

TARGET FOR TONIGHT Steve Dixon's online campaign
Mission 8 Target Neuss, Germany 14th/15th December 1944

102 Squadron C Cobblers

“BREAK LEFT! BREAK LEFT!”

But even as I started the manoeuvre shells and tracer sprayed through the cockpit shattering the windscreen. Blood trickled down from a cut on my forehead and froze almost instantly.

The sound of guns fire but whether they were ours or the bandit I couldn't tell.

A sudden bright flash and a ball of fire blossomed off the port wing. The remains of an aircraft tumbling to earth.

Digger thumping me on the shoulder, pointing to the oxygen cylinder and the shredded cable of my headset. Oxygen out. Need to use the tank and dive, dive below 10,000 feet.

Behind me the whoosh of a fire extinguisher as Nigel our navigator puts out an electrical fire.

Where the hell are we? Coast up ahead. Should we turn for Allied occupied Belgium or try to limp home? The wind howling through the shattered windscreen is sheer ruddy murder. My face outside my mask and goggles is frostbitten.

Digger hands me a note “Fires under control. No R/T. Engines fine. Bomber aimer wounded but OK. No worries.”

Take her down below the 10/10ths cloud cover but with enough height to glide in if necessary.

I indicate to Digger to break out the cocoa to warm everyone up.

After what seems a lifetime we cross the coast south of Great Yarmouth. Circling the field we fire a red Very light to let them know we have wounded on board before making a good approach and landing.

Later in the debriefing room we put together what happened.

“ We made it to the target zone and dropped our bombs without any enemy contact. 40% on target according to the photo. A bit of light flak on the way out of the target zone. Then Northwest of Eindhoven we were bounced by He219 A-0 but Ian spotted him just in time and gave him what for but not before he had smashed our R/T, shattered my windscreen, taken out our oxygen supply and started fires in the Front Centre section. Bags of superficial damage all over the shop and he took out a chunk of our port rudder. Our bombardier took a bullet in the thigh which tore his flexor muscle.”

“Very good Pilot Officer Dodds. I think that you had better get the Quack to attend to that frost bite.”

Piece of cake.