

No. 433 SQUADRON

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ON SEPTEMBER 25th, 1943, No. 433 (Porcupine) Squadron officially came into being. Though it was one of the later R.C.A.F. heavy bomber squadrons to be formed, this unit was to compile a highly respectable record with regard to bomb-tonnage dropped, operational sorties flown, and individual heroism displayed.

For the first three months or so, the efforts of squadron personnel were devoted to building up strength in manpower and material, organizing generally, and achieving a state of operational readiness. Aircraft (Halifax IIIs) began to arrive on 3 November, and no time was lost in checking out pilots and organizing a crew-training schedule. In addition, eleven pilots gained operational experience as "second dickies" with No. 427 (Lion) Squadron.

Unfortunately, a bad flying accident occurred during this period, causing the death of five aircrew N.C.O.s and one airman, and injuries to two airmen. While taking off, a Halifax suddenly turned over on its back and crashed down upon a dispersed aircraft in which four fitters were working. The fatalities were: Flt. Sgt. P. R. Humphreys (captain), Sgt. H. L. Miller (air bomber), Sgt. H. G. Buxton (flight engineer), Sgt. K. N. Lake (mid-upper air gunner), Sgt. L. D. Griese (rear gunner), and L.A.C. M. F. O'Connor. Injured were L.A.C.s S. T. McEvoy and P. W. Butler.

At the end of December, with a personnel strength of 49 officers and 473 airmen, and an aircraft strength of 20 Halifax IIIs, No. 433 Squadron was ready to start work. Shortly after 2030 hours on 2 January 1944, four Hallies took off on this squadron's first operation, a sea-mining expedition to the "Nectarines I" area (Frisian Islands). This proved to be an omen of sorts, for the Porcupines went on to become one of the foremost mining squadrons of No. 6 Group.

After 17 days of bad weather, during which the unit's chief activities were local training and anticipating "scrub" signals, the squadron made its operational bombing debut. Nine aircraft were detailed to take part, one of which became a non-starter. At the coming-out party, held over Berlin, 2,000-pound "cookies" were served amid a shower of incendiaries. One of two early-returning aircraft was flown by Flt. Lt. G. W. Wolton, who was jinxed by malfunctioning overload pumps. This misadventure gave him and his crew the honour of dropping the squadron's first bombs on "Hitler's Fortress." They bombed Kiel at 1845 hours on the 20th January.

Despite the non-start and early returns, this attack, in which the "Porkies" were led personally by their Commanding Officer, Wing Cdr. Clive B. Sinton, D.F.C., (a Briton in the R.C.A.F.), was considered quite successful for a first attempt. Unbroken cloud lay over the target, but the six successful crews had little trouble finding the target and bombing on Pathfinder Force's sky markers. Opposition was surprisingly light. The groundcrew deserved special commendation for their quick work in installing overload tanks, which had arrived only that morning.

The Squadron suffered its first operational casualties the following night, when the crews of Flt. Lt. A. G. Jira and Flt. Sgt. J. A. Wilson failed to return from Magdeburg. It was Flt. Lt. Jira's first operation as captain, and the first for his crew. His aircraft was brought down over Magdeburg, and he

and his entire crew were killed. The other crew members were: Flying Officer R. J. McMehen, Sgt. T. J. Seeley, Flying Officer B. A. Russell, Sgt. M. Couture, Sgt. S. J. Swain, and Sgt. J. C. Webber. *

***Unless otherwise noted, crews are listed in the following order: captain, navigator, wireless operator, air bomber, rear gunner, flight engineer, and mid-upper gunner. Ranks shown are those held at the time of the casualty; many of the personnel were subsequently promoted or commissioned.**

Flt. Sgt. Wilson was forced to ditch in the North Sea about fifty miles off the English Coast, according to the last "fix" taken on the aircraft. He and his crew perished before a rescue could be effected. His crew consisted of the following men: Flying Officer R. B. McLellan, Warrant Officer C. L. Depper, Flying Officers J. H. Seymour, W. R. Reed, Sgt. J. M. Townsend, R.A.F., and Pilot Officer R. H. Megainey, R.A.F.

On 28 January the squadron rejoined the battle of Berlin. It contributed ten aircraft, all of which bombed successfully on sky markers. Crews reported a good attack and an intense cloud glow visible up to 120 miles away. Three Hallies did not return to base, but fortunately only two personnel lost their lives. In the crash of one aircraft during a landing attempt at R.A.F. Station Catfoss, the captain, Flt. Sgt. W. A. Stiles, was killed, while the m/u gunner, Sgt. R. L. Ludlow, and the bomb-aimer, Sgt. H. C. Boissevain, were injured. The remaining crew members escaped unhurt. It was Stiles' second operational sortie.

Another aircraft, piloted by J. M. (Johnny) Gray, who was making his first sortie as captain, had to be ditched just off the English Coast. The starboard fuel tanks had been holed by flak before the target was reached. The bombing was carried out and course was set for home. Two more attacks by enemy aircraft caused no further damage, but not quite enough fuel remained to complete the trip, and the Hally had to be ditched. The entire crew was rescued after two and a half hours in the water. This, the squadron's first successful ditching, earned an immediate D.F.C. for Flying Officer Gray, the first member of this squadron to be decorated.

The third Halifax — "H-Harry", captained by Flt. Sgt. J. E. Mitchell — had been attacked on the way in by a Ju.88. The starboard rudder was damaged to the point of complete uselessness, and a fuel tank was badly holed. "H-Harry" continued on to the target and bombed successfully, but excessive loss of fuel forced the crew to bail out near Thirsk, Yorks. All the crew reached earth safely except the rear gunner, Pilot Officer H. Cox. His parachute fouled on the aircraft and he was killed. Mitchell, later commissioned, was awarded an immediate D.F.C.

The month's final operation took place on 30 /31 January, and the target was again Berlin. Most crews considered the operation a "piece of cake" in comparison to other Berlin trips. One aircraft, captained by Flt. Sgt. G. E. Hagerman, flying on his first operation as captain, did not return. All crew members were officially presumed dead except the rear gunner, Sgt. M. B. Parke-Taylor, who became a prisoner-of-war. The other crew members were: Flt. Sgt. K. Hargreaves, Warrant Officer J. R. Charlton, Flt. Sgt. C. Phillips, Sgt. J. Wannop, R.A.F., and Sgt. J. F. Walters.

After a mining trip to the Kiel Canal on 2 February and a fourth blow at Berlin on the 15th (for the Porkies both operations were casualty-free and almost routine), the squadron paid its first call to Leipzig. On this occasion the usually reliable "met" winds were not even close, and more than 800 bombers were forced to waste from 20 to 30 minutes before bombing. This gave the enemy a decided advantage, and Bomber Command losses were heavy. One of 78 missing aircraft was captained by Flt. Sgt. R. J. McKay of this squadron, who was on his fifth operation. McKay's crew consisted of the following: Sgt. J. E. Davidson, Sgt. F. W. Daplyn, R.A.F., Sgt. J. Oliver, Sgt. J. Hein, Sgt. J. J. Murphy, R.A.F., and Sgt. B. Fraser. All Canadian members of the crew were officially presumed dead, and the fate of the English crew members was indefinite.

Before the month was out, the Porkies, in keeping with Bomber Command's policy of "incendiarism and more incendiarism," gave the hot foot to Stuttgart, Schweinfurt (chief source of the German ball-bearing), and Augsburg. Casualties were sustained on the Schweinfurt operation when two aircraft, captained by Flt. Sgts. G. F. Fielding and V. T. Meldrum, did not return. The former captain became a P.O.W. along with Flt. Sgt. J. J. Mulvaney, Pilot Officer I. S. Thomas, and Sgt. J. D. McAnulty, but nothing is known of the fate of Sgts. H. W. Whitt, J. Cowen, and A. J. Wood, all R.A.F. Flt. Sgt. Meldrum was also captured, as was his navigator, Flt. Sgt. D. C. Ferguson. His other three Canadian crew members, Flt. Sgt. O. L. Harding and Sgts. E. R. Machesney and C. A. Lavery, were killed. The fate of the English crew members, Flying Officer P. Dormand, D.F.C., and Sgt. J. R. Frost, was undetermined.

On 6 March the Porcupines took to the air to attack their first French target — the Trappes marshalling-yards near Paris. The fact that they were carrying their first full load of explosives (as opposed to incendiaries) further illustrated Bomber Command's aspirations to arsony during the previous two months. Moreover, the nature of the target signalled the beginning of a series of tactical operations (in preparation for the invasion of Normandy and designed to disrupt enemy transport to coastal areas) on vital rail junctions in France and Belgium. Little opposition in the form of flak or fighters was encountered. The railway yards at Le Mans were given similar treatment the following night and again on the 13th.

The next target, on the 18th, was Frankfurt. Taking a personal hand in the actual operation was the Station Commander, Group Capt. (now Air Vice-Marshal) L. E. Wray, A.F.C., who was flying as second pilot in "K-King" with Warrant Officer D. E. James and crew, all of whom had completed 20 or more sorties. Everything went well with "King" on the way to the target, as it reached Frankfurt and bombed without mishap. About eighty miles from the target on the way home, however, the navigator discovered they were off track and gave an alteration. At that moment "King" received a direct flak hit and went out of control. Failing to regain control after dropping 5,000 feet, the captain gave the bale-out order. Warrant Officer C. W. Sharpe (nav.), Flt. Lt. S. A. Sinclair (a/b), Sgt. R. Pearce, R.A.F. (w/op), Group Capt. Wray, Sgt. R. Stinson (mu/ag), and Sgt. R. Green, R.A.F. (f/e), baled out successfully in that order, but Warrant Officer James and Sgt. J. Levesque (a/g) were killed. Sharpe, Sinclair, Wray, and Stinson were taken prisoner, while the ultimate fate of Pearce and Green is not clear.

After despatching, without loss, a strong mining force to Kiel Bay and a lone bombing representative to Frankfurt on the 22nd, the squadron hit "the Big City" for the fifth time on the 24th /25th. One of the last crews to bomb described the target area as a mass of flame from which smoke rose to a height of 23,000 feet. Two crews, captained by Flt. Sgt. H. Lossing and W. F. Russell, failed to return from this operation. Flt. Sgt. Lossing, Flying Officer D. A. Robinson (nav.), and Sgt. L. G. Davey (w/op), were presumed dead, while Flt. Sgt. G. A. Dancey (a/b) and Sgt. O. W. Sporne, R.A.F. (f/e), were known to have been killed. Of the fate of the two gunners, Sgts. E. Osborne and F. E. Simons, both R.A.F., nothing is known. Flying in the other missing Halifax, Flt. Sgt. Russell and the mid-upper gunner, Sgt. D. W. Howell, were killed, while Flying Officers M. Topplin (nav.), J. T. Shea (a/b), and Sgt. R. C. Cossar (a/g), were captured. The ultimate fate of Sgts. W. Walmsley and P. McLuskie, both R.A.F., is unknown.

A third crew, captained by Flying Officer E. B. Van Slyck, was badly shot up on the return journey over the Ruhr. Despite fire and flak damage to the port outer engine, the fuselage, the undercarriage, and both wings, all of which made the aircraft extremely difficult to control, Van Slyck managed to nurse the Hally ("G-George") back to Woodbridge, where he effected an emergency landing. The navigator, Sgt. A. R. Phillips, although weak from loss of blood caused by flak wounds in the chest

and arm, stuck to his navigational duties until the aircraft reached England. For a highly commendable showing on this operation, Van Slyck received an immediate D.F.C., Phillips an immediate D.F.M.

The rear gunner of "George", Flt. Sgt. R. H. Potentier, had baled out over enemy territory when given the precautionary order, "put on parachutes." Landing in a field near the village of Membach, Belgium, Potentier knocked at the door of a nearby cottage, and when a woman answered from a window, he shouted "Aviateur"! Thinking him drunk, she ignored him, whereupon he retired to the seclusion of a wood and fell asleep. Discovered in the early morning by the same woman who had earlier rebuffed him, he was taken to her house and given food. From then on for nearly six months he was assisted by the underground, until, on 11 September, he contacted an American recce patrol at Sart. An advance unit of the U.S. 9th Air Force directed him to the proper authorities, who arranged for his return to England. Flt. Sgt. Potentier thus became No. 433 Squadron's first successful evader.

Operating again on the 26th, the Porcupines made a strangely quiet trip to Essen. Then, on the 30th, they joined a Bomber Command force of 800 despatched against Nuremburg. Flight conditions over England and most of the Continent were cloudless, but 8-10/10ths cloud suddenly materialized near the target, making visual bombing impossible. The homeward trip was flown in bright moonlight, and, as expected, the Luftwaffe was very active. Combats were reported all the way from the target to a point south of Aachen. It was on this occasion that Bomber Command suffered its most grievous losses of the War — 94 aircraft. No. 6 Group suffered heavily, but only one missing aircraft belonged to this squadron. It was Halifax "N-Nan", captained by an American, Pilot Officer C. M. "Chris" Nielsen (the "Mad Dane"), of New York City, a veteran of 26 operations and the outstanding "character" on the squadron. (He received his nickname after a raid on Leipzig. On that occasion, having arrived early on the target, he decided to put in time by hopping over for a look at Berlin, which he did. Then he rejoined the main force at Leipzig.) "Nan" had just started its timed bombing-run when there occurred an explosion in the starboard inner engine, which the pilot later attributed to fuel vaporization in the empty tank. At any rate, no enemy action was reported. The engine was immediately enveloped in flames, which soon spread to the wing. The bale-out order was given, but before it was completely carried out, the aircraft blew up: Nielsen, who was thrown clear, parachuted safely to the ground along with his wireless operator, Warrant Officer H. Cooper, and rear gunner, Warrant Officer J. G. McLaughlan. All three became P.O.W.s. The remaining Canadian crew members — Flt. Sgt. W. S. Rost (2nd p.), Pilot Officer D. M. Awrey (nav.), and W.O. I. Milward (a/b) — were killed. The fate of Flt. Sgt. C. W. Panton (f/e) and Sgt. J. Thompson (mu/ag), both R.A.F., is not known. Another Halifax, "Q-Queen", captained by Flt. Sgt. R. C. Reinelt, R.A.F., was set on fire and extensively damaged when attacked by a fighter. Its starboard mainplane and outer engine were aflame for nearly two hours, and it landed with approximately 32 square feet of skin burned from the wing. Having also been holed in two fuel tanks, this Hally barely made it to Manston. Reinelt and his navigator, Flt. Sgt. A. Harges, were gonged for their part in this action. After Nuremburg and an extended period of bad weather, assaults were made on marshalling-yards at Villeneuve St. Georges and Ghent, and a mining jaunt to the Kattegat was completed, without loss. Six more days of "scrub" weather followed. Then the Porcupines went after Noisy-le-Sec, another key rail centre, and gave it a good going-over. The defence consisted of sporadic heavy flak and the usual quota of night fighters. Though it was another well-concentrated attack, it was, for the Porcupines, a costly one, as two experienced crews failed to return. The captains of the missing aircraft were Flt. Lt. G. B. Edmonds and Flt. Sgt. W. J. Sturmy. The former was killed, as were W.O.2 T. M. Ryan (nav.), Sgt. E. A. Lansdowne (a/b), Sgt. H. K. Tole (a/g), and Sgt. D. B. Carter (mu/ag). Sgts. H. W. Fox (w/op), and A. W. Wilkinson (f/e), both R.A.F., were missing. Flt. Sgt. Sturmy, Warrant Officer G. H.

Taylor (nav.), Flying Officer A. R. Thrasher (a/b), and Sgts. N. I. Innis (a/g) and S. W. Follows (mu/ag), were presumed dead, while Sgts. J. F. Barron (w/op) and L. Morgan (f/e), both R.A.F., were missing.

After a tactical operation on Lens, the squadron reverted to strategic bombing with attacks on Dusseldorf, Karlsruhe, and Essen, on 23, 25, and 27 April, respectively. Over Dusseldorf, despite the presence of haze and vapour trails, the bombing was "on target," and, as one pilot put it, the city became "a mass of flame and fire over an area of five square miles." But the squadron suffered its heaviest setback thus far when three experienced crews failed to return. The missing crews were captained by Flying Officers G. C. Burns, W. L. Canter, D.F.M., and Warrant Officer J. Bourgeault. Burns, Sgt. J. W. Dunford, R.A.F., Flt. Sgt. D. C. MacDougall, Pilot Officer A. S. Holmes, Sgt. J. J. Bedard, and Sgt. J. Desroches, lost their lives on this operation. The sole surviving crew member, Sgt. T. N. Morris (w/op), recalled seeing a fire burning furiously in the rest position after the aircraft had been holed by flak when just east of Aachen. The last thing he remembered doing in the aircraft was donning his parachute; the next thing he was aware of was lying on German soil. He could only assume that an explosion had occurred, knocking him unconscious but at the same time throwing him clear and opening his 'chute for him. He became a P.O.W.

Flying Officer Canter's aircraft dropped its load on Dusseldorf without incident, but was attacked on the homeward journey about 10 miles east of the Belgian-German border. The port outer engine was knocked out, the port inner damaged, and the wing set ablaze. A second attack was evaded, but as the fire could not be extinguished, the skipper gave the order to bale out. Flying Officer Canter, with his navigator, Flying Officer A. W. Norris, and rear gunner, Sgt. A. M. Camenzuli, floated safely to earth but were captured. W.O.2 H. Boissevain (a/b) and Sgt. H. C. Seedhouse (mu/ag) were killed, while the fate of Sgt. G. J. Cummings, R.A.F. (f/e), is unknown.

W.O.2 Bourgeault and crew had experienced no difficulty until near Aachen, where their aircraft was holed several times by flak. The starboard wing and outer engine took fire, and they began to lose height rapidly. After an unsuccessful attempt to jettison the bomb load, the skipper gave the order to prepare to abandon aircraft. Then, following a frontal attack by a Dornier, the order to abandon was given. All crew members baled out successfully except the captain, who was killed. Four members of his crew — W.O.2 T. A. Miller (w/op), Flying Officer J. W. Guignon (a/b), Sgt. L. Plante (a/g), and Sgt. J. Laframboise (mu/ag) — fell into enemy hands. It is not known whether Sgt. D. R. Bowerman, R.A.F. (f/e), became a P.O.W. or a successful evader.

Two members of the three aforementioned crews — Flying Officer P. A. Schnobb, wireless operator with Flying Officer Canter, and W.O.2 W. G. Dennstedt, navigator with Warrant Officer Bourgeault — became evaders, and each had his share of adventure.

After baling out, Schnobb landed in Holland near the German border. He walked for almost 36 hours, then found shelter, successively, at a farmhouse, a convent, and a policeman's house in Dork. Moving on to St. Proud, he contacted the underground organization and was given shelter at the home of the district chief. On 22 July, the Gestapo came to search the house, and Schnobb and his benefactor were forced to hide in a loft. From there they lowered themselves with a rope to a garden outside the house while the Gestapo was searching inside the house. They hid in the garden until led to safety by two girls who acted as lookouts. Two days later, Schnobb contacted another organization at Liege, where he remained until the city was liberated by the Americans.

W.O.2 Dennstedt parachuted to earth just west of Duren, Germany, and started travelling southwest. After three weeks of alternate walking and sheltering in friendly farmhouses, he contacted the underground. On being told that it was then impossible to smuggle him out, he continued once more on his own. Feeling his way to another organization at On, he remained there until mid-August, being

then moved to another camp. On 2 September he was taken, along with five R.A.F. airmen, to a camp containing several American airmen. This group became scattered shortly after, when the Germans raided the camp. On the same day, however, Dennstedt was delivered into Allied hands when an advancing American unit captured the area.

Foul weather, with unpredicted high cloud and severe icing conditions, accompanied the squadron on the Karlsruhe raid, which was considered unsuccessful. One returning Hally — "K-King" — landed at Woodbridge with 64 square feet of its starboard wing showing daylight and with its navigational equipment shot to pieces by flak. The skipper, Pilot Officer D. Brown, and his navigator, Pilot Officer H. Rumble, both R.A.F., earned immediate D.F.C.s on this operation.

With improved weather over Essen some 48 hours later, there was a corresponding improvement in the calibre of bombing. Enormous fires, the glow of which was visible from the Dutch coast, left little doubt about that. For the Porcupines the operation was, like the Karlsruhe affair, casualty-free.

Before the month was over, the squadron went tactical again, hitting rail yards at Aulnoye and Somain, the first of which was particularly well plastered. Both operations were pleasantly devoid of serious enemy activity.

In May, Porcupine activities had a pronounced horticultural flavour, ten of their seventeen operations in that period being of the gardening variety. Lorient, St. Nazaire, Cherbourg, St. Malo, Brest, Morlaix, the Kattégat, and the Frisians — all were visited once or twice during the month, and only three sorties out of 79 were abortive. Operations not maritime in nature were tactical, directed against gun emplacements at St. Valéry-en-Caux and Le Clipon, marshalling yards at Ghent, Boulogne, Le Mans, and Aachen, and a radio station at Au Fevre. Throughout all these missions the enemy offered only token resistance. Scarcely any fighter activity was reported, and even the German flak, which could usually be relied upon to make things hot, was weak. The chief hazard during this period was congestion over the target, which reached its peak when aircraft had to orbit the area before bombing. Such was the case at Le Mans on the 23rd, where the wing of "U-Uncle", piloted by Flt. Sgt. R. L. Porter, was neatly holed by a 500-lb. bomb.

The end-month tabulation of squadron data revealed a most significant and cheering statistic. In May's 173 sorties (169 successful), the Porcupines had suffered not a single casualty. The only sorrowful note of the month was struck when it was learned that Wing Cdr. Sinton had been screened from operations. This happy Englishman's cheerful leadership and inspiration in all phases of Porcupine activity would be sorely missed. Effective 1 June 1944, he was replaced by Wing Cdr. A. J. Lewington.

Throughout the momentous month of June, Porcupine operations followed a distinctly tactical pattern. Every bombing mission was against a French target, all but three of these being designed either to help set up the enemy for the D-Day punch or to speed up the Allies' breakout from the Normandy beach-head. Assaults were made on gun emplacements and key junction points in the invasion area, also on vital rail yards farther inland. Other operations included five mining excursions, a twilight raid on E-boat pens at Boulogne, and three attacks on sites housing the latest German victory weapon, the flying bomb (alias V-1, buzz bomb, robot bomb, and doodlebug). One of these sites, situated at Bonnetot, was the object of the squadron's first daylight raid, and photographs proved the attack to have been a model of precision bombing.

On 15 June the squadron suffered its first loss in more than 400 sorties when one of its original crews, captained by Flt. Sgt. R. L. Porter, failed to return from a raid on Cambrai. Other crew members were: Flt. Sgt. J. Rathbone, R.A.F., Warrant Officer L. D. Bennett, Flying Officer C. Ramsdell, U.S.A.A.F., Sgt. D. Wallbank, Sgt. D. C. Wood, R.A.F., and Sgt. J. Buckingham. All were

lost when only an operation or two away from the end of their tours. A single fatal casualty was sustained two nights later when Flt. Sgt. D. E. Horton (a /g) was killed during a taxiing accident.

A raid on Metz on 29 June was shaky for more than one Porcupine crew. Among them was the crew of Warrant Officer H. G. McVeigh, about whom the following appears in the squadron diary:

"This night was marked by a wonderful bit of work by Warrant Officer H. G. McVeigh, who was captain of 'C - Charlie'. He was attacked four times by fighters, and evaded them all until he was finally hit while in a corkscrew. The starboard fin and rudder were completely shot off, the starboard elevator, aileron and wing tip were smashed, and the starboard flap and mainplane were badly damaged. The aircraft went into a tight spin at 13,000 feet, and McVeigh told his crew to abandon aircraft. Two members of the crew (the bomb aimer and the mid-upper gunner) baled out before the captain managed to level off at 6,000 feet. He had barely set course for England when his port inner engine packed up. However, he managed to reach Woodbridge, where he landed. A good thing it was this station with its long runways, as it was necessary to land at 155 m.p.h. to hold the starboard wing up ..."

Commissioned shortly after, McVeigh was awarded an immediate D.F.C. for this outstanding performance.

But what of the two crew members who had baled out? The bomb-aimer, Flt. Sgt. Y. K. Carter, touched down in a marshalling-yard near Metz (his erstwhile target), and had to get out of there fast, as hostile-looking people were rushing towards him. Evading them, he began to walk, hugging wooded areas and secondary roads. For two days he kept moving, but met only people who were either unwilling or unable to help him. On the fourth day after being shot down, he was taken in at a farmhouse, given civilian clothes and food, and introduced to an Englishman who arranged to put him in touch with the leader of the local resistance movement. The latter took him to a wood near Orbois, where he was presently joined by his crew-mate, Sgt. D. W. Palmer, who had contacted the organization with the help of a friendly farmer. The pair remained there until American troops liberated Paris.

On the Metz raid the squadron recorded its first victory over the Luftwaffe. It came at 0038 hours, and the marksmen were Pilot Officers A. L. Butler and W. MacKay, of Flying Officer J. D. R. Nixon's crew. The squadron's combat report records the action as follows:

"Fighter first seen by mid-upper gunner port quarter well up. Dived down to level and closed in, opening fire. As enemy aircraft turned in from port quarter, corkscrew port was given, and rear gunner, followed by mid-upper, opened fire. At 400 yards, fighter burst into flames and dived steeply. Was seen to explode by both gunners and flight engineer."

Butler and MacKay earned immediate D.F.C.s in this action. The squadron's second victory came seven minutes later, when an enemy aircraft fell to the guns of Sgts. W. D. Robertson and A. W. Prosofsky, flying with Flying Officer A. C. Stein.

In June the Porkies dropped nearly 1000 tons of bombs and mines, almost equalling their cumulative total for the previous five months. An idea of how busy they were may be gleaned from another statistic: in the fifteen days from the 2nd to the 17th they completed 13 operations.

In July the squadron concentrated on V-1 launching sites, but also managed two "army co-op" attacks, three strategic stabs at the Fatherland, four gardening operations, and a foray on a French rail centre. The first target to feel the sharp quill of Porky in July was the marshalling-yard at Villeneuve St. George, which got properly clobbered. But the cost to the squadron was high. Although no enemy fighters were seen by returning crews, they were active in the area, and accounted for three Porcupine aircraft. Each of the missing Hallies bombed successfully, but was shot down by a fighter on the homeward journey. One of them, struck by cannon fire from a Ju.188, began to burn furiously

amidships and around the port wing root. Five of the crew baled out as ordered, but the pilot, Pilot Officer G. A. Wolstencroft (an American), and the flight engineer, Sgt. S. J. Chambers, R.A.F., had no alternative other than to stick with the ship, since their 'chutes had been burned. Wolstencroft set the blazing Hally down in a soft, moonlit field, and he and Chambers walked away from it without a scratch. They eventually became P.O.W.s, as did Sgt. D. L. MacLean (mu/ag). Three other crew members, Sgts. H. P. Pergantes (nav.), P. R. Reeve (a/b), and A. R. Hutchinson (a/g), managed to avoid capture until mid-August, when they were taken by a retreating German ack-ack battery. In transit to Rouen, their vehicle was strafed by allied fighters, and Pergantes was wounded. During the attendant confusion Reeve and Hutchinson escaped, thereafter evading until being delivered into Allied hands. Pergantes was liberated by the Americans in September. Flt. Sgt. H. R. Brewer was the crew's only fatal casualty.

When another Halifax was shot down by an enemy aircraft, the captain, Flying Officer B. Yunker, and the mid-upper gunner, Sgt. W. Gracie, were killed. Flying Officers P. Scullion (w/op), S. G. Heatherinton (a b), and Flt. Sgt. L. T. Grenon (a g), baled out safely but became P.O.W.s. Nothing is known of what befell Sgt. C. F. Watmough, R.A.F. The only crew member who avoided capture was the navigator, Flying Officer M. Wiome. He struck out through rural country, walking southwest until daybreak. Hailing a farmer, he became frustrated by the latter's complete ignorance of English. However, another farmer soon appeared bearing a French-English dictionary, with the aid of which he told the Canadian to stay hidden until his return after dark. The Frenchman returned as promised and took Wiome to his home. On 7 July, the farmer conveyed the officer by horse and cart to a Maquis camp in the forest of Freteval, near Chateaudun. From this point Wiome's journey was arranged for him.

Six members of the crew of the third missing aircraft were killed. They were; Flying Officer W. D. Baird, Warrant Officer R. T. Longley, Pilot Officer D. F. Wilson, and Sgts. T. C. Jenkins, J. H. Marler, R.A.F., and W. H. Winder. The sole survivor, Pilot Officer J. D. D. Harvie (nav.), was taken prisoner.

Of the next twelve operations, seven were swats at the doodlebug, and results varied from poor to good. The best attacks by this squadron were on sites at Anderbelck and Donges, where bombing was of an unusually high order. But raids on Siracourt, Ardouval, Acquet, Ferme du Forrestel, and L'Hey, had to be assessed as unsuccessful. It must be remembered that these launching-sites were very small, and nothing but direct hits, or at worst, near misses, could achieve appreciable results. Direct hits required, among other things, a combination of crystal-clear weather and near-perfect marking and bombing. No such conditions had yet been fully satisfied.

The squadron suffered unexpected casualties on the 14th, when Halifax "U-Uncle", on a cross-country exercise, crashed on the Isle of Man, killing its entire crew. In the crew were Warrant Officer J. M. Murie, Flying Officer W. M. Wallace, R.A.F., Flt. Sgt. B. E. Tees, Flying Officer J. T. Evans, and Sgts. R. L. Movold, C. F. Walker, R.A.F., and C. W. Pidgeon.

In direct support of the British Second Army, Bomber Command and the Porkies attacked Caen on the 18th and enemy positions in the Villers-Bocage area on the 30th. At Caen, pin-pointing and calculating more carefully than ever before, crews bombed within the prescribed limits, despite an unforeseen veil of cloud and smoke which partly obscured the target five minutes after bombing began.

The total effect at Villers-Bocage was also good. It was a low-level affair wherein crews, some flying as low as 1400 feet, were buffeted by the concussion of their own bomb-bursts.

In matter of strategic warfare, this squadron, on 19, 26 and 29 July, attacked Wesseling, Stuttgart, and Hamburg. At Wesseling, where the target was a synthetic oil plant, wishful-thinking Germans

jammed our master-bomber, planted decoy markers, and put up a smoke screen. But Porky was not easily put off. Before departing, he made a smoke screen of his own — the smoke of burning *ersatz* oil, which reached a level two miles above the earth.

From the Hamburg operation, one aircraft — "W-William" — failed to return. In the crew were Flying Officers J. K. Armstrong and W. A. Martineau, Warrant Officer J. A. Robertson, Flying Officer R. W. James, and Sgts. T. B. Owen, G. A. Stonham, R.A.F., and R. W. Robinson. This aircraft had bombed successfully and was returning home, when suddenly and inexplicably the port inner engine took fire. Unable to extinguish it, the captain ordered the crew to abandon aircraft, as the flames were now spreading rapidly over the wing. Before the order could be carried out, the port wing broke off and the aircraft went into a vicious spin. Then an explosion occurred, throwing clear Martineau, James, and Robertson. Somehow or other their 'chutes opened on the way down (two of them pulled the silk out by hand), and they landed heavily but safely, although the last-named sustained an injured back and a paralyzed right leg and arm. All three were captured. The other crew members were killed.

The four mining operations were like so many others carried out by this squadron to date, crews having met with practically nothing resembling difficulty or opposition.

In August the majority of Porcupine bombs were again aimed at V-1 launching-platforms and supply depots. The squadron made not a single attack on Germany, but it did mine once in German waters. Foret de Nieppe, Bois de Cassan, St. Leu d'Esserent, Foret du Croc — these were a few of many French names pin-pointed for destruction on the squadron wall-map. Ten of them were hard-to-hit V-1 depots or launching-sites.

In the course of the raids on Bois de Cassan and St. Leu d'Esserent the squadron suffered two fatal casualties and lost two aircraft. Halifax "H-How", returning from the latter target, crashed in the village of Skipton Bridge while making a three-engine approach to land. The pilot, Pilot Officer J. R. Harrison, was instantly killed, and the flight engineer, Sgt. D. L. Whitbread, R.A.F., died in hospital. The other crew members were hospitalized with injuries, but recovered. The loss of the second aircraft was directly attributable to enemy action. Just after bombing Bois de Cassan, Halifax "S-Sugar", piloted by Flying Officer R. H. Simpson, was hit by flak which slightly wounded the bomb-aimer and disabled Sugar's steering gear. After an unsuccessful attempt to repair the broken rudder-rods with aerial wire, it was found that the gunners, Sgt. O. M. Brown and R. E. Budd, could help to control the aircraft by manipulating the rudder controls. Through this unusual bit of pilot-gunner co-operation, "S-Sugar" was brought back to England. Deciding not to press his luck further by attempting to land this way, the captain ordered a bale-out, which was carried out successfully. This example of cool thinking and close crew co-operation earned an immediate D.F.C. for Simpson and D.F.M.s for Brown and Budd.

August 11th, 1944 —mark that as a most memorable date in the history of the Porcupine Squadron. The occasion was an investiture held at Leeming, wherein His Majesty King George VI officiated personally. Accompanied by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, Princess Elizabeth, and Princess Margaret, the King first made a tour of the aircraft and chatted with several of the crew members. Then came the investiture. His Majesty pinned the D.F.C. on Pilot Officer H. G. McVeigh, Flt. Lt. D. Brown, R.A.F., Sqn. Ldr. H. T. Patterson, and Flying Officer G. B. Sharman, R.A.F., and the D.F.M. on Flt. Sgt. A. R. Phillips, R.A.F.

Two obviously successful raids were carried out on 14 and 15 August 1944. On the former attack the Porkies made life miserable for the German forces attempting to escape from the Falaise pocket. The specific aiming-point was the village of Bons Tassily. Early crews were able to bomb visually, guided

by precise marking and a calm and deliberate master bomber. Later arrivals bombed the centre of the smoke and dust as requested by him. It was a fairly safe bet that the village of Bons Tassily was, for all military intents and purposes, wiped out.

The attack on the 15th was part of a large-scale smash at airfields in the Low Countries. The Porkies interrupted the lunch-hour of Luftwaffe personnel stationed at Soesterberg, Holland, where the first crew bombed at 12:02. As visibility was excellent, this attack was another answer to the bomb-aimer's prayer. The airfield and practically everything that went with it took a fearful pounding. Among the installations hit were an ammunition dump, the control tower, S.H.Q. buildings, armament workshops, fuel dumps, and dispersal areas — plus, of course, the airfield and its runways.

Three of the squadron's operations in the next ten days were mining-trips, and one was very costly. The area being mined the night of the 16th had the innocent code name, "Forget-me-not"; but everyone knew that this meant Kiel Harbour, a hot spot on any type of operation. Thirteen aircraft took off; ten returned. One of the missing *Hallies* — "P-Peter"—was manned by a crew of veterans all of whom had completed 25 or more sorties. When over the Island of Fyen, east of Denmark, it was attacked from below and astern by a fighter which set it afire in the port wing-root area. The fire could not be extinguished, and the aircraft, now in a steep dive, had to be abandoned. The navigator, Flying Officer C. H. Gill, and the rear gunner, Flying Officer P. E. "Phil" Marchildon (formerly a star pitcher with the Philadelphia Athletics), were in the water for about three hours before being picked up by a Danish patrol boat. They were eventually handed over to the Germans. The rest of the crew, consisting of Flying Officer J. A. W. Morgan (captain), Flt. Sgt. C. R. Stewart (w/op), Flying Officer J. R. O. Clerc (a/b), Sgt. R. F. Young, R.A.F. (f/e), and Flt. Sgt. J. W. Moffatt (mu/ag), were lost. The other two missing aircraft, "I-Ink" and "D-Dog," were also manned by experienced crews. The crew of "I-Ink" was made up of Flt. Lt. J. C. Valk, Pilot Officer J. A. Tolmie, Flying Officer J. C. Sprott, Flying Officer G. Scott, Flt. Sgt. T. L. Baker, Sgt. R. I. Atkinson, R.A.F., and Flying Officer M. H. Fleming. The crew of "D-Dog" consisted of Flt. Sgt. J. G. M. Savard, Flying Officer H. Grimble, Warrant Officer B. Bercuson, Flying Officer J. L. Baillargeon, Sgt. A. W. J. Drennan, Sgt. G. H. Lilley, R.A.F., and Sgt. M. E. Fairall. All members of both crews were officially presumed dead. So did the remarkable mining luck of this squadron run out. These were its only losses thus far in 26 mining missions (195 sorties). Four other gardening trips, mostly in the waters near Brest, La Rochelle and St. Nazaire, were completed in August without loss.

Casualties came unexpectedly on the 31st, over the Ile de Cezembre, near St. Malo. Crews were instructed to bomb the island's heavy guns visually at heights from 2,000 to 3,000 feet. Enemy resistance was practically nil as the squadron poured stick after stick on the sitting duck of a target. It could well have been the easiest target bombed by heavies during the entire European campaign, yet one aircraft failed to return. Halifax "O-Oboe" suddenly went into a steep dive from which it never recovered. It plunged into the sea, killing its entire crew. The casualties were, Flying Officer K. R. Beveridge, Flt. Sgt. E. C. Harman, Pilot Officer L. S. Guernsey, Flt. Sgt. W. L. Long, Sgt. G. W. Pharis, Sgt. C. W. Garrett, R.A.F., and Sgt. J. R. Hawkins.

Also attacked during August were two oil storage depots, marshalling yards at Connantre, heavy gun positions at Brest, and shipping in Brest harbour. On the latter raid two crews scored direct hits on the ship that was the primary target.

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By September, when most of the V-1 sites in northern France had been either overrun by the Allies or abandoned by the Germans, Bomber Command again turned to strategic attacks on Germany and raids in support of the Canadian Army. September began with a big bang on the 6th, as the Porkies

made their first daylight raid on Germany. They joined a Command attack on Emden, which was officially rated among the best of the whole bombing campaign. The Germans, again caught at meal-time, expressed annoyance with moderate-to-intense barrage and predicted flak. But the attack was pressed home, and a shower of 2,000-pounders and incendiaries went down on the centre of the city and the dock area. Large fires sprang up in the heart of the built-up section, while oil burned furiously around the docks. These fires could still be seen by returning crews 100 miles away. The flak proved to be particularly rough on engines; five Hallies flew back and landed "on three".

September's strategic attacks also included an excellent raid on Kiel on the night of the 15th and a highly-scattered day thrust at Sterkrade-Holten on the 27th. (The Sterkrade affair was the only occasion of the campaign when half the Ruhr Valley was bombed in the space of a few minutes).

Tactically, the Porkies backed up the Canadian Army with raids on enemy positions at Le Havre, Boulogne, Calais (twice), Cap Gris Nez, and Domburg. Their other efforts of the month included a successful mining mission to Kiel and a day-bombing attempt on Wilhelmshaven, which became completely abortive when they were recalled while over the North Sea. Despite the squadron's switch to more heavily defended targets, September was a loss-free month.

* * *

Throughout October, November, and December, Bomber Command continued to concentrate on strategic bombing in Germany, but lent a tactical hand whenever needed. The Porkies' first target in October, however, was the U-boat pens at Bergen, Norway. Blessed with clear skies and perfect visibility, the squadron was ordered by the master bomber to bomb visually, and the happiness of the bomb-aimers was reflected in the accuracy of their bombing. A secondary target was shipping in the adjacent harbour. Vessels of all sizes and shapes were seen scuttling around in a maelstrom of panic, vainly trying to escape the hail of high explosive. The bomb concentration was truly murderous, as stick after stick straddled the harbour. Smoke which rose as high as 14,000 feet over the target area was visible to returning crews as far as 120 miles away. A strong escort of *Mustangs* gave excellent cover throughout the attack, and the Luftwaffe again declined to fight. The only enemy resistance was slight and inaccurate flak, both light and heavy.

The following evening ten aircraft went mining in the Heligoland area. All dropped their mines without interference, and it looked like another milk-run until, shortly after the drop, *Halifax* "M-Mike" was attacked by a Ju.88. The fighter raked the bomber from end to end with cannon fire, instantly killing the rear gunner, Pilot Officer J. Zareikin. Because of extensive damage to the tail, empennage, and port aileron, the pilot, Flying Officer W. T. C. Watson, could not corkscrew, but could only dive straight ahead. Unable to bring his guns to bear at this moment, the mid-upper gunner, Pilot Officer J. M. Cochrane, saw his chance a few seconds later after the overconfident enemy had sneaked over to port quarter-up for another attack. Knowing full well that his aircraft was incapable of taking evasive action, Cochrane coolly watched and waited as the Ju. bored in for the kill. He continued to hold his fire until the enemy had closed to 100 yards, then blasted it at almost point-blank range, striking the starboard engine, cockpit, and starboard wing. The enemy aircraft dropped its undercarriage, flipped onto its back, and fell into a vertical dive seawards. Thus did Cochrane, an American from Michigan, avenge the death of a former countryman, Joe Zareikin, originally of California. For this action, in which he was officially credited with a "probable", Cochrane was awarded an immediate D.F.C.

On the 6th, twenty crews went to Dortmund, that eternally hot spot in the Ruhr. They found the skies over the target area just cloudy enough to hinder the searchlights. But the air was filthy with flak. A burst at 20,000 feet knocked out both port engines of "G-George", captained by Flying Officer

V. G. B, Valentine, who was on his second trip with his crew. The skipper feathered the engines and applied full trim, but considerable pressure was still needed on the control column to keep the aircraft level. It began to lose height at the rate of 1,000 feet per minute, which was eventually reduced to 500 feet per minute. Being only five minutes from the target, Valentine decided to push on and bomb, then to bale out, if possible, over allied territory. After sustaining more flak damage to wings and fuselage over the target area, "G-George" bombed the target at a suicidal altitude of 7500 feet, then headed west, still losing height. At 5,000 feet Valentine tried to level out, but the crippled kite stalled at 125 m.p.h. Recovery was made over Duisburg at 500 feet, but the aircraft kept losing height, and Valentine had a final hazy recollection of crashing into a factory building in that city. Ironically, the four crew members who, upon impact, were in crash positions, were all killed. They were Flt. Sgt. J. E. Tazuk (w/op), Warrant Officer W. M. Ritchie (mu/ag), Sgt. A. G. Dollery, R.A.F., (f/e), and Sgt. A. E. McGraw (a/g). Two of the others, who at the time were on their way to crash positions, were badly injured, but eventually recovered. One of them, Flying Officer H. R. L. English (a/b), remembers nothing of the crash. He was knocked cold, and regained consciousness in a Duisburg hospital two days later. The third survivor, Warrant Officer J. P. Lee (nav.), was hospitalized along with Valentine and English.

Two days later, another "maximum effort" was laid on. This time it was Duisburg, which, for this "squadron, had never previously been a primary target. The Porkies made up for this oversight by attacking it twice within a period of seventeen hours, once by day and once by night. Theirs was part of a concerted one-two punch by Bomber Command, which punch undoubtedly constituted the most devastating air blow (with conventional high explosive) of all time. (Bomber Command delivered a total of 9,200 tons of bombs to Duisburg in slightly more than 16 hours). Most Porcupine crews found the city largely obscured by cloud. Hearing the master bomber's signal, "Freehand", they bombed either on H2S or through cloud breaks. Consequently the bombing was reported as scattered. Nevertheless, the "scattering" was done over the right places, for debriefing revealed that bombs were seen dropping on such pay-off areas as docks, factories, steel mills, marshalling-yards, and built-up districts. One pilot summed it up pretty well when he said, "Bombing was spread out but effective". A barrage of intense heavy flak, the enemy's only resistance, claimed no Porcupine aircraft.

Returning *Hallies* were immediately refueled and bombed-up, and some ten hours after the last had landed, the nocturnal marauders were taking off. Unfortunately for Duisburg, the weather had considerably improved. The squadron's specific aiming-point, the southern section of the city, stood out like the proverbial sore thumb, bathed in the glow of fires ignited that morning in the northern section. Flames soon took hold in the southern half too, and, according to the last Porcupine crews on the target, "it looked as if the whole city was ablaze." The glow of fires could be seen from the Dutch coast. Flak was not as intense as in the morning, but was still accurate. The Luftwaffe was airborne, probably to cool off, but made no attacks on Porcupine aircraft. Again there were no casualties.

During the second half of October, the squadron pounded Wilhelmshaven, Essen, Homburg (synthetic oil) and Cologne (twice), without loss. On the first Cologne operation, two aircraft were extensively damaged by flak and another by falling bombs, but the crews were miraculously unhurt. One *Hally* was peppered in the nose and cockpit sections by a fiendishly accurate first burst of predicted flak. A big hole was punched in the left-hand corner of the windscreen, the trimming controls on each side of the pilot were shot to shreds, and shattered radar equipment was sent crashing onto the navigator's table; yet not one of the four crew members crammed into that small space was even touched.

The lone mining-mission of the 16-day period took three *Hallies* to the Oslo area. Here the enemy surprised with night-fighters, one of which attacked "Y-Yoke". Flying Officer R. J. Mountford

corkscrewed, and German tracers made a harmless splash pattern on Oslo Fjord. Gunners Warrant Officer E. G. Munro and Flt. Sgt. W. H. Christie were more accurate. Taking advantage of a no-deflection shot, each raked the fighter from end to end. The German flipped on to his back and dived seawards with flames licking his fuselage. Seconds later, a distinct red glow shone through the cloud. It was scored as a "probable".

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The squadron lost three crews in November, one on the 4th (Bochum) and the others on the 21st (Castrop-Rauxel). On the Bochum operation it was obvious that the enemy had received some sort of early warning. His ground-to-air defences were so active that crews swore every flak gun and searchlight in the Ruhr had been moved to Bochum for a one-night stand. His fighters were busy too, but ignored the Hallies sporting the big "BM". Despite such disconcerting elements, the bombing was of the first order. It was so accurate that one batch of ground-markers was completely snuffed out. So bright and continuous were the flashes of explosions that crews were able to discern the tall chimneys of the very factories they were attacking. Halifax "F-Fox", manned by Flying Officer R. J. Mountford and his veterans of 20-odd trips, had bombed successfully and was going all-out for home, when, in an area of no apparent activity, it was plastered with at least four flak bursts. Both starboard engines took fire immediately, and, when the fire appeared uncontrollable, the skipper gave the bale-out order. The seven crew members reached earth safely, the only "casualty" being the skipper's flying-boots, which were lost to the slip-stream during his hasty exit. All were captured. They were, in addition to the captain, Flying Officer R. M. Madill, Warrant Officer I. H. Jervis, Flying Officer H. W. Langlands, Flt. Sgt. J. H. Christie, Sgt. J. S. Bell, R.A.F., and Warrant Officer E. G. Munro. The latter, before being apprehended, took time out to engage in a little sabotage of Germany's war effort. During his westward stroll he chanced upon a railway bridge towards which was puffing a long freight train. It took only seconds for him to remove two logs from a convenient pile on the embankment and place them on the tracks. A few moments later came his reward — the satisfying sight of one derailed enemy freight train.

One other *Halifax* returned from Bochum so severely flak-ridden that it subsequently became a "write-off". But somehow or other its crew was unharmed.

On the Castrop-Rauxel operation it appeared that the enemy had been forewarned again. Two great banks of searchlights formed a veritable "great white way" from the battle-front to the target. It was unlike anything most of the crews had ever seen. Night-fighters were patrolling this avenue in very business-like fashion, and one of the two Porcupine aircraft lost on the raid succumbed to their guns. Over the target area, flak, both barrage and predicted, was quite intense. It accounted for the other missing Hally. The aircraft shot down by fighters was "T-Tare", manned by Pilot Officer A. T. ("Tommy") Bond and crew, all of whom were at least half-way through their tours. When starting their run-up on the target, they were hit by fire from an unseen fighter, which severely wounded Flt. Sgt. R. Allan (mu/ag). He died within a few minutes. "Tare" began to blaze from fuselage to port outer. Attempts to extinguish the flames failed, whereupon the crew baled out as ordered. Pilot Officer Bond, Flying Officer E. A. Watson (nav.) Sgt. K. E. Slack (a/g), and Sgt. J. Weir, R.A.F. (f/e), reached earth safely and were taken prisoners, but Flt. Sgt. A. E. Robson (w/op) and Flt. Sgt. J. R. Seymour (a/b) were officially presumed dead. When the war ended, Slack, now a flight sergeant, made his way to an Allied camp south of Magdeburg. On 9 May, he and another Canadian airman, boating in the Elbe River near Schonebeck, saw a German soldier struggling in the water. Both immediately dived to his assistance. In the rescue attempt Flt. Sgt. Slack was drowned, but a boat

manned by American soldiers rescued the second airman as well as the enemy soldier for whom the flight sergeant had given his life.

The second missing Halifax, "R-Roger", was manned by Flying Officer D. F. Guy's veteran crew (21 trips). A minute or two before time-on-target, "Roger" sustained flak hits which started fires in the starboard outer and rest position. When the flames continued out of control despite every effort to extinguish them, the crew was ordered to bale out, but not before the bomb load had been jettisoned in the target area. W.O.2 J. J. Scott (mu/ag) baled out normally, but the rest of the crew had not left the aircraft before an explosion occurred. Flying Officer Guy and his bomb-aimer, Flying Officer H. A. McLennan, were knocked out, and both regained consciousness in mid-air after falling about 15,000 feet. McLennan found his 'chute already open, but Guy was still falling freely, and pulled the ripcord at an estimated 2,000 feet above the ground. Guy, McLennan, and Scott became P.O.W.s along with Pilot Officer R. D. MacLachlan (a/g). The other crew members — Flying Officer C. H. Love (nav.), Flt. Sgt. L. P. Ramey (w/op), and Sgt. T. A. S. Lockety, R.A.F. (f/e) — were presumed killed. Proof of the great number of searchlights in action that night was offered by the fact that one returning *Hally*, despite violent evasive action, was coned for almost 20 minutes.

The Porcupines pounded seven other targets in November without loss. Five of these — Oberhausen, Dusseldorf, Gelsenkirchen, Neuss, and Duisburg — lay in "The Valley". The others were Munster and Julich, the latter being bombed with outstanding success for the benefit of the U.S. 9th Army. In a mining way, successful drops were made in the Oslo and Kattegat areas.

During November two senior officers were posted from the squadron. On the 6th, its two-tour veteran and Commanding Officer, Wing Cdr. A. J. Lewington, D.F.C., left to assume command of Station Dishforth. He was replaced by Wing Cdr. C. A. Tambling. On the 22nd, Wing Cdr. F. R. Sharp, who had been attached to No. 433 for some weeks, left to become the new C.O. of No. 408 (Goose) Squadron.

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On 2 December, a Porcupine aircraft was shot down by enemy fire after bombing Hagen. Killed were Flt. Lt. W. H. Cook, Flying Officer J. E. Grant, Pilot Officer J. B. Pittman, Flying Officer R. H. Shiells, Sgt. R. E. Ainsworth, R.A.F., and Sgt. J. W. Ash. The only survivor, Flt. Sgt. L. A. Mallory (a g), lost consciousness when the *Halifax* was hit. Upon fully regaining his senses, he found himself wandering around on the ground, burned about the face and hands. Seeing no trace of his parachute anywhere, he could only conclude that he had survived a crash or crash-landing. Early the next morning he was taken in and fed by a farmer, and subsequently his burns were dressed by a nun. For four days he remained at another farm house near Weiler, France, hiding in the cellar when the Germans came to search. He then contacted French troops who entered the town, and about a month later was taken to England.

New or almost forgotten names like Karlsruhe Soest, Osnabruck, St. Vith, Opladen, and Troisdorf, decorated the operations board in December, in addition to such familiar ones as Duisburg, Cologne, and Oslo. The Karlsruhe and Soest operations, except for persistent flak, were fairly routine for all crews; but not so the Osnabruck raid, on the 6th. After the bombing-run, Flt. Sgt. O. S. T. Clarke, rear gunner aboard "Q-Queen", spied an amber light, which he perceived to belong to an Me.410. He gave "corkscrewstarboard", then watched and waited while the enemy shadowed "Queen" through two corkscrews. As she rolled to start a third, Clarke opened fire, point blank. He poured about 200 rounds into the Messerschmitt, which exploded and dived steeply in flames. It was presently seen to crash and explode again. Clarke thereby chalked up one "destroyed", earned a D.F.C. in the process.

Flying Officer Neil Mara, captain of "F-Fox", had engine trouble nearly all the way. After bombing successfully, he was forced down by fighters to 1,000 feet, at which sticky height he flew the return trip. He landed on three engines at Woodbridge, with an unserviceable hydraulic system. This action was mentioned in the citation which accompanied Mara's D.F.C.

On the 24th, this squadron was sent a congratulatory message by the A.O.C.-in-C. for being the Group's only unit to operate on Christmas Eve. (It was actually the only squadron to operate in the whole of Bomber Command). Three crews had dropped mines in the Oslo area, and returned to a diversion at Peterhead, Scotland. These septets, captained by Flt. Lt. Doug McGrath, Flying Officer S. V. McKellar, and Pilot Officer Bob Saunders, thus injected a little Canadian flavour into the R.A.F.'s Christmas pudding.

Highly resentful of Von Rundstedt's attempt to spoil their Yuletide Season by sneaking through the Ardennes, the Porkies went after St. Vith on Boxing Day in support of the Allies who were checking the move. Results compared favourably to those obtained at Julich. Despite bad weather, six more missions were completed before the year was out. Three were attacks on Opladen, Troisdorf, and Cologne, and the rest were mining operations in the Oslo Fjord, the last of which saw four crews ring in the New Year dodging flak over Fredrikstad.

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After the squadron's first operation of 1945, an excellent raid on Ludwigshafen on 2 January, "A"-Flight was temporarily "stood down" from operations pending conversion to *Lancasters*. Meanwhile, the squadron colours were borne into battle by "B"-Flight crews in their trusty *Hallies*. By 16 January they had added to the squadron's "Targets Visited" list the names of Hanover, Hanau, Saarbrucken, Grevenbroich, and Magdeburg (the squadron's last objective attacked by *Halifaxes*).

Throughout the last half of January the meteorological law of averages finally worked. The weather was bad-to-abominable. It failed, however, to interrupt the *Lancaster* conversion schedule, and on 29 January, when "A"-Flight was ready to operate on *Lancs*, "B"-Flight was in turn stood down for approximately three weeks.

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On 1 February the squadron flew on its first operation with *Lancasters*. Seven crews bombed Ludwigshaven "on Wanganui". Though the flak was only moderate, one burst managed to damage *Lancaster* "A-Able", captained by Sqn. Ldr. H. K. Stinson, D.F.C., "A"-Flight Commander. Thereafter all went well with the damaged *Lanc* until it had reached a point only a few miles south of base. It went out of control at 3,000 feet while in cloud, and crashed between Dalton and Dishforth. Two crew members, Flying Officer A. W. Bellos (a/b) and Pilot Officer R. J. Thompson (a/g), bailed out safely, but the others were all killed. In addition to Sqn. Ldr. Stinson, the deceased crew members were Flying Officer D. J. McMillan (nav.), Pilot Officer J. T. McShane (w/op), Pilot Officer E. H. Thompson, R.A.F. (f/e), and Pilot Officer R. Pierson (mu/ag). Sqn. Ldr. Stinson. had completed the sixth operation of his second tour, while his crewmates were all veterans of 21 or more sorties with this squadron.

After an icebound trip to Wiesbaden, which was generally considered poor, the Porcupines attacked Bonn. The German defences consisted of some half-hearted flak and the odd "scarecrow". But it was not the enemy who accounted for the squadron's single loss that night. The missing aircraft, "M-Mike", captained by Flt. Lt. Neil D. Mara, D.F.C. (flying on his 21st operation), was thought to have collided with another *Lancaster* over Belgium. Killed with Mara were Flying Officer C. H. Howald

(2nd pilot), Flying Officer W. L. Melbourne, Pilot Officer N. A. Hurst, Flying Officer A. J. Tyrell, Pilot Officer W. C. Whitton, Sgt. L. J. Sims, R.A.F., and Warrant Officer B. T. Sheeran.

Those who hadn't already guessed the reason for the switch to *Lancasters* knew it on the evening of 13 February. Bomber Command had wanted more aircraft able to lug heavier loads farther. This night's operation (in support of the Russian Army) was on Dresden, the most distant target ever attacked by the Porcupines. (One navigator joked about its being on the same streetcar line as Prague, Czechoslovakia.) At briefing, each crew member was given a piece of cloth containing a message in Russian identifying the bearer as an ally. Fortunately no one had to use it.

There was no mistaking this target. Great fires resulting from an earlier raid provided crews with a homing beacon visible 100 miles away. An R.A.F. master bomber skilfully dispersed the bombing over sections hitherto unscathed, and results were terribly effective. Built-up areas on both sides of the Elbe were engulfed in flames that were beyond recall, and the river itself must have been boiling. This two-stage raid ranked with the twin assault on Duisburg (14/15 October) as the most destructive of the European campaign.

The Porkies made another long journey the following night, mining in Pomeranian Bay. Then, within ten days, came four gardening jaunts to the Oslo area (they now owned that fjord by squatter's rights) and attacks on Dortmund and Duisburg. Their only daylight target of February was Mainz.

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The squadron's record of targets attacked during its last two months of combat read like a Bomber's Baedeker. Mannheim, Cologne, Essen, Dortmund, Hagen, Bottrop, Hanover, Hamburg (twice), Leipzig, and Kiel, were its major objectives. Less familiar, but not necessarily easier, were targets like Chemnitz, Dessau, Zweibrucken, Heide, Hildesheim, Merseburg, and Schwandorf. In addition, at least one gardening operation was completed in each of the Oslo, Heligoland, Kiel, and Kattegat areas.

Not long after the Oslo operation there occurred the only air-to-ground attack ever made on this squadron. In the early hours of 3 March, a Ju. 88 intruder began to shoot up the station. It put three cannon shells through a wall of No. 2 Hangar, slightly damaging two Porcupine aircraft. It also punched a king-size hole in the squadron's radar hut. Among station personnel, however, there were no casualties, the only real loss being precious sleep.

The Porkies' longest haul of March and April was to Chemnitz, less than 50 miles from the border of Czechoslovakia. Although the enemy's flak and fighter defences were unusually sharp along the route, the chief hazard was unforeseen severe icing encountered from almost ground-level to a point near the operational height of 15-17,000 feet. Eleven aircraft of No. 6 Group crashed in the York area either shortly after takeoff or when returning to land. The Group's total loss of 17 aircraft that night was one of its heaviest setbacks. Somehow the Porcupines came through it without casualties, but it had been touch-and-go for many of them.

The squadron's last loss while mining, which occurred on 12 March in the Kattegat area, was probably attributable to fighter activity. The missing aircraft was *Lancaster* "E-Easy", manned by Flying Officer J. P. Farrell, Flt. Sgt. J. H. Wilson, Pilot Officer C. A. Kennedy, Flying Officer A. V. Plante, Flt. Sgt. D. W. Hodge, Sgt. T. Orr, R.A.F., and Flt. Sgt. T. C. Pierson. All were presumed dead.

Homeward-bound from the Hagen operation, on the night of 15 March, *Lancaster* "Q-Queen" was attacked by an Me.410. The enemy fired wildly, but no so Pilot Officer H. D. Millson, mid-upper gunner aboard "Queen". He shot the Messerschmitt down in flames, chalked up an official "destroyed", and eventually put up a D.F.C.

A daylight raid on Hanover, a scant 17 hours later, saw flak damage done to several Porcupine aircraft. But it remained for the Hamburg "incident" on the 31st to supply the real fireworks. Airborne just before 0630 hours, the Porcupines returned shortly after midday, and judging by the obviously shaken appearance of some of them, something out of the ordinary had happened.

This impression was borne out by the story that unfolded at interrogation. No. 6 Group's gaggles, flying at the rear of the bomber stream, arrived over the target ten minutes late. Meanwhile our fighters, which had given excellent cover to preceding waves, had quit the area, thinking the raid was over. The Germans took advantage of the situation by despatching an estimated 30 Me.262 jet fighters against the straggling gaggle, and among the aircraft singled out for special attention were seven of this squadron. With amazing speed the Me.s shot up out of nowhere; but they had to reckon with alert and well-trained crews. Two of the attackers closed simultaneously on "D-Dog" from the rear port quarter, one of them opening fire at 800 yards. The rear gunner, Warrant Officer E. J. Ash, fired back at this one while the mid-upper, Warrant Officer W. M. Ruthig, directed a short burst at the other. Then both concentrated their fire on fighter No. 1, who was hit on the wing, engines, and nose. Debris was seen to fall from the wing as the German broke away and fell earthwards, trailing smoke. It was claimed as destroyed. Then, throughout five consecutive passes, Ruthig gave his skipper, Sqn. Ldr. P. D. ("Pip") Holmes, such well-timed evasive action that the Lancaster emerged undamaged. Both gunners were later commissioned and gonged, this action being mentioned in their official citations. A "probable" was chalked up for Flt. Sgt. M. A. Graham, mid-upper custodian in "Y-Yoke", in a rather unusual way. Seeing a jet attack another *Lancaster* about 100 yards away on the port quarter up, he gave supporting fire with 150 rounds. The enemy aircraft went into a steep dive, giving off smoke as it disappeared into a cloud. The other *Lancaster* was destroyed, and its crew presumably lost; but at least they were partially avenged.

Altogether, out of 78 separate encounters fought by the Canadians in this raid, sixteen involved the Porcupines, yet their aircraft were not even dented. This was the first instance of airborne attack on No. 6 Group in daylight, and possibly the first daylight attack by jets on aircraft of Bomber Command. Although unsuccessful in battle with the Porcupines, the Me.262s did help to create the third precedent of the day. It was the first time in squadron history that the engineers had taken battle stations in the front turret.

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The 2nd and 3rd of April were fraught with frustration. Advised that there would be no operations that day or night, eager-beaver flight commanders drew up a large air-training schedule, and several crews took off on training flights of various kinds. Then, just at noon, unpredictable Group surprised with operation orders. Crews on training flights were frantically recalled and their aircraft hastily bombed up. When the job was all done, along came a cancellation. At 1900 hours word came through that the squadron would be called for both bombing and mining, the former likely to be early. The call came. Group wanted eight crews, then nine, then seven, then eight again, within a couple of hours. Briefing was held at 0930 hrs.; the bombing was called off at 1145. Bombing crews stood by while gardening preparations continued. The bombing was on again at 1350 hrs., off again at 1930. The mining was washed out at 1920, a scant minute before take-off time. At 1940 crews learned there would be nothing further until the morning, and at 1947 they were told to expect an early morning call. This came at 0100, to be scrubbed at 0310 after briefing. Such an on-again-off-again routine, though perhaps unavoidable, was more than a little telling on aircrew nerves; but it was all part of life on a heavy bomber squadron.

The squadron suffered its final loss of the war near Leipzig on 10 April, when *Lancaster* "F-Fox" was hit by predicted flak just before the bombing run. It crashed, killing the entire crew. Manning "F-Fox" were Pilot Officer R. J. Grisdale, Flying Officer I. B. Zierler, Sgt. J. M. Hirak, Flying Officer W. C. McLeod, Sgt. F. G. Seeley, Sgt. W. A. Thurston, R.A.F., and Sgt. D. W. Roberts.

On 25 April the Porcupines attacked gun positions on the island of Wangerooge. This was their last operation in the face of the enemy, who, they observed, was still full of fight, still throwing up a healthy curtain of fire for the bombers to penetrate.

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As the news of Germany's surrender was expected at any time, speculation became rife concerning the squadron's future. Then, rather mysteriously, navigators became unusually busy polishing up their sextants and observing heavenly bodies by day and by night. But they couldn't contain their secret for long. The squadron was to begin training for a trans-Atlantic flight, which could mean but one thing—"We're flying home".

With the announcement that Hitler's "thousand-year Reich" had died some 985 years prematurely, no end of celebrating was anticipated. But such was not to be, at least for the time being. Throughout V-E Day and the next two days the squadron was busily engaged in "Operation Exodus"—the airlift of liberated P.O.W.s from the continent to England. Crews said it was worth foregoing the main celebrations just to see the expressions of sheer joy on the faces of their long-suffering passengers, some of whom had been prisoners since 1939. This task completed, the squadron received the disheartening news that it would not be flying home after all.

Meanwhile, selected as one of two squadrons to represent No. 6 Group in Bomber Command's "Striking Force", No. 433 had as one of its main tasks the jettisoning of bombs from bases within the Group. When the bomb supply ran out early in September, the squadron took on another highly important commitment—"Operation Dodge"—the airlift of troops from Italy. This necessitated its transfer from No. 6 to No. 1 (R.A.F.) Group. During August and September the squadron was affected by two changes in command. On 1 August Wing Cdr. G. A. Tambling, Squadron Commander since 6 November 1944, assumed temporary command of Station Skipton, and was succeeded temporarily by Sqn. Ldr. J. E. Vallance. On 25 September, Wing Cdr. C. E. Harris, D.F.C., took over, and led the squadron until its disbandment on 15 October 1945.

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A summary of No. 433 Squadron's operations reveals that, during the period from 2 January 1944 to 25 April 1945, it took part in 155 bombing attacks, 54 sea mining missions, and four sea searches. The total number of sorties, bombing and mining, was 2316, of which 2098 (or 90.07%) were successful. The Porcupines' favourite bombing targets were Berlin and Duisburg, each of which they bombed five times. One of the more interesting statistics concerning this squadron is the fact that more than 25% of its operations were mining missions. Of these, fifteen were in the Oslo Fjord, six in the Kiel area, five in the Kattegat, and five in the Heligoland area. The total weight of bombs and mines delivered by it to the enemy was 7486 tons.

Thirty-eight aircraft were lost on operations (31 over enemy territory, five in crashes on English soil, and 2 in the North Sea). Operational casualties totalled 241 officers and N.C.O.s (191 R.C.A.F., 49 R.A.F., and 1 U.S.A.A.F.), made up of 32 complete crews (227 individuals) and 14 members of 8 other crews. Of this number, 152 were killed or presumed dead, 56 were prisoners of war, 7 were evaders, 2 were escapers, and 24 were R.A.F. personnel on whom no definite information was

available. Non-operational casualties totalled 13 aircrew and 2 ground crew. Gunners of this squadron destroyed 6 enemy aircraft and probably destroyed 2 more.

The Porcupines won 160 decorations and honours. These consisted of 132 D.F.C.s, 2 bars to the D.F.C., 9 D.F.M.s, 1 B.E.M., 14 M.i.D.s, 1 Purple Heart (U.S.), and 1 Air Medal (U.S.).

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The following words, inscribed as a foreword in the squadron scrapbook, were written by Wing Cdr. Clive B. Sinton, D.F.C., the Porcupine Squadron's first Commanding Officer:

"Porky was conceived who knows where and how? Born it was at Skipton-on-Swale, November 1st, 1943, unknown and unheralded ... a mere infant hardly knowing where to turn amongst its roaring, fighting neighbours. As the body grew, so, too, its spirit soared — until, with the blood of Canada, Britain, Australia, and America (and Eire, too) in its veins, young Porky launched itself into the battle in January, 1944. It was inevitable that its first blow should strike at the very heart of its adversary (Berlin).

Porky's character is such that it is difficult to single out for praise any one individual. Every effort made has been made by the Porkies as a team, whole-heartedly, without restraint. It is because of this that Porky, scarred, and with new quills replacing those lost, is continuing to add to the many battle honours recorded . . .

. . . The spirit of Porky will live wherever there is freedom, and Porky will fight when, at any time or place, that freedom is challenged."

