

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

8/9 Mar 42

Mission 01/ TGT - Essen, Zone 6.

Formation - Last 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

From the Oliver Davies' Diary:

We got "the word" that Ops were on for tonight. They posted the battle order on the Notice Board in the Squadron Area. Our first briefing was scheduled for 1500 hours. It was going to be a "Big Show". We were going to Essen Germany! That was a zone 6 target and most of the trip would be over water, so no AAA or searchlights until the Netherlands and maybe pretty light there too... we would see.

At the briefing, "Stormy" our Meteorology Officer lived up to his name. He was predicting 100% cloud cover from mid channel until Essen. That coupled with a crescent moon meant we would have a pretty dark sky ... not good for navigation but it would certainly help us hide in the clouds! We had a GEE blind bombing and navigation radar set installed in "F for Freddie" so WO "Harry" Ponsonby our navigator was frantically taking frequency and location notes as the briefing progress.

When they uncovered the map board we could see that there were a couple doglegs in our route to the target to help us avoid belts of AAA batteries and searchlights in the Netherlands and Germany, so maybe we could confuse the Kammhuber Radar Line control posts. We wrapped up by 1700 hours and met the rest of the fellows at the club for Supper. The usual Target Pool was set up and we all contributed our five quid to the pot to see whose bombs got closes to the aiming point. I was feeling lucky tonight...

After eating we headed out to "Freddie" to get loaded up... After the usual ritual of "peeing" on the tail wheel... for luck you know... (Though I think it was really about unloading all that tea we had consumed at supper as the first person to use the Elsen on-board Chemical Toilet had to empty it when we returned!)

The Erk (Ground Crew Chief) assured me that "Freddie" was ready to go. "Freddie" and our squadron were schedule to take off in the last 1/3 of the of the bomber stream. I fidgeted around in the cockpit rechecking everything waiting for our turn to go ... Finally it was our turn. I lined

"Freddie" up on the grass strip and pushed the throttles to the stops. "Freddie" rattled and shook. Flt Sgt Richard Watkins, our Observer, who handled the Flight Engineer duties gave me the "Thumbs Up". I released the brakes ... "Freddie" waddled down the airstrip slowly gaining speed trying to get airborne with the heavy bomb and gas load. ... Finally he became light on his wheels and we lifted off ... I circled the field to get our bearings and Watkins our Observer/Nose gunner pointed out the guiding searchlight at Flamborough Head that was our assembly point for tonight to start our trip across the channel toward the Continent. The weather was good when we took off but now we had a buildup of ground fog and haze that was going to lead to lots of cloud cover over the Channel and the target or so "Stormy" said...

After Turning for the Netherlands coast at Flamborough Head I leveled "Freddie" off at 8000 feet (Low Level) for our channel dash thru the first three zones. "Freddie" was in fine form tonight and we had no mechanical problems on the way into the Target. Our "black Box" GEE set kept us on course at Low level into zone 3. Flt. Sgt. George Blackwood our Wireless Operator advised there was no recall even though the target and our current zone had 100% cloud cover.

Then, the Kammhuber Line's Freya Radar picked us up! We were lucky ... we rolled a Random Event on Table 5-5. Making the random event roll (5) on Table 5-11 ...

Sgt Gyles Corbyn our tail gunner called out that we had picked up a "Visitor" who was closing on us from 6 o'clock low!! As I prepared to engage with the night fighter, Corbyn yelled "It's a "Mossy" for sure!" ... I breathed a sigh of relief and wiped a bead of sweat that trickled down into my eyes even though the outside air temperature was below freezing. Corbyn said the "Mossy" gave the recognition signal and was now flying a loose formation with us as we moved into Zone 4...

I told the boys to go on oxygen as I climbed into the high altitude band as we entered zone 4. We had to get higher so the GEE could continue to keep us on course. We must have been detected again by the controllers in the Kammhuber Line... The "Mossy" now said he had a target and was going to investigate ... I banked "Freddie" away in the opposite direction. A few minutes later Sgt. Edward Neville our Waist Gunner called out Tracer Fire from the direction the "Mossy" had gone... I said a little prayer for the "Mossy" pilot ... wishing him well... Flt. Sgt. Blackwood again advised there was no recall order.

We crossed the coast in Zone 5, the Netherlands... the cloud cover thinned to about 50%. There were no contrails. This time the Kammhuber Line's controllers failed to locate us ... no AAA or Night Fighters greeted us. "Freddie" continued to drone on toward Essen.

We entered Zone 6, our target zone, right on the money.... The GEE brought us close enough to the target to see the fires burning from all the bombers that hit Essen in the front 2/3s of the bomber stream. There were no contrails to attract attention to us as we lined up on the target fires. We were extremely lucky as the bombers ahead of us had all of the AAA guns and night fighter's attention. Neville is standing by at the bomb bay to activate 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.

We slipped in and dropped our bombs with no interference from the AAA guns or night fighters. With 100% cloud cover and a crescent moon WO Ponsonby had a tough time getting a good target lineup. (+3 DM on Table 6-1). A 2 was rolled and modified to a 5. (Mostly Obscured). Ponsonby got a -1 DR on Table 6-6. Ponsonby then rolled on Table 6-6. (DM's were -5, Mission before 9/42, -1, Bomb Aimer less than 5 missions, -1 Target mostly obscured, and +2 for GEE. Net modifier is -5.) Ponsonby rolls a 9 on 2D6 resulting in a net roll of 4. The bombs are ON TARGET. Ponsonby then rolls 10 on 2D6 for Bombing Accuracy on Table 6-7... 50% hit.

Result = 50%/ON TARGET

Our return trip from the Continent was a milk run. We picked up a few rips and tears in "Freddie's" fabric skin from AAA fire in the Netherlands on the way home but nothing major. And, there were no night fighters attacks on us. We landed safely and went to debriefing... I was really looking forward to that Big English Breakfast afterward.

We had 50% bombs/ON TARGET. No Enemy Aircraft were claimed this mission. "Freddie" had light damage and will be ready for the next mission.

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