



## Bomber Command Fact Sheet

- Bomber Command was formed in 1936, as part of the Royal Air Force.
- From 1940 it had an attacking role, targeting German industry and later- civilian populations in cities such as Dresden, Berlin and Cologne.
- This was known as a policy of 'De-housing', as it was thought that destroying homes and houses would lower the morale of the German people and help bring about the end of the war.
- Arthur Harris became Commander-in-Chief of Bomber Command in 1942. He was in charge of the bombing campaigns against German civilians, which leaves him as a controversial figure in military history, despite the decision having been a political one.
- Although this strategic bombing of cities helped to end the war, it remains controversial as it caused the deaths of an estimated 600,000 German civilians and over 55,000 British, Commonwealth and Allied airmen.
- A Bomber Command Aircrew worked as a team, all had their individual roles but were reliant on each other to make sure the mission ran as smoothly as possible. In a Lancaster Bomber there was a crew of seven.
  - The Pilot- he flies the aircraft
  - The Navigator- he is responsible for directing the pilot to the right location, as well as getting them back home again
  - The Wireless Operator- he sends and receives messages to and from the base.
  - The Bomb Aimer- He takes control of the plane during the bombing run, directing the pilot until the bombs had been released the bombing photograph was taken.
  - The Flight Engineer- he helps the pilot with take-off and landing, as well as maintaining the planes systems.
  - The Gunners- The gunners stay in their turrets for the whole flight, they warn the pilot of enemy planes approaching and return fire when needed.
- Operational flying was dangerous, and chances of survival varied widely. During the war 44% of aircrew were killed on operations, 12% were killed or wounded in non-operational accidents and 13% became prisoners of war.
- All aircrew were volunteers.
- Women were not allowed to be part of a Bomber Crew. However, they contributed to the war effort in different ways... For example, Women in the Women's Auxiliary Airforce packed parachutes for the crews, as well as working as drivers, code breakers and wireless operators.