

Target for Tonight Steve Dixon's online campaign
Target Railway Chambly, France 7/8 April 1944

"With A Apple awaiting a new nose section you will take P Popsie for tonight's mission. Are you sure that you are fit to fly and that head wound isn't going to be a problem? I don't want you bending any more kites."

"No problem sir. Looks worse than it was. Just a scratch really - bit of broken glass from the display."

Thinking back that was when I should have said something and got out of tonight's little jaunt. Now here we were nearly at the target zone with a ruddy nightfighter on our tail pouring shells into us from 6 o'clock low and all comms cut. Brian, my Flight Engineer, is slumped over with buckets of blood pouring from his chest and the fuel gauges playing merry hell. That is when Hugh, our Wireless Operator squeezed into the flight deck reached over and plugged my microphone cable back in – it must have got yanked out in all the excitement.

"Dougie (out tailgunner) says he's seen off that Jerry shitehawk and did you know that the Port outer is leaking fuel mun, and it needs to get sorted, alright."

"Have a look around and see if there is any other damage but see to Brian first, see if you can stop the bleeding."

From the look of the amount of fuel we have lost it is going to be touch and go whether we will have enough to make it back to base but we are almost at the target zone so we will press on.

Hugh is back, "Bit of damage to the starboard Aileron, H2S took a bit of a dink but is still working, dinghy has had it other than that nothing serious like. Brian's wound looks serious but I have done what I can."

Medium flak going into the target but no nightfighters. Pathfinders have done a good job and despite the 5/10ths cloud the target is unobscured.

George, our bomb aimer with the embarrassing wound from our last mission, "Bombs gone – looks good 60% on target I think!"

Turning for home and medium flak again. Please God no more fuel losses or we will never make it. Something has hit us but no reports coming in.

Somewhere over Abbeville medium flak hits us again. "Tail gunner to pilot. I think they got our tailwheel skipper."

Out over the Channel and it is clear that we are not going to have enough fuel to get back to base but with the White Cliffs in sight I think we can just about make it if I can find somewhere to put down. "Gordon what is the nearest airfield we have about 10 minutes of flying time left?"

"Lympne is just coming up to port steer 283 degrees."

"Hugh try and get them and arrange some landing lights."

"All crew take up crash positions behind main spar this could be a bit lumpy."

"Hugh I think I can see Lympne dead ahead. Fire a red flare then take up crash position."

Despite the lack of a tailwheel it was probably my best landing yet. As we rolled to a standstill there was nothing left on the fuel gauges apart from the makers name. Piece of cake, old boy, piece of cake.