

**ROYAL AIR FORCE
BOMBER COMMAND**

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**SQUADRON PROFILES
NUMBER 15**



50 SQUADRON

From Defence to Attack

RESEARCHED, COMPILED AND WRITTEN

BY

CHRIS WARD

ROYAL AIR FORCE BOMBER COMMAND SQUADRON PROFILES



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GENERAL NOTES

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GENERAL NOTES

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

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

An aircraft is included in section 3 if; a) it spent time on squadron charge, no matter how briefly, and irrespectively of whether or not it operated. b) 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 However, where there is a blank space following the serial number of a type which has been withdrawn from service with Bomber Command, it signifies that I don't know its ultimate fate.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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50 SQUADRON

MOTTO FROM DEFENCE TO ATTACK

Code VN

Originally formed on the 15th of May 1916, 50 Squadron's initial role was as a home defence unit, patrolling the southern coastal area of England. On the 13th of June 1919, it was disbanded while under the command of a certain Major A T Harris, whose future career would have great significance for Bomber Command, and remained on the shelf until its reformation at Waddington on the 3rd of May 1937. At the end of 1938, the squadron received Hampdens, and it was with this type, under the banner of 5 Group and the command of W/C Young, that it would face the impending Second World War. Although 5 Group was in action from the very first day of hostilities, 50 Squadron experienced a more gentle introduction, and its main occupation at the start was training, with short periods of detachment to Coastal Command during late 1939 and early 1940. It was during training, on the 17th of October, that the squadron registered its first wartime aircraft casualty, when L4080 suffered brake failure while taxiing in the hands of P/O Lloyd, and was written off in a collision with an object much larger than itself, happily though, without damage to the occupants. The first fatal incident was not long in coming, however, and it occurred on the last day of October, when L4096 crashed soon after take-off for a training flight, killing Sgt Cordle and his crew.

1940

The winter of 1939/40 brought particularly harsh weather, and this contributed to restricted flying for much of the time. L4063 became the year's first casualty for the squadron, when crashing into high ground in Scotland, as it returned from patrol during the night of the 16/17th of March, and there were no survivors from the crew of F/O Ayres. Just three nights later, on the 19/20th, the serious business of bombing began for Bomber Command and 50 Squadron, with a raid on the Hörnum seaplane base on the island of Sylt, for which the squadron's F/L Bennett became the first Bomber Command pilot to be awarded a DFC for a night bombing operation. He would later command 144 Squadron in 1942, and after a spell at 1 Group HQ, become the first commanding officer of 550 Squadron in November 1943. The operation had been mounted in retaliation for a Luftwaffe attack on the naval base at Scapa Flow a few nights earlier, during which a stray bomb had inadvertently killed a civilian on the island of Hoy. Conducted over a six hour period by Whitleys and Hampdens, the raid was claimed by the crews to be an outstanding success, and did it wonders for morale at home, but reconnaissance on the 6th of April failed to detect any evidence of damage to the target. On the 9th of April, Germany invaded Denmark and Norway, and on the following day, W/C Taafe became the new commanding officer. Two days later, on the 12th, five Hampdens of 50 Squadron joined seven others from co-residents of Waddington, 44 Squadron, to attack shipping in Kristiansand harbour. A sobering introduction to the real war was made manifest, by the return of just one of the 50 Squadron contingent, and 44 Squadron also registered the loss of two crews. 50 Squadron posted missing the crews of Sgt Wild and P/O Thomas in L4073 and L4081 respectively, both of which fell victim to a combination of flak and fighters

with no survivors. F/O Donaldson crash-landed L4083 onto an island off the Norwegian coast following a brush with a BF109, he and two others surviving as POWs, and L4064 was ditched in the middle of the North Sea on return, and P/O Bull and his crew did not survive to be rescued. Returning late in the evening from the search for this crew on the 13th, N5193 ran out of fuel, and was crash-landed near Grimsby by P/O Wawn, who along with his crew, sustained injuries. That night, fifteen of the Group's Hampdens carried out the first mining operation of the war, in Danish coastal waters, and 50 Squadron's L4065 disappeared into the sea off Lincolnshire on return, taking with it F/L Cosgrove and his crew. From that point until the German advance began through the Low Countries on the 10th of May, 50 Squadron concentrated solely on mining and training.

When the storm broke, it signalled the massacre of the Battle squadrons of the AASF in France, and also the Blenheim units of the England based 2 Group, both types being pitched into the unequal fight against murderous ground fire and marauding BF109s. It fell to the so-called heavy Groups to hinder the progress of the enemy forces, by attacking communications behind their lines, as in the first such operation on the 11/12th, when road and railway targets were raided at Mönchengladbach. This set the pattern of operations until the fall of France, but industrial objectives also came within the Command's remit, particularly those of an oil related nature. It was a period during which 50 Squadron fared well, and no losses were incurred at all during May, and apart from a training crash involving P4289, from which P/O Smettem and his crew walked away on the 8th, June was also looking like remaining casualty free. On the 12th, W/C Crockart assumed command of the squadron, but his period of tenure would be all too brief. A force of over a hundred aircraft was sent against various targets on the night of the 26/27th, W/C Crockart leading a 50 Squadron element in P1329, to attack an airfield at Hanover. He failed to return, having crashed into the sea off the north German coast, apparently having lost an engine, and there were no survivors. Also missing from this operation was L4078, in which the crew of P/O Luxmoore was killed. W/C Golledge assumed command, and unlike his two immediate predecessors, he would adorn his post for a reasonable length of time.

The fall of France on the 22nd, paved the way for the Battle of Britain to begin, and although most of the attention would fall on the Aces of Fighter Command, Bomber Command would play its part by taking the war to Germany, and during September and October, target the build-up of invasion craft in the occupied ports. Throughout July, small numbers of aircraft were active simultaneously at various locations in Germany and the occupied countries, while the Hampden brigade maintained its mining role. 50 Squadron's P4288 crashed on approach to Waddington while training on the 9th, but P/O Malloy and his crew walked away unhurt. The squadron undertook its first wartime change of address, when it left Waddington for Lindholme on the 10th. The squadron continued to operate against targets in Germany from its new home, and suffered its first loss from there on the 25/26th, when P1321 crashed on a Norfolk beach on return from bombing oil installations at Castrop-Rauxel, and the above mentioned P/O Malloy was killed with his crew. On the last night of the month, P4383 was part of a mining contingent, and was one of three Hampdens to ditch in the North Sea on return, sadly without survivors from the crew of P/O Bell. August's operations followed a similar pattern as invasion fever increased, and when not engaged on minelaying, the

Hampden crews raided industrial towns in Germany. P4382 set off towards Holland on a night training exercise, and disappeared without trace, and the crew of P/O Nolan was posted missing. A spate of losses afflicted the squadron in the last week of the month, beginning on the 25/26th, when P2070 force-landed in Germany during the first bombing operation of the war on Berlin, and P/O Wawn and his crew fell into enemy hands. P2124 ditched off the Yorkshire coast on return, from where P/O Potts and his crew were picked up, but an attempt to tow the Hampden ashore failed. On the following night, a flak-damaged P1317 crashed on approach to Hemswell on return from Leipzig, but Sgt Abbott and his crew emerged from the wreckage unscathed. L4079 failed to return from Mönchengladbach on the 30/31st, and P/O Smettem and crew died in the crash in Holland.

The overriding priority in September was the destruction of the invasion craft being assembled in occupied ports, and numerous operations were mounted against them, and this campaign was the swansong for the Fairey Battle, which had fared so badly in France during May and June. Ports were the objectives for over 130 aircraft on the 8/9th, including forty nine Hampdens bound for the Blohm & Voss shipyards at Hamburg. 50 Squadron's P4287 failed to return, having been abandoned over enemy territory by S/L Willans and his crew, who all became POWs. On the 10/11th, it was L4097 which was missing from a raid on Ostend, and F/L Reed and his crew were killed when it went into the sea off the Belgian coast. Returning from Calais on the 26/27th, L4062 crashed while attempting a landing at Lindholme, and P/O Mulligan and one of his crew sustained injuries. Stuttgart was one of many targets for which briefings took place on the 29/30th, and X2902 disappeared without trace, taking with it the crew of S/L Taylor, and on the following night, P4411 crashed while landing at Docking on return from Berlin, but P/O Powell and his crew emerged unscathed. Another crash on return involved X2896 and the crew of P/O Thwaites, who tried to land on a dummy flarepath in Scotland on return from Hamburg on the 2/3rd of October and crashed, injuring one of his crew. Twenty Hampdens were sent against oil and railway targets in Cologne on the 5/6th, and P4417 was lost without trace, and the names of Sgt Brooker and crew were added to the growing list of 50 Squadron airmen missing in action. It had been a shaky ten night spell for the squadron, during which two crews had been lost with their aircraft, and three further Hampdens had been written off, but there was no more bad news until mid month, when X2993 fell victim to a nightfighter during an operation to Berlin on the 14/15th, and only two of P/O Davies's crew survived as POWs. Crews returning from Berlin on the 29/30th were welcomed by icing conditions, and this forced P/O Walker and crew to abandon X3000 over Yorkshire, and all drifted safely to earth, no doubt singing the praises of the parachute packers. Sadly, this reprieve would be extremely short-lived.

By the onset of November, the Battle of Britain had been won, and the fear of invasion banished for the time being at least. Industrial Germany would now become the main focus of attention as the winter took hold, with oil related targets at the head of an impressive list drawn up by the Air Ministry, and delivered to the recently appointed C-in-C Sir Richard Peirse. Over a hundred aircraft were aloft on the 5/6th, their crews briefed for objectives in Germany, Italy and the occupied countries. The above mentioned P/O Walker took X2907 to Magdeburg, but crashed in Holland with no survivors from among the crew. Two nights later, F/O Liddell and his crew were forced to abandon X2994 over East Anglia on return from

Essen, and happily, all arrived safely on the ground. On the 10/11th, an operation to Mannheim claimed L4149, which crashed into the sea killing Sgt Thomas and two of his crew, while the sole survivor fell into enemy hands. When X2908 crashed in Lincolnshire on return from Hamburg at dawn on the 15th, again there was only one survivor, this time from the crew of Sgt Richardson, who was one of those killed. On the 22nd, AVM Harris relinquished his command of 5 Group on his appointment as second deputy to the Chief of the Air Staff, Sir Charles Portal, and he was replaced by AVM Bottomley. A shortage of fuel forced Sgt Crum to crash-land X3125 in Lincolnshire on return from Kiel on the 25/26th, and all on board sustained injuries. Another testing time lay ahead for this pilot, who, while serving with 44 Squadron in April 1942, would force-land his burning Lancaster in a French field during the epic daylight operation to Augsburg, and spend the remainder of the war as a guest of the Reich.

It often seemed to happen, that when a crew survived a crash or the abandonment of its aircraft, it would go missing within a short time thereafter, and the next two squadron losses involved such crews. F/O Mulligan failed to return from Düsseldorf in X3004 on the 7/8th of December, and he and his crew were lost without trace, and F/O Liddell and crew died in the wreckage in Germany of X3117, during an operation to Mannheim on the 10/11th. The latter loss was the penultimate one of the year, and it preceded the arrival of W/C "Gus" Walker as the new commanding officer on the 16th. He would become one of the best known figures and characters in Bomber Command, and while station commander at Syerston in December 1942, he would lose his right arm to a 4,000lber, while trying to rake away burning incendiaries. This man of small stature but enormous heart recovered and returned to duty, becoming a leading light in 4 Group as 42 Base commander, with responsibility for Pocklington, Melbourne and Elvington, and at 31, was the youngest Air Commodore ever. The squadron's final loss of the year came during raids on ports in the occupied countries on the 28/29th, when X3141 crashed in France during a trip to Lorient, and only the pilot, P/O Ainsworth, escaped with his life. It had been a year of discovery for the Command, and some lessons had been learned, but it lacked the aircraft and technology to fulfil its ambitions, and the coming year would see little improvement in tactics and performance. It would be a case of treading water for at least the next twelve months, and the Command would have to work hard to keep its head above the surface.

1941

Bremen hosted the year's first major operation on the night of the 1/2nd, and for the period, a reasonable degree of damage resulted, although in the context of the overall picture, it was still nothing more than a pinprick. It was a shaky start for 50 Squadron, although P/O Burrough and crew walked away from the remains of X3143, after it crashed during a landing attempt at Lindholme on return. Whatever this incident augured for the coming year, the remainder of the month was loss free, as was the first half of February, and much of this period would be devoted to the continuing campaign against ports, with Wilhelmshaven one of the more popular destinations. The Air Ministry had decided in a directive issued on the 15th of January, that an all-out assault against oil related targets would eventually take its toll on the German war effort, and operations from now on would reflect this. A list of seventeen

sites was drawn up, the top nine of which represented 80% of Germany's synthetic oil production, but it was to be February before Peirse was able to comply. The first major operation in February involved a new record force of 222 aircraft, whose crews were briefed to attack industrial targets at Hanover on the 10/11th. Forty six Hampdens were involved, and returning crews claimed to have seen large explosions and many fires. Mining had proceeded alongside bombing ever since April, and it was from such an operation to the Gironne area on the 14/15th, that the squadron suffered its first missing crew of the year. X2983 was shot down over France, and P/O Tunstall and one of his crew were killed, while the two survivors were marched off into captivity. Gelsenkirchen, Homberg and Sterkrade were raided during the middle part of the month, but the policy of sending small numbers of aircraft to various targets simultaneously, diluted the effectiveness of operations, and losses were still incurred.

Attacks on Cologne spanned the turn of the month, and returning from the second of the five mounted against this city, on the 1/2nd, 50 Squadron's X2984 crashed in Yorkshire, killing one of P/O Pexton's crew. An indication of the lack of a firm direction came with a change of policy in March, when a new Air Ministry directive issued on the 9th, ordered the C-in-C to begin a campaign against the U-Boat menace and its partner in crime, the long range maritime reconnaissance bomber, the Focke-Wulf Kondor, and this became the new priority ahead of oil. Bomber Command was now to attack these craft where-ever they could be found, at sea, in their bases, and at the point of their manufacture, whether in the ship-building yards or the engine and component factories, and consequently the Blohm & Voss yards in Hamburg were attacked by over eighty aircraft on the 12/13th, while two other forces of similar size raided Bremen, the home of a Focke-Wulf factory in addition to a shipyard, and Berlin. The Hampden brigade was split between Hamburg and Berlin, and 50 Squadron posted missing F/L Johnston and his crew in AD721 from the latter, and there were no survivors. On the following night, thirty four Hampdens made up a force of 130 aircraft which returned to Hamburg, and produced a surprisingly effective raid for the period. The squadron's X3146 was lost without trace, and the crew of Sgt Grainger was duly posted missing. Twenty one Hampdens took part in a raid on Gelsenkirchen on the 14/15th, and some useful damage was inflicted on an oil plant. The rest of the month was dedicated predominately to ports, but the squadron's only other casualty in March came as the result of a mining operation on the 20/21st. AD742 crashed on approach to Lindholme on return from the sealanes around Lorient, and P/O Burrough and his crew survived their second incident of the year. It was on the 29th, that the German cruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau were first reported to be off Brest, and by the following day they had taken up residence, this beginning an eleven month saga, during which a great many operations would be mounted against them, and numerous crews would be lost as a result.

April would prove to be an expensive month for 50 Squadron, and its troubles began on the 5th during a daylight effort by ten Hampdens at Brest. Only one aircraft bombed because of cloud, and AD753 crashed into the sea off the Isles of Scilly, and there were no survivors from the crew of P/O Macrossan. A rare training accident cost the squadron Sgt Campbell and one other, when AD830 crashed in Leicester on the 10th. That night, a force made up of Hampdens and Whitleys raided Düsseldorf, and it was a bad night for the Hampden contingent, which lost five of its number. Two of them were 50 Squadron aircraft, and both

AD789 and AD828 fell victim to nightfighters over Holland, P/O Cornish alone of his crew escaping with his life from the former, and P/O Powell was the only fatality in the latter, and all the survivors were taken into captivity. Over a hundred aircraft set off for Berlin on the 17/18th, and a particularly unfortunate incident cost the squadron another crew. As occasionally happened when a crew lost its bearings, AD730 flew right across England and the Irish Sea, and eventually crashed in Ireland, killing P/O Hill and the others on board. What had been a bad month for the squadron became worse, when five Hampdens went mining around La Rochelle on the 28/29th, while a predominately Wellington force attacked Brest. AD728 crashed into the sea, and took with it S/L Good and his crew, and AD834 went down in France, killing two of its crew, although the pilot, F/O Whitecross, ultimately evaded capture, and would return to the squadron in August.

As if in atonement for the casualties of April, May was much kinder to 50 Squadron, despite a busy schedule of operations which took the Hampden brigade to Hamburg four times in the first two weeks, and Cologne, Mannheim three times and Bremen during the same period, in addition two two attacks on Brest. Hanover, Cologne twice and Kiel opened the account for the second half of the month, and a large minelaying effort by Hampdens off French ports was only partially successful on the 25/26th. The squadron's single casualty of the month came on the 30th, as the result of an air-test, during which AD867 stalled and crashed near the airfield, and P/O Cunningham and his passenger were killed. June's first major operation was to Düsseldorf on the 2/3rd, and little damage resulted from a scattered raid. 50 Squadron's AD797 crashed in Belgium, and there were no survivors from the crew of P/O Hodgson. Another attempt was made to incapacitate the German cruisers at Brest on the 10/11th, but no hits were scored, and Hampdens made up almost half the force which failed to produce anything of note at Duisburg on the following night. Most of the available Hampdens went to attack railway yards at Soest on the 12/13th, a town just north of the soon to be famous Möhne Dam. Poor visibility prevented half the force from bombing, and two aircraft failed to return, although neither of these was from 50 Squadron. Cologne continued to be a popular destination, and further attacks on this city and its railway system involving the Hampden squadrons were carried out on four consecutive nights from the 14/15th, but results, in keeping with the period, were disappointing. Düsseldorf seemed to be equally attractive as a target, and would be raided simultaneously with Cologne on no fewer than eight nights during the second half of the month. On the 18th, Sgt Hinde took P4389 for an air-test, and was joined by one crew member and three ground crew. Sadly, the Hampden crashed almost immediately after take-off, and all on board lost their lives. In keeping with the U-Boat campaign, Bremen and Kiel dominated the remainder of the month, and it was from the latter that the squadron registered its next failure to return, when X3133 was despatched by a nightfighter over Germany on the 29/30th, and there were no survivors from the crew of Sgt Hughes.

After the comparatively light losses of the preceding two months, 50 Squadron was now to embark on a testing ten week period, which would see twenty one aircraft crash or go missing, and this coincided with a return to Germany's heartland at the conclusion of the U-Boat offensive. The first few operations of July, to Bremen on the 3/4th, Lorient on the 4/5th, Osnabrück on the 5/6th, Brest on the 6/7th, Hamm on the 8/9th, Aachen on the 9/10th,

Cologne on the 10/11th and Wilhelmshaven on the 11/12th, were negotiated by the squadron without loss, and particularly good results were obtained at Aachen. On the 12/13th, a Hampden and Wellington force raided Bremen, and two 50 Squadron aircraft failed to return. Both fell to nightfighters, AE226 over Holland with no survivors from the crew of P/O Vivian, and AE230 over Germany, killing three of the crew outright, and the pilot, Sgt Austin, subsequently succumbed to his injuries. When Hamburg was attacked on the 16/17th, poor visibility hampered precision, and AD844 failed to return, and was lost without trace with the crew of P/O Owens. A training crash in Yorkshire, in AD897, claimed the lives of Sgt Bousfield and his crew on the 19th, the day on which the squadron departed Lindholme to take up residence at Swinderby, on the A46 south of Lincoln. Hampdens took part in three operations to Frankfurt on the 21/22nd, 22/23rd and 23/24th, and it was on return from the last of these, that AD843 crashed into the sea off the east coast, and Sgt Holme and his crew lost their lives. Two nights later, another aircraft, AE234, was lost to a crash in Lincolnshire on return from Hanover, and again there were no survivors, this time from the crew of Sgt Montgomery. A mining operation by forty two Hampdens to Kiel Bay cost the squadron two more aircraft on the 28/29th. AE159 was lost without trace with the crew of P/O Burrows, and P/O Christophers crash-landed AD902 at Swinderby following an early return, having encountered electrical storms en-route, but all emerged unscathed.

August began for the Hampden units with an attack on Kiel on the 2/3rd, and this was followed on the 5/6th by raids on Mannheim and Karlsruhe, with a Hampden presence at both. AE137 failed to return from the latter, having crashed at Essen, and Sgt Fothergill and his crew were killed. AE124 was bound for a mining sortie off the Frisians on the 8/9th, when it crashed soon after take-off, fortunately without damage to P/O Milnes and his crew. F/O Whitecross, who had recently returned from the Continent following his forced landing in April, failed to return from an air-sea-rescue sortie in P4408 on the 15th, and died with his new crew in the North Sea. A Hampden and Whitley contingent went to Bremen on the 17/18th, to attack the Focke-Wulf factory and railway targets, and AE185 failed to return, having been shot down by a nightfighter over Holland. P/O Maskell escaped with his life to fall into enemy hands, but his crew perished in the wreckage of the Hampden. It was on the 18th, that civil servant Mr D M Butt completed his analysis of the Command's performance, and its disclosures would send shock waves resounding around the Cabinet room, the Air Ministry and the Command in general. Having studied around four thousand photographs taken during night operations in June and July, he concluded that only a fraction of bombs were falling within miles of their intended targets, and this revelation was to have a serious effect on morale, and forever unjustly blight the period of tenure as C-in-C of Sir Richard Peirse. A series of operations against Mannheim began on the 22/23rd, and continued for the Hampden brigade on the 25/26th and 27/28th. AE320 failed to return from the former with the crew of Sgt Fisher, who were all killed, and X2991 crashed immediately after take-off for the latter, although without casualties among the crew of P/O Ferrie. While the last raid of the Mannheim series was in progress without a Hampden presence on the 29/30th, 4 and 5 Groups carried out a scattered and ineffective attack on Frankfurt, during which AD839 crashed in France, killing Sgt Turner and his crew. On return, AE229 crashed in Lincolnshire without fatalities, but F/S Mapp and one of his crew sustained injuries.

Operations on the 2/3rd of September concluded in an eventful way for 50 Squadron, and the outcome could easily have been more serious than it turned out. AE157 was part of a small mining effort in northern waters, on return from which it landed at Waddington in the hands of P/O Ferrie, and collided with a 44 Squadron Hampden. Meanwhile, AE305 and X2919 were returning from Berlin short of fuel after almost nine hours in the air, and both crash-landed, the former in Norfolk with F/S Titcombe at the controls, and the latter in Cambridgeshire in the hands of Sgt Mudd, and he and one of his crew sustained the only 50 Squadron injuries of the night. Hampdens were out and about in numbers on the 7/8th, contributing to operations to Berlin and Kiel and mining. The Berlin contingent produced some effective bombing, while damage at Kiel was slight, and it was from there that AE318 failed to return, but Sgt Good and his crew all escaped with their lives and became POWs. AD854 returned short of fuel from Kassel on the 8/9th, and was abandoned by two of the crew over Bedfordshire. They arrived safely on the ground, but Sgt Rowney and the remaining crewman died in the ensuing crash. This incident concluded the high rate of attrition which had afflicted the squadron since early July, and it would be over a month before it became necessary to post missing another crew. The remainder of the month produced a moderately effective attack on Hamburg on the 15/16th, and numerous small-scale raids which were of nuisance value but little else, and the inability of the Command to achieve results commensurate with the effort expended, would add weight to the criticisms following the damning Butt Report, and ultimately lead to a scaling down of operations during the winter.

October would cost 50 Squadron four crews, the first of them in AE367, the only Hampden missing of seventy nine despatched to a chemical factory at Hüls on the 12/13th, and P/O Waddell and his crew were killed. On the following night, AE251 was shot down by flak during an operation to Cologne, this one of the rare occasions on which an entire crew survived, and that of F/L Abbott was marched off into captivity. Less fortunate was the crew of P/O Laidlaw, who were killed in AE383 during a raid on Bremen on the 20/21st, and P/O Cooper and his crew paid the ultimate price three nights later, when flak accounted for AE256 over Kiel. On the 26th, W/C Walker concluded his lengthy term as commanding officer, and handed over the reins to W/C "Beetle" Oxley, who had a reputation as a "Hun Hater", and would do his best to engender similar sentiments among his crews. The first squadron loss under his command was from a mining sortie on the 6/7th, when AE427 crashed into Oslo Fjord with the crew of Sgt Howett. No doubt frustrated by the recent run of bad weather, which had not only caused problems in the target areas, but had also led to numerous operations being recalled after take-off, Peirse planned a massive night of operations for the 7/8th of November. Berlin headed the list of targets, for which a force of over two hundred aircraft was detailed, but doubts about the weather prompted an objection from the encumbent 5 Group AOC, AVM Slessor, and he was allowed to withdraw his seventy five strong contingent of Hampdens and Manchesters, and send it instead to Cologne. In the event, 169 aircraft took off for Berlin, while fifty three Wellingtons from 1 and 3 Groups were sent to try their luck at Mannheim. The Berlin raid was a failure for the loss of twenty one aircraft, and 5 Group's raid was no better, but at least all its aircraft returned. No bombs at all fell on Mannheim, and seven Wellingtons failed to return, and all these together with other losses from the nights minor operations brought the casualty figure to a new record thirty seven aircraft, more than twice the previous highest in a single night.

This was the final straw for the War Cabinet, and Peirse was summoned to a meeting with Churchill to make his explanations. On the 13th, the Air Ministry ordered him to restrict operational activity until further notice, while the future of the Command was considered at the highest level, and this shackle would remain in place for the next three months. With loud voices calling for the redeployment of bomber aircraft to combat U-Boats in the Atlantic and to redress reversals in the Middle East, the very existence of an independent bomber force hung in the balance. Mining operations would continue unabated, however, and five Hampden sorties were despatched to the Frisians on the 15/16th. P1152 returned early having encountered icing conditions, and crashed in Yorkshire killing one man, while Sgt Young and the others sustained injuries. On the 26th, the squadron moved to Skellingthorpe on the western side of Lincoln, but its association with Swinderby would be renewed at a later date. A large force of over 180 aircraft took off for Hamburg on the last night of the month, with a sizeable Hampden element. 120 crews claimed to have reached and bombed the primary target, and a number of fires were started, but results were again disappointing. P1202 arrived back short of fuel, and was force-landed by Sgt Williams close to home, and one crewman was injured.

The dominant theme during December was the continued presence at Brest of Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, and no less than fifteen operations of varying sizes were mounted against the port and its guests during the month, some by daylight, and a number of hits were claimed on the Gneisenau. Ostend was targeted by a small force on the 15/16th, and the sole missing aircraft was AE380 of 50 Squadron, which crashed into the sea, and there were no survivors from the crew of Sgt Young. A daylight operation took place on the 27th, in support of a landing by commandos on the Norwegian island of Vaagsö. Nineteen Blenheims and ten Hampdens took part, and 50 Squadron lost AE369 and AE428 to flak in the target area, Sgt Redfern and crew losing their lives in the former, while the pilot, Sgt Smith, alone survived from the latter, and was picked up by a vessel from the Royal Navy. It had been a disappointing year for the Command, and despite the best efforts of the crews, one of under-achievement. The new aircraft types introduced into operational service early in the year had all failed to meet the requirements expected of them, and each had undergone long periods of grounding while essential modifications were carried out. 1942 would bring changes, however, chief among which were the arrival on the operational scene of a war-winning aircraft, and a new Commander-in-Chief, who would know how to exploit it.

1942

As far as the crews were concerned, the New Year brought nothing different, and still under the restrictions of the November directive, the Command's activities reflected the continuing obsession with the German raiders at Brest, and a further eleven operations against the port took place during January. In-between, the squadron registered its first casualties of the year as the result of a mining operation off Wilhelmshaven on the 10/11th. AE250 ran out of fuel while trying to find a landing place, and crashed in Cumberland, killing Sgt Williams and one of his crew outright, and fatally injuring a third man. Two raids fell on Hamburg on consecutive nights from the 14/15th, but neither resulted in more than superficial damage,

and among the four aircraft missing from the first operation were two 50 Squadron Hampdens. AE420 and AE431 were both lost without trace, and the crews of Sgt Baddeley and P/O Hore were duly posted missing. A training crash in Derbyshire accounted for Sgt Heron and his crew on the 21st, and AT142 crashed in Rutland while trying to land at Cottesmore on return from an ineffective raid on Münster on the 22/23rd, and there were no survivors from the crew of F/O Peace. On the 25th, the squadron took delivery of its first example of the troublesome Manchester, R5778, an ex 207 Squadron aircraft, and this made 50 Squadron the 6th recipient of the type. Thankfully, its association with this aircraft would be brief, and it would be some months yet before it would be used operationally.

There was little activity for the Hampden squadrons during the first half of February, other than mining operations on the 6th and 7th around the Frisians. The latter brought about the loss of the squadron's AE306, which fell victim to a nightfighter, and F/S Smith and his crew failed to survive. The situation at Brest finally came to a head in the early hours of the 12th, when under cover of atrocious weather conditions, and shortly after yet another raid on them by a small force of Wellingtons on the evening of the 11th, the Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Prinz Eugen, with destroyer escort, slipped anchor and headed for the English Channel in an audacious bid for freedom. The British authorities had prepared a plan in advance for precisely this eventuality, under the Codename Operation Fuller, but so secret was it, that few either knew of its full requirements or even of its existence. Once the enemy fleet was spotted in the late morning, frantic efforts were made to get Coastal and Bomber Command aircraft away, but only 5 Group was standing by at four hours readiness. It was 13.30 hours before the first sorties were launched, and despite the largest commitment of aircraft by daylight to date, amounting to 242 sorties, the squally conditions and low cloud base hampered location of the ships, and those attacks which were carried out, failed to score hits. Fifteen Bomber Command aircraft were lost as a result of this debacle, and the enemy fleet passed through the Straits of Dover into open sea, and made good their escape. Scharnhorst and Gneisenau both struck mines recently laid by 5 Group aircraft, which slowed their progress to a degree, but by the following morning they were safely in German ports, and it was a huge embarrassment to the government and the nation. On the credit side, the presence of these ships at Brest had been an unwelcome distraction for the Command, and many good crews had been sacrificed to operations against them over the past twelve months, and at least it could now be said that this annoying itch had been scratched for the last time. 50 Squadron was also touched by this final episode in the long-running saga, and posted missing the crew of F/O Carter, who were lost without trace in AT177. On the 14th, a new Air Ministry directive cleared the way for the blatant area bombing of Germany, without the pretence of aiming at industrial and military targets, while also reaffirming the assault on the morale of the enemy's civilian population, particularly its workers, and waiting in the wings was the leader who would pursue this policy with a will.

On the night before the arrival at the helm of Bomber Command of ACM Sir Arthur Harris, who took up his appointment on the 22nd, AE394 ran out of fuel on return from Koblenz, and crashed in York, killing three of the crew, the pilot, W/O Mapp, having escaped by parachute. Harris took up his post with firm ideas already in place about how to win the war by bombing alone. He recognized the need to overwhelm defences by pushing the maximum number of

aircraft across an aiming point in the shortest possible time, and this would bring an end to the former practice, whereby crews determined for themselves the timings, route and manner of their individual sorties. Harris knew also that urban areas are most efficiently destroyed by fire rather than blast, and it would not be long before the bomb loads being carried by his force reflected this thinking, but in the meantime, he continued with the fairly small scale attacks on German ports. Such an operation to Kiel on the 26/27th, which was directed at the town's floating dock, threw up one of the war's great ironies. One of the Wellingtons, Hampdens and Halifaxes taking part released a high explosive bomb, which struck the bows of the Gneisenau, now supposedly in a safe haven after enduring eleven months of constant bombardment at Brest, and this ended her sea-going career for good. A similar fuel shortage to the one which caused the previous loss, led AE218 to crash on approach to Skellingthorpe while returning from another raid on Kiel on the 27/28th, but on this occasion, F/S Johnson and his crew walked away.

The first signs of a change in policy, and a portent of things to come, took place on the 3/4th of March, with an operation by 235 aircraft, the largest number to date sent to a single target. This was the Renault lorry factory at Billancourt in Paris, and the operation was carefully planned as a three wave attack, led by experienced crews, and with extensive use of flares to provide illumination. Bombing was to be carried out from low level to ensure accuracy and to avoid civilian casualties in the adjacent residential districts, in the face of what was expected to be scant anti-aircraft defence. This proved to be an accurate assessment, and the 223 aircraft which reached the target, produced an outstanding success for the loss of just one of their number. 40% of the factory's buildings were destroyed, and production was halted for four weeks. Sadly, not all the bombs fell precisely where intended, and heavy casualties were inflicted on civilians. It was somewhat paradoxical, that as a champion of area bombing, Harris should gain his first major victory by way of a precision target. On the 7th, AE387 crashed on take off from Skellingthorpe when bound for a training flight, and one of P/O Nock's crew lost his life. That night, AE400 failed to return from a mining sortie in French coastal waters, and there were no survivors from the crew of F/O Davidson. A series of three operations against Essen on consecutive nights began on the 8/9th, and all were dismal failures. Returning from the last of these on the 10/11th, P/O Stone and his crew abandoned a fuel starved AT173 over East Anglia, and all arrived safely on the ground.

The first successful operation to employ the Gee navigation device fell on Cologne on the 13/14th, and some useful industrial damage resulted. Another Hampden was lost to a mining sortie on the 24/25th, AE429 finding the sea off Brest, and taking with it P/O Fair and his crew. Two more failures came at Essen on the 25/26th and on the following night, the former accounting for the squadron's AT151, which was lost without trace with the crew of P/O Roblin, while AT158 failed to return from mining in French waters on the same night, and P/O Crombie and his crew were also killed. Later on the 26th, AT118 suffered an engine failure while engaged in an air-sea search for a missing crew, and was forced to crash-land in Cornwall, where the Hampden burned out, happily without injury to S/L Jeffs and his crew. These operations preceded another foretaste of things to come, with a raid mounted against the Baltic port of Lübeck on the 28/29th. Selected for its proximity to an identifiable coastline, the paucity of its defences and its narrow streets and timbered buildings which

would aid the spread of fire, this city was ideal to test out Harris's ideas, and provide a much needed morale booster both for the crews and the folks back home, to say nothing of polishing up the Command's tarnished image in the face of continued criticism. The operation, which was carried out along the same lines as that at Billancourt at the start of the month, and was led by Gee equipped aircraft, was another outstanding success, and the predominately incendiary bomb loads laid waste to over fourteen hundred buildings, amounting to around 30% of the city's built-up area. It had been an expensive month for 50 Squadron, but April would be a little less so, and would bring an end to the squadron's long association with the trusty Hampden, and the first operations in the less dependable Manchester.

The final Hampden loss occurred on the 5/6th of April, when AT216 crashed soon after take-off for Cologne, and F/O Seeley-King and his crew lost their lives. It was just three nights later, on the 8/9th, that the squadron launched its first Manchester sorties, three of the type dispensing leaflets over occupied territory, and returning safely from a gentle introduction to operations, while the rest of the Command failed to impress at Hamburg. Further failures occurred at Essen on the 10/11th and 12/13th, and at Dortmund on the 14/15th and 15/16th, but things improved somewhat at Hamburg on the 17/18th, where over thirty large fires were left burning. This operation brought about the first loss to 50 Squadron of a Manchester, R5782, in which P/O Baker and one of his crew died, while the other five men fell into enemy hands. In an attempt to repeat the success gained at Lübeck, Rostock, also on the Baltic coast, was attacked on four consecutive nights from the 23/24th. An added attraction was the nearby Heinkel aircraft factory, and an element was directed specifically at this target. The first operation in the series was disappointing, but the second one hit the town centre, as did the third and fourth, and the Heinkel factory was also damaged by a contingent led by 106 Squadron's commanding officer, W/C Guy Gibson. 50 Squadron put up four Manchesters for the final raid, which brought a spirited response from the flak batteries below, and L7432 was buffeted by near misses and damaged, but arrived home safely in the hands of P/O Southgate and crew. It was a successful campaign, which left 60% of the town's built-up area in ruins. The squadron sent five aircraft on mining sorties on the 29/30th, during which L7516 was attacked by a nightfighter, and crashed off the island of Sylt, from where F/S Willett and four of his crew were rescued by the enemy, the remaining two occupants failing to survive.

May began with an unusually effective raid on Hamburg on the 3/4th, although in the absence of a Manchester contingent, and they were also excluded from a three raid series on Stuttgart which began on the following night. It was not until the 8/9th that the type was again committed to a bombing operation, and this was at Warnemünde on the Baltic, for which the squadron contributed L7489. Hit by flak over the target, Sgt Gruber attempted to reach Sweden, but was forced to bale his crew out over Denmark, where they were captured, and he was killed in the ensuing crash. Two squadron crews went mining on the same night, and when Sgt Wilkie and crew brought R5778 home, it was declared beyond economical repair, and struck off charge. The career of the Manchester as a front-line aircraft was now effectively over, and Lancasters began to arrive on 50 Squadron dispersals during the first week of May, making it the sixth operational squadron in the Command to receive the type. It would be some time before the crews were fully converted, however, and Manchesters would

remain on charge for almost two more months. L7519 crashed in Lincolnshire during training on the 13th, and F/S Blake was killed with his crew. There was little activity for the final third of the month, and when aircraft from the training establishments began to arrive on bomber airfields from Yorkshire to East Anglia, it gave rise to much speculation.

Harris needed a major victory, and perhaps some symbolism, to silence the critics and save his Command from dissolution. On his appointment as C-in-C, he had asked for four thousand heavy bombers with which to win the war, and whilst there was not the slightest chance of getting them, he needed to ensure that those earmarked for him were not spirited away to what he considered to be less deserving causes. Out of this was born the Thousand Plan, Operation Millennium, the commitment of his entire force plus reserves, to erase from the map in one night an important German city. The symbolism would only be satisfied by the figure of one thousand aircraft, which Harris did not have, and he would therefore need the cooperation of other Commands, principally Coastal and Flying Training to make up the numbers. This was forthcoming in letters received on the 22nd and 23rd respectively, but following an intervention by the Admiralty, Coastal Command underwent a change of heart and withdrew its contribution of a hundred aircraft. Not to be denied, Harris, or more probably his able deputy, AM Sir Robert Saundby, scraped together every airframe capable of controlled flight, or something close to it, and recalled the screened crews from their instructional duties, and come the hour, the magic figure of one thousand would not only be reached, but comfortably surpassed.

The weather, however, was not co-operating, and as the days ticked inexorably by towards the the final few days of May, there was a real danger of the massive force drawing attention to itself and compromising security. Finally at "morning prayers" on the 30th, Harris's chief meteorological adviser, Magnus Spence, gave a grudging and qualified nod in the direction of the Rheinland as the region most likely to be free of cloud after midnight, while vetoing Harris's first choice of Hamburg. In this way, the fickle finger of fate decreed that Cologne would bear the dubious honour of hosting the first One Thousand Bomber raid in history. That night, 1047 aircraft departed their airfields, some of the older training hacks doing so somewhat reluctantly, lifted more by the enthusiasm of their crews than by the power of their engines, and a number of these, unable to climb to a respectable height, would fall easy prey to the defences, or come crashing down onto foreign soil through technical failures. Those 868 aircraft which reached the target, carrying with them the future of Bomber Command, delivered, what by any standards, was a devastating attack, which left more than 3,300 buildings in ruins, and thousands more damaged. 50 Squadron contributed fifteen Manchesters, two of them borrowed from 106 Squadron, and one Lancaster, the squadron's first offensive sortie with the type. Forty one aircraft failed to return from this ground-breaking operation, the highest losses to date, and among them were two from 50 Squadron. By a remarkable coincidence, the two missing Manchesters were those borrowed from 106 Squadron, L7301 and L7456, and both had displayed a distinct unwillingness to take part. The former was hit by flak over the target, and struggled to maintain height on the return flight. Eventually, it became necessary to abandon ship, and a number of the crew did so at very low altitude. Sadly, P/O Manser did not have an opportunity to save himself, and he died in the wreckage of the Manchester in Belgium. Five of the crew ultimately evaded capture and

returned to duty, and their testimony to the gallantry of their pilot resulted in the posthumous award to him of the Victoria Cross, the only such award gained on the Manchester. The other missing Manchester had been unable to attain a safe operational height, and when the port engine seized, a crash-landing was made on an airfield near Düsseldorf, in which three of the crew were killed, and Sgt Wilkie and three others became POWs.

While his giant force was still assembled, Harris used it again immediately, although it was actually 956 aircraft which took-off for Essen on the night of the 1/2nd of June. In contrast to the success of Cologne, this was a dismal failure which deposited bombs all over the Ruhr, and once again this centre of war production escaped with superficial damage. 50 Squadron contributed ten aircraft, including two borrowed from 44 Squadron's conversion flight, and one from that of 106 Squadron, and all returned safely. A much smaller force returned on the following night, and fared no better, but a raid on Bremen on the 3/4th by 150 aircraft, caused housing and industrial damage. 50 Squadron's L7432 failed to return from this operation, the victim of a nightfighter over Holland, and three of F/O Heaton's crew survived to become POWs. While another failure occurred at Essen on the 5/6th, R5833, still on loan from 44 Squadron's conversion flight, went mining around the Frisians, from where it failed to return having crashed into the sea, and P/O Garland died with all but one of his crew. On the following night, a force of over two hundred aircraft was sent against Emden, and substantial damage resulted to residential districts for the loss of nine aircraft, among which was 50 Squadron's L7471 in the hands of an all Australian crew captained by P/O Beatty. He subsequently died of his injuries, one man was killed, and the remainder began an extended period as guests of the Reich. Emden was attacked three more times over a four night period from the 19/20th, without great effect, and this series preceded the final use of the Thousand Force, which would strike at Bremen on the 25/26th. The 20th was the day on which the squadron moved back down the A46 to Swinderby, although its period of residence would last only four months, and would be followed by a return to Skellingthorpe. 960 aircraft were available for the final one thousand bomber operation, and while not achieving the success of Cologne, the results far surpassed the debacle of Essen, with housing representing the bulk of the destruction. A separate raid by Coastal Command on this night, meant that the total number of aircraft sent against this target exceeded the 1047 which took off for Cologne, and this technically represented a new record. The loss to Bomber Command of forty eight aircraft was also a new record, and included a representative from among the twelve Manchesters and two Lancasters contributed to the operation by 50 Squadron. L7289 was brought down by flak in Germany, and the all Dominion crew of Sgt Roy was killed. This was the last occasion on which Bomber Command would despatch Manchesters on operations, and 50 Squadron relinquished its complement. Among the 50 Squadron pilots who had operated that night was one P/O H B Martin, whose finest hours lay in the future, and with a different squadron.

It took 50 Squadron longer than most to fully convert onto Lancasters, having only recently relinquished the Hampden in favour of the Manchester. It had been a late recipient of the type, when it was nearing the end of its operational career, and the training programme only got into full swing once it had departed. July was a month of generally less activity for the Command, and the main feature was a series of four operations against Duisburg beginning

on the 13/14th, and followed up on the 21/22nd, 23/24th and 25/26th. None of these was more than moderately effective, and most of the damage was to housing. Hamburg was raided on the 26/27th and 28/29th, the first of which was the most damaging raid so far on this target, and again it was housing which bore the main weight of bombs, and hundreds of large fires were left burning. The inevitable first loss of a 50 Squadron Lancaster came during an operation to Saarbrücken on the 28/29th, a raid which produced extensive damage in central and north-western districts for the loss of nine of the 250 strong force. R5728 was shot down by a nightfighter over Belgium, and Sgt Foster and his crew were killed. The month ended with a successful attack on Düsseldorf by over six hundred aircraft on the 31st, and the force included an element from the training units. The last of the current series of raids on Duisburg was mounted on the 6/7th of August, and again, accuracy and concentration eluded the force, but like its neighbour Essen, its time would come in 1943. While 150 aircraft set off for Mainz on the 11/12th, a further sixteen aircraft, including a 50 Squadron element, raided Le Havre, and R5746 crashed in the target area with no survivors from the crew of P/O Gray. Düsseldorf claimed R5735 on the 15/16th, and two members of P/O Jones's crew survived as POWs. Two nights later, R5639 was lost without trace during a reasonably effective attack on Osnabrück, and F/O Bunbury and his crew were posted missing, and this was the last raid before the operational debut of the newly established Pathfinder Force. Formed on the 15th, under the then Group Captain Don Bennett, a man with unparalleled experience and qualifications as an airmen and navigator, and whose selection by Harris as its leader was both inspired and controversial, it led its first raid on the 18/19th to Flensburg, a target selected for its location on a coastline, and access via the sea. It was an inauspicious beginning to what would become an illustrious career for the fledgling force, and no bombs fell anywhere near their intended destination. There was little improvement at Frankfurt on the 24/25th, and it was not until its third operation, to Kassel on the 27/28th, that it was able to provide good illumination for the main force to exploit.

September was a busy month, and began with the PFF putting up a "black", by marking Saarlouis in error for Saarbrücken on the 1/2nd. Successes followed at Karlsruhe, Bremen and Duisburg over the next five nights, but Frankfurt on the 8/9th was a failure. One of the most successful operations to date fell on Düsseldorf on the 10/11th, and over nine hundred houses were destroyed and numerous industrial premises damaged. It was another occasion on which the training units contributed aircraft, and some of these were among the high figure of thirty three which failed to return. 50 Squadron was also represented in the form of R5725, from which Sgt Blaskey and three of his crew survived as POWs. The run of successes continued at Bremen on the 13/14th, Wilhelmshaven on the 14/15th, and even at Essen on the 16/17th, where despite an absence of concentration, housing and industry suffered extensive damage. If any period in Bomber Command's war to date could be identified as the moment when it turned the corner on the long road to becoming a war-winning weapon, then these first two weeks in September was surely it. A large mine-laying effort was mounted on the 18/19th, involving over a hundred aircraft destined for numerous coastal regions. On return, R5689 suffered engine failure during the approach to land at Thurlby, and one man was killed in the crew of Sgt Morley. Groups operated independently of each other on the 23/24th, 5 Group being briefed for Wismar on the Baltic, which contained the added attraction of a Dornier aircraft factory. Many crews bombed from low level, and good results were claimed at

debriefing, although F/S Dickenson and his crew were not there to report, having died when R5909 crashed into the sea. The Group tried again on the 1/2nd and 12/13th of October, and lost two Lancasters on each occasion, including 50 Squadron's R5902 from the latter, and one man survived from the crew of Sgt Rawlins.

On the 17th, the squadron returned to Skellingthorpe, where it would remain for the rest of the war, and this was also the day when the Group launched eighty eight Lancasters against the Schneider armaments works at Le Creusot led by 49 Squadron's W/C Slee, while a further six, led by W/C Guy Gibson of 106 Squadron, raided the nearby transformer station at Mont Chanin. 50 Squadron sent twelve aircraft, R5687, R5691, R5702, R5726, R5733, W4112, W4117, W4135, W4151, W4161, W4194 and W4266, and all returned safely. The raids were carried out by daylight from low level, but were only moderately successful for the loss of just one aircraft from 61 Squadron. The 20th brought to an end the year long reign of W/C Oxley, who handed over the squadron to W/C Russell, in time for him to preside over the squadron's involvement in a campaign against Italian cities, in support of land operations in North Africa, which would ultimately lead to Montgomery's victory over Rommel at El Alamein. The first of the series was mounted on the 22/23rd against Genoa, and involved elements from ten 5 Group squadrons with Pathfinder support. It was an outstanding success, and no aircraft were lost. A daylight operation took place against Milan on the 24th, this time 5 Group operating alone, and it was equally successful, but cost three Lancasters missing, one of which was 50 Squadron's R5691, which crashed into the sea, killing Sgt Cumberland and his crew.

Minor operations saw out the remainder of the month, and it was not until the 6/7th of November that the Group operated again, when sending seventy two Lancasters back to Genoa, an operation repeated on the 7/8th, and both were successful. In a break from Italy, Hamburg was raided ineffectively on the 9/10th, and the squadron's W4194 failed to return, crashing in northern Germany with the loss of Sgt Jones and his crew. On the 17th, R5753 crashed and caught fire while landing at Skellingthorpe during training, but Sgt Kitchin and his crew emerged from the wreckage unscathed. The Italian campaign concluded with seven raids on Turin between the 18/19th and the 11/12th of December, all but two of the later ones being highly successful, and 50 Squadron registered no losses from its involvement. While the last one was in progress, W4117 crash-landed at Skellingthorpe on return from night-flying training, but there were no casualties among the crew of Sgt Murray. No further major operations would take place during what remained of the year, but 5 Group despatched twenty seven Lancasters to eight small German towns on the 17/18th, and it became something of a disaster. Nine Lancasters failed to return for little or no gain, and two of these were from Skellingthorpe. Briefed for Soltau, W4266 was hit by flak, and then finished off by a nightfighter over Holland with just three survivors from the crew of F/O Goldsmith, and W4382 failed to return from the same target, and was lost without trace with the crew of F/L Atkinson. These were the squadron's final casualties of a year which had seen the Command stop the rot, and begin to emerge as an effective force. Technological development was about to bear fruit in the form of the Oboe blind bombing device, which had been undergoing trials in the hands of the PFF's 109 Squadron since the summer, and on the 20/21st, W/C Bufton dropped the first Oboe aimed bombs near a coking plant at Lutterade in Holland. It would be

June before the device was entirely reliable, but by then it would already have played the major role in negating the industrial haze which had concealed the likes of Essen and Duisburg from the bombsights, and enabled them to be attacked with accuracy for the first time.

1943

The year began with a continuation of the Oboe trials programme, involving the Mosquitos of 109 Squadron, and small forces of Lancasters from 1 and 5 Groups. Essen was the principal target, and received seven raids in the first two weeks of January, while just one was directed at Duisburg. This one took place on the 8/9th, and it cost the squadron its first casualty of the new year, when W4800 crashed in Germany, killing Sgt Kiernan and his crew. Later on during the 9th, ED394 crashed while trying to land at an airfield in Cumberland during night-flying training, and this accident killed four of Sgt Smith's crew, he and two others escaping with injuries. Another dominant theme for the early part of the year was the U-Boat menace, and an Air Ministry directive on the 14th, opened the door to the drastic measure of area bombing those French ports which contained bases and support facilities, and five such operations were mounted against Lorient during the course of the month from the 14/15th. Mid month also brought two operations to Berlin on consecutive nights, the first, on the 16/17th, by a predominately 5 Group force numbering two hundred. The only success of note, despite the first use of genuine target indicators, was the destruction of the ten thousand seater Deutschlandhalle, the largest covered arena in Europe, and the raid was conducted for the loss of a single Lancaster. When a slightly smaller force returned on the following night, results were again scattered and ineffective, but this time twenty two aircraft failed to return, and among them was 50 Squadron's ED471, which crashed in Germany with no survivors from the crew of P/O Heinrich. Düsseldorf was selected for the first Oboe ground marking exercise on the 27/28th, and the southern districts took a pounding from the relatively small main force. ED846 failed to reach much beyond Skellingthorpe before crashing, and Sgt Kitchin and his crew, who had survived a landing accident in November, this time did not survive. The month closed with an attack on Hamburg on the 30/31st using H2s, but no concentration was achieved, and damage was not severe.

It was a time of honing and refining for the Command, in preparation for the launching of a major campaign a month hence, and the Cologne raid on the 2/3rd of February provided another field-test for Path Finder techniques. Precision and concentration again eluded the force, and 50 Squadron's ED488 was one of only five aircraft missing, and fell to a nightfighter over Belgium with four survivors from the crew of F/O Power, who died with two others. A similar outcome attended an attack on Hamburg on the 3/4th, but amends were made at Turin on the following night, where extensive damage resulted from a raid by 150 aircraft for the loss of three Lancasters. 50 Squadron was represented by ED527, which apparently suffered some kind of misfortune, and carried on to North Africa where it crashed, killing Sgt Johanson and his crew. Further attacks fell on Lorient on that night, and on the 7/8th and 13/14th, and the last mentioned claimed ED484, which crashed into the sea, and took with it the eight man crew of F/L Davies. After the final raid on this port on the 16/17th, it was little more than a deserted ruin. An attempt to deliver a telling blow on Nuremberg, the

birthplace of Nazism, was only partially effective on the 25/26th, destroying three hundred buildings for the loss of nine aircraft, and once again 50 Squadron had the sad task of posting missing one of its crews, this time that of Sgt Yates in ED387, and although four men survived when it was brought down over Germany, one later died of his injuries. March would bring with it the start of the Ruhr offensive, but first the squadrons had to negotiate operations to Berlin on the 1/2nd and Hamburg on the 3/4th. A highly scattered attack ensued at the Capital, but substantial damage, never-the-less, resulted in southern and western districts, at a cost of seventeen aircraft. Two 50 Squadron Lancasters crashed in Holland, ED423 and ED592, and neither produced a survivor from the crews of P/O Townsend and Sgt Ward respectively. Misplaced markers at Hamburg led to much of the bombing falling away from the planned target area, and on this occasion, the ten missing aircraft did not include one from 50 Squadron.

The Ruhr campaign opened on the night of the 5/6th, and Essen, the home of the giant armaments producing Krupps organisation, was selected to host round one. This was a momentous occasion, a culmination of all that had gone before during three and a half years of Bomber Command operations. The backs-to-the-wall desperation of 1940, the tentative almost token offensives of 1941, the treading water and gradual metamorphosis under Harris in 1942, when failures still far outnumbered successes, had all been leading to this night, and from now began the calculated and systematic dismantling of Germany's industrial and population centres. The only shining light during these dark years had been the quality and spirit of the aircrew, and this had never faltered. The development of Mosquito borne Oboe, the advent in large numbers of the Lancaster, the coming of age of the Pathfinders, and the evolution of new tactics, all boded ill for the enemy, and although failures would still occur, they would be matched by an equal number of successes. 442 aircraft took-off for Essen, but an unusually high number of early returns and the bombing of alternative targets reduced the numbers actually bombing the target to 362. 50 Squadron contributed seven Lancasters and crews, and they were F/L Knight in ED478, he soon to be posted to the newly forming 617 Squadron, with which he would gain fame and ultimately lose his life, F/L Gilmour in ED483, P/O Evans in ED470, and Sgts Huntley, Richardson, Schofield and Ward in ED491, ED693, ED648 and ED712 respectively, and all returned safely. It was an outstandingly successful beginning to the campaign, and apart from destroying over three thousand houses, the Krupps complex also suffered damage to fifty buildings. It would be a week before the next round, and in the meantime Harris switched his attention to southern Germany, attacking Nuremberg with partial success on the 8/9th, Munich on the 9/10th, again with a reasonable degree of effectiveness, and Stuttgart on the 11/12th, although this escaped serious damage, when much of the bombing fell in open country.

The second Ruhr operation was also directed at Essen on the 12/13th, and although the number of buildings destroyed was substantially less than achieved a week earlier, the degree of concentration was greater, and the Krupps works found itself in the centre of the bombing area. Twenty three aircraft failed to return, among which 50 Squadron's ED449 fell to a nightfighter over Holland, and Sgt Ward and his crew were all killed. At least three of the squadron's aircraft were at Scampton on the 15th, W4112, W4196 and W4823, and they were written off when the bomb load of 57 Squadron's W4834 went up, although there were no

crew casualties. There were no other losses to 50 Squadron during the remainder of the month, despite operations to Duisburg on the 26/27th which failed, and Berlin twice on the 27/28th and 29/30th, where results also did not reflect the effort and numbers of aircraft involved. April would bring the least rewarding period of the Ruhr campaign, largely because of the number of operations mounted beyond the range of Oboe, but it never-the-less got off to an encouraging start, with another punishing tilt at Essen on the 3/4th. 50 Squadron came through unscathed, but had registered its first loss of the month the night before, when ED482 was lost without trace while mining, and F/O Nichols and his crew were posted missing. An attempt to hit Kiel by the largest non-1,000 force to date of 577 aircraft failed on the 4/5th, as did the second raid of the campaign on Duisburg on the 8/9th, and another small scale follow-up on the 9/10th. Five hundred aircraft took-off for Frankfurt on 10/11th, few found the target with their bombs, and 50 Squadron's ED478 came down in the sea off the Lincolnshire coast when returning early, and Sgt Mcgrath and his crew did not survive. A return to Stuttgart was made on the 14/15th, and most of the useful industrial damage resulted from the creep-back phenomenon, which afflicted most Bomber Command operations, and could work for or against it, depending on the accuracy of the marking, and the press-on spirit of the crews.

Two operations were mounted on the 16/17th, the larger by Lancasters and Halifaxes to the Skoda armaments works at Pilsen in Czechoslovakia, while a predominately Wellington and Stirling force raided Mannheim as a diversion. The former was a total failure, compounded by the loss of thirty six aircraft, split evenly between the two types, of which three belonged to 50 Squadron. ED691 crashed in France killing the pilot, P/O Day, who, it seems, remained at the controls while his crew took to their parachutes, and six of them fell into enemy hands, while one evaded capture. ED800 was shot down by a nightfighter over Belgium, with no survivors from the crew of Sgt Duncan, and ED784 was damaged by flak and a nightfighter during the outward flight, and ditched off the French coast while making an early return. Five of F/O Elderfield's crew survived to be rescued, but the pilot and two others lost their lives. In what remained of April, distant Stettin suffered extensive damage at the hands of a force of over three hundred aircraft on the 20/21st, some moderate success was at last gained at Duisburg on the 26/27th, and another effective blow fell on Essen on the last night of the month.

In contrast to April, May would bring some outstanding successes and record-breaking operations, as well as one particular exploit, which would involve former members of 50 Squadron, and would enter bomber folklore as the most celebrated feat of arms in aviation history. The largest non-1,000 force to date, of 596 aircraft, set off for Dortmund on the 4/5th, and delivered a devastating blow. Thirty one aircraft failed to return, however, and such high losses would be a worrying feature throughout the remainder of the campaign. 50 Squadron was not afflicted, but on the 12/13th, the night when Duisburg finally succumbed to a near perfect Bomber Command attack, which destroyed almost sixteen hundred buildings and sank or damaged sixty thousand tons of shipping, W7462 was among thirty four missing aircraft, and was shot down into the Ijsselmeer by a nightfighter, killing P/O Huntley and the other seven men on board. While the main force continued the campaign at Bochum on the following night, a predominately 5 Group force tried again at Pilsen, and again met with

complete failure. A nightfighter caused the demise of ED693 over Germany, and two men died, while Sgt Pickens and four of his crew became POWs.

On the 16/17th, 617 Squadron carried out its epic attack on the dams, and a sprinkling of former 50 Squadron airmen shared in the triumph and the sorrow. Flying as navigator in Gibson's crew was the Canadian P/O "Terry" Taerum, who had flown twenty eight operations with 50 Squadron before being posted to 1654CU in February, and Australian P/O "Spam" Spafford was Gibson's bomb aimer, he having been posted to 617 Squadron from 1660CU after completing a tour with 50 Squadron in January. Rear gunner, the irrepressible F/L Trevor-Roper, had completed two tours with 50 Squadron, amounting to fifty one operations, before his posting to 617 Squadron, and sadly, none of these men would survive the war. A fellow crewmate of Trevor-Roper at 50 Squadron was F/O Earnshaw, who was destined to lose his life with Hopgood at the Möhne Dam, along with another ex 50 Squadron man, the front gunner P/O Fraser. F/L "Mickey" Martin was languishing at 1654CU after his spell with 50 Squadron, and he joined 617 Squadron during the last week of March. Naturally, he drew the majority of his crew from among his former 50 Squadron colleagues, P/O Whittaker, his flight engineer, F/L Leggo his navigator, F/L Hay his bomb aimer and squadron bombing leader, front gunner P/O Foxlee, and rear gunner F/S Simpson, the last four, fellow Australians, and all but Hay would survive the war. 617 Squadron's B Flight commander was S/L Maudslay, who had recently begun a tour with 50 Squadron, having previously served with 44 Squadron in 1941. His dams crew included Sgt Marriott, F/O Urquhart, P/O Fuller, F/O Tytherleigh and Sgt Burrows, all serving with 50 Squadron when the call came through to join 617 Squadron, and all were killed on Operation Chastise. F/L Les Knight took most of his 50 Squadron crew with him to 617 Squadron, Sgt Grayston, F/O Hobday, Sgt Kellow, F/O Johnson and Sgt Sutherland, and all but Knight survived the war, although some as POWs. The other former 50 Squadron airman to participate in the Dams operation was Sgt Jagger, as front gunner in Shannon's crew, and he would lose his life in a flying accident in a Lancaster in April 1944.

The majority of the crews had enjoyed a nine day stand-down from operations when briefings took place for Dortmund on the 23rd. Having hosted a record non-1,000 bomber raid at the start of the month, it would repeat the dubious honour on this night, when 826 aircraft took-off to deliver a massive assault, which destroyed almost two thousand buildings and killed six hundred people. On the debit side, the operation cost a massive thirty eight aircraft, although none from 50 Squadron, which was in the middle of a loss free period. Düsseldorf escaped serious damage on the 25/26th, and a raid on Essen two nights later was only moderately successful. The twin towns of Barmen and Elberfeld, known jointly as Wuppertal, were about to suffer almost total destruction in two raids over the next month. Barmen's turn came on the 29/30th, when seven hundred aircraft reduced 80% of its built-up area to ruins, and killed over three thousand of its inhabitants. Losses to the Command were again high, however, at thirty three aircraft, and there was no answer to the burgeoning effectiveness of the Luftwaffe's Nachtjagd. June began with another stand-down until the 11/12th, when over seven hundred aircraft raided Düsseldorf, and despite stray markers luring away a proportion of the bombing, serious damage was inflicted to industry and housing alike, and 140,000 people lost their homes. The cost was another thirty eight aircraft, and this was added to on

the following night, when Bochum reeled under a heavy assault, but the defences claimed twenty four heavy bombers. This brought an abrupt end to 50 Squadron's exemption from losses, and three empty dispersals at Skellingthorpe was evidence enough of the squadron's fortunes. ED429 blew up in the air over the Ruhr, and just one man escaped with his life from the crew of Sgt McCrossan. ED472 and ED828 both fell victim to nightfighters, the former over Germany, killing F/S Weber and his crew, and the latter over Holland, and F/L Stone and four others lost their lives. A force of under two hundred aircraft attacked Oberhausen on the 14/15th, and in return for another successful outcome, seventeen crews paid the price, among them that of F/O Crawford in ED810, which was shot down by a nightfighter over Belgium with no survivors. A rare training accident claimed the lives of Sgt Hill and his crew during a night bombing exercise on the 18/19th, when W4932 crashed near Lincoln. A hectic round of four operations in five nights began at Krefeld on the 21/22nd, when excellent Pathfinder marking was exploited by a large main force, and the centre of the target became engulfed in a sea of flames, which destroyed over five thousand houses, and killed in excess of a thousand people. Nightfighters exacted a heavy toll of bombers, and forty four failed to return, and when Mülheim was raided on the following night with similar success, the attackers paid with another thirty five aircraft. Neither operation had cost 50 Squadron an aircraft, but at such heavily defended targets, losses were a fact of life, and when, on the 24/25th, the Elberfeld half of Wuppertal was subjected to a raid of even greater ferocity than that which decimated its twin Barmen a month earlier, the squadron's ED712 was among thirty four failures to return, and Sgt Brock and his crew died in the crash in Germany. A break in the run of outstanding successes occurred at the oil town of Gelsenkirchen on the following night, and while bombs were reported all across the Ruhr, few fell on the intended target, and this disappointment was compounded by the loss of thirty more bombers.

A series of operations against Cologne spanned the turn of the month, and brought for this much bombed city its worst experience of the war at the hands of Bomber Command. A force of under six hundred aircraft reached the target on the 28/29th, and delivered a devastating blow against the Rheinland Capital, destroying almost 6,500 buildings, and killing over 4,000 people. A return was made in similar numbers on the 3/4th of July, and a smaller raid by under three hundred aircraft followed up on the 8/9th, after which the catalogue of destruction and casualties amounted to a total for the series of 11,000 buildings destroyed, 5,500 people killed, and a further 350,000 made homeless, at a cost to the Command of sixty two aircraft. After the recent failure at Gelsenkirchen, another attempt was made on the 9/10th, and this again lacked concentration, although some limited damage was inflicted, and the loss of twelve aircraft could be considered moderate for the period. 50 Squadron's ED617 failed to return, having crashed in France with total loss of life among the crew of P/O Hendry, and ED475 struggled back to the Sussex coast with flak damage sustained over the target, and was successfully ditched by Sgt Clifford. He and all but one of his crew were rescued from the sea, the absentee having baled out earlier while the Lancaster was on fire, and he failed to survive. Although two more operations would be mounted to Ruhr targets at the end of the month, this long running campaign was now effectively over, and Harris could look back over the past five months with genuine satisfaction at the performance of his squadrons. Much of Germany's industrial heartland lay in ruins, largely as a result of the success of Oboe, and although losses had been grievously high, the factories were more than keeping pace, and the

Empire Training Scheme was funneling eager new crews into the fray. In a break from Germany, 5 Group joined forces with elements from 1 and 8 Groups to raid Turin on the 12/13th, and left this city with its highest casualties of the war. This was the operation which cost the life of 44 Squadron's commanding officer, W/C Nettleton VC, and 50 Squadron's DV156 also failed to return, and was lost without trace with the eight man crew of P/O Burnett. Three nights later, a small 5 Group contingent of twelve aircraft accompanied 617 Squadron to attack transformer stations in Italy, in a shuttle operation which involved a landing in North Africa, and a further raid on the way home. It was not a successful exercise, DV167 crashing in Italy during the first phase against Reggio Emilia, and F/L Hunt and his crew were killed.

With confidence high, Harris now sought an opportunity to deliver a knock-out blow against a major German city in a short, sharp series of raids under the codename Operation Gomorrah, which would send a message reverberating around the Reich. Having been spared by the weather from hosting the first one thousand bomber raid in May 1942, Hamburg now satisfied Harris's criteria perfectly. As Germany's second city, its political status was undeniable, and as a centre of industry, particularly with regard to U-Boat construction, its destruction would have the required effect on enemy morale. It was also close enough to the bomber stations to be reached in the few hours of darkness afforded by mid summer, could be approached from the sea via an identifiable coastline to aid navigation, and beyond the range of Oboe, which had proved so decisive at the Ruhr, it boasted the distinguishing feature of the wide River Elbe to provide good H2s returns. Launched on the 24/25th, the first round of the battle had the added bonus of the first operational use of the device "Window", the tinfoil-backed strips of paper designed to blind the enemy nightfighter, searchlight and gun-laying radar. Almost eight hundred aircraft took off, and they benefitted immediately from the effects of Window once in the nightfighter patrol area, where fewer than normal engagements took place. A number of aircraft were shot down during this stage of the flight out, but these were generally off track, and outside of the protection of the bomber stream. Over the target, there was an absence of the usually efficient searchlight and flak coordination, and the opportunity was there to deliver a crushing blow. In the event, the initial marking was slightly misplaced, and an extensive creep-back developed, which created a swathe of destruction from the city centre back along the line of approach across the north-western districts, and out into open country, where a proportion of the bombs were wasted. It was, however, a highly successful opening to the campaign, and the loss of just twelve aircraft spoke volumes for the efficacy of Window.

On the following night, Harris took advantage of the chaos caused to the enemy defensive system by Window, and raided Essen. It was another outstanding success, which destroyed almost three thousand houses, and severely damaged the Krupps complex. 50 Squadron posted missing the crew of P/O Dennis from this operation, and he died with four of his crew when ED753 was shot down by a nightfighter over Holland. After a night's rest, over seven hundred aircraft took off to return to Hamburg, and what took place on their arrival was both unprecedented and unforeseeable. A period of unusually hot and dry weather had left the city a tinderbox, and the spark to ignite it came with highly concentrated Pathfinder marking, which, while again misplaced by about two miles, fell predominately into the densely populated working class residential districts of Hamm, Hammerbrook and Borgfeld. The

main force followed up also with uncharacteristic accuracy and almost no creep-back, and unloaded 2,300 tons of bombs into what was a relatively compact area. The individual fires joined together to form one giant conflagration, which sucked in oxygen from surrounding areas at hurricane velocity to feed its voracious appetite. It was a meteorological phenomenon, which uprooted trees and flung them bodily into the inferno, along with people and masses of debris, and temperatures at its heart exceeded one thousand degrees centigrade. Over forty thousand people lost their lives on this one night alone, and a mass evacuation began next day. The defences were beginning to recover from the body-blow of Window, and seventeen aircraft failed to return on this night, on top of the twenty six missing from Essen forty eight hours earlier. 50 Squadron lost its veteran Lancaster R5687 to flak over Germany, and there were no survivors from the crew of F/S Castells. The ordeal continued for Hamburg on the 29/30th, when bombing fell across the already devastated areas, and spread into other residential districts further west. Twenty eight aircraft failed to return, and for the third operation running, 50 Squadron suffered a casualty, this time close to home, when ED468 failed to climb away from Skellingthorpe and crashed. Happily, before it was consumed by fire, the crew of Sgt Clarke scrambled away to safety. On the 30/31st, a relatively small force reduced Remscheid to rubble, and this operation brought down the final curtain on the Ruhr campaign. DV197 was damaged by flak which killed one man, and was brought to a successful crash-landing in Northamptonshire by F/S Cole and his remaining crew.

August brought the final operation in the Gomorrah series, which took place on the 2/3rd, and it was rendered ineffective by violent electrical storms and icing during the outward flight, many of the crews electing to bomb alternative targets, or jettison their bombs over the sea. During the four raids, 50 Squadron despatched forty seven sorties, thirty seven of which bombed the target, one aircraft failed to return, and one crashed on take-off. (The Battle of Hamburg. Martin Middlebrook). The remainder of the first half of the month was devoted to Italy, which was now teetering on the brink of capitulation. P/O Lees's DV223 suffered an engine fire during an operation to Milan on the 7/8th, and crashed on landing in North Africa, injuring one of the crew. On the 11th, W/C Russell concluded his long tour as commanding officer, and he was replaced by W/C McFarlane. It had long been known that Germany was carrying out research into rocketry, and photographic reconnaissance discovered it to be centred on Peenemünde, an island on the Baltic coast. Churchill's chief scientific adviser, Professor Lindemann, or Lord Cherwell as he became, steadfastly refused to accept the feasibility of such weapons, and held firm to this viewpoint even when confronted with a photograph of a V-2 taken by a PRU Mosquito in June 1943. With this incontrovertible evidence to hand, and following the combined urgings of Duncan Sandys and the brilliant scientist, Dr RV Jones, Churchill took the situation seriously, and a decision was taken to attack the site at the first available opportunity, this arising on the night of the 17/18th of August.

It was vitally important to destroy the site at the first attempt, or face the necessity of returning, and 596 aircraft answered the call for a maximum effort, a figure somewhat depleted by the lack of availability of a proportion of the Stirling contingent, which could not be made ready in time following the last raid on Italy the night before. The operation was to be carried out in three waves, each assigned to a specific aiming point, the housing estate, the

factory and the experimental site, with the Pathfinders responsible for shifting the point of the attack accordingly. The whole operation would be controlled by a Master of Ceremonies, G/C Searby of 83 Squadron, in the manner of Gibson at the dams, and a spoof raid on Berlin by Mosquitos of 139 Squadron led by G/C Slee was designed to draw off the nightfighter force.

5 Group was assigned to the last wave, its crews briefed to attack the experimental site, and 50 Squadron contributed twelve aircraft led by S/L Abercromby in EE189. This would be his last operation with the squadron, and the following day would find him assuming command of 619 Squadron, to replace W/C McGhie, who would fail to return on this night. Sadly, Abercromby himself would be killed on the 1/2nd of January while raiding Berlin, shortly after being posted to command 83 Squadron. The other 50 Squadron aircraft and crews were; F/Ls Chopping and Parks in ED755 and JA961, P/Os Duncan and Mason in ED588 and DV217, F/Ss Banks, Code, Nelson, Smith, J Thompson and S Thompson in ED470, W5004, ED415, EE124, DV227 and ED470, and Sgt Weatherstone in ED393. The initial marking of the housing estate went awry, and many bombs fell on the forced workers camp at Trassenheide over a mile beyond, inflicting heavy casualties on these friendly foreign nationals who were trapped inside their wooden barracks. Once rectified, the operation proceeded more or less according to plan, and damage was caused to all three aiming points. 5 Group crews were allowed the option of using the "time and distance" method of aiming, should smoke obscure the bomb-aimers' view of the target, and some will have done this. This was the least effective part of the attack, and while 5 and 6 Groups were in the target area, the nightfighters belatedly arrived from Berlin, and proceeded to take a heavy toll of bombers, both in the skies over Peenemünde, and on the route home towards Denmark. Forty aircraft failed to return, many of them from 5 Group, but 50 Squadron came through unscathed, all of its aircraft having reached and bombed the target. The operation was sufficiently successful to delay development of the V-2 by several weeks, and ultimately to force the withdrawal of the testing programme eastwards into Poland, out of range of Bomber Command.

Harris had long believed that Berlin held the key to ultimate victory. As the seat and Symbol of Nazi power, its destruction would so rock the foundations of the nation's morale, that it might loosen the authority's grip on the populace. Harris had stated, that with the involvement of the UK based American 8th Air Force, he could "wreck Berlin from end to end", and bring an end to the war. Having personally experienced the carnage of trench warfare during the Great War, his intention was to avoid the necessity of a long and bloody land campaign, but as this was precisely what the Americans were committed to, there was never a chance of enlisting their support. Undaunted as always, however, Harris would go to Berlin alone. Launched on the night of the 23/24th, it would be a campaign which, with an autumn break, would drag on until spring, and test the resolve of the crews to the absolute limit. Over seven hundred aircraft set off, and those which arrived at the Capital delivered a moderately effective attack, although many bomb loads were wasted in open country, and the defences had a field day, claiming fifty six heavy bombers, a new record. A similar wastage of bombs attended an attack on Nuremberg on the 27/28th, and little damage resulted in return for the loss of a further thirty three aircraft. The balance was redressed somewhat at the twin towns of Mönchengladbach and Rheydt, which wilted under a highly accurate and concentrated

assault on the 30/31st, and this success was gained at a cost of twenty five aircraft. This expensive phase of operations continued with the second raid in the Berlin series on the last night of the month, when only the southern fringes of the city reported bombs, and another forty seven aircraft were hacked down by the defences.

Remarkably, 50 Squadron had negotiated all these operations since early August without loss, but this fine record ended with the last of the current raids on Berlin on the 3/4th of September, when an all Lancaster force produced some useful industrial damage, and also hit residential areas, but in the absence of the Stirling and Halifax brigades, which had begun to suffer disproportionately heavy losses, twenty two Lancasters failed to return, among them the squadron's ED755, which crashed in Germany, killing F/O Coates and his crew. After a night's rest, a main force assault on Mannheim and Ludwigshafen created widespread damage, and once a medium scale raid on Munich had been concluded on the 6/7th, there was little further major activity until the 22/23rd, when a four raid series spanning the next four weeks began on Hanover. This operation was not successful, but amends were made on the following night at Mannheim, which was again the victim of a heavy and accurate attack. Losses continued to be high, and 50 Squadron's ED415 was among thirty two missing aircraft, and fell to a nightfighter near the target, with no survivors from the crew of P/O Nelson. The second Hanover operation took place on the 27/28th, and fortunately for the city, the highly concentrated bombing was concentrated outside the city, and turned a lot of earth in the surrounding countryside. Another 50 Squadron aircraft failed to return on this night, and just one man survived from the crew of P/O Banks when EE189 crashed in Germany. Two nights later, JB143 was ditched off Denmark following a brush with a nightfighter while on a mining sortie, and P/O Code and five of his crew survived to begin a period of extended leave in a prison camp.

October began with a hectic first eight nights, particularly for the Lancaster brigade, starting with a medium sized raid on Hagen on the 1/2nd, which was a major success, and Munich on the 2/3rd, which was less so. Kassel escaped serious destruction on the 3/4th, although a number of districts near the fringes suffered extensive damage, and large areas of Frankfurt were engulfed in flames following a raid on the 4/5th. This operation cost the squadron the veteran Lancaster W4905, and P/O Wilkie and his crew all died when it crashed near the target. After two previous failures, Hanover finally succumbed to an accurate and concentrated attack on the 8/9th, and most parts of the city were extensively damaged. It was becoming an expensive campaign, and another 50 Squadron aircraft was among this night's missing twenty seven. DV324 was hit by flak shortly after bombing, and went in near the target, killing two of P/O Taylor's crew, he and four others escaping by parachute to become POWs. The final Hanover raid was an all Lancaster affair on the 18/19th, and it was not successful, and the series cost the Command 110 aircraft, in exchange for one highly effective operation. Having escaped serious damage earlier in the month, Kassel fell victim to the second recorded firestorm on the 22/23rd, delivered by a force of little over five hundred aircraft. The catalogue of destruction was enormous, amounting to over 4,300 apartment blocks, and the death toll was between six and nine thousand people. ED483 crashed in Germany, and its pilot, P/O Broadbent, lost his life, presumably ensuring the safety of his crew, who all survived as POWs.

An eleven night stand-down preceded the next major operation, which was to Düsseldorf on the 3/4th of November. It was on this night, that 61 Squadron's F/L Bill Reid earned the award of a Victoria Cross for pressing on to bomb the target after his Lancaster, LM360, was severely damaged, and a number of his crew were either killed or wounded. On return, the aircraft was crash-landed at Shipdham, and following repair, LM360 would eventually find its way to 50 Squadron for further service. There were no more major operations for the time being, as Harris prepared to resume the battle against Berlin, now that the long, dark nights of winter could provide better protection for his crews. It was an all Lancaster force which took-off for the Capital on the 18/19th, while the Stirlings and Halifaxes carried out a diversionary raid on Mannheim and Ludwigshafen. The diversion seems to have been successful, and only nine Lancasters were missing from what was a scattered raid on Berlin. A maximum effort was called for on the 22/23rd, and the squadrons responded by putting up over 750 aircraft. Those which reached the target produced the most destructive attack of the war on the Capital, reducing three thousand houses to rubble, while also hitting industrial premises and creating large areas of fire. 50 Squadron posted missing its first crew for a month, after DV366 crashed in Germany, and W/O Saxton and his crew were killed. This proved to be the final operation over Germany for the Stirling, which was now relegated to secondary if useful duties. A predominately Lancaster heavy force returned on the following night and repeated the success, aided by the glow of fires still burning from the night before. 50 Squadron was not represented among the twenty missing aircraft, but an eventful night awaited it with the next Berlin trip on the night of the 26/27th.

This was an all Lancaster heavy force of over four hundred aircraft, and more by luck than judgement after inaccurate Pathfinder marking, much of the bombing fell into industrial districts, and some important factories were destroyed, along with the usual catalogue of residential damage. A diversionary raid on Stuttgart had little effect on nightfighter activity, and twenty eight aircraft failed to return, while a further fourteen crashed at home. It was during this return phase of the operation, that 50 Squadron's problems arose. DV377 landed at the 4 Group station at Melbourne, and collided with a motor vehicle and JA961, also of 50 Squadron, and both Lancasters were burned out, although neither of the eight man crews of the recently commissioned P/O Weatherstone and P/O Toovey sustained casualties. Also attempting to land in Yorkshire, in their case Pocklington, were F/S Thompson and his crew in ED393, and sadly, while awaiting their turn in the circuit, they crashed, and just two of the crew survived with injuries. DV178 failed to return, having been involved in a mid air collision which forced a ditching, and P/O Adams and five of his eight man crew were rescued by the enemy. These last three operations against Berlin undoubtedly represented the best phase of the entire campaign, and from now on it would be a bitter struggle of ever decreasing returns.

Berlin opened the December account on the 2/3rd, and although some useful industrial damage resulted, much of the bombing missed the mark, and forty aircraft failed to return from a predominately Lancaster force. A nightfighter caused the demise of 50 Squadron's DV325 in the target area, but F/L Bolton, four of his crew and a Daily Express war correspondent, managed to vacate the stricken Lancaster before it crashed, killing the remaining two crew members. (Bomber Command Losses Vol 4. W R Chorley). A heavy

blow fell on Leipzig on the 3/4th, and this was followed by a stand-down until mid month, during which, on the 6th, W/C McFarlane was posted out, to be replaced as commanding officer by W/C Pullen, whose tenure would be brief indeed. It was the Lancaster element again which rejoined the rocky road to the Capital on the 16/17th, a night which will forever be remembered for the thick blanket of fog which greeted the returning crews. Twenty five aircraft were missing from this scattered but moderately effective raid, but the real problems were encountered when the tired crews tried to find somewhere to land. Twenty nine Lancasters either crashed or were abandoned by their crews, and around 150 airmen lost their lives. Mercifully, 50 Squadron was spared a share in the carnage, and all its crews returned safely. Frankfurt escaped with moderate damage on the 20/21st, when dummy target indicators lured a proportion of the bombing away from the intended aiming point, but it was one of those occasions when the creep-back worked in the Command's favour, and a large number of houses and public buildings were destroyed or damaged. It was a good night for the defenders, which brought down forty one aircraft, and unusually for 50 Squadron, two of its aircraft were among them. DV217 blew up in the air, and two of the crew were thrown clear to survive as POWs, but P/O Heckendorf and four others were killed. DV234 was brought down by a combination of flak and a nightfighter over Germany, and W/C Pullen and three of his crew were killed in the ensuing crash, while four others fell into enemy hands. Just two more operations lay between now and the end of the year, and both were to Berlin, the first of them on the 23/24th. Those bombs which found the city, fell mostly in the southern fringes and destroyed housing, and ED445 was the squadron's representative among the sixteen missing Lancasters, and there were no survivors from the crew of F/O Herbert. The raid of the 29/30th was the first of three trips to the Capital in the space of five nights spanning the turn of the year, and it again hit residential districts in the south-east, but many bombs were wasted outside the city limits, something which had become a feature of the campaign. 50 Squadron registered its final loss of the year, when DV375 crashed in the North Sea on return, and F/L McAlpine and five of his crew perished.

It had been a testing end to a year which had brought major successes and advances in tactics, but it had also been a year of high losses, particularly among the Stirling and Halifax squadrons, and the former was now engaged in operations over the occupied countries and mining, although it would find an additional role in the coming year on behalf of the Special Operations Executive. Whilst Window had been an instant success, it had also caused the Luftwaffe to rethink and reorganise, and the nightfighter force which emerged from the ruins of the old system, was a leaner, more efficient and altogether more lethal beast than that of before. As far as the crews of Bomber Command were concerned, the New Year offered the same fare as the old one, and few would view that with relish.

1944

The increasingly war-weary inhabitants of Berlin held similar sentiments, and banners in the streets during their winter of discontent proclaimed, "You may break our walls, but not our hearts. Just like their counterparts in London under the blitz of 1940, they were a hardy people, who were Berliners first and Germans second, and they bore their trials with fortitude and humour, while also finding that communal unity and resolve common to many a

beleaguered populace. They were allowed little time to enjoy the arrival of the New Year, and before the 1st of January was done, over four hundred Lancasters were winging their way towards the Capital, arriving overhead around 03.00 hrs on the 2nd. The results were not commensurate with the effort expended, and much of the bombing fell into open and wooded country. The failure was compounded by the loss of twenty eight Lancasters, to which were added twenty seven on the following night, after another scattered and ineffective raid. Three trips to Berlin in five nights had been unprecedented and exhausting, and the Lancaster crews welcomed the short break before the next operation, which was to distant Stettin on the 5/6th. Assisted by a Mosquito diversion at Berlin, the predominately Lancaster force delivered an accurate attack, which destroyed or damaged large numbers of houses and industrial premises, and sank eight ships in the harbour.

It was left to the Mosquitos of 8 Group's Light Night Striking Force to keep the pot boiling, while the crews of the heavy brigade enjoyed an eight night stand-down. Briefings took place on the 14th for the night's operation, and the crews must have been relieved to see the red line on the wall map stop short of Berlin. It stopped, in fact, at Brunswick, a town in the same region of Germany as Hanover, which had recently proved to be a difficult nut to crack. The raid almost entirely missed the city, and thirty eight empty dispersals on bomber stations next morning adequately portrayed the Command's fortunes. Another five nights elapsed before the next operation, a maximum effort to Berlin on the 20/21st. Cloud prevented an immediate assessment of results, but much of the bombing fell into the hitherto less severely damaged eastern districts. Thirty five aircraft failed to return, and the Halifaxes bore the brunt of the losses, a fact which did not escape notice at Bomber Command HQ. A raid on Magdeburg on the following night drew further attention to the vulnerability of the older Halifaxes, when thirty five of them failed to return in an overall new record loss of fifty seven aircraft. The problems had begun when nightfighters infiltrated the bomber stream before it even crossed the north German coast, and a running battle ensued all the way to the target. A diversion to Berlin by a small force of Lancasters and Mosquitos, which included a contribution from 50 Squadron, clearly did not achieve its aims, and there wasn't even the consolation of a successful attack to soften the blow. Earlier in the day, W/C Heward, an exacting man, was appointed as the new commanding officer, and he would preside over an unprecedented three Berlin raids in four nights at the end of the month.

An all Lancaster heavy force returned to the "Big City" on the 27/28th, and delivered a scattered attack which caused substantial damage, but also afflicted dozens of outlying communities, and at a cost of thirty three aircraft. Remarkably, 50 Squadron had not posted missing a single crew since the end of December, despite the nature and frequency of operations, but this superb record had to come to an end, and did so on the 28/29th. This was a highly destructive raid, but again many bombs were wasted on outlying communities, and forty six aircraft failed to return, among them the squadron's LM428, in which F/L Burt and his crew were killed. On the 30/31st, the raid followed the now familiar pattern of substantial damage within the city, with bombs sprayed around the immediate countryside. It was another expensive night for the Command, which counted a shortfall in returning bombers of thirty three, and this brought the tally for the three raid series to 112 aircraft. This effectively ended the main battle, and the two remaining operations would be in isolation during the next two

months. It is true to say, that Berlin had been hit very hard, but it was by no means in danger of imminent collapse, and would continue to function as the seat of government.

Harsh weather helped to keep the main force on the ground for the first two weeks of February, during which spell, on the 12th, veteran Lancaster W4119, which had originally served with 207 Squadron and a conversion unit, caught fire in the air over Lincolnshire during a fighter affiliation exercise. F/L Beetham and five of the ten men on board successfully escaped by parachute, but sadly, four others were unable to do so and perished in the crash. When the Command next went to war in strength, it was for the penultimate time to Berlin, and was a record breaking effort. The largest non-1,000 force to date of 891 aircraft took-off in the early evening of the 15th, to deliver a record 2,600 tons of bombs, much of to good effect within the Capital's built-up area, destroying housing and industry alike. Again outlying communities were peppered with stray bombs, and again the defences made the attackers pay a high price for any success gained. Forty three aircraft failed to return, and the squadron posted missing the crew of F/O Litherland DFC*, who were all killed in DV376.

Despite the losses, over eight hundred crews again answered the call for a maximum effort on the 19/20th, and they headed towards the greatest disaster to afflict the Command so far in the war. Elements of the enemy nightfighter force were waiting at the Dutch coast, and remained in contact with the bomber stream all the way to eastern Germany. Wrongly forecast winds brought many aircraft to the target area ahead of time, and while orbiting, awaiting the arrival of the pathfinders, around twenty of them were shot down by the local flak. In return for indeterminate results, a massive and record seventy eight aircraft failed to return, and although the Lancaster element was the hardest-hit numerically, the percentage loss among the Halifaxes was prohibitive, and the Merlin powered Mk II and V, like the Stirlings before them, were withdrawn from operations over Germany from this point. Less than six hundred aircraft and crews were available for Stuttgart on the following night, the depleted ranks of the Halifax squadrons represented by those equipped with the new Hercules powered Mk III. This night broke the run of reversals, and for the loss of just nine aircraft, considerable damage was inflicted on the city's central and northern districts. New tactics were introduced for the next two operations, Schweinfurt on the 24/25th and Augsburg twenty four hours later. The forces were split in two, with a two hour gap between, and although the former failed to achieve success, the second phase force lost 50% fewer aircraft than the first, in an overall loss of thirty three. The latter was an outstanding success, however, which ripped the heart out of this beautiful and historic city, and destroyed by fire centuries of its cultural heritage. Twenty one aircraft failed to return, and having bucked the trend since Berlin in mid month, 50 Squadron was forced to post missing P/O Taylor and his crew in LL791. Assigned to the first wave of the operation, the Lancaster was shot down by a nightfighter over France while on the way to the target, and one of the six survivors evaded capture.

Stuttgart opened the March account on the 1/2nd, and bombs fell to good effect in districts which had also suffered extensive damage ten days earlier. In the light of recent experiences, the loss of only four aircraft was highly encouraging, but when, after a two week break from operations, the bombers returned to this southern city in large numbers on the 15/16th, thirty seven of them failed to return, and much of the raid was concentrated in open country. Before

the final operation of the campaign against Berlin took place on the 24/25th, two heavy and concentrated raids hit Frankfurt on the 18/19th and 22/23rd. The former alone destroyed or seriously damaged almost six thousand buildings, and following the latter, half of the city was without electricity, gas and water for an extended period. A combined loss of fifty five aircraft was within sustainable limits, and this figure included 50 Squadron's ED308 from the earlier raid, from which P/O Miller and three of his crew parachuted into captivity, and DV384 and ME578 from the second raid, with no survivors from the crew of F/O Dobbyn in the former, and just two among the crew of P/O Thornton in the latter. What was about to happen over the next week and a half, however, would overshadow anything that had gone before, and would certainly not fall within what might be considered acceptable.

Over eight hundred aircraft set out for Berlin on the evening of the 24th, on the last occasion that the Command would send heavy bombers to this target. The crews encountered "Jetstream" winds from the north at cruising altitude, the first time, it seems, that such powerful winds had been recorded. The cohesion of the bomber stream was broken, and this led to a scattered raid developing at the target, where damage was severe in the south-western districts, but over a hundred outlying communities were also afflicted. Many aircraft were driven by the winds over heavily defended areas during the return flight, and two-thirds of the seventy two missing aircraft fell to the flak batteries, which enjoyed their most successful night of the war. 50 Squadron operated without loss, and its record during this long-running offensive was magnificent. The squadron was present on each of the nineteen main raids on the Capital, and also contributed to the diversion there on the night of the Magdeburg operation. It despatched 281 sorties, only one less than the highest number in 5 Group, and lost eight Lancasters at a rate of 2.8%, which was bettered in the whole Command only by fellow 5 Group 49 Squadron. (The Berlin Raids. Martin Middlebrook).

The period which became known as the Battle of Berlin, or more accurately the winter campaign, still had a week to run, and two more major operations for the crews to negotiate. The first of these was against Essen on the 26/27th, and the destruction of over seventeen hundred houses, and damage to dozens of industrial premises reflected the success which the Command had enjoyed against this target since March 1943, after the introduction of Oboe to main force operations. The winter campaign drew to a close on the 30/31st, with a standard maximum effort raid on Nuremberg. The only departure from normal practice was a direct route from Belgium across Germany, to a point about fifty miles north of the target. This was selected in the face of strenuous protests from AVM Bennett at 8 Group, whose own raid planners were used to including feints, spoofs and diversions to throw off the nightfighter controllers. The route, and a combination of freak meteorological conditions, which included unusually bright moonlight, crystal clear visibility, an absence of the forecast cloud at cruising altitude, but a backcloth below to silhouette the aircraft, the formation of condensation trails, and the presence again of the Jetstream winds, only this time from the south, all served to hand the almost eight hundred strong force on a plate to the waiting nightfighters. The route from Charleroi in Belgium to the target was littered with the burning wreckage of RAF bombers, and at least eighty were hacked down during the outward flight. Blown well north of the planned track by winds in excess of 100mph, the crews which either failed to notice, or refused to believe the evidence, turned towards Nuremberg from a false

position, and many of these bombed Schweinfurt in error. Little damage occurred at Nuremberg, and when all the aircraft which were going to return home had done so, there was a shortfall of ninety five. 50 Squadron was among those hard-hit, in contrast to its trend-bucking record, and three of its nineteen crews failed to return, each the victim of a nightfighter over Germany. Veteran Lancaster R5546 was the first to fall, torn assunder by an explosion over Germany, which threw clear F/S Gray and two of his crew as the only survivors, and they became POWs. F/S Waugh and three of his crew survived the destruction of EE174 by a nightfighter, but the eight man crew of F/L Robinson all died when LM394 suffered a similar fate. The very first casualty of the night was the squadron's W4933, which crashed on take-off in the hands of F/S Bucknell and his crew, who all emerged uninjured.

From now on, the tenor of operations would be in marked contrast to those of the past eight months. In place of the long slog to Germany on dark, often dirty nights, shorter range hops to France would be the order of the day in improving weather conditions, in preparation for the forthcoming invasion of Europe. These operations would be equally demanding in their way, however, and would demand of the crews a greater commitment to accuracy to avoid casualties among friendly civilians. One fly in the ointment was the decree from on high, that such operations were worthy of counting as just one third of a sortie towards the completion of a tour, and until this flawed policy was rescinded, an air of mutiny would pervade the crew rooms. Despite the prohibitive losses of the winter campaign, the Command was in remarkably fine fettle to face its new challenge, and Harris was in the enviable position of being able to achieve what his predecessor had attempted to do but failed, namely, to attack multiple targets simultaneously, in sufficient numbers to make an impact. He could assign targets to individual Groups, to Groups in tandem or to the Command as a whole, as dictated by operational requirements, and provide a Pathfinder element to accompany each force. The priority now was the Transportation Plan, the dismantling of the French railway system, a campaign which had, in fact, already begun in early March, when the Halifaxes withdrawn from the main battle attacked railway targets at Trappes and Le Mans. Now the rest of the heavy brigade could join in, but while Harris was at the helm, city-busting would not be entirely shelved in favour of other considerations.

The first target for 5 Group in April, was an aircraft factory at Toulouse, and this was effectively dealt with on the 5/6th. Railway yards at Tours received similar treatment on the 10/11th, before the Group joined 1, 3 and 8 Groups for an area attack on Aachen on the following night. A heavy blow was delivered, which inflicted a large number of casualties on the ground, in return for a loss to the attackers of nine aircraft, one of which was ME572 from 50 Squadron, this Lancaster disappearing without trace with the crew of P/O Skillen. On the 14th, the Command became officially subject to the dictates of SHAEF, and would remain thus shackled until the Allied armies were sweeping towards the German frontier. Railway yards at Juvisy occupied the Group on the 18/19th, and likewise at La Chapelle on the 20/21st. It was at the latter that the 5 Group low level visual marking technique was employed for the first time, having been devised by W/C Cheshire and 50 Squadron's former son, S/L "Micky" Martin of 617 Squadron. Frustrated by the inaccuracy even of Oboe marking during attacks on flying bomb sites in the Pas-de-Calais in December and January, when 617 had plastered the markers, only to find that the markers had missed the targets by a few hundred

yards, Martin had practiced a dive bombing approach in a Lancaster, and found it a highly precise way to deliver target indicators. It was a somewhat hairy experience in a Lancaster, though, and Cheshire tried the method in a Mosquito, before taking the idea to the ever receptive AOC, Sir Ralph Cochrane. He approached Harris, and 617 Squadron was allowed to take on charge four Mosquitos to mark targets for the squadron's Lancasters. On the 18th, the former 5 Group squadrons, 83 and 97, returned to the Group on permanent loan from the Pathfinders to perform the illuminator function, along with 627 Squadron to take over the Mosquito role from 617 Squadron. On this night's debut of the technique, the 627 Squadron crews were there to observe 617 Squadron in action, and a number of 8 Group Oboe Mosquitos provided the initial indication of the target. The operation was conducted in two phases, one hour apart, and after some minor difficulties in communication at the start, all went as planned, and the railway yards were severely damaged. The first use of the 5 Group method at a German city target took place at Brunswick on the 22/23rd, and failed to find the mark, but when repeated at Munich on the 24/25th, it was an outstanding success, and probably sealed the award of the Victoria Cross to 617 Squadron's W/C Cheshire at the conclusion of his tour. ND876 was the 50 Squadron representative among the nine missing Lancasters, and was despatched by flak over the target, killing F/O Durham and his crew. This was the squadron's final casualty of a month which had been relatively kind. May, however, would be a different proposition.

The month began well at Toulouse, where the Group successfully dealt with two factories on the 1/2nd. The 3/4th brought a 1 and 5 Group attack on the Panzer training camp and transport depot at Mailly-le-Camp, which should have been a straight-forward affair, controlled by W/C Deane of 83 Squadron, with W/C Cheshire as marker leader. Having attended separate briefings, there seems to have been a degree of confusion concerning the overall plan, and the involvement of 1 Group's Special Duties Flight, which was assigned to a specific objective of its own. Partly as a result of interference by a commercial broadcasting station, a delay occurred in calling in the main force crews to bomb after the marking had been carried out, and this allowed nightfighters to infiltrate the Lancasters as they milled around in the target area. As burning aircraft were observed to fall in large numbers, some crews succumbed to anxiety and frustration, and a number of questionable comments were heard over the R/T in a rare breakdown in discipline. Once in progress, the bombing was accurate and caused severe damage to the target, but forty two bombers were shot down, and 50 Squadron experienced a bad night by losing four crews. There were no survivors from the crew of P/O Handley in ED870, one man survived and ultimately evaded capture from the crew of P/O Hanson in LM437, F/L Blackham and one other evaded capture after alone surviving the demise of LM480, and P/O Dobson and one of his crew did likewise from ND953, while a third man fell into enemy hands.

Five railway targets were selected for the 10/11th, with a 50 Squadron element briefed for Lille, and most of the night's casualties resulted from this successful raid. The squadron was represented among the twelve failures to return by LM429 and NN694, and the crews of P/O McFarlin and W/O Mason were duly posted missing. There were no survivors from the former following a crash in Belgium, and there was also total loss of life among the latter after a nightfighter attack over France. The Group returned to Tours on the 19/20th, to attend

to railway yards near the town centre, taking great care to avoid colateral damage to the town, although this was never entirely possible. On return, ND989 crashed while on approach to Benson, and P/O Irving died with two of his crew. The first raid on Duisburg for a year was successfully completed on the 21/22nd by 1, 3, 5 and 8 Groups, but it cost twenty nine Lancasters, including 50 Squadron's ME979, which was shot down by flak over Germany, killing the crew of F/O Amphlett. On the following night, another attempt was made by elements of 1 and 5 Groups on the difficult town of Brunswick, when once again success was elusive at a cost of thirteen aircraft. 50 Squadron's LL744 crashed into the North Sea on the way home, and there were no survivors from the crew of F/L Startin. Happily, this was the last casualty of the month, which had brought eight missing aircraft and crews, in addition to the one which crashed.

June was a hectic month which made great demands on the crews. Besides the railway campaign, operations were required in support of the D-Day landings, two new offensives opened against oil and flying bomb launching and storage sites, and airfields, ports and fuel and ammunition dumps also required attention. Over a thousand aircraft were aloft on D-Day Eve to target ten coastal batteries, including one at St Pierre du Mont, from which the squadron's ND874 failed to return and just one man survived from the crew of P/O Ward, and he managed to evade capture. The next three nights were devoted to attacks on road and rail communications behind enemy lines, to prevent the forward movement of reinforcements, and this brought about the loss of LL841 from an attack on railway yards at Rennes on the 8/9th, and the deaths of P/O Gilmour and his crew. The oil campaign opened at Gelsenkirchen on the 12/13th at the hands of 1, 3 and 8 Groups, and it was an outstanding success, which halted all production at the plant for several weeks. The first daylight raids since the departure of 2 Group a year earlier were mounted against Le Havre on the evening of the 14th, to destroy the fast, light E-Boats which posed a threat to Allied shipping serving the beachhead. The two attacks were a complete success, and a similar operation took place at Boulogne twenty four hours later. A second new campaign, this one against flying bomb launching and storage sites in the Pas-de-Calais, was opened on the 16/17th by elements from 1, 4, 5, 6 and 8 Groups, and all four targets were accurately bombed.

It was not until the 21/22nd that 5 Group became involved in the oil campaign, and it turned into a bad night all round. 128 Lancasters and six Mosquitos, with five 1 Group Lancasters for company, were sent to the synthetic oil plant at Wesseling, while 124 Lancasters and Mosquitos headed for Scholven-Buer in company with eight Oboe Mosquitos. Cloud prevented use of the low level visual marking system at both targets, and the Wesseling attack went ahead by H2s alone, while the Pathfinders laid Oboe aimed skymarkers at Scholven. Some damage resulted at both refineries, but the Wesseling force was massacred by nightfighters, and thirty seven aircraft were shot down, over 27% of the force, and four 5 Group squadrons, 44, 49, 57 and 619 each lost six aircraft. 50 Squadron posted missing the eight man crew of S/L Cole from the Scholven raid in LL840, he and five others surviving, three of them to evade capture. A new commanding officer, W/C Frogley, had arrived earlier in the day to preside over this and future operations, W/C Heward having been poached by 97 Squadron following the loss of its commanding officer, W/C Carter, on D-Day morning. Over seven hundred aircraft attacked flying bomb sites on the 24/25th, and the two 50 Squadron

crews, those in JA899 and ME798, failed to return from the one at Prouville. Both Lancasters crashed in France, P/O Peters and one other surviving from the former, but P/O Wood and his crew all died in the latter.

July was dominated by the offensive against flying bomb sites, and it was the 4th before 5 Group was next active, 617 Squadron attacking a cave at St Leu d'Esserent, which was being used as a storage site. This evening operation was followed up hours later by over two hundred of the Group's aircraft, which delivered an accurate attack, but in an encounter with nightfighters, lost thirteen of their number. It was during this operation that the Squadron's ED588 VN-G logged her 100th sortie, being the mount on this occasion of F/L Enoch and crew, but sadly, she would not survive the war. It was considered necessary to repeat the attack on St Leu on the 7/8th, and this time twenty nine Lancasters and two Mosquitos failed to return, 50 Squadron registering the loss of three aircraft. F/S Davies and his crew were all killed in DV363, and there were also no survivors from the crew of Sgt Lloyd in DV277. PA996 exploded in the air over France, and as so often happened on such occasions, the pilot, P/O Laidlaw, was thrown clear as the lone survivor of his crew, and he ultimately evaded capture. Operations followed to railway targets, including Revigny, which required three attempts to destroy it, the first two by predominately 1 Group forces. The successful operation was by 5 Group on the 18/19th, but it cost twenty four aircraft, including DV312 from 50 Squadron, in which F/O Long and five of his crew were killed, the sole survivor evading capture. This was followed by a mini campaign against Stuttgart, which was targeted three times in the space of five nights, beginning on the 24/25th. This night also brought a small scale 5 and 8 Group attack on an oil depot at Donges, and both operations cost the squadron an aircraft. LL842 failed to return from Stuttgart, and claimed the lives of F/O Parker and four of his crew, and PA968 was lost from the Donges operation, with total loss of life among the crew of P/O Haaland. The middle Stuttgart raid was the most destructive of the three, and the city was left severely damaged by the end of the last one on the 28/29th. This was a bad night for the attackers, which were pounced on by nightfighters while outbound over France, and thirty nine were shot down in a grim reminder of the dark times of the winter past. LM210 was one of the victims, and was shot down over Germany with no survivors from the crew of F/O Curphey. This was, however, the final loss of the month for 50 Squadron.

August was destined to be an unhappy month for the squadron, and would effectively bring to an end the campaigns against railways and flying bomb sites in occupied territory. The squadron's troubles began at the flying bomb supply site at Bois de Cassan in daylight on the 6th, where confusion led to half the force bringing their bombs home, and the veteran W4824 was one of three Lancasters missing. This contained the crew of F/O Coombs, who died with four others, while the two survivors evaded capture. On the following night, over a thousand aircraft supported ground forces, by bombing enemy concentrations in their path. Elements of 5 Group were briefed for Secqueville, one of five aiming points, and 50 Squadron posted missing the crew of F/L Palandri in LL922, later to learn that the captain and two others had been killed, while three of the four survivors had retained their freedom. ME813 crashed at Skellingthorpe on return, but F/O Mountain and his crew emerged unscathed. An oil storage dump at Forêt de Châtellerault was successfully attacked by elements of 1 and 5 Groups on the 9/10th, and the squadron's LM435 was one of two Lancasters failing to return, sadly

without survivors from the crew of F/O Best. A busy night on the 12/13th saw an experimental raid on Brunswick without Pathfinder support, an attack on enemy troop concentrations in the Falaise area, numerous small-scale sweeps and forays, and an attempt to neutralize the Opel motor works at Rüsselsheim by a mixed force of almost three hundred aircraft. This last mentioned was not successful, and for the period was quite expensive, and the squadron's NE135 was one of twenty aircraft which failed to return. The Lancaster crashed in Belgium, and F/O Haynes and his crew were all killed. Later on the 13th, fifteen Lancasters attacked an oil depot at Bordeaux, and PD237 failed to return to Skellingthorpe, the fifth 50 Squadron aircraft to go missing in the first two weeks of the month. The crew, however, was safe, F/S Lorimer and one other evading capture, while their colleagues baled out over Allied held territory.

With the end in sight for Bomber Command's subjection to SHAEF, Harris was planning his return to Germany and a new night offensive. To this end, over a thousand aircraft were launched by daylight against nightfighter airfields on the 15th, and in an old style city-busting raid on the 16/17th, Stettin suffered devastation to residential and industrial buildings, and thousands of tons of shipping was sunk or damaged in the harbour. Bremen felt the weight of an accurate attack on the 18/19th, and then, while a further attempt was being made on the Opel works at Rüsselsheim by 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups on the 25/26th, 5 Group went to nearby Darmstadt, where a catalogue of misfortunes compromised the raid, and little damage resulted. ED856 was abandoned over France, and the crew of F/O Frew arrived safely on the ground, albeit with a number of injuries to report. It was a temporary reprieve for the town, and its time would come in less than three weeks. While Kiel was being pounded on the 26/27th, 5 Group flew to distant Königsberg at the eastern end of the Baltic, and returned on the 29/30th, taking advantage of a simultaneous attack on Stettin by 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups. Both operations were an outstanding success, but casualties were high, twenty three of the Stettin force and fifteen from Königsberg failing to return. It was a bad night for 50 Squadron, which posted missing four crews with just one survivor between them. ED588's loss to a crash in Sweden was particularly sad, she having arrived from 97 Squadron in early 1943, and participated in all the campaigns since, notching up what was probably an unprecedented fifteen trips to Berlin during the twelve months to March 1944. Her total operations tally was, according to various records, 126, 128 or 130, and it seems that 116 of these were undertaken with 50 Squadron. Lost with her was the crew of F/O Carver with no survivors, and a similar fate was the lot of the crews of F/O Clarke and F/O Holseth, who were both lost without trace in LM222 and NF921 respectively. The operation's other casualty from Skellingthorpe was PA994, in which F/O Horspool and all but one of his crew were killed.

Le Havre was the main focus of attention between the 5th and 11th of September, and six operations were mounted to the area to dislodge enemy strong points preventing capture of the port. 5 Group played its part on the 10th and 11th, hours after which, the German garrison surrendered to British forces. That night, 5 Group returned to Darmstadt, and the ensuing attack created a firestorm in the central districts, which led to a death toll in excess of twelve thousand people, with a further seventy thousand made homeless. Among the twelve Lancasters missing from the operation were 50 Squadron's NF919 and PD294, both of which crashed in Germany, with no survivors from the crew of F/S McLean in the former, and three

from the crew of F/O Odgers in the latter. On the following night, 1 and 5 Groups went to Stuttgart, while further elements of 1 Group with 3 and 8 Groups carried out the final major raid of the war on Frankfurt. Both operations produced highly accurate and concentrated bombing for a combined loss of twenty one aircraft. 50 Squadron's LM162 crashed in Lincolnshire on return, after being involved in a mid-air collision, but F/O Hickling and his crew survived, albeit with a number of injuries. German positions around Boulogne were attacked by over seven hundred aircraft on the 17th, and this was sufficient for the port to fall to Allied forces. A target which had a particular, almost personal association with 5 Group since 1940, was the Dortmund-Ems Canal, and numerous attacks would be carried out against it, and the Mittelland Canal which joined it, right through to almost the end of hostilities. As a vital part of the Reich's communications network, a spirited defence was always guaranteed, and this greeted the 130 strong 5 Group force on the 23/24th. Breaches were made in both banks of the canal at Ladbergen, and these were undoubtedly caused by the Tallboys dropped by the 617 Squadron element, who were returning to the scene of a disastrous night for them twelve months earlier, which had witnessed the death of the former 50 Squadron pilot and Dambuster, F/L Les Knight. On this night it cost fourteen Lancasters, 10% of the force, and 50 Squadron was represented by LM212 and ME700. The former crashed in Holland with just one survivor from the crew of F/O Sweetman, but F/L Korpela and two of his crew abandoned the latter before it crashed in Belgium, and they managed to evade capture. As at Le Havre, German strong points were holding up the capture of Calais, and from the 20th, efforts were made to dislodge them. Six daylight operations brought an eventual surrender to Canadian forces on the 28th, and the series cost the squadron LM264, which failed to return on the 24th, and took to their deaths the crew of F/O Warrington.

A new Ruhr campaign began at Dortmund on the 6/7th of October, and this led to Operation Hurricane, a demonstration to the enemy of the overwhelming superiority of the Allied forces ranged against it. Shortly after breakfast on the 14th, almost a thousand aircraft descended on Duisburg, and deposited onto it over four thousand tons of bombs. That night, similar numbers returned to press home the point about superiority, while 5 Group took advantage of the activity there, to press further eastwards to Brunswick, which finally, after so many failures in the past, succumbed to a highly accurate and concentrated assault. Essen received its visits from the Hurricane force on the 24/25th, and again later in the day by daylight, after which it ceased to be an important centre of war production. Cologne's turn came on the 28th, 30/31st and on the last night of the month, and it too was almost finished as a functioning city. The 28/29th brought a 5 Group raid on U-Boat pens at Bergen in Norway, but in the face of thick cloud, the Master Bomber was forced to abandon proceedings after only a proportion of the force had bombed. Three Lancasters were lost, among them 50 Squadron's single casualty of the month, PD326, and this was lost without trace with the crew of F/O Wonders.

The repair of the Dortmund-Ems Canal was an open invitation to 5 Group to pay further visits, and the first of these occurred on the 4/5th of November. A successful outcome drained stretches of the waterway, and prevented vital supplies of coke from reaching steelworks. Canal-busting was again the purpose of a 5 Group operation on the 6/7th, this time involving the Mittelland at its junction with the Dortmund-Ems at Gravenhorst. Marking difficulties

called a premature halt, and the defenders brought down ten Lancasters, including 50 Squadron's LM628, in which F/O Rennie and his crew were killed when it crashed in Holland. Returning early from a raid on the Rhenania-Ossag oil refinery at Harburg on the 11th, a Lancaster with a history crashed while trying to land at Fiskerton, having suffered engine failure. LM360 was the aircraft in which 61 Squadron's Bill Reid had earned the Victoria Cross twelve months earlier, and as 61 Squadron shared Skellingthorpe, following repair, its passage to 50 Squadron had been easy. It was in the hands of F/O Hickling and crew on this night, and they survived their second crash-landing, having narrowly escaped death following the mid-air collision two months earlier. Much of the remainder of the month was devoted to oil related targets, and 5 Group revisited both the Dortmund-Ems and Mittelland Canals on the 21/22nd, leaving long stretches of them drained. December followed a similar pattern, but a number of small towns which were unfortunate enough to lie in the path of the enemy retreat, were bombed to extinction, and others like Heilbronn, whose only importance was as a small link in the communications chain, were also flattened in one night by forces of only moderate size. Cities which were used to the Command's attentions also featured during the month, Essen receiving its last major night raid of the war on the 12/13th, and Duisburg was attacked on the 17/18th, although neither needed the assistance of 5 Group. It was active elsewhere on the 17/18th, at Munich to be precise, and more destruction was heaped on this much bombed objective, at a cost to the attackers of four aircraft. LM676 and NG302 were both from 50 Squadron, the former a victim of flak over the target. Five men were killed in the crash, the pilot, F/O Amey, succumbed to his injuries some time later, and one man fell into enemy hands. There is a suggestion that the latter may have been brought down by Allied flak over Belgium, but whatever the cause, there were no survivors from the crew of F/O Beer. Despite the enemy breakout in the Ardennes, the year closed with the unmistakable scent of victory in the air, the only remaining question being how long it would take.

1945

Much remained to be done as the New Year dawned, and the Luftwaffe did itself no favours by launching the ill conceived and ultimately ill-fated Operation Bodenplatte at first light on New Year's Day. The entire Tagjagd was committed to the destruction of the Allied Air Forces on the ground at airfields in the recently liberated countries. Around 250 fighters were lost, and many of those pilots who survived, found themselves in Allied hands. It was not an entirely auspicious start to the year for 50 Squadron, whose NG127 crashed on take-off from Skellingthorpe when bound for the Mittelland Canal at Gravenhorst on the 1st, although F/O Sagar and his crew were unhurt. During the course of the operation, NF984 was damaged by flak and one member of the crew baled out, before F/O Skilling carried out a successful crash-landing at Juvincourt. A controversial attack on the small French town of Royan in the early hours of the 5th came in response to a request from Free French forces, who needed to take the town to get at Bordeaux. The German garrison commander offered the residents passage out of the town, but many refused, and a goodly number of these were killed in the ensuing bombing. Sadly, in the event, it was one of those futile wastages of life that war throws up, and the garrison remained in place until mid April. PD292 failed to return to Skellingthorpe from this operation, and this time good fortune deserted the crew of F/O

Sagar, who were lost without trace. The last major raids of the war on Hanover and Munich fell on the cities on the 5/6th and the 7/8th respectively, and the oil offensive continued at Leuna near Merseburg on the 14/15th. This two phase operation dealt a major blow to the industry, as did others during the period, and it further reduced production of aviation fuel, which was now in short supply. 50 Squadron lost LM234 among the ten Lancasters which failed to return, this falling to flak over Germany, and F/O Nicol and four of his crew were killed.

Just when the crews must have thought that the worst was over, the first week of February provided a sharp reminder, particularly to 50 Squadron, that the tenacious enemy was going to fight for every inch of its homeland. Over 250 aircraft of 5 Group produced a rare failure for the period at Siegen on the 1/2nd, largely because of difficulties with marking, and most of the bombs fell in open country. PD346 was one of three Lancasters missing, and it contained the crew of F/O Fairbairn, who died with four others, while the two survivors were captured. This loss was followed by two more, those of NG381 and PA223 on the 2/3rd, when a second failure occurred, this time at Karlsruhe. F/O Tarrant and all of his crew were killed when the former crashed in southern Germany, and one man was blown clear to survive when the latter exploded near the Franco-German border, but F/O Harrop and the rest of the crew died. The hat-trick of failures was completed at the Ladbergen section of the Dortmund-Ems Canal on the 7/8th, and this time PD316 failed to return with the crew of F/L Boyle, he and four others losing their lives. This uncharacteristic for the period run of results came to an end on the 8/9th, with a two phase attack on a synthetic oil plant at Pölitz, the first by 5 Group and the second by 1 and 8 Groups. An outstanding success, it halted production for the remainder of the war, but 50 Squadron posted missing its fifth crew of the month, that of P/O Hewett in NG385, which crashed into the sea near the target. Operation Thunderclap, the Churchill inspired campaign against Germany's eastern cities, was unleashed on Dresden on the 13/14th, in another two phase attack led by 5 Group. Only partially successful, the fires it created acted as a beacon for the second force three hours behind, and the resultant firestorm dwarfed even that at Hamburg, and estimates of the death toll ranged from 50-250,000 people, although the lower figure is accepted as the true one. The last major night raid of the war against Dortmund hit the city on the 20/21st, Duisburg was raided for the last time on the following night, and also on that night, 5 Group rectified the recent failure at Gravenhorst, by rendering the Mittelland Canal unnavigable, at least for a time. The familiar hostile reception took its toll, and two further 50 Squadron crews, those of F/O Anderson and F/O Hatcher in LL741 and RF138 respectively, were added to the growing list of those missing in action. The former crashed in Holland with just one survivor, who landed in Allied territory, while the sole survivor from the latter became a POW.

The final of many raids on Cologne during the war, fell on the city by daylight on the 2nd of March, and it was captured by American forces days later. 5 Group breached the Ladbergen Viaduct section of the Dortmund-Ems Canal on the 3/4th, the night on which the Luftwaffe launched Operation Gisella, a large intruder effort, which was successful in shooting down twenty bombers, and causing panic throughout the Command. While seven hundred aircraft raided Chemnitz under Operation Thunderclap on the 5/6th, over two hundred 5 Group Lancasters tried to smash an oil refinery at Böhlen, but cloud prevented accurate assessment

of results. F/O King's NF918 was a casualty of this operation, crashing in southern Germany with no survivors. NG177 was lost without trace with the crew of F/L Ling while raiding a similar target at distant Lützkendorf on the 14/15th, where moderate damage resulted for an overall loss of eighteen Lancasters. The squadron welcomed a new commanding officer to see them through to the end, W/C Flint, who had risen through the ranks from Sgt, having replaced the long serving W/C Frogley on the 11th. Böhlen again claimed a squadron aircraft on the 20/21st, ME441 containing Sgt Levy and crew, all but one of whom were killed, but this time there was no doubt about the outcome, and the plant produced no more oil before the end of hostilities. The month's other casualty involved NG171, which suffered an engine failure while outbound to Wesel on the 23/24th, and crashed on landing at Florennes in the hands of F/O Lillies and his crew, happily without injuries. April would bring an end to the bombing war for the heavy squadrons, and there would be only one more failure to return for 50 Squadron to endure, this occurring during an operation against oil storage tanks at Finkenwerder (Hamburg) by daylight on the 9th. NG342 bore the sad honour of being the very last 50 Squadron aircraft to fail to return, and it contained the crew of F/O Berriman, who all died in the crash in the target area. The final operations for the Group took place on the 25th, a daylight raid on the SS barracks at Hitler's Eaglesnest retreat at Berchtesgaden during the morning, and an attack that night on an oil refinery at Tonsberg in Norway. Later on the 26th, PD339 crashed in Northamptonshire while low flying on the way home from delivering former POWs to Wing airfield in Buckinghamshire, and F/O Evans and four of his crew proved to be the squadron's final fatalities of the war.

It had been a long and testing war for all concerned, and one which 50 Squadron negotiated with distinction. It took part in more operations than any other squadron in the Command, and also conducted the highest number of bombing operations. It flew the highest number of sorties, and dropped the greatest bomb tonnage in 5 Group, and carried out the highest number of Hampden operations in the Command. 50 Squadron was, without doubt, one of the premier units in Bomber Command, with a fine reputation. It counted many amongst its number who were, or would become characters and legends. Henry Maudslay, Mickey Martin and Les Knight all found fame as Dambuster pilots, and others from the squadron also joined 617 in various crew capacities. The spirit and morale of 50 Squadron contributed to its experiencing one of the lowest percentage loss rates of any which went right through the Battle of Berlin, and this was an indication of the quality of leadership, which the squadron enjoyed throughout.

STATIONS

WADDINGTON	03.05.37. to 10.07.40.
LINDHOLME	10.07.40. to 19.07.41.
SWINDERBY	19.07.41. to 26.11.41.
SKELLINGTHORPE	26.11.41. to 20.06.42.
SWINDERBY	20.06.42. to 17.10.42.
SKELLINGTHORPE	17.10.42. to 15.06.45.

COMMANDING OFFICERS

WING COMMANDER L YOUNG	12.07.38. to 10.04.40.
WING COMMANDER R T TAAFE OBE	10.04.40. to 12.06.40.
WING COMMANDER N D CROCKART	12.06.40. to 27.06.40.
WING COMMANDER G W GOLLEDGE	27.06.40. to 16.12.40.
WING COMMANDER G A WALKER DSO DFC	16.12.40. to 26.10.41.
WING COMMANDER R J OXLEY DSO DFC	26.10.41. to 20.10.42.
WING COMMANDER W M RUSSELL DFC	20.10.42. to 11.08.43.
WING COMMANDER R McFARLANE DSO DFC	11.08.43. to 06.12.43.
WING COMMANDER F PULLEN DFC	06.12.43. to 21.12.43.
WING COMMANDER A W HEWARD DFC AFC	21.01.44. to 21.06.44.
WING COMMANDER R T FROGLEY	21.06.44. to 11.03.45.
WING COMMANDER J FLINT DFC GM DFM	11.03.45. to 25.01.46.

AIRCRAFT

HAMPDEN	12.38. to 05.42.
MANCHESTER	04.42. to 06.42.
LANCASTER I/III	05.42. to 11.46.

SECTION 2



OPERATIONAL RECORD

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OPERATIONAL RECORD

OPERATIONS 767	SORTIES 7135	AIRCRAFT LOSSES 176	% LOSSES 2.5
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CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS

BOMBING 620	MINING 124	LEAFLET 23
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HAMPDEN

OPERATIONS 368	SORTIES 2299	AIRCRAFT LOSSES 57	% LOSSES 2.5
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CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS

BOMBING 266	MINING 88	LEAFLET 14
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MANCHESTER

OPERATIONS 44	SORTIES 126	AIRCRAFT LOSSES 7	% LOSSES 5.6
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CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS

BOMBING 15	MINING 10	LEAFLET 9
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LANCASTER

OPERATIONS 365	SORTIES 4710	AIRCRAFT LOSSES 112	% LOSSES 2.4
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CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS

BOMBING 339	MINING 26
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TABLE OF STATISTICS

(Heavy squadrons)

Highest number of overall operations in Bomber Command.
Highest number of bombing operations in Bomber Command.
3rd highest number of sorties in Bomber Command.
8th highest number of aircraft operational losses in Bomber Command.

Out of 59 Lancaster squadrons.

5th highest number of Lancaster overall operations in Bomber Command.
3rd highest number of Lancaster sorties in Bomber Command.
8th highest number of Lancaster operational losses in Bomber Command.

Out of 22 squadrons in 5 Group.

Highest number of overall operations in 5 Group.
Highest number of sorties in 5 Group.
2nd highest number of aircraft operational losses in 5 Group.

Out of 10 Hampden squadrons in 5 Group.

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

Out of 8 Manchester squadrons in 5 Group.

5th highest number of Manchester overall operations in 5 Group.
6th highest number of Manchester sorties in 5 Group.
6th highest number of Manchester operational losses in 5 Group.

Out of 17 Lancaster squadrons in 5 Group.

4th highest number of Lancaster overall operations in 5 Group.
Highest number of Lancaster sorties in 5 Group.
4th highest number of Lancaster operational losses in 5 Group.

SECTION 3



AIRCRAFT LISTING

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50 SQUADRON.

HAMPDEN.

To May 1942.

L4062 Crashed while landing at Lindholme on return from Calais 26.9.40.
L4063 Crashed in Scotland on return from patrol 16/17.3.40.
L4064 FTR Kristiansand Norway 12.4.40.
L4065 FTR from mining sortie 13/14.4.40.
L4073 FTR Kristiansand Norway 12.4.40.
L4074 To 44Sqn.
L4075 To 16 OTU.
L4076 To 14 OTU.
L4077 To 49Sqn.
L4078 FTR Langenhagen airfield Hanover 26/27.6.40.
L4079 FTR Mönchen-Gladbach 30/31.8.40.
L4080 Damaged beyond repair in taxiing accident at Waddington 17.10.39.
L4081 FTR Kristiansand Norway 12.4.40.
L4083 FTR Kristiansand Norway 12.4.40.
L4084 To 25 OTU.
L4096 Crashed soon after take-off from Waddington while training 31.10.39.
L4097 FTR Ostend 10/11.9.40.
L4099 To 44Sqn.
L4149 From 106Sqn. FTR Mannheim 10/11.11.40.
L4150 From 106Sqn. To 16 OTU.
L4164 From 7Sqn. To 1 AAS.
L4168 From 44Sqn. Returned to 44Sqn.
P1152 From 44Sqn. Crashed in Yorkshire following early return from mining sortie 16.11.41.
P1156 To 455Sqn.
P1166 From 144Sqn. Returned to 144Sqn.
P1202 Force-landed near Skellingthorpe on return from Hamburg 1.12.41.
P1223 To 1404Flt.
P1228 To 106Sqn.
P1239 To 420Sqn.
P1317 Crashed on approach to Hemswell on return from Leipzig 26/27.8.40.
P1321 From 106Sqn. Landed on a Norfolk beach on return from Castrop-Rauxel 26.7.40.
P1327 SOC on return from mining sortie 1.8.40.
P1329 FTR Hanover 26/27.6.40.
P1330 To Farnborough.
P1356 From 83Sqn. To 16 OTU.
P2070 FTR Berlin 25/26.8.40.
P2093 To 1 AAS.
P2094 From 144Sqn. To 420Sqn.

P2124 Ditched off Yorkshire coast on return from Berlin 26.8.40.
P4285 To 44Sqn.
P4286 To 44Sqn.
P4287 FTR Hamburg 8/9.9.40.
P4288 Crashed near Waddington while training 9.7.40.
P4289 VN-X Crashed on approach to Waddington while training 8.6.40.
P4382 FTR from training flight 10/11.8.40.
P4383 FTR from mining sortie 31.7/1.8.40.
P4389 Crashed soon after take-off from Lindholme on air-test 18.6.41.
P4395 To 14 OTU.
P4408 Crashed in North Sea during air-sea rescue operation 15.8.41.
P4409 From 49Sqn. Crashed on take-off from Lindholme while training 1.4.41.

P4411 Crashed on landing at Docking on return from Berlin 1.10.40.
P4417 FTR Cologne 5/6.10.40.
P5335 From 7 AAU. To 144Sqn.
X2896 Crashed in Scotland on return from Hamburg 3.10.40.
X2897 To 83 Sqn..
X2902 FTR Stuttgart 29/30.9.40.
X2907 FTR Magdeburg 5/6.11.40.
X2908 VN-Y Crashed at Goole on return from Hamburg 15.11.40.
X2919 Crashed near Wittering on return from Berlin 3.9.41.
X2968 To 16 OTU.
X2983 FTR from mining sortie 14/15.2.41.
X2984 Crashed in Yorkshire on return from Cologne 2.3.41.
X2991 Crashed on take-off from Swinderby en-route to Mannheim 27/28.8.41.
X2992 To 25 OTU.
X2993 FTR Berlin 14/15.10.40.
X2994 Abandoned over Norfolk on return from Essen 8.11.40.
X3000 Abandoned near Linton-on-Ouse on return from Berlin 30.10.40.
X3003 To 16 OTU.
X3004 FTR Düsseldorf 7/8.12.40.
X3022 Converted for use as torpedo bomber. To Russian Navy.
X3117 FTR Mannheim 10/11.12.40.
X3125 Crashed in Lincolnshire on return from Kiel 26.11.40.
X3133 FTR Kiel 29/30.6.41.
X3141 FTR Lorient 28/29.12.40.
X3143 Crashed on landing at Lindholme on return from Bremen 2.1.41.
X3145 Converted for use as torpedo bomber. To 415Sqn.
X3146 FTR Hamburg 13/14.3.41.
AD721 FTR Berlin 12/13.3.41.
AD728 FTR from mining sortie 28/29.4.41.
AD730 Crashed in Eire on return from Berlin 17/18.4.41.
AD742 Crashed on approach to Lindholme on return from mining sortie 21.3.41.

AD753 Crashed in the sea en-route to Brest 5.4.41.
AD764 Converted for use as torpedo bomber. To 5 OTU.
AD766 To 144Sqn.
AD789 FTR Düsseldorf 10/11.4.41.
AD795 From 83Sqn. Converted for use as torpedo bomber. To 144Sqn.
AD797 FTR Düsseldorf 2/3.6.41.
AD824 To 49Sqn.
AD828 FTR Düsseldorf 10/11.4.41.
AD830 Crashed in Leicester while training 10.4.41.
AD834 FTR from mining sortie 28/29.4.41.
AD836 Converted for use as torpedo bomber. To 455Sqn.
AD839 FTR Frankfurt 29/30.8.41.
AD843 FTR Frankfurt 23/24.7.41.
AD844 FTR Hamburg 16/17.7.41.
AD852 Converted for use as torpedo bomber. To 489Sqn.
AD853 To 420Sqn.
AD854 Crashed in Bedfordshire on return from Kassel 9.9.41.
AD867 Crashed near Lindholme during air-test 30.5.41.
AD897 Crashed near Lindholme during practice 19.7.41.
AD902 Crashed while landing at Swinderby following early return from mining sortie 29.7.41.

AD908 To 144Sqn.
AD927 Converted for use as torpedo bomber. To 489Sqn.
AD928 To 144Sqn.
AD929 From 106Sqn. To 144Sqn.
AD977 Converted for use as torpedo bomber. To 455Sqn.
AE115 To 420Sqn.
AE116 Converted for use as torpedo bomber. To 489Sqn.
AE124 Crashed on take-off from Swinderby for mining sortie 8/9.8.41.
AE137 FTR Karlsruhe 5/6.8.41.
AE157 Hit X3025 (44Sqn) on the ground at Waddington on return from mining sortie 3.9.41.

AE158 To 144Sqn.
AE159 FTR from mining sortie 28/29.7.41.
AE184 VN-Z Crashed on landing at Ratcliffe Yorkshire while training 25.10.41.
AE185 FTR Bremen 17/18.8.41.
AE218 From 44Sqn. Crashed on approach to Skellingthorpe on return from Kiel 28.2.42.

AE226 FTR Bremen 12/13.7.41.
AE228 To 455Sqn.
AE229 Crash-landed on Lincolnshire decoy site on return from Frankfurt 29/30.8.41.

AE230 FTR Bremen 12/13.7.41.
AE231 Converted for use as torpedo bomber. To 144Sqn.

AE234 Crashed soon after take-off from Swinderby en-route to Hanover 25/26.7.41.

AE248 To 144Sqn.

AE250 Crashed in Cumberland on return from mining sortie 10/11.1.42.

AE251 FTR Cologne 13/14.10.41.

AE256 From 455Sqn. FTR Kiel 23/24.10.41.

AE291 To 455Sqn.

AE305 Crash-landed in Norfolk on return from Berlin 3.9.41.

AE306 FTR from mining sortie 7.2.42.

AE316 To 144Sqn.

AE318 FTR Kiel 7/8.9.41.

AE320 FTR Mannheim 25/26.8.41.

AE367 FTR Hül's 12/13.10.41.

AE369 FTR Norway 27.12.41.

AE370 Converted for use as torpedo bomber. To 415Sqn.

AE373 To 408Sqn.

AE375 To 408Sqn.

AE380 FTR Ostend 15/16.12.41.

AE381 Crashed in Derbyshire while training 21.1.42.

AE383 FTR Bremen 20/21.10.41.

AE386 To 14 OTU.

AE387 Crashed on take-off from Skellingthorpe while training 7.3.42.

AE388 From 83Sqn. Converted for use as torpedo bomber. To 144Sqn.

AE394 Partially abandoned and crashed in York on return from Koblenz 22.2.42.

AE400 FTR from mining sortie 7/8.3.42.

AE401 To 420Sqn.

AE420 From 83Sqn. FTR Hamburg 14/15.1.42.

AE422 To 420Sqn.

AE423 Converted for use as torpedo bomber. To 5 OTU.

AE427 FTR from mining sortie 6/7.11.41.

AE428 From 44Sqn. FTR Norway 27.12.41.

AE429 FTR from mining sortie 24/25.3.42.

AE431 FTR Hamburg 14/15.1.42.

AE435 Converted for use as torpedo bomber. To 455Sqn.

AT109 Converted for use as torpedo bomber. To 455Sqn.

AT118 From 49Sqn. Force-landed in Cornwall while on air-sea-rescue patrol 26.3.42.

AT125 Converted for use as torpedo bomber. To 144Sqn.

AT139 To 408Sqn.

AT140 Converted for use as torpedo bomber. To 144Sqn.

AT142 Crashed on approach to Cottesmore on return from Münster 22.1.42.

AT146 To 106Sqn.

AT147 Converted for use as torpedo bomber. To 489Sqn.

AT151 FTR Essen 25/26.3.42.

AT152 Converted for use as torpedo bomber. To 415Sqn.
AT153 Converted for use as torpedo bomber. To 5 OTU.
AT158 FTR from mining sortie 25/26.3.42.
AT173 Abandoned over Norfolk on return from Essen 11.3.42.
AT177 FTR from shipping strike (Channel Dash) 12.2.42.
AT216 Crashed in Lincolnshire soon after take-off from Skellingthorpe when bound for Cologne 6.4.42.

MANCHESTER. From April 1942 to June 1942.

L7277 Flew on the last Manchester operation, to Bremen 25/26.6.42. To 1654CU.
L7289 From 83Sqn. FTR Bremen 25/26.6.42.
L7291 From 106Sqn. No operations. To 1654CU.
L7294 From 97Sqn. To 1654CU.
L7301 ZN-D From 106Sqn on loan. FTR Cologne (Operation Millennium) 30/31.5.42. Manser awarded posthumous V.C.
L7401 From 61Sqn. To 1485 T.T.Flt.
L7415 From 61Sqn. To 1654CU.
L7416 To 1654CU.
L7419 From 61Sqn. To 1654CU.
L7432 VN-Z From 207Sqn. FTR Bremen 3/4.6.42.
L7455 From 97Sqn. To 1661CU. Completed 23 ops total.
L7456 ZN-T From 106Sqn on loan. FTR Cologne (Operation Millenium) 30/31.5.42.
L7460 From 97Sqn. To 1656CU.
L7464 From 61Sqn. To 460Sqn.
L7468 From 207Sqn. Completed 19 ops. Became ground instruction machine.
L7469 From 49Sqn. Returned to 49Sqn.
L7471 From 61Sqn. FTR Emden 6/7.6.42.
L7475 From 97Sqn. Completed 21 ops. Crashed 16.8.42.
L7476 VN-Z From 207Sqn. To 1654CU.
L7486 From 207Sqn. Crashed on landing at Skellingthorpe during training 25.3.42.
L7489 From 97Sqn. FTR Warnemünde 8/9.5.42.
L7491 From 207Sqn. To 1654CU.
L7492 From 97Sqn. To 1654CU.
L7496 From 207Sqn. To 1654CU.
L7516 VN-N From 61Sqn. FTR from mining sortie 29/30.4.42.
L7519 From 61Sqn. Crashed in Lincolnshire while training 13.5.42.
L7521 Crashed while landing at Waddington 5.9.42.
L7525 From 83Sqn. To 1485Flt.
R5769 From 106Sqn. To 9Sqn.
R5778 From 207Sqn. Damaged beyond repair during operation to Warnemünde 8/9.5.42.
R5782 From 207Sqn. FTR Hamburg 17/18.4.42.

R5784 From 61Sqn. To 1660CU.
R5786 From 61Sqn. To 1654CU.
R5833 From 83Sqn. FTR from mining sortie 5/6.6.42.
R5835 From 49Sqn. To 408Sqn.

LANCASTER. From May 1942.

L7532 From 61Sqn. No operations. To 207Sqn.
L7534 From 44CF. Undercarriage collapsed when landing at Swinderby while training 13.8.42.
R5503 From 1660CU. To 1664CU.
R5546 VN-T From A&AEE. FTR Nuremberg 30/31.3.44.
R5625 From 83Sqn. No operations. Returned to 83Sqn.
R5626 From 83Sqn. No operations. Returned to 83Sqn.
R5639 VN-J FTR Osnabrück 17/18.8.42.
R5680 VN-O To 106 Sqn.
R5685 VN-P To 44Sqn on loan. Returned to 50Sqn. To 460Sqn.
R5687 VN-N/D FTR Hamburg 27/28.7.43. (Firestorm).
R5688 VN-G To 12 Sqn.
R5689 VN-N Crash-landed in Lincolnshire on return from mining sortie 18/19.9.42.
R5690 VN-H To 1654CU via 50CF.
R5691 VN-K FTR Milan 24.10.42.
R5702 VN-S To 106Sqn.
R5725 VN-F FTR Düsseldorf 10/11.9.42.
R5726 VN-B To 44Sqn.
R5728 VN-L FTR Saarbrücken 29/30.7.42. Squadron's first loss of a Lancaster on operations.
R5733 VN-O Flew 31 operations. To 44Sqn.
R5735 VN-G FTR Düsseldorf 15/16.8.42.
R5739 VN-X To 1654CU.
R5746 VN-Q FTR Le Havre 11/12.8.42.
R5747 VN-G To 83Sqn and back. To 1654CU.
R5753 VN-C Crashed on landing at Skellingthorpe while training 17.11.43.
R5851 From 207Sqn. To 1654CU.
R5902 VN-T FTR Wismar 12/13.10.42.
R5909 FTR Wismar 23/24.9.42.
W4112 VN-L Destroyed in explosion at Scampton 15.3.43.
W4115 To 1651CU via A.V.Roe and A&AEE.
W4117 VN-R Crashed on landing at Skellingthorpe during training 11.12.42..
W4119 VN-Q From 207Sqn via 1661CU. Abandoned over East Kirkby 12.2.44.
W4131 To 1660CU via 50CF.
W4135 VN-Q Flew 21 operations. To 44Sqn.
W4154 VN-A Flew 21 operations. To 100Sqn.
W4155 VN-M To 9Sqn and back. Returned to 9Sqn.
W4161 VN-J Became ground instruction machine.

W4163 VN-M/N To 622Sqn via 1667CU.
W4194 VN-F FTR Hamburg. 9/10.11.42.
W4196 From 156Sqn. Destroyed when W4834 (57Sqn) blew up at Scampton 15.3.43.
W4232 From 57Sqn via 1660CU. To 5LFS.
W4250 Crashed at Woodhall Spa on return from Turin 9/10.12.42.
W4266 VN-N/S To 44Sqn and back. FTR Soltau 17/18.12.42.
W4267 To 44Sqn.
W4303 No operations. To 1654CU.
W4315 To NTU. Returned to 50Sqn. To 61Sqn.
W4367 To 106Sqn.
W4380 VN-E From 467Sqn. To 12Sqn.
W4381 VN-G To 207Sqn.
W4382 From 467Sqn. FTR Soltau 17/18.12.42.
W4383 From 467Sqn. To 207Sqn.
W4762 From 61Sqn. FTR Duisburg 12/13.5.43.
W4772 Conversion Flt only. To 1654CU.
W4800 VN-T FTR Duisburg 8/9.1.43.
W4823 From 467Sqn. Destroyed on the ground at Scampton when W4834 (57Sqn) blew up 15.3.43.
W4824 VN-Z From 467Sqn. FTR Bois de Cassan 6.8.44.
W4905 VN-H From 83Sqn. FTR Frankfurt 4/5.10.43.
W4932 From 97Sqn. Crashed near Dunholme Lodge during night flying training 19.6.43.
W4933 From 44Sqn. Crashed at Skellingthorpe 30.3.44.
W5004 To 5LFS.
DV156 VN-C From 617Sqn. FTR Turin 12/13.7.43.
DV161 From 9Sqn. To 1653CU.
DV167 VN-M FTR Reggio Emilia 15/16.7.43.
DV178 VN-N From 49Sqn. FTR Berlin 26/27.11.43.
DV197 VN-T Crash-landed in Northamptonshire on return from Remscheid 31.7.43.
DV217 VN-C FTR Frankfurt 20/21.12.43.
DV223 Destroyed in forced-landing in Algeria following operation to Milan 7/8.8.43.
DV227 VN-F/L FTR St Leu d'Esserent 7/8.7.44.
DV234 VN-M FTR Frankfurt 20/21.12.43.
DV312 VN-J From 207Sqn. FTR Revigny 18/19.7.44.
DV324 VN-N FTR Hanover 8/9.10.43.
DV325 VN-B FTR Berlin 2/3.12.43.
DV363 VN-H/O/K Flew 13 Berlin operations. FTR St Leu d'Esserent 7/8.7.44.
DV366 VN-R FTR Berlin 22/23.11.43.
DV368 To 5LFS. Flew on 11 Berlin operations.
DV375 VN-E FTR Berlin 29/30.12.43.
DV376 VN-F FTR Berlin 15/16.2.44.

DV377 VN-X Destroyed in ground accident at Melbourne on return from Berlin 27.11.43.
DV384 VN-V From 44Sqn. FTR Frankfurt 22/23.3.44.
ED308 VN-J From 57Sqn via 1661CU. FTR Frankfurt 18/19.3.44.
ED309 From 467Sqn. To 44Sqn.
ED358 To 106Sqn.
ED387 From 49Sqn. FTR Nuremburg 25/26.2.43.
ED388 FTR Berlin 17/18.1.43.
ED393 VN-K Crashed in Yorkshire on return from Berlin 26/27.11.43.
ED394 VN-R Crashed while landing at Crosby Cumberland during training 9.1.43.
ED409 VN-S To 106Sqn.
ED415 VN-N FTR Mannheim 23/24.9.43.
ED423 VN-N FTR Berlin 1/2.3.43.
ED429 FTR Bochum 12/13.6.43.
ED430 From 97Sqn. To 622Sqn.
ED437 To 617Sqn.
ED442 To 207Sqn.
ED445 VN-L From 49Sqn. FTR Berlin 23/24.12.43.
ED449 VN-T FTR Essen 12/13.3.43.
ED468 VN-A Crashed on take-off at Skellingthorpe when bound for Hamburg 29.7.43.
ED470 VN-O To 61Sqn.
ED471 FTR Berlin 17/18.1.43
ED472 FTR Bochum 12/13.6.43.
ED473 To 15Sqn via 1667CU.
ED475 VN-E Ditched off Hastings on return from Gelsenkirchen 10.7.43.
ED478 VN-G Lost in the North Sea on return from Frankfurt 10/11.4.43.
ED482 FTR from mining sortie 2/3.4.43.
ED483 VN-R FTR Kassel 22/23.10.43.
ED484 VN-Q FTR Lorient 13/14.2.43.
ED486 Crashed after take-off for Düsseldorf 27.1.43.
ED488 VN-M FTR Cologne 2/3.2.43.
ED491 VN-H To 115Sqn.
ED527 VN-B Crashed in Morocco after raid on Turin 4/5.2.43
ED585 VN-G To 1656CU.
ED588 VN-G From 97Sqn. Flew 116 operations, 15 to Berlin. FTR Königsburg 29/30.8.44.
ED592 VN-B FTR Berlin 1/2.3.43.
ED617 From 57Sqn. FTR Gelsenkirchen 9/10.7.43.
ED690 To BDU 3.43.
ED691 VN-K FTR Pilsen 16/17.4.43.
ED693 VN-H FTR Pilsen 13/14.5.43.
ED712 FTR Wuppertal 24/25.6.43.
ED753 VN-M FTR Essen 25/26.7.43.
ED755 VN-Q FTR Berlin 3/4.9.43.

ED784 VN-N FTR Pilsen 16/17.4.43.
ED800 VN-U FTR Pilsen 16/17.4.43.
ED810 VN-Z FTR Oberhausen 14/15.6.43.
ED828 VN-B/S FTR Bochum 12/13.6.43.
ED856 VN-K/A From 156Sqn. FTR Darmstadt 25/26.8.44.
ED870 VN-I/J From 97Sqn. Completed 11 Berlin raids. FTR Mailly-le-Camp 3/4.5.44.

EE124 VN-B/Z To 300Sqn.
EE174 VN-A From 97Sqn. FTR Nuremburg 30/31.3.44.
EE189 VN-S FTR Hanover 27/28.9.43.
JA899 VN-D Flew 13 operations to Berlin. FTR Prouville 24/25.6.44.
JA961 VN-A Damaged in ground accident at Melbourne on return from Berlin 27.11.43.

JB143 VN-L FTR from mining sortie 29/30.9.43.
LL741 VN-X FTR Mittelland Canal at Gravenhorst 21/22.2.45.
LL744 VN-B FTR Brunswick 22/23.5.44.
LL786 To 5LFS.
LL791 VN-O FTR Augsburg 25/26.2.44.
LL840 VN-M FTR Gelsenkirchen 21/22.6.44.
LL841 VN-O FTR Rennes 8/9.6.44.
LL842 VN-F FTR Stuttgart 24/25.7.44.
LL922 VN-E/T FTR Secqueville 7/8.8.44.
LM162 Crashed in Lincolnshire after collision on return from Stuttgart 12/13.9.44.

LM210 VN-D FTR Stuttgart 28/29.7.44.
LM212 VN-L FTR Dortmund-Ems Canal 23/24.9.44.
LM222 VN-Y FTR Königsburg 29/30.8.44.
LM234 VN-K FTR Leuna 14/15.1.45.
LM236 To 1651CU.
LM264 VN-J FTR Calais 24.9.44.
LM296 VN-T Completed 50 operations.
LM360 From 61Sqn. Written off at Fiskerton 11.11.44.
LM368 VN-S From 467Sqn. To 1653CU.
LM394 VN-R FTR Nuremburg 30/31.3.44.
LM428 VN-O FTR Berlin 28/29.1.44.
LM429 VN-T/C FTR Lille 10/11.5.44.
LM435 VN-E FTR Chatellerault 9/10.8.44.
LM437 VN-P FTR Maily-le-Camp 3/4.5.44.
LM480 VN-U FTR Maily-le-Camp 3/4.5.44.
LM591 To ECDU.
LM628 VN-M FTR Gravenhorst 6/7.11.44.
LM629 VN-O To 5LFS.
LM656 VN-W From 619Sqn. FTR Munich 17/18.12.44.
LM676 VN-W FTR Munich 17/18.12.44.
LM680 To 630Sqn.

ME295 VN-P To 463Sqn.
ME319 VN-M
ME429
ME441 VN-W FTR Böhlen 20/21.3.45.
ME483 VN-A
ME567 VN-G To 1664CU.
ME572 VN-Z FTR Aachen 11/12.4.44.
ME578 VN-K FTR Frankfurt 22/23.3.44.
ME700 VN-N/V FTR Dortmund-Ems Canal 23/24.9.44.
ME797 VN-J FTR Duisburg 21/22.5.44.
ME798 VN-Z FTR Prouville 24/25.6.44.
ME813 Crashed while landing at Skellingthorpe 8.8.44.
ND874 VN-R FTR St Pierre de Mont 5/6.6.44.
ND876 VN-Z FTR Munich 24/25.4.44.
ND953 VN-S FTR Maily-le-Camp 3/4.5.44.
ND989 Crashed on approach to Benson on return from Tours 19/20.5.44.
ND991 To Flight Refuelling Ltd.
NE135 VN-F FTR Rüsselsheim 12/13.8.44.
NF918 VN-N FTR Böhlen 5/6.3.45.
NF919 VN-D FTR Darmstadt 11/12.9.44.
NF921 VN-Q FTR Königsburg 29/30.8.44.
NF922 VN-G/U
NF930 To 433Sqn.
NF984 FTR Mittelland Canal at Gravenhorst. Crash-landed at Juvincourt 1/2.1.45.
NG127 VN-D Crashed on take-off from Skellingthorpe when bound for Mittelland Canal at Gravenhorst 1.1.45.
NG171 Crashed on landing at Florennes when bound for Wesel 23.3.45.
NG177 VN-L FTR Lützkendorf 14/15.3.45.
NG271 From 1651CU. Crashed near Waddington when bound for Ijmuiden 6.4.45.
NG302 VN-R Shot down by allied flak over Holland on return from Munich 17/18.12.44.
NG326 VN-Q
NG342 VN-S FTR Hamburg/Finkenwerder 9.4.45.
NG381 VN-A FTR Karlsruhe 2/3.2.45.
NG385 VN-P From 1669CU. FTR Pölitz 8/9.2.45.
NN694 VN-L FTR Lille 10/11.5.44.
PA222 VN-K
PA223 VN-D FTR Karlsruhe 2/3.2.45.
PA968 VN-S FTR Donges 24/25.7.44.
PA994 VN-H FTR Königsburg 29/30.8.44.
PA996 VN-J FTR St Leu d'Esserent 7/8.7.44.
PB755 VN-Y
PB821 VN-E

PD237 VN-D	FTR Bordeaux 13.8.44.
PD291	To 1656CU.
PD292 VN-H	FTR Royan 4.1.45.
PD294 VN-A	FTR Darmstadt 11/12.9.44.
PD316 VN-A	FTR Dortmund-Ems Canal at Ladbergen 7/8.2.45.
PD326	FTR Bergen 28/29.10.44.
PD339 VN-J	Crashed in Northamptonshire during transit following Exodus sortie 26.4.45.
PD340 VN-C	
PD346 VN-V	FTR Siegen 1/2.2.45.
PD362	To 467Sqn.
PD368	To 9Sqn.
RA565	
RA591 VN-P	
RE133 VN-D	
RE135	
RF138 VN-D	FTR Mittelland Canal at Gravenhorst 21/22.2.45.
RF153	To 49Sqn.
RF175	To 463Sqn.
RF180	To 467Sqn.
RF249 VN-L	
RF267 VN-M	
SW249	
SW253	
SW261	To 83Sqn.
SW262	To 83Sqn.
SW264 VN-F	

HEAVIEST SINGLE LOSS.

12.04.40. Kristiansand Norway.	4 Hampdens FTR.
03/04.05.44. Mailly-le-Camp.	4 Lancasters FTR.
29/30.08.44. Königsberg	4 Lancasters FTR.

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SECTION 4



KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

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

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



SECTION 5



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SECTION 6



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