

Our background story in edition 2019-10 dealt with the so-called Hunger Winter 1944/1945, the food droppings and the food transport. These operations are known under the name: "Manna", "Chowhound" and "Faust".

Faust is the operation that was performed under Canadian supervision, as you have read, probably. Chowhound was an action of the US Air Force, Operation Manna was of the Royal Air Force. It is logical that Canadian pilots, assigned to the RAF, were also involved.

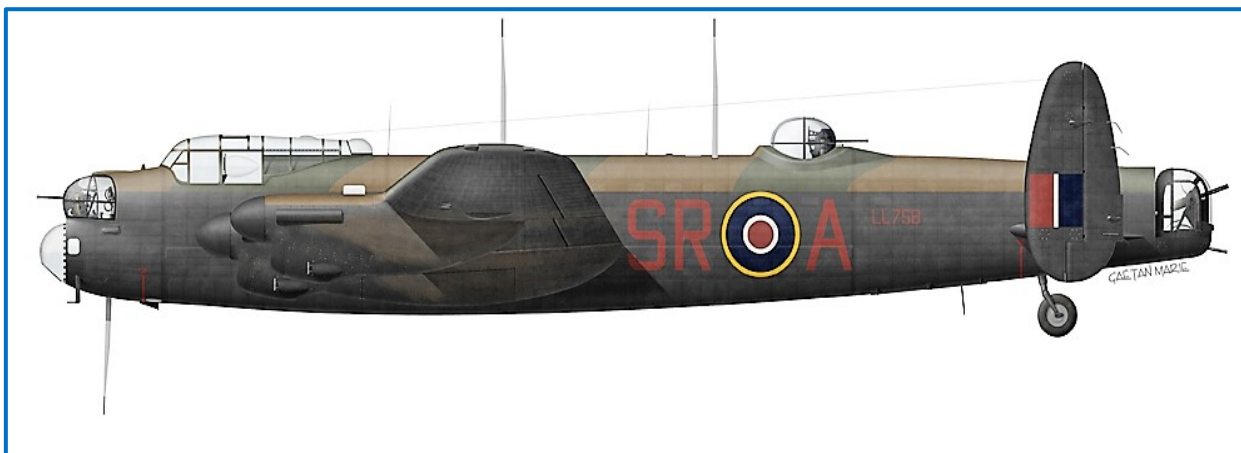
Note that from the first flight, which was operated under very uncertain conditions, the crew was almost entirely Canadian, five out of seven. In this edition we want to explain their role in more detail. Fortunately, the details of this have been recorded. We use the information from, among others, the Canadian Historical Aircraft Association.



Canadian Historical AIRCRAFT ASSOCIATION



RAF 101 Special Duties Squadron was a Lancaster bomber squadron based at Ludford Magna, Lincolnshire, England. The base opened in June 1943 and 101 Squadron remained there until the end of the war. The squadron's Lancasters were equipped with special radio equipment and antennas (known as ABC or Air-Borne-Cigars) and were used to disrupt German communications over target areas. As a result, the Germans considered these aircraft as prime targets and, over its almost two years of operation, the squadron lost 113 Lancasters to enemy action, one of the highest loss rates of any RAF squadron in Bomber Command. The crew had at least one member who could speak/understand German.



A RAF 101 Squadron Lancaster with ABC equipment

F/O Bob Upcott of Windsor, Ontario was the pilot of a 101 Squadron crew made up of British and Canadian airmen. The crew referred to any Lancaster they flew in as "Bad Penny", a superstition borne from the popular phrase: "Like a bad penny, it always turns up". In addition, each of the seven-man crew carried a British penny in their pocket as a good luck charm.

By April 27th, 1945 they had flown their 15th combat mission. The next day they were scheduled for a very special operation. The reason for this:

In the fall of 1944, Allied forces had attempted to end the war early by way of Operation Market Garden, a combined forces attack that would capture strategic bridges in Holland and Belgium and open the way to Berlin. With the help of the Dutch citizenry, the operation nearly succeeded, but the Germans successfully counter-attacked and re-captured the final "bridge too far", pushing back the Allied attack.



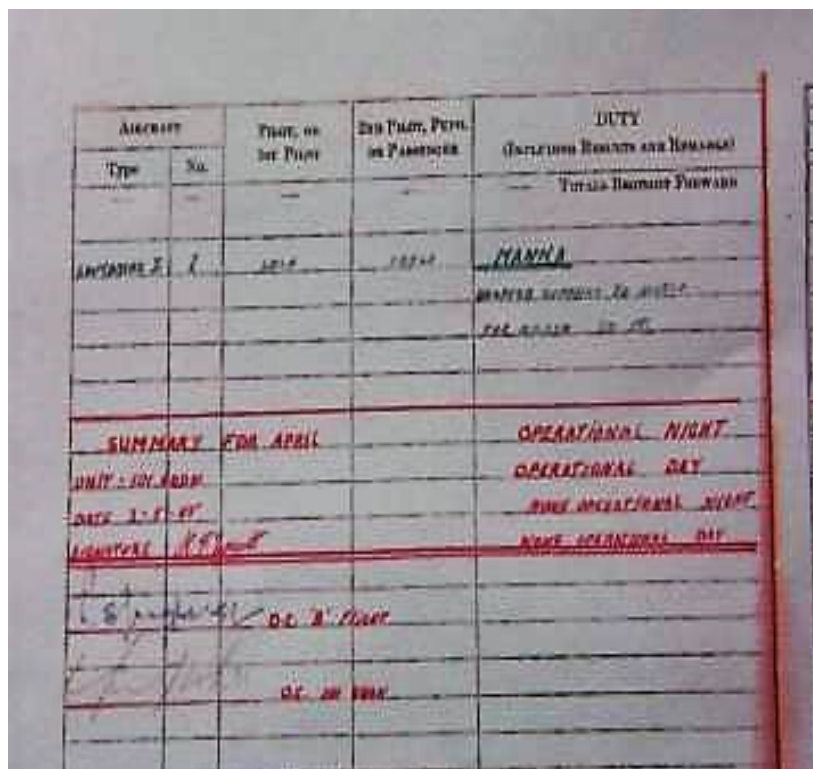
Bob Upcott

The Dutch were made to pay by way of the Germans cutting off food supplies and blowing up strategic dykes to slow the Allied advance, effectively destroying the harvest of 1944.

The following extremely cold winter is known to this day by the Dutch as "The Hunger Winter". Thousands were to perish of starvation. As the war neared its end in the spring of 1945, word of the situation in Holland reached the ears of the Allied Command and a plan, known as Operation Manna, was hatched, whereby Allied aircraft would drop food supplies to the starving population.

A tenuous agreement was reached with the German Commander in Holland and, on the morning of April 29th, the crew of the "Bad Penny" and a second Lancaster piloted by Australian F/O P.G.L. Collett, took off from Ludford Magna with bomb bays full of sacks of food. These were the only two bombers without ABC equipment. Their target was a racetrack for horses near the Hague and they weren't sure whether the German anti-aircraft guns would fire on them or not, as no formal ceasefire had been signed.

As they crossed the Dutch coast, they dropped to 100 feet, a suicidal altitude as they flew straight into the German defenses.



AIROCRAT	PILOT, OR CO-PILOT	2ND PILOT, PILOT OR PASSENGER	DUTY (Include Hours, Remarks and Remarks)
LANCASTER	P.G.L. COLLETT	P.G.L. COLLETT	MANNA DROPPED 250 TONS OF FOOD FOR HOLLAND
SUMMARY FOR APRIL			OPERATIONAL NIGHT
UNIT - 100.000			OPERATIONAL DAY
DATE 2-5-45			OPERATIONAL NIGHT
SIGNATURE [Signature]			OPERATIONAL DAY
1.8.45			DE 2.45
1.8.45			DE 2.45

Log book entry Bob Upcott. [Click for his own story.](#)

Meanwhile, on the ground, a young Dutch boy named Peter Buttenaar, was on his own mission. He was on his way to steal food from the German garrison for his starving family, knowing full well that if he was caught, he would be shot. As he was walking, he heard the sound of the two Lancaster bombers, approaching so low that he was certain they were about to crash, so low in fact that he could see the face of bomb aimer Bill Gray in the nose of the Bad Penny, who waved to him as they passed overhead. Peter turned and ran home in fear, only to find when he got there that the bombers had dropped not bombs but their precious loads of food. They had been saved for the time being.

The two Lancasters dropped their food on the Racetrack Duindigt (for horses) at Wassenaar, near The Hague, then returned along the same corridor they had flown on the way in. In the air, after

dropping their food supplies, Bad Penny Wireless Operator Stan Jones radioed back to base, "Mission accomplished" and shortly after lunch that same day, 250 more aircraft departed for Holland with bomb bays full of food. By May 8th when the war in Europe ended, the Lancasters had made 3,156 sorties and dropped over 6,600 tons of food. At the cost of three machines, two due to a collision and one crashed due to lack of fuel.

The Lancasters were also deployed after the war for the repatriation of prisoners of war. 2,900 trips were made in 24 days during which approximately 74,000 POW's were retrieved.

At war's end, pilot Bob Upcott returned to Windsor and was eventually joined by W/Op Stan Jones and his wife Helen. On April 29th, 1995 a re-union of the entire Bad Penny crew was held at the Canadian Historical Aircraft Association where Windsor's Lancaster bomber, FM212, was dedicated to them.

In attendance as well, was Peter Buttenaar, who had emigrated to Canada with his family after the war and who, fifty years later, met the crew who flew overhead on that fateful day.



The Bad Penny crew

Top row L-R: W/OP Stan Jones, F/E John Corner, F/O Bob Upcott, Navigator Bill Walton

Bottom row L-R: MUG Ossie Blower, AG Bill Demo, Bomb Aimer Bill Gray

Click on photo to read the story about Peter and the crew members →



Peter Buttenaar, his wife Dolly and Bill Gray (photo M. Beale)



Crew members reunited.

SUE REEVE The London Free Press
Members of the first Lancaster bomber crew to fly food into Holland on April 29, 1945, during Operation Manna, were reunited in London Wednesday. From left are navigator Bill Walton of Toronto, pilot Bob Upcott of Windsor, bomb aimer Bill Gray of London, radio operator Stan Jones of Windsor and mid-upper gunner Orval "Ozzie" Blower of Mississauga.