

Explanation of some of the maps used by the 8th Air Force navigators during WW 2 in Europe.

+Pennine Chair maps (a series of maps that covered England. We did not use them after we arrived at Valley Wales. They were issued to us at Iceland and we were to go down to the Irish Sea and then go to Valley, Wales. We left Iceland after a break in the weather and soon were over a heavy cloud formation. After we got down to what I assumed was land I asked the pilot to let down through the clouds and see what was down there. We broke out over Bangor harbor that was filled with a convoy gathering to cross the North Atlantic. The war ships were all flashing the code of the day. Our Aldis lamp was under some of our gear and I told the pilot to go back up into the clouds, quick. We eventually arrived at the Valley Air field and landed. We were told, get your gear out the plane, it is no longer yours.

Middlesbrough-Den Halder.

These durable maps were used for finding our way around England. They stood up to a lot of writing and erasing. There were a number of Gee navigation systems made up of master stations that would send out a signal and slave stations would trip and send out a signal.

The result was two lines of green across a cathode ray tube. When you could make the blips stop moving you would lock it in and transfer the numbers to the map. That was your position when you locked it in. The system was very accurate over England and on the west coast of the continent. As you got farther east it became harder to use. We even used it for bombing near the coast. Lead crews had to take up the ship that they were going to use the next day. We would use the time to practice using the Gee box to find our base and the two large bases near the channel as if we were in heavy fog. We had a system called Fido at our base made up of lines of smudge pots along the run ways that could be ignited and burn off the fog along the run way. Our problem was to get close enough to see that line of pots.

Strasbourg, Berlin, Straight of Dover.

I heard that when the war started the navigators had to use National Geographic maps to find their course. I don't know if that was true or not. When I got there they had excellent maps. The dark green shapes on the maps are "forests". In that area they apparently down cut down the trees and plant crops. The shapes were so distinctive that we could navigate by them. The roads, streams, and villages were also very accurate. As to shape and location.