

After Action Report – Charmed

07 July 1942

Charmed, of 103 Squadron, 15 Group

Düsseldorf, Germany

Last mission and fate of “Charmed”, 103 Squadron, 15 Group, RAF, as related by W/O Gerald Condor, Flight Engineer

“The crew was pretty lighthearted, before this mission. We had just come off our most successful mission. What could go wrong? Cross the North Sea, at its narrowest, hit our target, and come home. What could go wrong, indeed.

We had green across the board, at run up. I gave the skipper the go ahead, and he took his position to await takeoff. No surprises, no issues,...yet. As we climbed to altitude our oxygen gave out. Apparently, there was just enough in the system to give us a false impression of a fully charged system. Skipper (P/O John White, pilot) asked our opinions of whether to abort or continue. The vote was unanimous. Let’s deliver our cargo to Gerry.

Skipper got us to 8,000 feet, and Big Al (W/O Alan Ludlum, navigator) got us on course. We had no sooner crossed the coast when Monica started screaming. Alan (Sgt Alan Carr, rear gunner) called from the tail that a JU88 was coming in from 6 high. He and Frank (Sgt Francis Horak, mid upper gunner) opened up on the 88, getting in some solid hits, but Gerry got in a few of his own. He took out our starboard aileron, as well as getting a hit on Frank’s ammo supply. After his run, Gerry disappeared into the night. I guess to lick his own wounds. Frank was able to get his ammo feed back into shape.

Everything was quiet, except for the whistling of air through the holes in the fuselage, as we approached The Netherlands. We crossed the coast of Holland when Richie (Sgt Richard Larsen, wireless operator and gunner) received a message we were recalled, as we were on a “spoof” raid. We were so close to I.P., but, orders were orders.

Skipper turned us around, and we headed home. We figured being out of the stream, it might be quiet for us. No sooner thought then squashed. Searchlights found us, and ack ack hit us heavy. Fortunately, nothing important was hit.

Back over the North Sea and heading home. The coast of Norfolk had just come into sight when we were hit by a hail of rounds from an unseen aircraft. As it passed, we made out the twin engine silhouette of a JU88. He was good. We could not spot him coming in as he made pass after pass. On his last run he lit up the starboard inboard fuel tank.

All efforts at extinguishing the flames came to nought. Skipper had just given the order to bail out when the fuel exploded, folding the wing over the top of the fuselage, and putting us into a spin. As the wing folded, it ripped open the fuselage. The spin threw me through the gaping wound in the side of the aircraft, as the she spun uncontrollably.

I finally managed to open my parachute. None too soon, as I hit the water in mere moments. Once I discarded my chute, I tried to spot any more parachutes. I saw none. I did see two things, the burning wreckage of Charmed, as it began to sink into the water, and the coast of Norfolk, a few miles away.

I began to slowly make my way to shore, ensuring to keep myself afloat. It was not more than an hour or so before Air-Sea Rescue found me, as the sun came up. When asked about my comrades, they had no word."

Crew of Charmed, presumably lost:

F/O John White, Pilot

W/O Alan Ludlum, Navigator

F/O Jeffrey Peterson Bomb Aimer

Sgt. Richard Larsen, Wireless/Gunner

Sgt. Francis Horak, Mid Upper

Sgt. Alan Carr, Tail Gunner.

Respectfully

W. Clayton, Lt

Operations, 15 Group

Addendum:

9 July 1942

Air-Sea Rescue Operations reported the finding of the wreckage of an aircraft identified as "Charmed", a Handley Page Halifax from 105 Squadron, 15 Group, RAF.

Found in shallow waters, divers were able to locate and extricate six bodies from the submerged aircraft.

Graves Registration have positively identified all six crew members and notified 15 Group. 15 Group is currently in the process of notifying their families, and preparing full honors for their internments.