

THE SUPERB WW2 1942 D.F.M. GROUP TO A HAMPDEN N.C.O. W/O A/G WHO TOOK PART IN AT LEAST 53 OPERATIONAL SORTIES WITH 44 AND 207 SQUADRONS, SEVERAL BEING OF GREAT NOTE, INCLUDING THE FIRST RAF RAID ON BERLIN, BEING IN ONE OF JUST 29 BOMBERS TO ACTUALLY BOMB THE GERMAN CAPITAL. TAKING PART IN THE 'BATTLE OF THE BARGES' IN SEPTEMBER 1940, AN ATTACK ON THE GERMAN BATTLESHIPS GNEISENAU AND SCHARNHORST, HE WAS FORCED TO BAIL OUT DURING A SORTIE TO LORIENT AND ON 7 SEPTEMBER 1941 DURING A SORTIE TO BERLIN HIS AIRCRAFT WAS HELD IN A CONE OF 50 SEARCHLIGHTS ABOVE THE CITY FOR FOUR MINUTES AND PEPPERED WITH MORE THAN 30 FLAK HOLES. FOR WHAT WAS CALLED AN 'IMPOSSIBLE' JOURNEY BACK HOME ON JUST ONE ENGINE, HIS PILOT WAS AWARDED THE D.S.O.



DISTINGUISHED FLYING MEDAL, G.V.I.R. '535815. F/SGT. J.E. HALLAM. R.A.F.', 1939-1945
STAR, AIR CREW EUROPE STAR, DEFENCE AND WAR MEDALS

D.F.M. *London Gazette* 23 December 1941. The original recommendation stated:

'This airman has been engaged on operational flying in the role of air gunner since the war began. Since joining his present unit Flight Sergeant Hallam carried out 21 sorties, including targets in Germany and attacks on the enemy cruisers Gneisenau and Scharnhorst. He has at all times shown great enthusiasm and efficiency and has set a fine example.'

Reduced recommendation:

"T/F/Sgt. Hallam has been employed continually on Operational Flying duties since the outbreak of the war and at all times has shown enthusiasm and efficiency in his work and has set a splendid example to his fellows"

535815 Flight Sergeant John Edwin Hallam was an Air Gunner with 207 Squadron. At the point of his recommendation on 28 October 1941, he had taken part in a total of 53 operational sorties (303 flying hours). 31 of these sorties were with his previous unit.

A newspaper article on the award of his D.F.M. tells how Hallam was born in Hope, Derbyshire in 1915 and in civil life was an electrician. He joined the Royal Air Force in 1936 and served on operational sorties from the start of the war. The first squadron he would serve operational sorties in was 44 Squadron.

44 (RHODESIA) SQUADRON

44 Squadron was medium bomber unit, equipped with the Handley Page Hampden 1's, a fast sleek looking aircraft which was known for its long range and ability to carry a substantial bomb load. However, it was extremely cramped for the crew, gaining the name 'the flying suitcase' and was extremely lightly armoured which led the type to have an extremely high loss rate. Nonetheless, it would bear the brunt of the early bombing war over Europe, and it would be the type of aircraft Hooker flew in for all but his last sortie.

Sergeant Hallam's first operational sortie was on 1 June 1940; a bombing mission of the Oil Plants at A.7 and A.19, during which heavy Flak was experienced. During this sortie, his Pilot was Squadron Leader Parker, with whom he would fly his first 15 sorties, before switching to the crew of Squadron Leader Gardner. Over the following 5 months, he would take part in a further 30 sorties, most notably taking part in the first RAF raid on Berlin and 'battle of the barges' in September 1940. The latter, which were the attacks on the build up of the German invasion fleet, were extremely hazardous due to the air defences around the channel harbours.



In retaliation for the bombing of London the 24 August 1940, Churchill ordered the RAF to bomb Berlin. On the night of 25/26 August 1940 a mixed force of approximately 103 aircraft from 3 Bomber Groups, each with different targets, set off. Of this number about 50 actually attacked Berlin, with just 29 claiming to have bombed the German Capital.

Just 6 Hampden's of 44 Squadron were assigned to the bombing of Berlin, including Hallam and crew in Hampden 1339. Tasked with bombing Power Station B.57; the Klingenberg power station in the eastern part of the city. 4 of the 6 Hampden's (including Hallam's) reported hits and as such were among the 29 bombers that actually bombed Berlin that night. A 5th scored hits on their secondary target. An extremely good description of events can be found here:

<https://www.berlinluftterror.com/blog/the-first-one>

Of Sergeant Hallam's other sorties, among others, he took part in many against enemy aerodromes and oil refineries in the Ruhr. His last sortie with 44 Squadron was on 16 October 1940 and he likely was then posted to a training unit.



207 SQUADRON

Sergeant Hallam joined 207 Squadron circa March 1941, which was equipped with Avro Manchester's I's and from July, Handley Page Hampden's. Operational logs (included with research), show Hallam fling with P/O 'Kipper' Herring DSO/DFM on all bar his first sortie with the Squadron and flew in both aircraft types, even after July 1941.

Hallam's first operational sortie with this squadron was on 21 March 1941, a sortie to Lorient, in a Manchester piloted by Sgt Harwood DFM. After 20 minutes, the aircraft had an engine failure and though it picked up again, it then caught fire. "The Captain gave orders to abandon aircraft, which all the crew did, with exception of Sgt Hogg (1st W/Op). It appears that Sgt Harwood tried to land the

aircraft but hit a tree and crashed in flames. Sgt Harwood and Hogg were killed. Sgts Hallam and Holland landed safely. Sgts Birch and Aitken were killed as their parachutes apparently did not open"

Presumably Sgt Hallam, who was injured (presumably on landing), received a caterpillar club badge for this.

<https://branch.rafa.org.uk/melton-mowbray/avro-manchester-17278-no-207-sqn-raf-waddington-21st-mar-1941>

Hallam would take part in a further 20 Sorties with the squadron, as noted, all piloted by P/O Herring. These would include; Mannheim, Hamburg, Berlin, Dusseldorf, Hannover, Essen, Cologne, Frankfurt, Keil and Rostock. Also several against enemy ships.

On 12 April, Herring and crew took part on a raid on the German battleships Gneisenau and Scharnhorst at Brest by 60 aircraft.

On 9 May, Hallam took part in his first of three stories with the squadron to Berlin. On the outward journey, they were attacked by an ME110 over the North Sea and after a brief encounter at 10,000 feet, the enemy aircraft was shot down (it is not clear by which air gunner). Carrying onto Berlin, on the return trip the aircraft was hit by heavy flak.

On 7 September 1941, Flying in Manchester P/O Herring, Hallam took part in what was described as an "Impossible" return trip from Berlin, during which his aircraft was held in a cone of 50 searchlights above the city for four minutes, and peppered with more than 30 flak holes in wings and fuselage. Herring dragged his battered aircraft the 600 miles to home, over the most heavily defended part of Germany, unarmed, on one engine and at a height of 5,000 feet. This was the first Manchester ever brought back on just one engine and one of the crew described that in order to try and gain height, the formed a chain, with Hallam at the hatch, the crew passing anything that could be jettisoned from oxygen to machine guns.

<https://44sqn.com/newsletters/march-2015/Kipper/>



For this sortie, Herring was awarded the D.S.O.. The recommendation states:

"Flying Officer Herring has now completed over 320 hours operational flying as the captain of Hampden and Manchester aircraft and he has always shown the utmost determination to carry through whatever operation he has been allotted. On numerous occasions this officer has been detailed to attack the most heavily defended targets involving deep penetration into enemy territory, and in every instance he has completed his mission with a cool efficiency that has been a model to other aircrews.

His resolute behaviour was particularly noticeable on the night of September 7th, when he was the captain of a Manchester which took part in a raid on Berlin. Whilst over the City the aeroplane was the target for intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire and repeated hits were received. Severe damage was sustained, including the seizure of the port engine owing to a punctured radiator. Flying Officer Herring feathered the port air screw, dived out of the defences, sustaining more damage, and decided to attempt to fly the damaged aircraft to England. This decision was taken with the full knowledge that the flight would necessarily have to be made during a full moon by the shortest route which would entail passing through the thickest part of the enemy searchlight belt and fighter areas. At this time he was also aware that, following the failure of the port engine, there was no hydraulic power to the gun turrets and that the aeroplane was almost defenceless.

The return flight was made successfully at about 5,000 feet. The aircraft encountered cloud at the most critical part of the flight and in consequence of severe icing conditions was forced to fly below cloud across the main enemy searchlight area. On arrival back in England, a successful landing was made at an aerodrome with practically no fuel left in the tanks. The decision to make a return flight in the face of all the known and unknown hazards shows that this officer possesses the finest type of courage and determination and the manner in which the flight was executed demonstrates his skill and efficiency as a pilot and captain of a heavy bomber..."

His awards were sold in auction at Spink: <https://www.spink.com/lot/130027>

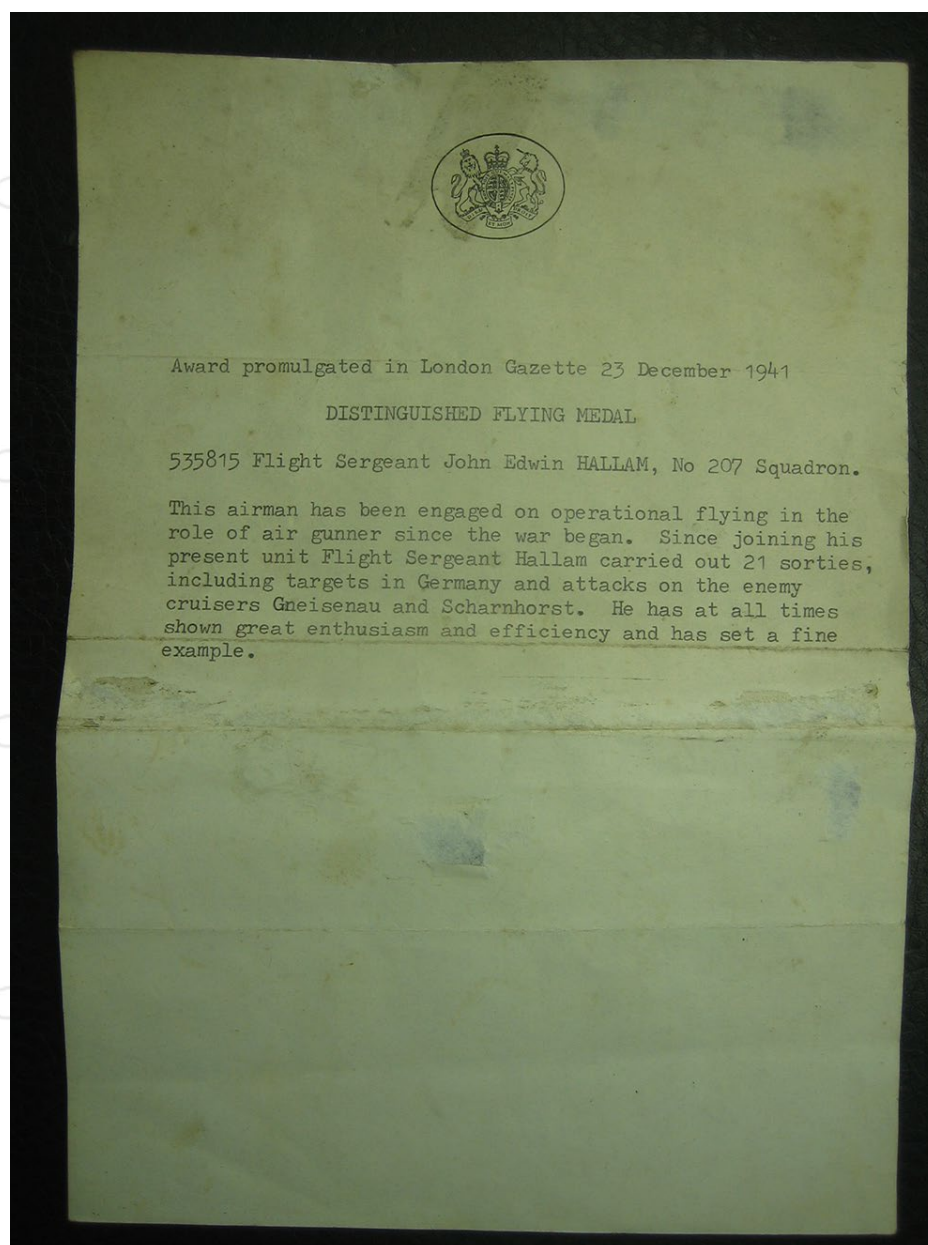
Hallam's last sortie with 207 Squadron was on 10 October 1941, a sortie to Essen, after which he was again likely posted to a training unit. Whether he saw further operational service is unknown but quite possible. The London Gazette, 18 April 1944 lists Hallam as being commissioned Pilot Officer (P), dating from 27 January 1944; new commissioned number 54390. He was confirmed and appointed Flying Officer on 27 July 1944 and was transferred to the Admin and Special duties branch on 10 April 1945.

44 SQUADRON SORTIES - all Handley Page Hampden's piloted by Squadron Leader Parker until August then rest Squadron Leader Gardner

1 JUNE 1940 – OIL PLANTS AT A.7 AND A.19 - Heavy Flak
3 JUNE 1940– OIL PLANTS AT A.24, A.25, A.19 - considerable AA fire at Frankfurt and Dusseldorf
8 JUNE 1940 – BOMB TARGETS A.Y.I. AND M.405
10 JUNE 1940 – GARDENING – PLANTING 'WALLFLOWER'
13 JUNE 1940 – ENEMY RAIL MOVEMENT AT BEAVAIS - 2 direct hits
16 JUNE 1940 – KIEL CANAL - Gardening – Radish planted from 600 feet
20 JUNE 1940 - LINGEN - DESTROY ENEMY TRAINS
27 JUNE 1940 – NYBORG – OIL TANKS
29 JUNE 1940 – BARGE AERODROME – three direct hits on building, one on runway
2 JULY 1940 – DESTROY TARGET A10
13 JULY 1940 – BORKUM AERODROME - Direct hit on buildings
15 JULY 1940 - GARDENING
18 JULY 1940 – AERODROME AT ESCHWEGE – one bomb hit hanger which disintegrated
28 JULY 1940 – OIL REFINERIES - Intense AA fire
31 JULY 1940 – OIL REFINERIES & AERODROMES -large explosion after first stick was dropped

14 AUGUST 1940 – OIL REFINERIES AT Z.161
16 AUGUST 1940 – AERODROME SE OF MUNSTER
19 AUGUST 1940 – GARDENING
22 AUGUST 1940 – LINGEN AERODROME bursts seen across target
25 AUGUST 1940 – BERLIN – **1ST RAF RAID ON BERLIN DURING WW2**
30 AUGUST 1940 – OIL REFINERIES AT A70
1 SEPTEMBER 1940 – INLAND PORT OF MAASTRICHT
4 SEPTEMBER 1940 – OIL REFINERIES AT A10 - one direct hit seen
7 SEPTEMBER 1940 – OSTEND- all bombs seen to hit concentration of barges
8 SEPTEMBER 1940 – DESTROY DOCKLAND INSTALLATIONS
14 SEPTEMBER 1940 – SHIPPING CALAISE- all bombs seen to hit concentration of barges
18 SEPTEMBER 1940 – DESTROY MERCHANT SHIPPING -Four bursts seen – shipping at CC24
22 SEPTEMBER 1940 – DESTROY BARGES SHIPPING ETC at CC.29
9 OCTOBER 1940 – GARDENING
12 OCTOBER 1940 – ESSEN
16 OCTOBER 1940 – SYNTHETIC OIL PLAT AT A.77

TOTAL 32 OPERATIONAL SORTIES



207 SQUADRON SORTIES – Manchester's and Hampden's from July 1941 – squadron flew both at same time after – Hallam flying in both types. All sorties piloted by P/O 'Kipper' Herring DFM/DSO bar first

20 MARCH 1941 – **LORIENT - return engine caught fire, bailed out - 1 of only 2 survivors**

8 APRIL 1941 – KIEL SHIPYARDS

12 APRIL 1941 – **GNEISENAU AND SCHARNHORST AT BREST**

5 MAY 1941 - MANNHEIM

8 MAY 1941 – HAMBURG

9 MAY 1941 – BERLIN – ME110 claimed shot down over North Sea – aircraft hit by heavy flak

23 JUNE 1941 - DUSSELDORF

26 JUNE 1941 – KIEL

6 JULY 1941 – CRUISERS AT CC.49.

14 JULY 1941 - HANNOVER

24 JULY 1941 – KIEL

27 JULY 1941 – GARDENING “ARTICHOKE” VEGS.

7 AUGUST 1941 – KRUPP WORKS, ESSEN

25 AUGUST 1941 - MANNHEIM

29 AUGUST 1941 -DOCKS AT FRANKFURT

31 AUGUST 1941 – COLOGNE

2 SEPTEMBER 1941 - BERLIN

7 SEPTEMBER 1941 – **BERLIN – aircraft severely damaged- pilot awarded DSO**

11 SEPTEMBER 1941 – CR.3585 ROSTOCK

15 SEPTEMBER 1941 –“DACE” “B” HAMBURG

10 OCTOBER 1941 – GN.3814 ESSEN

TOTAL 21 OPERATIONAL SORTIES



Condition VF, with original recommendation. Sold with digital copies of the original DFM recommendation and operational logs for each squadron during Hallam's service. A really quite outstanding DFM group to an Air Gunner who certainly saw his fair share of aerial action.