

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## INTRODUCTION

This document is a pastiche of copied information; it does not purport to be original in any way. It is therefore without copyright. It simply chronicles certain events from the Squadron's formation in 1939 onward.

The basic concept began with extracts from official documents titled AIR/ 485, 486 & 487, the Squadron Operational Record Books (Form 540 and Appendices Form 541) held by the National Archives at Kew, London which were originally available only for personal viewing at the Archives at Kew, London but which are now available on-line (for a fee). These records very briefly summarise each 'operational' mission.

Overlaid on this was information on the human losses suffered by 50 Squadron taken from the painstakingly researched and meticulously produced document by Flt. Lt. P.C. Jacobs, RAF and the No. 50 and No. 61 Squadron Association, the "Roll Of Honour 1939 – 1945".

Finally, further information garnered from Internet and journal sources has been over-laid to expand on some of the incidents recorded briefly, by necessity, in these Operational Record Books. Wherever possible, first hand accounts have been referenced.

Such is the nature of a document such as this, written some 70 years after the event, that accounts published by some authoritative, and some not so authoritative, sources have had to be taken at face value. Responsibility for any inaccuracies is accepted by the 'author' but I have tried to cross reference as much information as possible within the constraints of budget (i.e. zero) and time (i.e. not much).

The bottom line is that no account such as this can be taken as 100% accurate.

It is hoped this document may help anyone curious in the events that followed the declaration of war in Europe in 1939 with particular relevance to No. 50 Squadron, Bomber Command, Royal Air Force.

**Plain text** is the 'authors' interpretation. *Text in Italics* is a quotation taken verbatim from the original source or record. Sources are listed at the end of this document.

These were very brave men indeed.

"We will remember them".

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# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

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## Part 1: Expansion and Consolidation

1937

On 3 May 1937, No. 50 (Bomber) Squadron was re-formed under the RAF Expansion Scheme 1936/ 37, at RAF Waddington.

As of the 14 May, Establishment No. BC/528 authorised 12 Blenheim aircraft fitted with Bristol Mercury Engines for Initial Equipment (I.E.) and 4 for Immediate Reserve (I.R.). Personnel allowed under this establishment 10 Officers; 114 other Ranks.

On the 18 May this establishment was amended to HIND aircraft with Kestrel V 540 HP Power Plant: 12 IE and 4 IR. Personnel allowed under amended establishment: 10 Officers; 80 other ranks.

21 May

(Hawker) *HIND* aircraft K6739, K6740, K6741 and K6747 delivered from No. 90 (Bomber) Squadron BICESTER.

22 May

*Pilot Officers (P/O.) J.J. Bennett and C.A. Vernieux reported for Flying Duties from 11 F.T.S. Wittering. P/O H.C.M. Pollard reported for Flying Duties from 2 F.T.S. Digby.*

23 May

(Sergeant's) *Sgt.'s 580283 W. Brodie, 580291 G.H. Wild and 580294 J. Winsor, Direct Entry Airman Pilots reported for Flying Duties from 11 F.T.S. Wittering.*

*The following day, 24 May Sgt.'s 563034 E.R. Abbott, 563381 G.B. Smith and 564413 C.D. Stenner, all Pilots/ Fitters A.E. reported for Flying Duties from 6 F.T.S. Netheravon.*

## June 1937 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

3 June

*HIND aircraft K6742 and K6744 were delivered from No. 90 (Bomber) Squadron, Bicester followed by two more, K6738 and K6743 on 7 June.*

11 June

*Squadron Leader R.B. Sutherland, D.F.C. took over command of the Squadron.*

16 June

*P/O J.J. Bennett appointed Adjutant to the Squadron.*

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## June 1937 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 20 June

*HIND aircraft K6746, K6748, K6749 and K6750 were delivered from 90 (Bomber) Squadron Bicester.*

### 25 June

*Sgt. W. Brodie posted to 88 (B) Squadron, Waddington.*

### 30 June

*P/O's R.J. Cosgrove and D.C.F. Good reported for Flying Duties from No. 7 F.T.S. Peterborough.*

## July 1937 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 2 July

*563051 Sgt. F.W. Batchelor, Pilot/ F. Arm. reported for Flying Duties from 9 F.T.S. Thornaby.*

## August 1937 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 16 August

*Whilst flying in "Box" formation near WOODHALL SPA, in a formation of five aircraft, two of the aircraft (Hind K.6748 piloted by P/O RJ Cosgrove and Hind K.6746 piloted by 580294 Sgt. Windsor) collided in mid-air. Both aircraft crashed (where is NOT specified). No.526880 AC2 J. Crawford, (passenger) descended safely by parachute from K6748. Neither of the pilots, or the passenger in K6746, received serious injuries. The Lincolnshire Echo reported on the 17<sup>th</sup> August 1937 that the two aircraft touched wings while performing aerobatics over Woodhall Spa at 3000 feet (but probably more correctly formation flying) and subsequently both force landed, with one aircraft overturning and the other 'nosing in'. The pilots and passengers including the one who jumped for it were indeed not seriously injured.*

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## September 1937 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 4 September

*P/O P.C.S. Bagley reported from 11 F.T.S. Wittering, for Flying Duties.*

### 8 September

*“A” and “B” Flights formed. P/O RJ Cosgrove assumed command of “A” Flight and P/O CA Vernieux “B” Flight.*

### 28 September

*Two new Hind aircraft collected from the makers, L7195 and L7196, by two of the Squadron pilots.*

## October 1937 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 23 October

*P/O J.W.G. Wellham reported for Flying Duties from 5 F.T.S. Sealand. P/O R.E. Smissen reported for Flying Duties from 7 F.T.S. Peterborough. P/O's A.F. Russel and V.H. Ayres reported for Flying Duties from 9 F.T.S. Hullavington.*

## December 1937 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 14 December

*At 12.10hrs Hind K.6744 (Dual Control) aircraft crashed at NEW OLLERTON, Nottinghamshire while on a training flight. P/O R.E. Smissen (Pilot) and P/O J.W.G. Wellham (Safety Pilot) were admitted to Mansfield General Hospital, Notts, at 13.00 hours, and transferred to R.A.F. Hospital, Cranwell on the 18<sup>th</sup>. The Lincolnshire Echo of this day records the crash site as a field adjacent the New Ollerton Colliery Sports Ground.*

Representative aircraft- Hind: K6738, K6739, K6740, K6741, K6742, K6743, **K6744**, (Dual Control) K6746, K6747, K6748, K6749, K6750, L7195, L7196.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

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## 1938 BASED RAF STATION WADDINGTON

January 1938

8 January

*A/P/O. P.W. Ackroyd-Simpson reported for Flying Duties from 6 F.T.S.*

14 January

*Hind aircraft K6750 made a forced landing “near Waddington” after the engine cut resulting in the undercarriage collapsing. (From bcar.org).*

17 January

*F/Lt. H.M. Cox reported for Flying Duties from No. 1 Anti-Aircraft Co-Operation Unit (Biggin Hill) and took over command of “B” Flight from P/O C.A. Vernieux.*

31 January 1938

*Long distance bombing (!) was carried out by the Squadron to North Coates Fitties from 31 January to 5 February 1938.*

May 1938 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

5 May

*F/Lt. H.M. Cox and 560838 Cpl. L.C. Noon, F.A.E. /AG carried out a Photographic Flight in the competition for the Sassoon Photographic Challenge Trophy.*

20 May

*P/O Cosgrove granted the Acting Rank of Flying Officer.*

31 May

*A/PO R.E. Smissen posted to No.1 Balloon Training Unit, Cardington for Kite balloon training.*

June 1938 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

(Nothing in the ORB).

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

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## July 1938 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 1 July

*The Squadron's Commanding Officer, S/Ldr. R.B. Sutherland, D.F.C. promoted to rank of Wing Commander.*

### 4 July

*W/Cdr. Sutherland D.F.C. posted to Headquarters No. 3 Bomber Group Mildenhall.*

### 9 July

*A/PO's R.L.H. Harris and J.A. Meads posted to the Squadron from No. 8 F.T.S. to gain Squadron experience (Class "A" Reserve officers). P/O D.J. French posted from No. 10 F.T.S. and P/O G.R. Taylor posted in from NO. 3 F.T.S. Both attached to No. 4 E. & R.F.T.S. w.e.f. 11 July 1938.*

### 12 July

*S/Ldr. L. Young reported from C.F.S. to take over command of the Squadron.*

### 22 July 1938

*563051 Sgt. F.W. Batchelor hit the 'Chance' Landing Light when landing (at Waddington) during Night Flying.*

*Hind K6738 hit a fire tender on approach to land at Waddington and overturned. Injuries are unknown. .*

## August 1938 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 5 August

*'HOME DEFENCE EXERCISES'- "A" Flight took part in the Exercises from 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> August 1938, owing to very bad weather conditions prevailing during the period of the exercises, of the three raids attempted only one was carried out successfully. (No. 50 Squadron was one of 36 Bomber Squadrons acting as an 'attacking force' to test the air and ground defences of Great Britain. The exercise ran from 10.00hrs 5<sup>th</sup> August to 09.00hrs Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> August with a foul weather extension of 24hrs if needed (and it was, naturally). A total of 900 aircraft were involved).*

### 10 August

*"B" Flight commanded by F/Lt. H.M. Cox attached to R.A.F. Station CATTERICK until the 31 August and carried out General Service Training organised by H.Q. 22 (AC) Group, South Farnborough in co-operation with the Northern Command of the Army. Also P/O R. Lloyd posted to the Squadron for Flying Duties and duty of Navigation Officer.*

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## August 1938 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 11 August

*Information received from Air Ministry that the Sassoon Photographic Challenge Trophy had been won by this Squadron for the year 1938, the Squadron had not previously competed.*

### 19 August

*HIND aircraft K.6671 ("A" Flight) collected by P/O Cosgrove from 108 (B) Squadron, Bassingbourne.*

### 20 August

*Postings IN for Flying Duties were: A/PO R.A. McAlister from the School of Air navigation, A/PO F.B. Gabb from 2 F.T.S. and A/PO S.G. Esson from 6 F.T.S. on completion of Flying Training.*

### 21 August

*P/O's H.C.M. Pollard and P.C.S. Bagley proceeded to Gosport on appointment to H.M.S. VICTORY transferred to the "Air Branch of the Royal Navy".*

## September 1938 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 10 September

*HIND aircraft K6695 delivered to the Squadron from No. 107 (B) Squadron, Harwell, by a pilot of that Squadron.*

### 15 September

*F/Lt. H.M. Cox attached to No. 61 (B) Squadron, Hemswell w.e.f. 12 September.*

### 23 September

*A/PO's R.L.H. Harris and J.A. Meads relegated to the Reserve on completion of Squadron Training.*

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## October 1938 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 6 October

*P/O's G.R. Taylor and D.J. French arrived from No. 4 Elementary and Reserve Flying Training School (E & R.F.T.S.) Brough.*

### 9 October

*Affiliation exercises with No. 46 (Fighter) Squadron, from 9<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> October 1938.*

### 13 October

*P/O D.C.F. Good promoted to the rank of Flying Officer w.e.f. 19 September 1938.*

### 15 October

*F/Lt. H.M. Cox posted to No. 61 (B) Squadron Hemswell w.e.f. today. P/O A.F. Russell proceeded to Gosport, H.M.S. 'Victory' on appointment to the "Air Branch Of The Royal Navy".*

### 20 October

*P/O F.B. Gabb crashed when landing during Night Flying. (Injuries, if any are not known, however the next day P/O Gabb is given a desk job. This is thought to be Hind aircraft K6740 which undershot on landing at night at Waddington. .*

### 21 October

*P/O R.L.H. Harris posted to the Squadron on appointment to a Short Service Commission. P/O F.B. Gabb took over duties of Adjutant vice P/O J.J. Bennett.*

### 29 October 1938

*A/PO's K.A. Cockerell and G.B. Treasure posted to the Squadron from No. 8 F.T.S. to gain.....?(Due to the poor quality of the copying process by the National Archive, this portion of the On-line document is unreadable).*



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## November 1938 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

29 November

*A/P/O. C.A. Vernieux granted the rank of Pilot Officer w.e.f. 13 October 1938.*

## December 1938 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

9 December

*F/O R.J. Cosgrove collected (The first?) HAMPDEN aircraft from Radlett (Handley-Page's factory) – Scampton Pilot. (Possibly L4064, information via P/O Stenner/ 50 & 61 Sqdn. Association or L4062 via Chaz Bowyer).*

15 December

*F/O Cosgrove collected a HAMPDEN aircraft from Radlett.*

Representative aircraft- Hind: K6671, K6695, K6739, K6741, K6742, K6743, K6746, K6747, K6748, K6749, K6750, L7195, L7196.

Hampden L4064, L4062.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

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## 1939- BASED RAF STATION WADDINGTON

### January

#### 1 January

*P/O W.G. Wellham transferred to Air Branch of the Royal Navy.*

#### 2 January

*S/Ldr. J.R. Fleming (RAAF) posted for Flying Duties, and assumes command of "B" Flight. P/O C.A. Vernieux relinquishes the Acting rank of Flying Officer.*

#### 15 January

*Hampden L4076 'QX-D' delivered to the squadron.*

#### 17 January

*A/PO's G.B. Treasure and K.A. Cockerell relegated to Reserve on Completion of Squadron training.*

#### 28 January

*P/O J.B. Bull posted for Flying Duties.*

*Representative Aircraft: Hampden Serial Numbers L4064, L4076 QX-D, L4078, L4080.*

### February 1939 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

#### 10 February

*P/O C.A. Vernieux promoted to the rank of Flying Officer.*

#### 14 February 1939

*P/O K.A. Cockerell posted (in) for Flying Duties on appointment to Short Service Commission.*

#### 15 February

*P/O H.J. Winch granted Permanent Commission.*

#### 25 February

*P/O A.S. Luxmoore posted from School of Air Navigation on completion of Navigation Course.*

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## February 1939 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 27 February

*“B” Flight attached to 8 Armament Training Station (A.T.S.), Evanton, Scotland, until 9 March 1939.*

## March 1939 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 1 March

*P/O H.G. Winch posted for Flying Duties.*

### 2 March

*F/O's D.C.F. Good, C.A. Vernieux and R.J. Cosgrove granted the Acting rank of Flight Lieutenant.*

### 8 March

*P/O G.B. Treasure posted for Flying Duties on appointment to Short Service Commission, after relinquishing his commission in the Air Force Reserve.*

### 9 March

*“B” Flight returns from 8 A.T.S. Evanton, “A” Flight leaves for Evanton returning 29 March.*

### 11 March 1939

*A/P/O A.A.G. Trueman posted for Flying Duties; P/O W.D.B. Ruth posted from School of Air Navigation and A/P/O F.D. Middleton posted for Flying Duties on completion of Navigation Course.*

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

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## March 1939 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 20 March 1939

This is possibly the first Hampden Loss for 50 Squadron.

P/O R. A. McAlister and crew of three killed in an air accident whilst returning from 8 A.T.S. Evanton. P/O McAlister and crew crashed in Hampden **L4082** at Boultham Baths, Lincoln, on this date; the aircraft apparently went out of control and dived at high speed into open ground immediately between Boultham Baths and the bowling green, some 30 yards from the old water Works Cottages and Boultham Allotments. The aircraft hit the ground almost vertically and according to the Lincolnshire Echo the fuselage was buried in the ground. Miraculously no-one on the ground was killed or even injured. The crew were: P/O Robert Alexander McAlister, Sgt. Walter Harry Freestone, Aircraftman Norman Vincent Newsham and Aircraftman Frederick Roy Greensill. Their final resting places have yet to be established as this date lies outside the periods recorded by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (but they are not in Waddington St. Michaels). (Ref. the Lincolnshire Echo.)

### 27 March

*A/PO A.D. Pilcher posted for Flying Duties*

## April Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 1 April

*S/Ldr. L. Young promoted to the rank of Wing Commander. (Squadron C. O.)*

### 6 April

*P/O J.J. Bennett promoted to the rank of Flying Officer.*

### 7- 10 April

*Squadron engaged in the Minor Air Exercises.*

### 12- 26 April

*Squadron engaged in Fighter Affiliation Exercises.*

### 17 April

*P/O S.G. Esson posted to No. 4 Air Observer School, Acklington.*

### 22 April

*“B” Flight attached to 8 A.T.S. Evanton for Armament Training.*

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

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## May 1939 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

4 May

*Station Defence Test.*

8 May 1939

*S/Ldr. C.V.J. Pratt posted from No. 2 group for Flying Duties and assumes command of "A" Flight; F/O C.A. Vernieux relinquishes the acting rank of Flight Lieutenant; "A" Flight attached to 8 A.T.S. Evanton for Armament Training.*

9 May

*"B" Flight returns from 8 A.T.S. Evanton.*

13 May

*P/O P.W.M. West posted for Flying Duties and P/O P.W. Ackroyd-Simpson posted to No. 57 Squadron.*

20 May

*"B" Flight participated in the Flying Programme on Empire Air Day at Waddington.*

21 May

*"A" Flight return from No. 8 A.T.S. Evanton on completion of Armament Training and after taking part in the Flying Programme on EMPIRE AIR DAY 20 May 1939; the flight carried out High and low-level bombing.*

*The Squadron took part in Group Tactical Exercises 20 May to 23 May.*

## June 1939 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

22 June

*314359 F/Sgt. A.E. Rudkin promoted to the rank of Warrant Officer.*

24 June

*Several pilots and air observers attached to Manby for an Automatic Bomb sight Course.*

30 June 1939

*The Squadron took part in Regional Air Exercises ending 2 July 1939.*

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

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## July 1939 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 11 July

*A formation from the Squadron took part in a long distance flight to France, the route covered was Tangmere – Bordeaux – Base. (Hampden aircraft).*

### 13 July

*The Squadron took part in the Regional Air Exercises from 13 to 14 July.*

### 18 July

*W.O. A. Watson posted from No. 502 Squadron (Coastal Command) to fill vacancy of Squadron Engineering Officer.*

### 22 July

*A/PO R.D. Dawn posted for Flying Duties.*

### 25 July

*The Squadron participated in further long distance flight to France, the route followed – Tangmere – Paris – via Rhone valley – Avignon and return over same route.*

## August 1939 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 6 August

*The Squadron took part in Home Defence Exercises, from 5 August to 11 August.*

### 7 August

*While taking part in the Home Defence Exercises, the propeller and reduction gear on Hampden L4075, piloted by P/O A.S. Luxmoore, sheared and broke away whilst the aircraft was in flight about 45 miles off the English Southern coast. P/O A.S. Luxmoore successfully landed the aircraft at Martlesham Heath.*

### 9 August

*Arrangements were made for a number of pilots to visit the Anti-Aircraft Brigade Camps at Weybourne and Stiffkey, where they were able to gain first hand information on Anti-Aircraft Organisation.*

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## August 1939 Based R.A.F. Waddington

### 10 August

*P/O's D.J. French, P.W.M. West, 560088 Sgt. K.W. Wright, 529969 Ac1 W. Marshall, 612813 A.C.1 J.F. Burge, 550995 A.C.1 G. Barras and 539322 Ac1 B. Parry attached to Ferrying Flight for the purpose of ferrying two Blenheim aircraft to H.Q.M.E. and took off this same day.*

### 18 August

*W.O. A.E. Rudkin posted to 4 Wing, No. 2 E & W School. Yatesbury.*

### 19 August

*The Squadron is attached to No. 8 A.T.S. Evanton for Armament Training.*

*SQUADRON RECALLED ON THE 25 AUGUST. (To Waddington).*

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

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## Part 2- WAR

1 September 1939

*At the commencement of the war period, number 50 Squadron was located at Royal Air Force Waddington.*

*Squadron Strength: Officers, 26; Airmen: 235*

*Commanding Officer: Wing Commander L. Young*

*Equipment: Handley Page Hampden B.Mk.1; Power Plant Twin Pegasus XVIII*

*Summary:*

*The Operations Order to mobilise the Squadron Mobilisation Scheme was brought into effect. The first months of the war's activities were confined to flying training. Affiliation exercises were arranged with No. 12 (F) Group, air firing was carried out at Number 1 Armament Training Station, Catfoss at Carlisle, and over the sea near Blackpool and bombing at Misson.*

*Night Flying was cancelled more often than not owing to unfavourable weather. On occasion the Squadron was detailed to "Stand-by" to Carry Out raids against the German Navy, but these flights were cancelled, and on one occasion a few minutes before the machines were due to take off for Wilhelmshaven.*

*Whenever possible during the periods when the Squadron was "standing-down" serviceable aircraft were sent to the rearward aerodrome at Tollerton, thereby affording rest to the crews and lessening the danger of aircraft dispersed round the base being located and destroyed by enemy air attack.*

*Operation Order No. B2 received from Headquarters, No. 5 group providing for the attack of enemy warships. Squadron Op. Order No. 15 dated 1-9-39 issued to cover the period 48 Hours from 1-9-39.*

*Signal received from No. 5 Group stating that Squadron should be prepared to take off at 45 minutes notice from first light 2-9-39.*

4 September 1939

*Squadron strength was 23 officers, 20 Airmen pilots, 42 aircrew and 184 non-flying staff.*

8 September 1939

*563944 Sgt. Woon, W.H.T. posted for Senior Armament Instructor.*

9 September 1939

*560156 Sgt. Green attached to No. 1 AAS, Manby for Senior Armament Instructors Course.*

11 September 1939

*Squadron participated in air firing at Squires Gate, Blackpool.*

*Air Vice-Marshal A.T. Harris assumes command of No. 5 Group, Bomber Command.*



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## September 1939 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

19 September 1939

*Squadron to "Stand By" at 4 hours notice from 1500 hours.*

21 September 1939

*Squadron carried out Air Firing at Carlisle. Pilot Officer E.J.N. Brown reported to the Squadron for Adjutant duties.*

23 September 1939

*Serviceable aircraft proceeded to Tollerton for dispersal. Ferry party returned from HQME.*

## October 1939 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

1 October

*The Squadron Stood-By for several days but no operations were undertaken.*

3 October

*P/O A.A.G. Trueman, 580294 Sgt. J. Windsor, Pilots attached to No. 144 Squadron, Hemswell pending posting.*

4 October

*350498 Cpl. F.C. Perry, photographer, attached from R.A.F. Station, Waddington.*

7 October

*Five wireless operators (Air crew) posted from No. 8 A.T.S. Evanton on completion of Air Crew Training.*

*P/O H.J. Winch, 564413 Sgt. C.D. Stenner P/F.A.E. and 580430 A/Sgt. B. Doyle Air Observer, attached to School of Air Navigation, St. Athan, for Advanced Navigation Course.*

10 October

*564745 Cpl. H.G. Mainley F/Arm. Posted to No. 145 Squadron. 3 Wireless Operators u/t Air Crew posted to No. 219 Squadron, CATTERICK, on being found unsuitable for Air Crew Duties.*

16 October

*350498 Cpl. F.C. Perry, Photographer, posted from R.A.F. Station Waddington.*

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## October 1939 based R.A.F. Waddington

### 17 October

*Hampden L4080 damaged when it collided with a hangar after suffering brake failure whilst taxiing. No injuries reported, Pilot was P/O R. Lloyd. Aircraft was a write-off.*

### 21 October

*Whilst at Tollerton, Hampden L4077 piloted by 580291 Sgt. Wild struck a dummy gun on the centre of the field causing the death of 4963932 Sgt C. Fretwell and injuring 1474701 Gunner G. Wardle both of the 53<sup>rd</sup> LAA Battery.*

### 24 October 1939

*511988 Sgt. G. Austin, Air Observer/ Wireless Operator promoted to Temporary Flight Sergeant and re mustered to basic trade of Wireless Operator.*

### 28 October

*Two Wireless Operators (Air Crew) posted from No. 7 Squadron, Upper Heyford.*

### 30 October

*Fifteen airmen posted to No. 266 Squadron, SUTTON BRIDGE.*

### 31 October

*Hampden L4096 crashed at Branston while Night flying causing the death of 565161 Sgt. Ralph Sunei Wallace Cordle, Pilot/ WT Electrical Mechanic, 612813 AC1 Joseph Frank Burge W/OP (Aircrew) and 624358 AC2 Leonard James Penteny W/OP (Aircrew). This may have been a test flight.*

*Sgt. Cordle is buried at YOXFORD CEMETERY, Suffolk; AC1 Burge is buried at LIVERPOOL (ANFIELD) CEMETERY, Lancashire; AC2 Penteny is buried in WADDINGTON (ST. MICHAEL) Churchyard, Lincolnshire.*

*The serviceable aircraft of the Squadron were dispersed at Tollerton when not standing-by.*

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## November 1939- Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 1 November

*Squadron stood-by on several dates but no operations undertaken from Waddington.*

### 23 November

*565893 Cpl. Archibald McDonald Henderson, Fitter II was killed when Hampden L4034 of Number 49 Squadron crashed into a hangar at Waddington while avoiding the watch office during a landing in poor visibility and an engine fell on him. Several airmen also working within the hangar were injured, 565863 Cpl. S Cooke Fitter II and 629180 AC2 M. Bastow were severely injured. 49 Squadron Hampden crew were also all killed, (1) 16257 S/L P. McGregor Watt, Pilot; (2) 348825 Cpl. Thomas Alexander Keating, (3) 552191 AC.1 Stanley Taylor and (4) 351857 AC2 F.L. Talbot. Also killed were 49 Squadron Ground Crew, (5) 535916 AC.1 Leslie McGarvie and (6) 620024 LAC Walter Gerald Kelly. Cpl Henderson is buried at WADDINGTON (ST. MICHAEL) Churchyard, Lincolnshire; S/Ldr. Watt is buried in NETTLEHAM (ALL SAINTS) NEW CHURCHYARD, Lincs; Cpl. Keating, Cpl. Taylor and LAC Kelly are buried in SCAMPTON (ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST) Churchyard, Lincs; AC2 Talbot is buried in BLACKBURN CEMETERY, Lancashire; AC1 McGarvie is buried in PRESTWICH (ST. MARY) Churchyard, Lancashire.*

### 24 November

*Eleven aircraft and one additional aircraft from 44 Squadron proceeded to Wick.  
No Operations undertaken from Wick.*

### 26 November 1939

*S/Ldr. C.V.J. Pratt posted to Army C.W. School, Winterbourne Gunner.  
Acting Flight Lieutenant D.C.F. Good was granted acting Squadron Leader rank and took over 'A' Flight. Flying officer JJ Bennett was granted acting Flight Lieutenant rank.  
Aircraft dispersed to Tollerton prior to departing for Wick.*

### 29 November

*L4097, L4065, L4079, L4083, L4077, L4164, L4078, L4064, L4075, L4076 and L4084 departed for Wick.*

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## December 1939 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

2 December

*Aircraft return from Wick.*

14 December (From Form 541, Appendix "A").

*Hampden's L4164, L4078, L4168, L4062, L4084, L4073, L4097, L4081, L4075, L4065, L4171 (Piloted by P.O. Penman on loan from 44 Squadron) and L4064 took off in the evening for a sweep operation in the North Sea. No targets were found, no bombs were dropped and no photographs taken. At 10.25hrs the section led by S/L DCF Good were challenged by a flak ship. The letter of the day was returned but the ship opened fire. Tracers were seen but no damage done. 5 Group Signal OPS 721 dated 14/12/39.*

26 December 1939

*Acting Flt. Lt. T.C. Weir from 44 Squadron was granted acting S/L. Rank and took command of No. 50 Squadron, 'B' Flight.*

Representative Aircraft- Hampden:

L4062, L4064, L4065, L4073, L4075, L4078, L4081, L4084, L4097, L4164, L4168, L4171.

**End of Part Two**

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## PART 3- THE SO-CALLED 'PHONEY WAR' BEGINS, 1940

For those involved this period was anything but Phoney. Losses through accidents in training increase and the valiant attempts to deter German forces in Norway, at extreme range and in appalling weather conditions cost many young lives.

January 1940- Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

11 January 1940

At 16.00hrs F/O WD Corr (Captain) Sgt. J. Wells (Nav.) 611365 LAC EP Davidson W/t OP and 519743 Sgt. J. Bryce Air Observer successfully dropped Nickels over the Bremen District. This is believed to be the first operational mission flown by 50 Squadron in WWII, 'Nickel' being the code-word for a Propaganda Leaflet.

25 January 1940

*A Warning Order was received from 5 Group for six aircraft to be despatched to Lossiemouth. Ground crew left by rail.*

*A signal was received for the aircraft to be ready at first light 26<sup>th</sup> January 1940.*

*Telephone instructions received from Operations RAF Waddington that the aircraft are to proceed on the 26<sup>th</sup> January.*

*Op. Order B.39 received from 5 Group for the move. Squadron Op. Order number 16 also issued for the move.*

26 January 1940

*6 aircraft left for Lossiemouth as a strike force for Coastal Command. Hampden's L4062, L4164, L4168, L4083, L4055 and L4079.*

*Representative aircraft (Hampden I's): P2093, P4389, P4409, X2983, X2984, X2991, X3133, X3143, X3145, X3146, AD721, AD728, AD730, AD742 (VN-F), P4408, L4075, L4164.*

February 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington and a detachment at Lossiemouth.

Overview: Particularly severe weather severely restricted operations by Bomber Command as a whole for the entire month. The Baltic is reported to be frozen from shore to shore on the 11th; it remained so for around two weeks. Waddington is gripped by an icy hold with heavy snow followed by flooding with thawing. Those aircraft that did get airborne faced trying conditions with snow, frost, strong winds, low cloud and fog.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

February 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington and a detachment at Lossiemouth.

1- 5 February 1940

The weather at Waddington is very poor, low cloud and fog preventing flying. Six aircraft now detached to R.A.F. Station Lossiemouth, Morayshire as a strike force for Coastal Command. Ice and fog at Waddington prevented any operations. The combined 50 and 44 Squadron detachment stood-by on days that convoys were at sea, and weather was generally very good.

6 February 1940

*The crews of the detachment were relieved by fresh personnel who travelled by train to R.A.F. Lossiemouth.*

8 February 1940

On this date the Squadron's Commanding Officer, W/Cdr. L. Young is 'posted' to R.A.F. Uxbridge, No.1 Depot, Non-effective (Sick). The reason for this is not known but such a posting would come about by long term illness or an accident, either non-operational flying or an event unconnected with the R.A.F. To be investigated further.

8 February 1940- NORTH SEA SWEEP FROM LOSSIEMOUTH

*Six Hampden's each of 50 and 44 Squadron's performed a North Sea Sweep for surface vessels flying in three sections of four aircraft, in 'Vic' formation. "Nothing of interest was seen, no photographs taken, no bombs dropped and no casualties received".* This quote almost sums up the frustration of the crews. All returned safely to Lossiemouth.

9- 14 February 1940-LOSSIEMOUTH DETACHMENT

The weather here started to deteriorate with squalls, visibility down to 2000 yards and cloud. During this period the Squadron 'Stood-by' each day from dawn to about 15.00hrs. No further sweeps were made from Lossiemouth

6- 14 February 1940- WADDINGTON BASE

The weather at Waddington was also poor with little flying of any nature.

13 February 1940- ADMIN.

*S/Ldr. D.W. Reid is attached to the squadron pending posting and is granted acting rank of Wing Commander- O.C. 50 Squadron designate vice W/Cdr. L. Young.*

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

February 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington and a detachment at Lossiemouth.

14 February 1940- LOSSIEMOUTH DETACHMENT

Orders received to leave Lossiemouth and return to Base; however this was postponed until the next day. The reason being that due to the German Tanker 'Altmark' incident it was thought that the German fleet might sail into the North Sea.

15 February

*The Squadron aircraft returned during daylight to Waddington from Lossiemouth in formation with No.44 Squadron. During the journey various formations were practised, and the weather was generally good.*

February 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of February 1940 heavy snows were experienced at RAF Waddington followed by a heavy frost. Cloudy, freezing weather preponderated up until the 22<sup>nd</sup> February and no flying occurred until the 23<sup>rd</sup>, although the Squadron was on continuous 'Stand-by' "*the object of which was a little obscure*". This may be connected to the 'Altmark Incident'.

23 February 1940

Following the commencement of heavy drizzle on the 22<sup>nd</sup> the snow rapidly thawed and the aerodrome flooded. The Aerodrome was declared unserviceable throughout the 23<sup>rd</sup>. However one aircraft took off later for a Night 'Nickel' raid to Hamburg but returned soon after take-off due to W/T failure.

24 & 25 February 1940

The weather improved but mists forming early morning and evening made night flying impracticable. Nickel raids and a patrol of the Frisian Islands and Sylt were duly postponed.

26/ 27 February 1940- NORTH SEA SECURITY PATROL

*L4079 performed a night-time sweep of the North Sea; route was Friesian Isles- Nordeney- Fohr-Sylt. On the return journey the crew of Hampden L4079 piloted by F/Lt R.J. Cosgrove had extreme difficulties in navigating a return course due to poor D/F fixes and poor visibility. The aircraft made landfall near Margate and with a seized Starboard engine force landed at R.A.F. Manston, Kent. One further aircraft successfully dropped 'Nickels' over Hamburg. Again bad weather made navigating the return route very difficult, the aircraft landed safely back at Base at 00.30hrs*

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## February 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington.

### 29 February/ 1 March 1940- PATROL, NORTH SEA

*Two aircraft carried out a night mission to patrol the Frisian Island and the Island of Sylt to check on the activities of mine-laying seaplanes, and bomb them as required. No activity was noted and the aircraft both returned safely to Base with bombs on board. (These seaplanes were known to be mining the Humber Estuary, landing off-shore and taxiing in to the estuary to drop the mines).*

Representative Aircraft (Hampden B.Mk.1): L4062, L4069, L4075, L4079, L4168, L4188.

Crews: Ayres, French, Abbott, Bennett, Corr, Bull, Cosgrove, Lloyd, Stenner, Wawn, Vernieux, Luxmoore.

Postings 'IN' this month included S/Ldr. D.W. Reid and the following Officers/ airmen returned to the unit from various attachments: P/O P.A.F. Addie, Sgt. Coad, P/O. G.B. Treasure, P/O K.R.K. Smettem and P/O R.T. Mulligan.

There were no losses this month.



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## March 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

Overview: Finland capitulates.

Scapa Flow is attacked by Germany. Retaliatory strikes are ordered by the War Cabinet on German seaplane bases.

The Squadron is occupied mainly on routine Patrolling of selected areas of the North Sea and observing Coastal waters by day and night for enemy warships.

The weather over the continent and the Eastern North Sea for most of this month is, again, generally appalling with rain, low cloud and poor visibility. Conditions at Waddington are occasionally better with some clear skies (but low temperatures) allowing much needed training flights to proceed.

### 1/ 2 March- North Sea 'SECURITY PATROL'

*Two Hampden aircraft made a daylight routine sweep over the Borkum/ Norderney/ Sylt areas (Heligoland Bight) for signs of enemy sea-plane activity. Visibility was poor and no activity or opposition was reported, both aircraft landing safely back at Base.*

### 2 to 15 March 1940

Apart from one exception, on the 6 March, the weather prevented operational flying.

### 6 March-AIRCRAFT RECOVERY

*F/O Vernieux, P/O Luxmoore and P/O Nolan proceeded by air to R.A.F. Station Manston, Kent to recover L4079. P/O Luxmoore and P/O Nolan returned to base the same day. F/O Vernieux returned with L4079 (and ground crew) the next day, 7 March.*

### 6/ 7 March- NICKELLING WILHELMSHAVEN (NIGHT)

Weather permitted three aircraft to successfully drop 'Nickels' over Hamburg, Wilhelmshaven and Bremen. All three aircraft returned to Base safely. (This being the only operation since the 1<sup>st</sup> March).

### 15 March- NORTH SEA SWEEP

The weather improves to allow the first operational mission since the 6<sup>th</sup>; a daylight formation sweep to a reported position of an enemy mine-layer. Aircraft flew in two 'Vics' of three, although nothing was observed and all six aircraft landed back at Base safely shortly after nightfall.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## March 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 16 March- NORTH SEA PRACTICE SWEEP

A formation of six aircraft, two flights of three Hampden's each made a 'Practice' daylight security sweep of the North Sea. Unusually, the flight was authorised by Waddington's Station Commander. All returned to base safely.

### 16/ 17 March- NORTH SEA SECURITY PATROL

Two aircraft took-off for a night-time security patrol in the Heligoland Bight. Having completed the patrol both aircraft were diverted to R.A.F. Leuchars in Fife, Scotland due to bad weather at base. Nothing of interest in the patrol area was reported. One aircraft (L4164) made a safe landing at Leuchars. However the second, **Hampden L4063 piloted by 39479 F/O Vivian Howard Ayres, with 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot 41646 P/O Peter Aubrey Forrester Addie, AG 514444 Sgt. George Albert Rowling and W/op AG 550802 LAC Allan Vincent Wallace crashed into hills at WINDY GYLE, (Opposite Cock Law) at around 2,032 feet AMSL on the Pennine Way about 12 Miles SSE of Kirk Yetholme near Jedburgh while making for Leuchars in the early hours of the morning on the 17th. All were killed. The aircraft's instruments were thought to have been fed incorrect QDM's due to QDM equipment failure which led to the aircraft descending to 2000' in the area where hill tops were 3000'. A memorial has recently been erected on the crash site.**

**P/O Addie is buried at Oundle Cemetery; F/O Ayres is buried in Cardiff cemetery. George Rowling and Allan Wallace are 'Missing' and are commemorated on the Runnymede memorial.**

Later on the 17<sup>th</sup> two pilots, P/O Bull and P/O Pilcher flew to Leuchars possibly in connection with the loss of L4063. They returned on the 18 March, performing an anti-submarine patrol from Leuchars on the way. Nothing of interest was seen however the aircraft was intercepted by a Spitfire and after firing recognition signals the Spitfire disengaged; friendly fire was to cost many lives during this war.

L4164 returns from Leuchars later in the day.

### 19/ 20 March- BOMBING RAID, SYLT

Five aircraft joined other Bomber Command aircraft in a large force bound for Sylt seaplane base, oil reserves and the 'Hindenburg' Dam, (a causeway which joins the island of Sylt to the mainland Schleswig-Holstein, which were duly bombed. F/Lt J.J. Bennett was awarded the DFC for 'the precise and efficient way he carried out his flight'.

This raid was essentially an experiment and actual damage done amounted to very little; at this time the effectiveness of 500lb and 250lb bombs; especially on shipping was thought to be very limited even when dropped from 10,000 feet.

Interestingly, the 'Lincolnshire Echo' of the 20<sup>th</sup> March and also for the subsequent three days contained major editorials on the raid. This is not surprising; what is surprising is the descriptions of the effect of the raid, which leave Sylt a smouldering, burning ruin. This was far from the truth but was in effect harmless propaganda and in no way diminished the courage of those who pressed home the attacks.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## March 1940 based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 20 March 1940- HAMBURG, LUBECK AND CUXHAVEN, NICKELLING AND RECONNAISSANCE.

Three aircraft set out on a day-light, dual-purpose mission to drop Nickel's and also carry out reconnaissance tasks over Hamburg, Lubeck and Cuxhaven. One aircraft returned early with engine trouble while the other two successfully carried out their tasks; however one of this pair force-landed at Manston in Kent due to Wireless failure returning to Base the next day safely.

### 21 to 26<sup>th</sup> March- STAND-BY FOR OPERATIONS

For this period the Squadron was placed on 'Stand-by' for Night Operations and North Sea Sweeps were also thought likely however bad weather OVER Germany and the Eastern North Sea forced the cancellation of all night flying for the period.

### 27 March- NORTH SEA SECURITY PATROL

Two aircraft (L4078 and L4064) from the six 'standing by' took off to carry out security patrols of the German sea-plane bases but both were recalled due to severe icing conditions and magnetic storms; however one failed to hear the recall and successfully carried out a patrol.

### 28/ 29 March- SECURITY PATROL AND RECONNAISSANCE

Six aircraft again 'stood by' but due to the same weather conditions all missions were cancelled. Local weather was however ideal for training flights.

### 30 March 1940- SECURITY PATROLS, SYLT & NORTH GERMAN ISLANDS

Two aircraft carried out successful day-light security patrols of the North German Islands and Sylt. Weather was poor with mist rendering identification of land areas difficult.

Postings into the Squadron this month included S/Ldr. F.E. Cooper, F/O Donaldson, P/O Middleton, P/O Smettem, P.O. J. Adair and F/O Lennie.

Representative aircraft (Hampden B.Mk.1): L4063, L4064, L4065, L4073, L4075, L4076, L4077, L4078, L4079, L4081, L4083, L4164, L4168.

Crews: Good, Corr, Bull, Thomas, Cosgrove, Donaldson, Taylor, Lloyd, Ayres, Wawn, Vernieux, Taylor, Jacklin, French, (Reid- C.O.), Abbott, Cooper, Stenner, Bennett.

Losses this month were L4063 and four crew killed on March 17.

**End of Part Three**

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## PART 4- CONFLICT

### April 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

Overview: On the 8<sup>th</sup> April 1940, Denmark was invaded and over-run that same day. Around the 9<sup>th</sup> April the German Naval Fleet was in position off Norway and soon after the Luftwaffe attacked all aerodromes in Norway and swiftly crushed all resistance. Troops were poured in to the captured aerodromes, first by airborne forces then by troop carriers as well as by sea. Bomber Command operating ill-equipped aircraft at extreme range (sometimes forward based from Wick, Kinloss, Lossiemouth and Leuchars) and in marginal weather attacked these bases and the German Naval Fleet but it was hopeless. Norway quickly fell. It was effectively a dress rehearsal for the coming months in Europe- Flanders and Dunkirk. The German Navy and Air Force now had control of strategic territory from which air and seaborne attacks on Baltic, North Sea and Atlantic convoys could be launched. These forces however still had huge logistical problems of their own.

For the Squadron, April saw an emotion wrenched few days when, following the raid on Kristiansand with its heavy losses, desperate searches were made by the Squadron's own aircraft for the crew of a downed Hampden known to have ditched safely with the crew subsequently seen taking to the life-raft. No trace was ever found of their four comrades. Much activity this month consisted of dropping sea-mines, or 'vegetables'. Losses at this period of the war on these duties were extremely few; this state of comparative safety did not last long however.

Air Marshall Sir Charles Portal KG, GCB, OM, DSO, MC takes over from Air Chief Marshall Sir Edgar Ludlow-Hewitt GCB, GBE, CMG, DSO, MC as C-in-C Bomber Command.

### 1/ 2 April- RECONNAISSANCE AND NICKEL DROPS, ELBE ESTUARY

*Three aircraft set off tonight for a reconnaissance flight to the Elbe estuary. Weather conditions were poor and nothing of interest could be discerned by any crew, all dropping leaflets and returning safely to base after around four hours flying time. No opposition was reported.*

### 6/ 7 April- RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS

One aircraft, L4164 took off for R.A.F. Station Bircham Newton in preparation for a long range reconnaissance flight to SWINEMUNDE. The aircraft made a 7.5hr flight (close to full endurance) successfully observing salient points in and around Swinemunde against charts carried, dropping leaflets at Zeinwitz on the return leg and landing safely at Base.

Four more aircraft made shorter flights to the Elbe estuary where the weather was poor making reconnaissance impossible; all four dropped leaflets and returned safely to Base.

Two further aircraft dropped leaflets and had mixed fortunes with the reconnaissance mission due to weather.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## April 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 9 April 1940- BERGEN FJORD

12 aircraft in four flights of three aircraft each took off this afternoon to attack the German Fleet off Bergen Fjord, Norway. For various reasons and at various times, all the aircraft lost sight of each other and essentially pressed home attacks on enemy cruisers found in the Fjord individually. Some aircraft failed to find the target at all. One aircraft reported hitting a cruiser which was claimed as sunk; using 500lb bombs this is fairly unlikely. The ships set up a fierce barrage of quite accurate flak but none of the aircraft were seriously damaged. The twelve aircraft having broken formation returned to various Scottish bases individually, but safely. Bases reached were Wick, Lossiemouth, Montrose, and Leuchars. The aircraft returned to Base the next day (10<sup>th</sup> April).

### 10/ 11 April- RECONNAISSANCE OF THE BALTIC SEA

L4168 carried out a general reconnaissance of the Baltic in the Esbjerg area; the aircraft landed safely at an unspecified diversion aerodrome.

### 11/ 12 April- SEARCH FOR THE “ADMIRAL VON SCHEER” (BALTIC AREA)

L4079 set out at 22.25hrs to search for the pocket battleship ‘Admiral Von Scheer’ reported at 56.22N, 11.02E. Despite near perfect visibility no trace was found of the ship and the aircraft returned safely to Base after 7 hours 50 minutes in the air.

### 12 April 1940- LISTER FJORD/ KRISTIANSAND HARBOUR, Norway

On the morning of the 12 April an ambitious and hazardous day-light mission to attack shipping in the Lister Fjord, Norway was launched, with 50 Squadron contributing five Hampden’s and 44 Squadron contributing seven Hampden aircraft. Primary target was enemy warships off the Norwegian coast around the Lister Fjord; secondary target was to attack warships in Kristiansand harbour. The attacking force was divided into four flights as seen before in the Bergen mission three days ago. 50 Squadron made up No. 3 and No. 4 Sections, while 44 Squadron made up No.1 and No.2 Sections.

The flight across the North Sea was made at around 300 Feet due to low cloud; this time the crews were determined not to lose contact with each other. In a feat of remarkable Navigation the formation entered clearer weather a few miles from the Norwegian Coast almost exactly on target at Lister Fjord. However as cloud was considered too low for safe bombing by the formation leader, the formation turned south and followed the coastline making for Kristiansand harbour. Climbing to 8000 feet two cruisers and other shipping were spotted in the harbour. Approaching in line astern from inland the formation attacked the two cruisers. All aircraft were loaded with four 500lb General Purpose bombs internally. It is believed that all twelve aircraft dropped their bombs but no hits were reported. Anti-Aircraft Fire was reported as ‘intense’. The leader dived to sea level at full speed for the escape with the formation following. Two aircraft of No. 4 Section were reported as being seen going down into the sea in flames (L4073 and L4083).

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## April 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

12 April 1940- LISTER FJORD/ KRISTIANSAND HARBOUR, NORWAY Continued:

Immediately after the get-away the formation was set-upon by enemy fighters (believed to be Messerschmitt Bf.109E's of II JG.77) and one further (in fact the final) aircraft of No.4 Section, L4081 was seen to crash in flames. Two further aircraft were reported to have been shot-down (thought to be the two 44 Squadron machines). The Hampden's gunners shot down two enemy aircraft and crippled a third in response.

All but two Hampden's received damage of varying degrees. The combat lasted for 25 minutes after which the formation of seven remaining aircraft set course for base. Of these seven, only five made it to Base. One aircraft force-landed at Acklington while L4064, escorted by L4168 (S/Ldr. D.C.F. Good) ditched into the sea 120 miles East of Newcastle having run out of fuel at around 14.20hrs. L4168 circled the stricken aircraft sending an S.O.S message; the crew were seen to escape the downed aircraft and get into the dinghy. None of the surviving crew was injured. Hampden's L4081, L4099, L4064, L4083 and L4073 failed to return from Southern Norway (together with other aircraft from No. 44 Squadron).

1. L4081; 550995 Cpl Alexander Scougal Gibson Barrass, 550598 Sgt. John Robert Jopling, 40648 P/O Mervyn Thomas RAF and 580261 Sgt. Stanley Vernon Vart RAF K.I.A. The entire crew were never found and are commemorated at Runnymede.

2. L4099, 44 Squadron; 613213 Cpl. Harold Dennis Brown RAF, 580659 Sgt. William John Ison RAF, 40155 F/O William George Taylor RAF and 564502 Sgt. Joseph Raybould Tonkiss RAF all K.I.A. None of the crew has been recovered and all are commemorated at Runnymede.

3. L4064; 40599 P/O John Bartlett Bull RAF, 623895 Cpl. George Fawcett RAF, 580494 Sgt. William Stuart Nevinson RAF and 40848 P/O Alonzo Derek Pilcher RAF, K.I.A. Believed to have ditched 120 miles East of Newcastle with 3 crew taking to the dinghy; however a search found no trace of the dinghy or its occupants. Sgt. Nevinson is buried in grave 4.D.6, KIEL WAR CEMETERY, Schleswig-Holstein (presumably washed up). His three colleagues have never been found and are commemorated at Runnymede.

4. L4083 flown by F/O M. Wilson-Donaldson, shot down by an ME109 and crashed near MANDAL killing the Observer, 580696 Sgt. John Greet RAF; W-D and two crew survived becoming Prisoner Of war (POW's). Sgt. Greet is buried in MANDAL CHURCHYARD, Grave I.2.8, near Kristiansand, Norway.

5. L4073; 580637 Sgt. Harry Bratton RAF, 740907 Sgt. David William Arlidge Chambers RAFVR, 611349 LAC Stanley Kershaw RAF and 580291 Sgt. Gerald Marsden Wild RAF all K.I.A. This crew were never found and are all commemorated at Runnymede.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## April 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

12 April 1940- LISTER FJORD/ KRISTIANSAND HARBOUR, NORWAY Continued:

6. P1173, 44 Squadron Hampden was reported to have crashed into the sea. 40229 F/O Kenneth John Alan Johnstone RAF, 532819 Cpl. John Henry Evans RAF aged 20 and 566421 Cpl. William Henry Glyndwr Evans RAF were never found and are commemorated at Runnymede while the Pilot 39759 F/O Harry Wood Robson RAF, aged 22 was, presumably washed ashore later and was laid to rest at Frederikshavn cemetery on the 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1940.

**A Black day for No. 50 Squadron.**

Cpl John 'Jock' Wallace WOP/AG was awarded the DFM by King George VI after this action.

Within one hour of L4169 reporting the ditching of L4064, a No.50 Squadron Hampden, L4077 was searching the sea East of Newcastle, the Squadron Commanding Officer personally authorising the flight. Weather was good but nothing was found and in the failing light L4164 replaced L4077 in the search. Again no trace of the Dinghy or its occupants was found.

## 13 April 1940- NORTH SEA SEARCHES

Further searches of the North Sea were made at first light by the Squadron Anson aircraft, N9829 for the crew of L4064. A report from a Lockheed Hudson of Coastal Command gave hope when it found the crew and circled above it but these were cruelly dashed when the Hudson lost sight of the Dinghy. N9829 returned to R.A.F. Driffield for fuel and landed back at Base at 10.50hrs. This aircraft set out at 17.55hrs with a fresh crew for another search but nothing was found, landing back at Base at 22.20hrs.

Squadron Anson aircraft N5193 made a final search of the sea taking off at 17.45hrs but found nothing; the O.R.B. records that the pilot of N5193 allegedly forgot that the safe endurance of an Anson is around 4 Hours 30 minutes and subsequently ran out of fuel at 23.35hrs. It crashed south of Grimsby and all four crew were injured, one seriously: P/O. R.D. Wawn, Sgt. B. Pollard, Sgt. A. Wappnett and Cpl. R.L.H. Smith. N5193 was a "total wreck".

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## April 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 13/ 14 April- GARDENING OPERATIONS, ASPARAGUS AREA

Three aircraft set off tonight to drop sea-mines in the 'Asparagus' area. According to the ORB's, this was the Squadron's first ever operational mine-laying mission. Weather was poor with low cloud over the target and heavy static and cloud encountered en-route. Two aircraft successfully dropped mines but the third, L4065 failed to return. The crew were; Pilot 39456 F/Lt. Robert James Cosgrove RAF, 563051 Sgt. Frederick William Batchelor RAF, 535553 Cpl. James Doran RAF and 580714 Sgt. Gordon William Everatt RAF. All missing presumed killed when L4065 disappeared without trace. A report was received that an aircraft was heard crashing off Mablethorpe but a search found no remains. Possibly they crashed "Off Skegness" but site is unknown. No bodies were recovered hence L4065, wherever it lies, is a Listed War Grave; all are commemorated at the memorial at Runnymede. The pilot, F/Lt. R.J. Cosgrove was the Governor of Tasmania's son.

### 14 April- NORTH SEA SEARCHES

Two final searches for the crew of L4064 were made today. Anson N9829 positioned to Thornaby in Yorkshire to take on fuel to allow as long a search as possible leaving base at 05.40 and returning at 1900hrs again via Thornaby. Finally Hampden L4097 left at 0600hrs and returned to base at 12.30hrs, sadly with neither crew finding any trace of L4064's crew. L4062 with S/Ldr. D.C.F. Good in command (this pilot was the one whom had circled L4064 as she ditched) took off at 11.30hrs for a search for the crew of L4065 some 12 Miles off Mablethorpe but again no trace of this aircraft or crew was found.

### 14/ 15 April- GARDENING OPERATIONS, ASPARAGUS AREA.

Four aircraft were detailed tonight to drop sea-mines in the 'Asparagus' area. Three were successful but one returned to base after the 'No-Go' message was received from base. All three aircraft returning from the mission diverted to Manston in Kent due to bad forecast weather at Base, with two returning to base later on the 15<sup>th</sup>. L4097 appears to have gone u/s at R.A.F. Manston, not returning to base until the 16<sup>th</sup> April.

### 17/ 18 April- GARDENING OPERATIONS, ASPARAGUS AREA

From around 22.50hrs four aircraft set off to drop sea-mines in the 'Asparagus' 'Garden' (The Great Belt, Denmark/ Norway). In an eventful night only two successfully mined the allotted area in 'perfect moonlight'. The crew of L4097 however suffered the ignominy of the Navigators compartment trap-door being left open causing all the maps, charts and navigating equipment to be lost overboard! L4079 meanwhile had engine trouble over Horncastle and turned -back, all returned safely to base.



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## April 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 20/ 21 April- GARDENING OPERATIONS, EGLANTINE AREA (HELIGOLAND)

Seven aircraft departed from around midnight onwards to drop sea-mines in the Heligoland area. Five successfully dropped mines; two returned early due to radio and engine unserviceability. All landed safely at Base.

### 21/ 22 April- GARDENING OPERATIONS, DAFFODIL AREA (The Sound)

Three aircraft were detailed on a night mission to drop mines in The Sound. Opposition was minimal throughout including an over-flight of Husum Aerodrome. Two were successful, dropping the mines in bright moonlight but a third, due to navigational errors failed to find the target and returned with weapons on board. All returned to Base safely.

### 23/ 24 April-GARDENING OPERATIONS, DAFFODIL & MELON AREAS AND 'SECURITY PATROL' OF NORDENY AND BORKUM ISLANDS

Three aircraft dropped mines successfully in the above areas, in excellent weather with a full moon which aided pin-pointing the target. A fourth aircraft made a reconnaissance flight over the islands of Norderney and Borkum but nothing of note was seen other than a lone ME.109 fighter which did not approach. Due to poor weather three diverted safely to R.A.F. Mildenhall and one to R.A.F. Marham on return.

### 25/ 26 April- GARDENING OPERATIONS, FORGET-ME-NOT AREA (KIEL)

Four aircraft set off tonight to drop sea-mines in the Kiel Bay area. Weather was very bad with thick cloud across the North Sea with low-lying fog at the target. Two aircraft found breaks in the weather and dropped successfully, two failed to find the surface and returned with weapons aboard. No enemy opposition was encountered. Three aircraft diverted to R.A.F. Leuchars and one to R.A.F. Acklington; all landed safely.

### 30 April/ 1 May 1940- BOMBING FORNEBU AERODROME (OSLO)

Tonight, three aircraft attacked the aerodrome at Fornebu near Oslo. Excellent visibility aided navigation and the three aircraft dropped six 250lb bombs apiece on the aerodrome. Two aircraft bombed from 12000 feet and noted intense flak which did not however reach this height; the third made its run at 4000 feet and was forced to abandon the attack by the heavy flak, returning at 10000 feet to complete its mission successfully. One aircraft reported a German Dornier 18 sea-plane forming on its tail with landing lights blazing but after a burst of fire from the rear gunner it disappeared! All landed safely at R.A.F. Kinloss, returning to base later that day.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## April 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### April 1940 Summary

Representative Aircraft (Hampden B.Mk.1): L4062, L4064, L4065, L4073, L4075, L4076, L4077, L4078, L4079, L4081, L4083, L4097, L4164, L4168, P1317, P1321.

Crews: Wawn, Vernieux, Lloyd, Good, Wilson-Donaldson, Cosgrove, Corr, Jacklin, French, W/Cdr. Reid, Bull, Abbott, Cooper, Bennett, Wild, Thomas, Stenner, Taylor, Willan, Shaughnessy.

## May 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

Overview: By mid-May all allied forces have withdrawn from Norway and operations by Bomber Command reduce in this theatre.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> May, 1940, Germany attacked Flanders- Holland, Belgium and France- simultaneously. In Holland, the Luftwaffe bombed all major airports, aerodromes, Army barracks and Anti-Aircraft defences followed by airborne troop drops to secure beaches and aerodromes for German troop carrying aircraft and Luftwaffe offensive aircraft to use. By the 13<sup>th</sup> May only 10 of the 248 aircraft available for use by the Dutch Air Force remained, and by the end of this day those 10 had also been destroyed. The Dutch Army and Air Force was effectively neutralised or destroyed in 4 days and the Dutch laid down arms on the 15<sup>th</sup> May. Meanwhile the battle was joined in Belgium and France. On the 10<sup>th</sup> May when German troops advanced across bridges into France and Belgium, RAF attack aircraft (Battles and Blenheim's by day, Wellington's, Hampden's and Whitley's by night) would attack strategic ground targets such as bridges, road junctions and railway marshalling yards to delay any such advance. Other targets such as communications, oil storage facilities and supply centres were hit. In Belgium, similar tactics were employed however attacks on troops and convoys in Luxembourg and Belgium were the primary use of the Advanced Air Striking Force (based in France) and the mainland 'heavy' bomber forces. However such was the unequal disposition of land forces that by the end of May the allied forces were penned into the Dixmude and Armentieres area culminating in the lifting of the trapped forces from Dunkirk under 'Operation Dynamo', 27<sup>th</sup> May to 4<sup>th</sup> June 1940. Belgium capitulated on the 28<sup>th</sup> May and France subsequently surrendered under an armistice on 17<sup>th</sup> June. All troops and aircraft had now left France.

The first true attacks by Bomber Command are made this month on German Industrial targets although the resulting damage was assessed as negligible due to, mainly, the lack of navigational aids that would allow accurate placing of ordnance.

Winston Churchill becomes Prime Minister 10 May 1940.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## May 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 1/ 2 May 1940

L4075 and P1317 attacked the aerodrome at AALBORG, North Denmark. L4075 developed W/T trouble after take-off and returned to base leaving again one hour later after rectification of the defect. Both bombed successfully in good visibility. L4075 was attacked three times by ME110 night fighters while leaving the target and fire was returned, the aircraft suffering a damaged pitot-head, an aerial shot away and a bullet through the tail. P1317 received flak damage to the tail. Due to forecast unfit weather at base, both aircraft returned safely to R.A.F. Kinloss. L4075 was left at Kinloss for repair returning some days later to base; P1317 left for base later on the 2<sup>nd</sup> however due to a very low cloud base a forced landing was made at THORNABY (Yorkshire) but the journey to Base was safely completed some 2hrs later.

### 2 May 1940

Three aircraft return from KINLOSS following the sortie on 30 April/ 1 May, routing via KINNAIRDS HEAD/ MONTROSE/ ST. ABB'S HEAD/ CATTERICK and YORK, landing between 11.25hrs and 12.00hrs.

### 2/ 3 May- GARDENING

Three aircraft took-off from Waddington at around 20.15hrs followed by a fourth, L4149 leaving at 00.25hrs. Two dropped the mines successfully in the 'ONION' area despite intense A.A. fire in the OSLO area; both returned safely to R.A.F. Station Kinloss, returning to Base later in the day. The crew of P1327 had great difficulty in locating the target area ('Forget-me-not') and spent two hours circling the Baltic before finally pin-pointing a known landmark; however by now daylight was breaking so the crew set course immediately for base with the mine on board. No flak or fighter activity was encountered by this aircraft and it returned safely to base landing at 05.40hrs. The fourth aircraft L4076 dropped the sea mine at 02.20hrs in the 'Forget-me-not' area and set course for home however it was soon attacked by 3 ME110 night fighters; these were evaded by climbing into cloud and were left behind after enemy territory was left the aircraft returning safely without injury or damage to base.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## May 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 4/ 5 May- GARDENING 'ONION' AREA

Three aircraft successfully mined the 'Onion' area. Two aircraft successfully dropped mines without incident and returned to R.A.F Station Kinloss. The third, Hampden L4062 had an eventful sortie. In good weather the aircraft flew at 50 feet above the waters of BONNE FJORD to the target area; at around 01.05hrs just as the crew were about to drop the mine the aircraft was hit by a Pom-Pom shell on the Port side injuring the Pilot; despite this the mine was dropped and a sharp turn away from the area was made. Now with an inoperative intercom system the Navigator/ 2<sup>nd</sup> Pilot exchanged places with the badly injured pilot and made a safe return to R.A.F. Kinloss. The Observer meanwhile tended to the Pilot's injuries and undoubtedly saved his life. The Pilot and navigator were awarded the DFC later. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Pilot returned the aircraft to Base later that day despite the un-repaired damage. Crew were: Pilot S/Ldr. Good, 2nd Pilot P/O Gardiner, Sgt. Smith and Cpl. Wallace DFM. Both Good and Gardiner were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC).

### 9/10 May- GARDENING (DENMARK)

Five aircraft set-off to drop sea mines in various areas tonight (Hollyhock, Eglantine and Jasmine), departing Base from around 21.35hrs onwards. Weather was very good in some areas but in the KIEL area visibility was such that after one hour searching in vain P1330 returned to base with the weapon on board. Due to the wind forecast being inaccurate P1321 was blown off-course and returned to Base due to impending daybreak; when off Cromer Norfolk the aircraft was notified of a downed aircraft in the sea and searched for 45 minutes to no avail, returning to Base safely. The other three aircraft successfully dropped the mines with varying amounts of opposition from flak and searchlights- no night fighters were encountered- and all returned safely to Base.

### 12 May- BOMBING MUNCHEN- GLADBACH

Three aircraft set-off in the early morning to bomb road and railway targets in the centre of Munchen-Gladbach. One aircraft failed to pin-point the target and returned with bombs aboard, the other two successfully bombed the target returning to Base safely.

### 13 May 1940

An entry in the ORB reads: *"From this date, Appendices attached in form 541 are for the most part extracts of personal experience reports written by the aircraft crews themselves. This form of recording has been resorted to owing to the large number of operations taking place and hence the correspondingly small amount of time that the officer i/c compilation of the operations Record Book can give to the work."*

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## May 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 13/ 14 May 1940- GARDENING

P1321 took off from base at 15.30hrs and flew to Scampton (reason unknown). It left Scampton at 20.35hrs to drop a mine on the East Coast of Denmark. Weather was appalling with dense cloud and sea fog down to sea level. The crew had extreme difficulty in establishing their position once over enemy territory (Baltic). Having avoided 3 enemy fighters and lost them by entering cloud they then were picked up by 10 fighters- "two sat up 75' above our tail, 6 below, 300 yards away and two on either side at 300 yards. Once again we had to take evasive action". After a further course change they encountered three fighters again and took evasive action. Again three fighters found them and having entered cloud to evade them subsequently found they were now over Lubeck bay. On setting course for the target they were again picked up by three fighters once more heading into the clouds. At this time they had been airborne for a long time and so asked on the W/T for a navigational fix. By the time this was received they found themselves over the North Sea and with daybreak imminent set course for home only to be followed by a lone fighter which, this time entered cloud with them. Eventually they lost the fighter and landed safely at Base at 04.40hrs, over 8 hours in the air. The pilot remarked that he believed the fighters could see their exhaust flames.

### 14/ 15 May- GARDENING & BOMBING ROSSENDAAL

Five aircraft set-off from around 10.30 to drop mines in the 'Quince' area (near NYBORG). One aircraft managed to find a break in the dense clouds at the target and mined successfully; the remaining four could not pinpoint the target and so returned with weapons on board. All five returned safely to base. Two further aircraft, P1329 flown by S/Ldr. Crockart and P1317 flown by the Squadron boss, W/Cdr. Taaffe set off around 00.15hrs on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 00.25hrs on the 15<sup>th</sup> respectively, on a mission to bomb road junctions at ROSSENDAAL and BREDA. P1329 bombed Rossendaal; two of the four 500lb bombs hung-up however and were brought back. P1317 could not locate the primary target due to smoke haze and finally bombed a road junction at Breda. Both returned safely to Base.

### 15/ 16 May- KAMEN (RUHR VALLEY)

Six aircraft took off late evening to bomb Kamen. In the event only two aircraft found the primary target and successfully bombed; haze prevented the remaining aircraft finding the target and alternate targets (Dortmund, Soest and Bocholt) were successfully bombed. Intense searchlight activity was noted over the Ruhr but no effective A.A. fire or fighters were encountered and all aircraft returned safely to Base. (This was the first Bomber Command air offensive against mainland Germany).

# **No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two**

**The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.**

## May 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 17/ 18 May- HAMBURG & BELGIUM

In perfect weather, seven aircraft bombed an oil refinery near Hamburg all returning safely; one crew encountered a twin engine night fighter and the lower rear gunner hit the aircraft causing it to disengage its attack. Three further aircraft successfully bombed a road/ rail junction at YVOIR, Belgium. A fourth returned to base soon after take off when an exhaust manifold became loose. Aircraft that took off first safely returned to Base; those departing later found base blanketed with radiation fog and all safely diverted to R.A.F. Station Scampton.

### 18/ 19 May- GIVET, FRANCE

Two aircraft successfully bombed a road junction at Givet in clear skies and bright moonlight; a third found the bombs would not release even using the jettison switch. All returned safely to Base.

### 19/ 20 May- SALZBERGEN

Three aircraft successfully bombed an oil refinery at Salzbergen in good weather while two further aircraft failed to pinpoint the target. Direct hits on the oil tanks were seen by two crews. All returned safely to Base all landing by 03.00hrs. Inaccurate maps were noted on this mission.

### 20/ 21 May- LONGCHAMPS AND MONT D'ORIGNY

Three aircraft this evening bombed bridges and a railway line at Longchamps, France. French searchlights were in action and the aircraft were being fired upon by French flak guns despite the 'letter of the hour' being signalled. No damage was sustained however and all aircraft returned safely to Base.

### 21/22 May- TRAINS ON THE KOLN TO DUREN RAILWAY

Four aircraft set off to bomb trains on the railway line between Koln and Duren. No trains were found; one aircraft bombed the Liblar to Turnich railway line while the other three bombed the Koln/ Duren line, the goods yard at Duren and also a railway viaduct at Hohram. One aircraft was hit by a 'pom-pom' shell in the Starboard wing while a second encountered a night-fighter which attempted a stern attack but was fired on and seen off by the gunners, near Koln. No damage was sustained. All aircraft landed safely back at Base.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## May 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 22/ 23 May- BINCHE, BELGIUM

Three aircraft were detailed to bomb road and rail communications at Binche, with one of the aircraft given an additional reconnaissance task at MONDEWOOD. Two aircraft bombed the target, while the third could not pin-point the target and was unable to perform the recce. task due to haze. All returned to safely, one having encountered three night-fighters but without combat ensuing, with two diverting to Honington and one to Wattisham as base was unfit for landing.

### 23/ 24 May- VARIOUS LINES OF COMMUNICATION IN WEST GERMANY AND S.E. HOLLAND

The squadron despatched eight aircraft to multiple targets across Western Germany and Holland this evening; bridges, railways, roads and a goods yard. One aircraft failed to locate any target due to weather preventing accurate bombing (collateral damage was not allowed at this time) and returned with bombs on board to Base; another was hit by flak in the tail while outbound over the Dutch Coast and, coupled with severe icing and an intercom failure forced the pilot to return to Base. The remaining six aircraft bombed their various targets and, due to base being unfit diverted to Abingdon, Hemswell, Upper Heyford and Kidlington safely, returning onward to base around mid-day 24<sup>th</sup> May. This raid included the Squadron Boss W/Cdr. Taaffe.

### 24/ 25 May- RECOGNE

Three aircraft were despatched tonight to bomb an oil dump at Recogne, all the aircraft finding the target without difficulty. Two aircraft bombed the target but the third crew could not release the bombs even using the jettison switch. The two successful aircraft reported extremely accurate (and close) flak working well in conjunction with searchlights over the target area but without damage being reported.

### 25/ 26 May 1940- COMMUNICATIONS IN WEST GERMANY

This evening five aircraft were despatched to destroy various lines of communications in West Germany. All aircraft each attacked multiple targets including railway lines, a tunnel and bridges and in one case destroyed a train (near WIESMES). The aircraft attacking the train had a portion of the Port aileron shot away by flak. All returned to Base safely.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## May 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 26/ 27 May- COMMUNICATIONS IN WEST GERMANY AND BELGIUM

Four aircraft were despatched tonight to bomb enemy road and rail transport. One aircraft P1321 flown by F/Lt. Bennett, having attacked and set on fire a motor convoy between Bruhl and Euskirchen then "*proceeded to the RUHR area and created a disturbance there by flying over several towns*". Flushing aerodrome was bombed by another crew and having done so flew over Antwerp at 500 feet "*with no opposition*". Two more bombed Belgian railways. All returned to Base safely and without major incident.

### 27/ 28 May- HAMBURG and GIVET, FRANCE

Five aircraft were detailed to bomb an oil refinery at Hamburg while four more were detailed to bomb a bridge at Givet, France. Of the first group, only two aircraft located the target and both bombed; two further aircraft failed to locate the target due to haze and bombed alternates while the fifth crew were unable to locate their position after 1.5hrs in the estimated area and returned with bombs on board. All landed at Base safely. Of the second group, two aircraft bombed the target, one bombed an alternate (Flushing aerodrome) and the fourth found, on reaching Ostend that the Starboard engine was cutting badly and returned to Base. All landed safely.

### 30/ 31 May- HAMBURG

Three aircraft were detailed to attack an oil refinery at Hamburg tonight. Due to dense cloud down to ground level at the target area all three dropped their bombs 'Blind' into the estimated target area (i.e. flak and searchlights) and returned safely to Base.

No aircraft were lost this month and injuries were confined to the Pilot of L4062, S/Ldr. Good.

Representative aircraft are: L4062, L4075, L4076, L4077, L4079, L4149, L4164, L4168, P1317, P1321, P1327, P1329, P1330, P1356, P4287, P4288, and P4289.



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## June 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

Overview: British and Allied forces are now forced to retreat in Flanders culminating in the evacuation at Dunkirk. Bomber Command supports the evacuation by Day and by Night but bad weather hampers effective 'tactical' support. The first (unsuccessful) raids on Italy launched from the Channel Islands also occur. The Squadron continues to attack targets in Europe by Night and planting of sea-mines continues- some at extreme range. Airfields, canals and aircraft factories attract a lot of attention toward the latter part of the month in response to the suspected invasion of Britain by a flotilla of barges supported by an aerial onslaught- what came to be known as the "Battle of Britain".

British Bombers suffered comparatively little from the very limited 'night fighters' of the Luftwaffe which were simply standard fighters flying at night. Ground defences were also scant with the Luftwaffe's Anti-Aircraft gun batteries having no predictive radar assistance and searchlights being relatively few in number. All this was about to change however.

### 1/ 2 June 1940

Six aircraft are tasked to bomb 'A.19'- KIEL Area. Due to bad weather over the target all returned without identifying either primary or alternate targets.

### 3/ 4 June 1940

5 aircraft bombed oil refineries and storage units at FRANKFURT; one aircraft bombed 'A.24' and four aircraft bombed 'A.25', oil refineries at EMMERICH. All returned safely.

### 4/ 5 June

Two Hampden's bombed oil receiving units at MANNHEIM (A.165), while a third turned back u/s en-route. All returned safely, landing at Scampton due to fog at base.

### 5/ 6 June 1940

Six aircraft bombed oil refineries and storage units on the banks of the Elbe near Wedel. Weather was perfect, but one aircraft reported being pursued by 7 enemy fighters that gave up at around 60 miles out at sea. All returned safely.

### 6/ 7 June

Three aircraft set out to bomb 'A.7', one returned due to not receiving the W/T "GO". Rest bombed and returned safely.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## June 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 7/ 8 June

Six aircraft 'Gardened' successfully, all returning safely, two at Hemswell and one at Cottesmore due to fog at BASE. On the return trip, some warships off TRONEKJON opened fire on some of the Hampden's who duly returned fire with their machine guns, L4076 being a casualty sustaining hits to the Starboard wing.

### 8 June

Hampden P4289, 'VN-X' crashed at Coleby Grange, 20.40hrs whilst on approach to Waddington. It is believed to be a minor accident as no casualties are reported and the aircraft was repaired and fought another day.

### 8/ 9 June 1940

P1329 bombed a road junction at RECOGNE while two aircraft bombed railway marshalling yards at EUSHKIRCHEN. All returned safely.

### 9/ 10 June

Three aircraft bombed railway marshalling yards at SOEST, while six more having failed to find the primary targets of marshalling yards at DUISBERG (P1321 hit by 'a small shell') and RHEYDT bombed alternate targets at DUSSELDORF, HAMBORN, HOMBERG and railways near SOEST and ISERLOHN (P1327 hit by intense AA fire around DUSSELDORF injuring the pilot and jamming the bomb-release gear), all landed safely back at Base.

### 10/ 11 June

One aircraft successfully 'Gardened' whilst 6 aircraft bombed bridges over the MEUSE around SEDAN. All returned safely.

### 12 June 1940

S/Ldr. N.D. Crockart promoted to acting W/Cdr. and now new Officer Commanding 50 Squadron. The outgoing C.O. W/Cdr. Taaffe last flew in the Sedan mission and was posted to HQ 5 Group on the 17<sup>th</sup> June.

### 11/ 12 June

Seven aircraft bombed German lines of communication in the LA FERRE, CHARLEVILLE AND SEDAN Region, and German occupied buildings in the town of LA FERRE. All returned safely. (Includes new the C/O W/Cdr. Crockart in P1329 and P/O C.D. Stenner in L4149).

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## June 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 12/ 13 June

Two aircraft bombed marshalling yard at LAON. A further four bombed goods marshalling yards at CHARLEVILLE. All returned safely. P1330 turned back u/s.

### 13/ 14 June

Two aircraft bombed a river crossing at PONT DE L'ACHE, two more bombed railway junctions at LAON while a further four bombed road centres at BEAUVAIS. All returned safely.

### 14 June

A/ Squadron leader R.J. Oxley attached from No.106 Squadron pending posting.

### 14/ 15 June

P4288 bombed railway yards at SOEST.

### 16/ 17 June

Three aircraft performed mining operations in the BALTIC region. All returned safely.

17 June- The CWGC records the death of 568528 LAC James Weston Bowes, No. 50 Squadron on this date. However the RoH does not list James. He is buried in Castleford New Cemetery, Sec. U Grave 359.

### 17/ 18 June

Five aircraft were detailed to bomb oil refineries at HAMBURG, with a further four attacking the marshalling yards at KOBLENTZ. All returned safely to Base.

### 18/ 19 June

Three aircraft mined the "Eglantine" area, while one bombed railway movements in the BONN area followed by marshalling yards at BONN. All returned safely.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## June 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 19 June

The 50 Squadron RoH lists P/O Kenneth Andre Cockerell as killed in 'Active Service' on this date. He was in fact killed in a road traffic accident on the evening of the 19<sup>th</sup> June. Two cars collided head-on in black-out conditions on the A15 near the Temple Bruer junction. All three occupants were killed; P/O Alan Blanchard Lawton and WAAF Barbara Sarah Watkins Williams being the other fatalities. P/O Cockerell last flew L4097 on a successful raid to Hamburg on the 17/ 18<sup>th</sup> June.

70850 P/O Cockerell RAF is buried in Waddington, St. Michael's Churchyard, Lincolnshire. He was aged 21 when he died. (Kenneth was the son of Harry and Madeleine Cockerell of Teddington, Mddx). Ref. CWGC and the Lincolnshire Echo, 20 June 1940. (42237 P/O Lawton RAF is buried at Scopwick Church burial ground, Lincolnshire; he was aged 20. 883075 ACW1 Barbara Williams, WAAF died the next day on the 20<sup>th</sup> June and was laid to rest in Cardiff (Cathays) Cemetery, Barbara being the Daughter of Thomas and Annie Williams, Cardiff, Glamorganshire. She was only 17 years old.

### 19/ 20 June

Two aircraft were detailed to bomb oil storage depots at BRUNSBUTTEL, one further aircraft bombed "A.7" while a further six aircraft bombed German communications in the WESEL, KOBLENTZ and HAMM area, all returned safely. P1317 engaged a German Blohm & Voss seaplane and claim to have shot it down into the sea.

### 20/ 21 June

Five aircraft were detailed to bomb the aerodrome at PADERBORN, one also bombing MUNSTER aerodrome, all returning safely. Includes L4097 flown by P/O C.D. Stenner.

### 21/ 22 June1940

Six aircraft were detailed to bomb the synthetic oil plant at SPERKRADE-HOLTEN. Due to industrial haze over the target area, the target could not be pinpointed by one of the aircraft. Secondary targets were therefore attacked, including the Blast Furnaces at TERBORG; the Krupp works ESSEN; a factory at DREVENACK and marshalling yards at GOTTRUP near ESSEN. Two aircraft successfully bombed the target. All aircraft safely returned to base.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## June 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 23/ 24 June 1940

Nine aircraft were detailed to bomb the aircraft factory at WENZENDORF, SW of HAMBURG. One aircraft turned back as the pilot felt unwell; another suffered engine problems and returned. Another aircraft failed to pinpoint the target and, low on fuel returned direct to Base. In fair visibility five aircraft bombed the target; Hampden L4164 was hit by flak over STADE and the navigator was wounded, the captain electing to bomb STADE aerodrome before turning for Base. All returned safely to Base.

### 24/ 25 June

Four Hampden aircraft successfully bombed barges on the DORTMUND-EMS and MITTLELAND CANALS. All returned safely.  
P/O R.D. Wawn discharged from R.A.F. Officers Hospital, Torquay- probably as a result of injuries sustained in the Anson crash on the 13<sup>th</sup> April.

### 25/ 26 June

Three aircraft returned to bomb the Dortmund-Ems canals, canal barges and locks; one also bombing an un-identified aerodrome. A further two bombed German lines of communication including moving trains and railway lines near DORSTEN. P1330 returned to base after the W/T receiver failed. All returned safely to Base.

## June 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 26/ 27 June 1940

Seven aircraft were detailed to bomb the airfield at LANGEN HAGEN near HANOVER, or alternatively yards at OSNABRUCK. Two aircraft failed to return; One, **Hampden P1329** sent an S.O.S. at 0326 hours, "*Returning on one engine*" with the rest of the message unreadable. At 0359 hours a further message in plain language was received, "*Going Down*". A fix taken at this time estimated its position as 15 miles East of AMSTERDAM 53 20N, 04 05E. However the fix was second class so the aircraft may have crashed in enemy territory.

Six Blenheim's of 235 Squadron searched a 400 square mile area at around 04.00 but no trace was found. Various sources give the crash location as 25km West of Callantsoog in the North Sea. [www.flensted.eu.com](http://www.flensted.eu.com) states that the aircraft was claimed shot down by coastal flak battery 3/ 614. All crew perished: No. 50 Squadron's C/O, 32155 W/Cdr. Norman David Crockart; 514566 F/Sgt. William Thomas Joseph Southey; Sgt.'s 580958 Allen John Dennis Ingram and 614601 Eric Howard McKenzie Turner. W/Cdr Crockart had been C/O for barely 17 days. W/Cdr. Crockart was found on the beach near the Dutch town of Callantsoog and he was buried in CALLANTSOOG Cemetery, Holland by the Germans with full military honours; Sgt. Ingram was washed ashore on the 25<sup>th</sup> July near Argab, Denmark and was buried in NORRE HAVRIG CHURCHYARD, WEST

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## June 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 26/ 27 June 1940 (Ctd.)

JUTLAND, DENMARK on 28 July 1940 again with full military honours. F/Sgt. Southey and Sgt. Turner were never found and are commemorated at Runnymede memorial.

Additionally, **Hampden L4078** failed to return with 40628 P/O Anthony Seton Luxmoore (pilot aged 26) and Sgt.'s 580426 Walter Cecil Harding, (Observer Age 22), 624403 Gerald Nichols (WOP/AG) and 550966 Arthur Harry Smith (WOP/AG, 20) killed. The aircraft is believed to have crashed near RETHEN, near Hannover. All are buried side-by-side in Hannover War Cemetery, locality NIEDERSACHSEN. (Ref. CWGC)

Note:- One of the successful aircraft noted in their report that “numerous accurate whitish- blue searchlight beams picked up and held the aircraft” around Hannover with the “flak fire falling 40- 60 Yards astern”; this may be the cause of the two casualties tonight as these searchlights were part of a German ‘Predictive Flak’ system which proved devastatingly accurate in later months and years. Another quotes that ‘intense heavy and accurate A.A. fire was encountered bursting all around the aircraft, usually about 60 yards away’. The reporting crews may simply have been lucky as the predictive flak batteries adjusted their ranging.

Strangely, the ORB records the cause of death of each crew member as due to a “Flying Accident”. Only one of the remaining five aircraft reported hitting the target. The five others returned safely.

### 27/ 28 June 1940

Four aircraft attacked the oil tanker facility at NYBORG. No casualties reported. Although all the aircraft bombed in good visibility and some bombs were seen to burst on the target, no explosions were seen; this may suggest fusing or quality problems with the 500lb bombs used. This must be very frustrating for the crews having got the ordnance to the target. All aircraft returned to Base safely.

### 28/ 29 June 1940

Three aircraft mined the “Quince” area; all did so successfully and one aircraft attacked a flak ship on the return leg; while a further seven aircraft bombed a poison gas factory at DORMAGEN, South of Dusseldorf. Again during this mission whitish-blue and also reddish searchlights and intense accurate A.A. fire was endured. One aircraft returned to base early due to the pilot feeling unwell. Only one aircraft bombed the primary target, the others finding the target obscured by the intense searchlight activity and subsequently attacking the alternate targets. All returned safely to Base.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## June 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 29/ 30 June

Four aircraft were detailed to attack a Dynamite factory near HAMBURG (!). The attack was unsuccessful, only one aircraft finding the primary target, the others failing to identify any targets. All returned to base safely.

### 30/ 31 June

Six aircraft were detailed to bomb an oil refinery at HAMBURG. All returned safely after a largely un-successful mission.

Representative Hampden aircraft: L4062, L4075, L4076, L4078, L4079, L4097, L4149, L4164, P1317, P1321, P1327, P1329, P1330, P1356, P4287, P4288, P4289, P4297, P4374.

Representative Crews: Crockart, Luxmoore, Oxley

## July 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

Overview: The Battle of Britain Begins- Bomber Command supports with Daylight Operations by Blenheim's and Night operations by Hamden's, Wellington's and Whitley's with the Hamden's concentrating mainly on mining operations (Gardening).

One repetitive problem now being reported by many crews is that of the glare caused by searchlights; this prevents essential map-reading needed to pin-point targets once in the general target area. Due to orders not to bomb unless the specific target can be positively identified many crews had to search for a secondary target; this of course left them exposed to mortal danger while they did so.

In July, the course of the air war over Germany was to begin to change; The Luftwaffe's Oberst Josef Kammhuber champions the cause of ground defence of the Reich territory and establishes belts of mobile, anti-aircraft batteries (known as Fliegerabwehrkanonen or 'FLAK') aided by primitive radar assistance and large groups of searchlights. Also, 'Nachtjagdgeschwader 1', or NJG 1 begins nocturnal operations with specially modified single and twin-engine fighter aircraft which are also assisted by ground based radar in intercepting the allied bombers. More importantly, all these assets were starting to be used in co-operation.

It is believed that S/L Oxley becomes O.C. 'B' Flight this month.

This month, the Squadron moves to a new home, Royal Air Force Hatfield Woodhouse, later re-named RAF Lindholme, Yorkshire. Such moves are a major consumer of time and resources and required careful planning and execution. Anecdotal evidence reveals that things did not always run to plan! Moves were also to become quite common-place throughout the War.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## July 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 1/ 2 July- MINING OP'S AND OSNABRUCK

From around 21.30hrs three aircraft took off to mine the 'ENDIVE' area. Although the weather was very good throughout, only two found the target and successfully mined the area. These two also dropped wing-bombs on a flak ship that had fired at them while leaving the area. The third could not pin-point the target, all three returned to Base safely. At the same time, three further aircraft took off to bomb railway marshalling yards at Osnabruck; two hit the target but the third having turned back 120 miles east of Skegness due to low oil pressure on one engine then finding the engine recovered, set course again for the alternate target- some barges at Rotterdam. On reaching the area the crew found the visibility poor and being unable to locate a target returned to base with bombs on board.

### 2/ 3 July- HAMBURG

Five aircraft were detailed to attack an oil refinery at Hamburg. Two aircraft bombed the alternate target, the seaplane base at Nordeney where ferocious flak and searchlight activity was encountered; one due to an exhaust stub falling off while en-route to the main target and the second due to low cloud over Hamburg. The other three located the target at Hamburg and successfully bombed with a direct hit claimed by one; however flak and searchlights were again intense. L4149 was hit by flak after releasing the bombs, causing the forward crew entrance door to be blown open; this caused the Observer Sgt. Hyland, to be blown partially out of the cockpit and he was pulled back in by the WOP Sgt. E.S. Smith. The Observer was uninjured but collapsed from shock. All aircraft returned safely to Base- P1327 landed at Wyton due to Navigational problems and continued back to base after 45 minutes.

### 3/ 4 July- MINING OP'S

Three aircraft took off from around 21.00hrs to mine the QUINCE' area. One, L4164 captained by the Squadron CO W/Cdr. Golledge. L4076 experienced a Starboard engine exhaust stub detaching and returned direct to Base while L4149 dropped the mine successfully. L4164 made the target area but upon release the sea mine failed to drop and so was taken back to Base where no fault could be found with the bomb release gear.



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## July 1940 Based R.A.F. Station Waddington

### 4/ 5 July- KIEL

Six aircraft were detailed tonight to bomb the ship building yards and ship repair basins at Kiel. Opposition was fierce at Kiel; L4079 was hit by flak making holes in the WOP and rear gunner's cockpits and blowing off the Starboard flap. Despite this the crew bombed the target, straddling the battleship 'SCHARNHORST' and a pocket battleship. A second aircraft discovered once airborne that no dinghy was fitted, returned for one then took off to locate an alternate target at Nordeney seaplane base. This could not be located due to cloud and haze. Four further aircraft bombed the target and found the defences intense; so much so that evasive action and searchlights prevented them from observing the fall of the bombs. All returned safely to Base.

### 6/ 7 July- MINING OP'S

Five aircraft successfully mined in the 'QUINCE' area with little opposition all returning safely to Base around 04.00 on the 7th.

### 7/ 8 July- SOEST

Three aircraft successfully bombed railway marshalling yards at Soest. Flak and searchlights were intense in the target area, so much so that some aircraft were buffeted by near-misses. All aircraft safely returned to Base.

### 9 July 1940

Hampden P4288 crashed at Branston while attempting a landing at Waddington, at 19.45hrs. No reported injuries. Pilot may have been P/O W.A.C. Mulloy DFC (see also 25 July entry). - Nothing on 'Tinternet or ORB.

### 10 July 1940

**The Squadron moved to R.A.F. Station Hatfield Woodhouse (later named RAF Lindholme, Yorkshire).**

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## July 1940 based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

### 13/ 14 July- HAMBURG

A large force of eleven aircraft set off tonight to bomb a powder factory at KRUMMEL, near Hamburg. Weather was atrocious throughout with thick cloud and thunderstorms causing havoc with navigation. Only one aircraft reached the primary target but results were doubtful. Some aircraft bombed targets of opportunity while some dropped no weapons and returned having jettisoned the bombs in the sea. Aerodromes's at Eelde, an un-identified one East of Hamburg, and on the island of Texel were bombed by three aircraft. Only two aircraft returned to Base (Lindholme), one landing at Hemswell and the remainder at Waddington.

### 14/ 15 July- OLDENBURG

Five aircraft were detailed this night to bomb the aircraft factory and aerodrome ay Oldenburg. In good weather all aircraft bombed the target area but results were not thought good. All aircraft returned safely to Waddington.

### 15/ 16 July- MINING OP'S

Ten aircraft successfully mined the "DAFFODIL" area tonight, with little opposition. All returned safely to Base.

### 18/ 19 July- PADERBORN AERODROME

Ten aircraft set off tonight to bomb the aerodrome at Paderborn. Opposition was slight and seven aircraft hit the target with doubtful results. Two aircraft bombed alternate targets whilst a third turned back shortly after take off with an engine problem. All returned to Base safely.

### 19/ 20 July- PADERBORN AERODROME

Six aircraft returned to Paderborn aerodrome tonight. Three aircraft found the aerodrome and bombed but again results were poor; two further aircraft failed to find the target and so bombed alternates while the sixth aircraft having come under such intense flak over the target area that the pilot thought he was hit and losing control, jettisoned its bombs and tuned for home. All returned to Base safely.

### 21/ 22 July- WISMAR & MINING OP'S

Four aircraft set off tonight to bomb the DORNIER aircraft works at Wismar. Three aircraft bombed the target one reporting a direct hit while a fourth attacked an alternate target. All returned to Base. A further seven aircraft mined the NASTURNTIUM" area, with six aircraft dropping mines successfully without opposition while the seventh suffered engine problems and returned. All returned to Base safely.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## July 1940 based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

### 22/ 23 July- HAMM

Three aircraft were detailed to bomb the railway junction and marshalling yards at Hamm. Due to cloud and haze two aircraft bombed alternates while one bombed Hamm but only one of four (250lb) bombs dropped was seen to explode. All returned safely to Base.

### 24/ 25 July- WISMAR

Four aircraft tonight returned to the Dornier factory at Wismar. Weather was very poor. Only one located and bombed the target; of the remainder one jettisoned bombs in the sea, one returned to Base with bombs on board and the final aircraft bombed an alternate at Borkum seaplane base. All returned safely to base.

### 25/ 26 July- CASTROP- RAUXEL & WANNE- EICKEL, RUHR VALLEY

Five aircraft tonight set off to bomb a synthetic oil plant at Castrop- Rauxel. Due to bad weather and poor visibility with searchlight activity, three of the aircraft bombed alternate targets and returned safely to Base while a fourth bombed the target reporting massive flak and searchlights working in conjunction with night fighters; these four returned safely to Base. The fifth, **Hampden P1321** failed to return. The aircraft transmitted a W/T message at 02.15hrs that the port engine had failed over Cuxhaven and that they were heading for Calais. Nothing further was heard however until the M.L.O. reported "*Battery at Haisboro' reports bomber crashed at low water mark near heavy battery; position of machine visible and have removed 3 bodies*". It was also stated that the aircraft was P1321 and that it bore marks of bullets or shrapnel holes. The aircraft had apparently flown from the direction of the land and on hitting the beach had disintegrated. Presumed the pilot was attempting to make a forced landing on the beach after flying a few miles inland to establish his position. Crew were Pilot, 40636 P/O William Arthur Coote Mulloy DFC RAFVR, WOP/ AG Sgt. Angus Lamont Stewart RAF 624161, Observer Sgt. Gordon Reeves Watt RAF 522273 and P/O Thomas Monks Taylor RAFVR 77205 WOP/ AG, .

It is believed that P1321 crashed at Happisburgh beach near Cromer at 03.00hrs? P/O Mulloy is buried in Hatfield Woodhouse Cemetery Nr. Doncaster. P/O Taylor is buried in Thornton Garden Of Rest, Lancashire and Sgt. Watt is buried at Romford Cemetery, Essex. Sgt. Stewart was never found and he is remembered on the Runnymede memorial.

In addition six further aircraft set off to bomb a synthetic oil plant at Wanne- Eickel. Two successfully bombed the target but four failed to locate the target due to haze and searchlight glare and so bombed various alternate targets, returning safely to base.

### 26 July

**Hampden L4139** crashed at R.A.F. Finningley due to undercarriage failure on landing during night training; the pilot (and the only crew member) P/O K.R.K. Smettem was unhurt but the aircraft was substantially damaged. (From ASN Web site, 22478.) .

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## July 1940 based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

### 27/ 28 July- HAMBURG

Seven aircraft were detailed to bomb the oil refineries at Hamburg. All the aircraft reported extreme difficulty in pin-pointing the target once in the area due to intense searchlight activity making map-reading impossible due to glare, as well as the avoiding actions taken due to flak bursts. P4383 successfully identified the target and bombed but results were not seen (4x 500lb bombs). One aircraft failed to locate any target at all and returned to base with bombs on board, while a third with an overheating engine bombed the first target of opportunity at Borkum seaplane base. A fourth also attacked Borkum as a secondary target, a fifth bombed Nordeney aerodrome after turning back from the primary target while a sixth bombed an oil plant at Ostermoor after abandoning the search for Hamburg. The final aircraft reached the target area but, unable to locate the oil refineries then bombed a flak battery in the area, the aircraft receiving damage from shrapnel which struck the pilots cigarette case; no injuries were reported. All returned safely to base.

### 28/ 29 July- BREMEN

Eight aircraft tonight took off to bomb oil refineries at Bremen. The night was particularly dark and subsequently target identification was difficult. Subsequently, just three aircraft bombed the target with none recording results. Of the remainder two returned to base with bombs on board while three bombed alternate targets at Borkum seaplane base, Wilhelmshaven docks and the aerodrome at Texel on the return flight. All returned to Base safely.

### 31 July/ 1 August- GARDENING

Tonight, a large force of 12 squadron aircraft set out on Gardening missions to the "RADISH" and also the "FORGET-ME-NOT" areas (six per area). Of the first group, three aircraft successfully dropped sea-mines while two failed to locate the target area all five returning safely to Waddington as Base weather was unfit. The sixth, **Hampden P4383 failed to return, with Pilot 40663 P/O Brian Stallard Bell, W/OP 617444 Sgt. Christopher Douglas Evans, Observer 742485 Sgt. William Elliott Miller and AG 526290 Sgt. Donald Tailford all missing. At 04.10hrs information was passed to Base that the aircraft was returning on one engine. It was hoped they had force landed in the sea and had taken to their dinghy and subsequently an air and sea search was initiated. (Dutch ASN Wikibase Occurrence 53856 gives crash located 50 miles East off Flamborough head, North Sea).** Further details: aircraft airborne 2113 hrs. 31 July, contact lost 0410 1<sup>st</sup> August; presumed to have ditched. 6 Weeks later the body of P/O Bell was washed up on the Dutch Coast and he is buried in Bergen op Zoom War Cemetery. The remaining crew were never found and are commemorated at Runnymede.

Of the second group mining the "Forget-me-not" area, four aircraft successfully mined the target area while one failed to pin-point the target and returned to Waddington with weapons on board. One further aircraft returned early due to excessive engine vibration. P1327, flown by S/L Oxley was overstressed during this mission, when the

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## July 1940, Based RAF Lindholme

### 31 July/ 1 August (Continued)

pilot attempted to swap seats with the Observer/ 2<sup>nd</sup> Pilot to allow flying training; the aircraft went out of control and entered a vertical dive, the recovery from which caused severe strain, however the aircraft was landed safely at Drifffield returning onward to base a few hours later. Damage was sufficient to prevent the aircraft flying operationally again, P1327 becoming a ground instructional airframe. No injuries recorded to crew.

Representative Hampden B.Mk.1 aircraft: L4062; L4075; L4076; L4079; L4097; L4149; L4164; P1317; P1321; P1327; P1330; P1356; P2070; P4287; P4288; P4382; P4383; P4389, P4395.

Crews: Treasure, Corr, Shaughnessy, **Mulloy**, Vernieux, Reed, Taylor, Willan, Lloyd, Banker, Watts, Stenner, Gardiner, West, Abbott, Jacklin, Wawn, Oxley, Potts, **Bell**. The Squadron C.O. W/Cdr. Golledge flew three operational missions this month.

## August 1940, RAF LINDHOLME

Overview: Bomber Command continues to support The Battle of Britain, with Blenheim's switched to anti-shipping patrols. Hampdens frequently bombed industrial and logistical targets across Germany but accuracy was dire due to a combination of bad weather and minimal navigation aids; casualties were severe. The Dortmund-Emms Canal receives attention. Gardening operations also continued apace.

### 5/6 August- HAMBURG DOCKS

Eight aircraft took off to bomb the Battleship BISMARCK under construction at HAMBURG docks. Due to Haze in the area the ship was not identified; some bombed the area while others found alternate targets. Two aircraft turned back due to technical problems but all landed safely.

### 7/ 8 August- 'GARDENING'

Seven aircraft took off to drop sea-mines in the "Quince" area (The Great belt/Kiel Bay) only four being successful. All returned safely.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## August 1940, Based RAF Lindholme

### 10/ 11 August- HOMBERG

Eleven aircraft took off from around 21.40hrs to bomb the synthetic oil plant at HOMBERG, SW of HAMBURG, including P1317 flown by the Squadron C.O. W/Cdr. Golledge. Only five managed to attack the primary target due to weather.

That same night, Hampden P4382 was lost on "Active Service", with the crew Sgt. J.M. Beattie, 41727 P/O George Grant Kingsmill Nolan RAFVR, Sgt. E.S. Quinn and Sgt. F.C. Shook missing. All were later confirmed as killed. The crew were in fact detailed to perform a 'Practice Flight' to Vlieland, Holland as they were all inexperienced (Hampden) crew members. The aircraft took off at 21.47hrs (with the main bomber stream) and after receiving the 'GO' signal nothing further was heard. The ASN Web site lists this aircraft as crashing in the North Sea off VLIELAND, HOLLAND. Their names are commemorated on the memorial at Runnymede.

### 12/ 13 August- GARDENING

Nine aircraft took off from 20.50hrs onward to mine the "Quince" area (Great Belt/ Kiel bay), with seven successfully dropping the mines. One turned back and a second (P4417 flown by P/O Vernieux and crew) while 80 miles East of Flambor' Head spotted two lights flashing the international distress signal 'SOS'; believed to be torches shone from small boats. The aircraft circled for 45 minutes reporting the position to Base. Due to the time spent circling the aircraft was ordered to return to base. All aircraft returned safely.

### 13/ 14 August- BERNBURG

Three aircraft took off around 21.00hrs to bomb the JUNKERS aircraft factory at BERNBURG. One turned back u/s, a second attacked the alternate target and L4079 successfully attacked the target.

### 14/ 15 August- PAULLAC REFINERIES, BORDEAUX

From 21.15hrs onwards, 8 aircraft left to bomb the PAULLAC oil refineries near Bordeaux. Weather was good and all aircraft successfully attacked leaving the refineries blazing to an extent they could be seen from 130 miles away. A further aircraft was late in leaving due to radio troubles, so bombed CHERBURG aerodrome. All returned safely.

### 16/ 17 August- MERSEBURG OIL PLANT

Eleven aircraft left from 20.40 onwards, seven aircraft bombed the target. P1356 flown by Sgt. Abbott, Sgt. Bryce, Sgt. Harney and Sgt. Turner ran out of fuel in the Derby area (the return trip hindered by cloud cover) and force landed at REPTON, hitting an H.T. pylon in the process. The aircraft was not badly damaged however and none of the crew was hurt. The remainder returned to base safely.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## August 1940, Based RAF Lindholme

### 21/ 22 August 1940- MAGDEBURG OIL PLANT

From around 20.26hrs, ten aircraft took off for the MAGDEBURG Synthetic oil plant. Nine bombed successfully and all returned safely.

### 22/ 23 August- FRANKFURT

Four aircraft attacked the aircraft component factory in Frankfurt with one turning back u/s. All landed safely but none found the primary target due to weather.

### 23/ 24 August- “GARDENING” IN BREST HARBOUR

P4395, P1317 and P2070 successfully mined the “Jellyfish” area; in the entrance to Brest Harbour they met ‘fierce opposition’ from the harbour defences. P4075 reached the target but the weapon failed to release. All returned to base safely.

### 24/ 25 August- “GARDENING”, LA ROCHELLE

Seven aircraft took off from Lindholme for a mining operation around La Rochelle at approximately 21.30hrs. One aircraft became u/s shortly after take-off (forward recognition light would not switch off) and landed at Finningley. The remaining six successfully dropped ‘Vegetables’ at around 01.00hrs and all safely returned to base, dropping wing bombs on targets of opportunity on the return trip. Intense flak was encountered over the target.

[The first bombs fall on London tonight.](#)

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

August 1940, Based RAF Lindholme

25/ 26 August- BERLIN

Five aircraft took off at around 21.50hrs to attack an electricity power station at Berlin. Low cloud hampered an effective mission. All aircraft are thought to have reached their target but two casualties were suffered due to intensive flak defences. One, **Hampden P2124 was written-off after ditching (1/4 mile off Scarborough pier) following fuel exhaustion on return from BERLIN.** The crew believed they may have been hit by flak. The aircraft subsequently flew across the North Sea on one engine. A successful ditching was made and all crew escaped safely, the aircraft being very quickly put on tow by a local fishing boat. However the aircraft sank just 200 yards from the shore. Pilot, P/O G.A.C. Potts; Observer P/O R.S. Hook; WOP/AG Sgt. Wood and WOP/AG Sgt. Ashmore. (From ASN Web site, 22473). .

A second Hampden, P2070 VN-X was lost without trace after requesting permission for, and acknowledging receipt of, fixes from HESTON around 04.40hrs. Finally QDM's were requested from base at 0555hrs which also were acknowledged; the aircraft had now been airborne for 8 hours. This was the last contact. The aircraft's approximate position at this time was calculated as around BRUSSELS. Searches were not carried out due to the vast area of a possible crash site (from Suffolk to Brussels). Crew were P/O Wawn, Sgt. Scholfield, Sgt. R. Smith and Sgt. Bushel. It is believed to have force landed, intact near Lautersheim, near Mannheim Southern Germany around 06.34 and crew all taken POW. This location is around 400 miles off-track for the return trip, a huge error. High probability that the aircraft ran out of fuel. The aircraft was **captured intact** by the Germans.

In addition, L4417 flown by S/Ldr. Oxley and crew suffered a Starboard engine failure due to fuel starvation while over Leconfield, on the return journey and made a successful forced landing at that aerodrome. The aircraft proceeded back to base later that day (26<sup>th</sup>). Only two aircraft managed to find and bomb the primary target.

26/ 27 August- Bombing, LEIPZIG- MOCKAU and River EMMS

In the early evening six aircraft took-off to bomb the aerodrome at LEIPZIG- MOCKAU and adjacent aircraft component factories. Three aircraft found and bombed the primary target, two bombed alternate targets and all 5 returned to base safely. A sixth aircraft, **Hampden P1317 was damaged by Flak over the target in the Starboard fuel system and crashed in a field when Starboard engine cut 2 miles South of Hemswell, while returning to base. No injuries reported, crew Sgt. Bryce, Sgt. Abbott, AC1 Green and Sgt. Harney. Aircraft written-off. .**

A seventh aircraft, P4287 was detailed to bomb an aqueduct carrying the Dortmund EMS canal over the river EMS North of Munster but failed to locate the target and returned to base with bombs aboard.



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## August 1940 based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

### 28/ 29 August- SIEMENSTADT, near BERLIN

From around 20.30hrs, 4 aircraft departed on a bombing mission to the SIEMENS Works near BERLIN. One aircraft was late in departing due to a 'hitch in the bombing-up arrangements' and returned to base shortly after. The remaining three successfully bombed the target and returned to base safely. Intense Flak and searchlight activity was noted over the target.

(Rather ironically, Siemens now have a factory in Lincoln but a Hundred yards from old Skellingthorpe airfield!)

### 30/ 31 August 1940- GLADBECK

Five aircraft were detailed to attack an oil refinery NE of GLADBECK. None of the aircraft were able to locate the target and alternate targets were attacked with four returning safely. Sadly, Hampden L4079 VN-N Failed To Return, the crew 626342 Sgt. Herbert Henry Best RAF (WOP/ AG), 580957 Sgt. Alan Albert Horsfall RAF (Obs.), 743057 Sgt. Eric William Joseph Skinner RAFVR (AG) and the Pilot 41877 P/O Kenneth Richard Killey Smettem all missing, later confirmed killed. From Author Larry Donnelly: Crashed 14km East of Arnhem, near the village of Angerlo, shot down by a night fighter at 00.32hrs. The Fighter pilot was Oblt Werner Streib. All are buried in the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, Gelderland, near Nijmegen, Netherlands (CWGC). .

Excellent photographs of Sgt. Horsfall and his original crew, taken in April 1940, are to be found in Mark Postlethwaite's book "Hampden Squadrons in Focus."

### 30/ 31 August- MAGDEBURG

Five aircraft were detailed to attack the synthetic oil refinery at MAGDEBURG, and departed around 20.00hrs. Weather throughout the area was generally unfavourable with 10/ 10 cloud. Two aircraft located and bombed the primary target with all aircraft recovering safely to base except L4164 which, running short of fuel landed at Bircham Newton, continuing on to base later.

Representative Aircraft: L4062, L4075, L4076, L4079, L4097, L4149, L4164, P1317, P1330, P1356, P2017, P2070, P2124, P4287, P4382, P4389, P4395, P4408, P4411, P4417, X2908

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## September 1940 based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

Overview: The Battle Of Britain Intensifies; Bomber Command continue to support the Campaign by mining sea-ways and bombing Channel Ports and Industrial targets in Germany by Night. Airfields were frequently attacked as secondary targets as the opportunity arose, with machine guns if that was all the armament left.

The battleship 'Bismarck' this month left Hamburg and made for Kiel via the Kiel Canal.

### 2/3 September- Dortmund/ Emms canal and Hamm

Two aircraft were detailed to bomb the marshalling yards at HAMM. One aircraft bombed the estimated target whilst the second aircraft was unable to locate Hamm at all and bombed an aerodrome (HENGELOO or RIJESSEN) noticed on the way in. However all incendiaries and bombs missed the aiming point. Both returned to base safely.

Two further aircraft left for the Viaduct just north of MUNSTER carrying the canal over the River Emms. Smoke screens were found in place, one aircraft bombing from straight and level the other making a dive-bombing attack; the results could not be seen unfortunately, and both aircraft returned to base safely.

### 4/5 September- STETTIN oil refinery

Five aircraft left for R.A.F. Station Bircham Newton arriving there at around 19.35hrs and refuelled. From there, the aircraft set off from around 21.00hrs for STETTIN Oil refinery. L4075 went u/s after take-off and returned to Bircham Newton. The remaining four attacked the target in good visibility with two aircraft reporting direct hits. Two returned to R.A.F. Station Waddington and two returned to Bircham Newton as the weather at Base was poor.

### 6/ 7 September- 'Gardening'

Four aircraft dropped "Yew-Tree" munitions according to the ORB however this code is thought to describe the mining area itself. Varying degrees of difficulty were encountered as was success. One aircraft dropped the mine successfully but, on receiving navigational fixes of "doubtful accuracy" for the return leg to R.A.F. Station KINLOSS found themselves greatly off course when WICK was spotted through cloud. The aircraft then turned south and landed safely at KINLOSS. Flight time was NINE hours, meaning fuel must have been desperately low and most probably they were assisted by tail winds. A second could not locate the target and, unable to find Kinloss made a safe landing at DYCE, Aberdeen. A third dropped the sea-mine and returned to Kinloss with "*No difficulties of any kind*" whilst the fourth similarly had little trouble. All four returned to LINDHOLME later on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

### Saturday, 7 September

The 'Blitz' begins over Southern England.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## September 1940 based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

### 7/ 8 September 1940- OSTEND HARBOUR

Five aircraft successfully bombed OSTEND harbour/ canal area including barge concentrations. All aircraft reported they were unable to see the results of bombing as, on bombs exploding the A.A. fire opened up and searchlights coned the aircraft requiring evasive action to be taken. All returned safely to base.

### 8/9 September- HAMBURG/ ALTONA

Six aircraft were detailed to bomb the shipyards at ALTONA including L4062 led by the squadron C.O. W/Cdr. Golledge. Four attacked the target with unclear results due to haze while one returned to base unable to locate Altona. **The sixth, P4287 VN-J failed to return. A W/T report was received at 23.59hrs by R.A.F. Scampton reading 'Jumping for it over Germany'. Nothing further was heard. The crew consisted of S/Ldr. F.A. Willan, Sgt. K.W. Wright, Sgt. A.B. Cox and Sgt. F.G. Brook. Later it was established that all four crew were safe but taken P.O.W.**

### 9/10 September- HAMBURG

Four aircraft took off for the Blohm and Voss ship-yards at Hamburg from around 19.30hrs. Weather was good and all four bombed the target however results were uncertain due to avoiding action being taken when heavy flak was encountered. All returned safely however one aircraft had difficulty navigating the return leg as Q.D.M.'s (bearing fixes) obtained from HESTON were considered inaccurate.

### 10/ 11 September- OSTEND

This evening two aircraft, L4097 and P4408 took off at 19.56hrs to bomb barges at Ostend harbour. The crew of P4408 could not locate the target due to dense cloud and bombed a target of opportunity, rolling stock in a marshalling yard on the return leg.

**Hampden L4097 failed to return and nothing more was heard from this crew after the W/T call 'GO' was made. Believed to have been shot down off Oostende, all perished; 632830 Sgt. Reginald Halls, and 635088 Sgt. William Aubrey Johnson were never found and are commemorated at Runnymede, while 40059 F/Lt. Robert James Reed RAAF and 42889 P/O Peter William Roylance RAF are buried in Oostende (Ostend) Communal Cemetery, Belgium. .**

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## September 1940 based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

### 11/ 12 September- HAMBURG (ALTONA)

Five aircraft set out to bomb the ship yards near Hamburg- Altona. Four reached the target and bombed however target identification was not easy and one aircraft bombed using dead-reckoning; none of the results were observed due to cloud. A fifth gave up a search for the target and bombed an aerodrome near-by. All returned safely, with all performing "Razzling" on the return leg. {Razzle is a code word for Phosphorous coated strips of wood transported in water and dropped by the unfortunate WOP/AG. The intention was to fire crops and forests}. One WOP suffered frost-bite while handling the 'Razzle'.

### 14/ 15 September 1940- MANNHEIM and OSTEND BARGES

Three aircraft set off to bomb the railway marshalling yards at Mannheim. Two bombed the target successfully with one aircraft also destroying a searchlight with machine gun fire. Both could not determine the result of bombing due to the taking of evasive action (heavy flak and searchlights). The third aircraft suffered intercom failure while crossing the Dutch coast and so bombed the first available target, an aerodrome at Antwerp. All returned safely although one landed on one engine which had cut out during a snow-storm.

A further TEN aircraft set out to attack barges and shipping at Ostend. One aircraft lost the rear entrance door on take-off and returned immediately, the remainder successfully reached the target. However due to patchy cloud and evasive action needed to avoid flak and searchlights none of the aircraft could observe the fall of their bombs. All returned safely to base.

### 17 September- 'Gardening'

The first aircraft of a wave to drop mines in the 'Artichoke' area took off at 00.45hrs; the rest were prevented from taking off as a gale warning had been received. However X2896 proceeded on its mission despite NO W/T "GO" signal being transmitted- strictly against orders. Due to the strong headwind the crew realised the target would not be reached in darkness and it successfully returned to base. (P/O Banker and crew)

### 17/ 18 September- 'Gardening'

Later that day eight aircraft made it into the air to plant 'vegetables' in the 'Artichoke' area (Lorient, France) on the evening of the 17th. X2896 was not one of them! The weather was near perfect and although some light flak was encountered at Lorient no problems were encountered, all returning safely to base. Some aircraft dropped the wing bombs on targets such as aerodromes and flak batteries on the way home.

In addition six aircraft left to raid enemy barge concentrations around ANTWERP. Five aircraft bombed the estimated point of the target due to thick cloud making identification very difficult and up to 1.5 hours was spent circling the area by some aircraft. A sixth bombed Ostend with no reason given. All returned safely to Base.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## September 1940 based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

### 19 September

Master T9676 lost on Active Service. The Squadron hack, a Miles M9 Master crashed near THORNE, Doncaster killing the Pilot and fatally injuring the passenger. The aircraft reportedly was on an area familiarisation sortie with P/O Patrick William Michael Bushnell 80805 RAFVR, 22, of Rose Hill Oxford in command when the aircraft entered a spin from which it did not recover. His passenger, LAC Philip Raymond Currie, RAF 570163 died of his injuries later that day, aged only 21. P/O Bushnell is buried at Rose Hill Cemetery Oxford and LAC Currie is buried at Blaydon Cemetery, Durham.

P/O Bushnell had joined the Squadron only 4 days prior to the accident.

### 20 September 1940- FLUSHING

Twelve aircraft took off from around 01.47hrs onwards to bomb barge concentrations at Flushing. Weather en-route to the target was reported as atrocious, with 10/ 10 cloud down to 2000' and driving rain; weather at the immediate target vicinity was however better although patchy cloud made identification difficult and results are best described as sporadic. Four aircraft turned back on reaching the Dutch coast; five aircraft bombed, some after up to 100 minutes spent circling with some reporting direct hits on barges and warehouses. One aircraft bombed the alternate target of BERGEN OP ZOOM Aerodrome.

P4389 developed engine trouble over the coast and turned back however the Port engine appeared to be on fire and the pilot gave orders to abandon the aircraft. However only the navigator bailed out and he landed by parachute directly in the middle of R.A.F. Station Hemswell aerodrome! The aircraft subsequently landed safely at base with bombs on board. (One theory is that the aircraft may have been subject to 'St. Elmo's Fire', an extremely disorientating and uncomfortable experience).

L4149 developed engine trouble and duly returned to base.

### 23 September- FLUSHING

Early this morning three Hampden aircraft left for enemy barge and shipping strikes at FLUSHING. Results were inconclusive although weather was fair and opposition minimal. All returned to base safely around 06.00hrs.

Although the ORB states that four more aircraft set out to bomb barges at Antwerp, in fact only one appears to have done so with the other three of this group successfully bombing shipping at FLUSHING (making a total of six that bombed Flushing).

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## September 1940 based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

### 23/ 24 September- BERLIN

This evening, five aircraft set off to bomb the Moabit power station in Berlin, from a forward location at Bircham Newton, at around 10.00hrs.

L4164 flown by S/Ldr. Oxley could not reach the target due to the crew Oxygen supply being exhausted and the weather conditions near the target preventing an attack at lower level therefore on turning back SOESTERBURG Aerodrome was bombed instead and "Razzling" was performed on the way back. One aircraft hit the target while another, on failing to identify the power station duly bombed a Flak battery in Berlin. A fourth suffered a heating system failure and turned back to bomb dock yards at BREMERHAVEN, with "Razzle" dropped on the return trip and the fifth, unable to locate Berlin due to weather bombed the BMW Works at SPANDAU. All returned to base safely.

### 24/ 25 September- CALAIS

Shortly before midnight, four aircraft left to attack enemy shipping and barges at Calais. Weather was reasonable over the target and all four successfully located the docks and bomb with variable results. One aircraft was hit by moderate flak, all returning safely to Base.

### 25 September 1940- BERLIN

Four aircraft deployed to Bircham Newton arriving around 19.45hrs on the 25<sup>th</sup> for an attack on the Power station near Berlin. However due to an air raid warning at Bircham Newton refuelling was delayed and the raid was cancelled, the aircraft returning to base around 9am on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

### 26/ 27 September- CALAIS

Seven aircraft took off around 19.00hrs to attack barges at Calais- this was extremely early and aircraft subsequently arrived in partial light and circled awaiting darkness. Weather at Calais was poor with 10/ 10 cloud. On return the weather at Lindholme was equally bad with poor visibility making it difficult to locate the aerodrome, all but the first aircraft back reporting problems in landing. Two aircraft bombed the secondary target at Boulogne; one aircraft bombed the primary target due to a break in the cloud revealing the harbour entrance but was shot-up by AA fire.

Hampden L4062 'VN-A' bombed Calais but found Lindholme and the surrounding area blanketed by fog. While coming in to land at 23.50 hrs. the aircraft struck trees on the airfield perimeter and crashed on the airfield. Of the four man crew, P/O Robert Trevor Mulligan RAF, 41864 of Martinborough, Wellington New Zealand was injured and P/O George Olaf Roy Kilner RAF 42401 was seriously injured (and never flew again). WOP/AG Sgt. Cyril James Smith RAF 612904 of Ystrad, Glamorgan Wales and P/O Leonard were both uninjured. The aircraft was a write-off.

A sixth aircraft bombed searchlights and guns in the target area returning safely to Base.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## September 1940 based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

### 27/ 28 September- LORIENT

Five aircraft left in the early evening to attack barges, submarines and motor torpedo boats at Lorient, France. L4150, on crossing the coast west of Guernsey came under fire from surface craft, and at this time engine vibration was noted. Bombs were dropped on a target of opportunity and the aircraft returned to base safely. A second aircraft was unable to locate the target and so it also bombed the alternate. Three aircraft bombed the target with good results. All returned safely despite poor weather over England.

### 29/ 30 September 1940- STUTTGART

Four aircraft were detailed to bomb the BOSCH Ignition Components factory at Stuttgart. Three aircraft bombed the target and returned safely although weather was reported as very bad on the return journey. **The fourth aircraft failed to return.**

**Hampden X2902 was last heard from after the W/T "GO" signal was acknowledged. The aircraft and crew, 551722 Sgt. Alan Gordon Hobson RAF (Aged 19), 755031 Sgt. Peter Anthony Merrick RAFVR, 34115 S/L John Cornelius Taylor RAF and 516040 Sgt. Kenneth Harrison Watchous RAF have never been found. The crew are commemorated at Runnymede. See CWGC. .**

### 30 September/ 1 October 1940- BERLIN and "Gardening"

X2907 successfully mined the "Eglantine" area and returned to Base safely.

Four further aircraft flew to R.A.F. Station Bircham Newton, Norfolk for a raid on BERLIN AIR MINISTRY BUILDINGS, departing from around 23.00hrs onwards. This was some 1 hr. 15 minutes later than planned, reportedly due to poor organisation of the refuelling section; subsequently the captain of one aircraft, P4389 decided to bomb BREMEN instead as the late take-off meant crossing the Dutch coast on return in daylight. The aircraft returned to base safely. A second, L4076 also decided insufficient time was available as darkness made pin-pointing the target impossible and opted to bomb SCHIERMONNIKOOG ISLAND on the return to base; due to poor weather it diverted to RAF Docking in Norfolk.

**P4411 made it to BERLIN but, unable to locate the target due to intense AA fire duly attacked another target thought to be a factory at FROHNAN with inconclusive results as searchlight activity was blinding. On the return journey, while off TERSCHELLING the Port engine caught fire due to a petrol leak but soon faded out. With one failing engine, the aircraft made it back to Bircham Newton at the first light of dawn. Unfortunately on landing the aircraft hit a mound on the edge of the landing ground, crashed and was completely destroyed. The pilot, P/O Powell and crew (Sgt.'s Martin, Green and R.E. Drake) were all un-injured. (One source quotes this incident as occurring at RAF Docking a satellite of Bircham Newton).**

**Hampden P4395 suffered engine failure on take-off and crashed. All the crew were un-injured (S/Ldr. Oxley, P/O Hook, P/O Pichel-Juan and Sgt. Fullerton) but P4395 was totally destroyed.**

Representative aircraft: L4062; L4075; L4076; L4097; L4149; L4150; L4164; P2093; P4287; P4389; P4395; P4408; P4411; P4417; X2896; X2902; X2907; X2908; X2919.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## October 1940 based R.A.F. Lindholme

Overview: The Battle of Britain draws to a close. Bomber Command come under threat of a new, stealthy menace- Night marauder attacks by (usually) lone German Ju88 or Do17 aircraft of the Luftwaffe's Nachtjagdgeschwader 2 (NJG/ 2) over Bomber Command airfields in Great Britain.

At High Wycombe, Sir Charles Portal is succeeded by Air Marshall Sir Richard Peirse as Commander in Chief, Bomber Command.

The German Navy had just commissioned the battleship 'Bismarck' which was stationed in a Baltic Sea port for sea trials which last until December. Although her sister-ship 'Tirpitz' had been launched in 1939 it took until February 1941 for the fitting out to be completed at Wilhelmshaven. Although many attempts had been made to attack the Tirpitz while a 'sitting duck', not one bomb had hit the ship. The attacks had, however delayed her fitting out.

## 2/ 3 October- BOMBING, HAMBURG

Five aircraft this evening took off for a mission to attack oil refinery and storage facilities in Hamburg. Four aircraft bombed the target in the face of stiff opposition from flak over the target as well as from flak-ships off the Dutch Coast but thick, low cloud obscured results. (X2907, X2915, x2908, x2896 included). **Hampden X2896 developed engine trouble over the target and the engine cut out. Returning on one engine the aircraft made landfall in Scotland and eventually as fuel was running low elected to land at a Decoy Airfield. The aircraft overshot on approach and while climbing out steeply to avoid some trees stalled and crashed into a valley at Woodhall Innerwick, near Dunbar East Lothian. Three crew members were unhurt; the pilot, P/O E.M. Thwaites, Observer P/O R.S. Hook and WOP/AG Sgt. Day were taken to R.A.F. Station Drem. WOP/AG Sgt. E.S. Smith was injured, suffering a broken leg. X2896 was destroyed.**



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

October 1940, based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

5/ 6 October 1940 - BOMBING, HAMM, AMSTERDAM, SOEST, OSNABRUCK & COLOGNE

Eight aircraft were tonight detailed to attack a number of targets. Two attacked marshalling yards at Hamm; two attacked marshalling yards at Soest; one attacked railway junctions at Osnabruck; one aircraft attacked the FOKKER aircraft factory at Amsterdam and two further aircraft attacked marshalling yards at Cologne. Only one of the two aircraft tasked with Hamm made it to the target successfully, L4076 turning back early due to instrument problems, both returning safely to Base. L4150 attacked the Fokker factory at Amsterdam but unfortunately it was found that the 'power bolt' had not been 'ON' and bombs had not released; the aircraft returned with bombs on board to base. Of the two aircraft attacking Soest, X2919 returned to Base early as the compass was deviating and unreliable while P4389 made a high level attack but results could not be seen. P4408's crew found the target area hidden by cloud and, as extremely accurate flak was encountered the bombs were dropped some 3- 4 miles S.W. of the target. The aircraft returned safely to Base. Of the two aircraft bound for the South West outskirts of Cologne, L4149's Port engine started to falter and overheat while over the coast and the crew returned to base. The second aircraft, P4417 failed to return and nothing further was heard from this crew after take-off. Crew were 43020 P/O Andrew Stenhouse Boak RAF, 742131 Sgt. Francis John Brooker RAFVR, 817236 Sgt. James Douglas Marshall RAFAUX and 505501 Sgt. Charles Harold Wise RAF all presumed killed in action. No trace was ever found of this aircraft, all the crew are commemorated at the memorial, Runnymede. Further details .

7/ 8 October 1940- BOMBING, MANNHEIM & OSNABRUCK

This evening, three aircraft were detailed to attack a marshalling yard at Mannheim and a further three the marshalling yards at Osnabruck. The three aircraft bound for Mannheim were successful the weather being favourable. One aircraft also dropped 'Razzle' between Liege and Kaiserslautern; both aircraft returned safely to Base. Of the three aircraft bound for Osnabruck, one successfully bombed the target while the second bombed the secondary target at Schipol Aerodrome, Holland; both returned safely to Base. The third, Hampden L4150 could not find the primary or secondary targets and force landed approx. ½ Mile from Base (Lindholme) following Port engine failure on return from OSNABRUCK at around 03.07hrs on the 8<sup>th</sup> October WITH BOMBS ON BOARD. Believe that the aircraft came down just to the East of the airfield. The crew all escaped injury- Pilot P/O D.E.F. Powell RAF, Navigator Sgt. K.S. Gowland, WOP/ AG Sgt. R.E. Drake RAF and WOP/ AG Sgt. Green. L4150 was repaired and subsequently went to 16 O.T.U. A lucky escape! .

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

October 1940, based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

9/ 10 October 1940- GARDENING, ARTICHOKE AREA & BOMBING, ESSEN

Three aircraft set off tonight for the Artichoke area in N.W. France. Weather was generally good with excellent visibility apart from some localised thunderclouds with associated icing conditions which froze some instruments. L4076 with Sgt. Crum and crew had a busy time; once the mine was dropped they then dropped the wing bombs on two merchant ships (missed) while machine gunning them as well. Finally the crew machine gunned an aerodrome in France that foolishly was fully lit-up.

All three returned safely to Base. Two further aircraft were detailed to bomb the Kruppe armament factory at Essen; visibility to and from the target was excellent but the cloud thickened to 10/ 10 over Essen. One aircraft failed to find the target and subsequently bombed the docks at Amsterdam while the second bombed the approximate target area, both returning safely to Base.

10/ 11 October 1940- BOMBING, 'TIRPITZ' AT WILHELMSHAVEN

Four aircraft set off tonight from around 19.10hrs in another attack on the battleship 'Tirpitz' in dock at Wilhelmshaven, leading a charmed life due to poor visibility and good ground defences. One aircraft returned early due to the cabin heating system failing (Outside Air temperatures are in the region of -35 Degrees Celsius). Two aircraft bombed the target area, (6 x 250lb G.P. bombs and some incendiaries, 4 x 500lb bombs) in good weather and with moonlight assisting visibility, however the ground defences were so ferocious that results were not seen due to violent avoiding actions; another had the misfortune of the bombing system 'power bolt' seizing up during the run-in preventing bomb release. The Flak was so intense that another run was not attempted and the aircraft bombed the docks at Amsterdam instead. Three aircraft returned safely to Base while one landed at Waddington due to navigational equipment failures.

11/ 12 October 1940-BOMBING, TIRPITZ, WILHELMSHAVEN & BOMBING, HAMBURG

Five aircraft were detailed tonight to attack the battleship 'Tirpitz' again at dock in Wilhelmshaven, including the Squadron C.O. W/ Cdr. Golledge in L4076 who dropped a 2000lb bomb on the target (but did not see the result). Two further aircraft attacked the target but cloud was so thick and flak so heavy and accurate that results were not observed. X2993's crew had a trying time when, after releasing 4 x 500lb bombs ran into stratus cloud with severe icing that caused snow to enter the cockpit. On the return journey flares were continually dropped behind them as if an aircraft was stalking them, and finally after passing through heavy flak over the Frisian Islands the Starboard engine began to falter and cut out totally while 50 miles out from Flamborough Head (due to carburettor icing). After declaring an emergency the aircraft was assisted to land at R.A.F. Station Linton-on-Ouse without damage. Two aircraft failed to pin-point the target area due to cloud and so bombed the alternates. A sixth aircraft was detailed to bomb the Blohm and Voss shipyards at Hamburg but found the visibility so poor that the crew elected to bomb the 'Tirpitz' instead

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The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

October 1940, based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

11/ 12 October 1940-BOMBING, TIRPITZ, WILHELMSHAVEN & BOMBING, HAMBURG (Ctd.)

although cloud again prevented the results from being observed. Some aircraft landed at Dishforth and Finningley, probably due to fog which is a recurring problem in Yorkshire this time of year.

12/ 13 October- GARDENING OPERATIONS, 'BEECH' & 'ARTICHOKE' AREAS

Two aircraft set off tonight to drop mines in the 'Beech' area. Weather was excellent but the presence of flak ships in the target area made the mission very uncomfortable. Both aircraft dropped mines in the allotted position and on the return journey sought out shipping to attack with the wing bombs and machine guns, one bombing the railway and on the occupied aerodrome at St. Helier, Jersey. Heavy flak and searchlight activity was encountered both on Jersey and the French Coastal regions. Both returned to Abingdon safely.

Two more aircraft successfully dropped mines in the 'Artichoke' area with defences this time very poor. Both returned safely to Base as the weather over Lindholme had improved sufficiently.

13/ 14 October 1940- BOMBING 'TIRPITZ', WILHELMSHAVEN

Seven aircraft were tonight detailed to attack, once more, the Battleship 'Tirpitz' still being fitted out in the docks at Wilhelmshaven. Once again bad weather and low visibility came to the 'Tirpitz's' aid; only one aircraft reached the target area and even this dropped bombs on an estimated point, the thick cloud preventing the fall of bombs being seen. Cumulus cloud containing rain and severe icing reached from 5000 feet to over 12000 feet; two aircraft attacked Texel Aerodrome and Borkum aerodrome with inconclusive results. X2993 returned to Base early due to engine trouble while L4075 suffered double engine failure while descending from 10000 feet to search for the target and, turning south the order to abandon the aircraft was given. Thankfully at this moment the engines picked up again and after jettisoning the bombs the aircraft made a safe landing back at Base. Two further aircraft failed to find any targets and returned to base with bombs on board.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

October 1940, based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

14/ 15 October 1940- BERLIN

Three aircraft were detailed for a 'special' mission; to bomb the Air Ministry buildings in Berlin. This target is at the limit of range for the Hampden and so the three were forward based at R.A.F. Bircham Newton, Norfolk for fuelling prior to setting off for Berlin at around 20.50hrs. P2093 and P4408 reached Berlin in fair weather but hazy visibility. Ground opposition was light and both aircraft spent some 20 minutes circling Berlin; the city was ringed with barrage balloons and a course through them had to be established. The target was duly bombed (11 x 250lb G.P. bombs and incendiaries) and both aircraft returned safely to Base having been in the air for a creditable 9hr 35 mins and 8hr 24 mins respectively. **Hampden X2993 'VN-T' failed to return. Two of the crew were later confirmed as killed and are listed in the RoH: Pilot Sgt. Edgar James Andrews 745535 RAFVR and 42203 P/O Arthur Howell Davies RAFVR. Two crew survived and were captured; Sgt Hurrell and Sgt. Lee. Believed shot down by a night fighter flown by Hauptmann Werner Streib O/C 1/ NJG 1 at 03.05hrs near KALBE (between Hannover and Berlin). P/O Davies and his colleague P/O Andrews are buried side by side in the BERLIN 1939-1945 War Cemetery, 9.E.13 and 9.E.12 respectively (CWGC).**

15/ 16 October- BOMBING, MAGDEBURG

Six aircraft were detailed to attack a synthetic oil plant at Magdeburg. The visibility proved variable, thick cloud preventing three of the aircraft identifying the target; alternates were bombed instead. Three aircraft found the target through breaks in the cloud and bombed successfully, the results not being seen. All returned safely, one aircraft landing at R.A.F. Station Abingdon.

18/ 19 October- BOMBING THE 'BISMARCK'

Seven aircraft were detailed tonight to attack the battleship 'Bismarck'. Although the location of the ship was given in the Squadron records only as 'Target D.2', 'Bismarck' was today thought to have been in the Baltic on sea-trials at this time and was most probably at Gotenhafen (now Gdynia, Poland) in the Gulf of Danzig in October; this would put the vessel out of range for the Hampden. As three aircraft quote the River Elbe as being in the target area it would suggest the target was indeed in Hamburg. Or, it could be that the Intelligence was incorrect and the ship was thought to be at the Blohm & Voss shipyard in HAMBURG (Target 'D.2') but was not there.

Also, the flight times of those aircraft that bombed the 'target' and of those that bombed Hamburg are almost the same. Whichever, only two aircraft reported finding the target area and bombing as cloud cover was dense; no results were seen. Four aircraft could not pin-point the target area and so bombed the alternates which included Hamburg. One aircraft turned back over the North Sea due to icing and technical problems. All returned to R.A.F. Station Leuchars, Scotland as the weather at Base was not fit for landing.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

October 1940, based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

## 23/ 24 October 1940- BOMBING, MAGDEBURG

Just after midnight, nine aircraft took off for an attack on a Synthetic oil plant at Magdeburg. Cloud was layered on the way to the target and solid over the target. Two aircraft bombed through gaps but results were not seen. Two aircraft returned to Base early due to carburettor icing and a failed cabin heating system. The remainder bombed alternate targets, again with inconclusive results. All returned safely to Base.

## 24/ 25 October 1940- GARDENING, JELLYFISH AREA

Two Hampden aircraft took off in the early hours of the 25<sup>th</sup> October on a mine laying mission to the 'Jellyfish' area. Weather was poor over the channel with cloud down to 1000ft, but improved at the target 'garden'. Due to differences in routes selected one aircraft dropped the mine without difficulty and returned to Base safely after a six-hour flight. X2983 and crew were not so lucky and failed to find the target area; returning to Base the crew ran into a thunderstorm and suffering from a technical problem that led to very slow navigation fixes eventually landed at Woodford Aerodrome (Avro Aircraft factory) after nearly eight hours in the air, safely.

## 25/ 26 October 1940- BOMBING, KIEL & GARDENING, DEODARS AREA

From around 17.45hrs onwards, six aircraft took off on a mission to bomb the dock yards at Kiel. One aircraft, L4149 returned early to Base with engine trouble. Weather was variable, with three aircraft reporting very little cloud over the target and no difficulty in either bombing or observing the results while two could not pin-point the target through cloud and so bombed nearby alternate targets. All reported intense flak and searchlight activity in the area. All returned to Base safely. Two further aircraft took off later that evening on a mine-laying mission to the 'Deodars' area. Only one aircraft found the target area due to cloud; both however had considerable difficulties in navigating a course home through severe electrical storms. One aircraft suffered transmitter/receiver failure and after nearly ten agonising hours airborne managed to locate R.A.F. Station Benson and landed safely desperately short of fuel. The other suffered severe icing and having also suffered difficulties in navigating the route home eventually landed at Gravesend Aerodrome, Kent after eight hours airborne.

## 27/ 28 October 1940- BOMBING, HAMBURG

Three aircraft were tonight detailed to bomb an oil plant in Hamburg. One aircraft suffered engine trouble and returned early to Base.

Owing to an attack on R.A.F. Lindholme by a Luftwaffe Heinkel 111K intruder aircraft which machine gunned and bombed the airfield, the aircraft were 30 minutes late in taking off.

The remaining two aircraft failed to locate the target due to cloud cover but bombed nearby docks and returned safely to Base with no difficulties after around seven hours in the air.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

October 1940, based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

28/ 29 October 1940- BOMBING, HAMBURG

Tonight four more aircraft set off to attack the same target as last night. Again, weather and visibility proved variable with two aircraft finding the target clear of cloud and bombed it with positive results whilst the other two had virtually no sight of the ground for the entire flight, one bombing Cuxhaven which probably appeared through a gap in the clouds and the fourth aircraft, having caught a glimpse of Wilhelmshaven then found that the bombs would not release. All aircraft reported intense, accurate flak over the selected target areas. All aircraft reached base safely; however X2994 which had bombed Cuxhaven suffered radio failure and could not obtain fixes for base, eventually landing just as the **Port engine cut out due to lack of petrol**. Flight time had been a creditable nine hours twenty minutes!

29/ 30 October- BERLIN

Five aircraft were tonight detailed to attack the Danziger Strasse gas works near Berlin. One aircraft suffered heating failure crossing the enemy coast and so elected to bomb Amsterdam Aerodrome (Schipol) which was lit up with aircraft seen to be taking off, returning safely to Base. A second turned back soon after take off due to crew intercommunications system failure. X2907 encountered dense clouds extending to 14000ft and icing was encountered. Having decided to return, the aircraft was subjected to continuous accurate flak, and calculating they were over Berlin dropped the weapons. A safe return to Base was made despite wireless failure. A fourth aircraft made it to the estimated time on target but with no ground visible through thick cloud and intense flak bursting around them decided to abandon the primary target and bomb Amsterdam Aerodrome; this however could not be found either and the aircraft returned to Base safely with bombs on board after eight hours flying time. The fifth aircraft, **X3000 crashed between Barton-le-Street and Salton, North Yorkshire returning to Lindholme after abandoning an attempt to bomb the target only 50 miles from Berlin. Due to carburettor icing the engines were running intermittently and the aircraft was losing height steadily. Having crossed the coast too far north, both engines then began to cut out alternately. Unable to maintain height the crew safely baled out over Salton, near Malton. The aircraft crashed near Linton-on-Ouse and was destroyed. The aircraft was only one month since new. Crew was P/O Walker, Sgt.'s Gowland, Cole and Emm. Tragically, this same crew perished in another Hampden, X2907 when it crashed in Holland only six days later.**

October 1940- Summary

Representative aircraft; Hampden B.Mk.1- L4073, L4075, L4076, L4149, L4150, L4164, P2093, P4389, P4408, **P4417, X2896**, X2907, X2908, X2919, X2983, **X2993**, X2994, **X3000**, X3003. **Four aircraft were lost on operations this month, and two damaged.**

Crews: Tunstall, Liddell, Walker, Thwaites, Woodward, Russell, Mulligan, Everitt, Ripplingdale, Crum, Powell, Cooke, Oxley, Richardson, Thomas, Hindley, Coad, Grylls, **Davies**, (W/Cdr. Golledge), **Brooker**. **Six Airmen were lost this month.**

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## November 1940, based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

Overview: The threat of invasion now having receded, Bomber Command continues to hit industrial and strategic targets in Germany.

No. 207 Squadron forms at Waddington on November 1 and the first R.A.F. AVRO Manchester to enter service, L7279 arrives.

### 1/ 2 November- BERLIN KLENINBERG

Commencing 23.00hrs, four aircraft were detailed for a bombing mission to Berlin Kleninberg Power Station. Two aircraft bombed Berlin although the target was obscured by cloud; L4164 and P2093 both encountered heavy rain and snow accompanied by extreme icing and static discharges in the cloud with L4164 suffering Airspeed Indicator Failure on the outward leg while on the return leg the engines spluttered due to lack of fuel while overhead base. Both aircraft found flak opposition intense around Berlin as well as the Dutch Coast. Both returned safely. L4149 ran into the 'Chance' light while taxiing for take off damaging the aircrews, while X2919 returned shortly after take off due to icing of the Starboard engine, landing safely at Base.

### 5/ 6 November- MAGDEBURG & GARDENING

From 23.33hrs onward eight aircraft took off for a bombing mission to Magdeburg synthetic oil plant. Weather was appalling with 10/ 10 cloud and rain for the entire trip with no aircraft seeing the ground for the whole journey. P4408 suffered severe icing and despite trying to avoid the weather returned to Base safely after six hours in the air. Two further aircraft turned back due to unserviceability; one with inoperative Airspeed Indicator and Artificial Horizon the second with wireless failure, both returning safely to base. Four aircraft bombed on estimated target points or alternate target (Bremen) due to being unable to locate the Primary target due to cloud; no results were noted and these four aircraft returned safely to base.

Hampden X2907 and crew of Pilot 41759 P/O Colin James Ray Walker RAF (25), WOP/ AG 755025 Sgt. Douglas Owen Cole RAFVR (20), Pilot 742817 Sgt. Kenyon Stafford Gowland RAF and WOP/ AG 905343 Sgt. Kenneth Emm RAFVR (23) left at 00.45hrs on the 6<sup>th</sup> November. After receiving the W/T 'GO' signal nothing further was heard from the crew. All were later confirmed as killed. Possible crash site is DEN AGELER ESCH, or Agelo near Valkenberg, or Ootmarsum, NETHERLANDS. A local resistance member, Herman Budde tells the story, via his son's web pages: The aircraft crashed in the early morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> November, while returning to England. Three bodies were found outside the wreckage, one remained trapped for many days due it is presumed to the dangerous state of the aircraft. The four crew were buried at Ootmarsum Protestant Cemetery, Overijssel, with full military honours and with local Civic dignitaries present, on the afternoon of Monday, 11 November. Some 30 floral wreaths were paid for by local inhabitants and these along with a wreath donated by the German occupiers were presented at the funeral. From "Paul Budde's History Files, at [www.paulbuddehistory.com](http://www.paulbuddehistory.com). A memorial has been erected at the crash site, location .



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## November 1940, based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

### 5/ 6 November- MAGDEBURG & GARDENING (Ctd.)

One further aircraft, L4075 was detailed to drop a sea-mine in the SASNITZ area, successfully completing its mission in poor weather.

### 6/ 7 November- MANNHEIM AND HAMM

Four aircraft took off for the railway marshalling yards at Mannheim and Hamm. En-route weather was very poor with rain, cloud, icing and static encountered however target weather was excellent and three bombed successfully with some opposition from defences. P4408 suffered heating failure and due to the low altitude of the freezing point the mission was abandoned. All returned to Base safely.

### 07/ 08 November 1940 based R.A.F. Lindholme – ESSEN

Tonight, eight aircraft were detailed to bomb the Krupps Works at Essen. All aircraft managed to identify the target through gaps in the clouds and bombed the target area but results could not be observed. Defences were moderate; however **X2994 with P/O Liddell and crew was hit by flak and damaged, the W/T becoming inoperative. The crew became lost but finally managed to regain the English coast with 1.5 hours fuel remaining. However the aircraft was abandoned over East Anglia after repeated requests by Aldis lamp to land at Bircham Newton and West Raynham were ignored, unanswered or refused finally crashing somewhere between West Raynham and Bircham Newton aerodromes, Norfolk. Crew of Sgt.'s Leech, A.S. Atkinson and E. McConnell safely abandoned the aircraft when the Starboard engine cut due to lack of fuel; the Pilot F/O E.B. Liddell continued for a further 25 minutes until the Port engine cut and it entered a stall then safely bailed out himself. As P4389 had reported a twin-engine aircraft shadowing it on the outward leg it is likely that Luftwaffe Night Intruders were active and the Stations were duly 'twitchy' about unidentified aircraft. The other seven aircraft returned to base safely.**

### 8/ 9 November- MUNICH

Tonight, four aircraft set off from 18.20hrs onwards to bomb railway marshalling yards at Munich. All aircraft reported that the ground speed was much less than calculated (probably due to stronger headwinds than forecast) and three bombed alternate targets at Ostend, Rotterdam and Mannheim. A fourth found Munich and successfully bombed it. All four aircraft returned to England with one diverting to R.A.F. Station Abingdon.



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

November 1940, based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

10/ 11 November- MANNHEIM AND LEUNA

Tonight, five aircraft were ordered to bomb a power station at Mannheim while a further 3 set off to bomb a synthetic oil refinery at Leuna. Due to severe icing, aircraft unserviceability and thick unbroken cloud in the target area only one aircraft bombed the target by dive bombing it; one returned home without releasing the bomb load and the third bombed A.A. locations; all three returned to Base safely. Of the five Mannheim aircraft, due to unbroken cloud cover one returned home after circling the target area for some time and three bombed alternate targets at Leuna, the Moselle area and the Walcheren Canal. Hampden L4149 'VN-T' failed to return; after the W/T 'GO' signal was given nothing further was heard from this crew. Three crew were later confirmed killed- 751648 Sgt. William "Billy" Cave AG, Observer 580658 Sgt. Robert Cecil "Bob" Hyland and the Pilot 561946 Sgt. Thomas Thomas (via RoH & CWGC).

They were never found, and are commemorated at the Runnymede Memorial. One crew member survived, with the R.A.F. notified that Sgt. D.G. Hamilton, rear gunner had been taken P.O.W. Some reports state the aircraft crashed into the North Sea but Sgt. Hamilton's son states his father said L4149 was shot down on the run-in to the target at Manheim. This latter information is thought more likely; POW records may reveal where he was captured.

12 November- HAMBURG

In the early hours of the 12<sup>th</sup>, three aircraft set out to bomb the synthetic oil refinery at WANNE EICKEL. Due to 10/ 10 cloud cover the primary target could not be found; therefore alternate targets were bombed; two aircraft attacked searchlight and flak positions while the third attacked a railway junction at Dorsten. All three returned safely to base around 08.00hrs.

15 November- HAMBURG

In the early hours of the 15<sup>th</sup>, six aircraft departed WADDINGTON to attack an oil refinery (5) and the Blohm and Voss works (1) in Hamburg. Five successfully attacked their targets with X2919 returning to base after three hours airborne due to complete failure of both Airspeed Indicators.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

November 1940, based R.A.F. Lindholme

16 November- HAMBURG

In the early hours on the 16<sup>th</sup>, seven aircraft set out to bomb the power station at Altona, Hamburg. Five aircraft successfully bombed the target in good visibility; two aircraft returned early one suffering engine problems the second suffering failed Airspeed Indicators. Sadly, Hampden VN-Y/X2908 failed to return. The aircraft crashed 07.07 Hrs. at Dunhill Road, Goole, East Yorkshire close to the junction of Boothferry road on returning with engine failure OR alternatively due to fuel exhaustion. Three of the crew were killed: 529564 Sgt. Colin Richardson, pilot; 745413 Sgt. Birt Brookes, Pilot/ Observer and 904426 Sgt. Charles William Ian Parker, WOP/ AG. Sgt. J. Anderson, WOP/AG was slightly injured. The aircraft was destroyed. Sgt. Richardson is buried in Adwick-Le-Street Cemetery, Yorkshire; Sgt. Parker is buried in Rottingdean (St. Margaret) Churchyard, Sussex, and Sgt. Brookes is buried at THE DOWNS CEMETERY, Brighton.

17 November- HAMBURG

In the early hours on the 17<sup>th</sup> four aircraft took off to bomb industrial areas of Hamburg- Veddel and Peute. One aircraft bombed the alternate target at Wassermunde due to cloud, and with a failing Starboard engine, no W/T and an unconscious WOP/AG made a safe landing at R.A.F. Station Manby, returning to base later in the day. A second failed to find any gaps in the cloud and brought the bombs back to base. A third dived on the target through a gap in the cloud and returned safely to base. The fourth, Hampden X3022 attacked an alternate, an aerodrome on the island of Spiekerook, but swung on landing at R.A.F. Lindholme on return and crashed on hitting the waterlogged grass of the airfield as the runway flare-path was unlit. The aircraft was repaired. No fatalities or injuries reported.

Crew were Pilot Sgt. H.C. Crum, 2<sup>nd</sup> Pilot Sgt. L.H. Adams RAFVR, WOP/ AG Sgt. McAlwane and WOP/ AG Sgt. Barley.

20/ 21 November- DUISBURG

Seven aircraft departed for Duisburg from 22.45hrs onwards. Weather en route was good with a bright moon. All aircraft successfully hit the target with some flak and searchlight activity encountered and returned safely to Base.

25 November- HAMBURG

Six aircraft took off in the early hours to attack ship yards at Hamburg. X3004 returned soon after take off due to Oxygen failure along with X3125 which suffered intercom failure. Two aircraft bombed on ETA through thick cloud and two, unable to locate the target bombed alternates. All returned safely to Base.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

November 1940, based R.A.F. Lindholme

25/ 26 November- KIEL

Four aircraft set out from around 17.00hrs to bomb ship yards at Kiel on a largely unsuccessful mission. Two aircraft, X3125 and X2919 bombed the APPROXIMATE AREA of the target, due to patchy cloud; the remaining two returned to base shortly after take off, both with W/T failure.

Unfortunately Hampden X3125 crash landed at Saltfleet, near North Coates due to fuel exhaustion (after nearly 8 hours airborne) at 0315hrs 26<sup>th</sup> while returning from a mission to KIEL. All aboard were slightly injured and were the same crew that crashed X3022 on the 17<sup>th</sup>, i.e. Sgt. Crum, Sgt. Adams, Sgt. McAlwane and Sgt. Barley. (Sgt. Crum was later awarded the DFM, gazetted on March 7 1941.

28 November- COLOGNE

In the early hours on the 28<sup>th</sup>, four aircraft set off to bomb an armaments factory in Cologne. X2983 encountered towering Cumulus/ Nimbus cloud up to 15,000 feet along with severe icing and accumulating snow on the way to the target, bombing at 04.50hrs; on the return leg land was not sighted at all and along with technical failure of navigational equipment and a complete reversal of wind direction led to the aircraft crossing the whole of England and, thankfully due to day-light breaking the crew realised they were crossing Southern Ireland and turned around landing safely at Base at 10.30hrs. This was almost 8 Hours airborne and close to the maximum endurance of the petrol supply. A second aircraft returned to base early due to Intercom failure; a third bombed an alternate target as dawn was breaking. The fourth aircraft, X3004 successfully bombed the target, but again was a victim of the reversed wind direction and unknowingly entered the friendly A.A. defences around the South Coast and was fired upon; no hits were reported. All returned safely to Base.

28/ 29 November- LUDWIGSHAVEN & HAMBURG

From around 17.00hrs, six aircraft took off to bomb mixed targets of harbours at Ludwigshaven and industrial areas of Veddel and Peute, Hamburg. Three aircraft attacked the target while the remaining three bombed alternate targets due to difficulties in navigation, and, in one case also an unserviceable heating system. One aircraft diverted on return to R.A.F. Station Swanton Morley while the other five returned safely to Base. Due to an air raid in progress at Lindholme two aircraft were held-off while the enemy aircraft cleared the area.

Note: Bomb loads most commonly carried in this month were 4x 500lb GP Bombs.

Representative aircraft: Hampden B.Mk.1: L4075, L4149, L4164, P2093, P4389, P4408, X2907, X2908, X2919, X2983, X2984, X2994, X3003, X3004, X3022, X3125.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## December 1940 (RAF Lindholme)

Overview: This month sees the first “Area Attack” carried out on Mannheim: Operation ‘Abigail Rachel’. A retaliatory strike following heavy bombing of English Cities, it was carried out on the 16/ 17<sup>th</sup> and saw the largest number of aircraft sent to a single target so far- 134 aircraft. The Squadron continues to attack strategic/ industrial targets across Europe with its Hampden aircraft. The ‘Bismarck’ this month returns to Hamburg via the Kiel Canal and remains there for December to allow completion of outfitting and modifications.

### 4-5 December

5 a/c set out to bomb marshalling yards at Derendorf/ Dusseldorf. Due to extreme icing only one a/c bombed, all returned safely but icing problems were severe.

### 7 December

Hampden L4103 lost on “Active Service”. Believed to be a No. 106 Squadron machine, from Finningley which was being flown by a No. 50 Squadron pilot on attachment. Aircraft on a night training exercise when struck by lightning in the Finningley circuit. The strike caused a propeller to detach and resulted in the aircraft crashing near Blaxton, Finningley killing the crew of two (believed only two men aboard). Fatalities were pilot, Sgt. Joseph Donald Shilling RAFVR 741468, of Farnborough and WOP/ AG, Sgt. John Thomson RAF 647064, of No. 106 Squadron. Sgt. Shilling is buried at Farnborough Cemetery Hampshire, while Sgt. Thomson is buried in Finningley churchyard extension, Yorkshire. L4103 was written- off. .

### 7- 8 December

8 a/c bombed an armament works at Dusseldorf (Mannesmann Rohnenwerke). Again due to severe weather causing icing only 3 a/c bombed, of the remaining 5 Hampden aircraft one, X3004 with 41864 F/O Robert Trevor Mulligan (pilot, New Zealand), 638746 Sgt. Francis Arthur Buckle, 43292 P/O Malcolm James Preece (Tasmanian) and 612904 Sgt. Cyril James Smith aboard F.T.R. (All aboard Killed). This crew were never recovered and are commemorated on the memorial at Runnymede (CWGC).

### 8- 9 December

5 a/c to a steel factory at Dusseldorf. All a/c returned safely. (Includes S/L Walker).

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## December 1940, based R.A.F. Lindholme

### 10- 11 December 1940

6 aircraft set out to bomb an industrial port at Mannheim. Due to bad weather and severe icing, no a/c bombed the target and X3117 failed to return. Despite a daylight search of the North Sea by 2 Hampden's and an Anson no trace of the aircraft or crew (40234 F/O Eric Beck Squibs Liddell (Pilot), 652440 Sgt. Alfred Stanley Atkinson WOP/ AG, 43278 P/O Ronald George Ash and 1755215 Sgt. Eric McConnell) was found. However, later the crew remains were recovered and they now rest at RHEINBERG WAR CEMETERY, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany in a 'collective' grave. The aircraft is believed to have been shot down and crashed near Trier (Treves), in the Eifel District, NW Germany. .

### 15- 16 December 1940

5 aircraft set out to attack Wil Mersdorf electricity power station, all a/c returned safely.

### 15 December

W/Cdr. Gollodge, Squadron O.C. posted overseas (Aden).

### 16 December 1940

Postings 'In' include S/Ldr. G. A. Walker. However as S/L Walker flew on a bombing mission to DUSSELDORF on the night of the 8/ 9<sup>th</sup> December it is clear he actually 'arrived' earlier! S/Ldr. Walker was soon promoted to Wing Commander and assumed command of the Squadron.

### 16- 17 December

12 a/c were planned to raid Motorenwerke Manheim AG, in two waves of six a/c. However due to predicted fog only the first wave of 6 was launched. All returned safely.

### 19- 20 December

5 a/c to a synthetic oil plant at Cologne, results poor, all a/c returned safely.

### 20- 21 December

7 a/c to same target and all returned safely. Two further aircraft attacked Schlesiger railway Station BERLIN. Both returned safely.

### 21- 22 December

4 a/c to an electric power station S.E. of DESSAU. All returned safely.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

December 1940, based R.A.F. Lindholme

28- 29 December

10 a/c detailed to attack docks at LORIENT. Nine a/c returned safely, X3141 with Pilot, P/O. Ainsworth and crew FTR. Possible crash site is LANESTER/ MALACHAPPE, FRANCE. Three known fatalities, which were: WOP/ AG Sgt. Marchant Hemingway age 19, Observer Sgt. Edward Hulme Battle age 23 and WOP/ AG Sgt. George Gray Smith age 19. P/O Ainsworth presumed survived/ POW, the deceased are commemorated in a communal grave at LANESTER Communal Cemetery, Lorient, France, grave c-5. .

On or about the 20 December, S/L Walker is promoted to Wing Cdr. as he flew as C/O on 21/ 22 December (vice W/Cdr. Golledge, posted to Aden).

Representative aircraft (Hampden B. Mk. I):

L4075, L4076, L4164, P2093, P4389, P4408, X2919, X2929, X2983, X2984, X2991, X3004, X3117, X3133, X3141, X3143, X3145, X3146, AD721.

Representative Crews:

Ainsworth, Burrough, Cooke, Crum, Everitt, Grylls, Johnston, Liddell, Mulligan, Ormonroyd, Oxley, Powell, Ripplingdale, Russell, Shilling, Thwaites, Walker (C/O), Weston, Whitecross, Woodward.

Seven men were killed this month on operations or training and two aircraft were destroyed.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## 1941

### January 1941, Based R.A.F. Lindholme.

Overview: Targets are mainly Coastal facilities and sea-mining operations. The first concerted attack on the Ruhr Valley is made this month. The weather plagues operations again this month with bitter cold winds, poor visibility and snow storms.

#### 1/ 2 January

A night bombing mission. Met: snow and low cloud across the country. 10 a/c detailed to attack A. 2, oil refinery and food stocks at Bremen. Conditions at home base were poor with low cloud and fog down to 600'. **Hampden I X3143 crashed on landing in the snow-covered overshoot area (P/O Burrough's crew, no casualties) with landing gear being deliberately raised to halt the aircraft;** X3133 diverted u/s (A.S.I. failed due snow/ ice) to Finningley; X3145 and X3146 diverted to Marham; X2991 landed u/s at Digby; X2983 returned early to base u/s, remainder returned safely. Not a good start to the year!

#### 4/ 5 January

Night bombing mission, Cruiser in docks at BREST. Includes AD721 flown by the C/O W/Cdr. Walker. All a/c returned safely including one which landed at St. Eval.

#### 8/ 9 January- WILHELMSHAVEN & 'TIRPITZ'; GARDENING

Night bombing mission to the naval shipbuilding yards at Wilhelmshaven (D.5). 7 a/c bombed all returned safely. Three further a/c planted 'Vegetables' and bombed and machine gunned targets of opportunity, all returned safe.

#### 9 January

First flight of the AVRO Manchester III at Ringway Airport, Manchester- the Lancaster prototype.

#### 12/ 13 January

Night bombing mission returning to the cruiser at BREST. 5 a/c attacked the target and were diverted to St. Eval on return. Due to damage P4408 elected to land at Boscombe Down, and X2984 landed at St. Athan; X3133 was also fired upon by the Plymouth AA Battery but was not hit, landing at St. Eval safely.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

January 1941, Based R.A.F. Lindholme.

13/ 14 January 1941

7 a/c 'Gardened' the jellyfish area. All returned safely, but X2991 was fired on by the Plymouth defences, landing at Warmwell undamaged; X3146 landed (just!) at St. Eval with BOTH engines out due to icing. Note: two aircraft could not locate the area to be mined and brought back 'special' vegetables. Anecdotal evidence suggests that these modified sea mines have exploded prematurely bringing down an aircraft on occasion.

29/ 30 January 1941

9 a/c bombed WILHELMSHAVEN. All returned safely.

Representative aircraft (Hampden B. Mk. I):

L4075, L4161, P2093, P4389, P4408, P4409, X2983, X2984, X2991, X3133, X3143, X3145, X3146, AD721, AD728, AD730, AD742 'F'.

Representative crews:

Weston, Woodward, Powell, Whitecross, Everitt, Russell, Walker (C.O.), Grylls, Moore, Ormonroyd, Oxley, Burrough, Crum, Grainger, Hill, Macrossan, Good, Rippingdale, Cornish, Thwaites, Johnston.

There were no casualties this month, one aircraft was written-off.



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## February 1941 Based R.A.F. Lindholme.

Overview: This month sees the RAF's first four-engined 'heavy' bomber make its operational début: three Short 'Stirling's' attack Rotterdam.

Also this month the Avro Manchester has its operational début in a mission to Brest Harbour.

### 4 February- BOMBING DUSSELDORF

Eleven Hampden aircraft took off in the early evening to bomb an aiming point at Dusseldorf. Excellent visibility was experienced until 10 miles from target allowing good navigation but hindering pin-pointing of the aiming point. A mixture of 1900lb, 500lb and 250lb bombs and incendiaries were dropped on the target area which was obscured by thick cloud; none of the crews therefore could see any results. Two crews elected to bomb alternate targets which could be more positively identified. All crews returned safely to base in good weather landing before mid-night. One crew reported they were a little shaken when, over Norfolk, a stick of eight bombs dropped from above right in front of them!!

### 7/ 8 February- BOMBING, DOCKS, DUNKIRK

In a major effort, fifteen aircraft were tonight detailed to attack the docks at Dunkirk. Visibility to, and at the target was excellent with a full moon. Heavy flak and searchlight activity hampered bombing and observation of the results. However accuracy was good, and one crew recorded seeing boats being bodily blown out of the water. Only one aircraft was forced to return early due to a troublesome engine. All returned safely to Base.

### 10/ 11 February- BOMBING, HANOVER

Ten aircraft tonight took-off to bomb Hanover. All ten reached the target in excellent visibility and bombed successfully, however the area was already a mass of flames which made identifying the results impossible. Some enemy fighters were seen over the target but none attacked and the ground opposition was minimal. One aircraft ran short of fuel and diverted safely, the remainder returning to Base safely.

### 11/ 12 February- BOMBING, BREMEN

Led by the Squadron Commander W/Cdr. Walker, five aircraft set off to bomb Bremen tonight. The visibility deteriorated as the Dutch coast was reached, and thick cloud cover obscured the target itself. The crews bombed either through gaps in the cloud, results of other bombs or Dead reckoning; whichever method was used no results were seen other than the glow of flames. All returned safely, one being aided by the 'Darky' system to Oakington.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

February 1941 Based R.A.F. Lindholme.

14 February 1941- GARDENING OPERATIONS, "DEODARS" (GIRONDE ESTUARY)

Eleven aircraft set-off from around 01.30hrs this morning from a forward base at St. Eval, Cornwall to lay sea-mines in the Gironde estuary, to prevent the movement of Italian submarines under repair at the docks in Bordeaux. As if to exemplify the fickle nature of flying on bomber operations, some crews reported no flak at the target and one even flew around the area for 20 minutes looking for a target to drop the wing bombs on, while others met slight flak opposition and yet more went through heavy flak. One aircraft, X2983 and two of her crew was lost to this flak while ten returned safely to St. Eval. In ideal weather the aircraft dropped the mines in the Gironde and continued on-land to drop wing bombs on targets of opportunity. One crew reported a large fire, possibly an aircraft a quarter of a mile inland from Pointe de Chambrette at 04.30hrs. A second reported identifying a blazing Hampden aircraft on the South bank of the estuary. **This was Hampden X2983, believed shot down by flak. Two crew are known to have been killed when the aircraft crashed near Pointe de Chambrette after dropping the sea mine in the Gironde and then heading on-shore to bomb a target of opportunity with the wing bombs. Pilot/ Observer 748707 Sgt John Bell Barclay RAFVR and Pilot, 79551 P/O Peter George Tunstall RAFVR, perished in the crash or post crash fire. The WOP/ AG Sgt. Benjamin Dixon and WOP/ AG Sgt. F.C. Bailey both survived and were immediately captured and made P.O.W.'s.**

**Sgt. Dixon states that he was not aware of any flak or fighter activity prior to a loud 'bang' and airframe vibration while turning toward the target. P/O Tunstall and Sgt. Barclay are both buried in the Le Verdon-Sur-Mer Communal Cemetery, near the mouth of the river Gironde. .**

Another crew nearly came to grief for different reasons; stand-in second pilot/ Observer Sgt. R.N. Haggart (on loan from No.106 Squadron, Finningley) flew in P4408 and recalls: *we were forward based at St. Eval in Cornwall to load mines and take fuel on. The Captain was Sgt. Ormonroyd; course set via Channel, Brittany, Bay of Biscay and Belle Isle and mine placed successfully. A search for a target to drop the wing bombs on was made but nothing was found. Weather was excellent with moon and no cloud. Due to a reversal of the wind occurring, the aircraft unknowingly flew south of England and (luckily) made landfall on the Southern coast of Ireland. After some time a lighthouse was identified, that of Coningbeg, Ireland. A new course was set (back to England) and the aircraft safely returned to St. Eval.*

None of the latter made the ORB!

21/ 22 February- GARDENING OPERATIONS- JELLYFISH AREA

Fourteen aircraft took off this evening for a mining operation near Brest. In variable weather thirteen aircraft successfully dropped their mines while one aircraft returned early with an unserviceable Airspeed Indicator. Ground opposition was mainly searchlights. All returned safely to either Base, Middle Wallop, Boscombe Down or Andover.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

February 1941 Based R.A.F. Lindholme.

24/ 25 February- BOMBING, CRUISER IN BREST DRY- DOCKS

Thirteen aircraft this evening took off to bomb a cruiser in dry dock at Brest harbour. En-route weather was poor but improved over the target. Eleven aircraft bombed the target but no hits were reported on the warship. Heavy flak and searchlight activity was encountered but with no damage sustained. Two aircraft went u/s and returned and diverted safely, one with the squadron C.O. on board, W/Cdr. Walker.

26/ 27 February 1941-based at R.A.F. LINDHOLME- BOMBING COLOGNE

Ten aircraft tonight departed for Cologne. Aircraft X2992 suffered an Oxygen failure and returned to Base. Weather was fair but with an effective black-out over the English and Dutch coasts navigation was difficult. However the Rhine proved a pin-point for the remaining nine aircraft who successfully found the aiming point at Cologne. However by the time it was reached the city was already ablaze. Results of H.E. bombs could not be seen but incendiaries dropped were all on target. A lone fighter was seen over the target but did not join battle. Flak was described as between non-existent and intense (no doubt dependent on timing and direction of attack) but no damage was caused, all aircraft returning safely to Base by 02.00 on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

Representative aircraft (Hampden B. Mk. I):

L4075, L4164, P2093, P4389, P4408, P4409, X2983, X2984, X2919, X2991, X2992, X3133, X3145, X3146, AD721, AD728, AD730, AD742 'F', AD753

Representative crews:

Weston, Woodward, Powell, Whitecross, Everitt, Russell, Walker (C.O.), Grylls, Moore, Ormonroyd, Oxley, Burrough, Crum, Grainger, Hill, Macrossan, Good, Rippingdale, Cornish, Thwaites, Tunstall, Johnston.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## March 1941, Based R.A.F. Lindholme

Overview: Weather plays havoc across the country with fog causing many aborted sorties and causing many casualties amongst Bomber Command aircrew due to crashes associated with fog and limited navigational aids. This month the Handley Page Halifax makes its operational début.

Bomber Command finds itself committed to regular night bombing of industrial targets (around 100 aircraft average) as well as the destruction of U-Boat production and operations infrastructure along the French and German Coasts and in German Industrial Cities.

The 4000lb High Capacity Bomb is used for the first time- the 'Cookie'.

The Squadron continues to perform mine-laying operations ("Gardening").

The newly commissioned Battleship 'Tirpitz' leaves Wilhelmshaven 9<sup>th</sup> March and heads for Gotenhafen for sea-trials in the Gulf of Danzig via the Kiel Canal 11/ 12 March.

The Battleship 'Bismarck' leaves Hamburg for the Baltic passing through the Kiel Canal 7/ 8<sup>th</sup> March, stopping at Kiel for two weeks, finally leaving for Gotenhafen on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

As an example of the hazards faced by these crews, on the raid to Hamburg on the 13<sup>th</sup> of this month, Manchester L7313 from 207 Squadron at RAF Waddington was strafed as it TOOK OFF from Waddington by a JU-88 night-fighter and crashed at Whisby killing five of the crew. Luftwaffe night fighters are in fact much in evidence across the county this month, albeit as lone intruders, with a JU-88 being shot down by a Beaufighter near Market Deeping on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. As if further examples of hazards are needed, sad to record that another Manchester from 207 Squadron was shot down by a Beaufighter on the same evening with the loss of all on board.

### 1/ 2 March- BOMBING, COLOGNE MARSHALLING YARDS

Eleven aircraft set out tonight to bomb the railway marshalling yards in Cologne. One aircraft suffered engine overheating and an intercom failure en-route and returned safely to base with bombs on board. Nine aircraft found near perfect visibility over the target and successfully bombed, despite heavy flak and intense search-light activity; all nine returned safely to Base. One aircraft, Hampden X2984 suffered navigation difficulties coupled with bad weather on the return trip, and crashed into a plantation on high ground at/ near Wold Newton between Driffild and Hunmanby, Yorkshire at 03.35hrs 2<sup>nd</sup> March. The Observer, 745715 Sgt. Leonard Thomas Richards RAFVR was killed and was laid to rest in HATFIELD WOODHOUSE Cemetery, (Lindholme) Yorkshire. The three remaining crew were all injured but survived. They were Pilot 81650 P/O Harold Cass 'Ben' Pexton, RAFVR; Sgt. Wheeler, RAF WOP/AG and 971149 Sgt. James Hopkin Tittley RAFVR, WOP/ AG. The aircraft was written-off.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## March 1941, Based R.A.F. Lindholme

### 12/ 13 March- BOMBING, HAMBURG SHIP YARDS & BERLIN

Eight aircraft set off to bomb Hamburg tonight. The weather was near perfect making pin-pointing the target simple and seven aircraft bombed successfully while the eighth headed for an alternate target and bombed it; all eight returned safely to base. Flak defences were intense.

Later that evening, a further nine aircraft set off to bomb Berlin. Seven aircraft successfully bombed the target in good weather while one aircraft turned back early due to falling engine oil pressure. Flak defences around Berlin were extremely accurate with one aircraft sustaining fourteen shrapnel hits alone. **The ninth aircraft, Hampden AD721 failed to return from this night's raid on Berlin. Believed to have been shot down by a Night fighter the aircraft crashed, possibly near Nordhorn, Western Germany. Nothing further heard from this crew after take-off at 22.23hrs. Later all the crew were confirmed killed and are buried in the BERLIN 1939- 1945 WAR CEMETERY, situated on the Western outskirts of the City. Crew were 39319 F/Lt. Donald Thurston Johnston, Pilot RAF; 90748 P/O Lionel Edward Stannard, Pilot RAF(Aux); 631240 Sgt. Harry Howell, WOP/AG RAF and 540821 Sgt. William Gordon Williams, WOP/AG RAF. Nordhorn is approximately half way (300 miles) to the city of Berlin and around only a mile from the Dutch border; no further details of the crash available at this time.**

### 13/ 14 March 1941- BOMBING, HAMBURG

The squadron returned to Hamburg ship yards on a bombing mission tonight, eight aircraft taking off from around 19.00hrs. Weather was very good with a bright moon. Flak defences were mixed but intense at times; night fighter activity was very apparent tonight over Hamburg (most likely based at Borkum) with Me109's and Me.110 types seen. One aircraft returned to base early due to engine overheat, and six successfully bombed the target, returning safely to base with no damage. One aircraft (Cornish Crew) engaged an Me.110 and claimed it as a possible kill, both gunners contributing. Sadly one aircraft, **Hampden X3146 failed to return with nothing further heard from the crew after the W/T 'GO' was obtained. The crew consisting of 969956 Sgt. John Cameron RAFVR, 758212 Sgt. Robert Little Grainger RAFVR, 759157 Sgt. Robert Duncan Watson and 745394 Sgt. Robert Edward Frederick Wunderlich RAFVR were never found, nor was any trace of the aircraft. All four colleagues are commemorated at the monument at Runnymede. Details?**

### 14/ 15 March- BOMBING, GELSENKIRCHEN

Four aircraft tonight set off to attack an oil plant at Gelsenkirchen. In excellent visibility three aircraft located the target area; however large fires were already burning and, combined with existing ground haze across the Ruhr made pinpointing the target difficult for some crews. The fourth failed to locate the target so headed for the alternate target at Dusseldorf and duly bombed it. All four aircraft returned safely to Base; however two aircraft were seen to be shot down in flames by enemy fighters, one over each target. These were not Squadron machines but R.A.F. colleagues

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## March 1941 Based R.A.F. Lindholme.

### 15/ 16 March- BOMBING, DUSSELDORF

Six aircraft departed Base tonight to attack Dusseldorf (marshalling yards). Weather over the target was good but with inevitable Ruhr valley haze at ground level. Ground defences were reported as mixed, with some crews meeting a formidable barrier of searchlights followed by flak while others were un-opposed. Incendiaries and 1000lb bombs were dropped and all six safely reached English bases, all being required to divert to either Tangmere (a fighter base) in Kent or St. Eval in Cornwall. One aircraft arrived over Tangmere in the middle of an enemy intruder attack on the aerodrome with sticks of bombs falling and aircraft reported flying in all directions with no lights showing.

### 20/ 21 March- MINING OPERATIONS, ARTICHOKE & JELLYFISH AREAS

Ten aircraft tonight set out to lay sea-mines in the Artichoke 'Garden' (Lorient, France). All crews successfully dropped mines in the required location in variable visibility. Flak defences were active in various positions along the French coastline; one aircraft reported that no flak was encountered at all until crossing the English coast!! Nine aircraft returned to base safely, however one Hampden AD742, VN-F struck the ground at Armthorpe, Doncaster having under-shot the Flare-path during the final landing approach to Lindholme due to thick ground haze. One crew member, WOP/ AG 638755 Sgt. Alfred Bryan Brooks RAF was injured. The remaining crew, Pilot P/O T.N.C. Burrough RAFVR, 2<sup>nd</sup> Pilot P/O P.B. Hodgson RAFVR and WOP/ AG Sgt. Russell RAF were un-injured, but AD742 was a total wreck.

In addition the squadron C.O. flew a lone mining mission to the 'Jellyfish' area, at very short notice; the mine was placed successfully and X2919 landed safely back at Base.

### 22- 29 March- STAND-BY FOR BOMBING BREST (BATTLE CRUISERS)

The Squadron begins a stand-by period, whereas the crews are on two-hour notice to launch six Hampden aircraft for a formation attack on two cruisers in Brest harbour. This necessarily limited the amount of flying that could be done during this period.

### 23/ 24 March- BOMBING, KIEL

Three aircraft (AD789, AD766 & P4408) set out tonight to bomb Kiel (Docks). En Route weather was poor but cleared in the target area; one aircraft returned early due to an unserviceable Intercom. system. Bombing appeared accurate despite heavy flak put up from both sides of the River. All aircraft returned safely to Base.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## March 1941 Based R.A.F. Lindholme.

### 29 March- DAYLIGHT BOMBING, BREST WARHIPS

After seven days of standby, at two hours notice, the Squadron Commander led five other crews on a formation attack on two German Navy battle-cruisers in Brest harbour. The aircraft took off from 16.41hrs onward and flew in two 'vics' of three aircraft making for the Lizard Point then turning for Brest. Weather was so clear that no trace of concealment was available (the only real defence in daylight was cloud, learned from bitter experience) and when half-way across the channel W/Cdr. Walker ordered that the mission should be abandoned and the aircraft returned safely to Base. This was, perhaps, an extremely courageous decision to take at this point in the war but undoubtedly was one that the crews would never forget.

### 30 March- DAYLIGHT BOMBING, BREST WARHIPS

Another attempt was made today to attack the cruisers in Brest Harbour. At 14.00hrs the squadron C.O again led a formation of six Hampden's and, flying to R.A.F. Station Hemswell, joined with six further aircraft from that Base. The formation of twelve then proceeded via Upper Heyford, Lyme Regis, Start Point and the Lizard turning on course for Brest. Unfortunately the weather was as good, if not clearer than the previous day and the formation was given permission to return to Base when around 30 miles out and no trace of cloud cover could be seen ahead. All aircraft returned to their respective bases safely.

Representative squadron aircraft, Hampden B.Mk.1: P4389, P4408, P4409, X2984, X2919, X2991, X3133, X3145, X3146, AD721, AD728, AD730, AD742 'F', AD753, AD766, AD789, AD797, AD828, AD830.

Crews: Weston, Powell, Whitecross, Everitt, Russell, Walker (C.O.), Grylls, Moore, Ormonroyd, Burrough, Hill, Macrossan, Good, Rippingdale, Cornish, Grainger, Thwaites, Johnston.  
The Commanding Officer, W/Cdr. Walker flew four operational missions this month, two especially hazardous day missions included.

Nine men were killed and four injured in operations and training this month.



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## April 1941 Based R.A.F. Lindholme.

Overview: On April 6<sup>th</sup> Germany invades Greece and Yugoslavia.

Operations continue against German Industrial production, and Brest and other channel ports are attacked and mined as the race to destroy the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau intensifies.

All in-service Avro Manchester aircraft are grounded to have engine main-bearings replaced (amongst other modifications).

### 1 April 1941

P4409 was wrecked at R.A.F. Station Lindholme while attempting a down-wind take-off; the aircraft swung and the undercarriage collapsed. It is believed that the solo pilot, 748372 Sgt. John Ratcliffe RAF was slightly injured. P4408 was SoC on the 9<sup>th</sup> April. Sgt Ratcliffe was killed nine days later.

### 5 April- Battleships at BREST

Hampden AD753 went missing on a bombing mission to BREST, crew of 654174 Sgt. Frederick Richard Worthington, 810051 Sgt. John Henry Matthews RAFAUX, 43288 P/O Hugh Murtagh MacRossan RAF and 742195 Sgt. Ronald Frank Cheesman presumed killed (via RoH). Their bodies have never been recovered; their names are all recorded on the memorial at Runnymede (CWGC). Aircraft AD753 was No.2 of the leading formation of three, followed by a second three-ship formation. Weather was particularly bad with 10/10 cloud up to 8000 feet and down to 500 feet, with driving rain.

Formation keeping was nigh impossible with some aircraft descending to 500 feet and others climbing to above 8000 feet. Five of the formation either witnessed this aircraft, AD753 dive vertically out of control from around 500 feet into the sea, narrowly missing a collision with AD824 and explode and burn, or saw the flaming wreckage on the sea. Believed it may have crashed in the sea near Ile d'Ouessant, now known increasingly as Ushant, an island off Brittany that marks the Southernmost point of the Celtic Sea. The report from AD728 stated "*After leaving the Scillies, the cloud lowered and heavy continuous rain was encountered. Several attempts were made to get through this cloud layer, but the leader finally considered that it would break the formation and was eventually forced down to 500 feet in blinding rain. Shortly afterwards, No.2 aircraft was seen to be behind. A few minutes later it was seen to be out of control and dive vertically into the sea.*" None of the formation appeared to have an accurate idea of their location at the time of the crash; it is therefore, based on AD728's report, quite possible that a French website claim for the aircraft crashing in the vicinity of USHANT are accurate. From the evidence it is probable that the pilot became disorientated and lost control; at such a low height recovery would have been impossible in a fully laden Hampden. Weather was so poor that two aircraft turned back after 30 minutes flying, two more persevered but returned whilst probably close to their target and the fifth bombed through cloud on an Estimated target Area. The remaining five returned safely.

Details .



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## April 1941 Based R.A.F. Lindholme.

### 7/8 April- KIEL

Nine aircraft departed from around 20.00 onward, mainland cloud dispersing to near perfect weather. Eight aircraft successfully bombed Kiel using various routes and altitudes with the ninth aircraft turning back soon after take-off with engine trouble. All landed safely, one desperately short on fuel.

### 8/9 April- KIEL

From around 19.45hrs onwards, eight aircraft took off to bomb Kiel, including the CO, W/Cdr. Walker in AD707. Weather was soon reported as ideal over Europe however most aircraft encountered severe icing in cloud off the UK coast outbound. Flak activity over the target was intense. One aircraft suffered from severe icing and could not climb so returned to base. On return a JU-88 was seen circling in the vicinity of Lindholme. A further aircraft was hit by fire from a night fighter over the target and the Starboard engine failed causing the aircraft to enter a flat spin. A recovery on one engine was made and while descending to 3000 feet and preparing to ditch the second engine re-started (probably iced carburettor) and the flight home was completed.

### 10 April

Hampden AD830 lost on Active Service. Two crew members are known to have perished; Pilot 971123 Sgt. John James Campbell RAFVR and 743067 F/Sgt. Leslie Albert Carn RAFVR, WOP/AG (via RoH & CWGC). Probably on an Air Test, as the Starboard engine oil pressure had been low coupled with rough running on the previous (Kiel) flight. The fate of the two other crew (if aboard) is not known. Possible crash site is at Evington, 3 miles East of Leicester. It is possible the aircraft was attempting to land at RAF Leicester East, (RAF Stoughton) which is less than a mile from Evington. F/Sgt. Carn is buried in Southend-On-Sea (Sutton Road) Cemetery, while Sgt. Campbell is buried in Hatfield Woodhouse Cemetery. .

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

April 1941 Based R.A.F. Lindholme.

10/ 11 April 1941- NIGHT BOMBING, DUSSELDORF

Nine aircraft departed base around 19.30hrs for Dusseldorf. Four aircraft bombed with varying success due to haze, one made the target only to find the bomb doors frozen solid and two more turned back. Two aircraft failed to return from this mission:

Hampden **AD789** was lost with three of the four-man crew known to have been killed:

WOP/ AG 747984 Sgt. Sidney Reginald Cassey RAFVR

Navigator/ 2<sup>nd</sup> Pilot 748372 Sgt. John Ratcliffe RAF

WOP/ AG 652894 F/Sgt. Richard Albert Royal RAF.

All are buried at JONKERBOS WAR CEMETERY, GELDERLAND, Nijmegen, the Netherlands, in graves 16.F.7, 16.F.4 and 16.F.5 respectively.

The fourth crew member, Pilot 43282 P/O Geoffrey James CORNISH RAAF survived and was taken POW, being incarcerated in Stalag Luft 3. The aircraft is known to have crashed at Neer (Bosheide) Holland around 22.45hrs 10 April. The three crew were believed to have been found in the wreckage and a picture of the crashed aircraft is on one Dutch web-site.

(Note: Ref. Liberation report 1797, File WO208/ 3335, National Archives, Kew.

Hampden **AD828** was also lost on this mission to Dusseldorf; the Pilot 42880 P/O David Evan-Frank Powell RAF being killed. Sgt. Raymond Edward Drake 648987 survived, becoming a POW (POW 596), as did Sgt. F. C. Snook, POW 612. Sgt. J. A. Davis is thought to have been severely injured and was hospitalised/ made POW until being repatriated in February 1945.

Post war it has been established that AD828 was shot down by a night fighter of 3/NJG 1 flown by Obfw. Herzog, the aircraft crashing at Ulestraten near Maastricht in Holland (and almost on the then-occupied airfield at Maastricht- Aachen) at around 22.55hrs (indicating it was hit prior to reaching the target and incidentally at the exact same time that AD789 was shot down). P/O Powell is buried in Jonkerbos War Cemetery, Nijmegen, Netherlands in Grave 16. F. 6. (Alongside his colleagues from AD789).

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## April 1941 Based R.A.F. Lindholme.

### 13/ 14 April- GARDENING CINNAMON AREA

From 22.00hrs on ten aircraft set out to drop sea-mines. Eight did so successfully while two turned back with engine problems, some diverting to Abingdon and Upper Heyford due to deteriorating weather in the UK. Two aircraft hit by flak.

### 15/ 16 April – KIEL

Ten aircraft set out to bomb Kiel with one aircraft returning due to engine trouble and a second with seized bomb doors. The remainder bombed with varying success.

### 17/ 18 April 1941- BERLIN

Seven aircraft departed base around 20.15hrs for Berlin. Only two aircraft found and bombed the target with three more bombing the alternate. One aircraft returned with a u/s gyro-horizon and VSI. Two aircraft reported tangling with ME109 night-fighters with AD728 claiming one 'damaged'. Other aircraft reported difficulties in navigating the return leg.

Hampden AD730\* went missing on the return leg, later being found having crashed at BLESSINGTON, Co. WICKLOW, EIRE. It is likely the crew became lost, despite a positional fix being transmitted to the aircraft while near WATTON (Suffolk). Failure of radio equipment due to technical or atmospheric problems is also likely. Crew comprised of 553897 Sgt. Frederick Henry Erdwin RAF WOP/AG; 754628 Sgt. John Thompson Lamb, Pilot; 751744 Sgt. Stanley Wright RAFVR, WOP/ AG and 83253 P/O John Kenneth Hill RAFVR, Pilot- all perished. The crash site is more accurately Black Hill, Lacken near Blessington; a memorial has been erected at the site. The area in which the aircraft crashed was remote and boggy, with searchers finding the remains of all four crew near the highly fragmented aircraft some two days after the crash. These airmen are buried side by side in BLESSINGTON (ST. MARY) CHURCH OF IRELAND CHURCHYARD, Co. Wicklow, EIRE. .

\*The ORB lists the crew as taking off in AD853 however the aircraft was certainly AD730; errors in the ORB were not uncommon. See [www.csn.ul.ie/dan/war/gravescj](http://www.csn.ul.ie/dan/war/gravescj) for about the most comprehensive account of a Hampden loss you could hope to read. Magnificent.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## April 1941 Based R.A.F. Lindholme.

### 20/ 21 April 1941- GARDENING JELLYFISH AREA

Six aircraft left from around 23.30hrs to mine the Brest coastal area, with varied results reported. Flak opposition and searchlight activity was noted but no casualties were recorded. Poor weather was met on the return to Lincolnshire- low- level haze and fog, all landed safely.

### 24/ 25 April- BARGES AT LE HAVRE & GARDENING OPS

Three aircraft departed Lindholme around 0100hrs 25 April to bomb barges at Le Havre, all reaching the target but bombing inconclusively due to ground haze, all returning safely.

A further six aircraft took-off from 21.30hrs onwards to mine the Copenhagen area ('Jellyfish'). Four aircraft dropped mines (one in an incorrect location) and two returned having run out of time to locate the target, all returning to base safely.

### 28/ 29 April- GARDENING OPS

Five aircraft took-off from around 20.00hrs onward to mine the 'Cinnamon' area. Only one aircraft mined the area with two other returning to base unable to locate the target due to haze. Two aircraft failed to return this morning.

Hampden AD728 (or AD782?) lost whilst on a mine-laying operation in the 'Cinnamon' Area. Crew posted missing and were WOP/ AG 648973 Sgt. Albert Charles Evans RAF, Pilot 39459 S/L Duncan Charles Frederick Good RAF (2<sup>nd</sup> pilot), WOP/ AG 908004 Sgt. Horace Cuthbert Page RAFVR and the pilot, 88228 P/O John George Embleton Willis RAFVR. The crash site is not known but three crew members were recovered; P/O Willis is buried at Plot 54, CHATELAILLON-PLAGE COMMUNAL CEMETERY, near La Rochelle, FRANCE; Sgt. Evans is buried in ST. MARTIN-DE-RE COMMUNAL CEMETERY, on the Ile de Re, near La Rochelle, at row 3 grave 4. Sgt. Page is buried in PORNIC WAR CEMETERY, locality Loire-Atlantique (near Saint-Nazaire), grave 1.A.10. .

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

April 1941 Based R.A.F. Lindholme.

28/ 29 April- GARDENING OPS (Ctd.)

Hampden AD834 also Failed To Return. The Crew of four, 41888 F/O James Alexander Whitecross, RCAF; W.O. Edwin James Martin; 543012 F/Sgt. Douglas Fredrick Ross RAF and 976138 Sgt. Joseph Francis O'Hare RAF posted as missing. A message was received from the aircraft shortly before midnight that the aircraft had attempted to find the secondary target of Lorient/ La Pallice but had developed Port engine trouble.

WO Martin stated after repatriation Post War that the Port engine had developed Low oil pressure and smoke immediately prior to crashing. The aircraft finally crashed in farmland near the village of Quilliampe, near Loudeac, France. The pilot, P/O Whitecross and Observer WO Martin managed to parachute to safety but Ross and O'Hare perished in the post crash fire that burned for days. Whitecross evaded via Spain and Gibraltar returning to the UK in June 1941. WO Martin suffered a badly broken leg and surrendered for hospital treatment spending the war in various POW Camps. F/Sgt. Ross and Sgt. O'Hare are buried side by side in Quilliampe Cemetery near Loudeac, and a memorial stone is also to be found at the crash site, Quilliampe. See [www.absa3945.com](http://www.absa3945.com) for an in-depth article.

29/ 30 April- ROTTERDAM OIL STORAGE TANKS

Four aircraft left Lindholme around 21.00hrs for Rotterdam. Two aircraft bombed the target, one bombed a flak battery seen to be attacking a friendly aircraft as the primary target could not be found, and the fourth returned to base with full bomb load being unable to locate the target despite a 55 minute search. All returned safely.

Representative aircraft: P4408, X2919, X2991, X3133, X3145, AD728, AD730, [AD753](#), AD766, [AD782](#), [AD789](#), AD797, AD824, [AD828](#), AD830, [AD834](#), AD835, AD843, [AD853](#), AD897, AD908, AD954.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

May 1941, based R.A.F. Lindholme.

Overview: This month, the battleship 'Bismarck' and the 'Prinz Eugen' pass through the Great Belt for Bergen. Later, HMS Hood is sunk by the 'Bismarck' in the battle of Denmark Strait; however the Bismarck is now low on fuel and makes for St. Nazaire. She is spotted by Coastal Command aircraft on the 26<sup>th</sup>; Hampden's of the Squadron mine the approaches to Brest but the Bismarck is sunk before reaching port.

The Squadron continues to mine coastal waters around France, Denmark and the Baltic approaches ('Gardening'), and to bomb strategic industrial targets in Germany, many close to the limit of the Hampden's radius of action. Despite this, the Squadron suffers no combat losses this month, one aircraft being lost due to a training accident.

Bombing is unfortunately largely in-effective with most raids using bombs of a maximum weight of 1000lb. Poor weather and primitive navigation aids prevent accurate placing of these weapons and more often than not bombs are dropped using dead-reckoning leading to errors of miles. Results are often not seen, with photographic reconnaissance missions needed to assess damage. The Squadron continues to fly from Lindholme, Yorkshire.

## 2/ 3 May- BOMBING, HAMBURG & GARDENING OPERATIONS

Seven aircraft set out tonight to bomb Hamburg, from around 21.00hrs. Weather over the North Sea was excellent but over mainland Europe a ground haze was encountered making target identification difficult. Three aircraft succeeded in attacking the primary target, Hamburg but results could not be seen. Two aircraft decided to bomb Wilhelmshaven (one subsequently being unable to identify this target either) and one aircraft bombed Cuxhaven in Holland due to an engine problem. All along the route extensive 'box' formations of searchlights were encountered and one aircraft reported heavy accurate flak but some distance behind the aircraft. Night fighters were also encountered with one Me.110 being driven off by AD853.

On the same evening, three further aircraft set out to drop mines in the 'Nectarine' area. As reported by the bombing aircraft heavy flak was encountered over the Frisian Islands. All aircraft returned safely to base.

## 5/ 6 May 1941- BOMBING MANHEIM & GARDENING OPERATIONS

This evening two targets were detailed for the Squadron. One lone aircraft set off to drop a sea-mine in the 'Nectarine' area and duly dropped the mine 1 mile off Juist Island. A further seven aircraft set out to bomb Manheim. From leaving Base and climbing the entire journey was made in almost unbroken cloud; one aircraft had trouble with low oil pressure on both engines and so returned to base. The remainder were able to find the general area of the target but could not pin-point it therefore all elected to bomb flak concentrations which were thought to be the target using dead-reckoning; no results were observed. Flak was largely absent and all aircraft returned to base safely although most had difficulty in Navigation due to cloud.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

May 1941, based R.A.F. Lindholme.

## 8/ 9 May- BOMBING HAMBURG

Tonight ten aircraft set off from around 21.00hrs onward to bomb the ship-building yards at Hamburg. Visibility throughout was ideal and six aircraft easily pin-pointed the target, which was already a mass of flames. Bombing was accurate, and several aircraft reported enemy fighters passing close by but none engaged the Hampden's. Four aircraft suffered serious technical problems; one, AD908 reported that severe vibration was encountered and the aircraft would not climb above 15,500 feet; at this height the tail was seen to shake from side to side and, as the intercom also broke down the aircraft returned directly to base landing safely. Strangely enough AD843 also found it impossible to exceed 15,500 feet in altitude and therefore bombed nearby Sylt and returned safely to Base. Another aircraft could not exceed 13,500 feet and therefore elected to bomb Cuxhaven before returning safely to Base.

Finally X3145 and crew had a hair-raising mission when, while crossing the Danish coast the Starboard engine oil pressure dropped; the bombs were dropped on a railway near Hautrup and shortly after the engine cut, restarted then fluctuated violently. An emergency was declared and the crew were prepared to ditch in the North Sea when at the last minute a fix was obtained for Driffield and the crew set course for Base, but not before coming perilously close to a balloon barrage at Sheffield. It landed eventually at Base after seven hours in the air.

## 9/ 10 May- BOMBING LUDWIGSHAVEN

Seven aircraft tonight set off for a mission to bomb the RADISCH Chemical Works at Ludwigshaven. One aircraft suffered a serious Navigation error and tried to establish its position for some time and, having done so finally set course for Base as fuel was low. Poor visibility contributed to the problem. Another aircraft suffered intercom and Oxygen failures (the latter preventing the aircraft operating above 12,000 feet) so elected to bomb the docks at Calais which it did successfully. Five aircraft found and bombed the target with mixed results. All the aircraft were airborne for at least eight hours and one for eight hours forty minutes; this is very close to maximum endurance for the Hampden and is an indication of the risks the crews faced with missions of this range against vital targets. All aircraft returned safely however one diverted to Tangmere due to low fuel state; the margin for error was virtually nil.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

May 1941, based R.A.F. Lindholme.

## 11/ 12 May- BOMBING BREMEN

Tonight six aircraft set off to bomb the ship-building yards at Bremen. Visibility throughout was excellent and all aircraft bombed the target, generally with good results. However flak over the target was heavy and searchlight activity intense; due to the taking of avoiding action some aircraft could not see the results. AD854's crew described seeing two aircraft being shot down near the target, "*about 15 searchlights were seen concentrating on an a/c which was falling like a ball of fire. On hitting the ground it burned ferociously. About this point on the return another a/c was seen to be caught in the searchlights at about 1000 feet. Suddenly a stream of tracer from an enemy fighter was seen to strike the a/c which was obviously hit*". (Squadron records show these were not No. 50 Squadron machines). One can only imagine the thoughts of those observing this carnage. All six returned to Base without incident.

## 15/ 16 May- BOMBING HANNOVER

Tonight a large force of eleven aircraft set off to bomb Hannover. One aircraft suffered a magneto failure and returned to Base. The remaining ten successfully bombed the target with mixed results. Weather was generally poor with broken cloud making pin-pointing the target a hit-or-miss affair. Most could not observe the results of bombing due to this cloud. Ground defences were formidable with intense searchlight activity and heavy, accurate flak both on the way to and from the target and at the target itself making for an extremely unpleasant sortie. All aircraft returned safely to Base.

## 18/ 19 May- BOMBING, KIEL

Six aircraft tonight set off to bomb the docks at Kiel. One aircraft was some 150 miles out when an engine failed leading to severe airframe vibration and tail flutter; the aircraft jettisoned weapons and returned direct to Base safely. Three aircraft bombed the general area of the target due to very poor visibility obscuring the ground; bombs were dropped on an estimated position where a concentration of flak and searchlights was noted by two and the third positively identified the docks by the reflection of searchlights on the water. Two remaining aircraft failed to find the target and bombed alternates instead. All returned to Base safely.

Four further aircraft set out from around 22.00hrs to place sea-mines in shipping lanes in the 'Forget-me-not' area (possibly Kiel Harbour). Visibility was atrocious with cloud and fog down to sea level preventing all four from accurately dropping the mines; one returned with the mine aboard and the other three dropped around a mile or two from the intended point. All returned to Base safely.



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

May 1941, based R.A.F. Lindholme.

26/ 27 May 1941- MINING OPERATIONS, JELLYFISH AREA

Tonight, a large force of thirteen aircraft set off to drop sea-mines in the 'Jellyfish' area, from around 22.30hrs onwards. W/Cdr. Walker flew AD867 on this occasion. This area is the mouth of the channel off Brest harbour, Brittany, a major occupied port for enemy warships. Weather for this operation was very poor, with medium and low-level cloud obscuring the ground. Four aircraft failed to find the target area and returned to Upper Heyford; the remainder successfully penetrated the cloud and dropped the mines in the required position. Flak defences were sporadic, but two aircraft were damaged by accurate bursts of flak. AD766 was hit by a large shell which went through the tailplane and damaged the Starboard rudder. Splinters were also found in the elevator and the rudder trim tab wires were broken, however the aircraft landed safely at Base after six hours forty minutes in the air. AD952 was also hit by flak during the run-in to the target, and during evasive action the navigator was wounded in the foot and was incapacitated. The pilot, F/Lt. Potts continued in defiance of continued flak and dropped the mine, returning directly to Boscombe Down to enable first aid for the injured crew member P/O Seeley-King. On landing it was found that the Port engine had been hit by flak and the brakes failed completely; no injuries or further damage was sustained however. The remainder of the attacking force returned safely to either Upper Heyford or Base.

30 May 1941- based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

Hampden AD867 lost on Active Service, believed during an air test. It is believed the aircraft stalled while turning and crashed at 11.20hrs some 50 yards from Hale Hill Farm between Hatfield and Hatfield Woodhouse, 2 miles NW of Lindholme. Those known as killed are 88868 P/O John Charles Cunningham, Pilot, RAFVR and 552215 Sgt. Wilfred Hall, WOP/ AG RAF. P/O Cunningham is buried in Great Bookham (St. Nicholas) Churchyard, Surrey, while Sgt. Hall lies in Southport (Birkdale) Cemetery. .

Representative Hampden B.Mk.1 aircraft: P4389, P4408, X2919, X2991, X3133, X3145, AD766, AD797, AD824, AD843, AD852, AD853, AD854, AD867, AD897, AD902, AD908, AD928.

Crews: Maries, Cooke, Moore, Collins, **Cunningham**, Potts, Pexton, Broderick, Hughes, Willett, Mulford, Baker, Fox, Abbott, Quinton, Hodgson & Burrough.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## June 1941 based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

Overview: Germany invades the USSR on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June.

Major attacks on German Industrial towns are launched; however results are still poor and bombing accuracy a major problem.

### 2/ 3 June- BOMBING DUSSELDORF

Nine aircraft took off for Dusseldorf from 22.40 onward. Met: cloudy over entire route with thick haze obscuring Dusseldorf. Eight aircraft bombed, most by dead reckoning with no results noted. One aircraft, **Hampden AD797** failed to return, nothing further being heard from the crew after take-off. All crew were killed; 2<sup>nd</sup> Pilot 88403 P/O Peter Robert Duncan Brown RAFVR, (an Australian), Sgt. George T. Cheetham, F/Sgt. John T. Donnelly and Pilot P/O P.B. Hodgson. All are buried in Leopoldsburg war Cemetery Row 5c, Belgium. A Belgian local History group tells the full story on [www.aviationheritage.eu/nl](http://www.aviationheritage.eu/nl): On the morning of the 3 June 1941, the aircraft crashed into Mollestraat (now Linde Bosstraat) in LINDE, close to a Village Funfair. Villagers were first on the scene. German soldiers from the nearby Helchteren Barracks were soon on the scene. Due to the carnage, the bodies were buried on the spot. Remarkably, the German soldiers are believed to have placed flowers on the graves, as they were First World War veterans (maybe Home Guard or equivalent?) and were anti-Nazi. After the war, the bodies were exhumed and re-interred at the British Military Cemetery in Leopoldsburg. Interestingly FIVE bodies are said to have been recovered from the wreckage and five graves were visible in a photograph taken at the time. However such was the devastation of the crash site that it is possible that remains of four were thought to be five? A memorial to these men has also recently been placed in LINDE- PEER Cemetery.

An ME110 attacked one of the other crews this morning; this may have been the cause of AD797's demise.

The remaining eight aircraft landed safely back at Base, one diverted to Finningley.

### 11/ 12 June 1941- BOMBING DUISBURG

From around 23.00hrs, a very large force of seventeen aircraft set off for Duisburg. Met: good en-route with some icing encountered but very poor visibility over the target. Night fighters were seen (ME109's) but none attacked. Flak was encountered over Holland and at the target, some intense. One a/c suffered a technical failure and turned back early. Two Hampden aircraft failed to pin-point the target and bombed a bridge at Wessel. Fourteen aircraft bombed the target although most were estimated positions where fires were already raging. All returned to Base safely.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## June 1941 based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

### 12/ 13 June- SOEST

Ten aircraft set out tonight to bomb railway marshalling yards at Soest. Met: variable with some aircraft encountering severe icing on the way in, and solid cloud over the target. Others reported good visibility over the target. Two aircraft returned early; one with instrument failure, the other suffering icing and going into a spin which lost 5000 feet before recovery. Of the remaining eight, three bombed alternate targets, one returned with bombs, and four bombed the target. All returned to Base safely.

### 13 June

Today P/O. G.H. Everitt was posted in.

### 14/ 15 June- COLOGNE

Nine aircraft set off to bomb Cologne tonight. Met; thick cloud all the way and over the target prevented any crew bombing with any certainty; seven crews dropped on an estimated position while one crew returned with bombs on board. All landed safely at Base. Little opposition was encountered however.

### 16/ 17 June- COLOGNE

Ten aircraft were detailed for a night raid on Cologne. Met: good until target area which was obscured by (the usual) haze/ fog. Intense flak and searchlight activity encountered over the Dutch and Belgian coastal areas. Most bombs were dropped on estimated points due to haze. One aircraft, X2919 had an eventful time; hit by flak over Ostend, the I.F.F then fused causing the WOP to receive a severe electric shock which paralysed him for 2 Hours. Bombs were jettisoned on the Ostend flak batteries and this aircraft returned to Base some 3 hours earlier than the rest. Subsequently the weather at base deteriorated and all other aircraft landed safely at Waddington.

### 18 June 1941

Hampden P4389 lost on Active Service. The aircraft stalled and dived into the ground shortly after take-off just outside the Finningley airfield boundary (near Gatewood farm) during an air test at 18.05hrs. Aboard were WOP/ AG 974217 Sgt. Alexander Campbell RAFVR aged 19; Pilot, 926469 Sgt. Lawrence Rex Hinde RAFVR (aged 20) and three ground crew: 1250704 LAC Harry Barton RAFVR (Of 50 Squadron), Cpl. Morris Ernest Balkin RAFVR and 114845 AC2 Percy Charles Kemp. All aboard were killed and the aircraft destroyed. Sgt Campbell and Sgt. Hinde are buried in Hatfield Woodhouse Cemetery; LAC Barton is buried in Bacup (Fairwell) Cemetery, Lancashire; Cpl. Balkin is buried in Glasgow (Glenduffhill) Jewish Cemetery, and AC2 Kemp is buried in Worthing (Durrington) Cemetery, Sussex. T.B.C.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## June 1941 based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

### 18/ 19 June- BREMEN

Nine aircraft took off from around 22.50hrs onwards for Bremen, including X2919 but without the injured Sgt. Dalglish. Met: good but with thick ground haze over the target thus preventing pin-pointing of the aiming point. One aircraft returned to Base early after reporting severe engine vibration (AD853). Intense flak and searchlight activity was noted over and around Bremen. The remaining eight crews bombed on estimated positions with largely unseen results. All returned safely to Waddington.

### 21/ 22 June- DUSSELDORF

Eight aircraft set off tonight to bomb Dusseldorf. Met: good but thick haze over the target and approaches. AD908 bombed searchlights on Schoowen Island due to instrument failure and excessive exhaust flames and returned to Base early, while on X2991 the rear gunner's door blew wide open while over Great Yarmouth. As it was distorted the door was jettisoned but the WOP who had come to assist badly injured his hand in the process the pilot electing to land immediately at Bircham Newton, returning to Base the next morning. AD928 was suffering a rough-running engine and so bombed Ostend Docks which was already under attack. The remaining five bombed on estimated aiming points. All crews returned safely to Base.

### 24/ 25 June- KIEL

Nine aircraft were tonight detailed to bomb Kiel. Met: reported as perfect to and over the target by some and impenetrable haze up to 13000 feet by others. Defences were very active with intense flak and much co-ordinated searchlight activity. A German flak ship opened fire on two aircraft. One aircraft bombed Sylt due to a combination of a late take-off and radio failure, the remainder bombing with mixed results dependent on visibility encountered. The crew of AE157 reported that while over Kiel they were coned by numerous searchlights and simultaneously attacked by three ME110 night fighters. Two of the ME110's had 'headlights' and although a fire-fight ensued no damage was caused. All aircraft returned safely to Base.

### 25/ 26 June- KIEL

Five aircraft tonight took off on a bombing mission to the Deutsche Werke at Kiel. Met: Good outbound, patchy ground haze over the target. Severe electrical storms were encountered on the return leg. One aircraft failed to locate the target and returned to Base with bombs on board. Four aircraft bombed the target area on dead-reckoning. Three aircraft reported little opposition over the target area as one aircraft was receiving all the searchlight and flak; this was the unfortunate crew of P4408, who, caught in more than twenty searchlights were hammered by flak. Only by diving steeply from 12000 to 6000 feet did they escape, miraculously un-harmed. Two aircraft encountered severe electrical storms over the North Sea, the crew of P4408 being most startled as they thought they were still over Germany being shot at! All returned safely to base.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

June 1941 based R.A.F. Lindholme

27/ 28 June- VEGESACK & 'NUISANCE RAIDS'

Eight aircraft took off tonight for a bombing raid on the Bremen Vulcan Schiffbau at Vegesack, along with two more Hampden aircraft detailed for nuisance raids on Cologne and Dusseldorf. Visibility over the target, Vegesack was good. Two of the formation returned to Base with engine trouble after reaching the Dutch coast. Six aircraft bombed the target but pin-point accuracy was impossible. One aircraft was attacked by a searchlight-equipped ME110 over the Dutch coast but managed to evade further attacks. The two aircraft on nuisance raids again reported difficulty in pin-pointing the aiming points and dropped on an estimated position. Crews reported that the searchlights were being used as 'pointers' for the night fighters, the beams being laid flat along the direction of travel of the Hampden's. All aircraft returned safely to Base.

29/ 30 June- KIEL- Based RAF Lindholme.

Nine aircraft took-off for a night bombing mission to Kiel from around 22.20 on.

Met: visibility excellent but thick low cloud obscured the target. Two aircraft returned early due to engine and Oxygen system unserviceability. Six aircraft bombed the target but without being able to pin-point the aiming point results were poor. Flak in the area was formidable; F/O Collins in AD902 reported "*the result of the bombing was not observed on account of the searchlights. It {AD902} was passed on from group to group of searchlights and was fired at unceasingly for 20 minutes. It was hit in 10 places by shrapnel.*" In addition flak was reported as bursting at 20,000 feet: this is probably above the height that a loaded Hampden could normally attain. One aircraft failed to return from this mission.

After taking off at 22.35hrs nothing further was heard from the crew of **Hampden X3133**. **Aboard were 921063 Sgt. Charles Townsend Chipperfield, Pilot RAFVR; 755119 Sgt. Albert Patrick Drane, WOP/ AG RAFVR; 754151 Sgt. Wilfred Douglas Hughes, Pilot RAFVR and 971654 F/Sgt. Charles Robert Wells, WOP/ AG RAFVR. All were killed, believed shot down by a night fighter flown by Lt. Altendorf at 01.53 hrs. Crash site . All are buried side by side in Hamburg (Friedhof Ohlsdorf) Cemetery. .**

Representative aircraft- Hampden B.Mk.1: P4389, P4408, X2919, X2991, X3133, X3145, AD766, AD797, AD836, AD839, AD843, AD852, AD853, AD854, AD897, AD902, AD908, AD928, AD977, AE157.

Crews: Collins, **Chipperfield**, Pexton, Fox, **Hinde**, Cooke, Hughes, Willett, Dawson, Abbott, **Hodgson**, Ford, Quinton, Burrough, Potts, Moore, Mulford, Baker, Hunter, Walker (C.O.), Christophers, Mudd, Lynch-Staunton (C.O.?), Broderick, Maries, Vivian, Austin.

**Casualties: 11 Killed.**

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## July 1941 based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

Overview: A new directive is issued to Bomber Command- *“I am to request that you will direct the main effort of the bomber force.....towards dislocating the German transportation system and to destroying the morale of the civilian population as a whole and of the industrial workers in particular”*. Many specific targets in and around the industrial heartland of the Ruhr were included. Attacks on Battleships, U-boats and associated facilities continued.

This month, the Squadron moves once more, to RAF Swinderby, Lincolnshire.

### 1 July

The second grounding of the Avro Manchester fleet (a new aircraft type in service with 97 and 207 Squadron's for around six months, and the type slated to replace the Hampden), due to technical difficulties. New and borrowed Hampden aircraft fill the temporary shortfall.

### 2/ 3 July- DUISBURG

11 a/c sent to bomb marshalling yards at DUISBURG. AD836 returned early to base with flaps inoperative and the IFF u/s; most aircraft bombed alternative targets due to ground haze obscuring primary, with poor results. The aircraft diverted to Waddington (9) and Digby (1) on return.

### 4/ 5 July- SUBMARINE PENS, LORIENT

10 a/c bombed submarines at LORIENT, in ideal weather. All returned safely.

### 6/ 7 July 1941

13 a/c took off from 22.15 onwards and bombed battleships at BREST- Battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau. W/Cdr Walker first to bomb in perfect visibility but smoke screen was seen to be started on his departure. The following bombers were unable to locate the ships due to this smoke-screen. Results were inconclusive. One un-identified a/c was reported as seen to be hit and crashing at Brest (later research indicates this was Wellington W5360 of 12 Squadron); all Squadron aircraft returned safely.

### 7/ 8 July- MUNCHEN GLADBACH RAILWAY JUNCTION

10 a/c bombed Munchen Gladbach, all returned safely, although one pilot was injured slightly by Perspex shattered by flak. A.A. flak reported as heavy and accurate around the target and fighters were very active. [One ME110 shot down by AE226.](#)

### 8/ 9 July- HAMM RAILWAY MARSHALLING YARDS

7 a/c bombed the marshalling yards at HAMM. All returned safely but roughly mid-way across the North Sea one aircraft (AD839) reported seeing an *“aircraft burst into flames and explode as it hit the water”*- probably Whitley Z6555.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## July 1941 based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

### 10/ 11 July 1941- COLOGNE

9 a/c bombed Cologne, all returned safely, although AD897 had a lucky escape when, on return it overshot base and hit a barrage balloon cable which fortunately broke on impact. One aircraft returned early due to high engine oil temperature. Target largely obscured by Industrial haze. AD928 also was lucky as during severe evasive action the aircraft entered a spin which was safely recovered from after jettisoning the bomb load.

### 12/ 13 July 1941- BREMEN RAILWAY JUNCTION

12 aircraft bombed the railway junction at Bremen. Weather generally poor due to ground haze and many aircraft could not pin-point the primary target. Flak and fighter activity was intense around the target. X2919 was mauled by an ME110 which put the bomb release gear out of action; numerous other aircraft were also damaged. TWO AIRCRAFT FAILED TO RETURN.

The first, Hampden AE230 was crewed by Sgt.'s 964468 Donald Onions, Pilot RAFVR; 759261 Peter Anthony Otho Windsor Mitchell, WOP/ AG RAFVR; 754933 James Austin, Pilot RAFVR and 551030 F/ Sgt. William McLaren Crichton, WOP/ AG RAF. After take-off at 22.15hrs nothing further was heard from this crew who were posted missing. All are buried at REICHSWALD FOREST WAR CEMETERY, Kleve, Nordrhein-Westfalen district, Germany (near the Dutch border, 25Km from Nijmegen). Note: this cemetery was opened post-war and all graves here have been brought in from all over Western Germany from cemeteries and isolated sites. It appears that Sgt. Austin survived the crash but died a few days later, on the 16<sup>th</sup> July. Possible cause is shot down by Night fighter of 7 /NJG 1 and place of crash is 2 KM East of WELTRUP, Germany. All . Unable to find a location Weltrup; however two Waltrup locations were found. One, 10 miles South of Munster in Ascheberg, the other 4 miles North of Munster near Altenberge. Whether either or none of these locations is correct is debatable as both appear to be street names!! Could even be Waltrop, 5 miles North of Dortmund?

A second Hampden, AE226 with Set's 921757 Kenneth John Lord, Pilot RAFVR; 1158295 H. Jackson (aka Israel Jacobovitch of west Hampstead, London), WOP/ AG RAFVR; 525488 F/Sgt. Jack Guest, WOP/ AG RAF, and 89071 P/O Edward Douglas Vivian, Pilot RAFVR (a South African) also failed to return this morning. Nothing further was heard from this crew after take-off at 22.30hrs. All were later known to have perished. Their burial details give the 12 July which would suggest they crashed on the way to the target. All the crew are buried in VEENDAM GENERAL CEMETERY, near Groningen, Holland (adjacent the protestant Church in J.G. Pinksterstraat). Possible crash site is near "VEERSLOOT", the Netherlands. .

Due to poor visibility at base the remainder of the Squadron diverted to Bircham Newton and Coningsby.

Details of the causes of both these above losses are unclear; however one other aircraft in the formation was badly damaged by a ME110 Night-Fighter near the Dutch Coast on this same mission.



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## July 1941 based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

### 16/ 17 July 1941- BOMBING, HAMBURG

12 a/c bombed HAMBURG. Thick haze obscured the target and most bombed alternatives with unknown results. **ONE AIRCRAFT FAILED TO RETURN, AD844.** The crew of: 926790 Sgt. Roy William Owen, RAFVR; 88012 P/O Henry Moncrieff Owens, RAFVR; J/4710 P/O Robert George Mitchell RCAF and 646900 F/Sgt. Douglas Edward Russell, RAF were never found and are commemorated on the memorial at RUNNYMEDE. The ORB records *“Two fixes were obtained by this aircraft and an I.F.F. plot made, fading out at 01.14hrs. Nothing further was heard from this aircraft”*. The following is reproduced from a letter received by Henry Owens’s Mother: *“The aircraft piloted by your son took off from base at approximately 11p.m. on the 16<sup>th</sup> July to attack a target in Hamburg. A message was received from the aircraft at approximately 12.15hrs saying ‘returning to base’. At 12.35am another message was received from the aircraft, but after this no further message was received and it was reported that communication with the aircraft had faded out. At dawn a search for the aircraft was initiated and a dinghy similar to the one carried by the missing aircraft was seen afloat but empty.....”*

### 17/ 18 July 1941- COLOGNE

10 set off to bomb COLOGNE from 22.50hrs onwards. Ground haze again obscured the target; those that bombed did so using dead reckoning/ estimated position and most bombed alternate targets with little result. P4408 returned early due to engine overheating as it crossed the Belgian coast; all returned safely.



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

July 1941 based R.A.F. Station Lindholme

19 July 1941

The Squadron moved to RAF Station, Swinderby.

Sgt.'s 971237 Edward Ronald Bousfield, Pilot RAFVR, and 995760 James Edward Stanley Burke, WOP/AG RAFVR; AC.1 993639 Herbert Leslie Reed, RAFVR and 971149 F/Sgt. James Hopkin Tittley, WOP/AG RAFVR were killed 'on active service' in Hampden I AD897 on this date. Internet search revealed that 50 Squadron left Lindholme for Swinderby in formation, shortly after which AD897 was seen to turn inverted and crash into the ground.

Sgt Bousfield was laid to rest in LIVERPOOL (TOXTETH PARK) CEMETERY, Lancashire; Sgt. Burke in CUPAR NEW CEMETERY, Fife; AC1 Reed in DARLINGTON WEST CEMETERY, Durham; and F/Sgt. Tittley in SALFORD WEASTE CEMETERY, Lancashire.

The Hampden aircraft was generally very pleasant to fly however, one vice thought to be responsible for many fatalities was a lack of lateral authority from the small twin fins which was particularly acute at slow speed; if the aircraft was allowed to side-slip immediate action to correct the slip was needed before the aircraft stalled, dropped a wing and turned inverted. Senior RAF officers forewarned the Halifax designers of this feature of design and indeed they listened and increased the fin and rudder size early in the development phase. The Manchester/ Lancaster also had lateral stability problems.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## July 1941 based R.A.F. Station Swinderby, Lincolnshire

### 20/ 21 July- COLOGNE MARSHALLING YARDS

Now based SWINDERBY, 11 a/c bombed COLOGNE; ground haze made target identification impossible. Bombs were dropped on estimated positions with few results seen. All returned safely.

### 22/ 23 July- FRANKFURT

4 a/c departed from 22.30 on. AE228 returned early due to severe icing. Remainder bombed estimated positions through cloud with results not seen. All returned safely.

### 23/ 24 July- FRANKFURT

9 a/c bombed FRANKFURT. Visibility again poor and bombing done on estimated position with few results noted. One aircraft, Hampden AD843 with Sgt.'s 919089 Lister Mowbray Megginson, RAFVR; 966817 Herbert Thomas Holme, RAFVR; 1151053 William Martin Watt, WOP/ AG RAFVR and 649215 F/Sgt. Robert Evans, WOP/ AG RAF on board failed to return. After two fixes off Norfolk, the aircraft was last heard of on W/T while over the sea and may have come down in the sea East of Cromer. The bodies of F/Sgt. Evans and Sgt. Watt were later recovered from the sea in an area East of Cromer; their companions are commemorated at Runnymede. Sgt. Evans is buried in BOLTON (ASTLEY BRIDGE) CEMETERY, Lancashire while Sgt. Watt is buried in DUNDEE WESTERN CEMETERY, Dundee, Angus, Scotland.

During the day of the 24 July, Squadron aircraft performed air-sea rescue searches of the North Sea, in conjunction with other units. Squadron aircraft active included P2929 and AD927. The search was unsuccessful.

### 25/ 26 July 1941- HANOVER

6 a/c bombed HANOVER. On Take-Off ( from SWINDERBY) Hampden AE234 (AE184 in ORB, probably AE234) crashed near the village of Thurlby, Swinderby killing all the crew of four; Sgt.'s 902248 Charles George Montgomery, Pilot RAFVR; 749503 Robert Hooker Rampton, Observer RAFVR; 943709 Wilfred Ellsley, WOP/AG RAFVR and 654720 Albert Edward Medden, WOP/AG RAF). The aircraft was destroyed. All crew are buried in Thurlby St. Germain Churchyard (St. Germain is the local cemetery for Swinderby airmen).

AD908 bombed the target but on the return journey had to climb to 19,000 feet to avoid a frontal system; however this quickly used the remaining fuel and Oxygen forcing a descent on one engine after the Port cut due to fuel starvation. A successful single-engine landing was made at Driffield. AE231 returned immediately after take-off when the Starboard engine cut-out. The remaining Squadron aircraft all returned safely.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## July 1941 based R.A.F. Station Swinderby, Lincolnshire

### 28/ 29 July- GARDENING IN KIEL BAY ('QUINCE' AREA)

12 a/c 'Gardened'. ONE A/C FAILED TO RETURN, AE159 (AE124 in ORB, probably AE159) with 69423 P/O William Brandwood Burrows, 89603 P/O John Malcolm Graham, RAFVR; 552490 F/Sgt. Cyril John Jolin, (19) RAF and 625936 Sgt. Cyril Douglas Rose RAF, all missing. Nothing further was heard from this crew after departure at 22.20hrs. This crew are commemorated on the memorial at Runnymede.

In addition, AD902 crashed at 0430hrs 29 July on landing at base (Swinderby) after jettisoning the weapons NE of Hull, due to severe icing encountered near Hull and also with Airspeed Indicator, total instrument and radio equipment failure. All the crew survived (P/O Christophers, Sgt.'s Glenn, Thompson and Bullin) although P/O Christophers is believed to have been injured.

Weather was poor on return to base and many had difficulty navigating a return course.

Representative Aircraft: P2929, P4408, X2919, X2991, AD234, AD766, AD836, AD839, AD843, AD844, AD852 VN-N, AD854, AD897, AD902, AD908, AD928, AD977, AE116, AE124? AE157, AE158, AE159, AE184? AE216, AE226, AE228, AE229, AE230, AE231, AE234.

## August 1941, Based R.A.F. Swinderby

Overview: During this month No.50 Squadron began lending Hampden aircraft to crews of Swinderby based No.455 (Australian) Squadron to fly as the fledgling Squadron began operations on the type. No.455 Squadron would soon gain Hampden's of its own and was commanded for a time by an ex-50 squadron pilot, S/Ldr. D.J. French DFC.

### 5/6 August

7 a/c bomb Manheim, 6 a/c bomb Karlsruhe. All a/c return except AE137 with Sgt.'s 901845 Dennis Gold Fothergill, Pilot RAFVR; 754017 Sidney Owen Hirschfield, Pilot RAFVR; 908525 Herbert Smith, WOP/AG RAFVR and 626848 Alan Davies, WOP/ AG RAF on board, from the Karlsruhe raid, all missing presumed killed. This was later confirmed and the crew are believed to have been buried local to the crash site, Essen and were later transferred to REICHSWALD FOREST WAR CEMETERY, Kleve, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany where they all now rest.

Details of this loss are very confusing, with regard to whether this aircraft, AE137 was actually the one flown by the crew, or whether it was AD157.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## August 1941 based R.A.F. Station Swinderby, Lincolnshire

### 8/9 August 1941

12 a/c bomb KIEL. AE124 crashed on take off (Swinderby) due to Port Engine failure (all crew safe) and AE248 hit a HULL barrage balloon cable after bombing but returned safe (but damaged).

### 12/ 13 August 1941

8 a/c bomb MAGDEBURG. AE228 crashed on landing, crew safe. (AE228 later joined 455 Squadron RAAF at Leuchars as a Torpedo Bomber in 1943).

AE115- the ORB entry states "*no details available of this operation*" with respect to this aircraft.

The raid included AD977 flown by Squadron CO, W/Cdr. G. Walker.

### 15 August

P4408 lost on Active Service, crew were: 1152463 Sgt. Michael Oakley Fisher, RAFVR; 957728 Sgt. Ronald Taylor, WOP/AG RAFVR; 41888 F/O James Alexander Whitecross, RCAF and 751951 F/Sgt. Norman Gray, WOP/AG RAFVR were posted missing. It was later established that P4408 was on an Air Sea Rescue search for another Squadron aircraft that had been reported as crashed in the North Sea with the crew having taken to the aircraft dinghy. F/O Whitecross and his off-duty crew volunteered to search the area and successfully located the lost crew. Tragically while returning to base P4408 developed engine trouble and failed to return. No trace was ever found of P4408 and two of her crew; these men are commemorated on the monument at Runnymede. Sgt. Taylor and F/Sgt. Gray were recovered (when, where and how unknown) and are buried at SAGE WAR CEMETERY, NIEDERSACHSEN, Oldenburg locality, Germany.

However, SAGE is a post war burial site and all graves were brought in from original sites in the outlying areas of North-West Germany and the Frisian Islands.

Details of this loss not known but it would indicate the aircraft crashed close to the continent with the bodies being washed-up some time after. .

Note: F/O Whitecross had successfully evaded capture after being shot-down on April 29<sup>th</sup> in France, returning to the UK in July via Spain and Gibraltar.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

August 1941 based R.A.F. Station Swinderby, Lincolnshire

16 August 1941

Searches of the North Sea carried out for P4408 by AE116 and the Helmore crew, nothing found.

17 August

Searches of the North Sea again carried out by AE116 and crew, nothing found.

17/ 18 August- BREMEN

11 a/c bomb BREMEN, Hampden AE185 F.T.R. Crew: 923093 Sgt. George Albert Cowell, WOP/AG RAFVR; 61297 P/O Henry Law, Observer RAFVR and 551839 Sgt. Peter Francis Barclay Orwin are listed (in RoH) as Killed, the fourth crew member P/O Eric Cyril Maskell survived (POW). Dutch Aviation web-site [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com) gives eye-witness testimony of this loss. In the early morning on the 18 August, (Sunday) witnesses heard gunfire above them and saw an explosion in the sky which turned out to be AE185 being shot down by a Night Fighter (Obtlt. Becker of 4.NJG.1) over Groningen, with the aircraft finally crashing on the Eastern Shore of Lake Paterswoldsemeer, Holland. The aircraft apparently fragmented and engines were seen to fall in the lake, while the fuselage and one wing were found on land by the shore, on fire. The weapons were seen to fall and explode in fields after the explosion in the air (confirming the loss was before reaching the target). Exploding ammunition was heard and seen peppering the lake. The body of P/O Henry Law was found on the shore of the lake and was identified by his name written on his belt. P/O Law was buried with full military honours at 3pm August 19 in Haren Cemetery. The body of Sgt. Cowell was found in the lake on Monday 19 August and was buried at 3pm on the 26 August, again in Haren Cemetery. A third body was recovered from the water at an undisclosed date and was also buried in Haren Cemetery, that of Sgt. Orwin. The cemetery is on the Southern outskirts of Haren village, 6 Kilometres SSE of Groningen, Netherlands.

A local farmer, Mr. Gardener was approached while leaving his house by the pilot, P/O Maskell who had parachuted to safety, at around 5am that morning. Not knowing what to do he agonised but then sought help from a local policeman. The policeman apparently was sympathetic, but not knowing of any resistance group that could help to hide him, and aware that the Germans were already on the scene of the wreckage, could only suggest handing P/O Maskell over to the Germans. This they duly did the same day and P/O Maskell was taken POW. The aircraft wreckage was soon put under guard and removed a few days later.

It is believed that later in the war, 'allotments' in the Paterswoldesmeer area were specially 'constructed' to help hide downed airmen evade capture.

Also this evening a further 4 a/c 'Gardened', all returned safe.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## August 1941 based R.A.F. Station Swinderby, Lincolnshire

### 18 August

Searches of the North Sea carried out by AD251 and the Banker crew.

### 25/ 26 August- MANNHEIM

14 a/c bomb MANNHEIM. AE320, flown by 935316 Sgt. Richard James Fisher, Pilot RAFVR; 61986 P/O Roy Frederick Benson Temperley, Pilot RAFVR; 1252534 Sgt. Kenneth Fyvie, WOP/ AG RAFVR and 921994 Sgt. Lionel Ronald Eames Sciville, WOP/ AG RAFVR, Failed To Return, all aboard perished. Aircraft crashed at Pellingen, 9km South of Trier/ Treves, all the crew are buried together in Rheinberg War cemetery, Kamp Lintfort, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany. Note however that all these men have been moved from original graves to Rheinberg as the cemetery opened in 1946. .

### 27/ 28 August

6 a/c bomb MANHEIM, X2991 crashed on take off (Swinderby), all crew safe, (P/O Ferrie, Sgt. Redwood, Sgt. Holland and Sgt. Hawkins) the rest all RTB safely. Also 7 a/c "Gardening" including AD927 flown by W/Cdr. L. Cheshire, all aircraft diverted to Horsham St. Faith due to bad weather but on arrival forced to orbit 2 hours due to enemy activity in area. All landed safely and returned to base next day.

### 27 August

P/O. L. Manser, Pilot, posted in from 14 O.T.U.

### 29/ 30 August 1941

14 a/c bomb Frankfurt docks. AD839 captained by 745663 Sgt Leonard Cyril Turner, Pilot RAFVR with 1162796 Sgt. John Gordon Procter, Pilot RAF; 923863 Sgt. Robert Victor Urpeth WOP/ AG, RAFVR and 1050344 Sgt. Thomas Henry Willis, WOP/AG, RAFRV Failed to Return. "Two fixes were given by SEALAND which put this aircraft over North East France. Nothing more was heard from it". Aircraft MAY have crashed near Abbeville, France. All were killed. All are buried in the Abbeville Communal Cemetery Extension, Abbeville, Somme, France. AE229, on return to base mistook a 'Q' site flare path for base and crashed on attempting to land. Two crew were hurt.

Representative Aircraft: P4408, X2919, X2991, AD766, AD839, AD854, AD908, AD927, AD928, AD977, AE115, AE116, AE124, AE137, AE157, AE158, AE184, AE185, AE228, AE229, AE231, AE248, AE249, AE250, AE251, AE305, AE306, AE316, AE320 (NEW),

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

September 1941, based R.A.F. Swinderby

2/ 3 September

Five a/c detailed to bomb targets in FRANKFURT; all returned safely.

Further 5 Hampden a/c set off to bomb BERLIN; AE305 attacked the alternate target of KIEL but on force landing at Bircham Newton (on the A149 Warham to Stiffkey Road!) the aircraft was 'wrecked'; AE250 ran out of fuel and crashed at COTTESMORE; and X2919 force landed between WITTERING and WANSFORD.

A further 4 a/c were detailed for 'Gardening' sorties at Copenhagen; of these two Hampden aircraft crashed at WADDINGTON due to fog and mist- AD852 crashed into a dispersed aircraft (casualties not listed in Squadron ORB), although this may be an error and should read AE157. AE116 VN-ä was force-landed on one engine onto a ploughed field adjacent to the airfield after running out of fuel (and complicated by mist at Waddington), Pilot P/O Carter, P/O Davidson, Sgt. Walter Henry Layne WOP/ AG and Sgt. Gilmore unhurt (via Mr. David Layne on WW2talk.com & 50/ 61 Squadron Association newsletter 4/ 2011) There were no injuries to the crew.

2/ 3 September

Note:

"Hampden Squadrons" quotes AE157 VN-F as colliding with a 44 Squadron aircraft on landing in fog at WADDINGTON on the 3 September; this information likely came in turn from Harry Moyle's "The Hampden Files". Although AE157 last appeared in the ORB on 29/ 30 August it does not appear in September's ORB. Need to see Station ORB and Summary ORB to confirm as the aircraft may have been on a training flight. A/c probably repaired or possibly a write-off. Further, on-line source bcar.org.uk also lists this aircraft as being crash a/c, hitting X3025. However, on balance as AD852 VN-N is listed as being flown by P/O Carter's crew on the 6<sup>th</sup> September in both Sgt. Laynes Log Book and in the ORB it is more likely that AD852 went u/s on start-up and was replaced by the 'spare' AE157 and that it was indeed AE157 that crashed today?

4 September 1941

*Sgt. MacDonald posted in from 16 OTU Upper Heyford.*

6/7 September

Aircraft were detached to Lossiemouth in the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup>, from where 'Gardening' operations were later performed in OSLO FJORD with 8 a/c. All returned safely to Lossiemouth early on the 7<sup>th</sup> September. This includes AD852 which returned on one engine to Lossie. All a/c returned to Base later on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

September 1941 based R.A.F. Station Swinderby, Lincolnshire

7/8 September

3 a/c bombed KIEL; visibility was excellent with a bright moon and no cloud. AE264 successfully bombed the target but reported heavy flak in the target area. AD854 developed engine vibration shortly after take-off and returned direct to Base. AE318 took off around 21.45hrs but failed to return; nothing further was heard from the crew. Believed to have crashed near Oldenburg, Germany. Crew consisted of Sgt.'s D. Good, D.F. Endsor, R. Williamson and I.A. MacDonald Sgt. MacDonald's son later reported that his father had told him AE318 was struck in the Port wing and engine by flak and that the crew all baled out. The Hampden was last seen on fire. Sgt. MacDonald broke his ankle on landing and "spent two nights in German ditches before being discovered by some local children and shortly after that, being captured by the Home Guard". The rest of the crew also became P.O.W.

8/9 September 1941, Based R.A.F. Swinderby

5 a/c bombed KASSEL. AD854 crashed near Bedford between Woburn and Husborne Crawley on return due to fuel shortage, the W/Op 649228 F/Sgt. Thomas Anthony Barker RAF and Pilot 745849 Sgt. Ford Rowney, RAFVR were both killed, remaining crew Sgt Morgan and Sgt. Mitchell safely bailed out. A memorial to the crash is in the village hall opposite the White Horse pub, Husborne Crawley, School Lane, off the A4012, Beds. In addition, an information plate has been erected on a 'Public Footpath' sign-post half-mile west of School Lane, in Horsepool Lane indicating the approximate location of the crash site and giving basic crew information. F/Sgt. Barker is buried in MANSFIELD (NOTTINGHAM ROAD) Cemetery, while Sgt. Rowney is buried in ARLEY (ST. WILFRED) Churchyard, Warwickshire.

12/ 13 September

8 a/c detailed to bomb Frankfurt. Two aircraft diverted due to flak damage but all landed safely. 3 further a/c 'Gardened' and returned safely.

15/16 September

9 a/c bombed HAMBURG. AD927 force- landed in a field near RAF Scampton due to lack of fuel with no casualties. Aircraft was wrecked.

20/ 21 September

8 a/c detailed to bomb BERLIN. Some aircraft, e.g. AE158 positioned forward to Swanton Moreley prior to the mission. All aircraft diverted to various airfields on return due to fog and low cloud at base- Finningley, Dishforth, Snaith, Church Fenton, Leeming. Aircraft recovered to base later on the 21<sup>st</sup>.



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

September 1941 based R.A.F. Station Swinderby, Lincolnshire

29/ 30 September

6 a/c bombed the Bloehm and Voss yards at HAMBURG. All returned safely. A further two a/c attempted attack the Pocket Battleship ADMIRAL SCHEER in dock at HAMBURG but only one was successful. Both returned safely.

30 September/ 1 October

6 a/c bombed the Bloehm and Voss yards at Hamburg again. All returned safely. A further two a/c bombed the docks at CHERBOURG, both returned safely.

Representative (Hampden) aircraft were: X2929; AD852; AD854; AD908; AD927; AD928; AD977; AE115; AE116; AE158; AE184; AE198; AE231; AE248; AE250; AE251; AE264; AE306; AE305; AE307; AE318; AE367; AD369; AE375; AD373; AE381; AE386; AE387; AE370.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

October 1941, based R.A.F. Swinderby

Overview: the Squadron continues to press home attacks into Germany including the Ruhr Valley Industrial heartland, at extreme range and in very poor weather. There is NO margin for error. Bombing accuracy continues to be poor due in no small part to weather and in particular the industrial ground haze encountered in the Ruhr district. Navigation aids are primitive at this point in hostilities. As an example, look at the raid on the Synthetic Rubber factory at Huls, near Recklinghausen, another vitally strategic target on the 12/ 13th. Only three aircraft out of fourteen could say with any certainty that they hit the target at all; of these three one aircraft was unable to release the precious 2000lb bombs carried internally due to flak damage and could only drop the two 250lb wing bombs carried externally. This was at the cost of one aircraft and 4 crew lost (nearly 10% loss rate) with three more badly damaged. The USAAF sent a daylight force of 183 B-17's on one raid later in the war (summer 1943) to Huls and still only managed to cause a one month lull in rubber production. The Hampden's maximum bomb load was 4000lb but rarely was this carried, fuel being more precious. Huls is today one of the biggest chemical complexes in Europe, called 'Chemiepark Marl' despite orders for its sabotage issued by the Gestapo in 1945.

This month, W/Cdr. Gus Walker is posted and S/Ldr. Oxley is promoted and becomes the new Officer Commanding No. 50 Squadron.

It is believed that (via personal anecdote) at some time during this month, an advance party from No.50 Squadron was detached to RAF Skellingthorpe, Lincoln, to prepare for the Squadrons pending move there. Skellingthorpe was as yet unfinished.

1/ 2 October 1941- BOMBING KARLSRHUE

Night bombing mission by seven Hampden aircraft. Conditions over the target were very hazy which led to none of the aircraft bombing the primary target. All seven dropped bombs on a variety of alternate targets including searchlights. One aircraft, AE381 was attacked by a Ju.88 night fighter over the Ardennes region which injured the first WOP/ AG and put the radio out of action. The rear gunner fired a burst which appears to have hit the fighter as 3 plumes of smoke were seen from the nose after which sight was lost; AE381 was again attacked soon after this time by a single engine fighter but no further damage was sustained. Two further aircraft reported a single engine enemy aircraft (ME.109) attack but no damage reported. AD928 reported being attacked by a friendly Beaufighter aircraft while nearing Dungeness but no damage was done. All aircraft returned safely, including two which landed at North Luffenham and one at Dishforth. A single aircraft also successfully dropped a sea-mine in the 'Nectarine' area.

10/ 11 October- Bombing Dunkirk

Four aircraft set off tonight from around 18.45hrs onwards to bomb the docks at Dunkirk. Three aircraft found the target easily in very good visibility returning safely to Base. AE375 however reported that three hours were spent over enemy territory but the target was not found and the aircraft returned with bombs on board, jettisoning them in the North Sea. On crossing the English coast all four outboard fuel tanks showed 'empty' and only 20 gallons in each inboard tank remained. The aircraft subsequently 'belly landed' (wheels up) near PATRINGTON, Hull at 01.45hrs after seven hours airborne. The aircraft may have been hit by flak unknowingly. None of the crew was hurt. The aircraft was dismantled by 13 M.U. on 21 October.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

October 1941, based R.A.F. Swinderby

12/ 13 October- HULS

A large force of fourteen aircraft set out tonight to bomb a synthetic rubber plant at Huls led by the Squadron CO W/Cdr. Walker. 250lb, 1900lb and incendiary bombs were carried. Visibility deteriorated as the target was neared; four aircraft returned early with unserviceable engine-driven generator, intercom or radio systems. The target was heavily defended with flak and barrage balloons. Two aircraft hit balloon cables causing damage, AE369 'O' hitting two cables in succession causing it to spin down to around 1000 feet before breaking. This unfortunate crew were then engaged by flak which jammed the bomb doors preventing the release of the 1900lb bomb which was safely brought back to Base; ten further flak hits were taken. AE184 was hit by flak returning safely. Only four aircraft reported pinpointing the target with any certainty, and only one confirmed the results of the attack. Others bombed targets of opportunity in the area. One aircraft failed to return, nothing further being heard from AE367 and crew after it set course. The crew consisted of 961776 Sgt. Ronald William CURTIS, WOP/ AG RAFVR; 61296 P/O Walter Edmund HINCHCLIFFE, Pilot RAFVR; 627244 Sgt. Neil Rolf LAWSON, WOP/AG RAF and 402230 P/O John Marshall WADDELL, Pilot RNZAF were all posted as missing, and later were confirmed killed. The crew are all buried at REICHSWALD FOREST WAR CEMETERY, Nordrhein-Westfalen Germany. Note: Reichswald was created after the war so these airmen would have been buried else where prior to being moved the Reichswald. No details of the loss of this crew are available at present. .

AE369 was damaged to such an extent by both flak and also the stresses suffered by the balloon cable strikes that it was removed from service for repairs on the 30<sup>th</sup> October and did not return to the Squadron until seven weeks later on the 19<sup>th</sup> December.

13/ 14 October- COLOGNE/ KOLN

Eight aircraft were detailed tonight to bomb Cologne taking off from around 00.30 onwards. This target is at the extreme end of the endurance range of the Hampden aircraft. Two aircraft bombed alternate targets while five reported good results at the primary target. All seven returned safely although one was extensively damaged by flak. One aircraft, AE251 was not heard of again after setting course. It is believed the aircraft was shot down by flak and the crew, F/Lt E. R. Abbott, Sgt. T.G. Wake POW, P/O Chase & Sgt. Barrett were injured/ taken POW? .

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

October 1941, based R.A.F. Swinderby

20/ 21 October 1941- BREMEN

A large force of fifteen Hampden aircraft tonight set off to bomb Bremen. Visibility, as usual, was poor in the Ruhr valley with haze making target pin-pointing difficult for all crews. Some bombed with a degree of certainty, only 12 aircraft making the target area. Of these, eight aircraft bombed alternate targets or an 'estimated' area of Bremen. Three aircraft returned early due to engine problems. **Hampden AE383 Failed To Return, nothing further was heard from this crew after it set course. 88408 P/O William Laidlaw, Pilot RAFVR; Sgt.'s 927831 Kenneth Sidney Furley, Pilot RAFVR; 948262 William Arthur Saunders, WOP/AG RAFVR & 1252091 Edwin Ralph James, WOP/AG RAFVR all missing. Later confirmed all were killed and are buried at BECKLINGEN WAR CEMETERY near SOLTAU, NIEDERSACHSEN, GERMANY.**

**NOTE; Becklingen was created post-war to accommodate the war dead removed from countryside, small German Cemeteries and Prisoner Of war camp cemeteries within a radius of around 80km. Details of the loss of this crew are unknown at this time. .**

23/24 October- BOMBING KIEL

A large force of sixteen aircraft (probably the largest to date) were detailed to bomb Kiel, taking off from around 11.45hrs on the 23<sup>rd</sup> onwards. Visibility was poor at the target but gaps in the cloud allowed successful attacks by many crews with some direct hits on the DEUTSCHE WERKE, the primary target. One aircraft departed late and so bombed Sylt; AD977 developed engine trouble and returned early. Thirteen aircraft reached the target and successfully bombed with good results. One aircraft failed to return with nothing further being heard from the crew after it set course- **Hampden AE256 'VN-D'. Its crew were posted as missing but later it was confirmed all had perished- 930289 Sgt. Samuel Barton, WOP/AG RAFVR; 1164368 Sgt. Richard Cubitt Blamey, Observer RAFVR, 61279 P/O Kenneth Tyrell Cooper, Pilot RAFVR and 1154295 Sgt. William Conyers Wright, WOP/AG RAFVR. The aircraft is believed to have crashed in the municipality of DOBERSDORF, Plon District 10 km East of KIEL. All crew are buried at KIEL WAR CEMETERY. Web-site [www.spurensuchesh.de](http://www.spurensuchesh.de) tells the detailed story of its fate supported by pictures of the crash site. Around 05.51 the aircraft crashed into a searchlight battery named "JASDORF" East of Kiel Bay. The aircraft was hit by flak from another battery and, possibly out of control and/ or blinded then attacked flak battery 'Jasdorf' with machine guns and, caught in the beam flew straight into the flak battery. Three were killed on the ground and three more seriously injured while the searchlight battery and bunker were destroyed. It is possible that the stricken aircraft captain was deliberately sacrificing himself and crew while drawing fire to allow the other Hampden's to attack. A memorial to those killed (including the flak battery crew) comprising one of the aircraft's propeller's mounted on a brick plinth stands, presumably, on the crash site although this can not be confirmed. There does not seem to be a place called 'Jasdorf' as such; probably the A.A. Battery site code.**

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

October 1941, based R.A.F. Swinderby

24/ 25 October

Hampden AE184 VN-Z crashed at either Rawcliffe near York OR Rawcliffe near GOOLE or Ratcliffe near York, on a training flight. Pilot was 1169339 Sgt. Arthur John Weber. Casualties are unknown. Aircraft probably written off.

26/ 27 October- BOMBING HAMBURG, GARDENING FORGET-ME-NOT

Nine aircraft were tonight detailed to attack the Bloehm and Voss yards at Hamburg (docks). Three aircraft returned early to base due to unserviceability and crew incapacitation, while another bombed the first available target due to intercom failure. A fifth bombed the wrong target by mistake. The remaining four found visibility at the target poor and only two found, and bombed the aiming point. All returned safely to Base.

Three further aircraft successfully dropped sea-mines in the 'Forget-me-not' area and returned safely to Base, having also dropped wing bombs on targets of opportunity on the return leg.

29/ 30 October 1941- BOMBING SCHIPOL AERODROME

A very large force of NINETEEN aircraft were detailed to attack the aerodrome at Schipol, Amsterdam by now in use by the Luftwaffe. (It is likely some of these aircraft and crews have been borrowed). Due to extremely poor visibility with a cloud base as low as 400 feet at times making it unsafe to bomb at such low heights, results were very poor. Some aircraft searched the area for up to two hours before finally pin-pointing the target.

Only five of the nineteen aircraft found the target; three returned early due to unserviceability while the remaining eleven failed to find the primary target with one bombing another, nearby aerodrome instead. Ten returned to Base without bombing.

31 October/ 1 November 1941- BOMBING HAMBURG

Tonight another large force of fifteen aircraft was detailed to return to the Bloem and Voss yards at Hamburg. An early take-off was made from around 17.45hrs onwards. Visibility over the target was very variable with some crews finding gaps through which to pin-point the aiming point while others were not so fortunate. Three aircraft turned back early due to unserviceability; interestingly two aircraft suffered identical faults where the main Oxygen system supply tap could not be opened. Only five aircraft reported bombing the target with any confidence (one reported bombs falling two miles from the target due to cloud cover). All aircraft returned safely to RAF Swinderby.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

October 1941, based R.A.F. Swinderby

Representative aircraft- Hampden B.Mk.1:

P1152, P1202, AD852, AD928 'Q', AD977 'J', AE158 'X', AE184 'Z', AE231 'G', AE251, AE256, AE306 'V', AE367, AE369 'O', AE370 'P', AE373 'T', AE375 'B', AE380, AE381, AE383 'U', AE386, AE387 'S', AE394 'M', AE400, AE401 'K', AE422, AE423, AE427, AE428, AE429, AE431, AE435.

Crews:

Lloyd, Helmore, Banker, Lord, Sgt. Smith, P/P Smith, Waddell, Ford, Hore, Norris, Cooper, Bartley, Williams, Atkinson, Laidlaw, Ferrie, Grant-Dalton, Walker\*, Potts, King, Carter, Miller, Taylor, Goldsmith, Abbott, Mapp, Redfearn, Peace, Howett.

\*Squadron C.O. W/Cdr. Gus Walker, Huls raid 12/ 13 October.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## November 1941(RAF Swinderby, RAF Skellingthorpe and a Detachment at WICK).

Over-view: On the night of the 7/ 8 November, Bomber Command suffered its worst loss rate of the war thus far, on a massed raid to Berlin. Only the intervention by 5 Group HQ led to the group's Hampden aircraft being spared this massacre as the target of Cologne was duly allocated while Whitley, Wellington and Halifax Losses in the Berlin raid were so great that further missions to mainland Germany were soon forbidden and led to the removal of Air Marshall Sir Richard Peirse as C. in C. Bomber Command. A thorough review of bombing tactics was instigated, culminating in the extremely critical Butt Report. For now, Coastal targets were to be the norm for Bomber Command.

The Battleship 'Tirpitz' returns to Kiel and is dry-docked for all of November.

Also, this month work began on laying concrete runways at R.A.F. Station Swinderby, and the Squadron moves again, a few miles to RAF Skellingthorpe on the South- West outskirts of Lincoln. Newly formed Australian Air Force No. 455 Squadron RAAF joins 50 Squadron at Skellingthorpe for a few months. RAF Skellingthorpe is at this time designated a 'Satellite' Airfield with RAF Waddington as the Headquarters or Base Airfield. Facilities at Skellingthorpe were incomplete and spartan; as long as the runway was usable however it was 'finished' in the eyes of the Air Ministry!

### 3/4 November- Swinderby

10 a/c detailed on gardening missions; all returned safely however Hampden AE306 was badly holed by A.A gun fire and by a night fighter, off ESJBERG.

### 4/ 5 November 1941

3 a/c detailed for 'roving commissions' (Bremen, Bremerhaven and Emden). All returned safely however Hampden AE231 was damaged by flak, flown by W/Cdr. Oxley, O.C. 50 Squadron.

### 5/ 6 November 1941

3 a/c to bomb Cherbourg docks, all (Hampden's) returned safely.

### 6 November 1941

Twelve aircraft proceeded to R.A.F. Station Wick for operational duties.

### 6/ 7 November

15 a/c departed on gardening raids in the 'Onions' area (Oslo/ Stavanger area). 14 a/c returned. Hampden AE427 VN-D failed to return with 745810 Sgt. John ('Jack') Howett, Pilot RAFVR; 945219 Sgt. Mendel Gilbert Bloomfield, WOP/ AG RAFVR; 61042 P/O Peter Frederick Joseph Boreham and 1050516 Sgt. Herbert Walter Fewkes, WOP/ AG RAFVR aboard. The aircraft was later found to have been hit by flak and had crashed into Oslo Fjord. All the colleagues are buried in OSLO WESTERN CIVIL CEMETERY, on the outskirts of Oslo, Norway.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

November 1941(RAF Swinderby, RAF Skellingthorpe and a Detachment at WICK).

7 November 1941

*P/O Manser, Pilot, posted to 25 OTU Finningley.*

7/ 8 November

Two aircraft on bombing missions to Dentze Railway Station, Cologne, and to the searchlight belt, both returned safely.

Operational aircraft returned from WICK.

8/ 9 November

9 a/c bombed an armament factory at Essen, and a further two bombed the docks at DUNKIRK. All returned safely.

15/ 16 November

Three Hamdens 'Gardened' the 'Nectarine' area. On return one a/c, P1152 became lost over England and despite being aided by searchlights the a/c crashed into a hill in bad visibility, possibly on Westerdale Moor, near Stoney Ridge, Baysdale, Yorkshire at around 2pm (but the crash site has still not been positively determined as one source gives nearby Guisborough Moor; The rear gunner Sgt. Ronald St. Claire Neale RAFVR 1375564 age 27 of Lambeth London was killed. He is buried at Newark, Notts. War Cemetery. Those injured were:

The Pilot Sgt William John Young RAFVR 778478 of Fort Jameson, North Rhodesia:

Navigator Sgt Donald McGregor Symes RAFVR 1175877 of Newton Abbott, Devon and WOP/ AG Sgt. Alexander Russell Bernard, RAFVR, 1004002 of Kelty, Scotland.

On examination of the squadron records this appears to have been Sgt. Young's first operational mission as captain, at least with 50 Squadron, and this crew's first mission together?

Two a/c also bombed Emden and returned safely.

23/ 24 November

4 a/c bombed the submarine base at Lorient, all returned safely.

26 November 1941

**Squadron moved to R.A.F. Station SKELLINGTHORPE as a temporary base for operations** (While concrete runways were laid at Swinderby).



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## November/ December 1941- RAF Skellingthorpe

### 30 November/ 1 December

From Skellingthorpe, 11 a/c bombed the Bloehm and Voss yards at Hamburg. **Hampden P1202 ran out of fuel whilst circling base and crash landed at SWINETHORPE, suspected no injuries to crew.**

The rest made base or diversion aerodrome's safely.

One a/c reported seeing a MANCHESTER aircraft being shot down.

4 further aircraft were detailed for a Gardening mission, all returned safely.

## December 1941- RAF Skellingthorpe

In this month, the Squadron took part in Operation "Archery", a combined forces Commando assault on a Fjord in Southern Norway; it is known from documentary evidence that full-scale rehearsals took place prior to the operation, on the 17<sup>th</sup> December (On a small island of similar size to Maaloy probably in the Shetland/ Orkney islands), followed by a mini-rehearsal with a RN Cruiser and Hampden aircraft soon after. This would have involved substantial flying by the Squadron in preparation for the assault, however as this work is essentially training it is not recorded in the ORB. It is notable that Squadron records for December show little operational flying being done prior to the raid, in line with rehearsal requirements, which involved ten aircraft flying four different missions- smoke screen laying and bombing. The smoke screen laying is not routinely practised and the weapons, believed to be Phosphorous bombs are particularly hazardous to handle, load and required pin point accuracy at low-level to be effective. It is therefore likely that the aircraft that had been detached to Wick last month had been taking part in training for this mission in conjunction with the Navy.

This month, over at RAF Waddington, the first 7 new Lancaster aircraft arrive from the Manufacturer.

### 7/8 December- AACHEN & BOULOGNE DOCKS

Skellingthorpe- Six aircraft were detailed for a night bombing mission to Aachen. Conditions were poor, with low cloud, snow covered landscape and extreme cold. Opposition was however minimal other than damage to AE401, which was hit by flak on the run-up to the target and, out of control jettisoned the bombs at 7000 feet 2 miles from Aachen, returning safely to Swinderby albeit with difficulty (probably due to control damage). One aircraft returned without finding the target, another bombed what was thought to be Aachen but transpired to be Liege and the remaining three bombed successfully all aircraft returning to Base safely. A single aircraft took off at 18.19hrs for Boulogne but landed just over one hour later at Marham due to I.F.F. failure.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

December 1941(RAF Skellingthorpe and a Detachment at WICK).

10 December- AERODROMES AT SOESTERBERG & GILZE RIJEN (HOLLAND)

Just after 12 O'clock today, two aircraft took off for aerodromes captured by the enemy; one bound for Soesterberg and the other for Gilze Rijen. These were extremely high risk sorties, being in daylight and against fighter airfields. In addition both aircraft were required to attack at low-level. P2094 flew so low on the run-in to Soesterberg that the trailing aerial hit High Tension power lines causing a large flash. Soesterberg was bombed from 350-400 ft; so low that on leaving the area "fishermen and other inhabitants waved". AD852 also attacked at low level, having spent an hour searching for the target in very poor visibility then successfully bombed Gilze Rijen from 250ft. Both aircraft returned safely to Base.

11/ 12 December- LE HAVRE

Two aircraft set off for Le Havre docks and shipping at around 17.00hrs. One aircraft returned to base with bombs on board after searching in vain for the target through low cloud. The second successfully bombed the docks despite the cloud but was hit in the tail and badly holed by intense and accurate light flak

15 December- OSTEND

Two aircraft were detailed for a night bombing mission to Ostend/ Oostende. AT125 suffered engine trouble soon after take off and returned to base. The second, AE380 failed to return and nothing further was heard from the crew after take-off.

The crew were posted as missing and later were confirmed killed; 1375391 Sgt. Edward William Armer, RAFVR; 921752 Sgt. Douglas Arthur Ferguson, RAFVR; 946158 Sgt. Frederick Alexander White, RAFVR and 778478 Sgt. William John Young, RAFVR (originally from Northern Rhodesia). Only Sgt. Young's body was recovered (details unknown) and he rests in Oostende (Ostend) New Communal Cemetery, Oostende West-Vlaanderen, Belgium. Sgt. Armer, Sgt. Ferguson and Sgt. White, and AE380 were never found and their names are commemorated on the memorial at Runnymede.

17/ 18 December- LE HAVRE DOCKS

A single aircraft, AE429 was detailed for a night bombing mission to Le Havre docks, however shortly after take-off the Port engine failed. After jettisoning the bombs the aircraft returned to base safely after 43 minutes in the air.

24 December 1941

The first Avro Lancaster enters service, with No. 44 Squadron, R.A.F. Waddington.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

December 1941(RAF Skellingthorpe and a Detachment at WICK).

27 December- MALØY/ VAGSØY, FORWARD BASED AT WICK

On Saturday, 27 December 1941 the Squadron supported the first ever combined operation of the Second World War. Twin missions were detailed, with seven aircraft dropping smoke bombs to form a screen for two separate amphibious landings, and a further three aircraft to bomb Gun emplacements.

Smoke screens were to be laid on Måløy Island, South Vågsøy and Rugsundo Island, Norway. The gun emplacements on Rugsundo Island were also to be bombed.

This was operation "Archery" the first Army- Navy- Air Force combined amphibious operation of the Second World War, against German-held territory in the Vågsfjord, Southern Norway.

Two Hampden's, Seven Blenheim's and two Beaufighters were lost during this daring operation. The two Hampden's were lost dropping smoke bombs in the amphibious forces landing areas, some 300 miles flying from the forward base at Wick.

As if not hazardous enough, the raid was also carried out in Daylight.

Please note that despite some quite comprehensive official reports of the Operation the precise details of these aerial losses are difficult to exactly determine. This is compounded by the fact that both aircraft were lost in the same area, probably within minutes of each other.

The operation was undertaken in perfect flying conditions at Norway; conditions to and from the area were not good however. The Squadron Commander, W/Cdr Oxley, took part in this extremely dangerous mission, in Hampden AE361.

Whilst the Squadron ORB records the smoke screens being laid at Måløy Island and Rugsundo, three separate screens were in fact made; one at Måløy Island, a second at South Vågsøy across the narrow straight from Måløy Island and the third at Rugsundo Island.

This feature, in addition to the rapid nature of this operation makes identification of the two aircraft's fate difficult.

Of the seven aircraft detailed to drop smoke bombs, it is believed all made a successful drop, but two failed to return, nothing further being heard from either crew after take-off from Wick at 05.43hrs (AE428) and 05.29hrs (AE369).

AE428 (possibly VN-B) believed shot down by flak off Måløy while supporting commandos at South Vågsøy and crashed in flames into the sea at the entrance to the Vågsfjord, dropping its load of smoke bombs on target as it did so. However one (Phosphorous) bomb undershot and hit a landing craft injuring 20 Commandos. Three of the crew were killed (RoH): 621608 Sgt. Derek 'Sandy' Bell RAFVR; 48277 P/O Robert Watson RAF and 924930 Sgt. John Drax Williams. The official summary of Operation Archer published in 1942 states that HMS Prince Leopold went to the aid of this aircraft and pulled three men from the Fjord, but does not name these individuals and states only one survived. The fourth crew member, Sgt. Reginald Newbald Smith (Rhodesian) did indeed survive so it is likely him who is recorded as being picked up with two others by 'Leopold; who the other two were is not clear. Sgt. Bell, Sgt. Williams and P/O Watson are commemorated on the memorial at Runnymede. However one source (Chorley's) states that Sgt. William's body was also recovered (again by HMS 'Prince Leopold') and was re-interred at sea. Sgt Williams is remembered at Runnymede; this is of course in line with the CWGC's policy of identifying those with no KNOWN grave on the memorial.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

December 1941(RAF Skellingthorpe and a Detachment at WICK).

27 December- MALØY/ VAGSØY, FORWARD BASED AT WICK (Ctd.)

AE369 (minor correction to the ORB, incorrectly given as P1223 and possibly VN-O) is believed to have crashed into open sea around 50 miles from Måløy; a cruiser was despatched immediately to search the area but nothing was found. The Crew of 778284 Sgt. Leonard Frank Redfern, Pilot RAFVR; 1166466 Sgt. Leonard Reginald Brockett, RAFVR; 1256277 Sgt. Denis Herbert Roberts, RAFVR and 1256759 Sgt. Alexander Valentine William Sherwin, RAFVR were all posted as missing.

Sgt.'s Roberts, Brockett and Sherwin are commemorated on the memorial at Runnymede. Sgt. Redfern is buried some distance away in STAVNE CEMETERY, Trondheim, Norway; as the fleet sailed immediately for Scapa Flow following the engagement (some five hours after landing), it is likely that the sea gave up its dead and that Sgt. Redfern was washed ashore and interred by the locals or the German Occupiers.

It is therefore possible that the Prince Leopold picked up Sgt. Smith (survivor), Sgt Williams and one other of the other two missing crew of AE428, P/O Watson or Sgt. Bell and subsequently re-interred Sgt. Williams and one other at sea. This is unfortunately an educated guess and the two victims recorded as recovered by HMS Prince Leopold could have been any of the other six crew.

In addition, the crew of AE381 reported that the aircraft took four or five flak hits from a flak ship one of which jammed the rudder, the aircraft safely landing back at Wick.

Two further aircraft successfully laid smoke screens on Rugsungo Island and safely returned to Wick.

Of the three aircraft detailed to bomb gun emplacements on Rugsundo Island, one was unable to maintain height and returned to Wick; the other two successfully bombed the targets, machine gunning them as well into the bargain.

The navigator on AE422, P/O Day was seriously wounded by flak but despite his wounds continued to plot a course home before becoming unconscious. The WOP/ AG and rear Gunner administered first aid and the aircraft safely landed back at Sumborough.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

December 1941(RAF Skellingthorpe and a Detachment at WICK).

27/ 28 December- MINING 'FORGET-ME-NOT' AREA AND BOMBING DUSSELDORF.

Five aircraft set off tonight on a mine-laying mission to the Forget-me-Not area. In addition four further aircraft set off to bomb marshalling yards at Dusseldorf. None of the aircraft that took part in the Måløy Operation had returned from Wick at this time so, given the numbers of aircraft in use (19) it is likely that some had been borrowed for either or both missions.

Four of the mine-laying aircraft successfully laid sea-mines while the fifth jettisoned the weapons as the target could not be found before petrol was estimated to run out. One aircraft was hit by flak, damaging the crew heating system and hydraulics, subsequently making a safe landing at Pocklington. The remaining three landed at Docking safely.

Of the bombing aircraft, two found the target and successfully bombed while two could not identify the marshalling yards and so bombed the secondary target of Dusseldorf Town. All aircraft returned safely, again to Docking. The reason for the landing at Docking is not clear; it is notable that weather conditions are rarely mentioned in the ORB reports for this mission, not the usual format.

28/ 29 December- HULS

Seven aircraft set off on a night bombing mission to the Synthetic rubber factory at Huls. Three of the aircraft sent tonight had returned from the Wick detachment.

AE158 suffered a Port engine failure and returned to base after 20 minutes flying, the remainder found conditions over the continent perfect and successfully bombed the target with spectacular results one aircraft also strafing a train and searchlights in the target area. All returned to Base safely.

Representative aircraft- Hampden B.Mk.1: P1166, P1223\*, P2094, AD766, AD852, AD908, AD928 'Q', AE158 'X', AE250, AE369 'O'\*, AE370, AE373 'T', AE380, AE381, AE387, AE394, AE400, AE401, AE422, AE428, AE429, AE431, AE435, AT109, AT125, AT139, AT142.

\*ORB conflicts as P1223 not on strength, believed AE369 was this loss (Redfern crew 27<sup>th</sup>.)

Crews: Bartley, Carter, Sgt. Smith, Fl/Lt. Smith, Redfearn, Hore, Young, Potts, Jeffs, Milnes, Oxley (O.C.), Miller, King, Goldsmith, Norris, Atkinson, Grant-Dalton, Ferrie, Halmore, Williams, Gruber, Baddeley, Southgate, Lloyd.

Casualties: Three aircraft lost, eleven killed, one injured.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## 1942

### January 1942 based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe

Overview: The battleship Tirpitz leaves Gotenhafen and passes through the Kiel Canal 12/ 13<sup>th</sup> January arriving at Wilhelmshaven on the 14<sup>th</sup>; escorted by three destroyers the task force leaves later that evening for Faettenfjord, Trondheim, Norway .

The Squadron is temporarily based at R.A.F. Skellingthorpe while concrete runways are laid at Swinderby.

C-In-C Bomber Command, acting Air Marshal Richard Peirse is relieved of his post and posted to S.E. Asia, replaced temporarily by AVM J.E.A. BALDWIN KBE, CB, DSO, DL.

### 2/ 3 January

'Gardening' sorties. Eleven Hampden's all returned to England safely but diverted due to poor weather.

### 6/ 7 January 1942

"Scuttle raids" performed. (A code-name for a roving commission where individual aircraft bomb built-up areas through gaps in the clouds, on a GEE fix or an ETA at Target). Five sent to MUNSTER; Five to Essen; and Three to Cologne. All returned safely with diversions due to bad weather at Base.

### 9 January

Day bombing mission to the docks at Brest; probably battleships moored there. FIFTEEN aircraft bombed, all returned safely but results were thought to have been poor.

### 10/ 11 January 1942

Night bombing mission to Wilhelmshaven's main railway station. Eight aircraft took part, all returned safely. Four more Hampden's 'Gardened' SCHIELIG WESER, all returned safely. AE381 'Gardened' in the YAMS area and returned safely.

AE250 (AE350 in the ORB) crashed 'CROSBY' according to the ORB. This may have been on a cricket Pitch at Brampton, Cumbria, 3 miles East of RAF CROSBY-ON-EDEN according to [www.yorkshire-aircraft.co.uk](http://www.yorkshire-aircraft.co.uk), or one of a number of identical named places; either way two members of the crew were killed, after an 'Unknown' mission. Fatalities were 1377183 Sgt. Leonard Chapple Williams, pilot RAFVR and 1004002 Sgt. Alexander Russell Bernard, WOP/AG RAFVR. It is possible the aircraft was lost and chanced upon RAF Crosby but then ran out of fuel while attempting to land there; but this is by no means sure. Confusion still exists as to which 'CROSBY' the aircraft crashed at. Survivors were Sgt. Earnshaw and Sgt. Counce. Sgt. Williams is buried in CARLISLE (DALSTON ROAD) CEMETERY, Carlisle, Cumberland, while Sgt. Bernard is buried at BEATH CEMETERY, Cowdenbeath, Fife Scotland. One aircraft performed an unknown mission, and AT139 landed back at Stradishall.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## January 1942 based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe

### 14/ 15 January 1942

Eleven Hampden's bombed the BLOHM & VOSS Yards at HAMBURG.

Two aircraft failed to return. Sgt.'s 1378467 Robert Ashton Baddeley, 924548 John Michael Horley, RAFVR; 1168673 Donald Wilfred Cockburn RAFVR and 1181649 Leonard Arthur Angel RAFVR were killed aboard AE420.

P/O's 80128 Eric Vivian Hore RAFVR; 102605 Lawrence Mason Jacob RAFVR; and Sgt.'s 1375303 Gerald Alan Gale, RAFVR and 1375481 Philip Charles Pettersson perished aboard AE431. All were lost without trace and are commemorated on the memorial at Runnymede. Unable to establish any more detail.

### January 15/ 16 1942

Four aircraft set out to bomb HAMBURG, all returned safely but only one aircraft bombed the target. The other three returned early due to unserviceability.

### January 21 1942

On the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup> January 1942 Hampden AE381 crashed while on a training mission (night cross country exercise) at Cluther Rocks near Kinder Scout Derbyshire Peak District during an attempt to land at Ringway Aerodrome in a blizzard. All were killed. 404820 RAAF Sgt. Royal George Heron (Pilot), 407487 RAAF Sgt. Walter Chantler Williams (O), Sgt. William Thomas Tromans (WOP/AG) and Sgt. Sydney Albert Peters (AG).

### 22/ 23 January

Nine aircraft bombed the railway station at MUNSTER. AT142 is thought to have successfully hit the target (ORB gives AT124 in error) but crashed at Exton, Oakham while attempting to land at Cottesmore killing all aboard: P/O 89609 David Brian Peace, Pilot RAFVR and Sgt.'s 934201 John Wilson Adey, Pilot RAFVR; 942640 Francis Haydn Brooke WOP/AG RAFVR, and 932941 Archibald Donald Jory, WOP/AG RAFVR.

P/O Peace is buried at Cottesmore (St. Nicholas) Churchyard, Cottesmore, Sgt. Adey is buried in South Ealing Cemetery, Sgt. Brooke is buried in Hepworth Methodist Chapel Yard, and Sgt. Jory is buried in Camborne (St. Martin) Churchyard. (C.W.G.C. and the Aircrew Remembrance Society).

A further two Hampden's 'Gardened' the YAMS area both returning safely diverting to Mildenhall.

### 26/ 27 January

Nine aircraft bombed the railway station at HANOVER, all returning safely.



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## January 1942 based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe

28/ 29 January

Ten aircraft bombed the railway station at MUNSTER. AE373 suffered almost total instrument failure due to severe icing after bombing; on return the aircraft stalled twice and due to frozen controls stalled a third time over England, pulling up after the controls unfroze at around 50 feet above the ground. Flying under pylon wires the aircraft belly landed at an unknown location. Crew OK. Source; ORB.

## February 1942 based R.A.F. Station Skellingthorpe

Overview: Operation 'Cerberus'- the channel dash of the Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Prinz Eugen from Brest to Norway. Scharnhorst seriously damaged by a sea-mine in the mouth of the Scheldt on 11<sup>th</sup> February- quite possibly one of 50 Squadrons.

ACM Sir Arthur Harris GCB, OBE, AFC is appointed the new C-In-C of Bomber Command.

## 6/ 7 February 1942-GARDENING IN THE 'NECTARINE' AREA

Thirteen aircraft set off on a DAYLIGHT 'Gardening' operation in the Terschelling area from around 11.45 onwards. Conditions in the target area were reported as good and very little opposition (Flak) was observed. Twelve aircraft dropped mines and returned safely; however two crews reported enemy ME-109 fighters in the target area. This may account for the thirteenth aircraft, **Hampden AE306 which failed to return, nothing further being heard from this crew after departure at 12.11hrs. The crew of four was later confirmed as killed; 1354324 Sgt. Arnold Geoffrey Boccock, RAFVR; R65245 F/Sgt. Charles Edward Carroll, RCAF; 778353 F/Sgt. Reginald Newbald Smith, RAFVR and 759155 F/Sgt. John Stables, RAFVR. Both the ASN Wikibase and Dutch Author Rob Van Niewendjik give a possible crash location as the North Sea, 15 miles West of TERSCHELLING, HOLLAND. It is believed the aircraft was shot down by a night fighter flown by Obfw. Detlef Luth of 4/NJG1 (Chorley). These men and their aircraft have never been found, their names being placed on the memorial at Runnymede.**

## 11/ 12 February- BOMBING MANNHEIM & NICKELLING CHERBOURG

Three aircraft bombed the railway station at Mannheim while a Fourth dropped leaflets around 11 miles North of Cherbourg. All returned safely to diversion airfields due to bad weather at Base; these were Chipping Norton, Waterbeach and West Malling.



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## February 1942 based R.A.F. Station Skellingthorpe

### 12 February- BATTLESHIPS AT BREST

Eight aircraft were detailed to attack the 'Scharnhorst' and 'Gneisenau' while docked in Brest Harbour in a highly vulnerable daylight operation. Five of the aircraft failed to identify the targets while two did bomb albeit with inconclusive results. AD852 flown by F/O Goldsmith was hit by flak and the lead from the Aldis lamp was used to lash the pilots hand-grip's to the control column, this aircraft diverting to Horsham St. Faith. One aircraft failed to return with nothing further being heard from the crew after departing Skellingthorpe at 14.40hrs. **Hampden AT177 was lost, with the crew of 88404 F/O Derek Guy Carter, RAFVR; 982853 Sgt. Frederick George Hancock, RAFVR; 1283406 Sgt. Donald William Meeking and 1175877 Sgt. Donald McGregor Symes, RAFVR all missing. They were never found. All are commemorated at Runnymede. Source: ORB & CWGC).** . In fact, the convoy of the 'Scharnhorst', Gneisenau' and 'Prinz Eugen' along with six destroyers had already left Brest (at 22.45hrs on the 11<sup>th</sup>) and were steaming East up the English Channel, still undetected.

### 12/ 13 February- GARDENING OFF WANGEROOGE

Two aircraft set off at 23.06 and 23.20hrs to drop sea mines off Wangerooge, with one, AE400 successfully doing so. The other P1166 developed low oil pressure in the Starboard engine near the target and abandoned the mission, limping home on reduced power only to have the engine stop completely on landing (S/Ldr. Lloyd and crew).

### 15 February 1942- Singapore falls.

### 16/ 17 February- GARDENING & NICKELLING OPERATIONS

Two aircraft dropped leaflets in the Cherbourg Area while AD766 placed a sea-mine in the 'nectarine' area (Borkum Island). All returned safely to Base.

### 17/ 18 February- NICKELLING THE CHERBOURG & PARIS AREAS

Two aircraft departed from around 18.00hrs and dropped leaflets in the Cherbourg region, while AT118's crew dropped leaflets over Paris, none observing any opposition. All returned safely to Base around 23.30hrs.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

February 1942 based R.A.F. Station Skellingthorpe

21/ 22 February- COBLENZ/ RHINE VALLEY

Six aircraft were detailed to bomb the Rhine valley in the Coblenz area, aircraft departing from around 18.20hrs. Despite the aircraft leaving relatively closely together, crews reported diametrically differing conditions in what was thought to be the same target area. Four aircraft reported good visibility and no cloud and bombed Coblenz and Aachen with impunity, no opposition being recorded. However, a fifth, AE429 reported 10/10 cloud and could identify no targets, dropping the load 'blind' on E.T.A (at Coblenz). The aircraft was then attacked three times by enemy fighters. After climbing into cloud to lose the fighters the aircraft iced up severely, losing all blind flying instruments and Airspeed Indicator. After sending an 'S.O.S.', with help from a ground Station the aircraft made the English Coast. Now flying through driving snow, and with no instruments or Airspeed Indication the aircraft attempted to land at R.A.F. Station Desford but over-shot the flare-path and was damaged. No injuries were reported. The sixth aircraft, **Hampden AE394 (Possibly VN-M)** crashed in York after bombing a railway junction to the West of Coblenz. 1258728 Sgt. Philip Sidney Ballard, WOP/AG RAFVR; 934284 Sgt. Francis Reginald Law, WOP/AG RAFVR and 920520 Sgt. Hector Francis Thompson, Navigator RAFVR were killed when their aircraft crashed into 'Haleys Terrace' York. The ORB records that shortly after leaving the target the navigator Sgt. Thompson became unconscious; the Pilot W/O Mapp then set course for home base after obtaining 'fixes'. The navigator then recovered, but whilst coming in from the North Sea one engine failed, and the aircraft then encountered severe icing conditions. Shortly after the second engine failed due to fuel exhaustion and the crew were ordered to abandon the aircraft. Reference [www.yorkshire-aircraft.co.uk](http://www.yorkshire-aircraft.co.uk), the aircraft ran low on fuel due to navigational errors and crossed the Yorkshire coast on one engine and then began to ice up. This made control difficult, and when the second engine cut the pilot ordered 'bail out'. The pilot, 741068 W/O Ivor Philip Mapp saw one crew member bail-out so then jumped out himself; unfortunately two other crew members had not escaped and were killed when the aircraft hit the road outside the Rowntrees factory at York at around 2am 22<sup>nd</sup> February, remaining substantially intact.

W/O Mapp parachuted to safety but the other crew member's parachute failed to deploy properly as he hit trees in HAXBY ROAD and was killed. Two airmen, Thompson and Law, are buried together in the same grave at Thurlby, St. Germain Churchyard near Swinderby, Lincs (probably the two who remained aboard) while Sgt. Ballard is buried at CHARTHAM Cemetery, Kent. The aircraft was destroyed.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## February 1942 based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe

### 22 February 1942

Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris, GCB, OBE, AFC appointed Air Officer Commanding (C-In-C) Bomber Command.

### 24 February- GARDENING

In the early hours of the 24<sup>th</sup> February, eight aircraft set off to mine the Schillig Weser area. Weather at base was very poor with ice reported prior to take-off which required removing; this delay prior to take off forced some aircraft to proceed direct to alternate targets, such as the Heligoland Bight. Despite the poor conditions six aircraft succeeded in dropping mines (some by Dead Reckoning only) while one failed to locate any target area and returned with the weapon aboard. The eighth developed engine trouble and abandoned the task, jettisoning the mine and wing bombs in the sea and returning safely to base.

### 25/ 26 February- GARDENING & NICKELLING

Eleven aircraft set off to drop mines (nine aircraft) in an unnamed location, and two further aircraft dropped leaflets over Paris. All returned safely with little opposition to Base.

### 27/ 28 February 1942- BOMBING KIEL (?) & GARDENING OP's

In a large night operation, no less than fifteen Hampden aircraft left to bomb an undisclosed target (eight aircraft, thought to be Kiel Docks) and to lay mines in the 'Nectarine' area (seven aircraft). Of the mining sorties, six were successfully completed with one aircraft returning early due to intercom. failure. Of the Bombing sorties, one aircraft turned back due to severe icing, one further aircraft turned back due to intercom. failure and six aircraft bombed alternate targets (Kiel area mainly) due to extremely poor weather and visibility, with poor results. Icing conditions were reported by most crews this night.

Hampden AE218, up 17.55hrs bombed Kiel as a 'Last Resort' target and is then thought to have force landed or 'crashed' near or on Skellingthorpe aerodrome at 02.25hrs 28<sup>th</sup> when the Starboard engine cut while attempting to land at the base due to fuel exhaustion. It is believed there were no injuries to the crew of F/Sgt. Johnson, Sgt. Booker, F/Sgt. D.L. Barrie and Sgt. Denman. The ORB merely states "Starboard engine cut on landing. No serious injury to crew." It does not specify where the aircraft 'landed'. AE218 was also the last aircraft down of the bombing sorties, by a good 40 minutes.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## February 1942 based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe

Representative Aircraft, Hampden B.Mk.1: P1166, P1239, P1329, P2049, AD766, AD852, AD928, AE158, AE216, AE218, AE306, AE381, AE387, AE388, AE394, AE400, AE423, AE429, AT118, AT125, AT139, AT140, AT147, AT151, AT152, AT173, AT177, AT216.

Aircraft lost this month: AE306, Smith Crew; AT177, Carter Crew; AE394, Mapp Crew.

Eleven No. 50 Squadron airmen lost their lives on operations this month.

## March 1942 based R.A.F. Station Skellingthorpe

### 3/ 4 March 1942- BOMBING PARIS

Eight aircraft took off this evening to bomb the Renault Engine Works in Paris. Visibility was excellent and good pin-pointing of the target was possible using flares and the River Seine. Results were seen to be positive with the works said to be ablaze from end to end. All returned to base safely, little in the way of ground opposition being encountered.

Hampden AT216 was flown by the Squadron Commander, W/Cdr Oxley. Loads seem to consist of 1x 1900lb and 2x 500lb bombs, dropped from low-level (2000- 3000 feet), indeed AE400 had the trailing (wireless) aerial ripped off by a high-tension cable.

### 7 March 1942

At 16.30hrs Hampden AE387 swung on take-off from R.A.F. Station Skellingthorpe in strong wind and crashed on the airfield subsequently catching fire. Believed this may have been an air-test; of the crew of two, the Pilot, P/O P.W.W. Knock was injured and 1154650 L.A.C. Harry Lees RAFVR was killed.

L.A.C. Lees is buried at LEICESTER (WELFORD ROAD) CEMETERY.

### 8 March-GARDENING ARTICHOKE AREA

Eight aircraft took off in the early hours on the 8<sup>th</sup> March for a mine dropping mission to French coastal waters. Seven aircraft returned safely to Base. Hampden AE400 failed to return, nothing further having been heard from this crew after departing Base. It is believed the aircraft was lost off LORIENT, 61280 F/O Allan Godfrey Davidson, Pilot RAFVR; 1182318 Sgt. William Mervyn Alastair Eardley, WOP/AG RAFVR; 1178923 Sgt. Leslie Norman Follows, Pilot 2 RAFVR and 1101049 Sgt. Gordon Shackleton, WOP/AG RAFVR later confirmed killed. The body of Sgt. Follows was washed ashore at Finistere 11 March but the rest of the crew have never been found. Likely area of loss is the Bay of Biscay. As no night fighter claims have been found for this period it is suspected the aircraft was hit by flak. Sgt. Follows is buried in the Concarneau Communal Cemetery, grave 3, near Quimper, Finistere, France; the other three colleagues are commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## March 1942 based R.A.F. Station Skellingthorpe

### 9 March- GARDENING & BOMBING, ESSEN

Four aircraft departed in the early hours of the 9<sup>th</sup> March to mine the 'Nectarine' area; three did so successfully but the third encountered thick, low cloud and abandoned the mission. A further nine aircraft took off from around 0100hrs for a mission to bomb an un-specified point in Essen. Visibility was only moderate with a ground haze; consequently two aircraft bombed an alternate target in the town of Essen itself while one suffered navigational errors that caused it to abort the mission. Large fires were however already burning in Essen which were seen from the Dutch coast. One aircraft turned back early due to an intercom failure. Five aircraft bombed the main target, with accurate flak reported from Essen. All returned to Base safely.

### 10/ 11 March - ESSEN & BOULOGNE, BOMBING

Two attacks were made tonight. One, an attack on the main square, Essen by a force of eight Hampden aircraft. The second saw three aircraft set off for Boulogne docks. Poor visibility dogged both raids. The first raid was launched from around 19.20hrs onward and no losses were sustained over the target however **Hampden AT173 suffered icing on the return journey and steadily lost height, and was eventually abandoned over East Anglia with the crew all parachuting to safety after fog prevented a landing and fuel was nearly exhausted. AT173 crashed at 02.25hrs. This was P/O Stone's crew.**

AE435 suffered engine failure immediately after take-off and returned to Base. Due to visibility only five aircraft bombed the primary target with results inconclusive. Seven aircraft returned safely to Base.

### 13 March- GARDENING 'YAMS' AREA

Two aircraft mined the 'Yams' area in the early hours of the morning, 13<sup>th</sup> March. Both returned safely to Base. (AE423 and AE158).

### 13/ 14 March- COLOGNE, BOMBING AND PARIS, NICKELLING

Ten aircraft took-off from around 19.00hrs onwards for Cologne City Centre. Severe flak and intense searchlight activity was encountered over the target. Eight aircraft found the target (which was well ablaze by the time it was reached) and successfully bombed; a ninth failed to pin-point the target and abandoned the mission while the tenth aircraft developed a technical problem and also abandoned the mission. All landed safely back at Base. Two aircraft were damaged by flak and the navigator of AT139, Sgt. Addison was wounded by shrapnel. The GEE Blind-Bombing System was used operationally for the first time by specially equipped Whitley aircraft of a Bomber Command trials unit. AE425 also departed with the main bomber force and successfully dropped 'Nickels' over Paris.

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## March 1942 based R.A.F. Station Skellingthorpe

### 14 March

“Dinghy Search” carried out by AE140; nothing was found. They were probably looking for the crew of Wellington R1802 of 311 Squadron.

### 15 March to 23 March

In this period, operations were ordered but subsequently cancelled on five nights; reason is not known.

### March 24/ 25- GARDENING IN THE ‘ARTICHOKE’ AREA

Five aircraft were detailed for a Gardening mission to the Lorient area tonight. Three aircraft successfully placed the mines in the allotted position while a fourth had the misfortune of the mine falling off when the wing bombs were dropped on Lannion aerodrome. The aircraft used the Ile De Groix, Quiberone and Lorient as aiming points, and returned safely to Base. No flak or fighter activity was noted by the returning crews.

Hampden AE429 failed to return, nothing further was heard from the aircraft after leaving Base at 19.20hrs. 108115 P/O Ivor Owen Davies, Observer RAFVR; 64935 P/O Dennis Reginald Fair, Pilot RAFVR; 935370 Sgt. Jack Hudson, WOP/AG RAFVR and 1152531 Sgt. John Henry Pearson WOP/AG RAFVR all later confirmed killed. All crew are buried in BREST (KERFAUTRAS) Cemetery, St. Martin, Brest, France. The aircraft is believed to have come down in the sea off Morlaix, Finistere, France: their bodies were probably washed ashore near Brest in the days after the event.

### 25 March

Manchester L7486, (Ex-207 Sqdn. EM-P and EM-Z) bounced on landing and stalled during a training flight, possibly at Skellingthorpe? Casualties unknown.

Ref. Air-Britain RAF Aircraft L1000- N99999

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## March 1942 based R.A.F. Station Skellingthorpe

### 25/ 26 March- ESSEN, BOMBING, NICKELLING AND GARDENING, 'ARTICHOKE' AREA

Tonight, a variety of targets were ordered. Two Hampden's AT151 and AT147 took off for an industrial centre in Essen at 19.30hrs. AT147 was unable to identify either primary or alternate targets and bombed what they thought was Duisburg due to a thick haze at ground level. **Hampden AT151 failed to return, with nothing heard from this crew after take-off; 987379 Sgt. Joseph Davidson Beattie, RAFVR; 546918 Sgt. Robert Dudley Howarth, RAFVR; 66029 P/O Howard Phillips Roblin, RAFVR and 1282788 Sgt. Eric Alexander Gordon Lumsden, RAFVR were posted as missing. No trace was found of the aircraft and all are commemorated on the memorial at Runnymede.**

Three aircraft were detailed for a Gardening mission in the Artichoke (Lorient) area. Visibility was good with no cloud and moonlight and two crews successfully dropped mines in the correct area. However the third aircraft, **AT158 failed to return. It is believed to have come down on or near the Ile de Groix (Ile de Groix is directly outside the mouth of the Lorient basin in the Bay of Biscay). 68793 P/O James Duncan Crombie, Pilot RAFVR; 924734 Sgt. Harry Naughton Deckman, Observer RAFVR; 1208601 Sgt. Frank Manley, WOP/AG RAFVR and 1165304 Sgt. Charles Ronald Clive Perry, WOP/AG RAFVR were later confirmed killed. All are buried at LORIENT (KERENTRECH) Communal Cemetery, Locality Morbihan, Brittany, France. .**

F/O Seely-King and crew took off on a leaflet dropping mission in AT126 but almost immediately the Airspeed Indicator became unserviceable and the aircraft returned direct to Base.

### 26 March 1942

**Hampden AT118 VN-C force-landed at Roswidney Farm, Ludgvan 1.5 miles NE of Crowlas Police House between Marazion and St. Erth, North of Penzance, Cornwall. Engine failure during an A.S.R. sortie believed to be the cause (and presumably looking for the crew of AT158 which FTR from Lorient last night). As Hampden aircraft fly reasonably well and can be landed on one engine it is guessed that fuel starvation and BOTH engines failing may be the cause? The aircraft burnt out completely on crashing but all the crew escaped unharmed. (Excellent picture of AT118 on [www.squadronforum](http://www.squadronforum) which may be at Swinderby.)**



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## March 1942 based R.A.F. Station Skellingthorpe

### 26/ 27 March - GARDENING, 'DEODAR' AND 'NECTARINE' AREAS

Four aircraft were detailed to drop mines in the Deodar Area (Mouth of the River Gironde, Bordeaux) tonight. Visibility was good and all four successfully dropped mines in the correct place, returning safely to R.A.F. Station Chivenor (x2) and to Base (x2). AT216 was detailed to drop a mine in the 'Nectarine' area (Dutch Coast) and in good visibility did so and returned to Base safely.

### 28/ 29 March- BOMBING, LUBECK

Six aircraft were detailed to bomb selected targets in Lubeck tonight using a mixture of H.E. and incendiaries. Visibility was unusually good to the extent that crews could map-read and five aircraft bombed Lubeck successfully with good results seen. P2094 became unserviceable and abandoned the mission. All returned safely to Base.

### 29/ 30 March- GARDENING 'NECTARINE' AREA & LILLE, NICKELLING

AT216 was detailed to drop a mine in the 'Nectarine' area and although not seen to fall was felt to leave the aircraft; the wing bombs were then jettisoned and the aircraft safely landed at R.A.F. Station Bircham Newton, Norfolk. It is possible the aircraft had engine trouble and had trouble maintaining height on the return journey. The two aircraft detailed for leaflet drops found very poor visibility over the target area and dropped 120 bundles of leaflets in the approximate area of Lille, returning safely to Base after five hours airborne.

### 31 March- BOMBING LOCOMOTIVE AND RAILWAY INSTALLATIONS, N.W. GERMANY

Two aircraft set off on a rare daylight raid (probably a 'roving' raid) on railway locomotives and railway installations in N.W. Germany. Cloud cover was variable, as P1166 aborted the mission due to no cloud cover available over Europe whereas AE388 found a good cloud base and duly attacked a goods train but missed, then machine-gunned an aerodrome nearby; the aircraft suffered a badly damaged Starboard rudder for its troubles. Both returned safely to Base.

### March 1942 Summary:

Representative aircraft, Hampden B.Mk.1;

P1166, P1239, P2094, AD766, AD908, AD928, AE115, AE158, AE218, AE387, AE388, AE400, AE423, AE429, AE435, AT118, AT125, AT126, AT139, AT140, AT147, AT151, AT152, AT158, AT173, AT216.

Crews:

Atkinson, Goldsmith, Lloyd, King, Miller, Bartley, Ferrie, Johnson, Lord, Davidson, Gray, Weber, Crossley, Jeffs, Wiseman, Morgan, Duncan-Crossley, Stone, Seeley-King, Fair, Crombie, Roblin, Packard, Dickenson, and L.A.C. Harry Lees.

16 men lost their lives this month, and 6 aircraft were lost/ destroyed.



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## April 1942, Based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe.

Overview: The squadron sees a large increase in manpower due to the arrival of the Manchester aircraft. The Manchester carries a crew of seven as opposed to the four carried in the Hampden. The Manchester flies its first operational mission with the Squadron this month and the use of the trusty Hampden scales down. The 'last' Hampden sortie is flown by F/Sgt. Packard and crew in AD766 on the 13<sup>th</sup> April. Targets continue to be industrial and other selected strategic points in France and Germany as well as 'Gardening' sorties up and down the coast of Europe. The long range capabilities of the Manchester are exploited in two raids to the Heinkel works at Rostock.

### 1/ 2 April- BOMBING, LE HAVRE AND N.W. GERMANY; GARDENING, NECTARINE AREA

Hampden AT147 set off tonight for the docks at Le Havre. Two further aircraft set off to attack railways in NW Germany, and one further Hampden carried out Nickelling (leafleting) in the Paris area. Visibility across the continent was good this evening; AT147 bombed the target at Le Havre successfully. AE115, operating in the Emden/ Lingen area bombed a railway bridge but missed; the crew reported firing 700 rounds at a night fighter but no claim was made. AD766 suffered engine failure 30 miles out from the English coast and returned to Base. In bright moonlight P2094's crew dropped leaflets over Paris. All returned safely to Base.

### 2/ 3 April 1942- GARDENING, GORSE AREA

Gardening operations (night) with five Hampden aircraft detailed for the 'Gorse' area; the weather was excellent with a bright moon and four successfully dropped mines in the allotted position. There were no casualties although AT216 flown by F/O Seely-King abandoned the mission after technical problems forced the aircraft to land at Thrupton. (All Hampden aircraft).

### 4 April- GARDENING, NECTARINE AREA

Seven Hampden aircraft were detailed for daylight Gardening Operations but all were recalled after an hours flying due to weather (no cloud cover).

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

April 1942, Based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe.

## 6 April - BOMBING, COLOGNE

Target for tonight is the City centre Cologne, 2 Hampden aircraft sent on a bombing mission departing around 00.29hrs. P1839 bombed successfully in bright moon-light, however **Hampden AT216** crashed after being airborne for only 5 minutes, and came down at Thorpe-on-the Hill near Lincoln. The crew of 4 were killed:

1165162 Sgt. James Hardy, WOP/AG RAFVR

924568 Sgt. Gilbert Lewis Quincey, Observer RAFVR

89084 F/O Ronald Seely- King, Pilot RAFVR

1158660 Sgt. Gerald Colin Stewart Skelton, WOP/AG RAFVR).

Sgt Hardy is buried at LEICESTER (GILROES) Cemetery, Sgt. Quincey is buried in WOOLWICH CEMETERY, LONDON, F/O Seely- King is buried at THURLBY St. GERMAIN CHURCH YARD, Swinderby Lincs. and Sgt. Skelton is buried in NOTTINGHAM NORTHERN CEMETERY, Notts. All appear to have been buried in their home locality. The other aircraft returned safely to Base.

This would appear to be the Squadron's last loss of life in the Hampden aircraft.

## 7 April - BOMBING, ESSEN

One aircraft was detailed tonight to bomb Essen main square leaving at 00.10hrs (Hampden AD786). Mission was aborted due engine failure and the aircraft was damaged by heavy flak.

## 8/9 April- GARDENING ROSEMARY AREA & NICKELLING PARIS

FIRST OPERATIONAL USE BY 50 SQUADRON OF THE MANCHESTER AIRCRAFT TYPE. Three Hampden aircraft successfully mined in the 'Rosemary' area tonight while three Manchester and a single Hampden aircraft (P2094 flown by P/O Leslie Manser) dropped leaflets on Paris. All returned safely. The Manchester aircraft involved were L7432, L7455 & L7489. The latter aircraft received serious damage due to a bird strike (Seagull!) through the Bomb-aimers Perspex but returned safely along with the remaining aircraft to Base.

## 10/ 11 April- BOMBING, ESSEN; NICKELLING, PARIS & BOMBING, LE HAVRE

Six aircraft were detailed for Operations tonight; 3 Hampden to Essen main square bombing, all returned safely. One Manchester (L7455) dropped leaflets in Paris, while two further Manchester's (L7489 and L7468) successfully bombed the docks at Le Havre, all returned safely.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

April 1942, Based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe.

12/ 13 April- BOMBING, ESSEN; GARDENING ROSEMARY & HAWTHORNE AREAS & NICKELLING PARIS.

8 a/c detailed for Operations tonight. Weather and visibility is generally fair tonight. One Hampden bombed Essen and two further Hampden's successfully dropped sea mines in the Rosemary area Two Manchester's successfully dropped sea mines in the first 'Gardening' mission by the Manchester type, and a further three Manchester aircraft dropped leaflets over Paris; the 'black-out' is reported as very bad. All aircraft returned safely to Base.

14/ 15 April - BOMBING, DORTMUND

Two Manchester aircraft, L7455 and L7468 were detailed tonight to bomb Dortmund City Centre taking off at around 22.20hrs. Both aircraft successfully bombed with intense flak and searchlight activity reported over the Ruhr. One aircraft dropped the 'new' 4000lb 'Cookie' bomb while 6 x 1000lb and 4 x 500lb bombs were also expended. Both returned safely to Base.

15/ 16 April - BOMBING, DORTMUND; GARDENING, BEECH AREA & 'NICKELLING', RENNES.

Six aircraft were detailed this evening for operations; two bombing the main square at Dortmund; two gardening in the 'Beech' area, and two on Nickel raids in the RENNES area. One Manchester, L7468 with P/O Leslie Manser on his first operational Manchester mission (as a second pilot) suffered icing problems and abandoned the mission to Dortmund, returning safely to base after nearly six hours in the air. L7455 successfully bombed despite severe flak and searchlight activity over the Ruhr. 6 x 1000lb and 1 x 4000lb bombs were dropped. The two aircraft 'Gardening' found the targets easily while the two 'Nickelling' aircraft dropped leaflets successfully over Rennes. All returned safely. All were Manchester aircraft.

16/ 17 April- NICKELLING LILLE AREA

Two aircraft dropped Nickels in the Lille area reporting the town as badly 'blacked out' and returned safely to Base.

17/ 18 April- BOMBING HAMBURG, GARDENING 'ROSEMARY' AREA (Ording)

Five aircraft were detailed for operations tonight; three Manchester's detailed to bomb Hamburg city centre (includes L7455) and two Manchester's on gardening operations (includes L7519). No. 50 Squadron suffered its first of many Manchester losses.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## April 1942 based R.A.F. Station Skellingthorpe

Manchester R5782 (an ex-207 Squadron machine then 'EM-R' which had been mistakenly attacked and damaged by Spitfires in December 1941) failed to return from Hamburg, nothing further being heard from the crew since leaving base. 116830 P/O Gordon Baker, Pilot RAFVR and 1171442 Sgt. Harold Knight, WOP/AG RAFVR were killed, the rest of the crew survived and were made P.O.W. These were:

Sgt. C. B. McKenzie, RNZAF, Pilot POW 169

Sgt. F. J. S. Pearce "A.O." POW 39630

Sgt. R. B. Dawson WT/ AG, POW 151

Sgt. A. T. Griffiths WT/ AG, POW 159

Sgt. S. Crawford A.G., POW 147

ASN Web site 141753 gives crash site as near TANGSTEDT, 17km NNE of HAMBURG. P/O Baker and Sgt. Knight were originally buried at Utersen Cemetery but later moved post-war to HAMBURG FRIEDHOF-OHLSDORF CEMETERY, Hamburg, Germany (ironically just a stone's throw from Hamburg Airport) in Joint grave 4A. D. 15. In an post- repatriation report, Sgt Pearce states he can remember nothing about the incident except seeing an engine on fire and bailing out in a steep dive.

The remainder returned safely to Base, L7519 returning with the mines on board after failing to identify the target area.

## 19/ 20 April- GARDENING NECTARINE AREA

Six Manchester aircraft set off to drop sea mines in the Nectarine 'Garden' on a night operation. One Manchester R7480 returned early due to technical problems, all returned to Base safely. Includes R7491, L7521 & R7586.

## 22/ 23 April- GARDENING, FORGET-ME NOT AREA

Six aircraft performed a successful night operation safely returning to base in good weather with no cloud. Included L7480.

## 24/ 25 April- BOMBING, ROSTOCK; NICKELLING, RENNES

Seven aircraft were detailed for operations tonight; five Manchester's to bomb the Heinkel aircraft factory at Rostock and two further Manchester's to drop leaflets over Rennes. Visibility was near perfect and all five aircraft bombed Rostock including L7521 which dive bombed the target from 3000 feet; flak defences were active and the bomb doors of L7516 were damaged. Bomb loads were 3 x 4000lb H.E. bombs and 28 x 250lb incendiaries. Both the Rennes aircraft dropped leaflets successfully also in good visibility and moonlight (R5778's navigator was able to map read to the target) with all aircraft returning safely to base.

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April 1942, Based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe.

## 26/ 27 April- BOMBING ROSTOCK & GARDENING, ROSEMARY AREA

Six aircraft were detailed for operations tonight; four Manchester's bombed Rostock factory sheds and two more 'gardened' the 'Forget-me-Not' area. Weather was excellent, and despite heavy flak over Rostock all four bombed the target (from as low as 1000 feet). Similarly, L7460 and L7476 successfully dropped sea-mines. All six returned safely.

## 29/ 30 April- GARDENING FORGET-ME-NOT, QUINCE, ENDIVE & RADISH AREAS

Five aircraft were detailed for Gardening operations; two to the Quince South area and one each for the others. L7480 abandoned the mission to the Endive area due to severe buffeting of the rudder bar; L7460 found visibility excellent and dropped mines on target in the 'Radish' area, as well as firing 1000 rounds at shipping. L7455 and R7586 also found weather in the Quince South area excellent and dropped mines on target. These four aircraft returned safely to Base. Unfortunately nothing further was heard from the crew of **L7516** after she got airborne for the **Forget-me-Not area at 21.42hrs.** After the war research by Historians suggest that the aircraft was shot down by a night fighter (flown by Oblt. Gunter Kuberich of 11/ NJG3) and crashed on a sandbank off RANTUM, SYLT.

403206 RAAF Sgt. David Alexander Williams (AG) Aged 21, and 1379715 Sgt. Cecil John Scott RAF(VR) (RG) were killed. 5 other crew survived and were made POW's; F/Sgt. S. Willett RAF DFM (Pilot)(POW 279), F/Sgt. SE Packard RAF (FE), P/O 113993 N. Hannah RAF (NAV)(POW 198), F/Sgt. HJ McDonald RAF (WOP), 406602 RAAF Sgt. CA Miners (WOP)(POW 257).

Sgt. Williams and Sgt. Scott were both recovered (no details known) and were laid to rest at KIEL WAR CEMETERY, Kiel, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany. NOTE; Most graves now present at KIEL were moved in from outlying isolated graves and cemeteries in Schleswig-Holstein, Frisian Islands and other parts of North West Germany.

Representative aircraft- Manchester B.Mk.1: R5778, **R5782**, R5786, L7419, L7432, L7455, L7460, L7468, L7475, L7476, L7480, L7489, L7491, L7492, **L7516**, L7519, L7521.

Hampden B.Mk.1: P1166, P1239, P1839, P2094, AD766, AD908, AD928, AE115, AE435, AT125, AT147, **AT216**.

Crews (Hampden B.Mk.1): Packard, Wiseman, Weber, McKenzie, Jeffs, Stone, Duncan-Crossley, **Seely-King**, Gray, Dickenson, Manser, Morgan.

Crews (Manchester B.Mk.1A): Wilkins, Southgate, Crampton, **Baker**, Atkinson, Ferrie, Goldsmith, Willett, Gruber, Lloyd, Wilkie, Cole.

Eight crew were killed and ten made P.O.W this month with one Hampden and two Manchester's destroyed.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## May 1942 based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe

No. 50 Squadron Conversion Flight (50CF) is established at Skellingthorpe, to assist in the switch from the Hampden to the Manchester aircraft.

The last of the trusty Hampden aircraft has by now left Skellingthorpe.

### 2/3 May

Five Manchester's carried out a successful 'Nickelling' raid in the Rennes area; the weather and visibility was good and all aircraft returned safely reporting no opposition.

### 6/ 7 May 1942

Two aircraft successfully bombed the Docks at NANTES, while one further Manchester (R5778 with P/O Manser and crew) dropped leaflets in the RENNES area. No opposition, all returned safely.

### 8/ 9 May 1942

Three Manchester's tasked with bombing the Heinkel Works at WARNEMUNDE. **All met very heavy opposition; one aircraft, L7489 failed to return and was last heard from at 02.20 hours when a message was sent stating "Crew bailing out". The RoH lists one crew member, 777669 Sgt. Maurice Gruber, Pilot, RAFVR as being killed; the remaining six crew members bailed out successfully. It is believed that the bomb doors could not be closed due to flak damage; the resulting drag required the engines to be run at full power and subsequently one caught fire and could not be extinguished. The pilot, in staying to allow the others to bail out left himself insufficient height to escape. The aircraft crashed into a field on the Island of Møn , Denmark and the others also landed safely on this island. During the morning of May 6<sup>th</sup> the crew were rounded up from various locations on the island; Sgt. Sydney Garbutt, Sgt. John Pearce, P/O Harald Frederick Avery, RCAF, Sgt. Donald Broadhead, Sgt. Richard Soloman and Sgt. Kenneth G.R. Johnson. Later that day the survivors were handed over to the Luftwaffe and became POW's. Sgt. Gruber was buried with full military honours in a white coffin covered in flowers by the local people in the tiny SVINO CHURCHYARD, overlooking Dybso Fjord, 90Km SSE of Copenhagen, Denmark. Reference [www.flensted.eu.com](http://www.flensted.eu.com) for a very full and detailed account from which the above details are extracted with grateful thanks.**

The remaining two Manchester's were L7476 VN-Z which bombed the target, and R5778 which did not attack the target as it was hit by flak in the Port engine on approach. Crew of Sgt. Wilkie, Sgt. Byres, Sgt. J.W. Campbell, Sgt. Benn, Sgt. Baird and Sgt. E.W. Fitch.

Both aircraft returned safely to Base. It is believed that R5778 was SoC later due to the severity of damage.

A further two Manchester's mined the 'Rosemary' area successfully this same night with no opposition.

Such was the cruel luck of the draw.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## May 1942 based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe

### 12/ 13 May

Manchester L7519 crashed during 'Active Service' near Thurlby, Lincs (close to Swinderby) killing the crew of 120996 P/O Alan Bartlett, Observer RAFVR; 1165296 F/Sgt. Peter James Widdell Blake, Pilot RAFVR; 755113 F/Sgt. Raymond Leslie Cunningham, WOP/AG RAFVR; 1142647 AC.1 Leslie Harrison, RAFVR and 931022 L.A.C. William Stanley Stevens RAFVR. The aircraft was probably being Air-tested after maintenance. P/O Bartlett was cremated and is commemorated at WEST NORWOOD CEMETERY AND CREMATORIUM, Lambeth, London. F/Sgt. Blake and L.A.C. Stevens are buried together in a joint grave in Thurlby St. Germain Churchyard, Swinderby, Lincs. F/Sgt. Cunningham is buried at LONDON ROAD CEMETERY, COVENTRY, Warwickshire. AC.1 Harrison is buried in SHERBURN ST.MARY CHURCHYARD, Durham. .

### 16/ 17 May 1942

Four Manchester's successfully dropped sea-mines in the 'Rosemary' area in good visibility and returned safely with no opposition.

### 19/ 20 May 1942

Three Manchester's successfully bombed MANNHEIM, in good weather and with no opposition. A further two aircraft attacked LE MANS, one, R5786 returning due to un-serviceability and a second dropping leaflets. Similar conditions to Mannheim, all returned safely to base.

### 30/ 31 May - COLOGNE '1000 BOMBER RAID'

Maximum Effort- The first '1000 Bomber raid'. Fifteen Manchester's bombed COLOGNE however defences were active and a number of aircraft were shot down or suffered flak damage, some severe.

Two aircraft failed to return:

Manchester L7301 (aircraft ZN-D borrowed from 106 Squadron at RAF Coningsby) was hit by flak over Cologne and very severely damaged. Losing height, the skipper ordered the aircraft abandoned and, staying at the controls, six crew members safely bailed out. The aircraft soon after was seen to crash at Bree/ Limburg 21km NNE of GENK, BELGIUM and explode; the pilot was killed. A Posthumous award of the Victoria Cross was awarded to the Pilot 66542 F/O Leslie Thomas Manser, RAFVR, aged 20. Of the surviving Crew:

2<sup>nd</sup> Pilot 1376820 Sgt. Leslie H. Baveystock successfully evaded capture.

Navigator 66005 P/O Richard J. Barnes DFC became a POW (370).

WOP/ AG 120849 P/O Robert M. Horsley RAF evaded.

WOP/ AG 1304730 Stanley E. King RAF evaded.

AG 972986 Sgt. Allan M. Mills RAF evaded.

AG 1386637 Sgt. B.W. Naylor RAF evaded.

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30/ 31 May - COLOGNE '1000 BOMBER RAID'

On their repatriation they told the story of F/O Manser's selfless bravery.

The second casualty was Manchester L7456 (believed also on loan from 106 Squadron, coded ZN-T [via Chorley's] based Coningsby) of which nothing further was heard after getting airborne (Radio silence was standard procedure), believed crashed near or on Dusseldorf Lohausen Airfield Germany after an engine failure and reduced power on the one remaining engine rendered it unable to maintain altitude. Three of the crew are recorded as being killed in the RoH: 1270882 Sgt. Edward William Finch, WOP/AG RAFVR; 1180257 Sgt. Alan Mowlem Bee, Observer RAFVR and 1199377 Sgt. Douglas Wilson Baird, WOP/AG RAFVR.

The PIC, 1068112 Sgt. J.B. Wilkie, RAF (POW No.455), R/80099 F/Sgt. C.H. Tobias, RCAF (POW No. 533), 1052282 Sgt. J.W. Campbell, RAFVR (POW No.399) and 403180 Sgt. A.C. Benn, RAAF (POW No.392) survived (how is open to debate) and were made POW's. The probability, given eyewitness testimony is that the three may have bailed out and were those killed (the aircraft was very low when the order was given) and those that survived were on board the aircraft which then made a perfect belly landing, remaining intact.

Sgt. Finch, Sgt. Bee and Sgt. Baird are all buried in REICHSWALD FOREST WAR CEMETERY, KLEVE, Nordrhein-Westfalen.

NOTE; Reichswald is a post-war cemetery located near to the Dutch border in West of Germany therefore these airmen would most likely have been laid to rest near to the crash site prior to being moved post-war to Reichswald.

Also L7468 was hit by flak; L7525 was hit by flak disabling a Starboard engine, with the aircraft limping back to land at Tempsford, and one further aircraft returned with minor flak damage.

Two un-identified "Lancaster's" also took part according to the Squadron ORB and one reported being hit by flak with both returning to Base safely. (This may however be a typographical error as no less than three crew members on one 'anonymous' Lancaster have the same names as those lost on board Manchester L7456 this same raid, namely Sgt. Bee, Sgt. Benn and Sgt. Campbell?). Night fighters were also reported in the area by one aircraft crew. If Lancaster's did indeed join in this raid at all then they would have been borrowed from a Waddington based Squadron most likely.

Representative Manchester Aircraft: L7301 (loan), L7319, L7419, L7432, L7455, L7456 (Loan), L7460, L7468, L7471, L7475, L7476, L7489, L7491, L7496, L7519, L7525, R5769, R5778, R5784, R5786, R5833.



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## June 1942 based RAF Skellingthorpe and RAF Swinderby

Overview: The Squadron and Conversion Flight begin the conversion process from the twin-engine Manchester to the four-engine Lancaster, moving to nearby R.A.F. Station Swinderby while Skellingthorpe's concrete runways are extended and additional parking provided for the latter type's heavier weight, longer take-off run and physical size. Strategic targets in Germany continue to be visited still using mainly Manchester aircraft with some occasional mine-laying sorties. This month S/Ldr. Hugh Everitt becomes O.C. 'B' Flight (Lancaster's).

### 1/ 2 June- The second "1000 Bomber Raid"- Essen

Ten aircraft detailed to attack ESSEN area 'E', at night as part of the first massed bomber raid. Weather was good and an almost complete lack of ground defences were commented on by crews. However such was the ferocity of bombing that crews found it difficult to pin-point the target and also could not observe bomb-burst due to the huge conflagration. One Manchester L7476 hit by flak and Navigator F/S. G. Stevens injured, (Captained by P/O T. Cole) all returned safely.

### 3/ 4 June- BOMBING, BREMEN & NICKELLING, LE MANS

Four Manchester aircraft were detailed to bomb BREMEN, with two more on 'Nickelling' raids to LE MANS area. Of the Bremen detail, only two reached the target and bombed; little ground opposition was encountered. R5784 reported the Starboard engine started to miss-fire after crossing the English coast following which both engines overheated; a safe (and miraculous?) landing was made. The fourth aircraft, Manchester L7432 'VN-Z' (an ex-207 Sqdn. machine EM-J) failed to return from Bremen; she took off 23.03hrs but nothing further was heard from this crew. After the war it was established that she had been shot down by a night fighter and may have crashed at BEEKBERGEN near Apeldoorn, Holland; the rest returned safely. Observer 120997 P/O Harold William SHEEN RAFVR; Pilot 109916 P/O John Ross STEEN RAFVR (20); Pilot 60334 F/O. John Frankland HEATON RAFVR and 1282315 Sgt. Stanley Henry THOMAS (WOP/AG), aged 19 were killed. All Four are buried in APELDOORN (UGCHELEN-HEIDEOF) GENERAL CEMETERY, Ugchelen, near Apeldoorn, Gelderland, Netherlands. (Ref. CWGC)

The Survivors were captured and became POW's: Sgt.'s P.S. Buttigeig (AG)(POW 487), J.A. Farquhar (WT/ AG)(POW498) and K.J.F. Gaulton (WT/ AG)(POW 502).

Peter Buttigeig has written a book on his life entitled "We weep no more".

The two Nickelling aircraft met fierce ground opposition but both returned safely to Base.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## June 1942 based RAF Skellingthorpe

### 5/ 6 June- 'GARDENING', 'GORSE' AREA

Three Manchester aircraft were detailed for 'Gardening' duties. Two aircraft dropped mines with no ground or air opposition reported, however one aircraft failed to return. Nothing further was heard from R5833 after leaving base. Lost aircraft is Manchester Mk. IA R5833 (Ex-83 Squadron 'OL-N') with Sgt.'s 955478 William GRAY, B.A. RAFVR; 405135 John Joseph NIXON, Pilot RAAF; 1268307 Albert MOTH, Observer RAFVR; 1337262 Walter Roy WEST, AG RAFVR; 402670 Robert William OGILVIE, WOP/AG RAAF and 115223 P/O Desmond William GARLAND, Pilot RAFVR later confirmed killed.

One survivor, P/O R.T. GILL, WT/ AG who became a POW, No.286 (Stalag Luft Sagan/ Belaria-L3). Possibly shot down by German Naval Flak Ship. According to P/O Gill's POW testimony the aircraft crashed into the sea off Ile de Quiberone, Lorient, FRANCE on the 6<sup>th</sup> June. He remembers that the aircraft hit the sea but nothing further until he came to in the water, surrounded by blazing petrol, with no-one else to be seen. He states the Germans told him he was the only survivor, however there was nothing to substantiate this claim and no graves are known to exist. The missing crew were never found and are commemorated at Runnymede. Note: some crew members are listed by the CWGC as having died on the 5<sup>th</sup>, others on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Why yet to be established. P.O.W. Info. Via Ross McNiell and AIR20/2336, Kew. Testimony via awm.gov document by Alan Storr.

There are some disturbing eye-witness testimonies on the web alleging that German navy crews were seen machine-gunning downed aircrew in a dinghy on a date around this time and in a location roughly proximate.

### 6/ 7 June- BOMBING, EMDEN HARBOUR AND INSTALLATIONS

Two aircraft, L7471 & L7319 were detailed for a night bombing mission to EMDEN HARBOUR, ONE AIRCRAFT FAILED TO RETURN. Manchester Mk. I L7471 with 403104 RAAF F/O Argyle Donald BEATTY (Pilot), Sgt.'s 403856 RAAF Ronald Garnet BURTON (FE) and Sgt.'s 400342 RAAF RF Davies (AG), 404646 RAAF RG Buchanan (W/AG), 402615 RAAF AF Scanlan (W/AG), PO FWR Allen RAF (NAV) and 402472 RAAF AC Tebbutt (AG) crashed/ ditched in the sea 30/ 40 miles from Emden after bombing their target. An S.O.S. was sent out at around 01.40hrs and received by Heston but only a third class 'fix' could be made; this was not acknowledged by L7471.

Six of the crew escaped and made it into the aircraft's dingy, being rescued shortly afterwards by a German seaplane. One of the survivors, F/O Beatty RAAF was badly injured and subsequently died from meningitis in captivity on 10<sup>th</sup> September, 1942.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## June 1942 based RAF Skellingthorpe

(L7471)

*The aircraft is believed to have suffered non-combat related Starboard engine failure (one engine remaining operative but proving insufficient to remain airborne according to Sgt. Buchannan and Sgt. Scanlan's POW Reports). P/O Burton is thought to have gone down with the aircraft and was never found; he is commemorated on the memorial at Runnymede. F/O Beatty is buried in the SAGE WAR CEMETERY, Locality Oldenburg, Niedersachsen, Germany (CWGC). Note that, as SAGE Cemetery is a post-war cemetery F/O Beatty was probably interred near the POW Camp and his remains later moved to Sage.*

8- 15 June 1942- NO OPERATIONS RECORDED

16 June

All Manchester aircraft again grounded to enable engine cooling system modifications to be made. The removal from operational service of the Manchester type quickly followed.

20 June 1942

**No. 50 SQUADRON MOVED FROM RAF STATION SKELLINGTHORPE TO RAF STATION SWINDERBY.** (This follows completion of concrete runways at R.A.F. Swinderby). Conversion to the **Lancaster** begins.

No. 50 Squadron Conversion Flight is active this month, with a mixture of Manchester and Lancaster aircraft. One example being Manchester L7521 VN-A. Its tenure is brief however.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## June 1942 based RAF Swinderby

### 25/ 26 June- The Third '1000 Bomber raid'- BREMEN

14 aircraft detailed for a night bombing mission to the Focke-Wulf Factory, BREMEN. The first Lancaster operation is recorded; however it is an inauspicious start as 'Lancaster "J"' with the Wilkins crew suffered Starboard outer engine failure 30 minutes after take-off and returned to base after jettisoning bombs. Manchester L7455 found the rear gun turret was inoperative and it too tuned back for base. The remaining Manchester aircraft and single Lancaster, aircraft "X" found thick cloud cover over Bremen and bombed alternate targets or blind-bombed on ETA. Night fighters were active with L7416 taking evasive action to shake of its attacker. ONE AIRCRAFT FAILED TO RETURN, **Manchester L7289** with Sgt.'s 402622 RAAF Lawrence Chase THOMPSON (W/AG), 12419 RAAF Jasper S. PETERS (FE), NZ41361 John Charles ROY, RNZAF, (Pilot), 403194 RAAF James William LINDSAY (AG), 404903 RAAF Neil Malcolm HARDY (W/AG), 406318 RAAF Robert Leslie Hugall (NAV) and 403813 RAAF Edgar Griffiths JOHNSON (AG), all killed. Post war it was established that the aircraft was shot down (Flak) at 02.00 hours 26 June and crashed in a field at Grambke near Bremen (possibly now known as the District of Burg-Grambke). It is believed that the crew were all interred at WALLER CEMETERY, BREMEN but after the war were moved to Becklingen War Cemetery, Soltau, Nikedersachsen, Germany. References "For Your Tomorrow" Vol.1 by Errol Martyn (which chronicles all the RNZAF losses) and the CWGC.

Note: it is possible the two Lancaster aircraft were 'borrowed' from another Squadron.

Representative Aircraft: Manchester 1; L7277, **L7289**, L7294, L7319 VN-F, L7401, L7415, L7416, L7419 'N', L7425 VN-A, **L7432** VN-Z, L7455, L7460, L7464, L7468, **L7471**, L7475 VN- J, L7476 VN-Z, L7496, L7521 VN-A, L7525, R5769 VN-C, R5784 VN-A, **R5833**, R5835.

Representative Aircraft: Lancaster 1; "X", "J". Serials to be determined.

Representative Crews: Martin, Southgate, Bunbury, Stone, Calvert, Goldsmith, Weber, Gray D, Cole, Wiseman, Morgan, **Roy**, Taylor, Wilkins, Atkinson, **Beatty**, **Garland**, **Heaton**, Duncan-Crossley, Crampton.

**19 men lost their lives on operations this month and four aircraft were destroyed.**

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

July 1942, Based R.A.F. Swinderby.

ORB not seen.

The Squadron becomes operational on the Lancaster type later in the month although some Manchester's are retained for training with the Conversion Flight.

Due to the training intensity operations are few.

## 23/ 24 July- GARDENING TREFOIL AREA

Six Lancaster aircraft tonight mined the 'Trefoil' area with no opposition encountered; all returned safely to Base.

## 25/ 26 July- BOMBING DUISBURG

Five aircraft tonight set off to bomb Duisburg. N5726 turned back after crossing the Dutch coast due to Oxygen Supply failure while the remaining four successfully bombed the target in the face of severe flak and also night fighter opposition.

## 26/ 27 July- BOMBING HAMBURG

Eight aircraft tonight set off to bomb Hamburg. All successfully completed their missions in the face of stiff flak; the town was already well ablaze which aided navigation greatly, all aircraft returned safely to Base.

## 29- 30 July- BOMBING SAARBRUCKEN

14 aircraft including aircraft "X" of the Conversion Unit departed tonight for Saarbrucken. Darkness and poor general visibility, only three aircraft could identify the target while eight bombed on estimated position. Two developed engine problems and jettisoned weapons in a 'safe' condition before returning. Thirteen returned safely to Base, one failed to return tonight.

Lancaster R5728 VN-L took off from Swinderby at 0100 hours but the aircraft failed to return, the Squadron's first loss of the type on operations. Post war it was confirmed that the aircraft was shot down at 0300 by a night fighter, falling at BRAINE-LECOMPTE, HAINAUT, BELGIUM. All crew killed. One engine fell on a school commandeered by the Wehrmacht and killed 6 soldiers. The following crew are buried in BRAINE-LE-COMTE COMMUNAL CEMETERY, Hainaut, Belgium: J/16685 F/Sgt. (P/O) Leslie Foster, RCAF (Pilot), 1123342 Sgt. Douglas John Ware RAFVR (FE), 113935 P/O Robert Hugh Curran RAFVR, (Obs.), 401264 RAAF Sgt. Allan Wyles, (W/AG), 403451 RAAF Sgt. Cyril John Stallard (W/AG), 404406 RAAF F/Sgt. Cameron Duff Kennedy (MUG) and 1290940 Sgt. Cyril Alfred Bowes RAFVR, (AG). A contemporary account is within "Le Dernier Raid" by Belgian Author Willy Felix.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

July 1942, Based R.A.F. Swinderby.

Summary, July 1942:

Representative Aircraft Lancaster B. Mk. I: R5639, R5685, R5687, R5690 'H', R5691, R5725 'F', R5726 'B', R5728 'L', R5733, R5747.

Manchester Mk. I: L7455 'G', R5788

Representative Crews: Foster, Martin, Southgate, Bunbury, Stone, Calvert, Goldsmith, Weber, Gray D, Cole, Wiseman, Morgan, Taylor, Wilkins, Atkinson, Duncan-Crossley, Crampton.

Squadron operational losses for this month: Seven killed, one aircraft destroyed.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## August 1942, based R.A.F. Swinderby

This month, the Squadron Conversion Flight moves out to RAF Wigsley, a short distance away prior to it's re-organisation into No. 1654 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU).

### 1 August- DUSSELDORF

A daylight bombing mission was undertaken by Fifteen Lancaster I's to 'aiming point "X" at Dusseldorf'. The rear gunner of Lancaster R5733 shot down a fighter over the target. One aircraft, R5788 was severely damaged by flak over the target and with hydraulic failure, following the feathering of both Starboard engines the Port engines both overheated due to lack of radiator flaps and although a landing was attempted at RAF Bircham Newton it was thought one or even both tyres were punctured by flak and the aircraft overshot the flare-path and the undercarriage collapsed coming to rest around ½ mile from the station.

No casualty details are known, crew were Sgt.'s PM Crampton, RW Game, AW Little, J. Reilly, J. Kemp, S. Cooper and F/Sgt. A. Booker however no fatalities are recorded thankfully. The other aircraft returned to Base safely.

Some bombs were dropped "by mistake" near Swinderby by R5691's crew!

### 3/ 4 August 1942

Night 'Gardening' mission by five aircraft to two areas (one being Kiel Bay), all returned safely.

### 4/ 5 August

Lancaster R5687 'Gardened' successfully.

### 5/ 6 August

Four aircraft 'Gardened' and one aircraft, Lancaster I, VN-Q R5746, bombed ESSEN. Flak damage noted to latter aircraft.

### 6/ 7 August

Nine aircraft bombed DUISBURG, and one 'Gardened', all returned safely.

### 9/ 10 August

Three aircraft bombed the docks at LE HAVRE, and eight bombed OSNABRUCK. All returned safely.

### 10/ 11 August

Seven aircraft 'Gardened', all returned safely.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

August 1942, Based R.A.F. Swinderby.

11/ 12 August

Two aircraft bombed the docks at LE HAVRE; one aircraft, Lancaster I VN-Q R5746 failed to return. Crew were Sgt.'s 402993 RAAF David Gray (Pilot), 404571 RAAF Thomas William Sheridan Addison (NAV), 1101233 Alexander Ashcroft Waldie, RAFVR (WOP/AG), 403199 RAAF Geoffrey Browning McCloy (AB), 1211090 William Paul Taylor, RAFVR (FE); R/86751 John Manley Lowe, RCAF (WOP/AG) and 1382214 Joel Bogard RAFVR (AG). No details available on the circumstances of this loss but all are buried in the Ste. Marie cemetery, Le Havre locality Seine-Maritime, France. (From the Australian Government Casualties List 'awm.gov.au/catalogue/research\_centre/pdf', page 174 and the CWGC.)

13 August

Lancaster L7534 VN-Z written-off following undercarriage collapse during a training flight at R.A.F. Station Swinderby; believed no injuries. Pilot Sgt. Blaskey.

13/ 14 August 1942

Seven aircraft 'Gardened' all returning safely.

14/ 15 August

Eight aircraft bombed the centre of MAINZ and all returned safely.

Four aircraft bombed DUSSELDORF. One failed to return, Lancaster I R5735 'VN-G' with crew Sgt.'s 403054 RAAF Godfrey Rees-Jones (Pilot) KIA, 400861 RAAF FE Lethbridge, 1007437 Norman Tomlin, RAF (W/AG) KIA; J. McMillan RAF (AG), 576796 Robert Charles Montague White RAF (FE) KIA, 403171 RAAF Alfred Joseph Pankhurst (W/AG) KIA and R/101535 Herbert Alfred Chislett, RCAF, (RG) KIA. The RoH list's five of the crew as Killed In Action but Sgt. F.E. Lethbridge and Sgt. J. McMillan survived as POW's.

Sgt. Lethbridge reported as a P.O.W.; "The aircraft was hit by enemy action at 0300 hours 16 August and went into a spin. I have no clear recollection of what happened after putting on my chute and have no information re. the others". The Five crew are buried in Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, Kleve, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany. Further research required.



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

August 1942, Based R.A.F. Swinderby.

17/ 18 August- OSNABRUCK

Seven aircraft left to bomb OSNABRUCK from around 21.30 onward; one aircraft failed to return. Lancaster I R5639 'VN-J' with P/O's 101535 John Shirley Bunbury, RAFVR Pilot; 400476 Alexander Gordon MacDonald, RAAF; and Sgt.'s 965570 Peter Simpson, RAFVR; 574930 Maurice Patrick Gallagher, RAF; 405094 Ashleigh Thomas Mears, RAAF; 1058531 Stewart Robertson Mitchell, RAFVR and 630457 Glyndwr Phillips, RAF aboard. Nothing further was heard from this aircraft and all were posted missing. They are all commemorated on the memorial at Runnymede.

20 August- ANTI-SHIPPING STRIKE

Daylight raid to bomb an 'Enemy Tanker' probably a 'blockade runner'; seven aircraft failed to locate the tanker and returned to base.

24- 25 August- Night raids, Mixed targets

Three targets detailed for bombing. Seven aircraft bombed FRANKFURT/ MAIN, one aircraft bombed KREUZNACH, one aircraft bombed BINGEN and one aircraft bombed MAYEN. All returned safely.

27- 28 August 1942- KASSEL

Twelve aircraft detailed for a bombing mission to KASSEL; all returned safely. Lancaster R5702 and F/O Calvert's crew reported being fired upon by a Wellington rear gunner when the aircraft passed under the Wellington (without damage).

28- 29 August 1942- NURENBURG

12 aircraft bombed NURENBURG; R5702 VN-S could not find primary target so bombed AUGSBERG instead. All returned safely.

Representative aircraft were (Lancaster): R5639 (destroyed 17/ 18<sup>th</sup>), R5685, R5687, R5689, R5690, R5691, R5702 VN-S, R5725, R5726, R5733, R5735, R5746 VN-Q (DESTROYED 11/ 12<sup>th</sup> ), R5747, R5753 VN-C (destroyed 16/ 17<sup>th</sup>) , R5788, R5902, W4112, W4117, W4135, W4154, W4161.

(Manchester): L7534, L7460.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## September 1942 based R.A.F. Swinderby

No. 50 Squadron Conversion Unit/ Flight is still in existence (at RAF Wigsley); F/O H.B. Martin posted to it on the 20<sup>th</sup> in exchange for P/O J.C. Atkinson. There are many postings in and out this month from/ to the fledgling No. 1654 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU), Wigsley as the Squadron and the HCU expand as AVRO Lancaster production ramps up.

### 1/ 2 September- NIGHT BOMBING, SAARBRUCKEN

Twelve Lancaster a/c bombed aiming point 'A' Saarbrucken, the visibility being excellent. The target was also identified by 'Pathfinder' force flares all returned safely. Aircraft R5725 was 'GEE' equipped; the raid was virtually un-opposed by flak, fighters or searchlights.

### 2/ 3 September- NIGHT BOMBING, KARLSRUHE

Nine a/c bombed Karlsruhe, aided by 'Pathfinder' flares; defences were very quiet. All returned safely to Base.

### 4/ 5 September- NIGHT BOMBING, BREMEN

Eight aircraft bombed aiming point D, Bremen with one, W4135 returning to Base early due to an engine oil pressure problem. A further 8 aircraft bombed the Focke-Wulf factory at Bremen, all assisted by marker flares. Defences were very heavy but only one aircraft sustained minor flak damage. All returned safely.

**Manchester L7521 suffered a propeller seized in the feathered position on a training flight (may be a C.F. aircraft?) and stalled, crashing at Waddington on the approach. Casualties and details?**

### 6/ 7 September- NIGHT BOMBING, DUISBURG

10 a/c bombed Duisburg, all returned safely. Lancaster R5733 with F/O Abercrombie and crew was turned inverted when "something burst under the tail while waiting for photo". The a/c recovered by a diving roll! These were tough aircraft indeed. In addition, R5689 'N' flown by S/Ldr. H.H. Everitt suffered flak damage to the Port inner engine which was feathered causing hydraulic failure, and two holes were also made in the tail and rudder.

### 8/ 9 September- BOMBING, FRANKFURT/ MAINZ

Eleven a/c bombed FRANKFURT/ MAIN, all returned safely. The 'Pathfinder' force flares were widely reported as being scattered; this along with ground haze and a very dark night made bombing accuracy very poor (as described by the men themselves). F/O Calvert (T5902) commented in his Log Book "Too many searchlights- Shaky Do".

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

September 1942 based R.A.F. Swinderby

10/ 11 September- BOMBING, DUSSELDORF

Eleven a/c bombed DUSSELDORF, in conditions of good visibility. The results were generally seen by all crews and reported as accurate; R5753 was 'GEE' equipped. 'Pathfinder' flares were dropped after most crews had bombed. W4155 found it carried defective guns when tested over the sea and subsequently returned to base. **One aircraft failed to return, Lancaster R5725 "F" flown by Sgt. P.H. Blaskey and crew. This was Sgt. Blaskey's third operational trip as an aircraft Captain.**

**Sgt.'s 1062558 John Cooper Havenhand RAFVR (NAV), 1310940 Stanley George Young, RAFVR (AG) and 530247 Lancelot Cyril Cartwright, RAF (AG) were killed (via "Roll of honour" list and CWGC). Sgt.'s P.H. Blaskey (Pilot), R.T. Hedley (WT/ AG) and J.A. Kean survived and were taken P.O.W.**

NOTE: A discrepancy in the ORB here; The ORB record lists only SIX crew instead of the normal seven- Blaskey, Havenhand, Hedley, Kean, Cartwright and Young. However the ORB SUMMARY lists SEVEN as missing on this mission but omits Sgt. Kean but DOES include a SGT HEMMINGS, FE AND SGT WIDDOWSON AB as "posted to 1 Depot, Uxbridge NE Missing" (along with Blaskey, Havenhand, Hedley, Cartwright and Young) i.e. a complete crew. Also note this same 'Crew' of Blaskey, Havenhand, Hedley, Widdowson, Hemmings, Cartwright and Young joined the Squadron from 1654 CU only seven days earlier. The ORB does not record Widdowson as having flown at all with this or any other crew in September from their arrival to going missing.

The Roll of Honour lists only Havenhand, Young and Cartwright as killed in this event.

On the 6/7, the crew of this aircraft were Blaskey, Havenhand, Hedley, Hemmings, Kean, Cartwright and Young; they returned safely from Duisburg, and again the same crew list returned safely from Frankfurt the following day.

Sgt Havenhand, Sgt. Young and Sgt. Cartwright are buried in the REICHSWALD FOREST WAR CEMETERY, Nordrhein-Westfalen, near Kleve. NOTE: Reichswald is a post-war cemetery; those interred here would have been brought from their original resting places all over western Germany for re-interment.

P.O.W. records now indicate that four survivors were indeed made P.O.W. possibly at Stalag Luft VIIIIB/344, LAMSDORFF, (now Lambinowice) Poland.

Sgt. Blaskey was PoW 27013, Sgt. Kean was PoW 26984, Sgt. Hedley was PoW 27038 and Sgt. Hemmings was PoW 26978. This confirms the aircraft's crew as Blaskey, Havenhand, Young, Hedley, Kean, Hemmings and Cartwright.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

September 1942 based R.A.F. Swinderby

13/ 14 September- BOMBING, BREMEN

12 a/c bombed Bremen; results were recorded as generally poor with many results not seen due to haze. Enemy opposition was stiff. Two aircraft suffered minor flak damage, all returned safely.

14/ 15 September- NIGHT BOMBING, WILHELMSHAVEN

11 a/c detailed to bomb WILHELMSHAVEN, ten aircraft doing so successfully. W4154 jettisoned its 4000lb HC bomb and returned to base after the rear gunner was sprayed with hydraulic oil when a folding pipeline to the turret motors snapped. All returned safely.

16/ 17 September- BOMBING, ESSEN

12 aircraft bombed a 'special aiming point' at Essen, assisted by P.F.F. flares but due to hazy conditions most results could not be seen. One aircraft, R5689 'N' performed most of this mission on three engines after feathering one whilst crossing the English coast. R5759 was also attacked by a night fighter over the target but evaded it successfully by 'Corkscrew' action. All returned to Base safely.

18/ 19 September- GARDENING

11 a/c 'Gardened' tonight; two in the 'Nasturtium' area, two in Elderberry, two in the 'Pollock' area, three in the 'Willows' area, one in 'Daffodil' and one in 'Quince' area's tonight. W4161 performed the run in to the Nasturtium area but the bomb doors failed to open and the aircraft made a landing at HINTON. The remainder successfully dropped 4/ 5 mines each. However Lancaster **R5689, VN-N** (the aircraft used on "Press Day" at Swinderby in June) crashed immediately before landing (near the village of Thurlby, Lincolnshire) at around 01.55 local when both Port engines failed killing four; (400517 RAAF F/O George William Marshall (GWM) Harrison (Observer), 953414 Sgt. Harry Male, RAFVR (W/AG), 651255 Sgt. Sidney Charles Garrett, RAF (FE) and R/91886 Sgt. James Reginald Gibbons RCAF (AG) and injuring Sgt. E.J. Morley (Pilot), Sgt. J.W. Dalby (W/AG) and Sgt. J. Fraser (AG).

F/O Harrison is buried at Thurlby St. Germain Churchyard (two miles N.E. of R.A.F. Swinderby); his grave stone does not carry his crew position unlike almost every other grave at this site. This is strange.

Sgt. Male is buried at HALESOWEN Cemetery, Worcestershire; Sgt. Garrett is buried in BOURNEMOUTH EAST cemetery, Hampshire and Sgt. Gibbons is buried in NEWARK-UPON-TRENT CEMETERY, Newark, Notts. (Sec. P. Grave 304).

The remaining aircraft returned safely.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

September 1942 based R.A.F. Swinderby

19/ 20 September- BOMBING, MUNICH

Five aircraft were detailed to bomb a 'special' aiming point at MUNICH. W4117 was airborne for only 16 minutes and returned due electrical trouble while R5725 found the target but could not release the 'Cookie' due to electrical plug failure but the other three bombed accurately. All returned safely.

23/ 24 September- BOMBING, WISMAR

Eleven a/c bombed both the town and also the Norddeutsche Dornier-Werke factory at WISMAR. (Building Dornier 217 and Junkers JU-88 aircraft). R5733 was hit by flak over the target and jettisoned the bombs; R5753 was unable to pin-point the target and brought the bombs back to Base; W4112 bombed but was hit by flak in the tail and rudder; the exhaust muff of R5687 fell off and it returned to Base; P/O Calvert's Lancaster was also hit by flak in several places. The weather was very poor with low cloud and no moon and only five aircraft managed to bomb the target with varying degrees of accuracy. Ten aircraft returned to Base; Lancaster R5909 (VN-?) with the Dickenson crew FTR, F/S G.K. Dickenson RAF (Pilot), Sgt.'s 400981 RAAF Rex Alfred Gotts (Nav./ AB), W.H. Trottier RAF (FE), 403161 RAAF James William Carnley (AB), 401258 RAAF Charles Francis Watson (AG), 407873 RAAF Harold Arthur Phillips (AG) and F/S H.J. Wade (W/AG) all killed. Post war it was established that the aircraft exploded in the air and crashed in the Baltic Sea off the Isle of Lolland, Denmark, South of Nysted. The bodies of Sgt. Carnley and Sgt. Watson were later washed ashore and are buried in Svino Cemetery, Denmark, 90Kms SSW of Copenhagen. The others were never found and are commemorated at Runnymede.

Incidentally this is thought to be the last operational Bomber Command loss from RAF Station Swinderby in the war, being the 84<sup>th</sup> casualty.

Representative aircraft, Avro Lancaster 1a: W4117 'R', W4155 'M'; W4135 'Q'; W4161 'J'; W4163 'M', W4154 'A', W4194 'F', R4112, R4115, R5685 'P'; R5687 'D', R5689 'N', R5690 'H', R5691 'K' ("KING COLE"), R5702 'S', R5725 'F'; R5726 'B', R5733 'O'; R5739 'X', R5753 'C', R5747 'G', R5902 'T', R5909.

Manchester Mk. I: L7521

Crews: Abercrombie, Southgate, Taylor J.F., Wiseman, Wyness, Cole, Howie, Dickenson, Everitt, Calvert, Eyres, Martin H.B., Moore, Blaskey, Crampton, Heinrich, Duncan-Crossley, Wilkins, Morley.

15 men were lost this month on Lancaster operations.

The Manchester and Lancaster aircraft of the Squadron Conversion Flight are believed to have been absorbed into the new 1660 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU) at Swinderby while the Squadron left for Skellingthorpe to renew the offensive in Europe in October 1942.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

October 1942 based R.A.F. Swinderby/ R.A.F. Skellingthorpe.

**This month, No.50 Squadron moves back to RAF Skellingthorpe near Lincoln, where it was destined to remain until the end of the war.**

## Overview

Hitler's attention is turned predominantly on his Eastern Front- Russia. A series of risky daylight raids begin this month to assist General Montgomery's El Alamein Campaign and the Anglo-American Landings in North Africa- bombing of Italian Industry and cities. Bomber Command again pays a heavy price; despite the Italian defences proving relatively ineffectual crews had to cross occupied Europe with city and coastal defences, and the Alps and its unpredictable weather patterns. American Bombers join the daylight offensive with the USAF deploying the first of many aircraft- initially B17's to England.

The first A4 Rocket is test launched by Germany, predecessor to the V2 ballistic Missile.

From The London Gazette, Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October 1942

“By Order of the Air Ministry

Bar to Distinguished Flying Cross.

Acting Squadron Leader Gordon Hugh Everitt D.F.C. (81032), Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, No. 50 Squadron.

Flying Officer Robert Claude Hay (Aus. 407074), Royal Australian Air Force, No. 50 Squadron.

Distinguished Flying Cross

One night in August 1942, these Officers, as Captain and Navigator of aircraft respectively, were detailed to execute a special bombing sortie. In spite of difficulties, they accomplished their task successfully and brought back excellent photographs. Squadron Leader Everitt and Flying Officer Hay have completed many sorties and they have always displayed great skill and determination to make every mission a success. Their outstanding operational efficiency and devotion to duty have set a fine example”.

The Squadron conversion Flight disbands as it is absorbed into the new No. 1654 HCU at RAF Wigsley. This month, postings in and out increase as more Lancaster aircraft are received from the manufacturer. The majority of postings are to and from No. 1654 Conversion Unit, Wigsley and No. 1660 Conversion Unit, R.A.F. Swinderby, while the first posting to No.61 Squadron's new Conversion Flight is noted and a few postings from 106 and 207 Squadrons also arise.

Also this month, as an example of the complex organisational changes taking place with the RAF as a whole, and Bomber Command in particular, the Conversion Flights of No. 97 Squadron and No. 106 Squadron leave RAF Skellingthorpe to make way for No. 50 Squadron after a stay of just some weeks as they merge into the newly formed No. 1660 Heavy Conversion Flight which officially formed for business at RAF Swinderby on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

Also of note is the fact that the Squadron had only two days between the last operation at RAF Swinderby and the first Operation from RAF Skellingthorpe; this being the very non-standard daylight low- level raid on Le Creusot, France. A lot was expected; a lot was given.

W/C W.M. Russell takes command of No. 50 Squadron vice W/C R. J. Oxley this month.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## October 1942 Based Swinderby.

### 1/ 2 October- BOMBING WISMAR TOWN AND DORNIER FACTORY

7 aircraft took off from R.A.F. Swinderby from 18.30hrs onward to bomb the town centre at Wismar. The target was totally obscured by cloud and three aircraft captains reported they had actually bombed Rostock instead by mistake. Only one of the 4 aircraft detailed to bomb the Dornier Aircraft factory claim to have found the target. In all cases no results could be seen due to cloud cover. Heavy flak was encountered but no damage or casualties were reported. W4194 with the Atkinson crew was diverted to East Moor from Swinderby while the rest returned to Base, the last aircraft landing at 02.34hrs- some 8 hours flying. Bomb mix was 4 x 4000lb 'cookies', 9 x 1000lb and 760 x 30lb Incendiaries.

### 5/6 October- BOMBING AACHEN

10 aircraft successfully attacked AACHEN despite poor visibility over the target but were aided by flares dropped by the 'Pathfinder' force. Very heavy flak was encountered over the target, and intense flak aided by searchlights over the coast on the return flight. Aircraft R5733 commanded by S/L G.H. 'Hughie' Everitt was hit by flak in the Starboard wing after dropping to 4000 feet on the run-in to the target to avoid cloud which caused a rapid loss of petrol to the Starboard engines. The crew carried on and bombed the target then made a rapid return to England with the two Starboard engines being feathered while crossing the Belgian coast. With very little fuel left the aircraft broke cloud at 300 feet over West Malling in Kent during a second landing attempt; due to the imminent exhaustion of fuel the captain elected to land despite having overshoot and deliberately retracted the undercarriage performing a successful 'Belly' landing. There were no injuries.

The remaining aircraft returned safely to Swinderby without incident.

### 6/ 7 October 1942- Bombing, OSNABRUCK

Tonight, 9 Lancaster aircraft departed Swinderby from 19.35hrs onward. In generally poor visibility due to ground haze, the target was still considered to be well hit thanks to accurate 'Pathfinder Force' marker flares. Little opposition reported, all aircraft bombed and returned without incident arriving back at Swinderby around midnight.

### 8- 11 October 1942- No Ops Recorded



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## October 1942 Based Swinderby.

### 12/ 13 October 1942- Bombing WISMAR TOWN CENTRE & DORNIER FACTORY

From around 18.00hrs, seven aircraft departed for a bombing raid on WISMAR, along with a further four aircraft bound for the DORNIER Factory also near Wismar. W4154 returned early due to Turret failure (2 hours flying time). Due to cloud over the target, results were not good although the Dornier factory was believed to have been heavily damaged. Cloud was so bad that some crews reported bombing LUBECK instead, along with other units. 10 aircraft returned safely to Swinderby.

One aircraft, R5902 VN-T failed to return with nothing heard from the aircraft after departure. Crew was Pilot 1234574 Sgt. Michael Howard Rawlins RAF, Aged 28; Navigator F/S T. McKerrow RAAF, AG/ WOP 404465 Sgt. Kent Oswald Thompson Summerville RAAF, 23; FE 641680 Sgt. Raymond Alfred Wilfred Hacker RAF, 20; AG/ WOP 1057233 Sgt. Alan Dabbs RAFVR, 21; AG 1325318 Sgt. Frederick Verdun Dacey RAFVR, 25; and AG 1330940 Sgt. Sydney Harold Parker RAFVR, 21.

The aircraft was believed to have been hit by flak or night fighter over LUBECK BAY and crashed into the Bay at 21.45hrs around 10 miles from the East coast 34 Miles to the South East of Kiel and Lubeck, near Travermunde. One crew member survived, Sgt. McKerrow being thrown out of the aircraft when it exploded in the air after entering a tight spin, and he parachuted into the sea. He was rescued by a German launch and made P.O.W. at Stalag Luft VI and survived the war, his report providing the preceding information as to the crews probable fate. Michael Rawlins's body was recovered from the sea and Sgt. Hacker's body was washed ashore in Lubeck Bay a month later. The bodies of Alan Dabbs, Kent Summerville, Fred Dacey and Harold Parker were never recovered and are commemorated at the memorial at Runnymede. Michael Rawlins is buried alongside his colleague Ray Hacker in Hamburg Cemetery, Plot 5A, Row A Grave 8 and 7 respectively.

### 13/ 14 OCTOBER 1942- Bombing KIEL 'SPECIAL' AIMING POINT

This evening, the final operation flown by No.50 Squadron from R.A.F. Swinderby was made when 9 aircraft left from 18.50hrs onward for KIEL. Weather and visibility were good throughout the trip and over the target. Opposition at Kiel was light although a smoke screen was laid. All aircraft returned to Swinderby without damage or casualties. Results of bombing were thought to be excellent.

A total of 9x 4000lb 'Cookies', 472x 30lb Incendiaries and 4290 4lb Incendiaries were dropped.



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## October 1942 Based RAF Skellingthorpe.

15 & 16 October

No Operations flown while the Squadron re-locates to RAF Skellingthorpe- call sign "BLACK SWAN".

## 17 October 1942- Daylight Bombing, Le CREUSOT SCHNEIDER FACTORY

### FIRST OPERATIONAL MISSION FROM R.A.F. SKELLINGTHORPE

At 12.00 Hours the first of 12 aircraft lifted off from Skellingthorpe and proceeded to join 82 other aircraft on a Daylight mission to bomb the Schneider factory at Le CREUSOT, as well as an associated power station nearby, more than 300 miles inside France not far from the Swiss border. Using a circuitous route via the coast of Brittany, the aircraft flew some 300 miles at tree-top level in broad daylight before climbing to bombing altitude near Nevers. The formation was un-escorted but met no opposition whatsoever. In excellent visibility 11 aircraft bombed the target; due to hydraulic failure the bomb doors of W4117 did not open and bombs were brought back to Base. All aircraft returned safely to Base at around 22.40hrs some 10 hours flying, bar W4161 which diverted to HINTON due to weather.

R5691 suffered a bird-strike at low-level, with the bomb aimers panel in the aircraft being smashed. Despite hopes that the raid was a great success, post raid photographs revealed that destruction was not as complete as had been hoped. In addition it revealed that bombs had over-shot the target and had, sadly, destroyed many houses in a civilian workers housing estate.

18- 21 October 1942- No Operations.

## 22/ 23 October 1942- Bombing, GENOA, ITALY.

10 aircraft successfully attacked Genoa tonight, departing around 17.00hrs and the last returning at 03.12hrs 23 October. Weather was near perfect and defences totally ineffective. Bombing results thought to be excellent. Most aircraft dropped leaflets- 'Nickels'- on the return leg.

Some 2 hours after departing in W4131, the Port Outer engine cut and minutes later burst into flames. The fire was extinguished but as the propeller could not be feathered the aircraft returned safely to base on three engines with no injuries to Sgt. L. Cumberland and crew. (In a cruel twist of fate this crew were all killed while on a mission the very next night). It is noted that 3 aircraft had electrical problems with bomb release mechanisms failing to operate.

21x 1000lb G.P. bombs and 5640 4lb Incendiaries were dropped on the target.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## October 1942- Based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe

### 24 October 1942- DAYLIGHT Bombing, MILAN

Shortly after midday the first of 9 aircraft took off from Skellingthorpe on a daylight mission to bomb GENOA. In very good visibility and negligible defensive fire 8 aircraft dropped weapons on the target, returning safely to base by around 22.00hrs.

Lancaster R5691 'K' failed to return. Crew were Pilot 403644 Sgt. Russell Lloyd Cumberland RAAF, age 25; Navigator 403532 Sgt. James Temple Philpot RAAF age 24, Bomb Aimer 404420 Sgt. Stanley Alfred Gregg RAAF age 23; WOP/ AG 991158 Sgt. John James Glendinning RAFVR age 32; Flight Engineer 549357 Sgt. Walter Scott RAF, Rear Gunner 1332609 Sgt. Frank Adey, RAFVR, aged 21; and Mid-Upper Gunner 1277581 Sgt. John St. K. Bernard Fern RAFVR age 34.

The aircraft is reported to have crashed into the English Channel near Meuvaines, Caen, France; the bodies of Sgt. Cumberland and Sgt. Philpot were washed ashore in France that evening followed by John Glendinning. Some days later Frank Adey was found in the sea near Le Havre. All four are buried in France; Frank Adey is interred in Ste. Marie Cemetery, Le Havre, Division 67 Row F, Grave 4; Russell Cumberland in Bayeux War Cemetery, Calvados, Grave XXVIII.J.11 as is his colleague Jim Philpot at rest next to him at XXVIII.J.9 and John Glendinning at XXVIII. J. 10. The bodies of John Fern, Walter Scott and Stanley Gregg were never found and are commemorated at the Memorial at Runnymede.

(See 50 & 61 Squadron Association and the CWGC web sites for details).

In addition, aircraft W4135 was hit by machine gun fire after descending to tree-top level to escape heavy flak and low cloud (the sortie report states the aircraft was well behind time and so may have flown into defences now well prepared after the initial wave of aircraft had passed through). The rear gunner F/S. D.A. MacDonald was hit and severely injured and the mid-upper turret put out of action. The mid-upper gunner dragged the injured tail gunner out of his turret, mended the turret entry doors with an axe and then manned the guns for the rest of the trip. The Flight Engineer tended the injured crewman's injuries. On the way back to England the two gunners shot up two trains. The aircraft landed at R.A.F. Boscombe Down and the injured crewman taken to Salisbury Hospital. Sadly F/S MacDonald died from his injuries a day later. (The ORB may be incorrect, according to the CWGC no F/S D.A. MacDonald is in their care; he was most probably 1553032 Sergeant William Thomas McDonald RAFVR, age 27 and is buried in Brookwood Military cemetery, Surrey at Grave 23.A.16 and whose family resided in Chile.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

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## October 1942- Based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe

Representative aircraft, Avro Lancaster 1a:

R5702 'S'; R5726 'B'; R5685 'P'; R5687 'D'; **R5691 'K'** ("KING COLE"); R5733; R5747; R5753 'C'; **R5902 'T'**; W4112; W4117 'R'; W4131; W4135 'Q'; W4154 'J'; W4161 'A'; W4194;; W4266; W4267.

Crews: Abercromby, Atkinson, **Cumberland**, Crampton, Jones T, Davies, Taylor J.F., Wiseman, Wyness, Cole, Howie, Everitt, Calvert, Knight, Martin H.B., Moore, Crampton, Heinrich, **Rawlins**, Wilkins.

**14 men were lost this month on Lancaster operations, with two aircraft destroyed.**

## November 1942 based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe.

### Overview

The German War Machine is heavily committed to the Eastern Front; in addition the Allies start the North African Campaign with a view to using the French Colonies as a base for operations against Southern Europe, much to the Chagrin of Josef Stalin who complains that the Allies are concentrating on a 'soft' target while they should in his opinion be opening a second front against Hitler- the Invasion of Europe.

No. 50 Squadron crews continue to attack targets in Italy (Turin and Genoa) and Germany (Stuttgart and Hamburg) and Sea mining operations start again ('Gardening').

One of the Squadrons pilots receives the Bar to his DFC (effectively his second Distinguished Flying Cross) this month after a mission on the 9/ 10<sup>th</sup>, New Zealander F/O R.O. Calvert along with his navigator F/S. J. Medani. Also, the Squadron's C.O. W/C W.M. Russell takes part in three raids this month.

Postings in and out increase apace, due to the expansion of the Lancaster force and also due to operational losses. The majority of movements are to and from 1660 and 1654 Conversion Units, with other movements involving 11, 16, 23, 25 and 27 O.T.U.'s, No.9 and No.49 Conversion Flight's and crew postings to No.467 (RAAF) Squadron, Scampton.

### 6/7 November 1942- Night Bombing- Genoa

5 aircraft departed Skellingthorpe from around 21.30hrs for GENOA. Weather was near perfect en-route and over the target with defences reported as ineffective. Pathfinder Force marking was accurate. All aircraft returned safely with no incidents to report.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

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November 1942 based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe.

7/8 November 1942- Night Bombing- Genoa

This evening 12 aircraft departed for Genoa again. Weather was reported good and the target was bombed successfully by all aircraft, returning safely to base by 02.00hrs. Two aircraft suffered damage; S/L Moore's crew in R5687 had a difficult time when on leaving the target the aircraft was hit by flak and the Port Inboard engine was damaged which soon exploded and was shut down and feathered. This was followed soon after by similar trouble with the Port Outer engine which was operated on reduced power for the return flight. The Flight Engineer also was in a state of collapse when his Oxygen supply failed due to damage however he continued to guide the aircraft home safely.

In addition, W4267 was hit by flak and the crew dinghy was lost (from the over-wing stowage) causing the aircraft to go out of control for a period, and W4135 received flak damage to the rear turret and Starboard tail trim tab. Other aircraft reported electrical and Navigational equipment failures.

9/10 November 1942- Night bombing- HAMBURG

Tonight nine aircraft took off for Hamburg on a mission that was to see a complete reversal of the previous raid in Italy. Weather was very bad with 10/10ths cloud and in some cases nil visibility and led to four aircraft bombing on Dead Reckoning (D.R.), an unreliable method. None of the crews could see where bombs had fallen; in one case it is believed that Hanover was bombed instead. Hamburg Naval gun flak defences were aggressive and accurate and caused losses tonight. W4154 returned to base early due to engine problems

Lancaster W4194 with Sgt. T. Jones and crew 'Failed To Return'. The aircraft was believed to have been claimed as shot down by a German Naval (Coastal) Flak battery 3.FLAKDIV.U. MARINEARTILLERIE at 20.12hrs, but no further details are known. The crew were all recovered and are interred at Kiel War Cemetery. However, Kiel Cemetery is post-war and contains the remains of those previously buried elsewhere in Northern Germany and the Friesian Islands.

11915231 Sgt. Trevor Jones RAFVR, Pilot is interred at KIEL WAR CEMETERY, Schleswig-Holstein, joint grave 3.F.8-9; 120041 P/O Thomas Jack Kingman RAFVR, Observer was buried in grave 3.F.10 ; 657780 Sgt. William McGowan Arnott RAF, Navigator was buried in grave 3.F.7; 521690 Sgt. Archibald Leslie Bung RAF WOP/ AG is buried in grave 3.F.12; 1061454 Sgt. Oscar Wardle RAFVR WOP/ AG is buried in joint grave 3.F. 8-9; 1160567 Sgt. Thomas Albert Cobb RAFVR, AG is buried in grave 3.F.13 and 1316854 Sgt. Edward Charles James Frizzell RAFVR, AG is buried in grave 3.F.11. .

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## November 1942 Based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe

### 9/10 November 1942- Night bombing- HAMBURG

Also, Lancaster R5702 VN-S 'Taipo' was hit by flak while bomb doors were open, twice. Shrapnel and shattered Perspex peppered the aircraft and crew cutting off the Intercom between crew members. The pilot P/O Roy Calvert DFC and Bar was hit in the face and arm and the aircraft started flying left wing low due to loss of aileron trim and rudder bias systems. The navigator F/S Medani, RNZAF was very badly wounded and the wireless operator Sgt. Lewis Herbert Austin RAAF was killed outright, with the wireless and numerous other navigation aids put out of action while over the target. The navigator managed to help the depleted and injured crew plot a course back to England and Harwich was eventually spotted, and an airfield seen shortly afterwards in Essex. The hydraulics were completely useless and emergency air was used to lower the landing gear. However, on final approach a low level fog obscured most of the runway lights and no indication of the aircraft's height above the ground was available. Suddenly the wheels hit the ground and collapsed with a belly landing ensuing on the runway, at 23.55hrs. No fire occurred and no further injuries were reported.

The airfield was R.A.F. Bradwell Bay; Roy Calvert mentions in his Log Book that 'P/O Power' was actually an RCAF Officer acting "as an Observer to gain air combat experience". What he does not mention is that the Canadian disobeyed Roy's command to assist the injured Navigator possibly due to shock. Please see internet site [www.cambridgeairforce.org.nz](http://www.cambridgeairforce.org.nz) for in depth information on this incident and on Roy himself; a striking website. Lancaster R5702, "TAIPO" Roy Calvert's beloved aircraft was amazingly repaired despite tremendous damage and fought again with another crew and Squadron.

402338 Sgt. Lewis Herbert Austin RAAF of Elwood, Victoria died aged 27 and was buried at Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey at Grave 4.H.21.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

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## November 1942 based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe

### 10/ 11 November 1942- NIGHT SEA MINING ('GARDENING')

Two aircraft were detailed to place sea mines in the FURZE & ELDERBERRY 'Gardens'- St. John De Luz and Bayonne, France. Sea mines were dropped by R5726 and a safe return to base ensued. W4135 suffered an engine failure and diverted to RAF Tangmere where a safe landing was made on three engines.

### 12 November 1942- No Operations this day.

### 13/ 14 November 1942- NIGHT BOMBING- GENOA

Tonight the Squadron returned to Genoa. 7 aircraft departed Skellingthorpe around 18.15hrs. One aircraft returned early with bombs on board due to Intercom and gun turret failure, the remainder pressed home their attacks. Weather en-route and over the target was excellent and bombing claimed as accurate with results seen. Flak defences were reported to be of a much greater volume. All aircraft returned safely to base shortly after 2am.

### 15/ 16 November 1942- NIGHT BOMBING- GENOA

In a near copy of the previous attack on Genoa, 3 aircraft successfully attacked Genoa with results seen and assessed as good. All aircraft returned home safely. However it should be noted that after all the risks taken and dangers faced tonight, only 3x 1000lb bombs and 264x 30lb Incendiaries were dropped from the 3 Lancaster's Bomb shortages were not uncommon at periods and it is likely that this played a part in tonight's raid.

### 16/ 17 November 1942- DAYLIGHT MINING- 'GERANIUM GARDEN'

W4117 and R5747 left Skellingthorpe just after 17.00hrs today to drop sea mines in the Swinemunde area. Both aircraft returned to base without dropping the mines, the former due to an Unserviceable Compass and the latter due to the Navigator collapsing.

### 18- 19 November 1942- no operations.

### 20/ 21 November 1942- NIGHT BOMBING THE NEW FIAT WORKS, TURIN

Although 7 aircraft departed base for this mission, two returned early due to engine problems. Of the remaining 5, due to ground haze although the target area could be recognised the FIAT Works could not be pinpointed so bombs were dropped on the Town of Turin; Pathfinder Force flares were believed to have been dropped over the town as well. One aircraft was hit by Flak near Le Crouset and the mid-upper gunner wounded. All aircraft returned to Base safely around 03.00hrs. 6x 4000lb 'cookies' and 120x 30lb Incendiaries were dropped.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## NOVEMBER 1942 based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe

### 22/ 23 November 1942- NIGHT BOMBING- STUTTGART

9 aircraft took off tonight to attack Stuttgart Town. 2 aircraft returned early due to u/s/ Intercom and Oxygen system failures. The remaining 7 bombed with reasonable accuracy and most dropped leaflets ('Nickels') on the route home. One aircraft reported seeing three aircraft going down in flames on the outward journey. One aircraft reported shooting up two trains and a car with machine guns on the way home. All aircraft returned safely to base with no reported casualties.

### 24- 27 November 1942- No Operations.

### 28/ 29 November 1942- NIGHT BOMBING- TURIN

6 aircraft departed for Turin tonight on the last operation of the month, from 19.00hrs onwards. The Squadron Commander W/C Russell took part in an unspecified Lancaster. In very good visibility 5 aircraft bombed the target thought to be the FIAT Works again while one aircraft bombed a mile off target due to the 4000lb 'Cookie' hanging up on three separate passes, the weapon finally coming off by being manually jettisoned. Flak was encountered and was very accurate with W4367 suffering engine failure over the target and returning to Base on three engines. All crews commented on the ferocity of fires burning in the town which could be seen while crossing the Alps 30 miles away. One aircraft reported seeing an un-identified aircraft hit a hill and explode while crossing the Alps. Their luck held good tonight.

### Representative aircraft, Avro Lancaster:

R5702 'S'; R5726 'B'; R5685 'P'; R5687 'D'; R5733; R5735; R5747; R5753 'C'; W4112; W4117 'R'; W4131; W4135 'Q'; W4154 'J'; W4161 'A'; W4194; W4266; W4267; W4360; W4381.

8 men were lost this month on Lancaster operations, with one aircraft destroyed.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

December 1942 based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe.

## Overview

This month, the first use of 'Oboe' blind-bombing equipment is made by Mosquitoes of No. 109 Squadron; this equipment was destined to become a key weapon in Bomber Command's arsenal. During this month, Bomber Command re-organises its Airfields using a 'BASE' system; under this system RAF Waddington is No. 53 BASE with two subordinate Satellite Airfields of RAF Skellingthorpe and RAF Bardney.

## 6/7 December 1942- Night Gardening and Bombing- Mannheim

A total of 10 aircraft took off from Skellingthorpe tonight. 4 were detailed to drop sea-mines in the NECTARINE area and all successfully completed the mission without incident. However, of the 6 further aircraft detailed to bomb Mannheim, one failed to reach the target due to a crew member becoming ill due to lack of Oxygen and returned early. The remainder found the target with some difficulty due to an extremely dark night; however bombing was thought to be accurate and all returned to base bar one which diverted to Wyton.

## 7/8 December 1942- Gardening

Two aircraft were detailed to drop sea-mines in the ELDERBERRY and FURZE area, however only one (this machine being flown by the Squadron C.O.) completed the mission successfully, the other returning early due to intercom and W/T equipment failures. Both returned safely to base.

## 8/ 9 December 1942- BOMBING TURIN

Ten aircraft departed Skellingthorpe tonight to attack TURIN. One aircraft returned early due to Inter. Comm. failure; the remaining 9 aircraft bombed in excellent visibility. Defences were reported as in-effective, all aircraft returning safely to base without further incident.

## ?? December 1942- BOMBING TURIN

9 aircraft returned tonight to attack TURIN. All aircraft successfully bombed the target again in excellent visibility and with little opposition.

## 14/ 15 December 1942- GARDENING NECTARINE AREA

7 aircraft took off to drop sea-mines tonight, however the recall order was given and the aircraft dropped the weapons 'SAFE' on the way back to Base.



# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## DECEMBER 1942 based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe

### 17/ 18 December 1942- BOMBING SOLTAU

Five aircraft took off tonight for an attack on various targets in SOLTAU, but this mission was to prove disastrous. Flying at low-level to the target area, in bright moonlight, one aircraft was attacked by fighters and despite severe damage managed to return to base safely. Three aircraft managed to bomb the marshalling Yards and the other two dropped bombs on built-up areas in and around the town. **Two aircraft Failed to Return**, with nothing heard from either aircraft after departure. Two crews were later posted missing.

W4382 was lost with the Atkinson crew; the aircraft and crew have never been found to this day. The Dutch Institute of Military History lists this aircraft as going down into the North Sea, North of the tiny coastal village of PETTEN, Netherlands at 21.18hrs (i.e. on the outward flight). The aircraft was claimed shot down by a Luftwaffe Night fighter flown by Oblt. Lothar Linkee of IV/ NJG1. (Although the Luftwaffe documents list the aircraft as a Halifax the Dutch Investigators have concluded it was in fact this Lancaster.

#### The crew were:

Pilot 120725F/Lt John Charles Atkinson DFM, RAFVR, 28

WOP/ AG 407956 F/O Charles William Walker RAAF, 33. Charles was an Australian test Cricketer and toured England in 1930 and 1938

Nav. 401287 F/O Percy William Rowling RAAF, 30

AG 404622 P/O Henry William Joseph Smith DFM, RAAF, 25

F/E 951050 Sgt. Francis Martin RAFVR, 25

B/A 402604 Sgt. James Cornelius O'Neill RAAF, 28

AG 702772 Sgt. John Mason Reilly RAFVR, 24

All are commemorated at Runnymede.

Post war investigations failed to reveal any trace of this aircraft and of the crew.

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Lancaster I W4266 VN-N also failed to return. The aircraft was claimed as shot down by a night fighter crewed by Oblt. H. Lutje of III/NJG 1 and crashed 600 metres North of Haarst near Mastenbroek, Zwolle, Holland at 21.10hrs. Three of the crew parachuted to safety and were made P.O.W. for the rest of the war. Four remaining crew perished in the crash.

(This was a loss rate of 40 % on this raid.)

#### Killed:

Pilot 80127 F/O Norman Edward 'Nick' Goldsmith DFC RAFVR, age 20.

Flight Engineer 1264796 Sgt. Ronald Walter Game RAFVR, age 22.

WOP/ AG 1062601 Sgt. Duncan Martin 'Duncan' Wilson RAFVR, age 21.

AG 115640 F.O. Harold Gilleland RAFVR, age 31.

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## DECEMBER 1942 based R.A.F. Skellingthorpe

### 17/ 18 December 1942- BOMBING SOLTAU (Ctd.)

(W4266)

All are buried at Zwollerkerspel (Bergklooster) General cemetery, Plot K row 1 grave 2, K-1-1, K-1-4 and K-1-3 respectively. This is a small, wartime cemetery adjacent a larger, post war cemetery and these four colleagues are the only military WWII burials in the cemetery.

#### Survivors:

Navigator 404628 P/O William James 'Jim' Farrelly RAAF, age 26, POW 81. One source gives William's Camp as "Camp 21B/ L3". This was probably Oflag XXI-B Szubin in Pomorze, Poland later called Stalag Luft XXI-B. In April 1943 the Camp was emptied (probably due to a mass escape in the previous month!) and the men are moved to the famous Stalag Luft III, Sagan, home of the great escape.

WOP/ AG 751344 F/S J.D. John Chapman RAF, POW 27340, and MUG 920369 F/S J.H. Mitchell RAF, POW 27334 were both interned in Stalag Luft VIII-B, Lamsdorf (now Lambinowice, Poland), Silesia. This Camp was a Luftwaffe Camp opened inside an Army camp Stalag VIII-B in 1942 and later became Camp 344 by simply re-numbering.

### 21/ 22 December 1942- BOMBING MUNICH

7 aircraft tonight departed to attack MUNICH, however weather was very poor with haze and thick cloud obscuring the target along with dense smoke and glare from massive fires started by other unit's bombing. Bombs were dropped in the area of existing fires but results of bombing could not be assessed. All aircraft returned safely to Base.

### 29/ 30 December 1942- NIGHT GARDENING- DEODARS AREA

Five aircraft successfully completed this mission tonight with no casualties.

#### Representative crews:

Atkinson, Goldsmith, Calvert, Yates, Townsend, Johnson, Dennis, Birch, Crampton, Davies, Taylor J.F., Wiseman, Wyness, Everitt, Kitching, Knight, Moore, Russell, Rowling, Heinrich, Richardson, Schofield, Huntley, Power, Stevens.

#### Representative aircraft, Avro Lancaster I:

R5702 'S'; R5726 'B'; R5685 'P'; R5687 'D'; R5733; R5735; R5747; R5753 'C'; W4112; W4117 'R'; W4131; W4135 'Q'; W4154 'J'; W4161 'A'; W4194; W4266 VN-N; W4267; W4360; W4380, W4381, W4382, W4383, W4800, ED303, ED309.

"We will remember them".

END OF PART FOUR

# No. 50 Squadron Royal Air Force In World War Two

The Diary of a WWII Bomber Squadron- Part 1 to Part 4, 1937 to 1942.

## Credits, Acknowledgements and Sources:

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Unfortunately, with the passage of time Web sources may come and go.