

No. 104 Squadron (KX) Bomber Command - "R for Roger"

3/4 Jan '44

Mission 17/ TGT - Brunswick, Germany, Zone 8. (Area Targets)

Formation - First 1/3.

Moon Phase: Crescent Moon

Crew:

Name Rank Position

Malcolm Fraser Warrant Officer Flight Engineer (Wnd)

William Cavendish Warrant Officer Bomb Aimer

Jacob Morton Sergeant Rear Gunner (1-Ju88c6, 2- ME-110 G4, 1-Do-217N2, 1-Me-110 F4)

Alfie "Binky" Williams Pilot Officer Navigator

Theodore "Teddy" Fernsby Flying Officer Pilot

Jeremiah "Jerry" MacKenzie Sergeant Mid-Upper Gunner (2-Ju88c6, 1-Do-217, 1-Fw-190A5, 1-Me-110F-4)

Oscar Addington Flight SGT Wireless Operator/Gunner (Wnd) (Do- 217J1)

Sidney Cartwright Warrant Officer Senior Erk

"The Mission to Brunswick, Germany...

New Year's Eve 1943 fell on a Friday and there was a definite party mood in the air. The Bomb Group hosted a large dance and party to ring in the New Year at the airbase. Eligible females from the surrounding countryside were invited to attend and as a future popular American Actor would say in a movie many years in the future... "It was a Target Rich Environment!" No. 104 Squadron and "R for Roger's" crew took maximum advantage of the holiday and the party opportunities to mix with the local female population.

The next mission was not until 3/4 January and everyone enjoyed a few days R&R to celebrate. But the crews were back to duty on the 2nd. Another maximum effort raid was laid on, this time to Brunswick Germany.

A storm front had moved in over the channel. The Squadron could expect 50% to 100% cloud cover over the channel and the Netherlands that was supposed to turn to ground fog and haze over Germany proper, or so "Stormy" our Met guy said. The route picked for the mission had the Group flying toward the West Frisian Islands north of Amsterdam. Then it turned southeast toward Hannover and Brunswick. This deviation was to confuse the Germans as to the true target. The group would turn southeast toward Brunswick at a point between Oost Vlieland and Terschelling Island in the Frisian Island chain. No 104 Squadron was chosen to lead the Raid and "R for Roger's" crew was picked to lead No. 104 Squadron...

It was another "crappy weather" take off for the Squadron... It was raining hard and there was a strong headwind that buffed Roger as he climbed away from the end of the field but Teddy got him into the air ok... Roger climbed into the darkness and turned northeast toward the channel. They circled the Rendezvous Point on the English coast until the Squadron formed up. Then they turned toward the Netherlands and Germany beyond. The wind and rain buffeted Roger

making for an uncomfortable but safer flight across the channel. It was doubtful that the Jerry night fighters would venture this far out in the stormy weather. Roger's gunners did keep a watchful eye out just in case they did. Teddy was flying at Low Altitude trying to avoid the worst of the storm...

As they entered zone 4 "Binky's" head popped up next to Teddy's shoulder. "Looks like our first turn is coming up in one minute." he said "... You'll be turning to course 105 degrees."

Teddy looked over at Binky and nodded his head... Binky stayed in the cockpit as they approached the turn. "Hey, Malcolm ... Keep an eye out to starboard for any sign of Oost Vlieland Island" he said... Teddy looked over at him with his eyebrows raised... Binky said "No worries... We have a pretty good cross wind and I just want to make sure we are on course!"

Just then Bill Cavendish's voice came over the intercom from the nose... "I have an island in view off to port". Binky smiled and said "Yep, That's Tershelling Island in the Frisian Island chain... right where it's supposed to be. Oost Vlieland Island will be on the right." Teddy raised his right thumb in a "Good Job" gesture...

Bill Cavendish's voice again came over the intercom... "I have a ship's wake in view crossing from our left to right about two miles out dead ahead".

JUST THEN A BLINDING LIGHT LIT UP THE COCKPIT INTERIOR!!!

Several things happened almost simultaneously...

"A SPERRBREACHER!!!" flashed through Teddy's mind as he squeezed his eyes shut tight to block the searchlight... it didn't help as he still lost his night vision. Reacting instantly, he put "Roger" into a hard bank to the left... he remembered Cavendish's call about a ship's wake passing from their left to right so he turned to port so as to pass to the rear of the Heavy Flak Ship. This limited the number of guns it could bring to bear and widened the distance between the bomber and the ship. Teddy pushed the wheel forward to gain speed and make the relative movement in relation to the guns firing from the ship have to speed up their traverse to keep accurate fire on the bomber...

Several streams of tracers from multiple AA guns passed around and into Roger. As the bomber picked up speed and plummeted toward the surface of the ocean several thousand feet below there were loud ringing BANGS from 20 and 40 mm AA shells hitting and exploding inside Roger... Then a Heavy KA-BOOM! erupted next to Roger's right wing. The blast rolled them up onto their left wing ... Shrapnel whizzed thru the air tearing holes in Roger's skin... Teddy was showered in broken glass and pieces of instruments as the pilot's instrument panel took a hit from a large piece of shrapnel ... Cold wind blew into the cockpit as Teddy pulled his goggles down over his eyes...

The altimeter gage continued unwinding at an alarming rate... Teddy managed to right Roger and began to pull the nose up to recover from the dive. Just as he pulled Roger level a Large Brilliant Explosion erupted near Roger's nose...

"AN 88 FLAK GUN!" Flashed into his mind as Roger's nose was lifted almost vertical and his air speed began to bleed off... More bangs as shrapnel whizzed past Teddy... Teddy pushed the nose down and began picking up airspeed...

Then the Sperrbrecher was gone just as quickly as it appeared! Roger had slipped into the cloud cover ...

Malcolm voice sounded in his headphones ... "We have a fire burning in Number 3 engine... I've activated fire suppression" ... Teddy reached over and pulled the throttle control for number 3 engine to stop. He then feathered the prop... "Prop Feathered!" he said to Malcolm. "Number 4 is running hot also" replied Malcolm... "Roger that..." said Teddy in a calm voice as he reached out and reduced the power to number 4 engine... "I've reduced power to number 4!" ... He heard Malcolm grunt a reply...

"Crew check in" said Teddy over the intercom...

"Engineer ok" said Malcolm Fraser... "Tailgunner ok" said Morton... "Mid Upper Gunner ok" said MacKenzie... "Wireless ok" said Addington... "Navigator ok" said "Binky" Williams in a hushed voice, followed by "... I'm in the nose... Cavendish didn't make it ... the bomb sight is wrecked also."

"Addington, send out a contact report on the Heavy Flak Ship so the rest of the guys can avoid it" ordered Teddy...

Then he called for a damage report. The list was long... Number 3 engine was out and number 4 was running hot. They would probably have to shut it down. The Bombsight was destroyed and Cavendish the bomb aimer was KIA. The controls were "mushy"... probably some cable damage. Cabin heat was out and some flight instruments were not working as well... The list was long...

Teddy decided to abort the mission ...

The bombs were jettisoned and Roger turned for home. The flight home was longer than going out because of the damage. Teddy was able to safely land the bomber... It was a somber crew that headed for debriefing ...

Roger's damage was repaired for the next mission and a crew replacement for William Cabendish was found. The mission was aborted/credit given as it was from enemy action. No bombs dropped and no night fighters engaged.