

RAF
FORM 541

BY	104 Squadron
FOR THE MONTH OF	August 1943

SECRET

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DATE	AIRCRAFT TYPE & NUMBER	CREW	DUTY	TIME		DETAILS OF SORTIE & FLIGHT	REFERENCES
				UP	DOWN		
23/24 August	Lancaster	F/Sgt Turnbull (P)	Berlin	2100	0520	Bomb load:	
1943	R4598	Sgt Crowe (F/E)				14 x 1,000 lb Medium Case, General Purpose	
	DX-M	F/Sgt Roberts (Nav)				RDX	
		F/Sgt Pettit (B/A)					
		Sgt Pearson (W/Op)				Total bomb load: 14,000 lbs.	
		Sgt Laycock (A/G)					
		Sgt O'Connor (A/G)					
		<p>The crews 21st mission but the first time that the fateful word BERLIN appeared in the crews' logbooks.</p> <p>F/Sgt Turnbull contemplated the weather en-route and the thought of a lot of instrument flying ahead. Turning to Roberts, he whispered "I hope you get it spot on tonight or we'll be stooging over Germany till autumn."</p> <p>It was still dusk as the crew started the now familiar start up drill and Mother's Ruin lumbered into the gathering darkness. As the aircraft gained height the clouds ahead grew thicker and higher and soon Mother's Ruin and its crew were flying in their own personal cocoon. With no reference points to go on, it seemed that no progress was being made and it was only confirmatory comments from Roberts that H2S showed eastwards progress.</p> <p>Holland passed unseen but a thinning of the cloud gave the first glimpse of enemy territory as the twinkling of flak in the Bremen area could be seen 16,000 feet below and to starboard.</p> <p>"Back to the mark 1 eyeball, we're out of H2S range. The next major city should be Hamburg off to port."</p> <p>"No eyeballs needed, the cloud has come back, we're in the fug again."</p> <p>"Wireless Operator. Any met messages?"</p> <p>"Nothing."</p> <p>"Ok. Navigator to pilot, change course to 115 degrees. You should see Berlin about 70 miles on the starboard quarter."</p>					

		<p>"The cloud is thinning but not enough for me to see anything that far off."</p> <p>"Mid-upper to pilot. Do217 at 3 o'clock high heading south. Don't think he's seen us."</p> <p>"I'm not taking any chances, there's a layer of cloud at 13,000, we'll hide in there."</p> <p>"Mid-upper, he's definitely not seen us, he's going straight and true at 19,000."</p> <p>"Roger, keep your eyes peeled."</p> <p>"Navigator to pilot. Turn to 170 degrees. Target should be straight ahead, range 40 miles."</p> <p>"I see it, good to know that your training wasn't all in vain. Pilot to wireless operator, start dropping Window. Everyone ready?"</p> <p>The sing-song voice of the bomb aimer now started his running commentary, punctuated by flak from Berlin's formidable defences.</p> <p>"That's a fresh set of target indicators going down directly ahead, the aiming point seems to have taken a pasting. Bomb doors open, bombs fused."</p> <p>"Bombs gone." As over 6 tons of bombs left the Lancaster, the aircraft lifted and the speed increased.</p> <p>"Engineer to pilot, throttle back a bit skipper, we're going to need all the juice we have."</p> <p>"Mid-upper to pilot. Fighter flares dropping to port."</p> <p>"Don't like those. Navigator, can we cut a corner?"</p> <p>"Navigator to pilot, steer 270 degrees then, that'll take us a bit close to Magdeberg though."</p> <p>"Understood. I'll get well past these flares then you can get us back on course."</p> <p>"Wireless op to navigator, Group Met message, cloud thickening to 10/10ths before we get to Osnabruck."</p> <p>"Thank you wireless op. Pilot, that's about an hour away on current course and speed."</p> <p>"Pilot to wireless operator, drop the rest of the window, hopefully that'll keep the fighters confused until we get to the cloud."</p>	
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		<p>"Rear gunner to pilot. I can see a fire about 5 miles behind us and dropping. Might be a bomber going down."</p> <p>"Note the position, navigator."</p> <p>"Corkscrew port, Mell0, 6 o'clock low." The rear gunner's call reminded all that this trip wasn't over yet by a long chalk. The four Browning .303s of the rear turret opened fire and as the aircraft rolled and yawed, the crew all heard the cannon of the Messerschmitt but no-one heard any strikes on Mother's Ruin.</p> <p>"Mid-upper to pilot. He's overshoot, I can see him going round and coming in from 4 o'clock high, corkscrew starboard."</p> <p>Again the chatter of 303s and the deeper, slower rhythm of the cannon punctuating Turnbull's commentary to the gunners</p> <p>"Going down to starboard... Going up port... rolling..."</p> <p>"Ok skipper, he's had enough, going south at a rate of knots."</p> <p>"Acknowledged. Any injuries or damage to report?"</p> <p>A round of negative responses before the navigator suggested a new course and airspeed. All the while the thick cloud came closer until, after what seemed like an eternity, it swallowed the Lancaster up.</p> <p>"Navigator to pilot, we're back in H2S range, we're slightly north of track. I'll get a new course to avoid Rotterdam."</p> <p>An hour later and with the cloud thinning Turnbull started the descent toward base.</p> <p>"Wireless operator to Pilot. Message from base, intruders have been active over the Humber estuary. Can we hold on a circuit for 10 minutes or do we want a divert?"</p> <p>"Tell them we can circuit for 10 minutes but if it's any longer, we'll be too low on fuel if we can't go straight in."</p> <p>"Base acknowledge. Wait."</p> <p>"Wireless op to pilot. All clear given."</p> <p>Fifteen minutes later and 8 hours 20 minutes after take off, Turnbull set Mother's Ruin down and the crew headed off to debriefing, breakfast and sleep.</p>	
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