

'The formation of 100 Group during November 1943, re-awakened Bomber Command's interest in B17s. The B17 Fs and Gs offered a performance which in many respects could not be matched by the 'home-grown' heavies. An important factor in the bomber support planner's minds was the vulnerability of jamming signals being 'homed' onto by the enemy. As a consequence of this, it was anticipated that 100 Group's squadrons would suffer heavy losses when operating over enemy territory. The altitude performance of the B17 seemed to offer a solution to this problem, especially when combined with the type's potent defensive armament and during the last months of 1943, it was decided to equip at least one of the Group's squadrons with this type. Accordingly, the Eighth Airforce was formerly requested to supply 14 B17 F aircraft to 100 Group on January 12, 1944 and a new Special Duties Unit, 214 Squadron was drafted in from 3 Group to operate the type. 214, which had previously flown Sterlings, was moved from Downham Market to Sculthorpe between 17th and 20th of the month and received its first B17s on the latter date.

The jamming and associated equipment fitted to the Group's B-17s was varied as the aircraft themselves. On January 12, 1944, Bomber Command laid down an RCM specification for the 214 sqdn B-17s. which envisioned a crew of eight, pilot, navigator, flightengineer, wireless operator, special operator, airbomber (to act as second navigator, and air gunner) and two gunners - and the installation of H2S navigational radar, the Gee or Loran navaid, the Monica IIIA tail warning radar, M/F and H/F wireless telegraphy, H/F and VHF radio, the Jostle IV VHF communications jammer and four Airborne Grocer AI radar jammers.

This specification couldn't be met as there were delays in the production of Jostle IV and in late January 1944, work was put in hand to replace this item with the already available Airborne Cigar device.

When delivered to 100 Group the first 14 B-17s carried, besides additional wing tanks, the standard armament of nine 0.5 in Brownings disposed in a dorsal turret (two) the radio room (one), a ventral ball turret (two), the waist positions (two) and a tail turret (two). In addition most of the aircraft were fitted with the mountings for two Brownings in the nose cap glazing and at least one of them carried G-type gun mountings, an installation which was fairly common on late production B-17Fs.

The installment of the ABC equipment in the squadron aircraft took some time and by the end of March, only six operational aircraft were available.

By the end of May, Monica IIIIE tail warning devices had been installed on all available airframes. The first H2S was not installed until July, 1944 and Loran appeared in November.

On May 16th, Sculthorpe was closed, after the a/c had been suitably converted to RCM requirements), the squadron moved to Oulton which was to be its home for the remainder of the war. It was to be involved in jamming undertaken by the Group but mainly concentrated on SWF (Special Window Force) and Main Force support sorties.

Main Force operations were usually flown some 1,000 to 2,000 feet above the stream and from December, 1944, the unit's B-17s were required to circle the target area giving jamming cover during the whole of the attack. This hair-raising procedure was executed within a five mile radius of the aiming point and could last up to 15 minutes. In this way, three of four aircraft could give cover to the whole of a raid. SWF operations were flown at a similar altitude. Jamming would

commence on instructions received from Group and would usually start over the North Sea outward bound. Transmissions were maintained until well into the return journey.

Crew Biographies.

P/O Alan James Leville Hockley. Aus 420197. RAAF. Pilot. RAF- 214 Sqdn. Age 27. Son of Walter James Hockley and Minnie Blanche Hockley. From Strathfield, New South Wales, Australia.

† Buried at Yerseke General Cemetery NL. 22. Grave 171.

*The body of Pilot washed up at Yerseke harbour June 11, 1944 and buried the same day.

As per Murray Peden, Pilot - 214 Sqdn. Author of the wonderful autobiography, *A Thousand Shall Fall*.

‘I remember him (Allan Hockley) well as a companion in the mess, a companion with a good sense of humour and a ready wit; here is what Ron James’s book says (pg. 149).

“On the night of May 24/25, 1944, the Squadron suffered its first Fortress casualty when P/O Hockley, RAAF, was shot down on a patrol to Antwerp. It was on this flight that SDO (Special Duties Officer) Lloyd-Davies was the stand-in operator. P/O Hockley stayed at the controls of the burning aircraft to give his crew the chance of bailing out and in doing so forfeited his own life. All the crew with the exception of the pilot and Sgt Simpson managed to parachute out and landed on one of the small Dutch Islands, in the North Sea. As this area was well guarded by Germans, they had no opportunity to evade capture and were quickly rounded up by the enemy.”

As per Gerhard Heilig, Sp W/Op 214 Sqdn.

‘I did not myself take part in that night’s operations but my flying log books shows that I did a pre-operational air test on SR384 BU-A, the aircraft in which P/O Hockley was shot down, on the very day, the 24th of May, taking off at 12:10 and landing 25 minutes later, with P/O Jackson and crew. What’s more I have a photo of the aircraft taken by me on that very day. I never flew with Hockley and crew operationally but I do remember him. In fact, my very first flight with the squadron was with him, a training flight at night lasting 3hrs 20 minutes on 26th of March, then another of 6 hrs 20 minutes on the 7th of April.”

Note: See the Chapter ‘Ops In A Fortress’, by Gerhard Heilig from his own personal history.

‘We were informed that the sole object of the squadron was to carry special operators, like ourselves, along in the main bomber stream and it would be our duty to find, identify and jam enemy fighter control transmissions causing havoc and confusion to their defences. The whole thing was so secret not even the Commanding Officer knew what it was all about. No time was wasted in getting us trained on our equipment. It consisted of a control unit with a cathode ray tube scanning the German fighter frequency band. Any transmissions would show up as blips on the screen. We would then tune our receiver to the transmission by moving a strobe spot unto it, identify the transmission as genuine (this was where our knowledge of the language came in as the Germans were expected to come up with phony instructions in order to divert our jammers), then tune our transmitters to the frequency and blast off a cacophony of sound which in retrospect would put today’s ‘Pop’ music to utter shame. The transmitters were standard T1154 mf/hf transmitters modified to operate on 38-42.5 mc/s. Later on, specially designed equipment was to be used. The Squadron was not yet operational, having recently been converted from Sterlings. The B17 Fortress had been chosen for the job, later to be followed by B-24 Liberators for 233

Squadron, as the American type bomb bay was better suited for the installation of the equipment than the British underfloor bays. As there were not enough special operators to go around, we were allocated to whoever happened to be flying until our establishment would be complete and allow permanent crewing up. We soon made friends and found our favourite crews. The old hands, a number on their second tour, made us feel welcome and we soon lost the feeling of being intruding greenhorns. Training went on apace and we all felt it could not be long now before we became fully operational . . . I can't remember many details about my time with 214 Sqdn, but I have deep and lasting impressions of a happy unit with high morale and a great sense of professionalism. Survival in war is largely a matter of luck, but it was always seemed to me that the high standard of airmanship in 214 Sqdn must have had something to do with the fact that of the twenty-odd crews I knew, only four were lost. 214 Sqdn has certainly always had a very special meaning for me.

The Squadron moved to Oulton on 16th of May. One of our specialties were spoof raids, small groups of aircraft shoveling out great quantities of Window to simulate a bomber stream. Following the pattern of attacks on French railway marshalling yards, several of these had been flown over France giving the real raids to Germany a clear run while the German night fighters were chasing Window. Then one night we flew a spoof to the Dutch coast while the real attack consisted of a force of Mosquito night fighters over France. The Germans fell for it and flew straight into the waiting guns of our Mossies.”

F/Sgt Thomas ‘Tom’ D. Glenn. 15166907. Navigator. RAF (VR). RAF- 214 Sqdn. War Time Address: 2 Landsdown Gardens, Jesmond Castle, Newcastle, Northumberland, U.K. POW Luft 7 POW# 7 or 18?

As per Thomas D. Glenn. “The original crew did not include Bob Lloyd. (This is the name we knew him by at this time. He added ‘Davis’ later) The explanation for this is that our crew, when operational on Sterlings was seven, with Jim McCutchan joining us on a permanent basis when we converted onto B-17s. The eight of us were then augmented by a ninth, a special radar operator, who was assigned for just the one night’s operation and Bob was unlucky enough to be with us on the night of 24th of May, 1944. This I might add helped to explain why I did not recognize him when I found him in the hay loft round the back of the farmhouse. Both Tommy and myself were Flight Sergeants with promotion, to Warrant Officer, coming through a few days after ‘buying it’. The operation we were assigned that night was a decoy one to Antwerp, involving about forty planes while the main target were the railway yards at Aachen, when over 400 planes were involved. Our operation was only a minor one and I remember, at the pre-briefing, feeling a little bit apprehensive when we were told our height was to be only 8,000 feet there and back. In Sterlings, we were used to around 18,000 feet and that was considered low. Those Lancasters on the raid carrying bombs were targeting the Ford Motor factory. We were the first 214 Squadron crew to be shot down after the Squadron had been converted to B-17s.

I rather skipped over the events leading to the bailing out. I was sitting at the navigation table working out the course for base, waiting to hear from the Skipper or Bill Hallett, the Flight Engineer, to tell me we were crossing the Dutch coastline, when all of a sudden the aircraft lifted in the air and a dull thud came from the aircrafts belly. I realized, with horror, that something had hit us - either a night-fighter or Ack-Ack. Would we be able to limp home? We soon had the answer with the Skipper’s voice shouting over the intercom, ‘Abandon Aircraft! Abandon Aircraft!’

Then, I saw Bill Hallett coming down the steps from the cockpit, waiting for me to release

the escape hatch and that was when I went to get the key . . .

. . . I had a shock when I came to bale out. Our exit was in the floor of the nose and the Flight Engineer, Walter 'Bill' W. Hallett, was waiting to get out and I went to obtain the key to the hatch, but it was not there. So, the only thing to do was put my hands up to the roof and force the door off it's hinges with my feet. With a sigh of relief the door disappeared and I followed the Flight Engineer out. After counting eight I pulled the rip-cord and on the opening of the chute, I looked down and saw a big black mass below me — cloud I thought, and pulled the cords to see if I could see the fighter that got us, because I could hear the engine, but I did not see it. I followed our plane down with the port wing blazing and saw it crash. The next thing I knew I got an awful clout under the chin and realized I had hit water. I released the parachute and I was just able to stamp it into the mud. In places I was just able to stand with the water up to my neck then two or three places further on I went right under and had to swim. After what seemed to be hours I came across a haystack sticking about 2 feet out of the water and although it was soaking wet I decided to settle into it for the rest of the night. It was about 1:00 a.m.

Next morning, I kept observation on a large house about 150 yards away which appeared to be surrounded by water and after what I estimate would be about half-an-hour, I made my way over to it. It was surrounded by about 2 feet of water and I tried to break down the door but could not do so. I then walked round the out-buildings and got a terrible fright when someone shouted. It was a man standing in the entrance to a doorway to a barn one floor up, without a stitch of clothing. I was so confused that I peeled off question after question without waiting for answers. Who are you? Where have you come from? How long have you been here? Are you English? After a few minutes he calmed me down and was a member of my crew - Bob Lloyd-Davies!!!'

' . . . I might add that in 1988 I went back to Holland and met the two sons of the Dutchman who came out in his boat to pick us up. I visited the farmhouse we broke into and met the owner. The rowing boat was still there! We had a wonderful three days and were shown round the Dutch Airforce base at bergen-op-Zoom, where Bob and I spent the first night in captivity in an underground cell. . . '

F/Sgt R. 'Bob' Y. Gundy. NZ42663. RNZAF. Bomb Aimer. 214 Sqdn RAF. Next of Kin; Mrs. V.J. Gundy, Matamata, New Zealand. Pow Luft 7 # 23. In 1992, he lived at Ranfurley War Veterans Home, 539 Mount Albert Road. Oak. (Auckland?), New Zealand.

Sgt Walter 'Bill' W. Hallett. 1587281. RAF. Flight Engineer. 214 Sqdn RAF. Pow Luft 7. Pow 24.

F/Sgt R. 'Tommy' Lyall. Aus 421541. RAAF. Wireless Operator. 214 Sqdn RAF. Pow Luft 7. Pow 36.

Sgt Raymond George Victor Simpson .1805752. RAF. Air Gunner. 214 Sqdn RAF. Age 20. Commemorated on Runnymede M237.

† Buried at Yerseke General Cemetery NL. 22. Grave 172. The body of Sgt Simpson washed ashore on the 20th of June, 1944 and was initially buried as an unknown airman.

Sgt E. 'Nick' Lovatt. 1590361. RAF. Airgunner. 214 Sqdn RAF. War Time Address; 28 Frenchman's Way, Littlehorse Hill, East South Shields, Co. Durham, England, U.K. Luft 7. Pow 3. E. 'Nick' Lovatt died in 1951.

As per 'Tom' D. Glenn: ' . . . Nick Lovatt, who lived not far from me at South Shields, about 12

miles away, died suddenly about six years after the end of the war. He worked in a butcher's shop and was cleaning up the shop one Saturday early evening, when suddenly, he collapsed and died within three hours. It was then that they found he had a hole in his heart, so, it was quite remarkable that he lived so long.'

Sgt James E. 'Jim' McCutchan. R178606. RCAF. Air Gunner. 214 Sqdn RAF. Age 36+. From Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.
Luft 7. Pow 39. Deceased.

Remarks: From: *The Royal Canadian Air Force at War 1939-1945*.

'P/O James E. McCutchan was not a typical RCAF aircrew type; he was a waist gunner in a Fortress of No. 214 Sqdn, engaged on electronic warfare. He became a POW on the night of May 24/25, 1944 while operating near Antwerp. A subsequent interrogation report illustrates the pandemonium of a bail-out: "We were hit coming away. When we received the first hit, which came up from below us, we took evasive action. My intercom went dead and I never heard what was taking place until members of the crew were passing me in order to bail out. I went out the rear exit behind the Special W/Operator (Lloyd-Davies), Bomb Aimer (Gundy) and the W/Op (Lyll) – the whole of the port wing was afire and the starboard motors were spewing out shower of sparks. I judged we were at about 1,000 feet or less when I jumped. I landed in the water and after releasing my chute, struck out and swam . . . to a dyke. I believe I was in the water about 20 minutes, though this is very hazy as I seemed to be suffering from shock of some sort . . . did not use my Mae West."

As per 'Denny' Blackford, 51 Sqdn pilot shot down over Aachen, May 24/25, 1944. From an interview March, 1992. "I was the youngest member of the crew. In 1943 I was 20 years old. I was the youngest member of the crew. The others were between 21 and 25. I think Johnny Pile and Jack Saunders were the oldest. This was the average raid for most crews though I remember one fellow on the squadron who was reputed to be 40. I don't know if he was but he looked old. We used to call him Pop in fact. I met a fellow in POW camp called, 'Jim McCutchan', who was very old and he admitted it. (see 214 Sqdn). We were very good friends and in fact planned on going into a bush flying service business together. As it turned out I got married in England and just couldn't afford to go to Canada at the time. We kept in touch for a few years after the war but eventually lost touch. I would dearly love to find him again."

As per Tom Glenn: "I very much regret having to tell you that Jim McCutchan died in March, 1985. His widow still lives in Edmonton. It was a severe shock to me as I went over to the Pow reunion in Calgary in July that year hoping to meet him again and by co-incidence another ex-Pow from Edmonton called on me with a message from a friend and I discovered Jim McCutchan was his best friend."

Sgt Robert F. Lloyd -Davies. 2211370. SpW/Op - Special Duties Operator. 214 Sqdn RAF. Pow Luft 7 # 34. Robert 'Bob' Lloyd-Davies was living at 8 Keates Terrace, Bracon, Chester, England, when he passed away sometime in 1992. The *Davis* was added to his name after the war.

Yerseke General Cemetery, NL. 22. The dead of this crew lies at rest at Yerseke General Cemetery. Yerksey is a village commune in Zuid Beveland, 13 kilometers, about 8 miles, east of

Goes and 35 kilometers, nearly 22 miles, west of Bergen-op-Zoom. The cemetery is in the north-western part of the village, in the road known as Steeweg. In the north-eastern part are the graves of 2 airmen; one from Australia and one entirely unidentified. Now known to be Sgt Simpson.
