

Red 1, 2, 3, 4: S/Ldr Baker DFC + Bar, F/sgt Proctor, F/O Mercer, F/Sgt Williams.

Blue 1, 2, 3, 4: F/Lt Ross, F/Sgt Gray, F/Sgt Beaumont, F/Sgt Cooper

1 (A) 263/19 (B) 24 Oct 1943 (C) 8 W'bombers (D) 263

2. (A) 10 mph 220° (B) 3/10 3000 feet (C) 30 miles (D) calm  
(E) Sunlight

3 (A) 1525 (B) Cherbourg Harbour 49° 40' N, 01° 40' W.

(C) Ship 1 M/V ~~tons to~~ 6500 tons, 3-island type, medium-sea-gray (looked newly painted)

Ship 2 smaller M/V, ~~or other type~~ 3-island type, black funnel.

Ship 3 still smaller Armed Trawler or M/V

These three ships were lying alongside the S. side of the Digue du Homet with their bows to the East, Ship 1 being the ~~Easternmost~~ most easterly.

Ships ~~4-11~~ 4-9 ~~or 4-11~~ were six vessels ~~to eight~~ lying bow-to-stern alongside both sides of the ~~railway station~~ Transatlantic dock (C.I.U Port Plan ~~115700~~ 1170). These were fairly confidently identified as M. Class minesweepers, but the conditions for observation were not ideal.

(D) Abeam Ships 1, 2, 3, ~~port 70°~~ 70° port beam attacks. Ships 4, 5, 20° stbd bow attacks

(E) Ship 1 seemed riding high. Others not known.

4. (A) 16 x 250 (B) 250 lb GP (C) 3 secs (D) 21 feet lateral

(E) Mast-height (F) Eyesight.

Also 342 x 20mm HEI + SAPI

5. Only cannon strikes seen by 263 pilots on Ship 1, Ship 2, and Ships 4 and 5.

8 x 250 lb bombs aimed at Ship 1. 4 x 250 at Ship 2. 4 x 250 at Ship 3. See 7 below

6. Whirlibomber attack followed 4 minutes after medium-level bombing by Mitchells.

7. 8# Typhoons of 257 Squadron dived past the target from W to East immediately after the Whirlibombers attack. They saw two bomb bursts forward of the ~~mast~~ funnel - orange flashes followed by dense black smoke and flames. They also saw a fire aft of the funnel.

4 Typhoons of 266 Squadron dived over the target

from S to N seven minutes after and saw target well ablaze with smoke and flames visible from 10 miles.

However the 8 Typhoon bombers of 183 Squadron which claim to have bombed Ship 1 from mast height from S to N at 1815, saw no damage ~~on ships this~~ to this ship.

Further reconnaissance not known at this unit.

8. (a) (i) Ship 1 Cat 3 (or 2) ~~bombs~~

Ship 2 Cat 3 ~~cannon~~

Ship 3 Cat 4 ~~bombs~~

Ships 4 and 5 Cat 3

(b) (i) 3 Whirlibombers Cat 3. 1 Whirlibomber Cat B. 4 Whirlibombers Cat A

(ii) F/O Mercer (Red 3) missing believed killed. F/Sgt Gray (Blue 2) missing

(iii)

9 ~~beam on See attached plan~~

~~10~~ 11 CCG used by Red 1, Blue 1 and Blue 3 Ref 263/49, 50, 51

10. Whirlibombers were ordered to take part in 10 Gp Roadstead 79. Their task was to bomb from low level at 1525 hours a 6500 ton ship lying alongside the Digue du Homet in Cherbourg Inner Harbour.

Accordingly, these 8 a/c took off from Warmwell at 1500 hrs, set course over base at 1505 hrs, and flew in two sections of 4 a/c line abreast with slight vic, ~~Nos 2, 1, 3, 4~~ \* Below at just above sea level on a course which brought them straight into Cherbourg Harbour.

~~At about 4 minutes before~~

At about 1521 the bursts from the Mitchell's bombs were seen ahead, and subsequently smoke was seen from these bursts in the Western area of the harbour near the Quai Napoleon.

~~The~~ Our a/c flew over the outer moles at +4 boost, 2500rpm, 250mph, and saw Ships 1, 2, 3 ahead of them. ~~They~~ At 1525 they bombed from mast-height, ~~as follows~~ Blue section following red section about 650 yards behind.

~~Blue Red 1 and 2 bombed Ship~~

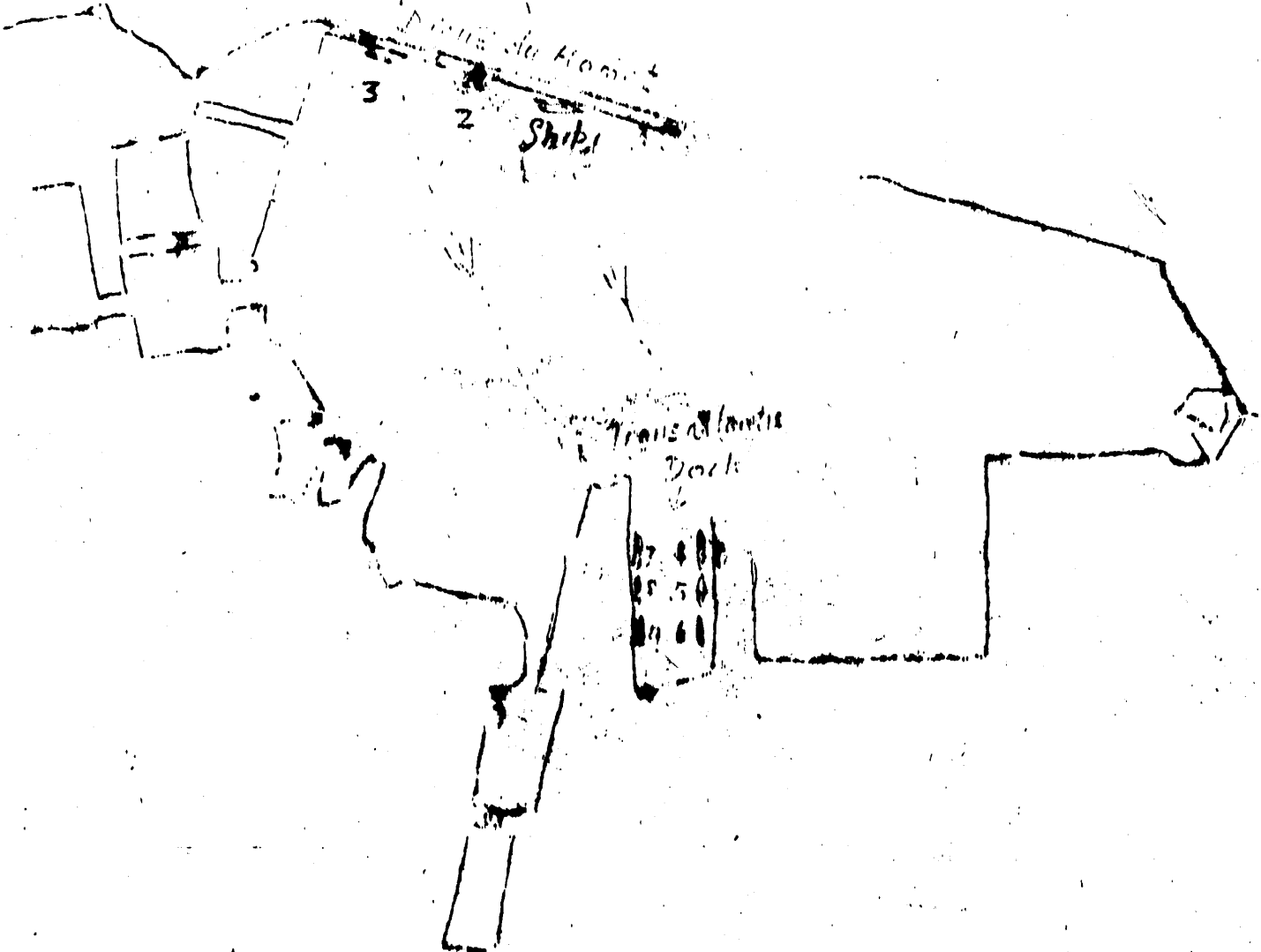
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\* with No 2 ~~on the left~~ to port of No 1 and Nos 3 and 4 ~~on~~ to starboard.

0 Blue # # # #

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Chenbourg Harbor

Red # # # # Section



~~Red 1, 2 and 3 bombed ship 1 and Red 1 fired 44 rounds x 20 mm HEI and SAPI, seeing strikes on~~

Red 1, 2, and 3, and Blue 2 bombed ship 1, and Red 1 fired 44 66 x 20 mm at Ship 1, seeing strikes on the superstructure.

~~Blue Red 4 saw~~ Blue 1 and Blue 3 bombed Ship 2 and both fired bursts of cannon (Blue 1, 44 x 20mm) and saw strikes.

Red 4 and Blue 4 bombed Ship 3.

~~In order to~~ Our a/c climbed to get over the masts of the ships they attacked and this brought them to about 150 feet. ~~Blue~~ In getting down to sea level Blue 3 got ~~the ships by~~ ships 4-9 in his sights and fired about 80 more rounds at them seeing strikes on at least two of them (122 x 20mm altogether)

Flak. It is difficult to give a picture of the flak without seeming to exaggerate. ~~All the eleven ships~~ It was extremely intense, of all calibres. The air seemed filled with tracer and black puffs. Continuous gun flashes came from every land bound part of the harbour and from the eleven ships that were seen there. Blue 3 ~~compared~~ says "It was like a horizontal hail-storm, with the hail-stones painted red".

All our a/c were hit by flak. The formation broke half to port and flew low to E.S.E.

F/Sgt Gray (Blue 2) was seen to have his starboard engine smoking heavily. About 3 miles E.S.E of Cherbourg town he climbed to 150 feet and went into a shallow glide turning slightly to port, just in the manner of a controlled force-landing. The country here was fairly open with some wooded area. It is hoped that F/Sgt Gray may have landed safely.

On leaving the target area F/O Mercer called that he had been hit, but then that he thought his a/c was all right. He continued with the main formation to cross the coast about 3 miles E of St Vaast. S/Ldr Baker noticed that he was at 150 feet, that is about 120 feet above the other a/c, and asked him if he was all right.

*(All our pilots have been both generally and specifically briefed to cross the coast "at 30 feet"). He replied that he was all right. Almost immediately afterwards his a/c was seen to be hit by one of 8-10 rounds fired from a coastal light flak position. The ~~starboard~~ stbd wing dropped and the a/c dived into the sea about 200 yards from the shore, disintegrating on impact. It is not thought possible that F/O Mercer could have survived.*

*F/Lt Ross' a/c was hit in the starboard wing by an explosive shell probably of 37mm calibre, fired from the target area. The a/c could only be controlled by ~~being~~ F/L Ross bracing his right elbow against the side of the cockpit in order to hold the control column fully to the left. He broke to port and flew out over Rethoville at 200 feet, without meeting further flak. He was escorted back to base by 2 Typhoons of 257 Squadn. F/Lt Ross found that his starboard wing juddered and stalled at 180 mph and he judged that to lower his undercarriage would be the end of him. He therefore made a perfect belly-landing at 180 mph. It was afterwards found that there was further serious damage from flak at the wing-root. This a/c is Cat E.*

*~~F/Sgt Cooper's a/c~~ The starboard side of F/Sgt Cooper's undercarriage had been damaged by flak and it collapsed on landing. This a/c is Cat AC.*

*The damage sustained by the other 4 a/c was more superficial, although the bullet holes in S/Ldr Baker's perspex were only just in this category.*

*These 6 Whirlibombers landed at Warmwell by 1610 hrs.*

*Flying Officer Intell. Office*

*No 263 Squadron*