

## 313 (Czechoslovak) Squadron

### Fighter Command records state at Fairlop

29 April 1942 to 28 June 1942

### ORB's state

From Hornchurch

30 April to 8 June 1942

To Churchstanton, Somerset



### Aircraft

#### Spitfire VB

AA765, AD397, AR397 (lost 2 June 1942), BL973, BM117, BM127 (Damaged -Cat AC, 1 May 1942), BM137, BM203, BM207, BM209, BM227, BM242, BM245, BM248, BM261, BM263, BM301 (lost 17 May 1942), BM306, BM317, BM322, BM323, BM328, BM360 (lost 17 May 1942), BM361 (lost 5 May 1942), BM374, BM483, BM510, BM517, HL973.

### Magister

#### Tiger Moth

No details given

### Pilots

Blouzak, Borkovec, Miroslav	Sgt.	Sgt. 787528 RAFVR (Czechoslovakia) Died 17 May 1942 Remembered on the Runnymede Memorial
Cap, Karel	F/Sgt.	
Dohnal,	Sgt.	
Foglar, Vaclav	W/O	F/Lt. 82546 RAFVR (Czechoslovakia) Died 17 May 1942 Buried Pihen-Les-Guines Communal Cemetery
FejFar, Stanislav		
Grunn, O	P/O	
Hajek, Vaclav	F/Lt.	
Halamasek, Evzen		Sgt. 787669 RAFVR (Czechoslovakia) Died 2 June 1942 Remembered on the Runnymede Memorial
Hlouzek, Jaroslav	Sgt.	
Hochmal, Alois	F/O	
Horak,	F/Lt.	
Jicha, Vaclav	P/O	DFC, AFC
Kasal,	F/Lt.	
Kocfelda, Pavel	Sgt.	
Kohout,	Sgt.	
Kotiba,	Sgt.	
Kucera, Josef	P/O	
Kucera, Otmar	P/O	DFC
Lehnal,	Sgt.	
Mares,	F/Sgt.	
Mechal,	F/O	
Morak,	Sgt.	
Mrazek, Karel	S/Ldr.	DSO, DFC
Pavlik, Karel		F/Lt. 787431 RAFVR (Czechoslovakia) Died 5 May 1942 whilst on Circus 157 Buried Ypres Town Cemetery, Belgium

Prerost, Vaclav	Sgt.
Prihoda, Bohuslav	P/O
Raba,	F/Lt.
Reznicek,	F/Sgt.
Valasek, Karel	Sgt.
Vandl,	F/L
Vavrinek, Frantisek	F/O
Zadamasek,	Sgt.
Zadrobilek, Ladislav	W/O

### Notes

**30 April 1942.** Squadron moved from RAF Station Hornchurch to RAF Station Fairlop by road, pilots by air. Echelon remained at former station. First party breakfasted at 0545 hours and left by road at 0630 hours, remainder following during the morning. The move was completed in the early afternoon when the Adjutant had completed 'marching out' and left by road with final party and reported to the Station Commander, RAF Station Fairlop (S/Ldr Overden O.B.E.). Pilots landed at Fairlop from first operation in the morning; three offensive operations conducted during the day as follows:



**Cap Gris Nez in the distance, from Cap Blanc Nez – a familiar sight to many 313 Pilots.**  
(David Martin)

### between 0935 and 1055 hours.

Wing (No's 64, 122 and 313 Squadron) undertook offensive sweep over N. France. Wing crossed at Ambletouse. (Ambletouse, Pas-de-Calais), at allocated heights, 122 Squadron below, 64 middle and 313 top. It flew over Guines going out over Gravelines then along coast and turned in again N of Dunkirk (Dunkerque), coming back over Guines and going out finally over Gris Nez. When wing was over Bourbourg area returning over France the second time, 2 FW 190's dived very fast from out of the sun, (SSE) passing within 200 yards of G/C Broadhurst. They immediately rolled and dived back over France and were going too fast to follow. Flak medium at 12,000 ft over Calais. No casualties on either side.

### between 1400 and 1550 hours

Squadron took off from Fairlop and rendezvoused over Hornchurch with remainder of wing (Nos 64 and 122 Sqdns). Contacted bombers and other Wings at Clacton. Course set 120° for the target Flushing (Missingen). (Turn made over Flushing at 22,000 feet with bombers still in view. Midway across sea on return 3 FW 190's dived against Squadron from above and behind. Squadron Leader gave order to break and attack. Sgt. Hlouzek fired at one from 500 yards range, observed strikes and saw white smoke pour from aircraft. Sgt. Hlouzek followed it down to 18,000 feet, but his aircraft was hit on the starboard wing and flap and he took evasive action. Sections were by this time split up. S/Ldr took over yellow section and when 20 miles N of Manston saw 2 Me 109's coming from below and behind. When identity established, order was given to attack and the Squadron Commander himself fired at 800 yards range, but observed no results. The E/A dived away at great speed and were not followed as fuel was running low. Squadron landed at Fairlop.

### between 1835 and 2010 hours.

11 aircraft of 313 Squadron took off from Fairlop to rendezvous with 6 Boston's over Gravelines with target at Abbeville. As bombers were leaving target, Sgt. Hlouzek saw 1 Me 109 diving about 4,500 feet below. He went into attack and gave two bursts. On the second burst he observed the tail plane of the E/A completely fall off and the aircraft was last seen in a vertical dive at 9,000 feet. This was claimed as destroyed. 2 FW 190's made attack on bombers. Attack was thwarted by two Spitfires from another Squadron. English coast crossed on return S of Beachy Head and Squadron landed at Fairlop.

Our casualties – NIL

Enemy casualties – 1 Me 109 destroyed.

Total flying times for April 1942.

	<b>A Flight</b>	<b>B Flight</b>
Operational day	195.20	271.15
Operational night	Nil	Nil
Shipping Protection	45.20	46.30
Non operational day	152.40	136.30
Non operational night	Nil	Nil
Total Spitfire	393.40	454.20
Magister	19.40	.25
Tiger Moth	2.40	-
Total flying	416.00	456.45
<b>Grand Total....</b>	<b>872 hours 45 minutes</b>	

Officers	Strength of Squadron on 30 April 1942	
	Pilots	9
	Ground	8 (including 2 attached).

Senior N.C.O's	Airman Pilots	14
	Ground	9
	Airmen	128

#### Aircraft Strength

Spitfire Mk VB	Merlin 45	1
Spitfire Mk VB	Merlin 46	18
Magister		1.

**1 May 1942.** Fine weather. Squadron recalled from early operation when over Manston due to bad weather over France. As wing approached Southend, weather conditions deteriorated until cloud 10/10 at 8,000 feet with patches of rain experienced. Operational Order No. 228 undertaken during early evening at 1840 hours was carried out as planned, but bombers were three minutes late. On way in, E/A leaving smoke trails were seen high up to starboard going north. These swung behind and at the same height as 313 Squadron but did not attack. After bombing 2 E/A were seen by W/Commander Powell starting dive from his height. He dived down to intercept, but their start and intervening Spitfires and lower wing gave him no chance. The section regained position over Beehive. After an unsuccessful attack on 2 Me 109's, they were attacked by 5 FW 190's. One pilot's aircraft had its tail shot off and pilot is missing. (Pilots name and Squadron not specified). The second was engaged in a running flight with 5 E/A all the way across the Channel at 0 feet until he landed at Manston. This pilot reported that though the E/A were much faster, he could easily out turn them. Flak – medium, over Mardyck below bombers height. More at Bombers height, but wide over St.

Omer. Considerable and accurate at Marck. Weather: Pas de Calais clear except some high Stratus inland, Cumulus 7/10, 10,000 feet.

P/O J. Kucera (103533) (GD) arrived on posting from Czechoslovak Inspectorate for full flying duties. 787338 Sgt. Mlouzek's Spitfire Mk VB BM127 damaged on operation by enemy action (Cat AC).

P/O O. Kucera (787658) (GD) and 787385 Sgt. Kotiba (AP) graded operational (Day only).

**2 May.** Overcast and cold morning. No operations during the day. P/O W.A.W. Dilks (114745) posted from Hornchurch for Intelligence Officer duties (F/O post) wef (with effect from) 3.4.42.

**3 May.** 1510 hours. 6 aircraft rear support over Dunkirk (Dunkerque) at 20,000 feet. With 64 and 122 Squadron, landfall made over Nieuport at 28,000 feet. Just afterwards bombers observed going in and flak accurate for height over Dunkirk. Bombing not seen. Wing swung round and out after Mardyck after which 313 Squadron began to leave smoke trails which might have been mistaken for E/A by other wing. Weather quite thick vertical haze to 10,000 feet over whole area. No casualties on either side.

**4 May.** At 1835 hours, 13 Aircraft made rendezvous with 64 and 122 Squadrons at Southend at 10,000 feet with North Weald and crossed over out over Deal at 1910 hours. French landfall Gravelines with the W/Commander and 64 Squadron at 19,000 feet, 122 at 20,000 feet and 313 at 21,000 feet. Wing flew to Andruing, Hardelet out to 5 miles off Dungeness, crossed Kenley Wing just off French coast. Having primarily waited for North Weald at French coast for approximately 3 mins., climbing 23/25,000 feet. Upon nearing English coast, wing swept towards Gris Nez down sun, crossed coast and turned NW again. Hearing Kenley were engaged over Boulogne, wing turned round swept Boulogne down sun, sighting many a/c below. Wing dived 17/20,000 feet, identified aircraft as Spitfires, turned for base passing English coast north over Hythe. When first crossing from France north of Somer, (sic) (St Omer) 9 E/A were seen coming from direction of Le Touquet above 313 Squadron. 2 Spitfires from presumably North Weald Wing were seen to dive on them. No flak noticed.

Weather: Pas de Calais area-clear of cloud; 10/10 cumulus 8,000 feet Lille area down to Amiens. Considerable haze over England and along French coast up to 10,000 feet. Casualties- -nil on either side

**5 May.** Fine day apart from heavy haze. Operation conducted to act as high cover for 6 Bostons over Lille area during the afternoon and it proved possible the fiercest carried out so far. Rendezvous Clacton at 10,000 feet.

Stepped up -     64 Squadron at 20,000 feet.  
                         122 Squadron at 21,000 feet.  
                         313 Squadron at 22,000 feet.

Wing proceeded to target and when within 5 miles SSE of Furnes, 6 FW 190's were seen 3 to 5 miles away at same height of wing coming from direction of Ostend, (Oostend), and flying parallel to Wing. These E/A followed wing to Lille and as bombers turned right after bombing were seen coming from St. Omer about 2,000 feet above and behind. At same time 6 FW 190's were seen diving to attack. 313 and 122 Squadrons, which fell back while evading attack became involved in various dog fights. F/Lt. Fejfar (Red 1) and leading Squadron ordered Squadron to break formation. He attacked two FW 190's and saw the pilot of one aircraft bale out. This FW190 was claimed as destroyed. Red 1 went into a spin and lost 4,000 feet. He pulled out and climbed again and saw 2 FW 190's on his port side about to attack 3 Spitfires. He opened cannon and MG fire expending ammunition as he closed 300 to 200 yards. Before he could observe results, he saw in his mirror another FW 190 behind and taking evasive action went into a further spin. Pulling out, a FW 190 passed him on its back with half its wing missing. As he saw no other Spitfires at the same time and as E/A passed him in a spin immediately after his attack, he claimed this second FW 190 as probably destroyed.

P/O O. Kucera (Blue) saw 4 F/W 190's about to attack his section. As he turned, he noticed a further 6 FW's about to attack. He immediately engaged one of the latter closing from 200 to 100 yards, making a port quarter attack. He saw a large part of the wing fall off and white, then black smoke pour from the E/A. The last he saw of it was at 15,000 feet when it was smoking and in a vertical dive. It was claimed as probably damaged.

Sgt. Dohnal (Red 2) fired at one of four FW 190's and the E/A immediately rolled on its work. Apart for this no result observed as friendly aircraft got in his way.

P/O J. Prihoda (Blue 3) fired at two of the same FW 190's. After his second burst, they turned on their back, rolled and dived away.

F/Sgt. Reznicek (Red 3) was attacked by 3 FW 190's. He took violent evasive action and climbed into cloud, was again attacked by two FW 190's as which he fired without observed results. In taking evasive action he found himself 10 miles W of Flushing (Mussingen), where heavy flak was observed.

P/O Jicha's (Yellow 1) aircraft was attacked by 4 FW 190's with several hits and damaged (BM306 Cat. B.) and he had to exercise skill to bring it safely home. He was protected in a magnificent manner by 2 Spitfires of 122 Squadron.

P/O J. Kucera (Yellow 1) was attacked by 6 FW 190's after leaving Lille and fired a short deflection burst at one from 100 yards. E/A immediately made one and a half barrel roll and grey smoke was seen to come from it. As pilot was attacked again, he lost sight of the E/A and made no claim. On reaching the French coast at about 6,000 feet, he was again attacked by 3 FW 190's. He did a series of light turns down to sea level, but E/A continued to attack him, sometime singly and at other times from astern and others from above and head on. He got in four separate bursts at the a/c making head on attack but saw no definite results. Attack continued until he reached a belt of fog somewhere in the North Sea. He eventually crossed English Coast near Dymchurch and while searching for aerodrome, his engine cut out for lack of petrol and he forced landed at Newchurch on Romney Marshes at 1640 hours. His aircraft was severely damaged by hitting an obstruction post (Cat E) and the pilot slightly injured with abrasions to head and leg with slight concussion.

Our casualties: 787431 Sgt. Pavlik was missing from the operation.

P/O J. Kucera injured.

Enemy Casualties: air combat

1 FW 190 destroyed and 1 FW 190 probably destroyed F/Lt. Fejfar.

1 FW 190 probably destroyed by P/O O. Kucera.

Following aircraft Spitfires VB, Merlin 45 taken off strength – BM261, BM209, BM127. Following Spitfire VB taken on strength AR397.

**6 May.** 1215 to 1330 hours. 12 aircraft from 313 with 64 Squadron rendezvous over Clacton. Squadron at 6,000 feet with North Weald crossed in between Gravelines and Mardyck 14,000 feet, straight to St. Omer and turned right. Upon hearing from Controller bandits some distance to east flying west, W/Commander changed original to go out Gris Nez turned back instead and sweeping, between St. Omer & Gravelines hoping to intercept E/A at coast. However no E/A seen. After crossing coast as had been arranged with North Weald, climbed and returned to coast high up while 64 Squadron dived, patrolling up and down the coast at 4,000 feet. This was done in view of E/A sometimes making standing patrols very low down on their coast in order to intercept stragglers returning home at zero feet. As no E/A seen and other wings reported returning, Wing returned via Dover.

Flak: slight heavy flak at St. Omer, accurate for height, inaccurate for direction. Weather: hazy over England, quite good over France, no low cloud, but hazy stratus above (25,000 feet). Visibility over France quite good. Casualties on either side – NIL.

1440 to 1625 Hours. 11 aircraft escort to Hurribombers. 313 and 64 Squadron rendezvous over West Mallang at 6,000 feet. In over Calais, Marcq 13,000 feet, intense flak (heavy and light) encountered in crossing coast, accurate for height of bombers. Wing made circuit to avoid flak and as Hurribombers had got clear and no E/A sighted, 64 Squadron gained height 18,000 feet. Turned into Andruing/Marquise area, out Griz Nez, during which time it became split from top cover wings, climbed in Channel to 20,000 feet when 313 Squadron reported 15 FW's over Boulogne. Wing turned to Boulogne, saw one Squadron of Spitfires coming out, but no E/A. Red marker flak from Boulogne. Wing turned back into Channel, climbed to 21,000 feet back towards Calais, then Gris Nez. Still no E/A sighted, but many smoke trails inland and over top of wing, one of which at above 28,000 feet was definitely hostile.

Weather – high stratus at 30,000 feet, visibility excellent. Casualties – NIL either side.

Received following Spitfires VB Merlin 46 – BM517, BM207, and BM483.

**7 May.** 1010 to 1125 hours. 12 aircraft. Rodeo Gravelines/Le Touquet at 28,000 feet. Nothing to report. 1450 to 1540 hours. 5 aircraft. Scramble 25,000 feet, no result.

1620 to 1640. 4 aircraft. Scramble 11,000 feet, no result.

1830 to 2015 hours. 12 aircraft. 313 with 64 Squadron rendezvous over Clacton. Squadron at 500 feet in bad visibility. Course set, flew 6 minutes sea level then climbed, 64 Squadron to 15,000 feet, 313 Squadron to 16,000 feet, crossed Ostend (Oostende) to port of bombers, turned over town losing height with bombers. Met by intense flak at bombers height (12,000 feet) also at 16,000 feet accurate for height, but scattered. Flak followed aircraft in circuit over Ostend and came from town, from SW of town and from Middlekerk. Wing cut across bombers just off Ostend and came from town and remained to port of them. Two lots of smoke trails as if from 20 A/C flying north then turning SE seen above wing Ostend left. Casualties - NIL on either side.

Weather: much haze over England and Channel. Less over Belgium. Visibility bad, high Stratus cloud.

**8 May.** Squadron released from operations for practice flying.

**9 May.** Dull cold morning. Operations undertaken at 1240 and 1440 hours. 12 aircraft. 122, 64, and 313 Squadrons acted as medium Escort Wing to Boston's. Rendezvous with bombers over Bradwell 1300 hours at 1,000 feet. Climbing over Channel to 12,000 feet and French coast crossed over Mardyck, course set for Hazebrouck, target reached 1330 hours. After bombing, course set for Gravelines. When over Cassel, 24 FW 190 's and Me 109's were seen behind the formation but did not attack. French coast cross over Gravelines at 16,000 feet. Course set SW to Manson.

1645 to 1820 hours 11 aircraft to act as top cover to bomber escort on attack on Bruges. (thought to be Brugge, near Oostende) Rendezvous with bombers over Clacton. Squadron at 500 feet. After crossing English coast and climbing to 16,000 feet course set 120°. Belgian coast crossed over Blankenberge (near Oostende) at 16,000 feet when formation turned slightly to starboard towards Bruges. Course then set for Dixmude and over Bruges turned to starboard again crossing French coast out over Gravelines. When about 5 miles NE of Dunkirk, formation saw 12 E/A FW 190's and Me109's coming out of the sun from Cassel area. They dived down on 122 Squadron. 313 Squadron leader warned, then after breaking off E/A disappeared. P/O Prihoda (Blue 3) about 5 miles NE of Dunkirk saw 3 FW 190's in front of him slightly diving and turning to port. He turned to the right and FW 190 passed above him. As Blue 3 was turning steeply, he saw 2 FW 190's (probably those first E/A mentioned above) coming from his starboard in the same level. Blue 3 went into attack getting in on the first E/A 2 short burst (one second each), opening from 400 and closing 250 yards. As a result of the second burst he saw FW 190 enveloped in cloud of black smoke. This FW 190 is claimed as damage. Blue 3 lost sight of it when being attacked by second FW 190. He took violent evasive action diving down to 6,000 feet. Then he set course for home. The main formation crossed English coast back over Fulness. (thought to be Foulness Island north of Southend)

Weather—England, Channel, France— clear, high Cirrus 2/10. Flak – slight over Bruges.

Our Casualties; NIL. Enemy casualties – 1 FW 190 damaged by P/O Prihoda.

W/O Zadrobilek reported from 111 Squadron for FFD (full flying duties). The celebration in connection with the first anniversary of the Squadron's formation was held although effected by operations introduced unexpectedly as it was anticipated that the Squadron would be released from 1300 hours. Lunch in the Airmen's and Sergeant's Messes had to be postponed until 1500 hours and completed by 1600 hours. Special luncheons were prepared and beer and cigarettes supplied. The Squadron photograph could not be taken. Seats for the Ilford Hippodrome had been reserved, but only Sergeants and N.C.O's released could attend. In the evening the anniversary dinner took place in the Officers mess RAF Station Fairlop, (Hainault Lodge on Hog Hill) attended by 50 guests and members of the Squadron. 786431 Sgt. Pavlik (AP) posted to No.1 Depot (NE) w.e.f 6.5.42. (unbeknown to those at Fairlop, he was killed 6 May 1942).

**10 May.** 12 aircraft. Rodeo from 1125 to 1245 hours. With 64 and 122 Squadrons rendezvous with Biggin Hill at 3/4,000 feet. Course to Hastings climbing to 11/14,000 feet then 127° to Le Touquet. In view of bad visibility, W/Commander obtained permission to modify programme. North Weald Wing seen crossing out over Le Touquet and on hearing that Biggin Hill had turned back having become split up, Hornchurch wing also turned back just off French coast. Wing at that time stepped up to 19,000 feet. No E/A seen. Moderate flak bursting at 17,000 feet seen in distance between Le Touquet and Boulogne.

Weather; over England very hazy. Ground obscured at time in some areas, 10/10 high layer cloud over Channel. Layer of cloud above wing patches of this stratus obscuring sea very hazy. Towards south – 10/10 stratus at 6/7,000 feet.

Casualties NIL on either side.

**16 May.** 1430 to 1555 hours. 2 Aircraft. Convoy patrol, off Barrow Deep Lightship. Nothing to report.

**17 May.** Fine clear morning. 12 Aircraft. Operation over France from 1040 to 1210 hours. Made rendezvous with 12 Boston's over Beachy Head. Course set for Hardelot, coast crossed at 22,000 feet. Six large puffs were seen over Boulogne and eventually the whole harbour was enveloped in black smoke. Course then set for St. Omer and on towards Mardyck, but before reaching Mardyck and slightly south, a right hand orbit was made as E/A were reported in immediate vicinity. 6 FW 190's were seen passing the Squadron on the right 2,000 feet below, but did not engage. Course set for Ambleteuse but before reaching there, Squadron turned slightly starboard. Blue 1 (F/Lt. Fejfar) and Blue 2 (Sgt. Borkevec) turned to port and lost height. Blue 3 & 4 followed and former called Blue 1 informing that the Squadron had turned to starboard, but no reply was received and sight was lost of Blue 1 & 2 whilst Blue 3 & 4 regained formation. French coast was crossed near Ambleteuse and after turn to port Squadron formed up with two other Squadrons, a wide left hand orbit made and the English coast crossed over Dungeness.

Flak: Intense over Boulogne at a height of 12/15,000 feet.

Shipping; 2 large ships – armoured merchant vessels and 6 (what appeared to be) destroyers at Boulogne.

Weather: Clear over France. Visibility: 10/20 miles.



Our casualties /Lt. Fejfar, S. 82545 (GD) missing, 1 Spitfire.  
Sgt. Borkovec, M. 7875128 (AP) missing, 1 Spitfire.  
Enemy casualties NIL.

### **Pihen-Les-Guines Communal Cemetery.** (David Martin)

**19 May.** Operation conducted with Hornchurch wing at 1945 hours. No 64, 122 and 313 Squadrons rendezvoused over Eastchurch with wing below 500 feet and 6 Hurribombers at 4,000, crossed out over Deal at 7,000 feet making French coast, 5 miles W of Gravelines with 122 Squadron close escort, at 12,000 feet, 54 Squadron at 13,000 feet and 313 Squadron at 15,000 feet. Formation turned right over St. Omer, the bombing not observed. Squadron lost 10,000 feet over Channel and crossed between Deal and Ramsgate. One pilot reported having seen 6 FW 190's astern at 15,000 feet S of Calais on way out but shortly after E/A broke away. Over Gravelines, flak heavy at Bomber height but a little behind, continuing for 5 miles. Over target intense heavy and light (including red balls of flak). Casualties: Nil either side.

**20 May.** 12 aircraft. 1410 to 1520 hours. Practice wing formation over Martlesham at 17,000 feet. Landed at Hornchurch.

**21 May.** 2 Aircraft between 1110 and 1345 hours. Firing into sea.

**22 May.** 3 aircraft, between 1145 and 1225 hours, dive test over base.

**23 May.** 12 aircraft. Rodeo Operation carried out between 1105 and 1230 hours. 313, 122 and 64 Squadrons set course for Dungeness at 1120 hours at 10,000 feet over Channel. French coast crossed over Hardselot at 22,000 feet. Course set for Desvres – Marquise. French coast crossed out at Wissant. S/Ldr Mrazek saw about 9 FW 190's 3,000 feet above and behind. Having warned W/Cmdr, he turned to port to meet the E/A, which subsequently disappeared toward France. Blue 3 (F/O Jicha) saw 6 of these FW 190's behind. He turned sharply to port and made a beam attack from 600 yards, getting in on the last E/A 1½ sec. burst (m.g. and cannon) without any observed result. E/A broke away into a dive. Speed attack made by Blue 3, 2 minutes later, when 4 FW 190's were flying 3,000 feet above him. He climbed and made an astern attack (2 sec burst) from below, opening at 600 yards and closing to 500 yards – result not observed. Wing formed over Channel and continued sweep for 20 mins over Channel. English crossed between Dover/Deal.

Our casualties: NIL      Enemy casualties: NIL.  
Weather: 7/10 at 4/5,000 feet.      Hazy at 25,000 feet – England.  
Channel – clear.      France 2/10 lower clouds  
Flak: Very slight – Boulogne area.

1505 to 1605 hours practice low flying, not below 50 feet at the mouth of the River Crouch.

P/O Dilks, WHW (Intell) sick in quarters.

1330026 AC1 (i) FI Gillson (ACH/GD) discharged from RAF in accordance with K.R. & A.C.I. (ii) para 652, clause 23½. (iii)

- (i) Aircraftman Class 1.
- (ii) Kings Regulation & Air Council Instructions
- (iii) KR & ACI is split into different aspects. Clause 23½ is thought to relate to bad character.

**25 May.** 12 aircraft, 1040 to 1230 hours. Rodeo operation with 64 and 122 Squadrons. Made rendezvous over Clacton, Squadron below 500 feet steered course 143° then 150° intention being if weather suitable, for Rodeo to sweep in at Nieuport (sic) around Ostend (sic) and out at Flushing. If unsuitable, to carry out shipping reconnaissance along coast. Wing started to climb after 13 minutes from Clacton. Squadron at 500 feet, 122 Squadron reaching 15,000 feet, 313 Squadron 16,000 feet and 64 Squadron 17,000 feet. Landfall E of Dunkirk at 1125 hours over Furness, S of Nieuport over Bruges and as no E/A had been reported anywhere, Wing crossed out over Blankenberghe (sic), diving down to sea level, carried out alternative programme sweeping about 5 miles out along



Belgian and French coast from Blankenberghe (sic), to point between Gravelines and Calais, where wing turned in having received order from Controller to return to base.

**Shipping** – many fishing vessels seen off Blankenberghe (sic)

**Flak** – none

**Weather** – 8/10 Strata Cumulus over Channel. France/ Belgium - high Cirrus at 20/25,000 feet

**Visibility** – poor due to haze

**Casualties** – NIL on either side.

1 aircraft, 1150 to 1520 hours. Air to sea firing at Dengle Flats.

**29 May.** Indication received that Squadron was likely to move out of Group shortly in which case Station Commander Hornchurch (G/Capt, Lett DSO, DFC) considered it unnecessary for Squadron move from Fairlop to Hornchurch on 1.6.42 as arranged. The question was consequently discussed with Group. 787510 F/Sgt. J. Pipa (AF) regarded operational (day only). P/O Dilka W.H.W. ceased being sick in quarters and proceeded home for 48 hours.

1420 to 1505 hours. Cine camera attacks at 5,000 feet.

**30 May.** Flying conducted during the day concluding with Fighter Sweep involving 12 aircraft over France between 2015 and 2145 hours, which provided no result as affecting the Squadron.

**31 May.** 1127086 AC1 S. Townson (Inst Rep II) released for civil employment Sect 6 (Armed Forces (conditions of service) Act 1939. Confirmation received that move of Squadron from RAF Station Fairlop to Hornchurch on 1.6.42 is cancelled.

#### Month End State

Strength	Pilots Officers	10	) All operational
	Airman Pilots	14	)
	Ground Officers	9	( including 3 attached)
	Airmen	117	
Aircraft	Spitfire VB Merlin	46	19 aircraft
	Spitfire VB Merlin	45	1 aircraft
	Magister		1 aircraft

Total Flying hours for May 1942.

	<b>A Flight</b>	<b>B Flight</b>
Operational day	128.00	166.00
Operational night	Nil	Nil
Shipping Protection	58.00	51.00
Non operational day	142.00	128.00
Non operational night	Nil	Nil
<b>Total</b>	<b>328.00</b>	<b>345.00</b>

Magister 16 Hours

**GRAND TOTAL 689 Hours**

**1 June.** Fine clear day. 12 aircraft. Escort to Hurribombers to Bruges (thought to be Brugge, Belgium) from 1240 to 1430 hours. F/Lt. Hajek (GD) landed at Manston with aircraft damaged by Flak over Ostend. Second operation to escort Hurribombers undertaken by 12 aircraft in evening with no special result.

**2 June.** Fair Conditions. 12 aircraft on Rodeo Operation during afternoon, 1640 to 1830 hours. Rendezvous made North Foreland a minute late and missed Debden and North Weald Wings. Following other Wings formation turned right near Boulogne, flew mid Channel between Dover and Gris Nez, climbed to 25,000 feet where they flew as a separate Wing, but in visual contact. A few E/A were sighted. 313 Squadron were attacked when at 26,000 feet by 12-15 Me 109's and FW 190's which dived from 30/35,000 feet and disappeared.

Afterwards 787669 Sgt. E. Halamasek (AP) was missing and aircraft of F/O Jicha (66486) was damaged forcing him to land at Manston. P/O O. Grunn (Czech Adjutant) returned from Adjutant's conference.

**4 June.** Operations during the day. Squadron was called to stand by until 1900 hours for Air-Sea Rescue, after which released for station.

**5 June.** Blazing hot day. No operations during the day. First preparation for the movement of the Squadron from Fairlop to Churchstanton.

**6 June.** Hot weather continued. 12 aircraft of 313 accompanied Wing on a Ramrod to escort Hurribombers to bomb Bolbec. Here a military camp was attacked and afterwards Squadron attacked various targets including factories, water towers and transformer stations. At military camp



several soldiers were seen to fall on the ground. 10 pilots fired. All landed at Fairlop 1325 hours. Casualties NIL.

**7 June.** Early morning showers but cleared by 0930 hours. The day was taken up with packing for the move.

**8 June.** Today the Squadron moved by road, rail and air to Churchstanton, Somerset. The rail party left Fairlop Station at 0826 hours and arrived at Taunton at 1515 hours. 18 Pilots took off from Fairlop and handed them over to 154 Squadron at Hornchurch, then proceeded by Bombay Air Transport to Churchstanton. Another Bombay took the ground crews. 4 Pilots travelled by private car.



**Poppies on the cliff at Cap Gris Nez, Pas de Calais**  
(David Martin)

## **Circus 157** (see also the Fact File for the full story)

### **5 May 1942. Sequence of events.**

#### **1441 hours.**

313 (Czechoslovak) Squadron took off from Fairlop. **Sergeant Karel Pavlik** (Czech) Blue section, in Spitfire BM 361.

#### **1443 hours.**

122 (Bombay) Squadron commanded by **Squadron Leader František Fajtl** (Czech) took off from Hornchurch, also-

**Flight Sergeant Stacey Jones** (British) Yellow section, in Spitfire MT-A BM 404;

**Flight Lieutenant Baudouin de Hemptinne** (Belgian) Blue section, Spitfire MT-T BM 321, also in Blue section was **Sergeant Roland Joffre Ribaut** (Canadian), Spitfire MT-N BM 138.

#### **1530 hours.**

The Bostons reached Lille, but due to the cloud cover could not drop their bombs.

They turned to fly back to England, accompanied by the 12 Spitfires of 64 Squadron, and all landed safely at their home airfields in Swanton Morley and Hornchurch around 1630 hours.

At the same time, however, 313 and 122 Squadron were attacked by 15 FW 190s coming at them from the direction of St. Omer, about 2,000 feet above and behind the Spitfires.

At the same time, 6 more FW 190s fired at the Spitfires from the easterly direction of Oostend. Fierce dog fighting ensued between the 24 Spitfires of the 122 and 313 Squadrons and the 21 FW 190s, with tragic consequences.

#### **1550 hours.**

Operation Circus 157 comes to a tragic culmination above a small area of Belgian Heuveland (hill country) near the Kemmelberg (Mt. Kemmel), in the vicinity of the small towns of Dranouter and Poperinghe, not far from the town of Ypres, and at the French border near Nieuwkerke.

Local people had to hide in safety of cellars or houses, frightened by the low flying fighting aircraft and rain of machine gun bullets and canon shells and of course falling debris. However, there were many eye witnesses of the events.

It took only 20 minutes of aerobatics and dog fighting in which four lives were lost with several more Pilots returning to their airfields wounded or with badly damaged aircraft.



**Top L:** S/Ldr Fatjl  
**R:** F/L Hemptinne  
**Bottom L:** F/Sgt Jones  
**R:** Sgt Ribout

The Spitfire of **F/Sgt Stacey Jones** was hit by enemy fire after the initial clash between the Spitfires and the Focke-Wulfs. His plane nose dived and crashed in the front garden of a house on Provensteenweg near Poperinghe. The pilot did not survive the impact.

**Sgt Roland Joffre Ribout** in Blue Section of the 122 Squadron was attacked by two Focke-Wulfs. Four witnesses on the ground watched him bail out from his stricken Spitfire at the height of about 2,000ft. His parachute stayed shut, or perhaps his aircraft was too low for the parachute to open and Roland jumped to his death.

**Squadron Leader František Fajtl** was the only one of the five shot down pilots to survive a crash landing. He left the crash site within 10 minutes of landing and managed to flee through France, across the Pyrenees, via jail in Spain back to the UK.

He shot down 2 enemy aircraft before he was forced to land with his damaged aircraft in the field near the village of Hardifort by Cassel in Northern France, with the engine of his Spitfire burning and his aircraft riddled by enemy fire.

After landing, he was given civilian clothes by a French woman plucking grass for her rabbits nearby, and started his 3 months escape odyssey.

He finally landed in Portreath, UK, on 20 August 1942 on his 30th birthday. He rejoined the RAF and went on to become a Czech Spitfire legend after the war!

A milkman and a farmer witnessed the following crash: a damaged Spitfire spiraled down in a lethal pirouette and buried itself in the side of the Kemmel Hill so deep (21 feet) that it was not until three years later, after the war has ended, that the wreck was recovered from the heavy blue clay and the pilot still sitting behind the controls in the cockpit, identified. His name was written – against the rules – inside one of the pilot boots he was still wearing.



**24 year old Sgt Karel Pavlik**

It appears he was shot through the head and probably died before his Spitfire reached the ground. The pilot's body was perfectly preserved by the dense soil of the Flanders Fields.



**The Crash site in 1942**

It was not until May 1945, that the Missing Research and Inquiry Service together with C.W.G.C. finally lifted the wrecked aircraft from the compact clay, with the pilot still strapped in his cockpit. Now identified, Sgt Karel Pavlik was buried with full military honours in Ypres Town Extension C.W.G.C. cemetery a few days later alongside his fellow Fighter Pilots killed in Operation Circus 157.





**Burial at Ypres**

The Merlin engine of his Spitfire remained in a thick layer of clay until 1997, when it was recovered by Groep Huyghe-Decuyper, local aircraft archeologists, who also traced Sgt Pavlík's sister and the family in Czechoslovakia, who after 52 years, finally informed of the location of Sgt Pavlík's grave.





**Karels Merlin engine in the garage of Wim Huyghes: l-r Anny (sister), Katherine (granddaughter), at the back, Carole (daughter) and Wim Huyghes on extreme right.**

(David Martin)

On 5 May 2011, *Lest We Forget* tours arranged a visit to the crash sites and Ypres Town Extension Cemetery. Afterwards, wreaths were laid during a moving ceremony at the Menin Gate.



**The graves of the four killed during Circus 157. The gap is where Flight Lieutenant Baudouin de Hemptinne was buried originally but his body was exhumed and reburied in the Belgian Military Cemetery.**





**Anny, Carole and Katherine at the crash site on Kemmel Hill.  
(Anny passed away in 2012)**



**Memorial to Karel Pavlik with his crash site in the background.**





**Anny and Carole at the Menin Gate.**



**David Martin lays a wreath on the grave of Karel Pavlik.**





**Piece of wreckage presented to David Martin by Wim Huyghes.**  
(David Martin)