

Brought down by “Friendly Fire”

My Great Uncle Angus’ story of a Lancaster Bomber lucky escape and prisoner of war survival, is a tale of courage, grit and sheer determination.

My amazing WW2 family story is all about my Great Uncle Angus Galloway, who flew with the RAF Bomber Command (RAF Royal Air Force) in 1943.

My war veteran Great Uncle Angus, who is now 92, flew in one of the famous Lancaster Bomber planes. The Lancaster Bombers had 7 crew members and here is a picture of a typical crew standing beneath their plane.



Typical 7-man Lancaster Bomber crew

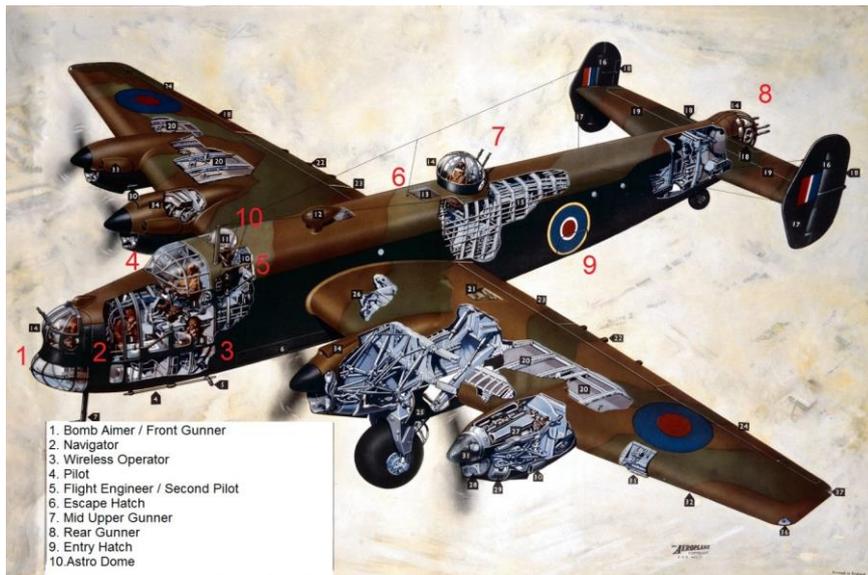
After they received training (Uncle Angus trained in Canada), all young trainees were put into a huge hangar together and left alone to sort themselves out into 7-man crews. Raids in the Lancaster Bombers were very intense and could last up to 10 hours, so I think it is just as well that they were allowed to choose who they wanted to team up with!

Each crew had a:

- Pilot
- Flight engineer
- Navigator
- Wireless operator
- 2 gunners
- Bomb aimer

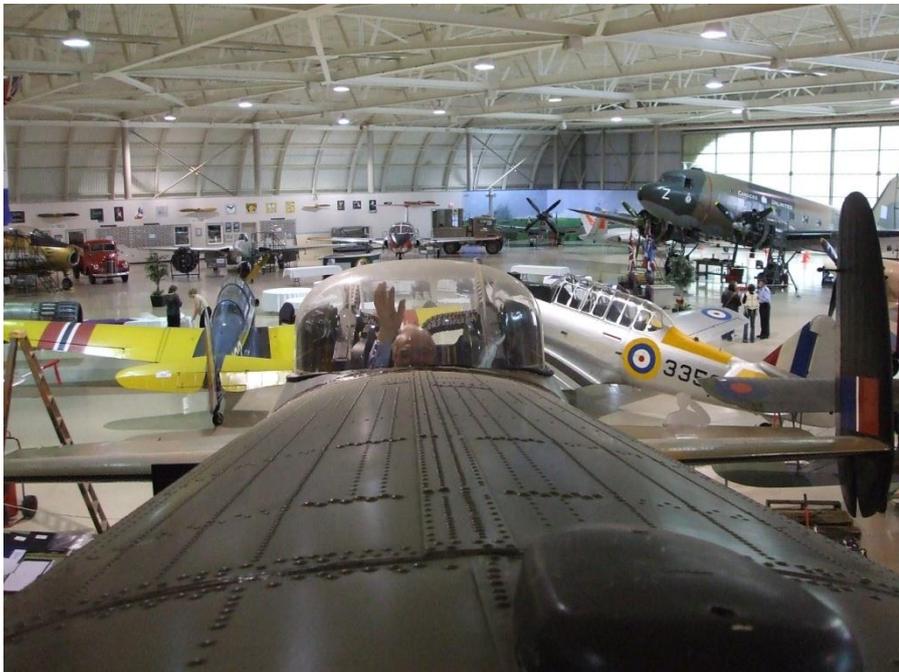
Uncle Angus was a bomb aimer, whose job it was to align bombs and help the pilot steer left or right. When the aircraft was above target, he pressed a button to release the bomb load. Bomb aimers would also double as front gunners.

This picture shows where each of the crew members was positioned in the aircraft.



A detailed drawing of a Lancaster Bomber, the RAF's World War II pride and joy

Three years ago the National Lottery gave lottery funds to war veterans to go on a trip down memory lane and return to their Lancaster training camps. Uncle Angus flew out to Canada, which is where these photos were taken, to revisit his training centre. It was a very moving time for him to revisit the aircraft.



Back on board the Lancaster Bomber

As you can see, space was very limited and the cramped conditions were not at all comfortable for the crew.



Uncle Angus doubling as front gunner



The Bomb Aimer's "spacious" quarters

The bomb aimer would be in a seated position when operating the front gun turret, but lying down when directing the pilot on to the aiming point prior to releasing the bomb load. Here is my Great Uncle Angus reliving his Lancaster Bomber interior:



Remembering that everything was a bit too cosy for comfort

For the rear gunner, things were even worse. They were known as the crew's "Tail End Charlie" and would not see any other crew member until the aircraft returned to base.

Towards the end of the war, the RAF Bomber Command carried out raids on strategic German towns. During these raids the planes flew very close together in tight formation. In August 1944, Uncle Angus took part in a daylight raid over the north of Paris. Unfortunately for him, a fellow RAF plane dropped its load on to his plane, which is why Uncle Angus entitled his story as *Brought down by "Friendly Fire"*. The entire crew evacuated the aircraft by bailing out by parachute before landing in Normandy. Uncle Angus was immediately picked up by the Germans and taken prisoner.

Six months later, still being held prisoner in the Stalag Luft 7 prisoner of war camp, Uncle Angus was forced to leave the camp by the Germans because the Russian army was due to arrive and free all prisoners. He embarked on a forced march which was 240 km long.

The walk was hell; hardly any food was given out, there was virtually no medical support and, despite it being the middle of winter, the prisoners hardly had any clothes or blankets to keep warm. The forced march was so horrendous, that it was pure joy when they finally reached their new prison camp destination. Uncle Angus miraculously survived! You would never know, looking at these photos that he is over 90 years old because he is made of such strong stuff. I believe that this strength helped him hold out during that awful winter.

We regularly visit Uncle Angus in Edinburgh and you could not hope to meet a more down-to-earth, modest war hero. I feel very privileged to have him as a Great Uncle.



Great Uncle Angus beaming with Lancaster Bomber pride

My mum's cousin, Uncle Angus' daughter, said that he is "secretly" proud to know I am retelling his tale. I am extremely proud to do so. His pride definitely shines through in this final Lancaster Bomber photograph.