

R5679 QR-O and the history of the Avro Manchester/Lancaster

Mike Brewser

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Only 200 Manchester's were built and the type withdrawn from service in 1942. R5679 was part of the second production batch of 200 ordered from A. V. Roe & Co. Ltd., and designated AVRO LANCASTER MARK I as part of Contract No. B69274/40 under Works Order No. 7671, Newton Heath, Manchester. R5482-R5517, R5537-R5576, R5603-R5640, R5658-R5703, and R5724-R5763. Deliveries commenced 2nd February 1942 and were complete July 1942 (average rate of production ten aircraft per week.) Many aircraft surviving in 1943, had the Merlin XX engines replaced by the more powerful Merlin XXIIIs.

In the summer of 1942, 61squadron was twice loaned to RAF Coastal Command for anti-submarine operations in the Bay of Biscay. It was detached from its base in Rutland to St Eval in Cornwall. It was whilst on loan that R5679 piloted by F/Sgt Norman Turner is credited in sinking the blockade runner Corruna. The aircraft suffered flak damage from the encounter and is pictured here whilst under repair. Mission: Gardening (Laying mines) Sweetpeas area.

61 Squadron supplied 11 aircraft that night, R5679 took off from RAF Syerston, Nottinghamshire on the evening of Friday 24th September at 19.50hrs part of an attacking force of 51 aircraft to lay mines in the vicinity of Rostock, Germany. The flight path across Denmark would be Nissum Fiord, Fornæs Point, Gedser Head, and to return on exactly the same reversed headings.

The weather for the night of Friday 24/25th September (Extract weather report to Bomber Command) :

Cloud cover at 2,000 ft, the target areas were visible in full moonlight. Weather over the Baltic was less disturbed during operations, and visibility was clear except when 10/10ths, cloud at 4-5,000' obscured the full moon.

German Night Fighter

It is now known that Lt Karl Heinz Brandes of 7/NJG2 flying a JU88C, attacked R5679 at 01.22hrs. Although R5679 was the only allied aircraft shot down that night another aircraft from 61 Squadron R5724 was also engaged in the same area by Lt Brandes at 02.13hrs



🇬🇧 *The Avro Manchester was designed by Roy Chadwick from an Air Ministry request for a 'Worldwide use' new generation twin engine bomber. The Manchester suffered from poor performance and reliability so was redesigned with 4 Rolls Royce Merlin engines in a modified wing and renamed the Lancaster.*

R5724 (Extract 61 Squadron Records)

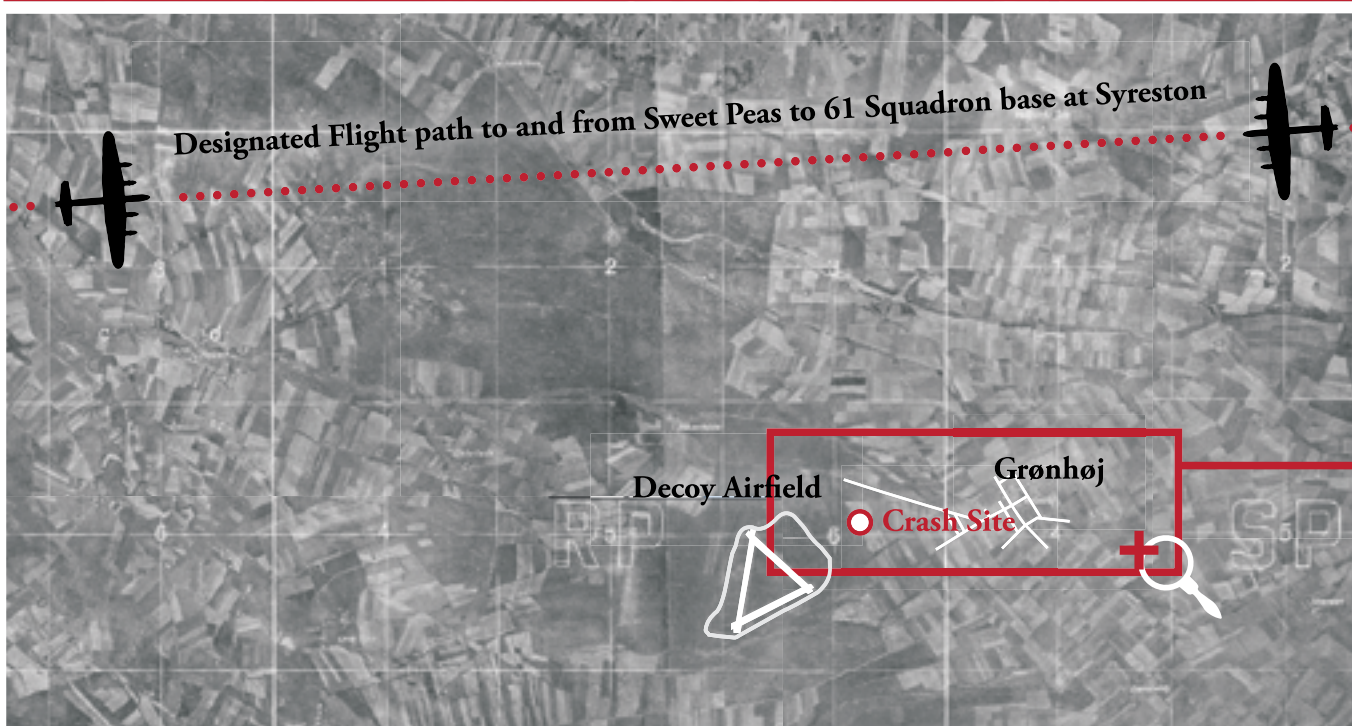
F/Sgt. Campbell proceeded to the garden and dropped his veg in the allotted position. On returning over Viborg he was fired at, and the flak commenced a fire inside the aircraft at the same time another burst hit the nose of the aircraft blowing in the bombardier's window, and blew all the glass out of the cockpit. Two fighters which had been following then closed in and started to shoot up the aircraft, wounding the rear gunner and mid-upper gunner. The aircraft stalled and the pilot regained control at 4,000ft. He dived for cloud and lost the fighters. During the return which was very cold the injured men were attended by the crew, and F/Sgt Campbell and Sgt Gunnell the two pilots flew the aircraft safely back to base in spite of the fact that all the instruments were U/S, and the cockpit was open. Sgt Coakley obtained QDMs (Direction Magnetic) and eventually a successful belly landing was made at RAF Wittering, near Peterborough, an airfield designated that night, to land badly damaged returning planes.

F/Sgt. Campbell received an immediate commission after this trip, and the whole crew received an immediate award of the D.F.M.



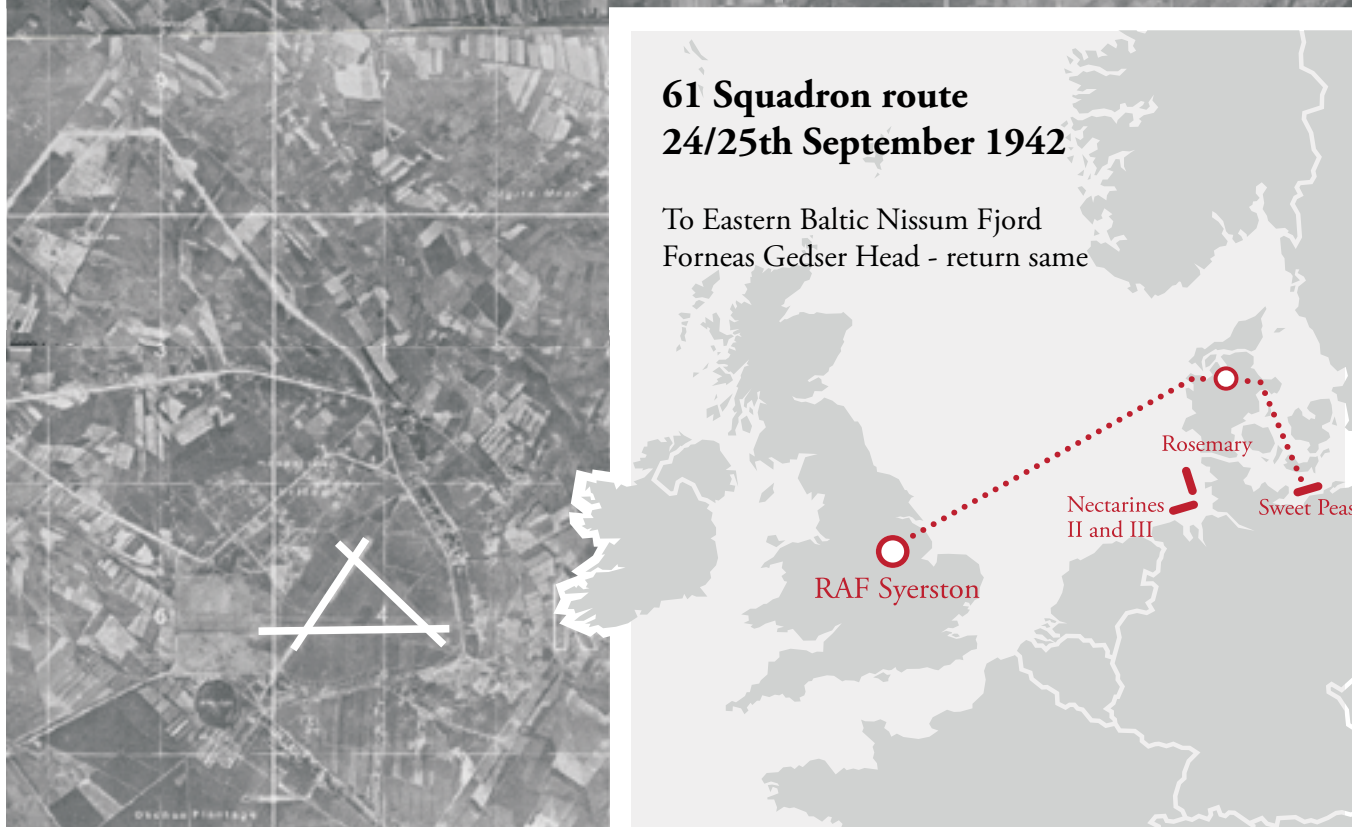
🇬🇧 R5679 after 19/8/42 when she sustained flak damage over the Bay of Biscay - courtesy of Allan Turner of Colorado

Map of the route and the crash site



61 Squadron route 24/25th September 1942

To Eastern Baltic Nissum Fjord
Fornæs Gedser Head - return same



Eyewitness account

“ The sky lit up when the bomber burned. ”

Article in Viborg Stiftis Folkeblad on 29 July 2009 about LAN R5679 which crashed at Grønhoj, sent from the author to and translated by Anders Straarup for www.airmen.dk.

A Lancaster bomber was shot down over Grønhoj in 1942. Gudrun Laigaard woke up when the plane was flying over Grønhoj Inn.

By Georg Ask Lunden Jensen

GRØNHØJ: At about 01.22 on 25 September 1942 Gudrun Laigaard, then 22, woke up in her bedroom in Grønhoj Inn. "I woke up because suddenly my bedroom got light. There was a very loud noise," she states. A few minutes earlier a British Avro Lancaster bomber was on the return flight to England after having dropped mines into the Baltic Sea, but here it ran out of luck. The bomber was attacked by a German night fighter piloted by Lt Karl Heinz Brandes from Nachtjagdgeschwader 3 and burst into flames near Grønhoj.

In the house Gudrun Laigaard could hear the noise from the propeller engines of the big aircraft as it, burning, came roaring at low height over the village. "It passed very close over the house. I nearly thought that it was going to crash here," relates Gudrun, now 89, while we sit in the old inn looking out of the window to the western outskirts of Grønhoj where the plane fell to the ground.

R5679's operational history

- 1) Bremen, 25/26-6-42
- 2) Bremen, 27/28-6-42
- 3) Bremen, 29/30-6-42
- 4) Bremen, 2/3-7-42
- 5) Wilhelmshaven, 8/9-7-42
- 6) Danzig, 11-7-42, Dusk;
- 7) U-boat patrol from St. Eval, 26-7-42
- 8) Saarbrücken, 29/30-7-42
- 9) Dusseldorf, 1/2-8-42
- 10) Atlantic patrol 13-8-42
- 11) Atlantic Patrol, 16-8-42
- 12) Attacked enemy blockade runner Corruna off Spanish coast, 19-8-42 (damaged by flak; aircraft Captain, F/Sgt. N. F. Turner)
- 13) Karlsruhe, 2/3-9-42
- 14) Bremen, 4/5-9-42
- 15) Duisburg, 6/7-9-42
- 16) Düsseldorf, 10/11-9-42
- 17) Bremen, 13/14-9-42
- 18) Munich, 19/20-9-42
- 19) Gardening, Baltic, 24/25-9-42 (Missing)