

239 Squadron

Fighter Command records state at Fairlop

21 June to 15 August 1943

ORB's state

From Gatwick

23 June to 29 July 1943

to Martlesham, (near Woodbridge, Suffolk)



Aircraft

Mustang I (with Alison engine).

HB-A, HB-B, HB-C, HB-D, HB-E, HB-F, HB-H, HB-G, HB-K, HB-N, HB-R, HB-V, HB-X, HB-Y, HB-Z.

Tiger Moth

No details given.

Pilots –

Aitchison, Harold Leslie John		F/Lt 45327 RAF. Died 12 July 1943 age 25. Buried Abbeville Communal Cemetery Extension
Bassett,	F/O	
Bennett,	F/O	believed killed on 22 July 1943.
Collis,	P/O	believed killed on 22 July 1943.
Damsell, Walter Anthony		P/O 133356 RAFVR. Died 22 July 1943 age 20 Remembered on Runnymede Memorial
Esslemont,	F/O	
Fryer,	F/O	
Goodwin,	F/O	
Green,	F/O	
Hallas,	F/O	
Holmes, (Scruffy)	F/O	
Lawson,	P/O	
Legge,	W/Cmdr	
Martin,	F/O	
McClean,	S/Ldr	
McCloud,	P/O	
Roke,	F/O	
Shepherd-Smith,	F/O	
Vaughan, John Michael		F/O 117305 RAFVR. Died 22 July 1943 age 20 Remembered on Runnymede Memorial

Notes

From Appendices pages 110 to 112. (held by National Archives, Kew)

20 June 1943. 11 Group has directed that 239 Squadron consisting of 22 officers, 15 senior NCO's and 158 * other ranks (all of whom were in the main party and travelled by train) together with equipment will proceed to RAF Station Fairlop on 21 June 1943. To move in three parties, advance, main and rear. The advance party will move by road from RAF Gatwick on 20 June 1943 at 0930 hours. The main party will move by road, rail and air, at times to be specified later, and the main party will move by road on 22 June 1943. There follows precise instructions on the marking of vehicles, route to be taken **, dress code and rations.

* the other ranks are named, and include Corporal Basil Stan (Stan) Parsons who took the photographs below.

**The route taken ensured that the vehicles did not travel along main roads through Ilford and Barkingside, but rather along the A12 and avoided the low railway bridge at Fairlop Station.

Notes from ORB's

23 to 28 June. Now have above 80% of establishment, but limited serviceable transport and equipment.

Squadron formation flying. Preparations made for harmonisation checks prior to move to Air Firing Camp at Martlesham, where 48 air firing sorties were carried out by the end of the month.

P/O Martin air tested Mustang AG595.

27 June. Detachment is to proceed to Martlesham Heath for air firing practice. F/O Martin in charge of detachment.

Kit. No blankets are to be taken. Light marching order and steel helmets will be worn.

9 July. 12 Mustangs and one Miles Master aircraft returned from firing camp Martlesham. Also road party of 52 NCOs, men and equipment.

10 July. General cleanup of aircraft after practice camp. Station sports for all available personnel in afternoon.

11 July. Weather unsuitable in morning. Standing by 1200 at 30 minutes readiness 2 aircraft at 60 minutes readiness 2 aircraft, one fitted with 14 inch lens camera and one with 8 inch.

12 July. Three Rhubarbs carried out by W/Commander Legge and F/O Holmes to ST. VALERY area (2 trains damaged). F/O's Green and Bassett to CASSELL area (two trains, six barges and one tug damaged) and F/Lt Aitchison and F/O Goodwin to ABBEVILLE area. F/Lt Aitchison was shot down by flak and believed killed at ABBEVILLE. Now 2 extra aircraft standing by at 60 minutes readiness.

13 July. Unfavourable weather for operations, but two pairs standing by for cloud cover for two 'populars' demanded by 11 Group.

17 July. Limited flying due to possibility of calibration balloon flying for heavy AA on the edge of aerodrome. (Asylum Battery) Oblique photography at artillery ranges was carried out.

18 July. Big operation arranged at COURTRAI which would cover two of our 'populars' in the area. Weather caused it to be cancelled.

Operations planned but cancelled due to bad weather.

22 July. Two 'populars' were arranged and one section pilot P/O Vaughan and P/O Bennett were to photograph a lock near Ypres and one second P/O's Collis and Damsell to photograph a lock 8 miles south-east of COURTRAI. All took off at 1240 and none returned. A distress call was faintly heard at 1350 hours, 30 miles east of Ramsgate, but although a search was carried out till dusk, nothing seen.

23 July. S/Ldr Maclean and P/O Lawson took off at 1530 for a Rhubarb on the TREPORT-ST VALERY Railway. One engine attacked, but S/Ldr Maclean's aircraft hit by flak from train, so the pair set course for home. S/Ldr Maclean again hit on leaving French coast and P/O Lawson hit a tree. Both returned, but one machine Cat 'B'.

24 July. Bad weather and no flying or operations. Only two aircraft serviceable at Fairlop and 40 detached at Madeley. W/Commander Legge and S/Ldr Maclean visited HQ 11 Group (at Uxbridge) to discuss operations and ask for more aircraft as no replacement had been received for loss of six aircraft in past 12 days. Possibility of re-equipping with Mustang II aircraft.

25 July. Flight Lieutenant Bennett carried out a night recce as a passenger with the C.A.C.U. as part of exercise 'GALLOP'. Nothing seen. A ground striking attack, although part of exercise 'GALLOP' was abandoned due to poor visibility in the afternoon. Still only two aircraft serviceable.

26 July. At 1450 details of job to photo bombed shipping near Ostend came through. Hurricanes, Typhoons and Spitfires were to leave Deal at 15:05 hours to attack shipping and Mustangs were to proceed with them to photograph attack. As it is 15 minutes flying to Deal, there was no time for briefing or taking off so task is abandoned. In the evening two aircraft took off to take part in exercise 'Gallop' but returned owing to bad weather.

27 July. Ground Party of 55 senior NCO's and men and 7 vehicles left for Martlesham at 1000 hours. 12 Mustangs and 1 Tiger Moth.

28 July. Three replacement aircraft were delivered. One was unfit for acceptance, one needs a weeks work and one is in good condition.

29 July. Clear weather and no operations. W/C Sims (11 Group Engineer Officer) visited the squadron and to inspect the replacement aircraft. Agreed one machine was not to be accepted. Additional 3 armourers, 3 armament assistants and 1 FMA proceeded from Fairlop to Martlesham to join Air Firing Party, left at 1400 hours.

Photographs taken at Fairlop during the summer of 1943



Ride him cowboy!

Above: **F/O 'Scruffy' Holmes - a great guy.**

Below: **F/O Martin - a great chap.**

(Both photos David Martin via Stan Parsons)

I likes a nice cup of you and me!



Photographs of 239 Squadron personnel taken during the summer of 1943

F/O Bennet
-Memories of a great guy.

(photo David Martin via Stan Parsons)



Corporal Basil 'Stan' Stan Parsons.

(photo David Martin via Stan Parsons)



W.C Legge, the CO.
Pilot of my (Stan Parsons) aircraft
(photo David Martin via Stan Parsons)

