



British Lancaster Bomber G for George Aids Third Victory War Loan.

G for George Signs Off

Personal Story of a War-worn Lancaster That Has Explored Australia

By a Special Correspondent

THIS IS THE STORY of the famous British Lancaster bomber G for George, veteran of 90 operational flights over enemy territory, and who (please note the personal pronoun, for George—as his crews will tell you—is very much a person) has been touring Australia to persuade people to buy more bonds in the Third Victory War Loan.

Many records have been kept of G for George's career. There is one in the archives of the Air Ministry—very official—and one—very personal—in the pocket-book of Flight-Sgt Tickle, mechanical nurse of the bomber since it was commissioned in 1942. Between these there is a veritable library of log-books giving G. George's life story, but who is more suited to tell it than G. George himself?

This is the story of G for George, told as only an old bomber can tell it—cryptic phrases drawing shadow pictures of night raids over Germany, of the sky ablaze with tearing flak, of the swift menace of fighters, of destruction and the loneliness of death.

Yet through it the camaraderie of the air, the dogged determination of crews working in perfect unison, their lives the spirit of youth with its frivolity in the face of death and its willingness to sacrifice life so that the British Empire may live in freedom, honour, and security.

DIARY OF G. GEORGE

SEPTEMBER 5, 1944: An aerodrome in England.

I have a new name. Of course, I am still G for George—I'll always be that to the boys—but officially I am called A66-2. This is because I am now an Australian citizen, and we are due to leave England for the Antipodes next week.

I came into being two and a half years ago. Production of the thousands of parts which go into the construction of a bomber as big and complicated as I am had been going on all over the country for many months. Then they had to be despatched to the assembly plant—wings from here, petrol tanks from there, nuts and bolts from a garage geared for manufacturing, hydraulic systems from a plant specialising in their intricacies, tyres from a rubber factory, crystalline perspex from a glass-maker's—they all come rolling in by road and rail, and sometimes even floating down the canal waterways through the English countryside. Then

I was known as W4783, and under that name I left my dispersal point home, nicely shaded and hidden by trees on the big Midlands factory aerodrome, to be flown off to join my squadron. I was ferried half across England by an Air Transport Auxiliary pilot who had only flown one Lancaster before, but he treated me gently and efficiently, so I responded, behaving myself admirably.

I say "my" squadron because I have been with it for so long now that I take a proprietary interest. It is the famous No. 460 Squadron, commanded by Group-Captain Hughie Edwards, VC, DSO, DFC, who is another Australian.

But turn back the pages and read for yourself of the events which led to my being chosen to go to Australia.

OCTOBER 22, 1942: Today I arrive at X aerodrome to join my squadron. I use the mystic symbol so that in the unlikely event of my being shot down over enemy territory I shall not disclose secret information.

X is a fine base from which to operate; the runways are broad and smooth and of ample length. With a heavy bomb load up it is good to have plenty of room for an easy take-off. I am satisfied with my new home, also with my new masters. My pilot, Flight-Sgt Saint-Smith, and all his crew are Australians, and seem a wizard crowd. He and my personal attendant, Flight-Sgt Harry Tickle, were down at dispersal this afternoon giving me the once over.

Tomorrow work starts in earnest to train me up to fighting trim for our first ops trip. The squadron has converted from Manchesters, so we Lancs have a fine record to live up to—but we'll show the Jerry how to lay eggs.

DECEMBER 6, 1942: Back from first operational flight. We bombed Mannheim. Flight-Sgt Saint-Smith painted a little figure with a halo on his head on my fuselage, also my first bomb showing one ops trip. There will be many more. Harry Tickle said I did "o'right for a new chum."

MARCH 14, 1943: Nothing of interest to report. The usual missions, bags of flak, but we were spot on the target, and the result was better than Guy Fawkes night. I miss the "Saint" now that he has left the squadron, but his 13 little images are safe in my keeping.

JUNE 16, 1943: Back from Cologne

carriage caught it too. More work for Harry, but he will have me right in no time.

AUGUST 31, 1943: After all Harry's work patching me up, some silly blighter up above dropped incendiaries through my tail. I'm not averse from a little flak coming up, but incendiaries coming down are a little unnecessary. Pilot-Officer Carter thought so, too.

SEPTEMBER 6, 1943: Fuel feed-pipe cut on starboard outer engine tonight. Homing boost on the other three engines all the way back from the target—but home we came. That is the best of having Merlin engines—if one fades the others take over.

OCTOBER 22, 1943: My first anniversary with the squadron and my 67th ops trip. Went to Kassel with Flight-Sgt Watson, who hails from Clarence River, NSW, where he says "the weather was never like this." The elements were all against us tonight. There were electrical storms the whole way, lightning and balls of flame all round us, and St Elmo's fire licking every airscrew.

They iced up once, and I shook it off, but a great lump shattered the perspex and whizzed into the cockpit. It hit the engineer on the head, but only bruised him. I'm stiff in every longeron tonight.

DECEMBER 16, 1943: A hot trip to Berlin collected a large hole in the fuselage. One impudent fighter came in close, read the letter "G," and left hurriedly. Harry and I have worked hard to set an example of hard work and reliability, and it seems now we are quite well known, even outside the station and the Air Force. Some workers in the South of England who make small-aeroplane parts have asked for our photograph to hang on the wall of their factory.

DECEMBER 23, 1943: Back from my 19th trip with Pilot-Officer Carter. These Australian crews are good.

JANUARY 29, 1944: Another trip to Berlin. We were first away, but dilly-dallied over the target—the bomb-aimer wasn't satisfied with the first run-up, so we did it again. The others beat us home. Harry was hopping with impatience, but all the best people arrive late.

APRIL 20, 1944: Tonight was my last operational sortie. Went to Cologne with Flying-Officer J. A. Critchley, who comes from Melbourne,

crews, and could not have wanted any better. Harry Tickle is proud of me, and I am proud to have had his careful attention throughout my long tour.

I am what they call a veteran now—an oldtimer. But the war isn't over for all we've plastered Jerry. Sixteen trips to Berlin, five to Hanover and Essen, four to Cologne and Mannheim and Frankfurt—and the rest. It's been tough going at times, but I'm not done yet. Even if I am to be retired from ops—perhaps there is some other way I can help.

OCTOBER 12, 1944: After this long flight across the Atlantic, first to land in Canada; over the rich eastern states, the towering mountains, and rolling prairies of America to the Pacific seaboard; then through dirty weather across thousands of miles of water, at last I have come to Australia. I have always liked my Aussie crews, and I think their country is fine, too.

MARCH 13, 1945: Off on the Third Victory Loan campaign with the same crew which flew me out to Australia—Flight-Lieut E. A. Hudson, DFC and Bar, as pilot; Flying-Officer F. P. Smith, DFC, second pilot; Flying-Officer W. C. Gordon, DFC, navigator; Flying-Officer T. V. McCarthy, DFC and Bar, air bomber; Flying-Officer C. H. Tindale, DFM, wireless operator; Flying-Officer G. B. Young, DFM, air gunner; Flight-Sgt Harry Tickle, and Sgt Ower. There are some passengers, too—Flying-Officer Robert Dunstan, DSO, who was in the AIF and lost a leg in action in the Middle East; First-Officer Mardi Gething, Air Transport Auxiliary, who ferried planes in England (now she is our publicity officer); and Captain T. Steele, MC, who is representing the Commonwealth War Loans Organisation.

APRIL 28, 1945: Back in Melbourne again after a most successful tour for Australia's Third Victory Loan, during which I have landed at every town with an airstrip big enough to hold me in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, and South Australia. I have taken hundreds of loan subscribers up on a short flip, and many hundreds of others have inspected all the marvels of which I am composed. Today and tomorrow I will be at Essendon aerodrome from 2-4 pm, during which time anybody who subscribes £100 to the Third Victory Loan at the aerodrome will be able to go aloft in me, and anybody who subscribes...