

**ROYAL AIR FORCE
BOMBER COMMAND**

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**SQUADRON PROFILES
NUMBER 16**



51 SQUADRON

Swift and sure

RESEARCHED, COMPILED AND WRITTEN

BY

CHRIS WARD

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BOMBER COMMAND
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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 However, where there is a blank space following the serial number of a type which has been withdrawn from service with Bomber Command, it signifies that I don't know its ultimate fate.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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51 SQUADRON

MOTTO SWIFT AND SURE

Codes MH LK C6

The initial role for 51 Squadron, after its formation on the 15th of May 1916, was air defence, and anti-Zeppelin patrols were carried out from airfields in East Anglia. Disbandment came in June 1919, and the squadron remained a number on the shelf until it was reformed at Driffield from B Flight of 58 Squadron on the 5th of March 1937. In February 1938, the squadron became the 4th in the Command to equip with Whitleys, and on the 20th of April, it took up residence at Linton-on-Ouse, where W/C Silvester was installed as commanding officer. When war broke out on the 3rd of September 1939, 4 Group was the only Group fully trained for night operations, and 51 Squadron, operating a mixture of Mk II and III Whitleys, was one of its front line units.

The remainder of 1939, and almost the first three months of 1940, would see no bombing of enemy territory, as the "Phoney War" took hold. This provided a perfect opportunity for the crews of 4 Group to gain further experience in night flying and long range night navigation, and to gain an insight into the discomforts of operating an unheated aircraft in the depths of a severe winter, while delivering leaflets to the citizens of Germany. On the first day of the war, 51 and 58 Squadrons sent three and seven aircraft respectively to Leconfield to collect their war loads of leaflets, and that evening the 51 Squadron element set off for Hamburg, while 58 Squadron went to Bremen and the Ruhr. 51 Squadron had the honour of launching the Group's very first operational sortie, when F/O Milne and crew took to the air in K8938. Sadly, they were destined to be lost to the squadron during the Norwegian campaign in April 1940, just when the bombing war was getting under way, but happily all survived as guests of the Reich. A similar operation took place on the following night, the 51 Squadron element operating out of an advance base at Rheims. It was on the 19th of September that the first wartime casualties were registered by the squadron, and this involved K9001, which crashed immediately after take-off from Linton-on-Ouse for a ferry flight, and Sgt Mullins, and the only other occupant on board were killed.

Leaflet operations, known as "Nickels", would occupy the squadron until the Phoney War ended, and many were conducted at such long range, that crews could be airborne for ten hours and more. Inevitably, such flights resulted frequently in difficulties for returning crews, who were tired, often short of fuel, and possibly unsure of their exact position. On the night of the 27/28th of October, five of the squadron's aircraft took off from Villeneuve-les-Vertus, led by S/L Marvin and crew in K8981, with F/O Budden in K8989, F/S Wynton in K9008, Sgt Cotton in K8980 and Sgt Bowles in K8984, having been briefed for the southern German cities of Munich, Stuttgart and Frankfurt. The weather was not promising, and severe icing afflicted all the aircraft. S/L Marvin returned early, and the others encountered varying degrees of difficulty before arriving back over France. K8984 was abandoned by Sgt Bowles and three of his crew, the fifth man remaining with the aircraft, and remarkably surviving the ensuing crash with slight injuries, and K9008 crash-landed, without casualties among the crew of F/S Wynton. (The Whitley File by R N Roberts also mentions K8988 as crash-landing

on this night). During the course of November, the Merlin powered Mk IV Whitleys began to replace the Mks II and III. There were no further incidents for 51 Squadron during the remainder of the year, as leafleting flights continued, and an additional role was found for the Whitley squadrons in December. Enemy mine-laying activity was causing concern at the Admiralty, and Bomber Command was asked to carry out patrols around the seaplane bases, to discourage them from taking off. On the 9th, the squadron left Linton-on-Ouse for Dishforth, where it would remain for the next two and a half years. As 1939 came to an end, painful lessons had been learned about the viability of daylight operations, and the squadrons of 4 Group remained those best placed to carry the night time offensive to the enemy when the moment came.

1940

The winter deepened as the new year progressed, and operational flying was frequently restricted. The squadron suffered no losses during January and February, but March brought its first failure to return from operations since the outbreak of war six months earlier. During an operation against shipping on the 16/17th, a stray German bomb killed a civilian in the Orkneys, and in retaliation, Bomber Command was instructed to carry out its first bombing attack on a land target, the seaplane base at Hörnum on the island of Sylt. Thirty Whitleys and twenty Hampdens of 5 Group participated in the operation, which was allotted a time span of six hours, and returning crews claimed to have inflicted major damage on the target, a fact which was not confirmed by photographic reconnaissance two weeks later. Only one aircraft was missing from the raid, N1405, which was shot down into the sea off Sylt by flak, and there were no survivors from the crew of F/L Baskerville. The squadron had welcomed a new commanding officer by this stage, W/C Owen having been appointed on the 5th. There was little further activity for the Whitley squadrons as April dawned, but storm clouds were gathering over Denmark and Norway, as Germany prepared to invade both countries. The squadron lost K9040 to a training crash in the Bristol Channel on the 5th, and F/O Gould and his crew were killed.

The storm broke on the 9th as German troops moved into Denmark, and Bomber Command was ordered to slow down enemy attempts to land in Norway, while an expeditionary force was hurriedly sent to Narvik. Following the loss of nine aircraft to fighters during a daylight attack on shipping at Stavanger on the 12th, the Command effectively abandoned daylight operations as too dangerous, and from that point, the "heavy" squadrons would wage a predominately night offensive until mid 1944. Whitleys had been active the night before, attacking shipping in the sea lanes between Germany and Oslo, and others attacked Stavanger airfield on the 15/16th. Further attacks took place on airfields and shipping over the succeeding week, and the squadron's K9043 was lost without trace with the crew of F/O Birch while raiding Aalborg airfield on the 22/23rd. On the following night, a similar operation to the same target resulted in K9048 force-landing in Denmark, and the previously mentioned F/O Milne and crew all fell into enemy hands. The last night of the month took a squadron element to Fornebu airfield at Oslo, and during the course of the operation, K9039 crashed in Yorkshire, killing one of the crew, while the now commissioned P/O Cotton and the others sustained injuries, to which one man succumbed shortly afterwards. Returning from

a ten hour trip to the same area on the 2/3rd of May, S/L Marvin and crew abandoned N1406 over Yorkshire, and all but one man survived. The ill-fated Norwegian campaign was effectively over even before it began, and it came to an abrupt halt when German forces began their advance into the Low Countries on the 10th of May.

This brought to an end all the pretence which had characterized the preceding eight months, and while the squadrons of the AASF and 2 Group were being massacred by flak and fighters in a vain attempt to stem the enemy advance, Bomber Command was preparing to play its part by attacking industrial targets behind enemy lines, principally in the Ruhr. The first German town to be deliberately bombed, was Mönchengladbach on the 11/12th, where road and rail communications were targeted. This was followed by attacks on roads west of the Rhein, and roads and bridges linking Germany with Holland. Twenty four Whitleys contributed to a force of ninety nine aircraft sent against industrial targets in the Ruhr on the 15/16th, in what was the first example so far of strategic bombing. A further twenty four Whitleys raided oil refineries at Bremen on the 17/18th, and a similar operation to Hanover on the 18/19th cost the squadron S/L Turner and crew, who all survived as POWs when N1408 was brought down. Three nights later, P4980 failed to return from attacking a railway target at Jülich, having crashed in Germany, and Sgt Bowles and his entire crew also fell into enemy hands. The improved Mk V Whitley came on squadron charge during the month, and this would continue to be the squadron's equipment for a further two and a half years.

June began with twenty eight Whitleys, including a 51 Squadron element, seeking out oil and communications targets on the 1/2nd, and this set the pattern for the early part of the month. On the 11th, the five frontline Whitley squadrons set off for Guernsey and Jersey, where they topped up their fuel tanks in preparation for the long haul across the Alps to Italy, which had declared war on the previous day. Thirty six aircraft were detailed to take part, but the Alps and the weather proved too much for most of them, and only ten aircraft reached and bombed the primary target, the Fiat works at Turin, and two 51 Squadron crews bombed an alternative. Small numbers of assorted aircraft continued to attack industrial and communications targets in Germany and the occupied countries, and 51 Squadron negotiated the entire month without suffering any losses. There was, in fact, a two month gap between the last loss and the next one, which resulted from an operation to the important oil town of Gelsenkirchen on the 19/20th of July. P5007 crashed in Germany, and F/L Curry and three of his crew were killed, while one man survived as a POW. The same target accounted for the squadron's next failure to return, which came on the 11/12th of August, when the Battle of Britain was approaching its most critical period. P4983 failed to return on this night, and again, the whole crew survived as POWs, and on this occasion it was the one captained by Sgt Kearey. This was the first of a spate of losses to afflict the squadron over the ensuing month, and the next one was particularly tragic. P/O Swenson and crew were returning from Bordeaux in P4982 on the 14/15th, when they struck a balloon cable, and crashed in Buckinghamshire with the loss of all on board. Two nights later, P4986 failed to return from the oil town of Böhlen, and F/L Scott and his crew were all killed. 120 aircraft were despatched to a multitude of targets in Germany and the occupied countries on the 19/20th, and briefed for Zohornowitz, P/O Brodie and crew failed to return after P4968 crashed into the Ijsselmeer, and they were taken into captivity.

There were no more losses during August, but September got off to a bad start, when P5011 crashed on take-off from Dishforth while Sgt Wilson and crew were training, and was written off, fortunately with only one man reporting injuries. On the 4/5th, Berlin was one of the distant targets selected for the long range contingent of a total force of eighty six assorted aircraft, along with Stettin and Magdeburg. P4973's operation ended with a ditching off the Dutch coast, and one of the crew went down with the aircraft, but F/O Taylor and the remaining three men were picked up by a German seaplane, and marched off to prison camp. S/L Tait, whose celebrated operational career would see him in command of 51 and 78 Squadrons, and culminate as Cheshire's successor at the helm of 617 Squadron and the sinking of the Tirpitz in late 1944, was forced to return early from a reconnaissance of the occupied coast on the 7/8th, when technical difficulties afflicted N1414. He pulled off a successful crash-landing in Norfolk on one engine, and he and his crew were able to walk away. Berlin again featured on the 9/10th, and this resulted in another of the squadron's crews being forced to ditch well out in the North Sea off Scotland, this time in P5021, and one man died, while P/O Millson and the remainder were picked up safely. This concluded the expensive period of operational losses and crashes, and the rest of the month proceeded without major incident.

The Battle of Britain reached its zenith in mid month as invasion fever gripped the nation, and a sizeable proportion of the Command's effort was directed at those occupied ports in which invasion craft were being assembled. In a one-off shift from the normal policy of despatching small numbers of aircraft to wide ranging targets, over 120 aircraft were sent against eighteen separate aiming points in Berlin on the 23/24th. Some damage was inflicted, and only three aircraft failed to return. On the 2nd of October, W/C Brescon began a short period in command of the squadron, and a few days later, Sir Richard Pierse replaced Sir Charles Portal as C-in-C Bomber Command. Now that the threat of invasion had receded, the Command could concentrate on its strategic role, and this meant that industrial targets in Germany would become the main focus from now on. Particular emphasis was placed on oil, and the disruption of the enemy communications system, the latter requiring attacks on railway centres in major cities. Italy was also to receive attention, and Milan was the objective assigned to a number of Whitley crews on the 20/21st. Returning tired from such a long range destination, the sea was always the final hurdle to overcome, and many crews failed to negotiate it, having run out of fuel or lost their bearings. Sgt Wright and crew flew up the western side of England, and eventually ditched P5095 off the Lancashire coast after twelve hours aloft, from where they were rescued unscathed. Merseburg in eastern Germany was another distant target, and returning from there on the 29/30th, P4972 crashed on landing at Dishforth, killing one man, and P/O Sharp and one other of his crew sustained injuries.

The pattern of operations remained the same for the rest of the year, and the squadron experienced a number of further incidents, and just one more failure to return. A small force raided Ruhr targets on the 17/18th, nineteen Whitley crews briefed for Gelsenkirchen, and on return, T4218 crash-landed at Usworth, injuring Sgt Prior and one of his crew. Thirteen Whitley crews set off on the long trek to Stettin on the 28/29th, and all were inevitably short of fuel by the time they reached home. P4984's tanks were dry when P/O Hookway and crew abandoned it to its fate over Essex, and all arrived safely on the ground. This crew was a little

more fortunate than that of P/O Dunn, who had to endure a ditching in the Wash in T4201, but they also emerged from their experience unscathed. P/O Hookway was one of many 4 Group pilots who went on to a distinguished operational career, often with other Groups, and he eventually became a senior flight commander with 156 Squadron of the Path Finders. Sadly, he would lose his life during the opening round of the Ruhr campaign at Essen on the 5/6th of March 1943. 51 Squadron registered its final casualty of the year on the 7/8th of December, when P5112 was lost without trace during an operation to Düsseldorf, and F/O Dunn and crew were posted missing. On the 16th, W/C Tait replaced W/C Brescon as commanding officer, but his tenure would last only a month, as other duties awaited him. It had been a year of survival for the whole nation, and a year in which Bomber Command had done its best to present a belligerent front to the enemy. In truth, however, it had been little more than a token gesture of defiance, and few of the operations launched had produced results commensurate with the effort expended, and the loss of many of the finest of the prewar airmen. Despite the best endeavours of the crews, the aircraft and equipment available made it almost impossible for them to fulfill all that was required by a nation hungry for good news from the battle front, and the coming year would be equally bleak.

1941

The New Year got off to a bad start, when P5060 failed to return from Bremen on the 3/4th of January, and was lost without trace with the crew of Sgt Wright. The Oil Plan, first introduced during the Battle of France continued, and Gelsenkirchen was the destination for over a hundred and thirty aircraft on the 9/10th, just over a third of which released bombs in the target area causing little damage. T4270 crashed at Dishforth on return, killing P/O Shaw and two of his crew, and a third man succumbed to his injuries shortly afterwards. On the 13th, W/C Wilson was appointed to replace W/C Tait, and he presided over a loss free period, which took the squadron through to the second week of February. Meanwhile, W/C Tait and three other 51 Squadron crews were attached to Ringway on the 15th, along with four crews selected from 78 Squadron. They were to train in the art of delivering airborne troops of the recently formed X Troop No 11 SAS Battalion for Operation Colossus, a specially conceived attack on the Tragino aqueduct in Italy, which if successful, would become the forerunner of future airborne operations.

For the rest of the squadron back at Dishforth, the remainder of January was devoted mainly to ports, and Wilhelmshaven was the principal focus of attention. The beginning of February saw operations directed largely against French ports, but a reaffirming of the Oil Plan in January, meant that the crews would be going to industrial Germany until the next Air Ministry directive was issued. W/C Tait and his crews flew into Mildenhall on the 3rd, and on the night of the 7/8th, departed for Malta, from where Operation Colossus was to be launched. It was on the night of the 10/11th that the operation took place, all but one of the aircraft delivering its parachutists into the correct location, while other Whitleys bombed nearby targets as a diversion. Sadly, one crew got lost, and dropped its troops into the wrong valley, along with a large amount of explosives, leaving insufficient available to destroy the viaduct, although it was severely damaged. One of the 78 Squadron Whitleys assigned to the diversionary bombing of Foggia had to be abandoned with engine trouble, and the crew came

down close to the planned rendezvous with a Royal Navy submarine, which was to take the ground party home. The rendezvous had to be abandoned, and the entire commando force was captured along with the Whitley crew. A major operation to Hanover also took place that night, and was claimed as successful by returning crews, and on the following night, almost eighty aircraft were despatched to Bremen. Only a third reported bombing in the target area, and although no aircraft were lost to the defences, twenty two crashed while trying to land, after fog shrouded their bases. 51 Squadron was particularly hard hit, and suffered the loss of four aircraft. Sgts Fenton, Bowyer and Beddow and crews abandoned P4974, P4981 and P5013 respectively over Yorkshire, sustaining a number of injuries in the process, and P/O Sharp and crew left T4217 to its fate over Norfolk, and also picked up a number of knocks. Operations at this time were mostly low key, employing small numbers of aircraft, and were consequently not effective.

A series of operations against Cologne spanned the turn of the month, the first of them on the 26/27th. Despite the claims of the hundred crews which reported bombing in the target area, little damage resulted, and two more of the squadron's Whitleys crashed on return. T4148 returned early with technical problems and struck high ground in Yorkshire, but remarkably, Sgt Wall and crew emerged from the wreckage unscathed. Two men baled out of P4934 before it hit the ground, but Sgt Fenton, who had parachuted to safety two weeks earlier, was this time unable to do so, and he died with two of his crew. It was Cologne which opened the March account on the 1/2nd, and in contrast to the raid of a few days previously, this was reasonably effective, and left some useful damage in its wake. Two more 51 Squadron Whitleys failed to return, however, and the crews of Sgt Beddow and Sgt Bruce were posted missing. The former's N1481 disappeared into the sea with no survivors, while the latter's P5108 was crash-landed on a sandbank off the German coast, from where they were rescued by the enemy. Sadly, the rescue aircraft crashed on landing, and three of the captives were killed, leaving Sgt Bruce and one other to continue their journey to a POW camp. (Bomber Command Losses Vol 2. W R Chorley.) On a brighter note, these were the only casualties sustained by the squadron during a month in which a new Air Ministry directive was received on the 9th, informing Sir Richard Pierse that he must now concentrate his forces against the U-Boat menace, and attack it where-ever it could be found, at sea, in port, and in the component factories and on the slipways.

In response to the above, Hamburg was raided by eighty aircraft on the 12/13th, with the Blohm & Voss shipyards as the aiming point, and considerable damage to installations and offices resulted. A return to the same target on the following night brought similar success, and this was followed by operations to Bremen and Wilhelmshaven on the 17/18th, Kiel on the 18/19th, and Lorient on the 20/21st and 21/22nd. Apart from an inconclusive raid on Berlin by a force which included twenty eight Whitleys on the 23/24th, minor operations saw out the remainder of the month, and on the 30/31st, a saga began which would be played out monotonously over the next eleven months. The German cruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau had taken up lodgings at Brest, and 109 assorted aircraft took off that night to attack them, in the event, scoring no hits. On the 3/4th of April, ninety aircraft tried again and fared no better, and 51 Squadron registered the loss of two aircraft, one of them to the sort of unfortunate "friendly fire" incident which are all too common in war. Z6556 fell victim to the defences

and crashed in France, killing F/L Harrington and his crew, but T4299 was shot down by a Hurricane over Dorset, and although P/O Sharpe and three of his crew survived intact, one man lost his life. Two more attacks went in on the 4/5th and 6/7th, with just two Whitleys participating in the latter, and although no damage was inflicted, the Gneisenau was hit by a Coastal Command torpedo in the meantime, and sustained sufficient injury to require a six month repair programme. Two accurate attacks were delivered on Kiel on the 7/8th and 8/9th, the former resulting in the failure to return of 51 Squadron's T4298, from which the crew of Sgt Bowyer escaped with their lives to become POWs. Brest remained the principal target throughout the month, receiving in all another six raids, while Kiel, Cologne, Bremen, Berlin and Mannheim also featured. The Kiel raid of the 24/25th resulted in no serious damage, and the squadron's Z6482 disappeared into the sea, taking with it the crew of F/S Wilson.

The first three weeks of May brought a hectic round of operations, beginning at Hamburg on the 2/3rd. No major damage occurred, and it was a similar story at Cologne on the 3/4th. Unconfirmed hits were claimed on the German raiders at Brest on the 4/5th, and on the following night, Mannheim escaped with superficial damage despite the claims by 120 crews to have bombed the target. Eighty crews made similar claims after raiding Hamburg on the 6/7th, but the fact that only thirty three people were bombed out, tells its own story. It was better news on the 8/9th, however, when 180 aircraft returned there, and left dozens of large fires burning. Later on the 9th, W/C Burnett was appointed as the new commanding officer, in time to despatch a squadron contingent to the twin towns of Mannheim and Ludwigshafen that night. Moderate damage was inflicted at both locations for the loss of one Wellington and a single Whitley, the latter, P5106 of 51 Squadron, shot down by a nightfighter over Holland on the way home, with no survivors from the crew of P/O Myers. The busy period continued at Hamburg on the 10/11th and 11/12th, the second occasion while a simultaneous raid was sent against Bremen with a strong Whitley presence. Each attack was rewarded with a respectable degree of success, but a return to Mannheim and Ludwigshafen on the 12/13th was disappointing. Whitleys formed part of forces sent to Hanover on the 15/16th, Cologne on the 16/17th and 17/18th, and Kiel on the following night, none of which produced anything outstanding. It had been another good month for 51 Squadron, with just one crew posted missing, but June would be less kind as the industrial cities of the Ruhr were earmarked for attention.

Düsseldorf received the first of its eight raids of varying sizes during the month on the 2/3rd, and reported only scattered superficial damage, while results by an all Whitley force at Dortmund on the 8/9th were equally disappointing, and 51 Squadron's Z6663 crashed in Yorkshire on return, and Sgt Stubbs and his crew were all killed. The well trodden route to Brest was rejoined by Hampdens, Wellingtons and Whitleys on the 10/11th, but again no hits were scored on the raiders, which had now been joined by the Prinz Eugen. Düsseldorf and Duisburg were the main focus of attention on the 11/12th, both proving to be of nuisance value only, and the squadron's Z6657 failed to return from the latter having been despatched by a nightfighter over Holland, and there were no survivors from the crew of F/S Hannay. The 12/13th was a busy night on which briefings took place for five main targets. Eighty Whitley crews were assigned to railway yards at Schwerte, but in the presence of ground haze only half the force bombed. Cologne and Düsseldorf were targeted on the 15/16th and again on the

following night, the Whitley contingent going for the latter on the first night, and the former on the second, but all to no avail, as bombing was scattered and ineffective. Z6479 fell to a nightfighter over Belgium during the course of the latter operation, and Sgt Baston died with three others of his crew, while the lone survivor became a guest of the Reich. The same combination of targets provided employment for elements of the bomber force on the 17/18th and 19/20th, and the single missing aircraft from Düsseldorf on the latter occasion was 51 Squadron's Z6563, from which the crew of P/O Brewster escaped with their lives to become POWs. After yet another return to the same destinations on the 21/22nd, Bremen and Wilhelmshaven were paid a visit on the following night, although the residents would scarcely have noticed, and while returning over the North Sea, T4237 was forced to ditch off the Yorkshire coast, and one man drowned. P/O Matthey and the remainder of his crew endured over twenty four hours in their dinghy before rescue finally came.

There were no further losses registered by the squadron during June, and it would be the end of the third week of July before the next crew went missing. There was little change in the pattern of operations at the start of the new month, and the situation at Brest continued to divert the Command's resources from more useful targets in Germany. A new Air Ministry directive issued on the 9th instructed the C-in-C to now concentrate his forces on the enemy transportation system and the morale of its civilian population, with particular emphasis on its workers. There was no immediate change in the names of targets appearing on the list, all the familiar ones like Cologne, Hamburg and Bremen remaining, and Frankfurt was added along with Hanover. It was the last mentioned which claimed the next 51 Squadron crew to go missing, that of P/O Thomas in Z6487 on the 19/20th. The pilot alone lost his life, while his crewmates joined the steadily increasing number of Dishforth airmen on extended leave in German POW camps. It was, however, another good month for the squadron, and this was its only loss, but August lay around the corner, and it was about to redress the balance.

The August account opened at Hamburg on the 2/3rd, while Berlin and Kiel entertained smaller forces. The night's efforts were not rewarded with success, although matters improved a little on the 5/6th, when the Wellington and Hampden brigades went to Mannheim and Karlsruhe, and a largely Whitley force raided Frankfurt. The last mentioned was the least successful, and Z6803 crashed in Belgium, killing P/O Tilley and two others. A smaller force of Whitleys and Wellingtons targeted railway installations in the same city on the following night, and Z6488 fell victim to a nightfighter over Holland while on the way home, and although Sgt Allen and his entire crew got out alive, one man succumbed to his injuries a few hours later. P/O Pinney and crew encountered icing conditions on their return, and were forced to abandon Z6808 to its fate over Norfolk, and all arrived safely on the ground. The 14/15th brought a massive effort to three main targets, the largest of which was a force of 150 aircraft including the Whitley contingent, bound for Hanover. Results were again not commensurate with the effort expended, and the squadron registered another loss to a nightfighter, this time off the Frisians, Z6819 crashing into the sea with the crew of Sgt Griffin. The 18/19th was devoted to railway targets at Cologne and Duisburg, seventeen Whitleys joining forty two Hampdens and three Wellingtons at the former. It turned into a bad night for 51 squadron, which posted missing three crews, and lost another in England. Z6566 was hit by flak over the target, and it became necessary for the crew to bale out over Holland.

The pilot, Sgt James, gave up his parachute after that of one of his crew was found to be unuseable, a gesture for which he was later awarded the DFM, and he then crash-landed the Whitley and was captured along with the rest of his crew. While in captivity he developed tuberculosis and was repatriated, only to succumb to the illness in 1944. (Bomber Command Losses Vol 2. W R Chorley.) Z6569 was attacked by a nightfighter over Belgium, during which one of the crew was killed, and P/O Robertshaw and the others baled out to fall into enemy hands. Z6811 went down over Holland, killing Sgt Jamieson and three of his crew, and finally, Z6731 crashed in Suffolk on return, and none survived from the crew of P/O Loney. The month still hadn't finished with the squadron, however, and claimed Z6505 on the 24/25th, shot down by a nightfighter over Holland on the way home from Düsseldorf, and the crew of Sgt King all became POWs. It was during August that the damning Butt Report was published, which highlighted Bomber Command's ineffectiveness, and failure to land most of its bombs within miles of the intended aiming point. It led to calls from other Service chiefs to dissolve the Command, and distribute its aircraft to what they considered more worthy causes, principally the war against the U-Boat, and to redress reversals in the Middle East. The report demonstrated the claims of the crews to be wildly exaggerated, even though sincere, and the future of an independent bomber force would hang in the balance until the arrival of a new commander-in-chief, who would eventually turn things round in 1942.

In the meantime, the incumbent C-in-C maintained the pressure on Brest, as he had done since the arrival of its German guests, and continued the programme of raids on major German cities, attacking Frankfurt and Berlin on the 2/3rd, and sending a large force back to the Capital on the 7/8th. Moderate damage resulted on this night for the loss of fifteen aircraft, two of which belonged to 51 Squadron. There were no survivors from the crew of Sgt Wood in Z6744, while a flak damaged Z6938 was abandoned over Sweden, and the crew of Sgt Wilson was interned. Z6937 made it back to Dishforth, but crashed while trying to land, and Sgt Reynolds died at the scene with two others of his crew, a third succumbing to his injuries shortly afterwards. The first major raid of the war on Kassel produced some useful industrial damage on the 8/9th, housing was the main casualty at Frankfurt on the 12/13th, and scattered bombing at Hamburg on the 15/16th also produced reasonable results. Z6957 failed to return from the last mentioned, Sgt Gowland and two of his crew becoming POWs, while two crewmen were killed. Bad weather forced a recall from Berlin on the 20/21st, and it was a similar story when operations were mounted to Cologne, Emden, Mannheim and Genoa on the 26/27th. Stettin, another distant destination, was raided by a force which included over fifty Whitleys on the 29/30th, and good results were claimed by the ninety five crews which reported bombing the target. The operation had begun badly for 51 Squadron, when Z6474 crashed soon after take-off, but fortunately, Sgt Guan and his crew were unhurt on this occasion. Sadly, it would be a temporary reprieve for this crew.

There was little major activity in October until a sizeable effort was launched against Nuremberg on the 12/13th. Few of the 150 participating crews located the city, and bombing was spread around the region up to ninety five miles from the planned aiming point. Two nights later, a smaller force tried again, and this time fourteen of the eighty participating crews claimed to have bombed their assigned targets, although the authorities reported only three bomb loads. Among other targets for the Whitley force during the month were Duisburg

on the 16/17th, Wilhelmshaven on the 20/21st, Mannheim on the 22/23rd, Kiel on the 23/24th, and Frankfurt on the 24/25th. Z6874 failed to return from the last mentioned having crashed in France, Sgt Porrett and two of his crew surviving as POWs, while a fourth man evaded capture. This loss came close on the heels of a training accident on the 22nd, in which Z9145 crashed in Yorkshire while in the hands of Sgt Perrin, and he and the other two men on board were killed. The month ended with a raid on Hamburg by fifty six aircraft out of a total of 123 which had taken off on the night of the 31st, and bad visibility was blamed for the failure of the other crews to carry out their assigned tasks. Seven large fires were left burning, and four Whitleys failed to return, two of them from 51 Squadron. Z9141 was shot down by a nightfighter onto the island of Texel, killing the crew of F/L Barsby, and there were no survivors either from the crew of Sgt Guan, after Z9220 crashed into the sea.

Possibly frustrated by the recent spell of bad weather, Sir Richard Pierse mounted a night of heavy activity on the 7/8th of November, with his main thrust directed at Berlin. Weather conditions were again marginal, to the extent that the 5 Group AOC expressed his opposition to the plan, and was allowed to withdraw his aircraft, and send them instead to Cologne. A third predominately Wellington force would go to Mannheim, while numerous other minor operations went on around. It was destined to be a night of disappointment and losses, as demonstrated by 51 Squadron's experiences. S/L Dickenson led eight Whitleys to the Capital, and five crews, those of P/O Monro in Z9133, P/O Potter in Z6554, and Sgts Brown, Abercassis and Pohe in Z6879, Z9146 and Z9165 respectively all claimed to have reached their destination and bombed as briefed, while Sgt Edwards in Z9164 attacked an alternative target. Twenty one of the Berlin force failed to return, among them Z6839 and Z9130 of 51 Squadron, the former crashing in Holland and delivering the crew of Sgt MacMurray into captivity, while the latter was lost in the sea, taking with it to their deaths S/L Dickenson and three of his crew. Less than half of the force of 169 aircraft had penetrated as far as the Capital, and although 5 group suffered no losses at Cologne, the operation was a complete failure, as was that at Mannheim.

This proved to be the final straw, and on the 13th, an Air Ministry directive ordered Pierse to restrict further operations while the future of the Command was considered. In the meantime, however, a small scale raid on Essen on the 8/9th had cost the squadron its second flight commander in two nights, S/L McCullagh and crew all failing to survive the destruction by a nightfighter of Z6567 over Holland. On the 15th, the charismatic pipe smoking W/C Pickard became the new commanding officer, fresh from his starring role in the propaganda feature film, Target for tonight, in which he played the captain of Wellington F for Freddie. This paralleled his actual career to date, having served a first tour with 99 Squadron, before being posted to the command of 311 Czech Squadron in July 1940. Much of the remainder of the month was spent despatching small numbers of aircraft to the occupied ports, and it was only on the 27/28th and the night of the 30th that larger scale efforts were attempted to targets in inland Germany, when Düsseldorf and Hamburg were the objectives. German ports and Brest were the principal objectives during December, and the squadron almost negotiated the entire month without loss, but was thwarted on the 28/29th, when Z9202 was shot down by a nightfighter off the Dutch coast during an operation to Emden, and Sgt Roberts and crew lost their lives. It had been a year of treading water for the Command, and it had little to show for

its efforts and the loss of hundreds of its crews. It had occasionally delivered a telling blow, but more often than not, its raids had been of little more than nuisance value, and its main contribution was in presenting a defiant face to an as yet all-conquering enemy, at a time when the war was progressing generally badly for Britain.

1942

The New Year began with a continuation of the obsessive pre-occupation with Brest and its lodgers, and this target would be the main focus of attention until mid month, when two raids each were sent against Hamburg and Bremen. Emden was also the recipient of small scale attacks on the same nights, and it proved to be a troublesome target for 51 Squadron. Fifty aircraft set off for the port on the 15/16th, and the squadron's Z9424 was the sole Whitley casualty, shot down by a nightfighter over Holland, killing Sgt Richards and two of his crew, while the three survivors fell into enemy hands. Two nights later, Z9301 was lost without trace while raiding the same target, and the crew of Sgt Thom was posted missing, never to be heard of again. A similar fate overtook the crew of P/O Sides in Z9311, another victim of an Emden raid, this time on the 21/22nd, and it claimed the crew of P/O Wright in Z9423 on the 26/27th, this Whitley again lost without trace. Also missing from a leafleting sortie that night was the crew of Sgt Grut in Z9315, and just one man survived to become a POW, and this completed a trying second half of the month.

The first eleven nights of February were characterized by minor operations, including three to Brest, and just hours after an attack by a small force of Wellingtons on the 11/12th, the German Kriegsmarine decided to resolve this long running saga itself. In the early hours of the 12th, under conditions of the foulest weather, the three raiders, Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Prinz Eugen, slipped anchor, and with a destroyer escort headed for the Channel in an audacious bid for freedom. The British authorities had prepared a plan to cover this precise eventuality, under the codename, Operation Fuller, but so well protected was it, that few of those charged with its implementation seemed to be fully aware of its requirements. Only 5 Group was at four hours readiness, and the enemy fleet was not spotted until after 10.00 hours, thus preventing a response from being launched until afternoon. The first of a record daylight commitment of aircraft, which by the end of the day would amount to 242 sorties, were away around 13.30, but in the low cloud and squally conditions, few sightings of the enemy fleet were achieved, and even fewer attacks carried out. No hits were scored despite the gallant efforts of the Bomber and Coastal Command crews, and the ships passed through the Straits of Dover and into open sea, making good their escape. Scharnhorst and Gneisenau struck air-laid mines which slowed their progress a little, but the fleet made home ports by the following morning to heap huge embarrassment on the government and the nation. To compound this, a further fifteen brave crews had been lost during the operation, although on the credit side, this annoying distraction could now be consigned to the past, and the ships attacked in future as part of the general assault on German ports. The ironic conclusion to this entire episode was the effective destruction of the Gneisenau by Bomber Command, while in its supposedly safe haven of Kiel just two weeks later.

This last mentioned event occurred during the new commander-in-chief's first week at the helm of Bomber Command, a post which ACM Sir Arthur T Harris had taken up on the 22nd of February. There was to be no dramatic change in the Command's fortunes, but a gradual evolution to effectiveness would take place, and the first indications of this were not long in coming. First, however, 51 Squadron was involved in a quietly spectacular success on the 27/28th, when W/C Pickard led a force of twelve commando carrying Whitleys to Bruneval on the French coast, along with a radar technician, to dismantle and return with a Würzburg installation. The operation proceeded almost without a hitch, and the ground party returned home by sea with all the vital components and a captured operator. Aware that the key to effectively dealing with a target was to overwhelm it in numbers concentrated into as short a time as possible, Harris despatched the largest force to date to a single objective at the beginning of March. 235 assorted aircraft took off on the 3/4th, to attack the Renault lorry factory at Billancourt in Paris, in an operation which had been painstakingly planned, and would be the forerunner of all future raids on the Reich. The three wave attack was led by experienced crews, was attended by extensive use of flares to provide illumination, and was carried out at low level in an attempt to restrict casualties among the civilian population. An outstanding success for the period, the operation failed in the last mentioned aim, and 367 French people lost their lives, although casualties among the bomber force amounted to just one Wellington.

Essen was to feature prominently in Harris's plans to destroy Germany's industrial base, but raids on the consecutive nights of the 8th, 9th and 10th were a major disappointment, and it would be a further twelve months before the Oboe blind bombing device would negate the blanket of haze which provided the city's protection. Some useful damage was inflicted on the shipyards of Kiel on the 12/13th, and Gee scored its first success, when guiding over a hundred aircraft to Cologne on the following night, where housing was the chief victim. Essen again escaped all but slight superficial damage on the 25/26th and 26/27th, and on the following night, a force of thirty five Whitleys and twenty seven Wellingtons supported the naval and commando attack on the dock gates at St Nazaire. Complete cloud cover and icing conditions thwarted attempts by most of the crews to bomb, and the squadron's Z9304 was forced to ditch in the Channel on the way home, from where F/S Gray and his crew were rescued by a minesweeper. Two more squadron crews encountered problems on arrival over Yorkshire, and both Z9274 and Z9481 crashed in the county, although without fatalities among the crews of Sgt Bray and F/S Clow respectively. Eight days before Harris took up his appointment as C-in-C, a new Air Ministry directive reflected the War Cabinet's disillusionment with precision targets, and opened the way for the area bombing of German towns and cities, with the specific aim of attacking the morale of the enemy's civilian population, particularly that of its workers. The first major success for this policy came at the Baltic port city of Lübeck on the 28/29th, a target selected for its easily identifiable coastal location, the paucity of its defences, and most importantly, the half timbered construction of many of its buildings, which in the narrow streets of the old centre, would aid the spread of fire. The intention to consign the city to a fiery destruction was reflected by the predominately incendiary loads carried by the 234 participating aircraft, and 191 crew claimed to have bombed as planned, in an attack which was conducted along the lines of the successful

Billancourt raid at the start of the month. It was an outstanding success, which destroyed 30% of the built-up area, and cost the Command a reasonably modest twelve aircraft.

The venerable Whitley was approaching the end of its service with Bomber Command, and the type had not participated in any of the above mentioned major operations since Billancourt. April would see the final Whitley sorties, and it was not until the series of four raids on Rostock at the end of the month, that the type joined the rest of the Command for a major operation. Situated on the same coast as Lübeck, the port suffered a 60% destruction of its built-up area over the four consecutive nights from the 23/24th, and it was on return from this first one, that 51 Squadron registered its final Whitley casualty under Bomber Command. BD190 ran out of fuel over Yorkshire, and was crash-landed by F/L Towsey without injury to himself or his crew. On the 6th of May, 51 Squadron left Bomber Command on a temporary posting to Coastal Command, and took up residence at Chivenor. The squadron's activities during its Coastal Command service do not fall within the scope of this work, but a record of its quite considerable losses can be found in the Aircraft Listing section. On the 18th, W/C Pickard was posted away, and in October he would take command of 161 Squadron at Tempsford, with which he would be involved in many daring operations on behalf of the Special Operations Executive and the Secret Intelligence Service. In 1944, this inspirational leader of men was to lose his life during Operation Jericho, the audacious and brilliant attack on the walls of Amien prison by Mosquitos of the 2nd TAF.

W/C Pickard's replacement at 51 Squadron was W/C Tuck, who had commanded 10 Squadron during its conversion onto Halifaxes. On the 8th of October, he handed over the reins of command to W/C Sawyer, who had been the commanding officer of 78 Squadron between July 1941 and the end of the year, and had also served with 76 Squadron. It was he who presided over 51 Squadron's return to Bomber Command on the 27th of October, and oversaw its conversion onto the Halifax at Snaith, a station at which the squadron would remain almost until the end of hostilities. The first Mk II Halifaxes arrived on squadron charge during November, but it would not be until the first day of the New Year that the squadron would be declared operational. During the squadron's absence from the bombing war, the Path Finder Force had been formed under the then G/C Don Bennett, who had served his operational time with 4 Group while commanding 77 and 10 Squadrons. After a very inauspicious beginning to its career, the fledgling force was now finding its feet, and would gain Group status on the 8th of January. During the previous September, the Command had begun to turn the corner on the road to effectiveness with a series of very successful operations against important industrial cities, and 1942 had ended with a campaign against Italian cities in support of Operation Torch, the landings in North Africa which would ultimately lead to Montgomery's victory over Rommel at El Alamein.

1943

51 Squadron returned to the battle on the night of the 8/9th of January, when eight crews took part in a sizeable mining effort off the Danish coast. On the following night, 120 aircraft took off for similar duties off the Frisians and North Germany, and the squadron registered the first of what would become a harrowingly long list of losses during the year. DT483 failed to

return to Snaith, and no trace of it or the crew of Sgt Banks-Martin was ever found. Massive shipping losses to U-Boats in the Atlantic forced the government to sanction the area bombing of those French ports which provided their bases and support facilities. Lorient received the first of its five visits during the month on the 14/15th, the night on which the squadron carried out its first bombing operation since converting to Halifaxes. On return, DT506 crash-landed at Pocklington, although without injury to Sgt Brett and crew. It was the Lancaster squadrons which provided the main effort for attacks on Germany during the month, raiding Berlin on the consecutive nights of the 16th and 17th, with only a modest degree of success in return for the effort. The Halifax brigade, meanwhile, continued the assault on Lorient, and carried out further mining operations. The crew of DT581 became lost while returning from a gardening sortie to the Frisians on the 21/22nd, and eventually crashed into high ground in Yorkshire, killing two of those on board, and injuring P/O Getliffe and the others. The squadron provided a contingent of four Halifaxes for a predominately Lancaster attack on Düsseldorf on the 27/28th, on the occasion of the first use of Oboe ground marking, and extensive damage was caused to the city's southern districts. Two of the three missing Halifaxes were from Snaith, and both DT705 and DT721 were despatched by nightfighters over Holland. Sgt Barrett and three of his crew were killed in the former, and W/O Weakley died with two of his crew in the latter, all of the seven survivors falling into enemy hands. It had been an expensive first month of Halifax operations for the squadron, and to compound this, W1185 crashed on the airfield at Burn during an air-test while in the hands of F/S Whitworth on the 29th, and although the crew scrambled clear unhurt, a workman was killed on the ground.

February would prove to be a month free of failures to return, and no aircrew casualties would be registered, but a further five aircraft would be lost to the squadron through crashes and ground accidents. Operations began at Cologne on the 2/3rd, for which the squadron put up three aircraft, but it was a scattered and ineffective raid. It was a similar story at Hamburg on the 3/4th, when the squadron contributed eight Halifaxes to an overall force of 260 aircraft, but in contrast, 150 Lancasters and Halifaxes delivered a damaging attack on Turin on the following night, and the Snaith contingent of five returned safely. Lorient continued to be pounded on that night also, and on the 7/8th, and the first major success for the H2s blind bombing device devastated the naval dockyards and part of the town of Wilhelmshaven on the 11/12th. During bombing up on the 13th for the night's attack on Lorient, incendiaries fell from DT722's bomb bay and ignited, and the Halifax was destroyed in the ensuing inferno, along with DT724. The final raid on Lorient took place on the 16/17th, after which it was little more than a deserted ruin. Wilhelmshaven was raided again on the 18/19th, while a force of over seventy other aircraft carried out mining operations along the enemy occupied coast. Within minutes of taking off for the latter, W7818 suffered engine failure, and was safely crash-landed by Sgt Haly. Wilhelmshaven was again the target on the 19/20th, and for the second night running, escaped all but superficial damage, but there was some improvement at Nuremberg on the 25/26th, when three hundred buildings were damaged by a force of over three hundred Lancasters, Stirlings and Halifaxes, which included a contribution of thirteen from 51 Squadron. Earlier in the day, W7855 was crash-landed at Snaith by F/S Johnsen and crew at the end of a training flight, and although all on board escaped unhurt on this occasion, their reprieve would be short lived. Having disposed of Lorient, the Command

now turned its attention to St Nazaire, which wilted under a devastating attack on the last night of the month. On return, DT648 crashed on landing, and for the second time in the space of a month, Sgt Whitworth and crew emerged unscathed.

As March arrived, the Command was about to embark on a campaign of unprecedented proportions, which would occupy it for the next five months. First, however, Berlin was raided on the 1/2nd, and despite the attack being scattered over a wide area, over eight hundred houses were destroyed, and serious damage was inflicted on industrial buildings. It was a relatively expensive night which cost seventeen aircraft, and among them was the squadron's BB223, this falling victim to a nightfighter over Holland without survivors from the crew of F/S Stenhouse. On the 3/4th, misplaced marking led to only a proportion of the bombing hitting the intended target of Hamburg, but it was sufficient to leave a hundred fires burning for a more modest loss of ten aircraft. Again 51 Squadron was represented among them, this time by W7861, which was lost without trace with the previously mentioned crew of F/S Johnsen. The heavy squadrons were rested on the following night as Harris prepared to fire the first salvos in the Ruhr campaign, for which over 440 crews were briefed on the afternoon of the 5th.

Since the previous summer, 109 Squadron had been developing the use of Oboe, first in Wellingtons, and then, after its transfer to the Path Finder Force, in Mosquitos. During the first two weeks of January, live trials had been carried out, principally over Essen, in which the squadron marked the target for small forces of 1 and 5 Group Lancasters. The magnificent pioneering work of W/C Hal Bufton and his crews was to prove crucial in the months ahead, and for the first time since the war began, the industrial haze of the Ruhr region would have no say in the success or otherwise of a Bomber Command operation. As home to the giant armaments manufacturing Krupps complex, Essen was arguably the most important industrial centre in the whole of Germany, and it was to this city that Harris despatched his force on the night of the 5/6th. 51 Squadron provided eleven Halifaxes and crews for this momentous occasion, and they were as follows; DT738 F/L Hay, DT513 F/L Pexton, DT686 F/O Johnstone, W7772 P/O Garforth, DT690 P/O Harris, BB241 W/O Clayton, who would later serve with 617 Squadron, BB244 F/S Collins, DT645 F/S Stewart, DT729 F/S Locksmith, W1212 Sgt Haly and DT567 Sgt Rawcliffe. These were assigned to the first of three waves, and all reached and bombed the target as briefed on a night when an unusually large number of early returns reduced those doing so to 361. The operation was an outstanding success, which destroyed over three thousand houses, and inflicted some damage on the Krupps works. All of the 51 Squadron crews returned safely, but by the end of the campaign, five of the above mentioned would have been posted missing.

4 Group sent twenty Wellingtons and Halifaxes to lay mines off the Frisians on the 7/8th, and the squadron's DT567 failed to return having crashed into the sea, and there were no survivors from the crew of P/O Holmes. Harris switched his force to southern Germany for the next two main force operations, Nuremberg on the 8/9th and Munich twenty four hours later. Beyond the range of Oboe, neither raid achieved anything like the success at Essen, but over six hundred buildings were destroyed at the former, and three hundred at the latter. 51 Squadron contributed thirteen and five Halifaxes, and all returned safely to Snaith. Before the

next round in the Ruhr campaign, Stuttgart became the third southern city to be targeted, but this operation on the 11/12th was a disappointment which left only modest damage in its wake. Over four hundred aircraft returned to Essen on the 12/13th, and again scored a major victory, the bombing on this occasion centred around the Krupps works. Minor operations took the Command through to the 22/23rd, when a return to the U-Boat campaign saw a concentrated attack fall on St Nazaire. The importance of Oboe to success at the Ruhr was highlighted by a dismal failure at Duisburg on the 26/27th, when technical malfunctions among five of the 109 Squadron Mosquitos forced them to return early, and a sixth was lost in the sea. Two heavy raids were directed at Berlin at the end of the month, the first, on the 27/28th, producing only superficial damage, and the second, two nights later, destroying around 150 buildings, while wasting the bulk of the effort in open country. The squadron's BB244 was caught by a nightfighter over Holland during the latter operation, and the sole survivor from the crew of F/O Harris became a POW.

It had been an encouraging start to the Ruhr offensive, but April was to prove the least rewarding period of the battle. It began well, however, with another successful assault on Essen on the 3/4th, from which DT738 failed to return, and there were no survivors from the crew of Sgt Rawcliffe, when their Halifax was shot down in the target area. DT666 made it back to the Snaith circuit, but then crashed, and Sgt Pheloung and two of his crew lost their lives. On the following night, the largest non-1,000 force to date, 577 aircraft, took off for Kiel, and almost entirely wasted their effort. Twelve aircraft paid the price for this failure, and 51 Squadron posted missing the crew of F/L Emery, who were all killed when DT686 crashed in Germany. Duisburg again escaped serious damage on the 8/9th, and there was no improvement at Frankfurt on the 10/11th. A raid on Stuttgart on the 14/15th was progressing in similar vein, when the "creep-back" phenomenon, which was a feature of many Bomber Command raids, saved the night by falling across an important industrial suburb, where much useful damage ensued.

The 16/17th was a night of major activity, which saw a force of over three hundred Lancasters and Halifaxes set off to attack the Skoda armaments works at distant Pilsen in Czechoslovakia, while a slightly smaller predominately Wellington and Stirling contingent carried out a diversionary raid on Mannheim. A successful outcome at the latter was scant consolation for a complete failure at the former, and the heavy loss of thirty six aircraft, split 50-50 between the two participating types. The percentage losses among the Halifax brigade, however, were disproportionately high, and amounted to almost 14% of those despatched, and it turned into a bad night for 51 Squadron which had contributed seventeen Halifaxes. There were no survivors from the crew of Sgt Cox in DT561, and Sgt Inch and four of his crew were killed when flak brought down DT670 over France, although one of the two survivors ultimately evaded capture. DT690 was damaged by a nightfighter while outbound, and an alternative target was bombed before further damage was inflicted by flak, this forcing the crew of Sgt McCrea to take to their parachutes over France, the pilot and two others also managing to evade capture. Another of the squadron's Halifaxes to fall on French soil was HR784, in which F/S Stewart and five of his crew were killed, and finally, there was just one survivor from the eight man crew of W/O Edwards in HR729. Including the crash at the start of the month, April had now claimed eight aircraft and crews, and it was by no means done

On the following night, 442 aircraft set off for Bochum, while a predominately 5 Group force unsuccessfully attempted to rectify the previous month's failure at Pilsen. The former operation was moderately effective, destroying almost four hundred buildings for the loss of twenty four aircraft, among which were two more from Snaith. DT526 was damaged by flak before being finished off by a nightfighter, but F/L Johnstone and four of his crew escaped with their lives to fall into enemy hands. A nightfighter alone was responsible for the demise of HR790 over Holland, and P/O Byres and three of his crew likewise survived to become guests of the Reich. Another long rest from main force operations allowed the crews to draw breath, and it was during this period that 617 Squadron ensured its place in bomber folklore with its epic attack on the dams on the 16/17th. Having hosted a record non-1,000 raid at the start of the month, Dortmund was selected as the target for a new record force of 826 aircraft on the 23/24th. Central, northern and eastern districts of the city were devastated, and almost two thousand buildings were reduced to rubble, in return for the loss of thirty eight bombers, the largest figure during the campaign to date. Nineteen Halifaxes departed Snaith, and on the following morning, five empty dispersals told their own story of 51 Squadron's fortunes. HR835 crashed at Essen, killing Sgt Wright and his crew, HR836 was shot down by a nightfighter over Holland with no survivors from the crew of F/O Rigby, the pilot of HR842, Sgt Parker, alone of his crew was killed, and Sgt Mascall and his crew all survived the destruction of HR844 to join Sgt Parker's crew in captivity. JB792 made it back to Woolfox Lodge in Rutland, where P/O Andrew carried out a safe crash-landing, and no injuries were reported.

With these losses fresh in the minds of the squadron's crews, fifteen more took off for Düsseldorf two nights later, and participated in a disappointing raid by over seven hundred aircraft, which scattered bombs over a wide area. It was an expensive failure, but at least on this occasion, the squadron was represented among the twenty seven missing aircraft by only HR853, in which Sgt Davies and his crew all died. Sgt Cribb crash-landed HR747 in Yorkshire on return, and happily there were no casualties. After a night's rest, over five hundred aircraft took off for Essen, and delivered an attack which destroyed almost five hundred buildings, but as a measure of the advances made by the Command since the bad days of 1941 and early 1942, even this could be considered only a modest success. Almost half of the twenty three missing aircraft were Halifaxes, and the squadron's disastrous month continued with the failure to return of two more of its crews. HR750 fell to a nightfighter over Holland, and the crew of W/O Beeston was grateful to the parachute packers for its survival intact, although all were captured. They were at least more fortunate than most of their colleagues in HR789, which was shot down over the Ruhr with the crew of Sgt Prothero, he and just one other surviving as POWs. On the 29/30th, the Barmen half of Wuppertal was subjected to the most accurate and concentrated raid of the campaign to date, which left 80% of its built-up area in ruins, and over three thousand of its inhabitants dead. This success cost the Command thirty three aircraft, but for once, there were no absentees from the thirteen despatched from Snaith. It had been a terrible month for 51 Squadron, and sadly, June would provide little respite.

There were no major operations for the first ten nights of the new month, and it was not until the 11/12th that the heavy squadrons were called into action again. The target was Düsseldorf,

with the squadron yet. Another distant target was Stettin, situated at the eastern end of Germany's Baltic coast, and this suffered the destruction of its central districts in a highly accurate attack at the hands of over three hundred Lancasters and Halifaxes on the 20/21st. Twenty one aircraft failed to return, and 51 Squadron posted missing the eight man crew of Sgt Brett, which was lost without trace in DT628. One of the more successful raids on Duisburg destroyed over three hundred buildings on the 26/27th, but it was still only a partial success considering the five hundred strong force employed, and there was a general scattering of bombs around the Ruhr. Among the seventeen missing aircraft were two from 51 Squadron, HR778 and HR787, both of which crashed in Germany without survivors from the crews of Sgt Fisher and Sgt Brigden. On the 28th, W/C Sawyer's period in command came to an end, and on the 2nd of May he would be appointed station commander at the newly opened 4 Group airfield at Burn, moving later in the war to similar posts at Drifffield and Lissett. W/C Franks became the new commanding officer in time to preside over the final operation of the month, to Essen on the night of the 30th, when less than 240 of three hundred crews reported bombing as briefed, but these managed to produce fresh damage in return for the loss of twelve aircraft. The squadron registered its final casualty of the month on this night, when HR733 crashed in Germany, killing Sgt Wilson and four of his crew. It had been an extremely testing four weeks for the crews at Snaith, who had seen twelve of their number go missing, and it was perhaps fortunate that the survivors were unaware that it had been but a prelude to the events of the month ahead.

As far as the Command as a whole was concerned, May would bring a return to winning ways, and there would be a number of outstanding successes to celebrate. On the debit side, however, losses would begin to mount alarmingly, and this was a situation which would characterize the remainder of the campaign. The month began badly for 51 Squadron, when DT729 crashed in Yorkshire through engine failure during a training flight on the 3rd, and Sgt Greenhorn and his crew were killed. A new record was set on the 4/5th, when the largest non-1,000 force to date of 596 aircraft took off for Dortmund, and delivered a devastating attack, which destroyed over twelve hundred buildings. But for a decoy site luring away a proportion of the bombs, the damage would have been even more severe, but it was never a one-sided contest, and the defences claimed thirty one bombers, of which twelve were Halifaxes, although all ten from 51 Squadron returned safely. For the following week the heavy squadrons stayed at home, and it was not until the 12/13th that they were called into action again, to carry out the fourth raid of the campaign on Duisburg. Thus far, Germany's largest inland port had been spared the worst ravages of a Bomber Command attack, but on this night it succumbed to a highly accurate and concentrated assault delivered by over five hundred aircraft. Almost sixteen hundred buildings were destroyed, and thousands of tons of shipping was sunk or damaged, but thirty four aircraft failed to return home, and it was another disastrous night for 51 Squadron. DT645 crashed in Holland with no survivors from the crew of Sgt Smith, and a similar outcome attended the destruction by a nightfighter of P/O Locksmith's HR786 over the same country. DT685 went down in the target area killing all but one of the crew of Sgt Jones, and a combination of flak and a nightfighter accounted for JB806 over Belgium, and Sgt Brown and crew parachuted into captivity. Finally, DT637 force-landed in Yorkshire on return, and happily, Sgt Thompson and crew were able to walk away from the wreckage unscathed.

for which 783 crews were briefed, and many of these deposited their bombs into central and southern districts, and destroyed around 130 acres of the city. Had not an errant Oboe marker fallen well away from the city and attracted a proportion of the bombing, the city might well have suffered even greater damage, but even so, the catalogue of destruction included numerous war industry factories, a vast amount of housing, shipping in the inland port, and a large number of military establishments. The defenders, however, were not to be outdone, and fought back to claim thirty eight bombers, two of which belonged to 51 Squadron. HR788 crashed in the southern coastal region of Holland, killing F/S Anderson and his crew, but all eight men of the crew captained by F/S Harvey survived the destruction by flak of HR852, and all became guests of the Reich. The tendency of Allied convoys to fire first and ask questions later resulted in DT742 ditching ten miles off the Norfolk coast on the way home, and one of F/S Collins's crew failed to survive to be rescued. On the following night, 130 acres of Bochum were reduced to ruins by a force approaching five hundred aircraft, twenty four of which failed to return. 51 Squadron posted missing the crew of Sgt Chambers after a nightfighter accounted for DT568 over Holland, and the pilot was the sole survivor. 4 Group was left off the order of battle for the next week until the 19/20th, when it was joined by elements of 3, 6 and 8 Groups for an attack on the Schneider armaments works at Le Creusot, the target for an epic daylight raid by 5 Group Lancasters in October 1942. 51 Squadron contributed twenty Halifaxes to the operation, which failed to produce the desired results, and all returned safely to Snaith.

A hectic round of four operations in five nights began at Krefeld on the 21/22nd, when over six hundred aircraft deposited 2,300 tons of bombs into the centre of the town, and destroyed five and a half thousand houses. Heavy nightfighter activity contributed largely to the destruction of forty four bombers, although the single 51 Squadron casualty, JD244, was a victim of flak in the target area, and struggled towards home as far as Belgium, before a crash-landing became necessary. The crew of Sgt Heathfield emerged unscathed from the wreckage, but quickly found themselves in captivity. On the following night, it was the turn of Mülheim to suffer a devastating raid at the hands of over five hundred aircraft, and eleven hundred houses were destroyed along with numerous public buildings. It was another night of heavy losses for the attackers, however, and thirty five of them failed to return home. 51 Squadron's JD251 crashed into the target, and Sgt Elliot and all but one of his crew were killed. After a night's rest, six hundred aircraft returned to Wuppertal, and all but erased its Elberfeld half from the map. After the war it was assessed that 94% of the built-up area had been destroyed on this one night, and this had to be added to the 80% destruction of the Barmen half at the end of May. Among the thirty four aircraft missing from the operation was the squadron's JD250, another nightfighter victim over Holland, and there were no survivors from the crew of F/O Mackenzie. The run of outstanding successes came to an end at Gelsenkirchen on the following night, when bombs were sprayed all over the Ruhr, and few fell on the intended target. The cost to the Command was thirty aircraft, and there were two more empty dispersals to contemplate at Snaith next morning, those belonging to HR731 and JD261. The former was shot down by a nightfighter, which sent it crashing into the IJsselmeer, taking with it to their deaths the crew of Sgt Osmond, and F/O Davis and his crew were also all killed when another nightfighter brought the latter down onto Dutch soil.

A series of three raids on Cologne spanned the turn of the month, the first of which, on the 28/29th, was one of the major successes of the period, and was this city's worst experience of the war. On this one night alone, over six thousand buildings were destroyed, and four thousand three hundred people lost their lives, in return for which the defences claimed twenty five bombers. It was again nightfighters which accounted for the two missing 51 Squadron aircraft, DT513 over Holland and HR839 over Belgium, Sgt Sigournay and crew all losing their lives in the former, while two of the eight man crew of P/O Tay survived from the latter, one of them ultimately evading capture. Over six hundred aircraft returned to Cologne on the 3/4th of July, targeting with great success an industrial area on the east bank of the Rhein. Thirty aircraft failed to return, and 51 Squadron posted missing the crew of Sgt Garnham in JD262. It was later learned that this Halifax had been despatched by a nightfighter over Belgium, killing the pilot and four others, and one that one of the two survivors had also managed to retain his freedom. The final Cologne raid of the series was delivered by an all Lancaster heavy force on the 8/9th, once more to great effect, and the tally of destruction over the three nights amounted to more than eleven thousand buildings, over five thousand people were killed, and a further 350,000 were bombed out of their homes. A further attempt to hit Gelsenkirchen failed on the 9/10th, although the loss of a more modest twelve aircraft was a small compensation. It was an eventful night for the crew of HR843, after the Halifax entered a spin while evading flak. Two crewmen baled out in the confusion and both fell into enemy hands, but Sgt Foulston and the other four on board brought the aircraft home to a crash-landing in Surrey, and no injuries were reported. Although two more operations to the region would be mounted at the end of the month, the Ruhr campaign had now effectively run its course, and Harris could look back over the past five months with genuine satisfaction at the performance of his squadrons. Certainly, the losses had been grievously high, but the factories had more than kept pace with the rate of attrition, and eager new crews were being fed into the line by the Empire Training Schools overseas. A major blow had been dealt to Germany's industrial heartland, and many of its major towns and cities lay partly or wholly in ruins, forcing the enemy to take up the considerable slack in its manufacturing capacity.

With confidence high in the ability of his Command to deliver a knockout almost at will, Harris prepared for his next offensive, the destruction by ten thousand tons of bombs of an important city in a short, sharp campaign. For the past three years, the Command had visited Hamburg during the final week of July, and it was here that Operation Gomorrah would be played out. As Germany's second city, Hamburg had the necessary political status to satisfy Harris's requirements, and its importance to the German war effort as a centre of production, particularly in the area of U-Boats, was undeniable. There were, however, other important considerations which made it the ideal target, not least of which was its location close to a coastline, and its proximity sufficiently near the bomber stations to allow an operation to be concluded during the scant hours of darkness afforded by mid summer. Finally, beyond the range of Oboe, which had proved so decisive at the Ruhr, Hamburg boasted the wide River Elbe, which would provide excellent H2s returns for the Path Finder navigators high above. In the meantime, severe damage was inflicted on Aachen by a predominately Halifax force on the 13/14th, and for once, all of the twenty aircraft despatched by 51 Squadron returned safely. On the 15/16th, 8 Group marked the Peugeot factory at Montbeliard for a force of 4

Group Halifaxes, seventeen of which had been contributed by 51 Squadron. Despite ideal conditions for a medium to low level attack, the majority of the bombs missed the mark and fell into the town itself, killing over 120 inhabitants.

The first round of Operation Gomorrah was launched against Hamburg on the 24/25th, and involved a force of almost eight hundred aircraft, each carrying for the first time bundles of "Window", the tin-foil backed strips of paper designed to swamp the enemy nightfighter, searchlight and gun-laying radar with false returns. 51 Squadron despatched a record twenty four Halifaxes, one of which was HR940 containing the crew of Sgt Murray, who were on their maiden operation. Sadly, this crew strayed from the intended track losing the protection of the bomber stream, and the Halifax fell victim to a nightfighter over Denmark, killing all on board. At the target, the Path Finder marking was slightly misplaced, and an extensive creep-back developed, which cut a swathe of destruction from the city centre through the north-western districts and out into open country along the line of approach. Despite the wastage of a considerable number of bomb loads, extensive damage resulted within the city for the loss of just twelve aircraft, and it was a promising start to the campaign. Window had proved to be a considerable success in preventing the nightfighters from homing onto individual bombers, and the usually efficient co-ordination between searchlights and flak descended into chaos. On the following night, Harris switched his force to Essen to take advantage of the bodyblow dealt to the enemy defences by Window. It was another outstanding success, which reduced almost three thousand houses to rubble, and inflicted upon the Krupps works its most damaging night of the war. Among the twenty six missing aircraft were two more from 51 Squadron, HR749, which was lost without trace with the crew of Sgt Jones, and HR934, which crashed into the sea off the Dutch coast, and took with it the crew of F/O Cole.

787 aircraft took off for round two of Operation Gomorrah on the 27/28th, and those which reached the target triggered an unprecedented meteorological phenomenon, which had the direst of consequences for Hamburg's hapless inhabitants. The weather had been unusually hot and dry, and the tinderbox conditions required only a spark to bring about combustion. In the event, the Path Finder marking, although again slightly misplaced, was well concentrated, and a high proportion of the 729 bombers unloaded their high explosives and incendiaries into the densely populated working class residential districts of Hamm, Hammerbrook and Borgfeld. Individual fires joined up to eventually form one giant conflagration, which sucked in oxygen from surrounding areas to feed its voracious appetite, creating winds of Hurricane force, which tore up trees and flung them bodily into the heart of the inferno. Temperatures at the seat of the fire exceeded one thousand degrees centigrade, and it only subsided once all combustible material had been consumed. It would be weeks before parts of the firestorm area had cooled sufficiently to allow a full assessment to take place, and a mass evacuation began on the 28th. Over forty thousand people died on this one night alone, in addition to the fifteen hundred killed three nights earlier, and the city's torment was by no means over yet.

A night's rest preceded the next operation to Hamburg, which involved a force of 777 aircraft, 707 of which reached and bombed the target as planned. The Path Finders again missed the intended aiming point, and marked an area just south of that devastated by the firestorm, and

many bomb loads stirred up the embers here. Very concentrated bombing also hit the residential districts of Wandsbek and Barmbek, and a very large area of fire developed, although without reaching the intensity of a firestorm. The defenders were beginning to fight back, and were in the process of changing their tactics to combat Window, and twenty eight aircraft failed to return on this night. After coming through the firestorm raid unscathed, this night saw 51 Squadron suffer the loss of JD309, which shot into the sea by a nightfighter, and there were no survivors from the crew of F/S Fletcher. This crew had claimed the destruction of a nightfighter during the first round of Operation Gomorrah on the 24/25th. A comparatively small force comprising more or less equal numbers of Halifaxes, Stirlings and Lancasters raided Remscheid on the 30/31st, and left the town 83% destroyed, and it was this operation which brought down the final curtain on the Ruhr offensive. Operation Gomorrah came to a close on the 2/3rd of August, a night on which violent electrical storms and icing conditions persuaded many crews to jettison their bombs over the sea or attack alternative targets, and those which pressed on to Hamburg produced little worthwhile new damage. Thirty aircraft failed to return, some of them victims of the conditions, although it is believed that a nightfighter claimed the squadron's HR859, which disappeared without trace with the crew of Sgt Sklarchuk. During the offensive against Hamburg, 51 Squadron launched eighty seven sorties, of which seventy one were successful, and three Halifaxes were lost. (The Battle of Hamburg. Martin Middlebrook.)

August was to bring the final Bomber Command operations of the war against Italy, which was now teetering on the brink of capitulation. It would also see the start of a new major offensive against Germany's Capital, and an operation of vital importance to the defence of this country. The month began for 51 Squadron with a training accident on the 6th, in which P/O Lambert and his crew were killed, after HR783 suffered engine failure and crashed in Yorkshire. The first of the trips to Italy involved an all Lancaster force on the 7/8th, and then came two attacks on cities in southern Germany, Mannheim on the 9/10th and Nuremberg on the following night. The former was highly successful if scattered, and all sixteen 51 Squadron Halifaxes returned home safely. The latter produced some useful damage in central and southern districts for the loss of sixteen aircraft, one of which was the squadron's HR838, and this crashed in Germany killing the pilot, W/O Leeper, while his crew escaped by parachute to fall into enemy hands. HR981 was one of twenty Halifaxes despatched from Snaith on this night, and it crashed in Lincolnshire thirty minutes after take-off killing one man, and injuring P/O McPherson and the remainder of his crew. The squadron participated in just one of the Italian raids, that against Milan on the 12/13th, and all nineteen aircraft returned from what was deemed to be a successful night.

Since the earliest days of the war, intelligence had been filtering through, warning of German research into rocketry. The reports gradually gained weight, and an establishment at Peenemünde on an island on the Baltic coast was identified as the centre of activity in this area. Harris's chief scientific adviser, Professor Lindemann, later Lord Cherwell, gave scant regard to the feasibility of such weapons, and even in the face of evidence of a V-2 captured on film by a PRU Mosquito in June 1943, he found an alternative explanation for its purpose. Only the urgings of Duncan Sandys and the brilliant Dr RV Jones convinced Churchill of the need to act, and it was decided to attack the site at the first available opportunity. This arose

on the night of the 17/18th, the night after the final Bomber Command raid on Italy by a predominately Stirling force. Many of these 3 Group aircraft were forced to land away on their return, and unable to be made ready in time, their absence would restrict the numbers available for Peenemünde to 596 aircraft. These would be allotted to three bombing waves, each assigned to a specific target within the Peenemünde complex, the housing estate, the factory, and the experimental site, with the Path Finders shifting the point of aim accordingly, and the whole operation would be overseen by G/C Searby of 83 Squadron as Master of Ceremonies. Twenty four 51 Squadron crews were briefed to attack the housing estate in the first wave, along with the rest of 4 Group and 3 Group, and this, with 158 Squadron, equalled the largest effort in the Group. Remarkably, on a night when many squadron and flight commanders were operating, no less than nineteen of the squadron's aircraft were captained by NCOs, and the highest participating officer rank was Flight Lieutenant.

Take-offs for the 4 Group squadrons began after 21.00 hours, and a spoof raid on Berlin by eight Mosquitos of 139 Squadron helped to keep the nightfighters off the scene in the initial stages. The first Path Finder markers intended for the housing estate fell two miles south of the aiming point, and landed on the forced workers' camp at Trassenheide, where many of these friendly foreign nationals were killed in the ensuing bombing. Once rectified, however, the bombing was accurate, and much damage was inflicted upon the first two targets. 5 and 6 Groups were in the final wave assigned to the experimental site, and their arrival in the target area coincided with that of the nightfighters, which had been belatedly diverted from Berlin. They proceeded to take a heavy toll of bombers both in the skies above Peenemünde, and on the route home towards Denmark, and in all, forty aircraft failed to return. 4 Group escaped the carnage, and 51 Squadron saw all of its Halifaxes return to Snaith, which in the light of its heavy losses during the year, must have been a shot in the arm for morale. Whilst not entirely successful, the attack on Peenemünde left sufficient damage in its wake to set back the development programme by a number of weeks, and ultimately to force the V-2 testing to be withdrawn eastwards into Poland, out of range of Harris's bombers. On the following night, HR951 crashed on landing at Snaith after a training flight and was written off, but Sgt Long and crew were unhurt.

Harris had long believed that Berlin, as the seat and the symbol of Nazi power, held the key to ultimate victory, and that its destruction would so affect the German people, that they might rebel against their masters and sue for peace. Harris had stated, that with the help of the UK based American 8th Air Force, he could "wreck Berlin from end to end", and thereby bring a swift conclusion to the war, and avoid the kind of protracted and bloody land campaign that he had witnessed during the Great War. The Americans, however, were committed to victory on land, and there was never a chance that Harris could enlist their support. It is only in the light of more recent conflicts, that we know that no war can be won by bombing alone without the physical occupation of the land, but it was not until the middle of 1943, that this long held theory that such a victory was possible, could be actually put to the test for the first time. Harris was undaunted by the American response, however, and would go to Berlin alone, beginning the first phase of his assault on the night of the 23/24th. 727 aircraft took off for the operation, including a contribution by 51 Squadron of a record twenty seven Halifaxes. The Path Finder marking fell well short of the city centre, and it was the southern outskirts

which received most of the bombs to actually fall within the city boundaries. Much of the effort was wasted in open country, and numerous outlying communities were afflicted, something which would become a feature of Berlin operations from this point on. The bombers were met by a ferocious defence, and a new record of fifty six aircraft failed to return home, twenty three of them Halifaxes. 51 Squadron posted missing the crew of P/O Cribb in HR936, which was brought down over Holland, but all survived to become guests of the Reich.

Nuremberg escaped serious damage at the hands of over six hundred aircraft on the 27/28th, and the disappointment was compounded by the loss of thirty three aircraft. Just one of these was from the twenty one despatched by 51 Squadron, HR869 crashing on German soil with no survivors from the crew of F/L Dobson. The twin towns of Mönchengladbach and Rheydt received a highly accurate and concentrated attack on the 30/31st, and the catalogue of destruction included industrial, military, public and transport buildings, along with a vast amount of housing. Twenty four hours later, a force of six hundred aircraft returned to Berlin for round two, and failed to inflict more than relatively minor damage in return for the loss of a hefty forty seven aircraft. 51 Squadron's HR931 crashed in the target area, killing P/O Cates and three of his crew, and Sgt Turner and two others died in JN902, the survivors from both aircraft becoming POWs. The final Berlin raid in the current series was undertaken by an all Lancaster heavy force on the 3/4th of September, and was only moderately effective. Whether the heavy losses at Berlin forced Harris's hand is open to debate, but there would now be an autumn break before the Battle of Berlin resumed in November. Another set of twins, Mannheim and Ludwigshafen, were targeted to great effect on the 5/6th, and almost two thousand fires were left burning, half of them large. It seemed though, that where-ever the Command went, it could not escape heavy losses, and the tally on this night was thirty four. JD263 was shot down in the target area, killing F/S King and four of his crew, and the two survivors were captured.

After a disappointing raid on Munich on the 6/7th, fairly minor operations dominated the next two weeks, 4 Group participating in attacks on the Dunlop Rubber factory at Montlucon on the 15/16th, and railway yards at Modane twenty four hours later. The former was successful, but the latter not, and the squadron came through unscathed on both occasions. A series of four raids on Hanover spanning the next four weeks began on the 22/23rd, and the poor results reflected the difficulty which the Command would experience over the next twelve months when carrying out attacks in this region of Germany. A nightfighter accounted for the squadron's JN901, just one of twenty six missing aircraft, but at least P/O Pohe and his crew escaped with their lives to become POWs. Sadly, the pilot was to be one of those murdered by the Gestapo following the Great Escape in 1944. (Bomber Command Losses Vol 4. W R Chorley.) On the next night, Mannheim was subjected to its second heavy blow of the month, at a cost to the Command of thirty two aircraft, and then it was back to Hanover on the 27/28th. The squadron's JN900 was forced to return early with engine failure, and crashed while trying to land at Ridgewell, although without injury to the crew of P/O Bishop. The raid itself did not proceed according to plan, the concentrated bombing falling into open country north of the city, and this failure was paid for by thirty eight missing aircraft. The balance was

somewhat redressed at Bochum on the 29/30th, when heavy damage was inflicted for the more modest loss of nine aircraft, and this was the final operation of the month.

The first eight nights of October brought a hectic round of operations, although it was the Lancaster squadrons alone which began the period at Hagen on the 1/2nd and Munich on the 2/3rd. While the latter was in progress, a large mining effort from Lorient to Heligoland suffered the loss of just one aircraft, the 51 Squadron Halifax LW287, and this was lost without trace with the crew of Sgt Nixon. JN924 was almost another casualty, but it survived the attentions of a nightfighter to return home in the hands of P/O Cheal and crew, only to be declared damaged beyond repair. An attack on Kassel on the 3/4th was only partially successful, but that bombing which hit the city devastated an eastern suburb, and inflicted useful damage on two aircraft factories. Among the twenty four missing aircraft was the squadron's HR728, and this crashed in Germany without survivors from the eight man crew of F/L Irwin. Accurate Path Finder marking on the 4/5th led to the first really effective raid of the war on Frankfurt, and it was the eastern districts and the inland docks which received the main weight of bombs, and extensive areas of fire were created. A more acceptable ten aircraft fell to the defences, but 51 Squadron's casualty was the result of bad weather at home, HR727 crashing in Derbyshire on return, killing Sgt Fenning and four of his crew, and injuring the two survivors. Halifaxes were omitted from a successful raid on Stuttgart on the 7/8th, the night on which 101 Squadron operated its ABC Lancasters in numbers for the first time. The third Hanover operation was mounted on the following night, and this time a concentrated attack developed within the city, and all but the western districts suffered extensive damage and large areas of fire. Two 51 Squadron Halifaxes failed to return home, however, JD253 and JN885 both having crashed in Germany without survivors from the crews of Sgt Chislett and F/S James respectively.

This concluded the feverish start to the month, and thereafter, minor operations took the Command through to the 18/19th, when an all Lancaster force carried out the final one of the four raids on Hanover. It was not successful, and an all Lancaster attack on Leipzig on the 20/21st fared no better in the face of appalling weather conditions. On the 18th, HR870 crashed on take-off from Snaith when bound for a training flight, but happily, P/O Price and crew were unhurt. The last major operation of the month took a force of over five hundred aircraft back to Kassel on the 22/23rd, and it turned into a night of devastating consequences for this city. Accurate and concentrated marking by the Path Finders was exploited by the main force, and a firestorm developed along the lines of that at Hamburg, although to a lesser degree. Never-the-less, over four thousand apartment blocks were destroyed and half as many again were damaged, and over six thousand people lost their lives. The carnage was not one-sided, however, and forty three bombers failed to return home, among them JN920, which crashed in Belgium, killing Sgt Hall and his crew. There were no further operations during the month, and as November dawned, there was some good news for the hard-pressed Halifax crews, who could soon look forward to receiving the greatly improved Hercules powered MkIII, the first of which would enter service with 466 Squadron on the 3rd.

November's operations began at Düsseldorf on the 3/4th, and it was a promising start to a month which would bring a resumption to the Berlin campaign. In fact, there was to be only

one more operation for the Halifax brigade before this occurred, an attack on marshalling yards at Cannes on the 11/12th. 51 Squadron's contribution was scrubbed after briefing had taken place, and in the event, the operation managed only to inflict damage on working class residential districts in the town, and the intended target escaped. The long and rocky road to Berlin was rejoined on the 18/19th, four days after W/C Wilkerson assumed command of the squadron. He was an officer of long experience, and as a Squadron Leader back in the summer of 1942, he had commanded 158 Squadron's Conversion Flight during the change-over from Wellingtons to Halifaxes. It was an all Lancaster heavy force which began the return to Berlin, while the Halifax and Stirling squadrons carried out a diversionary raid on Mannheim and Ludwigshafen. Both operations resulted in scattered bombing, but the diversion seems to have helped in restricting losses at the Capital to a modest nine aircraft. The Mannheim force, however, lost twenty three of its number, although none from the nineteen despatched from Snaith. A predominately Halifax force with Stirling support failed dismally at Leverkusen on the following night, and managed to deposit just one bomb in the town. Fortunately, only five crews paid the price for this debacle, but one of them was from 51 Squadron. HR950 was hit by flak, which killed one crew member, but five others were able to take to their parachutes before the ensuing crash, in which the pilot, F/S McCutcheon, and one other were killed.

Over seven hundred aircraft took off for Berlin on the 22/23rd, and those which reached the target delivered upon it its most destructive raid of the war. Devastation stretched from the centre westwards, and large areas disappeared under a sea of flame. The catalogue of destruction included three thousand houses, industrial premises, and government and public buildings, and around two thousand people lost their lives. Two 51 Squadron Halifaxes were among the twenty six failures to return, HR726 and LW286. The former crashed in Germany, killing W/C Wright and four of his crew, and it must be assumed that this officer was gaining operational experience before being given command of his own squadron. The latter Halifax went into the sea, and took with it to their deaths P/O Farley and his crew. Because of the disproportionately high casualty rate among the Stirlings during the autumn period, the type was withdrawn from operations over Germany from this point. It was mostly Lancasters which returned to the Capital on the following night, and guided by the glow of fires still burning, they destroyed another two thousand houses, some industrial premises, and killed a further fourteen hundred inhabitants. A force of over two hundred Halifaxes and a sprinkling of Lancasters carried out a scattered and only marginally effective attack on Frankfurt on the 25/26th, and on the following night, covered a Lancaster raid on Berlin by raiding Stuttgart, again with little useful damage.

December began with the now familiar slog to Berlin by the Lancaster brigade on the 2/3rd, but they were joined by Halifaxes on the following night for a tilt at Leipzig. The most successful raid of the war on this eastern city ensued, but Halifaxes made up the bulk of the twenty four missing aircraft, and two of them belonged to 51 Squadron. HR732 was lost without trace with the crew of P/O Savage, and HR782 was brought down by flak over Germany on the way home, and Sgt Ainsworth and one of his crew were killed. This Halifax had already survived a mid-air collision with a Lancaster at the end of August, in which it lost the top half of its port fin. An air-test on the 5th ended for F/L McCreanor and his crew with a

crash-landing at Snaith in JN922, but all emerged from the wreckage without injury. It was the 20th before the Halifax crews were called on to operate again, and during that day, JN923 was struck by practice bombs during training while in the hands of F/L Blyth and crew, and on return to Snaith it was declared beyond economical repair. That night, over six hundred aircraft set off for Frankfurt, and some crews were misled by decoy fires and dummy target indicators. Even so, quite extensive damage did result, although at a cost of forty one aircraft, twenty seven of which were Halifaxes. HR948 was despatched by flak in the target area, killing F/L Burchett and three of his crew, while four others survived as POWs. They were more fortunate than their squadron colleagues in JD123, however, P/O Sherer and his crew all failing to survive the crash in Germany. A force of mainly Lancasters continued the assault on Berlin on the 23/24th, and then came a round of three trips to the Capital in the space of five nights spanning the turn of the year. The first of these took place on the 29/30th, for which seven hundred aircraft took off, and in the face of complete cloud cover, it was the southern and south-eastern districts which received most of the bombs to fall within the city, and only a moderate amount of damage resulted. Twenty aircraft failed to return, and the squadron posted missing the crew of F/S Baird in JD264. This Halifax developed engine trouble over Germany and had to be abandoned, and the entire crew arrived safely on the ground to be rounded up by their captors. It had been an extremely testing year for 51 Squadron, characterized by persistent losses, and the only consolation was that when its crews next went to war, they would do so in an aircraft which was vastly superior to anything they had had in the past.

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While the change-over to the MkIII Halifax took place, the squadron was stood down from operations. On the 14th of January, C Flight was hived off to form the nucleus of the newly forming 578 Squadron, which would share the facilities at Snaith for the next three weeks. W/C Wilkerson was posted to command the new unit, and he was replaced at 51 Squadron by W/C Ayling, although he would not officially take up his appointment until the 1st of February. The return to operations came on the night of the 20/21st with a daunting trip to Berlin, and this would also be the debut for 578 Squadron. 51 Squadron put eleven brand new MkIIIs into the air, and all returned safely from what was an effective operation, which fell mainly into the previously neglected eastern districts of the Capital. It was, however, a bad night for the Halifax squadrons generally, and they accounted for twenty two of the thirty five missing aircraft. On the following night, Magdeburg was the target for six hundred aircraft, while a small Lancaster diversion was directed at Berlin. The diversion failed to draw off the nightfighters which were waiting at the German coast, and they picked up the bomber stream straight away, and accompanied it all the way to the east. The operation was a failure, and a new record loss of fifty seven aircraft compounded the disappointment. Again it was the Halifaxes which suffered most heavily, losing thirty five of their number, and 51 Squadron experienced a bad night. LV775 and LV779 were both despatched by nightfighters over Magdeburg, P/O MacKenzie and four of his crew losing their lives in the former, while P/O Bruce and his entire crew escaped from the latter and fell into enemy hands. LV774 was brought down over Holland, and just one man survived from the crew of F/O Price.

An unprecedented three trips to the "Big City" in the space of four nights awaited the crews at the end of the month, although the first of these, on the 27/28th, was an all Lancaster affair. The squadron put up eleven aircraft for Berlin on the 28/29th, and although much damage resulted, scores of outlying communities were afflicted by stray bombs. A massive forty six bombers were shot down, many of them by nightfighters in the target area, and LW466 failed to return to Snaith having crashed in Germany, F/S Griffin dying with his crew. Only eighty two Halifaxes took part in the Berlin operation on the 30/31st, and eight of these were supplied by 51 Squadron, with a further thirteen from 578 Squadron, which would be operating from Snaith for the last time before moving to Burn on the 6th of February. Central and south-western districts of the Capital bore the brunt of the attack, which killed around a thousand people, and on this occasion, only one of the missing thirty three bombers was a Halifax. This series of three raids had produced much fresh damage in Berlin, and the city had been sorely afflicted, but it was still functioning as the seat of government, and had not, as Harris intended, been wrecked from end to end. This was the final concerted effort to destroy the city, and although two more major operations to the Capital would take place during the next two months, they would be in isolation, and the Berlin offensive was now effectively over.

Bad weather helped to keep the main force squadrons on the ground for the first two weeks of February, and when they next took to the air, it was as it happens, for the penultimate raid of the war by the heavy brigade on Berlin. It was a record breaking night in a number of ways, the largest non-1,000 force to date of 891 aircraft, the first time that five hundred Lancasters and three hundred Halifaxes had been despatched, and those which reached the target would deliver the largest weight of bombs, over 2,600 tons, ever dropped. Much of this was delivered to good effect within the built-up area of the city, and over a thousand houses were destroyed along with hundreds of temporary wooden barracks, but outlying communities again suffered in the scattered bombing, and many casualties were registered. Another night of heavy bomber losses saw forty three fail to return, but all sixteen from 51 Squadron returned home. A few nights of rest prepared the crews for another long haul to Leipzig on the 19/20th, for which over eight hundred crews were briefed, including sixteen from Snaith. They took off around midnight, and headed towards the greatest disaster to afflict the Command thus far in the war. The bomber stream was picked up by nightfighters early on, and accompanied all the way to the target, and stronger than forecast winds led to some aircraft arriving early at their destination, and being shot down by flak as they milled around in the target area awaiting the Path Finders. The operation itself was not successful, and when all the returning aircraft had been counted, there was an unbelievable shortfall of seventy eight. 51 Squadron was represented by just one, LW481 having been shot down by a nightfighter over Germany, P/O Carder surviving with five of his crew. The disproportionately high losses among the MkII and V Halifaxes was the final straw, and like the Stirlings before them, they were now withdrawn from operations over Germany.

In complete contrast to the above, the first of a three raid series on Stuttgart on the following night caused extensive damage to central and northern districts, and only four aircraft, all Lancasters, failed to return. A new tactic was introduced for the next two operations, to Schweinfurt on the 24/25th, and Augsburg twenty four hours later. The forces were split into

two, with a two hour gap between, in the hope that the second wave would find the nightfighters on the ground refuelling. The former operation by seven hundred aircraft was in itself not successful, but the second wave lost 50% fewer aircraft than the first, in an overall casualty figure of thirty three. 51 Squadron despatched sixteen Halifaxes as part of the first wave, and LV778 was shot down over Germany with the loss of the eight man crew of P/O Jackson. The Augsburg raid was an outstanding success, and an example of the terrible power of the Command when matters proceeded according to plan. Accurate marking led to heavy and concentrated bombing, and the centre of this ancient and historic city was torn out by fire, and centuries of culture was destroyed for ever. Twenty one aircraft were lost, but all eight from Snaith returned home, and this was the last operation of the month.

March would be a particularly bruising month for the squadron, and all its sorrows would be condensed into the second half. The month began with a highly effective attack on Stuttgart on the 1/2nd, for the loss of just three Lancasters and a single Halifax. Much of the main force would remain on the ground for the next two weeks, but it was during this period that the first salvoes were fired in the pre-invasion campaign, when railway installations at Trappes and Le Mans were attacked by predominately Halifaxes, including sizeable contributions from 51 Squadron. 4 Group had by now fully re-equipped with the MkIII, and the Command was now back to full strength, with even 3 Group slowly phasing out the Stirling and adding some more Lancaster squadrons to the order of battle. Stuttgart was the objective for a massive force of 863 aircraft on the night of the 15/16th, but in contrast to the successful raid at the start of the month, this one managed only a proportion of the bombs in the central districts, while most fell into open country to the south-west. The nightfighters arrived on the scene as the bombers were approaching the target, and thirty seven of them were shot down. The squadron's HX330 was a nightfighter victim over France, and there were no survivors from the crew of F/L Fell. The Stuttgart flak accounted for LW497, and S/L Eno died with five of his crew, while the two survivors became POWs. Two very heavy and devastating raids fell on Frankfurt on the 18/19th and 22/23rd, both employing over eight hundred aircraft. The former alone resulted in the destruction of five and a half thousand houses, a hundred industrial units, and numerous other buildings of a business and public nature. LK750 was one of twenty Halifaxes despatched by the squadron, and this was brought down by flak over Germany, killing F/S Seaman and two of his crew. The latter operation left half of the city without essential services for an extended period, and this outstanding success was achieved for the combined loss of fifty five aircraft, 51 Squadron despatching a total of thirty eight sorties for the single loss already mentioned. Earlier on the 22nd, F/L Davies crash-landed LW679 at Snaith on return from a training flight, but no injuries were reported.

The final raid of the war by RAF heavy bombers on Berlin was mounted on the 24/25th by over eight hundred aircraft, for which the squadron put up seventeen Halifaxes. The crews encountered unusually strong winds, jetstreams, at cruising altitude, and these drove the aircraft south of track, and broke the cohesion of the bomber stream. This led to scattered bombing at the target, and over a hundred outlying communities were hit by stray bombs. A moderate amount of damage was inflicted on the Capital, with housing the main victim, but the winds continued to play their part during the return journey, and many aircraft were blown over heavily defended areas of the Reich, where they fell victim to the flak batteries.

Approximately two thirds of the massive seventy two missing aircraft were lost in this way, and it was the flak gunners best haul of the war. F/O McPherson and all but one of his crew survived the destruction of LW539 over Germany, and became POWs, but just two survived from the crew of F/L Curtis when MZ507 was shot down by a nightfighter, also over Germany. The Battle of Berlin had now ended, but the winter campaign still had a week to run, and two more major operations for the crews to negotiate. The first of these was directed at Essen on the 26/27th, and it was another outstanding success against this centre of war production, thus continuing the remarkable run of accurate attacks on it since the introduction of Oboe twelve months earlier. A modest nine aircraft failed to return, and 51 Squadron's sole casualty was LW671, which crashed at a USAAF base in Suffolk while trying to land with failing engines, but without injury to Sgt Weaver and his crew.

Briefings took place on the 30th for the final deep penetration raid of the winter, a standard area attack on the birthplace of Nazism, Nuremberg. W/C Ayling was on leave at the time, prior to being posted, and it was S/L Hill who presided over the proceedings, he unaware that ahead lay one of the squadron's unhappiest nights of the war, and his own death. The operational plan departed from standard practice in only one major respect, and this was to prove crucial. The 8 Group route incorporating feints was rejected in favour of a 5 Group inspired straight-in approach, which would take the bomber stream on a long leg across Germany to a point about fifty miles north of the target, from where the final run-in would commence. Confirmed in the face of heated protests by the Path Finder AOC, AVM Bennett, this route and a combination of almost freak meteorological conditions sealed the fate of the 795 participating crews. The weather forecast was already questionable at the time of take-off, around 22.00 hours, and the anticipated scrub was awaited in vain. Instead of the expected cloud at cruising altitude, a layer formed below the bombers to silhouette them like flies on a tablecloth, and the unusually bright moonlight and crystal clear visibility compounded the problem. Further conspiring against the crews was the formation of condensation trails to advertise their presence, and the same jetsream winds which had so adversely affected the Berlin raid a week earlier. This time they blew from the south, driving the aircraft well north of the planned track, and the cohesion of the bomber stream was again broken. Those crews which either failed to register the strength of the wind, or refused to believe the evidence, turned towards Nuremberg from a false position, and many bombed Schweinfurt in error.

The nightfighters began to infiltrate the bombers at Charleroi in Belgium, and it was here that the carnage began, the route eastwards marked by the burning wreckage on the ground of RAF bombers. Over eighty aircraft were lost before the target was reached, and four of the seventeen Halifaxes despatched from Snaith fell victim during this stage of the flight. The first to go was LV822, shot down by a nightfighter over Germany, and there were no survivors from the crew of F/S Wilkins, who were on the sixth operation of their tour. F/S Brougham and his crew were on the battle order for the first and last time, and just two men survived the demise of LW544. Shortly afterwards, LV857 crashed in central Germany, taking with it Sgt Binder and his crew, and within minutes of this, LW537 was abandoned by F/O Stenbridge and all but one of his crew, and they were all captured. S/L Hill did at least reach and bomb the target, and was on the way home in LV777 when the Stuttgart flak got him, and there

were no survivors. Finally, LW579 crashed in Oxfordshire on return, and P/O Brooks and his crew died. These were just a few of the ninety five aircraft and crews which failed to return on this night, and many more were written off in crashes on return, or with battle damage too severe to repair.

On the 1st of April, W/C Ling took up his appointment as the new commanding officer, and he would preside over an entirely different type of operation to that which had been endured over the winter. In place of the long slog to Germany on dark, dirty nights, shorter range hops to France and the Occupied Countries would be the order of the day from now on, and despite the flawed opinion in high places that such operations would be a "piece of cake" in comparison, and worthy of counting as just one third of a sortie towards the completion of a tour, they would prove to be equally demanding in their way. Happily, this despised policy was quickly rescinded once losses were assessed, but before this happened, an almost mutinous spirit obtained among the aircrew. A further consideration to concentrate the minds of the crews, was the fact that many future operations would take place against targets in close proximity to Allied civilians, and this placed a greater responsibility on them to ensure that bombs were accurately placed. For the foreseeable future, as far as the crews were concerned, they would occupy themselves with the pre-invasion Transport Plan, the systematic dismantling of the French railway system. Harris, however, would never entirely abandon his preferred policy of city-busting in favour of other considerations, despite the fact that from the 14th, his Command became officially subject to the dictates of SHAEF, and would remain thus shackled until the Allied armies were sweeping towards the German frontier.

There was little time for 51 Squadron to mourn the losses of Nuremberg as preparations were made for the new campaign, but it was not until the 9/10th that it next went to war, when joining elements of 3, 6 and 8 Groups in an attack on the Delivrance goods station at Lille. On the following night, 4 Group severely damaged railway yards at Tergnier, but lost ten Halifaxes in the process, among which was the squadron's LV880, a nightfighter victim over France, and F/S Hall died with three of his crew, while one of the survivors ultimately evaded capture. The same target claimed two more 51 Squadron crews on the 18/19th, those of F/S Sarjantson in HX350, and Sgt Shackleton in LW522. The former was shot down by a nightfighter with no survivors, and the latter was in collision with a 158 Squadron Halifax over France, and both crews were killed. The Group lost no aircraft in an attack on railway yards at Ottignies on the 20/21st, and the squadron came through unscathed from a successful area attack on Düsseldorf on the 22/23rd. Earlier that day, LW578 burst a tyre on landing at Snaith after a training flight in the hands of Sgt Pettifer and crew, but they were unhurt. The squadron participated in a scattered raid on Karlsruhe on the 24/25th, and on the 26/27th, sent nine aircraft to join an attack on Essen, and another element to bomb railway yards at Villeneuve-St-George, and all returned safely. Not so on the following night, however, when the squadron put up eighteen Halifaxes for a 4, 6 and 8 Group raid on railway yards at Montzen. Fourteen of 120 Halifaxes were lost, and the squadron was represented by three of them. LV783 and MZ565 crashed on Belgian soil, the former producing one survivor from the crew of Sgt Keenan, and none survived from the crew of F/S O'Neill in the latter. LW479 fell

to a nightfighter over Holland, and F/L Rothwell was killed with three others, while their colleagues were marched off into captivity.

The first night of May was dedicated to four railway targets, with 4 Group assigned to one at Mechelen in Belgium. It was one of those sad occasions when colateral damage inflicted grievous casualties on the civilian population, and the intended target escaped with moderate damage. MZ593 was lost to a nightfighter over Belgium, and F/S French was killed with three of his crew. There followed an uncharacteristic loss free period for the squadron, during which it joined attacks on railway installations at Mantes-la-Jolie on the 6/7th, gun batteries at Morsalines in the Pas-de-Calais on the 8/9th, railway yards at Lens on the 10/11th, heavy gun positions at Colline Beaumont on the 11/12th, and more railway yards at Hasselt on the 12/13th. A welcome nine night rest from operations preceded a raid on railway installations at Orleans on the 22/23rd, the day on which F/S Jones and crew survived a crash in Wales following engine trouble with LK835 while training. Two railway yards at Aachen were targeted on the 24/25th, and damage occurred at both, but it was the town itself and nearby villages which suffered most, and also the Halifax element of the attacking force. Eighteen of the type were shot down, and the Reaper returned to 51 Squadron with a vengeance, claiming three aircraft and thirteen airmen. LK885 and LW498 both crashed in Holland, and their pilots, P/O Lawson and F/O McQuiston respectively, were killed along with two others from each crew. Of the survivors, a total of three managed to evade capture, and the remaining five didn't. LV784 was brought down over Germany, and there were no survivors from the crew of F/S Hyndman. To redress the balance, the squadron sent twenty four aircraft to a military camp at Bourg Leopold on the 27/28th, and all returned safely. In the light of the squadron's past record, May had been a relatively good month, and June and July would also turn out to be reasonably kind.

The first week of June was dominated by preparations for the imminent invasion, and the squadron played its part by sending ten aircraft with others of the Group to knock out a radio monitoring station at Ferme-d'Urville on the 1/2nd. Haze thwarted the force, and it was left to 5 Group to finish the job a few days later. On the 4/5th, four gun positions were attacked, three of them in the Pas-de-Calais to maintain the deception. A thousand aircraft were airborne on D-Day Eve to bomb coastal batteries at ten sites, 51 Squadron's twenty three crews assigned to the one at Mont Fleury, and similar numbers were involved on D-Day night to disrupt communications behind enemy lines. Such targets also occupied much of the Command on the 7/8th and 8/9th, and it was while returning from Chateaudun on the latter occasion, that LW364 smacked into high ground in Yorkshire, killing F/S Davies and all but one of his crew. Four airfields south of the beachheads were bombed on the 9/10th to prevent their use for bringing in reinforcements by air, and then it was back to railways at Massey-Palaiseau on the 11/12th and Amiens twenty four hours later. MZ643 was damaged beyond repair by flak during the latter, but the crew of F/S Smith came through unscathed. A new oil campaign began at Gelsenkirchen on that night, when Lancasters of 1, 3 and 8 Groups delivered an outstandingly accurate attack, which halted production of vital fuel supplies for several weeks. Support for the ground forces was provided by elements of 4, 5 and 8 Groups near Caen on the 14/15th, while a 51 Squadron effort of nineteen Halifaxes bombed railway installations at Douai. A further nineteen participated in an attack on an ammunition dump at

Fouillard on the 15/16th, and seventeen were detailed to bomb a railway target at St-Martin-l'Hortier on the 17/18th. A second new campaign, this one against flying bomb launching and storage sites, had begun on the previous night, and 51 Squadron became involved on the 22nd, when attacking one at Siracourt on the occasion of its first daylight operation. The pattern of operations remained unchanged for the remainder of the month, and the squadron registered its one and only failure to return during June on the very last day. Twenty four crews were briefed for an attack on a road junction at Villers-Bocage where Panzers were expected to pass through, and LV782 crashed in France, with no survivors from the crew of F/S Cooke.

July followed a similar pattern, with the campaigns against railways, oil and flying bomb sites continuing to be the main focus. During an evening attack on a V-Weapon site at Croixdalle, LV862 was hit by flak and was eventually successfully abandoned over England by F/S Abell and crew. Support for the ground forces around Caen came on the 7th and 18th, on the latter occasion by over nine hundred aircraft. On return from this, HX321 burst a tyre on landing and crashed off the runway, but F/S Hampson and crew emerged to fight another day. Sadly, their reprieve was to be brief indeed, and it seems that during the next two days, the pilot was commissioned. Shortly after 23.00 hours on the 20th, this crew was one of those to take off from Snaith for Bottrop, the first time that 51 Squadron had been assigned to an oil target since the new campaign began. The northern half of the refinery was severely damaged in the attack, but the now P/O Hampson and his crew failed to return in MZ821, and no trace of them was ever found. MZ581 was hit by flak over the target, and was then involved in a collision. Four members of the crew baled out over Allied held territory, after which, F/O Jowett and the remaining two crewmen headed for the emergency landing strip at Woodbridge. Sadly, the Halifax crashed while on approach to land, and all on board were killed. A series of three raids on Stuttgart in the space of five nights began on the 24/25th, and this was the only one in which 51 Squadron played a part. By the end of the third attack, the central districts of the city lay in ruins, and over eleven hundred of its inhabitants lay dead.

The flying bomb campaign dominated the first ten days of August, and the squadron equalled its best effort of the war when despatching twenty six aircraft to Anderbek on the 1st, although poor weather prevented most of the seven hundred strong force from bombing. A new squadron record was set on the 5th, when twenty eight aircraft took off for a flying bomb store in the Foret de Nieppe on the 5th, and this time conditions were favourable. It was, however, a railway target at Hazebrouck on the 6th which brought about the demise of the squadron's LW546, which was lost without trace with the crew of F/L Brown. A similar target at Somain accounted for LW588 on the 11th, this Halifax crashing in France with no survivors from the crew of W/O Garrett. Brunswick had thus far managed to escape the worst ravages of a Bomber Command attack, despite a number of attempts against it since January. It was selected for an experimental raid on the 12/13th, to ascertain the ability of main force crews to identify and bomb a target on H2s alone, without the presence of Path Finders. It was not a successful trial, and MZ349 had to be ditched after it was damaged and caught fire, and unfortunately it was the enemy who rescued F/L Hannay and the other three survivors. In preparation for his new night offensive against Germany, Harris launched a thousand aircraft by daylight on the 15th, to knock out nine nightfighter airfields in Holland and Belgium. The

offensive began on the 16/17th, when Lancasters raided Stettin, and a mixed force of Lancasters and Halifaxes went to Kiel. Two nights later, Bremen was attacked by predominately Lancasters, while Halifaxes made up the bulk of the raiders at Sterkrade, where the synthetic oil plant was left seriously damaged. LW538 failed to return to Snaith from the latter, and was lost without trace with the crew of F/O Quan. On the 25th, LW362 crashed on landing at Snaith while training, but F/S Mitchell and crew were uninjured. On the 27th, the squadron participated in the first major daylight raid on Germany since 1941, when the Rheinpreussen oil refinery at Meerbeck was the target, and all its crews returned safely from a partially successful operation, which was conducted under the umbrella of a strong fighter escort. The 28th brought the final operations against flying bomb sites, although the squadron was not called upon to provide aircraft.

September would be largely devoted to liberating those French ports which were still in enemy hands, and it was Le Havre which was the first to receive attention. Between the 5th and the 11th, six operations were carried out against enemy strong points around the town. 4 Group participated on the 9th, 10th and 11th, and hours after the final raid, the German garrison surrendered to British forces. Earlier in the month, on the 3rd, a large force had attacked six airfields in Holland, and on return from Venlo, the squadron's MZ758 force-landed in Lincolnshire in the hands of W/O Potts and crew, who all emerged unhurt after the final operation of their tour. Apart from the attack on Le Havre on the 11th, raids were carried out on synthetic oil plants at Castrop-Rauxel, Kamen and Gelsenkirchen in the early evening. A 51 Squadron element was assigned to the Nordstern site at the last mentioned, and a strong fighter escort kept fighters away from the scene. Smoke hampered the bombing, results could not be assessed, and five Halifaxes and one Lancaster fell victim either to flak or friendly bombs. Among them were two of the squadron's aircraft, MZ319 and MZ916, both of which crashed in Germany. F/O Preston and three of his crew died in the former, and the pilot of the latter, F/O Grose, was also killed, but the remainder of his crew parachuted into captivity. F/O Ainsley's MZ624 was so severely damaged by flak, that on return it was declared beyond repair. Boulogne was the second of the ports to be liberated, and this followed a heavy raid by over seven hundred aircraft by daylight on the 17th. The squadron's LV865 failed to get beyond the runway at Snaith before coming to grief, and one of the crew of F/O Twilley was killed. Sadly, this crew would not survive the year. Operations to clear the enemy from around Calais began on the 20th, and continued daily from the 24th to the 28th, after which the garrison surrendered to Canadian forces. The squadron was present on three of the raids, and it was from the one of the 24th that MZ972 failed to return, and F/O Bischoff and crew were killed. The last night of the month brought a training accident involving the crew of P/O Dixon in MZ870, which overshot its landing at Snaith, but caused no injuries.

October was to bring a full return to the industrial centres of Germany, and to the unfortunate small towns which happened to lie in the path of the Allied advance or the enemy retreat. A new Ruhr campaign opened at Dortmund on the 6/7th, after oil targets at Sterkrade and Scholven-Buer had been attacked earlier in the day. 51 Squadron had sent twenty four Halifaxes to the former, and MZ343 crashed in Germany, killing the crew of F/L Bell. The failure of Operation Market Garden had exposed sections of the ground forces, and Bomber Command was called on to provide support by bombing the towns of Cleves and Emmerich

on Germany's western frontier. It was predominately Halifaxes which attacked Cleves, and NP933 crashed in the target area, with just one survivor from the crew of F/O Collyer. As a demonstration to the enemy of the overwhelming superiority of the Allied air forces, Operation Hurricane was launched against Duisburg at first light on the 14th. Almost a thousand aircraft pounded it with 4,500 tons of bombs, and returned that night in similar numbers to press home the point. The same treatment was meted out to Essen on the 23/24th and again on the 25th, after which it ceased to be a major centre of war production. LL612 crashed on return to Snaith following the latter raid, but F/O Comer and crew emerged unscathed. Two days later, P/O Tomms crash-landed NR128 at Snaith while training, and one member of his crew sustained injury. Cologne received its first visit from the Hurricane force on the 28th, and this was followed up on the 30/31st and the last night of the month, by which time many of its inhabitants had left the city to its fate.

Operation Hurricane went to Düsseldorf on the 2/3rd of November, and left five thousand houses in a very bad state of repair, and on the 4/5th, Bochum suffered the destruction of four thousand buildings to a force of seven hundred aircraft. The defenders fought back, however, and twenty eight aircraft, mostly Halifaxes, were lost. The squadron posted missing the crew of F/O Reay, who were all killed when LW177 crashed in Germany, and MZ933 was set on fire by a nightfighter, and eventually crashed in Luxembourg after two of the crew had baled out, but F/S Berry and four others lost their lives. LV819 was also severely damaged by a nightfighter, but F/S Stevens and crew were able to bring the Halifax home, where it was declared a write-off. On the 8th, W/C Ling was posted out, and he was replaced by W/C Holford. Following a heavy raid on the town of Gelsenkirchen and its Nordstern oil refinery on the 6th, there was little further activity for the squadron until mid month. On the 14th, LK844 broke up in the air over Yorkshire during a training flight, and F/S Millard and his crew were killed. Another tragic incident occurred four days later as crews were returning from a scattered raid on Münster. NR241 collided with MZ559 of 578 Squadron while on approach to land, and W/O Bruce and his crew were killed, along with those from the sister squadron. The bad luck continued and claimed another crew on the 21/22nd, during the course of an operation to the oil refinery at Sterkrade. NR129 was in collision with a Halifax from 346 Squadron, a Free French unit, over Belgium, and there were no survivors from the crew of F/L Chapman or their gallant French comrades. A new squadron record was set on the last night of the month, when thirty Halifaxes were despatched to Duisburg as part of a force of over five hundred aircraft. All returned safely to Snaith after a moderately successful attack, and this magnificent effort would not be surpassed in what remained of the war.

The highlight of December was the return of LV937 "Expensive Babe" from its one hundredth operation, a trip to a railway target at Osnabrück on the 6/7th in the hands of F/L Kemp and crew. Happily this veteran, which had served with 578 Squadron during March and April, would survive the war, and eventually be struck off charge in May 1945. The month's low point came during a 4, 6 and 8 Group raid on Duisburg on the 17/18th, from which two of the squadron's aircraft failed to return. NP934 crashed in Belgium, and the eight man crew of the previously mentioned F/O Twilley were all killed, and just one man from the crew of W/O Bates survived the destruction of NR248. It had been a tough and hectic year for the squadron, but apart from the Nuremberg disaster, losses had not reached the scale of those in

1943, and its three flight status had enabled it to maintain a high sortie rate throughout. A four night break from operations allowed the crews to celebrate the final wartime Christmas without disruptions, and to savour the scent of victory which was wafting in from the Continent.

1945

It was the 2/3rd of January before the squadron went to war again, having not operated since the 27/28th of December. Ludwigshafen was the objective, with particular attention to be paid to two I G Farben chemical factories, and a very satisfactory outcome was achieved for the loss of just one Halifax. Any thoughts that the enemy defences were spent were misplaced, and January was to bring home that point to 51 Squadron, beginning three nights later with a raid by six hundred aircraft on Hanover, the first time that this city had been attacked since the autumn series in 1943. Almost five hundred buildings were reduced to rubble, but in an echo of the past, thirty one aircraft failed to return, a disproportionately high number of them Halifaxes, and three of them were from 51 Squadron. The errant aircraft were LV952, which crashed in Germany with just one survivor from the crew of P/O Leach, MZ767, which fell to a nightfighter, also over Germany, killing F/O Hodgson and two of his crew, and MZ918, which crashed near the target city with two men surviving from the crew of F/S Stevens. On the following night, elements of 1, 4, 6 and 8 Groups went to Hanau, an important railway centre, and destroyed 40% of the town for the loss of four Halifaxes and two Lancasters. One of the former was the squadron's MZ811, which contained the crew of P/O Bunn, and four men lost their lives, including one who was murdered by his captors. (Bomber Command Losses Vol 6. W R Chorley). Three operations in the space of four nights took squadron aircraft to Saarbrücken on the 13/14th, Dülmen on the 14/15th and Magdeburg on the 16/17th. It was from the last named that F/O Popplewell and his crew failed to return in LW461, and it was later learned that just one man had survived to be captured. There was little activity for the remainder of the month, until an attack on railway yards and an aero engine factory at Stuttgart on the 28/29th. MZ794 was leaving the target area when it was attacked by a nightfighter, killing one member of the crew. Although the damage was serious, F/O Brayshaw nursed the Halifax as far as Juvincourt in France, where an emergency landing was made at a USAAF airstrip, without further injury to the crew.

February began for the squadron with a disappointing raid on the oil refinery at Wanne-Eickel on the 2/3rd. MZ487 fell victim to the defences, and the pilot, F/L Arnold, was one of six on board to lose their lives. Operations followed to Gelsenkirchen on the 4/5th, the frontier town of Goch in support of the British XXX Corps on the 7/8th, and Chemnitz on the 13/14th, this last mentioned as part of Operation Thunderclap, the Churchill inspired series of heavy raids on Germany's eastern cities. On the previous night, Dresden had hosted a two phase all Lancaster assault, and had been consumed by a firestorm which surpassed even that at Hamburg in its intensity, and over fifty thousand people were killed in this beautiful and historic treasury of culture. Chemnitz was spared what might have been a similar fate, largely because of cloud, but its time would come in March. Wesel had the misfortune to lie on the Rhein close to an area of fighting, and the Command was invited to bomb it, doing so on four occasions between the 16th and 19th. F/L Winning's MZ765 suffered an engine fire while

outbound for this target on the 17th, and the Halifax was abandoned to crash in Sussex with one man still on board. Tragically, the pilot slipped through his parachute harness and fell to his death, but five others survived their descent, three of them sustaining injuries. A busy end to the month required the squadron to operate against the Rhenania-Ossag oil refinery at Düsseldorf on the 20/21st, a raid which halted production, help destroy 39% of Worms on the 21/22nd, continue the pounding of Essen on the 23rd, and participate in a damaging assault on the refinery town of Kamen on the 24th. The last operation of the month for the squadron took place on the 27th, a crushing blow on Mainz which destroyed over 5,600 buildings.

March began badly for the squadron, when MZ451 failed to return from the last RAF raid of the war on Cologne on the 2nd, four days after which it fell to American forces. The pilot, F/O Eastwell, was killed, but the remainder of the crew escaped with their lives to be taken prisoner. On the following night, 4 Group ended all further production at the synthetic oil refinery at Kamen, while at home, the Luftwaffe's intruder operation "Gisella" was enjoying great success, and resulted in twenty returning bombers being shot down. Central and southern districts of Chemnitz suffered severe fire damage at the hands of a Thunderclap force on the 5/6th, for which the squadron put up fifteen aircraft, and it sent thirteen to Hemmingstedt on the 7/8th, twelve to U-Boat yards at Hamburg on the 8/9th, and a further fourteen to Essen by daylight on the 11th, the last time that this much bombed city would be attacked by RAF heavies. Homberg was raided by a force from 4 Group on the 14/15th, to block roads through which the enemy was bringing supplies to the front, and on return, NP932 crashed while trying to land at Snaith, killing P/O Chopping and the other seven men on board. The squadron's final loss of the war involved MZ348, which was shot down by flak in the target area while raiding railway yards at Rheine on the 21st. With Germany facing imminent defeat, and its towns and cities in ruins, it was a bad time to be a bomber crew in enemy hands, and although all seven men arrived safely on the ground, F/O Paradise and three of his crew were murdered by their captors.

The squadron continued to conduct operations from Snaith for the remainder of the month and through to the 20th of April, when it moved to Leconfield. The final operation from Snaith came on the 18th, when twenty Halifaxes were despatched to bomb the naval base and airfield on Heligoland, as part of a force of over nine hundred aircraft. Just one operation was mounted from the squadron's new home, and this took place on the 25th, against heavy gun emplacements on the north Frisian island of Wangerooge, which were blocking access to the north German ports. Eighteen aircraft took off, and eighteen returned, and with that, the squadron's war came to an end. On the 30th, W/C Barnard was posted in as the squadron's last wartime commanding officer, he having relinquished his command of 102 Squadron a month earlier, and he would remain in the post until almost the end of the year. 51 Squadron was one of the mainstays of 4 Group and Bomber Command from the start of hostilities, and apart from a short spell of service with Coastal Command in 1942, it was constantly at the forefront of operations. Its record of service stands comparison with any in 4 Group, and is a testimony to all who served, in whatever capacity, within its ranks.

STATIONS

LINTON-ON-OUSE	20.04.38. to 09.12.39.
DISHFORTH	09.12.39. to 06.05.42.
CHIVENOR	06.05.42. to 27.10.42.
SNAITH	27.10.42. to 20.04.45.
LECONFIELD	20.04.45. to 21.08.45.

COMMANDING OFFICERS

WING COMMANDER J SILVESTER	20.04.38. to 05.03.40.
WING COMMANDER A H OWEN	05.03.40. to 02.10.40.
WING COMMANDER N F BRESCON	02.10.40. to 16.12.40.
WING COMMANDER J B TAIT	16.12.40. to 13.01.41.
WING COMMANDER R C WILSON	13.01.41. to 09.05.41.
WING COMMANDER R K BURNETT	09.05.41. to 15.11.41.
WING COMMANDER P C PICKARD DSO DFC	15.11.41. to 18.05.42.
WING COMMANDER J A H TUCK DSO	18.05.42. to 08.10.42.
WING COMMANDER A V SAWYER DFC	08.10.42. to 28.04.43.
WING COMMANDER A D FRANKS DSO DFC	28.04.43. to 14.11.43.
WING COMMANDER D S S WILKERSON DFC	14.11.43. to 14.01.44.
WING COMMANDER R C AYLING	01.02.44. to 31.03.44.
WING COMMANDER C W M LING	01.04.44. to 08.11.44.
WING COMMANDER H A R HOLFORD	08.11.44. to 30.04.45.
WING COMMANDER E F E BARNARD	30.04.45. to 03.12.45.

AIRCRAFT

WHITLEY II	02.38. to 12.39.
WHITLEY III	08.38. to 12.39.
WHITLEY IV	11.39. to 05.40.
WHITLEY V	05.40. to 11.42.
HALIFAX II	11.42. to 01.44.
HALIFAX III	01.44. to 06.45.

SECTION 2



OPERATIONAL RECORD

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

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OPERATIONAL RECORD

OPERATIONS	SORTIES	AIRCRAFT LOSSES	% LOSSES
497	5959	158	2.7

CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS

BOMBING	MINING	OTHER
476	9	12

WHITLEYS

OPERATIONS	SORTIES	AIRCRAFT LOSSES	% LOSSES
233	1806	50	2.8

CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS

BOMBING	LEAFLET	OTHER
221	10	2

HALIFAXES

OPERATIONS	SORTIES	AIRCRAFT LOSSES	% LOSSES
264	4153	108	2.6

CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS

BOMBING	MINING
255	9

TABLE OF STATISTICS

(Heavy squadrons)

21st highest number of overall operations in Bomber Command.

12th highest number of sorties in Bomber Command.

18th highest number of aircraft operational losses in Bomber Command.

Out of 30 Halifax squadrons.

(Excluding SD)

7th highest number of overall Halifax operations in Bomber Command.

6th highest number of Halifax sorties in Bomber Command.

6th highest number of Halifax operational losses in Bomber Command.

Out of 24 squadrons in 4 Group.

4th highest number of overall operations in 4 Group.

4th highest number of sorties in 4 Group.

4th highest number of aircraft operational losses in 4 Group.

Out of 6 Whitley squadrons in 4 Group.

2nd highest number of overall Whitley operations in 4 Group.

Highest number of Whitley sorties in 4 Group.

3rd highest number of Whitley operational losses in 4 Group.

Out of 15 Halifax squadrons in 4 Group.

6th highest number of Halifax overall operations in 4 Group.

6th highest number of Halifax sorties in 4 Group.

6th highest number of Halifax operational losses in 4 Group.

SECTION 3



AIRCRAFT LISTING

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

51 SQUADRON.

WHITLEY. **To November 1942.**

K8937 To 7BGS.
K8938 To 1Bat Flt.
K8939 Became ground instruction machine 6.40.
K8940 To 166Sqn.
K8941 To 19 OTU.
K8942 To 166Sqn.
K8959 From 77Sqn. To 10 OTU.
K8978 To 19 OTU.
K8979 To 58Sqn.
K8980 MH-E To 2BAT Flt.
K8981 MH-A To 10 OTU.
K8982 To 19 OTU.
K8983 To 19 OTU.
K8984 MH-A/N Abandoned over France after leafleting sortie 27/28.10.39.
K8988 Crash-landed in France on return from a leafleting sortie 27/28.10.39.
K8989 MH-M To 19 OTU.
K9001 From 97Sqn. Crashed soon after take-off from Linton-on-Ouse on ferry flight 19.9.39.
K9008 MH-J From 97Sqn. Crash-landed in France on return from leafleting sortie to Frankfurt 27/28.10.39.
K9021 From 10Sqn. To 10 OTU.
K9024 From 10Sqn. To 19 OTU.
K9038 From 1 AAS. To 10 OTU.
K9039 Crashed in Yorkshire during operation to Oslo 30.4/1.5.40.
K9040 FTR from training flight 5.4.40.
K9041 To 19 OTU.
K9042 To 10 OTU.
K9043 MH-G FTR Aalborg 22/23.4.40.
K9045 To 19 OTU.
K9046 To 19 OTU.
K9047 To 10 OTU.
K9048 MH-P FTR Aalborg 23/24.4.40.
N1390 To 77Sqn.
N1394 To 78Sqn.
N1405 FTR Hornum 19/20.3.40.
N1406 Abandoned over Yorkshire on return from Oslo 3.5.40.
N1407 To 78Sqn.
N1408 MH-K FTR Hanover 18/19.5.40.
N1414 Crash-landed in Norfolk on return from flare dropping sortie off Belgian coast 8.9.40.

N1418 To 58Sqn.
N1425 To 77Sqn.
N1435 From AFEE. To AFEE.
N1443 To 78Sqn.
N1464 SOC 24.2.44.
N1481 FTR Cologne 1/2.3.41.
N1485 To 78Sqn.
N1486 To 78Sqn.
N1488 From 10Sqn. To 10 OTU.
N1504 MH-K To 2BAT Flt.
N1525 To 78Sqn.
N1526 To 10 OTU.
P4934 MH-A Crashed off Durham coast on return from Cologne 27.2.41.
P4968 FTR Schornewitz 19/20.8.40.
P4969 MH-K To 77Sqn.
P4970 To PTS.
P4971 To 3 OTU.
P4972 MH-E Crashed on landing at Dishforth on return from Merseburg 30.10.40.
P4973 FTR Berlin 4/5.9.40.
P4974 Abandoned over eastern England on return from Bremen 11/12.2.41.
P4980 FTR Jülich 21/22.5.40.
P4981 Abandoned over Yorkshire on return from Bremen 11/12.2.41.
P4982 Crashed in Buckinghamshire on return from Bordeaux 14/15.8.40.
P4983 FTR Gelsenkirchen 11/12.8.40.
P4984 Abandoned over Essex on return from Stettin 29.11.40.
P4985 To 77Sqn.
P4986 FTR Bohlen 16/17.8.40.
P4987 To 24 OTU.
P4996 To 78Sqn.
P5007 FTR Gelsenkirchen 19/20.7.40.
P5011 MH-K Crashed on take-off from Dishforth while training 3.9.40.
P5013 Abandoned over Yorkshire on return from Bremen 11/12.2.41.
P5020 To 19 OTU.
P5021 Ditched in North Sea on return from Berlin 10.9.40.
P5027 MH-H/L SOC 20.2.44.
P5060 FTR Bremen 3/4.1.41.
P5095 Ditched near Liverpool on return from Milan 21.10.40.
P5105 To 78Sqn.
P5106 MH-O FTR Ludwigshaven 9/10.5.41.
P5108 MH-Q FTR Cologne 1/2.3.41.
P5112 FTR Düsseldorf 7/8.12.40.
T4145 To 58Sqn.
T4148 MH-R From 10Sqn. Crashed in Yorkshire after aborting operation to Cologne 26.2.41.
T4175 To 78Sqn.

T4201 Ditched in The Wash on return from Stettin 29.11.40.
T4217 MH-H Abandoned near Bircham Newton on return from Bremen 11/12.2.41.
T4218 Crashed on landing at Usworth on return from Gelsenkirchen 18.11.40.
T4224 To 19 OTU.
T4237 MH-E/A Ditched off Yorkshire coast on return from Wilhelmshaven 23.6.41.
T4263 To 10Sqn.
T4270 MH-M Crashed on landing at Dishforth on return from Gelsenkirchen 10.1.41.
T4298 MH-K FTR Kiel 7/8.4.41.
T4299 MH-B Shot down by Hurricane over Dorset on return from Brest 3.4.41.
T4323 MH-N To 10 OTU.
Z6469 To 58Sqn.
Z6474 MH-H/A Crashed soon after take-off from Dishforth bound for Stettin 29.9.41.
Z6479 MH-M FTR Cologne 16/17.6.41.
Z6480 MH-L To 81 OTU.
Z6481 To 10 OTU.
Z6482 FTR Kiel 24/25.4.41.
Z6487 MH-G FTR Hanover 19/20.7.41.
Z6488 MH-W FTR Frankfurt 6/7.8.41.
Z6505 MH-F From 58Sqn. FTR Düsseldorf 24/25.8.41.
Z6554 To 1485Flt
Z6555 To 78Sqn.
Z6556 MH-Q FTR Brest 3/4.4.41.
Z6559 To 10Sqn.
Z6563 MH-T FTR Düsseldorf 19/20.6.41.
Z6566 MH-Q From 102Sqn. FTR Cologne 18/19.8.41.
Z6567 MH-Z FTR Essen 8/9.11.41.
Z6569 MH-S FTR Cologne 18/19.8.41.
Z6579 To 24 OTU.
Z6657 MH-A FTR Duisburg 11/12.6.41.
Z6662 To 19 OTU.
Z6663 MH-D Crashed in Yorkshire on return from Dortmund 9.6.41.
Z6665 To 19 OTU.
Z6731 MH-A Crashed in Suffolk on return from Cologne 19.8.41.
Z6738 To 81 OTU.
Z6741 FTR Brest 4/5.7.41.
Z6744 FTR Berlin 7/8.9.41.
Z6803 MH-J FTR Frankfurt 5/6.8.41.
Z6808 MH-N Abandoned near Swanton Morley on return from Frankfurt 7.8.41.
Z6811 MH-D FTR Cologne 18/19.8.41.
Z6812 MH-A From 102Sqn. To 10 OTU.
Z6813 MH-K To Armstrong Whitworth.
Z6819 MH-X FTR Hanover 14/15.8.41.
Z6839 MH-O FTR Berlin 7/8.11.41.
Z6840 To PTS.
Z6874 FTR Frankfurt 24/25.10.41.

Z6875 From 78Sqn. To 1485Flt.
Z6879 MH-B To 10 OTU.
Z6933 MH-I To 19 OTU.
Z6935 From 102Sqn. Crashed in Dishforth circuit on return from Berlin 7.9.41.
Z6937 Crashed on approach to Dishforth on return from Berlin 8.9.41.
Z6938 FTR Berlin 7/8.9.41.
Z6957 FTR Hamburg 15/16.9.41.
Z6971 To 10 OTU.
Z6976 To 10Sqn.
Z6978 From 78Sqn. To 77Sqn.
Z9119 MH-G From 58Sqn. FTR from patrol 3.8.42.
Z9130 FTR Berlin 7/8.11.41.
Z9131 To 161Sqn.
Z9132 From 78Sqn. To 81 OTU.
Z9133 To 1485 Flt and back. Crashed in Cornwall while on patrol 27.8.42.
Z9140 To 138Sqn.
Z9141 MH-J FTR Hamburg 31.10/1.11.41.
Z9144 MH-G SOC 14.1.44.
Z9145 MH-K Crashed in Yorkshire while training 22.10.41.
Z9146 To 138Sqn.
Z9153 From 58Sqn. FTR from Patrol 16.10.42.
Z9164 MH-B/C To 10 OTU.
Z9165 To 1484Flt.
Z9201 MH-G From 102Sqn. Crashed at Dishforth 11.6.42.
Z9202 MH-P FTR Emden 28/29.12.41.
Z9206 MH-A To 1484Flt.
Z9215 MH-C From 78Sqn. Ditched during shipping escort sortie 22.7.42.
Z9217 MH-F From 102Sqn. To 10 OTU.
Z9220 MH-A/V FTR Hamburg 31.10/1.11.41.
Z9222 MH-C From 102Sqn. To PTS.
Z9228 MH-H SOC 19.4.45.
Z9230 To 138Sqn.
Z9274 MH-U Crashed in Yorkshire on return from St Nazaire 28.3.42.
Z9296 MH-D To 10 OTU.
Z9298 MH-B/D/F To 138Sqn and back. To 10 OTU.
Z9301 MH-N FTR Emden 17/18.1.42.
Z9302 From 78Sqn. To 10 OTU.
Z9304 MH-S Ditched in Channel on return from St Nazaire 28.3.42.
Z9311 MH-J FTR Emden 21/22.1.42.
Z9314 MH-L To 297Sqn and back. To 10 OTU.
Z9315 MH-V FTR from leafleting sortie 26/27.1.42.
Z9322 MH-G To 77Sqn.
Z9323 Ditched off Cornwall during patrol 12.10.42.
Z9387 MH-M FTR patrol 7.9.42.

Z9421 MH-H From 102Sqn. To 10 OTU.
Z9423 MH-S FTR Emden 26/27.1.42.
Z9424 MH-R FTR Emden 15/16.1.42.
Z9425 MH-E Crashed in Devon during patrol 24.9.42.
Z9465 FTR patrol 30.9.42.
Z9481 MH-V Crashed in Yorkshire on return from St Nazaire 28.3.42.
Z9511 FTR from patrol 12.7.42.
BD190 MH-J Force-landed in Yorkshire on return from Rostock 24.4.42.
BD191 FTR patrol 20.6.42.
BD192 MH-C Ditched while on patrol 7.6.42.
BD258 FTR patrol 30.9.42.
BD259 To 10 OTU.
BD260 To 138Sqn.
BD359 To 10 OTU.

HALIFAX.

From November 1942.

W1185 MH-V From 103Sqn. Crashed on landing at Burn after air-test 29.1.43.
W1212 MH-U From 103Sqn. To 1654CU.
W1224 MH-E/A From 103Sqn. To 466Sqn and back. To 1656CU.
W7772 MH-S/O From 103Sqn. To 10Sqn.
W7818 MH-T From 103Sqn. Crash-landed near Snaith during training 18.2.43.
W7855 From 10 Sqn. Crash-landed at Snaith during training 25.2.43.
W7860 MH-W From 103Sqn. To 1668CU.
W7861 MH-B From 103Sqn. FTR Hamburg 3/4.3.43.
BB223 MH-C From 103Sqn. FTR Berlin 1/2.3.43.
BB240 MH-X From 10Sqn. To 1652CU.
BB241 MH-S From 10Sqn. To 1652CU.
BB244 MH-G/Q From 78Sqn. FTR Berlin 29/30.3.43.
BB253 To 1658CU.
DT483 MH-F From 103Sqn. FTR from mining sortie 9/10.1.43.
DT506 MH-D From 103Sqn. Crash-landed at Pocklington on return from Lorient 15.1.43.
DT513 MH-H/N From 103Sqn. FTR Cologne 28/29.6.43.
DT526 MH-V From 78Sqn. FTR Bochum 13/14.5.43.
DT552 From 10Sqn. To 1658CU.
DT561 MH-K From 10Sqn. FTR Pilsen 16/17.4.43.
DT567 MH-F From 10Sqn. FTR from mining sortie 7/8.3.43.
DT568 MH-F From 77Sqn. FTR Bochum 12/13.6.43.
DT580 MH-Z To 78Sqn.
DT581 MH-Y From 77Sqn. Crashed in Yorkshire on return from mining sortie 21.1.43.
DT582 MH-X From 77Sqn. To 1666CU.
DT584 MH-J From 77Sqn. To 1666CU.
DT614 MH-H To 1658CU.

DT626 From 77Sqn. To 1658CU.
DT628 MH-B From 77Sqn. FTR Stettin 20/21.4.43.
DT637 From 158Sqn. Force-landed near Riccall on return from Duisburg 13.5.43.
DT638 MH-C To 158Sqn.
DT645 MH-B- From 77Sqn. FTR Duisburg 12/13.5.43.
DT648 MH-K Crashed on landing at Snaith on return from St Nazaire 1.3.43.
DT649 From 77Sqn. To 1658CU.
DT666 MH-T From 77Sqn. Crashed near Snaith on return from Essen 4.4.43.
DT670 MH-C/M From 77Sqn. FTR Pilsen 16/17.4.43.
DT671 MH-S From 158Sqn. To 1652CU.
DT685 MH-A From 77Sqn. FTR Duisburg 12/13.5.43.
DT686 MH-L/N From 58Sqn. FTR Kiel 4/5.4.43.
DT690 MH-A- FTR Pilsen 16/17.4.43.
DT693 MH-B/F To 1661CU.
DT705 MH-S FTR Düsseldorf 27/28.1.43.
DT721 MH-J FTR Düsseldorf 27/28.1.43.
DT722 MH-M Destroyed by fire at Snaith 13.2.43.
DT724 MH-H Destroyed by fire at Snaith 13.2.43.
DT729 MH-R Crashed in Yorkshire while training 3.5.43.
DT730 MH-A To 77Sqn.
DT738 MH-D FTR Essen 3/4.4.43.
DT742 MH-Y Ditched off Norfolk coast on return from Düsseldorf 12.6.43.
HR711 To 102Sqn.
HR716 MH-S From 158Sqn. To 102Sqn.
HR726 MH-B/LK-B FTR Berlin 22/23.11.43.
HR727 MH-V From 102Sqn. Crashed in Derbyshire on return from Frankfurt 5.10.43.
HR728 LK-D FTR Kassel 3/4.10.43.
HR729 MH-R FTR Pilsen 16/17.4.43.
HR730 To 102Sqn.
HR731 MH-C FTR Gelsenkirchen 25/26.6.43.
HR732 MH-Y From 77Sqn. FTR Leipzig 3/4.12.43.
HR733 FTR Essen 30.4/1.5.43.
HR747 Crashed on landing at Snaith on return from Düsseldorf 25/26.5.43.
HR749 MH-J FTR Essen 25/26.7.43.
HR750 MH-W FTR Essen 27/28.5.43.
HR755 From 158Sqn. To 78Sqn.
HR778 FTR Duisburg 26/27.4.43.
HR782 MH-A/R FTR Leipzig 3/4.12.43.
HR783 Crashed in Yorkshire while training 6.8.43.
HR784 FTR Pilsen 16/17.4.43.
HR786 MH-J FTR Duisburg 12/13.5.43.
HR787 FTR Duisburg 26/27.4.43.
HR788 FTR Düsseldorf 11/12.6.43.

HR789 MH-Z FTR Essen 27/28.5.43.
HR790 FTR Bochum 13/14.5.43.
HR834 MH-V/Q To 102Sqn.
HR835 FTR Dortmund 23/24.5.43.
HR836 FTR Dortmund 23/24.5.43.
HR838 MH-Q FTR Nuremburg 10/11.8.43.
HR839 LK-L FTR Cologne 28/29.6.43.
HR842 FTR Dortmund 23/24.5.43.
HR843 MH-A Crashed near Gatwick on return from Gelsenkirchen 10.7.43.
HR844 FTR Dortmund 23/24.5.43.
HR852 MH-D FTR Düsseldorf 11/12.6.43.
HR853 FTR Düsseldorf 25/26.5.43.
HR858 From 158Sqn. To 78Sqn.
HR859 FTR Hamburg 2/3.8.43.
HR868 MH-B To 1656CU.
HR869 MH-Z FTR Nuremburg 27/28.8.43.
HR870 MH-H Crashed on take-off from Snaith when training 18.10.43.
HR930 To 1662CU.
HR931 MH-F FTR Berlin 31.8/1.9.43.
HR934 FTR Essen 25/26.7.43.
HR935 LK-J To 77Sqn.
HR936 MH-J FTR Berlin 23/24.8.43.
HR939 MH-R To 1652CU.
HR940 FTR Hamburg 24/25.7.43.
HR946 MH-T To 77Sqn.
HR947 MH-K To 102Sqn.
HR948 MH-W FTR Frankfurt 20/21.12.43.
HR949 MH-E To 77Sqn.
HR950 MH-X/S FTR from operations 20.11.43.
HR951 Crashed on landing at Snaith while training 19.8.43.
HR952 MH-X To 10Sqn.
HR981 MH-D From 158Sqn. Crashed in Lincolnshire when bound for Nuremburg 10.8.43.

HX228 From R.A.E. To 1658CU.
HX237 To 466Sqn.
HX241 MH-J To 78Sqn.
HX321 MH-H From 35Sqn. Crashed on landing at Snaith on return from Caen 18.7.44.

HX330 MH-V FTR Stuttgart 15/16.3.44.
HX350 MH-U/Y FTR Tergnier 18/19.4.44.
HX355 To 78Sqn.
JB792 Crashed on landing at Woolfox Lodge on return from Dortmund 24.5.43.

JB806 MH-J FTR Duisburg 12/13.5.43.
JD118 LK-K To 78Sqn.

JD123 MH-S From 77Sqn. FTR Frankfurt 20/21.12.43.
JD125 To 77Sqn.
JD153 To 1658CU.
JD244 MH-K FTR Krefeld 21/22.6.43.
JD245 To 502Sqn.
JD248 MH-S To 78Sqn.
JD250 MH-R FTR Wuppertal 24/25.6.43.
JD251 MH-X FTR Mülheim 22/23.6.43.
JD252 MH-T To 78Sqn.
JD253 LK-A/E FTR Hanover 8/9.10.43.
JD261 MH-J FTR Gelsenkirchen 25/26.6.43.
JD262 MH-J FTR Cologne 3/4.7.43.
JD263 FTR Mannheim/Ludwigshafen 5/6.9.43.
JD264 MH-U/LK-H FTR Berlin 29/30.12.43.
JD266 LK-C To 1659CU.
JD299 LK-F To 1663CU.
JD300 MH-Y From 158Sqn. To 78Sqn.
JD302 From 77Sqn. To 102Sqn.
JD308 To 1652CU.
JD309 FTR Hamburg 29/30.7.43.
JD310 To 78Sqn.
JD311 MH-L To 102Sqn.
JD461 LK-E From 77Sqn. To 102Sqn.
JN883 LK-A To 10Sqn.
JN885 MH-A FTR Hanover 8/9.10.43.
JN887 From 158Sqn. To 78Sqn.
JN891 To 102Sqn.
JN899 LK-K To 10Sqn.
JN900 Crash-landed at Ridgewell following early return from Hanover 27/28.9.43.
JN901 FTR Hanover 22/23.9.43.
JN902 MH-H FTR Berlin 31.8/1.9.43.
JN906 MH-D To 78Sqn.
JN917 MH-W To 10Sqn.
JN919 MH-B From 158Sqn. To 78Sqn.
JN920 LK-L FTR Kassel 22/23.10.43.
JN922 MH-Z Crash-landed at Snaith following air-test 5.12.43.
JN923 MH-F Damaged beyond repair during a bombing exercise 20.12.43.
JN924 MH-H/D Damaged beyond repair by enemy avction during mining sortie 2/3.10.43.
LK748 To 1658CU.
LK750 MH-Y/Y2 FTR Frankfurt 18/19.3.44.
LK751 To 1663CU.
LK753 MH-B To 10Sqn.
LK756 MH-J To 578Sqn.

LK812 MH-E To 10Sqn.
LK827 To 10Sqn.
LK830 From 578Sqn.
LK835 MH-U Abandoned over Wales while training 22.5.44.
LK843 To 578Sqn and back.
LK844 MH-M Crashed in Yorkshire during training flight 14.11.44.
LK845 To 431Sqn.
LK846 To 578Sqn.
LK885 MH-Z FTR Aachen 24/25.5.44.
LL270 To 644Sqn.
LL328 To 644Sqn.
LL331 To 644Sqn.
LL548 From 578Sqn.
LL612 MH-A/C6-A Crashed on landing at Snaith on return from Essen 25.10.44.
LV774 MH-B FTR Magdeburg 21/22.1.44.
LV775 MH-G FTR Magdeburg 21/22.1.44.
LV777 MH-F/F2 FTR Nuremburg 30/31.3.44.
LV778 MH-T/C6-D/BFTR Schweinfurt 24/25.2.44.
LV779 MH-L FTR Magdeburg 21/22.1.44.
LV782 MH-T/E From 35Sqn. FTR Villers-Bocage 30.6.44.
LV783 MH-R/Z FTR Montzen 27/28.4.44.
LV784 LK-K/MH-S To 578Sqn and back. FTR Aachen 24/25.5.44.
LV815 To 578Sqn.
LV817 To 78Sqn.
LV818 To 35Sqn.
LV819 C6-F From 78Sqn. Damaged beyond repair during operation to Bochum 4/5.11.44.
LV820 To 578Sqn.
LV822 MH-Z2 From 10Sqn. FTR Nuremburg 30/31.3.44.
LV832 MH-P/X From 10Sqn.
LV857 MH-H2 From 10Sqn. FTR Nuremburg 30/31.3.44.
LV862 MH-K/A From 10Sqn. Abandoned over UK on return from Croixdale 6.7.44.
LV865 MH-Y From 10Sqn. Crashed on take-off from Snaith when bound for Boulogne 17.9.44.
LV876 From 78Sqn.
LV880 MH-E/C From 10Sqn. FTR Tergnier 10/11.4.44.
LV937 MH-E From 578Sqn. Completed over 100 operations.
LV952 MH-F From 578Sqn. FTR Hanover 5/6.1.45.
LW177 MH-N FTR Bochum 4/5.11.44.
LW194 From 424Sqn.
LW227 From 77Sqn. To 102Sqn.
LW286 LK-H FTR Berlin 22/23.11.43.
LW287 MH-C FTR from mining sortie 2/3.10.43.
LW289 MH-U/J To 10Sqn.
LW291 From 158Sqn. To 78Sqn.

LW299 MH-B From 158Sqn. To 102Sqn.
LW348 LK-X To 578Sqn.
LW362 C6-C To 578Sqn and back. Crashed on landing at Snaith while training 25.8.44.

LW364 MH-K/B Crashed in Yorkshire on return from Chateaudun 9.6.44.
LW442 MH-Q To 187Sqn.
LW445 MH-Z To 1658CU.
LW461 MH-D/Y FTR Magdeburg 16/17.1.45.
LW465 From 78Sqn. To 578Sqn.
LW466 MH-H FTR Berlin 28/29.1.44.
LW468 To 578Sqn and back. FTR Magdeburg 21/22.1.44.
LW469 LK-A To 578Sqn.
LW470 To 158Sqn.
LW471 MH-D To 578Sqn.
LW472 MH-H To 578Sqn.
LW473 MH-E To 578Sqn.
LW474 MH-B To 578Sqn.
LW475 MH-E To 578Sqn.
LW478 To 578Sqn.
LW479 MH-E FTR Montzen 27/28.4.44.
LW480 MH-A To 347Sqn.
LW481 MH-X FTR Leipzig 19/20.2.44.
LW495 MH-C To 578Sqn.
LW496 MH-S/C6-A To 578Sqn.
LW497 MH-W FTR Stuttgart 15/16.3.44.
LW498 C6-T FTR Aachen 24/25.5.44.
MH-Z/T
LW503 To 578Sqn.
LW504 MH-Q To 347Sqn.
C6-E/D
LW508 LK-Y To 578Sqn.
LW521 From 78Sqn. To 466Sqn.
LW522 MH-J From 78Sqn. FTR Tergnier 18/19.4.44.
LW537 MH-C2 FTR Nuremburg 30/31.3.44.
LW538 MH-T/N To 578Sqn and back. FTR Sterkrade 18/19.8.44.
LW539 MH-H/N/N2 To 578Sqn and back. FTR Berlin 24/25.3.44.
LW540 To 578Sqn.
LW541 MH-Y/C6-J To 347Sqn.
LW542 To 578Sqn.
LW543 MH-R To 578Sqn.
LW544 MH-Q2 FTR Nuremburg 30/31.3.44.
LW545 MH-K/C6-D To 10Sqn.
LW546 C6-L/MH-R FTR Hazebrouck 6.8.44.
LW553 To 578Sqn.
LW556 From 578Sqn. To 1665CU.

LW557 To 578Sqn.
LW578 C6-F Crashed on landing at Snaith while training 22.4.44.
LW579 C6-E/MH-V Crashed in Oxfordshire on return from Nuremburg 30/31.3.44.
LW588 MH-S/O FTR Somain 11.8.44.
LW642 MH-L To 347Sqn.
LW671 MH-K Crash-landed in Suffolk on return from Essen 27.3.44.
LW677 C6-B To 158Sqn.
LW679 MH-R Crash-landed at Snaith while training 22.3.44.
LW689 From 429Sqn. To 434Sqn.
MZ319 MH-B From 578Sqn. FTR Gelsenkirchen 11.9.44.
MZ343 MH-T FTR Sterkrade 6.10.44.
MZ348 MH-D FTR Rheine 21.3.45.
MZ349 MH-U FTR Brunswick 12/13.8.44.
MZ401 To 462Sqn.
MZ402 To 462Sqn.
MZ451 MH-F From 424Sqn. FTR Cologne 2.3.45.
MZ465 MH-Y
MZ484
MZ485 From 578Sqn.
MZ487 MH-Z FTR Wanne-Eickel 2/3.2.45.
MZ507 MH-P/P2 FTR Berlin 24/25.3.44.
MZ535 To 1658CU.
MZ563 To 578Sqn.
MZ565 MH-O FTR Montzen 27/28.4.44.
MZ566 MH-Y FTR Düsseldorf 22/23.4.44.
MZ571 To 347Sqn.
MZ581 C6-C Crashed on approach to Woodbridge on return from Bottrop 21.7.44.
MZ593 MH-Z FTR Mechelen 1/2.5.44.
MZ624 MH-N Damaged beyond repair during operation to Gelsenkirchen 11.9.44.
MZ634 MH-U To 1659CU.
MZ635 To 347Sqn.
MZ643 MH-Z Damaged beyond repair during operation to Amiens 12/13.6.44.
MZ689 To 77Sqn.
MZ708 To 77Sqn.
MZ743 To 77Sqn.
MZ754 MH-U From 424Sqn.
MZ758 MH-V Belly-landed near Strubby on return from Venlo airfield 3.9.44.
MZ765 MH-E From 77Sqn. Crashed in Sussex when bound for Wesel 17.2.45.
MZ766 MH-B/Z
MZ767 MH-D FTR Hanover 5/6.1.45.
MZ771 From 578Sqn.
MZ790 From 578Sqn.
MZ794 MH-T From 578Sqn. FTR Stuttgart 28/29.1.45.
MZ811 MH-X FTR Hanau 6/7.1.45.

MZ820
MZ821 MH-H FTR Bottrop 20/21.7.44.
MZ851
MZ868
MZ870 Crashed on landing at Snaith while training 1.10.44.
MZ897 From 424Sqn.
MZ916 MH-O FTR Gelsenkirchen 11.9.44.
MZ917 MH-R To 158Sqn.
MZ918 MH-U FTR Hanover 5/6.1.45.
MZ933 MH-W FTR Bochum 4/5.11.44.
MZ934 MH-P
MZ938 From 578Sqn.
MZ972 MH-O FTR Calais 24.9.44.
MZ974 MH-N
MZ988 From 578Sqn
NA123 From 578Sqn.
NA150 MH-N
NA196 MH-N To EANS.
NA200
NA493 To Handley Page.
NA496 MH-L To 187Sqn.
NA525 From 578Sqn.
NA529 To 578Sqn.
NA625 To 187Sqn.
NA626
NP932 MH-J Crashed on approach to Snaith on return from Homberg 14.3.45.
NP933 MH-M FTR Cleves 7.10.44.
NP934 MH-V FTR Duisburg 17/18.12.44.
NP962 MH-V
NP963 MH-R
NP972
NP974 To 1652CU.
NR128 MH-S Crashed on landing at Snaith while training 27.10.44.
NR129 MH-M FTR Sterkrade 21/22.11.44.
NR142 MH-S
NR202
NR241 MH-A Collided with MZ559 (578Sqn) on approach to Snaith on return from
Münster 18.11.44.
NR245 From 10Sqn.
NR248 MH-A FTR Duisburg 17/18.12.44.
NR254 MH-A To Leconfield.
NR255 C6-H From 578Sqn.
PN184 MH-Q To 640Sqn.

RG445

RG446 MH-U

HEAVIEST SINGLE LOSS. 30/31.3.44. Nuremberg. 6 Halifaxes. 5 FTR 1Crashed.

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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.



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SECTION 5



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Most of the figures used in the statistics section of this work, have been drawn from The Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt, and I am indebted to Martin Middlebrook for allowing me to use them.

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SECTION 6



STOCK LIST

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**MOSQUITO SQUADRONS
OF THE PATH FINDER FORCE
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BOMBER COMMAND AND ITS
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Commissions for original work welcomed
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