

THREE MEN PILOT A DAMAGED LANCASTER.

For three hundred miles over the north sea the Pilot and Flight Engineer of a Lancaster kept their badly-damaged aircraft on an even keel by grimly holding on to the control column while the bomb aimer jammed the starboard rudder bar with a metal bar.

The Lancaster, which was out on a minelaying sortie, was attacked by a night fighter just after leaving the Danish coast. The fighter came in from dead astern and raked the Lancaster from nose to tail, wounding both the rear and mid-upper gunners.

"We heard the rear-gunner cry out", the pilot said, "and the wireless operator went to see what had happened. On the way he found that the mid-upper gunner had been wounded and was lying on the floor of the aircraft. His seat had been shot away from under him. When the wireless operator got to the rear turret he found that the doors were jammed and he had to break them down with an axe. Then with the help of the bomb aimer, he pulled the gunner out of the turret. They wrapped the two gunners in blankets and gave them orange juice and some morphia.

"Meanwhile I was trying to get the aircraft under control. When the fighter hit us the Lancaster went into a flat spin. The port aileron had been shot away and we dived down nearly 9,000 ft before I could get the Lancaster under control. The Flight Engineer then came to my help, and by heaving on to the control column together we managed to right the aircraft. It was pretty exhausting work and we took it in turns to hang on to it. The Flight Engineer had to keep a check on the petrol gauges, as two of the tanks had been holed, and he was afraid that we might be running short of petrol.

"We found that we also had to keep the starboard rudder pushed hard forward. It was too much of a strain for me to hold it, so the bomb-aimer pushed it forward with a bar against a support and held it there".

"Despite all the damage the pilot made a perfect landing.

"When the aircraft was inspected it was found that both turrets had been riddled with bullets, the tail wheel punctured, two petrol tanks holed, the wireless aerial shot away, the fuselage damaged, and the port aileron shot away.
