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# One man's war – explored by his son in moving pictures

**By Gordon Rayner**  
Chief Reporter

THE SON of a Bomber Command veteran has paid a unique tribute to his father's war service by visiting all 30 of the targets his aircraft bombed and painting them for an exhibition.

Roger Kirby, whose father Rip died in 1990, decided to make the pilgrimage to France and Germany to gain a better understanding of his experiences and capture the reality of war and its aftermath for all those affected by it.

The paintings range from a tranquil forest that was once a V1 missile launching site to a war memorial at St Lo.

Mr Kirby, whose exhibition, *30 Missions*, has already been shown in America, now hopes to exhibit the paintings in Britain to complement the *Telegraph's* Forgotten Heroes appeal.

More than 55,000 men were killed flying with Bomber Command during the war, and the appeal for a long-overdue memorial to them has so far raised more than £800,000 towards a target of £2 million.

Rip Kirby flew a full tour of 30 operations as a navigator in a No. 550 Squadron Lancaster between June 2, 1944 and August 10, 1944, mostly over occupied France, to destroy German coastal positions before and after the D-Day landings.

His son said: "My mother found my father's RAF logbook in her attic in 2005, and it made me start thinking about what my father went through during the war, partly because the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were on the news almost every day.

"My father never really talked about his experiences during the war, apart from on one occasion when he talked about fear, about confronting



Artist Roger Kirby painted places that his father, a navigator, bombed during the war, in an effort to understand his experiences

the horrible deaths of fellow crewmen and of the awful reality of knowing that children, mothers and old people were the victims of his actions.

"I decided to visit France and Germany to see the places my father had been, and see them from the ground, which was a very different angle from the way he saw them."

The resulting paintings include a beech forest at Forêt de Croc in Normandy, formerly a V1 site, a wartime airstrip at Flers, Normandy, which is now a cornfield, and an oil-storage facility at Pauillac on the Atlantic coast, which is now a vineyard.

Professional artist Mr Kirby, 55, who was born in Britain but now lives in Newport, Rhode Island, added: "I didn't set out to make a polemic, I just felt I might be able to give a voice to the emotions he didn't feel he could talk about.

"It was very much a tribute to my father and to all the men who flew with Bomber Command."