

Worksheet 3: Horsham's Spitfire

Background: Horsham's "Spitfire Fund"

During World War Two many towns and cities raised money to buy planes for the air force. They would raise money then give it to the Minister for Aircraft Production. The money was used to fund the building of a new plane. So Horsham began a Spitfire Fund. Spitfires were fighter planes. They helped Britain win the Battle of Britain.

The fundraising was managed by Mr W. S. Parsons. He organised events, dances and whist drives to raise money for the fund. Mr Parsons even persuaded the Air Force to lend Horsham two German aircraft. They put these planes on show to raise money! First a Heinkel III plane at Springfield Road then a Messerschmitt 109 plane in the King's Head car park.



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Advert in the West Sussex County Times for the Messerschmitt put on show to raise money for the Spitfire Fund.



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Photo in West Sussex County Times showing Horsham and District's Spitfire.

The fund raised over £5000 which was used to buy a Spitfire Mark VB. Horsham's Spitfire began flying with the 611 Squadron in June 1941. Horsham's Spitfire had more than one pilot but was most often flown by Pilot Officer (P/O) Reeves. On 22 of October 1941 P/O Reeves was flying Horsham's Spitfire on a Channel Air Sea Rescue Escort. The squadron was attacked and Horsham's Spitfire never returned to base. Reeves and the Spitfire were listed as missing.

The records of 611 Squadron are held at the Public Record Office now part of the National Archives. Thanks to the research of Mr. Cliff White we have copies of these records such as the Bomber

Command Operational Diaries. The diaries give some details of what Horsham's Spitfire and other British squadrons were doing during the war.

Glossary

Battle of Britain	This was the fight by between the German air force (the Luftwaffe) and the British Royal Air Force (RAF). The Luftwaffe was trying to destroy the RAF. It took place between July and September 1940. The RAF won.
Fundraising	Raising money.
Squadron	A unit or group of planes and pilots in the RAF



Activity 4: Horsham's Spitfire

Look at the copied section of the Command Operational Diaries. This shows one week of Horsham's Spitfire and the actions of other British squadrons. There is a glossary to help you with some of the words.

Imagine there is no censorship. You are a reporter for the World War Two Times.

Use the diary entries to help you write your own newspaper article about the Horsham and District Spitfire.

You can do this by hand or type into the word newspaper template on your computer.

Use the space provided for a picture – maybe a map showing all the areas W3372 flew over.

Things to think about:

- Who is the article for?
- What do you think they would **want** to hear about most?
- What do you think they **should** hear about most?
- The Spitfire was a fighting plane. It was on dangerous missions. Many aircraft were 'lost'. This often meant the pilots and crew died too.
- Many people lost their lives because of the bombs *our* planes dropped. It cannot have been easy on the pilots.



Extract from the Bomber Command Operational Diaries held at the Public Records Office in the National Archives. Quoted in *The story of Stan's Spitfire* by Clifford White, 1989

Date in August 1941	Details from Bomber Command Operational Diaries
Monday 18 th	<p>Sgt. Milner 1410 – 1555 Fighter Sweep Channel 20,000'</p> <p><i>39 Blenheims on coastal sweeps of Holland and on Circus operations to Lille and Marquise. 2 trawlers were sunk and Lille was bombed. 1 Blenheim lost.</i></p> <p><i>A Blenheim of 188 Squadron, flying on one of the Circus raids dropped a spare artificial leg by parachute for Wing Commander Douglas Bader, who had recently been taken prisoner. It reached Bader safely.</i></p>
Tuesday 19 th	<p>P/O Bosch 1003 – 1150 Target support Gosney</p> <p>P/O Bosch 1740 – 1910 Wing support – Marquise, St. Omer, Hazebroeck</p> <p><i>18 Blenheims on Circus operations to Gosnay and Hazebroeck; only Hazebroeck was bombed. 3 Blenheims lost. 2 Fortresses to Dusseldorf turned back.</i></p>
Wednesday 20 th	<p>P/O van de Honert 0840 - 1020 Bomber escort Bethunes Bomber Escort Chocques</p> <p><i>24 Blenheims in raids on Ijmuiden steelworks, which were bombed, and on Chocques chemical factory, but this target was not reached. No losses. 3 Fortresses to Dusseldorf turned back.</i></p>
Thursday 21 st	<p>P/O Reeves 1630 – 1715 Convoy Patrol</p>
Friday 22 nd	<p>P/O Reeves 1210 – 1325 Wing Sweep St Inglevert/Dunkirk 25,000'</p> <p><i>18 Blenheims on uneventful coastal sweeps from France to the Frisians.</i></p>

Key

Each entry starts with the pilot, flight time and activity of Horsham and Districts Spitfire shown in **bold**. Words in green are places.

The information in *italics* is about the actions of the other British aircraft that day.



Glossary

Sweeps	Fighter planes seek out and destroy any enemy aircraft found in the area of that sweep.
Blenheims	British Bomber planes
Circus Operations	Day time bomber plane attacks -the fighter planes would protect them.
Target support	Fighters support attacks on enemy targets.
Wing support	Fighters support their 'wing' - a group of squadrons.
Fortress	Another type of bomber plane flown by the British
Bomber escort	Fighters protect bomber planes flying between targets.
Convoy Patrols	Convoys were groups of ships travelling together for protection. Fighters would fly back and forth above them protecting them from the enemy.

