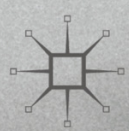




The Battle of Britain, 1945–1965
The Air Ministry and the Few

Garry Champion



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Garry Champion
University of Northampton, UK

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In loving memory

Pauline Champion
(1940–2011)

The Battle of Britain

Cecil Day-Lewis

*What did we earth-bound make of it? A tangle
Of vapour trails, a vertiginously high
Swarming of midges, at most a fiery angel
Hurled out of heaven, was all we could descry.*

*How could we know the agony and pride
That scrawled those fading signatures up there,
And the cool expertise of those who died
Or lived through that delirium of the air?*

*Grounded on history now, we re-enact
Such lives, such deaths. Time, laughing out of court
The newspaper heroics and the faked
Statistics, leaves us only to record.*

*What was, what might have been: fighter and bomber,
The tilting sky, tense moves and counterings;
Those who outlived that legendary summer;
Those who went down, its sunlight on their wings.*

*And you, unborn then, what will you make of it—
This shadow-play of battles long ago?
Be sure of this: they pushed to the uttermost limit
Their luck, skill, nerve. And they were young like you.*

From *Complete Poems* by Cecil Day-Lewis,
published by Sinclair Stevenson.
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Abbreviations

AA	Anti-aircraft
AASF	Advanced Air Striking Force
ACAS	Assistant Chief of the Air Staff
ACM	Air Chief Marshal
AHB	Air Historical Branch
AI	Air Intelligence
AM	Air Ministry
APS	Assistant Private Secretary
ARP	Air-raid personnel
ATC	Air Training Corps
AuxAF	Auxiliary Air Force
AVM	Air Vice-Marshal
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBFA	Battle of Britain Fighter Association
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
CAS	Chief of the Air Staff
CBS	Columbia Broadcasting Service
C-in-C	Commander in Chief
CO	Commanding Officer
DAMT	Department of Air Member for Training
DFC	Distinguished Flying Cross
DFM	Distinguished Flying Medal
DPR	Directorate of Public Relations
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
EEC	European Economic Community
HMSO	His Majesty's Stationary Office
HQ	Headquarters
LwKBK	<i>Luftwaffenkriegsberichterkompanien</i> (Luftwaffe propaganda)
LwPK	<i>Propagandakompanien</i> (Luftwaffe propaganda company)
MAP	Ministry of Aircraft Production

MBE	Member British Empire
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoI	Ministry of Information
MRAF	Marshal of the RAF
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO	Non-commissioned officer
NHS	National Health Service
ObdH	<i>Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres</i> (Supreme Commander of the OKH)
OKH	<i>Oberkommando des Heeres</i> (Supreme Army High Command)
OKW	German Forces' Supreme Command
PoW	Prisoner of War
PR	Public Relations
PS	Private Secretary
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAFA	Royal Air Force Association
RDF	Radio Direction Finding (radar)
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
RMVP	<i>Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda</i> (Propaganda Ministry)
ROC	Royal Observer Corps
R/T	Radio-telephony
SAO	Strategic Air Offensive
SNCO	Senior Non-commissioned Officer
SoS	Secretary of State
TV	Television
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States of America
USAAF	United States Army Air Force
USoS	Under-Secretary of State
VC	Victoria Cross
VCAS	Vice-Chief Air Staff
WAAC	War Artists' Advisory Committee
WAAF	Women's Auxiliary Air Force
WVS	Women's Voluntary Service

Chronology

1940

- 10 May Winston Churchill becomes Prime Minister on the day Hitler attacks France and the Low Countries.
- 4 June *Phase 1 of the Battle of Britain propaganda war.*
- 18 June Churchill's 'Finest Hour' speech to the Commons; suggested as the start date of the Battle of Britain by some commentators in late 1940.
- 22 June French surrender – Armistice.
German historian Karl Klee gives the period from the end of the fighting in France to 7 August as the initial contact phase of the Battle of Britain.
- 3 July French Fleet disabled by the Royal Navy at Oran and Mers-El-Kebir.
- 10 July Official start date for the Battle of Britain as later agreed in 1943, with attacks on Channel convoys marking *Phase 1*, from 10 July to 7 August.
- 8 August Start of *Phase 1* in the Air Ministry's 1941 account of the Battle of Britain. This became *Phase 2* of the 1943 revised battle dates, from 8 August to 23 August.
Phase 2 of the air propaganda war.
Klee: 8–23 August as Stage 1 of Main Phase 1.
- 13 August In Cabinet meeting Churchill confirms that he aims to send at least two armoured regiments (tank battalions) to Egypt.
- 15 August *Luftwaffe* loses 57 aircraft in daylight air battles. From mid-August there were increasing disputes between Britain and Germany about the very wide discrepancies between aircraft claims.
- 18 August A key date, with serious aircraft losses on both sides.
- 19 August Learoyd of Bomber Command awarded VC for attack against Dortmund-Ems canal viaduct.
- 20 August Churchill's 'Never in the field of human conflict' tribute to 'the Few' in the Commons.

- 24 August Start of *Phase 3* of the official period of the battle, lasting until 6 September.
Klee: 24 August–6 September, Stage 2 of Main Phase 1.
- 25 August First RAF overnight raid by Bomber Command on Berlin.
- 7 September Major *Luftwaffe* daylight attack on London marks the start of the Blitz and official *Phase 4*, from 7 September until 30 September. Bomber Command begins attacks against the assembly of invasion barges in Channel ports.
Phase 3 of the air propaganda war.
Klee: 7–19 September as Stage 1 of Main Phase 2.
- 8 September National Day of Prayer.
- 11 September Churchill's 'Every man to his post' broadcast notes the efforts of bomber crews in attacking barges, and also confirms that air superiority is essential for any German invasion attempt.
- 15 September RAF thwarts major *Luftwaffe* attacks against London claiming '185 raiders shot down'. Figure revised to 61 after the war.
- 16 September Extensive worldwide media coverage of the attacks on 15 September.
- 17 September Hitler postpones Operation *Sea Lion*.
Klee: 20 September to 13 November as Stage 2 of Main Phase 2.
- 27 September Hannah awarded VC for his heroism over Antwerp on 15 September.
- 30 September 47 *Luftwaffe* aircraft lost in major assault.
- 1 October *Phase 5*, 1–31 October, fighter-bomber attacks.
Phase 4 of the air propaganda war.
- 17 October RAF senior officers' conference to discuss the role of 'Big Wings' leads to the dismissal of Dowding and Park slightly later in 1940.
- 31 October Official end date for the Battle of Britain.
- 11 November Italian Air Force mounts its first large and only serious daylight attack against Britain including the use of some biplane aircraft.
Klee: 13 November 1940–22 June 1941 as Stage 3 of Main Phase 2.
- 14–15 November *Luftwaffe* attack against Coventry causes severe damage.

- 15 November Hurricane pilot Flight Lieutenant Nicolson awarded the VC.
- 25 November Dowding removed as Head of Fighter Command.
- 18 December Park replaced as Head of 11 Group, which bore the brunt of the air battles.

1941

Phase 5a of the 'cold' air propaganda war: three phases to 1945.

- 29 March *The Battle of Britain* booklet published by the Air Ministry.
- 17 June Existence of radar first revealed to the British public.
- 22 June Germany invades the Soviet Union.
- 7 September National Day of Prayer.
- 7 December Japanese attack against Pearl Harbor.

Propaganda phase 5b.

1942

- 12 February 'Channel Dash' of battle-cruisers *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst*.
- 15 February Surrender of Singapore to Japanese forces.
- 21 June Tobruk garrison surrenders to Rommel and *Afrika Korps*.
- 29 September In the Commons Churchill rejects a proposal for an 'Air Trafalgar Day' to commemorate the Battle of Britain.
- 4 November El Alamein victory for British and Commonwealth troops.
- 15 November First Civil Defence Day, to honour civil defence during the Blitz.

1943

Chapel created at RAF Biggin Hill to commemorate the air-crews flying from the base during the war.

- 2 February Germans surrender at Stalingrad.
- 16–17 May Dambusters' raid.
- August Air Ministry *Battle of Britain* pamphlet published for new recruits.
- 26 September The first Battle of Britain Sunday, combined with Civil Defence Day.
- 1943–4 T. C. G. James' historiographically-influential narrative on the Battle of Britain written for the AHB.

1944

- 6 June D-Day.
- 17 September Battle of Britain Sunday.

1945

RAF mission to research actual *Luftwaffe* losses.

Propaganda phase 5c.

13 May Churchill's victory speech highlights the Battle of Britain's fighter pilots as the 'Few'.

19 May Churchill confirms that the Few will receive a Battle of Britain emblem to the 1939–45 Star.

14 August At war's end, of the 2,917 'Few' that had fought during the Battle of Britain, 1,339 lost their lives either during the Battle itself (c.537), or later in the war – a total of 45.9 per cent.

15 September Massed RAF fly-past led by Douglas Bader to commemorate the Battle of Britain as part of a week of celebrations.

1946

10 September Dowding's 'The Battle of Britain', *Supplement to the London Gazette* published.

15 September Battle of Britain Sunday. A 330-aircraft fly-past and RAF 'At Home' days were also arranged during 'Battle of Britain Week'.

1947

15 May Official confirmation that RAF claims during the Battle of Britain were much higher than the actual *Luftwaffe* losses.

10 July Dedication of the Royal Air Force Chapel at Westminster Abbey.

14 September BBC *Battle for Britain* programme about Operation *Sea Lion*.

15 September Battle of Britain Sunday.

21 September Release of German Operation *Sea Lion* documents by the Admiralty.

1949

11 January Rolls-Royce Memorial Window unveiled in Derby.
Churchill's *Their Finest Hour* published.

1951

17 September Churchill's RAF Benevolent Fund broadcast appeal repeated his 'to so Few' epigraph to the fighter pilots.
St George's Chapel of Remembrance opened at RAF Biggin Hill.

- 1952 During Battle of Britain Week 76 RAF Stations are opened to the public, attracting around 966,000 visitors.
- 1953 Air Forces Memorial at Runnymede; Richards' *The Fight at Odds* published.
- 1955 RAF officer John Holloway began a definitive record of the Few.
- 1957 RAF Battle of Britain Memorial Flight established at RAF Biggin Hill; Collier's *Defence of the United Kingdom* official history published.
- 1958 Creation of the Battle of Britain Fighter Association.
- 1960 A question raised by the Air Ministry as to whether a Battle of Britain Monument was a worthwhile idea.
- 1964 Ministry of Defence formed in its current guise, the Air Ministry ceasing to exist as a separate organisation.
- 1965 Sir Winston Churchill dies on 24 January.
Royal Mail Battle of Britain twenty-fifth anniversary stamps issued.

Introduction

Valorising or mythicising the Battle of Britain?

With its seventy-fifth anniversary falling in September 2015 the Battle of Britain continues to resonate powerfully in British popular national memory, the roots of its valorisation firmly planted early in 1941. Why valorisation, in the sense of raising the value of the Battle as an event, rather than its mythicisation, as some historians have suggested? Usually, when one thinks of a myth the sense is of a largely fictitious event, so embroidered that it is no longer possible to untangle the facts from the subsequent layering of fiction, the primacy of supernatural deities central to the narrative. In contemporary usage describing an event as mythical is generally pejorative, to mythicise it, a further distortion. Revisionists have claimed that the Battle of Britain was deliberately mythicised both during wartime and thereafter, and certainly beyond what the actual facts of the air battles could bear. Challenging this, historian Basil Collier suggested in 1962 that ‘in military matters, legend usually has ten years’ start over truth. Legend is not necessarily myth. There is nothing mythical about the skill and courage of the young fighter pilots who gained an undying reputation as “the Few”.’¹

When one studies the propaganda projected during the air battles of the latter part of 1940 it is obvious that the grit and determination of Fighter Command’s pilots – including Blenheim and Defiant aircrews – was its main focus, and especially their dogged prowess in bringing down *Luftwaffe* aircraft. Their claims – made in the stress and confusion of battle – were only later revealed to have been inaccurate. In this sense, Fighter Command’s successes in blunting air attacks were valorised by the British Air Ministry principally for the purposes of providing a running commentary for the news media, and thereby raising morale at a difficult moment, but there was no wider attempt to mythicise their success beyond this. In fact, it was not obvious during late 1940 or indeed in very early 1941 that Britain had just won a major battle, many observers not otherwise struck by the strategic significance of a seemingly endless series of small- and large-scale daylight air

skirmishes and attacks beginning in late June and continuing into 1941. To this extent it can be argued that the British Air Ministry's air communiqués – upon which subsequent propaganda was based – were *not* in fact seeking to make more of the events than was justified. Although censored, the material about Fighter Command was intended for rapid broadcast by the BBC, thence as newspaper print, this developing as 'hot' news and propaganda on a daily basis. There was certainly no overarching propaganda plan to catapult the pilots of Fighter Command to a warrior-god status in late 1940.

This is most clearly demonstrated by comparing British propaganda with that projected by Germany during the same period, the latter – against its will because it lost the propaganda initiative – given no choice other than to parry British aircraft claims and counterclaims broadcast by the BBC. Their collective propaganda output represented two sides of one coin, neither working to a grander plan; from 1941, in the RAF's case it was possible to develop this, but from the *Luftwaffe's* perspective it was decided to focus on new campaigns, the fruits of which provided significant propaganda benefits.

Insofar as the yet to be formally named 'Battle of Britain' appeared as a coherent event in late 1940, most observers would then have conceded that the air attacks were intense and sustained, but might have struggled to invest them with deeper significance. It was in fact an Air Ministry interpretation offered in its *Battle of Britain* pamphlet which provided a clearer shape to the disparate air battles of the previous year, this released in March 1941 and impressing even Goebbels.² But did the pamphlet mythicise the Battle of Britain rather than simply valorise it? As far as Nazi war aims were concerned it was possible for all to agree that the *Luftwaffe* had made a significant attempt to end the war through a sustained series of air attacks, the strategic context of which was hazily discernible through speeches by Hitler and Goering, and wider Nazi propaganda; thus it had some shape and could be delineated as a series of shifting target priorities. The air battles had also been linked to the threat of invasion, this as much by Britain as Germany, the former increasingly shrill on the threat into September; the latter, by contrast, progressively lukewarm. Beyond this linkage it was less easy to make a convincing argument about the wider importance of the late 1940 period, simply because it was difficult to strategically contextualise the air battles at such an early point in the war.

Several interpretations could, after all, be placed on the German air campaign: first, that its Blitz phase was an attempt to bomb Britain into submission by invoking the air power doctrinal theories of Douhet et al. and quickly undermining civilian morale; second, that it was the initial phase of a campaign to destroy the RAF in order to launch an invasion; and third, that it was aimed at destroying Britain's economic potential, a peace deal inevitable. Added to these might have been a combined air and sea blockade but other than convoy attacks in the Channel it is hard to argue that

this was ever seriously attempted by the *Luftwaffe*; and although much of its late-1940 propaganda proclaimed the success of its attacks on merchant and naval shipping, the results were modest. Indeed, one of the arguments offered by invasion sceptics is that Goering was simply not interested in diverting his attention to Royal Navy bases and warships as part of his air campaign, a move which was in fact strategically vital to give the invasion armada its best chance of success.

This leads back to whether the hugely influential 1941 pamphlet was founded upon fact rather than fiction, its focus on 15 September 1940 as ‘the Greatest Day’ – or as suggested in 1942, ‘Air Trafalgar Day’ – central to the projection of Fighter Command as the saviours of the free world. In other words, had the RAF and AA defences *not* shot down 185 aircraft on that day it was proclaimed in the narrative that Hitler would have undoubtedly launched his invasion. Not possible to verify until Nazi High Command (OKW) documents were captured by the allies in 1945 – the details finally released in September 1947 – the central claim of the 1941 pamphlet was then either an inspired insight, or calculated misinterpretation.

The reality is that even seventy-five years after the Battle of Britain (hereafter Battle) historians remain divided over Operation *Sea Lion*, German war-time commanders inclining to the view that Hitler was not serious, allied commanders that he was. Most British historians – including Churchill, publicly at least – believed that it was a serious threat, only a few discordant voices – German historians amongst them – challenging this. Not in dispute was Hitler’s obsession with Russia, senior commanders tasked with planning for its invasion even as the air war against Britain intensified during July. It is, therefore, difficult to gauge whether ‘the Battle of Britain’ was a mythical construct simply because if it is accepted that Hitler called off his invasion plans given 15 September *Luftwaffe* losses, the pamphlet’s central argument was a valid claim. Hitler did in fact postpone the invasion on 17 September, this not known clearly until 1947 – as distinct from an opaque Enigma message, and barge dispersals – but it is not known precisely whether this was wholly due to RAF fighter – and bomber – resistance, or a combination of factors including the threat posed by the Royal Navy. Alas, different interpretations of Operation *Sea Lion* and its abandonment are possible, the pamphlet’s verdict highly valuable to the British during a period of continuing disappointment and setbacks.

Changing focus, the foundations of this now settled, dominant narrative of the Few single-handedly deciding the Battle were built upon erroneous RAF enemy aircraft claims. Air intelligence, and the ensuing propaganda which it generated, were critical to the representation of the developing Battle, military air communiqués projecting pilots’ claims collated from fighter airfield intelligence officers on both sides of the Channel. RAF intelligence claims about Fighter Command’s prowess thus formed the bedrock of the legend that rapidly elevated the Few.³

Although not articulated as a coherent policy, Britain's propaganda effort had several aims of which sustaining home front morale was the most pressing, especially after the fall of France and the ignominious retreat from Dunkirk. Persuading the British Empire that the fight would continue ensured vital support in both men and materiel, and as the summer drew on, the United States became a major focus for a sustained propaganda effort. Whilst this yielded little of direct value for fighting the Battle itself, from early 1941 American aid became increasingly critical, not least given Britain's parlous financial condition. To these objectives can be added propaganda directed at countries now under the Nazi yoke, and also, but ineffectually because of Hitler's extraordinary run of success, Germany's military and its civilian population.⁴

This British propaganda achievement – for such it was – is all the more remarkable given a Ministry of Information caught very much on the back foot and struggling to rally with a coherent message, and the Air Ministry's Directorate of Public Relations, the real source of RAF propaganda through its air communiqués, initially perhaps overly concerned to avoid any publicity for individual fighter and bomber pilots or aircrews. Despite this the BBC, press and wider media were content to project the RAF's daily aircraft claims for enemy aircraft shot down, and any stories which reinforced their heroism.⁵ The British Air Ministry's error was in not revealing the provisional nature of the aircraft claims during wartime where a key argument was the likely impact on both Fighter Command and public morale; in late 1940 this was reasonable but less so as the war progressed. A factor here may also have been the high estimates made by Fighter Command in its 'leaning into France' offensive from 1941; if the aircraft claims of 1940 were potentially wrong, what about subsequent figures? Thus, the aircraft claims were critical to how Britain projected itself to the watching world during the latter months of 1940.

Of perhaps greater interest to the valorisation of the Battle is what happened after the 1941 pamphlet's publication. There is no question that it set in train a wide and rich creative response, the confidently asserted shape and importance of the Battle generating literature, films, art, radio plays and other celebratory cultural media from 1941 onwards, once the implications of the pamphlet's core message had sunk in. Consolidated from 1941 to 1945, by war's end the Battle had also been commemorated formally through national Battle of Britain Days.

Post-war, the victors wrote the history, beginning with Churchill, the Few central to the narrative having been previously honoured as the war in Europe ended with the award of an aircrew medal clasp, and in 1947, a memorial in Westminster Abbey.⁶ By 1945 the RAF bomber attacks against barge concentrations in September 1940 had been wholly forgotten, the more delicate issues around the Strategic Air Offensive and recent bombing of Dresden tending to eclipse Bomber Command's contribution to

victory.⁷ Figures released by the British government in May 1947 (and only two months before the unveiling by King George VI of the Battle of Britain Memorial Window in the Royal Air Force Chapel in Westminster Abbey) confirmed that the RAF had over-claimed by a margin of between 45.3 and 58.2 per cent, depending on which figures are used – a combined figure gives 51.7 per cent, an over-claim rate of just over two to one.⁸ The post-war downward revision of the RAF's actual tally of German aircraft from the 2,692 claimed during the Battle, to a still impressive figure of 1,733 (959 less aircraft) has not dented the Few's reputation.⁹

Insofar as Fighter Command was concerned, the early British post-war focus on the Battle of Britain through Battle of Britain Day, Battle of Britain Week, the annual service in Westminster Abbey and other tributes, served to further enshrine the events of late 1940 as one of the noblest British achievements of the Second World War. Added to this, the ensuing Cold War made it sensible for the RAF to keep the Battle in the public's mind, not least for continued high morale, recruitment (other than National Service) and investment in new technology and aircraft during periods of austerity.¹⁰ Given the Cold War obsession with atomic bombs and maintaining a fleet of bombers to drop these – the V-Force in Britain's case – it is striking that Bomber Command was not given more credit for its contribution to the Battle (Fighter and Bomber Commands were merged in 1968). It is, then, one of the more notable aspects of the propaganda war waged during the Battle that the 1941 pamphlet narrative remains dominant over seventy years later, despite the question mark over whether it mythicised or only merely valorised the air battles of late 1940.

Powerfully resonant still, Churchill's 18 June 1940 'Finest Hour' epigraph pithily captured this period's importance to British popular memory despite repeated revisionists' attempts to challenge the 'myth', as Angus Calder has described the national representation of its defiance.¹¹ Thus, 1940, described by David Reynolds as 'the fulcrum of the Twentieth Century',¹² remains for the British, at least, a climactic historical moment down to the present time, even if their twenty-first-century political and economic partners are at times perplexed by a fascination with events of seventy-five years ago.¹³ This book, then, seeks principally to understand the central place of the Few in the Battle of Britain and their role in preventing Operation *Sea Lion*; the Air Ministry's role in valorising their deeds; and also, the eclipsing of the 'bomber boys' from the now settled narrative which continues to hold sway.

Book focus and structure

The Battle of Britain as it is understood today derives principally from the 'behind the scenes' efforts made by senior officers, officials and propagandists in the British Air Ministry from 1940 to 1945. Discussed above, whilst the aircraft-claims propaganda war of late 1940 was very much a day by day

response to a developing situation on both sides, matters changed significantly with the Air Ministry pamphlet released in March 1941. Thereafter – and building upon this wartime consolidation – the Battle has continued to be celebrated, commemorated and otherwise represented to the present time. This book seeks principally to understand the origins and evolution of the Battle of Britain as a major historical event in British popular memory, its fame based wholly on the view that the Few had prevented an invasion of Britain; 15 September 1940 is of particular importance here, *Luftwaffe* losses on that date believed to have persuaded Hitler that it was too risky to launch Operation *Sea Lion*.

To better understand this critical relationship *Sea Lion* is explored at different points in the narrative: its strategic context, evolution, preparation and planning are explored in Chapter 1, in addition to the divergent views about how serious a threat it was; Chapter 3 considers the impact of RAF bomber attacks on invasion ports; and Chapter 7, cultural representations of the invasion threat in light of captured German documents revealed in 1947. The eclipsing of both Dowding and Park, the two key Fighter Command commanders removed just after the Battle's conclusion is also considered at different points: perversely, as the Few became ever more valorised their two most important leaders were virtually extinguished from the narrative, this driven – to Churchill's immense irritation – by the Air Ministry itself.

Adopting a chronological approach, this book confirms the domino effect set in train, first through the propaganda war led by the British Air Ministry's Directorate of Public Relations, thence its 1941 pamphlet, this quickly followed by a range of official and unofficial cultural responses through to 1945. By war's end the Few's prowess during the Battle of Britain had become a settled focus of national celebration and thanksgiving. The foundations of this continuing fame were laid between 1941 and 1953, the Air Ministry's influence and determination key to how the Battle is now understood. From 1953 to 1965 official support continued to be given to this valorisation, the Air Ministry ceasing to exist in 1964. Moreover, Churchill's death in January 1965 is believed by most commentators to have marked the end of an age, that year denoting the beginning of the modern period. Given these two factors, 1965 is a good point at which to conclude this assessment.

A second aim concerns RAF Bomber and Coastal Command's contribution to the late-1940 air war, this quickly eclipsed from the Battle narrative despite its being a material consideration for Hitler and his High Command. Addressed in Chapter 3, in parallel with the air assault on Britain, ran the 'Battle of the Barges', the RAF's bomber attacks against the assembling invasion fleet in occupied Channel ports. Occasionally, the propaganda coverage was of equal intensity, but even by early 1941 Bomber and Coastal Command's efforts in obstructing Operation *Sea Lion* had been eclipsed in the popular memory and imagination by Fighter Command's 'Few', a

process complete by May 1945. This was in no small part due to a very selective Air Ministry representation of the Battle from early 1941 through to 1945. Chapter 3 explores the bomber attacks against the ports, their results, the propaganda projected about them and the rapidly fading recognition of their contribution even by 1942.

A third aim is to counterpoint *Luftwaffe* air war propaganda with that projected about Fighter Command, and the RAF bomber attacks during 1940. Following Dunkirk, German propagandists acted with equal fervour, the tone and claims made for the *Luftwaffe* not very different from those projected about the RAF. Confirming that it is the victor who writes the history, it is striking, though, how quickly the British Air Ministry moved to capitalise on the opportunity provided by the Few, yet across the Channel the *Luftwaffe's* significant late-1940 effort was forgotten by its propagandists as early as 1941. This is curious because by December 1940 at least it was not obvious to either side what precisely had been achieved through the series of earlier air battles, other perhaps than Britain's refusal to seek peace terms. Yes, she had strongly resisted the *Luftwaffe's* air assaults and managed to secure American support – the results of which would not be felt until later in 1941 – but beyond this Britain's geo-political position remained much as it was immediately after Dunkirk. True, she had not been invaded, but cities and towns had suffered through sustained air attacks which were in fact continuing to bite.

In seeking to understand the purpose of the air battles, until the night Blitz at least, the British could only view the *Luftwaffe* effort through the prism of what they *imagined* were Hitler's strategic objectives – namely an invasion. Indeed, German historians argue that the *Luftwaffe's* campaign did not simply 'cease' on 31 October 1940 in line with British interpretations, but instead continued – at a fierce and substantial level – through to 10 May 1941. It is then striking that German propagandists lost interest in further proclaiming the daylight air offensive effort made during late 1940, and all the more so given the primacy of propaganda as one aspect of their war machine's potent methodology. This had, of course, previously unnerved Britain and France, notably during the Munich crisis of 1938. In sum, German historians do not agree with either the British interpretation or naming of this event as 'the Battle of Britain', and in stark contrast to the continuing British focus on 1940 well into the twenty-first century, Germany as a nation completely ignores it.

A fourth aspect concerns those working behind the scenes at the Air Ministry and elsewhere, for if the actual winning of the Battle can be attributed to Dowding, Park, Mitchell, Camm, Watson-Watt and Rolls-Royce for their leadership or prowess in providing fighter aircraft and radar, its subsequent valorisation can equally be credited to several senior Air Ministry RAF officers and officials; indeed, it is hard to imagine that the Battle as it is now understood would have assumed the shape it has were it not for these

individuals. Involved in many ways from supporting popular films to writing formal propaganda, and agreeing to pilots' memoirs, the Air Ministry's propagandists achieved very significant results, the influence of which remains resonant. Air Ministry efforts to promote the Battle continued into the early 1960s, the creation of the Ministry of Defence in 1964 – in nascent form at least – effectively drawing a veil across further ambitions.

To achieve these aims, the book is organised into three parts. Part I considers the 1940 propaganda projected by both Britain and Germany as the Battle of Britain unfolded, including the 'Battle of the Barges'. The context of Operation *Sea Lion* is also considered here, this central to British claims that the Few managed to prevent this being attempted. Part II, focusing upon 1941–5, confirms the rapid valorisation of the Battle, principally through the 1941 pamphlet, this in turn leading to a range of cultural representation, official events and a developing historiography. Part III, its focus on the post-war era from 1945 to 1965, confirms the official cultural consolidation of the wartime representation of the Battle and the manner in which it has remained at the forefront of British popular memory, this despite the release of captured German documents in 1947 that offered a different perspective on the air battles of late 1940.

A note on sources

A book focusing on cultural history must necessarily explore a wide spectrum of sources. The material used here, therefore, ranges from Air Ministry documents held in the National Archive concerned with propaganda, commemoration and memorials at one extreme, to Battle-related material culture sold on eBay, at the other. Within the strict context of cultural history I suggest that any object, publication or broadcast item (TV and radio) which is an *original* representation of a theme or event should be considered as primary source material in this context. In respect of the chapters on propaganda in Part I, for instance, much of the evidence used was the actual material disseminated for this purpose (film, newspapers, posters, magazines and broadcasts). Such material is primary rather than secondary source in nature. Often, other than this material as the final product of a propagandist's efforts to project a particular view, nothing else survives of the draft material from which it was produced.

Unavoidably, some material from my book on Battle of Britain propaganda (2008, *The Good Fight*) has been referred to, specifically in the discussion of the propaganda phases from early June 1940 through to 1943. Where possible I have also introduced new material, which I hope is acceptable in providing an accurate historical context within which to understand post-war developments. It is, after all, very difficult to understand how the Battle was increasingly valorised after 1940 without also exploring the range of propaganda projected about it. A thread running throughout the discussion

from early in 1941 is the impact of the *Battle of Britain* pamphlet, its influence very wide. This material had an enormous bearing upon perceptions of British exceptionalism during 1940 and the later drive to shape the Battle as a unique historical event. It is clear that had the late-1940 propaganda war not developed in the manner that it did, British Air Ministry propagandists would have struggled to valorise the Battle so effectively from early in the following year.

Part I

Air War, Media War

1

Seelöwe und Bomben Auf England: The German Perspective, 1940

Hitler's unexpected strategic dilemma

By 22 June 1940 Hitler's armies had conquered Poland, invaded Norway and Denmark, defeated France and the Low Countries, and had forced the BEF out of France. What had threatened to deteriorate into a protracted and bitter conflict in the west had in fact been concluded so quickly that Hitler and the OKW had given little thought to what might come next. The only factor that was clear at this time was Hitler's obsession with invading the Soviet Union, his views first aired in *Mein Kampf*.¹ On 2 June during a visit to Army Group A HQ and even before France's defeat, Hitler had told Field Marshal von Rundstedt of his interest in attacking Russia now that Britain might be ready for peace – Britain was at this point engaged in the Dunkirk evacuation. Thus, very soon after France's defeat Hitler was torn between conflicting strategic aims: whilst he wished to reach a rapid settlement with Britain so that she no longer posed a threat or, more precisely, at that time remained an irritation on his western frontier, he realised equally that the Soviet Union was now within perhaps easy reach. Based on recent *Wehrmacht* success against a seemingly all-powerful France supported by Britain, an invasion of the Soviet Union was on this basis likely to succeed.

Fresh in Hitler's mind would be several facts: a small Finnish army had revealed Red Army weaknesses during an attempted invasion in November 1939; Stalin had ruthlessly purged his officer corps during 1937–8; and German intelligence assessments were generally very dismissive of Soviet military capability.² Hitler was also deeply suspicious of Stalin's intentions, becoming increasingly convinced that he would attack Germany at the first opportunity, hence the *Fuehrer's* preoccupation with this perceived threat.³ The prospects of an Anglo-Russian rapprochement were also of some concern were Britain to remain in the war. The chronology in Appendix 1 confirms that only days after France's surrender the *Wehrmacht* was beginning, if only in outline, to contemplate an attack in the east, these plans steadily

maturing in tandem with the air assaults against Britain as the summer and autumn progressed.

On the 'English question', in late June she hardly looked a threat of any consequence: Norway had been an embarrassment even when allowing for Royal Navy success against the *Kriegsmarine*; despite dogged fighting by the BEF it had been quickly routed and evacuated via Dunkirk, and was now without much of its equipment;⁴ the RAF's fighter force (AASF) had fought bravely against the *Luftwaffe* but its Hurricanes had not given a clear impression of technical parity with the Me109 fighter;⁵ and finally, Britain was suddenly isolated and vulnerable to sea blockade, American aid not a material factor in July 1940.⁶ In short, Britain posed no immediate or obvious future threat and was easily contained in the nearer term. Hitler could therefore afford simply to do nothing given the above and during the four weeks following the Franco-German Armistice on 22 June until his peace offer to Britain on 19 July, he saw no pressing need to consider a snap invasion of Britain, even had he the wherewithal to do so.

A rapidly improvised invasion suggests of course that Hitler's forces had the materiel and technical capability to invade Britain in late June or early July, but any close analysis of the realities soon dispels this notion.⁷ In fact, the French campaign had taken its toll of the German army and air force. The *Wehrmacht* had suffered quite high casualties, was exhausted after such a significant effort, and had many vehicle serviceability problems, whilst the *Luftwaffe* had suffered many aircrew and aircraft losses, and required time to replenish. There was also the small matter of occupying and making good former French air force airfields, and the practical realities of building new ones. Invading Britain at this point was therefore wholly unrealistic despite a weakened British army.

Similarly, as Admiral Raeder, the head of the *Kriegsmarine* well knew, the Royal Navy remained unbowed and would have played havoc with a hastily-improvised armada.⁸ Likewise, Milch's fanciful argument to Goering that airborne forces using gliders and parachutes should be quickly deployed to capture key airfields so as to bring in reinforcements, and then force a surrender, was a highly optimistic assessment of German capabilities⁹ – German parachute losses over Crete showed the risks.¹⁰ Given the lack of military readiness on the one hand, and no clear strategy on the other, it is therefore unsurprising that little of note happened for several weeks as the *Wehrmacht* celebrated its victory. A Britain very much at bay was simply left to ponder an uncertain future and worry about how best to repel an expected Nazi onslaught.¹¹ Viewed with hindsight it is all too obvious that allowing Britain to remain in the war was the decisive factor in Germany's eventual defeat, but in June 1940 it hardly appeared thus as Hitler surveyed a large empire running in the west from Norway down to the Spanish border, and to the east, the long border with the Soviet Union (Plate 5).

Operation *Sea Lion*

Hitler's invasion never launched, his ambitions for *Seelöwe*, or Operation *Sea Lion*, have been the focus of considerable debate since the Second World War, not least because planning for it had not been undertaken in a serious manner before the war began.¹² In essence, after Dunkirk and Britain's determination to continue the fight Hitler set his OKH the aim of landing an invasion force along various points of south-east England, and rapidly thereafter making progress towards London and the English midlands. A large German force of over 260,400 men, supported by 34,200 vehicles, tanks and artillery, 52 light flak batteries, 61,983 horses, and other necessities, was to be ferried across the English Channel in three waves.¹³ It fell to the German Navy, the *Kriegsmarine*, to mastermind this process, but not unreasonably they were very concerned about the RAF's strength where air superiority over the landing beaches was deemed a vital prerequisite, and also the overwhelming might of the Royal Navy. Table 1.1 confirms the broad numbers of vessels requisitioned and assembled for *Sea Lion* but also demonstrates the difficulty in assessing final numbers available for use by the German Navy as losses from British air attacks occurred between July and October (see Table 3.2, p. 71).

Sea Lion's broad chronology has been well documented (see Appendix 1) even if Hitler's reasoning has at times been harder to fathom. The sixteenth of July 1940 saw him issue *War Directive No. 16*, setting out a series of conditions that had to be met in order for an attempted invasion, air superiority deemed vital in order to offset the Royal Navy's primacy.¹⁹ On 1 August 1940 he confirmed in *War Directive No. 17* that the destruction of the RAF was to be carried out, *Sea Lion* to be staged thereafter.²⁰ The developing air attacks were in part the *Luftwaffe's* attempt to soften up and progressively destroy

Table 1.1 Vessels required, requisitioned and assembled by the German Navy for *Sea Lion* (compiled by Garry Campion from several book details)

	Original naval requirement	Numbers at end of August	Numbers in early September	Numbers on 19 September	Numbers on 21 September
Transports	141	168	168	168	170
Barges	2000	1900	1910	1975	1918
Tugs and trawlers	500	442	419	420	386
Motor boats	1056	1600	1600	1600	1020
Coastal motor boats	–	–	–	100	–
	3697¹⁴	4110¹⁵	4097¹⁶	4263¹⁷	3494¹⁸

the RAF so that it would be unable to mount any effective resistance over the Channel crossing and invasion beaches, and critically, would allow the *Luftwaffe* a free hand against the Royal Navy. The German Naval Staff had, though, recorded doubts on 1 September 1940, even before the main RAF offensive had been launched on 7–8 September:

[T]he enemy's continuous fighting defence off the coast, his concentration of bombers on *Seelöwe* embarkation ports [...] indicate that he is now expecting an immediate landing [...] The English bombers [...] are still at full operational strength, and it must be confirmed that the activity of the British forces has been [quite] successful.²¹

Fighter Command proving less easy to destroy than had been expected, and facing mounting attacks by its bombers against invasion preparations, on 14 September 1940 Raeder noted that these factors made the invasion risks very great.²² Although initially resisting his appeal to abandon *Sea Lion*, and demanding a final effort against the RAF on 15 September 1940,²³ it was clear after heavy *Luftwaffe* losses that air superiority had not been achieved, Hitler postponing the invasion on 17 September 1940.²⁴ On 19 September an order was issued in response to heavy RAF attacks, the invasion fleet dispersal beginning on 20 September.²⁵ With raids continuing against invasion ports and shipping, *Sea Lion* preparations were officially wound down from 12 October 1940, and remaining vessels continued to be dispersed.²⁶ Further confirmation of the receding invasion threat came on 21 November 1940 when Hitler's *War Directive No. 18* noted that *Sea Lion* might have to wait until early 1941 before being re-launched; it was striking, though, by 5 December 1940 that it had been utterly abandoned, if not officially confirmed in a directive.²⁷ These are the basic facts as accepted in most histories, but much more hotly debated are the precise reasons for its abandonment: these aspects are considered below, and also in Chapters 3 and 8.

German propaganda during the Battle of Britain

Setting the scene: mid-June 1940

In tandem with planning and preparations for an attempted invasion was the parallel propaganda war, this deemed an essential aspect of Germany's war-making strategy. It had clearly worked wonders in other theatres and there was every reason to believe that in conjunction with military action, it would do so again. In order to understand the development and progress of Germany's propaganda efforts during the latter part of 1940 it is necessary to return to France's recent surrender.

Whilst ordinary Germans – to Hitler's dismay – had generally been very lukewarm and anxious about the invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, it is undeniable that rapid campaign success had resulted in a dramatic

surge of popular support for him by July 1940.²⁸ Earlier anxieties shaped by the First World War and its aftermath were quickly forgotten as one country after another fell to German military might, her armed forces suffering relatively modest casualties given the large territories gained. It also mattered that there was little wartime impact on domestic life in Germany, pre-war household goods still available in quantity.²⁹ To most Germans the war seemed very distant, Britain, seemingly on its knees, its BEF having been unceremoniously knocked out of mainland Europe and licking its wounds across the English Channel.³⁰ With no obvious way for Britain to sustain the war ordinary Germans were understandably both thrilled and reassured by Hitler's run of victories. Even where there may have been ideological resistance previously it was now prudent for German citizens to fully embrace the realities of Nazi dominance, which, viewed from the perspective of June 1940, appeared to be a now permanent and immutable aspect of their daily lives.³¹ Within this context, manipulating German domestic public opinion was, therefore, made easier in mid-1940 given the prospect of a rapid end to the war and a return to peacetime conditions; Hitler's plans to invade Russia as yet embryonic and wholly unsuspected by many Germans, not least because there was no obvious rationale for it, even to his general staff.

However, as with British propagandists, Germany had not planned to be heavily engaged in either an actual conflict or propaganda war with Britain as a sole adversary at such an early part of the war, and in tandem with Hitler's wider strategic plans, there was no clear propaganda strategy per se to exploit recent German successes.³² These obstacles aside, Nazi propagandists nevertheless had four constituencies at whom they had to project pro-regime propaganda: German civilians and the military; neutrals including America;³³ occupied countries under the yoke of Nazism;³⁴ and finally, Britain and its Empire.³⁵ British propagandists were equally focused on these same audiences, but obviously projecting very different messages.³⁶ After France's surrender German propagandists therefore faced the same broad challenges as their British counterparts: first, there had been no expectation that events would move so quickly, and second, it was not clear what might happen next, but with an eye on America (and Japan) it was nevertheless very important to sustain the momentum.

To this end Hitler and Goebbels were clearly determined to maintain psychological pressure on the British through threats of massed air attacks and invasion, doubtless in the hope that – as had been the case previously – raw fears about the *Luftwaffe* and *Wehrmacht* would lead both to an early collapse in morale, and also demands for a peace settlement.³⁷ Given these objectives it was then possible to begin to frame a propaganda strategy addressing these various objectives within the context of Nazism's wider ideological framework, but there were difficulties. Key amongst these was a basic but critical failure to understand the British character, landlocked continental attitudes always an uncertain and misleading substitute.

Earlier war propaganda during 1940 provided little guidance as to how best to approach a campaign against Britain when invasion was not an immediate option, hence a *Blitzkrieg*-style clash of arms showing the *Wehrmacht* to best effect could not be portrayed. For instance, *Deutsche Wochenschau* newsreel coverage of the Norway invasion and later attack on France and the Low Countries, aside from an aggressive tone and justification for the assaults, graphically reminded viewers that death and destruction was everywhere to be seen, corpses not censored.³⁸ Large-scale urban devastation could equally be justified, so argued the Nazis, on the basis that Britain and France started the war, Germany's pre-emptive offensives mounted purely to prevent the Allies from invading her first. During late June and into July newsreel bulletins were full of images of the victorious *Wehrmacht*, soldiers, tanks and vehicles endlessly on the move, and later, German women, young and old, joyfully throwing flowers at them as they marched in victory parades. Martial music was a constant newsreel backdrop, again reinforcing the sense of Hitler's Germany as an aggressive and ruthless enemy, taking delight in its victories. This model, then, had by mid-1940 been developed and refined to an impressive if disquieting extent, but critically relied upon a clear representation of both victor and the vanquished to be successful.

As to how best to deal with Britain during June and into July, Dunkirk was an easy target for newsreel propagandists, scenes of abandoned vehicles, weapons and stores on roads and beaches not calculated to portray the BEF as likely to offer any strong resistance to the *Wehrmacht* when they – shortly – arrived in England. Captured 'Tommies' also appeared unimpressive, and whereas the British had been able to turn a disaster into a deliverance of sorts with smiling soldiers at Dover and other ports, there was no disguising the raw humiliation felt by prisoners of war in British khaki facing perhaps years of imprisonment and uncertainty. The cowardly British army was also accused of a scorched earth policy in France as it retreated, the obliging *Wehrmacht* – not having inflicted any damage itself of course – happy to rebuild and replace bridges and other infrastructure wrecked by the fleeing BEF. It was also morally awkward for the British that they had appeared to 'tactically withdraw', France left alone to deal with the *Wehrmacht*, Britain having first – as with Poland – exhorted her ally to stand and fight, pledging support to the very end until the situation deteriorated.³⁹

More widely and an overwhelming source of British military might, the Royal Navy was as yet untested other than in Norway and featured little in German propaganda simply because there was nothing positive to say about attempts to degrade it. The RAF too was largely absent in mid-1940 German coverage, any focus being on bombers attacking women and children, hospitals and other buildings. Moreover, having liberated France and the Low Countries, Nazi ire was turned on oft-mentioned British 'plutocrats', Churchill and the ruling class portrayed as leading Britain into a needless war. To this extent German propagandists could be broadly pleased with

their output: the *Wehrmacht's* immutable might had been again reinforced to a watching world, France had been utterly vanquished, and Britain, having also been humiliated, offered no immediate means of resistance.

Propagandising the air battles – the strategic context

Throughout the summer and autumn of 1940 Germany suffered from an acute lack of reliable, useful intelligence about British morale and resolve, these posing real challenges in framing effective propaganda messages. William Joyce – Lord Haw-Haw – initially had some impact on British audiences but soon, and despite initial official British anxiety, these were only listened to for entertainment rather than serious news.⁴⁰ Insofar as Goebbels was concerned, an additional problem was his lack of control and influence over air war communiqués written and disseminated by the German military.⁴¹ Also the case in Britain, these were based on air force intelligence returns, thence written and released by the Air Ministry but without reference to the RMVP (or Mol) these having first, though, been scrutinised by censors (see Figure 2.1 on p. 39 for the British communiqué process).⁴²

Thus, a critical plank of Germany's propaganda war against Britain was in the hands of Air Ministry propagandists focused very much on meeting Goering's expectations and the narrower dimensions of the aircraft claims' war, the whole basis of which only mattered if it could be shown with accuracy how many aircraft each side had had at the outset; and thereafter, production outputs necessary either to exceed or maintain current first-line aircraft strengths. Clearly, heavy aircraft losses inflicted on an opponent availed little if large reserves existed for timely replacement. An added factor, other than the personal enmity between Goebbels and Goering, was that not only did the Nazi propaganda minister have little sway in military communiqués' contents, but Hitler had to sign them off before release to the world's media.⁴³ This could lead to delays that British propagandists exploited whenever they could. All in all this was unsatisfactory and it was not until after the air battles of late 1940 that Goebbels was able to exert more influence on communiqués, but by which time it was of far less significance.⁴⁴

More fundamentally, beyond the tit-for-tat arguments about aircraft losses it was also difficult to decide on what exactly should be presented to the various constituencies targeted by Nazi propagandists, and indeed what results were desired. Underpinning much of its coverage was a continuing determination to blame Churchill 'the war-criminal', and the British ruling class for the war,⁴⁵ and to avoid at all costs a return to Germany being cast as the bogeyman on the international stage; very much the case during and after the Great War. This time, peace-loving Germans were of course simply responding to British aggression, *Luftwaffe* bomber attacks very much in retaliation for those carried out by 'English pirate gangsters' against German civilians. This extended – Hitler's 19 July 'peace offer' broadcast – 'around

the world by 1,000 stations in thirty languages’ – and of which much was made in the German media.⁴⁶ To Nazi thinking it was possible to portray its rejection as sheer bloody-mindedness on Churchill’s part, but any close scrutiny of the likely terms would reveal the speed with which Britain would be decisively choked-off and reduced to a vassal state, much in the manner of Vichy under Pétain.⁴⁷

German propagandists likewise found it difficult to develop a coherent strategy which made sense of the unfolding day by day air battles to an international constituency. Whereas in Britain it was possible to improvise and project a ‘David and Goliath’ narrative that both exploited and ridiculed pre- and early-war propaganda about the overwhelming might of the *Luftwaffe*, propagandists over the Channel faced challenges with its obvious corollary. Discussed below, there was, after all, little of real substance to report other than the daily aerial clashes which, for the most part, were not individually decisive. Clearly, for the British at least, the air battles offered an unexpected opportunity to show that the RAF were parrying heavy blows and despite expectations, seeming to prevail.

However, this was less useful to German propagandists seeking principally to apply psychological pressure through the threat posed by the *Luftwaffe* to bring Britain round to a peace deal; after all, the key means of reinforcing this was through air battle successes but these were proving somewhat amorphous to project convincingly. Insofar as Germany had anticipated the campaign against Britain, then, it surely did not predict such a one-dimensional focus on a developing air war, its army and navy wholly eclipsed. Although doubtless a visually appealing spectacle – and easier to project through the media – for the Germans at least the ‘Battle of Britain’ propaganda war was not therefore about two air force elites performing deadly if dazzling aerobatics in world-class fighter aircraft over the Channel and south-east England.

Poor *Luftwaffe* intelligence only exacerbated matters, this leading in turn to a progressive divergence from the military realities given extravagant RAF losses being claimed by its fighter pilots.⁴⁸ Unavoidably, into the autumn Germany adopted a hastily-improvised geo-strategic response involving sea blockade and air attacks against military and economic potential, this part of a much broader canvas including the Mediterranean and North Africa.⁴⁹ The night Blitz represented the final phase of the air war, but it was hard to see this as an affirmation of German and *Luftwaffe* might.

Air war and *Sea Lion* propaganda dilemmas

Despite these undoubted challenges Nazi air war propaganda was conducted with equal vigour and panache to that projected by its adversary, the main strategic challenge facing the Germans – insofar as watching world opinion was concerned, and having argued that the British had started the war – being a need to deliver quickly on the initially much threatened invasion lest it lead to a loss of prestige on their part. In printed media the close

proximity of England's south-east corner was affirmed through maps and graphics hinting at a tantalisingly narrow Channel, and which must have seemed ludicrously vulnerable after the astonishing fall of France in June 1940 (Appendix 2). Newspapers were also apt to reinforce this sense of vulnerability, portraying Britain's defences as being reliant on old men armed with spears and antique weapons.⁵⁰

Paradoxically, German propaganda attempted on the one hand to affirm *Luftwaffe* and *Wehrmacht* superiority as an unstoppable force against an unworthy and ineffectual opponent in the RAF, whilst on the other also being careful to give no guarantees of early success.⁵¹ This was a complicated balancing act to get right, the line between the two difficult to ride deftly: after all, if the RAF was as weak as claimed what was preventing an invasion attempt? Leading fighter ace Adolf Galland was incensed by such misleading and offensive coverage of the RAF, even raising the issue with Hitler during a meeting with him in Berlin.⁵² Aside from what Galland felt was an unworthy slur and characterisation of a brave, resolute and strong opponent, it was also the case that the *Luftwaffe's* reputation suffered too: why then was it unable to defeat a seemingly weak foe after such a long period of sustained effort?⁵³

As an example of the challenges Germany faced in striking this balance it is notable that whereas the invasion threat had been prominent in German domestic broadcasts during July, focus on this diminished from the first week of August with more emphasis thereafter placed upon the air war itself as the decisive dimension.⁵⁴ This extended to newsreel issues where no mention was made of invasion from August through to the year's end (Appendix 2). Germany's propaganda machine was therefore changing tack even at this point, and a full month before the British believed the invasion threat was at its highest in mid-September (Appendix 1).

This is surprising when viewed from the perspective of later on in August, *Luftwaffe* intelligence then robustly proclaiming significant RAF fighter losses (see Tables 2.2 and 2.3) and low morale; and reflected in a reported RAF reluctance to dogfight with Me109 fighters. Whilst it appeared that the RAF was closest to collapse as August faded into September, it is peculiar, then, that German propaganda had retreated from aggressively proclaiming the invasion threat weeks earlier than this weakening became apparent. However, as discussed below it is evident that Hitler and the OKW were not at any stage of *Sea Lion's* planning fully convinced of its viability, and in the same manner that a 'wait and see' policy might suddenly present an unexpected opportunity to launch the invasion, the corollary had also to be taken into account (Appendix 1).

Thus, rather in the manner that the *Wehrmacht* and *Kriegsmarine* had to be ready at short notice to launch the invasion – and despite senior commanders' scepticism they dared not risk Hitler's wrath by being caught out through lack of preparation – propagandists, too, had to be cautious.⁵⁵ On the one hand they wished to keep up the pressure on Britain – and restrain

American support – but on the other it was clearly risky to too powerfully threaten invasion in case it simply did not take place, thus giving Britain extra propaganda ammunition. At bay and with little to lose, Britain inevitably made much of the invasion threat which then allowed her propagandists to say that Hitler had failed to achieve a major war aim. Goebbels found this approach highly infuriating but recognised its propaganda genius: to his mind the Germans were falsely accused by the British of making claims and threats in a range of areas which, having not materialised, then made it possible for Britain to trumpet Nazi failures that they alone had fabricated.⁵⁶

Indeed, a contemporary expert noted that German propagandists deliberately broadcast the views expressed by other nations concerning Britain's plight so as to head off later accusations that Hitler had failed to achieve his aims. One example cited is of 'United States opinion' expecting a British surrender on 17 September, this broadcast to German citizens in order simply to counteract it. On 13 August, he noted, German radio had accused the British of seeking to confirm the date when Hitler expected to defeat the British, purely to later pour scorn on him.⁵⁷

Although, as discussed above, German propagandists had had much good material to work with after Dunkirk and the Fall of France, there was in truth little of significance to add to this as the air battles continued into the autumn. After all, the massed air attacks had been inconclusive – the laurels going to the RAF rather than the *Luftwaffe* – this based on the crude arithmetic of aircraft claims and a more effective and credible British propaganda campaign.⁵⁸ It was equally obvious that no invasion had been attempted and, given deteriorating weather conditions in the Channel, would now probably be delayed until Spring 1941. For the moment the British could therefore relax, hollow invasions threats easily dismissed given the real anxieties and menace of the summer.

The third strategic strand had been to seek through the Blitz⁵⁹ – focusing on 'military and economic targets' in London and other cities – to isolate Churchill and perhaps encourage a popular uprising against him in London's East End, the British working class seen as hapless victims of the 'English Lords' or the *plutokraten's* self-serving scheming.⁶⁰ Although a severe test for many suffering repeated night raids this, too, failed to provide any tangible results, instead exposing the Nazi regime to hostile neutral reporting that simply increased sympathy for the British, especially in a previously isolationist America.⁶¹ Germany thus found itself having to defend its actions as the British very skilfully projected the *Luftwaffe* as engaging in 'terror bombing'. It did not help that Goering broadcast on 7 September, as his bombers first attacked London in strength, that

I now want to take this opportunity of speaking to you, to say this moment is a historic one. As a result of the provocative British attacks on

Berlin on recent nights, the *Fuehrer* has decided to order a mighty blow to be struck in revenge against the capital of the British Empire. I personally have assumed the leadership of this attack, and today I have heard above me the roaring of the victorious German squadrons which now, for the first time, are driving towards the heart of the enemy in full daylight.⁶²

Rather than driven by strategic imperative this sounded merely vengeful to neutral ears, the *Luftwaffe* attacking in greater strength and claiming to be targeting economic objectives including London's extensive dock facilities, inevitably hitting civilian areas. But the British, too, were not entirely blameless and although the results of attacks against Berlin and other targets were at this stage very modest, an inability to hit industrial centres accurately meant that bombs could – and did – land in residential areas, a fact seized upon by Nazi newsreel propagandists.

As the Nazis therefore discovered, propaganda based on aggressive war could only be sustained through repeated, demonstrable military successes, it thereafter becoming much harder to project new propaganda angles about the 'English' situation that were genuinely new, revelatory or likely to reassure its more restive home front. Mindful of growing weariness and disappointment amongst the civilian population, given that the much hoped for victory over Britain had thus far eluded Hitler – and that a second Christmas might now be spent at war⁶³ – Fritzsche, Goebbels' leading radio propagandist, disingenuously broadcast on 26 September that Germany had never claimed victory over England would come quickly, only that she would be defeated; after all, 'we know a colossus like the British Empire cannot be overthrown in a day' he asserted.⁶⁴

It must, though, have seemed obvious to the German military and citizens alike that this – and complementary propaganda – was a tacit admission of, if not failure, then a major setback. By October it was no longer possible to regurgitate the *Luftwaffe's* claims of RAF aircraft shot down as they meant little in isolation; moreover, images and news pieces about invasion preparations were equally pointless and would be seen for what they were.⁶⁵ The only solution was to ignore the formidable *Luftwaffe* effort made to defeat Britain in recent months and focus instead on other stories that cast Germany in a better light, or to play up the sea blockade and other theatres of war where Britain was clearly more vulnerable and pickings might be richer.

Into 1941 the air battles of late 1940 therefore quickly faded from German propaganda and rarely featured; instead, propagandists preferred to reheat the glories of 1940 in France, or subsequent successes in Crete, Greece, the Balkans and thence in June 1941 the rapid advance into Russia before winter set in.⁶⁶ By 1945, for Germany at least, what the British had claimed as a significant victory was thus now a small footnote in the era of the Third Reich.⁶⁷

Luftwaffe propaganda

German propaganda relied upon the same media available to the British: wireless broadcasts, newspapers, magazines, newsreels, posters and other publications.⁶⁸ A core aspect of *Luftwaffe* propaganda was its reliance upon war correspondents, photographers, film-makers and artists who, in addition to undertaking these roles, also flew on operations as fully-trained aircrew gunners and bomb-aimers.⁶⁹ During 1939 the *Luftwaffe* had a total of four units supplying specialist staff to provide propaganda, these the original *Propagandakompanien* (LwPK), attached to each of the *Luftflotte*. In 1940 four more were added, the name changed to *Luftwaffenkriegsberichterkompanien* (LwKBK), wherein each unit had some 120 specialist staff to produce propaganda material.

There were advantages and challenges with this structure: on the one hand the *Luftwaffe* benefited from good-quality, authentic, professional journalism and imagery produced in the heat of battle, but on the other, there was a high loss rate amongst such personnel, almost a third killed on operations or captured during the Battle itself. Its personnel were also decorated for heroism during combat which had the advantage of making it more straightforward to integrate with aircrew, rather than being seen as having an easier, less dangerous job. One might also add that the realities of the air battles over England would be more apparent, report content framed by this, rather than relying upon what others might say about it. Such material was also censored at two stages before release, first at the OKW level, then the RMVP. This would be manifested in various ways as propaganda, wireless *Front Reports* also offering a means of projecting something of the nature of front-line action.⁷⁰ These pieces were usually twenty minutes in length, providing a more detailed sound-picture insight into the topic, subject of course to censorship restraints.

Domestic German audiences were additionally regularly updated through broadcasts with news of the latest air fighting over the Channel and Britain, greatly exaggerated aircraft claims announced (see Table 2.2). These reports were further embellished by newspapers and magazines which carried a range of material including images and stories about *Luftwaffe* commanders and aircrews, fighter aces, aircraft, bombing missions, targets attacked and their results, and occasionally, RAF aircraft (see Appendix 2). As with British propaganda, developed material was largely dictated by what was made available to propagandists, and thence passed by censors.

Leading fighter aces graced the covers of popular newspapers and magazines, postcards⁷¹ and cigarette cards, the *Luftwaffe*, unlike the RAF, very content to reveal individuals by name and to heroise them, often with tail-planes adorned with numerous RAF roundels. The cult of the warrior-hero was well-developed and for the favoured few, including Galland, Moelders and Wick, immense public interest revolved around who was ahead in the

deadly game of bringing down RAF fighters. It helped that the *Luftwaffe's* everyday officer's uniform – adorned with decorations – was glamorous by comparison with those worn in the army and navy,⁷² and that it was generally recognised, including by Hitler, that his air force was the politically most aligned with the ideals of National Socialism.⁷³

Luftwaffe prowess was frequently affirmed through aircraft such as the Stuka, Ju88 bomber and Me109 fighter being shown on the ground or in flight, though rarely as material derived from actual combats (see Appendix 2).⁷⁴ As with RAF propaganda during mid-1940 there was a tendency to recycle photographic and filmic material that in some instances was pre-war in date. Instead of actuality images which were sometimes difficult to source, despite embedded LwKKB personnel, publications featured detailed sketches of bombers attacking urban targets, plumes of smoke rising from serious damage, the emphasis on naked aggressive action perhaps less frequent in comparable British publications (Plate 2).⁷⁵ Given the space demands on newspaper and magazine pages these provided a better article context and perspective than one illustrative photograph, perhaps taken through a cockpit window, and which as a result could only capture a narrow aspect of an attack.

Aircrew were invariably shown in printed propaganda as cheerful yet purposeful, correct attire worn for the camera, and a sense of order prevailing as aircraft were re-armed or bombed up by black-overalled ground crews. Pilots might also be shown with dogs, occasionally birds of prey, or re-enacting a recent combat with their hands. Similarly – and the case on RAF airfields – other views pictured pilots and aircrews at dispersal, seated and reading in strong summer sunshine as they waited for their mission to begin; the tactical advantage lying with them rather than the RAF's defenders. This said, *Luftwaffe* units appeared on the basis of newsreel material to be more formal than their RAF counterparts, marching to aircraft, saluting, on parade, and so forth. Visits by senior commanders including Goering required formal parades and speeches, events only seen – goose-stepping aside – in British propaganda during medal-awarding ceremonies with King George VI.

Magazine articles allowed for a greater depth of focus, *Der Adler*, the *Luftwaffe's* specialist magazine also available to the public, carrying many stories of the air fighting in latter 1940.⁷⁶ A blend of images and text, articles reinforced the nature of air combat, attacks against England, the successes of leading fighter aces, and the role of senior commanders. Although far less likely to include stories of the air fighting, Germany's flagship quality magazine *Signal* – comparable to the American *Life*, or perhaps *Picture Post* – was published in many languages and had large print runs.⁷⁷ An example of its *Luftwaffe* coverage appeared in 'Fighting Through', wherein both a bomber and a fighter pilot gave their accounts of combat engagement with an RAF fighter – or 'chaser' in the manner of the American pursuit plane – following an attack on England. Photographs were included of both the

bomber with its wounded wireless operator, but also the shooting down of the RAF aircraft which was possible because the dogfight took place near the German airfield:

[T]he pilot of the bombing plane relates his story: As we were flying back we were suddenly attacked from out of the sunlight by an English chaser. Only one bullet from the burst fired by his eight machine guns struck us. And then I saw immediately, how the English chaser was driven off by our own chaser planes, which had flown with us for our protection.

The chaser's story: We continually kept banking and gradually I crept closer to him. I was close behind him all the time, but the distance is still too great. Now he tries to loop, in order to take me from behind, but now I am in the right position, now I have him. I let him have all the fire of which the guns are capable. I must still fly just a little higher. And this time there is no mistake, I have him well and truly.⁷⁸

Newsreels sought to convey similar imagery but suffered to a degree from the same problems as their adversaries, actuality film footage of high-speed dogfights both technically difficult to source despite embedded cameramen, and then contextualise for cinema audiences; a fleeting enemy fighter might be seen for a second or two before becoming a distant speck. In the case of a combined machine-gunner and cameraman one might also suppose that the demands of protecting a bomber against a fighter attack were more pressing than actually filming it, the material sourced of little value if taken prisoner or forced to bale out into the Channel. For sustained good-quality footage it was easier to create a dogfight using a captured enemy aircraft, the case when a Spitfire was used to portray an engagement with an Me109 in one issue.⁷⁹ As a result – and also true in British footage – much was made of foregrounding to build anticipation, including mission preparations, aircrews emplaning and deplaning, and aircraft taking off. Film footage of bomber missions was produced, though some of this originated from the Polish or French campaigns where the risks to camera crews had been less obvious. Britain's standing as a seafaring nation was also recognised, the defeat of its navy and merchant fleet important to a German victory. Attacks on merchant shipping were thus portrayed as an important strategic imperative to weaken Britain's supply-lines, these often viewed through the cockpits of bombers (Appendix 2 confirms the broad scope of newsreel content during the latter part of 1940).

In addition to 'hot' and 'warm' propaganda in the form of broadcasts, newspapers, magazines and newsreels, a range of booklets and pamphlets were also published throughout 1940 for popular consumption, these supplementing the material available in *Der Adler*. Liberally illustrated with good-quality photographs and diagrams, the text was usually Gothic script, this capturing the (censored) thoughts of individual combatants whether

on fighters or bombers. Although not always relating directly to the events towards the end of 1940 these also gave a good insight into the aircraft, aircrews and experiences of the *Luftwaffe* throughout that year as a whole, whence, up to July at least, it had largely had its way. Published in early 1940, *Out and Home* was the earliest such publication, this recounting maritime offensive action against Britain and – Phoney War aside – more widely in respect of France.⁸⁰ Although not principally about the *Luftwaffe's* role, mid-1940's *At England's Gates* recounts the collapse of France and Dunkirk from a *Wehrmacht* perspective, the reader left in no doubt that Britain was next, the rear cover helpfully including a map of Britain complete with almost swimmable distances across the Channel.⁸¹

Anticipating the primacy of Britain's navy in any future conflict, *To the Final Battle* was focused upon *Luftwaffe* attacks against British shipping and chimed with the series of convoy attacks in the early part of the air war (Plate 1). The content suggests a period of late June or early July; as noted previously, a phase that lacked a clear strategic dimension but which did allow *Luftwaffe* probes to test RAF resolution and response times.⁸² The publication most aligned with the Battle as defined by the British was *Bombs on England*, this late-1940 booklet taking the reader up to the impact of the London Blitz, and including a range of images clearly taken during the summer of 1940.⁸³ An example of content – which was very similar to British equivalents – is conveyed in 'Zerstörer kämpfen über London', or 'Fighters battle over London':

[T]he 'sharks' are over London again. Protected by their fighters, German bombing aircraft can carry out their attacks unhindered. 7,000 metres are between the German aircraft and the burning capital of a dying empire [...] [German Me110 fighter pilot:] Suddenly I saw a shadow above the cockpit, and heard a clattering in the rear of my aircraft and then saw beneath me enemy fighters. Spitfires and Hurricanes! [...] We were being attacked! They were as stubborn as donkeys, I tell you, attempting the same manoeuvre again.⁸⁴

Also published in 1940 was *Always on the Enemy*, again recounting *Luftwaffe* missions against Britain which similarly reflected the tone of comparable propaganda publications, but lacked depth other than in its focus on individual aircraft, airmen and more localised results.⁸⁵ Noted previously, a challenge in all material was that of demonstrating a clear strategic outcome that meaningfully brought together individual sorties and engagements with enemy aircraft and targets, rather than their being portrayed simply as inconsequential ends unto themselves.

The British *Battle of Britain* pamphlet achieved this by creating a Battle out of a series of individual actions but the *Luftwaffe* was unable to offer so pithy an assessment of the recent air fighting. Instead, and published only

three weeks after the former – but certainly not in direct response to it – *We Fly Against England* covered the air war for the first twenty or so months of the conflict, taking a very broad approach.⁸⁶ It more accurately confirms all aspects of the *Luftwaffe's* role including anti-aircraft batteries, transport, working with the *Kriegsmarine* and so forth. There is no obvious coverage of the air battles of late 1940 in the sense of images and a clear analysis, except for a crashed Spitfire on a Dunkirk beach at the end of May. It was perhaps the *Luftwaffe's* preferred approach, running chronologically up to France's fall in some detail, but more hesitant thereafter to affirm the actual nature of the air war as it progressed, principally because it had been inconclusive and very difficult to convincingly propagandise. Noted above, German interest in the air battles of late 1940 soon faded, other than where these could be integrated with clear Nazi triumphs (Appendix 7.1 confirms the German historiography from 1940–65).

Nazi propaganda films 1941

Kampfgeschwader Lützow (Battle Squadron *Lützow*)

In common with British and American film-makers, German propagandists saw the value in projecting selective aspects of the air war through feature films with the explicit aim of raising or maintaining morale, and encouraging continued determination to win through. In addition to 'their' flyers being seen to prevail over the enemy, other aspects of universal appeal to all audiences included a strong moral dimension, both articulated and resolved through the narrative, and love interest between aircrew and sweethearts. German film-makers were also determined to sustain home front morale through their work, an ambition strongly reinforced by Goebbels who watched many films prior to release.

Goebbels thought *Battle Squadron Lützow* (99 mins.) focusing on the lives and loves of a Heinkel He111 bomber squadron excellent propaganda, supporting its commercial release on 28 February 1941.⁸⁷ With the British-defined *Battle* having been concluded only four months earlier it is striking that the film skirts around direct references to air battles over Britain itself, its focus instead on one bomber crew, the men portrayed as *kamaraden*, the team as a whole far greater than the sum of its parts.⁸⁸ Much of the film concentrates upon the Polish campaign, the bombers deployed in close support of ground troops and reinforcing the merits of a combined operations approach.⁸⁹ In wide-ranging sequences the 'rescue' of ethnic Germans from Polish persecution is used as moral pretext and justification for the invasion, this forced upon Hitler because of intolerable excesses against 'his' people. Careful not to suggest that the campaign was too easy one bomber is shot down, the crew rescued by floatplane in the face of Polish resistance. Also reinforced is an attempt to portray the *Luftwaffe* as careful in its target

selection, fleeing refugee columns certainly *not* targeted or strafed to inflict maximum panic and chaos on critical roads.⁹⁰

It is only in the final twenty minutes that Britain becomes the focus, this prefigured by scenes at the Channel coast and confirming events during the summer of 1940. The British element can be summarised thus: initially, a telephone call to the squadron CO heralds the assault on England, this followed by sight of a wall map of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (with neutral Eire noticeably very vague in outline). Britain is portrayed as a remote, mysterious, perhaps forbidding, mist-shrouded land, the focus of speculative late-evening contemplation by aircrew on the coast, these briefed to attack the following day. Then, martial music and *Bomben auf England* heralds the offensive, massed He111s heading out to sea, a range of cockpit close-ups giving a graphic sense of how closely German bomber crews were to each other.⁹¹

The RAF appears in three radial-engined fighters, two of whom are quickly disposed of, and in the face of fierce crossfire the third gives up and flies off, thus projecting the RAF as ineffectual in air combat despite there being no fighter support for the bombers.⁹² The RAF's pilots, characterised much in the manner that their *Luftwaffe* opponents appeared in British and American films, appear hard, fanatical, merciless and ruthless. Meanwhile, one bomber pilot has been badly wounded and the crew, working together as one, are able to husband the aircraft back to base after a tense return flight across the Channel. The concluding sequence again has the *Bomben auf England* music as its backdrop, the bomber's aircrew sitting in their He111 wearing steel helmets as they head back towards England; this donning of head protection says perhaps more than the film-makers intended about the realities of flying against Britain in 1940.

Given that the film was completed in early 1941 it is noteworthy that no attacks against land-based targets or indeed the RAF are shown, the film-makers almost shy about making reference to the major air battles that developed from July 1940 onwards. Audiences might have been surprised that the film had essentially sought to 'reset' events back to mid-1940 when final victory seemed very certain, with the result that what all knew had been a major effort against Britain was in fact now wholly eclipsed. As reflected by other propaganda material later on in 1940 and into 1941 the Germans seemed to prefer a focus on shipping attacks, and appearing to be striking blows at Britain's maritime potential, which they doubtless and accurately identified as central to her survival.⁹³ The moral challenges posed by attacks on civilians during the Blitz were avoided simply by bringing the film to a close in mid-1940 rather than extending the narrative to year's end.

As an aside, folk and choral music is omnipresent throughout the film as is the tendency for *Luftwaffe* personnel to burst into song whenever an opportunity arises, which again reinforces Nazi determination to drive home the sense of one people, working closely together, subjugating their

personal concerns for the greater good. Interestingly, in addition to its original release when Germany was at the height of its domination over Europe, the film was also shown later in the war to bestir German audiences as the Allies moved ever closer to German soil, the realities of overwhelming air superiority which the *Luftwaffe* could only dream of in 1940 powerfully driven home.

Stukas

Whereas *Kampfsgeschwader Lützow* tended to eschew the grittier realities of combat and loss, *Stukas* (91 mins.) was more direct in its affirmation of the risks run by *Luftwaffe* aircrews.⁹⁴ In part, this both glorified and reflected the nature of dive-bombing and their deployment in close air support for ground troops, but it also acknowledged that contrary to the almost mythical status afforded to the Junkers Ju87 in pre- and early-war propaganda, it was in fact very vulnerable to RAF fighters.⁹⁵ The film's release on 27 June 1941 may also have been significant in calibrating a more realistic portrayal: by this point in the war it was perhaps no secret that the Stuka had its limitations without close air support from fighters.

Whilst the Stuka was used to good effect in the early part of the Soviet invasion, the film-makers – working on the film well before the invasion was launched – must have been aware through close cooperation with the *Luftwaffe* that it had not been so easy over Britain. The other obvious point, and of relevance generally, was the affirmation of personal sacrifice in the greater interests of Germany as a whole and which suddenly became even more prescient with the invasion of Russia. Impressionable young men hoping to fly with the *Luftwaffe* would though, on balance, probably be inspired rather than dissuaded; after all, by the time of its release German forces had also been successfully involved in Greece, Yugoslavia, Crete and North Africa. Clearly, German military prowess was at a high during this period, but it had not come without cost in young lives. A sacrifice deemed acceptable by the Nazis, *Stukas* therefore perhaps incidentally reminded cinema audiences that the invasion launched only five days previously might yet bring hard personal news as it developed.

Stukas focuses principally on the battle of France, the air war against Britain only present at the film's conclusion. Several points can be highlighted insofar as the overall tone is concerned: first, as with the previous film the sense conveyed is one of squadron order and discipline, airfield scenes confirming formal conduct towards more senior officers, saluting⁹⁶ and marching also chiming with newsreel footage of airfields.⁹⁷ Second, a sense of high-energy 'jolly japes' is also projected, adrenalin-charged young flyers as close-knit *kamaraden* very disciplined and determined when on duty, but also willing to have fun when relaxing – wine, good meals and music feature at several points. Third, the moral context of attacks is not addressed in detail other than to suggest that in France's case she invited

retribution through her aggressive plans to beat the Germans to it, even to the extent of lambasting French soldiers for their folly in sticking with Britain – and almost encouraging the invasion. Thus, there is no moral angst on display concerning the deployment of Stukas en masse, civilians the inevitable casualties whether deliberately targeted or not.⁹⁸

Fourth, as noted above, the Stuka squadron suffers casualties and is not immune from determined resistance to its air attacks. In one scene the squadron CO is shown writing letters to relatives of those lost in action, underscored with a melancholic choral composition. The apparent healing power of German classical music is reinforced too, one young pilot badly injured in a crash seemingly unable to regain his fighting spirit. Slowly recovering in hospital – audiences reminded that the *Luftwaffe* takes care of its injured men – the flyer goes to a concert at the Bayreuth Festival to hear Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* at which point, smiling rather foolishly in rapt absorption, he suddenly revives and quickly thereafter gets back to his squadron despite not having wholly recovered, heard the concert in full or seemingly given any further thought to the young nurse who accompanied him to the Festival.

Thereafter, action against the RAF heralds a new phase in their operations, one air combat scene against Spitfires suggesting that it was not only the British who were mesmerised by Mitchell's *meisterwerk*. In a frantic air action involving Stukas, He111s and presumably Me109s, some very striking footage of a Spitfire is included suggesting the use of a captured aircraft.⁹⁹ Anticipating, or perhaps wryly acknowledging the realities of seeking to operate in the face of fierce and effective British resistance, a Stuka is shot down.¹⁰⁰ With this perhaps disquieting experience hovering in the background the film's denouement is an attack on Britain, its aircrews bantering and singing as they head west. As with *Kampfgeschwader Lützow* the film ends just at the moment that serious opposition is encountered, the *Luftwaffe's* limitations laid bare and therefore easier to sidestep in a propaganda film where everyone was aware to a degree of the outcome of the air battles fought out only ten months or so earlier.

Was Operation *Sea Lion* a real threat?

Having considered the strategic options facing Hitler, and Germany's approach to propagandising its campaign against Britain, it is useful before turning to the British context to return to the question of *Sea Lion* as a significant factor during the latter part of 1940. As Churchill and his commanders were well aware, German propaganda alone would not be sufficient to force a British capitulation, even though – in conjunction with very effective and sustained bombing – it might undermine morale in certain sections of the home front and lead to localised unrest.¹⁰¹ In short, the propaganda campaign waged against Britain, although raising doubts about

her prospects and leading to difficult questions on the part of her allies, including America, would avail nothing without an actual crossing of the English Channel. Viewed from Cap Gris Nez this looked eminently possible on a fine summer's day, Dover's cliffs shimmering tantalisingly on the horizon. But it was fraught with risk.

From the British perspective the threat posed by Operation *Sea Lion* is therefore central to the post-war narrative which built up around the Few: it is argued that it was their dogged resistance which thwarted the *Luftwaffe*, this in turn denying the necessary conditions of air superiority over the Channel and beachheads for an invasion attempt. These two elements are wholly symbiotic and not capable of being separated out, if British exceptionalism during the Battle is to stand as a valid historical interpretation of those events. As with the efforts of Bomber and Coastal Commands (see Chapter 3) the threat posed by the Royal Navy has also been eclipsed in the Battle's historiography,¹⁰² only Fighter Command central to the post-war narrative. Given this it is reasonable to consider how valid a prospect *Sea Lion* was, the results discussed later (Chapter 3 considers the RAF bomber attacks against preparations; Chapter 8 evaluates *Sea Lion* in light of the early post-war historiography).

Beginning with the arguments against a serious threat, there has been inevitably much debate about whether an invasion was ever likely, this question mooted as early as 1940 in some British commentary.¹⁰³ It has been argued that Hitler made it clear in discussions that he had no real interest in invading Britain and had, for many years, seen the Empire as a force for good; its destruction would give little advantage to Germany, but would benefit America and Japan, he argued.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, as the Battle progressed Hitler also believed that if the Soviet Union could be defeated this would force Britain to the negotiating table as, coupled with a sea and air blockade, she would be unable to sustain a long war and would 'come round' when faced with hard realities.¹⁰⁵ That Hitler appeared far more interested in planning for the Russian campaign than of invading Britain remains for some historians a clear refutation of *Sea Lion's* seriousness, and a check on the settled British argument that it was ever contemplated as a practical possibility.¹⁰⁶

Several German commanders have also argued that Hitler was not persuaded by *Sea Lion* and took little direct interest in its planning.¹⁰⁷ Historians have suggested that *Sea Lion* planning was 'half-hearted' or 'half-baked' as indeed it was compared with Operation *Overlord* in June 1944, but the 1940 preparations were intended to overcome a country in complete disarray after a series of defeats with only rudimentary anti-invasion defences in place by July and August, not a massively fortified coastline.¹⁰⁸ On this point one could equally say that the invasion preparations were hastily improvised by an army not used to seaborne operations, hence the disjointed approach. The lack of a unified 'combined operations' command structure also made

planning difficult: the army and navy worked together to an extent, but the *Luftwaffe* largely pursued its own strategy, sometimes to a bewildering extent.¹⁰⁹ Added to these difficulties were poor intelligence assessments of Britain, a serious lacunae which had no remedy.¹¹⁰

German attempts to infiltrate spies into Britain were generally very poor and put its hapless operatives at great risk, British intelligence quickly capturing those few who made it to British soil.¹¹¹ Taken as a whole, poor *Sea Lion* preparations suggest incompetence or technical challenges rather than a lack of determination, but German historians have suggested – as indeed did AHB historian T. C. G. James – that the continuing preparations were principally a feint to provide a foil for Operation *Barbarossa*.¹¹² In German military planning and practice, propaganda was an important aspect of what today would be described as psychological warfare, or *psyops*, and there was clearly merit in maintaining an apparent invasion threat in order to sustain this pressure,¹¹³ which would in turn be picked up by British intelligence.¹¹⁴

It might equally be argued that having issued orders for the subjugation and neutering of the British threat Hitler was convinced that following the *Luftwaffe's* air assaults a deal could be struck along the lines suggested in his earlier 19 July speech to the *Reichstag*, hence the need to maintain pressure. Hitler did consider at length the British question in his conferences but was clearly uncertain as to the wisdom of launching an invasion.¹¹⁵ Failure would have been both a military and personal disaster showing for the first time that the German military machine *could* be thwarted. Hitler was therefore unwilling to risk his personal prestige on such a venture unless it was very likely to succeed, especially when, as noted above, Britain at that time posed little direct threat and could be left isolated through air and sea blockade. Given the centrality of propaganda extolling Germany's military prowess and the folly of seeking to resist, a failed attempt would be damaging indeed to future prospects where invaded countries might decide to fight on rather than quickly capitulate, their morale not impaired by Nazi propaganda.¹¹⁶

The above examples confirm a lukewarm attitude on Hitler's part to invading Britain, this understandable for the reasons cited in the 'strategic dilemma' discussion – namely that Britain posed no immediate threat in late 1940. Hitler's 'do nothing', or 'wait and see' policy in respect of *Sea Lion* was therefore a reasonable one until the results of the air attacks became clearer in early September. However, despite a significant effort being made to assemble and adapt shipping, train spearhead troops and assemble ordnance at invasion ports, it was evident by mid-September that the conditions were not yet right to launch *Sea Lion*. If Hitler had believed it stood a good chance of success – critically with relatively low risks – it is generally agreed he would have launched the invasion.¹¹⁷ To German minds this included the possibility that it might be an uncontested invasion – the occupation of the Channel Islands offers one model for how this might

have been undertaken were Britain to have sought peace terms¹¹⁸ – or, that desultory resistance was soon vanquished through overwhelming air power.

Whilst it is possible, with hindsight, to construct a narrative arguing that the evidence points clearly to a lack of determination on Hitler's part to invade, it remains the case that planning and preparing for it was extensive, if uneven. The *Wehrmacht* invested significant materiel effort which extended to producing detailed maps and intelligence briefing documents (and which were not visible to British intelligence)¹¹⁹ whilst – much-needed elsewhere – barges and other shipping were adapted to make them suitable for transporting armoured vehicles and trucks. Tanks, too, were modified to give them amphibious capabilities, so that once launched from a landing craft they could move ashore underwater. These were seriously undertaken attempts to fashion a credible invasion force but undoubtedly suffered from their hasty execution and a severe lack of experience in amphibious warfare.

Wehrmacht training involved maritime exercises, the results of which were perhaps mostly useful in confirming how hazardous an invasion would be from improvised shipping. Although a decision had been made to reduce the army's strength after France's surrender, this was reversed as Hitler's focus turned to Russia and units were moved to the east; preparations for *Sea Lion* also ensured that soldiers recently engaged in a major battle with Britain and France remained combat-ready and did not become bored; always to be avoided in the military.

More broadly, a decision not to launch *Sea Lion* reflected the continuing strength of Britain's defences and its determination to resist, despite sustained air attacks by the *Luftwaffe* and shipping losses to U-boats in the Atlantic. Other than weather conditions in the Channel the RAF and Royal Navy were clearly the two key material factors militating against an invasion attempt, and both had originally been identified at the outset by OKW planners as the key threats, air superiority of particular importance.¹²⁰ Whilst senior German commanders were undoubtedly sceptical about the prospects for a successful invasion it was hard to predict the likely outcome and therefore the risks. *Sea Lion* was improvised but insofar as Britain itself was concerned it posed a very real challenge, and this combined with effective air attacks might just have tipped the balance in Hitler's favour. Contrary to his senior commanders' pessimism Hitler had had a run of good luck, his willingness to take risks and do the unexpected reaping immense benefits. Given Britain's parlous state there was nothing to suggest that he could not achieve this again. Planning even went so far as to seek to kidnap Edward VIII in Portugal and once having invaded Britain, return him to the throne as a puppet monarch.¹²¹

That *Sea Lion* was abandoned owes much to British resolve. The combined efforts of both RAF fighter and bomber aircrews in defending UK airspace, attacking airfields, invasion ports and other facilities left significant doubt about the wisdom of seeking to cross the Channel if the RAF could hamper

Luftwaffe attacks against the Royal Navy, which in turn would intercept the armada. This takes nothing away from the senior service or denies credit to those on the ground, working in aircraft factories, servicing fighters, manning RDF stations, and ‘taking it’ on the home front in support of the war effort.¹²² Because of poor intelligence the *Luftwaffe* believed that it had brought the RAF to its knees in late August and thereafter shifted focus onto degrading Britain’s economic potential as part of a wider plan to force a peace deal.¹²³ There is no question that Fighter Command was in serious difficulty in early September, and that the turn on London gave it a vital breathing space. Had *Luftwaffe* bombers continued to degrade Fighter Command and only thereafter been given free reign to attack strategically vital targets and undermine Britain’s potential to resist, it is probable that peace terms might have been sought, either following an invasion or in stark anticipation of one, as above.

Returning to the arguments enumerated above against *Sea Lion* ever being a serious threat, one can see that even if Hitler was positively inclined towards launching it the challenges were immense. Fighter Command’s resistance was significant – as indeed were RAF bomber attacks against Channel ports – and what to do with the Royal Navy? Be that as it may, the decision not to launch *Sea Lion* is the foundation which underpins the Few’s post-war adulation. Following *Sea Lion*’s cancellation Hitler continued with attacks on Britain’s economy and capacity to make war, which in turn steadily impacted upon the home front too. Whereas the British historiography opts for 31 October as the end of the Battle, German historians prefer to argue that Hitler sought to force Britain’s capitulation by other means which only ceased in May 1941 (see Figure 8.2). Operation *Sea Lion* quickly faded away, the significant effort to assemble and adapt Rhine barges and shipping, amass ordnance, concentrate armour and train an invasion force, soon forgotten as the Russian campaign became the focus.

From a British perspective

It is noteworthy that the process of crafting a clear British victory out of the extended series of air battles during late 1940 was undertaken without reference to German military records. As a consequence the Battle as defined in early 1941 was an entirely British construct that took no account of Hitler’s and OKW thinking or planning – only revealed publicly in 1947 – or indeed the German propaganda projected at Britain, its own people, occupied territories, and neutrals. The truth was that it was not at all clear to the British in late 1940 what precisely had been achieved, other than a serious check on Hitler’s immediate, if rather vague, ambitions. It was, though, evident that the much feared invasion had not been attempted and Britain’s home front had resisted the pressure imposed by repeated bomber attacks – notably against London – but these of

themselves did not immediately coalesce into a clear ‘battle’ in the sense of two armies pitched against each other.¹²⁴

Strikingly, ‘The Battle of Britain’ as Churchill had first coined it on 18 June was originally intended to capture the same sense as that of ‘The Battle of France’: the army, navy and air force working together, aided by the civilian population. Whilst it was obvious that the air threat to Britain was the most immediate, naval operations were also important; as indeed would be the army in the case of invasion. The Battle as presented by the Air Ministry in March 1941, then, was very different in both context and tone to what Churchill would have expected in June 1940, but also perhaps to what Germany’s senior commanders would have recognised had they been consulted.

There is no doubt that the RAF’s resistance was significant in denying the necessary air superiority over the beachheads and Channel, but so, too, in OKW thinking was the might of the Royal Navy; and on a practical level, unpredictable weather conditions in the Channel.¹²⁵ All this aside, Hitler’s failure to invade was sufficient justification for British Air Ministry propagandists to build upon their undoubted latter-1940 successes in projecting the Few’s prowess to an international audience. Noted above, if German propagandists soon lost interest in the air battles, Britain’s Air Ministry took a wholly different view. However, before considering how in early 1941 the Air Ministry valorised Fighter Command’s success in 1940, we should first understand the nature of the aircraft-claims propaganda war which provided its solid foundations.

2

Britain's Fighter Boys: Projecting the Battle of Britain, 1940

The Battle of Britain

In essence the British-defined Battle of Britain ran for 113 days or sixteen weeks, most British historians accepting four or five main phases confirming a shifting strategic and tactical focus by the *Luftwaffe* (Figure 8.1, p. 199). Leaving aside the preliminary period of the Battle wherein *Luftwaffe* reconnaissance and limited fighter sweeps probed Britain's air defences, these mostly after the French campaign drew to a close, *Phase One* – from 10 July – included initially light daylight bomber attacks against merchant convoys passing through the Channel, RAF fighters tasked with providing air cover. These steadily intensified in addition to limited attacks against ports on the south and east coasts, and RAF airfields. *Phase Two* – from around 13 August – saw an intensifying effort against shipping in the Channel, but more critically for the RAF increasingly strong attacks against radar stations and coastal airfields, thence airfields further inland. *Phase Three* – from 24 August – was a determined effort by the *Luftwaffe* to destroy the RAF's fighter strength in support of Operation *Sea Lion*, attacks on airfields resulting in significant damage to Fighter Command's overall capability. It is arguable that the *Luftwaffe* achieved local air superiority over the intended invasion beaches and Channel during the latter part of this phase, Fighter Command in serious difficulty and at greatest risk of collapse.

The immediate pressure upon Fighter Command was relieved by Hitler's strategically foolhardy switch to the capital on 7 September, *Phase Four* principally focused on attacking strategic targets in London including its docks, but elsewhere aircraft factories and other economic assets were also bombed. The *Luftwaffe's* decision to attack the capital by both day and night also relieved pressure on Fighter Command's day squadrons, specialist night-fighter capability at this stage very poor and limited to small numbers of aircraft including the Boulton Paul Defiant, designed as a two-seat day-fighter for which it was very ill-suited.¹ Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding, the head of Fighter Command, was forced out of his role in no

small part because of an inability to provide an effective response to night raids, an undertaking that his highly ambitious successor Air Chief Marshal Sir Sholto Douglas also quickly realised was a major technical challenge.² The reality was that German night-bombers could range far and wide across the United Kingdom without much impediment, AA guns and barrage balloons of arguably limited value above a certain ceiling – it was also not possible to deploy these assets in strength everywhere.³

Battle of Britain Day is now accepted as 15 September 1940, Hitler effectively abandoning his plans for invasion soon thereafter. *Phase Five* – from 1 October – saw the *Luftwaffe* shifting instead to high-flying fighter-bomber attacks, which other than their nuisance value and forcing Fighter Command to fly more standing patrols, had limited strategic value. They were in fact an admission that the *Luftwaffe's* attempt to force Britain either to surrender or seek peace terms had failed, aircraft losses during daylight raids no longer sustainable. British historians argue that the Battle ended on 31 October 1940, though it has been suggested that it continued to the end of 1940, daylight attacks only petering out towards year's end.⁴

As the night Blitz replaced the daylight offensive Britain's home front increasingly became the focus as Hitler targeted military and economic assets often close to areas of population, including docks and factories. Coventry's destruction represented what Germany argued was a strategic or economic target, its actual focus on the weapons and armaments factories around its edges; the British saw this as terror-bombing because of the devastation of the city centre on 14–15 November 1940.⁵ Other cities, including Plymouth, were also badly hit, the aim this time the Royal Naval docks and shipping.⁶ The significant night-time effort against the capital and other major cities and towns throughout the Blitz finally ended on 10 May 1941, Hitler ordering his air force to move east to prepare for the invasion of the Soviet Union.

Battle phasing, as shown in Figure 8.1, reflects these broad shifts of operational emphasis as the daylight air battles reached their conclusion. Apart from minor adjustments on the part of individual historians and commentators, these have remained largely unchanged since being first defined publicly by Saunders in March 1941. Discussed in Chapter 8, German historians view the air battles of the latter part of 1940 rather differently.

Intelligence into 'hot' news

Given the impressive success of Britain's efforts to propagandise the air war during the summer and autumn of 1940 it is striking that there was no formal pre-war British policy or plan to enable a prompt response to such an event. The Ministry of Information (MoI),⁷ staffed by many who thought it rather un-British to engage with propaganda in the sense favoured by the Germans, lacked a coherent strategy for responding quickly to the air war and was itself disorganised during much of 1940.⁸ As was the case with

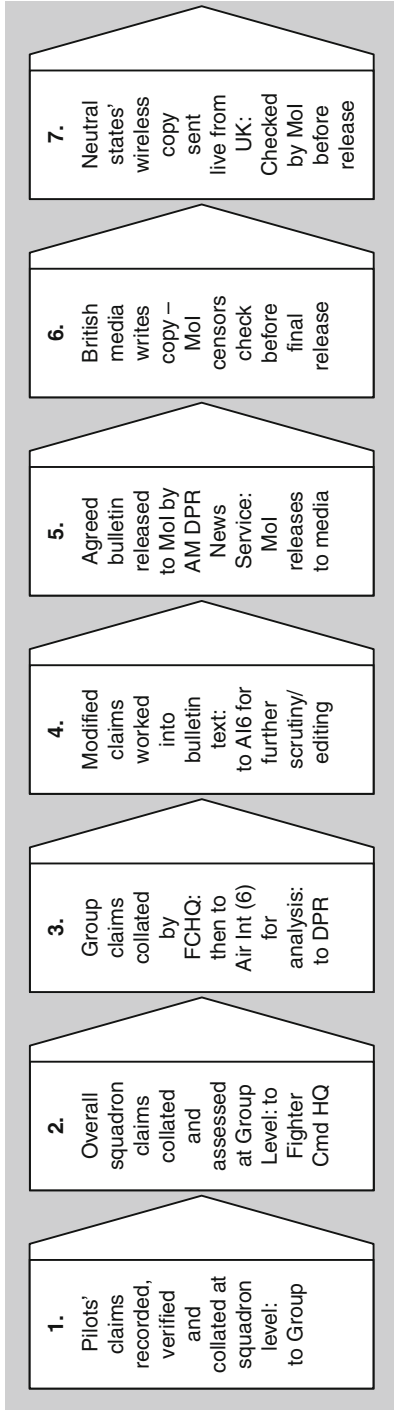


Figure 2.1 Intelligence into news (compiled by Garry Campion)

German air-war propaganda, it fell to the Air Ministry to collate, compile and provide daily news about the RAF's successes through air communiqués written by its Directorate of Public Relations' staff and released by its News Service.⁹ These were based wholly upon RAF intelligence summaries collated daily from fighter squadron returns, in turn derived from squadron-level pilot debriefings by intelligence officers, and which, prior to final translation into air communiqués were assessed for accuracy by senior intelligence officers. Figure 2.1 illustrates the transition of raw aircraft claims into 'hot' news.

The MoI's late 1940 'short' film *The Story of an Air Communiqué* confirmed the process by which such raw intelligence became 'hot' news, thence rapidly transmitted around the world. Using 15 September 1940 as the basis for confirming that the RAF's 185 aircraft claims were indeed accurate, the film-goer was first shown an immediate post-combat debriefing at a Spitfire squadron, one pilot's claims briskly disallowed by the squadron intelligence officer because they were not confirmed by a fellow pilot. Through this sharp scrutiny the viewer was reassured that contrary to German claims – and American concerns – that the RAF was over-claiming, faith could indeed be securely placed in 'fighter boys' figures. Pilots' claims having been recorded at individual fighter bases, total 'bags' from these and other squadrons' tallies were next forwarded to the respective Group HQ for processing into one larger figure. Thereafter, Fighter Command HQ checked them again, senior officers confirming the extensive controls at different stages of the intelligence assessments, and ironing out any contradictions.

At this stage the film showed how a duplicated claim from two pilots was disallowed, but in reality this was highly unlikely to have been assessed at this point. These collated and analysed claims figures were next forwarded to Air Intelligence 6 (AI6) at the Air Ministry (a firmly-closed door in the film), who – unseen – scrutinised them again before the collated material was forwarded for processing by propagandists compiling the communiqué's latest news narrative. Having then received the latter, AI6 gave a final air communiqué security clearance (again unseen), after which the AM News Service forwarded it to the MoI.¹⁰ The final link was for the communiqué to be released to the BBC and other news correspondents waiting in its Press Room, the world's press rushing for typewriters and telephones to quickly communicate the news to their respective agencies – these in turn broadcast or printed the information. Thus, the 'short's' viewers were reassured that the 185 aircraft claimed as shot down on 15 September was accurate.¹¹

As an added check, and not shown in the film, MoI censors would further scrutinise all finished news copy prior to its being projected to the public; for example, in the case of CBS correspondent Ed Murrow's live broadcasts to America. This applied equally to the news outputs of British journalists who, in contrast to the neutrally-minded American press corps, were very content to act as propaganda outlets for the government.¹² The air communiqués and subsequent censorship of copy arising from these prior to release in the public domain were, therefore, the twin pillars of the

propaganda war. There was, however, friction over the extent of censorship, American war correspondents frequently angered by what they viewed as needless meddling and interference over copy content which in its original form revealed nothing of military importance.¹³ Despite protests to and meetings with the highest levels of government, Britain was unwilling to compromise over censorship, a solution satisfactory to both the press corps and Whitehall, slow in being reached.¹⁴ On the home front air communiqués were read out word for word by BBC Home Service newscasters, in effect becoming an unofficial propaganda organ for the government, a situation that did not begin to change until November 1940 when the MoI relaxed its attitude, but only very exceptionally.¹⁵ BBC bulletins were also broadcast around the world, including to neutral and Nazi-occupied countries; the corollary applied in respect of German propaganda to these same constituencies.¹⁶

Very occasionally, propaganda leaflets were dropped over occupied France, a British example from late July in both German and French, featuring a sketch of a Spitfire doing a Victory Roll over a German aircraft crashing into the sea, affirming:

[O]ver 100 aircraft shot down in a week! In the week from 5–12 July about 100 machines of the German Air Force were shot down by British fighter aircraft over the English coast. The German High Command covered up the true figures. Demand the truth!

A second British propaganda leaflet dropped overnight on 9–10 September was addressed to the French only, one side detailing the air battle over Britain, and giving the following aircraft losses:

	<i>GAF</i>	<i>RAF</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
16 June to 7 August	285	53	5.4 GAF aircraft lost for each RAF
8 August to 31 August	1079	295	3.7 <i>ditto</i>
	1364	348	3.9

German aircrew losses during this period were given as 2,968 compared to 206 RAF aircrew lost – 14.4 German airmen for each RAF loss. Arguing for the veracity of the British figures, the leaflet drew upon neutral American opinion:

[L]isten to what an impartial witness says, the correspondent of a large American newspaper, *The New York Times*, on 27 August: all aerodromes in the south-east of England are in full working order, and over which it seems to me, to be full of their aircraft.

The leaflet's obverse detailed RAF attacks against identified German industrial targets and claimed significant results, the final text affirming in

essence that the German offensive was being broken by the RAF, the threats of blockade and invasion ‘reduced to nothingness’:

[S]oon the RAF will have the equality of numbers. And soon, thanks to the American contribution, the superiority of numbers will be added to the superiority of [RAF] quality [...] French have confidence! Our victory in the air prepares for the defeat of Germany!¹⁷

Whilst the leaflet’s prediction of victory was accurate it would take almost four years to liberate France, the value of such propaganda material clearly limited. Even where the recipients agreed with the message it would require far more than that to encourage the development of resistance groups. Added to this, the use of aircraft and fuel required to perform leaflet drops was also questionable at this critical juncture of the war. It was, after all, hard to imagine that such material would undermine *Luftwaffe* morale more effectively than what was already evident at airfields through aircrew and aircraft losses.

Aircraft-claiming realities

For British home front consumption brief communiqués were released several times a day, the speed at which raw combat data was manipulated into ‘hot’ news critical to retaining an edge in the propaganda war.¹⁸ This material was produced with wireless news bulletin times in mind. Propagandists on both sides of the Channel were aware that once released by wireless and press agencies communiqué claims’ content entered into the realm of claim and counter-claim, each vehemently challenging the veracity of the other’s output. Strikingly, neither the RMVP or its British equivalent the MoI had much say in these final communiqués, their roles being more concerned with the wider and broader use and justification of such material once it had been broadcast, for instance in parrying American concerns about which side was in fact winning the air war.¹⁹

American pressure to confirm the accuracy of the RAF’s claims was a direct response to German allegations of wildly exaggerated and nonsensical British propaganda. Germany, too, also released figures of both RAF aircraft claimed destroyed by the *Luftwaffe* and its own combat losses, claims on both sides usually bearing little relation to each other. Table 2.1 confirms the figures broadcast by both sides at the height of the Battle during August and September, and the significant differences in totals over time. Table 2.2 details RAF claims and actual *Luftwaffe* losses for the latter part of the Battle, in addition to what the RAF admitted to losing, relative to its actual aircraft losses. In contrast to the *Luftwaffe* which distorted its loss figures (Table 2.1), the RAF were more open. The wide gulf between these figures is evident and noted previously; RAF over-claiming was at a rate of just over two to

Table 2.1 Disparities in RAF and Luftwaffe aircraft claims (compiled by Garry Campion)²¹

Date	Actual RAF losses	Admitted RAF losses*	RAF loss admission + / -*	GAF over-claim	% GAF over-claim	Actual German losses	RAF over- claim	% RAF over- claim
16 August	21	22	+1	+71	77.4	45	+30	40.0
18 August	27	22	-5	+120	81.6	71	+81	12.3
24 August	22	19	-3	+42	65.6	39	+11	22.0
25 August	16	13	-3	+56	77.7	20	+35	42.8
26 August	31	15	-16	+39	55.7	41	+6	12.7
30 August	25	25	0	+73	74.4	36	+26	38.4
31 August	39	37	-2	+94	70.6	41	+47	53.4
1 September	15	15	0	+47	75.8	14	+11	44.0
2 September	31	20	-11	+62	66.6	35	+20	36.3
4 September	17	17	0	+40	70.1	25	+29	53.7
5 September	20	20	0	+26	56.5	23	+16	41.0
6 September	23	19	-4	+44	65.6	35	+11	23.9
Totals	287	244	-43	+714	71.3	425	+323	56.8

* Based on Briggs, 1970, *The War of Words*, p. 288.

Table 2.2 RAF aircraft claims and admissions of losses (adapted from Ramsey, 1989, *The Battle of Britain: Then and Now*, p. 707)²²

Date	RAF claim	Actual German losses	RAF over-claim	RAF losses admitted	Actual RAF losses	RAF admission + / -
2 September	65	37 (35)*	+28	20	14 (31)	+6 over
4 September	64	28 (25)	+36	17	17 (17)	0
6 September	46	33 (35)	+13	19	20 (23)	-1 under
7 September	103	41	+62	22	25	-3
9 September	52	30	+22	13	17	-4
11 September	93	29	+64	24	29	-5
15 September	185	61	+124	25	31	-6
18 September	48	20	+28	12	12	0
26 September	34	9	+25	8	8	0
27 September	133	57	+76	34	28	+6
30 September	49	47	+2	22	21	+1
7 October	28	19	+9	16	17	-1
15 October	18	16	+2	15	15	0
25 October	17	24	-7	10	14	-4
29 October	33	28	+5	7	12	-5
	968	479	+489	264	280	-16

* figures in italics are from Table 2.1, showing the impact on totals depending on which figures are used.

one, whereas the *Luftwaffe's* over-claim rate was just over three to one. In the *Luftwaffe's* case these were significant enough to seriously distort intelligence assessments and the strategic and tactical decisions made based on this inadequate material.²⁰

On the opposite side of the Channel different pressures were evident. Anxious both to secure and maintain American aid, Churchill and his coalition government were alive to the risks of appearing to be losing the air war and control over the Channel and potential beachhead airspace, thence making possible the conditions for invasion. US correspondents were determined to gauge the actual levels of attrition on both sides: if 'probables' (see below) were accepted too readily by the RAF as actual kills, the overall tallies would be significantly distorted over a period of weeks, in turn giving a highly misleading impression of actual *Luftwaffe* losses. A situation might therefore arise where Roosevelt made decisions based on inaccurate British propaganda. The president, willing to offer cautious assistance, but struggling with a powerful American isolationist lobby, could ill afford to be seen to support Britain if it faced the real prospect of defeat and occupation.²³

Albeit reluctantly, an effort was made to ameliorate American scepticism about British losses in the air war, though not without some reluctance on Churchill's part who wrote to the Secretary of State for Air on 21 August, the day after delivering his 'to so Few' epigraph to the Commons, that he objected to having to allow American correspondents onto RAF bases in order to satisfy both them and their audiences about the figures.²⁴ Despite Churchill's resistance it was, though, prudent to assuage American doubts and in late August its correspondents were given controlled access to two RAF fighter stations where they could observe at first hand the reporting, collation and assessment of the claims of pilots fresh from combat by squadron intelligence officers. Of keen interest was the difference between 'confirmed' claims as distinct from 'probables', how these were assessed and verified, and the veracity with which the overall process was undertaken.²⁵ These visits did much to reassure American correspondents, not least because of the modest yet sincere bearing of RAF fighter pilots; the same might have been said of *Luftwaffe* pilots on the opposite side of the Channel, equally convinced of their prowess and also made available to neutral reporters.²⁶ American correspondents were, though, reassured by British openness, articles appearing in many publications confirming the reliability of claim figures which in turn was important for securing aid.²⁷

A willingness to allow American access to RAF intelligence compilations of aircraft claims should not suggest that the British were complacent regarding the reliability of its pilots' reports.²⁸ The Air Ministry was not at all sure how much it could rely upon Fighter Command's overall tallies, a key difficulty being that the figures were very hard to verify because of aircraft shot down in the Channel or, having made it back to France, were written-off when landing. No one could be certain what the truth was, though Dowding as C-in-C

Fighter Command felt quite robust on claims' accuracy: writing in his 1941 despatch he recalled being questioned by Sinclair in August about the discrepancies between British and German tallies, responding that if the enemy figures were indeed accurate they would enter London within the week.²⁹

Anxious to establish the accuracy of the figures the Air Ministry's air intelligence section AI(3)(b) began in early September to aim to reach a view about the reliability of the net figure of *Luftwaffe* losses, this arrived at by weighing the claims made by pilots and AA-gunners against those confirmed by RAF intelligence, preferably through the hard evidence of aircraft wrecks.³⁰ To achieve this AI(3)(b) compiled regular tables for the broad period of 8 August to 30 October, these circulated to a small number of the Air Staff from 19 September, and every week thereafter.³¹ What became apparent through this exercise was the wide gulf between pilots' claims on the one hand, and clear proof of them on the other, tables of figures confirming that in many instances it was simply not possible to corroborate claims.

As an illustration, for the period 8 August to 2 October, the total claimed by the RAF and AA guns was an impressive total of 2,091 enemy aircraft. However, having exhausted all means of confirming these claims at the squadron level, and thereafter accepting only those for which there was firm actual evidence, the total was reduced by almost sixty per cent to 843 enemy aircraft, 1,248 aircraft thus being unverifiable.³² This suggested that only about fifty per cent of RAF claims were accurate, representing a significant reduction in the likely attrition of *Luftwaffe* capability. Noted previously, it was shown post-war that RAF over-claiming aggregated to 51.7 per cent, this very close to the 1940 intelligence estimate.

Understandably, Fighter Command was not pleased with these results and for a time strongly resisted accepting them. The Air Ministry finally agreed to the revised figures but decided against making these publicly available because of concerns about the likely impact upon pilots' and civilian morale generally, especially after the previously significant effort to deny concerns that the figures were erroneous.³³ The Air Ministry should in fact have confirmed the provisional nature of the figures at the time, but again avoided so doing. As the war drew on other than the recitation of Fighter Command's total 'bag' in 'cold' propaganda publications, the focus on claims' accuracy had steadily faded from public popular memory so that by 1945 what remained was a sense of Churchill's Few having achieved something very exceptional over four years earlier.³⁴ Churchill himself reinforced this in his victory speech on 13 May 1945,³⁵ and these matters remained for a further two years until 14 May 1947.

The shape of Battle of Britain propaganda

From the British perspective two battles were being fought out simultaneously, each intimately entwined with the other: on the one hand the struggle

to deny the *Luftwaffe* air superiority over the Channel and invasion beaches, and on the other, the symbiotic propaganda campaign seeking to loudly proclaim success and diminish setbacks. Insofar as world opinion was concerned – notably America – this was perhaps as important as the actual results of the air battles.³⁶ After all, the RAF's efforts in denying air superiority – and thence the conditions for invasion – would have been strategically less bountiful had Roosevelt chosen not to support his beleaguered ally. Into 1941 a situation might well have developed wherein although Britain had survived the trials of late 1940 she was still in peril for the lack of food, materials and other support, her empire alone not able to provide sufficient quantities. The Battle of the Atlantic would have exacerbated this yet further, fewer convoys inevitably attracting larger numbers of U-boats.

As a counterfactual, by mid-1941, although Britain had withstood invasion and resisted the prospect of seeking peace terms the previous year, the realities of insufficient food, fuel and other essentials might have made it impossible to continue the fight. In consequence, whilst the Battle tends to be seen as a self-contained event with a clear, decisive conclusion, strategically it was in fact part of a bigger canvas, the rewards from prevailing not immediately obvious but nonetheless manifested through the Atlantic Bridge as American support increased from 1941. The critical factor was in first winning Roosevelt's, then wider American support as 1940 progressed. It inevitably took time for American support to build – merchant shipping, diversion of resources, new industrial capacity³⁷ – and had Britain not managed at a critical moment to secure this in 1940 she might have been highly vulnerable as her government waited for supplies to build, perhaps following an American *volte-face* later in 1941.

Within this context the air battles and developing Blitz were the only two aspects of the war capable of being positively propagandised by the British at this time, much therefore hanging on getting it just right so as to persuade both Roosevelt, and the more reluctant isolationists determined not to be dragged into a second world war. The key British propaganda focus during the Battle itself was therefore the daylight air battles, and especially the RAF 'fighter boys' combat prowess. Accurately or not, this was the Battle as it is understood by the British today: heroic and undaunted young men flying Spitfires and Hurricanes against heavy odds, a 'David and Goliath' contest played out in the burning blue skies of a glorious English summer.

Three progressive elements contributed to the process by which this series of small- and large-scale air battles over a period of some six months from June to December 1940 coalesced and finally settled into the dominant narrative familiar today. The first element was the projection of the events themselves during the period of the air battles which might be described as 'hot' and 'warm' propaganda depending on the medium used, this output subject to stringent censorship and control by the Air Ministry and MoI, not least because it had value as tactical intelligence for the *Luftwaffe* if locations

were divulged.³⁸ Here, BBC news bulletins and daily newspapers were ‘hot’ in the sense that the latest news – essentially propaganda – was either heard on the BBC during news bulletins, or could be read the next morning in newspapers.

‘Warm’ propaganda black-and-white newsreel editions were screened before main features in cinemas, with a news time lag of three days for those scrutinised by censors on Mondays, and four days for those assessed on Thursdays. In this sense newsreels did not break the news as such but did offer viewers footage and upbeat narration of the previous few days’ events. Weekly magazines provided opportunities for ‘warm’ propaganda photo-essays and illustrated articles but were again unlikely to break the news. At best they offered angles and insights otherwise not possible in daily newspapers and other propaganda outputs. This period saw the fading out of large daytime air battles as the winter developed, but also the first nascent attempts in print to characterise the summer’s and autumn’s events from a strategic perspective.³⁹

The second main element in the valorisation of the Battle was ‘cold’ propaganda from January 1941 to mid-1945, wherein film, books, art, pilot’s accounts and radio broadcasts more sharply defined and further consolidated the 1940 narrative, which although still controlled within the context of wartime censorship did allow writers, artists, film-makers and broadcasters to begin the process of giving a clearer shape to the Battle in accord with the 1941 propaganda pamphlet.⁴⁰

The final element was the post-war development and consolidation of the Battle as a decisive event from mid-1945⁴¹ through both official and unofficial recognition and adulation, monuments, ceremonies, awards, events, books, media, film and art, shaping popular public perceptions of the Battle.⁴² Table 2.3 confirms the five phases of Britain’s air-war propaganda during wartime, propaganda phases one to four covering late 1940 as the Battle evolved both strategically and tactically, which then faded away into 1941. These will be considered in turn as they evolved during 1940.

Propaganda during 1940

Propaganda phase one: 4 June 1940–7 August 1940

Until the Blitz began on 7 September 1940 heralding the beginning of phase three, the initial propaganda phases had been wholly focused on the RAF and especially Fighter Command, although even before the events of 1940, the latter had been the focus of positive propaganda. *The Lion has Wings* film released in October 1939 anticipated in part the propaganda primacy of the Spitfire in providing air defence over Britain.⁴³ Criticised by some for its clunky production values, the film was the first attempt to confirm the existence of an integrated fighter command-and-control system, including

Table 2.3 Phases of Battle of Britain propaganda 1940–1945 (compiled by Garry Campion)

Propaganda Period	Strategic context	Notable events/dates	Propaganda outputs
1 4.6.1940–7.8.1940	Early Channel skirmishes and <i>Luftwaffe</i> probes as Battle of France reaches a conclusion; attacks on Channel convoys; attacks on RAF airfields near the coast; invasion anxiety in Britain begins and continues throughout the summer	Air attacks increased in intensity from 10.7.1940 to 7.8.1940; Hitler's <i>War Directive 16</i> on invasion aims, 16.7.1940; Hitler offered Britain a peace deal on 19.7.1940; 1.8.1940, <i>War Directive 17</i> focuses on RAF	Churchill coined 'Battle of Britain' term, 18.6.1940; 25.6.1940 <i>Spitfires over Britain</i> radio play; in July, 'what we are fighting for' media exhortations; Gardner broadcast of air attack, Dover, 14.7.1940; 'cricket-scores' of aircraft claims feature regularly from early July
2 8.8.1940–6.9.1940	Intensifying shipping attacks; significant effort to destroy air defence infrastructure and RAF Fighter Command's resistance so as to prepare the way for an invasion attempt	Delayed <i>Adler Tag</i> , 13.8.1940; major air battles, heavy losses on both sides, 15 & 18 August; 25/26.8.1940 RAF attacked Berlin; Fighter Command under great pressure into early September	Intense BBC, press and newsreel coverage of air battles throughout period; from mid-August coverage of air battles over Dover by US and other reporters; unnamed RAF pilots on magazine covers, and BBC talks; Churchill's 20.8.1940 'to So Few' speech widely reported
3 7.9.1940–30.9.1940	Attacks on London and Britain's economic capability across UK – the night Blitz began; invasion widely expected in Britain during mid-September; RAF bombers attacked invasion barges in Channel ports	London attacked on 7.9.1940; 'Battle of Barges' from 7.9.1940 onwards; major air battles on 15.9.1940; Hitler postponed <i>Sea Lion</i> on 17.9.1940	Media focus shifts to attack on London and civilian population; extensive world coverage of 15.9.1940 air battles, 16.9.1940; world attention on the Blitz and effort to secure US sympathy; coverage of 'Battle of Barges'

(continued)

Table 2.3 Continued

Propaganda Period	Strategic context	Notable events/dates	Propaganda outputs
4 1.10.1940– 31.12.1940	Daytime air attacks by fighter-bombers rather than bombers; Blitz intensified; daytime air battles lessened into October, and became more sporadic as 1940 drew to a close; no invasion was possible at this stage because of conditions in the Channel	14/15.11.1940 Coventry attacked; major night attack on London, 29/30.12.1940	Less media interest in the daytime air battles; the Blitz a major world focus; MoI 'Short' films on aspects of the air war; Coventry attack coverage; 15.11.1940 Nicolson receives VC; first books published to include aspects of the Battle of Britain; (Oct) US newsreel <i>Britain's RAF</i>
5 1.1.1941–1945	Night Blitz continued until 10.5.1941; Hitler's focus shifted to Russian invasion in 1941; Britain no longer faced threat of invasion as world events dominated, and it became possible to develop Strategic Air Offensive, and undertake D-Day landings	10/11.5.1941 last major attack on London; 22.6.1941 Hitler invaded Russia requiring the relocation of his bombers to the eastern front	<i>Battle of Britain</i> MoI pamphlet, 29.3.1941; <i>Battle of Britain</i> BBC radio play, 8.5.1941; 14.7.1941, Hillary talk on BBC; wide range of feature films, war art, pilots' memoirs, books released; US film <i>Battle of Britain</i> (1943); Churchill victory speech, 13.5.1945 pays tribute to 'the Few'
5a: 1941			
5b: 1942–1944			
5c: 1945			

some surprising views of an operations room complete with plotting table.⁴⁴ Viewers were shown a *Luftwaffe* attack being repulsed, close-up views of RAF fighter pilots in Spitfire cockpits, and waiting at dispersal on the ground, this footage already beginning to shape perceptions of the 'fighter boys'.

Here, the Spitfire was already being mythologised as a war-winning weapon, despite not as yet having been engaged in combat of any note. The press were willing to reinforce this sense, *The War Illustrated's* front cover on 30 September 1939 carrying an atmospheric image of three Spitfires (see Plate 3).⁴⁵ On June 25 1940 the BBC further reinforced the Spitfire's standing in its thirty-minute *Spitfires over Britain* radio-play feature, suddenly of keen interest given the fall of France and the heightened threat of a *Luftwaffe* attack.⁴⁶ The Air Ministry gave assistance revealing some details of their fighter command-and-control system, three Spitfires vectored onto Heinkel He111 bombers attacking a trawler in the North Sea. An atmospheric rendering of an air battle replete with sound effects and a tense plot, listeners would be reassured by the RAF's projected prowess.⁴⁷

The first intimation of the realities of a dogfight were broadcast 'live' by the BBC on 14 July when reporter Charles Gardner commentated on a *Luftwaffe* attack on a Channel convoy near Dover, this repelled by RAF fighters.⁴⁸ It was live in the sense that the almost seven and a half minute recording was broadcast seemingly without editing, as is evident from Gardner's narration, the pauses between dogfights, and the overall tempo of the piece. In some respects it was, though, akin to listening to a football match, a tone which some listeners took exception to. This was the first such 'live' broadcasting of an event and for those far away from areas where dogfights could be seen it gave the first sense of the developing air war over Britain and the risks being run by young RAF pilots. Because of the mixed reactions revealed in a listener survey soon afterwards, the BBC were cautious about repeating the format.⁴⁹

Outside of news coverage and RAF combat experiences recounted by aircrew, the BBC gave surprisingly little airtime to the air war and anticipated invasion threat during this phase. The first feature acknowledging the organised air defence system was broadcast on 18 July in *Watchers of the Sky*, essentially a piece about the Observer Corps' role in tracking enemy aircraft. This thirty-minute programme would have revealed nothing about radar or the intricacies of Fighter Command's control system but in the manner of late June's *Spitfires over Britain* radio play, provided some reassurance that there was a system in place. As a reminder to ordinary citizens that their calmness too would be critical, the following day's *If the Invader Comes* considered how ordinary people might react in the face of invasion, this piece set in a factory. In senior army commanders' minds were doubtless the decisive benefits afforded to spearhead German units in France during June and critically, the impact of refugees blocking roads gravely impeding Allied forces seeking to blunt Hitler's *Blitzkrieg*.⁵⁰

Initially during this period, news coverage was focused on sporadic and small-scale skirmishes over the Channel during the later stages of the Battle of France. There was no clear pattern to these early attacks, one of which, for instance, included a daylight attack by a single bomber on the village of Polruan in Cornwall, on 19 June, destroying a primary school.⁵¹ The previous day Churchill had indicated in his 18 June oratory that the forthcoming battle would aim at vanquishing Britain, and that in his view the Battle of Britain was imminent, though at this stage not purely as an air war.⁵² In tandem with a developing interest in *Luftwaffe* attacks was a focus in the popular press on ‘what we are fighting for’, these exhortations to stay calm doubtless framed by the threat of invasion.⁵³ Thereafter, the air fighting steadily developed in intensity from early July until the start of August, newspapers especially very interested in ‘cricket scores’ of aircraft shot down, these published daily (Appendix 4.1).

For example, *The Daily Mirror*’s 11 July issue carried ‘RAF’s battle score – 37’ on its front page, and on 1 August trumpeted ‘RAF bag 240 in July’; magazines too were also beginning to take this approach in their diary-of-the-week features (Appendix 4.2). BBC news bulletins routinely broadcast air communiqués as discussed above, details of air fights and claims projected. Talks by pilots and aircrew were broadcast during latter 1940 and also into 1941 and the later stages of the war (Appendix 3.1). These were bland, prescribed and censored, the experiences of air combat, either in shooting down the enemy, or being shot down, carefully modulated to avoid causing offence. Nothing of consequence was revealed other than to reinforce the calm, focused and essentially decent quality of the airman talking; there was no bloodlust to be heard on the BBC. This extended to those suffering directly at the hands of German bombers where, of very few features to consider the impact of bombing on the home front, and especially before the Blitz began in earnest, 26 July’s *Bombs were Dropped* piece gave censored voice to first-hand experiences of air raids.

Conversely, cinema-goers were shown newsreels featuring footage released by the Air Ministry, but much of this was poor quality and often very dated, irrelevant scenes and aircraft the norm, and bearing little relationship to the actual fighting (Appendix 5.1). As the Battle progressed, British newsreel companies were frustrated by the lack of useful material provided to them, arguing that only American newsreels were allowed useful footage.⁵⁴ As a consequence newsreel companies had to make the best of a bad job, jaunty narration seeking to compensate for inadequate footage. An additional factor was that other than fighter gun-camera film, actuality combat footage was technically very difficult to obtain. Similarly, air battles filmed from the ground were of poor quality, usually featuring very small aircraft formations which revealed little; Me109 fighters attacking barrage balloons over Dover were a poor substitute.⁵⁵ As the first propaganda phase ended it was clear that the air war was developing in scope and intensity, if

not exactly strategic clarity, but as yet it did not warrant a more substantial media focus.

Propaganda phase two: 8 August 1940–6 September 1940

Given the high numbers of downed aircraft being claimed as the air battles developed it was inevitable that the 'fighter boys' would attract significant public interest, and also growing media insistence that individuals should be identified as 'aces'.⁵⁶ It is striking that up to and following Dunkirk the RAF had not been held in particularly high esteem, especially by the army who felt that they had been left to bear the brunt of *Luftwaffe* dive-bomber and fighter attacks during the evacuation.⁵⁷ This rapidly changed in the four-week propaganda phase two from 8 August, once it became clear that the RAF were withstanding the *Luftwaffe's* attacks and based on aircraft-claim reports that they were inflicting high casualties on a numerically much larger enemy. These high claims were critical to the manner in which the 'fighter boys' were quickly elevated to godlike status in the public's mind, the media wasting no time in projecting this theme.

After all, for several years previously the threat of unstoppable massed *Luftwaffe* bombing raids had caused worry and anxiety, yet here was Fighter Command seemingly parrying the blows with astonishing success. It was, in fact, an unexpected and much needed reflection of British exceptionalism, 'David' inflicting staggering blows against 'Goliath'. Quickly setting the tone for the air-war propaganda, several developments gave impetus to this trend. The *Luftwaffe's* delayed *Adler Tag* on 13 August led to two major air battles, both sides suffering heavy losses on 15 and 18 August; this attracted intense media coverage both on front pages, but also in extensive inner-page articles.⁵⁸ Of many examples the 16 August *Daily Telegraph* proclaimed '144 raiders down for loss of only 27 planes'; 19 August's *Daily Mirror* ran '100 shot down', and on the same date, *The Times* confirmed 'Germany's heaviest air defeat; 140 machines shot down'.

A second development was that the faces of pilots were featured on magazine front covers, but rarely with details of individuals.⁵⁹ *Picture Post's* 31 August issue featured a low, oblique view of unnamed Pilot Officer Keith Gillman's face, the pilot killed over the Channel by the time his image appeared.⁶⁰ Typical magazine coverage from this phase is *Illustrated's* 24 August issue, its front cover carrying an image of pilots with the caption 'Spitfirers!' Its leading photo-article 'Battle of Britain' focuses on Dover, a photograph of reporters on Shakespeare Cliff confirming keen American interest in the air fighting.⁶¹ Emphasising the calm 'we can take it' attitude of the town's residents there is no immediate sense of the impact of the war.⁶² '*Spitfired!*' follows, with a two-page spread of German aircraft shot down over Britain:

[I]n the towns and countryside of Britain, by the sea and in the suburbs of the cities, lie the wreckages of German planes, grim skeletons of Nazi

dreams of air supremacy. Scattered over the whole of our island fortress is evidence of the great successes of our Spitfires, our Hurricanes, our Anti-aircraft batteries – and our men.⁶³

The article also noted 694 German aircraft losses in the period 8 August to 18 August; RAF losses are given as 150 aircraft. An undated *Illustrated* ‘Royal Air Force special number’ featured five aircrew on its front cover, this soon used for a poster carrying an abbreviated version of Churchill’s ‘to so Few’ speech (Plate 4). Its ‘Victorious Fighters’ photo-essay confirmed that ‘[B]etween Hitler and the conquest of Britain stands a gallant band of knights of the air whose courage and skill are the wonder of the world’.⁶⁴ Such adulatory coverage set the tone for much of the propaganda swirling around the ‘fighter boys’ as the air war intensified, newspapers also anxious to include images of the fighter pilots.

Newsreel coverage also focused much more strongly on the fighter pilots and air battles, footage of Spitfires and Hurricanes taking off and returning, and fighter pilots relaxing in the sunshine at airfield dispersals more frequently seen in this phase. Both officers and men – shoulder flashes showing various countries of origin – were commonly represented in newsreels, this countering the impression gained from *The First of the Few* in 1942, and early post-war films that the Battle was won solely by English public-school educated officers. Scrambles were a frequent device to show a Fighter Command primed for action, but aerial footage, such as it was, revealed little of the realities of dogfighting. Unsurprisingly, newsreel output reflected the supreme effort of resistance being offered, the focus generally that of projecting a calm, resolute and still cheerful Fighter Command.

Central to the developing valorisation of the Few was Churchill’s 20 August Commons’ ‘war situation’ speech which, although ranging across a broad canvas, is mostly remembered now for the high praise afforded to the fighter pilots. It is striking that by 20 August the Battle as it was later defined had been underway for almost six weeks, *Adler Tag* literally only a week earlier. By this time Fighter Command had been involved in two major air battles on 15 and 18 August, Churchill’s famous oratory perhaps slightly premature given what was to follow. The Prime Minister reinforced several aspects of the air war in the midst of a wide-ranging if otherwise rather leaden speech. The first was to pay tribute to the RAF’s ‘airmen’ – fighter pilots in this exact context – who through their bravery were decisively opposing the Nazi onslaught with conclusive results. His famous epigraph to the Few⁶⁵ was followed by a heartfelt appreciation for the fighter pilots.

There has been much debate about whether Churchill intended to include Bomber and Coastal Commands in his ‘to so Few’ tribute,⁶⁶ the sentence itself continuing as he developed his lengthy focus on bomber crews – and linked with a semi-colon whose significance is of perhaps unique historical

gravitas given the two counterpointed elements for which it acts as a hinge. The second part of this lengthy sentence affirmed the skill and courage of the bomber aircrews, reminding his audience that – in essence – their wide-ranging attacks must not be forgotten in the glare of publicity surrounding the ‘fighter boys’.⁶⁷

Within this passage the ‘to so Few’ phrase was fairly quickly – if not immediately – identified and projected around the world, pithily capturing the sense of appreciation many felt in Britain particularly towards Fighter Command.⁶⁸ The reality was that Fighter Command faced a further seventeen days of hard fighting before Hitler changed his strategic tack to London, this period its greatest single test as a major *Luftwaffe* effort to destroy RAF resistance was mounted. Whilst Bomber Command had been the focus of some media coverage (see Chapter 3), the reality was that Fighter Command had tended to dominate the news during July and August. This would not have swayed Churchill’s sense of the balance of effort in the air war, but the general public might have found it perhaps easier to link his tribute to the ‘fighter boys’. After all, even the BBC, the most accessible source of news and information to most, devoted little air time to the exploits of the RAF outside of bulletins, Bomber Command featuring infrequently.

For instance, reinforcing Britain’s efforts to ‘give it back’, 15 August’s *Bombers over Germany* radio play depicted a raid against a Bremen oil refinery, the listener taken from the raid’s start to finish. Based on the story of an actual raid, Cecil McGivern – also the writer of *Spitfires over Britain* – adopted sound effects to reinforce the drama, the approach used again in May 1941’s *Battle of Britain* piece. Advertising this wireless feature, and usually eschewing any images of war on its *Radio Times* front covers, the 9 August issue pictured a Whitley bomber and its crew seemingly having just returned from a mission.⁶⁹ A second Bomber Command BBC feature aired on 19 October, with Cecil McGivern’s *Bombers over Berlin*, a ‘radio impression’ of an attack on the Potsdamer railway. Both pieces reinforced the sense – at odds with the realities – that the RAF was able to carry out night attacks on strategic targets with pin-point accuracy.

This second propaganda phase was the most concentrated in its focus on the ‘fighter boys’, aircraft claims and Fighter Command’s dogged resistance given enormous coverage, not least because it was the main war news. The civilian population had not yet been targeted in which case the media was free to focus much of its effort on each day’s ‘cricket scores’ as aircraft claims came in from the Air Ministry. Had the RAF not claimed so many *Luftwaffe* aircraft it is unlikely that the media would have embraced the ‘fighter boys’ quite as they did, not least because it would be much harder to develop a narrative around only modest success. As the Air Ministry well knew it was the media’s exultant complicity in projecting the inflated claims’ figures around the world that was bearing fruit, both home front morale and American government and public opinion critical constituencies.

Noted above, the Air Ministry had their doubts about the veracity of the claims but forbore to reveal any of this to the public. It is not hard to imagine why: Britain had been through a series of military disasters, most recently at Dunkirk, good news very thin on the ground. A menacing invasion fleet sat only a few miles away across the Channel and it was essential to maintain morale and neuter defeatism lest intensive bombing led to demands for a peace deal. Despite the hammer blows it was suffering into early September Fighter Command provided a powerful example of resolute defence; in so doing it offered a rallying point for national defiance, even if the gravity of its situation through heavy pilot and aircraft losses was carefully shielded by the Air Ministry.

Propaganda phase three: 7 September 1940–30 September 1940

This three-week period had two propaganda centres of gravity: the first was the developing Blitz against London; the second, the invasion threat which, because of weather conditions in the Channel, realistically had to reach a denouement during this period. The unexpected 7 September attack on London led to a rapid shift in both news and propaganda focus, the *Few* generally featuring less on front pages, civilians on the home front instead becoming much more central. Critically, the American media took a more detailed interest in attacks against London and other major cities as the Blitz developed, sympathy developing strongly for the victims of air raids including the Royal family: for instance, *The New York Times* ran 'Five German bombs hit Buckingham Palace in day and night of air terror'.⁷⁰ MoI 'short' films about the home front in London were produced including *Britain Can Take It* and *London Can Take It*, similar films intended for either British or American audiences. In addition to disagreements about air claims German propaganda sought through 'moral equivalence' arguments to justify their attacks against London, but in the main these were not accepted by neutral countries.

Although the invasion threat had been present since France's surrender and many had expected an attempt in late June or early July, as nothing had been attempted during August it was assumed that mid-September was now the critical period (Appendix 1, Alanbrooke). Hitler's threat to invade Britain had remained prominent during this phase including his 4 September speech to the *Sportsplast*: 'Why doesn't he come? Be calm. He's coming!'⁷¹ In response and on the same day that Hitler attacked London, RAF bombers made repeated efforts to sink the assembling invasion barges, media coverage of a comparable scale to the air fighting itself. Such indeed was the level of invasion anxiety that King George IV asked that 8 September be observed as a national day of prayer. To this end Cardinal Hinsley, the Archbishop of Westminster, affirmed that '[T]he anxieties and responsibilities of the nation and Empire have greatly increased since the day of national prayer on June 26 [...] An invasion may be attempted at any time. It is therefore right that the nation should again turn to God and commit its cause to Him.'⁷²

Two massed attacks on 15 September, during which 185 *Luftwaffe* aircraft were claimed as shot down were a focus of major international interest from 16 September onwards. At midnight on the 15 September, the BBC had set the tone for the subsequent coverage: '[I]t was officially announced that by ten o'clock tonight, 175 raiders were known to have been destroyed by our fighters and anti-aircraft gunners'.⁷³ Typical newspaper headlines included *The Times*' '175 raiders shot down', and the *Daily Mirror*'s 'Greatest day for RAF'. Newsreels and magazines also covered this decisive day, 185 aircraft being the final figure claimed. Unknown to the British and despite the actual *Luftwaffe* loss figure being much lower at 56, on 17 September Hitler postponed a decision on launching *Sea Lion*, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 8. Although there were further major attacks against Britain – that on 27 September resulting in 133 RAF claims – it was clear by late September that a decisive moment had been reached in the *Luftwaffe*'s strategy, even if the invasion threat appeared to remain. Only a few days after Churchill's comments (see below) about air superiority being essential for invasion, 15 September was quickly identified as the fulcrum denoting a change in Britain's fortunes, this formally confirmed in the 1941 *Battle of Britain* pamphlet.⁷⁴ Post-war it has retained its significance as Battle of Britain Day (see Chapter 6).

Propaganda phase four: 1 October 1940–31 December 1940

Whilst the media was focused to some extent on the tactical shift to daylight attacks by high-flying fighter-bombers, and the reduction in attacks by twin-engined bomber formations, the reality was that the Blitz had developed strongly and was understandably of far more immediate concern.⁷⁵ The 14–15 November attack on Coventry was a notable example of intense international media coverage, pin-prick nuisance raids by fighters of very little strategic or tactical consequence in comparison. This attack on Coventry would also be significant in 1942 when it was decided to stage a Civil Defence Day to commemorate the work of fireman, medical services, the ARP, bomb disposal and other services involved in the Blitz. This event later became Battle of Britain Day, one leading to the other (see Chapter 6). During propaganda phase four, *Luftwaffe* attacks continued into late December but their intensity had undoubtedly peaked.⁷⁶ Given the manner in which these daylight attacks gradually reduced in scale it was not a straightforward matter at the time to define the Battle's official end date; and similarly the case in agreeing its beginning.

Two MoI 'shorts' appeared during this phase; firstly, *The Story of an Air Communicé*, discussed above, in respect of the Air Ministry's attempts to confirm the reliability of their aircraft claims, and in truth a rather dry piece (Appendix 5.2). Coupled with this was *Fighter Pilot*, a seven-minute film which could easily have been released much earlier in the summer as its content made little use of actual Battle footage, mostly using a selection of poor-quality 'combat' material. The key point was to inform viewers about RAF fighter pilots' prowess and dedication in defending British airspace, the

overall tone a little grittier than earlier newsreel and press coverage. It served to reinforce popular perceptions of the ‘fighter boys’ but eschewed Churchill’s epigraph, somewhat surprising given its omnipresence in other propaganda.

A more sophisticated production was the US newsreel company March of Time’s *Britain’s RAF*, produced with RAF assistance and the focus of complaints by British newsreel companies who felt hard done by.⁷⁷ Released in October to American cinemas, and to Britain in November, this was a panoramic sweep of the Battle of Britain through American eyes, but very much framed by the Air Ministry’s perception of events. It reinforced the sense gained of the RAF’s determined resistance in the Battle, their aircraft claims accepted as accurate. The tone was adulatory and the RAF portrayed as superior to the *Luftwaffe* in all respects despite being heavily outnumbered. The RAF’s fighters were also portrayed as near miraculous in their capabilities, the Hurricane credited with a speed of 400 miles per hour when the reality was far more modest.⁷⁸ In essence the film captured in its seventeen minutes the tone and overall propaganda timbre which had been projected throughout the summer and autumn to British audiences. The fact that it had been produced by a neutral country could only reinforce how determined America was to support Britain and that in this example at least, any sense of detached, neutral objectivity had been abandoned. The newsreel undoubtedly contributed to the overall sense that the Battle had been a very special event, reviewers arguing that it was the best film yet made about the RAF.⁷⁹ It also provided footage for later films including the American *The Battle of Britain* (1943).

This sense of RAF exceptionalism was added to by the award of a Victoria Cross to Hurricane pilot Flight Lieutenant James Nicolson, the details announced on 15 November; the day following the night attack on Coventry. The only VC awarded to Fighter Command during the Second World War, Nicolson was uncomfortable about receiving it and felt that many others were far more deserving despite his having been badly wounded.⁸⁰ However, whether he agreed or not, the Air Ministry – having initially considered a DFC – saw his valour as deserving of this highest award, and which, incidentally, was also very useful in publicising the heroism of Fighter Command more generally.⁸¹ Both the press and newsreels covered his story, this typical of the tone: ‘[N]o braver deed on any of the war fronts has been recorded than that which won the VC for Flight Lieutenant J. B. Nicolson. With multiple wounds, and his plane ablaze he power dived and shot down his opponent before bailing out.’

As 1940 drew to a close the first books covering aspects of the Battle also appeared, these tending to treat the air battles in the summer and autumn as part of a wider series of events, rather than delineating a specific episode with a clear beginning and end. Very much nascent drafts more informed by journalism than a wider historical perspective they were, though, significant in beginning the historiographical process of defining the Battle.

James Spaight, a former Air Ministry civil servant first published on air power in August and his book thereafter went through several reprints and a second edition, but his attention to the Battle was modest within a book covering a broad canvas.⁸² In November, Allan Michie and Walter Graebner included some first-hand accounts of fighter pilots' combat experiences,⁸³ whilst Walter Williams' photograph-based volume provided prompt coverage and images of Fighter Command during the Battle.⁸⁴ The most useful early account and one written by an aviation correspondent was Ronald Walker's volume appearing in December, devoting four chapters to the Battle and somewhat anticipating later appraisals.⁸⁵ Of this initial crop of books Walker's assessment certainly helped authors as they began to capture a more nuanced sense of the Battle from 1941 onwards.

Only one novel had been written that reflected some of the drama likely in the event of occupation, Douglas Brown and Christopher Serpell's cautionary tale first appearing in August 1940, published almost at the height of the invasion scare.⁸⁶ Intended to stiffen the resolve of its readers the book is dedicated to 'those who will not let this happen'.⁸⁷ It anticipated post-war novels including *Dominion* and *SS-GB*, and others based on Nazi occupation, but shied away from the air war as such which at the time of its writing must have been in its relatively early stages and not clearly likely to prove a decisive factor.⁸⁸ A pessimistic account, it may not have been appreciated by all and given the tension during August and September 1940 was a brave publication. In common with other 'firsts' published during 1940 and 1941, it set the scene for later treatments – either fictional or counterfactual – of invasion.⁸⁹

War artists were also active producing art either for the War Artists' Advisory Committee (WAAC), or, on their own account (Appendix 6).⁹⁰ Artists included Paul Nash, the surrealist whose work for the WAAC focused on RAF bombers and crashed German aircraft, but which did not find favour with those preferring a more traditional approach. Portraitists including Eric Kennington, William Rothenstein and Cuthbert Orde drew pilots' and aircrew portraits from 1940 onwards, these building into a sizeable collection of pencil, charcoal and pastel images.

A challenge for artists was to capture a sense of the air battles in a convincing sense, this not straightforward without the benefit of having flown in an aircraft. Other than using photographs of aircraft in flight or basing their work on aircraft or dogfights overhead, an element of conjecture was inevitable in portraying air battles. As a consequence many wartime paintings have a flat perspective quality, quite at odds with work produced in the 1960s and later, as films such as the *Battle of Britain* (1969) made it far easier to visualise and capture the Battle as a three-dimensional event. The availability of accurately-scaled plastic models also helped with authenticity, these not available during the war years. In some instances it was only possible for artists to draw and paint scenes on the ground, hence the range of work featuring aircraft, blast pens, servicing, and waiting for action.

Nash – prevented from flying through asthma – sought to animalise his bomber aircraft, these too very much earthbound. The better-quality work was shown in public exhibitions both in London and the provinces but much was not displayed, some only appearing in late-war publications. Artists not employed by the WAAC were also active, opportunities to draw at close hand more limited because of security clearances.

Photographers faced the same challenges: aircraft and activity on the ground was easier to capture but necessarily constrained by security considerations, whilst seeking to photograph actual air battles from an aircraft was very difficult because of RAF restrictions. An alternative was to photograph from the ground but as with newsreels, grainy images of Me109s shooting up barrage balloons was hardly a substitute for the drama of a large-scale dogfight. As a consequence there is little photographic actuality material from latter 1940, other than cine-gun camera stills, these – derived from moving film – often of very poor quality. This lack of film footage and usable images of combat has limited the post-war visual representation of the air battles of the period, many documentaries using inaccurate or late-war material to compensate.

Deliverance

Thus ended a dramatic year which many neutral commentators had expected would be a disaster for Britain, invasion perceived to be a very real threat. The propaganda war played out with Germany did not of course decide events, Hitler and his OKW basing their invasion prospect considerations on the realities revealed through intelligence assessments and hard-headed staff planning, not what Britain chose to project about its defensive capabilities. Although the *Luftwaffe* could not confirm RAF losses they could enumerate their own, and were therefore able to make a reasoned judgement about the implications for an attempted invasion.⁹¹ Conversely, Britain's morale had been sustained through a testing seven-month period since the Dunkirk evacuation, and it showed every sign of continuing during the night Blitz. In many regards the propaganda war's benefits would only be felt as the war progressed, especially in respect of crucially needed aid.⁹² American decisions about providing practical support to Britain were framed by its defiance in latter 1940, matters equally likely to have gone the other way. Again, American decision makers would not be swayed by propaganda alone, but significant doubt was left about Britain's seemingly inevitable collapse between May and September 1940, enabling Roosevelt – in the face of palpable opposition from isolationists – to begin the process of changing US neutrality laws to make support possible. The agreement to provide fifty First World War destroyers to Britain in early September was a significant first success for Churchill, its propaganda value arguably far more noteworthy than enhancing actual military capability.⁹³

Although the outlook was far from certain the RAF, and especially Fighter Command, had been placed centre stage by their determined resistance, very few commentators likely to have predicted this as the serious fighting began on 10 May 1940 when the RAF were first engaged over France. One could imagine that this also applied to Churchill. He was, however, not slow in recognising and developing this theme, his views central to the Few's later reputation for their role in dissuading Hitler from risking *Sea Lion*.

How then did Churchill's late-1940 oratory, affirming the linkage between Fighter Command and the abandoned invasion, develop as the air battles intensified? The invasion threat and the necessary air superiority to conduct it had been first highlighted by the Prime Minister in his 18 June speech, though in this instance focusing on tackling airborne troops and their transport; to his mind the former was impossible without having first attained air superiority.⁹⁴ Two months later, on 20 August, Churchill very briefly affirmed the vital role of Bomber Command in thwarting any invasion attempt, but at that juncture had not included Fighter Command as key to this, other than in the 'to so Few' passage (see Chapter 3). He returned to the theme of invasion and the RAF on 11 September, at which point the crisis appeared far more acute. In addition to confirming the importance of bomber attacks against invasion ports Churchill argued that the battle for air superiority was critical to any attempt, Fighter Command clearly central to denying it in the sense that Bomber Command could only operate under an umbrella of RAF fighter protection. Predicting disaster for a German invasion attempt, to Churchill's mind the 'crux' of the war rested on this issue.⁹⁵

This was not the first official linking of air superiority and the risks of crossing the Channel, an *Air Commentary* broadcast several days earlier making essentially the same point.⁹⁶ The final affirmation of the Few's primacy in thwarting invasion was on 8 October when Churchill glowingly noted that the principal reason for the invasion not being attempted was in no small part due to Fighter Command's successes on 15 August, 15 September and 27 September.⁹⁷ Interestingly, at this point Churchill praises Sir Cyril Newall as the previous overall commander of the RAF and also welcomed the appointment of Sir Charles Portal to replace him, but – in contrast to his later praise – makes no reference to Dowding. Churchill was by this time aware of Air Council discontent about Fighter Command's head, and in light of this may have found it difficult to publicly praise Dowding.

Reinforcing this hesitation, a controversial denouement to this period was the removal of both Dowding and Air-Vice Marshal Sir Keith Park as the principal commanders engaged in the Battle. The focus of considerable historical interest and analysis since the war, both are judged by most commentators to have been 'shabbily' treated by the Air Ministry as the Battle faded away.⁹⁸ Dowding went first, his tenure as C-in-C Fighter Command ending on 25 November 1940, to be followed by Park as head of 11 Group on 18 December. Whilst at the time this received little enough attention – the

inner workings of the RAF a matter for its senior commanders – a consequence of the rapid glorification of the Battle from 1941 inevitably left a vacuum at the centre of the developing narrative insofar as the key commanders were concerned. The Air Ministry had done its best to eclipse the roles of both Dowding and Park in its 1941 propaganda pamphlet, only relenting in 1943 with an enlarged booklet on the Battle, yet which also sought to spread the laurels to other – peripheral – commanders still in their posts (see Chapter 5).

It was not until after the war that significant interest was focused on Dowding and Park, the 1969 *Battle of Britain* feature film leading to awkward questions for the RAF, especially about Dowding's treatment and whether he should have been made a Marshal of the RAF. By any measure, given their success – notably Park's tactical management of the critical south-east region, including London – it had been a triumph despite slender resources. As both discovered though, achieving significant results without support at the most senior level would not save their positions.

Whilst both Dowding and Park, exhausted after the strain of the previous months, were still focused on blunting the *Luftwaffe's* assaults, others, and under no such pressure, were manoeuvring to push them out. Most agree that two senior commanders, jealous of their success, were determined to replace them at the moment of their triumph. Perhaps a message for any age, beware those who are so ruthlessly ambitious that they will go to any lengths in their quest for promotion, even to the extent of expunging those who have worked both loyally and efficiently for the greater good, and with little support. It brought discredit on those involved in seeking Dowding's removal that they were willing to indulge in malicious tittle-tattle, more senior commanders content to be swayed by this where it served their own ambitions.⁹⁹ With Dowding removed it was straightforward thereafter to banish Park to a training role. Both, however, would be later vindicated as the Battle's historiography developed and its significance became clearer, their reputations fully restored.

Postscript to a tumultuous period

Bringing closure to this final propaganda phase of the Battle itself, the contents of an internal BBC memo gives some sense of where matters stood from the British perspective as the daylight battles petered out from mid-October. Reporting on the results of discussions between the Controller of Home Broadcasting, and Air Ministry and army intelligence staff, it focused on the nature of *Luftwaffe* personnel, one anxiety being to discourage news agencies from running 'silly' or exaggerated stories suggesting that there was something abnormal about its aircrews.¹⁰⁰ Pilots were usually in their early twenties, it was noted, the youngest aircrew caught being wireless operators aged seventeen. Many were afraid of the Home Guard and feared rough

treatment, this presumably based on German propaganda. It continued that although German aircraft were often ordered to return to different bases after a mission, thus making it hard for them to gauge actual overall losses, it was widely known that the RAF was taking a toll of the *Luftwaffe*.

Despite this, aside from some war-weariness there was no sense of defeatism,¹⁰¹ nor excessive zeal in support of Hitler and Nazism, or a view that RAF fighters were better than their German counterparts. A lack of hard information available to aircrews was revealed by the fact that many had no idea how Berlin was faring in the face of RAF attacks, opinions divided on the actual level of damage inflicted. It was also noted that aircrews did not destroy their crashed aircraft but instead waited to give themselves up. Given both the pre- and early-war German propaganda, and British anxieties in response, it was a reasoned analysis, confirming the very human nature of *Luftwaffe* aircrews.¹⁰²

More broadly, one might also add that the British propaganda focus on projecting its resistance against a much stronger foe had clearly borne fruit, the value simply of staying in the fight doing much to sustain morale and secure American support. After all, Britain, having continued fighting very much on the back foot had not only fended off determined and relentless *Luftwaffe* blows, but had been able to fashion a coherent propaganda response affirming these successes. However, there were long-term risks and drawbacks: whereas Britain and its empire had been seen as omnipresent and all-powerful prior to 1940 it is striking that in unwillingly projecting itself as the diminutive 'David' to the German 'Goliath', this also shone a bright light on its sudden vulnerability, which in tandem with its increasing reliance on American finance was a decisive moment insofar as its post-war fortunes were concerned. For the first time, here was evidence that Britain had its limits in being able to police a vast empire, a message also not lost on Japan as it eyed Singapore and Britain's other Far Eastern assets.

As the war evolved, Britain's continuing emphasis upon the Few also reinforced this sense of a weakened empire, and very much at odds with how many of its citizens would prefer to view themselves. Conversely, whilst an otherwise triumphant Germany could not have foreseen the strategic consequences of having failed to knock Britain out of the war in 1940, its faltering propaganda war against its only remaining enemy in that year had far less dramatic consequences. Yes, America and other neutrals might point at Hitler's failure to invade and raise questions about Germany's overall capability, but the reality was that this had little practical impact on its actual military performance. This continued strongly until the winter of 1941 when the weather changed unexpectedly early, this stalling the advance towards Moscow. Into 1941 Germany's next likely victims were not assessing their prospects of survival based upon the propaganda campaign against Britain during late 1940, Nazi propagandists making no further allusions to this either.

As 1940 came to an end, British propagandists, and especially the Air Ministry's DPR – headed by Air Commodore Harald Peake – could derive quiet satisfaction from what had been achieved between June and December. Although not anticipated or planned for, they had after all managed to respond sufficiently well to a rapidly developing series of air battles, generally meeting media demands for information and proof about aircraft claims, pilots, and related issues. It is the wealth of propaganda generated in phases one to four that has shaped subsequent representations of the Battle, the foundations of the narrative proper beginning in early 1941.

Churchill's reinforcement of the link between the Few and the abandoned invasion was also critical to the manner in which the Air Ministry developed the Battle as a decisive event, this only coming through strongly from 11 September onwards. After the many setbacks of 1940 Churchill needed a victory and the Few, simply by refusing to give in, gave him one. It was an opportunity quickly seized by the Air Ministry despite the clear evidence – kept from the public – suggesting that RAF claims for *Luftwaffe* aircraft shot down were misleadingly optimistic. Had these reservations been publicly revealed as the air battles continued it is hard to imagine that the exultant propaganda enveloping the Few would have developed in quite the manner that it did. Fighter Command's exceptionalism was central to the media's infatuation with the nation's 'fighter boys', the primacy of the 'cricket scores' absolutely critical to the triumphant narrative projected about and swirling around them. Imagine the reaction in America or indeed on the British home front if more cautious figures had been released; thought would quickly turn to how vast the *Luftwaffe* appeared to be, and how much longer the RAF could hold out. On every level this had to be avoided, decisions made in the highest echelons of the Air Ministry unintentionally laying the foundations for the rapid valorisation of the Few's unparalleled triumph.

3

The Battle of the Barges: 'Blackpool Front' Propaganda, 1940–1945

The invasion threat

A possible German invasion was uppermost in many people's minds during the latter part of 1940, the destruction of the growing invasion fleet of keen interest.¹ The 'Battle of the Barges' – as described by Guy Gibson, the Dambusters' leader, and others² – therefore attracted considerable media attention that ran in parallel with and was not wholly subordinated to the coverage of Fighter Command's defence of British airspace. The campaign has since been largely forgotten: as the war itself progressed it came to be first swamped, and then wholly eclipsed, by the propaganda colossus of Fighter Command's victory over the *Luftwaffe*. Discussed below, it is not hard to find explanations for this, unjust though it must have seemed to the bomber aircrews involved. In the public's mind the Spitfire was pre-eminent during late 1940, its streamlined modernity providing superb iconographic opportunities in both filmic and printed propaganda; in comparison, RAF bombers, including the visually ungainly Hampden and Whitley, were more difficult to propagandise. The 'bomber boys', whether in Bomber or Coastal Command, also fought a different war, flying missions to often distant enemy targets, or in tedious patrols over vast oceanic expanses in search of an invasion fleet.³ Hilary Saunders captured this dichotomy when he wrote of the bombers that

[I]ts pilots and crews do not trace at vast speed fantastic patterns in the sky as did their comrades of Fighter Command when the Battle of Britain was fought and won. They plod steadily on, taking their aircraft through fair weather or foul, night after night and of late by day, to 'the abodes of the guilty'.⁴

Against this backdrop, hazardous though it was, the sinking of a Rhine barge in a French port was of a different order; inescapably, bombers killed people and were admirable targets for fighters, but by this metric, barges were not.

These factors combined made it more difficult to propagandise the RAF's bombing campaign against *Sea Lion* preparations, strict parity of coverage with Fighter Command not really achievable, except perhaps when its two Victoria Cross winners were justly heroicised. A German prerequisite for an invasion attempt, Fighter Command largely denied air superiority to the *Luftwaffe* over the planned beachheads during daylight, but .303 Browning machine-gun-armed fighters would avail little on their own against an invasion armada. This required Bomber Command, Coastal Command and critically, the Royal Navy.

Arguably, because no invasion was attempted, all the credit has gone to the 'fighter boys', which also served Churchill's pressing political need at the height of the crisis, not least in securing US aid.⁵ There was, though, strategic significance to these attacks – albeit with moderately small numbers of aircraft – against 'invasion ports' along the 'invasion coast' (both frequently used terms during the campaign itself) and post-war, 'Bomber' Harris argued strongly for their importance in deterring Hitler from invasion.⁶

The focus here is on both Bomber and Coastal Commands' efforts against *Sea Lion* preparations, but attacks against German industry, cities including Berlin, and other targets, were also significant. For instance, strikes against *Luftwaffe* airfields in Belgium, France and Germany were mostly undertaken during a six-week period from mid-July to the end of August 1940, aimed at directly supporting Fighter Command.⁷ These were the focus of British propaganda in their own right, but other than claiming many aircraft destroyed on the ground, or damage to airfield buildings and infrastructure, lacked the glamour of dogfights visible overhead in London and the south-east.

Bomber and Coastal Commands

Bomber Command was organised into Groups, and these in turn comprised squadrons usually based in airfields located well away from centres of population, in counties as widely spread as Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire, Suffolk and Yorkshire.⁸ From these, bombers could range across the North Sea to occupied Europe and also Germany, with no need to be located in the south-east of England where fighter bases predominated. A result of the reluctance to rearm during the early 1930s was that Bomber Command lacked aircraft capable of carrying heavy bomb loads over long ranges. It was not until 1941 that the four-engined 'heavies' became available through the Short Stirling and Handley Page Halifax. The RAF's bombers during 1940 were all twin-engined: the Vickers Wellington IC, Handley Page Hampden, Armstrong Whitworth Whitley V, and Bristol Blenheim IV, which was also produced as a fighter variant. Bomber Command had a force of 667 bombers, but only 560 were serviceable on 11 July 1940.⁹ The Command had incurred daylight losses during its support for the French,

as had Fighter Command, with available aircraft at the start of the Battle amounting to: Wellington (148), Hampden (109), Whitley (103), and Blenheim (234). The Fairey Battle, a slow, obsolescent, single-engined light bomber had been severely mauled during the Battle of France but was used for operations against Channel targets from 7–8 September 1940.¹⁰

By 1940 Bomber Command was a modestly sized if blunt weapon, especially against more distant cities such as Berlin. Objectives varied between strategic and tactical targets, ranging from attacks on oil refineries, power stations and supply networks, to mine laying, propaganda leafleting, and destroying railway junctions. The bomber strikes against Channel ports were an unexpected diversion from the strategic campaign envisaged in pre- and early-war RAF planning, guided in part by doctrinal theories on air power.¹¹ Propaganda attention was focused upon their successes and destructive capability throughout the Battle, yet it was proving difficult to hit targets with any degree of accuracy.

Away from large targets, inaccuracy in 'precision' bombing dogged RAF Bomber Command. Imprecise, 'area bombing' was more realistic an ambition in the face of German anti-aircraft defences, targets obscured by smoke and cloud, decoys, inaccurate bombsights and 'creep-back'. The latter occurred when bombs were dropped ever shorter from the target, a common problem as the conflagration that may – or may not – have initially been centred on the original objective concentrically widened;¹² murderous flak above the target area would also have the effect of encouraging this practice. Tragically, RAF bomber crews sometimes gave their lives flying for hundreds of miles across enemy territory for very modest results, at times genuinely confusing the Germans as to the intended targets, when during the latter part of 1940 '[T]here was merely a litter of explosives on farms, homes, lakes, forests and – occasionally – on factories and installations from end to end of the Reich'.¹³

A less glamorous war than that fought by the fighter pilots, it was no less deadly with high casualties, especially against inland enemy targets in daylight which were even more hazardous without Fighter Command's protection, as was usually the case in order to preserve fighters for UK home air defence. Even at night there was, in 1940, the increasing risk of being brought down by an enemy night-fighter; more so by anti-aircraft flak, collision, becoming lost through poor navigation or bad weather, thus crashing into sea or land. Bomber Command casualties were relatively high but compared tolerably in terms of human cost, especially given what was to come later as the strategic bombing offensive was unleashed under 'Bomber' Harris, and the mental and physical impact took its toll.¹⁴

These RAF raids during the Battle incurred large aircraft losses: between 4 July and 3–4 September 1940, 50 bombers were lost during strikes on airfields, with 112 men killed and 30 held as PoWs; this included an attack on

Aalborg on 13 August, where 11 Blenheims were destroyed which compares with 16 German bomber losses on 15 August in an ambitious flight across the North Sea from Norway.¹⁵ Whereas these August German losses are included in the RAF's overall tally for *Luftwaffe* aircraft, the reverse has usually not been the case. For instance, Bungay notes 376 Bomber Command and 148 Coastal Command aircraft losses during sorties of all types in the Battle period (including 34 on attacks against Berlin), a total of 524 in all, but these are not included in RAF losses for the Battle. The margin of difference between both sides is much smaller when RAF fighter and bomber figures are combined.¹⁶ The lowest possible RAF loss figure of 196 aircraft of all types (i.e. 11.3 per cent fewer losses than the *Luftwaffe*) when divided by the 114 official days of the Battle equates to 1.7 fewer RAF aircraft lost per day, relative to the *Luftwaffe*; at the upper end, 24.2 per cent amounts to four fewer RAF aircraft lost per day. Given either figure, one can argue that the Battle's dominant British narrative is less impressive when framed in this way.¹⁷ Table 3.1 details both Commands' aircrew losses during broadly the same period on all operational sortie types.

Many of the above comments concerning combat experiences and risks applied equally to Coastal Command, which lost 346 aircrew during the broad period of the Battle. It, too, was organised into Groups and squadrons, most of its airfields based nearer to the sea than those of Bomber Command, but very widely spread around Britain. It contributed standing patrols to detect early signs of invasion soon after Dunkirk, and protected shipping and convoys, in addition to mounting attacks against enemy vessels, particularly U-Boats, docks and other facilities – it was also responsible for mine laying.

The Command's crews suffered to a certain extent from the same problems as Bomber Command, wherein although their role was critical, it, too, must have seemed a thankless and invisible task. Extended patrols in a Short Sunderland flying boat or Lockheed Hudson, far out into the

*Table 3.1 Bomber Command, Coastal Command and Fleet Air Arm aircrew losses.*¹⁸ Lost on operations or during enemy action from 1 July–31 October 1940 (adapted from Donnelly, 2004, *The Other Few: Bomber and Coastal Command Operations in the Battle of Britain*, pp. 244–86)

British pilots Bomber Command	234
British aircrew Bomber Command	494
Non-British pilots Bomber Command	11
Non-British aircrew Bomber Command	27
British pilots Coastal Command	123
British aircrew Coastal Command	214
Non-British aircrew Coastal Command	9

Atlantic Ocean or North Sea looking for submarines to attack, might yield nothing for the effort invested. Its aircraft involved directly in the Channel offensive included the Bristol Beaufort and Blenheim, Lockheed Hudson and the Avro Anson. All modestly-sized aircraft, the Command's contribution to attacks on invasion ports was perhaps limited when compared with those of Bomber Command, the latter possessing a relatively much higher destructive mass potential.¹⁹ Supporting invasion patrols, army cooperation Westland Lysanders, later famous for their clandestine SOE work, were used by the RAF,²⁰ as indeed were de Havilland Tiger Moths, usually *ab initio* training aircraft fitted with makeshift bombs.²¹

'The Battle of the Barges'

The official wartime account of RAF Coastal Command's operations against *Sea Lion* preparations notes that early reconnaissance missions were mounted daily from 6 June 1940 to monitor enemy activity, with regular aerial photographing of ports, canals and rivers carried out from 13 June.²² Small Bomber and Coastal Command bombing operations against an expected invasion also began in early July 1940, only a month after the Dunkirk withdrawal – France had signed the Armistice on 22 June 1940. The *Bomber Command* propaganda paperback records 1 July 1940 as the date bomber operations began against Channel ports and invasion preparations,²³ but this is not borne out by Bomber Command's operational records, other than minor mine-laying sorties.²⁴ From this period onwards Bomber Command additionally attacked many targets in Germany, Italy, France, Belgium and Holland, but nowhere in strength, and in consequence the results were modest against strategic objectives. Confirming the effort expended between 24 June and 27 August 1940, oil-related targets represented 22 per cent; attacks on *Luftwaffe* support sites and airfields, 40 per cent; communications, 19 per cent, and docks and ports, eight per cent; the remainder represented smaller attacks. During this period 3,131 tonnes of bombs were dropped on all target types.²⁵

The minor impact of early 'invasion coast' attacks is confirmed by the following: a single Blenheim was lost on 2 July 1940 as it attempted the first attack against the Dortmund–Ems canal viaduct, a key transport node for moving barges and military supplies to the Channel ports, and which would be repeatedly attacked;²⁶ on 3 July 1940, 24 Blenheims attacked barge concentrations being built up near Rotterdam as they were brought up the Rhine; and overnight, some of the 27 Hampdens and Whitleys dispatched attacked barges.²⁷ The first Air Ministry directive identifying barge concentrations as a main target was issued on 4 July, this being subsequently modified on 13, 24 and 30 July as the threat of invasion slowly mounted, but targets were few until German preparations reached a head in September.²⁸ Reflecting this mounting crisis, by 21 September the Air Ministry was

strongly targeting invasion ports, a step-change from earlier war priorities. For instance, oil-processing plants, usually ‘the basis of our longer term offensive strategy’, were secondary to airfield attacks aimed at inhibiting *Luftwaffe* operations against Britain; up to late August, attacks on docks was only third in the list of priority targets.²⁹

The main German ‘jump off’ ports for the invasion armada were Antwerp, Boulogne, Calais, Dunkirk, Le Havre, Ostend and Rotterdam.³⁰ Linearly, from Le Havre to Rotterdam, it is some 250 miles (see Plate 5): rapidly acquiring the sobriquet ‘Blackpool Front’, this reflected aircrews’ impressions of extensive fires raging as a result of bombing along the enemy coast.³¹ Wartime propaganda in ‘Why the invasion armada never sailed’ claimed that between early July 1940 and 31 May 1941, 536 Bomber Command attacks were mounted, the following confirming the effort: Boulogne (89 attacks), Ostend (75), Calais (74), Dunkirk (62), Flushing (55), Le Havre (40), Antwerp (33), Den Helder (26), Rotterdam (28), Amsterdam (24), Cherbourg (16), and Dieppe (8);³² Coastal Command’s targets included Cherbourg (24 raids) and Boulogne (21).³³

The first striking achievement (tactical and propaganda) occurred overnight on 12–13 August when Flight Lieutenant Roderick Learoyd won the VC for blocking the Dortmund–Ems canal viaduct, putting it out of action for some ten days and preventing barges from reaching the coast (see below). A strategic step-change occurred on 25–26 August with the first raid against Berlin by 50 bombers, in response to which the *Luftwaffe* launched a daylight attack against London on 7 September; overnight, Bomber Command began regular, concerted strikes against the assembly of invasion barges in Channel ports – these ran until 12–13 October. The period 7 August to 24–5 September saw its most concentrated effort, with some 36 overnight raids within 37 days. Overnight on 15–16 September, and as the invasion scare reached its peak, Sergeant John Hannah also won the VC over Antwerp.

Bomber Command’s greatest effort was launched on 17–18 September, of which two-thirds of the 194 aircraft dispatched bombed barge concentrations. Its 23–4 September 1940 attack against Berlin saw 129 bombers sent in a unique effort at that time, but which by later standards was very modest. The 24–5 September overnight strike against Channel ports mustered 100 aircraft, the last substantial raid of its kind, and claimed wartime propaganda aimed at RAF recruits.³⁴ This also reflected the realisation (confirmed somewhat elliptically through an *Ultra* decrypt at Bletchley Park, and separate photographic sorties) that *Sea Lion* was being wound down. Raids continued against invasion ports but the dispersal of the armada allowed bombers to be increasingly used against new targets, a directive on 30 October confirming this change of tempo.³⁵

Bomber Command losses during port attacks between 10 July and 29 October, the most significant and clear period of sustained effort, were 64 aircraft, 154 aircrew and 15 taken as PoWs. Calais claimed 12 aircraft,

Boulogne (9), Ostend (7), and Antwerp (4), with the remainder in smaller or single figures – e.g. Bordeaux (1). Losses by aircraft type during this period were: Blenheims (34), Hampdens (11), Fairey Battles (8), Wellingtons (6), and Whitleys (5).³⁶ Often overlooked, French citizens living in or near attacked ports, harbours, airfields and other facilities also suffered casualties. During 1940 as a whole 292 people were killed in Allied air raids in France, and 636 wounded, with most of these during the harbour attacks; deaths through German air raids across France in 1940 as a whole amounted to 3,251, with 2,013 wounded.³⁷

What results were achieved?

The combined efforts of Bomber and Coastal Command against invasion preparations resulted in losses and damage to only a modest part of the assembled fleet. Table 3.2 is based upon original figures on 21 September 1940, where the total number of vessels available at 3,494 is rather lower than the 4,263 noted only two days earlier on 19 September by Kieser (cf. Table 1.1). Noted above, Hitler had of course ordered the fleet's dispersal on 19 September, and this began the following day. However, and confirming the difficulties with sources, 1,918 barges were noted as the *total* amount assembled up to 21 September, which after losses of 214 left only 1,704, yet Kieser, also using original sources noted 1,975 barges on 19 September (seemingly the *actual* highest number assembled(?)).

The key significance in these figures lies of course in the total numbers destroyed by the RAF, and therefore, the numbers remaining for an invasion. For example, the lower overall figure of 3,494 vessels of all types (21 September) suggests that 3,251 were still usable despite attacks; and at the upper end, given 4,263 (Kieser, 19 September), the same proportion of losses (6.9 per cent) would still result in 3,968 vessels being available. As with the Bomber Command aircraft losses noted above, much depends on which sources are used, and how these are interpreted.

In any event, Collier states that '[B]y 21 September more than a tenth of the transports and barges assembled or on their way to the assembly points

Table 3.2 Lost and damaged vessels as at 21 September 1940, following RAF attacks (from Collier, 1957, *The Defence of the United Kingdom*, p. 227)³⁸

	Total assembled	Lost or damaged	Proportion
Transports	170	21	12.3%
Barges	1918	214	11.1%
Tugs and trawlers	386	5	1.2%
Motor boats	1020	3	0.2%
	3494	243	6.9%

had been lost or damaged',³⁹ transport losses of over ten per cent also cited in several accounts of the RAF offensive against barge concentrations.⁴⁰ If this lower figure of 1,918 barges and 170 transports is accepted as the highest level of vessels assembled, the RAF (and Royal Navy) managed to destroy only 235 of these in total (and using the same percentages for Kieser, the figures would be 168 transports (20 lost) and 1,975 barges (219 lost) – 239 in all). Very crudely, and using the figure of 235, each RAF aircraft lost was therefore 'exchanged' (for want of a better word) for 3.67 transports sunk; or, for each individual RAF aircrew man killed, 1.52 transports were lost.

Interestingly, Churchill argued that despite the losses caused by Bomber and Coastal Command attacks, the German Navy had allowed a margin of ten per cent for transport losses and accidents, and was therefore comfortably within the range it had set itself for the first stage of preparations.⁴¹ Given this it is reasonable to assume that Hitler's decision to cancel was not principally based on inadequate invasion fleet preparations, as significant numbers of transports remained despite RAF and naval attacks. Reinforcing this sense that the attacks had not been overwhelmingly successful, four days after Hitler's decision to cancel the invasion attempt, Churchill had expressed frustration with the poor levels of attrition inflicted upon the barges as revealed through aerial photographic analysis (see Plate 6). On 23 September, in a memorandum to Archibald Sinclair, Secretary of State for Air, he noted that these suggested an inability on the part of the bombers to destroy barges, which to his mind should not present difficulties. Churchill was 'very disappointed' by these poor results and asked whether anything could be done.⁴²

As an aside, had the invasion been launched, one might wonder at the RAF's ability to attack the invasion armada in the open Channel if its bombers had achieved only relatively minor damage to static, closely-packed barges in easily located ports. 'Dambuster' Guy Gibson recounted a debriefing where his squadron commander assessed aerial photographs taken after one attack on a basin at Antwerp Docks, affirming that although they had sunk fifty barges, it was not enough, and all bombs had to count. The commander then sharply reminded the assembled aircrews that if they failed, they would find themselves having to fight the invaders with their bare hands.⁴³

Despite the RAF losses, on the basis of the overall vessels sunk it is difficult to agree with 'Bomber' Harris, who, as the Commander-in-Chief of Bomber Command from February 1942, believed that its contribution to the Battle was seriously underestimated: '[I]t was definitely Bomber Command's wholesale destruction of the invasion barges in the Channel ports that convinced the Germans of the futility of attempting to cross the Channel'.⁴⁴ Taylor rejects Harris' frustration, arguing that '[T]he record hardly supports so sweeping a judgement. Destruction of the prahms [barges] and other invasion craft was not "wholesale".'⁴⁵ Fleming is similarly dismissive, stating

that Harris was clearly overstating things, the impact upon German plans, rather than its invasion fleet, the real outcome.⁴⁶

However, not all agreed with this view that the attacks had been inconclusive, Richards' volume as the first in a series of three officially commissioned in 1947, and published in 1953, being more generously inclined: '[T]hese anti-invasion operations of Bomber Command had a direct effect on the German programme, and on 11 September the enemy's prospective D-day was once more postponed – from 21 September to 24 September'.⁴⁷ Lord Dowding, as head of Fighter Command during the Battle, was also praiseworthy of the attacks and whilst giving most credit to his 'fighter boys' for the victory, had written in 1942 that 'I do not underestimate the work which the Bomber and Coastal Commands did in attacking the invasion ports while the fighting was still undecided, but the outstanding point is that the crux of the battle lay in the ability of the Fighter Command to remain in effective operation.'⁴⁸ Fifteen years later he had not changed his mind about the Few's success, and whilst still giving them most of the laurels, also confirmed: 'it must not be forgotten that the attacks of our bombing aircraft upon the barges massed along the coast of Flanders exercised an important influence upon the outcome, and were not effected without heavy loss'.⁴⁹

In fairness, early attacks were 'merely annoying', but raids on 14, 15 and 16 September were so effective that serious losses were reported; on 17 September very heavy damage was inflicted at Dunkirk and other ports.⁵⁰ As discussed above, actual shipping losses through British attacks were well within tolerable limits, as presumably were the results of attacks on other resources. Many historians have argued that Fighter Command's continuing strength was *the* major strategic factor in Hitler's decision to abandon *Sea Lion*.⁵¹ For instance, Telford Taylor, in his major study held to this view, arguing that Hitler's decision not to launch *Sea Lion* followed an assessment that would not have altered even if the invasion ports had not been attacked.⁵²

Noted previously, a revisionist argument frequently advanced for Hitler's change of mind concerns his plans for the invasion of Russia, his OKW planning for *Barbarossa* beginning in early July 1940.⁵³ AHB historian T. C. G. James later suggested in his originally secret assessment written in 1943–4 of the Battle, that a number of barges remained in place for a time after *Sea Lion's* cancellation, either to draw off attacks against Germany, or to act as a decoy against invasion preparations elsewhere.⁵⁴

Propagandising the 'Battle of the Barges'

As with the broadly parallel coverage of Fighter Command's resistance to massed *Luftwaffe* attacks, insofar as the invasion threat evolved, the MoI, Air Ministry and media were improvising to a great extent in the face of a

rapidly developing situation. There was widespread concern about a possible invasion and despite the propaganda triumph of Dunkirk as ‘a deliverance’, it was evident to most people that Britain was vulnerable, its regular army greatly weakened.⁵⁵ In addition to extensive British coverage the North American media were also keenly awaiting developments, the threat of invasion widely anticipated. For instance, *The New York Times*’ 14 September edition reported RAF attacks on key railway facilities vital to the invasion supply network; and in its page three’s piece ‘Nearness of “invasion” stressed’, the Germans were reported to be focusing upon the destruction of the RAF, which outcome was decisive in respect of Hitler’s ‘not to be hurried’ decision to launch the invasion.⁵⁶

Conversely, the *Winnipeg Free Press*’ ‘Gales scatter invasion armada’ banner headline on 17 September – and ironically the day that Hitler postponed *Sea Lion* – considered the impact of inclement weather on the invasion fleet, many ships dispersed. The piece confirmed that British sources had monitored the invasion fleet’s movements for days, suggesting it was being prepared for an attempt.⁵⁷ Its editorial, ‘Through the fog of war’, weighed the chances of a successful invasion given the onset of equinoctial weather as autumn drew on, arguing rightly that if the invasion was not launched soon Hitler might shift his attention to British interests in the Mediterranean region instead. It hesitated, though, to suggest divine intervention on the part of the British. The New York State township of Mamoroneck’s *The Daily Times* featured a banner headline proclaiming ‘Britain smashes German invasion’, the RAF credited with halting embarked troops. Despite the risks posed by autumn weather, over a month later on 23 October, the *Red Wing Daily Republican* newspaper confirmed of the invasion threat that although ‘Nazis held at bay by heavy air attacks’, the ‘Invasion danger not over, British warn’.⁵⁸ Propaganda aside, by late October it was hard to take such claims seriously. What is striking throughout this period is the wide-ranging British news and propaganda projected about the attacks, as discussed next.

Wireless and press coverage

As with its coverage of the air battles the government was also very keen to project similar messages about effective attempts to scupper Hitler’s invasion plans, coverage of bomber attacks the clearest means of achieving this through the BBC and press. It was one means of hitting back against military targets. Even if slightly delayed, the press were also able to provide fuller details the following morning. In both instances they were relatively ‘hot’ forms of news and propaganda. The RAF’s bomber attacks were therefore regularly featured in bulletins, especially once their offensive operations began in earnest – ‘giving it back’ manifest in the tone. As with the fighter pilots’ coverage the predictable nature of content was, however, potentially off-putting, the public’s frustration with BBC reports often captured in MoI Home Intelligence surveys. There were only so many ways that attacks

against barges could be reported, especially when specific numbers of those damaged or sunk were withheld, or hard to gauge. Shot-down aircraft could at least be seen to fall, their wreckage visible to many. As with broadcast claims for German aircraft tallies, large numbers were central when reporting sunken shipping: the more destroyed, the less available for an invasion armada.

The problem lay in Air Ministry, Directorate of Public Relations' communiqué content, which, typically self-effacing and avoiding the worst excesses of bravado often found in German propaganda, was alas, frequently dull (see Chapter 2). Content-wise, the reality for the BBC and press was that it was also most difficult to acquire information, aircrews' accounts in the media wholly reliant upon what the DPR's staff was prepared to reveal, the RAF's actual impact upon targets impossible to independently confirm. A separate propaganda challenge for the DPR – if indeed they saw the need to separate out the two – was how best to project such material in the face of the numerous stories being generated daily about the fighter pilots, these often dominating the front pages.⁵⁹ Derring-do, getting the job done, pressing on in the face of opposition and a bland account of the action were usual aspects. Typical of such BBC output was 'Mast-high over Rotterdam' recalling a low-level raid, the original air communiqué confirming that

[A] highly successful daylight raid was carried out this afternoon on enemy shipping in the docks at Rotterdam. Several squadrons of Blenheims of Bomber Command were engaged in the operation and the attack was pressed home with great daring from very low levels.⁶⁰

The broadcast itself was later made by the air-gunner:

[W]e bombed Rotterdam at 4.55 in the afternoon. As we flashed across the docks, the observer saw 'our' ship [...] We nipped across the last building and from mast-height we let our load drop [...] There was a terrific explosion and instantaneous smoke and flames. I have seen lots of these explosions by now, but this one was by far the biggest. Over to the left we saw a good many supply vessels burning from the attack by the first wave.⁶¹

Of similar BBC broadcasts, one in September 1940 concerned an attack on Ostend in 'Bombing the invasion ports',⁶² and 'How we bombed Flushing Docks' by a New Zealand pilot, echoed this same content.⁶³ In truth, there was little more to say about such attacks, other than to recount experiences with flak and enemy fighters (Appendix 3.1).

Newspapers had the space to carry much more detail, especially the case with broadsheets (Appendix 4.1). *The Times* published some 53 articles between 5 July and 26 October on the Battle of the Barges, other dailies

frequently offering coverage – if generally less detailed. Content-wise, other than reciting target names, the more dramatic successes, or the determination shown in the face of strong defences, it was challenging to find new ways of presenting information which may already have been heard on the BBC. *The Times* printed six articles about coastal raids between 5 and 29 July, troop carriers and barges being both attacked and destroyed, whether moored along canals or in ports. Even at this early stage catchy article headings were a presentational challenge, it often proving difficult to do other than proclaim ‘barges bombed again’, or ‘barges destroyed’.⁶⁴ Examples of similar reportage was to be seen in the *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Mirror*, again reflecting ‘news’ constrained by censorship and air communiqués.⁶⁵ The jauntier *Mirror* found slightly more to report, the RAF credited with firing a French harbour, one aircraft with carrying out a 100-minute raid, and at the month’s end, various strikes smashing transports. The 19 August *Telegraph* reported that Boulogne docks had been hit with three tons of bombs (a weight of explosive capable of being read in different ways).⁶⁶

Now fully into the period of maximum RAF effort, *The Times* alone carried some 29 articles during the period 7 to 28 September, coverage becoming both more frequent and focused upon the invasion threat; thereafter, this vied for space with the increasingly menacing Blitz.⁶⁷ Coastal Command, who *The Times* had credited with undertaking a significant role in the attacks since the beginning, was surveyed on 11 September and Churchill felt emboldened enough the following day to offer an upbeat assessment of Britain’s chances of repelling the expected invasion. His optimism was also picked up in North America, its citizens expecting an invasion at any time.⁶⁸ On 16 September it was reported that strong forces of RAF bombers had attacked barge concentrations and facilities at Antwerp, Ostend, Flushing, Dunkirk, Calais and Boulogne.⁶⁹

In recognition of the significance of the by now reopened Dortmund–Ems canal viaduct, renewed strikes on this target were reported on 21 and 23 September (see below). Also, although barges were increasingly dispersed from 19 September heavy attacks were mounted during the final week of the month, sometimes in the face of ferocious resistance, it was claimed. Despite this it was asserted that 30 fires had been started in Calais’ docks, and missions were also carried out against Le Havre and other ports.⁷⁰ Other papers’ front pages carried headlines about bombs raining down for hours on Channel ports, the RAF’s pounding of the invasion fleet, and reprisal raids against Berlin.⁷¹ The invasion threat rapidly receding, the RAF’s efforts continued into October despite sometimes poor weather, 16 articles covering these in *The Times* alone. Readers could be forgiven for thinking that, given RAF claims for damage wrought, there was little left to destroy. A late-October item sought to put the invasion preparations and the RAF’s offensive in context and despite the effort made, believed that the invasion threat remained.⁷² In sum, by any measure this was significant BBC and press

coverage, and to the general listener or reader would not have seemed vastly different in volume and tone to that afforded to Fighter Command's efforts.

Magazine and newsreel coverage

This type of news and propaganda is best described as 'warm': depending on the issue date it might be within a few days of the first news release, but equally, might be up to a week later (Appendix 4.2). The challenge was to find new angles in pieces which might otherwise be fading in currency, the core of which was again informed by air communiqués. Magazine coverage was wide, ranging from popular titles and specialist aviation journals, to cheap, weekly illustrated newspapers devoted entirely to the war. Of inferior production quality but broadly comparable in its aims to the lavish American *Life* magazine, the leading, best-selling British *Picture Post* magazine ran a 'Diary of the War' with its earliest entry 18 days behind the magazine's date of publication (e.g. if published on 23 September, the earliest 'Diary of the War' date for that issue was 3 September).

Here, its first of many mentions about attacks on barges appeared on 18 July. Linked to these nascent strikes, its diary entry for 15 August mockingly recalled Hitler's boast 'that he would declare peace in London' on this date.⁷³ Continuing *Picture Post* diary entries from 3–16 September confirmed the RAF's smashing of barges and facilities, with Germany suggesting that invasion might be 'unnecessary' (16 September); and conversely, Churchill's warning on 17 September that it was in fact equally likely. Its 17–23 September diary entries reflected the intensified effort made as the armada grew in size, the 26 September entry reporting that 'The RAF goes on extending the fires along the invasion coast.'⁷⁴ Thereafter, entries confirmed Hitler's meeting with Mussolini on 4 October, and perhaps surprisingly, an Italian *Popolo di Roma* report that 'the invasion plan has failed'. Coverage to mid-October suggested a series of non-stop RAF attacks in often poor weather, rendering the ports virtually unusable; and one report from Radio Moscow noted troop-laden barges destroyed. *Picture Post's* 18 October diary entry was exultant, the invasion planned for 16 September abandoned because of RAF air strikes, it claimed.⁷⁵ *Picture Post* portrayed the men undertaking this work, its 14 September issue carrying a censored photo-essay about a Bomber Command squadron.⁷⁶

More detailed coverage was given in publications able to focus print space on individual stories, allowing for large illustrations and maps. The specialist aero magazine, *The Aeroplane*, ran two invasion-related stories in early July as the air battles developed, both considering air power as an essential consideration for any successful attempt; and in the latter, arguing that Germany had had such a good run of luck that it was unlikely to balk at an invasion attempt. A little over a month later on 23 August it returned to the theme in 'Invasion – or air blockade?', as, with no invasion forthcoming, Hitler might yet have to pursue other options in the face of fierce RAF

opposition.⁷⁷ As the fighting intensified the prospects for invasion were raised on 20 July by *The Illustrated London News*, a question at that time uppermost in many people's minds, and repeated again on 3 August in 'Will Hitler attack?'; similarly, *The War Illustrated* asked in early August whether Hitler would indeed invade with a fleet of barges and, perhaps in seeking to answer its earlier question, its 13 September issue detailed 283 RAF raids in just 31 days, many aimed at destroying invasion shipping. In similar vein, and building upon its earlier July piece, the 21 September *Illustrated London News* used a map to indicate distances across the Channel between British and enemy-occupied ports; and in the same issue, in noting RAF attacks – and bearing in mind the risks identified in the article just before it – offered an assessment as to the likelihood of invasion.⁷⁸

A close competitor of *The Aeroplane*, *Flight's* 26 September edition ran 'Checking the Invasion' and 'Bombing the Barges', similar coverage appearing in *War Illustrated's* 27 September edition's 'Berlin and the barges are bombed again'. *The Illustrated London News* ran 'Attacking Hitler's invasion ports' on 28 September; and *Flight's* 3 October edition printed 'Bombing the invasion ports', noting that RAF aircrew had observed little evidence to show what the barges were being used for, as no troops or tanks were seen. *The Aeroplane* included 'Thrust and Counter-thrust' on 4 October, and with the danger now clearly receding as the official Battle ended, *War Illustrated* asked 'Was September 16 Hitler's invasion day?', suggesting barge destruction as one reason for its failure.⁷⁹

Newsreels, too, were a key mode for projecting filmic propaganda in cinemas, censorship controls and access to RAF material ensuring that only the official line was broadcast (Appendix 5.1). From July to September 1940 there had been overwhelming coverage of the 'fighter boys' successes against the *Luftwaffe*, a convergence of aircraft, men, daylight air battles and the many aircraft wrecks ideal for racy narratives and footage.⁸⁰ The bomber war required a different approach, *Where the RAF Have Struck*, giving an idea of the difficulties faced in providing engaging commentary to otherwise deathly-dull footage of a map at the Air Ministry. It ran:

[T]his member of the office staff runs up his ladder and pops on another flag every time a raid is carried out over Germany, Italy or enemy-occupied territory [...] The magnificent deeds of our bomber squadrons earn our greatest admiration.⁸¹

The presentational difficulties were considerable: securing night-time footage of attacks or, indeed, during daylight, when the aim was to get in, drop your bombs and get out as fast as possible, was highly challenging. However, eschewing actuality coverage of the bomber war was unwise, even if the technical limitations were acknowledged: after all, by mid-September many British city-dwellers were beginning to feel the impact of the developing Blitz, demanding that the RAF hit back. The reality was that in 1940 the

RAF were largely unable to do so in depth, but evidence of an offensive spirit was crucial to the sustenance of morale. The Air Ministry did its best under the circumstances and it is perhaps coincidental that from late September until 14 October – when Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal became the RAF's Chief of the Air Staff, having moved from his position as the head of Bomber Command (held from April 1940) – a wider range of newsreel material was projected about bombing raids.

Even so, narrators had little choice other than to write scripts for inadequate material, for the most part filmed on or over British airfields. Hence, newsreels anticipated the narrative device used in the 1945 feature film, *The Way to the Stars*, during which bombers left for a target and then returned, no combat or actual bombing shown. Additionally, the five British newsreel companies were usually provided with the same Air Ministry footage, the only presentational differences being in their own editing and narration. This can be illustrated by material released in cinemas on 10 October,⁸² wherein, using the same film available to all five, Pathé Gazette's *R.A.F. Activities at a Bomber Station* depicted bombing-up and take-off, leading to a Blenheim attack: '[I]t won't be long before the sirens are wailing and the bombs dropping in Germany, while the Nazi invasion ports along the coastline are lit up by a hundred bomb flashes'.⁸³ The final scene cut to aircrews being debriefed (confirming the rigour of RAF intelligence assessments and echoing post-sortie fighter pilot claims' scrutiny in respect of enemy aircraft shot down), the attack itself left to viewers' imaginations.

Other than the *Three Sides of Britain's Air Force*⁸⁴ release a week earlier on 3 October 1940 – '[H]ere is the start of one of those brilliant raids by the Royal Air Force, hammering at the Nazi invasion bases' – *R.A.F. Activities* was the most direct in its affirmation of the effort against *Sea Lion*. Both items' release was, however, dated, the invasion scare effectively over. As with much film footage this may have been produced weeks before it was seen in cinemas. As for heroism, coverage of Hannah's VC award dominated all newsreel issues on 14 October, the Air Ministry shrewdly combining this with news of Portal's appointment as Chief of the Air Staff; *New Air Chief Will Keep Bombers Busy* typified the content, with Wellington bombers returning from action, a damaged wing being repaired, and views of Portal, then Hannah.⁸⁵

By contrast, Coastal Command's efforts received little newsreel attention, material released on 30 September confirming the creative difficulties posed by essential, but unspectacular long-range patrols.⁸⁶ *They've Got Eggs But Not For Hamm* included a Hudson being readied for action, thence, mission briefing, the crew emplaning and, following pre-flight checks, taking off: '[T]he young pilots to whom the nation owes more than it can ever repay begin one more flight [...] Flights by these squadrons revealed Hitler's invasion plans.' There was, however, little more to say and views of the King visiting fighter pilots followed in the same newsreel issue: 'men who are covering themselves with glory every day', the contrast between the two items

striking. A final affirmation of the difficulties posed in projecting effective propaganda about the Battle of the Barges was reflected by the MoI's lack of engagement in any official short films (Appendix 5.2). Whereas Fighter Command had had two 'shorts' about its role during the Battle, neither Bomber nor Coastal Command were similarly portrayed;⁸⁷ it would not be until *Target for Tonight* was released in 1941 that Bomber Command starred; *Coastal Command*, not until 1942.

Victoria Cross winners

Awards for bravery were an important platform for propaganda, particularly the Victoria Cross, Britain's highest honour for valour awarded in only exceptional circumstances, one of the requirements being that witnesses verified the action. Fighter Command received only one VC during the entire war (see Chapter 2). This perhaps explains why some 21 VCs went to bomber aircrews; during the Battle of the Barges, Bomber Command's Flight Lieutenant Roderick Learoyd and Sergeant John Hannah were so honoured. Learoyd's VC was conferred on 19 August following a mission on 12–13 August as part of an attack by 11 Hampdens against the Dortmund–Ems canal viaduct. Reported in *The Times* on 21 August, the viaduct was confirmed as a vital transport link stretching for miles across a plain between two mountain ridges, barges moving relatively quickly between the industrial areas of the Rhine and the Ruhr, and thence, via the Middleland Canal, to central Germany. Some 300 goods trains passed through the canal daily.⁸⁸

It was not the first time that the RAF had targeted this crucial transport node, 'before and after' photographs having been published on 27 July and 2 August showing earlier attempts to destroy it.⁸⁹ Learoyd's effort appears to have been the more definitive. With a badly damaged aircraft he pressed ahead, *Bomber Command* reproducing photographs confirming his attack's impact, and also details of its execution from the pilot, which, in the finest tradition of RAF jocularly included: 'the carrier pigeon we carried laid an egg during the attack'.⁹⁰ Subsequently, bomb damage prevented the movement of motorboats and Rhine barges moving towards the invasion coast for some ten days, or possibly even a month, of itself a significant blow against the build-up of invasion shipping and ordnance.

The BBC was not slow in broadcasting Learoyd's (anonymous) account of his attack when he was awarded the VC – it was later published.⁹¹ His valour attracted modest press interest, but seemingly not from the newsreels. *The Times*' 19 August issue included articles based upon Air Ministry communiqués; *Flight* magazine's 29 August edition gave details of Learoyd's attack, but its competitor, *The Aeroplane*, overlooked it; *War Illustrated* carried a brief item in 'Dortmund–Ems Canal V.C.'; and on 31 August an artist's impression of the attack was published.⁹² Learoyd's portrait was painted by the artist Eric Kennington in pastels and published in colour.⁹³ Later, Learoyd's VC citation and details of the attack appeared in several books.⁹⁴

Less than six weeks later, Sergeant Hannah's exposure was of a different order, the DPR by now well into its stride in effectively manipulating the media through its air communiqués and willingness to allow controlled access to the RAF's warrior-heroes.⁹⁵ An additional propaganda advantage was, of course, the confirmation that the VC could be awarded to either airmen or officers. Hannah, an 18-year old Scottish Wireless Operator/Air Gunner, won the VC for his bravery during a 15 September attack on Antwerp. Hit by flak, a fierce fire had started in the Hampden bomber and despite the danger posed by exploding ammunition, and in receiving serious burns, Hannah fought the blaze with extinguishers and a logbook; two of his crew members had already bailed out. Parts of the airframe melted, Hannah's actions allowing the almost wrecked aircraft to be flown home by its Canadian skipper, Pilot Officer C. A. H. Connor, who won the Distinguished Flying Cross – and who lost his life on an operation only weeks later.⁹⁶

Hannah was awarded the VC on 27 September, the news rapidly broadcast by *The Times*.⁹⁷ Magazine coverage was similarly effusive: *The Aeroplane* carried 'For Valour'; *The Illustrated London News* printed 'Fighting fire in mid-air: Sergeant Hannah, V.C., and 'plane'; *War Illustrated* told his story briefly in 'Britain's Youngest V.C.', and also in a longer piece, 'How We Saved Our Burning 'Plane'; and its 25 October issue ran 'Sergeant Hannah told me the flames were out'. *Flight* gave details of the award in its 3 October issue, followed by a more detailed piece with a tribute from his Air Officer Commanding.⁹⁸

In contrast to Learoyd's earlier experience – and perhaps because he was a senior NCO – all British newsreel companies covered Hannah's award, *Youngest V.C. of the War*, being typical. Here, both Hannah and Connor were filmed in front of a Hampden, uncomfortably delivering a pre-scripted, rehearsed and unavoidably wooden account of the raid.⁹⁹ British Paramount News on the same date included shots of both men at Buckingham Palace; this was followed by the identical material used by Pathé, but also included footage of Hannah in the rear gun cockpit.¹⁰⁰ The BBC broadcast Connor's account of 'How a VC was won', by 'a bomber pilot' in October 1940, his (and Hannah's) anonymity curious given his appearance in newsreels.¹⁰¹ *Bomber Command* gave brief details of 'a well-known story' leading to Hannah's VC, but eschewed naming him.¹⁰² WAAC artist Eric Kennington painted his portrait, this appearing in several exhibitions and books (see Plate 7).¹⁰³ An account of his valour also appeared in *So Few*.¹⁰⁴ Not seeing action again, and imperilled by his injuries, Hannah was invalided out of the RAF in 1942. He died in 1947.¹⁰⁵

Illustrative of many pilots and aircrew, Learoyd, Hannah and Connor displayed considerable courage in their respective actions against *Sea Lion* preparations, the Air Ministry doing its best – within established publicity guidelines concerning relative anonymity, modesty, 'the RAF is a team' and matters of taste – to project their warrior-heroism to best advantage. Hannah's

more extensive coverage perhaps reflected a concern by mid-September that in addition to recognising the contribution made by unsung bomber aircrews, Bomber Command should receive clear credit for their work in the Battle of the Barges, if only to offer a counterpoint to the immense Fighter Command propagandea, which was again extensive after 15 September.

Official propaganda publications

The internationally best-selling 1941 propaganda pamphlet, *The Battle of Britain* made no mention at all of Bomber Command's attacks on invasion barges or enemy airfields, both crucial aspects of the RAF's wider defensive war.¹⁰⁶ The pamphlet noted the roles 'ground staffs' and anti-aircraft batteries played in the victory, but despite confirming that the narrative was only concerned with the RAF, all the accolades went to the fighter pilots. Partly in recognition of this, author Hilary Aiden St George Saunders' pamphlet led to an illustrated, paperback book of 128 pages, *Bomber Command*,¹⁰⁷ seeking in part to achieve the same 'publicity' for the 'bomber boys' – a not straightforward task given the Command's modest assets and hitting-power to that point.

Saunders began work on this as soon as the success of his earlier pamphlet was confirmed and, released in the early autumn of 1941 it, too, was a major success, being published abroad, including America and Canada.¹⁰⁸ *Target for Tonight* (July 1941), a fictional bomber crew's attack against a German target gave added impetus to public interest in *Bomber Command*.¹⁰⁹ The bombers' war from September 1939 to July 1941 was detailed in the book – 'Why the Invasion Armada Never Sailed' – and occupies seven pages. It addressed the repeated strikes – often during daylight – against many ports (these commonly referred to as the 'nursery slopes' in the RAF because of their easily navigable locations¹¹⁰). Targets included port facilities, barges, ships and stores, the attacks being most concentrated during mid-September. As for levels of success, Saunders was careful to avoid going into details, doubtless aware of the photographic evidence that suggested only modest damage:

[Y]et, when it comes to count up the damage done, a certain prudence is necessary. Ports and harbours, though fairly easy to find and therefore to bomb, are hard to destroy. The vulnerable points are surrounded by much water and by heavy stone quays on which bombs have a limited effect. Barges and small surface craft are very difficult to hit. To attempt to assess the damage would be a mistake.¹¹¹

Having confirmed the challenges (and therefore dampened expectations on numbers), he offered the following after acknowledging both that many vessels had been assembled, but also that around 15 September there had been rumours of an attempted invasion which had been attacked by RAF bombers:

[H]ow many barges or small ships were destroyed or how many men killed or wounded in these long series of attacks is not of immediate or crucial importance. One fact stands out above all the rest. Last autumn no invasion took place. Though very great preparations were made [...] though the whole Continent of Europe waited breathless for news that the twentieth-century Armada had put to sea, the German High Command made no sign and launched no attack. While we held the sea and the air, it did not dare do so.¹¹²

Content to leave the suggestion hanging that an impending invasion *may* just have been thwarted, his narrative moved onto other aspects of Bomber Command's efforts, including 'Cutting the Canals' which detailed attacks against the Dortmund–Ems Canal viaduct.¹¹³ In its way this publication's propaganda value affirming the RAF's role in 'giving it back' was as powerful, if less glamorous, than that about the 'fighter boys' during the Battle.

Saunders also authored the 1942 *Coastal Command*, another highly successful propaganda softback from the MoI, running to 144 pages. Because of the Command's engagement with reconnaissance, aerial photographic sorties, attacks against shipping, U-boats and anti-invasion operations, details of its exploits were discussed under various headings. 'Heinkel-haunted Skies' recounted its role during the Battle of the Barges. Confirming the modest scale of its efforts Saunders admitted that

[A]ltogether from the opening of the German offensive Coastal Command delivered 251 attacks on land targets and barges in or near harbour. Their scale was not, however, formidable. It could not be, for the Command did not have the necessary strength in aircraft. But what was lacking in numbers was made up in skill and determination.¹¹⁴

Contrasting the very different roles between fighters and bombers, Saunders concluded this section:

[F]rom the end of the first week in August to the 31st October, 1940, Fighter Command was engaged in all its strength in the Battle of Britain. Those weeks were critical. Had the battle been lost, aircraft of Coastal Command patrolling off Norwegian fjords, off Danish and Dutch sandbanks and islands, off the grey shores of Belgium and the iron coast of Northern France might well have had to report that the German Armada was standing out to sea.¹¹⁵

On balance, Saunders' coverage of their role during the Battle was rather buried in a much broader range of commitments from 1939–42, but it did reflect both the difficulties faced in assembling sufficient aircraft for sorties, and also the very diverse nature of their responsibilities.

As propaganda, both publications went a long way to projecting a hitherto largely obscure aspect of the bombers' war to national and international audiences. Very much in accord with the model established by *The Battle of Britain*, Saunders' subsequent accounts were at pains on the one hand to give full credit for the effort expended during the Battle of the Barges, whilst on the other playing down the material outcomes gained. Readers were, in essence, asked to accept that the outcome was far greater than the sum of the parts required in bringing it about.

Literary accounts

Modest literary consolidation through books began as 1940 drew to a close, the *News Chronicle's* Ronald Walker, addressing Bomber Command's operations against invasion barges in a brief summation, leaving no doubt that such attacks – regularly confirmed in air communiqués, to a tedious degree – had led to an abandonment of invasion plans.¹¹⁶ Likewise, Air Ministry employee David Garnett included 'Invasion Ports and Submarine Bases' in his account,¹¹⁷ but gave only brief coverage, one aspect of which was to note that

Air Ministry bulletins have been reticent about the results of our attacks on the invasion ports [...] I have seen it stated frequently that the German invasion was planned to coincide with the bombing of London on September 15th, and that our attacks on the invasion ports were so destructive that the plan had to be postponed.¹¹⁸

James Spaight offered the first book-length attempt to place the Battle in context, 'The Threat of Invasion by Sea'¹¹⁹ and 'The Bombing of the Invasion Ports'¹²⁰ written partly in response to various comments made about strategy and whether it was the right policy – for example, would attacking targets in Germany for its 'moral' effect, or, allowing an armada to sail at which point it could be attacked in open sea, be better?¹²¹ Perhaps tellingly, something of the reduced status of the Battle of the Barges was by 1944 reflected in a very detailed account of the RAF's role during the Battle, where only some nine and a half out of 144 pages address the Battle of the Barges and related bomber attacks, the bulk of the focus being on Fighter Command's exploits.¹²² Macmillan did, however, note that

[T]hese attacks were as much a part of the Battle of Britain as were the defensive combats of Fighter Command. The bombers were the big guns, hitting out at long range; the fighters were the machine-guns, blasting at close range.¹²³

A first-hand account that did much to clarify the bomber's role in a clear, accessible and no-nonsense style was Guy Gibson's *Enemy Coast Ahead*,

which was written in 1944 and published in 1946 – his 'Battle of the Barges' captured the essence of strikes against Channel ports, but also the impact of squadron losses.¹²⁴ Such accounts were little different to those projected as the events unfolded in the latter months of 1940 but viewed now, they confirmed that for those writers at least, the campaign had been a crucial contribution to the thwarting of *Sea Lion* (Appendix 7.6).

Feature film propaganda

The *Battle of the Barges* scarcely featured in longer wartime films (see Appendix 5.5). As the first film to project the bomber war in any realism, the Mol's July 1941 *Target for Tonight* was a highly successful propaganda release, chiming closely with its *Bomber Command* publication.¹²⁵ The Air Ministry proposed the film during the autumn of 1940, the original intention a documentary charting Bomber Command's development from the mid-1930s. It was perhaps partly driven as a justification for Trenchard's strong bomber force policy, but also Portal's determination to go over to the strategic offensive against Germany (a process impeded by invasion port attacks and a lack of suitable aircraft during his tenure at Bomber Command).¹²⁶ It is arguable, too, that the film sought to soften moral resistance to such attacks, both in Britain but also neutral countries. That said, a 'moral equivalence' with Germany's attacks against civilians in Britain is not even hinted at, audiences left in no doubt that the RAF did not (deliberately) target non-combatants in 1940–1. The film also aimed to improve poor recruitment for bomber aircrews because – and reinforcing the powerful success of Air Ministry propaganda during the summer and autumn of 1940 – '[M]ost Aircrew trainees seemed to want to be fighter pilots'.¹²⁷

To a population already wearied by six long months of 'taking it' in the Blitz, the film showed how the RAF was 'giving it'. The plot depicted an operation by Wellington bomber 'F' for Freddie – on an unspecified date – from conception to conclusion, the complexities in that era of mounting such attacks effectively conveyed during the film's 50 minutes, divided between those who lead, those who fight, and those supporting them on the ground. Overly familiar to modern audiences, this narrative sequence and level of detail must have been fairly astonishing to lay viewers.

In brief, the plot follows target planning and briefing, 'bombing-up', a long night-time flight, and accurately hitting an oil refinery at 'Freihausen' during which the aircraft sustains damage. As the mist closes in, a long, hazardous return journey across the North Sea is faced, the tension sustained as the aircraft finally returns safely to base, at which following debriefing, the film ends. Although not an accurate portrayal of the previous year's attacks against barges and ports it was nevertheless a convincing insight into Bomber Command's broad approach (notwithstanding the doubtful bombing accuracy). An enormously successful film at the box office, in addition to British and empire audiences, it was shown across the United States, Canada and

South America in over 12,000 theatres, and seen by 50 million people.¹²⁸ The film's contrast with projections of the fighters' air war could not have been starker, the initial enmity felt by Bomber Command towards the 'fighter boys' understandable given the nature of such missions. Propaganda on an understated, yet impressive scale, it contrasted strongly with Nazi filmic portrayals of their bombers in action – with no Spitfires in sight.¹²⁹

Although begun in 1944, *The Way to the Stars* was already somewhat retrospective when released in June 1945.¹³⁰ Principally about a bomber squadron (that suffers heavy losses, emotions kept under control), it is striking that the RAF portrayed is mostly that which fought during the Battle, rather than in the later Strategic Air Offensive.¹³¹ Following an attack by the *Luftwaffe* during which three Hurricanes defend the airfield, the early part of the film focuses upon the Battle of the Barges, the first briefing confirming the squadron's task:

[W]ell chaps, as you know, the target for this afternoon is exactly the same as yesterday's, and the day before yesterday's, and the day before that. Calais. Barge concentrations.¹³²

Thereafter, the squadron's Blenheims leave for Calais; the screen temporarily 'blanks' and they return from their mission, the attack itself not shown. Although a short part of the film's 109 minutes, it contrasted strongly with the arrival of the Americans in 1942 and the very different nature of air power capability as the strategic bomber offensive developed. It was, perhaps, a version of the RAF that audiences preferred by 1945: 'bomber boys' flying underpowered, light bombers on missions that did not involve the devastation of German cities, by now revealed in sharp detail through sombre newsreels and print.¹³³

A partial eclipse

Given the breadth of propaganda projected during the Battle of the Barges, and in its wartime consolidation, how was this part of the RAF's contribution so steadily eclipsed as the war progressed? In addition to the media coverage during the Battle itself there were two significant propaganda events of striking impact: two columns, in fact, upon which Fighter Command's decisive prowess has been built. These were Churchill's 20 August 1940 speech to the Commons in which he delivered his 'to so Few' epigraph, and second, the best-selling *The Battle of Britain* pamphlet published in March 1941 (see Chapter 4). Looking at both in turn, Churchill's speech powerfully captured Britain's sense of gratitude to the RAF and Fighter Command and has largely retained its currency well into the 21st century.¹³⁴

However, in recognising the strategic importance of the bombers' attacks Churchill also sought in that speech to praise their role, actually giving

more attention to them than he did the fighter pilots. He thus anticipated the Battle of the Barges, affirming that in his mind – and seemingly overlooking one of the most powerful navies in the world – Bomber Command would bear the burden of attacking an invasion armada.¹³⁵ The reality was, however, that by 20 August Bomber Command's attacks against Germany were modest in scale, Berlin had yet to be attacked (25–6 August), and, fair or otherwise, it was Fighter Command's often visible defence of British airspace that was dominating the media during July and August 1940. Discussed above, slightly later there was sometimes extensive, contemporary coverage of the Battle of the Barges as it unfolded in September, but its very nature made it less easy to propagandise after the initial 'hot' news reporting stage.

The second significant moment in the eclipsing of Bomber Command's efforts occurred with the publication in 1941 of *The Battle of Britain* pamphlet. Its massive international success (published only five months after the officially-defined ending of the Battle) ensured that Fighter Command's role – doubtless unintentionally – vanquished all other claimants to this aerial victory, Saunders making no effort to broaden out the credit to include the bomber attacks – and seemingly not challenged by those senior RAF officers and politicians vetting its content. Assuming that he had seen a draft, it is perhaps surprising that Portal, appointed as Chief of the Air Staff in October 1940 – and previously the head of Bomber Command – did not insist on some credit being given to the latter in the 1941 pamphlet.¹³⁶ The version of events as captured in the pamphlet – other than a downward revision of aircraft claims in 1947 – holds sway, despite attempts to 'rebalance' the historical record. The illustrated version of the pamphlet published slightly later also included Churchill's 'to so Few' speech, and even by March 1941 the epigraph had become largely if not wholly associated with the 'fighter boys'.

As a counterpoint to the impact of the pamphlet, Saunders' previously noted *Bomber Command* publication did confirm the role played against barge concentrations, but it was hardly presented as an 'epic' victory, a view strongly projected about Fighter Command's achievement. In fact, the contrast between the two publications was stark: the 'fighter boys' dashing ascendancy over the *Luftwaffe* compared with Trafalgar or the Marne (a defining moment for Fighter Command); the 'bomber boys' plodding barge attacks pedestrian by comparison (and certainly not defining).

A key issue was the difficulty in giving precise numbers for vessels destroyed, the catchy 'cricket score' model having been well established during the Battle for relative aircraft losses on both sides. Had this methodology been adopted for the Battle of the Barges it would have remained a thorny challenge to present these claims in a fashion that could confirm beyond doubt the linkage between the barge attacks on the one hand, and abandonment of the invasion on the other. Whilst the material impact upon assembled transports was less substantial than hoped for – Saunders' explanation

as above that ‘barges and small surface craft are very difficult to hit’ – the determined attacks gave pause for thought in the OKW and raised questions about the potency of the RAF. Propagandising that as an outcome was the best that could be hoped for, and was arguably well done in Saunders’ literature for both Bomber and Coastal Commands. This partial eclipsing was reinforced in Air Ministry discussions from 1942 onwards, during which proposals for a Battle of Britain Day focused principally on the Few, the bomber attacks not specifically noted in meeting minutes (see Chapter 6). Clearly then, even in 1942 the role of the bomber attacks had become something of a footnote to the Battle (although Appendix 6 confirms that bombers and their crews were often the subject for war artists), this despite there being no evidence as yet available (see Chapter 8) through German documents to confirm the actual reasons for the invasion’s abandonment.

Part II

Valorising and Thanksgiving

4

'The Greatest Day': Shaping the Battle of Britain, 1941

A defining moment

Whilst Churchill's Few had received continuing and glowing tributes from many quarters as the air battles continued into late September 1940 and it became clear that the *Luftwaffe's* air offensive had been blunted, perhaps unsurprisingly, there was no official recognition beyond this.¹ After all, the air fighting had steadily moved from daytime to night attacks, the RAF's day-fighter squadrons not employed to the extent that they had been at the height of the crisis, which for the present, at least, was now over. Moreover, given that Fighter Command had been performing as it had been both designed and resourced to do, it was reasonable that into 1941 – publicly at least – the Air Ministry was not focused on celebrating the Few beyond what had already been said. It was also the case that many senior officers disliked publicity and 'line-shooting', engaging in such behaviour seen as 'un-British'.

Bomber and Coastal Commands were in a similar position given their collective role in attacking invasion barge concentrations, for which they received no special credit beyond the propaganda projected at the time, despite their losses (see Chapter 3). Into 1941 Britain's propaganda focus was also very much on the Blitz, the German daytime air offensive having failed. It was equally evident that invasion had been averted, the immediate crisis following Dunkirk now clearly past. Strategically and tactically it was therefore apparent that a milestone had been reached, though where it might lead was as yet unclear.² Closely linked, the series of latter-1940 air battles related to these developments were yet to be defined as a clear event in public consciousness. An example of the, as yet, ambiguous nature of the air fighting was reflected in the leading American magazine *Life's* photo-essay feature, 'Fighter Command RAF Heroes Save England', of which it noted:

England's most important young men today are the several thousand youths who fly the Hurricane and Spitfire fighters in the Battle of Britain. They undoubtedly saved England last fall from Nazi invasion.³

From an American perspective it is easy to see how the ongoing air war between Britain and Germany might not seem very different from the previous year's engagements, the Air Ministry pamphlet defining the Battle appearing in Britain five days after this issue of *Life*. Although the focus of German efforts had shifted to night-bombing, the RAF – not learning from the *Luftwaffe* – had embarked on 'leaning into France' operations which were in fact very costly to Fighter Command. The article also reiterated Churchill's epigraph, confirming that it acclaimed the role of fighter pilots, in this instance the focus on Flying Officer Albert Lewis, a Hurricane pilot credited 'as the top ace of the RAF'.⁴

Within this context of strategic uncertainty it is, however, striking that the Air Ministry was soon to publish the *Battle of Britain* pamphlet which did so much to shape perceptions of the event as understood today.⁵ How then did the Battle of Britain emerge as a clearly defined event from an initially erratic – if heavily propagandised – series of defensive air battles of varying intensity, contested over a period of some seven months, from early June 1940 onwards? Of keen interest to all, Britain had had no military successes prior to this, all senior officers and politicians sharply aware of the advantages of a moral victory against a previously unbeatable Germany. Conscious, too, of the propaganda and morale value to be gained from the RAF's resolute defence in this period, the Air Ministry wished to capitalise on this success; indeed, one might almost suggest that its Directorate of Public Relations had succumbed to the 'dulcet tones' of its own propaganda.

Strategically, following senior commander changes in Fighter Command and at Group level, there was a requirement for additional resources – as for the army and navy – recent air battles confirming RAF prowess.⁶ By extension one might also argue that Churchill, too, stood to gain from the reflected glory. After all, despite his political position being more stable than it had been when he first became Prime Minister on 10 May 1940,⁷ Churchill's premiership would be further enhanced by being closely associated with the air battles of late 1940, both as war leader and orator.⁸ More broadly, Churchill, of course, had no cause to apologise for his 'wilderness years' warnings concerning Hitler, but many Tories both distrusted his motives and resented his rise to the premiership.⁹ For those sensitive about the issue it was also perhaps a means of creating distance from the stain of appeasement, a popular policy which had once had many Tory adherents.

Of the Air Ministry's motivation to produce the pamphlet, then, junior WAAF officer Dame Felicity Peake noted, '[I]t was felt that an authentic account of the battle in popular style was badly needed', though she neglects to say why this might be.¹⁰ The Blitz may well have been a material factor, an accessible account of the RAF's recent successes offering a positive affirmation that night attacks would soon be met and blunted. In any event, the Air Ministry wasted little time in seizing the propaganda opportunity presented by the air battles, commissioning a pamphlet from Air Ministry

writer Hilary Aiden St George Saunders, a successful pre-war novelist.¹¹ With hindsight, moving so quickly to seize the propaganda initiative was impressive, the sour sobriquet 'Writer Command', rather apt.¹² Whose original idea it was is not clear, but the Air Council's Air Marshal Sir Richard Peck, Assistant Chief of the Air Staff for General affairs (ACAS(G)) with responsibility for public relations¹³ is a strong candidate.¹⁴ His correspondence in a range of fields reflects both energy and determination in missing no opportunity to publicise the RAF,¹⁵ *Flight* paying him a generous obituary tribute:

[D]uring most of the last war he was the anonymous 'Air Ministry spokesman' who gave information on R.A.F. affairs to members of the Press. His willingness at all times to assist and advise aviation journalists, and his tact, largely helped to make possible the excellent relations which existed between the Press and the Ministry.¹⁶

Closely involved from the beginning of the process – this confirmed by correspondence to Sinclair, discussed below – Peck had a strong sense of what he wished the pamphlet to convey. Initial research for it was undertaken by historian Albert Goodwin in 1940–1,¹⁷ suggesting that the project began in the later part of 1940 even as the air battles abated.¹⁸ Saunders, building upon Goodwin's work, was given a free hand to study official records, commanders' and pilots' combat reports, interview combatants, and analyse RAF intelligence reports. Saunders later wrote of his 'contemporary history' approach, that generally 'the pamphlet stands between a piece of journalism and a piece of historical narrative'.¹⁹ However, in order to frame the air battles as a coherent entity also comprehensible to a lay constituency, it was first necessary to say what had actually occurred, when and where. With this decided, it was then essential to confirm why it was decisive and thence to denote those dates and aspects which were deemed particularly significant. The final element in defining the Battle was to highlight those directly involved as a body of men, affirming both their achievements and sacrifices.

Its original text-only version of 32 pages contained no maps or images, this quickly superseded by an illustrated version which did much to reinforce the Battle as a clear, comprehensible event through its use of graphics. The text in both was identical and Saunders' aim was clearly to give a logical shape and a simple story to the numerous air skirmishes and battles which had taken place from early June to the end of 1940. Leaving aside the first two months, the Battle was defined as running from 8 August to 31 October, the intention to delineate the period of greatest intensity, this thereafter divided into four separate phases (8–23 August; 24 August–6 September; 7 September–5 October; and 8–31 October). In Saunders' interpretation – and agreed to by Peck – the Battle was therefore constrained to a period of twelve weeks, or 84 days, this most closely aligning with the *Luftwaffe* attacks of most severity.

What is perhaps surprising is that the end of October, rather than a September date, was chosen to define its conclusion, as even without the benefit of historical hindsight provided by captured *Luftwaffe* documents there was some merit in arguing that 15 September was the Battle's climax, or even 27 September, the last major daylight effort.²⁰ Given these uncertainties about the actual role of Fighter Command in forcing a strategic reverse, the pamphlet was an inspired creation, based in reality on insufficient evidence vis-à-vis the actual victory proclaimed, and what Hitler was really thinking (see Chapter 8).

As to the pamphlet's contents, discussed chronologically in a clear, racy and accessible narrative style, the key elements affirmed the following themes: the heroism of the Few, who despite being heavily outnumbered, prevailed; the large numbers of *Luftwaffe* aircraft shot down, at far less cost to the RAF; the technical supremacy of the Spitfire and Hurricane; the steely, if cheerful, determination of the 'fighter boys'; the development of the Battle as a series of strategic phases; and the Battle as a deliverance, Britain saved by the Few of Fighter Command (but no mention of the RAF's bombers).²¹ This view was firmly stated in the conclusion:

[W]hat the Luftwaffe failed to do was to destroy the Fighter Squadrons of the Royal Air Force which were indeed stronger at the end of the battle than the beginning. This failure meant defeat – defeat of the German Air Force itself, defeat of a carefully designed strategical plan, defeat of that which Hitler most longed for – the invasion of this island. The Luftwaffe which, as Goebbels said on the eve of the battle, had 'prepared for the final conquest of the last enemy – England', did its utmost and paid very heavily for the attempt. Between the 8th August and 31st October, 2,375 German aircraft are known to have been destroyed in daylight.²²

And raising this theme to a crescendo, '[M]en like these saved England', echoed Churchill's 20 August epigraph,²³ as indeed was Saunders' view, in his concluding words that '[T]ruly it was a great deliverance [...] Such was the Battle of Britain in 1940. Future historians may compare it with Marathon, Trafalgar and the Marne.'²⁴

Having satisfactorily and deftly framed the Battle, Saunders' *The Battle of Britain* propaganda pamphlet was released on 29 March 1941, only five months after the air battles had officially concluded.²⁵ This rather jaunty, international best-seller contributed very significantly to affirming the Battle as a decisive, critical moment in British history, providing a major foundation for the post-war representation of the Battle and its valorisation. Given the grim situation Britain faced at the time of its publication, it was undoubtedly a fillip to sustaining morale when there was little other good news: the Blitz was in full destructive flow; the Battle of the Atlantic was threatening vital supplies from America; and Greece and Yugoslavia were invaded on 6 April.

Its sales were vast, where even on 5 April Peck was able to say that the as yet unreleased illustrated version would sell well over a million copies;²⁶ and in commenting on the plain version, that '[O]ver a million copies were sold or ordered in the first week of publication'.²⁷ It was later confirmed that 4.8m copies had been sold in Britain alone by the end of 1941; by 1942 the pamphlet had appeared in 42 editions and 24 languages.²⁸ Air Commodore Peake who headed the DPR during the time of its release suggested total sales of six million copies,²⁹ whilst a post-war estimate suggests the probably high figure of fifteen million copies sold internationally, notably in America and the Dominions.³⁰ By any measure this was a massive success, doing more than any other event or publication to both delineate and then consolidate the Battle as a major victory, not least because it was an inspiring story, simply told, and comprehensible to millions, many of whom had seen the air battles at first hand. Although priced at just 3*d.*, an easily affordable publication, *The Daily Express* also serialised the pamphlet,³¹ and *Flight* magazine published it in full.³² A children's version using Saunders' abridged text was published in 1941, this lavishly illustrated with pencil and crayon drawings showing dogfights, aircraft, aerial manoeuvres, attacks on shipping, and an operations room.³³ If Saunders' pamphlet laid the foundations for the Battle's historiography, Garnett's version for children certainly had the same impact on subsequent literature for the young.

Dowding eclipsed

Despite the pamphlet's massive success there were, though, some problems with its contents, these coming to the fore immediately upon publication. Critically, forensically cleansed of any names – other than Goering as Dowding's adversary – it wholly failed to mention either him or Park, a fact not lost on the *Daily Herald* newspaper which having first re-projected the key messages about 'the Greatest Day', and a famous victory, thereafter ended its short piece on a sourer note:

[B]ut it does not mention the man who built up our defences and directed the air victory [...] Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding, Commander-in-Chief of the Fighter Command until the Battle of Britain.³⁴

This omission prompted Churchill to seek an explanation from Sinclair in a brief note expressing some astonishment that Dowding's name was wholly absent from 'your admirable pamphlet'.³⁵ Peck wasted little time in providing a detailed rationale to Sinclair for the approach taken, this also suggesting that the Secretary of State (SoS) had not been involved in earlier discussions about the pamphlet's contents.³⁶ Peck's two key points were first, that the pamphlet was not a despatch and was instead intended to tell a simple story, this focusing on the men doing the fighting; and second, it was decided to leave out all names simply because it would be hard to know

where to stop, as all from the very highest to the lowliest pilot might wish for inclusion. He added that it also seemed unnecessary to identify Dowding by name as ‘that is known to the whole world already!’, and Dowding himself – whom he did not believe would suffer any ‘heartache’ – felt that all credit should go ‘to the boys who fought it’. Peck also noted that the *Daily Herald* article’s ‘sting in the tail’ – the only one in an otherwise favourable press – may have come from Wing Commander Austin, a disgruntled Press Officer who had by now left Fighter Command (see below).

Sinclair in turn wrote promptly to Churchill, seeking to draw the sting by repeating Peck’s view that sales would be very impressive, and likely to be matched in the United States.³⁷ Reiterating Peck’s unconvincing points about publishing a simple and plain story, Sinclair then argued that if anyone should have been mentioned it would be Dowding, but that thereafter Park, Evill and other staff officers also warranted recognition; having done so the public might be disappointed that ‘famous Squadron Leaders like Bader, Malan and Greene’ were not so named too. To conclude, the SoS argued that ‘anonymity would seem to be in keeping both with the character of the story and the feelings of the Service’. Churchill was, however, having none of it, quickly blasting back that he could agree with neither the act itself nor the argument made in defence of it.³⁸

In the meantime, and quickly galvanised into action, both Peck and Sinclair sought to limit further potential damage, the former suggesting that the SoS write to Dowding with a copy of the pamphlet, a letter draft also provided. This noted, incidentally, that sales were now in the order of 400,000.³⁹ Therein Peck, perhaps seeing all too clearly how this would reflect on him personally – ‘it was prepared under my direction by Mr H. A. St George Saunders’⁴⁰ – suggested confirming to Dowding that the simple, plain, anonymised approach was deemed best, hence the former C-in-C’s name not appearing, despite his leadership of ‘the Battle which you fought and won for us last autumn’.⁴¹ Seeking to further restrict Dowding’s room for manoeuvre were he inclined to respond publicly – or perhaps privately to Churchill – the draft then appealed to his sense of modesty in noting that

[W]e believe that you would be the first to endorse that arrangement. There was of course no need in this story to state who was Commander-in-Chief; that is well known already to the world [...] It is not intended to be a comprehensive or complete official history. It is a story.⁴²

The draft concludes with the hope that Dowding will agree with the Air Ministry ‘that only the simplest statement of facts [...] would do justice to one of the greatest epics of the modern world’.⁴³ Had this been simply re-typed and sent to Dowding as a verbatim copy its recipient may have been forgiven for reading some resentment between its lines, the brisk and overly-formal tone almost patronising in being compelled to pre-empt any difficulty

which might have arisen from the Air Ministry's decision not to name the RAF commander who had, after all, led his men in what was being proclaimed as one of the most decisive battles in history.⁴⁴ This was, of course, Saunders' claim, not Dowding's, and obviously endorsed by the Air Ministry and MoI.⁴⁵ Were Fighter Command's C-in-C anyone other than Dowding it is reasonable to ask whether he would have been similarly excised from the narrative. Given the Air Council's positive view of both Sholto Douglas and Leigh-Mallory – replacing Dowding and Park respectively – it is possible that a different decision may have been reached had they been the senior commanders in Fighter Command at the proclaimed moment of victory. Alas, they were not, and therein lay the difficulty.⁴⁶

Rather bounced into urgent remedial action Sinclair proposed that photographs of Dowding and his Group Commanders be inserted into further issues of the pamphlet, in addition to which he proposed to commission a limited run of 'deluxe' copies for issue to senior officers and other officials, the latter idea, however, soon dropped.⁴⁷ Responding to a separate suggestion, Duff Cooper, Minister of Information at the MoI, quickly dispelled any hope Sinclair may have had that four pages of photographs might be included in future print runs of the pamphlet, the Stationery Office very resistant on grounds of practicality. Clearly taken by surprise at the pamphlet's success the MoI were also anxious to capitalise on current demand, Cooper not convinced that photographs would work in the extant version.⁴⁸

Sinclair and Peck's collective attempt to neuter the Prime Minister's anger did not, therefore, succeed. Nine days after his initial note, Churchill – despite being significantly committed elsewhere – had the last word. Perhaps both increasingly uncomfortable about being drawn into Dowding's misguided treatment during late 1940,⁴⁹ and equally irritated with the Air Council's ongoing pettiness towards the former C-in-C, he admonished Sinclair about the jealousy and 'cliquism' seemingly running unchecked throughout senior echelons of the Air Ministry, and which greatly discredited it. Churchill, equally surprised that Sinclair appeared to condone such behaviour, could not imagine that other service departments would behave in such a manner.⁵⁰ The Premier's typically brusque, rather contradictory view of his apparent complicity suggests that he did in fact suspect that Sinclair had had prior knowledge of the omission, but neglected to act. However, noted above, Peck's initial minute to the SoS suggests a decision taken without Sinclair's prior knowledge. If so, Sinclair's reaction to being wrong-footed can be imagined, but Peck retained his position and influence as later confirmed by his success in establishing Battle of Britain Sunday, despite the SoS's initial reluctance (see Chapter 6).

A fleeting opportunity to make amends – insofar as Peck et al. deemed this necessary – was offered by the production of the illustrated version of the pamphlet, but it is probable that the design, layout and printing had progressed too far by this stage, Peck confirming to Peirse on 9 April that

‘advance orders for the illustrated version to appear shortly have reached nearly half a million’.⁵¹ Its suggested publication date varies from April to July 1941, which ordinarily would have been of no great significance except that there was an opportunity both to credit Dowding and mollify the Prime Minister.⁵² That this did not happen – assuming a publication date nearer July – was further compounded by vast pamphlet sales across the world, Saunders having been paid just £50 for this international best-seller.⁵³ All this, of course, was firmly behind closed doors, and in any event the RAF wasted little time in reinforcing the central message about the Battle in its own in-house publication, wherein it closely followed the narrative of ‘that famous bestseller’ of only a month previous – and of which it noted that five million copies were being sent across the world. Affirming the ‘to so Few’ epigraph it also reminded RAF readers: ‘[A]nd the men who achieved this? Be it said simply, they saved Britain.’⁵⁴

Aftermath

Paradoxically, the Air Ministry’s pamphlet construct relied upon the projection of Britain as rather enfeebled, its modest air force only just thwarting the *Luftwaffe*. Although useful in the immediate sense in sustaining morale and of having something positive to say, the underlying reality was problematical. However, for developing ‘cold’ propaganda to be credible it had to work with the facts of the situation in late 1940, the only possible narrative approach being on the one hand to admit that Britain had not been best placed to deflect the *Luftwaffe*, but had on the other, through the exceptional prowess of its fighter pilots, nevertheless *just* staved off potential disaster. This was far better than saying nothing more – Germany’s approach – but it required delicate handling. As a consequence several themes come through strongly: the Spitfire as an affirmation of Britain’s superior design capability; RAF leadership at the tactical level through the fighter command-and-control system; the quality, skill and bravery of its fighter pilots; and the pivotal importance of 15 September. Care, though, was taken to portray the *Luftwaffe* as well-equipped, dangerous and determined, with seemingly no shortage of aircraft and aircrew to throw into the air battles.

It would take time to establish the actual facts, the main difficulty being the wide discrepancy between the aircraft losses claimed and the realities. By 1947, however, when the figures were finally confirmed, it was of no consequence (see Chapter 7). Read today, and leaving aside its obviously propagandistic tone, the Air Ministry’s pamphlet is a broadly accurate representation of the air battles upon which it is focused. Whilst German intentions may have been slightly different from those stated, Saunders could only recount the broad sweep of the Battle as it shifted from one set of targets to another, phases delineated to make these more comprehensible. Access to German records was not necessary to confirm dates, numbers

of aircraft and targets. Fighter Command's command-and-control system was also touched upon, though not the critical role of the RDF chain. The aircraft as described are broadly accurate insofar as their types and roles, other than the He113 which did not take part in combat but was useful for German propaganda.⁵⁵

Aside from these more factual aspects it is the linking of RAF aircraft claims with the abandoned invasion that is more difficult to reconcile with the actual results. Chapter 2 confirms the discrepancy between claimed and actual *Luftwaffe* losses, and Chapter 1 considers the Battle in respect of Operation *Sea Lion*, and Hitler and his OKW's invasion planning and decisions. From a British perspective, when viewed from late 1940 into early 1941, propagandistically it is easy to see how tempting it would be to conflate German losses with the abandoned invasion, but historical evidence is contradictory in some respects, especially regarding Hitler's plans for Russia. Thus, it is the grander strategic claims made for the Battle, rather than the more mundane facts as recounted in each phase, that have generated most disagreement historiographically (see Chapter 8).

These considerations aside, had the pamphlet not appeared in 1941 it is reasonable to ask whether, without the British establishment behind it, the Battle as a settled, dominant narrative in post-war popular memory would have attained such status. The answer is probably not, for the following reasons. First, a decision to award the Few a clasp came only in May 1945, this of great importance in identifying the men as an elite, its award reliant upon previous perceptions of their valour, lest it all be seen as rather rushed and belated. Second, Battle of Britain Days likewise, having originally begun as a Civil Defence Day in 1942 might not have developed but for the pamphlet, and a sense within the Air Ministry that a special day was warranted to mark 15 September as 'Air Trafalgar Day', which had been so strongly affirmed in the narrative. Third, Westminster Abbey's Royal Air Force chapel memorial window as first proposed by Mr Viner-Brady was also given unofficial Air Ministry support, responding indirectly to the original pamphlet and its official recognition of RAF sacrifice; after all, did not an achievement of that magnitude surely warrant a national memorial?

Similar arguments can be proposed in the case of a delayed pamphlet publication. Had the Air Ministry not published it in March 1941 it may have been more difficult politically to make a case for commemorating the Few later, as many would question why it was that nothing had been done soon after the air battles had been concluded.⁵⁶ Additionally, armed with fuller evidence of actual German losses in mid-1945, the publication of the pamphlet later in 1945 might well have seemed rather pointless, its principal function as a means of boosting morale – and reinforcing the RAF's standing – no longer necessary. If the Air Ministry knew at that stage what the actual German losses were – or had strong reason to doubt the original RAF figures based on initial intelligence analysis in Germany – it would soon

also lead to awkward questions, in which case, better not to publish at all. With so much having happened since 1940, both positive and negative, we may also wonder at what might have been said in a pamphlet released much later in the war, not least because many of the original Few had subsequently lost their lives: 1,339 (or 45.9 per cent) did not survive the Battle or later war. A final consideration is that had the pamphlet not been published before mid-1945 it seems unlikely that it would have been so under the new Labour government, its particular preference a focus on the heroism and sacrifice of the many in the People's War, rather than celebrating an elite Few of five long years' earlier.⁵⁷

Although not originally intended by the Air Ministry, its pamphlet quickly allowed for the creation of an accessible shape to the Battle as an event, images of men, aircraft dogfights and so forth more easily absorbed in popular memory through visual imagery. Following publication this task now passed to writers, historians, broadcasters, film-makers, artists, and to an extent those who had taken part in the air fighting, the initial wave of material in the form of films, books, art and other representations of the Battle laying the foundations for later work in the same vein (see Chapter 5). The timely publication of the 1941 pamphlet was, therefore, crucial to the development of the Battle of Britain as a historic event and thereafter, its rapid consolidation. In whatever manner the pamphlet was originally commissioned, Saunders as the writer and Peck as the RAF's most senior officer responsible for public relations, had undoubtedly achieved a propaganda masterstroke. For, if they were astonished at its huge international wartime success in sales alone, imagine their amazement looking back from the vantage point of 2015 and the Battle's continuing place in British popular memory. Insofar as Peck's focus had centred on propaganda and public relations, this was the first of two major successes in elevating the Battle to a near-mythical status; his second, proposing the establishment of Battle of Britain Day as a national event. These achievements are all the more remarkable given that the basis of the pamphlet, thence the annual commemorative day, were justified, in effect, wholly by the belief that on 15 September 1940 Fighter Command had inflicted such heavy losses on the *Luftwaffe* that Hitler had cancelled the invasion.

In the same manner that both Dowding and Park were wholly eclipsed from the pamphlet, so too were the 'bomber boys' efforts against the barges, and the undoubted threat posed to an invasion armada by the Royal Navy. However, whereas both Dowding's and Park's reputations have been 're-enchanted' in recent years, and now celebrated through statues, one searches in vain for a biography, or detailed publicly-available material on Peck.⁵⁸ Much the same can also be said of Sholto Douglas and Leigh-Mallory, respectively Dowding's and Park's successors in late 1940 after the Battle had been won. If, as seems probable, Peck had instructed Saunders not to mention either Dowding or Park in the pamphlet, it would be interesting

to hear his views in light of their restored reputations which now owe so much principally to his determination to elevate the Battle of Britain as a national deliverance.

Developing the narrative

BBC broadcasts

If the Air Ministry pamphlet was the most important propaganda development in early 1941, a second significant moment of consolidation was provided by the BBC at a similar time. Only six weeks after its publication Cecil McGivern had reworked Saunders' pamphlet into *The Battle of Britain*, a dramatic radio play first aired on 8 May 1941. Advertising the feature, the *Radio Times* carried a dramatic front-page image of people watching dogfights above St Paul's Cathedral, contrails added by a graphic artist.⁵⁹ In '[T]he story of how the RAF Fighter Command beat the Nazis from the skies of Britain in the great daylight air battles of last autumn', its audience was reminded of the previous year's air battles, as rendered in the best-selling Air Ministry pamphlet.⁶⁰ Its tone was affirmed: 'how the RAF accepted the challenge and beat the enemy to the ground'.⁶¹ The hour-long programme proved to be very popular, echoing in some respects the combat sequences in *Spitfires over Britain*, broadcast in June 1940. For an audience familiar with the overall tone of the previous year's air battles and the pamphlet itself, this production offered an authentic sense of the Battle as experienced by different commanders and combatants, sound effects interspersed with a wide range of voices, the multi-layered sound tapestry not dissimilar to the newsreel footage of late 1940, and the crop of war films being released in 1941.

The quite intense content and tempo provided what, for a 1941 audience, would have been an exciting experience. It reinforced the Battle propaganda from the year before but also gave a clearer sense of the sophisticated command of RAF fighters as they scrambled to take on the *Luftwaffe*, the Observer Corps also mentioned within the play.⁶² Although perhaps too calm and measured at times, the voices of fighter controllers confirmed that the RAF's resistance had not been haphazardly managed, or based merely on good luck.⁶³ Slightly grating, though, was the excessive formality of 'R/T' communication between controllers and pilots as they were vectored to the action, these instructions also noted by the Germans as they listened in to RAF communications and sought to discern their significance.⁶⁴

In common with the pamphlet, neither Dowding nor Park as the critical RAF commanders were identified, but listeners did hear their discussions as they anticipated Goering's next moves. German senior commanders also featured as they discussed the prospects for defeating the RAF: '[T]hese English airmen are brave. They fly their Spitfires and Hurricanes like devils.' Slightly later, the role of propaganda was confirmed when an air communiqué is read out at the Mol's offices, enemy losses noted as accurate. Further

in the piece, the determined heroism of a trainee RAF pilot flying an Avro Anson is proclaimed when he rammed a Heinkel 111: '[H]e's diving at us, the bloody fool!' Later again, Churchill's 'to so Few' tribute is voiced by an actor and here clearly relates to the fighter pilots. WAAFs are featured, their calm imperturbability echoing the heroism of women under fire: in an airfield operations room just hit by a Nazi raid, a WAAF asks male officers 'Would you care for a cup of tea sir?', drawing an astonished, 'God Almighty'.

With the ending of the second phase, London was now the target, a senior German commander demanding, '[B]omb the poor!' Linking the air battles to invasion, the narrator confirmed that the German broadcasts demeaning the RAF were an insult to the *Luftwaffe*, who had in fact fought with tenacity against a determined opponent:⁶⁵ '[T]heir morale had been high at the beginning [...] They had expected to clear the skies in advance of an invading army.' Allied airmen were also briefly included, a Polish pilot noting in a debriefing, '50 yards, bang, Dornier, puff!' In conclusion the narrator reminded listeners that on 15 September, '[M]en like these saved England [...] the enemy lost 185 [...] Victory in the Battle of Britain meant Hitler was denied what he most longed for: the invasion of this island. Truly, it was a great deliverance.'

Listeners would have been left with several impressions, these to some degree at variance with the more constrained tone and praise conveyed in the pamphlet: the *Luftwaffe* were determined and dangerous foes, but also demented, demonic and hysterical under combat pressure; Fighter Command, although outnumbered, held its own and fought back calmly and efficiently, its exceptionalism in battle bringing a narrow victory over a worthy opponent;⁶⁶ and finally, that although the 'fighter boys' won the laurels for preventing invasion, many others contributed to their victory. The radio play strongly reinforced the key propaganda messages in the pamphlet produced only a few weeks earlier, and the Air Ministry must have been delighted by it. After all, within just over six months of the official Battle having been concluded an internationally best-selling pamphlet which had transformed a series of air battles over several months into a clearly delineated historical event had been published, its tone and élan further reinforced by the BBC in a programme heard by millions.⁶⁷

BBC wireless broadcasts also projected the Few's efforts of the previous year, leading aces – the RAF disliked the term – including Douglas Bader and Bob Stanford Tuck given airtime to recount their combat experiences (see Appendix 3.1).⁶⁸ Ironically, both would be shot down and captured in 1941 during offensive sweeps, neither released until the end of the war in Europe. Usually anonymised to comply with the Air Ministry's rather archaic anxiety to avoid any publicity for individuals unless unavoidable, listeners heard material that amounted to the reading of self-penned but censored text by the pilot concerned. There were no other sound effects or embellishments but within the media context of the time such material would have been fascinating.

They were, though, also occasionally revealing, Spitfire pilot Richard Hillary's talk about his experiences reflecting the emotions generated by the stress of combat. Later to publish the highly successful *The Last Enemy*, Hillary had by July 1941 been through a series of operations on severe burns subsequent to being shot down into the Channel.⁶⁹ He talked of death and the moral rightness of killing or being killed, and also the drama of being badly injured, themes not often articulated on the BBC in such intimate detail: 'death should be given the setting it deserves. It should never be a pettiness, and for the fighter pilot it never can be.' Matter-of-fact and clipped in their delivery, the calm, self-effacing resolve of the RAF's fighter pilots was projected to millions through such talks. Usually officers rather than senior NCOs, the other aspect reinforced – as in 1941 feature films – was that officers predominated. This was rather at odds with newsreel footage at the height of the Battle, Sergeant pilots often seen talking to or waiting at dispersal alongside officer pilots.

Shorter films

Building on the key messages in official British propaganda, Canada's National Film Board's production *Churchill's Island*, which although originally released in Canada in late June 1941 was soon made available internationally including America.⁷⁰ At just over twenty minutes in length this was a highly regarded, award-winning short film, in pace, style and structure, akin to MoI 'shorts' and the American March of Time newsreel series. It was very much a continuation, if less vibrant and jaunty, of March of Time's *Britain's RAF* newsreel, with which it has much in common in its coverage of the RAF. Much of the material used was also produced during October to December 1940, appearing eight months after the Battle's officially-agreed ending. In some respects *Churchill's Island* provided a valuable retrospective segue between the filmic material produced during the latter part of 1940 and *The Battle of Britain* released in 1943 for the American Forces' Why We Fight series.

Whilst the film was preoccupied with Britain's ability and determination to withstand invasion, seemingly still anxiously anticipating this in June 1941, the reality was that only a week before its release Hitler had invaded Russia, changing at a stroke both Britain's strategic position, but also – and perhaps gallingly for the producers – the immediate currency of the film. It would, though, appeal to audiences in Canada and Britain, both countries' service personnel involved in preventing invasion. Its first eight minutes focused on the Battle before it shifted to projecting other aspects of Britain's war against Germany. Reinforcing the credit due to Fighter Command for averting a German assault on British shores, the Royal Navy was not mentioned in this regard, but was instead acknowledged for its convoy escort work, and its later role in thwarting any subsequent Channel threat. Clearly, the laurels for achieving this in 1940 went solely to the 'fighter boys'.

As with earlier filmic coverage of the Battle a range of actuality footage was employed, a deep-voiced Lorne Greene voiceover narrating and connecting the various elements as the film progresses. In sum, viewers were first shown the Channel and fortifications as they were reminded: ‘around this island fortress of Britain they have built a wall of steel [...] none can say when the hour of invasion will come, [but] come, they believe it will’. By now familiar scenes of aircraft formations, dive-bombers, dogfights, explosions and civil defence reinforced the settled filmic narrative of the Battle. Large *Luftwaffe* formations prompted the confirmation that

[T]hese raiders were the elite of the German air force, they were groomed for victory [...] only Britain remained. But they failed to reckon with the RAF – long will England remember the days when the Spitfires and the Hurricanes first roared in and the fortunes of war were written in white trails of vapour in the sky. Within two months the wreckage of 2,400 German aircraft lay on the fields and shores of Britain.

Thereafter the film focused on German invasion preparations, Britain’s wider defences and the prospects for invasion: ‘[F]or long months the German army staff has been planning with all the patient foresight of their kind, the landing which they know must win or lose the war’. To end, ‘[C]ome, if you dare’, Hitler is challenged, but he had given up thoughts of invading Britain even as the film-makers were producing footage in October 1940.

More widely in 1941, and reminding Britain that at that time the Battle was never far away in recent popular memory, several Mol ‘shorts’ and related films touched upon it (see Appendix 5.2). For example, *The Battle of London* echoed the previous year’s *London Can Take It*, the focus on the Blitz and home front, some brief coverage included of the daylight Battle, aircraft formations and individual fighters. An aircraft dump offered views of crashed *Luftwaffe* aircraft. Also shown were Spitfire Fund and Four Fighter Fund appeals, and an Me109 fighter on display to raise money.

RAF Action, part of the *Empire’s New Armies* series featured a lengthy sequence on the Battle with Hurricane fighters, and the affirmation of the contribution of Empire airmen. In other respects film-makers had already begun to move on from the Battle, but there was no escaping its dominance in 1941, no opportunity being lost to project morale-boosting and inspirational examples, and to link these new themes with the drama of late 1940, even if rather tenuously. The Battle thus offered fertile ground for filmic treatments, its mere inclusion sufficient to elevate subject matter irrespective of a perhaps debateable link. *An Airman’s Letter to His Mother* was a moving reminder that it was not only the ‘fighter boys’ who were being lost in action, this 1941 film based on a bomber pilot’s letter that had first been published in June 1940.

Feature films

Fighter Command's role in late 1940 also provided valuable opportunities to portray fighter pilots as glamorous defenders of the free world, the RAF's multi-national nature a focus of feature films released in 1941 (see Appendix 5.5). Two addressed aspects of the period directly, both enjoying RAF support in their production: *Dangerous Moonlight* and *A Yank in the RAF*.⁷¹ *Dangerous Moonlight* (RKO British Productions, September 1941, 94 mins.),⁷² includes a fourteen-minute sequence as its epilogue, focusing upon the Battle and creating a model for subsequent representation.⁷³ The film as a whole portrays the early war experience of a Polish musician and fighter pilot, the Nazi invasion of Poland prompting him first to fight the *Luftwaffe*, thence to escape to America where he works as a concert pianist. His conscience soon jolted by a friend, and growing disquiet at his host country's neutrality, joining the RAF is the obvious solution. Now in Fighter Command during August 1940 and flying with a multi-national squadron, the subsequent main combat sequence affirms the nature of aerial combat insofar as it was possible to portray this within the technical limitations of the time.⁷⁴

The pianist-pilot shoots down two aircraft and rams a third, and thence having crash-landed, loses his memory for a time. A highly successful film, aside from the always-appealing nature of a troubled romance which resolves itself amicably, it also gave some insight into the work of a fighter squadron, hinting at something of the drama of dogfighting.⁷⁵ The critical propaganda messages portrayed – broadly a year after the Battle – were: the commitment of Poles, Czechs and other Nationals in fighting with the RAF; the technical prowess of the Spitfire; and the evident fact that whereas the *Luftwaffe* had swept all before it until the summer of 1940, it had not prevailed against an opponent of equal strength. An added factor was RAF support in allowing access to aircraft and film footage, but very much determined by Air Ministry agreement concerning the script and general tone of the film.⁷⁶

A second feature film to benefit from Air Ministry and RAF support during 1941 was Twentieth Century Fox's 'comedy', *A Yank in the RAF* (USA, September 1941, 89 mins.).⁷⁷ First outlined in October 1940 as the Battle concluded, its original title was suggested as *Eagle Squadron*,⁷⁸ also reflecting the formation of the first American fighter squadron in the RAF during that month.⁷⁹ Although the film did not trespass into the Battle itself – which American film-makers clearly saw as the preserve of their British counterparts alone⁸⁰ – it did feature Dunkirk as a combat denouement and therefore anticipated the glories to come over south-east England. With America as yet still neutral, and mindful of the cultural differences between the two nations, the film-makers sought both to highlight the moral aspects of Britain's plight but also to capture something of the easy-going but tough nature of American flyers. RAF support was essential if the flippancy and

technical inaccuracies of contemporary films such as *International Squadron* were to be avoided and a good-quality film produced.⁸¹

An aspect the Air Ministry did insist upon was that the lead character should survive his air combat experiences over Dunkirk. Given the film's aim as a propaganda vehicle for the British, it was deemed undesirable to be too realistic in portraying the hard realities of air combat.⁸² The film centres on a happy-go-lucky civilian pilot who, after violating strict American neutrality laws, joins the RAF; as in fact did several American citizens, who had renounced their United States citizenship and were now, in effect, Canadians.⁸³ He is soon flying Hudson bombers as a co-pilot, despite wishing to be allocated to a fighter squadron, his indignation complete at being asked to drop propaganda leaflets.⁸⁴

Off base, a love triangle develops between the American, his CO, and an old flame, this providing a backdrop for the film as it develops – much as in *Dark Blue World* (2001). The Dunkirk combat sequence sees the focus shifting to a Fighter Command station with Spitfires arriving,⁸⁵ and being rearmed.⁸⁶ The American arrives in a replacement Spitfire – previously never having flown one – thence to Dunkirk with mostly American and Canadian pilots.⁸⁷ A lengthy combat sequence centres mostly on the American as he tackles Me109 fighters, the experience an epiphany as he is transformed from selfish philanderer to moral crusader in just a few tense minutes.⁸⁸ Thereafter, he wins his girl back from the upper-class RAF pilot-hero, viewers then able to relax as they realise that the Battle of Britain came next.⁸⁹ Despite its commercial success the Air Ministry was not impressed and thereafter was much more reluctant to provide unfettered access to RAF squadrons and personnel.⁹⁰

The reality was, though, that within about a year of Battle being fought, two feature films had been released which certainly cast the RAF's role during 1940 in a positive light, the Spitfire pre-eminent as an air superiority fighter, the Hurricane wholly eclipsed. At odds with the previous year's propaganda, both films also inadvertently reinforced the sense that Fighter Command was predominantly comprised of non-British pilots, the laurels therefore going to aircrew who had come to Britain to fight from overseas, rather than home-grown talent. Given the relative balance of Fighter Command aircrew personnel this must have irked some, but film companies had also to return a profit, American audiences preferring their own stars, and the war-weary British perhaps keen for cinematic distractions with Hollywood voices.

As a symbiotic counterpoint to the battle for air supremacy, the invasion threat was also addressed in *Confirm or Deny* (Twentieth Century Fox, USA, 12 December 1941, 73 mins.), one of very few wartime films to address this within the context of the Battle. Principally a fairly light-hearted romance, it is set against the backdrop of the September 1940 London Blitz, sound-effects conveying the action rather than actual scenes of air attacks. The lead part, an ambitious, seemingly ruthless and avowedly neutral American war

correspondent is frustrated by the MoI's censorship of his war dispatches and the requirement that he accepts a British female MoI teletype-operator cannot send material until it has been scrutinised beforehand. Against a backdrop of a developing romance between the two, sheltering in the Blitz, comedic English characters – rather in the manner of country yokels as patronisingly characterised in *Mrs Miniver*, where Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd* novel characterisations spring to mind – and the day-to-day experience of air attacks, the story evolves to the point where invasion seems imminent. An argument thence develops between the MoI censor, a Captain, and the correspondent:

'Well Captain, would it interest you to know there's not one English plane in the sky over London?'

'Really?'

'You know that just as well as I do. The Jerries have had the skies to themselves all morning. Where's the RAF? Have they been blasted out of the skies?'

'That's a question the Air Ministry can answer – if they care to answer.'

[*Argument continues, but here omitted*]

'What are you driving at?'

'Invasion, that's what I'm driving at, and that's what the Germans are driving at.'

The correspondent – no longer constrained by the now dead Captain – is informed by a roof-watcher that the 'sky's full of Jerries', the tension reinforced further by a carrier-pigeon message from occupied France, confirming 'sea black with barges, amphibious tanks'. Having relayed this information to America the correspondent is exhorted by a strident teletype speaker-demand to 'confirm or deny' this 'explosive' material. His British girlfriend – now locked out of the room – can both see and hear his actions and, accusing him of cowardice and selfish ambition, challenges the morality of confirming the material if it places a source of intelligence in danger. He thereafter relents, relaying a far less dramatic report of the air attack, the invasion not mentioned.

Within the plot context it is not exactly clear why it mattered whether the 'invasion' message was sent to America or not. After all, had the Germans launched it as suggested by the film all that Britain – and America – could do was to await developments, and respond accordingly. Insofar as the storyline was concerned the 'carrier pigeon' intelligence source might well be compromised but this would be of little consequence in the event of a successful landing; had it failed there were other means of securing intelligence in the

future, as there was in any event – aerial photography, wireless-monitoring, air and sea patrols, clifftop observation posts and so forth. As a major prop upon which to base the film plot it was therefore weak, but cinema-goers were not, of course, treating *Confirm or Deny* as an MoI public information film. Given the sky full of bombers and a sea packed with barges, the narrative suggests an invasion is underway, but the film then ends without closure, other than the correspondent's decision – despite his previously strict neutrality – to side with the British. The broader point was, of course, the moral imperative, hindsight a wonderful prism within which to frame the film given its late-1941 debut. Although made prior to America's entry into the war, its release just five days after Pearl Harbor was fortuitous, neatly sidestepping any criticism from anti-British isolationists in America.

This is not to suggest that American film-makers were averse to expressing pro-British sentiment prior to their entry into the war, Alfred Hitchcock willing to use *Foreign Correspondent* (United Artists, USA, August 1940, 115 mins.) to project a clear, if last-minute, anti-Nazi warning. A spy thriller set in the period leading up to the start of the war in 1939, an American reporter works in Europe and uncovers a Nazi conspiracy. Although of barely any relevance to the Battle – apart from America's delicate position as a neutral – the film's final sequence is significant. Now an established war correspondent in London, the reporter appeals live to the American people (in an echo of CBS correspondent Ed Murrow⁹¹) to join in the war as the city is subjected to an air attack.⁹² Despite this it would take another fourteen months before America joined the war.

Literature

Literary consolidation in 1941 came through fiction and non-fiction, all developing the narratives of the previous year and conveying in words what was also to be seen and heard either on the wireless, or in cinemas (see Appendix 7.2). Written with the benefit of some small distance from the previous months' events it was also possible, as with the pamphlet, to reinforce the chronological shape of the Battle and affirm a broad sense of phases as one development led into the next. Ivor Halstead's book, completed in November 1940 but published in early 1941, was one such, intended as a tribute to the RAF as a whole, with much of the book taken up with the 1940 air war.⁹³ Halstead made a bold claim about it: '[T]his is surely the first book about one of the decisive battles of the world to be written, set up, bound, published and sold on the battlefield'.⁹⁴ He meant in fact that it had been written during the Blitz, London the focus of considerable *Luftwaffe* attention in late 1940, rather than in the front line of an airfield under attack.

In common with Walker's *Flight to Victory* Halstead recognised on the one hand that the air battles of latter 1940 were significant, but other than describing these breezily as a series of events calibrated by some key moments, did not have the benefit of the official phasing framework provided by the

pamphlet – yet to appear – within which to work. Nevertheless, the reader gains a sense of the air war's timbre, the key 'Battle' chapters beginning in early July with the convoy battles – including the text of Gardner's BBC broadcast from Dover on 14 July – thereafter sweeping through to 15 September and the postponed invasion threat. Halstead was determined to claim 'that this is the first story of the Battle of Britain to appear in a book',⁹⁵ yet much of the narrative is not strictly focused on the event as it is understood now, but instead ranges across the aeroplane as an invention, France, Dunkirk, support services, VC winners including Learoyd and Hannah, other Commands and so forth.

It is more accurate to say that Halstead had produced one of the first attempts – in tandem with Walker – to understand the Battle as a very broad sweep which had yet to be firmly delineated. It is striking that he does not mention the term 'Battle of Britain' until his 'author's note' which is appended in different typeface at the very end of his volume, suggesting that this was written and included just prior to final binding, but which may well have been after the pamphlet was released in late March. Certainly, the text completed in November 1940 makes no reference to the phrase. Halstead was, though, right to anticipate the Few's place in history: 'nothing has changed the main argument of the book – that the immortal few saved civilisation at its greatest crisis, in the skies over Britain'.⁹⁶

At odds with Halstead's unusual – for the time – self-promotion, former Air Ministry Principal Assistant Secretary, and leading air power expert James Spaight's *The Battle of Britain 1940*, appearing in May 1941, can be credited as being the first successful attempt to capture in a single book what had been so pithily laid out in the pamphlet only shortly before.⁹⁷ This was a general survey of the air war and air power, giving broadly equal treatment to both the bomber and fighter wars, and in its use of both air communiqués and newspaper articles, was journalistic rather than historical in its approach. Inevitable so soon after the events they covered had been concluded, it also reinforced the sense that in contrast to the assured tone of the pamphlet in so firmly ascribing the Battle, it was perhaps less clear to other authorities and writers (e.g. Halstead) – of which Spaight was one – as a very firmly delineated event: '[O]bviously, a complete history of the Battle of Britain cannot yet be compiled. It is still raging as these words are compiled. The story can be told, however, of the Battle of Britain, 1940 [italic type in original]'.⁹⁸

Nevertheless, it provided far more detail than had previously been available and also sought to consider the blockade and invasion threat. Thus, in a single volume was offered the first significant attempt to evaluate Britain's experience from Dunkirk – or at least 18 June 1940 as a possible start date for the Battle⁹⁹ – through until year's end and the 29 December raid against the City of London. Despite its slightly disjointed approach, a general reader seeking historiographical assistance a decade later would have little else to

guide them other than this, or Macmillan's 1944 volume offering a chronological account based upon broadly the same material.¹⁰⁰ Dowding's 1946 despatch was clearly of immense value provided a copy was to hand, but it was not until Richards' 1953 volume that an officially-commissioned, more exacting volume was available.¹⁰¹ This too, whilst much more detailed and benefiting from sight of official documents and James' AHB secret narrative, was not very different from Spaight's approach as discussed here. Spaight's foreword was provided by the 'Father of the RAF', 'Boom' Trenchard, which may have had some influence on Dowding's being mentioned only once, and only then in passing: 'to the Fighter Command, then still commanded by Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding'.¹⁰² Trenchard – mentioned four times – was especially careful in his foreword to avoid any reference to the former C-in-C,¹⁰³ and Keith Park receives no mention at any point in the book.¹⁰⁴

Historiographically, Spaight's work is mostly significant as the first of what would eventually be many hundreds of books with 'Battle of Britain' featured in the title, and in setting a direction of travel for subsequent authors to follow (see Appendix 7.2). Also striking is that Spaight had written his book before the pamphlet had appeared in late March, and given a May publication date it seems unlikely that he would have been able to amend his proofs to acknowledge the pamphlet, or include material from it.¹⁰⁵ In any event, Spaight was the first to recognise the value in producing a substantial single volume on the subject, and given his former role at the Air Ministry may have encouraged or suggested the merits of such a publication, either directly or indirectly, to Peck. If so, Spaight makes no reference to this in his book other than to acknowledge John Nerney, Air Ministry librarian, for his assistance with Chapter Three, '[T]he few who saved the many'.¹⁰⁶

More broadly, an example of how quickly the pamphlet influenced other authors is conveyed in David Garnett's account covering the year from May 1940.¹⁰⁷ Therein he devotes a slim chapter to the Battle, entitled '[D]aylight Raids on Britain', his first sentence affirming the importance of Saunders' work:

[W]e come to the Battle of Britain, already described in a pamphlet written for the Air Ministry by a gifted writer, to which I can add nothing but a few touches of emphasis [...] I recommend all my readers to read *The Battle of Britain* if they have not already done so.¹⁰⁸

Garnett's chapter adds little new, but does say more about the command-and-control system and Fighter Command's reliance upon it for speedy interception of enemy aircraft. Very much a date-based account it gives aircraft losses, details of targets, the shifting nature of air battles, and recounts the difficulties faced by the *Luftwaffe*. In so doing it provided a useful summation

of Spaight's book, Garnett also including bomber offensives and attacks on the invasion ports and other targets. Garnett was not alone, Bernard Davy citing it in his broader assessment of air power, noting of the Battle that: '[T]he event is too recent to be recorded in the full detail of history, but the official booklet [...] provides an authentic and inspiring account of the part played by the fighters of the Royal Air Force in that signal victory'.¹⁰⁹ Davy's account sought to place the Battle within the development of air power as a whole, drawing upon the pamphlet's chronology and main phases in offering on the one hand an assessment of German aims in their deployment of air assets, whilst on the other reflecting on the RAF's ability to withstand such pressure. Also explored are the lessons identified from seeking to bomb civilian populations into submission, and the challenges of using air power to force economic collapse. William Ziff also cited the pamphlet in his own work the following year, as did Alexander Seversky.¹¹⁰

Dowding won high praise in Austin's account of Fighter Command, a broad survey of its work during 1940, not least because the author was attached to his staff and clearly saw the C-in-C's work during the Battle.¹¹¹ A Press Officer placed at the rank of Wing Commander to gain material for news and other material for distribution to the media, Austin had access to a range of secret material, this used to produce an accessible if not very analytical account of the men, machines and experiences of the Command up to the time of its publication. Dowding acknowledged the usefulness of Austin's book in writing his despatch – delivered to the Air Ministry in August 1941 – in which case Austin's book had been available publicly for perhaps two months, since June.¹¹²

Given Dowding's forensic analysis of the Battle in all its permutations, it is not clear quite how Austin's narrative aided this beyond giving a very generalised sense of the Battle as experienced by the personnel of his Command. Perhaps it is more accurate to suggest that Dowding, who had had difficulties with some, simply valued Austin's loyalty and wished to acknowledge this publicly. It appears that having worked at Fighter Command Austin did in fact leave under a cloud, Peck noting to Sinclair that he had 'left rather disgruntled at his own request. He is just about to produce for public sale his own story of the Battle of Britain. He takes very strong and sometimes bitter views.'¹¹³ In any event it is reasonable to argue, as did James, that Saunders' pamphlet managed to convey the tone of the Battle in a few pages, Austin's account suitable for readers wishing to be absorbed by a more fulsome narrative treatment and less concerned with sharp detail.¹¹⁴

By mid-1941 the process of constructing the Battle's history had therefore begun, British correspondents and commentators laying the foundations for what would eventually become an immense historiography. Walker had set the direction of travel in December 1940, to be followed by Saunders' official Air Ministry pamphlet in March 1941, thence Spaight's *Battle of Britain* in May, which month also saw Garnett's book, followed by Austin's volume in

June. Within the space of eight months since the official Battle's conclusion, then, it had therefore progressed from being a series of related but strategically incoherent air battles, to having a definite shape and context comprehensible to the British public as a whole. Noted previously, in Germany there had been no attempt to make sense of the events of latter 1940, even though to some historians the Battle was more of a stalemate than a clear victory for either side – 'a victory of sorts'; 'the narrow margin' – and on this basis might have warranted a more considered assessment.¹¹⁵

Aside from early attempts to historicise the Battle, two other strands were developing during the year following its conclusion – pilots' memoirs and novels – both of which would again represent a significant range of publications into the twenty-first century. During the war itself seven pilots were allowed by the Air Ministry to publish accounts of their experiences, five of whom would be killed whilst flying later in the war (see Appendix 7.6). Squadron Leader Tom Gleave was the first to publish his account as an 'RAF Casualty', this written after being shot down and badly burned on 31 August 1940.¹¹⁶ Subject to general Air Ministry anxiety lest it be seen as 'line-shooting' or in portraying a perhaps less glamorous aspect of the air battles than had been previously projected, the book's contents were very much a personal account giving little away. As the first of this genre – notwithstanding memoirs published about the recent French campaign¹¹⁷ – Gleave's book's chief merit was in giving voice to one of the Few, but also in affirming that success had come at a price. It set the tone for early post-war memoirs, the latter of course no longer constrained by censorship. Other books adopted a broader sweep of the RAF's heroism, Masters' volume, whilst using Churchill's epigraph in its broadest sense to refer to all of the RAF, offering chapters on aircrew from different Commands.¹¹⁸ In the absence of more detailed accounts it helped to add colour to otherwise rather dull narratives to be heard on the wireless and to give a more enlightened sense of pilots and crew as individuals.

The first novel to be written about the Battle from the perspective of the RAF appeared in Wing Commander Ronald Adams' engaging story, in essence his account of working as a Fighter Controller at Hornchurch Sector Station during the Battle.¹¹⁹ Published as 'Blake', Adams drew upon his experiences with fighter pilots to give something of the sense of the *joie de vivre* and self-effacing resolve of frontline 'fighter boys', but his account inevitably lacked hard detail, giving only a partial sense of the realities. It captured, though, the insular day-to-day nature of squadron life and the extended periods of enforced dispersal idleness counterpointed with scrambles and moments of high adrenalin as dogfights developed. Thereafter, he wrote a second novel in 1942, this focusing on the later war and fighter sweeps over France.¹²⁰ It was a reminder, too, that the Battle had been one event of many by that time, the war continuing relentlessly in several theatres for both personnel on the ground, but also those doing the actual fighting.¹²¹

Catering for children, a much lighter approach to the air war came through Johns' 1941 'Biggles' short stories focusing on the fighter war (see Appendix 7.7).¹²² Although not all strictly about the Battle, for impressionable young minds they provided exciting and accessible tales of derring-do and courage. Johns' work extended to novels about a WAAF heroine, 'Worrals', who, able to fly, was also driven to thwart various Nazi plots.¹²³ Insofar as the Battle was concerned, and the related threat of invasion, Johns' characterisations provided a model for subsequent authors to copy: the single hero or heroine, anti-authoritarian, part of a bigger team, comfortable in combat both in the air and on the ground, and making a substantial contribution to the war effort, if a little unorthodox in their tactics.¹²⁴ There were more serious books too, Squadron Leader Theodore Stanhope Sprigg's book providing a useful chapter on the Battle which echoed Saunders' racy pamphlet material.¹²⁵ Intended for teenage boys the author accepted the official dates but preferred three main phases to denote the strategic and tactical shifts, these discussed in useful detail complete with confirmation of the heavy *Luftwaffe* losses. Churchill's epigraph completes the Battle chapter.

War art

Culturally, a body of artwork also began to build during 1941 as artists reflected on the Battle narrative emerging from the pamphlet and other forms of representation (see Appendix 6). In addition to WAAC portraitists travelling to airfields to capture pilots and aircrew as they waited for the next sortie, other artists focused on seeking to recapture the drama of the previous year's events through depictions of the air battles seen by many as they developed overhead. Nash's *Battle of Britain* is the single most significant representation of the Battle to be produced during the war, it being completed and delivered to the WAAC in late 1941.¹²⁶ First shown publicly in early 1942, thereafter it featured in exhibitions and was reproduced in various publications.

A large-scale oil painting, the enemy coast is visible across a narrow stretch of Channel, remorseless formations of *Luftwaffe* aircraft intercepted by smaller numbers of RAF fighters. The central section is dominated by a vast amalgam of contrails as aircraft wheel and dive in dogfights, some aircraft trailing black smoke as they plummet to earth. The air battle is viewed from afar, even the nearest aircraft very small as they speed over land past barrage balloons, and above a tightly-twisting river towards the battle. On the far horizon and above occupied France, but below the contrails which appear to emerge from it, is a vast, menacing cloud representing the continuing menace posed by Hitler. As with all of Nash's work it is surreal in execution, no aspect detailed in a conventional sense.

However, no other painting by Nash, other than perhaps *Totes Meer*, captures the drama of the air battles, the latter a moonlit view of an aircraft dump tightly packed with the detritus of crashed German aircraft.

Conversely, Richard Eurich's *Air Fight over Portland* (1940) offers a striking contrast to Nash's *Battle*, also confirming the very different results attained by a literal focus on detail and accuracy.¹²⁷ Here, Eurich captures an air battle very high over Portland, the aircraft mere dots in the distance. Whereas Nash's *Battle* painting has additional value as an allegorical work of art, Eurich anticipates post-war representations of the Battle by using viewpoints, details and colours that provide an accurate record akin to actually viewing the action from a clifftop. Even if Nash's is easily the more significant within the canon of major Second World War art, casual viewers probably preferred Eurich's more realistic representation as this was visually less challenging, relying upon one point of perspective rather than the two adopted in Nash's masterpiece.

A triumphant year

As 1941 drew to a close, then, it was evident that significant progress had been made in representing culturally the air battles of the previous year. Not only had the Air Ministry triumphed with its pamphlet but the BBC, film-makers, writers and artists had also produced work both influenced by and reinforcing the narrative captured in Saunders' pithy text. This was not, however, undertaken in response to an overarching plan devised by the Air Ministry's DPR. Despite this a significant amount of 1941 'cold' propaganda was dependent to a degree on RAF or Air Ministry cooperation and there can be no doubt that in this respect there was both an official determination to assist where possible, but also that such support brought with it a degree of influence.¹²⁸

Taken as a whole, the following can be affirmed in respect of incremental official involvement in constructing the Battle's narrative. The pamphlet was commissioned by the Air Ministry's Directorate of Public Relations, this relying upon RAF intelligence and combat reports for its content; the BBC quickly refined this as a highly popular radio play with Air Ministry assistance. Individual fighter pilots were given permission by the Air Ministry to record their experiences, these in turn broadcast by the BBC. Air Ministry support was extended to two feature films, both involving footage of Spitfires, either singly or in squadron formation. Books capturing elements of Fighter Command and air battles also appeared, Austin's volume based directly on his work at Bentley Priory with Dowding. Added to this was Spaight's volume which benefited from some Air Ministry assistance, and Gleave's anonymous account of his experience as a fighter pilot that required its consent. Adams was also allowed to capture his work as a Fighter Controller in novel form, though inevitably heavily censored. War artists including Nash were enabled through the government's WAAC, or in being paid for individual work to portray aspects of the air battles, these in turn being exhibited at the National Gallery and in provincial cities.

Taken together this is a sizeable range of work confirming how important the Air Ministry was in providing access, resources and guidance for those wishing to capture the Battle through cultural representation. Whereas there had hitherto been a wide range of necessarily journalistic 'hot' and 'warm' propaganda during the Battle itself (propaganda phases one to four), 1941 saw this rapidly reworked as 'cold' propaganda in phase five (a). Had this not been the case it seems very unlikely that the Battle as it is understood now could have gained such importance as an event, and that 'cold' propaganda in phases five (b–c) would have developed as discussed below.

Noted previously, the pamphlet was critical to this, its appearance galvanising a wide cultural response. From 1942 it therefore became easier to build upon this initial work, not least because in the case of films these had been successful at the box office. Moreover, RAF-focused books sold well, and war art exhibitions drew large numbers of visitors. As the only wireless broadcaster – and provider of home entertainment – the BBC inevitably attracted large audiences, its radio plays and pilots' talks very popular. Thus, there was every incentive to continue the focus on the Battle, this also encouraged by the Air Ministry whom, whilst thereafter rather more cautious in respect of feature films, continued to give support during propaganda phase five (b–c), until the war ended.

In sum, what had begun as an improvised propaganda response by the Air Ministry's DPR to the air battles from late June 1940 onwards had only eighteen months later been shaped into a significant British victory, its already hardening dominant narrative etched into public consciousness. Several individuals could take some credit for this, including Air Commodore Peake as the head of the Air Ministry's DPR, the body who had commissioned the pamphlet from its employee Hilary Saunders; Sir Richard Peck's work in guiding Saunders' approach; Saunders himself for the actual pamphlet narrative; and finally, Cecil McGivern at the BBC for turning this into a very popular and influential radio play. These solid foundations have both stood the test of time and also indicated a direction of travel for the Battle's subsequent valorisation and cultural representation.

5

'Immortal Few': Heroising the Fighter Boys, 1942–1945

Valorising 'the Few', 1942–1944

As discussed in Chapter 4, 1941 was undoubtedly the most critical single year in shaping the actual sense of the Battle and thence defining the period in which it was fought, but the task of adding colour and nuanced tones which were neither too triumphal nor self-effacing, fell to those employed to work creatively in support of the war effort. Once established as a decisive event it was easier to reinforce what had been affirmed soon after the Battle itself, few if any at that time willing or inclined to do other than project positive messages about the 'fighter boys' during 1940. This had everything to do with a fervent wish to make a useful contribution to the war effort – artists, writers and other creatively-minded individuals otherwise unable to contribute except perhaps as Home Guard or ARP personnel.

Culturally, the period from 1942–5 necessarily required a different approach, consolidation very much the focus of propagandists working within the context of a now firmly accepted British success, this often achieved through 'background' references to the Battle within a broader canvas. Examples include a Battle of Britain hero focusing on saving rare birds, as in the *Tawny Pipit* feature film, or the fighter pilot son of the fictional Minivers, the hugely successful *Mrs Miniver* film, set within the wider context of the early war years. Fighter pilots too, initially constrained by excessively rigid Air Ministry controls over publishing personal memoirs, were gradually granted permission to divulge their experiences during latter 1940, and writers set about responding to the Battle as a sharply defined event.

Inevitably, as the war progressed into 1942 the Battle became less prominent in the face of other developments. Chapter 6 provides a strategic context for the period 1942–4, Britain slowly gaining the initiative from late 1942, prior to which the war news was unrelentingly depressing. There was, then, a need for propaganda and cultural material which both boosted morale and reinforced the need for a continuing effort against the enemy,

the Battle proof that Germany could be beaten. For the reasons given previously the Air Ministry and RAF were also keen to maintain a positive public profile, the air battles of latter 1940 a superb opportunity both to reaffirm the RAF's prowess, whilst also reminding Britain as a whole of the matter-of-fact heroism and gallantry displayed by its pilots and aircrews.

The BBC and newsreels

As the dominant source of news and entertainment the BBC continued to broadcast talks by the RAF,¹ and repeated the very popular *Battle of Britain* radio play on two further occasions (see Appendix 3.1).² Two other plays were also broadcast during this period, including *Into Battle* (21 September 1942) which portrayed 'the fighting spirit of Britain' in a ten-minute programme entitled *Battle of Britain* by J. C. Grene, and *Pilot's Wife* (22 May 1943). Based on the *Pilot's Wife's Tales*³ novel this fifty-minute radio play was a story of the Battle from the home front, wherein – seen through his wife's eyes – David, a Hurricane pilot shot down and badly burnt, slowly recovers, thence returning to an operational squadron. Much of the play is focused upon David's time in hospital and his wife's experience in supporting him. In this sense it was a more graphic representation of what had hitherto been largely hidden from public awareness, publicising aircrew with severe burns not deemed good for morale.⁴ There was little other BBC coverage than this during 1942–4: *Battle of Britain Day* (26 September 1943) covered the Thanksgiving ceremony in Westminster Abbey, whilst *For the Schools* (29 February 1944) included 'Every sound tells its story', illustrated by material from *Fighter Pilot* and *Battle of Britain*, the latter by Cecil McGivern.⁵

Newsreel coverage of the Battle was also slight, few opportunities available to allow for a current news angle to be developed (see Appendix 5.1). For instance, in a reprise of Pathé's 1940 coverage of the Battle, *Knights of the Air*, a 1942 appeal for the RAF Benevolent Fund reminded cinema-goers of the RAF's valour during and after 1940, Churchill's epigraph beginning the piece.⁶ Reusing 1940 footage from the Battle period it reinforced the debt owed to the Few, audiences exhorted to 'show your gratitude to the men who won the Battle of Britain' by making a donation to the hard-pressed fund. Given that some eighteen months or more had passed since the Battle it is striking that this remained the most effective means of galvanising support. Conversely, *Fighter Sweeps* (14 May 1942) emphasised to viewers that the RAF's focus had shifted to the offensive, Air Chief Marshal Sholto Douglas as Head of Fighter Command rather uncomfortably affirming: '[I]n the Battle of Britain Fighter Command was on the defensive, now the initiative is ours and every day with our fighter sweeps and escorted bomber raids we are carrying the war to the enemy. We like it better that way.'⁷

Aside from coverage of Civil Defence Day, which in turn paved the way for Battle of Britain Days, the Battle was mentioned briefly in *Many Happy*

Returns, this celebrating the RAF's twenty-fifth anniversary, Churchill's epigraph repeated along with 1940 footage (1 April 1943) and in which VC winners Hannah and Nicolson were both featured.⁸ In September of that year the first Battle of Britain Day was also commemorated, Pathé devoting a lengthy piece to it (30 September 1943).⁹ Praising Fighter Command's success in 1940 the latest Head of Fighter Command and Park's former adversary, Air Vice-Marshal Leigh-Mallory, in effect affirmed that the Few were the fighter pilots and not aircrew from other Commands. Echoing Sholto Douglas' view of the previous year that offensive sweeps were taking a disproportionate toll of the *Luftwaffe*, both commanders would no doubt have been surprised at the eventual figures. Neither Dowding nor Park are mentioned, the piece as a whole featuring footage from the Thanksgiving Service at St Paul's, the march past, the unveiling of St George's Chapel at Biggin Hill, and formations of Spitfires. The narrator was, though, careful to remind viewers that all contributed to victory including the home front and factory workers.

Dowding finally makes an appearance in coverage of the 1944 Battle of Britain celebration, here featuring in *Lest We Forget*, a short clip probably at RAF Bentley Priory where he takes the salute for a march past on an overcast day (18 September 1944).¹⁰ Sacrifices made by Fighter Command in defeating the *Luftwaffe* are noted, yet which by this stage in the war must have seemed modest in comparison to the toll of Bomber Command crews. Other than either linking the Battle to an active fundraising campaign or in covering a commemorative event, there was little else that could be achieved through the newsreels.

Feature films 1942–1944

Following the initial 1941 crop of popular films (see Appendix 5.5) about the 'fighter boys', it was clear that in addition to their earnings potential they had merit as propaganda, none doing more spectacularly than *Mrs Miniver* (MGM, USA, June 1942, 134 mins.). This portrays the fictitious Minivers, a wealthy and rather complacent English family – with perhaps a touch of pro-appeasement sentiment – being gradually enveloped by the war, thence their rapid stiffening of resolve in response to the threat posed by Hitler. Anxious to influence the film's tone and direction the MoI provided a modest level of support principally in reading early film drafts and scripts,¹¹ this beginning in October 1940 when the Blitz was then well underway. It took almost another year, though, for the script to be completed and filming to start,¹² the original story extended to include both the Battle and subsequent attacks on London and other cities.¹³

Attempts by the MoI to achieve a level of authenticity by filming in British locations were, however, rejected, MGM being obliged instead to use its US studio where the film's romanticised, class-ridden portrayal of the English has been frequently criticised. There is, though, no doubt that it was

a version of 'Olde England' that the Americans found appealing¹⁴ even if the polarised representations of the landed gentry on the one hand, and subservient, cap-doffing yokels on the other, are absurd. The film's focus upon the Few during the Battle is brief, this aspect of the film projected by the Minivers' young son – an idealistically-minded Oxford undergraduate – who joins the RAF as a fighter pilot,¹⁵ first seeing action over Dunkirk,¹⁶ and later in the massed daylight attacks. Despite his initial inexperience he gains stature as the film progresses, viewers on both sides of the Atlantic forging the link between the rapidly maturing young pilot, his family, and by extension, the interrelationship between the Few and the people who they fight – and die – for.

During the main air attack sequence the young pilot – now on marital leave – decides to return to his airfield to assist with its defence.¹⁷ Several camouflaged airfield buildings and a Spitfire are shown,¹⁸ pilots running from a dispersal hut in flying kit towards unseen aircraft: 'Jerries over London in hundreds, looks like a big show.'¹⁹ Brief footage is used of a Spitfire scramble, thence taking off in battle formation.²⁰ Meanwhile, the pilot's new wife drives home in the blackout and, concerned by an air battle occurring close above them, pulls over in the midst of exploding bombs, ricocheting bullets and an Me110 fighter crashing nearby.²¹

Next, revealing the technical challenges of showing air combat scenes, two aircraft cross the screen from either side,²² and during this dogfight the young wife is hit fatally in the neck.²³ The film ends with a service in the bomb-damaged parish church, the village also wrecked, closure provided by many formations of RAF fighters glimpsed passing over a large gap torn in the church roof, determinedly heading for battle.²⁴

Mrs Miniver was the most successful film shown in Britain during wartime, attracting audiences of over ten million. In America it earned seven Academy Awards, Glancy noting that by March 1943 some thirty-three million Americans had seen it and, therefore, the valiant resistance mounted by the RAF in 1940.²⁵ Given its lack of influence the Air Ministry must nevertheless have been quietly pleased; a young man overcomes his immature idealism, joins the RAF, thence flies Spitfires against the marauding *Luftwaffe*. Suffering a major personal loss he determines to fight on, his understated bravery, resolution and flying prowess exactly the qualities most desired by Fighter Command.

Whereas the Hurricane attracted no significant wartime commercial film interest the Spitfire's balletic virtuosity repeatedly graced cinema screens, *Mrs Miniver* one of many examples. Following in its wake the most successful wartime British film to portray both the Spitfire and Battle from a purely British perspective was *The First of the Few* (British Aviation Pictures, UK, August 1942, 118 mins.), its main focus being R. J. Mitchell and his design and development of the Vickers-Supermarine fighter.²⁶ Despite the Battle being a small part of the film as a whole – some twelve and a half minutes in all, in two sections – viewers were left in no doubt as to its primacy during

the air battles. The Air Ministry and RAF gave support by allowing the filming of pilots and Spitfires, this adding significantly to its overall authenticity and tempo.²⁷

In the first RAF sequence, and affirming the pamphlet's influence in focusing upon 15 September as 'Zero Day', the action is at RAF Ringford, a fictitious airfield near Tunbridge Wells in Kent, home to several Spitfire squadrons. A Sector Station Operations Room tracks *Luftwaffe* formations – models and special effects – as they head across the Channel, unperturbed men and women focusing on monitoring the enemy as the airfield faces attack. 'Hunter Squadron' Spitfires having been in action, they return to the airfield,²⁸ post-sortie banter between the pilots confirming their high morale and successes, these reported to the Intelligence Officer. As Hunter Squadron rests another Spitfire squadron at the airfield is scrambled,²⁹ leading all to watch as one Spitfire does aerobatics despite the urgency of the situation.

It is notable that the RAF pilots filmed were young British officers, those heard on screen well-spoken and inevitably reinforcing viewers' perceptions that it was public-school educated officers who did all the fighting. In contrast to *Dangerous Moonlight* and *A Yank in the RAF*, voices from other nations are not heard. Moreover, one Sergeant pilot is briefly featured saying a few words, but the subsequent dispersal point discussion about Mitchell is wholly between young officers and their CO. It is arguable that this film defined the moment when what had previously been portrayed through the newsreels as an event featuring both officers and men in an allied air force, now became associated only with educated British officer pilots.³⁰

Returning to the plot, the film's final six or so minutes focus on Hunter Squadron returning to the fray on 15 September, this time following a quite leisurely scramble.³¹ Aerial footage of Spitfires in 'vics' and a full squadron are followed by 'air combat' sequences, a captured He111 bomber used extensively in this element of the film, in addition to other stock footage including clips of Me109s and other German aircraft in formation.³² Oft-used cine-gun camera footage of an He111 reflects the lack of cinematically-useful material even by 1942.³³ The film ends with a lone Spitfire flying off towards the distant horizon followed by others against a dramatic cloud base, and Walton's score to raise the emotional temperature.³⁴ Churchill's epigraph to the Few appears at the very end as a text overlay.

Inevitably, the film was a major success: a British inventor and his superlative aircraft reflecting aero-engineering genius;³⁵ the Few flying Spitfires during the Battle; and 15 September, 'Zero Day', as their crowning achievement. Interestingly, despite there being little appetite for a film about the Spitfire when it was first suggested in late 1940, *First of the Few* remains the most iconic film about the Spitfire over seventy-five years later.³⁶ Whilst the aircraft features strongly in more recent colour films – not least because there are very few airworthy Hurricanes available – none capture the élan and sheer beauty of the earlier marks of the Spitfire in quite the same manner.

The focus of much interest during the Battle, the indissoluble link between the Few and the Spitfire was undoubtedly forged here for cinema audiences.

It is also interesting to reflect on what Sir Richard Peck at the Air Ministry might have thought of the film, as it probably chimed with how he wished the RAF's role in the Battle to be represented. There is no doubt that the pamphlet had confirmed 15 September as the date upon which all hung, film-makers and cinema audiences aware of this given its publication some eighteen months earlier. The RAF could take satisfaction from the very positive propaganda the film projected about the young men flying Spitfires, an aircraft which, despite some initial reservations, the RAF embraced in vast numbers as the war progressed. *First of the Few* was hugely successful, released both in Britain and America, in the latter case as *Spitfire!*

Not a feature film and more akin to an extended newsreel, such as the American March of Time's *Britain's RAF*, the release in April 1943 of *The Battle of Britain* (Why We Fight, US Army, 1943, 54 mins.) was in essence – insofar as the Battle was concerned at least – the brisk, emphatic tone of the 1941 pamphlet rendered on film. Film-maker Frank Capra's Signal Corps Special Services Film Unit provided the vehicle for the Oscar-winning series, and in the case of *The Battle of Britain*, one of a number on aspects of the war. The film series aimed to confirm the reasons for the war, the principles being fought for, and also, to familiarise American troops with the enemy they would soon face. It was also propaganda, skilled staff sent to insecure combat areas with generators and projectors to allow US forces to see the films.³⁷

Capra established a successful relationship with the MoI's Film Division, this evident through the range of rather tired and oft-seen British 'shorts'; film segments from *The Lion has Wings*, *A Yank in the RAF*, *Mrs Miniver* and *Target for Tonight* also feature in Capra's representation of the Battle, in part confirming the difficulties of sourcing usable material from the air war itself.³⁸ Available commercially in the United States from late May 1943, thence in Britain during the autumn, Churchill had pushed for the general British release of *The Battle of Britain* and even appeared in a brief piece before its screening to express his appreciation for such positive American projection of Britain's war effort, and indeed in arguing for the veracity of the original 1940 aircraft claims figures.³⁹

Angus Calder suggests that no film focusing on Britain during the period 1940–1 was seen by more people, its reach very wide.⁴⁰ It was, though, never intended as entertainment, the film's content strongly repeating the RAF's role in preventing invasion.⁴¹ The 1941 pamphlet was clearly influential in framing the overall period of the Battle, the first phase beginning on 8 August with attacks on airfields and radar stations: '[P]hase one of the Nazi plan called for the RAF to be knocked out of the air', but this initial phase runs to 18 August in the film, which accords with the later interpretation of the Battle by Goodwin.⁴² The next major stage is the 7 September attack on London, thence 15 September, in response to which

[T]he British met the challenge by throwing in everything they had. An historic three-dimensional battle took place, inside an area sixty miles long, thirty-eight broad, and from five to six miles high. 200 individual dogfights took place within the first thirty minutes of the raid.

Covering a breadth of themes including the previously undefeated *Luftwaffe*, the invasion threat, the RAF's defensive and offensive engagements, war on the home front, the 'People's War', thence Hitler's defeat, viewers were left in no doubt that '[T]he Battle of Britain was won, but not by Hitler. Hitler had lost the Battle. He had lost 2,375 German planes and their crews' and '[G]one was the legend of their invincibility'. Further reinforcing the Few's victory, an actor intones Churchill's 'to so Few' epigraph. However, and more in accord with current Air Ministry thinking about the Battle, the film is careful to show that both the RAF and the home front contributed to victory. But Fighter Command is clearly *primus inter pares* in this regard, the Spitfire 'one of the deadliest weapons put into the hands of man'. The film – released in Britain three years after the Battle – was not as popular with the British as the film-makers might have hoped, but had of course not been intended for commercial release. It is probable that cinema audiences were suffering from war fatigue and a sense towards the end of 1943 that the Battle as a form of filmic entertainment – glorious though it was – was a little past its sell-by date, this reinforced by the recycling of familiar, sometimes poor footage. Perhaps, too, the British were a little too modest to readily accept such loud, strident affirmations of their exceptionalism.

Turning now to films which featured the Battle only peripherally, if *Mrs Miniver* was a largely false representation of Britain during the Blitz, *Unpublished Story* (Columbia, UK, August 1942, 92 mins.), was far grittier in its portrayal of the realities, not least because it was filmed in bomb-torn London, drawing upon actual rather than imagined experience and Hollywood stage-sets.⁴³ Although only marginally connected with the Battle as it turned against the capital, this has as its backdrop the patriotic zeal of a wounded British newspaper correspondent recently returned from France via Dunkirk. At times an evocative film, there are surprisingly few others which portray latter 1940 in this manner, air attacks and invasion constant threats.⁴⁴

As to the plot itself, convinced that Nazi agents have infiltrated 'The People for Peace Society', the reporter decides to investigate the group given his anger at their 'out-and-out defeatism' and foolish belief that it is possible to negotiate with Hitler; his main concern being that France had just fallen precisely because of those not willing to fight. An MoI decision not to allow his story about 'People for Peace' to be published incenses the reporter further, no good reason given for the refusal. On 7 September the daylight attack on London's docks leads to press coverage by the newspaper, formations of German aircraft briefly viewed.⁴⁵ Thereafter, chancing upon a pacifistic leaflet the reporter visits the 'People for Peace' office, finding there the MoI censor who had previously refused to allow his story. It transpires

that he is in fact from Home Security and monitoring the movement which is spreading 'rumour, panic, disaffection, all boiling up for invasion'. Separately, as a reminder of the wider daytime Battle during the first major night attack, also on 7 September, two reporters discuss the attack on London and what it might mean:

[O]h, we'll adapt ourselves to it somehow. We've got to tell ourselves that this is the consequence of Hitler's first defeat. The RAF boys have slaughtered them in the daylight, now it's up to John Citizen to stand up to it in the dark.

In a later scene the reporter, assessing the war's progress with his girlfriend, is asked: '[D]o you think they'll invade us?' 'Sure of it, if the Germans think they can get away with it' is his response, based on hard experience in France. Having broken a Nazi espionage network the Blitz provides the denouement to the film, the newspaper office hit by a bomb, St Paul's Cathedral thereafter affording a backdrop to the film's end. The RAF beckons for the reporter, clearly motivated by the air battles over the capital; he has been asked to attend an RAF aircrew selection process in response to his application to fly fighters. There was no filmic opportunity for RAF involvement, but the Air Ministry would have appreciated reinforcement of Fighter Command's success during September's daylight attacks, and the recruitment pitch.

Flemish Farm (Two Cities, UK, 1943, 82 mins.) also touches only peripherally upon the Battle, but is nevertheless useful in affirming the contribution of allied airmen.⁴⁶ Recounting a true story the Air Ministry lent support through access to facilities, and four – rather battered – Mk. 1 Hurricanes, these probably Battle veterans. Principally about nascent resistance in occupied Belgium it was undoubtedly an exhortation to exiled services' personnel in Britain, but they hardly needed encouragement to fight for and liberate their own countries. Additionally, it was also a reminder that despite being heavily outnumbered the Belgians had resisted.

The plot is simple enough: in late May 1940 a Belgian Air Force squadron flying Hurricanes recognises that their country is defeated, ceremoniously burying their colours before departing for England. With the Battle now underway one of the Belgian pilots is killed, his pilot colleague – now on Spitfires – thence asking for permission to return to Belgium in order to retrieve the colours. A senior British official agrees – despite the shortage of pilots – the Belgian returning, and the film's focus thereafter is in occupied Belgium as the pilot engages with the resistance and avoids capture during September 1940. Pursued by German troops and only just escaping, having recovered the colours he returns to England and during a formal parade ceremony – complete with the four Hurricanes – the flag is handed to the RAF's first Belgian squadron. Mock newsreel cameras and crews reinforce the morale-boosting importance of the event, the film ending with the flag

fluttering in the breeze. There are no combat scenes as such, and other than the RAF squadron itself which is engaged in the Battle, within the plot it is a backdrop. The flag's recovery – an actual event – was also covered in the MoI's *There's Freedom in the Air* booklet:

[A] Belgian airman who knew of the hiding place volunteered to fly to Belgium, find the flag, and bring it to England. He knew quite well of the immense risks of that undertaking. But he flew to Belgium, found the flag as he had promised, and brought it to England. And there, before the members of the Belgian government, HRH Prince Bernhard of Belgium, the Secretary of State for Air [...] the flag was presented to the first Belgian squadron formed on British soil.⁴⁷

More broadly, also conveyed in *Dangerous Moonlight* and *A Yank in the RAF*, the film reinforces the relative ease with which a multinational RAF settles down to the business of hard fighting, the RAF as a whole welcoming and accommodating all those willing to fight for Britain.

Occasionally, the Battle features for little apparent reason other than the kudos it brings, as for example in *Tawny Pipit* (Two Cities, UK, 1944, 81 mins.); in this instance requiring no Air Ministry support. Wounded during a dogfight, a recovering fighter pilot ace is easily replaceable as a character within the plot by any airman risking his life for Britain's salvation.⁴⁸ The simple story features the pilot, Bancroft, and his nurse, discovering a pair of rare Tawny Pipits and their nest, thereafter successfully galvanising local support to thwart a combined threat from army exercises and egg thieves. It is striking that by 1944 the Battle retains its glamorous currency, the pilot having first saved Britain, now focusing on rare birds. Too modest to reveal his heroism, his 'ace' status is only revealed when a village woman recognises him as having been in the newspaper complete with a photograph – in defiance of Air Ministry rules – for winning a DFC. The nurse confirms in response that he is 'also a DSO now', but he has only just come out of hospital after five months having 'got mixed up with a pair of German fighters and came home with broken legs, and a shoulder blade in about ten pieces'. His part in the Battle is only revealed almost thirty minutes into the film when he is pressed by two young boys, having just watched an aircraft flying nearby:

Boy: 'You was in the Battle of Britain wa'n't you Mr Bancroft? What was that like?'

Bancroft: 'You know a big cricket match, thousands of people in the grandstands and everyone buying the lunchtime papers to see the score? It was rather like that.'

Boy: 'They had a lot more planes than us though di'n't they?'

Bancroft: 'Yes, we were playing for the best side in the world. We were playing for England, we were playing on our home ground.'

Nurse: 'So you see they'd bitten off rather more than they could chew.'

In a charming, bucolic setting with genial villagers, the plot is wholly focused on the home front, ornithologists, Whitehall ministries, and occasionally disreputable individuals, a later visitation by a female Russian soldier providing an opportunity to remind viewers of the sacrifices made by the Red Army, and what might have been had Hitler invaded Britain.⁴⁹ The eggs saved, Bancroft is now able to again fight for England, the film's last scene a close-up of him doing a victory roll and other aerobatics in a Spitfire⁵⁰ over the village and its church, the congregation singing 'All things bright and beautiful'. In a nod to Spitfire Fund fighters, *Anthus Camestrus*, the Latin genus for the Pipit, is emblazoned underneath his cockpit.⁵¹

An American production focusing on the threat to Britain during 1940, *The Hour Before the Dawn* (Paramount, USA, 1944, 75 mins.) was a late-war film which again featured the period of the Battle as a peripheral backdrop, but clearly with no Air Ministry assistance.⁵² The focus is on enemy agents with plans to assist *Luftwaffe* bombers in destroying a secret RAF airfield, but there are no daytime dogfights or other attacks. Confirming the film's setting, an enemy agent proclaims: 'France has surrendered. England is practically at our mercy, but a few stubborn idiots can be obstinate.' Providing a further context for Britain's plight, Churchill's 'War of the Unknown Warrior' speech is heard on the wireless,⁵³ this juxtaposed with a Nazi agent's view when facing opposition: '[W]hy don't you be sensible? England's beaten.' The airfield raid goes ahead and the female Nazi agent is shot, her hitherto pacifistic and unsuspecting naive British husband – now convinced of the need to fight – joins the RAF as an air-gunner, whence he is seen in a bomber's turret. Although not about Fighter Command as such, the invasion threat is made more menacing by the activities of enemy agents and efforts by some to reach a peace deal.

Insofar as feature films with a significant focus on the RAF during the Battle were concerned, the Air Ministry and MoI could take quiet pleasure in a run of successes from 1941 through to 1944: after all, during 1941 it had provided support for both *Dangerous Midnight* and *A Yank in the RAF*, both – if disproportionately – confirming the allied, multinational nature of Fighter Command. The motivation to fight for a just cause was also proclaimed: on the one hand, a Polish pilot-pianist sees his country invaded and, after reflection, decides to fight on with the RAF; and on the other, an American pilot technically justified in avoiding the war, fights for the RAF over Dunkirk. In this sense Fighter Command becomes both haven and crucible for those determined to defeat Nazism, an almost ethereal scimitar imbued with a rich, transnational moral purpose.

Into 1942, notwithstanding *Mrs Miniver* – which the MoI largely failed to influence, yet which still projected a heroic young RAF Spitfire pilot – *First of the Few* reminded audiences that British pilots also flew during the Battle. Of all wartime films focusing on or including the Battle, this has stood the test of time far more than its contemporaries, its brief focus on well-spoken RAF officers flying Spitfires anticipating 1950s films including *Reach for the Sky* and *Angels One Five*.⁵⁴ Judged within these strict parameters 1943's American *The Battle of Britain* had little to offer: even at its release it was simply reaffirming what had been previously confirmed in the earlier *Britain's RAF* and *Churchill's Island*, its old footage and over-adulatory tone perhaps at odds with what many remembered of the Blitz. One might also wonder at the impact the 1943 film had upon US servicemen: those in the USAAF would find it instructive in confirming that the *Luftwaffe* could be beaten, but US army and navy personnel may have felt more removed. After all, in 1940 it was an astonishingly remote event to a sixteen-year old, growing up in Texas or California. For British audiences it was, though, a reminder of how the fortunes of history could turn on a sixpence.

Other representations of the Battle again reinforced the threat posed by invasion or the RAF's heroism in resisting the *Luftwaffe*. *Confirm or Deny* was not dissimilar to *Unpublished Story* in having the Blitz as the backdrop, heard but not seen September daylight attacks on London providing a context. The moral imperative to overturn one's initial reluctance to fight, or indeed to abandon one's neutrality is also reinforced: the American reporters in both *Confirm or Deny* and *Foreign Correspondent* side with Britain at the critical moment; and the pacifist in *The Hour Before the Dawn* is eager to fly with the RAF as an air-gunner after his own epiphany. Others are already doing their bit, the wounded fighter pilot in *Tawny Pipit* recovering from wounds before returning to the fray, and the Belgian pilot risking his life for his squadron's honour. Each in their way strongly reinforced the RAF's achievement during the Battle, also reminding audiences that in stark contrast to the Teutonic automata flying for the *Luftwaffe*, the RAF drew upon a wide pool of individuals to do its fighting, many of these peaceable volunteers who had only learned to fly just before or during the Battle.

Literature 1942–1944

Books and other publications during the middle war years offered an opportunity to contextualise the Battle, especially the abandoned invasion threat and Hitler's attempts to force a peace settlement (see Appendix 7.2). Noted previously, by mid-1941 the Battle's early historiography was well underway, guided principally by Saunders' pamphlet's narrative, and perhaps Spaight's volume. With Saunders having set the initial direction of travel in 1941,

attention should first be focused on the Air Ministry's revised interpretation of his work in 1943.

Albert Goodwin's background research for Saunders' pamphlet led to him being asked to write a second account of the Battle, this time as principal author.⁵⁵ Released in August of that year by the Department of the Air Member for Training, its primary purpose was to provide new recruits and RAF personnel with a detailed, inspiring account of the RAF's defensive achievement during 1940, of which '[T]he result was decisive, and the historian will assess the true importance of this victory in preserving world civilisation'.⁵⁶ Figure 8.1 (p. 199) (AM, 1943), confirms Goodwin's revised chronology, 10 July 1940 – in accord with Dowding – now accepted as the official start of the Battle, but not revealed more publicly, whereas 8 August remained familiar to most through the 1941 chronology. Whilst Saunders' original pamphlet indicated four main phases the 1943 version denoted three, and two sub-phases. Despite this, Saunders' overall sense of shifting tactical and strategic objectives is retained in the later interpretation, if a little more sophisticated in its analysis. Less strident and adulatory than Saunders' booklet, the passage of time had clearly allowed for a less emotive and more reflective sense of the Battle to be presented, with more practical information provided about command-and-control, and radio location. For new recruits the message was clear: the RAF has excellent commanders, fighting men, aircraft and a sophisticated air defence system.

An obvious departure from the 1941 original – and clearly reflecting an anxiety not to be wrong-footed a second time – was the acknowledgement of Dowding's role: '[T]he R.A.F. was fortunate in having Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh (now Lord) Dowding as Commander-in-Chief of Fighter Command at that time'.⁵⁷ Credit was also extended for his 'organising genius' as a significant element in the defeat of the *Luftwaffe*.⁵⁸ Rather neutering this praise, but perhaps with that intention, also included is an unflattering centre-page photograph of a bowler-hatted and pinstripe-suited Dowding with eleven of the Few, the former C-in-C hardly looking the image of a commander having only recently won a decisive victory (see Plate 9).⁵⁹ One could almost imagine that having completed a day's work in the City, Dowding had haplessly wandered into a line-up of 'fighter boys' about to have a group photograph taken; perhaps Dowding intended to make this point?

In any event, it is possible that having finally rid themselves of Dowding the Air Ministry were not willingly going to involve him in the war again, the best policy being to remind all that he was now firmly retired.⁶⁰ Reinforcing this, more flattering – uniformed – photographs of the most senior officers in Training Command and Maintenance Command were included, and also a drawing of the then head of Coastal Command. To those who knew the facts of 1940 it must, though, have seemed something of a roll call of the 'second XI' insofar as a net contribution to winning the

Battle was concerned. Given a flattering image of a flying-helmeted Park – his OK1 Hurricane just visible behind him – if these commanders were to be given pictorial ‘credit’, what about Leigh-Mallory, Brand and Saul, as Park’s adjacent Group commanders? A combination of Goodwin’s narrative and the images had at a stroke rather perplexingly spread the laurels much more widely than Saunders, this now a victory for all involved whether at the centre of the storm or only at its periphery. Portal, now CAS but head of Bomber Command from April until early October 1940 was also rightly included.

Perhaps the final verdict on the veracity of both publications – and not having forgiven Dowding’s omission from Saunders’ version – Churchill confirmed in his post-war *Finest Hour* account of 1940, and of the inflated aircraft claims, that both Dowding’s and the Air Ministry’s pamphlet No. 156 had helped greatly with his own chapter on the Battle. Churchill was also careful to stress that these were written based on what was known in 1941 and 1943.⁶¹ Memories were, though, short in those demanding times. After all, in embracing the merits of Goodwin’s version over Saunders’, Churchill was in fact conceding that it was a victory of the Many and not only the Few; this contradicting his earlier view in May 1945 when the laurels for victory in 1940 were bestowed on Fighter Command alone. Whether Goodwin’s 1943 pamphlet became publicly available in wartime is not clear: there are no restrictions indicated. If nothing else it certainly offers a broader, more matter-of-fact perspective than Saunders’ rather heady tribute to the Few.

The RAF’s in-house journal’s September 1943 issue included articles relating to the Battle – its third anniversary – but neglected to mention the pamphlet’s issue during the previous month.⁶² In contrast to Goodwin’s narrative its editorial accepted Saunders’ analysis and inclined to the earlier representation of the Few:

[F]uture historians may well compare the Battle of Britain with Marathon, Trafalgar and the Marne, except perhaps that never before has the destiny of the world hung so precariously in the balance [...] There was only a pattern of white vapour trails leisurely changing form and shape, traced by a number of tiny specks scintillating like diamonds in the brilliant sunlight.⁶³

Seeking to provide a grander strategic context within which to view 1940’s significance, RAF intelligence officer Hector Bolitho – also the journal’s editor until late summer 1942⁶⁴ – offered an analysis of the RAF’s war experience as the air assault approached. Rather sidestepping discussion of the Battle itself, he does, though, summarise the victory thus:

[T]he facts of the Battle of Britain are well remembered. But enough time has passed to search beyond those facts and comprehend the spirit that

won the Battle in the light of history. For the first time, the Royal Air Force surprised the world. But it did not surprise itself [...] Mr Churchill's grand sentence 'Never was so much ...' has become almost a cliché of history now. It fits the world's view of what the pilots achieved during those splendid days.⁶⁵

Intended strictly for those 'needing to know' the information, circulation of the material contained in the journal was limited to those 'holding an official position in His Majesty's Service', in which case his adulatory narrative was rather like preaching to the converted.⁶⁶

Two commercially available MoI publications also embracing aspects of the Battle were *Front Line 1940-1941* (1942), proclaiming the work of Civil Defence celebrated in November of that year, and *Roof Over Britain* (1943), concerning Britain's air defences between 1939 and 1942.⁶⁷ Lavishly produced and well illustrated, both confirmed that the Battle was one event in a much broader canvas, the many also deserving the credit for their resolve and dedication in withstanding sustained and devastating attacks on Britain. This notably extended to barrage balloon, searchlight and anti-aircraft gun units providing an umbrella of sorts over otherwise vulnerable cities and towns. Reasonably, the Blitz was the main focus in *Front Line*, the Battle a prelude to the *Luftwaffe's* assault on the civilian population: even so, '[T]he first was the triumph of the few' and the 'more brilliant'.⁶⁸ *Roof Over Britain* addressed the Battle in 'Defending the airfields', its focus on the air fighting before the attack on London,⁶⁹ the latter recollected in 'The great London barrage'.⁷⁰

Although a little belated, also not to be neglected by the MoI, was the contribution made by allied airmen during the Battle and wider war generally, *There's Freedom in the Air* released in 1944 focusing on fighter and bomber aircrews, and ground crew men from countries under the Nazi yoke.⁷¹ Given the role played by Polish and Czech fighter squadrons during the Battle it was appropriate that several pages were devoted to their deeds, the narrative describing combats not unlike Saunders' approach to the pamphlet, or indeed books recounting the same: 'I was attacked by three Me.109s. I took evading action, closed down the throttle, and when the first Jerry shot past me, gave him all I could.'⁷² The seventh of September 1940 was noted as particularly significant for the Poles:

[T]hat day, indeed, they did magnificently. At about half-past four in the afternoon a formation of 16 Hurricanes of No. 303 squadron took off to meet a large enemy bomber formation protected heavily by enemy fighters [they claimed nineteen aircraft destroyed or damaged]. For this magnificent achievement the Poles paid with three Hurricanes [...] The day was historic. The Poles had given to the world their first real demonstration of that fanatical courage, determination and skill for which they have since become famous.⁷³

Fittingly, this focus on Poles and Czechs concludes with a reinforcement of the RAF's willingness to absorb allied squadrons in its Order of Battle: '[A]nd so, all through the Battle of Britain, the symbols of these two peoples were carried into combat on the fuselage of British aircraft'.⁷⁴ The narrative broadens out to embrace airmen from other countries but in many instances there was little to say about perhaps a handful of pilots, other than to acknowledge their contribution to the overall victory: for example, 'Holland's record in the Battle of Britain may not have been spectacular', but this quickly calibrated by recognition that Dutch airmen did in fact fly extended patrols with Coastal Command.⁷⁵

It was clear from these officially-sponsored publications that the Battle was being viewed through a now wider optic, rather than a narrower one permitting only a sharp focus on Fighter Command's ascendancy over the *Luftwaffe*. This was not a radical departure from earlier representations of the Battle but it did confirm – especially in respect of Civil Defence and the home front – that others, too, had contributed during 1940, and were now being duly recognised; this of course in line with formal commemoration in the 1942 Civil Defence Day and official concern to broaden out the credit.

As the war progressed it also became possible to view the Battle doctrinally as one of a series of now many examples of the exercise of air power, and also on this basis to seek to anticipate future results. It was, however, noteworthy that despite pre-war predictions *Luftwaffe* air power alone had failed to deliver the 'knockout blow' necessary to force a rapid British capitulation, this of itself challenging theories espoused by Giulio Douhet, Billy Mitchell and Basil Liddell-Hart during the interwar years.⁷⁶ Clearly though, American and other commentators were willing to accept the assessment affirmed in the 1941 pamphlet that RAF air superiority alone had prevented invasion. American author William Ziff's narrative is one such example,⁷⁷ wherein following a brief analysis framed by the pamphlet's chronology he considered the challenges posed by a large, aggressive army facing an enemy across a wide body of water:

[T]he Battle of Britain proved conclusively that even in its present state of development air power alone can be a decisive factor in the affairs of nations. It gave rise to a situation which may be accepted as doctrinal – that vast armies [...] are only valuable where they face an opponent on a contiguous land surface. [If not] the struggle then becomes one of air power alone, *which, without the intervention of surface arms, is quite capable of deciding the conflict* [original italics].⁷⁸

Similarly, Alexander Seversky also offered his doctrinal insights as gained through a study of the two air forces struggling for air superiority;⁷⁹ and he likewise draws upon Saunders' pamphlet in confirming the Battle's phases.⁸⁰ On the prospects for invasion itself Seversky was keen to remind readers that

as early as 1 June 1940 he had predicted: '[D]efensively, Britain is greatly superior [...] Therefore, no invasion of England is possible until that superiority of the air over England is achieved.'⁸¹ Having explored the Battle both technically in respect of aircraft, but also strategically, he then argued that:

[T]he German engine of war could not leap over the narrow waterway [and as at Dunkirk] the Royal Air Force was superior. That one fact tripped up Nazi plans and, for all we know, changed the course of human history [...] But no one can successfully dispute the elementary and now obvious fact that Britain's qualitative aviation advantage headed off the invasion.⁸²

It is evident that the dimension missing from Ziff's and Seversky's analyses – both therefore accepting the premise of Saunders' pamphlet that air superiority alone was decisive – is that of sea power, the OKW in reality keenly aware of the threat posed to an armada by a vastly superior Royal Navy. Doctrinally, they both here offer a very narrow and erroneous view of the realities, factors other than solely air power leading to Hitler's caution over *Sea Lion*. After all, despite the claims made for the primacy of a strong air force it would avail little if it was still unable – through a lack of dive-bombing capability – to sink invasion transports in the Channel, irrespective of enemy attempts to inhibit this. Also, modestly successful RAF bomber attacks against tightly-packed static barges in ports were not encouraging in this regard, given that they had 'only' at that stage faced nascent, relatively unchallenging air defences over invasion ports.

A view developed during the war and now accepted by most historians, the *Luftwaffe's* failure was clearly a consequence of an air arm developed ostensibly to provide ground-support in combined operations, twin-engined bombers and dive-bombers ill-suited for securing strategic results against a technically advanced and flexible air defence system. Inevitably, the *Luftwaffe* itself came under greater professional air power scrutiny as the war progressed, the Battle by the mid-war years a clear example if not exactly of defeat – because it remained a powerful weapon – but certainly a check on Goering's ambitions. To this end, several authors considered the *Luftwaffe's* role in the Battle, 'Hauptman Hermann', an exiled German aviation expert who had flown for Germany in the Great War using the pamphlet to provide his account of the phasing.⁸³ He had this to say about the *Luftwaffe's* failure over Britain, ensuring the collapse of Hitler's plans to be in London as expected during October:

[T]he Germans had lost it, in my opinion, on account of their lack of heavy bombers. The Battle of Britain proved that you could not carry out the Douhet plan or anything approaching the Douhet plan without Douhet's most important weapon – heavy bombers. The lack of them,

perhaps more than anything else, showed unmistakably how amateurishly the *Luftwaffe* had been built.⁸⁴

This view was strongly reinforced by C. G. Grey, *The Aeroplane's* former editor and sometimes fierce critic of Air Ministry policy during the interwar period: '[T]he Germans made their *worst* mistake in not building a big bomber fleet, and that did more than anything else to lose the war for them'.⁸⁵ Grey's brief and rather thin summary of the Battle drew broadly upon the established phasing and chronology, inevitably lavishing high praise on the RAF's air superiority over Dunkirk – as did all of the above commentators – with a particular focus on the technical supremacy of the Spitfire and Hurricane, these guided into action by an effective command-and-control system.⁸⁶ Taken together, all of these oft-cited and influential mid-war publications by air power experts reinforce the belief that the *Luftwaffe's* failure alone had decided matters in late 1940. Within this argument – originally proclaimed by Saunders – 15 September can be seen as the fulcrum upon which all hung, independent authorities therefore further validating the Air Ministry's original analysis. The Royal Navy features little if at all as a major obstacle to an attempted invasion.

A late-war contribution and one of a series on the RAF during the Second World War, was former RFC pilot Captain Norman Macmillan's volume which included the Battle within a broader sweep of the period May 1940 to May 1941.⁸⁷ More in the manner of Spaight's 1941 volume on the Battle than an attempt to explore its context doctrinally, forty-five per cent of Macmillan's narrative focuses on the air war with Britain following France's collapse, to the end of 1940.⁸⁸ Through a chronological approach which eschews Saunders' 1941 phasing but strikingly echoes Dowding's 1941 despatch⁸⁹ (see Figure 8.1) Macmillan proposes an extended period of engagements beginning with *Luftwaffe* reconnaissance in May, through to his phase six, ending in December.

Given Macmillan's ambition in writing the series it is striking that he did not have access to official sources, relying instead upon material in the public domain.⁹⁰ As a consequence, a voluminous and descriptive account is offered which by 1944, although useful in providing a broad panorama and details of the opposing forces, lacks the incisive and contextualising analysis likely to be of more value at this late stage of the war, and previously attempted by Ziff, Seversky and 'Hermann'. Macmillan instead immerses himself in chronicling the day-to-day combats and shifting tactical scenarios at the more localised level of operations, individual pilots and heroes 'centre stage' within this narrative frame. Both Dowding and Park warrant mentions, Dowding's elevation to the Peerage as Baron Dowding only the second such instance of an RAF officer being so honoured.⁹¹ Inevitably, it is also a one-sided account which is understandable given the circumstances

within which it was written, but by the same token is of less value historiographically. Macmillan also accepts the verdict of earlier writers in linking the Few with the abandoned invasion: '[T]he ordeal of the United Kingdom was not yet over, but the heavy losses the enemy had suffered in his vain daylight attempt to destroy Fighter Command in preparation for the invasion of Britain forced him to substitute large-scale night-bombing attacks in a last resort to break Britain's will and power to wage the war'.⁹²

Macmillan's account, then, usefully offers a broader denouement to wartime treatments of the Battle, no subsequent publication addressing it in as much detail before May 1945. Three main themes which developed in the earliest assessments of the Battle are again reinforced here: first, high German losses claimed by Fighter Command are accepted as accurate; second, Fighter Command's resolve and prowess alone led to the cancellation of invasion, 15 September central in this regard; and third, the *Luftwaffe*, designed to support the *Wehrmacht* through close air support, was unable to operate strategically, principally because it lacked heavy bombers. It is striking that in the main – with the exception of Saunders' and Goodwin's pamphlets, the latter not intended for general release – most commentary on the Battle during wartime relied on either Saunders' narrative, what the Air Ministry was willing to reveal (e.g. Austin, Spaight), or open-source materials.⁹³ Information projected through all of these sources was heavily controlled through Air Ministry and MoI censorship, in which case it was only possible to produce an assessment strongly biased in favour of the RAF. No one would expect otherwise in wartime of course, but it remains the case that – as with the 'hot' propaganda of 1940 – later-war published accounts of the Battle have exerted significant influence over its earlier post-war historiography, which in turn has had a 'domino effect'.

Turning now to fighter pilots' memoirs, with Ritchie's and Gleave's having set a precedent during 1941 in respect of their combat experiences over France and Britain, the Air Ministry relented on its stance in 1942 by allowing five pilots to publish their accounts of the Battle (Appendix 7.6). Written very much through the optic of personal experience these accounts reinforced the sense of life on a fighter squadron, moments of high drama and tension during dogfights contrasting with longer periods of sheer tedium at dispersal. Inevitably, these recollections lacked the perspective of the wider strategic context, material derived from recent memory and logbooks unlikely to lend much to a deeper strategic understanding of the air battles.

Their chief merit was in providing a human face and dimension to what many people had witnessed over London and the south-east during the Battle, and in understanding something of the young men flying sophisticated fighter aircraft at – for most onlookers – unimaginable speeds. Often written during periods of recovery from injuries or non-operational flying, it is striking that of the seven pilots able to publish during the war, five were

later killed during operations or flying accidents. Given that by the war's end 1,339 of the original 2,917 Few had lost their lives, we therefore have published reminiscences from only 0.37 per cent of the total lost.⁹⁴ From the broader perspective of history the Air Ministry's initial resistance on grounds of preventing a drift to the Great War's cult of the warrior-hero – which they so deplored – can with hindsight be seen as rather short-sighted, post-war memoirs lacking the immediacy and élan of those written whilst the possibility of death in action remained acute.

Of those to be published in 1942, the first to appear after Gleave's 1941 book was by the American Pilot Officer Arthur Donahue, who subsequently flew with 71 'Eagle' Squadron.⁹⁵ Shot down and burnt on 12 August, Donahue probably worked on the book between mid-September and May 1941, either on leave in America, or in quieter operational periods. Released during the autumn of 1941 Donahue's book sold very well in America, no doubt in part because it was the first such account to appear by a US citizen who had volunteered to fight for Britain, despite America's neutrality. Donahue died in combat over the Channel in 1942 and his book remains the only American Battle memoir by one of the Few.

Released at the same time, 19 Squadron's Flight Lieutenant Brian Lane opted for a degree of anonymity by using the pseudonym 'B. J. Ellan', this written when Lane was on staff duties during latter 1941.⁹⁶ Lane would also not survive the war, again being lost over the Channel in 1942.⁹⁷ Four memoirs were published during May–June 1942 by Flight Lieutenant Ian Gleed,⁹⁸ Flying Officer Frank Sutton,⁹⁹ Pilot Officer David Crook,¹⁰⁰ and Pilot Officer Richard Hillary.¹⁰¹ Of these, Gleed probably wrote his book during operational flying in 1941, and was later killed over Tunisia in April 1943;¹⁰² Sutton, who survived the war, had been badly burnt after being shot down on 28 August spending a year in hospital; Crook wrote his book when working as a flying instructor – itself very hazardous – but instead died flying a photographic reconnaissance Spitfire in 1944; and Hillary, easily the most famous of these pilot-authors, had been shot down on 3 September and also badly burnt, thereafter returning to flying only to die in 1943 during a training accident.¹⁰³

Hillary's account of his transformation from an Oxford undergraduate into wounded fighter pilot was internationally successful – including in wartime Germany¹⁰⁴ – his book written in two parts, the latter focusing on his slow and painful recovery having been shot down into the Channel. Hillary's prose captured that which eluded his contemporary pilot-authors, an ability to write poetically and with depth on a subject which to others seemed a perhaps more straightforward clash of arms. As with Rupert Brooke's death during the Great War, Hillary's loss – along with his navigator – in a disputed accident came to represent the lost potential of a second generation to war. Unlike his contemporary pilot-authors Hillary attained a degree of celebrity which included a tour of America and a range of public events and exposure,

though these were not always well-received by mothers and wives anxious about their own loved ones if war came, especially given his scars and reconstructed features.¹⁰⁵

Intelligence Officer Hector Bolitho, a friend and acquaintance to many given his role at the Air Ministry in London, also authored an anonymous account of Flight Lieutenant John Simpson, a fighter pilot who worked for a time in Adastral House.¹⁰⁶ Based on letters between the two, Simpson, who survived the war, was content to allow Bolitho to shape a memoir of his experiences during the Battle. Broadly, given its primacy as a major British victory it is regrettable that so few fighter – or bomber – pilots rendered accounts of their 1940 experiences, or indeed were able to involve those such as Bolitho in 'ghosting' their recollections.

Following 'Blake's' earlier 1941 lead, three novels were published in 1942, the RAF during the Battle a central theme (see Appendix 7.4). Hewes' novel¹⁰⁷ takes a broadly similar approach to Charles Graves' very popular *The Thin Blue Line*, this focusing on nascent fighter and bomber trainees (Plate 8);¹⁰⁸ in the former case four newly-trained fighter pilots arrive at RAF Goudhurst on 5 August 1940, thereafter being rapidly inducted into the world of dogfights. Leaving little room for misinterpretation their new Wing Commander reminds them of their principal responsibility:

[L]astly, you must clearly understand that your job is to do one thing and one thing only: ATTACK. You cannot stop the enemy [and echoing Baldwin] He is going to get through [...] What you must do above all else is to take the maximum toll of his machines – in particular of his bombers. ATTACK, and go on attacking [capitals in original].¹⁰⁹

Thereafter the novel follows a familiar format of repeated aerial clashes with the enemy, periods of waiting at dispersal, off-duty pub visits, romance and creeping exhaustion. 'Blake's' earlier *Readiness at Dawn* followed much the same format, the hermetically sealed life of a fighter pilot allowing only narrow literary scope in seeking fresh angles.

This was reinforced by Moisevitch's novel about fighter pilot 'Boy Hayward', the Battle one aspect of a story also focusing on his affair with a woman he meets in a 'notorious house', the narrative developing these two strands in parallel.¹¹⁰ Portraying dogfights and combat scenes inevitably added bite to any Battle novel, but the human dimension, too, was essential if these were to capture the imagination and allow the reader to experience something of the realities. Fear, a universal quality, offered such a possibility, Moisevitch here seeking to reveal a psychological depth not always present in wartime novels about air combat:

[H]e saw the Me[109] grow larger, ominous. Suddenly he saw it flinch, turn like a ham-strung horse. It was a moment of supreme revelation.

Boy had discovered that his foe was as afraid of him as he was of his foe. But – and that was the test, that was the crucial factor – his foe could not control his fear. Boy could.¹¹¹

Armed with this knowledge he was better able to maintain the exhausting effort required to fight effectively, not in the sense that it gave a technical edge, but more in that to Boy at least, the *Luftwaffe* had lost some of their hitherto potentially morale-sapping veneer as near-invincible warriors. That this Nazi superiority was not so is confirmed in the novel's closing pages where, the RAF now preparing to take the offensive, Boy's friend proclaimed that '[W]e beat them on the Channel, we beat them over Dover, we beat them on the Thames Estuary, we beat them over London'.¹¹² In strategic terms it was nothing less than the truth, the night Blitz a separate campaign that could not of itself create propitious circumstances for invasion. In tandem, as Boy grapples with his relationship, the reader is also reminded that the godlike men so powerfully and positively projected in the media were also, alas, human.

Conversely, a somewhat superhuman character is portrayed by Wing Commander Pelham Groom – actually a Fighter Command staff officer who later wrote the story used for *Angels One Five* (1952) – drawing upon his experience to create Mohune, hitherto a British secret agent, and now serving with the RAF during the time of the invasion threat.¹¹³ The plot has Mohune as a new fighter pilot but he is very soon shot down and captured; identified as a former secret agent he is thence flown to Berlin by the Gestapo and accused of spying, quickly escapes, and returns to England in time for the Blitz. Further japes follow – there is an edge of humour akin to the RAF's infamous Prune¹¹⁴ – in which he pretends to be a German spy, again returns to the RAF and is awarded a DSO.

Attacks on the Channel ports are included¹¹⁵ as is the expected invasion,¹¹⁶ and *Luftwaffe* air assaults are used to divert RAF attention from Stukas which are softening up key targets. Mohune is then engaged in air combats to defend airfields, these reflected through R/T communications, the climax reached as the invasion launches. Churchill urges calm and the attempt fails after a solid week's effort by the 'Hun'. Groom's use of detail confirms insider knowledge of the RAF – as witness his book title¹¹⁷ – its bravura, sense of loyalty and honour manifest throughout the narrative. There are details, too, about the RAF's command-and-control system, this seemingly no longer a closely guarded secret by 1942. Reading like a plot for a film, many nations are involved in the fight and Groom does not shy away from grittier moments: for instance, a woman is viciously beaten and threatened by the Gestapo.

Also related to invasion and adopting a different approach to 1940's *Loss of Eden*, H. V. Morton's *I, James Blunt* portrays a Nazi occupation of Britain based in September 1944, through the vehicle of a diary maintained by a retired tradesman.¹¹⁸ As with *Loss of Eden* this acts as a warning to those

'complacent optimists and wishful thinkers' who imagine that a German occupation could never happen; in this instance a Nazi invasion was successfully mounted in April 1944, Britain's defences caught unawares as it imagined that Hitler was preoccupied in the east.¹¹⁹ Although not focused on the air war which has clearly been fought and lost, it too is a reminder that even in 1942 there was residual anxiety about a sudden invasion, the threat never having wholly subsided despite a by now very different geo-strategic situation. The reality was that any last hope that Hitler may have had for invading Britain was effectively shelved on 17 September 1940, the British thereafter experiencing continuing uncertainty in no small part due to the effectiveness of Nazi propaganda – as Goebbels had intended – aimed at maintaining psychological pressure on Britain.

Of many poems published about the Battle¹²⁰ Gee's *Immortal Few* was an extended tribute in booklet form.¹²¹ The Battle proper is recounted from 'August 1940' in section XVI, its framework taking the pamphlet's chronology as a guide in developing the poem's trajectory. Extensive *Luftwaffe* losses are recounted, as are attacks on identified British targets including shipping and airfields, the invasion the looming threat whose outcome would be decisive. Readers hear of sunny days and glorious country vistas, fields and gardens alive with colours of gold and russet, lone fighters taking on massed hordes in the sparkling blue. Attacks on the RAF being indecisive, the *Luftwaffe* turns to the capital, 15 September in turn witnessing the 'Hun five hundred strong', in increasing terror 'Of our few, our fighting few'. Unable to force a decision, Hitler abandons his daylight attacks, the invasion forgotten too. Its final section (XXVI) takes a longer view of the Few as elderly men, children of a new generation hearing tales of their glory during 1940, the Battle taking its place in the wider spectrum of history, wherein

Surely, never have so many
Owed so much unto so few!¹²²

Edward Shanks offered a poem too, this in a slim volume dedicated to the Few, Arthur Bryant providing an essay on the Battle.¹²³ Extending over four parts Shank's poem similarly adopted a chronological approach: prelude; the fighter pilot speaks; battle; and triumphant threnody. In the Battle section he alludes to the Few:

We waited, trusting in a little band,
We waited, taut and breathing close,
Till, when those vultures came to peck our heart,
Proud as a flight of swans the fighters rose.¹²⁴

Bryant's narrative – and presumably the poem – had appeared in the *Daily Sketch* during late September 1944, his essay discussing the foundations of Fighter Command, the fall of France, Dunkirk, thence the Battle itself.¹²⁵

Following the accepted phasing, Dowding's role as C-in-C is acknowledged, the *Luftwaffe's* failure to defeat the RAF explored in some detail. The fifteenth of September is not identified as a critical date, or indeed mentioned, though much is made of the overall losses inflicted by the RAF. For those familiar with the pamphlet it would be well-known material, but juxtaposed with Shanks' poem had a certain poignancy given the 375 'British pilots' who through their sacrifice had 'saved the world'.¹²⁶

May–June 1945

With official appreciation to the Few confirmed (see Chapter 6), it was not only Churchill and the government who wished to pay tribute to their prowess of 1940. The BBC devoted a week of events to 'Victory programmes' from 10 May to 18 May 1945, the *Radio Times* carrying a range of features, wherein perhaps many agreed with the Archbishop of Canterbury's leading article, '[I]ndeed it is a great deliverance', in which he spoke less of triumph and more of 'preserving the possibilities of civilisation'.¹²⁷ Although not explicitly referred to in the piece, to most readers the Few were clearly associated with saving Britain in 1940. Similarly, *Their Finest Hour* was one of a series of programmes which included the RAF, this aired on 15 May and also the focus of a piece in the *Radio Times* which narrated a Manston fighter pilot's defence of a convoy on 8 August 1940: 'the Battle of Britain was their first and probably their most brilliant effort against a ruthless and, on paper, immensely superior force'.¹²⁸ Also broadcast on 14 May in *Now It Can Be Told* was the *Invasion of 1940*: 'what really happened, told by various soldiers and civilians concerned', and offering a counterpoint had the RAF been beaten.¹²⁹

During the following week on 22 May, the series *Now It Can Be Told* this time revealed a little of the RAF's command-and-control system used during the air battles. Linking the Battle to the threat posed by the Spanish Armada 357 years earlier the announcer intoned, '[T]he Battle of Britain, another very narrow shave that turned into a war-winning victory'. Fighter Controller Wing Commander Ronald Adams – aka 'Blake' – narrated *The Battle of Britain* feature, which ran for over thirteen minutes and for the first time revealed the existence of the integrated fighter control network.¹³⁰ An evocative piece, in addition to explaining the system it also reinforced the understated heroism of the exhausted 'boys', the overwhelming might of the *Luftwaffe*, and the grim implications had the Few failed in their efforts. Affirming Churchill's epigraph, of the *Luftwaffe* he concluded, the RAF had 'thrashed his hordes with a handful of fighter pilots'.

The newsreels similarly quickly captured the relief and delight of victory in Europe, Pathé Gazette's Victory Edition released on 10 May 1945 saluting Britain and its allies.¹³¹ A retrospective began with Dunkirk and the fighting spirit of the returning soldiers, overwhelmed by heavy odds:

[T]hey and the Few, the glorious unforgettable Few of the Battle of Britain. Men, whom numbers could not daunt. Who clawed the enemy out of the skies, and were Britain's living shield during the months when she stood alone and seemingly defenceless.

Newsreel footage of pilots at dispersal, bomber formations, Spitfires, and piles of wrecked aircraft duly reminded viewers of the events of 1940. Seen in the context of the war as a whole it was necessarily brief.

Although first screened publicly after the end of the war in Europe in June 1945, *The Way to the Stars* (Two Cities, UK, June 1945, 109 mins.) was a wartime production started in 1944.¹³² Focusing on the bomber war the film begins in 1940 during the Battle itself, with a briefly portrayed daylight attack on the airfield which is seen off by three Hurricanes attached to the airfield for local defence. As bombs are dropped and personnel seek protection in shelters one airman notes that fifty people were killed in a shelter at 'Marsden' airfield, perhaps an allusion to Manston, a coastal Kent fighter base which suffered repeated attacks. One Hurricane executes a victory roll as it returns to the airfield, a bomber pilot commenting in response: '[L]ine shoot. These fighter types you know, top button undone, victory rolls, bad show I think', then, after a pause, '[M]ind you, I'm not saying they're not doing a good job at the moment'. Thereafter, the film focuses wholly on the Battle of the Barges (see Chapter 3), and the later Strategic Air Offensive.

A highly successful box office hit, one reviewer said of it that '[S]o many pompous things have been said about the Battle of Britain that the imagination shies from it. This film makes it possible to dwell on it again.'¹³³ Given the very brief focus on the 'fighter boys' this was a slightly surprising view unless one also includes Bomber Command's attacks on the barge concentrations as being properly part of the Battle. Given the whole span of the war the film did place the Battle in its appropriate context given the enormity of the subsequent combined RAF and USAAF bomber offensive. War-weary viewers would perhaps have appreciated being reminded of the less complicated world they knew before the Blitz in the summer of 1940, when it appeared a straightforward, almost chivalrous fight for survival.

Firm foundations for the post-war age

Discussed previously, although the British Air Ministry had doubts about the accuracy of claim figures these reservations were not publicly expressed during wartime. As a consequence, the steady heroising of the Few as the saviours of the free world – the New Elizabethans¹³⁴ – became quickly accepted as immutable fact by the British, and so much so that by the time the actual *Luftwaffe* aircraft losses were released in 1947 it was no longer of any consequence. Although the exact relationship between the RAF's dogged resistance and the abandoned invasion was not entirely clear during the

Battle itself, by early 1941 the Air Ministry was forging this link in respect of Fighter Command, notably to the detriment of both Coastal and Bomber Commands.¹³⁵

Saunders' pamphlet quickly led to a range of creative responses to its main themes, the prevented invasion key among these. A lack of good news from 1941 into late 1942 provided opportunities to remind the British of their glorious deliverance in 1940, this broad approach strikingly also taken by Nazi propagandists struggling to find 'new' good news. For instance, after German successes in the Mediterranean and the faltering Russian advance it became increasingly necessary to recycle earlier victories, the fall of France chief among these. Luckily for the British the tide did indeed turn after latter 1942, the Battle if anything at risk of being eclipsed by later developments. Keenly aware of this and determined to act, the Air Ministry ensured that this did not in fact happen. Thus by war's end a range of 'cold' propaganda material produced during phase five gave enormous credit to the 'fighter boys' in staving off disaster in late 1940, the historical cogency of which was further validated by official Air Ministry commemoration and support for a range of propaganda material, principally feature films such as *The First of the Few*.

Whilst there was some concern during 1942–3 to broaden out the credit to the many (see Chapter 6), this had faded again by May 1945, the BBC further reminding listeners of Fighter Command's pivotal role during 1940. As a whole the wide range of cultural media produced from 1942 to 1945 – building in turn upon that made in 1941 – provided the firm cultural foundations for the settled, dominant narrative that we understand today. It is striking that this was built upon the late-1940 propaganda projected about the RAF's erroneous aircraft claims. This is not to suggest that Fighter – and Bomber – Command's roles were not significant in thwarting the threatened invasion, but it is a reminder that the Air Ministry's propaganda from early 1941 to 1945 was just as significant in framing the subsequent war valorisation of the Battle of Britain, its resonance still very powerful seventy years later.

6

'Air Trafalgar Day': Official Commemorations, 1942–1945

Britain's strategic context 1942–1945

If 1941 was the most significant year in both defining and affirming the context of the Battle as an event, how was this developed from 1942 onwards? As Chapter 5 confirms, propaganda during this phase necessarily responded to events of the moment during both 1940 and 1941, the Battle, although significant in British eyes, nevertheless at some remove given more recent developments, and few of these very heartening. After all, earlier in 1942 there were no victories to celebrate, Britain's run of bad luck seemingly unending; the Japanese attacks on British Empire territories reinforced the sense of gloom, the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942 a major blow to British prestige. This had been preceded on 12 February by the 'Channel Dash', the battle-cruisers *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst* managing to travel through the English Channel despite a major if improvised effort by the British to prevent them.¹ The 'mini-Blitz' also briefly flared through 'Baedeker' reprisal raids for RAF attacks against historic German cities including Lubeck, the first against Exeter taking place on 24 April.² On 21 June 1942 Tobruk surrendered to Rommel's *Afrika Korps*, reinforcing yet further the sense of British military vulnerability. Added to these reverses was the Battle of the Atlantic, high merchant shipping losses aggravating Britain's situation vis-à-vis food and war supplies.

Thus, the first six months of 1942 were dispiriting, the need to sustain morale and affirm the prospects for an eventual victory, pressing. The latter half of 1942 was less grim, the victory at El Alamein in November the first major British and commonwealth military success since the war had begun over three years earlier.³ By mid-1943 it was evident that the tide had turned in the Allies' favour, the Stalingrad surrender on 31 January a major reversal for the *Wehrmacht*, this in turn presaging a series of withdrawals and setbacks as Hitler was increasingly besieged from the south and east. Although suffering significant casualties Bomber Command was engaged with the Strategic Air Offensive, the results of which have remained contentious.⁴

Also attracting widespread interest was the Dambusters' raid on 16–17 May 1943, this representing a propaganda coup for Bomber Command as it published images of the breached Möhne Dam, near the town of Soest.⁵ Allied offensives in the Mediterranean resulted in Italy's surrender on 3 September 1943, which, although knocking one adversary out of the war did not prevent hard fighting as Field Marshal Kesselring's – a former *Luftlotte* commander during the Battle – forces were pushed northwards.

D-Day on 6 June 1944 marked the opening of the western front as Allied forces landed in Normandy thence pushing eastwards against determined, dogged *Wehrmacht* resistance. There were reverses too: the British home front suffered a renewed Blitz as V1 and V2 weapons rained down on the south-east, this reviving memories of four years earlier.⁶ By the end of 1944 it was, however, clear that on both the western and eastern fronts, Germany was in serious difficulty, the end of the war not now far off as her infrastructure, war-making capacity and civilian population bore the brunt of overwhelming Allied air and land superiority.

Re-enchanting the Battle of Britain

Inevitably, in this shifting strategic picture from January 1942 until early 1945 the Battle faded as a major event in the face of new developments and triumphs. Whereas the Battle had been principally an RAF success in the narrow sense of a clash of arms – and undoubtedly its most spectacular since being formed from the Royal Flying Corps in April 1918 – the British Army and Royal Navy were now also the focus of considerable propaganda effort.⁷ Not unreasonably, these successes were exploited much in the manner that the Air Ministry had achieved in 1941 with its pamphlet, the more senior services realising that the RAF's 'Writer Command' could only be contained with comparable propaganda material about land and sea campaigns. Moreover, the insatiable demand for men, materiel and other resources made it useful to propagandise success in advance of discussions concerning financial settlements for each armed service.⁸

Such demands did not, however, always coincide with an intelligent approach to strategic planning. As an illustration of poor leadership at the head of Fighter Command, its ongoing 'leaning into France' offensive was one example of the need for pilots and aircraft, this campaign's successful execution proclaimed despite the evidence for any significant strategic gains in pursuing this wasteful policy. In reality the bulk of *Luftwaffe* units had, during the earlier part of 1941, been relocated either to the east, or were in the Mediterranean and North African theatres, the RAF thereafter actually tackling an elite but modest force held back in northern France. Other than for satisfying the vanity of senior RAF commanders it was then hard to see any value in continuing these costly air battles over occupied France, except perhaps for training green pilots. From a British perspective these fighter

assets would have been far more useful on Malta or in North Africa, but this was not prioritised until matters became desperate, especially in respect of the former. By then, many experienced RAF fighter pilots – including Battle veterans – had been shot down in duels with Fw190s, the 'Butcher Bird' outclassing the Spitfire Mk. V during the earlier period of this campaign; for instance, both Bader and Stanford Tuck became PoWs in 1941, but in their cases through a possible friendly fire accident, and enemy ground fire, respectively. Thus, based on erroneous claims – and mirroring the *Luftwaffe's* over-claiming in late 1940 – Fighter Command insisted on being given the resources to continue these operations, the Battle used as an illustration of how effective it was in taking on the enemy air force.

Having done so much in 1941 first to construct the Battle as a clear entity, thence to support its consolidation through books, films, art and other propaganda ventures, the Air Ministry was not therefore about to relinquish the hard-won internal 'propaganda' advantages it had gained. Not content to let matters lie, from 1942 onwards in addition to its support for 'cold' propaganda, the Air Ministry also acted to promote an annual Battle of Britain Service of Thanksgiving, a Battle of Britain Day, and the memorial in Westminster Abbey. All of these initiatives came from motivated senior officers in the Air Ministry, much of the correspondence generated affirming the benefits both to morale – whether RAF or home front – and also in keeping the RAF's reputation at a high pitch, indicative of a determination to maintain and develop its status. The other effect of establishing these annual events and creating the memorial was that the Battle was thus elevated to a victory of almost supernatural importance, divine intervention a near-palpable element.⁹ The pamphlet having first established the Battle as a major event, it was perhaps thereafter only a small step to national remembrance and annual thanksgiving akin to the Battle of Trafalgar or Waterloo.

There were, though, contradictions at the heart of the Air Ministry's determination to elevate the Battle to such a majestic position in the national consciousness. The most obvious was that in the mid-war years it was not as yet possible to view the Battle in its exact broader strategic context. Despite Churchill's late-1940 rhetoric to the effect that the Few had saved Britain from invasion, it would not be until 1947 before corroborative evidence of Hitler's and OKW thinking came to light in respect of doubts about German air superiority over the invasion armada and beachheads, and the decision on 17 September 1940 to postpone *Sea Lion*, following 15 September (see Appendix 1 and Chapter 8).

Equally, it was not yet at all clear in say, July 1942, as discussed below – when an annual event was first proposed to mark 15 September – exactly how Britain's survival during 1940 might be central to eventual victory, America only having joined the war seven months earlier.¹⁰ The best that could actually be said in 1942 was that on balance, Fighter Command and the RAF's bomber attacks against the barge concentrations had given Hitler

and the OKW sufficient pause not to attempt the invasion in 1940.¹¹ Britain had then just remained in the war, but this was also arguably due to the untested might of the Royal Navy, home front resolve, factory output of munitions, and the threat posed by a now prepared British Army. For the same reasons the Air Ministry could not lay sole claim to having dissuaded Hitler from considering an invasion in mid-1941, but as with the Royal Navy, this was an undetermined premise.¹²

Another aspect necessitating delicate handling was that if the Battle was to be further valorised, how should Dowding's role as the victorious commander be addressed? Given the rather acrimonious manner in which he had been removed, followed by Park, it was no easy matter to remedy this in the sense of a narrative which shone a positive light on the Air Ministry on the one hand, but deftly ignored Dowding on the other; inconveniently, the former C-in-C's increasing interest in spiritualism was causing some disquiet.¹³ The 1941 pamphlet had sought to do so simply by ignoring both men, but this might become more difficult as the public reflected more on the Battle and wondered about the curious anonymity of the RAF's commanders responsible for such exceptional leadership.¹⁴ After all, previous victories including Trafalgar and Waterloo were very quick to proclaim the importance of Nelson and Wellington, as was also the case with El Alamein and 'Monty' in late 1942.

Aside from the benefits already identified above, an added advantage in further promoting the Battle was to spread the credit to include those more peripherally involved, but again, this meant giving Dowding and Park centre stage lest the jealousy and cliquism which had so incensed Churchill in early 1941 become publicly visible.¹⁵ Thus, although there were clear reasons to continue to promote the Battle as a major victory, caution was also required. The Air Ministry therefore trod a careful path in its efforts to fashion an official series of commemorative events, the apotheosis reached with the privately proposed Battle of Britain memorial window in Westminster Abbey.

The Battle of Britain scroll

It is *just* possible that the Air Ministry's focus on establishing a formal event to commemorate the Battle of Britain Day was indirectly suggested by Captain James Ingram, the proprietor of *The Illustrated London News'* proposition that a scroll be created which recorded the names of the Few.¹⁶ Writing to Archibald Sinclair, Secretary of State for Air, on 9 July 1942, Ingram felt that a permanent record of those involved should be preserved and perhaps held in Westminster Abbey. Discussed below, only two days later, Air Vice-Marshal Sir Richard Peck, as ACAS(G), the overall head of Air Ministry public relations, first raised the idea of commemorating 15 September 1940. If this was indeed the case Ingram's letter must have been quickly circulated to members of the Air Council, or mentioned in

passing to Peck. On offer was a proposal from Ingram to pay for a scroll, inscribed in gold leaf by a leading calligraphist with the names of those who flew during the Battle – both living and dead – in its most crucial period. Ingram compared the Battle's importance to Waterloo and Trafalgar, suggesting to Sinclair that if he obliged with details of those taking part it would be a fitting expression of gratitude to those who had prevented invasion.¹⁷

Sinclair, although very appreciative, took six weeks to reply but did confirm that the Air Council had considered the proposal.¹⁸ It had in fact met on 19 August and whilst welcoming the offer was far less clear as to how it might work in practice. For instance, should staff officers and ground crews on fighter squadrons also be included? As a sign of the shifting apportioning of credit for the Battle it was noted that the RAF as a whole had contributed, the glorification of only one part of the service to be avoided; including only those who had died was therefore seen as the least controversial solution.¹⁹ None of this was initially revealed to Ingram, Sinclair instead suggesting that he might talk to the Air Member for Personnel, Air Marshal Sir Bertine Sutton, about his proposal. Ingram's next letter confirmed that he had indeed met with Sutton but that 'there were some difficulties which must be got over', this focusing principally on recording those killed in action.²⁰

Ingram's view, however, was that the scroll would be a valuable historical document for the future and must therefore be comprehensive in nature. Anticipating the discussions which would later be the focus of much interest and energy, he felt that a record of all units involved was essential, but that those left out would no doubt lobby for inclusion.²¹ In closing, Ingram confirmed that – as Sutton had indicated – it was for Sinclair to support the idea of all names being included, hence Ingram's second letter to request this. In response Sinclair believed that it would be an unjustifiable distraction to seek to identify all those who had flown, but also anticipated that even in peacetime when the Air Ministry and RAF was under less pressure, it would be challenging to get it right:

[I]t is not only a matter of looking up names in records; we should have to ascertain what pilots from distant Squadrons were detached to take part in the battle and even what pilots in units concerned actually took part in the fighting. Some may have been sick, others for reasons beyond their control may not have taken part in the actual fighting.²²

Ingram was asked to accept – the by now firm Air Ministry view – that only 'those fighter pilots and air gunners in fighter squadrons who were killed in the Battle of Britain' be included, eventually finalised as a figure of 449 Fighter Command aircrew lost between 10 July and 31 October 1940.²³ Ingram, recognising that he could get no further for the moment accepted Sinclair's suggestion and work began thereafter on compiling the list, this involving Air-Chief Marshal Sir William Sholto Douglas and Air

Vice-Marshal Trafford L. Leigh-Mallory.²⁴ A list of aircrew names having been provided and confirmed, the Battle of Britain Memorial Committee included as its members both Lord Trenchard and Lord Dowding, both of whom had been asked by the Air Ministry and Captain Ingram to assume responsibility for the scope of the Roll of Honour. Several permutations were discussed, the main parameters being that in all cases the list must be confined to those either killed or mortally wounded in the air from 10 July to 31 October 1940. The possibilities considered were:

- A. Aircrew of the R.A.F, in Fighter Command; [the original 448 names]
- B. Aircrews based on England, engaged against the German Air Force;
- C. A list in two parts:-
 - (i) Aircrews posted or attached to Fighter Command squadrons serving in Fighter Command;
 - (ii) Aircrew posted or attached:
 - (1) to other operational units based on land aerodromes in the United Kingdom, or
 - (2) to non-operational units so based, if on flights expressly undertaken against the enemy.²⁵

The decision was taken to adopt option C, in which case a total list of some 1,460 RAF aircrew and 30 Fleet Air Arm names would be included. As this was perhaps more than anticipated by Ingram – a practical consideration being the time required by calligraphist Daisy Alcock to produce the scroll – it was decided to seek his views. It had taken over one and a half years to reach this point, Ingram's scroll not finally appearing publicly until exactly five years later when King George VI unveiled the Battle of Britain memorial window on 10 July 1947. As an aside, whatever hopes the Air Council had had in 1943 for a broader recognition of the role played by the RAF's various Commands during the Battle had been subjugated to a focus on the Few, the scroll almost anachronistic in recording Bomber and Coastal Command aircrew lost, these by now otherwise wholly eclipsed insofar as perceptions of the latter-1940 air battles were concerned.

'The Greatest Day'

Aside from the wider political considerations and sensitivities noted previously, several senior officers in the Air Ministry itself were keen to formalise commemorative and thanksgiving events in order to keep Britain's sole victory against Germany since war began in the public mind. Noted above, one such was Sir Richard Peck, as ACAS(G), the most senior RAF officer concerned with public relations, and working for Air Chief Marshall Sir Charles Portal as CAS, the Chief of the Air Staff. Therein, he was able to propose events designed to enhance the RAF's reputation, the Battle an obvious focus for official activity.

Previously, the National Day of Prayer events on 8 September 1940, thence 7 September 1941, had established the principle of the monarchy, government and the public coming together in church services across the country, thus providing an established model for future events. With this in mind – and presumably also aware of Captain Ingram's suggestion regarding the scroll – Peck wrote to the Private Secretary to Archibald Sinclair, Secretary of State for Air, on 11 July 1942 – almost exactly two years since the revised dates of the official Battle had been deemed to have begun.²⁶ In a brief, secret memorandum Peck suggested 'we should commemorate on September 15th, our victory, and our deliverance, in the Battle of Britain'. This date – reinforced in Saunders' pamphlet – was noted as 'the greatest day on which we fetched down our record number of enemy aircraft'.²⁷

Having first made this suggestion he then confessed to being a 'bit puzzled' as to how best to commemorate the event; perhaps an Air Training Corps parade, a handout, an article, newsreel coverage, and prayer services on all RAF bases? The Sunday nearest to 15 September was proposed as the appropriate date. Added to the foot of Peck's memorandum is a reply from Sinclair's Private Secretary, R. H. Melville, to the effect that VCAS, Vice-Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Wilfrid Freeman, was not keen at the present time, but he believed these to be practical objections. As a result Melville 'hesitated' to submit it before Sinclair at that time. The Private Secretary felt, moreover, 'it was inviting nemesis if we were to celebrate deliverance while the war is still on'.²⁸ As with most of the subsequent discussions there is no reference to the roles played by Bomber and Coastal Commands, or an indication as to why their collective contribution had been deemed irrelevant insofar as the Battle of Britain victory was concerned.

Melville – not concerned with this specific omission – had, however, been right to anticipate Freeman's objections, the latter – clearly aware of Peck's suggestion – writing directly to Portal that 'I think this is all wrong. The time to commemorate victories is when the war is won. I hope you won't agree with [Peck's] proposal.'²⁹ Portal's response is not in the file but the following day, and perhaps realising – as eventually was the case – that he was out of step with broader Air Ministry opinion, Freeman made a stronger objection directly to Peck, arguing that

[T]he historical precedents for self-congratulatory celebrations in the middle of a war are not very happy. Belshazzar held a banquet while the enemy were outside his gate: he lost his throne the same night. I do not suggest that any such consequences would necessarily follow from a church parade of the A.T.C., but the principle [...] seems to me very questionable. The so-called Battle of Britain consisted of a series of successful defensive operations by Fighter Command. It is true that the R.A.F. then saved this country from defeat, but in my view it is a misuse of words to

refer to ‘our victory’ or ‘our deliverance’. Victories can only be won by offensive action; and deliverance must be permanent to give much cause for junketing.³⁰

He concluded with the concern that once having allowed this celebration to go ahead, where would matters stop? To this end Freeman ‘contemplate[d] with dismay a future in which the active prosecution of the war [was] almost crowded out by prayers, thanksgivings and parades’. He felt, perhaps reasonably under the circumstances, that the effort should instead be focused on translating ‘victory’ and ‘deliverance’ into more concrete outcomes. Peck’s response is not held in the Air Ministry files but there can be little doubt that even though he would have disagreed with Freeman this was perhaps not an issue to cross swords over, especially given the latter’s influence with Portal;³¹ and possibly the fact that the Battle had only been concluded one year and some seven months previously, its significance not as clear to everyone.

There matters appeared to lie until Sir Bertine Sutton tabled a ‘note’ – perhaps at Peck’s direct behest – ten weeks later.³² This detailed paper addressed to the Air Council considered how best to celebrate the Battle, suggesting that a subcommittee be established to further consider this. In arguing that ‘discipline, morale and leadership’ within the RAF would benefit from effort in this direction, it is possible that morale was at a lower ebb than desired during this period, Bomber Command suffering losses as the offensive against Germany continued to build, and Fighter Command operating in north-west Europe, in need of a new role now that the threat of invasion and bomber attacks had passed.³³ Sutton’s contention that the Air Council, having done nothing regarding 15 September 1942 – ‘neglected this opportunity, and thereby lost most important benefits’ – lay at the root of his concerns.

Chief among these was the need to reaffirm the importance of air superiority in both the government and the public’s mind and, as noted, to sustain morale and quality leadership within the RAF. Of particular concern to Sutton was the hard lesson learned by the British Army in the aftermath of the Great War, which, having achieved victories in France and Palestine did not capitalise on these, thereafter suffering in the rapid post-war contraction. Concerned that the Battle offered just such a moment upon which to secure greater resources, he noted ‘[w]e may now be missing our opportunity. We should strike before the iron gets cold.’ It was also suggested – optimistically given Britain’s current state – that such a ceremony would ‘have a far-reaching effect on the status of the Service after the war’. In this it is clear that Sutton judged the situation correctly.

Sutton had in fact been inspired by a speech which reinforced the efforts made by the Royal Canadian Air Force to build and sustain morale, the lack of any comparable effort on the part of the RAF to be regretted. Examples to be deplored included Dowding’s appearance in the popular

press – complete with umbrella and bowler hat – alongside the Few (see Plate 9), and the lukewarm reception of Ingram's offer regarding the Battle scroll, discussed above. Interestingly, Sutton argued that the Battle was – and especially 15 September 1940 – being compared in importance to Waterloo and Trafalgar, though the root of this could just as easily be shown to be the Air Ministry's pamphlet published only eighteen months previously.³⁴

Whatever the merits of the case insofar as the Air Council were concerned, Churchill was not interested in formalising 15 September as a date for celebrating the Battle when asked for his view in the Commons only five days later:

Sir Henry Morris-Jones asked the Prime Minister whether he will recommend that 15th September each year be officially designated as Air Trafalgar Day, or such appropriate name, to commemorate the deeds of the Royal Air Force in the Battle of Britain.

The Prime Minister: I am not inclined at this stage of the war to make the particular recommendation of the kind suggested by the Hon. Member. His Majesty's Government do not, of course, wish to discourage any spontaneous form of commemoration or ceremony to mark such anniversaries.³⁵

Whether Sutton had suggested the idea to Morris-Jones, or another member of the Air Council had had the same idea, Churchill at this stage clearly did not see the merit but was not prepared to say why; mindful of a general lack of military success, he may have had the same reservations expressed earlier by Freeman. This view was also reinforced in a brief memorandum to the Air Council by Sir Arthur Street, the Permanent Under-Secretary, which repeated the above information verbatim and as we have seen, did in fact accord with the latter's opinion.³⁶ Perhaps Churchill was also mindful of the by now large Bomber Command losses, and sensitive to issues of morale if Fighter Command was again the focus for a significant national tribute.

For the moment, given these rebuffs there was nothing to do but await a more propitious moment, and to instead work with the organisers of the forthcoming Civil Defence Day as these plans developed. Formally announced in *The Times* on 31 October 1942, it was confirmed that King George VI had approved plans for this to be staged on 15 November 1942 – also the second anniversary of the attack on Coventry, overnight on 14–15 November – the aim being to commemorate the defeat of the *Luftwaffe's* attacks against Britain during 1940–1, and also to specifically recognise the deeds of the Civil Defence Services in helping to tackle the effects of the Blitz.³⁷

It was stressed that the event was not intended to commemorate an attack on any specific place, but rather the effects of the bombing across cities and countryside. Equally, it was not a celebration of the RAF's role during

the Battle. This was confirmed in reporting of the event which included a formal parade, followed by a service in St Paul's Cathedral during which the emphasis was on the 'Many', comprising medical, fire and police services, the ARP, the WVS, bomb disposal and others working to alleviate the impact of bombing in civilian areas.³⁸ The RAF were represented but only modestly, and as one of many services including anti-aircraft personnel.³⁹ By late 1942 it seems clear that there was no appetite outside of the Air Ministry to take forward a specific event focusing principally on the Battle, memories still raw about the devastation wrought during the Blitz and high death rate amongst civilians in London and other targeted centres of population.⁴⁰ Compared with the modest losses of fighter pilots during the Battle it was hard to disagree, probably reflecting views within the coalition government about formally recognising the contribution of the many to victory during 1940.

Battle of Britain Sunday 1943–1944

It was to be almost nine months before the Battle of Britain celebration proposals resurfaced, Britain's prospects looking much brighter following Montgomery's victory at El Alamein in late 1942. The focus of considerable propaganda, this may have unsettled some in the Air Ministry – including Sutton and Peck – as there had been no comparable propaganda equal to the Battle as a major RAF victory other than the very different Dambusters' raid on 16–17 May 1943.⁴¹ Sutton's concern of the previous September may, therefore, have begun to resonate more strongly, leading to an initiative by Lord Sherwood to propose a meeting on 19 June 1943.

Despite the previously lukewarm attitude of the Air Council, the invitation's recipients were told that he was 'anxious to begin consideration of the arrangements for the celebration of the anniversary of the Battle of Britain this year'.⁴² This subcommittee meeting was attended by seven senior Ministry officials including Peck, and may have been promoted by Sutton as the Air Member for Personnel, the floor being quickly given to him to make his case.⁴³ Developing his theme from the previous year, he argued that a formal event to mark the Battle was desirable, a view held both within and outwith the RAF. Two aims should be pursued he suggested, the first being to celebrate the RAF's victory, the second to give national thanksgiving which might extend to a wreath-laying event at the Cenotaph. Sutton was also concerned about adverse press coverage, specifically noting the lack of any Air Council members at a Battle thanksgiving service at Westminster Abbey during 1942.⁴⁴

Striking a discordant note, Sir Arthur Street, mindful that others had contributed to the Battle and perhaps preferring the less contentious status quo, argued that an event should also include the Civil Defence Services as had been the focus during the previous national event in November. He resisted the idea of an 'Air Force Day', arguing that it would be unwise to fix on 15 September as '*Der Tag*' for such a formal event, as there might be other days

to come which might yet be more worthy of being viewed as the RAF's finest achievement. Thus, within this influential subcommittee it was clear that views were somewhat polarised about how best to proceed, those in uniform arguing for an RAF-focused event, but Street, also a seasoned political operator, more sensitive to opinion outside of the Air Ministry.⁴⁵

Despite his reservations the meeting concluded with a decision to put a report to the Air Council suggesting an event on 15 September which would include a Cenotaph wreath-laying, services at RAF stations, and a BBC broadcast by Sinclair. For 19 September, the nearest Sunday to 15 September, it was also suggested that a formal thanksgiving service be held, this to be attended by members of the Air Council. In proposing these events they were also mindful of criticism made during 1942, presumably including Freeman's resistance to commemorating a defensive victory, when much still remained to be achieved by Britain's armed forces in offensive terms.

These proposals quickly translated into agreeing the value of a second meeting – also suggesting permission to continue the discussions from the Air Council – and this time with nine attendees, Lord Sherwood again chairing.⁴⁶ Street did not attend but both Peck and Sutton, their ambition for a formal event now clearly in the ascendant, ensured that momentum was maintained. They were also perhaps mindful that there were only some ten weeks in which to organise a formal event including more focus on the Battle itself. In essence, the meeting discussed and agreed with Home Secretary Herbert Morrison's concern that the parade should take place near Buckingham Palace rather than St Paul's, this principally because of the greater ease of allowing a long parade to march past to take the King's salute; this had proved more difficult outside St Paul's during the previous Civil Defence Day, as indeed had fitting all paraders into the cathedral thereafter. The nineteenth of September was agreed as the proposed date for the event, the Archbishop of Canterbury to decide on the service venue. It was also asked that factory workers be included to reflect the importance of the aircraft industry in making victory possible during 1940.

What is also clear from these minutes is that the Air Ministry had managed to manoeuvre itself into a more central position vis-à-vis decisions about the next formal national event. Correspondence with both the Home Office and Home Security had been entered into very quickly following the 25 June meeting, the subsequent event including two representatives from these, whereas the previous meeting had been a wholly internal Air Ministry matter. Thus, at a stroke the Air Ministry had laid the foundations for what would quickly become an event focused solely on an elite within Fighter Command; the Ministry of Home Security either did not anticipate this, or was content to allow the Air Ministry its head.

Further reinforcement of the altered position came in a full Air Council meeting which considered the subcommittee's proposals, including Sinclair, Freeman, Sutton and Lord Sherwood.⁴⁷ Notwithstanding securing agreement

from external bodies this was perhaps the single most important meeting insofar as formalising a national day to commemorate the Battle was concerned. It did not begin auspiciously, Freeman remaining unconvinced about the need for an 'Air Force Day', and arguing instead that RAF personnel could achieve the desired result simply by taking part in other events. More broadly, Sinclair – the Air Ministry head and politician with the power to decide, however graciously wielded – noted that the date of the next Civil Defence Day had been moved forward to 5 September, the Sunday nearest to 7 September when the Blitz began and first drew upon the Civil Defence in strength, this decision taken by the Ministry of Home Security. Sinclair, agreeing with both Street and Freeman's views, felt it would be better to participate in this event rather than having a separate Royal Air Force Day (as distinct from an event focusing upon Fighter Command), thus ensuring that the RAF still had a high profile and were included in a wider rejoicing with the public. Obviously, an added benefit, although not aired in the minutes, was that it then fell to someone else to do the organising, rather than the Air Ministry. Next, the meeting reflected on what this event might be called, and whether the Civil Defence authorities would agree to a name change; Sinclair suggested 'Battle of Britain Day', but presumably in the sense of a much wider and all-embracing focus as originally intended by Churchill in his 18 June 1940 oratory.⁴⁸

Responding to Sutton's anxiety to hold discrete RAF events on 15 September, Sinclair confirmed his previous view that the RAF should go along with the Civil Defence Day, but agreed that it could stage separate 'domestic' services on its bases. The discussion then considered the undoubtedly tedious prospects of organising parades at individual RAF stations, many commanders averse to these but more likely to cooperate with a formal event on or near 15 September. This led to Freeman's suggesting that 'it would be a pity if the Royal Air Force did not take a prominent part in the Day of Thanksgiving', a subtle but significant shift from his earlier position wherein he had simply suggested RAF participation, perhaps through a token presence and the Air Training Corps. The flying of the RAF Ensign on government buildings was also discussed, this proposal a matter unlikely to result in significant disagreement.

The meeting concluded with Sinclair confirming that he was not the best person to undertake a BBC broadcast, the former or present Fighter Command C-in-C, better placed.⁴⁹ More telling was Sinclair's concern that 'too great an emphasis on the part played by Fighter Command in the Battle of Britain was to be avoided' in such a broadcast, but it is not recorded as to why this should be, or whether Sinclair felt that this equally applied to the actual commemorative event. It was, of course, the case that the Air Ministry represented all branches of the RAF, a focus on Fighter Command perhaps now more difficult given the previously understated role of both Bomber and Coastal Commands in the 'Battle of the Barges' since 1940,

and the sacrifices and war records of both Commands as the war had progressed.⁵⁰ An additional factor to which Sinclair may have been privy was the imminent release in August of a more substantial booklet on the Battle, this written by Albert Goodwin who had previously undertaken the original research for Saunders' pamphlet (see Chapter 4).⁵¹ Goodwin's narrative took a broader view of the Battle and those who had contributed to it, the laurels spread a little more evenly, though still principally focusing on Fighter Command.

Clearly, from a public perspective it was not now possible to revise the Battle by releasing an amended version of Saunders' original narrative, but it may have reflected views within the RAF that Fighter Command had been unfairly given too much credit, service morale perhaps affected. In this sense Goodwin's publication was in fact the last official attempt to 'reset' the context of the Battle, but was intended primarily for issue within the RAF, wherein it was clearly desirable to give some credit to all Commands involved.⁵² The booklet did not in fact result in any significant change of opinion within the Air Ministry that challenged the increasingly settled view that Fighter Command alone had decided events in September 1940.

In any event the Air Council meeting's decisions confirmed impressive progress from the previous year's position. Chief among these was that 'the Battle of Britain should be commemorated by the holding of a Day of National Thanksgiving, in which the Royal Air Force and Air Training Corps should participate, to be arranged in conjunction with the Civil Defence Services'. Additionally, RAF stations would commemorate the Battle with services and flag events on 15 September. The BBC would also be asked to arrange a broadcast. Although not an outright acceptance of the original proposals, Peck, Sutton and Lord Sherwood had in fact largely achieved their aims, Freeman reluctantly acquiescing to the inevitable logic of a major publicity and propaganda opportunity for the RAF. From here – and once having persuaded the organisers of the Civil Defence Day of the merits of a shared event – it was thereafter a straightforward matter for the RAF to dominate the thanksgiving service from September 1944 onwards. Lord Sherwood, Peck and Sutton can therefore be rightly acknowledged for their roles in putting in place another building block of the aura developing around the Few and the Battle.

Given a previous reluctance to develop a Battle of Britain Day this was a curious volte-face, but perhaps reflected an improving war situation, the celebration of earlier victories no longer a sensitive issue. Noted previously, the Air Council might also have belatedly heeded Sutton's advice that the Air Ministry should adopt a more proactive approach if it was to benefit from what was undoubtedly the RAF's most stunning – and easily propagandised – success to date. A determination to broaden out credit for the Battle beyond the 'fighter boys' alone – e.g. RAF-focused events – seemingly made it possible to secure support from hitherto resistant senior

officers, but this did not translate into practical action in the first and subsequent Battle of Britain Day events. In any case, several factors appeared to coalesce in favour of an official event involving the RAF, presumably now also viewed more supportively by Churchill.

Events moved quickly thereafter, the Air Ministry wasting little time in seeking the BBC's assistance. In a confidential letter to Cecil McGivern, the producer of both the *Spitfires over Britain* and *Battle of Britain* radio plays, Squadron Leader Atherton of PR4 in the Air Ministry's Directorate of Public Relations, confirmed in response to a letter from McGivern that it had been suggested that 19 September would be the day for the official parades. Atherton asked that the BBC consider a broadcast on 18 September, within which '[I]t is considered very desirable that your feature should include flashes of activities of the R.O.C., Civil Defence, Anti-Aircraft, and M.A.P. factories which were strong contributory factors in the success of the Battle of Britain'.⁵³ Other discussions within the BBC were also mindful of the importance of the Battle into the future, the director of the BBC's Pacific Service confirming to a Mrs Spicer that, 'I believe the day itself will be a great anniversary when we are all dead and forgotten. For so long now we have made the point, and rightly I think, that the battle of Britain saved the world. Therefore I think we have to recognise it in an emphatic manner.'⁵⁴

Official sanction for the proposed merger of the Civil Defence Day with the Air Ministry's Battle of Britain Day came from King George VI on 3 August 1943, the monarch raising no objection to this change of emphasis in response to a letter from Herbert Morrison, and which agreed a later date of 26 September.⁵⁵ Official confirmation of the event affirmed that 'Battle of Britain Sunday' would commemorate the air battles collectively known as the Battle of Britain, but also the series of night attacks which followed, these involving the RAF, anti-aircraft batteries, the Royal Observer Corps, Civil Defence Services, and aircraft workers.⁵⁶ The twenty-sixth of September had been chosen rather than the previously proposed 19 September, because it fell during the most decisive phase of the Battle, the celebrations to take place across Britain. *The Times'* article confirming these details noted that the event was not intended to lay emphasis on any specific date, raid, or series of raids. It was acknowledged that the initial attacks in 1940 were aimed at supporting an invasion, followed by attacks on the morale of the civilian population.⁵⁷ At this juncture it is clear that all Commands of the RAF involved in the Battle and Blitz were to stand shoulder to shoulder with civil defence organisations.

Battle of Britain Sunday on 26 September 1943 itself attracted large crowds in London and across the United Kingdom,⁵⁸ many smaller celebrations also taking place including seventy-five in the capital alone.⁵⁹ More than 3,000 marchers paraded along the Mall, RAF, Civil Defence, and factory workers all represented, the Few sharing the parade with aircrews from Coastal and Bomber Commands. Portal and Dowding were present in St Paul's, and both were identified as 'architects of victory', the former rightly acknowledged

for his leadership of Bomber Command throughout the Battle of the Barges. The service followed a formal parade, the emphasis overall to ensure that all involved received credit for Britain's survival in 1940, the Few one of many groups to receive adulatory tributes.⁶⁰

Aircrew from the commonwealth, Poland and Czechoslovakia were also represented, this reinforcing the multi-national nature of the RAF during the year of greatest challenge. Interestingly, *The Times'* coverage of the event noted that the Battle had run from 8 August to 31 October 1940, these dates having been superseded insofar as Air Ministry evaluations of the air battles were concerned; it ended with a piece on the heroism of Polish pilots during the Battle.⁶¹ The BBC broadcast several features on 26 September, the day settled upon for Battle of Britain Sunday: Group Captain Peel recollected his experiences during the Battle, supplemented with those of a ground crewman, thus reflecting an anxiety to broaden out the credit. Reports of the parade were also broadcast, as was a separate service from Wembley.

Less than a year later the focus of the event had undergone a significant shift in emphasis, the 'fighter boys' preventing invasion now the key theme. The seventeenth of September 1944 saw Battle of Britain Sunday held at Westminster Abbey, where the service is still held in 2015.⁶² Additionally, RAF stations were opened to the public, with services and events held across the United Kingdom. Even by 1944 the Civil Defence element had been reduced, the focus now more on the RAF's role during the Battle itself. The Bishop of Southwark, Dr Simpson, further reinforced this in his sermon, the close link between the determined resistance of the Few and the failed invasion a central theme. Attendees included Churchill's brother, Sinclair, all members of the Air Council, and many of the Few. Dowding is not mentioned as having been there as the former C-in-C. At a more local level, Thanksgiving Services were also guided by traditional liturgy, one example of many being held at Holy Trinity Church in Tunbridge Wells on 17 September, this 'Battle of Britain & Civil Defence Sunday' appearing to eschew the new format agreed for the 1944 event (see Plate 10). Instead, it adopted the joint approach taken in 1943, the service itself an act of thanksgiving:

For the bravery, devotion and skill of the Royal Air Force;

For the courage and steadfastness and zeal of the Civil Defence Services and all associated and auxiliary Services and Bodies, and all others who work for or serve their Country in this present time of conflict.⁶³

There is no specific mention of the Battle itself, or the RAF except in general terms. It may be that the vicar felt the order of service from 1943 was adequate for the purpose and simply chose to reuse this.

In any event, given the effort made by both Peck and Sutton – their first foray in July 1942 – Battle of Britain Sunday was a significant achievement.

They had, after all, in the space of just over two years managed to establish a national commemorative event focusing on the RAF's success in the Battle, the earlier linkage with the abandoned invasion as first affirmed by Churchill in September 1940, thence the pamphlet, strongly reasserted as the Few's triumph. Despite Morrison's original wish to stage an event for the many who had contributed to Britain's survival during the Blitz the Air Ministry had managed after only one Civil Defence Day – where the RAF was one of many services represented – to then achieve equal billing with Civil Defence workers in a 'Battle of Britain Sunday' national event; this thereafter succeeded by an event principally about the RAF, and Fighter Command in particular.

Noted above, the improving military situation may have been significant, Churchill's initial resistance mollified by the later successes in North Africa and the Mediterranean. Sutton, mindful of the army and navy's increasing presence in the news had, of course, previously raised concerns that the RAF should maximise opportunities for securing more assets both in war and peacetime, the Battle a significant focus for this. It will also be recalled that Sinclair had expressed concern in July 1943 that the overall tone should not only be on Fighter Command's role but only a year or so later, the Secretary of State's preference had been quietly eclipsed.⁶⁴ Rather than this, perhaps it should be said revised, as despite Street's original view that the RAF might yet have a more glorious day than 15 September 1940 it was clear by September 1944 that the war was coming to an end, the Battle now unlikely to be bettered as the RAF's most significant publicity opportunity following victory.

Victory in Europe

Driven by the Air Ministry, official commemoration had taken the form of a Battle of Britain Sunday in September 1943 and 1944, but there was little formal government commemoration or recognition beyond this.⁶⁵ Although there had been a wide range of books, films and other materials produced about the Battle in the years since 1940 it was inevitable that despite the focus of Battle of Britain Sundays, wider, more recent war events would dominate government, media, and the public's consciousness. After all, fought as a defensive series of air battles it had not been immediately clear that an important victory had been won by the RAF in late 1940; subsequent events including Russia's and America's entries into the war, the Battle of El Alamein, the Dambusters' Raid, the advance of the Red Army, Italy's surrender, and the D-Day landings, occupying contemporary news. As a force the RAF had also been engaged in all theatres of war including against the Japanese in the Far East, and the Strategic Air Offensive shared with the USAAF, again necessarily dominating air war news copy. Inevitably, after the hard years of 1941 and 1942 the Battle had therefore faded in significance despite attempts to formally commemorate it;

others would of course have argued that the Few had had perhaps more than their fair share of the glory as it was.

This situation changed rapidly in May 1945 with Hitler's death and Germany's surrender. Behind the scenes, RAF intelligence officers had been able to access some German military documents and also to begin interrogating senior military figures (see Chapter 7). Whilst this work was still at a nascent stage in mid-1945 and would run through to war crimes trials staged later, the reasons for Germany's failure to invade Britain in 1940 were beginning to be revealed more clearly from a Nazi perspective. One factor was the strength of the RAF and its refusal to buckle under *Luftwaffe* attacks, Hitler and the OKW not willing to test British air capability in a Channel crossing that also involved facing a powerful Royal Navy. Although it was obvious that Britain's resolution in 1940 had made possible both the later Strategic Air Offensive and the D-Day Landings, victory in Europe brought the Battle's significance back into sharp focus, the Few's prowess re-emerging into the public domain as part of wider celebrations.

Outside of the formal Battle of Britain Sunday commemorations there were two key 'official' events reaffirming the Few's importance to eventual victory. The first was Churchill's BBC 'Victory broadcast' made from 10 Downing Street on 13 May 1945.⁶⁶ The second was the announcement of the Battle of Britain Clasp, discussed below. The 13 May speech was typically Churchillian in its rhetoric, tone and structure, the listener given a chronological survey of the war from its earliest days to eventual victory in Europe. Comprised of 3,547 words, eighty of these were devoted to the Few in the Battle (two per cent of the whole speech), the essential facts being that between July and September 1940, Fighter Command's squadrons had defeated the *Luftwaffe* despite odds of seven or eight to one. Dowding was also specifically mentioned as the commander who would remain most closely associated with this 'splendid event'.⁶⁷

Whilst this was modest attention, it confirmed several key points. First, the importance of the Few in preventing the conditions for invasion; second, the reiteration of Churchill's most famous sentence from 20 August 1940, focused wholly on Fighter Command; third, the linking of his personal resolution in 1940 with that of the Few; and fourth, a determination on Churchill's part to affirm Dowding's importance as the 'architect of victory' in 1940, which perhaps betrays the Prime Minister's lingering discomfort at the former C-in-C's poor treatment in late November 1940 and thereafter (see Chapter 2). Indeed, five days earlier, Sinclair, the Secretary of State for Air, had anticipated Churchill's likely view in a private letter to Dowding on 9 May:

[O]n this historic day, I send you on behalf of the Air Council a message of cordial greeting. It was under your inspiring leadership that the Battle of Britain was won and our island citadel was saved. The whole nation,

indeed freedom-loving men and women the world over, will always gratefully remember you and the gallant ‘few’ who fought and flew under your command.⁶⁸

Both Sinclair and Churchill were perhaps mindful that with the end of the war in Europe dissolution of the coalition government was inevitable, as was a General Election. Whilst in Sinclair’s case this was a private letter, Churchill would view his speech as a reminder to listeners of his towering achievement as a war leader. No one could begrudge him such a platform but he was perhaps disingenuous when he suggested that after five years of service if voters had had enough of him, he would accept this graciously.⁶⁹

The second official element in May 1945 was recognition through an award, this identifying the Few as an elite force. Given Churchill’s adulatory praise for the Few on 20 August 1940 and the broader reinforcement of their prowess during the war years, it is surprising that it took some four years and eight months after 15 September 1940 for the government to announce that the Few would be so honoured, but other factors as discussed above were significant.⁷⁰ Jeremy Crang’s article ‘Identifying the Few’ fully confirms the steps by which the fighter pilots and aircrew of Fighter Command came to be awarded the coveted Battle of Britain Clasp to be worn on the 1939–45 Star.⁷¹

The first step was to define the Battle as an event, and then to agree its exact dates; second, it was necessary to confirm that ‘the Few’ warranted a special award in recognition of their valour in 1940; third, fighter squadrons had then to be identified and the exact operational sortie requirements that qualified;⁷² and lastly, notwithstanding those killed in the air battles, the Few as individuals should then be confirmed. The whole process from inception to conclusion began in Spring 1944, and in respect of finally identifying all who qualified as one of the Few (some of whom were in doubt, or had been overlooked⁷³), lasted until July 2005 when 2,939 names were unveiled on the Battle of Britain Monument on the Embankment.⁷⁴ It is reasonable at this remove to say that the names both on the Monument and on the Battle of Britain Memorial Wall at Capel-le-Ferne in Kent do provide the definitive list of qualifying aircrew.⁷⁵

Credit for first suggesting that the Few be awarded individual recognition for their part in the Battle is due to Sir Ronald Ross, MP for Londonderry. In a general debate on medals and gallantry awards in the Commons on 22 March 1944 he proposed that the Few, the focus of the greatest tribute ever afforded to a group of combatants, be awarded an appropriate emblem to be worn on their 1939–43 Star.⁷⁶ Supported by fellow MPs Ross wrote to Sinclair, who responded by letter on 2 April 1944 to the effect that he fully supported the worthy proposal. Thereafter, on 11 July the Air Ministry made the case to the Committee on the Grants of Honours Decorations and

Medals, supplemented on 24 July with a report entitled "Battle of Britain" clasp to the 1939–43 Star',⁷⁷ who fully agreed with the proposal.

Ten months later Churchill was able to announce to the Commons on 19 May 1945 that George VI had agreed to an award for the Few, which would take the form of a 'gilt rose emblem' to be worn on the ribbon of the 1939–45 Star.⁷⁸ Despite Dowding's having confirmed the Battle's start date as 10 July 1940, the original Command Paper erroneously gave 1 July 1940 to 31 October 1940 as the qualifying period.⁷⁹ These technicalities aside, the award paved the way for eligible aircrew to receive the Battle of Britain Clasp and in so doing formally reinforced their exceptional achievement. Thus it was that during the September 1945 Battle of Britain celebrations the Few were further identified as an elite through this highly-coveted award.

The official eclipsing of the Battle of the Barges

As discussed in Chapter 3, the partial eclipse of the Battle of the Barges was well underway even in early 1942. This was completed at war's end when Churchill delivered his victory speech on 13 May 1945, during which in a broad sweep of the war years he repeated his epigraph to the Few, the listener left in no doubt that this was intended for the fighter pilots, thereafter paying warm tribute to Dowding and his place in the victory. Credit was then given to both the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy for the part they would have played in the face of an attempted invasion. The Battle of the Barges is not mentioned.⁸⁰ Thus, by mid-May 1945, the bomber contribution to the Battle had been marginalised insofar as the general British public were concerned, the RAF bomber aircraft 'conjoined with the Royal Navy' to attack an armada, but not credited with previously having already done so in the Battle of the Barges.

This eclipsing was further reinforced by the decision announced on 19 May 1945 to issue a Battle of Britain clasp to fighter aircrews (as discussed above), but which did not include Coastal or Bomber Command unless they had been seconded to and flown with a relevant Fighter Command operational squadron.⁸¹ Curiously, the Air Ministry was aware of the role played by Bomber and Coastal Commands as this exchange in a Commons' debate on 14 May 1947 confirms, the focus of the discussion revised claim figures confirming Fighter Command over-claiming during the Battle (see Chapter 7):

Mr Keeling MP: Will the right honourable gentleman make it clear that this victory was won not only by Fighter Command, but also to a large extent by Bomber and Coastal Commands, and that this glorious victory not only saved us from invasion, but made England a secure base for future Allied operations by land, sea and air?

Noel-Baker MP, Secretary of State for Air: Yes, Sir. The honourable member may have noticed that I did not mention any particular Command. As he says, other Commands took part with Fighter Command in the battle, and there is evidence from the German naval records that the work of Bomber Command, particularly in attacking the invasion ports, was a very important factor in the German decision.⁸²

The focus of much controversy since the war, the official recognition of Bomber Command had, however, to wait for a further 66 years before a clasp to their 1939–45 star was introduced.⁸³ This clasp is awarded to all operational aircrew in western Europe during the war as a whole, but with a far wider scope of operations than the Battle of the Barges alone. On the clasp, Prime Minister David Cameron affirmed his appreciation for Bomber Command as a whole, following the Archbishop of Canterbury's recent comments about the bombing of Dresden: '[O]ne of the things I was very proud to do [...] was to make sure the people who served in Bomber Command got proper recognition with a new clasp on their medals', having 'waited for many, many years for the recognition I think they deserve'.⁸⁴ Thus, there is no clear recognition for the modest number of bomber crews who, through their efforts in concert with Fighter Command, persuaded Hitler of the potential folly of launching Operation *Sea Lion* in September 1940.

More broadly, the Battle of the Barges also fell victim to a post-war anxiety to forget the devastating impact of the Allied Strategic Air Offensive, and the questions of moral equivalence it raised.⁸⁵ Inevitably, compared with the later massed raids against Berlin, Hamburg and Dresden, the Battle of the Barges appears almost as a *Boy's Own* paper adventure in objectives, scale, impact and tone.⁸⁶ In the final analysis politics mattered more than any concern to appropriately recognise the dogged efforts of Bomber and Coastal Command in attacking the assembling invasion fleet.

Post-war, the destruction of Dresden and other German cities became an object of embarrassment and accusation, Churchill anxious thereafter to distance himself from the campaign. The blame for that fell on others, for as Smith confirms, 'Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris has become the Douglas Haig of the Second World War.'⁸⁷ Inevitably then, the negative fallout from the SAO for bomber aircrews involved in the Battle of the Barges was unavoidable by 1945, but this takes nothing away from their grit and heroism during attacks against invasion preparations – not least as confirmed by the VCs for Learoyd and Hannah, and the loss of 154 men.

At war's end

By any measure the Few's reputation had risen even further by the end of all hostilities in August 1945, Churchill's victory speech adding yet more lustre to what he had begun almost five years earlier on 20 August 1940. It

was perhaps ironic that as the Few's stock continued to rise, Churchill himself was cast into the political doldrums following Attlee's Labour landslide in July. There was even further irony given that the place of 'the Many' in Britain's survival during 1940 had been eclipsed by the Few, despite Morrison's – alas short-lived – efforts to establish the Civil Defence Day as an annual event.

On the one hand, then, was a massive popular shift to a party that had practical solutions to the 'what we are fighting for' exhortation of the war years; yet on the other, the Few were given centre stage in direct opposition to a preference for a socialist ideology, eschewing exactly such elitism. After all, the post-war settlement led steadily to improvements in education, the founding of the NHS, new house-building initiatives for working people and so forth, and notwithstanding senior NCO aircrew who had fought in the Battle – the vast majority commissioned during wartime – the socialist agenda and developing welfare state were unlikely to be relevant to the Few. Most ordinary Britons, though, would not begrudge the 'fighter boys' their fame, the Battle of Britain in September 1945 a moment for national celebration. It was not until Battle of Britain Day 1947 that an opportunity arose to re-evaluate the part played by the 'bomber boys' during September 1940, but by then it was unlikely to have dented the settled narrative of the Few alone as having decided Britain's fate.

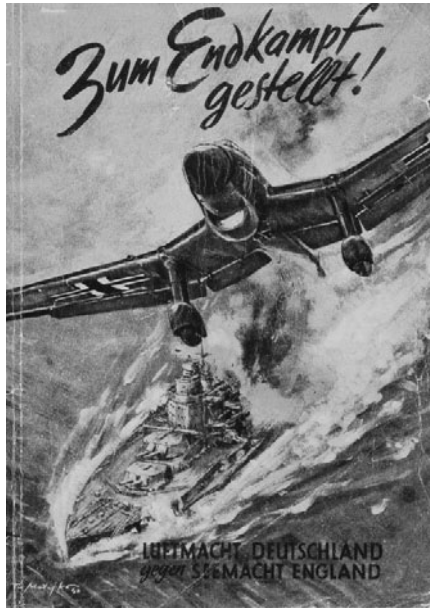


Plate 1 Wehrmacht 1940 propaganda booklet entitled Decisive Final Air Battle! Air Power against England's Naval Power (author's private collection)



Plate 2 German Eilebrecht cigarette card showing an attack on Portsmouth on 12 August 1940. Capturing action through dual-roled aircrew gave an added propaganda benefit to air attacks (author's private collection)



Plate 3 This issue of *War Illustrated* dated 30 September 1939 anticipates the balletic elegance of the Spitfire (author's private collection)



Plate 4 Widely used for a poster carrying Churchill's 'to so Few' epigraph, and generally associated with fighter pilots, this is in fact a bomber crew. This issue probably published between 24 August and 7 September 1940 (author's private collection)



Plate 5 The key invasion 'jump off' ports stretched from Le Havre in the south and northwards to Rotterdam, a linear distance of some 250 miles of coast (Crown Copyright expired)

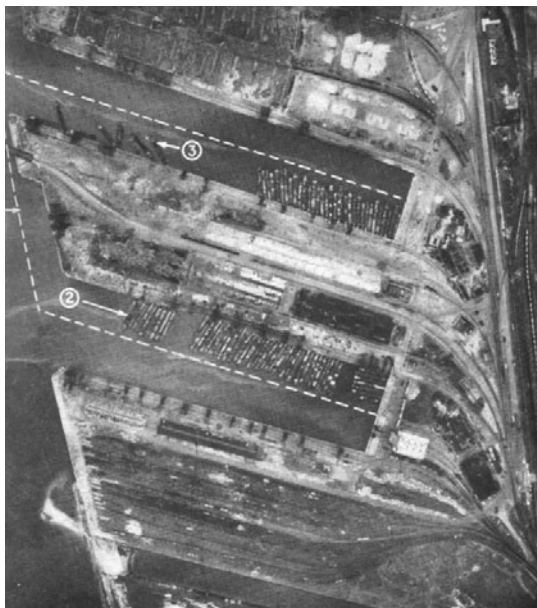


Plate 6 Almost ninety invasion barges assembled in Dunkirk harbour taken in September 1940. Tightly packed, RAF bombers nevertheless found it difficult to destroy them en masse (Crown Copyright expired)



Plate 7 Eric Kennington's Sergeant John Hannah VC. Hannah's posture is different to the more nonchalant poses adopted by young fighter pilot officers, the latter often wearing flying kit (Crown Copyright expired)

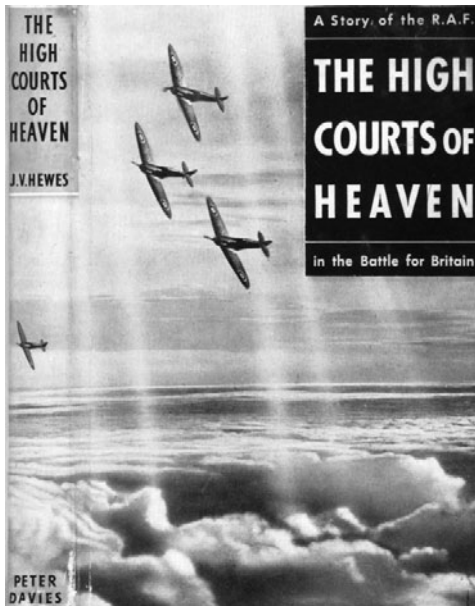


Plate 8 Hewes' 1942 novel about 'fighter boys' during the Battle captured their élan and prowess, its narrative constrained by a lack of information and wartime censorship (Crown Copyright expired: author's private collection)



Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding (now Lord Dowding), G.C.B., G.C.V.O., C.M.G., A.O.C.-in-C. Fighter Command during Battle of Britain.

Names from Left to Right:—Sqn. Ldr. A. C. Bartley, D.F.C., Wing Commander D. F. B. Sheeh, D.F.C. and Bar, Wing Commander C. R. Glead, D.S.O., D.F.C., Wing Commander Max Aitken, D.S.O., D.F.C., Wing Commander A. C. Malan, D.S.O., D.F.C., Sqn. Ldr. A. C. Deere, D.F.C., Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding, Flight Officer Henderson, M.M. (W.A.A.F.), Flt. Lt. R. H. Hilary, Wing Commander J. A. Kent, D.F.C., A.F.C., Wing Commander C. B. F. Kingscombe, D.F.C., Sqn. Ldr. G. H. Watkins, D.F.C., and Wt. Officer H. G. Gretton.

Plate 9 Lord Dowding and some of the Few in summer 1942. *Last Enemy* author Richard Hillary, here the only pilot without a DFC, is between Henderson and Kent. No Sergeant pilots are represented other than by Gretton, who has no DFM (Crown Copyright expired)

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, TUNBRIDGE WELLS

— o —

Battle of Britain & Civil Defence Sunday

17th SEPTEMBER, 1944.

— o —

"If from every place of worship, from home and factory, from men and women of all ages and occupations our prayers arise, then, please God, in a future not remote the predictions of an ancient Psalm may be fulfilled: 'The Lord will give strength unto His people; the Lord will give His people the blessing of peace.'"—H.M. The King.

"Religion has been a rock in the life and character of the British people upon which they have built their hopes and cast their cares."—Mr. Winston Churchill, Prime Minister.

— o —

Form of Service.

NATIONAL ANTHEM: GOD SAVE THE KING.

HYMN

<p>Great God of Hosts, our ears have heard, Our fathers oft have told, What wonders Thou hast done for them, Thy glorious deeds of old.</p> <p>Nor by their might was safety wrought, Nor victory by their sword; But Thou didst guard the chosen race Who Thy great Name adored.</p>	<p>Great God of Hosts! their God, and ours; Our only Lord and King; Let Thy right Arm which fought for them To us salvation bring.</p> <p>To Thee the glory we'll ascribe, By Whom the conqueror came, And, in triumphant songs of praise, Will celebrate Thy Name. Amen.</p>
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GENERAL CONFESSION

To be said by the Congregation.

Almighty and most merciful Father: we have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare thou them O God, which confess their faults. Restore thou them that are penitent; according to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake; that we may hereafter live a clean, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of Thy holy Name. Amen.

Plate 10 Order of Service for 1944's Battle of Britain Day, this eschewing the official decision to focus only on the Battle itself, the service and text probably repeating 1943's joint commemoration (author's private collection)



Plate 11 Confirming the importance of the Battle by September 1945, a wide range of events ran throughout the week promoted by this guide (Crown Copyright expired)



Plate 12 Battle of Britain Week events also raised money for the RAFA and RAF Benevolent Fund, this presentationally simple example from Maidstone carrying many local advertisements (reproduced by permission of RAFA)



Plate 13 Westminster Abbey's Battle of Britain Memorial Window. The postcard's sender writes: 'this window was the gift of the King in memory of the Battle of Britain men', presumably referring to George VI's unveiling of the chapel (author's private collection)



Plate 14 1946 commemorative Battle of Britain lace curtain manufactured by Dobsons and M. Browne Co. Ltd of Nottingham. Loaned to the RAF for display, the accompanying leaflet detailed the various scenes and also summarised the key points of the Battle (Crown Copyright expired)



Plate 15 A graphically striking 1951 South London RAFA booklet confirming a more sophisticated approach to the promotion of Battle Week (reproduced by permission of RAFA). It also carries an advertisement for the lace curtain depicted in Plate 14



Plate 16 RAFA's 1952 brochure is notable for its focus on the Battle of the Barges, to which it devotes an Introduction and short article. This generic issue included details of local 'Week' events simply inserted as separately-printed centre pages (reproduced by permission of RAFA)

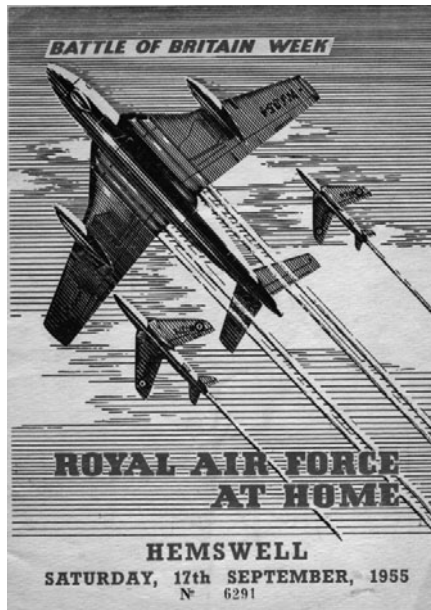


Plate 17 This cover art, in common with similar visitor guides of this period, confirms a focus on jet power and the realities of the Cold War, rather than the Battle (Crown Copyright expired)

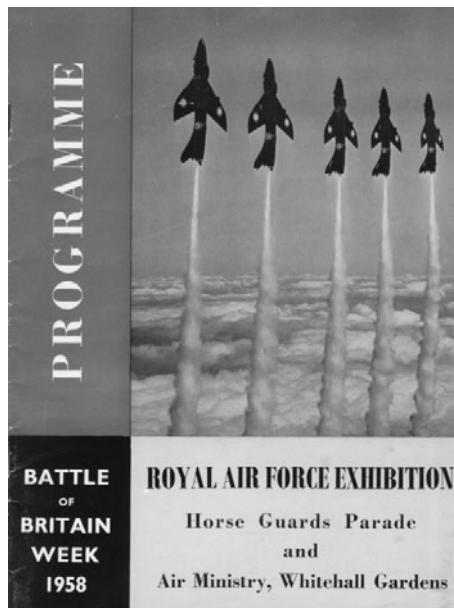


Plate 18 Staging a central London annual exhibition each year allowed the RAF to promote itself whilst also remembering the events of 1940. Despite its 'Battle' billing, much of the exhibition included more modern aircraft and technology (reproduced by permission of RAFA)



Plate 19 A more evocative cover than in Plate 18, the radar masts have been crudely added. The souvenir guide includes an article on Bomber Command and the Battle of the Barges (reproduced by permission of RAFA)

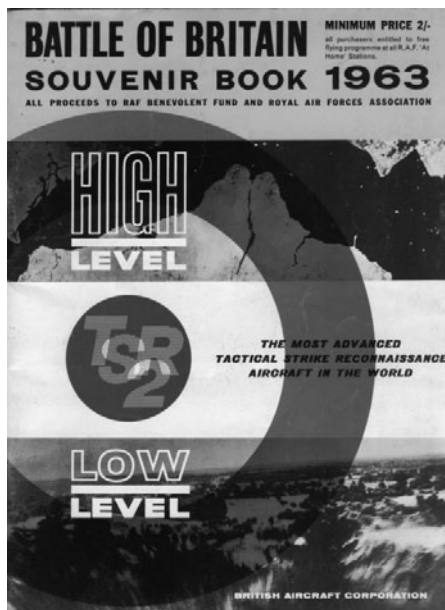


Plate 20 The contents of this souvenir book reinforce an RAF entering the modern age in the midst of the Cold War, the Battle a rather minor focus. The cover art affirms this, TSR2 the RAF's great hope, but in the end just too costly (reproduced by permission of RAFA)

Part III
Commemoration and Popular
Memory

7

'The Fight at Odds': Revelation, Memorialisation, 1945–1965

New realities and national celebrations, 1945–1946

Britain's international and imperial standing during the early post-war years underwent dramatic change, American and Soviet dominance of a devastated Europe reinforced through both military and economic realities (see Appendix 8). Struggling with the enormous burden of war reparations, rationing, the need to replace both housing and infrastructure and also make good on wartime socialist promises – 'what we are fighting for' – of better education, health and welfare provision, it was inevitable that despite being on the winning side, the peace would appear gloomily pessimistic to many.¹ Churchill had reinforced this on 5 March 1946 with his 'Iron Curtain' speech about the evolving Soviet threat, a hardly-welcome development after six years of war when the costs of maintaining a vast, jet-equipped RAF, standing army and navy to counter this new menace were clearly unsustainable into the medium term.²

Matters worsened even further in June 1948 as the Berlin Airlift was initiated to provide emergency food and other supplies to a now besieged West Berlin, confirming beyond any doubt Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. Moreover, as India and Pakistan secured independence in 1947, the immutable omnipresence of the British Empire – quickly recast as the Commonwealth – was fatally undermined, other nations soon following.³ Britain's decline as a world power was doubtless a legacy of the crises of 1940 and 1941 wherein – Britain's vulnerability writ large on the world stage – it was obvious to any informed observer that she could not afford to maintain her former military and economic might, a reality borne out by American and Soviet ascendancy as the war progressed, its denouement decided through overwhelming military capability.⁴

Within this context it was hardly surprising that as a nation Britain wished to remind herself of a moment of exceptionalism during 1940, the Battle offering a unique point around which all might rally. Confirming the direction of travel into the nearer future, the Battle's elevated standing in

the immediate post-war period was amply demonstrated in the first peacetime event to commemorate the Battle, the RAF and Air Ministry supporting a series of events during mid-September 1945, both in Britain and overseas. With Germany having surrendered in May, and Japan's capitulation in August, it was inevitable that the RAF would begin a significant reduction in size, this perhaps one of the last opportunities to draw upon wartime levels of aircraft, personnel and facilities before contraction to affordable peacetime levels. Thanksgiving Week during the period 15–22 September 1945 therefore featured a military procession and massed fly-past on the 15th followed by a Service of Thanksgiving on the 16th (Plate 11).

A week of shows by 'stars' in Trafalgar Square and elsewhere, displays, marches, military bands, ceremonies and a massed fly-past of aircraft added to the celebrations during the 'Anniversary of the Battle of Britain Thanksgiving Week'.⁵ Some ninety or so RAF bases were opened to the public, these also featuring flying displays, Hendon airfield attracting some 80,000 visitors as the only RAF base open in London. These events established the 'RAF At Home' model for subsequent years during which the public could visit airfields and watch displays. The main fly-past on 15 September was led by Douglas Bader – recently released as a PoW – and his 'squadron' of Spitfires, taking off from North Weald airfield, thence flying over Barking, West Ham, East India Docks, Hyde Park, Northolt, Ruislip, Elstree, Walthamstow, Greenwich, Wimbledon, Teddington, Brent and returning to North Weald. Several members of the Few flew with him, these inevitably the focus of much interest.⁶ Because of low cloud the aircraft – some 300 in number – flew over the capital at a height of 1,000 feet in an extended formation of twenty-five squadrons, comprising both piston and jet-engined aircraft. Even for those used to seeing military aircraft this must have been quite a spectacle, RAF air power strongly affirmed. One absentee during the fly-past was the Hurricane – now retired, although the RAF still had at least one airworthy example – its absence giving centre stage to its more balletic stablemate, and perhaps reinforcing in the minds of many that the Battle was won solely by Mitchell's thoroughbred.⁷

Confirming the changed political landscape, Clement Attlee, Prime Minister since July, linked the success of the Battle with the country's future when he thanked Fighter Command, and was content to let the Few have their moment, some of their number leading the fly-past. Noting their 'immortal glory' of five years earlier he confirmed the debt owed for their heroism, which had made possible a focus on 'the tasks of peace'.⁸

As for the service in Westminster Abbey on 16 September, a parade including workers from the aircraft industry, Civil Defence, Home Guard, Dominion forces, AA Command, Allied air forces and men who had flown during the Battle, preceded the Thanksgiving itself. The parade route both before and after the service was thronged with many thousands of

spectators, *The Times'* correspondent clearly taken aback by the numbers present, and the mass of service personnel inside Westminster Abbey itself. This clearly irked him as he was unable to hear the service, or to observe at close hand the actual proceedings, the organisers having made no provision for the press.⁹ Dowding is again not mentioned by name but presumably attended the service as the former C-in-C, along with many other senior officers and officials. Park, now the C-in-C of Allied Air Forces in South-East Asia, broadcast to forces from his HQ there on 15 September, recounting Churchill's visit to 11 Group's Operations Room at Uxbridge exactly five years earlier.¹⁰

Not all were happy with the services of thanksgiving held across the country on Battle of Britain Sunday, a Mr Kenneth Adam striking a discordant note in expressing disappointment at the 'uninspiring' morning event held in Canterbury Cathedral, the service itself inaudible, and not seemingly about the Battle, the sermon instead on the New Guinea Mission.¹¹ Given that the Battle took part in the area above and around Canterbury, he was rather mystified by the absence of an RAF Chaplain to read the sermon, or a focus on what he and his friends had been led to expect. This drew a speedy response from the Dean of Canterbury who confirmed that the evening service which he had led was wholly concerned with the Battle, his sermon celebrating the nation's deliverance at the hands of a 'small but valiant Air Force' in which his own nephew had fought. Canterbury Cathedral had not ignored, then, 'one of the greatest deliverances that our country has experienced'.¹² As an aside, this apparent failure to adhere to congregational expectations led to a brief note in September 1947 from the Archbishop of Canterbury reminding clergy – the diocese of Canterbury is specifically mentioned – of the need to cooperate in introducing 'appropriate thanksgivings and prayers in connexion with that great deliverance'.¹³ That this was two years after the original complaint suggests continuing difficulties with some clergy, not all perhaps persuaded by the focus on Fighter Command alone. These may have been the same objections noted previously, leading the September 1944 Tunbridge Wells church service to focus on the many, rather than an elite few.

Britain's focus was not only on commemorating the Battle during this period, wider national victory celebrations also arranged to take place on 8 June 1946.¹⁴ The war having ended almost ten months previously it was deemed too late as 1945 drew on to organise an event that did justice to the triumph over Germany and Japan, an additional factor the thousands of overseas military personnel who should be allowed to participate. It was after all their achievement too. The Victory Celebration in June, the earliest point at which the weather might cooperate, was of a different hue to that focused on the Battle; armed, civil defence and civilian services all to be represented, as indeed were Allied forces from the Empire and previously

subjugated countries. A substantial range of vehicles from all branches of the forces were driven in the parade, including representatives from farming, foods and other manufacturing. This format would have found favour with advocates of the People's War, a celebration of the many, whether on the home front, in factories, working the land, on merchant ships or in civil defence roles. All events focused into the one day, London and the provinces would have been ablaze with celebrations running into night-time.

The RAF was certainly represented but in a much wider sense than their victory in 1940, on this occasion many hitherto unsung branches given credit. Following the Central Band of the RAF, the marching column comprised representatives from the Allied Air Forces including the USA, France, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Yugoslavia.¹⁵ The main RAF Commands marched in the following order: Bomber Command, Fighter Command (including all Groups), Coastal Command, British Air Forces of Occupation in Germany, Air Command in South-East Asia, and the Mediterranean and Middle-East Command. These were followed by massed bands of the RAF, then Transport Command, Flying Training Command, Technical Training Command, Maintenance Command, Iraqi Levies, RAF Regiment, Royal Observer Corps, Nursing Services, and the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.¹⁶ Including this list as the actual marching running-order also makes the gentle point that the RAF was a diverse, multi-faceted organisation, many trades and activities easily obscured in the focus on the Commands who had taken the fight to the enemy.

Whilst many support services would not reasonably have expected to receive laurels for contributing to a historically decisive event, one can see how a focus on the Battle would seem disproportionate, especially, for instance, to bomber aircrews perhaps having completed one or more tours. It is clear from the overall organisation and arrangements of the marching columns that on this day at least, the Battle was to receive no special representation, Bomber Command this time leading the fighting Commands, as distinct from support services. The Battle is not mentioned in the programme as such, but the fly-past, including Hurricanes (first) and Spitfires (ninth out of thirteen aircraft types represented) would have been evocative and not dissimilar to the September events now familiar to most Londoners. The Victory Celebration having taken place, the focus inevitably shifted to Britain's peacetime challenges: rationing, austerity, financial constraints, bringing back thousands of overseas service personnel, demobbing, and the administration of the fading empire – or commonwealth.

Against this backdrop, three months later the Battle of Britain Week events from 9–15 September 1946 followed a very similar format to those of 1945, again with a formal service in Westminster Abbey on the Sunday. Confirming that the RAF was at this point still able to muster a significant air armada, a 330-aircraft fly-past including Polish squadrons of the RAF took

to the air on 14 September. This time following a much broader route, the intention was to allow many more people to see the RAF's extended formation over south-eastern coastal towns directly affected by the Battle.¹⁷ For the Thanksgiving Service itself on 15 September, the Abbey liturgy adhered strictly to religious convention in its Order of Service.¹⁸ In an atheistic age it is perhaps more difficult to understand the primacy of religion insofar as the armed forces were concerned, services such as the above lending gravitas and a sense of deep spirituality to the Battle as an event, God's presence an almost material factor in victory. During the service itself at no point are the RAF or Battle mentioned by name, this aspect presumably addressed in the sermon.¹⁹ Equally, there is also no reference to the recently defeated enemy as a whole. In all respects this service and those conducted elsewhere gave sincere thanks for the victory, such events very well attended, often to the extent that it was not possible to allow all worshippers to participate.

An example of a more local engagement with Battle of Britain Week is confirmed in the Maidstone Royal Air Force Association Branch's 1946 programme, the emphasis on raising money for the RAFA (see Plate 12).²⁰ Readers are exhorted through an appeal to their generosity in order to help those injured and disabled during the air fighting:

[T]he Battle of Britain – surely no one in Maidstone can forget those anxious days six years ago when in the skies above this ancient town was being fought the battle that was to decide the future of our country and of civilisation [...] How many of us, though, stop and think occasionally of the men who fought there and wonder what would have happened if that battle had been lost [...] They won the Battle of Britain for *you*; will you help us win the Battle for *them*?²¹

Clearly, the transition from war to peace would necessarily require that organisations outside of the RAF itself assist with injured service personnel, the RAFA and RAF Benevolent Fund both involved in these aims. As a consequence, the celebrations during Battle of Britain Week were reliant to a degree upon the commitment of local RAFA branches in organising formal dinners, dances, talent and variety shows, whist drives, gala balls, music recitals and other fundraising events, these usually spread across the Week, with the Sunday service nearest to 15 September a key local thanksgiving focus (Plates 12 and 15).²²

Additionally, this close relationship between the RAFA, former aircrew and local communities did much to remind all involved that many who had fought during the Battle – and indeed thereafter – did so as volunteers, significant numbers originally joining auxiliary squadrons as 'weekend flyers' whilst also studying at university or working in civilian jobs. Although the focus of some resentment and snobbery on the part of a number of RAF regulars when the war began, the Battle would have been lost but for the

commitment of auxiliaries and reservists flying alongside regulars, many of whom were killed in action either during the Battle or later in the war.²³

Revised aircraft claims, 14 May 1947

Despite the jubilation as the war in Europe came to a close it was business as usual for the Air Ministry. Given the primacy afforded to the aircraft claims during the Battle it was inevitable that its AHB would seek at the earliest opportunity to establish Fighter Command's actual air defence effectiveness. This was valuable not only for eventual historical context but also in assisting with 'lessons identified' for future operational assessments and planning.²⁴ In early 1945 John Nerney, as head of the AHB, had therefore established the German Documents section under Squadron Leader Louis Jackets – AHB 3 – this small unit visiting Germany during the Spring of 1945 to search for *Luftwaffe* records.²⁵ Of much interest were documents generated by its Quartermaster-General's office, these giving accurate German aircraft loss figures. Wholly internal documents, these were used for ordering replacement aircraft and identifying those in need of repairs, and at no point were they intended for external *Luftwaffe* propaganda purposes. They could thus be relied upon to give actual figures within the context of first-line squadron operational requirements, these complete documents for 1940 quickly accepted by the Air Intelligence Directorate as authentic.²⁶ Denis Richards, who confirms that Jackets had been feeding Richards and his AHB section with material well before March 1947 when he began working on *The Fight at Odds*, had asked him for *Luftwaffe* losses documents, the Quartermaster-General's returns furnished in response.

Richards, after some reflection – and concerned both that he might be blamed for undermining or besmirching Fighter Command by revealing the facts in his forthcoming book, but also that the remainder of his monograph would be overshadowed – took the initiative, writing to the Secretary of State's Private Secretary to confirm that the German figures had been accepted as accurate, and that these should be made publicly known by the Air Ministry as soon as possible. He also noted that the Americans had a copy of the documents and might reveal the facts at an inconvenient moment, thus causing needless embarrassment to the Air Ministry.²⁷ The actual German losses were thereafter quickly released to the public on 14 May 1947, Philip Noel-Baker, Secretary of State for Air, divulging the figures during a Commons' debate. Although newspapers had had the material for two days before the announcement, only the *Daily Telegraph* broke the news embargo and gave details, others publishing on the agreed date.²⁸

The revised figures showed a quite marked difference in German aircraft believed by the RAF at the time to have been destroyed during the broad period of the Battle. Table 7.1 details both the original and revised claims

Table 7.1 RAF aircraft claims made during the Battle of Britain, and later revision (compiled by Garry Campion from several book details)

Battle of Britain official periods	(a) Claimed 'destroyed' (1940)	(b) Revised wartime 'destroyed'	(c) May 1947 figures for 'destroyed'	(d) 1947 reductions	(e) May 1947 figures for 'damaged'	(f) May 1947 'destroyed' + 'damaged'	Col. (b) less Col.(f)
8.8.1940-31.10.1940	2375 ²⁹	2504 ³⁰	1541	963-	566	2107	397-
10.7.1940-31.10.1940	2692	2692 ³¹	1733	959-	643	2376	316-

made during the initially-defined period of the Battle from 8 August to 31 October, and then the extended period beginning 10 July.

Column (a) confirms the original claims made during the Battle itself, whilst in column (b) can be seen the figures agreed slightly later after the Battle. In this context 'destroyed' refers to aircraft that squadron intelligence officers were able to verify through pilots' eye-witness accounts, as distinct from 'probables' where an aircraft appeared to be mortally damaged but had not actually been seen to crash. In the former case this was not to say that such evidence was wholly reliable, but only that in the heat of battle the benefit of doubt was given to the claimant when backed up by others. In considering the merits of inconclusive proof being available Dowding suggested in his despatch that because 'a proportion of aircraft reported as "Probably Destroyed" or "Damaged" failed to return to their bases', it was reasonable to assume that the claim figures were broadly accurate.³²

Notwithstanding this view, during the officially agreed Battle beginning 10 July 1940 the RAF had over-claimed by 959 aircraft based on this analysis. However, when 'damaged' aircraft are included the figure reduces to an excess 316, which reinforces the sense that in the midst of a swirling dog-fight or high-speed attack, pilots found it difficult to gauge actual results.³³ Whereas many German aircraft did fly back over the Channel and either crashed in the sea or on land, others with perhaps smoke pouring from one engine could make it back across the Channel, but might look stricken to RAF pilots. It was genuinely hard to know.³⁴ In releasing the figures Noel-Baker was anxious to argue that although they were somewhat disappointing, they did, though, confirm the challenges of accurately gauging losses in large air battles:

[T]he figures I am circulating show that during the opening and concluding phases of the battle, while the numbers engaged were relatively small, and the fighting less continuous and intense, the losses actually inflicted on the enemy were higher than the numbers claimed by the RAF. When very large forces were in action, and when the battle raged without respite for many days, the estimates were well above the losses which the Luftwaffe sustained.³⁵

Table 7.2 confirms this tendency where very large *Luftwaffe* formations attacked on specific dates, the discrepancies between actual and claimed losses very wide. Even when figures for destroyed and damaged are combined the RAF were still over-claiming by exactly fifty per cent overall on these dates.³⁶

Richards notes that his minute was sent to Noel-Baker via Nerney as the AHB head, thence to the Director of Intelligence, suggesting that it was Richards who first raised the issue of public disclosure.³⁸ Clearly, Richards'

Table 7.2 RAF aircraft claims made on days of most intense air battles (*Flight*, 22 May 1947, p. 482)³⁷

Claim date	(a) RAF claim	(b) Actual destroyed	(c) Claim deficit	(d) Actual damaged	Col. (a) less Col. (b) & (d)
15 Aug	183	76 (32)*	107–	9	98–
18 Aug	155	71 (36)	84–	23	61–
31 Aug	94	39 (32)	55–	14	41–
2 Sept	66	34 (23)	32–	12	20–
7 Sept	100	40 (26)	60–	13	47–
15 Sept	185	56 (43)	129–	21	108–
27 Sept	153	55 (38)	98–	12	86–
Totals	936	371 (230)	565	104	461–

* Figures in parentheses were the losses admitted by Germany on those dates.

argument carried the day but may not have been appreciated by Air Intelligence, effectively bounced into action by an AHB historian. Insofar as the decision not to have publicly released the figures before Spring 1947 is concerned, it is possible that Air Intelligence had decided to keep the figures secret other than to those who needed to know, this a legacy from an earlier decision made during late 1940 not to release the results of AI(3) (b)'s analysis confirming RAF over-claiming of about fifty per cent, as the Battle continued (see Chapter 2). The later analysis having been completed, the results may thereafter simply have been absorbed into wider intelligence work undertaken from mid-1945 to early 1947 to assess the RAF's effectiveness throughout the war as a whole.

Additionally, Britain had just emerged from six years of war and the Air Ministry, in common with other government organisations, was still influenced by a wartime culture of secrecy, many of its staff having worked in sensitive posts throughout the war. Moreover, the hard-won peace appeared to be giving way to serious tensions with Stalin and the Soviet Union over the future of Europe, many hitherto 'historic' secrets still retaining potential intelligence sensitivity. Within this broad security context it can also be argued that had the actual figures been known in late 1945 they were, in effect, only kept secret for eighteen months at most, which is not unreasonable within the context of military intelligence given the above. Their real sensitivity, of course, was wholly attributable to the extraordinary accolades paid to the Few from August 1940 onwards, and the Battle's unique place in recent British popular memory.

Releasing the figures at this time was, then, a rather delicate matter, not least because on 10 July 1947 George VI was to unveil the Battle of Britain memorial window in Westminster Abbey, this major commemorative

event – covered by the BBC – only some eight weeks away. Noel-Baker would clearly have been aware of this and must have felt on balance that it would be preferable to disclose the confirmed facts immediately having been appraised of them, rather than perhaps being forced to at a later time. This might also compromise George VI who, having unveiled the window in good faith on the basis of what he had believed were accurate wartime claims, might thence have been both wrong-footed and embarrassed by a conscious decision on the part of his Air Ministry to withhold the actual figures. Protocol would simply not allow such an outcome as Noel-Baker clearly foresaw. In any event the release of Richards' *The Fight at Odds* would be based on the actual German losses, the potential for a separate difficulty arising had the Air Ministry sought to compel him to use the inaccurate wartime assessments from 1940 also to be avoided, as Richards might well have gone to the press in protest at having his independence as a professional historian undermined.

Once having been furnished with the revised figures *The Times* wasted no time in seeking to limit the potential damage to the Few's reputation, its 15 July editorial acknowledging that whilst on the one hand they were lower than had been claimed during 1940, on the other, the result was still undoubtedly the same, Fighter Command unquestionably thwarting Hitler's invasion plans. In addition to congratulating the government on their frankness, it also noted that 'the great deliverance [would] be remembered by the whole civilised world' when the memorial window was unveiled.³⁹ Clearly sensitive to the strong feelings likely to be aroused by the revised figures, Noel-Baker noted in his revelatory speech to the Commons on 14 May 1947 that

I am sure the House will agree that this retrospective correction of claims which were honestly put forward, does nothing to diminish the achievements or to dim the glory of the men who fought so bravely against great odds. As the Chief of the German General Staff in the West said in a confidential lecture in November 1943, the German Army could not invade England until the British Air Arm had been completely beaten; and this, he said, 'we were not able to do'. There is abundant confirmation of this spontaneous statement in the German records; they show that Hitler's High Command fully recognised that the RAF had inflicted a decisive defeat on their forces, and that, in consequence, their plan for the invasion of Britain could not even be launched, although a great army had been assembled and had been waiting for many days. Looking back to 1940, it is impossible to doubt that one of the decisive battles of history had been won.⁴⁰

Flight, the specialist aviation magazine, offered its readers much the same analysis when it re-printed the statement and figures released by the Air Ministry:

[D]oubtless there are those who will be so disappointed with the smaller figure that they may be inclined to jump to the conclusion that the official British claims were deliberately cooked, quite overlooking the fact that the RAF achieved what it set out to do: win the Battle of Britain, and thus denying to Germany the last possible chance to invade us [...] We think the Government did the right thing in publishing the correct figures, which detract no whit from the gallantry of those few to whom Mr Churchill paid his immortal tribute. They won the battle, and whether they did it by bringing down 3,000 or 2,000 German aircraft is of no great consequence. They saved the country; that is what matters.⁴¹

Despite attempts by commentators to give credit on the one hand whilst simultaneously taking it with the other, many former fighter pilots were upset when the figures were first released, often dismissing them as nonsensical. Fighter ace Douglas Bader perhaps captured the prevailing view when he wrote of RAF claims made on 15 September 1940 that

[A]fter the war there was considerable argument about the numbers [...] Frankly, those of us who were present at the time disagree most emphatically with the bureaucratic acceptance of German figures which had been proved unreliable in the U-boat campaign [...] Anyway nobody cares. The fact remains the Germans quit before we did and so they lost.⁴²

Douglas Bader's biographer, Paul Brickhill, had similarly confirmed in 1954 of the 15 September claim that 'R.A.F. pilots who fought in the battle flatly and vehemently disbelieve the German total. One might suspect that some of Goebbels' propaganda figures were discreetly promoted to official record status.'⁴³ The exact nature of the 'considerable argument' noted by Bader regarding the figures is less easy to gauge at this remove. Whilst many pilots would have found the revisions unpalatable and doubtless discussed these with each other, it is not evident that their disquiet manifested itself publicly in May 1947 or generated a wider debate that made its way into the popular media's letters' pages.⁴⁴ Similarly, earlier post-war pilots' memoirs and Battle histories mostly eschew offering any comment on the revised claims, simply because there was no reliable evidence with which to counter the *Luftwaffe's* returns.

For instance, and a rare exception, fighter ace Wing Commander Johnnie Johnson noted in his 1956 memoir that the figures were revised from 2,698 aircraft down to 1,733, clearly accepting the lower total without quibble.⁴⁵ Richards' RAF history – finally published in 1953, despite beginning his work in March 1947 – demonstrates in a brief comment on 'the British misconception about German losses', how quickly these revisions were accepted without further comment, a footnote confirming that the original claim of 2,698 aircraft was amended to 1,733.⁴⁶ Historian Ronald Clark concludes

his book by noting that the discovery of the *Luftwaffe's* actual losses, whilst surprising, did little to alter the general perception that '[A] handful of pilots had changed the course of history'.⁴⁷ Perhaps the final word should go to two Battle historians who published their account for the fiftieth anniversary: 'The "true figures" were a nine-day wonder for the general public', being only of interest to historians thereafter.⁴⁸

Battle of Britain Memorial, Westminster Abbey, 10 July 1947

Within two months of the release of the revised claims figures, a major national event took place which elevated the Few's reputation to even loftier heights. It is evident that whilst the figures caused some disquiet they were not allowed to detract from or diminish the importance of the Westminster Abbey event itself. Planning for the memorial window to those killed during the period of the Battle had in fact begun in earnest during December 1943, thus taking three and a half years to reach fruition. The memorial window itself was unveiled with great ceremony by King George VI on 10 July 1947, exactly seven years after the beginning of the official battle. Although a private initiative funded by public subscription – as indeed have been all related Battle monuments and statues⁴⁹ – there is no doubt that this represented the apotheosis of its commemoration. Whilst two monuments of national commemoration have since been established⁵⁰ the memorial in Westminster Abbey reflects the importance of the Battle at the very centre of Britain's religious and political establishment. Given that the memorial itself was first proposed during wartime, it is appropriate that it here provides a denouement for wartime efforts both to celebrate and commemorate the Battle.

Geoff Simpson includes in his account of the Battle of Britain Fighter Association a copy of the letter written by Mr Viner-Brady, a solicitor, to the Dean of Westminster on 8 March 1943 that began the creation of the memorial.⁵¹ Viner-Brady had been inspired by the Battle of Crécy Window in Gloucester Cathedral, and further noting that in Westminster Abbey lay the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior, it would also be fitting to include 'a Memorial to Those Few to whom so many owe so much'; those 'brave few not only saved Britain but probably the World'.⁵² Viner-Brady also proposed the setting up of a public fund to pay for the memorial, this likely to have widespread appeal.⁵³ The Dean of Westminster responded positively, a 1944 Air Ministry internal minute addressed to Peck confirming progress. It noted in sum that in December 1943 it had been decided to create a memorial, a committee formed under Lord Trenchard to take this forward. The Dean of Westminster had given the eastern chapel in the Henry VII Chapel, this in future to be named the Royal Air Force Chapel. The note included a caveat:

[T]his memorial is not to be considered in any way as an official Air Force memorial of a national character but is a private affair provided from funds obtained by a public appeal. The committee is not bound by any views the Air Council may have.⁵⁴

Perhaps the Air Ministry – who were represented on the committee by Air-Vice Marshal Harries – were a little concerned lest the Memorial be seen as focusing only on Fighter Command at a time when opinions had changed as to how far the credit should be spread. Discussed previously, Goodwin's booklet more accurately captured the now-prevailing view of latter 1940.⁵⁵

Although initially reluctant, Lord Trenchard had become involved as a leading fundraiser (his ashes were eventually interred in the chapel, along with Dowding's). Both had in fact been closely involved with the Battle of Britain Memorial Committee whose first meeting had been held on 17 January 1944. Its second meeting was more fruitful based on the minutes, the latter attended by Trenchard and Dowding, in addition to the Dean of Westminster, Mr Viner-Brady, and four other distinguished members.⁵⁶ The success of the fundraising campaign is revealed by the sum of £42,000 collected which had been invested in National War Bonds, these set to mature in 1947.⁵⁷ Discussed previously, much of this meeting appeared to be concerned with the Roll of Honour and its scope. Other decisions reached included limiting the number of armorial badges only to squadrons in Fighter Command (and also therein not to commemorate the fighter aircraft and engine designers); and the rejection of an offer by Saunders, the 1941 pamphlet's author, to donate a high-quality copy of his narrative for deposit in the chapel.⁵⁸

In final form the memorial, principally a stained-glass window by Hugh Easton, comprised forty-eight lights in six panels, extending across the eastern wall of the perpendicular, fan-vaulted gothic chapel in a bow-shaped curve (see Plate 13). The overall effect is a very tall, strongly-glazed, dazzlingly-coloured window, the slender perpendicular tracery not impeding its translucent aura. In all other respects, other than the stained glass itself, the original stonework and statuary in the chapel have remained unchanged. There is a small, plain glass-filled hole punched through the wall, this created by a bomb which destroyed the earlier – but not original to the chapel – window during September 1940. Easton's lower lights incorporate badges of sixty-three fighter squadrons engaged in the Battle, Shakespeare's 'We Few, We Happy Few, We Band of Brothers' inscription carried on the two lowest, centremost lights. Four RAF pilots are portrayed in kneeling or standing positions, contemplating visions symbolising the Redemption. The names of the RAF's wartime leaders are now painted in gold in a narrow band along the stonework immediately beneath the window – Douglas, Dowding, Harris, Newall, Portal and Tedder – but these were not present in the 1940s when the chapel was first unveiled. Dowding's ashes were buried in the

chapel following his memorial service in 1970.⁵⁹ Of the impact of the window's design, it is clearly sensitive to the Abbey's more ancient history and were it not for the pilots and occasional reference to the twentieth century might easily be taken for a Victorian, or earlier creation as Goebel suggests:

the project had the potential to become another medievalist demonstration [...] Crafted in stained glass, the memorial window restates impressively the notion of redemptive sacrifice in a synthesis between Christian and patriotic themes.⁶⁰

Given the immense historical significance of the Abbey and chapel it was not practicable to introduce an overtly modern memorial window, or to include motifs that might jar, stylistically, with the passing of time. As with the Abbey itself, the window will probably remain for centuries to come and this must have been a factor when making decisions about appropriate designs. Trenchard and Dowding would not, presumably, have countenanced anything too radical despite their both being intimately involved in leading a technologically advanced and innovative air force. The emphasis was clearly upon a conservative representation which resonated naturally with the existing tone and ambience of the cathedral.

There were many others to consider too: King George VI, the hierarchy of the Church of England, Abbey worshippers, and relatives of those lost in the Battle who would have expected a dignified memorial worthy of their lost sons. Much in the way that the RAF were concerned to create a body of air-crew portraits and other art to establish a sense of RAF heritage, the memorial window also offered such an opportunity; here after all was a memorial to the RAF in Britain's most important cathedral. Whether the army and Royal Navy were so enthusiastic given their own wartime successes is a moot point. Furniture and ornaments within the chapel included Professor A. E. Richardson's English walnut altar; the Royal Cipher, supported by sculptured figures representing King Arthur and St George by A. F. Hardiman; and a silver cross, two candlesticks, two flaming candelabra, and the chapel rail, designed by Seymour Lindsay. The overall impact was dignified, sparse and in accordance with what one might expect in a traditional chapel setting where contemplation was encouraged.⁶¹

Echoing an almost medieval sense of occasion, the unveiling and dedication ceremony itself was covered live by David Dimbleby, the BBC also devoting its *Radio Times*' cover page to promoting the event on 10 July 1947.⁶² Wholly religious in tone, the ceremony itself was not very different from that performed previously during Thanksgiving Services to mark 15 September.⁶³ Trenchard, Dowding and other leading RAF officers were present, as were the relatives of many who had been lost during the Battle. As the ceremony began George VI, accompanied by his family, was escorted from the west door as the RAF's central band played Sir Walford Davies'

RAF March Past. Thence, the Royal Family processed to the Sanctuary, this followed by the Archbishop of Canterbury's address. Dr J. A. Jagoe, Chaplain-in-Chief of the RAF read the lesson, after which Ralph Vaughan Williams' *The Souls Of The Righteous* motet was performed.⁶⁴ An address by Dr Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury, recalled the three months in which Britain, Germany and the world, seemed to rely upon the actions of young pilots in Fighter Command, and those who produced and maintained their aircraft:

[I]t seemed then, and it seems now, that they alone stood between us and the abyss. Our victory was made possible only by the splendour and the sacrifice which, by a 'narrow margin, denied hostile access across the channel to our shores, and preserved this bastion of freedom'.⁶⁵

Thereafter, George VI was guided to the chapel, unveiling both the memorial window and Roll of Honour, then also giving his own address, wherein,

[W]ith proud thanksgiving we ordain that this chapel be set apart for all time as a memorial of the men of the flying forces who gave their lives in the Battle of Britain. And we charge you, Mr Dean, to dedicate it and gifts wherewith it is adorned to the worship of almighty God.⁶⁶

The Dean of Westminster then performed the dedication. As the King returned to the Sanctuary Elgar's *Nimrod* was played, after which final prayers and a blessing concluded the hour-long ceremony. Acting as ushers throughout were thirty-seven Battle of Britain fighter pilots holding between them two MBEs, four DSOs, twenty-two DFCs and six DFMs. It was broadcast to listeners outside, and also to members of every unit of Fighter Command.⁶⁷

There can be no question that this was a solemn and dignified ceremony lending enormous gravitas to the sacrifices made in 1940.⁶⁸ Although the war in Europe had been concluded over two years previously there was clearly an appetite for commemoration in a world seemingly more uncertain. In contrast, Britain's achievement during the Battle offered a sense of stability, a focus for self-confidence and (rare) evidence of British exceptionalism. That this was in the past seemed to matter not; it offered refuge and a sense of permanence, these alas not reflected in the largely unexpected developing Cold War and geo-political repositioning following victory.

It is also interesting to reflect on what the Labour government may have thought of the memorial in Westminster Abbey. Clement Attlee attended the ceremony as he was entitled to do, not least as a member of the wartime coalition. However, a complication for Labour was Churchill's very close association with both the Few and the Battle in recent popular memory, and of course his being a Tory politician.⁶⁹ Whilst the wartime coalition

including Attlee had undoubtedly been involved in the struggles of 1940 and was entitled to take much credit for what had been achieved, it was difficult to project this in a manner comprehensible to Labour's natural constituency. For most working people the 'fighter boys' had been public-school educated officers, not other-rankers, as amply reinforced in *The First of the Few* and other wartime films.⁷⁰ In any event, by the time the Attlee government assumed power on 26 July 1945 planning for the memorial had been ongoing for some eighteen months and there was little to do but go along with it, even if there were reservations about elitism. Labour were not averse to giving credit where it was due, but they would not, perhaps, have opted for a lavish memorial of this nature which so completely eclipsed and was contrary to the spirit reflected in celebrating the many in the very short-lived Civil Defence Day events.

Memorials actual and imagined

In addition to the Westminster Abbey memorial window, this period also bore witness to three other memorials reflecting aspects of the Battle. The first was at the Rolls-Royce works in Derby, where on 11 January 1949 a Battle of Britain memorial window was unveiled at its main works on Nightingale Road; this one of the major factories producing Merlin engines for Spitfires, Hurricanes and Defiants.⁷¹ Designed by Hugh Easton, he had been approached by Rolls-Royce soon after the unveiling of his window in Westminster Abbey and commissioned to produce a new work for display in its main hall at the company's offices – the window cost £3,145 at 1948 prices. Intended as a tribute principally to the Few but also those producing the aero engines, its inscription records that 'This Window Commemorates the Pilots of the Royal Air Force who in the Battle of Britain turned the work of our hands into the Salvation of our Country.'⁷² Easton had this to say of his striking design, which again was a modern interpretation of medieval stained glass:

In the centre of the window stands the figure of a typical fighter pilot [...] Ready for battle [...] he stands on the spinner of an airscrew, its three blades dominating the lower part of the window. Behind it are stretched out in long lines the sheds and buildings of the Derby factory which produced these engines with which the pilots won the Battle of Britain. In the lower part, therefore, I have tried to symbolise the work of man's hands, the machine [...] In the centre, I felt, the pilot should represent the brain. Above and behind him, with outstretched wings, ready to strike, is a golden eagle; here is the heart and spirit. Beyond, and framing the eagle and dominating all the top of the window, is the resplendent sun in all its glory, symbol of that for which the Battle was fought.⁷³

Its unveiling attended by many dignitaries on 11 January, Rolls-Royce laid on a special train from St Pancras to transport the numerous guests to the factory, some seventy former Battle officer aircrew attending – mostly pilots – including Douglas Bader.⁷⁴ CAS and MRAF, Lord Tedder unveiled the window, this also the focus of a formal dedication by the Lord Bishop of Derby. Whilst not on the scale of that performed at Westminster Abbey it was, though, a reminder of the place of religion in such events. Sinclair as the former head of the Air Ministry attended, as did Noel-Baker his successor; also present were Trenchard and Dowding, but not Portal, whose wife was very ill. Representatives from Rolls-Royce, government bodies and the Admiralty confirmed the wide-ranging interest in the event; despite the illustrious gathering the BBC did not broadcast the unveiling. Sinclair, encouraged to deliver the main speech, paid tribute to Dowding as the 'lion-hearted leader of the Fighter Pilots'⁷⁵ and as their 'rugged and determined' C-in-C.⁷⁶ The many were also acknowledged, Sinclair echoing his earlier position of June 1943 that whilst wholly deserving of their fame, Fighter Command should not be the only recipients of laurels for the Battle.⁷⁷ Thereafter, Rolls-Royce employees were allowed to see the window but it was not intended for public access in the manner that Westminster Abbey's RAF chapel was.

RAF Biggin Hill's St George's Chapel of Remembrance, an RAF initiative dedicated to the 543 pilots who lost their lives flying from the airfield during the war, is inevitably associated with the Few because of its fame during the Battle. Repeatedly attacked, Biggin Hill more than any other airfield came to epitomise Fighter Command's resolve as the *Luftwaffe* shifted its focus to RAF bases during August 1940. Dedicated in November 1951, Dowding attended both its formal opening, also laying the foundation stone in July of that year.⁷⁸ This striking brick-built chapel – Hugh Easton designed the later stained-glass windows depicting squadrons in the Battle⁷⁹ – replaced the original one, this having been created from three station huts, then lost in a fire during 1946. Its original 1943 dedication was also the focus of media interest including newsreel coverage, during which fighter ace 'Sailor' Malan read a dedication to the packed chapel.⁸⁰

A third, national, monument was inaugurated by Queen Elizabeth II at Runnymede near Windsor, on 17 October 1953.⁸¹ The Air Forces Memorial intended – as with Lutyens' Memorial to the Missing of the Somme⁸² – to remember aircrew that had lost their lives during the war but had no known grave. Names are inscribed on stone in cloister vanes at the heart of the memorial. Some 20,547 names are recorded, aircrew originating from the Empire and Commonwealth: 175 of the aircrew killed during the Battle are engraved.⁸³

Notwithstanding the above three memorials, the unveiling of Westminster Abbey's commemorative window in 1947 undoubtedly represented the high-water mark for Battle remembrance: to adopt Churchill's rhetoric, one

might almost say that it denoted the ‘end of the beginning’ of a national love affair with the Few, the Battle growing in the popular British imagination thereafter. It is, though, striking that there remains no official national monument remembering the Battle of Britain in the sense of a formal, government-sponsored and -funded monument. Although the Air Ministry was – not unreasonably – content to be closely associated with the Westminster Abbey memorial window to those killed during the Battle (and its unveiling) this came about because of private initiative and the willingness of the Dean of Westminster Abbey to provide a chapel. Despite this, the window and chapel are generally now seen as an official government tribute to the Few, individual private proposals for a memorial deftly sidestepped by way of explanation.⁸⁴

This position was not satisfactory to all, a lively debate in *The Times*’ letter pages during November and December 1951 confirming the keen interest in a Battle memorial, this following an initial suggestion by W. R. Matthews, the Dean of St Paul’s Cathedral, that a memorial arch might be constructed in the cathedral’s precinct to commemorate the Battle, and also to acknowledge its miraculous survival during those months.⁸⁵ Dr Charles Holden had recently proposed a pedestrianised ‘Battle of Britain Way’ linking Temple Bar to the cathedral proper, a drawing and photograph of the original segmental-headed arch complete with statuary, framing a vista through to St Paul’s’ north transept.⁸⁶ This prompted a response from Gerald Barry and Hugh Casson to the effect that a Battle memorial would be appropriate near St Paul’s, but its exact location was of perhaps more importance than its design; they suggested instead creating a walkway from the South Bank through to the cathedral’s south porch.⁸⁷

A further letter noted instead that Tower Hill would be a suitable site.⁸⁸ More encouraging yet was another from the chairman of the London Society confirming that they would support Dr Holden’s proposal to re-erect Temple Bar, and also proposing that a fund ‘be opened’ to invite public subscriptions.⁸⁹ Further correspondence followed, one, from W. M. James arguing that a grander response was needed because ‘[T]he Battle of Britain [...] was absolutely decisive. If, by destroying our only air fleet, the German Air Force had won freedom to come and go as it pleased, we could not have held out for long.’⁹⁰ Alive to the endless possibilities, rather than putting his weight behind the St Paul’s’ scheme Lord Brabazon instead proposed a ‘noble archway’ inscribed with ‘Battle of Britain’, this to span the dual carriageway leading in and out of Hyde Park corner.⁹¹

The net result of these impassioned suggestions was that nothing whatsoever happened, this so irritating Sir Maurice Dean – an Air Ministry senior official during the Battle – that he devoted a lengthy paragraph to it in his memoirs.⁹² The root of the problem lay not with the Greater London Council who had proposed to government ministers that appropriate recognition be given to the Battle (along the lines as above) he argued, but wholly

that this had been quickly turned down. Dean's view was that despite 'forty years of remarkable service and a great historic victory the Royal Air Force still had not been quite accepted'.⁹³ Interestingly, a Conservative government under Churchill had been elected in October 1951, which, on the face of it, might have enhanced the prospects for such a memorial given the Premier's previous championing of the Battle. However, concerned with more pressing matters, Churchill may either have dismissed such a proposal, or more probably, was not aware of it.

As an aside, this indifference was further reinforced in 1960–1 when a Battle of Britain monument to commemorate the event itself was proposed by George Ward, Secretary of State for Air – and a wartime RAF Group Captain – on 9 September 1960.⁹⁴ Justifying this, the SoS argued that there had been 'no falling off in public interest and it seems clear that the Battle of Britain is still regarded by the general public as a major victory and deliverance'. Moreover, 'it was a fight against odds', and 'averted invasion'. Not able to take it forward himself, the SoS proposed, on the basis of discussions with the Air Council, that the memorial might include 'the naming of a street or square somewhere in central London – perhaps in the City, where extensive rebuilding and planning of blitzed areas is now going on – and the erection in it of a carved figure or series of murals'. Such a memorial would have to be funded through public subscription. A subsequent Cabinet meeting on 15 September agreed with the proposal in principle, but stressed that it was important to avoid 'any controversy about the respective achievements of the three Services in the war'.⁹⁵

A decision was not reached until 25 April 1961 when, following consideration of a memorandum written by the Minister of Defence, it was decided not to proceed with the idea of a formal memorial.⁹⁶ Not specifying the extent of consultation and soundings, the Minister suggested that

he had found no evidence that there was general demand for such memorials, but the Battle of Britain was in many ways a special case, and a memorial to it might well attract public support. If it were approved, the memorial should be dedicated to all those who had helped to make victory possible, including, as well as the Royal Air Force, civil defence services, aircraft workers and the civilian population at large.

Rather than pursuing the earlier suggestions as to the memorial's form, the Minister preferred the naming of a hall of residence at a new university, perhaps at the proposed new University of Kent.⁹⁷ It was further suggested that a debate might be generated in *The Times* in order to test public opinion about such a memorial. In any event the Cabinet decided that there was no 'appreciable demand for a Battle of Britain memorial', also questioning whether it was fitting 'to select that particular victory as the one most appropriate for commemoration by a national memorial'.⁹⁸ More akin to a

Labour Party perspective this decision was again taken by a Conservative government.

Despite this interest in a monument over a decade from 1951 to 1961 nothing concrete developed – literally and figuratively – until the publicly-funded monument at Capel-le-Ferne was dedicated some thirty years later in 1993, and the Battle of Britain Monument on the Embankment in 2005. Both of these more recent monuments owe their existence to the continuing valorisation of the Battle from 1945 onwards, the eight years following victory critical to the shaping and subsequent consolidation of its public representation. It was wholly understandable that a major memorial to the fallen of the Battle would be unveiled in Westminster Abbey, the planning for this dating back to late 1943. It was also fitting that this paid tribute to all those aircrew lost during the period of the Battle.

Battle of Britain Flight

Despite the lack of official monuments to the Battle, the RAF has maintained the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight since it was effectively inaugurated as the Historic Aircraft Flight at RAF Biggin Hill on 11 July 1957, with the arrival of three Spitfire PR. XIXs joining the last Hurricane – a Mk. II – then remaining in the RAF's charge.⁹⁹ Initiated by Group Captain Peter Thompson – a Hurricane pilot during the Battle – the Flight had its origins in the annual commemorative Battle flypasts in which Thompson took part. Its beginnings very tenuous, the Flight was allocated few resources and relied heavily upon the goodwill of station staff and ground crew to find spares, and service and maintain its aircraft.¹⁰⁰

The nascent Flight's base at Biggin Hill soon came under threat with a decision made in February 1958 to close this most famous Battle of Britain station; its memorial chapel, as above, had of course only been in existence for less than three years. Renamed the Battle of Britain Flight in March it relocated to another Battle fighter base at North Weald in Essex, this also short-lived with the station's closure in May 1958. Reinforcing the realities of a rapidly shrinking RAF, from there it moved to Martlesham Heath – also a Battle fighter station – where it remained until November 1961, thence RAF Horsham St Faith in Norfolk, the latter closing in 1963. In April, the Flight – now with only a Spitfire and Hurricane on charge – moved to former Battle airfield, RAF Coltishall. Once at its new base the Flight was able to add further aircraft, the most notable insofar as the Battle was concerned being Spitfire Mk. IIa (P7350), which had been shot down by an Me109. Restored and flown for the 1969 *Battle of Britain* feature film, it was presented to the Flight after filming had ended.¹⁰¹ It was not until 1965 that the Flight's future became more assured, the RAF – recognising the value in continuing to display vintage aircraft at airshows and other events – deciding to invest more heavily in supporting its historically priceless asset. The Flight moved

to its permanent home at RAF Coningsby in 1976, now complete with visitor centre. In its way a living memorial to the Few, its origins through the inspiration of a former Battle pilot are all the more fitting.

End of an era, 1965

As the Battle's twenty-fifth anniversary approached it was clear that both Britain and its place in the world had undergone dramatic change and that, despite the Cold War, one expression of this was the reduction in its armed forces, the costs prohibitive. A consequence was that in 1964 the Air Ministry ceased to exist as a separate organisation, being merged instead with the War Office, Admiralty, Ministry of Aviation, and Ministry of Defence, to form the latter in much enlarged configuration.¹⁰² Thus ended 46 years of unique leadership, focusing both on air power and projecting the RAF's successes and value to Britain and the world.

In this new political and funding landscape the RAF found itself having to negotiate with its army and navy counterparts in securing resources, and agreeing doctrinal and other combined approaches in future operational commitments. In this sense the Battle represented a unique RAF climacteric for which it could take sole credit given its intensive combat engagement. The wartime Air Ministry's senior officers – Peck and Sutton especially – had been right to anticipate and strongly promote the Battle as a distinctive opportunity to elevate the RAF's national standing, the legacy of which was astonishing by 1965. Table 7.3 confirms the Battle's progressive valorisation from impromptu propaganda war in latter 1940, to near-legend as the modern age dawned. Much of this, of course, was driven or strongly supported by the Air Ministry.

Churchill's death on 24 January 1965 provided a denouement to the Battle's official twenty-fifth anniversary, the former Premier having done more than anyone first to anticipate, and then pay tribute, to the Few.¹⁰³ His 20 August 1940 epigraph formally sanctioned all that followed, both from the Air Ministry but also writers, film-makers, artists and broadcasters. He further reinforced this through his best-selling *Their Finest Hour* (see Chapter 8). A striking expression of a changing world was Queen Elizabeth II's official visit to West Germany and West Berlin during May 1965. It was a perhaps fitting way to welcome in the new age, and one which Churchill – a Europeanist at heart – may have approved of as the then European Commission president, José Manuel Barroso, argued in November 2013: 'Churchill rightly said in 1948: "[W]e must aim at nothing less than the Union of Europe as a whole, and we look forward with confidence to the day when the Union will be achieved".'¹⁰⁴ A view strongly dividing opinion in 2015-Britain, ironically, there is little doubt that the roots of Euroscepticism originate in no small part from the distant events of 1940, these in turn attributable to Churchill's and the Air Ministry's (who he influenced) valorisation of the Few.

Table 7.3 Key events in the valorisation of the Few and the Battle of Britain (compiled by Garry Campion from various sources)

Year	Government or Air Ministry initiative	Publicly or Privately-derived
1940	18.6.1940 Churchill coined 'Battle of Britain' term: i.e. as in 'Battle of France'; 20.8.1940 Churchill's 'to So Few' speech; 8.9.1940 National Day of Prayer; 11.9.1940 Churchill's speech links the Few with invasion outcome; major focus on 15.9.1940 aircraft losses as critical for the invasion decision; 8.10.1940 Churchill speech confirms the Few's primacy in thwarting invasion	25.6.1940 <i>Spitfires over Britain</i> BBC radio play*; 14.7.1940 Gardner BBC 'live' broadcast of air battle; 16.9.1940 Extensive media coverage of 185 German aircraft losses on 15 September* November 1940, <i>Britain's RAF</i> US newsreel*
1941	29.3.1941 <i>Battle of Britain</i> Mol pamphlet; 7.9.1941 National Day of Prayer; November, Nash's <i>Battle of Britain</i> oil painting for WAAC	8.5.1941 <i>Battle of Britain</i> BBC radio play*; May 1941 Spaight's <i>Battle of Britain 1940</i> published*
1942	11.7.1942 Peck in Air Ministry proposes Battle commemoration; 15.11.1942 Civil Defence Day	June 1942 <i>Mrs Miniver</i> film; 19.6.1942 Hillary's <i>The Last Enemy</i> published*; 9.7.1942 Ingram letter to AM; SoS Sinclair proposing a Roll of Honour for the Few*; August 1942 <i>First of the Few</i> film*
1943	19.6.1943 Lord Sherwood in Air Ministry proposes Battle commemoration; 26.9.1943 Battle of Britain Sunday	8.3.1943 Viner-Brady letter to Dean of Westminster proposing a memorial to the Few Autumn 1943, <i>The Battle of Britain</i> US film*
1944	17.9.1944 Battle of Britain Sunday	
1945	22.3.1945 Ronald Ross MP argues for Few medal recognition in Commons; 13.5.1945 Churchill victory speech pays tribute to the Few; 19.5.1945 Churchill confirms medal award for the Few;	
1946	15.9.1945 RAF fly-past; 15–22.9.1945 Battle of Britain Week 10.9.1946 Dowding's despatch published in <i>London Gazette</i> ; 15.9.1946 Battle of Britain Sunday, and Week (and BBC TV coverage)	

- 1947 21.7.1947 Battle of Britain Sunday, and Week, including Battle of Britain exhibition on Horse Guards Parade (and BBC TV coverage continues)
- 1948 Battle of Britain Sunday, and Week and exhibition
- 1949 Battle of Britain Sunday, and Week and exhibition
- 1950 Battle of Britain Sunday, and Week and exhibition (and thereafter)
- 1951 St George's Chapel of Remembrance opened at RAF Biggin Hill
- 1952
- 1953 Richards' *The Fight at Odds* volume; Air Forces Memorial, Runnymede
- 10.7.1947 Battle of Britain Memorial Window unveiled by George VI in Westminster Abbey*; Ingram's Roll of Honour also unveiled*; 14.9.1947: *The Battle for Britain* BBC feature*
- Fuehrer Naval Conferences* volume published confirming impact of RAF on *Sea Lion* decisions (Admiralty)
- 11.1.1949: Rolls-Royce Battle of Britain Memorial Window unveiled in Derby; 18.9.1949: *An English Summer* BBC TV play; Churchill's *Their Finest Hour* volume*
- Wilmot's *Struggle for Europe* volume*; 4.8.1952: *Angels One Five* film*

* with Air Ministry support

8

'Angels One Five': Historical and Cultural Consolidation, 1946–1965

Shaping the historiography

An important factor in later perceptions of the Battle was – and remains – a sense of when and how it was fought. Even by 1945 the Battle's dates and phases were settled insofar as the Air Ministry was concerned, Saunders, Dowding, Goodwin and James individually defining the shape which it broadly retains (see Figure 8.1). However, during wartime only Saunders' version was publicly available, historians working without Air Ministry support and access to documents having little choice other than to accept his dates and phases. Previous chapters have confirmed how important this framing of the Battle was to the Air Ministry's steady fashioning of the air war as a key event, Saunders' interpretation in March 1941 both inspired and well-timed – even if 8 August was later deemed inaccurate in denoting the Battle's beginning (Air Ministry 1, in Figure 8.1).

Dowding – who had instead suggested 10 July as being as good a date as any – also had access to official documents, as indeed did Goodwin (1943: RAF training booklet) and James (1945: secret AHB narrative). Whereas most historical events are subject to progressive analysis over the span of many years – a dominant view not coalescing sometimes for decades – it is remarkable that insofar as the Battle was concerned its 'history' had already been settled within five months of its conclusion. For instance, there is not much difference between Goodwin's 1943 phasing, and that set out by Wood and Dempster eighteen years later.¹ Further confirming this, most British historians now accept that the Battle was concluded on 31 October 1940, at which point daylight attacks slowly faded away; this in fact mirrored the manner in which the Battle had begun, 10 July 1940 deemed the point at which the air attacks reached a sufficiently clear intensity to warrant its formal beginning.²

An advantage in giving precise dates and phases to an otherwise rather jumbled series of tactical and strategic moves is to make them comprehensible, the affirmation of a clear victory easier to reinforce.¹³ Discussed

	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
Air Ministry 1³ 1941	--		[8.8-----23.8][24.8-----6.9][7.9-----5.10][6.10-31.10] <i>phase 1 phase 2 phase 3 phase 4</i>			
Dowding⁴ 1941 (1946)	--	[10.7----- <i>phase 1</i>		-----25.8][26.8-----9.9][10.9-----30.9][1.10-----31.10] <i>phase 2 phase 3 phase 4</i>		
Air Ministry 2⁵ 1943		[10.7----- <i>phase 1 (i)</i>	-----7.8][8.8-----18.8] - [24.8-----6.9][7.9-----27.9][28.9-----31.10] <i>phase 1 (ii) phase 2 (i) (iii) phase 3</i>			
Macmillan⁶ 1944	[May <i>recee</i>	-----9.7][10.7----- <i>phase 1</i>	-----7.8][8.8-----18.8] -- [25.8-----9.9][10.9-----30.9][1.10-----31.10] <i>phase 2 phase 3 phase 4 phase 5 phase 6 →</i>			
James⁷ 1945	--	[10.7----- <i>phase 1</i>	-----7.8][8.8-----18.8] - [24.8-----6.9][7.9-----30.9][1.10-----fades away] <i>phase 2 phase 3 phase 4 phase 5</i>			
Lee⁸ 1946	--	[10.7----- <i>phase 1</i>	-----18.8] - [24.8-----27.9] <i>phase 2 phase 3</i>		[October - fades away] <i>phase 3</i>	
Park⁹ 1951	--	[July <i>phase 1</i>	-----7.8][8.8-----18.8][19.8-----7.9][7.9-----6.10][6.10---November] <i>phase 2 phase 3 phase 4 phase 5</i>			
Collier¹⁰ 1957	[June-July] <i>prelude</i>	[10.7----- <i>preliminary</i>	-----12.8][13.8-23.8] -- [26.8-----6.9][7.9-----31.10] <i>phase 1 phase 2 phase 3</i>			
Wood & Dempster¹¹ 1961		[10.7----- <i>phase 1</i>	-----7.8][8.8-----23.8][24.8-----6.9][7.9-----30.9][1.10-----31.10] <i>phase 2 phase 3 phase 4 phase 5</i>			
RAFM¹² 2014	--	[26.6-----16.7][17.7----- <i>phase 1</i>	-----12.8][13.8-----6.9][7.9-----2.10][3.10-----31.10] <i>phase 2 phase 3 phase 4 phase 5</i>			

Figure 8.1 British historical phases for the Battle of Britain period (compiled by Garry Campion)

previously, in taking this approach to the Battle it enabled the Air Ministry – seduced by its own propaganda – to develop a circular argument about the importance of the Battle. Similar assertions could be made about the Battle of El Alamein in late 1942, this too an extended series of clashes, no one day being absolutely decisive.

German historians and commentators take a rather different view of the 1940 air war against Britain, some disagreeing that there was actually a ‘Battle of Britain’.¹⁴ This was also the case in wartime where even soon after the Battle had been fought, and in response to BBC claims and no doubt the *Battle of Britain* propaganda pamphlet, German propagandists acted to deny that the series of air battles had ever taken place, Ernst Kris and Hans Speier, wartime experts on radio broadcasts in this field, noting that Germany’s ‘defeat’ in the Battle had been refuted, as had the Battle’s being fought at all. Moreover, they noted that Nazi propagandists also went so far as to organise a ‘denial campaign’, accusing the British and the BBC of seeking to cover up the RAF’s failure during the preceding year.¹⁵

To some degree this view about the Battle as a campaign has held sway despite the passage of seventy-five years, but German historians would not deny that a series of air battles for strategic dominance had taken place in late 1940 and early 1941. Figure 8.2 confirms that from a German perspective it was not until 8 August 1940 that a significant effort was made to challenge the RAF, this at odds with British historians’ views denoting an earlier start. Unusually, Adolf Galland, the foremost fighter-ace and leader engaged throughout the war – who experienced these events at first hand – suggested 1 July 1940 as the beginning of the campaign, his views regarding the phasing then quickly revised; his analysis of the earliest phase remained in broad accord with Collier.

Field-Marshal Albert Kesselring, commander of *Airflotte 2* during the Battle, argued that there were in fact two main phases of Germany’s attacks against Britain: the first was concerned with defeating the RAF and preparing the way for invasion; the second was an attack on Britain’s economic capability and its armaments industry.¹⁶ The Swiss historian Theo Weber reinforced this chronology with, to his mind, 6 September 1940 providing the hinge or fulcrum between the two halves of this strategy.¹⁷ German naval historian Karl Klee followed much the same approach in his phasing of the *Luftwaffe*’s progressive assault on Britain: first destroy its fighter defences and prepare the way for invasion, then turn to degrading its economic potential.¹⁸ Insofar as this strategy was adhered to in practice, faulty *Luftwaffe* intelligence led commanders to believe that progress with these aims was both significant and on track, this in turn presenting an increasingly confusing tactical picture for the defending British in seeking both to parry attacks and safeguard its fighter assets.

It is only when one recognises that the OKW had a seriously deficient intelligence picture of its impact upon the RAF that seemingly odd offensive

	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	1941
Galland 1 ²⁰ 1950	--	[1.7-23.7][24.7] <i>Initial phase 1</i>	-----20.8][24.8----- <i>phase 2</i>	6.9][7.9----- <i>phase 3</i>	30.9][1.10-22.10][23.10----- <i>phase 4</i>	phase 5	-----10.5.41]
Galland 2 ²¹ 1953	--	[1.7-23.7][24.7]-----8.8][8.8----- <i>phase 1 phase 2 phase 3</i>	-----7.9][7.9----- <i>phase 4</i>	-----20.10][late-10----- <i>phase 5</i>			-----Apr/May 41]
Kesselring ²² 1953	--	--	[8.8----- <i>phase 1</i>	-----6.9][6.9----- <i>phase 2</i>			-----June 41]
Weber ²³ 1956	--	[1.7----- <i>contact phase</i>	7.8][8.8-----18.8][19.8-----5.9][6.9-----27.9][28.9----- <i>phase 1(i) phase 2(i)</i>	(i)	20.10]		[14.11-----10.5.41] (iii)
Klee ²⁴ 1958	[22.6----- <i>contact phase</i>		7.8][8.8-----23.8][24.8-----6.9][7.9-19.9][20.9----- <i>phase 1(i) phase 2(i)</i>	(ii)			13.11][14.11-----22.6.41] (ii)
British ²⁵ 1941/1943	--	[10.7----- <i>phase 1</i>	7.8][8.8-----23.8][24.8-----6.9][7.9-----30.9][1.10----- <i>phase 2 phase 3 phase 4</i>	phase 5			-----31.10]

Figure 8.2 German historical phases for the Battle of Britain period, 1940-1941 (compiled by Garry Campion)

decisions begin to make sense: for instance, the turn against London on 7 September is logical if it was believed that RAF Fighter Command was genuinely down to its last sixty or so fighters, and – a serious hope amongst the OKW – a devastating attack on the capital might just lead to civil unrest and Churchill's downfall. In this context a shift away from the RAF and its airfields towards munitions and aircraft factories was therefore sensible; but for the British it represented a major *Luftwaffe* error, costing the Germans the Battle. One date then, but very different interpretations; the same applies to 15 September, the official military history authored by leading German historians making no mention whatsoever of this as a decisive date.¹⁹

Insofar as the construction and development of the Battle of Britain as a historical event is concerned it is evident that the British chronology and phasing inevitably favoured Fighter Command's daytime operations. In laying emphasis upon the day fighting the powerful propaganda of 1940 was preserved, fighter pilots going into action almost as knights of old, jousting with each other in chivalric dogfights. Linking these combats to the vanquishing of the *Luftwaffe* and a cancelled invasion added yet more gravitas to what was undoubtedly an important moment in British modern history. Yet this is a selective interpretation of those events by the British Air Ministry, who moved quickly to define them positively once it became clear that a 'victory of sorts' had been achieved.²⁶ This is not to suggest that the key dates and shifts of strategic emphasis did not take place, but rather that Fighter Command's success throughout German historians' definition of this period was uneven; the night Blitz is an example of what the British view as an entirely separate historic event to the day Battle, the one running into the other but nevertheless still very different in both its tone and significance.

In contrast, German historians note that the *Luftwaffe* was able to sustain the air war for a further six months, British air defences unable to counter night attacks until airborne radar became available in sufficient numbers. It is small wonder, therefore, that German assessments of this period are disinclined to accept Britain's triumphalist domination of the historical representation of the Battle when, certainly as it appears to the former, this very partial view wholly eclipses the majority of the *Luftwaffe's* effort from November 1940 to early May 1941 in degrading and dislocating its enemy's economic capability. However, as Churchill confirmed with his series of books on the Second World War, the victors write the history, the vanquished generally preferring to forget.²⁷ This is very much confirmed in the following discussion concerning the Battle's published historiography from 1949–61.

Operation *Sea Lion* revealed, then reprised

If May 1947's revelations about *Luftwaffe* losses had been unwelcome to many, the BBC's broadcast of *Battle for Britain* on 14 September 1947 was

received more enthusiastically. The BBC's last broadcast of its popular *Battle of Britain* radio play had been on 22 May 1943, the organisation not revisiting the Battle with a major new programme during the intervening four or so years. Written and introduced by the Australian-born BBC correspondent, Chester Wilmot – the author of the later, highly-regarded 1952 *Struggle for Europe*, of which more shortly – this second, more factual, programme revealed to the public for the first time the details of Operation *Sea Lion*, and critically insofar as the Battle was concerned, the impact of British resistance on Hitler's planning.

In this sense it was the second major revelation about the Battle in just a few months, this also providing clarity about the air battles of five years earlier. The hour-long programme was recorded for a special BBC Transcription Service event, the *Radio Times* proclaiming it as 'a new chapter in radio history', the BBC thereafter broadcasting the programme to thirty countries.²⁸ A full page of the *Radio Times* is devoted to the programme, Wilmot revealing German planning based upon a wide range of sources including notes from Hitler's conferences, diaries, operational orders, planning documents, official diaries, interviews with senior commanders, and the intended administration of Britain following the occupation.²⁹

Now familiar material, the article (and presumably the programme) confirms chronologically Hitler's various directives beginning with his 16 July *Sea Lion* order to begin preparations for the invasion, these followed by Goering's orders for the *Luftwaffe* to defeat the RAF during August. In consequence, Wilmot argues that *Sea Lion* was a serious, carefully planned threat, the preparations extensive and thorough.³⁰ Comparable in significance to the *Luftwaffe* Quartermaster-General's aircraft returns, this information was based principally on captured *Kriegsmarine* documents seized in 1945, thereafter carefully translated by a team at the British Admiralty.³¹

Wilmot had also drawn upon British documents and views in order to show how both sides viewed and prepared for invasion during latter 1940, in which case he argued, an accurate, hitherto untold story of a desperate moment was revealed for the first time.³² The recently revealed accurate aircraft losses were also included in his analysis. Dowding's September 1946 despatch, previously withheld, would also presumably have guided Wilmot's thinking, this assessment of the Battle a matter-of-fact, practical and thorough assessment by Fighter Command's former C-in-C.³³ Dowding, of course, had written his despatch without the revised figures to hand, this inevitably distorting his assessment of Fighter Command's overall effectiveness; in all other respects, though, it was an accurate, reasoned and factual account, if perhaps a little detailed for Wilmot's broader-canvas approach. Dowding's despatch was also notable for its entire absence of adulation regarding the Few, their deeds doubtless speaking for themselves.

Wilmot even posed a series of questions for the reader in the *Radio Times*' article, these on such subjects as: the length of time it took Hitler to order

the invasion after Dunkirk (almost seven weeks); following Hitler's decision how long Goering delayed before attacking Southern England (another month according to *Adler Tag*); what the *Luftwaffe's* real plan and objective was, and how close they came to realising it; the extent of Goering's errors of strategy that contributed to the failure; and '[W]as it really the toll of casualties that compelled the *Luftwaffe* to break off the battle?'³⁴ Several other questions were asked but these are the more significant insofar as the main focus of the programme was concerned, the answers to which were not given in the *Radio Times* but were instead revealed on air, but unlikely to surprise historians today.³⁵

In contrast to the revised aircraft figures which had had the effect of rather rubbing the shine off the Battle for some, Wilmot's BBC revelations about *Sea Lion* reinforced the sense of a disaster very narrowly averted. Perhaps mindful of his audience, Wilmot was also determined to spread the credit widely in his 1947 *Radio Times* article, and presumably in the broadcast itself: '[T]he Battle was fought – and won – not only in the skies, but in the command posts, airfields and factories, in the homes and air-raid shelters, on the high seas and in the Army's training camps and coastal defences'; and in quoting Churchill's 'war of the Unknown Warriors', it seemed clear to Wilmot that this victory was 'gained' as much by the Many, as by the Few.³⁶ This, of course, accorded with the earlier 1941 BBC radio play: the Few were certainly credited with a decisive victory, as were the Many; Denis Richards also broadly shared this view in his 1953 book, discussed below. Strikingly, five years later Wilmot's influential 1952 analysis reinforced only the Few's prowess in thwarting invasion, virtually if not wholly ignoring the 'many' identified in his earlier broadcast.³⁷

Insofar as the factual basis for the broadcast was concerned, *Kriegsmarine* Vice-Admiral Kurt Assmann had recently completed his report on *Sea Lion* for the Admiralty, this in turn based upon work he undertook for Admiral Raeder; this was prompted in 1943 when the latter was increasingly concerned that Hitler might blame him for the failure to defeat Britain during 1940.³⁸ Assmann, though, is quite clear as to the reasoning for a decision not to launch *Sea Lion* in September 1940:

[T]hose who tend to draw the conclusion that the operation was abandoned because of the German Air Force's failure to achieve effective air supremacy come nearer to historical truth, but even this does not fully meet the case. The real cause lay deeper. Among the prerequisites for the invasion, one remained unspoken, though it could be read between the lines in all discussions, and that was: Command of the sea.³⁹

Critically then, it was recognised – and viewed from the bridge of any *Kriegsmarine* destroyer, doubtless conceded – that the immutable Royal Navy, clearly resolute and prepared to suffer grave casualties, would do all

in its power to prevent the invasion armada from crossing the Channel. Assmann confirms that acute doubts remained about the *Luftwaffe's* ability to compensate effectively for a lack of *Kriegsmarine* heavy warships in taking on the Royal Navy, both during the initial assault waves, but also for critical re-supply thereafter.⁴⁰ Tellingly, he acknowledged this disparity as the principal reason for the invasion to be abandoned, the issue of air superiority in many respects a foil for a general lack of appetite for launching a hastily improvised invasion, Britain's otherwise parlous situation encouraging a view within the OKW that attacks on shipping and industry alone would bring about the desired result; but crucially without needing to risk a loss of prestige through this 'extreme measure' were the invasion to fail.⁴¹

It is hard to disagree with Assmann's assessment: it is, though, striking that virtually no mention is made of the British Army in his reasons for the decision, other than to suggest that 'on his own territory [the army] must have become stronger from day to day'.⁴² There were also concerns about weather conditions in the Channel for the proposed crossing dates. Even if the crossing was unopposed the unsuitability of Rhine barges to ferry hundreds of fully-armed and equipped troops across wide expanses of open sea was palpable; one can only imagine the relief felt by humble soldiers as they learned of the invasion's 'postponement'.

Discussed below, a notable omission in Wilmot's 1952 book is the vital role of the Royal Navy in challenging an attempted crossing, his view wholly ignoring Assmann's 1947 assertion that *Sea Lion* would be a huge risk in the face of superior naval opposition.⁴³ Several 'revisionist' historians have argued that it was the Royal Navy alone that settled matters during the critical decisions about *Sea Lion*, Fighter Command deemed to have been credited with an unwarranted victory.⁴⁴ In seeking to adopt a neutral position one is, though, bound to ask why it was that the Royal Navy's importance was eclipsed in many earlier post-war assessments of the Battle. It was clearly both a significant threat and material consideration for Hitler, and far more potent than the often few lines devoted to its existence in many books on the Battle (Appendices 7.2 and 7.3 confirm the broad historiography).

A major argument for Fighter Command's primacy – often implied rather than explored – concerns the perceived vulnerability of Royal Navy warships to air attack and the extent to which the *Luftwaffe* might have 'balanced up' the stark sea power disparity between the opposing navies. On the basis of prevailing 1940 *Luftwaffe* technology and bombs it has been argued that the Royal Navy could have withstood even unmolested Stuka and Ju88 dive-bomber attacks, this demonstrated during the Battle of Crete in 1941 despite the *Luftwaffe's* relative air superiority; hence, it is suggested that the argument about Fighter Command's primacy is redundant.⁴⁵

Others, of course, would contend that the Royal Navy suffered heavily precisely because of a lack of air cover. For example, David Brown notes that

‘[T]he German Air Force’s performance against the British warships attempting to support, and subsequently, evacuate the defenders of the island was of an equally high standard’ [to the airborne invasion], during which four destroyers and two cruisers were sunk by German air attack; several other major warships were damaged in related operations between 21 May 1941 and 1 June 1941.⁴⁶

Dunkirk also offers a useful example of a significant *Luftwaffe* effort against British shipping, this in a daily shifting balance of air superiority over the town and beaches: nine destroyers were sunk in the evacuation, of which six were British (of a total 38 involved – 15.7 per cent losses), and three French (of 20 involved – 15 per cent losses). These nine – many close inshore and laden with troops (five were victims of dive-bomber attacks) – represented 8.6 per cent of all destroyers engaged.⁴⁷ Other ships were lost to E-boats and mines, and many damaged. It is difficult to extrapolate from these two examples the likely *Luftwaffe* attrition of Royal Navy warships in mid-Channel – even operating in daylight – as they manoeuvred amongst the invasion armada. Stukas were of course vulnerable even with Me109 protection, this amply demonstrated before they were withdrawn from the Battle due to heavy casualties.⁴⁸ The reality was that in order to reduce losses the armada would make the crossing mostly during darkness, the aim to arrive off the British coast at first light – as indeed happened during D-Day in 1944. In this context the RAF would be of limited use before they reached the English coast, but so too would the *Luftwaffe* be in seeking to attack enemy warships.

It is of course difficult to prove – or disprove – revisionists’ claims that Fighter (and Bomber) Command were not critical to preventing an invasion attempt, without first testing theories in comparable conditions to those likely have been prevailing in a Channel crossing. Local sea conditions would be important: waves and swell, currents, haze, fog, visibility, wind and so forth. Adverse conditions may have scattered the invasion armada and made them harder targets, but also neutered the *Wehrmacht*’s ‘punch’ at a perhaps decisive point. A very smooth crossing would make barges more vulnerable to air attack, but allowed for a concentrated landing. Another factor easily overlooked is that had Hitler’s invasion force managed to cross the Channel and secure a bridgehead – despite RAF and Royal Navy opposition – the *Kriegsmarine* would be under immense pressure to quickly return to Channel ports, take on reinforcements, armoured vehicles and supplies, thence re-cross the Channel in the face of a now thoroughly alerted Royal Navy (and which, with some thirty destroyers immediately available – see below – would remain very potent even with twenty per cent losses). None of this could be achieved rapidly, the invading force at risk from running out of supplies in the meantime. One can also factor in the British Army, coastal defences, and a civilian population thoroughly prepared for an invasion.

A final point concerns airborne troops, either parachutists or glider-borne: the German invasion of Crete in 1941 confirmed the hazards of the former in a daylight operation, and it is questionable whether the *Luftwaffe* had sufficient gliders and tow-aircraft for these to be decisive in September 1940.⁴⁹ It can therefore be argued that even had *Sea Lion* been launched in the face of clearly faltering RAF opposition there was no guarantee that it would succeed, the disastrous August 1942 Dieppe landings confirming the inherent risks, even given time to prepare resources and careful planning.⁵⁰

Who then thwarted Operation *Sea Lion*?

Given the above – and the previous discussions in Chapters 1 and 3 – should the Few have been given most credit for *Sea Lion's* abandonment when its details were first revealed in 1947? Returning to the broader point generated by Wilmot's 1947 broadcast and his initial awarding of laurels to all, it is arguable that no single factor substantially decided matters in mid-September. It is undeniable that the Few's valiant resistance over many weeks of hard fighting had made a strong impression on Hitler and the OKW, as had the bomber attacks on Channel ports – as much for their determined and continued prosecution if not for the material damage they had caused – and the untested but nonetheless potent threat posed by the Royal Navy. Indeed, Wilmot quoted a 12 September *Kriegsmarine* report confirming that

[I]nterruptions caused by the enemy's air forces, long-range artillery and light naval forces have for the first time assumed major significance [Harbours are named which cannot be used as anchorages] because of English bombing and shelling. Units of the British fleet are now able to operate almost unmolested in the Channel. Owing to these difficulties, further delays are expected in the assembly of the invasion fleet.⁵¹

Clearly, despite Fighter Command's resolute engagement in fierce daylight battles this alone had not led to the invasion's prospects being reviewed. It is, though, striking that this is the first of only two mentions of RAF bomber attacks on barges in Wilmot's 1952 narrative on the Battle. The Royal Navy is similarly only occasionally mentioned, and usually as withdrawing from Channel escort duties because of sharp air attacks, rather than in taking offensive action.⁵² Despite solely crediting the Few with the victory, Wilmot concludes his analysis of the Battle with Hitler's 17 September verdict, this following several nights of RAF bomber attacks against Channel ports which destroyed or damaged some twelve per cent of the assembled barges:⁵³

[T]he enemy air force is still by no means defeated; on the contrary it shows increasing signs of activity. The weather situation as a whole

does not permit us to expect a period of calm. The Fuehrer has therefore decided to postpone Operation *Sea Lion* indefinitely.⁵⁴

Frustratingly brief as an explanation for the effective abandonment of *Sea Lion*, Hitler is, though, clearly acknowledging Bomber Command too. Also not noted in Wilmot's account is an entry in the War Diary two days later, this confirming the scale of the corresponding threat posed by the Royal Navy to any invasion armada, and of which Hitler was doubtless aware:

- i [Frequent appearances of destroyers off the French coast; and the Franco-Belgian coast; and stationing his patrol vessels off the north coast of France.]
- ii The main units of the Home Fleet are being held in readiness to repel the landing, though the majority of units are still in western bases.
- iii Already a large number of destroyers (over 30) have been located by air reconnaissance in the southern and south-eastern harbours.
- iv All available information indicates that the enemy's naval forces are solely occupied with this theatre of operations.⁵⁵

Given the scale of total Royal Naval assets capable of rapid deployment to intercept the *Sea Lion* armada, it is simply not credible to suggest that this was not a significant consideration when it was abandoned on 17 September.⁵⁶ It is then also curious that Wilmot chose not to acknowledge this more strongly in his narrative: it would take little away from the Few's achievement but would instead have offered a more accurate portrayal of the multiple challenges facing Hitler in crossing the Channel.⁵⁷ Less clear is the level of threat posed by the Royal Navy in Hitler's thinking: there is no question that it posed a considerable risk, but it is not possible to say that 'X' per cent of the decision was due to the RAF (fighters and bombers), and 'Y' per cent, the Royal Navy.

Returning to the original question as to whether the Few should have been given most if not all the credit for the abandoned invasion, there is no doubt that 15 September was a very clear statement of Fighter Command's resilience, the *Luftwaffe* failing to secure air superiority.⁵⁸ Assmann confirmed that from the historical perspective of the 17 September conference, RAF resistance – as distinct from Fighter Command's – was a major factor. It is also entirely reasonable to agree that from a British perspective in late 1940, Hitler's failure to invade Britain was clearly linked to this RAF fighter resistance. It is, therefore, understandable that the Air Ministry, very keen to build upon its propaganda success of the previous year, quickly wove these elements together in the 1941 pamphlet as we have seen. Viewed through this narrow prism, then, it is quite hard to disagree that the Few were entitled to take credit for denying the air superiority conditions under which the invasion might be launched.

Where the 1941 narrative departs from the actual facts of the situation in September 1940 is in respect of the RAF's bomber attacks. In contrast to Fighter Command's valorisation, and despite substantial propaganda during September 1940 about the Battle of the Barges, it is notable that this was not included in Saunders' best-selling pamphlet. Given Hitler's 17 September view about the 'RAF's' being 'by no means defeated', this omission has resulted in an inaccurate representation of this decisive period. Whilst Churchill was, of course, not impressed by Bomber Command's attrition of barges it is clear that *Kriegsmarine* staff officers took a rather different view, but this of course was not known at the time.

Returning to the historiography, it is also striking that having first seemingly credited both the Few and the Many with the victory in September 1947's BBC broadcast (to over thirty countries), Wilmot then changed tack for his later book. Given that the Royal Navy did not have to prove its mettle in mid-Channel it was wholly reasonable that the 'fighter boys' were valorised for their epic performance, but insofar as the precise reasons for *Sea Lion* were concerned it was a partial representation.

Wilmot, no doubt sensitive to the special place of the Few in popular British consciousness, was clearly aware of this, reinforcing their valour, but not that of the 'bomber boys'. He may also have decided that Churchill's rendering of the Battle in his 1949 *Their Finest Hour* volume – which series Wilmot cites – was a view not to be lightly contradicted. Here, Churchill gave full credit to the Few; bomber attacks against barges, and indeed the Royal Navy, are scarcely mentioned.⁵⁹ The former Premier also twice reinforces the Few's role on 15 September as being decisive 'as the culminating date' and in the war as a whole;⁶⁰ and as the 'crux'⁶¹ of the Battle. An international best-seller, Churchill's verdict on 1940 quickly came to dominate the Battle's historiography, setting a well-defined path for those who followed.⁶² As noted previously, Churchill's account drew upon Goodwin's 1943 pamphlet and also Dowding's 1946 despatch. Strikingly, insofar as the link between invasion and 15 September 1940 was concerned, Dowding simply ignored it, reinforcing instead continuing *Luftwaffe* attacks seemingly unrelated to the invasion:

[T]he most critical stage of the Battle occurred in the third phase. On the 15th September the Germans delivered their maximum effort, when our guns and fighters together accounted for 185 aircraft. Heavy pressure was kept up to 27th September, but, by the end of the month, it became apparent that the Germans could no longer face the Bomber wastage which they had sustained.⁶³

It may be recalled that Dowding paid tribute to the RAF's bomber crews for attacks on the Channel ports, first in 1942, and then in the Preface of his biography.

Given the national focus since 1943 on 15 September as Battle of Britain Day, the unveiled memorial in Westminster Abbey in 1947, and Churchill's affirmation of the Few's decisive victory, it is understandable that in 1952 Wilmot chose to reinforce – and closely echo – Churchill's narrative. Fighter Command's formidable resistance had undoubtedly been significant throughout the latter part of 1940, and they deserved to take credit for that. Historiographically this is important because aside from Churchill – who was careful to reinforce his wartime link with the Few – Wilmot was the only former war correspondent with intimate knowledge of these events, based upon his research for the BBC programme, and the 1946 coverage of the Nuremberg Trials. After all, excepting Churchill – and the various wartime assessments of the Battle – no one of Wilmot's stature and wide wartime experience had yet published an account of the Battle, this evaluating it within a wider geo-political and strategic context.

By 1952 then, two best-selling books had appeared which reinforced the Few's central role in preventing invasion, the bomber attacks and threat posed by the Royal Navy eclipsed. The third – of what was to prove a very influential triumvirate – came in December 1953 with AHB historian Denis Richards' authored *The Fight at Odds*, this commissioned by his employer the Air Ministry as one of a series of three books about the RAF's role in the Second World War.⁶⁴ Not intended as the 'official' history, the trilogy was instead seeking to provide a readable and accessible account of the war, one which was nevertheless substantial; the books are generally regarded as a more populist official history.⁶⁵ The research and writing was shared between Richards and Hilary Saunders, Richards producing the first volume which included the Battle. Some 30,000 copies were sold of *Fight at Odds* when it first appeared, this delighting HMSO officials who were more accustomed to selling 3,000 or so copies; but less so Richards.⁶⁶ His volume was drawn from a wide range of RAF and Air Ministry material, these including interviews, intelligence reports and so forth, the chronological narrative addressing each aspect of the Battle in turn as it developed into the Blitz.⁶⁷ In this sense it followed the format established in Macmillan's 1944 account of the Battle, the only difference being Richards' access to official sources, but which he does not reference. Nerney and Jackets are acknowledged, Richards – judging by his text – also probably making use of T. C. G. James' AHB secret report on the Battle, this written mostly in 1943 and 1944, and based upon contemporary documents.⁶⁸

Mirroring Dowding's view of 15 September – and not repeating Saunders' 1941 emphasis in the first official account of the Battle – Richards' narrative is oddly reticent about its exact significance, 15 August drawing far more attention.⁶⁹ The Battle of the Barges is covered in some detail,⁷⁰ this to Richards' mind a decisive factor in *Sea Lion's* cancellation: '[T]hese anti-invasion operations of Bomber Command had a direct effect on the

German programme'.⁷¹ As to the 'fighter boys', 'even the Luftwaffe's greatest effort availed little against Fighter Command'; not quite an unequivocal affirmation by the AHB's historian that the Few alone 'sank' *Sea Lion* on 15 September.⁷² However, as to the Battle as a whole, Richards' chapter conclusion repeats Wilmot's praise, whilst also completely ignoring the contribution of Polish, Czech and other allied pilots:

[T]he Battle of Britain was not won in the air alone. It was won, too, in the factories [and other support services] and the work of Bomber and Coastal Commands, important as it was, was secondary to that of Fighter Command. The public verdict, though it has done much less than justice to others, has thus rightly acclaimed Dowding's pilots as the foremost artisans of victory [...] in the summer of 1940 civilisation was saved by a thousand British boys.⁷³

The Few: *primus inter pares*

Returning to the two 'revelations' of May and September 1947, these struck a rather discordant note clearly running counter to the grain of popular perception: the aircraft claims had been revised downwards, this putting a new complexion on the Few's material impact on the *Luftwaffe*; and the BBC had broadcast a programme about Operation *Sea Lion* which – whilst rightly paying tribute to the Few – also credited the Many with the victory in 1940. Despite this new information being clearly contrary to Saunders' 1941 Battle narrative, thus casting a perhaps different light upon the Battle as previously projected, it had no impact upon events, broadcasts and other coverage of the Battle.

For instance, the Battle of Britain Sunday event on 21 September 1947 followed a very similar format to the 1945 and 1946 celebrations, with a formal Service of Thanksgiving to the Few in Westminster Abbey. A 300-aircraft fly-past with a much broader route through the areas of the Battle took place on 14 September 1946; 130 taking part in the 1947 event.⁷⁴ On 15 September 1947 access was also allowed to the 11 Group Operations Room bunker at Uxbridge for the first time, and 70 RAF bases were 'At Home', attracting 330,000 visitors.⁷⁵ On Horse Guards Parade – and establishing an event still running into the 1990s⁷⁶ – a soon to be annual Battle of Britain exhibition was staged featuring captured German aircraft, a Spitfire and Hurricane, modern jets, and an exhibition.

Churchill, speaking during the 1947 Battle of Britain Week and some two months after the formal ceremony to unveil the chapel in Westminster Abbey again reinforced how critical it was that air superiority had been denied to the *Luftwaffe*, arguing that however one viewed the events of 1940 it was impossible to escape the fact that only the *Luftwaffe* could have

inflicted damage on the Royal Navy, this in turn only preventable by ‘the Few’.⁷⁷ Despite the passing of literally six and a half years and the release of information which allowed for some historical ‘adjustment’, the Battle’s settled, dominant narrative remained intact then, as did 15 September as the apotheosis of the Few’s success.

Strong sales of the triumvirate of histories by Churchill, Wilmot and Richards confirmed a continuing popular fascination with both the war and Battle from 1949 to December 1953. By early 1954, insofar as most interested people were concerned at least, the Battle had been decided by Fighter Command, 15 September a critical date. Curiously, in all three books the threat posed by the Royal Navy was eclipsed in inverse proportion to how the *Kriegsmarine* actually viewed it. There is no question that Richards’ book provided the denouement to some thirteen years of both official and privately-derived valorisation (see Table 7.3), the Battle’s dominant narrative now firmly fixed in popular memory.

It is not hard to understand why this was, and no one can reasonably deny the Few’s exceptionalism during a period of severe crisis in late 1940; but the ‘bomber boys’ should have been acknowledged too. A rare occurrence in Battle literature, the Royal Air Force Association at least was not prepared to let the Battle of the Barges be easily forgotten, publishing both a brief introduction including this theme, and an article of that name, in its 1952 *Battle of Britain* brochure commemorating the twelfth anniversary.⁷⁸ Noting ‘Bomber’ Harris’ view that the barge attacks were significant in persuading Hitler of the folly of attempting an invasion, the joint success of both Fighter and Bomber Command is affirmed in respect of 15 September when ‘Bomber Command inflicted a decisive blow on the enemy’s invasion fleets’.⁷⁹

Consolidating the narrative

Whereas the triumvirate were to a degree pioneers bridging across from wartime narratives to the 1947 revelations, the next generation of books were able to build upon their recent work from a slightly fresher perspective. If the former laid the foundations for the Battle’s post-war historiography, these two subsequent histories appearing respectively some three, then five, years after Richards’, did much to lay the lower courses of its evolving superstructure (see Appendix 7.2). Also, as appears to have been the case with Richards’ volume, T. C. G. James’ AHB Battle narrative similarly influenced both Basil Collier’s 1957 official history⁸⁰ and Derek Wood and Derek Dempster’s highly-regarded 1961 popular account.⁸¹

In Collier’s case his was the official British history, whereas Richards’ earlier *Fight at Odds* was designed for a more general readership.⁸² Collier then, represents the British government’s formal historical account of the Battle of Britain. A detailed analysis of both the Battle and *Sea Lion* within British

defensive preparations from 1939–45, Collier's account is valuable not least in its reinforcement of the three dimensions of air, land and sea as material considerations for any German invasion attempt. Adopting a chronological approach he includes a 'prelude' phase during which *Luftwaffe* operations began to focus on Britain (see Figure 8.1), thereafter affirming the standard phasing other than to suggest a preliminary phase, where most indicate phase one. Also, according more directly with German analysis of this period, he deems 13 August as the beginning of the air offensive (see Figure 8.2).

In common with Richards' 1953 assessment, Collier is slightly equivocal about 15 September's primacy in deciding Britain's fate. Whilst clear on the one hand that it 'was one of the most important of the whole battle'⁸³ and that given losses of some sixty aircraft the *Luftwaffe* was obliged to re-think its strategy, on the other, he notes, '[W]hatever factors may have led to his decision [to cancel *Sea Lion*], outwardly at least it signalled the failure of Goering and his men to live up to their reputation'.⁸⁴ Hitler's Generals were, in fact, of the view that several factors were critical: much depended on the actual state of Britain's defences, and levels of morale; local air superiority was essential; once on British soil they were confident of succeeding provided they had established a bridgehead; and perhaps most critically of all 'they feared that German naval weakness might prevent them from securing such a foothold'.⁸⁵ As Collier noted – and published a decade after the naval conference minute's were revealed – it was difficult to quantify the exact reasons for the invasion's postponement, but there is no doubt that RAF bomber attacks influenced Hitler's thinking, as did the realisation that Bomber Command was a perhaps more significant force than had been hitherto recognised.⁸⁶

German historian Hans Umbreit's much later chapter on *Sea Lion* suggests that it collapsed for three reasons: first, that air superiority over the RAF could not be attained; second, the many technical challenges of a 'maritime nature' proved insoluble, especially given the Royal Navy's command of the seas; and third, time pressures gave little opportunity before bad weather set in.⁸⁷ His fellow historian Klaus Maier argues instead – and in common with Fleming, below – that *Sea Lion* 'since 14 September 1940 at the latest had been a mere psychological support measure for the air war';⁸⁸ and furthermore, on 2 October Hitler ordered – because of 'British air attacks' – that all measures concerned with the operation were to be dismantled.⁸⁹ A point also made much earlier in RAFA's 1952 commemorative booklet, as previously discussed, Air Marshal Robert Saundby had similarly reinforced this argument about shipping attacks in its 1960 commemorative issue:

[A]lthough to Fighter Command must always go the main credit for our victory in the Battle of Britain, that victory would not have been so decisive, and the price in lives would have been higher, if it had not been for the successful operations of Bomber Command.⁹⁰

And in respect of invasion port attacks on 15 September et al.: '[S]o successful were our attacks that, by September 17th, Hitler could no longer face his losses, and was compelled to order a dispersal'.⁹¹

Wood and Dempster's *The Narrow Margin* also emphasises this – and Collier's view – in noting that continuing Bomber Command attacks and 'the destruction of more than 200 barges [...] by September 19th undoubtedly led Hitler to admit, although privately, that an invasion that year was unrealistic'.⁹² Their influential account of the Battle – which Dowding commended in his 1969 foreword⁹³ – acknowledges the importance of 15 September principally because it forced a change of *Luftwaffe* tactics, rather than its being decisive wholly on account of Fighter Command's undoubtedly impressive and resolute performance that day.⁹⁴

In the revised 1969 version the authors more directly affirm the primacy of both Commands in forcing the decision on 17 September: '[T]he continued strength of both Fighter and Bomber Commands of the RAF and an adverse weather report for the coming week led Hitler on this day to postpone Operation *Sea Lion* until further notice'.⁹⁵ Beyond this, the vast bulk of the book is focused upon the development of Nazi and RAF air power, and in pursuing a chronological day by day approach to the Battle as fought by Fighter Command. Both books confirm – one the official history, the other endorsed by the former head of Fighter Command – that in addition to the Few's undoubted prowess and valour, recognition was also due to the RAF bomber attacks on shipping concentrations.

Dissonance

Contrary to views held by British historians focusing on the RAF and the air war, during the later 1950s three British-authored books about *Sea Lion* itself appeared, all of which voiced doubts as to its fundamental plausibility, these followed by an American, and German, assessment. Peter Fleming's wide-ranging 1957 survey concluded that although both seriously intended, and prepared for, more than any other factor the lack of advanced planning led to the invasion's downfall. This was principally a failure of foresight by Hitler and his OKW, who simply did not understand or anticipate the British way of thinking; as a result, when suddenly presented with an opportunity after Dunkirk it was already too late to act decisively.⁹⁶ With these deficiencies now fully evident to Hitler by early September, Fleming believes that he had already decided somewhere between 8 and 14 September that invasion was not a practical possibility, this only formally confirmed on 17 September.⁹⁷ Thereafter, the invasion pretence was maintained in order to sustain psychological pressure on Britain.⁹⁸ Almost an aside, Fleming noted of the RAF bomber port-attacks that they 'disturbed rather than disrupted' invasion preparations.⁹⁹

Ronald Wheatley's 1958 assessment is also valuable given his analysis of German documentation – notably the Fuehrer naval conferences' minutes

mentioned above – these contextualised within the broader scope of previous invasion threats against Britain.¹⁰⁰ As to the Battle of the Barges itself, Wheatley confirms that mid-September RAF bomber attacks on barge concentrations were considered to have inflicted serious or severe damage in some instances, German Naval Staff officers recording widespread shipping losses and concern.¹⁰¹ He suggests three main causes for *Sea Lion's* abandonment: first, the failure to attain air superiority; second, a failure to sufficiently degrade Britain's economy and morale so as to bring about a general collapse in likely resistance to invasion; and third, German weakness at sea.¹⁰² Even had these three factors been strongly in Hitler's favour, Wheatley argues that a crossing was only possible in exceptionally fine weather because of the 'inadequacy of the barges', this again reinforcing how ill-prepared was German sea power to improvise an attempt.¹⁰³ Wheatley concludes that Hitler was ill-advised ever to seriously consider invasion with the limited resources at his disposal, a positive outcome probably unattainable even in optimal conditions; British sea power was the immutable factor.¹⁰⁴

Reinforcing this view, former RFC pilot Duncan Grinnell-Milne's 1958 *Silent Victory*, in arguing for the primacy of the Royal Navy analyses *Sea Lion* through the naval optic of a contested Channel crossing.¹⁰⁵ Noting bomber attacks on barges, he argues that the RAF had insufficient mass to inflict serious damage, these attacks alone whilst irritating, deciding nothing. Equally – and suggested previously – if Stukas had been unable to inflict damage on slow-moving Channel convoys what hope, he asks, had the RAF's bombers against moving targets spread over a hundred or so miles of sea?¹⁰⁶ In closing – and rather in the manner that the best form of air superiority is to have your tank in the middle of an enemy airfield – Grinnell-Milne repeats the historic mantra that the first line of defence against invasion was to restrain the threatening armada in its ports, the Royal Navy solely credited with this result insofar as *Sea Lion's* abandonment was concerned.¹⁰⁷ Interestingly, the Royal Navy's official history, whilst acknowledging offensive action against ports by its warships, was modestly content to give the credit to the RAF: '[U]nsuitable weather and the consequences of the bombing of the invasion ports by the Air Force were among the reasons given for postponement',¹⁰⁸ and 'the victories by which Fighter Command frustrated the German hopes and intentions'.¹⁰⁹

To end this assessment the conclusions of two further detailed studies are noteworthy: first, is American Admiral Walter Ansel's 1960 belief that had Germany from the first focused all its naval and *Luftwaffe* effort against the Royal Navy, rather than on the RAF, an invasion attempt might well have succeeded. For this failure then, Ansel concludes that through his lack of focus and engagement '[M]ore than any other single factor, Adolf Hitler rendered invasion impossible'.¹¹⁰

German naval historian Karl Klee, the author of the 1958 *Das Unternehmen 'Seelöwe'*,¹¹¹ echoes Ansel's view in his 1960 article, arguing that insofar as Britain was concerned Hitler lacked the single-minded determination and

focus of his earlier campaigns. Moreover, Hitler invested too much hope in Britain seeking terms, thus allowing himself both to be fatally distracted by a premature focus on Russia, and giving Goering – whom he trusted – too free a hand in the air war.¹¹² Perhaps tellingly, Klee argues that ‘Hitler was always ready to welcome any ideas which avoided the risk of a landing, particularly as he realised the menace that would arise for Germany in the east if an attempted landing failed’; and, as confirmed by Assmann above, ‘an overarching factor in all discussions about the chances of successful invasion was sea power’.¹¹³

Coda

Confirmed above, close scrutiny of both the *Sea Lion* arguments and the evidence used to develop them reveals a complex picture, and not one which is easily resolvable into an unambiguous explanation. Even from the perspective of 1960 it was evident that what had been at first argued by Saunders nineteen years earlier in his 1941 pamphlet was by that time historically unsustainable, the factors leading to *Sea Lion*'s abandonment not solely due to the Few's heroic prowess on 15 September. Viewed from the perspective of a narrowly-averted disaster, a very sharp focus on the Few was understandable – as indeed was identifying 15 September as ‘Air Trafalgar Day’, so as to provide the RAF with its first victory – but it is perhaps more surprising that despite this new information the Battle's dominant narrative remained that articulated by the Air Ministry in March 1941.

Obviously, it was not possible to credit the Royal Navy with a victory that they had not achieved through a clash of arms, but the same could not be said of the bomber attacks both supporting Fighter Command through attacks on *Luftwaffe* airfields and infrastructure, but also seeking to destroy the invasion fleet. This remains a clear omission in the historiography: after all, Sergeant John Hannah won a VC over Antwerp for his valour in saving his Hampden from fire, and from 1 July–31 October 1940, 1,112 aircrew lost their lives on operations in these two Commands (see Table 3.1). Moreover, 154 bomber aircrew were killed in port attacks, and 64 aircraft lost. These aircrew losses are, of course, remembered in Westminster Abbey's RAF chapel's Roll of Honour.

A cultural denouement

Inevitably, cultural representation during this period was very much shaped and informed by the Air Ministry's wartime narrative, developed and consolidated from 1941 to 1945. As discussed previously, despite the revisions to aircraft claims figures and evidence for *Sea Lion* being made public, these did not result in a marked difference to how the Battle was portrayed from 1948 onwards. Several themes were strongly projected: first, Fighter

Command had prevented invasion by denying air superiority; second, the revised aircraft figures, whilst occasionally acknowledged, were not dwelt upon, some film content using the 15 September '185' claim in *The Story of an Air Communiqué* without comment; third, the Few had now become solely British officers, SNCOs and non-British aircrew now absent; and finally, the technological exceptionalism exemplified through radar and the fighter command-and-control system was reinforced. Conversely, the Battle of the Barges is rarely, if ever, alluded to.

Radio, television and newsreels

Media and public interest in both the Battle and the Few continued unabated during the two decades following the war, the BBC, independent television and the newsreels giving considerable airtime to plays, commemorations, discussions and retrospectives (see Appendices 3.2, 5.3 and 5.4). In this sense there was strong programme continuity from war to peace, content and focus largely unchanged other than to tone down what some might view as triumphalism, or lingering propaganda undertones. In common with the post-war historiography this content, too, was focused wholly on the part played by the 'fighter boys' in the 1940 victory, few, if any, contrary or revisionist views expressed.

During these two decades documentaries were surprising infrequent, the BBC's highly-successful *War in the Air* series broadcasting *Battle for Britain* on 15 November 1954, this drawing upon wartime film footage – some clearly not accurate – to create a familiar, if well-constructed chronological overview. The fifteenth of September warrants special focus in the film, this a straightforward series of aerial combats and dramatic music, the Few deciding matters on their own: '[W]e shan't forget 15 September 1940' audiences are reminded. The MoI's *Story of an Air Communiqué* is also drawn upon, its 185 aircraft claim not corrected by the later narration as it is confirmed that *Sea Lion* has been cancelled. Focus on the Battle itself is brief at some eight or so minutes, the remainder of the thirty-minute programme relating the experience of the Many during the Blitz.¹¹⁴

Squadron Leader Gerald Bowman thereafter drew upon this material to produce a book of the same name, its Battle chapter following the historiographically settled points as confirmed above.¹¹⁵ Bowman, though, departs from the film in noting the combined efforts of both Fighter and Bomber Command, this ensuring that Hitler had little choice other than to cancel *Sea Lion*. He also notes the revised aircraft claims; by the mid-1950s it is clear that they had had no subsequent impact on popular perceptions of the Battle.¹¹⁶

In common with this BBC programme, however subtly most output reminded audiences what was owed, Pathé's 23 September 1954 newsreel, *The 'Many' honour the 'Few'*, was unambiguous in its focus.¹¹⁷ Output

generally tended to cluster around the annual Battle of Britain commemorations in September of each year, the coverage including a reprise of the Battle, what had been gained through the defeat of the *Luftwaffe*, interviews with some of the Few – perhaps meeting the Prime Minister of the day – and less frequently, a radio or television drama penned by notable authors including H. E. Bates and J. B. Priestley. Here, because of the technical limitations of including flying sequences, these typically portrayed the Battle from the ground, dialogue whether in the mess, pub, or with a sweetheart, a key focus. All reinforced the calm, cheerful resolution of the Few, such portrayals little different in tone to wartime coverage, but on rare occasions the grittier realities were confirmed, for instance in ITV's September 1956 *The Last Enemy*, based on Hillary's famous book, or the BBC's March 1960 radio play, *With Courage*.

Retrospective programmes reminded audiences of the dangers Britain faced in 1940, famous CBS broadcaster Ed Murrow's November 1959 *After the Battle* a return to London, both to talk to those who had been through the Blitz, but also to look at its rebuilding.¹¹⁸ Occasionally, this might be linked to wider social concerns and the continuing challenges faced by the working class in securing decent housing and other essentials. For instance, in one documentary the 'fighter boys' are held up as an example of healthy young men, this disproving the need for social reform:

Man: 'What about the fine young chaps who fought the Battle of Britain?'
[Spitfire in flight shown]

Woman: 'Yes, they came from more fortunate homes.' [as Spitfire dives away]

Narrator: 'That tells you a story.'

Woman: 'Britain needed more than a brave few of such healthy young fellows, she needed a healthy nation as a whole.'¹¹⁹

Perhaps reinforcing this point, the more celebrated Few might also take part in a programme as individuals, fighter-ace Bob Stanford Tuck the focus of a September 1958 newsreel on account of his blossoming mushroom farm business.¹²⁰ Meanwhile, his more famous colleague, Douglas Bader, featured in a September 1965 *Late Night Line-Up*, this one of many such TV and radio appearances.¹²¹ There was little deprivation to be seen here, though Bader was of course commended for his outstanding work in encouraging and supporting those with disabilities.¹²²

Reflecting the changing face of Britain, newsreels covered the September 1961 'Ban the Bomb' protests,¹²³ counterpointing the scuffles and arrests of young activists with the dignity of the annual Battle Thanksgiving: to the latter, such scenes must have seemed anarchic; to the former, the commemorations merely anachronistic and reflective of an earlier age. On a more positive note the Few were held up as an example to the young in Pathé's

September 1965 *Youth is the Spur*, this on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Battle.¹²⁴

Feature films

In some respects this period was rich in films addressing aspects of the Battle, certainly when compared to subsequent decades (see Appendix 5.5). It is evident that stylistically there was a clear sense of continuity from films such as *The Way to the Stars*, to *Angels One Five*, and thence *Reach for the Sky*, discussed shortly. All reflected the tough, gritty, but understated heroism of RAF pilots, modesty much to be preferred over 'line-shooting' and self-aggrandisement.

Conversely, it was now possible to focus upon some of the previously secret technology that helped Britain stay in the fight, the development of RDF, or radar, an example explored in *School for Secrets* (Two Cities, UK, 1946, 102 mins.).¹²⁵ Here, bumbling and slightly chaotic scientists work towards the development of radar, the Battle included as a brief sequence principally to show the integrated command-and-control system used by Fighter Command. Most audiences would be familiar with control rooms from *The Lion has Wings* and *The First of the Few*, the drama as a raid comes in, and scrambling fighters. Beyond this it was a rather supercilious film, the genius of radar rather obscured by its eccentric and distracting characterisations.

Perhaps less comfortable were the early post-war films such as *Frieda* (Ealing Studios, UK, 1947, 94 mins.), this focusing upon a young German woman who marries an RAF pilot who had been shot down and taken prisoner, thence returning to live with him in England, much to the disquiet of his family.¹²⁶ Although peripheral to the Battle, a much earlier scene has the family celebrating the wedding of his brother – also a pilot with a DFC – the marriage held just before Dunkirk, and an unseen aircraft flying low overhead as his new bride looks up. Thus, both the Battle and invasion threat are intimated, the newly-wed brother killed in action. This loss pervades the film as Frieda, 'one of them', seeks to be accepted.

Also jarring is the main character in *Cage of Gold* (Ealing Studios, UK, 1950, 79 mins.), a caddish womaniser and former fighter pilot 'Wing Commander Glennon DSO DFC', first seducing then marrying a much younger woman. Although it is noted as a film portraying a Battle hero, other than to confirm his rank and medals – this through the painting of his portrait by the young woman – at no point is this actually stated.¹²⁷ It is perhaps just as well, for a more contrasting anti-hero is hard to imagine given the adulatory coverage of the Few during wartime, and the high standing they were afforded; conversely, 'Glennon', well attuned to this, deviously takes advantage of people's unsuspecting trust in a former fighter-ace.¹²⁸

Diametrically opposed to 'Glennon' in all respects is 'Tiger Small', the station commander – top button undone – at an RAF fighter airfield in *Angels One*

Five (Templar, UK, 1952, 95 mins.), this focused on a Hurricane squadron – Pimpernel – as the air war looms from June 1940 on.¹²⁹ Reminding viewers of the exceptional nature of the victory in 1940, the RDF chain, command-and-control system, and a squadron scrambled to protect a Channel convoy introduces the film.¹³⁰ So detailed is the portrayal of this system that in some respects it could almost be a public information film. Based on a story by Wing Commander Pelham Groom, it strongly echoes the suppressed emotional tone of *The Way to the Stars*, fighter pilots under significant pressure but determined neither to buckle, nor reveal their fear. ‘Baird’ – soon nicknamed ‘Septic’ – a junior officer joining the squadron, has a mishap with a replacement Hurricane thence ends up in ‘the hole’, the Sector operations room, with ‘controller types’ and the ‘beauty chorus’. Audiences are again reminded of this critical moment in 1940 as Fighter Command faces perhaps 3,000 *Luftwaffe* aircraft, now that France has fallen. As the Battle develops the airfield comes under attack, the toll taken of its fighter pilots is reinforced, and ‘Baird’ progresses from absolute novice to accomplished fighter pilot, but not without first causing difficulties for himself in a dog-fight by leaving his R/T on transmit. Eventually, he is mortally wounded, but not without having ‘done his bit’ as a ‘fighter boy’.

Notable here is the use of Hurricanes rather than Spitfires – though they are seen taking off – and that no SNCOs feature as pilots. The strict hierarchy of squadron life is reinforced, many well-spoken young men featured, and prone to ‘high jinks’ when off duty. No foreign pilots are featured and in this sense too it echoes *The First of the Few*, though this may also reflect some sensitivity around apparent British declinism. A hugely successful film,¹³¹ within the canon of Battle films it is perhaps the most authentic in portraying life in an RAF fighter squadron, though the 1969 *Battle of Britain* colour film more vividly portrays aerial combat.¹³²

Douglas Bader’s fame as a fighter-leader was unique in the RAF, his exploits attracting attention even during the Battle as an acting Squadron Leader when the media realised that he had no legs.¹³³ *Reach for the Sky* (Rank, UK, 1956, 136 mins.) was based on Paul Brickhill’s book of the same name¹³⁴ both commercially very successful.¹³⁵ Insofar as the Battle is concerned Bader rejoins the RAF in time for Dunkirk (1:16:00 in the film), thence joining 242 Squadron in 12 Group as its acting Squadron Leader (1:21:00) with whom he flies on Hurricanes throughout the Battle (to 1:44:00; 23 mins in all). Portrayed as a dynamic and fearless fighter-leader, a sense of life on his squadron is portrayed as he fights to secure spares and resources, this followed by his deep frustration as he waits for the *Luftwaffe* to trespass into 12 Group’s airspace.

Combat sequences are shown, these not markedly more sophisticated than wartime film footage, the latter also used. His final part in the Battle is as the Duxford Wing Leader, this brought about by his suggesting to Leigh-Mallory, his Group Air Officer Commanding, that more damage could be

inflicted by scrambling larger numbers of fighters. Portrayed as a positive and Battle-winning initiative in the film, it was – and remains – a controversial policy with which many disagreed, including Park as 11 Group AOC.¹³⁶ Also not shown was Bader's attendance on 17 October 1940 at the 'Big Wing' Air Ministry meeting, during which his arguments were exploited by Sholto Douglas and Leigh-Mallory to unseat both Dowding and Park after the Battle's conclusion. It was a shameful episode and one which tainted Bader's post-war reputation as the facts became publicly known. These points aside it was a popular, inspirational film that did Bader's reputation no harm when released, even though he was equivocal about it.¹³⁷ As with *Angels One Five* it also reinforced a sense that only officers fought in the Battle.

Conversely, viewed from a German fighter pilot's perspective *The One that Got Away* (Rank, UK, 1957, 111 mins.) offers a peripheral view of the Battle, this focusing on Franz von Werra, a confident and self-assured Me109 fighter pilot shot down over England.¹³⁸ Its opening sequence features a dogfight portrayed by R/T talk between fighter pilots, the sounds of aircraft engines and gunfire, against a still-frame sky with contrails. Although no action is seen, his Me109 comes down in a field and he is soon arrested. Interrogated by RAF intelligence in the 'London Cage', details of his combat claims are disputed, as are various assertions made out about him by German propagandists. Also raised is his claim that he shot down six Hurricanes over an airfield, but for which no RAF records exist. Thereafter – having revealed nothing, and convinced of a German victory – he is moved to Grizedale Hall from where he attempts to escape.¹³⁹ The Battle a small part of the film, its portrayal of the RAF's interrogation process reminded audiences of the fanaticism of some young *Luftwaffe* pilots. Meanwhile, Von Werra was so impressed by the interrogations that having finally escaped and returned to Germany, he ensured that *Luftwaffe* intelligence were given full details.¹⁴⁰

Blitz on Britain (Anglo Continental, UK, 1960, 68 mins.), a well-regarded documentary covering the period from May 1940 to May 1941, which included Dunkirk, the Battle (00:16:30–00:45:00), then the Blitz, takes a chronological view of a tumultuous year. With its film content drawing upon MoI and newsreel footage, the result is not unlike wartime productions such as *Britain's RAF* and the 1943 *Battle of Britain*. Much of the air war footage is, however, inaccurate. Here, only Spitfires fought in the Battle, and no mention is made of Allied airmen flying with Fighter Command.

There is, though, a slight focus on *Sea Lion's* preparations, and the Battle of the Barges: 'RAF bombers had smashed 83 invasion barges at Calais and Dunkirk'. Laurels for its abandonment went, however, to Fighter Command after 'Goering's last joust for air superiority, to warrant the invasion', had failed. The '185' claim in *Story of an Air Communiqué* material is used, but also qualified: post-war the 'figures were realised to have been too optimistic – on the British side by two to one; by three to one on the German side'. Park, as the head of 11 Group, is mentioned several times,

thus giving the impression that he was Fighter Command's C-in-C, but Dowding is wholly absent. September 1945's Battle flypast concludes the film, Bader shown in his 'DB'-marked Spitfire. Mostly, it is 'the Many' who are credited with Britain's survival in 1940, in this sense echoing the ethos behind 1942's Civil Defence Day.

A rare filmic occurrence in this period was a focus on Nazi occupation, *It Happened Here* (United Artists, UK, 1964, 97 mins.) portraying the realities of Britain under the jackboot, but it does not feature any Battle-related material. Germany having invaded in 1940 after Dunkirk, the film focuses on the period 1944–5, a nurse gradually coerced into collaboration, the main character. A filmic representation of wartime novels of occupation, it was a stark reminder of how quickly Britain might have been forced to embrace Nazi ideology, and the realities of life under an oppressive regime. Its release attracted wide criticism, many upset by the suggestion that the British would collaborate with Nazism. In some respects it bears comparison with the factual 1969 film *The Pity and the Sorrow*, this banned for many years in France because of its uncomfortable focus on Vichy collaboration.

Literature

With the exception of Dambuster Guy Gibson's *Enemy Coast Ahead*, its publication delayed until 1946, there was no immediate rush to build upon the initial crop of pilots' wartime memoirs.¹⁴¹ Instead, a series of autobiographies and biographies began to appear from 1950 onwards (see Appendix 7.6), these not markedly different in tone to the seven accounts appearing between 1941 and 1943. These later books tended to cover the author's wartime service as a whole, the Battle one facet of his experience as a fighter pilot or fighter-leader. Aside from Dickson Lovat's biography of Hillary,¹⁴² an exception because of *The Last Enemy's* success, there is something of an 'ace' pecking-order to these releases. With the exception of Jean Offenberg, a Belgian flyer,¹⁴³ and Jim Bailey, a South African,¹⁴⁴ the remainder were all by, or about, Battle aces familiar to the public through wartime propaganda.

An exception insofar as the Battle was concerned, 'Johnnie' Johnson, the leading Allied fighter ace, was technically one of the Few but because of a sports injury operation saw virtually no action during the Battle;¹⁴⁵ no one though could begrudge him his Battle clasp given an extraordinary war record. Whether self-penned or via a biographer, these tended to follow an established route from training – perhaps in the AuxAF – thence to an operational unit, junior command, then perhaps Wing command. Most strongly resisted any attempts to glorify or bask in war records, killing in war difficult, but necessary. Comrades lost in combat also feature, as do tributes to the many who produced aeroplanes, serviced them, and otherwise provided essential support.

Until leading aces and fighter pilot personalities had published their recollections, then, it was understandable that more humble pilots would

hesitate to follow suit. It is for this reason that relatively few autobiographies appeared during the twenty years following the war and some pilots also remained in RAF service, this imposing additional constraints on publishing reminiscences. To a degree this informal hierarchy was exemplified through the Battle of Britain Fighter Association. Constituted in March 1958 with Lord Dowding as Life President, the association's key aims were to commemorate the Battle, and celebrate the comradeship of those fighting in it.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, building upon the initial work undertaken to compile the Westminster Abbey Roll of Honour of those killed during the Battle, RAF officer John Holloway, who had been inspired by the filming of *Reach for the Sky* at RAF Kenley during 1955, set about compiling a definitive list of the Few.¹⁴⁷ As a result, the names of 2,937 men who had flown in the Battle were published as an appendix to Wood and Dempster's 1961 *The Narrow Margin*.¹⁴⁸ Further biographical details came with Kenneth Wynn's definitive 1989, *The Men of the Battle of Britain*.¹⁴⁹ In this way the Few as individuals were revealed to the public; no such association or list exists for those who flew operationally during the Battle of the Barges.

Postwar, published tributes to the Few included Howard-Williams' *Immortal Memory*,¹⁵⁰ and Arthur Narracott's *In Praise of the Few*.¹⁵¹ The former drew upon a range of combat and other reports in its compilation; the latter included quotes from books and other published sources, but beyond their intended purpose they added little to the historiography. Noted previously, the Battle of Britain Association also published an annual commemorative souvenir brochure, these carrying articles about the Battle, and occasionally, details of individuals (see Plates 15–16 and 18–20).

Of several examples, note should be made of novels or plays (Appendix 7.4; and Appendix 7.7, children's literature): H. E. Bates' 1964 *A Moment in Time* was a ground-based rendering of the Few during the Battle, the focus on romance, and pilots loved and lost.¹⁵² Based on his wartime experience with the Air Ministry's DPR, Bates met many RAF aircrew, this guiding his approach to the novel, and it was later used as the basis for a 1979 BBC screenplay of the same name. Invasion and occupation were the subject of several counterfactual novels during this period, Noel Coward's 1947 *Peace in our Time* including the Battle and a young fighter pilot seemingly killed in the action.¹⁵³ Principally about Nazi occupation and hints of collaboration, it anticipated 1960s novels including *England under Hitler*¹⁵⁴ and *The Other Man*,¹⁵⁵ neither of which did anything other than to reinforce the grim situation Britain would have faced if occupied.

Tributes

Aside from written tributes several other forms of commemoration are noteworthy. For example, in 1946 artist Frank Salisbury painted in oils *The Men who Saved the World*, a clearly heartfelt if by modern standards rather obsequious tribute.¹⁵⁶ Here, a fighter pilot is about to climb into a Spitfire

cockpit, whilst to his right is a member of the ground crew; behind and above both is a spectral rendering of St George on horseback, the latter a reminder that in 1946 at least it was believed that religion had played a significant part in Britain's salvation. To a degree this belief was also captured in a lace panel – or curtain – produced between 1942 and 1946 by Dobsons and M. Browne and Co. Ltd of Nottingham (see Plate 14). Only thirty-eight were produced, these presented to various dignitaries including King George VI, Winston Churchill, RAF units, Westminster Abbey, the City of London, and selected airmen. An accompanying leaflet to the example loaned to the RAF for display confirmed that '[T]he Battle of Britain lace panel was produced to perpetuate that glorious Epic in our History, and as a tribute to those who gallantly saved this Island'.¹⁵⁷ An 'advertisement' about it was also placed in the 1951 South London Branch of the RAFA's *Battle of Britain Week* souvenir programme, though other than to highlight its existence and purpose it gives few other details.¹⁵⁸

A national tribute was made through the issue of eight Royal Mail stamps commemorating the Battle's twenty-fifth anniversary.¹⁵⁹ These generated some controversy in the press, however, on account of the *Swastika* and *Balkenkreuz* being evident, a range of protests made to the Queen, the Prime Minister, and individual MPs.¹⁶⁰ At issue was the insult that many felt had been made to Britain's war dead by including these Nazi symbols, though others, including the RAFA, took a differing view.

Into the modern age

Culturally, for a young generation at least, it was obvious that the Battle was of little consequence in a world dominated by Beatle-mania, the Swinging Sixties and a relaxing of social attitudes towards sex and relationships. Christopher Bray captures this transition in his book *1965: The Year Modern Britain was Born*.¹⁶¹ After all, someone born during 1940 would be only 25, whilst an adult who had lived through the Battle as a ten-year old, would be 35. Conversely, for someone who had lived through or fought in the Battle as a young adult it would, of course, have very different significance and there is no doubt that for some, memories of the war remained relatively fresh, and perhaps bitter.

Even today, the war remains a matter of interest, John Ramsden's *Don't Mention the War* one example of many books on Britain's relations with Germany.¹⁶² Discussions about war guilt also surface periodically, where, for instance, in 1999 A. A. Gill published 'Hunforgiven', asking whether a now reunified Germany deserved to be vilified into the twenty-first century.¹⁶³ Not the place to pursue this further, in common with Queen Elizabeth II's State visit to West Germany in May 1965, evidence for a thawing in post-war relations with Germany was provided in a *Sunday Times*' article in June 1965.¹⁶⁴ This photo-essay included images and details of pilots on both sides

of the Battle, several of whom remained in *Luftwaffe* service on the German side. Although no suggestion is made in the article that the Battle had been forgotten and all had moved on, it was striking that at its twenty-fifth anniversary the *Sunday Times* felt able to take a retrospective view of the event. Also notable is a brief essay accompanying the images, these reprising Dowding's and Park's fate as a result of the 'Big Wing' dispute. The piece concludes with confirmation that Dowding's 'reputation was re-established the moment historians started to assess the battle after the war'.¹⁶⁵ Despite the Air Ministry's decision to excise him from the 1941 pamphlet, then, events had come full circle after all.¹⁶⁶

Conclusion

Following the latter-1940 propaganda war, which had much in common with German projections of the air war, it is the unacknowledged story of the Battle of Britain that its valorisation was built upon uncertain foundations. With over four years of hard fighting still to go before VE Day, it was simply not possible in early 1941 to so strongly predict its importance to the war as a whole. Nevertheless, first calibrated by Saunders' narrative then validated by Sir Richard Peck at the Air Ministry, the pamphlet's official confirmation of the Battle acted almost as a lightning conductor in channelling the creative energy of those unable to fight into a range of cultural responses. With the foundations both laid and firmly consolidated even by 1945, the essential facts of the Battle remained unaltered, despite 'corrective' revelations in 1947.

This is not to deny in any sense the Few's vital role during the Battle: Fighter Command's resistance clearly gave Hitler pause for thought insofar as *Sea Lion* was concerned; the Air Ministry and Mol's propaganda war against Germany was critical to persuading America that she should lend support; Britain's Dominions were encouraged to continue their strong commitment through men and materiel; and British morale was sustained to a striking degree by the aircraft claims' war. Given the Few's strong performance then, there was no prospect of Britain seeking peace terms with Germany. In this sense Saunders' pamphlet was almost clairvoyant in anticipating the cause of Hitler's decision to abandon thoughts of invasion in September 1940. 'Almost', given his omission of the continuing threat posed to the invasion by both RAF Bomber and Coastal Commands, of course. A historiographical opportunity to reverse this eclipsing arose between 1947 and 1953, but it would not arise so easily again. From the mid-1950s it is understandable that the Battle had become a signal victory in recent memory, the impact of Imperial decline in the face of American and Soviet global dominance¹ leading to further affirmations of the Few's exceptionalism through the creation of books, films and broadcasts.

By 1969, though, and the release of the *Battle of Britain* colour film – a portrayal only of the Few – it is arguable that some of the shine had come off the Battle, this in part due to widespread anti-war sentiment wrought by Vietnam, and also the strain – both economic and psychological – of the continuing Cold War.² However, if Britain's 1973 entry into the EEC reinforced the changing geo-political climate – as indeed did the loss of Rhodesia in 1980 – the Falklands War at least allowed a revival of the 'spirit of 1940',³ Margaret Thatcher invoking the example of the Few during the Battle in part-justification for re-taking the Islands.⁴ Germany's reunification in 1991 also reawakened dormant memories of the war, and it seemed ironic to some at least that the entrance to the 1994 Channel Tunnel lay quite close to the site of RAF Hawkinge, a front-line fighter base during the Battle.

Despite isolated attempts at revisionism – but not the importance of the Battle of the Barges – the Battle has undergone a process of re-enchantment in recent years.⁵ Projecting forwards to the Battle's seventy-fifth anniversary, several points are noteworthy. Both Lord Dowding, and the similarly deposed Sir Keith Park, have had statues erected in their honour: Dowding's was raised in 1988 outside the RAF church in the Strand; Park's statue, 'the defender of London', was unveiled in November 2009 at a temporary site in Trafalgar Square. Thereafter, in 2010, a new statue was erected at its permanent home in London's Waterloo Place. There is a certain irony here given that senior wartime Air Ministry officers – presumably including Sir Richard Peck – were so determined to deny both Dowding and Park any credit for the Battle that they actually achieved this very result more powerfully than would otherwise have been the case. Had Dowding, especially, been acknowledged from the outset, it is arguable that post-war historians may have invested far less energy in his restitution.⁶

As an aside, MRAF Viscount Charles Portal also has a statue, this for his work as CAS rather than his tenure as C-in-C Bomber Command from April to October 1940. There are now two national Battle of Britain monuments; the RAF Museum near Edgware, north London, has a Battle of Britain Hall, and the former Fighter Command HQ at Bentley Priory in north-west London is also a museum. A continuing fascination with the Battle was confirmed by the successful retrieval in 2013 of the last remaining Dornier Do17 from the Goodwin Sands, this shot down during the Battle.

Thus, 1940 remains a dominant historical moment as the 75th anniversary approaches in 2015, casting an occasionally long shadow over Britain's modern international relations. Prime Minister David Cameron's disagreements with the EU during 2013 and 2014 are a case in point, arguably calibrated by this same perception of British exceptionalism in 1940 and to which in turn, European leaders cautiously agree that the British are indeed 'different', as a consequence of their recent history.⁷ Inescapably, 75 years after the Battle of Britain, the events of the summer and autumn of 1940

continue to influence both Britain's image of itself but also its relations with the wider world.⁸ One can only wonder at what Sir Richard Peck would have made of a historical event which – in no small part a consequence of the 3d. Air Ministry pamphlet with which he was intimately involved – remains so deeply hallowed in British popular memory.

Appendix 1: Chronology of German-focused Events, 1939–1941

‘FH’ in the following text refers to the diary entries of General Franz Halder, Chief of the General Staff, Army High Command (OKH), from August 1938 to September 1942, responsible for directing a force in June 1941 of 5 million officers and men. It is striking that as British anxiety about Operation *Sea Lion*, the invasion of Britain, grew in September, German commanders including Halder were increasingly focusing on planning for Operation *Barbarossa*, the invasion of Russia (from Halder, [1962–4] (1988), *The Halder War Diary 1939–1942*, pp. 155–310).

‘AB’ in the following entries (italicised) refers to Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke, Commander-in-Chief British Home Forces, from 19 July 1940, and Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) from December 1941. It is evident that despite a range of intelligence suggesting Operation *Sea Lion* was winding down, Alanbrooke remained anxious about the threat into 1941 (from Alanbrooke, 2002, *War Diaries 1939–1945: Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke*, pp. 90–132).

- 23 August 1939 The Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact was signed.
- 1 September Hitler invaded Poland.
- 17 September Stalin invaded Poland.
- 15 October German naval study set out the argument for an economic war against Britain, principally by sea blockade and siege; this was formalised in Hitler’s *War Directive No. 9*.
- 15 November Admiral Raeder directed his staff to examine the prospects for an invasion of Britain, this being the earliest recorded date of consideration given to the issue.
- 1 December General Jodl, Chief of German Army Operations, asked for an Army response to the German Navy’s paper on the prospects for an invasion of Britain; Goering, head of the *Luftwaffe*, similarly directed that a staff officer respond to the Army paper, but also confirmed his doubts about the feasibility of a landing; the Navy and Army papers became linked as *Studie Nordwest*.
- 9 April 1940 Hitler invaded Norway and Denmark.
- 10 May Hitler launched his *Blitzkrieg* on France and the Low Countries.
- 21 May Private discussion between Hitler and Admiral Raeder about the prospects for an invasion of Britain at a ‘future time’, and the Army’s likely requirements for the transport of its landing divisions.
- 24 May Hitler’s subsequently disputed ‘Halt Order’ stopped his tanks from crushing the encircled British Expeditionary Force at Dunkirk.
- 27 May Dunkirk evacuation began, air cover provided by home-based fighter squadrons including Spitfires; German naval review of

- Studie Nordwest*, and a new *Studie England* undertaken that considered the question of invasion, the latter influenced by the former assessment in terms of feasibility – command of the air over invasion beaches identified as essential at this early stage.
- 2 June During a visit to Army Group A HQ, Hitler told Field-Marshal von Rundstedt of his interest in attacking Russia now that Britain might be ready for peace.
- 3 June British completion of Dunkirk evacuation.
- 4 June Small exploratory *Luftwaffe* raids tested the RAF defences.
- 15 June [FH] A Fuehrer directive confirmed plans to reduce army ground forces to 120 divisions as their role has been fulfilled with the fall of France: army and navy continuing the war.
- 18 June Growing *Luftwaffe* attacks against Britain. [FH] Noted that in the event of a Soviet counter-attack during the German invasion, everything should be used to blunt this.
- 22 June France signed the Armistice.
German historian Karl Klee gives the period from the end of the fighting in France to 7 August, as the initial contact phase of the Battle of Britain, comprising Luftwaffe fighter sweeps against England.
[FH] Conference with senior officers discussed army regrouping requirements including coastal defence, and a consideration as to whether Britain would carry on fighting.
- 25 June Albert Speer noted on this date that Hitler was talking about his plans for an attack on Russia.
- 26 June Transfer of the 18th Army ordered, to reinforce the defences to the east, most of its 15 divisions in place by the end of July. In tandem with this instruction Halder also discussed with 18th Army's commander, and its Chief-of-Staff, Major-General Marcks, 'Deployment Instructions for Eighteenth Army'. In substance this represented the first plan for a Soviet invasion (which in fact therefore existed before 26 June 1940).
- 30 June First evidence of official OKH thinking on the prospects for invasion of Britain; Jodl discussed the issues with Hitler. [FH] Hitler reported as noting in his conference that Britain needed one final blow before she gave in, so that German attention could shift to the east.
- 1 July [FH] Conference with Schniewind, Naval Operations Staff, about basis of warfare against England identified air superiority, smooth water, fog from mid-October, jump-off bases, and transport for 100,000 men in one wave, *Luftwaffe* as airborne artillery and beach defences as key considerations. Von Leeb, Ordnance Office noted that '[H]e was told all along that invasion of England was not being considered'.
- 2 July [AB] *Very anxious about an invasion threat and lack of British preparedness.*

- 3 July French Fleet disabled by the Royal Navy at Mers-El-Kebir, Oran; German Army conference headed by Halder discussed details for a possible invasion of Britain; also on this date, Halder issued instructions to the OKH Chief of Operations to consider operational issues arising from an invasion of Russia. [FH] Britain and the east are the focus now he notes. Discussion with General Von Greiffenberg-Buhle about operations against England: weather and air superiority the key factors.
- 4 July [FH] Discussion with General Stapf about air plans for the destruction of the RAF and its supporting installations, with a secondary objective the enemy fleet; discussion considers RAF's effective early-warning system, and the *Luftwaffe's* current strength and tactics.
- 5 July [FH] Under the heading 'England', five points considered with Stapf and Buhle including locations for seaborne and airborne landing jump-off points, airborne unit availability and nature, getting armour across the Channel, and amphibious tanks.
- 11 July [FH] Discussion with Stapf considered 'Invasion of England' including airborne troops, transport planes, cargo gliders, and that the British bomber force has parity with the *Luftwaffe*. The RAF policy of moving bombers to and from dispersal areas makes it hard to destroy them he records. Fourteen to twenty-eight days needed to smash the RAF. Discussion with Von Greiffenberg-Buhle focused on map-planning for the invasion of Britain, and German force dispositions.
- 12 July Jodl completed his *Löwe* study for OKW concerning the invasion plan for Britain; this substantially informed the content of Hitler's *War Directive No. 16*.
[AB] *Notes that invasion was threatened to be on this day.*
- 13 July Hitler sanctioned the Army plan for *Sea Lion*.
[FH] Report to Fuehrer on invasion of Britain noted that a range of technical issues are considered: British army strength, disposition, tactics; German invasion planning and preparations; time schedules. [FH] Confirms that orders issued for invasion planning; and Hitler puzzled by Britain's refusal to give in.
[AB] *No signs of an attack as yet.*
- 16 July Hitler's *War Directive No. 16*, the invasion of England, set out qualifying conditions with preparations to begin 15 August; German planning ongoing, but scepticism from the Navy and *Luftwaffe*. Oberst Josef 'Beppo' Schmid delivered his intelligence assessment of the RAF, seriously under-estimating Fighter Command's capability.
- 19 July Hitler's 'appeal to reason' speech made to the *Reichstag*, offering to reach a peaceful end to the war with Britain – quickly rejected by the BBC. [FH] '*Directive No. 16* has come in.' Remainder of entry enumerates eight points discussed in conference with ObdH concerning invasion plans.

[Field Marshal Alanbrooke appointed C-in-C of British Home Forces.]

- 21 July At the Fuehrer conference a Russian invasion was discussed, with an initial assessment offered to Hitler on timescale, requisite divisions and objectives. Field Marshal von Brauchitsch (Commander-in-Chief of the Army) directed to begin planning for the Soviet invasion.
- 22 July OKH furnished Hitler with a preliminary survey on the prospects for invading Russia. [FH] Hitler had noted that Britain was relying upon American aid and Russian support in order to keep fighting. Conference discussion about the invasion of Britain notes Hitler's view that a Channel crossing would be hazardous, and a last resort. The twenty-fifth of August noted as possible invasion date, depending on report from Raeder. Conference then turned to planning for Russian invasion.
- 26 July [FH] Meeting to review intelligence relating to a Russian operation; then, meeting to discuss technical issues concerning invasion vessels, barges, means of propulsion, dealing with tides and horses.
- 28 July Hitler gave General Fromm orders for the reorganisation of the German armaments programme, the army to be increased to a total of 180 divisions by the following spring. [FH] Noted that Naval Operations Staff memo about landing points and crossing times had upset invasion planning, the previous plans wholly unworkable.
- 29 July Following the 21 July conference Halder consulted with OKH officers, and Marcks began a special staff study for the invasion of Russia. Jodl confirmed Hitler's decision to invade Russia to military planners working under Colonel Warlimont – the planners were told that *Sea Lion* preparations were to continue, in addition to work on attacking Russia. [FH] Detailed invasion discussions following naval memo.
- 30 July [FH] Notes earliest invasion jump-off date is 20–6 September based on navy estimate; *Luftwaffe* is not focusing on operations to support a landing; Royal Navy cannot be prevented from attacking invasion fleet; value of aircraft against naval craft is exaggerated; serious doubts noted about likelihood of launching invasion because of naval shortcomings.
- 31 July Raeder argued in a Fuehrer conference for a postponement of *Sea Lion* until May or June 1941. An acknowledgement of the primacy of the air offensive and air supremacy was confirmed as key to *Sea Lion's* prospects, a target date of 15 September identified for invasion itself; after Raeder's departure Hitler confirmed his intention to attack Russia in Spring 1941, stating that the Royal Navy posed considerable challenges (i.e. *Kriegsmarine* only 15% the size of RN).
- July–August RAF Bomber Command attacked *Luftwaffe* airfields in France and the Low Countries as part of their supporting role to Fighter Command.
- 1 August Hitler's *War Directive No. 17* ordered the destruction of the RAF by the *Luftwaffe*; it in turn devised plans for *Adlerangriff*. [FH] Marcks

presented a report on Russian operations and organisational planning.

[AB] July having passed, will Hitler invade in August?

- 5 August Marcks' staff study for the invasion of Russia was presented to Halder at OKH, the first comprehensive plan of attack.
- 6 August [FH] Bemoans army and navy attitudes to *Sea Lion* arguing that only the army is driving it forward. OKW accused of 'playing dead'.
- 7 August Propaganda Minister Dr Goebbels noted in his diary: 'invasion not planned'. [FH] Conference confirms irreconcilable differences between army, navy, air force regarding *Sea Lion*.
- 8 August *Klee gives the period 8–23 August as Stage 1 of Main Phase 1.*
- 10 August Original date for Goering's postponed *Adler Tag*, or Eagle Day, by the *Luftwaffe*.
- 13 August *Adler Tag* began but misfired through poor communication and weather conditions.
- [AB] Admiralty had received accurate information that Germans in Norway had embarked on night of 11 August, and expected an invasion in the north.*
- 14 August Hitler confirmed in a conference that peace is possible with England, which Germany does not wish to destroy. Churchill is the obstacle and the *Luftwaffe* may bring matters to a head.
- 15 August *Luftwaffe* lost 57 aircraft in daylight air battles over Britain in a massive effort to defeat the RAF; serious aircraft losses on both sides, including an attack across the North Sea from Norway which was repulsed.
- 18 August Major *Luftwaffe* assault, with high losses on both sides.
- 20 August [FH] Briefly mentions discussion of OKW Directive with ObdH on keeping together the 'Cherbourg group for its original mission'; this considered pointless because of lack of landing craft. And, brief comment on distribution of forces for the east, as planned.
- 24 August *Klee gives the period 24 August–6 September as Stage 2 of Main Phase 1.*
- 25–26 August First RAF raid by Bomber Command on Berlin in response to a small but erroneous German attack on London.
- 26 August [FH] 'ObdH returns from today's Fuehrer conference. Results: *Operation SEA LION* stands. Interest in this operation seems to have increased.'
- 30 August [FH] Progress report suggests RAF fighter losses of 791, or 50% (8–26 August in 'four all-out battles'); RAF bomber losses are given as 80, or 5%, suggesting the British bomber force is intact. A total estimate of 1,515 is given for RAF fighters, and 1,700 for bombers.
- 4 September Hitler's speech to the *Sportsplatz*: 'Why doesn't he come? Be calm. He's coming!'
- [AB] Notes that evidence for an attack before 15 September is growing.*

- 7 September Major *Luftwaffe* daylight attack on London marked the start of the Blitz. *Klee* gives the period 7–19 September as Stage 1 of Main Phase 2.
[AB] *Invasion looks like getting nearer: ships assembled, spies and parachutists captured.*
- 7–8 September Bomber and Coastal Commands began sustained attacks against the assembly of invasion barges in Channel ports throughout September and into earlier October, aided by the Royal Navy.
- 8 September [AB] *'Everything pointing to Kent and E. Anglia as the two main threatened points ... found that all reports still point to the probability of an invasion starting between the 8th and 10th of this month.'*
- 10 September [AB] *No notes invasion as yet – is this likely in next few days?*
- 11 September Hitler postponed the decision on whether to launch *Sea Lion*. [FH] Continuing army discussions about technical aspects of landings.
[AB] *Next two days are critical as evidence points to invasion.*
- 13 September [AB] *Expects invasion tomorrow from Portsmouth to South-east coast.*
- 14 September [FH] Noted in Fuehrer conference that RAF fighter forces have not yet been eliminated, *Luftwaffe* reports failing to give a reliable picture. 'Successful invasion means victory, but it is predicated on complete air domination.' Discussion also considered: risks associated with the invasion; psychological effects of the invasion threat which must be sustained; air attacks which might lead to mass hysteria; and that if the air force effort is successful, an invasion may not be needed. The seventeenth of September agreed as next date to consider the invasion, which would give an actual invasion date of 27 September, or 8 October. Hitler: air effort is the decisive factor for invasion.
[AB] *Very quiet – are the Germans now ready to invade?*
- 15 September RAF thwarted major *Luftwaffe* daylight attacks against London.
[AB] *All expecting an invasion during the coming week – can Hitler retreat on this now?*
- 16 September [AB] *Nothing as yet – rumour is that it will be tonight.*
- 17 September Hitler postponed plans for *Sea Lion*. [FH] Intelligence conference forces in the east confirmed 96 infantry divisions and some 30 armoured and motorised divisions; in the west, 44 infantry divisions, 1 mobile division and two armoured divisions using captured materiel.
[AB] *Still no invasion and Channel conditions not favourable.*
- 18 September [AB] *Invasion looks very likely and the weather will help an attempt.*
- 20 September *Klee* gives the period 20 September–13 November as Stage 2 of Main Phase 2.
[AB] *Improved weather heightens invasion threat.*
- 21 September [AB] *Churchill has sent a document, provided by [Ambassador] Sam Hoare, confirming that a reliable American source recently returned from Germany believes an invasion will take place within a fortnight.*

- 23 September [AB] *No invasion as yet.*
- 25 September [AB] *Narrow Channel poses a danger now that shipping is assembled.*
- 28 September [AB] *Invasion expected in immediate future.*
- 29 September [AB] *This week should see whether an invasion takes place.*
- 30 September [FH] Noted a letter sent to OKW about the state of *Sea Lion* preparedness. Also on this date, 47 *Luftwaffe* aircraft lost in major assaults.
- 1 October *Luftwaffe* high-altitude fighter-bomber attacks began.
- 2 October Hitler ordered that Operation *Sea Lion* preparations be ‘largely dismantled’, following continued RAF attacks against barges, but the invasion plans were not at that stage abandoned.
- [AB] *In a meeting with War Office is informed he would lose the 1st Armoured Division to the Middle East, with 100 Cruiser tanks also being pulled back for overhaul.*
- 3 October [AB] *Notes that no invasion attempted as yet, and it may not be.*
- 4 October [FH] Baffled by logic of repeated attacks against London’s docks.
- 15 October [FH] Notes Hitler’s comment in conference on invasion preparations: ‘“Mistake”: Excessive crowding of invasion fleet (losses).’ It is also noted that Germany now had forty divisions along Russia’s border, with 100 more to follow.
- 16 October [AB] *Comments on evidence for build-up of an invasion attempt but finds it hard to believe it will go ahead given Channel conditions.*
- 17 October [AB] *Notes that intelligence points to invasion preparations including the massing of shipping and wireless communications.*
- 20 October [AB] *Confides a sense of fatigue at the anxieties over an invasion.*
- 21 October [AB] *No further reports of invasion but Stalin very uneasy about massed German troops along the Russian frontier.*
- 22 October [AB] *Notes his anxieties about a possible invasion, which is rumoured.*
- 24 October [FH] Conference with ObdH, confirmed points arising from conference with Hitler: the air attacks to continue as Britain may decide to give in.
- [AB] *Quiet at present, but will this change suddenly?*
- 2 November [FH] In notes for a presentation to Hitler on 2 November 1940, noted that all military effort must be directed at convincing Britain that the war is lost.
- 4 November [FH] Fuehrer conference confirmed that *Sea Lion* was on hold until next Spring but preparations must be maintained.
- 14–15 November Coventry attacked in heavy raid.
- Klee gives the period 13 November–22 June 1941 as Stage 3 of Main Phase 2.*
- 1 November Hitler confirmed that it might be necessary to revert to *Sea Lion* in early 1941, in his *War Directive No. 18*.

- 25 November [FH] Hitler is noted as taking renewed interest in *Sea Lion*.
- 5 December Hitler confirmed in conference that *Sea Lion* should be left out of future military equations, and had effectively been abandoned.
- 5 December [FH] Fuehrer conference covering a broad range of subjects: *Sea Lion* no longer a serious possibility – it was therefore abandoned. FH later noted that the RAF has not been weakened, but equally the *Luftwaffe* was not suffering heavy losses; although once very weak, the ending of daylight attacks has spared the RAF's fighter force. Until Fighter Command is defeated invasion is not possible.
- 6 December [FH] Discussion with General Konrad, Liaison Officer in Goering's Headquarters, confirmed that the RAF has conserved its fighter force and did not sacrifice them over London. The *Luftwaffe* has been obliged to attack at night.
- 13 December [FH] Conference with Chiefs of Staff of army groups and armies included a detailed discussion of Britain's current military, political and economic circumstances, noting its hopes vis-à-vis America and Russia. The view taken was that *Sea Lion* must be set aside for the moment because of British air superiority.
- 17 December [AB] Notes fairly strong rumours of German preparations for an imminent invasion.
- 20 December [AB] Sholto Douglas (C-in-C Fighter Command) and he discussed the role of Fighter Command in the event of invasion.
- 16 January 1941 [FH] Noted that it is not possible to defeat England through invasion, but that other means are required to continue to fight with confidence.
- 4 February [AB] Brief reference to the threat of invasion: Churchill believes with Portal that invasion is unlikely.
- 6 April Hitler invaded Greece and the Balkans.
- 1 May [FH] A final, enigmatic reference to *Sea Lion* was given in respect of a meeting with General Heusinger: 'Preparations in the west for SEA LION.'
- 10 May Last major bombing raid against London, marking the end of the night Blitz. Remaining German bomber units thereafter moved to the east.
- 20–7 May Crete fell to German airborne troops.
- 4 June [AB] Confirming his anxieties about a possible invasion, he met with Sholto Douglas to discuss fighter protection of airfields and Fighter Command support in the event of an attempt being made.
- 22 June Operation *Barbarossa* launched against Russia.
- 1943 Raeder ordered Vice-Admiral Assmann to write a report seeking to exonerate the *Kriegsmarine* from any blame for the *Sea Lion* failure. This was re-worked by Assmann for the Royal Navy in 1947.
- 1944 *Luftwaffe* Major Bechtle, who flew in the Battle of Britain undertook a study of the *Luftwaffe's* role in support of *Sea Lion*.

Appendix 2: Nazi Battle of Britain-related Propaganda

Wochenschau Newsreel

27 June 1940–7 August 1940

- Issue 513 Fortifying Europe against British attacks; Germany's Navy prepares for war with Britain.
- Issue 514 Hitler's return to Berlin: jubilant Germans greet the *Fuehrer* in vast numbers.
- Issue 516 Hitler's 19 July Reichstag address from Kroll Opera, broadcast in 30 languages from 1,000 radio stations: Churchill's last chance for peace; Mussolini visits his victorious troops after France falls.
- Issue 518 RAF bombing raid on Hamburg and British propaganda claims – foreign reporters invited to look at Hamburg to disprove claims of wide destruction; *Luftwaffe* reconnaissance missions over England, and the processing of intelligence material; montage of *Luftwaffe* air strikes over England ('blitzing the English foe'; 'Bomben en England').

Early August footage confirms the approach taken in subsequent material: aerial views of English countryside and fields (some French in actuality); martial music; narration affirms that these are military targets; the English plutocrats want war; no sign of RAF opposition; invasion is not mentioned.

23 August 1940–December 1940

- Issue 520 *Luftwaffe* steps up bombing raids against Britain; total air blockade of Great Britain begins.
- Issue 524 Coastal air defence: fighter aircraft intercept RAF over the Channel; RAF bombers reach Berlin; Germany vows revenge; Germany's new air strategy, London now the key; raid on London; inside a Junkers Ju88 dive-bomber; *Luftwaffe* unloads monumental destruction on London.
- Issue 525 British air raid kills German children; Goering tours airfields in northern France; *Luftwaffe* squadrons take revenge upon London; Stuka dive-bombers in action.
- Issue 528 Vichy outrage as RAF 'night pirates' bomb Le Havre; fastest gun in the west, Messerschmitt Me109 fighter; spectacular aerial dogfights over southern England; Germany's Navy girds for battle.
- Issue 531 Reich Marshal Goering reviews *Richtofen* and *Horst Wessel* fighter-wings in northern France.
- Issue 533 RAF bomber attacks against worker colonies and cities: German AA defences ('English night pirates', 'war criminal Winston Churchill'); JU88 bombers' daylight raid against British shipping (no RAF opposition, few obvious hits).
- Issue 534 This 28th November issue briefly features 'the crushing raid on Coventry'.
- Issue 536 Preparation for an attack against England (Birmingham): '6.75m kilos of bombs in November' – 'Luftwaffe answers English night attacks against civilian targets in England'.

Table A.1 Indicative German-printed propaganda June–December 1940 (compiled by Garry Campion)

	Newsletters – Front Pages	Magazines and Propaganda Pamphlets – Front Pages
German aircraft (Me109, Me110, Stuka, He111, Ju88, Do17 & Red Cross aircraft)	BIZ 4.7.40 (27); BIZ 14.11.40 (46)	DA 6.40; DRI 15.6.40 (24); Signal 25.7.40 (8); DW 30.6.40 (26); DA 20.8.40 (17); Signal 24.8.40 (10) [& i-p]; Signal 10.9.40 (11); Signal 9.40 (12) [& i-p]; DA 17.9.40 (19); DW 18.9.40 (38); Signal 10.40 (13) [& cc-p]; Signal 11.40 (16) – Spitfire & Me109 cc-p; DA 12.11.40 (23); DA 26.11.40 (24); DA 10.12.40 (25)
RAF aircraft	Hurricane – BIZ 21.11.40 (47)	Spitfire – DA 9.7.40 (14); Signal 10.40 (14) [RAF bomber, i-p]; Signal 11.40 (16) – Spitfire & Me109 cc-p
Aircrew	WI 28.8.40 (35); KIZ 12.9.40 (37); MIP 12.9.40 (37); Das Reich 15.9.1940 (17); BIZ 19.9.40 (38) [inner-pages]; BIZ 17.10.40 (42); WI 23.10.40 (43)	DRI 15.6.40 (24); DW 30.6.40 (26); DW 19.7.40 (28); DA 1.10.40 (20); DA 29.10.40 (22); Drauf und dran [34pp. pamphlet] – fighter and bomber aircrews and operations; Immer am Feind [128pp. pamphlet]
Luftwaffe Aces	Wick – BIZ 19.9.40 (38); Wick & Hitler – BIZ 3.10.40 (40); Galland & Moelders – JB 3.10.40 (40) [Wick and Galland appear in Jan '41 issues of JB]	Moelders – DA 15.10.40 (21); ? DW 11.12.40 (50); Moelders – Signal 12.40 (17)
Goering	JB 22.8.40 (34); BIZ 29.8.40 (35); JB 19.9.40 (38); NJZ 22.10.40 (43); BIZ 28.11.40 (48)	
Bombs & armourers	JB 4.7.40 (27); MIP 19.9.40 (38)	

Bombing and offensive operations (e.g. Stuka, He111, Do17 or Ju88)	London Docks – BIZ 19.9.40 (38) [i-p]	Signal 1.6.40 (4); airfield – DW 12.6.40 (24); DA 3.9.1940 (18) – airfield and other UK attacks i-p; Signal 10.9.40 (11) – and rear cover; DA 17.9.40 (19) & Kenley airfield attack i-p; Kenley airfield, i-p – Signal 10.40 (13); DA 29.10.40 (22); DA 26.11.40 (24); DA 10.12.40 (25); <i>Bomben auf Engeland</i> [28pp. pamphlet]
Channel view, English coast	BIZ 1.8.40 (31) – map of UK [i-p]; BIZ 19.9.40 (38) [i-p]	DWW 2.6.40 (22); rear-cover UK map – Signal 25.7.40 (8); Signal 10.9.40 (11) – and rear cover; Signal 10.40 (13) [s i-p]; DA 12.11.40 (23); <i>Sturm vor Englands Toren</i> [34pp.] – includes Dunkirk and a map of the UK and Channel, with distances
Luftwaffe ship attacks	BIZ 12.9.40 (37)	DA 6.40; DA 20.8.40 (17); Rear cover – Signal 10.9.40 (11); DA 3.9.40 (18); <i>Zum Endkampf gestellt!</i> [80pp. booklet]

Key:

BIZ	<i>Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung</i>
DA	<i>Der Adler</i>
DRI	<i>Deutsche Radio-Illustrierte</i>
DW	<i>Die Woche</i>
DWW	<i>Die Weite Welt</i>
JB	<i>Illustrierter Beobachter</i>
KIZ	<i>Kolnische Illustrierte Zeitung</i>
MIP	<i>Mancher Illustrierte Presse</i>
NIZ	<i>Neue IZ Illustrierte Zeitung</i>
WI	<i>Wiener Illustrierte</i>
cc-p	colour centre-pages
i-p	inner-page

Appendix 3: Radio and Audio Coverage of the Battle of Britain, 1940–1965

3.1 BBC wartime news, documentaries and talks

All Home Service or British Forces programmes.

The following includes talks by RAF fighter pilots, usually anonymised.

- 6.1940 'Air log: the story of an American fighter pilot with the RAF'.
6.1940 'Bringing down a night raider – by a Flight Lieutenant'.
25.6.1940 Radio play *Spitfires over Britain* [sole broadcast].
7.1940 'Air log: a veteran pilot re-visits France – by a Pilot Officer'.
'A night-fight – by an Auxiliary Squadron Leader'.
'Air battle over the Channel: by a Flying Officer'.
14.7.1940 Pilot Officer H. M. Stephen [date recorded].
Charles Gardner's 'live' broadcast of an air battle, near Dover.
18.7.1940 'Watchers of the Sky' [Observer Corps role in air defence].
19.7.1940 *If the Invader Comes* [play: how ordinary people might react].
21.7.1940 *There was a Rumour* [topical play set in English village].
3.8.1940 Flight Lieutenant G. E. B. Stoney [date recorded].
15.8.1940 *Bombers over Germany* [play: attack on Bremen oil facilities].
22.8.1940 BBC report of an air attack on a convoy in the Channel.
8.1940 'Story of a fighter Sergeant pilot'.
'Five enemy aircraft in one day – by a Sergeant pilot'.
'A fifteen-minute parachute drop – by a Flight Lieutenant'.
5.9.1940 'Air Commentary' [Air Marshal Joubert on current air-war situation].
9.1940 'Air battle over London – by a Squadron Leader'.
10.1940 'Air log: two fighter pilots' stories'.
'Story by a Pilot Officer of the American Eagle Squadron'.
11.1940 'A Hurricane Squadron attacks twenty-five Junkers 87s'.
'The first fight with the Italian raiders'.
2.12.1940 Flight Lieutenant John Nicolson VC [date recorded].
6.12.1940 'Story by a Canadian Spitfire Squadron Leader' [date recorded].
15.12.1940 Pilot Officer H. M. Stephen [date recorded].
Early 1941 Squadron Leader Bob Stanford Tuck: 'Fighter pilot'.

- Wing Commander Douglas Bader: 'Dogfights over England'.
- 1.1941 Sqn Leader Johnstone: 'Talk by the CO of an auxiliary fighter squadron: "A station commander looks back"'.
 2.1941 Sergeant Kingaby: 'Adventures of a New Zealand fighter pilot in the RAF'.
 8.5.1941 Radio play *Battle of Britain* [by Cecil McGivern].
 10.4.1941 *Radio Reconnaissance* – The Battle of Britain, pilot Stephen King-Hall.
 24.5.1941 'Brothers-in-Arms' [Commonwealth nations, and in the Battle].
 14.7.1941 Flying Officer Richard Hillary, fighter pilot talk.
 2.8.1941 Hillary talk continued.
 ?.1942 'Let us remember them: The Battle of Britain, 1940' [March 1942 to May 1943].
 25.8.1942 *Into Battle* – *John Hannah VC* ['Battle of the Barges' aircrew].
 21.9.1942 *Into Battle* [series about valour including the Battle of Britain].
 2.5.1943 *Transatlantic call* – *people to people* ['Front-line farmers', and in the Battle]
 22.5.1943 *Pilot's Wife* [play about badly-burned pilot].
 26.9.1943 'Fighter pilot Group Captain Peel and ground crewman talk'.
Battle of Britain Day [reports of the parade].
Sunday Half-Hour [Wembley service, Battle of Britain Day].
 27.9.1943 'Ack-ack, Beer-beer' [special tribute to Air Defence of Great Britain].
 29.2.1944 *For the Schools* [*Fighter Pilot* and *Battle of Britain* by Cecil McGivern].
 16.9.1944 'Atlantic Spotlight' [English stars pay tribute to Battle of Britain heroes].
 14.5.1945 *Now It Can Be Told* – *The invasion of 1940* [Britain's defences].
 22.5.1945 *Now It Can Be Told* – *The Battle of Britain* [fighter controller].

3.2 BBC post-war broadcasts

(HS: Home Service; LP : Light Programme; R2: Radio 2; R3: Radio 3; R4: Radio 4; R7: Radio 7; WS: World Service).

- 15.9.1945 Battle of Britain Week celebrations coverage. HS.
 5.11.1945 *The Day of Glory* [H. E. Bates play]. HS.
 22.9.1946 'RAF Festival of Reunion' [Lord Dowding address]. HS.
 1.7.1947 'What I Believe' [Lord Dowding talks about his beliefs]. HS.
 10.7.1947 *Battle of Britain* [Unveiling the memorial, Westminster Abbey]. LP.
HM The King [Battle of Britain memorial unveiling]. HS.
 14.9.1947 *Battle of Britain Festival*. LP.
The Battle for Britain [Operation *Sea Lion* assessment]. HS.
 17.9.1947 'RADAR': *Part 2 The Battle of Britain* [by Cecil McGivern]. HS.
 1.4.1948 *The Battle for Britain* [new version of 14.9.47 programme]. LP.

- 15.9.1948 *Battle of Britain Fly-past* [Charles Gardner commentates]. HS.
- 7.11.1948 *The Undefeated: True Stories of Courage – Richard Hillary*. HS.
- 11.6.1949 *An English Summer* [R. Adam fighter station play during the Battle]. HS.
- 26.6.1949 *The Finest Hour* [G. M. Young discusses Churchill's book *Finest Hour*]. HS.
- 7.2.1950 *For The Schools* [Battle of Britain pilot discusses poetry]. HS.
- 7.3.1950 *From London to Livingstone* [Douglas Bader interview, post-war work]. HS.
- 17.9.1950 *Ten Years After: 4. Britain Under Fire* [the Many and the Few recall]. HS.
Sunday half-hour: Battle of Britain Sunday [singing hymns]. LP.
- 26.7.1951 *Film Time* [includes analysis of Battle of Britain on film by pilot]. HS.
- 20.9.1953 *Evening Service* [Wigan Parish Church, The Battle of Britain]. HS.
Battle of Britain Day coverage. LP.
- 12.9.1954 *Battle for Britain* [Hitler's invasion plans – Chester Wilmot]. HS.
- 26.5.1956 *The High Adventure* [Music: The Battle of Britain Chorale]. HS.
- 15.9.1957 *The Battle of Britain* [BBC war archive recordings]. LP.
- 16.9.1957 *The Battle of Britain* [MRAF Slessor reprises the Battle, Collier's book]. HS.
- 31.1.1958 *Woman's Hour* [Dowding talks about 'death']. LP.
- 21.9.1958 *The Battle of Britain* [BBC archive recordings]. HS [repeat].
- 24.3.1960 *With Courage – Richard Hillary* [play]. HS.
- 6.9.1960 *Battle for Britain* [Hitler's invasion plans – Chester Wilmot]. HS [? repeat].
- 18.1.1961 *For the Schools* [The Battle of Britain written by Philip Holland]. HS.
- 1.4.1961 *Saturday Matinee: Yesterday's Hero* [ex-Battle pilot's test-flight problems]. HS.
- 2.8.1961 *The Town That Refused to Die* [Dover re-visited by Reginald Foster]. HS.
- 12.9.1965 *For Johnny* [25th anniversary of the Battle – and an LP release]. HS.
- 23.9.1965 *The Great Debate* [Radar and the Battle of Britain]. HS.

Appendix 4: Printed Coverage of the Battle of Britain, 1940–1965

4.1 Battle of Britain newspaper headlines

(*DE: Daily Express; DH: Daily Herald; DM: Daily Mirror; DT: Daily Telegraph; NC: News Chronicle; SE: Sunday Express; TT: The Times*).

- 11.7.1940 'R.A.F.'s battle score – 37'. *DM*.
- 13.7.1940 'Nazis over here lose another 11, all bombers'. *DH*.
- 15.7.1940 '60-minute air battle off Dover'. *DT*.
- 20.7.1940 '150 planes in fight'. *DM*.
- 13.8.1940 'Biggest air raids of all; R.A.F. shoots down 39 more Nazis'. *DE*.
- 16.8.1940 'Let us deserve our fighters'. *The Tribune*.
'144 raiders down for loss of only 27 planes'. *DT*.
'Yesterday's reckoning: 69 German planes destroyed'. *NC*.
- 19.8.1940 'Germany's heaviest air defeat; 140 machines shot down'. *TT*.
- 20.8.1940 'R.A.F. have saved world'. *DM*.
- 30.8.1940 '200 Nazi raiders are beaten'. *DM*.
- 1.9.1940 'One Hurricane pilot fights 120 Germans'. *SE*.
- 2.9.1940 'R.A.F. winning supremacy: waves of Nazi raiders foiled'. *DT*.
'Planes litter countryside – Waves of bombers'. *DT*.
- 6.9.1940 'Polish courage and tenacity – The King's message'. *TT*.
- 9.9.1940 'Air attack on London renewed last night; 1,374 Nazis down'. *DT*.
- 16.9.1940 '175 raiders shot down'. *TT*.
'175 Nazi planes down; RAF triumphs in biggest air battles'. *DH*.
- 17.9.1940 'Havoc in Antwerp docks; Devastation among barges'. *TT*.
- 26.9.1940 'Mass raiders are beaten off: 23 shot down'. *DH*.
- 9.10.1940 'Czechs open a new account'. *TT*.
- 18.10.1940 'Soviet praise for R.A.F.' *TT*.

4.2 Battle of Britain – indicative magazine articles

(*ILN: Illustrated London News; PP: Picture Post; TA: The Aeroplane; WI: War Illustrated*).

- 28.6.1940 'These were the first shots of the Battle of Britain taken on 18 June'.
WI.
- 6.7.1940 'The Battle of Britain' [war diary heading]. *PP*.
- 12.7.1940 'The Invader's Dilemma'. *TA*.

- 20.7.1940 'The war with Nazi Germany – prospects of invasion'. *ILN*.
- 26.7.1940 'Why the Nazis lost 140 aircraft in eight days'. *WI*.
'Invasion threat looms'. *WI*.
- 27.7.1940 'RAF bombs on the Dortmund-Ems Canal'. *ILN*.
- 2.8.1940 'The Empire's part in the Battle of Britain'. *WI*.
- 17.8.1940 'Heart of the R.A.F. fighter patrol system' [operations room drawing].
ILN.
'Per Ardua Ad Astra' [cover-page, Pilot Officer Douglas Grice]. *ILN*.
- 23.8.1940 'The air Battle of Britain: first phase opens'. *WI*.
- 24.8.1940 'How the score of R.A.F. fighter squadrons is counted'. *ILN*.
- 30.8.1940 'The RAF clawed them down by the hundred'. *WI*.
'We stand erect on the road to victory' [Churchill's 20 August speech].
WI.
- 31.8.1940 'The men against Goering' [cover-page, Pilot Officer Keith Gillman].
PP.
- 6.9.1940 'Tribute to the Hurricane'. *TA*.
- 7.9.1940 'Over 1000 Nazi aircraft brought down over Great Britain in 20 days –
August 11 to 31' [two-page illustration of aircraft claimed by the RAF].
ILN.
- 13.9.1940 'We have more than held our own in the air'. *WI*.
- 20.9.1940 'Nazi sky-writers leave their trail above St Paul's'. *WI*.
- 21.9.1940 'How the U.S. watches the war' [US war correspondents]. *PP*.
- 4.10.1940 'Czechs help to down the Nazis over London'. *WI*.
- 5.10.1940 'Fighting fire in mid-air: Sergeant Hannah, V.C., and plane'. *ILN*.
- 18.10.1940 'Polish airmen are fighting in Britain's war'. *WI*.
- 1.11.1940 'The Place for Our Pennies' [argues against Spitfire Fund donations].
TA.
- 2.11.1940 'Germany's losses in air personnel since the *Blitzkrieg* against this coun-
try started on August 11' [pull-out of four pages, small head images].
WI.
- 30.11.1940 'First fighter pilot's VC' [Nicolson]. *ILN*.

Appendix 5: Newsreel, Film and TV Coverage of the Battle of Britain, 1940–1965

5.1 Indicative newsreel content

Battle of Britain period

(BMN: British Movietone News; BPN: British Paramount News; GBN: Gaumont British News; PG: Pathé Gazette; UN: Universal News).

- 15.7.1940 *The Tactics of Air Supremacy.* BMN.
- 22.7.1940 *Heroic WAAF Honoured.* UN.
- 29.7.1940 *Another Convoy Attacked – Hurricanes to the Rescue.* UN.
- 5.8.1940 *Nazi's Red Cross Plane Down.* BMN.
- 12.8.1940 *President Benes with Czech Air Force.* PG.
- 14.8.1940 *Rout All Fritzes!* BPN.
- 15.8.1940 *RAF Smash Germany's Aerial Blitzkrieg.* GBN.
Royal Air Force Up and at 'Em. PG.
- 19.8.1940 *Battle of Britain.* BPN.
Britain's Air Toll of Nazi Blitzkrieg. BMN.
RAF Hit Hard as Raids Increase. BMN.
- 22.8.1940 *RAF Get Germans 'Down in the Dumps'.* BPN.
- 24.8.1940 *American RAF Pilot Honoured at Burial.* BMN.
RAF Fighters ever on the Alert. BMN.
- 26.8.1940 *Where the RAF Have Struck.* PG.
- 29.8.1940 *Bombs–Bricks–And Junk–Ers.* UN.
- 5.9.1940 *Hell Fire Corner.* BMN.
- 9.9.1940 *Blitzkriegs May Come But Nazis Will Fail.* BMN.
- 12.9.1940 *Britain's Day of Prayer.* BMN.
- 16.9.1940 *Dover Bombed.* PG.
- 19.9.1940 *RAF Gives Goering Greatest Shock Yet.* BPN.
Well Done! The Fighter Command. BMN.
- 30.9.1940 *The Magnificent Work of the Coastal Command.* UN.
- 7.10.1940 *RAF Fighters in Close-Up.* PG.
All in a Fighter's Day's Work. GBN.
With an Allied Fighter Command. BMN.

The RAF Victory Loop. UN.

Some of Goering's Failures. BMN

17.10.1940 *Hot Moments at a Fighter Station. PG.*

21.10.1940 *American Squadron with the RAF. PG.*

US 'Eagle' Fighter Squadron in Britain. GBN.

Later-war Battle of Britain Pathé newsreel coverage

21.11.1940 *Won VC in First Fight. PG.*

1940–42 *Knights of the Air* [RAF Benevolent Fund appeal].

14.5.1942 *Fighter Sweeps* [Battle is mentioned by Sholto Douglas].

19.11.1942 *Civil Defence Day in London.*

1.4.1943 *Many Happy Returns – 25 years young* [RAF anniversary].

30.9.1943 *Battle of Britain Day.*

18.9.1944 *Lest We Forget.*

10.5.1945 *Victory Edition* [includes Battle coverage].

5.2 Ministry of Information 'shorts' films, and similar propaganda releases

1940 *Britain at Bay* (7 mins.) [June 1940 and the invasion threat].

The Story of an Air Communiqué (6 mins.) [confirming RAF claims].

The Fighter Pilot (8 mins.) [a day in the life].

The Front Line (6 mins.) [Dover and the air war].

London Can Take It (10 mins.) [the London Blitz].

Britain Can Take It (7 mins.) [as *London Can Take It*].

Britain's RAF (17 mins., US) [*March of Time* newsreel, Battle of Britain].

1941 *An Airman's Letter to His Mother* (5 mins.) [1940 bomber pilot's last letter].

The Battle of London (15 mins., US) [London and the Blitz].

RAF Action (10 mins.) [for Empire release].

Churchill's Island (21 mins., Canada) [The Battle of Britain].

1945 'Battle of Britain', 'The Gen', RAF Film Production Unit [September].

5.3 Post-war Battle of Britain Pathé newsreel coverage

20.9.1945 *Battle of Britain Remembrance Day* [major series of events].

19.9.1946 *Pathe's Front Page* [includes Battle coverage].

10.7.1947 *Royals at Battle of Britain Ceremony* [Westminster Abbey memorial].

9.1947 *R.A.F.A. – United In Peace* [appeal for Battle of Britain Week].

18.9.1947 *Battle of Britain Memorial.*

- 18.9.1947 *One Week in History* aka *Battle of Britain*.
- 23.9.1948 *Britain Looks Up*.
- 19.9.1949 *Britain Remembers the Few*.
- 18.9.1952 *The 'Many' Remember* aka *Battle of Britain*.
- 1953 (possibly utilising) *Battle of Britain Week* footage, Horse Guards Parade exhibition.
- 23.9.1954 *The 'Many' honour the 'Few' – Battle of Britain anniversary*.
- 22.9.1958 *Mushroom Farm* aka *Airman At Home* [pilot Bob Stanford Tuck].
- 15.9.1960 *Grim Times Remembered*.
- 19.9.1960 *PM Meets the Few*.
- 21.9.1961 *Battles of Two Kinds* [Battle, and Ban the Bomb protest].
- 23.9.1965 *Youth is the Spur* [25th anniversary of Battle of Britain].

5.4 TV news, documentaries, interviews and other broadcast events

Unless significant, repeats are not shown. The first BBC broadcasts of major Battle of Britain films recorded in the *Radio Times* are included – marked with an asterisk (see section 5.5 below).

- 14.9.1946 *The Battle of Britain* [The Few at Biggin Hill]. BBC TV.
- 15.9.1946 *It Happened Six Years Ago Today* [RAF Film Unit on the Battle]. BBC TV.
- 15.9.1946 *Battle of Britain Commemoration Service* [Biggin Hill Chapel]. BBC TV.
- 28.8.1947* *Target for Tonight* film broadcast. BBC TV.
- 17.9.1949 *The Royal Air Force At Home* [RAF North Weald]. BBC TV.
- 18.9.1949 *An English Summer* [play: fighter station in the Battle]. BBC TV.
- 16.9.1950 *Battle of Britain Air Display* [RAF Castle Bromwich]. BBC TV.
- 10.9.1951 *Battle of Britain Week* variety show. BBC TV.
- 15.11.1954 *Battle for Britain. War in the air* series. BBC TV.
- 18.9.1954 *Battle of Britain Flying Display* [RAF St Athan]. BBC TV.
- 18.9.1954 *Battle of Britain Week* flying display. BBC TV.
- 17.9.1955 *Royal Air Force At Home* [RAF Biggin Hill]. BBC TV.
- 10.9.1956 *The Last Enemy* [play: Richard Hillary]. ITV.
- 15.9.1956 *Battle of Britain Day* [possibly RAF Biggin Hill]. BBC TV.
- 14.9.1957 *Battle of Britain Day* [flying display at RAF Biggin Hill]. BBC TV.
- 20.9.1958 *Battle of Britain Day*. BBC TV.
- 18.11.1959 *After the Battle* [Ed Murrow returns to London]. BBC TV.
- 18.9.1960 *An English Summer* [R. Adam, new version of play set in Battle]. BBC TV.
- 11.3.1961 *Winston Churchill – the valiant years* [5: 'Take one with you' – 1940]. BBC TV.

- 28.12.1961 *The Day of the Fighter* [the advent of the fighter, and the Spitfire]. BBC TV.
- 12.9.1965 *1940* [J. B. Priestley Battle of Britain play – 25th anniversary]. BBC2.
- 17.9.1965 *Late Night Line-Up* [with Douglas Bader]. BBC2.
- 19.9.1965 *Battle of Britain Service* [Westminster Abbey]. BBC1.
- 19.9.1965 *Songs of Praise* [RAF Halton Service]. BBC1.
- 19.9.1965* *Reach for the Sky* film broadcast. BBC1.

5.5 Feature films

Wartime release

- 1939 *The Lion Has Wings* (UK) [RAF air defences, Spitfires].
- 1941 *Confirm or Deny* (US) [US reporter and 1940 invasion report].
Target for Tonight (UK) [Bomber Command attack].
Dangerous Moonlight (UK) [Polish pilot in RAF during the Battle].
A Yank in the RAF (US) [US pilot in RAF up to Dunkirk].
- 1942 *Mrs Miniver* (US) [RAF fighter pilot during the Battle].
The First of the Few (UK) [R. J. Mitchell's Spitfire and the Battle].
Unpublished Story (UK) [conspiracy set during later 1940].
- 1943 *Flemish Farm* (UK) [Belgian fighter pilots in RAF during 1940].
The Battle of Britain (US) [US army *Why We Fight* information film].
- 1944 *Tawny Pipit* (UK) [recovering RAF fighter pilot during the Battle].
The Hour Before the Dawn (US) [Home Front, Nazi agent targets airfield].

Post-war release

- 1945 *The Way to the Stars* (UK) [RAF bomber pilots].
- 1946 *School for Secrets* (UK) [the race to develop RDF].
- 1950 *Cage of Gold* (UK) [post-war fighter pilot hero as scoundrel].
- 1952 *Angels One Five* (UK) [RAF fighter squadron during the Battle].
- 1956 *Reach for the Sky* (UK) [Douglas Bader].
- 1957 *The One That Got Away* (UK) [Von Werra, PoW in the Battle].
- 1960 *Blitz on Britain* (UK) [documentary covering May 1940–May 1941].
- 1964 *It Happened Here* (UK) [the German occupation of England].

Appendix 6: War Artists

6.1 Aircrew and commanders' portraitists

Eric Kennington (WAAC 1939–1942). *Learoyd, Hannah*;¹ *Beamish, Learoyd, Hannah, Neil, Malan, Mungo[-]Park, Lewis, Bader, Allard, McKnight, Lacey*;² *Simpson*;³ *Forbes*;⁴ *Town[s]end, Bader, MacLachlan, Hannah, Stevens, Learoyd, Beamish, Pisarek, Malan*;⁵ *Beamish, McGregor, Bader, Forbes, Malan, Crossley, Kayll, Mungo-Park, Allard, Cunningham, McKnight, Dafforn, Stephen, Lacey, Stevens, Hannah, Lewis*.⁶

William Rothenstein (WAAC 1940–1944). *Dowding*;⁷ *Dowding, Park, Broadhurst, Dewar, Kent, Leather, Straight, Bungey, Chisholm*.⁸

Cuthbert Orde (WAAC 1940–1945). *Crook*;⁹ *Finucane*;¹⁰ *Gleave*;¹¹ *Malan, Rhodes-Moorhouse, McKellar, Aitken, Dundas, Urbanowicz, Cunningham, Peel, Finucane, Lacey, Boyd, Bader, Dalton-Morgan, Oxspring, Clowes, Beamish, Hugo, Urwin-Mann, Kellett, Wolton, Holden, Higginson, David, Allard, Brown, Gaunce, Ogilvie, Simpson, Stevens, Mungo-Park, Neil, Turner, Kilmartin, Tuck, Robinson, Broadhurst, Whitehead, Deere, Kent, Whitney Straight, Hayter, Churchill, Duke-Woolley, Ryder, Sizer, Boulter, Dundas, Boyd, Tambllyn, Kingcome, Burnell-Phillips, Townsend, McGregor, Lock*.¹²

Thomas Dugdale (WAAC 1940–1942). *Farquhar*.¹³

6.2 WAAC artists: long- or short-term contracts

Paul Nash. Wartime published works: *Wellington Bomber 1940, Whitley Bombers Sunning 1940, Under the Cliff 1940, Bomber in the Wood 1940, Down in the Channel 1940, Bomber in the Corn 1940*;¹⁴ *Moonlight Voyage 1940, Hampdens at Sunset 1940, Totes Meer, Dead Sea 1940–41, Battle of Britain 1941*.¹⁵

Post-war publications: *Wellington Bomber Watching the Skies 1940, Day Fighter 1940, Night Fighter 1940*;¹⁶ [photographs] *Aeroplane parts at Cowley Dump 1940, A Blenheim, Whitley Vs and hangers, Messerschmitt BF109 crashed in Windsor Great Park 1940, Wrecked aircraft at Cowley Dump 1940*; [paintings] *Marching Against England 1940, Wellington Waiting 1940, Encounter in the Afternoon 1940, Bomber on the Shore 1940, Death of the Dragon 1940, Target Area 1940, Objective: Blenheims Bombing Barges, Le Havre 1941*.¹⁷

6.3 WAAC artists: aircraft, airfields, including Bomber Command

John Armstrong. *September 1940*;¹⁸ *Building Planes*.¹⁹

Robert Austin. *Parachutes Airing, Hurricane in a Canvas Shelter, Spitfire in a Hanger*.²⁰

Charles Cundall. *The Withdrawal from Dunkirk, June 1940*.²¹ *Wellingtons at Dusk* c.1940.²²

Robin Darwin. *Camouflaging the New Flight Shed*.²³

- Thomas Dugdale.** *Wellington and Crew: Pilot and Navigator Confer* c.1940.²⁴
- Richard Eurich.** *Air Fight over Portland 1940;*²⁵ *Trawlers against Heinkel.*²⁶
- Keith Henderson.** *Sergeant Wireless Operator; A Flying Officer from Nova Scotia.*²⁷
- Raymond McGrath.** *Fitters Working on a Spitfire, Wing Sections Awaiting Assembly;*²⁸ *Rear Turret of a Whitley Aircraft, 1940.*²⁹
- Thomas Monnington.** *Fighter Affiliation.*³⁰
- Henry Moore.** *Plane Crash in Summer 1940* [Heinkel bomber].³¹
- Cuthbert Orde.** *A Bomb Store, A Wellington Bombing Up 1940.*³² *Dispersal Point, Kenley* [Hurricanes in blast pens, watercolour] September 1940.³³ *Northolt, September 1940. No. 1 Canadian Squadron* September 1940.³⁴
- Eric Ravillious.** *Barrage Balloons at Sea 1940, Coastal Defences 1940, Morning on the Tarmac 1941.*³⁵
- Graham Sutherland.** *Camouflaged Bombers;*³⁶ *Picketed Aircraft 1943.*³⁷
- Feliks Topolski** [Poland's official war artist in Britain]. Eleven sketches or watercolours of Polish bomber aircrew.³⁸

6.4 Unofficial war artists – work included in wartime publications

- Richard Frost.** *The Author, M.E.110's ... 'This looks easy', Making for Cloud Cover, Worse than a Hendon Air Pageant.*³⁹
- A. K. Lawrence.** Untitled works included a pilot in Spitfire cockpit, and a Spitfire in flight.⁴⁰
- Roy Nockolds.** *Wellington Bombers Nearing Completion, Night Fighters Prepare at Dusk, Stalking the Night Raider, Three Spitfires Attacking a Formation of Junkers 1941.*⁴¹
- Frank Salisbury.** *The Young Airman: author of 'An airman's letter to his mother'* [Flying Officer Vivian A. W. Rosewarne 1916–1940; also the subject of an MoI 'short'].⁴²
- Frank Wootton.** *The Night Fighter;*⁴³ *Sky Battle: Dogfight over Dunkirk between Defiants and Dornier D.O.17 Bombers of the German Luftwaffe;*⁴⁴ *Wings for Victory, c.1942, Flt Lt C. J. Dundas Shooting Down Maj H. Wick 1940;*⁴⁵ *Libya – Help Them Finish the Job;*⁴⁶ *Looking for Trouble – Spitfires 1940;*⁴⁷ *A Job of Work to be Done – Defiant Fighters with de Havilland Constant-Speed Airscrews.*⁴⁸

6.5 Unofficial war artists – works held by RAF Museum

- J. Canning.** *Night Ops: Bomber Command, 1940* [Blenheim and crew] c.1940.⁴⁹
- Eric Hesketh Hubbard.** *An Air Battle* [massed Luftwaffe formations with Spitfires above] c.1941.⁵⁰
- Roy Nockolds.** *Spitfires over the Countryside* [In a 'vic' over a mosaic of fields] 1940;⁵¹ *Battle of Britain – Hurricanes being pursued by escorting Bf109s* [against large-scale air battle, Hurricanes in foreground] 1940s;⁵² *Hurricanes of No. 32 Squadron Attacking Dorniers over the South Coast* (n.d., possibly 1940s).⁵³
- Frank Salisbury.** *The Men who saved the World* [Spitfire pilot with ground-crew man, spectral St George on horse above] 1946.⁵⁴
- Rudolf Sauter.** Studies of vapour trails [five watercolour images of air battles, only vapour trails visible] October 1940.⁵⁵

Appendix 7: Books and Printed Literature, 1940–1965

7.1 German latter-1940 air war historiography

* = substantial Battle of Britain content

+ = substantial Operation *Sea Lion* content

^ = not originally intended for publication

1940	Anon.	<i>Bomben auf England</i>	Air offensive against Britain*
	Anon.	<i>Drauf und dran</i>	Developing air war
	Anon.	<i>Immer am Feind</i>	<i>Luftwaffe</i> attacks on England*
	Anon.	<i>Sturm vor Englands Toren</i>	Following France and Dunkirk
	Anon.	<i>Zum Endkampf gestellt!</i>	Developing <i>Luftwaffe</i> attacks*
1941	Bade and Wilmont	<i>Das heldische Jahr</i>	Includes air battles from latter 1940
	Kohl, H.	<i>Wir fliegen gegen England</i>	Survey of the air war during 1940
1943	Assmann, K.	'Operation <i>Sea Lion</i> report'	<i>Kriegsmarine</i> report, reworked in 1947 ^{^*}
1944	Bechtle, O.	' <i>Luftwaffe</i> and <i>Sea Lion</i> '	<i>Luftwaffe</i> report by Battle veteran ^{^+*}
1947	Assmann, K.	'Operation <i>Sea Lion</i> '	RN Restricted document ^{^+}
?	? Bechtle, O.	'Role of <i>Luftwaffe</i> in <i>Sea Lion</i> '	US Military report [^] – see 1944 entry
1949	Baumbach, W.	<i>Broken Swastika</i>	Bomber pilot account includes Battle
1951	Assmann, K.	<i>Deutsche Schicksals-Jahre</i>	German Vice-Admiral's account of the war+
1952	Osterkamp, T.	<i>Durch Höhen und Tefen Jagt ein ...</i>	<i>Luftwaffe</i> fighter General's memoir
1953	Kesselring, A.	<i>Memoirs of F-M Kesselring</i>	<i>Luftwaffe</i> commander's assessment*
1954	Hesse, F.	<i>Hitler and the English</i>	Includes <i>Sea Lion</i>
1955	Galland, A.	<i>The First and the Last</i>	German fighter ace's memoir*
	Manstein, E. von.	<i>Lost Victories</i>	Considers German failure+
1956	Bartz, K.	<i>Swastika in the Air</i>	Includes Battle assessment
	Kreipe, W.	'The Battle of Britain'	Chapter in <i>Fatal Decisions</i>
	Weber, T.	<i>Die Luftschlacht um England</i>	Swiss historian's account*
1958	Klee, K.	<i>Das Unternehmen 'Seelöwe'</i>	German historian's assessment+
1959	Raeder, E.	<i>Struggle for the Sea</i>	German Admiral's memoir+
1962	Halder, F.	<i>The Halder War Diary</i>	Key OKW General's diary+
	Warlimont, W.	<i>Inside Hitler's Headquarters</i>	German staff officer on <i>Sea Lion</i> + <i>Luftwaffe</i> war diaries*
1964	Bekker, C.	<i>Angriffs Höhe 4000</i>	
1965	Klee, P.	'The Battle of Britain'	Chapter in <i>Decisive Battles</i>

7.2 Battle of Britain historiography

* = substantial Battle of Britain content

+ = substantial Operation *Sea Lion* content

^ = not originally intended for publication

1940	Spaight, J.	<i>The Sky's the Limit</i>	Air power; brief Battle focus
	Walker, R.	<i>Flight to Victory</i>	Detailed latter-1940 focus*
	Williams, W.	<i>The RAF in Action</i>	Basic text coverage
1941	Austin, A.	<i>Fighter Command</i>	Bland coverage of Battle period*

	Davy, B.	<i>Air Power and Civilisation</i>	Chapter on Battle
	Dowding, H.	'The Battle of Britain'	Withheld C-in-C despatch*
	Garnett, D.	<i>War in the Air</i>	Chapter on Battle
	Halstead, I.	<i>Wings of Victory</i>	Claimed as first Battle account*
	Saunders, H.	<i>The Battle of Britain</i> [pamphlet]	MoI propaganda bestseller*
	Saunders, H.	<i>Bomber Command</i>	As above; including 'Battle of the Barges'
1942	Spaight, J.	<i>The Battle of Britain 1940</i>	First popular account*
	MoI	<i>Front Line 1940–1941</i>	Civil Defence role
	Saunders, H.	<i>Coastal Command</i>	MoI propaganda includes invasion threat
	Seversky, I.	<i>Victory through Air Power</i>	Chapter on Battle
	Ziff, W.	<i>The Coming Battle of Germany</i>	As above
1943	Air Ministry	<i>Battle of Britain</i>	RAF training pamphlet*
	Hermann, H.	<i>The Rise and Fall of the Luftwaffe</i>	Chapter on Battle
	MoI	<i>Roof Over Britain</i>	Balloon and AA defences
1944	Grey, C.	<i>The Luftwaffe</i>	Includes brief Battle context
	James, T. C. G.	'The Battle of Britain'	Secret AHB assessment^*
	MoI	<i>There's Freedom in the Air</i>	Allied airmen
	Macmillan, N.	<i>RAF in the World War. Vol. 2</i>	Substantial content*
1946	Dowding, H.	'The Battle of Britain'	<i>London Gazette</i> * [submitted 1941]
	Lee, A.	<i>The German Air Force</i>	Chapter on Battle
1948	Anon.	<i>The Rise and Fall of the GAF</i>	AHB Restricted study^
1949	Churchill, W.	<i>Their Finest Hour</i>	Post-war, dominant history*
1952	Wilmot, C.	<i>The Struggle for Europe</i>	Influential history*
1953	Richards, D.	<i>The Fight at Odds</i>	First official history (Vol. 1)*
1956	Bowman, G.	<i>War in the Air</i>	BBC TV series – chapter
1957	Collier, B.	<i>Defence of the United Kingdom</i>	Official history*
	Collier, B.	<i>Leader of the Few</i>	Mild Dowding biography*
1960	Bishop, E.	<i>The Battle of Britain</i>	Populist account*
	McKee, A.	<i>Strike from the Sky</i>	Journalist's perspective*
	Middleton, D.	<i>The Sky Suspended</i>	American journalist's perspective*
	Wood et al.	<i>The Narrow Margin</i>	Dowding viewed it as key text*
1961	Webster et al.	<i>The Strategic Air Offensive</i>	Official history (Vol. 1)*
1962	Collier, B.	<i>The Battle of Britain</i>	Populist account by official historian*
	Smith, N. D.	<i>The Battle of Britain</i>	Conventional history*
1965	Clark, R. W.	<i>Battle for Britain</i>	Indifferent account*
	<i>Icare</i>	<i>The Battle of Britain</i>	French airline pilots' association special*

7.3 Operation *Sea Lion* historiography

+ = substantial Operation *Sea Lion* content

^ = not originally intended for publication

1941	Anon.	<i>Invasion</i> [booklet]	Articles from <i>Evening Standard</i> +
1942	War Office	Notes on Preparations for invasion	Secret internal document on <i>Sea Lion</i> ^+
1948	Thursfield, H.	<i>Fuehrer Naval Conferences</i>	Includes <i>Sea Lion</i> +
1949	Churchill, W.	<i>Their Finest Hour</i>	Post-war dominant history+
1954	Wilmot, C.	<i>The Struggle for Europe</i>	Includes <i>Sea Lion</i>
1957	Collier, B.	<i>Defence of the United Kingdom</i>	Official history+
	Fleming, P.	<i>Operation Sea Lion</i>	British assessment of threat+
	Roskill, S.	<i>The War at Sea 1939–1945</i>	Official history+

1958	Grinnell-M, D. Wheatley, R.	<i>The Silent Victory</i> <i>Operation Sea Lion</i>	RN's primacy in deterring <i>Sea Lion</i> + British assessment+
1960	Ansel, W.	<i>Hitler Confronts England</i>	American assessment of <i>Sea Lion</i> +
1961	Webster et al.	<i>The Strategic Air Offensive</i>	Official history (Vol. 1)+

7.4 Battle of Britain novels

* = substantial air war Battle of Britain content

1941	'Blake'. Graves, C. Innes, H.	<i>Readiness at Dawn</i> <i>The Thin Blue Line</i> <i>Attack Alarm</i>	RAF fighter squadron* RAF aircrew in 1940 Battle from an AA-gunner's perspective
1942	Hewes, J. V. Moisevitch, M. Wright, E. T.	<i>The High Courts of Heaven</i> <i>Bring Me My Bow</i> <i>Pilot's Wife's Tale</i>	'Fighter boys' in the Battle* Fighter pilot and gritty romance* Wife of wounded Hurricane pilot
1943	Groom, P.	<i>What Are Your Angels Now?</i>	Secret agent-cum-'fighter boy'
1948	Wheatley, D.	<i>The Haunting of Toby Jugg</i>	Fighter pilot and the supernatural
1955	Trevor, E.	<i>Squadron Airborne</i>	RAF fighter squadron in the Battle*
(n.d.)	Raymond, J. K.	[1960s] <i>Battle Clouds</i>	RAF fighter squadron in the Battle*
1964	Bates, H. E.	<i>A Moment in Time</i>	Romance set within the Battle*

7.5 Operation *Sea Lion* and 'occupation' novels

+ = substantial Operation *Sea Lion* content

* = substantial focus on Nazi occupation and/or collaboration

^ = released as e-book

1940	Brown and Serpell	<i>Loss of Eden</i>	Britain occupied by the Nazis*
1940	Greene, G.	'The Lieutenant Died Last'	<i>Went the Day Well?</i> based on short story+
1942	Morton, H. V.	<i>I, James Blunt</i>	Diary account of German-occupied Britain*
1943	Hawkin, M.	<i>When Adolf Came</i>	Wartime account of German occupation*
1947	Coward, N.	<i>Peace in our Time</i>	Stage play about German occupation*^
1960	Forester, C. S.	'If Hitler had invaded England'	Foiled invasion attempt+
1963	Clarke, C.	<i>England under Hitler</i>	Counterfactual occupation of Britain*
1964	Cooper, G.	<i>The Other Man</i>	Britain under German occupation*

7.6 RAF pilots' memoirs, autobiographies and biographies

1941	Donahue, A.	<i>Tally Ho! Yankee in a Spitfire</i>	American flying with the RAF
1941	Gleave, P. T.	<i>I Had a Row with a German</i>	Badly burnt during the Battle
1942	Forbes and Allen	<i>Ten Fighter Boys</i>	Brief accounts of 66 Squadron pilots
1942	Glead, I. R.	<i>Arise to Conquer</i>	Conventional combat memoir
1942	Hillary, R.	<i>The Last Enemy</i>	Badly burnt during the Battle
1942	Sutton, F. B.	<i>The Way of a Pilot</i>	Badly burnt during the Battle
1942	Crook, D. M.	<i>Spitfire Pilot</i>	Conventional combat memoir
1942	Ellan, B. J.	[B. J. E. Lane] <i>Spitfire</i>	Fighter-leader, 19 Squadron
1943	Bolitho, H.	<i>Combat Report</i>	Biography of John Simpson

1946	Gibson, G.	<i>Enemy Coast Ahead</i>	Dambusters' delayed war memoir
1950	Dickson, L.	<i>Richard Hillary</i>	Affectionate account by his publisher
1953	Walker, O.	<i>Sailor Malan</i>	First biography of South African ace
1954	Brickhill, P.	<i>Reach for the Sky</i>	Best-selling account of Douglas Bader
1956	Forrester, L.	<i>Fly for Your Life</i>	Authorised biography of R. Stanford Tuck
	Johnson, J. E.	<i>Wing Leader</i>	Later the top Allied fighter ace
	Mouchotte, R.	<i>The Mouchotte Diaries</i>	French fighter ace memoir
	Offenberg, J.	<i>Lonely Warrior</i>	Belgian fighter pilot memoir
1959	Deere, A. C.	<i>Nine Lives</i>	Leading New Zealand fighter ace
1962	Baker, E. C. R.	<i>Fighter Aces of the RAF</i>	Includes Battle pilots
	Bickers, R. T.	<i>Ginger Lacey</i>	Authorised biography of leading Battle ace
1964	Bailey, J.	<i>Eskimo Nell</i>	Candid and absorbing account

7.7 Children's history books and novels

1940	Sprigg, Stanhope	<i>The Royal Air Force</i>	Broad sweep of the RAF at war
1941	Garnett, D.	<i>The Battle of Britain</i>	Puffin book based closely on pamphlet
1941	Craig, D.	<i>A Young People's Story ...</i>	Includes a chapter on the Battle
	Johns, W. E.	<i>Spitfire Parade</i>	Biggles' adventures
	Johns, W. E.	<i>Worrals of the WAAF</i>	Worrals of the WAAF's adventures
(n.d.)	Sprigg, Stanhope	<i>War Story of the Fighter Command</i>	1941 account of the war in 1940
1953	Reynolds, Q.	<i>The Battle of Britain</i>	American correspondents' account
(n.d.)	Robinson, J. G.	'Contact Established'	RAF adventure including invasion threat
1961	Anon.	'The Battle of Britain, 1940'	BBC Modern History broadcast guide

Appendix 8: Chronology of Political and World Events, 1945–1965

- 1945** 12 April: President Roosevelt dies.
20 April: Soviet army enters Berlin.
30 April: Hitler commits suicide.
8 May: Germany formally surrenders ending the war in Europe, but leading to a partitioned nation.
26 July: Labour wins General Election and forms government under Clement Attlee.
15 August: Japan surrenders, ending the Second World War (formal signing 2 September 1945).
20 November: Nuremberg Trials begin, ending on 1 October 1946.
- 1946** 10 January: First meeting of United Nations General Assembly in New York.
5 March: Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' speech urges unified action against Soviet threat as Cold War intensifies.
- 1947** 15 August: India and Pakistan secure independence from the British Empire, at which point the term ceases to be used to describe nations within the British Commonwealth.
- 1948** 4 January: Burma becomes independent republic.
June: Berlin Airlift begins, ending in May 1949.
22 June: *Windrush* arrives in England with 492 Jamaican immigrants.
5 July: National Health Service inaugurated.
- 1949** 29 January: Britain recognises State of Israel, Palestine mandate having ended in May 1948.
4 April: NATO treaty signed.
- 1950** 23 February: Labour just retains power in General Election.
29 August: First British troops reach Korea, going into action shortly thereafter.
- 1951** 3 May: Festival of Britain opens.
27 October: Churchill becomes Prime Minister of Conservative government.
- 1952** 6 February: George VI dies.
26 February: Churchill confirms that Britain has an atomic bomb.
- 1953** 5 March: Stalin dies.
2 June: Elizabeth II coronation. Eight million people tuned in on television marking a major increase in ownership – TV licence numbers rose from 763,000 in 1951, to 3.2 million in 1954.
18 June: Egypt becomes a republic.

- 1954** 4 July: Rationing ends in Britain.
3 October: Germany admitted to NATO.
- 1955** 5 April: Churchill, now an octogenarian, resigns as Prime Minister.
26 May: Conservatives returned in General Election.
- 1956** 13 June: Last British troops leave Suez Canal zone.
October–November: Suez crisis after Egypt nationalises the Canal.
- 1957** 25 March: Treaty of Rome creates six-nation EEC ‘common market’.
31 August: British rule in Malaya ends.
- 1959** 3 June: Singapore becomes self-governing state in Commonwealth.
8 October: Conservatives win General Election.
- 1960** 16 August: Cyprus secures independence.
1 October: Nigeria secures independence from Britain.
- 1961** 31 May: African Union including South Africa becomes an independent republic.
19 June: Britain relinquishes protectorate over Kuwait.
13 August: Erection of Berlin Wall begins.
- 1962** 6 August: Independence of Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago.
October: Cuban missile crisis.
9 October: Uganda becomes independent within Commonwealth.
9 December: Tanganyika becomes a republic within Commonwealth.
- 1963** 26 June: John F. Kennedy speech in West Berlin.
2 November: Kennedy assassinated.
2 December: Kenya secures independence within Commonwealth.
- 1964** 6 July: Nyasaland becomes independent as Malawi.
27 July: Churchill retires as MP after 64 years in Commons.
21 September: Malta secures independence within Commonwealth.
15 October: Labour wins General Election.
24 October: Northern Rhodesia secures independence within Commonwealth as Zambia.
- 1965** 24 January: Churchill dies.
18–28 May: Queen Elizabeth II State Visit to West Germany and West Berlin.
26 October: The Beatles receive MBES.
8 November: Rhodesia declares independence but is resisted by Britain, leading to sanctions.

Notes

Introduction

1. Collier, 1962, *The Battle of Britain*, p. 23.
2. Saunders, 1941, *The Battle of Britain: An Air Ministry Account of the Great Days from 8th August–31st October 1940*; Balfour, 1979, *Propaganda in War 1939–1945: Organisations, Policies and Publics in Britain and Germany*, p. 43.
3. Polish (145), Czechoslovak (88) and other non-UK aircrew contributed 19.9% (583) of the 2,917 men who flew with Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain.
4. The latter ecstatically welcomed Hitler in Berlin after the signing of the French armistice, *Deutsche Wochenschau* footage on 27 June 1940 confirming vast crowds.
5. The contrast with the modern age is striking: if reflecting on the Battle, the MoD could only be envious of the wartime BBC's compliance.
6. Churchill, 1949, *The Second World War*, Vol. 2, *Their Finest Hour* quickly dominated the early post-war historiography.
7. Süß, 2014, *Death from the Skies: How the British and Germans Survived Bombing in World War Two*.
8. Figure 8.1 confirms the changing nature of the dates and overall figures; the *Luftwaffe* over-claimed at a rate of just over three to one, or 215 per cent (Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight: Battle of Britain Propaganda and The Few*, pp. 114–15).
9. The AM confirmed the actual figures based upon the scrutiny of captured *Luftwaffe* aircraft returns (see Chapter 7).
10. A similar process doubtless developed in early 1941 when Fighter Command sought additional resources to undertake Big Wing 'leaning into France' operations.
11. Calder, 1997, *The Myth of the Blitz*. See also Smith, 2000, *Britain and 1940: History, Myth and Popular Memory*.
12. Reynolds argues this in '1940: Fulcrum of the Twentieth Century?', in Reynolds, 2007, *From World War to Cold War: Churchill, Roosevelt and the International History of the 1940s*, pp. 23–48.
13. German-British relations discussed in 'Don't mention the war! How the Germans are "bewildered" by British fixation with the Second World War' (*Daily Mail*, 23 September 2014, p. 12). Similarly, in 'It's time to love the Germans again', the director of the British Museum, Neil MacGregor, argues that Britain must put the war in the past (*Radio Times*, 27 September 2014, pp. 22–5). In support of this view the *New Statesman* suggests that despite recent tensions Germany and Britain once worked well together, as, for example, in their defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo (Simms, 2014, 'The First NATO Operation', pp. 22–6).

1 *Seelöwe und Bomben Auf England:* The German Perspective, 1940

1. Hitler, 1992, *Mein Kampf*, pp. 602–8.
2. Kershaw, 2007, *Fateful Choices: Ten Decisions that Changed the World 1940–1941*, Chapter 2.

3. 'Hitler and the Invasion of Britain', *Timewatch*, BBC2, 7 April 1998.
4. Edgerton, 2011, *Britain's War Machine: Weapons, Resources and Experts in the Second World War*, pp. 60–1.
5. Franks, 1983, *The Air Battle of Dunkirk*.
6. Edgerton, *Britain's War*, pp. 78–81.
7. Appendix 1 and Alanbrooke's palpable anxiety.
8. Raeder, 1959, *Struggle for the Sea*, Chapter XVI.
9. Hilton, 1983, *The Paras*, Chapter 5; Anon., 2001, *The Rise and Fall of the German Air Force 1933–1945*, pp. 58–69.
10. High German airborne forces' losses over Crete showed the risks (Clark, 1969, *The Fall of Crete*; Hilton, 1983, *The Paras*, Chapter 9).
11. Gillies, 2006, *Waiting for Hitler: Voices from Britain on the Brink of Invasion*; McKinstry, 2014, *Operation Sealion: How Britain Crushed the German War Machine's Dreams of Invasion in 1940*.
12. Fleming, 2003, *Operation Sea Lion: An Account of the German Preparations and the British Countermeasures*; Kieser, 1997, *Operation Sea Lion: The German Plan to Invade Britain, 1940*; McKinstry, 2014, *Operation Sealion*; Robinson, 2005, *Invasion, 1940: The Truth about the Battle of Britain and what Stopped Hitler*; Taylor, 1967, *The Breaking Wave*.
13. Kieser, 1997, *Operation Sea Lion*, p. 114.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
15. Taylor, 1967, *The Breaking*, p. 263.
16. Churchill, 1949, *Their Finest Hour*, p. 253.
17. Kieser, 1997, *Operation Sea Lion*, p. 118.
18. Collier, 1957, *History of the Second World War: The Defence of the United Kingdom*, p. 227; Fleming, 2003, *Operation Sea Lion*, p. 294.
19. Kieser, 1997, *Operation Sea Lion*, pp. 274–6.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 277–8.
21. Churchill, 1949, *Their Finest Hour*, p. 253.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 256.
23. Bryant, 1957, *The Turn of the Tide 1939–1943: A Study Based on the Diaries and Autobiographical Notes of Field Marshal The Viscount Alanbrooke*, p. 219.
24. Umbreit, 1999, 'Plans and Preparations for a Landing in England', in K. A. Maier, H. Rohde, B. Stegemann and H. Umbreit, 1999, *Germany and the Second World War*, Vol. II, p. 371.
25. Taylor, 1967, *The Breaking*, p. 276.
26. Hough and Richards, 1990, *The Battle of Britain: The Greatest Air Battle of World War II*, p. 301. It was evident that RAF photo-reconnaissance was monitoring barge numbers closely (Taylor, 1967, *The Breaking*, p. 280; Umbreit, 1999, 'Plans and Preparations', p. 271).
27. Maier, 1999, 'The Battle of Britain', in Maier et al., 1999, *Germany and the Second World War*, Vol. 2, p. 405.
28. Shirer, 1997, *Berlin Diary 1934–41*, pp. 97–103.
29. Tooze, 2006, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy*, Chapter 11.
30. Shirer, 1997, *Berlin Diary*, pp. 176–93.
31. Gellately, 2001, *Backing Hitler: Coercion and Consent in Nazi Germany*, Chapter 4.
32. Balfour, 1979, *Propaganda in War*, Chapter 4.
33. Cull, 1995, *Selling War: The British Propaganda Campaign against American 'Neutrality' in World War II*.

34. Balfour, 1979, *Propaganda in War*, Chapter 5.
35. Kallis, 2005, *Nazi Propaganda and the Second World War*, pp. 102–3; Doherty, 2000, *Nazi Wireless Propaganda: Lord Haw-Haw and British Public Opinion in the Second World War*.
36. Cole, 1990, *Britain and the War of Words in Neutral Europe, 1939–45: The Art of the Possible*.
37. Doherty, 2000, *Nazi Wireless*, p. 69.
38. <http://www.deutsche-wochenschau.de/>.
39. Notwithstanding British army support as the Battle of France drew to a close (Sebag-Montefiore, 2007, *Dunkirk: Fight to the Last Man*, Chapter 35).
40. Doherty, 2000, *Nazi Wireless*; McLaine, 1979, *Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War II*, pp. 80–1.
41. Welch, *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda*, p. 118.
42. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 19–24.
43. Welch, 2006, *The Third Reich*, p. 118.
44. Chapter 2 confirms the efforts made by the British AM to ensure that RAF aircraft claims were accepted as accurate, notably in America.
45. *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* (hereafter *BIZ*), 4 July 1940, p. 27; *Neue JZ Illustrierte Zeitung*, 10 September 1940; *BIZ*, 19 September 1940, p. 38 (inner supplement), p. 37; *JB Illustrierter Beobachter*, 26 September 1940, p. 39; *Muncher Illustrierte Presse* (hereafter *MIP*), 24 October 1940, p. 43.
46. Filmed in the Kroll Opera House – the *Reichstag* no longer in use – the speech was rapturously received by its large audience.
47. Author Alan Clark argued that Britain should have settled in May 1941 once the Blitz had been withstood ('Myths and Memories of World War Two', BBC2, 20 June 1995).
48. Boog, 1990, 'German Air Intelligence in the Second World War', pp. 350–424; Cox, 2000, 'A Comparative Analysis of RAF and Luftwaffe Intelligence in the Battle of Britain, 1940', in B. Finch, *Royal Air Force Air Power Review*, pp. 34–55; Puri, 2006, 'The Role of Intelligence in Deciding the Battle of Britain', pp. 416–39.
49. Maier et al., 1999, *Germany and the Second World War*, Vol. II.
50. *BIZ*, 1 August 1940, p. 31; 22 August 1940, p. 34; *MIP*, 29 August 1940, p. 35.
51. This extended to daily repeats on both wireless and in newsreels of the martial song capturing most precisely what the *Luftwaffe* was about, *Bomben auf England*. As with the German military generally it was deemed desirable to foster comradeship and teamwork through singing, martial music and the eponymous brass band.
52. Galland, 1955, *The First and the Last*, p. 86.
53. Churchill chastised Duff Cooper over his belittling of the Italians, just defeated by the British Army (Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, p. 91).
54. Kris and Speier, 1944, *German Radio Propaganda: Report on Home Broadcasts during the War*, p. 388.
55. Melvin, 2010, *Manstein: Hitler's Greatest General*, pp. 186–98.
56. Boelcke, 1967, *The Secret Conferences of Dr Goebbels: October 1939–March 1943*, pp. 63–109.
57. Kris, 1944, *German Radio*, p. 396.
58. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*.
59. Ray, 2000, *The Night Blitz: 1940–1941*.
60. *Kölnische Illustrierte Zeitung*, 15 August 1940, p. 33; *Die Woche*, 21 August 1940, p. 34.

61. Cull, 1995, *Selling War*, Chapter 4.
62. <http://www.aircrew-saltire.org/lib083.htm>.
63. Shirer, 1997, *Berlin Diary*, pp. 237–49.
64. Kris, 1944, *German Radio*, p. 402.
65. No mention was made of invasion during October: Kris, 1944, *German Radio*, p. 404.
66. Feature films touched upon aspects of it in the earlier war years, usually as a conclusion to glorious successes in Poland or France.
67. By 2015 the air war of late 1940 has almost wholly disappeared as a focus for German history and museum representation. Dresden, though, remains a major focus for modern Germans seeing themselves as victims of war (for example, *The Observer*, 4 January 2014, p. 23; M. Bittner, 'Why my city sees itself as a victim', *Sunday Telegraph*, 8 February 2015, p. 17; T. Rowley, 'The wounds have healed but the scars remain', *Sunday Telegraph*, 7 February 2015, p. 17). Opinion, though, remains sharply divided: one daily accused the Archbishop of Canterbury of apologising for the raid, also accusing the BBC of one-sided coverage (*Daily Mail*, 14 February 2015, p. 1 and pp. 4–5), this refuted (Church of England Media Centre, Statement on Dresden, 14 February 2015). David Cameron confirmed that he saw Bomber Command's aircrews as heroes (*Daily Telegraph*, 20 February 2015, p. 2).
68. Reeves, 1999, *The Power of Film Propaganda: Myth or Reality?* Chapter 3; Welch, 1983, 'Nazi Wartime Newsreel Propaganda', in K. R. M. Short, *Film and Radio Propaganda in World War II*, pp. 201–19; Welch, 2006, *The Third Reich*, Chapter 5.
69. Ishoven, 1998, *The Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain*, pp. 35–8.
70. Kris, 1944, *German Radio*, p. 66.
71. Wilson, 1996, *Luftwaffe Propaganda Postcards*, pp. 107–29.
72. Ailsby, 2006, *The Luftwaffe*.
73. Fighter ace Adolf Galland resisted actors using the salute in the 1969 *Battle of Britain* film, arguing unsuccessfully that this did not happen in reality (Mosley, 1969, *The Battle of Britain: The Making of a Film*, pp. 99–105).
74. Wilson, 1996, *Luftwaffe Propaganda*, pp. 79–92.
75. Nazi propagandists showed images of 1940 destruction on cigarette cards: Portsmouth, Coventry and London (see Plate 2).
76. Anon., (n.d.), *Der Adler: The Official Luftwaffe Magazine*.
77. Mayer, (n.d.), *Signal: Hitler's Wartime Picture Magazine*, <http://www.signalmagazine.com/signal.htm>.
78. *Signal*, No. 12, September 1940, pp. 11–14; this also includes a colour photo-essay of a Stuka attack in May, pp. 23–6.
79. The same Spitfire can be seen in *Signal's* November issue (No. 16) as a colour centre-page spread – the roundels are oddly applied; the RAF's flight did the same – or simply used its own aircraft to act as enemy fighters and bombers.
80. Anon., 1940, *Drauf und dran. Unsere Luftwaffe am Feind*.
81. Anon., 1940, *Sturm vor Englands Toren*.
82. Anon., 1940, *Zum Endkampf gestellt! Luftmacht Deutschland gegen Seemacht England*.
83. Anon., 1940, *Bomben auf England*.
84. Wundshammern, 1940, 'Zerstörer kämpfen über London', in *Bomben auf England*, pp. 1–5.
85. Anon., 1940, *Immer am Feind: Deutsche Luftwaffe gegen England*.
86. Kohl, 1941, *Wir fliegen gegen England*.
87. Fox, 2007, *Film Propaganda in Britain and Nazi Germany*, pp. 99–105.
88. RAF pilots reflected in comparable 1941 British propaganda films are of a different hue, strong individualism within fighter squadrons quite at odds with the close-knit *kamaraden* strongly affirmed here.

89. Exactly what was required for *Sea Lion*, but never developed because of poor leadership on Hitler's part (Ansel, 1960, *Hitler Confronts England*, p. 316).
90. Neitzel and Weltzer, 2012, *Soldaten: On Fighting, Killing and Dying*, pp. 63–5.
91. German bomber design reinforced this with the close concentration of aircrew in the noses of its aircraft: Dornier Do17, Heinkel He111, and Junkers Ju88, the net result of which was actually counter-productive in combat.
92. The fighters shown are French or American aircraft – the RAF did not use radial-engined fighters in 1940.
93. Of several variants, one film poster shows He111s attacking shipping in the Channel, England's white cliffs clearly visible.
94. Fox, 2007, *Film Propaganda*, pp. 105–8.
95. Spaight, 1941, *The Battle of Britain 1940*, Chapter 6.
96. At various times the Nazi salute is seen, in one instance during a formal mess event when a senior officer visits.
97. Quite at odds with the casual amateurism projected about the RAF.
98. Neitzel and Weltzer, 2012, *Soldaten*, p. 75.
99. Probably the previously noted captured Spitfire – see note 79.
100. This dates the action to the Dunkirk evacuation when Dowding first committed Spitfires, an experience giving the *Luftwaffe* pause for thought (Galland, 1955, *The First*, pp. 64–5).
101. Air Marshal Joubert, an RAF officer who gave popular talks on the BBC, noted in a memorandum dated 27 September 1940 that in his next broadcast he would focus on night bombing and comments for RAF night interception. He also noted that: 'I sense an increasing defeatism amongst a certain class. This must be combated' (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/battleofbritain/11438.shtml?page=txt>) (accessed April 2015).
102. Barnett, 2000, *Engage the Enemy More Closely: The Royal Navy in the Second World War*; Cumming, 2010, *The Royal Navy and the Battle of Britain*; Grinnell-Milne, 1958, *The Silent Victory: September 1940*; Hewitt, 2008, *Hitler's Armada: The German Invasion Plan, and the Defence of Great Britain by the Royal Navy, April–October 1940*; Larew, 1992, 'The Royal Navy and the Battle of Britain', pp. 243–52.
103. For example, Churchill, doubtless aware of these views, argued in Secret Session of the invasion threat that '[I]f this is all a pretence [...] it has been executed with surprising thoroughness and on a gigantic scale' (Eade, 1946, *Secret Session Speeches by the Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill OM, CH, MP*, p. 22). The threat was also reinforced by an editor advising caution to those believing it was impossible for Hitler to launch an invasion 'without the certainty of its utter destruction' (Anon., 1941, *Invasion: series of articles by expert strategists which first appeared in the 'Evening Standard' – with maps*, p. 3).
104. Hitler makes a number of generally positive points about Britain and her Empire in *Mein Kampf* (Hitler, 1992, *Mein Kampf*, p. 631); Rich, 1974, *Hitler's War Aims: The Establishment of the New Order*, pp. 394–5; Cook, 2000, 'The Japanese Perspective', in P. Addison and J. A. Crang (eds), *The Burning Blue: A New History of the Battle of Britain*, pp. 108–20; Hallion, 2000, 'The American Perspective', in Addison and Crang, 2000, *The Burning Blue*, pp. 82–107.
105. Kudryashov, 2000, 'The Soviet Perspective', in Addison and Crang, 2000, *The Burning Blue*, pp. 71–81.
106. Appendix 1 confirms the stages by which *Sea Lion* was first proposed and then finally abandoned, German aims and intentions strikingly out of sync with British anxieties.

107. North, 2012, *The Many not the Few: The Stolen History of the Battle of Britain*, pp. 328–30; ‘Hitler and the Invasion of Britain’, *Timewatch*, BBC2, 7 April 1998.
108. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, p. 103.
109. See Appendix 1 for examples of diverging *Luftwaffe* and *Sea Lion* objectives.
110. Schellenberg, 2006, *Walter Schellenberg: The Memoirs of Hitler’s Spymaster*, Chapter X.
111. Hayward, 2012, *Hitler’s Spy: The True Story of Arthur Owens, Double Agent Snow*; Siedentopf, 2014, *Unternehmen Seelöwe: Widerstand im deutschen Geheimdienst*.
112. The significant effort required to assemble and adapt Rhine barges and other shipping, and the shorter-term impact upon the Reich’s economy was not sustainable (Thursfield, 1948, ‘Fuehrer Conferences on Naval Affairs’, in *Brassey’s Naval Annual 1948*, p. 121).
113. Thursfield, 1948, ‘Fuehrer Conferences’, pp. 139–40.
114. Downing, 2011, *Spies in the Sky: The Secret Battle for Aerial Intelligence during World War Two*, pp. 62–8.
115. See Appendix 1.
116. Holman, 2014, *The Next War in the Air: Britain’s Fear of the Bomber, 1908–1941*; Lehmann-Russbuedt, 1935, *Germany’s Air Force*; Welch, 2006, *The Third Reich*, Chapter 5.
117. Ansel, 1960, *Hitler Confronts*, Chapter 8; Taylor, 1967, *The Breaking*; Wilmot, 1954, *The Struggle for Europe*, Chapter 8.
118. Cruikshank, 1975, *The German Occupation of the Channel Islands: The Official History of the Occupation Years*.
119. Anon., 2007, *German Invasion Plans for the British Isles 1940*.
120. Halder had noted on 3 July 1940 that air superiority was paramount – see Appendix 1.
121. Donaldson, 1974, *Edward VIII*, pp. 360–8.
122. North, 2012, *The Many*.
123. Cox, 2000, ‘A Comparative Analysis’; Puri, 2006, ‘The Role of Intelligence’.
124. El Alamein was an extended campaign but focused in one area; the results were clear.
125. Thursfield, 1948, ‘Fuehrer Conferences’, pp. 138–9.

2 Britain’s Fighter Boys: Projecting the Battle of Britain, 1940

1. Dowding devoted a section of his despatch to the challenge of night interception (Dowding, 10th September 1946, ‘The Battle of Britain’, *Supplement to the London Gazette*).
2. Douglas, 14th September 1948, ‘Air Operations by Fighter Command from 25th November 1940 to 31st December 1941’, *Supplement to the London Gazette*, pp. 5015–16.
3. Dowding, ‘The Battle’, 1946, Appendix B (AA Guns) and Appendix AA (balloons).
4. Foreman, 1988, *Battle of Britain: The Forgotten Months*.
5. One *Eilebrecht* cigarette card featured an image of destroyed buildings in Coventry, following the 14–15 November raid: ‘Angriff auf London und Coventry’ (serie 13, Bild 4).
6. Gould, 2010, *Plymouth: Vision of a Modern City*.
7. McLaine, 1979, *Ministry of Morale*.

8. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 15–25.
9. AM DPR monograph: NA AIR 41/9; Campion, *The Good Fight*, pp. 12–25.
10. Spaight, 1941, *The Battle of Britain*, p. 35; Walker, 1940, *Flight to Victory: An Account of the Royal Air Force in the First Year of the War*, p. 9.
11. In 1947 the figure was revealed to be some 61 aircraft. *Luftwaffe* losses on other dates were also significant: 57 on 15 August; 71 on 18 August; 57 on 27 September; and 47 on 30 September (different sources give a range of claims – Tables 2.1 and 2.2 are both creditable sources).
12. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 134–60.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 23–4.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 24–5.
15. Nicholas, 1996, *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939–1945*, p. 198.
16. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 246–9.
17. Note accompanying sale of leaflet: ‘This [second] leaflet came with a collection of RAF documents and ephemera that belonged to Sgt. R. J. Watson who was stationed at 16 OTU RAF Upper Heyford in 1941. This leaflet was the second propaganda leaflet dropped into France. It was only dropped once, on the night of the 9th–10th September 1940.’
18. James, 2000, *The Battle of Britain*, p. 395.
19. Welch, 2006, *The Third Reich*, p. 118.
20. Cox, 2000, ‘A Comparative Analysis’, pp. 34–55.
21. Briggs, 1970, *The War of Words*. Vol. 3: *A History of Broadcasting in Britain*, p. 288.
22. Ramsey, 1989, *The Battle of Britain: Then and Now*. Mk V., p. 707.
23. Moss, 2004, *Nineteen Weeks: America, Britain and the Fateful Summer of 1940*, Chapters 6, 8 and 10.
24. Gilbert, 1983, *Finest Hour: Winston S. Churchill 1939–1941*, pp. 743–4; Churchill, 1949, *Their Finest Hour*, p. 269.
25. <http://airminded.org/2010/09/12/thursday-12-september-1940/> (accessed March 2015).
26. Sinclair explained the different types of claims in the Commons; see Macmillan, 1944, *The Royal Air Force in the World War*, Vol. II, May 1940 to May 1941, pp. 176–8.
27. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 109–12.
28. Cull, 1995, *Selling War*, p. 91.
29. James, 2000, *The Battle*, Appendix; Gleed, 1942, *Arise to Conquer*, pp. 394–7.
30. Dowding, 1946, ‘The Battle’, p. 4550, para. 115; Gelb, 1986, *Scramble: A Narrative History of the Battle of Britain*, p. 133. Despite his mid-August assurances to Sinclair, later in the Battle Dowding expressed the view that over-claiming was probably at 25 per cent. James, writing the AHB narrative, was convinced by January 1945 that the amount would be at least that (James, 2000, *The Battle*, p. 396).
31. James, 2000, *The Battle*, pp. 396–7.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 396, note 2.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 397.
34. Wood and Dempster, 1969, *The Narrow Margin: The Definitive Story of the Battle of Britain*, p. 51.
35. Churchill, 1962, *The Second World War*, Vol. VI: *Triumph and Tragedy*, p. 658 (<http://www.churchill-society-london.org.uk/13May45.html>).

36. Cull, 1995, *Selling War*; Moss, 2004, *Nineteen Weeks*.
37. Edgerton, 2011, *Britain's War*, pp. 78–81; <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/lend-lease>.
38. German intelligence found it hard to gauge the results of their attacks on Britain. Reports of attacks over 'Southern England' were sometimes infuriating for BBC listeners but deemed necessary by air communiqué writers. In a BBC broadcast on 21 February 1941 Squadron Leader Graham explained that '[T]he Germans are short of information, and we are determined to keep it that way' (*The Blitz: Archive British Radio Recordings 1940–41* (Vol. 1), Disc 2, Track 7. CD41).
39. Walker, 1940, *Flight to Victory*; Williams, 1940, *The RAF in Action*.
40. Saunders, 1941, *The Battle of Britain*; the 1941 BBC radio play of Saunders' publication closely follows its narrative.
41. See Chapter 6 for the issuing of the Battle Clasp, and Churchill's tribute to the Few.
42. MacKenzie, 2007, *The Battle of Britain: 'The Few' in British Film and Television*; Prior, 2005, *Honouring the Few: The Remarkable Story of the Battle of Britain Heroes and our Tribute to them*; Simpson, 2015, *A History of the Battle of Britain Fighter Association: Commemorating the Few*.
43. Short, 1997, *Screening the Propaganda of British Air Power: from R.A.F. (1935) to The Lion has Wings (1939)*.
44. Only 'listening stations' were shown as an integral part of the system.
45. *The War Illustrated*, 30 September 1939.
46. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 118–19.
47. A similar stand-off was the focus of the Mol's 1940 *Men of the Lightship* 'short' film.
48. Soon after he also published an article (Gardner, 1940, 'These Men of the RAF', in *London Calling*, pp. 3–5).
49. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/battleofbritain/11432.shtml>.
50. The leaflet entitled 'If the Invader Comes' also reinforced this message. The BBC's 21 July 1940 *There was a Rumour* may have confirmed how to react to an invasion threat, this 'topical play' set in an English village.
51. http://www.raf.mod.uk/history/campaign_diaries.cfm.
52. *Picture Post* magazine first used the term 'Battle of Britain' in its 6 July 1940 issue (*Picture Post*, p. 9); subsequently it noted in its 26 September 1940 diary entry that: '[T]he world's attention is no longer obsessed with the Battle of Britain' (*Picture Post*, 12 October 1940, pp. 34–5); Churchill, 1941, *Into Battle: Speeches by the Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill C.H., M.P.*, p. 234; <http://www.gedmartin.net/index.php/martinalia-mainmenu-3/169-the-battle-of-britain-notes-on-the-origin-of-the-name> (last accessed 8 June 2015).
53. For instance, *Picture Post*, 13 July 1940.
54. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 176–9.
55. Post-war documentaries about the Battle had little choice other than to reuse the limited range of wartime material, hence the repetitive nature of footage which often included inaccurate aircraft.
56. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 141–5.
57. Churchill, 1941, *Into Battle*, pp. 218–19.
58. Price, 1988, *The Hardest Day: The Battle of Britain, 18 August 1940*.
59. Not all front covers were clearly related to Fighter Command, The BBC's *Spectator* magazine of 12 September 1940 featuring a pilot's head and shoulders, with only the caption 'British pilot of today'.
60. *Picture Post*, 25 August 1940.
61. *Illustrated*, 24 August 1940, pp. 3–9.

62. The Mol's 'short', *The Front Line*, conveyed much the same theme, also including some coverage of the dogfights over the town.
63. *Illustrated*, 24 August 1940, pp. 10–11.
64. *Illustrated*, pp. 18–22, probably published between 24 August and 7 September 1940. By contrast, appearing far less often during this period was coverage of the Royal Navy's preparedness to repel an attempted invasion: '[T]he Navy goes into Action', carried in *Modern World: The Pictorial Review*, 24 August 1940, p. 3.
65. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 74–83. The following shows earlier variations of the theme:

Yet neither fire, rust, nor fretting time shall amongst Englishmen either appal his honour or obliterate his glory which in so few years and brief days achieved so high adventures and made so great a conquest. (Edward Hall, *Henry V*, 1542 (Walter (ed.), 1967, *King Henry V*. The Arden Shakespeare, p. xxvii))

We are indeed in comparison to the enemies but a few [...] God and our just quarrel shall defend us, and deliver these our proud adversaries with all the multitude of them which you see [...] into our hands. (Raphael Holinshed, *Henry V*, 1577 (Nicoll and Nicoll (eds), 1969, *Holinshed's Chronicle: As Used in Shakespeare's Plays*, pp. 81–2))

The fewer men the greater share of honour. (William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 1599 (Act IV, Scene III))

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers. (William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 1599 (Act IV, Scene III))

Never was so much work done by so few men. (Lieutenant-Colonel John Moore, 1793 (Strawson, 2000, *Churchill and Hitler: In Victory and Defeat*, p. 282))

Never, perhaps, in the world's history has so small a body of men dominated so large a district and for so long a time. (Arthur Conan Doyle, 1893 (Conan Doyle, 2007, *The Refugees*, pp. 136–7))

Nowhere else in the world could so enormous a mass of water be held up with such little masonry. (Winston Churchill, 1908 (Burleigh, 2010, *Moral Combat*, p. 166))

Never in the history of mankind have so many owed so much to so few. (Winston Churchill, 16 August 1940 [and corrected after General Ismay comment] (Hart-Davis, 1998, *Halfway to Heaven: Concluding Memoirs of a Literary Life*, p. 41))

66. For instance, credit for the air battles of the previous summer is given to the fighter pilots in a one-page article, '[T]he Battle of Britain': '[O]f those unwearyed airmen who saw it through well might the Prime Minister say that 'never in the field [...]' (*Contact*, RAF Weekly News Magazine Vol. 1(4) (24 April 1941): 6). A *Flight* editorial also reinforced the link with fighter pilots: '[O]f our fighter pilots Mr. Churchill said; "The gratitude [...]" (*Flight*, 29 August 1940, p. 101). Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 74–83 discusses whether Churchill intended to include all RAF aircrew in his 'to so Few' tribute, or only the fighter pilots, a

- subject which continues to divide opinion. The author's view is that he intended this for the fighter pilots alone. This may be contrasted with the part-focus of this book in seeking to highlight Bomber and Coastal Commands' unwarranted eclipsing in both formal commemoration but also the Battle's historiography. Examples of varying viewpoints include: (1) <http://ww2today.com/20th-august-1940-never-in-the-field-of-human-conflict> (2) <http://airminded.org/2010/09/11/wednesday-11-september-1940/comment-page-1/#comment-148779> (3) <http://hnn.us/node/141522> (all last accessed in late 2014).
67. Churchill, 1941, *Into Battle*, p. 259.
 68. Churchill never indicated in 1940 whether he intended the phrase to relate to the RAF as a whole, or only its fighter pilots, but there is no doubt that even into 1941 the epigraph was wholly associated with Fighter Command (see Chapter 3).
 69. A selection of 1940 *Radio Times*' front covers confirms this trend, those during the period January–June more akin to what might be expected in peacetime. Other examples included a cottage scene (7–13 July); Napoleon (1–7 September); Charles Cochrane (8–14 September); organist Sandy Macpherson, with soldiers (15–21 September); food experts (22–28 September); three 'housewives' (29 September–5 October); Princess Elizabeth (13–19 October); and Arthur Askey (27 October–2 November).
 70. *The New York Times*, 14 September 1940, p. 1.
 71. Kris and Speier, 1944, *German Radio*, p. 395; Deighton, 1978, *SS-GB*, p. 5.
 72. *The Examiner*, Launceston, Tasmania, 16 August 1940, p. 1/c. One example of many religious services from this period was the formal opening by the Lord Bishop of Peterborough of the art deco Pearce Leatherworks building on the eastern edge of Northampton, on 1 June 1939. At a formal ceremony, prayers were said and two tablets blessed (*Order of Ceremony: The Opening of the New Works*. W. Pearce & Co., 1 June 1939).
 73. BBC National Sound Archive.
 74. Saunders, 1941, *The Battle of Britain*, pp. 21–8.
 75. An exception was the Italian air force's daylight raid on 11 November 1940, which, employing biplane fighters was almost farcical in its optimistic underestimation of the RAF's defensive capability.
 76. Foreman, 1988, *Battle of Britain*. Although the Battle had officially ended on 31 October 1940, as first confirmed in March 1941, propaganda relating to it had continued to be produced until the end of 1940.
 77. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 175–9.
 78. Dowding confirmed that its top speed was 305 mph (Dowding, 1946, 'The Battle', p. 4549, para. 105).
 79. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, p. 179.
 80. Nicolson's blood-stained tunic can be seen at Tangmere Museum. During his descent he was further injured by a shotgun-firing member of the Home Guard, but this was omitted from the press coverage.
 81. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 145–6.
 82. Spaight, 1940, *The Sky's the Limit: A Study of British Air Power*.
 83. Michie and Graebner, 1940, *Their Finest Hour: The War in the First Person*.
 84. Williams, 1940, *The RAF*.
 85. Walker, 1940, *Flight to Victory*.
 86. Brown and Serpell, 1940, *Loss of Eden: A Cautionary Tale*.
 87. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
 88. Cooper, 1964, *The Other Man*; Deighton, 1978, *SS-GB*; Sansom, 2012, *Dominion*.
 89. Evans, 2014, *Altered Pasts: Counterfactuals in History*, Chapter 3.

90. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 214–22.
91. Many *Luftwaffe* fighters and bombers were relocated to the east in earlier 1941 in preparation for the Russian invasion.
92. Practical American support was very modest during the Battle itself (Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, p. 242).
93. Kris and Speier, 1944, *German Radio*, p. 245.
94. Churchill, 1941, *Into Battle*, pp. 229–30.
95. *Ibid.*, pp. 272–3.
96. *War Commentary*, BBC broadcast on 5 September 1940, giving airtime to popular RAF broadcaster, Air Marshal Sir Philip Joubert:

[W]hen the aerial *Blitzkrieg* started it was not quite clear at what objective the Germans were aiming [...] The enemy appears to have made up his mind that a necessary prelude to a successful invasion of this country is the achievement of air superiority. (*The Listener*, 12 September 1940, <http://airminded.org/2010/09/12/thursday-12-september-1940/>)

97. Churchill, 1941, *Into Battle*, p. 286.
98. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 61–2; Dixon, 2008, *Dowding and Churchill: The Dark Side of the Battle of Britain*; Haslam, 1981, 'How Lord Dowding Came to Leave Fighter Command', pp. 175–86; Orange, 2008, *Dowding of Fighter Command: Victor of the Battle of Britain*.
99. Both Sinclair and Churchill made later efforts to acknowledge Dowding, though perhaps also with an eye on how history might judge them. Fighter pilot Kenneth Cross served with Leigh-Mallory at 12 Group Headquarters, and later wrote: 'coupled with all that I heard in the various telephone conversations, I believe this meeting ['Big Wing', 17 October 1940] was just part of a move to discredit the two principal figures fighting the battle with a view to the takeover later [...] it was altogether a disgraceful episode and highly discreditable to [Sholto] Douglas and Leigh-Mallory' (Cross, 1993, *Straight and Level*, p. 121).
100. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/battleofbritain/11439.shtm>.
101. Overy, 2000, *The Battle*, p. 83.
102. Holman, 2014, *The Next War*.

3 The Battle of the Barges: 'Blackpool Front' Propaganda, 1940–1945

1. Typical responses to the invasion threat in MoI Home Intelligence reports were:

6 September 1940: [*from Belfast*] 'The premier's forecast of a more determined onslaught on Britain is expected to materialize, but there is less talk now of the invasion of Britain through Eire.'

16 September 1940: 'Most people anticipate an invasion within a few days, and are very confident that it will be a failure. Rumours that it has already been attempted and has failed are reported from many quarters.'

[*from Newcastle*]: 'Rumours of an attempted invasion which failed are widespread.'

[from Nottingham]: 'Widespread rumours are prevalent that an invasion has already been attempted.'

[from Birmingham]: 'The relative calm of the past few nights is creating a belief that invasion is imminent and there is absolute confidence in the outcome.'

[from Edinburgh]: 'In Dundee there is general scepticism about invasion, based on confidence in the Navy, but elsewhere there are vigorous rumours of an attempted invasion of N.E. Scotland.'

17 September 1940: 'Rumours are rife that attempts at invasion have been made.'

(September reports in: MOI, HI reports. INF.1.264. Part 1 and Part 2 [reel one]. Hassocks, Harvester Press, 1979).

21–8 October 1940: 'The recent official announcement that "on September 16th many German troops were embarked only to be taken off because invasion plans were stopped by the sustained offensive of the R.A.F." has been taken by many of the public to mean that the attempted invasion rumours had a basis in fact' (MOI, HI reports. INF.1.292. [reel two]. INF 2/17. Hassocks, Harvester Press, 1979).

See also: Addison and Crang, 2011, *Listening to Britain: Home Intelligence Reports on Britain's Finest Hour, May–September 1940*; Gillies, 2006, *Waiting for Hitler*; Kershaw, 2009, *Never Surrender: Lost Voices of a Generation at War*, Chapters 4–5; Middleboe, Fry and Grace, 2011, *We Shall Never Surrender: Wartime Diaries 1939–1945*, pp. 41–113.

2. Gibson, [1946] 1975, *Enemy Coast Ahead*, Chapter VIII.
3. Bingham, 2003, *Attack!: Blenheim Operations – June–October 1940*; Donnelly, 2000, *A Quest for Wings: From Tail-Gunner to Pilot*, Chapter 5; Donnelly, 2004, *The Other Few: Bomber and Coastal Command Operations in the Battle of Britain*.
4. Saunders, 1941, *Bomber Command: The Air Ministry Account of Bomber Command's Offensive against the Axis, September 1939–July 1941*, p. 127.
5. Cull, 1995, *Selling War*.
6. Harris, 1947, *Bomber Offensive*, p. 43.
7. Some two thirds of Bomber Command's effort supported Fighter Command during the Battle, including strikes against *Luftwaffe* airfields (Bungay, 2000, *The Most Dangerous Enemy: A History of the Battle of Britain*, p. 91).
8. Hastings, 1979, *Bomber Command*, Chapter 1.
9. Bungay (2000, *The Most*, p. 107) used Churchill (1949, *Their Finest Hour*), Appendix C, p. 566, for this figure – it remained the same for 18 July 1940; and thereafter was 560 (1 August 1940); 496 (15 August 1940); 576 (5 September 1940); and 608 (26 September 1940).
10. Middlebrook and Everitt, 1996, *The Bomber Command War Diaries: An Operational Reference Book 1939–1945*, p. 80: the Fairey Battles ceased to be used operationally by Bomber Command after the raids on Calais and Boulogne on 15–16 October (*ibid.*, p. 95). Chorley confirms the first Fairey Battle losses since the French campaign were on 28–9 July (Chorley, 2013, *Royal Air Force Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War: Vol. 1, Aircraft and Crew Losses 1939–1940* (2nd edn.), p. 175).

11. Douhet, 1940, *The Command of the Air*; Webster and Frankland, 1961, *The Strategic Air Offensive against Germany 1939–1945*, Vol. 1: *Preparation*.
12. Hastings, 1979, *Bomber Command*, Chapter 3.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 99; Overy suggests that ‘German leaders could detect no pattern to the isolated and inaccurate attacks [...] and assumed that British intentions were simply to terrorize the German population’ (Overy, 2000, *The Battle*, p. 71).
14. A sign of things to come, the *Luftwaffe*’s first victim of a ground-directed radar interception was a Wellington, shot down overnight on 16–17 October 1940 (Chorley, 2013, *Royal Air*, p. 224). For assessments of RAF aircrew courage and morale when facing night-fighters, flak and other hazards, see Wells, 1995, *Courage and Air Warfare: The Allied Aircrew Experience in the Second World War*, Chapters 5 and 8; Hastings, 1979, *Bomber Command*, pp. 252–63 and Bishop, 2007, *Bomber Boys: Fighting Back 1940–1945*.
15. For airfield attack losses, see Chorley, 2013, *Royal Air*, pp. 161–99; for the Aalborg raid, see Chorley, *ibid.*, pp. 183–4, and Collier, 1957, *The Defence*, pp. 192–5. Airfield targets could be very distant from the Channel coast itself: on 5th July the RAF attacked an airfield near Soest in Germany, which is only several miles to the north of the Möhne Dam, famously breached by the Dambusters in May 1943 (Chorley, 2013, *Royal Air*, p. 162).
16. For Bomber and Coastal Command losses see Bungay, 2000, *The Most*, p. 368 (his 376 Bomber Command losses are taken from the first edition of Chorley, 1992, *Royal Air*); Coastal Command’s losses are from the AHB’s *The RAF in Maritime War*, Vol. 2 – see p. 429 in Bungay for source notes on both. An analysis of Chorley’s second edition suggests total Bomber Command losses of 366 aircraft between 10 July and 31 October, of which some 34 were through training accidents, aircraft in transit and other apparently non-operational sortie reasons. This 366 includes ten Whitley bombers destroyed on the ground at RAF Driffield during the 15 August raid from Norway on the north-east coast of England (Chorley, 2013, *Royal Air*, pp. 166–231). This was also covered in a German wartime publication as ‘Warplanes against England’ by Hans E. Seidat in Bade and Wilmont, 1941, *Das heldische Jahr. Front und Heimat berichten den Krieg*. If the total Bomber and Coastal Command losses of 366 and 148 aircraft are combined (i.e. 514) with Fighter Command’s losses, the following relative overall loss figures are arrived at:

<i>German losses</i>	<i>RAF losses</i> (using Overy)	<i>RAF losses</i> (using Ramsey)
1,733 (using Overy)	1,429 [304 less]	1,537 [196 less]
	17.5% fewer RAF losses	11.3% fewer RAF losses
1,887 (using Ramsey)	1,429 [458 less]	1,537 [350 less]
	24.2% fewer RAF losses	18.5% fewer RAF losses

Figures used: Overy records that the RAF’s total fighter losses were 915 aircraft, the *Luftwaffe*’s, 1,733 fighters and bombers (Overy, 2000, *The Battle*, p. 128); Ramsey (also used by Bungay) gives RAF losses of 1,023 fighters, the *Luftwaffe*, 1,887 bombers and fighters (Ramsey, 1989, *The Battle of Britain*, p. 707). See also note 17.

17. Whilst Chorley is cited by many as the authoritative source on Bomber Command losses, other figures give pause for thought: at odds with most historians, Middlebrook and Everitt identify 26 June to 12–13 October 1940 as the Battle period, citing 246 losses (Middlebrook and Everitt, 1996, *The Bomber*, p. 91); conversely, they suggest that ‘only’ 248 were lost from 10 July to 31 October, the

- officially recognised period (see pp. 56–100 for these data) – this is 120 less than Chorley’s 366 for the same period (see note 16). In contrast, Hastings gives a figure of 307 being lost between 1 July and 31 October, 34 more than Middlebrook and Everitt, but acknowledges that the RAF’s operational records were sometimes poor (Hastings, 1979, *Bomber Command*, p. 426).
18. Adapted from Donnelly, 2004, *The Other*, pp. 244–86; Fighter Command lost between 443 and 544 pilots and aircrew during the period 10 July to 31 October 1940, analysis varying as to exact numbers (Campion, *The Good Fight*, p. 59).
 19. Buckley, 1995, *Constant Endeavour: The RAF and Trade Defence 1919–1945*; Bungay, 2000, *The Most*, p. 107; Goulter, 1995, *A Forgotten Offensive: Royal Air Force Coastal Command’s Anti-Shipping Campaign, 1940–45*, Chapter 4; Hendrie, 2006, *The Cinderella Service: Coastal Command 1939–1945*; a magazine article and also a BBC broadcast gave details of a Coastal Command Hudson squadron which had flown over one million miles on sea reconnaissance patrols (*Flight*, 15 August 1940, pp. 129–34).
 20. For example, the RAF Museum’s Lysander was with ‘No. 225 (Army Cooperation) Squadron at Tilshead, Wiltshire [...] The squadron was at this time tasked to fly reconnaissance patrols along a section of south coast where German landings were expected [...] During its seven months with the squadron, R9125 had flown 36 operational coastal patrol and photo reconnaissance sorties, totalling 49.5 hours’ (www.rafmuseum.org.uk/documents/collections/74-A-21-Lysander-R9125.pdf).
 21. ‘An approaching invasion and a shortage of suitable anti-submarine a/c led to the fitting of Tiger Moths in 1939–40 with under-wing racks for eight 20lb bombs’ (Jackson, 1978, *De Havilland Aircraft since 1909*, p. 282).
 22. Saunders, 1942, *Coastal Command: The Air Ministry Account of the Part Played by Coastal Command in the Battle of the Seas 1939–1942*, p. 54.
 23. Saunders, 1941, *Bomber Command*, p. 65.
 24. Middlebrook, 1996, *The Bomber*, p. 60.
 25. Cox, 1998, *The Strategic Air War against Germany: Report of the British Bombing Survey Unit*, pp. 3–4.
 26. Middlebrook, 1996, *The Bomber*, p. 61.
 27. *Ibid.*
 28. Overy, 2000, *The Battle*, p. 71; Collier, 1957, *The Defence*, pp. 224–5.
 29. Cox, 1998, *The Strategic*, p. 29; this was also confirmed on 17 October 1940 in an editorial piece in *Flight*, the item detailing repeated attacks against oil targets since 1 May 1940 (*Flight*, 17 October 1940, pp. 315–16). Lord Trenchard deplored the attacks on barges, writing to Churchill on 25 September 1940 that oil should be the main focus (Furse, 2000, *Wilfrid Freeman: The Genius behind Allied Survival and Air Supremacy 1939–1945*, p. 150).
 30. Saunders, 1941, *Bomber Command*, pp. 65–9.
 31. Flying Officer R. S. Gilmour is credited with using the term in an article he wrote soon after a Blenheim attack in which he participated (Richards, 1953, *Royal Air Force 1939–1945: Volume 1, The Fight at Odds*, p. 187).
 32. Saunders, 1941, *Bomber Command*, pp. 65–9.
 33. Saunders, 1942, *Coastal Command*, p. 54.
 34. With an eye on in-house RAF propaganda, it was extravagantly claimed in 1943 that no less than 60 per cent of the bombing effort in September was against invasion preparations, with some 1,400 tons being dropped on invasion ports (Anon., 1943, *Battle of Britain*, Pamphlet 156, pp. 78–9).
 35. Cox, 1998, *The Strategic*, p. 4.

36. Chorley, 2013, *Royal Air*, pp. 166–230.
37. Baldoli and Knapp, 2012, *Forgotten Blitzes: France and Italy under Allied Air Attack, 1940–1945*, p. 3; most of the 292 deaths were attributable to the ‘Blackpool Front’ attacks, 7th September noted as a day of maximum effort by the RAF and a correspondingly high civilian death rate (*ibid.*, p. 26).
38. Collier, 1957, *The Defence*, p. 227; Fleming, 2003, *Operation Sea Lion*, p. 294.
39. Collier, 1957, *The Defence*, p. 227.
40. Bungay, 2000, *The Most*, p. 91; Overy, 1997, *Bomber Command 1939–45*, p. 54; Terraine, 1997, *The Right of the Line: The Royal Air Force in the European War 1939–1945*, p. 210.
41. Churchill, 1949, *Their Finest Hour*, pp. 253–4.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 367.
43. Gibson, 1975, *Enemy Coast*, p. 108.
44. Harris, 1947, *Bomber Offensive*, p. 43.
45. Taylor, 1967, *The Breaking*, p. 277.
46. Fleming, 2003, *Operation Sea Lion*, p. 295.
47. Richards, 1953, *Royal Air*, p. 188.
48. Dowding, 1946, *Twelve Legions of Angels*, p. 35; Dowding’s despatch on the Battle, published in September 1946, was submitted to the Secretary of State for Air on 20 August 1941. In this he made no mention of Bomber or Coastal Command’s contribution to the Battle, other than to note that some of its pilots were seconded as fighter pilots (Dowding, 1946, ‘The Battle’, p. 4550, para. 107).
49. Collier, 1957, *Leader of the Few: The Authorised Biography of Air Chief Marshal the Lord Dowding of Bentley Priory G.C.B., G.C.V.O.*, p. 11.
50. Collier, 1957, *The Defence*, p. 225.
51. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 4–6.
52. Taylor, 1967, *The Breaking*, p. 277.
53. Maier et al., 1999, *Germany*, p. 371; Cecil, 1975, *Hitler’s Decision to Invade Russia 1941*, pp. 70–81.
54. James, 2000, *The Battle*, p. 295; Maier et al., *Germany*, p. 369.
55. See examples in note 1, above.
56. *The New York Times*, 14 September 1940, p. 1/g; *Ibid.*, p. 3/b.
57. *Winnipeg Free Press*, 17 September 1940, p. 1; the *British Picture Post* magazine also noted this story in its ‘Diary of the War’ entry for 17 September (*Picture Post*, 5 October 1940, p. 32).
58. *Winnipeg Free Press*, 17 September 1940, p. 9/c; *The Daily Times* [Mamoroneck, New York], 18 October 1940, p. 1; *Red Wing Daily Republican*, 23 October 1940, p. 1/a.
59. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 140–51.
60. Anon., 1942, *We Speak from the Air: Broadcasts by the RAF*, p. 10.
61. *Ibid.*, pp. 10–12.
62. Anon., 1941, *Winged Words: Our Airmen Speak for Themselves*, pp. 104–6.
63. *War Illustrated*, 1 November 1940, p. 473.
64. *The Times* (hereafter *TT*), 5 July 1940, p. 5/f; 10 July 1940, p. 4/g; 15 July 1940, p. 3/c; *Ibid.*, p. 4/a; 19 July 1940, p. 4/c; 29 July 1940, p. 5/g.
65. *Daily Telegraph* (hereafter *DT*), 15 July 1940, p. 1; *Daily Mirror* (hereafter *DM*), 24 July 1940, p. 12/b; 1 August 1940, p. 4/d.
66. *DM*, 19 August 1940, p. 1; 22 August 1940, p. 12/d; 31 August 1940, p. 1; *DT*, 19 August 1940, p. 1.
67. *TT*, 7 September 1940, p. 3/c; 9 September 1940, p. 4/a; *Ibid.*, p. 4/d; 10 September 1940, p. 4/a; 11 September 1940, p. 4/a.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 5/f; *TT*, 12 September 1940, p. 4/a; 13 September 1940, p. 4/c; 14 September 1940, p. 4/d; *Ibid.*, p. 3/e; *Ibid.*, p. 4/a.
69. *TT*, 16 September 40, p. 4/b.
70. *TT*, p. 2/e; *Ibid.*, p. 4/d; *TT*, 17 September 1940, p. 4/a; 18 September 1940, p. 3/a; *Ibid.*, p. 4/d; 19 September 1940, p. 3/a; *Ibid.*, p. 4/d; 20 September 1940, p. 3/f; *Ibid.*, p. 4/c; 21 September 1940, p. 4/a; 23 September 1940, p. 3/d; *Ibid.*, p. 4/f; 26 September 1940, p. 2/b; 26 September 1940, p. 4/a; 27 September 1940, p. 4/a; 28 September 1940, p. 4/e.
71. *DT*, 9 September 40, p. 1; *Daily Express*, 12 September 1940, p. 1; *Daily Express*, 16 September 1940, p. 1; *Daily Herald*, 26 September 1940, p. 1.
72. *TT*: 2 October 1940, p. 4/a; 4 October 1940, p. 2/b; 8 October 1940, p. 4/f; 9 October 1940, p. 3/d; 10 October 1940, p. 4/d; 11 October 1940, p. 3/d; *Ibid.*, p. 4/g; 12 October 1940, p. 4/a; 14 October 1940, p. 2/e; 15 October 1940, p. 4/f; 17 October 1940, p. 3/d; 22 October 1940, p. 4/a; 23 October 1940, p. 4/a; 26 October 1940, p. 4/d; 21 October 1940, p. 2/b; 24 October 1940, p. 4/d.
73. *Picture Post* (hereafter *PP*): 3 August 1940, p. 28; 10 August 1940, p. 20; 31 August 1940, p. 32.
74. *PP*, 21 September 1940, pp. 34–5; 28 September 1940, p. 32; 5 October 1940, p. 32; 12 October 1940, pp. 34–5.
75. *PP*, 19 October 1940, p. 27; 26 October 1940, p. 32; 2 November 1940, p. 35.
76. In essence, many hours of waiting, the briefing, take-off, flight to target, attack, return leg, debriefing, unwinding and then sleep. One image is captioned ‘the few to whom we owe so much’ (*PP*, 14 September 1940, pp. 10–16); loosely following the *Picture Post* format, *Flight* featured a series of photographs of a bomber squadron in ‘Any evening, any day’ (*Flight*, 1 August 1940, pp. 85–8). *Illustrated* featured ‘Onslaught on Germany’, a photo-essay from briefing to final debrief (*Illustrated*, ‘special RAF number’, p. 6: probably published between 24 August 1940 and 7 September 1940).
77. *The Aeroplane*, 12 July 1940, p. 29; 19 July 1940, p. 55; 23 August 1940, p. 193.
78. *Illustrated London News* (hereafter *ILN*), 20 July 1940, pp. 76–7; 3 August 1940, pp. 142–4; *War Illustrated* (hereafter *WI*), 2 August 1940, p. 90; 13 September 1940, p. 263; *ILN*, 21 September 1940, p. 366; *Ibid.*, pp. 368–9.
79. *Flight*, 26 September 1940, pp. 245–6; *WI*, 27 September 1940, p. 320; *ILN*, 28 September 1940, p. 407; *Flight*, 3 October 1940, p. 274; *The Aeroplane*, 4 October 1940, pp. 367–9; *WI*, 1 November 1940, p. 456; in mid-October Coastal Command featured in a *Flight* article, ‘A Coastal Command station’, the intention to highlight the unsung work undertaken by Hudson, Blenheim and Fairey Battle crews in escort, reconnaissance and other duties (*Flight*, 17 October 1940, pp. 316–25).
80. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 165–75.
81. *Pathé Gazette* (hereafter *PG*), 26 August 1940: 40/69.
82. *British Movietone News* (hereafter *BMN*), 10 October 1940: 592A; *Gaumont British News* (hereafter *GBN*), 10 October 1940: 706; *Universal News* (hereafter *UN*), 10 October 1940: 1068.
83. *PG*, 10 October 1940: 40/82.
84. *GBN*, 3 October 1940: 704.
85. *British Paramount News* (hereafter *BPN*), 14 October 1940: 1004.
86. *BPN*, 30 September 1940: 1000; *UN*, 30 September 1940: 1065; *GBN*, 30 September 1940: 703; *BMN*, 30 September 1940: 591.
87. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 180–5.

88. *TT*, 21 August 1940, p. 5/d; *ILN*, 31 August 1940, pp. 276–7.
89. *ILN*, 27 July 1940, p. 123; *WI*, 2 August 1940, p. 91.
90. Saunders, 1941, *Bomber Command*, pp. 108–9.
91. Anon, 1941, *Winged Words*, pp. 77–9.
92. *TT*, 19 August 1940, p. 4/f; *Flight*, 29 August 1940, pp. 161–2; *Ibid.*, p. 176; *WI*, 30 August 1940, p. 222; *ILN*, 31 August 1940, pp. 276–7.
93. *ILN*, 7 December 1940, facing-page 723.
94. Spaight, 1940, *The Sky's the Limit*, pp. 101–2; Masters, 1941, *'So Few': The Immortal Record of the RAF*, pp. 249–51.
95. Champion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 111 and 141–2.
96. *ILN*, 16 November 1940, p. 631.
97. *TT*, 28 September 1940, p. 4/e.
98. *Aeroplane*, 4 October 1940, p. 365; *ILN*, 5 October 1940, p. 443; *WI*, 11 October 1940, p. 386; *WI*, 11 October 1940, p. 387; *WI*, 25 October 1940, p. 443; *Flight*, 3 October 1940, p. 280; *Flight*, 17 October 1940, p. 332.
99. *PG*, 14 October 1940: 40/83.
100. *BPN*, 14 October 1940: 1004.
101. Anon, 1941, *Winged Words*, pp. 155–8.
102. Saunders, 1941, *Bomber Command*, p. 69.
103. Kennington, 1942, *Drawing the RAF*, Plate 25; Anon., 1942, *War Pictures by British Artists: The RAF*, Plate 27.
104. Masters, *'So Few'*, pp. 143–51.
105. As a postscript to Hannah's death, the *Daily Mail* ran a small item in a January 1962 edition confirming that 'ex-RAF men may bid for Hannah's VC'. Hannah's widow, only 40 at the time, was reportedly offering the VC to any buyer for £1,000 in order to raise money to start a hairdressing business.
106. Champion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 280–7.
107. Saunders, 1941, *The Battle of Britain*, p. 30. ACM Sir Richard Peck, Assistant Chief of the Air Staff for General affairs (ACAS(G)) on the Air Council, which included public relations, had directed Saunders' work on the *Battle* pamphlet. It was Peck who also proposed the *Bomber Command* booklet (Minute 6987 from Peck to ACM Peirse, Head of Bomber Command, 9 April 1941, AIR 19/258).
108. James, 1996, *Informing the People: How the Government Won Hearts and Minds to Win WW2*, pp. 25–6.
109. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
110. Saunders, 1941, *Bomber Command*, p. 68.
111. *Ibid.*, pp. 69–70.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
113. *Ibid.*, pp. 108–9.
114. Saunders, 1942, *Coastal Command*, pp. 54–6.
115. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
116. Walker, 1940, *Flight to Victory*, pp. 59–63.
117. Garnett, 1941, *War in the Air: September 1939 to May 1941*, pp. 136–9.
118. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
119. Spaight, 1941, *The Battle of Britain*, pp. 87–100. Ivor Halstead's *Wings of Victory*, completed in November 1940, included brief details of the RAF's barge attacks, claiming significant destruction (Halstead, 1941, *Wings of Victory: A Tribute to the RAF*, pp. 84–6).
120. Spaight, 1941, *The Battle of Britain*, pp. 92–8.
121. *Ibid.*, pp. 97–8.

122. Macmillan, 1944, *The Royal Air Force*, pp. 142–286; pp. 142–51 cover the port attacks; Appendix 2 details Bomber Command’s activities during the Battle, including aircraft losses (pp. 305–17).
123. *Ibid.*, p. 144
124. Gibson, 1975, *Enemy Coast*, pp. 101–15.
125. Chapman, 2000, *The British at War: Cinema, State and Propaganda 1939–1945*, pp. 129–32; MacKenzie, 2001, *British War Films 1939–1945: The Cinema and the Services*, pp. 38–45; Paris, 1995, *From the Wright Brothers to Top Gun: Aviation, Nationalism and Popular Cinema*, pp. 142–4.
126. Chapman, 2000, *The British*, p. 130.
127. Peake, 1993, *Pure Chance*, p. 56.
128. Watt, 1974, *Don’t Look at the Camera*, p. 152.
129. Fox, 2007, *Film Propaganda*, pp. 39–59 and 94–109.
130. Aldgate and Richards, 1986, *Britain Can Take It: The British Cinema in the Second World War*, pp. 279–98; Chapman, 2000, *The British*, pp. 198–200; MacKenzie, 2001, *British War Films*, p. 55; Paris, *From the Wright Brothers*, p. 149.
131. MacKenzie, 2001, *British War Films*, p. 55.
132. Difficult to capture through film or photography, war art offered one approach for representing the attacks. Two War Artists’ Advisory Committee war artists sought to convey the drama of attacks on barges: Eric Ravilious’ *Bombing the Channel Ports*, c.1941, shows a stretch of coastline where, to the top right-hand quadrant is the Channel, and off to the right, the French coastline with searchlights denoting attacking RAF bombers. Paul Nash’s 1941 *Objective Blenheim: Bombing barges at Le Havre*, 1941, includes two Blenheims and unlike much of Nash’s war art work this is a quite convincing, literal impression of an air attack.
133. Dietmar Süß’ monograph on this subject provides valuable insights into the experience of bombing on both sides: Süß, 2014, *Death from the Skies*.
134. Ironically, given its association with Fighter Command, a 1940 poster with the banner ‘Never was so much owed by so many to so few’, used a photograph of a Whitley bomber aircrew – the aircrew (Plate 4) were, from left to right, Sgt. ‘Dinty’ Moore, Sgt. Peter Elliot, Sgt. Rawles, Sgt. Harold Stone (DFM) and Sgt. James Craig (Imperial War Museum, PST 8774). *Illustrated* magazine also carried individual images of each bomber aircrew member – probably published between 24 August 1940 and 7 September 1940.
135. Churchill, 1941, *Into Battle*, p. 259. Churchill also noted the role of RAF bombers in attacking barge concentrations in his ‘[E]very man to his post’ broadcast on 11 September 1940, these in addition to the Royal Navy undertaking an important role in inhibiting the invasion. He then predicted that the invasion must be attempted within the next week or so if it was to be tried at all (*ibid.*, pp. 272–3). In a Secret Session statement to the Commons on 17 September 1940 Churchill additionally warned that invasion was very likely. Moreover, despite the evidence provided by aerial photographs he affirmed that ‘serious injury’ had been inflicted on the assembled barges and shipping by RAF bombers. He also noted that some barges were laden with explosives, and had exploded (Eade, 1946, *Secret Session Speeches*, pp. 22–3). In his later ‘War situation’ speech on 5 November 1940, Churchill affirmed that the invasion threat by barges ‘has also been diminished by the victories of the Royal Air Force’ (Churchill, *Into Battle*, p. 304).
136. The omission of bomber attacks was partly remedied in the 1943 *Battle of Britain* pamphlet issued to new RAF recruits, wherein ‘Bombing attacks on invasion

targets' gave broad details of attacks against barges, shipping and ports (Anon., 1943, *Battle of Britain*, pp. 78–9), but the bulk of this later publication focused emphatically on Fighter Command's victory.

4 'The Greatest Day': Shaping the Battle of Britain, 1941

1. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 85–9.
2. Operationally this was reflected by Fighter Command's decision to launch 'circus' operations against targets in France, large numbers of fighters escorting a few bombers, the main aim to draw the *Luftwaffe* into combat (see note 6, below). The first such operation was staged on 10 January 1941. It would, though, come at a high cost to the RAF whose overall losses were not justified by the results gained. Kenneth Cross was highly critical of the offensive strikes into France, noting that '[T]he futility of these operations was not lost on many of the pilots taking part. But to the wing leaders it was an opportunity to increase their personal 'score'.' (Cross, 1993, *Straight and Level*, p. 123).
3. *Life*, 24 March 1941, p. 83.
4. *Ibid.* The photographs show a Hurricane during the Battle, rather than in 1941 livery, confirming that these were stock images. Some of this material – e.g. Lewis – was published in December 1940 (Williams, 1940, *The RAF*, Plates 22 and 26).
5. Saunders, 1941, *The Battle of Britain*. The Battle perhaps provided an opportunity to obviate the stain of Chamberlain's appeasement policy (Churchill, 1949, *Step by Step 1936–1939*; Faber, 2009, *Munich: The 1938 Appeasement Crisis*; Stewart, 2000, *Burying Caesar: Churchill, Chamberlain and the Battle for the Tory Party*).
6. Douglas, 1948, 'Air Operations by Fighter Command'.
7. He was belatedly made Leader of the Conservative Party in November 1940.
8. Lawlor, 1994, *Churchill and the Politics of War, 1940–1941*; Churchill mentioned the Battle no less than 116 times in the Commons during 1941 (North, 2012, *The Many*, p. 352).
9. Gilbert, 1981, *Winston Churchill: The Wilderness Years*.
10. Peake, 1993, *Pure Chance*, p. 53.
11. James, 1996, *Informing*, Chapter 2; Saunders was for a time the sole writer in the AM's DPR's PR11 section (Peake, 1993, *Pure Chance*, p. 53).
12. James, 1996, *Informing*, p. 28.
13. The organisation and management structure of both the AM and its DPR is confirmed in Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 12–19 (Grey, 1940, *A History of the Air Ministry*).
14. It has been previously suggested that the AM's AHB commissioned the pamphlet (Reynolds, 2004, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War*, pp. 186–7). The AHB, originally formed in 1918 to write the official history of the First World War, was disestablished in 1936. Thereafter, 'at some point it was decided that the Branch should be reconstituted under the direction of the formidable AM Librarian J. C. Nerney' (James, 2000, *The Battle*, p. xi), and it was resurrected in 1941 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Air_Historical_Branch).
15. For instance, see the range of his activities during 1943 in respect of RAF propaganda (AIR 20/2950). Saunders makes no reference to Peck or any other senior AM or DPR officer in his 1944 chapter on the pamphlet (Saunders, 1944, *Pioneers! O Pioneers!*, pp. 5–20).
16. 'Air Marshal Sir Richard Peck', obituary, *Flight*, 19 September 1952, p. 377.

17. Reynolds, 2004, *In Command*, p. 186. An Oxford fellow, Goodwin later wrote the 1943 AM training pamphlet.
18. Interestingly, Saunders makes no mention of Goodwin in his own account of undertaking primary research wherein, in addition to suggesting that he read through a wide range of situation and other intelligence reports, of pilots' combat reports he noted: 'I read well over a thousand of them' (Saunders, 1944, *Pioneers!*, p. 9).
19. Saunders, 1944, *Pioneers!*, p. 7; see also James, 1996, *Informing*, pp. 24–5.
20. Deighton, 1977, *Fighter: The True Story of the Battle of Britain*, pp. 229–30.
21. Churchill's epigraph appears in both, the illustrated version making more of it in conjunction with an image of fighter pilots.
22. Saunders, 1941, *The Battle of Britain* [illustrated version], pp. 33–4.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
25. Saunders, 1941, *The Battle of Britain*; Champion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 280–6.
26. APS to SoS, 5 April 1941, AIR 19/258.
27. Minute 6987 from Peck to ACM Peirse, Head of Bomber Command, 9 April 1941, AIR 19/258.
28. Holman, 2008, *Print for Victory: Book Publishing in England 1939–1945*, p. 104.
29. Peake, 1993, *Pure Chance*, p. 53.
30. James, 1996, *Informing*, p. 24.
31. Pidduck, 2000, *Popular Newspapers during World War II: Parts 1 to 5: 1939–1945*, p. 11.
32. *Flight*, 1 May 1941 (four-page insert).
33. Garnett and Gardner, 1941, *The Battle of Britain*. Puffin Book No. 21.
34. *Daily Herald*, 28 March 1941, p. 3.
35. Prime Minister's personal minute, M.395/1, 3 April 1941, AIR 19/258.
36. APS to SoS, 5 April 1941, AIR 19/258. Peck's minute, in addition to suggesting that no reply be made, indicates some thought being put into the original decision regarding the approach taken for the pamphlet, but no details are provided as to who was privy to these.
37. SoS to Prime Minister, 6 April 1941, AIR 19/258.
38. Letter to R. H. Melville from W. S. Churchill, 8 April 1941, AIR 19/258.
39. ACAS(G) 6898 to SoS, 6 April 1941, AIR 19/258.
40. Minute 6987 from Peck to ACM Peirse, Head of Bomber Command, 9 April 1941, AIR 19/258. Hough and Richards argued that a DPR blanket edict had led to Dowding's omission, the rationale being that anonymity was much to be preferred insofar as 'aces' were concerned, lest a cult of personality develop (Hough and Richards, 1990, *The Battle of Britain*, p. 324). In support of this the AM's AHB's narrative of the DPR notes that the 'withholding of the names of distinguished aircrew personnel' in line with official AM policy was a major source of frustration with the press (AM, DPR, AIR 41/9, p. 6). Dixon demolishes Hough and Richards' claim though, arguing – as indeed was the case – that during the Battle and certainly by early 1941, many pilots had received much interest from the press, many others identified in the *London Gazette* (Dixon, 2008, *Dowding and Churchill*, pp. 176–8). It is inconceivable that had Peck decided to overrule the DPR edict anyone would be in a position to oppose this other than Sinclair, Portal or Freeman.
41. Draft letter with ACAS(G) 6898 to SoS, 6 April 1941, AIR 19/258. A cynical reading might lead one to reflect that Dowding's efforts had principally benefited the Air Council.

42. *Ibid.*, draft.
43. *Ibid.*, draft.
44. Dowding was, in fact, praiseworthy both publicly and privately (Collier, 1957, *Leader of the Few*, p. 233); he also confirmed this in his despatch which although submitted to the AM in August 1941, was not finally published until September 1946 (Dowding, 1946, 'The Battle', p. 4549).
45. Gilbert notes that Churchill wrote to Saunders on 5 April 1941 to express his regret that Dowding is not mentioned in his otherwise 'admirable' account (Gilbert, 1983, *Finest Hour*, p. 1060).
46. It is noteworthy that biographies and autobiographies written by or about the Air Council's senior officers and officials make no reference to the pamphlet (Sholto Douglas, Dean, Joubert, Sinclair, Portal, Balfour). Whilst it was clearly of some moment to Dowding's supporters within the context of Britain's situation in Spring 1941, it could not be said to be a pressing issue. It had certainly been forgotten during the 1950s and 1960s when memoirs were written.
47. PS for SoS, to ACAS(G), M898, 10 April 1941, AIR 19/258.
48. Cooper to Sinclair, letter, GP 39/246, 10 April 1941, AIR 19/258.
49. By then Churchill would have realised that Sholto Douglas had had little more success than Dowding in tackling the pressing issues of night-bombing during the ongoing Blitz, airborne interception radar still being refined as a decisive solution (Douglas, 'Air Operations by Fighter Command', pp. 5015–16).
50. Churchill, Personal Minute, M.432/1, 12 April 1941, Churchill Papers 20/36; Gilbert, 1983, *Finest Hour*, p. 1061.
51. Minute 6987 from Peck to ACM Peirse, Head of Bomber Command, 9 April 1941, AIR 19/258.
52. July 1941 is suggested in one source ('The Publishing History of the MoI', <http://www.moidigital.ac.uk/blog/publishing-history-ministry-information/>, 6 March 2015); and an April publication date for the illustrated version (MacKenzie, 2007, *The Battle of Britain*, p. 25). Saunders suggested in 1944 that it took at least three months to write and publish a 50,000-word illustrated pamphlet including some 100 images (Saunders, 1944, *Pioneers!*, p. 19). In either event work on the pamphlet – both text and illustrated – might have begun in early 1941 rather than late 1940, which is only significant in that it confirms how soon the Battle was viewed as a major propaganda opportunity despite the continuing Blitz.
53. Saunders did argue in 1942 that all writers should be prepared to put their skills at the service of their country in wartime for an agreed wage, and could not expect to personally benefit from personal recognition for writing about heroism and wartime deeds in which they had played no part (Holman, 2008, *Print for Victory*, p. 127). Saunders was paid £50 for the pamphlet (Hough and Richards, *The Battle of Britain*, p. 324). Saunders made no later wartime reference to this other than to note that authors 'are paid a fixed salary or an inclusive fee' (Saunders, 1944, *Pioneers!*, p. 19).
54. *Contact*, RAF Weekly News Magazine Vol. 1(4), 24 April 1941, p. 6.
55. Saunders, 1941, *The Battle of Britain*, p. 5; James, 2012, *Hitler's Forgotten Secret Weapon: The Amazing Story of the Heinkel He113 'Super Fighter' in the Battle of Britain*.
56. During wartime some thirty titles were published about air, land or sea campaigns, other MoI titles relating to activities supporting the war. During 1941 eleven titles were published including the *Battle of Britain*, the others not about a specific British victory (James, 1996, *Informing*, pp. 137–9).
57. North, 2012, *The Many*.

58. Obituary, *Flight* magazine, 19 September 1952, p. 377.
59. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/battleofbritain/11425.shtml>; untouched contour trail image also appears in Halstead, 1941, *Wings of Victory*, facing page 73.
60. *Radio Times*, 2 May 1941.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
62. Radar was first revealed to the British public on 17 June 1941. An early, personal account of the WAAF's role in the radar system is provided by Daphne Carne (Carne, 1960, *The Eyes of the Few*).
63. *The Lion Has Wings* feature film had revealed a surprising amount of detail in October 1939, including the existence of operations rooms with plotting tables, which the Germans were also able to view.
64. Despite the evidence they failed to fully understand the significance of fighter defences by Sectors, and assets controlled within these. The RAF's Y-Service similarly listened in to *Luftwaffe* communications, poor radio discipline providing valuable tactical intelligence to Fighter Command. A good account of this clandestine world is given in Aileen Clayton's account of the Y-Service (Clayton, 1980, *The Enemy is Listening*, Chapters 2–3).
65. Galland, 1955, *The First*, p. 86.
66. The BBC also featured talks by fighter pilots including King-Hall on 10 April 1941, and most famously, Richard Hillary who wrote *The Last Enemy* (14 July 1941 and 2 August 1941). These were censored talks about the experiences of air combat, either in shooting down the enemy, or being shot down (Anon., 1941, *Winged Words*).
67. The piece was repeated three more times during the war, and then firmly consigned to the archives but the radio play had by then more than achieved its purpose.
68. Anon, 1941, *Winged Words*.
69. Dickson, 1950, *Richard Hillary*; Ross, 2000, *Richard Hillary: The Definitive Biography of a Battle of Britain Fighter Pilot and Author of 'The Last Enemy'*.
70. Baker, 2006, 'Churchill's Island', in J. White (ed.), *The Cinema of Canada*, pp. 23–30 (also at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQ38NLAMUi0&playnext=1&list=PLB5AF2E1B4365DEDF>).
71. A third film, *International Squadron* (USA, August 1941), although also including an international array of fighter pilots, portrayed the war from June 1941 onwards. *Eagle Squadron* (USA, July 1942) was similarly focused on US fighter pilots, the action this time beginning from March 1941. Despite not being included here, Kenneth Short has suggested that the trio of American films, and *Dangerous Moonlight*, all contributed to the mythologising of the Few as the war progressed (Short, 1997, *Screening the Propaganda*, p. 114). To these should be added *The First of the Few* (August 1942).
72. *Suicide Squadron* in America.
73. Aldgate, 2000, 'The Battle of Britain on Film', in Addison and Crang, 2011, *The Burning Blue*, p. 211; Chapman, 2000, *The British*, pp. 197–8; Murphy, 2000, *British Cinema and the Second World War*, pp. 172–3 and 217.
74. A mix of RAF genuine aircraft footage, crude models and inaccurate aircraft footage was used to convey the air battle, including massed German fighters and bombers, and some He111 material. Actuality footage of blazing aircraft, occasional views of Hurricanes, modest gun-camera film, occasional special effects, and non-combat material of Spitfires in formation, or smaller groups, contrived to convey the drama.
75. Despite a lack of *Luftwaffe* aircraft shown, aerial combat scene authenticity made it 'worth seeing' (Aldgate, 2000, 'The Battle', p. 211).

76. The first scramble sequence briefly features 222 Squadron Mk. II Spitfires ('ZD' coded), and close-ups of the single, factory-fresh uncoded Mk. II Spitfire made available. In 1941, 222 Squadron was based at Coltishall, Matlask, Manston, Southend and North Weald (Jefford, 2001, *RAF Squadrons* (2nd edn.), p. 75). The second scramble uses mixed squadron footage: pre-war material with two-bladed propeller Spitfires (also featured in *The Fighter Pilot* MOI short); 222 Squadron Spitfires both on the ground and airborne, and again, views of the single uncoded Spitfire.
77. Glancy, 1999, *When Hollywood Loved Britain: The Hollywood 'British' Film 1939–1945*, pp. 117 and 120; MacKenzie, 2001, *British War*, pp. 48–9.
78. Glancy, 1999, *When Hollywood*, p. 117.
79. Holmes, 2001, *American Eagles: American Volunteers in the RAF 1937–1943*.
80. *International Squadron* (August 1941) was set in June 1941; *Eagle Squadron* (July 1942) set in March 1941.
81. MacKenzie, 2001, *British War Films*, pp. 48–9.
82. Glancy, 1999, *When Hollywood*, p. 120.
83. America threatened to withdraw citizenship from those fighting for other countries (Kershaw, 2006, *The Few: The American 'Knights of the Air' Who Risked Everything to Fight in the Battle of Britain*).
84. The RAF did not use co-pilots, and Lockheed Hudson light bombers were flown by Coastal Command, but not on bombing operations over Germany (Middlebrook and Everitt, 1996, *The Bomber*, Chapters 1–2).
85. 'LO' fuselage codes throughout: 602 Squadron had served with distinction during the Battle, but without a single American in its ranks. The unit was pulled out of the front line for rest in December 1940 and was thus a valuable squadron to use for the filming (Holmes, 2001, *American Eagles*, pp. 114–15).
86. For details of filming, see Holmes, 2001, *American Eagles*, p. 114. In March 1941, RAF sequences were filmed at Prestwick on the west coast of Scotland, taking a month to complete.
87. This is good quality footage in the main, only the close-ups of pilots in mocked-up, rather large Spitfire cockpits marring its authenticity.
88. 'Baker' is seen in a mock-up Spitfire aircraft (with a very large cockpit, and improbable elliptical wings), filmed against a background featuring actual Spitfires in flight, before peeling off and engaging in dogfighting. Machine-guns firing through wing ports are studio-produced, and not the material featured elsewhere using authentic fighter wings and machine-guns.
89. In actual fact, and despite the sense gained through such films of a perhaps significant contribution, American fighter pilots flying with the RAF during the Battle itself represented a very few, of the Few. For instance, the Battle of Britain Historical Society suggests only seven American pilots (<http://www.battleofbritain1940.net/0004.html>); the Battle of Britain Monument lists nine pilots (<http://www.bbm.org.uk/pilots-us.htm>) (both last accessed 24 April 2015).
90. MacKenzie, 2001, *British War Films*, p. 49.
91. Seib, 2006, *Broadcasts from the Blitz: How Edward R. Murrow Helped Lead America into War*.
92. The speech, a late addition by Hitchcock, followed his visit to London in June 1940. This film and the scene anticipating the London Blitz was released in America on 27 August, just eleven days before the *Luftwaffe's* first attack against London.
93. Halstead, 1941, *Wings of Victory*.
94. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 221.

96. *Ibid.*, p. 222.
97. Spaight, 1941, *The Battle of Britain*.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
99. Spaight notes Ronald Adams' suggestion in *Flight to Victory* (Spaight, 1941, *The Battle of Britain*, p. 20).
100. Macmillan, 1944, *The Royal Air Force* – see 'The Air Battle of Britain', pp. 124–286.
101. See Richards, 1953, *Royal Air*; Anon., 1943, *Battle of Britain*; Dowding, 1946, 'The Battle', p. 4544, para. 13. Wright gives details of very limited internal circulation of the despatch within the Air Staff at the AM, and to external recipients including the American president. At Dowding's behest Churchill became involved in September 1942 (Wright, 1969, *Dowding and the Battle of Britain*, pp. 272–3). The matter had still not been resolved by May 1945 when senior officers were asked to comment on its publication. This included a note to Churchill suggesting that it would be advantageous to publish as '[W]e need much literature of this type just now', presumably a reference to the forthcoming elections and the wish to be seen to have made the right decisions in May 1940 when Churchill's government refused to send more fighters to France, thus preserving Britain's air defences (Letter to Churchill dated 12 May 1945 from 'B', AIR 20/4200).
102. Spaight, 1941, *The Battle of Britain*, p. 42.
103. *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.
104. Spaight may have been aware of the tensions occasioned by disagreements in the Air Council. Dixon suggests a wide range of involvement in efforts to remove Dowding (Dixon, 2008, *Dowding and Churchill*, Part II).
105. Given Spaight's standing, this is not to say that he did not have sight of drafts as they were developed by Saunders.
106. Spaight, 1941, *The Battle of Britain*, p. 11. In his *The Sky's the Limit*, revised and reprinted also in May 1941, he again makes no mention of the pamphlet. He does, though, mention Dowding twice in relation to Fighter Command, having neglected to do so in *The Battle of Britain* (Spaight, 1941, *The Sky's the Limit*).
107. He notes that the existence of radar was revealed when his book was in his publisher's hands, the former on 17 June 1941 (Garnett, 1941, *War in the Air*, p. 123); Garnett worked for the AM as an intelligence officer (Bolitho, 1955, *Penguin in the Eyrie: An RAF Diary, 1939–1945*, pp. 16–17).
108. Garnett, 1941, *War in the Air*, p. 122.
109. Davy, 1941, *Air Power and Civilisation*, p. 133; the Battle is addressed on pp. 132–41.
110. Ziff, 1942, *The Coming Battle of Germany*, p. 39; Hauptmann Hermann cites Ziff in his own work on the German Air Force, his coverage of the Battle suggesting that he drew upon both Ziff and also the pamphlet itself (Hermann, 1943, *The Rise and Fall of the Luftwaffe*, pp. 122–9); Seversky, 1942, *Victory through Air Power*, p. 41.
111. Austin, 1941, *Fighter Command*.
112. Dowding, 1946, 'The Battle', p. 4549, para. 104.
113. Austin's draft manuscript had been read by Peck, a copy of which was also provided to Sinclair. APS to SoS minute, 5 April 1941, AIR 19/258.
114. James, 1996, *Informing*, pp. 116–17.
115. Wood and Dempster, 1969, *The Narrow Margin*.
116. Gleave, 1941, *I Had a Row with a German* in 'RAF Casualty'.
117. Richey, 1941, *Fighter Pilot: A Personal Record of the Campaign in France 1939–1940*.
118. 'Blake' [pseudonym for R. Adams], 1941, *Readiness at Dawn*.
119. 'Blake', 1942, *We Rendezvous at Ten*.
120. Masters, 1941, 'So Few'.

121. In May 1945 the BBC featured a radio piece narrated by the author, this giving further details of the RAF's role during the Battle. This was also used in part for a 1965 LP recording *For Johnny*.
122. Johns, 1948, *Spitfire Parade: Stories of Biggles in Wartime*.
123. Johns, [1941] 2013, *Worrals of the WAAF*.
124. Dudley Edwards, 2000, 'The Battle of Britain and Children's Literature', in Addison and Crang, 2011, *The Burning Blue*, pp. 163–90; 2007, *British Children's Fiction in the Second World War*.
125. Sprigg, (n.d.) (1941?) *War Story of the Fighter Command*, Chapter 4.
126. Hall, 1996, *Paul Nash Aerial Creatures*, IWM exhibition catalogue.
127. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 220–1.
128. This extended to photographers including Cecil Beaton being given access to RAF aircrew on its bases. Beaton, (n.d.) (1942?), *Winged Squadrons*; Vickers, 1985, *Cecil Beaton: The Authorised Biography*, pp. 249–51.

5 'Immortal Few': Heroising the Fighter Boys, 1942–1945

1. Helmore, 1942, *Air Commentary*; Anon., 1942, *We Speak from the Air*; Anon., 1943, *Over to You*. James confirms the popularity of these talks, over 280 broadcast in 1941 alone. RAF personnel were invited to deliver talks, writing the material themselves which was then reduced to the necessary length for the broadcast (James, 1996, *Informing*, p. 32).
2. 14 September 1942 and 22 May 1943, but it did not broadcast the play again.
3. Wright, 1942, *Pilot's Wife's Tale: The Diary of a Camp Follower*.
4. Hillary, 1943, *The Last Enemy*; Mayhew, 2004, *The Reconstruction of Warriors: Archibold McIndoe, the Royal Air Force and the Guinea Pig Club*.
5. *Fighter Pilot* was first broadcast on 5 November 1940 and focused upon the work of RAF Flying Training Command.
6. Pathé ID: 3470: 07.
7. Pathé ID: 1326: 35.
8. Pathé ID: 1077: 23.
9. Pathé ID: 1091: 12.
10. Pathé ID: 1125: 03.
11. Cull, 1995, *Selling War*, p. 182; Glancy, 1999, *When Hollywood*, p. 146.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. Cull, 1995, *Selling War*, p. 182.
15. It appears that he had not joined the University Air Squadron as an auxiliary, the route for many fighter pilots during the Battle.
16. No action is depicted over Dunkirk, confirming the challenges of portraying aerial combat.
17. A studio set.
18. Not fully seen, it is probably a convincing mock-up.
19. This could refer to 7 or 14 September 1940.
20. As originally filmed for *A Yank in the RAF*, but this lasts for a few seconds and is the only such material in the entire film. No combat sequences are shown.
21. Actually a model.
22. Poor studio models and special effects.
23. A row of bullet holes across the car's soft-top roof.

24. Glancy notes that the original plot suggested that 'bombers' be shown on their way to attack Germany (Glancy, 1999, *When Hollywood*, p. 153).
25. Glancy, 1999, *When Hollywood*, p. 154.
26. Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 260–4; Aldgate, 2000, 'The Battle', pp. 211–12; Aldgate and Richards, 1986, *Britain Can Take It*, pp. 64–6; Chapman, 2000, *The British*, p. 197; MacKenzie, 2001, *British War Films*, pp. 36–8; MacKenzie, 2007, *The Battle of Britain on Screen*, pp. 37–59; Paris, 1995, *From the Wright Brothers*, pp. 129–30.
27. Peter Howard-Williams – a 19 Squadron pilot throughout the Battle – undertook some briefly-used aerial flying work (at that time with 118 Squadron, coded 'NK'), his and 'most of the aerial shots being filmed at (RAF) Ibsley in late 1941' (IWM Duxford, *Battle of Britain* exhibition).
28. 501 Squadron coded 'SD' aircraft are seen returning singly, filmed at RAF Ibsley in 1941.
29. This first scramble footage is derived from the 1941 *A Yank in the RAF* film ('LO' coded Spitfires), and later footage recorded with 501 Squadron at Ibsley ('SD'); see also MacKenzie for a brief comment on 501's involvement (MacKenzie, 2001, *British War Films*, p. 39).
30. 1940 newsreel footage was much more representative of those doing the fighting, a multi-national force of officers and men at dispersals shown in equal proportion.
31. The second scramble is entirely derived from 501 Squadron Spitfires ('SD'), with aerial footage of their Spitfires and brief glimpses of a 118 Squadron Spitfire coded 'NK', flown by Howard-Williams.
32. He111 flown by the RAF's 1426 Enemy Aircraft Flight (MacKenzie, 2001, *British War Films*, p. 37).
33. RAF Hurricane footage from the Battle of France.
34. Composer William Walton wrote film scores for a number of wartime releases, of which his *Prelude and Fugue* (The Spitfire) pieces, featured in the *First of the Few* film (1942), gained him considerable acclaim (Tierney, 1984, *William Walton*, pp. 97–8, 160 and 213–14).
35. For Spitfire buffs the film is also notable for the evocative 'whistle' that characterised early Merlin engines.
36. MacKenzie notes that there was little apparent interest from the public (MOI surveys), and that RAF support was slow to emerge. Following this, a second film about Mitchell and the Spitfire was announced in the trade press in December 1940, but it took considerable time for the filming and production to be completed (MacKenzie, 2001, *British War Films*, p. 36).
37. Doherty, 1993, *Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II*, p. 75; Aldgate, 2000, 'The Battle', pp. 210–11.
38. Including *Dover Front*, *Fighter Pilot*, *Story of an Air Communiqué*, *Ferry Pilot* and other material; March of Time's *Britain's RAF* was also drawn upon.
39. Calder, 1997, *The Myth of the Blitz*, pp. 247–8; *ibid.*, p. 247. Long dormant, the film was given a special screening on Battle of Britain Sunday 1959, in Plymouth's 'The Drake'. The organisers note that US Central Office of Information had released the film for 'this performance only' (*Battle of Britain Week 1959: RAFA Plymouth Branch Brochure*, p. 19).
40. Calder, 1997, *The Myth*, p. 247. Saunders, from whose pamphlet the film took its structure, noted his pleasure at the film being released in Britain and 'now enjoying a great and deserved success' (Saunders, 1944, *Pioneers!*, p. 62).
41. Not all agree with its tone and quality: '*The Battle of Britain* is blatantly agitprop, and the recreations, from British films, make this the weakest film of the series', www.hackwriters.com/whywefight.htm.

42. Saunders, 1941, *The Battle of Britain*.
43. Murphy, 2000, *British Cinema*, pp. 15, 48, 64 and 217 ff.
44. *Confirm or Deny* has a broadly similar context in a plot set during September 1940, news reporting also the focus.
45. As a backdrop to the Battle, actual newspaper headlines confirm 'bombs and bullets in London suburbs' and large air battles over Kent.
46. Murphy, 2000, *British Cinema*, pp. 90–1.
47. Bates, 1944, *There's Freedom in the Air*, pp. 18–19.
48. Chapman, 2000, *The British*, pp. 241–2.
49. This says more about how Britain viewed Russia in 1944 than at an earlier point in the war. Given that Hitler invaded Russia in June 1941, and Bancroft had been in hospital for five months, the film's chronology is rather adrift: assuming that he was injured in a mid-September dogfight this suggests March or April 1941.
50. Frequently-used dramatic footage of a Spitfire over rolling hills and fields, and also used in *First of the Few*, 1942.
51. Spitfire Fund: the names of towns providing them were usually painted under the cockpit – 'Shepley Spitfire' – this can be partly seen in *The First of the Few* and the crashed Spitfire in the first Battle scene where 'Borough of ...' is just visible.
52. Based on the 1942 novel of the same name by W. Somerset Maugham.
53. Churchill, 1941, *Into Battle*, pp. 247–51.
54. This is also reflected in television screenings: *First of the Few* appears fairly often, but *Dangerous Moonlight* and *A Yank in the RAF* are much rarer; both 1950s films have been screened many times, the British representation of the Battle clearly much to be preferred.
55. Professor Albert Goodwin was, in wartime, a Staff Officer in the AM's War Room, thence a member of the AHB. As a researcher he undertook primary investigations for the original 1941 pamphlet and later assisted Churchill with his chapters on the Battle for *Their Finest Hour* (CHUR 4/197A-B). Goodwin's obituarist noted of him (27 September 1995): 'in his wartime work for AM intelligence Goodwin was led to an interpretation of the Battle of Britain [...] which emphasised that it was not only the justly famous Few but a whole battery of people in the Services and elsewhere who produced victory' (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/obituary-professor-albert-goodwin-1603120.html>) (last accessed April 2015). Interestingly, Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham is also associated with the pamphlet, his papers held by King's College noting a draft article on the Battle of Britain from September 1943 (BROOKEPOPHAM: 9/12), and a copy of the pamphlet 'written by Brooke-Popham (see 9/12)' (BROOKEPOPHAM: 10/16) (<http://www.kingscollections.org/catalogues/lhcm/collection/b/br65-001/br65-01?searchterms=air+ministry>). Having been placed on the retired list in 1942 Brooke-Popham became Inspector General of the Air Training Corps until 1945, and it is not therefore clear how he may have been involved in its writing. Air Marshal Sir Peter R. M. Drummond was the Air Member for Training (April 1943–May 1945) under whose auspices the pamphlet was published (Saunders, 1954, *The Royal Air Force 1939–1945. Vol. III: The Fight is Won*, Appendix I).
56. Anon., 1943, *Battle of Britain*, DAMT, AM, inner front cover.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
59. Given that other pages of photographs include images on both sides it is notable that this double-page spread does not and may have been added at a later stage. Leigh-Mallory's image is not included. There were better images of Dowding in uniform, including with King George VI at Bentley Priory at the height of the Battle.

60. George VI sought MRAF recognition for Dowding (Orange, 2008, *Dowding of Fighter Command*, pp. 246–7).
61. Churchill, 1949, *Their Finest Hour*, pp. 263–4.
62. *Royal Air Force Journal*, September 1943, No. 11.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
64. Bolitho, 1955, *Penguin in the Eyrie*, pp. 114 and 119.
65. Bolitho, 1943, 'Towards the Battle of Britain', in *Royal Air Force Journal*, No. 11 (September), p. 8.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
67. Anon., 1942, *Front Line 1940–1941: The Official Story of the Civil Defence of Britain*; Anon., 1943, *Roof Over Britain: The Official Story of the A.A. Defences, 1939–1942*.
68. Anon., 1942, *Front Line*, pp. 158–9.
69. Anon., 1943, *Roof Over Britain*, pp. 44–8.
70. *Ibid.*, pp. 48–54.
71. Bates, 1944, *There's Freedom*.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
76. Douhet, 1940, *The Command of the Air*; Bond, 1977, *Liddell Hart: A Study of his Military Thought*; Hurley, 1975, *Billy Mitchell: Crusader for Air Power*.
77. Ziff, 1942, *The Coming Battle*, pp. 38–48.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
79. Seversky, 1942, *Victory through Air Power*, pp. 31–50.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
83. Hermann, 1943, *The Rise and Fall*, pp. 124–8; actually Hermann Steiner, he had had experience with the Junkers aircraft firm but was inclined to base his views on wartime newspaper reports. Homze, 1984, *German Military Aviation: A Guide to the Literature*, pp. 75 and 114.
84. Hermann, 1943, *The Rise and Fall*, p. 126.
85. Grey, 1944, *The Luftwaffe*, p. 186.
86. *Ibid.*, pp. 182–7.
87. Macmillan, 1944, *The Royal Air Force*.
88. *Ibid.*, pp. 124–286.
89. Not published until 10 September 1946 (Dowding, 1946, 'The Battle').
90. Higham, 1972, *Guide to the Sources of British Military History*, p. 426.
91. Macmillan, 1944, *The Royal Air Force*, p. 298.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 299.
93. For example, BBC bulletins (air communiqués), BBC pilots' broadcasts, newspapers, *The Aeroplane* and *Flight* aviation magazines, *The London Gazette* for citations (Macmillan's Appendix V includes all 'British Air Aces of Fighter Command' receiving awards for shooting down aircraft (Macmillan, 1944, *The Royal Air Force*, pp. 325–38), films (1943's *Battle of Britain*), other published accounts including pilots' memoirs, and personal contacts.
94. There were other publications, including a collection of shorter accounts of pilots in 66 Squadron at Duxford, but these were infrequent (Forbes and Allen, 1942, *Ten Fighter Boys*).
95. Donahue, 1941, *Tally Ho! Yankee in a Spitfire*.

96. Ellan, 1942, *Spitfire: The Experiences of a Fighter Pilot*.
97. A plaque commemorating Lane's life was unveiled at his home in London during a formal ceremony on 25 September 2011, which included an address by Battle of Britain historian, Dilip Sarkar MBE.
98. Gleed, 1942, *Arise to Conquer*.
99. Sutton, 1942, *The Way of a Pilot: A Personal Record*.
100. Crook, 1942, *Spitfire Pilot*.
101. Hillary, 1943, *The Last Enemy*.
102. Somerset Maugham wrote about Gleed in his *Strictly Personal* book, and Bolitho was also a friend of the pilot to whom he devotes several pages (Bolitho, 1955, *Penguin in the Eyrie*, pp. 107–11).
103. Ross, 2000, *Richard Hillary*.
104. Bielenberg, 2011, *The Past is Myself & The Road Ahead Omnibus: When I Was a German, 1934–1945*, pp. 146–7.
105. Bolitho was a friend of Hillary's, of whom he writes fondly (Bolitho, 1955, *Penguin in the Eyrie*, pp. 112–14).
106. Bolitho, 1943, *Combat Report: The story of a Fighter Pilot*.
107. Hewes, 1942, *The High Courts of Heaven*.
108. Graves, [1941] (n.d.), *The Thin Blue Line*.
109. Hewes, 1942, *The High Courts*, p. 7.
110. Moisevitch, 1942, *Bring Me My Bow*.
111. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
113. Groom, 1943, *What Are Your Angels Now?* This also provided the basis for the 1952 *Angels One Five* feature film.
114. Armstrong, (n.d.), *Prune's Progress: The Genealogical Tree of Pilot-officer Percy Prune*.
115. Groom, 1943, *What Are Your Angels?*, pp. 134–5.
116. *Ibid.*, pp. 164–5.
117. As a Fighter Controller he would ask 'what are your angels now?' to gauge a squadron's height: angels here representing bands of 1,000 feet (Angels One Five, 15,000 feet), though squadron leaders would often add several 'angels' in order to mislead German fighter formations who may have overheard the RAF ground-to-air dialogue, and sensed an opportunity to 'bounce' them.
118. Morton, 1942, *I, James Blunt*.
119. *Ibid.*, frontispiece.
120. Champion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, pp. 293–7 and 303–4.
121. Gee, 1943, *Immortal Few: The Story of the Battle of Britain in Verse*.
122. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
123. Bryant and Shanks, 1948, *The Battle of Britain: The Few* (article and poem first published 25, 27 and 28 September 1944).
124. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
125. *Ibid.*, pp. 5–25.
126. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
127. *Radio Times*, 10–18 May 1945, p. 3.
128. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
129. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
130. Adams published two wartime novels ('Blake', 1941, *Readiness at Dawn*; 'Blake', 1942, *We Rendezvous at Ten*). Landau's popular memoir also included commentary on his brief role as a Fighter Controller in a Northern Sector airfield (Landau, 1945, *The Wing: Confessions of an RAF Officer*).

131. Pathé ID: 1159: 11 (02:34–02:50).
132. Aldgate and Richards, 1986, *Britain Can Take It*, pp. 279–98; Chapman, 2000, *The British*, pp. 198–200; MacKenzie, 2001, *British War Films*, p. 55.
133. Aldgate and Richards, 1986, *Britain Can Take It*, p. 296.
134. Williams, 1940, *The RAF*, p. 5.
135. Saunders, 1941, *The Battle of Britain*.

6 'Air Trafalgar Day': Official Commemorations, 1942–1945

1. Ford, 2012, *Run The Gauntlet: The Channel Dash 1942*.
2. *The Listener* magazine featured a piece on the earlier Exeter attack and in anticipating a renewed air assault titled it 'Ready for the third Battle of Britain' (*The Listener*, 8 October 1942, p. 459).
3. Churchill's emphasis on the Battle being a victory was rather betrayed by his later view that '[B]efore Alamein we never had a victory. After Alamein we never had a defeat' (Reynolds, 2004, *In Command of History*, p. 309).
4. Webster and Frankland, 1961, *The Strategic Air Offensive*.
5. Sweetham, 1999, *The Dambusters Raid*.
6. '2,400 fly bombs fell in Kent', *Battle of Britain Week 9th–15th September, 1946*. Souvenir Programme, RAFA Maidstone, pp. 12–13.
7. The victory at El Alamein, for instance, led to the *Desert Victory* propaganda film (1943), its narrative confirming that it was as important as the Battle, and this time content to focus on 'Monty' as the Eighth Army's Commander. The only comparable film to this was the *US Battle of Britain* (1943).
8. The arguing for preferential treatment in the allocation of resources had been an ongoing dynamic since the RAF came into being, later becoming acute in the series of 1930s expansion schemes (Coombs, 1997, *The Lion Has Wings: The Race to Prepare the RAF for World War II: 1935–1940*).
9. A dissonant note to this otherwise adulatory sense of achievement is revealed in a rather obscure document dated 16 March 1942, this concerning an Air Commodore Williams who is 'asked to account for his statement that only nine fighters were left at the conclusion of the Battle of Britain'. The sensitivity of this gaffe is revealed by the Secretary of State's direct involvement, his Private Secretary suggesting that disciplinary action may be taken (brief note from PS to SoS, M3386, 16 March 1942, AIR 20/400). A follow-up note asked Sinclair whether Williams would be disciplined (M3459 dated 26 March 1942).
10. Major successes including the D-Day landings were still some two and a half years away.
11. Discussed previously, whereas the 'fighter boys' reputation had continued to grow, the bomber effort quickly faded from popular memory.
12. Perceptions of an invasion threat persisted. An example is the meeting organised for 30 January 1943 by the Nazeing Parish Invasion Committee, during which a Captain Walker, Eastern Command, was scheduled to give an address and answer questions (Meeting advertisement poster).
13. Orange, 2008, *Dowding of Fighter Command*, pp. 253–63.
14. This is one of the reasons why senior officers, later wrong-footed by allegations that they had treated Dowding shabbily as the strategic importance of the Battle came to light, opted for the defence of 'it didn't seem like that at the time' (Douglas with Wright, 1966, *Years of Command*, p. 84).
15. Churchill Personal Minute, M.432/1, 12 April 1941, Churchill Papers 20/36; Gilbert, 1983, *Finest Hour*, p. 1061; Memo to the Air Council from A.M.P., 'Discipline, morale and leadership', 24 September 1942, AIR 20/4200.

16. AIR 16/672, August 1942 to February 1943, Proposed Roll of Honour for Pilots engaged in Battle of Britain; Crang, 2005, 'Identifying the "Few": The Personalisation of a Heroic Military Elite', pp. 13–22.
17. Simpson, 2015, *A History of the Battle*, p. 55.
18. SoS, letter to Capt. Ingram, AIR 20/4200, 24 August 1942.
19. Crang, 2005, 'Identifying the "Few"', note 19.
20. Capt. Ingram, letter to SoS, AIR 20/4200, 1 September 1942.
21. This was in fact the first proposal to compile a list of the Few; the Battle had started only two years previously based on the revised official dates; Anon., 1943, *Battle of Britain*.
22. SoS, letter to Capt. Ingram, AIR 20/4200, 17 September 1942.
23. The final scroll also included Bomber, Coastal and other Command aircrews lost during these dates: 718 in Bomber Command; 280 in Coastal Command; 14 in other Commands; 34 in the Fleet Air Arm (Anon., [1947] (n.d.), *Battle of Britain Memorial Westminster Abbey, unveiled by His Majesty King George VI on 10th July, 1947 – the Seventh Anniversary of the Battle of Britain*, p. 5). Interestingly, this is also rather at odds with Sinclair's later position as stated in an Air Council meeting on 6 July 1943 in which he was concerned that credit for the Battle should not only go to Fighter Command.
24. Crang, 'Identifying the "Few"', note 23. Ironically, historians argue that both men were deeply involved in the removal of both Dowding and Park (Dixon, 2008, *Dowding and Churchill*; Orange, 2008, *Dowding of Fighter Command*; Orange, 2001, *Park: The Biography of Air Chief Marshal Sir Keith Park*).
25. Battle of Britain Memorial Committee: Minutes of second meeting on 21 February 1944, Lord Dowding Papers, RAF Museum.
26. Not in Saunders' original pamphlet, but by Dowding in his despatch, and in the 1943 AM booklet.
27. PS to SoS, 11 July 1942, AIR 20/4200. Affirming the importance of this date, an undated typed version is listed as 'PM's Battle of Britain speech' in the file, but it is not otherwise obvious that it relates directly to Churchill who used a psalm-form layout. Its tone is conveyed in the final section, speaking of the Few:

These men were the living walls, fluid yet impenetrable, set up about this island, that no armada of the air, however strong, however resolute, was able to cast down [...] For England, for the British Commonwealth of nations, for Democracy, for all everywhere who love freedom, it was a great deliverance. [Then Churchill's 'to so Few' epigraph to conclude] ('15 September 1940 – The Greatest Day', N.D. AIR 20/4200, 1942)
28. PS to SoS, 11 July 1942, AIR 20/4200.
29. VCAS 3499, 13 July 1942, AIR 20/4200.
30. Memorandum to ACAS(G) '(thro' PS to SoS)', 14 July 1942, AIR 20/4200.
31. Furse, 1999, *Wilfrid Freeman: The Genius Behind Allied Survival and Air Supremacy 1939 to 1945*, Chapters 9 and 10.
32. 'Discipline, morale and leadership', AC63(42), 24 September 1942, AIR 20/4200.
33. Neillands, 2005, *The Dieppe Raid: The Story of the Disastrous 1942 Mission*.
34. A separate factor in Sutton's mind may have been the release of the highly successful *The First of the Few* film about Mitchell and the Spitfire, 15 September 1940 the focus for combat sequences. The AM had also provided significant support for this production and may have wished to further exploit this positive publicity further.
35. House of Commons Debate, 29 September 1942, Vol. 383, c672.

36. AC64(42), 1 October 1942, AIR 20/4200.
37. *The Times*, 31 October 1942, p. 4/f.
38. A painting by war artist W. L. Clause (1943) shows the parade alongside the saluting-dais erected at the southern entrance to the cathedral; the event was also covered by the newsreels.
39. North, 2012, *The Many*; *The Times*, 16 November 1942, p. 2/a.
40. Almost 42,000 civilians were killed during the Blitz from 7 September 1940 to (?) May 1941 (Ray, 2000, *The Night Blitz*, p. 260).
41. *The Daily Telegraph's* 18 May 1943 issue included a front page aerial view of the Möhne Dam.
42. Meeting invitation from USoS(L) attached to file content sheet, 19 June 1943, AIR 20/4200.
43. 'Notes of a meeting held [...] on Friday 25 June 1943 [...] Anniversary of the Battle of Britain', AIR 20/4200.
44. Whilst there is no record of such a service in *The Times*, it does however note of the forthcoming September 1943 event that it will repeat the commemorative practice of the previous two years (i.e. 1941 and 1942) and donate monies raised from the event to the RAF Benevolent Fund. *TT*, 7 September 1943, p. 2/c; 25 September 1943, p. 2/d; 7 September 1943, p. 2/c; 25 September 1943, p. 2/d.
45. Dean pays him a fulsome tribute for his work at the AM (Dean, 1979, *The Royal Air Force and Two World Wars*, pp. 181–2).
46. Minutes of meeting 'dealing with the arrangements for the celebration of the Battle of Britain anniversary', 27 June 1943, AIR 20/4200.
47. 'Extract from conclusions of Air Council meeting 10(43), 6 July 1943, AIR 20/4200. Why it was necessary to mark the resulting minutes as 'Most Secret' is not clear. Perhaps the AM was concerned lest other services became aware of their plans and sought to interfere?
48. Yet, by 1943 Sinclair's suggestion went against the principles of what he had just argued, not least because of the formal linking of Fighter Command with the Battle as a result of Saunders' pamphlet.
49. Dowding must have been discussed but is not mentioned in the minutes.
50. However, the AM – or Peck at least – had agreed to the contents of the 1941 pamphlet which clearly gave full credit to the 'fighter boys'. Did Portal as the new CAS see it?
51. Anon., 1943, *Battle of Britain*.
52. Curiously, the RAF's in-house journal makes no mention of Goodwin's pamphlet in its '3rd Anniversary of the Battle of Britain' issue. *Royal Air Force Journal*, No. 11, September 1943.
53. PR4/Misc., 605, 28 July 1943 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/battleofbritain/11441.shtml?page=txt>).
54. Internal Memorandum, 'The Battle of Britain', G. Ivan Smith, 6 August 1943 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/battleofbritain/11442.shtml?page=txt>).
55. Letter from Buckingham Palace, 3 August 1943, AIR 20/4200.
56. A desire to share the credit was affirmed by fighter pilot Group Captain 'Sailor' Malan at a luncheon to commemorate the Battle. In response to many tributes he suggested that the Few had come in for more than their share of credit, and that some should go to senior commanders and ground support (*The Times*, 15 September 1943, p. 2/e).
57. *The Times*, 26 August 1943, p. 7/c.
58. Frank Fletcher, hymn-writer at Liverpool Anglican Cathedral, wrote 'The Hymn for the Celebration of the Battle of Britain', a copy of the score provided to the

RAF in August 1943. The music was based upon a hymn by J. Darwell (1731–1789), Fletcher’s third verse as follows:

And as that hero band,
The young, the few, the brave,
To shield our menaced land
Their eager manhood gave,
Nor turned aside
From danger’s call,
But for us all
They dared and died.

(Copy of score; Communication to AVM Slatter, dated 3 September 1943, AIR 20/4200).

59. Not all felt included in the celebrations, two letters to the editor, published by the *Catholic Herald*, expressing disappointment at the seeming lack of thanksgiving services in Catholic churches. One noted in arguing for a ceremony that

[I]f, however, it could be arranged and ecclesiastical authority would sponsor the arrangements for a solemn Mass on a suitable occasion at the Metropolitan Cathedral, with dignitaries from the Southwark and Brentwood dioceses present in the sanctuary, such a ceremony for the members of all civil defence organisations, Wardens, Rescue Services, Ambulance Services, N.F.S., the W.V.S. and so on, would not only hearten the individual Catholic engaged in Civil Defence who tends – I speak with experience – to feel isolated among a large majority of non-Catholics, but it would provide a laudable and impressive demonstration of Catholic patriotism.

The second was shorter and more direct:

I was disappointed to find that not one of the services held on Sunday in the church I attend regularly was offered in thanksgiving for the Battle of Britain victory. I gather this is not the only Catholic church to have made the omission; yet we English Catholics have at least as much reason to be grateful for that victory as anyone else. (*Catholic Herald*, 8 October 1943, both items on p. 2)

60. FO 372/3624, 1943, Battle of Britain – service at St Paul’s, Code 377, file 5986; HO 186/12, 1943, Battle of Britain Sunday 1943.
61. *The Times*, 27 September 1943, p. 8/c.
62. *The Times*, 18 September 1944, p. 2/a.
63. Order of Service, Holy Trinity Church, Tunbridge Wells, 17 September 1944.
64. This was certainly the case in *Air Mail*, the Royal Air Force Association’s monthly magazine. Its centre-page spread featured a tribute to the Few including images of Bader, Tuck, Malan, Kent, Kingcome, and graphs showing relative losses: ‘[I]n 1940, a few hundred fighter ‘boys’, their heroism unsurpassed within the whole story of the universe, stood between the world and its potential master [...] for verily they saved not only ourselves but civilisation itself’ (*Air Mail*, September 1944, pp. 14–15).
65. Discussions had been ongoing behind the scenes concerning a formal memorial since 1943, but little appeared in the public domain during the war itself.

66. The *Radio Times* had scheduled Churchill to appear on 10 May at 9 pm, to be followed by a 'victory serenade'; there is no other listing for a Churchill speech, suggesting that it was postponed (*Radio Times*, 10–18 May 1945).
67. Churchill, 1962, *The Second World War*, Vol. VI: *Triumph and Tragedy*, p. 658 (<http://www.churchill-society-london.org.uk/13May45.html>).
68. De Groot states that Dowding 'bitter to the end, could not bring himself to return the compliment', suggesting either a brief reply, or none at all (De Groot, 1993, *Liberal Crusader: The Life of Sir Archibald Sinclair*, p. 205). Dowding did acknowledge the letter on 11 May 1945 (Letter from Sinclair, 9 May 1945, AC71/17/48, Dowding Papers, RAF Museum).
69. <http://www.churchill-society-london.org.uk/13May45.html>.
70. Soldiers fighting in North Africa were awarded the North Africa Star for combat service between 10 June 1940 and 12 May 1943. The Award was announced in July 1943 (<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1943/jul/08/overseas-service-recognition>).
71. Crang, 2005, 'Identifying the "Few"'
72. Wynn, 1999, *Men of the Battle of Britain*, p. 1.
73. Gregory notes that because of government disarray some had been awarded the Clasp, but had not actually been one of the Few. The Battle of Britain Fighter Association (BBFA), established in March 1958, was progressively able to bring some order to this issue (Gregory, 2000, 'The Commemoration of the Battle of Britain', in Addison and Crang, 2000, *The Burning Blue*, p. 223).
74. Prior, 2005, *Honouring the Few*.
75. Crang notes that on the London Monument three additional names were added to those inscribed at Capel-le-Ferne.
76. House of Commons Debates, 5th series, 1943–4, Vol. 398, pp. 896–8; Simpson, 2015, *A History of the Battle*, pp. 9–14.
77. The original Star covered the period from 1939 to 1943 but was later amended to cover the entire period of the war.
78. <http://ww2talk.com/forums/topic/18535-distinctions-for-war-service-1939-1945/>; *The Times*, 19 May 1945, p. 4/f.
79. This was later amended to 10 July 1940, on 23 July 1945 when the qualifying conditions were confirmed; and amended again on 24 June 1946.
80. www.churchill-society-london.org.uk/13May45.html.
81. Crang, 2005, 'Identifying the "Few"', note 11.
82. <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1947/may/14/battle-of-britain-enemy-losses>.
83. www.veterans-uk.info/arctic_star_index.htm.
84. *Daily Telegraph*, 20 February 2015, p. 2.
85. 'Lessons of the Air War' is a valuable discussion on reconciliation, diverse opinion and post-war assessments of the bomber war (Süss, 2014, *Death from the Skies*, Chapter 10).
86. The official four-volume history was met with anger, not least by the commanders involved (Webster and Frankland, 1961, *The Strategic Air Offensive*; Frankland, 1998, *History at War: The Campaigns of an Historian*, Chapters 4–5).
87. Smith, 1990, 'The Allied Air Offensive', p. 68.

7 'The Fight at Odds': Revelation, Memorialisation, 1945–1965

1. Garfield, 2004, *Our Hidden Lives: The Everyday Diaries of a Forgotten Britain 1945–1948*; Judt, 2010, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*; Reynolds, 2007, *From*

- World War to Cold War*; Williams, 1961, *A Prime Minister Remembers: The War and Post-War Memoirs of The Rt. Hon. Earl Attlee*, Chapters 9–15.
2. Taylor, 2003, *Royal Air Force: Germany since 1945*.
 3. James, 2005, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, Part Five; Williams, 1961, *A Prime Minister*, Chapter 13 on India. Hong Kong in 1997 represented the last element of the former British Empire not remaining in the Commonwealth.
 4. Hitler had anticipated this, for instance the impact of the Anglo–American Alliance (Thursfield, 1948, ‘Fuehrer Conferences’, p. 134).
 5. ‘Anniversary of the Battle of Britain Thanksgiving Week’ leaflet (Plate 11).
 6. Newsreel footage shows Bader talking to Dowding at North Weald before the take-off.
 7. The pamphlet accompanying 8 June 1946 Victory Celebrations confirmed that the fly-past would include ‘Hurricanes’, these seemingly at the head of the massed formation (*Official Programme of the Victory Celebrations*, 8 June 1946, HMSO: London, 1946, p. 16); *The Times*’ report on the plans for 15 September 1947 noted that a single Hurricane would lead the fly-past on this date – also reported on 16 September 1947 (*TT*, 15 September 1947, p. 2/c; *TT*, 16 September 1947, p. 2/c).
 8. *Ibid.*, 17 September 1945, p. 4/f; Williams, 1961, *A Prime Minister*, Chapter 7.
 9. *TT*, 17 September 1945, p. 4/f.
 10. Both Dowding and Park attended the service in Westminster Abbey on 15 September 1946.
 11. *TT*, 18 September 1945, p. 5/f.
 12. *TT*, 19 September 1945, p. 5/f.
 13. *TT*, 5 September 1947, p. 6/b; *TT*, 16 September 1946, p. 2/a.
 14. *Official Programme of the Victory Celebrations*.
 15. Despite the political sensitivities, the AM’s treatment of Polish Air Force personnel following victory was regrettable (Olson and Cloud, 2004, *For Your Freedom and Ours: The Kosciuszko Squadron – Forgotten Heroes of World War II*, Chapter 21).
 16. *Official Programme of the Victory Celebrations*, p. 15.
 17. *TT*, 14 September 1946, p. 8/c; *TT*, 16 September 1946, p. 2/a; AIR 2/7002, 1946, Ceremonial arrangements.
 18. The order of Service on 15 September 1946:

The Ensign of the RAF presented to the Dean and laid upon the High Altar
A Fanfare of Trumpets
 The National Anthem
 Hymns and prayers
 Two lessons
 The Creed
 The Collects
 The Anthem
 Prayers (for King and Queen; RAF; those lost in action; Thanksgiving)
 Hymns
 The Sermon by Rev Gillingham
 The Blessing
RAF Ensign returned to Ensign Party

(Westminster Abbey: ‘A Thanksgiving for the Victory achieved in the Battle of Britain in the year 1940’, Order of Service, 15 September 1946).

19. The original Thanksgiving Service format was echoed in other ceremonies (for example: 16 September 1945, Air HQ RAF (Cyprus), order of service; 19 September 1948, Birmingham Parish Church, order of service; 19 September 1954, Westminster Abbey, order of service; 21 September 1958, St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, order of service). An undated AM 'Service of Commemoration and Thanksgiving for Victory in the Battle of Britain 1940' pamphlet confirms in its foreword a determination to standardise the service format, suggesting hitherto more improvised events (AM pamphlet 297, post-May 1947).
20. Founded in its present guise in 1933 with Lord Trenchard as its president, 'The RAFA exists to perpetuate the spirit of the RAF and its Associated Air Forces, through its members of all ranks, by looking after their well-being' (*Battle of Britain Week 9th–15th September, 1946*. Souvenir Programme, RAFA Maidstone, p. 10). The RAFA works in close cooperation with the RAF Benevolent Fund, the latter founded by Lord Trenchard in 1919 in order to provide welfare assistance (Bishop, 1989, *The Debt We Owe: The Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund 1919–1989*). In the early post-war years RAFA's commemorative literature became increasingly sophisticated in its celebration of the Battle, originally locally-produced material (see notes 21 and 22) supplemented with substantial booklets featuring full-colour covers distributed nationally (for example in 1949, 1950, 1952 (Plate 16), 1953, 1954 and 1955). All carried articles about the Battle, the Few, sometimes the 'Battle of the Barges', and the modern RAF, in addition to advertisements from national companies and organisations. The RAFA's *Air Mail* journal occasionally featured the Battle as its main focus, its 1948 issue devoting 19 of its 32 pages to it (*Special Battle of Britain Number: Air Mail*, Royal Air Forces Association Journal, September 1948).
21. *Maidstone Battle of Britain Week*, p. 1 (italicised words were both capitalised and underlined in the original text).
22. Some programmes offered no comment on the Battle as a historic event, being wholly comprised of details of entertainments and commemorative events, including a range of local advertisements. For instance, the Norwich RAFA Branch's 1947 programme is focused on raising money for RAFA and the RAF Benevolent Fund (*The Norwich Branch presents the second Battle of Britain Week, September 14th to 20th 1947*, programme). That for Northern Ireland in 1948 carries one article about the Battle (2 pages), but its 46 other pages feature advertisements, puzzles and other articles of no relevance to the 1940 air war (*September 1948 Battle of Britain Week*, RAFA Northern Ireland Branch).
23. AuxAF and Reserve Air Force.
24. For example, the command-and-control system used in the Battle was largely the same as that adopted for the early years of the Cold War (Mason, 1990, *To Inherit the Skies: From Spitfire to Tornado*).
25. Cecil James, the writer of the original narrative, gives an overview of 'writing the history' (Probert and Cox, 1991, *The Battle Re-thought: A Symposium on the Battle of Britain*, p. 85; Richards, 1998, *It Might Have Been Worse: Recollections 1941–1996*, p. 114).
26. The original figures were allowed to go unchallenged even when the revised figures were known to the AM: for instance, *The Times'* article on Battle of Britain Sunday, September 1946 reiterates the importance of 15 September 1940 as the decisive day, 185 aircraft brought down, *TT*, 16 September 1946, p. 2/a (Price, 1990, *Battle of Britain Day: 15 September 1940*).
27. Richards began working fully on *The Fight at Odds* in March 1947 (Richards, 1998, *It Might Have Been Worse*, pp. 115–16).

28. According to Richards he wrote the minute on 12 May 1947, the facts revealed by Noel-Baker only two days later. If this was the case then the press must have been furnished with the information almost immediately upon the receipt of Richards' minute (Richards, 1998, *It Might Have Been Worse*, p. 116). Details were also given in *The Times*, 15 May 1947, p. 4/d; and *Flight*, 22 May 1947, p. 482 (<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1947/may/14/battle-of-britain-enemy-losses>).
29. Saunders, 1941, *The Battle of Britain*.
30. The 1947 *Times* article shows altered AM figure (*TT*, 15 May 1947, p. 4/d; *Flight*, 22 May 1947, p. 482).
31. A figure of 2,698 is often cited in accounts of the Battle (Richards, 1953, *Royal Air*, p. 190).
32. Dowding, 1946, 'The Battle', p. 4550, para. 113.
33. Leading ace 'Johnnie' Johnson confirms the difficulties in his memoir (Johnson, 1956, *Wing Leader*, pp. 43–4).
34. Terraine provides valuable material on this issue, and includes a reference to AHB/II/117/2(B), its Appendix 36 giving an assessment of claiming during the Battle (Terraine, 1997, *The Right of the Line*, pp. 728–9).
35. <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1947/may/14/battle-of-britain-enemy-losses>.
36. See also Tables 2.2 and 2.3.
37. *Flight*, 22 May 1947, p. 482.
38. Richards, 1998, *It Might Have Been Worse*, p. 116.
39. *TT*, 15 May 1947, p. 5/c.
40. <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1947/may/14/battle-of-britain-enemy-losses>.
41. *Flight*, 22 July 1947, p. 459.
42. Bader, 1973, *Fight for the Sky: The Story of the Spitfire and Hurricane*, p. 122.
43. Brickhill, 1955, *Reach for the Sky: The Story of Douglas Bader*, p. 204.
44. *The Times* carries no letters in its editions after the release of the revised figures.
45. Johnson, 1956, *Wing Leader*, p. 43.
46. Richards, 1953, *Royal Air*, p. 190. Richards had noted earlier in his narrative that the true figures for RAF claims on 15 August 1940 'came as a great disappointment'. In his view the fault lay 'justly' with the AM for not being clear about the very provisional nature of the figures both during and following the Battle (*ibid.*, p. 171).
47. Clark, 1965, *Battle for Britain: Sixteen Weeks that Changed the Course of History*, p. 168.
48. Hough and Richards 1990, *The Battle of Britain*, pp. 310–11.
49. For example, whilst the UK government made no contribution, the Czech Government did support the Battle of Britain Monument (<http://www.bbm.org.uk/topdonors.htm>).
50. The Battle of Britain Memorial, Capel-le-Ferne, Kent (<http://www.battleofbritain-memorial.org/the-memorial/>) and the Battle of Britain Monument, Embankment, London (<http://www.bbm.org.uk/>).
51. Simpson, 2015, *A History of the Battle*, p. 51.
52. *Ibid.*
53. 'Lord Trenchard and Lord Dowding headed a committee to raise funds for the furnishing of this chapel and for a stained glass window' (http://www.raf.mod.uk/rafcms/mediafiles/68D5DEA4_1143_EC82_2EA07B46D05E19C7.pdf).
54. 'Battle of Britain Memorial', 24 August 1944, to ACAS(G), AIR 20/4200.
55. Anon., 1943, *Battle of Britain*.

56. Battle of Britain Memorial Committee: Minutes of second meeting on 21 February 1944, Lord Dowding Papers, RAF Museum. It was confirmed by *The Times* on 11 May 1944 that Easton had been commissioned to produce the window. Goodyear, 2010, *Something Quite Exceptional: Hugh Easton and the Battle of Britain Memorial Window for Rolls-Royce*, p. 12.
57. Results vary widely regarding the value of £42,000: for example, £1,206,240 in 2005 (*National Archive*), £2,391,534 in 2015 (*This is Money*).
58. With no reason recorded, perhaps Dowding took exception to the omission of his and Park's names. The fact that the Roll of Honour included all Commands, but the pamphlet only focused upon Fighter Command, may also have been an issue.
59. Perkins, [1945?] (n.d.), *Westminster Abbey: The Royal Air Force Chapel with the Battle of Britain Window in the Chapel of Henry VII*; Anon., [1947] (n.d.) *Battle of Britain Memorial Westminster Abbey, unveiled by His Majesty King George VI on 10th July, 1947 – the Seventh Anniversary of the Battle of Britain*, p. 5; Wilkinson, 2007, *Henry VII's Lady Chapel in Westminster Abbey*, pp. 24–6.
60. Goebel, 2009, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance and Medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914–1940*, Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Modern Warfare, p. 292.
61. *Illustrated London News*, 12 July 1947, pp. 40–5 included good-quality images and descriptions of both the chapel and its ornaments.
62. *Radio Times*, 4 July 1947.
63. The *Radio Times* confirms the Order of Service, a mix of addresses, lessons, hymns, prayers and the blessing (*Radio Times*, 4 July 1947, p. 18).
64. Ralph Vaughan Williams' *The Souls of the Righteous* was composed for the dedication of the chapel. Its words are from *The Wisdom of Solomon*, Chapter 3 (<http://www.westminster-abbey.org/our-history/people/ralph-vaughan-williams>): 'The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, / and there shall no torment touch them'.
65. *Flight*, 17 July 1947, pp. 70–1.
66. Perkins, (n.d.), *Westminster Abbey*, p. 22.
67. The event was covered extensively in the media: *Flight*, 17 July 1947, pp. 70–1; *TT*, 11 July 1947, p. 7/d; 'Victors of the Air', *TT*, 10 July 1947, p. 5.
68. Notwithstanding Fighter Command's losses during 1940, Bomber Command lost over 55,000 aircrew during the war as a whole (<http://www.raf.mod.uk/history/bombercommand.cfm>).
69. Gregory, 2000, 'The Commemoration', p. 218.
70. Almost 42 per cent of Battle aircrew were non-commissioned (Campion, 2008, *The Good Fight*, p. 59). There also appeared to be an over-representation of officers at official commemorative events, SNCOs less obviously present. Many had, though, been commissioned during or after the Battle.
71. Goodyear, 2010, *Something Quite Exceptional*; *TT*, 12 January 1949, p. 2/a.
72. *Flight*, 13 January 1949, p. 45.
73. *Ibid.*
74. Goodyear, 2010, *Something Quite Exceptional*, pp. 7–8 (facsimile commemorative booklet). No SNCOs are named but a number of officers were Sergeant pilots during the Battle.
75. Goodyear, 2010, *Something Quite Exceptional*, p. 18 (facsimile booklet).
76. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
77. *Ibid.*, pp. 19–21. The factory is now disused, the window in storage.
78. *TT*, 26 July 1951, p. 8/d; *TT*, 20 July 1951, p. 8/c; *TT*, 12 November 1951, p. 6/c. Woodcock Marshall, its building contractors, placed a rear-page advertisement

- in the RAF Biggin Hill's Battle of Britain Air Display souvenir brochure, which they refer to as the "'Battle of Britain' Memorial Chapel' (*Battle of Britain Air Display souvenir*, RAF Biggin Hill, 18 September 1954).
79. Easton's twelve windows were dedicated on 18 September 1955 during Battle of Britain Sunday, each costing £250 (RAF Biggin Hill, *Battle of Britain Air Display souvenir*, 19 September 1955, p. 12).
 80. Pathé ID: 1091: 12. RAF Biggin Hill continued to be occupied until 1992, the chapel's future of concern given an announcement by the MoD on 5 January 2015 that it would no longer pay towards its upkeep. It was confirmed by the Chancellor on 18 March 2015 that 'in the 75th anniversary year of the Battle of Britain we will help to renovate the [...] Biggin Hill Chapel Memorial so future generations are reminded of the sacrifice of our airmen in all conflicts'. £1m has been pledged towards this.
 81. Ramsey, 1989, *The Battle of Britain*, pp. 300–1. The RAFA's 1953 brochure included an article on the memorial (*Battle of Britain*, RAFA, 1953, pp. 28–9).
 82. Stamp, 2007, *The Memorial to the Missing of the Somme*.
 83. Ramsey, 1989, *The Battle of Britain*, p. 300.
 84. As a minor example of this tendency – and twenty years later – Wing Commander Wolsby, Biggin Hill's station commander, noted in response to a private suggestion that a Hurricane wreck form a memorial to the Few:

[I]n evaluating your suggestion and, in particular, the cost involved in establishing and maintaining the wreckage as a memorial I feel sure the Ministry of Defence will take account of the fact that there is a beautiful memorial window in Westminster Abbey and that we have, of course, our own memorial chapel. (Letter to P. F. S. Bright from Wg Cmdr Wolsey, RAF Biggin Hill, 27 February 1967 (author's private collection))
 85. *TT*, 29 November 1951, p. 5/e.
 86. *TT*, 30 November 1951, p. 12 (image).
 87. *TT*, 4 December 1951, p. 7/e. This route is in fact now established as a mostly pedestrianised thoroughfare from Tate Modern, over Millennium Bridge, thence north to St Paul's.
 88. *TT*, 5 December 1951, p. 5/d.
 89. *TT*, 7 December 1951, p. 7/e.
 90. *TT*, 7 December 1951, p. 7/e.
 91. *TT*, 19 December 1951, p. 7/f.
 92. Dean, *The Royal Air Force*, p. 147.
 93. *Ibid.*
 94. CAB 129/102. C(60)125, 12 September 1960.
 95. C.C.50(60). 15 September 1960. Although not officially sponsored, a possible approach to a memorial sculpture was suggested by artist and sculptor Eric Kennington's early-post-war 1940, a 148 cm high tribute to RAF pilots and aircrew killed during the Battle: 'the head of an RAF pilot topped by a stirring representation of the crusader saint par excellence, the Archangel Michael, energetically running through the evil dragon of Nazism' (Black, 2011, *The Face of Courage: Eric Kennington, Portraiture and The Second World War*, pp. 141, 142 and 149).
 96. CAB 128/35, 25 April 1961.
 97. UGC 7/208, 15 December 1960–12 December 1962.
 98. Within this context one proposal unlikely to win favour was a 1960 design proposal by Messrs Arthur Kenyon & Partners for a Battle memorial comprising two

steel and glass pyramids (each with an aircraft), these connected by an entrance hall (AIR 2/1540).

99. Cotter, 2007, *Battle of Britain Memorial Flight: Fifty Years of Flying*, p. 41.
100. *Ibid.*, Chapters 2 and 3.
101. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
102. History of the MoD Information Sheet (MoD, undated) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/history-of-the-ministry-of-defence>) (last accessed April 2015).
103. Details of his 30 January 1965 State funeral route were provided in the *Radio Times* (30 January–5 February 1965).
104. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/eu/10436218/David-Cameron-must-embrace-Churchills-vision-of-United-States-of-Europe.html>.

8 'Angels One Five': Historical and Cultural Consolidation, 1946–1965

1. Wood and Dempster, 1961, *The Narrow Margin*.
2. James' then secret AHB narrative was unclear as to the exact end date for the final phase in October 1940, his analysis again based on the study of numerous intelligence reports and other RAF documents (James, 2000, *The Battle*).
3. Saunders, 1941, *The Battle of Britain*.
4. Dowding, 1946, 'The Battle', Appendix DD.
5. Anon., 1943, *Battle of Britain*, p. 37.
6. Macmillan, 1944, *The Royal Air Force*, pp. 155–8.
7. James, 2000, *The Battle*.
8. Lee, 1946, *The German Air Force*, pp. 62–76; Churchill, 1949, *Their Finest Hour*, pp. 264–5.
9. Park, 1951, 'Background to the Blitz', pp. 101–2.
10. Collier, 1957, *The Defence*, pp. 147–250.
11. Wood and Dempster, 1961, *The Narrow Margin*; note also that this is the same phrasing as that used to explain the revised *Luftwaffe* losses on 14 May 1947 in the House of Commons (<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1947/may/14/battle-of-britain-enemy-losses>).
12. <http://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/research/online-exhibitions/history-of-the-battle-of-britain/introduction-to-the-phases-of-the-battle-of-britain.aspx> (last accessed March 2015).
13. It was not obvious that a victory had been achieved in the immediate aftermath of the day fighting, novelist and writer Margery Allingham noting: 'the war did not present itself in quite the same order as it came in actual fact [...] the Battle of Britain did not appear to us to coincide with the worst shock of the invasion threat' (Allingham, 1941, *The Oaken Heart*, p. 222). Similarly, George Orwell, writing in his diary on 8 April 1941, noted: 'what chiefly impresses me when reading *The Battle of Britain* [...] is the way in which "epic" events never seem very important at the time' (Orwell and Angus, 1968, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell. Volume II: My Country Right or Left 1940–1943*, pp. 391–2). This was a widely-held view, especially amongst the ranks of senior RAF officers and AM staff; Maurice Dean, Under-secretary of State for Air, noting of the Battle as a major victory that 'It didn't look like that at the time' (Dean, 1979, *The Royal Air Force*, p. 145). An early attempt to begin to make sense of the shifting strategic and tactical phases of the Battle was, though, suggested on 5

September 1940 in a BBC *War Commentary* broadcast by Air Marshal Sir Philip Joubert (<http://airminded.org/2010/09/12/thursday-12-september-1940/>) (last accessed March 2015).

14. Deighton notes: '[T]here are still some old *Luftwaffe* men who claim that there never was a Battle of Britain' (Deighton, 1980, *Battle of Britain*, p. 214). Former *Luftwaffe* fighter pilot Julius Meimberg, who flew in the Battle, confirmed in 2010 that '[T]here will be no official commemoration of the Battle of Britain in Germany, and the few surviving pilots who fought on the German side see no reason to mark the anniversary. Even if they did none of today's generation of Germans would take any notice or express any interest in their wartime adventures. Nobody's interested in that here' (The *Observer*, 16 July 2010) (<http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/jul/16/theobserver.uknews1>) (last accessed February 2015).
15. Kris and Speier, 1944, *German Radio*, pp. 389–90.
16. Kesselring, 1954, *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal Kesselring*, pp. 70–5. Kesselring notes that *Sea Lion* had in fact been scrapped as the second phase began on 6 September 1940 (*ibid.*, p. 75).
17. Weber, 1956, *die Luftschlacht um England*, p. 107.
18. Klee, 1958, *Das Unternehmen 'Seelöwe': Die geplante deutsche Landung in England 1940*, pp. 166–84.
19. Maier et al., 1999, *Germany*. 'Under the auspices of the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt [Research Institute for Military History], a team of renowned historians has combined [...] to produce what will be the definitive history of the Second World War from the German point of view'.
20. Weber, 1956, *die Luftschlacht*, p. 102.
21. Galland, 1955, *The First*, pp. 54–97.
22. Kesselring, 1954, *The Memoirs*, pp. 70–5.
23. Weber, 1956, *die Luftschlacht*, p. 107. German historian Horst Boog later endorsed this (Boog, 2000, 'The *Luftwaffe's* Assault', in Addison and Crang, 2000, *The Burning Blue*, p. 39).
24. Klee, 1958, *Das Unternehmen*, pp. 166–84.
25. Saunders, 1941, *The Battle of Britain*.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Churchill, 1949, *Their Finest Hour*.
28. *Radio Times*, 14–20 September 1947, p. 1.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
30. It is noted within the article that the Admiralty would shortly release the minutes of Hitler's Naval Conferences – i.e. on 21 September 1947 – these confirming the context within which Hitler decided not to launch *Sea Lion*.
31. Thursfield, 1948, 'Fuehrer Conferences', p. 26 (Operation *Sea Lion* is addressed on pp. 110–40).
32. Wilmot, *Radio Times*, 14–20 September 1947, p. 5.
33. Dowding, 1946, 'The Battle'.
34. Wilmot, *Radio Times*, 14–20 September 1947, p. 5.
35. A revised version was broadcast on 1 April 1948 – six and a half months later – the content unclear.
36. Wilmot, *Radio Times*, 14–20 September 1947, p. 5.
37. Wilmot, 1954, *The Struggle*, pp. 51–4.
38. Assmann confirms Raeder's anxiety that Hitler allowed himself to be 'talked out of' the invasion by his navy (Assmann, 1947, 'German Plans for the Invasion of England in 1940: Operation "*Sea Lion*"', Royal Naval Intelligence Division (unpublished, restricted document), p. 80).

39. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 80–2.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
42. *Ibid.*
43. The Royal Navy official history was modest in its attention to the Battle (Roskill, 1957, *The War at Sea 1939–1945: The Defensive*. Vol. 1, History of the Second World War, Chapter xiii).
44. Cumming, 2010, *The Royal Navy*; Grinnell-Milne, 1958, *The Silent Victory*; Hewitt, 2008, *Hitler's Armada*.
45. Cumming, 2010, *The Royal Navy*, Chapter 3.
46. Brown, 1990, *Warship Losses of World War Two*, p. 46.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
48. Spaight, 1941, *The Battle of Britain*, Chapter 6.
49. Hilton discusses the role of German airborne forces both during 1940 and over Crete (Hilton, 1983, *The Paras*, Chapters 5 and 9).
50. Neillands, 2005, *The Dieppe Raid*.
51. Wilmot, 1954, *The Struggle*, p. 53.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 42–57.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
54. *Ibid.* An added dimension, on 17 September 1940, Halder had recorded that '96 infantry divisions and some 30 armoured and motorised divisions' were on Germany's eastern border (see Appendix 1).
55. Thursfield, 1948, 'Fuehrer Conferences', p. 139.
56. For mid-September Royal Naval assets, see Hewitt, 2008, *Hitler's Armada*, p. 163.
57. In addition to the aforementioned sources, in reaching his later view Wilmot had drawn upon Macmillan's series on the RAF, no other publications cited as they related to the Battle – for example, Dowding's 1946 despatch – though he does acknowledge Dowding's assistance (Wilmot, 1954, *The Struggle*, p. 805). AM assistance is also noted from the previously mentioned Nerney and Jackets, though not Saunders, Richards or T. C. G. James, the latter, author of the AHB's Battle narrative (*ibid.*, p. 805).
58. Although heavily propagandised from 16 September onwards, claimed *Luftwaffe* losses of 185 aircraft were 70 per cent higher than the reality, the actual figure alone unlikely to force *Sea Lion's* abandonment.
59. Churchill, 1949, *Their Finest Hour*, pp. 263–79. Churchill does consider the invasion problem and Operation *Sea Lion* in the preceding chapters, but the Royal Navy is not very prominent in either perhaps because of their undoubted primacy, as Churchill, former First Lord of the Admiralty, was well aware.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 273.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 276. Churchill also acknowledges that a major *Luftwaffe* effort on 27 September was similarly worthy of note, but dismisses this as Goering's last throw of the dice in seeking to decide matters through air power alone, the invasion cancelled (*ibid.*, p. 277). One might equally say that this was further evidence of Goering's continuing prosecution of the air war having hitherto resisted a combined-operations approach to *Sea Lion*.
62. Reynolds, 2004, *In Command*.
63. Dowding, 1946, 'The Battle', p. 4557, para. 204.
64. Richards, 1953, *Royal Air*. Richards had actually completed his drafts in 1949 but these were delayed for several years as they waited for official approval (Richards, 1998, *It Might Have Been Worse*, p. 123). Given this, Richards could not have been influenced by Churchill, and the corollary applies.

65. Collier's *Defence of the United Kingdom* takes a much broader approach to all aspects of the subject (Collier, 1957, *The Defence*).
66. Richards, 1998, *It Might Have Been Worse*, p. 125. Richards' account of working with Saunders and writing the series also confirms the careful vetting of drafts and numerous individual requirements that the text be amended to remove criticisms and other undesirable comment. In most instances the authors resisted this pressure (*ibid.*, pp. 123–4).
67. *Ibid.*, pp. 151–97.
68. James, 2000, *The Battle*. Cox notes that the narrative was very influential in framing several notable accounts including Collier's 1957 *The Defence*, Wood and Dempster's 1961 *The Narrow Margin*, and Mason's 1969 *Battle over Britain*. Richards also made use of the AHB narrative for his later book with Hough (Cox, Introduction to James, 2000, *The Battle*, p. xiii).
69. For 15 August 1940, see Richards, 1953, *Royal Air*, pp. 166–72; for 15 September 1940, see *ibid.*, pp. 185 and 188.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
71. *Ibid.*, pp. 186–8.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
74. *TT*, 5 September 1947, p. 2/c; *TT*, 16 September 1947, p. 2/c; AIR 2/9754, 1947–8, ceremonial arrangements.
75. The 1951 Battle of Britain Week included a 280-aircraft fly-past, in addition to 66 RAF Stations being open to the public; in 1952, 76 RAF Stations were open to the public, attracting c.966,000 people.
76. Literally using the parade ground, 1,957 displays and aircraft included a Mk. 1 Spitfire, a Mk. 1 Hurricane (possibly L1592, now in the Science Museum), an Me109G and an He111, in addition to tents, vehicles and other period items (photographs dated 8 September 1954, author's private collection).
77. *TT*, 22 September 1947, p. 4/e.
78. *Battle of Britain* brochure to commemorate the twelfth anniversary, 1952, RAFA, pp. 10 and 11–14.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
80. Collier, 1957, *The Defence*.
81. Wood and Dempster, 1961, *The Narrow Margin*.
82. For the *Battle and Sea Lion* see Collier, 1957, *The Defence*, pp. 147–250.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 242.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 245.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 182. In early September the German Naval Staff had expressed concern about the failure of the *Luftwaffe* to attack the British fleet, which, in addition to bomber attacks on ports, they saw as a further, serious difficulty (*ibid.*, p. 226).
86. *Ibid.*
87. Umbreit, 1999, 'Plans and Preparations', in Maier et al., *Germany and the Second World War*, p. 370.
88. Maier, 1999, 'The Battle of Britain', in Maier et al., *Germany and the Second World War*, p. 405.
89. *Ibid.*
90. Saundby, R., 1960, 'Bomber Command and the Battle of Britain', in *Battle of Britain*, RAFA, p. 20.
91. *Ibid.*
92. Wood and Dempster, 1961, *The Narrow Margin*, p. 31.
93. Wood and Dempster, 1969, *The Narrow Margin*, p. ix.

94. Wood and Dempster, 1961, *The Narrow Margin*, p. 350.
95. Wood and Dempster, 1969, *The Narrow Margin*, p. 234.
96. Fleming, 2003, *Operation Sea Lion*, pp. 299–300.
97. *Ibid.*, p. 289.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 290.
99. *Ibid.*, p. 294.
100. Wheatley, 1958, *Operation Sea Lion: German Plans for the Invasion of England 1939–1942*.
101. *Ibid.*, pp. 88–9.
102. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
103. *Ibid.*
104. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
105. Grinnell-Milne, 1958, *The Silent Victory*.
106. *Ibid.*, pp. 154–5. Generally, both sides would have had to agree that the prospects for unspecialised twin-engined bombers wreaking havoc on moving warships were not promising: Do17s and He111s carrying conventional bombs were no better equipped for this specialist task than comparable RAF twin-engined bombers, the latter only modestly successful against even static port targets. However, against troop concentrations on beaches and further inland, or shipping moored offshore, the prospects were undoubtedly more favourable.
107. Grinnell-Milne, 1958, *The Silent Victory*, p. 195.
108. Roskill, 1957, *The War at Sea*, p. 255.
109. *Ibid.*, p. 256.
110. Ansel, 1960, *Hitler Confronts*, p. 316.
111. Klee, 1958, *Das Unternehmen*.
112. Klee, 1965, 'The Battle of Britain', in Jacobsen, *Decisive Battles of World War II: The German View*, p. 91.
113. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
114. Thames TV's highly-acclaimed 1973 *The World at War* series adopts the same format for the Battle of Britain period in *Alone: May 1940–May 1941*.
115. Bowman, 1956, *War in the Air*, pp. 34–9.
116. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
117. Pathé ID: 184: 29, 23 September 1954.
118. *After the Battle*, 18 November 1959 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p008qcdh/after-the-battle-1-london-ed-murrow-reports>) (last accessed April 2015).
119. *Land of Promise*, 1946. *Land of Promise: The British Documentary Movement 1930–1950*, British Film Institute DVD Set (Disc 3, from 33:20 mins).
120. Pathé ID: 70: 16, 22 September 1958.
121. 17 September 1965 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01bq4hn>) (last accessed April 2015).
122. Bader was knighted for services to the disabled.
123. Pathé ID: 1736: 24, 21 September 1961.
124. Pathé ID: 1818: 05, 23 September 1965.
125. Mackenzie, 2001, *British War Films*, pp. 60–1.
126. <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/494564/index.html> (last accessed April 2015).
127. Francis, 2008, *The Flyer: British Culture and the Royal Air Force, 1939–1945*, p. 147.
128. 'Glennon' is echoed by a fallen Battle of Britain ace in *Deep Blue Sea* (2012) (<http://www.musicboxfilms.com/the-deep-blue-sea-movies-1.php>) (last accessed April 2015).

129. MacKenzie, 2007, *The Battle of Britain*, Chapter 3.
130. The AM is thanked, as is the Portuguese Air Force for the loan of Hurricanes.
131. 'Angels One Five was very successful at the box-office' (Murphy, R., 'Fifties British War Films', p. 20) (http://www.academia.edu/3429212/Fifties_British_War_Films) (accessed April 2015).
132. See Ramsey, 1980, 'War Films', in *After the Battle*, pp. 11–18.
133. Brickhill, 1955, *Reach for the Sky*; MacKenzie, 2008, *Bader's War: 'Have a Go at Everything'*; Sarkar, 2013, *Douglas Bader*.
134. Brickhill, 1955, *Reach for the Sky*.
135. MacKenzie, 2007, *The Battle of Britain*, Chapter 4; Popple, 1982, 'Reach for the Sky', in *After the Battle*, pp. 38–53.
136. Frayn Turner, 1981, *The Bader Wing*; Sarkar, 1997, *Bader's Duxford Fighters: The Big Wing Controversy*.
137. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01bq4hn>.
138. Burt and Leasor, 1978, *The One that Got Away*.
139. See Ramsey, 1973, 'The Escapes of Franz von Werra', in *After the Battle*, pp. 44–50.
140. Steinhilper was also shot down and processed through RAF intelligence (Steinhilper and Osborne, 1990, *Spitfire on my Tail: A View from the Other Side*).
141. Gibson, 1975, *Enemy Coast*.
142. Dickson, 1950, *Richard Hillary*.
143. Offenber, 1969, *Lonely Warrior: The Action-Journal of a Battle of Britain Fighter Pilot*.
144. Bailey, 2005, *The Sky Suspended: A Fighter Pilot's Story*.
145. Johnson, 1956, *Wing Leader*.
146. Crang, 2005, 'Identifying the "Few"', pp. 13–22; Simpson, 2015, *A History of the Battle*.
147. Crang, 2005, 'Identifying the "Few"'
148. Wood and Dempster, 1961, *The Narrow Margin*, Appendix 19.
149. Wynn, 1999, *Men of the Battle*.
150. Howard-Williams, (n.d.), *Immortal Memory*.
151. Narracott, 1947, *In Praise of the Few: A Battle of Britain Anthology*.
152. Bates, 2006, *A Moment in Time*.
153. Coward, 1947, *Peace in our Time*.
154. Clarke, 1973, *England under Hitler*.
155. Cooper, 1964, *The Other Man*.
156. RAFM FA03207.
157. The Battle of Britain Lace Panel (undated leaflet to accompany exhibition of panel by the RAF).
158. *Battle of Britain Week Souvenir Programme*, RAFA South London Branch, p. 49.
159. The Philatelic Bulletin included details of the Battle and stamps (*Philatelic Bulletin*, Vol. 3(1): 3–6). The illustrations feature an He111 viewed from the front; a Stuka pursued by a Spitfire; a Do17 tail-plane with Swastika, immersed in the channel, with Hurricanes overhead; Spitfires in line astern; a pilot in a Hurricane cockpit; wingtips and national markings of a Spitfire and Me109, with German cross; contrails over St Paul's cathedral; and AA guns and searchlights in action.
160. <https://postalheritage.wordpress.com/2009/09/15/the-battle-of-britain-stamps-controversy/> (last accessed April 2015).
161. Bray, 2014, *1965: The Year Modern Britain*.
162. Ramsden, 2007, *Don't Mention the War: The British and Germans since 1890*.

163. Gill, 1999, 'Hunforgiven', in *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 11 July, pp. 18–24.
164. Perry, 1965, 'The Air Warriors', in *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 6 June, pp. 20–9.
165. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
166. Dowding died on 15 February 1970 (Obituary: *TT*, 16 February 1970, p. 10/e), his memorial service in Westminster Abbey on 12 March 1970.

Conclusion

1. Indian independence in 1947 set in motion the steady disintegration of the Empire (see Appendix 8). It has been suggested by Richard Overy that the developing post-war mythicisation of 1940 perhaps sought to ameliorate this sense of loss (cited on p. 40 in James, 2006, 'Pie in the Sky?'). This accelerated after the Suez Crisis in 1956 with the realisation that Britain's standing in the world was declining in the face of American dominance and the Cold War.
2. For the RAF it has remained an important focus of celebration, decennial anniversaries continuing to be supported by the RAF's Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, events at individual RAF stations, and, for example, the RAF's official website (<http://www.raf.mod.uk/history/thebattleofbritain.cfm>).
3. Boyce, 2005, *The Falklands War*.
4. Vinen, 2009, *Thatcher's Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s*, pp. 17–20, 83 and 104.
5. For instance: Allen, 1976, *Who Won the Battle of Britain? A Startling, Controversial Reappraisal by one of the Few*; Calder, 1997, *The Myth*; Cumming, 2010, *The Royal Navy*; Grinnell-Milne, 1958, *The Silent Victory*.
6. Brown, 2005, *Honour Restored: The Battle of Britain, Dowding and the Fight for Freedom*; Dixon, 2008, *Dowding and Churchill*; Orange, 2008, *Dowding of Fighter Command*; Wright, 1969, *Dowding and the Battle*.
7. <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/jameskirkup/100277844/very-well-alone-david-cameron-is-hoping-his-doomed-fight-over-juncker-will-be-another-veto-moment/>; <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jun/30/david-cameron-juncker-mps-european-strategy>.
8. An added dimension is the 'special relationship' with the United States which through financial aid and the Atlantic Bridge from early 1941, helped Britain to remain in the war – but not as a 'junior partner in 1940' as suggested by Cameron on a visit to the United States in July 2010 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-10719739>).

Appendix 6 War artists

RAFM: RAF Museum, Hendon

1. Anon., 1941, *Winged Words*.
2. Anon., 1942, *War Pictures*.
3. Bolitho, 1943, *Combat Report*.
4. Forbes and Allen, 1942, *Ten Fighter Boys*.
5. Helmore, 1942, *Air Commentary*.
6. Kennington, 1942, *Drawing the RAF*.
7. Anon., 1942, *War Pictures*.
8. Rothenstein, 1942, *Men of the RAF*.
9. Crook, 1942, *Spitfire Pilot*.

10. Helmore, 1942, *Air Commentary*.
11. Gleave, 1941, *I Had a Row*.
12. Orde, 1942, *Pilots of Fighter Command*.
13. Anon., 1942, *War Pictures*.
14. *Ibid*.
15. Read, 1944, *Paul Nash. The Penguin Modern Painters*.
16. Eates, 1973, *Paul Nash: The Master of the Image, 1889–1946*.
17. Hall, 1996. *Paul Nash*.
18. Gardner, 1940, *A.A.S.F.*
19. IWM, ART LD 6390.
20. Anon., 1942, *War Pictures*.
21. Harries and Harries, 1983, *The War Artists: British Official War Art of the Twentieth Century*.
22. RAFM, FA01163.
23. Anon., 1942, *War Pictures*.
24. RAFM, FA03198.
25. Anon., 1942, *War Pictures*.
26. Ross, 1983, *Colours of War: War Art 1939–45*.
27. Anon., 1942, *War Pictures*.
28. *Ibid*.
29. Ross, 1983, *Colours of War*.
30. *Ibid*.
31. IWM, ART 16112.
32. Anon., 1942, *War Pictures*.
33. RAFM, FA03333.
34. RAFM, FA03334.
35. Powers, 2003, *Eric Ravilious: Imagined Realities*.
36. Anon., 1942, *War Pictures*.
37. IWM, ART LD 6178.
38. *Illustrated London News*, 7 September 1940.
39. Gleed, 1942, *Arise to Conquer*.
40. Barnes, 1943, *Cloud Cover: Recollections of an Intelligence Officer*.
41. Anon., 1942, *War Pictures*; Nockolds, not an official artist, did have some works purchased. One of his images graced the Mol's 1941 *Bomber Command* pamphlet cover – in this case possibly a Whitley seen in silhouette over a river's bend. James, 1996, *Informing*, p. 26.
42. *Illustrated London News*, 28 September 1940.
43. Gleave, 1941, *I Had a Row*.
44. Stanhope Sprigg, 1940, *The Royal Air Force*.
45. Blake, 2001, *Frank Wootton: A Career in Perspective 1911–1998*.
46. Cantwell, 1989, *Images of War: British Posters 1939–45*.
47. Kaplan and Collier, 2002, *The Few: Summer 1940, the Battle of Britain and The Aeroplane*, 31 May 1940.
48. *The Aeroplane*, 21 June 1940.
49. RAFM, FA01481.
50. RAFM, FA01683.
51. RAFM, FA00198.
52. RAFM, FA03185.
53. RAFM, FA01509.
54. RAFM, FA3207.
55. RAFM, FA00171 and FA00172.

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CHUR 20/36
CHUR 4/197A-B

Film and Newsreel

British Movietone News
British Paramount News
British Pathé
Deutsche Wochenschau
Gaumont British News
Universal News

Imperial War Museum, London, UK (IWM)

Film Collection
Sound Recordings
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