

Target for Tonight Steve Dixon's online campaign
Target Gun Positions – St. Valery, France 3/4 April 1944

“BREAK LEFT! BREAK LEFT! Bogey coming in

” the intercom went dead as all comms were shot away but Geoffrey's response had been immediate and the crate was still flying. He could feel the plane shudder – was that from shells striking the plane or from outgoing fire. The cockpit was filled with smoke and powder from a fire extinguisher as Brian, the Flight Engineer put out a fire in the instrument panel. Everything was chaos.

A shadow passed over the windscreen like some huge bird of prey with more aerals than Ally Pally then its canopy was shattered and fire licked along its body as it cartwheeled away over his head.

Brian was trying to shout in his ear something unintelligible then he disappeared into the bomb aimers compartment. Dizziness and nausea were coming over him in waves as he felt the controls wrested from his grasp. More gun fire and then the whole aircraft shot upwards.

It had been a strange start to the day as the Commander had taken him to one side, “Can I have a quick word Geoffrey? I have given your tail gunner, young Kent 48 hours compassionate leave. It appears that his family were killed in one of the German's Baby Blitz raids on Bristol a few nights ago and he needs to go and sort things out. I have ordered W. Off Reid to fly with you on this mission. He needs to get back in the air as soon as possible as he was the only survivor when their crate crashed on take off for an air test and I don't want him to lose his nerve.”

The crew, nervous that they had a new bod on the team, kitted up and headed out to A Apple in the pouring rain expecting a recall at any moment given the weather, but none came. 102 was to play tail end Charlie on the mission.

Everything had gone without incident as they flew over East Anglia and on to the Thames Estuary before crossing the coast over Eastbourne and with 10/10ths cloud over the Channel. As they neared the French coast the cloud cleared but a sea mist blanketed the target area.

With flak exploding all around them they prepared for the run into the target which by now was totally obscured by mist and by all the smoke from flak guns and debris thrown up by the bomber stream that had already attacked.

“Skipper, skipper!” He came to with the most monumental headache and with a field dressing hanging over one eye. “Time to go home. We need to lose height LOSE HEIGHT! Oxygen is out.” Brian reinforced what he was saying by pointing down vigorously.

Back over the Channel the cloud was starting to break up so we dodged from cloud to cloud in case there were any more Jerries about.

The landing was not one of my best but then I wasn't feeling too good by this stage and as the crate came to a stop the blood wagon came out to meet us and the Quack gave me a jab and then helped me to get down the ladder. The nose turret looked a bit wonky and George, our bomb aimer was laying face down on a stretcher with a dressing the size of a cushion slapped on his backside. He did look comical. Reid came up to me with the biggest grin holding up two fingers of his gloved hand. Why is he doing that? “Two Jerries in one op! Bloody brilliant!” Well that's OK then. Think I will just lay down here and have a nap. Piece of cake old boy. Piece of cake.

Ju88G7 and He219 A-0 claims confirmed. On target 30%. Bomb Aimer and Pilot light wounds.