

Flight Sergeant A.J.B Sibbald

Flight Engineer



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References: 97 Squadron Operational Record Books 1939-1943

Achieve Your Aim by Kevin Bending

Mark Howard

2021

Approved
George R.I.



J.D. Astor-Amstrong

College of Arms,
January, 1939.

Chester Herald
and Inspector of Royal
Air Force Badges

Commanding Officers:

Wg Cdr D.F.Balsdon

Wg Cdr J.H.Kynoch

Wg Cdr J.H.H.Collier DSO DFC

Wg Cdr G.D.Jones DSO DFC

Gp Capt N.H.Fresson DFC

Wg Cdr E.J.Carter DFC*

Wg Cdr A.W.Heward DFC* AFC

Gp Capt P.W.Johnson DSO DFC AFC

(* denotes Bar)

Early in 1941, a large donation was made to the British Government by the Malay Straits Settlements for the purchase of some Avro Manchester bomber aircraft. In appreciation of this, 97 Squadron was authorized to assume the title of "97 (Straits Settlements) Squadron", and it was reformed in February 1941, at Waddington.

25th February 1941 97 Squadron was scheduled to operate from RAF Coningsby as part of 5 Group. The Squadron began to convert to using Lancasters in January 1942 and, in March of that year, 97 Squadron re-located to Woodhall Spa.

re-formed 25.2.41 as No.97 (B) Sqdn from nucleus provided by No.207 (B) Sqdn at: Waddington Feb 1941-Mar 1941

Coningsby : Mar 1941-Mar 1942

Woodhall Spa : Mar 1942-Apr 1943

Bourn : Apr 1943-Apr 1944

"A", "B" & "C" Flts detached to Gransden Lodge, Graveley & Oakington, respectively during Aug/Sep 1943.

Coningsby : Apr 1944 onwards

Aircraft flown by 97 Squadron

Avro Manchester : Feb 1941-Feb 1942

Avro Lancaster B.I and B.III : Jan 1942 onwards



List of Operations

Sibbald, A.J.B. (F/Eng) Sgt

1. 19 Sept 44 Munchen Gladbach (W/C Baker),
2. 26/27 Sept 44 Karlsruhe (W/C Baker),
3. 5 Oct 44 Wilhemshaven (W/C Baker),
4. 14/15 Oct 44 Brunswick (W/C Baker),
5. 6 Nov 44 Gravenhorst (W/C Baker),
6. 11 Nov 44 Harburg (W/C Baker),
7. 26/27 Nov 44 Munich (W/C Baker),
8. 4 Dec 44 Heilbronn (W/C Baker),
9. 6 Dec 44 Giesson (W/C Baker),
10. 18/19 Dec 44 Gdynia (W/C Baker) shown as F/Sgt A.J.,
11. 21/22 Dec 44 Politz (W/C Baker) shown as A.J.,
- F/Sgt 12. 28/29 Dec 44 Horten (W/C Baker) shown as A.J.,
13. 31 Dec 44/1 Jan 45 Oslo Fiord – “Koln” (W/C Baker) shown as A.J.,
14. 1 Jan 45 Gravenhorst - Dortmund-Ems Canal (W/C Baker) shown as A.J.,
15. 14/15 Jan 44 Merseburg (W/C Baker) shown as A.J.,
16. 7/8 Feb 45 Dortmund Ems Canal (W/C Baker) shown as A.J.,
17. 13/14 Feb 45 Dresden (W/C Baker) shown as A.J.,
18. 19/20 Feb 45 Bohlen (W/C Baker) shown as A.J.,
19. 21/22 Feb 45 Gravenhorst – Dortmund Ems Canal (W/C Baker) shown as A.J.,



DETAILS FROM OPERATIONAL RECORD BOOK

19 September 1944 – Munchen Gladbach

Flying training this morning – GPI runs, fighter affiliation and bombing. 14 aircraft were detailed to attack Munchen-Gladbach. All these took off and none returned early. The attack was only a limited success, owing to lack of cohesion and a certain amount of confusion over the target. There were two aiming points, the more northerly of which was to be marked by green TI and bombed by a Main Green Force, while the more southerly was marked by Mosquitos with red spot fires and bombed by a Main Red Force. Most of the bombs eventually fell on the north aiming point. The first flares went down at 2133.6 (H being 2145) and good illumination resulted. Marker I was about to mark the S A/P but was blinded by his own exhaust, and he was not able to mark until 2149. By this time, however, the N A/P had been adequately marked with greens, and both sections of Main Force ordered to bomb these. Although the Main Red Force were now ordered to bomb reds, few bombs fell on these, as W/T Link I had re-broadcast the Controller's original orders by W/T. Flak was reported as slight. Haze was reported over the target, and considerable icing on route. All of our aircraft returned safely to base.

PB410J W/C R.Baker, Sgt A.J.B.Sibbald, F/O K.J.Parfit, F/L R.V.Allen, F/O F.H.Harrison (Vis A/B), F/Sgt F.A.John, Sgts D.H.Wonfor, D.Mallinson. Up 1918 Down 2341. 12 x 7" clusters, 2 x 1000lb MC (1/2 hour delay), 2 rec flares. No cloud. Target located by other flares. After an abortive run, dropped 3 clusters which were a big overshoot owing to a misunderstanding among crew due to interference on intercom. Checked and ran in again dropping visually. Unsatisfactory H2S picture.

26/27 September 1944 - Karlsruhe

The bodies of F/O Walker, F/Sgt Sharpe and Sgt Strowger (all of F/O Lopez's crew, missing 23/24 of this month) were today recovered from the Wash. 11 aircraft were detailed for operations, target Karlsruhe. All aircraft detailed took off, but F/O Negus (RAAF) in aircraft "C" returned early with u/s intercom in his rear turret. The attack failed, because cloud conditions and searchlights combined to make marking impossible. The target was covered with 10/10ths cloud, the base of which is believed to have been about 400'. The first blind markers (green TI) and flares (this Squadron provided the greater part of the flare force) went down to time, but it was found impossible to mark, and those aircraft able to see the green TI dropped their reds on it. Main Force were then ordered to bomb the mean point of impact of reds and greens. It is feared however that little damage was done. All our aircraft returned safely. The heavy flak, though slight, was above expectation. A few fighters were seen.

PB410J W/C R.Baker, Sgt A.J.B.Sibbald, F/O K.J.Parfit, F/O F.H.Harrison, F/L R.V.Allan (A/B 2), F/Sgt F.A.John, Sgts D.H.Wonfor, D.Mallinson. Up 0046 Down 0727. 12 x 7" clusters, 2 x TI green No 16, 2 rec flares. 10/10ths cloud, some small gaps. Target located by GPI. At 0356 ordered to bomb red and green TI. At 0358 hrs ordered to bomb green visually. At 0401 hrs told to go home when greens were dropped. 0403 hrs warned of fighters. All these passed on in capacity of Link No 1 and Deputy III. At 0410 hrs Main Force told to complete bombing and return to base. 0414.5 hrs enquired of Controller if any more messages to pass on; answer in negative. Reds and greens only visible for about 30 seconds through cloud. Results could not be seen.

5 October 1944 - Wilhelmshaven

4 aircraft were detailed this morning for a daylight attack on Wilhelmshaven. Only 3 took off, however. F/O Woolnough (RAAF) was the unlucky man. On arriving at his aircraft he found that one of the tyres was u/s ("M" PB461). He immediately transferred himself and his crew to the spare aircraft, "K". He ran the engines up for take-off, and the starboard outer burst into flames. By this time Last Possible Time of take-off had gone by, and F/O Woolnough reluctantly gave up. The other 3 aircraft had been detailed as Primary Visual Markers, but were able to do little accurate marking, as the target was found covered with low stratus cloud 10/10ths, with tops between 3,000 and 6,000 feet. The Controller ordered main force crews to drop on instruments, or, if they had no instruments, to follow H2S aircraft. These instructions were also followed by our own aircraft, of whom 2 bombed on instruments and one visually "by watching other aircraft bomb". It is feared that bombs fell over wide area, including Wilhelmshaven Bay. The opposition was heavy, although no fighters were seen. Heavy flak was moderate but accurate at first, developing into extremely accurate fire at the correct height. Batteries at Bremerhaven and Heligoland were also in action. All 3 aircraft detailed from this Squadron returned safely to their base. Meanwhile training was going on, with blind runs on Boston, and bombing details, and a 184 cross country, and some Night Fighter Affiliation exercises were done at night.

ND495N W/C R.Baker, Sgt A.J.B.Sibbald, F/O K.J.Parfit, F/O F.H.Harrison, F/L R.V.Allan (AB 2), F/Sgt F.A.John, Sgts D.A.Wonfor, D.Mallinson. Up 0820 Down 1245. 4 x 1000lb ANM 65, 4 x TI green No 16. 10/10ths cloud tops about 2000'. Target located visually by watching other aircraft bombing. H2S unsatisfactory. Some bombing seen on last resort targets on way out.

14/15 October 1944 - Brunswick

Today's event was a mission to Brunswick, for which 10 aircraft of this Squadron were detailed – 2 as Primary Blind Markers and the rest as Flare Force and Supporters. All of our aircraft reached the target, though one must technically be counted as abortive – aircraft D (F/O Ryan) – as his flares hung up. Crews enjoyed clear weather and an almost complete absence of flak. Searchlights also were negligible. A marking point in the centre of the town was to be marked with red TI, and, with the help of a system of overshooting by main force, it was hoped that the whole of the town would be severely damaged. The attack went smoothly and to plan, and its success was indubitably laid on the foundation of flares and green TI dropped by aircraft of this Squadron and 83 Squadron. Main force were called in to bomb at 0229 (H-1) and were ordered to "complete bombing and return to base" at 0238 hours. All of our aircraft returned safely to their base. Reconnaissance aircraft over the target one hour later reported that the centre of the town and large portions to the west were burning fiercely, with smoke up to 15,000'.

PB410J W/C R.Baker, Sgt A.J.B.Sibbald, F/O K.J.Parfit, F/O R.V.Allan, F/O F.H.Harrison (AB 2), F/Sgt F.A.John, Sgts D.H.Wonfor, D.Mallinson. Up 2302 Down 0555. 9 x 7" clusters, 2 x TI green No 16, 2 rec flares. No cloud, vis good. Target confirmed on H2X – excellent picture. Centred on three green TI which were burning in the middle of the town. The red TIs to port slightly west of the most westerly point green TI which formed a close triangle. Bombing was a bit scattered, but large proportion fell in built up area of town. 18 loads of incendiaries dropped well clear of town up to 14 miles due west.

6 November 1944 – Gravenhorst (Ems-Weser Canal)

Further news today has been received of a member of the same crew, Aus F/O K.H.Frost. His body was recovered from the sea near Snettisham, Norfolk. Quite an amount of training this morning consisting of Y runs, bombing, GPI runs, Loran cross countries and air sea firing. 15 Lancasters have been detailed for an operation this evening. 9 aircraft to attack the Ems-Weser Canal at Gravenhorst, and the other 6 to attack Rheine. The operation on the canal was carried out from 15000 ft in clear weather and good vis. Slight light flak and fighter activity on last leg in to target and over target. Controller believed he identified Canal 4 miles SE of target & reported flares to be widely scattered with centre 10 miles NE of this point. However, several aircraft reported the two green TIs as close either side of the Canal embankment. Blind flares reported to have been dropped over the green TI but drifted eastwards in a stronger wind than forecast. At H-4 target had not been marked and Controller ordered more flares to east. One marker went in at H-2 but before red TI could be assessed it went out. The Main Force were required to orbit but at H+8½ in the absence of red marking Controller abandon mission was ordered. The operation against Rheine by 6 Supporters was carried out in much the same weather and defence. Bombs were dropped on instruments as briefed & no results observed. All aircraft were diverted on return owing to weather at base. F/O Greening crash landed at Knettishall but the crew were fortunately uninjured.

PB410J W/C R.Baker, Sgt A.J.Sibbald, F/O K.J.Parfit, F/L R.V.Allan, F/O F.H.Harrison (AB2), W/O F.A.John, Sgts D.Mallinson, D.H.Wonfor. Up 1639 Down 2110. 9 x 7" clusters, 2 rec flares. Clear. Found target by light of other flares and marker. H2X u/s, also Gee. Saw 2 green TI and flares ahead. Released flares as briefed on green TI. Landed at Langham.

11 November 1944 – Harburg

10 Lancasters have been detailed for operations against a target at Harburg. Thin stratus at 12,500 ft. Some e/a activity on last leg in to target, accurate predicted H/F, moderate barrage later. The primary blind markers and flare forces dropped their flares from approx 17,500 ft. Controller ordered Main Force to bomb centre cluster of red TI. Good bombing resulted on or near M/P with incendiaries, later covering town. Red TI attracted some bombing but main weight of attack believed to have fallen as required. Large explosion seen. All aircraft returned safely to base.

PB410J W/C R.Baker, Sgt A.J.B.Sibbald, F/O K.J.Parfit, F/L R.V.Allan, F/O F.H.Harrison (AB2), W/O F.A.John, Sgts D.H.Wonfor, D.Mallinson. Up 1645 Down 2141. 12 x 7" clusters, 2 x 1000lb MC (½ hour delay). Clear at target; patches of stratus up to 18,500'. Target identified by ground detail confirmed by H2S. We were slightly late at target due to change of wind. Dropped flares as briefed. Four reds and one green TI seen on first run – believed dummies, as they were early and very close together. Very difficult for Controller to give instructions for bombing owing to number of red TIs in area. Directions given for Main Force, and target area bombed. Several large explosions seen, one with orange flash.

26/27 November 1944 – Munich

High level bombing, Y runs and cross countries carried out. 16 aircraft have been detailed to attack Munich. The Squadron force consists of 2 primary blind markers, 2 u/t PBM, 8 Flare Force in 4 waves and 2 Supporters, who were routed via Italy and Mont Blanc to attack the target from an easterly direction. On arrival the weather was clear with slight industrial haze and the river, streets and houses could clearly be seen. Defences were caught napping, very slight H/F at start followed by Isight but very accurate predicted flak giving way to a weak barrage. The Controller arrived late, so Marker I assumed control on Controller's instructions pending his arrival. Flares were placed accurately and illumination was good. Marker I tally-ho at H-7. He assessed himself as almost on A/P & ordered fellow markers to back up. Controller had by then arrived and confirmed accuracy of markers. Backing up was finally completed by H-1, producing a very bright patch of red. Main Force were called in to bomb approx H hour, & were warned against spoofs west of town and against undershooting. Reports show that the whole of the planned sector was well ablaze. A very successful attack is anticipated. Good photographs were obtained. After a long journey lasting approx 9 hours all aircraft and crews landed safely at base.

PB410J W/C R.Baker, Sgt A.J.Sibbald, F/O K.J.Parfit, F/L R.V.Allan, F/L F.H.Harrison (AB2), W/O F.A.John, Sgts D.Mallinson, D.H.Wonfor. Up 2334 Down 0827. 6 x 1000lb MC, 5 x TI green No 2, 1 x TI green B21, 2 rec flares. Clear, no cloud, good vis. Target identified on H2S. Whole raid went according to plan, and bombing appeared well concentrated. We were not required for our emergency method. Dropped bombs blind as instructed. As Link II could not contact Link I (no W/T contact) we took over duties of Link I.

4 December 1944 - Heilbronn

Improved weather - eight aircraft were airborne first thing in the morning for training. 16 aircraft took off soon after 1600hrs to attack Heilbronn, two primary blind markers, flare forces in 3 waves & two supporters. Weather was clear over target except for some thin stratus at 7,500ft. Flak negligible, some predicted heavy flak south of Mannheim, little fighter activity. The attack was punctual with PBM, two of whose load fell in the centre of the town. A profusion of flares followed, producing intense illumination of the whole town and adjoining countryside. Flares were very accurate. F/O Yaxley had icing troubles leaving target, and turned back eventually, breaking cloud 8 miles east of Karlsruhe. He reported this town well ablaze, but fires at Heilbronn even better. All crews returned safely to base.

PB410J - W/C R.Baker, Sgt A.J.Sibbald, F/O K.J.Parfitt, F/L R.V.Allan, F/O F.H.Harrison (VBA), W/O F.A.John, F/S D.Mallinson, Sgt D.H.Wonfor. Up 1617 Down 2242. 14 x CP No1. Clear sky. Good visibility. Target identified by green TI. 1st green TI fell about 1 minute before we dropped our flares, so we dropped visually. The first flare being released 5.4 miles short of the green TI. No other flares were down at the time. 1st stick of flares after ours were 2 miles to port. No red or yellow TIs seen at time we were over. Ground detail could be seen and the A/P identified easily. Target subsequently well illuminated.

6 December 1944 - Glesson

Again, 13 aircraft detailed for operations, the raid schedule reading the same except for one crew, S/Ldr Parker replacing F/L Shorter, the latter now having completed 45 sorties & has one more to do to finish his crew with the same number. All 13 aircraft took off at dusk, consisting of 2 PBM, 3 waves of flare force & 2 supporters. The weather was clear over the target. Defences were slight, flak being negligible, but considerable fighter activity over target, Glesson. Only one PBM released; the other either not satisfied with Box, or instruments u/s. The green cascaded at H-11 & was followed by 1st flares which, although rather short, illuminated the A/P. Illumination was sufficient for the target to be marked at H-8, assessed as slightly wset & almost on railway line. Backing up produced a close concentration. Controller called in Main Force to bomb at H-3 1/2, which was accurate, producing two large, believed petrol explosions. The 3rd wave of flares was not required. F/O Yaxley was again unfortunate, his aircraft being shot up & his mid upper gunner being wounded; others have very close shaves. Sgt Wilkinson (MU/G) is now in Station Sick Quarters and progressing favourably. Numerous combat reports were reported & F/O Yaxley claims a JU88 probably destroyed, his aircraft being damaged by a ME410, which also took part in the encounter, the port outer being put entirely out of action. The raid was considered highly successful, and all aircraft and crews returned safely to base.

18/19 December 1944- Gdynia

Weather fine in morning. Squadron informed that operations are scheduled. 15 aircraft detailed, take-off approx 1600hrs. weather fine for take-off & good effort anticipated. All aircraft took off and returned safely. Target was port installations and ships in Gdynia harbour - almost as long a trip as Konigsberg.

21/22 December 1944 - Politz

Sixteen aircraft have been detailed for operations. Briefing took place after lunch & one crew was cancelled. Take-off was at 1630hrs, but 2 crews were unable to get airborne owing to technical defects. 13 aircraft and crews eventually set off to attack an oil target at Politz near Stettin, in very misty weather, visibility only half way up the runway. The crews were ordered just before taking off that they were to divert, on return, to Wick. Although all the reports are not yet to hand, the raid was not considered very successful. There were no Mosquito aircraft marking the target, and the Lancaster marking was not successful. Five aircraft landed away at Wick & the Squadron Commander landed at Metheringham. Other crews were told over R/T to land at Base, but the visibility was very poor. F/O Sinclair (Aus) & crew are missing from this operation - six aircraft from other Squadrons crashed between base and Lincoln. The attack was made by Primary Visual & Blind Markers, and three waves of flare force, the average time of mission being 10 hours.

28/29 December 1944 - Horten

Weather very cold, but was clear enough for flying training. Only 4 aircraft were detailed for tonight's operations, and were briefed at 1700hrs to operate as primary visual markers. The operation was against cruisers near Horten - identification was difficult - a marker reported that he saw a ship, which appeared of a cruiser shape, surrounded by many bomb bursts. Heavy flak and light flak from ships east of Horten Mole was intense. 3 searchlights and no fighter activity. Flares and bombs were dropped from 9000ft in clear weather below, but stratus at 14000ft obscured the moonlight and consequently visibility was inadequate.

31 December 1944/1 January 1945 – Oslo Fiord – “Koln”

31.12.44 Some flying training carried out. 8 aircraft briefed for operations & night training detailed. The target was again the 'Koln' or other cruisers at Horten. The attack was in clear weather - no cloud - and moderate flak from the cruisers, & was considered unsuccessful. All aircraft returned safely to base.

1 January 1945 – Gravenhorst (Dortmund-Ems Canal)

PB157B W/C R.Baker, F/Sgt A.J.Sibbald, F/O K.J.Parfitt, F/L R.V.Allan, F/L F.H.Harrison (Vis AB), W/O F.A.John, F/Sgt D.Mallinson, F/Sgt D.H.Wonfor. Up 1638 Down 0005 (at Wick). 14 CP No 3. No cloud. Target identified visually by flares. H2S was u/s from take off, so we dropped back in order to arrive one minute late so that we could use existing flares or TI for visual dropping. Red TI cascaded at 1900.5 hrs so we used that for dropping. Illumination was excellent. TIs were concentrated about one mile SE of marking point.

14/15 January 1945 – Merseburg (Leuna Oil Plant)

PB410J W/C R.Baker, F/Sgt A.J.Sibbald, F/O K.J.Parfitt, F/L R.V.Allan, F/L F.H.Harrison (Vis AB), W/O F.A.John, F/Sgt D.H.Wonfor, F/Sgt D.Mallinson. Up 1628 Down 0112 (at Brieghton). 11 CP No 1, 3 x 250lb TI red. Thin low cloud down to the ground. Target located on H2S. Dropped flares blind as briefed. Flares and red TIs appeared scattered. Our flares were slightly south of M/P.

7/8 February 1945 – Dortmund-Ems Canal

PB412J W/C R.Baker, F/Sgt A.J.Sibbald, F/O K.J.Parfitt, F/L R.V.Allan, F/L F.H.Harrison, W/O F.A.John, F/Sgt D.H.Wonfor, W/O G.A.Lennon. Up 2057 Down 0235. 14 CP No 1. 9/10ths cloud. Target identified on H2S. Illumination good and punctual. Green TI not observed. First red TI was assessed as being 150 yards to west, and second well to east which Main Force were told to ignore. Marker Force told to back up the first one. Flares well concentrated; visibility below cloud appeared to be quite clear. Difficulty might have been experienced at first in distinguishing reds below cloud but they should have been visible after flare had burnt out, as the cloud was quite thin

13/14 February 1945 – Dresden

PB410J W/C R.Baker, F/Sgt A.J.Sibbald, S/L T.Campbell, F/L R.V.Allan, F/L F.H.Harrison, W/O F.A.John, F/Sgt D.H.Wonfor, W/O G.A.Lennon. Up 1817 Down 0313. 12 CP No 1, 5 RP flares green/red. Medium cloud approx one mile east of target. Target covered by 10/10ths strata-cu, tops 5,000'. Identification by H2S III. Glow of 1 or 2 green TIs throughout. Our flares first to go down and so there were no flares released before time. Starboard outer engine lost power and after showing signs of catching fire was feathered near base on return.

19/20 February 1945 – Bohlen

PB410J W/C R.Baker, F/Sgt A.J.Sibbald, F/O K.J.Parfitt, F/L R.V.Allan, F/L F.H.Harrison, W/O F.A.John, F/Sgt D.H.Wonfor, F/Sgt D.Mallinson. Up 2355 Down 0708 6 x 1000lb MC (delay), 5 RP flares green/red. 10/10 ths stratus-cu tops 11,000'. Target located by faint glow below cloud. Green TI not visible. Target marked by Mosquitos and Main Force called in to bomb direct by Controller. A few seconds later Marker I called Controller, and getting no reply, took over and instructed Main Force to bomb green TI but this was amended to "Attack reds direct" following discussion with Link II regarding the Controller's lost instructions. Reds could hardly be seen owing to thick cloud. I did not take over as Lancaster Deputy I because full instructions had already been given.

21/22 February 1945 – Gravenhorst (Dortmund-Ems Canal)

PB410J W/C R.Baker, F/Sgt A.J.Sibbald, F/O K.J.Parfitt, F/L R.V.Allan, F/L F.H.Harrison, W/O F.A.John, F/Sgt D.H.Wonfor, F/Sgt D.Mallinson. Up 1700 Down 2250. 14 CP No 1. Weather clear. Target located on H2S. Our flares were dropped as ordered. Green and red TIs were dropped, and marking carried out. Main Force were called in to bomb red TIs in triangle, i.e. the northern ones.

Last Operation with 97 (Straits Settlements) Squadron.



WWII - R.A.F. PATHFINDER FORCE BADGE.
(Air Ministry Order No. A. 1244/42).
Worn on left hand pocket flap underneath Pilot's Wing or
Aircrew Brevet. This coveted wing was permitted to be
worn only by personnel holding the Pathfinder Certificate.