

Target for Tonight: mission 19 Mannheim  
Radio communications log 22/23 July 1942...

'Flight Sergeant Davies you are cleared for departure as lead aircraft, over'

'Full throttle... rotate.... Climbing to cruising altitude.... Weather systems ahead are patchy and changeable, this is going to be a protracted flight gentlemen with the majority of time spent over enemy territory. Your alert attention is required throughout as we are likely to attract company along the route from early on. Repeat all equipment checks and keep your eyes peeled.'

Despite the anticipation all remained eerily calm with no comms traffic as a consequence until far into Europe, when South of Cologne....

' bandit 9 o'clock low and rising' ,

a late burst from the ventral gun but tracer fire rakes through the starboard wing.

' losing pressure from number 3 engine, stopped all functions but not feathered, Skipper' ...

'can't see the blighter, nothing coming back at us , causing others problems I suspect' ..... 'Roger, taking her down to low altitude... this will slow us up so be extra aware of Luftwaffe lurking around!'

'Tracer at 12 o'clock!! ' as a Dornier flashes past and away, climbing to engage the bomber line... no damage to 'Sherwood Shirley' although evasive maneuvers have taken her away from the navigation route...

Remaining at low level the target approaches bringing another contact German airborne defenses, an Me 110 coming from the ground directly ahead, holes appearing in the starboard wing... Tail gun turret letting rip after the pass, shearing off the enemy's wing and taking him rapidly to ground.

'Good show Frankie... another marker for your turret when we get home. you are getting good at this young man'

Aligned on target, the bombing run commences, flak light on the run in...

'Steady skipper, left.. left ..steady.... Bombs gone'

'Turning sharply, and heading into some heavy flak ahead....

' were hit!!! Losing stability..... bail out... bail out.... Static ..... static....'

SILENCE

Excerpt from Squadron debrief:

Flt. Sgt. Davies and his crew were directly ahead of us at the front of the line flying at a low altitude. However, bombs delivered on target with reasonable accuracy, estimated at approx. 30%.

On turning for home, they flew through very heavy flak. A stream of flame appeared on the upper port wing followed by a catastrophic explosion separating the wing from the aircraft. The aircraft pitched downward and struck the ground within seconds, being at a low altitude. No 'chutes were observed'