

**ROYAL AIR FORCE
BOMBER COMMAND**

~ ~ ~

**SQUADRON PROFILES
NUMBER 122**



626 SQUADRON

To strive and not to yield

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

ROYAL AIR FORCE BOMBER COMMAND SQUADRON PROFILES



**Bomber Command squadrons covered in a series of
Squadron Profiles, each available separately.**

**Each copy professionally printed on quality paper
with Bomber Command crest and Squadron motto on
the cover.**

Spiral bound to lay flat when open.



www.bombercommandmuseum.com/marches.ca

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, photocopied or printed in any other publication, nor stored on any media or transmitted in any form by any means without written permission from the author.

This squadron profile has been researched, compiled and written by its author, who has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in it. The author will not be liable for any damages caused, or alleged to be caused, by any information contained within this book. E. &O.E.

**© Copyright: C. Ward - 1999
48 Woodmarket
Lutterworth
Leicestershire. LE17 4DB.
England.**

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

**ROYAL AIR FORCE
BOMBER COMMAND
SQUADRON PROFILES**



Number 122



626 SQUADRON



by

Chris Ward

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

CONTENTS

GENERAL NOTES.

SECTION 1: A BRIEF HISTORY.

SECTION 2: OPERATIONAL RECORD.

SECTION 3: AIRCRAFT LISTING.

SECTION 4: KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS.

SECTION 5: SOURCES OF INFORMATION.

SECTION 6: STOCK LIST.

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

GENERAL NOTES

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

GENERAL NOTES

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

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

An aircraft is included in section 3 if; a) it spent time on squadron charge, no matter how briefly, and irrespectively of whether or not it operated. b) the type was used operationally by the squadron. Where a squadron has a Conversion Flight involving a type with which it is intending to re-equip, but then does not, as in the case of 101 and 460 Squadrons, these have been included, on the basis that they sometimes found themselves on operations. Information is restricted in most cases to; where from, where to, unless it completed its service with the squadron, in which case, some detail of its demise appears. Aircraft which failed to return have the date and target recorded. Where no information follows the serial number of a type still in use when the squadron departed Bomber Command, or at war's end, it can be assumed that the aircraft was still on squadron strength. However, where there is a blank space following the serial number of a type which has been withdrawn from service with Bomber Command, it signifies that I don't know its ultimate fate. An absence of information does not imply that the aircraft flew no operations during its time with the squadron.

Those squadrons which served with the AASF in France between the outbreak of war and the fall of France, were not technically part of Bomber Command from January 1940. Nevertheless, their service is deemed to be on behalf of Bomber Command for the purpose of the relevant Profiles, and their experiences are, therefore, detailed, and their aircraft listed. The Blenheim squadrons of the AASF are also treated as if under Bomber Command.

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

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

SECTION 1



BRIEF HISTORY

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

626 SQUADRON

MOTTO To strive and not to yield.

Code UM

626 Squadron was a new squadron born out of Bomber Command's expansion during late 1943, and like many of its contemporaries, it had no history or tradition behind it, and little future once its wartime role was completed. In keeping with the policy of the time, 626 Squadron was spawned by an existing unit, in this instance 12 Squadron, whose C Flight of eight Lancasters and crews was posted en-masse as the nucleus on the 7th of November 1943. Following in its parent squadron's footsteps, 626 Squadron would operate under 1 Group, and share the station at Wickenby. Among those posted from 12 Squadron at this time was the late P/O, later S/L, Jack Currie, who wrote a number of excellent accounts of his wartime experiences, and also authored books on the Augsburg Raid, and the disaster at Mailly-le-Camp, the latter entitled, Battle under the moon.

The squadron was formed under the command of Wing Commander P Haynes, an officer who had been commissioned as far back as 1930, and who was posted to command the Air Observers School in the month that war was declared. The nucleus of experienced crews meant that there would be no delay in declaring the squadron operational immediately, although its formation came at a time of relative inactivity, which proved to be the lull before the storm broke less than two weeks hence. The resumption of the Berlin campaign was looming after its autumn break, but there was sufficient time beforehand for some of the crews to get an operation under their belt, and the squadron went to war for the first time on the night of the 10/11th of November, against the railway tunnel at Modane in southern France, which linked Turin and Grenoble through the Alps. Seven crews took off and seven crews returned, among them P/O Currie in his favoured Charlie Two, a Lancaster he had brought over from 12 Squadron. The attack by three hundred Lancasters from 1, 5 and 8 Groups was reasonably effective, and it was a promising start to the squadron's operational career. There was no further major activity for either the squadron or most of the rest of the Command over the next six nights, as Harris prepared his force for the renewed onslaught on Berlin.

Harris had long believed that Germany's Capital held the key to ultimate victory, and had stated that, with the participation of the UK based American 8th Air Force, he could "wreck Berlin from end to end", and thereby bring an early conclusion to the war, without the need for the kind of protracted and bloody land campaigns which he had personally witnessed during the Great War. There was at that time no precedent to demonstrate whether or not bombing alone could bring victory, and it is only in the light of more recent experiences that we know for certain of the necessity, in a non-nuclear conflict, to physically occupy the enemy's territory. The Americans, however, were committed to victory on land, and they would not accompany Harris to Berlin, so undaunted and single minded as ever, he would go alone. The three operations mounted at the end of August and early September had been characterized by heavy losses and poor results, and had been in marked contrast to the successful campaigns against the Ruhr and Hamburg during the spring and summer. Oboe had proved to be an

overwhelming success during the five month long Battle of the Ruhr, and Hamburg was relatively easy to locate and hit when relying on H2s alone. Berlin, though, was a different matter, its massive sprawl making identification of a specific aiming point extremely difficult, and its formidable defensive ring could easily deter all but the most stout-hearted crews from pressing on to its centre. In addition to the ferocious flak barrage which could always be guaranteed, the Luftwaffe had recovered from the setback dealt to it by Window, and its nightfighter force had emerged as a leaner, more efficient and deadlier adversary than that encountered pre-Hamburg.

This, then, was what faced the crews of 626 Squadron and the rest of the Command's heavy units as November marched on towards the 18/19th, the night of the campaign's resumption and the main part of the battle. It was to be the most bloody and bitter period of the war for the Command, as Berlin and some of Germany's other big cities took a massive toll of aircrew lives, and by the time the period came to a close at the end of March after thirty four major operations, sixteen of them to the Capital, many of the men who took off on this night would have already faded from the memory. It was an all Lancaster heavy force which began taking off shortly after 17.00 hours, while predominately Halifaxes and Stirlings departed their 3, 4 and 6 Group stations bound for a diversionary raid on the southern twins, Mannheim and Ludwigshafen. Eight 626 Squadron aircraft left Wickenby, and participated in an attack which was scattered across the city and caused only modest damage, but the diversion did at least keep the losses to a sustainable nine aircraft. The other force fared less well in terms of losses, sustaining twenty three, but its efforts were twice as successful in creating damage, and the Daimler-Benz car factory was one of the more notable scalps. It was a maximum effort of over seven hundred aircraft which returned to the Capital on the 22/23rd, and in conditions of complete cloud cover, those that reached the target delivered upon it its most devastating attack of the war. Over three thousand houses were destroyed along with twenty three industrial premises, and a similar number suffered damage to some degree. An estimated two thousand people lost their lives, while a further 175,000 were rendered homeless, and a pall of smoke from the large areas of fire rose to eighteen thousand feet above the city. The defences claimed twenty six aircraft, including 10% of the fifty Stirlings which had taken off, and from this point they would be excluded from all future operations over Germany. 626 Squadron's contingent of eleven aircraft all returned safely from this, its third outing.

Some of the above mentioned fires were still burning as a beacon through the clouds when the Lancasters returned on the following night, with just a handful of Halifaxes and Mosquitos for company. Another heavy blow was struck at Berlin, which left a further two thousand houses in ruins and around fifteen hundred people dead, in return for the loss of twenty bombers. None of these was from 626 Squadron, whose eleven aircraft all returned home safely. It was inevitable, however, that casualties would come, and almost equally certain that they would result from a trip to the "Big City". The fourth attack on the Capital since the resumption of the campaign was launched on the 26/27th, by an all Lancaster heavy force numbering over four hundred. 626 Squadron again contributed eleven aircraft to what became an unhappy night for it and the Command. Despite clear

conditions over the target, the Path Finders again experienced difficulty in identifying the city centre, and the markers eventually went down well to the north-west of the intended aiming point. As luck would have it, this happened to contain an industrial suburb, and some important war industry factories suffered extensive damage. A diversionary raid on Stuttgart by a predominately Halifax force helped to keep nightfighters away from the Berlin brigade until the return flight, but once on the scene, they scored consistently against what had become a scattered bomber stream, and were responsible for the bulk of the twenty eight missing Lancasters. DV388 became the squadron's first failure to return, when it crashed in Germany with no survivors from the crew of F/S Kindt, but problems awaited other crews on their return to England. A total of fourteen Lancasters crashed during these final stages of the night's operation after fog closed down their stations, and only the 6 Group airfields remained relatively clear. Hundreds of tired crews headed towards them, while two from 626 Squadron tried to find a landing place further south. F/S Windus and his crew all died when DV295 crashed during an attempt to get in at Marham, and F/L Wood undershot his approach to Wickenby in LM362, coming down a couple of miles to the east of the airfield, but without injury to the eight men on board. On the 29th, DV390 crash-landed while F/S Torrance was trying to put down at Coltishall during a training exercise, but he and his crew were able to walk away unhurt, and this was the final incident of the month.

Berlin opened the December account on the 2/3rd, when responsibility again fell almost entirely on the Lancaster crews. Unable to accurately establish their position, the Path Finder element marked towards the southern edge of the city, and bombs were scattered over a wide area and into open country. Some useful industrial damage saved the night from being a complete disaster, but the results were not commensurate with the effort of dispatching over 450 aircraft, or the massive loss of forty of them. Of 626 Squadron's ten participants, JA864 was brought down near Berlin, and S/L Roden died with six others of his crew, while the sole survivor fell into enemy hands, the first squadron member to do so. Over five hundred aircraft set off for Leipzig on the following night, and in contrast to proceedings at Berlin, the Path Finders carried out accurate marking, and extensive damage was inflicted on the city's housing and industry. Half of the twenty four missing aircraft fell foul of the Frankfurt defensive ring on the way home, and the Halifax contingent suffered disproportionately high casualties, something which would give rise to concern at Bomber Command HQ in the weeks ahead. Minor operations saw the Command through to mid month, until the 16th, when briefings took place on the Lancaster stations for yet another tilt at Berlin. The main weight of the attack fell on central and eastern districts, and a moderate amount of housing damage was caused. Twenty five aircraft were lost to the defences, but for most of the crews, the real problems arose as they arrived over England to find their stations concealed beneath a blanket of thick fog. 1, 6 and 8 Groups were those most badly affected, and twenty nine Lancasters either crashed or were abandoned as their tired crews searched for somewhere to land. 626 Squadron somehow escaped the carnage that afflicted some of the other squadrons, and all of its fourteen aircraft got down safely.

Four nights later, the squadron contributed thirteen crews to a small 1 and 8 Group diversion at Mannheim, while the rest of the main force went to Frankfurt. The latter operation was somewhat waylaid by a decoy site and dummy target indicators, but over four hundred houses were, never-the-less, destroyed. The Mannheim diversion caused little damage at the target, but more importantly, failed to draw the nightfighters away from the main operation, and forty one aircraft failed to return, the Halifaxes this time accounting for two-thirds of them. Mosquitos provided the diversion for the next round of the Berlin campaign, raiding Leipzig on the 23/24th, while over 350 Lancasters and a handful of Halifaxes tried again to inflict a telling blow. Their efforts were rewarded with only modest success, but losses fell to a more sustainable sixteen Lancasters, none of which was from the 626 Squadron contingent of thirteen. The fifth wartime Christmas came and went without any operational activity to interrupt the festivities, and then it was back to business on the 29/30th, for the first of what would be a three raid series against Berlin in the space of an unprecedented five nights spanning the turn of the year. This last major operation of the year was a maximum effort employing over seven hundred aircraft, of which thirteen were provided by 626 Squadron. They all returned from another moderately successful assault, which destroyed almost four hundred buildings at a cost to the Command of twenty aircraft. There can have been no tougher time for a new squadron to embark on its operational career, and 626 Squadron had done remarkably well under the circumstances, having to post missing just two crews from its eleven operations and 116 sorties to date.

1944

There is little doubt, that the men of Bomber Command and the citizens of Berlin shared a common hope for the immediate future, that Germany's Capital city would cease to be the focus of ACM Sir Arthur Harris's attention. Despite the ineffectiveness of some of the operations since the resumption, Berlin had suffered grievous damage, particularly during November, and the cumulative effect was putting great strain upon the emergency services. The population, who prided themselves on being Berliners first and Germans second, bore their trials cheerfully and resolutely, precisely as had their counterparts in London during the Blitz of 1940, and far from breaking morale, the bombing served only to strengthen the sense of community, and engender a determination to resist at all costs. This proud and defiant attitude was characterized by the banners paraded through the streets, which proclaimed, "you may break our walls but not our hearts", and constantly being played over the airwaves was the most popular song of the day, *Nach jedem Dezember kommt immer ein Mai*, after every December comes always a May, a sentiment which held promise of a change in fortunes with the onset of spring. As far as the people of Berlin were concerned, this would, to an extent, happen from April, by which time RAF heavy bombers would have raided their city for the last time, but for the nation as a whole, there would be no return to its former all-conquering days.

New Year's Day was not yet over before a force of over four hundred Lancasters was once more winging its way towards the Capital. Eight of this number was provided by 626 Squadron, and they contributed to a highly disappointing raid, which resulted in the

destruction of a mere twenty one houses and one industrial building. Twenty eight aircraft failed to return home, and 626 Squadron was represented among them by DV190, which crashed in Germany with just one survivor from the crew of Sgt Berry. The squadron was able to put up fourteen Lancasters for Berlin twenty four hours later, the third trip to the "Big City" in an unprecedented five nights. Bombing was scattered all over the city with no concentration, and although marginally more effective than on the previous night, the level of destruction was in no way commensurate with the loss of a further twenty seven Lancasters and crews, most of which were brought down in the target area. There were no losses among the 626 Squadron contingent, and the crews were not required to operate during the next two nights. On the 5/6th, eleven crews joined almost 350 others to attack distant Stettin, while 8 Group Mosquitos carried out a diversion at Berlin, which was successful in drawing off a sizeable proportion of the nightfighter force. Central districts of the port suffered heavy damage by fire, and over five hundred houses and twenty industrial buildings were destroyed, and an additional bonus was the sinking of eight ships in the harbour. Sixteen aircraft were missing from the operation, including the squadron's ME577, which ran out of fuel after more than ten hours in the air, and was ditched at 10.00 hours in the North Sea by F/L Belford, about a hundred miles off the Yorkshire coast, from where the entire crew was rescued apparently none the worse for their experience. Sadly, it was to be only a temporary reprieve for this gallant crew.

A period of minor operations took the Command through to mid month, and it was not until the 14th that briefings took place for the next major operation. There was probably a sense of relief when the crews noticed that the red tape on the wall maps terminated short of Berlin, and stopped, in fact, at Brunswick, a town in broadly the same region of Germany as Hanover. However, those among the former 12 Squadron crews may well have remembered the testing series of four operations against the latter during the previous autumn, when over a hundred aircraft had been lost in return for just one night of success. As events turned out, Brunswick, which had never been raided in numbers before, would prove to be equally as elusive and very expensive during the year, and on this night, escaped with only light superficial damage. Not so the bomber stream of almost five hundred aircraft, which was picked up by the nightfighters as it crossed the north-west German coast, and the two forces remained in contact all the way to and from the target until the Dutch coast was crossed on the way home. Thirty eight Lancasters were shot down, and 626 Squadron had two empty dispersals to contemplate at Wickenby next morning. JB141 and ME576 both came down in Germany, and there were no survivors from the crews of F/S West and F/S Elkington respectively.

Another break from operations, this time of five nights, preceded the next assault on Berlin, which employed a maximum effort force of over seven hundred aircraft on the 20/21st. The crews were greeted by the usual complete cloud cover, but H2s allowed the Path Finders to establish their position over the hitherto less seriously damaged eastern districts, and a fairly effective operation ensued. Nightfighters were again active along the routes out and in, and thirty five aircraft were brought down, the Halifax contingent suffering disproportionately high casualties, something which again would not go

unnoticed at Bomber Command HQ. All eleven 626 Squadron Lancasters returned safely, and the ground crews spent their waking hours feverishly preparing them for another long range trip that night, eventually declaring thirteen ready for battle. The target was Magdeburg, one of Germany's eastern cities, and a force of over six hundred aircraft took off either side of 20.00 hours, and began to encounter nightfighter activity before the German coast was crossed. Running battles with nightfighters would normally have only one outcome, and the majority of the new record loss of fifty seven aircraft was accounted for in this way. The Halifax brigade again bore the brunt, and the thirty five of the type which failed to return represented a massive 15.6% of those despatched. There was not even the consolation of a successful operation to soften the blow, as most of the bombing fell outside of the city, but at least 626 Squadron came through again unscathed.

At the turn of the year, the Lancaster crews had been incredulous at the demands placed upon them in the form of three Berlin trips in the space of five nights. Now they were to be asked to condense three attacks on the Capital into just four nights at the end of the month, but at least although the crews didn't know it, this would be the final concerted effort to bring Berlin to its knees. It was an all Lancaster heavy force numbering over five hundred which got the series off to a start on the 27/28th, and it was able to inflict moderate if scattered damage, while peppering sixty outlying communities with bombs. In the absence of the more vulnerable Halifaxes, thirty three Lancasters fell victim to the defences, and this time 626 Squadron did not escape. LM380 was on its way home over Germany when it failed to survive an encounter with a nightfighter, and the previously mentioned F/L Belford died with all but one of his crew. On the following night, the Halifaxes accompanied the Lancaster force to the Capital, while, as on the previous night, extensive diversionary activity was laid on to confuse the nightfighter controller. This was one of the rare occasions when cloud over Berlin was broken, and some ground marking took place which led to western and southern districts bearing the brunt of the attack. Substantial destruction of residential property bombed out 180,000 people, and a large number of public and administrative buildings were included in the extensive catalogue of other damage, but over seventy communities outside Berlin also reported bombs falling around them. The nightfighter controller was not misled by the diversionary activity, and elements of his force scored numerous victories in the general target area, contributing to another bad night for the Command. Forty six aircraft failed to return, although none from the twelve sent by 626 Squadron, and it was again the Halifax units which registered the higher casualties.

The heavy brigade stayed at home on the 29/30th, but 440 Lancasters and eighty two of the new Hercules powered Mk III Halifaxes headed back to Berlin on the following night, to be greeted by complete cloud cover. Bombs fell into many parts of the city, but the main concentration was in the central and south-western districts, where large areas of fire developed and a thousand people lost their lives. The nightfighters caught up with the bomber stream over Germany, and stayed with it until well into the return flight, and they contributed to a tally of thirty three missing aircraft, all but one of them Lancasters. 626 Squadron's ME587 was absent from its dispersal next morning, and no trace of it or the crew of F/O Wilkinson was ever found. ME584 was also nowhere to be seen, P/O

Breckinridge having put in at Docking with severe damage sustained in four encounters with nightfighters. It had been an exhausting end to the month for the crews, and there is no question that Berlin had suffered grievously over the three nights, but it had not been "wrecked from end to end", and it was still functioning as the seat and symbol of Nazi power. Although two more major operations would be mounted against Germany's capital over the next seven weeks, they would be in isolation, and the campaign had now effectively run its course.

For most of the crews of the heavy squadrons, the first two weeks of February provided a welcome rest from operations, and a chance to draw breath after a hectic and stressful period. Inhospitable weather was largely responsible, and it was to be mid month before it relented sufficiently to allow more than minor activity. When briefings took place on the 15th, the red tape on the wall maps led again to Berlin, for what would prove to be its penultimate raid of the war by RAF heavy bombers. It was a record breaking night in a number of ways, the 891 aircraft detailed representing the largest non-1,000 force to date, and it was the first time that over five hundred Lancasters and three hundred Halifaxes had operated together. Those which reached the target after out-ranging the nightfighters by routing over Denmark, delivered a record 2,600 tons of bombs into the city, much of it falling to good effect into the central and south-western districts. Eleven hundred medium to large fires had to be dealt with by the emergency services, a thousand houses and five hundred temporary wooden barracks were destroyed, and some important war industry factories suffered damage. A small 8 Group diversion to Frankfurt-an-Oder did not deceive the nightfighter controller, and once having infiltrated the bomber stream, nightfighters contributed to the destruction of forty three aircraft. 626 Squadron posted missing one of its eleven participating crews, that of F/S Jacques, who all survived the destruction of JB595 by a nightfighter over Germany to fall into enemy hands. Sadly, one of the crew succumbed to his injuries three months later, and two others were repatriated, arriving home twelve months later. (Bomber Command Losses Vol 5. W R Chorley.)

Despite the above casualty figures, 823 aircraft were available to answer the call for a maximum effort raid on the 19/20th, for which ten 626 Squadron crews were detailed. The target was Leipzig, and an extensive mining operation was laid on in the Kiel Bay area to draw off the nightfighters. A proportion of the nightfighter force was sent north to counter this threat, but when the bomber stream was plotted approaching the Dutch coast, these were recalled, and they joined those already awaiting the Command over occupied territory. Once in contact, the attackers and defenders remained together all the way to the target with the inevitable outcome. Wrongly forecast winds resulted in a proportion of the force arriving too early in the target area, and about twenty aircraft were shot down by the local flak as they orbited awaiting the Path Finder markers to go down. Complete cloud cover made assessment of the effects of the raid impossible, and the use of skymarkers in strong winds probably produced scattered bombing. Certainly, from a Bomber Command perspective, any success gained would not have been commensurate with the losses sustained, and when all the aircraft which were going to return had done so, there was an unbelievable shortfall of seventy eight. The percentage loss rate among the Halifaxes proved to be the final straw, and from this point on, the older Mk II and V

variants were withdrawn from operations over Germany, as had been the Stirlings in November. 626 Squadron's ME589 did not return to Wickenby, having crashed into the sea off the Frisians, and there were no survivors from the crew of F/S Matheson.

Having concentrated so much of his recent efforts in the east, Harris switched his force to southern Germany for the next few operations, and carried out the first of three raids on Stuttgart on the 20/21st. The losses and the removal of a proportion of the Halifax strength reduced the available numbers to under six hundred on this night, but they managed to deliver an effective attack, which caused extensive damage across the northern half of the city and in the centre. Many cultural buildings were badly damaged, along with an important Bosch factory, and this encouraging success was gained for the modest loss of nine aircraft, all eleven from 626 Squadron returning safely. A new tactic was introduced for the next two operations in an attempt to counter the prohibitive losses of recent weeks to nightfighters. The seven hundred aircraft raiding Schweinfurt on the 24/25th were split into two waves, with a two hour interval between, in the hope that the nightfighters would be on the ground refuelling and rearming as the second wave passed through. The operation itself was not successful, both phases suffering from undershooting, but the second wave lost 50% fewer aircraft than the first in an overall casualty figure of thirty three, and only four second wave aircraft were believed to have fallen to nightfighters. 626 Squadron put up a record fifteen aircraft as part of the first wave, and all but one returned safely home. The errant Lancaster was LL797, which crashed in France with no survivors from the eight man crew of F/O Hutchinson, who, tragically, were on the final operation of their first tour.

On the following night, a two phase attack was carried out on Augsburg in clear conditions, and it was a demonstration of the awesome power of the Command when all elements of a plan came together in perfect harmony. The Path Finders achieved pinpoint accuracy with their ground marking, and this was exploited by the main force crews, who, in the face of weak flak defences, deposited two thousand tons of bombs into the beautiful and historic old city. The city centre was ravaged by fire, almost three thousand houses were destroyed, and centuries of irreplaceable culture was lost forever. Twenty one aircraft failed to return, and this suggested that there may be some merit in splitting the force, but experience throughout the war to date had demonstrated that attacks on targets in the southern half of Germany could generally be expected to be less expensive than those in the north. 626 Squadron came through unscathed, and there were no further operations during the month. It was at this time that W/C Haynes was posted from the squadron on promotion to Group Captain, but he would remain at Wickenby as the new station commander. In December he would be awarded the DFC, the citation for which made the following mention. "Group Captain Haynes has completed numerous sorties, including two attacks on the German capital and one on Mannheim. He has displayed high qualities of skill, courage and leadership, setting an example which has inspired all with whom he has flown. In addition to his gallant work in the air, Group Captain Haynes has rendered most valuable service as station commander. By his outstanding ability, great drive and unfailing devotion to duty, this officer has contributed in a large way to the operational efficiency of all under his command." (AMB No 16740. 22.12.44.)

The new commanding officer was W/C Ross, whose period of tenure was destined to be all too brief. The March account opened with the second raid of the series on Stuttgart on the 1/2nd, and despite complete cloud cover, much fresh damage was inflicted on central, western and northern districts, and the catalogue of destruction included housing, cultural buildings, and parts of the Bosch and Daimler-Benz factories. Remarkably, only four aircraft were lost from the five hundred strong force, and all eleven 626 Squadron Lancasters returned to Wickenby to remain on the ground, other than for training purposes, for the succeeding two weeks. During this period an expansion took place, which enabled the squadron to have nineteen Lancasters available for the next operation, which was again to Stuttgart on the 15/16th. In contrast to the raid at the start of the month, this one, by over eight hundred aircraft, and after an accurate opening phase, deposited most of the bombs into open country, and also fell foul of nightfighters on the final approaches to the target. Thirty seven aircraft were brought down, but the squadron's fine record at this target was maintained, and it suffered no losses. During the stand-down period between these operations, the Halifax squadrons had carried out the first of the interdiction raids on the French railway system under the Transportation Plan in preparation for the forthcoming invasion, and they would be joined by the rest of the Command at the conclusion of the winter campaign.

Two massive and destructive attacks fell on Frankfurt on the 18/19th and the 22/23rd, each by forces numbering eight hundred aircraft. The former alone resulted in the destruction of or serious damage to over six thousand buildings, and following the latter, half of the city was left without electricity, gas and water for an extended period. The combined cost to the Command over the two operations was fifty five aircraft, which in the light of the year's losses thus far, and in the context of the scale of damage inflicted, was not excessive. Thirty three of these losses arose from the latter raid, and 626 Squadron was represented among them by JB599, which fell to a nightfighter over Germany, and F/O Kewley and his crew were all killed. Two nights later, the final operation of the war by the heavy brigade on Berlin took place, for which over eight hundred aircraft were detailed. 626 Squadron provided fourteen Lancasters, led for the first time by W/C Ross. The crews encountered unusually strong winds from the north which were quite beyond their experience, and many were unaware of the degree to which they were being driven south of the intended track. The bomber stream became scattered, and this had an adverse effect on the bombing at Berlin, where the markers were blown beyond the target. Over a hundred outlying communities were afflicted by stray bombs, and those which hit the city fell mainly into south-western districts, where housing was the chief recipient. On the way home, many aircraft were blown over heavily defended areas of Germany, where the flak batteries enjoyed their most successful night of the war, claiming over two-thirds of the seventy two shot down bombers. It was a bad night for 626 Squadron, which lost two crews, including that of its commanding officer. HK539 crashed while on the way home over Germany, and W/C Ross and his crew were killed, and LM393 fell victim to a nightfighter, also while homebound over Germany, and again there were no survivors from the crew of F/S Margetts. The squadron participated in all sixteen of the attacks on Berlin from the resumption, and eight Lancasters and crews failed to return from the 186 sorties

despatched. On top of this, two Lancasters were destroyed in crashes in England, and one of these resulted in the loss of another crew, and while this represented a high toll in aircrew lives, the squadron still enjoyed the second lowest percentage loss rate in 1 Group for the campaign. (The Berlin Raids. Martin Middlebrook.)

Although the Battle of Berlin was now over, the winter campaign still had a week to run, and two more major operations to mount. First, however, 626 Squadron contributed three Lancasters to an attack by a mixed force of under two hundred aircraft on railway yards at Aulnoye on the 25/26th. Despite clear conditions, the Path Finder marking was not accurate, and most bombs fell wide of the target. Earlier in the day, W/C Rodney, a Canadian in the RAF, was appointed as the new commanding officer. He had been commissioned in 1936, was awarded the AFC in January 1939, and was Mentioned in Despatches in January 1944. He took over the squadron at a time when morale was at a low ebb, but by force of personality, and by leading his men from the front, he was able to pick the squadron up and develop an esprit de corps which would see it through to the end. Gunnery leader at the time was F/L Whitehouse, who recalls that whenever W/C Rodney flew an operation, it was always with a "sprog" crew, and with his gunnery leader in the rear turret. On the 26/27th, the penultimate raid of the winter campaign was directed at Essen, and this was yet another outstandingly effective assault, which continued the remarkable run of successes against this target since the introduction of Oboe to main force operations twelve months earlier. One of the thirteen aircraft despatched by the squadron failed to return, and this was LL839, which crashed on the Franco-Belgian border, killing F/O Laidlaw and four of his crew. Two men did survive, however, and one of them ultimately evaded capture, while the other one didn't.

Briefings for the final operation of the long-running winter offensive took place on the afternoon of the 30th. It was to be a standard maximum effort raid on Nuremberg, the birthplace of Nazism, involving 795 aircraft, and would depart from normal practice in only one respect, which in the event was to prove critical. In place of the customary feints to throw the nightfighter controllers off the scent until the last possible moment, something which was an integral part of most routes prepared by the 8 Group planners, a 5 Group inspired alternative was chosen, which routed the bomber stream in a long, straight leg from Belgium to a point about fifty miles north of the target, from where the final run-in would commence. AVM Bennett, the 8 Group AOC, protested vehemently, but was overruled, and despite doubts about the weather the operation went ahead as planned. Take-offs were mostly between 22.00 and 23.00 hours, and sixteen 626 Squadron Lancasters lifted off into the night sky. They were to encounter a combination of almost freak meteorological conditions, which would conspire with the disputed route to hand the bombers on a plate to the waiting nightfighters. The promised cloud failed to materialize at cruising altitude, but formed instead below the bombers' path, silhouetting them like flies on a tablecloth. The moon, though still fairly new and crescent shaped, was unusually bright, and the visibility had a crystal clarity which is still remembered today by those who were there. To compound these obvious disadvantages, condensation trails formed to further advertise the presence and location of the bomber stream, and all the components were in place to bring about a catastrophe. The jetstream winds which

had so adversely affected the Berlin raid a week earlier, were also present, although this time from the south, and drove the aircraft continually north of track, some of them as far as fifty miles. Those crews which either failed to appreciate this, or refused to believe the evidence, turned towards Nuremberg from a false position, and many of these bombed Schweinfurt in error. The nightfighters made contact with the bomber stream over Charleroi in Belgium, and a running battle ensued all the way to the target. The route was signposted by the burning wreckage of RAF bombers on the ground, and there would not even be the consolation of a successful raid to soften the blow. The 120 or so aircraft which bombed at Schweinfurt combined with more than eighty shot down on the outward flight, severely reduced the bomb loads available for the target, and having witnessed the carnage going on around them, many crews bombed on the fringes, and this led to an extensive creep-back. A total of ninety five aircraft failed to return, and another twenty were written off with battle damage, but 626 Squadron bucked the trend, and all of its dispersals had an occupant next morning.

That which now stood ahead of the crews of Bomber Command was in marked contrast to what had been endured over the past five months. Gone were the long slogs to distant German targets on dark, often dirty nights, as shorter range hops to France and Belgium became the order of the day in improving weather conditions. The nature of the operations would also be different, however, as the emphasis changed from area to precision bombing, and it would require of the crews a much greater commitment to accuracy, and no longer would it be acceptable to bomb the fringes. Under the Transportation Plan, the French railway system was earmarked for destruction before the invasion could take place, and April would be largely devoted to this activity, although with Harris at the helm, city-busting would never be entirely shelved in favour of other considerations, and as opportunity allowed, he would still hit Germany in this way. The crews' joy at emerging from the dark days of winter was somewhat tempered by a dictate from the Air Ministry, which decreed that most operations to the occupied countries would count as just one-third of a sortie towards the completion of a tour. This flawed thinking, and clear case of moving the goal posts, was happily short-lived, when it was realised that such operations were equally as demanding in their way, and certainly no "piece of cake." Until this policy was rescinded, though, an air of mutiny pervaded the crew rooms. Despite the losses during the winter, the Command was in fine fettle to meet its new challenge, and Harris was in a position to carry out a policy which his predecessor had adopted in vain throughout his period of tenure. Pierse had sent forces to multiple targets on single nights, but the relatively small numbers of aircraft employed on each individual attack, with the consequent lightweight bomb loads, and the inability of the crews without navigation and bombing aids to achieve accuracy, had rendered all his efforts ineffective. Such was the size of force now available to Harris, however, that he could assign targets to individual Groups, confident in the knowledge that each of them had the means to reach and identify the target, and the bomb carrying capacity to destroy it. He also had the option of using Groups in tandem or the Command as a whole as operational requirements dictated, and he had at his disposal a sufficiently large Path Finder Force to enable him to provide each attack with a target marking element.

Bomber Command officially became subject to the requirements of SHAEF from the 14th of April, but the campaign got under way on the 9/10th, when elements of 3, 4, 6 and 8 Groups attacked the Lille-Delivrance goods station, while 1 Group joined others to target railway yards at Villeneuve-St-George. Although both targets were severely damaged, it was a night which brought home the necessity for pinpoint accuracy, after many French civilians were killed by colateral bombing at both targets. It was, of course, impossible to avoid casualties among friendly civilians, but it would concentrate the minds of the crews, and over the succeeding months, many operations would be aborted when aiming points could not be clearly identified. There were no losses from the latter raid, and the three 626 Squadron representatives returned safely home. On the following night, five railway targets were listed for destruction, the yards at Aulnoye assigned to 1 Group, with Path Finder Mosquitos to carry out the marking. It was a highly accurate attack, and although seven Lancasters were lost, none of them was from among the thirteen despatched by 626 Squadron. Aachen's location just inside Germany made it a tempting target, particularly as it was an important railway centre between Germany and the occupied countries. Over three hundred aircraft of 1, 3, 5 and 8 Groups inflicted its most destructive raid of the war on the 11/12th, and fifteen hundred people lost their lives.

There were no further operations for a week for the heavy squadrons, but the Mosquitos of 8 Group's Light Night Striking Force kept the pot boiling and the residents awake in German cities. Railway yards at four locations were attacked on the 18/19th, while extensive mining operations went on along side in northern waters. The total number of sorties for the night, at 1,125, was actually a new record, and just fourteen of these were lost. 1 Group, with elements of 3 and 8 Groups, carried out an accurate attack on the railway yards at Rouen, and no aircraft were missing from the 250 strong force. Sorties on the 20/21st exceeded those mentioned above by thirty, and 357 of these, from 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups, were active over Cologne in an old style city-busting raid, which heaped further misery on the Rheinland capital. All except 5 Group participated in a heavy raid on Düsseldorf on the 22/23rd, which destroyed or badly damaged two thousand houses, damaged fifty six large industrial premises, and killed around twelve hundred people. Operations to Germany could still be expensive, however, and twenty nine aircraft were lost from this raid, although none from 626 Squadron's contingent of seventeen. The squadron had, in fact, launched eighty eight sorties on seven operations since it last posted a crew missing, but two nights later, this fine record came to an end, when sixteen of its Lancasters departed Wickenby to join over six hundred other aircraft for an attack on Karlsruhe. Much of the bombing fell outside of the built-up area, and only northern districts suffered meaningful damage in return for the loss of nineteen aircraft. DV244 was shot down by a nightfighter over Germany, and W/O Bernyk and his crew were killed, and there were no survivors either from the crew of F/S Baker, after ED424 was despatched by another nightfighter over France. DV177 was returning over Essex when it was pounced on by an enemy intruder, and W/O McPherson and his crew all perished in the crash.

Targets in Germany continued to occupy the squadron and a large part of the rest of the Command over the next few nights, Essen sustaining more punishment on the 26/27th, before an attack on Friedrichshafen, deep in southern Germany, on the 27/28th. A heavily industrialized town, the latter contained factories engaged in the manufacture of engines and gearboxes for tanks, and it was also the location of the old Zeppelin works, which were now devoted to the assembly of Würzburg radar equipment. Over twelve hundred tons of bombs were dropped by the three hundred strong force, and severe damage was inflicted on the town generally, over 60% of which was devastated, while the gearbox plant was destroyed. Nightfighters arrived on the scene as the attack was in progress, and eighteen Lancasters were shot down, but none of these was from the eleven sent by 626 Squadron. In a break from the recent pattern, 1 Group despatched 116 aircraft, including six from 626 Squadron, to attend to a bomb and ammunition dump at Maintenon on the last night of the month. The operation was a complete success, and was concluded without casualties among the nearby civilian population.

May began for the squadron with a small scale attack on factories and railway installations at Lyons on the 1/2nd, and this was followed by what became a highly controversial operation on the 3/4th. The Panzer training camp and transport depot at Mailly-le-Camp should have been a straightforward affair involving 346 Lancasters of 1 and 5 Groups, fourteen 5 Group Mosquitos, and two Oboe Mosquitos from 8 Group to provide initial identification of the target. The operation's overall leader was W/C Dean of 83 Squadron, which had recently returned to 5 Group after its service as a founder member of the Path Finder Force. The marking was to be carried out by Mosquitos of 617 Squadron under the leadership of W/C Cheshire, who along with S/L Mickey Martin of Dambusting fame, had pioneered a low level visual marking method. They had first tried out the system unofficially with Lancasters, a somewhat hairy exercise, but having established its efficacy, Cheshire approached his AOC, AVM Sir Ralph Cochrane, who, ever open to new ideas, took the proposal to Harris, and ultimately, a number of Mosquitos were taken on charge. So successful under certain conditions was this approach to marking, that 627 Squadron was posted to 5 Group from the Path Finders as the only Mosquito squadron to be dedicated to this new role, and 83 and 97 Squadrons followed suit to fulfil the heavy target marking requirement. 617 Squadron continued to provide the low level Mosquito marking until 627 Squadron crews had been sufficiently trained to take over, and on this night, the latter operated in a flak suppression role.

W/Cs Dean and Cheshire attended separate briefings, and this may have had some bearing on later events, and certainly there was some confusion concerning the entire plan, particularly in regard to the role of 1 Group's Special Duties Flight from Binbrook, which had been assigned to its own "special" target. The main problem, however, arose from radio interference by a broadcasting station which blocked communications, and prevented orders from being received by the main force crews after the low level marking had been accurately carried out. This delay in calling in the Lancaster crews to bomb proved to be critical, and while they were being forced to mill around in the target area awaiting their orders, they were pounced upon by nightfighters, which began to shoot them down in large numbers. The sight of burning Lancasters all over the sky caused a

number of crews to break discipline in their anxiety and frustration, and some questionable comments were heard over the airwaves. The operation was rescued by the deputy Master Bomber, S/L Sparks, who was able to get his message through, and once under way, fifteen hundred tons of bombs were delivered onto the target with great precision, and much damage was done to buildings, installations and vehicles. Forty two Lancasters failed to return, including that of S/L Sparks, who survived, evaded and returned home, and twenty eight of them were from 1 Group. It was a bad night for 626 Squadron, which posted missing three of its crews. LL753 was shot down during its run-in to the target, and P/O Jackson and his crew were killed, F/S Barkway's DV281 was brought down shortly after bombing, also without survivors, and EE148 crashed in France on the way home, and P/O Fisher and his crew died in its wreckage. Recriminations abound to this day about who was to blame, and many accusations continue to be unjustly directed at Cheshire.

On the 6/7th, fifty two Lancasters of 1 Group took off to bomb an ammunition dump at Aubigne Racan, and completely destroyed the target for the loss of one aircraft. 626 Squadron sent three crews on this operation, and contributed ten on the following night to a force of fifty five Lancasters of the Group to attack a similar target and an airfield at Rennes. This was less successful, and most of the bombs fell onto a nearby village, although no aircraft were lost. The main focus of operations on the 9/10th were seven coastal batteries in the Pas-de-Calais, and whilst they would have no significance during the actual invasion, paying attention to them now helped to maintain the deception with regard to the genuine location of the planned landings. Ten 626 Squadron crews joined an attack on a position at Merville, and all returned safely. Five railway targets featured on the following night, among them Dieppe, for which seven of the squadron's crews were briefed. Four of the railway yards were successfully dealt with, but there was no post raid reconnaissance at Dieppe, and an assessment of the attack could not be made. Four railway yards, a military camp and a gun position were earmarked for destruction on the 11/12th, and this time just four of the squadron's crews were briefed to take part. Their target was a railway yard at Hasselt, along with 120 other crews from 1 and 8 Groups, but thick haze was encountered, and the Master Bomber called a halt after a third of the force had bombed. The squadron's JB406 failed to return to Wickenby, and it was later discovered to have crashed on the Frisian island of South Beveland, without survivors from the crew of P/O Marriott.

After a hectic start to the month, the crews were able to enjoy a week's stand-down from operations, during which it was left largely to the Mosquitos of 8 Group to keep the pot boiling. When heavy operations resumed on the 19/20th, five of the night's targets were railway yards in France, over a hundred Lancasters of 1 Group assigned to those at Orleans. A highly accurate attack was concluded for the loss of just one aircraft, which was not one of the eleven despatched by 626 Squadron. Two nights later, Duisburg was raided for the first time for a year, and suffered heavy damage at the hands of almost five hundred aircraft from 1, 3, 5 and 8 groups. In an echo of the past, twenty nine Lancasters failed to return, and 626 Squadron was represented among them by ND964, which crashed in Belgium, killing F/O Brant and all but one of his crew, the sole survivor

ultimately evading capture. On the following night, Dortmund was the objective, also for the first time in a year, for an attack by 350 aircraft of 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups, which left 850 houses and six industrial premises destroyed, and almost an equal number seriously damaged. Eighteen Lancasters fell to the defences, among them the squadron's NE118, this crashing on Dutch soil, killing three of the crew of F/S Grisdale, while he and one other evaded capture, and the two remaining survivors fell into enemy hands. Two railway yards at Aachen were targeted on the 24/25th, and those on the town's eastern side were particularly hard hit. Colateral damage to the town was severe, and the local population sustained heavy casualties. It was a good night for the defenders, however, and twenty five aircraft were brought down, the bulk of them 4 and 6 Group Halifaxes, and this time all thirteen of the squadron's Lancasters returned home. It was necessary to return to Aachen on the 27/28th, for another tilt at the Rothe Erde yards on the town's western side, and this time the target was effectively dealt with, and all through traffic was halted. Colateral damage, which was encouraged on German targets, accounted for a nearby suburb, which was totally destroyed by fire. A nightfighter caught the squadron's ND985 over Belgium and sent it crashing to the ground, killing P/O Ayres and four of his crew, while one of the two survivors managed to evade capture. The final operation of the month took thirteen of the squadron's Lancasters to railway yards at Tergnier on the night of the 31st, and the 1 and 8 Group crews dealt effectively with the target for the loss of just two aircraft. The last day of the month was notable also for the arrival from Ludford Magna of Lancaster PA990, although no-one knew at the time that its illustrious career with the squadron would take it to a century of operations. It had been a busy month, which had seen the squadron operate on thirteen nights and launch a total of 132 sorties, its highest number to date, but it had also brought the loss of seven aircraft and crews, and this echoed the dark days of January.

June was to prove to be the most intense month of the war for the squadron, during which it would launch a sortie figure which it would never surpass. The imminent invasion was, of course, partly responsible for this, but two new campaigns would begin later in the month, and they would both demand a massive effort from the Command. The month began with the lead up to D-Day, during which the priority targets were coastal defences and intelligence related installations. A radar-jamming station at Berneval was accurately bombed by the Group on the 2/3rd, and two nights later, elements of all but 3 Group attacked three coastal batteries in the Pas-de-Calais, and one in Normandy. On D-Day Eve, a thousand aircraft were aloft to cover the invasion forces by bombing ten coastal batteries, 626 Squadron's ten crews briefed for those at St-Martin-de-Varreville and Crisbecq. Most of the targets were cloud-covered, but five thousand tons of bombs rained down on Oboe aimed markers, and this was the greatest tonnage in one night to date. The crews were not told of the invasion, but briefings had included a ban on jettisoning bombs over the sea. Some of the crews returning in the early light of the morning of the 6th, were rewarded by the sight of the giant armada ploughing its way across the Channel below. That night, another thousand aircraft were involved in operations against nine road and railway targets behind enemy lines, the squadron providing eighteen Lancasters for an attack on Acheres. Most of the aiming points were cloud covered, and the Master

bomber at this target ordered the operation to be abandoned before any bombs were released.

626 Squadron was not involved in further smaller scale raids on communications target over the succeeding two nights, but contributed nineteen aircraft to an operation by four hundred aircraft of 1, 4, 6 and 8 Groups against four airfields south of the beachhead, to prevent their use by the enemy for bringing up reinforcements. All targets were accurately bombed, and there were no losses from the 1 Group element, whose crews were briefed for Flers. After a night's rest, the squadron posted a new record, when despatching twenty one aircraft to railway yards at Evreux, one of four similar targets for elements of 1, 3, 4 and 8 Groups. A successful outcome was claimed, and all of the 626 Squadron crews returned home. The sortie record was equalled on the following night, when 1, 3 and 8 Groups opened the new oil offensive at Gelsenkirchen. Massive damage was inflicted upon the Nordstern synthetic oil plant after highly accurate marking by the Path Finder element, and all production at the plant was halted for a number of weeks, depriving the enemy of a thousand tons of vital aviation fuel each day. The importance of oil installations to the German war effort guaranteed a spirited defence, and seventeen Lancasters were lost on this night, although none of them was from 626 Squadron.

The first daylight operations for more than a year were launched on the 14th against E-Boats and other marine craft at Le Havre, which were posing a threat to Allied supply shipping around the Normandy beaches only thirty miles away. 617 Squadron attacked the pens with Tallboys, before 1 Group opened the main attack in the evening under the umbrella of a Spitfire escort. As darkness began to fall, 3 Group followed up, and few E-Boats escaped being destroyed or damaged. Only one Lancaster was lost, but heavy casualties were sustained by the local population, despite the accuracy of the bombing. Boulogne was subjected to similar treatment twenty four hours later by elements of 1, 4, 5, 6 and 8 Groups, and extensive damage was visited upon the port and adjoining areas of the town itself, and two hundred civilians were killed. 626 Squadron despatched twenty and nineteen aircraft respectively for these two operations, and sustained no losses. It was back to railways for the squadron on the 17/18th, but cloud over Aulnoye forced the Master Bomber to call off proceedings after only seven aircraft had bombed. On the previous night, the month's second new campaign, this one against flying bomb launching and storage sites in the Pas-de-Calais, had been opened by elements of all but 3 Group, although without the participation of 626 Squadron. The squadron next went to war on the 22/23rd, when providing nineteen Lancasters for an attack by the Group on railway yards at Rheims. A successful outcome was marred for the squadron by the loss of LM102, the first failure to return for almost a month, this Lancaster crashing in France with no survivors from the crew of Sgt Woolley.

The squadron's first involvement with the flying bomb campaign came with an attack at Les Hayons, one of seven sites earmarked for destruction on the 24/25th. Later on the 25th, three more sites were attacked by daylight, and it was on this occasion that 617 Squadron's W/C Cheshire flew his Mustang for the first time, this against the flying bomb store at Siracourt. 626 Squadron's target was at Ligescourt, and all of its seventeen

Lancasters returned from what was pronounced a successful operation. While a force of over seven hundred aircraft prosecuted the flying bomb campaign on the 27/28th, eighteen Lancasters of 626 Squadron took off to join others from 1, 5 and 8 Groups to attack two railway targets. Briefed for Vaires, the Wickenby brigade contributed to a highly accurate assault, and returned home without loss. The squadron's objectives continued to alternate between railways and flying bomb sites, and it was to one of the latter at Siracourt that sixteen Lancasters departed Wickenby by daylight on the 29th. Partial cloud cover and the loss of the Master Bomber affected the accuracy of the attack, and bombing was scattered. The last night of the month took a 1 Group force of over a hundred Lancasters to the small town of Vierzon, led by the Group's Special Duties Flight from Binbrook. This produced excellent marking, and the crews following behind delivered a highly concentrated attack, which severely damaged the target. Losses, however, amounted to fourteen Lancasters, almost 12% of the force, and among them were two from 626 Squadron. ME774 was lost without trace with the crew of P/O Pocock, and ND952 crashed in France killing P/O Orr and three of his crew, while one of the three survivors ultimately evaded capture. It was a sad end to a month which had required the squadron to operate against seventeen targets, and despatch a never-to-be-surpassed 283 sorties.

July would bring a greater variety of operations, but it began for the squadron with more of the same fare by daylight on the 2nd, an attack by over 350 aircraft of 1, 3 and 8 Groups on three flying bomb sites. 626 Squadron sent fourteen aircraft to the one at Domleger, and all returned safely, and all eleven did likewise following a raid on railway yards at Orleans on the 4/5th. No aircraft from 1 Group were lost from an attack on railway installations at Dijon on the 5/6th, or from a V-Weapon site in the Forêt du Croc later on the 6th. On the evening of the 7th, over four hundred aircraft provided tactical support for British and Canadian ground forces, by attacking a stretch of open ground between Caen and a number of fortified villages. The bombing was accurate, but achieved little other than the destruction of the northern suburbs of the city, although at least losses were minimal. 626 Squadron's LM112 was hit by flak shortly after bombing, and had to be ditched when a fire broke out. The two gunners failed to survive, but P/O Oram and the four other members of his crew were rescued, three of them within minutes of hitting the sea. A few days rest preceded the next operation for the squadron, which required eighteen of its aircraft to participate in an attack on a railway target at Tours on the 12/13th, while another 1 Group element went to bomb a junction at Revigny. The latter was abandoned half way through because of cloud, and ten Lancasters were lost, but the former was concluded successfully without casualties, and it was on this night that the squadron registered its one thousandth sortie. Another stand-down from operations was broken by a return to tactical support for the ground forces around Caen on the 18th. Five thousand tons of bombs were delivered onto German divisions by over nine hundred aircraft, and this allowed Operation Goodwood to get off to a promising start.

It was back to railways for part of 1 Group on the night of the 20/21st, while a second element from the Group concentrated on an oil plant at Homberg. 626 Squadron

contributed eighteen Lancasters to the former, which resulted in devastation to railway yards and a junction at Courtrai, but two of them were among nine aircraft which failed to return home. LM136 crashed into the sea off the Belgian coast, killing F/O Wilson and his crew, and LM633 was brought down over Holland with just one fatality, while F/O Bowen and one of his crew fell into enemy hands, and the other four evaded capture. Three nights later, Harris launched his first major assault on a German target since May, and the first on Kiel for more than a year. Extensive 100 Group activity allowed the six hundred strong force to appear with complete surprise from behind a Mandrel screen, and inflict heavy damage on the port area, hitting also all the important U-Boat building yards and naval facilities. 626 Squadron sent fifteen aircraft, and none of these was among the modest four missing Lancasters. A series of three raids on Stuttgart over a five night period began on the following night, for which the squadron put up fourteen aircraft. Heavy damage resulted to central districts of the city at a cost of twenty one aircraft, 626 Squadron again coming through unscathed. The second raid took place on the 25/26th, and was the most destructive of the series, for the loss this time of twelve aircraft. This mini campaign concluded on the 28/29th, a night on which the all Lancaster force encountered heavy nightfighter activity over France during the outward flight, and in conditions of bright moonlight, a hefty thirty nine of them were shot down. 626 Squadron's LL895 met its end in this way, although over southern Germany, and just one member of the crew of F/S Ryan survived to be taken prisoner. The month closed for the squadron with participation in a daylight operation on behalf of American ground forces in the Caumont area on the 30th, and an attack on a flying bomb storage site in the Forêt de Nieppe on the night of the 31st, both of which were undertaken without loss.

The first six days and nights of August were dominated by the campaign against the flying bomb menace, although the squadron was not called into action until the 3rd. Over eleven hundred aircraft took part in successful heavy daylight raids on three storage sites, from which only six Lancasters failed to return. Five of these were from the attack on Trossy-St-Maxim, the target for the 626 Squadron element of thirteen aircraft, but they all returned safely. Over 250 aircraft of 1, 3 and 8 Groups were switched to oil storage depots at Bec-d'Ambes and Pauillac on the 4th, benefitting on this occasion from the first use of 100 Group's Serrate Mosquitos as escorts, and no aircraft were lost. Elements of the same Groups attacked three similar targets on the 5th, again under a 100 Group umbrella, eleven 626 Squadron crews briefed for a site at Blaye on the River Gironde, from which they all returned. On the 7/8th, over a thousand aircraft were involved in attacks on enemy strong points ahead of Allied ground forces in the Normandy battle area, and on the following night, elements of 1, 3 and 8 Groups returned to oil storage depots at Aire-sur-Lys and in the Forêt de Lucieux. Sixty Lancasters of 1 Group attempted to destroy a flying bomb site at Ferme-du-Forestal on the 10th, but cloud hampered their efforts, and only thirteen bombed with the Oboe Mosquitos before the raid was abandoned.

The squadron despatched its first mining sorties on the 11/12th, when sending five aircraft to the sealanes off Biscay ports, and all returned safely. The 12/13th was a night of major activity involving over eleven hundred sorties for main raids on Brunswick and

Rüsselsheim, and numerous support and minor operations. The Brunswick operation was an experiment to determine the ability of main force crews to locate and attack a target purely on H2s, without the presence of Path Finders. Eleven 626 Squadron Lancasters took part in what was only a partially effective raid, in which central districts were hit, but many bombs were scattered over a wide area. Among the twenty seven missing aircraft was the squadron's LM599, which fell victim to a nightfighter over Germany, and F/O Bennett and three of his crew survived as POWs, while the remaining three men were killed. Also on this night, three other squadron crews joined an attack on German troop positions in the Falaise area, and returned without loss. On the 14th, eight hundred aircraft were sent back to Falaise by daylight, and it was on this occasion that thirteen Canadian troops were killed by stray bombing. In preparation for his new night offensive against Germany, Harris launched a thousand aircraft by daylight on the 15th, to attack nine airfields in Holland and Belgium. 626 Squadron sent fourteen Lancasters to Volkel, and they all returned from what was considered a successful operation.

The return to Germany in strength began on the 16/17th, when major operations were mounted against Stettin by over four hundred aircraft, and Kiel by over three hundred. 626 Squadron was involved in the former, for which it put up twelve Lancasters, and it was a highly accurate and concentrated attack, which destroyed over fifteen hundred houses and numerous industrial buildings, and sank or seriously damaged twenty thousand tons of shipping in the harbour. The death toll on the ground was also high, amounting to over eleven hundred people, while the Command suffered the modest loss of just five Lancasters. Following a minor raid against oil storage installations at Ertvelde Rieme near Ghent on the 18/19th, which was the squadron's one hundredth operation, the crews enjoyed a week's stand-down, this coming to an end on the 25/26th, when eighteen of them were briefed for an attack on the Opel motor works at Rüsselsheim in company with almost four hundred others from 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups. A partially effective raid left the forge and gearbox assembly plant out of action, but most of the valuable machine tools escaped damage, and it would be necessary for the Command to return to this target. Fifteen Lancasters and crews would not be available for the next occasion, however, having fallen foul of the defences, and among them were two from 626 Squadron. LM140 crashed in Germany, killing F/O Whetton and all but one of his crew, but F/O Harris and three others managed to escape with their lives from PA989, and they became guests of the Reich. Kiel sustained heavy fire damage in central districts following a 1, 3 and 8 Group effort on the 26/27th, but this time there were no 626 Squadron aircraft among the seventeen missing Lancasters. The final attacks on flying bomb sites were carried out on the 28th in the absence of a 626 Squadron contingent, who, on the following afternoon, were briefed for a return to Stettin. In its outcome, this was a repetition of the raid of the 16/17th, with almost identical numbers of houses and industrial premises destroyed, a similar number of people killed, but an increase in the tonnage of shipping sunk or seriously damaged. The squadron's ME742 failed to return to Wickenby, but news soon came through that the eight man crew of F/O Hawkes were safe, and enjoying the legendary hospitality of the Swedes, in whose country the Lancaster had come down. The final operation of the month was directed at nine

suspected V-2 storage sites in northern France on the 31st. The squadron despatched ten aircraft to its target at St Riquier, and no losses were incurred.

September was to be largely devoted to the clearing of resistance from the three French ports still in enemy hands. First, however, six airfields in southern Holland were bombed by six hundred aircraft by daylight on the 3rd, the 626 Squadron element targeting Eindhoven. The first of six attacks on enemy strong points around le Havre took place on the 5th, for which the squadron detailed thirteen crews. An accurate raid was conducted without loss, and this was followed up next day, again without casualties. The port was given respite on the 7th, but was in the bomb sights again on the 8th, although low cloud hampered the efforts of the three hundred strong 1, 3 and 8 Group force, and only a third of them were able to carry out an attack. That night, LM270 crashed near the airfield while avoiding a collision during a training flight, and one man was killed, while P/O Vidler and the other five men on board sustained injuries. Having participated in the first three trips to Le Havre, 626 Squadron sat out the next one, before contributing seventeen Lancasters to a force of over nine hundred aircraft for round five on the 10th. Following the final raid on the 11th, which went ahead without 626 Squadron, the German garrison surrendered to British forces. That night, eight of the squadron's crews joined a large minelaying effort in the Kattegat, and all returned safely.

While two hundred Lancasters of 1 and 5 Groups were devastating north and west-central districts of Stuttgart on the 12/13th, other 1 Group aircraft, including fifteen from 626 Squadron, joined elements of 3 and 8 Groups to carry out the final heavy raid of the war on Frankfurt. Western districts suffered severe damage at a cost to the Command of seventeen Lancasters, among which was one from 626 Squadron. LM137 was brought down over Germany, with the loss of five lives, but the pilot, F/O Thorpe, and two others survived as POWs. On the Eve of Operation Market Garden, the Allied airborne landings at Arnhem and Nijmegen which began on the 17th, Bomber Command lent support by attacking four airfields, including Hopsten, the target for twelve Lancasters from 626 Squadron. Also on the 17th, enemy positions around Boulogne were pounded by three thousand tons of bombs, and soon afterwards, the garrison surrendered. The 626 Squadron effort by seven aircraft on this day was directed at German flak positions on West Kapelle. Calais was now the only French port still in enemy hands, and the first of six operations to rectify the situation took place by daylight on the 20th. On the 23/24th, Neuss suffered extensive damage to its inland docks and industrial areas at the hands of over five hundred aircraft drawn from 1, 3, 4 and 8 Groups, and this preceded the next raid on Calais involving 626 Squadron, which had missed the previous trip there on the 24th. The squadron put up a healthy twenty Lancasters as part of a force of over eight hundred aircraft, but only a third of them were able to bomb through breaks in the cloud. Seven hundred aircraft returned to the Calais area on the 26th, a large proportion of which were assigned to four targets at Cap Gris Nez, and this was the final operation of the month for 626 Squadron. Following yet another attack on the 28th, Calais was surrendered to Canadian forces. During the course of the month, W/C Rodney was posted away from the squadron at the conclusion to his highly successful tour, and he took up a staff appointment. He would return to the operational scene in April 1945 when taking

command of 153 Squadron, and would remain in the post until the squadron's disbandment in September of that year.

The new commanding officer was W/C Molesworth, who had begun his operational career as a sergeant, before being commissioned in 1940. He was awarded the DFC in 1941 for service with 77 Squadron. October was to bring an assault on industrial Germany in unprecedented proportions, but it began with an attack on the sea walls on the island of Walcheren in the Scheldt Estuary, where heavy gun emplacements were hindering access to the port of Antwerp. Oboe Mosquitos led this first operation by over two hundred Lancasters in eight waves against the West Kapelle section, for which 626 Squadron provided nine aircraft. The fifth wave opened a breach, which was widened to a hundred yards by the end, and sea water flooded onto the low-lying land. An extensive mining operation in northern waters on the 4/5th resulted in the squadron's first loss from this activity, PB412 disappearing without trace with the crew of F/O Green. A massive assault on Saarbrücken on the 5/6th left almost six thousand buildings in ruins, and cut the main rail route towards the advancing American forces, and on the following night, a new Ruhr campaign was opened at Dortmund by five hundred aircraft drawn from 3, 6 and 8 Groups. The failure of Operation Market Garden left the Allied right flank exposed around Nijmegen, and any enemy advance on this area would have to pass through the small towns of Cleves and Emmerich on Germany's westernmost frontier, and consequently each was subjected to a heavy attack on the 7th. The latter was the target for 1 Group, with elements of 3 and 8 Groups, and 626 Squadron contributed twenty Lancasters to what was a highly destructive raid, which reduced over two thousand buildings to rubble.

The squadron was not involved in a disappointing raid on Bochum on the 9/10th, and was next called into action on the 11th, to help silence gun emplacements at locations along the scheldt Estuary. Eleven crews were briefed to join others attacking the Fort Frederik Hendrik battery at Breskens, but less than half of the force had bombed when the operation was abandoned because of smoke and dust concealing the aiming point. In order to demonstrate to the enemy the overwhelming superiority of the Allied Air Forces ranged against it, Operation Hurricane was devised, and at first light on the 14th, over a thousand aircraft took off, and headed for the already much bombed city of Duisburg. Almost 4,500 tons of high explosives and incendiaries rained down, while Spitfires maintained a watching brief overhead, and massive damage resulted. Flak claimed most if not all of the fourteen shot down aircraft, and one of them was the squadron's NE163, in which the crew of F/L Aldus lost their lives. That night, similar numbers returned to Duisburg with another 4,500 tons of bombs to press home the point about superiority, and just seven failed to return. The target claimed another 626 Squadron crew, however, that of F/O Campbell in LM596, and all eight men died.

The final major raid of the war on Wilhelmshaven fell on the port to good effect on the 15/16th, just four 626 Squadron crews taking part, but nineteen were detailed for Stuttgart on the 19/20th, when central and eastern districts sustained further damage. On return from this operation, PA993 overshot its landing, and crashed in Lincolnshire while

going round again, and F/O Clements and his crew all suffered injuries, the flight engineer succumbing to his in hospital shortly afterwards. Essen received the first of its visits from the Hurricane force on the 23/24th, for which the squadron put up twenty Lancasters, and a daylight raid by over seven hundred aircraft on the 25th effectively ended its status as an important centre of industry. Cologne's turn came on the 28th, when a further seven hundred aircraft in two waves left more than two thousand apartment blocks in ruins in the north-eastern and south-western districts. Before the next two raids on the Rheinland Capital, further attention was paid to eleven enemy positions on Walcheren on the 29th. More misery was heaped on Cologne on the 30/31st and again twenty four hours later, for which the squadron provided fifteen aircraft on each occasion without loss.

Almost a thousand aircraft pounded Düsseldorf under Operation Hurricane on the 2/3rd of November, and five thousand houses were destroyed, while a further four thousand were laid waste at Bochum on the 4/5th, where industrial areas were also hard hit. The squadron's LM290 failed to return from the latter, having crashed in Belgium, and there were no survivors from the crew of F/O Cook DFC. Gelsenkirchen wilted under a heavy raid on the 6th, which although lacking concentration, was described by the city diarist as a catastrophe. An attempt to hit the important oil refinery at Wanne-Eickel on the 9th was thwarted by thick cloud, and the Master Bomber ordered the predominately 1 Group crews to bomb any built-up area which presented itself. Another largely 1 Group force gained consolation at Dortmund on the 11/12th, when inflicting severe damage on the Hoesch Benzin synthetic oil plant. On return, PD314 crashed a mile from the airfield in the hands of F/O Dainty, and one man was killed, while the pilot and the other five men on board sustained injuries. A request from American ground forces to support their advance towards the Rhein, led to the bombing of three small German towns by daylight on the 16th. Düren was assigned to almost five hundred aircraft from 1, 5 and 8 groups, Jülich to four hundred aircraft drawn from 4, 6 and 8 Groups, and Heinsberg was a 3 Group show. The three towns were all but erased from the map, and Düren alone reported more than three thousand people killed, but in the event, the American push became bogged down and proceeded only slowly. The squadron operated only four more times during the month after this, to Wanne-Eickel on the 18/19th, for another go at its oil installations, railway yards at Aschaffenburg on the 21/22nd, the virgin town of Freiburg on the 27/28th, which was of little importance save as a minor railway centre, and was left with two thousand houses in ruins and an equal number of its population dead, and Dortmund on the 29th.

There was a busy start to December with operations daily, although it was the 3rd before 626 Squadron was invited to join in. The operation to bomb the small town of Heimbach was abandoned after difficulties with identification, but a return would be made by various forces over the next eight days with the specific intention of destroying the nearby Urft Dam, to prevent its use by the enemy to flood the terrain ahead of advancing American forces. In the event, the dam was damaged but not breached. Karlsruhe reeled under an accurate and concentrated attack on the 4/5th, and two nights later, the first assault on an oil refinery in eastern Germany took place. The town of Leuna near

Merseburg suffered extensive damage at the hands of 1, 3 and 8 Groups, and just five aircraft failed to return from this long range target. The squadron's services were not required again until the 12/13th, the occasion of the last major night raid of the war on Essen. Further severe damage was inflicted on what was still standing in the city, and the Krupps works lay at the centre of the main bombing area. Another important factory to receive attention was that belonging to I G Farben in Ludwigshafen. Three hundred Lancasters of 1, 6 and 8 Groups caused substantial damage to it on the 15/16th, and at the same time halted production at its sister plant in nearby Oppau. The old city of Ulm received its one and only visit from Bomber Command on the 17/18th, and in twenty five minutes of concentrated bombing, fourteen hundred tons of bombs inflicted damage on 82% of its built-up area, and consigned a large part of it to a fiery destruction. A predominately 1 Group force targeted the Mosel railway yards at Coblenz on the 22/23rd, and although much of the bombing fell in open country and on outlying communities, a number of main lines were cut, and two road bridges brought down. 626 Squadron's NG244 turned back with engine failure shortly after take-off, and was directed to put down at Leeming. The pilot, F/O Preece, opted to continue his approach to Wickenby, however, but was unable to maintain control, and tragically, the Lancaster plunged into the ground close to the station bomb dump. Fortunately, although the Lancaster's bomb load went up, creating an enormous crater, the bomb dump itself survived. No trace was found of the luckless crew.

A five night stand-down from operations for 626 Squadron, meant that the crews could enjoy the final wartime Christmas in peace, but it was back to work on the 28/29th, when fourteen crews were despatched to Bonn, where the railway yards were earmarked for destruction. The first of the Lancasters to lift off the runway at Wickenby that afternoon represented the squadron's 2,000th sortie. The 150 strong force left extensive damage in its wake, although despite the claims of returning crews, little damage was caused to railway installations. This was not the case at Scholven-Buer on the following night, however, when elements of 1, 6 and 8 Groups managed to put three hundred high explosive bombs into the oil plant, and another three thousand into other parts of the towns. There was to be an unhappy ending to the year for 626 Squadron, which had negotiated the month to date without a single failure to return. On the afternoon of New Year's Eve, thirteen of its crews set out for Osterfeld, in company with over 130 other 1 and 8 Group crews, to attack the railway yards. Some success was gained, but PB687 fell foul of Allied anti-aircraft fire and crashed on friendly soil, killing three of the crew. F/O Beattie and four others managed to save themselves by parachute, and they landed safely to return home. PB561 crash-landed at Manston on return, but no injuries were reported among the crew of F/O White. It had been a successful year for the Command once the dark days of the winter campaign were behind it, and despite the German breakout in the Ardennes, there was no doubt concerning the ultimate outcome of the war. Much remained to be done, however, before the proud and tenacious enemy laid down his arms, and many more crews would be sacrificed in the months that lay ahead.

1945

The New Year began with a bang on the Continent, when the Luftwaffe launched its ill-conceived and ultimately ill-fated Operation Bodenplatte at first light. Almost its entire front-line day fighter strength was thrown against Allied aircraft on the liberated airfields of France, Holland and Belgium. Flying at low level into the teeth of the airfield flak defences, and pounced upon by RAF and USAAF fighters, any success gained was insignificant when compared against its own losses, which amounted to around 250 aircraft. Many of the pilots of these shot down or damaged fighters were killed, wounded or fell into Allied hands, and while the Allies could make good their losses in a matter of hours, the Luftwaffe could not, and it was a setback from which it would never recover. 626 Squadron prepared sixteen Lancasters for its first outing of the year, as part of a five hundred strong force drawn from 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups with Nuremberg as their target. After so many disappointing raids in the past, and with bitter memories of heavy casualties, this city finally succumbed to an accurate and concentrated raid, the like of which it had not experienced before. Over six thousand houses and apartment blocks were destroyed, many by fire in the central districts, and the more industrial southern half of the city also suffered extensive damage. Four hundred factory buildings were destroyed, and a total of eighteen hundred people lost their lives in what was a copybook attack. Remarkably, only four Lancasters were shot down, and two more crashed in France, and there were no casualties among the 626 Squadron element.

A controversial operation took place in the early hours of the 5th in response to requests from Free French Forces, which were besieging the town of Royan, where a German garrison was preventing the Allies from using the port of Bordeaux. The garrison commander invited the civilian population to vacate the town for their own safety, but many declined, and they were still in residence when over three hundred Lancasters and Mosquitos of 1, 5 and 8 Groups pounded the area to destruction in a two wave attack. In the event, the German garrison remained in place until mid April, and the deaths of over five hundred French civilians were in vain. Railway targets at Hanau and Neuss occupied a large part of the Command on the 6/7th, 1 Group providing aircraft for both. 626 Squadron crews were briefed for the latter, where some bombs fell among railway installations, but the bulk found its way into the town, and destroyed seventeen hundred houses, along with many industrial and public buildings. Also that night, three crews joined a mining effort to the Baltic, and all returned safely. Munich received its last major raid of the war on the 7/8th at the hands of over six hundred aircraft from 1, 3, 5, 6 and 8 Groups. It was a successful operation, although one of mixed fortunes for 626 Squadron. JB661 was shot down in the target area, killing the crew of F/O Stroh, but more fortunate were five of the crew of LL961, who survived the demise of their Lancaster through a mid-air collision with a 150 Squadron Lancaster, and arrived safely on the ground in Allied held territory. Sadly, the pilot, F/O Smith, and one other were still on board when the aircraft crashed in France, and both men died.

There were no further operations for the squadron for a week, until thirteen crews were briefed for a two phase attack on the oil refinery at Leuna near Merseburg on the 14/15th,

and a further three for a mining effort in northern waters. The main raid was highly successful for the loss of ten Lancasters from the 550 strong force, and for the second operation running, the squadron had to post missing one of its crews. LL959 exploded near the target, throwing out the pilot, F/L Nelson, who alone of his crew survived to be taken prisoner. On the 16/17th, thirteen 626 Squadron crews joined 315 others from 1, 6 and 8 Groups to attack the Braunkohle-Benzin synthetic oil plant at Zeitz in eastern Germany, and it was another successful blow against this vital industry. A long stand-down kept the squadron at home until the 28/29th, when six crews joined almost six hundred others of 1, 4, 6 and 8 Groups setting off for the Stuttgart area, to bomb railway installations to the north of the city, and an aero engine plant in the north-western suburb of Zuffenhausen. Cloud at both targets necessitated the use of skymarking, and both attacks were scattered.

Ludwigshafen opened the February account on the 1/2nd, and the catalogue of damage included nine hundred houses, railway yards and a road bridge over the Rhein. Wiesbaden was subjected to its first and only major raid of the war on the following night, and 550 buildings, mostly houses, were destroyed, and a thousand people lost their lives. 626 Squadron's PD286 was the victim of a mid-air collision with a 460 Squadron Lancaster over France on the way home, but F/L Grindrod and all but one of his crew survived the experience intact to return to the squadron. Sadly, only one man escaped with his life from the other aircraft, the pilot, G/C Parsons, who had recently relinquished command of that squadron to assume the role of station commander at Binbrook, and he too was returned home. Severe damage was inflicted on the Prosper Benzol plant at Bottrop on the 3/4th, concluding a hectic start to the month. As the British XXX Corps prepared to cross the German frontier in the Reichswald area, the small towns of Goch and Cleves were heavily bombed on the 7/8th. Most of the inhabitants had already evacuated the area, and certainly, few were present at the latter to witness the almost complete destruction of its built-up area by a force of under three hundred aircraft, which included fifteen representatives from 626 Squadron.

The Churchill inspired series of raids on Germany's eastern cities under Operation Thunderclap got under way at Dresden on the 13/14th, in what became the most controversial attack by Bomber Command of the entire war. Conducted in two phases, it was led by 5 Group, which employed its low level visual marking technique. 244 of the Group's Lancasters delivered eight hundred tons of bombs in a moderately effective opening salvo, but three hours later, 529 Lancasters of 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups arrived on the scene guided by the fires already burning. Standard Path Finder marking was employed in clear conditions, and a further eighteen hundred tons of bombs rained down onto the beautiful and historic city, creating a firestorm of greater intensity even than that which afflicted Hamburg, and estimates of the death toll, while being fixed at around fifty thousand, are varied, and many believe the true figure to be nearer 135,000. What angered the people of Dresden perhaps more than anything about the operation, was the strafing of its streets and open spaces by American fighters during a USAAF bombing raid next morning, something for which Bomber Command is unaccountably held responsible by some. Just six Lancasters were shot down on this night, and all fifteen 626

Squadron crews returned safely home. Thunderclap moved on to Chemnitz on the following night, but this was not a successful operation, and its time would come in March.

The 18/19th was devoted to minor operations, which included a small mining effort in the German Bight. It was not a good night for 626 Squadron, which posted missing two of the five crews it despatched. NF907 and PA216 both disappeared without trace into the sea, and neither produced a survivor from among the crews of F/O Holloway and F/O Lucas respectively. The next two operations involving the squadron also resulted in casualties, in what was a bad spell. Fourteen crews took off for Dortmund on the 20/21st for a standard area bombing attack which caused widespread damage in the city's southern half. LM726 failed to return to Wickenby, and it was later learned that F/O Patterson and all but one of his crew had perished in the crash in Germany. On the following night, a similarly successful raid was carried out on Duisburg, but LM105 was brought down in the target area, and there were no survivors from the crew of F/O Rodger. The squadron took part in just one more operation during the month, and this was the only area bombing raid of the war on Pforzheim. In twenty two minutes of precision bombing, eighteen hundred tons of bombs devastated the town by fire, and more than seventeen thousand people lost their lives, the third highest death toll of the war in a German urban target.

The volume of operations increased again in March, although it would be much kinder to the squadron in terms of losses. The month began with a daylight raid on Mannheim on the 1st, which turned out to be the last major raid on this much bombed target. Over eight hundred aircraft raided Cologne on the 2nd, and four days later it fell to American forces. Having escaped serious damage in mid February, Chemnitz succumbed to a heavy attack on the 5/6th, which left much of the central and southern districts in flames, and similar destruction was visited upon the virgin target of Dessau on the 7/8th. Kassel was bombed for the last time to good effect on the 8/9th, and a record force of over a thousand aircraft pounded Essen on the 11th, also for the final time. Another record was set on the following day, when 1,108 aircraft set out for Dortmund to deliver an unprecedented 4,800 tons of bombs, the most ever dropped on an urban target in one raid, after which it ceased to be a functioning city. The coal mining community of Dahlbusch in Gelsenkirchen was bombed on the 13/14th, the Deurag refinery at Misburg two nights later, and the war's final heavy raid on Nuremberg took place on the 16/17th. This predominately 1 Group operation caused further severe damage, but it cost the Group twenty four Lancasters, mostly to nightfighters, and the casualties included 626 Squadron's only failure to return of the month. PD393 crashed in southern Germany, and there were three survivors from the crew, including the pilot, F/L Cox. Hanau was devastated on the 18/19th by a force of under three hundred 1 and 8 Group Lancasters, and two thousand of its inhabitants were killed, and other operations during the remainder of the month took elements of the squadron to Bremen on the 23rd, where railway bridges were the targets, Hanover on the 25th, Paderborn on the 27th and Hamburg on the 31st. During the course of March, the squadron undertook nineteen

operations, including mining, and despatched 239 sorties, its second highest effort of the war.

April was the final month of the bombing war for the heavy squadrons, and it was one which began inauspiciously for 626 Squadron. Its first operation was to Nordhausen on the 3rd, which was believed to be a military barracks. In fact, it housed many forced workers and concentration camp inmates who worked in the secret weapon store in underground tunnels, and although those below ground at the time of the attack were unhurt, the occupants of the barrack blocks sustained heavy casualties. One of the two missing Lancasters was 626 Squadron's PA190, which crashed in the sea off the Dutch coast with no survivors from the crew of F/O Driver. On the night of the 4/5th, a predominately 1 Group force carried out an attack on the oil refinery at Lützkendorf, and lost six of their number. Two of these were from 626 Squadron, PB411, which crashed in Germany, and PD295, which came down in the sea near the Dutch Frisians, and neither aircraft produced a survivor from the crews of F/O Reid and F/L Eames respectively. On a happier note, these men were the last to lay down their lives as a result of 626 Squadron operations, despite further forays during the month. Important parts of Kiel were bombed in a raid which involved nine of the squadron's crews on the 9/10th. Much destruction occurred in the Deutsche Werke U-Boat yards, the pocket battleship Admiral Scheer was hit and ultimately capsized, and the Admiral Hipper and the Emden suffered damage, while other shipyards and residential areas also failed to escape attention. The railway yards at Plauen, and half of the town's built-up area were destroyed twenty four hours later, and the first incursion into the Berlin defence zone since the previous winter's campaign saw five hundred aircraft attack Potsdam on the 14/15th, and this was the final major raid of the war on a city type target. Almost a thousand aircraft bombed the naval base and island of Heligoland by daylight on the 18th, and the outskirts of Bremen were softened up for the approaching British XXX Corps troops on the 22nd, the city falling to them five days later.

626 Squadron operated for the final time in anger on the morning of the 25th, and fittingly, the target was the SS barracks at Hitler's Eaglesnest retreat at Berchtesgaden in the Bavarian mountains. Fourteen Lancasters took off to join almost 350 others from 1, 5 and 8 Groups, and when they all returned, although the crews were not yet aware, it was over. This was the occasion of PA990's 100th operation, and it was flown on this day by F/O Warner and his crew. During the course of the month, W/C Molesworth was posted away from the squadron, and W/C Dixon saw it through to the end of hostilities. From the 29th, the squadron participated in the humanitarian Operation Manna flights to drop food to the starving Dutch people still under German occupation. Throughout its relatively brief operational career, 626 Squadron produced a record of service of which its members can be proud, but its duty done, it had little future, and on the 14th of October 1945, 626 Squadron was disbanded.

I am indebted to Don Wells and Geoff Monk, respectively President and Vice President of the Wickenby Register, for their willingness to help with information on 626 Squadron. Don sent me a mass of data drawn from the squadron's records, and put me in touch with Willy Whitehouse, the squadron's Gunnery Leader, with whom I had an enjoyable telephone conversation, and discovered that, like me, he is a life-long Aston Villa supporter.

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

STATIONS

WICKENBY

07.11.43. to 14.10.45.

COMMANDING OFFICERS

WING COMMANDER P HAYNES

07.11.43. to 02.44.

WING COMMANDER Q W A ROSS

02.44. to 25.03.44.

WING COMMANDER G F RODNEY DFC AFC

25.03.44. to 09.44.

WING COMMANDER J H N MOLESWORTH DSO DFC

09.44. to 04.45.

WING COMMANDER D F DIXON

04.45. to 26.10.45.

AIRCRAFT

LANCASTER I/III

07.11.43. to 26.10.45.

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

SECTION 2



OPERATIONAL RECORD

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

OPERATIONAL RECORD

OPERATIONS	SORTIES	AIRCRAFT LOSSES	% LOSSES
205	2628	59	2.3

CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS

BOMBING	MINING
187	18

TABLE OF STATISTICS

Out of 59 Lancaster squadrons.

27th highest number of Lancaster overall operations in Bomber Command.
29th highest number of Lancaster sorties in Bomber Command.
26th equal (with 550 and 630Sqns) highest number of Lancaster operational losses in Bomber Command.

Out of 19 Squadrons in 1 Group.

11th highest number of overall operations in 1 Group.
11th highest number of sorties in 1 Group.
10th equal (with 550Sqn) highest aircraft operational losses in 1 Group.

Out of 14 Lancaster squadrons in 1 Group.

7th highest number of overall Lancaster operations in 1 Group.
10th highest number of Lancaster sorties in 1 Group.
9th equal (with 550Sqn) highest number of Lancaster operational losses in 1 Group.

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

SECTION 3



AIRCRAFT LISTING

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

626 SQUADRON.

LANCASTER.

From November 1943.

W4967UM-G² From 460Sqn. To 101Sqn.
W4990UM-V² From 12Sqn. To 1LFS.
DV171UM-F² From 12Sqn. To 463Sqn.
DV177UM-K² From 12Sqn. Shot down by intruder near Boxted on return from Karlsruhe 25.4.44.
DV190UM-B² From 12Sqn. FTR Berlin 1/2.1.44.
DV244UM-L² From 12Sqn. FTR Karlsruhe 24/25.4.44.
DV281UM-D² FTR Mailly-Le-Camp 3/4.5.44.
DV295UM-M² From 100Sqn. Crashed on approach to Marham on return from Berlin 27.11.43.
DV388UM-S² FTR Berlin 26/27.11.43.
DV390 Crashed while landing at Coltishall during training 29.11.43.
ED424UM-E² From 12Sqn. FTR Karlsruhe 24/25.4.44.
ED623UM-M² From 207Sqn. To 101Sqn.
EE133UM-C² From 12Sqn. To 1LFS.
EE148UM-S² From 617Sqn. FTR Mailly-Le-Camp 3/4.5.44.
HK539UM-A² FTR Berlin 24/25.3.44.
HK544UM-W² To 75Sqn.
JA864UM-D² From 12Sqn. FTR Berlin 2/3.12.43.
JA922UM-J² From 12Sqn. To 300Sqn.
JB141UM-N² From 100Sqn. FTR Brunswick 14/15.1.44.
JB409UM-P² From 12Sqn. FTR Hasselt 11/12.5.44.
JB559UM-H² From 12Sqn. To 300Sqn.
JB595UM-O²/B² FTR Berlin 15/16.2.44.
JB599UM-Q² FTR Frankfurt 22/23.3.44.
JB609 From 12Sqn. Returned to 12Sqn.
JB639 To 166Sqn.
JB646UM-R² To 300Sqn.
JB649 To 166Sqn.
JB661UM-C² From 300Sqn. FTR Munich 7/8.1.45.
LL753UM-Z² FTR Mailly-Le-Camp 3/4.5.44.
LL772UM-F² To 101Sqn.
LL797UM-B² FTR Schweinfurt 24/25.2.44.
LL798UM-N² To 300Sqn.
LL829UM-T² To 101Sqn.
LL835UM-C² To 38MU.
LL839UM-X² FTR Essen 26/27.3.44.
LL849UM-B² To 101Sqn.
LL895UM-Y² FTR Stuttgart 28/29.7.44.
LL918UM-C² To 615Sqn.

LL959UM-A² FTR Leuna 14/15.1.45.
LL961UM-S² FTR Munich 7/8.1.45.
LM102UM-Z² FTR Reims 22/23.6.44.
LM105UM-T² FTR Duisburg 21/22.2.45.
LM112UM-A² FTR Caen 7.7.44.
LM113UM-B² To 15Sqn.
LM136UM-D² FTR Courtrai 20/21.7.44.
LM137UM-G² From 12Sqn. FTR Frankfurt 12/13.9.44.
LM140UM-O² FTR Rüsselsheim 25/26.8.44.
LM160UM-F² From 300Sqn. To 15Sqn.
LM270UM-D² Crashed in Lincolnshire while training 9.9.44.
LM290UM-W² FTR Bochum 4/5.11.44.
LM362UM-A² From 12Sqn. Crashed on approach to Wickenby on return from Berlin 27.11.43.

LM380UM-S² From 460Sqn. FTR Berlin 27/28.1.44.
LM391UM-T² To 1664CU.
LM393UM-W² FTR Berlin 24/25.3.44.
LM472UM-U² To 101Sqn.
LM515 To 625Sqn.
LM530UM-J² From 460Sqn.
LM596UM-V² From 101Sqn. FTR Duisburg 14/15.10.44.
LM599UM-W² FTR Brunswick 12/13.8.44.
LM632UM-Q² To 300Sqn.
LM633UM-T² FTR Courtrai 20/21.7.44.
LM635UM-I²
LM689UM-N² To 166Sqn.
LM726UM-P² FTR Dortmund 20/21.2.45.
ME576UM-A² FTR Brunswick 14/15.1.44.
ME577UM-T² Ditched in the North Sea on return from Stettin 5/6.1.44.
ME584UM-Y²
ME587UM-X² FTR Berlin 30/31.1.44.
ME589UM-D² FTR Leipzig 19/20.2.44.
ME742UM-B² From 12Sqn. FTR Stettin 29/30.8.44.
ME750UM-G² To 1666CU 11.44.
ME774UM-L² FTR Vierzon 30.6/1.7.44.
ME830UM-K² To A&AEE 2.45.
ND324UM-D² From 12Sqn. FTR Stettin (12Sqn crew) 5/6.1.44.
ND441 To 12Sqn.
ND864UM-N² From 460Sqn.
ND952UM-E² FTR Vierzon 30.6/1.7.44.
ND964UM-K² FTR Duisburg 21/22.5.44.
ND983UM-Q² To 101Sqn.
ND984UM-H² To 300Sqn.
ND985UM-W² FTR Aachen 27/28.5.44.
NE118UM-U² FTR Dortmund 22/23.5.44.

NE163UM-T²	From 460Sqn. FTR Duisburg 14.10.44.
NF907UM-K²	FTR from mining sortie 18/19.2.45.
NF993	To 625Sqn.
NG244UM-E²	Crashed near Wickenby soon after take-off for Koblenz 22.12.44.
NG247UM-D²	From 300Sqn. To 39MU.
NG248UM-H²	To 138Sqn.
NG285UM-O²	
NG354	
PA190UM-G²	From 12Sqn. FTR Nordhausen 3.4.45.
PA216UM-C²	FTR from mining sortie 18/19.2.45.
PA989UM-U²	FTR Rüsselsheim 27/28.8.44.
PA990UM-R²	
PA993UM-H²	Crashed while on approach to Wickenby on return from Stuttgart 20.10.44.
PB260UM-Z²	To 463Sqn.
PB411UM-Y²	FTR Lützkendorf 4/5.4.45.
PB412UM-Z²	FTR from mining sortie 4/5.10.44.
PB561UM-X²	Crash-landed at Manston on return from Osterfeld 31.12.44.
PB687UM-Q²	FTR Osterfeld 31.12.44.
PD286UM-O²	FTR following collision with ME326 (460Sqn) over France on return from Wiesbaden 2/3.2.45.
PD287UM-U²	
PD295UM-B²	FTR Lützkendorf 4/5.4.45.
PD314UM-J²	Crashed while landing at Wragby on return from Dortmund 11/12.11.44.
PD315UM-D²	
PD390	From 12Sqn.
PD391UM-W²	
PD393UM-N²	FTR Nuremberg 16/17.3.45.
PD404UM-Q²	
PD432UM-E²	
RA535UM-X²	
RA543UM-A²	
RF156UM-P²	
RF159UM-C²	
RF241UM-S²	
RF255UM-G²	
RF256UM-T²	
SW271UM-L²	To 12Sqn.
SW279	To 300Sqn.

HEAVIEST SINGLE LOSS

Berlin	26/27.11.43. 1 Lancaster FTR 2 crashed on return.
Mailly-le-Camp	03/04.05.44. 3 Lancasters FTR.

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

SECTION 4



KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

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



SOURCES OF INFORMATION

www.bombecommuseumarchives.ca

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Air War over France. Robert Jackson. Ian Allan.
 Als Deutschlands Dämme Brachen. Helmut Euler. Motor Buch Verlag.
 At First Sight. Alan B Webb.
 Avenging in the shadows. Ron James. Abington Books.
 Avro Lancaster. The definitive record. Harry Holmes. Airlife.
 Avro Manchester. Robert Kirby. Midland Counties Publications.
 Battle-Axe Blenheims. Stuart R Scott. Budding Books.
 Battle Under the Moon. Jack Currie. Air Data.
 Beam Bombers. Michael Cumming. Sutton Publishing.
 Beware of the Dog at War. John Ward.
 Black Swan. Sid Finn. Newton.
 Bomber Command. Max Hastings. Pan.
 Bomber Command War Diaries. Martin Middlebrook/Chris Everett. Viking.
 Bomber Group at War. Chaz Bowyer. Book Club Associates.
 Bomber Harris. Dudley Saward. Cassel.
 Bomber Harris. Charles Messenger. Arms and Armour Press.
 Bomber Intelligence. W E Jones. Midland Counties Publications.
 Bomber Squadron at War. Andrew Brookes. Ian Allan.
 Bomber Squadrons at War. Geoff D Copeman. Sutton Publishing.
 Bombers over Berlin. Alan W Cooper. Patrick Stephens Ltd.
 Bombing Colours 1937-1973. Michael J F Bowyer. Patrick Stephens Ltd.
 Confounding the Reich. Martin W Bowman/Tom Cushing. Patrick Stephens Ltd.
 De Havilland Mosquito Crash Log. David J Smith. Midland Counties Publications.
 Despite the Elements. 115 Squadron History. Private.
 Diary of RAF Pocklington. M Usherwood. Compaidd Graphics.
 Each Tenacious. A G Edgerley. Square One Publications.
 Feuersturm über Hamburg. Hans Brunswig. Motor Buch Verlag.
 Forever Strong. Norman Franks. Random Century.
 From Hull, Hell and Halifax. Chris Blanchett. Midland Counties Publications.
 Gordon's Tour with Shiney 10. J Gordon Shirt. Compaidd Graphics.
 Great Raids. Vols 1 and 2. Air Commodore John Searby DSO DFC. Nutshell Press.
 Halifax at War. Brian J Rapier. Ian Allan.
 Hamish. The story of a Pathfinder. Group Captain T G Mahaddie. Ian Allan.
 Heavenly Days. Group Captain James Pelly-Fry DSO. Crecy Books.
 In Brave Company. W R Chorley. P A Chorley.
 Joe. The autobiography of a Trenchard Brat. Wing Commander J Northrop DSO DFC AFC. Square One Publications.
 Lancaster at War. Vols 1,2,3. Mike Garbett/Brian Goulding. Ian Allan.
 Lancaster. The Story of a Famous Bomber. Bruce Robertson. Harleyford Publications Ltd.
 Lancaster to Berlin. Walter Thompson DFC*. Goodall Publications.
 Low Attack. John de L Wooldridge. Crecy.
 Massacre over the Marne. Oliver Clutton-Brock. Patrick Stephens Ltd.
 Master Airman. Alan Bramson. Airlife.

Melbourne Ten. Brian J Rapier. Air Museum Publications (York) Ltd.
 Mission Completed. Sir Basil Embry. Four Square Books.
 Mosquito. C Martin Sharp & Michael J F Bowyer. Crecy.
 Night Fighter. C F Rawnsley/Robert Wright. Collins.
 Night Flyer. Squadron Leader Lewis Brandon DSO DFC. Goodall Publications.
 Night Intruder. Jeremy Howard-Williams. Purnell Book Services.
 No Moon Tonight. Don Charlwood. Goodall Publications.
 On The Wings Of The Morning. RAF Bottesford 1941-45. Vincent Holyoak.
 On Wings of War. A history of 166 Squadron. Jim Wright.
 Only Owls And Bloody Fools Fly At Night. Group Captain Tom Sawyer DFC. Goodall
 Publications.
 Pathfinder. AVM D C T Bennett. Goodall Publications.
 Pathfinder Force. Gordon Musgrove. MacDonald and Janes.
 Reap the Whirlwind. Dunmore and Carter. Crecy.
 Royal Air Force Aircraft Serial Numbers. All Volumes. Air-Britain.
 Royal Air Force Bomber Command Losses. Vols 1,2,3,4,5,6. W R Chorley. Midland Counties
 Publications.
 Silksheen. Geoff D Copeman. Midland Counties Publications.
 Snaith Days. K S Ford. Compaid Graphics.
 Start im Morgengrauen. Werner Girbig. Motor Buch Verlag.
 Stirling Wings. Jonathon Falconer. Alan Sutton Publications.
 Strike Hard. A bomber airfield at war. John B Hilling. Alan Sutton Publishing.
 Sweeping the Skies. David Gunby. Pentland Press.
 The Avro Lancaster. Francis K Mason. Aston Publications.
 The Berlin Raids. Martin Middlebrook. Viking Press.
 The Dambusters Raid. John Sweetman. Arms and Armour Press.
 The Halifax File. Air-Britain.
 The Hampden File. Harry Moyle. Air-Britain.
 The Handley Page Halifax. K A Merrick. Aston Press.
 The Hornets' Nest. History of 100 Squadron RAF 1917-1994. Arthur White. Square One
 Publications.
 The Lancaster File. J J Halley. Air-Britain.
 The Other Battle. Peter Hinchliffe. Airlife.
 The Pedulum and the Scythe. Ken Marshall. Air Research Publications.
 The Starkey Sacrifice. Michael Cumming. Sutton Publishing Ltd.
 The Stirling Bomber. Michael J F Bowyer. Faber.
 The Stirling File. Bryce Gomersall. Air-Britain.
 The Wellington Bomber. Chaz Bowyer. William Kimber.
 The Whitley File. R N Roberts. Air-Britain.
 The Squadrons of the Royal Air Force. James J Halley. Air-Britain.
 They Led the Way. Michael P Wadsworth. Highgate.
 To See The Dawn Breaking. W R Chorley.
 Valiant Wings. Norman Franks. Crecy.
 Wellington. The Geodetic Giant. Martin Bowman. Airlife.
 White Rose Base. Brian J Rapier. Aero Litho Company (Lincoln) Ltd.

Wings of Night.

2 Group RAF. A Complete History.

101 Squadron. Special Operations.

207 Squadron RAF Langar 1942-43. Barry Goodwin/Raymond Glynne-Owen. Quacks Books.

408 Squadron History.

Alexander Hamilton. Crecy.

Michael J F Bowyer. Crecy.

Richard Alexander.

The Hangar Bookshelf. Canada.

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.

Generous assistance in the compiling of lists of commanding officers has been provided by Anna McIlwaine at the RAF Museum at Hendon, until her retirement in 1998. Also of considerable help in this regard, and with details of awards, is Clive Richards at the Air Historical Branch of the Air Ministry, to whom I am greatly indebted.

My good friend, author Martyn Ford-Jones, had allowed me to draw extensively from his research material, particularly in respect of losses during 1945. I am also extremely grateful to my friend Steve Smith, an historian of 3 Group in general, and 218 and 623 Squadrons in particular, for conducting research on my behalf whenever he is at the PRO.

A special mention is due to Chris Salter of Midland Counties Publications, without whose generous assistance and encouragement at the outset, I would not have been able to compile a complete list of all operational aircraft on charge with Bomber Command squadrons during the war period, a list, incidentally, which comprises some 28,000 entries.

www.bombercommandmuseum.org.uk

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

SECTION 6



STOCK LIST

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

SQUADRON PROFILES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

**7 9 10 12 XV 35 40 44 49 50 51 57 61
75(NZ) 77 78 83 90 97 100 101 102 103
105 106 115 139 144 149 150 153 156 189
207 214 218 405 408 419 460 467 550 578
617 619 622 625 626 627 630**

AVAILABLE SOON

138

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

**MOSQUITO SQUADRONS
OF THE PATH FINDER FORCE
and
OPERATIONAL STATISTICS
OF
BOMBER COMMAND AND ITS
SQUADRONS**

www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to John Tanner and staff at Copy Cats Swindon for the excellence of their service.

I am grateful to the following for providing valuable assistance with research.

**Martyn Ford-Jones
Anna McIlwaine at RAF Museum Hendon
Clive Richards at Air Historical Branch**

Aviation Art by Keith Aspinall



Commissions for original work welcomed
Tel/Fax 01427 787438