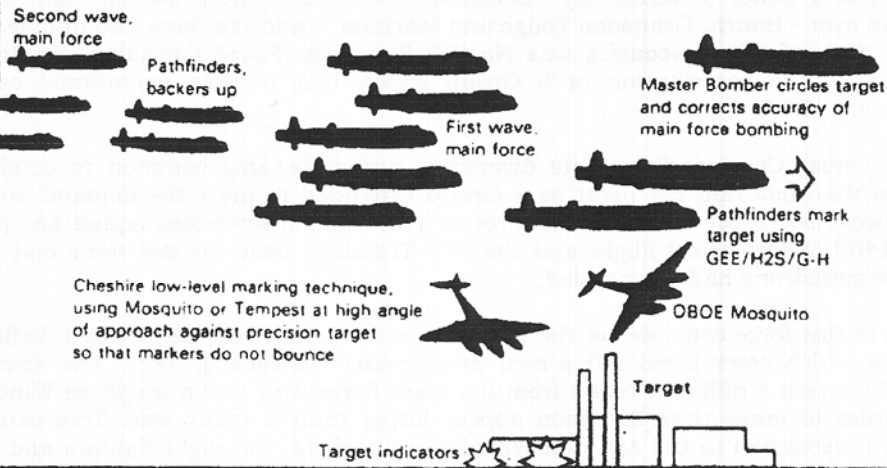
As Bomber Command's targets diversified and it became common to conduct more than one raid per night so 8 Group expanded to meet the demand on its services. December 1944 saw the force at a strength of seventeen squadrons plus No. 1409 Meteorological Flight and the PFF Training Unit. By the wars end two more squadrons had been added.

Part of this force consisted of the Mosquito squadrons of the Light Night Striking Force which constituted PFF's own diversionary distracting force. The aircraft would attack a different target from the Main Force and would dispense Window in order to make their diversion appear larger than it really was. This caused much disruption to the Air Raid Warning authorities, the night fighters and the civilian population when raid counter-measures were initiated in expectation of a major assault which never arrived. Nonetheless they did considerable damage as the Mosquito was able to carry the 4,000lb High Capacity 'Cookie'.

8 Group's contribution to the success of the bomber offensive was inestimable. Indeed as the Butt Report proved, it was the key without which the efforts of the Main Force for all its gallantry, would have been very largely wasted.

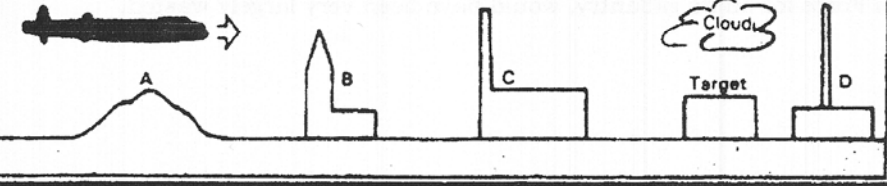
BOMBING TECHNIQUES IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Pathfinder, Master Bomber, low-level marking



Time and distance and offset marking

Pilot flies at constant speed. Navigator measures time taken to fly A-B. Knowing the distance of C to target, he calculates time from C to target while he is flying B-C and then orders bomb aimer to release bombs when time is up. Alternatively, if weather permits, master bomber orders D to be marked and instructs main force to correct their sights onto target, using D as reference.



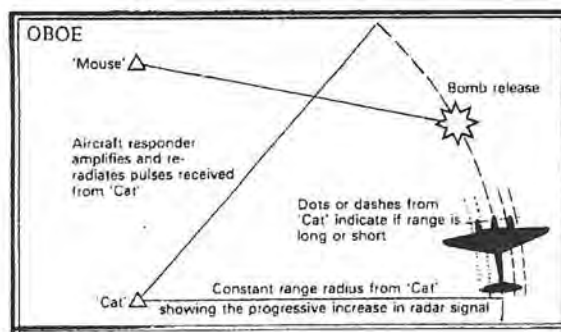
The Oboe system employed ground stations in the UK to determine the position of an aircraft over Germany and provided the means of directing it to the release point for its target indicator flares with great accuracy.

The two ground stations, nick-named the 'Cat' and the 'Mouse' transmitted pulses of radio energy which were received in the aircraft, amplified and retransmitted to the ground stations. The ground stations measured the time intervals between the transmission of the pulses and their reception back from the aircraft. These time intervals permitted the range of the aircraft from each station to be calculated to a high order of precision. The intersection of the range radii from the two stations thus defined the position of the aircraft.

Having been navigated to a suitable point, the pilot was directed to fly the aircraft along the path of an arc of a circle, centred on the Cat station, which passed through the calculated release point for the target indicator. This path was indicated by a constant tone passed by radio to the pilot's earphones; deviation from the path toward the Cat station was indicated by short bursts of this tone, deviation away from the Cat station by long bursts.

Meanwhile the Mouse station was continually measuring the distance to the aircraft and calculating the distance of the aircraft from the computed release point. Warning signals were transmitted to the pilot at appropriate ranges from the release point and then at time intervals as the aircraft approached that point. The last warning, at 3 minutes from release, was followed by a signal which automatically released the target indicator.

Using Oboe it was possible for the Mosquitoes of NOS. 105 and 109 Squadrons to mark targets out to approximately 300 miles from the UK to an accuracy of the order of 150 yards.



H2S - HOW IT WORKS

A SIMPLIFIED EXPLANATION

When a radio wave is transmitted downwards from an aircraft, the amount of energy reflected back to the aircraft from a given point on the ground depends on the nature of the terrain. Water reflects almost no energy back, open country a small amount and built-up areas much more.

In H2S pulses of microwave radio energy were transmitted in a fan shaped beam, broad vertically but narrow horizontally, which rotated about a vertical axis beneath the aircraft, so scanning the terrain over which it was flying. The pulses reflected from points on the ground return to the aircraft after time delays proportional to their distance from it. The pulses were displayed as a spot on a cathode ray tube and this spot became more or less bright according to the amount of energy reflected back from the terrain. The spot moved out along a radial line from the centre to the edge of the tube each time a radio pulse left the aircraft, at a rate proportional to the time taken for the pulse to return from the successive points on the ground which, at that instant, lay within the narrow horizontal radio beam, The radial line on the tube rotated in synchronism with the radio beam, so producing a "light map" of the response from the terrain over which the aircraft was travelling. The centre of this "display" was indicative of the point on the ground vertically beneath the aircraft and thus of its position.

The direction in which the aircraft was travelling was indicated by a distinct brightening of the radial line on the tube when the emission of the scanning beam was along the heading of the aircraft, to form the "heading marker".

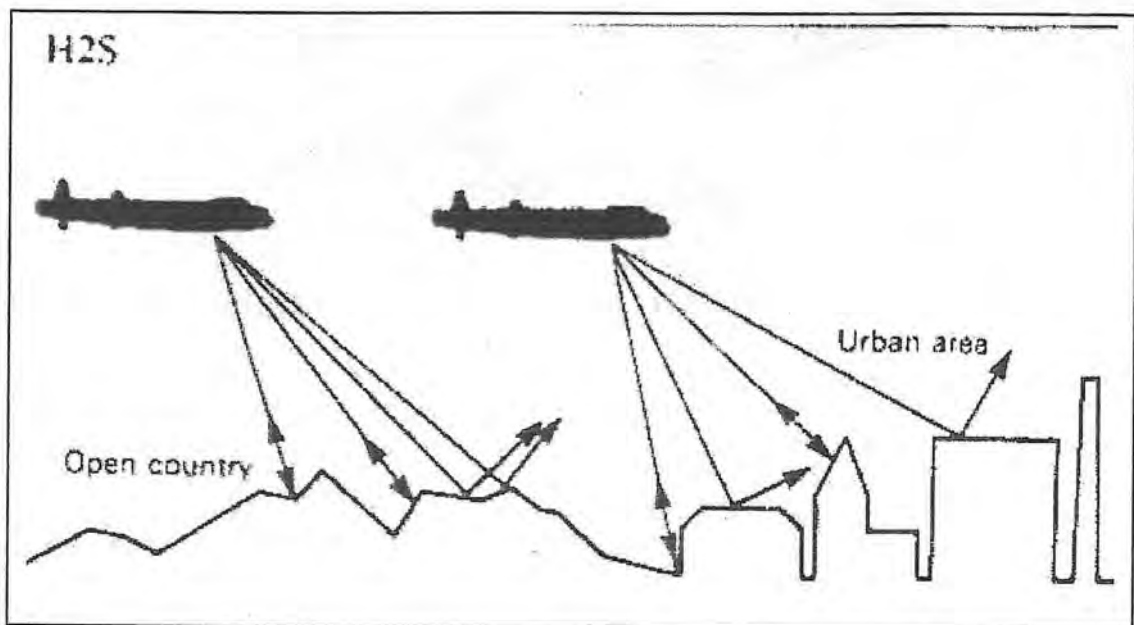
The display on the tube was orientated by the aircraft's compass to maintain true North at the top. The bearing from the aircraft of responses from points on the ground could then be determined by rotating the perspex bearing-plate in front of the display until the line engraved upon it passed through the response.

Range was determined by the generation of a bright spot which was superimposed on every radial line at a constant delay after the transmitted pulse left the aircraft. This could be adjusted by a control calibrated in miles. Thus a circle of constant range was produced on the tube and by adjusting this 'range marker' to pass through a response, it was possible to measure the distance from the aircraft of the feature on the ground producing that response or image.

Thus the bearing and range from the aircraft of an identifiable feature could be measured, so giving the navigator a 'fix'.

To use H2S to release a target indicator flare (TI), the range marker was set to the calculated forward throw of the TI taking into account the method of attack. The pilot was then directed to fly the aircraft such that the heading marker passed through the response from the selected target. When the intersection of the heading line and range ring coincided with the response from the target, the TI was released.

H2S was carried in all Halifax, Lancaster and Stirling aircraft of the PFF and in Mosquitoes of No. 139 Squadron.



AVRO Lancaster Heavy Bomber



AVRO's entry in the heavy bomber category was the last, and best, English heavy bomber of WWII. They flew more missions, and dropped a greater tonnage of bombs than all of the other English heavy bombers combined. The origins of the Lancaster came from the development of the AVRO Manchester bomber powered by two Rolls-Royce Vulture engines. It wasn't long after the Manchesters made it into service in 1940 that it was realized the complex and under-powered Vulture engine would not suffice. Roy Chadwick, the designer, replaced the two Vulture engines with four Merlin engines and tested the aircraft. Voila! The Lancaster was born with superb handling characteristics, relatively high speed and the capability of hauling a heavy load over a long distance, 1f empty of bombs it could fly on one engine, although losing height. On two engines it could maintain level flight. It could be handled like a fighter aircraft, being able to dive sharply to over 400 mph. These characteristics helped a lot of bomber crews reach their targets and get home again. The first Lancaster Is took to the air in October, 1941. Other than the engines it differed from it's progenitor in the adoption of a mid-upper and belly turrets. Soon the belly turrets were removed as they were at first useless for night flying. They would have been some use against German fighters equipped with upwards firing cannons in 1944. Lancaster I models fought throughout the rest of the war, although individually few made it to 100 operational softies. A high production schedule of Lancasters soon meant that Merlin engines were in short supply (they were also used in Spitfires, Mosquitos, Halifax bombers and many other aircraft). This necessitated adopting an alternative power plant. The Lancaster I was fitted with the Bristol Hercules radial engine and renamed the Lancaster II. After a long testing program' it went into operational service in March, 1943. The Mark II possessed good overall flying characteristics, but it never equalled the Merlin-powered model. The Hercules-powered aircraft had better takeoff, ascent and low altitude flight characteristics than the Lancaster Is, but they flew slower and used more fuel. The arrival of American-built Merlin engines (built under license by Packard) doomed the Lancaster II after a production run of 301 aircraft. The Packard Merlin-powered Lancasters were the III model, however, they were nearly identical to the I. There was also a Mark VII built by taking Mark Is and IIIs, adding a four-bladed propellor, and removing the nose and tail turrets. They were loaded with electronic jamming equipment. These were the special aircraft of No. 100 (Bomber Support) Group designed to fly in the bomber stream and jam the German electronic defences. Lancaster Xs were Lancaster Is built in Canada by the Victory Motor Works of Malton, Ontario. The Lancasters continued well into the 1950's with England, Canada, and Australia. A total of 7,366 Lancasters of all Marks were built.

Technical Details

The Lancaster I carried a crew of seven; pilot, flight engineer, observer/nose gunner/bomb aimer, navigator, wireless operator, mid-upper gunner, and tail gunner (see below). It was powered by four Rolls-Royce Merlin XXIV, 12 cyl. V block, liquid-cooled engines of 1,620 hp each. It's maximum range, speed and bomb load were all dependant on each other. With a typical bomb load, it reached a maximum speed of 286 mph (462 km/h) , an ceiling of 24,671 ft (7,500 m) and a range of 2,527 miles (4,070 km). It carried eight 0.303 caliber machine guns, two in the nose, two in the upper turret and four in the rear turret. Total shells carried reached 14,000. The bomb load in 1941 was 8,000 lb. and could be a Wide mixture of high explosive and incendiary bombs. It eventually reached 22,000 lb (a single Grand Slam bomb) with special modifications to strengthen the fusilage and removal of the bomb bay doors.

Bombaimer/Nose Gunner



Pilot and Flight Engineer



Navigator



Wireless Operator



Mid-upper Gunner



Tail Gunner



Development Avro Lincoln Bomber



The Lincoln bomber was the last piston-engined bomber to be employed under operational conditions by the RAF. It was originally seen as the logical development of the very successful Avro Lancaster and was in fact named as Lancaster IV or V, the difference being the type of engine fitted - Rolls Royce or Packard Merlin. As the design study progressed it became apparent that the aircraft would be substantially different and hence a different but associated name was chosen.

The main thrust of the design was to extend the operational range of the Lancaster with an equivalent bomb load, a requirement dictated by the needs of the war in the Far East. The same requirement resulted in one of the earliest provisions of in-flight refuelling. Work started in 1943 but proceeded slowly because of the production demands of the Lancaster. The first prototype Lincoln PW 925 was built and the aircraft flown for the first time from Ringway, Manchester on 9th June 1944 in the hands of Captain H.A. Brown.

Deliveries of Lincolns began in February 1945 which coincided with Hugh Stevensons stand down from operational flying. The early aircraft were fitted with Merlin 85 engines and went in the main to trial units or Maintenance Units at Woodford or Langar. The first production Lincoln RE227 was sent to Boscombe Down for handling trials, whilst two others RE228 and RE230 appeared at Rolls-Royce Hucknall for engine installation tests. It is also apparent from Hugh Stevensons log book that both these aircraft spent some time at Boscombe Down on intensive flying trials.

It is certain that these trials were associated with the early problems of severe vibration which resulted in various unservicabilities. I can recall my father recounting stories of how engines on earlier models had simply flown out of their mountings and I think he said that one of the previous trial planes had crashed as a result. If this is so, and I have as yet not been able to find any corroborating facts, it seems likely that it was the first production model RE227 or perhaps one of the earlier prototypes. As a result of this when he joined the Intensive Flying Development Flight, whilst being shown all the facilities available to the Navigator he apparently remarked " Well that's all fine but which is the quickest way out?".

Another tale that I recall was that the solution to the problem was thought up by one of the boffins during a motor journey with colleagues. Apparently the vibrations in the car led him to think about resonance and he suddenly suggested that the solution lay in changing the resonant frequency of the engines by increasing the number of blades on the propeller to four from three.

The official account of the flying trials are recorded in the Aeroplane & Armament Experimental Establishment Reports 822/ 17, 822/ 19, 822a/2, & 822a/ 3-8 held in the library at Boscombe Down.

Lincoln RE 228 undertook a total of 172 flying hours of which Hugh Stevenson flew 52. The report shows that the main purpose of the trials was to discover and eliminate the cause of joint failures on the Merlin 85 engine due to vibration. The main cause of this was believed to be plugs and propellers. After 23 hours of test flying, the three bladed propellers were replaced with four bladed ones and the problem was cured. The tests started on 27 th March and finished on 10th July 1945 and since Hugh Stevenson flew in this aircraft from May 18th to June 11th 1945 it seems likely that the change of propeller had taken place by this time. The original propellers were Nash Kelvinator three bladed and these were replaced by four bladed De Havilland's, but as the service aircraft were to have Rotol propellers, these were fitted before any flying took place.

RE 230 flew for 55 hours with three bladed propellers fitted to Packard Merlin 68 engines. A further 150 hours were flown with four bladed propellers, giving a total of 205 flying hours between 22nd March and 8th June with Hugh Stevensons' 38 hours fitting in between 3 March and May 17th 1945. Apparently four engine failures were recorded due to vibration with the three bladed propellers with Rotol Propellers being fitted at 55 flying hours and De Havilland propellers at 117 hours.

No real details are available on RF 337 (shown in the logbook as RE 337) except that it completed various flying trials including propeller surging.

One further memory of these days was of a Lincoln circling over our home town of Wallasey and Mum and two boys waving frantically from our back yard, to be rewarded with a wing waggle before the plane flew back to base.

This then was the final chapter in a flying career that had logged just over 700 flying hours. From Boscombe Down Hugh Stevenson went on to RAF, Burn and Mildenhall and there began an interest in photography which he brought with him into "civvy street" when demobbed on 13th February 1946.



RECORD OF SERVICE

OF

FLYING OFFICER HUGH GRANT STEVENSON DFC (175069)

DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH - 3 February 1909 Liverpool

NON-COMMISSIONED SERVICE

Enlisted as No 1534065 Aircraftman 2nd Class	20 Jun 41
Aircrafthand/Observer	26 Nov 41
Leading Aircraftman under training Observer Group 2	28 Aug 42
Under training navigator	23 Dec 42
Temporary Sergeant remustered Air Navigator	12 Dec 43
Temporary Flight Sergeant	19 Apr 44
Discharged on appointment to temporary Commission	

APPOINTMENTS AND PROMOTIONS

Granted a Commission for the duration of the Emergency as Pilot Officer on probation in the General Duties Branch of the Royal Air Force	20 Apr 44
Confirmed in appointment and promoted Flying Officer War Substantive	20 Oct 44
Acting Flight Lieutenant	1 Nov 44
Relinquished Acting Flight Lieutenant	26 Mar 45
Last day of paid service	13 Feb 46
Relinquished Commission retains rank of Flying Officer, Army, Navy and Air Force Acts 1954 and 1959	10 Feb 54

POSTINGS

No 3 Recruit Centre	20 Jun 41
Reserve	21 Jun 41
No 1 Aircrew Reception Centre	8 Sep 41
Catterick	27 Sep 41
Aircrew Disposal Wing	31 Jan 42
No 1 EROS	1 Feb 42
South Africa	27 May 42
No 75 Air School	27 May 42
No 44 Air School	28 Aug 42
United Kingdom	18 Dec 42
Harrogate	16 Jan 43
No 11 Elementary Flying Training School (on attachment)	16 Apr 43
No 7 Personnel Reception Centre	30 Apr 43
No 2(Observers) Advanced Flying Unit	19 May 43
No 30 Operational Training Unit	22 Jun 43
No 1667 Conversion Unit	21 Sep 43
No 7 Squadron	1 Dec 43

Note the false date of birth; moved forward by one year to fit age limit in place at time of call up. He was always the Dad of the crew.



POSTINGS (cont)

No 576 Squadron	28 Dec 43
No 156 Squadron	27 Feb 44
No 582 Squadron	1 Apr 44
Aircraft and Armament Experimental Establishment	26 Mar 45
RAF Burn	26 Jul 45
No 32 Base Mildenhall	28 Aug 45
Mildenhall	15 Nov 45

MEDALS, HONOURS AND AWARDS

Distinguished Flying Cross	16 Feb 45
1939-45 Star	
Aircrew Europe Star with France & Germany Clasp	
War Medal 39-45	
Defence Medal	

S C Raftree

S C RAFTREE
for Air Secretary

Note the false date of birth; moved forward by one year to fit the age limit in place at time of call up. He was always the Dad of the crew.



ROYAL AIR FORCE

PATH FINDER FORCE

*Award of
Path Finder Force Badge*

This is to certify that

ACTING FLIGHT LIEUTENANT

H. G. STEVENSON.

175069

having qualified for the award of the Path Finder Force Badge, and having now completed satisfactorily the requisite conditions of operational duty in the Path Finder Force, is hereby

Permanently awarded the Path Finder Force Badge

Issued this **8th** day of **FEBRUARY** in the year 19**45**

Air Officer Commanding, Path Finder Force.

Although my father rarely if ever talked about his time on operations we did pick up the Odd snippet. One came through a visit from a young RAAF Wireless Operator Johnny Walker, who told us that when they were flying through German flak Dad used to sing a song over the intercom which contained the line "I don't care if the ship goes down. It doesn't belong to me". I have never heard the song but through my Music Hall contacts traced it as being Take your Girlie on a Steamer". It would be great to find a recording but so far no luck. The story does however strike me as a good illustration of the more formal words in the following citation for the Distinguished Flying Cross.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HONOURS AND AWARDS.

21
373

Christian Names:- Hugh Grant Surname:- STEVENSON

Rank:- Acting Flight Lieutenant Official Number:- 175069

Command or Group:- Path Finder Force Unit:- 582 Squadron,
(No. 8 Group)

Total hours flown on operations.....216.50

Number of sorties.....50.

Total hours flown on operations since receipt of previous award.....N/A.

Number of sorties since receipt of previous award.....N/A.

Recognition for which recommended.....Non-Immediate D.F.C.

Appointment held.....Navigator

Particulars of meritorious service for which recommendation is made

Flight Lieutenant Stevenson is navigator of a Blind Marker crew that has a reputation for accuracy of timing and reliability of marking. Flight Lieutenant Stevenson's work has undoubtedly contributed largely to the building of this reputation. He has demonstrated his personal courage by the coolness and accuracy with which he works under the most hazardous circumstances. He is strongly recommended for a non-immediate award of the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Date:- 21st November, 1944.

J. G. Call
Group Captain, Commanding,
No. 582 Squadron, R. A. F.

REMARKS BY STATION COMMANDER.

This officer's outstanding ability and unflinching determination regardless of enemy opposition to carry out the task in hand makes him very worthy of the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Date:- 23rd November, 1944.

Dring
Group Captain, Commanding,
R.A.F. Station, Little Staughton.

REMARKS BY AIR OFFICER COMMANDING.

Strongly recommended.

Air Vice Marshal, Commanding.

List of operational sorties carried out by
Acting Flight Lieutenant H.G. Stevenson.

<u>Date of sortie.</u>		<u>Nature of operation.</u>	<u>Target.</u>
30th August	1943	Bombing Attack	Ammunition Dep
14th January	1944	"	Brunswick
20th "	"	"	Berlin
21st "	"	"	Magdeburg
20th February	"	"	Stuttgart
24th "	"	"	Schweinfurt
25th "	"	"	Augsburg
24th March	"	"	Berlin
26th "	"	"	Essen
9th April	"	"	Lille
10th "	"	"	Leon
20th "	"	"	Cologne
22nd "	"	"	Leon
24th "	"	"	Karlsruhe
26th "	"	"	Essen
27th "	"	"	Aulnoye
6th May	"	"	Nantes Gassicourt
9th "	"	"	Cap Griz Nez
27th "	"	"	Rennes
31st "	"	"	Montcouple
6th June	"	"	Longues
8th "	"	"	Fougères
11th "	"	"	Tours
15th "	"	"	Lez
23rd "	"	"	Coubronne
28th "	"	"	Wizernes
30th "	"	"	Villers Bocage
18th July	"	"	Cagny
20th "	"	"	Forêt Du Croc
22nd "	"	"	Linoux
22nd "	"	"	Kiel
24th "	"	"	Stuttgart
28th "	"	"	Hamburg
29th "	"	"	Battle Area
4th August	"	"	Trossy St Maximin
5th "	"	"	St Les D'Esserent
7th "	"	"	Mare De Magne
18th "	"	"	Breux
6th September	"	"	Le Havre
8th "	"	"	Le Havre
12th "	"	"	Frankfurt
15th "	"	"	Kiel
17th "	"	"	Boulaigne
23rd "	"	"	Meusa
5th October	"	"	Saarbrücken
6th "	"	"	Dortmund
23rd "	"	"	Essen
25th "	"	"	Homburg
31st "	"	"	Cologne
2nd November	"	"	Düsseldorf

T

LANCASTER LOCATION MAP



