

**ROYAL AIR FORCE  
BOMBER COMMAND**

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**SQUADRON PROFILES**

**NUMBER 14**



**49 SQUADRON**

*Cave Canem*

**RESEARCHED, COMPILED AND WRITTEN**

**BY**

**CHRIS WARD**

# **ROYAL AIR FORCE BOMBER COMMAND SQUADRON PROFILES**



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# CONTENTS

**GENERAL NOTES.**

**SECTION 1: A BRIEF HISTORY.**

**SECTION 2: OPERATIONAL RECORD.**

**SECTION 3: AIRCRAFT LISTING.**

**SECTION 4: KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS.**

**SECTION 5: SOURCES OF INFORMATION.**

**SECTION 6: STOCK LIST.**

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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) the type was used operationally by the squadron. Where a squadron has a Conversion Flight involving a type with which it is intending to re-equip, but then does not, as in the case of 101 and 460 Squadrons, these have been included, on the basis that they sometimes found themselves on operations. 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 from January 1940. Nevertheless, their service is deemed to be on behalf of Bomber Command for the purpose of the relevant Profiles, and their experiences are, therefore, detailed, and their aircraft listed. The Blenheim squadrons of the AASF are also 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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# 49 SQUADRON

MOTTO CAVE CANEM (Beware of the dog)

Code EA

Formed on the 15th of April 1916, 49 Squadron began life as a training unit, until moving to France in November 1917 for day bombing and reconnaissance duties. At the conclusion of the Great War, the squadron remained in Germany as part of the force of occupation, and was disbanded there on the 18th of July 1919. On the 10th of February 1936, the squadron was reformed in the light bomber role, and became the first unit to receive the Hampden in September 1938. It was with this type that the squadron faced the impending Second World War as one of 5 Group's front-line units under the command of W/C Chick, sharing its base at Scampton with 83 Squadron.

Elements of both Scampton squadrons were airborne on the evening of the first day of the war, 49 Squadron despatching three Hampdens in company with six from 83, on an armed reconnaissance operation to seek out the German fleet in the Schillig Roads area. Two of those taking part would achieve fame in the years ahead, 49 Squadron's F/O Learoyd, and 83 Squadron's F/O Guy Gibson. Darkness fell before the formation reached the target area, no attacks were carried out, and all returned safely home. This operation set the pattern for the remainder of a year in which the Command would learn a salutary lesson, and discover the flaws in the theory that the self defending bomber formation would always get through by daylight. 49 Squadron, however, was to suffer its first wartime casualties by way of a training accident involving N5096, which crashed in Nottinghamshire on the 4th of October, killing P/O Harker and the other occupant. An even more tragic outcome attended the loss of L4034, also during training on the 23rd of November. While trying to land at Waddington in very poor visibility during a training flight, the Hampden flew into the side of a hangar, killing the crew of S/L Watt and five men working inside.

On the 2nd of December, W/C Sheen was posted in from his command of 106 Squadron, which at this stage of the war was non-operational, and a few days later he took over the reins of command at the departure of W/C Chick to a staff job. Also during the 2nd, the squadron operated for only the second time during the war to date, when sending three aircraft on a fruitless search for enemy shipping. On the 21st, W/C Sheen led a force of twenty four Hampdens, consisting of twelve each from 49 and 44 Squadrons, in search of the pocket battleship Deutschland, which was believed to be off the coast of Norway. Having reached the limit of their range without sighting the target, they headed back for a planned landing at Kinloss and Lossiemouth in Scotland. In poor visibility, the Scampton contingent eventually found themselves over Northumberland, and put down at Acklington, but L4072 ran out of fuel on approach and crashed, killing two of the crew, and injuring the pilot, Sgt Marshall, and his navigator.

## 1940

The winter of 1939/40 was particularly harsh, and this, combined with the “Phoney War”, restricted operational flying to a minimum. The conditions actually seemed to worsen as the new year progressed, and it was towards the end of February before they loosened their grip. Before the snow brought a complete cessation of activity, however, the squadron managed to get off three leafleting sorties on the 18th of January to Hanover, Bremen and Brunswick, flown by the senior officers, W/C Sheen, and S/Ls Lowe and Allen in L4092, P1177 and P1174 respectively. On the 26th, the squadron moved up to Kinloss on detachment to 18 Group, from where it would conduct armed reconnaissance sweeps in search of submarines, but it was a month before any activity took place. Seven aircraft were detailed on the 26th of February, led by W/C Sheen, but no targets were encountered, and a similar operation on the 28th proved to be equally unrewarding. It was the same story on the 2nd of March, and on the 19th, the squadron was ordered back to Scampton. During the squadron’s absence, there had been little to occupy the squadrons of Bomber Command, as the ban on bombing of enemy territory held firm on both sides for fear of reprisals. Occasional leafleting sorties and sea patrols over German seaplane bases broke the monotony of training, until the gloves partially came off on the day that 49 Squadron was preparing to return to 5 Group. During an attack on Royal Navy ships at Scapa Flow in mid month, a stray German bomb inadvertently killed a civilian on the island of Hoy, in retaliation for which, Bomber Command was ordered to attack the German seaplane base at Hörnum on the island of Sylt. The operation by thirty Whitleys and twenty Hampdens was mounted on the night of the 19/20th, and was spread over a six hour period. Returning crews made enthusiastic claims of widespread destruction, which was sadly not confirmed by photographic reconnaissance on the 6th of April. Only one aircraft failed to return, and all the Hampdens got back safely.

Serving with 49 Squadron at this stage of the war were a number of notable officers, who would progress to greater things in the future. S/L Allen was destined to command 106 Squadron, where he would be W/C Gibson’s predecessor, and F/O Deane would attain the rank of Group Captain and lead 83 Squadron in 1944. F/O Learoyd would win the Victoria Cross before the year was out, and eventually take command of 44 Squadron. F/L Timmerman became the first commanding officer of 408 Squadron RCAF, and P/O “Penny Beauchamp joined 207 Squadron during its time with the troublesome Manchester, before, in 1944, taking command of 100 Group’s 157 Squadron, with which he would become the scourge of Luftwaffe nightfighter crews while flying “Serrate” Mosquitos. Serving with him at 207 Squadron would be F/O Peter Ward-Hunt, whose operational days were to end as a flight commander under W/C Gibson at 106 Squadron, before he was eventually posted to a staff job at Ludford Magna. On the 1st of April, W/C Gillan was posted in from the Air Ministry, and on the 8th he was appointed as the new commanding officer, on the posting of W/C Sheen to 5 Group HQ. W/C Gillan’s arrival was just in time to guide the squadron through the Command’s first real campaign.

On the 9th, German forces marched into Denmark, and began landing airborne troops in southern Norway. The British response was to attempt to gain a foothold in northern Norway at Narvik, and Bomber Command was required to support this move as best it could. Beyond



the limit of range, the bombers could not support the British forces directly, and were put to work instead against the airfields in the south being used by the Germans around Stavanger and Oslo. The Hampden brigade was sent in search of enemy warships on the 9th, although half of the force of twenty four was recalled, and two of the remainder claimed some hits. The first minelaying operation of the war, a task to which the Hampden was to prove itself eminently suited, was carried out on the 13/14th, in the sealanes between Norway and the German ports, and from this point on, the Hampden would be increasingly employed in this role. 49 Squadron contributed three aircraft and crews to this operation, and all returned safely. On the day before, a force of Hampdens had been badly mauled by fighters during an operation against shipping at Stavanger, and six aircraft from 44 and 50 Squadrons failed to return. In the light of such heavy losses, Bomber Command was forced to change its pre-war policy, and although 2 Group would still operate by day, the rest of the force was to become predominately nocturnal. Twenty eight Hampdens were sent mining off Denmark on the 14/15th, on return from which, 49 Squadron's L4043 ran out of fuel, and crash-landed on a beach on the north-east coast, killing one of the crew, and injuring flight commander S/L Lowe and two others. W/C Gillan registered his first operational sortie with the squadron on the 17/18th, with a mining trip to the Baltic. The Elbe Estuary was mined by a force of Hampdens on the 21/22nd, following which, P1175 overshot on landing at Scampton, and was written off in the ensuing crash, happily without serious damage to F/O White and crew. Worse was to come, however, when a 49 Squadron element joined over twenty other Hampdens to lay mines in the Borkum and Sylt areas on the 25/26th. Poor weather prevented most crews from carrying out their tasks, and three aircraft failed to return, all from 49 Squadron. F/O White's reprieve was brief indeed, and he died with his crew in L4040. L4092 went down in the sea, and took with it F/O Rowan-Robinson and crew, and P1319 fell to the guns of a nightfighter in the target area, and there were no survivors from the crew of P/O Benson. (This is believed to be the first Bomber Command loss to a nightfighter of the war. Bomber Command Losses Vol 1, W R Chorley).

The ill-fated Norwegian campaign had all but run its course, when events elsewhere assumed a greater significance. On the 10th of May, German forces began advancing into the Low Countries, and this signalled the beginning of the massacre of the Battle squadrons which were stationed in France as part of the AASF. The Blenheims of 2 Group would also be thrust into the unequal fight against marauding BF109s and murderous ground fire, and they too would suffer heavy losses over the succeeding weeks. Bomber Command was to play its part by attacking communications targets behind enemy lines, and in so doing, would bomb mainland Germany for the first time. The first raid of the war on a German town followed quickly, when thirty seven Whitleys and Hampdens, including six from 49 Squadron, attacked road and rail communications at Mönchengladbach on the 11/12th, losing three of their number in the process. 49 Squadron was represented among them by L4068, which crashed in France, but P/O Drakes and crew survived the experience, and were soon back with the squadron. Industrial objectives in the Ruhr were also to receive attention, and the 15/16th saw almost a hundred crews briefed for sixteen separate aiming points in the region, each one having nine or less aircraft assigned to it, a policy which was to continue for almost the next two years, and result in operations of little more than nuisance value. The squadron posted missing another crew following an attack on railway targets in the Aachen-Krefeld area on

the 25/26th, and it later emerged that P1318 had gone into the sea off the Belgian coast, with no survivors from the crew of F/O Butler. Later on the 26th the Dunkerque evacuation began, and the Command assisted by targeting troop columns, railways and airfields in France, Belgium and Holland. Over a hundred aircraft were out and about on the 27/28th, the Hampden crews briefed for oil refineries at Hamburg and Bremen. Neither raid caused more than pinprick damage, and a return to the same targets on the 30/31st fared no better.

June began in similar fashion, with wide-ranging oil and communications targets for the Hampden force on the 1/2nd, and on the 3/4th, the Command launched its largest effort to date, 142 aircraft, including forty eight Hampdens, to hit communications and industry, again over a wide area. Twenty four Hampdens went for an oil refinery at Hanover on the 7/8th, and on the 8/9th, 49 Squadron lost P4044 to a crash near Lincoln shortly after take-off, when bound for Amiens. Fortunately, there were no fatalities, but P/O Parker and crew all sustained injuries. Operations were mounted on almost every night of the month, and on most days, and when France fell on the 22nd, invasion fever began to grip the British nation. The Hampden brigade was maintaining its pressure on enemy shipping through mining operations, and such an operation to the Kiel area on the 26/27th cost the squadron the crew of F/L Mitchell, he surviving with one other as a POW when P4305 crashed in northern Germany, and the remaining two men were killed.

As the Battle of Britain began to gain momentum overhead, Bomber Command became faced with a number of commitments which would further reduce its effectiveness. The strategic offensive against oil and industry would continue, but support for the Battle of Britain demanded attacks on airfields in the occupied countries, while attempts to thwart the anticipated invasion meant that a large part of the Command's resources were directed at shipping and marine craft in general, which were being gathered in the Channel and North Sea ports. Aside from all this, the Hampden force was required to continue its highly effective mining operations, and it was on return from such a sortie, on the 20/21st of July, a night on which other Hampden elements attacked Tirpitz and Admiral Scheer in Wilhelmshaven harbour, that P/O Mitchie and crew had a narrow escape. Having sown mines in the Baltic Sound, L4077 ran out of fuel on arrival over Norfolk and crashed, happily without causing injury to the crew. On the 24th, F/L Timmerman was posted to 14 OTU at the conclusion of his tour, and when he next returned to the operational scene, it would be to take command of 408 Squadron a year hence. Another case of fuel shortage forced Sgt Unsworth to ditch P4351 off the Lincolnshire coast on return from Kiel on the 3/4th of August, from where he and his crew were picked up safely.

This was the first incident in a month which would bring the squadron's heaviest losses to date. Sgt Jennings and crew were lost without trace in P4377 while mining in Danish coastal waters on the 6/7th, and on the 11/12th, flak brought down L4036 during an operation to Dortmund, and there were no survivors from the crew of P/O Gower. One particular target which was to have an association with 5 Group throughout the war was the Dortmund-Ems Canal, a vital link in the German communications network. On the 12/13th, eleven Hampdens from the Scampton squadrons carried out a low level attack on the aqueducts crossing the River Ems near Münster, in the face of fierce flak defences. Two 83 Squadron aircraft were

shot down, but the remainder inflicted sufficient damage to restrict barge traffic for a number of weeks. 49 Squadron's F/L Learoyd was the last to attack, and he completed his run in the teeth of the most ferocious ground fire, eventually arriving home in a badly shot up P4403. In recognition of his courage and determination, he was awarded the Victoria Cross, and on the 15th, he was posted from the squadron to take up a staff appointment at the Air Ministry. He would return to the operational scene a year later, when appointed to command 44 Squadron.

On the 16/17th, Sgt Stetton and crew were posted missing from a raid on the distant oil town of Leuna near Merseburg, and it later transpired that P1333 had crashed in Holland, and that the crew was in enemy hands. The first raid of the war on Berlin was mounted on the 25/26th, in retaliation for German raids on London and other cities the night before. It was a target at the limit of endurance for Hampdens, but forty six of them took part, twelve contributed by 49 Squadron, led by W/C Gillan. Three of them were forced to ditch with dry tanks, while three more were missing, among them 49 Squadron's P4416, which was lost without trace with the crew of P/O Fawcett. The last day of the month brought an unfortunate loss involving P2135, which stalled on becoming airborne from Scampton for a ferry flight, and Sgt Roberts and the other three occupants were killed in the ensuing crash.

September brought with it the climax of the Battle of Britain, but the first week meant some long range trips for the crews of Bomber Command. Stettin, Magdeburg and Berlin were among the targets for the night of the 4/5th, and F/O Hodges and crew were among those briefed for the Baltic port. P1347 failed to return home, having force-landed in France, and Hodges and crew fell into enemy hands. He and one other managed to escape from their captors, and both made it back to England in 1941, after which, Hodges distinguished himself as a member of one of Bomber Command's SOE supporting "Moon" squadrons, 138 and 161, flying Lysanders to drop and pick up agents and resistance operatives, eventually becoming commanding officer of the latter. Stettin was again on the list of targets for the following night, and this time it was P4350 which failed to return, after ditching in the Channel off the French coast, from where F/L Haskins and crew were picked up by the enemy. Attacks against invasion craft in the ports were stepped up during the month, and occupied the bulk of the Command's efforts, although Berlin was also targeted on a number of occasions. Just as August had ended for the squadron with a non-operational accident, so did September. P2134 crashed in Lancashire while on a training flight, and Sgt Catley and crew were killed.

A new C-in-C was appointed on the 5th of October, Sir Richard Pierse succeeding Sir Charles Portal, who became Chief of the Air Staff. The squadron bade farewell to one of its leading lights on the 10th, S/L Allen moving to HQ 7 Group on posting. Briefings took place for four main targets on the 16/17th, Bremen, Kiel, Merseburg and Bordeaux, involving Hampdens and Wellingtons, while six Hampdens went mining. It turned into a bad night for 49 Squadron, which posted missing the crew of Sgt Imber from the Bordeaux contingent, and all on board L4129 were killed when it fell victim to flak over France. L4195 crashed in Kent on return from a mining sortie, and one man was killed in the crew of P/O Evans. Another crash on return from mining occurred in Hampshire, and this involved P2143, in which the crew of F/O Pitman all died, and then X2900 crashed on landing at Abingdon, but without injury to Sgt Bates and his crew. While the Whitley Boys went over the Alps to Italy on the 20/21st,

thirty Hampdens headed for Germany's Capital, and lost just one of their number. Returning short of fuel, P/O Green force-landed X2962 in Cornwall, and two of the crew sustained injuries. A week later, X3027 was caught by an intruder and shot down off the Lincolnshire coast, and there were no survivors from the crew of P/O Bufton.

The pattern of wide-ranging operations by small numbers of aircraft was set for the remainder of the year, and the Hampden squadrons continued to play their part. X3029 crashed almost immediately after take-off from Scampton when bound for Kiel on the 3/4th of November, but Sgt Richman and crew survived to fight another day. Less fortunate were their colleagues, F/O Bulmer and crew, who were briefed for the Baltic port of Danzig on the 10/11th. X2985 disappeared into the sea during the course of the operation, and there were no survivors. The futility of the Command's efforts at this stage of the war, particularly with regard to long range operations, was evidenced by the failure of all but seventeen out of over sixty crews to bomb their assigned targets on the 19/20th. It is not known whether Sgt Fulton and crew reached Lützkendorf, as they failed to return in X3024, and were lost without trace. On the 22nd, AVM Harris relinquished his command of 5 Group, and became a Deputy Chief of Staff under Portal. X3052 was shot down by a nightfighter over Holland during an operation to Hamburg on the 24/25th, but at least Sgt Phillips and crew survived as POWs, and this was the squadron's final loss of the month.

Another bad night awaited the squadron at the end of the first week of December. Fifty five assorted aircraft were sent to attack bomber airfields in the occupied countries on the 6/7th, and both the missing Hampdens were from 49 Squadron. P4404 was hit by flak, and was crash-landed by Sgt Shaw, who was marched off into captivity with his crew. It was also flak which sent X3050 crashing into the sea off Ostend, and this time there were no survivors from the crew of Sgt Greeves. To compound these losses, X3028 crashed near Scampton on return, and Sgt Barrier was the sole survivor of his crew. Recent attacks by the Luftwaffe on English cities, notably Coventry in November, prompted the War Cabinet to authorise a reprisal, for which Mannheim was selected. The largest force to a single target to date, 134 aircraft, took off on the night of the 16/17th, and arrived over Mannheim in generally clear conditions, with orders to bomb the central area. The initial incendiary loads, which were to act as rudimentary target markers, missed the planned aiming point, and the remaining bombing was scattered. A moderate amount of damage for the period resulted, and just three aircraft failed to return, among them 49 Squadron's X3063, which crashed in the Channel, killing F/L Scoltock and crew.

On the 22nd, W/C Gillan concluded his period in command, and was posted to the Air Ministry. S/L Jefferson, who had been posted in from 106 Squadron to replace S/L Allen as a flight commander, was appointed to command the squadron, and he presided over its final loss of the year. P4384 crashed near the airfield at Abingdon during the course of an operation to Bordeaux on the 27/28th, and there were no survivors. It had been a backs-to-the-wall struggle throughout the year, much of it under the threat of invasion, and thereafter it had been a case of presenting to the enemy a defiant face by disrupting its war effort where possible. The crews had performed magnificently, but many who represented the cream of the pre-war Air Force had been lost in action. 1941 was to produce little change, and the

Command would be forced to tread water for at least another fourteen months before its efforts would begin to bear fruit.

## 1941

The squadron was called into action on the first night of the new year, detailing ten aircraft for an attack on an oil refinery at Bremen. Two aircraft returned early, and only two of the remainder attacked the assigned target, the other crews finding alternatives in the city. A further ten aircraft were sent mining in French waters on the 5/6th, and P4322 failed to return, having crashed off the south coast of Devon on the way home while being diverted to St Eval, and P/O Price and his crew died. A second successive harsh winter restricted operations at the start of the year, and it was another six days before the next operation was mounted by the squadron, eight Hampdens being despatched in search of the Tirpitz at Wilhelmshaven. Again only two aircraft found the target in cloudy conditions, and on return, L4045 crashed in Lincolnshire, killing P/O Newhouse and his crew. The 15th brought a new Air Ministry directive, which stressed the importance of attacking Germany's oil industry, but it would be the following month before Sir Richard Pierse could comply.

February began with an attack on Düsseldorf by an intended thirty Hampdens, eighteen of them provided by the Scampton squadrons. The single failure to return was 49 Squadron's P4299, from which Sgt Baird and his crew escaped with their lives to fall into enemy hands. Following a raid by eight of the squadron's aircraft on Dunkerque on the 7/8th, a further twelve were despatched to Hanover on the 10/11th. X3001 was shot down by a nightfighter over Holland, and P/O Green and all but one of his crew survived to be taken prisoner. On return, and while awaiting its turn to land, AD719 was caught by an intruder and shot down, Sgt Bates and one of his crew managing to escape by parachute before the inevitable crash, in which the two remaining men died. Operations to Homberg on the 14/15th, Düsseldorf on the 25/26th and Wilhelmshaven on the last night of the month were concluded without further loss, but few of the crews were able to bomb the primary targets in the prevailing unfavourable weather conditions.

Cologne opened the March account on the 1/2nd, an operation which was repeated on the 3/4th, for which the squadron contributed twelve aircraft, some of which bombed alternative targets. The oil directive proved to be short-lived, and was replaced by a new directive issued on the 9th, which ordered the C-in-C to concentrate his efforts against the U-Boat menace where-ever it could be found, at sea, in the shipyards and in the component and diesel engine factories. The new campaign began at Hamburg on the 12/13th, where the Blohm & Voss U-Boat yard was the principal objective. Bremen and Berlin were also to be raided on this night, and 49 Squadron contributed aircraft to both the first and last mentioned, doing so without loss. A return was made to Hamburg on the following night, and the two operations produced a useful degree of damage for the loss of six aircraft, all missing from the second raid. Accurate bombing was claimed by crews on return from Bremen on the 17/18th, and thus far the squadron had negotiated the month without loss, but this came to an end on the 21/22nd, when six aircraft were despatched, some to bomb the U-Boat base at Lorient, and the others to lay mines off Bordeaux. Returning from the former, X3054 crashed into high ground on

Dartmoor, and P/O Wilson and crew lost their lives. This proved to be the squadron's only casualty of the month, despite further operations to Kiel on the 23/24th, Düsseldorf on the 27/28th and Brest on the 30/31st. The main objective of the Brest raid was to hit the German cruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau which had taken up residence there, and their continued presence over the next eleven months was to be a thorn in the flesh of Bomber Command.

In order to be closer to this particular quarry, 49 and 83 Squadrons detached aircraft to St Eval under the command of W/C Jefferson. The first operation from here involved four 49 Squadron crews, three of which went mining off French coastal waters, while the fourth attacked the German cruisers. Returning from mining off Lorient, P4403 crashed while landing at St Eval, but Sgt Ball and his crew emerged unscathed. This was to be the only aircraft casualty of a month in which the squadron contributed to raids on Kiel on the 7/8th and 24/25th, the former a highly effective for the period, Berlin on the 9/10th and 17/18th, Brest on the 12/13th and 14/15th, Bremen on the 16/17th and Hamburg on the 26/27th. May would also bring only one casualty, and the month began with a series of raids against Hamburg, the centre of Germany's U-Boat production. The squadron sent eleven Hampdens there on the 2/3rd, all but two of which bombed as briefed, and some fires were left burning. A further eleven crews joined in the attack of the 6/7th, which failed to achieve more than superficial damage, but a return on the 8/9th was much more effective, creating dozens of large fires. The final raid of the series again produced a worthwhile outcome on the 11/12th, and 49 Squadron's record was fifty sorties without loss. On each occasion, the squadron had despatched a small number of mining sorties, and these too suffered no casualties. The twin towns of Mannheim and Ludwigshafen escaped with slight damage on the 12/13th, but all of the squadron's fifteen crews returned safely. Cologne was the principal target from mid month, and received four raids of various sizes beginning on the 16/17th. None of them was a major success, and on the night of the final raid, the 27/28th, 49 Squadron despatched nine minelayers to French coastal waters. S/L Smith and crew in AD729 were briefed to sow their vegetables in the sealanes around Brest, but failed to return and were posted missing, lost without trace presumably in the sea. This brought to an end a fine record of loss free operations, which had extended since the 10/11th of February.

Following an operation to Düsseldorf on the 2/3rd of June, there was little further activity for the Hampden squadrons until another tilt at Brest was mounted on the 10/11th. Railway yards at Soest, just a few kilometres north of the soon to be famous Möhne Dam, were the target for an all Hampden force on the 12/13th, but only a proportion of the force was able to bomb in the conditions of poor visibility. Raids on Brest, Cologne and Bremen followed over the next six nights, and in all, Cologne was attacked eight times during the month, but on no occasion was a telling blow delivered. The first casualty of the month resulted from a training flight, and involved P2068, which crash-landed near the airfield shortly after take-off, injuring Sgt Alden and his crew. While a squadron contingent joined in a disappointing small scale raid on Kiel on the 25/26th, P/O Falconer and crew carried out an unsuccessful mining sortie in the Frisians. Returning with the mines still on board, X3060 crashed while landing at Scampton, but happily without injury to the crew. P/O Falconer would eventually join the Path Finder Force, and in late 1944, assume the command of 156 Squadron, with which he would lose his life over Cologne on the 30/31st of December. AD788 failed to return from the attack on

Kiel, having been shot down in the target area, and only the pilot, Sgt Hind, escaped with his life to fall into enemy hands. The month ended with an operation to Düsseldorf on the 31st, for which the squadron put up four aircraft. X3134 was afflicted by engine trouble while outbound, and was eventually ditched in the North Sea by Sgt Woolston, who along with his crew, attained the relative safety of the dinghy, and awaited rescue. Eight days later, rescue arrived, and the crew was ultimately put ashore, apparently none the worse for their ordeal.

On the 1st of July, a C Flight was added, which gave the squadron a compliment of twenty four aircraft. Fourteen of these were airborne on the 3/4th, with Bremen as the primary target, the seventh raid on this port since mid June. A 5 Group attack on Osnabrück on the 5/6th was claimed as successful by returning crews, but that of Sgt Flint was not able to make debriefing, AD856 having been shot down by an intruder just off the Norfolk coast on the way back. The pilot and two others survived, one of them, the navigator, succumbing to his injuries shortly afterwards. Sgt Flint rose through the ranks, and was rewarded with the command of 50 Squadron in March 1945, he seeing the famous 5 Group unit through to the end of hostilities. On the following night, AD739 failed to return from another assault on the German raiders at Brest, and was lost without trace with the crew of P/O Henderson. On the 8th, W/C Stubbs was posted in from 97 Squadron to assume command of the squadron in a few days time. He was a highly experienced officer, who had joined 207 Squadron from 144 Squadron as a flight commander, and was involved in the transfer of 207 Squadron's B Flight to form the nucleus of 97 Squadron a few weeks later. There would be no further squadron losses to enemy action during the remainder of the month, but two crews would be thankful to the sturdy construction of the Hampden when it became necessary to put them down in a hurry without wheels. Returning from Bremen on the 12/13th, AD910 ran short of fuel, and was force-landed in Yorkshire by Sgt Batchelor, who emerged with his crew unhurt. X3151 likewise ran out of fuel while on final approach to Scampton, having been to Hanover on the 25/26th, and this time it was P/O Cooke who pulled off a safe crash-landing. On the 17th, W/C Jefferson had been posted out to 25 OTU, and W/C Stubbs took over the reins of command from that date.

August was the month in which the damning Butt Report highlighted the failure of most crews to bomb within miles of a target, and demonstrated the Command's claims of success to be over enthusiastic and greatly exaggerated. The month began with a raid on Hamburg on the 2/3rd, for which eighty aircraft took off, while 5 Group's effort was directed at Kiel. The latter was a complete failure, but some amends were made at Karlsruhe on the 5/6th, a night on which Mannheim and Frankfurt were also attacked. The squadron sent five freshman crews against Calais on the following night, and twelve crews to Essen on the 7/8th, the third consecutive night of operations. Raids to Magdeburg and Hanover on the 12/13th were attended by poor weather conditions, and two nights later, 5 Group operated alone to railway targets at Brunswick, a town which would lead a relatively charmed life at the hands of the Command in general and 5 Group in particular until October 1944. The squadron despatched its full compliment of twenty four aircraft on this night, although early returns and the bombing of alternative targets accounted for thirteen sorties. AE262 overshot its landing on return to Scampton, but Sgt Owen and crew were unhurt. An interesting diversion for some Hampden crews came on the 24/25th, when six of them, including two from 49 Squadron,

carried out searchlight suppression around Wesel in support of a raid on Düsseldorf, the results of which seem to have been effective. The night ended in tragedy, however, when AD967 collided with 83 Squadron's X3121 in the Scampton circuit on return, and Sgt McMahon and his crew were killed, along with those in the other aircraft. It was a sad way to lose a crew, but four nights later there was more cause for sorrow, as the return of the squadron's eight crews was awaited from Duisburg. Only six made it back, the two errant Hampdens having crashed into the North Sea. Both AD971 and AE126 fell victim to nightfighters somewhere near the Frisians, and there were no survivors from the crews of P/O Pratt and P/O Fournier respectively.

September was to be an expensive month, which got off to a bad start at Berlin on the 2/3rd, although the outcome was less serious than it might have been. The Capital was at the limit of the Hampden's range, and fuel was always critical as the crews arrived back over friendly airspace. By the time that X3136 crash-landed in Norfolk, it had been airborne for ten hours, but Sgt Samuel and his crew emerged unscathed if not a little stiff. Meanwhile, the previously mentioned Sgt Flint had been aloft for eleven hours in AE203 when he crash-landed in Suffolk, but the outcome was similarly favourable. Slightly less fortunate were their colleagues Sgt Robinson and crew, who ran out of fuel while returning from a mining sortie off Oslo in AD744 on the 6/7th. This Hampden crashed in Scotland, and all the crew members sustained injury, although none of a life threatening nature. On the following night, a force of almost two hundred aircraft took off for Berlin, while fifty other crews were briefed for Kiel, the squadron putting up five and three crews respectively. Both operations enjoyed a degree of success, but AE236 of the Kiel force failed to return to Scampton, and it was later learned that it had crashed in the target area, killing the entire crew of P/O Bromham. Twenty four hours later, the squadron despatched five crews to Kassel and three to Danish waters to lay mines, and for the third night running, there was a casualty to report. AD805 arrived back from Kassel after ten hours in the air, and ran out of fuel on approach to Scampton, P/O Jones completing a safe crash-landing. Further operations during the month took elements of the squadron to Frankfurt on the 12/13th, Hamburg and Le Havre on the 15/16th and Frankfurt again on the 28/29th, the last mentioned resulting in an unfortunate crash and a failure to return. AE376 failed to get more than a few miles towards its destination before crashing in Lincolnshire, killing Sgt Walker and his crew, and AD733 was brought down over enemy territory, although all on board survived, and F/L Mundy and crew became POWs.

October was to be a loss free month for 49 Squadron, although it has to be said that operational activity was less than during the preceeding months. An operation to Karlsruhe on the 1/2nd ended with a recall, and little further employment was found for the squadron until the 12/13th, when the main target was Nuremberg, which took place without the participation of the Hampden brigade. The Hampdens contributed instead to raids on Bremen and Hüls, neither of which was effective, and on the following night, the Group operated alone with Hampdens and Manchesters in a small scale raid on Cologne. Operations to Duisburg, Bremen and Mannheim were completed by the 22/23rd, and none of them brought satisfactory results, but the squadron's mining efforts alongside had every chance of doing so. The month closed with a mining effort by two crews to the Frisians on the night of the 31st, and two similar sorties were launched on the first night of November to the Kiel Bay area,



while S/L Drakes and F/L De Mestre in AE224 and AD980 respectively, went looking for enemy shipping off the Frisians. The former failed to return, having fallen victim to flak and crashing into the sea, and there were no survivors. Following further mining and shipping sorties on the 3/4th and 5/6th, the squadron despatched sixteen aircraft to Cologne as part of a 5 Group effort, which had been intended to participate in the night's main operation to Berlin. Doubts about the weather prompted AVM Slessor to object to the Berlin plan, and he was allowed to withdraw his Group, and send it to a target nearer to home. In the event, both operations were dismal failures, although the Cologne force at least incurred no losses, while the Berlin brigade registered twenty one failures to return. On the following night, a force of sixty aircraft set out for Essen, eight of them assigned to searchlight suppression and intruder duties. Two 49 Squadron crews were among the latter, and P1206 was shot down by a nightfighter at the Dutch coast, and crashed into the IJsselmeer without survivors from the crew of W/O Saunders. On the 11th, Sgt Bryant took off in X3135 for the short hop to Dunholme Lodge, carrying with him two members of the ground crew. Shortly after becoming airborne, the Hampden crashed, and all three men were killed.

The recent Berlin debacle was the final straw as far as the Air Ministry was concerned, particularly in the light of the Butt Report, and on the 13th, Sir Richard Pierse was directed to restrict future operations while the future of the Command was considered. It brought a period of inactivity for the squadron, which ended on the 23/24th, when eighteen aircraft were despatched to bomb the docks at Lorient along with other Hampdens and Manchesters from the Group. The second non-operational crash of the month involved AD759, which crashed in Lincolnshire on the 25th, killing Sgt Hough and the other man on board. An attempt to bomb Emden on the 26/27th was a total failure as far as 49 Squadron was concerned, none of its crews being able to locate the primary target, and some bombed alternatives. In contrast, eleven of the squadron's eighteen participants found the target of Hamburg on the last night of the month, and some damage occurred.

The first week of December passed without the squadron being called into action, before a disappointing attack on Aachen on the 7/8th. A number of daylight sorties were launched by the squadron against targets in Germany on the 10th and 12th, the latter resulting in flak damage to AD979 and the death of one of the crew. Sgt Robinson brought the crippled Hampden back to a crash landing in Norfolk, and the survivors emerged from the wreckage unscathed. Activity increased a little from mid month, with a raid on Wilhelmshaven by eighty aircraft on the 16/17th, but few found the mark as the year's poor performance continued. AE354 crashed at Scampton while training on the 18th, but Sgt Bow and crew were unhurt, and the squadron's final effort of the month was in support of an all 5 Group raid on a chemical factory at Hüls on the 28/29th, for which it put up twenty aircraft. Of the four missing Hampdens, AE419 was from Scampton, and it was lost without trace with the crew of Sgt Watt. It had been a year of treading water for the Command, and its performance had layed it open to criticism from various quarters, most notably the Admiralty, which considered that bombers could be better employed dealing with the U-Boat menace, while others were anxious to divert the Command's resources to redress reversals in the Middle Eastern theatre of operations. There was, however, light at the end of the tunnel, and a change

in leadership early in the New Year would lead to a gradual evolution towards the development of a war winning weapon.

## 1942

The first six weeks of 1942 were to see a continuation of the obsession with Brest, or more accurately its guests, and no fewer than eleven operations were directed against the port during January alone. The year began for 49 Squadron with four daylight intruder sorties on the 2nd, only one of which resulted in an attack, this on the airfield at Leeuwarden by the crew of Sgt Hamer in AE368. The W/OP was Sgt John Minchin, who, in 1943, would lose his life during 617 Squadron's epic attack on the Möhne Dam. The year's first casualty came via a training crash on the morning of the 6th, when AD896 crashed into a village following engine failure while approaching to land at Scampton, and Sgt West and one other were killed. Earlier in the morning, the squadron had paid its first visit of the year to Brest, from which all ten Hampdens returned safely. The first failure to return of 1942 was not long in coming, and it involved one of five squadron aircraft assigned to mining duties off Brest on the 9/10th, while nine others attacked the dock area. AD909 was lost without trace, and took with it the crew of P/O Jacobs. The port of Emden was another frequent destination during January, and the squadron sent freshman crews there on the 14/15th and 17/18th as a secondary target, and a further five on the 20/21st when it was the night's only objective. AT148 was shot down by a nightfighter over Holland, and F/O Harvey and crew were killed. Taking off for Brest in the late afternoon of the 25th, AT129 crashed almost immediately, killing Sgt Stewart and his crew, and this was the squadron's final casualty of the month.

The situation at Brest was to resolve itself in February, and in the meantime, three small scale raids on its lodgers kept up the pressure. 49 Squadron laid mines around the Frisians by daylight on the 6th and 7th, although Sgt Reid and crew failed to get away for the latter, after L4125 crashed on take-off, happily without injury to the occupants. In atrocious weather conditions in the early hours of the 12th, Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Prinz Eugen, with destroyer escort, slipped anchor, and made their way into the Channel in an audacious bid for freedom. They were not spotted until late morning, and it was at this point that Operation Fuller ground painfully slowly into action. It was a plan prepared precisely to deal with a breakout by the German cruisers, something which had always been anticipated, but so secret was it, that few of those charged with its implementation were aware of its requirements. It was early afternoon before the first sorties by Bomber and Coastal Commands got away, and despite the largest commitment of aircraft in daylight to date, amounting to 242 sorties, the weather conditions prevented all but a few from catching a glimpse of the enemy fleet, and those attacks which did take place, failed to score any hits. The ships passed through the Straits of Dover and made good their escape, although Scharnhorst and Gneisenau struck air-laid mines which slowed their progress to some extent. Never-the-less, the fleet made home port by the following morning, and the "Channel Dash" episode was a huge embarrassment to the government and the nation. Attacks on Brest over the preceding eleven months had diverted the Command from more suitable targets, and cost it dozens of valuable aircrew lives, and over a hundred aircraft, and fifteen more were lost to Operation Fuller on this day. It was a bad day for 49 Squadron, which despatched the first of twenty Hampdens around

13.30 hours, and suffered the loss of four of them during the course of the afternoon. P5324 crashed into the sea with no survivors from the crew of Sgt Downes, and AE132, AE240 and AE396 were lost without trace, taking with them the crews of F/S Pollitt, Sgt Holt and Sgt Phillips respectively. The only positive aspect of this entire debacle, was that this annoying itch had been scratched for the last time, and the Command could now concentrate more of its efforts towards genuinely strategic targets.

Two days later, a new Air Ministry directive set the pattern for future Bomber Command operations, by declaring that the morale of the enemy civilian population, particularly its workers, was to be attacked, and the arrival at the helm of a new C-in-C eight days hence, would ensure that this policy would be pursued. In the meantime, a force of over ninety aircraft was sent to Mannheim on the 14/15th, where it failed to produce more than slight superficial damage, and two 49 Squadron crews found themselves in difficulties on return. AE397 ran short of fuel, and was ditched by P/O Allsebrook off the Isle of Wight, from where he and his crew were rescued, and AT112 ran out of fuel and crashed near Upwood in the hands of Sgt Hamer, and again there were no casualties. P/O Allsebrook was another 49 Squadron man whose life would end while serving with 617 Squadron, in his case at the Dortmund-Ems Canal in September 1943. Two nights later, AT124 failed to return from a mining sortie to the Frisians, and was lost without trace with the crew of F/O Jenkins, and this was the final casualty of the month. On the 22nd, ACM Sir Arthur Harris took up his appointment as the new C-in-C, and immediately set about improving the effectiveness of his Command.

On the night of the 3/4th of March, he despatched the largest force to date to a single target, 235 aircraft, for a meticulously planned three wave attack on the Renault motor works at Billancourt. It was led by experienced crews, and employed extensive use of flares to provide illumination, and the whole operation was carried out at low level to aid accuracy and avoid civilian casualties. In the absence of a flak defence, 223 crews carried out their assigned tasks, and the raid was an outstanding success for the loss of just one Wellington, although there were, sadly, many friendly casualties from stray bombs. Three raids on Essen on consecutive nights from the 8/9th were almost total failures, and it would be a further twelve months before technological advances would facilitate the accurate bombing of this haze-blanketed industrial region. The last of this series, on the 10/11th, cost the squadron AT174, which crashed in Germany, killing P/O Andrews and his crew. Mining was to occupy the squadron for most of the remainder of the month, during which period, on the 17th, P1226 crashed in Devon after taking off for a test flight from Exeter, prior to it returning to Scampton after repair. Only two men were on board, P/O Cook and P/O Manders, and both were killed. On the 28/29th, Harris launched a major attack on the Baltic port of Lübeck, selected for its ease of location on a coastline, and the half timbered construction of its buildings. The operation was carried out by 234 aircraft along the lines of the successful raid on the Renault works at the start of the month. The predominately incendiary bomb loads reflected the intention to destroy the city by fire, the spread of which was aided by the narrow streets of the old centre. 191 crews claimed to have bombed as planned, and the destruction of 30% of the built-up area represented the first real success for the area bombing policy. 49

Squadron put up ten Hampdens, two of which returned early, and there were no casualties among the others.

A new record force of 263 aircraft was sent against Cologne on the 5/6th of April, but the massive effort was not rewarded with a high degree of success. Scattered bombing destroyed less than a hundred buildings, and five aircraft failed to return. One of these was the squadron's AT156, which was shot down by a nightfighter over Belgium on the way to the target, and two men were killed, while P/O Kay fell into enemy hands, and the other survivor of his crew ultimately evaded capture. On the following night, AT126 was lost without trace while raiding Essen, and F/S Davis and crew were added to the growing list of those missing in action. Essen was again the target on the 10/11th and the 12/13th, the latter the more effective, but it was from the former that two 49 Squadron crews failed to return. AE421 was brought down to crash into the Ijsselmeer, killing F/O Worthy and his crew, and AT190 was the victim of flak over the target, although F/L Marshall and one other escaped with their lives to become POWs. Returning from the latter raid, AT196 ran out of fuel over Yorkshire, and was abandoned by Sgt James, after he had ordered his crew to do likewise. Sadly, they were not able to leave the stricken aircraft in time, and all three died in the ensuing crash. Two nights later, Dortmund escaped all but slight damage at the hands of 130 aircraft out of a force of over two hundred which had set out. The squadron's AD931 was accounted for by a nightfighter, and F/O Williams and one of his crew survived as POWs.

On the 17th, the day on which 44 and 97 Squadrons flew their Lancasters into bomber folklore with the epic daylight raid on the M.A.N. factory at Augsburg, 49 Squadron received its first three examples of the Manchester, an aircraft with which it would have a brief and unhappy association. Fellow Scampton residents, 83 Squadron, had already gone through the ordeal of operating Manchesters, and were now in the process of converting onto Lancasters. Meanwhile, Hampden operations continued, and when AT217 failed to return from a mining sortie to the Frisians on the 19/20th, the month was beginning to rival February in terms of losses. It was eventually learned that there had been no survivors from the crew of Sgt Slingo, but at least the month brought no further losses. A series of four raids on the Baltic port of Rostock on consecutive nights began on the 23/24th, in an attempt to repeat the success gained at Lübeck a month earlier. The nearby Heinkel aircraft factory was an added attraction, and a small proportion of the force was directed specifically at this. The operation was to bring down the curtain on the squadron's association with the trusty old Hampden, and three of the type were despatched as part of the Heinkel factory contingent, AT178, AT191 and AT227 having the honour. The outcome of the attack was disappointing, but all three crews returned safely, and on the 27th, the Hampdens were flown out of Scampton on their way to 144 Squadron, where they would be converted into torpedo bombers. During the preceding nights, the series against Rostock had been prosecuted with great effect, and approximately half of its built-up area now lay in ruins.

The arrival of the Manchester signalled an influx of aircrew from 25 OTU at Finningley on the 26th, and working up on the type got under way in time for operations to begin at the start of May. It was, in fact, on the night of the 2/3rd, that the first five Manchester sorties were launched, and the aircraft and crews for this momentous occasion were; L7287, P/O Perry,

L7386, P/O Jeffreys, L7469, P/O Farrington, L7484, F/S Carter and R5771, P/O Shackleton. All were briefed to drop leaflets in the Rennes area, and they returned safely to Scampton after a trip of around six hours. Two more nickeling sorties were despatched on the 4/5th, and the first four mining sorties were sent to the Heligoland area on the 7/8th, although only one was successful. Two crews tried again on the 9/10th, and this time all went well. A new commanding officer was appointed on the 14th, W/C Slee arriving from duties at Coningsby to replace W/C Stubbs, who was posted to 92 Group. A Conversion Flight was formed on the 18th under S/L Ward-Hunt, who had returned to the squadron after a spell at 207 Squadron. The Flight initially boasted two Lancasters, R5850 and R5855, and two Manchesters, and an experienced Lancaster pilot, F/S Rowlands, arrived from 97 Squadron on the 24th to assist with the conversion programme.

For the rest of the Command, the start of May had been attended by a busy operational schedule, but the final third was strangely quiet, and the arrival on bomber stations of aircraft from training units gave rise to much interest and speculation. Harris, aware of the criticism of the Command in high places, was much in need of a major victory and a dose of symbolism to keep the vultures at bay, and out of this was born the Thousand Plan, to destroy at a stroke an important German city by employing a thousand aircraft. To achieve the magic figure, he would need the cooperation of other Commands, most notably Coastal, and this was forthcoming until the eleventh hour, when its support was withdrawn. Undaunted, Harris and his deputy, AM Sir Robert Saundby, scraped together every airframe capable of controlled flight, or something approaching it, and pulled in the screened crews from their instructional duties. Come the night, Harris would not only achieve the figure of a thousand aircraft, but would comfortably surpass it. Only the weather now posed a question, and as the days ticked by, it was showing no willingness to cooperate. The frustration was exacerbated by the real risk of the giant force drawing attention to itself, and the operation would have to be mounted soon or abandoned for the time being. Finally, at "morning prayers" on the 30th, Harris's chief meteorological advisor, Magnus Spence, gave a grudging and qualified nod in the direction of the Rheinland as the area most likely to be free of cloud that night, and thus did the fickle finger of fate decree that Cologne would bear the honour of hosting the first one thousand bomber raid in history, and not Hamburg as Harris had intended.

The first take-offs for Operation Millennium began as the time approached 23.00 hours, although some did not get away until well after midnight. Among the 1047 assorted aircraft were twelve Manchesters from 49 Squadron, and a further three from the Conversion Flight in the hands of 83 Squadron crews. L7524 developed a technical problem and returned early, but the others pressed on, W/C Slee flying with S/L Ward-Hunt in L7493. The operation progressed as planned, and was an outstanding success, which destroyed over 3,300 buildings, including some important industrial units, and 2,500 fires had to be dealt with by the emergency services. The losses, however, were a new record high of forty one, which included a number of those older aircraft which had only reluctantly taken to the air, and refused to climb to a respectable height. 49 Squadron posted missing two crews, those of the recently commissioned P/O Carter, which was lost without trace in L7429, and P/O Floyd in L7290. This Manchester was hit by flak over Germany, and five of the crew managed to bale out before it crashed, but sadly, the pilot and one other died in the wreckage.

While the massive force was still assembled, Harris decided to use it again immediately, and on the 1/2nd of June, he despatched 956 aircraft to Essen. This, in contrast to Cologne, was a dismal failure, which sprayed bombs all over the Ruhr, and caused scant damage at the intended target. It was on this night, that the squadron despatched its very first Lancaster sortie, the Conversion Flight's R5850 making the trip in the hands of F/S Rowlands, and returning safely along with seven of the eight Manchesters involved. The errant crew was that of P/O Shackleton, who was killed with four others when R5794 was shot down by a nightfighter over Belgium. A follow-up raid on Essen by under two hundred aircraft twenty four hours later was equally ineffective, as was a third attempt on the 5/6th. In between, on the 3/4th, Bremen received a sharp attack which caused some useful damage, and Emden suffered the destruction of three hundred houses on the 6/7th. This became a sad night for the squadron, however, when two of its most experienced crews failed to return from among the five despatched. F/L Paramore DFC and his crew were lost without trace, presumably in the sea, in L7287, and L7469 definitely suffered a watery conclusion to its career, and took with it the crew of S/L De Mestre. Two more failures took place at Essen on the 8/9th and 16/17th as no answer could be found to the Ruhr's industrial haze, and then three more attacks fell on Emden over a four night period beginning on the 19/20th. This was not a successful series, and the second operation, on the 20/21st, cost the squadron another Manchester and crew, the sixth to be lost in three weeks. L7387 crashed into the sea off the Frisians, and there were no survivors from the crew of Sgt O'Brien.

Fortunately, the squadron's brief association with the type was about to end, as, in fact, was the Command's, and on the 25/26th, the night of the final thousand bomber raid on Bremen, the Manchester operated for the last time. The squadron's contribution in an overall force of 960 aircraft, plus 102 from Coastal Command, was three Manchesters and one Lancaster, R5850 of the Conversion Flight, in the hands of W/C Slee. The latter returned little more than half an hour later with hydraulics problems, but the three Manchesters carried on to bomb as planned and return safely. While not as effective as the Cologne raid, results at Bremen far surpassed the debacle at Essen, but cost a new record forty eight aircraft. As a final postscript to 49 Squadron's time with the ill-fated Manchester, it suffered the highest percentage loss rate among Manchester users at 12.8%. From this point, the squadron stood down from operations while working up got under way on the Lancaster, and a period of intense training began, which would take the squadron through to operational status at the end of July.

It was, in fact, on the last night of July, that the squadron returned to the operational scene, when despatching eleven aircraft to Düsseldorf, led by S/L Barnard in R5890. This was the first occasion on which over a hundred Lancasters had taken to the air together, and the force of 630 assorted aircraft was swelled by a contribution from the training units. It was a successful if expensive operation, and more than a third of the twenty nine missing aircraft came from the OTUs. August began slowly for the squadron, and by mid month, only a handful of nickeling sorties had been flown. On the 15th, the Path Finder Force came into existence, and 83 Squadron departed Scampton as a founder member, and took up residence at Wyton. That night, 49 Squadron sent eleven Lancasters to Düsseldorf, and two others mining off the Frisians, and all returned safely from a disappointing raid. The first Path Finder led operation was to Flensburg on the 18/19th, for which the squadron put up eleven

Lancasters. It was an inauspicious beginning for the fledgling force, which failed entirely to locate the target, and no bombs fell within miles of the intended aiming point. There was little improvement by the Path Finders at Frankfurt on the 24/25th for their second operation, but they were able to illuminate Kassel effectively on the 27/28th, and the main force exploited the opportunity to cause widespread destruction. It was another night of heavy losses, however, and thirty one aircraft failed to return, although all twelve Lancasters from Scampton returned without incident. Thus far, no 49 Squadron Lancaster had been lost to any cause, and it was two months since the last crew had failed to return, but this happy record came to an end with an operation to Nuremberg on the 28/29th. In all, twenty three aircraft failed to return from what was a disappointing raid on the birthplace of Nazism, and two of them were among the ten despatched from Scampton. L7567 crashed in Holland, killing F/O Lowrie and four of his crew, and R5897 went down over Germany, with no survivors from the crew of F/S Burton.

September began with a "black" for the Path Finders, which marked Saarlouis in error for Saarbrücken on the 1/2nd, but they made amends at Karlsruhe on the following night by accurately marking the target for a force of under two hundred aircraft to cause extensive damage. A moderate eight aircraft were missing, and among them was the squadron's R5763, which fell to a nightfighter over Belgium, killing F/S Lewis and two of his crew, while one man evaded capture, and three others didn't. On the 4th, 57 Squadron arrived at Scampton following a posting from 3 Group to act as replacements for the Group's loss of 83 Squadron to the PFF. 49 Squadron's R5752 was hit by flak during the bombing run over Duisburg on the 6/7th, and two of the crew received injuries. The Lancaster struggled back to England, where P/O Jeffreys baled the four uninjured crew members out, and they arrived safely on the ground. He remained at the controls with two wounded men still on board, and crash-landed at Martlesham Heath without major further injury, but the second pilot had sadly already succumbed. A series of successful operations began on the 10/11th, which perhaps signalled that the Command had turned the corner on the route to becoming a war winning weapon. Düsseldorf and its neighbour Neuss suffered heavily on this night, and Bremen was hit equally hard three nights later. Wilhelmshaven registered its most destructive raid of the war on the 14/15th, and even Essen felt the weight of a useful if scattered attack on the 16/17th. In return, the raiders lost thirty nine of their number on this night, and 49 Squadron was represented among them by R5890, which crashed in the target area, and there were no survivors from the crew of S/L Barnard.

The first of three operations by 5 Group to the Baltic port of Wismar took place on the 23/24th, for which ten 49 Squadron Lancasters were prepared, six to attack the town area, and four assigned to the nearby Dornier aircraft factory. Bombing was carried out from low level, and damage to the target was claimed by returning crews. The second raid followed on the 1/2nd of October, and was scattered, but at least all twelve 49 Squadron participants returned safely. On the afternoon of the 4th, the first practice flights took place in preparation for a 5 Group operation planned for later in the month, of which the crews were as yet ignorant. Low level loose formation exercises took the crews over land and sea, and culminated in simulated attacks on the bombing range at Wainfleet. Further flights took place daily from the 7th to the 11th, after the squadron had successfully negotiated disappointing operations to Aachen and

Osnabrück on the 5/6th and 6/7th. The final assault on Wismar was mounted on the 12/13th in poor weather conditions, but returning crews again reported damage and a large fire. 49 Squadron's P/O Elliott and crew were not present at briefing, having failed to return in W4116, and no trace of the Lancaster and its occupants was found. Operations followed to Kiel and Cologne on the 13/14th and 15/16th, the former moderately effective, the latter not, and on the 16th came the final practice flights for the daylight raid which was planned for the morrow.

Operation Robinson was to be an attack on the Schneider armaments factory at Le Creusot deep in France by eighty eight aircraft, with a subsidiary force of six aircraft assigned to the nearby transformer station at Montchanin. The overall commander was to be 49 Squadron's W/C Slee flying in W4196, with W/C Gibson of 106 Squadron leading the second element, and take-offs from Scampton began shortly after midday, ten aircraft from 49 Squadron leading the way, followed immediately by a further ten from 57 Squadron. The route to the target was via Land's End, after which the formation continued on at low level, arriving in the target area as dusk was approaching. Attacks on the factory complex were carried out from between 4,000 and 7,000 feet, the first bombs going down minutes after 18.00 hours, and no aircraft were lost. The Montchanin section went in at ultra low level, and a 61 Squadron Lancaster was seen to crash into the target, thus becoming the single casualty. The crews returned elated after nine or ten hours in the air, and W/C Slee was awarded the DSO for his part in what was claimed to be a highly successful operation. Later photographic reconnaissance showed that many bombs had, in fact, fallen short, and that damage to the factory was not extensive.

Much of the remainder of the year would be spent raiding Italian cities in support of Operation Torch, the landings in North Africa which were to lead to Montgomery's victory over Rommel at El Alamein. 5 Group went to Genoa with PFF support on the 22/23rd, and caused heavy damage in central and eastern districts without loss. On the 24th, it was the turn of Milan to receive a visit from the Group, this time in daylight, and it was another successful attack which gained complete surprise. W4306 was hit by flak over the target, and suffered an engine fire and damage to the hydraulics system, which prevented the bomb doors from closing. Struggling back home, the Lancaster was hit again over Le Havre, but eventually reached the south coast, where a landing was attempted at Ford in Sussex. Sadly, as the speed fell off, the Lancaster ploughed in, and F/L Bonnett and four of his crew died at the scene, while a further man succumbed to his injuries a few days later, and the sole survivor spent eighteen months in hospital.

W/C Slee led a section of three aircraft on daylight "moling" sorties to Osnabrück on the 6th of November, and then it was back to Italy that night and the following night, with Genoa the target on both occasions. Foul weather ruined a raid on Hamburg on the 9/10th, before two return trips to Genoa on the 13/14th and 15/16th, and Turin on the 20/21st, all negotiated by the squadron without loss. The southern outskirts of Stuttgart received most of the bombs intended for the centre on the 22/23rd, and shortly after making its attack, W4107 was hit by flak and caught fire, four of the crew baling out as the situation looked hopeless. Eventually, the Lancaster was crash-landed on Sark in the belief that it was the English mainland, and F/S



Singleton and those still on board joined their other colleagues as guests of the Reich. This was the squadron's only loss of the month, and as activity diminished during December, it turned out to be the penultimate casualty of the year. The Italian campaign lasted until the 11/12th, after which the weather caused operations to be scrubbed until the 20/21st, when over two hundred crews were briefed for Duisburg. Returning crews claimed another successful night, but that of the squadron's Sgt Johnston was not there to report, R5762 having been hit by flak on the way back over Holland, and crashing at the coast with no survivors. It had been a year of change for 49 Squadron, and since the arrival of the Lancaster, losses had averaged a modest two per month. Under the firm direction of the highly respected W/C Slee, the unit was developing a fine reputation for efficiency, and this would continue for the remainder of the war.

## 1943

Since early August, 109 Squadron had been pioneering the use of the Oboe blind bombing aid, and the first two weeks of the New Year were to bring a continuation of live trials, which would involve the squadrons of 5 Group and a contribution from 1 Group. Essen was the principal target for these small scale operations, and seven attacks fell on it between the 3/4th and 13/14th, although without the participation of 49 Squadron, which was otherwise occupied in moving out of Scampton for its new station at Fiskerton, officially taking up residence there on the 2nd of January. It was not until the night of the 16/17th that it was once more declared operational, in time to take part in a raid by two hundred aircraft on Berlin. The squadron put up a maximum effort of sixteen brand new Lancasters, with W/C Slee leading from the front in ED441. It was not an outstandingly successful operation, but it did result in the destruction of the 10,000 seat Deutschlandhalle, the largest covered venue in Europe, and only one aircraft failed to return. On the following night, 170 aircraft set out once more for the Capital, nine of which were from Fiskerton. The effort was again largely wasted, although this time at a cost of twenty two aircraft, among which was the squadron's ED444, which fell to a nightfighter over north Germany, killing F/O Jeffreys and two of his crew, and delivering the four survivors into captivity.

A few days earlier, on the 14th, a new Air Ministry directive authorized the area bombing of those French ports which housed U-Boat facilities, and that night, Lorient received the first of five raids during the remainder of the month, which would culminate in its almost complete destruction. 49 Squadron sent eight Lancasters to Düsseldorf on the 23/24th, as part of a small 5 Group force, and despatched a further nine to the same target on the 27/28th, when Oboe laid ground markers were used for the first time. The success gained on this night augured well for the future effectiveness of the Command, but boded ill for the industrial centres of the Ruhr, against which Oboe would be employed in the near future. The month's operations concluded at Hamburg on the 30/31st, when the first use of H2s failed to produce the required accuracy, and damage was at best moderate. The eleven crews returning to Fiskerton encountered poor visibility over Lincolnshire, and were advised to find alternative airfields. A flak damaged ED428 could not comply, however, and crashed on approach to Fiskerton in the hands of F/S Cole, and he was killed with all but one of his crew.

February began with a raid on Cologne on the 2/3rd, during which Oboe and H2s markers were used in an attempt to improve accuracy. It was another disappointing night of scattered and ineffective bombing, which cost the squadron the crew of F/O Jackson, all but one of whom were killed when ED440 was shot down by a nightfighter over Holland. After another failure at Hamburg on the 3/4th, the assault on Lorient continued on the 4/5th and 7/8th, before Wilhelmshaven was subjected to a highly accurate attack on the 11/12th, in what was the first real success for H2s marking. The penultimate raid on Lorient took place on the 13/14th, on return from which 49 Squadron's ED450 collided with a balloon cable on the coast of Devon, and crashed into the sea with no survivors from the crew of F/S Miller. It was a busy time for the squadron, which operated to Milan on the following night, took part in the final raid on Lorient on the 16/17th, went to Wilhelmshaven on the 18/19th and 19/20th, and Bremen on the 21/22nd. A few nights stand-down preceded a trip to Nuremberg on the 25/26th, which was only marginally effective, and the performance was little better at Cologne twenty four hours later, although the squadron was at least coming through without casualties. This came to an end on the last night of the month, when St Nazaire became the next French port to be targeted as part of the U-Boat campaign. Widespread damage resulted, but ED467 was brought down in the target area, and there were no survivors from the crew of Sgt Duncan.

March was to herald the start of the Command's most intensive campaign to date, one in which the industrial towns and cities of the Ruhr were to be systematically dismantled, but before the first salvoes were fired, Berlin was raided on the 1/2nd, and Hamburg on the 3/4th. Neither operation was an outstanding success, each attended by scattered bombing, but both targets lay beyond the range of Oboe, and for the time being at least, such distant objectives would bring no guarantees. The first round of the Ruhr campaign was directed at Essen, home of the giant Krupps armaments complex, and a city which had thwarted the Command's best efforts to date by hiding under its blanket of industrial haze. It was the night of the 5/6th, and among the 442 crews briefed for the occasion were eight from Fiskerton, including that of F/L Allesbrook, who would lead in ED497. The other aircraft and crews for this noteworthy occasion were; ED445, F/O Eyre, ED584, F/S Gilmore, and ED416, ED431, ED432, ED438 and ED487 of Sgts Gumbley, Thom, Townsend, McDonald and Penry respectively. Take-offs began around 19.15 hours, but an unusually high number of early returns restricted the numbers actually claiming to have bombed the primary target to 362. Never-the-less, the result was an outstanding success for the Command in general, and Oboe in particular, and on top of the destruction of over three thousand houses, the Krupps works received a substantial number of hits. Fourteen aircraft failed to return, a modest loss in view of the scale of success, but 49 Squadron was represented among them by ED431, which was lost without trace with the crew of Sgt Thom.

Before the next raid took place on a Ruhr objective, operations were mounted against the southern cities of Nuremberg on the 8/9th, Munich on the 9/10th and Stuttgart on the 11/12th, the first two enjoying a moderate degree of success, and there were no losses from the combined total of twenty six sorties despatched from Fiskerton. Round two of the Ruhr offensive was again directed at Essen, on the 12/13th, and this time the Krupps works found themselves in the centre of the main bombing area, and suffered extensive damage. This was

followed by a period of minor operations while the main force drew breath, until St Nazaire was subjected to a concentrated attack on the 22/23rd, by a force which included a contribution of fourteen aircraft from 49 Squadron. Over at Scampton, a new squadron was forming under the command of W/C Guy Gibson, and Sgts Townsend and Anderson were posted there on the 24th. Townsend was nearing the end of his first tour, and he joined his new unit straight-away, but the freshman crew of Sgt Anderson remained at Fiskerton until early April, and managed to get a few operations under their belt first. An operation to Duisburg on the 26/27th went awry following equipment failure among the Oboe Mosquito marking force, and on the following night, almost four hundred bombers set out for Berlin. It was another disappointing night, and when three hundred aircraft returned to the Capital on the 29/30th, most of the bombs fell into open country. The failure was compounded by the loss of twenty one bombers, and 49 Squadron registered two missing aircraft, ED435 and ED469. The former was hit by flak over the target, at which point a number of the crew departed by parachute, Sgt Fyffe and the remainder, who were on their first operation, struggling back as far as Holland before the Lancaster was finished off by a nightfighter. The pilot also managed to escape with his life at this stage, but three others died in the ensuing crash. F/O Mabee and crew were also operating together for the first time, and they fell victim to a nightfighter while over Germany in ED469, and just one man survived to fall into enemy hands.

April would prove to be the least rewarding month of the Ruhr campaign, but it, nevertheless, got off to a good start at Essen on the 3/4th, the third successful attack in a row on this important target. On the 5th, W/C Johnson was posted in from Swinderby to assume command of the squadron, and W/C Slee departed for pastures new in the rank of Group Captain. He would not be away from the operational scene, however, and in August he would be posted to the command of 8 Group's 139 Squadron, which was equipped with Mosquitos. Duisburg escaped serious damage again on the 8/9th, a night on which the squadron's ED590 failed to return, and F/O Southern and crew died in the crash in the target area. A small force returned to Duisburg twenty four hours later, but the crews were not rewarded with a successful outcome. W/C Johnson led a squadron element for the first time on the following night in ED702, when bad weather contributed to a disappointment at Frankfurt. A change of scenery took a force of two hundred aircraft to Italy on the 13/14th to bomb the docks at La Spezia, and three damaged Lancasters, including the squadron's ED453 in the hands of Sgt Nixon, landed at Maison Blanche and Blida in North Africa.

The "creep-back" phenomenon, which blighted many Bomber Command raids, rescued an attack on Stuttgart on the 14/15th, by falling across an industrial suburb and creating some useful damage. On the 16/17th, over three hundred Lancasters and Halifaxes set off to bomb the Skoda works at distant Pilsen in Czechoslovakia, while a predominately Wellington and Stirling force carried out a diversionary raid on Mannheim. The former was a total failure, and the diversion failed to prevent heavy losses, which amounted to a massive thirty six at Pilsen, and eighteen at Mannheim, and this represented the Command's heaviest losses to date on one night. Two Lancasters were missing at Fiskerton, ED427 and ED441, the former lost without trace with the crew of F/O Bone, and the latter crashed in France, with just one survivor from the crew of Sgt Penry. Another distant target was Stettin on the Baltic coast,

and a highly concentrated attack fell on its central districts on the 20/21st, at a cost of twenty one aircraft. ED620 was damaged by flak, and brought to a crash-landing in Denmark in which three men died, and the pilot, Sgt Anderson, succumbed to his injuries shortly afterwards. One of the more effective attacks on Duisburg was delivered on the 26/27th, but many bombs were again wasted, and the month ended with a moderately successful raid on Essen on the night of the 30th.

May would bring a return to winning ways, and it began for the heavy brigade with the largest non-1,000 force to date of 596 aircraft taking off for Dortmund on the 4/5th. Even though a decoy site lured away a proportion of the bombing, that which hit the city destroyed over twelve hundred buildings, and caused damage in the docks area. The losses were again worrying, however, and on this night they amounted to thirty one aircraft, although none from 49 Squadron. A lull in main force operations kept the crews at home for the next seven nights, and when they next went to war, on the 12/13th, it was to deliver the first really effective attack on Duisburg, which suffered the destruction of sixteen hundred of its buildings, and had a large tonnage of shipping sunk in the harbour. On the following night, a predominately 5 Group force returned to Pilsen to rectify the previous month's failure, while Bochum was raided by four hundred other aircraft. The Pilsen force fared no better in terms of accuracy, although on this occasion only nine aircraft failed to return. ED452 struggled back to Fiskerton with engine problems and crashed, but Sgt Morrison and crew emerged almost unscathed.

On the 16/17th, 617 Squadron entered bomber folklore with its epic attack on the dams, for which F/S Bill Townsend, formerly of 49 Squadron, distinguished himself, and was awarded the CGM, although his attack on the Ennepe Dam was unsuccessful. In contrast, F/S Cyril Anderson and crew returned to Scampton with their "Upkeep" weapon still on board, having lost their way while avoiding flak and fallen behind schedule. With little prospect of finding the Sorpe Dam in the gathering ground mist, and evacuating enemy territory under cover of darkness, and with an unserviceable rear turret, the crew opted to abort the sortie, and followed a reciprocal course home. In the light of the performances of Townsend and F/S Brown, who both carried out attacks after Anderson had turned for home, and were forced to fly home through lightening skies, or in the case of Townsend, broad daylight, Anderson's position was less tenable. Gibson, whose attitude to other ranks was frequently dismissive, effectively sacked Anderson and crew with immediate effect, and they would return to 49 Squadron at the end of the month. However, any aspersions cast upon this unfortunate crew are entirely unjust, and it is worth considering, that had Anderson been an officer, his treatment may well have been different. It was certainly not an act of cowardice to bring his weapon home, face Gibson, and admit defeat. Less fortunate even than these was another former 49 Squadron man. Flying as W/Op to F/L Hopgood was Sgt John Minchin, who suffered a severe leg wound when the Lancaster was hit by flak over Germany while outbound. Remaining silent about his plight, he continued at his post for the rest of the flight to the Möhne Dam and during the attack, in which the aircraft was again hit, this time mortally. In the half minute or so between the release of the Upkeep and the explosion of the Lancaster a few kilometres beyond the dam, he crawled towards the rear exit, where the rear gunner pushed him out, hanging on to the parachute ripcord, but sadly, he did not survive.

Another long break from operations enabled the Command to assemble a new record non-1,000 force of 826 aircraft to send to Dortmund on the 23/24th. 49 Squadron contributed twelve Lancasters to an outstandingly accurate and concentrated attack, which destroyed almost two thousand buildings, including some of an important industrial nature. It was not a one-sided affair, however, and the defences claimed thirty eight bombers, the heaviest loss from a single target during the campaign to date. Among them was the crew of F/O Thomas, who were on their first operation, and the pilot and two others survived the destruction of ED813 over the Ruhr, to become guests of the Reich. A massive force of over seven hundred aircraft produced results at Düsseldorf on the 25/26th, which were in no way commensurate with the effort expended, and the failure was paid for by the loss of twenty seven aircraft. By recent comparisons, a raid on Essen on the 27/28th was only moderately effective in destroying almost five hundred buildings, but an operation at the end of the month gave a frightening insight into the destructive capability of the Command when matters proceeded according to plan. On the 29/30th, more than seven hundred aircraft set off for Barmen, which with its twin, Elberfeld, constituted Wuppertal. Unusually accurate marking was exploited by the main force crews, and around 80% of Barmen's built-up area was reduced to rubble in an inferno of flame. Four thousand buildings were destroyed, and over three thousand people lost their lives, by far and away the highest death toll to date from a Bomber Command raid.

There were no main force operations at the start of June, and it was not until the night of the 11/12th that the month's first major operation was launched. The target was Düsseldorf, for which almost eight hundred aircraft took off, but a proportion of the bomb loads were lured away by an errant Oboe marker, and fell into open country. Despite this, the city suffered its most damaging raid of the war, and the emergency services had to deal with almost nine thousand fires. Included in the catalogue of destruction was an impressive list of industrial buildings, where production was brought to a complete halt, and there would have been factory workers among the twelve hundred people listed as killed. On the debit side, thirty eight aircraft failed to return home, and this was added to to the tune of twenty four, when the centre of Bochum was likewise decimated on the 12/13th, and this time the casualties included one from 49 Squadron. ED584 was brought down over Holland, and crashed on farmland with no survivors from the crew of Sgt Hutchison. This was the squadron's first loss of the month, but much worse was to come over the succeeding few nights.

Eleven Lancasters departed Fiskerton on the 14/15th, as part of a force of under two hundred aircraft heading for Oberhausen. The operation was concluded successfully, but the defences as always were active, and seventeen Lancasters were hacked down, three of them from 49 Squadron. Flak caused the demise of ED432 over Holland, and Sgt Cole and five of his eight man crew were killed. A nightfighter accounted for ED434, also over Holland, and the pilot, Sgt Frost, and one other were the only survivors, and ED453 crashed in Germany, killing the eight man crew of W/O Nixon. Barely had this sunk in, when two more crews were posted missing from a moderately successful operation to Cologne two nights later. Both ED497 and ED785 fell to nightfighters over Holland, the latter crashing into the Scheldt Estuary, and there was just one survivor from among the fifteen men in the crews of F/L Dunnet and S/L Storey. Thus, in the space of five nights, the squadron had lost forty five members of aircrew, only five of which had survived to become POWs. On the 20/21st, 5 Group carried out an

attack on the Würzburg radar factory in the old Zeppelin works at Friedrichshafen. The operation was led by the squadron's former commanding officer, G/C Slee, as Master Bomber, flying in his favourite ED702, which was piloted by F/O Gerry Fawke, an officer who would later join 617 Squadron. Having lost an engine to flak while outbound, however, he handed over to W/C Gomm of 467 Squadron, and continued on as part of the main force. The defences forced the attack to take place from higher than intended, and not all the bombs found the mark. Following the raid, the force flew on to North Africa, and the squadron's six participating crews missed the start of the hectic round of four operations in five nights which began at Krefeld on the 21/22nd.

This was one of the most destructive raids of the war to date, which left five and a half thousand houses in ruins, and killed a thousand people. The defenders fought back, however, and claimed forty four heavy bombers, their biggest bag of the campaign to date. On the following night, Mülheim wilted under an accurate attack, which reduced over 60% of its built-up area to rubble, but the price was again high, at thirty five bombers. After a night's rest, during which the shuttle brigade bombed La Spezia on the way home from North Africa, the Elberfeld half of Wuppertal suffered the destruction of approximately 90% of its built-up area, and this included three thousand houses and 170 industrial buildings. The defenders again left their mark on the attacking force, however, and prevented a further thirty four aircraft from returning home. On the 25/26th, it was the turn of the oil producing town of Gelsenkirchen to be targeted, but in a rare failure for the period, bombs were sprayed all across the Ruhr, and few if any fell where intended. The price of this failure was thirty aircraft, but remarkably, 49 Squadron came through the four raids unscathed.

A series of three operations against Cologne, spanning the turn of the month, began on the 28/29th, for which the squadron put up nine Lancasters. The scale of the destruction which resulted from this attack was quite unsurpassed, and amounted to 6,400 buildings, and the number of people killed on the ground was also a record at over 4,300. Over two thousand more houses were destroyed in the second raid on the 3/4th of July, and an all Lancaster force brought the series to an end on the 8/9th, again with great success. When the dust had settled, the city authorities were able to compile an inventory of damage and casualties, which showed that over the three raids, more than eleven thousand buildings had been destroyed, over five thousand people were killed, and a further 350,000 had been bombed out of their homes. The combined cost to the Command was sixty two aircraft, only one of which was from Fiskerton, ED663 failing to return from the final raid, and Sgt Eyles and crew died when it was shot down by a nightfighter over Belgium. Elements of 1, 5 and 8 Groups carried out a successful attack on Turin on the 12/13th, and 49 Squadron registered the loss without trace of F/O Miller and crew in ED726. Although two more operations to the region would take place at the end of the month, the Ruhr campaign had now effectively run its course, and Harris could look back with genuine satisfaction over the past five months, in the sure and certain knowledge that his crews had dealt a severe blow to Germany's industrial heartland. Admittedly, the losses had been grievously high, but the factories were more than keeping pace with the rate of attrition, and there was no shortage of eager new crews arriving from the training schools in distant parts of the world.

With confidence high, Harris now determined to deliver a knockout blow to the morale of the enemy's civilian population, by destroying one of its major cities in a short, sharp series of raids. Having been spared by the weather from hosting the first one thousand bomber raid a year earlier, Hamburg suited Harris's requirements for Operation Gomorrah, which would be prosecuted during the final week of the month. As Germany's second city, and a major producer of war materials, principally in the area of U-Boat production, the status of the city, particularly in political terms, was undeniable. It was also favourably located close to a coastline to aid navigation, could be reached without crossing large tracts of enemy territory, and was close enough to the bomber stations to allow attacks to be carried out during the few hours of darkness afforded by midsummer. Finally, beyond the range of Oboe, which had proved so decisive at the Ruhr, Hamburg was served by the wide River Elbe, which would provide good H2s characteristics for the navigators high above. 791 crews answered the call for a maximum effort for round one on the night of the 24/25th, and at briefing they learned that they would be dispensing "Window" on the occasion of its first operational use, to blind the enemy nightfighter, searchlight and gun-laying radar.

The majority of the force took off between 22.00 and 23.00 hours, and headed north-east across the North Sea. A number of aircraft were lost during this stage of the flight through being off course, and outside of the protection of the bomber stream, but those which reached the target had been largely unmolested by nightfighters, and there was a marked lack of coordination between the searchlights and flak batteries. The initial marking was slightly misplaced, and a pronounced creep-back developed, which 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 considerable number of bomb loads was wasted. Never-the-less, a substantial amount of damage was left in the wake of the retreating bomber force, and it was a promising start to the campaign, achieved for the loss of a moderate twelve aircraft. On the following night, Harris sent his force to Essen, to take advantage of the bodyblow dealt to the enemy defences by Window. It was an outstanding success, which destroyed over 2,800 houses, and clobbered the Krupps works more seriously than ever before.

After a night's rest, 787 aircraft took off once more for Hamburg, and what followed was both unprecedented and unforeseeable. The unusually concentrated marking and bombing fell predominately into the heavily populated working class residential districts of Hamm, Hammerbrook and Borgfeld, where the individual fires joined together to form one giant conflagration, which sucked in air from surrounding areas at hurricane velocity to feed its voracious appetite. The temperature at the heart of the inferno exceeded one thousand degrees Centigrade, and it only subsided when everything of a combustible nature had been consumed. On this one night alone, over forty thousand people lost their lives, and this was on top of the fifteen hundred who had been killed three nights earlier. On the following morning, mass evacuations began, but those leaving the tortured city did so with warnings ringing in their ears, that they were not to talk about what they had witnessed. The third raid took place two nights later, and although many bombs fell into the already devastated area, much fresh damage was created. The defenders were beginning to recover from the effects of Window, and twenty eight aircraft failed to return. Remscheid was raided by a force of under three hundred aircraft on the 30/31st, which left the town over 80% destroyed, and it was this

operation which brought down the final curtain on the Ruhr Campaign. The final round of Operation Gomorrah took place on the 2/3rd of August, but it was rendered ineffective by violent electrical storms and icing on route, and many crews, including five from Fiskerton, were persuaded to abandon their sorties, and either jettison their bombs, or attack alternative targets. Little new damage occurred at Hamburg, and thirty aircraft failed to return, a number of them falling victim to the weather conditions. 49 Squadron's contribution to the destruction of Hamburg was impressive, launching a total of fifty nine sorties during the four operations, all but six of which completed their assigned tasks, and it was one of only two squadrons in the Group to register no aircraft or aircrew casualties. (The Battle of Hamburg. Martin Middlebrook).

Italy was now teetering on the brink of capitulation, and the Command was invited to help nudge it over with a series of operations against its major cities, beginning at Genoa, Milan and Turin on the 8/9th. On the following night, the squadron was able to contribute a healthy seventeen aircraft for an attack on Mannheim, which resulted in serious damage to the target for the modest loss of nine aircraft, but 49 Squadron posted missing its first crew for a month when ED719 failed to return. Fortunately, the crew of F/S Watson survived the experience intact, to spend the rest of the war as POWs. Having been blighted by persistent engine problems while outbound, they pressed on to bomb the target, but were forced to abandon their chariot on the way home. A reasonably effective attack was delivered on Nuremberg twenty four hours later, and it was ED625 which this time failed to return. Attacked by two nightfighters, which probably mortally wounded some of the crew, the Lancaster's bomb load went up shortly after P/O Moss and the only other survivor baled out. The squadron went to Italy for the final times on the 14/15th and 15/16th, attacking Milan on both occasions, and returning from the latter, LM337 was despatched by flak over France, and P/O Gospel and four of his crew died in the ensuing crash, the two survivors ultimately evading capture. On the following night, 3 and 8 Groups concluded the Command's wartime association with Italy.

Since the beginning of the war, intelligence filtering through from anonymous sources, pointed to German research into rocketry. Gradually, the name Peenemünde began to feature as the focal point of experiments in this field, and photographic reconnaissance eventually provided the first pictures of what the interpreters at Medmenham dubbed the Peenemünde 20, later known as the V-1. Churchill's chief scientific advisor, Professor Lindemann, steadfastly refused to accept the feasibility of rocket technology, and even when presented with a photograph of a V-2, taken over Peenemünde by a PRU Mosquito in June 1943, his closed mind found alternative explanations, and it took the combined urgings of Duncan Sandys and the brilliant Dr R V Jones to convince Churchill of the need to act. A decision was taken to attack the research and development centre, situated on an island on the Baltic coast, at the first available opportunity, and this arose on the night of the 17/18th. The operation was to be carried out in three waves, each assigned to a specific target, beginning with the housing estate, and followed by the factory and the experimental site, the Path Finders charged with the responsibility of shifting the aiming point accordingly. A Master Bomber was appointed to control the raid, and the officer chosen was G/C Searby, the commanding officer of 83 Squadron. A force of 596 aircraft was assembled, the numbers



somewhat depleted by the late return to their stations of around sixty Stirlings, which had been diverted after arriving back from Italy the night before, and could not be made ready in time.

Twelve Lancasters from 49 Squadron began their take-offs shortly after 21.30 hours, led by W/C Johnson in ED702. 5 Group would be in the final wave, and authorisation had been given for crews to use the "time and distance" method of bombing, should the target be obscured by smoke. As events turned out, 5 Group would arrive in the target area at the same time as the nightfighters, which would initially be drawn to Berlin by a spoof raid by eight Mosquitos of 139 Squadron, led by the former 49 Squadron commanding officer, G/C Slee. The initial marking of the housing estate went awry, and the markers fell two miles south of the aiming point, onto the forced workers camp at Trassenheide. Many of the 3 and 4 Group crews bombed here, and enormous casualties were inflicted on the friendly foreign nationals in their wooden barracks. Once rectified, the operation proceeded more or less according to plan, and 1 Group dealt fairly effectively with the factory complex. The nightfighters arrived from Berlin as 5 and 6 Groups were bombing the experimental site, and they proceed to take a heavy toll both in the skies above Peenemünde, and on the route home towards Denmark, and 49 Squadron suffered an uncharacteristically bruising time. ED805 went down into the Baltic, and took with it the crew of S/L Todd-White, JA691 and JA851 both fell to nightfighters over Denmark with no survivors from the crews of F/O Randall and P/O Tomlin respectively, and JA892 crashed on German soil west of the target when making for Denmark, and P/O Robinson and four of his crew became the only survivors from the squadron's four missing aircraft. A total of forty aircraft failed to return, in exchange for which the development programme of the V-2 was set back by a number of weeks, and its testing was eventually moved eastwards into Poland, out of range of Harris's bombers.

Harris had long believed that Berlin, as the seat and symbol of Nazi government, held the key to ultimate victory, and that its destruction would so loosen the grip of the authorities on the populace, that the war might be brought to a swift conclusion without the need for the kind of protracted and bloody land campaign that he had witnessed during the Great War. He had stated, that with the participation of the UK based American 8th Air Force, he could "wreck Berlin from end to end", and win the war. The Americans, however, were committed to a traditional land campaign, and would not accompany Harris to Berlin, so, undaunted he would go alone. What would be the longest and most bitter offensive undertaken by the Command during the war, began with a three raid series, which would be followed by an Autumn break, although whether this was forced on Harris by the heavy losses incurred, or was planned, is unclear. 727 aircraft took off for the Capital on the 23/24th, nine of them from Fiskerton, and although matters did not proceed precisely according to plan, it was the most destructive raid to date on the city. A feature of Berlin operations was to be the number of bomb loads sprayed onto outlying communities, and this night saw a proportion of the effort wasted. In return for the damage, the defenders shot down a new record fifty six aircraft, but happily for 49 Squadron, there were no empty dispersals at Fiskerton next morning.

Nuremberg was raided on the 27/28th, when much of the bombing again fell on open country, but amends were made at the twin towns of Mönchengladbach and Rheydt on the 30/31st, both targets suffering the destruction of over a thousand buildings. The month ended with the second of the series on Berlin on the 31st, and this was a major disappointment, which caused only superficial damage for the loss of forty seven aircraft, bringing the Command's casualty figure for the last week of the month to 161 aircraft and crews. An all Lancaster force returned to the Capital on the 3/4th of September, and achieved a moderate degree of success, and on this night, 49 Squadron was represented among the casualties by JB126, which was crippled by flak, and eventually crashed in the North Sea off the Northumberland coast, killing F/O Coates and three of his crew, a further man succumbing later to his injuries. A massively destructive raid fell on the twin towns of Mannheim and Ludwigshafen on the 5/6th, a success paid for by the loss of thirty four aircraft, and the squadron's ED416 was among them. Set on fire by a nightfighter while leaving the target area, the Lancaster exploded, catapulting the pilot, F/S Kirton, and one of his crew clear, and they were the only survivors.

Despite being a new airfield, the runways at Fiskerton were giving cause for concern, and it was decided from the 10th, to launch operations from nearby Dunholme Lodge, the other 52 Base satellite. Crews remained billeted at Fiskerton, and were ferried to their aircraft for operations. On the 15th, ED448 crash-landed at Dunholme Lodge at the end of a ferry flight, but F/S Oglesby and crew were unhurt. It was on this day that W/C Johnson concluded his period in command, and he was posted to Woodhall Spa. As a Group Captain, he would take command of 97 Squadron at Coningsby in October 1944, and remain in that post for the duration of the war. His replacement at 49 Squadron was W/C Adams, and he arrived in time to preside over the start of a series of four operations to Hanover, which would be spread over the succeeding month. The first of these took place on the 22/23rd, but despite the size of the force, it was an ineffective raid, which deposited most of the bombs miles away from the city centre. The disappointment was compounded by the loss of twenty six aircraft, although all eleven 49 Squadron Lancasters returned. Not so on the following night, when Mannheim again reeled under a heavy blow, and suffered the destruction of almost another thousand buildings. Among the thirty two missing aircraft on this night was 49 Squadron's ED702, the Lancaster traditionally favoured by the incumbent commanding officer, and one which had been present on many of the squadron's most notable operations. It was the now commissioned P/O Anderson and crew, survivors of the Dams operation, who were on board, and they were all killed. Also missing was the crew of F/S Stanton in JB301, and they also all died when the Lancaster crashed in Germany.

The second Hanover operation took place on the 27/28th, W/C Adams leading the squadron's contingent of twelve. It was another unhappy night for the Command, which registered the loss of a further thirty eight crews, in return for a raid which was more agricultural than demolition in nature. There was a busy schedule at the start of October, and the squadron operated on each of the first four nights, Hagen on the 1/2nd, followed by Munich, Kassel and Frankfurt, the first and last mentioned with outstanding success, and the other two to moderate effect, and while the Command lost a combined and acceptable total of forty four aircraft, 49 Squadron came through unscathed. All but 4 Group took part in a useful raid on

Stuttgart on the 7/8th, the night on which ABC Lancasters of 101 Squadron operated in numbers for the first time. ED426 was brought down by a combination of flak and a nightfighter over southern France, and three men died, but P/O Wares and one other evaded capture, while the other two survivors didn't. The Path Finders and main force finally got it right at Hanover on the 8/9th, and most of the bombs fell within the built-up area, causing extensive fires in central districts, and destroying almost four thousand buildings. The twenty seven missing aircraft could be added to eighteen more lost from the final raid of the series on the 18/19th, which was another failure. Earlier that day, JB411 had been involved in a spectacular accident when departing from Fiskerton for delivery to Dunholme Lodge. A swing on take off could not be corrected by F/S Brunt, and the new Lancaster ground-looped and was written off when the undercarriage collapsed. The occupants were unhurt, but their reprieve would prove to be only temporary. Appalling weather conditions ruined a raid on Leipzig on the 20/21st, and then came an attack by over five hundred aircraft on Kassel on the 22/23rd. So concentrated was the bombing, that a firestorm developed, which, while not as extensive as that at Hamburg, was sufficiently devastating to destroy dwelling blocks containing over 26,000 apartments, with a similar number damaged, and over six thousand people lost their lives. The defenders fought back, however, and forty three aircraft were shot down, two of them from 49 Squadron, and both crashed in Germany. JB413 produced five survivors, although the pilot, P/O Taverner, and one other were killed, but none survived from the crew of F/S Hodgkinson in JB416.

There followed a lull in main force operations, during which time, 49 Squadron was able to return its aircraft to Fiskerton for future operations. These began again with a raid on Düsseldorf on the 3/4th of November, which produced heavy damage in central and southern districts. Two more of the squadron's crews went missing on this night, those of F/L Thomas and F/L Carfoot in ED438 and JB305 respectively. The former was a nightfighter victim near Cologne, and the pilot and four others died of the eight men on board, and the latter crashed in the target area, the pilot again paying the ultimate price along with three others. On the 10/11th, a force of three hundred 5 and 8 Group Lancasters successfully attacked railway yards at Modane in southern France, an operation which finished early for W/O Webb and crew in JB533. This Lancaster came to grief on take-off, probably through a burst tyre, but the crew was able to scramble clear as fire took hold, and it was some time later that the unfortunate aircraft was spread across the airfield when the bomb load went up. The decks were now cleared for the resumption of the Berlin campaign, and an all Lancaster heavy force was prepared for the first operation, on the 18/19th, while a predominately Halifax and Stirling contingent raided Mannheim as a diversion.

Nineteen Lancasters departed Fiskerton, led by W/C Adams, and all reached the target safely. Bombing was scattered across the city, but at least the diversion was successful in drawing nightfighters away, and only nine aircraft failed to return from the Capital. A Maximum effort force comprising over 750 aircraft set out for Berlin once more on the 22/23rd, and this time, it delivered the most destructive attack of the war on the city, demolishing over three thousand buildings, including some of industrial importance. Twenty six aircraft paid the price, and the squadron's JB368 was lost without trace with the eight man crew of F/O Cottingham. Disproportionately high casualty figures among the Stirling squadrons had been

giving cause for concern for some time, and following this operation, they were withdrawn from future operations over Germany. A predominately Lancaster force returned on the following night, and heaped more misery on the capital, guided by the fires still burning from the previous night, and although the squadron lost no aircraft to the defences, an altimeter malfunction caused JB229 to hit the sea just off the Lincolnshire coast, and come to rest on the beach at Chapel-St-Leonards, from where the crew of F/O Turner waded ashore with minor injuries. It fell to the Lancaster squadrons again to provide the heavy force for the fourth Berlin raid since the resumption, and this took place on the 26/27th. The PFF marking was well north of the planned aiming point, and many bomb loads fell here, and into industrial suburbs, where thirty eight war industry factories were destroyed. It was a punishing night for the attackers, which lost twenty eight of their number, and JB362 was one of those which crashed in the target area, with just one survivor from the crew of W/O Brunt. Crews returning to Fiskerton at around 01.00 hours encountered fog, and the FIDO installation had already been put into operation. JB235 undershot on approach, broke up and caught fire, and despite heroic efforts by surviving crew members and the station's fire brigade, Sgt Richardson and four of his crew failed to survive.

December began as November had ended, with another trip to the "Big City" by a predominately Lancaster heavy force of over four hundred aircraft. It was not destined to be a happy night for the Command, which again sprayed bombs liberally over Berlin and the surrounding countryside, but did manage to score some useful hits on industrial premises. On the following morning, forty dispersals stood empty on bomber airfields as a testament to the previous night's losses, and JB371's at Fiskerton was among them. This Lancaster had been hit by flak and abandoned in the target area by W/O Petty and five of his crew, but two others died in the crash. Twenty four hours later, over five hundred crews headed back towards eastern Germany, only this time with Leipzig as their objective. A Mosquito diversion at Berlin helped to draw off the fighters, but having delivered the most successful raid of the war on this city, some aircraft strayed over a heavily defended area of the Reich, and paid the price. Twenty four aircraft failed to return, but all eleven despatched from Fiskerton returned safely.

A welcome break allowed the crews to draw breath until mid month, and when briefings took place for the Lancaster crews on the 16th, the red tape on the wall maps again terminated at Berlin. This night will for ever be remembered for the thick blanket of fog which concealed the airfields as the tired crews returned home. The operation itself was moderately successful, although scattered, and fell mostly on residential districts. Twenty five aircraft fell to the defences, but the real problems were encountered by the crews on their return. Twenty nine Lancasters either crashed or were abandoned by their crews during the search for somewhere to land with dwindling reserves of fuel, and around 150 airmen lost their lives in this way. 49 Squadron's loss, however, came via a nightfighter, which accounted for JB545 over Holland, killing P/O Ratcliffe and his crew. Harris switched his force to Frankfurt on the 20/21st, and gained a moderate degree of success, which would probably have been greater but for decoy fires and dummy target indicators, which lured away a proportion of the bombing. Forty one aircraft failed to make it home, and the Halifax squadrons suffered disproportionately high casualties. JB467 crashed in Germany, and there were no survivors from the crew of P/O

Blackmore, but this was thankfully the last time during the year that the squadron would have to post missing one of its crews, despite two further operations to Berlin on the 23/24th and 29/30th, the latter the first of an unprecedented three trips to Berlin in the space of five nights spanning the turn of the year.

## 1944

As far as the crews and the residents of Berlin were concerned, the New Year offered the same fare as the old. Both camps would have welcomed a change of policy which removed the Capital from the top of the target list, but it was not to be, and it would be some time yet before this wish was realized. The inhabitants of the city, Berliners first and Germans second, were a hardy people, and not unlike their counterparts in London, who, during the Blitz of 1940, not only found strength and unity in their communal trials, but were imbued with a sense of defiance, which would stand firm under the most persistent bombing. Banners were carried through the streets which proclaimed, "you may break our walls, but not our hearts," and the song, *Nach jedem Dezember kommt immer ein May*, After every December comes always a May, was played endlessly over the radio during Berlin's "winter of discontent", hinting at a change of fortunes for the beleaguered city, and indeed, the nation.

Harris allowed little time for New Year celebrations, and before New Year's Day was over, four hundred Lancasters were winging their way towards the Capital, arriving overhead as the clock showed 03.00 hours. The result was not commensurate with the effort expended and the loss of twenty eight aircraft, and most of the bombing fell outside of the city limits into open and wooded country. The following night's effort fared no better, and this time twenty seven Lancasters failed to return, 49 Squadron registering its first casualties of the year. JB231 went down as the result of a head-on collision with another Lancaster on the approach to the target, but F/O Young and crew all managed to abandon the Lancaster before it crashed, and were captured. (Beware of the dog at War. John Ward.) The other missing crew was that of F/L Palmer, and they were lost without trace in JB727. On the 5/6th, a predominately Lancaster force raided Stettin, and inflicted substantial damage on housing and industry, and sank eight ships in the harbour.

The crews remained at home for the next eight nights, and when briefings took place on the 14th, there must have been a sense of relief that the red tape on the wall maps stopped well short of Berlin. It led, in fact, to Brunswick, a town in the same region of Germany as Hanover, and no doubt some of those present would have remembered the bruising and largely ineffective series of raids on that city during the Autumn. In the event, history was to repeat itself, and the force of almost five hundred aircraft deposited its bombs mainly into the surrounding hamlets and countryside. *(A German friend of mine, who as a small child at the time, lived in the village of Geitelde a few kilometres from Brunswick, and whose father was the parish clergyman, states that the villagers believed that it was Bomber Command policy to bomb the surrounding communities first, to drive the people into the towns and cities, before attacking them.)* The nightfighters were waiting at the German frontier, and they remained with the bomber stream until it retreated out to sea on the way home, and contributed largely to the loss of thirty eight aircraft. JB295 fell victim to one of them over Germany, and F/L Lawson-Tancred and four of his crew were killed. After

another break from operations which lasted five nights, a force of over seven hundred aircraft returned to the main business of trying to destroy Berlin. It was the night of the 20/21st, and many bomb loads fell into eastern districts, which thus far, had been spared from the worst ravages of a Bomber Command attack, and much fresh damage was inflicted. Among the thirty five missing aircraft was a disproportionately high number of Halifaxes, and alarm bells were beginning to sound at HQ, as they had done for the Stirlings in the previous October and November.

Magdeburg was earmarked for its first major raid on the following night, and a disappointing bombing performance was compounded by a new record loss of fifty seven aircraft, thirty five of them Halifaxes. 49 Squadron sent ten aircraft with the main force, and contributed two others to a small 5 Group diversion on Berlin, a ruse which was patently ineffective. A five night rest allowed Harris to prepare his Command for what would prove to be the final concerted effort against Berlin, and it would involve an unprecedented three trips there in the space of four nights. The series began on the 27/28th, when an all Lancaster heavy force scattered bombs over a wide area, with the main weight falling into southern districts and outlying communities. Among the thirty three failures to return was 49 Squadron's JB360, in which P/O Barnes and two of his crew were killed. The Halifaxes joined in on the following night, and their losses again exceeded those of the Lancaster element in a total casualty figure of forty six aircraft. In return, 180,000 Berliners were bombed out of their homes, and a large number of public and administrative buildings was destroyed. On the 30/31st, heavy damage was inflicted upon central and south-western districts, but much of the effort was again wasted in open country and on numerous surrounding hamlets, and thirty three bombers failed to make it home. Although two more large scale operations would be mounted against Berlin, one in February and the other in March, this destructive series at the end of January effectively ended the campaign. Remarkably, 49 Squadron had managed to negotiate four of the month's six major raids on Berlin without loss, and also the diversion during the debacle at Magdeburg.

There was no operational activity for the bulk of the heavy force for the first two weeks of February, largely because of inhospitable weather conditions. When it did eventually take to the air again in numbers, however, it was for the record breaking penultimate operation of the war by RAF heavy bombers on the "Big City". The largest non-1,000 force to date of 891 aircraft took off on the night of the 15/16th, and those which reached the target delivered a record 2,600 tons of bombs, much of it to good effect within the city boundaries. Many hundreds of large fires were left burning, a thousand houses were destroyed, and some important war industry factories suffered damage. The now familiar wastage of bombs on rural areas was also a feature of this night, as was another heavy loss of forty three aircraft. 49 Squadron came through this one unscathed, but would not do so on the 19/20th, when contributing to a raid by almost eight hundred aircraft on Leipzig. Enemy nightfighters picked up the bomber stream at the Dutch coast and remained with it all the way to the target. Wrongly forecast winds caused some aircraft to arrive in the target area too early, and a goodly number of these were despatched by flak while milling around, waiting for the attack to begin. Cloud cover prevented assessment of the results, but they were almost certainly disappointing, and Bomber Command suffered its heaviest defeat of the war to date, losing a

massive seventy eight aircraft. Two of these were from Fiskerton, JB469 and ND516, and both fell on German soil, the former with no survivors from the crew of F/S White. The latter was shot down by a nightfighter while outbound, and P/O MacKenzie and two of his crew escaped with their lives to become POWs. Perhaps any other C-in-C would have suspended operations following such a heavy defeat, but not so Harris, and twenty four hours later, almost six hundred aircraft took off for Stuttgart. One Lancaster from 49 Squadron failed to negotiate this stage of the proceedings, ND498 coming to grief with an undercarriage collapse after swinging off the runway at speed. P/O Clark and crew scrambled clear as fire took hold, and the bomb load eventually went up, distributing the once proud Lancaster over a wide area. The raid itself was scattered, but substantial damage resulted in the northern half of the city, and the loss of just nine aircraft was a welcome boost to morale.

A new tactic was introduced for the next two operations, to Schweinfurt on the 24/25th and Augsburg on the following night. The forces were split into two waves two hours apart, and although the former operation was in itself a failure, the second wave lost 50% fewer aircraft than the first, in an overall casualty figure of thirty three. In contrast, the attack on the beautiful and historic Augsburg went as planned, and the centre of the city was ripped out by fire. Centuries of culture were destroyed for ever as the crews achieved the accuracy and concentration which was always intended, but only occasionally realized. The loss of twenty one aircraft suggested that there may be some merit in splitting the forces, but generally speaking, trips to the southern cities tended to be less expensive anyway. March began with a very encouraging raid on Stuttgart on the 1/2nd, which left widespread damage in its wake, and cost a very modest four aircraft. It was a different story, however, when eight hundred aircraft returned there on the 15/16th, after a two week break from major operations. Early bombing fell into central districts on this night, but the performance deteriorated, and the bulk of the rest was wasted in open country, and thirty seven aircraft were claimed by the defences. It was a nightfighter which accounted for the squadron's ND474 over Germany, and Sgt Waugh and crew were killed while on their first operation.

Two heavy and devastating raids fell on Frankfurt on the 18/19th and 22/23rd, the former alone destroying six thousand buildings. Following the latter, half of the city was without water, gas and electricity for an extended period, and this outstanding success was gained for a combined, and in the context of the scale of damage, acceptable loss of fifty five bombers. 49 Squadron posted missing two crews from the second raid, those of F/S Greig in ND536, and F/O Turner in ND672, both of which crashed in Germany, with just one survivor from the latter. The final raid of the war by RAF heavy bombers on Berlin was launched on the night of the 24/25th, and involved a force of eight hundred aircraft. Seventeen Lancasters were despatched from Fiskerton, although one returned early with engine problems. The crews encountered jetstream winds at cruising altitude, which drove them south of the intended track, and broke the cohesion of the bomber stream. This led to scattered bombing at Berlin, and the usual wastage of bombs on over a hundred outlying communities. Most of the bombing which hit the city afflicted the south-western districts, and it caused a moderate amount of damage. Many aircraft were driven by the winds over heavily defended areas on the return journey, and were brought down by flak, over two thirds of the seventy two missing aircraft being accounted for in this way. 49 Squadron maintained its excellent run of low

losses from Berlin operations, and again came through unscathed. Its record during the Battle of Berlin is impressive indeed, registering as it did the loss of just seven aircraft from its participation in all nineteen of the main raids, and the small diversion. 273 sorties were despatched to the Capital, and this gave the lowest percentage loss rate of all the squadrons which took part. (The Berlin Raids. Martin Middlebrook.)

The Berlin campaign was now over, but the winter offensive still had a week to run, and two more major operations for the crews to negotiate. The first of these was aimed with outstanding success on Essen on the 26/27th, thus continuing the run of victories against this important city since the introduction of Oboe at the start of the Ruhr campaign a year earlier. Only nine aircraft failed to return, but one of these was 49 Squadron's JB680, which was shot down by a nightfighter over Germany, killing P/O Dodgson and his crew. A similar fate almost befell the crew of P/O Shinn, after ND676 was attacked by a nightfighter on the bombing run. The bombs were jettisoned, and the struggle to reach home began, with two of the crew carrying injuries. The fit members of the crew were baled out over Norfolk, after which the pilot carried out a successful wheels-up landing at Coltishall, only to find that one of the injured men had lost his fight for life. (Beware of the Dog at War. John Ward.)

The final operation of the winter period came on the 30/31st, a standard maximum effort attack by a force of 795 aircraft on Nuremberg, which was to depart from normal practice in only one respect. In place of a route incorporating feints to mislead the enemy nightfighter controllers, a long straight leg was incorporated, which took the bomber stream across Germany, to a point about fifty miles north of the target, from where the final run-in would commence. Despite vehement protests by PFF chief AVM Bennett, and doubts about the weather, the operation went ahead on the basis of the 5 Group plan. The route, and a combination of almost freak meteorological conditions, bright moonlight, crystal clear visibility, a backcloth of white cloud to silhouette the bombers against, and the formation of condensation trails, all conspired to hand the force on a plate to the waiting nightfighters, which exploited their opportunity with a will. The jetstream winds, which had so adversely affected the Berlin operation a week earlier, were also present, although this time from the south, and the bomber stream was driven well north of the intended target. Those crews which failed to appreciate the degree to which this happened, turned towards Nuremberg from a false position, and many bombed Schweinfurt in error. The route from Charleroi in Belgium to the target was marked by the burning wreckage of RAF bombers, and the massively depleted numbers which bombed the intended target produced little new damage. When all the aircraft which were going to return had done so, there was a shortfall of ninety five, and this represented a new record loss by a clear seventeen aircraft. Both 49 Squadron casualties were sent crashing onto German soil by nightfighters, one man surviving from the crew of P/O Kellow in JB314, and two men from the crew of F/O Colhoun in JB466.

What now lay before the crews was in marked contrast to that which had been endured over the preceding eight months. In place of the long slog to distant German cities on dark, dirty nights, shorter range hops to France and the other occupied countries would be the order of the day, and despite the flawed thinking in high places that such operations were worthy of counting as just one third of a sortie, they would prove to be equally demanding in their way.



Happily, this devised policy would be short-lived, and quickly rescinded in the light of heavy losses. The new targets, principally railways and defences, would demand a greater degree of accuracy in view of their close proximity to friendly civilians, and such considerations would concentrate the minds of the crews. The Transport Plan, the destruction of the French railway system, had actually begun in early March, when the Stirlings and Halifaxes exempted from operations over Germany attacked installations at Trappes and Le Mans. This campaign could now gain momentum as the rest of the heavy brigade joined in, and despite the scale of the losses over the winter, the Command was in fine fettle to discharge its new role. Harris could assign targets to individual Groups, to Groups in tandem, or to the Command as a whole as required, and thereby achieve what had been attempted in vain by his predecessors in 1940 and 1941, namely, to deliver a telling blow at numerous targets simultaneously.

The first of the heavy Groups to return to operations in April was 5 Group, which carried out a successful attack on an aircraft factory at Toulouse on the 5/6th. The first night of multiple operations came on the 10/11th, when five railway yards were targeted, and four of them seriously damaged. Harris's preferred policy of city-busting would never be completely abandoned in favour of other considerations, and Aachen felt the weight of a highly concentrated raid by elements of 1, 3, 5 and 8 Groups on the 11/12th, which killed over fifteen hundred people. The squadron's LL899 was shot down by a nightfighter over Belgium during the course of the operation, and F/L Bacon and crew were killed. Officially from the 14th, the Command became subject to the requirements of SHAEF in preparation for the forthcoming invasion, and would remain thus shackled until the Allied forces were sweeping towards the German frontier. 5 Group successfully attacked railway yards at Juvisy on the 18/19th, and on the 20/21st, tested its new low level visual marking system for the first time in a two phase attack on yards at La Chapelle. The method, pioneered by W/C Cheshire and S/L Martin at 617 Squadron, was highly effective under the right conditions, and required the use of Mosquitos to dive onto the aiming point to position spot fires. Initially, the job remained the preserve of 617 Squadron, but 627 Squadron was transferred from 8 Group as the first complete unit to be dedicated to this role, and after training, would replace 617 Squadron as the marker force for the Group. Also transferred from 8 Group at this time, were the former 5 Group stalwarts, 83 and 97 Squadrons, which would act as the illuminators.

The real test of the system would come at a heavily defended German target, and Brunswick was selected for this purpose on the 22/23rd. Despite accurate marking by the 617 Squadron Mosquito element, the heavy brigade failed to exploit the situation, and the operation failed. Two nights later, it was tried again at Munich, and this time it was an outstanding success, largely made possible by W/C Cheshire's marking in the face of murderous light flak, a feat which probably sealed the award to him of the Victoria Cross at the conclusion of his tour. 49 Squadron posted missing the crew of P/O Clark from this operation, and it was later learned that all had been killed when ND537 was shot down over Germany by a nightfighter. 627 Squadron was given its first opportunity to mark for the Group on the 26/27th, during a raid on Schweinfurt. On this occasion, accuracy eluded them, and the operation was a complete failure, which was compounded by the loss of twenty one aircraft. It was a bad night for 49 Squadron, which had three empty dispersals to contemplate at Fiskerton next morning. LL908 and JB679 both went down over France, the former with total loss of life among the crew of

P/O Dickinson, and the latter producing two survivors from the crew of P/O Montgomery, one of whom evaded capture. The third casualty was ND687, which fell to a nightfighter over Germany, and F/L Armstrong and crew paid the ultimate price. Away from the operational scene, a Lancaster crashed in Cambridgeshire while engaged in trials of the "Village Inn" nightfighter warning system, after the dinghy broke from its stowage and fouled the tailplane. There were four 49 Squadron men among the crew of the 460 Squadron aircraft, including the pilot, F/L Healey, and all were killed. Also among the dead was former 49 Squadron gunner, Sgt Jagger, now a member of the Bombing Development Unit, who had been F/L Shannon's front gunner for the Dams operation.

On the 1st of May, W/C Crocker was posted in from his command of 630 Squadron to replace W/C Adams at the helm of 49 Squadron. The month began for the group with a successful return to Toulouse and a small scale raid on a factory at Tours on the 1/2nd, and this was followed by what became a controversial 1 and 5 Group attack on a Panzer training camp and transport depot at Mailly-le-Camp on the 3/4th. The two principal figures, Master Bomber W/C Deane of 83 Squadron, and Marker leader W/C Cheshire, attended separate briefings, and this may have led to the later confusion. Certainly, interference from a commercial broadcasting station hampered the passing of instructions to the main force once the marking had been accurately carried out, and while over three hundred Lancasters milled around in the target area awaiting the call to bomb, enemy nightfighters exploited their opportunity to get amongst them, and proceeded to take a heavy toll. A few crews succumbed to their anxiety and frustration, and there was a rare breakdown in R/T discipline in the form of some questionable comments. Once in progress, the bombing was accurate, and extensive damage was inflicted on the target, but forty two aircraft failed to return, and recriminations abound to this day, with many accusations unjustly directed at W/C Cheshire. Remarkably, 49 Squadron escaped the carnage, and all its aircraft returned home, although two crewmen did bale out of P/O Ball's ND647 after it suffered damage from flak and a fighter, and appeared to be out of control.

An ammunition dump at Salbris was the target for a small 5 Group force on the 7/8th, fourteen of the fifty eight Lancasters involved provided by 49 Squadron. The operation was successful, but among the seven missing aircraft was JB421, and P/O Anderson and crew died while on their first sortie. Later that day, LL912 was written off in a taxiing accident without human casualties, and it would be almost two weeks before the Reaper returned, during which time the squadron operated to Gennevilliers on the 9/10th, and Bourg-Leopold on the 11/12th, a raid which was abandoned part way through because of haze, and this happened again at Amiens on the 19/20th. On the 21/22nd, 1, 3, 5 and 8 Groups carried out the first attack for a year on Duisburg, and left severe damage, but in an echo of former times over the Ruhr lost twenty nine aircraft. LM539 was brought down over Holland, and just one man survived from the crew of P/O Carrington. Over three hundred aircraft raided Dortmund on the 22/23rd, its first attack since the Ruhr campaign, while 5 Group tried again at Brunswick with 1 Group support. The conditions thwarted the 5 Group marking method, and the town escaped once more. The squadron posted missing the crew of P/O Graves-Hook in NE125, and there were no survivors.

With the invasion less than a week away, it was time to target gun batteries along the coast from the Pas-de-Calais to Normandy, and 49 Squadron was involved on the 2/3rd of June at Wimereux near Boulogne, and at La Pernelle on D-Day Eve, when over a thousand aircraft were airborne to hit ten aiming points. On D-Day Night, a further thousand aircraft went for communications targets on the approaches to the beachheads, and this was continued over the next two nights. On the 9/10th, airfields occupied elements of 1, 4, 6 and 8 Groups, while a hundred 5 Group Lancasters bombed a railway junction at Etampes. This was not entirely accurate, and colateral damage to the town was extensive. A third of the six missing Lancasters were from Fiskerton, and both crashed in France. There were no survivors from the crew of P/O Smiley in JB714, and only one man escaped with his life from the crew of F/O Bell in ND533, he only to die while a POW. A new oil campaign opened at Gelsenkirchen on the 12/13th, without the participation of 5 Group, and it continued at Sterkrade on the 16/17th. This was the night on which a second new campaign began, this one against flying bomb launching and storage sites in the Pas-de-Calais.

5 Group had to wait until the 21/22nd before getting involved with oil targets, and briefings took place for two separate attacks to be carried out that night. Both operations, Wesseling and Scholven-Buer, included a sprinkling of ABC Lancasters from 1 Group's 101 Squadron, and a number of Oboe Mosquitos were also present at the latter. Thick cloud prevented use of the 5 Group method at both targets, and marking at Wesseling went ahead on H2s alone, while skymarking was used at Scholven. It was a night of fierce nightfighter activity, and it seems that most of them descended on the Wesseling force, and contributed to the destruction of thirty seven Lancasters. Four 5 Group squadrons each lost six aircraft, among them 49 Squadron, which despatched twenty Lancasters led by W/C Crocker in LL900. This aircraft was shot down by a nightfighter while outbound over Germany, and all eight men on board died, among them a BBC correspondent. It was an immensely experienced crew, which boasted four holders of the DFC, and two of the DFM. ME675 crashed in Holland, killing F/L Hill and his crew, and ME808 was downed over Belgium with an identical fate for S/L Cox and his crew. ND683 found the sea off the Dutch coast, and took with it to their deaths P/O Shinn and crew, and ND695 was lost without trace with the crew of P/O Ross. Finally, NE128 produced the only survivors from this disastrous night, five men from the crew of F/O Simpkin, who was killed with one other. S/L Botting landed in ND957, to discover that his commanding officer was gone, and he was installed as the new squadron commander, remaining at the helm until after war's end. Three nights after this disaster, thirteen crews set out from Fiskerton as part of a seven hundred strong force to attack seven flying bomb sites. Briefed for the one at Pommerval, F/O Taylor and crew were shot down in LM572, while on their maiden operation, and three of the crew were killed, while the pilot and three others fell into enemy hands.

July would be a month dominated by the continuation of the flying bomb, railway and oil campaigns, and 5 Group was assigned to an underground V-1 storage site at St Leu d'Esserent on the 4/5th. Earlier in the evening it had been attacked by 617 Squadron dropping Tallboys, and now came the assault with 1,000 pounders. Nightfighters were active, and thirteen Lancasters failed to return, including 49 Squadron's PB195, in which F/O Dod and crew were all killed. It was found necessary to return to this target on the 7/8th, and this was an even

more successful night for the defenders, which claimed twenty nine Lancasters and two Mosquitos. It was another unhappy night for 49 Squadron, which posted missing two crews, those of F/O Baker and F/L Ball in LL976 and LM541 respectively, the former a nightfighter victim over France, and the latter tragically shot down by another Lancaster, also over France, and neither produced a survivor. PB207 survived an attack by a nightfighter and returned home in the hands of F/O McCracken and crew, but after inspection, it was declared to be beyond economical repair. The 18th was a busy day, which began with a dawn attack on fortified villages east of Caen in Support of the ground forces' Operation Goodwood. That night, fifteen crews were briefed for a 5 Group raid on a railway junction at Revigny, a target which had twice been assigned to 1 Group, on the 12/13th and 14/15th, both of which had been abandoned because of ground haze, the latter without any bombs being released. They had been relatively expensive failures, and although the 5 Group effort would deal effectively with the target, it was to suffer another bruising time. Twenty four Lancasters failed to return, and 49 Squadron was represented by four of them, all crashing on French soil, at least three of them as the result of nightfighter attacks. There were no survivors from the crews of F/O Green and F/O Appleyard in JB178 and ND684 respectively, and just two men escaped with their lives from the crew of F/O Lacy in PB231. The crew of F/O Deacon in JB473 was more fortunate, however, and five of them ultimately evaded capture, while the pilot became a POW, and one man was killed.

Following a successful raid on a railway junction at Courtrai on the 20/21st, twelve 49 Squadron crews took part in a highly destructive attack on Kiel on the 23/24th, which benefited enormously from a Mandrel screen provided by the heavy squadrons of 100 Group. The last week of the month featured a three raid series against Stuttgart over a period of five nights beginning on the 24/25th. 49 Squadron was active elsewhere on this night, participating in a successful raid on an oil storage dump at Donges, but sent fourteen aircraft to the southern German city on the following night, and lost PB250 over France, with no survivors from the crew of F/O Buchanan. The final Stuttgart operation was on the 28/29th, and the series left the central districts in ruins. Nightfighters took advantage of the bright moonlight on this night, and with the flak batteries, hacked down a massive thirty nine aircraft, one of which was JB701, and there were no survivors from the crew of F/L Powell. Having suffered its worst period of the war since Wesseling in June, the squadron was now about to embark on a two month spell of loss free operations, which would take it into October.

The first two weeks of August were devoted mainly to the flying bomb campaign, punctuated by attacks on railway and oil related targets. 49 Squadron was active on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 5th by daylight, and carried out its first night raid of the month on the 7/8th, when operating against enemy strong points in support of the ground forces. Oil targets at Chatellerault and Bordeaux occupied the nights of the 9/10th and 10/11th, and a railway junction at Givors was the target for the 11/12th. On the following night, Brunswick was selected to host an experimental raid, which was intended to assess the ability of crews to locate and bomb a target on H2s alone, without the aid of Path Finders. It was not a success, and the disappointment was compounded by the loss of twenty seven aircraft. 49 Squadron contributed eight aircraft, and a further three to support ground forces in the Falaise area, and

all returned without incident. In preparation for his new night offensive against Germany, Harris despatched a thousand aircraft to nine nightfighter airfields in Holland and Belgium by daylight on the 15th, and 49 Squadron played its part in a successful assault on Deelen. Although still a month away from being released from his responsibilities to SHAEF, Harris began his return to Germany on the 16/17th, with raids on Stettin and Kiel, thirteen 49 Squadron crews participating in the former. On the 18th, 5 Group attacked a supply depot at L'Isle-Adam, and then the crews underwent a frustrating week of scrubbed operations, before carrying out the first major raid of the war on Darmstadt on the 25/26th. This was not a typically smooth 5 Group operation, particularly after the Master Bomber returned early, and his deputies were shot down. Some crews joined in the simultaneous attack on nearby Rüsselsheim, and Darmstadt escaped with minor damage. When the Group returned in September, however, it would be a horrifyingly different story. Königsberg was the distant target for the Group on the 26/27th, and again on the 29/30th, and despite the small bomb loads in favour of maximum fuel, almost half of the city's housing was destroyed, along with a good proportion of its industry.

September began for the squadron with a stand-down, while the crews got to grips with the new Village Inn nightfighter defence system. While this was in progress, a series of operations began to clear the French ports still in enemy hands. Le Havre was the first to be targeted, and the first of six assaults on enemy strong points was launched on the 5th. 49 Squadron returned to operations in time for the 5th raid, on the 10th, and the garrison surrendered to British forces hours after the sixth raid on the 11th. That night, 5 Group returned to Darmstadt with over two hundred Lancasters, of which nine were from Fiskerton. The accuracy and concentration of the bombing on this night left a firestorm raging in the hapless town, and over twelve thousand of its inhabitants lost their lives, while twelve Lancasters failed to return. The more familiar city of Stuttgart was the destination for a 1 and 5 Group raid on the 12/13th, and the 49 Squadron contingent was swelled by the presence of the Fiskerton "station master" G/C Weir, an officer of great operational experience, and former commanding officer of 61 Squadron. This operation was another outstanding success, which was negotiated by the squadron without loss. Boulogne received the Le Havre treatment by daylight on the 17th, and on the 18/19th, Bremerhaven was visited by 5 Group, the first time that RAF bombers had made a serious attempt on it. The 5 Group marking method worked perfectly, and the target was effectively knocked out by this one raid. The following night was devoted to the destruction of the twin towns of Mönchengladbach and Rheydt, an operation for which W/C Guy Gibson was appointed Master Bomber. Flying as his navigator was S/L Warwick, who completed a tour of operations with 49 Squadron during the second half of 1943. After early difficulties with marking, the operation proceeded more or less according to plan, but Gibson's 627 Squadron Mosquito crashed on the outskirts of Steenberg in Holland on the way home, and he and S/L Warwick lie side-by-side in the town's catholic cemetery.

October would bring the start of a new Ruhr campaign, and this got underway at Dortmund on the 6/7th. 1 and 5 Groups did not take part, but went instead to Bremen, where they delivered a devastating blow, which destroyed or seriously damaged almost five thousand buildings. It was on this night that 49 Squadron suffered its first missing crews since July.

PB353 crashed into the Baltic, and took with it the crew of F/O Harrop, and PB429 went down over Germany with the crew of F/O Beatson, who were on their first operation, and all were killed. Operation Hurricane was unleashed on Duisburg at first light on the 14th, and soon other Ruhr cities would witness at first hand the overwhelming superiority of the Allied Air Forces. Over a thousand aircraft were aloft for this attack, which delivered 4,500 tons of bombs into the already rubble strewn streets. It was on this day that an advance party left Fiskerton for Fulbeck, the new home of 49 Squadron, soon to be joined by the rest of the personnel and equipment. Before leaving their long time home, however, the crews had one more operation to negotiate from there that night, while the Hurricane force returned to Duisburg in similar numbers to the morning, to press home the point about superiority. Taking advantage of the activity over the Ruhr, 5 Group returned to Brunswick, the scene of many former failures, and finally delivered a telling blow, which completely destroyed the town centre, and caused extensive damage in most other districts. The squadron officially became resident at Fulbeck on the 16th, this one of two stations, the other Balderton, controlled by 56 Base at Syerston. The first operation from its new home was mounted on the 19/20th, when Nuremberg was the target for 5 Group, while a much larger force raided Stuttgart. Only partially effective, the 5 Group bombing did at least fall onto an industrial area, and forty one factory buildings were destroyed, along with four hundred houses. An attempt to bomb the U-Boat pens at Bergen on the 28/29th was thwarted by cloud and abandoned after only a fifth of the force had bombed. On return, PB519 was diverted to Marston Moor, and, landing too far down the runway to be able to stop, went straight off the end, and finished up on a main road minus its undercarriage, happily without injury to F/O Lee and his crew.

Oil was the main focus of attention during November, but 5 Group would also renew its acquaintance with the Dortmund-Ems Canal, a target with which it had an almost personal association. First, however, came the Meerbeck oil plant at Homberg on the 1st, when scattered marking led to a third of the force failing to bomb. On the 2/3rd, it was the turn of Düsseldorf to receive its visit from the Hurricane force, Essen and Cologne having already had the treatment during the two weeks since Duisburg. PB385 failed to return from this operation, having fallen to a nightfighter, and F/O Harford and crew were killed on only their second sortie. A large force went to Bochum on the 3/4th, while 5 Group successfully attacked the Dortmund-Ems Canal near Münster for the loss of just three Lancasters. 49 Squadron's PB370 was one of them, and there were no survivors from the crew of F/O Talbot. An attack on the Mittelland Canal at Gravenhorst on the 6/7th failed, when markers became extinguished, and a raid on the Rhenania-Ossag oil refinery at Harburg on the 11/12th spread into the town, and most of the damage occurred there. One 49 Squadron aircraft failed to return, and this was PB369 of the B Flight commander, S/L Gorton, which crashed in Germany with no survivors from among the eight men on board. On the 16th, three small German towns, Düren, Jülich and Heinsberg, which were in the path of advancing American ground forces, were erased from the map, 49 Squadron assisting at the first mentioned. Two 5 Group forces went canal-busting on the evening of the 21st, one to the Dortmund-Ems, and the one including the 49 Squadron element to the Mittelland at Gravenhorst. Both attacks were successful, and large stretches of these vital waterways were drained for the loss of two Lancasters, but sadly, both belonged to 49 Squadron. Flying PB300 was G/C Weir, and he was

the sole survivor of his crew, and fell into enemy hands. The other missing crew was that of F/O Maul, and they all died in PB354. After such low losses during the preceding three months, November was proving to be expensive, and a further casualty occurred shortly after take-off for Munich on the 26/27th. PB432 came down in the Lincolnshire countryside, and two men were killed. The pilot, F/O Le Marquand, sustained serious injuries, as did two other members of his crew, and two more were slightly hurt.

As events turned out, the enemy would claim no more 49 Squadron crews during 1944, but that did not mean that the Reaper would have no part to play. December brought a less frenetic period of operational activity, and it was not until the 4/5th that 49 Squadron was called to arms. The small town of Heilbronn had the misfortune to stand astride an important railway line, and after a visit from 5 Group on this night, over 80% of its built-up area was gutted by fire, and seven thousand inhabitants lay dead. A number of attempts were made to breach the Urft Dam at Heimbach, each without success, the last attack, on the 11th, including a 49 Squadron element. That night, F/L Green and crew set off in PB799 for a night navigation exercise, and failed to return, presumably going down over the Irish Sea. The squadron's next operation was as part of a 5 Group effort to Munich on the 17/18th, from which PB355 returned early, and crashed on a Sussex beach, killing the crew of F/O Essenhigh. Just four more operations would involve the squadron before the end of the year, and these began with Gdynia on the 18/19th, where extensive damage was caused to shipping and port installations. Another distant objective was an oil refinery at Pölitz, and this 5 Group effort on the 21/22nd inflicted some useful damage on the plant, although cloud and smoke made accurate bombing difficult. 49 Squadron crews landed at Dyce in Scotland on return, at which point the weather clamped down, and all fifteen spent the last wartime Christmas enjoying the very best in Scottish hospitality. The squadron sent five crews to join a 5 Group raid on naval units at Horten in Oslo Fjord on the 28/29th, and the year's final operation for the Group took place on the 30/31st, when a German supply line was attacked at Houffalize. It had been a year of contrasts for the whole Command, which had begun in the depths of the dark nights of the Berlin offensive, continued through the long days of summer, when daylight operations were reintroduced, and finished with a return to the nighttime pounding of industrial Germany, with the Command at the peak of its strength and destructiveness. Although the scent of victory was wafting in from the continent, much remained to be done before the proud and tenacious enemy could be persuaded to finally lay down his arms.

## 1945

The New Year started with a bang, as the Luftwaffe launched Operation Bodenplatte at first light on New Year's Day, in an attempt to destroy the Allied Air Forces on the liberated airfields of France, Holland and Belgium. It was an ill-fated project, which cost Germany around 250 fighters, and many of the shot down pilots were either killed, or fell into Allied hands. The Luftwaffe would never entirely recover from the effects of this disaster, but having not been committed, the bulk of the nightfighter force remained intact, although desperately short of fuel and experienced crews. 5 Group was active at the Dortmund-Ems Canal on New Year's Day, and that night visited the Mittelland Canal at Gravenhorst, both targets succumbing to accurate attacks. Free French forces requested the bombing of the small

town of Royan, where the German garrison commander offered to evacuate the inhabitants for their own safety. The majority declined, and many became casualties under the bombs of a 1, 5 and 8 Group force on the 4/5th, and the operation caused a great deal of controversy. In the event, the garrison stayed put until mid April. The squadron sent twelve aircraft to Munich on the 7/8th, the last major raid of the war on this city, and registered its first missing crew of the year, that of F/O Bolter in PB586, which crashed in France with no survivors. This would prove to be the squadron's only loss during January, despite further operations to oil targets at Pölitz on the 13/14th, Leuna near Merseburg on the 14/15th, and Brüx in Czechoslovakia on the 16/17th.

February began for 5 Group with a series of rare failures, beginning at Siegen on the 1/2nd, when most of the bombing fell in open country. A similar outcome attended a raid on Karlsruhe on the 2/3rd, and even the Dortmund-Ems Canal at Ladbergen escaped damage on the 7/8th. It was found necessary to return to Pölitz on the 8/9th, and 5 Group was joined by elements of 1 and 8 Groups to deliver a knock-out blow against the refinery, which produced no more oil for Germany's war effort. The squadron's ME353 went down in the target area, and just one man survived from the crew of F/L Galloway, who were approaching the end of their tour. The Churchill inspired series of raids against Germany's eastern cities under Operation Thunderclap began at Dresden on the 13/14th, in a two phase operation opened by 5 group. The 5 Group marking method led to a reasonably effective attack, and the fires acted as a beacon to the second force following three hours behind. Faced with no opposition, the second phase contingent poured its bombs into the centre of this beautiful and historic old city, and unleashed a firestorm of unprecedented proportions, which killed around 50,000 people on the ground.

Chemnitz was spared by the weather from what might have been a similar fate on the following night, while 5 Group attacked an oil refinery at Rösitz near Leipzig. The group returned to the same region on the 19/20th, to bomb an oil refinery at Böhlen, but the loss over the target of the Master Bomber was one factor in the operation's failure. The main operation for the 20/21st was by five hundred aircraft to Dortmund, but 150 aircraft from 5 Group went instead to Gravenhorst, for another shot at the Mittelland Canal. Cloud caused the attack to be abandoned before bombing took place, and the operation was remounted on the following night. This time it was a success, and it is unlikely that this vital waterway was navigable again during the war. Among the thirteen Lancasters which failed to make it back across the North Sea were two from 49 Squadron, NG327 and PB568. Only two men survived from the crew of F/O Smith in the former, and one of them was sadly killed in a strafing attack while on a forced march in early April. The crew of the latter was more fortunate, F/O Mallinson and five others surviving as POWs, having been lost on their 35th operation, and two of these managed to evade capture. The final employment of the month for 49 Squadron came on the 23/24th, when contributing sixteen Lancasters to a smallish 5 Group force briefed to bomb a naval base at Horten in Oslo Fjord.

March began with the Group's final visit to the Dortmund-Ems Canal at Ladbergen on the 3/4th, and thereafter, it ceased to be a useable part of the German communications network. It was on this night that the Luftwaffe launched the highly profitable intruder effort, Operation



Gisella, which accounted for twenty of the bombers returning from the night's various raids. One 49 Squadron crew had a close call, but in the event landed safely. Böhlen was the target for the 5/6th, a raid which was hampered by cloud, and this was followed twenty four hours later by an attack on the port of Sassnitz, which was situated on an island not far from Pennemünde in the Baltic. A major oil centre was Harburg, south of the Elbe near Hamburg, and this was raided by the Group on the 7/8th to good effect, although in the face of a spirited flak defence. PB537 failed to return with the crew of F/O Stark, and he died with three others of his crew, while the remainder became POWs after baling out over Germany. The largest force to date to a single target, 1079 aircraft, took off for Essen by daylight on the 11th, and this was the last raid of the war on this city, which fell into Allied hands some time later. A similar operation with a record tonnage of bombs hit Dortmund on the 12th, and ended its existence as a functioning city. 5 Group went alone to the Wintershall oil refinery at Lützkendorf on the 14/15th, and was partially successful, but suffered the loss of eighteen Lancasters, including 49 Squadron's RF153, in which F/L McPhee and five of his crew were killed when it crashed in Germany, while the sole survivor evaded capture to return to the squadron a few weeks later. A 5 Group raid on the virgin target of Würzburg on the 16/17th destroyed almost 90% of its built-up area in just seventeen minutes of extremely accurate and concentrated bombing, and six Lancasters were lost. Two of these were 49 Squadron aircraft, ME454 and NG352, F/O Whent and three of his crew surviving the destruction of the former, albeit with injuries, while F/O Gibson and four of his crew prevailed from the latter. Sadly, the W/Op, F/S Hughes, was murdered by a police official on the 18th, a crime for which he was later convicted and executed. (Beware of the Dog at War. John Ward.) Further operations during the month took the squadron to Hamburg on the 21/22nd and Wesel on the 23/24th, but there were no casualties arising from them.

April was to be the final month of the bombing war for the heavy squadrons, and it would have been good to negotiate it without losses, but this was not to be. On the 4th, 5 Group attacked the town of Nordhausen, and caused severe damage for the loss of just one Lancaster, ME308, which exploded over the target, killing F/O Fisher and his entire crew. A benzol plant at Molbis near Leipzig was the Group's target on the 7/8th, and all production ceased as a result. A similar outcome attended a return to Lützkendorf on the 8/9th, but this operation cost the squadron two crews, those of F/O Cluer in PB374, who were lost without trace, and F/O Perkins in RA531. Neither crew produced a single survivor, and these fourteen men had the sad honour of being the last in 49 Squadron to lose their lives on operations. The squadron was about to move home again, and the last operation to be flown from Fulbeck was to the Skoda works at Pilsen on the 16/17th, for which the squadron put up thirteen Lancasters. After dismal failures at this target in the past, this one was successful, and all returned safely home. Training was laid on on the 19th, and F/O Hytch took ME357 for a spot of bombing and air-sea firing practice, with one of the ground crew along for the ride. While over the Wash, the pilot blacked out, and came to in time to prevent a crash, but not a ditching, from which, happily, all eight men were rescued. On the 22nd, the squadron departed for its new home at Syerston, and during the course of the move, tragedy struck. Having just beaten up Fulbeck, PB463 struck a building and crashed, killing F/O Elkington and the other five men on board, and also killed outright ten members of a Works Flight, and mortally injured five others.

The squadron's final operation of the war was fittingly against the SS barracks at Hitler's Eaglesnest retreat at Berchtesgaden on the morning of the 25th. Twelve Lancasters set out, and twelve returned, F/O Hawkins the last to land in PB559 at 13.20 hours. On the 1st of May, ten crews were detailed to fly to Juvincourt to begin Operation Exodus, the repatriation of Allied POWs, and on the 4th, twelve aircraft flew similar sorties to Belgium. It had been a long and exacting war for those squadrons like 49, which had been involved from the start. Many of the finest men to serve in Bomber Command passed through the squadron during the course of the war, and many, many more had sacrificed their lives or their freedom in serving it. As one of the mainstays of 5 Group and the Command, there can be few squadrons to parallel its excellence, and certainly none to surpass it.

The definitive account of the complete history of this magnificent squadron is that written by John Ward, under the title, Beware of the Dog at War.

## STATIONS

<b>SCAMPTON</b>	14.03.38. to 02.01.43.
<b>KINLOSS</b> (Detachment to Coastal Command).	26.01.40. to 20.03.40.
<b>FISKERTON</b>	02.01.43. to 16.10.44.
<b>FULBECK</b>	16.10.44. to 22.04.45.
<b>SYERSTON</b>	22.04.45. to 28.09.45.

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

<b>WING COMMANDER J S CHICK MC AFC</b>	27.02.39. to 01.12.39.
<b>WING COMMANDER W C SHEEN</b>	01.12.39. to 08.04.40.
<b>WING COMMANDER J W GILLAN DFC AFC</b>	08.04.40. to 22.12.40.
<b>WING COMMANDER J N JEFFERSON</b>	22.12.40. to 17.07.41.
<b>WING COMMANDER R D STUBBS DFC</b>	17.07.41. to 14.05.42.
<b>WING COMMANDER L C SLEE DSO DFC</b>	14.05.42. to 05.04.43.
<b>WING COMMANDER P W JOHNSON DFC AFC</b>	05.04.43. to 01.10.43.
<b>WING COMMANDER A A ADAMS</b>	01.10.43. to 01.05.44.
<b>WING COMMANDER M CROCKER DFC</b>	01.05.44. to 22.06.44.
<b>WING COMMANDER L E BOTTING</b>	23.06.44. to 12.06.45.

## AIRCRAFT

<b>HAMPDEN</b>	09.38. to 04.42.
<b>MANCHESTER</b>	04.42. to 07.42.
<b>LANCASTER I/III</b>	07.42. to 10.49.

[www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca](http://www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca)

# **SECTION 2**



# **OPERATIONAL RECORD**

[www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca](http://www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca)

[www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca](http://www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca)

# OPERATIONAL RECORD

<b>OPERATIONS</b>	<b>SORTIES</b>	<b>AIRCRAFT LOSSES</b>	<b>% LOSSES</b>
674	6501	163	2.5

## CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS

<b>BOMBING</b>	<b>MINING</b>	<b>LEAFLET</b>
543	105	26

## HAMPDENS

<b>OPERATIONS</b>	<b>SORTIES</b>	<b>AIRCRAFT LOSSES</b>	<b>% LOSSES</b>
342	2636	55	2.1

## CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS

<b>BOMBING</b>	<b>MINING</b>	<b>LEAFLET</b>
241	82	19

## MANCHESTERS

<b>OPERATIONS</b>	<b>SORTIES</b>	<b>AIRCRAFT LOSSES</b>	<b>% LOSSES</b>
10	47	6	12.8

## CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS

<b>BOMBING</b>	<b>MINING</b>	<b>LEAFLET</b>
4	2	4

## LANCASTERS

<b>OPERATIONS</b>	<b>SORTIES</b>	<b>AIRCRAFT LOSSES</b>	<b>% LOSSES</b>
323	3818	102	2.7

## CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS

<b>BOMBING</b>	<b>MINING</b>	<b>LEAFLET</b>
298	21	3

# TABLE OF STATISTICS

(Heavy squadrons)

7th highest number of overall operations in Bomber Command.  
8th highest number of bombing operations in Bomber Command.  
5th highest number of sorties in Bomber Command.  
16th highest number of aircraft operational losses in Bomber Command.

## **Out of 59 Lancaster squadrons.**

8th highest number of Lancaster overall operations in Bomber Command.  
16th highest number of Lancaster sorties in Bomber Command.  
16th highest number of Lancaster operational losses in Bomber Command.

## **Out of 22 squadrons in 5 Group.**

3rd highest number of overall operations in 5 Group.  
2nd highest number of sorties in 5 Group.  
4th highest number of aircraft operational losses in 5 Group.

## **Out of 10 Hampden squadrons in 5 Group.**

2nd highest number of Hampden overall operations in 5 Group.  
Highest number of Hampden sorties in 5 Group.  
3rd highest number of Hampden operational losses in 5 Group.

## **Out of 8 Manchester squadrons in 5 Group.**

7th highest number of Manchester overall operations in 5 Group.  
7th highest number of Manchester sorties in 5 Group.  
7th highest number of Manchester operational losses in 5 Group.  
Highest Manchester percentage loss rate in 5 Group.

## **Out of 17 Lancaster squadrons in 5 Group.**

6th highest number of Lancaster overall operations in 5 Group.  
8th highest number of Lancaster sorties in 5 Group.  
9th highest number of Lancaster operational losses in 5 Group.



# **SECTION 3**



# **AIRCRAFT LISTING**

[www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca](http://www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca)

[www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca](http://www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca)

## 49 SQUADRON.

### HAMPDEN.

To April 1942.

- L4034** From CFS. Crashed at Waddington during training 23.11.39.  
**L4036 EA-R** FTR Dortmund 11/12.8.40.  
**L4038** To 106Sqn.  
**L4040** FTR from mining sortie 25/26.4.40.  
**L4041** To 7Sqn.  
**L4042** To 44Sqn via 7Sqn and 16 OTU.  
**L4043** Crashed on a Northumberland beach on return from a mining sortie 15.4.40.  
**L4044 EA-R** Crashed soon after take-off from Scampton en-route to Amiens 8/9.6.40.  
**L4045 EA-Q** Crashed in Lincolnshire on return from Wilhelmshaven 12.1.41.  
**L4046** To 44Sqn.  
**L4053** To 83Sqn.  
**L4060 EA-H** To 5BGS.  
**L4066** To 83Sqn.  
**L4067** To 144Sqn.  
**L4068** FTR Mönchengladbach 11/12.5.40. Crew got home.  
**L4072** Crashed in Northumberland on return from reconnaissance sweep off Norway 21.12.39.  
**L4077** From 50Sqn. Crashed in Norfolk on return from mining sortie 21.7.40.  
**L4086** From 44Sqn via 14 OTU. To 420Sqn.  
**L4092** FTR from mining sortie 25/26.4.40.  
**L4125** From 144Sqn. Crashed on take-off from Scampton when bound for a mining sortie 7.2.42.  
**L4129** From 144Sqn. FTR from mining sortie 16/17.10.40  
**L4195 EA-H** From 185Sqn. Crashed in Kent on return from mining sortie 17.10.40.  
**P1153** To 455Sqn.  
**P1174** To 16 OTU.  
**P1175** Crashed on landing at Scampton on return from mining sortie 21/22.4.40.  
**P1176** To 14 OTU.  
**P1177** To 25 OTU.  
**P1206 EA-Z/K** FTR from intruder sortie to Bocholt 8/9.11.41.  
**P1226** Crashed in Devon during a transit flight 17.3.42.  
**P1310** From 14 OTU. To 415Sqn after conversion for use as torpedo bomber.  
**P1314** From CGS. To 420Sqn.  
**P1318** FTR from communications target in the Krefeld/Aachen area 25/26.5.40.  
**P1319** FTR from mining sortie 25/26.4.40.  
**P1323** From 61Sqn. To 16 OTU.

**P1333** EA-F FTR Merseburg 16/17.8.40.  
**P1347** EA-D FTR Stettin 4/5.9.40.  
**P2063** To 144Sqn.  
**P2068** Crashed soon after take-off from Scampton while training 19.6.41.  
**P2095** To 25 OTU.  
**P2111** To 25 OTU.  
**P2112** To 14 OTU.  
**P2134** Crashed in Lancashire during training 29.9.40.  
**P2135** Crashed soon after take-off from Scampton on a ferry flight 31.8.40.  
**P2143** Crashed in Hampshire on return from Bordeaux 17.10.40.  
**P2145** To 16 OTU.  
**P4299** FTR Düsseldorf 4/5.2.41.  
**P4304** To 489Sqn after conversion for use as torpedo bomber.  
**P4305** FTR from mining sortie 26/27.6.40.  
**P4321** To 1 AAS.  
**P4322** EA-N FTR from mining sortie 5/6.1.41.  
**P4350** EA-L FTR Stettin 5/6.9.40.  
**P4351** Ditched off Lincolnshire coast on return from Kiel 3/4.8.40.  
**P4377** EA-K From 106Sqn. FTR from mining sortie 6/7.8.40.  
**P4384** Crashed in Berkshire during an operation to Bordeaux 27/28.12.40.  
**P4403** EA-M Crashed on landing at St Eval on return from mining sortie 4.4.41.  
**P4404** EA-R FTR from attack on airfields in France 6/7.12.40.  
**P4409** To 50Sqn.  
**P4416** EA-L FTR Berlin 25/26.8.40.  
**P5324** EA-T From 83Sqn. FTR from shipping strike (Channel Dash) 12.2.42.  
**X2900** EA-S Crashed while landing at Abingdon after recall from a mining sortie 16/17.10.40.  
  
**X2912** From 61Sqn. To 455Sqn after conversion for use as torpedo bomber.  
**X2959** To 25 OTU.  
**X2962** Force-landed in Cornwall on return from Berlin 20/21.10.40.  
**X2985** EA-W FTR Danzig 10/11.11.40.  
**X3001** EA-H FTR Hanover 10/11.2.41.  
**X3021** To 106Sqn.  
**X3024** EA-H FTR Lützkendorf 19/20.11.40.  
**X3027** EA-A Shot down by intruder off Skegness on return from Hamburg 27/28.10.40.  
  
**X3028** EA-S Crashed near Dunholme Lodge on return from an operation to French aerodromes 7.12.40.  
  
**X3029** EA-D Crashed near Scampton soon after take-off when bound for Kiel 4.11.40.  
  
**X3050** EA-N FTR from operation against aerodromes in France 6/7.12.40.  
**X3052** EA-C FTR Hamburg 24/25.11.40.  
**X3054** Crashed in Devon on return from Lorient 21/22.3.41.  
**X3057** From 44Sqn. To 420Sqn.  
**X3060** Crashed on landing at Scampton on return from mining sortie 26.6.41.

**X3063** Crashed off Isle-of-Wight on return from Mannheim 16/17.12.40.  
**X3134 EA-C** FTR Düsseldorf 30.6/1.7.41.  
**X3135** Crashed near Scampton during training 11.11.41.  
**X3136 EA-K** Crash-landed in Norfolk on return from Berlin 3.9.41.  
**X3151 EA-T** Crash-landed near Scampton on return from Hanover 26.7.41.  
**AD719EA-C** Shot down near Lincoln by intruder on return from Hanover 11.2.41.  
**AD729EA-N** FTR from mining sortie 27/28.5.41.  
**AD733EA-B** FTR Frankfurt 28/29.9.41.  
**AD739EA-A** FTR Brest 6/7.7.41.  
**AD744** From 83Sqn. Crashed in Scotland on return from mining sortie 7.9.41.  
**AD759** Crashed in Lincolnshire while training 25.11.41.  
**AD788EA-V** FTR Kiel 25/26.6.41.  
**AD792** To 14 OTU.  
**AD799** From 106Sqn. To 144Sqn.  
**AD805EA-R** Crash-landed in Lincolnshire on return from Kassel 9.9.41.  
**AD824** From 50Sqn. To 144Sqn.  
**AD842** To 408Sqn.  
**AD845** To 14 OTU.  
**AD856EA-P** Shot down by intruder off Cromer on return from Osnabrück 6.7.41.  
**AD865** From 83Sqn. To 455Sqn after conversion for use as torpedo bomber.  
**AD896EA-M** Crashed on approach to Scampton during training flight 6.1.42.  
**AD909EA-H** FTR from mining sortie 9/10.1.42.  
**AD910EA-Y** Force-landed near Pocklington on return from Bremen 13.7.41.  
**AD931EA-X** FTR Dortmund 14/15.4.42.  
**AD960** To 420Sqn.  
**AD964** From 83Sqn. To 144Sqn.  
**AD967EA-H** Collided with X3121 (83Sqn) over Lincolnshire on return from Düsseldorf 25.8.41.  
**AD968** From 420Sqn. To 408Sqn.  
**AD971EA-O** FTR Duisburg 28/29.8.41.  
**AD973** To 144Sqn.  
**AD974** From 61Sqn. To 455Sqn.  
**AD976** To 455Sqn after conversion for use as torpedo bomber.  
**AD979** To 144Sqn.  
**AD980EA-V** To 408Sqn.  
**AE123** To 106Sqn.  
**AE126EA-N** FTR Duisburg 28/29.8.41.  
**AE132EA-U** FTR from shipping strike (Channel Dash) 12.2.42.  
**AE145** To 455Sqn after conversion for use as torpedo bomber.  
**AE194** To 455Sqn after conversion for use as torpedo bomber.  
**AE203EA-F** Crash-landed in Suffolk on return from Berlin 3.9.41.  
**AE224EA-Z** FTR from Shipping strike off the Frisians 1/2.11.41.  
**AE227** To 408Sqn.  
**AE236EA-P** FTR Kiel 7/8.9.41.  
**AE237** To 83Sqn.

**AE240EA-P** FTR from shipping strike (Channel Dash) 12.2.42.  
**AE241** To 5 OTU after conversion for use as torpedo bomber.  
**AE261** From 106Sqn. To 489Sqn after conversion for us as torpedo bomber.  
**AE262** Crashed on landing at Scampton on return from Brunswick 15.8.41.  
**AE354EA-S** Crashed on landing at Scampton during training 18.12.41.  
**AE357** Converted for use as torpedo bomber.  
**AE368** To 144Sqn.  
**AE372** To 408Sqn.  
**AE376EA-E** Crashed in Lincolnshire soon after take-off for Frankfurt 29.9.41.  
**AE396EA-W** FTR from shipping strike (Channel Dash) 12.2.42.  
**AE397EA-G** Ditched off Isle of Wight on return from Mannheim 14/15.2.42.  
**AE419EA-T** FTR Hül's 28/29.12.41.  
**AE421EA-P** From 83Sqn. FTR Essen 10/11.4.42.  
**AT111** To 489Sqn after conversion for use as torpedo bomber.  
**AT112EA-M** From 83Sqn. Crashed near Upwood on return from Mannheim 15.2.42.  
**AT118** To 50Sqn.  
**AT124EA-C** FTR from mining sortie 16/17.2.42.  
**AT126EA-Z** FTR Essen 6/7.4.42.  
**AT129EA-O** From 83Sqn. Crashed on take-off from Scampton when bound for Brest 25.1.42.  
  
**AT148EA-S** FTR Emden 20/21.1.42.  
**AT150** To 455Sqn after conversion for use as torpedo bomber.  
**AT156EA-C** FTR Cologne 5/6.4.42.  
**AT174EA-E** FTR Essen 10/11.3.42.  
**AT178** From 106Sqn. To 408Sqn.  
**AT179** To 408Sqn.  
**AT180** To 408Sqn.  
**AT185** To 420Sqn.  
**AT190EA-A** From 106Sqn. FTR Essen 10/11.4.42.  
**AT191** From 106Sqn. To 408Sqn.  
**AT196** Abandoned over Yorkshire on return from Essen 13.4.42.  
**AT217EA-S** FTR from mining sortie 19/20.4.42.  
**AT227** To 408Sqn.  
**AT228** To 420Sqn.

**MANCHESTER. From April 1942 to July 1942.**

**L7281** From 1654CU. No operations. To 1661CU.  
**L7287 EA-G** FTR Emden 6/7.6.42.  
**L7290** From 97Sqn. FTR Cologne (Operation Millennium) 30/31.5.42.  
**L7293** From 83Sqn. To 61Sqn.  
**L7296** Conversion Flt only. To 1661CU.  
**L7325** From 97Sqn via 25 OTU. No operations. Became ground instruction machine.

**L7386** Crash-landed at Scampton during training 5.10.42. (May have been on 57Sqn charge)  
**L7387** From 83Sqn. FTR Emden 20/21.6.42.  
**L7389 EA-L** From 83Sqn. To 1660CU.  
**L7397** From 83Sqn. Training only. To 207Sqn.  
**L7398** From 106Sqn. To 1661CU.  
**L7420** From 25 OTU. Training only. To 1660CU.  
**L7421** To 1660CU.  
**L7429** Conversion Flt only. FTR Cologne (Operation Millennium) 30/31.5.42.  
**L7453 EA-T** From 61Sqn. To 1661CU.  
**L7469** To 50Sqn. and back. FTR Emden 6/7.6.42.  
**L7479** Ultimate fate unknown.  
**L7484** From 83Sqn. Became ground instruction machine.  
**L7493 EA-F** From 25 OTU. To 1661CU.  
**L7515** From 106Sqn. To 1656CU after 22 operations.  
**L7524** From 25 OTU. To 1485Flt.  
**L7526 EA-V** From 25 OTU. To 207Sqn.  
**R5771** From 25 OTU. To 420Sqn.  
**R5772** From 25 OTU. Flew the last operation by a Manchester, to Bremen, 25/26.6.42. To 83CF.  
**R5775** Training only. To 83 Sqn.  
**R5780** From 83Sqn. To 57Sqn.  
**R5788** From 83Sqn. Training only. To 1660CU.  
**R5793** From 25 OTU. Training only. To 83Sqn.  
**R5794** From 25 OTU. FTR Essen 1/2.6.42.  
**R5835** From 83Sqn. To 50Sqn.  
**R5836** From 83Sqn. To 1661CU.

**LANCASTER. From July 1942.**

**L7567** From 44Sqn. FTR Nuremberg 28/29.8.42.  
**R5658** To 1654CU.  
**R5698** Training only. To 1654CU.  
**R5751 EA-E** To 57Sqn after 21 operations.  
**R5752 EA-D** Crash-landed at Martlesham Heath on return from Duisburg 7.9.42.  
**R5757** To 156Sqn.  
**R5762** FTR Duisburg 20/21.12.42.  
**R5763** FTR Karlsruhe 2/3.9.42.  
**R5842** From 49CF. To 1661CU.  
**R5850** From 83Sqn. Conversion flight only. To 1661CU.  
**R5855** From 83Sqn. Conversion flight only. To 1661CU.  
**R5889** To 97Sqn.  
**R5890** FTR Essen 16/17.9.42.  
**R5892** To 1661CU.  
**R5894** To 9sqn.

**R5896** To 97Sqn.  
**R5897** FTR Nuremberg 28/29.8.42.  
**R5898** 22 operations. To 44Sqn.  
**R5912** 17 operations. To 156Sqn.  
**R5916** To 9Sqn and back. To 9Sqn.  
**W4104** No operations. To 83Sqn.  
**W4107** FTR Stuttgart 22/23.11.42.  
**W4108** To 1654CU.  
**W4113** 24 operations. To 156Sqn.  
**W4116** FTR Wismar 12/13.10.42.  
**W4129** No operations. To 207Sqn.  
**W4140** Conversion flight only. To 156Sqn.  
**W4181** 19 operations. To 15Sqn via 1660CU.  
**W4183** To 1661CU.  
**W4196** To 156Sqn.  
**W4235** To 156Sqn.  
**W4245** To 156sqn.  
**W4258** Conversion flight only. To 1661CU.  
**W4306** Crashed at Ford on return from Milan 24.10.42.  
**W4314** 11 operations. To 156Sqn.  
**W4761** 18 operations. To 9Sqn.  
**W4773EA-F** 16 operations. To 156Sqn.  
**W4822** From 467Sqn. To 57Sqn.  
**W4835** To 97Sqn.  
**W5010** From BDU. To 9Sqn.  
**DV166EA-F** To 44Sqn.  
**DV178EA-N** To 617Sqn on loan. Returned to 49Sqn. To 50Sqn.  
**DV238EA-D/O** From 619Sqn. To 44Sqn.  
**ED310** To 97Sqn.  
**ED348** To 57Sqn.  
**ED352** To 57Sqn.  
**ED387** To 50Sqn.  
**ED416EA-J** FTR Mannheim 5/6.9.43.  
**ED426EA-P** FTR Stuttgart 7/8.10.43.  
**ED427EA-O** FTR Pilsen 16/17.4.43.  
**ED428EA-Q** Crashed on approach to Fiskerton on return from Hamburg 31.1.43.  
**ED431EA-M** FTR Essen 5/6.3.43.  
**ED432EA-R/N** FTR Oberhausen 14/15.6.43.  
**ED434EA-T** FTR Oberhausen 14/15.6.43.  
**ED435EA-G/K** FTR Berlin 29/30.3.43.  
**ED438EA-P/R** FTR Düsseldorf 3/4.11.43.  
**ED440EA-L** FTR Cologne 2/3.2.43.  
**ED441EA-D/E** FTR Pilsen 16/17.4.43.  
**ED444EA-B/C** FTR Berlin 17/18.1.43.  
**ED445EA-H** To 50Sqn.



**ED448** EA-M Crash-landed at Dunholme Lodge after ferry flight 15.9.43.  
**ED450** EA-G Hit balloon cables on return from Lorient 13/14.2.43 and crashed in sea off Plymouth.  
**ED452** EA-F Crashed on landing at Fiskerton following early return from Pilsen 14.5.43.  
**ED453** EA-G FTR Oberhausen 14/15.6.43.  
**ED467** EA-E FTR St Nazaire 28.2/1.3.43.  
**ED469** EA-A FTR Berlin 29/30.3.43.  
**ED497** EA-C FTR Cologne 16/17.6.43.  
**ED584** EA-U FTR Bochum 12/13.6.43.  
**ED590** EA-L FTR Duisburg 8/9.4.43.  
**ED597** EA-B To 619Sqn.  
**ED602** From 83Sqn. To 619Sqn.  
**ED620** EA-K FTR Stettin 20/21.4.43.  
**ED625** EA-R FTR Nuremberg 10/11.8.43.  
**ED663** FTR Cologne 8/9.7.43.  
**ED702** EA-D W/C Slee's a/c. FTR Mannheim 23/24.9.43. F/S C.T.Anderson and crew, Dams raid survivors.  
**ED719** EA-K FTR Mannheim 9/10.8.43.  
**ED721** EA-T To 9Sqn.  
**ED726** EA-V FTR Turin 12/13.7.43.  
**ED756** To 617Sqn.  
**ED785** FTR Cologne 16/17.6.43.  
**ED805** EA-S FTR Peenemünde 17/18.8.43.  
**ED813** EA-W FTR Dortmund 23/24.5.43.  
**ED999** EA-A To 617Sqn on loan. Returned to 49Sqn. To 44Sqn.  
**EE134** EA-B/Y To 619Sqn.  
**EE186** To 106Sqn.  
**JA690** To 9Sqn.  
**JA691** EA-L FTR Peenemünde 17/18.8.43.  
**JA851** EA-P FTR Peenemünde 17/18.8.43.  
**JA892** FTR Peenemünde 17/18.8.43.  
**JA894** EA-C To 617Sqn.  
**JA959** EA-C From BDU. Became ground instruction machine.  
**JB126** Ditched in North Sea on return from Berlin 3/4.9.43.  
**JB139** To 617Sqn.  
**JB144** To 617Sqn.  
**JB178** EA-V/U FTR Revigny 18/19.7.44.  
**JB229** EA-S Crashed on the beach at Chapel-St-Leonards on return from Berlin 24.11.43.  
**JB231** EA-N FTR Berlin 2/3.1.44.  
**JB235** EA-B/C Crashed on approach to Fiskerton on return from Berlin 27.11.43.  
**JB295** EA-R FTR Brunswick 14/15.1.44.  
**JB301** FTR Mannheim 23/24.9.43.  
**JB305** EA-E FTR Düsseldorf 3/4.11.43.

**JB314** EA-Q FTR Nuremberg 30/31.3.44.  
**JB360** EA-M FTR Berlin 27/28.1.44.  
**JB362** EA-D FTR Berlin 26/27.11.43.  
**JB368** EA-G FTR Berlin 22/23.11.43.  
**JB371** EA-J FTR Berlin 2/3.12.43.  
**JB399** EA-A/H To 1653CU.  
**JB411** EA-L Crashed on take-off from Fiskerton while training 18.10.43.  
**JB413** FTR Kassel 22/23.10.43.  
**JB416** FTR Kassel 22/23.10.43.  
**JB421** EA-K FTR Salbris 7/8.5.44.  
**JB466** EA-A FTR Nuremberg 30/31.3.44.  
**JB467** EA-T FTR Frankfurt 20/21.12.43.  
**JB469** EA-B FTR Leipzig 19/20.2.44.  
**JB473** EA-Q/U/W FTR Revigny 18/19.7.44.  
**JB533** EA-P Crashed on take-off from Fiskerton when bound for Modane 10.11.43.  
**JB545** EA-O FTR Berlin 16/17.12.43.  
**JB679** EA-D FTR Schweinfurt 26/27.4.44.  
**JB680** EA-P FTR Essen 26/27.3.44.  
**JB701** EA-G FTR Stuttgart 28/29.7.44.  
**JB710** EA-G To 630Sqn.  
**JB714** EA-J/K FTR Etampes 9/10.6.44.  
**JB727** EA-S FTR Berlin 2/3.1.44.  
**LL899** EA-P FTR Aachen 11/12.4.44.  
**LL900** EA-T FTR Wesseling 21/22.6.44.  
**LL908** EA-H FTR Schweinfurt 26/27.4.44.  
**LL912** Damaged in taxiing accident at Fiskerton while training 8.5.44.  
**LL976** EA-A FTR St Leu d'Esserent 7/8.7.44.  
**LM190** EA-R To 1656CU.  
**LM191** To 619Sqn.  
**LM207** To 619Sqn.  
**LM306** EA-F/E To 44Sqn.  
**LM337** EA-V FTR Milan 15/16.8.43.  
**LM539** EA-D FTR Duisburg 21/22.5.44.  
**LM541** EA-N FTR St Leu d'Esserent 7/8.7.44.  
**LM572** EA-P FTR Pommerval 24/25.6.44.  
**LM648** To 44Sqn.  
**LM649** EA-T To 630Sqn.  
**LM653** To 57Sqn.  
**ME308** EA-F FTR Nordhausen 4.4.45.  
**ME322**  
**ME353** EA-Q FTR Pölitz 8/9.2.45.  
**ME357** EA-U/C From 460Sqn. Crashed off Lincolnshire coast while training 19.4.45.  
**ME454** EA-E From 227Sqn. FTR Würzburg 16/17.3.45.  
**ME471**  
**ME491** EA-P

**ME675** EA-R FTR Wesseling 21/22.6.44.  
**ME787** To 619Sqn.  
**ME808** EA-D FTR Wesseling 21/22.6.44.  
**ND383** EA-E To 1668CU.  
**ND473** EA-O To 467Sqn.  
**ND474** EA-T FTR Stuttgart 15/16.3.44.  
**ND498** EA-R Crashed on take-off from Fiskerton when bound for Stuttgart 21.2.44.  
**ND512** EA-C To 1653CU.  
**ND516** EA-N FTR Leipzig 19/20.2.44.  
**ND533** EA-M FTR Etampes 9/10.6.44.  
**ND536** EA-U/F FTR Frankfurt 22/23.3.44.  
**ND537** EA-S FTR Munich 24/25.4.44.  
**ND647** EA-N To 1653CU.  
**ND672** EA-F/U FTR Frankfurt 22/23.3.44.  
**ND676** EA-M Crash-landed at Coltishall on return from Essen 26/27.3.44.  
**ND677/G** From 460Sqn. To 115Sqn.  
**ND683** EA-K Detached to 617Sqn. Returned to 49Sqn. FTR Wesseling 21/22.6.44.  
**ND684** EA-V FTR Revigny 18/19.7.44.  
**ND687** EA-P FTR Schweinfurt 26/27.4.44.  
**ND695** EA-B FTR Wesseling 21/22.6.44.  
**ND713** From 460Sqn.  
**ND787** EA-F To 1668CU.  
**ND791** From 460Sqn.  
**ND792** EA-A To 619Sqn.  
**ND957** To 619Sqn.  
**NE125** EA-K FTR Brunswick 22/23.5.44.  
**NE128** EA-J FTR Wesseling 21/22.6.44.  
**NE142** From 460Sqn.  
**NE176** EA-V From 460Sqn via 1LFS.  
**NG327** EA-E/K FTR Mittelland Canal at Gravenhorst 21/22.2.45.  
**NG352** EA-J FTR Würzburg 16/17.3.45.  
**NX581** EA-X  
**PB195** EA-P FTR Creil (St Leu d'Esserent) 4/5.7.44.  
**PB207** Damaged beyond repair at St Leu d'Esserent 7/8.7.44.  
**PB226** From 460Sqn.  
**PB231** EA-H FTR Revigny 18/19.7.44.  
**PB250** EA-J FTR Stuttgart 25/26.7.44.  
**PB295** To 207Sqn.  
**PB299** To 467Sqn.  
**PB300** EA-K FTR Mittelland Canal at Gravenhorst 21/22.11.44.  
**PB306** To 467Sqn.  
**PB347** To 106Sqn.  
**PB348** To 227Sqn.  
**PB349** EA-H To 35Sqn.  
**PB353** EA-E FTR Bremen 6/7.10.44.

**PB354** EA-G FTR Mittelland Canal at Gravenhorst 21/22.11.44.  
**PB355** EA-B Crashed on Worthing beach following early return from Munich  
 17.12.44.  
**PB359** To 106Sqn.  
**PB360** To 44Sqn.  
**PB361** EA-R From 35Sqn.  
**PB369** EA-A FTR Harburg 11/12.11.44.  
**PB370** EA-F FTR Dortmund-Ems Canal at Ladbergen 4/5.11.44.  
**PB373** EA-O To 115Sqn.  
**PB374** EA-N FTR Lützkendorf 8/9.4.45.  
**PB383** EA-E From 460Sqn.  
**PB385** EA-V FTR Düsseldorf 2/3.11.44.  
**PB406** EA-X/L From 460Sqn.  
**PB429** EA-S FTR Bremen 6/7.10.44.  
**PB432** EA-O Crashed in Lincolnshire soon after take-off from Fulbeck when bound  
 for Munich 26.11.44.  
**PB433** EA-L To 115Sqn.  
**PB455** EA-W/V To 115Sqn.  
**PB460** EA-R  
**PB463** EA-Y From 460Sqn. Crashed at Fulbeck during transit flight 22.4.45.  
**PB479** From 460Sqn.  
**PB484** EA-T  
**PB504** EA-U  
**PB519** EA-Q Crashed on landing at Marston Moor on return from Bergen 29.10.44.  
**PB522** From 460Sqn.  
**PB537** EA-X FTR Harburg 7/8.3.45.  
**PB559** EA-B From 460Sqn.  
**PB568** EA-Y FTR Mittelland Canal at Gravenhorst 21/22.2.45.  
**PB571** EA-Z To 115Sqn.  
**PB586** EA-E/V FTR Munich 7/8.1.45.  
**PB791**  
**PB797** EA-K  
**PB799** EA-G FTR from night flying training 11.12.44.  
**PB844** EA-D To 57sqn.  
**PB873** EA-N From 460Sqn.  
**PB875** EA-G From 460Sqn.  
**PB907** EA-Q To 115Sqn.  
**RA531** EA-R/S FTR Lützkendorf 8/9.4.45.  
**RF153** EA-K From 50Sqn. FTR Lützkendorf 14/15.3.45.  
**RF179** EA-Y  
**RF215**  
**RF216** EA-J  
**SW256** From 1661CU. To 57Sqn.  
**SW265** To 106Sqn.  
**SW274** EA-G

**HEAVIEST SINGLE LOSS. 21/22.06.44. Wesseling. 6 Lancasters FTR.**

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# **SECTION 4**



# **KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS**

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## KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

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

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



# SECTION 5



# SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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# SECTION 6



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## Aviation Art by Keith Aspinall



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