

23/3/40. - No.1.

FRENCH OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE

(MORNING)

The following official communique was
issued from French G.H.Q. this morning:-

PATROL ACTIVITY TO THE EAST OF THE SAAR.

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

NEWS SERVICE FOR ALLOTMENT HOLDERS, NO. 19.

HOW TO PREPARE SEED BEDS.

Garden soil as dug is not in a fit condition to receive seeds - or even seed potatoes! It first has to be fined down. The following process is recommended:

With the garden fork prick over the ground to a depth of three or four inches, the tines of the fork also being used to crumble up any lumps that may be found. Then take the rake and work it vigorously through the soil, aiming not only to reduce the lumps to still smaller proportions but also to level and even off the surface.

Work backwards when raking so that the foot-marks made are removed.

The Order of Going In.

On the allotment where winter work has proceeded according to plan and the ground is all ready for seeding, enthusiasm may lead the gardener to take time by the forelock and, over Easter, sow all of the crops he intends to grow.

Alas! you cannot take time by the forelock in gardening; you cannot, by intensified effort, crowd a month's work into a weekend so that the other weekends will be free. There is a regulation period for sowing each vegetable and nothing but harm comes from anticipating that period.

The vegetables which it will be safe to sow in the next week or so are broad beans, summer cabbage, early stump-root carrots, cauliflower, cos and cabbage lettuce, onions, parsley, parsnip, early peas, radish, summer spinach and summer turnip. All of the other vegetables normally grown on the allotment are not due to be sown till April or later.

The most urgent sowings are those of broad beans, onions and parsnips for they ought really to have been in in February.

Lettuce, radishes and spinach might well occupy just a small patch of ground apiece somewhere on the plot; there is no need to waste a whole row on each. These crops mature very quickly - you will be gathering spinach twelve weeks after sowing; and when they are ready they must be used up quickly. So the custom is to sow just a pinch of seed at, say, fortnightly intervals.

For the other vegetables, make drills of the following distances apart, using a piece of string, tightly stretched, to keep them quite straight, for nothing gives a garden an untidier look than crooked rows of plants:

<u>Vegetable.</u>	<u>Distance apart of Drill.</u>
Broad bean	2 ft.
Carrots	9 - 14 inches
Lettuce	12 inches
Onion	12 "
Parsnip	15 "
Early pea	2 ft. 6 ins.
Turnip	12 inches

Grow parsley as an edging round the outside of the plot. The summer cabbage and cauliflower should be sown on a spare piece of ground, the seeds just being scattered thinly over the surface and covered with a sprinkling of sifted soil. These two vegetables have to be grown on a "three-phase" plan. They are sown in a seed bed, planted out in the seedling stage into a nursery bed, grown on there for a while and finally transferred to the main plot where they are to finish. This method must be adopted with all the cabbage family.

NOT TO BE PUBLISHED BEFORE
THE EVENING NEWSPAPERS OF
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27TH, 1940.

AIR MINISTRY WEEKLY NEWS LETTER.
(Evening Papers).

Note: The information contained in this News Letter may be used by the Press without acknowledgement. If it is desired to refer to the Air Ministry as the source of the information, the expression "The Air Ministry Announces:-" is NOT to be used.

C O N T E N T S

100,000 Miles Over Germany.

The Air Defence of London.

High Flier's Oxygen Supply.

V.C's. of the Air.

First B.A.F. Golf Course.

Questionnaire for Caterpillars.

The Air Force Digs for Victory.

Press and Publicity Branch,
Air Ministry,
King Charles Street,
Whitehall, S.W.1.

27th March, 1940.

100,000 MILES OVER GERMANY.

Aircraft of the Royal Air Force Bomber Command have flown more than 100,000 miles on reconnaissance over Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland since the outbreak of war.

Several times our bombers have flown over Berlin. They have been over Vienna and over Prague. They have visited Stuttgart and Mannheim and have made detailed daylight, photographic reconnaissances of nearly all the important towns of North West Germany.

The longest flight was made by night to Poland and back recently. Most of the long flights to Eastern Germany and Poland are made by night - to Berlin, Vienna, Prague, Munich and Poznan.

The aircraft used have included Armstrong-Whitworth Whitleys and Handley-Page Hampdens, and Vickers Wellingtons. But Bristol-Blenheims have been used extensively on daylight reconnaissances in Western Germany and over the Frisian Islands. These are reputed to be specially suited to low-flying attack.

Some of the longer flights have been made, at altitudes above normal operational height subjecting the crews to severe cold - more than 30 degrees below zero - and reduced atmospheric pressure, and necessitating the use of oxygen masks.

Here is a statement by a member of an air crew engaged on a long distance flight over Germany:

"I began to feel cold. Just before midnight it grew worse. I lost the use of all my fingers. As I bent down, a draught of cold air suddenly struck my face. One of my eyes was closed tightly and for some time I could not open it. Later I recovered the use of my left hand, but my right hand remained numb. When I landed I found that it was frozen stiff."

One of the crew of another bomber flying high over Brunswick became unconscious through the intense cold. To bring him round the pilot descended to a warmer level.

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To counteract the intense cold as far as possible all aircraft are fitted with heating equipment but in addition the crew carries rations of chocolate, boiled sweets, sultanas and nuts, flasks of hot drinks and chewing gum. The crew use the chewing gum to freshen and moisten the mouth before donning their oxygen masks.

The night flights have their lighter side. Recently the crew of an aircraft saw what they thought was a large fire blazing on the horizon. It was the moon about to rise.

THE AIR DEFENCE OF LONDON.

Even with many important Government Departments and big commercial houses evacuated, with schools shut and children sent to the country, Greater London has a war-time population of more than 7,000,000. London remains Britain's most vital centre.

Elaborate measures have been taken for the defence against air attack of this densely populated 400 square miles of England.

The London air defence system operates in four phases under the unified control of the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Fighter Command. Firstly the Observer Corps, the eyes and ears of the defence, keeps a ceaseless watch on the skies for enemy raiders.

As soon as they report the approach of German aircraft the defence enters its second stage. Fighter squadrons of the Royal Air Force go up to engage the enemy. If the attack takes place at night the third section of the defences comes into immediate operation: the searchlights in the deep searchlight zone which surrounds London. It is in this zone that the Spitfires and Hurricanes seek to engage the raiders.

If the raiders elude the fighter patrols - an exceedingly difficult operation in daylight - the defence enters its fourth /phase.

phase. The close defences come into action - the heavy anti-aircraft guns; the light anti-aircraft artillery, and the menacing balloon barrage.

All these units of the London defence, inter-connected through Fighter Command by an intricate radio and telegraphic system, have been in constant operation day and night for seven months, manned by volunteer forces through the coldest winter in four decades. They have not been fully tested in war. Their very preparedness has been a deterrent - their efficiency will be proved if the raiders venture.

HIGH FLYER'S OXYGEN SUPPLY.

It is well-known that an artificial supply of oxygen is necessary for airmen flying at heights above 15,000 ft. for any considerable time. The measures taken by the R.A.F. to ensure this vital oxygen supply are not so well-known.

The oxygen is stored in metal cylinders or "bottles" placed in a rack inside the aircraft before the take-off.

Each "bottle" contains compressed oxygen which would occupy under normal atmospheric pressure, a space of 750 litres (about 36 cubic feet).

The number of "bottles" varies from one to five according to the number of the crew, but more may be carried on long-range flights.

Several factors influence the rate of consumption of the oxygen supply - duration of the flight at high altitude and the precise altitude flown, as well as the individual physical needs of the men.

Roughly speaking, an oxygen "bottle" lasts two hours at a height of 25,000 ft. to 30,000 ft., and about 20 minutes longer between 20,000 ft. and 25,000 ft.

The life of the "bottle" could be prolonged by equipping the oxygen mask with a "re-breather". This device enables exhaled air partly exhausted of oxygen to be breathed again to use up the oxygen that remains.

After careful tests, however, R.A.F. experts have pronounced the re-breather unsafe, and it is not used by the Air Force.

V.C.'s OF THE AIR.

Group Captain L.W.B. Rees.

It was by taking advantage of his own mistake that Group Captain Lionel Wilmot Brabazon Rees of the Royal Flying Corps won the Victoria Cross for "conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty."

It was in the summer of 1916 that he won his V.C. While flying over enemy territory, he sighted what he thought was an allied bombing patrol returning home. He approached to escort them back to the base. But they proved to be a patrol of ten enemy aircraft.

Rees engaged one machine immediately. After a short encounter it disappeared damaged, behind the lines. Five other enemy aircraft then attacked him at long range. But Rees dispersed them by coming to close quarters. Two enemy aircraft were seriously damaged. The British pilot then pursued two more of the enemy westward, but was wounded in the thigh while approaching them. The injury caused him temporarily to lose control of his aircraft. He soon righted himself, closed with the enemy and continued the combat at a range of only a few yards until his ammunition was exhausted. Then he returned to make a safe landing at his base.

Born in 1884, son of a Carnarvon solicitor, he was educated at Colwall, Eastbourne College and the Royal Military
/Academy;

Academy; took a commission in the Royal Garrison Artillery at the age of 19; and was seconded to the Royal Flying Corps six days after the outbreak of war in 1914.

He became a Flight Commander and instructor at the Central Flying School in 1915, but later that year went to the Front. He was awarded the M.C. for a daring photographic reconnaissance under heavy fire, followed by the shooting down of a twin-engined enemy aircraft.

By the end of the year, Rees was a Squadron Commander.

He became a Wing Commander in the R.F.C. in May 1917, and received the same rank in the R.A.F. on the day of its formation 1st April, 1918). He retired in 1931 with the rank of Group Captain.

FIRST B.A.F. GOLF COURSE.

A squadron leader of the B.A.F. in France who, as Commanding Officer of his unit was faced a few months ago with innumerable problems in housing his men, has now found time to lay out a nine-hole golf course in the grounds of a dis-used chalet.

Henry Cotton might take a poor view of the "fairways" and "greens" but that would not damp the enthusiasm of the squadron leader. He has sunk empty jam tins at spots where the grass is comparatively short and is very proud of having "holed out in two at the third."

The chalet, which has not been inhabited for years, is now the officers Mess, so the "nineteenth" is conveniently near the ninth "green".

The squadron leader is a good golfer. He has no need to carry many clubs. Two or three are sufficient if one is a substantial niblick because the "rough" is formidable.

/QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CATERPILLARS.

Airmen of the R.A.F. who qualify for the Caterpillar Club by making an emergency parachute jump, have now another ordeal to face after they have made their jump.

According to an Air Ministry Order recently promulgated "a questionnaire is to be answered by all personnel who have carried out an emergency jump". The questionnaire is as follows:-

- (1) Date of jump. (2) Number, rank and name of jumper.
- (3) Type of aircraft from which jump was made. (4) Type of parachute and harness used. (5) Duty on which jumper was engaged.
- (6) Weather conditions at the time. (7) General circumstances.
- (8) Events prior to jumping. (9) Action prior to jumping.
- (10) Air speed at the time of jumping. (11) Altitude of aircraft, e.g. level, spinning, out of control..... inverted out of control.....
- (12) Altitude from which jump was made. (13) Method of abandoning aircraft and any difficulties. (14) Time taken to pull rip-cord. (15) Sensations when descending. (16) Description of landing. (17) Injury attributable to parachute descent.
- (18) Damage to parachute and/or harness.

There is space for other questions.

THE AIR FORCE DIGS FOR VICTORY.

Gardening is encouraged in the R.A.F. and has the blessing of an Air Ministry Order which says that every effort should be made to arrange for the cultivation of any suitable surplus areas of land at stations and establishments.

In addition to a number of aircraftmen with the Advanced Air Striking Force in France who are "digging for victory" on allotments provided for them in the villages where they are billeted, airmen and civilians attached to R.A.F. stations at home are being given allotments rent free.

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One Air Force Station of the Bomber Command is to hold a show later in the year "if conditions allow". There will be prizes for the best-kept allotment and the best vegetables.

23/3/40 - No.4.

The following is issued by Naval Affairs
for such use as the Press may like to make
of it.

S.S. CHARKOW RAFT FOUND BY WARSHIP

It was stated yesterday that, in addition to the five Danish ships and one Norwegian ship sunk without warning by German U-boats, the Danish s.s.CHARKOW (1026 tons) had disappeared and was thought to have fallen victim to the same U-boat that sunk the Danish s.s.MINSK (1229 tons).

Further evidence of this has now come to light. A raft belonging to the CHARKOW has been found by a British warship. On the raft there was one dead body.

This mute evidence of the murderous methods of the Germans in attacking defenceless neutrals, steaming independently upon their lawful occasions, deepens the universal horror caused by the continual German crimes against law and humanity.

NAVAL AFFAIRS.

THE RAIN WAS RIGHT - SO TEA IS BETTER

The Government this year have bought the whole crops of India and Ceylon tea and are importing no more of the Java or "common" China grades.

These were the cheapest types used in the blends - common China tea costing maybe 6d. a pound less than the cheapest kinds of Indian tea sold at auction.

Moreover, the moderate rains in India and Ceylon have produced a most satisfactory crop (heavy rain - ten inches or so in a night - makes the tea coarse).

But there is more than this to the story.

You are expected to make this better blend of tea go further and last longer.

There are various methods of doing this, such as:

1. Using a small size of teapot when making for one or two people only.
2. Using boiling water (it is not really boiling unless the kettle puffs out a jet of steam about $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet long).
3. Warming the teapot with really hot water.
4. Using freshly boiled water. Continuous boiling drives the air out of the water so that the resulting tea tastes flat. Many people, dissatisfied with this kind of brew, try to put things right by using more tea than is necessary.

How far should a pound of tea go?

When testing tea at the tea sales, buyers use a weight just about as heavy as a 6d. on the scales. This amount of tea is supposed to be enough for a really strong cup.

Now there are roughly ten sixpences to the ounce, so the buyers get 160 tests out of their 1 lb. But buyers can afford to be extravagant.

For ordinary household use, you should be able to get more like two-hundred cups of tea to the pound.

(6)

IMPORT LICENSING DEPARTMENT

NOTICE TO IMPORTERS NO.51

1. The Board of Trade announce that until further notice, no applications will be considered for licences authorising the importation of the following commodities from foreign countries other than France:-

Accumulators and parts thereof.
Baths, iron and steel.
Bell apparatus, electrical.
Bell domes and bell gongs.
Blast furnace slag.
Enlargers, photographic, and parts thereof (other than lenses) and accessories therefor.
Lanterns, optical, including epidiascopes and episcopes, and parts thereof, other than lenses.
Latches, hasps, bolts, hinges, locks and keys, parts thereof and blanks therefor.
Mechanical lighters and parts thereof, other than flints.
Wireless receivers, complete, and complete chassis.

2. Until further notice, no licences will be issued for the importation of the following goods from any country, British or foreign:- Manufactures wholly or mainly of linen or flax except (a) tissues of a weight of 12 ounces or more a square yard (b) nets and netting.

3. The foregoing announcements do not apply to goods to be imported for re-export or for use in the export trade.

Import Licensing Department,
Board of Trade,
25, Southampton Buildings,
Chancery Lane,
London, W.C.2.

23rd March, 1940.

23/3/40 - No. 7.

FRENCH OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE

(EVENING).

Paris, Saturday, March 23, 1940.

The following official communique was issued from
French headquarters this evening:-

A ~~quiet~~ day on the whole of the front.

Local artillery actions.
