

Air Ministry News Service

FIGHTER ATTACK OVER HAVRE

Fighter Command Spitfires which today escorted bombers to attack enemy shipping at Le Havre destroyed eight enemy aircraft.

Seven fell to the Wing led by Group Captain F. V. Beamish D.S.O. and Bar., D.F.C., A.F.C., who himself shot down two. His first victim was an F.W. 190, and after destroying an Me. 109 a few moments later, he almost crashed into the cliffs of the French coast.

The sector from which the Group Captain's Wing operates celebrated the day by passing the 450 total of enemy aircraft destroyed since the beginning of the war.

Group Captain Beamish's first victim was at 8,000 feet over Le Havre. Black smoke poured from the F.W. 190 after he had fired at it and other pilots of the Wing saw it explode a few seconds later. What was left of the machine crashed into the sea.

The Group Captain then attacked an Me. 109 which dived vertically past the Le Havre cliffs.

"As the Hun was going straight down", said the Group Captain "my wing commander called me up on the R.T. to say there was another on my tail. I pulled up and only just missed the top of the cliff. It was abit too close for my liking. "

Having seen one of his pilots bale out over the sea the Group Captain returned from the English Coast when on his way home to make certain that the Shore Station knew the exact position of the pilot. The Group Captain was one of the last of the Wing to land at his home base.

A New Zealand squadron in the same wing destroyed three Me.109s., while the English squadron leader of an Australian Squadron "bagged" his 10th enemy aircraft by shooting down an Me.109, which almost disintegrated in the air. After a two-second burst from the Squadron Leader's guns part of the Me. 109's wing and also its wheels fell off and the aircraft crashed into the sea.

A South African Squadron leader, Squadron Leader Hugo, whose squadron recently destroyed eight enemy fighters without loss to themselves, got another today.

With almost all his ammunition exhausted after he had destroyed one Me.109 and shared in the destruction of another, Flight Lieutenant Compton of the New Zealand squadron shepherded a bomber which was flying on one engine.

"I had a few worrying moments when the other engine of the bomber began to smoke," said the Flight Lieutenant, "but it got safely home and landed with me."

The Me.109 destroyed by this Flight Lieutenant was first attacked by a New Zealand pilot officer who was having his first combat with an enemy aircraft.

"He made a wizard head-on attack," said the Flight Lieutenant, "I saw both the Spitfire and the Me.109 firing like blazes at each other as they approached."

When they had passed, the Hun showed a Glycol leak and I gave him a few seconds burst which finished him off in flames.

The other Me.109 crashed into the sea about a quarter of a mile from the French Coast.

A sergeant pilot in the New Zealand unit destroyed the squadron's third enemy aircraft in the afternoon by shooting down a Me.109 in flames.

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