

863rd CHEMICAL COMPANY

303rd BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
MOLESWORTH, ENGLAND
1942-1945

As best we can tell, the 863rd Chemical Company was officially in business in the fall of 1942, as that is the earliest date of anyone being assigned to the 863rd. We have never found a roster listing the officers and men that were assigned to the 863rd Chemical Company. All we have found is the names of two officers and 3 three enlisted men that served with this company. We know that there were many more men that helped with this vital function, but we are not sure how many were actually assigned to the 863rd, and how many were performing these duties, but were assigned to the bomb squadrons.

For an organization that was designed to carry on a chemical war defense, if such warfare developed, the 863rd Chemical Company strayed far from this original goal. As there was no such immediate prospects of a gas attack, the men of the company were split up among the four bomb squadrons, and assigned the task of handling and loading incendiary bombs and sky markers on the B-17 for their missions over Nazi Germany.

Members of the 863rd Chemical Company teamed with the other "grunt and groan" artists who muscled the high explosives into the B-17 bomb bays. The Chemical boys helped load the bombers with every type of incendiary bomb the Army Air Forces used, including some that were designed and manufactured for use by the Royal British Air Forces.

Most of the work was done at night, in all kinds of weather, but the men under the command of 1Lt **Chester B. Hoven** and 1Lt **Cosby D. Thomas** were always on hand to help the bombers be fully loaded with their bombs. These efforts bore fruit many times, blossoming out in huge fires at Hamburg, Berlin, Merseburg and some of the other prize German targets.

The bombs loaded by the 863rd Chemical Company played a large part in the destruction of many German factories and, according to the boys who did the loading, were very well pleased with the contribution that they played in bringing Germany to its knees.

863rd Chemical Company Personnel

1Lt Chester B. Hoven	01036199	Chemical & Explosives Officer (7311)
1Lt Cosby D. Thomas	(Unknown)	Chemical & Explosives Officer (7311)
(Commanding Officer in late 1944)		
S/Sgt James W. Kintner	15087548	Chemical Technician (870)
Pfc Marshall D. Baker	32265572	Chemical Gas Handler (786)
Pvt George Blass	32344749	Chemical Equipment Armorer (911)