

No. 263 Squadron Operational Record.

Owing to the loss of the Squadron's files and records, it was necessary to prepare a second Operation Record from 1st April 1940.

This Record was prepared from pilots' log books and from various other sources. The accuracy of all such details ~~being~~ verified before inclusion. *has been*

The Squadron on being warned for overseas duty was raised to Field Force Strength on 15th March 1940. The various personnel, necessary to complete ~~the~~ establishments being posted to the Unit.

In view of the great secrecy attached to the intended theatre of operations, no mention of the intended move was made in the original Operation Records and little relevant correspondence was received from Higher Authorities.

S/Ldr. J.W.Donaldson was interviewed at Air Ministry by the Director of Intelligence and informed of the duty and destination of the Squadron i.e.

An expeditionary force was being formed for operations in Finland and No.263 Squadron was to be a unit of this Force. This Squadron had been selected in the light of its having Gladiator Aircraft, which could be used under the difficult conditions to be experienced from snow and small aerodromes, in the northern part of Finland.

Owing to the impossibility of keeping complete secrecy, when building a Field Force Squadron, the Air Ministry issued maps of Turkey for study by the Squadron pilots. (Following which a daily newspaper reported that units were being formed for operations in Turkey).

On the arrival of the extra personnel, measures for the training of Ground Defence Crews were effected and all personnel received extensive fire-arms drill. Practice movements of packing and transporting equipment were also made.

On 8th April 1940 two sections of aircraft were detached from the Squadron to provide night S/L co-operation. One to train the London Sectors and the other, based at St. Eval, being at the disposal of the S/L school at Truro. These sections were recalled to Filton on 13th April 1940.

were

All aircraft ~~was~~ grounded and received 120 hr. inspections. Pilots carried consumption tests and final gun firing at Sand Bay. These tests were concluded on 7th March 1940 and the Squadron aircraft and personnel were ready for movement. A limited amount of Squadron transport was received, whilst the remainder was at M.T.Us. being loaded with heavy equipment.

F/Lt. T.Rowland was appointed Officer i/c Reco. Party and departed for embarkation on a transport ship.

After this preparation and work the project was cancelled and the Squadron was reduced to normal Home Defence Establishment. (Later the establishment was again raised to Field Force Strength for operations in Norway).

The short-sighted policy of forming, reducing and reforming a Field Force Squadron, whilst being employed on operational duties in the Filton sector, entailed many hours of difficult and unnecessary work. This is exemplified by the Orderly Room staff which together with the additional work incurred, was inundated with some 400 postings in a period of less than one month.

The Squadron and Flight Commanders had, however, gained valuable experience in the wide field covered by the training of the newly arrived personnel in such duties as the following:- Ground defence crews. Medical, equipment and cooking personnel. Arranging of Movement Orders. Preparation of aircraft. Forming of maintenance and repair units. Training of gas defence units. And the examination and allocation of some fifty vehicles of the M.T. Sections.

All work proceeded smoothly and successfully reflecting great credit to individual Officers, Technical personnel and Senior N.C.Os. The preparations were always ahead, being in anticipation of the movement orders issued by the Air Ministry.

Owing to the foregoing preparations, very little flying activity took place from 1st March 1940 until the project was cancelled on 20th March 1940. The flying times of the following ten days however, amounted to over 250 hours.

Sgt/pilot Vickery was killed as the result of a flying accident, as shown by the following details:- P/O Craig-Adams was leading a section of fighter-aircraft, one of which was piloted by Sgt. Vickery. The formation flew into bad weather conditions over the Bristol Channel. Upon encountering a warm front which had formed, Sgt. Vickery broke formation and flew towards the sea near Weston-Super-Mare S/Ldr. S.W.Donaldson and fighter units searched the Channel for over two hours but without success. During a second patrol, lead by F/Lt. R.S.Mills, a patch of oil was discovered near the coast in a position which was subsequently verified as the scene of a crash. Later the body of the missing pilot was discovered together with a side panel on which the aircraft numbers were marked.

On the night of the 19th April 1940 a cypher message was received ordering the movement of Squadron aircraft to Prestwick on the 20th April 1940.

The Squadron departed for Sealand on 20th April 1940. (For the purpose of this record the original Report, submitted by S/Ldr J.W.Donaldson to Air Ministry, is incorporated.)

On 18th April 1940 F/O Vickery was ordered by Air Ministry to proceed to Norway, his duty being to select aerodromes in that country. (This Officer, however, did not arrive in Norway until the Squadron left for the second time).

A point of interest with regard to the need for accurate Aircraft Consumption Tests is shown by the fact that had it been impossible for the aircraft to proceed by air (according to the plan: G.Britain-Norway-Finland) it would have been necessary to be transported by means of aircraft carrier.

Great difficulty was experienced owing to Air Ministry communicating direct to the Squadron instead of through the usual Channel system. This prevented No.11 Group and Fighter Command receiving the necessary information with regard to preparation and need for suitable flying personnel for operations in Finland.

The following personnel were posted to the Squadron for technical and other duties:-

F/O D.H.Fowler,	Medical.
F/O E.W.Cole,	Meteorological duties.
P/O N.J.Fagan,	Equipment.
Two Officers	for Cypher duties.

During the period that the Squadron was being reduced to normal establishment, Norway was invaded and (~~as had been supposed, should the Allies aid Norway~~), orders were received to reform as a Field Force Squadron.

F/Lt T.Rowland remained in charge of the ground personnel at Filton. ~~The convey did not leave Scotland and~~ the personnel were eventually posted to Turnhouse (during the absence of the flying Squadron at Aandalsnes in Southern Norway).¹

On April 20th 1940 the following personnel reported for flying duties with the Squadron:-

F/O H.A.Oliver.
P/O F.C.Parnall.
P/O A.W.Britton.
P/O G.S.Drake.
P/O W.S.Daniel.
F/O H.E.Vickery.
P/O A.C.Cockrane.

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*Two days later they After a delay of about a week
~~The Squadron personnel later~~ moved to Scapa Flow and they started on the voyage to Norway but before they had got very far it was heard that the flying party was returning to England, and accordingly the convoy returned, and the personnel were posted to Turnhouse.*

REPORT BY THE COMMANDING OFFICER

263 (F) SQUADRON.

The following summary is submitted of the activities of 263 Squadron between April 20th and May 1st, 1940.

April 20th.

At 14.00 hrs. Eighteen aircraft left Filton for Sealand. 15.00 hrs. eighteen aircraft arrived Sealand.

Note. Warning had been given by signal to Staff of Sealand that aircraft would arrive at 15.00 hrs, and therefore the C.F.O. had taken the wise precaution of keeping the aerodrome clear of ab initio flying.

17.00 hrs. Eighteen aircraft left Sealand for Prestwick. 19.45 hrs. Fifteen aircraft arrived at Prestwick.

Note. Three Gladiators were unable to proceed past Blackpool owing to very bad visibility conditions and therefore returned to Sealand.

April 21st.

00.30 hrs. Fifteen pilots embarked on H.M.S. Glorious. 14.00 hrs. Fourteen Gladiator aircraft landed on H.M.S. Glorious.

Note. One Gladiator was landed in the Sea some two hundred yards astern of the H.M.S. Glorious. Fleet Air arm Pilot uninjured, aircraft total loss.

April 22nd.

Four Gladiators were flown on to H.M.S. Glorious
Three pilots of 263 Sqdn. were embarked by launch from Scapa Flow.

Note. 263 Squadron at 15.30 hrs. complete to strength as required by Air Ministry. Eighteen Gladiators and Eighteen Pilots.

The following is the list of Pilots that embarked:-

S/Ldr. J.W. Donaldson.

F/Lt. R.S. Mills.

P/O. Jacobson	<u>Note.</u> 13 Officers
P/O. Mc.Namara.	5 Sgt/Pilots.

P/O. Purdy.

P/O. Wyatt-Smith

P/O. Hughes.

P/O. Bentley.

P/O. McKenzie.

P/O. Richards.

P/O. Carpenter.

P/O. Craig-Adams.

P/O. Hogg.

Sgt/Pilot Russell.

Sgt/Pilot Kitchener.

Sgt/Pilot Milligan.

Sgt/Pilot Whall.

Sgt/Pilot Forrest.

April 24th.

4. 12.00 hrs. Captain of H.M.S. Glorious gave Officer Commanding 263 Squadron warning that the Squadron must be prepared to fly off the Carrier within three hours.

The ship was then about 250 miles from the shore.

Note. Weather conditions were not good. In the vicinity there were local snow showers and it was ascertained that the position of the ship was about 250 miles from the shore. The Squadron Commander then consulted with the Captain of the Glorious and asked him to produce two Skuas to navigate two formations of Nine Aircraft to the frozen lake. The Captain very kindly agreed. This action was ~~most~~ *much* appreciated.

17.00 hrs. Nine Gladiators took off from the H.M.S. Glorious for frozen Lake at Lesjeskogen. 17.30 hrs. Nine Gladiators took off from H.M.S. Glorious for frozen Lake at Lesjeskogen. One Skua led each formation.

Note. For the information of R.A.F. pilots who may be called upon to take off from a carrier in future it is pointed out that, provided take-off is made with care, there may be no anxiety for the safety of the pilot.

19.00 hrs. Eighteen aircraft landed on lake at Lesjeskogen.

5. It was noticed by Squadron Commander and Flight Commander that the road and railway line between Aandelsnes and the Lake had a continuous series of bomb craters on each side situated in groups at approximately mile intervals the whole way down. A conference was held on landing, between *the* Squadron Commander and the Flight Commander concerning the observations made and it was decided that the Flight Commander should make a reconnaissance of the valley toward the front line. On landing the Flight Commander reported that similar conditions existed toward the front line and it was therefore considered that the situation was most critical and that air activity in the district was of the most severe nature.

6. In view of this appreciation the Squadron Commander decided that little operations could be undertaken and that the Squadron aircraft must be used solely for the defence of its very existence. ~~This decision, serious as it was, considering the military situation which desperately needed Air Co-operation through constant bombing along its only line of communications, showed that the placing of the Squadron in this particular area was dangerous and difficult and that the decision of the Squadron Commander subsequently proved to be correct.²~~

7. Three aircraft were ordered to accelerate their refuelling and come to a state of immediate readiness, Pilots sitting in cock-pits ready to take off and aircraft hands standing by ready to start up. Pilots were ordered to take off immediately any aircraft was sighted and if hostile ~~it must be to destroyed it~~ at all costs, to *in order to* prevent reports reaching the enemy.

it proved to be

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This was a very serious decision. The Army's only line of communication was constantly being bombed, and air co-operation was badly needed. Nevertheless, subsequent events proved that the decision was right.

8. 21.00 hrs., as it was becoming semi-dark, two aircraft were sighted and the Section took off to intercept. One aircraft was unable to start its engine soon enough and was left behind. One interception was successful, but both aircraft were identified as Norwegian. Our two aircraft made a landing in the dark without the aid of any night flying equipment and one pilot, who applied his brakes too severely on the runway, burst a tyre. Although this slight mishap happened, it is considered that credit is due to these two pilots, Sergeant Pilot Kitchener and Sergeant Pilot Milligan.

9. At 22.00 hrs. all eighteen aircraft had been refuelled and dispersed around the perimeter of the lake, placed in most cases as near as the snow drifts permitted to the edge of the woods. Four aircraft were placed along the runway at 100 yard intervals.

~~10. 22.30 hrs. two aircraft had landed and were refuelled.~~ (Limited guards were placed around the aircraft. Owing to the shortage of personnel, pilots were included in this duty.

Operation orders.

~~11. Orders were issued being based upon the defence of the aerodrome as follows.~~
The following operation orders were issued

03.00 hrs. to dusk...

One section to patrol the aerodrome at 6,000 feet for two hours and to be relieved in the air.

Two sections at stand by. Pilots in cockpits.

One section available at 15 minutes.

Minutes of Conference.

12. A conference was held between Wing Commander Keens and Squadron Leader Donaldson, Flight Lieutenant Mills, Squadron Leader Whitney-Straight, and Captain Uwin Chief Norwegian Air Force.

13. It was represented by the C.O. of 263 Squadron that it was quite apparent that the Squadron could not possibly operate successfully from a frozen lake. With huge snow drifts surrounding the runways, the roadway cut was melting. This view was based on the lack of equipment, spares, quick rearming and refuelling facilities, grave shortage of trained personnel, ~~i.e.~~ there was only one armourer ~~who was obviously incapable of~~ maintaining 72 browning guns. It was urgently emphasised that other landing sites should be found at the earliest possible moment. + *that* Petrol and belted ammunition ~~to~~ *should* be deposited at these landing sites. It was stated that the surrounding country did not offer sites for this purpose, even with the aid of engineering personnel. Enemy intelligence was then discussed concerning previous German air operations in this theatre of operations.

14. We were informed by Captain Uwin that the enemy were employing a considerable number of aircraft in bombing operations in a swift and resolute manner, employing the most ruthless methods in bombing military and non-military targets. Parachute troops had been dropped in large numbers and the methods employed by German Officers in shooting German troops who were unwilling ~~or~~ ~~frightened~~ to leave the aircraft, clearly showed the worth of our enemies. Some of these troops he explained were forced to jump into snow drifts from a low altitude without parachutes. Quite a number of these men were found to have been seriously wounded by their fall and with bullet wounds caused by their Officers shooting them. Those using parachutes had indicated that they were surrendering and had thrown hand-grenades at their would-be captors. This practice was easily dealt with in a suitable manner.

15. It was requested by the Army authorities that patrols should be despatched to strengthen the morale of the Naval, Army, and Norwegian personnel who had been suffering through constant bombardment by the enemy air forces without rest for fourteen days. This was agreed to with limitations.

April 25th.

Fighter Operations.

(during the night)

Owing

16. ~~It is necessary to point out that due~~ to the severe frosts experienced at night and being situated on ice, the carburettors and aircraft controls were frozen. Every effort was made to have the oil emptied from the aircraft *and* ~~to be~~ heated, but this was not possible. The starting of the engines would have been simplified had the Squadron starter batteries been available. However some were run during the night. The Squadron made superhuman efforts to start the engines, and at 04.45 hours two aircraft were able to take off, and patrol the base. This patrol intercepted and successfully attacked one He.115. This aircraft was destroyed. Two He.111 were sighted at great range, but no attack was made. Two enemy reconnaissance aircraft, He.111, bombed the lake at 05.00 hrs. No damage was done.

17. At 07.45 hrs. the enemy commenced bombing operations against the Squadron and these attacks were continuous throughout the day until dusk. These operations consisted of bombing and machine gunning with front and rear gun from altitudes of 500 feet to 6,000 feet. The enemy employed formations of three which made their approach to within some distance of the aerodrome and *then* broke up their formation and made individual attacks. In one case only did the enemy approach the aerodrome in vic formation and *On this occasion* ~~drop~~ a salvo of twelve bombs was dropped. This attack was successful ~~in as much that~~ Four aircraft were destroyed ~~and~~ three pilots wounded, and the Squadron C.O. was concussed by the effect of the bombs. These officers were endeavouring to start their aircraft. ~~and~~ It was due to the fact that the bombs fell on ice and were nullified to a great extent by *reason of the fact that they penetrated* ~~the bombs penetrating~~ the ice before exploding, that serious casualties did not occur. After this attack this formation of enemy aircraft attacked the personnel by machine gunning. The nearest shelter ~~being~~ *consisted of* trees amid snow-drifts some fifty yards away.

From this time onwards, the Squadron could not rely on the ground personnel for any assistance when enemy aircraft were approaching the aerodrome. The Officers and Sergeant pilots therefore had to rely on their own resources and efforts for the rearming and refuelling of aircraft. Many brave acts were performed by the pilots during the course of the day. They carried out these duties whilst bombs were bursting near them and when being machine gunned at the same time. During the enemy attack at 0745 hrs. Pilot Officer Purdy was severely burnt on the face and hands which was caused by a bomb bursting immediately in front of the aircraft he was starting up with the aid of the Commanding Officer. This Officer refused to have his wounds dressed, *but* took off and carried out a patrol. During this attack two Gladiator aircraft which were awaiting to be refuelled were set on fire by enemy action. ~~It is desired to point out that due to~~ *Owing to the* impossible conditions it took anything up to an hour and a half for aircraft to be refuelled and rearmed, and many of the Squadron aircraft were destroyed ~~due to~~ *for* this reason.

18. At 09.00 hrs. Flight Lieutenant Mills managed to start his aircraft whilst under machine gun fire. He took off to patrol the lake and for the next 30 minutes this Officer prevented enemy aircraft from making decisive attacks on the aerodrome and during this period six aircraft were able to take off. One section maintained its patrol over the base, whilst the other section patrolled the front line to prevent German reconnaissance aircraft from spotting for their field guns. In the mean time Flight Lieutenant Mills engaged six He.111 at various times during his flight. ~~and One of these which~~ was observed to retreat with its port engine on fire was subsequently confirmed as a victory.

19. During one of the early morning patrols Pilot Officer Hughes attacked a Ju.88. This Officer managed to fire three short bursts from an astern attack. The enemy aircraft turned on to this Officer very quickly compelling him to dive out of range, the enemy despite his superior speed did not take up pursuit.

20. At 11.00 hrs. Sergeant Pilot Forrest took off ~~in Gladiator N.5705~~ and flew for twenty minutes patrolling the lake. ~~and~~ His engine cut out at a height of 3,000 feet due to failure to turn over on to main tank when taking off. A successful landing was ~~however~~ made in the soft snow near the lake, *but* this aircraft was destroyed by enemy action shortly after. ~~It is necessary to point out that this Sergeant made no effort to restart his aircraft after landing, and it is considered that this could have been done.~~

21. At 12.00 hrs. Pilot Office McNamara leading a sector during his patrol over base engaged an he.111 and, using full deflection tactics, secured a victory. The aircraft was seen by all personnel on the lake to spin in shortly after his attack. This had great effect on the ground personnel, as much cheering was heard from around the lake. The aircraft was also seen to have white smoke gushing out of its port engine, prior to the moment of losing final control. The pilot of this aircraft was taken prisoner and was found to have a bullet wound in his cheek.

22. 12.30 hrs. At this period the Squadron had lost ten Gladiator aircraft by enemy bombing action. Aircraft were destroyed whilst waiting to be refuelled and rearmed, ~~only~~ *while* four were destroyed without having flown. Two aircraft only received direct hits, the others were set alight by bombs landing close by (within approximately ten yards.)

23. At 13.00 hrs. Pilot Officer Richards took off and attacked an He.111 using all his ammunition during this attack. The attack was an astern attack. It was observed by all the ground personnel that this aircraft had its port engine on fire and was losing height behind the lake. However the wreckage of this aircraft was not found ~~and it is assumed that this was an unconfirmed victory.~~

24. At 13.05 hrs. the aerodrome was attacked by three He.111. S/Ldr. Donaldson and F/Lt Mills were endeavouring to start their aircraft and take off. P/O Purdy was giving assistance. ~~But as~~ This attack was particularly vicious ~~during which a salvo of twelve bombs was dropped near the aircraft. it was decided to take shelter as~~ the enemy then commenced to "ground straff" the personnel.³ There was a machine gun post near this part of the lake that had been deserted and F/Lt Mills and P/O Purdy ran to this position through the snow drifts to operate the gun against the attacking aircraft. ~~It is considered that this run over the ice on top of the snow by these two Officers was particularly brave as the distance was some 60 yards and the machine gun bullets were striking the ice in amongst them and ricocheting off.~~ The machine gun was then manned by F/Lt Mills firing and P/O Purdy leading the ammunition in. It was observed that their fire was accurate (tracer) and the enemy aircraft broke off their ground strafing. This enabled two aircraft to be started by the three Officers, but in the mean time an He.111 had commenced operations against the lake. This attack was ignored and aircraft took off during machine gun fire. The aircraft were piloted by S/Ldr Donaldson and F/Lt. Mills. A patrol was carried out over the valley and the enemy-occupied positions were inspected. The patrol then returned ~~to~~ *past* the lake ~~and was extended to Aandalsnes,~~ but no enemy aircraft were sighted during this stage of the flight, which had lasted an hour and a half. The formation then returned to the lake and many engagements were made with enemy aircraft until these Officers were compelled to land through shortage of petrol. The engagements are as follows:-

25. Two He. 111 were attacked when nearing the lake, one He.111 was destroyed after these Officers had completed their first attack which was of the full deflection type. The wreckage of this aircraft was inspected later and the pilot was found to have been seriously injured and had eventually committed suicide. This was confirmed as a victory. The other He.111 was seen by ground personnel to be losing height rapidly with its starboard engine gushing with white smoke and part of the main plane on fire. S/Ldr. Donaldson then proceeded to attack a single He.111. This aircraft was destroyed and was seen to crash into the valley approaching Aandalsnes with F/Lt. Mills following close behind watching. This aircraft was subsequently inspected. Full deflection attack was employed and the pilot was found to be killed.

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+ *It was accordingly decided to take shelter*

26. F/Lt. Mills states that on attempting to rejoin his Commanding Officer, he was able to witness his C.O. attack a formation of three He.111 which were approaching to attack the lake. This formation was dispersed and two aircraft were seen to be in difficulties. It seemed to F/Lt. Mills that the deflection attack from the quarter head on position caused confusion among the enemy pilots. F/Lt. Mills ~~in his report~~ was unable to watch the progress of these two aircraft as he had then to attack three individual He.111, in which he silenced two rear gunners and caused them to break off their attacks against the lake. One aircraft was seen by ground personnel in difficulties but this aircraft cannot be claimed as a confirmed victory, no wreckage being found, ~~due no doubt~~ to the mountainous country and difficulty of transport. *This was possibly due*

27. At about 14.50 hrs. two He.111 were observed approaching the aerodrome, one from the East and one from the West. S/Ldr. Donaldson gave a visual signal to F/Lt. Mills to attack the one approaching from the East whilst S/Ldr. Donaldson attacked the one approaching from the West. Both attacks were carried out successfully but there is no evidence to show that any damage was caused to either aircraft. Both enemy aircraft disappeared from the vicinity of the lake. S/Ldr Donaldson had by this time run out of ammunition in three of his guns, but there were a few rounds left in the port inner. It was decided to make a landing to re-arm and refuel. S/Ldr. Donaldson ordered F/Lt. Mills by visual signal to land first with the intention of covering his landing. Both aircraft had been airborne for 2 hours 15 minutes. F/Lt. Mills then proceeded to make a landing on the lake, whilst S/Ldr. Donaldson patrolled the base at 2000 ft. Very shortly afterwards four ~~aircraft~~ JU.88 were observed approaching the lake from a southerly direction. S/Ldr. Donaldson immediately attacked the formation. He fired a very short burst and ran out of petrol on main tank and switched over to reserve tank, engine picking up immediately. From this time onwards he found that he was being completely outmanoeuvred and therefore decided to break off engagement by diving away. Three of the attacking aircraft were lost during this manoeuvre but the other followed closely. All four aircraft were able to fire several bursts but were unable to obtain hits owing to the evasion tactics employed by this Officer. After three had been lost, the aircraft that followed closely was able to fire several bursts during the course of the next 5/10 minutes at the Gladiator now flying as close as possible to the ground. Finally by applying violent right rudder and completing a loop this aircraft placed himself behind the Ju.88 in a very steep ravine. The Ju.88 thereupon broke off the engagement. In the meantime F/Lt. Mills was about to land, but noticing that the ground personnel were not visible suspected that the aerodrome was about to be attacked and took his Gladiator off again from the position of touch-down. On completing a half circuit he noticed that the JU.88s were about to attack the aerodrome and this Officer carried out a deflection attack. The enemy aircraft broke up their formation and formed line astern, and proceeded to deliver attacks. It was observed from the ground that when the Gladiator was within a range of approximately 550/600 yards the enemy would open fire with their front cannon, and the shells were seen to burst around the Gladiator aircraft. This Officer was practically out of petrol and only had one gun firing. High pressure oil was gushing out of the high pressure trigger motor system.

The combat lasted for approximately ten minutes, and the pilot states that he found himself being out manoeuvred and out climbed. It is suggested that the Ju.88 was not turning quicker than the Gladiator, but the advantage lay in the fact that the Ju.88 was able to dive on the Gladiator, climb up and cut short the turn of the Gladiator. It was only due to aerobatic manoeuvres that the pilot was able to prevent accurate fire. It was only when the pilot altered his tactics and attempted to collide with the Ju.88 that hits were scored on his aircraft. One interplane strut and the top of one of his starboard cylinders was seriously damaged, but in no way affected the flying of the aircraft. These manoeuvres however caused the Ju.88 to discontinue the attacks and to withdraw from combat. The Gladiator then commenced to climb and when the Ju.88s were practically out of sight his engine cut through lack of petrol. F/Lt. Mills was able to make a successful forced landing at the end of the lake. He attempted to examine the effects of the cannon fire and can only remember that there were large holes where the shells had struck the fuselage and also a piece of the top of the starboard side of one of the cylinders appeared to be missing, but his examination was cut short by the commencement of an attack by an He.111 for which he became the target. The Gladiator was destroyed by this attack. S/Ldr. Donaldson was able to land successfully on a small plateau which existed at Aandalsnes, in spite of the fact that three Norwegian machine gun posts fired at the Gladiator whilst it was making a forced landing. On inspecting the aircraft after landing it was found that many hits by machine gun fire were glancing blows on the side of the fuselage, and had removed pieces of canvas a foot long by about two or three inches but had not affected the efficiency of the aircraft.

surface of this landing ground

28. The ~~aerodrome surface~~ was then inspected and it was found to be 400 yards by 80 yards, with approximately another 100 yards sloping away to the sea. A dispatch rider was sent ~~as soon as possible as all telephonic communication was out~~, to order all serviceable Gladiator aircraft to be flown to this landing ground as soon as possible, and to bring by ground part all available petrol and ammunition, from the lake. Any aircraft that were completely wrecked and not burnt out were to be set alight immediately. Four more serviceable aircraft landed successfully at this landing ground by 23.45 hours. S/Ldr. Donaldson proceeded to the lake by lorry to direct the evacuation. It was found that eleven aircraft had already been burnt out, and that two Gladiators remained in a broken up condition. These were destroyed by fire. Limited transport was commandeered and conveyed all pilots, a few of the ground personnel, and petrol and ammunition, to the new site. It was found that a Squadron could operate from this landing ground as Wing Commander Dore, ~~of~~ the Air Attache, had expedited the preparation of this ground the previous day.

April 26th.

Operation orders.

29. Two aircraft were ordered to make reconnaissance flights to locate other landing sites in the vicinity, ~~and~~ It was reported that no suitable sites were available but it was considered that two could have been made with limited reconstruction.

30. Once section was ordered to carry out ground strafing over the enemy position in the district of Kvan. Reports had then been received that the Germans had made a landing of troops at Sundalen north east of Aandelsnes. The section reported that no movement of troops was observed. ~~This was confirmed as the engine of the aircraft piloted by P/O. Craig Adams seized solid. The pilot was forced to abandon his aircraft by parachute as he was over⁴ mountainous~~ *This was confirmed by P/O Craig Adams* country with no place for a forced landing. The pilot made a safe landing at Sundalen, and was returned to his unit by the Norwegian army. No German troops were seen by this Officer. The other aircraft returned to base safely and likewise had no oil pressure, and was then considered unserviceable due to the big end seizing up.

31. With the three remaining aircraft a section as detailed to patrol over the new base at 10,000 feet. Aandelsnes was then attacked by a number of He.111 which carried out bombing operations from 1000 hrs. until dusk. The section attempted to engage the enemy aircraft which were flying at an altitude of 25,000 feet, but as the oxygen supplies were exhausted in the aircraft and there were being no oxygen supplies available for the unit, the enemy were able to carry out bombing without any hindrance, and scored direct hits on the docks, exploding an ammunition dump. During this afternoon one aircraft was made serviceable and Pilot Officer Jacobson attacked two He.111 during two flights. The results of these combats have not been confirmed but it is ~~assumed~~ *thought* that severe damage was inflicted on one of the He.111, as parts of the fuselage were seen to fall from the enemy which was losing height. Deflection attack in both cases was employed, the pilot was certain that he injured the pilots of the He.111. A wreckage was found. The fire of the rear gunners ceased after the first attacks.

32. Owing to lack of petrol flying operations were discontinued with the one remaining aircraft. The aircraft was later inspected and found to be in such a state that it would have been needlessly endangering pilots' lives to ~~carry~~ *have carried* out further flights ~~that~~ *They* could not have been pursued with any effect. This decision was communicated to Wing Commander Keens, who, it is understood advised Air Ministry of the circumstances.

April 27th.

33. No operations were carried out due to the fact that there was no petrol. Nor could the aircraft be made serviceable, even with the exchange of parts from one aircraft to another owing to the structural damage received.

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The engine of the aircraft which this officer was flying seized solid. He was forced to abandon the machine by Parachute as he was over

34. Officers were sent to examine the wreckages of the Squadron's victories, to assess the damage of our machine gun fire.

35. One salient point was obvious. viz. that where deflection attacks had been employed, the victory had been obtained not so much by material damage in working parts of the aircraft, but by seriously wounding the pilot and personnel in the enemy aircraft. In most cases the dashboard of the pilots' cockpits were found to be smashed. Due to the amount of equipment and length, it is considered, in the light of these examinations, that many thousand rounds must be fired into the fuselages from the astern attack if any result is to be obtained, and even then it is doubtful whether an He.111 can be brought down by the astern attack unless both engines are put out of action.

April 28th.

36. The Squadron personnel received orders to embark that night on the ~~S.S.~~
Delius a cargo ship. MV

April 29th.

37. The S.S. Delius sailed and became a target from 08.00 hrs to 14.00 hrs for continuous bombing attacks by enemy aircraft. They employed high level bombing attacks and low level bombing attacks, and also dive bombing attacks, accompanied by machine gun fire.

May 1st.

38. S.S. Delius arrived Scapa Flow at 06.00 hrs. Pilots embarked on board tender and were conveyed to Thurso by 21.30.

May 2nd.

39. Arrived London at 20.00 hrs.

MV

40. *Captain Walker the Captain of ~~S.S.~~ Delius was awarded O.B.E. (Civil) for his action in saving his ship from enemy action whilst the Squadron was on board.*

Pilots who received wounds.

Pilot Officer Purdy: Severe burns on face and hands.

Pilot Officer Craig-Adams: Bullet hole in the ear.

Pilot Officer Wyatt-Smith: Shrapnel wound on the leg.

Squadron Leader Donaldson: Shock and effects of near-by bursting bomb.

The following Officers are recommended for recognition for acts of bravery:-

Pilot Officer Purdy:

This Officer is mentioned in dispatches for bravery and devotion to duty in that he remained in his cock-pit whilst three enemy aircraft were preparing to attack the aircraft, and whilst his Commanding Officer was assisting in starting the engine of the aircraft. A salvo of bombs burst around the aircraft and this Officer only abandoned his aircraft when it was set on fire by a near-by bursting bomb. This Officer, despite the painful nature of his wounds, insisted on helping to start up other aircraft whilst the lake was being attacked and machine-gunned. This Officer also made a dangerous run across the ice to assist F/Lt. Mills in the firing of a deserted machine gun post.

Pilot Officer McNamara:

This Officer is mentioned in dispatches for leading a successful attack on a He.111 and showing great determination and courage in pursuing his attacks. This enemy aircraft was destroyed in front of all ground personnel and had a great effect upon their morale. On landing from this flight the Officer displayed great courage in remaining in the vicinity of the aircraft and issuing orders for the refuelling of his aircraft when the lake was being heavily attacked and the Officer only abandoned his place of duty when a salvo of bombs destroyed his aircraft.

Flight Lieutenant R.S. Mills.

This Officer is mentioned in dispatches for marked bravery and devotion to duty in that (1) he remained in this cockpit of his aircraft whilst bombing attack was in progress and thus started his aircraft and took off under machine-gun fire. (2) ~~For attacking~~ *He attacked* fourteen He.111 and three Ju.88 in which two He.111 were confirmed to have been destroyed and three others unconfirmed. (3) ~~For taking~~ *He took* over a deserted gun post and ~~firing~~ *fired* the gun at enemy aircraft when he himself was subjected to severe machine-gun fire. (4) ~~For attacking~~ *He attacked* three Ju.88s when he himself was running short of petrol and ammunition.

These three Officers were strongly recommended to be decorated.

Sergeant Russell (Pilot).

This N.C.O. is mentioned in dispatches for his devotion to duty in that he rearmed the Squadron aircraft throughout the day whilst the lake was being subjected to machine-gun fire and continuous bombing. It was due to this N.C.O.'s good work that the Squadron aircraft were able to operate, and it was only when this N.C.O. was ordered to leave his duty that he did so.

Summary of operations and results of 263 Squadron.

Total sorties	-49.
Attacks carried out against enemy aircraft	-37.
Confirmed enemy casualties (aircraft)	- 6.

Note. Aircraft that are considered confirmed were found by ground personnel and positions tallied with that of pilots' reports.

Unconfirmed enemy casualties (aircraft)	- 8.
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Four sections were employed on ground strafing.

Victories.

Flight Lieutenant Mills.	Confirmed	2	Unconfirmed	3
Squadron Leader Donaldson.	Confirmed	2	Unconfirmed	2
Pilot Officer McNamara.	Confirmed	1	Unconfirmed	0
Pilot Officer Bentley.	Confirmed	1	Unconfirmed	0
Pilot Officer Richards.	Confirmed	0	Unconfirmed	1
Pilot Officer Jacobson.	Confirmed	0	Unconfirmed	2
	Total.....	6	Total.....	8

On 3rd May 1940 S/Ldr S.W.Donaldson and F/Lt. Mills reported to Air Ministry and were interviewed by various Departmental Officers of High Rank, among whom were the following:- C.A.S. Sir Cyril Newall, A.V.M. Joubert-de-la-Ferte, A. Com. Stevens, W/Com. McEvoy. These two Officers were later received at the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for Air, Sir Samuel Hoare.

4th May

Later, the Secretary of State for Air (in the House) made reference to the Squadron's activities in Norway and announced the following awards:-

S/Ldr.	S.W.Donaldson	D.S.O.
F/Lt.	R.S.Mills	D.F.C.
P/O.	McNamara	D.F.C.
P/O.	Purdy	D.F.C.
SGt/Pilot	Russell	M.M.

On May 6th 1940. S/Ldr. S.W.Donaldson and F/Lt. R.S. Mills reported to Headquarters, Fighter Command and were interviewed by the Air Officer Commanding, A.C.M. Sir Hugh Dowding and G/Cpt. A.Orlebar. Headquarters No.11 (F) Command was later visited but a request for these Officers to visit Headquarters Bomber Command was refused, owing to the preparation of the Squadron to proceed to Norway for further operations. *in Norway*

It was indicated that the Squadron would be re-equipped with Gladiator Aircraft and would be based at ~~Baranfoss~~ in Northern Norway.

Bardufoss

It was requested that the Squadron should receive further reinforcements in flying personnel. Two Officers were selected: F/Lt. C.B.Hull and F/O.F.Ede. These Officers were posted to Turnhouse ~~when~~ the Squadron was due to assemble.

where

On 10th May 1940 all personnel were assembled at Turnhouse.

On 11th May 1940 instructions were received for the Squadron to embark on the H.M.S.Furious at Grenock. The embarkation was completed on 12th May 1940. the aircraft being flown on by Fleet Air Arm pilots.

On 14th May 1940 P/O Wyatt Smith on being medically examined by the Naval Medical Service in H.M.S.Furious, was found to have a piece of shrapnel in his leg (received from the bombing raid on ~~H.M.S. M' Delius~~). This necessitated an operation in shore base hospital.

In view of the departure of the H.M.S.Furious it was not possible to obtain an R.A.F. Pilot, and the Fleet Air Arm were requested to make good this loss, to enable the aircraft to be flown off on arrival in Norway. This was agreed to and Lt. Lidecker R.N. was attached to the Squadron. (He rendered valuable services in flying operations and on armament duties)

The Squadron was ordered to fly off H.M.S. Furious at 02.30 hrs. on 21st May, 1940. The weather was poor, visibility being about 300 yards. and cloud height 100 feet. The orders ~~were to fly to Bardufoss (due to the shortage of oil fuel in the destroyer force) were ill advised.~~

The first formation felt the carrier at 03.00 hrs. and consisted of four Gladiator aircraft lead by S/Ldr. Donaldson, with one Swordfish aircraft for navigating purposes.

The second formation took off at 03.10 hrs. and, owing to a navigation error on the part of the Swordfish aircraft, was lead into a mountain. (Torsten, Senga Island)

P/O Richards, a gallant and beloved Officer, was killed. P/O. Ede escaped and, by most fortunate circumstances, succeeded in joining the third formation.

F/Lt Mills crashed and succeeded in escaping from a badly crashed and burning aircraft

The third formation arrived at Bardufoss at 0420 hrs.

In view of the impossible conditions S/Ldr. Donaldson and his formation returned to the carrier, all making successful landings.

P/O. McNamara landed whilst the carrier was turning. On being admonished for this act by the Captain, he remarked "You should try it some time".

The remaining aircraft took off at 09.00 and all landed at Bardufoss.

On 26th May 1940 the whole Squadron volunteered for operations at Bodo, and the following Officers were selected:-

F/Lt. Hull

P/O. Falkson.

Lt. Libecker.

Lydekjær

This section operated from a small field, the surface of which was covered with logs and wire netting, and owing to the boggy nature of the surface one aircraft was damaged beyond repair.

Successful air defence was given during the Army evacuation to Bodo and for 24 hrs. the air was kept clear of enemy aircraft. F/Lt. Hull destroyed ~~destroyed~~ two Ju.89s (troop carrying aircraft), two He.111s and dispersed a formation of Ju.88s.

At the Army's request the patrols were continued for a further four hours. It was during this period that the aerodrome was dive-bombed by a formation of Ju.88s. F/Lt. Hull and Lt.Libecker attacked and succeeded in destroying two enemy aircraft.

F/Lt. Hull was wounded, and after being attacked by an Me.110, forced landed. Lt.Libecker was also wounded but managed to fly back to Bardufoss in his damaged aircraft.

After these operations Bodo was completely destroyed, but the air co-operation had enabled over 2,000 troops to be evacuated across a fiord without any loss.

F/Lt. Hull was awarded the D.F.C. for his part in these operations.

The following decorations were also awarded for service in the Bardufoss operations:-

P/O. Ede	D.F.C.
P/O. Williams	D.F.C.
P/O. Jacobsen	D.F.C.
etc.	
etc.	

The following personnel were evacuated from Norway:-

F/Lt Mills, from Tromso in H.M.S. Devonshire.
P/O. Hughes and men.
P/O. Fowler and men.

The Squadron reformed at R.A.F. Drem, and were re-equipped with Hurricane aircraft. F/Lt. Mills being temporarily in Command.

Instructions for compilation of BARDUFOSS Report.

Insert report drawn up by S/Ldr. Donaldson and W/Com. Atcherley for the operations at Bardufoss until the Squadron perished on the H.M.S. Glorious.

Insert report drawn up by F/Lt. Mills concerning the circumstances in which P/O. Richards was killed at Torsken, Senja Island.

When the Squadron reformed at Turnhouse for the second Norwegian campaign various postings were made to strengthen the flying personnel. These postings are as follows:-

Posted to the Squadron.

F/Lt.	C.B.Hull
F/O.	A.F.Ede.
A/F/Lt.	Williams.
P/O	<i>J.Falkson</i>

Posted from the Squadron.

10/5/40.

P/O. Hogg
P/O. Carpenter.
P/O. McKenzie.
Sgt. Forrest.

24/5/40.

F/Lt. T.Rowland was posted from Norway and left Harstaad by air.

The air party which left Turnhouse on 11th May 1940. is as follows:-

S/Ldr.	J.W.Donaldson.
F/Lt.	R.S.Mills.
F/Lt.	C.B.Hull.
A/F/Lt.	A.Williams.
F/O.	H.F.Ede.
P/O.	Wyatt-Smith (left carrier for hospital on 14/5/40.)
P/O.	McNamara
P/O.	W.P.Richards.
P/O.	A.Craig-Adams.
P/O.	J.G.Hughes.
P/O.	J.Falkson.
P/O.	P.H.Purdy.
P/O.	L.R.Jacobsen.
P/O.	M.A.Bently.
Sgt.	Milligan.
Sgt.	Kitchener.
Sgt.	Whall.
Sgt.	Russell.

Wyatt

Lt.Lidecker R.N. from H.M.S. Furious, replaced P/O.~~Craig~~-Smith.

The advance party, under the command of F/Lt.Rowland, departed in H.M.T. Chroby on 7th May 1940. and arrived at Sjoveien, Norway on 11th May 1940. The personnel of this party is as follows:-

F/Lt. T.Rowland.
F/O. D.H.Fowler *MO*
P/O. I.F.McDermott.
P/O. J.L.Wilkie.
P/O. A.W.Britton.

The main party departed in H.M.T.Sobiesti, and arrived at Serreisai, Norway on 18th May 1940. The personnel of this party is as follows:-

F/O. W.Riley
F/O. H.A.Olivier.
F/O. B.W.Cole. *I.O.*
P/O. N.J.Fagan. *E*
P/O. G.B.Parnall.
P/O. W.T.Daniel *C*
Sgt P.I. Watson-Parker
Sgt Mason

These parties proceeded to Bardufoss on 19th May 1940.

CASUALTIES.

P/O. W.P.Richards: was killed on being led into the mountain at Torsken on 21st May 1940 at 0315 hrs.

F/Lt. R.S.Mills: was injured in, but escaped from, a crash on the mountain at Torsken on 21st May 1940. at 0315 hrs. He was admitted to No.22 General Hospital at Harstaad and later removed to Tromso.

P/O. Craig-Adams: was killed in action on 22nd May 1940. He gained a victory by colliding with a Ju.88. (both aircraft were found on the mountain near Narvik).

P/O. J.L.Wilkie: reported missing believed killed in action 2nd June, 1940.

F/Lt. C.B.Hull: was wounded in action during operations at Bodo. he was admitted to the Norwegian Hospital at Bodo. Owing to intense bombing, the hospital was destroyed. F/Lt. Hull was transferred to No 22 General Hospital at Harstaad, and later flown to England, on 29th May 1940.

The Squadron covered the evacuation of the Army from Norway, with No. 46 Squadron and the pilots of each Squadron flew their aircraft onto H.M.S. Glorious at 0300 hrs on - At 1600 hrs that day the Glorious was engaged by two Hipper Class Cruisers and subsequently sunk with the two Squadrons perishing in her.

P/O Purdy and P/O Williams were seen to die on a raft [??] sight of the other eight pilots – nothing was seen of them during or after the engagement. And so perished a brave and gallant Squadron formed and trained at Filton on October 15 1940.

The following personnel gave their lives through doubtful circumstances in which the Glorious was sunk,

<i>S/Ldr J.W. Donaldson.</i>	<i>D.S.O.</i>
<i>F/O. H.E. Vickery.</i>	<i>D.F.C.</i>
<i>F/O. L.R. Jacobsen.</i>	<i>D.F.C.</i>
<i>F/O. F.H. Ede</i>	<i>D.F.C.</i>
<i>P/O. P.H. Purdy</i>	<i>D.F.C.</i>
<i>P/O. McNamara</i>	<i>D.F.C.</i>
<i>P/O. M.A. Bentley.</i>	
<i>P/O. A. Williams</i>	<i>D.F.C.</i>
<i>P/O. J. Falkson</i>	
<i>Sgt Russell</i>	<i>M.M.</i>