

**ROYAL AIR FORCE
BOMBER COMMAND**

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**SQUADRON PROFILES
NUMBER 119**



622 SQUADRON

Bellamus noctu

**RESEARCHED, COMPILED AND WRITTEN
BY
CHRIS WARD**

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GENERAL NOTES

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

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

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 However, where there is a blank space following the serial number of a type which has been withdrawn from service with Bomber Command, it signifies that I don't know its ultimate fate.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

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

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

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SECTION 1



BRIEF HISTORY

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MOTTO **BELLAMUS NOCTU** (We make war by night.)

Code **GI**

Born out of the expansion of Bomber Command during the latter half of 1943, 622 Squadron was formed from C Flight of XV Squadron at Mildenhall in 3 Group on the 10th of August. Unlike its parent squadron, it had no previous history and tradition, and once its wartime duty had been fulfilled, it would become a number on the shelf, reappearing only briefly during the early fifties. The squadron's initial complement of seven Stirlings inherited from XV Squadron constituted A Flight, and the numbers would be made up over the succeeding days to sixteen, with four in reserve. The original crews posted in on the 10th were those of S/L Martin, F/L Bould, F/Ss Batson, Clarke, Marsh and Rollett, and Sgt Jackson, with aircraft, BF521, BK652, BK766, BK816, EF391, EH897 and MZ264, to be followed by EF490 on the 12th and EF461 on the 14th. Additional aircrew were posted in from training units to bring the squadron up to full strength, but the presence of experienced crews enabled the squadron to be declared operational on the day of its formation. Command of the new squadron rested for the first ten days with S/L Martin, and he conducted his first briefing on the afternoon of the 10th for an operation to Nuremberg by over six hundred aircraft, including 119 Stirlings, of which seven were provided by the 622 Squadron. After a late evening take-off, the crews found the birthplace of Nazism under cloud, but never-the-less, proceeded to deliver an effective operation, which destroyed some historic buildings, and left one district engulfed in flames, in return for the loss of sixteen aircraft. All seven 622 Squadron aircraft came through their operational debut unscathed, although two had returned early, and no crews would be posted missing until the next major campaign got underway.

The formation of 622 Squadron came shortly after the highly successful Ruhr and Hamburg campaigns, and two weeks before the first salvoes were fired in what was to be the long and bloody Berlin offensive over the coming winter. At the precise time of the squadron's birth, however, the Command was in the middle of a final offensive against the major cities of Italy, a country teetering on the brink of capitulation. It was, in fact, Turin which provided the target for the squadron's second operation, a 3 Group effort on the 12/13th with Pathfinder Halifaxes in support. Returning crews claimed an accurate raid, and were similarly enthusiastic on return from the same city on the 16/17th, the final raid of the war on Italy by aircraft of Bomber Command. Some of the Stirlings were diverted away from their bases on arrival back over England, and by the time that they eventually got home, many of them could not be made ready in time for that night's operation, which was one of the most important of the war to date. Since the start of hostilities, intelligence had been passed to the British government concerning German research into rocketry. Gradually it became clear, that this activity was centred upon Peenemünde, an island on the Baltic coast, and once this had been established, the region became subject to monitoring through interception of radio signals and photographic reconnaissance. Churchill's chief scientific adviser, Professor Lindemann, or Lord Cherwell as he became, steadfastly refused to give credence to rocket weapons, and remained unmoved even when presented with a photograph of a V-2 taken by a PRU Mosquito in June 1943. It required the combined urgings of Duncan Sandys and the brilliant

scientist, Dr R V Jones, to get Churchill to act, and finally, an operation was planned for the first available opportunity, which arose on the night of the 17/18th. It may be remembered, that earlier in the day, the American 8th Air Force had mounted its ill-fated two phase attack on Regensburg and Schweinfurt, and lost a massive sixty B17s in the process.

It was essential to complete the destruction of the site at the first attempt, because any return would be certain to be met by the fiercest opposition. For this reason, a complex and highly detailed plan was prepared, which called for the marking of three aiming points, the housing estate, the factory and the experimental site, each assigned to a specific wave of bombers, with the Pathfinders charged with the task of shifting the point of aim accordingly. The operation was to have a Master of Ceremonies to control the attack in the manner of Gibson at the Dams, and the officer selected was G/C Searby, the commanding officer of 83 Squadron, and successor to Gibson at 106 Squadron. A simultaneous spoof operation on Berlin by eight Mosquitos of 139 Squadron was designed to keep the nightfighters away from Peenemünde, and hopefully give the bombers a clear run at the target from low to medium level. Most of the 596 take-offs took place between 21.00 and 22.00 hours, and just one solitary 622 Squadron Stirling was among them, EE146, which was bearing the crew of F/S Young.

The initial marking of the housing estate for the 3 and 4 Group element went astray, and some target indicators fell around the forced workers camp at Trassenheide, two miles south of the true aiming point. Many casualties were inflicted upon these friendly foreign nationals, who were trapped inside their wooden barracks in an enclosed compound. Once rectified, however, the bombing was accurate, and a number of important members of the scientific staff were killed. 1 Group enjoyed a reasonably successful time over the factory, but by this time, nightfighters were on their way from Berlin, their pilots having observed the activity far to the north, and assessed the Berlin raid as a ruse. It was predominantly the 5 and 6 Group aircraft which were in the target area as the nightfighters arrived, and they were targeting the experimental site, for which some of the 5 Group crews adopted their "time and distance" method of bombing. This was the least successful phase of the operation, and the nightfighters proceeded to take a heavy toll of bombers both in the skies above Peenemünde, and on the route home towards Denmark. A total of forty aircraft failed to return, twenty nine of them from the final phase, but on the credit side, sufficient damage had been inflicted upon the site to set back the development programme by a number of weeks, and it would not be necessary for the bombers to return. On the 20th, S/L Martin stepped down as the temporary commander of the squadron, and reverted to flight commander in favour of W/C G H N Gibson. The latter was an experienced officer, who had recently returned from the Middle East, where he had spent three months as the commanding officer of 104 Squadron, formally a 4 Group Wellington unit.

Harris had long believed that Berlin held the key to ultimate victory. As the seat and the symbol of Nazi power, its destruction would deal a major blow to the morale of the enemy civilian population, and loosen the tight grip of the Party machine. Harris had stated, that with the assistance of the American 8th Air Force, he could "wreck Berlin from end to end", and thereby achieve victory without the need for the protracted and costly land campaigns which

he had personally witnessed during the Great War. The Americans, however, were committed to victory on land, and the physical occupation of Germany, and they would not accompany Harris to Berlin. It should be remembered, however, that the winning of a war by bombing alone was an untried theory, and that Harris was the first commander to test its validity. Only in the light of more recent experiences have we learned of the need, in a conventional war at least, to occupy the enemy's land in order to secure a surrender. Harris, as adamant and undaunted as ever, would not be deflected from his path, and he would attempt to bring Berlin to its knees alone. As events were to prove, the Berlin offensive would be conducted in two phases, separated by an autumn break, and the force of 727 aircraft which stood ready to launch the campaign at around 20.00 hours on the 23rd, included 124 aircraft from 3 Group's ten Stirling squadrons, and a contingent of Mk II Lancasters from 115 Squadron.

The operation did not proceed according to plan after the pathfinder element found difficulty in identifying the centre of the city. The markers fell mostly onto the southern outskirts, and while the ensuing bombing was spread across these districts and onto outlying communities, it was the most effective raid on the Capital of the war to date, with over 2,600 buildings destroyed or seriously damaged. On the debit side, fifty six aircraft failed to return home, and this was a new record loss, the almost 13% casualty figure among the Stirling element including the first missing aircraft from 622 Squadron. BF521 crashed in Germany, killing F/S Rollett and his crew, and BK816 almost suffered a similar fate, after repeated attacks by nightfighters left it severely damaged. Remarkably, it was the other members of the crew who brought the Stirling home to a safe landing, after the pilot was wounded in the engagement. After three nights of minor operations, over six hundred aircraft took off for Nuremberg on the 27/28th, and many of them contributed to the extensive creep-back which resulted in most of the bombs being wasted in open country. The operation cost the Command thirty three aircraft, and the Stirling casualties again amounted to 10%, although on this occasion there was none from 622 Squadron. The twin towns of Mönchengladbach and Rheydt were subjected to a heavy raid on the 30/31st, which left a combined total of more than 2,300 buildings in ruins for the loss of twenty five bombers, of which six were Stirlings, and this represented a much more sustainable 5.6% for the type. Twenty four hours later, over six hundred crews were briefed for a return to the "Big City", but despite the numbers, bombing was spread many miles back along the line of approach, and less than a hundred houses were destroyed at the Capital. A massive forty seven crews paid the price for this disappointing raid by their failure to return, and the Stirling loss rate was an incredible 16%. There were two 622 Squadron aircraft among the seventeen examples of the type missing, EF119 and MZ264, both of which were shot down by nightfighters to crash in Germany. F/O Toy and two of his crew were killed in the former, and only one man escaped with his life from the crew of F/S Young in the latter, and the survivors from both crews were taken into captivity.

This initial phase of the Berlin campaign was concluded by an all Lancaster force on the 3/4th of September, when some useful industrial damage saved the operation from being a complete waste. Two nights later, six hundred crews were briefed for an attack on the twin towns of Mannheim and Ludwigshafen, and for once at a target beyond the range of Oboe, the Pathfinder marking went precisely according to plan, and was exploited by the main force crews with little creep-back. Both towns suffered extreme damage and large areas of fire, but

the defenders again fought valiantly, and claimed thirty four bombers. Stirlings were excluded from a raid on Munich on the 6/7th, but 3 Group had an important part to play in Operation Starkey, the controversial bombing of heavy gun positions at either end of the small resort town of Le Portel near Boulogne on the 8/9th. 112 Stirlings took part in the two phase operation, along with Wellingtons from 1 Group and elements from the training units, with the Pathfinders providing Mosquito Oboe markers and Halifaxes. 622 Squadron sent five aircraft in the second phase, but the operation was not a success, and it was the town itself which suffered under the bombs, with around 90% of its built-up area being reduced to ruins, and some five hundred people losing their lives or succumbing later to their injuries. Elements of 3, 4, 6 and 8 Groups made up a force of over 350 aircraft for an attack on another precision target on the 15/16th, the Dunlop Rubber factory at Montluçon. The operation was conducted very successfully under the watchful eye of the Master Bomber, W/C Dean of 35 Squadron, and the target was well plastered for the loss of just three aircraft. The same Groups took part in an operation against important railway yards at Modane in Southern France on the 16/17th, but this time the marking was not accurate, and the operation failed. F/O Roberts and crew were able to walk away from the wreckage of EF126 after it crashed on take-off from Mildenhall when bound for a mining sortie on the 21/22nd, and this was the first incident thus far of the month.

A series of four raids in the succeeding four weeks on Hanover began on the 22/23rd, at the hands of a maximum effort force of over seven hundred aircraft. The bombing was concentrated away from the city centre, and the disappointment was compounded by the loss of twenty six aircraft. On the following night, over six hundred aircraft returned to the recently bombed town of Mannheim, and heaped further misery upon it and its inhabitants with another highly accurate attack. A thousand buildings were destroyed, and some bombs fell across the Rhein into Ludwigshafen, where some useful industrial damage occurred. It was another night of heavy losses, however, thirty two aircraft failing to return, and this was added to on the 27/28th, when the second of the Hanover series took place. Most of the bombing was wasted in open country, and thirty eight aircraft fell victim to the defences. Among them was the squadron's EH991, which was lost without trace with the crew of F/S Hunt.

October began in busy fashion for the Command as a whole, although the Stirling squadrons were not called into action until the month's third major operation, to Kassel on the 3/4th. Difficulty in identifying the aiming point led to the bombing falling mainly onto the western suburbs and outlying communities, but fires were started at two important aircraft factories, and one eastern suburb was completely destroyed. Seventy Stirlings took part in a raid by almost four hundred aircraft on Frankfurt on the 4/5th, and this was the first time that a serious blow had been delivered on this target. Stirlings were excluded from operations against Stuttgart on the 7/8th and Hanover on the 8/9th, which, incidentally, was the most successful of the war against this target, but while the latter was in progress, a predominately Stirling force carried out a diversionary raid on Bremen. It was an all Lancaster force which concluded the disappointing series against Hanover on the 18/19th, and fell foul of atrocious weather conditions while attempting to attack Leipzig on the 20/21st. On the 22/23rd, Kassel became the victim of one of the war's most devastating raids, when undergoing an ordeal by firestorm at the hands of five hundred Lancasters and Halifaxes. The Stirlings were beginning

to play a decreasing role in bombing operations, and as November dawned, the end to the type's involvement in activities over Germany was but three weeks away. The Stirling squadrons were now to play a more prominent role in mining operations, and they would also find themselves gainfully employed in clandestine activities on behalf of the Special Operations Executive, whose two "moon" squadrons, 138 and 161, flew out of Tempsford, also under the control of 3 Group.

There was very little to occupy the main force squadrons in November following a raid on Düsseldorf by Lancasters and Halifaxes on the 3/4th. The Stirling brigade was restricted to occasional nights of mining as Harris prepared for the resumption of the Berlin offensive, and it was, in fact, an all Lancaster heavy force which embarked on the main battle on the night of the 18/19th, while a predominately Halifax and Stirling contingent carried out a diversionary raid on Mannheim and Ludwigshafen. Results at the Capital were modest, but the tactic of splitting the effort reduced the losses from this main raid to nine Lancasters, while the secondary attack produced better results in terms of the damage inflicted, but at a cost of twenty three aircraft. Nine Stirlings failed to return from 114 despatched, compared with twelve Halifaxes from 248, and the implications of this disparity were clear. Two of the errant aircraft were from 622 Squadron, EF128 and EJ113 both crashing in France, with just one survivor from the crew of F/S Morecombe in the former, and none from the eight man crew of F/S Owen in the latter. On the following night, Halifaxes and Stirlings went to Leverkusen in the company of Oboe Mosquitos. Equipment failure among the last mentioned prevented accurate marking, and bombs were sprayed over a wide area, with just one being recorded at the intended target. Losses were light in the poor weather conditions, which kept the enemy nightfighters on the ground, but fog at home caused major problems for returning crews, and a number of aircraft crashed. 622 Squadron's EF123 came down in Cambridgeshire while on approach to Mildenhall, and P/O Hughes was killed with all but one of his crew.

764 aircraft and crews answered the call for a maximum effort on the 22/23rd, for the second operation to Berlin since the resumption. Only fifty Stirlings represented 3 Group, along with the MkII Lancasters of 115 and 514 Squadrons, in what turned out to be the most destructive raid of the war on the Capital. The bombing was conducted through cloud, which made it impossible for the crews to assess the results of their efforts, and a fairly modest twenty six aircraft failed to return home. What the crews couldn't see was an area of devastation stretching from the city centre westwards across predominately residential districts, where fires had possibly reached firestorm intensity. Three thousand houses were destroyed along with two dozen industrial premises, approximately two thousand people were killed, and a further 175,000 were rendered homeless. Five of the missing aircraft were Stirlings, and this amounted to 10% of those despatched. Among them was 622 Squadron's EF150, which was brought down over Germany, but F/L Denham and the seven others on board all parachuted to safety, albeit as guests of the Reich. This operation marked the end of the road for Stirlings as far as Germany was concerned, and from now on, the type would be relegated to the useful but, never-the-less, secondary roles mentioned earlier. It must have been something of a blow to 3 Group, to find its involvement in front-line operations reduced to just its two Lancaster units, particularly having been at the forefront of activity since the first day of the war. Happily, the rather slow conversion to becoming an all Lancaster Group would see the

Mildenhall squadrons beginning to re-equip before the year was out, and as events would prove, 622 Squadron had now already posted missing its final crew on Stirlings. All around, however, the winter campaign continued, and an all Lancaster main force followed up the success at Berlin with a second highly destructive assault twenty four hours later, guided by the fires still burning. Two thousand more houses were reduced to rubble, and around fifteen hundred people lost their lives, but despite the best efforts of the crews, the level of success achieved at the Capital over these two nights would not be repeated.

Mining operations provided the only employment for the Stirling crews until deep into December, when twenty six of them carried out an attack on a flying bomb site at Tilley-le-Haut in the Pas-de-Calais on the 16/17th. The operation failed in the face of insufficiently accurate Oboe marking, and 617 Squadron was similarly frustrated at nearby Flixecourt. It was on this night, that crews returning from Berlin found their airfields blanketed in thick fog, and twenty nine Lancasters either crashed or were abandoned by their crews as they searched for somewhere to land. A couple of days after Christmas, 622 Squadron welcomed its first Lancaster, W4163, which was something of a veteran, and an aircraft which would not enjoy a long career with its new owner. Since the two back-to-back successes at Berlin in November, and in the absence of the Stirling brigade, five more raids had been directed against the Capital, none of which was more than moderately effective, and they had cost the Command 129 missing aircraft, plus around another fifty written off in crashes. Despite this, it had been a successful year for the Command, with some notable victories to look back on. The effective removal of 3 Group from the order of battle had been compensated for by the formation of new squadrons in the other Groups, and they were now being bloodied in what was becoming a bitter struggle for victory at Berlin. For the long standing Lancaster crews, the New Year offered more of the same fare that had characterized the final quarter of the old year, but for XV and 622 Squadrons, the former having also begun its conversion programme, there must have been a sense of optimism following the departure of the Stirling, even though it had aroused feelings of affection and loyalty among the crews.

1944

The last of the squadron's Stirlings was flown off on New Year's Day, and the crews got on with the business of working up to operational status on the Lancaster. There was to be no respite, however, either for the hard-pressed crews or the beleaguered citizens of Germany's capital city. Proud of their status as Berliners first and Germans second, they were a hardy breed of people, and equally as capable as their counterparts in London during the Blitz of 1940 to withstand any amount of bombing. They bore their trials just as resolutely and cheerfully, they developed their own black humour, and carried banners through the streets which proclaimed "you may break our walls, but not our hearts." They also sang along with the most popular song of the day, *Nach jedem Dezember kommt immer ein Mai*, after every December comes always a May, a sentiment which hinted at a change of fortunes with the onset of spring. In a way, this would come true for the Berliners with the conclusion of Bomber Command's winter campaign at the end of March, after which, RAF heavy bombers would pay the Capital no further visits.

Such a prospect for the Lancaster crews, had they but known, would have brought no sense of relief. To them, three months of operations over Germany would provide enough opportunity to sacrifice their lives a dozen times, and a large proportion of those embarking on the New Year would survive to see precious little of it. The 1st of January was barely over when the first Lancasters arrived over the "Big City" to disgorge their incendiaries and high explosives. It was a highly disappointing performance, which was only marginally improved upon on the following night at a combined cost of fifty five Lancasters, and this concluded an unprecedented three trips to Berlin in the space of five nights. The burden fell on the main force Lancaster crews again on the 5/6th, although this time the target was Stettin on the Baltic coast. In contrast to the recent attacks on Berlin, this was a success, which destroyed five hundred houses, seriously damaged twice that number, and sank eight ships in the harbour. Minor operations saw the Command through to mid month, and when briefings took place on the 14th, there was doubtless a sense of relief that the tape on the wall maps stopped short of Berlin. It stopped, in fact, at Brunswick, a town in the same region of Germany as Hanover, which had proved to be a difficult and costly nut to crack in the previous autumn. It was this night which brought the return to the operational scene of 622 Squadron, now freshly converted onto the Lancaster. Almost five hundred Lancasters took off at around 17.00 hours, and these were picked up by nightfighters shortly after crossing the north-west coast of Germany. All the way to the target and back, the bomber stream was under attack, and thirty seven empty dispersals next morning provided ample evidence of the Command's fortunes. 622 Squadron almost came through unscathed, but S/L Martin was forced to crash-land W4163 at Mildenhall on return, happily without injury to the Lancaster's occupants.

A five night break from operations allowed the crews another respite, before the final third of the month brought a hectic round of long range trips, all but one of them to the Capital. The series began on the 20/21st, when a maximum effort force of 769 aircraft took off for a cloud-covered target at the end of a four hour outward flight. It was impossible for the crews to assess the effectiveness of the raid, but it was, in fact, successful, and fell largely into the previously little damaged eastern districts. The route out across Denmark did not deceive the nightfighter controller, and he was able to maintain contact with the bomber stream for most of the operation. Thirty five aircraft failed to return home, the Halifaxes suffering disproportionately high casualties, as had the Stirlings before them, and this would not be lost on the decision makers at Bomber Command HQ. Among the thirteen missing Lancasters were the first from 622 Squadron to fail to return, and both of them were veterans carrying eight man crews. There were no survivors from the crew of F/L Claydon following R5483's crash on German soil, and flak caused the demise of R5915 while it was outbound over Germany, and just two men survived as POWs from the crew of F/S Deacon. On the following night, over six hundred aircraft headed for Magdeburg, while a small 5 and 8 Group diversion took place at Berlin. The diversion failed, as again the nightfighters infiltrated the bomber stream, and remained with it to bring down three quarters of the new record of fifty seven missing aircraft, and there was not even the consolation of a successful operation to soften the blow. Thirty five of the missing aircraft were Halifaxes, a massive 15% of those despatched, but at least, 622 Squadron was not represented among the twenty two missing Lancasters.

A five night rest for most of the heavy crews prepared them for what would prove to be the final concerted effort to bring Berlin to its knees. The 27/28th brought the first of an unprecedented three trips to Berlin in the space of four nights. It was an all Lancaster main force of five hundred aircraft, and those which reached the target area delivered a scattered attack which fell mainly into the southern districts. Another good night for the defenders resulted in thirty three missing Lancasters, including the squadron's ED624, which failed to survive an encounter with a nightfighter over Germany, and F/S Craig was killed with all but two of his crew. Twenty four hours later, the Halifaxes joined in for a maximum effort raid, which did sufficient damage to dehouse 180,000 people. Many public and industrial buildings were also afflicted, but the defenders fought back and claimed forty six aircraft, the Halifaxes again suffering the higher actual and percentage losses. There were no 622 Squadron casualties on this occasion, and the following night saw the heavy squadrons stay at home, only to return to the Capital on the 30/31st for another try. A feature of the campaign to date had been the number of bomb loads missing Berlin altogether, and falling onto outlying communities, and seventy small towns and villages reported being afflicted on this night. In the city itself, it was the central and south-western districts which were hardest hit, and fierce fires erupted, while around a thousand people lost their lives. Thirty three aircraft failed to return home, this time all but one of them Lancasters, and 622 Squadron posted missing the crew of F/L Brown in ED364, which was lost without trace. Although there would be two more raids on Berlin by the heavy brigade, they would be in isolation over the next two months, and the campaign to destroy Berlin was now effectively over. There is no question that it was severely damaged, and that much of its industry had been destroyed or disrupted, but it had never been close to collapse, and it would continue to function as the seat and symbol of Nazi power until the Russian army arrived in its streets in April 1945.

On the 1st of February, W/C Gibson concluded his tour as commanding officer, and was posted to 1665 HCU. He was replaced by W/C Swales, otherwise known as "Blondie", another highly experienced officer, whose operational career had begun as a sergeant pilot at 38 Squadron in 1940. His award of the DFM was gazetted in October of that year, and in mid 1941, he joined XV Squadron to undertake a second tour, still in the rank of sergeant. He was eventually commissioned, and was awarded the DFC in March 1942, before, in April, being promoted to acting Flight Lieutenant. A week or so later, he was posted to XV Squadron's Conversion Flight for instructional duties, and spent most of the next twenty two months officially away from the operational scene. However, like many instructors, he was able to take part in the first thousand bomber raid on Cologne at the end of May 1942. There were no main force operations for him to preside over as commanding officer of 622 Squadron for the first two weeks of February, largely because of inhospitable weather, and it was not until the 15/16th that the next maximum effort operation took place. This, as it happened, was again to Berlin, in what would be the penultimate raid of the war by RAF heavy bombers on Germany's capital city. It was also to be a record breaking night, spectacularly eclipsing a number of previous best efforts. The total number of aircraft taking off was a massive 891, the largest non-1,000 force to date, beating the previous best by sixty five. It was the first time that more than five hundred Lancasters and three hundred Halifaxes had operated together, and those which reached the target would deliver a new record 2,640 tons of bombs. The 622 Squadron contingent got away from Mildenhall shortly after 17.30 hours and headed towards

Denmark with the rest of the stream. Berlin, as usual, was cloud covered, but the bombing was accurate, and fell mainly into central and south-western districts, destroying around a thousand houses and hundreds of temporary wooden barracks. Nightfighters were active along the routes in and out, and forty three aircraft were shot down by these and flak. Two 622 Squadron Lancasters failed to return home, and there were to be no survivors from among the sixteen men on board. F/L Welch and his crew died in the wreckage in Germany of W4268, and a nightfighter sent W4272 plunging into the IJsselmeer on the way home, almost within sight of safety, and it took with it the crew of F/L Griffiths.

After a three night rest, another force of over eight hundred aircraft headed eastwards to Leipzig, the crews unaware that they were participating in the greatest disaster to afflict the Command thus far in the war. The enemy nightfighters were waiting for the bomber stream at the Dutch coast, and the two forces remained in contact all the way to the target. Wrongly forecast winds led to some aircraft arriving too early in the target area, and their crews were forced to orbit and wait for the markers to go down. Some twenty of these fell victim to the Leipzig flak, while a number of others were lost through collisions. Most of the remainder probably went down under the guns of the nightfighters, and when all those aircraft which were going to return home had done so, there was an unbelievable shortfall of seventy eight, a new record loss at a single target by a clear twenty one aircraft. The percentage loss rate among the Halifaxes forced the withdrawal of the Mk II and V variants from further operations over Germany, and this would temporarily remove a number of major squadrons from the order of battle. Somehow, 622 Squadron avoided the carnage and came through unscathed, and also operated without loss when Stuttgart was the target on the 20/21st, a night in contrast to recent experiences, when the bombing was accurate and extensive damage was inflicted on central and northern districts. The loss of just nine aircraft was an added bonus, but a solution had to be found to the prohibitive losses of recent weeks, and a new tactic was tested over the next two operations, which were also to targets in southern Germany.

The first of these was to Schweinfurt, for which over seven hundred crews were briefed on the 24th. The plan was to split the operation into two phases with a two hour gap between, with the intention of catching the nightfighters on the ground as the second force passed through. The first phase force got away between 18.00 and 19.00 hours, and the 622 Squadron element was airborne around 20.30 hours. The operation itself was not a success, and only very modest damage resulted in the face of a pronounced undershoot by many of the Pathfinder and main force crews. However, in an overall loss of thirty three aircraft, the second phase casualties were 50% fewer than those of the first, and this suggested some merit in the tactic. The squadron's LM442 was engaged by a nightfighter shortly after leaving the target, and four of the eight men on board had time to save themselves before the Lancaster crashed, and they fell into enemy hands, but F/L Doig and three others lost their lives. On the following night, a two phase attack on Augsburg was a copy book example of the terrifying destructive power of the Command when all facets of the plan came together in perfect harmony. Clear weather conditions and weak defences allowed the Pathfinders to mark the target with great accuracy, and the five hundred strong main force exploited the opportunity to deliver two thousand tons of bombs into the heart of this beautiful and historic old city. The central districts were completely overwhelmed by fire and blast, and almost three

thousand houses were reduced to ruins, while centuries of cultural history and priceless works of art were lost forever. The cost to the Command was a moderate twenty one aircraft, among which 622 Squadron was not represented.

March was to be the final month of the winter campaign, and it began with a return to Stuttgart on the 1/2nd. The nightfighters crews found it difficult to establish contact with the bomber stream in the conditions of thick cloud, and the bomber crews were unable to assess the results of their bombing for the same reason. It was, in fact, a successful operation, with central, western and northern districts receiving the main weight of bombs. A remarkably low loss of four aircraft from the five hundred strong force made it a good night all round, and for many of the Lancaster crews, who had borne the brunt of the operational strain thus far during the year, there now followed a two week break. It was during this period that the first salvoes were fired in the Transportation Plan, the first of the pre-invasion operations, in which the French and Belgian railway systems were to be dismantled by bombing. Once the winter campaign was over, the entire Command would be committed to this task, but in the meantime, it fell largely to the Halifax squadrons of 4 and 6 Groups to prosecute this new offensive, particularly those still equipped with the Merlin powered versions exempt from operations over Germany. Elements of 4, 6 and 8 Groups carried out a highly accurate attack on the railway yards at Trappes on the 6/7th, and a 3 Group Lancaster contingent joined in at Le Mans on the following night, where a similarly successful outcome was achieved.

The Command returned to the job of city-busting on the 15/16th, with the last of the current series of operations against Stuttgart. The second largest non-1,000 force to date, of 863 aircraft, took off either side of 19.00 hours, and headed south into France. The nightfighters did not pick up the bomber stream until it was approaching the target, but from that point on, they took a heavy toll of bombers. The early stages of the attack produced bombing in central districts, but thereafter, most of the effort was wasted in open country, and it was a disappointment compounded by the loss of thirty seven aircraft. 622 Squadron's LL828 was one of those caught by a nightfighter over France, but the crew had time to get clear before the Lancaster plunged to earth, and four of them ultimately evaded capture, while the pilot, F/S Thompson, and the remaining two were taken prisoner. Two massive raids were unleashed on Frankfurt on the 18/19th and 22/23rd, both by forces numbering around eight hundred aircraft. The first of these alone caused the destruction of, or serious damage to, over six thousand buildings, and following the second attack, half of the city was left without essential services for an extended period.

On the 24th, briefings took place for the final one of the nineteen operations sent against Berlin since the previous August. It was a maximum effort raid for which over eight hundred aircraft took off either side of 19.00 hours, and they encountered unusually strong winds from the north, which drove them continually south of the planned track, and broke the cohesion of the bomber stream. It also led to scattered bombing at the Capital, and over a hundred outlying communities were afflicted by stray bombs. Those bombs which hit the city fell mainly into south-western districts, where housing was the chief victim, along with a number of military establishments and some industrial concerns. The jetstream winds continued to play their part during the return journey, and many crews found themselves being blown over

heavily defended areas, where they were brought down by the flak batteries, these claiming responsibility for more than two thirds of the seventy two shot-down bombers. A few squadrons had almost sailed through the Battle of Berlin, but for others it had been a testing time. 622 Squadron had arrived on the operational scene in time to participate in two of the pre-autumn operations, and one other during the main part of the campaign in November before the Stirling was withdrawn. Thereafter, it returned to the fray with Lancasters, and participated in all six of the main raids on the "Big City" from the 20/21st of January. In all, the squadron despatched twenty three Stirling and sixty Lancaster sorties on nine operations, from which four of the former and six of the latter failed to return, a sobering 12% loss rate. (The Berlin Raids. Martin Middlebrook.)

Although Berlin had now been attacked for the last time during the war by Bomber Command's heavy brigade, 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 against Essen on the 26/27th, and it left over seventeen hundred houses in ruins, and dozens of factories severely damaged, thus continuing the remarkable run of successes against this centre of war production since the introduction of Oboe to main force operations twelve months earlier. A very modest nine aircraft failed to return on this night from the seven hundred despatched, and 622 Squadron negotiated its fourth loss-free major operation in a row. The final operation of the winter campaign took place on the night of the 30/31st, and was a standard deep penetration attack on Nuremberg. The plan departed from normal practice in just one respect, and that was with regard to the route, which, instead of incorporating feints to deceive the enemy nightfighter controllers, was to take the 795 strong force on a long, straight leg across Germany to a point about fifty miles north of Nuremberg, from where the final run in would commence. This 5 Group inspired plan was hotly disputed by AVM Bennett of 8 Group, who generally had responsibility for route planning, but his protests went unheeded. The weather was also questionable, and it was a surprise to many when the operation was allowed to go ahead. Taking off at around 22.00 hours, the force headed for the forecast cloud at cruising altitude, only to find it absent, and in its place, a layer of white cloud well below, against which the bombers were silhouetted like flies on a table cloth. This was exacerbated by an unusually bright moon, an unprecedented crystal clarity of visibility, and almost as a final insult, the formation of condensation trails to further advertise the bombers' presence. The jetstream winds, which had so adversely affected the Berlin operation a week earlier, were also present, although this time from the south, and the bomber stream was scattered and driven north of its intended track. Many of those crews which either failed to notice the strength of the wind, or refused to believe the evidence, turned towards Nuremberg from a false position, and over a hundred bombed Schweinfurt in error. These were the lucky ones, for over eighty others had fallen victim to the waiting nightfighters during the outward straight leg from Charleroi in Belgium to the turning point, and from there to the target, and the route was marked out by the burning wreckage on the ground of RAF bombers. One of these funeral pyres was that of P/O Sutton and crew, who were all killed when ED619 was shot down while outbound over Germany. Even more tragic was the loss of ND767 to a collision with a 427 Squadron Halifax over Luxembourg on the way home. F/S Pickin and his crew were all killed, and just one man escaped with his life from the other aircraft.

That which now faced the crews was in marked contrast to what had been endured over the winter. The emphasis was now firmly on the forthcoming invasion, which would mean shorter range hops over to France and Belgium in improving weather conditions to deal with railway targets, fuel and ammunition dumps, airfields and coastal defences. While Harris was at the helm, city-busting would never entirely be shelved in favour of other considerations, but generally speaking, there would in any case be little activity beyond the Ruhr until much later in the year. One major fly in the ointment, however, was the decision to reduce the value of most trips to France to one third of a sortie towards the completion of a tour, on the basis that such operations were "a piece of cake". In fact, they were to prove themselves to be equally demanding in their way, and require of the crews a greater commitment to accuracy, to avoid casualties among the civilian populations. Until this despised policy was rescinded, after losses demonstrated the flaws in the theory, an air of mutiny pervaded the crew rooms. Despite the grievous losses of the winter, the Command was in remarkably fine fettle to face its new challenge. Harris now had the opportunity to carry out what his predecessor had tried and failed to do, namely, to effectively hit multiple targets simultaneously. With the luxury of five heavy main force Groups, each on its own having the destructive capability to knock over a target in one go, a highly professional target marking force which could be spread among the Groups, and a Group dedicated exclusively to the RCM disruption of the enemy radar and nightfighter control systems, Harris had at his disposal the most potent force in history. He could assign a target to individual Groups, to Groups in tandem, or to the Command as a whole as operational requirements dictated, and in the sure and certain knowledge that they would be capable of doing the job.

It was on the night of the 9/10th of April that the heavy squadrons next went into battle in numbers, elements of 3, 4, 6 and 8 Groups attacking the Delivrance goods station at Lille, and causing much damage to track and rolling stock, but also inflicting heavy casualties on French civilians. Also that night, other elements from all the Groups tried to bomb railway yards at Villeneuve-St-Georges, where colateral damage likewise killed a goodly number of French people. On the following night, five railway targets were assigned to separate forces, 3 and 6 Groups sending 140 Lancasters to railway yards at Laon with Oboe Mosquitos to carry out the marking. Only a corner of the yards was hit, and one Lancaster failed to return, ED808 of 622 Squadron, and this went down in France with no survivors from the crew of F/S Burrows. Twenty four hours later, Aachen, admittedly an important railway centre, was subjected to an area attack, which left enormous damage in its wake, and killed fifteen hundred people. After a week's break, 3 Group aircraft joined elements of 1 and 8 Groups to bomb railway yards at Rouen on the 18/19th, while others went with 4 and 8 Groups to a similar target at Tergnier. A raid on Cologne by three hundred aircraft of 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups resulted in massive damage to residential and industrial buildings on the 20/21st, and two nights later, Düsseldorf wilted under more than two thousand tons of bombs delivered by a force of over five hundred aircraft from all but 5 Group. While this was in progress, 5 Group was attacking Brunswick and 3 Group's Stirlings were making up a force of 180 aircraft which severely damaged the railway yards at Laon. It was a night of heavy losses, however, nightfighters contributing to the destruction of twenty nine aircraft from the main raid, while a total of thirteen were missing from the other operations.

622 Squadron was not represented among these failures to return, but would not emerge from its next operation unscathed. Another large force of six hundred aircraft set off for Karlsruhe on the 24/25th, again minus 5 Group, which was active this time at Munich. The latter was a highly satisfying test of the Group's low level visual marking technique, while the former suffered from overshooting, and much of the bombing was wasted in return for the loss of nineteen aircraft. ME693 was the 622 Squadron casualty, and this crashed in Germany with no survivors from the crew of F/L Jameson. On the 27/28th, the squadron contributed aircraft to a 1, 3, 6 and 8 Group all Lancaster attack on the heavily industrialized town of Friedrichshafen, deep in southern Germany, where engines and gearboxes were being manufactured for tanks. The pathfinders produced an excellent marking performance, and this was followed up by the main force with great accuracy, and a major blow was dealt to German tank production, while the town itself was severely damaged. The nightfighters arrived while the bombers were over the target, and they began to score successes from this point. In all, eighteen were shot down, including the squadron's ND781, which was attacked by up to four nightfighters and set on fire before crashing in France, killing the pilot, F/O Watson, who by this stage was the only man still on board. The other six crew members were able to escape by parachute, and they all fell into enemy hands.

Four railway targets opened the May account on the 1/2nd, 3 Group providing most of the aircraft for a highly accurate attack on the main stores and repair depot at Chambly. On the 7/8th, a small 3 and 8 Group force bombed the airfield at Nantes, hitting the runways and hangars, but thirty Lancasters from the Group failed to make an impression on a heavy gun position at Cap Gris Nez twenty four hours later. Coastal batteries were again the targets on the 9/10th, all seven of them, situated in the Pas-de-Calais area, attacked to maintain the deception over the precise whereabouts of the impending landings. It was back to railways at five locations in France and Belgium on the 10/11th, and a further four on the following night, before a period of minor operations occupied the middle of the month. A busy night on the 18/19th involved a hundred Lancasters of 3 and 8 Groups at the railway yards at Le Mans, while other forces dealt with similar targets elsewhere. Five hundred Lancasters, including some from 3 Group, carried out the first raid for a year on Duisburg, and left extensive damage in its southern districts. In an echo of past Ruhr operations, however, twenty nine aircraft failed to return, and the squadron's LL793 was lost without trace with the crew of P/O Harris. On the following night, it was the turn of Dortmund to receive its first heavy raid since the Ruhr campaign, and over eight hundred houses were destroyed at a cost to the Command of eighteen Lancasters.

Railway yards at either end of Aachen were the specific aiming points for four hundred aircraft on the 24/25th, and while these were hit, bombing spilled over into the town itself causing extensive damage. It was considered necessary to return to this target two nights later, to attack the railway yards at the eastern end of the town which had escaped relatively lightly, and this time all through traffic was stopped. Railway yards and a junction at Angers occupied a hundred Lancasters drawn from 3 and 8 Groups on the 28/29th, but much of the bombing fell into the town destroying eight hundred buildings, and casualties among the civilian population were high. Just one Lancaster failed to return from this operation, and that was LM108 of 622 Squadron, from which the entire crew of F/S Teague escaped with their

lives, the pilot and four others falling into enemy hands, while the remaining two managed to evade capture. The month ended with six operations against railway, radar and defensive targets on the night of the 31st, the largest of which involved over two hundred aircraft drawn from all but 5 Group. They carried out a successful two wave attack on the railway yards at Trappes, losing four Lancasters in the process, but sadly for 622 Squadron, two of them were its own LL782 and ND926. The former crashed in France killing three of the crew, but the pilot, 1st Lieutenant Braithwaite of the USAAF, and one other survived as POWs, while the two remaining men ultimately evaded capture. The latter was attacked by a nightfighter over France, and was torn apart by an explosion, in which all but one of the crew of F/L Randall were killed, the sole survivor also managing to retain his freedom.

The first week of June was dominated by the preparations for the D-Day landings. Coastal batteries in the Pas-de-Calais occupied elements of 3 Group on the 2/3rd and 3/4th, thus continuing the deception, and on the 5/6th, D-Day Eve, over a thousand aircraft were aloft attending to ten similar sites, some of which were in the invasion area. The number of sorties flown that night on all operations was a new record 1,211, of which only eight resulted in a missing aircraft. On D-Day Night, another thousand aircraft attacked communications targets near nine towns on the approaches to the beachheads, and on the following night, it was railway targets at four locations. A 3 Group element was assigned to the railway yards at Massey-Palaiseau on this night, and they were able to carry out an accurate attack. Nightfighters got amongst the various forces, and contributed to the destruction of twenty eight aircraft, including two from 622 squadron, both of which crashed on French soil. Sadly, there were no survivors from either aircraft, LM491, captained by P/O Hall, and ND765 with the crew of F/L Godfrey. Two new campaigns were to begin during the month, the first of them, against oil, opening at Gelsenkirchen on the 12/13th at the hands of three hundred aircraft from 1, 3 and 8 Groups. A highly successful outcome brought a halt to all production at the Nordstern synthetic oil plant at a cost of seventeen Lancasters, among which was the squadron's LL812, which fell to a nightfighter over Holland, with no survivors from the crew of P/O Rattle. The first daylight raid since the departure of 2 Group from Bomber Command a year earlier took place on the evening of the 14th, in two waves against Le Havre. The specific objectives were the fast, light marine craft which posed a threat to Allied supply ships off the Normandy beaches. The first phase was predominantly 1 Group, and the second 3 Group, both with Pathfinder support and a Spitfire escort, but 617 Squadron was also present with its Barnes Wallis designed Tallboy deep penetration bombs. The operation was an outstanding success, and few of the enemy craft survived destruction or damage, although the town itself was also badly hit, and seven hundred houses were reduced to rubble. A similar operation was carried out at Boulogne on the following day without a contribution from 3 Group, and this was equally successful.

The second new campaign began on the 16/17th, this one against flying bomb launching and storage sites in the Pas-de-Calais, while another force attacked the synthetic oil plant at Sterkrade. The former operation was concluded successfully without loss, while the latter ran into a fierce flak and fighter defence, and thirty one aircraft were shot down. 3 Group was not active on this night, and elements from it were thwarted by cloud on the following night when attempting to bomb railway targets. It was a similar story when flying bomb sites were

attacked by daylight on the 21st, but all four were hit by a four hundred strong force drawn from 3, 4, 6 and 8 Groups on the 23/24th. The single loss from the attack on l'Hey was 622 Squadron's LM138, which crashed in France, killing F/S Cooke and one of his crew, while the survivors fell into enemy hands. 3 Group was the least called-upon during the period, partly because a number of its squadrons were still operating the Stirling or were in the process of a slow conversion to Lancasters. The Group was required to operate on just three more occasions during the month, against flying bomb sites on the 24/25th and 27/28th as part of seven hundred strong forces, and against the Villers-Bocage road junction in support of the ground forces on the evening of the 30th.

Flying bomb sites, railways and oil would continue to dominate proceedings during almost the whole of July, and it was the first mentioned which provided 3 Group with its first major activity of the month on the 2nd. This was a joint operation with 1 and 8 Groups against three sites, all of which were believed to have been well plastered through the cloud, and no losses were incurred by the 350 strong force. Over five hundred aircraft of 3, 4, 6 and 8 Groups attacked two launching and two storage sites on the 5/6th, and again claimed success for the loss of just four Lancasters. The same Groups were involved at six launching sites by daylight on the 9th, from which one Lancaster and one Halifax failed to return. The former was 622 Squadron's veteran R5625, which had begun its career by participating in the first Thousand Bomber raid on Cologne at the end of May 1942 as an 83 Squadron aircraft. It remained with that squadron throughout the year, apart from a brief spell with 50 Squadron, and was on charge during the Ruhr offensive in the spring and early summer of 1943 and Operation Gomorrah in July. On this night it was carrying the crew of W/O Bamford, who were briefed to attack the Lisieux site, and no trace of them was ever found. In a break from flying bomb and oil related targets, over nine hundred aircraft were committed to tactical operations at dawn on the 18th, in support of Operation Goodwood, an armoured advance by the British Second Army in the Caen area. Five fortified villages to the east of the town were heavily bombed from medium level, and a complete absence of German fighters restricted losses to just six aircraft.

While complete air superiority had been gained during the day over the Normandy battle area, at night over Germany it was a different matter, as events were to show on the 20/21st. Elements of 1, 3 and 8 Groups, amounting to 140 aircraft, carried out an attack on an oil plant at Homberg, and lost twenty of their number, 75(NZ) Squadron alone losing seven Lancasters. Two 622 Squadron aircraft also failed to return, and neither Lancaster produced a single survivor. LL859 crashed in Holland with the crew of F/L Smith, and LM595 came down on the Frisian island of Overflakke, taking with it the crew of F/O Pyle. A lot of the effort during the final third of the month was directed at urban targets, and Kiel suffered its most destructive raid of the war on the 23/24th, after a force of six hundred aircraft appeared suddenly from behind a 100 Group RCM screen and achieved complete surprise. All parts of the town were hit, but particularly heavy damage occurred in the port areas where the U-Boat yards and naval facilities were situated. The loss of just four aircraft was a bonus to the success of the operation, but a three raid series on Stuttgart beginning twenty four hours later was to result in much heavier casualties. Over six hundred aircraft participated in the first raid, from which twenty one failed to return, and substantial damage was inflicted on the

city's central districts. 622 Squadron was again represented among the missing by two Lancasters, LM477 and NE146, both of which crashed in France. There was just one survivor from the crew of F/L Vercoe in the former, and this man fell into enemy hands, while none survived from the crew of F/O Thomas in the latter. The second of the Stuttgart series took place on the 25/26th, and was the most destructive of the three, as well as being the least expensive, resulting as it did in the loss of a moderate twelve aircraft. The heaviest losses were reserved for the 28/29th, when an all Lancaster heavy force of almost five hundred aircraft drawn from 1, 3, 5 and 8 Groups ran into fierce nightfighter activity over France while outbound, and thirty nine aircraft were lost. Meanwhile, three hundred aircraft of 1, 6 and 8 Groups attacked Hamburg in numbers for the first time since Operation Gomorrah twelve months earlier. This was a disappointing operation which cost a further twenty two aircraft, bringing the night's casualty figure to sixty one. 622 Squadron lost another veteran Lancaster on this night, and arguably the oldest one still to be operating. Just like the previously mentioned R5625, L7576 had participated in the first Thousand Bomber raid on Cologne, in its case as a 44 Squadron aircraft. After serving that squadron's Conversion Flight, and eventually moving on the 1660CU, she joined 622 Squadron in December 1943, and took part in the squadron's first Lancaster operation, to Brunswick in mid January. Now she lay wrecked on French soil, containing the bodies of F/O Peabody and four of his crew, the two survivors having escaped by parachute, one to fall into enemy hands, and the other to evade capture.

The first week of August was dominated by the flying bomb campaign. An attempt by over seven hundred aircraft to attack a number of sites on the 1st was thwarted by the weather conditions, and less than a hundred crews were able to bomb. Over eleven hundred aircraft were involved in attacks on three storage sites by daylight on the 3rd, and this time the weather allowed the operations to be concluded successfully. Also by daylight on the following day, elements of 1, 3 and 8 Groups attacked two oil storage depots without loss, and returned twenty four hours later to finish the job. It was back to tactical support for the ground forces on the 7/8th, when a thousand aircraft were sent to bomb enemy strong points ahead of an Allied advance in Normandy. 1 and 3 Groups continued to operate independently but against the same category of targets on the 8/9th and 9/10th, the former for an attack on two oil storage dumps, and the latter five flying bomb related targets with an element from 6 Group for company. The 11th was devoted largely to railways, before two major operations were launched against targets in Germany on the 12/13th. While a force of 240 aircraft vainly attempted to raid Brunswick on the strength of H2s alone without the aid of a Pathfinder element, a further 290 aircraft were despatched to Rüsselsheim, where the Opel motor works was the intended objective. Most of the bombing was wasted in open country, and little useful damage was inflicted on the factory. The loss of twenty aircraft made it an expensive failure, and 622 Squadron posted missing its first crew of the month, that of F/O Busby in LM466, which crashed in Germany with just one survivor.

It would be necessary to return to Rüsselsheim later in the month, but in the meantime, eight hundred aircraft provided daylight support for the 3rd Canadian Division on the 14th, by attacking seven German troop positions barring its approach to Falaise. This was the occasion on which thirteen Canadian soldiers were killed by Allied bombing, and over fifty were

injured. In preparation for his new night offensive against Germany, now that his responsibilities to SHAEF were dwindling, Harris launched a thousand aircraft by daylight on the 15th, to bomb nine airfields in Holland and Belgium. On the 16/17th, a force of over four hundred aircraft carried out a stunning attack on Stettin, which left fifteen hundred houses in ruins, while a second force raided Kiel with substantially less success. Elements of 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups returned to Rüsselsheim on the 25/26th, and enjoyed more success than on the previous occasion, but the important machine tools escaped with only light damage, and production was not severely affected. Fifteen Lancasters failed to return, and for the second time during the month, this target claimed a 622 Squadron crew. LM241 went down over France, and the crew of F/O Holdsworth all died in its wreckage. On the following night, 3 Group helped to deliver a highly effective raid on Kiel, and on the 29/30th, participated in the second outstandingly successful operation of the month against Stettin, in which a further sixteen hundred buildings were destroyed, and much damage was caused to shipping in the port. In between, on the 28th, the final operations were carried out against flying bomb sites.

Much of September's effort would be devoted to the clearing of resistance from those French ports still in enemy hands. Le Havre was the first to feature, and enemy strong points around it were raided six times between the 5th and the 11th. 3 Group was involved on the 5th, 6th, 8th and 10th, and hours after the final attack on the 11th, the German garrison surrendered to British forces. That night, F/S Devine and crew took LM511 mining in the Kattegat and failed to return, and no trace was ever found of the Lancaster or its occupants. An all Lancaster heavy force of over 350 aircraft drawn from 1, 3 and 8 Groups carried out the last major raid of the war on Frankfurt on the 12/13th, and left severe damage in western districts for the loss of seventeen aircraft. It was not a good night for 622 Squadron, which posted missing two crews, one of them in tragic circumstances. LM291 crashed in Germany with no survivors from the crew of P/O Alexander, and NF965 collided with a 625 Squadron Lancaster near the Franco-German border on the way home, and both aircraft plunged to earth. Neither produced a survivor, and the names of F/O Owen and his crew became the latest to be entered in the squadron Roll of Honour. While this operation was in progress, a further element of 1 Group joined up with 5 Group and inflicted a firestorm on north and west-central Stuttgart for a more modest loss of four Lancasters. Support for Operation Market Garden came on the 16/17th, 3 Group providing a small contribution in the form of an attack on a flak position at Moerdijk.

The main operation on the 17th brought three thousand tons of bombs cascading onto German positions around Boulogne, and the garrison surrendered to Allied forces shortly afterwards. This left Calais as the only port still in enemy hands, and the campaign to liberate it began in daylight on the 20th, with an attack by over six hundred aircraft. As aircraft were taking off for this late afternoon attack, another tragedy struck 622 Squadron which was quite unrelated to the main activity. Formation flying was to feature as an important part of 3 Group's future operations, as it became the principal user of the G-H bombing system. While practicing formation flying on this day, and upon entering cloud, F/O James's LL802 collided with LM167 flown by the formation leader F/O Hogg, and both aircraft crashed near Colchester without survivors from among the fifteen men on board. Neuss experienced a destructive raid at the hands of 1, 3, 4 and 8 Groups on the 23/24th, and later that day, a further attempt was

made to bomb enemy positions around Calais. Cloud prevented a third of the force from bombing, and it was a similar story on the 25th, when two thirds of the almost nine hundred crews were thwarted. Over seven hundred aircraft returned to the general area on the 26th, the majority to target gun emplacements near Cap Gris Nez. Cloud was again encountered on the 27th, but the master Bomber ordered the crews to bomb from below the cloud base, and the attack was effective. The final operations in the recapture of Calais took place on the 28th, at the hands of 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups, and shortly afterwards the port fell to Canadian troops.

A request by the Americans brought the first raid for two years on the south-western town of Saarbrücken on the 5/6th of October. Five hundred 1, 3 and 8 Group Lancasters reduced almost six thousand houses to ruins, and lost just three of their number in the process. On the following night, a new Ruhr campaign opened successfully at Dortmund, 6 Group providing over half of the five hundred strong force, while most of the remainder were supplied by 3 Group. The failure of Operation Market Garden had left the Allied right flank exposed near Nijmegen, and this spelled disaster for the two nearby German frontier towns of Cleves and Emmerich, through which any German attack would come. A force of over three hundred aircraft was prepared for each town, 3 Group providing an element for both operations, although the Cleves raid was a predominately 4 Group Halifax affair. Massive damage was inflicted on the hapless towns, Emmerich suffering the greater destruction at the hands of an all Lancaster heavy force, and almost two and a half thousand buildings were destroyed. There was an early start for a thousand crews on the 14th, as Operation Hurricane got under way shortly after first light. Intended as a demonstration to the enemy of the overwhelming superiority of the Allied air forces ranged against it, it would bring an unprecedented pounding to a number of the already most heavily bombed cities in the Reich. 957 bombers arrived over Duisburg that morning between 08.30 and 09.00 hours, and they delivered around 4,500 tons of bombs. Before the day was out, the first wave of a two phase return to Duisburg was taking off, to be followed two hours later, shortly after midnight, by the second wave, and a total of 940 aircraft reached the battered target to drop another 4,500 tons. Remarkably, these 2018 sorties in twenty four hours had not included any from 5 Group, which took advantage of the activity over the Ruhr during the night operation, to finally deliver a telling blow on Brunswick.

The final raid of the war on Wilhelmshaven took place on the 15/16th, and included a 3 Group contribution, and on the 18th, the Group carried out its first operation in a new independent role, which was not dissimilar to that enjoyed by 5 Group since April. The G-H blind bombing device had already been used in a limited way, but 3 Group was to pioneer mass attacks against targets obscured by cloud, and would develop an expertise in this role which would be put to good use particularly against the German oil industry. A third of the Group's Lancasters were now equipped with G-H, and their tail fins carried markings to identify them to the rest of the force. Crews in non-equipped aircraft were to formate on G-H leaders, and release their bombs when the leaders' were seen to fall. Most such operations were intended to take place in daylight, but a number of night operations would also be undertaken. This new role signalled a full and welcome return to the forefront of Bomber Command's order of battle for 3 Group, after too long in the wilderness through the inadequacies of the Stirling. The target for this first operation was Bonn, a city which had

largely been ignored thus far, and therefore had almost no existing damage to confuse an assessment of this important trial. It was a modest force of 128 aircraft which took off at 08.30 that morning, but they were sufficient to destroy the old centre of the city, reducing to rubble seven hundred buildings, and seriously damaging a thousand others. Stuttgart fell victim to another heavy raid on the 19/20th by 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups, and 622 Squadron registered its one and only loss of the month, and its first missing crew for five weeks. LM283 crashed in Germany, and although the entire crew survived to fall into enemy hands, the pilot, F/O Orton, succumbed a month later to injuries sustained. This was the first operation presided over by the Squadron's new commanding officer, W/C Buckingham, he having arrived earlier in the day to replace the departing W/C Swales, who was posted to 3 Group HQ.

3 Group carried out its second G-H raid on the 22nd, when Neuss was the target for a generally disappointing performance. The Hurricane force paid its first visit to Essen on the 23/24th, when those of the new record force of 1055 aircraft which reached the target delivered over 4,500 tons of bombs in the early evening. A force of over seven hundred aircraft returned on the afternoon of the 25th, by which time this much bombed city had ceased to be a major centre of war production. Leverkusen was the target for another G-H raid by 3 Group on the 26th, but the cloud cover prevented assessment of the results. A two phase attack by the Hurricane force on Cologne on the afternoon of the 28th left massive damage in its wake, and the catalogue of destruction included over two thousand apartment blocks. The island of Walcheren in the Scheldt Estuary had been the objective of eight attacks thus far during the month, in order to silence heavy gun emplacements which were barring free access by the Allies to the much needed port of Antwerp. The early attacks had been directed at the sea wall, with the intention of flooding the low-lying terrain and swamping the defensive positions, and this had, to an extent, been achieved. On the 29th, the ninth operation of the series, by over three hundred aircraft of 1, 3, 4 and 8 Groups, went for eleven German positions, all of which were believed to have been hit. 5 Group completed the campaign on the following day, and after a week of fighting, the island finally fell to Canadian and Scottish troops. Also on the 30th, 3 Group carried out a G-H attack on the oil refinery at Wesseling, but it was not possible to assess the results. The month ended with two more heavy raids by the Hurricane force on Cologne, the first by nine hundred aircraft in the mid evening of the 30th, and the second by half that number from 1, 3, 4 and 8 Groups twenty four hours later. Earlier on the 31st, a hundred 3 Group Lancasters carried out a G-H raid on the synthetic oil refinery at Bottrop.

3 Group opened its November account with a G-H raid on the Meerbeck oil plant at Homberg on the 2nd, and that night, almost a thousand aircraft of the Hurricane force went to Düsseldorf, and destroyed or badly damaged five thousand houses. 622 Squadron's LL803 failed to return from the former having crashed in Germany, and F/L Cass died with three of his crew, while the survivors were taken into captivity. An attempt by the Group to bomb Solingen on the 4th was a failure, but it was only a temporary reprieve for this town. On the following day, the Group returned to destroy thirteen hundred buildings, mostly houses, and seriously damaged an even greater number. On the 6/7th, the Group carried out a night G-H attack on the relatively untouched town of Coblenz, and succeeded in destroying by fire over

half of its built-up area and much of its cultural history. G-H operations had so far brought very low losses, and this raid was no exception, with just two aircraft failing to return home. Sadly, both of these were from 622 Squadron, and both were Lancasters equipped with a mid-under gun position and consequently carrying eight man crews. There was, however, good news concerning one of the crews, that of F/O Stephens, who emerged unscathed from the wreckage of HK621 after it was crash-landed in France. Less fortunate were their colleagues, F/O Leake and crew, who all perished when HK644 was brought down. The Group returned to the Meerbeck oil plant at Homberg with a G-H raid by 130 aircraft on the 8th, and a number of large fires were seen before smoke obscured the aiming point. The refinery at Castrop-Rauxel was treated to the same on the 11th, and a similar installation at Dortmund was bombed through thick cloud on the 15th.

A request by American forces for assistance with their push towards the Rhein was answered by the Command on the 16th to the tune of almost twelve hundred aircraft. The three small and insignificant towns of Düren, Jülich and Heinsberg were a link in the communications chain to the nearby German front line, and consequently had to be cut ahead of the Allied attack. The first mentioned was assigned to over four hundred aircraft of 1 and 5 Groups, the second to a slightly smaller number from 4 and 6 Groups, both with a Pathfinder element, and the third to 182 Lancasters of 3 Group operating alone. The mid afternoon attacks were carried out in good conditions from medium level, and all but erased the towns from the map, killing over three thousand people at Düren. In the event, the American advance became bogged down in the conditions, and was unsuccessful. The Group's third visit of the month to Homberg, on the 20th, was thwarted by stormy weather, which interfered with accurate formation flying, an essential ingredient of the G-H process, but there was no escape for the refinery twenty four hours later, when it appeared to be ripped apart by a massive explosion. It was the turn of the Nordstern plant at Gelsenkirchen on the 23rd, and bombing again seemed to be accurate, although the cloud cover prevented an assessment at the time. Seventy five Lancasters from the Group were sent on a proving raid on the 26th, to ascertain the range of G-H signals. The target was the railway yards at Fulda, an area made famous by the breaching of the Eder Dam, and well to the east of the Ruhr. It was not a successful operation, and the bombing was scattered, but amends were made on the following day, when the Kalk Nord yards at Cologne were well plastered. A handful of 1 Group Lancasters joined 140 from 3 Group for a night G-H raid on Neuss on the 28/29th, and the month closed with the Group attacking a coking plant at Bottrop and a benzol plant at Osterfeld on the 30th, both with just sixty Lancasters.

3 Group had performed well with G-H since mid October, and would become even more proficient as the weeks passed. A bonus had been the remarkably low losses from these predominately daylight operations, which were generally covered by a fighter escort, and this was reflected in the 622 Squadron casualty rate, which showed only three crews lost during that period. This fine record was to continue almost to the end of the year despite a busy operational schedule, which began at Dortmund on the 3rd, where the Hansa benzol plant was the objective. A G-H raid on Oberhausen by 150 of the Group's Lancasters on the 4th caused heavy damage in the centre of the town, and the important railway centre of Hamm, just to the north of the Möhne and Sorpe Dams, suffered the 40% destruction of its built-up area at

the hands of a modest ninety Lancasters from the Group on the 5th. As long ago as the summer of 1940, Hampdens had been sent to the oil refinery at Leuna near Merseburg, deep in eastern Germany, and at the absolute limit of the type's range. Now, on the 6/7th, the first major attack of the current campaign took place on this target, heralding a general assault on Germany's oil production in the east. Beyond the range of G-H, it was a joint effort by over four hundred Lancasters of 1, 3 and 8 Groups, which took off in the late afternoon for the 4¼ hour outward journey. Despite a large amount of cloud in the target area, bombing was sufficiently accurate to cause extensive damage to the installations for the loss of 5 Lancasters, and 622 Squadron was not represented among them. An element of the Group went to Duisburg on the 8th to bomb railway yards, and on the 11th it was railway yards and a benzol plant at Osterfeld. The Ruhrstahl steelworks at Witten escaped damage on the 12th, when the bombing fell into the town itself, while Siegen and its railway yards escaped altogether on the 15th, when the force was recalled after bad weather kept the fighter escort on the ground. It was only a temporary reprieve, however, and when the force returned on the following day, heavy damage was inflicted upon housing and public buildings, and many of the inhabitants lost their lives.

This was the day on which the German forces began their Ardennes offensive, and this led to a small 3 Group attack on the railway yards at Trier on the 19th, to cut supply lines to the front. Most of the bombs fell into the town rather than the yards, and it was necessary to repeat the operation two days later using a force of over a hundred aircraft. As this was again inconclusive, a third raid was mounted on the 23rd by 150 Lancasters, and the local authorities declared this the town's worst experience of the war. On Christmas Eve, elements of 4, 6 and 8 Groups attacked the main airfields at Düsseldorf and Essen, and later that night, 3 Group carried out a G-H raid on Bonn's main airfield, Hangelar. Results were not observed, and just one of the one hundred participating Lancasters failed to return. This was 622 Squadron's NF915, in which F/L Perdue and three of his crew lost their lives, while the three survivors were taken into captivity. This was the squadron's final casualty of the year, and only its fifth aircraft and fourth crew loss during the entire final quarter. All of the crews were allowed to enjoy the last wartime Christmas without interruptions, but it was business as usual for almost three hundred of them on Boxing Day, when enemy troop positions were attacked near St Vith. All of the Groups were represented in the operation, when just two of them could have provided the requisite number of aircraft, and this was possibly to ensure that no individual Groups could claim to have been unfairly treated by being forced to work during the holidays. On the following day, 1, 3, 5 and 8 Groups clubbed together to send two hundred Lancasters and eleven Mosquitos to the railway yards at Rheydt, and on the 28th, 3 Group delivered an accurate attack on the Gremberg marshalling yards at Cologne. The Coblenz railway system was brought to a standstill by 3 and 4 Groups on the 29th, and 3 Group ended the year by conducting a disappointing G-H raid on the railway yards at Vohwinkel on the 31st.

It had been a successful year for the Command, once it had risen phoenix-like from the ashes of the winter campaign, and although losses had continued to be high, particularly during the summer, they had resulted from an unprecedented rate of sorties demanded by the prosecution of so many concurrent campaigns. 3 Group had regained its rightful place at the

forefront of operations, having been relegated to a bit part involvement following the resumption of the Berlin offensive, and having now fully re-equipped with Lancasters. The German breakout in the Ardennes had done nothing to mask the scent of victory wafting in from the Continent, but much remained to be done before the proud and tenacious enemy could be persuaded to lay down his arms, and many more crews would be sacrificed before the end finally came.

1945

The New Year started with a bang, as the Luftwaffe launched its ill-conceived and ultimately ill-fated Operation Bodenplatte at first light on New Year's Morning. Designed to catch the Allied air forces on the ground on the liberated airfields of France, Holland and Belgium, the Luftwaffe instead frittered away around 250 of its frontline day fighters and many of the pilots, who were killed, wounded or taken prisoner. The Allied losses could be made good in a matter of hours, but not so those of the Luftwaffe, and it was a setback from which it would never fully recover. The failure at Vohwinkel was rectified by the Group on New Year's Night for the loss of just one aircraft, a 218 Squadron Lancaster brought down by American flak over France. Nuremberg had always proved difficult to hit effectively, and few telling blows had been delivered during the first five years of war. It was also only nine months since that disastrous night, when ninety five aircraft had failed to return from there. The score was settled by elements of 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups on the early evening of the 2nd in a copy-book example of area bombing. Accurate Pathfinder marking was exploited by the all Lancaster main force, and over four and a half thousand apartment blocks were destroyed, along with two thousand preserved medieval houses and four hundred industrial buildings, while more than eighteen hundred people lost their lives.

The Group sent ninety nine aircraft to benzol plants at Dortmund and Castrop-Rauxel on the 3rd, and lost just one from the former. This was 622 Squadron's NF964, which exploded over the target having been hit by flak, and F/L Dean and his crew were killed. An attempt by the Group to hit railway yards at Ludwigshafen on the 5th was only partially successful, and much of the bombing fell onto the town itself, destroying or seriously damaging over six hundred buildings. Elements of 1 and 3 Groups joined forces to attack railway installations at Neuss on the 6/7th, when colateral damage was again extensive. Also that night, forty nine Lancasters carried out mining sorties off the Baltic ports, and the squadron's NF939 was one of two which failed to return, and was lost without trace with the crew of F/O Francis. Happily, this was to be the last time that the squadron would post missing one of its crews for almost a month, despite a continuing busy schedule of operations. The Lancaster Groups provided over six hundred aircraft for the final major raid of the war on Munich on the 7/8th, and thereafter, with one exception, 3 Group operated alone for the remainder of the month. On the 11th it was railway yards at Krefeld, followed by a similar target at Saarbrücken on the 13th and 14th. On the 15th, the Group sent small forces to Recklinghausen and Bochum to attack benzol plants, and late on the 16th, attacked another one at Wanne-Eickel. A joint operation with elements of 1 and 8 Groups was directed at a benzol plant at Duisburg on the evening of the 22nd, when the Thyssen steel works was also hit and extensively damaged.

The Gremberg railway yards at Cologne occupied 150 Lancasters of the Group on the 28th, and this was followed by a return to the railway yards at Krefeld on the 29th.

February opened with a G-H attack on Mönchengladbach on the 1st, from which the squadron's HK617 failed to return. An engine caught fire while the Lancaster was outbound over France, and it became necessary to abandon it to its fate when the flames spread to the airframe. F/O Conacher and six of the others on board landed safely in Allied territory, but an eighth man fell to his death when his parachute burned up during his descent. This raid was followed by a joint operation with 1, 6 and 8 groups on the 2/3rd against Wiesbaden, the one and only occasion that this town was raided in numbers. The Hansa benzol plant at Dortmund was assigned to 3 Group on the 3/4th, but the attack was not accurate, and the weather conditions hampered attempts to bomb the oil plant at Wanne-Eickel on the 7th. Having effectively dealt with the Uerdingen railway yards at Krefeld, the Group turned its attention to the town's Hohenbudberg installations on the 8/9th, but the attack was inconclusive. Operation Thunderclap, the Churchill inspired series of operations against Germany's eastern cities, was unleashed in all its fury against Dresden on the night of the 13/14th. The two wave attack began at the hands of 5 Group, using its Mosquito low level visual marking system, and over eight hundred tons of bombs were delivered by 244 Lancasters in what was only a partially effective first phase. Three hours later, at around 01.30 hours, a further 529 Lancasters of 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups dropped eighteen hundred tons of bombs with great concentration into the already burning city, and a firestorm developed which purportedly dwarfed even that at Hamburg. Estimates of the death toll have been the subject of debate ever since, and fifty thousand seems to have been settled on as the generally accepted figure, although some commentators believe 135,000 to be more accurate. Whatever the true figure, to the crews it was just another deep penetration nine hour slog into Germany, and one step nearer the end of a tour, which had recently been extended to thirty six sorties. On the following night, over seven hundred aircraft tried to repeat the success at Chemnitz in a similar two phase operation, but were thwarted by cloud cover, and much of the bombing was wasted.

The town of Wesel, now on the frontline, was subjected to a series of four raids on consecutive days from the 16th, to prevent movement through it of enemy troops and supplies. 3 Group carried out three of the attacks by G-H on the 16th, 18th and 19th, aiming ostensibly at the railway installations, but cloud made it impossible to assess the results. The last major night raid of the war on Dortmund was carried out by five hundred Lancasters of 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups on the 20/21st, the force arriving over the already tortured city around 23.00 hours to aim its bombs at the southern half. On the 22nd, the Group sent two eighty strong forces to Gelsenkirchen and Osterfeld, where oil refineries were accurately bombed, and on the 23rd, over a hundred of the Group's Lancasters returned to the former to attack the Alma Pluto benzol plant. Two days later, the Group carried out a G-H attack on an oil refinery at Kamen, following up a predominately Halifax assault on the previous day, and on the 26th it was the Hoesch benzol plant at Dortmund. On the 27th it was back to the Alma Pluto plant at Gelsenkirchen, followed by the Nordstern synthetic oil plant at the same location on the 28th.

Such was the size of the Bomber Command at this stage of the war, and so rapidly was the stockpile of worthwhile targets diminishing, that Harris could afford to keep on sending aircraft back to targets to ensure their destruction. The oil plant at Kamen opened 3 Group's March account on the 1st, the third time in a week that this particular objective had been visited. Cologne received its final raid of the war on the 2nd, beginning at around 10.00 hours with the first phase attack by seven hundred aircraft drawn from all except 3 Group. 150 Lancasters of 3 Group followed up, but a malfunctioning G-H station in England resulted in only fifteen aircraft bombing, and the remainder brought their bombs home. Four days later, Cologne was entered by American troops. 622 Squadron posted missing its first crew since the start of February when HK769 failed to return from this operation, and it was later learned that it had been shot down by flak in the target area, and that there were no survivors from the eight man crew of F/O Ray. As events turned out, this would be the squadron's only casualty of the month, even though there were daylight G-H operations against oil targets at Wanne-Eickel on the 4th, Gelsenkirchen on the 5th, Salzbergen on the 6th, Datteln on the 9th, Scholven-Buer on the 10th, Datteln again and Hattingen on the 14th, Dortmund and Hüls on the 17th, Hattingen and Langendreer on the 18th, Gelsenkirchen on the 19th, Hamm on the 27th and Salzgitter on the 29th. In-between, the Group was involved in a mid evening attack on Chemnitz under Operation Thunderclap on the 5/6th, which devastated parts of the central and southern districts by fire, a heavy and destructive raid on the eastern town of Dessau in company with 1, 6 and 8 Groups on the 7/8th, the final RAF raid of the war on Essen by over a thousand aircraft on the afternoon of the 11th, and the final raid of the war on Dortmund by a new record force of over eleven hundred aircraft on the 12th. There were also a number of small scale attacks by the Group operating alone to Wesel on the 6/7th, Hamm on the 20th, Münster on the 21st and Bocholt on the 22nd.

April was the final month of the bombing war, and it contained something of a sting in the tail as far as 622 Squadron was concerned. The first outing for the Group came on the 4/5th, when it joined elements of 6 and 8 Groups to bomb the synthetic oil plant at Leuna. It was not a successful operation, but when it was next called into action, for an attack on Kiel in company with 1 and 8 Groups on the 9/10th, there was a far more satisfactory outcome to report. This late evening attack by over five hundred aircraft left extensive damage to shipyards and the port area in general, capsized the pocket battleship Admiral Scheer, and damaged both the Admiral Hipper and the Emden. Only three Lancasters failed to return, but one of these was 622 Squadron's NG447, which was shot down by a nightfighter over Germany, killing F/L Hodge and all but one of his crew. This town was attacked again less spectacularly on the 13/14th by 3, 6 and 8 Groups, and on the following night, 1, 3 and 8 Groups carried out the final area attack of the war, this falling on Potsdam, the first time for more than a year that RAF heavy bombers had entered Greater Berlin air space. Over nine hundred aircraft took part in the pounding of Heligoland shortly after midday on the 18th, and on the 19th, 3 Group carried out a small daylight G-H raid on railway yards at Munich.

The honour of conducting the very last attack on an oil related target fell to 3 Group on the 20th, and this involved a long round trip to Regensburg by a hundred Lancasters. The objective was a fuel storage depot, and it was effectively dealt with for the loss of just one aircraft. Five men died in the wreckage of PA285, the pilot, F/L Robbins, failed to survive his

descent by parachute, and just one member of the crew escaped with his life. Two days later, a heavy raid on Bremen in the early evening was intended to pave the way for an attack by the British XXX Corps. Less than two hundred aircraft had bombed, before smoke, dust and cloud obscured the aiming point, and the Master Bomber was forced to call a halt to proceedings. Among the two missing Lancasters was 622 Squadron's final casualty of the war, on what turned out to be its final offensive operation of the war. HK770 was hit by flak over Bremen while on its bombing run, and the extensive damage included the loss of an engine, which fell from its mountings, and a large piece of wing. Never-the-less, F/L Cook and his crew managed to coax the aircraft towards Allied territory, but were forced to abandon their chariot before reaching it, six men parachuting into captivity in Germany, while the pilot experienced a similar fate in Holland. A number of injuries were treated, but none of them were serious. One cause for celebration on this day was the safe return of the squadron's centurion Lancaster LL885, which had completed its offensive contribution to Bomber Command's war on 113 operations, having flown its first on the infamous Nuremberg raid on the 30/31st of March 1944.

Three days after the Bremen operation, the final raids by the heavy brigade took place, and from the 29th, food replaced bombs in the cavernous bomb bays, as much needed supplies were ferried to the starving Dutch people still under German occupation. 622 Squadron played its part in this humanitarian undertaking, flying its last such sorties on the 7th of May. The squadron came comparatively late into the fray, but in time to leave its indelible mark in the annals of Bomber Command. It contributed greatly to the re-emergence of 3 Group as a major force, and shared in its triumphs during the final six months of the conflict. Its duty done, 622 Squadron was disbanded on the 15th of August 1945.

STATIONS

MILDENHALL

10.08.43. to 15.08.45.

COMMANDING OFFICERS

SQUADRON LEADER J MARTIN

10.08.43. to 20.08.43.

WING COMMANDER G H N GIBSON DFC

20.08.43. to 01.02.44.

WING COMMANDER I C K SWALES DFC DFM

01.02.44. to 19.10.44.

WING COMMANDER G K BUCKINGHAM

19.10.44. to 15.08.45.

AIRCRAFT

STIRLING III

10.08.43. to 12.43.

LANCASTER I/III

12.43. to 15.08.45.

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SECTION 2



OPERATIONAL RECORD

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OPERATIONAL RECORD

OPERATIONS	SORTIES	AIRCRAFT LOSSES	% LOSSES
268	3000	51	1.7

CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS

BOMBING	MINING
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231	37
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STIRLING

OPERATIONS	SORTIES	AIRCRAFT LOSSES	% LOSSES
41	195	7	3.6

CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS

BOMBING	MINING
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21	20
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LANCASTER

OPERATIONS	SORTIES	AIRCRAFT LOSSES	% LOSSES
210	2805	44	1.6

CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS

BOMBING	MINING
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210	17
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TABLE OF STATISTICS

Out of 59 Lancaster squadrons.

22nd highest number of Lancaster overall operations in Bomber Command.

27th highest number of Lancaster sorties in Bomber Command.

32nd highest number of Lancaster operational losses in Bomber Command.

Out of 29 Squadrons in 3 Group.

9th highest number of overall operations in 3 Group.

8th highest number of sorties in 3 Group.

11th highest number of aircraft operational losses in 3 Group.

Out of 12 Stirling squadrons in 3 Group.

10th equal (with 623Sqn) highest number of Stirling overall operations in 3 Group.

10th highest number of Stirling sorties in 3 Group.

Lowest number of Stirling operational losses in 3 Group.

Out of 11 Lancaster squadrons in 3 Group.

2nd highest number of Lancaster overall operations in 3 Group.

5th highest number of Lancaster sorties in 3 Group.

5th highest number of Lancaster operational losses in 3 Group.

SECTION 3



AIRCRAFT LISTING

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622 SQUADRON

STIRLING.

From August 1943 to December 1943.

BF521 GI-H	From 15Sqn. FTR Berlin 23/24.8.43.
BF533 LS-H	From 15Sqn. Returned to 15Sqn.
BF562 GI-H	From 214Sqn. To 1661CU.
BK652 GI-E	From 15Sqn. To 1665CU.
BK766 GI-T/G	From 15Sqn. To 1661CU.
BK816 GI-X/B	From 15Sqn. To 199Sqn.
EE908 LS-V	From 15Sqn. Returned to 15Sqn.
EE954 LS-J/F	From 15Sqn. Returned to 15Sqn.
EF119 GI-Q	FTR Berlin 31.8/1.9.43.
EF122 GI-M	To 1661CU.
EF123 GI-A	Crashed in Cambridgeshire on return from Leverkusen 19.11.43.
EF126 GI-F/Q	Crashed on take-off from Mildenhall when bound for mining sortie 21.9.43.
EF127 GI-N	To 1661CU.
EF128 GI-D	FTR Mannheim 18/19.11.43.
EF132 GI-Q	To 1654CU.
EF144 GI-R	To 1654CU.
EF145 GI-D	To 1653CU.
EF150 GI-E	FTR Berlin 22/23.11.43.
EF151	To 1661CU.
EF153	To 199Sqn.
EF154	To 199Sqn.
EF161 GI-Z	To 15Sqn.
EF177	To 15Sqn.
EF186	To 15Sqn.
EF208	To 1661CU.
EF217	To 75Sqn.
EF351 GI-I	From 15Sqn. To 1665CU.
EF391 GI-M	From 15Sqn. To 1665CU.
EF460	From 15Sqn. To 1653CU.
EF461 GI-C	From 15Sqn. To 1661CU.
EF490 GI-F	From 15Sqn. To 1651CU.
EH897 GI-Z	From 15Sqn. To 570Sqn.
EH921 GI-D	From 214Sqn. To 1661CU.
EH956 GI-F	To 1653CU.
EH991 GI-P	FTR Hanover 27/28.9.43.
EH992 GI-O	To 1661CU.
EJ113 GI-Q	FTR Mannheim 18/19.11.43.
EJ114 GI-R	To 1654CU.
LJ444 GI-A	To 1653CU.

LJ451 From 15Sqn. To 1653CU.
LJ455 GI-E To 1653CU.
LK396 To 75Sqn.
LK403 To 196Sqn.
MZ264 GI-A From 15Sqn. FTR Berlin 31.8/1.9.43.

LANCASTER. From December 1943.

L7576 GI-L/M/K From 1660CU. FTR Stuttgart 28/29.7.44.
R5483 GI-D From 1654CU. FTR Berlin 20/21.1.44.
R5490 From 1654CU. To 15Sqn.
R5514 GI-O/T From 1654CU. To 3LFS.
R5625 GI-B From 83Sqn. FTR Lisieux 9.7.44.
R5739 From 15Sqn. Returned to 15Sqn.
R5846 From 15Sqn. To 75Sqn.
R5906 From 15Sqn. To 3LFS.
R5915 GI-P From 9Sqn via 1660CU. FTR Berlin 20/21.1.44.
W4158GI-U From 9Sqn. To 3LFS.
W4163GI-A From 50Sqn via 1667CU. Crash-landed at Mildenhall on return from Brunswick 14.1.44.
W4174 From 15Sqn. Returned to 15Sqn.
W4248GI-H/T From 460Sqn via 1667CU. To 3LFS.
W4268GI-A From 44Sqn via 1654CU. FTR Berlin 15/16.2.44.
W4272GI-C From 15Sqn. FTR Berlin 15/16.2.44.
W4885GI-N From 1662CU. To 15Sqn.
W4980 From 1656CU. To 15Sqn.
ED364 GI-Q From 207Sqn via 1654CU. FTR Berlin 30/31.1.44.
ED383 From 1656CU. To 15Sqn.
ED425 GI-F From 97Sqn via 1660 & 1654CU. To 75Sqn.
ED430 GI-A From 50Sqn. To 3LFS.
ED437 GI-D From 617Sqn via 1661CU. To 3LFS.
ED474 GI-L/S From 15Sqn via NTU & 1667CU. To 3LFS.
ED610 From 1656 & 1662CU. To 15Sqn.
ED619 GI-M/T From A.V.Roe. FTR Nuremberg 30/31.3.44.
ED624 GI-G From 1660CU. FTR Berlin 27/28.1.44.
ED631 GI-B From 1662CU. To 617Sqn.
ED727 From 15Sqn. To 5LFS.
ED808 GI-O/R/U From 15Sqn. FTR Laon 10/11.4.44.
HK545 To 115Sqn.
HK614GI-R From 15Sqn. To 46MU.
HK615GI-Z From 15Sqn. To 138Sqn.
HK616GI-W From 15Sqn. To 44Sqn.
HK617GI-Q From 15Sqn. FTR Mönchengladbach 1.2.45.
HK621GI-P/O FTR Koblenz (crash-landed in France) 5/6.11.44.
HK623GI-F

HK626	To 15Sqn.
HK628GI-X	
HK644GI-D	FTR Koblenz 6/7.11.44.
HK646GI-M	
HK651GI-B	
HK700GI-Y	
HK769GI-D	FTR Cologne 2.3.45.
HK770GI-T	FTR Bremen 22.4.45.
HK787GI-F	
HK805GI-H	
JA876 GI-E	From 106Sqn. To 1661CU.
LL782 GI-H	FTR Trappes 31.5/1.6.44.
LL793 GI-Q	FTR Duisburg 21/22.5.44.
LL802 GI-M	Collided with LM167(622Sqn) over Essex while training 20.9.44.
LL803 GI-G/M/S	FTR Homberg 2.11.44.
LL812 GI-C/Z	FTR Gelsenkirchen 12/13.6.44.
LL828 GI-J	FTR Stuttgart 15/16.3.44.
LL859 GI-N/U/Q	FTR Homberg 20/21.7.44.
LL885 GI-J	Completed 113 operations.
LM108GI-N	FTR Angers 28/29.5.44.
LM138GI-N	FTR L'Hey 23/24.6.44.
LM167GI-N	From 15Sqn. Collided with LL802 (622Sqn) over Essex while training 20.9.44.
LM235GI-B/G	
LM241GI-Q	FTR Rüsselsheim 25/26.8.44.
LM282	To 218Sqn.
LM283GI-O	FTR Stuttgart 19/20.10.44.
LM291GI-F	FTR Frankfurt 12/13.9.44.
LM442GI-P	FTR Schweinfurt 24/25.2.44.
LM443GI-T/G	To 1653CU.
LM466GI-P	FTR Rüsselsheim 12/13.8.44.
LM477GI-L	FTR Stuttgart 24/25.7.44.
LM491GI-C/E	FTR Massy-Palaiseau 7/8.6.44.
LM511GI-E/C	FTR from mining sortie 11/12.9.44.
LM577GI-E	To 218Sqmn.
LM593	From 75Sqn. Returned to 75Sqn.
LM595GI-D/O	FTR Homberg 20/21.7.44.
ME383	
ME693GI-F	FTR Karlsruhe 24/25.4.44.
ME736GI-J	To 103Sqn.
ND765GI-M/O/C	FTR Massy-Palaiseau 7/8.6.44.
ND767GI-D	FTR Nuremberg 30/31.3.44.
ND781GI-R	FTR Friedrichshaven 27/28.4.44.
ND926GI-D	FTR Trappes 31.5/1.6.44.
NE146GI-F	FTR Stuttgart 24/25.7.44.

NF915 GI-U	FTR Bonn (Hangelar airfield) 24/25.12.44.
NF939 GI-D	FTR from mining sortie 6/7.1.45.
NF964 GI-L	FTR Dortmund 3.1.45.
NF965 GI-S	FTR Frankfurt 12/13.9.44.
NG299 GI-O	To 149Sqn.
NG300 GI-T	
NG301	
NG447 GI-U	FTR Kiel 9/10.4.45.
NN709 GI-H	
PA164 GI-P	
PA218 GI-K/L	
PA285 GI-O	FTR Regensburg 20.4.45.
PB795 GI-V	
PB802	To 15Sqn.
PB819	
PD219 GI-L	To 1654CU.
PD225 GI-G	
PD228 GI-A	
PD229 GI-K	To 218Sqn.
PD285	From 15Sqn.
PD332 GI-N	
PD366 GI-E	

HEAVIEST SINGLE LOSS.

31.08/01.09.43. Berlin.	2 Stirlings FTR.
18/19.11.43. Mannheim.	2 Stirlings FTR.
20/21.01.44. Berlin.	2 Lancasters FTR.
15/16.02.44. Berlin.	2 Lancasters FTR.
30/31.03.44. Nuremberg.	2 Lancasters FTR.
31.05/01.06.44. Trappes.	2 Lancasters FTR.
07/08.06.44. Massy Palaiseau.	2 Lancasters FTR.
20/21.07.44. Homberg.	2 Lancasters FTR.
24/25.07.44. Stuttgart.	2 Lancasters FTR.
12/13.09.44. Frankfurt.	2 Lancasters FTR.
20.09.44. Training.	2 Lancasters crashed.
06/07.11.44. Coblenz.	2 Lancasters FTR.

SECTION 4



KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

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

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



SECTION 5



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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



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