

303rd BG (H) Combat Mission - Recalled

16 December 1944

Target: Railroad Marshalling Yard at Ulm, Germany
(No Crew Loading Lists Available)

Thirty-nine 303rd BG(H) aircraft flew as the 41st CBW-A Group to attack Ulm, Germany. The formation was recalled due to adverse weather conditions and turned back at 1005 hours over England. Bombs were jettisoned in the North Sea before the aircraft returned. Some of the aircraft landed at an RAF airfield at Kirmington, England.



B-17G #44-6504 by John Patterson

One of the 303rd BG(H) B-17s became lost and crashed into a mountain southeast of Edinburgh, Scotland. After the mission was recalled, the Fortresses broke formation on the return route and were ordered to land separately at various bases to avoid mid-air collisions. The pilot of B-17G #44-6504 360BS, 2Lt. George A. **Kyle**, Jr., executed a 180E turn back toward England and, at the same time, began his descent.

On several occasions he requested headings, only to discover that they were coming from German transmitters. Twice he found himself heading toward France. He descended to 3,000 feet, attempted to find a hole in the clouds, and retained his bombs, not knowing where they might drop. At 1315 hours, the west hill of the Cheviot—at 2,600 feet one of the highest points in England—suddenly loomed out of the snow. His B-17 struck the mountainside and skidded across a bog, with the peat absorbing some of the impact. F/O Fred **Holcombe, Jr.**, Navigator and Sgt. Frank R. **Turner**, Togglier, were instantly killed.

Fires erupted from the ruptured hydraulic and fuel lines, but the RDX bombs did not explode. Lt. **Kyle** was pulled from the aircraft by his co-pilot, F/O James H. **Hardy**. The cockpit crewmen, **Kyle**, with a broken jaw, **Hardy** and Sgt. Ernest G. **Schieferstein**, the engineer, wandered down the hill, found a farm house, and were taken to an RAF first aid station near Berwick.



John Dagg and Sheila

The four men in the back of the aircraft all suffered minor injuries. Sgt. Joel A. **Berly**, radio operator, tried to put out the bomb bay fire, but his foot became entangled in the plywood floor and a mass of peat. Waist gunner, Sgt William R. **Kaufmann**, who had been knocked unconscious during the crash, regained consciousness in time to pull Sgt. **Berly** free and to assist Sgt. George P. **Smith**, ball turret gunner, from the plane. The three men found tail gunner, Sgt Howard F. **Delaney** wandering around in deep snow, bleeding from a severe head wound. They left the aircraft and found shelter in a ditch 100 yards away. After several hours, Sgt. **Smith** felt a dog licking his face. The dog's barking brought two shepherds, John **Dagg** and Frank **Moscrop**, to the ditch. They had been searching in the storm with **Dragg's** collie, Sheila, for survivors. Sheila led the group through the blizzard to **Dagg's** cottage. The B-17 blew up with a window-shattering explosion just as they reached the

cottage. **Dagg's** daughter ran two miles through the storm to summon help by telephone. Later that night the four sergeants were taken to the same RAF hospital that treated the other crewmen.



GEORGE A. KYLE CREW - 360th BS

(crew assigned 360BS: 25 Nov 1944 - photo: 28 Nov 1944)

(Back L-R) F/O Fred Holcombe (N), F/O James H. Hardy (CP), 2Lt George A. Kyle (P),
Sgt Ernest G. Schieferstein (E) - (Front L-R) Sgt Howard F. Delaney (TG),
Sgt Frank R. Turner (Tog), Sgt William R. Kaufmann (WG),
Sgt George P. Smith (BT), Sgt Joel A. Berly, Jr. (R)

Sequel:

2Lt. George A. **Kyle**, Jr., pilot was invalided back to the U.S. in April, 1945. F/O James H. **Hardy**, co-pilot returned to flying and completed 30 missions. He was awarded the Soldier's Medal for rescuing Lt. **Kyle**.

F/O Fred **Holcombe, Jr.**, navigator and Sgt. Frank R. **Turner**, togglier, were buried at the American Cemetery at Cambridge, England. In 1946 Sgt. **Turner's** mother wrote to the shepherd, John **Dagg**, and thanked him for his efforts. She asked that if the collie Sheila had puppies, she would like to buy one. A few months later the RAF flew Sheila's first puppy, named Tibbie, to South Carolina. Tibbie lived for 11 years as the adopted town pet of Columbia, SC.

Sgt. **Schieferstein, Berly, Kaufmann** and **Delaney** returned to flying status and flew another 10 or 11 missions. Sgt **Kaufmann** was awarded the Soldier's Medal for his rescue of Sgt. **Berly**.

Sgt. George P. **Smith**, ball turret gunner, collapsed on a train platform in London with spinal meningitis while on a rest leave. At the 150th Station Hospital, he was pronounced dead and was taken to the morgue. While awaiting autopsy, Maj. **Hill**, a doctor, noticed that Smith's dog tags indicated that he was from Louisville, Kentucky, Maj. **Hill's** home town. The doctor decided to listen for Smith's heart beat once more, detected a faint heart beat, and revived him.

John **Dagg** and Frank **Moscrop**, the shepherds, were awarded the British Empire Medal in June 1945, in ceremonies on the Cheviot. This was **Dagg's** second medal for rescue efforts during the war.

Sheila, the collie, was awarded the Dickin Medal for animal heroism, the first civilian dog to be awarded this medal.



*The propeller memorial on Braydon Crag in the 1970s.
Sadly it no longer there*

Summer 1967 — Members of the St. Michael's Church Choir Club, Alnwick, England, unearthed portions of aircraft #44-6504 on the Cheviot's mountainside where it crashed, and found two bombardier microswitches. The switches were sent to the Honeywell Microswitch Division, Freeport, Illinois, where tests revealed that one of the switches was still in working order. The boys in Alnwick, called "The Reivers," an ancient term for border raiders, embarked on the arduous task of building a memorial. One propeller freed from the wreckage was planted in concrete pointing toward the grave of the buried bomber. A memorial plaque was installed that reads: "Erected by the St. Michael's Church Choir Club, The Reivers, to the men of the U.S.A.A.F. who fought for our freedom, 1941-1945."

June, 1968 — Sgt. **Turner's** son, Roderick **Turner Merritt**, 23, of New York, the seven crew survivors, high ranking military guests, including the retired Generals **Spaatz** and **Eaker** and Air Vice Marshall David **Crowley-Milking**, RAF Air Attache in Washington, D.C., and a Honeywell vice president made a 3,500-mile impulse journey to England to participate in the dedication of the memorial. They took part in the ceremony by slipping a blue and yellow drape from the memorial. The vicar of St. Michael's Church, the choir boys, and others, also participated in the memorial ceremony high atop the mountain. It was climaxed by a flyover of four US F-100 fighters and the sounding of "The Last Post" by a bare-headed Reiver bugler.



*Researcher Jim Corbett with an engine nacelle from the B-17.
This is the largest remaining piece at the crash site.*

The mountainside plaque was vandalized and no longer exists. Large aircraft parts remain at the crash site. On 26 December 1994, on the fiftieth anniversary of the crash, two F-15 Jets from the 48th Fighter Wing at RAF Lakenheath made a 1315 hours flyover at the crash site, the exact hour of the crash. The flyover was viewed by a group of citizens from Wooler, who hiked to the crash site. Pupils from the Glendale Middle School in Wooler lined up on a former airfield to form the figure "50" that was seen by the flyover pilots. A new monument, dedicated to all airmen who lost their lives on the Cheviot Hills, was dedicated on 19 May 1995 at the Sutherland Hall entrance to College Valley. A display of the crashes was placed in the Wooler Library. The ceremony was attended by crash survivors George **Kyle** and Joe **Berly** and Frank **Moscrop**, one of the rescue shepherds.