



P7056 Club

Home of the Westland Whirlwind Fighter

Newsletter August 2020

Since I started to look further into the operations that 263 Squadron carried out during its time in Norway, getting to know the Squadron and its personnel on a minor level, certain personalities started to grab my attention.

The combat reports and the very matter of fact way that they wrote down what happened on each sortie, I'm pretty sure that during the heat of battle I wouldn't remember even a fraction of what happened.

The article below is an extract from a combat report by F/I Caesar Barraud Hull DFC-

Got the Gladiator going and shot off without helmet or waiting to do anything up. Cirled the 'drome climbing and pinned an 87 at the bottom of the dive. It made off slowly over the sea and just as I was turning away another 87 shot up past me and his shots went through my windscreen knocking me out for a while. Came to and was thanking my lucky stars when I heard rat-tat behind me and felt my Gladiator hit. Went into right hand turn and dive but could not get it out. Had given up hope at 200 feet when she centralised and I gave her a burst of engine to clear some large rocks. Further rat-tats from behind so gave up hope and decided to get her down. Held off and then crashed.

F/I Hull returned to England injured before the rest of the Squadron sailed for home. He was returned to 263 after recovering but was never operational on Whirlwinds. He was posted to 43 Squadron as S/Ldr but was killed a week later having already claimed a Me109 and 2 Me110's as possible.

His Hurricane V6641 crashed into the grounds of Purley High School.

Looking ahead as to what befell 263 on its way home from Norway, I found myself quite saddened to learn of their fate during that fateful meeting with the battle cruiser Hipper.

Many names spring to mind from S/Ldr Donaldson who was one of the casualties on the HMS Glorious to F/Sgt Hatter (maintenance flight) who returned to the UK on a later convoy, and it is in this spirit, that we hope to bring part of both Squadrons histories back to life in the shape of a Westland Whirlwind Fighter.

The build so far

Unfortunately, Covid 19 has had a marked effect on the progress of this project, along with many other projects and charities in the UK, the money has almost dried up. With people looking to their own needs first, which is quite understandable but as a result we find ourselves in need of further funds to continue with the build.

Airframe Assemblies have been good enough to give the fuselage interior a coat of silver paint at their own expense and have put it into their storage area till we are able to raise more funds to continue. At this moment in time we need £3000 to enable us to unlock some of the sponsorship money that we are in discussion about with the Battle of Britain Museum Trust.

I have approached several large aviation companies for assistance but have never had a reply.

If anyone knows of any route that might help please contact me at the email address at the end of this newsletter.

Whirlwinds over Jersey

Because of the nature of their work over the Western Approaches the Whirlwinds of 263 and 137 Squadrons were often suited to striking shipping, trains and aerodromes across Britany and Normandy. The fact that they had two engines gave their pilots a better chance of returning home than perhaps a single engined fighter bomber.

They were first converted to carry bombs at Manston these being 250lb ones, very soon they were also carrying 500lb bombs under each wing.

Several Whirlwinds were shot down in the sea around Jersey one is a known war grave.

One of our members lives on Jersey and sent us some photographs of the gun battery supposed to have claimed two of them, both shot down into the Baie du St Brelade on the 7th of December 1942 while attacking a convoy.

There is a memorial to the 2 Whirlwinds that were lost inside the main bunker, which is run as a museum through the summer months.

P7105 (HE-N) S/Ldr Robert Woodward RAF. 263 Squadron. (below)



P6978 (HE-L) W/o Donald McPhail RCAF. 263 Squadron. (below)



Plaque outside the bunker door.

Peter Le Boustouller visited Noirmont head land where battery Lothringen is situated. He tells us that;

“There is a great 6-minute film on YouTube produced by the CIOS (Channel Island Occupation Society), just type in battery Lothringen. This will give you a good idea of the fortifications. I think there were 4 anti-aircraft bunkers, 3 are still visible”.

Named after the SMS *Lothringen*, and constructed by Organisation Todt for the Wehrmacht during the Occupation of the Channel Islands. The first installations were completed in 1941, around the same time as the completion of the nearby Battery Moltke, in St. Ouen.

The battery site is located at the end of Noirmont Point, a rock headland which overlooks St. Aubin's Bay, Elizabeth Castle, and the harbours of Saint Helier. It was a part of the Atlantic Wall system of coastal fortifications, and most of the concrete structures remain today. The 3rd Battery of Naval Artillery Battalion 604 were stationed here.

SMS *Lothringen* was the last of 5 pre-dreadnought battleships of the Braunschweig class, built for the German Kaiserliche Marine. She was laid down in December 1902, was launched in May 1904 and commissioned in May 1906. She was named for the then German province of Lothringen (now Lorraine). She was quickly made obsolete by the launching of the revolutionary HMS *Dreadnaught* in 1906, as a result her career as a front-line battleship was cut short.

Battery Lothringen at Noirmont Head



15cm gun under refurbishment

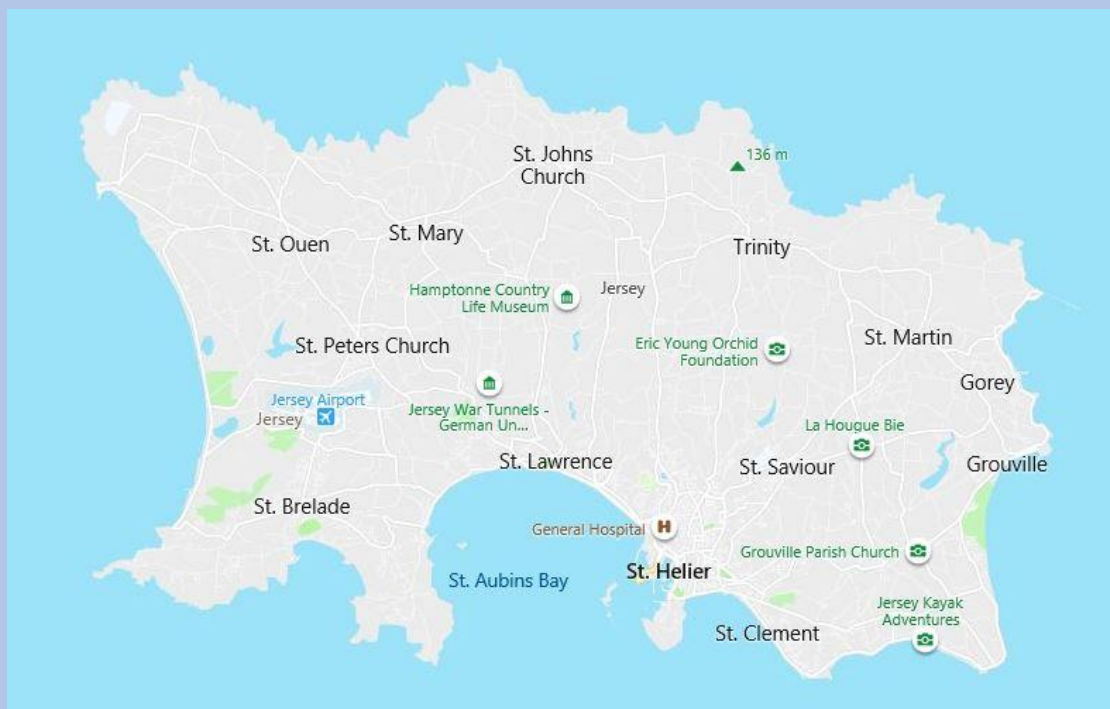


15cm gun emplacement



entrance to the museum where the plaque is situated.

We have tried on a number of occasions to contact local dive clubs to see if anyone has dived on these sites and what, if anything is left of the Whirlwinds. We know that the rear fuselage was constructed of magnesium panels which would have corroded away many years ago but there is still a lot we know nothing of regarding their construction, luckily, we have two Peregrine engines both at the Rolls Royce museum at Derby.



St Brelade bay, SW corner of Jersey



3 Whirlwinds of 263 Squadron over Exeter.

P6978 (HE-L) can be seen in the middle of this formation.

Many thanks to Rob Bowater and his book *263 and 137 Squadrons the Whirlwind Years* and to Peter Le Boustouller for the photographs.

Also Wlki for the information on the Lothringen battery and SMS Lothringen

A signed copy of Rob's book can be purchased from our website at – whirlwindfighterproject.co.uk

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