

Operations

Bernard joined 61 Squadron on 20 August 1943 after transferring from 166 OCU as a flight engineer stationed at RAF Syerston. He was teamed up with Pilot Officer Anthony Bird.

The first operation was on 27/28 August 1943 to Nuremberg in Lancaster ED 718.

30th/31st August to Munchen Gladbach in JB 137

3rd/4th Sept. to Berlin in W49

5th/6th Sept. to Mannheim in W4900

22nd/23rd Sept. to Hanover in JB 137, Awarded the DFM

10th/11th Nov. to Modan in JB552

18th/19th Nov. to Berlin in EE186

22nd/23rd Nov to Berlin in Ee186

25th /26th Nov. to Berlin in EE186

Moved home base airfield to Skellingthorpe

2nd/3rd Dec.to Berlin in EE186

15th/16th Dec. to Stuttgart in LM476

18th/19th Dec.to Frankfurt in LM476

22nd/23rd Dec. to Frankfurt in LM476

Gap in ops with F/L Bird who had injured a knee

Flight Lieutenant Bird had an accident and required knee surgery keeping him off operations until 1 March 1944. He managed to keep his flight engineer and rear gunner in his crew.

There is anecdotal evidence from his mother and sister that during January and February 1944 Bernard flew several missions with other crews, possibly as many as seven.

1st/2nd March 1944 to Stuttgart in W4950

10th/11th March to Chateauroux in ME596

15th/16th March to Stuttgart in LM476

18th/19th March to Frankfurt in LM476

22nd/23rd March to Frankfurt in LM476

5th/6th April to Toulouse in LM476

10th/11th April to Tours in LM476

11th/12th April to Aachen in LM476

18th/19th April to Juvisy in LM476

20th/21st April to Paris la Chapelle in LM476

Failed to return

22nd/23rd April to Brunswick in LM476

On their way to Brunswick, they were attacked by a night fighter (an Me110 piloted by Leutnant Joachim HanB of 1/NJG5). The fighter approached from underneath and fired into the wing root fuel tank. The wing immediately caught fire; the fire spread to the bomb bay.

Comments from Antony Bird: "My feet got hot; I looked down to see the floor of the cockpit melting. The next thing I knew was that I had an almighty bang to my face as the plane exploded and I was ejected, protected by my armoured seat. I was attached to my parachute as this formed my seat cushion and so I survived. By miracle, the navigator also survived but was so badly injured that he was later re-patriated by the Swedish Red Cross. All other members of the crew perished, including an eighth member who was a new pilot on his first acclimatising mission."