

**AN EXTREMELY FINE WW2 D.F.M. TO AN AIR GUNNER WHO COMPLETED 49 OPERATIONAL SORTIES 1942-44, HIS SECOND TOUR WITH LANCASTERS OF 97 (STRAITS SETTLEMENTS) SQUADRON, PATHFINDER FORCE FREQUENTLY AS A MARKER. IN MAY 1944, HIS PILOT WAS AWARDED AN IMMEDIATE D.S.O. FOR HIS ACTIONS DURING AN EPIC SORTIE, IN WHICH HIS AIRCRAFT WAS EXTREMELY HEAVILY DAMAGED BY FLAK OVER THE TARGET, THEN BY ENEMY FIGHTERS AND FINALLY BY HOME DEFENCES ON HIS RETURN HOME, THE LATTER HAPPENING AGAIN A MONTH LATER**



**DISTINGUISHED FLYING MEDAL, GVI, '1415475. F/SGT. G. A. LEONARD. R.A.F.'**

D.F.M. London Gazette of 27 June 1944, His Recommendation reads:

*"This N.C.O. has carried out 35 1/3 operational sorties, 9 1/3 of which have been in Path Finder Force, 8 1/3 as Marker. Sergeant Leonard has at all times shown every enthusiasm for operations. His skill as a gunner has frequently enabled his Captain to evade enemy aircraft and successfully press home their attacks over heavily defended targets. His infectious enthusiasm and alertness have done a great deal to sustain the high morale of his crew. It is recommended that he be awarded the*

*Distinguished Flying Medal, Signed Wing Commander, Commanding No 97 (Straits Settlements) Squadron, R.A.F. Bourne, 15th April 1944.*”

His Station Commander added: *“A very keen Air Gunner with considerable operational experience. Recommended.”*

George Alfred Leonard was born in Hull, Yorkshire on 6 February 1923 and enlisted in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve in Penarth after March 1941. Completed training as an Air Gunner and took part in his first Operational Sortie on 10 November 1942. He was recommended for the D.F.M. on 14 April 1944 whilst serving as a Sergeant Air Gunner with Path Finder Force, 8 Group Unit, 97 Straits Settlements Squadron. At the time of his D.F.M. recommendation, he had completed 253 hours 25 mins time flown on operations over 35 1/3 sorties, 9 1/3 of which had been with the Path Finder Force and 8 1/3 as a Marker. He went on to take part in a further 14 Sorties with 97 Squadron before being posted to No.14 OTU WEF on 18 August 1944.

Flight Sergeant Leonard had been awarded the Pathfinder Force badge (temporarily) on 8 February 1944 and in addition to the D.F.M. was likely entitled to 1939-45 Star, Aircrew Europe Star with France and Germany clasp, Defence Medal (maybe) and War Medal

### **LIST OF OPERATIONAL SORTIES**

His recommendation adds the following brief details of Sorties carried out up until the recommendation of his D.F.M. on 14 April 1944:

26 sorties carried out Prior to Joining 97 Squadron. It is as yet unknown which Squadron he served with for his first tour, prior to joining 97 Squadron:

10.11.42 –Mine Laying Op – Successful  
16.11.42 –Mine Laying Op – Successful  
22.11.42 –Stuttgart – Successful  
28.11.42 –Turin – Successful  
06.12.42 –Mannheim – Successful  
08.12.42 –Mine Laying Op – Successful  
17.12.42 –Mine Laying Op – Successful  
20.12.42 –Duisberg – Successful  
23.01.43 –Lorient – Successful  
03.02.43 –Hamburg – Successful  
04.02.43 –Turin – Successful  
07.02.43 –Lorient – Successful  
16.02.43 –Lorient – Successful  
19.02.43 –Wilhelmshaven – Successful  
25.02.43 –Nuremberg – Successful  
26.02.43 –Cologne – Successful  
28.02.43 –St Nazaire – Successful  
01.03.43 –Berlin – Successful  
09.03.43 –Munich – Successful  
11.03.43 –Stuttgart – Successful  
12.03.43 –Essen – Successful  
27.03.43 –Berlin – Successful  
29.03.43 –Berlin – Successful  
04.04.43 –Keil – Successful  
10.04.43 –Frankfurt – Successful  
16.04.43 –Mannheim – Successful

Sorties after joining 97 Squadron:

- 29.12.43 –Berlin – Successful
- 02.01.44 –Berlin – Successful
- 14.01.44 –Brunswick – Successful
- 20.01.44 –Berlin – Successful
- 21.01.44 –Magdeburg – Successful
- 30.01.44 –Berlin – Successful
- 25.02.44 –Augsburg – Successful
- 01.03.44 –Stuttgart – Successful
- 31.03.44 –Nuremberg – Successful
- 09.04.44 –Lille – Successful



Chatten and crew – same Lancaster as below

Sorties with 97 Squadron after D.F.M. recommendation on 14 April 1944; these extracted from squadron records:

- 20.04.44 -La Chapelle – Successful
- 22.04.44 -Brunswick – Successful
- 26.04.44 -Schweinfurt - Successful
- 19.05.44 – Amiens – Successful
- 22.05.44 -Brunswick – Aircraft badly damaged by both enemy and friendly fire, pilot awarded D.S.O. for his actions
- 27.05.44 -Morsalines - Successful
- 06.06.44 -Argentan – Successful
- 12.6.06.44 –Caen – Successful
- 15.06.44 -Chatellerault – Successful. On return, aircraft ‘well hit’ by flak from London Defences
- 4.07.44 -St Leu D’Esserrent – Successful. Combat with enemy fighter over target which ‘continued after leaving coast’
- 15.07.44 -Nevers - Successful
- 20.7.44 -Coutrai - Successful
- 24.07.44 -Donges - Successful
- 25.07.44 -Stuttgart – Successful

Total: 49 Operational Sorties

## DETAILS OF SORTIES

For all his 97 Squadron Sorties, Flight Sergeant Leonard flew as a mid-upper and rear gunner in Pilot Officer Clifford Stanley Chatten's crew. Having been awarded the D.F.C. Chatten was later awarded an immediate D.S.O. for his actions during a raid on Brunswick on the night of 22/23 May 1944. Flight Sergeant Leonard was part of his crew during this epic sortie.

Sqn Ops Record Book for above raid : *"..F/Lt Chatten who was flying H on this attack, was engaged by a JU.88 just north of Hannover. He sustained many hits by cannon fire, the Perspex nose was shot completely away & the bombing compartment wrecked. Despite the intense cold & damage to the aircraft he decided to "press on" & maintained course to the target. On arrival at Brunswick he was hit several times by flack. By now every one of his instruments were destroyed or unserviceable. However, he dropped his bombs on the Wanganui flares & set course "by the stars" for base. On the return journey he was again attacked by fighters. He followed the fighter around & the mid-gunner returned fire by shooting over his plane's wing. Several hits were observed on the fighter in this action. On arrival at this country (UK) he was unable to identify himself as a friendly & our coastal batteries promptly opened up, hitting him with the first two shots. Eventually he reached base (RAF Conningsby) where he made a good landing. F/Lt Chatten received an immediate award of the DSO. The Navigator F/L Campbell displayed a high standard of Pathfinder navigation, in guiding the aircraft part of the way to the target & all the way home without the use of instruments of any kind & also without a map or chart"*



Chatten wearing award ribbon which indicates Lancaster during Leonard's service

Chatten's D.S.O. recommendation:

*"DSO- CHATTEN, Clifford Stanley Act FL 149529 RAFVR LG 16.6.44 – One night in May 1944 this officer was the pilot of an aircraft detailed to attack Brunswick. On the outward flight the aircraft was intercepted by a fighter but it was cleverly evaded. When nearing the target area, however, another fighter was encountered. As a result, the bomber was severely damaged. The nose part was smashed. The air pressure thus caused blew out the windows at the side and most of the windscreen around the pilot's cupola. The navigational equipment, the wireless apparatus and the mid upper turret were rendered useless, while two members of the crew were wounded. The cold was intense. Nevertheless, Flight Lieutenant Chatten was determined to complete the task for which he had flown so far. In the face of much anti-aircraft fire, and an attack by yet another fighter, he executed a successful bombing run and afterwards flew the damaged aircraft to this country. This officer displayed skill, gallantry and devotion to duty of the highest order."*

On 15 June 1944 Chatten's Lancaster was again targeted by Home Defences and his aircraft damaged. The Squadron record book notes:

*"15.6.44 A large practice bombing programme this morning. The target for tonight's operation was an ammunition dump at Chateaurault. 9 aircraft were detailed. The flares were very accurate and punctually dropped at 0044 hrs. The RSFs were very accurately dropped and were backed up with red and green TIs. The bombing went smoothly and the target was left a sea of flames. Heavy explosions were seen. The weather was clear and no opposition was encountered. All of our aircraft returned safely, with the exception of F/L Chatten DSO who was engaged for some unknown reason by the London Defences. His aircraft was well hit."*

The following fine website gives a huge amount of detail on 97 Squadron:

<http://www.97squadronassociation.co.uk/Awards.html>

Condition NEF, attractive patina. Sold with copy D.F.M. recommendation and extracted 97 Squadron operational logs (digital), the latter will be emailed to buyer.



An extremely fine D.F.M. to an air gunner who saw a great deal of action during the War. His latter tour with Pathfinder Force and as a Marker