Flight numbers were not always issued in strict sequence; flights in the same area sometimes being allocated numbers in the 400 series, provision being made for additional flights to be added to the existing blocks. Thus, the met. flights in the original sequence (1401/1405) had trebled by 1945, the additional flights being numbered between 1406 and 1415. Of these, 1401 remained at Mildenhall with Gladiators, until October 1941 when it moved to Bircham Newton with one flight of Gladiators and one of Hurricanes, the aircraft carrying code ‘TE’. Spitfire IIAs and 5s were added later, as daylight bombing and photographic reconnaissance rendered new meteorological requirements necessary. Early morning flights to the greatest possible height were given the code ‘LV’, the ‘L’ from an A.R.P. meteorological flight into enemy territory were commenced, under the code name PAMPA. In a re-organization of met. units in June 1942, 1401 combined with 1403 to form 521 (Met.) Sqn. In August 1943, a new flight was formed from the PRATA element of 521 Sqn. at Manston, in Fighter Command. Equipped with the Spitfire 9, and later other marks including 5C and 16 (all coded BN), it joined 2nd R.A.F. in January 1945.

Nos. 1406 Met. Flight remained at Aldergrove until December 1944 when it moved to Ballyhalbert. Equipment included Hurricanes, Spitfires, and Gladiators, some of the latter still being airborne in 1945. This unit was engaged on similar activities to 1401 Flight. No. 1403 Met. Flight continued to use Blenheim IVs for a while, but later in 1941 these were replaced by Hudsons. Shortly before the re-organization in June 1942, six Venturas were received, these being used primarily for meteorological flights into enemy territory. In 1942, Hudsons were again allocated, together with some Hampdens and Gladiators. This existence, too, was to be of short duration, and on September 20, 1943, the unit became 520 Met. Sqn.

No. 1406 Met. Flight (St. Eval) and 1405 Met. Flight (Aldergrove) had Blenheim IVs originally, these being replaced in turn by Hudsons and Hampdens. In addition, 1404 Met. Flight had had a few Venturas and Albatroses in 1943. In August of that year these flights became 517 and 518 Met. Squadrons, respectively.

Nos. 1406 and 1408 Met. Flights were both formed at Wick, in 18 Group, in August 1941, and were combined on August 15, 1943 to form 1406 Flight. Nos. 1108 and 1109 Met. Flights operated Spifires and Hurricanes, whilst 1408 Flight used Hudsons, replaced in November 1942 by Hampdens. In Iceland, 1407 Met. Flight, based at Reykjavik, used Hudsons, Hampdens and Venturas.

Mosquito flight of 521 Sqn. was redesignated 1409 Met. Flight. Using Mosquito Met. 16s (coded “AE”) it operated from Askogart on long-range-penetration met. duties. (P.T.O. Flight), until June 1945. Other aero-dromes used included Brize Norton, Upwold, Wyton and Waterbeach. From the latter, in 1945, the flight also operated Liberators, again coded “AE”. In the Middle East, five flights operated, all originally equipped with Gladiators. No. 1411 Met. Flight was attached to H.Q., R.A.F. Middle East, and later received some Hurricanes; 1412 Met. Flight operated at first with 203 Group, but later it, too, was attached to H.Q., R.A.F. Middle East, and received some Hudsons. No. 1413 Met. Flight operated in the Levant, 1414 Met. Flight in East Africa and 1415 Met. Flight in Iraq, 1414 Flight having its Gladiators replaced later by Lyonsers and Ansons.

Odd Assortment

The next batch of flights—Nos. 1421 to 1449—was an assorted collection, many being re-named to form part of squadrons re-designated. It continued to use "LZ"-coded Spitfire 2As from Gravesham and Hawkinge, eventually becoming 91 Sqn., with a consequent change in code letters to "DL". No. 1422 Flight was used for local ferrying duties in the Far East; Havoc 1s from Cambridge later at Spa
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1941/2. No. 1423 Fighter Flight operated around the same period in defence of Iceland. It was equipped with ten Hurricane Is and six Blenheim IVs, both types being used for maritime reconnaissance operations. This unit was redesignated No. 333 (Norwegian) Squadron on May 10, 1943.

Further assorted flights included 1471 at Old Sarum; 1473 Flight at Finmere; 1474 Flight equipped with Wellingtons 1Cs, and flying the task of defensive duties. No. 1475 [R.A.F. Middle East; and 1477 (Norwegian) Flight, which served with 18 Group at Woodhoven in 1943, using Catalina flying-boats. The latter unit was redesignated No. 333 (Norwegian) Squadron on May 10, 1943.

A series of bombing and anti-aircraft fighters formed in the Middle East; in bomb-airing and anti-air-firing, this last by means of drogues flown behind Defiant target-tugs. No. 1481 B. and G. Flight, based at Birkbeck, had previously been based at Blenheim, in addition to its Defiants, whilst 1482 B. and G. Flight operated in the Levant, and later West Raynham and Great Massingham, used a variety of types. Defiants and Blenheim, the basic equipment, but also Venturas, Boston 1s and Lancasters, Lyonsers, Oxfords and Ansons were also employed. These were used in 'ex-squadron' aircraft, and retained their old code-markings.

No. 1484 B. and G. Flight at Driffield used Defiants, Battle XIVs (some of them target-tugs), and Lysanders. No. 1485 B. and G. Flight was based at Skellingthorpe. No. 1489 Fighter Gunnery Flight at Hunton Cranwick operated in conjunction with 1484 B. and G. Flight and flew Master 3s. (To be continued.)