

For those of you following Steve Dixon's Target For Tonight Campaign game ... Mission 19 has "F for Freddie" going to Mannheim, Germany. No. 101 Squadron is flying in the last 1/3 of the formation on this mission with a full load of bombs... Here is my AAR for "F for Freddie" for the July 22/23rd Mission. Enjoy!

No. 101 Squadron (KX) Bomber Command - "F for Freddie"  
22/23 July 42  
Mission 19/ TGT - Mannheim, Germany, 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)
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	(1Bf-110 Kill-4th Mission) (.5 JU-88C6 - 10th Mission) (1 Bf-110 Kill -18th Mission) (1 Bf-110 Kill -19th Mission)

**From Oliver Davies' 20 July 1942 Diary entry:**

We stood down for a week after the last mission to Saarbrucken. The Squadron was tired and we needed a little rest. Leaves and passes were handed out and much needed maintenance and overhauls were done on the aircraft. Our crew was given 5 days leave and didn't have to report back until the 20th. I managed to get together with Miss Sue Ellen Swift, the Earl of Grantham's niece. Sue Ellen and I had become quite close since I met her at a dance at Downton Abby. She picked me up in her red MG TD and we spent five glorious days in London.

She just dropped me off at the gate and I miss her already! I checked in with our Senior ErK at "Freddie's" revetment. The right engine was pulled while we were on leave and a new one installed ... hopefully that would fix the overheating problems we have been having...

That evening at the club rumors were running high that "Bomber" Harris had give approval for the new Pathfinder Group in Bomber Command. There was plenty of speculation and talk about who was interested in volunteering for the group. Rumor had it that Air Vice-Marshal Donald Bennett would be the new C.O. It looked likely that AV-M Bennett would be visiting our group looking for Volunteers in the next few weeks. The boys were having a great time speculating on who would and would not be considered to be a "Crack Crew" for pathfinders.

Harry Ponsonby leaned over to me and whispered "Well, Old Man... if we want to be considered we best do better on this mission than that poor showing last time!" ...I just smiled and raised my pint "Here's to making it thru" I said ...

**From Oliver Davies' 23 July Diary entry:**

On the morning of the 22nd we got word that the Operation was on for tonight. The squadron ops officer posted the battle order on the Notice Board in the Squadron Area as usual. No. 101 Squadron would be flying last in the take off order for this one. That always gave Jerry more time to react to us but it made the bombing easier if the lead groups got anywhere near the target. Maybe we would be able to get "on Target" this time!

"Freddie's" crew would have some time to kill after eating supper in the mess. Our first briefing was scheduled for 1500 hours. It was going to be another "Big Show" it looked like. The whole group was going to Mannheim Germany tonight! That was in zone 8. The target was about 300 miles from the Channel Coast. "Stormy" our Meteorology Officer was predicting ground fog/haze most of the way to Mannheim with 50% to 100% cloud cover in zones 4 and 6. Clear weather over Mannheim proper was forecast. There would be ground fog and haze over the channel. There would be a crescent moon that would give us a pretty dark sky ... good for navigation. WO "Harry" Ponsonby, our Navigator was not worried. He took down all the radio frequencies and location notes. This was our 14th mission and the missions were turning into a somewhat predictable pattern of cat and mouse with Jerry as we navigated to the assigned target. The briefing wrapped up by 1700 hours and the crews moved to the Mess for Supper. The usual Target Pool was set up and "F For Freddie" contributed "his" usual five quid to the pot to see whose bombs got closest to the aiming point... we hadn't won one in awhile. After eating everyone "kitted up" and we boarded our lorry that took us out to "Freddie"... The Crew "christened" Freddie's tail wheel by "peeing" on it, as usual. My hand caressed the lucky rabbit's foot in my pocket that Sue Ellen had given me ... maybe Lady Luck would smile on us again tonight! Our Erk had Freddie in tip top form. All was good...

"Freddie" and No. 101 squadron were scheduled to take off in the last 1/3 of the of the bomber stream. The weather was good for takeoff. We waited somewhat restlessly for our turn to go ... finally it came. I got "Freddie" lined up on the grass strip and pushed the throttles to the stops while holding the brake pedals down. "Freddie" rattled and shook. F/SGT Quincy Jones, our Observer and Flight Engineer gave me the "Thumbs Up". I released the brakes and "Freddie" began moving down the airstrip slowly gaining speed while trying to get airborne. We had a heavy bomb load, but Freddie finally got "light on his wheels" and lifted off ... I turned him toward Flamborough Head, tonight's assembly point. "Freddie" had no mechanical problems on the way into the Target.

We did our usual thing ... from Flamborough Head we made our low level channel dash toward the Netherlands coast. I leveled "Freddie" off at 8000 feet (Low Level) for the dash across the channel and into Belgium. It was a great night for flying! It was quiet with the low hum of "Freddie's" engines in the back ground making it somehow soothing.

The dark sky over the lighter ground fog and haze in the channel gave just enough light to enjoy the night sky. You could see for a 100 miles it seemed. As I looked around I could see a string of tracers arcing toward a darker spot in the sky. The tracers were coming from a dark speck following it. Then a return string came from the darker spot ... It was absolutely quiet except for the soothing hum of "Freddie's" engines... I was watching a death dance between a Jerry Night Fighter and one of our Boys...

Harry's head popped up next to me and pointed toward the bomber's silent fight. "Yeah, I see it" I said... Then more tracer strings going back and forth lit up the scene and it looked like the darker spot was on fire... Then a second dark speck joined the fray and there was an explosion lighting up the darker spot, turning it into the remains of a Halifax bomber... The two dark specks detached themselves and vanished into the darkness heading toward the Continent... "Harry" had a grim look on his face as I looked over at him ... I banked in the direction of the place where the Halifax was lost in the ground fog and haze, hoping to see some parachutes ... "Get off a contact report about the shoot down..." I said "... maybe Air Sea Rescue can find them" ... Harry nodded and ducked below. A few moments later F/SGT Stanley came on the intercom and advised he had sent out the contact report and received an acknowledgement ...

We learned later at debrief that it was M for Meyer from 103 Squadron and there were no survivors found...

The GEE kept us on course at Low level thru zone 3 where Freddie crossed into Fortress Europa on the channel coast. The Kammhuber Line's Freya Radar picked us up as we entered Zone 4 in Belgium. We had 100% cloud cover. The searchlights cast an eerie glow over the clouds as the beams reflected off of the cloud base. I put "Freddie" into a dive and leveled out "on-the-deck". This increased our speed as we flashed across the coastline into Belgium ... The Jerry gunners were not prepared for an "on the deck" entry as we only received a few desultory streams of small caliber tracers that crisscrossed the sky over top of Freddie. It was clear and there was enough of a crescent moon so that I could avoid Church spires and the like as I zigzagged to throw off their aim... The flak belt quickly passed away behind us. No night fighters were directed our way and I climbed back into the low altitude level to avoid any hills or buildings as we entered zone 5. F/SGT Thomas Stanley, our wireless operator came on the intercom and advised that he had copied no mission recall orders.

"Harry" Ponsonby's head popped up next to me and gave me the "thumbs up" sign. That was our signal that he had our position pinpointed and we were on course. I did not have to fly a search course to find him a position marker.

We continued at Low Altitude thru zone 5. Jerry's Kammhuber Line must have had its hands full as we were not detected as we passed thru the zone's 50% cloud cover in zone 6 and popped into clear air over ground fog and haze again in zone 7... Ponsonby's navigation skills had been spot on as we approached the Target Zone. I could see a lighted glow on the horizon... it looked like Mannheim was ablaze.

On this clear and almost moonless night as I positioned Freddie for a low altitude bomb run. Still many miles south east of us I could see two different small groups of searchlight beams in the

target area trying to follow a twisting turning speck that was being harried by bright red streams of tracer fire. In each case a bomber crew fought for its life. In eerie silence I watched as both dramas play out in slow motion. First one and then the other bomber flared into brilliance like a moth caught in a flame and their flaming wreckage spiraling earthward. It looked like Jerry was busy defending Mannheim and hitting the bombers who came before us. That explained the lack of Night Fighter attention we had received so far in the mission. We continued southeast toward Mannheim to the steady drone of Freddie's engines. We entered Zone 8 and I made our pre-target turn to line up for the bomb run on the Target. The weather was Clear!

SUDDENLY SGT Giles Corbyn, "Freddie's" tail gunner 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 night fighter circling in from 6'o'clock high... He later said it was a Bf-110 F4 Messerschmitt! I could hear the pounding of Corbyn's 303 machineguns in the tail... I could hear the SMACK! BANG! of the night fighter's 20mm shells exploding as "Freddie absorbed the return fire. Then a stream of tracers passed close by my canopy missing by inches and followed quickly by the dark form of the Bf-110 as it rolled over in a steep banking turn. The Jerry must have been Green or just unlucky as Corbyn stitched him up pretty good with his twin 303s. Flames were coming from starboard engine of the 110 and I could see the pilot slumped back in his seat as the F4 flashed past. I kicked in hard right rudder to avoid a collision and it just missed us... The 110 entered a steep dive and disappeared in a bright flash of light that illuminated the night a few moments later. Chalk up another one for Corbyn! I confirmed his kill when we got back.

We again lined up on the target fires. We were lucky as the bombers ahead of us had all of the AAA guns and night fighter's attention. F/SGT Stanley was standing by at the bomb bay to active the photo flash that will get photos of the bomb drop for accuracy and will hopefully be close enough to garner us the winning entry in the Bombing Accuracy Pool this time!

Ponsonby took control for that "Longest Minute" ride to the target... "Freddie" took his customary "Jump" as the bombs fell free and Ponsonby was sure the bombs were not only On Target but clustered in the Target Area... The photo showed multiple secondary explosions...

(Rolling an 11 in the On Target column on Table 6-7. The 3dr roll for Note a., totaled 14 and the single die roll was 4 for 56% on target!)

Coming off of the target a Searchlight found us and we got a hail of AAA fire. One round in particular exploded right below Freddie's belly ... I almost lost control as Freddie jumped several hundred feet higher from the force of the blast... Freddie shook and shuddered ... I held my breath as I finally got him under control and managed to get us away from the searchlight and AAA fire. After leveling out... I checked Freddie's instruments and controls... the port engine was running a bit rough but the temperature was still below redline... My stomach tightened a bit more as I thought of the 300 miles back to the coastline.

As we headed northwest back toward the coast and home we must have been detected again by the controllers in the Kammhuber Line... A night fighter appeared in our 6 o'clock sector. Corbyn had spotted him and called for a break... I rolled Freddie sharply left and into a shallow dive favoring his injured engine... Whether the night fighter was low on fuel or out of ammo, I don't know but it only made one pass and we did not see him again. Corbyn said it too was a Bf-110 F-4 Messerschmitt.

We flew on toward the coast. Freddie's engine continued to run rough and the temperature continued to climb toward the red line... and then it finally crossed into the red zone as we crossed the coast. After consulting with Quincy Jones our engineer we decided to shut it down... With my heart in my throat I feathered the prop. Freddie continued to lumber on over the channel ... I was really glad to see the coast coming up as I didn't want to ditch in the channel. We made it back to the station and turned into the landing circuit. Freddie touched down on one engine with no problems.

#### Mission Stats:

SGT Giles Corbyn was awarded a Kill for the Bf-110. (He has 3.5 kills now)

The bombing photo showed that we were ON TARGET with 56% hitting the target.

The Senior Erk said Freddie would be repaired and ready for the next mission.

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