

Chapter Two

July 1941: Blenheims, Stirlings and Bf109s

1st July 1941

The day began with a loss for Fighter Command when Sergeant F.A.Thornber, a 91 Squadron Spitfire pilot, failed to return from a dawn weather reconnaissance.

In the morning, the first of 39 Blenheims were sent out on anti-shipping and cloud cover bombing missions. Squadron Leader H.D.Cooper's 21 Squadron aircraft departed at 08.30 hours and failed to return. It was shot down by *Flak* near Hamburg, only the pilot being captured. A second Blenheim, flown by Sergeant E.Fenton of 139 Squadron, was intercepted 60 km northwest of Vlieland by a Bf109 of 3./JG 52 flown by *Feldwebel* Friedrich-Karl Bachmann, who shot it down at 12.48 hours with the loss of the crew.

In addition to Blenheims, six Stirlings had also been despatched as cloud cover raiders. Three of 7 Squadron were sent to Aurich and Emden and these were engaged by both Bf109s from 1./JG 52 and Bf110s from 6./ZG 76. The '109s attacked off Borkum, where *Unteroffiziers* Georg Brey of 1 *Staffel* and Wilhelm Summerer of 3 *Staffel* claimed one apiece – the latter actually misidentifying the Stirling as a 'B-17'. Flying Officer J.Kinnane's bomber was last seen circling a dinghy and fighting off two Messerschmitt Bf109s. It did not return. Flying Officer Witt's aircraft also came under attack and was slightly damaged, but his rear gunner, Pilot Officer J.L.A.Mills, fought back despite being wounded. He claimed a '109 destroyed and another damaged and indeed two Messerschmitts were hit, both crash-landing on Texel. They were probably flown by the two German pilots mentioned above.

Bf109 pilots from 1./JG 52 were based in Holland and on airfields in the Frisian Islands. They were often engaged against the unescorted British Stirlings, sent against northern German ports.



1941: The Non-Stop Offensive

Meanwhile, *Unteroffizier* Einar Armgrimm and *Leutnant* Oskar Hautt, Bf110 pilots from 6./ZG 76, reported engaging Stirlings 150km west of Vlieland, each claiming one destroyed. Sergeant Madgewick's aircraft was badly shot-up, but he brought it back with no injuries to the crew.

In the early evening *Circus No.28* was despatched, but the mission was aborted due to haze. The Tangmere Wing continued on to carry out a fighter sweep and Sergeant Smith of 145 Squadron fired at a lone Bf109 without effect.

One Coastal Command crew was lost when a 206 Squadron Hudson flown by Pilot Officer J.F.Bendix failed to return from an afternoon patrol. This was engaged and shot down by an unidentified German bomber crew - probably from *I./KG 40* - at 14.53 hours, 190 km east of Brest.

One inconclusive combat took place when a 143 Squadron Beaufighter crew fought an He111 at 09.00 hours.

Casualties 1st July 1941

Royal Air Force

7 Sqn	Stirling	N6013	Failed to return. Last seen fighting Bf109s NW Borkum. F/O J.Kinnane and crew lost.
7 Sqn	Stirling	N3655	Cat B to Bf110. Sgt Madgewick and crew unhurt.
7 Sqn	Stirling	N6005	Cat A to Bf109. Sgt Witt and crew unhurt
21 Sqn	Blenheim	V6396	Failed to return. Crashed at Suederhastedt.. S/L H.D.H.Cooper DFC captured, two killed.
86 Sqn	Beaufort	X8925	Overshot Cosford. P/O A.T.Leaming and crew unhurt.
91 Sqn	Spitfire	R7340	Failed to return. Sgt F.A.Thornber killed.
139 Sqn	Blenheim	V6258	Failed to return. Lost to fighter N Vlieland. Sgt K.Fenton and crew missing.
143 Sqn	Beaufighter	T3234	Swung landing Ringway. F/O G.J.Lemar and crew unhurt.
206 Sqn	Hudson	AE609	Failed to return. P/O J.F.Bendix and crew missing in combat west of Brest.
209 Sqn	Catalina	AH557	Lost hatch and beached. S/L B.A.Wood and crew unhurt.
405 Sqn	Wellington	LQ-	Damaged on the ground at Pocklington. Sgt Conroy and crew safe.
603 Sqn	Spitfire	W3123	Cat B; Stalled at Southend. Sgt C.W.M.Neill safe.
611 Sqn	Spitfire	R7274	Cat B; Bellylanded Hornchurch. F/L J.B.H.Brunier safe.

Luftwaffe

I./JG 52	Bf109F2	8197	Crashed landing Texel. Aircraft 35% damaged.
I./JG 52	Bf109F2	8129	Crashed landing Texel. Aircraft 35% damaged.
E./JG 53	Bf109E8	6494	Crash-landed La Rochelle. Engine failure. Aircraft 35% damaged.
III./KG 26	He111H5	4065	Crashed landing at Poix-Nord; Pilot error. Aircraft 40% damaged. (NC)
I./KG 40	FW200C-3	—	Damaged west of Ireland. Bf wounded. Negligible damage.

1/2nd July 1941

The *Luftwaffe* flew anti-shipping operations off the east coast of Scotland and in the Bristol Channel, plus much minelaying in the Thames estuary, some 50 aircraft operating. There were no fighter engagements except for a 'Blue on Blue' engagement noted below.

Only No.3 Group operated, losing three from the five aircraft sent to Brest. Pilot Officer S.L.St.Vincent-Welch and his crew fell to *Flak* over the target and Pilot Officer J.E.Horsefield and his crew were shot down at

<p>Bomber Command Operations Brest 43, Cherbourg 5</p>

Plouzane, ten miles to the west. There were no survivors from either of these 149 Squadron aircraft. A third Wellington, the 311 Squadron machine flown by Sergeant O.Helma, became the victim of a 'Blue on Blue' incident when it was shot down by – it is believed – by a Beaufighter of 604 Squadron flown by Wing Commander John Cunningham and crashed at Mere, Somerset. Again the crew perished.

Casualties 1/2nd July 1941

Royal Air Force

149 Sqn	Wellington R3143	Failed to return. Crashed Brest. P/O S.L.St.Vincent-Welch and crew lost.
149 Sqn	Wellington R1408	Failed to return. Crashed Plouzane,W Brest. F/O J.E.Horsfield and crew killed.
311 Sqn	Wellington R1516	Crashed Mere, Soms. Believed shot down by Beaufighter. Sgt O.Helma and crew killed.

Luftwaffe

- nil -

2nd July 1941

The late morning saw *Circus No.29* carried out, twelve Blenheims with twelve escorting fighter squadrons off to attack the Lille power station. Haze prevented target identification and the bombers attacked Lille and

Circus No.29 to Lille	
12 Blenheims	
Close Escort	71, 303, 308 Sqns
Cover Wing	74, 92, 609 Sqns
Target Support	145, 610, 616 Sqns
Rear Support	242, 258, 312 Sqns

Merville airfield as targets of opportunity. Fighters from *JG 2* and *JG 26* were airborne and, to the RAF pilots, seemed more determined than usual, only stopping when the French coast was reached. The Close Escort Wing was harried from Lille to the coast. They made the following claims: Squadron Leader H.de la.C.Woodhouse of 71 Squadron claimed two destroyed, while Pilot Officers W.R.Dunn, G.A.Daymond and R.L.Mannix claimed one shot down apiece, Pilot Officer V.R.Bono claiming

1941: The Non-Stop Offensive



Tangmere successes: (left to right) Alan Smith, Douglas Bader and Philip 'Nip' Heppell all claimed 'doubles' on 2nd July. Alan Smith was Bader's usual wingman. All three survived the war and Smith was knighted in 1982.

one damaged. 308 Squadron claimed Bf109s destroyed by Pilot Officers B.Kudrewicz, W.Bozek, Squadron Leader M.Pisarek and Sergeants J.Zielinski (two) and Sgt S.Widlarz. The latter also claimed a 'probable', as did Sergeant S.Krzyzagorski. Kudrewicz also claimed strikes on another. For 303 Squadron, Flight Lieutenant W.Kolaczkowski claimed one destroyed and Flying Officer J.E.L.Zumbach two, Pilot Officer M.Lipinski claiming one damaged. The Wing suffered however, for 308 Squadron lost Flight Lieutenant E.S.Kawnik missing and Sergeant P.Kowala captured, while Squadron Leader M.Pisarek and Pilot Officer Kudrewicz both had their Spitfires badly shot-up. The latter being wounded. Pisarek was "*chased all over the Channel by Jerries*" and force-landed at Manston with his fighter "*rid-dled*". 303 Squadron lost Squadron Leader W.Lapkowski, their highly successful commander, while Sergeant R.Gorecki, wounded, ditched his crippled Spitfire into the Channel from where he was later rescued. Sergeant M.Wojciechowski was also wounded, but brought his fighter home. 71 Squadron lost Pilot Officer W.T.Hall to *Hauptmann* Rolf-Peter Pingel, *Gruppenkommandeur* of I./JG 26. He went down south of Dunkirk to become a prisoner. Pilot Officer G.A.Daymond's Spitfire was badly shot-up but he returned unhurt.

The Cover Wing from Biggin Hill was engaged near Lille, where Wing Commander A.G.Malan shared the destruction of a Messerschmitt with Sergeant W.G.Lockhart of 74 Squadron, the fight continuing to Gravelines, where Flight Sergeant D.E.Kingaby of 92 Squadron claimed



(left) Sqn Ldr Waclaw Lapkowski, CO of 303 Sqn, was lost into the Channel. He had claimed a total of six confirmed kills. (right) Sgt Larry Robillard of 145 Sqn was luckier. He evaded through France to Spain and survived the war.

two Bf109s shot down and Sergeants D.E.Lloyd and A.Pietrasiak also from 92 claimed another apiece. 74 Squadron lost two pilots, Flying Officer S.Z.Krol and Sergeant G.T.Evans both being captured. Krol was later murdered by the *Gestapo*.

Douglas Bader's Target Support Wing from Tangmere was also engaged near Lille and the Wing Leader claimed two Messerschmitts destroyed, as did Pilot Officer P.W.Heppell and Sergeant A.Smith of 616, Alan Smith also claiming one damaged. Sergeant J.G.L.Robillard of 145 claimed two Bf109s destroyed and for 610 Squadron, Sergeant G.Mains claimed one shot down and Pilot Officer F.A.O Gaze claimed one damaged. One Spitfire was lost, when 'Larry' Robillard failed to return. He evaded capture and reached England via Spain.

It was near Merville when the Bf109s finally succeeded in getting through to the bombers. *Oberstleutnant* Adolf Galland, *Kommodore* of JG 26 and *Hauptmann* Rudolf Bieber of *Stab I./JG 26* hurtled through the top cover to claim a Blenheim apiece as did *Leutnant* Horst Ulenberg of 2 *Staffel*. Galland recalled,

"We reached a favourable position for attacking.I gave the order for the attack and I was the first to dive down through the English fighter escort on to the bombers. Flying in a shallow right bank, I fired from a distance of about 200 metres right down to ramming distance at one of the Blenheims in the first row of the formation. Pieces of metal and other parts broke away from the fuselage and from the right engine. Then she went up in flames and smoke."

1941: The Non-Stop Offensive

Pilots of 9./JG 2. Fw Heinz Jahner (right in photo) baled out wounded after being attacked by Spitfires.



He then got involved with the escorts. One of his ground crew had installed a new piece of armour plate above the cockpit and this saved his life as his '109 was hit by cannon fire. He managed to escape with a slight head wound and said,

“Unteroffizier Meyer got special leave and 100 Marks. I valued my head that much.”

Leutnant Egon Mayer of 7./JG 2 and Feldwebel Günther Seeger of Stab./JG 2 also claimed Blenheims and clearly ‘double claimed’ with the JG 26 pilots, for only two Blenheims fell. Flight Sergeants J.W.Stanley and A.R.Carvell were both lost with their crews at Merville. Claimants for RAF fighters were;

1./JG 2	Ofw Rudolf Täschner	Spitfire	
4./JG 2	Oblt Hans-Jürgen Hepe	Spitfire	
7./JG 2	Lt Egon Mayer	Spitfire	
7./JG 2	Lt Friedrich Kellner	Spitfire	
8./JG 2	Lt Bruno Stolle	Spitfire	W Armentieres
9./JG 2	Fw Heinz Jahner	Spitfire	
St III./JG 2	Hptm Hans Hahn	Hurricane	Hazebrouck
St I./JG 26	Hptm Rolf-Peter Pingel	Spitfire	
1./JG 26	Oblt Josef Priller	Spitfire	10 km W Lille
6./JG 26	Oblt Walter Schneider	Spitfire	Mardyck
St IIII./JG 26	Hptm Gerhard Schöpfel	Spitfire	

‘Assi’ Hahn’s Hurricane claim probably relates to that flown by Pilot Officer G.A. ‘Gus’ Daymond of 71 Squadron, who returned unhurt but with his fighter badly shot-up. For the twelve confirmed claims above, seven Spitfires failed to return and a further three Spitfires and one Hurricane sus-



(left) On July 2nd *Obstlt Adolf Galland* owed his life to an extra piece of armour plate when attacking a *Blenheim*. (right) The burnt-out remains of an *RAF Blenheim* lie in a French field. (ww2images.com)

tained severe battle damage, with two pilots wounded. German losses amounted to five, including one shot down by own *Flak* gunners. *RAF* pilots had claimed 26 confirmed victories.

Coastal Command lost a *Blenheim* fighter from 248 Squadron that was engaged and shot down 80km northwest of *Texel* by *Unteroffizier Fritz Metzler* of *3./JG 52*. *1./JG 52* reported a '109 shot down in combat, *Leutnant Karl Rung* being rescued, presumably in this action.

During the day uneventful sweeps were flown by fighters from *Martlesham Heath* and *Hornchurch* and Coastal Command *Blenheims* were escorted on a *Roadstead* to *Le Touquet* by *Biggin Hill* pilots, also without incident.

Casualties 2nd July 1941

Royal Air Force

71 Sqn	Hurricane	Z3094	Failed to return. P/O W.T.Hall captured.
71 Sqn	Hurricane	Z3185	Cat B. P/O G.A.Daymond unhurt.
72 Sqn	Spitfire	P7376	Cat B; Crashed landing at Acklington. P/O L.B.Fordham safe.
74 Sqn	Spitfire	W3263	Failed to return. F/O S.Z.Krol shot by Gestapo in 1944.
74 Sqn	Spitfire	W3259	Failed to return. Sgt G.T.Evans captured.
74 Sqn	Spitfire	P8560	Cat A; Damaged landing Manston. Sgt C.J.Stuart safe.
74 Sqn	Spitfire	W3412	Cat A; Overshot Gravesend. P/O W.M.Skinner safe.
145 Sqn	Spitfire	P8536	Failed to return. Sgt J G L.Robillard evaded capture and returned via Spain.
226 Sqn	Blenheim	Z7440	Failed to return. Crashed Merville. F/Sgt J.W.Stanley and crew all killed.
226 Sqn	Blenheim	V6085	Failed to return. Crashed Merville. F/Sgt A.R.Carvell captured, crew killed.

1941: The Non-Stop Offensive

248 Sqn.	Blenheim	Z6171	Failed to return. Lost to fighter 80 km NW Texel. P/O R.R.J.Powell and crew missing.
303 Sqn	Spitfire	P8329	Cat E; Heavy landing Martlesham Heath. F/O W.Strembosz injured.
303 Sqn	Spitfire	P8596	Failed to return. S/L W.Lapkowski killed.
303 Sqn	Spitfire	P8463	Abandoned Channel, Sgt R.Gorecki rescued wounded.
303 Sqn	Spitfire	P8390	Cat.B; Sgt M.Wojciechowski wounded.
308 Sqn	Spitfire	P8525	Failed to return. F/L E.S.Kawnik killed.
308 Sqn	Spitfire	P7536	Failed to return. Sgt P.Kowala captured.
308 Sqn	Spitfire	P7446	Cat B; landed Manston. S/L M.Pisarek unhurt.
308 Sqn	Spitfire	P7883	Cat B. P/O B.Kudrewicz wounded.
317 Sqn	Hurricane	V7339	Ran off runway and damaged. Sgt B.Malinowski unhurt.
1 PRU	Spitfire	X4492	Cat B; Crashed landing Benson. P/O J.Morgan safe.

Luftwaffe

I./JG 2	Bf109E7	3775	Force-landed at Mardyck, engine failure. Aircraft 10% damaged. (NC)
4./JG 2	Bf109F2	6758	Shot down by fighter 1km SW Cassel. Oblt Hans-Jürgen Hepe (StK) baled out wounded. Aircraft destroyed.
III./JG 2	Bf109F1	5718	Damaged by fighter and force-landed near Fruges. Aircraft 30% damaged.
9./JG 2	Bf109F2	5530	Shot down by fighter at Norrent-Fontes. Fw Heinz Jahner baled out wounded. Aircraft destroyed.
Stab./JG 26	Bf109F2	—	Damaged by Spitfire. Obstlt Adolf Galland wounded. Extent of damage unknown.
2./JG 26	Bf109E7	3213	Shot down near Calais by own Flak. Oblt Martin Rysavy (StK) killed. Aircraft destroyed.
1./JG 26	Bf109F2	12853	Crashed St Omer. Technical failure. Lt Kurt-Erich Wenzel baled out wounded. Aircraft destroyed.
E./JG 26	Bf109E3	1400	Force-landed at St Amand, engine failure. Aircraft 20% damaged.
1./JG 52	Bf109F2	5514	Shot down PQ 44/7 Lt Karl Rung rescued. Aircraft KD+YR lost.
E./JG 53	Bf109E7	2990	Crashed landing at La Rochelle. Aircraft 20% damaged. (NC)
13./JG 77	Bf109F-2	7764	Probably collided PQ 5963. Uffz Kurt Dopfer killed. Aircraft KD+QB lost.
13./JG 77	Bf109F-2	7744	Probably collided PQ 5963. Uffz August Scheimann missing. Aircraft RB+OQ lost.
IV./KG 27	He111H2	2738	Tyre damage landing at Avord. Aircraft 10% damaged. (NC)
II./KG 40	Do217E1	5083	Crashed near Belfort, engine failure. Oblt Georg Wolff and two crew injured. Aircraft destroyed. (NC)
SND Führer West	FW58	2164	Force-landed near Bretteville, engine failure. Aircraft 35% damaged. (NC)

2/3rd July 1941

German aircraft flew operations in the Western Approaches as far north as Cardigan, while others laid mines in the Thames estuary and flew anti-



Havocs of 85 Sqn became very effective night fighters, with up to eight forward-firing machine-guns. Plt Off P.W.Arbon's crew was successful on 2/3rd.

shipping missions off East Anglia, the total number of aircraft employed being estimated as 35. Two interceptions took place, the first at 01.40 hours, when Pilot Officer P.W.Arbon of 85 Squadron engaged an He111 some 30 miles south east of Clacton. The Havoc pilot claimed it probably destroyed. Over an hour later, Pilot Officer R.P.Stevens of 151 Squadron claimed a Ju88 destroyed in roughly the same area. It is likely that his opponent was actually an He111 of *Stab./KGr.100*, flown by *Feldwebel* Karl-Heinz Plundtke, that failed to return from a shipping strike.

Four aircraft were lost from the listed raids. A Wellington of 12 Squadron, flown by Flight Lieutenant W.B.Baxter, is believed to have been lost at sea. A Hampden of 106 Squadron fell to *Flak* at Grosskönigsdorf with the loss of Flight Lieutenant J.F.Sharpe and his crew. The final two fell to a nightfighter crew from *2./NJG 1*. *Oberleutnant* Reinhold Knacke, hunting near Maastricht, caught Sergeant A.Jephson's 78 Squadron Whitley and shot it down at Itteren at 01.03 hours, killing the crew. Nine minutes later Pilot Officer R.A.Walker's 106 Squadron Hampden suffered the same fate, falling 8km southwest of Maastricht. The pilot and two of his crew baled out and were captured, but one man was killed. Other nightfighter crews damaged a 15 Squadron Stirling and a 115 Squadron Wellington, but one crew claimed a Bf110 shot down in flames – quite correctly, as one from *II./NJG 1* fell in flames near Langweer, south-southeast of Sneek. This crew baled out.

<p>Bomber Command Operations Duisburg 39, Köln 44, Bremen 54, Cherbourg 3</p>
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sea. A Hampden of 106 Squadron fell to *Flak* at Grosskönigsdorf with the loss of Flight Lieutenant J.F.Sharpe and his crew. The final two fell to a nightfighter crew from *2./NJG 1*. *Oberleutnant* Reinhold Knacke, hunting near Maastricht, caught Sergeant A.Jephson's 78 Squadron Whitley and shot it down at Itteren at 01.03 hours, killing the crew. Nine minutes later Pilot Officer R.A.Walker's 106 Squadron Hampden suffered the same fate, falling 8km southwest of Maastricht. The pilot and two of his crew baled out and were captured, but one man was killed. Other nightfighter crews damaged a 15 Squadron Stirling and a 115 Squadron Wellington, but one crew claimed a Bf110 shot down in flames – quite correctly, as one from *II./NJG 1* fell in flames near Langweer, south-southeast of Sneek. This crew baled out.

Casualties 2/3rd July 1941

Royal Air Force

12 Sqn	Wellington W5419	Failed to return. F/L W.B.Baxter and crew lost in sea.
15 Sqn	Stirling W7428	Damaged by nightfighter. Sgt Jones and crew unhurt.
78 Sqn	Whitley Z6558.	Failed to return. Crashed Itteren. Sgt A.Jephson crew killed.
106 Sqn	Hampden AD862	Failed to return. Crashed 8 km SW Maastrich. P/O R.A.Walker and two crew captured, one killed.

1941: The Non-Stop Offensive

106 Sqn	Hampden	AD873	Failed to return. Lost Grosskönigsdorf. F/L J.F.Sharpe and crew killed.
115 Sqn	Wellington	KO-	Damaged by nightfighter crew unhurt.
125 Sqn	Defiant	N1748	Cat A: Damaged landing Colerne. Sgt Olley and crew unhurt.
311 Sqn	Wellington	T2561	Hit balloon cable on return. Landed safely, crew unhurt.

Luftwaffe

St./KGr.100	He111H3	6884	Failed to return from English east coast. Fw Karl-Heinz Plundke and crew missing. Aircraft 6N+BA lost.
4./NJG 1	Bf110C4	1305	Shot down near Langmeer. Crew baled out. Aircraft destroyed.

3rd July 1941

In the mid-morning *Circus No.30* was flown to attack the Hazebrouck

Circus No.30 to Hazebrouck 6 Blenheims	
Escort Wing	303, 306, 308, 71 Sqns
Cover Wing	145, 610, 616 Sqns
Target Support	54, 603, 611 Sqns
	74, 92, 609 Sqns
Rear Support	258, 312, 485 Sqns

marshalling yards. Sun glare prevented target identification and a railway yard near St Omer was bombed instead. The 139 Squadron Blenheims were broken up by *Flak* in the target area and one was shot down, Sergeant J.A.Cormack's aircraft falling near St.Omer. Around seventy Bf109s from

both *JG 2* and *JG 26* were airborne, but the combats were few. The Cover Wing from Tangmere engaged fighters southwest of Lille, where Flight Lieutenant R.A.Lee-Knight and Pilot Officer J.R.Stoop jointly claimed a Bf109 destroyed, Lee-Knight also claiming a second probably destroyed. Sergeant E.W.Merriman sighted an Hs126 over Hazebrouck and went down to attack. This was also seen by Sergeant R.D.Bowen of 616 Squadron, who joined in, but misjudged his own attack and struck it with his port wingtip. The Henschel was claimed jointly destroyed. Despite this, no such casualty appears in German records. Sergeant D.D.Crabtree was shot down, baling out to become a prisoner. A second Spitfire was lost when Sergeant M.K.McHugh from 611 Squadron, part of the Hornchurch Target Support Wing, went down in flames near Hazebrouck and was killed. These two aircraft probably fell to *Leutnant* Egon Mayer of 7./*JG 2* and *Oberleutnant* Rudolf Pflanz of *Stab./JG 2*. One victory was claimed by 603 however when Sergeant W.J.Jackman claimed a Bf109 shot down into the Channel. Wing Commander A.G.Malan's Biggin Hill Spitfires, the second Target Support Wing, engaged between St.Omer and Hazebrouck, where 'Sailor' Malan claimed one damaged and Flight Sergeant D.E.Kingaby of 92 Squadron