

Target for Tonight – Steve Dixon’s online campaign
Mission 7 area bombing Stetten, Germany 2nd / 3rd December 1944

102 Squadron, Lancasters

“C Cobblers” aircraft funded by public subscription by the town of Northampton and named after their football team.

This is our second mission together. After an uneventful first trip we are hoping tonight will be another milk run.

Flt Lt Brett “Digger” Grimmond of the RAAF has done a very thorough pre-flight check of our bus and assured me that all is well in his usual style, “No worries, mate. She’ll be right.”

The weather is ruddy freezing and there is a full moon but we are tucked into the middle of the bomber stream. Text book take off and we are on our way.

Periodic testing of guns is called for to stop the little blighters from freezing up.

We’ve had a mixture of 5/10ths and 10/10ths cloud all the way but just as we enter German airspace the cloud clears and we feel terribly exposed in the moonlight. We’re just lucky not to be producing any contrails. The bright searchlights have us coned and we can’t shake it off. However the flak is very second XI as we can see the bursts but nothing even comes near. There are no nightfighters coming out to play in this sector.

Pressing on further into Germany and there is a ghostly shimmering of ground fog. No searchlight activity but let’s hope that the target is clear.

Approaching the target area and the fog has cleared but we have 5/10ths cloud and we are streaming contrails. Not great. However, again no nightfighter activity on the run in and the flak has its attention turned elsewhere. “Target slightly obscured Skipper.” Flt Lt Chard’s West Country burr makes even this short sentence long for a pint of scrumpy. “Bombs gone!” The photo later shows that we got a good 60% on target.

Turning for home and I’m sure the flak knows where we are but they have either been overwhelmed by the first wave or they have run out of ammunition. Again the nightfighter seem to have taken the night off.

We make it out of the target area and back across most of Germany without incident and then somewhere around Koblenz we are coned again and medium flak makes life uncomfortable. We take one wing root hit to the starboard wing but otherwise emerge unscathed apart from our Tail Gunner losing his night vision thanks to those searchlights.

After that we are in allied controlled territory so its time to break out the sandwiches and cocoa. Piece of cake.

Pilot Officer Tony Dodds.