

After Action Report – L-Lincoln
26 JUL 1943
L-Lincoln of 103 Squadron, 15 Group

Essen, Germany

No rest for the wicked. No sooner had the engines cooled down, it seemed, we received our next target. Tonight, we are headed to Essen.

Pre-flight check showed nothing of concern. We received the signal to ‘start’em’ up. As we waited for the signal to take our position in the take-off queue, we here “Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more ...” over the intercom, from Sgt Peyton, tail. The appropriateness of the Bard’s quote another example of Peyton’s public school education. “ ‘Ere he goes again”, was the response. “Pipe down, all.”

The signal flare was fired. Off we go. We trundled slowly to the end of the field, turned, and began our takeoff roll. After what seemed like ages, Lincoln finally decided to leave the ground for a smooth climb to altitude. We made our way into the stream then pointed her nose east.

F/Lt Nye, bomb aimer, moved from the nose the rear, to man the Window chute. He would man the position until we neared Germany, where he would then return to his bomb sight.

Half way across the North Sea, between Great Yarmouth and The Hague, Sgt Springfield, mid upper, spotted two twin engine fighters north of us. Based upon their heading, altitude, and engine exhaust glow he believed them to be a pair of ME-110s. They never closed the distance.

The east coast The Netherlands approached. “That should be Rotterdam, just to the left, Skip”, piped F/O Beverley, navigator. “Right. Check your guns, boys. It should get a little warm, soon.” The skies were still empty of the enemy. Despite that, the tension in the darkened aircraft was palpable. “I found it!”, exclaimed F/Lt Nye, “I found it!” “What, is it now?” “I found my good luck charm. It was in one of my pockets this whole time.” “Right, no cork it.” Nye’s fiancé had given him some trinket for good luck. He had been moping for days, thinking he had lost it. More afraid of her reaction if indeed he had lost it, than for any powers it might bestow.

Flak was particularly heavy when we passed Nijmegen. We evaded the searchlights, but the flak found us. F/Lt Nye’s good luck charm may have actually worked. We took a direct hit from a flak round to the right wing. No explosion. If we get home, first round is on me.

As we cleared the flak belt Sgt Camden, wireless/gunner, noted a two-engine aircraft ahead of us, heading north by west. Aircraft profile appeared to be a Dornier 217. He did not turn toward us.

F/Lt Nye returned to his position in the nose, in preparation for the bomb run.

I turned over control to F/Lt Nye for our approach and run.

Search lights again failed to locate us. Flak was light and off target. Despite our constantly scouring the skies for the enemy we were surprised by an ME110 attacking from 6 low. Our only warning was the tracers passing around us. He completed his pass and did not reappear.

F/Lt Nye maintained a constant verbal report of our progress. He reported that the target was mostly obscured, but the rail lines were quite clear, giving him good bearings to target. Steady. Release. Good show, 30% on target.

Finally, we made our turn toward home. Flak was heavier on the return. We took three superficial hits.

Clearing the flak belt we spotted an ME-110 and a JU-88 patrolling in the distance. Our luck still held, as they did not see us.

Now that the bomb run was complete, F/Lt Nye returned the aft compartment to man the Window chute.

Our return course took us past Amsterdam. There, the flak found us again, though the searchlights still failed to find us. We suffered no hits. Another E-110 was spotted, and, like before, he failed to spot us.

All was quiet until we were halfway across the North Sea when #4 burst into flames. F/Sgt Ramsey, engineer, quickly got the flames under control, and finally extinguished. Quite happy that this happened AFTER we made our bomb run.

The Norfolk coast was in sight when we encountered two ME-110s. They must not have been communicating well, as only one spotted us. The 110 was able to make a pass from 3 low, with no one spotting him. This pilot knew what he was doing, getting 6 solid hits on us. However, the results were less impressive. The only real damage was to the right-wing aileron, the left-wing dinghy, and knocking out the tail heat. As before, a single pass was made, and no more sign of Gerry.

Despite the aileron being out, our landing was uneventful. Ground crew expects L-Lincoln to be ready for the next mission.

Debrief completed, time for a few rounds with the crew.

P/O D. Hayden, Pilot
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