

Kiel Bugt

Kiel Bugt - målet for LL 963's mineudlægning.



U-både under sløringsnet

U-bådshavnen i Kiel, 19. april 1944.



Kiel blev forsvaret med bl.a. Tysklands kraftigste flak-kanon, 12,8 cm.



Kiel 1945.

Kiel bombet 633 gange

Byen var krigsmarinens værksted

Kiel stod højt på De Allieredes liste over bombe-mål, fordi byen rummede en række nøgleindustrier for den tyske krigsmaskine, fire skibsværfter - *Krigsmarinewerft, F. Krupp Germaniawerft, Deutsche Werke, Walter og Co*, samt maskinfabrikkerne *von Prey, Leichtbau, Waldbeck* samt uddannelseskasernen *Eichhof*.

Kiel blev en af de mest bombede byer over-hovedet. RAF og USAAF foretog i alt 633 togter mod Kiel, der også var mål for det sidste allierede bombetogt over Tyskland, den 2. maj 1945.

Alene Germaniawerft byggede 130 ubåde fra 1935-45.

Kiel var derfor også forsvaret med et stort antal flak-kanoner, bl.a. den kraftigste af alle, 12,8 cm (*billedet i midten tv.*), der havde en maksimal række-vidde på 20,9 km (14,8) i højden. En granat vejede 26 kg. Derudover var Kiel beskyttet af et stort antal jagerfly.

De Allierede led da også meget store tab under bombeoffensiven mod Kiel. Med direktivet af 23. februar 1942 ændrede RAF strategi: I stedet for at gå efter specifikke mål, gik man nu over til tæppebom-bardementer af industribyerne for, som det hed - "at svække moralen hos den menige tysker, især industri-arbejderne".

Nederst tv. ses direktivets resultat i Kiel, 1945.

Den flyvende doktor

Robert "Doc" Henderson i krig mod angst og stress

Natten mellem den 30/31 marts 1944 led RAF Bomber Command det største tab under hele krigen.

Af de i alt 795 fly (572 Lancaster, 214 Halifax og 9 Mosquitos), der deltog i toget mod Nürnberg, blev 95 skudt ned - en tabsprocent på 11,9.

Udover de sårede i de tilbagevendende fly, skulle lægerne på Elsham Wolds tage sig af de besætningsmedlemmer, der var presset til deres yderste grænse af stress og angst. De hårdt sårede blev visiteret til det nærliggende hospital. De mindre skader klarede man selv på basens sygeafdeling.

Flight Lieutenant Robert "Doc" Henderson var en af lægerne på Elsham Wolds. Han gjorde tjeneste i Squadron 103 på Elsham Wolds fra 1942-45. Henderson var i midten af 20'erne, en distingveret udseende, ung læge, der var sit ansvar bevidst, men i øvrigt havde sin egen dagsorden.

De teoretiske bøger om stress var ham ikke nok. Han ville have et førstehåndskendskab og deltog - i strid med alle ordre - som menigt besætningsmedlem i 19 bombetogter over det besatte Europa.

Da chefen for Elsham Wolds, Group Captain Hugh Constantine fik kendskab til Hendersons uofficielle "studieture", affødte det en røffel - og en lodret ordre om ikke deltage i flere togter.

Hendersons journaler om besætningsmedlemmernes stress-påvirkning er aldrig blevet offentliggjort.

Besætningsmedlemmernes generelle fysiske og psykiske tilstand var Hendersons ansvar. Han foretog forsøg i dekompressionskammer for at afdække virkningerne af mangel på ilt. Det kunne føre til besynderlige reaktioner. En navigatør skulle i dekompressionskammeret fortage en simple sammenlægning af tal, men i stedet for at skrive på papiret, skrev han udregningen på sit bukseben.

Manglen på sollys var også et problem. Besætningerne sov om dagen og fløj om natten. For at modvirke manglen på sol og lys fik besætningsmedlemmerne regelmæssigt højfjeldssol, der ved bestråling af huden danner D-vitaminer.

Stress og angst var den naturlige følge af at flyve utallige togter i lav højde, i op til 6 timer, om natten, i en frysende kold kabine, mod svært bevæbnede mål og med udsigt til at lide samme skæbne som kammeraterne, der ikke vendte tilbage.

Mange besætningsmedlemmer kom til at lide af åndedrætsbesvær af at flyve i den tynde, kolde luft.

Det var årsag til de fleste indlæggelser på sygeafdelingen på basen. De mange tilfælde af ondt i maven var også en af de opgaver, der krævede konstant behandling.

Forud for hver operation blev besætningerne udstyret med vitaminpiller og opkvikkende koffein-tabletter.

Alle besætningsmedlemmer i Bomber Command var frivillige. Stress og angst afløste hurtigt den oprindelige entusiasme over at have meldt sig til tjenesten, men de fleste formåede tackle presset. Fællesskabet og sammenholdet i besætningerne indbyrdes samt en personlig tro var en afgørende faktor for at holde stress og angst på et niveau, der

ikke afstedkom handlingslammelse.

Med håbet om - "Well we will be OK, It will not happend not to us" - fortsatte de togterne. De bedste besætninger var de, hvor rang ikke spillede nogen rolle, og hvor opgaverne løstes i fællesskab, hvor vanskeligt det end kunne være.

Nogle kunne ikke stå for presset. De fleste af dem var meget unge, nogle kun drenge, der aldrig før havde været hjemme fra. De meldte sig frivilligt uden at have nogen anelse om, hvad luftkrig var. De blev sat i situationer, hvor de havde stort ansvar for sig selv og

andre. På Elsham Wolds blev kun 6 frivillige fra såvel Squadron 103 som 576 afskediget i perioden 1941-45 på grund af stresslammelse.

Det faktum, at besætningsmedlemmerne var i stand til at gennemføre alle planlagte togter, understreger, at moralen generelt var i orden.

Robert Henderson forlod RAF efter krigen og nedsatte sig som praktiserende læge.

En tidligere officer fra Squadron 103 husker ham på denne måde: - "Doc" Henderson var en mand af stor hengivenhed. De, der fløj, kendte ham som en dygtig og seriøs læge, der sagde "Til helvede med protokollen".



Flight Lieutenant Robert "Doc" Henderson (tv) sammen med Group Captain Hugh Constantine.

Troen med om bord

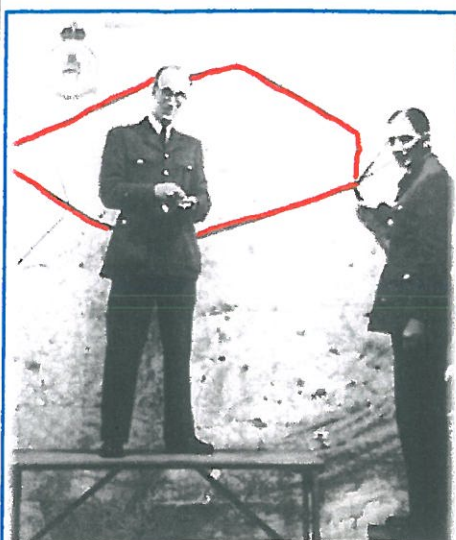
Den religiøse tro var også med i flyene - en trøst for mange besætningsmedlemmer. Squadron 103's motto: "Noli me Tangere", "Touch me Not" - "Rør mig ikke" var da også hentet fra biblen, Johs. Evangeliet, kap 20, vers 17: "Da Jesus møder Maria efter at være stået op fra graven, siger han: "Rør ikke ved mig".



Indblik

Agterskytte A.P. Moldt, Danmark

Danskeren Andreas P. Moldt var elev på skoleskibet "Danmark", der lå i Atlanten på vej til USA, da Danmark blev besat den 9. april 1940. Han afmønstrede i USA og



Briefing: Efterretningsofficererne har med den røde t råd markeret nattens togt.

meldte sig i 1943 som frivillig i RCAF - det canadiske luftvåben. Samme år overførtes han til England til 166 Sq. med hjemstedet "RAF Kirmington", en satellitflybase til Elsham Wolds". I 1944 udnævntes han til Pilot Officer og deltog som agterskytte i 30 togter i en Lancaster. Den 6. januar 1944 var han for første gang på togt over fjendtligt territorium.

De fleste af Moldts togter var led i forberedelserne til invasionen den 6. juni 1944 i Normandiet og efterfølgende støtte de landsatte allierede styrker.

Moldt beretter, at besætningerne først fik meddelelse om togtets art og mål en time før start. Det første, man

kikkede efter, når man kom ind i briefingrummet, var den røde tråd på kortet, som angav ruten for nattens togt. Men allerede inden briefing fik man ofte et tip fra jordpersonellet om, hvor langt togtet ville blive. Lidt benzin, kort togt, meget benzin, langt togt.

Der blev udleveret en "flugtpakke", der bl.a. indeholdt valuta i de lande, man skulle overflyve. Dog ikke tyske Reichmark, da man ikke regnede med, at man ville nå langt i Tyskland - selv med tyske penge.

Flugtpakken indeholdt derudover: Barbergrej, salve til ømme fødder, en gummipose med piller til at rense grøftevand, så det kunne drikkes, piller til at stille den værste sult, et kort trykt på tynd silke over Vesteuropa, et lille kompas - gemt enten i en blyant eller i en knap. I højre støvle var gemt en Wilkinson Commandodaggert.

Moldt gennemførte sin fulde "tour" på 30 togter. Efter krigen fløj han Catalina for det danske flyvevåben, men forlod flyvevåbnet efter 5 år og endte som skibsfører i ØK.

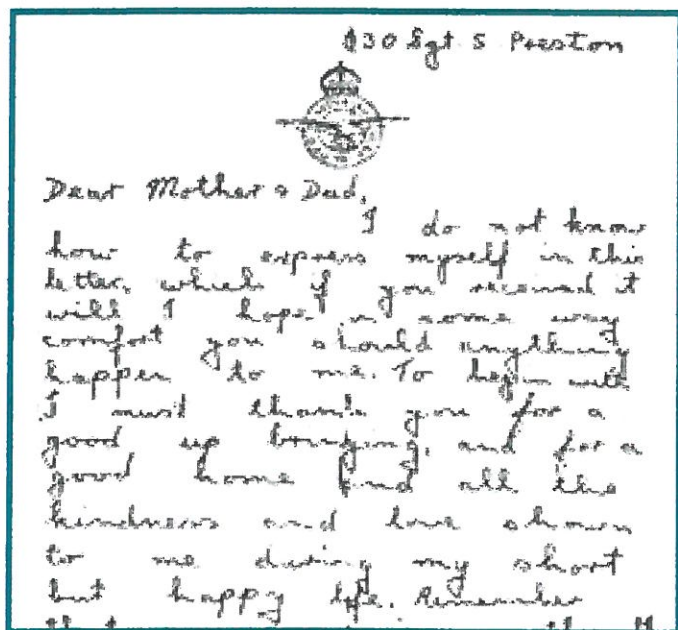


Andreas P. Moldts ID-kort:
Det var det eneste skriftlige, besætningsmedlemmerne måtte have med - og i givet fald oplyse til fjenden.

Brev til far og mor: Hvis - jeg ikke kommer hjem...

Den sidste hilsen: Alle RAF-flyvere skulle skrive et brev til deres forældre eller nærmeste pårørende, før de begyndte på deres "tour" - 30

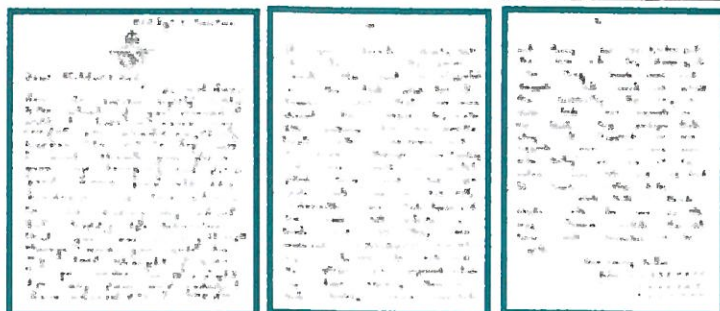
- 30 togter. Her et brev fra 19-årige sergent **Stephen Preston**. Brevet blev af RAF sendt efter, at de pårørende havde fået overrakt dødsbudskabet.



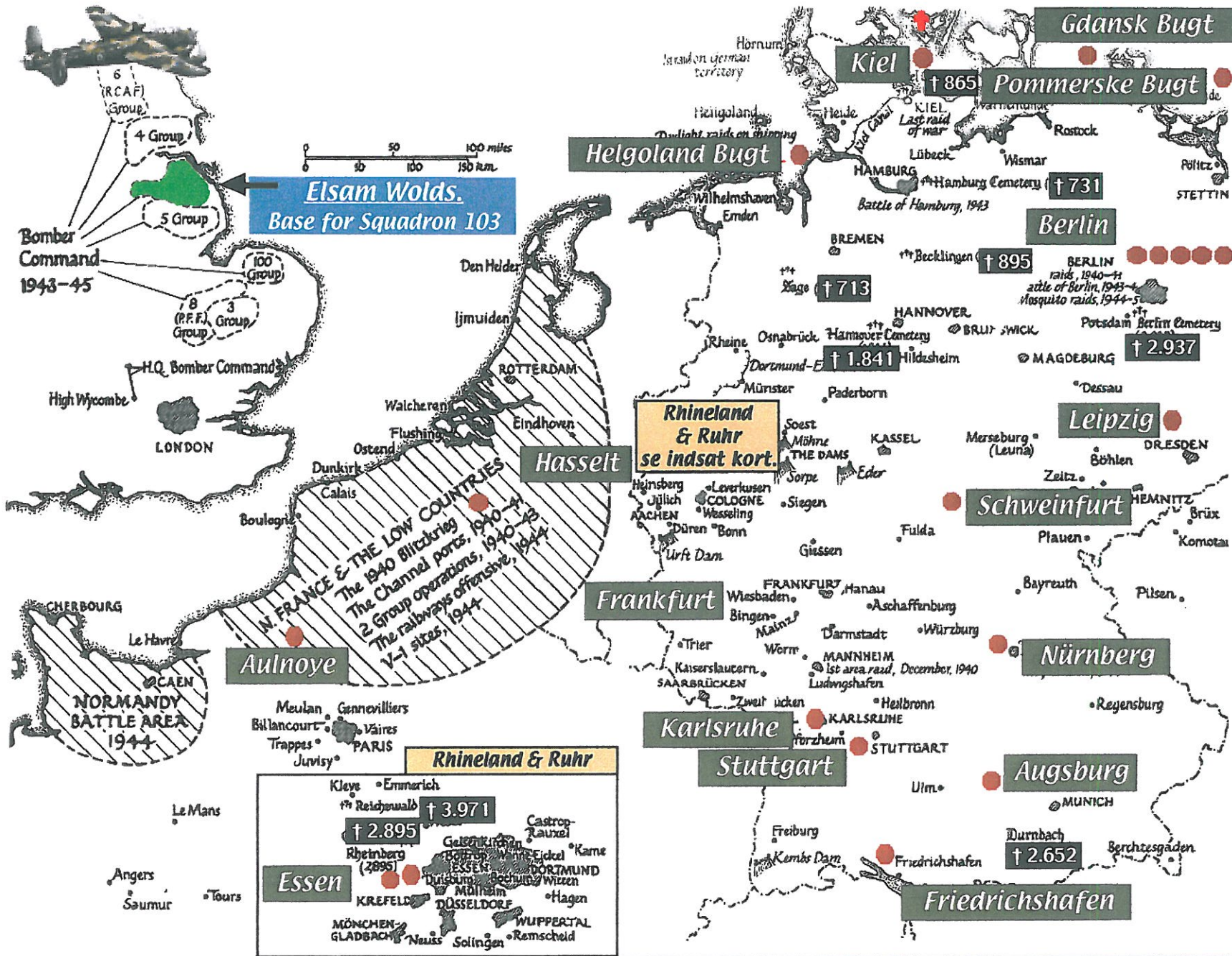
Brevets indledning:

30. september 1943.

Kære mor og far!
Jeg ved ikke, hvordan jeg skal udtrykke mig i dette brev. Men jeg håber, hvis I modtager det, at det vil være jer til trøst, hvis der skulle ske noget med mig...



RAF bombemål i Tyskland. Røde prikker: LL 963s togter. Sort: RAF-grave (med antal).



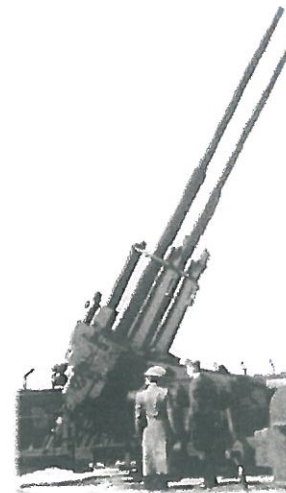
LL 963s
23 togter

Mitchell-besætningens 23 togter i LL 963 over det besatte Europa er her markeret med røde prikker. Korset øverst markerer det sidste, fatale togt over Danmark.



RAF-kirkegård i Durnbach ved München. 2.652 grave.

Flak 12,8 cm



Luftwaffes kraftigste 12,8 cm flak var opstillet omkring storbyer / industricentre - og frygtet af De Allierede Bombefly.

Mål syd for kortet: Frankrig: Cannes, Clermont-Ferrand, La Pallice, LeCreusot, Mondane, Montlucon, Poltiers, Royan, St.Médand-en-Jalles. Italien: Genoa, La Spezia, Milan, Turin.

1939-45

1000 mænd fra Royal Air Force basen Elsham Wolds blev dræbt



Eskadrille 103 blev dannet under Første Verdenskrig i Beaulieu i Hampshire under kommando af *major T. Maxwell-Scott*. Den var udstyret med DH9 enmotorede biplaner. I maj 1918 blev 103 forflyttet til Frankrig, og fløj resten af krigen rekognosceringsflyvninger og dagbombe-togter på Vestfronten.

Eskadrillen blev opløst efter krigen i marts 1919. Under indtryk af den tiltagende politiske usikkerhed i Europa i 1930'erne blev eskadrille 103 gendannet i 1936 på Andover i Hampshire som led i RAF's udbygning.

Under Kommando af eskadrillechef *D.H. Carey* blev eskadrillen udstyret med bombefly af typen Hawker Hind, et enmotoret biplan. Eskadrillen flyttede til Unsworth i Nordengland og fik i 1937 flyene udskiftet til det mere moderne bombefly Fairey Battle, et enmotoret monoplan.

Ved Anden Verdenskrigs udbrud i 1939 fløj eskadrille 103 til Frankrig som del af "*The Advanced Air Strike Force*" – den fremskudte luftangrebs styrke.

Vinteren 1939/40 var nogenlunde rolig på denne front, men det ændrede sig helt den 10. maj 1940, da de tyske styrker foretog et altomfattende angreb på Frankrig, Belgien og Holland. Med meget svære tab til følge kastede eskadrillen sig øjeblikkelig ind i en række desperate angreb mod en langt stærkere og mere erfaren fjende, der tillige havde bedre materiel. Efterhånden som situationen forværredes, og Frankrig var nær sammenbrud, blev det, der var tilbage af eskadrillen, trukket tilbage til Abingdon flypladsen i England i juni 1940.

I juli 1940 blev eskadrillen overført til Newton nær Nottingham og underlagt "*1 Group Bomber Command*" – første gruppe bombekommando.

I oktober 1940 fik 103 igen nye fly, denne gang Vickers Wellington, et to-motors bombefly - et særdeles effektivt og alsidigt fly.

Man startede operationer med det nye fly i december 1940, og i de følgende tre måneder blev der fløjet mange natangreb mod mål i Tyskland og i det besatte Europa.

I foråret og sommeren 1941 var mange af eskadrillens anstrengelser koncentreret om U-bådsbaserne langs den franske kyst og den tyske flådes store skibe i Brest.

Tyske mål blev igen angrebet med stor styrke vinteren 1941/42 igennem og i maj 1942.

Elsham Wolds var oprindeligt en af de flypladser hjemmeværnet – "*Home Defence*" benyttede i forsvaret af North Lincolnshire og Humber side mod angreb under Første Verdenskrig. Det havde været nemt for Zeppelinerne at finde og trænge ind over området mellem floderne Humber og Wash, og Lincolnshire fik sin del af bomberne, skønt kun få forårsagede nogen skade. De første eskadriller var hovedsageligt udstyrede med Avro 504 eller BE2, og flyvepladsens udrustning var primitiv. C Flight – afdelingen – af 33. eskadrille holdt til på flyvepladsen fra december 1916, hvor den benyttede FE2b-jagere til krigens slutning. I juni 1919 gik flyvepladsen tilbage til landbrug.

Behovet for flyvepladser til bombefly i 1939 førte til at mange tidligere flyvepladser blev undersøgt med

henblik på deres egnethed til formålet. Elsham Wolds blev udpeget som egnet til bombefly, og anlægsarbejdet gik i gang i 1940. En vigtig faktor i valget var jernbaneforbindelsen med en station i den nærliggende Barnetby.

Flyvepladsen blev bygget på det høje plateau umiddelbart nordøst for landsbyen Elsham og anlagt efter et mønster fra tidligt i krigen med en type "J" hangar på østside af flyvepladsen indkvartering, værksteder og administration grupperet bagved. Der blev efterhånden anlagt tre start- og landingsbaner med cementbelægning, hovedbanen lå i retning NV/SØ. Efterhånden som krigen skred frem, blev der bygget yderligere to store hangarer.

Det var en ofte kold, våd og blæsende flyveplads, og indkvarteringsfaciliteterne var noget primitive, så det var ikke et komfortabelt sted at være, specielt når vejret var koldt.

Elsham Wolds åbnede som flyveplads for svære bombefly tilhørende gruppe 1 af Bombe Kommandoen (*1 Group Bomber Command*) i juli 1941, og eskadrille 103 flyttede til sit nye hjem kort efter.

Gennem resten af krigen forblev eskadrillen på Elsham Wolds, hvorfra den fløj mange og mangeartede operationer over det besatte Europa. I 1943 dannedes eskadrille 576 på Elsham Wolds, og opererede herfra indtil november 1944, hvorefter den flyttede til Fiskerton. Den 1. april 1945 blev eskadrille 100 overflyttet til flyvepladsen.

Kort efter krigen blev eskadrille 103 opløst og i december 1945 flyttede eskadrille 100 til Scampton. Herefter var Elsham Wolds hjemsted for Nr. 21 HGCU fra Transport kommandoen, som flyttede derfra i november 1946.

Flyvepladsen lukkede i 1947. Det meste af området er vendt tilbage til landbrugsformål, dog er der en hangar tilbage, som huser en mindre industrivirksomhed. Hovedvej Syd fra Humber Bridge løber lige ret hen over midten af flyvepladsen.

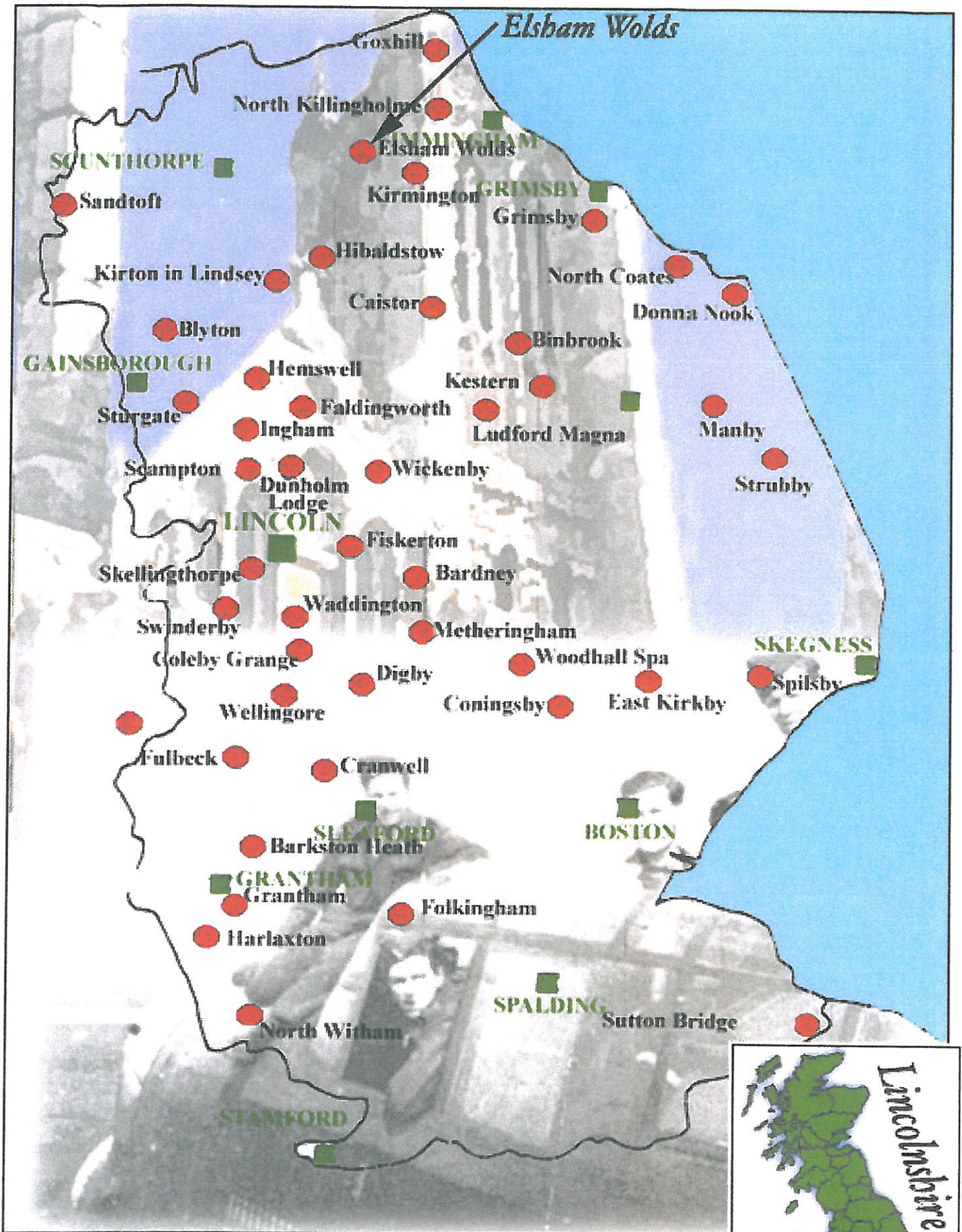
Der er blevet bygget et vandrensningsanlæg på pladsen, og under jorden findes et mindesmærke for de soldater fra eskadrille 103 og 576 som faldt i krigen. I indgangspartiet til vandrensningsanlægget er der ligeledes en hædersplade for begge eskadriller, foruden adskillige andre interessante ting.

Elsham Wolds åbnede i juli 1941 og lukkede i 1947. I 1943 blev den gjort til det 13. basehovedkvarter. Og den var den største flyveplads i 1. gruppe med op til 47 Lancastere i luften hver nat i slutningen af 1943.

Eskadrille 103 havde base på Elsham mellem 1941 og november 1945. Eskadrille 576 mellem november 1943 og oktober 1944, eskadrille 100 var der mellem april og december 1945. Under krigen blev 1.000 RAF mænd fra Elsham Wolds dræbt.

J-hangaren
2003.





Kort over flyvepladser i Lincolnshire 1940-45.
RAF Bomber Command havde ikke færre end 40 flyvepladser i Lincolnshire. Den danske indflydelse fra Vikingetiden fornægter sig ikke med bynavnene med endelserne: *-toft, -by, -holme, -torpe, -beck.*

RAF-bombercommand's tab: Ud af 125.000 blev 55.500 dræbt

Indblik

Kun de tyske ubådsbesætninger havde større tabs-pct.

Bortset fra det tyske ubådsvæsen led RAF-bombercommand forholdsmæssig det største tab under 2. verdenskrig.

- Der var i alt 125.000 besætningsmedlemmer i RAF-bombercommand.
- 47.268 blev dræbt i kamp.
- 8.195 blev dræbt under øvelse eller ved ulykker på flyvepladser.
- I alt dræbte: 55.500 (44,4 pct.), heraf over 1.000 alene fra LL 963's flybase, Elsham Wolds.
- 9.838 blev taget til fange, heraf mange kvæstede.
- 4.200 blev kvæstet i aktion, men vendte hjem med flyet.
- 4.203 blev kvæstet ved ulykker på flyvepladser.



Største tab • Af de 8.953 mistede fly, var de 4.171 Lancastere.

Af de i alt 125.000 RAF i bombercommand var det samlede tab - dræbte, sårede og tilfangetagne 73.731 (58,9 pct.).

1939-45 gennemførte RAF-bombercommand 387.416 togter, kastede 955.044 tons bomber og mistede 8.953 bombefly, heraf 4.171 Lancastere.



RAF-kirkegården Reichswald, nord for Essen med 3.971 kors - den største RAF-mindelund i Tyskland.

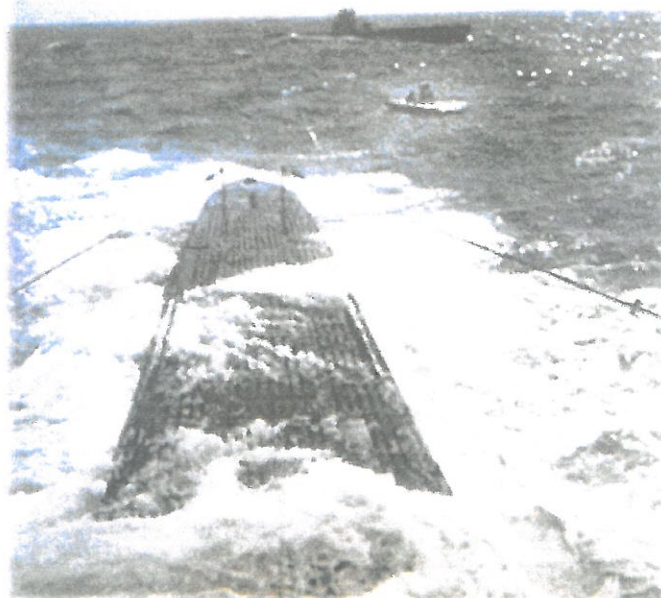
2. Verdenskrig: Tabene i menneskeliv

Nationalitet	Militære	Civile	Samlede tab
Englændere:	350.000	60.000	410.000
Franskmænd	250.000	360.000	610.000
Tyskere	4.000.000	3.000.000	7.000.000
Italienerne	330.000	85.000	415.000
Polakker	120.000	5.300.000	5.420.000
Russere	13.600.000	7.500.000	21.100.000
Øvr. europæere*	1.020.000	3.700.000	4.720.000
Amerikanere	250.000	-	250.000
Canadiere	42.000	-	42.000
Japanere	1.700.000	360.000	2.060.000
Kinesere	3.500.000	10.000.000	13.500.000
I alt	25.162.000	30.365.000	55.527.000

* Jugoslaver, tjekker, belgiere, hollændere, bulgarere, danskere, finner, grækere, luxembourgere, nordmænd, rumænere, ungarere og østrigere.

• Under de 12 års nazistyre fandt næsten 6 millioner jøder døden i de tyske koncentrationslejre, eller blev henrettet af de såkaldte "Einsatzgrupper" i Polen og Sovjetunionen.

• Tyskerne aflivede ca. 100.000 af sine egne borgere under det såkaldte "Eutanasi program", medlidenhedsdrabet på fysisk og psykisk handicappede.



Største tab • Af alle værn i 2. verdenskrig led det tyske ubådsvæsen det relativt største tab. I alt var 1.158 tyske ubåde i aktion. Tre fjerdedele - 785 ubåde blev sænket. Af omkring 39.000 ubådsfolk mistede 32.000 livet.

Logbog over Mitchell-besætningens togter 27/I - 16/5 1944

Lancaster LL 963-besætningen, der styrtede ved Avernakø 16. maj 1944, nåede at foretage 23 togter over det besatte Europa. Nedenstående er RAF's logbog over Mitchell-besætningens togter.

Der er ikke redigeret i logbogen. Alle optegnelser på de dage, LL 963 deltog, er medtaget - for at give et indtryk af den samlede aktivitet - af bombeoffensiven over Europa.

• 27/28 January 1944 BERLIN

515 Lancasters and 15 Mosquitoes. The German fighters were committed to action earlier than normal, some being sent out 75 miles over the North Sea from the Dutch coast. But the elaborate feints and diversions had some effect. Half of the German fighters were lured north by the Heligoland mining diversion and action in the main bomber stream was less intense than on recent nights. 33 Lancasters lost, 6.4 per cent of the heavy force.

The target was cloud-covered again and sky-marking had to be used. Bomber Command was not able to make any assessment of the raid except to state that the bombing appeared to have been spread well up and down wind. Local reports confirm that the bombing was spread over a wide area, although many bombs fell in the southern half of the city, less in the north, but 61 small towns and villages outside the city limits were also hit with 28 people being killed in those places. Details of houses destroyed in Berlin are not available but it is known that nearly 20,000 people were bombed out. 50 industrial premises were hit and several important war industries suffered serious damage. 567 people were killed, including 132 foreign workers.



Elsham Wolds-basen horte til 1. bombegruppe. Dens motto: "Swift to Attack"

• 28/29 January 1944 BERLIN

677 aircraft - 432 Lancasters, 241 Halifaxes, 4 Mosquitoes. Part of the German fighter force was drawn up by the early diversions and the bomber approach route over Northern Denmark proved too distant for some of the other German fighters. The German controller was, however, able to concentrate his fighters over the target and many aircraft were shot down there. 46 aircraft - 26 Halifaxes, 20 Lancasters - lost, 6.8 per cent of the force.

The cloud over Berlin was broken and some ground-marking was possible but the Bomber Command claim that this was the most concentrated attack of this period is not quite fully confirmed by German records. The western and southern districts were hit but so too were 77 places outside the city. The Berlin recording system was now showing an increasing deterioration. No overall figure for property damage was recorded; approximately 180,000 people were bombed out on this night. Although many industrial firms were again hit, the feature of this night is the unusually high proportion of administrative and public buildings appearing in the lists of buildings

hit: the new Chancellery, 4 theatres, the "French" cathedral, 6 hospitals, 5 embassies, the State Patent Office, etc. The report concludes with this entry: "The casualties are still not known but they are bound to be considerable. It is reported that a vast amount of wreckage must still be cleared; rescue workers are among the mountains of it."

Diversions AND SUPPORT OPERATIONS

Extensive operations were carried out in support of the Berlin raid. 80 Stirlings and Wellingtons flew to the Dutch coast and laid mines there, 21 Halifaxes did the same near Heligoland, both hoping to draw the German fighters up early. 9 aircraft flew R.C.M. sorties and 1 Mosquitoes flew Serrate patrols. 18 Mosquito-bomber aircraft dropped imitation "fighter flares", away from the main bomber routes to and from the target. 140 aircraft were thus engaged in various operations in support of the main raid. 1 Stirling minelayer lost.

Lancaster



Minor Operations: 9

Mosquitoes bombed a flying-bomb site at Herbouville, 8 Halifaxes flew Resistance operations sorties, 10 O.T.U. aircraft dropped leaflets over France. No aircraft lost. Total effort for the night: 697 sorties, 34 aircraft (4.9 per cent) lost.

bombed night-fighter airfields at Deelen, Leeuwarden and Venlo. 4 Mosquitoes carried out a diversionary raid to Hannover and 6 more Mosquitoes flew Serrate patrols at the same time as the main raid. 2 Stirling minelayers and 1 Serrate Mosquito were lost from these operations. 16 O.T.U. Wellingtons carried out leaflet flights to

Da krigen kom til Avernakø

France without loss.
Total effort for the night: 794 sorties,
49 aircraft (6.2 per cent) lost.

29/30 January 1944 Minor Operations

22 Mosquitoes - 12 to Duisburg and 10 to Herbouville
flying-bomb site - 6 O.T.U. sorties. No losses.

•30/31 January 1944 BERLIN

534 aircraft - 440 Lancasters, 82 Halifaxes, 12
Mosquitoes. There were no preliminary diversions on this
night and the attempt by the German
controllers to intercept the bomber
stream over the sea failed. The bombers
were, therefore, well on the way to
Berlin before meeting any fighters but
the Germans were then able to follow the
bomber stream until well into the return
flight. 33 aircraft - 32 Lancasters and 1
Halifax - lost, 6.2 per cent of the force.

The raid took place through complete
cloud cover but Bomber Command claimed
another concentrated attack. The local
report repeats a recent trend - heavy
damage in the city at the same time as
widespread bombing in the country areas
outside. 79 towns and villages reported
various numbers of bombs but most of
these fell in open country; 17 people were
killed and 28 injured outside Berlin.
The main concentration of damage in the
city was in the centre and in the southwestern quarter,
though many other districts were also hit. The
seriousness of fire damage on this night is stressed. Once
again, overall figures for domestic property damage and
casualties are not available but, by a process of deduction
from an overall report for this period, it is certain that at
least 1,000 people died. Some details of individual
property damage were recorded: 2 industrial premises
were completely destroyed and 15 were seriously
damaged; many public buildings are mentioned, including
Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry, the Berlin transport
system suffered, not only by the destruction of 94 U-Bahn
carriages at the Kreuzberg depot.

SUPPORT AND MINOR OPERATIONS

22 Mosquitoes to Elberfeld and 5 to Brunswick' 8 R.C.M.
sorties, 7 Serrate patrols, 12 Stirlings minelaying in the
River Gironde, 22 O.T.U. sorties. No losses.

• 15/16 February 1944 BERLIN

After a rest of more than 2 weeks for the regular bomber
squadrons, 891 aircraft - 561 Lancasters, 314 Halifaxes, 16
Mosquitoes - were dispatched. This was the largest force
sent to Berlin and the largest non-1,000 bomber force
sent to any target, exceeding the previous record of 826
aircraft (which included Stirlings and Wellingtons) sent
to Dortmund on the night of 23/24 May 1943. It was also
the first time that more than 500 Lancasters and more
than 300 Halifaxes were dispatched. The quantity of
bombs dropped, '2,642: tons, was also a record.

The German controllers were able to plot the bomber
stream soon after it left the English coast but the swing
north over Denmark for the approach flight proved too far
distant for many of the German fighters. The German
controller ordered the fighters not to fly over Berlin,
leaving the target area free for the Flak, but many
fighters ignored him and attacked bombers over the city.
The diversion to Frankfurt-on-Oder failed to draw any
fighters. 43 aircraft - 26 Lancasters, 17 Halifaxes - were
lost, 4.8 per cent of the force.

Berlin was covered by cloud for most of the raid. Heavy
bombing fell on the centre and south-western districts
but many places out in the country again recorded bombs,
with 59 people being killed there. Damage in Berlin was
extensive with 599 large and 572 medium fires and nearly
1,000 houses and 526 temporary wooden barracks, of
which there were now a large number in Berlin,
destroyed. Some of Berlin's most important war industries
were hit, including the large Siemensstadt area. 320
people were killed - 196 civilians, 34 service personnel, 9
airraid workers, 80 foreign workers and 1 prisoner of war.

The diminishing proportion of civilian
casualties reflects the large-scale evacuation
which had now taken place but a further 260
civilians were recorded as being 'buried alive'
and it is not known how many of these
survived. This was really the end of the true
'Battle of Berlin'; only one more raid took
place on the city in this period and that was
not for more than a month.



*Arthur Harris
- Chef for Bomber
Command 1942-45.*

DIVERSION AND SUPPORT OPERATIONS

23 Oboe Mosquitoes attacked 5 night-fighter
airfields in Holland, 43 Stirlings and 4
Pathfinder Halifaxes carried out minelaying
in Kiel Bay, 24 Lancasters of 8 Group made a
diversion raid on Frankfurt-on-Oder (where
147 buildings were damaged, 25 people were
killed and 34 were seriously injured), 9
aircraft made R.C.M. flights and 14
Mosquitoes carried out Serrate patrols. A
Serrate Mosquito was the only aircraft lost.

MINOR OPERATIONS

2 Mosquitoes to Aachen, 6 Stirlings and 6 Wellingtons
minelaying off Bayonne and Lorient, 48 aircraft on
Resistance operations. 1 Stirling lost from a Resistance
flight.

Total effort for the night: 1,070 sorties, 45 aircraft (4.2
per cent) lost.

• 19/20 February 1944 LEIPZIG

823 aircraft - 561 Lancasters, 255 Halifaxes, 7
Mosquitoes. 78 aircraft - 44 Lancasters and 34 Halifaxes -
lost, 9.5 per cent of the force. The Halifax loss rate was
13.3 per cent of those dispatched and 14.9 per cent of
those Halifaxes which reached the enemy coast after
'early returns' had turned back. The Halifax IIs and Vs
were permanently withdrawn from operations to Germany
after this raid.

This was an unhappy raid for Bomber Command. The
German controllers only sent part of their force of
fighters to the Kiel minelaying diversion. When the main
bomber force crossed the Dutch coast, they were met by a
further part of the German fighter force and those
German fighters which had been sent north to Kiel
hurriedly returned. The bomber stream was thus under
attack all the way to the target. There were further
difficulties at the target because winds were not as
forecast and many aircraft reached the Leipzig area too
early and had to orbit and await the Pathfinders. 4
aircraft were lost by collision and approximately 20 were
shot down by Flak.

Leipzig was cloud-covered and the Pathfinders had to use
sky-marking. The raid appeared to be concentrated in its
early stages but scattered later. There are few details of
the effects of the bombing. No report is available from
Germany and there was no immediate post-raid
reconnaissance flight. When photographs were

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eventually taken, they included the results of an American raid which took place on the following day.

DIVERSION AND SUPPORT OPERATIONS

45 Stirlings and 4 Pathfinder Halifaxes minelaying in Kiel Bay, 16 Oboe Mosquitoes bombing night-fighter airfields in Holland, 15 Mosquitoes on a diversion raid to Berlin, 12 Serrate patrols. 1 Mosquito lost from the Berlin raid

3 Mosquitoes attacked Aachen and 3 more bombed flying-bomb sites in France without loss.

Total effort for the night: 921 sorties, 79 aircraft (8:6 per cent) lost. This was the heaviest Bomber Command loss of the war so far, easily exceeding the 58 aircraft lost on 21/22 January 1943 when Magdeburg was the main target.

• 20/21 February 1944 STUTTGART

598 aircraft - 460 Lancasters, 126 Halifaxes, 12 Mosquitoes. The North Sea sweep and the Munich diversion successfully drew the German fighters up 2 hours before the main bomber force flew inland and only 9 aircraft - 7 Lancasters and 2 Halifaxes - were lost, 1,5 per cent of the force. 4 further Lancasters and 1 Halifax crashed in England.

Stuttgart was cloud-covered and the bombing became scattered. The local report states that considerable damage was caused in the centre of the city and in the north-eastern and north-western suburbs of Bad Canstatt and Feuerbach. Several important cultural buildings in the centre of the city were badly damaged - the Neues Schloss, the Landtag (regional parliament building), the state picture gallery, the state archives, the state theatre and two old churches. In the Feuerbach suburb, however, the Bosch factory, which produced dynamos, injection pumps and magnetos and was considered to be one of the most important factories in Germany, was heavily damaged. 125 people were killed and 510 injured.

DIVERSION AND SUPPORT OPERATIONS

156 aircraft - 132 from training units and 24 from squadrons - flew a large training exercise across the North Sea as a preliminary feint; 24 Mosquitoes attacked airfields in Holland; 7 Mosquitoes made a diversionary raid on Munich and there were 7 Serrate patrols. No aircraft lost.

28 Stirlings and 6 Wellingtons laid mines off French ports. 1 Wellington lost.

Total effort for the night: 826 sorties, 10 aircraft (1.2 per cent) lost

• 24/25 February 1944 SCHWEINFURT

734 aircraft - 554 Lancasters, 169 Halifaxes, 11 Mosquitoes - carried out the first Bomber Command raid on this target, home of Germany's main ball-bearing factories. 266 American B-17s had raided the factories the previous day. Bomber Command introduced a novel tactic on this night. The Schweinfurt force was split into two parts - 392 aircraft and 342 aircraft, separated by a 2-hour interval. Part of the German fighter force was drawn up by earlier diversions. The first wave of the Schweinfurt bombers lost 22 aircraft, 5,6 per cent; the second wave lost only 11 aircraft, 3,2 per cent, and it is believed that only 4 bombers from the second wave were shot down by night fighters. Total losses were 33 aircraft - 26 Lancasters, 7 Halifaxes - 4,5 per cent of the force.

Both phases of the bombing suffered from undershooting by some of the Pathfinder backers-up and by many of the Main Force crews. Schweinfurt records refer to "nominal damage" in the R.A.F. night raid and give a combined figure of 362 people killed by the American raid the previous day and by this R.A.F. raid. No breakdown of this figure is available.

DIVERSION AND SUPPORT OPERATIONS

179 training aircraft on a diversionary sweep over the North Sea, 60 Halifaxes and 50 Stirlings minelaying in Kiel Bay and the Kattegat, 15 Mosquitoes to airfields in Holland, 8 Mosquitoes to Kiel and 7 to Aachen, 12 Serrate patrols. Stirlings were lost from the minelaying operation and 1 Serrate Mosquito of 141 Squadron was lost, the first Serrate aircraft to be lost under Bomber Command control. Wellingtons laid mines off Lorient without loss.

Total effort for the night: 1,070 sorties, 36 aircraft (3.4 per cent) lost.

• 25/26 February 1944 AUGSBURG

594 aircraft - 461 Lancasters, 123 Halifaxes, 10 Mosquitoes - on the first large raid to this target. The various diversions and the splitting of the main bomber force into 2 waves again reduced casualties still further. 21 aircraft 16 Lancasters, 5 Halifaxes - lost, 3,6 per cent of the force; at least 4 of these casualties were due to collision.

The bombing at Augsburg was outstandingly successful in clear weather conditions and against this "virgin" target with only weak Flak defences. The Pathfinder ground-marking was accurate and more than 2,000 tons of bombs were dropped by the 2 waves of the force.

The R.A.F. night raid became controversial because of the effects of its outstanding accuracy. The beautiful old centre of Augsburg was completely destroyed by high explosive and fire, with much less than the usual spread of bombing to the more modern outer areas, where some industry was located. 2,920 houses were destroyed and more than 5,000 were damaged; 85,000-90,000 people were bombed out. Among the main public and cultural

buildings destroyed or seriously damaged were the old Rathaus (completely destroyed), 16 churches and 11 hospitals, but all patients in the hospitals were safely evacuated except for 2 women foreign workers. The total value of lost works of art was estimated to be 800 million Reichsmarks (£80

million). Among the buildings destroyed was the famous puppet theatre - Heimbühne Puppenschrein - of Walter Oehmichen. Oehmichen re-created his puppets and, exactly 4 years later, opened the "Augsburger Puppenkiste" (packing-case puppet theatre) now well known in Germany and often seen on television. There were 246 large or medium fires and 820 small ones; the temperature was so cold (minus 18° Celsius) that the River Lech was frozen over and many of the water hoses also froze. Between 678 and 762 people were killed and approximately 2,500 were injured. The Germans publicised it as an extreme example of "terror bombing".

Part of the bombing of the second wave of aircraft did spread to the northern and eastern parts of Augsburg and damage was caused to an important aircraft component factory and to some former paper and cotton



*German JU88
Night Fighter*

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mills which had been taken over by the M.A.N. engineering company.

DIVERSION AND SUPPORT OPERATIONS

131 aircraft minelaying in Kiel Bay, 22 Mosquitoes to airfields in Holland, 15 Mosquitoes on diversionary raids to 4 towns to the north of the Augsburg routes, 5 R.C.M. sorties, 10 Serrate patrols. 3 Halifaxes and 1 Stirling lost from the minelaying operation.

Total effort for the night: 777 sorties, 25 aircraft (3,2 per cent) lost.

• 15/16 March 1944

STUTTGART

863 aircraft - 617 Lancasters, 230 Halifaxes, 16 Mosquitoes. The German fighter controller split his forces into 2 parts. The bomber force flew over France nearly as far as the Swiss frontier before turning north-east to approach Stuttgart. This delayed the German fighters contacting the bomber stream but, when the German fighters did arrive, just before Stuttgart was reached, the usual fierce combats ensued. 37 aircraft - 27 Lancasters, 10 Halifaxes - were lost, 4,3 per cent of the force. 2 of the Lancasters force-landed in Switzerland.



Frankfurt - efter bombardementet 22/23 april 1944.

Adverse winds delayed the opening of the attack and the same winds may have been the cause of the Pathfinder marking falling back well short of the target, despite the clear weather conditions. Some of the early bombing fell in the centre of Stuttgart but most of it fell in open country south-west of the city. The Akademie was damaged in the centre of Stuttgart and some housing was destroyed in the south-western suburbs. 88 people were killed and 203 injured.

• 18/19 March 1944 FRANKFURT

846 aircraft - 620 Lancasters, 209 Halifaxes, 17 Mosquitoes. The German fighter force was again split. One part was lured north by the Helgoland mining operation but the second part waited in Germany and met the bomber stream just before the target was reached, although cloud made it difficult for these fighters to achieve much success. 22 aircraft - 12 Halifaxes, 10 Lancasters - were lost, 2,6 per cent of the force.

The Pathfinders marked the target accurately and this led to heavy bombing of eastern, central and western districts of Frankfurt. The later phases of the bombing were scattered but this was almost inevitable with such a large force; new crews were usually allocated to the final waves. Extensive destruction was caused in Frankfurt. The local report gives a long list of "cultural buildings", including the Opera House and the preserved medieval quarter, destroyed. Most of the report consists of statistics: 5,495 houses, 99 industrial firms, 412 small businesses, 56 public buildings all destroyed or seriously damaged; many other buildings were lightly damaged. 421 civilians were killed and 55,500 were bombed out. A military train was hit and 20 soldiers in it were killed and

80 wounded but this may have been by the action of a Fighter Command Intruder aircraft; the Frankfurt report says that the train was shot up by cannon-fire.

DIVERSION AND SUPPORT OPERATIONS

17 Mosquitoes to airfields in Holland, Belgium and France, 98 aircraft on minelaying diversion in the Heligoland area, 11 Mosquitoes on a diversion raid to Kassel, 4 R.C.M. sorties, 13 Serrate patrols. No aircraft were lost and the Serrate Mosquitoes claimed 3 Ju 88s destroyed.

Minor Operations

19 Lancasters of s Group (including 13 aircraft from 617 Squadron) on an accurate raid of an explosives factory at Bergerac in France, 1: Mosquitoes to Aachen, Dortmund and Duisburg, 8 aircraft on Resistance operations, 18 O.T.U. sorties. No aircraft lost.

Total effort for the night: 1,046 sorties, 22 aircraft (2,1 per cent) lost.

• 22/23 March 1944

FRANKFURT

816 aircraft 620 Lancasters, 184 Halifaxes, 12 Mosquitoes. Again, an indirect route was employed, this time crossing the Dutch coast

north of the Zuider Zee and then flying almost due south to Frankfurt. This, and the Kiel minelaying diversion, confused the Germans for some time; Hannover was forecast as the main target. Only a few fighters eventually found the bomber stream. 33 aircraft - 26 Lancasters, 7 Halifaxes - were lost, 4,0 per cent of the force.

The marking and bombing were accurate and Frankfurt suffered another heavy blow; the city's records show that the damage was even more severe than in the raid carried out 4 nights earlier. Half of the city was without gas, water and electricity "for a long period". All parts of the city were hit but the greatest weight of the attack fell in the western districts. The report particularly mentions severe damage to the industrial areas along the main road to Mainz. The report also has long lists of historic buildings, churches and hospitals destroyed and statistics for the destruction of property. Mention is made of 5 important and 26 lesser Nazi Party buildings hit. 948 people were killed, 346 seriously injured and 120,000 bombed out.

162 B-17s of the Eighth Air Force used Frankfurt as a secondary target when they could not reach Schweinfurt 36 hours after this R.A.F. raid and caused further damage. The Frankfurt diary has this entry:

The three air raids of 18th, 22th and 24th March were carried out by a combined plan of the British and American air forces and their combined effect was to deal the worst and most fateful blow of the war to Frankfurt, a blow which simply ended the existence of the Frankfurt which had been built up since the Middle Ages.

One result of these heavy raids was that recently

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captured R.A.F. men often had to be protected by their guards from the assaults of angry civilians when they passed through Frankfurt to reach the nearby Oberursel interrogation and transit camp.

• 24/25 March 1944 BERLIN

811 aircraft - 577 Lancasters, 216 Halifaxes, 18 Mosquitoes. 7: aircraft - 44 Lancasters, 28 Halifaxes - lost, 8.9 per cent of the force. This night became known in Bomber Command as "the night of the strong winds". A powerful wind from the north carried the bombers south at every stage of the flight. Not only was this wind not forecast accurately but it was so strong that the various methods available to warn crews of wind changes during the flight failed to detect the full strength of it. The bomber stream became very scattered, particularly on the homeward flight and radar-predicted Flak batteries at many places were able to score successes. Part of the bomber force even strayed over the Ruhr defences on the return flight. It is believed that approximately 50 of the 72 aircraft lost were destroyed by Flak; most of the remainder were victims of night fighters. The Berlin report says that 14 bombers were shot down by fighters in the target area.

The strong winds caused difficulties in the marking at Berlin with, unusually, markers being carried beyond the target and well out to the south-west of the city.

126 small towns and villages outside Berlin recorded bombs and 30 people were killed in those places. The majority of the damage in Berlin was in the south-western districts. As usual, much housing was destroyed and about 20.000 people were bombed out. Approximately 150 people were killed. No industrial concerns were classed as destroyed but several important ones were damaged. 5 military establishments were badly hit including the depot of the Waffen-S.S. Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler Division in Lichterfelde.

This was the last major R.A.F. raid on Berlin during the war, although the city would be bombed many times by small forces of Mosquitoes.

DIVERSION AND SUPPORT OPERATIONS

147 aircraft from training units carried out a diversionary sweep west of Paris; 27 Mosquitoes bombed night-fighter airfields and 15 Mosquitoes bombed Duisburg, Kiel and Münster; aircraft of 100 Group flew 4 R.C.M. sorties and 10 Serrate patrols. 1 Serrate Mosquito lost.

9 aircraft dropped supplies to the Resistance without loss. Total effort for the night: 1,023 sorties, 73 aircraft (7,1 per cent) lost.

• 26/27 March 1944 ESSEN

705 aircraft - 476 Lancasters, 207 Halifaxes, 22 Mosquitoes. The sudden switch by Bomber Command to a

Ruhr target just across the German frontier caught the German fighter controllers by surprise and only 9 aircraft - 6 Lancasters, 3 Halifaxes were lost, 1,3 per cent of the force.

Essen was covered by cloud but the Oboe Mosquitoes marked the target well and this was a successful attack. 48 industrial buildings were seriously damaged and 1,756 houses destroyed. 550 people were killed, 49 missing and 1,569 were injured. The figures for killed and missing are broken down in the Essen report as follows: Germans - 192 women, 155 men, 27 children, 6 soldiers, 4 policemen and 2 Hitler Youth. Foreigners - 74 forced workers and 1 prisoner of war. The remaining 138 victims were mixed German and foreign concentration-camp prisoners, large numbers of whom were now providing the labour forces in German factories.

• 30/31 March 1944 NUREMBERG

This would normally have been the moon stand-down period for the Main Force, but a raid to the distant target of Nuremberg was planned on the basis of an early forecast that there would be protective high cloud on the outward route, when the moon would be up, but that the target area would be clear for ground-marked bombing. A Meteorological Flight Mosquito carried out a reconnaissance and reported that the protective cloud was unlikely to be present and that there could be cloud over the target, but the raid was not cancelled.

795 aircraft were dispatched - 572 Lancasters, 214 Halifaxes and 9 Mosquitoes. The German controller ignored all the diversions and assembled his fighters

at 2 radio beacons which happened to be astride the route to Nuremberg. The first fighters appeared just before the bombers reached the Belgian border and a fierce battle in the moonlight lasted for the next hour. 82 bombers were lost on the outward route and near the target. The action was much reduced on the return flight, when most of the German fighters had to land, but 95 bombers were lost in all - 64 Lancasters and 31 Halifaxes, 11,9 per cent of the force dispatched. It was the biggest Bomber Command loss of the war.

Most of the returning crews reported that they had bombed Nuremberg but subsequent research showed that approximately 120 aircraft had bombed Schweinfurt, 50 miles north-west of Nuremberg. This mistake was a result of badly forecast winds causing navigational difficulties. 2 Pathfinder aircraft dropped markers at Schweinfurt. Much of the bombing in the Schweinfurt area fell outside the town and only 2 people were killed in that area.

The main raid at Nuremberg was a failure. The city was covered by thick cloud and a fierce cross-wind which developed on the final approach to the target caused many of the Pathfinder aircraft to mark too far to the



Lancaster på Elsham Wolds.



På baggrund af de tre projektorers vinkler beregnes skyhøjden, inden Lancasterernes take-off.

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east. A 10-mile-long creepback also developed into the countryside north of Nuremberg. Both Pathfinders and Main Force aircraft were under heavy fighter attack throughout the raid. Little damage was caused in Nuremberg; 69 people were killed in the city and the surrounding villages.

DIVERSION AND SUPPORT OPERATIONS

49 Halifaxes minelaying in the Heligoland area, 13 Mosquitoes to night-fighter airfields, 34 Mosquitoes on diversions to Aachen, Cologne and Kassel, 5 R.C.M. sorties, 19 Serrate patrols. No aircraft lost.

Minor Operations:

3 Oboe Mosquitoes to Oberhausen (where 23 Germans waiting to go into a public shelter were killed by a bomb) and 1 Mosquito to Dortmund, 6 Stirlings minelaying off Texel and Le Havre, 17 aircraft on Resistance operations, 8 O.T.U. sorties. 1 Halifax shot down dropping Resistance agents over Belgium.

that 93 people were killed and 167 injured.

Minor Operations:

36 Mosquitoes to Mannheim and 8 to four other targets, 16 Serrate patrols, 103 Lancasters of 1 and 5 Groups minelaying off Danzig, Gdynia and Pillau in the Baltic, 61 aircraft on Resistance operations, 9 O.T.U. sorties. 9 Lancasters from the minelaying force and Serrate



Take-off.

Mosquito were lost.

Total effort for the night. 950 sorties, 11 aircraft (1,6 per cent) lost.

• AULNOYE 10/11 April 1944

132 Lancasters of I Group and 15 Pathfinder Mosquitoes. 7 Lancasters lost. The attack was successful; a later examination showed that 287 bombs hit the railway yards. The local report says that many bombs fell in fields near the railway but the engine-shed was hit and 30 locomotives were put out of action. 340 houses were destroyed or damaged and 14 civilians were killed.

• 23/24 April 1944 MINELAYING

114 aircraft - 70 Halifaxes, 30 Stirlings, 14 Lancasters - to lay mines in 5 areas of the Baltic. 4 Halifaxes and 1 Stirling lost.

• 24/25 April 1944 KARLSRUHE

637 aircraft - 369 Lancasters, 259 Halifaxes, 9 Mosquitoes - of all groups except 5 Group. 19 aircraft 11 Lancasters, 8 Halifaxes - lost, 3,0 per cent of the force.

Cloud over the target and a strong wind which pushed



Navigatoren.

the Pathfinders too far north spoiled this attack. Only the northern part of Karlsruhe was seriously damaged and most of the bombs fell outside the city. It has been difficult to obtain details from this target. One report says that 23 people were killed, 133 were injured and



Piloten.

Total effort for the night. 950 sorties, 96 aircraft (10,1 per cent) lost.

Pilot Officer C. J. Barton, a Halifax pilot of 578 Squadron, was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross for carrying on to the target in the Nuremberg operation after his bomber was badly damaged in a fighter attack and 3 members of his crew baled out through a communication misunderstanding. Although the navigator and wireless operator were among the men who had parachuted, Barton decided to attempt the return flight to England in spite of the fact that only 3 engines were running. An unexpected wind took the Halifax steadily up the North Sea and it was short of fuel when the English coast was reached near Sunderland. Barton had to make a hurried forced landing when his engines failed through lack of fuel and he died in the crash, but his 3 remaining crew members were only slightly hurt.



Victoria Cross

Pilot Officer Barton's Victoria Cross was the only one awarded during the Battle of Berlin, which had now officially ended.

• 9/10 April 1944

VILLENEUVE-ST-GEORGES /Gdynia Bay

225 aircraft - 166 Lancasters, 49 Halifaxes, 10 Mosquitoes - of all groups. No aircraft lost.

Bomber Command claimed a successful attack on these railway yards near Paris. The local report does not contain details of damage to the railways but states that more than 400 houses were damaged or destroyed and

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more than 900 houses were destroyed or badly damaged, but another report gives the number of people killed as 118. Mannheim, 30 miles to the north, recorded a raid by approximately 100 aircraft on this night and Darmstadt, Ludwigshafen and Heidelberg were also hit by aircraft which failed to find the main target. It must be assumed that many bombs fell in open country between Karlsruhe and Mannheim; another German report says that bombs fell in 120 parishes.

• 26/27 April 1944 ESSEN

493 aircraft - 342 Lancasters, 133 Halifaxes, 18 Mosquitoes - from all groups except 5 Group. 7 aircraft - 6 Lancasters, 1 Halifax - lost, 1,4 per cent of the force. The Bomber Command report states that this was an accurate attack, based on good Pathfinder ground-marking. The only report available from Essen states that 313 people were killed and 1.224 injured.

• 27/28 April 1944 FRIEDRICHSHAFEN

322 Lancasters and 1 Mosquito of 1, 3, 6 and 8 Groups. This was a raid with some interesting aspects. The Air Ministry had urged Bomber Command to attack this relatively small town in moonlight because it contained important factories making engines and gearboxes for German tanks. But the flight to this target, deep in Southern Germany on a moonlit night, was potentially very dangerous; the disastrous attack on Nuremberg had taken place only 4 weeks previously in similar conditions. However, Friedrichshafen was further south and on the fringe of the German nightfighter defences; because of this and the various diversions which confused the German controllers, the bombers reached the target without being intercepted. However, the German fighters arrived at the target while the raid was taking place and 18 Lancasters were lost, 5,6 per cent of the force.

1,234 tons of bombs were dropped in an outstandingly successful attack based on good Pathfinder marking; Bomber Command later estimated that 99 acres of Friedrichshafen, 67 per cent of the town's built-up area, were devastated. Several factories were badly damaged and the tank gearbox factory was destroyed. When the American bombing survey team investigated this raid after the war, German officials said that this was the most damaging raid on tank production of the war. A civil report states that 136 people were killed and 375 injured in Friedrichshafen, and that 656 houses were destroyed and 421 severely damaged.

• 10/11 May 1944 RAILWAY TARGETS

506 aircraft - 291 Lancasters, 187 Halifaxes, 28 Mosquitoes - to bomb railway yards at Courtrai, Dieppe,

Ghent, Lens and Lille. No post-raid reconnaissance was carried out at Dieppe and results of the raid there are not known. All other raids were successful, although some bombs fell on nearby civilian housing. At Ghent, 48 Belgian civilians were killed and 58 were injured but no other details are available. 12 Lancasters lost from the 5 Group raid to Lille and 1 Lancaster lost from the Dieppe raid.

Minor : 9 Mosquitoes to Ludwigshafen and 2 to Chateaudun. 5 R.C.M. sorties, 9 Intruder and 3 Serrate patrols, 26 aircraft minelaying off Brest and Heligoland, 28 aircraft on Resistance operations, 10 O.T.U. sorties. 1 Halifax minelayer lost.

Total effort for the night: 618 sorties, 14 aircraft (2,3 per cent) lost.

• 11/12 Maj 1944 HASSELT

126 Lancasters and 6 Mosquitoes of 1 and 8 Groups. The target was marked and 39 aircraft bombed, but all missed the railway yards because of thick haze and the Master Bomber ordered the bombing to stop. 5 Lancasters lost.

• 15/16 May 1944 MINOR OPERATIONS

43 Mosquitoes - 30 to Ludwigshafen' 10 to Carpiquet airfield near Caen and 3 to Leverkusen, 1 R.C.M. sortie, 2 Serrate patrols, 43 aircraft minelaying from Kiel to Biscay 6 aircraft on Resistance operations, 24 O.T.U. sorties. 3 Lancaster minelayers and 1 O.T.U. Wellington lost.



Et hold af "bombeladere" tager sig et hvil på en 1000 kg.s brisant-bombe...



Besætninger fra Elsabm Wolds - med maskothunden på hæderspladsen. Februar 1944.



The story of "The Black Swan" - Squadron 103

by David Fell, Bradford

World War 1

The Squadron was formed during the First World War at Beaulieu in Hampshire on the 1st September 1917 as a result of a War Office recommendation to increase the number of squadrons in the Royal Flying Corps to 200. The first commanding officer was Major T Maxwell-Scott and the first aircraft operated by 103 was the DH9 single engined biplane. The Squadron was transferred to France in May 1918 and gave good service up to the end of World War 1 flying reconnaissance and day bombing operations on the Western Front. In March 1919 103 Squadron was disbanded.

Reformation

With the increasingly uncertain political climate in Europe in the mid thirties the British Government embarked on a rearmament programme to counter the rising threat of Hitler's Germany. As part of this the number of RAF squadrons was increased and 103 Squadron was reformed in August 1936 at Andover in Hampshire under the command of Squadron Leader D H Carey. The aircraft flown at this time was the Hawker Hind. This was a single engined biplane day bomber soon to be obsolete. In February 1937 the Squadron flew North to its new base at RAF Usworth in the North East of England.

In 1937 the squadron crest, featuring a black swan, was chosen along with the motto *Noli me Tangere* which translated means "Touch Me Not".

The Squadron exchanged their Hawker Hinds for the the new Fairy Battle Mk 1 in August 1938. This aircraft was a single engined monoplane day bomber and a great improvement on the Hind. At the time the Battle was thought to be a very modern and effective machine. It was now clear that war was inevitable and in September 1938 the Squadron returned South to its new base at Abingdon in Berkshire and then on to Benson in Oxfordshire in April 1939.

The Outbreak of World War 2

At the start of hostilities in September 1939 103 Squadron flew to France as part of No 1 Group RAF to form the first echelon of the Advanced Air Strike Force (AASF). Under the command of Wing Commander H J Gemmill the Squadron commenced operations from Challerange in France on the 17th

September 1939. The first operation was a daylight reconnaissance by 3 aircraft along Franco-German border. There followed a series of reconnaissance operations which encountered occasional German flak but no fighter opposition. These were completed successfully without loss. On the 27th September 1939 3 Battles led by Flight Lieutenant M C Wells took off at 1220 hours for what they thought would be another routine flight. Whilst flying at 3000 feet between Bouzonville and the Rhine the Battles were attacked by 3 French Curtis Hawks. The Battles fired off recognition flares and the French aircraft broke off their attack. Soon after the Battles were attacked by 3 German Bf 109s. The Battle flown by Flight Lieutenant A L Vipan was damaged in this attack and his observer, Sergeant J H Vickers, mortally wounded. In the combat Vipan's gunner, Air craftsman J E Summers, shot down one of the attacking Bf 109s. Flight Lieutenant Vipan crash landed his damaged Battle in a field close to French troop positions on the Maginot Line and Sergeant Vickers was taken to hospital where he sadly died on the 7th October 1939. The aircraft was considered damaged beyond repair and struck off charge on the 9th October.

Sgt Vickers was posthumously awarded the Medaille Militaire by the French authorities and Air craftsman Summers was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal. So, in its first combat with enemy fighters, 103 sustained it's first fatal casualty, lost it's first aircraft, shot down it's first enemy aircraft and received it's first gallantry awards of World War 2. These

events were to be repeated many times before the war was to come to an end.

The winter of 1939/40 passed quietly during the period known as "The Phony War" with routine reconnaissance and leaflet dropping operations over the Franco-German border and Western Germany being undertaken without loss. Training continued to be undertaken on a regular basis and 2 Battles were lost in accidents with the deaths of 3 air crew. During this period the Squadron moved to their new airfield



103 Squadron,
The Black Swan
Royal Air Force
Motto:
NOLI ME TANGERE
(Touch Me Not)



Lancaster

Da krigen kom til Avernakø

at Betheniville. Wing Commander T C Dickens took over command of the Squadron on the 12th March.

The Battle of France

At dawn of the 10th May 1940 war in France began in earnest and the Luftwaffe made an attack on the airfield at Betheniville, fortunately without damage or casualties. In the afternoon 4 Battles from the Squadron were tasked to bomb German troop columns in Luxembourg. 3 of these aircraft failed to return all being hit by light flak at low level. Further similar low level daylight attacks were made in the next 3 days in an effort to stem the tide of advancing German forces for the loss of 2 Battles. On the 14th May the Squadron was ordered to attack the pontoon bridges over the River Meuse. 4 aircraft were lost on this day to flak and fighters and by now it was clear

that the Fairey Battle was totally inadequate for the task of low level daylight bombing being poorly armed, having little armour plate and no self sealing fuel tanks. As the position rapidly worsened Betheniville and the nearby village and road were subjected to a series of air raids. The Squadron was forced to withdraw to a new airfield at Rheges leaving behind several damaged aircraft. 103 continued to fly more sorties against the rapidly advancing German army in daylight but from a higher altitude and the surviving air crews showed remarkable spirit and determination in the face of a numerically superior, more experienced and a far better equipped and trained enemy. This was matched by the courage and resourcefulness of the Squadron ground personnel who worked tirelessly in the most difficult, arduous and often dangerous conditions throughout. In a further effort to reduce losses 103 flew several night bombing attacks from the 22nd May 1940.

For the next 10 days operations were mounted daily until withdrawing again to Ozouer-le-Doyene on the 3rd June 1940. By now 103 had lost all but a handful of its aircraft and most of its crews. The Squadron base at Herbouville was subjected to a series of bombing raids by the Germans on the night of the 6/7th June 1940.

On the 8th June 1940 the Sergeant G Beardsley and his gunner Leading Air craftsman G Lewis were shot down for the third time in less than a month and captured. On the 2 previous occasions they had managed to escape and return to the Squadron.

The same day Pilot Officer Thoroughood and crew singlehandedly took on approximately 50 German dive bombers. Thoroughood managed to shoot one down with his single fixed forward firing machine gun. His gunner, Pilot Officer Webber, also managed to shoot down a Bf 109 which had chased them after the attack. Webber was wounded 3 times in this incident and was immediately evacuated to England. Their aircraft was badly damaged and force landed. These 2 incidents are typical of events at the time.

The Squadron was reinforced by replacements from the UK and continued to make attacks by day and night on enemy troop concentrations, airfields, lines of communication and sea convoys in what, by now, was a hopeless situation. On the 14th June 1940 the Squadron withdrew again to Souge which was bombed by the Luftwaffe that night and again on the following night and resulted in the loss of several Battles and casualties amongst the ground personnel. On the 15th June 1940 the surviving Battles flew to Abingdon in the UK as ordered.

The Squadron ground personnel left Souge for Nantes and were later evacuated by sea.

Throughout the Battle of France the Squadron personnel, both air crew or otherwise, had shown

remarkable tenacity and spirit in the most difficult and trying of circumstances which fully upheld the traditions of the Royal Air Force. The numerous gallantry awards which were subsequently presented to members of the Squadron representing all ranks and duties are a testimony to this.

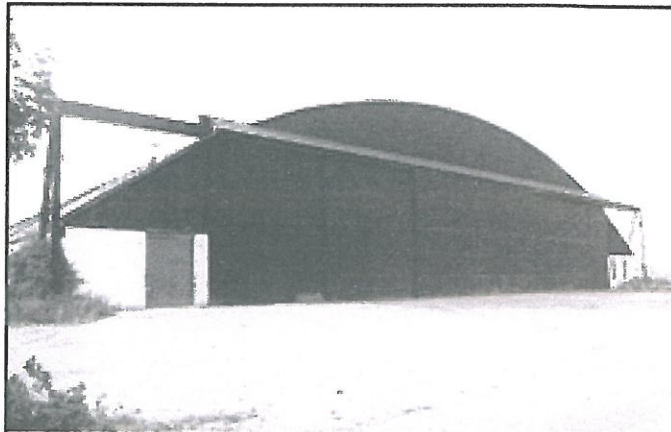
Anti-Invasion Operations

On the 3rd July 1940 1 Group Bomber Command was re-formed and 103 Squadron was transferred to the control of this Group flying from

RAF Newton near Nottingham. At this time they were under the command of Wing Commander T C Dickens.

The Squadron was quickly brought back up to strength, although still flying the, by now, obsolete Battles, and a period of intensive training followed. With the Battle of Britain in full swing and the threat of invasion ever present the Squadron was in constant readiness. Whilst Fighter Command were fighting a desperate battle against the German Luftwaffe it

is often forgotten that, at this time, Bomber Command were flying continually attacking targets on mainland Europe.



The sole surviving J Type hanger at Elsham Wolds pictured in 1994. It is now part of the small commercial site which has been built on that part of the airfield since the war. A water treatment works is built on part of the old airfield.



The Allied supreme command in conference (left to right) general Bradley, admiral Ramsay, Air Chief Marshal Tedder, Supreme Commander Eisenhower, general Montgomery, Air Chief Marshal Leigh-Mallory and Lt. general Bedell-Schmidt.

Da krigen kom til Avernakø

103 went into action on the night of the 21/22 July 1940 when 3 Battles took off to bomb an oil storage depot at Rotter dam. On the following night the target was the airfield at Schipol in Holland and on the 25/26th July 1940 airfields in Belgium were raided.

There then followed a period of 6 weeks training when no operations were flown but the Squadron was back in action on the 7th September when an evening attack was made on invasion barges and shipping in Calais harbour.

Throughout that September a series of similar night raids were flown against invasion barges and shipping at Calais and Boulogne for the loss of one aircraft and crew. During the first stages of the war, whilst flying the Fairey Battle Mk 1 the Squadron had lost at least 26 aircraft, all but 2 in France. It is impossible to say how many operations were flown in this time as the Squadron records are incomplete, the originals having been destroyed during the withdrawal from France.

A New Beginning

On the 1st October 1940 the Squadron received orders stating that they were to re-equipped with Vickers Wellington Mk 1C and it was with some relief that they said goodbye to the Fairey Battles. The unit was stood down from operations whilst the conversion and initial training was undertaken on the new bomber. The Vickers Wellington was Britain's most capable bomber at the start of the war. It had twin engines and power operated front and rear turrets which were quite effective but only mounted .303 calibre machine guns. It was structurally very strong so it was able to take heavy punishment and had good range and could carry a maximum 4500lb bomb load. Heavy losses on daylight operations in the early stages of the war had shown that the type was not suitable for day bombing but by night it had proved quite a capable machine.

The Wellington had a crew of 6 as compared to a crew of 3 in the Battle so the number of air crew was increased substantially in the next few weeks with new crews and personnel posted in daily as the new aircraft arrived. It was also a far bigger and more complex aircraft which required retraining of the ground crews and maintenance personnel and also a greater number of them. Astonishingly the conversion and training were completed by the end of November.

Wing Commander Dickens, who had proved extremely popular whilst in command of the Squadron, was transferred to 33 SFTS and was replaced by Squadron Leader C E R Tait on the 23rd November 1940 who was in turn replaced by Wing Commander C E Littler on the 5th December 1940. On the 22nd December 1940 the Squadron was once again operational.

The Long Road Back

On the night of the 22/23rd December 1940 4

aircraft from the Squadron were detailed to attack shipping and docks at the Belgium port of Ostend and this task was accomplished successfully. This was followed on the 28th December 1940 by an attack on oil installations at Rotter dam.

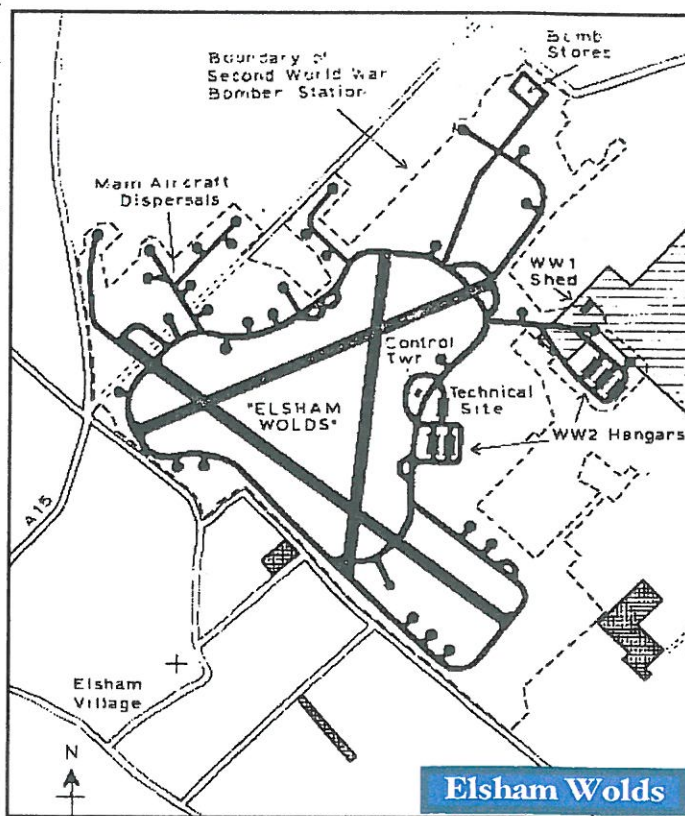
On the night of the 1/2 January 1941 4 crews took part in a raid on Bremen. This was the 103's first attack on a German target and the raid proved a reasonable success. Damage was caused to 3 industrial firms including the large Focke-Wolf aircraft factory. Bad weather in the Britain meant that many operations were cancelled over the next few weeks. In spite of this 2 operations were flown, the first to Wilhelmshafen and the second to Hannover.

On the later raid Sergeant W R Crich and crew ditched in the North Sea and spent 2 very difficult days adrift in a dinghy before being rescued by the S S Tovelil and returned to Britain.

At this time Newton was declared unfit for operations due to heavy rain which made the grass runways unusable. For the next 10 days the Squadron operated from RAF Lindholme near Doncaster but heavy snow meant that no operations were flown from there either. The Squadron returned to Newton and operations resumed on the 25/26th February 1941 with a raid on Dusseldorf. The target was completely cloud covered and the results of the bombing were poor.

Raids were continued on German targets with mixed results. Those near the coast proved easier to find and

provided some success. The targets far inland were far more difficult. Flying over a blacked out continent, often for hundreds of miles, to find a town or city proved very demanding. This was complicated by the changeable and often inclement weather over Europe and also fog and ground haze which was common in the large industrial conurbations. The later introduction of electronic navigation and bombing aids and better target marking techniques went some way towards improving bombing effectiveness and this improved steadily as



the war progressed. U Boats and Battleships

The German submarine fleet in the Atlantic was, at this time, proving a formidable threat. The convoys to and from Britain were continually under attack and the loss of merchant ships and their cargos was reaching critical levels. In addition the German battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau had managed to sail to the French port of Brest and were poised to break out into the Atlantic again. Bomber Command

Da krigen kom til Avernakø

was ordered to concentrate on these 2 threats and a series of raids were mounted on Brest and the U Boat bases of St Nazaire and Lorient. In addition the German ship building centres of Hamburg and Bremen and the port of Kiel were also raided as part of this offensive in addition to further raids on German industrial cities, mainly in the Ruhr area.

On the 21/22nd March 1941 the Squadron was detailed to attack Lorient and was met with intense searchlight and flak. The Wellington of Squadron Leader Mellor and crew was attacked and damaged by a night fighter. The aircraft managed to get back to Newton but with hydraulics and flaps shot away it ran out of runway and came to rest in the bomb dump. Fortunately no one was badly hurt. On the 29/30 March 1941 Brest was the target and again the defences were intense. Squadron Leader Mellor was shot down 1 mile from the airfield on return by a Ju 88 intruder aircraft. Wing Commander Littler was killed on the 31st March 1941 when the Wellington he was flying crash landed on return from a raid on Brest. His place as Commanding Officer of the Squadron was taken by Wing Commander B E Lowe on the 4th April 1941.

Throughout April and into July 103 continued to attack the French and German ports and industrial cities with increasing intensity.

The growing strength and effectiveness of the Luftwaffe night fighter force was now becoming more evident and on the 10/11th May 1941 Pilot Officer Ball and crew were involved in combats with 4 night fighters. His gunners claimed 1 shot down and 1 probable. Flying Officer Harper and crew also fired on an approaching night fighter which broke off contact.

Squadron Leader D D A Kelly and crew were shot down on the 16/17th June 1941 taking part in an operation to Duisburg. Sadly all the crew were killed. Kelly was a very experienced and well liked Flight Commander who had flown with the Squadron in the Battle of France with great distinction.

On the 11th July 1941 the Squadron moved to a new airfield at Elsham Wolds in Lincolnshire. The airfield was situated on the top of a plateau on the south bank of the Humber Estuary. It could be a cold and windy place and was rather isolated but had concrete runways and was more suited to medium and heavy bomber operations.

The Station Commander at Elsham Wolds was Group Captain H Constantine who had to pressure the contractors to get the station into a condition acceptable for an operational unit in time for the arrival of the Squadron. There was, however, still much work to do around the airfield and the work was not fully complete for some months. 103 flew its first operation from Elsham Wolds on the 14/15th July 1941 to Bremen.

Brest was again the target on the 24th July 1941

but this time the operation was to be by daylight. The Squadron contribution to this attack was 6 Wellingtons which flew in 2 formations of 3 aircraft. The objective was the battleship Gneisenau, the Scharnhorst having sailed for La Pallice shortly before. As the 6 aircraft approached Brest they were met by a heavy flak barrage and were also attacked by a number of Bf 109s. 3 of the attacking fighters were shot down but the Wellington of Sgt J S Bucknole and crew was hit and one engine caught fire. The Wellington slowly descended out of the formation and the attacking fighters concentrated on this aircraft. Although the fire in the engine was seen to go out the aircraft could not regain height. It was last seen at

about 8000 feet attempting to fight off its attackers and succeeding in shooting down one of them which was seen to crash into the sea. Sgt Bucknole's aircraft also crashed into the sea and he and his crew all killed.

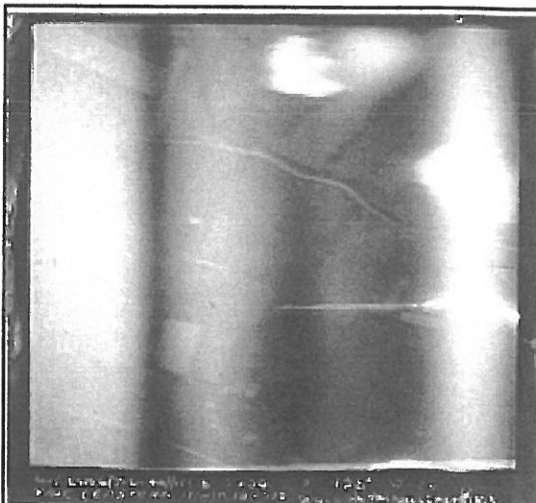
The raid on the Gneisenau resulted in a reported 6 hits on the battleship for the loss of 12 aircraft out of a total force of 100. Although these losses were high they could have been much worse taking into account the strength of the defences and unsuitability of the Wellington for daylight operations of this nature.

Back To Germany

By now 103 was becoming more of a multi national squadron with some trained air crew from the Commonwealth being posted in as replacements along with the newly trained British air crew. The majority of these were Canadians Australians and New Zealanders. There were however other parts of the Commonwealth represented and also a few from occupied Europe who had escaped during the early stages of the war. Belgium had at least

4 representatives on the squadron at one time or another. Together with the British air crew this mixture of nationalities generally proved a great success with all nationalities working together within their own crews and forming close knit teams. This multi national mixture continued with 103 Squadron throughout the rest of the war.

For the rest of 1941 103 Squadron flew operations mainly to attack the main German industrial cities



Et kamera i Lancasteren tog billeder, når bomelasten var udløst. Her to sådanne billeder. Øverst: Bomber over Vire i Frankrig og Nederst: over Berlin. Flyvets nr. samt dag, tid og sted blev registreret på billedet.



Da krigen kom til Avernakø

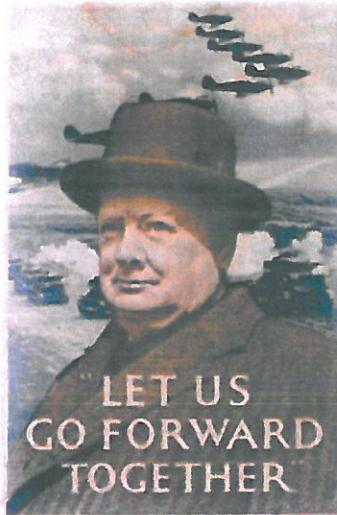
and areas inland concentrating on oil refining plants, communications and factories producing aluminium and aircraft. As the nights grew longer the targets were deeper inside Germany. The difficulties in navigation and target finding however meant that the results from these operations were by and large disappointing. The increasing effectiveness of the German nightfighter force, radar, interception techniques and ground control was also starting to take an increasingly heavy toll.

Wing Commander R S Ryan took over command of the Squadron on the 25th August 1941. On the 10/11th September 1941 103 Squadron made its first attack on an Italian target with a raid on Turin. P/O I Murchie and crew failed to return from this operation. September and October was a very busy period with a total of 15 targets attacked for the loss of 8 aircraft, 4 missing over Occupied Europe, 3 crashed on return to Britain and 1 crash landed in Eire after getting hopelessly lost on the way back from an operation to Frankfurt. This crew were quickly returned to the Squadron and resumed operations.

November began with a raid on Mannheim on the 7/8th but operations were curtailed due to a period of further training and bad weather. Operations in December were hampered by heavy snowfalls at Elsham Wolds. The bad weather made life very difficult for the ground crews and maintenance personnel, many of whom had to work on the aircraft in the open at their dispersals. In addition the conditions at Elsham Wolds were very spartan with inadequate heating and a lack of hot water which made it a very uncomfortable base in winter.

The New Year saw the resumption of the attacks on the 2 German capital ships in Brest and on the 6/7th January 1942 15 Wellingtons from the Squadron flew from Elsham Wolds on a raid which was hampered by ground haze over the target. A similar raid was mounted on the 9/10th January 1942 but again 8/10th cloud cover over the target and a German smoke screen obscuring the ships prevented accurate bombing. On the 10/11th January the Squadron flew a raid to Wilhelmshafen. The Wellington of Sergeant C L Bray RCAF and crew was hit by flak over the target. With the fuselage on fire Sergeant Bray ordered his crew to bale out and 4 of them did so. In the meantime Sergeant D W Spooner RAAF, the co-pilot, had managed to extinguish the fire. In spite of severe damage sustained by the Wellington the pilot and co-pilot managed to navigate and fly the aircraft back to Britain. For this feat each was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal. Both were later killed on

bombing operations with the Squadron. Of the 4 crewmen that parachuted to safety all were made prisoner of war. The navigator, Pilot Officer G E McGill RCAF, was actively involved in the Great Escape from Sagan in March 1944. Following his recapture he was murdered by the Gestapo along with 49 other escapees.



In a carefully and brilliantly executed plan the battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, which had been repaired after suffering constant damage in air attacks, broke out of Brest on the 12th February 1942 with a massive naval and air escort and sailed up the English Channel in an attempt to reach the safety in the German ports. As part of the attempts to stop them 103 Squadron attacked the battleships in spite of the bad weather in the English Channel at that time. The Wellington of Squadron Leader I K P Cross DFC and crew was hit by flak and ditched in the sea during

this operation and Squadron Leader Cross and 3 of his crew survived to be taken prisoner of war. Squadron Leader Cross also escaped from Sagan in the Great Escape but was recaptured and was murdered by the Gestapo on the 30th March 1944.

The Scharnhorst and Gneisenau managed to return to the safety of their German ports but, in the final stages of their voyage, both ships were damaged after striking mines which were probably laid by bombers from 5 Group. The laying of sea mines in the seas around occupied Europe by Bomber Command aircraft throughout the war is an often forgotten and unrecognised aspect of the work of the Command but throughout the war this proved particularly successful. 103

Squadron played its part in the mine laying offensive which was not without dangers of its own.

On the 9th March 1942 Wing Commander J F H Du Boulay DFC took over command of the Squadron from Wing Commander R S Ryan. Operations continued to be mounted by the Squadron on a regular basis throughout the rest of the winter and into early spring. The raid to Cologne on the 13/14th March 1942 was particularly significant because it marked the first successful Gee led raid. Gee was the first radio navigation aid to come into service. Although there was no moon the leading crews were able to find and mark the target with incendiaries for the following bombers. It was later estimated that the raid was 5 times more effective than previous raids on this target and several large industrial premises were hit and production severely disrupted. The raid on Lubeck on the night of the 28/29th March 1942 was also significant because this was the first major success by Bomber Command against a German target. This



target was beyond the range of Gee but was on the coast and so much easier to find. Lubeck was not raided again by Bomber Command. 103 Squadron lost Pilot Officer J E Ward and crew on this operation the aircraft presumed to have crashed in the sea.

April and May of 1942 proved to be a fairly quiet time with the rate of operations slowing down. The Squadron continued to fly to Germany and the U Boat bases on the Western coast of France but the pace was not so intense. The Squadron did however still lose 7 aircraft during this period, 5 on operations, 1 on a training flight and 1 in transit.

The 1000 Bomber Raids

On the 30/31st May 1942 103 Squadron participated in the largest attack yet on a German target when the industrial city of Cologne was the target. The Squadron detailed 19 Wellingtons and crews for this operation, one of which was flown by the Station Commander himself, Group Captain H Constantine. The raid took place on a full moon and caused considerable damage to the city as well as being a massive boost to the morale of the British people. 103 Squadron did not sustain any losses but Flight Lieutenant C H Saxelby and crew were attacked by a night fighter on the return trip which killed Sergeant Roberts and wounded 2 other members of the crew. Squadron Leader Saxelby was able to fly his damaged aircraft back to Britain to crash land at Honnington.

A second Thousand Bomber raid was mounted on Essen the following night but the aircraft had great difficulty in finding the target due in this case to the low cloud and heavy industrial haze in the area of the Ruhr.

There followed a series of attacks on both Essen and Emden during that month. In the raid to Essen on the 5/6th June 1942 the Wellington of Flight Lieutenant W McD Morrison and crew was involved in a collision with another Wellington just inside the German border. Only Morrison of the 2 crews involved survived this incident.

Rumours that the Squadron were to be re-equipped with the new 4 engined Handley Page Halifax Mk II were proved correct when, on the 7th June, a 103 Squadron Conversion Flight was formed under the command of Squadron Leader D W Holford DFC. The 2 instructors in the flight were Pilot Officer Potts and Warrant Officer R J Fulbrook.

On the 23/24th June 1942 103 lost 2 Wellingtons on one minelaying sortie off the Dutch coast. Both were night fighter victims.

A further Thousand Force was sent to Bremen on the 25/26th June 1942. The target was completely

covered by cloud when the bombers arrived and the results were not as good as expected but the raid was still an improvement on the previous Thousand Raid on Essen. 103 Squadron sent 15 Wellingtons and crews without loss.

Several more raids were mounted on Bremen in the next few days with varying results. The last Wellington losses sustained by the Squadron were on the 2/3rd July 1942 in an attack on Bremen when the aircraft of Sergeant D W Spooner and crew and Pilot Officer A T Little and crew both failed to return.

Whilst operating the Wellington 1C the Squadron had participated in 138 bombing operations and 6 minelaying operations, 1116 sorties in total. 31 aircraft had failed

to return, 5 had crashed in England on return, 1 had crashed in the Republic of Ireland, 2 had crashed in during training and 1 was lost on a transit flight.

The Handley Page Halifax

The Halifax was a new aircraft with 4 Merlin engines and was capable of carrying a much heavier bomb load than the Wellington. The early Halifax aircraft were not without their problems and this was evident in 2 separate training crashes when, on the 28th July 1942 and the 1st August 1942, 2 of the aircraft stalled and spun into the ground killing all on board.

Memorial service at Elsham



Dedication service of the memorial for the aircrew of both squadrons, 103 and 576 at Elsham Wolds • The minister on the left speaking to the crowd is the *Reverend Canon E David Ratlidge*. He was the station chaplain at Elsham Wolds from Feb 42 to Aug 44. The man in the white coat is Air Vice Marshall *Sir Tom Prickett*. He flew a tour with 103 Sq as a pilot in 43. The next man is Wing Commander *E D McK Nelson*. He was 103 Squadron commanding officer from Oct 43 to May 44. The tall man in the middle is Air Chief Marshall *Sir Hugh Constantine*. He was the airfield commander at Elsham Wolds in 41, 42 and 43. The minister on the right is the Reverend *Frank Smith* who was with 576 Sq. (Photo: David Fell)

Da krigen kom til Avernakø

In spite of this operations were commenced on the type early in August when several raids were flown on targets in Germany. In the first month of service 103 lost 6 of the new aircraft which included 3 very experienced pilots and their crews. Those concerned were Flight Lieutenant J R Frith and crew, Warrant Officer R L Telfer RCAF and crew and Squadron Leader C K Saxelby and crew. Saxelbys aircraft crashed in Holland and his navigator, Flight Lieutenant T C Pipkin, made a daring escape and evasion and eventually returned to Britain. At the end of September Warrant Officer R J Fulbrook was killed in another training accident along with all on board. The losses continued at a shocking level and in

October 5 more aircraft went missing. These included the experienced crews of Flight Lieutenant G N Parker, Flight Lieutenant K F J Winchester and Squadron Leader S H Fox DFM. From amongst these crews Flight Sergeant G H Mellor and Warrant Officer H J Spiller DFM also evaded and returned to Britain. The losses of such experienced pilots and crews were a serious blow to the Squadron and it was with great relief that they were told that the Halifax's were to be replaced by the Avro Lancaster. Whilst the early

Halifax II had its fair share of problems in later versions it proved to be a very fine and adaptable machine. Wing Commander R A C Carter DSO took over command of the Squadron on the 9th September 1942.

In the short time the Squadron had been equipped with the Halifax 15 bombing operations had been flown, 137 sorties in total. A total of 14 Halifax's had been lost, 10 failed to return from operations, 1 crashed in the Humber Estuary on return and 3 were lost in training accidents.

The Avro Lancaster

An intensive conversion programme started on the 1st November 1942. This involved considerable effort by both air crew and ground staff to familiarise themselves with the new aircraft. By the 21st November all was ready and 103 flew its first operation in its new aircraft. This conversion period of 3 weeks seems astounding by today's standards and must have involved an exceptional amount of effort from all involved.

From the start the Lancaster was a fine aircraft and easily the best 4 engined bomber to be active in the European Theatre of operations. It was easy to fly, manoeuvrable and without vices, strong and capable of absorbing considerable punishment and could carry very heavy bomb loads of 14000lb plus for in excess of 1500 miles.



RAF Elsham Wolds. Dispersal points for aircraft how as ping-pong bat-shaped light areas.



The Focke-Wulff plane factory at Marienburg in East Prussia lies riddled with bomb craters after a raid by US heavy bombers. Britains Air Chief, Marshal Sir Charles Potal called the strike "the most perfect example in history of the accurate distribution of bombs over a target.



Pursuing a policy of devastation: Bomber Command assesses the damage.



Luftkrigen i Europa 1939-1945

1939

1. september:

Tyskland angriber Polen.

3. september:

Luftwaffe udsletter det polske luftvåben.

25. september:

Luftwaffe retter terrorangreb mod Warszawa.

16. oktober:

Luftwaffe angriber den britiske flådebase Scapa Flow.

1940

10. maj:

På 1.-dagen af Tysklands angreb på Vesteuropa bomber Luftwaffe ved en fejltagelse den tyske by Freiburg. Tyskland hævder, at det er RAF og bruger Freiburg-episoden i propagandaen: "Det var RAF, der begyndte at bombe civilbefolkningen."

11. maj:

Den britiske regering beslutter at bombe de tyske byer.

15. maj:

Tysk luftangreb sætter Rotterdam i brand.

10. juli:

Luftwaffe angriber Sydengland.

13. august:

"Slaget om England" begynder. Luftwaffe vil lamme det britiske luftforsvar og angriber med 1500 fly.

15. august:

Luftwaffe angriber med 1700 fly en række mål i Syd- og Midtengland og mister 55 fly.

16. august:

Luftwaffe retter angreb mod Sydengland med 1700 fly.

20. august:

RAF er hårdt presset af Luftwaffes storangreb. Winston Churchill i BBC: "Aldrig før i en strid mellem mennesker har så mange, skyldt så få, så meget".

24. august:

Luftwaffe kaster de første bomber over London.

25. august:

RAF svarer igen på bomberne over London og bomber Berlin.

7. september:

"The Blitz" begynder. Luftwaffe angriber med 300 bombefly, støttet af et stort antal jagermaskiner, London og andre byer. RAF bomber om natten Berlin.

15. september:

"Slaget om England" kulminerer. I et stort luftslag over London nedskyder RAF 56 tyske fly mod eget tab på 26 fly. RAF retter storangreb mod de tyske flådekoncentrationer i kanalhavnene.

17. september:

Hitler opgiver "Operation Søløve", invasionen af England, med begrundelsen, at RAF ikke er nedkæmpet.

8. oktober:

RAF kaster 50 tons bomber over Berlin.

14. november:

Luftwaffes angreb på befolkningscentrene har ikke haft den tilsigtede virkning. Tyskland ændrer strategi: Nu skal Luftwaffe angribe de engelske industricentre. Angrebet på industribyen Coventry med 437 fly kommer til at stå som symbol på Hitlers trussel om at "udradere" de britiske byer.

1941

9. januar:

Luftwaffe bomber London og Manchester. Over Tyskland ses for første gang en Lancaster.

17. april:

685 tyske bombefly angriber London.

8. maj:

RAF retter med 350 bombefly det hidtil største angreb mod Tyskland.

22. juni:

Tyskland angriber Sovjetunionen: Luftwaffe retter et tiltagende slag mod de russiske luftbaser og bomber Kiev, Sevastopol og Odessa.

1942

28. marts:

RAF tæppe-bomber for første gang en tysk by, Lübeck.

30. maj:

Med over 1000 bombemaskiner retter RAF det første "1000-bomber"-angreb mod Köln.

1943

27. januar:

US-Airforce retter det første dagangreb mod Wilhelmshafen.

17. maj:

RAF ødelægger Möhne-dæmningen og oversvømmer dele af Ruhr-området.

10. juni:

RAF og US-Airforce indleder den fælles bombeoffensiv mod Tyskland.

19. juli:

Allierede bombemaskiner angriber 1. første gang Rom.

24. juli:

RAF indleder bombe-kampagnen mod Hamburg.

13. august:

US-Airforce angriber for første gang Østrig.

18. oktober:

RAF begynder bombe-kampagnen mod Berlin.

1944

21. januar:

Tyskland genoptager bombeangreb mod England.

20. februar:

De allierede indleder bombeangreb mod den tyske rustningsindustri.

31. marts:

RAF lider det største tab i krigen ved angreb mod Nürnberg. 95 af 795 bombemaskiner går tabt, en tabsprocent på 11,9.

5. april:

Fra Italien angriber De Allierede de tyske oliekilder i Rumænien.

27. april:

322 Lancastere angriber industribyen Friderichshafen.

19. april:

Luftwaffe angriber for sidste gang England.

6. juni:

Invasjonen: De Allierede råder over 10.150 jagere og bombefly, 1.370 transportfly og 3.520 svæveplaner til troppetransport. I månederne forud for invasionen har RAF og US-Airforce med daglige angreb svækket det tyske militære og industrielle kompleks i Frankrig, flyvepladser, våbendepoter og transportsystemer.

12. juni

Første V-1 raket rammer London.

27. juli:

1000 amerikanske bombefly angriber Launa-rafinaderierne.

1. september:

De tyske V-1 affyringsramper i Nordfrankrig på allierede hænder.

9. september:

London rammes for første gang af en V-2 raket.

7. oktober:

3.000 allierede bombefly opererer over Tyskland.

1945

3. februar:

De Allierede retter det største bombeangreb mod Berlin.

4. februar:

En af krigens største katastrofer rammer Dresden. RAF kaster 3.000 tons bomber, over 60.000 omkommer.

5. april:

De tyske V-2 angreb mod England ophører.

20. april:

US-Airforce retter på Hitlers 56 års fødselsdag det sidste bombeangreb mod Berlin.

25. april:

RAF bomber Hitlers residens, Berghof i Berchtesgaden.

2. maj:

Det sidste allierede bombeangreb mod Tyskland rammer Kiel.



Grave og mindesmærker over de syv.

Af de syv besætningsmedlemmer blev fire fundet og begravet:

R.A. Tapp på Avernakø Kirkegård
K.W. Mitchell på Aastrup Kirkegård.
William Kelly på Faaborgs Ny Assistens Kirkegård
David Howells på Drejød Kirkegård.

De tre, der ikke blev fundet

D.G. Pegrum, T.K. Wright og C.F. Bish er der rejst officielle mindesten over på Runnymede Memorial, Surrey i Sydengland.



Overalt i verden står den officielle sten ved alle kendte grave for britisk faldne i 2. verdenskrig.



RAF-mindesmærket i RUNNYMEDE, Surrey, United Kingdom,

"The Commonwealth War Graves Commission's
(Commonwealth-landenes Krigsgravs-Kommission)
officielle register over, hvor de syv besætningsmedlemmer fra "Lancaster LL 963"s sidste mission, den 16. maj 1944 er begravet eller mindet.

Sergent **RALPH AUBREY TAPP**

103 Sqdn., Royal Air Force Frivillige Reserve som døde tirsdag den 16. maj 1944.
Avernakø Kirkegård, Danmark.

Sergent **DOUGLAS FRANK PEGRUM**

1800767 - 103 Sqdn., Royal Air Force's Frivillige Reserve, som døde tirsdag, den 16. maj 1944.
Mindesmærke: RUNNYMEDE MEMORIAL, Surrey, United Kingdom, grav reference/ Panel nummer: Panel 236. Sted: Mindesmærket ligger på Cooper's Hill i Englefield Green mellem Windsor og Egham ved A308, 4 mil fra Windsor.

Pilot **THOMAS KITCHENER WRIGHT**

170619 - 103 Sqdn., Royal Air Force's Frivillige Reserve, som døde tirsdag den 16. maj 1944. 32 år. Søn af Robert Edmund Wright, og Rosina Wright, Walamstow, Essex.
Mindesmærke: RUNNYMEDE MEMORIAL, Surrey, United Kingdom. Grav reference/ Panel nummer: Panel 213. Sted: Mindesmærket ligger på Cooper's Hill i Englefield Green mellem Windsor og Egham ved A308, 4 mil fra Windsor.

Pilot/kaptajn **KENNETH WALTER MITCHELL**

172974 - 103 Sqdn., Royal Air Force Frivillige Reserve, som døde tirsdag den, 16. maj 1944.
Kirkegård: Aastrup Kirkegård, Danmark. Grav reference/ Panel nummer: Grav 9.

Sergent **WILLIAM KELLY**

1553988 Nav. -103 Sqdn., Royal Air Force Frivillige Reserve, som døde tirsdag den 16. maj 1944. 22 år.
Søn af Daniel og Helen Kelly, Glasgow. Kirkegård: Faaborgs Ny Assistens Kirkegård, Danmark. Grav reference/ Panel nummer: Grave 51.

Sergent **DAVID HOWELLS**

1102739 103 Sqdn., Royal Air Force Frivillige Reserve, som døde tirsdag den 16. maj 1944. 29 år.
Søn af David og Mary Ellen Howells, Clydach Vale, Glamorgan. Kirkegård: Drejød Kirkegård, Danmark

Sergent **CLAUDE FREDERICK BISH**

1333658 103 Sqdn., Royal Air Force Frivillige Reserve, som døde tirsdag den 16. maj 1944. 21 år.
Søn af Charles Frederick og Florence Eva Bish, Horsted Keynes, Sussex. Mindesmærke: RUNNYMEDE MEMORIAL, Surrey, United Kingdom. Grav reference/ Panel nummer: Panel 215. Sted: Mindesmærket ligger på Cooper's Hill i Englefield Green mellem Windsor og Egham ved A308, 4 mil fra Windsor.

“Vold respekterer kun magt”

RAF gjorde forskellen, da England stod alene mod Nazi-Tyskland.

Hvordan kunne en europæisk nation - på et højt kulturelt stadie - gøre sig skyldig i en barbarisme, et voldsorgie uden sidestykke i menneskets historie - med skamstøtterne - *Auschwitz, Treblinka, Lublin-Majdanek, Sobibor, Bergen-Belsen*, hvor

Et personligt synspunkt.

excesserne kulminerede med en bevidst, af race begrundet, udryddelse af 6 millioner mennesker i gaskamre, nedslagtning af utalte millioner civile i Rusland og et

eutanasi-program, der aflivede over 100.000 mentalt syge blandt sine egne borgere? Hvor var bærerne af arven efter Goethe, Heine og Schiller?

Hvorfor var der så få Stauffenberg'er, Olbricht'er, Tresckow'er, Witzleben'er i det tyske officerskorps med civilcourage, der følte et ansvar for at redde den tyske civilisation - og som forsøgte at handle? De seneste 10 års forskning har effektivt gjort op med undskyldningen - “Vi vidste det ikke”.

Påstanden om, at det kun var Himlers SS og Einsatz-udryddelsesgrupperne, der begik “krigsforbrydelser” og “forbrydelser mod menneskeheden” i Østeuropa, er af tyske historikere dokumenteret som en myte, der skulle redde den regulære tyske hærs ære. Store dele af officerskorpset ikke alene “vidste besked” om SS-enhedernes massakrer. Enheder af den regulære tyske hær begik selv krigsforbrydelser, bl.a. vilkårlige henrettelser af civile i Sovjetunionen og på Balkan, som det nu er bevist med billeder, film, dokumenter og vidneudsagn.

Fyns tidl. biskop *Vincent Lind*, der som 18-årig kom i Kz-arbejdslejren Porta Westphalica og senere i Neuengamme, beskriver nazismen som “Magt uden moral”. Den 2. verdenskrig blev en kamp mellem barbari og civilisation.

Denne beretning begrænser sig til bombekrigen, med udgangspunkt i en enkelt RAF-Lancaster og dens syv mands besætning, hvis skæbne blev besejlet ud for Avernakø 20 dage før invasionen i Normandiet 6. juni 1944. De syv unge RAF-besætningsmedlemmer, nogle kun drenge, var en del af den magt, der skulle sætte en stopper for den nazistiske vold.



Omgivet af sine stormtropper (SA) er Hitler på vej op på podiet for at tale til masserne.

Som tiden er gået har historikere rettet et kritisk søgelys mod De Allieredes anvendelse og valg af midler i krigen mod Nazistytret. Specielt mod, at RAF-bombercommand og US-Airforce svarede igen på de tyske bombeangreb mod de britiske byer, specielt “Blitzen” i 1940 mod Londons civilbefolkning, ved at bombe de tyske byer. Det er et spørgsmål for den enkelte at tage

stilling til - 62 år efter at hele Europa var 780 RAF-jagermaskiner fra at blive lagt i nazismens lænker - i “Slaget om England”.

I de 12 måneder fra juni 1940 til juni 1941 stod England alene overfor den sejrrige tyske militærmaskine, der på en måned i september 1939 havde nedkæmpet den

polske hær, Norge og Danmark i april 1940 og “verdens stærkeste hær”, den franske - på 6 uger i forsommeren 1940.

Tyskland havde i august 1939 indgået en venskabspagt med Sovjetunionen, der efter Frankrigs fald i juni 1940 gav Hitler mulighed for at kunne koncentrere hele sin militære kraft mod England. USA var af den isolationistiske stemning hjemme holdt ude af krigen og kom først med, da Japan 7. december 1941 angreb Pearl Harbor.

Alt imens det britiske ørige blev tæppebombet af Luftwaffe i efteråret 1940 måtte England afsætte sin sparsomme ressourcer til at imødegå Tysklands planlagte invasion, “Operation Seelöwe”.

Hvis ikke det var lykkedes RAF at vinde “Slaget om England” i efteråret 1940, ville Tyskland have vundet luftherredømmet og dermed skabt baggrunden for en invasion af England.



Jøder i Warszawa på vej til Kz-lejr - og til gaskammeret.

Efterfølgende ville Tyskland kunne koncentrere hele sit militære indsats i en én-frontskrig mod Sovjetunionen.

Fra Tysklands angreb på Sovjet 22. juni 1941 til De Allieredes invasion i Normandiet 6. juni 1944 efterlyste Stalin skabelsen af “Den 2. front”, De Allieredes landgang i det besatte Europa for at aflaste Sovjet på Østfronten.

Men for England var der ingen “2. front” fra juni 1940 til juni 1941. Tværtimod smurte Sovjetunionen den tyske militærmaskine. Som led i Hitler-Stalin-pagten af 23. august 1939 til Tysklands angreb på Sovjet den 22. juni 1941 rullede dagligt godstog med råstoffer, olie og metaller, fra Sovjet til Tyskland.

Man kan kun gisne om, hvordan krigen havde udviklet sig, hvis ikke RAF havde vundet “Slaget om England”. Det var 2. verdenskrigs egentlige skæbnetime.

Med et England besat af Tyskland, Tysklands én-frontskrig i Øst, ville 6.000 km Atlanterhav have skilt det besatte Europa fra “Demokratiernes arsenal”, våbenhjælpen fra USA.

RAF gjorde forskellen i efteråret 1940 og skabte forudsætningen for Europas - og Tysklands egen - befrielse for Nazismen.

Ebbe Bork-Pedersen



Spitfire - “Slaget om England”. Tegning.

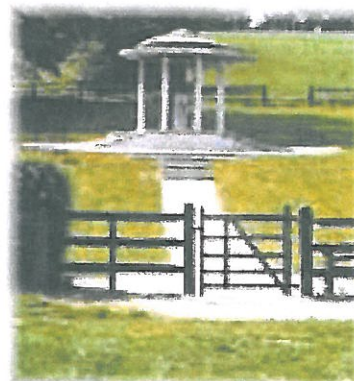
RAF's mindesmærke, Runnymede, England



“Deres navne vil leve til evige tider”

Hendes Majestæt Dronningen indviede i 1953 mindesmærket ved Hovedvej A30, tæt ved stedet, hvor Magna Carta* blev underskrevet. Mindelunden omfatter 20.401 gravsten for mænd og kvinder fra RAF, Royal Canadian Air Force, Royal Australian Air Force, Royal New Zealand Air Force, South African Air Force, Royal Indian Air Force. En større mindesammenkomst holdes hvert år på søndagen før den 2. tirsdag i maj. Mindelunden er åben hver dag, undtagen Jul og Nytår.

*Magna Carta - det store frihedsbrev (håndfæstning), som den engelske konge John Lackland måtte undertegne 1215 på engen Runnymede ved Themsen til sikring af kirkens, adelens og borgernes hævdvundne rettigheder og privilegier mod overgreb fra kongens side.



*The first rays of the dawning sun
Shall touch its pillars,
And as the Day advances
And the light grows stronger,
You shall read the names
Engraved on the stone
Of those who sailed on the angry sky
And saw harbour no more.
No gravestone in yew-dark churchyard
Shall mark their resting place;
Their bones lie in the forgotten corners
Of earth and sea.
But, that we may not lose their memory
With fading years, their monument stands here,
Here, where the trees troop down to Runnymede.*

*Meadow of Magna Carta, field of freedom,
Never saw you so fitting a memorial,
Proof that the principals established here
Are still dear to the hearts of men.
Here now they stand, contrasted and alike,
The field of freedom's birth, and the memorial
To freedom's winning.*

*And, as evening comes,
And mists, like quiet ghosts, rise from the river bed,
And climb the hill to wander through the cloisters,
We shall not forget them. Above the mist
We shall see the memorial still, and over it
The crown and single star. And we shall pray
As the mists rise up and the air grows dark
As brave a heart as they.*

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