

F/Sgt Leslie Bernard Daitz Operations

- 1. 24/25 June 44 Prouville (P/O Bucknell)**
- 2. 12/13 July 44 Culmont Chalindrey (F/O Bucknell)**
- 3. 15/16 July 44 Nevers (F/O Bucknell)**
- 4. 30 July 44 Cahagnes (F/O Bucknell)**
- 5. 3 Aug 44 Trossy St Maximim (F/O Bucknell)**
- 6. Bois de Casson (F/O Bucknell) KIA**

From 97 Squadron Operation Book

1. 24.6.44 Many training cross countries this morning. Some practice bombing at Wainfleet. The target for tonight was Prouville – a point from which the Germans had been sending their pilotless aircraft to bomb London. 12 aircraft were detailed. At 00.10 and 00.11 the first Oboe markers were seen. Flares were immediately dropped over them. It was very difficult, however, for the marker aircraft to identify the target, especially as they were hampered by searchlights, light flak and night fighters. The Deputy Controller attempted to mark blindly on his blind bombing equipment, but it is feared that as greater accuracy was needed than was possible that the raid must be considered abortive. F/Lt Walton, flying Lancaster “J”, did not return from this sortie. No message was received from him. The gunners of “Q” – F/O Jones and W/O Clark – distinguished themselves by shooting down in flames two JU88s which attacked them. A third JU88 was claimed as a probable. An exceptionally good effort.

24/25 June 1944 – Prouville

ND740F P/O C.Bucknell, Sgt L.Barlow, F/Sgt L.B.Daitz, F/Sgt R.McAllister, F/Sgt C.C.Dyke, Sgts W.Patience, L.D.Farmer. Up 2256 Down 0204. 14 x 500lb MC, 2 x 500lb MC LD (12 hrs), 3 x 4.5” rec flares. No cloud, hazy. Vis good. Target area located by 3 RSF and one green TI. Not possible to see ground detail. The RSF seemed to be setting something alight. At least 100 searchlights in the area.

2. 12.7.44 This morning’s training programme consisted of blind bombing practice and cross countries. Tonight 13 aircraft were detailed for an attack on an important railway crossing at Culmont Chalindrey. At 0140 hours we dropped our flares on our blind bombing equipment very accurately over the target area. Mosquito aircraft instantly found the aiming point and marked it with RSFs. The Controller not having been heard from by now, the raid was taken over by the Deputy Controller who ordered the RSFs to be backed up and passed a vector wind to the main force to bomb with. At 0145 the Controller was heard from on VHF and he then assumed control of the raid. The operation is believed to have been very successful. There was no flak – only a few searchlights – and fighter opposition was negligible. All of our aircraft returned safely, but owing to cloud base being so low at base the majority were diverted to Metherringham and two to Winthorpe.

12/13 July 1944 – Culmont-Chalindrey

ND840J F/O C.Bucknell, Sgt L.Barlow, F/Sgt L.E.Daitz, F/Sgt R.McAllister, Sgts C.C.Dyke, W.Patience, L.D.Farmer. Up 2201 Down 0557. 9 x 7” clusters, 4 x 1000lb MC, 1 x 1000lb MC LD (36 hours), 2 rec flares. Weather clear. Target identified by RSF. Called in to drop flares 0158 hours. Ordered to bomb 0208 hours. Wind received 0153 hours – 031/55. Heard another wind which was

immediately cancelled, then 325/15 at 0206 hours. This one we used. Attack seemed fairly concentrated when it finally commenced. Landed at Metherringham.

3. 15.7.44 This morning some aircraft took off for blind bombing practice at Lincoln and Nottingham. Operations tonight were directed against a marshalling yard at Nevers. 10 aircraft were detailed. The attack opened with this Squadron dropping flares, by means of its blind equipment, accurately over the aiming point at 0145 hours. The Mosquitos immediately went in and dropped a RSF which fell about 400 yards from the aiming point and was immediately cancelled by a yellow TI marker. Another RSF was soon put down, this time accurately. The Controller then broadcast a bombing wind and main force went in and bombed. The target was well hit though the accuracy of the bombing was rather disappointing. A terrific explosion was seen at 0209 hours. There was no flak of any kind and no fighters were seen. All of our aircraft returned safely.

15/16 July 1944 - Nevers

ND452S F/O C.Bucknell, Sgt L.Barlow, F/Sgt L.E.Daitz, F/O R.A.V.James, Sgts C.C.Dyke, W.Patience, L.D.Farmer. Up 2232 Down 0525. 9 x 7" clusters, 4 x 1000lb MC, 1 x 1000lb MC LD (72 hrs), 2 rec flares. Weather clear. Identified target by RSF and visually on existing flares. Called in to drop flares 0150. Bombing wind passed at 0155 – 272/16. At 0156 order to bomb came through by W/T. 0158 ordered to standby and at 0203 ordered to bomb. First RSF 500 yards out cancelled by yellow TI. Second RSF was the one we were ordered to bomb. Terrific flash and clouds of smoke seen at 0208. First RSF attracted a lot of the bombing.

4. 30.7.44 This morning 6 aircraft were detailed for daylight operations against German positions and troop concentrations in the front line at Cahagnes near Caumont. The role of our aircraft was to lead the formation to the target, where the force would split up and bomb independently. However, on arrival at the target area at 0800 hours, 10/10ths cloud conditions prevailed and the master bomber gave instructions for the force not to bomb but to go back to base. This order was obeyed but by now the force had split up and they returned, some breaking cloud at 2000' and coming back low level and others above cloud. The weather over the Channel was fine and enormous amounts of shipping could be seen waiting to unload their war cargoes. One of our crews captained by F/L H.A.B.Baker did not return. S/L Stevens DFC, the squadron navigation officer, was flying with this crew on this operation. The opposition was negligible. A large training programme was carried out by the remainder of the Squadron tonight.

30 July 1944 - Cahagnes

ND840J F/O C.Bucknell, Sgt L.Barlow, F/Sgt L.B.Daitz, F/O R.A.V.James, F/Sgt R.McAllister (A/B 2) Sgts C.C.Dyke, W.Patience, L.D.Farmer. Up 0546 Down 1102. 18 x 500lb GP. 10/10ths cloud at 1,200'/6000'. Running up to target found aiming point completely covered. At 0507 hours, second TI seen cascading slightly to port through cloud. Descended in company with leader of our formation. Broke cloud at 1,200' by which time we had over shot target. Received order to bomb TIs if we could see them. Orbited below cloud and were running again when we received "Apple Pie" on R/T and abandoned mission.

5. 3.8.44 Some day training on blind marking equipment this morning. This afternoon an operation was carried out against a flying bomb base at Trossy St Maximim. 16 of our aircraft participated. The formation arrived at the target at 1430 hours. The leading aircraft reported the aiming point clear and very clearly visible. Very soon afterwards the whole area was covered in smoke. The attack is believed to have been reasonably successful. The standard of formation flying was very low, and both the controller and his leader complained strongly of lack of flying discipline and

disobedience to flight plan instructions. There was moderate heavy but accurate flak over the target. The weather consisted of 3/10ths cloud. All of our aircraft returned safely. No night flying tonight.

3 August 1944 – Trossy St Maximim

ND840J F/O C.Bucknell, F/Sgt L.Barlow, F/Sgt L.B.Daitz, F/Sgt R.McAllister, F/O R.A.V.James (Vis A/B), F/Sgt C.C.Dyke, Sgts W.Patience, L.D.Farmer. Up 1147 Down 1616.

6. 6.8.44 Today also the training flights were overshadowed by another operation against a flying bomb base at Bois de Casson, for which 9 of our aircraft were detailed. The raid was not a great success as the controller's navigational equipment became unserviceable at the English coast out. A deputy controller took over and led the force into a large cumulus nimbus cloud which was lying across track. The formation broke up in the cloud and on emerging had spread over many miles of sky. The target was bombed more or less by individual aircraft, and the bombing that did occur was believed to have been accurate. There was moderate heavy flak over the target and the fighters attacked the aircraft which were most dispersed on breaking cloud. 'J' captained by F/O Bucknell RAAF, did not return from this mission.

6 August 1944 – Bois de Casson

ND840J F/O C.Bucknell, Sgt L.Barlow, F/Sgt L.B.Daitz, F/Sgt R.McAllister, F/O R.A.V.James (Vis A/B), F/Sgt C.C.Dyke, Sgts W.Patience, L.D.Farmer. Up 0918 – aircraft missing.