

No. 101 Squadron (KX) Bomber Command - "F for Freddie"
01/02 Apr 42
Mission 06/ TGT - Dortmund, Zone 6. (101 Squadron stood down for Mission 5)
Formation - Front 1/3.

Crew:

Name	Rank	Position
Oliver Davies	Pilot Officer	Pilot
Henry "Harry" Ponsonby	Warrant Officer	Nav/Bomb Aimer
Richard Watkins	Flight Sergeant	Observer/Nose Gun
George Blackwood*	Flight Sergeant	Wireless Operator
Edward Neville*	Sergeant	Waist Gunner
Giles Corbyn	Sergeant	Tail Gunner 1Bf-110 Kill 4th Mission

* - KIA

Narrative from Oliver Davies' Diary:

March 31st entry: The Squadron stood down for eight days after we returned from Kiel. We all got leave and I was able to spend five Glorious Days with Miss Sue Ellen Swift at Downton Abby. It was a a great time and I feel really relaxed. What a Lady she is... I just got back on base a few hours ago. I visited SGT Neville to see how he was doing. He was released from the hospital on Monday the 30th. He is doing fine and will be available to fly on this upcoming mission to Dortmund on April Fool's Day! Boy... I hope Jerry will not have any bad tricks to play on us... Uh-oh... The Ops Sergeant just stuck his head in and said there is an Officer's Call right now for the Dortmund mission...

April 2nd 1942 Entry:

APRIL FOOL'S DAY! It was a Bomber's Moon ... full and bright... I should have know that was a bad omen.. But, the mission started out so good...

"Stormy" our weather guy was right... We had 50% cloud cover over the Channel, Ground fog and Haze in the Netherlands, and then it cleared off just before the target. We never saw a night fighter going in and the searchlights were a long ways away from us. My stomach settled down and I was beginning to enjoy the flight!

We picked up a bit of ground fog as we made the IP turn on the target run to Dortmund, but "Harry" Ponsonby was good! He dropped those bombs right on target.... There was very little flak over Dortmund and everything was going smoothly ... I was beginning to think we were home free as I could see the 100% Cloud Cover coming up in the next zone. I had just made the turn for home in the target zone when "Harry" came up from below and said "It was a bit of a milk run wasn't it?"

That's when All Hell Broke Loose! A searchlight flicker by and came back to lock onto "Freddie" and then a massive barrage of Flak exploded around us... I could hear was Jerry laughing in my head, saying "APRIL FOOL... WE GOT YOU!"

And they DID get us! ... I tried evasive action but they had us locked up good... Several very close Flak bursts exploded around "Freddie"... the last one was a big one and went off right under "Freddie's" belly... I swear, I could hear him groan like he was punched in the gut as he was boosted several hundred feet upward from the force of the blast...

Hot shrapnel scythed thru "Freddie" smashing several instruments on the panel in front of me and tearing holes in "Freddie's" fabric skin and lattice framework... I put his nose down and began another corkscrew turn... "Freddie" sluggishly followed my commands... The heavy cloud cover was so agonizingly slow in coming closer...

Then I heard someone yell "FIRE!" ... "Harry" Ponsonby pushed past me moving toward the rear section with a fire extinguisher in hand... I could smell smoke in the cockpit!

THEN A STREAM OF TRACERS PASSED OVER MY CANOPY!

Instinctively I ducked and then I started to roll right and dive... the stream of cannon shells merged into "Freddie's" body and I heard the muffled explosions of what sounded like 20mm cannon shells ... one went off in the bulkhead behind me... The explosion stunned me for a moment and in that span of time "Freddie" managed to right himself and plunged into a billowing white cloud!

Somehow we lost the searchlights and the nightfighter that had fired the 20mm cannon shells into us...

I was just getting my wits about me when "Harry" stuck his head up next to me and asked me how bad I was hurt... I said "I'm not hurt!" ... "Harry" pointed to my right arm and said "You're bleeding..." Looking down I saw my shoulder and forearm were covered in blood. Blood was dripping on the cockpit deck... That is when the PAIN started!

"Harry" got the the bleeding stopped while I gripped "Freddie's" wheel ... I'm sure my finger prints are still imbedded in it!

While he worked on my arm, "Harry" told me what happened aft... SGT Ed Neville was operating the camera for the bomb run when the last large Flak burst exploded... He took a lot of the explosive force and shrapnel... He was killed instantly and it was quite messy back there. A small fire started and "Harry" got it put out with the fire extinguisher. SGT Corbyn called the nightfighter but I must have missed the call... The cannon shells from his 20mm burst hit the tail assembly and into the rear centre section ... F/SGT George Blackwood, our radio operator had come aft to help put out the fire... When the nightfighter hit us, he took over the waist gun station and engaged the nightfighter... The nightfighter got him with his second pass...

It was a long and ugly flight back for me ... It took me a bit more than 2 hours to coax "Freddie" back to England. We made it with a bumpy landing and "Harry" helping me get "Freddie" on the ground.... I lost a lot of blood...

The medics on the ambulance crew got me loaded aboard and took me right to the hospital... The Doctors took an inch long shrapnel splinter out of the heavy muscle mass of my right shoulder... I had a 3 inch long gash that took a dozen or so stitches to close up too. They gave me the shell splinter as a souvenir and I have it here on the desk... I will tape it to the page entry for today.

A second ambulance took SGT Neville and F/SGT Blackwood to the morgue ... we will be arranging funeral services for them soon.

The "Doc" said I would need some pain killers ... I told them I had a bottle of Scotch in my quarters ... He smiled and said if I needed something stronger to let him know. I have half of the bottle left as I write this... I still have to write letters home for Neville and Blackwood but I will do that after my "pain killer" wears off a bit ...

Later...

WO Henry "Harry" Ponsonby was awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross in recognition of acts of conspicuous gallantry during active operations against the enemy in the air operation against Dortmund, Germany on 1/2 Apr 1942.

SGT Neville and F/SGT Blackwood were posthumously awarded Distinguished Flying Crosses in recognition of exemplary gallantry during active operations against the enemy in the air operation against Dortmund, Germany on 1/2 Apr 1942.

All three Airmen were mentioned in dispatches (MID) in an official report written by a superior officer and sent to the high command, which described their meritorious actions in the face of the enemy in the air operation against Dortmund, Germany on 1/2 Apr 1942.

Mission Stats:

SGT Edward Neville and F/SGT George Blackwood were Killed in Action and awarded Posthumous Distinguished Flying Crosses in recognition of exemplary gallantry.

WO Henry "Harry" Ponsonby was awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross in recognition of acts of conspicuous gallantry.

Our replacement crewmembers are:

Thomas Stanley	Flight Sergeant	Wireless Operator
William Bedford	Sergeant	Waist Gunner

The bombing photo showed that we were ON TARGET with 20% (2d6=7) hitting the target.

The Senior Erk said "Freddie" might be repaired and ready for the next mission, but if not he would have the "Hanger Queen" ready to go for us.

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Plane Name: "F for Freddie"

