

No. 101 Squadron (KX) Bomber Command - "F for Freddie"

1/2 June 42

Mission 11/ TGT - Lubeck, Zone 8.

Formation - Last 1/3.

Crew:

| Name | Rank | Position | |
|------------------------|-----------------|---|---|
| Oliver Davies | Pilot Officer | Pilot | |
| Henry "Harry" Ponsonby | Warrant Officer | Nav/Bomb Aimer (Conspicuous Gallantry Cross 6th Mission) | |
| Richard Watkins | Flight Sergeant | Observer/Nose Gun | |
| Thomas Stanley | Flight Sergeant | Wireless Operator | |
| William Bedford | Sergeant | Waist Gunner | (.5 JU-88C6 - 10th Mission) |
| Giles Corbyn | Sergeant | Tail Gunner | (1Bf-110 Kill-4th Mission) (.5 JU-88C6 - 10th Mission) |

From Oliver Davies' 30 May Diary entry:

Well, so much for being a "Raid Leader" and flying target marking missions for the Group. It looks like we are back to flying in the LAST 1/3 of the bomber stream again. "Freddie" stood down after the last "Raid Leader" mission. We (the crew) honed our flying and night navigation skills with several practice "Raid Leader" missions around the UK and attended training classes at Group. We had heard unofficially that "Bomber" Harris was opposed to any special units being formed within Bomber Command and "Raid Leaders" was his answer to forming a special group of Pathfinders... Rumors are running rampant that he has been overruled by the Air Ministry and there WILL be a Path Finder Group formed! Maybe this is the confirmation of that rumor... Who Knows???

From Oliver Davies' 2 June Diary entry:

101 Squadron was scheduled to fly its next mission to Lubeck Germany on 1/2 June. 101 Squadron was flying in the last 1/3 of the bomber stream... Hopefully some other Group's "Raid Leaders" would get the target marked properly.

We "stood to" for the afternoon briefings and our evening meal before we "kitted up". We performed the usual "taboo ritual" at "Freddie's" tail wheel and then boarded. The weather was mild with a full moon which would make us stand out for the Jerry's tonight... I was feeling a little tense as we ran down the takeoff checklists... "Freddie" would be last to go this evening... I could feel a little "stutter" in "Freddie's" port engine as it warmed to flying temperature... Nothing I could put my finger on but it hadn't been there during our last training flight yesterday ... I could feel my gut tighten but could not identify anything that would cause me to believe we could abort the mission... my gut tightened a little more...

Then we were airborne! ... WO "Harry" Ponsonby our navigator and I had discussed it and we decided to make a run across the channel at low altitude level like usual and see if we could slide

into Germany after the Jerry night fighters were low on fuel and out of ammo. We would be over water until we reached zone 6 and "Harry" was certain that with the weather forecast he could get a good navigation fix for me.

T/SGT Thomas Stanley our wireless operator advised there was no "Recall Signal" as we passed thru Zone 3. I climbed "Freddie" to high altitude in Zone 4 to keep the Gee signal coming so "Harry" could get that navigation fix. Our luck seemed to be holding thru the first 4 zones... "Freddie's" engines were purring quite nicely...

(All of our mechanical failure die roll checks were ok).

The moon was full and it was a nice night for flying. Jerry must have been busy with all the "traffic" ahead of us because if he even saw us he didn't vector any night fighters our way.

(All die rolls on Table 4.5 were less than 5 even with the +1 modifier for flying in the last 1/3 of the bomber stream.)

Then it happened! ... As we entered Zone 5, there was a definite "stutter" in "Freddie's" port engine ... I could feel the power drop off... the engine RPMs dropped on the gauge... My heart leaped into my throat and I could feel my guys tighten... And then the engine caught and the RPMs came back up... Harry's head popped up next to my right shoulder and said "What Did YOU DO?"...

"Nothing!" I replied ... Then port engine did "it" again... Ponsonby said "Let me check it!" and dropped out of sight...

By now I was sweating profusely ... While I was checking all the gauges, the port engine sputtered and wound down just as if it had be shutdown... "Harry's" head popped back into view... "It's a fuel transfer problem!" he said... "I tried to do a hand transfer and that failed too!"

Now my stomach had really tightened up! We were in DEEP SH!T! ... We were out over the ocean with a fuel issue... I had visions of floating around in a raft for days hoping to be picked up by a ship! ... I blinked several times and got myself under control...

Trying to sound calm I say... "Alright Harry... go down there again and see if you can get some fuel transferred ... let me know how far we can fly." I said.

I got on the intercom and informed the crew. I immediately "leaned back" the fuel mixture to the starboard engine. We were in the high altitude level so I put "Freddie's" nose down a bit to trade height for distance and use less fuel to keep us flying ... I did a 180 degree turn and told Watkins our Observer to jettison the bomb load...

Ponsonby stuck his head up and said "No Luck" on the second hand pumped fuel transfer attempt... He said he thought with conservative flying we MIGHT make the English coast... Maybe!" We exchanged looks and he went forward to help Watkins dump the bombs... I told the crew on the intercom to prepare to throw out anything we didn't need to lighten the load...

Just then "SGT Corbyn our tail gunner came up on the intercom and said he saw a night fighter circling around above and to the rear of us... We must have been spotted by the German Freya and Wurzburg radars...

(We failed the spotting roll on Table 4.5 when we re-entered Zone 4. Now we had a night fighter around looking for us. Fortunately, after the die roll modifiers we managed to roll 7 on Table 5-6, so the night fighter never saw us. Whew!)

"Freddie" continued southwest, leaving a trail of machine guns and ammo crates and other things that could be thrown out to lighten the load and give us more flying time... even the chemical "Loo" when over the side.

(There were no more mechanical failures and no more sighting by German Radar...)

"Freddie" was flying at about 500 feet altitude when we crossed over the English coastline ... way too low to jump now, so the parachutes joined the trail of equipment as we headed for an emergency airstrip called "Fighter One". Ponsonby had given me a straight in heading for the nearest place we could put "Freddie" down...

I lowered the gear and turned "Freddie" into the wind with the starboard engine cutting in and out from fuel starvation

Just as the wheels touched down, "Freddie's" one remaining engine quit running ... The silence was deafening! I let "Freddie" roll to a stop and then I just sat there trying to get my breathing and heart rate back under control....

There were no bombing results as we aborted the mission from a mechanical failure.

There was no night fighter contact to report.

We spent the day at the emergency field and our Eerk crew arrived to repair Freddie. Our Eerk said it looked like a failed transfer pump combined with contaminated fuel that caused the problem. "Freddie's" damage will be repaired by the next mission.

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Plane Name: "F for Freddie"

