

For those of you following Steve Dixon's Target For Tonight Campaign game, the NEW second campaign has moved forward in time a year to 1943. It is now 24/25 July 1943 and No. 101 Squadron is heading for Hamburg Germany in a Maximum Effort raid on that city as the first mission of this new campaign.

Many of you have closely followed the exploits of "F for Freddie" and his crew in the first campaign. We are closing that chapter on "Freddie" as he is a twin engine Wellington Bomber and I will be flying a new bomber type in this next campaign. Since many of you expressed a keen interest in "Freddie" and the crew, I did not want to leave "Freddie's" followers without an ending to his story. So we will pick up with Oliver Davies diary entries after Mission 19 to Mannheim on July 22/23rd 1942 and tell "F for Freddie's" story leading up to the Hamburg Mission in July of 1943..

Target For Tonight was designed with the idea of giving the player many options to fly different mission types in the game. We will be exploring one mission type that has not received a lot of attention in the campaign game so far... Rule 4.8 - Decoy Mission or "Spoof Raid". It can be selected as a mission type or you can continue a Mission Recall by rolling it on Table 4.2A.

This AAR is being posted in Steve Dixon's new 2nd Campaign as Mission 1 to Hamburg Germany for No. 101 Squadron. However, so the reader understands the sequence of events related below, this is "Freddie's" story as it relates to the Hamburg Mission in 1943. Our AAR begins right after "Freddie" and the crew return for the first campaign's Mission 19 to Mannheim in 1942... I hope you enjoyed the story! Thanks for reading it and for all your GREAT Comments!

No. 101 Squadron (KX) Bomber Command
24/25 July 1943 - NEW (2nd) CAMPAIGN
Mission 1/ TGT - Hamburg, Germany, Zone 8.
Formation - Last 1/3.

"F for Freddie"

Crew:

Name	Rank	Position	
Oliver Davies	Pilot Officer	Pilot	
Henry "Harry" Ponsonby	Warrant Officer	Nav/Bomb Aimer	(Conspicuous Gallantry Cross 6th Mission)
Quincy Jones	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	(1 Bf-110 Kill -4th Mission) (.5 JU-88C6 - 10th Mission) (1 Bf-110 Kill -18th Mission) (1 Bf-110 Kill -19th Mission)

We begin with Oliver Davies' 25 July 1942 Diary entry:

We stood down after the last mission to Mannheim. When we returned, the C.O. told us to fly a few navigation training flights and that Wing Commander Donald Bennett for RAF Bomber Command was requesting a meeting with us the following week. The C.O. also told us that "Bomber" Harris had personally selected Wing Commander Donald Bennett to form and lead a new Path Finder Force in Bomber Command. Our C.O. went on to say that WC Bennett was a Navigations expert who had flown most RAF aircraft types and had commanded No.10 and No. 77 Squadrons... The C.O. also said he expected Wing Commander Bennett to become an Air-Vice Marshall rather quickly! After the C.O. departed, "Harry" Ponsonby and I exchanged looks ... Harry said "Looks like we might still have a shot at the Path Finders"... "We'll give it our best shot." I replied...

And give it our "best shot" we did... A week later, Harry and I along with our crew were summoned to the briefing hut in the late afternoon... We were a bit surprised as no mission was laid on for tonight. When we reported we were introduced to a briefing team from Bomber Command HQ. Wing Commander Bennett led the briefing and told us a little about the Path Finder Force that would become active on 15 August 1942. He explained that tonight we would be flying a training mission. He also told us that he and a few of his staff would accompany us and would grade our performance. We were to assume this was a real mission over the Continent rather than a tour of the British Isles. As darkness descended, Freddie's wheels lifted lightly off of the grass... WC Bennett and his staff graded every aspect of our performance. After a grueling 8 hour mission, WC Bennett told us we would be advised of the results...

A week later our C.O. called Harry and me into his office... He announced that we had been selected for the Path Finder Force and were being transferred to No. 156 Squadron. We would be assigned to RAF Wyton, Huntingdonshire, the new PFF HQ. We would be flying Wellington bombers, so "Freddie" was going with us. Our new home would be the satellite field at Warboys. He also had orders promoting me to Squadron Commander of No. 156 Squadron and a similar promotion for Ponsonby to Senior Navigator of the Squadron. He stood and shook our hands and offered congratulations and then said that the promotion party was on us at the club tonight!

Fast Forward to the night of July 24/25 1943...

It had been hard work getting the Squadron into shape. "Freddie" had received electronic upgrades and the latest jamming aid Window so we could fly our pathfinder missions over the Continent. In the year since taking over command of No. 156 Squadron "Freddie" and the crew had flown numerous successful path finding missions. We had impressed Air Vice Marshall Bennett and in my last Squadron Commander's meeting with him he had told me that I was being promoted and assigned to Path Finder Force HQ as the new Operations Officer. Ponsonby was also being promoted and would take over Chief Navigation Officer duties for the PF Force. He also said that he wanted us to lead a Spoof Raid aimed at Osnabruck to see if we could trick the German radar defense force into believing the main thrust of our Hamburg Maximum Effort raid was directed there rather than Hamburg ... this was a test for the new radar reflective secret weapon to defeat radar. Thousands of specially cut tin foil strips would be dropped behind our spoof raid bombers. These tin foil strips would float slowly down to the ground and give radar the impression that a large number of bombers were following our planes. Hopefully this would

fool the Germans into thinking we were the main raid and they would send their night fighters after us instead of the main strike force... we would see.

From Oliver Davies' 26 July Diary entry:

On the morning of the 24th we got word that the Hamburg Operation was on for tonight. No. 156 Squadron would lead the raid. We would follow the plotted course for the bomber stream heading for Hamburg. At a certain point the Spoof Raid would turn south toward Osnabruck leaving a path of tin foil that would give the German radar the impression hundreds of bombers were following in our wake. We loaded the bomb bay with bails of tin foil. Harry Ponsonby manned the H2S aerial radar. Quincy Jones manned the Monica tail radar set to insure we were transmitting and making maximum electronic "noise" so the Germans would "see" us..William Bedford would be manning the Window chute and dispensing the tin foil strips... Unlike our low level channel dashes that we made to avoid radar contact with No. 101 Squadron being a Spoof Raider meant you had to fly at high altitude to be seen by the Jerry's so they would come after you ... A scary thought!

After takeoff I climbed "Freddie" to high altitude and we began making the maximum amount of "electronic noise" ... we also began dropping "Window" in zone 2. There were a dozen other Pathfinder Wellington Bombers flying 3 abreast and four deep dropping Window... It was a Crescent Moon and there were broken clouds as we moved thru the dark sky.

"Jerry" Radar found us immediately and followed us along our path toward Osnabruck. F/SGT Thomas Stanley our wireless operator kept me posted on the coded signal we were receiving from PFF Signals Intelligence Section that was monitoring German radio traffic. The signals indicated the Germans had taken the bait! They were diverting Night fighters southward to intercept our raid aimed at Osnabruck.

I was flying a somewhat random pattern to avoid making it easy for German AA guns and searchlights to find us... After we crossed the coast line into Fortress Europa we had a couple of AA Gun barrages fired at us with only one coming close enough to pepper "Freddie" with shrapnel... There were no casualties or damage but I was sweating heavily from the experience. My hand caressed the lucky rabbit's foot in my pocket that Sue Ellen Swift had given me ... maybe Lady Luck would smile on us again tonight!

I could see for a miles from high altitude. I could see searchlight beams dancing around the night sky looking for us. One of my squadron mates flying a few miles to the north of us had been trapped in the beams of several searchlights ... The drama played out silently in front of me as I watched several large flashes from exploding AA shells as he twisted and turned to escape the light... Then suddenly there was a much larger explosion and I watched as the Wellington came apart in the darkness and burning debris slowly fluttered earthward... The scene slowly passed astern of us...

"Freddie" was caught in searchlight beams in zone 4 and just as quickly a heavy barrage of AA fire burst around him! I rolled "Freddie" right and put him into a diving turn, then I rolled left and pulled his nose up into a climb ... the searchlights lost us and I climbed back into the high

altitude level and circled back to continued dropping window from the altitude that we left off at. Zone 5 had heavy cloud cover so the searchlights lost their effectiveness and "Freddie" was able to slip away. F/SGT Stanley advised over the intercom that there was no recall order yet and we were to continue our mission...

As we entered zone 6 I began my turn toward the south and Osnabruck. Quincy Jones sang out a Monica warning! Our tail gunner Giles Corbyn said he had nothing! I started some heavy evasive action and the Monica Set went silent...

SUDDENLY SGT Giles Corbyn yelled for me to "BREAK LEFT! I immediately rolled Freddie to the left... kicking in hard left rudder and pushed the nose down into a diving left hand turn... Corbyn had spotted a Do-217 A0 night fighter climbing up toward us from 6'o'clock low... Tracers streaked past the right side of the canopy but quickly disappeared from my view as they merged into "Freddie's" belly ... I could hear the SMACK! BANG! of the night fighter's 20mm shells exploding as "Freddie absorbed the return fire. One of them passing thru my control panel that just missed me by mere inches...

Fast Forward to Christmas 1982 at Downton Abby...

"BANG! ... BANG! ... BANG!" ... I jumped at the noise and stopped reading aloud from the diary entry... I looked around and made eye contact with Harry Ponsonby who was sitting in the overstuffed leather chair next to the window in the Earl of Grantham's study. He was banging his cane on the floor...

Harry had a twinkle in his eye and a wry smile on his face as held out his empty glass... "Excuse me, Air Vice Marshall, Retired Sir Oliver Davies... my glass seems to have run dry while listening to your riveting accounts from 40 years ago."

"What?" I said, still bringing my thoughts back to the present...

"I must say I do remember that incident very well and the four months I spent in Hospital recovering after the doctor's took that Jerry nightfighter's bullet out of my leg..." continued Harry as he lifted the cane up showing me that he still walked with a bit of limp. Harry shifted in his chair and held out his empty glass... "The least you can do is keep an old wounded vet's glass full on Christmas as we reminisce about our "old times" in the RAF!" He smiled as he said that...

"Sorry! ...Yes, you are certainly right." I said as I picked up the bottle of the Glenlevit Scotch from the desk.

"So, I see you are still drinking the Old Man's scotch" Harry said referring to the Earl of Grantham... Still chuckling, he held out his glass... I leaned over and poured a full measure into his glass and then topped off mine too!

Glenlevit had been the favorite of the Earl when he was still alive. The Earl had very graciously given several cases of it to us when were flying "Freddie" and I was dating his American niece

Sue Ellen Swift, who was the heir to the Swift Meat Packing Company fortune and quite wealthy in her own right.

Harry stood up and raised his glass in the direction of the Portrait of our Wellington Bomber "F for Freddie" that hung on the wall over my desk...

"To Freddie" he said "He never failed to bring us home" ...

"To Freddie" I repeated and we both downed our Glenlivet ... I poured another healthy measure into both our glasses...

"Well, there you Boys are..." came a familiar voice from the doorway... "We thought we would find you both in here telling war stories about your days in the RAF..."

I turned to see "Connie", Harry's wife and Sue Ellen standing at the door. I marveled at Sue Ellen. She was every bit as beautiful as that day she kissed me at the airfield's main gate after giving me a ride back to the air base in her red MG TC convertible so I wouldn't be late. Her long golden locks had a bit of silver in them now but she is just as beautiful now as she was then...

"Ahhh... Countess, your husband and I were just drinking a toast to our "old kite", who always brought us home" said Harry rather matter-of-factly. Both girls laughed...

Changing the subject, asked "Has Bobby arrived yet?" Sue Ellen looked at me and replied "Our Son should be arriving soon. He called and said he was filling his car with petrol in town and would be right out... Oh, he also said he was bringing his new girl friend for Christmas..."

Harry chuckled "I imagine now that he has been promoted to Squadron Commander of his Vulcan Bomber Squadron at RAF Wyton he must cut a dashing figure in his new uniform... the Ladies must love him... I know they love us in our uniforms! ...

Both Connie and Sue Ellen laughed... Harry went on as he pointed out the window of the study "In fact, here is our New Squadron Commander now!."

Everyone moved to the window and looked out... A Red MG convertible was speeding up the long winding drive to Downton Abby ... A blue RAF uniformed figure was sitting in the passenger's seat holding his hat while a woman with a white dress and long flowing blond hair that was blowing in the wind was driving!

Well, I hope you enjoyed reading the Exploits of "F for Freddie" and his crew as much as I enjoyed writing about them! Thanks for all your great comments.

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