

BOMBER COMMAND

Air Ministry Record of Britain's Main Air Striking Force: A Story of Courage and Efficiency the Drama of which is Enhanced by the Simple Manner of its Telling

Appendix *Appendix II* R.A.F. FORM 511.

OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK.

DETAIL OF WORK CARRIED OUT.

From *204 hrs 3/9/39* to *213 hrs 3/9/39* By *139 Squadron* No. of pages used for day

Aircraft Type and No.	Crew.	Duty.	Time Up.	Time Down.	Remarks.	References.
<i>Blenheim Mk IV N 6215</i>	<i>F/O McPherson Cdr. Thompson Cpl. Arrow-smith</i>	<i>Photo. Recon.</i>	<i>16:00</i>	<i>16:50</i>	<i>Duty successful. 75 photos taken of German fleet. The first Royal Air Force aircraft to cross the German frontier.</i>	

THE FIRST RECORD : A facsimile of the first operation of the war. A reconnaissance flight over Wilhelmshaven by a Mk. IV Blenheim of No. 139 Squadron.

ON the R.A.F. aerodrome at Wyton, on the morning of Sunday, Sept. 3rd, 1939, a Blenheim of Bomber Command was waiting to take off. Three men were standing by—the pilot, F/O. McPherson, the observer, Cdr. Thompson, who was a naval officer, and Cpl. Arrow-smith, air-gunner.

They had been waiting since Sept. 1st, the day on which the Germans launched their attack on Poland. A minute after noon the Blenheim was air-borne, and two hours later its crew were photographing units of the German Fleet, then on its way out of Wilhelmshaven. Weather was such that, flying at 24,000ft., the Blenheim's wireless set froze, so it was not until 4.50 in the afternoon, when the aircraft returned, that Bomber Command and the Admiralty became

aware of the nature and position of the war's first target.

That evening an entry appeared in the log-book of No. 139 Squadron: "Duty successful. 75 photos taken of German Fleet. The first R.A.F. aircraft to cross the German frontier."

The next day, after a further reconnaissance, 29 Blenheims and Wellingtons carried out the now famous first attack on Brunsbüttel and Kiel—the war had begun!

It is in such simple, straightforward language as this that *Bomber Command*, the Air Ministry's account of the activities of our main aerial striking force, is written. It covers, in 128 pages, which include some admirable photographs, the offensive of Bomber Command against the Axis from the first day of the war until July of this year and, in doing so, it goes much farther than its excellent predecessor, *The Battle of Britain*, which dealt with one phase only—albeit a supremely glorious one—of Fighter Command's share in the present conflict.

Anonymous Author

No author's name appears on the cover of *Bomber Command*, either, but the magnificent simplicity of the writing is significantly similar to that of *The Battle of Britain*, from which one is invited to make the obvious assumption. It begins its story with the declaration of war and that first Blenheim's flight, goes on to give an instructive résumé of the general policy underlying the constitution of Bomber Command, and to describe something of the training and duties of the men composing it, their life in the Service, and a word or two about the machines they fly.

"This record," it says, "is, for the most part, the story of the Battles, the Blenheims and the Hampdens, the Wellingtons and the Whitleys. Our larger and more modern aircraft, the Stirlings, the Manchesters, the Halifaxes, the Flying Fortresses and the rest, enter it only at the end. It has been the aircraft constructed before the war that have up till now been the chief instruments of the attack on Germany. In these aircraft the men of Bomber Command have flown some 24,000,000 miles during the period under



BROKEN BRIDGES : An air view of the Meuse bridges at Maastricht. The first two air V.C.s of this war were awarded to the crew of a Fairey Battle who bombed a vital bridge over the Albert Canal to the west of the Meuse.