

Air Ministry News Service

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A MANCHESTER SHOOTS DOWN TWO HEINKEL FIGHTERS

The pilot of a Manchester bomber which was intercepted by two Heinkel 113 fighters during the attack on the German warships on February 12 found himself flying at two thousand feet in thick cloud over the reported position of the battle cruisers. The pilot decided to break cloud and began to dive.

At six hundred feet above the sea he came out of the cloud and saw either the Scharnhorst or Gneisenau and a destroyer a little to the north of him.

As he began to turn away to make his bombing run up he heard his rear gunner yell "fighters". Two Heinkel 113s were on the tail of the Manchester. The first one to attack received a burst at close range from the Manchester four-gun power-operated turret, but at the same moment the rear-gunner was knocked out by a bullet in the chest.

The fighter swept by under the Manchester but not before the front gunner of the Manchester had got in a long burst. The Heinkel dived steeply down to the sea with smoke and flames pouring from it.

Almost immediately a second fighter appeared astern. With the gunner wounded the Manchester's rear turret was temporarily out of action, but the gunner manning the dorsal turret got in an effective burst. He saw the Heinkel go down in smoke. The Manchester was badly shot up in the tail and the pilot made for cloud, reaching it just before a third Heinkel could attack.

After the Manchester had dropped its bombs, course was set for home. On the way back the rear gunner was brought out of his turret and his wounds dressed on the rest couch in the middle of the bomber. His place was taken by another member of the crew who found that the rear turret still worked.

The Manchester got home safely and the crew felt that their bombers had been a match for Germany's fighters.

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