

603 Squadron

Fighter Commands records state at Fairlop

15 November to 15 December 1941

ORB's state at Fairlop

Actual date move from Hornchurch

11/12 (*) November to 15 December 1941
to Dyce, Scotland.

* bad weather disrupted the move



Aircraft

Spitfire VA

P8603, P8796, R7226, R7229, R7230, R7333, W3110, W3113, W3118, W3364, W3379,

Spitfire VB

AD502, AD503, AD557, P7692, P8585, P8603, P8720, P8786, P8796, R7224, R7250, R7332, W3112, W3226, W3242, W3631, W3647, W3651, W3698, W7692, X4353,

Pilots

Bennett, Harold

Sgt. 1181163 RAFVR age 20.

Shot down 18 December 1941 off Le Touquet.

POW Stalag 383.

Promoted to W/O when POW.

Buckstone, John Walter

P/O 79626 RAFVR age 22.

Died 9 May 1942.

Remembered on Malta Memorial.

Bush, Sgt.
Colquhoun, Sgt.
Cook, Sgt.
Dalley, Sgt.
Douglas, F/O
Falconer, P/O

Farmar, John Anthony Goodhand

(Southern Rhodesia).

Sgt. 777664 RAFVR age 21.

Died 1 January 1942 - flew into a hill 5 miles north of Dundee.

Buried in Dyce Cemetery.

Fawkes, Stephen Guye Hawksworth

(South Africa).

P/O 86366 RAFVR age 23.

Died 8 December 1941 – shot down in the English Channel.

Remembered on the Runnymede Memorial.

Fayelle, F/Lt.

Forshaw, Roger Gatty

S/Ldr. 37009 RAF age 27.

Died 18 December 1942 – lost on night patrol off NE Scotland.

Remembered on Runnymede Memorial.

Hamilton, F/Lt.
Hurst, Sgt.

Innes,	F/Lt.	
Kistruck,	Sgt.	
Lamb,	Sgt.	
Louden,	Sgt.	
Neill,	Sgt.	
Otto Allan Walter,		(Canada). Sgt., later W/O Class 1 pilot R/68549 RCAF age 21. Died 16 May 1943 - crashed on take off. Buried Bone Cemetery, Annaba, Algeria.
Prytherch,	Sgt.	
Ruchwaldy,	Sgt.	
Smith,	F/Lt.	
Stapelton,	W/Cmdr	
Stone,	Sgt.	
Webster,	Sgt.	

ORB Notes.

12 November 1941. Move to RAF Fairlop. The move was in good order and record time. Aircraft had unfortunately to wait for the weather, which was of particularly bad visibility on this day, there being 10/10 cloud at about 600 feet accompanied by squally wind. Following the forward party, which left the previous evening, the Squadron personnel established themselves here and the opinion of all was that there was more room in the billets and at dispersals. No flying took place at Fairlop where mud seemed to be flying all over the place.

13/14 November. No flying today, weather very bad indeed.

15 November. Weather good and colder, wind did much to dry up the mud here. Convoy patrols (i) all day in pairs. Nothing to report.

(i) First operational flight made by P/O Stephen Fawkes and Sgt. Harold Bennett at 0835 hours.

16 November. Dull weather, fog, drizzle, mud all colours and depths. A day as gloomy that it was almost amusing to see the 'brassed off' faces everywhere. No flying at all.

17 November. Heavy raid with squalls, developing to gale force. Convoy patrols of two aircraft took off at 0845 hrs and 0930 hours, further sections abandoned task owing to weather getting worse. Gale warning in Channel. Heavy rains in evening.

18/19 November. A thick mist enshrouded the airfield, fog and mist, no flying possible.

20 November. Very wet day visibility too bad for flying, Rhubarbs planned but cancelled. Things brightened considerably in the afternoon. 2 convoy patrols took off and Squadron did some practice landings.

21 November. Typically November weather, gloomy rainy, foggy and mud everywhere. Things livened up in the evening when Officers of Fairlop entertained guests from Hornchurch to a housewarming and convivial evening. Guests included Wing Commander and Mrs F.S. Stapleton, F/Lt. and Mrs Hayter, S/Ldr. Cane and several W.A.A.F. Officers. The pipers included F/Lt. Lord, D. Douglas Hamilton played eightsome reels etc. Lt. Lord Clonmore was amongst guests from the Army.

22 November. Better weather, Convoy patrols took place all the morning, no enemy aircraft sighted. Practice flying in the afternoon. Most officers went to Hornchurch in evening for a wizard dance and party, which was terrific. Most of us made home base at about 0430 hours well and truly wine, dined and tired.

23 November. Weather wet and foggy. Dawn Convoy Patrol, but weather so bad three aircraft had to land at Manston and one at Hornchurch.

24 November. Misty and wet. One Convoy Patrol of four aircraft in morning, but visibility closed to less than 1,000 yards and no further flying took place.

25 November. Very rainy in morning. Convoy Patrol recalled. Weather closed in late afternoon.

27 November. Eleven aircraft led by S/Ldr. Forshaw made Manston at 1200 hours. Close escort to eight Hurricane bombers who were to attack plant at Oisemont. Target changed to supply ships in convoy with eight flak ships 10/12 miles north off Le Havre, $\frac{3}{4}$ miles off French coast. Squadron task to beat up flak ships. Left Manston at 1300 hours, W/C Stapleton leading blue section flew at 500 feet, target reached 1340 hours. Red 1 (S/Ldr. Forshaw) turned right on rear of flak ships opened fire at 500 yards, fired three good bursts, Many direct hits. Blue 1 attacked from starboard followed by his section and Green section. All pilots fired and as many hits were seen, it was not possible to estimate damage. Bombers came in on supply ships one of which exploded. A great cloud of white and black smoke came up from amidships. Second supply ship was hit and near miss also observed. All aircraft made base by 1500 hours without a bullet hole in any aircraft and no enemy aircraft were seen.

Telegram later from AOC 11 Group congratulating 603 Squadron on fine performance. Two flack (sic) ships known to have been sunk!

28 November. Fog and rain, no flying. S/Ldr. Forshaw with S/Ldr. Ovendon and F/Lt. D. Douglas Hamilton attended luncheon at Mansion House on the invitation of Airport Committee in commemoration of the opening of Fairlop 'drome. (sic)

29 November. Wet, misty. No flying possible.

30 November. Colder and misty. Squadron took off at 0845 hours for air firing at Sutton Bridge, but returned owing to poor visibility.

(Sutton Bridge a village and civil parish in the South Holland district of Lincolnshire, on the Wash).

1 to 5 December. Bad visibility and fog. No flying possible.

6 December. Weather fine. Convoy Patrols took place. No enemy A/C seen.

7 December. Weather was fine and rough wind from SW. Squadron did some cannon firing at Sutton Bridge.

8 December. This fine cold day turned out to be one of the unhappiest days in the Squadron's history. Convoy patrols took place from dawn until 1050 hrs. Conference called at 1030 hours and 603 were to form part of cover and escort to Hurricanes, who were to attack target at Hesdin 25 miles south of Le Touquet. Squadron made rendezvous at Hornchurch at 1105 hrs and Manston at 1120 hrs coast crossed at Dungeness at 1130. Our Squadron were middle cover at 18,000 feet and became detached over Le Touquet and heavily attacked by both Me 109's and FW 190's. A sharp fight took place with our planes outnumbered and with no cover from above, we left Le Touquet with F/O Fawkes, P/O Falconer and Sgt. Bennett missing. Owing to convoy patrols finishing at 1050 hours we flew three A/C short (these having gone u/s from convoy patrol). P/O Lamb shot down an Me109E and saw it crash into the sea. S/Ldr. Forshaw, F/Lt. Douglas Hamilton, and Sgt. Rawson, all fired at enemy aircraft without success that could be observed.

9 December. No operational flying until 12 00 hours when convoys took place at 1410 hours. Then P/O Lamb and Sgt. Thomas took off and at 1435 hours while over Clacton P/O Lamb developed engine trouble and had to bail out. He was picked up within 10 minutes by a patrol boat, and was none the worse for his adventure.

10 December. 50 mph gale. Conroy patrols took place, but no enemy a/c seen.

11 December. Misty. No operational or other flying took place until after the afternoon when Sgt. Thomas landed with undercarriage retracted.

13 December. No operational flying, striking and packing for move to Dyce in north-east Scotland.

14 December. Nothing to report. The farewell party in evening a success

15 December. Fine and visibility good. Squadron set off in fine style at 1030 hours.

See: **FACT FILE**

**Harold Bennett,
Stephen Fawkes
Allan Otto.**