

**AAR Target For Tonight**  
**STEVEN K. DIXON'S ONLINE CAMPAIGN**

**After Action Report – D-Dauntless**  
**103 Squadron, 15 Group**  
**Halifax**

**Campaign 3, Mission 6**

**20/21 APR 1944**

**Trappes, France, Rail Facilities**

**On/Off Target: DNB**

**Crew**

Pilot, Flying Officer Alister Priestley  
Navigator, Pilot Officer Sunna Bush  
Bomb Aimer, Flying Officer George Garfield  
Flight Engineer, Warrant Officer Clinton Hodgson  
Wireless/Gunner, Flight Sergeant Al King  
Mid-Upper Gunner, Flight Sergeant Wilfred Burns  
Tail Gunner, Sergeant Garfield Savage

**Damage to Aircraft**

Total  
Aircraft exploded over the English Channel

**Peckham Points: Total**

**Claims**

None

**Wounded Crew**

Pilot, Flying Officer Alister Priestley - KIA  
Navigator, Pilot Officer Sunna Bush - KIA  
Bomb Aimer, Flying Officer George Garfield - KIA  
Flight Engineer, Warrant Officer Clinton Hodgson - KIA  
Wireless/Gunner, Flight Sergeant Al King - KIA  
Mid-Upper Gunner, Flight Sergeant Wilfred Burns - KIA  
Tail Gunner, Sergeant Garfield Savage - KIA

**AAR**

D-Dauntless had been back at her home field a day before heading out on her next combat mission. She had been laid up several days in East Suffolk, at an RAF fighter field, for sufficient repairs to fly back home on Norfolk. Once back in Norfolk, the Halifax spent several more days getting tidied up, getting ready to return to combat.

Upon landing in Suffolk, her two wounded crew members were taken to a local hospital for care. Tail gunner Sgt Savage, requiring surgery for his abdominal wounds, would require two months of recovery before returning to duty. Bomb aimer F/O Garfield was treated and released, with a few sutures as a reminder of his first combat mission.

Upon their tardy return to Norfolk, the rest of the squadron chided the crew of D-Dauntless about being “fashionably late”.

Flight Sergeant Dickinson Hamilton, a seasoned flyer, was assigned to D-Dauntless as their replacement tail gunner. The crew was grateful that an experienced gunner had joined the crew.

Five days after taking a severe beating at the hands of the Luftwaffe, D-Dauntless and her crew headed once again into the unfriendly skies of Europe. Their target tonight were the rail facilities at Trappes, France, on the outskirts of Paris.

The weather for the flight to target called for 0/10 to 5/10 cloud cover, with scattered clouds over the target, under a waning crescent moon. Two days before the new moon, the stars gave off more light than the moon herself.

The crew spent extra time going over the Halifax, before the flight, after the ship had undergone such extensive repairs, particularly her tail control surfaces. Once satisfied with her airworthiness, the crew participated in the rather peculiar “good luck” tradition of urinating on her tail wheel.

The bomber’s crew had taken their positions in the aircraft, and each indicated their readiness. Upon signal, F/O Priestly and W/O Hodgson brought each of the aircraft’s systems up, and all four of the Rolls-Royce Merlin engines. F/O Priestly, satisfied with the running condition of the bombers, signaled such to the ground crew, then awaited the signal to roll out for takeoff.

Takeoff went smoothly, with the large aircraft lumbering along the runway, and into the darkening night sky. F/O Priestly slowly climbed to altitude as he brought the ponderous aircraft into the bomber stream and headed toward their target.

With the darkening skies, the crew only knew they were still over England due to the patchwork of dark and darker fields and copses of trees passing below them.

Soon the dark patchwork below turned to a slight shimmer. A shimmer reflecting what little moon and starlight there was upon the surface of the Channel, below them.

With England behind them, the crew’s vigilance increased by a magnitude as they entered the domain of the enemy – the ebon skies of night. The dark recesses of the night could hide the presence of the enemy fighters until it was too late.

Indeed, it was too late. A Junkers 88 C-6, piloted by a veteran Luftwaffe pilot, and crew, were able to approach and attack D-Dauntless from below, with their 20mm Schrage- Musik cannons. The fighter was able to make several passes at the Halifax, inflicting minor damage. On his first pass, the fighter knocked out the bomber’s radio, the tail gunner’s suit heat, as well as wounding the bomb aimer, F/O Garfield. Numerous 20mm rounds struck the bomb bay, without causing any serious damage to the aircraft or her cargo.

On his second pass, tail gunner Savage spotted the Junkers, but failed to score any hits on the enemy.

In response, the Junkers knocked out Sgt Savage's .50 cal machine guns, and struck the bomb bay again, as well as the nose turret. The damaged tail guns were the only telling damage to the bomber.

The bomber was attacked again by a Junkers. The bomber's crew believed it to be the same Junkers making a third pass. As it turned out, it was a second Junker 88 C-6, this time piloted by an expert pilot and crew.

This second Junkers made a single attacking Schrage Musik attack against the Halifax. One pass was all it would need.

The Junkers' 20mm shells wounded the tail gunner, piercing his right upper arm. The shells continued to hit the bomber, as the fighter moved forward. The fighter's rounds finally reached the bomber's bomb bay. This time, however, the enemy's rounds found their mark, striking the bombs within, and causing them to detonate. The exploding bombs destroyed D-Dauntless, killing the crew within. What little was left of the Halifax fell to the Channel below, somewhere between Dover and Calais.