



# "STICKY FINGERS"

## IPMS HORNCHURCH – NEWSLETTER



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# **"STICKY FINGERS"**

## **IPMS HORNCHURCH – NEWSLETTER**

**Dave's "Divulgence"**

*Dave*



# "STICKY FINGERS"

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### Peter's "Prattlings"

Firstly I would like to thank every one for voting me in again to the Assistant Secretary post, I'm sure apathy and a "thank God he's still happy to do it" attitude has something to do with it. Still, hopefully I can continue to do a good job for the club. I haven't had a report from Dave but I'm sure we would like to say something similar to.

Secondly, I'm sure we would all like to thank Ken for the sterling work he carried out over the years as the previous Club Secretary. As Steve Hubbard has found, being secretary for SouthEast Essex, being the Secretary is a thankless job at the best of times and any mistakes can be pounced on by the "vultures".

Lastly I want to stress that this is the Clubs newsletter and I would like every one to consider whether they could write at least one article, either a kit review or an overview on a visit to an air show/model show for example. There was a suggestion that if members are going to a particular show and had spaces in their car to take other members could they let me know and I'll add a note in the next "Sticky Fingers". Vice versa if you're looking for a lift do the same and we'll try doing a "Blind Date".

Speaking to Robin Bellamy recently he asked me a question that a friend had overheard on the radio. Unfortunately they missed the answer as they went into a tunnel. The question was: -

What did Harriet Quimby become the 1<sup>st</sup> woman to do in 1912?

Surprisingly we hadn't heard of her before. So onto the Internet I went, searched for her name and quickly found the answer.

She was not only the 1<sup>st</sup> woman to get a pilot licence in the United States but on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1912 she became the 1<sup>st</sup> woman to cross the English Channel. The one big reason why she isn't as famous as Bleriot (apart from being a woman – sexist comment!) was that this took place on the day that the Titanic sank, talk about timing!

*Peter*



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### Ricky's "Ramblings"

#### COMPETITION TIME

Here are the answers to last months puzzle. Were you able to get them all ? one person actually contacted me the day after last month's meeting with all the correct answers' Maybe next time I will give a small prize as an incentive.

H	K	I	S	O	F	W	N	A	C	C	T	N	P	R	Q
E	T	S	D	O	R	N	I	E	R	W	J	T	T	M	A
G	R	A	D	V	B	R	O	L	E	K	N	I	E	H	H
T	R	J	P	E	E	F	Y	N	S	I	L	S	F	H	T
A	Q	U	U	F	E	T	H	N	V	N	S	R	L	E	O
H	A	N	S	A	B	R	A	N	D	E	N	B	U	R	G
A	J	K	T	T	Z	M	W	L	R	O	O	G	W	M	R
L	K	E	H	I	A	S	C	S	V	E	R	G	E	A	Y
B	I	R	A	L	E	H	C	S	N	E	H	J	K	N	J
E	T	S	L	O	E	H	A	V	R	E	H	F	C	R	R
R	A	U	B	T	M	D	S	V	T	Y	K	L	O	P	E
S	I	H	A	I	M	B	S	R	E	K	K	O	F	R	T
T	V	D	T	D	E	H	T	Y	J	K	R	A	C	B	Q
A	A	T	R	G	H	I	O	I	R	E	L	P	M	U	R
D	X	R	O	W	D	F	F	G	K	Z	R	M	X	C	F
T	E	N	S	S	O	V	D	N	U	M	H	O	L	B	Z

#### HOT TIPS HOT TIPS HOT TIPS

The only clean tank is one that comes straight from the workshops. Armoured vehicles live in the field and are always covered in mud, dirt and general wear. This can be simulated by first spraying the hull with either dark brown or black and then lightly sprinkle with flour or talcum powder. Then repaint the colour and add more flour/powder as you think fit. The key is to do many light coats rather than one heavy one.

To blend in photo-etched parts after the glue is dry make up a sloppy paste of Tamiya putty and liquid glue. With a fine paintbrush apply the paste around the areas you have attached the etched brass. Use an older stubble brush to "stipple" the paste and blend it into the area.



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To simulate rust apply a liberal coat of liquid glue to the area that is rusted and then sprinkle fine sand, flour or powder. Dry brush with various shades of rust, the newer the rust the more yellow it looks.

### B – 52 BELIEVE IT

In late 1957 / 58 Fairchild AFB in Washington State was asked to participate in the dedication ceremony for Vandenberg AFB in California.

The practice was quite common to have Air Force aircraft do a "fly by" during the official ceremonies. One aircraft and its crew were designated to do the flypast as part of one of their routine training runs. They were required to be there at a precise time, altitude and set course.

Arriving over the base at high altitude radio checks with the control tower revealed that the cloud ceiling was zero. There was no way that a fly past could be achieved safely at the designated altitude.

Radio conversations with the Command Post added to the confusion, as the B52 was one of several different aircraft planned to participate. The thought of so many aircraft attempting to fly in clouds was unthinkable.

Finally a decision was made to send all the other aircraft out of the area except the B52 which at that time was one of the USAF's newest aircraft. The B52 was to then fly as low as it possibly could at the precise time.

Unable to be seen the aircraft flew over making as much noise as it could thus fulfil its mission.

### German Military Spacecraft of World War 2

In the 1920s and '30s, Germany's Verein für Raumschiffahrt ("Spaceship Society"), a club for model rocket enthusiasts, nurtured the band of men who would eventually place men on the moon. With the encouragement of von Braun's various apologists, historians have often treated the V2 (and the slave labour system that produced it) as a militaristic aberration forced on the VfR's peace-loving idealists by a Nazi bureaucracy whose vision extended no further than new types of super-artillery. Things are seldom so simple however. While some of the pre-war German and Austrian rocket enthusiasts were no doubt dazzled by romantic dreams of space voyaging and while some may have been forced to do what they did, terror weapons were never altogether foreign to their thinking. Manned space flight was, as early as the 1930s, viewed as a weapon of intercontinental war by Sänger, the acknowledged father of practical German space programs. Be that as it may, by 1945, Germany had dabbled with at least three military, manned space programs: Sänger's antipodal bomber, a manned, intercontinental, two-stage V2, and, incredibly enough given Germany's limited resources, a Nazi space station.

Popular interest in space began in Germany in the 'Twenties and peaked in the late 'Thirties. From the first, German rocketry had links with extremism. The first commercial space venture anywhere, the Magdeburg rocket of 1933 was meant to prove the Hohlweltlehr or Hollow World Doctrine of



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one Peter Bender. With the encouragement of anti-intellectual, no-nothing ideologues in the Nazi Party, Bender taught that Copernican cosmology was a lie. Mankind did not live on the outside of a globe orbiting a much larger sun. The universe was actually inside the earth, at the centre of a hollow sphere whose inner surface was the world, as we know it. If the Magdeburg rocket went straight up, it was held, it would hit the antipodes (the opposite side of the world), proving Bender's contentions. The backers of the scheme of course failed to note that no rocket flies "straight." Any sufficiently powerful rocket would be able to reach the antipodes after a curving, sub-orbital, ballistic flight, so the demonstration would prove nothing. The Bank of Magdeburg may have had its doubts about the Hohlweltlehr, but it did finance a man-carrying rocket, perhaps for publicity purposes. A series of sub-scale test shots was completed successfully, but only after a series of disasters that shook the confidence of the prospective pilots. The effort came to nothing.

Sänger's bomber was at once the earliest serious plan for manned space flight in the Germanic world and the most advanced and forward-thinking. The "Silver Bird," as the development team called it, was a hypersonic, single-stage-to-orbit aerospace plane powered, in its original form, by gasoline and liquid oxygen rocket motors. It would cruise at speeds above Mach 10 (6200 mph, or just about three times the SR-71 Blackbird's published record) at altitudes between 37 and 47 miles. It was an extraordinary conception for 1933. By 1938, when Sänger offered his creation to the Austrian war ministry, his stainless-steel wind tunnel models featured ultra-thin, knife-edged, wedge-profile wings and a flat-bottomed, plano-convex fuselage that earned the craft the further nickname of "flat iron." Sänger arrived at this shape after exhaustive trials in what were then the world's only supersonic wind tunnels, located in Germany. The design included a pressure cabin, retractable landing gear, a bomb bay, and jettisonable heat shields for the cabin windows.

In its operation, the Bomber was a hybrid of aircraft and orbital spacecraft. It was to take off from a special rocket sled running on a monorail. When it reached 1640 ft/sec, it would lift off and climb to operational altitude in a steep, near-ballistic trajectory. But the Silver Bird would shut down its engines before attaining orbital velocity. It would sink back to earth until it bounced off the upper edge of the atmosphere. The bomber would proceed to the target like a stone skipping over the surface of a pond. After dropping its weapons, it would continue on around the globe to its base.

As near as we know, the Sänger aerospace plane got no closer to the hardware stage than the aforementioned wind-tunnel models. Germany's other notable manned space venture, on the other hand, was a member of the V2 rocket family. Many of its elements were actually tested using sub-scale, V2 components. The A9/A10 project was a two-stage, hypersonic, semi-ballistic manned bomber with a planned 3000-mile range. Taking the aerodynamics of the experimental, winged A4b version of the V2 for their starting point, the engineers at Germany's Peenemünde rocket centre added a pressurised cockpit, landing gear, flaps, ailerons, elevators, and a turbojet sustainer engine. They planned to mount this A9 on a huge A10 booster, in essence a V2 grown to monstrous proportions.

The A9/A10 composite would take off vertically. After staging, the A9 component would follow a ballistic trajectory to the edge of space, 210 miles up. It would then fall back to earth until, 750 miles from its base, at an altitude of about 30 miles, and at speeds of over 8000 mph, the wingborne portion of the flight began. The A9 would approach its target in a high-Mach, unpowered glide.



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Forty-five minutes into the mission, it would release its modest one-ton bomb load, start the turbojet, and turn for home.

The most ambitious and, perhaps, delusional of the Nazi space schemes was a 1945 project for an orbital space station armed with a death ray, a huge space mirror. In 1929, Herman Oberth had proposed a potentially practical space station that served as the basis for the later project. But the 1945 station was to be one giant mirror fabricated entirely from metallic sodium. Over-sized V2 rockets were to carry the thing to its 1500-mile orbit in prefabricated sections. Here, Nazi spacemen would assemble it, using electricity provided by a system of solar-fired boilers and steam-driven dynamos. Breathable oxygen would come from pumpkins grown under fluorescent light. When they were finished, the crew would steer the station over target nations, focus the sun's rays, and burn cities and boil reservoirs.

The space station is patently ridiculous, even today. It is hard to say how practical either of the rocket plane schemes could have been either, given the state of the art in the 1940s and the ever-worsening shortages of rare metals and petrochemicals. The German engineers appear to have grossly underestimated the thermal loads on a winged re-entry vehicle. These would not be on the order of an Apollo capsule, but they would still pose a formidable problem. Stainless steel might not be up to the job and was hard to fabricate. Titanium was still in the future. Inconel and the nimonic alloys that made the X-15 possible were still a few years away. Even now, the only working aerospace plane, the Space Shuttle, has to have ceramic tiles over all highly heated surfaces. Propulsion would also be a problem. As the new masters of German science, the US and USSR, discovered in the 1950s, V2-type engines could not simply be scaled up in the manner planned for the A10. Sänger-style, single-stage-to-orbit systems are still no more than a dream after sixty years.

Even if the A9/A10 or the Antipodal Bomber had been built and made to work, one wonders what it would all be for. A paltry ton of high explosive could hardly have a measurable effect on the war. It could never justify either program's staggering cost in money, raw materials, and industrial capacity. Some writers have suggested that one or both was an intended delivery vehicle for a Nazi nuclear weapon. But the Nazis had no hope of fielding an A-bomb by 1944 or 1945. In any case, it would be decades before nuclear weapons could be had in 2000-4000 lb packages (the Hiroshima and Nagasaki weapons weighed in at around 10,000 lbs each). The Nazi space program is thus best understood as little more than a self-indulgent delusion, one of many that occupied Germany's bunker-bound leadership and self-serving intelligentsia as disaster and defeat overtook the nation they professed to lead.

*Ricky*





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### EVENT NEWS

By Bob Ryan

Over the summer months there will be a list airshows and other events, which may be of interest to club members. If any members have information they would like to pass on, please would they let me, Dave Ryan or Peter Bagshaw know.

### June

26-27 RAF Waddington International Airshow  
Phone 01522 726100  
3 miles south of Lincoln

Red Arrows, Frecce Tricoloris, Su-27 Pair, Patrouille Swiss, plus modern and vintage jets and warbirds.

26-27 Biggin Hill Kent Air Fair  
Phone 01959 572277

Anniversary of the Harrier, Su-27s, vintage and modern aircraft. Large area of stalls and marquees. Historic vehicles etc.

### July

4 Summer Airshow Old Warden Beds  
A1 road, about 65 miles from Dagenham

If you have never been to Old Warden, then you are missing going back in time. Probably the oldest collection of aircraft in the world, from the Bristol Bauxite to the Mk.5 Spitfire. About 30 aircraft, including the De Havilland Comet and the Sea Hurricane. All aircraft in the collection are airworthy.

10-11 Flying Legends Airshow Duxford  
Phone 01223 835000  
Off M11 about 45 miles from Barking

Without doubt the premier warbirds show in Europe. If you have not been to Duxford, then you haven't lived. Apart from the show, for your money you also get hangers full of aircraft from Concorde to the Lancaster, Vulcan, B-52 etc, also the 8<sup>th</sup> Airforce Museum and the Land Warfare Museum. A word of warning, if you do go try to be there by 8:30am as the car park gets full on the airfield fairly early and there's a lot to see before the show starts at about 1:30 p.m.

Aircraft expected





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15 Spitfires, 10 Mustangs, 6 Hurricanes, 2 Kittyhawks, 3 B-25 Mitchells, 4 Sea Furies, 3 Lysanders, 3 Skyraiders, a Catalina, 2 Swordfish, various Grumman cats, Thunderbolt, Blenheim, Invader, Harvards, Me-109, Kingcobra, Battle of Britain Flight and a B-17.

23-25 Beltring  
Hop farm in Kent

The best military show in the UK. There are literally hundreds of vehicles on display from Jeeps to Panzer IIIs to Chieftains. This year there are going to be battle re-enactments.

INVICTA MILITARY VEHICLE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

**I.M.P.S.**

**WAR & PEACE SHOW**

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Telephone: 01304 813128 Facsimile: 01304 812422  
E-Mail: rex@theoldrectory.freeserve.co.uk  
Web site: <http://freespace.virgin.net/john.blackman4/imps.html>

Admission Charges:  
Friday - Adult £6, Children & OAP's £4, Family Ticket £18 (2 Adults & 2 children, up to 16 years of age)  
You can purchase an all weekend ticket/showpass for £14 Adults, Children and OAP's £10  
These can be purchased on the Friday from: The Hop Farm Country Park, Tel: 01622 872068  
Saturday and Sunday - Adult £8, Children & OAP's £6, Family ticket for each day £25 (2 Adults, 2 Children, up to 16 years of age)

24-25 Royal International Air Show RAF Fairford

Biggest military airshow in the world. Modern aircraft from around the world and NATO. Miles (literally !) of aircraft on static display and large numbers in the airshow.

If any one is going to any of the shows listed, please go early and enjoy yourself.

**Bob**



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### Wrighty's References

#### ***Fighters of the Luftwaffe – The Night Fighters Part 2***

This second part covers the follow on from 1942, how the force was built up in the mid war years, the development of new tactics, introduction of the Wilde Sau units and the beginning of its major battles with the RAF Night Bomber force, which proved so costly to that service.

#### **Night Fighters 1943**

With the increase of Bomber Command night attacks and the new four engined heavies such as the Lancaster and Halifax, gradually equipping all RAF bomber squadrons by the end of the year, the NF force had to be increased to meet these attacks on the German homeland.

Bases extended from Eastern France to Denmark, radio beacons were set up as assembly points for the NF units, who homed onto them to be directed by the ground controllers to positions to attack the bomber stream.

The increase in strength is illustrated in the tables for Dec 42, mid 43 and Dec 43.

#### **The New Units**

In July 1943 the Hamburg raid took place, when "Window" was used for the first time, it was from the chaos caused that prompted the formation of "Wilde Sau" units. These units worked in conjunction with searchlights and illumination staffeln to produce the conditions necessary for single engined fighters to attack the bomber stream, in a free search role.

Formed in July from an original Commando unit using Focke Wulf FW-190A-4s, the first "Wilde Sau" unit was JG/300, it had 3 gruppen, soon followed in August and September by JG/301 and JG/302.

Unit	Based At
I/JG 300	Bonn Hagelar
II/JG 300	Rheine
III/JG 300	Oldenberg
I/JG 301	Neubiberg
I/JG 302	Doberitz

Using specialised aircraft the Focke Wulf FW-190A-5/U2N and the Messerschmitt Me-109G-6/U4N, these units only had limited numbers of the radar equipped special aircraft as the year entered autumn. Because of the supply shortage they were forced to use ordinary day fighters which were shared with day fighter units, who were at the same airfields, i.e. II/JG 11 with II/JG 302, II/JG 27 with I/JG 302 and parts of JG/1 with JG/300.

Further gruppen were added to JG/301 and 302 (II/JG 301, III/JG 301, II/JG 302 and III/JG 302) before the end of the year. Early successes with these units in the summer did not continue, as losses began to creep up during the winter of 43/44.



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Another new unit formed was NJ Gruppe 10, which was basically a test and trials unit for new aircraft like the Heinkel He-219, and testing other devices like new radar on Junkers Ju-88s and Messerschmitt Me-110s. This unit was used operationally from its base at Werneuchen and forward base at Bonn Hagelar.

### **Reorganisation**

In September a full reorganisation of the NF force took place, previously known as Fliegerkorps XII, the NF organisation became Luftflotte Reich (Fighter Group 1). The old box system (which allowed only limited numbers of aircraft to operate within a given area) was scrapped.

The NF defensive area was split up into 5 divisional areas, (see map). By using the beacons, the controllers had a very mobile force that could be vectored to attack the bomber stream, land at the nearest airfield to re-arm & refuel then either return to the attack or fly back to their home base the next day.

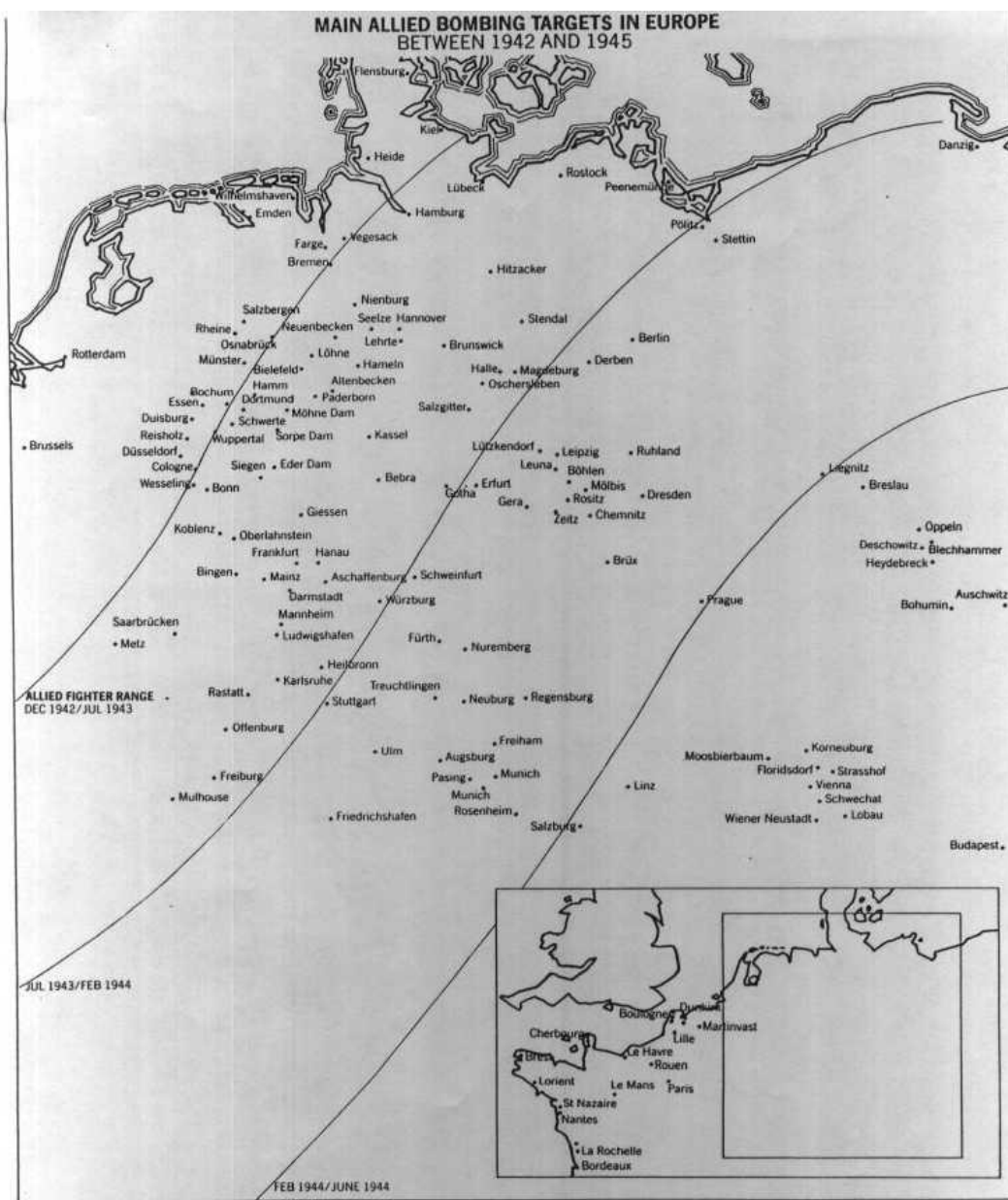
During the summer all NJG 2 had returned to Germany from Italy badly depleted, this Geschwader was being rebuilt to take up a defensive role by the end of autumn.

NJG 5 also built up strength forming a III, IV & V Gruppe between August and December. The IV Gruppe of NJG/4 in France was recalled to join up with operational training and replacement units, to form I/NJG 6 & II/NJG 6.



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### Eastern Front

A need for NFs on the Eastern front prompted the formation of NJG 100 in August using Junkers Ju-88, Focke Wulf FW-189 and Dornier Do-217 aircraft, they were operational on the Central and Southern sectors of the Russian front. By late October this unit was fully Junkers Ju-88 equipped. Another independent unit NJG 200 was formed in November, operating Dornier Do-217 and Messerschmitt Me-110s they soon took up operational status over the Northern sector of the Russian front.



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### Problems and Setbacks

During the year I/NJG 1 & Stab NJG/1 had the Heinkel He-219 at first on trial, and then fully equipped, but official high level interference prevented the introduction of the best night fighter of the war. Due to a lack of engines the Junkers Ju-88 was delayed in getting into service. Late in the year the first Junkers Ju-88Cs complete with radar made their debut.

### The Big Battles

Between August and December, RAF Bomber Command raided Berlin on 11 occasions, as well as many other targets, the effectiveness of the NF's new system can be seen from the following list, given that the NFs were responsible for approximately 80% of the casualties to the bombers. The shift from the box system which allowed only a few planes to attack, had given all the many planes available a chance to attack the bomber stream. However it was still the experts who took the major tolls, some taking 3, 4 and even 5 on occasions per mission, whilst others flew up to 70 missions without scoring.

Berlin Raids						
Date	Sent	Lost	Halifax	Lancaster	Stirling	Other
23/24 Aug	719	62	25	20	17	
30/31 Aug	613	47	26	20		
3/4 Sep	316	20		20		
18/19 Nov	440	9		9		
22/23 Nov	764	26	10	11	5	
23/24 Nov	383	26		26		
26/27 Nov	443	28		28		
2/3 Dec	458	40	2	37		1
16/17 Dec	498	25+34		59		
23/24 Dec	390	15		15		
29/30 Dec	712	20	9	11		

This table shows how the heavy losses on the early raids were reduced in the November phase, but a big increase by the end of the year, proving the effectiveness of the NF Force still increasing in strength for 1944.

### Strength of Units

Dec 42

NJG/1 :- I, II, III, IV Gruppen

NJG/2 :- I, II & IV

NJG/3 :- I, II, III & IV

NJG/4 :- I, II & III

NJG/5 :- I & II

Total strength 390 (Note II/NJG 2 was in Africa)

Mid 43

NJG/1 :- I, II, III, IV Gruppen

NJG/2 :- I, II, III & IV



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NJG/3 : - I, II, III & IV  
NJG/4 : - I, II, III & IV  
NJG/5 : - I, II & IV  
Total strength 360 (Wilde Sau units not included)

End of 43

NJG/1	:-	I, II, III, IV Gruppen	Code G9
NJG/2	:-	I, II, III & IV	Code R4
NJG/3	:-	I, II, III & IV	Code L1
NJG/4	:-	I, II, III & IV	Code 3C
NJG/5	:-	I, II & IV	Code C9
NJG/6	:-	I & II	Code 2Z

Total strength 600

*Alan*





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### Schedule for 1999/2000 Season

<b>June 21<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>Kit Clinic. Bring along models with problems for the club to solve</b>
<b>July 19<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Photographs Night. Bring along any interesting photos.</b>
<b>August 16<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Competition</b> Aircraft      Open Miscellaneous      Open
<b>September 20<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Guest Speaker – TBA</b>
<b>October 18<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Video Night</b>
<b>November 15<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Competition</b> Aircraft      Civil – any scale Miscellaneous      Vehicles with tyres
<b>December 20<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Christmas Nibbles and Quiz</b>
<b>January 17<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Slide Show – Peter Quinn</b>
<b>February 21<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>Competition</b> Aircraft      Jets Miscellaneous      Sci-Fi, TV or Movie related
<b>March 20<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Guest Speaker – TBA</b>
<b>April 17<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Competition</b> Aircraft      Open Miscellaneous      Open
<b>May 15<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>AGM</b>

N.B. In August there will be a “Bring & Build” competition. The idea is to bring along a wrapped up kit (usually something like a series 2 Airfix or equivalent). A draw is then made out of a sack and the kit you pull out is to be built by the December meeting. Please note that the kit must be injection moulded and in mint condition, this is not an excuse to get rid of any old rubbish!





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### CONTACT

Journal for Ex-Servicemen/women and Associated Club Members.

#### ***LEROS***

By Ron Murray ex ~A" Company 1st Battalion Kings Own Royal Regiment

At the conclusion of its course of combined operations 1st Kings Own had returned to Syria, no more than 25 miles from Beirut where Brigadier Barraclough was commanding. Here on 1st November the Battalion received orders to go to an unknown destination which later turned out to be Leros. Considered by the Government to be of paramount importance. All ranks embarked in destroyers at Alexandria on 3<sup>rd</sup> November and arrived at Leros at 2am on the 5<sup>th</sup>. On that day when the 8th Kings Own left Malta for Egypt, the Garrison consisted of the 4<sup>th</sup> Buff, 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Irish Fusiliers and the 1<sup>st</sup> Kings Own with some light AA gunners and some Indian Engineers.

The Italians were manning coastal defence guns reinforced by four eighteen pounders. As nothing bigger could use the narrow roads the transport consisted of a few jeeps with trailers.

Deep bays broke the island into a shape not unlike a butterfly flying North East with a wing span of some 8 miles, and a body of 2 miles long. 4<sup>th</sup> Buffs held the northern wing, with "C" Company 1st Kings Own under Major W.P.T. Tilly, located as "Fortress Reserve" just north of Gurna Bay. 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Irish Fusiliers with a company of the Royal West Kents defended the central portion, which included the neck of land between Gurna and Alinda bays and Leros town. 1st Kings Own was responsible for the southern area.

On the day that Kos fell the Admiralty had ordered strong Naval reinforcements, including five Cruisers to the Aegean from Malta, and General Eisenhower sent two groups of long-range fighters to the Middle East as a temporary measure. But they had to be withdrawn on October the 11<sup>th</sup>. Throughout the week in which the Regiment was preparing to resist the impending attack there was no air support of any kind. It was therefore only by night that Allied ships could operate without crippling loss. By day, in spite of continuous air attacks there were remarkably few casualties, but the effect on morale was considerable. Telephone wires were constantly cut and this, with the unreliability of the wireless, made control difficult. The main air attack was directed against the Italian gun positions, which were effectively silenced. Captain H P J Burke was on a course in the Middle East when he heard that the Battalion was going into action, he applied for and obtained permission to rejoin. He had made his own way in a minesweeper and succeeded in reaching the regiment a few hours before the action began.

It was about 04:30hrs 12th November when the light was beginning to grow in the East that the German invasion fleet was sighted. The Italian coastal guns were powerless to prevent the German troops from being put ashore in Palma Bay, near Pasta di Sopra on the N/East coast of the Buffs sector and in Tageli Bay near Leros Town. This last landing was staunchly resisted by the Royal Irish Fusiliers although they prevented the capture of the two features of Castle hill and Mount Appetici they were not strong enough to drive the enemy back into the sea.



# "STICKY FINGERS"

## IPMS HORNCHURCH – NEWSLETTER

The Buffs had insufficient troops to cover the whole of the area and during the morning the enemy secured a foothold on Mt Clidi. Major Tilly's company of Kings Own was hurried to the scene in jeeps. When it deployed to attack, the fire of its machine guns was smothered by that of the German mortars and the first effort was checked. The men slowly rallied and gained a little ground. but in the confused fighting which followed they were slowly forced back westward. They were struggling not only against numerical superiority on the ground. but also against persistent and almost unhindered air attack. In the early afternoon Major Tilly sent a platoon to his right to occupy a small ridge running towards Alinda Bay. and so join up with the Royal Irish Fusiliers. No sooner was this move completed at about 2pm than fighter-bombers swept over the Island from the S.West. They sprayed fire from the machine guns in their wings and pounded the rugged slopes with high explosives. Behind them flew the JU 52s. and from these bellied out mushroom-like puffs. Some 500 parachutists descended on the neck of land between Gurna and Alinda bays which had so recently been vacated by Major Tilly's company. A few German parachutists were shot down by small arms fire and a Bren gunner of C Company claimed a spectacular hit when his victim fell like a driven partridge into the sea, but in spite of a stiff breeze the majority dropped successfully from a loss- height. In this position they effectively divided the island in two and isolated the Buffs and "C" Company Kings Own from the rest of the garrison. While a fight ensued in the centre with the Royal Irish Fusiliers. Major Tilly launched a counter attack on Mount Clidi with the survivors of his Company. In hand to hand fighting the enemy was pushed down the forward slope and in the course of the advance Major Tilly was wounded. With the arrival of enemy reinforcements the company was forced back 300 yards before it could consolidate and hold on. L/Cpl J. Hall noticed that Major Tilly was not there so he went back under fire from close range and within throwing distance of hand grenades. He found his Company Commander and brought him back to safety. In its new position the Company was reinforced the next day by the Buffs.

In order to dislodge the enemy paratroops from their positions on the neck, it was the Brigadiers intention to counter attack with two Companies of Fusiliers and 'B' Company of Kings Own. The two Companies of Fusiliers had already been fighting hard, and to reorganise them and ensure their concentration in the darkness proved difficult indeed. Of the three Companies. only one arrived at the rendezvous, so the operation had to be postponed. During the night more German troops were landed to strengthen the forces attacking Mt Appetici.

November 13th dawned with cloudy skies, high wind and heavy seas, but this did not prevent the enemy from landing more parachutists to reinforce the others. The resistance on Clidi that day was overcome and the Germans were able to concentrate on the built up area along Alinda Bay. The paratroops attacked from the N/West whilst those in Tangeli Bay took Mount Appeteci and Castle Hill at about noon. For the rest of the day the heavy attacks of the Luftwaffe prevented further action. but at 2a.m. on the 14th November a counter attack was delivered. In spite of every effort only one company of Fusiliers plus "A" and "D" Companies Kings Own. could be collected for it. "A" Company Commanded by Captain D.J.P. Thirkill-White of the Suffolks with Captain C.J. Blyth as his Second in Command, was directed onto the searchlight and gun position at the top of the hill. "D" Company had to cover dark ground, which abounded in caves, each one had to be assaulted separately. and platoons were forced to act independently. Touch between the companies was soon lost "A" Company reached the first gun position, after which it came under heavy fire



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from the flanks, the Company Commander and two of the platoon Commanders being killed. Blyth was wounded and in great pain. but he continued to lead the company into the attack until he was again wounded in the neck and died on his way back to the Regimental aid post (The Company "Chalky White" was killed at the top of the hill.)

In spite of heavy machine gone fire from the left flank. "D" Company was able to gain ground and eventually. step by step. forced its way to the top of the slope where the situation was much confused. Here Major M.R. Lonsdale was wounded Burke and Matheson killed.

Meantime the Germans launched an attack under cover of mortar fire, which threatened the safety of Fortress Headquarters. "A" Company was withdrawn from Mount Appetici. "D" Company with the Fusiliers. continued to hold the crest until well after dawn when. after heavy mortar fire the Germans, "every' man a Tommy Gunner" attacked in their turn. They could not be held and the Kings Own and Fusiliers were forced back down the hill amid showers of Grenades.

"C" Company and the Buffs retook Clidi, and after capturing 130 prisoners, re-established control of their part of the Island. "B" and H.Q. Companies attacked the paratroopers from the S/West. O.C. "B" Company. Major G.H. Duxbury went forward alone at one point bombed two enemy machine gun posts and was mortally wounded while going to deal with a third. This made it possible for the two Companies to gain ground and take prisoners. When all other officers of his Company were killed. Captain lit L.P. Maxwell, on being ordered to send out a patrol, led it himself and was also killed. Many of these casualties were caused by accurate bombing and machine gun fire by German aircraft. Confused fighting continued in many quarters after dark when two more companies of the Royal West Kents were put ashore in Portolago Bay from Samos. On the 15th there was more fighting on Clidi during which the hill was once more lost but elsewhere the Germans were kept in check. The 4th Company of Royal West Kents landed that night. 170 German prisoners were sent to Samos but the Germans were at that time bringing in important reinforcements at Alinda Bay. They were estimated at a thousand fighting troops and certainly 88mm guns. tractors and other heavy equipment. On the 16th "A". "B" and "C" Companies having reformed. the Battalion concentrated for a final attack on the area occupied by Brigade Headquarters near Appetici Hill. but before it could be launched news was received of the Islands surrender. The total number of casualties is not known. Fifteen officers were killed of those wounded, five were evacuated and three were included among the fifteen taken prisoner.

The withdrawal of the American fighters had sealed the fate of Leros. With no air support and heavily attacked by enemy aircraft. the three Battalions had fought for five days until they were exhausted and could fight no more. The Commander in Chief Ninth Army General Wilson. reported to the Prime Minister Leros has fallen. after a very Gallant struggle against overwhelming Air attack. It was a near thing between success and failure. Very' little was needed to turn the scales in our favour and to bring off a Triumph. Every-thing was done to evacuate the Garrisons of the other Aegean Islands and to rescue the survivors from Leros. Eventually an Officer and fifty-seven other ranks of the Kings Own rejoined their details in Palestine. (American air support would have given Victory).