

**ROYAL AIR FORCE
BOMBER COMMAND**

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SQUADRON PROFILES

NUMBER 87



419 (MOOSE) SQUADRON

Royal Canadian Air Force

Moosa aswayita

RESEARCHED, COMPILED AND WRITTEN

BY

CHRIS WARD

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GENERAL NOTES

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

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

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 However, where there is a blank space following the serial number of a type which has been withdrawn from service with Bomber Command, it signifies that I don't know its ultimate fate.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

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

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

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SECTION 1



BRIEF HISTORY

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419 (MOOSE) SQUADRON

MOTTO **MOOSA ASWAYITA** (Beware of the moose).

Code **VR**

419 Squadron Royal Canadian Air Force was born out of Article XV of the BCATP Agreement, which was signed on the 7th of January 1941, and called for the formation of twenty five Canadian squadrons by May 1942. All such units were to be numbered in the 400 series, and 419 Squadron was the third to be formed in Bomber Command after 405 and 408 Squadrons. The former found its first home in 4 Group, and the latter in 5 Group, while 419 Squadron became the first from Canada to enter 3 Group. The squadron came into existence on paper on the 15th of December 1941, and took up actual residence at Mildenhall on the 21st under the command of W/C John "Moose" Fulton, a Canadian with seven years RAF service, and a tour of operations behind him. Another Canadian, S/L Turner, was appointed as A Flight commander, and B Flight came under a British officer, S/L Reid, both men also having extensive operational experience.

The squadron's progress to operational status was hampered somewhat by an initial lack of aircraft, and it was not until the 2nd of January 1942 that the first Wellington Ic arrived to be taken on charge. X9748 was joined on the following day by Z1145, while X9757, Z1077 and Z1083 arrived on the 8th, and X3201, X9874 and Z1053 on the 9th. Just two days later, 419 Squadron launched its first sorties in anger, when W/C Fulton and P/O Cottier and their crews took off for Brest in X9748 and Z1145 respectively. This was one of eleven raids of varying sizes sent against the French port during the month, and these came at the tail end of a saga which had been running since March 1941, when the German cruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau had first appeared off Brest, before taking up residence. Their presence had ever since been a thorn in the flesh of Bomber Command, and had necessitated regular raids, most of which had been ineffective in the face of cloud, smoke-screens and a hostile defence, and had cost the Command dearly in valuable crews. It had also been a major distraction from the strategic operations to which the Command was better suited, and following the damning Butt report of August 1941, the Command badly needed some successes, at a time when the future of an independent bomber force was being debated in high places. On this night, the twenty three Wellingtons, including the two from 419 Squadron, and three Stirlings returned safely from what was an inconclusive operation, and prepared themselves for what lay ahead.

There were no operations over the next two nights, but two raids were mounted against Hamburg on consecutive nights from the 14/15th, the former without a 419 Squadron presence. The second raid, on the 15/16th, enabled the squadron to notch up its first sorties against a target in Germany, but sadly, it would also bring the first inscriptions in its Roll of Honour. The same two aircraft and crews headed for Germany's Second City, along with ninety four other aircraft, and those which reached it left three dozen fires burning for the loss of just one of their number. Z1145 was damaged by enemy action, and ran out of fuel as it approached the south Yorkshire coast, eventually coming down

off Spurn Head in a semi-controlled ditching. When rescuers arrived, only two of the crew were found alive, and P/O Cottier and three others of his crew became the first 419 Squadron airmen to be lost in action. For the remainder of the month and the first half of February, the squadron operated exclusively against French ports, Brest twice, Boulogne on the 21/22nd and 28/29th, and St Nazaire on the night of the 31st, all concluded without loss.

The situation at Brest was finally resolved by the Kriegsmarine shortly after a Bomber Command raid on the 11/12th. In atrocious weather conditions, the Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Prinz Eugen slipped anchor, and under the protection of a destroyer escort, headed into the English Channel in the very early hours of the 12th, to make an audacious dash for freedom. Such an eventuality had been anticipated by the War Cabinet, and a counter measure prepared under the codename Operation Fuller. So secret was it, however, that it appears that not all those charged with its implementation were in full possession of the necessary information, but having said that, the German breakout was so expertly planned and secretive, that it was already late morning before it was first spotted, and only 5 group was standing by at four hours readiness. The first aircraft got away around 13.30 hours, but found the German fleet difficult to locate in the squally conditions and low cloud. Despite the largest commitment of aircraft in daylight to date, amounting to 242 sorties, only a few actual attacks were carried out, and no hits were scored. The raiders passed through the Straits of Dover, making good their escape, and despite Scharnhorst and Gneisenau striking air-laid mines, which slowed their progress a little, all arrived safely in home port the following morning. The frantic efforts by Bomber Command to stop them had cost another fifteen gallant crews, on top of all those lost while attacking the ships at Brest, and two of those missing were from 419 Squadron. Z1091 was lost without trace with the crew of F/S Vezina, and Z1146 came down into the sea off the Dutch coast, with no survivors from the crew of P/O Laing. The whole episode was a massive embarrassment to the government and the nation, but on the credit side, this annoying itch had been scratched for the last time, and the Command could now concentrate on more rewarding targets.

On the 14th of February, a new Air Ministry directive was received, which ordered the C-in-C to concentrate his efforts against the morale of the enemy civil population, particularly its workers, and thus was born the area bombing policy which was to prove so controversial. It would not, in fact, be the incumbent head of Bomber Command, Sir Richard Pierse, who would implement this new policy, but another waiting in the wings. Pierse had done all that was possible with the resources to hand, and had done his best to husband his available resources while inflicting as much damage as possible on the enemy. The truth was, though, that small scale attacks on multiple specific targets had done little more than create a nuisance, and present a defiant face to an, as yet, all-conquering enemy, and such scant reward could not begin to justify the enormous losses, and the thinning in the ranks of the RAF's finest pre-war airmen. On the 22nd, ACM Sir Arthur Harris arrived to take up his appointment at the helm of Bomber Command, and provide the firm leadership and direction which would ultimately turn it into a war-winning weapon. Harris knew, that in order to be effective, it was necessary to

overwhelm the defences with a concentration in numbers, time and bombing accuracy, and also that a built-up area is destroyed, not by blast, but by fire. It was not long before he was putting his beliefs into action, and in a sign of things to come, he despatched the largest force to date to a single target, 235 aircraft, to attack the Renault factory at Billancourt in Paris on the 3/4th of march. The three wave operation was led by experienced crews, and extensive use was made of flares to illuminate the target. Bombing was from low level to aid accuracy and avoid casualties among French civilians, and the operation was an outstanding success for the loss of just one Wellington. 419 Squadron contributed eight aircraft to the operation, including some Mk III Wellingtons, and all returned safely. Essen was to feature heavily in Harris's future plans, and on the 9/10th and 10/11th, he sent forces numbering 187 and 126 respectively to this centre of war production and home of the giant Krupps armaments organisation, and over the two nights, destroyed three buildings, including a house, and damaged less than a hundred others, in return for a combined loss of seven aircraft. Typically for the period when raiding Ruhr targets, bombs were scattered over a wide area, and it was anyone's guess as to where they would fall, and it would be 1943 before a new electronic aid to target location would negate the industrial haze which concealed the region's towns and cities. Returning from the latter raid, Z1077 crashed on landing at Mildenhall, but Sgt Foy and crew emerged unscathed from their battered transport.

Following a reasonably effective attack on the port area of Kiel on the 12/13th, and the first genuine success for a Gee led raid on Cologne on the 13/14th, a period of minor operations took the Command through to the last week of the month, when two more failures were directed at Essen. With target location and identification still clearly a problem, Harris selected Lübeck as his next objective, where its Baltic coast situation would provide excellent pinpoints for the navigators. It was also an old city, with half timbered buildings and narrow streets through which fire would spread rapidly, and the predominately incendiary bomb loads carried by the 234 aircraft reflected Harris's purpose. Conducted along similar lines to the successful raid on the Renault factory at the start of the month, the operation was another outstanding success, the first for the area bombing policy, and when the smoke had cleared, approximately 30% of the city's built-up area was judged to have been destroyed. Twelve aircraft failed to return, among them the squadron's X3477, which was hit by enemy fire, mortally wounding P/O Hobson and one of his crew. The Wellington was crash-landed on waterlogged ground near Wilhelmshaven, and the four survivors taken into captivity.

The first major operation in April was by a new record force of 263 aircraft, whose crews, on the 5/6th, were briefed for Cologne. The level of success achieved was not commensurate with the massive effort expended, and less than a hundred houses were destroyed. It was a similar story at Essen on the following night, and a new record force of 272 aircraft was equally ineffective at Hamburg two nights later, after less than two hundred of them reached the target area. 419 Squadron's X3467 was one of only five aircraft to fail to return home, having been abandoned over enemy territory by all but one of the crew when fires developed in both engines, and F/O Crighton and four others landed safely to fall into enemy hands. One of these survivors, F/S Brooks, ultimately

escaped from his hum-drum POW existence at his third attempt a year after his capture, and remained with the Polish underground until the Russians arrived, before returning home in March 1945 to the award of the Military Cross. It was back to Essen on the 10/11th and 12/13th, again without any concentration, although the Krupps works sustained some damage on the latter occasion. Over two hundred aircraft set out for Dortmund on the 14/15th, and more than half of the crews claimed to have bombed it. Photographic evidence, however, showed a scattering of bombs over a forty mile stretch, and the city sustained only slight superficial damage. 419 Squadron's X3484 did not return to Mildenhall, and nothing more was ever heard of it or its crew, which was captained by F/S Norris. A smaller force returned to Dortmund twenty four hours later, but the result was the same, and it had been a very disappointing, and for Harris, frustrating month so far.

A little encouragement was derived from an attack on Hamburg on the 17/18th, when thirty three large fires were left burning, and this was followed by a small raid on Cologne on the 22/23rd, when bombs equivalent to a dozen or so aircraft loads caused some industrial damage. The final week of the month was characterized by a four raid series against the Baltic port of Rostock, where the nearby Heinkel aircraft factory was an added attraction. The first operation, on the 23/24th, was disappointing, and the 5 Group element assigned to the Heinkel factory failed to score any hits. It likewise remained unscathed on the 24/25th, but the town suffered extensive damage on this night, and again on the 25/26th, when W/C Guy Gibson led a 106 Squadron contingent to at last damage the Heinkel works. The final attack took place on the 26/27th, with the force split between the town and the factory, and both elements achieved great success, the tally of destruction over the four nights amounting to more than seventeen hundred buildings, or 60% of the main town area. 419 Squadron suffered no casualties at Rostock, but almost lost its commanding officer during an operation to Kiel on the 28/29th. On the way home over the North Sea, W/C Fulton's Wellington was attacked and severely damaged by a BF110, which wounded the rear gunner, and trapped him in his turret. The hydraulics system was punctured, causing the wheels and bomb doors to hang down, many of the instruments were smashed, and one of the blades on the port propeller was splintered, necessitating the shutting down of its engine in the face of massive vibration. A dramatic loss of height persuaded Fulton to restart the engine, and a shaky return was eventually made to Mildenhall, where the shattered Wellington was belly-landed without further distress to the crew. For his superb airmanship and coolness in a crisis, Fulton was awarded the DSO, and his observer's gallantry in releasing the trapped gunner from his turret and tending his injuries, when he himself was wounded, and then assisting his captain in bringing the crippled aircraft home, was recognised by the award of the DFM.

May would prove to be the squadron's most expensive month to date, and it began with what for the period was a remarkable success at Hamburg on the 3/4th, achieved by fifty four crews bombing on an estimated position through cloud. Over a hundred fires were started, half of them classed by the city authorities as large, and eleven blocks of flats were destroyed by the blast from just one 4,000lb "cookie". A three raid series on consecutive nights on Stuttgart began on the 4/5th, but in the face of haze, each was a

major disappointment, and no important damage occurred within the city. The final raid cost 419 Squadron the crew of F/S Roberts, who were all killed when X3717 crashed in Germany. A force of almost two hundred aircraft was despatched to the Baltic town of Warnemünde on the 8/9th, the location of another Heinkel aircraft factory. No particular success was achieved, but heavy losses were sustained by the attackers, and among the nineteen failures to return were two from 419 Squadron. X3840 was hit by flak, which killed one of the crew, and a ditching was ultimately made off the Danish coast, from where F/S Giddens and crew were rescued by the enemy and marched off into captivity. Less fortunate were F/S Shannon and crew, who all died in X3703. Minor operations occupied the next ten nights, during which, Z1562 was lost without trace while on a mining sortie in the hands of F/S Pikula and crew. An effort by a hundred and fifty crews at Mannheim on the 19/20th was a dismal failure, and there was little activity thereafter to the end of the month, while Harris prepared for his master stroke. It was during this period that a motley collection of aircraft from the training units began to arrive on bomber stations, giving rise to much speculation, but no answers.

The demand for bomber aircraft in other theatres, principally for the campaign against the U-Boat in the Atlantic, and to redress reversals in the Middle East, represented an ever present threat to the effectiveness of Harris's strength. He wanted four thousand heavy bombers with which to win the war, and not only would he not get anything like that number, those which were earmarked for Bomber Command were in danger of being diverted. The Command had never recovered from the slating it received at the hands of the Butt report, and Harris needed a major victory and a dose of symbolism to demonstrate the wisdom of sending all available new aircraft to him. Out of this was born the Thousand Plan, Operation Millennium, the launching of a thousand aircraft to a single target in one night, for which Hamburg had been earmarked, to erase it from the map. In order to achieve this magic figure, Harris would require the cooperation of other Commands, principally Coastal and Flying Training, and a commitment of 250 aircraft was offered by the former in a letter on the 21st, and 200 by the latter on the 22nd. On the 25th, Coastal Command underwent a change of heart at the insistence of the Admiralty, and Flying Training's contribution was reduced to fourteen aircraft and a handful of navigators to help out. Undaunted, and demonstrating the adamance for which he was famous, Harris, or more probably his deputy, AM Sir Robert Saundby, scraped together every airframe capable of controlled flight, or something resembling it, and come the night, the figure of one thousand would not only be reached, but comfortably surpassed.

The only question now was the weather, and as the days ticked by towards the end of May, it was not playing ball. There was a genuine risk that the giant armada might draw attention to itself, and the point was quickly being reached when the operation would either have to be mounted or postponed for the time being. In the meantime, a force of seventy seven aircraft was sent to the Gnome & Rhone aero engine factory at Gennevilliers in Paris on the 29/30th, and more damage was inflicted on nearby housing than on the target. The squadron's X3715 crashed in the target area, and there were no survivors from the crew of P/O Cavaghan. At "morning prayers" on the 30th, Harris's

chief meteorological adviser, Magnus Spence, gave a qualified nod in the direction of the Rheinland as the region most likely to enjoy a break in the clouds, and thus did the fickle finger of fate swing away from Hamburg, and point unerringly at Cologne as the recipient of the first one thousand bomber raid in history. That night, 1047 aircraft took off, some of the older and more ill-used examples from the training units somewhat reluctantly, and this figure included eighteen Wellingtons from 419 Squadron, three of which returned early. W/C Fulton, reluctant to deprive one of his pilots a Mk III Wellington, and typical of his leadership qualities, took to the air in an old Mk Ic hack used by the squadron for training, and completed the trip without Gee and at a sedate pace. The operation was an outstanding success, which left over three thousand buildings in ruins, and many times that number damaged. The losses amounted to a new record high of forty one aircraft, among them some of the less airworthy examples which had been unable to climb to a respectable height, but all from 419 Squadron returned to Mildenhall.

June was to be the squadron's busiest month since its formation, and, in fact, the sortie rate achieved would not be exceeded until the month which included D-Day, two years hence. The first night of the month brought the second outing for the Thousand Force, although the actual figure taking off for Essen was 956. In contrast to Cologne, this was a major disappointment, which sprayed bombs over a wide area of the Ruhr, and destroyed only eleven houses at the intended target. 419 Squadron again operated without loss, doing so also on the 2/3rd, when a conventional size of force returned to Essen, and once more missed the mark. Some compensation was gained at Bremen on the following night, in an attack described by the city authorities as heavy, and it was undoubtedly the most effective raid to date on this target. Essen continued to be elusive on the 5/6th, 8/9th and 16/17th, and it was from the first mentioned that the squadron's X3486 failed to return, lost without trace with the crew of F/S Dutton. From the last mentioned, two more 419 Squadron crews were posted missing, and they experienced mixed fortunes. X3359 suffered engine trouble and the attentions of flak, and came down in Belgium, killing the pilot, Sgt Leblanc. Two of his crew fell into enemy hands, but two others didn't, and they ultimately evaded capture. No such luck for F/S Harris and his crew, however, who all lost their lives when a nightfighter shot down X3723 into the sea off Holland. In-between these operations, on the 6/7th, Emden received the first of its four visits during the month, the others coming in a four night period on the 19/20th, 20/21st and 22/23rd, but little significant damage was caused.

The Thousand Force was used for the final time on the 25/26th against Bremen, and this time higher authority insisted that Coastal Command take part, although its contribution is classed as a separate raid. The actual numbers going to Bremen on this night exceeded the Cologne force by twenty, and those which reached and bombed the target produced damage which was nowhere near the scale of that achieved at Cologne, but far surpassed the debacle of Essen. A new record loss of forty eight aircraft did not include any from 419 Squadron, and this bespoke a creditable contribution to the Millennium series of fifty four sorties without loss. The month, during which the squadron despatched a total of 172 sorties, ended with a follow-up series against Bremen which ran into July, and each gained a degree of success. The main focus of attention during July would be Duisburg

from mid month, but the squadron registered its first casualties as the result of a tragic accident on the 6th. F/S Pearson and crew took X3556 for a training flight that morning, with two ground crew and three USAAF privates on board for air experience. The Wellington crashed onto farmland in Huntingdonshire and overturned, the pilot and seven others dying at the scene, while one of the crew and an American sustained injuries. That night, Z1597 went mining in the sea lanes off Lorient, and on return, smashed into high ground in Wiltshire, killing F/S Murphy and his crew. The series of operations against Duisburg began on the 13/14th, and it was typical of attempts to nail a Ruhr target. Only eleven houses were destroyed by those reaching the target of the almost two hundred strong force which had set out, and the cloud and electrical storms probably persuaded many to bomb alternative targets. The squadron's X3416 failed to return home, and no trace of it or the crew of W/O Sargant was ever found. Duisburg was targeted again on the 21/22nd, 23/24th and 25/26th, and some destruction of housing was achieved, but not in proportion to the effort expended in launching a combined total of eight hundred sorties.

The end of the month brought two operations in three nights against Hamburg, the first of which, on the 26/27th, was a remarkable success for the period, causing widespread damage in residential and commercial districts, and over eight hundred houses were destroyed. More than five hundred of the eight hundred fires created were classed as large, and a further 250 aircraft took-off two nights later to capitalize on the success. This became a 3 Group operation supported by ninety aircraft from the Operational Training Units, after bad weather over the 1, 4 and 5 Group stations prevented their participation. The weather conditions worsened on the outward flight, and the OTU element was recalled, leaving 3 Group to go on alone. It was a night of only moderate success for the attackers, but a good one for the defenders, who brought down twenty five 3 Group aircraft, and five of the OTU aircraft which had not received the recall. It became, however, a tragic night for 419 Squadron when W/C Fulton failed to return. A message was received from X3488 suggesting that it had been attacked by a nightfighter, wounding some of the crew, and it is presumed to have crashed into the North Sea. It was a bitter blow to the squadron, and shortly afterwards, as a token of the high esteem in which W/C Fulton was held, his nickname Moose was added to the squadron title, and its permanent place confirmed when His Majesty the King authorized the squadron's official crest in June 1944.

Until the appointment of a new commanding officer, flight commander S/L Wolfe stepped into the breach, and he presided over his first operation in temporary command on the following night, when Saarbrücken was the destination for a force of almost three hundred aircraft. Central and north-western districts suffered extensive damage at a cost to the Command of nine aircraft, one of which was the squadron's X3712. This Wellington fell victim to a nightfighter over Belgium, and W/O Moore and all but one of his crew were killed, while the lone survivor evaded capture. The month ended with an attack on Düsseldorf on the night of the 31st, for which 630 aircraft took off, their numbers swelled by another significant contribution from the training units. Less than five hundred actually bombed the target, but these inflicted quite a substantial amount of

damage on the city and on Neuss over the Rhein, but again at a high cost of twenty nine bombers, although none on this occasion from 419 Squadron. W/C Walsh was appointed as the new commanding officer on the 5th of August, he having earned the DFC while serving with 9 Squadron in 1940, but sadly, his period of tenure was destined to be brief. A small scale intruder type operation was mounted to the Ruhr on the 5/6th, involving seventeen aircraft bound for Essen and eight for Bochum to bomb through gaps in the cloud. Only four crews carried out their assigned tasks, and five aircraft failed to return home. Briefed for Essen, P/O Krefting and crew were all killed when X3360 crashed in Germany.

A disappointing attack on Duisburg on the 6/7th preceded three with much more encouraging results. Two hundred houses were destroyed and thousands damaged in Osnabrück on the 9/10th, and the central districts of Mainz were hard hit on the 11/12th and 12/13th. Later that day, 419 Squadron departed Mildenhall and 3 Group, and took up temporary residence at Leeming, before moving into its new home at Topcliffe on the 18th as 4 Group's latest recruit. A new era had also begun for the Command on the 15th, with the formation of the Path Finder Force under the then G/C Don Bennett. Harris had been strongly opposed to the idea of an elite target finding and marking force, and his Group commanders, with the exception of AVM Roddy Carr at 4 Group, were unanimously behind him. It would lead to an uneasy co-existence between the new force and 3 Group, under whose control it initially fell, and upon whose stations it lodged. Harris, to his eternal credit and in typical fashion once overruled by higher authority, gave his unstinting support to Bennett, and determined to get the Path Finders onto the order of battle at the first opportunity. This arose on the night of the 18/19th, when the easily located Baltic port of Flensburg was selected as the target. In an inauspicious beginning to its operational career, the fledgling force failed to locate Flensburg, and no bombs fell within miles of it. The second PFF led raid, to Frankfurt on the 24/25th, fared little better, and it was not until Kassel on the 27/28th that the Path Finders achieved their first success, when providing good illumination for the main force to exploit, and 144 buildings were destroyed. Two main targets were assigned for the following night, Nuremberg for a predominately four engined effort, and Saarbrücken for seventy one Wellingtons with Halifaxes and Hampdens in support. Neither operation caused more than modest damage, and a combined loss of thirty aircraft was a high price to pay for little worthwhile return. 419 Squadron's DF665 was shot down by a nightfighter, crashing close to the German/French border, and Sgt Zaparynuk was killed with three of his crew, while the single survivor managed to retain his freedom.

The Path Finders put up a "black" on the 1/2nd of september, when illuminating and marking Saarlouis in error for its industrial neighbour, Saarbrücken, but thereafter, the Command embarked on a succession of remarkably effective raids to mid month, which was punctuated by just one failure. It began at Karlsruhe on the 2/3rd, when under two hundred aircraft delivered a telling blow, which left extensive destruction in residential and some industrial districts. For the second time in five weeks, 419 Squadron was forced to post missing its commanding officer, and it was later learned that W/C Walsh, on only his second operation with the squadron, had been killed with his entire crew when a

nightfighter accounted for X3711 over Belgium. S/L Pattison took temporary command of the squadron until the appointment of a new commanding officer a few days hence. In the meantime, operations continued with a major success at Bremen on the 4/5th, when over 450 buildings, mostly of a residential nature, were destroyed. Another 419 Squadron aircraft failed to return, however, and this time it was BJ602, which was lost without trace with the crew of Sgt Kertson. On the 6/7th, a modestly effective raid on Duisburg which destroyed 114 buildings and seriously damaged over three hundred more could be counted as a success in view of its elusive record in the past, and only Frankfurt in the current run proved to be a failure, when attacked ineffectively on the 8/9th. Earlier in the day, W/C Fleming had arrived as the new commanding officer, having been awarded his DFC for service with 58 Squadron in 1940.

It was back to winning ways at Düsseldorf on the 10/11th, when over nine hundred houses were destroyed, and fifty two industrial concerns in the city and in Neuss lost all production for various periods. Returning from this operation in the early hours of the 11th, 405 Squadron Halifax, BB212, landed at Topcliffe, and crashed into 419 Squadron's parked BJ887, writing it off. On the 13/14th, it was the turn of Bremen to suffer its worst raid of the war to date, when over eight hundred houses were destroyed, and further damage was inflicted on war industry factories. Among the twenty one aircraft failing to make it home on this night was X3308 of 419 Squadron, which fell into the North Sea just three miles short of the Suffolk coast, having been hit by flak in the target area, and consequently run out of fuel. By the time rescuers arrived two hours later, one of the crew had drowned, but F/S Cameron and the remaining four were picked up safely. Wilhelmshaven reported its heaviest raid of the war to date on the 14/15th as the run of successes continued, and even Essen suffered what was probably the most effective raid yet launched against it on the 16/17th. On the previous day, W/O Clark and crew had taken X3796 for an air-test, along with four members of ground crew, and all eight on board were tragically killed when the Wellington crashed in Lincolnshire. If any period could be said to represent the turning point in Bomber Command's long and tortuous road to effectiveness, then September 1942 was it. It did not mean an overnight end to failures, and these would continue to outnumber successes for some time to come, but it did represent the coming together of the measures put in hand by Harris in terms of tactics, aids to navigation, and the accession to effectiveness of the Path Finder Force, and all of this augured well for the future.

On the 30th, the squadron changed address yet again with a move to Croft, but the disruption did not prevent nine crews taking off for Krefeld on the night of the 2/3rd of October. The operation did not reflect the successes of the previous month, and 419 Squadron registered the loss of its first crew from its new home. BK269 failed to survive an encounter with a nightfighter over Holland, and just one man survived as a POW from the crew of F/S Stowe. A similarly poor performance attended a raid on Aachen three nights later during a continuing spell of bad weather, and on this occasion there were two 419 Squadron Wellingtons among the ten missing aircraft. Z1623 was lost without trace with the crew of Sgt Crewe, and there were likewise no survivors from F/S Powell's crew after BJ729 crashed in Holland. On the 10th, BK335 crashed near the airfield and caught

fire during a training flight, and two men died at the scene, while the pilot, Sgt Scobie, succumbed to his injuries on the following day. What might have been a highly destructive raid on Kiel on the 13/14th was spoiled by the presence of a decoy site, which lured away half the bomb loads, and one at Cologne was even more effective on the 15/16th. The former operation cost the squadron Sgt Wakeman and crew, who were all killed when DF664 crashed into the sea off the German coast, and BK270 failed to return from the latter having crashed in Germany, and Sgt Jolley and his crew also lost their lives. As events turned out, this was the last 419 Squadron Wellington to fail to return from operations. Thereafter, the bad weather curtailed the squadron's operational activity over the next three weeks to just three daylight moling operations, to Krefeld on the 23rd, Emden on the 31st, and Wilhelmshaven on the 6th of November. On the following day, the squadron was stood down from operations in preparation for its conversion onto Halifaxes, and twelve crews were posted to 1659 Heavy Conversion Unit for training. On the 9th, the squadron undertook its final move of the war, when taking up residence at Middleton-St-George, the station with which it would become most famously associated. Examples of the less than popular Mk II Halifax began to arrive on squadron charge during the course of November, while the rest of the Command continued with its campaign against the major cities of Italy in support of Operation Torch, the Allied landings in North Africa, which would ultimately lead to Montgomery's victory over Rommel at El Alamein. The almost inevitable training accident during the conversion stage occurred on the 30th, when DT540 crash-landed at Middleton-St-George while in the hands of F/S Frederick and crew, but no injuries were reported.

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The squadron was to be away from the operational scene for almost two months, and was finally declared ready to return on New Year's Day, which was also the day on which 6 Group came into existence. Most of the existing RCAF squadrons were transferred to 6 Group on this day, 419 Squadron among them, and they would soon be subject to the dictates of a new Air Ministry directive, to be issued on the 14th, which authorized the area bombing of those French ports which provided bases and support facilities for U-Boats. It was an echo of 419 Squadron's original introduction to operations twelve months earlier, when Brest had been the main focus of attention, but now it was Lorient which headed a list of four targets, all of which would be visited over the coming three months. The New Year began for the Command with a series of seven small scale operations against Essen and one against Duisburg during the first two weeks of January, involving Mosquitos of 109 Squadron and Lancasters of 1 and 5 Groups. It was all part of the Oboe trials programme, the development work for which had been the preserve of 109 Squadron under W/C Hal Bufton during the second half of 1942, and this squadron's magnificent efforts were shortly to bear fruit in spectacular fashion at the Ruhr.

As far as 6 Group was concerned, however, the year began with a succession of scrubbed operations because of bad weather, although six mining sorties by 427 Squadron on the 3/4th represented the new Group's debut. Mining was a useful form of employment, and ideal for introducing new crews to operations, or easing them into battle in a new aircraft

type. This was how 419 Squadron introduced its Halifaxes to operations on the 9/10th, the night of 6 Group's second excursion into battle. This first foray for the Moose brigade in Halifaxes resulted in the first of many failures to return of the type over the next two years. Sent to lay mines off the Frisians, W7857 went into the sea, and took with it to their deaths the crew of Sgt Barker, and these were also the first casualties sustained by 6 Group. F/O Porter and crew almost joined them in the abysmal weather conditions, but somehow avoided the fire from three flak ships at point blank range, and narrowly missed hitting the surface of the sea. Sadly for the pilot, he would not survive to complete his tour, and his crew would spend the last two years of the war as guests of the Reich. 6 Group undertook its first bombing operation on the night of the 14/15th, when sending fourteen Halifaxes and Wellingtons of 408 and 426 Squadrons to Lorient, the first of five attacks on the port during the month. 419 Squadron sat this one out, and watched an element from fellow Middleton-St-George residents, 420 Squadron, take off for a daylight moling operation on the 15th.

419 Squadron participated in just three bombing operations during January, all against Lorient, and the only aircraft casualty arising from them involved DT623, which returned on the 29/30th to a wheels-up landing without damage to the crew. The pilot on this occasion was F/L Alec Cranswick, a slightly built Englishman, whose exploits until his untimely death in action in July 1944, would typify the very best in those who went to war in bombers. Having served his first tour with 214 Squadron in 1940, he volunteered for a posting to the Middle East theatre to avoid being rested, where he completed seventeen operations with 148 Squadron, before moving on to West Africa as a ferry pilot. After recovering from a serious bout of malaria, he returned to operational duties with 148 Squadron out of Kabrit, and was eventually sent back home in early 1942 with a total of sixty one operations to his credit. Much of the year was lost through recurring ill-health, but in December, he was declared fully fit for flying duties, and was posted to 1659 HCU for Halifax conversion. By the end of the year, he and his blue Alsatian, Kluva, had joined 419 Squadron for what would be a brief stay, and on the 1st of February, after adding five more operations to his personal tally, he was posted as a trainee Path Finder to 35 Squadron. He remained at 35 Squadron until rested in October, but lived for the day when he could return, and his frequent requests bore fruit in April 1944, when he was posted back to 35 Squadron. The Command lost one of its finest sons when S/L Cranswick's Lancaster was shot down over Villeneuve-St-George on the 4/5th of July, officially his 104th sortie, although his biographer credits him with substantially more.

February began for the Group with an attack on Hamburg on the 3/4th in company with elements from the other groups, but the results did not reflect the size of the force employed, and 419 Squadron posted missing the crew of F/S Mackenzie, who was killed with three others when DT630 was shot down by a nightfighter over Holland. The maritime flavour of operations continued with further attacks on Lorient on the 4/5th and 7/8th, Wilhelmshaven on the 11/12th, a particularly accurate and destructive raid, and the first blind-bombing success for H2s, and Lorient again on the 13/14th. Cologne was the main target for the 14/15th, but results were not commensurate with the effort expended,

and Lorient was raided for the last time on the 16/17th, after which it was little more than a deserted ruin. On the 18/19th, the 419 Squadron crew of F/S Levasseur went missing without trace while mining off the Frisians in DT639, and a similar operation in the same region on the 27/28th, ended for Sgt Gray and crew with a ditching, after DT615 was damaged by flak. Twenty two hours later, the cold and tired crew was safely picked up and returned to duty. During the same period, Wilhelmshaven was attacked ineffectively three more times, Nuremberg escaped serious damage on the 25/26th, and a moderately successful raid fell on Cologne on the 26/27th. The month ended with the 60% destruction of St Nazaire on the night of the 28th, and as the clock ticked over into March, Harris had already planned, and was about to embark on, the first major campaign of the war for which the Command was adequately equipped and prepared.

Before this got under way, however, two other operations lay before the crews, the first of which would take three hundred of them to Berlin on the 1/2nd. The attack that followed was massively scattered, largely because the sprawl of Berlin was so extensive, that it was impossible for the Path Finder navigators to distinguish specific pin points on their H2s screens, and this would be a recurring problem at the Capital in the twelve months ahead. Never-the-less, the damage inflicted was greater than on any previous raid to this city, and the catalogue of destruction included over eight hundred houses, twenty factories, and railway installations. On the debit side, over 5% of the attacking force failed to return, and 419 Squadron posted missing the crew of P/O Herriott, who all died when DT641 disappeared into the North Sea. The marking at Hamburg on the 3/4th was mostly again miles from the planned aiming point, and the small town of Wedel received most of the bomb loads intended for its more illustrious neighbour. The Hamburg civil defence had to deal with a hundred fires before going to the assistance of Wedel, where the harbour area was hardest hit. 419 Squadron was not represented among the modest loss of ten aircraft, and P/O Dickson's gunners claimed a BF110 and a JU88 destroyed, the pilot and rear gunner, P/O Wagner, each being awarded the DFC.

The Ruhr campaign began on the night of the 5/6th, with Essen, home of the giant Krupps armaments works, fittingly selected as the target. 419 Squadron contributed ten Halifaxes to this momentous occasion, led by S/L Clarke. The other crew captains were F/L Sills in DT617, F/O Porter in DT616, F/Ss Bell and Goddard in BB283 and DT689 respectively, and Sgts Bakewell, Heintz, Jackson, McSorley and Maddock in DT646, DT634, DT672, DT798 and W7817. Although 442 aircraft took off, an unusually high number of early returns and the bombing of alternative targets reduced the numbers bombing at Essen to 362, but following copybook marking of the city centre by the Oboe Mosquito element, these produced the most devastating raid of the war to date on this formerly elusive target, and over three thousand houses were destroyed, while fifty three buildings within Krupps suffered damage. A moderate fourteen aircraft failed to return home, and one of them belonged to 419 Squadron. DT646 was damaged by flak over the target, and was finally despatched by a nightfighter over Holland, but Sgt Bakewell and all but one of his crew survived the encounter, and one of them ultimately evaded capture. Before round two of the Ruhr offensive, Harris switched his force to southern Germany, raiding Nuremberg, Munich and Stuttgart on the 8/9th, 9/10th and 11/12th. The

first two mentioned were concluded with a reasonable degree of success, but most of the bombs intended for Stuttgart fell into open country, and little more than a hundred houses were destroyed. 419 Squadron registered no losses, and also came through the second Ruhr operation unscathed. This was again directed at Essen on the 12/13th, when the Krupps works found themselves in the centre of the bombing area, and suffered 30% more damage than in the earlier raid.

A period of minor operations saw the Command through to the 26/27th, when equipment failure among the Oboe Mosquito element was largely responsible for a disappointing raid on Duisburg. Two raids on Berlin sandwiched a trip to St Nazaire at the end of the month, and all three operations cost the squadron crews and/or aircraft. Much of the bombing fell short of the Capital on the 27/28th, during the course of which, DT634 was hit by flak while outbound over northern Germany. The previously mentioned P/O Porter elected to continue on to the target, where the bomb load was delivered, but the Halifax was picked up by a nightfighter near Hamburg on the way home, and all but the pilot escaped with their lives to become POWs. Wellingtons formed the bulk of the force bound for St Nazaire on the following night, but all these returned, while a Halifax and a Lancaster were the only losses. The former was 419 Squadron's BB283, which crashed in France with no survivors from the crew of Sgt Beckett. Berlin again escaped serious damage on the 29/30th in a raid which was more agricultural than demolition in nature, and this failure was paid for by twenty one aircraft and crews. No 419 Squadron aircraft were lost to the defences, but following an early return through the icing conditions, JB860 crashed during the attempt to land, although without injury to P/O Ainsworth and crew.

April would prove to be the least rewarding month of the Ruhr period, largely because the majority of operations were directed at more distant targets beyond the range of Oboe. It never-the-less got off to an encouraging start with another successful tilt at Essen on the 3/4th, but it was a bad night for the Halix contingent, which lost over 9% of its number. For the fourth raid in succession, 419 Squadron registered a casualty, this one involving the loss to a nightfighter over Holland of DT617, and there were no survivors from the crew of P/O Boyd. The largest non-1,000 force to date of 577 aircraft took off for Kiel on the 4/5th, and failed to cause more than slight superficial damage. Two more raids on Duisburg on the 8/9th and 9/10th were equally ineffective, and the squadron's BB327 failed to return from the former, and it was later discovered to have crashed in the Ruhr, with just one survivor from the crew of Sgt Morris. There was no improvement in performance at Frankfurt on the 10/11th, and only the despised creep-back phenomenon which attended most Bomber Command operations, saved the night at Stuttgart on the 14/15th, by falling across an industrial suburb. The objective for the Lancaster and Halifax squadrons on the 16/17th was the Skoda armaments works at distant Pilsen in Czechoslovakia, while a predominately Wellington and Stirling force carried out a diversionary raid on Mannheim. The former was a total disaster, both in terms of accuracy and losses, no bombs falling within miles of the intended target, while eighteen of each type failed to return. An effective attack on Mannheim was little consolation in the light of a further eighteen missing aircraft, and these brought the night's casualty

figure to a new record high. 419 Squadron was not afflicted on this night, but posted missing the crew of P/O Jackson from a remarkably successful attack on the almost equally distant Baltic port of Stettin on the 20/21st. A hundred acres of the city's central districts were laid waste, in what was the most destructive non-Ruhr and beyond-the-range-of-Oboe operation during the entire campaign period. JB912 fell victim to a nightfighter over northern Germany, and all but one of the eight man crew survived as POWs. A markedly improved performance at Duisburg on the 26/27th resulted in the destruction of three hundred buildings, still less than might have been hoped for in the light of the recent successes at Essen, but time was running out for Germany's largest inland port. The largest minelaying effort to date involved 160 aircraft between the Bay of Biscay and the Frisians on the 27/28th, and this was exceeded on the following night, when 207 aircraft sewed vegetables in northern waters. In contrast to the loss of just one aircraft from the former, twenty two were missing from the latter, most of them falling to the light flak which was so lethal to low flying aircraft. The squadron's JB923 was absent from its dispersal in the morning, and the fate of it and the crew of Sgt Smallwood remains unknown. The month closed with a moderately successful attack on Essen on the night of the 30th, and thereafter, the crews enjoyed a three night stand-down.

May was to bring a return to winning ways, with a number of spectacular victories and new records. The force of 596 aircraft which took off for Dortmund on the 4/5th was the largest non-1,000 effort to date, and those which reached the target area destroyed over twelve hundred buildings in central and northern districts, despite the fact that a decoy site lured some bomb loads away. The defenders fought back, however, and they claimed thirty one bombers, including two from 419 Squadron, the first in what would prove to be a very expensive month for the Moose men. DT794 crashed into the target, killing the entire crew of F/O Elliott, while W7817 was brought down by a nightfighter over Holland, and F/O Vaillancourt survived with five others of his crew to be taken into captivity. There were no more major operations until the 12/13th, and it was on this night that Duisburg finally succumbed to an accurate and concentrated attack, which devastated central districts and the port area, destroying almost sixteen hundred buildings and sinking or severely damaging sixty thousand tons of shipping. The alarmingly high losses at Dortmund had set a pattern which would continue throughout the campaign from this point, and thirty four aircraft failed to return from Duisburg, among them two more from 419 Squadron. JB719 fell victim to flak when leaving the target area, and the pilot, W/O McMillan was killed. His crew all managed to abandon the stricken Halifax to fall into enemy hands, but one of them later died from his injuries. JB861 was shot down by a nightfighter over Holland, and this time none survived from the crew of F/S Palmer. On the following night, a force of over four hundred aircraft raided Bochum to good effect, while 5 Group, with Path Finder support, tried unsuccessfully to rectify the previous month's failure at Pilsen. The squadron's trend of losing two aircraft per raid continued on this night, when DT672 crashed in Germany with no survivors from the crew of Sgt Adams, and JD113 was caught by a nightfighter over Holland on the way home, and Sgt Buckwell and three of his crew were killed.

A nine day break preceded the next operation, and it was during this period that 617 Squadron ensured its place in bomber folklore with its epic attack on the dams on the 16/17th. After the long and welcome stand-down, it was a new record force of 826 aircraft which took off to return to Dortmund on the 23/24th, the objective for the previous record at the start of the month. Accurate Path Finder marking in good conditions led to a devastating attack, which destroyed two thousand buildings and damaged many more, among them some important war industry factories where production was halted. It was another night of heavy losses, however, and the thirty eight missing aircraft represented the highest of the campaign to date. JB862 seemed to be ill-fated from the start, and experienced engine problems while outbound. Eventually, and before the target was reached, a combination of flak and a nightfighter finished off the Halifax over Germany, and Sgt Green was killed with all but one of his crew. BB384 ran out of fuel on final approach, and crash-landed near the airfield with out injury to F/O Weedon and his crew. Düsseldorf was the scene of a rare failure for the period on the 25/26th, and an attack on Essen on the 27/28th, while destroying almost five hundred buildings, was less effective than on previous occasions. The combined losses from these two operations amounted to fifty aircraft, but 419 Squadron was not represented among them. May's final major operation was against Barmen, the western half of twin towns known jointly as Wuppertal. Launched on the night of the 29/30th, it involved over seven hundred aircraft, and became one of the most devastating attacks of the entire campaign. When the smoke had cleared, 80% of the town's built-up area could be seen in ruins, and this amounted to four thousand buildings destroyed. The death toll at 3,400 was by far the highest to date, but again, it was not a one-sided affair, and thirty three bombers failed to return. JB793 was on the way home when it succumbed to a nightfighter over Belgium, and three men escaped with their lives from the crew of Sgt Winegarden. JB805 met a similar fate, also over Belgium, and the crew of Sgt Johnson all died in its wreckage.

There were no operations for the main force at the start of June, and it was the night of the 11/12th before the crews were roused to action again. 783 of them were briefed for an attack on Düsseldorf, and apart from a hiccup caused by the inadvertant release of Oboe markers miles from the target, extensive damage was inflicted on the city's central districts, and almost nine thousand fires sprang up, over fourteen hundred of them classed by the authorities as large. Twelve hundred people lost their lives, and a further 140,000 were bombed out of their homes, while the bomber force lost a hefty thirty eight of its number. For once, there was only one absentee from a 419 Squadron dispersal next morning, and this was JD143, which was a victim of flak over Germany with five survivors from the eight man crew of F/O Boyce. On the following night, it was the turn of Bochum to suffer the destruction of 130 acres of its built-up area for the loss of twenty four aircraft, but at least Sgt Kirkham and all of his crew lived to tell the tale of the demise of their DT616, after it was despatched by a nightfighter. A period of rest for the Halifax crews came to an end on the 19/20th, when elements of 6 Group joined others from 3, 4 and 8 Groups to attack the Schneider armaments works at Le Creusot, the scene of an epic daylight raid by 5 Group in the previous October. Only about 20% of the bombs found the mark, but fortunately losses were restricted to just two Halifaxes.

As a hectic round of four major raids in five nights approached, 6 Group was operating under a cloud of despondency. Concern had been growing during its first six months over its disproportionately high losses, early returns and poor rate of serviceability in comparison with the longer established Groups. It had earned a reputation as the "chop Group", and there were rumblings in some quarters that the Canadians should never have been allowed a Group of their own. The Operational Research Section set up an investigation to compare 6 Group's performance with that of 4 Group, the equipment and geography of which were broadly similar. In the meantime, the offensive continued with a devastating attack on Krefeld on the 21/22nd, which resulted in the highest tally of destroyed buildings of the war to date, over five and a half thousand. However, this night also brought the highest losses of the campaign to date, when forty four aircraft failed to return. A number of 428 Squadron crews were attached to 419 Squadron for operational experience, and one of these borrowed W1271, and didn't bring it back. The crew of BB323 spotted a single engined nightfighter wheeling in to attack during the outward flight, and the rear gunner promptly shot it down in flames.

Twenty four hours later, it was the turn of Mülheim to reel under the weight of another Oboe-led accurate attack, and twelve hundred buildings, mostly houses, were reduced to rubble. The defenders fought back with a will, and claimed thirty five bombers, but none this time from 419 Squadron. After a night's rest, the Elberfeld half of Wuppertal was subjected to an assault which was even more devastating than that visited on its twin Barmen at the end of May. Over three thousand buildings were wrecked, and eighteen hundred people lost their lives, and a post war survey assessed that 94% of the town's built-up area had been destroyed on this one night. The high loss rate continued, and amounted to thirty four heavy bombers, among which were three from 419 Squadron, which experienced its worst night since converting to Halifaxes. JD147 was shot down by a nightfighter over Holland, and F/L Jost and two of his crew were killed, and JD214 suffered a similar experience, but Sgt Neale managed to carry out a forced landing on Dutch soil, delivering the crew into enemy hands. JD258 was the other casualty, this falling to a nightfighter while in the hands of another 428 Squadron crew. The run of outstanding successes came to an end at Gelsenkirchen on the 25/26th, when bombs were sprayed over a wide area of the Ruhr, and few landed where intended.

A short campaign against Cologne spanned the turn of the month, beginning on the 28/29th with a raid for which over six hundred crews were briefed. What followed was the most devastating night of the war for this magnificent city, and when the smoke had cleared, over 6,300 buildings were assessed as destroyed, and 4377 people lay dead. The operation cost the Command twenty five aircraft, and 419 Squadron JD215, this yet another nightfighter victim over Holland, with no survivors from the crew of P/O Fowler. Six hundred aircraft returned to Cologne on the 3/4th of July, and an all Lancaster force completed the series on the 8/9th, after which the tally of destruction for the three raids amounted to over 11,000 buildings, with 5,500 people killed, and a further 350,000 rendered homeless. The combined cost to the Command was sixty two aircraft, and 419 Squadron registered another casualty, this from the second raid, when JD159 was despatched by a nightfighter over Belgium, killing P/O Bell and two others of the eight

on board. Another failure at Gelsenkirchen on the 9/10th was followed by a devastating attack on Aachen on the 13/14th, and although two more raids would be sent to the region at the end of the month, this effectively brought the Ruhr offensive to a conclusion. 2nd Lt Furey of the USAAF and five of his crew would view these operations from behind the wire of a POW camp, after their BB323 was downed by a nightfighter over Holland during the Aachen trip. Harris could look back over the past five months with genuine satisfaction at the performance of his crews. Much of Germany's industrial heartland lay in ruins, forcing it to take up much of the slack in its manufacturing capacity. Oboe had proved its worth in spectacular fashion, and there would be little chance of escape for any target which came within its range. On the debit side, losses had been grievously high, and "Happy Valley's" reputation had been well earned, but the factories had been more than able to keep pace with the rate of attrition, and even allowed for a gradual expansion to take place. Eager new crews were arriving from the Empire Training schools to fill the gaps, and at Bomber Command HQ, confidence was high that the Command could win the war by bombing alone, if only the powers-that-be would heed the signs and provide the resources.

It had almost become a tradition to send bombers to Hamburg during the final week of July, and this was the city selected by Harris to host Operation Gomorrah, the systematic destruction of a Major German city in a short, sharp series of attacks until the job was done, for which a total of ten thousand tons of bombs was deemed requisite. Germany's Second City satisfied Harris's parameters perfectly in many respects, not least of which were its undoubted political importance, and its status as the centre of U-Boat construction and other important war industries. There were, however, other considerations of an operational nature which made Hamburg an attractive proposition, chief among which were its location close to an easily identifiable coastline, its ease of access without the necessity to penetrate deep inland, and its proximity to the bomber stations, which would allow large forces to approach and retreat during the few hours of darkness afforded by mid summer. Finally, and of major significance, Hamburg lay beyond the range of Oboe, which had proved so decisive at the Ruhr, but in compensation, it boasted the wide River Elbe to provide good H2s returns for the navigators high above. Operation Gomorrah would also see the introduction of a new device, "Window", the tin-foil backed strips of paper designed to swamp the enemy nightfighter, searchlight and gun-laying radar with false returns, and hopefully render them ineffective.

Almost eight hundred aircraft set out between 22.00 and 23.00 hours on the 24th, and those which remained within the bomber stream encountered little opposition before reaching the target. A number of aircraft were shot down during this stage of the flight, but they were invariably off track over the sea, and unable to benefit from the Window screen. The efficacy of the new device was also evident in the target area, where the usually efficient co-ordination between searchlights and flak was absent, and defence from the ground was reduced to little more than random firing into the night sky. The Path Finder marking was slightly misplaced and an extensive creep-back developed which cut a swathe of destruction from the city centre, out across the north-western

districts along the line of approach, and into open country, where a proportion of the bombing was wasted. Over 2,200 tons of bombs caused extensive damage, and around fifteen hundred people lost their lives, a new record for a target outside the range of Oboe. An encouraging start to the campaign was made more so by the modest loss of just twelve aircraft, testimony indeed to the success of Window. On the following night, Harris switched his force to Essen to take advantage of the bodyblow dealt to the enemy defences by Window. It was an outstanding success, which destroyed over 2,800 houses, and inflicted the greatest damage yet on the Krupps works. Twenty six crews paid the price for this victory, and 419 Squadron was represented among them by that of Sgt Chapman, who, alone of the eight occupants of JD256, survived its demise over the target.

Another massive force set off for round two at Hamburg on the 27/28th, the 419 Squadron element led by W/C Fleming. The events which followed were both unprecedented and unplanned, and were the result of an unfortunate combination of factors. A period of unusually hot and dry weather had created tinderbox conditions within the city, and when the Path Finders marked the target, they did so with great concentration, even though the target indicators fell two miles east of the planned aiming point. The main force followed up with uncharacteristic accuracy and concentration and scarcely any creep-back, delivering over 2,300 tons of bombs into the city. Most of this fell into the densely populated working class residential districts of Hamm, Hammerbrook and Borgfeld, where the individual fires joined together to form one gigantic conflagration of overwhelming proportions, sucking in oxygen from surrounding areas at hurricane velocity to feed its voracious appetite. Such was the power of this meteorological phenomenon, that trees were uprooted and flung bodily into the inferno, in the centre of which temperatures reached a thousand degrees centigrade. Only when all the combustible material had been consumed did the flames subside, by which time more than forty thousand people had perished. Seventeen aircraft failed to return home, but there was none missing from the ranks of 419 Squadron.

Hamburg's ordeal was not yet over, however, and over seven hundred aircraft dropped another 2,300 tons of bombs into the tortured city on the 29/30th. Many of these fell into the already devastated firestorm area, but that proportion which found fresh residential districts, inflicted another night of massive destruction and misery on those who had not yet joined the mass evacuation. The losses began to creep up as the defenders recovered from the setback of Window, and twenty eight aircraft failed to make it home on this night. On the 30/31st, a modest force of around 250 aircraft laid waste to Remscheid, destroying over three thousand houses and most of its industry, and this raid brought down the final curtain on the Ruhr campaign. The final round of Operation Gomorrah took place on the 2/3rd of August, and it was rendered largely ineffective by violent electrical storms encountered on the outward flight. Many crews opted to either bomb alternative targets or jettison their bombs into the sea, and little new damage occurred at Hamburg. Thirty aircraft were missing, and 419 Squadron registered its only loss of the series after DT798 succumbed to the weather conditions, including, according to the survivors, a fatal lightning strike, and crashed in Germany, killing Sgt Sobin and three of

his crew. With Italy now teetering on the brink of capitulation, Bomber Command was invited to help nudge it over with a series of attacks on its major cities between the 7/8th and 16/17th. Targets in Germany during the same period were Mannheim on the 9/10th and Nuremberg on the following night. The former was highly effective, but it did cost 419 Squadron the crew of F/O Ludlow, who all died in the crash of JD257 in the target area.

Since the start of hostilities, intelligence had been filtering through from various quarters, which drew attention to German research into rocketry. Gradually the name Peenemünde became associated with such weapons, and PRU flights were despatched to the Baltic coastal region as part of the ongoing intelligence gathering process. Churchill's chief scientific adviser, Professor Lindemann, or Lord Cherwell as he became, steadfastly refused to give credence to the feasibility of rocket projectiles, and even in the face of photographic evidence of a V-2 obtained by a PRU Mosquito in June 1943, he refused to give ground, and it was only the urgings of Duncan Sandys and the brilliant scientist, Dr R V Jones, which persuaded Churchill to act. A decision was taken to mount an attack on the rocket research centre at Peenemünde at the first available opportunity, and this arose on the night of the 17/18th of August. A complex plan was devised to cover three main targets, the housing estate, the factory and the experimental site, each assigned to a specific wave of bombers, with the PFF element responsible for shifting the point of aim accordingly. The whole operation was to be controlled by a Master of Ceremonies, in the manner of Gibson at the Dams, and the officer chosen was G/C Searby of 83 Squadron. A "spoof" raid at Berlin by eight Mosquitos of 139 Squadron was to be laid on in an attempt to keep the nightfighters away from the target area, and it was intended that bombing would be conducted from between 4,000 and 7,000 feet to ensure accuracy.

At around 21.00 hours, the first of 596 aircraft took off, the numbers somewhat depleted by the absence of many of the Stirling brigade, which had landed away from their stations when returning from Italy that morning, and could not be made ready in time. 419 Squadron contributed seventeen Halifaxes to the 6 Group effort, and the crews were those of F/Ls Corcoran, Keddie and Quaile in JD382, BB376 and JB859?, F/Os Hamilton, Heard, Hewitt and Westland in JD204, JD158, JB929 and JD420, W/O Morrison in DT731, F/Ss Cooke, Douhassoff, Pekin and Stewart in JD457, JD456, JD458 and JD459, and Sgts Batterton, Cameron, Coutlee, McIntosh and Metherall in JD163, JD270, JD325, JD114 and JB965. The first wave consisted of 3 and 4 Group aircraft, whose crews were briefed to attack the housing estate, the most southerly of the aiming points. The initial markers here went awry, and some fell onto the forced workers camp at Trassenheide two miles beyond, attracting many bomb loads, and inflicting grievous casualties on these friendly foreign nationals, who were trapped in their wooden barracks. Once rectified, the bombing was accurate, and the 1 Group attack on the factory area also proceeded more or less according to plan. The Mosquito spoof on Berlin was successful in delaying the arrival of the nightfighters, but their presence in the target area coincided with that of 5 and 6 Groups, whose crews were briefed to attack the experimental site. The 5 Group "time and distance" method of bombing was not entirely effective, and this stage of the raid was only moderately successful. Running battles between nightfighters

and bombers were played out both in the skies above Peenemünde, and on the route home towards Denmark, and 5 and 6 Groups suffered heavy losses, the former seventeen aircraft, over 14%, and the latter twelve aircraft, over 19%, in an overall loss to the Command of forty aircraft or 6.7%. It was a bad night for 419 Squadron, which had three empty dispersals to contemplate next morning, those which should have been occupied by JD158, JD458 and JD163. The two former crashed into the Baltic, possibly victims of the first use by the Luftwaffe of their Schräge Musik upward firing canons, and neither Halifax produced a survivor from the crews of F/O Heard and F/S Pekin. The latter came down into the North Sea off the east coast, and Sgt Batterton and his crew also failed to survive. The operation was deemed to have been sufficiently successful to require no return, and the development programme was delayed by a number of weeks, while testing of the V-2 was ultimately withdrawn into Poland for greater security.

Harris had long believed that Berlin, as the seat and symbol of Nazi power, held the key to enemy morale, and in the long run to victory. He had stated that with the assistance of the UK based American 8th bomber force, he could “wreck Berlin from end to end”, and thereby bring an end to the conflict without the kind of protracted and bloody land campaign that he had personally witnessed during the Great War. The Americans, however, were committed to victory on land, and they would not accompany Harris to Berlin. Undaunted as ever, he would go alone, and he embarked on what would become the Command’s longest and most bitter struggle on the night of the 23/24th, sending a force of over seven hundred aircraft under the control of a Master Bomber, who on this occasion was the charismatic Canadian, W/C “Johnny Fauquier, the commanding officer of 405 Squadron, and future leader of the by now famous 617 Squadron. The Path Finders failed to identify the city centre, and dropped their markers instead onto the southern fringes, which led to many bomb loads being wasted in open country. Nevertheless, that which hit the city inflicted the most destructive raid of the war thus far on the Capital, leaving 2,600 buildings in ruins. A fierce flak and nightfighter defence guaranteed a hot reception for the bombers, and a new record loss of fifty six aircraft resulted, in which the Halifaxes suffered the highest numerical casualties, while the Stirlings’ percentage loss rate was a massive 12.9. The Moose Squadron came through this one unscathed, but had lost JB965 on the 22nd to a wheels-up landing at Middleton-St-George after an air-test in the hands of Sgt Metherall and crew, who were able to walk away.

A large effort was devoted to Nuremberg on the 27/28th, but the outcome was disappointing, particularly in the light of thirty three missing bombers. Some compensation was gained at the expense of the twin towns of Mönchengladbach and Rheydt on the 30/31st, however, when highly concentrated bombing left half the built-up area of both towns in ruins. F/O Laidlaw and crew arrived home in a badly damaged JD381, having barely survived an encounter with a nightfighter, and the Halifax was subsequently declared to be beyond economical repair. The second of the current series against Berlin was launched on the last night of the month by a force of just over six hundred aircraft, which managed between them the destruction of just eighty five houses. The enemy again mounted a spirited defence of its Capital, and this time brought down

forty seven aircraft, including three from 419 Squadron. JD270 crashed in the target area, killing Sgt Cameron and three of his crew, and JD331 fell to a nightfighter over Germany, F/L Corcoran and three of his crew parachuting into captivity. JD464 was also a nightfighter victim over Germany while on the way home, and F/O Stewar died with two of the others on board. It was an all Lancaster force which carried out the final Berlin raid of the current period on the 3/4th of September, this a reflection of the high casualty rates among the Halifax and Stirling squadrons from the first two operations. When operating alone, however, Lancasters were also vulnerable, and twenty two failed to return on this night.

Possibly as a result of losing a total of 125 heavy bombers over the three nights, Berlin was shelved for the remainder of the autumn period, and Harris turned his attention to two southern targets, Mannheim and Ludwigshafen on the 5/6th, and Munich twenty four hours later. The former was an outstanding success, although at a cost of another thirty four aircraft, and two 419 Squadron Halifaxes were among those missing. There were no survivors from the crew of F/O Studer after JD210 crashed in Germany, and just one man escaped with his life from the crew of Sgt Allan in JD410, which was shot down by flak in the target area. The latter operation produced a scattered attack, and the results were not commensurate with the effort expended. 6 Group joined elements of 3, 4 and 8 Groups to attack the Dunlop rubber factory at Montluçon on the 15/16th, and every building in the plant was damaged to some extent. The same Groups were out again on the following night to hit railway yards at Modane in the south of France, but this time the bombing was not accurate, and three aircraft were lost. One of these was 419 Squadron's LW240, which was carrying the experienced crew of F/L Quaille. Shot down by a nightfighter while homebound, the entire crew abandoned ship, and the pilot and three others were captured. More fortunate were their four colleagues, all of whom managed to evade the enemy and retain their freedom. Among this group was the squadron gunnery leader, F/L Kenyon, who was on his 44th operation.

Over the next four weeks, a series of four raids would be carried out against Hanover which would prove to be testing in the extreme, and very expensive. The first took place on the 22/23rd, when stronger than forecast winds drew the bombing towards the south-eastern corner of the city, and results were inconclusive. The twenty six aircraft lost on this night were added to on the following night by a further thirty two, but at least on this occasion there was a worthwhile return from the second devastating raid of the month on Mannheim. 419 Squadron posted missing the crews of Sgt Griffiths and Sgt Kelly in JB971 and JD457 respectively, and neither produced a survivor. The second Hanover raid took place on the 27/28th, when good concentration was achieved, but unfortunately it was in open country north of the city, and this disappointment was compounded by the loss of thirty eight aircraft. The final raid of the month fell to good effect on Bochum on the 29/30th, and this provided further confirmation that a severe blow could be dealt to any target within the range of Oboe, but that beyond it, bombing was still a very imprecise science. BB376 failed to return home from the Ruhr, and no trace of it or the crew of P/O Symons was ever found.

October got off to a busy start for the Command in general, although it fell to the Lancaster squadrons to raid Hagen and Munich on the 1/2nd and 2/3rd respectively. The Halifax brigade was back in the action on the 3/4th, helping to inflict damage on the western districts and outlying villages of Kassel, and devastate its Wolfshanger suburb in the east. Fires were started at the Henschel and Fieseler aircraft factories, and an ammunition dump was detonated by a fluke bomb load, which attracted others, and this military site suffered severe damage. Having arrived back safely, the squadron's JB967 was attacked by an intruder over Lincolnshire, and crash-landed on final approach to base, injuring two of F/S Cook's crew. On the 4/5th, Frankfurt was subjected to its most damaging raid of the war to date, and large parts of its eastern and docks areas were swallowed up in a sea of flame. The modest loss of ten aircraft included two from 419 Squadron, both falling to nightfighters, JD204 over Germany while outbound, and JD463 over Belgium on the way home, the former with three survivors from the crew of F/O Hamilton, and the latter with just one from the crew of Sgt Fare, and he ultimately evaded capture. On the 8th, W/C Fleming's long period in command of the squadron came to an end, and the A Flight commander, S/L McMurdy, was promoted to the position as his replacement. That night, he presided over his first operation as CO, although he did not accompany the squadron element to Hanover. The city finally succumbed to an accurate and concentrated assault on this night, and large areas of fire contributed to the destruction of almost four thousand buildings, with another 30,000 showing signs of damage.

It was an all Lancaster force which concluded the series against Hanover on the 18/19th, another failure as events turned out, and then Kassel was raided for the second time during the month on the 22/23rd. It was a catastrophic night for this central German city, becoming only the second to experience a genuine firestorm along the lines of that which devastated Hamburg in July. Over 4,300 residential blocks were completely destroyed, amounting to some 26,700 apartments, with a further 6,700 blocks sustaining damage, and in excess of six thousand people lost their lives. Numerous industrial and public buildings were also included in the enormous catalogue of destruction, but this success was gained at the high cost to the Command of forty three aircraft. W/C McMurdy led the 419 Squadron element for the first time, and he died with four of his crew, when JD382 was shot down over Germany by a combined effort from three nightfighters working in unison. W/C Pleasance was appointed as the new commanding officer on the 25th. The first half of November would be relatively light on operational activity after Düsseldorf on the 3/4th, a raid which left extensive damage to industry and housing. As the build-up began to the resumption of the Berlin campaign, a predominately Halifax force attacked railway installations at Cannes in the south of France, but most of the damage was in residential districts and nearby villages, where a few dozen civilians were killed. Remarkably, this turned out to be the longest duration trip of the war for the 419 Squadron crews, some of whom were airborne for more than ten hours.

The long and rocky road to Berlin was rejoined by an all Lancaster heavy force on the 18/19th, while a predominately Halifax and Stirling effort was directed at Mannheim and Ludwigshafen. The diversion was successful in reducing nightfighter activity on the route

to and from Berlin, and only nine Lancasters failed to return from what was a scattered and only marginally effective raid. The southern force exacted a higher toll of damage, but lost twenty three aircraft, among which were LW239 and LW328 from 419 Squadron. The former took F/O Fogg and his crew to their deaths, while the latter suffered engine failure on the way home, and was abandoned over enemy territory by all but the pilot, F/S Sedgwick, who was killed in the ensuing crash. A maximum effort force took off for the "Big City" on the 22/23rd, and delivered upon it its most destructive raid of the war. Devastation stretched from the centre westwards across mostly residential districts, and firestorm areas were reported. Over three thousand houses were destroyed along with some important war industry factories, and an estimated two thousand people lost their lives. Twenty six aircraft were lost, and this was the last operation to Germany in which the Stirlings would take part. 419 Squadron posted missing the crew of Sgt Hunter in LW231, and none survived its destruction by a nightfighter over Holland. A predominately Lancaster heavy force returned on the following night, and guided by the glow of fires still burning, inflicted another serious blow on the Capital. The main force Lancaster crews were rested on the 25/26th, while the Halifaxes went to Frankfurt and destroyed a modest amount of housing. On the following night, both types were aloft, the Lancasters returning yet again to Berlin, while the Halifaxes tried their luck at Stuttgart as a diversion. The former enjoyed the greater success in strategic terms, but lost twenty eight of their number, and 419 Squadron lost LW242, one of six Halifaxes missing from Stuttgart, and Sgt Clarke and his crew failed to survive.

As events turned out, the above was the squadron's penultimate loss of the year, as December was negotiated almost to the end without casualties. The Berlin raids of the 2/3rd and 16/17th were undertaken by Lancasters, and they were joined by Halifaxes for a successful tilt at Leipzig on the 3/4th. S/L Stewart and crew walked away from JP112 after a crash-landing at Middleton-St George while training on the 19th, and then both heavy types operated to Frankfurt on the 20/21st. Decoy fires and dummy target indicators lured away a proportion of the bombing, but the creep-back worked in the Command's favour, and some 460 houses were destroyed, while public and cultural buildings also featured on the list. The responsibility for maintaining the pressure on the Capital fell upon the Lancaster crews again on the 23/24th, and the year ended with a maximum effort to the same target on the 29/30th, this the first of three trips to Berlin in an unprecedented five nights spanning the turn of the year. It was a moderately useful attack, but it resulted in the squadron's final loss of the year, although happily it was without fatalities. LW282 caught fire while in the general area of the Capital, and F/S Thompson and crew took the only possible decision, abandoning their chariot to its inevitable fate, to begin a period of extended leave as guests of the Reich. All things considered, it had been a successful year for the Command, but a testing one for the crews, and 6 group in particular had experienced a torrid time. Matters would improve, however, and during the course of the coming year, the Canadians would achieve a level of performance which was the equal of any.

1944

As the New Year dawned, the hard pressed crews of Bomber Command and the beleaguered citizens of Berlin were jointly experiencing their "winter of discontent". Both parties shared the hope that Germany's capital would cease to be the main focus of attention, but it was not to be, and before New Year's Day was done, a force of Lancasters was on its way, arriving overhead in the early hours of the 2nd. Priding themselves on being Berliners first and Germans second, the people of this great European city bore their trials cheerfully and resolutely, precisely as had the Londoners under the Blitz of 1940, and far from weakening morale, the bombing served only to engender a spirit of defiance and unity, reflected in the banners paraded through the streets which proclaimed, "You may break our walls, but not our hearts". Played incessantly over the radio was the melodious song, *Nach jedem Dezember kommt immer ein Mai*, after every December comes always a May, a sentiment which gave promise of a change in fortune with the onset of spring. This first operation of the year was an expensive failure, and results were scarcely better on the following night for a combined loss of fifty five aircraft and crews.

There was a much more gentle introduction to the New Year for the Halifax squadrons, and they were not required to operate in numbers until the 20/21st of January, when participating in the month's third raid on Berlin. Over 750 aircraft took off, and most of those which reached the target dropped their bombs into the previously only lightly damaged eastern districts, and caused substantial damage. 419 Squadron's HX162 was in trouble from the moment it crossed the enemy coast and lost its H2s and navigation instruments. The crew elected to press on by dead reckoning, and had reached a point about sixty miles north-west of the target, when a nightfighter attacked and raked the Halifax with cannon shells, killing the flight engineer, and severely wounding the mid upper gunner. The rear gunner also suffered wounds when a shell exploded inside his turret, knocking out two of his guns, but he continued to engage the enemy, and claimed to have shot it down. The Halifax plunged earthwards until control was regained at six thousand feet, and a westward course was set, during which the badly damaged aircraft was dragged back up to a respectable altitude. North-west of Hamburg, flak ended all hope of a return to base, and with two engines burning, four of the crew baled out, leaving the pilot, P/O Bullis, to attempt a crash-landing with the wounded mid upper gunner. This gallant gesture was thwarted when a wing broke away, and the pilot was forced to save himself, eventually joining his comrades in enemy hands. DT731 had also failed to survive the attentions of a nightfighter, and crashed near Leipzig after F/S Hopkins and crew had taken to their parachutes, and they too were captured.

On the following night, over six hundred aircraft set out for Magdeburg, and found themselves in the company of enemy nightfighters before the hostile coast was crossed. There was a running battle all the way to the target, which in the event escaped serious damage, and a new record of fifty seven aircraft failed to return home, a massive thirty five of them Halifaxes. The squadron's JD420 was hit by flak while homebound, mortally wounding one of the crew, and F/S Hawkes and the remainder abandoned the

Halifax to its fate to become POWs. Less fortunate was the crew of F/L Hermitage, who were all killed when JD466 crashed in Germany. The end of the month brought an unprecedented three Berlin trips in the space of four nights beginning on the 27/28th, and this would prove to be the final concerted effort to bring the Capital to its knees. The Lancasters went alone on this night, but twenty four hours later, the Halifaxes joined in, and helped to produce a highly destructive if scattered attack, which destroyed many public and administrative buildings, as well as the usual catalogue of housing and industrial damage, and 180,000 people were rendered homeless. Another night of heavy losses led to forty six empty dispersals on bomber airfields next morning, and again the Halifax contingent suffered the higher numerical and percentage losses. Just one aircraft was missing from 419 Squadron, and this was JD119, in which the eight man crew of F/S Palmer was killed. After a night's rest, a predominately Lancaster force returned to Berlin, and created large areas of fire in central and south-western districts in return for the loss of thirty three of their number, just one of which was a Halifax. There is no question that Berlin had suffered grievously over these three nights, but it was not broken, and continued to function as the seat of Nazi power. Bomber Command also was not broken, but these first three months of 1944 would bring it uncomfortably close to the edge.

RAF heavy bombers would ply their trade just twice more at Berlin in what remained of the war, and these operations would be in isolation over the next seven weeks. The first half of February found flying restricted by inhospitable weather, but it at least gave the crews an opportunity to draw breath, and the squadrons time to replenish. Mining was an activity which was less susceptible to the conditions, and few were the nights when at least a handful of crews didn't brave the elements and the lethal low level flak. F/L Laidlaw and crew were detailed to lay mines off Borkum on the 12/13th, and took off into the gloom in HR910 shortly after 18.00 hours, never to be heard of again. When the Command as a whole next took to the air in anger, on the 15/16th, it was a record breaking night in a number of ways, and the penultimate raid of the campaign and, indeed, the war as far as the heavies were concerned. The figure of 891 aircraft was the largest non-1,000 effort 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 would deliver a record 2,640 tons of bombs, and much of this was put to good use within the built-up area of the city. A feature of almost every Berlin raid since August had been the high number of outlying communities reporting stray bombs, and it was no different on this night. Berlin suffered severe damage also, however, and a thousand houses were destroyed, along with hundreds of temporary wooden barrack blocks, and many important war industry factories were hit. Forty three aircraft were lost to the defences, just one of them from 419 Squadron, and there were no survivors from the crew of P/O Parker in JD456, which disappeared into the cold Baltic Sea.

Four nights later, 823 aircraft took off for Leipzig, and headed into the greatest disaster to afflict the Command since the war began. Nightfighters met the bomber stream at the Dutch coast, and remained with it all the way to eastern Germany, and some of those aircraft which survived this stage of the flight arrived early at the target in stronger than

forecast winds, and fell victim to flak while orbiting ahead of the Path Finders. When all the aircraft which were going to return home had done so, there was an unbelievable shortfall of seventy eight, of which two were from 419 Squadron. JD114 was lost without trace with the crew of F/S Macleod, while LW327 was shot down by a nightfighter near Magdeburg during the outward flight, and F/O Lucas and three of his crew parachuted into captivity. This was the final straw for Harris as far as the Mk II and V Halifaxes were concerned, and from this point they were withdrawn from operations over Germany. For 419 Squadron, this would bring a greater commitment to mining operations and attacks on targets in the occupied countries until re-equipping could take place in April. It was from an example of the former, in the Kiel Bay area on the 25/26th, that the squadron registered its final casualty of the month, when JP200 disappeared without trace with the crew of F/O Warren.

During a break from operations for the main force squadrons following a successful assault on Stuttgart on the 1/2nd of March, the opening salvoes of the pre-invasion campaign against the French railway system were fired by Halifaxes of 4 and 6 Groups. On the 6/7th, tracks, rolling stock and installations were severely damaged at Trappes, and on the following night, Lancasters joined in a successful attack on railway yards at Le mans. It was deemed necessary to return to the latter, however, and on the 13/14th, 4 and 6 Groups inflicted further damage to locomotives, rolling stock and track. 419 Squadron's JD459 struck a pill box as it became airborne, and was too badly damaged to continue the sortie. After jettisoning the bomb load, F/O Barclay carried out a safe crash-landing, and the crew walked away unhurt. Two nights later, the main force received a bloody nose while trying to repeat the earlier success at Stuttgart, but more than compensated for this with two mighty blows at Frankfurt on the 18/19th and 22/23rd, the first of which alone resulted in the destruction of or serious damage to six thousand buildings, while the second one left half the city without electricity, gas and water for an extended period. A large mining effort was also mounted on the latter night in the Kiel Bay area, for which a number of 419 Squadron crews were detailed. While outbound, JD468 suffered an engine fire, but the crew of P/O Peck elected to carry on and complete their sortie. This they did, but a second engine fire forced them to ditch in the North Sea on the way home, from where they were rescued unhurt.

The final Berlin operation went ahead on the 24/25th, and cost the Command seventy two aircraft, and on the following night, an attempt by under two hundred aircraft to bomb the railway yards at Aulnoye failed, but no aircraft were lost. JP125 lost two engines while outbound, and a crash-landing at Ford was completed by P/O Eyjolfson, in which all the crew sustained minor injuries. On the 26/27th, the main force carried out another stunning attack on Essen, thus continuing the remarkable run of successes at this target since the introduction of Oboe twelve months earlier. The railway yards at Vaires were the target for a small force of Halifaxes from 4 and 6 Groups on the 29/30th, when very accurate bombing caused two ammunition trains to blow up, and over twelve hundred German troops were apparently killed. HR912 failed to return to Middleton-St-George, and it is believed to have fallen victim to flak around Le Havre, although no trace of it or the crew of W/O Greenidge was ever found. The night of the 30/31st

brought the Command's blackest night of the war, with the failure to return from Nuremberg of an incredible ninety five aircraft, and with this, the winter campaign came to an end. What now faced the crews, including those of 419 Squadron, would be in marked contrast to that which had been endured over the past five months. In place of the long slog to Germany on dark, often dirty nights, shorter range hops to France and Belgium would become the order of the day, something which would require of the crews a greater commitment to accuracy to avoid casualties among friendly civilians. It was at about this time, that someone at the Air Ministry decided that such operations were "a piece of cake", and were worthy of counting as just one third of a sortie towards the completion of a tour. This flawed policy was fairly quickly rescinded, but in the meantime, came very close to causing a mutiny among the aircrew. During the course of March, Canadian built Mk X Lancasters began to arrive on 419 Squadron charge, and conversion training went on alongside the operations in Halifaxes.

The Transportation Plan would dominate proceedings until D-Day, along with attacks on airfields, fuel and ammunition dumps and coastal defences, but April began quietly for most of the heavy brigade, and 6 Group got its first taste of action on the 9/10th when attacking the Delivrance goods station at Lille, and railway yards at Villeneuve-St-George. Extensive damage was inflicted on buildings, track and rolling stock at the former, but colateral damage at both targets led to heavy casualties among French civilians. Five similar targets were earmarked for destruction on the following night, 6 Group crews briefed for Laon with elements of 3 and 8 Groups, and Ghent, with PFF Mosquitos as the marker force. 6 Group was absent from Aachen's heaviest raid of the war on the 11/12th, and, in fact, was not called upon again until the 18/19th, for a raid on the railway yards at Noisy-le-Sec. An outstandingly successful attack was marred by deaths of over 450 French civilians as 750 houses were destroyed, and over two thousand damaged. There was also extensive mining activity in northern waters on this night, and 419 Squadron registered its first casualty of the month when JP202 failed to return having crashed into the North Sea, and there were no survivors from the crew of P/O Quinn.

Officially from the 14th, Bomber Command now became subject to the dictates of SHAEF, and would remain thus shackled until the Allied armies were sweeping towards the German frontier. However, while Harris was at the helm, his preferred policy of city-busting would never be entirely shelved in favour of other considerations, and on the 20/21st, a force of moderate size heaped further misery on Cologne. Two nights later it was the turn of Düsseldorf to wilt under more than two thousand tons of bombs, which laid waste to two thousand houses and dozens of industrial premises. Other operations on this night included a return by elements of 3, 4, 6 and 8 Groups to Laon, where severe damage was caused to the railway yards. 419 Squadron's HX189 crashed in France during the course of the operation, and one man was killed, but F/O Thomas and three others of his crew managed to evade the enemy and retain their freedom. The squadron's association with the Halifax came to an end on the 27/28th, in an operation which also brought its final casualty in the type. Elements of 4, 6 and 8 Groups were only partially successful in bombing railway yards at Montzen, and the second wave suffered heavily at

the hands of nightfighters. JN954 was despatched by one of them over Holland, and P/O McIvor and his crew were killed. While this operation was in progress, the first 419 Squadron Lancasters to take-off in anger were winging their way towards Friedrichshafen in southern Germany, which had been identified as a centre of tank engine and gearbox production. Good PFF marking led to an outstanding attack, which devastated over 60% of the town's built-up area, and had a greater effect on Germany's tank output than any other raid of the war.

Having operated the unpopular Merlin powered Halifaxes for so long, a misplaced air of confidence probably accompanied the arrival of Lancasters, and although as a type it was immeasurably superior, a spate of losses during May would dispell any such feelings. On the 1/2nd, 6 Group Halifaxes and Lancasters attacked the railway yards at St Ghislain with 8 Group support, this just one of six main targets for the night. The single missing Lancaster from this very accurate raid was 419 Squadron's KB711, which was shot down by a nightfighter over Belgium, killing P/O McNary and one of his crew, while six others fell into enemy hands. This was the first Canadian built Lancaster to be lost or written off in Bomber Command service. On the 7th, KB716 crash-landed with a burst tyre after a training flight while in the hands of 1st Lt Hartshorn of the USAAF, but he and his crew walked away unhurt. Five railway yards at towns in France and Belgium were targeted on the 10/11th, and forty eight Belgian civilians were killed during the 6 group attack on those at Ghent. KB704 overshot the landing on return, but P/O Holmes and his crew survived the crash to fight another day. Two nights later, P/O Smith and his crew were all killed when KB710 was shot down by a nightfighter over Belgium during an operation against railway yards at Louvain, and KB713 also failed to return, having crashed onto Belgian soil while outbound, and P/O Edwards and his crew likewise lost their lives. Another training accident had tragic consequences for F/O McMaster and his crew on the 15/16th, all perishing in the crash in Yorkshire.

Two familiar names from the past received their first visits from the Command's heavy brigade since a year earlier, Duisburg hosting a moderately effective raid on the 21/22nd, and Dortmund a very destructive one twenty four hours later, this with a 6 Group contribution. The squadron posted missing the eight man crew of P/O Patterson in KB717, and it was later learned that all had died when it was shot down by a nightfighter over Germany. Two nights later, two railway yards at Aachen were the objectives for over four hundred aircraft, and the town also suffered heavily under the bombing. KB706 was caught by a nightfighter over Holland on the way home, and W/O Robson and five of his crew died in the crash, while the other member succumbed to his injuries on the following day. The first week of June brought the final build-up to D-Day, when coastal batteries were the principal targets, many of them in the Pas-de-Calais area to maintain the deception concerning the actual landing grounds. On D-Day Eve, over a thousand aircraft were aloft to bomb ten such sites, mostly in conditions of thick cloud, and five thousand tons of bombs rained down onto the Oboe markers. Although crews had not been informed that the invasion was beginning, briefings had included a strict instruction that no bombs should be jettisoned over the sea. Through breaks in the cloud on the way home, many crews were rewarded with the sight of the giant armada ploughing its course

across the Channel below. That night, a further thousand aircraft attacked communications targets on the approaches to the landing area, and the succeeding two nights were devoted to similar activities, before an attack on airfields on the 9/10th, to prevent their use by the enemy to bring up reinforcements. Earlier, on the 7/8th, the first enemy nightfighter to be shot down by a Canadian built Lancaster fell to the guns of Sgts Burton and Mann of F/O Anderson's crew, as they were leaving the target at Acheres, and both were later awarded DFMs.

A new oil campaign began at Gelsenkirchen on the 12/13th, and this was an outstandingly effective raid by elements of 1, 3 and 8 Groups on the Nordstern plant, which halted production for several weeks. Also on this night, 4, 5 and 6 Groups continued the attacks on communications, 6 Group crews briefed for a railway target at Cambrai. It was to be a bad if heroic night for 419 Squadron, which would post missing three of its crews. KB726 was intercepted by a JU88 before reaching the target, and its cannon fire put both port engines out of action, set fire to the wing, and ignited hydraulic fluid in the rear fuselage. F/O De Brayne ordered his crew to bale out, and he and four others did so safely. Before leaving the stricken aircraft, W/O Mynarski, the mid-upper gunner, realised that the rear gunner was trapped in his turret, the doors of which had become jammed, and made his way through the flames to attack them with an axe. Surrounded by flames which set his clothing alight, the gallant Mynarski vainly persisted with his attempts to free his colleague, F/O Brophy, but was eventually waved away, and having done all he could, he too exited the Lancaster, his clothing and parachute pack trailing fire. Miraculously, Brophy survived the impact unhurt, and along with his pilot and two others, evaded capture, but sadly, Mynarski succumbed to his terrible burns while in the hands of members of the French Resistance who had observed his descent. In October 1946, he was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross, the only 6 Group man to be so honoured. While these events were being played out, KB714 was falling to the guns of a nightfighter over Belgium, with no survivors from the crew of F/O Wilson, and flak accounted for KB731, the only two survivors from F/O Lacey's crew ultimately evading capture.

6 Group became involved in the oil campaign on the 16/17th, when joining elements of 1, 4 and 8 Groups to attack the synthetic oil plant at Sterkrade/Holten. It was a scattered and largely ineffective raid which fell foul of nightfighters, and they took the greater share in the destruction of thirty one aircraft. Among them were two Lancasters from 419 Squadron, KB728 falling to a nightfighter over Holland with no survivors from the crew of F/O Morrison, and KB734 also crashed onto Dutch soil killing F/L Smith and four of his crew, while one man was captured and another evaded the same fate. A second new campaign also opened on this night, against flying bomb launching and storage sites in the Pas-de-Calais, and a 6 Group contingent was included in the force of four hundred aircraft sent to attack four aiming points. The remainder of the month saw the squadron operating almost exclusively against the flying bomb menace, and no further losses were incurred.

July began in similar vein, but on the 4/5th, 6 Group contributed aircraft to an attack on railway yards at Villeneuve-St-George. Of the eleven Lancasters missing, three were from the Moose Squadron, and a fourth was a 35 Squadron aircraft containing the previously mentioned S/L Alec Cranswick, who had recently embarked on his fourth tour of operations. All three 419 Squadron aircraft came down in France, KB718 and KB727 after encounters with nightfighters, and all survived from the crews of F/O Frame and F/O Stevenson, both pilots and three others from the former evading capture. KB723 was brought down by flak, and F/O Steepe and two of his crew also evaded capture, while one didn't and three were killed. The first tactical operations in support of the ground forces were mounted during the month, the first targeting enemy fortified positions north of Caen by daylight on the 7th. Isolated daylight operations had been introduced in mid June, and they would become an increasingly frequent feature of the Command's activities for the remainder of the war. Mid month brought a mixture of flying bomb related and railway targets, and a second massive attack in support of Operation Goodwood around Caen on the 18th. The German oil industry was not neglected, however, and 6 group joined in a useful attack on the plant at Wesseling on the 18/19th.

The first major raid on a German city for two months fell with great effect on Kiel on the 23/24th, when the bombing force appeared with complete surprise from behind a Mandrel jamming screen laid on by 100 Group. Stuttgart was selected for a series of three raids in five nights beginning on the 24/25th, and this effective first operation inflicted damage on the central districts for the loss of twenty one aircraft. KB719 crashed in France, possibly having been hit by a rocket, and F/S Phillis and one of his crew evaded capture, one became a POW and four others were killed. The second raid was even more destructive on the 25/26th, and the final one, on the 28/29th, ran into strong nightfighter activity, and thirty nine Lancasters were shot down. 6 Group went to Hamburg on this night, along with elements of 1 and 8 Groups, and this force lost a further twenty two aircraft, although none from 419 Squadron. The first ten days and nights of August were devoted almost exclusively to flying bomb and oil targets, with tactical support for the ground forces being provided by a thousand aircraft in the Caen area on the night of the 7/8th. It was this last mentioned operation which brought the squadron's first casualty of the month, and this involved KB755, which crashed in France with no survivors from the crew of F/O Walker.

An operation to Brunswick on the 12/13th demonstrated Harris's intentions to get on with what he considered to be the real business of the Command, bombing industrial Germany into submission. It was an experiment to gauge the ability of crews to locate and identify an aiming point on H2s alone, without the presence of Path Finder aircraft to do it for them. It was not a success, and it cost the Command twenty seven Lancasters and Halifaxes. It was back to tactical bombing on the 14th, in support of Canadian forces approaching the Falaise area, and it was on this occasion that Allied positions were bombed in error, and thirteen Canadian soldiers were killed. In preparation for his new night offensive against Germany, Harris launched a thousand aircraft by daylight on the 15th to bomb nine nightfighter airfields in Holland and Belgium. On the following night, he sent two forces to the Baltic coast, one to Stettin and the other to Kiel, the former

outstandingly successful, the latter only partially so. The 22nd brought a change of command, as W/C Pleasance was posted out at the end of a long tour, and the former A Flight commander, S/L Hagerman, was promoted to Wing Commander to step into his shoes. On the night of the Brunswick raid, a smaller force had attempted to destroy the Opel motor works at Rüsselsheim, but failed to do so. A second attempt was made on the 25/26th, and parts of the plant were put temporarily out of action, but most of the valuable machine tools escaped unscathed. On approach to the target, 419 Squadron's KB775 struck another aircraft and plunged towards the ground out of control. Suddenly, it broke up, throwing the pilot, F/O Witwer, clear, and he alone of his crew survived. KB708 ran out of fuel and crashed while trying to land at Boscombe Down in foggy conditions, and F/O Milner and three of his crew were tragically killed, while the remainder sustained injuries. Their squadron colleagues in KB724 were more fortunate on the 27th, when engine failure struck just three minutes after take-off for a V-3 site at Mimoyecques. A successful crash-landing was pulled off by W/O McDonald, and he and his crew were able to walk away. The final attacks of the flying bomb campaign were carried out on the 28th, and little now stood between Harris and a full return to the bombing of Germany.

The gradual shift of emphasis towards Germany would become evident during September, but the main theme of the month was the liberating of the three French ports still in enemy hands, which were desperately needed by the Allies to bring in supplies to keep the advance mobile. Le Havre was the first to be targeted, and six daylight operations were mounted against enemy strong points around it between the 5th and the 11th. 6 Group participated in the last three raids, on the 9th, 10th and 11th, and hours after the final visit, the German garrison surrendered to British forces. Objectives in Germany occupied the Command for almost the next week, before Boulogne became the second port to return to Allied hands after a single raid by seven hundred aircraft on the 17th. A force of sixty four Lancasters and Halifaxes from 6 Group, with PFF Mosquito support, were thwarted in their attempt to knock out a coastal battery on Walcheren in the Scheldt Estuary on the 18th, when poor weather prevented accurate marking. On return, KB735 crash-landed at East Moor after overshooting, but happily, F/L Chalcraft and crew emerged unscathed. KB707 also landed there and remained overnight, before going on to Leeming to pick up some passengers and returning to Middleton-St-George. Another overshoot on landing wrote off the Lancaster, but P/O Weston and the others on board were not hurt. The liberating of Calais began on the 20th, and continued on consecutive days from the 24th to the 28th, after which Canadian forces moved in to take control.

October would bring with it the start of a new Ruhr offensive, but first, 6 Group went to the Norwegian port of Bergen on the 4th, where the formerly French based U-Boats had taken up residence. Although some damage was inflicted on the pens and other marine installations, and some enemy shipping was sunk, it was the town itself which suffered most, and sixty children were killed while sheltering in a school basement. The squadron's KB745 crashed in Scotland during the course of the operation, and F/O Duncan was killed with his entire crew. It was Dortmund which hosted the first raid in the new series against the Ruhr on the 6/7th. What proved to be the largest 6 Group effort

of the war, 293 aircraft, was joined by over two hundred others from 3 and 8 Groups, and severe damage was visited upon the target. Bochum escaped serious damage at the hands of a force made up from 1, 4, 6 and 8 Groups on the 9/10th, and the sole Lancaster loss was 419 Squadron's KB754, which was caught by a nightfighter when leaving the target and exploded, throwing clear the only survivor from the crew of P/O Cohen. This latest assault on the Ruhr moved into top gear on the 14th, with the unleashing of Operation Hurricane, a demonstration to the enemy of the overwhelming superiority of the Allied Air Forces ranged against it. In the early morning, over a thousand aircraft took off for Duisburg, and the 957 which reached their destination unloaded 4,500 tons of bombs into the hapless city. Of the thirteen Lancasters and one Halifax which failed to return, KB800 was from 419 Squadron, and this aircraft blew up over the target after being hit by flak, throwing clear the pilot, F/O Roy, and he alone of his crew survived. That night, the Hurricane force returned to Duisburg in similar numbers, and with a similar payload, to press home the point about superiority. Essen received its visits under Operation Hurricane on the 23/24th and by daylight on the 25th, by which time it had lost its status as a centre of war production. It did, however, claim a 419 Squadron crew during the former, that of S/L McGuffin in KB776, and there were no survivors. A two phase attack on Cologne by a slightly smaller Hurricane force destroyed over 2,200 blocks of flats and numerous other buildings of an industrial and public nature on the 28th, but KB712 fell victim to the defences and crashed in Germany, killing F/L Nelligan and his crew. Follow up raids were mounted on the 30/31st and again twenty four hours later, and further massive destruction took place.

The November account was opened by 6 Group at Oberhausen on the 1/2nd, but the operation was a rare failure for the period. On the way home, an FW190 seriously damaged KB767, wounding two members of the crew, and starting a fire in the navigator's position. The port inner stopped immediately, and the starboard inner followed suit shortly after the Belgian coast was crossed. A temporary loss of control almost sent the Lancaster spinning into the sea, but F/O Cox rescued the situation, and eventually pulled off a crash-landing at Manston, having completed the flight without navigation instruments, intercom and hydraulics, and with an aircraft which was riddled with holes and boasted two burst tyres. In recognition of their fortitude, three DFCs and a DFM were immediately awarded to the pilot, navigator, w/operator and rear gunner. The Hurricane force laid waste to five thousand houses in Düsseldorf on the following night, over four thousand assorted buildings in Bochum on the 4/5th, and caused massive uncatalogued damage in Gelsenkirchen by daylight on the 6th. The 16th was devoted to the annihilation of the three small German towns of Düren, Jülich and Heinsberg, which had the misfortune to stand in front of an American advance between Aachen and the Rhein. Oil related targets dominated the second half of the month, and 6 Group was involved in a highly successful attack on the refinery at Castrop-Rauxel on the 21/22nd, ending its output for the remainder of the war. Not a single 419 Squadron aircraft failed to return from operations during the month, but a tragic accident cost a crew on the 24th. KB785 caught fire over the Bradbury bombing range while training, and subsequently crashed, killing F/O Mansfield and his entire crew.

After such an encouraging month for the squadron in November, December proved to be the sting in the tail of the year. There were no losses from operations to Hagen on the 2/3rd, Karlsruhe on the 4/5th and Soest on the 5/6th, all of which were outstandingly accurate, but a moderately effective raid on Osnabrück on the 6/7th brought the failure to return of KB779, which was lost without trace with the crew of F/O Hyndman. There was little further activity for the group until the 15/16th, when it participated in a very accurate attack on Ludwigshafen, where two important I G Farben chemical plants were badly damaged. Elements of 4, 6 and 8 Groups hit Duisburg again on the 17/18th, and it looked as if 419 Squadron might negotiate the month without adding to its single loss. It was not to be, and while attacking Lohausen airfield near Düsseldorf by daylight on Christmas Eve, KB715 was shot down by flak. F/O Cowtan and his crew successfully abandoned the Lancaster to its fate, but one member of the crew was shot by German troops immediately on landing, while the others were taken into captivity. F/O How and crew were able to celebrate the final wartime Christmas, and then died in the wreckage in Germany of KB738, after it was shot down during a raid on marshalling yards at Opladen on the 27/28th. Two nights later, a 6 Group contingent was joined by others from 1 and 8 Groups to inflict serious damage on the oil refinery at Scholven-Buer. Four Lancasters were lost, and two of them were from 419 Squadron, both suffering remarkably similar ends with identical consequences for the crews involved. KB753 was a victim of flak, and exploded, throwing the rear gunner clear, he alone of P/O Adam's crew surviving. KB765 was likewise hit by flak, but was finished off by a nightfighter and also exploded, catapulting its rear gunner into the night sky to be the sole survivor of F/O McVicar's crew. It was a sad end to what had been a better year for the squadron, and indeed for the Group. The "chop" tag had been cast off, and the Canadians were beginning to earn for themselves a fine reputation for professionalism and efficiency. This was not, however, a time for complacency, and much remained to be done before the tenacious and proud enemy would lay down his arms.

1945

The crews of 6 Group were still enjoying the arrival of the New Year when its first major action took place. At first light on New Year's Morning, the Luftwaffe launched its ill-fated and ill-conceived Operation Bodenplatte, to destroy those elements of the Allied Air Forces which were on the ground at the liberated airfields of France, Holland and Belgium. In return for a reasonable bag, which could be made good by the Allies in a matter of hours, the German day fighter force lost around 250 aircraft, a goodly number of whose pilots were killed, wounded or taken prisoner, and it was a setback from which the Luftwaffe would never recover. Nuremberg had always proved to be a difficult target to hit effectively, but the birthplace of Nazism succumbed to a decisive blow on the 2/3rd, delivered by 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups. The city centre was destroyed along with centuries of its historic heritage, and over 4,600 houses were reduced to rubble, some important factories were severely damaged, and more than eighteen hundred people lost their lives. A famous Lancaster came to grief on return, after faulty hydraulics caused a bad landing, and KB700, Ruhr Express, the first Canadian built Lancaster to enter service, ended up in a heap beyond the runway, and burst into flames. F/L Warner and

crew managed to scramble away before the aircraft was consumed by the fire, but it was a sad way for the old girl to finish her forty ninth operation, particularly as she was due to be retired at fifty, and flown back to Canada. Another 6 Group element was active elsewhere on this night, and assisted in inflicting severe damage on the I G Farben factories at Ludwigshafen. Outbound over liberated territory on the way to Hanover on the evening of the 5th, KB722 fell foul of a gunner in another Lancaster, and was forced to set course for Brussels, before eventually crash-landing at St Quentin with only minor injuries among the crew of P/O Mallen. Further operations during the month took elements of the squadron to Hanau on the 6/7th, Munich on the 7/8th, Saarbrücken on the 13/14th, Leuna and Grevenbroich on the 14/15th, Magdeburg and Zeitz on the 16/17th and Stuttgart on the 28/29th, all but one negotiated by the squadron without loss. The Leuna raid against the oil refinery near Merseburg, carried out in two phases three hours apart, cost the squadron the crews of F/L Tedford and F/O Vatne in KB769 and KB799 respectively, and they were duly posted missing. It was later learned that the former had been set on fire by a nightfighter over Germany while homebound, and only one man had escaped with his life to become a POW. The latter was hit by flak as it departed the target area, and before the Allied lines had been reached, loss of fuel caused engine failure. The pilot was still at the controls when the aircraft crashed, but his crewmates were able to save themselves and fell into enemy hands. W/C Hagerman was posted out on the 26th, to be replaced as commanding officer by W/C Ferguson, who had previously served as a flight commander with 428 Squadron, and he would see the Moosemen through to the end of hostilities.

February began briskly for the Group, which went to Ludwigshafen on the 1/2nd to assist in another damaging raid, and also provided aircraft for a disappointing attack on Mainz on the same night. The only major raid of the war on Wiesbaden resulted in heavy damage on the 2/3rd, but the squadron's KB750 became its first failure to return of the month, and just one man survived from the crew of P/O Martin when the Lancaster was shot down by flak over Germany on the way home. Two nights later, KB787 was not among those returning from Bonn after what turned out to be an ineffective raid. It had collided with 433 Squadron's PA219 over Belgium on the outward journey, and F/L Barlow and his crew were killed, along with all eight men on board the other aircraft. The Churchill inspired series of operations against Germany's eastern cities under Operation Thunderclap was unleashed with catastrophic results on Dresden on the 13/14th, in a two phase attack led by 5 Group. Three hours later, Lancasters of 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups arrived on the scene guided by the fires already burning, and large areas of this beautiful and historic city became engulfed in a firestorm of the most terrible ferocity and proportions, and although estimates of the death toll have been fixed at around fifty thousand people, some commentators believe 135,000 to be a more realistic figure. Thunderclap continued at Chemnitz on the following night, but it escaped serious damage on this occasion. The penultimate heavy raid of the war on Dortmund fell on the city on the 20/21st, and KB804 failed to return to Middleton-St George along with the others. It transpired that a flak hit during the bombing run had caused a severe fire, which forced all but the pilot, F/O Blaney, to abandon the aircraft. He paid the ultimate price for

his selfless act, and one of his colleagues fell to his death when his parachute failed to deploy, but the other five crew members landed safely, and were soon in enemy hands.

March was not destined to be a happy month for 419 Squadron, as the enemy continued to inflict heavy casualties on Bomber Command. The month began with the final raid of the war on the frequently visited city of Mannheim on the 1st. Cologne wilted under another massive attack on the 2nd, and having escaped relatively lightly in mid February, Chemnitz suffered an ordeal by fire on the 5/6th. 419 Squadron's KB845 crashed in Bedfordshire on return from this operation, probably as the result of icing, and F/O Reitlo and his crew were killed. On the 7/8th, Dessau received its first major raid of the war, an accurate assault by elements of 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups, but the relatively high number of eighteen Lancasters failed to return. Among them was KB797 of 419 Squadron, in which F/O MacNeil and four of his crew lost their lives. No further losses were incurred from operations to Hamburg, Essen and Dortmund on the 8/9th, 11th and 12th respectively, the last mentioned by the largest force ever despatched by the Command to a single target of 1108 aircraft. No aircraft were lost from a predominately 6 Group force which all but wiped out the small town of Zweibrücken to block an enemy retreat on the 14/15th, but when the Ruhr town of Hagen was smashed by elements of 4, 6 and 8 Groups on the following night, the defenders claimed two 419 Squadron Lancasters. A nightfighter accounted for KB814 over the Rhein, and F/S Parrish and three of his crew were killed, while three others parachuted over enemy territory, and ultimately evaded capture. F/L McLaughlin and three of his crew survived the demise at the hands of a nightfighter of KB870 over Allied held ground, albeit with injuries, but the remaining three men lost their lives. An oil refinery at Heide near Hemmingstedt was the target for contingents from 1, 6 and 8 Groups on the 20/21st, and it was put out of action for the rest of the war. Just one Lancaster failed to return, KB786, which exploded after a nightfighter attack, throwing clear the sole survivor. Tragically, the crew was that of F/L Millar, who were on the 36th and last operation of their tour. The month ended with a daylight raid on Hamburg, where the specific objective was the Blohm & Voss shipyards. Complete cloud cover prevented any chance of precision, and it developed into a standard area attack which caused considerable damage. The unexpected arrival on the scene of enemy day fighters resulted in the loss of eleven aircraft, including two from 419 Squadron, and the crews of F/L Metivier and F/O Bowes were posted missing in KB761 and KB869 respectively. Both Lancasters were shot down by ME262 jet fighters, the former with no survivors, and the latter with three, but the pilot was among those killed. (Bomber Command Losses Vol 6. W R Chorley).

The bombing war would end for the heavy brigade in April, but there was still time for the Moosemen to lose another two crews. 6 Group provided almost half of the force of over four hundred aircraft for the final raid of the war on Hamburg on the 8/9th. KB752 lost an engine while outbound, but F/O Cram opted to continue to the target, and bombed as briefed. On the way home a second engine caught fire, and the Lancaster began to lose height too quickly for comfort. The crew all took to their parachutes over Allied held territory, and arrived safely on the ground to return home within days. The squadron's final loss of the war occurred on the 13/14th, during an attack on the port area and U-

Boat yards at Kiel. KB866 was believed to have been shot down by a nightfighter, although no trace of the wreckage was found, and F/S McLaren and his crew became the last to be entered in the squadron's wartime Roll of Honour. The squadron's final aircraft casualty came via an undercarriage collapse afflicting KB762 while taxiing during training on the 23rd, but happily, F/L Peters and his crew were unhurt. The squadron operated for the last time on the 25th, when acting as part of a force sent to destroy heavy gun emplacements on the north Frisian island of Wangerooge, which were barring the approaches to Germany's ports.

419 Squadron was one of the mainstays of 6 Group, and contributed massively to its metamorphosis from "Chop" Group to top Group. By war's end, the Canadian Group had proved its worth and silenced the detractors, but this was of course no surprise to the RAF crews and those from the other Dominions who had served alongside Canadians from the start and recognized their quality. It was only the class-ridden attitudes of those at the Ministry and higher echelons of the service that had led to the "Backwoodsmen" tag and uncivilized reputation which attended the influx of volunteers from Canada, but the presence of these men, and those particularly from Australia and New Zealand, was one of the major contributory factors in the development of the spirit which pervaded Bomber Command. 419 Squadron was part of this, and owed much of its own esprit de corps to the superb leadership provided by the likes of Moose Fulton, who were Canadians in the RAF. The squadron's battle honours include all of Bomber Command's major campaigns, and it sent crews on numerous occasions to the hottest spots in the Reich. Essen was visited by the squadron no less than twenty three times, and Duisburg fifteen, while Hamburg and Cologne each played host to the Moose men on thirteen occasions, and Berlin on ten. The squadron also took an active part in the Command's very profitable mining operations, for which the Frisians was the most frequent destination, with nineteen separate visits. Including mines, the squadron delivered in excess of 14,000 tons of bombs during its wartime career, and was at or near the top of all the statistical tables. A total of 618 aircrew were killed or presumed dead, and a further 197 became prisoners of war, while the squadron's gunners were credited with fourteen enemy aircraft shot down. The catalogue of awards to its members included a Victoria Cross, 4 DSOs, 150 DFCs, 3 Bars to DFCs and 35 DFMs. On the 1st of June, ten crews departed Middleton-St-George on the first lap of their journey home to Canada, and they were followed on the 4th by a further ten, and after a period of leave, training began for participation in the Tiger Force, which in the event, was not needed.

The Middleton-St-George Memorial Association perpetuates the memory of 419 Squadron, along with that of 420 and 428 Squadrons, and was formed in 1985 to coincide with the unveiling of a memorial on an area of ground donated by the Airport Hotel at Middleton-St-George, which stands on the site of the wartime officers mess. That inaugural memorial service was attended by some five hundred people, around half of whom were from Canada, and a commemoration service and reunion has been held there each year since. I am indebted to the Association President, Robbie Robson, a former 428 Squadron airman, for providing the above information about the organisation.

STATIONS

MILDENHALL	21.12.41. to 12.08.42.
LEEMING	12.08.42. to 18.08.42.
TOPCLIFFE	18.08.42. to 30.09.42.
CROFT	30.09.42. to 09.11.42.
MIDDLETON-ST-GEORGE	09.11.42. to 01.06.45.

COMMANDING OFFICERS

WING COMMANDER J FULTON DSO DFC AFC	21.12.41. to 29.07.42.
SQUADRON LEADER WOLFE (Temp)	29.07.42. to 05.08.42.
WING COMMANDER AP WALSH DFC AFC	05.08.42. to 03.09.42.
SQUADRON LEADER J D PATTISON (Temp)	03.09.42. to 08.09.42.
WING COMMANDER M M FLEMING DSO DFC	08.09.42. to 08.10.43.
WING COMMANDER G A McMURDY	11.10.43. to 23.10.43.
WING COMMANDER W P PLEASANCE DFC*	25.10.43. to 21.08.44.
WING COMMANDER D C HAGERMAN DFC*	22.08.44. to 25.01.45.
WING COMMANDER C M E FERGUSON	26.01.45. to 06.08.45.

AIRCRAFT

WELLINGTON IC	01.42. to 11.42.
WELLINGTON III	02.42. to 11.42.
HALIFAX II	11.42. to 04.44.
LANCASTER X	03.44. to 09.45.

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SECTION 2



OPERATIONAL RECORD

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OPERATIONAL RECORD

OPERATIONS	SORTIES	AIRCRAFT LOSSES	% LOSSES
354	4293	129	3.0

CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS

BOMBING	MINING	OTHER
299	51	4

WELLINGTON

OPERATIONS	SORTIES	AIRCRAFT LOSSES	% LOSSES
88	648	24	3.7

CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS

BOMBING	MINING	OTHER
67	18	4

11 of the above Wellington operations were flown under 4 Group following the departure from 3 Group on 12.8.42. The number of 4 Group sorties is not known, but 9 Wellingtons were lost as a result of operations, and 3 others were written off in non-operational incidents.

HALIFAX

OPERATIONS	SORTIES	AIRCRAFT LOSSES	% LOSSES
139	1616	66	4.1

CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS

BOMBING	MINING	OTHER
105	33	1

LANCASTER

OPERATIONS	SORTIES	AIRCRAFT LOSSES	% LOSSES
127	2029	39	1.9

CATEGORY OF OPERATIONS

ALL BOMBING

TABLE OF STATISTICS

Out of 42 Wellington squadrons

22nd equal (with 37Sqn) highest number of Wellington overall operations in Bomber Command.

24th highest number of Wellington sorties in Bomber Command.

22nd highest number of Wellington operational losses in Bomber Command.

Out of 32 Halifax squadrons

21st highest number of Halifax overall operations in Bomber Command.

22nd highest number of Halifax sorties in Bomber Command.

9th highest number of Halifax operational losses in Bomber Command.

Out of 59 Lancaster squadrons

38th highest number of Lancaster overall operations in Bomber Command.

37th highest number of Lancaster sorties in Bomber Command.

34th highest number of Lancaster operational losses in Bomber Command.

Out of 28 squadrons in 3 Group

22nd highest number of overall operations in 3 Group.

21st highest number of sorties in 3 Group.

18th equal (with 37Sqn) highest number of aircraft operational losses in 3 Group.

Out of 18 Wellington squadrons in 3 Group

14th equal highest number of Wellington overall operations in 3 Group.

14th highest number of Wellington sorties in 3 Group.

12th equal (with 37Sqn) highest number of Wellington operational losses in 3 Group.

Out of 12 Wellington squadrons in 4 Group

10th highest number of Wellington overall operations in 4 Group.

Number of sorties not known.

7th highest number of Wellington operational losses in 4 Group.

Out of 15 squadrons in 6 Group

2nd equal (with 408Sqn) highest number of overall operations in 6 Group.

Highest number of sorties in 6 Group.

Highest number of aircraft operational losses in 6 Group.

Out of 15 Halifax squadrons in 6 Group

10th highest number of Halifax overall operations in 6 Group.

11th highest number of Halifax sorties in 6 Group.

Highest number of Halifax operational losses in 6 Group.

Out of 11 Lancaster squadrons in 6 Group

Highest number of Lancaster overall operations in 6 Group.

Highest number of Lancaster sorties in 6 Group.

2nd highest number of Lancaster operational losses in 6 Group.

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SECTION 3



AIRCRAFT LISTING

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419 SQUADRON.

WELLINGTON. From January 1942 to November 1942.

L4356 From 214Sqn. To GRU.
R1801 From 101Sqn. To 12 OTU.
X3201 From 149Sqn. To 22 OTU.
X3277 VR-F From 9Sqn. To 101Sqn.
X3308 VR-O Ditched off Suffolk coast on return from Bremen 14.9.42.
X3344 From 115Sqn. To 17 OTU.
X3357 VR-T To 196Sqn.
X3359 VR-N From 75Sqn. FTR Essen 16/17.6.42.
X3360 VR-R FTR Essen 5/6.8.42.
X3390 From 75Sqn. To 214Sqn and back. To 57Sqn and back. To 427Sqn.
X3404 To 16 OTU.
X3416 VR-J From 115Sqn. FTR Duisburg 13/14.7.42.
X3420 From 75Sqn. To 426Sqn.
X3451 From 150Sqn. To 75Sqn.
X3467 VR-N FTR Hamburg 8/9.4.42.
X3470 VR-E From 9Sqn. To 23 OTU.
X3477 VR-G From 75Sqn. FTR Lübeck 28/29.3.42.
X3480 From 429Sqn. FTR Warnemünde 8/9.5.42.
X3481 To 25 OTU.
X3483 VR-S To 23 OTU.
X3484 VR-O FTR Dortmund 14/15.4.42.
X3486 VR-U FTR Essen 5/6.6.42.
X3488 VR-H From 75Sqn. FTR Hamburg 28/29.7.42.
X3541 To 101Sqn.
X3556 VR-L Crashed in Huntingdonshire while training 6.7.42.
X3562 To 427Sqn.
X3563 VR-T To 427Sqn.
X3592 VR-E From 115Sqn. To 23 OTU.
X3659 VR-B To 427Sqn.
X3699 VR-V To 426Sqn.
X3703 VR-Q FTR Warnemünde 8/9.5.42.
X3711 VR-R FTR Karlsruhe 2/3.9.42.
X3712 VR-D FTR Saarbrücken 29/30.7.42.
X3715 VR-G FTR Gennevilliers 29/30.5.42.
X3717 VR-C FTR Stuttgart 6/7.5.42.
X3723 VR-H FTR Essen 16/17.6.42.
X3726 To 57Sqn.
X3727 To 27 OTU.
X3752 To 427Sqn.

X3796 VR-C Crashed in Lincolnshire during air-test 15.9.42.
X3840 VR-J FTR Warnemünde 8/9.5.42.
X3873 To 427Sqn.
X9748 From 57Sqn. To 23 OTU.
X9757 From 75Sqn. To 218Sqn.
X9819 From 101Sqn. To 18 OTU.
X9874 From 57Sqn. To 12 OTU.
X9920 From 101Sqn. To 1474Flt.
X9975 From 20 OTU. Returned to 20 OTU.
Z1053 VR-F From 57Sqn. To 23 OTU.
Z1067 VR-C From 57Sqn. To 23 OTU.
Z1077 VR-P From 75Sqn. Crashed on landing at Mildenhall on return from Essen 10.3.42.

Z1083 VR-O From 75Sqn. To 23 OTU.
Z1091 VR-A From 57Sqn. FTR from shipping strike (Channel Dash) 12.2.42.
Z1095 VR-Q From 101Sqn. To 214Sqn.
Z1145 VR-A From 57Sqn. Ditched off Spurn Head on return from Hamburg 15/16.1.42.

Z1146 VR-E From 101Sqn. FTR from shipping strike (Channel Dash) 12.2.42.
Z1562 VR-N From Tempsford. FTR from mining sortie 17/18.5.42.
Z1572 VR-Q From 75Sqn. To 427Sqn.
Z1597 VR-T Crashed in Wiltshire on return from mining sortie 6/7.7.42.
Z1599 To 426Sqn.
Z1604 To 427Sqn.
Z1623 VR-V FTR Aachen 5/6.10.42.
Z1626 VR-G To 427Sqn.
Z1676 To 427Sqn.
Z1680 From 29 OTU. To 426Sqn.
Z1727 To 156Sqn.
Z8800 From 57Sqn. To 12 OTU.
Z8899 From 99Sqn. To 22 OTU.
Z8964 From 99Sqn. To 20 OTU.
Z8967 VR-E From 99Sqn. To 21 OTU.
Z8980 From 99Sqn. To 20 OTU.
Z8981 VR-H From 57Sqn. To 20 OTU.
Z9757 VR-N
Z9894 VR-G
Z9920 VR-Z

BJ602 VR-J FTR Bremen 4/5.9.42.
BJ604 VR-A To 427Sqn.
BJ643 To 156Sqn.
BJ668 VR-X To 427Sqn.
BJ729 VR-R FTR Aachen 5/6.10.42.
BJ778 To 427Sqn.
BJ886 To 427Sqn.

BJ887 VR-H Destroyed at Topcliffe when struck by 405Sqn Halifax BB212 returning from Düsseldorf 11.9.42.
BJ919 To 426Sqn.
BK268 To 427Sqn.
BK269 VR-C FTR Krefeld 2/3.10.42.
BK270 FTR Cologne 15/16.10.42.
BK276 To 427Sqn.
BK335 VR-Y Crashed on approach to Croft while training 10.10.42.
BK343 To 427Sqn.
BK364 To 427Sqn.
BK389 To 427Sqn.
DF664 VR-E FTR Kiel 13/14.10.42.
DF665 VR-Q FTR Saarbrücken 28/29.8.42.
DV509 VR-S From 101Sqn. To 214Sqn.

HALIFAX.

From November 1942 to April 1944.

W1019 From 405Sqn. To 1659CU.
W1235 From 460Sqn. To 1666CU.
W1271 VR-P From 10Sqn. FTR Krefeld 21/22.6.43.
W7817 VR-A From 460Sqn. FTR Dortmund 4/5.5.43.
W7857 VR-O From 102Sqn. FTR from mining sortie 9/10.1.43.
W7869 From 10Sqn. To 1666CU.
BB283 VR-O FTR St Nazaire 28/29.3.43.
BB323 VR-R FTR Aachen 13/14.7.43.
BB327 VR-Q FTR Duisburg 8/9.4.43.
BB376 VR-S FTR Bochum 29/30.9.43.
BB384 Crash-landed near Middleton-St-George on return from Dortmund 24.5.43.
DT500 From 10Sqn. To 1659CU.
DT540 VR-C From 102Sqn. Crashed on landing at Middleton-St-George while training 30.11.42.
DT548 From 102Sqn. To 1659CU.
DT615 VR-P FTR from mining sortie 27/28.2.43.
DT616 VR-K FTR Bochum 12/13.6.43.
DT617 VR-G FTR Essen 3/4.4.43.
DT619 To 1658CU.
DT623 Under carriage collapsed at Middleton-St-George 30.1.43.
DT629 From 77Sqn. To 1659CU.
DT630 VR-T FTR Hamburg 3/4.2.43.
DT634 VR-E FTR Berlin 27/28.3.43.
DT639 VR-B FTR from mining sortie 18/19.2.43.
DT641 VR-R FTR Berlin 1/2.3.43.
DT646 VR-C FTR Essen 5/6.3.43.
DT669 To 1668CU.

DT672 VR-D FTR Bochum 13/14.5.43.
DT689 To 1666CU.
DT731 VR-M From 158Sqn. FTR Berlin 20/21.1.44.
DT794 VR-Y FTR Dortmund 4/5.5.43.
DT798 VR-T FTR Hamburg 2/3.8.43.
HR780 From 158Sqn. To 1666CU.
HR910VR-R From 405Sqn. FTR from mining sortie 12/13.2.44.
HR912VR-F From 35Sqn. FTR Vaires 29/30.3.44.
HR925 From 35Sqn. To 428Sqn.
HX162VR-X FTR Berlin 20/21.1.44.
HX168 From 35Sqn. To 1659CU.
HX189VR-J FTR Laon 22/23.4.44.
JB791 VR-X FTR Duisburg 12/13.5.43.
JB793 VR-X From 77Sqn. FTR Wuppertal 29/30.5.43.
JB805 VR-B FTR Wuppertal 29/30.5.43.
JB859 To 1666CU.
JB860 Crashed while landing at Middleton-St-George following early return from Berlin 29/30.3.43.

JB861 VR-C FTR Duisburg 12/13.5.43.
JB862 VR-U FTR Dortmund 23/24.5.43.
JB900 VR-E To 1666CU.
JB912 VR-B FTR Stettin 20/21.4.43.
JB917 From 405Sqn. To 1666CU.
JB923 VR-Q FTR from mining sortie 28/29.4.43.
JB929 VR-J To 1659CU.
JB965 VR-W Crash-landed at Middleton-St George following air-test 22.8.43.
JB967 VR-F From 429Sqn via 1659CU. Crash-landed during final approach to Middleton-St-George on return from Kassel 3/4.10.43.

JB969 From 429Sqn. To 1659CU.
JB971 VR-X From 429Sqn. FTR Mannheim 23/24.9.43.
JD113 VR-Z FTR Bochum 13/14.5.43.
JD114 VR-O/R To 1666CU and back. FTR Leipzig 19/20.2.44.
JD143 VR-A FTR Düsseldorf 11/12.6.43.
JD147 VR-C FTR Wuppertal 24/25.6.43.
JD158 VR-D FTR Peenemünde 17/18.8.43.
JD159 VR-Y FTR Cologne 3/4.7.43.
JD163 VR-N FTR Peenemünde 17/18.8.43.
JD204 VR-L FTR Frankfurt 4/5.10.43.
JD210 VR-S FTR Mannheim/Ludwigshaven 5/6.9.43.
JD212 From 429Sqn. To 1666CU.
JD214 VR-U FTR Wuppertal 24/25.6.43.
JD215 VR-B FTR Cologne 28/29.6.43.
JD256 VR-A FTR Essen 25/26.7.43.
JD257 VR-F FTR Mannheim 9/10.8.43.
JD258 VR-K FTR Wuppertal 24/25.6.43.

JD270 VR-P FTR Berlin 31.8/1.9.43.
JD325 VR-X To 429Sqn.
JD331 VR-K FTR Berlin 31.8/1.9.43.
JD372 From 429Sqn. To 1666CU.
JD381 VR-R Damaged beyond repair during operation to Mönchengladbach 30/31.8.43.

JD382 VR-A FTR Kassel 22/23.10.43.
JD410 VR-V FTR Mannheim/Ludwigshaven 5/6.9.43.
JD420 VR-T/D FTR Magdeburg 21/22.1.44.
JD456 VR-B FTR Berlin 15/16.2.44.
JD457 VR-F FTR Mannheim 23/24.9.43.
JD458 VR-C FTR Peenemünde 17/18.8.43.
JD459 VR-Q Crash-landed at Middleton-St-George following early return from Le Mans 13.3.44.

JD463 VR-D FTR Frankfurt 4/5.10.43.
JD464 VR-N FTR Berlin 31.8/1.9.43.
JD466 VR-E FTR Magdeburg 21/22.1.44.
JD468 VR-W Ditched in North Sea on return from mining sortie 22/23.3.44.
JN953 To 428Sqn.
JN954 VR-R From 428Sqn. FTR Montzen 27/28.4.44.
JP111 To 3 OAPU.
JP112 VR-R Crash-landed at Middleton-St-George while training 19.12.43.
JP119 VR-O FTR Berlin 28/29.1.44.
JP125 VR-L Crash-land at Ford following early return from Aulnoye 25/26.3.44.

JP130 To 428Sqn.
JP131 VR-S To 1666CU.
JP200 VR-G FTR from mining sortie 25/26.2.44.
JP201 VR-P To 428Sqn.
JP202 VR-T FTR from mining sortie 18/19.4.44.
JP203 VR-M To 428Sqn.
JP204 VR-E To 428Sqn.
LW231 VR-F FTR Berlin 22/23.11.43.
LW238 To 1658CU.
LW239 VR-K FTR Mannheim 18/19.11.43.
LW240 VR-S FTR Modane 16/17.9.43.
LW242 VR-N FTR Stuttgart 26/27.11.43.
LW243 To CRD.
LW279 From 428Sqn. To 1666CU.
LW282 VR-Y FTR Berlin 29/30.12.43.
LW325 VR-H To 428Sqn.
LW327 VR-A From 428Sqn. FTR Leipzig 19/20.2.44.
LW328 VR-L FTR Mannheim 18/19.11.43.
NA587 To 1666CU.

LANCASTER.**From March 1944.**

KB700 VR-Z From 405Sqn. Crashed on landing at Middleton-St-George on return from Nuremberg 2/3.1.45.

KB701 VR-B Crashed in Yorkshire during night training flight 15/16.5.44

KB704 VR-Y Crashed at Middleton-St George on return from Gent 10/11.5.44.
To 428Sqn.

KB706 VR-A FTR Aachen 24/25.5.44.

KB707 VR-W Crashed on landing at Middleton-St-George while in transit 19.9.44.

KB708 VR-E From Rolls Royce. Crashed while trying to land at Boscombe Down on return from Rüsselsheim 25/26.8.44.

KB710 VR-W FTR Louvain 12/13.5.44.

KB711 VR-C FTR St Ghislain 1/2.5.44.

KB712 VR-B/E/L FTR Cologne 28.10.44.

KB713 VR-X FTR Louvain 12/13.5.44.

KB714 VR-Y FTR Cambrai 12/13.6.44.

KB715 VR-T FTR Lohausen Airfield 24.12.44.

KB716 VR-E/D Crashed on landing at Middleton-St-George while training 7.5.44.

KB717 VR-E FTR Dortmund 22/23.5.44.

KB718 VR-J FTR Villeneuve-St-Georges 4/5.7.44.

KB719 VR-T FTR Stuttgart 24/25.7.44.

KB720 VR-P To 1664CU.

KB721 VR-B/E From A&AEE.

KB722 VR-A Crash-landed at St Quentin after being hit by friendly fire 6.1.45.

KB723 VR-U FTR Villeneuve-St-Georges 4/5.7.44.

KB724 VR-K Crashed in Yorkshire when bound for Mimoyecques 27.8.44.

KB726 VR-A FTR Cambrai 12/13.6.44.

KB727 VR-H FTR Villeneuve-St-Georges 4/5.7.44.

KB728 VR-V FTR Sterkrade 16/17.6.44.

KB731 VR-S FTR Cambrai 12/13.6.44.

KB732 VR-X

KB733 VR-G

KB734 VR-F FTR Sterkrade 16/17.6.44.

KB735 VR-O Crashed on landing at East Moor on return from Walcheren 18.9.44.
To 1660CU.

KB736 VR-A/M

KB738 VR-D FTR Opladen 27/28.12.44.

KB745 VR-V Crashed in Scotland during the course of an operation to Bergen 4.10.44.

KB746

KB748 VR-O

KB750 VR-N FTR Wiesbaden 2/3.2.45.

KB752 VR-S/V Abandoned over Allied territory on return from Hamburg 8/9.4.45.

KB753 VR-L FTR Scholven-Buer 29/30.12.44.

KB754 VR-C	FTR Bochum 9/10.10.44.
KB755 VR-F	FTR Caen 7/8.8.44.
KB761 VR-H	FTR Hamburg 31.3.45.
KB762 VR-J	Damaged in taxiing accident at Middleton-St-George while training 23.4.45.
KB765 VR-M/Q	FTR Scholven-Buer 29/30.12.44.
KB767 VR-U	Crash-landed at Manston on return from Oberhausen 1/2.11.44.
KB769 VR-I	FTR Leuna 14/15.1.45.
KB772 VR-R	
KB774 VR-P	To 431Sqn.
KB775 VR-Y	FTR Rüsselsheim 25/26.8.44.
KB776 VR-F	FTR Essen 23.10.44.
KB779 VR-B	FTR Osnabrück 6/7.12.44.
KB783 VR-Z	From 428Sqn.
KB785 VR-Y	Crashed in County Durham while training 24.11.44.
KB786 VR-P	FTR Heide 20/21.3.45.
KB787 VR-M	FTR Bonn 4/5.2.45.
KB788	To 431Sqn.
KB796	To 431Sqn.
KB797 VR-K	FTR Dessau 7.3.45.
KB799 VR-W	FTR Leuna 14/15.1.45.
KB800 VR-C	FTR Duisburg 14.10.44.
KB802	To 431Sqn.
KB804 VR-E	FTR Dortmund 20/21.2.45.
KB807	To 431Sqn.
KB809	To 431Sqn.
KB811	To 431Sqn.
KB814 VR-N	From 434Sqn. FTR Hagen 15/16.3.45.
KB815	To 431Sqn.
KB817	To 431Sqn.
KB824	To 434Sqn.
KB830	To 434Sqn.
KB831	To 431Sqn.
KB832	To 434Sqn.
KB833	To 434Sqn.
KB839 VR-D	From 431Sqn.
KB841	
KB844	To 434Sqn.
KB845 VR-L	Crashed in Buckinghamshire on return from Chemnitz 5/6.3.45.
KB850	To 434Sqn.
KB851	From 428Sqn.
KB854 VR-T	
KB855	To 428Sqn.

KB857
KB860
KB865VR-E
KB866VR-M FTR Kiel 13/14.4.45.
KB869VR-Q FTR Hamburg 31.3.45.
KB870VR-K FTR Hagen 15/16.3.45.
KB871 To 431Sqn.
KB875VR-Z
KB878VR-I To 428Sqn.
KB884VR-K From 434Sqn.
KB888 From 428Sqn. To 431Sqn.
KB892
KB896
KB909
KB915 From 431Sqn.
KB921 No operations.
KB999VR-M No operations. To 405Sq.

HEAVIST SINGLE LOSS

24/25.06.43. Wuppertal. 3 Halifaxes FTR. (One 428Sqn Crew).
 17/18.08.43. Peenemünde. 3 Halifaxes FTR.
 31.08/01.09.43. Berlin. 3 Halifaxes FTR.
 12/13.06.44. Cambrai. 3 Lancasters FTR.
 04/05.07.44. Villeneuve-St-George. 3 Lancasters FTR.

SECTION 4



KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

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

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



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SECTION 5



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SECTION 6



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