

## Target For Tonight Mission 13

Rail junction at Cambrai, France 8/9<sup>th</sup> June 1944

As the rear gunner I'm the first to take off and the last one to land in this crate. I like to fly with the middle plexi glass screen taken out so that I can see proper, like. It gets a mite nippy, but it's worth it so I don't nothing with the glare or condensation like. But I may have to rethink that. Take last night's mission for example.

We had just cleared the coast around about Aldeburgh and we are in five tenths cloud on a bright full moon night when I spots this cheeky bug.... er, blighter trying to sneak into position under our tail. So I gives him what for with all four barrels and shout out to the skipper to roll right. I can see this Ju88 is leaking fuel but he decides to try and give us a goodnight kiss as he is leaving but I must have put him off his stroke 'cause his tracers all go wide.

Good thing too, as I don't have room for a parachute in the rear turret and if we is hit I have to unlatch the door and reach behind me inside the plane where my chute is stowed.

Well after that bit of excitement there wasn't all that much doing. The sky cleared as we approached the Belgian coast and the flak opened up but other than filling my turret with the smell of cordite didn't achieve a whole lot else. Bray Dunes - funny to think that I was now flying over the same places as my father flew his Sopwith Triplane with the RNAS in the Great War. Wipers, or Ypres, nearly 30 years and the landscape still hadn't recovered.

Now we are crossing into France the battlefield of Lens and Douai where the Red Baron and his chums were based. Looks like we have got another uninvited visitor. An Me110 G4, trying his luck from 6 o'clock high both Harry and I give him something to think about and his tail shears off and at least one parachute blossoms in the night sky.

Then Jeff's on the blower "Bomb run started." It almost clear as day, being in the first third of the bomber stream there isn't much smoke and dust yet and we have caught the flak off guard. Tis are marking the target. Strewth! A Lanc just behind us has taken a direct flak burst with it's bombs on board and something lands in the opening of my turret splashing blood. It's a flying boot and I don't think that it's empty. Just then we rear up as our bombs are released. I count off the seconds and can just make out the explosions on the ground I think. Looks like a good prang. The skipper throws us into a steep right turn as we head for home but we get coned by a blue master searchlight and five others all swing round to pick us up. The skipper dives and corkscrews but no good and we cop a dose somewhere up front. We continue to dive then level out at 10,000 feet so someone must have lost oxygen.

Looks like we are taking a different way home as we cross the coast I can see Dunkirk off to my left and Calais off to the right. "Everything alright skipper?" No reply. Intercom must be out. Well it doesn't look like we are going into the drink so I'd better sweat it out and stay put.

We are crossing the coast between Dover and Deal. Here, that's Canterbury cathedral and we are dropping down through ten tenths cloud and coming into land. We circle around the Isle of Sheppey and blow me down we come into land at Eastchurch where my old dad did his flying training!

As I open the hatch I can see the fuselage is full of smoke and there is a ruddy great hole just below the mid upper gunner turret. Bits of paper and stuff, some of them burnt have all been blown back and cover my parachute.

“Sorry about that Bert, but we had a bit of an oxygen fire and couldn’t get to you until we had put it out. Why are you holding that flying boot like that?”

Bombing results 50% on target. Me 110 G4 claim upheld.