

Target for Tonight online campaign
10/11th October 1943 target Leverkusen, Germany
P – Phoenix

Debrief of Flying Officer Christopher Buddle, Flight Engineer:

We took off immediately after the new boys in F – Frederick and all went well until we crossed the Dutch coast just south of the Hague where we copped a dose of light flak that hit the coolant tank on number 3 engine and caused a couple of wing root hits. We were able to feather the engine before it seized.

Being in the rear of the bomber stream the German defences now knew we were coming and where we were despite our copious use of Window and we had a spot of bother with a couple of nightfighter attacks before reaching the target. We suffered mostly superficial damage apart from damage to our Master Compass and some control cable damage. Our return fire seemed sufficient to prevent them both from returning for a second go. Either that or they had plenty of other targets to keep them busy.

We dropped our bombs on target but that was when we really ran into trouble. It was either flak or a Shrage Musik attack or possibly a combination of the two smashed the nose turret, wounded our pilot smashed up the radio, started an oxygen fire in the rear section which Flt Sgt Bell, our radio operator rushed to extinguish and killed our rear gunner. Then there was the severe damage to our wings and our fuel tanks which were losing fuel.

Flt Sgt Bell came rushing back and tripped over my long flight engineer's intercom lead pulling it out and cutting off from everybody. I saw the mid-upper gunner climb down and put on his parachute and saw the navigator doing the same. So I did the same and followed the navigator down to the escape hatch. I got my legs through the hatch after he went, then felt a pressure on my back. I looked round and the bomb aimer had his knees pressing in my back. I gave him the thumbs up and jumped, but the bomb aimer never got out. As I went through the hatch I felt the aircraft lurch as it broke in half and he was thrown back into the cockpit.

I counted to ten then pulled the D ring and the main chute opened with a tremendous jerk and I came down in agony because all the weight was on my leg straps which tore into my groin. I didn't land well and the leg buckle came up and broke three of my ribs. I passed out and when I came to it was just after sunrise and the chap whose farm I had landed on found me and took me into the barn where he hid me for a few days. Turns out we had just crossed the border in Belgium when I bailed out. A quack came to look at me and bound up my ribs and gave me some pills for the pain. A pretty girl with long brown hair was with him and asked me to tell her some gen that only I could know so they could check me out with London. They said they couldn't move me until my ribs were healed. So it was six weeks later before I was "taken down the line" first to Brussels then into France and eventually over the mountains into Spain and then Gib and so came home.