THE OUTSTANDING SECOND WORLD D.F.C. AWARDED TO A 51 AND 617 SQUADRON BOMB AIMER, WHO COMPLETED 55 OPERATIONAL SORTIES, ALL BUT 5 PILOTED BY FLIGHT LIEUTENANT 'BUNNY' CLAYTON, D.S.O. C.G.M, D.F.C., 32 WITH THE FAMED 617 LANCASTER SQUADRON; JULY 1943 -JUNE 1944. DURING HIS SERVICE WITH 617, HE TOOK PART IN A WIDE RANGE OF RAIDS, INCLUDING 'SPECIAL TARGET'S, SOE OPERATIONS, SEVERAL AGAINST ANTHEOR VIADUCT, THE RAID ON LIMOGES AND THE SINGLE LANCASTER ATTACK ON THE AMMUNITION DUMP AT BERGERAC, WHICH FORMS PART OF HIS D.F.C. RECOMMENDATION. HE LATER TOOK PART IN THE FIRST 'TALLBOY' EARTHQUAKE BOMB RAID ON SAUMAR RAILWAY TUNNEL, 8 JUNE 1944, THE NEXT TWO TALLBOY RAIDS ON THE U-BOAT PENS AT LE HARVE AND E-BOATS AT BOULONGE BEFORE TAKING PART IN THE FIRST RAIDS OF OPERATION CROSSBOW; THE TALLBOY ATTACKS ON GERMAN VI AND V2 ROCKET INSTALLATIONS.



DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS, G.VI.R., REVERSE OFFICIALLY DATED 1944, IN ROYAL MINT CASE OF ISSUE, 1939-45 STAR, AIR CREW EUROPE STAR; DEFENCE AND WAR MEDALS 1939-45. WITH RECIPIENTS OBSERVER'S AND AIR GUNNER'S FLYING LOG BOOK

D.F.C. *London Gazette* 30 June 1944. James Sidney Watson, Flying Officer, 146647. Operational Air Bomber, No. 617 Squadron. The Recommendation reads:

"F/O Watson has completed 41 operational sorties as an Air Bomber. He has taken part in many attacks against such heavily defended targets as Hamburg, Berlin, Essen, Duisburg and Kiel. Moreover, he has carried out two low level missions of a special nature. He has infused into his work

Medals

an enthusiasm and keenness which it would be difficult to equal and in consequence he has an exemplary record of achievement to his credit. In addition to numerous aiming point photographs which he has brought back he has in recent weeks, when engaged in high level precision bombing, attained a magnificent standard of efficiency. During the attack on the Powder Factory at Bergerac his aircraft was detailed to carry out an attack on its own against the ammunition dump. F/O Watson 's outstanding map-reading and bomb aiming enabled him to score a direct hit with the result that a very large part of the dump was completely destroyed.

This Officer's great gallantry and devotion to duty, often in the face of extremely heavy opposition, call for the highest praise and he is therefore strongly recommended for the award of the D.F.C."

James Sidney Watson was born in Moorthorpe, South Elmsall in 1917 and after school worked in the laboratory at Frickley Colliery. At the outbreak of the Second War, his job was classed as being a reserved occupation and was exempt from conscription. Despite this, in 1941, he volunteered for service in the Royal Engineers but this was refused because of his job in the mining industry. Determined, he tried again, and was successful in enlisting as aircrew in the RAF. After 22 weeks training, he qualified as an Air Bomber on 31 July 1942 and was posted to 20 O.T.U. Lossiemouth on 1 August. Initially training on Wellington's, in November 1942, himself and crew were posted to 1658 H.C.U. Riccall for conversion to Halifax bombers and on the 17 November 1942, he joined the crew of W/O Bernard (Bunny) Clayton. Clayton that time serving as a training instructor was an experienced pilot who had completed 31 operations on Wellington's up to this date and by wars end would be recognised as one of the most skilful pilots in Bomber Command. See the following:

https://dambustersblog.com/2021/05/11/bernard-bunny-clayton-617-squadron-pilot-with-82-operations-from-three-tours/



Flt/Lt James Sidney Watson DFC.

Watson was Commissioned Flying Officer on 21 November 1942 and the following day Clayton's crew were posted to 51 Halifax Squadron based at Snaith. On 15 January 1943, they took part in their first operation, an attack on the U-boat pens at Lorient, attacking the same target 8 days later. Over the following 3 months, Watson completed 17 operation sorties with Clayton, bombing many heavily

defended targets, including; Hamburg, Wilhelmshaven, Essen, Berlin, Nurnberg, Munich, Stuttgart, Duissberg, St Nazaire, Keil, Frankfurt and Plzen, before Clayton left for a second spell as a training instructor. Clayton would be awarded the D.F.C. on 20 April, followed by the C.G.M. in June. Watson and crew continued their tour with a number of different pilots, completing a further 5 sorties; Stettin, Duisberg, Kattegat, Essen and Dortmand, before a period of leave in late May/June.

With two tours completed and the C.G.M. and D.F.C. to his name, in late June 1943, Clayton was invited to join the elite 617 squadron, who were seeking highly experienced crews to replace those lost during the 'Dams' raids. He then travelled over to 51 Squadron and persuaded all six of his old crew to accompany him, including Watson, who had been promoted to Pilot Officer 21 May. Joining 617 squadron on 2 July, Clayton's crew began training in methods of low flying and precision bombing with Lancaster's, taking part in their first raid on 15 July 1943, Operation to Aquata-Scrivia (Italy), where Watson notes in his logbook 'bombed & machine -gunned 800, landed North Africa (Bilda)'. The operational record book recording 'Made six runs machine gunning and saw blue flashes from electrical installations'. 10 days later, another Italy sortie followed; Operation over Leghorn, with all of August on non operational training.



On 16 September 1943, they took part in operation to Antheor Viaduct and Clayton and crew reportedly went on to play a pivotal role in rebuilding the squadron after the September 1943 attack on the Dortmund Ems canal. On 8 February 1944, Flying Officer George Chalmers joined Clayton's crew as the wireless operator. He had been in Bill Townsend's crew on the Dams Raid and had won the DFM for his role in attacking the Ennepe Dam. In early December selected crews including Clayton's, were briefly attached to 138 Squadron at R.A.F Tempsford for operations with the Special Operation Executive (SOE), who operated arms and agent drops to the French Resistance. These operated below 1000 feet and on nights with a full moon. Of the first of these missions was a disaster, with 2 out of four of the 617 Squadron Lancaster's being lost, Squadron Leader David J. B. Wilson, DSO, DFC and Bar would write:

"...Cheshire also loaned out from 617 crews with McCarthy Clayton, Bull and Weeden, for a few days to the Special Duties Squadrons at Tempsford. They were needed to make pinpoint drops of guns and ammunition to the French Resistance near Doullens (on the River Outhie in Northern France) on December 10th. The raid went badly, flak bringing down both Bull and Weeden's aircraft with two of

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Bull's crew, and all in Weeden's being killed. McCarthy couldn't find the target, and so he and Clayton went back on December 11th, and were successful this time. Cheshire and 617 had lost two more valuable crews."

Watson would further take part in many other bombing sorties, he would also take part in the first sortie carrying the Barnes Wallis's new giant 14,000lb 'Tallboy' earthquake bomb on 8 June 1944, when 19 specially equipped Lancasters from 617 Squadron, bombed Saumar rail tunnel. He would take part in the next 5 Tallboy raids, 3 of which as part of Operation Crossbow; the attacks on German V1 and V2 rocket installations.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No. 617 Squadron RAF

SORTIES WITH 617 SQUADRON

Between joining 617 squadron and 25 June 1944, Watson would take part in 32 operational sorties, the following is a list in brief, this containing some well known and high target raids. Notes in Italics are taken from Watson's logbook; though only select ones

Aquata-Scrivia-15 July 1943

Leghorn – 25 July 1943

Antheor Viaduct -16 September 1943 'bombs jettisoned due to heavy icing. Landed Predannack'

Antheor Viaduct -11 November 1943 '1x 12,000lb M.C. landed Bilda (N Africa)'

Rabat Sale – 18 November 1943

Supply Drop France (SOE) – 10 December 1943. Watson lists as 'JOE'

Special Target – Belgium (SOE) – 21 December 1943 Watson lists as 'JOE'

Special Target – France – 30 December 1943 – 'Direct hit evasive action to avoid another Lancaster'

Special Target - France - 4 January 1944 'Stick burst across T.I.'

Special Target – France -21 January 1944

Special Target – France -25 January 1944

Limoges – 8 February 1944 'Gnome & Rhone Factory 1 x 12,000lb bomb Direct Hit'

Antheor Viaduct – 12 February 1944 – '1 x 12,000lb bomb' (believed a direct hit)

Albert – 3 March 1944 – 'Aircraft Factory 1 x 12,000lb bomb'

St Etienne – 5 March 1944

St Etienne – 10 March 1944 - 'Ball bearings factory'

Bergerac- 18 March 1944 - 'Powder Factory 1x 12,000lb & 1 x 1,000lb Direct hit on dump which exploded'

Angoulleme – 20 March 1944 - 'Hit seen on powder magazine'

Lyons – 23 March 1944 – 'Gnome Aero Works'

Lyons – 25 March 1944 – '12 x 500lb incendiaries (American)

Lyons – 29 March 1944 – 'Aero Works'

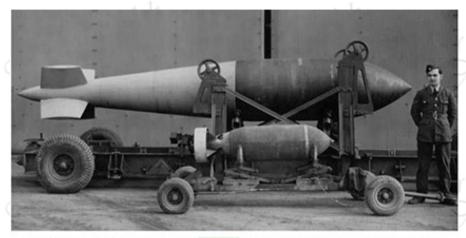
Toulouse – 5 April 1944 'Aero works'

Paris – 10 April 1944 – 'St Cyr Signals' (own bombs fell on target)

Special Operation—5 June 1944 – 'Opening of second front' No details of OP given but Watson's Lancaster was carrying 2 Canadians as extra personnel

Saumar railway tunnel -8 June $1944 - '1 \times 14,000lb \ bomb$ 'This was the first 14,000lb 'Tallboy' raid. Watson seems to have scored a direct hit. See

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tallboy (bomb)



Bigger, better bombs. The 12,000 lb TALLBOY and the standard 1,000 pounder.

Le Harve – 14 June 1944- 'Daylight formation 1 x 14,000lb bomb U-Boat pens attacked S.I. knocked out'

Boulonge -15 June 1944 – '1 x 14,000lb bomb D.N.C.O. Flak very heavy' – This bombing E-Boats pens

Watten, Pas De Calais – 19 June 1944 – *'Rocket installation 1 x 14,000lb'* This the start of Operation Crossbow; the attacks on German V1 and V2 rocket installations.

Wizernes, Pas De Calais – 20 June 1944 – '1 x 14,000lb'. Wizernes, Pas De Calais. Operation abandoned; mix of Lancaster's and Mosquito's

Wizernes, Pas De Calais – 22 June 1944 – '1 x 14,000lb' As above

Wizernes, Pas De Calais 24 June 1944 – '1 x 14,000lb holed by flak 3 engines' Wizernes, Pas De Calais

Siracourt – 25 June 1944- '1 x 14,000lb second operation in 12 hours. A/C damaged by flak' V1 Rocket bunker

A PDF copy of '617 Squadron, The Operational Record Book 1943-1945' by Tobin Jones, is included with the research. This details each operation by the squadron, aircraft that took part, their crew and individual notes made by each aircraft commander after each sortie. This can be used in conjunction with Watson's own logbook to add further notes.



FINAL OPERATIONS AND POST 617 SQUADRON

Watson officially completed his 2nd tour on 11 June, this being noted in his logbook and signed by Wing Commander G.L. Cheshire V.C., who additionally notes (and signs) *'F/O Watson has completed a very distinguished 2nd operational tour'*. However, Watson would take part in a further 7 'Tallboy' operations before completing his 55th operations 25 June 1944; sorties over Sirrcourt. Having completed 55 operational sorties (51 and 617 Squadrons), Watson was 'screened' on 29 June and on 11 July 1944, Watson, Clayton and the majority of that crew left 617 squadron:

Flight Lieutenant B W Clayton – left July 1944

Flying Officer A Hill-left July 1944

Flying Officer P Blythe-left August 1944

Flying Officer J S Watson-left July 1944

Flying Officer G A Chalmers-left July 1944

Flying Sergeant A W Sharp-left April 1945

Flying Sergeant W Hume-left July 1944

More details of Hume's service with the Clayton crew can be seen here:

https://www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca/s,billhume.html

For their services, Watson and Flying Officer Hill would be awarded the D.F.C. and Flight Lieutenant Clayton the D.S.O. Watson's recommendation was made between 21 and 22 March as he had completed 41 sorties when the recommendation was made.

Watson was placed on 'indefinite leave' on 19 July, before being posted to 10 O.T.U. on 13 September but posting are not clear after this until November 1945 when he was posted to HQ Air Command, South East Asia, at Kandy, Ceylon. He stayed there for just 17 days before being posted to 322 Maintenance unit, Chakeri, India. On 21 May 1945, he was promoted Flight Lieutenant and was finally demobbed from Hednesford Staffordshire on 6 July 1946. He remained on Voluntary Reserve until 1 July 1959 when he relinquished his commission.

JUNE 29th/44 AWARDED D.F.C. NOU. 21ST. F/O. WATSON. J.S. Cedals 1943 May 21st. Plo. WATSON J.S. 146647.
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THE LOGBOOK Watson's logbook covers all Watson's flights, his operational sorties numbered. It contains the signatures of Wing Commander G.L. Cheshire V.C., Clayton and other well-known 617 Squadron Commanders. It also has a couple of photographs glued to pages taken during the bombing of the Gnome & Rhone Factory at Limoges on 8 February 1944, one very close up of an explosion marking over buildings, labelled to the reverse 'Limoges W/C Cheshire marking' Additionally, the group includes an original 22 x 16cm post war photograph of Watson with Group Captain G.L. Cheshire V.C., D.S.O., 2 bars, D.F.C. and Wing Commander J.B. Tait D.S.O., 3 bars, D.F.C., bar.

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FLIGHT LIEUTENANT 'BUNNY' CLAYTON, D.S.O. C.G.M, D.F.C. IN CENTER



Medals in NEF. When originally purchased, the medals and post war photo were framed and the suspender bar from D.F.C. removed. Sold with a quantity of copied research.