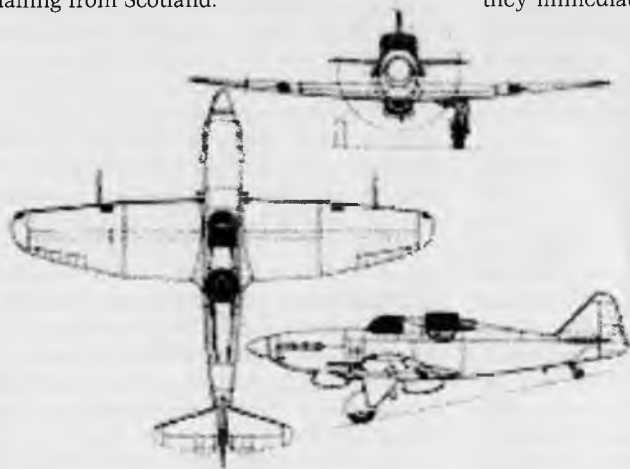


1940: Dover and Tragedy in the Air

by Alan Lee

It was early July 1940 and the Battle of Britain had just begun. 141 Squadron equipped with their new aircraft the Boulton Paul Defiant had just arrived at R.A.F. West Malling from Scotland.



The Defiant had no forward firing weapons but carried a gunner at the rear of the cockpit in a turret mounted with four .303 Browning Machine Guns. The German Messerschmitt 109 pilots soon realised the Defiant was slow, lacked manoeuvrability and was a much softer target than the Hurricane. Also the design of the rear turret made it very difficult to escape and it was a notorious death trap.

On 19th July the squadron left West Malling for their forward aerodrome at R.A.F. Hawkinge. The weather was sunny with light rain showers and the coast of France clearly visible. About midday the Dover A.A. guns were engaged quite heavily with the Luftwaffe who were bombing the harbour.

At 12.30hr 141 Squadron took off from Hawkinge to patrol south of Folkestone. Three aircraft had engine problems so only nine lifted off. They were then ordered to

patrol Cap Griz Nez at 5,000 feet. Unknown to the pilots at 20,000 feet lurked a flight of Me109's of JG 51 Squadron. Attacking out of the sun, taking the Defiants totally unawares they immediately shot four down. Of those

who bailed out only one gunner survived becoming only the second person to save his life using the new static X line parachute.

Only one Me109 was destroyed and after being badly shot up crash landed at its base, the pilot, Fw. Heilmann, dying of his wounds the next day.

Badly shot up, the remaining planes of 141 Squadron tried to return to base. Two made it safely back

landing at 13.00hr, the remainder was as follows:

IL6983 Hit, returned to base, PO MacDougall unhurt, Sgt Wise missing.

I L7001 Crashed near base: engine failure. Flt Lt Loudon injured (treated Canterbury Hospital) PO Farnes baled out (rescued by the Ramsgate Lifeboat).

IL7009 Crashed at Elms Vale, Dover. Flt Lt Donald and PO Hamilton both killed.

IL6974 Shot down in the channel. PO Kemp and Sgt Crombie both missing.

IL6995 Shot down in the channel. PO Howley and Sgt Curley both missing.

IL7015 Shot down in the channel. PO Kidson and Sgt Atkins both missing.

IL7016 Shot down in the channel. PO Gardner baled out wounded (treated Canterbury Hospital) PO Slatter missing.

The "Dogfight" only lasted about 10 minutes and none of those missing were ever found. On returning to base the squadron was released from further

operations and they returned to West Malling. Next day they received seven new replacement aircraft. On 21st July they were posted back to Scotland.

Boulton Paul Defiant



HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

Thursday 8th to Sunday 11th September 2005

Derek Leach

Heritage Open Days, organised by English Heritage and the Civic Trust every year, celebrates England's fantastic architecture by encouraging free access to buildings that are usually closed to the public or would normally charge an admission fee.

Dover has a great wealth of historic buildings, but only some are normally open to the public such as Dover Castle, the Maison Dieu and the Roman Painted House. The Dover Society thought that it was about time Dover made an effort to have more buildings open, if only for a few days. As a result five buildings will be open this year. The Dover Society is coordinating publicity both nationally through the regional booklet and the on line service produced by Heritage Open Days and locally using local press and radio. Details of opening times are:

St Edmund's Chapel Thursday 8th to Sunday 11th September 10am to 4pm

Maison Dieu House Thursday 8th and Friday 9th September 10am to 4pm

Archcliffe Fort

<i>(guided tours)</i>	Saturday 10th September	10.30am to 11.30am & 3pm to 4pm
	Sunday 11th September	3pm to 4pm

Unitarian Church,

Adrian Street	Sunday 11th September	11am to 3pm
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Grand Shaft Staircase Saturday 10th & Sunday 11th September 10am to 4.30pm

The Drop Redoubt will also be open at a small charge.

Hopefully, many of our members will take up this opportunity. It is a new initiative for The Dover Society and, if successful, we hope to increase the number of properties participating next year.