“A VERY FINE TOUR”

THE STORY OF

Ft. Lt. GEOFFREY FRANCIS BAKER - DFC and BAR

WW2 BOMBER COMMAND PILOT

Stan Hurd 2015.
This article is dedicated to the

Memory of Geoff Baker and to all

Servicemen and women who went to war.
OVERVIEW OF THE STORY

The story of Geoff Baker consists of five main sections, they are:

- How I met Geoff Baker
- The pre-war period
- The war period
- The post-war period
- Appendices

The first section outlines the circumstances of how I met Geoff Baker and the reason why this article was written.

The pre-war period deals with the salient parts of Geoff Baker’s life up until he enlisted with the RAAF.

The war period has several sub sections that deal with different subjects such as training in Australia, training in the U.K., flight operations of squadrons 467, 463 and 97 and its anecdotes, the post flight operations and summaries that include the credits bestowed on Geoff Baker.

The post-war period outlines the events that occurred when Geoff Baker returned to Australia. It also contains an article written by AVM Donald Bennett commander of Sq. 97 that passionately expresses the qualities of the airmen of Bomber Command.

The appendices contain information and documents that support the main story.

Stan Hurd
Winter 2015
The Story of Geoffrey Francis Baker

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SYNOPSIS

This is the story about an ordinary Australian who went to war and safely returned to his family.

This story is not about the politics of war or any other contentious matters which occurred during the conflict, it is about the experience and times of Geoffrey Francis Baker who became a war hero.

The story of Geoff Baker is unique to him but the basics of the story can apply to many other military personnel, in fact it could apply to tens of thousands of ordinary citizens who changed their lives and went to war.

There appears to be a commonality and a sense of purpose that gripped all during the period of the Second World War. I noticed a similar but smaller coming together of people, without the trauma of war, during the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games.

Geoff Baker was a Lancaster Bomber pilot for Squadrons 467 and 463 operating within the RAF Group 5 of Bomber Command. He also was a Pathfinder pilot with Squadron 97 in Group 8 and Group 5 of Bomber Command.

These airmen were able to understand and follow instructions under difficult circumstances and impossible conditions. They were asked to repeatedly work and operate to the best of their ability as a cohesive team in extreme situations.

I often wonder of how I would perform if confronted with the same situations and conclude that I would find it extremely difficult if not impossible to perform adequately.

Although Geoff Baker and his like duly undertook the operational and non-operational duties in a proper workmanship like manner they must have felt in their quieter moments the heavy load that had been placed upon their young shoulders. With the mateship and cohesion of the team they carried on with their duties courageously in a selfless and purposeful manner.

Bomber Command by their actions were the catalyst that paved the way for the early victory of occupied Europe, unfortunately however, there was a price to be paid.

After training to fly heavy bombers in England Geoff Baker went on his first operational bombing trip over Europe in June 1943 he was 23. He was discharged on 10th August 1945 aged 26 with the rank of Flight Lieutenant. He was decorated with two DFC medals for gallantry during flying operations and awarded the prestigious Pathfinders Badge.

He flew a total of 54 operations over Europe covering two tours. Within Bomber Command the average survival rate of one tour was 1 in 6(17%) and the average survival rate of surviving two tours was 1 in 40(2.5%).
Of the 125,000 aircrew of Bomber Command 55,573 (44%) were killed, 8403(7%) were wounded and 9,838(8%) became prisoners of war.

At the end of the war it was calculated that 1 in 10 of all British and Commonwealth Forces killed during WW2 were from Bomber Command.

Geoff Baker flew with four squadrons. Two were bombing squadrons and one Sq. 97 was a Pathfinder squadron. The Pathfinder squadron was a very dangerous operation where a single or a small number of bombers went ahead of the main bombing force, they located a specific target and marked it with incendiary bombs. The survival rate was low. The fourth squadron was 627 but this was for non-operational duties and part of his training.

Before his discharge Baker was asked to stay on and fly dignitaries and staff to various locations. He declined this request as he had enough of the war. This work would have taken him to places where his bombs would have caused tremendous damage and he did not want to see that. He wanted to return to the peace of home and put the war behind him.
HOW I MET GEOFF BAKER

About 2 years after I completed my apprenticeship in electrical fitting with AEI Pty Ltd I was asked if I would be interested in transferring to the commercial side of the business and be a trainee engineer. I said yes.

My first position was as an internal sales rep handling AC motors and electrical control equipment. The department had six personnel, a manager, secretary, two outside sales reps and two inside reps, I was the new inside rep. The other inside sales rep I worked with and next to was Geoff Baker. Geoff was my mentor and teacher. I had no idea about office protocol or how to write quotes, handle enquiries or do office paperwork etc. I was office raw but I technically knew the products. I was in this department for 12 to 18 months. I owe a lot to Geoff as he took me under his wing and developed me from a raw recruit to a capable operator in the commercial engineering world.

I believe I was given the warmth, intelligence, experience and guidance this man exhibited years earlier while on the world stage. He was a quiet purposeful man with a good sense of humour.

I think Geoff liked me and he would ask me to join him for drinks at a pub in Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills each Friday night after work. It was during these encounters that he told me a little about his earlier life.

He was also apprenticed to electrical fitting and when he was 22 he joined the RAAF and eventually became a Lancaster Heavy Bomber pilot during WW2 flying with the RAF Bomber Command. I probably did not understand many of the things he told me but I do remember many of his stories.

We never left the pub together he always stayed on to have a few more drinks. He told me his wife was getting a divorce as he was becoming too hard to live with because of his increased drinking.

Although he was home and in the comfort of his family he was a psychological wreck and he drank heavily. There was no government backup or assistance for these people. If they were not bodily damaged they were told to go get a job and that was that. Today he would be treated for Post-Traumatic Stress.

I understand his demons to be; - the constant loss of his mates and friends, the continual responsibility for his crew and his aircraft, the never ending realisation that the next operation would be his last and the harm and destruction his bombs caused to civilians. These are the things he did talk to me about and I believe he had no one else to express his thoughts to in detail.

He said he did not know anyone from his squadrons and home life was difficult. I just wonder whether I could have done more to assist him.
The Story of Geoffrey Francis Baker

When I was transferred to Head Office to the Scientific and Electronics Department I never had contact with him again – I regret that. I was too busy with studying, workload, getting married, having children, sport etc. that he became a part of my past.

Later I always thought of him on Anzac Day and recalled many of the stories he told me.

In August, 2013 I went to an art exhibition at the National Art Gallery in Canberra to see the works of JMW Turner. I stayed over to the next day and had some spare hours in the morning and I decided to visit the Australian War Memorial.

The Memorial had a Light and Sound exhibition about the RAF/RAAF Bomber Command. The exhibition detailed a RAF Lancaster bombing raid over Germany. Part of this exhibition included an actual WW2 Lancaster bomber, ‘G’ for George of Sq. 460. The exhibition was very moving and the stories of Geoff Baker came rushing back to me.

Although I only knew his name and that he lived in the Cammeray area and he flew Lancaster’s in Bomber Command I approached the Research Department and asked whether they had any records of Geoff Baker. To my surprise they had a complete file on him. After reading this material I decided to collect further information held at the National Archives of Australia. No one had previously requested his files so they had lain dormant for about 70 years.

I decided to analyse and correlate all the information I could gather and write the conclusions into an article about him. If I finish this project and if I can find his daughter I am sure she would appreciate a copy.

I have contacted the RAAF and the RAF Associations to find anyone who flew with or remembered him but I have had no replies to that effect. When I think about it most of his associates would have passed away by now, I have started his story too late.

However what I did receive from the Waddington Air Base Heritage Centre in the UK were two official photos of him. One photo was with his crew in front of his Lancaster and another of him with two of his mates on the base. That was a real surprise and a great find.

From all the material I have gathered and analysed the following article tells the story of Geoff Baker an Australian who flew as a pilot with RAF Bomber Command during the Second World War.
THE PRE-WAR PERIOD

Geoffrey Francis Baker was born on 4th December 1918 to May and Herbert (Bert) Baker. He was born in St Leonards NSW, probably at the Royal North Shore Hospital.

In his early years and up to his marriage Geoff lived with his parents at 27 Cremorne Road, Cremorne.

He obtained his Intermediate Certificate at the Neutral Bay High School and after leaving school at the age of 16 he became an apprentice to electrical fitting with Coupland and Warddell Pty Ltd, 17 Day St. Sydney.

His work involved installing and repairing electrical equipment and solving electrical system problems on board maritime ships.

Geoff’s father Herbert was a manager at Burns Philip and Co Ltd in Bridge Street Sydney. They were a major importer/exporter and owned many merchant ships importing and exporting goods to and from the United Kingdom and servicing the Far East Island trade and the Australian coastal trade.

I believe Herbert was influential in obtaining for Geoff the apprenticeship with Coupland and Waddell as Coupland and Waddell were either under contract or financially associated with Burns Philip to service their fleet of ships.

At the end of his 5 year apprenticeship he started studies for an electrical diploma at the Sydney Technical College at Ultimo. He did not complete this course due to the intervention of the Second World War.

On the sporting field he was a member of the Sydney Leagues Club and the Colleagues Sports Club. He participated in playing football, golf, tennis, surfing and horse riding.

He met and courted Betty Durham and they married on the 22nd August 1941. They lived at Flat 2, 1 Green’s Drive, Cammeray.

When Geoff left for overseas Betty moved and she lived with Herbert and May Baker at 37 Northwood Road, Northwood.

Geoff was anxious to become a pilot in the Air Force and to give himself an edge he joined the RAAF Reserves on 26th November 1940 at the age of 21 years. This also allowed him to complete his apprenticeship.

On 19th July 1941 Geoff enlisted with the RAAF for the duration of the war, his age was 22 years.
THE WAR PERIOD

TRAINING IN AUSTRALIA

Geoff Baker enlisted in the RAAF on 19 July 1941. He underwent elementary pilot training in Australia at the following RAAF establishments before embarking to the United Kingdom.

AUSTRALIAN TRAINING COURSES

NON-OPERATIONAL FLYING HOURS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>COURSE</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>AIRCRAFT</th>
<th>HOURS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26-11-40</td>
<td>Join RAAF Reserve</td>
<td>2 recruiting Office Syd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-7-41</td>
<td>Enlisted in RAAF</td>
<td>2 recruiting Office Syd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-7-41</td>
<td>Initial Training School</td>
<td>Bradfield Park NSW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-10-41</td>
<td>Elementary Flying Training School</td>
<td>Temora NSW</td>
<td>DH82-Tiger Moth</td>
<td>63.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-12-41</td>
<td>No1 Service Flying Training School</td>
<td>Point Cook Vic</td>
<td>Airspeed Oxford</td>
<td>150.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-4-42</td>
<td>Embarkation Depot</td>
<td>Bradfield Park NSW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-7-42</td>
<td>RAAF</td>
<td>Depart Aus. for U.K.</td>
<td>SS Capetown Castle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

He was given the Service Number 412356

This is a unique and interesting number for the numbers are all in a numerical series from 1 to 6 except that the regimental numbers started with 4. Once 4 was placed as the first number the series was still valid. What an easy number to remember.

The second feature to note is that the first three numbers are Geoff Baker’s birthday, 4th December.
Flight of Tiger Moths

Airspeed Oxford Training Aircraft
Description of Geoff Baker [Enlistment]

Year: 1941
Age: 22 years and 7 months
Height: 5 Feet 5 inches (165 cm)
Weight: 129lbs (58.5Kg)
Chest measurement: 32.5/35 inches (82.5/89 cm)
Complexion: Medium
Eyes: Hazel
Hair: Brown
Medical: A1. B.
**TRAINING IN THE U.K.**

On the 2 July 1942 Geoff Baker embarked for the U.K. on board the SS Capetown Castle. The journey took six weeks and he arrived in the U.K. on 18th August 1942.

Upon arriving in the U.K. Geoff Baker was billeted in a hotel in Bournemouth by the RAF Personnel Reception Centre.

He was required to attend an advanced flying training program. The program was designed for him to become a proficient heavy bomber pilot.

**U.K. TRAINING COURSES AND NON-OPERATIONAL FLYING HOURS**

The program of courses Geoff Baker attended are as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>COURSE</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>AIRCRAFT</th>
<th>HOURS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-8-42</td>
<td>RAAF</td>
<td>Arrive in U.K.</td>
<td>SS Capetown Castle</td>
<td>6 Weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-8-42</td>
<td>Personnel Reception Centre</td>
<td>Bournemouth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-9-42</td>
<td>Advanced Flying Unit for Pilots</td>
<td>Lulsgate Bottom</td>
<td>OXFORD</td>
<td>64.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-10-42</td>
<td>Beam Approach Training Unit</td>
<td>Cranage</td>
<td>OXFORD</td>
<td>12.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-10-42</td>
<td>Operational Training Unit</td>
<td>Nth Luffenham</td>
<td>WELLINGTON</td>
<td>110.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-4-43</td>
<td>Heavy Bomber Conversion Unit</td>
<td>Swinderby</td>
<td>MANCHESTER</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heavy Bomber Conversion Unit</td>
<td>Swinderby</td>
<td>LANCASTER</td>
<td>31.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6-43</td>
<td>Sq. 627</td>
<td>Woodhall Spa.</td>
<td>LANCASTER</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL 236.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The training at Woodhall Spa was a training program arranged by Sq. 467 prior active operations.
READY FOR WAR

When Geoff Baker successfully completed the training course program he was then posted to an operational bombing squadron. This was the RAF/RAAF Squadron 467 located at the Bottesford Air Base, Leicestershire.

He joined the squadron in May 1943 and went on his first night bombing operation in a Lancaster as 2nd pilot to P/O J. Good on 11/12-6-43. On this flight Baker was able to bring into focus all his previous training while P/O J. Good taught him the practical strategies to be employed in an actual bombing raid.

The target for that night was Dusseldorf, Germany.

THE SQUADRON 467

No. 467 Squadron was formed on 7 November 1942 and was equipped with Lancaster Heavy Bombers. The squadron was nominally a RAAF unit under control of the RAF, but it was manned by a mixture of Commonwealth personnel, with the majority being British. As the war continued more Australians were posted to the squadron. Soon after becoming operational the squadron moved to RAF Bottesford, Leicestershire where it remained for a year before moving to the RAF Waddington air base in Lincolnshire.

The 467 squadron formed part of No 5 Group RAF Bomber Command, and flew its first operation on 2 January 1943, laying mines off the French coast near Furze. Five days later, it undertook a bombing raid on Essen in Germany. After this it conducted raids on Germany, France, Norway, Czechoslovakia, and Italy until 1945.

According to the RAF Museum, during these raids the squadron gained a reputation for accurate bombing and was selected, on a number of occasions, to attack important and heavily defended German targets.
The Squadron 467 was initially formed with three flights – designated 'A', 'B' and 'C' – although it was usual practice for Lancaster squadrons to consist of only two flights. In November 1943, No. 467 Squadron lost its flight ‘C’ when it was used to form the new No. 463 Squadron, another heavy bomber unit flying Lancaster’s.

Sq. Ldr. Rollo Kingsford-Smith was given command of the new squadron.

Geoff Baker was with flight ‘C’ and he was posted to Sq. 463 on its formation on the 25-11-1943. He had completed 22 operations with Sq. 467.

The 463 Squadron continued to operate from the Waddington Air Base.
**SQUADRON 467 OPERATIONS TABLE**

The following table lists the details of the 22 bombing operations Geoff Baker performed with Squadron 467.

For operations Nos 1 to 21 he was located at the Bottesford Air Base, Leicestershire. For the No 22 operation he was located at the Waddington Air Base, Lincolnshire.

There are notes following the table in which specific incidents are highlighted that occurred during a raid. The notes use the ‘No.’ of the table as the reference point.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TARGET</th>
<th>PLANE No</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>11/12-6-43</td>
<td>Dusseldorf</td>
<td></td>
<td>P/O Baker was 2nd pilot to P/O J. Good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>16/17-6-43</td>
<td>Cologne</td>
<td>ED547 PO-M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>21/22-6-43</td>
<td>Krefeld</td>
<td>ED547 PO-M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>22/23-6-43</td>
<td>Mulheim</td>
<td>ED547 PO-M</td>
<td>Damaged by flack. Cold trip home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>23/24-6-43</td>
<td>Wuppertal</td>
<td>EE143 PO-J</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>25/26-6-43</td>
<td>Gelsenkirchen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>28/29-6-43</td>
<td>Cologne</td>
<td>EE143 PO-J</td>
<td>Attacked by a night fighter, aircraft badly damaged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>24/25-7-43</td>
<td>Hamburg</td>
<td>EE135 PO-Y</td>
<td>Hit repeatedly by predicted box barrage flack for 30 min,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>25/26-7-43</td>
<td>Essen</td>
<td>EE135 PO-Y</td>
<td>Up 2148 down 0233. Attacked by fighters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2/3-8-43</td>
<td>Hamburg</td>
<td>EE135 PO-Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>22/23-8-43</td>
<td>Leverkusen</td>
<td>JA 902</td>
<td>Major chemical plants incl. Bayer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>23/24-8-43</td>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>ED 949</td>
<td>Lost 56 aircraft. Heaviest loss for Bomber Command to date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>30/31-8-43</td>
<td>Gladbach</td>
<td>JA 902</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>31/8,1/9-43</td>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>EE143 PO-J</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>3/4-9-43</td>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>JB 121</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>6/7-9-43</td>
<td>Munich</td>
<td>DV 223</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>22/23-9-43</td>
<td>Hanover</td>
<td>EE 135 PO-Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>7/8-10-43</td>
<td>Stuttgart</td>
<td>EE 135 PO-Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>18/19-10-43</td>
<td>Hanover</td>
<td>EE 135 PO-Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>20/21-10-43</td>
<td>Leipzig</td>
<td>EE 135 PO-Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>22/23-10-43</td>
<td>Kassel</td>
<td>EE 135 PO-Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>18/19-11-43</td>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>EE 135 PO-Y</td>
<td>Start of second phase of the Battle of Berlin. Landed at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cranwell. Nine bombers lost.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note No 7

When returning from a raid on Cologne on 28th June 1943, the aircraft was attacked by an enemy fighter about half way home and the starboard aileron was jammed, the trimmers shot away, the rear turret made unserviceable, the hydraulics damaged and a lot of Perspex shot away. It was a freezing ride home.

“The first thing we knew about the fighter was when we felt the Lancaster shudder as a cannon shell hit the starboard wing and a stream of tracers went across the nose from starboard to port” said P/O Baker. He tried a diving turn to starboard but the starboard aileron was jammed, with the result that the aircraft remained straight and level. Baker then turned the machine to port and went down in a diving turn. Just before the turn to port the fighter sent another burst along the centre of the Lancaster. The aircraft was out of control for a couple of seconds and the orders were given to abandon the aircraft but none of the crew left.

Eventually P/O Baker was able to get the Lancaster back on an even keel after having lost about 5000 feet in altitude. While the aircraft was diving the intercom became useless and the last order heard was “Abandon aircraft”. However, when the aircraft levelled out, the intercom came on again. From then on all the evasive action had to be controlled by the rudder alone. A fighter followed them over the coast but it didn’t get close enough to attack. It was below the Lancaster and turned back just after crossing the enemy coast.

When the crew returned to base they landed with one of the tyres punctured and ran off the runway.

During the attack by the fighter, several bullets had entered the rear turret and set off some of the ammunition causing a minor fire. The rear gunner was injured on an ankle by an exploding cartridge case. That was the only injury to the crew.

For his skill and courage Baker was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, DFC.

Note Nos 8, 9, 10

A major bombing operation was planned for Hamburg, Germany. The operation was to be spread over 10 days from 24-7-43 to 3-8-43. The operation was named ‘Gomorrah’. The raid was to drop the heaviest load of bombs yet onto one target.

The operation was the first time Bomber Command dropped large quantities of tin foil to confuse the enemy radar, this process was named Windows.

Due to bad weather on the 25/26-7-43 the raid on Hamburg was cancelled and moved to Essen a closer target.
During Baker’s last raid on Hamburg on August 2 1943, an engine cut-out as the Lancaster took off, but it started again soon after. As a result of this they were late over the target and flew in alone, thus having the flak concentrated on their aircraft.

There was a severe lightning storm over the target. The ground defences knocked out the port outer engine and numerous holes were made in the fuselage. The hydraulics was damaged and one tyre burst. When the aircraft landed at base the ground crew counted more than 50 holes from the flak.

THE SQUADRON 463

No. 463 Squadron was a RAF heavy bomber squadron during World War II. The squadron was formed in the United Kingdom on 25 November 1943 from personnel and aircraft allocated from No. 467 Squadron. The Squadron was equipped with Avro Lancaster bombers and flew its first raids on Germany immediately after being formed. Operating as part of RAF Bomber Command Group 5, No. 463 Squadron conducted raids against cities, industrial facilities and military targets in Germany, France and Norway throughout 1944 and until the end of the war in May 1945. Following the war the Squadron evacuated Allied Prisoners of war from Europe until it was disbanded on 25 September 1945.
SQUADRON 463 OPERATIONS TABLE

Geoff Baker was with flight ‘C’ of Squadron 467 and was posted to Squadron 463 at its inauguration on 25-11-43. The squadron was located at the Waddington Air Base.

After Geoff Baker completed 7 operations with Squadron 463 he was posted to the Pathfinder Squadron No 97.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Plane No</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>26/27-11-43</td>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>DV 338 JO.V</td>
<td>Crew flew first Op by Sq. 463 at 1710 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>16/17-12-43</td>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>DV 338 JO.V</td>
<td>Raid known as ‘Black Thursday’. See note 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>5/6-1-44</td>
<td>Stettin</td>
<td>ED 545</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>14/15-1-44</td>
<td>Brunswick</td>
<td>ED 545</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>21/22-1-44</td>
<td>Magdeburg</td>
<td>ED 545</td>
<td>57 aircraft lost. See note 27.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>27/28-1-44</td>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>ED 545</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>28/29-1-44</td>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>LL 740</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note No 24

Major raid to Berlin using 500 bombers. Fifty Lancaster’s were lost during this operation, 25 over the target and 25 when landing in severe weather conditions back at base. The losses were so tragic the operation became known as Black Thursday.

The Bomber Command exhibition at the Australian War Memorial is based upon the Black Thursday operation.

Note No 27

A total of 648 aircraft were on a bombing mission to the industrial city of Magdeburg, Germany. A large enemy fighting force was waiting and the bombing operation failed. A total of 57 aircraft were lost.

HISTORICAL EVENT. BAKER piloted the first aircraft of Sq. 463 to take off from Waddington base to lead a bombing raid to Berlin on 26/27–11–1943.
Flight of Lancaster’s

Weary airmen returning from an operation in the early hours.
THE SQUADRON 97 - THE PATH FINDER FORCE

The Path Finder Force (PFF) was colloquially known as the Pathfinders but officially it was Group No 8 of Bomber Command.

It was one of the most important Groups in RAF Bomber Command during the Second World War. The Pathfinder Squadron 97 was stationed at Bourn in Cambridgeshire from April 1943 to April 1944 then located at Coningsby.

The Pathfinders was a target marking force. Their Lancaster's were fitted with the latest target finding instruments and radar devices to increase the bombing accuracy of the main bombing force. The Pathfinders were normally the first to receive new blind bombing instruments like Gee, Oboe and the H2S radar.

They located and then marked targets with flares. The flares made it easier for the following main bomber force to drop their bombs on the target, therefore increasing the accuracy of a bombing mission.

The Commander of the Pathfinders was a brilliant Australian airman, Air Commodore Donald Bennett, later promoted to Air Vice-Marshal. CB, CBE, DSO.

Donald Bennett was a perfectionist. He demanded and got the best crews, he demanded and got the latest navigational aids, and in return he demanded the most accurate target marking possible.

During April 1944, Squadron 97 passed to Group 5 under the command of Air Vice-Marsh Ralph Cochrane. Cochrane was best known for his command of Operation Chastise, the famous "Dambuster" raids.

From his Dambuster days Cochrane was an advocate of precision low level marking and lobbied hard to be allowed to prove his theory. He proposed that 5 Group could attempt targets and techniques that 8 Group would not. Bennett on the other hand did not believe in low level marking.

Air Vice-Marsh Ralph Cochrane, Wing Commander Guy Gibson, King George VI and Group Captain John Whitworth
The Pathfinder Force ultimately grew to a strength of 19 squadrons. While the majority of Pathfinder squadrons and personnel were from the Royal Air Force, the group also included many from the air forces of other Commonwealth countries.

During April 1943 – Sq. 97 moved to Bourn and joined No. 8 (PFF) Group and became a “marker” squadron.

In June 1943 – Sq. 97 marked and illuminated Zeppelin works at Friedrichshafen and the Italian naval base at Spezia. This was the first "shuttle-bombing" raid by Bomber Command.

In April 1944 – Sq. 97 returned to Coningsby Air Base and No. 5 Group. The purpose of the change was to employ low flying target finding and marking for the main bombing squadrons.

On the 25/26th April 1945 – Sq. 97 flew its final offensive mission.
The Story of Geoffrey Francis Baker

The following details were extracted from the 97 Squadron log book. The points raised refer to the transformation of Sq. 97 from Group 8 to Group 5.

12.4.44 “Stand down from operations. Flying and ground training carried out during afternoon.

13.4.44 “Y” bombing runs, fighter affiliation and bombing carried out. 6 aircraft detailed for night cross countries and bombing. Cancelled owing to weather.


15.4.44 News heard today of the Squadron’s impending move and return to 5 Group. Some training carried out.

Extract from “Pathfinder Force – A History of 8 Group” by Alan Cooper

April saw further changes in the Group; 83, 97 and 627 squadrons were ‘detached’ to 5 Group for PFF duties. This was in accordance with the new policy of giving each Group its autonomy.

16.4.44 No flying today, pending move of Squadron tomorrow. Arrangements made for move commencing the 17th but held in abeyance owing to transport difficulties. The move was postponed until the 19th/20th April under instruction signal from PFF HQ. Late in the evening these instructions were cancelled and the original order to move on the 17th (tomorrow) to take place. Transport has now been organised and the movement order as referred to in the Appendix will be amended for movements on the 17, 18 and 19th April in place of the 19th, 20th, and 21st April.

17.4.44 Advance Party moved off early in the morning with the Equipment under command of F/O Broome.

18.4.44 Main party and equipment, under command of S/Ldr Leatherland, moved off by road in the morning according to order. 21 aircraft and crews departed by air about midday for RAF Coningsby.

19.4.44 Rear party clearing at Bourn. The Advance and Main Parties are now at RAF Coningsby. On the 18th April two of our pilots flew with 617 Squadron from Woodhall to watch the new operational method of bombing and marking as used by 5 Group. The attack was carried out against Juvisy, France. The raid was considered successful.”
### SQUADRON 97 OPERATIONS TABLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>20/21-4-44</td>
<td>Oberhausen</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>blinds marker. La Chapelle Paris rail marshalling yards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>24/25-4-44</td>
<td>Munich</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>blinds marker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>26/27-4-44</td>
<td>Schweinfurt</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>blinds marker. Take-off 2131 Down 0601.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>28/29-4-44</td>
<td>Kjeller/Oslo</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>blinds marker. Maintenance depot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>29/30-4-44</td>
<td>Claremont Farrand</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Primary blind marker. 8 hour flight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>1/2-5-44</td>
<td>Toulouse</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>primary blind marker. Explosives factory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>7/8-5-44</td>
<td>Tours</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>primary blind marker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>22/23-5-44</td>
<td>Brunswick</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>primary blind marker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>24/25-5-44</td>
<td>Eindhoven</td>
<td>Nederland</td>
<td>primary blind marker. Philips factory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>6/7-6-44</td>
<td>Argentan</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>military Barracks. Primary blind marker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>9/10-6-44</td>
<td>Etampes</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>aircraft damaged by Ju88. Primary blind marker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>28/29-6-44</td>
<td>Prouville</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>V1 Flying Bomb launch site. Fighter attack for 10 min. Shot down 2 Ju88. See note 45.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>20/21-7-44</td>
<td>Courtrai</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>primary blind marker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>24/25-7-44</td>
<td>Longes</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>primary blind marker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>25/26-7-44</td>
<td>Stuttart</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>primary blind marker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>1-8-44</td>
<td>Siracourt</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>V1 Flying Bomb launch site. Daylight raid. Flew as Master Bomber. See note 49.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>2-8-44</td>
<td>L'isle Adam</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Daylight raid. Baker flew as Master Bomber. See note 50.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>3-8-44</td>
<td>Trossy de Maximum</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Daylight raid. Baker flew as deputy Master Bomber. See note 51.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>9/10-8-44</td>
<td>Chatellerault</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>primary blind marker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>26/27-8-44</td>
<td>Konigsberg</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>at extreme range of Lanc. 3100 Km. Not a successful raid. Landed at Tuddenham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>29/30-8-44</td>
<td>Konigsberg</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>20% industry destroyed major damage to housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>10/11-9-44</td>
<td>Darmstadt</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>crossed over Mannheim alone to make up time to reach the blind mark. See note 55.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I cannot verify the bombing raid on Oberhausen and have left it out of the number of operations Baker undertook. Baker wrote Oberhausen in his notes as having bombed that city but he left out Kassel. I think there was a mix up between Kassel and Oberhausen. It could also have been a shuttle bombing operation.

Note No 40

The target on D-Day were German gun emplacements that were located on a ridge overlooking Omaha Beach. D-Day was planned to commence on 5/6/44 but due to bad weather moved to 6/6/44.

Note No 41

Argentan is a Normandy town with rail and road junctions as well as housing German army barracks. The town is about 50K from the allied beach head. The weather was bad.

Note No 44

Over Gelsenkirchen Geoff Baker’s Lancaster was alone and attacked by a ME410 in a clear sky. The attack lasted for approx. 20/30 minutes. Baker instinctively knew he was in trouble and instructed the crew to strap themselves in tightly and he evaded the fighter by barrel rolling the aircraft several kilometres to a bank of clouds.

The aircraft was hit by flak and machine gun fire and returned to base on three engines.

Note No 45

During an attack on Prouville, a V1 flying bomb site, on June 28 1944, Baker’s crew fought off four attacking enemy fighters shooting down two of them. Baker was awarded an immediate Bar to the DFC. The mid-upper and rear gunners were awarded immediate D.F.C’s.

Baker had made one run this night dropping marker flares but was called upon to make a second run to drop more flares. He was turning into the target for the second time when the first fighter came in from the port quarter down. Baker started taking violent evasive action. Meantime the Lancaster was caught in the searchlights and both gunners practically blinded.

The fighter, a Ju88, closed to about 300 yards before the rear gunner was able to see it. He opened up immediately and after a short burst the enemy aircraft burst into flames and crashed to the ground.
A minute later, the second fighter, another Ju88 attacked, coming in from starboard quarter up. The Lancaster was still coned by the searchlights but despite the intense dazzle both gunners were able to distinguish the enemy and at 300 yards both turrets opened up. The Junker was hit immediately and caught on fire. It was last seen going down burning. During this attack Baker jettisoned the remaining load.

The third fighter came in from the port quarter up two minutes after the second went down and the mid-upper gunner engaged this time. He opened fire from approximately four hundred yards range. Baker was still throwing the Lancaster into violent evasive tactics and the third fighter passed over the top as he corkscrewed the aircraft. It disappeared from view.

Three minutes later another Ju88 came in from the starboard beam. It climbed rapidly up from underneath the bomber and overshot, passing within a hundred yards of the nose of the bomber. None of Bakers gunners were in a position to engage and this aircraft also disappeared. Not one of the four Junkers opened fire on the bomber.

Clear of the last fighter Baker evaded the searchlights and the bomber returned to base.

**Note No 49**

On the daytime attack on Siracourt, a flying V1-bomb launch site, Baker flew the leading aircraft of the formation and acted as Master Bomber.

**Note No 50**

On the second daylight attack on L’isle Adam, Baker’s Lancaster led a formation of 120 aircraft and acted as the Master Bomber.

**Note No 51**

On the third daylight attack on Trossy du Maximum, Baker’s Lancaster led two hundred aircraft and was the Deputy Master Bomber.

**Note No 55**

In early September 1944 Geoff Baker completed his last assignment with the squadron. This was a raid on the German town of Darmstadt.
At the interrogation following his last operation Geoff Baker was personally congratulated by the Air Officer Commanding Group 5, Air Vice-Marshal Ralph Cochrane as having had “A very fine tour”.

On September 8th just before his last operation, the Darmstadt attack, an endorsement was made in Baker’s logbook by order of the A.O.C. Air Vice-Marshal R. Cochrane. It stated “while engaged on a training exercise the aircraft of which F/L Baker was pilot was struck by a training aircraft doing aerobatics. The trailing edge and upper part of the main plane were damaged severely and the wingtip destroyed making the aircraft most difficult to control. F/L Baker showed most commendable skill in landing safely at base”.

THE END OF OPERATIONS

After Geoff Baker completed his last operation with Squadron 97 he underwent further study and duties prior to him being discharged on 10-8-45.

He was 26 years old when he requested to be discharged. Information is sketchy about this period but I understand he had a role in administration and teaching pilots to bring them up to operations level.

I believe he did not have the heart to stay in the Air Force and become a Commander, he had had enough and he was worn out. The ambition and drive had gone.

The following table highlights Baker’s final duties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>COURSE</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-3-44</td>
<td>Operations Training Unit</td>
<td>Tealing</td>
<td>Staff Pilot Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.9.44</td>
<td>Officers Advanced Training Unit</td>
<td>No1 College, Cranwell</td>
<td>Commander’s Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-1-45</td>
<td>Personnel Despatch and Reception Centre</td>
<td>Padgate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.3.45</td>
<td>2 Personnel Dep’t</td>
<td>Ex OPS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.45</td>
<td>2 Personnel Dep’t</td>
<td>Pending Posting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-5-45</td>
<td>2 Specialist Training for Pilots</td>
<td>School of Admin</td>
<td>Pilot Flying School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7.45</td>
<td>2 Personnel Dep’t</td>
<td>Terminating Appt</td>
<td>Keep rank of Ft/Lt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.8.45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Appt Terminated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DECORATIONS AND AWARDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>AWARDS/DECORATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27-2-42</td>
<td>Flying Badge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-6-43</td>
<td>1939-1943 Star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-8-44</td>
<td>War Medal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-5-44</td>
<td>Pathfinders Badge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-6-43</td>
<td>Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) Sq. 467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-6-44</td>
<td>BAR to DFC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Second World War No.97 Squadron flew a total of 4,091 operational sorties and lost 130 aircraft.

The following decorations were awarded to members:

- 21 Distinguished Service Orders (DSO)
- 222 Distinguished Flying Crosses (DFC)
• 2 bars to (DFC)
• 157 Distinguished Flying Medal’s (DFM)
• 2 bars to DFMs
• 1 Order of the British Empire (OBE)
• 1 British Empire Medal (BEM)

It is to note that Geoff Baker was awarded one of the two Bars to the DFC awarded by Squadron 97. His DFC was awarded when he was with Squadron 467.

During the war Bomber Command awarded Australians 1513 DFC’s, 95 Bars to DFC’s, and one double Bar to the DFC.

AWARDS FOR SERVICE

Following are copies of the Gazetted citations.

**Copy of Award of the D.F.C.** Gazetted 10-12-1943.

Pilot Officer Geoffrey Francis BAKER, (AUS 412356). (RAAF) Squadron No 467.

This officer has completed a number of daring and successful operations which have included 3 attacks on Berlin. When attacked by enemy fighters he has always displayed great presence of mind and exceptional fearlessness in the face of danger. During a sortie to Cologne, on the 28/29th June1943, his aircraft was seriously damaged by an enemy fighter but was successfully flown to base by Pilot Officer Baker though the starboard aileron, trimmers, flaps and the hydraulic system were unserviceable. His skill in handling aircraft and the courage in the face of danger have been highly commendable.

**Geoff Baker Awarded the Bar to D.F.C.** Immediate Award Gazetted 22-8-1944


Flying Officer Jones and Warrant Officer Clark, both RAFVR, were mid-upper and rear gunners respectively of the aircraft piloted by Flight Lieutenant Baker detailed for an operation recently. Whilst over the target of Prouville on 28/29th June 1944 the aircraft was illuminated in a concentration of searchlights. At that moment Warrant Officer Clark sighted a Junkers 88 closing in. He promptly warned his pilot who manoeuvred to a good position. These gunners were then able to bring their guns to bear with good effect. Following their accurate bursts of fire the enemy aircraft caught fire and fell to the ground. Almost immediately another enemy aircraft closed in but excellent co-operation between Flight Lieutenant Baker and his gunners frustrated the attacker which was finally shot down. A third fighter then took up the attack but it was driven off. In these spirited fights, Flight Lieutenant Baker and his gunners displayed great skill, coolness and resolution.

(Flying Officer Jones and Warrant Officer Clark were awarded the D.F.C.)

(Interesting to note Baker’s two awards were on operations exactly one year apart.)
PROMOTIONS FOR GEOFF BAKER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>PROMOTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11-10-41</td>
<td>LAC (Leading Aircraftman)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-2-42</td>
<td>Flying Badge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-4-42</td>
<td>Flight Sergeant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-5-43</td>
<td>Pilot Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-11-43</td>
<td>Flight Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-12-43</td>
<td>Flight Lieutenant</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

APPRAISALS FROM BAKER’S COMMANDING OFFICERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>COMMANDER</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-3-44</td>
<td>R. Kingsford-Smith. Wing Commander – Sq. 463</td>
<td>An excellently valuable operational pilot and a capable deputy Flight Commander. I consider he would be an efficient instructor or staff pilot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-3-44</td>
<td>S. C. Elworthy. Group Captain – Sq. 463</td>
<td>A sound and viable officer with a fine operational record.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-1-45</td>
<td>P. W. Johnson Group Captain - Sq. 97</td>
<td>A fine operational pilot with a fair understanding of administrative responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-2-45</td>
<td>A. C. Evans-Evans. Group Captain – Sq. 97 Commander of Coningsby Air Base.</td>
<td>A good PFF captain of aircraft and a sound officer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The underlined words are an interpretation of the illegible written word.

Geoff Baker was considered to be of very good character by many of his superiors.

To date I have not been able to locate the equivalent appraisal documents from Squadron 467.
### SUMMARY OPERATIONAL FLYING DATA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOUR</th>
<th>SQUADRON</th>
<th>AIR BASES U.K.</th>
<th>AIRCRAFT</th>
<th>OPERATIONS</th>
<th>HOURS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-6-43</td>
<td>1ST</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>BOTTESFORD</td>
<td>LANCASTER</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1-11-43</td>
<td>1ST</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>WADDINGTON</td>
<td>LANCASTER</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-11-43</td>
<td>1ST</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>WADDINGTON</td>
<td>LANCASTER</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>234.5</td>
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<td>9-4-44</td>
<td>2ND</td>
<td>97 PFF</td>
<td>BOURN</td>
<td>LANCASTER</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-4-44</td>
<td>2ND</td>
<td>97 PFF</td>
<td>CONINGSBY</td>
<td>LANCASTER</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>254.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>488.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TOTAL FLYING HOURS GEOFF BAKER PILOTED AIRCRAFT

The break-down is as follows;

- Australian Training: 213.15 hours
- U. K. Training: 236.25 hours
- Active Operations: 488.80 hours

**Total Flying Hours..................938.20 Hours**

*Note: The above hours do not include flying training and testing of equipment between operations. These hours are unknown.*
OVERALL SUMMARY

During his term of flying for RAF Bomber Command Geoff Baker flew 54 operations over enemy territory dating from June 1943 to September 1944. Details as follows;

- **51 Night Operations:**
  - 2 operations acted as Deputy Master Bomber. Sq. 97.
  - 20 operations acted as the blind primary target marker. Sq. 97.

During the night operations Baker performed dual roles.

- **3 Daylight Operations:**
  - 2 operations acted as the Lead aircraft and Master Bomber. Sq. 97.
  - 1 operation acted as Lead aircraft and Deputy Master Bomber. Sq. 97.

On seven Pathfinder operations Baker flew into the target first and alone by one to two minutes ahead of the bomber squadron to mark the blind primary target.

Over the two tours completed with Squadrons 467, 463 and 97, Baker’s Lancaster received 18 enemy fighter attacks. Three of the attacks inflicted major damage to the aircraft.

Geoff Baker’s operations occurred in the following countries, 37 in Germany, 14 in France, one each in Belgium, Nederland’s and Norway.

A HIGH PRICE TO PAY

During WW2 RAAF personnel were especially notable in RAF Bomber Command. Although the RAAF personnel in Bomber Command represented two percent of all RAAF personnel during the WW2 they accounted for 23% of the total number killed in action.

To further amplify this point, Squadron No. 460, mostly flying Lancaster’s had a compliment aircrew of 200. The squadron recorded 1,018 combat deaths. The squadron therefore was effectively wiped out over five times.
THE POST-WAR PERIOD

THE AIRMEN OF BOMBER COMMAND

By Donald Bennett. 1956.

“The contribution of an aircrew member of Bomber Command who completed an operational tour or died in the process – measured in terms of danger of death, both in intensity and duration – was, in my view, far greater than of any other fighting man, RAF, Navy or Army. The contribution of a Pathfinder, in the same terms of intensity and duration of danger – and indeed of responsibility – was at least twice that of other Bomber Command crews. Great Britain and the Empire have, in the goodly time of ten years since the end of the war, strangely failed to erect any Nelson’s column in memory of Bomber Command, the most power striking force in all British history.”

Air Vice-Marshal DONALD BENNETT, Commander of Bomber Command’s Pathfinder Force.
THE BOMBER COMMAND WAR MEMORIAL

The Bomber Command Memorial which is located in Green Park, London was opened by the Queen on 28th June 2012.

Donald Bennett, if he were alive, would have been very proud of this monument. He was always one of the crew.

He would also be proud of the Australian War Memorial’s tribute to Bomber Command.

Memorial for 55,573 aircrew of RAF Bomber Command who died during the Second World War.

“A tribute to the airmen who gave their lives for us to live. You cannot just walk past it. It is thought provoking and makes you feel sad and proud at the same time.” A recent visitor’s comment.
**CONCLUSION**

Sometime after the 10th August 1945 Geoff Baker was repatriated back to Australia to reunite with his wife Betty and his mum and dad. He was pleased it was all over and had the opportunity to return to civilian life and the fortune to be without any bodily injuries.

In 1946, Betty and Geoff had a baby daughter which they named Margaret.

They were living at 65 Wilson Street Cremorne during 1947.

Geoff and his family were summoned to go to the NSW Government House on the 27th February 1947. The occasion was for him to receive from the Governor, Sir John Northcott, his DFC medals and the associated citations.

I have no information of his early civilian work details but suspect he returned to Coupland and Waddell Pty Ltd for a time. By the mid 1950’s (probably earlier) he was employed by AEI Pty Ltd who at the time was the largest electrical engineering and manufacturing company in Australia.

His position was that of an internal sales representative handling the sales of locally manufactured AC electric motors and industrial electrical control gear.

AEI gave work preference to returned servicemen. I worked at AEI at the time and met many returned men from all the services. The company was generous in looking after these men and settling them back into civilian life.

By the 1960’s Geoff and his family had moved to Mona Vale on the northern peninsular.

In 1971 Geoff Baker became ill and was taken to the Mona Vale District Hospital. Although his wife Betty had been through a troublesome time she did not divorce him and she was with him when he died on 11th July 1971 at the Mona Vale District Hospital, he was aged 52. He died from a cerebral haemorrhage and alcoholic poisoning.

I trust at last he had found peace and the battles that were raging in his mind have now ceased. He was a good man.

Stan Hurd.

470metres@gmail.com
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td>Born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Intermediate Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Joined RAAF Reserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Joined RAAF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>’41 - ’42</td>
<td>22-23</td>
<td>Aus. RAAF training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Embarked for UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>’42 – ’43</td>
<td>23-24</td>
<td>UK RAF Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Joined Sq. 467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Awarded DFC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Promoted to Flight Lieutenant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>’43 – ’44</td>
<td>24-25</td>
<td>Joined Sq. 463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Joined Sq. 97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Awarded Bar to the DFC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Awarded the Pathfinders Badge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Discharged from RAAF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Returned to Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Daughter Margaret was born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Presented medals from Governor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950’s</td>
<td>30’s</td>
<td>Employed by AEI P/L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Died at Mona Vale Hospital</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 1 - OFFICIAL PHOTOS OF GEOFF BAKER

Geoff Baker is placed in the middle of the back line.

The crew flew 22 ops with Sq. 467 not 20 as mentioned in the caption.
The timing puts Geoff Baker either at the end of his post with Sq. 463 or in or just before joining Sq. 97. The Photo appears to have snow on the ground.

Photos courtesy of RAF Waddington Heritage Centre.
APPENDIX 2 – AVRO LANCASTER SPECIFICATIONS

Details for Lancaster I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specification</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length</strong></td>
<td>69ft 4in (21.08m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wingspan</strong></td>
<td>102ft 0in (31.00m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Height</strong></td>
<td>20ft 6in (6.23m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maximum Speed</strong></td>
<td>287mph (462km/h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cruising Speed</strong></td>
<td>200mph (322km/h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ceiling</strong></td>
<td>19,000ft (5,793m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Range</strong></td>
<td>2,530 miles (4,072km) with 7,000lb (3,178kg) bomb load.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Powerplant</strong></td>
<td>Four Rolls Royce Merlin XX, 22 or 24 of 1,280hp (955kw) each.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Up to 22,000lb bombs carried internally. Later versions modified to carry a variety of single high explosive bombs of 8,000lb (3,632kg), 12,000lb (5,448kg) or 22,000lb (9,988kg) for special missions.

**Defensive Armament:**
- 2 x .303 Browning machine guns in nose turret
- 2 x .303 Browning machine guns in mid-upper turret
- 4 x .303 Browning machine guns in tail turret
- Early models also had ventral turret with a single .303 machine gun. Special versions were stripped of armament to carry increased bombloads.

Slab-sided fuselage with heavily-framed canopy mounted well-forward on the upper fuselage. Nose, tail and upper rear fuselage contain turrets housing defensive guns. Twin tail unit with unswept horizontal surfaces. Main undercarriage housed in the cowlings of the inner engines. Some aircraft had the H2S radar bulge aft of the bomb-bay while a few others carried a mid-lower gun-turret.
APPENDIX 3 - DUTIES PRIOR TO TAKE-OFF

“All crew members attended the briefing before an operation, which gave the target, the route to be followed, the ETA, time of arrival (H hour), and the route to be taken getting back. The anticipated weather and wind conditions going to and at the target, whether there might be cloud cover, and the type of bombing raid it would be. Aircraft were assigned, with the classification of the crews and the raid, and their bomb and flare loads, fuel load and alternate airports noted for any aircraft returning with damage.

Then it was time for a meal, (not too much tea!), suiting up in flying gear, making sure you had all the maps, charts, etc. each member had to carry, a jitney ride to the "hard standing" where your assigned aircraft was waiting, a final ground check, urinate on the tail wheel for luck, (and to be sure your bladder were empty), get on board, check your oxygen, check your equipment, and after the pilot and engineer had done all their engine checks, taxi to the end of the runway and take off.”

Anon Quote.
APPENDIX 4 - INDIVIDUAL TASKS WITHIN SQ 97 THE PATHFINDER FORCE (PFF)

PFF crews found themselves given ever increasingly sophisticated and complex jobs and tasks that were constantly modified and developed tactically during the bombing campaign from 1943 until the end of the war. Some of the more usual tasks were as:

"Finders": these were 8 Group aircraft tasked with dropping sticks of illuminating flares, firstly at critical points along the bombing route to aid navigation and keep the bomber stream compact, and then across the approximate target area. If conditions were cloudy then these were dropped "blind" using H2S navigational radar.

"Illuminators": were PFF aircraft flying in front of the main force who would drop markers or target indicators (TIs) onto the designated 'aiming point' already illuminated by the "Finders". Again, if conditions were cloudy H2S navigational radar was used. These Target Indicators were designed to burn with various and varying colours to prevent the German defences lighting decoy fires. Various Target Indicators were dubbed "Pink Pansies", "Red Spots", and "Smoke Puffs". "Illuminators" could include Mosquitoes equipped with "Oboe" if the target was within the range of this bombing aid.

"Markers": would then drop incendiaries onto the Target Indicators just prior to the Main Force arrival. Further "Markers" called "Backers-Up" or "Supporters" would be distributed at points within the main bomber stream to remark or reinforce the original Target Indicators as required.

“Blind Markers”: It is the duty of the Blind Markers to locate the target using H2S (Radar Bomb Aimer) and to set Ground or Sky Markers, or both, according to weather conditions, at zero hour minus 2 to 5 minutes.

The Blind Marker crew are responsible for the success or the failure of the raid. They are more strictly bound to the time schedule than all the other aircraft taking part in the raid. They are not allowed to drop their markers if the schedule is deviated from by more than one or two minutes, or if the instruments fail, or fail to indicate accurately. In such cases the Blind Marker aircraft automatically becomes part of the Pathfinder Main Force and must drop its High Explosive bomb load exactly at zero hour.

With smaller targets, it is the duty of the Blind Markers to set flares over a precise area, in order to illuminate the target.

Another duty of good Blind Marker crews during the initial stages of the attack is not only to set new markers, but also to re-centre the attack. Experience has shown that the first aircraft of the Main Force drop their bombs near the Markers but that succeeding aircraft tend drop them short of the target area during the progress of the attack. It is the duty of the Blind Markers detailed for this purpose to bring the bombing back to the original target by resetting the Markers past the first aiming point in the direction of withdrawal.

For several months past, the Blind Markers have had a further duty. In several operations it was repeatedly shown that errors in the navigation of the Main Force occurred owing to inaccurate wind forecasts. Experienced Pathfinders were therefore instructed to transmit their established wind calculations to England by W/T. Each Group picks up these reports and transmits them every half-hour to the airborne bombers.
“Primary Blind Marker”. Again experienced crews would be needed to undertake this role, but the Target Indicators would usually be dropped by a second navigator identifying the target by interpretation of the H2S returns on his oscilloscope. He was effectively a “Radar Bomb Aimer”.

The Master Bomber

From August 1943 the role of "Master Bomber" or "Controller" was introduced. This was an idea that had been used by Guy Gibson in the Dambuster raids. The appointed Pathfinder “Master Bomber” circled the target, broadcasting radio instructions to both Pathfinders and Main Force aircraft, correcting aiming points and generally coordinating the attack.

Some operational sorties would have a Master Bomber and a Deputy Master Bomber. These were very skilled and dangerous jobs and were executed by highly experienced and senior Pathfinder aircrew. The task would involve arriving first over the target area, sometimes dropping the very first Target Indicators, and circling around the target area for the duration of the raid to accurately assess the situation and initiate re-marking if necessary and direct the Main Force bombers which Target Indicators to drop their bombs on. If the Target Indicator was just off the Aiming Point, the Master Bomber would instruct the bombers to adjust their bombing by voice radio communications e.g. “Bomb two seconds after red marker”. Once the raid was complete, the Master Bomber was usually the last to leave the area.

The “Deputy Master Bomber” or “Deputy Controller” would be there to assist the Master Bomber and take over the duties if deemed necessary.
APPENDIX 5 – ONE OF THE STORIES GEOFF TOLD ME

At times Geoff carried with him on different operations members of Parliament, reporters, military personnel, and other dignitaries with the reason that they wanted to experience, discover and learn what it was like to go on a bombing raid.

They took-off in the early evening and the visitors expected the trip to take several hours. All was well flying over the Channel and passing high over France towards their target. When they approached the target area the visitor would come up to the pilot’s cabin and look at the scene before them. Behind the pilot’s seat was a Perspex blister used for observing the ground directly below.

As they got closer to the target dozens of searchlights would pierce the night sky and illuminate the aircraft, anti-aircraft flack would explode around them rocking the aircraft. The occasional German fighter plane would come from nowhere with its guns blazing, the tracer bullets glowing in the dark sky. Planes would be on fire, some explode and fall from the sky. Explosions and large fires erupting on the ground where the bombs had landed, outside it was pandemonium.

The scene had changed dramatically from a steady peaceful flight to one where all hell was breaking loose around them. The crew was quiet and intently concentrating on their duties.

For obvious reasons they needed to fly straight and steady no ducking or weaving and this seemed to concern the visitors. All the crew were busy doing what they needed to do and had no time to hold their hands. Most of the visitors could not stand being in the cabin seeing what was happening outside and they disappeared back down into the fuselage and that is where they stayed until all was quiet.

To me this story is not about the fear of the non-experienced visitors but more about the character of the steely determined calculating professionalism of the bomber crew.
Following data are extracts from the Squadron 97 log book written by each Captain.

**NE124J**  F/L W.M.Walton, F/Sgt L.G.C.Mayhew, F/Sgt W.Williams, P/O E.Rees, P/O F.D.Roberts, F/Sgt J.D.Hadlington, F/Sgt J.W.McLaren.  Up 2319  Down 0317.  6 x 7 x 4.5" clusters, 10 x 500lb MC, 3 x 4.5" reco flares.  Argentan eastern aiming point.  10/10ths cloud at 6-7000'.  Located on green TI.  Bombing was well concentrated on the markers.  A straightforward attack.  DR compass u/s.

**NE121E**  F/L R.N.Higgs, Sgt J.E.Cowan, W/O T.H.Gibson, P/O T.W.Black, P/O V.G.Williams, F/Sgt H.Tiller, F/Sgt D.Chalmers.  Up 2316  Down 0253.  18 x 500lb MC.  Clear, ground haze, vis fairly good.  Identified target (Argentan eastern aiming point) by yellow flares and green TI.  Ran up on target at 0109 hours.  Yellow Oboe marker seen at 0105 hours.  Flares fell across immediately.  On e green TI seen on ground at 0109.30 hours, assessed as accurate, then smoke obscured backing up and TI itself was partly obscured, but aircraft was instructed to bomb it.  HE bursts around marker.  Controller heard to criticise scatter.  Main Force called off at 0118 hours.

**ND501Q**  F/L G.F.Baker, F/Sgt H.Townsley, P/O J.Muller, F/Sgt E.J.Watson, F/O J.F.Thomson, P/O A.H.Jones, W/O R.M.Clark.  Up 2318  Down 0306.  6 x 7 x 4.5" clusters, 10 x 500lb MC, 3 x 4.5" reco flares.  Argentan east located on GEE.  Weather clear below aircraft.  10/10ths cloud above 6000' approx.  Ran in and dropped flares to time.  Orbited twice breaking cloud.  Marker heard to ask for second wave flares which were dropped and marking concluded quickly.  Bombing was very concentrated, several hits seen on TI.  If TI was accurate, objective destroyed.

**ND862R**  F/O H.W.J.Edwards, F/O W.Hannah, F/L E.C.Burt, F/O K.S.Barker (Vis A/B), F/L J.Skingley, F/Sgt A.W.A.Burnell, F/O R.Underhill, Sgt J.Rumney.  Up 2329  Down 0315.  6 x 7 x 4.5" clusters, 10 x 500lb MC, 3 x 4.5" reco flares.  Target northern aiming point at Argentan located by PFF markers.  Encountered 10/10ths cloud at 6,000', clear below.  Flares dropped on northern aiming point.  After circling for few minutes, bomb sight toppled on first run; on second run the automatic release did not work.  By this time the cease bombing signal had been given, then the other attacks opened and we heard Controller say that the markers were okay, and as bombing had started on this one (Marshalling Yard) we went in to bomb.

**JA846A**  P/O D.H.Shorter, Sgt E.J.Betts, P/O A.A.Aveline, P/O C.A.P.Thomson, F/Sgt P.Withers, Sgts G.Batho, D.E.Broughton.  Up 2324  Down 0301.  6 x 7 x 4.5" clusters, 10 x 500lb MC, 3 x 4.5" reco flares.  Located target (Argentan east) on GEE.  Also yellow Oboe marker reflected on ground.  10/10ths cloud base 5,500', tops 8,500'.  If the markers were “on”, it appeared a good attack and was over very quickly.  Bombing was well concentrated on the markers.  A lot of smoke from bombing obscured details.

P/O later F/L John Muller DFC, navigator, was a permanent member of Baker’s crew.  Muller was the only other Australian in Baker’s crew, he was from Adelaide S.A.
APPENDIX 7 – OTHER RELATED DOCUMENTS

NAME: BAKER, Geoffrey Francis

Award: D.F.C.
Reg. No.: 412356
Rank: P/O
Service: R.A.A.F.

Recommended by Governor-General on
Promulgated in London Gazette on 10/12/43.
Promulgated in Commonwealth of Australia Gazette on 16/12/43.

Citation (G. H. File RAAF 462) Attacks on BERLIN, COLOGNE, and other targets.
Insignia received from London 12/7/43. PN LONDON. 28/3/47.
Insignia presented by G. H. File L/53.
Insigia presented by The Governor of New South Wales,
At Government House, Sydney, Nsw. 27/2/47.
Address of recipient on presentation date 105 Wilson Road,
Cremorne. NEW SOUTH WALES.

Remarks: See BAR TO DFC card.

Other Awards:
NAME  BAKER, Geoffrey Francis
Award  BAR TO DFC  Reg.No. 412356  Rank  F/Lt.  Service  R.A.A.F.
Recommended by Governor-General on  22/8/44  G.R
Promulgated in Commonwealth of Australia Gazette on  31/8/44
Citation (G. H. File RAAF 862 ) Destroying at least two enemy aircraft over target.
Insignia presented by The Governor of New South Wales,
Address of recipient on presentation date  105 Wilson Road,
GLENMORE.  NEW SOUTH WALES.
Remarks

Other Awards  D.F.C.

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

file:///C:/Users/Sharan/Auar/Files/Local/Temp/1Low/BCJORS5K.htm  1MAR2014
FLIGHT LIEUTENANT
GEOFFREY FRANCIS BAKER DFC
412356

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

4 DECEMBER 1916

SYDNEY, NSW

10 JULY 1941

SYDNEY, NSW

BAKER, HERBERT

10 AUGUST 1945

SCHOOL OF ADMINISTRATION

DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS AND BAR

Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs
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The Squadron 467/463 Association.
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The RAF Waddington Heritage Centre, UK.
Peter Rees.
Wikipedia website.
Emma Martin for her editing and software formatting skills.