

After Action Report

H-Harry of 103 Squadron, 15 Group
Halifax
Campaign 2, Mission 18
018/19 JAN 1944
Ossun, France, Area
On/Off Target: On Target, 40 %

Crew:

Pilot, F/O, Calvin Graham
Navigator, F/O, Parker Cheater
Bomb Aimer, F/O, Lindsay Woodward
Flight Engineer, W/O, Kenzie Sadler
Wireless/Gunner, F/Sgt, Milton Maker
Mid-Upper Gunner, F/Sgt, David Greenwood
Tail Gunner, Sgt, Roy Hawkins

Tonight, was a long, grueling, marathon of a mission. Right from the start we had warnings of how the flight would likely go. Not an auspicious start for our first combat mission.

On take-off roll out #2 engine gauges pegged momentarily, then returned to normal status.

As we approached the French coast, we picked up a Mosquito escort. Perfect timing as a Heinkel 219 A-0 appeared. The Mosquito drove off the Heinkel, neither to return.

Crossing the coast, we were coned by searchlights which allowed the local flak to target us. We took three hits from the flak, all superficial.

A second Heinkel 219 picked us up but was also spotted by us. Sgt Hawkins targeted the 219 coming in from 6 low but missed. The Heinkel took out the left aileron, our H2S radar, as well as causing an engine oil leak on #1 engine, which self-sealed. The fighter did not return.

Not twenty minutes passed before another Heinkel attacked. This time we were hit by a pair of devastating Schrage attacks. The first pass knocked out the tail guns and wounded F/O Woodward, our bomb aimer. On the Heinkel's second Schrage pass F/Sgt Greenwood, MUG, was wounded. He'll be eating his food through a straw for a few weeks., as a piece of shrapnel hit him in the mask, bloodying his mouth, and taking out a few teeth. #2 engine took a hit to the oil system, which also self-sealed. Pilot O2 was knocked out, the autopilot bomb release mechanism was shot out, and the right flap was rendered useless, and the right-wing root took a good hit.

The Heinkel did not press home his attack and disappeared into the night.

I brought the bomber down below 10,000 feet, to continue the mission.

I continued to drop to the deck, to protect us from future Schrage attacks. That altitude also added some defense since we were without our tail guns.

Passing Poitiers local flak made a half-hearted attempt at us, missing. An Me-110 surprised us from 6 low, but missed, and continued into the darkness.

Passing between Bordeaux and Bergerac we were once again coned by searchlights. Flak was a bit heavier than earlier but couldn't get the range. Through breaks in the cloud cover below, and a good star sighting, F/O Cheater got a good fix on our position.

Halfway between Bordeaux and Ossun searchlights found us, again. Flak was still off target. It was about this time that W/O Sadler reported that our Mandrel was out.

Approaching the target area I brought us up to 9,000 feet for the bomb run.

German ground control was on their game as we continued to be picked up by searchlights as we entered the target area. We were unable to dodge the lights. Even lit up local flak was ineffective. A Dornier 217 came in from 1:30 low but missed. As the Dornier passed over us, we could make out the rivet lines on his underbelly. The enemy fighter did not return.

Despite the target mostly obscured, and our H2S radar out, F/O Woodward was able to drop 40% on target.

Exiting the target, we were able to dodge the searchlights, but flak found us, though still unable to get the range. Once the flak ceased, we picked up a Junkers 88 attacking from 3 o'clock high. F/Sgt Greenwood, unable to call out the approaching fighter simply opened up with his twin .50 calibers. He hit the fighter's fuel tanks, igniting the fuel, engulfing the airplane, and killing its crew.

With La Rochelle off our port side an Me-110 caught us from 12 high, but missed, and did not press home its attack.

Passing between Tours and Angers flak found us, but was ineffective, doing little more than scratching the paint. F/O Cheater got another good fix, for us.

We had just Le Mans when a tandem of Junkers too turns on us. The first came in from 6 level. Sgt Hawkins in the tail, being toothless without his guns, called him out. I began evasive maneuvers. Despite the jinking about the first fighter was able to knock out Sgt Hawkins' heat and O2. The damaged O2 system caught fire. Sgt Hawkins was able to extinguish the fire. The Junkers did not return.

An apparent second Junkers surprised us from 6 level, but missed, not to return.

The French coast was finally in sight when we were caught by searchlights again. We were able to duck the lights, but local flak found us, but to no effect.

As we crossed the coastline, the mute F/Sgt Greenwood opened fire on an approaching Dornier. His accurate fire tore off the enemy's left wing, sending it into a death spiral. No chutes were observed.

The skies were quiet the rest of the flight. An occasional exhaust was spotted, but no threats.

Once we landed, we were met by the meat wagon. It took F/O Woodward and F/Sgt Greenwood to hospital. F/O Woodward is expected to be released within the week, as he is to be observed for concussion. F/Sgt Greenwood is expected to return to flight status in about two weeks once his mouth is healed and the dentist can fit him with new teeth.

Our ground crew chief estimates 3 days to repair the damage.

F/O, Calvin Graham, Commander
H-Harry
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