

Target for Tonight Steve Dixon's online campaign
Mission 6 Target – Trappes, France 20/21 April 1944

Aircraft: Berlin or Bust 102 Squadron

“So, Pilot Officer Hastings, how did your first operational mission go?”

The room was full of cigarette smoke as the crews gathered around the tables made their reports to the intelligence officer.

“Not too bad, actually. We took off shortly after P Pete and arrived at the assembly point before setting off over the North Sea. We were just off the enemy coast when we saw P Pete copping a basin full and could see the canon shells striking the old bus. Harry, my MUG thought he could just make out a Dornier J1 and from the trajectory reckoned that it would cross our tail when he had finished with P Pete so he called Bert – that's our tail gunner to be on the look out. Sure enough we heard Bert open up with a long burst followed by a shout of triumph as the burning wreckage of the Dornier passed below us.

We were coned by the searchlights shortly after we crossed the French coast north of Calais and took a bit of flak damage but it was mainly superficial. We had just made a dogleg turn northeast of Rouen when Monica started chirping up and a ruddy great Ju88C6 bore down us with obvious evil intent. I corkscrewed hard left and all his shots went high and wide and he disappeared into the night.

The run into the target was a piece of cake. As we were in the middle of the stream the target had been thoroughly plastered by the time we had come on the scene. That and the Navigator had got a particularly good fix so we were bang on target. About a third of our bombs were definitely on target. The flak was heavy coming out of the target and our port wing was clipped as well a hit to our bomb bay which was now thoroughly empty. A brush with a single seater of some sort but he was gone in a flash so couldn't quite be sure of the identification. He managed to plant a shell in our H2S as a souvenir.

The lads were feeling pretty bucked by now having seen off the cream of the Luftwaffe and dropping our bombs on target.

Came back to base and landed with no further ado.”