

## **Donald Victor Day**

This is my story.

I was born in the city of Ely in the United Kingdom on the 17<sup>th</sup> March 1923. Having passed an entrance examination to join the Royal Air Force on September 5<sup>th</sup> 1939, I was told to report for duty to serve an apprenticeship at the number one school of technical training at Halton. After a two-year apprenticeship I joined an operational training unit as a flight engineer. At this unit I joined the other six members of the crew that I was to fly with. We then proceeded to carry out the necessary day and night flying that was essential for the crew to carry out flying operations over Germany. After this training was finished we were posted to number 15 squadron that was stationed at Mildenhall. As a crew we completed a full tour of operations on both Short Stirlings and Arvo Lancasters in just over a year. My war experiences would have to go down to having a very good crew to fly with, the rear gunner that flew with us was excellent, during the tour that we finished he was credited with three enemy night fighters shot down and two probables. Our seven-man crew worked very well as a team, which was essential to survive.

Personally I always thought that our most successful operation was the night bombing of Peenemunde, which was the city where the experimental V1's and V2's were made and tested. This was a low level raid and we arrived at the target six minutes early. The captain then decided to do a six-minute circuit away from the target in order to drop our bombs at our scheduled time. While we were flying away from the target on our delaying circuit the rear gunner reported that Halifaxes flying over the target at 2500 feet were getting shot down by night fighters. When on operations your duty was to hit the target and get back to base. After the rear gunners report the crew captain decided to climb as high as possible and then dive across the target at a lower than suggested altitude. We crossed the target at 500 feet and the photograph of our aiming point was exact and at that altitude we had no trouble with night fighters.

At the end of the war we were allowed to take the ground crew of our airport and fly over some of the cities in Germany to let them see what had been achieved. The impact upon myself was terrible because even I had no idea of the devastation that had been caused, to fly over a city the size of Cologne and not see a single house that was not severely damaged. The only building that was still standing was the cathedral, how it survived I will never know because it was absolutely black with the smoke from the fires. The impact was life changing because I never want to see such devastation again because I realise that a lot of human suffering must have taken place.

While I was flying on Transport Command after the war I had the pleasure of helping the Germans in another roll. I actually flew into Berlin on over one hundred flights during the Berlin airlift.