

A MOST INTERESTING AND RARELY SEEN WW2 1944 D.F.M. AWARDED TO AN R.A.F. SPECIAL OPERATOR WHO COMPLETED 36 SORTIES WITH 192 SPECIAL DUTIES SQUADRON OPERATING SPECIALLY MODIFIED WELLINGTON'S, HALIFAX'S AND MOSQUITO'S, TASKED WITH IDENTIFYING AND DISRUPTING GERMAN RADAR PATTERNS AND WAVELENGTHS OVER ENEMY TERRITORY



DISTINGUISHED FLYING MEDAL, GVI, '1382720 SGT. R. H. LOCK. R.A.F.', 1939-45 STAR, WAR MEDAL, IN CASE

D.F.M. *London Gazette* 15 February 1945. The original recommendation made on 20 December 1943:

"This N.C.O. has carried out thirty sorties, twenty two of these as a Special Operator, and has performed every one of them with outstanding skill and keenness.

Lock has proved himself to be an untiring worker in the air, and has displayed a remarkable standard of concentration and complete disregard for his personal safety in the face of danger and difficulties, qualities which are essential for this most difficult hand hilly skilled task, which is peculiar to the Squadron, and upon the results obtained depends the whole success or failure of the Unit.

As a Special Operator he has not had a crew of his own and carries out his operations with continually changing crews, but this added disadvantage has in no way distracted from Lock's efficiency or morale which have always been of the highest order.

V. Willis, Wing Commander, Commanding 192 Squadron"

Remarks by Air Officer Commanding 100 Group:

“The work of a Special Operator, even when performed in a laboratory, calls for the application of skill and assiduity of a high order. When this work is performed in an aircraft over enemy territory, usually without escort, it calls also for courage and powers of concentration of the highest order. The fact that this Operator has been so successful under these latter conditions speaks well for his valour and disregard of danger in the face of the enemy. I agree he is deserving of the D.F.M.”

Lock's 30 sorties are listed, all listed as 'Special Duty' all in Wellington X's and Halifax II and V's

- 1- 23/6/43 – French Coast
- 2- 27/6/43 – French Coast
- 3- 30/6/43 – Bay of Biscay
- 4 - 6/7/43 – Bay of Biscay
- 5 – 9/7/43 – Bay of Biscay
- 6- 12/7/43 – Bay of Biscay
- 7 – 24/7/43 – Heligoland Bight
- 8 – 27/7/43 – Hamburg
- 9 – 11/8/43 – Bay of Biscay
- 10 – 15/8/43 – Bay of Biscay
- 11 – 18/8/43 – Bay of Biscay
- 12 – 5/9/43 – Bay of Biscay
- 13 – 8/9/43 – Bay of Biscay
- 14 – 14/9/43 – Arctic Sea
- 15 – 16/9/43 – Skagerrak & Norwegian Coast
- 16 – 24/9/43 – Dutch & Danish Coast
- 17 – 27/9/43 – Dutch Coast
- 18 – 1/10/43 – Dutch Coast
- 19 - 2/10/43 – Bay of Biscay
- 20 - 5/10/43 – Bay of Biscay
- 21 – 7/10/43 – Bay of Biscay
- 22 – 13/10/43 – Bay of Biscay
- 23 – 20/10/43 – Bay of Biscay
- 24 – 3/11/43 – Belgium Coast
- 25 – 4/11/43 – French Coast, Breast to Arachon
- 26 – 7/11/43 – Bay of Biscay
- 27 – 12/11/43 – Bay of Biscay
- 28 – 18/11/43 – Bay of Biscay
- 29 – 29/11/43 – Bay of Biscay
- 30 – 11/12/43 – Bay of Biscay

Operational logs for the period (digital copies with research), interestingly do note the sorties to the Arctic Sea, Skagerrak & Norwegian Coast on 14 and 16 September 1943. For these sorties it appears lock was in one of 3 Wellington's detached to Lossiemouth to carry out this work.

Lock completed a further 6 sorties with 192 Squadron before being transferred to 84 Operational Training Unit (OTU) on 31 January 1944:

- 31 - 5/12/43 – Bay of Biscay
- 32 – 29/12/43 – Dutch & Danish Coast
- 33 – 30/12/43 – Western Coast of France
- 34 – 2/1/44 – 2 x flight off Dutch Coast
- 35 – 4/1/44 – Western Coast of France



Flight Lieutenant Robert Harold Lock, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, was born in 1917 at Bounds Green and was a process engraver by trade before enlisting in 1940. Initially serving as a Wireless Operator-Air Gunner, he went on to train in the highly secretive role of a Special Operator, serving with distinction with 192 Special Duties Squadron between June 1943 and January 1944. Initially serving with the rank of Sergeant, he was Commissioned Pilot Officer (Prob) on 16 October 1943, service number 162603. This is interesting because his D.F.M. recommendation has him as a Sergeant and Operational Logs list him as Sergeant until his sortie of 29 December 1943 (and onwards) when he is listed as 'Pilot Officer Special Operator'. A check of operational logs for 192 Squadron post December 1943 show most, if not all Special Operators with Commissioned or at least Warrant Officer ranks

As noted, he joined 84 OUT on 31 January 1944 and was advanced to Flying Officer (War Service) 16 April 1944 and finally Flight Lieutenant (War Service) 16 October 1945. It is not as yet known if he served operationally with any squadron after leaving 84 OUT but given the highly skilled nature of his work as a Special Operator and the small numbers of those qualified, it is very likely. Air Force List of April 1945 lists Lock as Flying Officer, General Duties Branch (Air Gunners and Wireless Operators (Air)) and if he was later serving operationally, it would almost certainly be with another Special Duties squadron.

192 SQUADRON AND SPECIAL OPERATORS

192 Squadron was always part of the 'Y' Service and, as such, its primary object was a complete and detailed analysis from the air of the enemy signals organisation:

<https://www.bletchleypark.org.uk/about-y-stations/the-y-services/raf-y-service/>

The airborne investigation of enemy signals was originally performed by 'B' Flight of 109 Squadron, which later became 1474 Flight, being formed at Gransden Lodge on the 10 July 1942, and this in turn, became 192 Squadron on 4 January 1943. With the formation of 192 Squadron, the aircraft establishment was 8+3 Wellington Mk.X, 1+1 Halifax Mk.II and 3+0 Mosquito Mk.IV. 192 Squadron had hardly been formed when it was called upon to undertake a very important and detailed investigation. These investigations consisted of exploratory flights over enemy territory to identify enemy radars and establish the wavelengths used. In February a detachment went to the Mediterranean for similar duties. By March the aircraft were flying along the Norwegian, French, Spanish, Dutch and Danish coasts and inland as far as Berlin. In May a detachment went to work with Coastal Command, operating over Biscay and the Western Approaches. By mid-summer over 50 sorties a month were being flown of which three aircraft were lost (all over Biscay). In December 1943, 192 Squadron became part of the Newley formed 100 (Bomber Support) Group, a dedicated Special Duties group:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._100_Group_RAF



A 192 SQUADRON WELLINGTON AND CREW

'The type of work undertaken by the Squadron necessitates a high standard of skill and efficiency on the part of the Special Operator. Prior to November 1943 the training of special operators was undertaken by T.R.E. but after this date, all training of special operators was done on and by the Squadron. A detailed course was given to the special operators involving 2 - 3 weeks of ground lectures and at the termination of these lectures, an examination was given. On passing the ground examination, additional air training was given to the candidate. Generally, the special operator had to have an average of from 6 - 9 air training flights before becoming operational.'

In addition to the medals in the group, Lock's medal entitlement would have additionally consisted of at least the Air Crew Europe and Atlantic Stars, likely the Defence medal and possibly other Stars if he later served in other squadrons



Condition NEF. Sold with digital research including LG's, DFM recommendation/sorties, 192 Squadron Operational Logs etc.

A most interesting and rarely seen D.F.M. to one of the small numbers of R.A.F. Special Operators