

Chapter 18

Our erks and Lancs

After writing off our first aircraft, UM-H² (Harry), in a storm, we were given UM-F² (serial LM113) who was already a veteran of many Ops. She proved to be a most dependable and manoeuvrable aircraft and by far the best Lanc we flew. She went faster than others on the same revs and boost, and even when an engine had to be changed, that made no difference to her. She was always more economical, and not just because of our engine tuning skills. All these aircraft must have been built much the same but, as with any car or mechanical unit, some ended up better or worse than the average. F² seemed to just have all her aerodynamics just right.



One night the aircraft taking off ahead of us slewed when a tyre burst just over halfway down the runway. Luckily F² had already started to lift and Tom had been holding her down. We took off and cleared the other craft with plenty of room to spare. Had we been in a different aircraft I doubt we would have made it, as most required much more take-off distance than F².

When we were first allocated F², she had a sparsely dressed lady painted on her. I am not sure what she was called before, maybe it

was Freda, as new crews would often assign their own new names to go with the call sign. I believe Tom chose the name Friga (pronounced Freega) who was a Scandinavian goddess, the wife of Odin.

A couple of WAAFs jokingly supposed we would much rather have a nude reclining, to which we heartily agreed. They offered to paint a new lady on for us and did a beautiful job. They teased us that they had taken turns between modelling and painting but refused our offers to hold the paints for them if they were to do another one! They added the words “Friga of the Fighting Sixes”.

Much later I heard that the crew following us were told by the CO to remove the naked lady from F², which they did. The artwork reverted to a sparsely clad lady, standing, but they had a sense of humour. They changed the name from “Friga” to “Frigger”, keeping a sexual connotation even though she had her clothes on!



*LM113 UM-F² before we had her. She had done 56 sorties at that time.
The pilot, third from left, is John Oram with whom I flew one Op*

We were on a cross-country training flight one day when a Flying Fortress came close alongside us and indicated he wanted a race. Tom opened up our Lanc and we moved steadily ahead of him. After about five minutes Tom throttled back so the B17 could come alongside again and to our surprise the pilot gave us a V for victory sign and