

“Mid-upper, are you all right?” called the captain. “I thought you were hit?”

“I told him I felt all right. As we crossed the coast I gingerly got out of the turret and examined myself. Not a scratch. The bomb-aimer got into the turret.

“Christ!” he exclaimed, “Are you sure you were in the turret? The whole back and front have gone.”

“Where the hell do you think I was?” I asked, “Home in bed?” The next day a notice was put up in the locker room. “For an education see F-Fox and S-Sugar,” it read. As well as our damaged F-Fox, S-Sugar had taken a direct hit on the bomb-bay, the doors of which were wrapped around the fuselage. The plane had fallen 10,000 feet upside down, but the pilot had carried on. Three times the next day different people told me how lucky it was that I was not in the turret. To this day I’ll never understand how they missed me.

‘Bomber Command operated on the theory that, if you have had a rough trip, get right back in there fast before your nerve goes. We were no exception. The next night they gave us Berlin, the big city. We flew up the Baltic and approached Berlin from the north. We had been a very quiet crew on take-off, but Berlin got us back in form. The Command suffered heavy losses, but we bombed without incident and did not have any trouble until we were back over our own coast. Heavy winds had played havoc with our fuel supply and we had to land at Coltishall. About fifty other bombers were trying to land there too, but it was a fighter station and unused to such traffic. We got no response to our calls for permission to land and we were not sure where we were.

“Darkie, Darkie, may we land please?”

‘This high emergency call got immediate response. A cool WAAF voice answered.

“This is Coltishall, land as you can.”

‘We barged right in and landed, on the grass!

‘The fighter boys treated us well and made us welcome. Our aircraft damaged a wheel and we needed expert help, which was not available locally, so our own ground crew had to come down and we got a night off. In a nearby pub we met a WAAF Flight Officer and left her convinced that Fighter Command was a non-combatant organisation compared to Bomber Command, and that

Yorkshire Airfields used by Halifaxes

