

**ROYAL AIR FORCE
BOMBER COMMAND**

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**SQUADRON PROFILES
NUMBER 106**



467 SQUADRON

Royal Australian Air Force

RESEARCHED, COMPILED AND WRITTEN

BY

CHRIS WARD

ROYAL AIR FORCE BOMBER COMMAND SQUADRON PROFILES



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GENERAL NOTES

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GENERAL NOTES

This profile is a reference work on the activities of the squadron during the Second World War. Bomber Command operated exclusively from stations in the UK, and used overseas bases purely for shuttle operations, or as advanced staging posts for specific purposes. For this reason, periods spent on detachment, or permanent postings to overseas Commands, do not fall within the scope of this work.

This profile is not intended to serve as a comprehensive squadron history, but to provide as much information as possible in a non-anecdotal form. The brief history narrative is basically an account of Bomber Command's war, with the individual squadron's involvement interwoven into it. The publications listed in section 5 are not only recommended reading, but represent the best available sources of information for serious students of the subject. The operational record is based almost entirely on the figures provided in *The Bomber Command War Diaries* by Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt, and I am indebted to Martin Middlebrook for allowing me to use them.

An aircraft is included in section 3 if; a) it spent time on squadron charge, no matter how briefly, and irrespectively of whether or not it operated. b) its type was used operationally by the squadron. Information is restricted in most cases to; where from, where to, unless it completed its service with the squadron, in which case, some detail of its demise appears. Aircraft which failed to return have the date and target recorded. Where no information follows the serial number of a type still in use when the squadron departed Bomber Command, or at war's end, it can be assumed that the aircraft was still on squadron strength. However, where there is a blank space following the serial number of a type which has been withdrawn from service with Bomber Command, it signifies that I don't know its ultimate fate. An absence of information does not imply that the aircraft flew no operations during its time with the squadron.

Those squadrons which served with the AASF in France between the outbreak of war and the fall of France, were not technically part of Bomber Command. However, a number of them retained their Fairey Battles on return to the UK, and formed part of the reconstituted 1 Group. The AASF service of these squadrons is recorded, and their aircraft listed, but Battle squadrons which relinquished the type on their return to Bomber Command, do not have this period detailed. The Blenheim squadrons of the AASF are treated as if under Bomber Command.

Finally, information has been drawn from a variety of sources, ranging from Records Branch to individuals with squadron connections, and I am grateful for their contributions. There will inevitably be errors and omissions when dealing with a subject as vast as Bomber Command, and I am happy to be corrected and/or updated by readers.

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SECTION 1



BRIEF HISTORY

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467 SQUADRON

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Formed at Scampton on the 7th of November 1942 under the banner of 5 Group, 467 Squadron was the second Royal Australian Air Force squadron to form in Bomber Command. Its formation came in response to the Australian government's wishes to group together, where possible, Australian flying personnel, although initially, like all squadrons, it was a polyglot of nationalities, predominately from Britain, Canada and New Zealand. Ground crews were also mainly RAF, although this would change in time. The squadron was formed under the command of Wing Commander C L Gomm, whose expatriate family resided in Brazil. Born there also, he was educated in England, and in many ways his life paralleled that of Guy Gibson. Both were born overseas and educated in England, and both were serving officers at the outbreak of war. They each completed a tour of operations, Gomm with 77 Squadron flying Whitleys, and Gibson with 83 Squadron on Hampdens, before joining respectively 604 and 29 nightfighter squadrons. Both then returned to Bomber Command to take up commands of their own, Gomm at 467 and Gibson at 106. Twenty nine years old, tall and quiet, he was every inch the commanding officer, and would lead the squadron in the only way acceptable to the Australians, by example from the front. The two flight commanders, Squadron Leaders Green and Paape, had both served with 207 Squadron at Bottesford, to where 467 Squadron would shortly be posted, 207 Squadron having moved to nearby Langar.

Four crews arrived on the day that the squadron was formed, and within three weeks a complement of twenty were on strength. Most were straight out of OTUs, although there was a sprinkling of second tour men to provide the experience. The first Lancaster, W4384, was taken on charge on the 9th, thus making the squadron the 15th operational unit to receive the type. On the 22nd, the squadron made the move to Bottesford, an inhospitable plot of farmland on the Leicestershire border with Nottinghamshire, which lacked all the basic amenities and comforts taken for granted at pre-war stations, like the one the squadron had just vacated. Training occupied the squadron for the remainder of 1942, but it did suffer one operational loss in the meantime. F/O Bannerman went missing during an operation to Munich on the 21/22nd of December with a crew from 207 Squadron, with whom he was flying as "second dickey", and all were killed. This left a headless crew at Bottesford, and while the flight engineer joined the commanding officer's crew, the others were sent back to OTU to find a new pilot.

467 Squadron was formed at a critical time in the Command's gradual evolution towards becoming a war-winning weapon. The Commander-in-Chief, ACM Sir Arthur Harris, who had been in post since the 22nd of February, firmly believed in the potential of the bomber to force the surrender of the enemy, by destroying his capacity and will to continue the fight. On taking up his appointment, he had asked for four thousand bombers with which to accomplish this, and whilst there was never the slightest chance of getting them, he had demonstrated at Cologne at the end of May what a thousand aircraft could achieve. This had been the high point of his tenure to date, however, and the second Thousand bomber raid two nights later

had brought an unmitigated failure at Essen. The third and final use of the Thousand Force at Bremen towards the end of June had been a modest success, but there was no consistency, and attempts to hit the towns and cities of the industrial Ruhr were almost always doomed to failure. The problem was the haze, which hung permanently over the region, shielding it from the eyes of the crews above. The Gee navigation device, which had been introduced to operations in March, could help crews navigate to the general area of the Ruhr, but to pinpoint a specific urban target proved almost impossible, and bombs were sprayed around over hundreds of square miles, with no point of concentration. Concentration, Harris knew, was the key to effective area raids, by overwhelming the defences and emergency services. He also recognized, that built-up areas are most efficiently destroyed by fire rather than blast. By condensing the bombing into the shortest practicable time period, and concentrating it around an aiming point, collapsing buildings and cratered and blocked streets would prevent access to the fires, allowing them sufficient time to gain a foothold and spread. Harris struck eight times at Essen during March and April, launching 1,555 sorties for the loss of sixty four aircraft, and gained only twenty two bombing photographs within five miles of the city. (Bomber Command War Diaries. Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt.) It was a similar story at other Ruhr locations, as at Duisburg, which Harris attacked four times in July and once in early August for a very modest return, which was in no way commensurate with the effort expended and the losses sustained.

It was all a case of accurate navigation, and at night, over a blacked out country, which was often covered by cloud, and beyond the effective range of Gee, it was little more than a lottery. Harris proved at Lübeck at the end of March, that if he could provide his crews with easily identifiable pin-points on the ground, they could find the target. The Baltic coastline was ideal, and the historic old city suffered 30% destruction of its built-up area in a fire raising attack, which was the first major success for the area bombing policy. Harris tried to use Gee as a blind bombing device at Cologne in April, to ultimately solve the problem over the Ruhr, but it was a disappointing experiment. Over the succeeding four nights, he returned to the Baltic coast to attack the port of Rostock, and in contrast, after an initial failure, he destroyed 60% of the town's built-up area, and reduced over seventeen hundred buildings to ruins. A new era began on the 15th of August, with the formation of the Pathfinder Force under the then Group Captain Don Bennett. Harris had been opposed in principle to such an organisation, which to his mind smacked of elitism. His Group commanders, with the exception of AVM Roddy Carr of 4 Group, were of a similar mind, but once overruled by higher authority, Harris, to his eternal credit, and in typical fashion, gave it his unstinting support. The Pathfinders started life with four heavy squadrons, 7 Squadron from 3 Group with Stirlings, 35 Squadron from 4 Group with Halifaxes, 83 Squadron from 5 Group with Lancasters and 156 Squadron, formerly of 3 Group, but representing 1 Group, with Wellingtons. 109 Squadron was also posted in with its Mosquitos, and this would prove to be the crucial factor. The Oboe blind bombing device had been intended for use in the pressurized Mk IV Wellington, but an inspired decision to marry it to the Mosquito gained favour. For the remainder of the year, 109 Squadron would conduct the development programme, which would ultimately bear fruit in spectacular fashion in the following year.

The Pathfinder Force began its operational career inauspiciously, by entirely failing to locate its maiden target of Flensburg, which had been selected for its coastal location on the narrow neck of land where Germany and Denmark meet. Matters proceeded only marginally better at Frankfurt on its second outing, and it was only the third operation, to Kassel, which resulted in sufficient illumination of the target to allow the main force to achieve a modest degree of success. When the small non-industrial town of Saarlouis was marked in error for Saarbrücken on the 1/2nd of September, it augured ill for the fledgling force. However, thereafter, the Command embarked on an unprecedented series of effective and destructive raids over the next two weeks, which in their way, would suggest a turning point after three years of punching the air. It began at Karlsruhe in southern Germany on the 2/3rd, when returning crews reported around two hundred fires, and the damage was later confirmed by photographic reconnaissance. Two nights later, the Pathfinders introduced the three phase system of illumination, visual marking and backing up, which would form the basis of all future operations, and 480 buildings were destroyed at Bremen, while almost fourteen hundred others were seriously damaged. 114 buildings were wrecked in Duisburg on the 6/7th, and whilst this was only a modest result, it still represented a victory at what was a most elusive target.

The run of successes was temporarily halted at Frankfurt on the 8/9th, when the Pathfinders located only the general area, but a return to winning ways came at Düsseldorf on the 10/11th. 479 aircraft took off on this night, a proportion of them provided by the Training Groups, and the main force was able to benefit from the first use by the Pathfinders of Pink Pansies as target indicators. The attack was the most effective of the war to date after Cologne, and resulted in the destruction of over nine hundred houses and apartment blocks in Düsseldorf and nearby Neuss, and sufficient damage to more than fifty industrial premises to halt production for varying periods. A return to Bremen on the 13/14th brought a catalogue of destruction, which included over eight hundred houses, and further damage to important war industry factories. Wilhelmshaven suffered its heaviest raid of the war thus far on the 14/15th, when the town centre and residential districts sustained the greatest degree of damage. Even Essen was not exempt from a serious blow on the 16/17th, when many fires were started, and fifteen high explosive bombs hit the giant armaments producing Krupps complex. It can be no coincidence that these effective raids came at a time when the Pathfinder crews were emerging from their shaky start, and were coming to terms with the requirements of their demanding role. The evolution of tactics, and the development of marking aids were further steps towards forging a war-winning weapon, and it boded ill for Germany in the years ahead. This did not mean, of course, that there was an overnight transformation, and failures would continue to outnumber successes for some time to come, but at least the encouraging signs were evident.

On the night of the 22/23rd of October, a campaign began against the major cities of Italy, in support of Operation Torch, the landings in North Africa, which would ultimately lead to Montgomery's victory over Rommel at El Alamein. This would occupy much of the Command's attention until mid December, when the campaign concluded, and 5 Group played a leading role throughout. This then, was the situation into which 467 Squadron was born, with the Command on the threshold of great things in the coming year, when major

campaigns would be unleashed against Germany's industrial heart. An operation of great significance took place almost unnoticed on the night of the 20/21st of December, while over two hundred aircraft from the Pathfinders and main force were active over Duisburg. W/C Hal Bufton led six Mosquitos of 109 Squadron to a power station at Lutterade in Holland, to deliver the first Oboe-aimed bombs as a calibration exercise. Bufton and two others bombed as briefed, while the remaining three crews experienced failure of their Oboe equipment, and went on to bomb Duisburg instead. The results were encouraging, but as a calibration exercise, the operation failed, when photographic reconnaissance revealed the presence of numerous craters from misdirected bombs from an earlier raid intended for Aachen, and it proved impossible to plot those dropped by Oboe.

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467 Squadron was declared operational at the start of the New Year, and began what would become an illustrious career on the night of the 2/3rd of January. Five crews were briefed to lay mines in the areas of Bayonne and St-Jean-de-Luz off the Biscay coast, and the honour of being first away from Bottesford fell to an Australian, Sgt Max Stewart, in PO-J. The other crews on this momentous occasion were those of S/L Paape, F/L Thiele, Sgt Howie and Sgt Aicken, and all returned safely, although Sgt Stewart was diverted to Predannock in Cornwall. A similar operation off the French and Dutch coasts took place on the following night, while 109 Squadron marked Essen for a small force of 5 Group Lancasters as part of the Oboe trials programme. This was the first of seven such small-scale operations against Essen and one on Duisburg during the first two weeks of the year, and the third of them, on the 7/8th, gave five of the squadron's crews an opportunity to carry bombs for the first time. Two were forced to return early with technical problems, and F/L Thiele's Lancaster was damaged by flak over the target, but he and his crew made it back home without further incident from what was a disappointing raid. On the following night, Duisburg was the target for three Oboe Mosquitos and thirty eight Lancasters, and this operation brought the inevitable first loss of a 467 Squadron aircraft and crew. ED367 failed to return home, and was presumed to have crashed into the sea, taking with it to their deaths the crew of the American Sgt Al Wark. On the 14th, a new Air Ministry directive was issued, which authorized the area bombing of those French ports which were hosts to U-Boat bases and support facilities. This was in response to the continued heavy losses of Allied shipping in the Atlantic, and a list of targets was drawn up accordingly, which contained Lorient, St-Nazaire, Brest and La Pallice. The first of eight raids on Lorient over the next four weeks was mounted that night, with only a handful of Lancasters involved, and only modest success was achieved. The operation was repeated on the following night, again with only minimal Lancaster involvement, and this time, eight hundred buildings were destroyed.

On the 16/17th, the first major raid on Berlin for fourteen months was undertaken by two hundred aircraft drawn from 1, 4, 5 and 8 Groups. A disappointing attack ensued, which scattered bombs across mostly southern districts, with no point of concentration. The only significant building to be hit was the ten thousand-seat Deutschlandhalle, the largest covered arena in Europe, and this suffered total destruction. A bonus, however, was the loss of just a single Lancaster, and never again would the Command escape so lightly from the Capital. A

tragic death did occur on this night in a 467 Squadron aircraft, Sgt Broemeling, the rear gunner in F/L Thiele's ED360 succumbing in his turret to oxygen starvation caused by ice blocking the tube. Despite the best endeavours of his colleagues to revive him on the way home in a flak damaged aircraft, he was pronounced dead by the Medical Officer on arrival at Bottesford. 170 Lancasters and seventeen Halifaxes set out once more for Berlin on the following night, and produced similar results, after the Pathfinders again failed to identify the city centre. Not a single building was classed as destroyed, and this time, the nightfighters were able to infiltrate the bomber stream, and contribute to the loss of twenty two aircraft, or nearly 12% of those despatched. Included among the missing was 467 Squadron's W4378, which disappeared into the sea, taking with it Sgt Aicken and his crew. Following two further trips to Lorient, on the 23/24th and 26/27th, again both predominately non-Lancaster, Düsseldorf was raided on the 27/28th, when Oboe Mosquitos carried out ground marking for the first time. The mainly Lancaster heavy force produced encouraging results, amounting to 450 houses destroyed or seriously damaged, and numerous public buildings and industrial premises were also hit. Hamburg was beyond the range of Oboe, and an attack on the 30/31st brought the first use of the H2s navigation and blind bombing device, which was installed in the Stirlings and Halifaxes of 7 and 35 Squadrons. It could not be considered an effective baptism, and although over a hundred fires were started, many bomb loads could not be accounted for.

February was characterized by further frequent trips to French and German ports, particularly Lorient and Wilhelmshaven, the former dominating the first half of the month, and the latter the second. It was Cologne, though, which opened the month's account on the 2/3rd, and despite the use of both Oboe and H2s to mark the target, bombing was scattered across the city, and damage was nowhere serious. Hamburg also escaped serious damage on the 3/4th, after icing conditions over the North Sea persuaded many crews to turn for home early. The Pathfinders again failed to achieve any degree of concentration, and it was, therefore, beyond the main force crews to do so. A trip across the Alps to Turin brought some compensation on the 4/5th, when extensive damage was inflicted on the city by 156 aircraft, and then it was back to the U-Boat campaign, with further raids on Lorient. Wilhelmshaven was bombed through cloud on skymarkers on the 11/12th, and the glow from a huge explosion on the ground was observed by crews to last for around ten minutes. This was a naval ammunition dump in the process of destroying itself, and in excess of a hundred acres of the town and naval dockyard was laid waste. While the other types failed to impress at Cologne on the 14/15th, the Lancaster brigade went to Milan, and returning crews reported being able to see the fires from a hundred miles away. 360 aircraft delivered the final assault on Lorient on the 16/17th, after which, the town was little more than a deserted ruin. Wilhelmshaven provided the objective on the 18/19th, 19/20th and 24/25th, and in contrast to the raid of a week earlier, each was a resounding disappointment. The second of the series cost the squadron its first casualties of the month, when the crews of F/L Michie and Sgt Vine went missing without trace in ED525 and ED529 respectively. Nuremberg received a visit from over three hundred aircraft on the 25/26th, but late and inaccurate marking led to disappointing results, and the squadron's ED526 was one of six Lancasters missing. This contained the crew of F/S Stewart, and there were no survivors from the crash in southern Germany. Over four hundred aircraft were despatched to Cologne on the 26/27th, but only a quarter of the force found the mark,

and housing was the chief victim. Having disposed of Lorient, the Command now turned its attention to St-Nazaire on the last night of the month, and destroyed 60% of its built-up area on this one night alone.

March would bring the opening rounds in the Ruhr offensive, the first campaign of the war for which the Command was adequately equipped and prepared. Before this, however, the crews had two other major operations to negotiate, Berlin on the 1/2nd and Hamburg on the 3/4th. The former attack sprayed bombs over a wide area, but still caused some useful damage, which was actually more extensive than on any previous occasion at the Capital. Misleading H2s returns resulted in a failure at Hamburg, and the small town of Wedel received most of the bombs intended for its more illustrious neighbour, although more than a hundred fires had to be dealt with at the intended target. The Ruhr campaign began on the night of the 5/6th, for which 442 aircraft took off either side of 19.00 hours. 467 Squadron contributed thirteen Lancasters, led by W/C Gomm in ED524, accompanied by the crews of S/L Green in ED543, F/Ls Thiele and MacKenzie in ED532 and ED538 respectively, P/Os Desmond, Manifold and Mant in ED504, ED539 and ED530, and Sgts Ball, Cairnby, Good, Harper, Heavery and Marks in ED545, ED523, ED651, ED500, ED547 and ED531. An unusually high number of early returns and the bombing of alternative targets reduced the numbers bombing at Essen to 362, but these delivered an outstandingly accurate and concentrated assault, which fell mainly between the city centre and the Krupps works. Over three thousand houses and apartment blocks were destroyed in a 160 acre area of devastation, and fifty three buildings were hit within Krupps, all for the relatively modest loss of fourteen aircraft. All of the 467 Squadron crews completed their allotted tasks before returning safely. It was the first time that Essen had really succumbed to a Bomber Command attack, and much of the credit for this success belonged to Oboe, which had negated the effects of the industrial haze blanketing the city.

It would be a week before Harris sent a force back to the Ruhr, and in the meantime, he turned his attention to southern Germany, mounting raids on Nuremberg, Munich and Stuttgart over a four night period beginning on the 8/9th. All were beyond the range of Oboe, and the Pathfinders, now operating with H2s to aid aiming point identification, were still experiencing problems with accuracy. At least, though, with the weight of bombs being carried in the cavernous bays of the four engined heavies, some useful damage was almost guaranteed if the markers found the general area. Much of the bombing at Nuremberg fell into open country, but despite this, over six hundred buildings were destroyed, and a number of important war industry factories sustained damage. On return from this operation, F/S Howie's crew became the first to complete a tour on 467 Squadron, having embarked on their operational career while serving with 50 Squadron. It was a similar story at Munich, where the Pathfinders also failed to mark the city centre, and the main weight of the attack was concentrated in the city's western half. Almost three hundred buildings were destroyed, and twice that number were seriously damaged. Each of these operations cost a modest eight aircraft, while eleven failed to return from Stuttgart, after a raid which brought less rewarding results, possibly because the presence of dummy target indicators attracted a proportion of the bombing. One of the two missing Lancasters was 467 Squadron's ED523, which was captained by P/O Mant, who died with one other in the crash in southern Germany. Five of his

crew did manage to escape from the stricken aircraft to fall into enemy hands, and these were the first survivors to date from a downed 467 Squadron aircraft.

The second raid of the Ruhr offensive came on the 12/13th, and again fell on Essen. Although substantially less buildings were destroyed than in the earlier attack, much of the bombing was concentrated around the Krupps works, which sustained 30% greater damage. Minor operations held sway for the next nine nights, before almost three hundred aircraft returned to St Nazaire on the 22/23rd to continue the campaign against U-Boats. On return, the 467 Squadron crews were diverted to Lossiemouth because of heavy cloud over Lincolnshire. The first to arrive was P/O Hooper in ED500, which suffered a minor prang. As a result of this, the other crews had to divert again, this time to Kinloss. Duisburg was raided on the 26/27th, and partly through failure of the Oboe equipment in some of the 109 Squadron Mosquitos, success eluded the Command on this night. On the following night, the first of two raids on Berlin in the space of three nights was undertaken by almost four hundred aircraft. As usual, the intended aiming point was the city centre, which the Pathfinders failed to find, and much of the bombing undershot by up to seventeen miles. Poor weather conditions contributed to a similarly disappointing raid two nights later, when a lot of earth was turned outside the city, and only slight damage was caused within it. The combined loss of thirty aircraft from the two operations was expensive in the light of such a poor return, and was certainly not commensurate with the effort of launching 725 aircraft. During the period, 467 Squadron developed an excellent reputation for reliability and efficiency, and despite the frequency of operations, and the nature of the targets, no losses had resulted since Stuttgart, and squadron morale was very high. The flow of Australians increased, and they took readily to the style of command provided by W/C Gomm, who must be credited for the fine spirit which pervaded the squadron. April and May would be a testing time, through which the squadron would emerge bruised, but unbowed. Keith Thiele was promoted to Squadron Leader during the month, and he took over the newly formed C Flight.

April would prove to be the least rewarding month of the Ruhr campaign, largely because of the number of operations mounted to targets outside of the region, and consequently beyond the range of Oboe. It began in promising fashion, however, with another successful tilt at Essen on the 3/4th, when clear conditions contributed to an effective attack, which destroyed over six hundred buildings. This was the first occasion on which more than two hundred Lancasters operated, and among the nine of the type failing to return was the squadron's ED524. This was carrying the B Flight commander S/L Paape and his crew, and it crashed between the target and the border with Holland with no survivors. The largest non-1,000 force to date of 577 aircraft was sent against Kiel on the following night, but decoy fires were partly responsible for luring away the majority of the bombs, and the massive effort was almost entirely wasted. Duisburg reflected the generally disappointing results accruing from April's operations, when raided on the consecutive nights of the 8/9th and 9/10th. The former involved a little short of four hundred aircraft, but those reaching the target destroyed only forty buildings for the loss of nineteen of their number. The latter was by a hundred Lancasters, and this attack achieved the destruction of fifty houses in return for eight missing aircraft. Five hundred aircraft were committed to a raid on Frankfurt on the 10/11th, but this fared no better, only a few bombs falling into the southern suburbs. It was decided at this point to rest S/L

Green, the A Flight commander, who eventually went on detachment to the USAAF 8th Air Force as an adviser. An operation to the docks at La Spezia in Italy on the 13/14th produced good results and no squadron casualties, and this was followed by a raid on Stuttgart on the 14/15th. Here, the creep-back phenomenon was responsible for most of the useful damage, after spreading across an important industrial district.

Bottesford was a very spartan station with primitive arrangements in the latrine and ablutions department. Regular medical checks were carried out, and in early April a case of diphtheria was uncovered, and a mini epidemic claimed the life of one WAAF, while necessitating lengthy spells in hospital for others. Bottesford was quarantined, but the war went on around, oblivious to the trials and tribulations of one bomber station, and the crews continued to ply their trade, and for that matter, their germs over Germany.

Harris divided his strength on the 16/17th, when sending the Lancaster and Halifax brigade to distant Pilsen in Czechoslovakia to attack the Skoda armaments works, while a predominately Wellington and Stirling effort was directed at Mannheim. 467 Squadron contributed fifteen aircraft to the former, which failed, when Pathfinder route markers were confused for target indicators, and most of the bombs fell onto an asylum seven miles from the intended aiming point. The disappointment was compounded by the loss of thirty six aircraft, a massive 11%, split evenly between the two types, and a further eighteen aircraft failed to return from the diversion, although this was at least a reasonably damaging attack. The combined total of fifty four missing aircraft represented a new record for a single night. Two of the absent Lancasters were from 467 Squadron, ED780, which crashed in France with the loss of Sgt Stuart and his crew, and ED651 captained by Sgt Wilson, who survived with three of his crew, one of whom subsequently died of his injuries. On the 18/19th, over 170 aircraft returned to La Spezia to attack the docks, but most of the bombing hit the town, where the railway station and many public buildings were hit. The city and port of Stettin, at the eastern end of the Baltic, would prove to be one of the few urban targets in Germany never to escape lightly. It hosted an attack by over three hundred aircraft on the 20/21st, which left an estimated one hundred acres of its central area in ruins, and this included the destruction of 380 houses and a dozen industrial premises. This success was achieved at a cost of twenty one aircraft, but none of these were from 467 Squadron. The most successful raid yet on Duisburg took place on the 26/27th, when three hundred buildings were destroyed, but even so, much of the bombing missed the mark by undershooting. The final night of the month brought a return to the increasingly familiar, and progressively more hostile town of Essen, where 305 aircraft produced scattered but effective bombing, and further damage was inflicted on the Krupps works. The squadron's ED771 was shot down by flak over Holland on the way home, although F/L Craigie and two others survived to become PoWs.

May would bring a return to winning ways with some spectacular successes and a number of new records. The main force ventured forth for the first time on the 4/5th with a new record non-1,000 force of 596 aircraft, whose crews were briefed to carry out the first genuinely heavy assault of the war on Dortmund. A decoy site attracted a proportion of the bombing, and some of the later marking undershot, but at least half of the bomb loads fell within three miles of the aiming point, and over twelve hundred buildings were destroyed. "Happy

Valley's" evil reputation among the crews was gaining strength, and thirty one aircraft failed to return home on this night. There was no further main force activity for a week, and when the Command next took to the air in numbers, it was for yet another tilt at Duisburg on the 12/13th. For once at this target, the operation proceeded according to plan, and the accurate Pathfinder marking was exploited by the main force crews. They destroyed almost sixteen hundred buildings, and inflicted damage on some important war industry factories, including the Thyssen steel works, while sinking or seriously damaging sixty thousand tons of shipping in the port. Thirty four aircraft were shot down as the losses over the Ruhr began to mount, but the squadron narrowly came through again without loss. S/L Keith Thiele, ever in the action, lost two engines, hydraulics, and most of the perspex from the greenhouse, and had to belly-land at Coltishall on return, earning for himself a DSO, the first to be awarded to a member of 467 Squadron. On the 13/14th, while over four hundred main force aircraft raided Bochum, 5 Group returned to Pilsen, in company with a Pathfinder element to provide the marking. Once more the operation failed to achieve its objective, and the Skoda works remained undamaged. 467 Squadron's ED543 was one of nine aircraft missing from the operation, and this Lancaster was brought down over Germany, with no survivors from the crew of Sgt Mahoney. There would now follow a nine night break from operations, and it was during this period, on the 16/17th, that 617 Squadron went to war for the first time, and registered its unique place in aviation history with its epic attack on the dams. The first crew to be lost during Operation Chastise was that of P/O Vernon Byers, whose Lancaster was shot down by flak from the island of Texel, to crash into the Waddenzee with no survivors. Canadian Byers, at 32, was one of the older men involved, and was on his first tour of operations. He had arrived at 467 Squadron as a Sergeant on the 5th of February, and completed three operations before his posting to 617 Squadron on the 28th of March. The Dams raid was, therefore, only his fourth sortie, and his promotion to officer status had come through on the day before. Killed alongside him were four members of his original 467 Squadron crew, flight engineer Sgt Taylor, W/Op Sgt Wilkinson, bomb-aimer Sgt Whitaker and front gunner Sgt Jarvie.

The main force returned to the fray in record numbers on the 23/24th, rested and replenished after its long break. The target, for the second time in the month was Dortmund, for which 826 aircraft took off either side of 23.00 hours. 467 Squadron set a record of its own on this night, by despatching twenty four Lancasters, the best effort in the Group, and all would return safely with an aiming point photograph. This reflected the high state of efficiency and morale in the squadron, which also gave the station commander, Group Captain McKechnie, the confidence to fly to Dortmund on this night. On the following morning, he allowed journalists onto the station to record the impressions of the crews, a number of which made reference to the flood waters still evident from the dams raid a week earlier. A devastating attack left almost two thousand buildings in ruins, and inflicted damage on war industry factories, but the loss of thirty eight aircraft represented a new high for the campaign. Shortly afterwards, Sgt Heavery and his crew became the first to complete a first tour on the squadron. No such luck for F/O Giddey and F/S Parsons and their crews, though, who were posted missing in ED695 and ED768 respectively, following an operation to Düsseldorf on the 25/26th. Giddey and four of his crew survived in enemy hands after being shot down by a nightfighter over Holland, and four survived from Parson's crew, when their Lancaster was

brought down by flak near Antwerp. The raid itself, by 759 aircraft, was a failure in the face of cloud and decoy markers and fires. 518 aircraft returned to Essen on the 27/28th, and delivered a moderately successful if scattered assault, which destroyed almost five hundred buildings. 467 Squadron lost another crew, when F/L Desmond's ED504 crashed in Germany, and all on board were killed. A highly successful month closed with a raid by over seven hundred aircraft on Barmen, one of the twin towns known jointly as Wuppertal. It developed into one of the most awesomely devastating operations of the campaign, and was a perfect example of area bombing at its most brutal. 80% of the town's built-up area, amounting to around a thousand acres, was destroyed by fire, which left almost four thousand houses and apartment blocks gutted. Five of its six largest factories, and dozens of other industrial premises were also reduced to rubble, while over three thousand people lost their lives. The success was paid for by the loss of thirty three aircraft, and this came on top of the heavy casualty figures already sustained during the month, including a combined total of sixty nine from the two Dortmund operations, thirty four from Duisburg, and over twenty each from Bochum, Düsseldorf and Essen.

June began with rain and mist, and operations were suspended for nearly two weeks. S/L Thiele was declared tour expired, and volunteered to drop a rank to remain on operations. This was denied him, and he was posted to Ferry Command, although the end of the war would find him commanding 3 Squadron, a fighter unit in the 2nd Tactical Air Force. Squadron Leader Ambrose arrived on the 9th to take over C Flight, and flew to Düsseldorf on the 11/12th as second dicky to B Flight commander S/L MacKenzie, who was on the 28th trip of his tour. This was the first major operation of the month, and the squadron contributed eighteen aircraft to a force of 783. An errant Oboe marker was released miles from the target during the course of the attack, and this inevitably attracted a proportion of the bombing. Never-the-less, that which found the mark created a massive area of fire around the city centre. Much housing and many industrial premises featured in the catalogue of destruction and damage, and almost nine thousand individual fires were recorded by the city authorities. Thirty eight aircraft failed to return, and this equalled the highest losses of the campaign to date. It became a sad night for 467 Squadron, when S/L MacKenzie's W4983 was brought down by flak over Germany with no survivors, thus depriving the squadron of two flight commanders and the gunnery leader. ED304 was also missing from its dispersal, and was lost without trace with the crew of F/S Wilmot. S/L MacKenzie's place as B Flight commander was taken by S/L Keith Sinclair, the first Australian to be appointed as a flight commander on the squadron, and at the same time, Wing Commander Gomm was awarded a DSO. An accurate and concentrated attack fell on Bochum on the 12/13th, and an all Lancaster assault on Oberhausen on the 14/15th destroyed 267 buildings. High losses continued to be a feature of the campaign, and these two raids cost a total of forty one heavy bombers. 1 and 5 Groups provided the main force for a raid on Cologne on the 16/17th, when the Pathfinders marked without Oboe, and on H2s alone. The marking was not concentrated, and the subsequent bombing was scattered, but, even so, four hundred houses were destroyed. 467 Squadron was represented among the fourteen missing Lancasters by ED737, which was shot down by a nightfighter, and the pilot, F/S Binnie, was one of only three survivors. A special operation was mounted by 5 Group on the 20/21st, for which 467 Squadron provided eight aircraft in a force of sixty. Operation Bellicose was an attack on the Würzburg radar factory in the former

Zeppelin works at Friedrichshafen, deep in southern Germany on the northern shore of the Bodensee lake near the Swiss frontier. The operation was to be controlled by a Master Bomber, in the manner pioneered by Gibson at the dams, and G/C Slee, the former commanding officer of 49 Squadron, was selected. While outbound, Slee's Lancaster was damaged by flak, and he was forced to drop back into the formation, and hand over the role of Master Bomber to his Deputy, W/C Gomm of 467 Squadron. Active defences forced the bombing to be conducted from a higher altitude than intended, where stronger winds played a part in the accuracy of the two phase attack. The initial marking was by Pathfinder crews, before the second wave adopted the "time and distance" method, currently under development within the Group, which was designed to cope with an aiming point being obliterated by smoke from earlier bombing. Around 10% of the bombs found the intended target, causing considerable damage, while others hit nearby factories in this heavily industrialized town. Having completed its work, the force continued on to Blida in North Africa, in the first "shuttle" operation of the war, and would miss the first two of a hectic round of four major operations in the space of five nights beginning on the 21/22nd.

The series opened with an outstandingly accurate and destructive attack by over six hundred aircraft on Krefeld. 2,300 tons of bombs were delivered, mostly within three miles of the town centre, and these districts disappeared under a sea of flames, and were completely burned out. Over 5,500 houses and apartment blocks were totally destroyed, a new record number for the war, and over a thousand people were killed. It was not a one-sided affair, however, and the success was marred by the failure to return of forty four aircraft, the heaviest loss of the campaign to date. Twenty four hours later, it was the turn of Mülheim to wilt under an onslaught by five hundred aircraft, which left over eleven hundred houses in ruins, and many industrial and public buildings displaying the deep scars of battle. On the 23/24th, the squadron returned home from North Africa, bombing La Spezia on the way, and no aircraft were lost from the entire operation. A night's rest preceded an operation to the Elberfeld half of Wuppertal, where the level of destruction, at 90%, surpassed even that visited upon its twin a month previously. The cost was again high, and this time the defences claimed thirty four bombers. The run of successes was brought to an abrupt halt at the important oil town of Gelsenkirchen on the 25/26th, when, in an echo of the past, bombs were scattered indiscriminately around the Ruhr, and few, if any, found the intended target. The failure was made more frustrating by the loss of another thirty aircraft and crews, although 467 Squadron was not represented among the missing, and hadn't been since Cologne in mid month.

After a two night rest, six hundred main force and Pathfinder crews set out for the first of three raids on Cologne spanning the turn of the month. The omens were not good when cloud forced the use of the least reliable skymarking method, and half of the Oboe Mosquito markers experienced equipment problems, and had to abandon their sorties. Despite this, the raid was hugely successful, dwarfing even that delivered by the Thousand force in May 1942. Over 6,400 buildings were destroyed, and fifteen thousand others sustained damage to some extent, while 4,377 people lost their lives. Cologne claimed another 467 Squadron crew on this night, when ED363 was shot down by a nightfighter over Holland, and just two men survived in enemy hands from the crew of Sgt Gates. Having closed the June account, it fell

to Cologne also to open that of July on the 3/4th, when over six hundred aircraft destroyed a further 2,200 houses and twenty industrial premises. It was an all Lancaster heavy force which completed the current torment on the 8/9th, and afterwards, the city authorities were able to count the massive cost of the three raids at eleven thousand buildings destroyed, 5,500 people killed, and 350,000 others rendered homeless. Another failure at the elusive town of Gelsenkirchen on the 9/10th effectively brought the Ruhr offensive to an end, although two further operations to the region would be mounted at the end of the month. Harris could look back over the past five months with genuine satisfaction at the performance of his squadrons, and point to Oboe as the decisive factor. A major blow had been dealt to Germany's industrial heartland, and few tears would be shed by the crews at the prospect of a rest from "Happy Valley". Although losses had been grievously high, the factories had more than kept pace with the rate of attrition, and the training units were continuing to pour fresh, eager new crews into the fray to fill the gaps. On the 12/13th, 467 Squadron was Italy bound for an attack on Turin by a force of 295 Lancasters from 1, 5 and 8 Groups. Accurate bombing produced a death toll in excess of seven hundred people, and 467 Squadron paid a high price for its involvement. ED531 experienced engine problems, and in an effort to maintain altitude, jettisoned its bombs while over Switzerland. Unable to climb to safety, the aircraft collided with high-tension cables and crashed, killing F/O Mitchell and his crew. JA676 was lost without trace, taking with it the crew of F/L Gibbs, and LM311, having been severely damaged during the operation, broke up in the air while on final approach to Bottesford, and P/O Chapman and his crew also lost their lives. One of 5 Group's favourite sons failed to return on this night, W/C John Nettleton, the commanding officer of 44 Squadron, who had won a Victoria Cross for his part in the audacious daylight raid on the M.A.N. diesel-engine factory at Augsburg in April 1942. His Lancaster disappeared into the sea in the Bay of Biscay on the way home, and there were no survivors. Italy had not done with the squadron yet, and five 467 Squadron Lancasters joined thirteen others from the Group, to bomb a transformer station at Cislago, under the direction of a Master Bomber. His late arrival allowed fighters an opportunity to intercept, in view of which, F/L Locke decided to go for the secondary target, La Spezia, and then continue on to Blida. Running short of fuel, he put down at the first airfield he found, and wrote off ED538 by over-running the inadequate landing strip. The crew eventually arrived home in the Lancaster of the 9 Squadron commanding officer, W/C Burnett, about six days later.

Bouyed up by his successes during the spring and early summer, Harris now sought an opportunity to deliver a knock-out blow against a major industrial city, in a short, sharp series of raids until the job was done. The intention was to cause alarm bells to reverberate around the Reich, and perhaps loosen the Nazi Party's grip on the civilian population. Having been spared by the weather from hosting the first one thousand bomber raid in 1942, Hamburg suited perfectly Harris's criteria for Operation Gomorrah. As Germany's Second City, its political status was undeniable, as was its importance as a major centre of war production, particularly in the area of U-Boat construction. There were other considerations of an operational nature, however, which also made it an attractive proposition, among which was its location close to a coastline to aid navigation. It could also be approached from the sea, without the need to traverse large tracts of hostile territory, and it was sufficiently within range of the bomber stations to enable a force to get in and out in the few hours of complete

darkness afforded by mid summer. Finally, beyond the range of Oboe, which had proved so crucial at the Ruhr, Hamburg boasted the wide River Elbe to provide a strong H2s signature for the operators high above. The campaign was also to benefit from the first operational use of Window, the tinfoil-backed strips of paper, which were designed to render ineffective the nightfighter control, searchlight and gun-laying radar systems, by swamping them with false returns. The device had actually been available for twelve months, but its use had been vetoed in case the enemy copied it. Germany, in fact, had already developed a similar system under the code name Düppel, which had also been withheld for the same reason.

Operation Gomorrah was launched on the night of the 24/25th, at the hands of almost eight hundred aircraft, which took off between 22.00 and 23.00 hours. Few nightfighters were encountered during the outward flight, and those aircraft shot down at this stage of the proceedings were invariably off course, and outside of the protection of the bomber stream. The effects of window were made apparent in the target area by the absence of the usually efficient co-ordination between the searchlights and flak batteries, and the anti-aircraft defence was random and sporadic. The Pathfinders slightly missed the city centre aiming point, and the main force bombing was attended by a pronounced creep-back. This cut a swathe of destruction from the city centre, across the north-western districts along the line of approach, and out into open country, where a proportion of the bomb loads were wasted. Never-the-less, it was an encouraging start to the campaign, and the fifteen hundred deaths inflicted in the city were a portent of things to come. The efficacy of Window was made manifest by the comparatively modest loss of just twelve aircraft, and this, in contrast, augured well for the crews.

All of the 467 Squadron crews returned from this operation, and many of them were on the order of battle for the following night. This was when Harris took advantage of the novelty of window, and the body blow it had dealt to the enemy's defensive system, to deliver another crushing assault on Essen. Over 2,800 houses were reduced to rubble, and the Krupps works suffered its most destructive raid of the entire war. Another night's rest preceded the second round of the Hamburg series, for which 787 aircraft took off in the late evening. What followed their arrival over the target city was both unprecedented and unforeseeable, and was the result of a conspiracy of factors. A period of unusually hot and dry weather had produced tinderbox conditions within the city, and the initial spark to ignite it came with the Pathfinder markers. As on the previous raid, these missed the planned city centre aiming point, but fell with unaccustomed concentration two miles to the east, into the densely populated working class residential districts of Hamm, Hammerbrook and Borgfeld. 729 aircraft of the main force followed up with uncharacteristic accuracy and scarcely any creep-back, and delivered over 2,300 tons of bombs, mostly into this relatively compact area. The individual fires joined together to form one giant conflagration, which, as it grew, sucked in oxygen from surrounding areas at hurricane speeds to feed its voracious appetite. Such was the ferocity of this meteorological phenomenon, that trees were uprooted and flung bodily into the flames, along with debris and people. The temperatures at the heart of the inferno exceeded one thousand degrees Celcius, and it only began to subside once all of the combustible material had been consumed.

Forty thousand people lost their lives in this one night alone, and the following morning brought the start of what would become a flood of 1.2 million people fleeing the city. Had the preceding weather conditions been otherwise, had the Pathfinder markers been more widely spaced and fallen into a less densely built-up part of the city, and had the main force crews produced the kind of scattered bombing pattern mostly associated with non-Oboe raids, this first recorded firestorm may never have erupted. Thankfully, only once more would it happen on such a scale. A fairly modest seventeen aircraft failed to return, including two from 467 Squadron, and the crews of F/S Buchanan in W4946, and P/O Carrington in W5003 were posted missing. The former was shot down by a nightfighter, and crashed into the sea off the Dutch Frisian island of Terschelling, with no survivors from the freshman crew, while the latter suffered a similar fate over Germany, and only the flight engineer and rear gunner survived as PoWs. Two nights later, 777 aircraft set off to return to the tortured city, where the Pathfinders deposited their markers south of the firestorm area. The creep-back spread across this already devastated area, before falling onto other residential districts to the north, where a large area of fire developed. As the defences began to recover from the effects of Window, so the losses began to creep up. Twenty eight aircraft failed to return, and among them was the squadron's ED534, which was lost without trace with the crew of F/S Park. Before the final raid of Operation Gomorrah, a relatively small force went to Remscheid on the 30/31st, and devastated the town, bringing down the final curtain on the long-running Ruhr offensive. The fourth and final Hamburg raid took place on the 2/3rd of August, and was attended by violent electrical storms and icing conditions during the outward flight, which persuaded many crews to abandon their sorties, and either jettison their bombs over the sea or on alternative targets. Damage in Hamburg was insignificant compared with what had gone before, and thirty aircraft were missing, some of them having fallen victim to the weather. The sole 467 Squadron casualty was Sgt Pratt, the rear gunner in the crew of P/O Symonds, who was killed in his turret by a single shot to the head. The squadron contributed sixty four sorties to Hamburg over the four operations, and fifty nine bombed as briefed, for the loss of three aircraft. (The Battle of Hamburg, Martin Middlebrook).

Italy was by now teetering on the brink of capitulation, and Bomber Command was invited to help nudge it over with a series of attacks on its major cities. This would occupy the second week of August, and it began on the night of the 7/8th, when elements of 1, 5 and 8 Groups raided Genoa, Milan and Turin. G/C Searby of 83 Squadron acted as Master Bomber at the last mentioned, as a trial run in preparation for a very important operation to take place ten days hence. It was not an entirely successful exercise, and he was presumably unaware at the time of the future target. 467 Squadron's objective on this night was Genoa, to which fourteen aircraft were despatched, and all returned with an aiming point photograph. It was back to Germany on the 9/10th for an attack on Mannheim, which left over thirteen hundred buildings destroyed. This was followed by Nuremberg twenty four hours later, where extensive damage was inflicted on residential and industrial property. On the 12/13th, almost five hundred aircraft returned to Milan to inflict severe damage and heavy casualties, and this was followed up by 1, 5 and 8 Groups on the 14/15th. The same city was also scheduled for an all Lancaster force on the 15/16th, for which the squadron put up ten aircraft led by W/C Gomm. While over France outbound, ED998 was attacked by a nightfighter and exploded, and W/C Gomm and all but one of his crew perished. It was the 24th trip of his second tour, and his loss was a

bitter blow to the squadron. JA675 suffered an identical fate, and just two men survived from the crew of F/L Sullivan. Temporary command of the squadron now passed to the A Flight commander, S/L Raphael, but his tenure would be tragically brief.

As mentioned earlier, 5 Group had been practicing a "time and distance" method of bombing, to overcome the problem of smoke obscuring the target, and this was offered as an option for use during the very important operation two nights later. Intelligence had been filtering through since the beginning of the war, concerning German research into rocketry. Through the interception and decoding of Enigma signals at Bletchley Park, it was known that this activity centred upon the secret weapons research and development establishment at Peenemünde, on an island on the Baltic coast. The photographic interpreters at Medmenham had discovered the existence of the V-1 here, and dubbed it the Peenemünde 20, in reference to its wing span. Through the magnificent efforts of the code-breakers, the brilliant scientist, Dr R V Jones, had been able to monitor the V-1 trials taking place in the Baltic, and establish the weapon's range capability. Through this, and the use of disinformation, it became possible to dupe the enemy into believing that the weapon was overshooting London, so that the adjustments made to fuel loads actually caused many to fall short. Harris's chief scientific adviser, Professor Lindemann, or Lord Cherwell as he became, steadfastly refused to accept the feasibility of such weapons, and even when confronted by a photograph of a V-2 on a trailer at Peenemünde, captured by a PRU Mosquito in June, he remained unmoved. It required the combined urgings of Dr Jones and Duncan Sandys to convince Churchill of the need to act, and a decision was finally taken to attack the establishment at the first available opportunity. This arose on the night of 17/18th, by which time a complex and detailed plan had been prepared.

Three aiming points were identified, the housing estate, the V-2 assembly buildings and the experimental site, each of which was assigned to a specific wave of bombers, with the Pathfinders responsible for shifting the point of aim accordingly. G/C Searby was the Master Bomber, and he would remain in the target area throughout the course of the operation, directing the marking and bombing, and encouraging the crews to press on to the aiming point. It was essential to destroy the site at the first attempt, while the element of surprise was with the Command, otherwise, a further operation would have to be mounted, from which higher casualties could be expected. To facilitate a clear run on the target, eight Mosquitos of 139 Squadron, under the command of the former 5 Group stalwart, G/C Slee, would carry out a diversionary raid on Berlin to attract the enemy nightfighter force. 597 aircraft and crews answered the call for a maximum effort, the numbers somewhat depleted by the late return to their stations, after being diverted, of a proportion of the Stirling force. These had concluded the Italian campaign at Turin the night before, and many of them could not be made ready in time. 467 Squadron contributed ten Lancasters to the operation as follows; LM342 S/L Raphael, LM338 S/L Lewis, LM340 F/L Blucke, JA902 F/O Forbes, ED764 P/O Dixon, ED539 P/O McIver, ED547 P/O Whiting, ED545 W/O Wilson, ED949 F/S Tillotson, and ED541 Sgt Claxton. The above mentioned F/O Forbes would rise through the ranks with remarkable speed, and be appointed to the command of 463 Squadron in June 1944. Ultimately, he would be killed in action against the Mittelland Canal at Gravenhorst in February 1945, by which time he was the holder of the DSO and DFC.

The Pathfinders experienced no difficulty in locating the target, but the initial markers intended for the housing estate were misplaced, and fell over a mile beyond the aiming point, onto the forced workers camp at Trassenheide. Inevitably, this attracted a proportion of the 3 and 4 Group bombs, and heavy casualties were inflicted upon the friendly foreign nationals trapped inside their wooden barracks. Once rectified, however, the operation proceeded according to plan, and a number of important members of the technical staff were killed. 1 Group's attack on the factory buildings was hampered by a strong crosswind, which drove the markers towards the sea, but extensive damage, never-the-less, resulted. It was while the 5 and 6 Group aircraft were in the target area attacking the experimental site, that the nightfighters belatedly arrived from Berlin. Once on the scene, they proceeded to take a heavy toll of bombers, both in the skies above Peenemünde, and on the route home towards Denmark. Forty aircraft were shot down, seventeen of them from 5 Group, and twenty nine in all from this final wave. 467 Squadron was not exempt from the losses, and two of its aircraft failed to return, while a third came close to disaster. S/L Raphael's LM342 was shot down into the sea close to the target, and all eight men on board were killed. ED764 fell victim to a nightfighter shortly after leaving the target, and crashed near Greifswald in the coastal region a few miles to the west. P/O Dixon and four of his crew parachuted to safety, and were taken into captivity, but two others died in the crash. In ED545, a drama was played out following a nightfighter attack, which resulted in a fire in the fuselage. The Lancaster dived out of control, with its rear turret out of action and the gunner wounded, but the mid upper gunner, Sgt Oliver, maintained defensive fire, and shot the fighter down. On return, the pilot, W/O Wilson, was awarded a DFC, and Oliver the CGM, and at the completion of their tour the remainder of the crew received DFMs, thus becoming the most decorated first tour crew in 467 Squadron, a record which was never surpassed.

Wing Commander Balmer was posted in from Syerston to assume command on the 20th, and he was the squadron's first Australian commanding officer. He arrived just in time to set his foot on the long and bitter road to Berlin, the next campaign on which Harris was to embark. Harris had long believed that, as the seat and symbol of Nazi power, Berlin held the key to ultimate victory, and that its destruction might loosen the vice-like grip of the party on the people. Twenty four hours after a disappointing raid on Leverkusen on the 22/23rd, 727 aircraft set off for the Capital, eight of them from Bottesford. Despite the attentions of the grizzled W/C Johnny Fauquier of 405 Squadron as the Master Bomber, the operation was only a partial success, and many bomb loads found their way onto outlying communities, something which would become a feature of the campaign throughout. Over 2,600 buildings were destroyed or seriously damaged, however, and this represented the best result yet at Berlin. On the debit side, a record fifty six aircraft failed to return, and 467 Squadron registered the loss of JB124, which was lost without trace with the crew of P/O Vincent. An attempt to hit Nuremberg failed on the 27/28th, when most of the bombs fell into open country, and the squadron's EE194 was one of thirty three aircraft missing. The Lancaster crashed in southern Germany with no survivors from the crew of P/O Good, and this was the final casualty in what had been a particularly sad month for the squadron. The month ended with a highly accurate and concentrated attack on the twin towns of Mönchengladbach and Rheydt on the 30/31st, which destroyed over 2,300 buildings, and the second Berlin raid in the current series on the night of the 31st. The latter was not a success, despite the commitment of

over six hundred aircraft, a large proportion of which undershot the target by many miles. Forty seven aircraft failed to return, and the disproportionately high casualty rate afflicting the Stirlings set alarm bells ringing at Bomber Command HQ.

It was an all Lancaster heavy force which opened the September account at Berlin on the 3/4th, when the bombing again largely undershot the target. That which found the mark, however, created some useful damage in the industrial suburb of Siemensstadt, where a number of important war industry factories suffered a serious loss of production. Two 467 Squadron crews were posted missing from this operation, and neither produced a survivor from among the fifteen men on board. Both Lancasters, DV237 and ED541, crashed a few miles to the west of Berlin, and contained the crews of F/O Turner and F/L Carmichael respectively. Perhaps in the face of such heavy losses over the three operations to date, further trips to the "Big City" were suspended until the long, dark nights of winter could better cloak the bombers' path. Other destinations could be equally unforgiving, of course, although the Grim Reaper would turn his attention onto other squadrons for the next few weeks. Two nights after Berlin, six hundred aircraft were despatched to the twin cities of Mannheim and Ludwigshafen astride the Rhine in southern Germany. Whenever the former was attacked, the bombing tended to spill over onto the west bank and into the latter, and this was incorporated into the plan on this night. The aiming point was in the eastern half of Mannheim with an approach from the west, and the natural creep-back took care of the rest. The Mannheim authorities reported a catastrophic raid, and over a thousand houses and apartment blocks were destroyed in Ludwigshafen, while the important I G Farben chemicals factory was among the industrial concerns afflicted. A scattered and largely ineffective raid was directed at Munich on the 6/7th, after which, 5 Group remained relatively inactive until the 22/23rd, when the first of a four raid series was mounted against Hanover. Over seven hundred aircraft took part, but the efforts of their crews were hampered by stronger than forecast winds, and most of the bombs fell well to the south-east of the aiming point. The northern half of Mannheim was the target for six hundred aircraft on the following night, when over nine hundred houses and twenty industrial premises were left in ruins, and the I G Farben factory in Ludwigshafen was hit again. The Reaper returned to Bottesford from duties elsewhere, and claimed the lives of P/O Long and his crew, whose EE135 crashed in southern Germany. P/O Farmer's DV233 was attacked by a nightfighter, also over southern Germany, and the rear gunner was killed in the engagement. Five other crew members parachuted into captivity, but the pilot failed to survive, and he has no known grave.

It was at about this time, that Lancaster R5868 arrived on the squadron, and was assigned to B Flight. Already a venerable old girl following sixty eight operations with 83 Squadron as Q-Queenie, she became S-Sugar at 467 Squadron, and went on to clock up a reputed 137 sorties, becoming the second highest sortie-scoring Lancaster of all time. She is now preserved in pristine condition in the RAF Museum at Hendon, as the centre-piece of the Bomber Command Hall. There is always a degree of discrepancy concerning the operational history of individual aircraft, and in his excellent book, *The Avro Lancaster*, Francis K Mason shows no operations between the final one with 83 Squadron on the 14/15th of August 1943, and the first with 467 Squadron on the 15/16th of February 1944. Vincent Holyoak, on the other hand, writes in his book on the wartime history of Bottesford, *On the Wings of the Morning*, that

Sugar's first operation with 467 Squadron was the second of the Hanover raids, which took place on the 27/28th of September. This was an example of concentrated bombing, which, unfortunately, fell outside of the city area, but an attack on Bochum two nights later, in which Sugar again apparently participated, produced extensive damage to the town centre in particular, and over five hundred houses were destroyed.

There was a hectic start to October for the Lancaster squadrons, which were called into action six times in the first eight nights. Hagen opened the month's account for 1, 5 and 8 Groups on the 1/2nd, and accurate Oboe marking was exploited by the force of over two hundred aircraft, to produce a copy-book raid for the loss of just two Lancasters. The same Groups went to Munich on the following night, and this time, they were only moderately satisfied with the results. Halifaxes and Stirlings joined in an attempt by over five hundred aircraft to hit Kassel on the 3/4th, when considerable damage was caused to two aircraft factories, and an eastern suburb was devastated by fire. However, the main weight of bombs fell outside of the intended area into western suburbs and outlying communities, and the squadron's JA906 was one of twenty four aircraft missing. This was shot down off the Dutch coast, and P/O Smith survived with two others of his crew in enemy hands. The first genuinely destructive attack on Frankfurt was delivered by almost four hundred aircraft on the following night, when the eastern districts and the docks area were left under a sea of flames. The ABC Lancasters of 101 Squadron were out in numbers for the first time on the 7/8th for a raid on Stuttgart, and whether or not they were responsible, this moderately successful operation resulted in the loss of just four Lancasters from the 343 despatched. The third raid of the Hanover series came twenty four hours later, when the city finally succumbed to a heavy and concentrated assault, which destroyed almost four thousand buildings, and damaged to some extent thirty thousand others.

There were no further major operations for nine nights thereafter, and this brought a welcome rest after such an intense round of activity. The final assault on Hanover was an all Lancaster affair, which took place on the 18/19th, but it again failed to find the mark. Most of the bombs found their way into open country, and eighteen aircraft failed to return home. Among them was W4240, which was lost over Germany during the return flight, and six men, including the pilot, F/O Davenport, were killed. This had proved to be a costly campaign, and the one success was gained at a combined cost to the Command of 110 heavy bombers. Atrocious weather conditions thwarted an attack on the eastern city of Leipzig on the 20/21st, and this was followed on the 22/23rd, by the month's second assault on Kassel in north-central Germany. Fifteen Lancasters from 467 Squadron joined a force of 569 aircraft to produce concentrated bombing, and this resulted in the war's second genuine firestorm, which although not as extensive as that at Hamburg, still claimed the lives of at least six thousand people. The city's living accommodation was decimated, over 4,300 apartment blocks undergoing complete destruction, while more than 6,700 others sustained damage to some extent. The defenders exacted a heavy toll also, however, and the tens of thousands of homeless residents were no doubt cheered to learn that forty three of their tormentors would not be returning home. 467 Squadron registered a single loss, that of DV226, which was lost without trace with the crew of F/O Godwin.

A welcome stand-down for most of the crews preceded the opening operation of November, which was mounted on the 3/4th to Düsseldorf by over five hundred aircraft. This highly destructive raid cost eighteen aircraft, among them the Lancaster containing the 467 Squadron C Flight commander, S/L Lewis. JB121 was shot down shortly after crossing the Belgian coast near Antwerp while outbound, and although the pilot and three others were killed, four men escaped by parachute, two of them ultimately to evade capture, the first from 467 Squadron to do so. He was replaced as flight commander by F/L Locke. Minor operations occupied the Command for the succeeding week, during which period, the squadron was told to prepare for a move to Waddington. It carried out its last operation from Bottesford on the 10/11th, for which the squadron put up sixteen crews to a 5 and 8 Group attack on the railway yards at Modane, on the main route between France and Italy. On the 12th, the squadron bade farewell to the primitive surroundings of Bottesford, and moved into the well-established and comfortable pre-war station near Lincoln. There was barely time to settle in before the resumption of the Berlin campaign after the autumn recess, and once rejoined, this battle would grind on throughout the winter until the end of March.

In a minute to Churchill on the 3rd of November, Harris stated that he could “wreck Berlin from end to end”, if the Americans came in on it, and although he estimated that it would cost between them four to five hundred aircraft, it would cost Germany the war. Harris hoped to avoid the kind of bloody and protracted land campaigns, which he had personally witnessed during the Great War, but the Americans were committed to victory by invasion, and there was never the slightest chance of enlisting their support. Undaunted as always, Harris would not be denied Berlin, and he embarked on the main battle on the night of the 18/19th, when sending an all Lancaster heavy force of over four hundred aircraft. Meanwhile, a predominately Halifax and Stirling effort was directed at the twin cities of Mannheim and Ludwigshafen, probably the Command’s favourite diversionary destination, but neither raid was a success commensurate with the effort expended. Some useful industrial damage was achieved at the latter, but the main benefit derived from the diversion was the loss of only nine aircraft from the Capital. A maximum effort force of over seven hundred aircraft set off once more for Berlin on the 22/23rd, and at least one came to grief immediately. Veteran Lancaster L7574 had originally been issued to 97 Squadron back in February 1942, before the type had made its operational debut. The Lancasters bearing the serial numbers either side had actually taken part in the daylight raid on Augsburg, but L7574 appears not to have begun its operational career until July, and then continued through to the end of the year. From that point, and during the whole of 1943, until its arrival at 467 Squadron in early November, the aircraft seems to have been under repair. While taking off for Berlin in the hands of Sgt Schomberg and his crew, an engine failed, and the Lancaster crashed into a building on the airfield, injuring three of those on board. Those reaching the target area delivered the most punishing blow of the war on the “Big City”, destroying at least three thousand houses, along with twenty three industrial premises, and 175,000 people were made homeless. Twenty six aircraft failed to return, and this operation proved to be the swan song for the Stirling over Germany. From now on, the type would be relegated to secondary, if useful work, predominately mining, but also on behalf of the Special Operations Executive, to drop arms and supplies to resistance movements in the occupied countries.

On the following night, the Lancasters went again, with a handful of Halifaxes for company among the Pathfinder contingent, and guided by the glow of fires still burning beneath the clouds, they delivered another telling blow. Residential districts again bore the brunt of the assault, and around two thousand houses were reduced to rubble, while somewhere in the region of fifteen hundred people met their deaths. Twenty Lancasters failed to return, and the type was all but rested two nights later, when a Halifax main force managed to inflict only modest damage on Frankfurt. On the 25th, 467 Squadron's C Flight moved across the tarmac to become the nucleus of the new 463 Squadron RAAF. F/L Locke became its A Flight commander, and S/L Kingsford-Smith, the nephew of the famous pioneering aviator, was promoted to Wing Commander as its first commanding officer. Berlin was again the objective for an all Lancaster heavy force on the 26/27th, but the marking overshoot the city centre by up to seven miles, causing much of the bombing to be concentrated in the north-western suburbs. It was fortunate therefore, that these were fairly heavily industrialized areas, and thirty eight war industry factories were totally destroyed, while others sustained damage. Four operations to Berlin had now taken place since the resumption of the offensive, and apart from the take-off incident mentioned above, 467 Squadron had come through all of them unscathed.

Berlin would also be the main focus of attention during December, and it received its first visit of the month on the night of the 2/3rd, at the hands of an all Lancaster main force. Wrongly forecast winds did little to help the Pathfinders, and the ensuing scattered raid deposited bombs from west to east across the southern half of the city, but also into open country. Destruction was light compared with recent attacks, but a number of important war industry factories sustained serious damage. It was a bad night for the Command, which registered the loss of forty aircraft, and the death toll among the crews was far greater than that on the ground. In contrast, a trip to Leipzig by over five hundred aircraft on the 3/4th resulted in the most effective raid of the war on this city, and the Command sustained a more moderate loss of twenty four aircraft. Thereafter, the main force stayed on the ground until the 16/17th, when almost five hundred aircraft from the Lancaster squadrons were Berlin bound again, twelve of them from 467 Squadron. The operation was scattered but moderately effective in terms of damage, and it was residential property in central and eastern districts, which bore the main weight of bombs. Nightfighters found the bomber stream early on, remaining in contact all the way to the target, and most of the twenty five missing aircraft went down during this stage of their flight. The real problems began, however, when the tired crews returned to home airspace around midnight, and encountered a thick blanket of fog, which completely concealed the airfields, particularly in the 1, 6 and 8 Group regions. After such a long flight, few crews could report sufficient fuel reserves to be able to reach a diversionary airfield, and a frantic search began for somewhere to land. With aircraft stumbling around in the murk, and straining eyes unable to see the ground until the last moment, accidents were inevitable, and twenty nine Lancasters either crashed or were abandoned by their crews. It was tragic, that almost 150 airmen should lose their lives in this way, when so close to home and safety, but at least 5 Group avoided the carnage, having already featured quite prominently in the failures to return.

This was not the only operation to take place during the evening, and one of those of a more minor nature was to have great significance for the future of the Command, 5 Group and the

Pathfinders. Two flying bomb sites in the Pas-de-Calais, at Tilley-le-Haut and Flixecourt, were attacked by small forces, the former by 3 Group Stirlings, and the latter by nine Lancasters of 617 Squadron under W/C Leonard Cheshire. The marking was carried out by Oboe Mosquitos at both locations, although it was by just a single aircraft at the latter. Neither operation was a success, after the markers missed the aiming points by a few hundred yards, and this demonstrated the shortcomings of the Oboe system. Whilst it was ideal for marking an urban target, where there was a large margin for error, it was too imprecise for use against a small target like a flying bomb site or an individual building. This was precisely the kind of target to which 617 Squadron was to be assigned for the remainder of the war, and it was frustrating for Cheshire and his crews to have plastered the markers, only for the target to escape damage. A similar disappointment would take place at the end of the month at the same flying bomb site, and this set minds working at 617 Squadron. Original "Dambuster", S/L "Mick" Martin tried out a diving approach over a bombing range, and found that he could deliver a marker with extreme accuracy, although the business of pulling out afterwards almost tore the wings off his Lancaster. Never-the-less, the seeds of a future target marking system had been sown, and together with Cheshire, Martin would develop it into a fine art. Ultimately, 5 Group would take on its own target marking force, and effectively become independent from the rest of the Command.

Frankfurt was the objective for the next major operation, which took place on the 20/21st, and involved 650 aircraft. The employment by the enemy of decoy fires and dummy target indicators reduced the number of bomb loads falling into the city, but well over four hundred houses were destroyed. The nightfighter controller was again able to feed his aircraft into the bomber stream early on, and a diversionary raid on Mannheim was ignored. Most of the forty one missing aircraft fell during the outward flight, and in the absence of Stirlings, it was the Halifaxes which suffered the heavier casualties, and they represented two-thirds of the losses. The last two major operations of the year were both directed at Berlin, that on the 23/24th employing an all Lancaster main force. Many Pathfinders experienced failure of their H2s sets, and Berlin was completely cloud covered, and this led to a disappointing raid, which hit the south-eastern suburbs, and destroyed less than three hundred buildings. The enemy nightfighter force also found the weather conditions difficult, and a more modest sixteen aircraft were lost. The fifth wartime Christmas came and went in relative peace, before a maximum effort was called for on the 29/30th, for which over seven hundred Lancasters and Halifaxes took off. This would prove to be the first of three trips to the Capital for the Lancaster brigade in an unprecedented five nights spanning the turn of the year. Although the attack destroyed almost four hundred buildings, cloud cover and the use of skymarkers again spared the Capital from what might have been a worse fate. Remarkably, apart from two take-off crashes, the squadron had negotiated all of the Berlin operations since the resumption without sustaining a loss, but sadly, this fine achievement came to an end, when P/O Tait and his crew failed to return in ED547. The Lancaster was shot down to crash south-south-east of the city, and all on board were killed. Within the context of the campaigns undertaken by the Command during the year, 467 Squadron had negotiated its first twelve months with comparatively low losses, while developing a fine reputation for itself within the Group. The coming year would be even more intense, however, and the first three months in particular would test the resolve of the crews to the absolute limit.

1944

There was to be no change in the emphasis of operations for the hard-pressed crews as the New Year dawned, and it is likely that they shared a common wish with the beleaguered citizens of Germany's capital city. Proud of their status as Berliners first and Germans second, they were a hardy breed, and just like their counterparts in London during the blitz of 1940, they bore their trials with fortitude and humour, and would not buckle under Bomber Command's onslaught. They taunted their tormentors by parading banners through the shattered streets, which proclaimed, "You may break our walls, but not our hearts", and the most popular song of the day, *Nach jedem Dezember kommt immer ein Mai*, After every December comes always a May, was played endlessly over the radio, hinting at a change of fortunes with the onset of spring. This was, to an extent, prophetic, and both camps would indeed have to endure throughout the remainder of the winter, before Berlin ceased to be the main focus of attention. New Year's Day was not quite done when the first of more than four hundred Lancasters began to take off, arriving over the "Big City" in the early hours of the 2nd. The operation was a complete failure in the face of cloud cover and skymarking, and most of the bombs fell into wooded country to the south-west. Only twenty one houses were destroyed, in return for which, twenty eight Lancasters fell victim to the defences, one of them belonging to 467 Squadron. LM372 was the errant aircraft, and the eight man crew of F/O Patkin were all killed, when it crashed in Germany on the way to the target. The strain on the crews was reflected on the following night, when an all Lancaster main force followed the Pathfinders back to Berlin, and sixty of their number dropped out to return early for a variety of reasons. Those reaching the city were hounded by nightfighters, and scattered bombs over all parts, without causing more than superficial damage. Twenty seven Lancasters failed to return home, but this time, there were no empty dispersals on the 467 Squadron side of Waddington, and just one over at 463 Squadron.

A further four squadron crews would be posted missing from Berlin in January, but first, other targets had to be negotiated, beginning with Stettin on the 5/6th. It was another all Lancaster main force which delivered a successful attack, destroying over five hundred houses, and sinking eight ships in the harbour for the loss of sixteen aircraft. This more modest casualty figure included the two 467 Squadron Lancasters, ED994 and LM431, from which just one man survived. He was the flight engineer from the crew of F/O Reynolds in the former, which was brought down somewhere near the target, and he fell into enemy hands. The latter was lost without trace, and took with it the crew of P/O Connolly. Another welcome break from operations allowed the hard-pressed crews to draw breath, and when briefings took place on the 14th, there was doubtless a sigh of relief that the red tape on the wall maps terminated some way short of Berlin. It terminated, in fact, at Brunswick, an historic town of only moderate size, situated in the same area of Germany as Hanover, a target which had proved a difficult and expensive nut to crack during the autumn. A force of almost five hundred aircraft took-off for what was the first major raid on this target, and the bomber stream was met by enemy nightfighters shortly after crossing into north-western Germany. The attack almost entirely missed the town, and only a handful of houses were destroyed. In exchange for this scant damage, thirty eight aircraft were shot down, although happily, 467 Squadron was not represented among them. As the year progressed, Brunswick would

continue to defy the Command's efforts, and it would be towards the end of the year before it finally succumbed.

After an eighteen day break from Berlin, a force of over seven hundred aircraft set off to return to the Capital on the 20/21st, and encountered complete cloud cover, which prevented any immediate assessment of the results. In fact, the main weight of the attack fell into the hitherto less severely afflicted eastern districts, where a substantial amount of damage was caused. The nightfighter controller was not deceived by the northern approach route, or by diversions, and he again brought his crews into contact with the bomber stream early on. They were able to contribute to the demise of thirty five aircraft, almost two-thirds of them Halifaxes, and 467 Squadron again came through unscathed. Twenty four hours later, over six hundred aircraft were sent to Magdeburg, while twenty two Lancasters and twelve Mosquitos from 5 and 8 Groups carried out a diversion at Berlin. This did not fool the enemy, and nightfighters were already in contact with the bomber stream while it was still over the North Sea. A running battle ensued all the way to the target, to where wrongly forecast winds brought a proportion of the main force ahead of the Pathfinders, and some of those equipped with H2s elected to bomb before any markers went down. The fires started by these early bombs combined with decoy markers to hamper attempts by the Pathfinders to achieve concentration, and the operation was unsuccessful. A new record of fifty seven aircraft failed to return, and once more, the Halifaxes suffered a disproportionately high casualty figure amounting to over 15% of those despatched. 467 Squadron was represented both at Magdeburg and Berlin, but it was from the former that ED803 failed to return, having been shot down in the Berlin defence zone, and there were no survivors from the crew of P/O Mitchell.

An unprecedented series of three raids on the Capital in four nights awaited the crews at the end of the month, and it would signal further losses to the squadron. What would turn out to be the final concerted effort to bring the Capital to its knees began on the night of the 27/28th, when an all Lancaster heavy force numbering over five hundred aircraft was committed to the attack. The bombing was spread over a wide area, predominately in the southern districts of the city and numerous outlying communities, and twenty thousand people were bombed out of their homes, while a number of important war industry factories sustained serious damage. Among the thirty three missing aircraft were 467 Squadron's ED539 and ME575, both of which crashed in Germany, producing no survivors from the crews of P/O O'Brien and P/O Grugeon respectively. On the following night, the Halifax squadrons joined in to make up a force of over six hundred aircraft, which delivered an assault of sufficient weight to render 180,000 people homeless, while also afflicting more than seventy outlying communities. There was heavy nightfighter activity over the target, and the presence in the Berlin cemetery of one member of the crew of F/L Durston, suggests that the squadron's ED867 probably fell here, although the others have no known final resting place. This was just one of a massive forty six failures to return, a figure which was added to two nights later, when thirty three aircraft were missing from a predominately Lancaster force of over five hundred. Berlin suffered heavy fire damage, many public buildings were hit, and at least a thousand people lost their lives. The squadron's DV378 received a direct hit by flak and exploded in the air over the city, miraculously throwing clear the sole survivor from the crew of P/O Riley. There

is no question that these three raids had inflicted substantial damage on Berlin, but at a cost to the Command of 112 aircraft and crews. The Capital remained a functioning city, the seat of government, and nowhere were there signs of imminent collapse. Although the crews were unaware of the fact, only two more operations to Berlin lay before them, and these would be in isolation, one in each of the next two months.

Bad weather kept the main force on the ground for the first two weeks of February, and this thwarted Harris's plans to follow up the recent Berlin series with another raid early on. It did, however, give the squadrons time to replenish and draw breath, and it was during this period, that the next major step towards an independent 5 Group took place. Having taken the low level marking idea to the ever receptive 5 Group AOC, AVM Sir Ralph Cochrane, permission was given to Cheshire to carry out a live trial of the method. The Gnome & Rhone aero-engine factory at Limoges was selected as the target, and the operation took place on the 8/9th. The presence nearby of residential areas would concentrate the minds of the crews, and provide a testing proposition for the system. W/C Cheshire made three low level runs across the target to warn the workers, and dropped 30lb incendiaries on his fourth pass from under a hundred feet. Eleven 617 Squadron Lancasters were waiting above, and ten of them delivered their 12,000 pounders right onto the factory from medium level, while the eleventh fell into the adjacent river. It was a stunning example of precision bombing, and of the efficacy of the method, and this would be further honed in the weeks ahead with the introduction of the fast, light Mosquito to replace the Lancaster in the low level role.

After its enforced break from operations, the main force returned to the fray in record numbers on the 15/16th. Berlin was the destination for the largest non-1,000 force to date of 891 aircraft, and it was the first time that over five hundred Lancasters and three hundred Halifaxes had operated together. Those which reached the target carried in their bomb bays a record of over 2,600 tons of bombs, and much of this was put to effective use within the built-up area of the city. Central and south-western areas bore the main weight of the attack, a thousand houses were destroyed, along with many temporary wooden barracks, and important war industry factories, including those in the Siemensstadt district, sustained damage. As usual, however, many outlying communities were also afflicted, as was the bomber force, which registered the loss of forty three of its number, although none from 467 Squadron. As events were to prove, this was the penultimate raid on the Capital by a force of RAF heavy bombers, and it would now be left in relative peace until the final week of March. Three nights of rest preceded the next operation, for which 823 aircraft took off either side of midnight on the 19/20th, and headed into the greatest disaster to afflict the Command thus far. It was another of those now frequent occasions, when the enemy controller was able to feed his nightfighters into the bomber stream early, on this night at the Dutch coast. The combatants remained in contact all the way into eastern Germany to the target of Leipzig, some aircraft driven by the wrongly forecast winds to reach their destination ahead of the Pathfinders. They were forced to mill around in the target area, while they waited for the markers to go down, during which time, four aircraft were lost to collisions, and around twenty others to the local flak batteries. The attack, when it came, was inconclusive in the face of complete cloud cover, and seventy eight aircraft failed to return home, a new record loss by a clear twenty one. Remarkably, 467 Squadron escaped the carnage, and all of its

aircraft got back safely, but this was the end for the Mk II and V Halifaxes, which, like the Stirlings before them, were withdrawn from further operations over Germany.

Despite the losses at Leipzig, almost six hundred aircraft took off on the following night for the long trek to Stuttgart in southern Germany. Complete cloud cover led to a scattered raid, but much damage was inflicted on the city centre and in the northern quadrant, and in contrast to recent experiences, a modest nine aircraft failed to return. A new tactic was employed for the next two operations, to Schweinfurt on the 24/25th and Augsburg twenty four hours later. The forces were split into two waves separated by two hours, with the intention of catching the nightfighter force on the ground refuelling and re-arming. Although the former attack suffered from undershooting and was a failure, the second wave sustained 50% lower casualties than the first, in an overall loss of thirty three aircraft, and this suggested that there was some merit in the ploy. The beautiful and historic city of Augsburg became the victim of one of those rare occasions beyond the range of Oboe, when everything proceeded according to plan, and the attack was a stunning example of the awesome destructive capability of the Command. Accurate Pathfinder marking was exploited by the main force crews, who concentrated their bombs within the built-up area of the city, and left fire to tear out its cultural heart. Centuries of history were consigned to the flames, and almost three thousand houses were destroyed, while many hundreds of people lost their lives. Twenty one aircraft failed to return, a further indication of the efficacy of dividing the forces, and this was a tactic which would be employed regularly in the future. 467 Squadron's LL746 was part of the first wave, and crashed in southern Germany, with were no survivors from the crew of P/O Stuchbury.

Stuttgart opened the March account on the 1/2nd, when over four hundred Lancasters were accompanied by 129 Hercules powered Mk III Halifaxes, the best that could be achieved until the older variants of the type could be completely phased out. The bombs disappeared into the clouds, and it was impossible for the crews to assess the results of their efforts, but it was later learned that central, western and northern districts had sustained extensive damage. A bonus was the remarkably low loss figure of just four aircraft, and this probably resulted from the abundance of cloud throughout the operation, which made it difficult for the nightfighters to make contact. The main force would not to be called into action again until mid month, and in the meantime, the Halifax squadrons fired the opening salvoes in the pre-invasion campaign. Railway yards at Trappes and Le Mans were attacked on the 6/7th and 7/8th respectively, and similar targets in France would receive attention on other nights throughout the month. This new offensive would gain momentum once the rest of the heavy brigade was released from the winter campaign in the following month. 5 Group carried out a number of small-scale attacks on factories during the period, an aircraft plant near Marseilles on the 9/10th and four separate factories on the 10/11th, the latter occasion providing 617 Squadron with an opportunity to hone its low level marking system. There were over six hundred Lancasters in a force of 863 aircraft, which took off in the early evening of the 15th to return to Stuttgart. In contrast to the events of two weeks earlier, much of the bombing fell into open country, and the nightfighters were responsible for the majority of the thirty seven bombers which were shot down. Two devastating attacks fell on Frankfurt on the 18/19th and 22/23rd, both of which involved forces of over eight hundred aircraft. The former alone destroyed or

seriously damaged over six thousand buildings, while the latter left half of the city without electricity, gas and water for an extended period. The combined cost to the Command was fifty five aircraft, or the equivalent of three and a half two-flight squadrons, although within the context of the scale of the success and the numbers despatched, it still represented an acceptable outcome.

After a night's rest, over eight hundred aircraft were made ready for the final operation of the campaign to Berlin. It would also be the final raid on the Capital by Bomber Command's heavy squadrons, and thereafter, it would be left to the Mosquitos of 8 Group's Light Night Striking Force to harass the city almost to the end of hostilities. 467 Squadron's contribution to the raid was seventeen Lancasters as follows. LM475 S/L Smith, LL789 F/L Colpus, LM450 F/L Conway, LM376 F/L Simpson, LL788 F/O Smith, LM338 P/O Ainsworth, ND732 P/O Baggott, ND729 P/O Cowan, LM440 P/O Dearnaley, DV372 P/O Felstead, DV277 P/O Gibbs, R5485 P/O Hawes, EE143 P/O Llewelyn, LL792 P/O McDonald, DV240 P/O Mackay LL846 P/O Quartermaine, and JA901 P/O Tottenham. It was another early evening take-off, and once at cruising altitude, the crews encountered unusually strong winds from the north, which broke up the cohesion of the bomber stream, and drove the aircraft continually south of track. The wind led to marking difficulties over the target, and the parachute flares were carried beyond the aiming point towards the south-western districts, which received most of the bombs to actually fall within the city. The others were sprayed over a wide area outside of Berlin, and over a hundred outlying communities reported being afflicted. Many aircraft were blown by the winds over heavily defended areas of Germany on the way home, and a large number of them were picked off by flak batteries, which accounted for over two-thirds of the seventy two aircraft which failed to return. Remarkably, as at Leipzig five weeks earlier, 467 Squadron bucked the trend, and came through unscathed. By the end of the campaign, 467 Squadron could claim to have participated in every one of the twenty operations to the Capital since the 23/24th of August, including the diversion on the night of the Magdeburg raid in January, and lost nine aircraft and crews from 270 sorties. This was only twelve sorties short of the highest number despatched by a 5 Group squadron during the campaign. An indication of the odds against survival if shot down is demonstrated by the fact, that out of the sixty five missing crewmen, only one escaped with his life. (The Berlin Raids. Martin Middlebrook).

Although Berlin was now consigned to the past, the winter campaign still had a week to run, and two further major operations for the crews to negotiate. The first of these was directed at Essen on the 26/27th, for which 705 aircraft were despatched. The sudden switch to a Ruhr target, after so many recent trips to southern and eastern Germany, caught the defenders unawares, and a very modest nine aircraft failed to return. The operation was highly effective, thus continuing the remarkable run of successes against this important target since the introduction of Oboe to main force operations twelve months earlier. The attack resulted in the destruction of over seventeen hundred houses and apartment blocks, while forty eight industrial premises were seriously damaged. The final operation of the winter offensive was a standard maximum effort raid on Nuremberg, the birth place of Nazism, and briefings for the pilots, navigators and bomb aimers began in the late afternoon of the 30th. There was some surprise at the planned route, which incorporated a long, straight leg from Belgium across Germany, to a point about fifty miles north of the target, from where the final run-in was to

commence. There was a protest from AVM Bennett of 8 Group, who were the experts on navigation and route planning, and he was supported by AVM Carr of 4 Group, whose Halifaxes were more vulnerable to nightfighter attack should a running battle ensue. The Lancaster Group AOCs won the day, however, and the route was confirmed, as was the operation itself, despite a disquieting report from a Met Flight Mosquito crew, that the forecast cloud at cruising level was unlikely to be present.

795 aircraft took off either side of 22.00 hours, Waddington launching the night's best effort of thirty five aircraft, seventeen of which were from 467 Squadron. Having reached cruising altitude, the crews were struck by a number of almost freakish characteristics to do with the conditions, and these were to prove critical in the events of the following few hours. The moon, though relatively new, cast an unusual brightness, while the visibility had a rare crystal clarity, enabling the crews to observe all the other aircraft in their part of the sky. The forecast cloud failed to materialize, but a layer developed beneath the bomber stream, against which aircraft were silhouetted like flies on a tablecloth. The jetstream winds, which had so adversely effected the Berlin raid a week earlier, were also present, only this time from the south, and as the final insult, condensation trails formed to further advertise the bombers' presence. This combination of factors conspired to hand the bomber force on a plate to the waiting nightfighters, which were orbiting their control beacons close to the selected route. The carnage began over Charleroi in Belgium, and the track from there to the target was marked out on the ground by the burning wreckage of RAF bombers. Had the fierce winds not scattered the bomber stream, the casualties might have been even higher, but as it was, over eighty aircraft were shot down before Nuremberg was reached. Those crews who failed to appreciate the true strength of the wind, or perhaps failed to notice the extent to which they were being driven north of track, turned towards the target from a false position, and many bombed at Schweinfurt in error. The numbers actually available to attack as briefed were depleted by the losses, fifty two early returns and those bombing the wrong target, and the city escaped serious damage. When all the aircraft which were going to return home had done so, there was an unbelievable shortfall of ninety five, and a further twenty or so were written off in crashes at home, or with battle damage too severe to repair. The Reaper visited 467 Squadron on this night, claiming two of its aircraft, while 463 Squadron came through unscathed. LM376 was an early victim of the slaughter, and fell to the guns of a nightfighter over Belgium. F/L Simpson and all of his crew escaped with their lives, he and four others ultimately evading capture. The crew of DV240 was less fortunate, they too being early casualties of a nightfighter attack, this time over Germany, and P/O Llewelyn and three of his crew were killed.

With the winter campaign now behind them, that which faced the crews was in marked contrast to what had been endured over the past months. In place of the long slog to Germany on dark, often dirty nights, shorter range hops to France and Belgium would become the order of the day in improving weather conditions. The new priority was the Transportation Plan, the systematic dismantling by bombing of the French and Belgian railway networks in advance of the forthcoming invasion, a campaign, which, as already mentioned, had begun in March at the hands of the Halifax and, later, the Stirling squadrons. Such operations would prove to be equally demanding in their way, and would require of the crews a greater commitment to

accuracy, to avoid unnecessary casualties among friendly civilians. The main fly in the ointment was a dictate from on high, which decreed that most operations to the occupied countries were worthy of counting as just one third of a sortie towards the completion of a tour. Until this flawed policy was rescinded, an air of mutiny would pervade the bomber stations, but by then it would be too late to save some crews, who might otherwise have survived their tours under the old system. Despite the prohibitive losses of the winter period, the Command was in remarkably fine fettle to face its new challenge, and Harris was in the enviable position of being able to achieve that which had eluded his predecessor. This was to hit at multiple targets simultaneously, with forces large enough to make an impact. He could now assign targets to individual Groups, to Groups in tandem, or to the Command as a whole, according to operational requirements, and provide a sprinkling of Pathfinders for each raid, in the form of Oboe Mosquitos, and or heavy aircraft. Although pre-invasion matters would always take priority, while Harris was at the helm, his preferred policy of city-busting would never be entirely shelved in favour of other considerations, and whenever an opportunity presented itself, he would strike.

There was no major activity at the start of April, and the first bombing operation by heavy aircraft was a 5 Group affair of great significance. Following the successful trials of the 5 Group low level visual marking system at factory targets in February and March, 617 Squadron had been authorized to take on charge a number of Mosquitos, an aircraft far better suited to the task than the Lancaster. On the night of the 5/6th, W/C Cheshire led 144 Lancasters from the Group to attack an aircraft factory at Toulouse, and on his fourth pass across the target, he released his markers with pinpoint precision. Two 617 Squadron Lancasters backed up with further markers, and the main force crews consigned the factory to oblivion. So successful was the operation, without any special training for the 5 Group main force crews, that Harris immediately gave the go-ahead for 5 Group to operate as an independent force. This was a snub to AVM Bennett of the Pathfinders, who was opposed to the principle of low level marking, and he would soon be even more distraught, at the removal on permanent detachment to 5 Group of three of his finest squadrons. The new offensive began in earnest on the 9/10th, when elements of 3, 4, 6 and 8 Groups attacked the Lille-Delivrance goods station, while another force attended to the railway yards at Villeneuve-St-Georges on the outskirts of Paris. The former in particular was a resounding success, which destroyed over two thousand items of rolling stock, and inflicted severe damage on buildings, track and installations. Sadly, heavy casualties were sustained by French civilians at both locations, and this was a problem which could never be satisfactorily addressed, particularly where standard Pathfinder marking was concerned. Four similar targets in France and one in Belgium were attacked on the following night, 5 Group dealing effectively with the yards at Tours for the loss of just one aircraft.

Officially from the 14th of April, Bomber Command became subject to the requirements of SHAEF in preparation for the invasion, and would remain thus shackled until the Allied armies were sweeping towards the German frontier at the end of the summer. Elements of 1, 3, 5 and 8 Groups delivered a highly destructive area attack on Aachen on the 11/12th, and over fifteen hundred people lost their lives. 83 and 97 Squadrons moved into Coningsby from their 8 Group stations on the 18th, both having formerly been 5 Group units to the core. Their

loyalties now lay elsewhere, however, and the crews were as upset as Bennett at the transfer to 5 Group from what they considered to be an elite status. They would retain their Pathfinder ranks and badge, and would eventually form a grudging attachment to 5 Group, but it was going to be a very strained relationship to start with. Relations were not helped, when the crews tumbled out of their transports on arrival at Coningsby, to be summoned immediately to the briefing room. Here, they were subjected to a humiliating lecture by the 54 Base commander, A/C Sharp, an officer with no relevant operational experience. Instead of welcoming them as brothers-in-arms, he harangued them over their bad 8 Group habits, and told them to buckle down to learning 5 Group ways. This was an insult to experienced bomber crews, for whom the task of illuminating targets would be a piece of cake compared with the complexities of their Pathfinder role. Over at Woodhall Spa, the home of 617 Squadron, the third ex-Pathfinder unit, 627 Squadron, was settling in, and preparing to assume the Mosquito role, which was currently the preserve of 617 Squadron. This entire episode is said to have deepened the already publicized rift between Bennett and his 5 Group counterpart, AVM Cochrane, and henceforth in 8 Group circles, 5 Group would be known somewhat disparagingly as the "Independent Air Force" and "The Lincolnshire Poachers". The new arrivals did not operate that night, when the Group successfully attacked the railway yards at Juvisy, but a number of pilots hitched a lift to observe the marking method in action.

The Independent Air Force went to war as a unit for the first time on the 20/21st, to carry out a two-phase attack on the railway yards at La Chapelle, north of Paris. Oboe Mosquitos provided the initial reference for each of the phases, which were separated by an hour, and 83 and 97 Squadrons illuminated the area for 617 Squadron's Cheshire and Fawke to mark from low level as the first shift, and Shannon and Kearns as the second. Meanwhile, twelve 627 Squadron Mosquitos acted as the windowing force, and once initial communications problems between the various marking elements had been overcome, the operation was carried out successfully at a cost of six Lancasters. One of these was ND732 of 467 Squadron, which was brought down by flak over France, and P/O Feeney and his crew all lost their lives. The real test of the system would come at a heavily defended target in Germany, and this was no doubt eagerly awaited at 8 Group, where the belief was, that losses among the low level force would prove to be prohibitive. The opportunity came two nights later at Brunswick, while the other Groups delivered a crushing blow on Düsseldorf, where over two thousand houses were destroyed or seriously damaged, and dozens of large industrial premises were hit. The 5 Group raid did not proceed according to plan, despite accurate marking by the 617 Squadron Mosquito element. Cloud hampered the main force attempt to hit the markers, and although some bombs found the town centre, much of the effort was wasted outside of the built-up area. On the 24/25th, two forces headed for southern Germany, the larger, consisting of over six hundred aircraft from all but 5 Group heading for Karlsruhe. 234 Lancasters and sixteen Mosquitos of 5 Group, with ten 101 Squadron ABC Lancasters in support, meanwhile made their way to Munich for another attempt to use the marking method at a heavily defended German target. W/C Cheshire dived onto the aiming point through a curtain of light flak, delivered his two spot fires, and screamed away across the rooftops to safety, to be followed by the Mosquitos of Fawke, Kearns and Shannon. McCarthy and Munro backed up with more spot fires from their Lancasters from 18,000 feet immediately after Cheshire, and the main force crews concentrated their bombs around the markers. The attack was a stunning

success, which destroyed over eleven hundred buildings, mostly in central districts, and inflicted heavy damage on railway installations. Nine Lancasters were lost, including one from 617 Squadron, but the 467 Squadron contingent came through unscathed. Two nights later, the low level marking at Schweinfurt was carried out for the first time by 627 Squadron, but its debut in the role was not rewarded with success. The marking was inaccurate, the heavy marker and main force Lancasters were delayed by head winds, and most of the bombing fell outside of the town. The Group closed its April account with a successful small-scale attack on an airframe factory at Oslo on the 28/29th.

May began in similar vein, with a raid on two factories at Toulouse and an aircraft assembly plant at Tours on the 1/2nd. On the 3/4th, 1 and 5 Groups joined forces for a two-phase attack on the Panzer training camp and motor transport depot at Mailly-le-Camp. The operation fell under the overall control of W/C Deane of 83 Squadron, and he and W/C Cheshire, who was to act as marker leader, attended separate briefings. It seems possible that neither had a complete picture of the operational plan, including the involvement of 1 Group's Special Duties Flight from Binbrook, which was assigned to a special target of its own. 617 Squadron marked the target from low level as briefed, while 627 Squadron busied itself with flak suppression, and it was at this point that matters began to go awry. Interference from a commercial broadcasting station jammed W/C Deane's VHF transmissions, preventing his instructions from getting through to the main force crews. They, meanwhile, were forced to mill around in the target area, waiting to be called in to bomb, and this provided an opportunity for enemy nightfighters to get among them. The Deputy Master Bomber, S/L Sparks, was able to communicate with the main force, and brought them in to attack, with 5 Group in the lead. It was when the 1 Group aircraft were in the target area that combats reached a fever pitch, and as burning Lancasters were seen to fall all over the sky, a degree of R/T indiscipline afflicted some crews in their anxiety and frustration. A number of unauthorized and uncomplimentary comments were broadcast, and after the operation, many accusations were unjustly directed at Cheshire. Once in progress, the bombing was accurate and caused the destruction of over a hundred barracks, dozens of transport sheds and over a hundred vehicles, including thirty seven tanks. On the debit side, forty two aircraft failed to return, twenty eight of them from 1 Group, and among the 5 Group casualties was 467 Squadron's JA901, in which P/O Dickson and four of his crew perished, while the two survivors ultimately evaded capture.

On the 6/7th, the Group sent a small contingent to Sable-sur-Sarthe, where an ammunition dump was destroyed, and a similar target at Salbris was equally effectively dealt with on the following night, along with an airfield at Tours. On the 10/11th, Lille was one of five railway yards targeted by the Command, and was assigned to 5 Group. Although successful, twelve Lancasters were lost, including EE143, LL788 and LM475 of 467 Squadron, the first time that three squadron aircraft had failed to return from one operation. All three crashed in the target area, and there were no survivors from the crews of P/O Hislop and P/O Felstead in the first two mentioned, while only the pilot, S/L Smith, escaped with his life from the last, ultimately to evade capture. 463 Squadron also lost three aircraft, and this was Waddington's worst night of the war as home to the Australians. On the following night, the squadron's commanding officer, the now Group Captain Balmer, failed to return in LL792 from a raid on a military

camp at Bourg-Leopold in Belgium, where haze caused the attack to be abandoned after only half of the force had bombed. His Lancaster blew up after being attacked by a nightfighter during the bombing run, and all eight men on board were killed. Later on the 12th, W/C Brill became the new commanding officer on posting from 463 Squadron. He had previously served with 460 Squadron RAAF, and as a Pilot Officer, he had been the first in that squadron to be awarded the DFC, for his courage during an operation against the Gnome & Rhone factory at Gennevilliers in Paris on the 29/30th of May 1942. The 19/20th was a night devoted predominately to attacks on railway yards at five locations, two of which involved 5 group. The raid at Amiens was abandoned because of cloud after a third of the force had bombed, but the attack at Tours was completed successfully without loss.

On the 21/22nd, the much bombed city of Duisburg was the recipient of more attention from 532 aircraft drawn from 1, 3, 5 and 8 Groups, the first time it had been visited since the Ruhr campaign a year earlier. 350 buildings were destroyed, but at a cost of twenty nine Lancasters, and these included the squadron's ED657, which crashed in Holland with no survivors from the crew of F/O Harris. On the following night, Dortmund also received its first visit for a year, although 5 Group had no part to play in the proceedings, as its attention was required elsewhere. Brunswick was the destination for over two hundred Lancasters and ten Mosquitos from the Group, which on arrival, found the town completely cloud covered, despite a forecast that the skies would be clear. Here was the only flaw in the 5 Group marking system. Not only did cloud prevent the Mosquito crews from identifying the aiming point from a distance, but the spot fires could also not be seen by the main force high above. The only alternative was to skymark on H2s, and as had been demonstrated during the winter campaign, this frequently led to inaccurate and scattered bombing. Hardly any bombs fell within the town, and frustratingly, a reconnaissance aircraft found the skies clear just an hour after the attack had taken place. The main targets on the 24/25th were railway yards at either end of Aachen, but the Independent Air Force was again active elsewhere, sending small forces to bomb the Philips factory at Eindhoven and the Ford motor works at Antwerp. The former was abandoned through poor visibility, while the latter missed the target altogether. Three nights later, a hundred Lancasters targeted a railway junction and workshops at Nantes, and the first fifty did such a good job, that the remaining crews were sent home with their bombs.

The first five nights of June were dominated by preparations for the imminent invasion, and a small 5 Group force severely damaged a railway junction at Saumur on the 1/2nd, following up a raid on the same target twenty four hours earlier. The first incident of the month for 467 Squadron was a landing accident involving ED953 following an air-test on the 2nd, but P/O Scholefield and his crew emerged unhurt. That night, the Command attacked four coastal batteries in the Pas-de-Calais, to reinforce the belief that the landings would take place in that area. Ninety six Lancasters from the Group were sent to attack a signals station at Ferme-d'Urville on the 3/4th, to rectify a failure by 4 Group Halifaxes on the 1/2nd. The target was accurately marked by Oboe Mosquitos, and the Lancaster crews did the rest. The 4/5th was devoted to the further bombing of coastal batteries at four sites, three of which were intended to maintain the deception. Briefings on the 5th gave no direct reference to the invasion, but all crews were prohibited from jettisoning bombs over the sea, and there were strict instructions

to maintain pre-determined flight levels. Over a thousand aircraft were aloft that night to bomb ten coastal batteries along the Normandy coast, and the five thousand tons of bomb delivered, represented a new record for a single night. Aircraft were taking off throughout the night, and those crews returning in dawn's early light were rewarded with a sight of the armada ploughing its way sedately across the Channel. The Waddington squadrons operated in tandem under the leadership of W/C Kingsford-Smith of 463 Squadron, and targeted a battery at Point-du-Hoc in the area of Omaha Beach. D-Day Night brought another thousand aircraft into action against road and rail communications targets around towns in Normandy. 5 Group was assigned to railway yards at Caen and Argentan, but as at all locations, the poor weather, which had delayed the invasion, hampered accuracy. This was followed up over the next two nights by a hectic round of operations aimed at troop positions, fuel and ammunition dumps and railways. On the 8/9th, 5 Group forces attacked railway targets at Rennes and Pontabault, and returning from the former, the squadron's LM440 crashed while trying to land at Catfoss. Four of the crew died at the scene, and the pilot, P/O Parkinson, and one other succumbed later to their injuries. While elements of 1, 4, 6 and 8 Groups bombed four airfields south of the battle area on the 9/10th, 5 Group attempted to hit a railway junction at Etampes near Paris. The marking was accurate, but the bombing spread into the town, and hundreds of houses were destroyed. Railway installations at Orleans occupied an element from the Group on the 10/11th, and on the following night, LM552 failed to return from a training flight over the Irish Sea, and the crew of P/O Horton was lost without trace. Over six hundred aircraft from 4, 5, 6 and 8 Groups continued the communications offensive on the 12/13th, when 5 Group was assigned to railway targets at Caen and Poitiers. This night also brought the start of a new oil campaign, and it was opened by 1, 3 and 8 Groups at the Nordstern refinery at Gelsenkirchen. It was a stunningly accurate attack, which halted all production of vital aviation fuel for several weeks, and cost the enemy a thousand tons per day.

The first daylight operation since the departure of 2 Group a year earlier, took place on the evening of the 14th, when a two phase attack was launched against E-Boats and other fast, light craft at Le Havre. It was a predominately 1 and 3 Group effort, with only 617 Squadron representing 5 Group, although its Lancasters were sent home with their bombs. The raid was highly successful, and few, if any craft remained to pose a threat to Allied shipping supplying the beachhead. Also that night, 5 Group attacked enemy troop and vehicle positions at Aunay-sur-Odon with great accuracy. A similar operation to the one at Le Havre was mounted against Boulogne late on the 15th, and this too was concluded successfully. The month's second new campaign, this one against flying bomb launching and storage sites, began on the 16/17th at four locations in the Pas-de-Calais, while three hundred other aircraft continued the assault on the enemy's oil industry at Sterkrade/Holten. 5 Group had not yet become involved in the oil offensive, but its turn came on Midsummer's night, when operations were prepared for two targets. These were the synthetic oil plants at Wesseling and Scholven-Buer, the former to be attacked by 128 Lancasters and six Mosquitos, with five 101 Squadron ABC Lancasters in support, and the latter by a force of similar size and make-up, but with Oboe Mosquitos in attendance. Despite a forecast of clear skies, complete cloud cover was encountered at both targets, and this prevented use of the 5 Group low level visual marking system. Bombing went ahead at Wesseling by H2s alone, and at Scholven by Oboe

skymarking. The Wesseling force was badly mauled by nightfighters, and suffered the loss of thirty seven Lancasters, a casualty rate of almost 28%, with four 5 Group squadrons, 44, 49, 57 and 619 each losing six aircraft. In contrast, the Scholven force lost a more modest eight aircraft, and two of them belonged to 467 Squadron. ED532 was shot down over Germany by a nightfighter, killing the eight man crew of P/O Dearnaley, and LL971 crashed on the Dutch/German border, with just one survivor from the crew of F/L Brine. The remainder of the month was dominated by the campaigns against railways and flying bomb sites, and on the 24/25th, 739 aircraft took off to bomb seven of the latter. A 467 Squadron element joined in an attack on a target at Prouville, and two of its Lancasters were among the twenty two missing from all the night's activity. P/O Berryman, the captain of LM540, was the single fatality among his crew, and two of the survivors managed to retain their freedom. ND729 fell to flak in the target area, and F/L Cowan and four of his crew died at the crash site, while two others succumbed later to their injuries. On the 29th, a daylight attack on flying bomb sites at Beauvoir and Siracourt again resulted in a squadron casualty, and on this occasion it was LM205 which failed to return. Set on fire by flak, the Lancaster was partially abandoned over the Pas-de-Calais, but F/O Edwards and two of his crew were still on board when it crashed.

In July, it seemed to be a sad case of two by two for 467 Squadron in terms of losses, and the month began with the Command attacking flying bomb sites by daylight on the 1st, 2nd and 4th. Later, on the night of the 4/5th, a predominately 5 Group raid was mounted against a flying bomb store in caves at St-Leu-d'Esserent. Nightfighters got amongst the bombers, and thirteen Lancasters failed to return, and although the bombing was accurate, it was inconclusive, and it would be necessary to go back to this target. The first operations in direct support of the ground forces took place on the evening of the 7th, when fortified villages were attacked north of Caen, but 5 Group was not involved. On the 7/8th, 5 Group returned to St-Leu d'Esserent with a number of Pathfinder aircraft in support. In exchange for a successful raid, which collapsed the mouths of the tunnels and blocked all access to the store, the Group paid a high price of twenty nine Lancasters, two of which belonged to 467 Squadron. Both LM219 and LM338 crashed in France, F/L Reynolds and five of his eight man crew in the former losing their lives, while the two survivors evaded capture, and F/O Ryan and his crew were all killed in the latter. It seems that this may have been the operation which brought up the century for S-Sugar, R5868, although other commentators suggest that this milestone occurred with its Bourg-Leopold sortie on the 11/12th of May. Railway installations at Revigny, Tours and Culmont occupied elements of 1, 5 and 8 Groups on the 12/13th, the last mentioned the target for 5 Group. 1 Group's attempt at Revigny was abandoned half way through because of cloud, and this was to have serious consequences for 5 Group six nights hence. 1 Group tried again on the 14/15th, but this was abandoned altogether when haze prevented identification of the aiming point, and thus far, seventeen Lancasters had been lost for no return. The 15/16th brought attacks by 3 and 5 Groups on railway yards at Chalons-sur-Marne and Nevers, the latter involving an element from 467 Squadron. ME851 failed to return after crashing in France, and there were no survivors from the crew of F/L Murphy. Over nine hundred aircraft were involved in attacks on five fortified villages to the east of Caen in the early morning of the 18th, in support of the British Second Army, which was about to launch Operation Goodwood. American air power was also used, but five thousand of the 6,800 tons of bombs were delivered by the RAF. The responsibility of destroying the

railway junction at Revigny was passed to 5 Group that night, and although the operation was successful, it was another expensive night for the Independent Air Force. Twenty four Lancasters were shot down, more than 20% of the force, and among the two missing 467 Squadron aircraft was one of its oldest examples. R5485 was attacked by a nightfighter on the way home, and the rear gunner was killed during the engagement. Five of the crew managed to escape by parachute, four of them to evade capture, but the pilot, P/O Davis, was killed in the ensuing crash. The squadron also lost one of its newest aircraft on this night, PB234, which also fell to a nightfighter during the bombing run, and the pilot, F/O Beharrie, was killed along with two of his crew, while three of the four survivors evaded capture. On the 20/21st, the railway yards at Courtrai were left a tangled mess, as were the wreckages in Belgium of LM101 and LM119, in which the crews of F/O Jeffery and F/O Barlow were killed. The first major raid on an urban target in Germany for two months was directed at Kiel on the 23/24th, when over six hundred aircraft appeared with complete surprise from behind a 100 Group RCM screen. All parts of the town were hit, with particular emphasis in the port area, where U-Boat construction yards and naval facilities sustained severe damage. A three raid series of operations against Stuttgart over five nights began on the 24/25th, and continued on the 25/26th and 28/29th. By the end, the city's central districts lay in ruins, but the last operation was a victory for the defenders, after nightfighters caught the bomber stream over France outbound. Thirty nine Lancasters were shot down, 8% of the force of 494 aircraft, and this figure included LL846 and ME856 from 467 Squadron. The former was forced to ditch on the way home, and F/O Johns and all but one of his crew survived to be rescued by the enemy on the following day. They were more fortunate than their colleagues in the latter, however, which crashed in southern Germany, and delivered no survivors from the crew of F/O Fotheringham.

The first six days of August saw a continuation of the assault on flying bomb sites, with over eleven hundred aircraft involved on the 3rd alone. The 467 Squadron trend of losing two aircraft at a time did not seem to alter with the onset of August, when two Lancasters, ME853 and ND346, failed to return from Bois de Cassan, a V-1 supply depot, following a daylight raid on the 2nd. The aircraft crashed close together, and all fourteen men in the crews of F/O Bradley and F/O Dyer were killed. A thousand aircraft took part in operations in support of Allied ground forces on the 7/8th, and this was followed by more flying bomb sites and fuel storage dumps over the next few nights. An attempt to knock out the Opel Motor works at Rüsselsheim on the 12/13th failed to achieve its objectives, and PD230 became the squadron's first solo loss for over a month. Two men from the crew of F/O Mellowship did manage to abandon the stricken Lancaster before it crashed, and they both evaded capture. A simultaneous operation took place at Brunswick, as an experiment to gauge the ability of main force crews to locate and bomb a target on H2s, without the presence of Pathfinder aircraft. Whilst it was undoubtedly the most effective operation yet against this target, bombing was still scattered, and it demonstrated that the main force still required its Pathfinder colleagues to light the way. *A German friend of mine, who was borne on D-Day, was brought up in the village of Geitelde, a few kilometres to the south-west of Brunswick, where his father was the parish minister. He grew up with the belief shared by all the residents of the surrounding hamlets, that Bomber Command intentionally bombed the environs first, to force the inhabitants into the town, before delivering a knock-out blow there. In view of the four misdirected raids, before the one which devastated Brunswick in mid October, it is not difficult to understand how such a belief was born.*

Happily for 467 Squadron, the following two weeks were to bring a period of loss-free operations, which included support for the ground forces around Falaise by daylight on the 14th. Eight hundred aircraft were involved in these attacks on seven enemy positions, each under the control of a Master Bomber and Deputy. Despite the attentions of these highly skilled and experienced officers, a "friendly fire" incident killed thirteen Canadian soldiers, and wounded a further fifty three. In preparation for his new night offensive against industrial Germany, Harris launched a thousand aircraft by daylight on the 15th, to bomb nine nightfighter airfields in Holland and Belgium. This got under way at Stettin and Kiel on the 16/17th, the former operation visiting particular destruction on the city, to the tune of fifteen hundred houses and twenty nine industrial premises, while five ships were sunk in the harbour. One of the most devastating raids of the war to date fell on Bremen on the 18/19th, and it left over eight and a half thousand houses and apartment blocks in ruins. A second raid was mounted against the Opel works at Rüsselsheim on the 25/26th by 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups, and although most of the machine tools survived the attack, some parts of the factory remained out of action for a number of weeks. 5 Group was also active over southern Germany on this night, but its attack on Darmstadt faltered, when the Master Bomber was forced to return early, and his Deputies were shot down. As the war ground on, 5 Group would find itself being sent to some of the most distant targets in Germany, and the end of the month brought two trips to the eastern Baltic port of Königsberg, which was being used by the enemy to supply its forces in Russia. The first operation took place on the 26/27th, when most of the bombing fell into the eastern half of the town, and many public buildings were destroyed or seriously damaged. The final acts of the flying bomb campaign were played out on the 28th, and shortly afterwards, the Pas-de-Calais was captured by Allied ground forces. It was clearly believed that there was still work to do at Königsberg, and 189 Lancasters of 5 Group undertook the nineteen hundred mile round trip again on the 29/30th. Its extreme range meant that fuel took precedence over bombs, but the city, never-the-less, suffered a devastating blow, in which 41% of its housing and 20% of its industry was destroyed. It was not, however, a one-sided contest, and fighters over the target accounted for fifteen Lancasters, of which three were from 467 Squadron, thus bringing an abrupt halt to its loss-free period. LM237 crashed into the sea, and only one man survived from the crew of F/L Tattersall, F/O Richards and four of his crew escaped with their lives from LM267 to fall into enemy hands, and LM583 was lost without trace with the crew of F/O Sandell.

September would be devoted largely to the business of liberating the three important French ports still in enemy hands. The first outing for 5 Group was a small-scale attack on ships in Brest harbour on the 2nd, which was concluded without loss. Over six hundred aircraft bombed six airfields in Holland on the 3rd, possibly to hamper enemy fighter operations against bomber forces attacking Le Havre over the ensuing days. Six operations were mounted against enemy strong points around the port between the 5th and the 11th, and a few hours after the final raid, the German garrison surrendered to British forces. That night, 5 Group returned to Darmstadt, the scene of a recent failure, and delivered a devastating assault, which culminated in a firestorm and the deaths of over twelve thousand people, while seventy thousand others from a population of 120,000 were rendered homeless. Stuttgart had always proved to be a difficult and dangerous target, and had cost the lives of many crews over the past eighteen months, although the raids in 1944 had left much of it in ruins. On the

12/13th, the Command despatched a force to Frankfurt, while 1 and 5 Groups concentrated on Stuttgart. A accurate attack ensued, which totally destroyed the north and west-centre of the city, creating a firestorm area, and killing more than eleven hundred people. On this occasion, only four of the 204 Lancasters were lost, but two of these belonged to 467 Squadron. Both LL789 and LM226 crashed in Germany, F/O Bright and one other surviving from the former, and two men prevailed from the latter, but the pilot, F/L Browne, was among those who died. Boulogne became the second French port to return to Allied hands, after seven hundred aircraft dropped three thousand tons of bombs onto German position on the 17th. This left only Calais to be liberated, and operations to bring this about would begin on the 20th. In the meantime, 5 Group sent two hundred Lancasters to Bremerhaven on the 18/19th, and delivered a stunning attack, which was a further demonstration of the effectiveness of the low level marking system. Over 2,600 buildings were destroyed at what was virtually a virgin target, and it would not be considered necessary to return.

On the following night, 1 and 5 Groups joined forces to attack the twin towns of Mönchengladbach and Rheydt. The officer selected to act as Master Bomber was W/C Guy Gibson VC, who was serving as a Base Operations Officer at 54 Base, Coningsby. Having been forcibly removed from the operational scene following the Dams raid, Gibson had lost his direction, and become listless and frustrated, and was desperate to get back into the war before it ended. He had not, however, lost the arrogance, which had made him the perfect choice to lead Operation Chastise. When the opportunity presented itself to lead this night's attack, he grabbed it with both hands, despite being unqualified in the role of Master Bomber, and despite his lack of recent operational experience. The marking plan was relatively complex, and would have taxed even an experienced Master Bomber, which Gibson was not, and as Coningsby was the home of 5 Group's Master Bombers, an abundance of advice was available to him, had he wanted it. It was certainly offered, but he brushed it aside, and also, unaccountably, rejected the 627 Squadron aircraft prepared for him, and insisted on another. It was not even that he was familiar with the type, and, in fact, had only a fleeting acquaintance with it. Once initial difficulties with the marking had been rectified, the operation proceeded more or less according to plan, although some crews bombed markers not assigned to them. Gibson was heard to send the crews home, but he never arrived, and it was later discovered that his Mosquito had crashed on the outskirts of the Dutch town of Steenberg without survivors. 467 Squadron also registered the loss of PB299, whose crew had been briefed to attack Rheydt. F/O Findlay was one of three survivors after they were shot down over Holland, and he ultimately evaded capture, while his two crew colleagues were taken prisoner.

German positions around Calais were targeted, as already mentioned, on the 20th, and before the next operation took place, 136 Lancasters and five Mosquitos of 5 Group were sent to the Dortmund-Ems Canal at Ladbergen. This was a target with which the Group had an almost personal association stretching back to the summer of 1940, when 49 Squadron's F/L Learoyd earned the award of a Victoria Cross for his courage in pressing home his attack. 617 Squadron took part, a little over a year after losing five of eight crews in a vain attempt to breach its banks, and its Tallboys were probably responsible for the damage caused on this night, which left a six mile stretch drained. 113 other aircraft from the Group carried out a

simultaneous attack on Handorf airfield at nearby Münster as a diversion, but this did not prevent the loss of fourteen Lancasters from the main raid. Operations against Calais resumed on the 24th, but low cloud hampered accurate bombing, to the extent that some crews elected to bomb from below 2,000 feet, where light flak claimed a few of them. LM636 was one of seven aircraft failing to return, and this crashed in the target area, killing F/O Brown and four of his crew, while the two survivors landed in Allied held territory. Further operations against the port and its environs took place daily thereafter, until the 28th, after which the German garrison surrendered. While this campaign was in progress, elements of 1 and 5 Groups went to Karlsruhe in southern Germany on the 26/27th, and left a large area in ruins. Only two of more than two hundred Lancasters failed to return, but one of these was 467 Squadron's final casualty of the month. LM239 was shot down close to the target, but F/O Millar and all but the mid-upper gunner managed to extricate themselves before the crash, and all became PoWs.

Now released from the bulk of its obligations to SHAEF, Bomber Command returned with a will to industrial Germany, and from this point until the end of hostilities, Germany would suffer an unprecedented assault by a force at peak strength. During September, a number of attempts had been made to bomb heavy gun emplacements on the island of Walcheren in the Scheldt Estuary, which were barring the approaches to the much needed port of Antwerp. It was decided, as an alternative, to breach the sea walls, thereby inundating the batteries, and creating difficult terrain for the defenders when the ground forces arrived. The walls at Westkapelle were attacked by eight waves of thirty bombers each on the 3rd, with Oboe Mosquitos providing the marking. The fifth wave caused a breach, which was widened by those following behind, and the 617 Squadron element was sent home with its valuable Tallboys. 5 Group sent a force of over two hundred Lancasters to Wilhelmshaven by daylight on the 5th, but total cloud cover led to a scattered and ineffective attack. DV373 developed engine problems on the way there, and was forced to ditch in the North Sea, from where F/O Fedderson and his crew were rescued. Sadly, their reprieve would be brief. A second Ruhr campaign began at Dortmund on the 6/7th at the hands of 3, 6 and 8 Groups, while elements of 1 and 5 Groups went to Bremen, and destroyed or seriously damaged almost five thousand buildings. The frontier towns of Cleves and Emmerich were heavily bombed by daylight on the 7th, a day on which 5 Group continued the assault on Walcheren by breaching the sea walls near Flushing. W/C Brill's tour as commanding officer came to an end on the 12th, and he thus became the first 467 Squadron commander to survive to be posted. He was replaced by W/C Douglas, who arrived from 460 Squadron, where he had been in command since May.

The new Ruhr offensive led inexorably to Operation Hurricane, a demonstration to the enemy of the overwhelming superiority of the Allied air forces ranged against it. Duisburg was selected to open proceedings on the 14th, and at first light, over a thousand aircraft took off, most of them arriving overhead shortly after breakfast time to deliver 4,500 tons of bombs. That night, similar numbers returned to press home the point about superiority, and remarkably, this massive total of 2,018 sorties in under twenty four hours was achieved without a contribution from 5 Group. It took advantage of the nighttime activity over the Ruhr to raid Brunswick, which finally succumbed to a devastating assault, after so often in the past

escaping comparatively lightly. This was the first operation presided over by the squadron's new commanding officer, W/C Douglas, who, like most of his predecessors, would not survive his period of tenure. Stuttgart and Nuremberg were the main targets on the 19/20th, the latter assigned to 5 Group. Almost complete cloud cover hampered the marking and bombing, and a moderate 397 houses and forty one industrial premises were destroyed in mostly southern districts. The Group had continued its small-scale attacks on Walcheren during the course of the month, and it was during a raid on a gun battery at Flushing on the 23rd, that the squadron registered its next failure to return. NF989 was lost without trace, and took with it the crew of F/O Rowell. The Hurricane force moved on to Essen that night with over a thousand aircraft, again without 5 Group, and destroyed over six hundred buildings. A smaller force of seven hundred aircraft returned on the afternoon of the 25th, and this time destroyed over eleven hundred buildings. An attempt by 5 Group to bomb U-Boat pens at Bergen in Norway on the 28/29th was thwarted by unexpected cloud, and the Master Bomber was forced to call a halt to proceedings after less than fifty of the 230 strong force had bombed. The squadron's LM746 was still over Lincolnshire outbound, when it touched NN714, another of the squadron's Lancasters, and the pilot was forced to abort the sortie. Having jettisoned the bomb load over the sea, F/O Boxsell baled out four of his crew, before carrying out a successful crash-landing at Carnaby. The other aircraft involved was able to make a safe landing. (Bomber Command Losses Vol 5. W R Chorley). Earlier that afternoon, Cologne received the first of its visits from the Hurricane force, and over 2,200 apartment blocks were reduced to rubble. Further heavy raids were mounted against this city on the evenings of the 30th and 31st, and also on the 30th, 5 Group carried out the final assault on Walcheren. Ground forces went in on the 31st, and after a week of heavy fighting, the island fell. The succeeding three weeks were spent clearing mines from the approaches to Antwerp, and it was the end of November before the first convoy arrived.

The Hurricane force destroyed or seriously damaged over five thousand houses and apartment blocks in Düsseldorf on the 2/3rd of November, but the squadron's DV396 failed to return. F/O Landridge and one of his crew were killed in the crash in Allied held territory, but the others all landed safely by parachute and soon returned home. The breaches in the Dortmund-Ems Canal had now been repaired, and this was an open invitation to 5 Group to do it further mischief. While the bulk of the main force was inflicting heavy damage on the centre of Bochum on the 4/5th, the Independent Air Force returned to the canal, and left the Ladbergen section drained and unnavigable. As the Command's recognized Canal-Busters, the Group turned its attention to the Mittelland waterway at its junction with the Dortmund-Ems at Gravenhorst on the 6/7th. On this occasion, the markers could not be seen, and the Master Bomber called a halt to the bombing early on. Throughout the remainder of the war, 5 Group would make its mark in the oil campaign, and an attempt was made on the 11/12th to knock out the Rhenania-Ossag oil refinery at Harburg. It is not clear whether serious damage was inflicted, but there was considerable collateral damage to the town, and the squadron's NF917 and NN714 were two of seven Lancasters missing from the operation. Both crashed in Germany, with just one survivor from the crew of F/O Eyre in the former, but F/O Fedderson and his crew were all killed in the latter. Almost twelve hundred aircraft were called into action on the afternoon of the 16th, to lend support to American ground forces advancing towards the Rhine. The three small towns of Düren, Jülich and Heinsburg were links in the

communications chain behind enemy lines, and were to be eliminated. 1 and 5 Groups joined forces with a Pathfinder element to attack the first mentioned, which was all but erased from the map, and over three thousand people lost their lives. The 21/22nd was a busy night of operations, for which over thirteen hundred sorties were launched. Oil and railway targets occupied a large proportion of the Command, while 5 Group returned to canal-busting at both the Dortmund-Ems and the Mittelland. Both were successfully attacked, and the breach in the latter left a thirty mile stretch drained. Munich was the Group's objective on the 26/27th, and returning crews claimed an effective outcome. PD398 ran out of fuel and force-landed in France on the way home, but there were no casualties among the crew of F/O Findlay, who had evaded capture after being shot down in September.

December began gently for 5 Group, and it was not called to arms until the night of the 4/5th. The target was the town of Heilbronn, which had never before been attacked by the Command in numbers, and was of importance now simply because of its location on a main north-south railway line. A virtual maximum effort of 282 Lancasters and ten Mosquitos took off, and in a few-minute orgy of destruction, over 80% of the town was consigned to oblivion, and seven thousand people lost their lives. Twelve Lancasters failed to return, and among them was the squadron's PB740, which crashed in southern Germany, killing P/O Plumridge and all but one of his crew. Two nights later, the eastern town of Giessen wilted under a heavy 5 Group assault, which was successfully aimed at its centre and railway installations. Earlier in the month, 8 Group had carried out a number of attacks on the Urft Dam in the Eiffel region of western Germany. No breach had occurred, and 5 Group was equally unsuccessful on the 11th, despite scoring a number of direct hits. The 17/18th was another night of intense activity, which involved over thirteen hundred sorties. Duisburg was the main feature, while 1 Group went to Ulm, and 5 Group tried again at Munich, from where returning crews claimed a highly effective operation. The 467 Squadron crew of F/O Evans was not at debriefing, having been forced to abandon PD215 on the way home over France, after a collision with a 50 Squadron Lancaster in the target area. Happily, both crews arrived safely on the ground, and were soon back home. On the following night, the Group was sent on one of its long treks, and having arrived at its destination, it inflicted heavy damage on the Baltic port of Gdynia. On the 21/22nd, the Group headed in the same direction to carry out an attack on the synthetic oil refinery at Pölitz, near Stettin, and although photographic reconnaissance showed some damage, it would be necessary to return in the coming year. The final wartime Christmas came and went in relative peace, but some crews were roused into action on Boxing Day to attack troop positions at St Vith, following the enemy's breakout in the Ardennes.

It had been a good year for 467 Squadron, in which losses had been regular but never excessive, and there had been none of the disastrous nights to which some squadrons occasionally succumbed. The Command was now bludgeoning its way across a shattered Germany, a country which still had to face some of its heaviest raids. As the year turned, the unmistakable scent of victory was wafting in from the Continent, but much remained to be done before the proud, resourceful and tenacious enemy would finally lay down his arms.

1945

The enemy defences, while suffering extreme shortages, particularly in aviation fuel, were by no means spent, and they would continue to inflict casualties on Bomber Command, even though not in the same measure as before. The Luftwaffe did itself no favours, when launching its ill-conceived and ultimately ill-fated Operation Bodenplatte at first light on New Year's Morning. The intention to destroy elements of the Allied air forces on the ground at the recently liberated airfields in France, Holland and Belgium was only modestly realized, and any losses could be made good from the enormous stockpiles within hours. Not so the Luftwaffe, however, whose entire front line day fighter strength was committed to the attack. Many of those which survived the hedge-hopping strafing and bombing attacks into the teeth of the airfield flak batteries, were pounced on by fighters as they withdrew, and around 250 aircraft were destroyed. More serious was the loss of around 150 pilots, killed wounded and captured, and this was a setback from which the Luftwaffe day fighter force would never fully recover. If 467 Squadron was hoping for some respite from losses in 1945, New Year's Day was to be a disappointment. A successful 5 Group attack on the Dortmund-Ems canal at Ladbergen in the morning, resulted in two Lancasters failing to return, one of them belonging to 9 Squadron, in which F/S George Thompson earned a posthumous VC, and the other, PA169 of 467 Squadron. The latter was hit by flak during the bombing run, but carried on to release its bombs, before being hit again while turning away from the target. The crew of F/O Bache nursed the aircraft towards home with a ruptured fuel tank, and had reached Allied territory when both port engines failed through petrol starvation. The Lancaster was abandoned to its fate, and all seven men landed safely in Holland, with a number of injuries between them. That night, another element from the Group returned to the Mittelland Canal at Gravenhorst, and undid some of the recent repairs. On the afternoon of the 3rd, NF908 flew into a stuffed cloud in Staffordshire during a fighter affiliation exercise, and F/O Allamby and his crew were all killed.

A controversial attack was mounted against the small French town of Royan, in response to requests from Free French forces, which were laying siege on their way to Bordeaux. Many of the residents had declined the German garrison commander's invitation to evacuate the town, and they were to suffer the most serious consequences. The two phase operation by 1, 5 and 8 Groups took place in the early hours of the 4th, and the town was left severely damaged. 467 Squadron's ND473 collided with ME300, a 189 Squadron Lancaster, on the way home over France, and F/O Eggins and his crew baled out safely, while, sadly, only the rear gunner survived from the other crew. This would prove to be only a temporary reprieve. In the event, the French did not take the town, and the garrison remained in place until mid April. The last major raid of the war on Munich was conducted by over six hundred aircraft of 1, 4, 5, 6 and 8 Groups on the 7/8th, and further heavy damage was sustained by the city, at a cost to the Command of fifteen aircraft. JB286 crashed near Peterborough on return after ten hours in the air, and the absence of the crew of F/O McNamee suggested that they had baled out over the sea and perished. On the 13/14th, the Group returned to Pölitz, where unexpected clear conditions allowed low level marking to take place, and the operation was successful. A similar oil target at Leuna, near Merseburg in eastern Germany, occupied over five hundred aircraft from 1, 5, 6 and 8 Groups on the following night, and this also was concluded

satisfactorily. For the third operation in a row, the Group found itself engaged in the oil campaign, and joined forces with 1 Group on the 16/17th to attack the refinery at Brůx in Czechoslovakia. Another accurate attack ensued, after which, the Group enjoyed a short break from operations until the 22/23rd, when it participated in a small area raid on Gelsenkirchen.

The weather at the beginning of February was largely unfavourable, and conditions over the targets would lead to a number of failures for the Group. One of these occurred at Siegen on the 1/2nd, when most of the bombs fell into open country. The squadron's NG197 was one of only three Lancasters missing, and contained the eight man all-officer crew of F/L Livingstone. He died in the crash, while the other seven men escaped by parachute and were taken into captivity. Another unsuccessful operation took place on the following night, when complete cloud cover helped Karlsruhe to escape serious damage, and the Group lost fourteen Lancasters for its pains, two of them from 467 Squadron. LM100 suffered the failure of all its engines while homebound over France, and only the bomb-aimer had time to jump clear before the crash, in which F/O Robinson and the other five were killed. PB306 crashed in southern Germany, and there were no survivors from the eight man crew of F/L Colley. The "hat-trick" of unsuccessful raids came for the Group on the 7/8th, when 170 of its aircraft returned to the Dortmund-Ems Canal at Ladbergen, while the other Groups pounded the frontier towns of Goch and Cleves. Post operation reconnaissance showed no breaches in the banks of the waterway, but the disappointment was at least not compounded by heavy losses. Just three Lancasters failed to return, and, sadly, one of them was the squadron's NG455, containing the crew of the squadron commander, W/C Douglas. This veteran of over a hundred operations died with two others on board, one man evaded capture, and the remaining four became PoWs. He was the third of the squadron's four commanding officers thus far to lose his life in action, and his replacement was to suffer a similar fate. W/C Langlois stepped immediately into the breach, and presided over his first operation that night. The third and final raid on the oil refinery at Pölitz was a two phase affair, which was opened by 5 Group, employing low level marking. Standard Pathfinder marking paved the way for 1 Group, and the highly accurate bombing halted all production at the site for the remainder of the war.

The Churchill inspired series of attacks on Germany's eastern cities under Operation Thunderclap began at Dresden on the 13/14th, and was another all Lancaster two phase affair. 5 Group opened proceedings, but a layer of cloud hampered the marking and bombing, and this part of the operation was only partially successful. 244 Lancasters delivered eight hundred tons of bombs into the city, and once the fires had taken hold, they acted as a beacon to guide the second wave 1, 3, 6 and 8 Group aircraft to the mark three hours later. By this time, the skies were clear, and a further eighteen hundred tons of bombs rained down onto the hapless city and its inhabitants, whose numbers had been swelled by a large influx of refugees fleeing from the eastern front. The bombing set off the same chain of events which had led to the firestorm at Hamburg in July 1943, and the beautiful and historic city of Dresden became engulfed in one of even greater proportions. On the following morning, the Americans came, and some of their escort fighters allegedly strafed the streets and open spaces where the survivors were sheltering. This as much as the RAF raid angered the citizens of Dresden, but

in their minds, the architect of all their misery was Harris, and he would carry their hatred to the grave. A figure of fifty thousand has been settled on as the death toll for this one night, although some commentators believe the total to be substantially higher. Thunderclap moved on to Chemnitz on the following night, but complete cloud cover made marking and bombing conditions difficult, and much of the bombing fell into open country. 5 Group did not take part this time, but was also active over eastern Germany, targeting the oil plant at Rösitz, where some installations were hit. An attack by the Group on the oil refinery at Böhlen on the 19/20th foundered, when the Master Bomber's Mosquito was shot down by flak over the target. W/C Benjamin of 54 Base was killed, and little damage was inflicted on the plant. A return to canal-busting took elements of the Group to the Mittelland Canal at Gravenhorst on the 20/21st, but the Master Bomber abandoned the attempt because of cloud. The operation was rescheduled for the following night, and this time, it was entirely successful, although it did result in the loss of the Coningsby station commander, the larger-than-life G/C "Tiny" Evans-Evans. There were only a number of minor operations to occupy elements of the Group during the remainder of the month, and the coming month would be the penultimate one of the bombing war.

March began with the final heavy raid of the war on Cologne on the morning of the 2nd, and four days later, it fell to American forces. On the 3/4th, the Luftwaffe mounted Operation Gisella, a concerted intruder effort to catch bombers returning from the night's activity, the main features of which were a 4 and 8 Group raid on the synthetic oil refinery at Bergkamen, and a 5 Group attack on the Dortmund-Ems Canal. It was a highly successful foray, and demonstrated what the Luftwaffe could have achieved, had Hitler not been opposed to intruder operations, on the basis that it was better propaganda to show RAF bombers on the ground in Germany and the occupied countries. Twenty bombers were shot down by the intruders over England, but 467 Squadron's losses occurred during the raid on the canal, which effectively rendered the waterway unserviceable, and this proved to be the final raid of the war on this target. Three of its Lancasters were among the seven missing, and PB806 contained the commanding officer, W/C Langlois DFC. He died with four of his crew, after barely a month in the post, and the two survivors fell into enemy hands. LM677 crashed in Germany, killing F/O Eggins and all but one of his crew, who, it will be recalled, took to their parachutes over France on the way back from Royan in early January. ME453 was the final casualty, and this took F/O Ward and his crew to their deaths. As events would prove, only once more would the squadron have the sad duty of posting missing a crew. The new commanding officer was W/C Ian Hay, who would see the squadron through to the end of hostilities. Operation Thunderclap returned to Chemnitz on the 5/6th, without 5 Group, and this time, severe fire damage was inflicted on the city. 5 Group, meanwhile, was trying again at Böhlen, but again failed to deliver a knockout blow. On the following night, the Group sent almost two hundred aircraft to Sassnitz, a port on the island of Rügen, just north of Usedom where Peenemünde was situated. It was a successful raid, which caused heavy damage in the northern half of the town, and sank three ships in the harbour. A successful return to Harburg by the Group on the 7/8th left a rubber factory damaged as well as the oil installations, and this was followed by three days of rest.

A new milestone was set on the 11th, when the largest ever single Bomber Command force of 1,079 aircraft took off in the late morning, to attack Essen for the last time. The record stood for a little over twenty four hours, and was surpassed on the following afternoon, when 1,108 aircraft departed their stations for the final raid of the war on Dortmund. Both operations were massively destructive, leaving the two cities effectively paralyzed, and only five aircraft were lost from the 2,187 sorties despatched. 5 Group returned to the oil offensive on the 14/15th, with a raid on the Wintershall refinery at Lützkendorf. Some success was achieved, but it would be necessary to return to this target at a later date. The final raid of the war on Nuremberg took place on the 16/17th at the hands of 1 and 8 Groups, and whilst further heavy damage was inflicted, twenty four 1 Group Lancasters were shot down, most of them by nightfighters on the way to the target. 5 Group went to Würzburg on this night, and in just seventeen minutes of accurate and concentrated bombing, 89% of the built-up area of this historic cathedral city was reduced to rubble and ashes, and at least four thousand people lost their lives. Six Lancasters failed to return, and among them was 467 Squadron's PD231, which was brought down during its final approach to the aiming point. F/O Thomas and all but one of his crew were killed, while the rear gunner fell into enemy hands. Thus did this crew earn the sad distinction of being the very last from 467 Squadron to be posted missing from operations, and PD231 of being the last of 104 Lancasters to be lost. The Group went back to Böhlen on the 20/21st, after which the refinery produced no more oil for the German war effort, and a similar fate befell the Deutsche Erdölwerke refinery at Hamburg twenty four hours later. The small town of Wesel had received more than its fair share of attention from the Command since mid February, purely because of its location close to an area of fighting. 5 and 8 Groups delivered the final attack on the 23/24th of March, by which time it was 97% destroyed.

April was the final month of the bombing war for the heavy brigade, and it began for 5 Group with a daylight raid on the 4th, on what was believed to be military barracks at Nordhausen in central Germany. It was, in fact, a camp for forced workers at the underground secret weapons factory, which had been set up after Peenemünde. 1 and 8 Groups had attacked it on the previous day, and the two operations caused many casualties among friendly foreign nationals. All production at the benzol plant at Molbis near Leipzig ceased after an attack by the Group on the 7/8th, and the following night brought a similar fate for the Wintershall refinery at Lützkendorf. This effectively brought an end to the campaign against Germany's oil production, and 5 Group would now concentrate on the final operations against communications. This would require some long flights into eastern Germany and beyond, and began with a small raid on the Wahren railway yards at Leipzig on the 10/11th, in company with an element from 8 Group. The Group went alone to bomb railway yards at Pilsen in Czechoslovakia on the 16/17th, and on the following night, stopped just short of the Czech border to attack the yards at Cham. Later on the 18th, over nine hundred aircraft descended upon the island of Heligoland, and left it resembling a lunar landscape. 5 Group carried out the final raid of the long-running communications offensive on the 18/19th, when attacking the railway yards at Komotau, again in Czechoslovakia. On the 25th, Bomber Command undertook its final major operations of the war. In the morning, elements of 1, 5 and 8 Groups almost fittingly raided the SS barracks at Hitler's Eaglesnest retreat in the Bavarian mountains at Berchtesgaden, and in the afternoon, 4, 6 and 8 Groups bombed heavy gun emplacements

on the Frisian island of Wangerooge, which were barring the approaches to the North German ports. That night, a 5 Group force of a hundred aircraft, including fourteen from 467 Squadron, visited an oil refinery at Tonsberg in Norway, and then it was all over. On the following day, crews began to prepare for the forthcoming humanitarian operations, Manna and Exodus, the former, to deliver food to the starving Dutch people still under enemy occupation. This began on the 29th, and continued to the end of hostilities, while Operation Exodus, the repatriation of Allied prisoners of war, required a longer commitment, and the squadron was happy to participate in both.

467 Squadron arrived on the scene in time to face the German defences at their most lethal. The squadron's battle honours include all of the major campaigns, which it saw through with distinction. The quality of leadership enjoyed by the squadron enabled it to maintain a high level of efficiency and morale, but through leading from the front, four of its six commanding officers were killed in action. The squadron's operational statistics appear in another section of this Profile, but in addition, it flew 26,625 operational hours, delivered 17,578 tons of bombs, and claimed six enemy aircraft destroyed, thirteen probables and twenty one damaged. Its airmen were awarded five DSOs, 146 DFCs, two CGMs and thirty six DFMs. There is no question that 467 Squadron was one of the mainstays of the Group and the Command, and it was the equal of any squadron. On the 30th of September 1945, its duty done, 467 Squadron was disbanded at Metheringham.

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STATIONS

SCAMPTON	07.11.42. to 22.11.42.
BOTTESFORD	22.11.42. to 12.11.43.
WADDINGTON	12.11.43. to 15.06.45.

COMMANDING OFFICERS

WING COMMANDER C L GOMM	07.11.42. to 16.08.43.
SQUADRON LEADER A S RAPHAEL	16.08.43. to 18.08.43.
WING COMMANDER J R BALMER	18.08.43. to 11.05.44.
WING COMMANDER W L BRILL	12.05.44. to 12.10.44.
WING COMMANDER J K DOUGLAS	12.10.44. to 08.02.45.
WING COMMANDER E Le P LANGLOIS	08.02.45. to 04.03.45.
WING COMMANDER I H A HAY	04.03.45. to 30.09.45.

AIRCRAFT

LANCASTER I/III	11.42. to 09.45.
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SECTION 2



OPERATIONAL RECORD

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OPERATIONAL RECORD

OPERATIONS	SORTIES	AIRCRAFT LOSSES	% LOSSES
314	3833	104	2.7

CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS

BOMBING

299

14 Lancasters destroyed in crashes.

MINING

15

TABLE OF STATISTICS

(Heavy squadrons).

Out of 59 Lancaster squadrons.

9th highest number of Lancaster overall operations in Bomber Command.

15th highest number of Lancaster sorties in Bomber Command.

14th equal (with 156Sqn) highest number of Lancaster operational losses in Bomber Command.

Out of 22 squadrons in 5 Group.

11th highest number of overall operations in 5 Group.

8th highest number of sorties in Bomber Command.

9th highest number of aircraft operational losses in 5 Group.

Out of 17 Lancaster squadrons in 5 Group.

7th highest number of Lancaster overall operations in 5 Group.

7th highest number of Lancaster sorties in 5 Group.

8th highest number of Lancaster operational losses in 5 Group.

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SECTION 3



AIRCRAFT LISTING

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467 SQUADRON.

LANCASTER. From November 1942.

L7530 From 207Sqn. Training only. To 1661CU.
L7574 From 97Sqn. Crashed on take-off from Waddington when bound for Berlin 22.11.43.

R5485 PO-S/F From 1657CU. FTR Revigny 18/19.7.44.
R5868 PO-S From 83Sqn. Flew a total of 137 operations. Preserved in RAF Museum Hendon.

W4240 PO-A From 57Sqn. FTR Hanover 18/19.10.43.
W4375 No operations. To 57Sqn.
W4376 To 57Sqn.
W4377 To 57Sqn.
W4378 PO-N FTR Berlin 17/18.1.43.
W4380 To 50Sqn.
W4381 From 207Sqn. To 106Sqn.
W4382 To 50Sqn.
W4383 To 50Sqn.
W4384 PO-B To 57Sqn.
W4795 First off on Squadron's first operation. To 207Sqn.
W4797 No operations. To 57Sqn.
W4798 To 207Sqn.
W4822 To 49Sqn.
W4823 To 50Sqn.
W4824 No operations. To 57Sqn and back via 1660CU. To 50Sqn.
W4825 To 97Sqn.
W4826 To 106Sqn.
W4946 PO-C/U- FTR Hamburg 27/28.7.43.
W4983 PO-B/Z FTR Düsseldorf 11/12.6.43.
W5003 PO-H FTR Hamburg 27/28.7.43.
DV226 FTR Kassel 22/23.10.43.
DV233 From 427Sqn. To 207Sqn and back. FTR Mannheim 23/24.9.43.
DV237 FTR Berlin 3/4.9.43.
DV240 PO-D FTR Nuremberg 30/31.3.44.
DV277 PO-L To 5LFS.
DV337 PO-N To 463Sqn.
DV338 To 463Sqn.
DV372 PO-F To 1651CU.
DV373 To 463Sqn.
DV374 To 463Sqn.
DV378 PO-C FTR Berlin 30/31.1.44.
DV396 PO-B From 9Sqn. FTR Düsseldorf 1/2.11.44.
ED303 To 106Sqn.

ED304 PO-B/C/D FTR Düsseldorf 11/12.6.43.
ED305 No operations. To 44Sqn.
ED309 To 50Sqn.
ED360 PO-D To 106Sqn.
ED361 To 207Sqn.
ED363 PO-E FTR Cologne 28/29.6.43.
ED364 To 207Sqn.
ED367 PO-H FTR Duisburg 8/9.1.43. Squadron's first loss.
ED500 PO-S Crash-landed in Cheshire while training 3.8.43.
ED504 PO-K FTR Essen 27/28.5.43.
ED523 PO-Q FTR Stuttgart 11/12.3.43.
ED524 PO-T FTR Essen 3/4.4.43.
ED525 FTR Wilhelmshaven 19/20.2.43.
ED526 PO-J FTR Nuremberg 25/26.2.43.
ED529 FTR Wilhelmshaven 19/20.2.43.
ED530 PO-O Ditched in Channel on return from Munich 2/3.10.43.
ED531 PO-T FTR Turin 12/13.7.43.
ED532 PO-H FTR Scholven Buer 21/22.6.44.
ED534 PO-R FTR Hamburg 29/30.7.43.
ED535 To 460Sqn.
ED538 PO-O Crashed on landing in North Africa following operation to Cislago 16/17.7.43.
ED539 PO-V/P FTR Berlin 27/28.1.44.
ED541 PO-A FTR Berlin 3/4.9.43.
ED543 PO-H FTR Pilsen 13/14.5.43.
ED545 PO-F/G To 463Sqn.
ED546 Crashed while landing at Wittering during training 15.10.43.
ED547 PO-M/U FTR Berlin 29/30.12.43.
ED561 To 100Sqn.
ED602 To 83Sqn.
ED606 PO-X To 463Sqn.
ED621 PO-P/V FTR Munich 2/3.10.43.
ED651 PO-Y FTR Pilsen 16/17.4.43.
ED657 PO-T FTR Duisburg 21/22.5.44.
ED695 PO-J FTR Düsseldorf 25/26.5.43.
ED737 PO-F/G/P FTR Cologne 16/17.6.43.
ED763 To 617Sqn.
ED764 PO-N FTR Peenemünde 17/18.8.43.
ED768 PO-N FTR Düsseldorf 25/26.5.43.
ED771 PO-E FTR Essen 30.4/1.5.43.
ED772 To 463Sqn.
ED780 FTR Pilsen 16/17.4.43.
ED803 PO-B FTR Magdeburg 21/22.1.44.
ED867 PO-T/L From 97Sqn. FTR Berlin 28/29.1.44.
ED871 From 97Sqn. To 9Sqn.

ED949 PO-U To 463Sqn.
ED953 From 97Sqn. Damaged at Waddington 2.6.44.
ED994 PO-A From 576Sqn. FTR Stettin 5/6.1.44.
ED998 PO-Y FTR Milan 15/16.8.43.
EE135 PO-Y FTR Mannheim 23/24.9.43.
EE143 PO-J FTR Lille 10/11.5.44.
EE194 PO-E FTR Nuremberg 27/28.8.43.
JA675 PO-F From 427Sqn. FTR Milan 15/16.8.43.
JA676 PO-B FTR Turin 12/13.7.43.
JA901 PO-N FTR Mailly-Le-Camp 3/4.5.44.
JA902 To 463Sqn.
JA906 PO-K To 427Sqn and back. FTR Kassel 3/4.10.43.
JA909 From 405Sqn. To 1661CU.
JB121 PO-U FTR Düsseldorf 3/4.11.43.
JB124 FTR Berlin 23/24.8.43.
JB130 To 1668CU.
JB140 Crashed on take off from Waddington when bound for Leipzig 4.12.43.
JB286 PO-L From 405Sqn. Crashed in Cambridgeshire on return from Munich 8.1.45.

LL746 PO-M FTR Augsburg 25/26.2.44.
LL788 PO-H/G FTR Lille 10/11.5.44.
LL789 PO-P FTR Stuttgart 12/13.9.44.
LL792 PO-E FTR Bourg Leopold 11/12.5.44.
LL843 To 61Sqn.
LL846 PO-V FTR Stuttgart 28/29.7.44.
LL971 PO-N FTR Scholven-Buer 21/22.6.44.
LM100 PO-D FTR Karlsruhe 2/3.2.45.
LM101 PO-J FTR Courtrai 20/21.7.44.
LM119 PO-E FTR Courtrai 20/21.7.44.
LM205 PO-B FTR Beauvoir 29.6.44.
LM219 PO-G FTR St Leu d'Esserent 7/8.7.44.
LM223 To 463Sqn.
LM226 PO-H FTR Stuttgart 12/13.9.44.
LM233 PO-M To 635Sqn.
LM237 PO-N FTR Königsburg 29/30.8.44.
LM239 FTR Karlsruhe 26/27.9.44.
LM267 PO-J FTR Königsburg 29/30.8.44.
LM310 To 106Sqn.
LM311 PO-L Crashed on approach to Bottesford on return from Turin 13.7.43.
LM338 PO-U FTR St Leu d'Esserent 7/8.7.44.
LM340 To 405Sqn.
LM342 FTR Peenemünde 17/18.8.43.
LM368 From 101Sqn. To 50Sqn.
LM372 PO-K FTR Berlin 1/2.1.44.
LM376 PO-O FTR Nuremberg 30/31.3.44.

LM431 PO-M FTR Stettin 5/6.1.44.
LM440 Crashed in Yorkshire on return from Rennes 8/9.6.44.
LM450 PO-K FTR Prouville 24/25.6.44.
LM475 PO-B FTR Lille 10/11.5.44.
LM552 PO-D FTR from Training exercise 12.6.44.
LM583 PO-O FTR Königsburg 29/30.8.44.
LM636 PO-U FTR Calais 24.9.44.
LM642
LM646 PO-A To 156Sqn.
LM677 PO-V FTR Dortmund-Ems Canal at Ladbergen 3/4.3.45.
LM686 PO-X To 156Sqn.
LM746 Written off after collision with NN714 (467Sqn) over Lincolnshire when bound for Cologne 28.10.44.

LM748 To 1654CU.
ME304 From 405Sqn.
ME432
ME453 PO-L FTR Dortmund-Ems Canal at Ladbergen 3/4.3.45.
ME484
ME488
ME575 PO-C/G FTR Berlin 27/28.1.44.
ME851 PO-B FTR Nevers 15/16.7.44.
ME853 PO-Q FTR Bois de Cassan 2.8.44.
ME856 PO-T FTR Stuttgart 28/29.7.44.
ND346 PO-E FTR Bois de Cassan 2.8.44.
ND473 PO-N From 49Sqn. Collided with ME300 (189Sqn) over France on return from Royan 4.1.45.

ND729 PO-L FTR Prouville 24/25.6.44.
ND732 PO-Y FTR La Chapelle 20/21.4.44.
NF908 PO-C Crashed in Staffordshire during fighter affiliation exercise 3.1.45.
NF910 PO-Q
NF917 PO-Q FTR Harburg 11/12.11.44.
NF989 PO-P FTR Walcheren 23.10.44.
NG196
NG197 PO-G FTR Siegen 1/2.2.45.
NG234 To 463Sqn.
NG366
NG455 PO-H FTR Dortmund-Ems Canal at Ladbergen 7/8.2.45.
NG485
NN714 PO-W FTR Harburg 11/12.11.44.
NN805
PA169 PO-S FTR Dortmund-Ems Canal at Ladbergen 1.1.45.
PA187 PO-F From 463Sqn.
PB234 PO-C FTR Revigny 18/19.7.44.
PB299 PO-O From 49Sqn. FTR Rheydt 19/20.9.44.
PB306 PO-J From 49Sqn. FTR Karlsruhe 2/3.2.45.

PB513	From 405Sqn.
PB653	From 405Sqn.
PB726 PO-P	To 635Sqn.
PB740 PO-O	FTR Heilbronn 4/5.12.44.
PB754 PO-U	To 35Sqn.
PB762	To 35Sqn.
PB806 PO-W	FTR Dortmund-Ems Canal at Ladbergen 3/4.3.45.
PD215	FTR Munich following collision with PD346 (50Sqn) 17/18.12.44.
PD218	
PD230 PO-X	FTR Rüsselsheim 12/13.8.44.
PD231 PO-T	FTR Würzburg 16/17.3.45.
PD362	From 50Sqn.
PD398	Force-landed in France on return from Munich 26/27.11.44.
PD418 PO-P	From 617Sqn.
RE134	
RE136 PO-V	
RF139	
RF140	
RF180	From 50Sqn.
SW259	From 156Sqn.
SW263	

HEAVIEST SINGLE LOSS.

12/13.07.43. Turin.	2 Lancasters FTR 1 crashed on return.
10/11.05.44. Lille.	3 Lancasters FTR.
29/30.08.44. Königsburg.	3 Lancasters FTR.
03/04.03.45. Ladbergen.	3 Lancasters FTR.

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SECTION 4



KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

A&AEE	Aeroplane and Armaments Experimental Establishment.
AA	Anti-Aircraft fire.
AACU	Anti-Aircraft Cooperation Unit.
AAS	Air Armament School.
AASF	Advance Air Striking Force.
AAU	Aircraft Assembly Unit.
ACM	Air Chief Marshal.
ACSEA	Air Command South-East Asia.
AFDU	Air Fighting Development Unit.
AFEE	Airborne Forces Experimental Unit.
AFTDU	Airborne Forces Tactical Development Unit.
AGS	Air Gunners School.
AMDP	Air Members for Development and Production.
AOC	Air Officer Commanding.
AOS	Air Observers School.
ASRTU	Air-Sea Rescue Training Unit.
ATTDU	Air Transport Tactical Development Unit.
AVM	Air Vice-Marshal.
BAT	Beam Approach Training.
BCBS	Bomber Command Bombing School.
BCDU	Bomber Command Development Unit.
BCFU	Bomber Command Film Unit.
BCIS	Bomber Command Instructors School.
BDU	Bombing Development Unit.
BSTU	Bomber Support Training Unit.
CF	Conversion Flight.
CFS	Central Flying School.
CGS	Central Gunnery School.
C-in-C	Commander in Chief.
CNS	Central Navigation School.
CO	Commanding Officer.
CRD	Controller of Research and Development.
CU	Conversion Unit.
DGRD	Director General for Research and Development.
EAAS	Empire Air Armament School.
EANS	Empire Air Navigation School.
ECDU	Electronic Countermeasures Development Unit.
ECFS	Empire Central Flying School.
ETPS	Empire Test Pilots School.

F/L	Flight Lieutenant.
Flt	Flight.
F/O	Flying Officer.
FPP	Ferry Pilots School.
F/S	Flight Sergeant.
FTR	Failed to Return.
FTU	Ferry Training Unit.
G/C	Group Captain.
Gp	Group.
HCU	Heavy Conversion Unit.
HGCU	Heavy Glider Conversion Unit.
LFS	Lancaster Finishing School.
MAC	Mediterranean Air Command.
MTU	Mosquito Training Unit.
MU	Maintenance Unit.
NTU	Navigation Training Unit.
OADU	Overseas Aircraft Delivery Unit.
OAPU	Overseas Aircraft Preparation Unit.
OTU	Operational Training Unit.
P/O	Pilot Officer.
PTS	Parachute Training School.
RAE	Royal Aircraft Establishment.
SGR	School of General Reconnaissance.
Sgt	Sergeant.
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force.
SIU	Signals Intelligence Unit.
SOC	Struck off Charge.
SOE	Special Operations Executive.
Sqn	Squadron.
TF	Training Flight.
TFU	Telecommunications Flying Unit.
W/C	Wing Commander.
Wg	Wing.
WIDU	Wireless Intelligence Development Unit.
W/O	Warrant Officer.



SECTION 5



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SECTION 6



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75(NZ) 77 78 83 90 97 100 101 102 103
105 106 115 139 144 149 150 153 156 189
207 214 218 405 408 419 460 467 550 578
617 619 622 625 626 627 630**

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138

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