

Johnny

JOHN FAUQUIER DSO AND 2 BARS DFC

Canada's Greatest
Bomber Pilot

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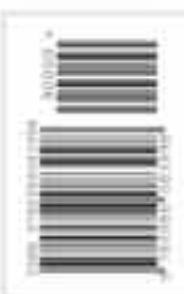


Dave Birrell



Air Commodore John Fauquier DSO and 2 Bars DFC was Canada's most decorated airman and its leading bomber pilot during World War II, flying at least 93 combat operations.

'Johnny' did it all during his flying career as a bush pilot, flying instructor, bomber pilot, squadron commander, pathfinder, master bomber, base commander, and finally leading the legendary 'Dambusters' squadron as they dropped 22,400 pound Grand Slam bombs on Nazi targets.



Johnny



**Bomber Command Museum of Canada
Nanton, Alberta, Canada**



Air Commodore John Emilius Fauquier DSO and two Bars DFC
by F/Lt. Robert S. Hyndman (courtesy Canadian War Museum)

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www.bombercommandarchivess.ca

Dave Birrell

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Front cover: 'Johnny' Fauquier with a 22,400 pound Grand Slam bomb at Woodhall Spa (courtesy Royal Canadian Air Force)

Back cover: Air Commodore John Emilius Fauquier DSO and two Bars DFC by F/Lt. Robert S. Hyndman (courtesy Canadian War Museum)

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INTRODUCTION

John Emilius Fauquier was the most decorated Canadian airman of World War II. As well, he was Canada's preeminent bomber pilot of that conflict, completing at least ninety-three combat operations as a pilot with the Royal Canadian Air Force.

After flying as a bush pilot in northern Quebec, Johnny joined the Royal Canadian Air Force when war broke out in 1939. The air force decided that Johnny's flying experience could best be utilized by having him serve as a flying instructor in Canada as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. After finally being posted overseas, Johnny was involved in virtually all aspects of Bomber Command's contribution to victory.

Johnny served almost four years with Bomber Command, beginning at a time when twin-engined bombers flew alone to their targets prior to the development of any electronic navigational aids. He went on to fly four-engined heavy bombers -participating in the 'Thousand Bomber Raids', as a Master Bomber with the Pathfinders on raids to the V-2 Rocket development site at Pennemunde and to Berlin, and leading precise attacks on Nazi targets with 22,400 pound 'Grand Slam' earthquake bombs. He even flew the legendary Mosquito as he led his squadron into combat.

And Johnny took the lead as a Canadian within Bomber Command, becoming the first Canadian to command a bomber squadron, playing a major role in the formation of 6 Group -the RCAF component of Bomber Command, assisting in the formation of 'The Pathfinders' and commanding its Canadian Squadron, and completing his career as the commanding officer of the Royal Air Force's elite 617 Squadron -'The Dambusters'.

Johnny returned to Canada fiercely proud of the strategic role played by Bomber Command in the defeat of the Nazis as well as of the Canadians who were such an important part of this enormous effort and sacrifice.



Ardvar -the Fauquier family home in Rockcliffe, as photographed during the 1930's. It remains much the same today, as the residence of the Swedish ambassador to Canada.

CHAPTER 1

The Pre-war Years

"As we passed over lakes we drew our own maps, otherwise we would never have been able to return."

'Ardvar' was the name given by Gilbert Emilius Fauquier to the impressive home that he purchased in 1920 in the exclusive Rockcliffe Park neighbourhood of Ottawa. He and his wife, Jesse Maye (Gilmour) Fauquier, added a building for their chauffeur that they named Ardvar Cottage. Located on a headland high above the Ottawa River, the house is of red brick with a slate roof, in an architectural style known as Queen Anne Revival. In 1944, Gilbert Fauquier's widow sold the house to the Government of Sweden. It has been the residence of the Swedish ambassador to Canada ever since.

Through his work in the construction business that included being involved in the building of a section of the Canada Atlantic Railway that connected Georgian Bay on Lake Huron with the northern end of Lake Champlain via Ottawa, Gilbert became quite wealthy.

Gilbert and Jesse's son, John Emilius Fauquier, was born in Ottawa on 19 March 1909 and was raised at Ardvar. He attended Ashbury College which continues to function as an exclusive, private school in the Rockcliffe area. Johnny's supervisory and management skills may very well have developed here as he became head prefect, an older student who is given the job of helping to watch and control younger students. Johnny was active in sports as captain of the cricket team and playing a prominent role on the school's rugby, hockey,

soccer and other teams. His mother was quoted as saying that she had, "a collection of forty-two cups that he had won at various meets."

Following military service with the Royal Highlanders of Canada (The Black Watch) from 1929 until 1931 and after considering a career in medicine, Johnny moved to Montreal where he became a successful stockbroker and bond salesman with Nesbitt, Thomson and Company, to some extent through his family's extensive social contacts and those of his wife, Dorothea Coulson, whose family owned the Alexandra Hotel in Ottawa.

However, something seemed to be lacking in Johnny's life which he livened up by becoming involved in racing fast cars and motorcycles and joining the Montreal Light Aeroplane Club where, it was said, he was a natural pilot. The club was located at the St. Hubert Aerodrome and the aircraft Johnny learned to fly was the De Havilland DH.60 Cirrus Moth.

Johnny's life was changed. He felt that he was 'born to fly' and flying so appealed to him that he abandoned the stocks and bonds business, although the stock market crash and enduring depression may have had some influence on his decision as well. In 1933, after persuading his father to provide financing, he established a bush-pilot airline called Commercial Airways in Noranda, Quebec where a mining boom was taking place. His company operated from a lake and supported mining exploration in northern Quebec utilizing at least two aircraft -a Waco and a Fairchild 71.

As both the owner and chief pilot, Johnny had all the work that his active nature desired. With commercial flying in its early



**Johnny and Dorothea Fauquier's
wedding photo**



Johnny took this photo of his Waco

stages, he regularly found himself wrestling cargo onto his airplanes as well as flying them. The primitive, outdoor operating conditions suited his independent nature, teaching him the knack of coming up with practical inventions and solutions to the challenges he regularly faced. It has been written that, "His young and exciting wife was there with him, flying with him on occasion into the bush country." Johnny's daughter-in-law recalls that, "He loved dogs and took his dog with him when he was bush-flying."

The proximity to the chaos of the mining boom meant that Johnny did more than just fly airplanes in the bush. There were opportunities to enter the mining business and even real estate as he related in a 1978 interview with CBC Radio.

"I realize now, that all the bush pilots did not take full advantage of the opportunities offered them apart from their interest in flying. I'd like to give you one example of how I missed a chance to improve my finances. One day I landed in Lac Blouin, tied up the aircraft, and then proceeded by buckboard and a team of horses over a very muddy trail, in fact at times the horses were up to their bellies in mud, to a place that had one log cabin, owned and operated by a character known as MacEwan.



Johnny and his Fairchild 71 at Noranda

"Mac told me that the province of Quebec was going to make a townsite out of the very spot we were standing on. As I looked around at the tall spruce trees and mud track, I burst out laughing and said, even if true, I was in the flying business, not real estate. Out of curiosity, I asked how much were the lots. He said you could buy them for \$12.50. About a year later, those lots were selling for over \$6000 apiece. Today, there are paved streets, traffic lights, etcetera in what is now known as Val d'Or."

As he flew over the vast wilderness of northern Quebec, Johnny's navigational challenges were considerable. One problem faced by the early bush pilots was that, if maps existed at all of the country they were flying over, they were not detailed nor accurate and could not be trusted.

Johnny described how they navigated,

"There were very few maps of northern Quebec and northern Ontario. You might have got the impression that most of our trips were of short mileage but they weren't. I can recall going up into northern Hudson's Bay and I shudder to think of the chances we took. We had no radio. We had no navigational

aids. We had to, in most cases, put a pad on our knee and as we passed over lakes we drew our own maps, otherwise we would never have been able to return.”²

As well as supporting the mining effort, Johnny flew mercy flights.

“It seems to me, as I recall, that all the mercy flights happened to be asked for on days when the flying was most hazardous. I recall one in particular which will give you an example. I received a call by radio from Wedding Lake stating that a miner had a very badly infected arm and had to be hospitalized at once. As this was late in March and the ice was very unpredictable, I thought very seriously about this thing but my conscience wouldn’t allow me not to go. So I said what about your mine dump. What’s on top of it? Is there any snow? They said yes, but one thing they forgot to tell me was that there was a high-tension wire at one end of it. Never-the-less. I took off in my little Waco and I landed on the dump.



A Fairchild 71 on floats. Johnny flew this type of aircraft to support mining exploration in northern Quebec. As well as seating for passengers, the aircraft was able to carry significant loads of cargo.

"Much to my horror and extreme annoyance I found the man had nothing but an infected thumb. Nevertheless, I was there and if I didn't get off it in a hurry I would still be there I presume. So, I asked some miners to hold the wing tips while I revved up the engine, freed the skis and away we went. How much we cleared that wire by we'll never know but we did and we finally got the man back.

*"Now these are the kind of things that go unnoticed by the general public but I don't know of a man who was in the flying business, or a bush pilot if you'd care to call him that, who wouldn't have risked his life and his machine to go to the aid of somebody who really needed assistance in any kind of weather."*³

Johnny's long-time friend, Lt. Gen. Reg Lane, recalled how northern Quebec honed Johnny's brawling and fighting skills,

*"Johnny was only about five feet, ten inches and no more than 160 pounds but he loved to fight -especially when he had a few. More than once, his pal, 'Tiny' Wilson, who was huge and weighed close to three hundred pounds, would reach in and haul Johnny out of a scrap by the back of the neck."*⁴

As well as his flying business, Johnny was owner and manager of 'Pro Products of Canada' in Toronto from 1937 until war broke out during September 1939.

During the 1930's, Johnny's father had a fishing camp on one of a series of lakes near Wakefield, fifteen miles northwest of Ottawa. According to Johnny's nephew, his father told the story of how Johnny flew into the cabin one day and decided to take his brother David water-skiing behind the aircraft. He said that this was typical of the kinds of antics Johnny and his



Johnny and his son Jonathan Gilbert at the family cottage

brothers were involved in. As young men, they were well-known for their parties, enjoying life to the fullest, and being somewhat on the wild side.



Gilbert Fauquier and his five children on the terrace at Ardvar, just prior to WW II; (l-r) Johnny, David, Louisa, Gilbert (Gib) and Adam



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CHAPTER 2

Enlisting and Instructing in Canada

“An A-1 instructor who could always be relied on to organize and carry out a job effectively.”

When Canada declared war on Nazi Germany, Johnny answered the call as did hundreds of thousands of other Canadians. In his application to join the Royal Canadian Air Force dated 18 September 1939, just one week after Canada declared war, Johnny noted that he had flown 2000 hours on wheels, skis, and floats and that he had flown Moth, Rambler, Avian, Waco, Fairchild and Bellanca aircraft. He likely had logged over 200,000 air-miles as a bush pilot. Other reports state that he had flown 3000 hours and logged 300,000 air-miles.

Johnny's application was, of course, successful and he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force on 1 November 1939. Clearly impressed with his experience, Johnny was immediately commissioned, becoming an officer with the rank of pilot officer, a level that a raw recruit would take numerous months of training to attain and that many would never reach. Johnny was assigned RCAF service number C.1399.

Johnny had likely hoped that he would immediately be posted overseas as a fighter pilot. This is what virtually all the



P/O Fauquier



A British Commonwealth Air Training Plan station under construction.

recruits wanted, but the RCAF's primary focus at this point was supporting Canada's leading role in what many argue was the country's major contribution to victory in World War II, the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP). When Johnny was filling out the RCAF application form and declared that he had 2000 hours of flying experience, whereas others claim he had 3000 hours, it may have been with the hope that having less experience might make him less likely to become part of the BCATP as an instructor.

Referred to as the "Aerodrome of Democracy" by US President Roosevelt, Canada had an abundance of air training space beyond the range of enemy aircraft, excellent climatic conditions for flying, immediate access to American industry, and relative proximity to Britain via the North Atlantic.

Canada had been the location of a major recruitment and training organization during the First World War and Britain looked to it again when the war began. To Canada's Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, this major commitment had the advantage of keeping large numbers of Canadians at home and avoiding the raising of a large expeditionary force to fight in Europe as had been the case in the First World War.

Canada agreed to accept most of the plan's costs, but insisted that the British agree that air training would take precedence over other aspects of the Canadian war effort. The British expected that their Royal Air Force would absorb Canadian air training graduates as in the First World War, but Prime Minister Mackenzie King demanded that distinct Royal Canadian Air Force squadrons be formed.

The construction of the training schools was a massive undertaking in itself. On the prairies, farmer's fields were

transformed into operational schools within a matter of a few months. This involved the levelling of the land and paving of runways, taxiways, and tarmacs, the building of several huge hangars and dozens of other buildings for accommodating, teaching, and providing other services to the young airmen, and the installation of electrical, water, sewage, and other services.

As well, an aircraft manufacturing industry was developed to provide most of the thousands of aircraft that were necessary.

At the plan's peak 94 schools were operating at 231 sites across Canada, 10,840 aircraft were involved, the ground organization numbered 104,113 men and women, and 3000 trainees graduated each month. In total 131,553 pilots, navigators, bomb aimers, wireless operators, air gunners, and flight engineers were graduated.

When the BCATP was established, it was clear to the air force that its success would depend on the quality of its instructors. So in order to encourage experienced, commercial pilots such as Johnny to join the RCAF, they made it known that immediate commissions would be offered to those who signed up. This may or may not have made a difference to Johnny. It was likely not a surprise to him when he was designated to be a flying instructor.

Five days after his acceptance by the air force, Johnny was posted to the Central Flying School at RCAF Camp Borden. He then attended an 'Intermediate Flying Training' course and a 'Flying Instructor' course. Upon their completion on 19 February 1940, he was presented with his RCAF pilot wings. He remained with the school for the next fourteen months, serving at both Camp Borden and Trenton, giving instruction to experienced



Instructor, student, and
De Havilland Tiger Moth



Johnny took this photo of graduates parading at Trenton.

pilots who were, like he had been, destined to become flying instructors.

By December 1940, Johnny had made an impression, a report reading,

"Above average instructor. Has a capacity for work and can be depended upon to get a job done. Has a pleasant personality and a sterling character, professional and otherwise above average."



Johnny would have flown aircraft such as this Fleet Fawn while instructing future instructors at the Central Flying School.

An assessment of Johnny's performance of his Flying Instructor duties by S/Ldr. G.D. MacAllister dated 21 March 1941 reads,

"He has been instructing at the Central Flying School (approximately 500 hours). An excellent instructor whose experience and work at CFS warrants the highest category."²

Another, dated 29 May 1941, referred to Johnny's work as an instructor and Flight Commander,

"An A-1 instructor who could always be relied on to organize and carry out a job effectively. Well liked by those who worked under him."³

The graduates of the BCATP went on to win the air war but the majority of instructors, most of whom longed to be posted overseas, continued to teach class after class until the end of the hostilities. But Johnny was given the opportunity to serve overseas. This is somewhat surprising in that, by this time, he was thirty-two years of age, a dozen or so years older than most of the other Canadian airmen who were posted overseas.

Prior to leaving though, Johnny served at RCAF Headquarters in Ottawa for two months. He then sailed for England from Halifax on 18 June 1941.



Johnny kept this photo of S/L Joseph Gutray, the Chief Flying Instructor at the Flying School that he served at.



A comic from a flying school newsletter in Vulcan, Alberta



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CHAPTER 3

Training in the UK

Generally, Royal Canadian Air Force aircrew arriving in the UK travelled by train to #3 RCAF Personnel Reception Centre at Bournemouth on the south coast of England where they were introduced to wartime life in Britain. Bournemouth had formerly been a restful, seaside resort whose up-scale hotels catered to the upper class who came to enjoy its beaches, warm climate, stately gardens, and lush parks.

Now war had transformed the city. Upon their arrival, the Canadians immediately noticed that the beaches were heavily mined and all access to them barred by coils of rust-encrusted barbed wire. They heard air-raid sirens. Bournemouth suffered its share of bombing attacks during the war with more than fifty air raids leaving 219 people dead and 726 injured.

The function of the Personnel Reception Centre was to act as a holding unit for the newly arrived Canadian airmen prior to their being posted elsewhere in the UK to receive additional training. The airmen had their photographs taken and were issued identification cards as well as flying suits, silk and fleece lined boots, chamois leather gloves, helmets, and goggles. Then they awaited their posting.

It appears though, that Johnny did not pass through the RCAF's Reception Centre. Rather, he was sent directly to the Royal Air Force's, 'Central Landing Establishment' at Ringway, a Royal Air Force station near Manchester. Johnny arrived there on 7 July 1941 and spent the next month helping to devise systems for landing gliders within restricted areas, his extensive

bush flying experience undoubtedly being the reason for this temporary assignment.

But it had been decided that Johnny would be a bomber pilot and on 16 August 1941, he was posted to a Bomber Command Operational Training Unit (OTU). Located at Wellesbourne in Warwickshire, the training at 22 OTU was much more serious and the flying much more dangerous than Johnny would have previously experienced. He was now training as a member of a bomber crew and they would learn to fly operationally on an actual warplane.

As a pilot, Johnny would be acquiring the 'feel' and learning the flying characteristics of a much heavier aircraft. For Canadian pilots, there was also a need for them to become familiar with flying over the English countryside and in the English weather. This experience would be called upon when returning to a fog-shrouded airbase following a raid over Germany, possibly with a damaged aircraft.

When Canada's Bomber Command Memorial was dedicated in Nanton, Alberta in 2005, the danger of training at an OTU became apparent when it was noted that of the 10,643 names on the Memorial Wall, exactly ten percent, 1064, had not been killed in combat, but rather while at an Operational Training Unit. One of the reasons for this high loss rate was that the aircraft that the trainees used for their training were generally old, 'clapped-out' bombers that had been replaced by new aircraft on the operational squadrons.

The bomber that Johnny trained on at the OTU was the Vickers Wellington Mk II. Like the Armstrong-Whitworth Whitley, Bristol Blenheim, and Handley-Page Hampden, the Wellington was a twin-engined aircraft that had been operational at the outbreak of the war. These four aircraft carried the fight for Bomber Command until the much larger, four-engined Stirlings, Halifaxes, and Lancasters became available.

The Vickers-Armstrong Wellington, known affectionately as the 'Wimpy', was Bomber Command's leading twin-engined medium bomber from the outbreak of the war until it was superseded by the four-engined bombers during 1942 and 1943. However, it continued to play an important role in training and flew operationally until the end of the war in roles such as convoy

protection, reconnaissance, mine-laying, and anti-submarine operations. Its unique, geodetic structure, had been designed by Sir Barnes Wallis who masterminded the weapon and techniques used in the famed Dambusters Raid. It made the airframe capable of withstanding tremendous damage and still able to bring its crew safely back to base.

The Wellington Mk II's were powered by twin, 1145 horsepower Rolls-Royce Merlin X, V-12 engines. Like the other bombers operational at the time, it was slow and had a limited ceiling. Wimpy's were armed with twin .303 machine guns in the nose and tail turrets and could carry a 4500 pound bomb load.

Upon their arrival at the OTU, virtually all the RCAF aircrew were simply thrown in with the other Commonwealth airmen, mostly British but with a considerable number of Australians, and New Zealanders. Johnny would have stood out for two reasons, the first being that at thirty-two years of age, he was ten to twelve years older than the others. The second was that, although he had no combat experience, he carried the rank of flight lieutenant.



**Wellington Mk III's at Bomber Command's
30 Operational Training Unit**

The manner in which most bomber crews came together was quite informal. Murray Peden was a Canadian pilot who served with an RAF squadron. Of his 'crewing-up' at the OTU he was posted to, Murray wrote,

"The instructors and admin officers, who wasted no time getting hold of us, organized the group into classes and laid out our syllabus. They dropped the word that within about ten days we would be teamed up in crews of five, each consisting of a pilot, bomb-aimer, navigator, wireless operator, and air gunner.

Equal numbers of each of these trades had been brought together to form our course, and we were told that if any five could agree amongst themselves that they wanted to form a crew and fly together, the Air Force would oblige and crew them up officially. But at the end of the ten-day period, all those who had not made their own arrangements would be crewed up arbitrarily by the staff and probably, we guessed, by purely random selection."¹

Twin-engined bombers such as the Wellington had a crew of five whereas the four-engined bombers that Johnny would fly later in the war had a crew of seven. Almost all the airmen were very young, even a man of twenty-five would likely be referred to as the 'Old Man' or 'Grandpa'. Within a crew, there were generally different ranks and nationalities, and they came from different walks of life. However, the men quickly bonded together to form a very special, tightly-knit crew. This bond was based on mutual trust, dependence, and shared experiences –both terrifying ones in the air and enjoyable ones while off duty.

This camaraderie was crucial to maintaining morale and efficiency in the air. Most felt that their crew was one of the best in Bomber Command. They generally spent many of their off-duty hours together as well as the first day or two of a leave. The bond between members of a bomber crew was very strong. F/Lt. Eddie Tickler wrote,

"You were seven men brought together by conflict and you came to know each other's every mood and reaction, ability, humility, and likes and dislikes during your training and



This crew had just returned from their thirtieth operation, including nine trips to the most dangerous target of all, Berlin. They are elated as their tour of operations is over and they have beaten formidable odds. Five of the crew went on to serve a second tour together. This particular aircraft was lost the following night after an operational life of only nine days.

operational life together . . . Your crew were seven men who not only flew together but ate, drank, slept, and played together . . . You were ‘one’ and generally inseparable. Rank meant little between you, yet you knew the dividing lines between respect, authority, and familiarity.”²

Following five weeks at 22 Operational Training Unit, Johnny was posted to an operational Bomber Command squadron. He was ready to go to war.



CHAPTER 4

405 Squadron -Wellingtons

"Our eyes were in all directions and we operated by stealth. Silhouetted on clouds was a danger; icing in them was even more so."

The 405 Squadron 'Operations Record Book -Summary of Events' for 20 September 1941 lists a number of 'Postings In - Aircrew' that includes, 'C.1399 F/Lt. Fauquier, J'. Johnny was about to begin flying combat operations with Bomber Command.

During the 1930's few would have foreseen that Britain would be as isolated and vulnerable as it was when Johnny began operational flying. Indeed, many people today do not understand how threatened the future of the entire free world was during the early years of World War II. The situation the beleaguered island found itself in at this point in its history was bleak indeed.

Offshore was an enemy-held continent, and that enemy was bent on conquering the British Isles. The British Army had been defeated in France, supplies from North America were being cut off by the enemy's fleet of submarines, and Britain was suffering from heavy bombing attacks. Furthermore, although Canada had declared war on Germany one week after the British declaration, the United States continued to remain neutral and showed little indication that it would become involved in the war.

Faced with this situation during the summer of 1940, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill threw his support behind the defensive power of the Royal Air Force's Fighter Command and the development and potential of Bomber Command with the words, "The Navy can lose us the war, but only the Air Force

can win it. Therefore, our supreme effort must be to gain overwhelming mastery in the air. The fighters are our salvation, but the bombers alone provide the means of victory."

With this decision, a massive effort was begun to strengthen and develop Bomber Command -to focus on the production of heavy bombers and the training of aircrew to fly them.

Bomber Command's crews ranged far over Europe during the early years of the war, suffering great hardship from frostbite, weather, and enemy action. Forced to operate at night, navigation was by the stars and 'dead reckoning' using compass, airspeed, and assumed wind direction and speed.

The crews suffered greatly, flying at high altitude, at night, and often through violent weather on operations that sometimes exceeded eight hours. A Whitley pilot recalled,

"Rain used to come into the cockpit, and for three months my hands were frost-bitten. Everything was bare metal and sharp corners, and vital switches that were all too easy to brush against, especially when one's bulk was inflated by the multiple layers of clothing needed to keep out the freezing cold, plus a yellow 'Mae West' around the upper body for flotation. A leather flying helmet covered the head, bulging with the vital earphones. Except for the eyes, the face was covered by a carefully fitted mask that contained a microphone and supplied life-giving oxygen."

Early successes included the destruction of many of the enemy's invasion barges assembled in French ports, thus making a landing on the British Isles less likely. During August 1940, Bomber Command played a pivotal role in the war when, after bombs were dropped on London, Prime Minister Churchill



Winston Churchill and one of the first Short Stirling four-engined heavy bombers

ordered Bomber Command to attack Berlin. Hitler was furious and retaliated in force against British cities rather than continuing to focus on the destruction of the RAF fighters and their airfields. This allowed Fighter Command to recover and eventually win the Battle of Britain. Following this historic defeat, Hitler was forced to abandon his plans to cross the English Channel and invade Britain.

When Johnny joined 405 Squadron during September 1941, things were still not going well for Britain and its Commonwealth allies. The Americans had not entered the war and the enemy continued to dominate the European continent, North Africa, and the North Atlantic.

Bomber Command continued to be the only offensive power that Britain and her Commonwealth had to fight back with but it was becoming obvious that Bomber Command's results were not significant enough to justify the heavy casualties being sustained. A report presented to the War Cabinet on 18 August 1941 focused on a series of disappointing statistics, including the fact that one-third of all crews dispatched did not even claim to have reached the target area.

At the same time, it was a period of increasing losses among the bomber squadrons. During the four-month period beginning on 7 July 1941, Bomber Command lost 526 bombers. This was approximately equivalent to the loss of its entire front-line strength of aircraft and crews in four months. Bob Dale, who graduated as an observer (navigator) during December 1940, recalled that of his class of forty-two, only four survived their first tour of thirty operations.

405 Squadron had been formed on 23 April 1941 as the first Royal Canadian Air Force bomber squadron. It was assigned to be part of 4 Group of Bomber Command, operating as part of the Royal Air Force. Based at Driffield in Yorkshire, the rookie unit was equipped with Wellington bombers. 405 slowly built up to its full strength of both aircraft and aircrew but, before it was able to fly its first operation, RAF Driffield itself was attacked by enemy intruder aircraft. One Wellington was destroyed and another damaged. Eight days later, the squadron flew its first operation with three Wellingtons bombing the railway marshalling yards at Schwerte, sixty miles east of Holland.

By the time Johnny arrived on the squadron, 405 had moved to the newly-constructed RAF Pocklington, fifteen miles to the west, one of dozens of hastily-built bomber stations in eastern England. 405 Squadron was the first to be stationed there.

The countryside was flat, sparsely-settled farmland and the Village of Pocklington was located about twelve miles from the City of York. Pocklington had paved runways but many of the other operational bomber bases at the time, including Driffield, were simply fields of grass. Adjacent to the runways and taxiways were numerous Nissen huts that were used as quarters for the aircrew and other personnel as well as larger buildings that served as headquarters, squadron offices, equipment storage facilities, etcetera, and a control tower. All had little or no insulation and were heated by coal stoves. When 405 arrived, there were no hangars. The ground crews had to work outdoors in all weather conditions and the aircraft were parked on the paved dispersal areas that were scattered about the perimeter of the airfield.

A pilot who flew with 405 during those first months of operations recalled,



"Life on 405 in 1941 in the north of England was tough, severe, uncomfortable, and dangerous. We were fighting in a war in which, at that time, we were not on the winning side. Weather was perhaps as great an enemy as the Jerries . . . Many times we were stood-down just prior to take off, but many times we went with a so-so or optimistic forecast, only to find the continent was socked in from 10,000 feet down to 2,000. On moonlit nights visibility was much better, and even more so for the night-fighters. Our eyes were in all directions and we operated by stealth. Silhouetted on clouds was a danger; icing in them was even more so."²

Johnny's first combat operation was a raid on Emden, a city on Germany's northwest coast, on the night of 20/21 October 1941. His crew was made up of Sgt. Vautour, P/O Gibson, and Sgt's. Curtis, Shaw, and Pickard. Only two aircraft from 405 squadron took part in the raid that included thirty-five Wellingtons and a single, four-engined Halifax bomber.



A 405 Squadron Wellington being fuelled and 'bombed-up' prior to an operation from Pocklington. 405's squadron code was 'LQ' and all of the squadron's aircraft carried that on one side of the roundel. The single letter on the other side of the roundel designated the particular aircraft within the squadron.

The Handley-Page Halifax had flown its first operation during March 1941 and the huge four-engined Short Stirling during February 1941. Both aircraft were beginning to be produced in large numbers but the twin-engined bombers were continuing to carry the load for Bomber Command.

The returning crews reported that fires were started on the docks and in the town. One of the thirty-five Wellingtons failed to return.

The squadron's 'Operations Record Book' noted a theory that Johnny had regarding the Wellington's I.F.F. (Identification Friend or Foe) system. This was an early WW II electronic device that was carried aboard the bombers and used to distinguish Bomber Command aircraft from enemy fighters. Johnny had the idea that it could also be utilized to cause interference with the enemy's radar-controlled searchlights. The report reads,

"One a/c, 'B' (F/Lt. Fauquier), made the attack and was not unduly inconvenienced by flak, which was not working with S/L (searchlights), but on the barrage system, I.F.F. was used at one second intervals and the A/C was not caught by searchlights."³

Although a popular theory amongst aircrew at the time, it was later determined that there was no connection between the I.F.F system and the radar that controlled the searchlights. In fact, the enemy was homing in on the I.F.F. transmissions and any long-term use of it would not have been a good idea. Electronic measures and counter-measures such as these, on both sides, increased and became more sophisticated as the war progressed.

On the night of 31 October/1 November, Johnny was flying one of 123 aircraft that attacked Hamburg. Visibility over the city was poor and only fifty-six of the attacking bombers claimed to have bombed the target.

Seven of the nine 405 Squadron aircraft reached the target area. Of these, four, including Johnny, were able to identify "local features at Hamburg" and believed that their bombs fell on



405 Squadron aircrew being ‘briefed’ in 1941

the target. The other three thought they had attacked the “target area” but could not be said to have attacked the actual target.

A raid on the night of 7/8 November was to be a major effort for Bomber Command involving 392 bombers, likely the maximum number of aircraft available at the time. Air Marshal Richard Peirse, Bomber Command’s commanding officer, had been frustrated by poor bombing results and bad weather. He was hoping that this would be a turning point for Bomber Command and it was, but not in the way he wanted it to be.

Strong winds and icing were forecast for large areas of northern Europe and over the North Sea across which the bombers would have to pass. However, Peirse was adamant that the operation should go ahead and Bomber Command aircraft were sent to Berlin and other targets.

At 23:07, late in the evening of 7 November 1941, F/Lt. Fauquier took off in one of ten 405 Squadron Wellingtons to attack Berlin. It was nine hours of challenging, frustrating, and at times terrifying flying for the crews of the 169 bombers that attempted to reach Berlin. Twenty-one of the aircraft, a stunning 12.4% of those dispatched, did not return.

Johnny and the others flew in near-constant overcast, relying only on ‘dead-reckoning’ and the forecasted winds during the long outward flight across Germany. Hail and sleet created icing problems and the pilots flew through electrical storms as well.

When they did reach the area of Berlin, the crews encountered particularly alert defences. Of the 169 aircraft who attempted to reach Berlin, only seventy-three reached the general area of the city. Although a few were able to observe fires on the outskirts, most reported “unobserved” results and little damage was done to the German capital.

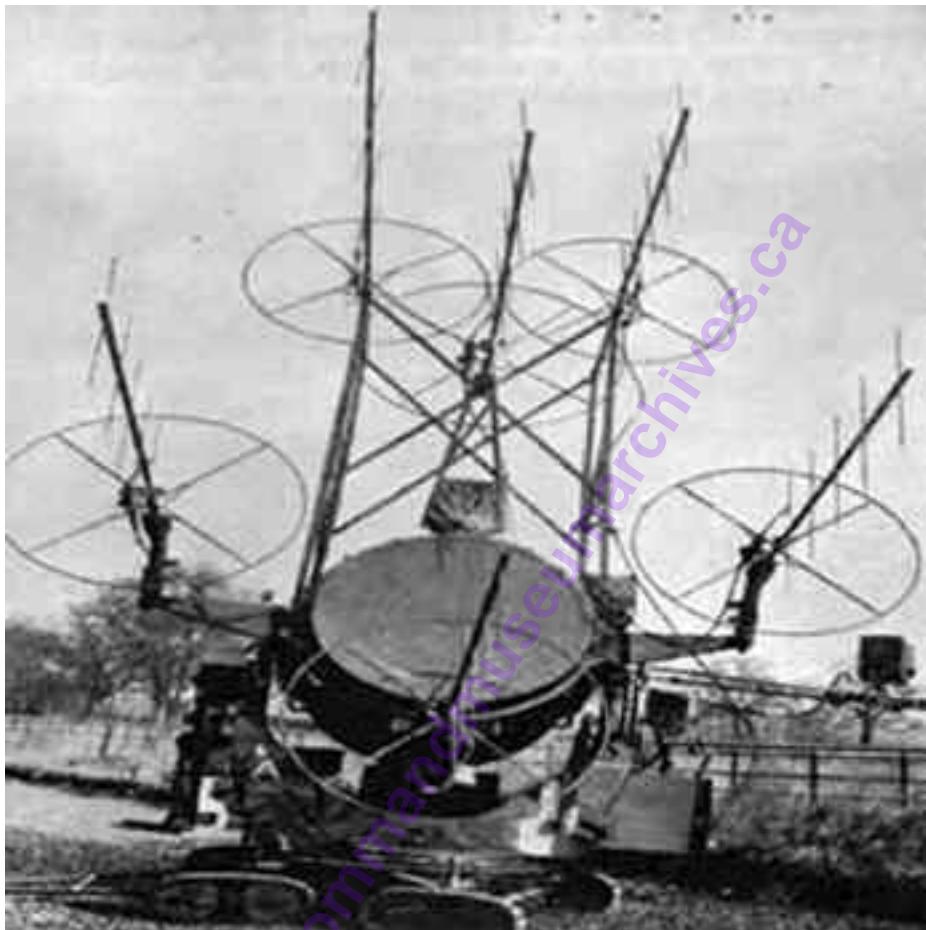
Six of the ten 405 Squadron crews dropped their bombs in the vicinity of the target. Johnny was one of four that attacked Kiel, a nearby alternate target where the weather permitted some views of the ground.

At 02:44, F/Sgt. Hassan’s wireless operator reported that they had successfully bombed the target but their Wellington was not heard of after that and all aboard were killed. Three other 405 Squadron aircraft were damaged and one crash-landed on its return to England.

As for Johnny, he reported, “Unable to find primary, bombed Kiel in clear weather observing explosions on west side of harbour. Incendiaries were seen turning from white to red. The aircraft was heavily damaged by flak when caught in searchlights but escaped.”

Being ‘coned’ by searchlights was terrifying. In his book, ‘Boys, Bombs, and Brussels Sprouts’, 408 Squadron pilot J. Douglas Harvey wrote,

“I had just closed the bomb doors when I went blind. Absolutely blind. Terrified, I realized we had been coned. The world was a dazzling white, as though a giant flashlight was aimed directly into my eyes. I couldn’t see my hands on the control column, couldn’t see the instrument panel, couldn’t see outside the cockpit. I was naked, totally exposed, helpless. We were a very bright and shiny target in the apex of fifty or more beams that were radar-directed. They weren’t going to let go easily.”⁴



Radar-controlled searchlight

After diving for seven minutes at speeds reaching 350 mph, Doug was able to out-distance the lights and escape.

Regarding his return from Kiel, Johnny reported,

"It wasn't long before I realized we were in trouble because the winds had increased greatly in strength and were almost dead ahead. Eventually I lost height down to a few hundred feet to avoid icing conditions and to save fuel since the head-wind would be less strong. I have seen the North Sea in many moods, but never more ferocious than that night. Huge waves of solid green water were lifted from the surface and carried hundreds of feet by the wind."

"After what seemed like hours in those appalling conditions, I realized we were unlikely to make base. I had little or no fuel left, and told the crew to take up ditching positions, though our chances of pulling off a successful ditching in darkness amid that hell of strong winds and blown spray were practically nil. It was then I saw briefly one of those wonderful homing lights and made a bee-line straight for it, completing the crossing the English Channel with all gauges knocking on zero.

"In a few moments we found what I thought was Driffield but it proved to be a non-operational airfield. I could just make out the runways as it was early dawn and slapped the wheels and flaps down whilst I still had power, only to find at a hundred feet that the runway was blocked with railroad iron to prevent the enemy making use of it. They had erected pylons of this stuff all down the runway but, of course, they forgot to put any kind of obstructions on the grass surfaces. I landed but swerved to port and damaged the starboard tail plane.

"All in all, we were lucky and nobody was hurt, thank God. As soon as we climbed out of the aircraft, we were surrounded by the Home Guard, who were most hostile in spite of our uniform and the RAF roundels on the fuselage. They were going to lock us up! I asked repeatedly for the Colonel, or whoever was in charge, to make contact with Pocklington but he was still suspicious. He asked me when we had left England and when I said, 'Eleven o'clock last night,' he replied, 'No aircraft can stay in the air that long.' Finally, everything was smoothed over and we were picked up and returned to Pocklington."⁵

Johnny had found Hutton-Cranswick airfield which was, at that point, still under construction. He had landed following an extremely long flight of eight hours and fifty-six minutes.

Johnny minced no words describing the Berlin sortie. He had been uneasy about the operation from the first few minutes of the briefing when the meteorologist had been, "nervous and seemed unable to make up his mind about the wind velocity for the return to base." Following his return, Johnny summarized his thoughts by stating that he was, "Utterly fatigued, half frozen, and disgusted at being launched on a major operation against the German capital in weather totally unfitted to the task."

This raid, with its 12.4% loss rate, prompted the War Cabinet to take drastic action. Serious concerns as to the capability of Bomber Command had been raised during August 1941 with the release of the report examining the effectiveness of the bombing effort. It was a shock to many, although not necessarily to those within the Command, that crews were struggling to navigate to, identify, and bomb the targets assigned to them.

The War Cabinet ordered that Bomber Command's operations should be strictly limited, at least for the immediate future, while its strategic potential and operational techniques were thoroughly reviewed. On 13 November, Air Marshal Peirse was told that the bomber offensive was to be curtailed in order to debate the future shape and tactics of Bomber Command. It was felt that casualties on the scale currently being suffered could only be justified if worthwhile results were being achieved and, at this point, they were not.

With the exception of a few minor raids, this is what happened and, by early January 1942, Air Marshal Peirse had been removed from his position. It would be over six weeks before Johnny saw action again.

However on 30 November, six 405 Squadron Wellingtons were sent to bomb the dock area of Hamburg. 405 was made up of two 'Flights', one of which was led by 'A' Flight Commander, S/Ldr. Robert C. Bisset who took off to participate in the raid. One hour after takeoff, a message was sent from his bomber advising



S/Ldr. Bissett in the cockpit, above his aircraft's impressive nose art



**S/Ldr. Robert Bissett DFC and Bar (third from left) and his crew.
Their 405 Squadron Wellington was lost over the North Sea.**

that he was abandoning the operation. The aircraft transmitted four position fixes as it began to return to base but after that, nothing more was heard. It was presumed the aircraft went down into the North Sea. An intensive search yielded no clues.

A native of Edmonton, S/Ldr. Bissett had joined the Royal Air Force during April 1937 and was twenty-eight years old when he was killed. He was one of some two thousand Canadians who were serving in the RAF when the war began. As an experienced Whitley pilot, S/Ldr. Bissett had flown a sortie on the second day of the war and had been engaged on operations ever since. Following the war, it was determined that of those bomber aircrew who, like S/Ldr. Bissett, were flying at the beginning of the war, only ten percent survived.

Despite having only been serving on an operational squadron for two months, Johnny was designated to replace S/Ldr. Bissett as 'A' Flight Commander and was promoted to the rank of Squadron Leader. This rapid rise in rank and to the role

of Flight Commander was an indication of both the high loss rate that the squadron was suffering on operations and the recognition that Johnny had demonstrated leadership abilities.

For several days beginning on 7 December, Johnny was temporarily attached to 4 Blind/Beam Approach Training Flight at RAF Wyton where he learned to use a primitive system that utilized radio beams to assist pilots attempting to land during periods of poor visibility.

On 22/23 December, Johnny was back on the 'Battle-Order', part of a small group of ten Wellingtons from 405 Squadron and twelve Whitleys that were ordered to attack Wilhelmshaven. However, Johnny and a second Wellington were 'cancelled' for some reason and weren't part of the operation. Sgt. Wather returned early after having a problem with his starboard engine. Over England, the Wellington's port engine cut out but he was able to crash-land. There were only minor injuries but the aircraft was destroyed.

Then on 28 December, forty aircraft, including Johnny and four others from 405 Squadron, attacked Emden. The pilots reported perfect weather over the target with, "snow showing up practically every visible feature in the moonlight." The Wellingtons had only recently been equipped with cameras and the squadron ORB entry noted that S/Ldr. Fauquier had captured, "one clear photo of the country north of Jarrsum." Royal New Zealand Air Force pilot, Sgt. Edwin Williams, was flying the squadron Wellington marked 'LQ-J'. It failed to return, nothing being heard from the aircraft following take-off.

Two days later, Toronto's 'Evening Telegram' newspaper carried an extensive report regarding the raid. It included a photo featuring 405 Squadron pilot F/Lt. Jack McCormack and others who had taken part in the raid. The article quotes Johnny as saying, "There was a nice moon and snow on the ground and we couldn't miss. We saw sticks of bombs from other kites bursting and photographed the fires they started."

The night of 7/8 January saw attacks on the French ports of Brest and St. Nazaire. Twenty-seven Wellingtons attacked St. Nazaire. Five of the aircraft were from 405 Squadron and were led by W/Cdr. Fauquier. Johnny was interviewed by a newspaper reporter following the St. Nazaire raid, He was quoted as saying,

They Gave Huns A "Noisy New Year"



In a mid-air raid on western Germany Sunday night, crews of the Royal Canadian Air Force plastered Berlin and Wilhelmshaven with bombs as a New Year's celebration. The crew of one bomber which was down stated reported that "the boys in wide eyes and we are the targets again on the nose." The plane was commanded by Pte. G. L. Gauthier.

Bombardier, at Toronto Jan. 1st 1941, and others who took part were P.Lt. G. R. Fiducia, Vicenza (second from left); Sgt. Jack Clark, Victoria (fifth from left). The above picture was taken just after a raid on German ballistics at Brest. Others in the picture are Sgts. E. MacLellan, Sgt. David Dodge and Sgt. J. Wynnmark.

Toronto Bombers Report They Hit Target "On Nose"

Left Fires They Could See For 15 Minutes on Homeward Flight — Other Canadians Left Deadly Mementoes With Huns at Wilhelmshaven

LONDON, Dec. 28—Bomber squadrons of the Royal Canadian Air Force hammered at Wilhelmshaven and Brunsberg in weekend attacks that concluded the Canadian airmen's "holiday greetings to Hitler."

An explosion of "great violence" which shot flames many hundreds of feet into the air followed an attack on the great chemical works at Hull where German manufacturers steadily rubber substitutes.

The explosion came from the very centre of the plant and fires spreading unchecked in numerous buildings guided other bombers to the flaring target.

One RCAF squadron attacked

the skipper thought we were hit, but it was just a close one," Gertly said.

A heavy cloud prevented Penwick-Wilson from attacking so he unloaded his cargo of "greetings" on a seaplane base "where the blackout was not so good." The aircraft ran into a cloud as the bombs were dropped and the damage could not be

COULDNOT MISS

"There was a nice moon and snow over the ground and we couldn't miss," Pasquier reported. "We saw lots of bombs from other planes bursting and photographed the fires they started."

*"I saw more searchlights over France than I had ever seen before. They sure were throwing up flak when we reached St. Nazaire. To add to the party there were plenty of aircraft about. One passed right over my head. When we bombed they shoved up the stuff at us. There were a number of fires burning when we left."*⁶

In the same Ottawa Citizen article, Johnny's mother was quoted as saying,

*"We have received no information from John in over a month and my mail doesn't seem to be reaching him. In fact of late, all that we hear concerning him are the newspaper reports about his bombing flights over the continent."*⁷

A raid to Bremen on 17/18 January was significant for Johnny in that he was flying 'LQ-J', which he and his crew referred to as, 'J for Johnny' or 'J-Johnny'. This was likely a new aircraft, replacing the one lost with Royal New Zealand Air Force pilot Sgt. Williams and his crew on board on 28 December. From this point on, Johnny flew aircraft with the 'J' designation whenever he could. As a flight commander, and later as a squadron commander, he was able to arrange this on a regular basis. It's not known whether Johnny's 'J' aircraft carried actual art work but one squadron veteran recalled, "I think he just had 'Johnny!' with an exclamation mark -something like that."

There were at least seven 405 Squadron Wellingtons that carried nose art and these were, as much as possible, flown by the same crew on all their operations. The personalization of an aircraft by giving it a name, painting an image on it, and in many cases doing both began in the early months of the war, increased in frequency as the war progressed, and reached its peak in 1945. If a bomber crew was assigned a particular aircraft, they were sometimes able to choose the name and artwork and this enabled a powerful bond to develop between the men and the machine. Often, but not always, the name and the artwork were directly related to the letter designation for the particular aircraft within the squadron.

As pilot Jack McIntosh recalled, remembering his 419 Squadron Halifax 'Medicine Hat', "The name and nose art made it feel she was 'our' aircraft and would always bring us home."

Several photos exist of nose art painted on 405 Squadron Wellingtons and many of these would have been on the squadron during Johnny's time there.

The Bremen Raid was an important milestone as it was the first time a 4000 pound 'cookie' high explosive 'blast' bomb was dropped by the squadron. The bomb had only recently been introduced into service and was Bomber Command's heaviest.

Only one of the seven squadron aircraft carried a 'cookie' and Johnny, in the leadership role that he was beginning to take, dropped it from 'LQ-J'.

Six of the pilots reported "thick cloud over the North Sea" but somehow Johnny found a hole in the clouds and, "experienced clear weather." The ORB reported that the, "Results are uncertain except for 'J' who dropped his 4000 pounder in dock area and observed a terrific flash in centre of town north of docks."



Ground crew prepare to load a 4000 pound 'cookie' into the bomb-bay of a 405 Squadron Wellington



This 405 Squadron nose art clearly has a Canadian connection but it is not known who Marnie Cromar was.

405 Squadron's 'B' Flight was under the command of S/Ldr. Walter Keddy. While en-route to Bremen, his wireless operator sent the message, "returning base, engine trouble." In fact, S/Ldr. Keddy's starboard engine had caught fire and he was eventually forced to ditch the aircraft as they approached the British coast. 405's C/O, W/Cdr. R.M. Fenwick-Wilson, led a sea search which proved fruitless. The next morning word was

received that two of the crew had been picked up by a British destroyer, suffering from exposure and frostbite after spending fourteen hours in their dinghy. S/Ldr. Keddy and the other three crewmembers had either died in the crash or were unable to reach the dinghy.

The ORB noted that,

*"S/Ldr. Keddy was the very able leader of 'B' Flight and was popular throughout the squadron. He was posted to command 'B' Flight on 30th May, 1941, and on 8th August 1941 he became the first officer to win the Distinguished Flying Cross with 405 Squadron. His loss to the Squadron and to the RCAF in these crucial days is severe and regretted by all."*⁸



S/Ldr. Walter Keddy

Johnny was flying 'LQ-J' to Bremen again on the night of 21/22 January. Of the fifty-four aircraft sent out, only twenty-eight claimed to have bombed the target.

Nine of the bombers were from 405. This time, 'cookies' were dropped by both Johnny and W/Cdr. Fenwick-Wilson.

The author of the ORB reports continued to be impressed with the new weapon writing, "Results most successful under clear weather conditions. 'J' and 'R' dropped 4000 pound bombs with devastating results. Observed terrific flash and long lane of blast. 'R's caused big red fire."

Seventy-one aircraft were sent to Hanover on 26/27 January but only thirty-two claimed to have found the target area although many fires were believed to have been started. 'J for Johnny' was one of five Wellingtons from 405 Squadron. Johnny reported that, "While seeking alternative target, recognized Bremen and dropped 4000 pounder in built up area northwest of city. Flash and explosion observed." The ORB also reported that Johnny was, "Engaged by friendly destroyer and despite identification signals, the indignant captain (Johnny) had to resort to evasive actions to avoid persistent fire."



405 Squadron Wellington during the winter of 1941-1942

Johnny led five squadron aircraft on a raid to Brest on the night of 31 January/1 February as part of an attack by seventy-two bombers. Although visibility was good, the enemy was able to put up an effective smoke screen. Two of the 405 Squadron aircraft bombed the dock area with unknown results. S/Ldr. Fauquier was unable to pin-point the target and so returned to base with his 'cookie', the only one taken on the raid, still on board.

Despite operating during the night, Johnny was likely up early the next morning making preparations for a visit by the Duke of Kent. Visits to the operating squadrons by Royalty were always of huge significance as this report from the squadron's Monthly Diary for 1 February 1942 indicates,

"His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent honoured 405 Squadron and the station with his presence in order that he might carry out a personal inspection of the Squadron. His Royal Highness arrived at the Squadron in the early afternoon and was welcomed by the Officer Commanding, W/Cdr. Fenwick-Wilson AFC and Flight Commanders S/Ldr. Fauquier and F/Lt. McCormick, respective Commanders of 'A' and 'B' flights. His Royal Highness was introduced to the crews in their crew room and spent some time in informal chats with some of the airmen.

"He displayed a keen interest in their various exploits and, with every handshake he exchanged, offered his congratulations and expressed the wish that they should all enjoy good fortune and happy landings in their valiant efforts against the enemy.

"After his inspection of a typical airmen's hut, he was able to satisfy his interest in one of the Wellington bombers used on this Squadron by devoting some time on the tarmac where the accompanying officers explained the service qualities of the aircraft.

"On completion of his round of inspection, his Royal Highness was invited to the Officers' Mess where he enjoyed refreshments and lunch with the Officers present. Before leaving for Driffield, the distinguished visitor was warm in his praise for the efficiency apparent throughout the Squadron and expressed a desire to renew his acquaintance with the Squadron personnel in the not too distant future."⁹

An operation on 12 February was a completely new experience for Johnny and likely for all the other members of the squadron. Their target was a trio of enemy warships -the battle-cruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau and the light cruiser Prinz Eugen. These large ships were accompanied by an escort of destroyers. They had sailed from Brest, en-route to northern Germany, directly through the English Channel in a carefully prepared and well-executed, audacious operation. They chose a date when bad weather and low cloud provided cover. The Luftwaffe, the German Air Force, provided the warships with a fighter escort.

As part of attempts by the Royal Navy and Bomber Command to intercept the warships, Johnny led six 405 Squadron Wellingtons to try to find them. All the aircraft reported 10/10 cloud with no breaks as well as rain and snow. The cloud cover was so low that Johnny was the only captain to even see



German Battle-Cruiser Gneisenau

the ocean as they searched at altitudes as low as 250 feet. All the aircraft returned to Pocklington with their bombs. In a *Globe & Mail* report, Johnny was quoted as saying, “There was terrific rain under the clouds. I’ve never seen anything like it before. We went down low enough to see anything there was to be seen, but all we could see was the sea.”

Shortly before Johnny’s group landed, two other 405 Squadron aircraft took off to try their luck. Visibility had improved and both located one of the larger ships. One Wellington was able to drop a bomb before the ships were lost again in the rain and clouds.

The enemy warships successfully reached their home ports, although the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau both suffered damage after striking mines while passing through areas recently mined by Bomber Command. The placing of air-dropped mines was a significant focus of Bomber Command throughout the war, denying the enemy the use of much of the Baltic Sea.

On the night of 14/15 February, eight squadron aircraft were on the battle order for a raid that saw ninety-six aircraft target Mannheim. Johnny’s was one of two 405 bombers that were cancelled for mechanical reasons.

F/Lt. Frizzle’s crew took off with the others but, according to the ORB, “Experienced severe icing which caused the aircraft to lose height and necessitated his return to base with bombs.” The ORB shows “NO SORTIE” for F/Lt. Frizzle, despite the crew experiencing over two hours of dangerous flying on a combat operation.

Although there were some variations, Bomber Command airmen were generally required to complete a tour of thirty operations (or sorties) before they were taken off of combat duties and generally assigned to a training role. The senior officers of 405 Squadron were not alone in requiring a combat operation to be completed before credit would be given to a crew.

On 17 February, W/Cdr. Fenwick-Wilson, who had commanded 405 Squadron since August 1941, became the station commander of RAF Pocklington. S/Ldr. Fauquier immediately assumed command of the squadron, becoming the first Royal Canadian Air Force officer to lead a bomber squadron

on operations overseas. Although the 'Canadianization' of 405 Squadron was well underway, only 72 of the 140 aircrew were Canadians and 204 of the 434 ground crew.

Five days later, on 22 February, Arthur Harris was appointed commanding officer of Bomber Command. Over the next several months, as Johnny was taking charge and growing into his role as C/O of 405 Squadron, Arthur Harris was taking charge and growing into his role at Bomber Command Headquarters. As their careers as leaders within Bomber Command progressed, it became apparent there were many personal characteristics that were shared by Johnny and Arthur Harris.

Harris was introducing new tactics, taking advantage of increasing numbers of the new, four-engined bombers, and implementing new, electronic navigational aids. The most significant of these was 'GEE', a system that measured the time delay between two radio signals to produce a quite accurate 'fix' at ranges up to about 350 miles. The range was limited by the fact that it required a direct 'line of sight' that was limited due to the curvature of the earth. The system was of particular value in helping navigators returning from a raid to locate their aircraft's base over the often cloud and fog-covered English countryside.

405 Squadron operated on 26 February, sending nine aircraft to attack the Kiel Docks. Johnny did not fly on this operation that saw the first crew lost under his command. Nothing was heard from F/Lt. Melvin Robson's aircraft after



**W/Cdr. R.M.
Fenwick-Wilson**



**Air Chief Marshal Arthur
Harris (left) with Bomber
Command aircrew**

its take-off from Pocklington. P/O Taylor reported seeing, "two vapour trails and a minute later saw big red flash in sky and a burning aircraft slowly descending." This may very well have been F/Lt. Robson's Wellington being shot down by an enemy fighter.

This would have been the first time that Johnny would have had to write personal letters to the families of those who were killed while serving under his command.

On 9/10 March, flying 'J for Johnny' and with a 'cookie' in the bomb-bay, S/Ldr. Fauquier led seven of his squadron's Wellingtons on a raid to attack Essen. Aided by flares dropped by other squadrons that had arrived earlier, all seven captains were able to pinpoint water features that enabled what they felt was a successful attack. Johnny was able to observe his bomb bursting despite encountering flak that damaged his aircraft's bomb doors.

During the return flight, the squadron ORB noted that Johnny, "became involved in Ipswich balloon barrage and probably cut balloon adrift." Barrage balloons were large balloons tethered with metal cables that were flown over cities and other key targets such as industrial areas, ports, and harbours to discourage enemy aircraft from attacking at low altitude. Many Bomber Command aircraft, including Johnny's Wellington on this operation, had cable cutters mounted on their wings. It appears they worked well in this case although a section of cable remained imbedded in the wing.

Twenty-four Whitleys and thirty-five Wellingtons attacked the Ford motor factory at Poissy in the western suburbs of Paris on the night of 1/2 April. Johnny led four 405 Squadron aircraft to the target. The ORB entries reported the raid to be very successful, "Bright moonlight and perfect visibility enabled the captains to identify the targets almost as in daylight."

Results included one direct hit on the target by W/Cdr. Fauquier, a very near miss by P/O Swetman which lifted factory buildings in immediate vicinity, and a hit on the power station by P/O Taylor. Wellington 'LQ-L' flown by F/Sgt. Howsan, a pilot and member of the Royal Australian Air Force, crashed near Versailles. The only survivor, P/O L.G. Burgoyne, became a Prisoner of War.



405 Squadron's Operations Room

Sgt. Frank Tatro from Toronto was Johnny's rear-gunner on almost all of his Wellington operations. In a Hamilton Spectator newspaper article, Frank said that the moon was so bright that it was just like a daylight raid. He described what he saw from his turret as the 'cookie' exploded,

"I've never seen such a burst in my life. Pieces of the building shot up into the air. It was a swell job and I wish there were more like it."¹⁰

This is the first time the squadron records refer to Johnny as a Wing Commander. His promotion would have coincided with his taking command of the squadron.

A raid to Dortmund on the night of 15/16 April was 405 Squadron's last with the Wellington Mk. II bombers. As of 18 April, the squadron was taken off (screened) from operations as they were to begin converting to the Halifax Mk. II. This process would take six weeks and 405 would not fly operationally again until the end of May.

While flying Wellingtons, Johnny's crew varied considerably. However it often included Sgt. P.J.M. Scott,

Sgt. Raymond A. Gardiner (wireless operator), P/O J.D. Gibson, Sgt. Beare, and almost always, Sgt. Frank J. Tatro (rear gunner).

Established in 1939, the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, whose members were referred to as WAAFs, was the ladies' auxiliary of the Royal Air Force during World War II. Jean Weir was living in the port city of Hull in east Yorkshire when she joined the WAAF during the summer of 1941 at the age of seventeen.



Sgt. Frank Tatro

"There was nothing left of the city that I lived in (It had been 'flattened' by Nazi bombers.) so I just said, 'That's it.' I joined the WAAF and was transferred to the Canadian forces after about half a year. I went into the Canadian forces in 1942. The Canadian squadrons didn't have transportation and they didn't have all kinds of things they needed so the RAF decided they would loan us out. I was posted to 405. Johnny had just been given the squadron."¹¹

Jean became a driver, one of four assigned to 405 squadron. One of her duties was to be Johnny's personal driver whenever he needed one although she said that Johnny preferred to drive himself. Jean stayed with 405 Squadron for the duration of the war and came to know Johnny very well as she worked directly for him and so was often with him as he went about his business as the squadron's commanding officer.

One of Jean's duties was to drive the crews out to the dispersal pads where their aircraft were waiting. Both Jean and the crews knew there was a good chance that these young men wouldn't be returning. Jean recalls,

"They were usually a little on the sombre side because they'd been given all the instructions for their flight and what-have-you. We tried to be nice and friendly with them and keep them cheery rather than in the doldrums. We just sort of chatted with them as they were getting on the transports. We would usually shake hands with them or pat them on the shoulder or something like that and wish them all luck. There were some



A 405 Squadron crew boarding their Wellington at Pocklington
sayings that we had like, ‘Go get the . . .’ Most of them sort of looked ‘half-happy’. They had a little smile or some quip to say when they got on but you could sense the feeling. There was a tension, quite a tension.”¹²

The age difference between Johnny, who was about to turn thirty-three when he took command of 405 Squadron, and the much younger aircrew and others on the squadron such as eighteen year old Jean, was very significant.

“Most of the pilots we had were just youngsters and to Johnny, they were his boys. They were anywhere from eighteen to twenty-two -to him they were lives lost, lives that hadn’t even been lived yet. He was very down when we lost them -very much so.

“To us he was a father type. I looked upon him as a father. The other girls and I looked at him and we used to say ‘My God, we’ve got another Dad.’ He was that close to us -not in the familiar sense of the word. The fact that we were there and we were with him and we were on his team -that was important to

him. Everybody worked on his team and that was why he called it his family. I swear in many, many respects he treated the ground crew and the aircrew like his own family. He took a shine to certain people and he was quite fatherly towards them.”¹³



405 Squadron aircrew with a Vickers Wellington -3 April 1942.
W/Cdr. Fauquier is in the front row, slightly left of centre.



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CHAPTER 5

405 Squadron -Halifaxes

"The bravest men I knew used to go to bed after briefing and refused to eat -sick with fear. Any man that frightened who goes to the target is brave."

From the beginning of the war, it was clear that if Bomber Command was to play a pivotal role, it would begin when the four-engined, heavy bomber aircraft became available in strength. During February 1941, the Short Stirling became the first to enter operational service. The Handley-Page Halifax was the second, flying its first operation the following month. 405 Squadron was the first Canadian squadron to be equipped with the Halifax but eventually all fifteen of the Canadian squadrons would fly the aircraft.

The 405 Squadron diary indicates the level of effort that was being made to complete the conversion to the Halifaxes. The entry for 25 April 1942 reads,

"All leaves were cancelled and men on leave recalled to unit. All squadron personnel are working with fury to set the Squadron on an operational basis. Maintenance personnel have worked long into night to get our new Halifaxes ready for operations as soon as possible."¹

Two days later the diary reported, apparently with some pride that, "No. 405 Squadron RCAF is now in a position to detail fourteen aircraft for operations" and that, "This Squadron can be considered to be on an operational basis." Despite this declaration, it would be over a month until a 405 Squadron

Halifax would fly a combat operation and, sadly, the squadron would soon find out that their brand new Halifax Mk. II's came with serious problems and that the squadron's losses would only get worse.

To begin with, the Rolls-Royce Merlin engines that the Halifax Mk. II's were equipped with did not provide the aircraft with sufficient power. This resulted in both reduced cruising speeds and a lower operational ceiling that made the aircraft more vulnerable to flak and fighter attacks. Later versions of the Halifax were powered by Bristol Hercules fourteen-cylinder, radial engines that generated additional horsepower.

The aircraft's worst fault, and one that was not understood as 405 Squadron was converting to the aircraft, was that the its somewhat triangular-shaped, twin vertical stabilizers were not sufficient to control the bomber when it was undergoing aggressive manoeuvres at lower airspeeds, particularly when fully-loaded. The pilot would lose control and the aircraft would then enter an inverted spin.

As one pilot put it, "They were slow, flew soggily, and were inclined to yaw and drop into a fatal spiral with rudders locked over." This problem was eventually solved on later models by replacing the triangular vertical stabilizers with larger ones of a more rectangular shape. However 405 Squadron would fly the Halifax Mk. II for the next fifteen months.

As 405 Squadron worked towards the completion of the conversion process, they were honoured with another Royal visit and inspection on 30 April. The squadron's daily 'Summary of Events' recorded that,



**405 Squadron pilot,
F/Lt. W.H. Swetman, in the
cockpit of a Halifax Mk II**



405 Squadron Halifax Mk II. Note the somewhat triangular-shaped vertical stabilizers.

"Her Royal Highness Princess Alice, graciously accepted the Squadron Commander's invitation to officially open the Canadian Y.M.C.A.'s Canteen and Tea Car on this squadron. After the opening ceremony, Her Royal Highness was accompanied by the Squadron Commander, Wing Commander J.E. Fauquier, in an inspection of the Squadron's Crew Rooms and Library. Before her departure, the Wing Commander led the boys in three rousing cheers on behalf of the Squadron as a tangible expression of thanks for the honour Her Highness bestowed on us with her presence."²

Other events kept the squadron busy during this time as well and there were constant reminders that the war was continuing. On 2 May, the squadron participated in a funeral service with full military honours for a German officer who had been shot down during an enemy air raid on the City of York on 29 April. The casket, draped with the Nazi colours, was

accompanied by a firing party. Then, on 11 May, Johnny had the squadron involved in a mock invasion exercise and on the 12th they participated in a mock gas attack readiness exercise.

On 14 May, the squadron's 'Summary of Events' noted that,

"Three planes of German origin captured intact over England paid a visit to the Squadron and remained on display in order that personnel might get acquainted with enemy-type machines. The circus was composed of two Me 110's and one Junkers 88. They proved a very interesting sight and novelty for our airmen."³

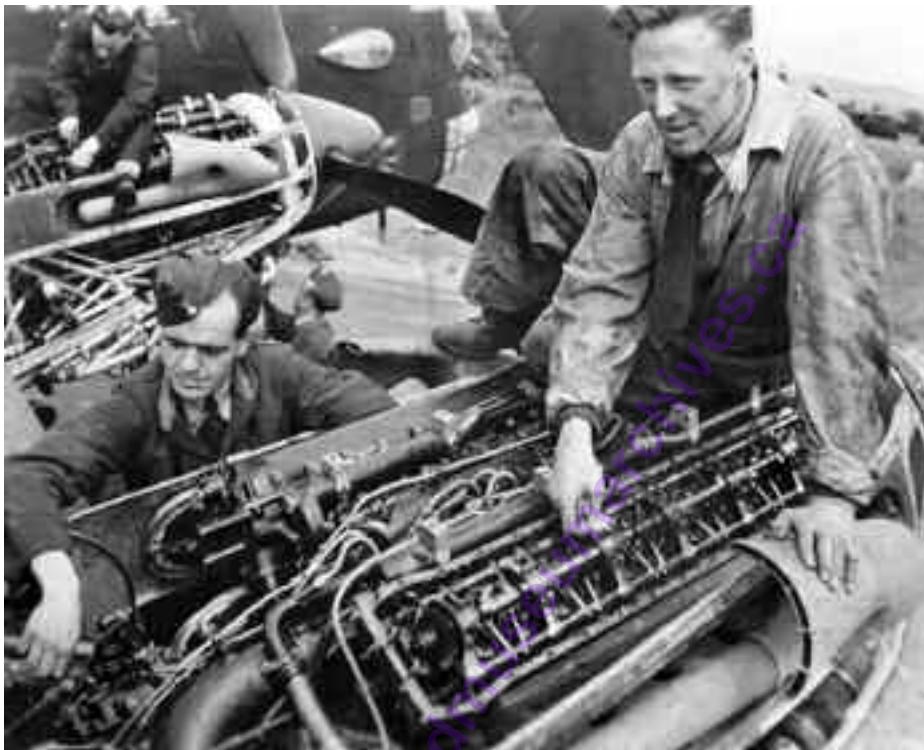
These enemy fighters would have indeed been of interest as they were two of the most common of the Luftwaffe night-fighters that were decimating the squadron's operations and would continue to do so in the future. In fact, of the more than 12,300 Bomber Command aircraft that were lost to enemy action, seventy percent were thought to have been shot down by enemy fighter aircraft.



Me110



Ju88



**405 Squadron ground crew working on a Halifax Mk II's
Rolls-Royce Merlin V-12 engines**

Statistics told that when a bomber was shot down by flak or an enemy fighter, most of the airmen perished. If members of a crew were fortunate enough to have survived, it was often because their pilot had held the bomber steady as they escaped, but then the pilot often became trapped in the aircraft when he released the controls, and was killed.

As the Halifax was becoming operational, Arthur Harris was implementing new tactics involving large raids utilizing tightly grouped bomber streams calculated to swamp enemy defences. Harris knew that the future of Bomber Command was in doubt and he approached both Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Charles Portal, Chief of the Air Staff, with the bold idea of assembling a force of 1000 bombers and sending them out in a single, massive raid. Harris wanted to persuade the doubters in the War Cabinet and catch the public's imagination. His recommendation was approved and eventually three 'Thousand Bomber Raids' were launched.

At this point, there were relatively few of the four-engined 'heavy' bombers available so the majority of the 'Thousand' would be twin-engined bombers, primarily Wellingtons. As well, aircraft from the OTU's and their trainee aircrew would be pressed into combat, in order to assemble the force of 1000 bombers.

As 405 Squadron readied its new aircraft and the aircrew who had only recently been trained to operate them, there were other challenges as final preparations were made for 405 to be part of the first 'Thousand Bomber Raid'. As one ground crew member recalled,

"The order was out. Get everything in the air -nothing to be held back. It was a big order and we worked our butts off -one



405 Squadron ground crew and a Halifax bomb-bay



'Bombing-up' 405 Squadron Halifax 'LQ-Q'



Johnny's Halifax 'LQ-J' with an unknown 405 Squadron aircrew
snag . . . We could not get the bombs out of our dump fast enough. Every vehicle was hauling bomb carts, even Fauquier's car . . . The logistics of aircraft carrying double the previous loads needed some methods which we had not yet mastered."⁴

Johnny had picked out Halifax W7709 to be his aircraft. Like his Wellington, it was designated as 'J for Johnny', and carried the markings 'LQ-J'. On 31 May, as part of the first of Arthur Harris's first 'Thousand Bomber Raid', the C/O led fifteen 405 Squadron bombers on their first raid with their new aircraft. The target was Cologne and there were a total of 1103 bombers heading towards the target.

Following take-off, the squadron suffered its first Halifax loss. Sgt. L.A. Wadman's aircraft was never seen again, presumably going down into the sea en-route to Cologne. Only ten of 405's Halifaxes successfully bombed the target. Two returned early with engine problems, one aircraft's bomb release failed and the crew had to return with their bombs, and another was late taking off and attacked an alternate target.

In a post-war interview, Johnny recalled,



Cologne Cathedral surrounded by the devastation

"I might say, that it has always amazed me to realize that this thousand aircraft raid on Cologne literally burned the whole city. I was asked to stay behind after the raid and report on the effects of the raid itself and I had two 4,000 pound block-busters on my Halifax. To my amazement I couldn't find a single spot to drop these bombs that wasn't already on fire."

Now I ask you to consider how we missed the cathedral. It would seem to me that there must be something in religion after all, because there was the whole city was just completely covered in flames, and yet the cathedral was not damaged. I never can understand how this happened."²⁵

Upon debriefing, W/Cdr. Fauquier reported that he, "released his bombs from 13,500 feet over southwest part of town which was as yet not ablaze." Two minutes later, "at 02:14 while at 13,500 feet aircraft was coned by searchlights when leaving target."

A Vancouver Daily Province newspaper reporter wrote,

DIE SCHWERSTEN ANGRIFFE DER LUFTWAFFE
VON DER R.A.F. WURDEN ÜBERHOLT

**Mehr als
1000
Bomber
auf einmal eingesetzt**

In der Nacht vom 28. Mai griff die Royal Air Force mit über 1000 Flugzeugen an. Ein Angriff wurde auf nachtschichtende Munitionslager konzentriert. Der Angriff auf das Abwurflager von der Stadt als Ganzes nicht gewünscht.

Das britische Combermere-Flieger-Brigade-Bataillon ist ein Teil des Royal Air Force und hat über 5000 Abwurfmunitionen ge-

Die Offensive der Royal Air Force in ihrer neuen Form hat begonnen

Leaflet dropped by Bomber Command aircraft

precise time that the submarine menace grew to its peak. This situation encouraged certain people to believe the time had come to disband Bomber Command, splitting it up between Coastal Command and various other branches of the services. Thus, it will be noted that some indication of the might of the heavy bomber had to be given to the public.

"With this in mind, the first one thousand aircraft raid was planned and turned out to be a very successful raid indeed . . . I was there and I know.

"This spectacular raid once again convinced the powers that be that a separate air force, and especially a bombing force, could be very useful indeed, but at the same time it was realized that greater accuracy in bombing was absolutely essential."

'Tiny' Wilson was Johnny's life-long, best friend and his family believes that the two worked together during Johnny's bush flying years in northern Quebec. An article in the *Globe & Mail* dated 22 May 1942 gives us some information as to 'Tiny' Wilson's wartime role and its connection with Johnny. The article was written by RCAF Flying Officer Peter Field and describes the return of 405 Squadron Wellingtons following a raid to Essen.

There is a reference to the engineering officer on the squadron, a "big, blond giant well over the six foot mark, whose home is on Foster Street, Ottawa." It appears that it is likely that Johnny was able to make arrangements for 'Tiny' to join him on 405 Squadron so that they could be together during the war.

Jean Weir recalled that Tiny was with 405 Squadron for much of the war.

Another Hum In Sky.

Scarcely had the sound of "V for Victor" died away when there is another hum in the sky. "It's Morris, sir," calls the duty airman in the control tower.

The Wing Commander leaves the tower and walks to the interrogation room. There, "Tiny" Millar, a big blond giant, well over the six-foot mark, whose home is on Foster Street, Ottawa, and who is the engineering officer of the squadron, sits talking to the station doctor. Both always await the crews: "Tiny" because he wants to know how his engines stood up, and the doctor in the event of casualties. But there is a deeper motive. On an operational station all are "buddies."

Note that F/O Field inadvertently referred to 'Tiny' as 'Tiny Millar' rather than 'Tiny Wilson'.

"We called him 'Tiny Tim'. He was the engineering officer. I used to drive him into town for parts. He and Johnny were great buddies too. He was a huge man, not fat, but the most gentle man I think I've ever met. He used to come into the M.T. Section and say, 'Okay Jeannie are you ready? I need to go into town for parts.' He'd take me in for lunch and then we'd go for the parts. He used to make quite a thing of it. They ('Tiny' and Johnny) spent a lot of time together at the base because there was always something that Johnny had to fix or that he had to be sure about and Tiny was usually with him." He and Johnny were very, very close.

"Tiny was so wonderful. He was so easy to talk to. He'd sort of reminisce about his home and his family and things like that. He'd always ask how we girls were doing, was everything all right, and did we need any help."¹⁸

On 1 June, an attack on Essen was the second raid carried out by the 'Thousand Bomber Force', although only 965 bombers were dispatched. 405 Squadron participated and Johnny led twelve Halifaxes to the target. Following take off, nothing more was heard from P/O Baltzer's aircraft.

Four squadron aircraft, one of which was 'J for Johnny', attacked Essen again on the following night as part of a much smaller force of 195 aircraft.

On 5 June 1942, Johnny's superiors recommended him for the 'immediate' award of the Distinguished Flying Cross in the following letter,

"Wing Commander Fauquier has now completed 19 sorties against the enemy and has shown the highest qualities of courage, leadership and determination. His ability, selflessness and grim determination to destroy the targets he sets out to attack have excited the admiration of the squadron he commands and this has stiffened the determination of all the aircrews to find and attack their targets, whatever the scale of opposition.

"Wing Commander Fauquier personally led his squadron on the two raids of the 'Thousand Plan' and then, because his crews were called upon to operate the following night, he again



Distinguished Flying Cross

went out although physically and mentally tired after organizing and leading the two previous operations. For his courage, selflessness and high qualities of leadership, I recommend that he be given an immediate award of the Distinguished Flying Cross.”⁹

Two days later, Air Vice-Marshal Tarr, the officer commanding RAF 4 Group of which 405 Squadron was a part, added his remarks,

“A born leader, Wing Commander Fauquier has shown the greatest courage during his entire operational tour and by his skill, energy and fine example has brought his squadron up to a high operational standard. I very strongly recommend him for the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross.”¹⁰

Founded by King George V upon the formation of the Royal Air Force in 1918, the Distinguished Flying Cross is awarded for, “an act or acts of valour, courage, or devotion to duty performed whilst flying in active operations against the enemy.” A citation describing the event or events for which the medal is presented accompanies each award.

On 6/7 June, 405 Squadron participated in a raid on Emden with twelve Halifaxes attacking. Johnny reported seeing a Wellington shot down by a fighter and the presence of three dummy fires -fires deliberately set by the enemy with the hope that attacking bombers would drop their loads on these rather than the actual targets.

On the night of 8/9 June the squadron sent ten Halifaxes on a raid to Essen. One returned early with engine problems and of the nine that attempted to reach the target, three did not return -one third of its bombers that attacked. It was a bad night for 405 Squadron and for Bomber Command as 6.5% of the 170 aircraft dispatched went down, including seven (16.7%) of the forty-two Halifaxes.

As the bomb-aimer aboard F/Lt. Angus MacLean's 405 Squadron Halifax was about to release his bombs over Essen, the aircraft was suddenly illuminated by a powerful, blue searchlight and heavy flak began exploding all around it. As F/Lt. MacLean later wrote,



A posed photo of Wing Commander Fauquier
at the controls of a Halifax -16 July 1942

*"I knew I had to do something fast. For a start, I had to make quick changes in direction and altitude. Our bomb-load was still on board and the bomb-doors were open. That, plus the effects of the bursting shells and my probable over-reaction, caused the aircraft to stall suddenly and go into a spin."*¹¹

The Halifax fell over ten thousand feet before F/Lt. MacLean regained control at about 5000 feet, only to find that the ailerons were jammed in the left-turn position.

*"As a result, we had to fly in large circles while a west wind blew us farther and farther into Germany. German ground defences were following us closely, firing light flak at us."*¹²

Eventually the bombs were released, F/Lt. MacLean was able to release one of the stuck ailerons, and a course was set towards England. After a period of relative calm, a, "stream of cannon shells shot by my window, less than a foot from my head" and both port engines lost power. They had been attacked by an Me110 fighter which the mid-upper and rear gunners had then managed to shoot down.

Now down to an altitude of 1200 feet, F/Lt. MacLean ordered the crew to abandon the aircraft. After holding the aircraft steady for them, he found that when he,

*"left the controls and scrambled to the escape hatch, the aircraft was doing a slow roll to the left and would soon dive into a crash. So I had to scramble back to the pilot's seat, straighten up the aircraft, throttle back the two good engines, and trim the aircraft into a straight glide. All of this used up several hundred feet of our precious 1000 feet of altitude. When I dived out the escape hatch, I knew I was very low so I pulled the rip-cord immediately."*¹³

The crew, and in particular F/Lt. MacLean, were very fortunate in that all were able to successfully abandon the aircraft over occupied Holland. Six were captured and became Prisoners of War. The navigator, P/O James 'Jimmy' Wernham, became part of the planning of 'The Great Escape' from Stalag

Luft III, the Prisoner of War Camp at Sagan. He was the 32nd escapee to go through the tunnel. Sadly, P/O Wernham was captured and became one of the six Canadians amongst the fifty Allied officers murdered by the Gestapo on direct orders from Adolf Hitler.

F/Lt. MacLean successfully evaded and after a three month journey through occupied Holland, Belgium, and France, reached Spain, and eventually Gibraltar. There he was confronted and interrogated by Major Donald Darling of M19 (the U.K.'s Directorate of Military Intelligence). F/Lt. MacLean recalled,

"I first had to satisfy him that I was who I claimed to be and not a German agent posing as Angus MacLean.

"Darling asked me many questions about where I had been stationed. 'With what squadron?' he asked. 'Who was the squadron commander?' 'J.E. Fauquier,' I replied. 'Can you tell me anything unusual about Fauquier?' 'Yes,' I said, 'He has a pet dog on the station.' 'That is rather unusual,' Darling remarked, 'Would you happen to know its name?'"¹⁴

F/Lt. MacLean was able to say, "The Wingco's dog is named 'Butch'." A coded message was sent to England to confirm the dog's name and, after a few hours, Darling was satisfied that F/Lt. MacLean was who he claimed to be.

According to a member of Johnny's family, Butch was a 'show dog'. His owners were unable to afford to feed him during the war so Johnny took him because he knew he could provide 'Butch' with scraps from the mess. There was an agreement that the dog would be returned to his owners after the war. Jean Weir, Johnny's driver, recalls that 'Butch' regularly rode with them in Johnny's car.

When F/Lt. MacLean returned to England he was sent on a brief tour to speak to the Canadian squadrons. According to Angus, the purpose of the tour was,

"to exhibit me as living proof that it was possible to be missing for months and still return. My speaking tour included my old base in Pocklington. Sadly, I found few of my old friends



Johnny and Butch

there. Since I had been shot down, 405 Squadron had lost twenty-one crews, a total of about 150 men. The squadron's normal strength was eighteen crews.¹⁵

Johnny was flying again on the third and last of the Thousand Bomber Raids -an attack on Bremen on the night of 25/26 June that included seventeen 405 Squadron Halifaxes.

After bombing the target from 12,500 feet, the ORB recorded that Johnny, "then dived down to one hundred feet when illuminated by two searchlights and engaged by two light flak guns and replied with fire from rear and mid turrets silencing one of the light guns and dousing one of the searchlights."

It was an amazing feat of flying few others would have attempted with a fighter, let alone a four-engined heavy bomber. Asked if he was scared, Johnny's reply was,

*"A man who isn't frightened lacks imagination, and without imagination he can't be a first-class warrior. Let's face it: the good men were frightened, especially between briefing and take-off. The bravest men I knew used to go to bed after briefing and refused to eat -sick with fear. Any man that frightened who goes to the target is brave."*¹⁶

The squadron participated in another raid to Bremen on the night of 29/30 June. This was 405 Squadron's one hundredth operation since its formation, but was clearly one of the worst nights of its history. Out of the nine squadron Halifaxes dispatched, three failed to return. Two days earlier, two bombers out of twelve dispatched to Bremen had been lost, killing all fourteen aircrew. 405 Squadron had lost one third of its aircraft and thirty-five aircrew in a three-day period -thirty-four had been killed with only rear-gunner Sgt. J.W. Dumond surviving to become a Prisoner of War. Reading between the lines in the monthly squadron diary, one can clearly sense the severity of the losses on Johnny's squadron as the names those in the lost

This page from 405 Squadron's 'Operations Record Book' lists the three aircraft and twenty-one airmen lost on the Bremen raid.

aircraft are carefully listed, together with their ranks and regimental numbers.

In fact, since the squadron began operating the Halifax Mk. II's as part of the first 'Thousand Bomber Raid' on 31 May through until the end of June, 405 Squadron had lost eleven aircraft of a total of 127 dispatched -a loss rate of 8.7%. So, over that one month period, well over one half of the aircraft on the squadron had been lost and of the seventy-seven aircrew aboard, sixty-one had been killed, eight became Prisoners of War, one successfully evaded capture, and one crew of seven had successfully parachuted to safety over England after abandoning their badly damaged Halifax.

At this loss rate, the chances of an airman completing their operational combat tour of thirty operations, safely landing after each, was a mere 6.5% and their chances of not being killed before completing it was only 11.7%.

Of course, 405 Squadron was not the only unit flying the Halifax Mk. II and suffering extraordinarily high loss rates. Leonard Cheshire who, like Johnny, would go on to become a commanding officer of 617 Squadron, 'The Dambusters', became the C/O of 76 Squadron during the summer of 1942. They too were flying Halifax Mk. II's. During a post-war interview Cheshire recalled,

"She wasn't really a safe aircraft. There was no margin of error when you got near to the stall.

"We suddenly became aware that nobody ever came back on three engines and that was suspicious. I remember that I took the aircraft up and deliberately stalled her and I found that you couldn't get out of the stall. The only way you could get out of the stall was to apply both opposite engines and both feet on one side of the rudder. It took all your strength and only then, you just got out.

*"So it was clear that a man who had an engine knocked out on ops would have no chance."*¹⁷

Despite knowledge of this significant design deficiency, Leonard Cheshire's, Johnny's, and many other squadrons were forced to continue flying the Halifax Mk. II's.

Jean Weir remembers how Johnny reacted to losing aircraft and aircrew,

"His emotions . . . when we lost one aircraft, that was enough but if we came in with three maybe four aircraft missing that man was . . . You couldn't go near him, he was just so upset. He took everything to heart, he really did.

*"It was the emotion that he showed, openly, when he lost men and when things happened that shouldn't have happened. Things like that just seemed to hit him very hard."*¹⁸

There was yet another raid to Bremen on 2/3 July by ten 405 Squadron Halifaxes. They encountered haze, searchlight glare, and flak opposition that prevented 'accurate pinpointing'. Johnny bombed the primary area, two minutes after watching another bomber shot down in flames during his approach.

On this night all the 405 Squadron aircraft returned to base but one had a close call that was summarized in the ORB as follows,



Air Marshal Gus Edwards (at right), the commanding officer of the RCAF Overseas, is welcomed to Pocklington; Johnny (at centre)

*"S/Ldr. Fraser encountered heavy flak crossing Dutch Coast and one close burst under right wing turned a/c onto its back and it fell into a spin. The a/c lost 3000 feet before it came out and the pilot pulled his stick back too quickly and the a/c flick-rolled to the right and finished on an even keel with elevator trim u/s."*¹⁹

Johnny led a raid to Hamburg on 25/26 July by thirteen 405 Squadron Halifaxs. Although the raid summary in the ORB recorded that, "Opposition at the target was considerably less than anticipated," with only moderate heavy and light flak co-operating with the searchlights, the Halifaxs piloted by Sgt. Smith and F/Sgt. Slezak failed to return with only one of the fifteen aircrew surviving to become as Prisoner of War.

Many of Bomber Command's aircraft had very short service lives as well. The Halifax flown by F/Sgt. Slezak that night (W1230) had been on the squadron for just two days and had only been flown for two hours and 35 minutes prior to departing for Hamburg on its last flight.

Only two 405 Squadron aircraft, one piloted by Johnny and the second by S/Ldr. Thiele, participated in another raid to Hamburg on 2 August, taking off just after 4:00 pm on a daylight sortie, unusual during this period of the war. The operation required cloud cover. Both aircraft returned to Pocklington five hours later after the anticipated cloud cover failed to develop.

During the evening of 3 August, according to the squadron diary, word was received that Johnny's DFC,



**W/Cdr. Fauquier DFC
Note the DFC ribbon below
his RCAF Wings**

that had been recommended almost two months earlier, had been approved.

*"News that the Squadron Commander, W/Cdr. John E. Fauquier had been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) by His Majesty the King was broadcast over the Home and Forces newscast this evening. Although recognition of the valuable contributions made by the Wing Commander was long expected, yet the announcement came as a pleasant surprise and members of the Squadron were quick to extend hearty congratulations to their leader. The award is more than justified in view of the continued daring with which he inspired those under his command in the many undaunted attacks he led on countless occasions over enemy territory."*²⁰

The official citation that accompanied the award reads,

*"Throughout the many sorties in which he had participated this officer has displayed the highest quality of courage and leadership. His ability and grim determination to inflict the maximum damage on the enemy have won the admiration of the squadron he commands. Wing Commander Fauquier took part in the two raids on Essen when a thousand of our aircraft operated each time. He is an exceptional leader."*²¹

As for Johnny's reaction to receiving a 'gong,' as decorations such as the DFC were referred to as by the aircrew, Jean Weir recalled,

*"We'd shake his hand and congratulate him and do all kinds of things but he always used to fluff us off and say, 'Don't fuss, don't fuss.' He was very easy-going really, but not where work was concerned. Where work was concerned he was bound and determined to do his job and do it thoroughly but as for glamour and awards and things like that, he accepted them and he was very thankful for them but beyond that . . . No, I never knew of him to make any fuss at all about being awarded things."*²²

Then on 7 August, there were two major changes on the Squadron -a change of command and a move from Pocklington to RAF Topcliffe.

When W/Cdr. Fauquier relinquished command of 405 Squadron he had completed his first tour of operations that had included thirty-five combat sorties. The following tribute was paid to him in the squadron diary,

*"Johnny leaves an envious record behind him as he bids everyone a reluctant farewell; a record that not only will be an inspiration to those who will succeed him but one which will ever exist in the spirit of the squadron itself. His daring exploits and undaunted leadership more than justified his recent award of the D.F.C. and the friends and relatives of the Ottawa Valley boy may proudly acclaim his amazing rise to fame."*²³

While flying Halifaxes on his first tour, Johnny's crew included F/Sgt. Raymond Gardiner (wireless operator) who had been on Johnny's Wellington crew, F/Lt. Albert Lambert (navigator), Sgt. G. MacGregor (mid-upper gunner), Sgt. King, F/Sgt. Adams (rear gunner), and Sgt. Foot.

As the commanding officer of a bomber squadron, Johnny was extremely demanding but never asked his pilots to do anything that he himself would not do. One of his former pilots recalled that at one of his briefings he said,

"I want you to go right in as close as you can and drop those damn bombs right down the smokestacks. And don't be worrying about any of that survival crap, because if you survive



**Johnny's rear-gunner,
F/Sgt. Adams**

*this raid, I'll be taking you out on another one and another one anyway.*²⁴

Following his first tour of flying combat operations that extended over ten months, Johnny was given some time off during which he returned to Canada for a month. It was written that,

*"His friends found him quieter, leaner, and sure of himself in a new way. He was still able to enjoy a rousing political argument from the standpoint of a wealthy and distinguished family.*²⁵

An Ottawa Citizen newspaper article dated 17 September 1942 reported that Johnny,

*". . . declined a posting to Canada, saying that he would rather, 'go back and fight.' His wishes were met and the gallant air hero, who also rejected a proposed civic reception, left for overseas recently.*²⁶

But Johnny wouldn't be going back to combat operations. He was, instead, posted to RCAF Overseas Headquarters where the air force felt his operational experience was badly needed as major changes involving the RCAF's bomber squadrons were imminent.

Johnny was not pleased about his new posting. As Jean Weir recalled,

*"Oh, he was not happy and I heard him cursing about going to HQ. He wasn't happy about that at all because he knew he'd be stuck at a desk. He hated to be inside. He wasn't meant to be inside. He said, 'I'm an outside guy and I need to be outside and I need to be doing things.' He liked anything to do with the outdoors."*²⁷



Johnny (at left) with his 405 Squadron Halifax crew



Wing Commander Fauquier at Pocklington -July 1942



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CHAPTER 6

RCAF Overseas Headquarters

"He has proved himself to be a very capable staff officer."

Upon returning from his trip to Canada on 20 September 1942, Johnny took up his new appointment at RCAF Overseas Headquarters. He had been appointed Senior Operations Staff Officer to Air Commodore C.R. Slemon, providing to headquarters the considerable practical, operational experience that he had gained with 405 Squadron. As such, he soon became Air Commodore Slemon's 'right-hand man'.

S/Ldr. Bill Swetman, who had flown with Johnny on 405 and would later become commanding officer of 426 Squadron, provided additional operational experience to Air Commodore Slemon's staff.

These months were crucial, as planning was well underway for the formation of 6 Group Bomber Command, an important step in the 'Canadianization' of the RCAF overseas.

Although Canadians had been serving as members of the Royal Air Force and RCAF airmen had been serving within RAF squadrons since the beginning of the war, specific Canadian bomber squadrons only began to be formed in 1941 but were



S/Ldr. Swetman in the cockpit of his 405 Squadron Halifax, 'O for Orange'



Allerton Park

attached to Royal Air Force Bomber Command groups. Canada, however, wanted its own identifiable presence in Allied air operations overseas. The Canadian government did not want its air force to be merely a source of manpower for the Royal Air Force nor its squadrons to be part of Royal Air Force groups.

To accomplish this, 6 (RCAF) Group was formed on 25 October 1942, initially with eight squadrons. It was to begin operations on 1 January 1943. The Group would continue to be part of the RAF's Bomber Command but the squadrons would be getting their orders directly from the Canadian Bomber Group's headquarters. At the peak of its strength, 6 Group consisted of fourteen squadrons.

Headquarters for 6 Group was to be located twenty-two miles northwest of the City of York in North Yorkshire in a sprawling, seventy-five room, nineteenth century mansion known as Allerton Park. The Canadians referred to Allerton Park as 'Castle Dismal'. It was located adjacent to the stations at which the Canadian squadrons would be based. Most of the ten

airfields that were operated by the RCAF were within five to ten miles of each other.

6 Group was to be under the command of Air Vice-Marshal George E. Brookes. Although he had joined the RCAF in 1921, AVM Brookes had had very little exposure to the type of practical, combat experience necessary to lead the Group. His Senior Air Staff Officer was Air Commodore Roy Slement, who AVM Brooks had taught to fly in 1924.

As for Johnny's work during his seven months at 6 Group Headquarters, Slement wrote on 11 March 1943,

"Wing Commander Fauquier has served four months in the capacity of 'Air I' under me at No.6 Group Headquarters. He



Executive officers of the recently formed 6 Bomber Group RCAF at Allerton Park -14 January 1943

(l-r) S/Ldr. D.D. Miller, Group Engineering Officer; W/Cdr. C.G. Durham, Senior Administration Officer; W/Cdr. J.E. Fauquier DFC, Chief Operations Officer; AVM G.E. Brookes OBE, Air Officer Commanding the Group; G/C C.R. Slement, Senior Air Staff Officer, and S/Ldr. A. Lambert DFC*, Chief Navigation Officer

*S/Ldr. Lambert had often flown with Johnny as a member of his 405 Squadron Halifax crew



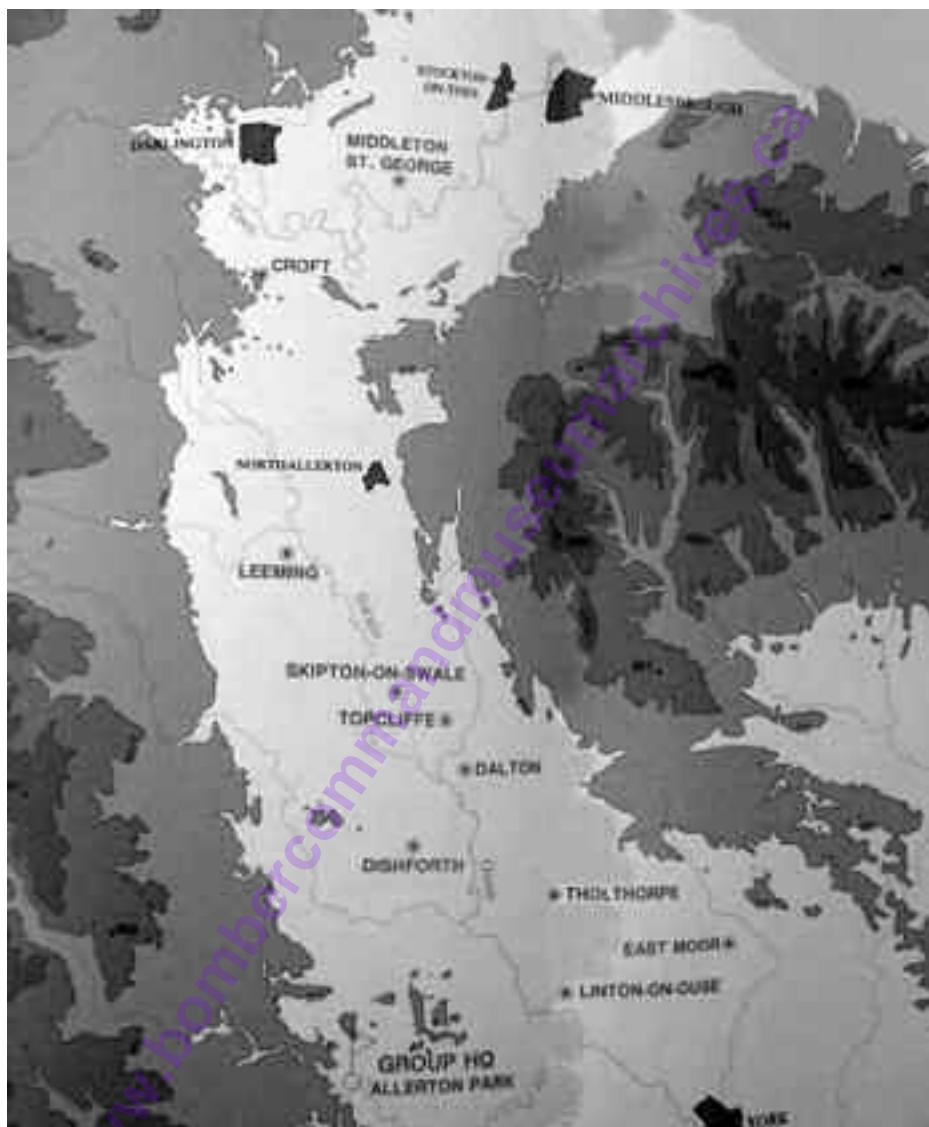
This apparently staged photo was taken by the RCAF photo unit on 3 February 1943. The following caption written at that time:

"Whenever bombers go out on attacks over Germany, scenes such as these take place in Group Headquarters all over Britain. This picture was taken at the new Canadian Bomber Group. Air Vice Marshal G.E. Brookes, O.B.E., Air Officer Commanding the Group and G/C C.R. Slemon, senior Air Staff officer explain tactics which are to be followed to the Group and Staff officers. Considerable care and planning is necessary before aircraft take off for any attack on Germany.

"From Bomber Command down through the Groups to the Squadrons, instructions are relayed carefully. Each person from ground crew to the pilot of the big Halifax, Lancaster and Stirling bombers has his own particular job to do. Each is expert in that job and each carries it out carefully to the smallest detail.

"At the new year, a Bomber Group of the R.C.A.F. took on its new identity. This group, embracing a number of R.C.A.F. squadrons, is now making regular bombing attacks on Germany and enemy country."

(Johnny is third from the left on the opposite side of the table from AVM Brookes and G/C Slemon.)



Canadian Bomber Stations in Yorkshire

The map indicates that the RCAF airfields were in a low-elevation area. For this reason they were often fog-shrouded when the aircraft returned from night operations.



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CHAPTER 7

405 Pathfinder Squadron -Halifaxes

“We discussed the formation of a corps d’elite who would consist of all our best crews in the Command and who would lead all raids in the hope that their example and incendiary fires would act as markers for the more inexperienced crews.”

As of 20 April 1943, Johnny was back on an operational squadron and again as 405 Squadron’s Commanding Officer, just nine and one half months after he had relinquished command. During his absence, the squadron had continued flying with Bomber Command although it had been ‘loaned’ to Coastal Command from late October 1942 until early March 1943 during which time their Halifaxes flew anti-submarine patrols over the Bay of Biscay as convoys sailed through this section of the North Atlantic in preparation for the Allied army’s landing in North Africa.

During the spring of 1943, 405 Squadron was continuing to fly the Halifax Mk. II and continuing to suffer heavy losses. On 3 April, five 405 squadron bombers had taken off to attack Essen but only three returned -two experienced crews had been lost including two of the squadron’s ‘specialist officers’. The following night one of six squadron Halifaxes deployed for a raid to Essen failed to return. There were no operations on 5 April but then one of six aircraft sent on a gardening (mine-laying) operation on the 6th failed to return. So over a four day period, of seventeen Halifaxes deployed, four had been lost -a stunning loss rate of 24%. With seven squadron airmen aboard each aircraft, twenty-eight airmen were missing. Regarding losses, little had changed while Johnny was away.

Prior to Johnny's departure from 6 Group Headquarters, it had been decided that the RCAF was to have a squadron in Bomber Command's elite Pathfinder Force. 405 Squadron had been selected, and it must have been clear to the most highly ranked members of the RCAF that Johnny Fauquier was the one to lead it in this new role.

On 8 April 1943, 405 Squadron's daily 'Summary of Events' recorded that, "Definite instructions were received today regarding the move of the Squadron to No. 8 P.F.F. (Pathfinders) Group, RAF Station Gransden Lodge to be effective 19th April 1943. This will be the third movement of the Squadron within a period of six weeks. Squadron personnel have become very efficient in squadron movement and it is expected the move will be completed with little difficulty." Upon its return from Coastal Command, the squadron had been based in Yorkshire, initially at Topcliffe and most recently at Leeming.

RAF Gransden Lodge was located in East Anglia, ten miles east of Cambridge, and had opened in early 1942. Prior to the arrival of 405 Squadron, the station was initially used as a satellite location for RAF Tempsford which was a station used as a base for secret operations involving the underground activities in occupied Europe. Later, Wellingtons of 1418 and 1474 Flights flew from Gransden Lodge.

As scheduled, 405 Squadron's eighteen Halifaxes departed RCAF Station Leeming on 19 April and flew to Gransden Lodge. They left behind W/Cdr. A.C.P. Clayton DFC and Bar who had been posted to RCAF Headquarters so that Johnny could take over command. The daily 'Summary of Events' noted that, "All ranks retain many happy memories of W/Cdr. Clayton's popularity and comradeship during the period in which he commanded the squadron."

Jean Weir had been Johnny's driver during his first tour with 405 Squadron and was still with the squadron. She recalled the squadron's reaction to the news that Johnny was returning as the commanding officer,

"They partied, if I can put it that way. We couldn't believe that we got him back. After they took him away we kept saying to our own (WAAF) C/O, 'Please, can you get Johnny back? We

need him back.' The aircrew missed him more than anybody because he was their lifeline. He really was because they could go to him, and not only that, he would take them aside in briefings. He used to give them tips and little anecdotes as to what they should be thinking about and how they should handle this and that. They learned from him and it made the sorties a lot easier. They went into them a little more relaxed than they would have without him. He had a tremendous influence on all of them and the same thing with the ground crew.

*"Anytime anyone asked how we liked the C/O of the squadron we'd answer, 'Well don't ask such a stupid question. You know we'd go to hell and back with Johnny Fauquier.' That's what everybody used to say."*¹

Regarding the change of command, one airman recalled,

"It is fair to say that at that time, discipline on the squadron left something to be desired, with people wearing whatever they damned well pleased.

"One morning, all squadron personnel were called to the maintenance hangar, and there to greet us was Johnny Fauquier who had returned so he could join us in our new venture as Pathfinders. Standing behind him was a man with so much brass on his cap that we knew he was right from London and drew an awful lot of water.

*"Johnny began by telling us how pleased he was to be back among so many familiar faces, and thanked us for past services rendered. As a parting shot, Johnny looked at the assembled array of sweaters, sweat-shirts, tennis shoes, and what-have-you, and said, 'I don't ask you to shine your shoes and buttons but you damned well better wear them.'*²

PATHFINDERS

The idea of having an elite corps of crews with proven navigational abilities evolved from the somewhat limited accuracy of bomber crews during the early years of the war, together with the development of more



sophisticated and difficult to use electronic navigational aids. Although originally opposed by Marshal of the Royal Air Force Arthur Harris, hand-picked crews from operational bomber squadrons were transferred to the Pathfinder Force (PFF) which was officially formed on 15 August 1942.

In a post-war speech to the Empire Club in Toronto, Johnny recalled his involvement in the formation of the Pathfinders,

“Several Squadron Commanders were detailed to report to Air Ministry, of which I was one, where we discussed the formation of a corps d’elite who would consist of all our best crews in the Command and who would lead all raids in the hope that their example and incendiary fires would act as markers for the more inexperienced crews following them. This name was later changed to the ‘Fire-Raising Force’ and finally named ‘The Pathfinders’. The man who was to head this force is probably well known to you. He is Air Vice-Marshall Bennett -no doubt one of the world’s best navigators.”³

Donald C.T. Bennett had only recently returned from Sweden after crashing during an attack on the Battleship Tirpitz. The veteran Australian bomber pilot had joined the Royal Air Force in 1931 and had pioneered long-distance aviation between the wars. His navigational abilities were recognized when he was selected to help organize the North Atlantic Ferry Service and he



AVM Don Bennett (left) and W/Cdr. Fauquier at Gransden Lodge. Bennett referred to Johnny as, “A thoroughly press-on type if ever there was one.”

led the first flight of Hudson Bombers across the Atlantic which had never been flown before during the winter.

Bennett had been with Bomber Command since 1941, serving as the commanding officer of 77 Squadron and 10 Squadron.

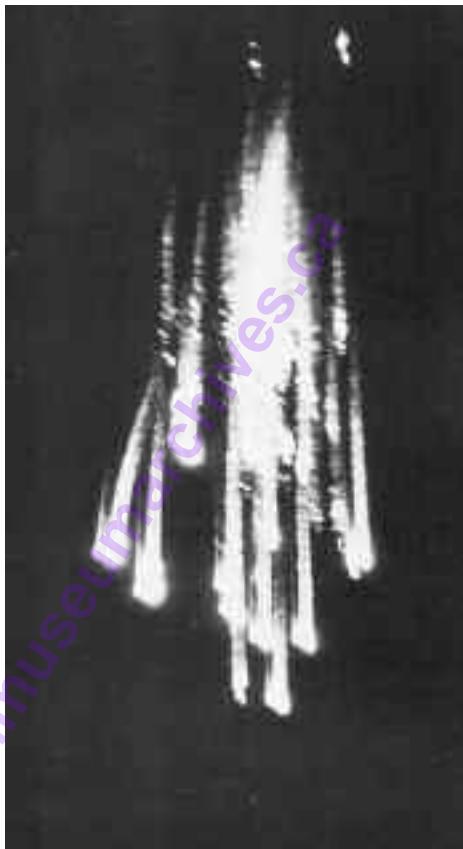
Don Bennett retained command of the Pathfinder Force throughout the war. The PFF became its own 'Group' within Bomber Command - '8 Group'. They were given the latest of the new, scarce, and complicated technological innovations developed specifically to aid in navigation.

The Pathfinder Force began operations on 18 August and continued its work of leading the main force against the enemy until the end of the war.

A variety of techniques for marking targets were used, the type being dependent on cloud conditions. Green, red, and yellow Target Indicator (T.I.) flares were utilized. Generally, an initial marking of the target was improved upon or altered as the raid progressed. Often a Master Bomber would circle over the target, transmitting radio instructions to other Pathfinders as well as to the main force aircraft.

The gallantry of the Pathfinder Force is legendary and its contribution to the war effort immense as it significantly improved the accuracy of the main force's bombing. Probably the greatest of its many successes was its part in the sustained Battle of the Ruhr, the industrial heartland of Nazi Germany.

The PFF flew a total of 50,490 individual sorties against some 3440 targets. But the cost in human lives was grievous as 3727 members were killed on operations.



Target Indicator Flares

By April 1943, the Pathfinder Force was becoming a vital part of Bomber Command's operations and its improved performance led to the expansion of the force, and the inclusion of a Canadian squadron. 405 Squadron was the only Royal Canadian Air Force squadron to be part of the Pathfinders, serving with 8 Group until the end of the war. As its last operation before V.E. Day, the squadron participated in Operation Manna, marking the aiming point for other Bomber Command aircraft detailed to drop food supplies to the starving Dutch civilians at Rotterdam.

According to Jean Weir, when 405 Squadron joined the Pathfinders, Johnny came into some conflict with Royal Air Force officers who, at times, were somewhat reluctant to have 'colonials' making suggestions.

"He was so far in advance of the British in most flying situations. He had learned so much over the years as a bush pilot. That's how he did it. He just knew. He seemed to know ahead of time what was going to happen. When he tried to pass it along when we went into 8 Group, there was sometimes resistance."

"Johnny didn't fit well with the British at all. They didn't like the fact that he was French and they didn't like the fact that he talked too loudly sometimes."*

"The Brits didn't like it at all. They weren't going to be told what to do by some damn Frenchman. They didn't want to listen to him at all. They wanted to tell him what to do."⁴

405 Squadron was now at a new base, with a new commanding officer, and with a new role as a Pathfinder Squadron. As well, the squadron had been 'adopted' by the City of Vancouver during Johnny's absence and now carried 'City of Vancouver Squadron' as a nickname.

The arrival by truck of the squadron's ground equipment and the unloading of the second of two trainloads of equipment

*Of course, Johnny wasn't 'French' nor 'French-Canadian' but he did have a French sounding name and had spent several years flying in Quebec.

was completed on 20 April. The aircrew had already arrived and Johnny wasted no time, the daily diary recording, "Wing Commander Fauquier addressed aircrew personnel at 09:30, outlining the training programme to be undertaken for P.F.F. work. Johnny may very well have quoted from an instructional booklet prepared for the squadron at the time,

*"Well, my lucky lads, you can't blame the P.F.F. anymore for erratic bombing. You are one of them now. The whole striking force of Bomber Command depends on you, so gen up! Learn all you can. If a few hours training per day will finish this war sooner, let's do it and do it conscientiously."*¹⁵

The following day,

*"Eight crews were selected as the first group to undertake flying training to be conducted by the Navigational Training Unit. At 09:00 hours, all aircrew attended a lecture given by the C.C.1. on P.F.F. techniques. Specialist Officers of the N.T.U. gave one hour lectures to the various crew categories. At 11:30 hours the C.G.1. gave a talk on P.F.F. navigation. The afternoon was devoted to lectures by N.T.U. Specialist Officers on various phases of P.F.F. work."*¹⁶

For the first two months following 405 Squadron's arrival at Gransden Lodge, the station was shared with the Pathfinder 'Navigational Training Unit' (N.T.U.) so this was very convenient for the squadron's training.

There were generally other units and, at times, other entire squadrons operating from the stations that 405 Squadron flew from. The station commander was in charge of the station but Johnny, of course, was in charge of his squadron. This sometimes put Johnny in conflict with the station commanders as Jean Weir recalled,

"The stations (that 405 Squadron was based on) were British-operated and controlled. There was nothing Johnny liked better than if the Brits would put in a rule for a station or a group of stations that he didn't like. If it concerned his men and the

dealings we had within the squadron, he didn't hesitate. He couldn't have cared less whether it was an order or a law or anything else. He just went to the station commander and he let him have it, 'This is my squadron. We are a Canadian squadron. We're here to help you. My rules are my rules not yours. You look after your babies and I'll look after mine but don't interfere with mine under any circumstances.'

"Oh, he was determined. He'd have no nonsense from the Brits at all. They were terrible with rules and regulations. They'd drive him silly. To Johnny, a rule or a regulation or whatever -it had to mean something, and it had to be perfectly and honestly and continually obeyed and, if they weren't, then we were in trouble. He was possessed with the job he had to do, and he was going to do it if it killed him.

"He was a man with a vision and a purpose, and nobody was going to stop him."

As the P.F.F. training continued, so too did operational flying. 405 squadron launched its first raid from Gransden Lodge on 26 April, when eleven Halifax II's took off on a raid to the inland-port city of Duisburg in the highly industrialized Ruhr Valley. The crews reported that they, "Released loads on red and green T.I. markers" and, as they did so, they must have been thinking that soon it would be their aircraft placing the T.I.'s.

Sadly, the first loss under Johnny's resumed command occurred that night when Sgt. D.E. Crockatt and crew crashed at Walsum on the east bank of the Rhine River, killing all eight airmen on board. On 30 April, an operation to Essen was launched. One of the six Halifaxes dispatched failed to return. F/Lt. H.A. Atkinson's aircraft was shot down by a Luftwaffe night fighter. In this case only F/Lt. Atkinson and F/O Lloyd G. Hardy were killed. The other six airmen aboard became Prisoners of War.

Operations planned for both 2 and 3 May were 'scrubbed' at the last moment, but on 4 May Johnny led the squadron from Gransden Lodge on an operation for the first time since his return to combat flying. He had selected his aircraft, 'LQ-J', and would continue to fly 'J for Johnny' whenever it was available.



Johnny brought this somewhat damaged photo of eight 405 Squadron Halifax Mk II's back to Canada following the war.

Ten Halifaxes took off to attack Dortmund. With the exception of the three 'Thousand Bomber Raids', this was the largest raid of the war to date and included an impressive mix of 596 bombers -255 Lancasters, 141 Halifaxes, 80 Stirlings, 110 Wellingtons, and ten Mosquitoes. The initial Pathfinder marking was accurate but some of the backing-up marking fell short. A decoy (dummy) fire site also attracted many bombs. But half of the large force did bomb within three miles of the aiming point and severe damage was caused to steel factories, facilities in the dock area, and other buildings in the central and northern parts of the city.

Seven of the 405 Squadron bombers, including Johnny's, bombed the target although three of the largest bombs Johnny was carrying 'hung up' over the target. Somehow he was able to release them and 'jettison live' during his return flight. This was a superior option to landing at Gransden Lodge with bombs that may or may not have been securely attached to his aircraft.

Although the squadron lost three Halifaxes that night, only two of the twenty-one aircrew aboard were killed. This was very unusual as most often, when a bomber was lost, so were the aircrew.

The Halifax piloted by P/O J.W. Lennox was shot down by a night-fighter. When a bomber was severely damaged by cannon or machine-gun fire from a fighter or by anti-aircraft fire the pilot would immediately order his crew to abandon the aircraft. The pilot would then keep the bomber under control as

best he could while his crew escaped. Then, when the pilot released the controls to attempt to escape himself, he often became trapped by the centrifugal forces within the out of control aircraft. This may very well have been what happened in this case as P/O Lennox and the rear gunner, Sgt. B. Moody, were killed and the other aircrew became Prisoners of War.

A second Halifax, flown by P/O J.C. Harty, was badly damaged by flak and ‘pranged’ (crash-landed) near RAF Station Gravely. No one was reported hurt but the aircraft was, “written off on landing.” A third, flown by F/O W. Weiser, ran low on fuel and while trying to land in fog at RAF Wyton crash-landed, colliding with trees near the airfield. One of four airmen injured was the navigator, F/O Glen Ellwood, who Johnny would come to know well on 405 Squadron and who would become Johnny’s navigator later in the war.

The loss rate for the Dortmund raid was 4.9%. It would be noted that the loss rate for the Lancasters was 2.4%, whereas for the Halifaxes it was 8.5%. It was becoming clear that the Lancaster had a much better survival rate, but 405 continued to fly their Halifax Mk II’s.

405 Squadron had suffered a devastating loss rate since their arrival at Gransden Lodge, with three of twenty-four Halifaxes dispatched (12.5%) being lost and a fourth aircraft damaged beyond repair.

On 23 May, another raid to Dortmund in the Ruhr Valley, was the first Pathfinding sortie for 405 Squadron as three of the fourteen aircraft carried Target Indicators (TI’s). Sgt. J. Martin and his crew were not heard from after take-off, disappearing without a trace. W/Cdr. Fauquier, flying ‘LQ-J’, led the raid and recorded details of the Pathfinding as follows:

“At 00:58 hours, red T.I. markers were observed twenty miles to S.S.W., followed by green T.I. and incendiaries. At 01:08 hours, red T.I. markers were followed by two green T.I.’s and more incendiaries, about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to S. of target. At 01:12 hours, a/c dropped green T.I. markers on this red T.I. which was just burning out. This was followed by more green T.I.’s in same place. A large area solidly covered with incendiaries lay from red T.I. for two miles to N. and N.W.”⁸



405 Squadron ground crew with a 'bomb trolley'

On 25 May, as thirteen 405 Squadron Halifaxes attacked Dusseldorf and another went missing, Johnny travelled to P.F.F. Group Headquarters at RAF Wyton in order to pay a visit to their Majesties, The King and Queen. As well as W/Cdr. Fauquier, an operational Halifax flown by P/O H. Gowan, and twenty-five air and ground crew represented the squadron. Jean Weir drove Johnny to Wyton that day. She recalled that the ceremony was known as, 'Presenting Crews'.

RAF Wyton had been the home of 8 Group and Don Bennett's headquarters since the Pathfinders' formation during January 1943. 405 Squadron's presence at the ceremony was an indication that they had reached operational status and a high level of operational performance, and that they were playing a significant role with the P.F.F. There was much fanfare with a band and other pomp and formality.

Following the ceremony, Jean witnessed a side of Johnny that she had not seen before,

"I dropped him off but I could see all the activity. When he came back, he opened the car door and he almost fell into the car and he just couldn't wait. He said, 'Jeannie, she's wonderful - peaches and cream. She's just adorable.' He was so thrilled, but he only just mentioned the King. Of course, the King in those days wasn't in the best of shape and he stammered very badly, but Johnny was so taken with that lady that I just couldn't believe

it because it wasn't like him. It's about the only thing like that I ever saw him do. He was so relaxed and so happy and just like a little boy and I thought, this is priceless. It's another side of him that nobody else would ever see.

"We didn't even take off and leave for quite a few minutes because he was just so thrilled. When you knew him as he was as a commanding officer, he was a very brusque man when he had to be. He was there for his job and that was his life, but this was so totally different. He was a different man altogether. When I looked at him his eyes were just glistening, and I couldn't believe it was him, I really couldn't, it was just great."⁹

On 29 May, Johnny led fourteen Halifaxes to bomb Wuppertal with five of the aircraft placing target markers. They were part of a very large raid of 719 bombers and it was said to have been, "the outstanding success of the Battle of the Ruhr - a five month series of Bomber Command raids directed against Nazi Germany's Ruhr Valley industrial area, which had coke plants, steelworks, and ten synthetic oil plants."

Both the Pathfinder marking and main force bombing was particularly accurate. Five of the six largest factories, 211 other industrial premises, and nearly 4000 houses were completely destroyed and 71 other industrial buildings were seriously damaged.

As Johnny was on his run over the target preparing to place his T.I.'s, he had to take evasive action. He reported, "At 00:32 hours, course was set, but had to evade fighter. At 00:33 hours, course was set again and went on to target."

Evasive action was generally taken when one of the air gunners, upon seeing an enemy fighter, would call for the pilot to, 'Corkscrew Left' or 'Corkscrew Right'. This manoeuvre involved abrupt dives, climbs, and turns, flying through the air somewhat like a corkscrew with the hope that the bomber could 'shake off' the attacker.

The pilot would begin a steep dive and turn towards the attacker, losing approximately one thousand feet of altitude and gaining speed, and then beginning a steep climb. While still in the turn, but after climbing five hundred feet or so and still climbing, the pilot would change direction and make a sharp turn

to the opposite direction, all the while losing speed. All this variation in speed and the violent manoeuvering would hopefully result in the fighter pilot flying past the bomber. If the fighter was still a threat when the pilot reached his original altitude, the corkscrew would be repeated. With no hydraulic assists to the flight controls, the manoeuver required a significant physical effort by the pilot.

Fortunately, all the bombers returned safely from the Wuppertal operation but May had been a difficult month for the rookie Pathfinder Squadron, even though much of their focus had been on training. Five (8%) of the sixty-two bombers dispatched on operations had been lost.

Johnny's next operation was on 19 June, when he led eleven 405 Squadron aircraft to bomb an armament factory at Le Creusot, fifty miles northwest of Geneva. The crews reported a successful operation, the target being, "clearly identified visually and several crews observing bombs falling directly on Schneider Works." The raid was unusual in that, "No flak damage was suffered by any of our aircraft and all returned back to base safely." It was a pretty easy raid for the other squadrons involved as well as of the 290 bombers that attacked the target, only two failed to return.

Two nights later, Johnny was flying again on an operation to Krefeld. Fourteen squadron Halifaxes took off and of the thirteen that reached the target, three suffered flak damage. The Halifax flown by F/Lt. S.L. Murrell failed to return.

During June and July, Johnny and his squadron were introduced to H2S, a recently developed, downward-looking radar designed to assist navigators in identifying their targets. The squadron diary for 25 June reported that, "Navigators were lectured on 'new secret equipment'."

Johnny's next operation was on 15 July to Montbéliard in



An interpreted image from an
H2S radar screen

eastern France to bomb the Peugeot motor factory. Twelve 405 Squadron aircraft took off for the target, nine of them with target indicators in their bomb-bays as well as 1000 pound bombs. 165 Halifaxes attacked, 134 from 4 Group and 31, including the 405 Squadron bombers, were from 8 Group.

One of the 405 aircraft failed to return. F/Lt. J.H. Foy's aircraft was shot down by a night-fighter near Tonnerre, France during their return. The entire crew survived, the rear-gunner becoming a Prisoner of War and the other six successfully evading.

En-route back to base, F/O M. Sattler's bomber was attacked by an enemy aircraft which was identified by both gunners as a Dornier 217 but the enemy aircraft did not carry Luftwaffe markings.

Although designed as a twin-engined bomber, many Dornier 217's were converted to serve as night-fighters to defend the Nazi homeland from Bomber Command. Both of F/O Sattler's air gunners recognized British camouflage and markings on the attacking aircraft, including the RAF's distinctive, target-like roundels.

As their Halifax underwent the violent, corkscrew evasive action, F/O William Anderson, the mid-upper gunner, was wounded four times in the left arm but continued firing. He then fought off eight subsequent attacks, eventually shooting down the enemy aircraft.

Johnny, of course, was briefed on this action following the raid. He was most impressed with F/O Anderson's actions and courage, recommending the immediate award of the DFC with the following report,

"On the night of 15th July 1943, the aircraft in which Flying Officer Anderson was mid-upper gunner was attacked by a Dornier 217 which fired a burst of cannon and machine gun fire.

F/O Anderson received four wounds in F/O William Anderson DFC



No. 405 Squadron

On the night of 15/16th July, 1943, Halifax a/c "F" heading 114° t., flying at 5,500 ft., position 47.11°N 05.30°E was attacked by an e/a which both the rear and M/U/G's identified as a Dornier 217. The e/a was first sighted by the R/G on a parallel course at 500 yds. on port side. It continued to fly in this position for three minutes, and both gunners recognised British markings and roundels. E/A passed from port beam to starboard beam and fired a burst of cannon and machine gun fire. Our a/c was violently manoeuvring but sustained damage in the first attack, M/U/G being wounded four times in the left arm, but he continued to keep on firing during subsequent attacks - eight in number. The e/a then went into a slight dive and one engine was seen to burst into flames just before it crashed into the ground and continued to burn. The e/a is claimed destroyed.

The M/U/G F/O Anderson was trained at No. 4 B & G School, Fingal, Canada.

Comment

Congratulations to the M/U/G on his fortitude and great determination in dealing with this nasty combat, and has well deserved success.


Air Commodore, Commanding
H.Q. Path Finlar Force (No. 8 Group)

F/O Anderson's combat report

the left arm. In spite of this he continued to fire during the seven subsequent attacks of the enemy aircraft which finally went into a dive with one engine in flames and crashed to the ground where it continued to burn.

After receiving first aid treatment, Flying Officer Anderson acted as lookout in the lower blister on the return journey. Flying Officer Anderson's courage and devotion to duty have been an inspiration to this squadron.¹⁰

The night of 24/25 July, saw the opening attack of the 'Battle of Hamburg', also known as 'Operation Gomorrah'. Hamburg, located on the Elbe River on Germany's north coast, was one of Germany's most important port cities. Its shipyards produced most of Germany's submarines and its oil refineries were vital to the Nazi's as well. The enemy were aware of the



A concentrated mass of 'Window' falls from an RCAF bomber need to defend Hamburg. The city was well-protected by six night-fighter bases, twenty-two searchlight batteries, and more than fifty heavy anti-aircraft guns.

There were four major raids over a ten-day period and all incorporated Bomber Command's new and evolving strategies. The first raid utilized 791 bombers. Only twelve (1.5% of the attacking force) were lost. On this raid there were 347 Lancasters, 246 Halifaxes, 125 Stirlings, and 73 Wellingtons. These numbers illustrate that Stirlings and particularly Wellingtons were being taken off of operations and Lancasters were in the process of replacing Halifaxes in carrying the load for Bomber Command.

The minimal loss rate was due in large measure to Bomber Command's initial deployment of 'Window', a simple technology that involved releasing huge volumes of thin strips of metallic foil which totally confused the enemy's airborne and ground-based radar systems. However, the Nazi scientists reacted quickly with countermeasures and the loss rate increased during the three subsequent raids on Hamburg on 27/28 July (2.2%), 29/30 July (3.6%), and on 2/3 August (4.1%). But the new technique's effectiveness had been demonstrated

and ‘Windowing’ became a regular part of many future Bomber Command operations.

Another first was that the American 8th Air Force participated in the attack on Hamburg by bombing during daylight following Bomber Command’s initial night raid. This was the first time that the two bomber forces had combined to attack a target. The City of Hamburg was devastated. According to Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Minister for Propaganda, the bombing of Hamburg was the first time that he thought Nazi Germany might have to call for peace.

Led by Johnny, 405 Squadron participated in the initial raid on 24/25 July, with fifteen Halifaxes flying to Hamburg. Their reports gave details regarding the target markers and there were no reports of fighters. However, 405 Squadron pilot, P/O H. Gowan, was struck by flak on his run-up to the target. One shell burst near the mid-upper turret, seriously wounding Sgt. C.C. McLellan in the thigh and abdomen. P/O Gowan was able to make a safe return to Gransden Lodge but, sadly, Sgt. McLellan died of his wounds a week later.

It is instructive to compare Johnny’s first raid to Hamburg on 31 October 1941, when he was one of 123 twin-engined bombers of which only 56 claimed to bomb the target (14 fires were started and one person was killed), to this monstrous raid of 791 bombers, 91% of which were four-engined Stirlings, Halifaxes, and Lancasters, which destroyed much of the city.

405 Squadron experienced heavy losses on 2 August when it was part of a fourth raid to Hamburg. The crews reported extreme weather including electrical storms and severe icing conditions that forced many of the pilots to seek alternate targets, or in some cases, to jettison their bombs and return early. Of the sixteen Halifaxes that took off from Gransden Lodge, only five reached the target. Two bombed alternate targets, six jettisoned their bomb loads and returned to base, and three bombers failed to return.

The 405 Squadron Halifax flown by Sgt. J.A. Phillips was struck by lightning on the run up to the target, putting two engines out of action. The crew baled out over neutral Sweden where they were interned. Sgt Phillips later recalled what it was like following a raid when squadron airmen didn’t return,



405 Squadron ground crew

"Empty beds and people taking all their kit away in kit bags the next morning was a sight which was a normal sight on a squadron – not a happy sight – and you just hoped they were prisoners of war, but unfortunately most were not. The squadron lost a lot of men."¹¹

The squadron's daily record for August mentions details of a 'Squadron Dance' being planned for 8 August. When operations were ordered for the evening, the dance was postponed but then, as often happened, the operations were 'scrubbed' and the dance was on. The squadron's daily diary recorded that,

"The RCAF Overseas Dance Orchestra provided excellent music which contributed greatly to the success of the dance. There was a large attendance of personnel from Station Headquarters, B.A.T. Flight, and the RAF Regiment had been cordially invited to attend as guests."¹²



**W/Cdr. Fauquier and F.G. Waite at the
'Airmens' Dance' - 8 August 1943**

(courtesy Canadian War Museum)

The dance had been given by the aircrew in honour of the ground crew. As did all the aircrew, Johnny held the ground crew in high regard. They thought the world of him, because he thought the world of them and never took them for granted, always remembering to take them bottles of beer or other treats if they had worked particularly hard.

Jean Weir recalled this as well, "He'd do favours for them. He'd get the station C/O to put something on or he'd get the cookhouse to put on a special meal for them."

One 405 Squadron ground crew member recalled,

“Johnny called a muster parade in front of one of the hangars and gave us a speech in which he thanked us for our help and cooperation in making our squadron one of the best in England, about 96-98% serviceability at all times, but he said he also wanted us to know we were one of the scruffiest. We were always presentable when we went off camp or on leave, but we didn’t hold much with ceremony when at work on the ‘drome or amongst ourselves.”¹³

Johnny was quoted as telling Air Marshal Lloyd S. Breadner, then AOC in Chief of RCAF Overseas Headquarters, that, “Canadian ground crew have been showing themselves to be unquestionably the best in the world.”

As a commanding officer, Johnny had become highly respected by both those at RCAF Headquarters and by the ground crew, airmen, and others on his squadron. Jean Weir summarized Johnny’s leadership style by saying,

“He always appeared beautifully attired and with that air that made it clear, ‘I am the boss.’ He looked the part, he just looked the part. He was courteous but he wouldn’t hesitate to call someone out who wasn’t dressed properly or behaved in the wrong manner.

“When things didn’t go well or the way he wanted them to, he was sometimes a little on the harsh side. He wouldn’t hesitate. He was very forthright in that respect.

“He was proper. He just seemed like a natural to me. He seemed to know his position. He belonged in uniform. He loved his job. He made people feel that they belonged. He loved what he was doing and of course flying was his life.

“Johnny didn’t mess around. If there was punishment to be had, it was given. Whatever the damage or whatever had happened, the person responsible was punished for it which was usually being grounded or whatever else was necessary.

“He was just ‘straight down the pipe’, that’s all there was to it. He didn’t mince words about anything. He was a little too straight in a way. The Brits didn’t like him for that at all. They would hum and haw and be very frightfully thoughtful -but this wasn’t Johnny’s way at all. He was right dead on the button.



Whenever anything happened, it happened and you knew it because Johnny let you know it.

"He did swear -quite frequently. He only did it in a nasty way when he was angry. But he used to just put in swear words when he was just talking.

"He didn't like having his picture taken. He wouldn't pose for photographs unless he absolutely had to and would say, 'I'm not here to be prim and proper, I'm just a guy. Just let me do what I know I can do."¹⁴



405 Squadron and a Halifax Mk II



Later series Halifax Mk II's, such as this 405 Squadron aircraft, featured a perspex nose.





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CHAPTER 8

405 Pathfinder Squadron -Lancasters

"It was quite a shock to see such an old guy, thirty-four years old, going on ops, and only on the tough ones at that. I thought surely he was the meanest, toughest man I ever met, but soon learned he was a very dedicated and competent leader."

On 7 August 1943, 405 Squadron's flight engineers attended their first session of ground training that began the squadron's conversion from the Halifax Mk. II's that they had been flying since May 1942 to the Avro Lancaster. The presentation consisted of, "a lecture on the Lancaster III, general description, fuel system, and engine starting and stopping."

However many of the airmen, including both Johnny and S/Ldr. Reg Lane who was about to play an important role in 405 Squadron's history, had likely grown quite 'attached' to their Halifax Mk II's. Reg recalled,

"I found the Halifax to be a very satisfactory airplane . . . The Halifax was capable of taking an awful lot of punishment and not once did I ever have a problem with its controls. I've heard stories about troubles with the tail assembly but I never did have that problem."

This was likely because Reg was an extremely talented pilot but by this point in the war, it was becoming generally recognized that the Halifax Mk. II's being flown by 405 and numerous other squadrons had serious shortcomings. Arthur Harris was certainly no fan of the Halifax, writing in a letter to the

Ministry of Aircraft Production on 16 October 1942, just six months after Johnny's squadron had converted to Halifax Mk. II's from the Wellingtons,

"Our friend, the Halifax, as you rightly say, stinks. I have little faith in the gains to be expected from the carrying out of minor modifications, that even if they come up individually to specifications, will be additive in effect where additional miles-per-hour are concerned... I know that you are fully aware of the vital urgency of doing something and doing it quickly to get the Halifax right.

*The morale of the Halifax units is definitely cracking. This is not as yet ascribable to the squadrons themselves, but we are getting to the usual stage with suspect aircraft where the young intake from the OTU's arrive under a sense of injury that they have been selected for Halifax flying, and old lags coming back for their second tour and hoping for Lancasters become despondent at their prospects of survival on the Halifax."*²

According to one member of 405 Squadron,

"When we were sent to the PFF in April 1943, we were the only PFF squadron flying Halifaxes. Now Don Bennett, our AOC, suggested we would be better off with Lancasters but needed the Squadron Commander's agreement. Now John Fauquier was a Halifax booster and the Handley-Page representative on our 'drome had stories of new and wonderful marks of Hallies that were worth trying before the final decision was made . . .

*Bennett outfoxed Fauquier by sending a Lancaster to our 'drome and leaving it sit within John's view. Finally, John tried it and got home an hour ahead of the others from Berlin. We got one more changeover -this time to Lancasters."*³

As Jean Weir recalled, "Johnny was quite pleased with the Lancs and very impressed with them. He thought they were such an improvement on the Halifaxes."

405 Squadron was still flying Halifax Mk. II's, the first model to become operational. What was being referred to by the 'Handley-Page representative' was the Halifax Mk. III that was

being developed. It featured larger, trapezoidal-shaped vertical stabilizers that solved control deficiencies caused by the more triangular-shaped stabilizers of the earlier model Halifaxes. As well, the Mk. III's were powered by the more powerful, 1650 horse power Bristol Hercules XVI, fourteen-cylinder radial engines. This model was introduced to service during November of 1943 and by January 1944, was available in quantity, quickly proving to be a much superior aircraft to the Halifax Mk. II.

Introduced to operational flying with Bomber Command during March 1942, the Lancaster had regularly been demonstrating a lower loss rate and clearly had the advantages of being faster and having a higher ceiling. The last of Bomber Command's four-engined aircraft to enter service, the 'Lanc' featured a huge, thirty-three foot long, unsegmented bomb-bay which made it suitable for special operations such as the



Avro Lancaster

Dambusters' 'bouncing-bomb' attack on the dams of the Ruhr Valley that had just taken place two months prior to 405 Squadron's conversion.

For these reasons and others, the Lancaster became the bomber of choice for both Arthur Harris and Don Bennett. By the end of August, 405 Squadron had nine Lancasters on strength and the number of Halifaxes had decreased to ten. By the end of September, nineteen of the twenty-two bombers on strength were Lancasters and the conversion was completed prior to the end of October.

405 Squadron was being equipped with the Lancaster Mk. III, essentially the same as the original Mk. I, except that the Mk. III used a version of the Rolls-Royce Merlin V-12 engine that was being built under license by the Packard Motor Company in the United States.

Operations with the Halifax II's continued during the conversion but on 10 August, Johnny and his crew considered themselves ready to fly 405 Squadron's first Lancaster (JA920), marked as 'LQ-E', into combat. This Lancaster had replaced a Halifax that previously carried 'LQ-E' but was shot down by flak over Bremen on 2 August. Sgt. A.F. Gregory and his crew had all been killed.

Although the aircraft was not brand new, having been transferred from 83 Squadron, it was certainly new to 405 Squadron as Johnny led fourteen squadron bombers on a raid to Nuremberg. All returned and landed safely at Gransden Lodge,



405 Squadron Lancaster 'LQ-N' at dispersal at Gransden Lodge

but for some reason Johnny went off the end of the runway. After turning around to taxi back to the runway, the Lancaster's port undercarriage dropped into an overgrown ditch. The ORB report documenting the operation noted that, "Aircraft taxied into ditch after landing. Extent of damage not known."

However, it must have been known that the damage was pretty severe as it was soon determined that the Lancaster could not be repaired. So although no one was killed or injured, Johnny Fauquier had the dubious distinction of being the pilot of the first Lancaster lost in service by 405 Squadron -the irreparable damage being incurred while on the ground.

Well known for his demanding expectations of others and his 'colourful' language, one can only imagine Johnny's embarrassment and what he had to say, as well as the subsequent conversations in the Mess amongst the pilots under his command.

Two days later, Johnny led fourteen aircraft over the Alps on a raid to Turin, Italy. All returned safely, although two bombers exchanged fire with enemy fighters during the eight hour flight.

Joe McCarthy, renown as the RCAF American who flew

A photograph of a handwritten note on a printed form. The form has columns for 'NAME', 'GRADE', 'RANK', 'SQUADRON', 'TYPE', 'UNIT CLASS', 'ARMAMENT TYPE', 'GUNNERS', 'PILOTS', and 'COPIES'. Handwritten notes in the margins include:

- "C.O. was Pilot" and "Insufficient care to see (that the) ground ahead was clear."
- "O.P." handwritten in the top right corner.
- "D.A.W." handwritten in the bottom right corner.

Page 2 of the accident report documenting the loss of Lancaster JA920. The officer completing the report noted that, "C.O. was Pilot" and that "Insufficient care to see (that the) ground ahead was clear."

on the Dambusters Raid and then spent another year completing special operations with 617 Squadron, recalled his habit of never flying straight and level, with one exception -while over the Alps,

"I made it a point that as soon as I got in the air to never stay in the same spot -back and forth, back and forth just keep rolling back and forth all the way out and all the way in. This gave the gunners a chance to see below and up and around me and gave me a chance to see what was going on.

"The only time I ever flew straight was over the Alps and I knew the fighters would not come over that way. If they lost a motor they were going to be up in the mountains. We could at least maybe have struggled back out. That was the only time too that we'd light a cigarette, have a smoke, and keep on going (Generally, Joe would have been worried that the light from a match or cigarette might give away their position to an enemy night-fighter)."⁴

As the conversion training intensified, the daily summary of events stated that, on 14 August, the squadron's pilots commenced being given dual instruction by W/Cdr. Fauquier himself as training for all ground and air trades continued.

405 Squadron returned to Turin again on 16 August but Johnny didn't go. He was preparing to play a major role in an extremely important operation -Pennemunde.

PENNEMUNDE

The Nazi's V-1 Flying Bomb could be seen and defended against by fighters and anti-aircraft guns but the V-2 Rocket was effectively invisible after it had been launched. The first Londoners knew about a V-2 was when it exploded in their city.

The rocket was forty-six feet in length and, fully loaded with fuel and warhead, weighed thirteen tons. From launch to the speed of sound took only thirty seconds. Its maximum trajectory height was between fifty and sixty miles for long-range targets. The warhead weighed one ton and was capable of causing considerable damage.

On 8 September 1944, the first V-2 hurtled down on London without warning and exploded with devastating effect.

The campaign reached a climax during February 1945 when 232 hit southern England. In all 1115 struck southern England and, of these, 517 struck in the London area.

Although 2754 people were killed and about 6500 were injured, the V-2 program did not change the course of the war as Hitler had hoped. However, it would have had significantly more of an effect had its development not be delayed, the scale of the program reduced, and many of its vital facilities destroyed, by Bomber Command.

Pennemunde is located on the Baltic coast, due north of Berlin. Here, during the summer of 1943, the Nazis were developing and testing the V-2 rocket. They had assembled many of Germany's most brilliant scientists and a workforce that operated under the greatest of secrecy. One of the leading scientists was Wernher Von Braun, who would go on to play a leading role in the Apollo program that succeeded in making the first manned lunar landing in 1969.

The Polish underground movement had sent back information about the Pennemunde program and facilities. As well, the RAF had aerial photographs of the site. When the significance of the site became apparent, Bomber Command was ordered to destroy Peenemunde -no matter what the cost.

Pennemunde would be a 'precision', low-level, moonlight raid, highly unusual for Bomber Command and making it much more



V-2 Rocket

hazardous for the crews. There would be no hiding in the clouds on this night, but the risk had to be accepted. It was decided that a diversionary raid on Berlin by Mosquito Bombers should be launched with the hope that German fighters would be drawn to the defence of the capital before the night's actual target became apparent. It was hoped that the first, second, and perhaps even the third of the three waves of bombers would be able to drop their loads without being attacked by fighters.

Pilot Jack Stephens recalled,

"The first thing that baffled everyone was, "Pennemunde?" No one had the slightest idea where it was or what it was -we were to find out! There were two other aspects of this raid that were puzzling and rather scary. We were to bomb from 7000 feet rather than our usual 18-20,000 feet and it was a full moon."⁵

The attack on Pennemunde was considered to be one of the most important of the war and this was made clear to the crews by a personal message to them from Arthur Harris. Canadian 419 Squadron navigator Jim Love recalled very clearly the warning they were given, "If you don't knock out this important target tonight, it will be laid on again tomorrow and every night until the job is done (regardless of losses)."

The airmen had never heard anything like this before. Sergeant K.W. Rowe of 434 Squadron recalled,

"There wasn't the usual babble and horseplay and I remember coming out onto the airfield, right into the rural surroundings and sunshine and I thought, 'This can't be happening to us on such a lovely day.'"⁶

A total of 596 bombers, including sixty-two from the Canadian 6 Group, took off during the evening of 17 August 1943. Johnny led twelve 405 Squadron aircraft to the target and he would have a special role to play. Seven of the aircraft carried Target Markers as well as bombs. 405 Squadron pilot F/O H.S. McIntyre, who had somehow strayed off track en-route to the target, was shot down over Flensburg. The seven airmen aboard became the Pennemunde Raid's first casualties.

Of the flight to the target, 419 Squadron pilot Jack Stephens wrote,

"The trip out was uneventful but very scary –flying a bomber at night with a full moon is like walking down your busiest road –naked! Everyone can see you. You are a sitting target for every fighter in the Reich. You want to hide but there's no place to go.

*"Eventually we crossed to the north of Denmark and turned south to Pennemunde. Before long, the target appeared. The first wave of bombers had already arrived and when we bombed, the target was well alight. Jerry had put up a smoke screen, but too late."*⁷

An intricate plan of target marking had been devised and control of the attack rested on the experienced shoulders of G/C John Searby of the Pathfinders' 83 Squadron who was designated the Master Bomber. Johnny was the Deputy Master Bomber.

In a postwar interview, Johnny described the role of a Master Bomber,

"The real point of a master bomber is only to avoid letting the raid go astray. For example, I was a master bomber in Nuremberg one night when I was positive that the raid had gone astray. In other words, I figured it was three miles to the southwest. I halted the raid and we marked the target and then told them to continue.

*"When I got home of course, I was either going to be a hero or a bum, because if I'd taken the raid out of Nuremberg and put it in the country as opposed to taking it out of the country and putting it into Nuremberg, you can imagine what would have happened. Actually, I was lucky and it had been in the wrong place and so I became a little bit of a hero that day."*⁸

The Pathfinder Force had marked the target and continued to drop target flares as the raid progressed. In this case the markers were dropped some distance from the target and the crews flew a pre-planned course and distance from the

markers before dropping their bombs. This ensured the markers would remain visible and not become obscured by fires and smoke.

Most of the first wave aircraft were on their way home before the flak opened up but the remaining crews found themselves in the thick of intense gunfire. Many of the bombers flew across Pennemunde at altitudes as low as 4000 feet, making themselves ideal targets. Fortunately the diversionary raid to Berlin had been successful and the enemy fighters, upon realizing that Pennemunde was under attack rather than Berlin, had to land and refuel.

The second wave saw lots of enemy aircraft but it was the third wave, that included the Canadian squadrons (other than the 405 Squadron's Pathfinders), that encountered the majority of the fighters. When they arrived, the bombers were silhouetted against the bright flames on the ground and bathed in brilliant moonlight.

Jack Stephens recalled,

"We bombed and turned on a reverse course for home. It was then it seemed that fighters were everywhere. I saw a Lanc ahead of and below us, clearly visible in the full moon. All four engines were on fire and the fighter was standing off, following it down. Then I saw tracers streaming out from the rear turret but the fighter was obviously out of range. In my mask I was silently screaming, 'Get out, get out!' The tracers continued to stream out and then it was too late. He hit the Baltic and it was all over. He is my unknown V.C."

"Twice on the way back fighters maneuvered into position to attack and each time they were spotted in time and conversely the full moon was our salvation. With the fighter below and behind, a turn up-moon brought the fighter into full view while we on the dark side became invisible to him. The Gods were with us that night."⁹

Bob Charman, a 427 Squadron navigator recalled,

"All over the sky planes were going down in flaming infernos. I had barely given Frank a course for home, when

Jimmy Fletcher, the tail gunner, broke in with evasive action. A Ju-88 was bearing down on our tail. We went down into a dive, trying to avoid the fighter. Then the aircraft quivered, like in killing poultry you strike the brain with a knife and the feathers release –that is the way the aircraft felt. A horrible smell of gunpowder enveloped the aircraft and the wireless operator lay beside me dying, with his entrails exposed.”¹⁰

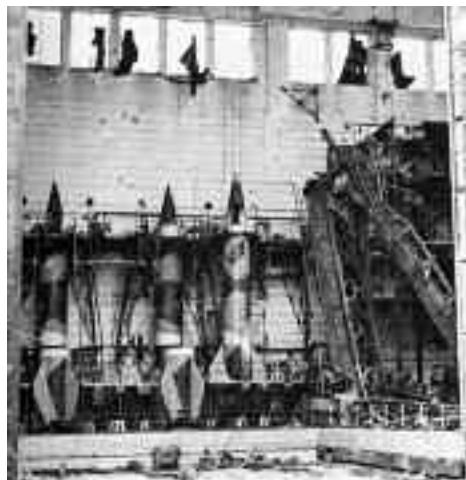
Bob was one of only two crewmembers to escape from the doomed Halifax and became a Prisoner of War.

Bomber Command lost forty aircraft that night, 6.7% of the attacking force. But the Canadian squadrons had lost twelve aircraft, suffering a staggering loss rate of 19.3%. The Luftwaffe estimated that they might have shot down 200 bombers had the diversionary raid to Berlin not been successful.

Johnny summarized his experience in the squadron ORB as follows:

“Visibility was good in target area with full moon and nil cloud. Target was identified visually. Whole target area was under visual observation (by Johnny) from 00:11 to 00:55 hours. Load was released at 00:55 hours from 8,000 feet. A.P. (Aiming Point) “B” was covered in smoke and no results were observed. A.P. “F” was gutted and four buildings on sea side of A.P. “F” were enveloped in flames. “E” was a mass of flames with Green T.I. spread around. Bomb bursts were outlining the whole peninsula. Good fires enveloped all buildings. The T.I. carried only to be used if necessary, and were not required to be used.”¹¹

Johnny circled over the target throughout the attack, dropping his bombs during the very last minute of the planned raid period. His navigator, S/Ldr. Peter Powell, wrote,



Damage at Pennemunde

"From our vantage point, circling the target throughout the raid, we witnessed some of the most accurate marking and bombing we had ever seen. Miraculously, in spite of our lengthy stay in the target area, the only time we were shot at was by a few stray bullets from one of our own aircraft.

"The Master Bomber did a fine job throughout. This was fortunate for us as we were able to sit back and watch, fascinated, as one would at a theatre spectacular. And we didn't even have to pay to get in!"¹²

As Master Bomber, G/C Searby spent fifty minutes above Pennemunde directing the raid. Johnny circled above the target for fifty-four minutes. The crews in all the other bombers, of course, just wanted to drop their loads and head for home. Obviously the target marking had gone well if Johnny brought his T.I.'s back to Gransden Lodge.

The Pennemunde Raid was clearly a tactical success with a high percentage of the bombs being on target. Following the attack, the V-2 program was dispersed to various other locations. Estimates vary as to the delay the raid caused in the development of the V-2 program —the consensus being between two and six months. Perhaps more importantly, the raid resulted in the scale of the program being significantly reduced, to some extent because the various production components were dispersed to a variety of other locations.

Other than the unfortunate loss of F/O McIntyre, 405 Squadron was relatively unscathed following Pennemunde. P/O Gerry Smith wrote,

"We returned uneventfully to Gransden Lodge and I think my general impression was that, perhaps this pathfinding business wasn't going to be so bad after all. I little realized that the next operation for which we would be briefed was to Berlin, the dreaded 'Big City', and that on that raid the two Canadian pilots with whom I joined the squadron would be lost, one never to be seen or heard from again."¹³

In the aftermath of Bomber Command's success at Hamburg, Arthur Harris's attention turned to the German capital,

Berlin. Between 23/24 August and 3/4 September well over 1600 sorties were flown in three raids from which 125 crews failed to return. Many refer to these raids as the beginning of the Battle of Berlin although there was a gap between these initial raids and a more intense series of sixteen raids on the city that took place from November through March of 1944. 405 Squadron participated in all nineteen of the Battle of Berlin raids during which 617 bombers failed to return. Johnny was very involved in the first during the night of 23/24 August.

Arthur Godfrey, an Australian pilot with 626 Squadron, described his vivid memories of being over Berlin which, in many ways, was similar to other heavily defended Bomber Command targets. He wrote,

"Berlin was an angry, glaring, writhing enormity of a target. We rarely caught a glimpse of the city beneath the unbroken cloud cover, but there seemed to be thousands of searchlights. Often they did not move, but pointed upwards and illuminated the clouds. It was like flying across a vast, bubbling cauldron into which was poured the sky-markers and above which burst the 'scarecrow' flares. (Many Bomber Command aircrews believed that scarecrow flares were being used by the Germans to deceive them into believing they were bombers in flames.) We have since discovered that there were no 'scarecrow' flares, only exploding and burning aircraft.

*"It was a target so bright that the bomber stream could be seen above, below, and around you. One was part of a vast armada of aircraft moving relentlessly across the target. Bomb doors could be seen opening. The black crosses on the fighters were clearly visible as they dived into the bomber stream, oblivious to the bursting flak, whose muffled crump could be heard above the roar of our engines."*¹⁴

A bomb-aimer wrote,

*"The run-up seemed endless, the minutes of flying 'straight and level' seemed like hours, and every second I expected to be blown to pieces. I sweated with fear, and the perspirations seemed to freeze on my body."*¹⁵

At 20:37 hours on 23 August, Johnny took off from Gransden Lodge, leading fifteen 405 Squadron bombers, by this time a mixture of Halifaxes and Lancasters, on the opening raid of the Battle of Berlin. Johnny would be the Pathfinder Force's Master Bomber and direct the attack by 727 bombers.

This was a brand new, tactical innovation. Although a Master Bomber had been utilized on the Pennemunde Raid, it was a low-level, precision attack on a relatively small facility. This night would be the first time that Bomber Command utilized a Master Bomber, or as it was referred to at the time, a 'Master of Ceremonies', over a German city. It speaks to AVM Bennett's confidence in Johnny, that he was chosen to play the role.

Air Commodore C.D.C. Boyce, then Senior Air Staff Officer at 8 Group Headquarters, recalled that,

*"If anyone could have coped with Master Bomber work it was Johnny Fauquier. He had the ability to impose his will. He was a bright, hard fellow, who certainly would have made the Master Bomber method work, if anyone could."*¹⁶

After returning from a raid that utilized a Master Bomber, an Australian pilot noted,

*"It's not always the instructions you notice, but the relief at hearing a good English voice getting things organized ahead of you after that long slog through flak and dirty weather."*¹⁷

Flying Lancaster 'J for Johnny', Johnny was carrying green Target Indicators, a light load of incendiaries, and seventy gallons of extra fuel. His orders were to attempt to control the first ten minutes of the raid, using the call sign of 'Dagin'. Other components of the Pathfinders were referred to as, 'Skylark' and 'Old Crows' and the call sign for the main force was 'Ravens'.

Johnny arrived over the target on time, released his T.I.s and bomb load and then began to orbit the target and broadcast his instructions. S/Ldr. Peter Powell, Johnny's navigator, recalled,

"It was a good, clear night below and we had an excellent view of the city. I was in the bomb aimer's position. My main

function was to assess the accuracy of the T.I.s. Johnny would then broadcast the information to all crews: 'Those green T.I.s are short – aim for the red ones further on,' 'Disregard the T.I.s on your left,' etc. Then he would encourage the Main Force with comments such as, 'Come on in, fellows! The flak is nowhere near as bad as it looks! He had an excellent R/T voice which came over loud and clear to all we later talked with. It no doubt helped to calm jittery nerves and, I believe, it helped produce a better concentration of bombs on the Aiming Point.'¹⁸

Describing what he and Johnny saw as they circled over the city, S/Ldr. Powell recalled,

"The moonlight, searchlights and fires made the scene almost a daylight raid, and fighters were as thick as flies. But it's a thrilling sight to fly above a blazing city and see our bombers come streaming in . . . It's a sight you never forget -the bright bomb bursts, freshly-laid incendiaries breaking into flames, colourful target sky markers, the city burning, smoke rising, illuminating chandelier flares dropped by enemy fighters, crimson tracer exchanges between aircraft and all around the flak, searchlights and fighters."¹⁹



Flak Tower built in the Berlin Zoo Park. The four story high structure featured four

128 mm guns.



Anti-aircraft guns

Johnny devoted most of his efforts to encouraging the Main Force to press right on into the target and not to release their bombs prematurely. It was not easy. The Main Force pilots, flying through flak and at times under attack by fighters, were not always inclined to listen. As well, many of the main force bombers arrived late and cut a corner from their prescribed route as they arrived, thus compounding the target marking challenges.

The Berlin air raid authorities considered the raid the heaviest that the city had suffered although, despite Johnny's efforts, it fell far short of Bomber Command's expectations. Berlin was out of GEE range, so the Pathfinders had to rely on H2S, the relatively recently developed downward-looking radar, to locate their aiming points. The crews generally found H2S most useful when clearly defined and easily identified water features contrasted with returns from the adjacent land. Under some circumstances, H2S operators were able to distinguish between countryside and built up urban areas but over Berlin, on this night, they found it difficult to identify anything in the midst of the echoes that filled their radar screens.

A large portion of the main force's bombs were dropped on the misplaced target indicators, landing in open country to the southwest of the city. However, those bombs that did hit the centre of Berlin caused a great deal of damage, destroying government buildings and sinking twenty ships in the canals.

Johnny was unable to develop the attack as well as he would have liked because of the smoke and the sheer strength of the defences. The use of a Master Bomber would be tried twice more before the technique was shelved for six months.

Of the 727 aircraft that attacked Berlin, 56 (7.9%) were lost. This was Bomber Command's greatest loss of aircraft in one night yet and was a foretaste of the dreadful casualties that it was to suffer during the upcoming winter.

As was generally the case, it was the enemy night-fighters that accounted for the majority of the losses. Luftwaffe Me109 pilot, Jajo Hermann, recalled,

“Suddenly, I found the turbulence of the bombers’ slipstream and I knew that I had arrived . . . It was clear, no

*moon, and the searchlights were doing a good job. I tried for one bomber, but I was too fast and went past him without firing . . . I came up to the next one more slowly, level, from the rear but before I could open fire, another chap coming down from above me attacked the bomber and set it on fire . . . I circled back over the target and had no difficulty finding a third bomber . . . We usually waited until the bomber weaved or dove out of the searchlights and then attacked it. I shot that third bomber down.*²⁰

Of the fifteen 405 Squadron bombers that were detailed (eight with T.I.'s), only nine reached and bombed the target -four returned early with engine trouble and one because its oxygen system had failed. Two Halifaxes failed to return. F/O F.A. Harmon and crew were killed in the vicinity of Berlin. W/O1 H. Smith's aircraft was badly shot up by an Me109 fighter while leaving the target but the crew survived a crash landing in neutral Sweden where they were interred.

Johnny was in the air for six hours and forty-two minutes. His report in the squadron ORB makes no mention of his role as Master Bomber. It reads,

*"Moon was just rising, with no cloud and clear visibility in target area. Load dropped on concentration of Red T.I.s at 23:44 hours from 21,500 feet. Uncertain when bombs went owing to hang-up. Good concentration of Red T.I.'s around A.P. with Green T.I. concentration in centre of Red. Big red fires were seen on leaving around A.P. Photo flash hung up."*²¹

Bomber Command went to Berlin again, on the night of 31 August/1 September, and again the force suffered huge losses as 47 (7.6%) of 622 bombers dispatched were shot down. 405 Squadron sent nine aircraft but Johnny didn't fly that night. Six were able to reach the target and bomb. P/O J.T. Maddock's Halifax was shot down by a night-fighter and crashed in the general vicinity of Berlin. P/O Maddock and four of his crew survived to become Prisoners of War.

On 1 September 1944, Johnny was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) by the King. Whereas the



Distinguished Service Order

DFC is awarded only to air force officers, the DSO is awarded to officers in any branch of the military for an act of meritorious or distinguished service. It is normally given only for service under fire or under conditions equivalent to actual combat with the enemy. Only the Victoria Cross has a higher status than the DSO.

The accompanying citation for Johnny's DSO reads,

*"This officer is a first-class leader whose skilful and courageous example has proved most inspiring. His sterling qualities were well illustrated during an operation against Peenemunde one night in August 1943, and again a few nights later in an attack against Berlin. Wing Commander Fauquier has displayed boundless energy and great drive and has contributed, in a large measure, to the high standard of operational efficiency of the squadron he commands."*²²

Presumably, there were celebrations at Gransden Lodge but it wasn't long before Johnny was flying into combat again. On 3 September, he led six 405 Squadron Lancasters, again to Berlin. In fact, because of the major losses suffered on the

previous two raids to Berlin (particularly by the Halifaxs and Stirlings), the size of the force was reduced and the only heavy bombers dispatched were Lancasters. Four Mosquitoes were part of the raid as well. They dropped ‘spoof’ flares well away from the bomber’s route to attract German night-fighters.

Although Johnny wasn’t the Master Bomber, he was very involved in the target marking. The squadron ORB notes the variety of target indicator flares that ‘J-Johnny’ was carrying as,

“2 L.B. T1 Red “A”; 2 Ord. T1.Red; 1 L.B. T.I. Yellow; 1 LB. T1. Red “J”; 1 x 500 G.P. T.Inst.; 1 T.I. No. 8 Red Spot “J”; 1 Flare Red/Green Stars.”²³

While over Berlin at 20,500 feet, Johnny’s Lancaster suffered damage from heavy flak. However on this night, all the 405 Squadron aircraft returned safely to Gransden Lodge.

Even though there were no Stirlings or Halifaxs on the raid, the loss rate was still extremely high (7.0%) as 22 of 316 Lancasters failed to return. Once more, Berlin had demonstrated the strength of its defences and the results, although several factories were destroyed, came nowhere near to justifying the losses. The Battle of Berlin would resume in earnest in November.

Two nights later, on a raid to Mannheim, the last Halifax Mk. II to be lost by Johnny’s squadron was recorded as Sgt. A.C. Brunton’s aircraft failed to return. Since the squadron’s first Halifax loss on 31 May 1942 until the loss of Sgt. Brunton on 5/6 September 1943, 405 Squadron lost sixty-four Halifax II bombers, each with a crew of seven airmen.

On 20 September, Johnny was promoted to Group Captain. It was clear that he was continuing to impress those at the highest level of Bomber Command.

As for the airmen within his squadron at the time, one recalled,

“The C/O when we arrived was G/C John Fauquier. It was quite a shock to see such an old guy, 34 years old, going on ops, and only on the tough ones at that. I thought surely he was the meanest, toughest man I ever met, but soon learned he was a

very dedicated and competent leader. He was proud to have a Canadian squadron on Pathfinders, and continually told us we were the best and also praised the ground crew and treated them with great respect.

“Early in our operational career, I was very proud to have arrived at the target only one minute late, a tremendous accomplishment, I thought. At debriefing he asked me how my timing was and I proudly said, ‘Only one minute late sir!’ His response, “Where were you?”²⁴

As was the case during his first tour, Johnny had the highest of expectations of his crews. One of his crews that was on probation with the Pathfinders returned early from an operation after an engine failure. Johnny refused to give them permission to land. He ordered them back to their original squadron telling them that they were unsuitable for the Pathfinder Force.

The night of 27/28 September saw 405 Squadron's first Lancaster losses in combat when two aircraft failed to return from operations. One of the fourteen squadron airmen lost that night was F/O John Clair Lowther. F/O Lowther was Johnny's regular wireless operator, having flown on at least twelve operations with him since Johnny's return to 405 Squadron. However for some reason, F/O Lowther was flying as part of F/O Bruce St. Louis' crew when their Lancaster disappeared without a trace. The loss of one of his crew must have been felt deeply by Johnny.

On 8 October, the first Canadian-built Lancaster arrived at Gransden Lodge. During September 1941, a decision had been made to build Lancasters in Canada and the first drawings arrived in January 1942. For a country still largely agrarian and just recovering from a decade of depression, the challenge was immense. 500,000 manufacturing operations were involved in building a Lancaster which was made up of some 55,000 separate parts even when engines and gun turrets were only considered as one and small items such as rivets, nuts, and bolts were not included.

A Crown Corporation named Victory Aircraft was formed to do the work in Malton, Ontario and during August 1942, a



KB700 Roll-Out from the Victory Aircraft Factory

British-built Lancaster (R5727) was flown across the Atlantic to be utilized as a pattern. There were to be some differences between the British Lancaster Mk. III's and the Canadian-built version to be known as the Mk. X.

Although the engines were to be of the same Rolls-Royce Merlin design, they would be manufactured by the Packard Motor Company in the United States. All instruments and radio equipment were to be of Canadian or American manufacture. However, it was deemed essential that all major subassemblies of the Canadian-built Lancasters be interchangeable with the British versions so that in the event of damage, spare parts would not have to be sent across the Atlantic.

On 1 August 1943, almost exactly a year after the pattern aircraft was flown to Canada, the Canadian Mk X prototype (Serial number KB700) rolled off the Victory Aircraft assembly line and was christened, the 'Ruhr Express'. This was an astonishing accomplishment given that the drawings had only been in Canada for just over eighteen months. Eventually, production at Victory Aircraft Ltd. reached the level of one aircraft per day and the manufacturing of Lancaster Bombers employed as many as ten thousand people.

The departure of the 'Ruhr Express' from Malton to cross the Atlantic and be delivered to the RCAF in England was an occasion for which the country could be proud. With much



**KB700 and crew shortly after its arrival at Gransden Lodge
W/Cdr. Reg Lane (at left)**

fanfare and media attention, the aircraft was flown to England by S/Ldr. Reg Lane DSO DFC who had completed two tours of operations and was one of the war's most decorated Canadian airmen at the time.

KB700 was assigned to 405 Squadron and, following some significant delays, arrived at Gransden Lodge where one airman recalled, "We had on hand copies of MacLeans magazine telling us how this aircraft was already bringing Hitler to his knees." Despite the delays, the presence of a Canadian-built Lancaster on an operational RCAF squadron was a major accomplishment for Canada.

S/Ldr. Lane had been posted to 405 Squadron as well, promoted to Wing Commander, and placed in charge of 'A' Flight.

On 10 November, Johnny led fourteen 405 Squadron Lancasters to Modane, a small French town that, unfortunately for it, straddled the main railway line from France into Italy. 313 Lancasters attacked the railway yards, bombing from 14,000 feet in excellent visibility with a full moon. The railway system was

seriously damaged. All the 405 Squadron aircraft returned undamaged and, most unusually, there were no losses at all on the raid.

On the evening of 17 November, ten 405 Squadron bombers took off to attack Mannheim. Two returned early because of gun turret malfunctions and another, flown by F/S R.H. Larson, was lost en-route to the target. Johnny was one of seven that bombed the target. It was another relatively easy night for Bomber Command as only one of eighty-three bombers dispatched was lost. The main reason for the low losses was thought to be because misleading instructions were broadcast from England to the enemy night-fighter pilots.

The following night the Battle of Berlin was resumed and nine 405 Squadron Lancasters were part of the raid. It would be a challenging winter for Bomber Command and for the squadron. W/Cdr. Lane was at Gransden Lodge for all of it. For the Canadians, not being used to the British winters, the accommodations, even for the Wing Commander, were not the best.

Reg recalled that winter -the conditions and living in Nissen huts.

(J) (G/C J.E. FAUCONIER, D.S.O., D.F.C.) Bombload:-
4 x 1000 GP (C); A Ord. TI. Red (O); 3 x 1,000 GP (T.I., stat);
3 x 1,000 GP (ID); 1 Flare Red/Green Stars.
No cloud with slight ground haze and local fog in target area. Target was identified visually. Aiming Feing was in bombsight when load released at 0057 hours from 13,500 feet. As aircraft arrived, flares were seen dropped to East of Aiming Point. Zig zag path could be located. Dropped Red T.I. on A.P. 2 lots of Green TI seen cascading together on A.P. Further Red TI seen on hills to South and by crooked path. Then further Red and Green TI's fell along railing West and East of A.P.; and lots of bombs bursting among the Red and Green T.I.'s which were very concentrated around the A.P. 1 x 1,000 GP jettisoned safe 0304 hours, 20,000 feet, 10 miles from French Coast. 1 Flare Red/Green brought back - not required. Route markers appeared to be o.k. Photo Flash hung up together with 1 x 1,000 GP bomb. Aircraft returned to base undamaged.

Johnny's ORB report for the attack on Modane

We'd come back from a raid and we climbed into a wet bed . . . the beds were damp as could be - no heat. So it was dreadful to get out of your flying gear and then crawl into a sticky bed. The food was bad. You couldn't get beer. Things were dreadful, clothing coupons had just about dried up –it was rough. It was in that ground environment, atmosphere, that we launched ourselves into the Battle of Berlin.”²⁵

On the night of 22/23 November, the greatest force sent to Berlin thus far in the war took off -764 aircraft of which 469 were Lancasters. Fourteen 405 Squadron Lancasters were detailed, including Johnny, and thirteen reached and bombed the target. The one that didn't was 'LQ-Q', the 'Ruhr Express'. The pilot was P/O Harold Floren and the bomber took off at 17:00 hours.

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation personnel were on hand as Canadian media specialists were given the job of making the most of the story for the folks back home. The ORB entry for the first combat operation of the 'Ruhr Express' reads,

"No attack was made and aircraft turned at 5237 N. 1110 E, at 19:28 hours, 10,000 feet, when port outer engine u/s and



KB700 The 'Ruhr Express' with its 405 Squadron markings and F/O Floren (third from left) and crew

aircraft losing height. The port outer engine went u/s and aircraft began losing height and eventually decided to jettison 3x2000 lb. bombs. Still losing height so a further 1x2000 lb. bomb was jettisoned and finally at 9,000 feet, it was decided to return when approximately 40 miles short of target. Returned direct and met heavy flak in area of Amsterdam when then at 4,000 feet. Aircraft landed base. This aircraft is the 1st Canadian built Lancaster, known as the 'Ruhr Express'. Tail assembly was damaged when landing.²⁶





P/O Floren in the “Ruhr Express”

The following night the squadron flew to Berlin again. This time, two of the squadron's thirteen Lancasters dispatched failed to return. One of the thirteen airmen killed was F/Lt. Raymond Arthur Gardiner DFC who had been Johnny's navigator on both Wellingtons and Halifaxs during his first tour. Like Johnny, F/Lt. Gardiner was completing a second tour of operations.

The special notation in 405 Squadron's Operation Record Book for the raid to Berlin on 22/23 November 1943 indicates the importance to Johnny's squadron of KB700's first operation.

On the night of 26/27 November, the ‘Ruhr Express’ reached its first target, Berlin, and bombed it successfully. F/O Floren landed KB700 successfully following a flight of six hours and forty-two minutes. F/O Taylor and F/Lt. Johnston were aboard as photographers to document the flight but unfortunately their camera froze during the flight and they were unable to take any photos. The next day, Canadian newspapers had banner headlines one of which read, “First Toronto-built Lancaster Stars in Sortie on German Capital.”

This would be the last operation for KB700 with 405 Squadron. The squadron was equipped with British-built Lancasters and KB700 was a Canadian-built Mk. X with Packard-built Merlin engines and somewhat different electrical systems and instruments. This was creating maintenance and logistical problems, so KB700 was transferred to 419 Squadron as they were about to convert from Halifaxes to the new, Canadian-built Lancasters that were now regularly emerging from the Victory Aircraft factory and being ferried across the Atlantic.

There were no ops or training on 25 December. The following details were recorded in the squadron’s diary,

“Officers and N.C.O.’s served the Airmen at X-mas Dinner in the Airmen’s Mess. It was an excellent dinner and all had a good helping of chicken which is quite a treat. Beer was served with the meal and also minerals. A cigar and six cigarettes were given out to each airman. The Station Dance Band provided music throughout and all were in a happy mood, and all appeared to have enjoyed a wonderful time. A dance was held in the evening in the airmen’s concert hall. Group Captain G.P. Dunlop AFC addressed all ranks during dinner, and expressed his appreciation of the co-operation he received and conveyed his wishes to all for a Very Merry Xmas and a Very Happy New Year.”²⁷

All this, in contrast, at a time when Bomber Command was going through its most trying months -the Battle of Berlin. As one 405 Squadron navigator recalled,

*"The sad part of squadron life was the loss of crews who had become very good friends. One night in December 1943, Mac and I went to bed in our billet by ourselves. All the others were missing, about seven or eight men as I recall. Bob Borrowes, Gord Bennett and their crews arrived at 405 within days of us, and both went missing with forty trips or more. We were greatly saddened by their loss, but there were many more."*²⁸

The Battle of Berlin continued as 1944 began. Ten 405 Squadron aircraft took off for the Nazi capital on 1 January 1944. Two of the Lancasters, one flown by F/O A.P. Campbell and a second by F/O T.H. Donnelly did not return to Gransden Lodge.

F/Lt. G.E. Coldrey was flying Johnny's 'J' Lancaster that night. It was attacked near Berlin by two enemy fighters that the crew believed to be working together. The crew reported,

*"A large hole in the port main-plane, a large hole in the port elevator, port inner tank holed, leads of H2S hit, inter-com u/s, mid-upper turret hit, and petrol jettisoning gear hit causing 300 gallons of petrol being lost. Aircraft 'J' landed at Gravesend."*²⁹



F/O Donnelly's Halifax was returning from Berlin when it was shot down over the Netherlands by a night-fighter during the night of 1/2 January 1944. All aboard were killed. The 405 squadron code, 'LQ', is clearly visible on the wreckage.

It was likely the loss of fuel that forced F/Lt. Coldrey to divert to RAF Gravesend which was located east of London, near where the Thames flows into the sea. Johnny was likely not pleased that his 'J for Johnny' had been damaged.

The following night the squadron launched twelve aircraft to Berlin and W/O A.W. Robinson's crew was lost.

W/Cdr. Lane recalled the state of mind of the squadron's aircrew as the Battle of Berlin wore on,

"Every time the crews came into the ops room, the route would be up on the map, and they'd look at the map and they'd say, 'God! Berlin -again!' The old, usual chit-chat that had gone on had died. It was just not there. It was like walking into the jaws of death another night, because the losses on the Berlin raids were very heavy."³⁰

During the night of 5/6 January, Johnny was flying one of thirteen 405 Squadron aircraft attacking Stettin. He was flying 'J for Johnny' so the ground crew must have done quite a job getting it ready to go again.

Johnny's navigator on this trip was S/Ldr. Glenmore B. Ellwood DFC. It was unusual for a navigator to reach the rank of Squadron Leader so Glen must have been one of the best on the squadron. Johnny was impressed and the two would fly together again, later in the war.

Johnny was flying again on 14 January as the squadron suffered more heavy losses as three of the fourteen 405 Squadron Lancasters (21.5%) sent to the target failed to return. The target was the City of Brunswick and this was the first major raid to this city. 496 Lancasters and two Halifaxes attacked. Thirty-eight Lancasters were lost, 7.6% of the force.

The enemy's running commentary was heard by radio as they followed the progress of the bomber force from a position only forty miles from the English coast. Many Luftwaffe fighters



Reg Lane

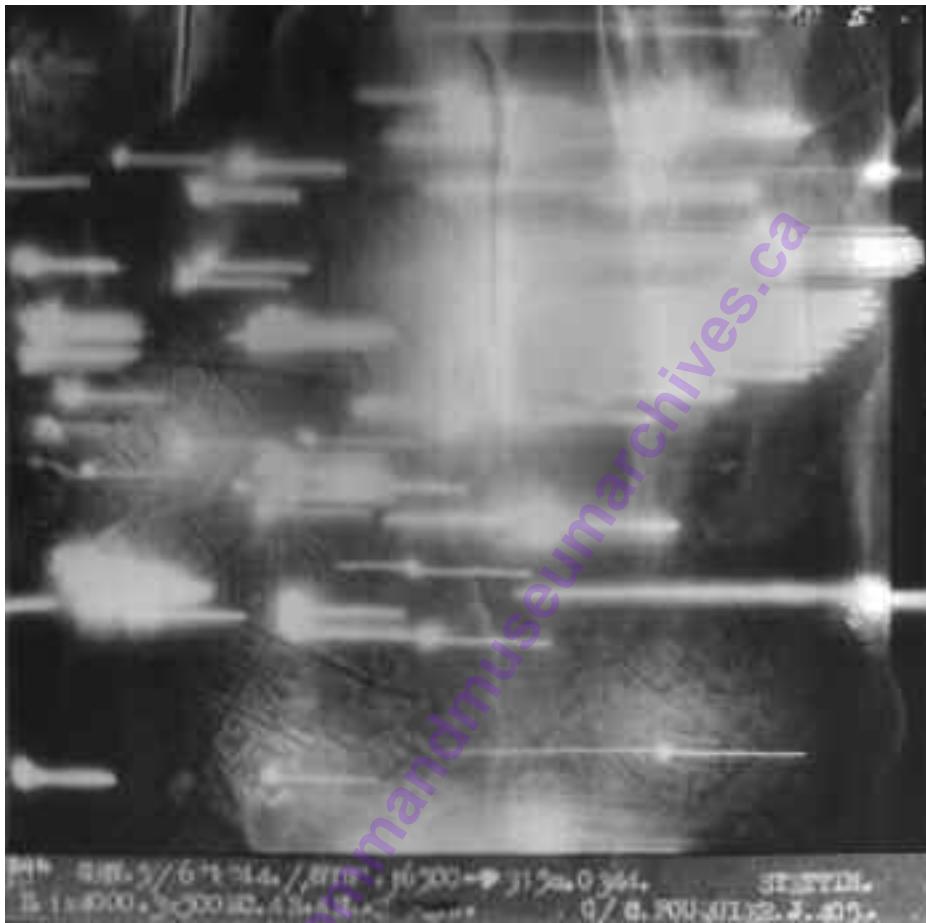


Photo taken over Stettin on 5/6 January from Johnny's 'LQ-J'

entered the bomber stream soon after the German frontier was crossed near Bremen. The night-fighters scored steadily until the Dutch coast was crossed on the return flight. Eleven of the lost bombers were Pathfinders.

The 405 Squadron crews lost were those of F/Lt. W.B. Cloutier, F/O G.R. Drimmie, and P/O Harold Floren, who had, with much fanfare, flown the first and second combat operations aboard KB700, the 'Ruhr Express'. All aboard P/O Floren's aircraft were killed.

On 22 January, Johnny, having completed his second tour of operations during which he flew 38 sorties, was relieved of the command of 405 Squadron. While flying Halifaxes and Lancasters on his second tour, Johnny's crew varied but generally included S/Ldr. Peter Powell (navigator), John Clair

OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK

(Unit or Formation) No. 402 R.C.A.F. SQUADRON (P.T.P.L.)

No. of pages used

Date	Time	Summary of Events	<u>SECRET</u>																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																												
100G. 30		Weather: Fair or fine with slight mist all day. Wind NNE'ly, light, variable. Training mid-morning. Flight proficiency was the only flying-training carried out today. Ground training included the following: 1. Lecture on navigation. 2. Instruction on bomb panel and bomb sight. 3. Some practice and Aeronavigational. 4. Daily inspection and flying drills. 5. Lecture on feathering of aircraft.																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																													
100G. 31		Weather: Fair or fine becoming cloudy with slight mist, by 1100 hours. Visibility deteriorating at 1000 m. 2,000 yards at 1200 hours. Occasional intermittent slight rain from 1400 to 1500 hours. Wind NNE'ly becoming ESE, light variable. Training: No flying was carried out during the day owing to poor weather conditions. Ground training was somewhat curtailed owing to preparation for operations which were anticipated during the day. PERSONNEL: Warrant Officer (C.W./M.W.O.) W.A. K.M. Allen (Pilot), was relieved today as Bomber Commander. Details: Full service hours were awarded. AIRCRAFT NUMBER OF NO. 402 R.C.A.F. SQUADRON AIR 42-11752. The Squadron has 21 Lancaster III aircraft in service. OPERATIONAL HOURS OF NO. 402 R.C.A.F. SQUADRON AIR 42-11752 DURING 100G. <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Period</th> <th>Officer</th> <th>Aircraft</th> <th>No.</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>100A. 30</td> <td>-</td> <td>Ground Open</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100A. 31</td> <td>-</td> <td>Ground Open</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100B. 1</td> <td>-</td> <td>Aircraft</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100B. 2</td> <td>-</td> <td>Ground Open</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100B. 3</td> <td>-</td> <td>Aircraft</td> <td>14</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100B. 4</td> <td>-</td> <td>Ground Open</td> <td>14</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100B. 5</td> <td>-</td> <td>Aircraft</td> <td>14</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100B. 6</td> <td>-</td> <td>Ground Open</td> <td>97</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100B. 7</td> <td>-</td> <td>Aircraft</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100B. 8</td> <td>-</td> <td>Ground Open</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100B. 9</td> <td>-</td> <td>Aircraft</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100B. 10</td> <td>-</td> <td>Ground Open</td> <td>1</td> </tr> 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Open</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Period	Officer	Aircraft	No.	100A. 30	-	Ground Open	3	100A. 31	-	Ground Open	3	100B. 1	-	Aircraft	10	100B. 2	-	Ground Open	10	100B. 3	-	Aircraft	14	100B. 4	-	Ground Open	14	100B. 5	-	Aircraft	14	100B. 6	-	Ground Open	97	100B. 7	-	Aircraft	9	100B. 8	-	Ground Open	1	100B. 9	-	Aircraft	1	100B. 10	-	Ground Open	1	100B. 11	-	Aircraft	1	100B. 12	-	Ground Open	1	100B. 13	-	Aircraft	1	100B. 14	-	Ground Open	1	100B. 15	-	Aircraft	1	100B. 16	-	Ground Open	1	100B. 17	-	Aircraft	1	100B. 18	-	Ground Open	1	100B. 19	-	Aircraft	1	100B. 20	-	Ground Open	1	100B. 21	-	Aircraft	1	100B. 22	-	Ground Open	1	100B. 23	-	Aircraft	1	100B. 24	-	Ground Open	1	100B. 25	-	Aircraft	1	100B. 26	-	Ground Open	1	100B. 27	-	Aircraft	1	100B. 28	-	Ground Open	1	100B. 29	-	Aircraft	1	100B. 30	-	Ground Open	1	100B. 31	-	Aircraft	1	100C. 1	-	Ground Open	1	100C. 2	-	Aircraft	1	100C. 3	-	Ground Open	1	100C. 4	-	Aircraft	1	100C. 5	-	Ground Open	1	100C. 6	-	Aircraft	1	100C. 7	-	Ground 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Lowther (wireless operator), J.R. Sipple (mid-upper gunner), J.F. Clark (rear gunner), and D.E. King (bomb-aimer).

W/Cdr. Reg Lane took over command of the squadron. This had obviously been the plan when he joined the squadron. After being promoted to Group Captain at the age of only twenty-four, Reg led the squadron through the horrific months that remained of the Battle of Berlin, completing his third tour of operations before being posted to new duties at 6 Group Headquarters on 23 August 1944. He went on to have an impressive postwar career with the RCAF. Johnny and Reg are considered to be the two most outstanding bomber pilots and leaders of the wartime RCAF.

Many years later, following a successful post-war career with the RCAF, Lt. General Lane recalled,

"I was with Fauquier as a flight commander for about three months. Then he left and I took over the squadron. Now Fauquier was a remarkable person, I think he had ice in his veins -that's the only way to describe him. He was as hard as nails and it didn't make any difference whether he was thinking of the enemy or getting into a fight in a pub in London, he just had no fear.

"He was a tough commander. He would not stand for any shortcomings in his crews. He had no compassion whatsoever. If you didn't measure up you were chewed out something fierce. Now he couldn't fire people because there was no place to fire them to, but he let it be known that he was not very pleased with your performance.

*"But a fine man, I liked Johnny . . . The man didn't know the meaning of -he couldn't even spell the word fear."*³¹

Yet according to Clifton Wenzel, another Canadian pilot who served with Bomber Command,

*"Johnny was a complex individual who could freeze you with a glance of those cold, blue eyes and brusque manner. But when I got to know him, I soon recognized that the intimidating exterior was straight veneer and that there was a very soft character underneath."*³²

Johnny's eyes were often mentioned by those who served with him. According to Lucien Thomas, a 405 Squadron air gunner,

*"When something went wrong, Fauquier's gaze froze and it looked as if it could penetrate solid steel."*³³

Jean Weir described Johnny's eyes as,

*"very piercing and focussed. They were always wide-open and always looking at you. If he was with you or speaking to you he looked right at you. You knew you were being looked at by Johnny. It was just that obvious."*³⁴

Spencer Dunmore wrote in his book, ‘Above and Beyond’,

“There is no doubt that Fauquier drove his crews hard, invariably dissatisfied with their performance. They could always have done better, in his opinion. Edith Kup, a WAAF intelligence officer, remember a harried - and inebriated - aircrew officer threatening to shoot Fauquier. He wasn’t going to put up with any more of the C/O’s brow-beating, he declared, producing a service revolver in an unsteady hand. Fortunately for the war effort, he didn’t carry out his threat.

“There is no doubt that Fauquier was one of the toughest of commanders. He saw his job as getting every available aircraft on the target on every night of operations and had no patience with any incompetence or inefficiency that might compromise that goal. Although he was well read, he was no sophisticate. Edith Kup remembers him eating the flowers on his table at dinner at the Royal Station Hotel after a few drinks.”³⁵

Of Johnny’s time with the Pathfinders, Gordon Musgrove, author of ‘Pathfinder Force’, wrote,

“Other groups quote their heroes and crack squadrons but for the Pathfinders, anonymity was the key word, Bennett refusing to have a public relations officer in the group. Tempting though it is, it would be invidious to single out individuals without making unfair omissions when team-work was so essential.

“G/Capt. J.E. Fauquier has been described as ‘King of the Pathfinders,’ not for any outstanding act of bravery, nor indeed for any brilliant feats of marking, but because he embodied the qualities so necessary in a force whose job was to lead: courage, reliability, tenacity, the ability to blend into a team and, above all, to press on resolutely with continued enthusiasm, in spite of adversity, with his allotted task to help to win the war.”³⁶

On 19 March 1944, Johnny was awarded a Bar to his Distinguished Service Order (essentially a second DSO) in recognition of his leadership and courage during his second tour with 405 Squadron. The accompanying citation reads,



King George VI presents a Bar to Johnny's Distinguished Service Order at RCAF Station Linton-on-Ouse on 11 August 1944. Note Queen Elizabeth at right.

"This officer has commanded the squadron with notable success during the past nine months. He has frequently taken part in sorties against distant and well defended targets including several attacks on the German capital. He is a forceful and gallant leader whose outstanding ability and unswerving devotion to duty have been reflected in the fine operational work performed by the whole squadron. Group Captain Fauquier has set an example of the highest order."³⁷

But again, as was the case following Johnny's first tour, Johnny was not pleased with being taken off of flying operations. His driver, Jean Weir recalled,

"He lived to fly, he really did. It was in every bone in his body. That's all he wanted to do.

"He'd learned so much as a bush pilot that he was able to get things through to the aircrew that they didn't know -things in flying that were preventative or little side-slips you could do that could help a situation. Apparently, he learned all this when he was bush piloting. That was what made him as strong a man as

he was and as hard a taskmaster because everything had to be done right. That's why he lasted as long as he did.”³⁸

When Johnny left 405 Squadron he had a special gift for his long-time driver and friend,

“He gave me his Pathfinder Wings. He took them right off his tunic and gave them to me. He said, ‘Here, this will remind you of me.’ I said, ‘I don’t need the reminder but thank you.’ I still wear them.

“He was just an all-right guy. There were no half-measures with Johnny. You either did the job or you left it alone and I was brought up that way. He thought like I did. We just sort of clicked and it was kind of nice because I was only a corporal in those days. There was just something between us. We just liked to discuss things.”³⁹



Jean Weir in 2018
wearing a 405 Squadron
pin and above it,
Johnny Fauquier’s
Pathfinder Wings
[courtesy Brianna Potter]

“King Of The Pathfinders”

Is Johnny Fauquier’s Title

LONDON, March 30. — (C.P.O cable)—There is a new name now for Johnny Fauquier of Ottawa and Toronto, one of Canada's bomber aces. It is "King of the Pathfinders."

That is something special here in the home of the R.A.F. which developed the Pathfinder technique for lighting up the targets for night bombers, and was the title used by the Press Association in announcing the award of a bar to Fauquier's D.S.O.

Now acting group captain, Fauquier frequently has been to distant and well-defended enemy targets, including several trips to Berlin.

His Canadian squadron, formerly on anti-U-boat duty, now locates targets for the bombers that follow on raids.

Fauquier acts as "master of ceremonies" on these occasions. He flies high above the target watching over the flare-dropping Pathfinders.

The citation for the new award called him "a forceful gallant leader whose outstanding ability and unwavering devotion to duty has



Acting Group Capt. John Fauquier,
D.S.O., and Bar, D.F.C.

been reflected in the fine operational work of his squadron."

Canadian Press 30 March 1944; Johnny was originally dubbed the 'King of the Pathfinders' by the British press



405 Squadron Lancaster taxiing at Gransden Lodge



**Memorial to 405 Squadron RCAF
at Gransden Lodge airfield**

Courtesy Colin Hinson -Cambridge Gliding Club



G/C John Fauquier DSO and Bar DFC

CHAPTER 9

6 Group Headquarters and 62 'Beaver' Base

*"Everybody would be on the plane and he'd sneak on and say,
'This is my flight tonight,' get in the pilot's seat,
and away he'd go."*

Having completed his second tour of operations and been promoted to the rank of Air Commodore, Johnny again found himself at Allerton Park, having been appointed 6 Group's Senior Operations Staff Officer. Much had changed there though, most noticeably the appointment during February 1944 of AVM Clifford M. McEwen as the Group's commanding officer.

AVM McEwen was a twenty-seven victory ace from the Great War and an inspirational leader in every sense of the word. Known as 'Black Mike', he was said to have been,

"An extremely energetic officer who has already become vastly popular with his men, both in the air and on the ground and 6 Group, under his command, was, 'getting into its stride and putting up a magnificent effort.'"¹

According to David Bashow, author of 'No Prouder Place - Canadians and the Bomber Command Experience',

"'Black Mike' was an unrepentant advocate of arduous, realistic and demanding training, as well as stern discipline. No armchair commander, McEwen led fearlessly from the front, often accompanying his airmen on their toughest missions and against the explicit orders of Arthur Harris.

“Knowing that their commander fully appreciated and shared their dangers, 6 Group’s crews’ performance soon became as good as any in Bomber Command, and better than most. McEwen’s presence was soon being taken for granted -he became a good luck symbol.

“As the men saw it, when the man with the moustache was along, things were going to be fine. They felt drawn to this colourful airman who wanted to share their danger, and when ordered not to, could not sleep while his men were on a raid.

“As Air Officer Commanding

6 Group, Black Mike’s credo was leadership by example, albeit in his case, illegal when he flew on operations, usually dressed in a sergeant’s uniform. Despite an almost total ban by the highest of authorities, ‘Bomber’ Harris winked at McEwen’s actions . . . However, what he was doing soon became known throughout 6 Group and beyond . . .”²

The similarities shared by Johnny and his new boss at 6 Group Headquarters are clear, particularly in “leading fearlessly from the front.” As the officer commanding 405 Squadron, Johnny had been expected to fly on operations a couple of times a month but this wasn’t enough for him. Although he often led the squadron on a raid, Johnny was not always listed in the ORB Form 541 ‘Detail of Work Carried Out’. In one case, when he likely wanted no record to be kept of his participation on the raid, the person documenting the details on the ‘541’ excluded his name from the list of those flying but then, in a post-raid summary of what the various pilots reported, inadvertently included a comment by W/Cdr. Fauquier as to what he had seen over the target.

Jean Weir recalled what Johnny would do following the crews’ names being published on the ‘Battle Order’ and the aircrew designated to fly being briefed,



AVM Clifford M.
‘Black Mike’ McEwen



A staged photo taken at Allerton Park on 23 May 1944 by an RCAF Photo Unit photographer. The accompanying caption reads:

"All branches of the armed services work in close harmony as bombing operations against enemy targets are carefully planned at headquarters of the RCAF Bomber Group somewhere in Great Britain. Air Vice Marshal C.M. McEwen, MC, DFC and Bar, discusses a point of interest with some of his senior officers. Beside him are, (l-r) Major A.K.L. Stephenson; Air Commodore C.R. Slemon CBE, senior air staff officer; and Air Commodore J.E. Fauquier DSO and Bar DFC, in charge of operations."

"Oh, he did that regularly. It was a little game he played. He'd figure out that he wanted to fly that sortie. Then he'd decide which crew he was going to take over. He did it so quietly.

"Everything he did like that was quiet and very nicely

done. He'd take the flight and do the trip and he'd come back and he was as happy as could be . . . It could have been either taking the crew over prior to their going to the aircraft, or actually at the dispersal

"He either went with them openly or he would drive himself out to a dispersal and get on the plane after the crew was on . . . Everybody would be on the plane and he'd sneak on and say, 'This is my flight tonight,' get in the pilot's seat, and away he'd go. He was cool. There wasn't much you could push over on Johnny Fauquier.

"The aircrew and Johnny worked together as an absolute team. They pulled every trick in the book. Whatever suited the crews and Johnny for a raid, they did . . . He would choose a lot of the targets that he wanted to go to and that's when he would go out and he would take a flight.

"He took his own life in his hands so many times. He didn't know whether he was coming back any more than the rest of them did."³

In a May 1944 article written for 'Canada's Aces', author Hugh Kemp wrote of Johnny, "He devised some odd methods of justifying flights; even to identifying himself as Flight Sergeant Smith when Smith happened to be grounded at the last moment."

When attempting to correlate the number of raids flown by Johnny in both of his 405 Squadron tours with the documentation in the Operation Record Books, there are a total of thirty-three missing entries in the ORB's. So many of the operations he flew remain un-documented, just as he wished them to be at the time.

On 28 June 1944, Johnny took command of 6 Group's, 62 'Beaver' Operational Base where he very likely continued his practice of flying unauthorized combat operations. AVM McEwen noted that,

"He has had a brilliant operational record, having commanded No.405 (RCAF) Squadron in No.8 Pathfinder Force Group for the duration of his second tour. This officer has also had command of RCAF Station Eastmoor and held the position of Wing Commander Operations at this Headquarters prior to

posting into his present appointment. Air Commodore Fauquier is much above the average in his ability to fly, command and operate modern aircraft and is fully qualified to command an operational base.”⁴

Headquartered at RCAF Station Linton-on-Ouse, 62 Operational Base also controlled the stations at East Moor, and Tholthorpe. This placed Johnny in charge of six bomber squadrons (408, 415, 420, 425, 426, and 432) for a period of three and a half months.

In a wartime article written during Johnny's time at Linton-On-Ouse, author Hugh Kemp described Johnny as,

“A sallow-faced man of average height, slim, wide-shouldered build, he moves precisely, talks precisely, runs the show without debate. He demands and gets discipline, doesn't care if he's liked or not, gets honest respect.”⁵

BEAVER BASE

New Boss for Beavers

Big event of the week was the arrival of a new commander to assume the baton duties of this, the RCAF Bomber Group's own base. So the special welcome mat is out for Air Commodore J. E. Fauquier, DSO, DFC, Ottawa, one of the outstanding bomber pilots of this war. There is no doubt here that under him the Beaver Base will add new laurels to its present fine record.

Leaving

At the same time, all here join in saying a farewell to Air Commodore A. D. Ross who is having to take up another appointment. This parting salute was given to the base administrator, W/C A. C. Tufts, Halifax, NS, who has departed to take on duties at one of the new bases in the group.

Back here after a period of detachment, much to the pleasure of the female members of the base orderly room in particular is P/L Andy Mynard. He is also welcomed back by W. Bert Bond, whose officers' wife hasn't been doing so well since the Montreal home run king went away.

Another new arrival who has joined the local wives to take a new interest in life is S.O. ... with interesting-born



During Johnny's time with RCAF Overseas Headquarters under AVM Brookes, it appears that no particular priority was given to obtaining decorations for the airmen under his command. Now, with 'Black Mike' McEwen in charge, base commanders such as Johnny were instructed to increase the number of award submissions. Johnny wrote the following letter to his six squadron commanders,

"Headquarters No. 6 (RCAF) Group has expressed a desire that the numbers of recommendations submitted from this Base for Non-Immediate awards be increased, pointing out that the recommendations submitted by other (RAF) Groups in Bomber Command are greatly in excess of this Group, regardless of the fact that this Group is reputed to be one of the most efficient from an operational standpoint.

"In view of this, it is considered that the Group is not receiving an equitable share of honours and awards, due largely to the small number of recommendations submitted . . . In order that this situation may be improved it is requested that each squadron submit a minimum of ten recommendations for Non-Immediate awards monthly. This is in no way to change existing instructions relative to recommendations for immediate awards."⁶

Johnny's and similar letters by the other RCAF Base commanders apparently had the desired effect and is thought to have contributed to improved morale and the outstanding performance record of 6 Group during the final year of the war.

Then on 18 September, Air Commodore Fauquier returned to Allerton Park to serve as the Senior Air Staff Officer.

Throughout his operational career, it had been clear that Johnny was very demanding of himself and of those under his command. At this point, there is evidence that he wasn't satisfied with the overall bombing accuracy of the Group, believing that it had, "deteriorated considerably, in part due to the gross errors incurred by a minority of crews who, through bad navigation, inefficiency, and poor captaincy, negligently wasted their bombs." He also thought that H2S operators were making too many mistakes and that H2S serviceability rates left much to be desired.



King George VI, Queen Elizabeth, and Princess Elizabeth with Air Commodore Fauquier (second from right) during a visit to a 62 'Beaver' Base station on 11 August 1944

During the next few months, Johnny played an important role as 6 Group continued to evolve from having the highest casualty rates, having the highest rates of 'early returns', and the lowest rates of aircraft serviceability to beginning to lead Bomber Command in efficiencies.

One example of this was Johnny's experimentation with various take-off and landing procedures in order increase their efficiency. He insisted that too much time was wasted as an aircraft ready to take off was forced to wait for the previous one to be completely clear of the runway before starting to roll.

Regarding landings, during the early days of 6 Group, bombers were landing following a raid at an average rate of one every six minutes. By mid-1944, aircraft could be landing as often as every two minutes or less.

It also appeared to Johnny that, as in other Bomber Command Groups, many crews were reluctant to make the prescribed bombing run through heavy flak. During November,

Johnny decreed that squadron bombing leaders were to test and rate their crews on a weekly basis, so that those with training errors greater than 280 yards or operational errors of more than 1000 yards could be taken off the battle order temporarily and given further training.

It is thought that as the end of the year approached, 6 Group was in much better shape and, having volunteered for the job, Johnny reverted in rank to Group Captain to take over command of the Royal Air Force's 617 Squadron 'The Dambusters' on 27 December 1944.



RCAF Officers at Allerton Park -1944
Air Commodore Fauquier (front row, third from right) with
AVM 'Black Mike' McEwen to his right



Additional Allerton Park staff are now gathered around Air Commodore Fauquier and AVM 'Black Mike' McEwen



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CHAPTER 10

617 Squadron -Tallboys

"I thought that it would be good for Canada and good for our country to have a Canadian command this exalted squadron."

Johnny put up with his non-combat role at 6 Group Headquarters for a time, but he longed to be back on operations and, during December 1944, persuaded Ralph Cochrane, the officer commanding Bomber Command's 5 Group, to give him command of the Royal Air Force's 617 Squadron -'The Dambusters'.

The appointment required Johnny to accept a demotion in rank from Air Commodore to Group Captain, as those of the higher rank were not permitted to fly in combat.

Group Captain Fauquier was about to begin his third tour of operations. It was remarkable that a Canadian should become the commanding officer of any Royal Air Force squadron, let alone the most renown of them all, 'The Dambusters'. Johnny would be their leader until the end of the war.

The legendary Guy Gibson was the commanding officer of 617 Squadron when it was formed in the spring of 1943 and he led the squadron to its successful attacks on the dams of the Ruhr Valley, two of which were breached. The Dams Raid is acknowledged to have been the most audacious and brilliantly



successful tactical aviation operation of the Second World War. For his role, W/Cdr. Gibson was awarded the Victoria Cross.

Following the death on operations of Gibson's replacement, W/Cdr. George Holden, the squadron was led by another legend, Group Captain Leonard Cheshire. He commanded the Dambusters for eight months as they continued in their role as a special operations squadron. G/C Cheshire was removed from operations and awarded a Victoria Cross following the completion his one hundredth Bomber Command operation. He was replaced by another Bomber Command giant, Group Captain Willie Tait.

The culmination of G/C Tait's illustrious career came with his leading the force of thirty Lancasters that finally sunk the Battleship Tirpitz that was moored in Tromso Fjord in northern Norway. Following two more sorties, he was taken off operations on 15 December 1944, having flown 101 bombing raids.

Although recommended for a Victoria Cross for his "sustained gallantry" over almost five years of constant operations, G/C Tait was awarded a third Bar to his DSO for his "conspicuous bravery and extreme devotion to duty in the face of the enemy," making him the only airman during the Second World War to be awarded the DSO four times. He had a DFC and Bar as well.

Clearly recognizing that he would be following in the footsteps of these three most highly regarded Bomber Command pilots and leaders -Guy Gibson, Leonard Cheshire, and Willi Tait, Johnny recognized the significance of his appointment, not only from a personal point of view, but as a recognition of the role that Canadians were playing in Bomber Command. In a 1968 interview he recalled,

"Well I had already completed two tours when this position came up for grabs. I thought that it would be good for Canada and good for our country to have a Canadian command this exalted squadron. Sir Ralph Cochrane was kind enough to accept me. It is a very difficult thing indeed to follow in the footsteps of men like Gibson, Cheshire, and Tait but we did the best we could and, in fact, we did a considerable amount of damage on our own."¹

Johnny was introduced to the squadron at G/C Tait's farewell party on 28 December. The squadron members were quite aware of their successes as a special operations unit and that they had enjoyed outstanding leadership. Perhaps they were a little 'above themselves'. Although there were some Canadians members, 617 Squadron was, of course, dominated by Royal Air Force officers, many of whom may have questioned Cochrane's choice of a 'colonial' as their new leader, despite Johnny's distinguished operational record. They were likely not particularly impressed with Johnny's two DSO's and his DFC as many of them had similar 'gongs', as medals were referred to by the aircrew.

Following his introduction at the party, one of Fauquier's new charges shouted at him, "Sing a song or take your pants off" -a well-established method of shattering the dignity of a senior officer. Johnny, who likely knew that something like this was to be expected, immediately dropped his trousers and was cooled off from behind by a strategically aimed pint of beer.

When Johnny was given command of the squadron, Ralph Cochrane was concerned that the crews may have been becoming somewhat relaxed, perhaps with the realization that the war was drawing to a close. Cochrane told Johnny, "You've got to see 617 is kept up to the mark and stays as good as ever." Part of Johnny's efforts to deliver on this was ordering the aircrew out of bed early on cold winter mornings for outdoor exercise sessions, having them attend lectures, and shovel off snow-covered runways when there was no flying.

617 Squadron was based at RAF Woodhall Spa, fourteen miles east-southeast of the City of Lincoln. Willi Tait's farewell party was held in the squadron's Officers' Mess which was located in the nearby Petwood Hotel and in fact, the officers were billeted in the hotel.

During the early twentieth century, an express train would bring wealthy Edwardians to the woodland setting of Woodhall Spa for, "treatments at the baths." It became a military hospital for convalescents during World War I and in 1942 was requisitioned by the Royal Air Force as the Officers Mess for 97 and 619 Squadrons, and later in the war for 617 Squadron. For the wartime RAF Officers, the Petwood was fondly remembered



The main entrance to the Petwood Hotel in 2011

as a “splendid place,” remote from battle. Today the Petwood is a high-end hotel and the ‘Squadron Bar’ features a range of artwork, memorabilia, and tributes to 617 Squadron and its members who frequented the mess.

As the closing days of 1944 were reached, the air war over Europe was entering its final phases with many of Bomber Command’s main force attacks now being conducted during daylight. But there were still lots of precision targets that would require 617 Squadron’s expertise. Although the new squadron commander had two tours and seventy-three operations in his logbook, he faced a steep learning curve regarding both the weapons and equipment used by his new squadron.

SABS

The Stabilizing Automatic Bomb Sight (SABS) was a precision instrument that became available during early 1942. It was rarely used until 617 Squadron was equipped with the device in August 1943 to be used in conjunction with newly developed bombs that would be delivered from high altitude to precise targets. The Mk. XIV/T-1 bomb sight that was being used by the main force bomb-aimers during this period of the war was not capable of this.

The SABS was stabilized by a gyroscope and incorporated a complex mechanical computer that was able to calculate its own wind corrections which the Mk. XIV/T-1 could not. After generating aiming instructions for the bomb aimer, the SABS was then able to automatically release the bomb. These were qualities it shared with the American designed Norden bomb sight.

A number of factors had to be precisely measured prior to being utilized within the bombsight to attain the accuracy required. The aircraft's groundspeed, airspeed, and altitude had to be determined and, as well, the outside air temperature at the point of release was critical. This indirectly indicated air density and an error of one degree celsius would result in a bombing error of 21 feet. It was found that attaining this measurement was not a simple matter as air passing over a thermometer creates heat by friction. However, a system was devised to determine an accurate temperature.

As the target was approached the pilot had to hold his exact course for about ten miles while the flight engineer manipulated the throttles to maintain a constant speed in order to determine the wind drift. This need to fly straight and level ruled out the possibility of any evasive action, leaving the aircraft vulnerable to radar-predicted flak and fighter attacks during the bomb run.

The accuracy that 617 Squadron was able to attain with the SABS was truly remarkable. Their bombs were generally dropped from between 12,000 and 15,000 feet while flying at a speed of 200 miles per hour and several miles back from the target. From that height and distance even the white square on the bombing range looked like the size of a pin-head.

Although it was claimed during the war that an American B-17 Flying Fortress bombardier using the Norden Bomb Sight could drop a bomb into a 'pickle barrel' from six miles up, this was of course not really the case. USAAF bombardiers were never able to match the accuracy developed by 617 Squadron's bomb aimers using the SABS. In fact, as Joe McCarthy, himself an American who had joined the RCAF in 1940, flew on the Dams Raid, and with 617 Squadron for fourteen months afterwards, recalled,

"Now the Americans with the Norden sight said that they could put a bomb in a pickle barrel but this was crazy. They came to visit us when they started bombing, Eaker and another two (Lt. General Ira Eaker was the Commanding Officer of the United States Eighth Air Force which was the American's bomber force based in Britain). They visited us and watched what we were doing and watched us bomb. They were amazed at the consistency -75 yards or less from 20,000 feet.

*"Somebody made a caustic remark about this pickle barrel bombing and I think it was Cheshire who said, 'Well, let's have a competition. We'll put up three crews and you put up three crews and we'll see who comes out the best.' They wouldn't do it."*²

TALLBOY

As knowledge of the Nazi's V-2 Rocket program became known to British intelligence, it was determined that these weapons were to be manufactured, stored, and in some cases, launched from massive, concrete bunkers which could not be penetrated by existing weapons. As well, the enemy's U-Boat and E-Boat (small, fast torpedo launching vessels) pens were being extensively reinforced with very thick concrete roofs and walls.

The 12,000 pound bombs that 617 Squadron had been using for some of its operations since the Dams Raid had very thin casings and would simply shatter when dropped on solid concrete. However Barnes Wallis, whose creative mind designed the Wellington Bomber as well as the techniques and weapon that enabled the Dambusters Raid to be successful, had been thinking of these sorts of problems and developed plans for a



Barnes Wallis (Note the photo of the breached Mohne Dam in the background.)

very heavy, strong-cased, and extremely streamlined 12,000 pound bomb that could be dropped accurately from a great height immediately next to these challenging, concrete targets.

Named Tallboy, the weapon would exceed the speed of sound prior to reaching the ground and impact with such energy that it would penetrate deeply underground prior to exploding following a pre-set time delay. A series of 'earthquake waves' would then fracture and hopefully collapse the nearby concrete structures and tunnels.

The bomb casing was made of special chrome molybdenum steel, cast in a single piece to ensure that it would survive the impact. Near the tip of the bomb, this casing was over four inches thick. This was then filled with 5200 pounds of



Ground crew prepare to load a Tallboy into the bomb-bay of a 617 Squadron Lancaster. Note the SABS bombsight that fills the perspex bomb-aimer's blister.

Torpex D1 explosive. The bomb was twenty-one feet long with fins that were placed at a five degree angle so that it spun as it fell, reaching a maximum rotational velocity of 300 rpm. This improved the aerodynamics and thus the accuracy.

When dropped from 18,000 feet, Tallboy took thirty-seven seconds to reach the ground where it impacted at 750 mph and, depending on the characteristics of the material it struck, penetrated to a considerable depth. Unlike conventional bombs, Tallboys were suspended in the bomb-bay by means of a heavy cast-link chain which was secured with an electrical release.

The bomb was first manufactured during the winter of 1943-44. By war's end, 854 Tallboys had been dropped on a variety of targets including the Battleship Tirpitz, E-Boat and submarine pens, viaducts, tunnels, and canals as well as V-2 rocket sites. The Lancaster, with its huge, uninterrupted bomb-bay, was the only aircraft capable of carrying the Tallboy but the accuracy possible with the SABS bomb sight was vital. During May 1944, the first Tallboys were delivered to 617 Squadron at Woodhall Spa and dropped two days after the D-Day invasion on a railway tunnel near Saumur, some 125 miles south of the Normandy beachheads.

9 and 617 were the only two squadrons that were equipped with the SABS bomb-sight and the only squadrons that dropped the Tallboy bombs.

Johnny didn't lead his new squadron when they attacked the E-Boat pens at Rotterdam on the day following his arrival and the going away party for Leonard Cheshire. However, on the last night of 1944, Johnny led 617 Squadron as part of a force of twenty-eight Lancasters to attack two enemy warships, the cruisers Koln and Emden, which had been located in a fjord near Oslo in Norway.

As well as employing a bomb-sight and bomb that were new to him, attacking moving warships which he hadn't done for some time, and leading his new squadron, Johnny was also flying with a crew he was unfamiliar with although it included two Canadians. One was the bomb-aimer, F/O Walter A. 'Danny' Daniel who had been Joe McCarthy's bomb-aimer during his last fourteen operations with 617 Squadron and later became

W/C ‘Willi’ Tait’s bomb-aimer. ‘Danny’ was his bomb-aimer on the raid that sunk the Battleship Tirpitz. Johnny must have been impressed with ‘Danny’ who had been awarded the DFC earlier in December. He became his regular bomb-aimer for the remainder of the war. Johnny’s navigator was S/Ldr. Glenmore B. Ellwood.

It was likely no coincidence that Glenmore Ellwood was transferred to 617 Squadron at the same time as Johnny was. Glen was a native of Portage La Prairie, Manitoba and Johnny would have come to know him well as Glen flew operations on both Halifaxs and Lancasters with 405 Squadron during Johnny’s time with the squadron.

Following one raid, Glen had been injured when his aircraft struck a tree while making a forced landing in fog after running out of fuel. Following Johnny’s time with 405, Glen flew as navigator for squadron commander Reg Lane on operations when Reg was the Master Bomber.

Glen had risen to the rank of squadron leader and had been awarded the DSO and DFC, rare accomplishments for a navigator. The letter recommending the award of the DSO reads, in part,

“On many occasions Squadron Leader Ellwood has unreservedly offered his services for operations duty which he would not normally be required for and has invariably displayed a fighting spirit which has had an inspiring effect on all personnel serving under his command. Undoubtedly, this officer’s fine example will be difficult to surpass.”³



S/Ldr. Glen Ellwood
DSO DFC and Bar



S/Ldr. Glen Ellwood
DSO DFC and Bar

S/Ldr. Ellwood's DSO, which was awarded on 29 September 1944, was accompanied by the following citation,

"This officer has participated in a very large number of sorties, including seven against the German capital. He is a brave and devoted member of aircraft crew and has rendered service of immense value. In addition to his operational duties, S/Ldr. Ellwood has devoted much of his knowledge and energy in training of the other members of the squadron."⁴

Glen would be Johnny's navigator on all but two of his operations with 617 Squadron.

The sortie to Oslo Fjord was Johnny's first experience with the SABS bomb-sight and the massive 12,000 pound Tallboy bomb. For the attack on the two warships, the bombs were fused with a 0.3 second delay so that they would explode one hundred feet under the water. Bright moonlight was expected for the attack.

Johnny took off at 19:52 hours and the operation to find and attack the warships would last more than seven and one quarter hours. Like all of 617 Squadron's operations, there were many challenging aspects including that this would be a night operation and the fact that 617 had never attacked ships at sea. Twelve Lancasters from 617 were joined by sixteen others from 83 and 97 Squadrons carrying flares that would provide illumination over the ships.

The ships were located and what has been described as a "confused" attack took place over a thirty-minute period as the warships zig-zagged to make things difficult for the attackers.



Koln

Johnny reported that he dropped his Tallboy just after midnight from 8000 feet, and that,

"The bomb burst approximately 100 yards to port of ship. After bomb burst, ship made off in a northerly direction at high speed. One stick of flares was dropped over target and I gave instructions for the Force to orbit to the north and to begin continuous illuminations and bombing within two minutes and that this ship was midway between island and mainland. The most flares were dropped at northern end of Ran Island. Bombing was eventually carried out without flares."¹⁵

A number of near misses were reported, one or more of which damaged the Kolin's propulsion system, forcing her to return to Wilhelmshaven, Germany for repairs where she was again attacked by Allied bombers and sunk.

On 12 January, Johnny led the squadron on another long flight, this time across the North Sea to attack Nazi targets in the harbour at Bergen, Norway. He was flying a fast and agile, twin-engined Mosquito Bomber with Glen Ellwood sitting beside him in the right-hand seat as navigator/bomb-aimer. It would be the first of two sorties that Johnny would fly in the Mosquito. Flying the high-powered, twin-engined fighter-bomber would have been very different from the four-engined heavy bombers Johnny was accustomed to.

An example of engineering ingenuity inspired by the challenges of war, the De Havilland Mosquito's all-wooden design was a major advantage during a time of acute shortages of light metal alloys. Almost all of the aircraft was made of wood. The fuselage was a frameless shell of plywood made of balsa sandwiched between sheets of birch and the wings were made of wood as well.

Powered by the same Merlin V-12 engine as the Lancaster, the sleek design, together with lightness and the lack of any defensive armament or armour, allowed the Mosquito to travel at speeds in excess of 400 mph making it extremely difficult for enemy fighters to attack. The crew consisted of a pilot and a navigator/bomb aimer.



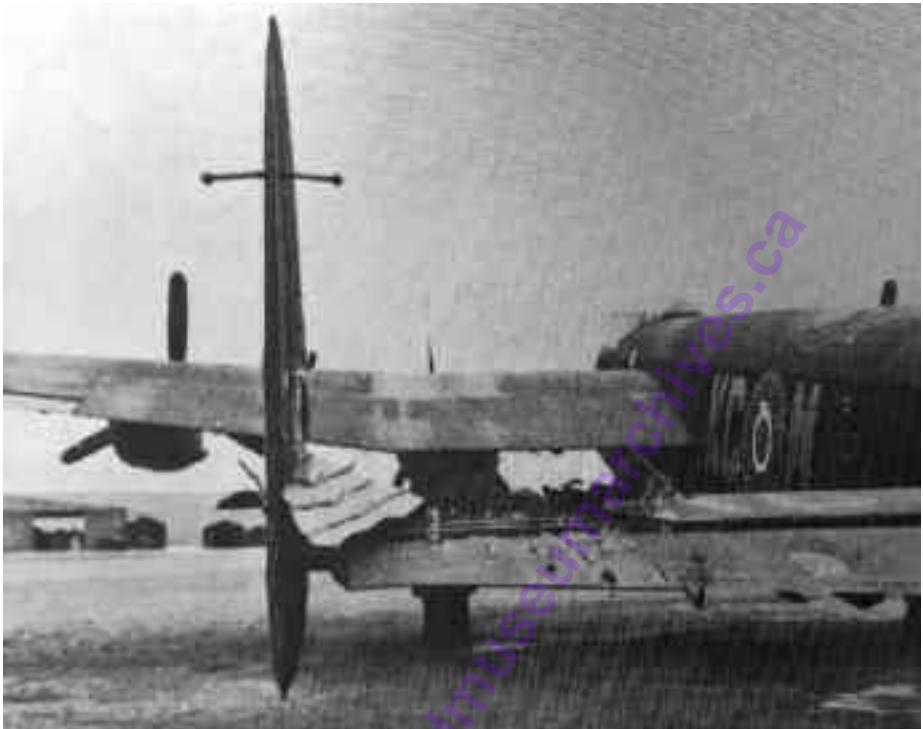
De Havilland Mosquito

During much of the war the Mosquito was the fastest aircraft in the sky on either side. It could deliver the same bomb-load to distant targets as the heavily armoured, four-engined B-17 Flying Fortress flown by the American Air Force. Although designed as a bomber, the Mosquito also served as a fighter. As well as defending Britain against enemy aircraft, Mosquito fighter squadrons conducted sweeps across Europe against the Nazi's night-fighters that were attacking Bomber Command aircraft.

Flying the Mosquito, Johnny led thirty-two Lancasters to attack targets in the harbour at Bergen. Together with bombers from 9 Squadron, three 617 Squadron Lancasters were to attack shipping in the harbour while the remainder targeted U-boat pens and a floating dock.

Three Tallboys struck the 3.5 metre thick roof of the submarine pens. One penetrated the roof causing an eight metre wide hole on top and a four metre wide crater inside. Two others exploded prior to penetrating. As well, there were two near misses. Severe damage was caused to workshops, offices, and stores inside.

As he circled the harbour in his Mosquito, Johnny noticed that smoke from the attack was beginning to obscure the target. He ordered the pilots who had not yet bombed to aim for the ships. Two U-Boats were damaged in the pens and in the harbour, a minesweeper was sunk, and a cargo ship was significantly damaged and had to be beached.



**Battle damage to 617 Squadron Lancaster 'KC-M for Mike'
following the Bergen raid**

However, before the bombing was completed, Luftwaffe Fw190 fighters arrived, two of which shot down F/Lt. Pryor's Lancaster. Pryor had made six runs over the target and Johnny ordered him make another which he was unable to complete. F/O Ross was hit by fighters, knocking out his starboard-inner engine and damaging the flight controls. After jettisoning his Tallboy, the aircraft was seen to perform a successful ditching in the sea with the crew scrambling out of the fuselage and onto the wings but none of the crew survived. A third Lancaster, one of 9 Squadron's aircraft, was shot down over the target area as well.

The losses were extremely high -three of the Lancasters failed to return including two of the sixteen 617 Squadron aircraft.

Submarine pens were again the target as Johnny led eighteen 617 Squadron Lancasters to Poortershaven on 3 February. This part of Holland was still occupied and the pens

were sheltering midget submarines. A much shorter trip than his first two with 617, Johnny landed after less than three hours in the air. The weather was clear on this daylight operation. Johnny bombed from 13,400 feet and noted that, "The gaggle formation was good, that all bombs went on the first runs," and that the, "Bombing looked very concentrated."

The raid was indeed a great success with several squadron pilots claiming direct hits and almost all of the facility was destroyed.

F/O J.B. Scannell was Johnny's rear-gunner on the raid to Poortershaven. F/O Scannell had been posted from 405 Squadron to 617 on 25 January, likely at Johnny's request. He would be Johnny's rear-gunner for most of his raids during the remaining months of the war.

The Bielefeld Viaduct in northwest Germany carried important railway traffic to and from the highly industrialized Ruhr Valley. It consisted of two parallel, twin-tracked viaducts. The first had been completed in 1847 and the second during the First World War. By 1939, three hundred trains were crossing on the Bielefeld Viaduct every day. The viaduct was bombed on fifty-four different occasions between 1940 and 1945 but being a long, extremely narrow target, it was extremely difficult to hit, even in ideal weather.

On 6 February, Johnny led seventeen aircraft to attack the viaduct. However when they arrived, it was obscured by 10/10ths cloud. All the aircraft returned and landed safely with their Tallboys, but Johnny and 617 Squadron would be back.

On 8 February, Johnny led fifteen squadron aircraft to attack the E-Boat pens at Ijmuiden on the Dutch coast, west of Amsterdam. With a top speed of over forty knots, E-Boats were agile, larger, and more formidable than the similar, fast-attack/torpedo boats built by the British and Americans.

A total of 230 were used in the Baltic, Mediterranean, and Black Seas, however their main operational area was the English Channel where they regularly attacked coastal shipping with considerable success. E-Boats sunk over forty warships including twelve destroyers and well over one hundred merchant vessels. For a time, they controlled a significant portion of the Mediterranean Sea and a sizeable area of the English Channel.



**This photo of a German E-Boat was taken
as it surrendered at the end of the war.**

Convoys venturing north from the London docks or south from the Firth of Forth were liable to be attacked.

Johnny bombed from 14,500 feet and reported that he saw two hits and one near miss. The reports of his other pilots indicated that they felt that the bombing was accurate. In fact, the raid brought down large sections of the roof and the pens were of no further use to the enemy.

On 22 February 617 Squadron launched their third operation within seventeen days to destroy the railway viaduct at Bielefeld. Johnny led the eighteen Lancasters. They found good visibility over the viaduct and at debriefing felt certain that the operation had been successful as at least one Tallboy was seen to have entered the ground very close to the structure. The viaduct was, in fact, damaged but not significantly. It was quickly repaired and the railway over the viaduct made operational again. But Johnny and 617 Squadron would return yet again, next time with an even bigger bomb.



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CHAPTER 11

617 Squadron -Grand Slams

“The wing tips of the airplane started to bend up and I was wondering whether the wings would come off or what would happen, but finally she did take-off.”

There were no operations for 617 Squadron on 5 March 1945, but G/C Fauquier was busy test-flying a newly arrived Lancaster (Serial #PB997). This was the first of thirty-two ‘B1 Specials’ that had been modified to carry the 22,400 pound Grand Slam bomb. The modifications included more powerful Rolls-Royce Merlin 24 engines, the removal of the bomb doors to accommodate the weapon, the removal of the front and mid-upper gun turrets and the H2S radar equipment to save weight, and the strengthening of the undercarriage to enable the aircraft



Lancaster B1 Special



Johnny's Lancaster B1 Special 'YZ-J'

to land with the huge bomb still aboard. Minor weight-lessening even included the removal of three of the Lancaster's four fire axes and its crew door ladder.

The 617 Squadron Lancasters that were modified to carry the Upkeep bouncing bomb on the Dams Raid carried the fuselage markings 'AJ' and the ones that the squadron had operated since then were marked 'KC'. The B1 Specials that would carry the Grand Slam were marked 'YZ'. Johnny, of course, flew 'YZ-J for Johnny'.

Although the 12,000 pound Tallboy had been in service for nine months, Barnes Wallis's original concept had been to build a similar, but much larger weapon that would have a weight of 22,000 pounds. Grand Slam was the culmination of five years-

worth of bomb design and now, with the modified Lancasters, it could be put into action.

Identical in shape to the Tallboy, when in production the Grand Slams weighed 22,400 pounds, had a length of twenty-five feet, five inches and a diameter of 3 three feet ten inches.

Like the Tallboy, the Grand Slam's fins were designed to generate a stabilizing spin of up to sixty revolutions per minute and, like the Tallboy, it had a thicker case than a conventional bomb, allowing it to penetrate deep into the earth or to pass through extremely thick reinforced concrete roofs. The explosive was Torpex and it was poured into the casing as a liquid and took a month to cool and set. Because of the low rate of production and high value of each bomb, the crews were told to land with their Grand Slams on board rather than jettison them if a sortie had to be aborted.

Barnes Wallis had determined that the bomb would need to be dropped from an altitude of 40,000 feet to reach its terminal velocity. Although even the modified Lancasters struggled to carry it to an altitude approaching 20,000 feet, it was still a formidable weapon and one that allowed Johnny's squadron to attack a range of new and difficult targets. The Grand Slam carried slightly less than twice the explosive material as Tallboy but is said to have been five times as powerful. Grand Slam was by far the most powerful, non-atomic bomb used during the Second World War.

The first Grand Slam was delivered to Woodhall Spa on 20 January, however the B1 Special Lancasters that were to carry them had not yet been delivered. So the bomb had never even been taken off the ground or test-dropped at that point. Referring to the weapon by the name 'Grand Slam' seems to



A six foot tall man, a Tallboy, and a Grand Slam

have been discouraged, and the 617 ORB's refer to it simply as a 'Special Store'.

When the first Lancaster B1 Special (PB997) arrived at Downham Market on 5 March, Johnny was eager to try it out. During a post-war interview, he recalled his first flight with a Grand Slam on board -the first time anyone had tried to take off, and land, with the huge bomb,

"The first one (Grand Slam) arrived and was put in the bomb dump with no instructions from Bomber Command whatsoever. Everybody, I think, realized that the war was drawing to a close and I thought what a pity that this should never be dropped. So, without authority from Bomber Command, I ordered the bomb hoisted onto my own aircraft and cleared the personnel out of the station and started to take-off.

"At one point, I didn't think we would make it because usually we got airborne with a full load at around 110 miles an hour and I was at 145. The wing tips of the airplane started to bend up and I was wondering whether the wings would come off or what would happen, but finally she did take-off.

"So, I flew it around for about twenty minutes and brought it back and landed and then called up Bomber Command and said it was quite safe."



Grand Slam bomb crater

As Johnny was waiting for a chance to drop the Grand Slam, 617 Squadron launched yet another operation to take out the Bielefeld Viaduct on 9 March. This time Johnny flew a Mosquito as he led nineteen Lancasters carrying Tallboys. However the viaduct was obscured by low cloud and three and a half hours after take-off, all the bombers had safely landed back at Woodhall Spa with their Tallboys still in the bomb-bays.

Then on the morning of 13 March, the first Grand Slam was test-dropped over the RAF's Ashley Walk bombing range. A witness on the ground described the drop as follows,

"We had a job to see it when it came down. It was all marked in black and white, so you could see it rotating. Then there was this almighty explosion when it went into the ground. After that had settled a bit we motored round to stand on the edge of the crater (It was 124 feet in diameter and 34 feet deep). There were minor explosions, like a volcano going off, from the



Grand Slams at the Woodhall Spa bomb dump

gases still coming up. So that proved the ten ton bomb to be able to be dropped from a Lancaster, and to work.”²

As Johnny was briefing his crews for another operation to Bielefeld, a message was received, “The beast went off all right!”

Later that day, two Grand Slams were prepared and fused for eleven second delays. One was loaded onto Johnny’s Lancaster B-1 Special. A second was hoisted into the bomb-bay of his Flight Commander, S/Ldr. Charles ‘Jock’ Calder’s, aircraft.

The two took off, again headed for the Bielefeld Viaduct, a target that Johnny and his squadron were by now quite familiar with. It had been subjected to attack since the beginning of the war by an estimated seven million pounds of explosive. It was damaged, but remained in regular use.

However, the raid was aborted when the pilots were advised that the target was shrouded by 10/10ths cloud. Both returned with their Grand Slams, landing very carefully at RAF Carnaby which had a longer runway than Woodhall Spa. Ground crew travelled from Woodhall Spa to Carnaby to service the bombers to make them ready for the next day.

On 14 March, Johnny and the squadron were again authorized to drop the first Grand Slams and the target was again the Bielefeld Viaduct. Thirteen other squadron aircraft were loaded with Tallboys. The Lancasters roared to life and Johnny prepared to make history by dropping the largest weapon ever built.

Then, a huge disappointment. Just prior to take-off, Johnny’s SABS began leaking oil and his starboard-inner engine seized up. Not even Johnny Fauquier would consider taking off with a Grand Slam on three engines.

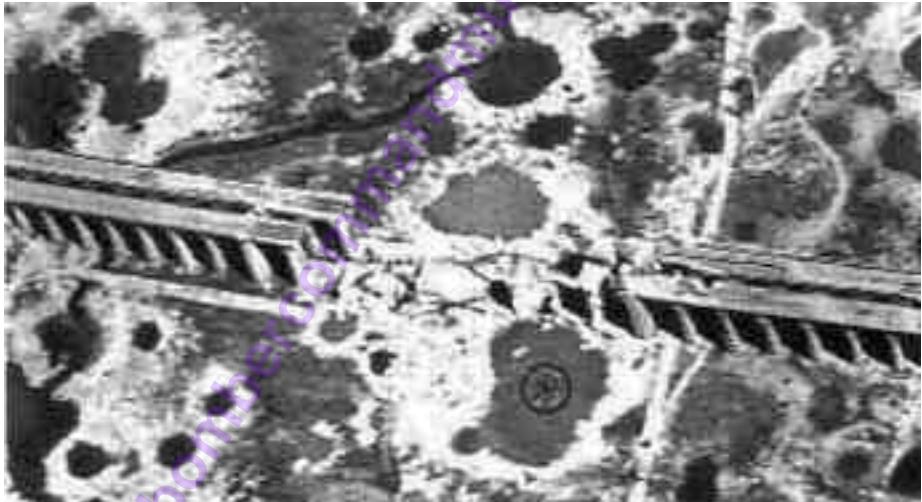
Johnny ran towards S/Ldr. Calder’s aircraft and tried to get his attention so that he could ‘commandeer’ his Lancaster. S/Ldr. Calder, very likely wanting to be part of this historic raid just as badly as Johnny did, later claimed that he was unable to make sense of Johnny’s frantic waving and sign language. He cracked open the throttles and took off for Bielefeld, leaving Johnny fuming on the tarmac.

As S/Ldr. Calder flew to the target, he began to realize the intense pressure he was under. He would clearly be facing the

wrath of Johnny Fauquier when he returned and, doubly-so, if he had failed to destroy the viaduct. S/Ldr. Calder's Grand Slam was released from 11,965 feet, and he estimated that it landed thirty yards short of the structure. Other 617 pilots reported accurate drops with their Tallboys. Eleven seconds after penetrating the ground, the Grand Slam exploded and 260 feet of the span was destroyed.

During a 1968 interview, Johnny didn't mention his personal disappointment at missing out on the Bielefeld raid but obviously took considerable pride in the result,

"Now this was a massive structure which Barnes Wallis assured me that the Americans had dropped 3500 tons on and, whilst they had damaged the tracks, they could do no damage at all to the granite pillars. These pillars measured 88 by 88 feet and the bombs just had no effect on them whatsoever. This is where the big bomb came into its own."



The Bielefeld Viaduct following 617 Squadron's visit on 14 March

*"Now the method which we used to bomb structures such as these, was not to hit the granite columns. This would have done no good at all. We put the bomb into the ground about fifty to sixty feet before the column. This bomb was capable of going 90 feet into the ground and 150 feet forward. It would then explode. This created a huge air space underneath the column and the column just collapsed into this great hole. This really put the viaduct out of commission for the rest of the war."*³

The following day, Arthur Harris was briefed on the first use of the Grand Slam and sent a note to 617 Squadron that read:

*"I have just seen a stereo-pair of the Bielefeld Viaduct taken after your visit yesterday afternoon, my congratulations on your accurate bombing. You have certainly made a proper mess of it this time and incidentally added another page to your history by being the first squadron to drop the biggest bomb on Germany so far, good work. Keep up the training. We can't afford to put these new little pets in the wrong place."*⁴

Johnny would have to wait until 19 March to drop his first Grand Slam. This attack focused on another viaduct structure, this one crossing the Ruhr River at Arnsberg, twenty-five miles east of Dortmund. Nineteen 617 Squadron Lancasters took part, six of them carrying Grand Slams and the remainder Tallboys. This time 'J for Johnny' was ready to go.

F/O Phil Martin, an Royal Australian Air Force pilot who was being briefed to go on the Arnsberg raid, described his introduction to carrying the Grand Slam,

"Remember,' said the Groupie (Johnny), 'If you bring the bomb back, you can't drop the aircraft more than six inches onto the runway. If you do, the tyres will burst.' If anyone among us



F/O Phil Martin

sitting in that Nissen hut had had a pin and dropped it, it would have sounded like an unexploded Tallboy hitting a steel floor.

"Fauquier went on with his briefing. His previous comment was just one in a string of pearls of wisdom we mentally fingered as we came out of the briefing room, knowing we were to fly the op to obliterate the Arnsberg Viaduct with one of the biggest bombs ever made, the awesome Grand Slam."⁵

F/O Martin described the flight to the target,

"We managed to coax this flying bomb up to about 12,700 feet. And there she stayed, governed by the law of gravity and that damn great bomb hanging under there like an overgrown pilot fish under a whale's belly. We began attracting predictor-guided flak as the viaduct neared, and the bomb aimer set up his SABS sight.

"The flak was a serious concern as during the final run to the target, the Lancaster had to be flown at a constant and precise course, speed, and altitude for five minutes making it a perfect target for radar-controlled anti-aircraft guns."⁶



A 617 Squadron Lancaster with a Grand Slam



An RAF photographer aboard another Lancaster took this remarkable photo of the Grand Slam being released from F/O Martin's aircraft over the Arnsberg Viaduct. Note the two sections of the single strap that held the bomb in the bomb-bay dangling below the aircraft.

Martin braced himself for what was to come,

"I had dropped Tallboys and knew what the upward spring was on release. But this Grand Slam was a beauty. I heard the release unit 'fire' with its usual sharp retort, and the slam of those great arms (the straps that had been holding the bomb in the bomb-bay) hitting the fuselage as they came free. That Grand Slam, spinning impeccably, went down. And we went UP. Lord how we ascended. Most of us made it six hundred feet upwards, the Lancaster's wings flexing and re-flexing like an overstrung bow and we were the human arrow."

"As it struck the viaduct, a magnificent pattern of concentric shockwave circles was shuddering out, the apex being where the viaduct had once arched. Tallboys were already slamming into the circles, creating cross-circle patterns. An immense feeling of lightness and power flowed through the stick as the Lancaster drew breath, delivered of its mammoth babe. The aircraft felt light, responsive, full of bellowing power -in fact, like a Lancaster again."

Johnny reported releasing his 'Special Store' from 13,000 feet. Of the raid, he wrote, "Bombing had a tendency to

overshoot, but about a third of the viaduct appeared to be down. There were two hits on the embankment to north of bridge." In fact, a forty-foot section of the viaduct had been destroyed, putting it out of action for the rest of the war.

Two days later, Johnny led 617 Squadron to the Arbergen railway bridge, a two-hundred yard long and double tracked structure consisted of three spans of steel girders. It crossed the Weser River at Bremen.

Johnny and S/Ldr. Calder both carried Grand Slams while eighteen other 617 Lancasters carried Tallboys. The defences were stronger here. The tail of F/Lt. Bernard Gumbley's aircraft was struck by flak over the target. His Lancaster was seen to immediately turn over and dive to the ground in flames, killing all five aboard. Johnny's 'YZ-J' was hit at least six times by flak.

Although Johnny reported that his Grand Slam fell about two hundred yards to the north of the target and that no direct hits were seen on the bridge, the approach structures on both ends were destroyed by the twenty giant bombs, rendering the bridge of no further use to the enemy.

Bomber Command's 5 Group Headquarters at Grantham were pleased that targets such as the Bielefeld, Arnsberg, and Arbergen Viaducts had been destroyed but were becoming concerned that their stock of what were proving to be highly effective Grand Slams and Tallboys was rapidly being reduced. The bombs were difficult and expensive to produce and the supply available was dwindling. On 16 March, Johnny attended a meeting at which a plan was reached whereby, upon reaching a target, four aircraft would bomb and their results observed prior to the next four (if required) bombing. This would be repeated until, hopefully, the target was destroyed.

The new technique was put into practice on 22 March when Johnny again led twenty 617 squadron Lancasters, this



**The Arbergen Railway Bridge
over the Weser River**

time to attack a railway bridge at Nienburg, northwest of Hanover. Six carried Grand Slams and the fourteen others, including Johnny's, were loaded with Tallboys. After Johnny and three other aircraft had bombed, Johnny dove down, flying to one side of the target to observe the results before ordering the next four in. Five Grand Slams and twelve Tallboys did the job, completely destroying the bridge from one end to the other, so at least one Grand Slam and two Tallboys were returned to Woodhall Spa to be used the following day.

617 Squadron's ground crews were doing an impressive job as again, twenty of their Lancasters were ready to go again the next day. This time the target was a railway bridge over the Weser River near Bremen, this one double-tracked and 720 feet in length. However, three bombers were forced to return early, two with engine failures and the third because of a complete failure of its oxygen system.

Again Johnny, flying his 'YZ-J', led the squadron. At least five pilots reported direct hits and others reported near misses. Opposition over the target was fierce from both heavy flak and the Luftwaffe's new Me 262 jet fighters.

Johnny dropped his Grand Slam from 16,500 feet. Although he saw two direct hits, Johnny reported that, "Our bomb was not seen to strike" and that, "Results could not be ascertained because of smoke and debris." Other pilots had difficulty determining the success of the raid from the air as well.

Despite the crew's claims, only one Tallboy had had a significant effect on the bridge, destroying a span at the southern end, although two others had struck the tracks. The enemy made repairs and the bridge stood until the Germans themselves destroyed it in a futile attempt to stop the Allied armies from crossing the Weser River.

On 27 March, and with Johnny once again leading the way, twenty Lancasters from 617 Squadron, attacked the U-Boat pens at Farge, a small port just northwest of Bremen. This was an immense structure, 1375 feet long, 315 feet wide and more than 75 feet high with roofs made of reinforced concrete some of which was fifteen feet thick but was in the process of being increased to a thickness of twenty-three feet. It was considered a very important target so thirteen Grand Slams were deployed.



**Two Grand Slams penetrated the roof
of the submarine pens at Farge.**

Two crews returned early to Woodhall Spa but the remainder bombed the target, although several were hit by flak and F/Lt. Trent's navigator was wounded. Two Grand Slams penetrated the roof, collapsing a large section of the roof and bringing down thousands of tons of rubble, rendering the shelter unusable. Johnny reported that his Grand Slam "overshot" by ten yards.

On 4 April, Johnny travelled to London on three days leave but was back in action on the 9th, leading seventeen squadron aircraft as they dropped two Grand Slams and fifteen Tallboys on the U-Boat pens at Hamburg. Despite the end of the war being only a few weeks away, the target was heavily defended and six of the 617 Squadron aircraft were hit by the heavy flak. Recent daylight attacks by the Luftwaffe's Me 262 jet fighters were a concern, so a massive fighter escort consisting of 150 RAF Mustangs and 84 Spitfires flew with the seventeen bombers.

Johnny reported that his Grand Slam was, "seen to hit the northeast corner of the pen" and that he saw, "three other bombs hit in the approximate centre of the pen before smoke obscured further observations."

S/Ldr. Calder, who dropped the other Grand Slam, saw his strike the west side of the pen. Other pilots claimed direct hits with their Tallboys. The pens and harbour were left severely damaged.

The fighter escort, as it turned out, was warranted as some thirty Me 262 jets appeared and were engaged by the RAF fighters. As well as 617 Squadron's attack on the submarine pens, forty other Lancasters had attacked oil storage tanks at Hamburg. Two failed to return.

In a postwar interview, Johnny recalled,

"This so-called earthquake bomb was used very successfully on submarine pens. Here you had these vast



Luftwaffe Me 262 jet fighter



Johnny and a Grand Slam

buildings that were forty-two feet of concrete, in fact there was more reinforcing in it than there was concrete. This time we aimed right at the target. In Hamburg, we got eight hits on these pens. Barnes's theory was that the bomb would only penetrate about seven feet at which time it was red hot, but it had generated a huge cone of shock waves and it was at that point that the bomb exploded and that whole cone was blown in.

From up above and on the surface it looked as if we'd only pock-marked the roof but actually I went over and examined these after the war and there were four submarines that had been completely demolished by these huge hunks of concrete.

This, of course, was the same system that Cheshire used in getting the V-3 Sites where Hitler had got these rapid firing, heavy guns that were to fire on London but he forgot to reinforce the bottom. He (Cheshire's 617 Squadron crews) put the bombs into the ground, under the structure, where they exploded and collapsed the building. This was the same system that we used.”⁸

On 13 April, Johnny was flying one of thirty-four Lancasters from 9 and 617 Squadrons to attack the enemy warships Prinz Eugen and Lutzow in Swinemunde Harbour on the northern coast of Germany, almost directly north of Berlin. However, the raid was abandoned because of cloud over the target. The aircraft all returned safely with their Tallboys after the long flight, Johnny landing after seven hours in the air.

Two days later, Johnny led twenty 617 Lancasters to attack the ships. It was another frustrating day as the raid was abandoned only eighteen miles from the target which was found to be covered by clouds.

On 16 April, the squadron again took off to attack the warships in Swinemunde Harbour. This would be the third attempt to sink the Prinz Eugen and Lutzow. Johnny was concerned that the enemy fighters would be waiting for them to take advantage of the long, straight run-in that the SABS system required.

Johnny requested, and was granted, another long-range fighter escort. However, no enemy fighters appeared as Johnny led the eighteen 617 Squadron aircraft over the harbour, but all

but two of the Lancasters were hit by the heavy flak that was encountered. S/Ldr. Powell's bomber received a direct hit. The port wing was torn off and the aircraft spun into the ground near the target. Although one parachute was seen to open at about 2000 feet, all seven crewmembers were killed. This was the last 617 Squadron aircraft lost during the war.

Three Tallboys straddled the Lutzow, one striking between the dock and ship's moored side and blowing a large hole in Lutzow's armour plating below the waterline. She settled to the bottom at her moorings in less than fifty feet of water. Johnny admitted to having misidentified the target and bombed a boat in the canal nearer to Swinemunde.

Due to the heavy flak encountered over Swinemunde Harbour, the squadron was 'stood down' for three days as they did not have enough serviceable aircraft. The enemy defences still had to be respected even though, as it turned out, the last day of the war was just over two weeks away.

On 19 April, thirty-six Lancasters from 9 and 617 Squadrons attacked the heavy coastal batteries at Heligoland that barred allied access to the ports of northwestern Germany.

As was almost always the case, Johnny was flying, leading his squadron in what would be his 93rd combat operation of the war. He reported that he dropped his Grand Slam from 11,000 feet on his second run, the bomb striking the ground about twenty yards east of the gun emplacement area. He noted that the, "Bombing was concentrated except for two overshoots seen on cliff to the south of the target." As Johnny flew home to Woodhall Spa after dropping his last Grand Slam, he was satisfied that the enemy batteries no longer threatened Allied shipping.

The operation to Heligoland was Johnny's final sortie with 617 Squadron. 5 Group Commander, Ralph Cochrane, had been reassigned and his replacement told Johnny he was grounded because he did not want to see him killed during the last moments of the war.

Johnny had flown twenty operations of his total of ninety-three leading the 'Dambusters'. S/Ldr. Glen Ellwood had been his navigator on sixteen of the operations, F/O W.A. Daniel had



Canadian Ground Crew at Woodhall Spa -April 1945

been his bomb-aimer on twelve, and F/O J.B. Scannell had been his rear-gunner on thirteen.

Johnny and his Flight Commander, S/Ldr. 'Jock' Calder, had each dropped six Grand Slams of the total of forty-one that the squadron dropped during the last five weeks of the war. Johnny may very well have been 'keeping score' and still smarting from that first raid when Jock 'didn't understand' that Johnny wanted him to stop and let the C/O drop the first Grand Slam.

As ordered, Johnny did not participate in 617 Squadron's final raid of the war as they delivered sixteen Tallboys as part of an attack by 375 aircraft on Berchtesgaden, Hitler's 'Eagle's Nest' chalet and mountain retreat. For most of the squadrons, including 617 Squadron, this was their final operation of the war.

As the war's final days were reached, Johnny was involved in a different sort of 'first' for an RCAF airman. 617 Squadron had attacked the massive U-Boat pens at Hamburg on 9 April but the British Navy was unconvinced that the bombing could have put them out of action. At Arthur Harris's request,

Johnny flew across the English Channel and then drove a jeep to Hamburg to have a look, with the understanding that the city was by that time completely occupied by the Allies.

Driving through Hamburg, Johnny wondered why they saw no signs of allied troops and why the German soldiers stared at them. It didn't occur to him that Hamburg had, in fact, not surrendered and that no Allied troops, other than Johnny and the two RAF officers in the jeep with him, had entered the city.

The German officer in charge of what was left of the U-Boat pens had not been able to communicate with others on his side and when the three air force officers arrived in their jeep, simply assumed that the City of Hamburg had been surrendered and so he should too.

"Upon his arrival, Johnny was surprised to find two hundred German sailors working hard on what were the demolished pens. The German officer in command decided at this point to formally surrender his party to Johnny and then invited Johnny, and two others that had accompanied him, to lunch. It is thought that Johnny Fauquier was the only RCAF officer to accept a formal surrender by an entire garrison of enemy troops."⁹

Unaware of the protocol of a military surrender, Johnny had the Germans place all their small arms in the jeep and then drove off back through the unoccupied city and returned to Woodhall Spa. He brought three German luger pistols back to Canada as personal souvenirs of his involvement in the surrender of the submarine pens at Hamburg.

Johnny's operation to Heligoland was also the final operation flown by his trusted navigator, Glen Ellwood who completed a total of eighty combat operations and received a second DFC to compliment his DSO. The accompanying citation notes that,

"He has operated almost continuously for over two years and has attacked numerous heavily defended targets, many of them a great distance from this country. These sorties called for a high standard of navigation skill. During his third tour (with 617

Squadron) this officer has navigated the leading aircraft in all his missions.”¹⁰

As for Johnny, he had recorded a total of ninety-three combat operations -thirty-five during his first tour with 405 Squadron, thirty-eight during his second, and twenty as the commanding officer of 617 Squadron. It is almost certain that he flew an unknown number of additional operations which were not recorded in any way. The chances of any airman surviving three tours and almost one hundred operations with Bomber Command were extremely low, particularly when flying early model Halifaxes at a time when a Canadian airman’s chances of surviving even a single tour were less than seventeen percent.

On 1 June, Johnny was awarded a second Bar to his DSO -essentially a third Distinguished Service Order. The accompanying citation makes specific note of the fact that as the C/O of 617 Squadron, as he did with 405 Squadron, Johnny “led from the front, taking part in almost every raid in which his squadron flew.” The citation reads:

“Since assuming command of the squadron in December 1944, this officer has taken part in almost all the sorties to which the formation has been committed. Early in February 1945, Group Captain Fauquier led the squadron in an attack on the U-Boat pens at Poortershaven. Photographs obtained showed that the bombing was accurate and concentrated. Since then, this officer has participated in a number of sorties during which the railway viaduct at Bielefeld, a railway bridge over the river Weser and a viaduct over a flooded meadow near to Arbergen Bridge were all rendered unusable by the enemy.

“By his brilliant leadership, undoubted skill and iron determination, this officer played a good part in the successes obtained. He has rendered much loyal and valuable service.”¹¹

He had indeed.



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CHAPTER 12

The Post-war Years

Following the end of the war, Johnny was posted back to RCAF Headquarters and reinstated to the rank of Air Commodore. It was written that,

“Once he had climbed out of his Lancaster after his last sortie, he vowed never again to touch the controls of an aircraft. He felt he had done his time and had pushed his luck to the end.”¹

Johnny was repatriated to Canada on 6 October and on 4 December 1945, John Emilius Fauquier DSO and Two Bars DFC retired as the Royal Canadian Air Force’s most decorated airman. In 1947, the Government of France named him a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour and awarded him the Croix de Guerre avec Palm.

Sadly, the war and the long separations had taken their toll and Johnny and Dorothy were divorced.

Like virtually all of the Bomber Command veterans, Johnny, despite his undisputed accomplishments, was self-effacing and, whenever he had a chance, gave credit to the ground crew that supported the airmen. A 15 October 1945 article in the *Globe & Mail* reported on an interview Johnny had



given. The reporter referred to, "the dark-eyed, hard-muscled, ex-bush pilot and air commodore" who gave credit to, "the ground-crew man who did all the dirty work."

During the interview Johnny indicated that he was planning to take his place in the building of, "Canada's commercial air future in one way or another." He may have looked into this but, together with 'Tiny' Wilson whom he had worked with in Quebec prior to the war and during his time with 405 Squadron, Johnny was eventually lured back into the excitement of the mining exploration business that he had left prior to joining the air force.

Reg Lane recalled,

*"Johnny and his friend 'Tiny' Wilson discovered the rich iron ore deposits of Wabush and Ungava. He was a millionaire one day and broke the next. He made and lost money more times than anyone else I ever heard of."*²

According to Ed Houston, an Ontario Supreme Court Justice, "One of the times he was wiped out in the mining business was when he was defrauded."

Ottawa, Oct. 15 (Staff). — "Johnny" Fauquier is through with the air force, but not with flying. He's not quite sure what it will be yet, but he is going back to take his place in the building of "Canada's commercial air future in some way or another."

The dark-eyed, hard-muscled ex-bush pilot and air commodore could take credit for having done more than any other Canadian to make bombing effective—but he won't.

He gave an interview to newspapermen here today which seemed to have as its main purpose his anxiety to assert that publicity about the feats of the air force had been "grossly unfair." Aircrew were given all the credit while the "Erk," the ground-crew man who did all the dirty work, wrestled day and night on open airfields getting busted-up planes back into shape, went forgotten. Most of the work was done in the open because there were too many planes and too little time to put them in hangars.

"And don't tell me than an English airfield in winter isn't a cold place," he added. "While he was out there we were sleeping."

The aircrew were overfed, over well-treated and over-glorified, according to the leader of the famous Pathfinder group.

Air Com. Fauquier was one of the very few men in the Pathfinder force who could openly wear his golden albatross badge. He was a marked man, anyway, blacklisted by the Germans. If he had dropped over Germany he would have been turned over to the tender care of the Gestapo, not the high command. Some RAF Pathfinders did meet this fate, but in spite of the Gestapo's modern methods of "interrogation" and millions of pounds spent on a fairly efficient spy system, the Germans never did find out the real secrets of the Pathfinder operations.

Globe & Mail, 15 October 1945

In fact, a Canadian Press newspaper article dated 12 May 1959 headlined, “RCAF Storm Brewing Over Johnny Fauquier” reported that,

“The wartime ‘King of the Pathfinders’ won’t be in England tomorrow when the Queen Mother makes a special presentation to his World War II buddies of the Royal Air Force’s famous 617 Dambusting Squadron. He said yesterday he had to pass up on the RAF invitation because he couldn’t afford the trip.”³

The article goes on to explain that Johnny, “lost \$170,000 in one day in 1957 when Aconic Mining Corporation stock dropped on the Toronto Stock Exchange from \$10 a share to \$1.” Johnny was a vice-president of the corporation. The president and general manager of the company were, at the time, on trial for fraud and wash trading -the same person acting as buyer and seller of the stock.

Sadly, Johnny’s long-time friend ‘Tiny’ Wilson, was killed in a flying accident. As Justice Houston recalled, “Tiny was a passenger in a float plane flying from Labrador to Montreal and drowned when it crashed. Johnny was devastated. Tiny’s death hit him hard. It was the worst crisis in his life.” Johnny’s daughter-in-law recalled that, “Johnny was very upset” and had said that, “Tiny shouldn’t have been flying that day.”

Johnny and his second wife, Mary (Burden) eventually settled in Toronto where he operated a concrete business,



Johnny and Mary Fauquier

owned and operated a car-wash and later, in partnership with Mary, became part of the 'Johnston and Daniel Ltd. Real Estate' firm. According to Johnny's nephew, "Uncle John was very good at getting the listings and Aunt Mary was very good at closing the deals."

Johnny passed away in Toronto on 4 April 1981 at the age of 72 years. He was buried at Ottawa's Beechwood Cemetery, the National Military Cemetery of Canada, where a military firing party fired a well-deserved salute.



(l-r) Adolf Galland (Luftwaffe General and flying ace), Douglas Bader (Legendary RAF flying ace), Johnny Fauquier, and Johnnie Johnson (RAF fighter pilot) at a Commonwealth Wartime Aircrew Reunion in Winnipeg, 1980

Wartime 'savior of London' *John Fauquier dies at 72*

By Vickie McGrath

(Times Staff Writer)

Ottawa native John Fauquier, the only Canadian to command the RCAF's famous wartime Bomber Command, died at age 72 of a heart attack Friday.

Fauquier was best-known as "the savior of London" for his leadership of the 600-bomber raid on the Pomeroy rocket base on the British coast, where the V-1 and V-2 rockets were being developed.

"War was his cup of tea," his widow, Gis, said this weekend as he pondered old pictures and various clippings of his father's feats. "He was the best pilot in the world."

"He was the type that actually enjoyed war."

A pilot who served under the famous group captain has quoted him as saying:

"I want you to go right in there as close as you can and drop those damned bombs right down the smokestacks. And don't be worrying about any of that surviving crew, because if you survive this raid, I'll be taking you out on another one and another one anyway."

The only Canadian to receive three Distinguished Service orders, Fauquier will accorded full military honors at today's funeral service in Toronto. He will then be brought



John Fauquier
Lod Bomber

home for burial in the family plot here.

He got his start as a bush pilot in Northern Ontario and joined the Royal Canadian Air Force on Nov. 1933 with 300,000 miles already on his log book.

He spent his first year as a flying instructor at Trenton before being shipped overseas to lead the 1st RCAF flying squadron, earning the popular title "King of the Pathfinders."

His greatest feat in three years of duty was raid on Pomeroy, one of the most vital targets of the war. That (Intelli) August night, 41 Allied bomber crews were lost, but the attack was said to have killed several German scientists and delayed the use of the dreaded rockets on British cities by a full year.

Fellow pilots said he flew the big bombers—Halifaxes and Lancasters—like a fighter pilot, on pathfinding missions, which involved going ahead to mark targets with fire-bombs; he was known to transfix Germany to elude enemy searchlights and anti-aircraft guns.

Fauquier was promoted to air commander during the war but decided to stay as group captain, in order to stay in the air, away from a desk.

He was again promoted to air commander in 1945.

"He refused the promotion and did 26 more missions," said Gis of her father.

Fauquier also received the Air Crew Europe Star with France and Germany Clasp, a Defence Medal, a Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp, a War Medal with mention in Dispatches, an Oak Leaf, the French Legion of Honour, and the French Croix de Guerre with Palm.

Johnny's Ottawa Citizen Obituary

Although G/C John Searby had played the role of Master Bomber at Pennemunde, the Fleet Street press dubbed Johnny Fauquier "The Savior of London" for reducing the damage to the city by the Nazi's V-2 rockets.



Air Commodore John Emilius Fauquier's Medal Set
(held by the Canadian War Museum)

(l-r) Distinguished Service Order with two Bars; Distinguished Flying Cross; 1939-1945 Star; Aircrew Europe Star; Defence Medal; Canadian Volunteer Service Medal; War Medal 1939-1945; Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur (France), Croix de Guerre (France)





www.bombercommandmuseum.ca

APPENDIX

THE RCAF BOMBER GROUP IN ACTION

An address by JOHN E. FAUQUIER DSO and two Bars DFC
Empire Club of Canada - Toronto, Ontario
22 November, 1945

You have been informed that I am going to talk to you of the exploits of Royal Canadian Air Force Bomber Group, but I am sure you will permit me to tell you something of the larger organization, Bomber Command of the Royal Air Force, of which the Canadian Bomber Group was so vital a part. Equally vital was the part played by the R.C.A.F. air crew who, apart from those in the Canadian Group, were spread throughout the other Bomber Groups of the RCAF Bomber Command.

Perhaps the best way in which I can explain Bomber Command's contribution in this war is to give you a short history of this great organization and tell you how it operated.

There are very few people, for instance, who realize that this one branch of the Royal Air Force was approximately equivalent in numbers to the entire Canadian Army Overseas.

Bomber Command at the beginning of the war started in a modest way. It grew from a handful of grave men in very indifferent aircraft, as we know them today, mostly Whitleys and Wellington 1-C's, and it might amuse you to know that at the outset of the war, these few original members of the Command were ordered to drop paper propaganda leaflets on such heavily defended German cities as Essen, Duisberg, Cologne, etc., but no bombs were to be carried. In fact, strict orders were issued to make sure that the propaganda bundles were packed loosely, as it would never do to have a bundle drop on a German's head and hurt him. From these modest beginnings, the Command grew, under the brilliant leadership of Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur

Harris, to a weapon of such size and might that by its achievements it undoubtedly saved countless thousands of casualties for our Army and shortened the war by many months, in fact, years.

Let there be no mistake about this: the strategic bombing of Germany contributed more than any other factor to her defeat. One has only to see the devastation in Germany to realize that no country could put up a prolonged defence under such a hammering as she received. Evidence of this is the statement of Field Marshal Kesserling, probably Germany's most outstanding soldier in this war, who stated that the strategic bombing of Germany was probably more responsible for her defeat than any other factor.

Few people today are aware of the price that the Bomber crews paid for this. In killed and missing alone, not wounded, the casualties amounted to fifty per cent of Air Crews engaged on operations. This figure is by far the highest of any fighting force of comparable size. They also indicate the frantic efforts that the enemy made to stop the avalanche of bombs. His defences against those raids grew in size and effectiveness throughout the years of war. His night-fighter organization, for example, was his only fighting arm which grew stronger towards the end of the war and it was only by really brilliant radio counter-measures and strategy, that our Air Forces escaped as lightly as they did in the closing months of the war.

It is perhaps not generally appreciated by Canadians that the leadership provided by the Royal Air Force in Bomber Command operational planning was of the highest order and contributed greatly to the success of our raids.

When one considers that the enemy employed over one million men and women to halt these raids, it can be seen that a high standard of strategy was necessary.

It is always surprising to me to meet the number of people who imagine that a raid consisted of merely telling some air crew to raid, say Berlin, when you stop to realize that a good-sized bomber raid is the equivalent of an army division launched against a heavily defended target, you will readily see that the raid becomes a battle and therefore, required co-ordination and planning. For instance, feints were made, fake raids on nearby

towns put on to draw off fighters from the vicinity of the actual target; radio curtains were thrown up to screen the approach of the main force; our own Bomber Command Intruder aircraft were sent in to shoot up and bomb enemy night-fighter aerodromes to keep their fighters grounded; our own bomber command night-fighters engaged the enemy's fighters wherever they could be found. All this and more had to be co-ordinated and planned to the second and this was done at the headquarters of Bomber Command.

Before I explain to you in detail how a raid was planned and executed, perhaps it is necessary for you to know how different bomb loads were chosen for different cities. There was in Air Ministry a special committee composed of experts on bombs and explosives and it was this committee's task to decide which was the most effective type of bomb for each individual target.

To give you a simple example, when we were attacking Turin, Italy, which was built as you probably know, almost entirely of stone and marble, it would have been silly for us to carry incendiaries, and therefore our load consisted almost entirely of high explosive bombs. The type of bomb employed was mostly 1,000 pounders, 2,000 pounders and 4,000 pounders with a sprinkling of 8,000 pounders.

Conversely, when we were attacking the medieval Hanseatic trading ports of Germany, like Lubeck, Rostock and Dresden, incendiaries were the order of the day, as nearly all the buildings in these cities were made of wood and would burn fiercely. This information was passed to Bomber Command and was used by them as a guide when they were detailing bomb loads to the various groups.

The actual planning of an air raid began with another special committee who chose all targets we were to attack and gave each one of them a priority. The priorities were decided according to their importance of the moment. For example, when the submarine menace was at its peak, it was not only necessary for us to sink them at sea, we had to strike at their very source where they were manufactured. In this case, we would be ordered to attack such towns as Hamburg, Kiel, Bremen, or some of the Ruhr cities, where the sub parts were made.

All these priorities were then examined by the Commander-in-Chief at Bomber Command and were attacked in order, provided that is, that the weather allowed us to take off, reach our target, see it, and return. The Commander-in-Chief, after consultation with the meteorological experts, decided what target was to be attacked and how many planes were necessary to do the job. The actual plan of attack was made out by his operational staff advisors and presented to him for his approval, after which it was passed to the various groups in Bomber Command.

There were actually twelve groups in the Command, four were training groups, one was a daylight bombing group, one was a radio counter-measure group, and six were night-bombing groups, one of the largest of which was our own Royal Canadian Air Force Bomber Group. Of these six fighting groups, each one consisted of anywhere from 250 to 350 four-engined bombers. The population of each group was approximately 25,000 to 30,000 of all ranks. Thus it can be seen that our Canadian Bomber Group was approximately the equivalent of two army divisions.

The six groups would be advised that they were to attack a certain city and the bomb load each was to carry. In addition, a Zero Hour was chosen and each group given a different time on target, as it would be impossible to have over one thousand heavy bombers over one spot at one time. So if, for example, No. 6 Group was detailed for the attack, they might be given the middle part of the raid for their time of attack and if the raid was to last twenty minutes, they would be allotted a zero hour of Z plus 8 to Z plus 13. That would mean that all our bombers would have to drop their bombs and be off the target between eight and thirteen minutes after the attack opened. In addition, all groups would be advised of what method the Pathfinders would use to mark and illuminate the target.

Immediately on receipt of this information, the operational planning staff of each group headquarters would then figure in the minutest detail to all phases of the proposed attack and allot different times for bombing to each squadron in their respective groups.

When the plans were complete, they were then passed to the Squadron Commander, who after studying them, gathered his men together in what was known as the Briefing Room and briefed them, or in other words, told them exactly what to do from the time they took off until they returned. Such information as the air speed they were to use, the height they were to be at at predetermined points on the route to the target and on the way back, what they could expect when they reached the target in the way of markers from Pathfinders, what colours the markers would be, and the methods the Pathfinders were going to use to illuminate after they had dropped their markers.

While the briefing was on, the Ground Crews would be frantically checking and rechecking engines, air frames, cameras, radio equipment, radar, instruments, guns, ammunition, electrical apparatus, oxygen, and of course, putting the bomb load on.

As soon as the briefing was over and the aircraft signed out as serviceable by the Ground Crews, the pilots would marshal their aircraft. That is, they would line them up nose to tail near the end of the runway to be used that night.

Then began the wait which was so hard on the nerves. This probably was the most trying time of the whole raid. The time would come eventually, however, for the crews to get into their flying clothes which consisted of heavy fleece-lined boots, heavy sweaters, electrically heated outer clothes for the gunners, electrically heated shoes and gloves for the gunners, check their helmets to insure that the oxygen and inter-communication system was serviceable, and finally, collect their parachutes and then climb into an air crew bus and out to their respective aircraft.

Approximately ten minutes before the time of takeoff you would hear as many as 160 engines come to life and roar up to full revolutions as the pilots gave them their final check before take-off. It literally used to shake the earth. Finally, the aircraft would start rolling heavily toward the runways. You couldn't taxi quickly because the aircraft weighed at that time, before take-off, somewhere between 60,000 and 70,000 pounds. They were difficult to handle when they were that heavy, so we had to be very careful.

You drove slowly up to the end of the runway and when it was your turn to take off you turned slowly into wind on the runway and, on receipt of a green light flashed at you by the Aerodrome Control Pilot or starter, you pushed your throttles forward and were away. From that time until you returned you were entirely on your own. Unlike fighting on the ground or daylight bombing, when you could see what your pals are doing, at night you are entirely alone.

Then began the long haul, climbing as fast as possible in order to be at the correct height as ordered at briefing by the time you reached the enemy coast. The enemy coast will gradually appear before you and you would see searchlights snapped on very much as a flashlight would appear to you across a field at night, except that the silver and light blue beams, as thin as pencils, reached up far above your height. At the same time, orange bursts exploding from heavy anti-aircraft shells at approximately your height would tell you the battle was about to commence.

You would watch the searchlights very closely and avoid large concentrations of them if it was at all possible. To be caught in their beams and coned was to ask for trouble, as the Germans wisely considered a bird in the hand worth two in the bush and would throw everything within range at the illuminated aircraft. Unless you got out of this cone fairly soon, in approximately thirty to forty seconds, your chances of survival were rapidly approaching the zero mark.

To be illuminated by a large number of searchlights at night gives one the most conspicuous feeling imaginable. In fact you could not feel more conspicuous if you were to walk down Yonge Street without your trousers. It makes you feel as if every German in Germany were looking at you personally, and rubbing his hands and saying, "We've got you this time, Boy."

However, by altering course slightly and diving and gathering a little speed it was usually easy enough to get out of the view of the coastal defences and start again your long trip to the target. From the moment the enemy coast was sighted every eye in the aircraft was straining and searching for enemy night-fighters and that meant seven pairs of very alert eyes. You probably know that a bomber crew consisted of pilot, navigator,

bomb aimer, flight engineer, wireless operator, mid-upper gunner and tail gunner.

If you saw the fighter in time, you took avoiding action. If not, you were usually listed as 'Missing,' as things happened pretty quickly in the air and especially at night, so very little warning was ever given of the approach of this type of danger.

From time to time before reaching your target, it was necessary to pass over or near ground defences which never failed to salute you with a barrage of heavy flak. This would continue until you neared your goal, when far ahead, sometimes forty or fifty miles, you would see that the Pathfinders were on their job by the target markers which they would drop to mark the main point in the target that you were about to attack.

Immediately after, hundreds of flares would be dropped also by the Pathfinders to illuminate the city beneath. We were usually then about 20,000 feet in the air. Of course, the enemy defences here were more concentrated and the display of fireworks would put your Toronto Exhibition to shame - searchlights by the thousands, guns both heavy and light firing different coloured shells, the burst of heavy anti-aircraft shells all around you and, unfortunately, too often you would see the exchange of tracer bullets followed by a long thin stream of fire hurtling vertically towards the earth. This would be one of our own bombers on fire. It would be followed by a crash, by a large, red, fiery, mushroom-shaped explosion which seemed to blossom out and stay exposed for two or three seconds, then die out leaving a few glowing embers.

Occasionally, you would see a tremendous mid-air explosion which would light the sky for many miles around. That would be one of our poor chaps who received a direct hit, usually in a petrol tank, and exploded in mid-air.

Various forms of anti-aircraft shells were used by the enemy. Some of the more spectacular ones would rocket into the air, leaving a trail of sparks behind them and on bursting, three other rockets would shoot out at different angles until they, too, exploded.

On the ground was a bubbling mass of brilliant white light, which looked exactly like boiling solder in a plumber's fire pot. These white lights were the incendiaries fiercely burning, and

when they set buildings on fire the white light would turn into a deep orange. Occasionally, when we raided towns where there were chemical factories we would see flames of every colour of the rainbow -blue, green, yellow and pink. All the time, the flashes from the gun muzzles of heavy flak batteries could be seen as the guns fired. Then came the wait of a few seconds, approximately twelve to seventeen seconds, and finally the thud and blast of air as the shell exploded near you. Often you could smell the fumes from the shell explosions as you flew through the spot where the explosion took place a second before.

It is very hard to explain all the details but it was rather a pretty sight, even if we were playing for keeps. Throughout all that time only the gunners were able to keep a lookout for enemy fighters as the rest of the crew had, a special job to do. The bombing run was usually a tense few moments, when the bomb aimer guided you to your aiming point. Eventually the time would come when he would yell "bombs gone," and you could feel the aircraft jump as each heavy bomb left its station. You usually kept on a steady course for approximately thirty seconds in order to allow the camera to take a picture of the actual spot where your bombs landed. Immediately after this you set a course for home and I can assure you it was a really wonderful feeling.

However, all danger was not yet over, as all the way back you had to be on the lookout for night-fighters, as you were on the way in. If you saw one a running fight would ensue, until he either got you or you lost him. Sooner or later, however, the English coast would appear, and then your own aerodrome. You then wait your turn to land and after landing be interrogated.

Sometimes these trips took as much as nine or twelve hours. That, with the relaxation of the tension after landing brought on extreme fatigue and that is why most air crews received such liberal leave.

I think that now is a good time to tell you something of the history and methods of the Pathfinders. In the beginning of the war you will recall the Royal Air Force had won renown for the Battle of Britain. Shortly after this, fighters found it very difficult to come to grips with the enemy and it was from this point on that Bomber Command took the spotlight. In those days, the equipment used by Bomber Command was such that only

approximately three percent of our bombs were hitting the aiming point and unfortunately it was at this precise time that the submarine menace grew to its peak. This situation encouraged certain people to believe the time had come to disband Bomber Command, splitting it up between Coastal Command and various other branches of the services.

Thus, it will be noted that some indication of the might of the heavy bomber had to be given to the public. With this in mind, the first one thousand aircraft raid was planned and turned out to be a very successful raid indeed. It was originally planned for Hamburg but the weather made it impossible for us to carry it out on Hamburg, so two days later we attacked Cologne and at one time I can assure you the whole city, without exception, was on fire. I was there and I know. This spectacular raid once again convinced the powers that be that separate air force and especially a bombing force could be very useful indeed, but at the same time it was realized that greater accuracy in bombing was absolutely essential.

Shortly after this, several Squadron Commanders were detailed to report to Air Ministry, of which I was one, where we discussed the formation of a corps d'elite who would consist of all our best crews in the Command and who would lead all raids in the hope that their example and incendiary fires would act as markers for the more inexperienced crews following them. This name was later changed to the 'Fire Raising Force' and finally named 'The Pathfinders.' The man who was to head this force is probably well known to you. He is Air Vice-Marshal Bennett -no doubt one of the world's best navigators.

Under his leadership, the Force rapidly grew in effectiveness, due to an extensive and concentrated training program, into a full-sized group in Bomber Command which was not only capable of marking and illuminating very accurately, but could, in addition, carry a heavy load of bombs.

The technique used was roughly as follows: In the case of targets at close range, Mosquito Aircraft were sent out, flying very high, with a bomb load of target indicators. These were bombs filled with 'Roman Candles,' with a barometric fuse. When the bomb dropped, as it descended through the rarefied air and got into heavier air the barometric fuse was ignited or detonated

which in turn would detonate a small explosive charge which lighted the bomb off and lighted the Roman Candles and out would shower some different coloured stars. It was rather interesting to know that one of the methods by which these Mosquitoes was controlled was by radar from England, enabling them to drop their target indicators with an accuracy of approximately one hundred yards from their aiming point when the pilot couldn't even see the target. In fact, the signal to drop was given from England.

Immediately after the Mosquito had dropped his indicator, Lancaster aircraft of Pathfinders followed up by dropping different coloured target indicators on top of the first ones, in order to keep the target continually marked throughout the attack and in case the high explosive bombs blew the original markers out. In case of longer range targets, we were forced to use aircraft carrying their own radar and these aircraft would fly over the target by means of this radar equipment and drop their target indicators.

There would be as many as ten or fifteen aircraft so equipped doing this work. The accuracy on this type of target was not so great as in the close raid targets, but with fifteen aircraft dropping their markers at the same time, the main force crews following obviously would average out the error if they aimed at the center of all the markers visible. In other cases, the target was first located by radar, an indicator dropped, immediately followed by a straight line of flares dropped at intervals for a distance of about five miles, and by the light of these flares, a special crew would go as low as was safe in view of the defences and visually bomb a particular building or aiming point in the city beneath.

Now, a word about a Special Duty Squadron which I was fortunate enough to command in the closing stages of the war. This Squadron was formed primarily with the idea of breaching the Mohne, Eder and Sorpe Dams. The officer chosen to train and lead this Squadron was Wing Commander Gibson, of whom you all know. His success on this raid is now history. As this squadron was so successful in this initial task it was decided that it should continue performing special duties of this nature, and with this in mind, they were provided with streamlined 12,000

pound bombs, primarily for attacking large battleships and reinforced concrete submarine pens which the Germans used to repair and refit their submarines and still be safe from the ordinary bombs.

Toward the end of the war, we received the news that a new bomb was going to be sent to us, weighing 22,500 pounds. In order to give you a rough idea of the size of this bomb, I assure you, you could drive a good-sized Buick up the side of it and the bomb was bigger in diameter from the distance from the top of the hood of the Buick to the ground. It was considerably longer than the largest Cadillac. As great accuracy was required in order not to waste these bombs, the Squadron was provided with special bomb-sights. The accuracy of these bombs and the crews dropping them can best be judged by the fact that when we raided the viaduct at Arnsberg in Germany, the greatest error was one hundred yards from the aiming point and when one considers that these bombs shift approximately 10,000 tons of earth when they explode, it can be seen that it wouldn't have been too safe to have been on that viaduct. It might interest you to know that these bombs penetrate into the ground 110 feet and go forward about 65 feet.

Now, a word about the men on the ground who kept the aircraft serviced and made all this possible by tremendous work, in rain, snow, and freezing cold. They were always ready to carry on 24 hours a day, day after day, to see that the aircraft were not just fit enough, but perfect in every detail.

I would like to say a few words about the men who did the bombing -your men. In any combat unit where casualties are high, morale is subjected to great stress. It is depressing to see the empty places at the mess table the next day. It is equally depressing for the new replacements coming in to have to occupy these places, but never for a moment did a crack appear. The will to do the job thoroughly never faltered.

Recently a public statement was made by a prominent Canadian over the radio, that these young men flew by the seat of their pants and took longer to train for civil airline flying than men without previous flying experience.

Well, I agree that comparisons are odious, but I cannot let this statement pass unchallenged. How can this gentleman

reconcile this statement with the facts, when you consider these same young men, your sons, brothers and friends, have taken off in really appalling weather, flown 1,000 miles through icing conditions, which have to be experienced to be believed, harried by night-fighters throughout, shot at by heavy guns, yet arrived at their targets to the second, and I mean to the second, not to the minute, but to the second. And then repeated the procedure on the homeward trip to arrive back at base and be forced to execute a landing on a radio beam with their aircraft as often as not badly shot up, in weather conditions when civil air lines wouldn't wheel their aircraft out of the hangar, let alone fly them.

No, this statement was unworthy, to say the least, and even if this gentleman had thought it true, it had better be left unsaid.

Finally, may I add a few words regarding something I mentioned earlier, concerning the saving of army casualties by the strategic bombing of Germany. Does anyone here seriously think that the war would be over now if Germany had been able to maintain her oil and gasoline plants intact, her iron and steel empire working full blast, her internal rail and road communications unimpaired, her canals filled with water and fit for navigation, her factories standing and producing war materials and her colossal army of civilian workers well housed and organized?

No! The war would be on today, and the casualties on D-Day would have been far higher. So, to those of you who suffered losses and to those who happened to be more fortunate and escaped, to all of you I say, "Remember those of Bomber Command who gave their lives so others might live."

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A geophysicist, teacher, and interpretive guide in the Canadian Rockies, Dave was a founding director of the Nanton Lancaster Society which operates the Bomber Command Museum of Canada. One of hundreds of the museum's volunteers, he has been primarily involved with the development of its library and archives, of display material for the museum, and with the research associated with its special events.

Dave is also the author of: *Baz -The Biography of S/Ldr. Ian Bazalgette VC DFC*, *People and Planes, FM-159 -The Lucky Lancaster, Nose Art -The Clarence Simonsen Collection, Big Joe McCarthy -The RCAF's American Dambuster, Leading the Stearmans, Calgary's Mountain Panorama, 50 Roadside Panoramas in the Canadian Rockies, Landmark Mountains of the Canadian Rockies*, www.peakfinder.com, and a number of mobile device applications for the Canadian Rockies.