

DECLASSIFIED

Report on Operation of No.263 Squadron in
Norway, by Squadron Leader J.W. Donaldson,
Officer Commanding.

Squadron arrived 24th of April at 1900 hrs. with eighteen aircraft at frozen lake - Lesjaskozen. Aircraft were refuelled and dispersed around perimeter of woods and runway. A section was detailed to patrol the aerodrome 6,000 feet. Section took off 2200 hrs in darkness to intercept one unidentified aircraft. Interception was made and aircraft was identified as Norwegian. Pilots landed aircraft successfully in darkness without night flying equipment. Morning of 25th April operation orders issued for one section to patrol over Lake at 6000 feet at 0300 hrs. Two sections at readiness and one available 15 mins. It was not until 0500 hrs that first three aircraft were able to be started owing to the carburettors being frozen due to extreme cold air. This section intercepted He.115 and two He.111. The He.115 was shot down.

From 0515 hrs. the aerodrome was continuously bombed and machine gunned until 2000 hrs. During the attack 13 Gladiators were completely destroyed and the aerodrome surface made totally unserviceable. It is necessary to emphasise that aircraft could not be started owing to extreme cold conditions, and squadron was without its equipment, and more especially its starter trolley's to enable easier starting. Also refuelling and rearming took between 50 and 70 minutes to complete, owing to snow drifts and many other hazards, to be contended with. Aircraft had also to be refuelled and rearmed by hand under severe conditions of bombing and machine gunning. During the day 31 interceptions were made; six enemy aircraft were shot down and eight other enemy aircraft with either one engine damaged or rear gunner shot, and put out of action.

Squadron Leader Donaldson (32074) and Flight Lieutenant Mills carried out continued attack on He 111 (deflection attack) aircraft crashed on mountain top. Four other attacks were made by S/Ldr. Donaldson on formation of three He.111 and one single He.111. The attack on single He.111 was successful and He.111 crashed 20 miles west of base in valley, rear gunner shot and pilot found shot. (Full deflection attack employed). Finally when out of ammunition was attacked by four Ju.88. These aircraft found to be very manoeuvrable and performance estimated at 350 m.p.h. Aircraft used .303 bore to commence attack (tracer) and then tracer cannon fire. The following recommendations are strongly recommended:-

F/Lt. R.S. Mills recommended for D.F.C.
Remained in cock-pit of aircraft whilst bombing attack in progress, and started machine and took it off under machine gun fire. For assisting in destroying one He.111 and attacking eight other He.111 and three Ju.88. For carrying out successful forced landing when cannon shots had removed one aircraft cylinder and starboard interplane strut. For taking over deserted Norwegian .5 machine gun post during ground straffing raid and firing at enemy aircraft when he himself was under severe fire.

P/O. McNamara recommended for D.F.C.
For leading a successful attack on He.111. This officer showed great determination and courage in pursuing his attacks at correct range despite accurate tracer fire from rear gunner. For showing bravery and steadying the morale of ground personnel during bombing attack of which three bombs burst within a close

distance of his aircraft whilst he remained in the cock-pit trying to start his engine on the battery, and finally taking off under machine gun fire.

P/O. Purdy recommended for D.F.C.

For leading successful attack against He.11. For remaining in cockpit whilst three aircraft (He.111) were making bombing run up: bombs burst all around the aircraft and pilot only abandoned his aircraft when it burst into flames. Pilot received serious burns on the face and hands. This pilot despite his injuries insisted on helping to start two aircraft whilst Lake was attacked with machine gun fire. This officer also assisted F/Lt. Mills load anti-aircraft machine gun at deserted post and fire caused attacking aircraft to disperse away from aerodromes.

Combat Report by Flt. Lt. R.S. Mills. No. 263 Squadron.

Notes concerning an engagement with Ju.88.

I noticed a formation of three Ju.88 which were about to attack the lake.

I delivered an attack on the rear aircraft but when I was seen, the formation increased their speed. I realised the aircraft were Ju.88. They are beautifully finished on the surface of fuselage and well stream lined. During the engagement with the three Ju, I found myself being out-maneuvred and had no advantage in attempting to climb so I decided to fight on a line of tactics of attempting to collide with them having very little ammunition remaining (after six other combats) and caused one front gunner to cease fire and I believe one rear gunner. I ran out of ammunition and petrol and landed on runway, and with only a few minutes petrol I drove the enemy away by attempting to collide it was my only hope to keep them away from the lake and to save myself from being shot down. This change of tactics enabled the enemy to inflict damage on my aircraft. An inner plane strut was shot away, large holes on the leading edges of my main planes but as I made my last dive at one Ju.88 to try and hit him, the aircraft turned to avoid collision and then withdrew just as my petrol was exhausted and I forced landed in the snow successfully. The holes were caused by cannon-fire from the front guns. The holes on my aircraft were large about 4 to 5 inches in diameter wherever they struck the aircraft, there were about 15 holes. I was unable to carry out any further examination as I became a target for a number of ground strafing He.111. My aircraft was set on fire as I left it. I walked to the lake and tried to start another aircraft but was forced to leave and this aircraft was also bombed.

Combat Report during morning patrol of 2½ hours.

Attacked one He.111 setting his port engine on fire and turning noticed three He.111 approaching aerodrome at a low altitude. I attacked this formation each aircraft in turn from astern. This formation broke up and made off in different directions. I followed one firing and killed the rear gunner two burst entered the nose of the fuselage when I left the aircraft it was losing speed and height. I broke off the attack as the lake was being bombed so I attacked the bombing He.111 as it made his second run. I was out of ammunition so I made feint attacks and the He.111 left the lake. I noticed another He.111 approaching the lake and my feint attacks were also successful in driving the enemy away. During this patrol I am certain of causing two He.111 to crash the third being unconfirmed.

Afternoon Patrol.

I attempted to start an aircraft but left owing to bomb attacks and I found a deserted Norge gun and with the aid of Pilot Officer Purdy we were able to drive a He.111 away. A number of hits were observed. The bomber released his bombs but they were not accurate. Pilot Officer Purdy, although badly burnt, assisted me to start an aircraft when we were being bombed and machine gunned. I joined up with my C.O. and attacked a

/He.111.

He.111. This He.111 was set on fire, one engine and crashed. I lost my C.O. and then noticed him attacking a formation of He.111. I saw the formation being broken up and the He.111 dived into the snow in one of the valleys. The C.O. prevented any of these He.111 from attacking the lake. I then attacked another three He.111 during the course of my patrol how much damage I inflicted I cannot say as there was always another He. to attack. I remember seeing an He.111 flying low along a valley I attacked this aircraft and killed the rear gunner. I placed a short burst in the fuselage which caused the He. to drop his undercarriage I broke away as I was running short of petrol and lost certain of my position. I landed on the lake and saw 3 Ju.88 approaching the lake so I took off again and attacked these aircraft eventually force landing through lack of petrol. In all I had sixteen combats but what distressed me was being compelled to break off my attacks having to conserve my ammunition which perhaps enabled me to place accurate burst at enemy aircraft and having no quick refuelling and rearming facilities. For myself I know I shot down two He.111 helped my C.O. on another. I am also certain that I scored four other victories but I had always to leave my target as there would be another attacking the lake. The other officers worked themselves to a standstill helping to refuel and rearm whilst under severe gunfire and continuous bombing attacks.

Prisoner Interrogation Reports

1-6-40

PLANE - HEINKEL BOMBER 111

Crew of 4.

Took off from VESTERLAND, Germany on reconnaissance. Ordered not to proceed much further north than Harstad area.

Shot down by Hurricane, which they only saw for a few minutes owing to cloud, and they do not know what became of it,

They themselves landed on an island off HINNOYAND, their plane caught fire on landing. It had been their intention to refuel at Oslo on the return journey back to VESTERLAND.

Norwegian civilians stole their papers, wallets etc. on landing.

All are anxious to leave HARSTAD.

PLANE - HEINKEL BOMBER 111

Took off from TRONDHEIM aerodrome at 9.0. a.m. on 28.5.40, under orders to bomb warships lying off NARVIK. Plane was unaccompanied.

Defect in bomb release apparatus, so no bombs could be dropped.

Brought down by two Hurricanes, whose shooting was stated to be extremely good. They do not believe the Hurricanes were damaged. They crashed into the sea at 11.30 p.m. when rear gunner was either drowned or killed. Crew picked up by Puffer in middle of OFOTEN FJORD. Puffer manned by British who removed all clothing, valuables, identity discs etc.

PLANE - MESSERSCHMIDT 110

Unteroffizier Helmuth FEIG. Air Force . Age 26

Left OLDENBIRG, Germany 24.5.40.

Five days in STAVANGER. Left there in 29.5.40 by plane as fighter escort for 3 Bombers. It was believed that there was an air craft carrier near HARSTAD, hence need for fighters.

He was an observer. Pilot was Oberleutnant Jäger (see separate report and c.f. reports).

Refuelled at VERNES on way up at 6.30. Forced landing at 8.30. owing to radiator trouble in sea off BALLANGEN.

Route followed was out to sea.

It was his first flight up here. States that aerodromes in this country are on the whole far too small for bombers, which usually come from Germany. Says VERNES is very small and difficult to land. STAVANGER aerodrome much better.

Anxious to leave HARSTAD.