



# *FlyPast* Spotlight

# Handley Page Hampden

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Main picture  
Hampden Is of 49 Squadron  
on the attack. AIRFIX

This month's *Spotlight* shines on the Handley Page Hampden medium bomber – a type that fought against the odds to hit back at Nazi Germany during the early days of the war



# The Handley Page Hampden

Among the RAF's first World War Two bombers, the Hampden was an important (but flawed) part of Britain's war machine

**A**long with the Vickers Wellington and the Armstrong Whitworth Whitley, the Handley Page Hampden has come to symbolise the bravery and sacrifice of RAF bomber crews involved in operations early in World War Two. It was developed in the late 1930s, at a time when the rigours of what lay ahead could only be guessed at.

All three of the RAF's main bombers were soon proven to be ill equipped for the daylight raids that had been envisaged. Losses were great, and even with the human cost removed from the equation, the effectiveness in terms of damage done to the enemy was often less than satisfactory. Like most of its contemporaries, the Hampden was quickly withdrawn from such duties, though it did find a second wind when put to work in other areas, such as torpedo bombing with Coastal Command.

As hostilities drew to a close, the war-weary Hampdens that remained had long since been relegated to secondary roles. Larger and more durable four-engined 'heavies',

such as the Avro Lancaster, flew nocturnal bombing missions, while the Flying Fortresses and Liberators of the USAAF attacked by day. In comparison, the Hampden looked like the product of a previous generation.

## Unusual origins

It may come as a surprise to learn that the Handley Page bomber was designed by a German. Gustav Lachmann had served his country in the Great War, and had actually trained as a pilot, before a serious accident in 1917 curtailed his career. The following year he invented Lachmann Flaps, leading edge wing slats that reduced the stalling speed of an aircraft and improved its resistance to spinning.

Studying engineering after the war, his career took him around the world until he accepted a job with Handley Page in 1929. As part of the company's design team, he developed the Hampden as a twin-engined day bomber in the mid-1930s – Vickers drew up the Wellington to the same specification. The HP.52 prototype

undertook its maiden flight on June 21, 1936. This was followed by an initial order for 180 Mk.I Hampdens, the first of these flying on May 24, 1938.

Despite the significance of Lachmann's role, as the threat of war with Germany intensified, his origins led some to suspect him of being a spy. On the outbreak of World War Two he was interred as an 'enemy alien' on the Isle of Man. Following persistent pressure from his employers he was eventually released to continue his work for the British company. In fact, Lachmann stayed loyal to Handley Page not just for the duration of the war but for the remainder of his career. He died in Chorleywood, Herts, in 1966.

The design of the Hampden was innovative, if somewhat unorthodox. Its 'tadpole' rear end was similar to that of Germany's Dornier Do 17, but its front section – bulbous in profile but extremely narrow – led to crews nicknaming it 'the Flying Suitcase', a less than favourable soubriquet reflecting its cramped conditions. In its claustrophobic interior, four



“The design was innovative, if somewhat unorthodox”

men were accommodated: pilot, navigator/bomb aimer, radio operator and rear gunner.

Powered by two Bristol Pegasus radials, it was armed with up to six 0.303in (7.7mm) Vickers machine guns in the nose, dorsal and ventral positions. Despite the fact that it was soon rendered obsolete as a bomber, 1,430 Hampdens were constructed. More than half (770) were built by English Electric at Samlesbury in Lancashire. Handley Page produced around 500, and a further 160 were made in Canada from 1940 to 1941 by Canadian Associated Aircraft.

### Quickly outclassed

Although conceived as a quick and agile ‘fighting bomber’, the Hampden’s frailties soon became all too clear. The RAF’s 49 Squadron was the first to receive the type in September 1938, followed by No.83, with both units based at Scampton, Lincs. A total of 226

Hampdens were in service with eight squadrons when war broke out, and these unfortunate units suffered considerable losses during early, daylight sorties.

By the time the war ended, a total of 714 Hampdens had been lost on operations, almost half the number built. The toll in human life was considerable – around 1,800 crew members were either killed or listed as missing. After a savage introduction, which nevertheless led to the award of the Victoria Cross to Sgt John Hannah who tackled the flames of a burning aircraft (see page 74), and to Flt Lt Rod Learoyd (see panel), the focus quickly shifted to night raids and mine-laying.

Bomber Command withdrew its Hampdens in 1942. The type did go on to operate with some success with Coastal Command as a long range torpedo bomber from 1943. The TB Mk.I was fitted with a single torpedo in an open bomb bay, along with a 500lb (230kg)

Flt Lt Roderick Learoyd’s 49 Squadron Hampden P4403 at Scampton. PETER GREEN COLLECTION



### Hampden Victoria Cross

The Handley Page Hampden was vulnerable to attack, both from the air and ground. Flying P4403 ‘EA-M’ with 49 Squadron on August 12, 1940, Flt Lt Roderick Learoyd pressed home an attack on an aqueduct over the River Ems in Germany despite sustaining severe damage to his aircraft. As he commenced his bomb run at just 150ft, his machine was caught by searchlights and bombarded by flak. Learoyd nevertheless dropped his bombs on the target and nursed his crippled Hampden home. Believing that a night landing would be too dangerous, he circled until morning light, finally bringing his crew home safely. He was awarded the VC on September 9, 1940. The medal is now on display within the Imperial War Museum’s Lord Ashcroft Gallery.

bomb under each wing. It also served as a maritime reconnaissance aircraft. In addition, 144 Squadron and RAAF 455 Squadron were put to good use escorting Arctic convoys, flying from Soviet bases. The 23 aircraft involved were subsequently left to the Russians, and were used by the 3rd Squadron of 24 MTAP (Anti-shipping Wing) of the Soviet Navy until at least 1943. (See page 78.)

Very little came from a Napier Dagger powered variant, known as the Hereford, due to engine cooling problems, and most were eventually re-engined as Hampdens. The few Herefords that survived were used by training units – those built in Canada went to 32 OTU, but even these suffered an unusually high attrition rate, resulting in around 200 ‘semi-retired’ examples being flown from the UK as replacements.

Thrown into the cauldron of World War Two, the Hampden was a machine from which vital lessons were learned. It is best remembered for this, and even more so for the courage of its hard-pressed crews. ●

**Main picture**  
Handley Page Hampden I AT137 ‘UB-T’ of 455 Squadron RAAF flying in May 1942. RAF MUSEUM

**Above left**  
L4032 was the first Hampden to roll off the production line. KEY

# Spotlight

## Handley Page Hampden

# Stiff opposition

How did the Hampden shape up against other twin-engined medium bombers in service at the time?

**T**he distinctive Handley Page Hampden was one of three primary medium bombers in service with the RAF during the early years of World War Two. While it was not a success in the long term, the harsh reality of daylight bombing raids proved that the Vickers Wellington and Armstrong Whitworth Whitley were not entirely suited to the task either.

The Hampden had the advantage of being the fastest, but it could not carry as large a payload as either and was considerably more vulnerable than the Wellington. The latter's unusual geodetic fuselage design made it both complex to construct and difficult to destroy. Far fewer Hampdens were built because they proved less capable and were

unpopular with crews. The type – along with the Whitley – was retired from frontline service in 1942.

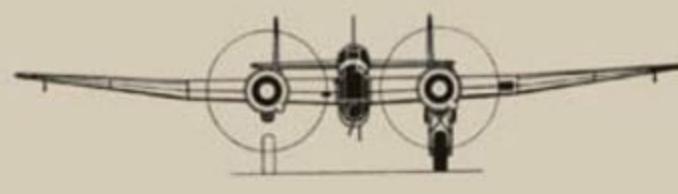
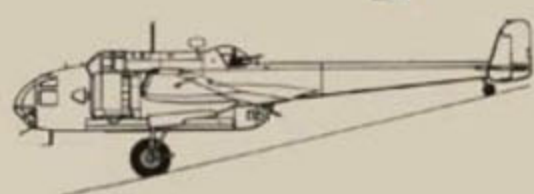
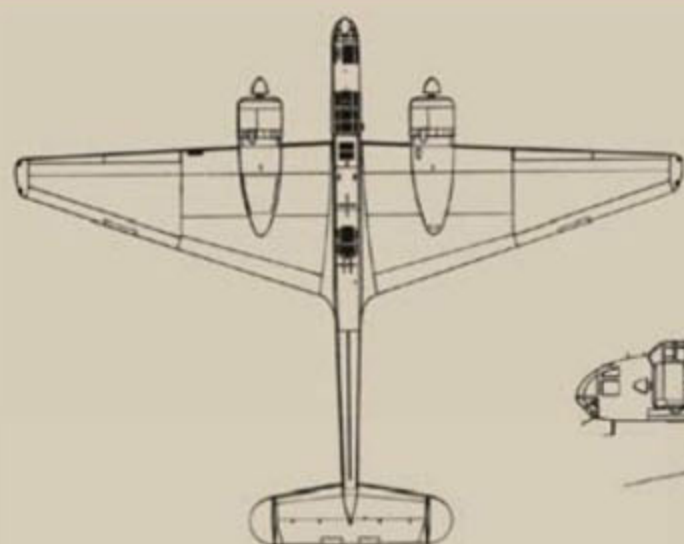
All three RAF machines were comprehensively outclassed when the North American B-25 Mitchell became available, and while the Hampden bore a certain similarity to the Luftwaffe's Dornier Do 17, the German design proved much the more versatile. The same was true of Germany's other mass-produced medium bomber, the Junkers Ju 88, which was faster than the Hampden, more durable, and could carry more bombs.

The Italians achieved some success with the Fiat BR.20 Cicogna. While it could not match the Hampden's bomb load, let alone that of the Wellington, it was well armed and

had a useful range. It served briefly in the Battle of Britain and was later flown against the USSR in addition to extensive use in the Mediterranean theatre. However, like the Hampden, it proved exceptionally vulnerable to enemy fighters.

Lighter aircraft, such as the Bristol Blenheim, were put to good use as bombers in the war's early years, but these too were subject to heavy losses. The Soviet Union debuted its Ilyushin DB-3 in 1936 (the same year that the Hampden first flew) and later renamed it the Il-4. It could match the Ju 88 in terms of payload. In all, 6,800 were built and the type soldiered on until the end of the war. By this time, Britain's early medium bombers had certainly had their day.

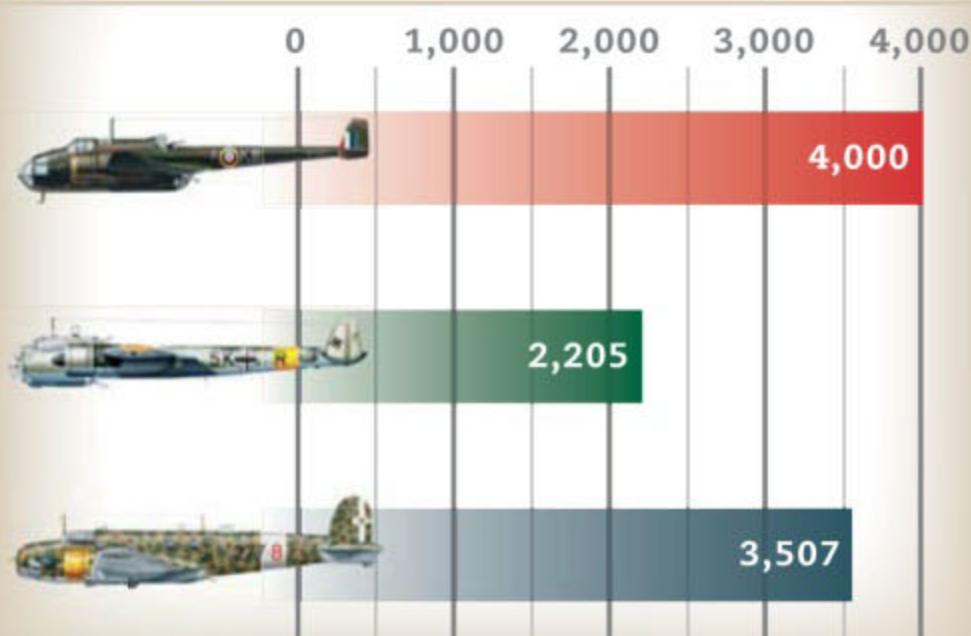
### Handley Page Hampden I



Above right

Handley Page Hampden I AE257 'KM-X' of 44 Squadron. PETE WEST 2012

### AT A GLANCE: BOMB LOAD (lbs)



**Construction:** Built by Handley Page at Cricklewood, London; English Electric in Lancashire, and the CAC consortium in Canada. 1,432 constructed including prototypes, plus around 20 conversions from the similar HP Hereford.

**First Flight:** June 21, 1936 by prototype K4240 from Radlett, Hertfordshire, with Major J Cordes in the pilot's seat.

**Powerplants:** Two 1,000hp (746kW) Bristol Pegasus XVIIIIs.

**Dimension:** Span 69ft 2in (21.1m). Length 53ft 7in. Height 14ft 11in. Wing area 668ft<sup>2</sup> (62.1m<sup>2</sup>).

**Weight:** Empty 11,780lb (5,343kg). Loaded 18,756lb.

**Performance:** Max speed 254mph (408km/h). Service ceiling 19,000ft (5,791m). Initial rate of climb 980ft/min. Range 1,885 miles with 2,000lb of weapons, or 1,200 miles with 4,000lb load.

**Armament:** One fixed and one Browning gun forward, and twin Brownings in the rear ventral and dorsal stations. Up to 4,000lbs of bombs.

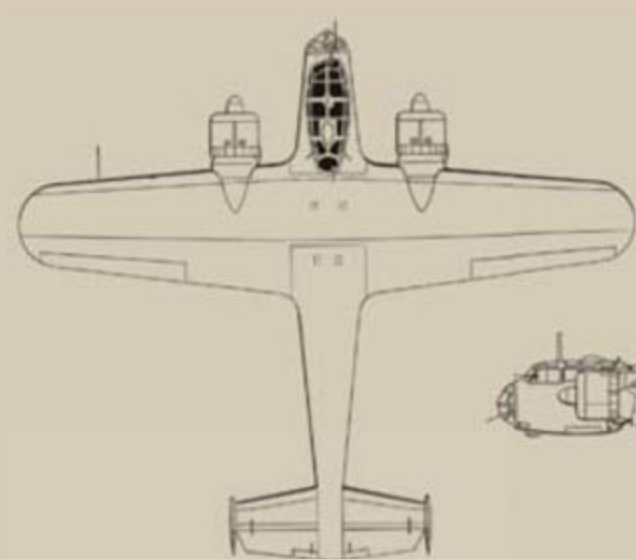
**Crew:** Four.

**Note:** performance and weights varied according to role and configuration.

**SPOT FACT** The first unit to operate the Hampden was 49 Squadron

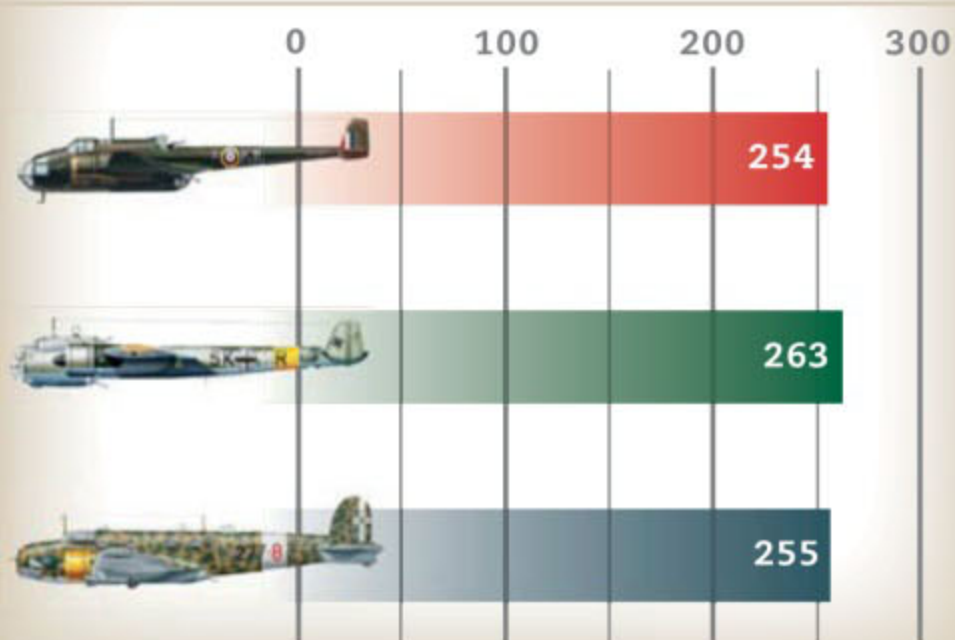
## Contemporaries compared

### Dornier Do 17Z



Above right  
Dornier Do 17-Z2 5K+HR of KG 3.  
PETE WEST 2012

#### AT A GLANCE: SPEED (mph)



**Construction:** Around 1,200 of all variants were built, including approximately 535 Do 17Zs and 112 Do 215s.

**First flight:** The first of three Do 17 prototypes with single fin and rudder flew on November 23, 1934. Subsequent aircraft had the more familiar twin-fin design, the first flying on May 18, 1935.

**Powerplants:** Two 1,000hp (746kW) Bramo Fafnir 323P nine-cylinder radials. The Do 215 had two 1,100hp Daimler-Benz DB601A inverted V12 units.

**Dimension:** Span 59ft 1in (18m). Length 51ft 9in. Height 14ft 11in. Wing area 592ft<sup>2</sup> (55m<sup>2</sup>).

**Weight:** Empty 13,145lb (5,962kg). Loaded 18,937lb.

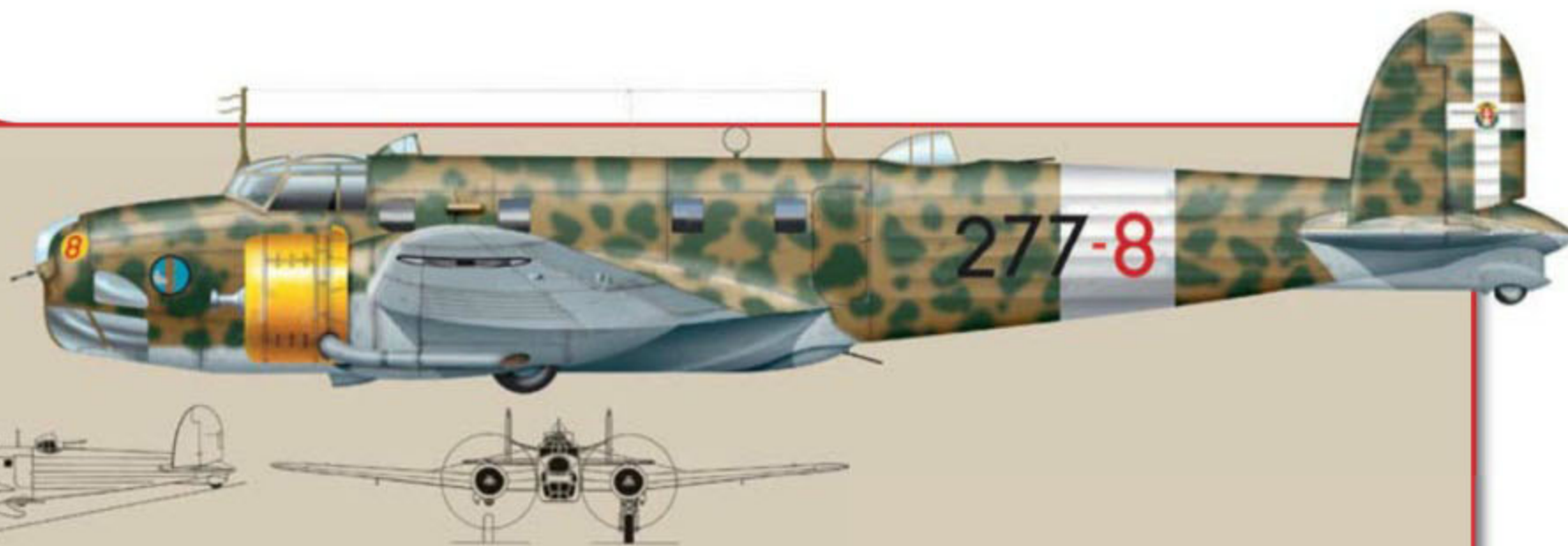
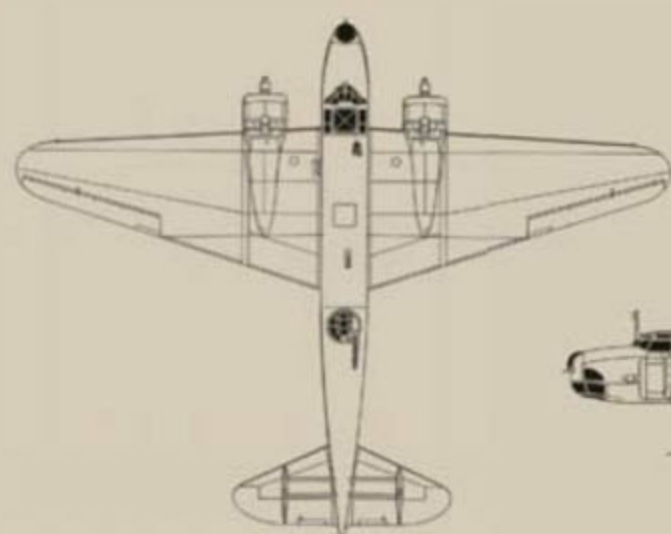
**Performance:** Max speed 263mph (423km/h) at 16,400ft (5,000m). Service ceiling 26,740ft. Range 720 miles with 1,100lb bomb load.

**Armament:** Six 7.9mm machine guns. Max bomb load 2,205lb (1,000kg).

**Crew:** Four.

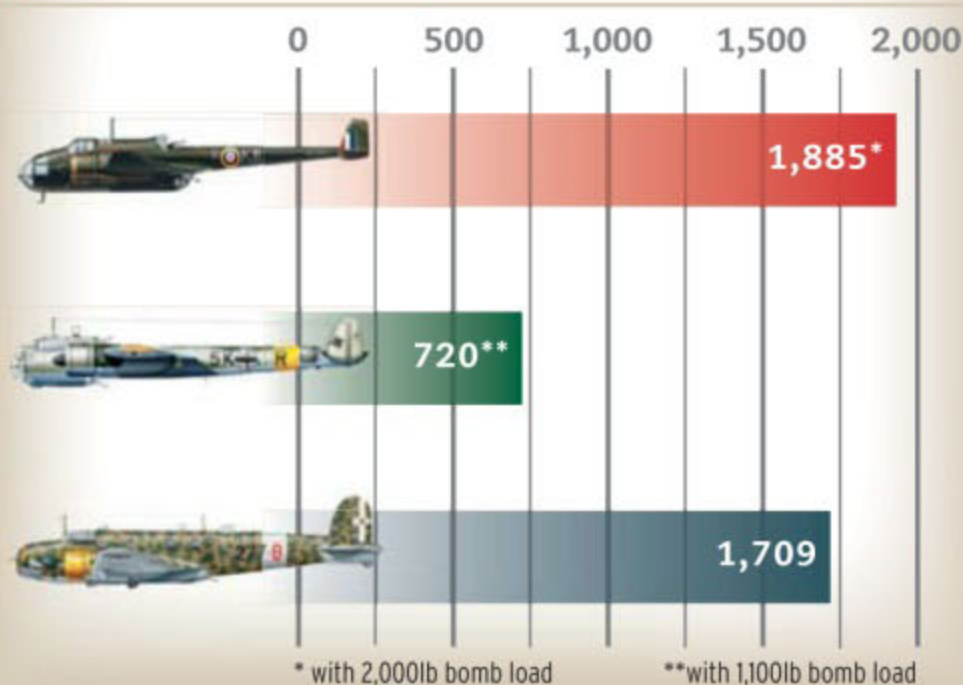
**Note:** performance and weights varied according to role and configuration.

### Fiat BR.20 Cicogna



Above right  
Fiat BR.20 Cicogna 277-8.  
PETE WEST 2012

#### AT A GLANCE: RANGE (miles)



\* with 2,000lb bomb load

\*\*with 1,100lb bomb load

**Construction:** A total of 602 were built - 320 BR.20s, 264 BR.20Ms, 15 BR.20bis, two BR.20As and a single BR.20L.

**First Flight:** The prototype MM274 flew for the first time from Turin, Italy, on February 10, 1936.

**Powerplants:** Two 1,000hp (746kW) Fiat A.80 RC41 18-cylinder radials. Some BR.20Ms had 1,100hp A.80 RC20 units.

**Dimension:** Span 70ft 8in (21.6m). Length 54ft 8in. Height 15ft 7in. Wing area 795ft<sup>2</sup> (74m<sup>2</sup>).

**Weight:** Empty 14,330lb (6,500kg). Loaded 23,038lb.

**Performance:** Max speed 255mph (410km/h) at 13,450ft (4,100m). Initial climb 900ft/min. Service ceiling 23,600ft. Range 1,709 miles.

**Armament:** Four 7.7mm machine guns in nose, dorsal turret and ventral positions. Max bomb load 3,537lb (1,600kg).

**Crew:** Five.

**Note:** performance and weights varied according to role and configuration.



# Spotlight

## Handley Page Hampden

**Graham Pitchfork** relates some exploits of pilots who flew the fastest of the first-generation wartime bombers

# Brave SOULS



*Deryck Grainger.*



*Bryan Woolston.*



*George Glenn.*



**T**ogether with the Wellington and the Whitley, Hampdens formed the mainstay of Bomber Command's long-range force at the outbreak of war. Early heavy losses during daylight raids compelled all three types to be assigned to night operations.

With a top speed of 245mph (394km/h) the Hampden was the fastest of the trio. In terms of defensive armament, it carried only four machine-guns.

Many deeds of heroism were carried out by Hampden crews. Here are the exploits of three Hampden pilots, all of whom had to master the bomber without the advantage of a dual-control version.

### **A gunner for company**

With war looming, 19-year-old Deryck Grainger volunteered for the RAFVR in June 1939 to become a pilot, starting his initial training almost immediately. This was

completed on September 29, 1940 and he departed for Cottesmore in Rutland, where he joined 14 Operational Training Unit (OTU) with Hampdens.

In 1940 it was the practice that all medium bombers carried a first and second pilot. The unorthodox fuselage and strange internal layout of the Hampden made movement within almost impossible, so the second pilot acted as navigator and bomb aimer.

During the OTU course the junior pilots regularly flew on navigation exercises in Ansons, when they also practised bomb aiming. Pilot training consisted of dual instruction in Ansons followed by committing the Hampden's cockpit drills to memory. Once these had been mastered, an aircraft was jacked up in the hangar where the landing attitude could be demonstrated and the various drills could be practised. This was necessary since there was no dual-control version.

After a demonstration flight with an instructor, the pilot flew the aircraft

for the first time with a gunner to keep him company. By the end of January 1941 Grainger had completed his basic pilot and navigator training and he was posted to 83 Squadron based at Scampton, near Lincoln.

He flew his first operation as navigator and bomb aimer with Plt Off Royle and his crew on February 15 when they attacked oil installations at Homberg. Owing to searchlight activity, and the failure of a flare to ignite, the target could not be located, so two 250lb (113kg) bombs were dropped on the searchlight positions. The results of this sortie were typical for this period of the offensive when navigation was restricted almost entirely to dead reckoning and bombsights were of a basic design.

After four more 'ops' Grainger returned to the OTU to complete an intensive four-week captain's course before being allocated his own crew. He had served his apprenticeship and was ready to start flying in his own aircraft, AD907. ➔

**Below**  
Armourers 'bomb up' a Hampden of 49 Squadron.



**2** 1,500lb sea mines could be carried

**SPOT FACT** Napier Dagger-engined Hampdens were called Herefords

**Right**  
*'Gneisenau' in dry dock at Brest in April 1941. ROY NESBIT COLLECTION*

**Below**  
*Groundcrew loading a mine into a Hampden.*



“...the arrival of the German battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* at Brest in May 1941 placed greater emphasis on the French ports”

### Gardening

The first operation for a new captain was usually a mine-laying sortie. On the night of May 2, Grainger

and his crew flew their first war mission together when they headed for the German convoy routes near the Frisian Islands.

Commencing in April 1940, mine-laying became a major role for the RAF's medium bomber force. Until the arrival of the 'heavies', only the Hampden, with its large weapons bay, was capable of carrying the 1,500lb A (for airborne) Mk.I-IV sea mine. These contained 750lb of high explosive with magnetic or acoustic fusing, or a combination of both. The mine could be fused to detonate on first sensing an impulse or it could be fitted with a time-delay fuse – some remaining inactive for months.

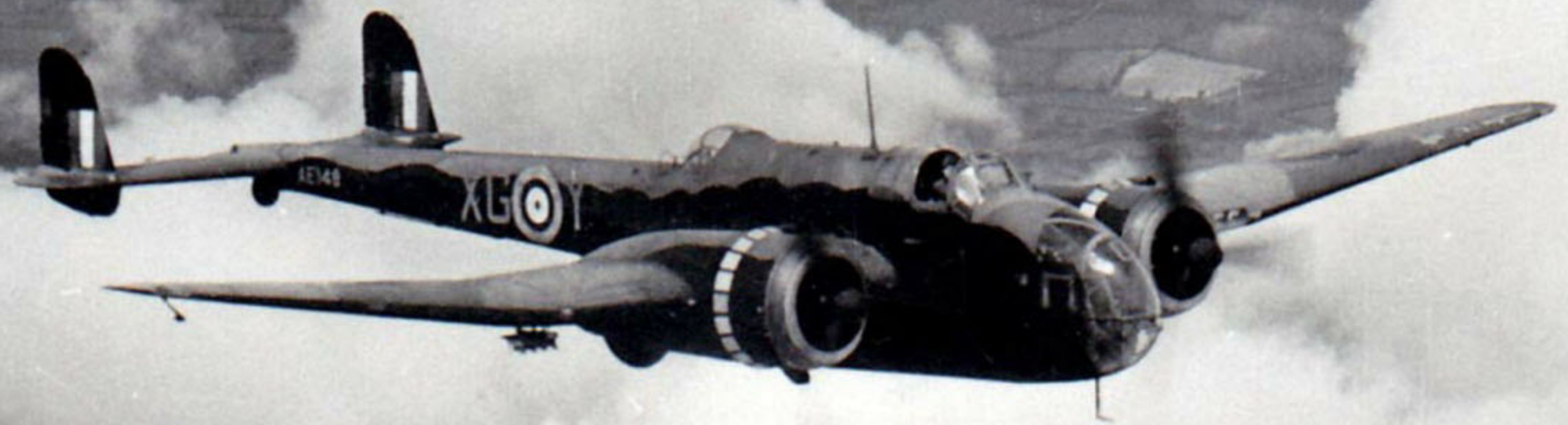
'Gardening' was the code name for such 'ops' when 'vegetables' were 'planted' in sea areas identified by the Admiralty, which was responsible for all sea mining, whether carried out by aircraft, ships or submarines. The purposes of sea mining were several, and were seen by the Admiralty as a major means to dislocate enemy maritime traffic and, in particular, to assist in the Battle of the Atlantic by hindering the passage of U-boats.

The value of such mining has often been ignored. Unlike bomber or ground attack sorties, mining sorties did not generate immediate results or provide much news for the propaganda machinery. But a great deal of enemy shipping was lost following these operations and post-war analysis has highlighted its effectiveness and value. The effort Germany was forced to allocate to minesweeping along the much-extended occupied coastline of Europe was considerable. Sea mining significantly reduced the Third Reich's capability to mount offensive naval operations.

Hampdens were used for long-range mining, usually to the Baltic, but the arrival of the







## European Mining Areas

- Area 1** Western Baltic
- Area 2** The Kattegat, Kiel, the Sound and Belts
- Area 3** South coast of Norway
- Area 4** North Sea; Danish, German and Netherlands coasts
- Area 5** Belgian and French north coasts
- Area 6** French Biscay coast

obscured the city, but Grainger's navigator was able to obtain a pinpoint on the river to the south. He calculated a timed run from there and attacked despite the attention of the German flak batteries.

From the beginning of July it was back to German industrial assets for the main bomber force, but bad weather thwarted good results. Grainger's next visit to Cologne on July 20 once again ran into poor conditions over the target, but further trouble awaited him and his crew as they left the Belgian coast. Three German fighters attacked, with one closing to 400 yards (1,200ft – 365m) before opening fire. Sgt Neil, the rear gunner, returned fire with his twin 0.303in machine-guns while Grainger manoeuvred the Hampden violently as he headed for the protection of thick cloud, which he reached before the fighter could inflict any serious damage.

Grainger flew two more mining 'ops', first to the Baltic and then to the approaches of Kiel harbour. His final, and 13th, Hampden operation was to Mannheim on August 5. After almost eight hours at the controls of his reliable AD907, he landed at Scampton at 06:00 hours.

On October 24, 1941, Grainger was commissioned as a Pilot Officer and four weeks later it was announced

**Above**  
A Hampden of 83 Squadron.

**Left**  
Woolston's crew. From left: McKay, Wood, Woolston, Chandler.



German battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* at Brest in May 1941 placed greater emphasis on the French ports. Accordingly, Grainger's second sortie as a captain was to Quiberon where he laid his mine successfully before returning on the long route to avoid the defences on the Brest Peninsula, landing back at Scampton after a flight of over eight hours.

## 'Maritime' targets

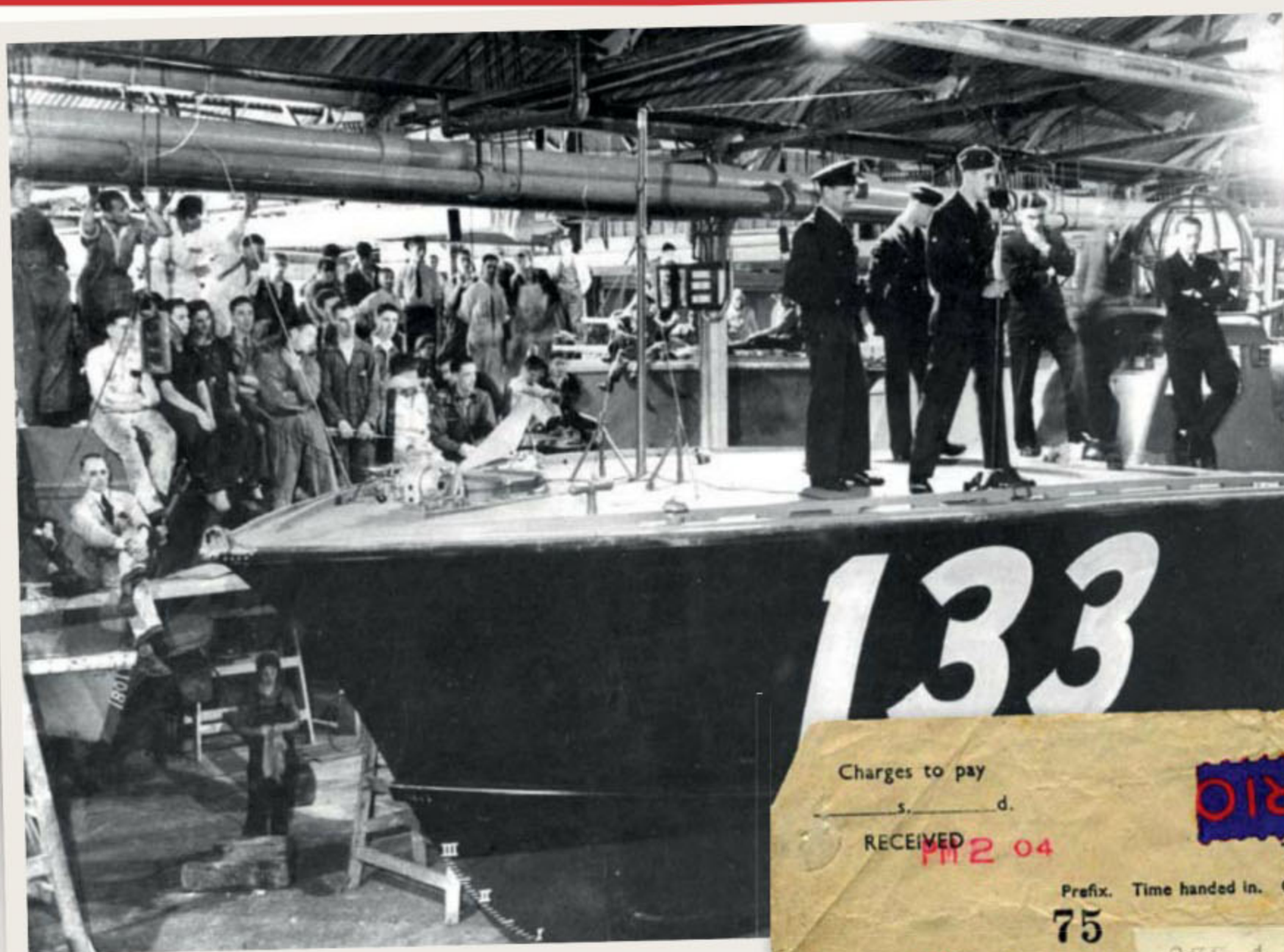
With the U-boat threat in the North Atlantic reaching serious proportions in the spring of 1941, most Bomber Command operations mounted during this period were directed against ports and industrial centres in Germany supporting the building of naval vessels and components. Grainger attacked the port and shipyards of Hamburg in what was later described as one of the most destructive raids so far in the war.

On May 12 he was briefed for Mannheim but, with poor visibility over the target, he and 26 other aircraft struck at the secondary – Cologne. Records maintained by the city's authorities confirm that a number of important industrial centres were hit and a barracks was destroyed with heavy loss of life.

The effort against 'maritime' targets continued throughout June, and Grainger flew two attacks against the German battlecruisers in Brest, three to the shipbuilding yards in Bremen and one on the U-boat building yards at Vegesack near Bremen. The difficulties of target finding and identification during this phase are well illustrated by the Vegesack raid with all crews reporting failure to find the objective, and some dropping their bombs on estimated time of arrival or estimated positions.

Similar problems occurred over Cologne on July 10 when cloud

**SPOT FACT** Its final raid with Bomber Command took place on September 14/15, 1942



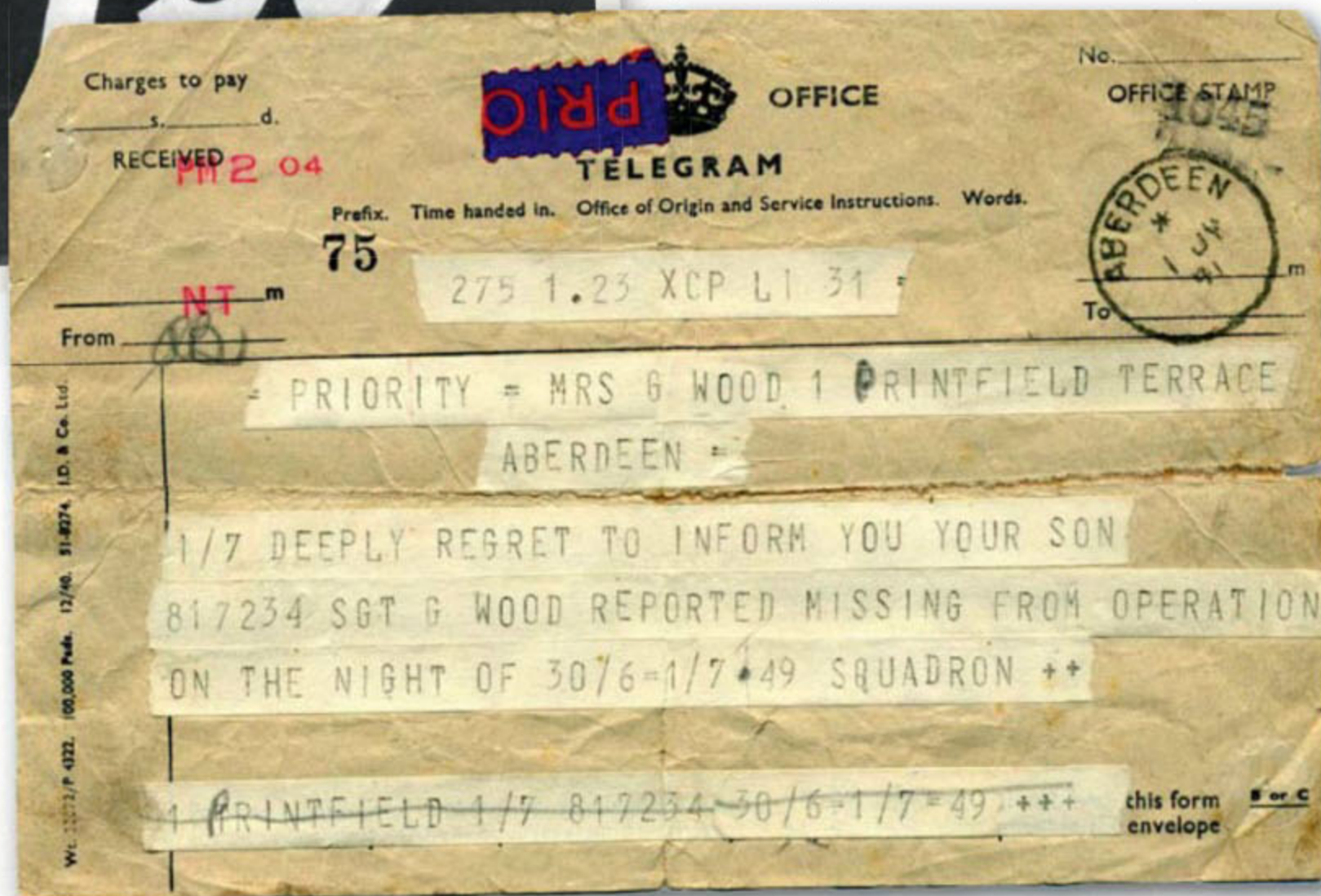
Sgt Bryan Woolston, took off from Scampton just before midnight on June 30, 1941 to bomb Dusseldorf, Germany. For Woolston and his wireless operator, Sgt George Wood, it was their 30th and final 'op' before starting a rest tour.

The bomber had just crossed the Dutch coast at 17,000ft when the port Bristol Pegasus started to fail. The navigator, Sgt P Mackay, gave Woolston a course to steer and he turned for home. Within a few minutes, the powerplant failed completely amidst a shower of sparks and flames from the exhaust. Jettisoning the bombs over the sea,

in the *London Gazette* that he had been awarded the DFM. After a rest tour as an instructor, Grainger converted to the Mosquito before joining 692 Squadron, part of the Light Night Striking Force. He completed 50 sorties with the unit and was later awarded the DFC. He was released from the RAF in January 1946.

**Ditching stations**

The four-man crew of 49 Squadron Hampden X3134, captained by



Woolston remained confident that he could reach the English coast, despite losing some height.

Six weeks earlier he had lost an engine during an attack against Hamburg and had managed to creep back to make a successful crash-landing on the Essex coast. However, on this occasion X3134 was very difficult to control and it steadily lost height despite all loose items being jettisoned. The gunner, Sgt E B Chandler, also threw his guns and ammunition over the side. An SOS was sent (it later transpired that it was never received) and Woolston ordered the crew to take up their ditching stations.

The sea was very calm and there was good moonlight when Woolston throttled back the remaining engine until the bomber was just above the surface, flying at slow speed with the tail down. It hit the sea hard and George Wood thought they had landed on the beach. He immediately clambered onto the wing to find that they were on the open sea and that the immersion switch had activated to inflate the dinghy, albeit upside down.

Woolston quickly dived into the sea to right the dinghy. During this he swallowed quantities of sea water and was violently sick for the next few hours. Before the crew could retrieve the Verrey pistol, provisions and the two pigeons, the Hampden sank. The four spent an uncomfortable night in the small dinghy.

## Endurance test

The crew took stock of their situation; their only food was a box containing 36 Horlicks tablets and some chocolate. They had a container with almost two pints of water and quickly realised that they would have to impose strict rationing, particularly the water. In the morning and evening each had a half a Horlicks' tin-lid of water and three tablets.

As the first day progressed the sun appeared and, for the rest of their ordeal, the four men had to endure a heat-wave. Woolston later commented: "The hot spell undoubtedly saved us from dying of exposure."

Towards the end of the second day they saw two Wellingtons but they flew on. To remain cool and avoid sweating, the crew immersed themselves in the water. On one occasion they spotted a mine close by and paddled away, suddenly able to understand why there was no shipping around.

By the third day they were all suffering from sunburn and had to halve their meagre water ration; all the Horlicks tablets had been eaten. They then ate half a piece of chocolate each three times a day but due to the lack of water they were unable to swallow all of it.

Towards the end of the third day, three Blenheims flew by, but the ditched crew's two marine flares failed. The Blenheim's crews also

## 'Gardening' statistics

- 48,060 mines were laid offensively in enemy-controlled waters in north-west Europe - 47,152 by Bomber Command.
- 717 vessels totalling 688,153 tons were sunk and 565 damaged - far exceeding the results obtained by any other weapon.
- Mines accounted for 40% of the total sinkings of enemy-controlled vessels. Contrast that with 17% by surface ships and submarines, 23% by direct air attack, such as the Strike Wings, and 20% during RAF and USAAF bombing raids.
- From 19,523 sorties spread over four years, just 507 aircraft were lost - compare that with the loss of 96 on one night in March 1944 when Nuremberg was bombed for little result.

failed to see the flashes from the signalling mirror. Nothing of note occurred over the next two days as the four men tried to paddle in a westerly direction, but they grew weaker and began to think that the end was near.

On the sixth day their spirits rose when they saw three launches about two miles away - but they turned away without seeing the tiny dinghy. On the seventh the water ran out after each had taken a mouthful. During the following day a Hampden, escorted by Hurricanes, passed overhead - once again the flashes from the signal mirror failed to attract their attention.

Throughout the ordeal, no-one slept for more than 15 minutes at a time. At first the crew endeavoured to rest with their legs over each other's shoulders, a position that worked until someone got cramp. The scheme eventually adopted was for two to rest at a time as the others sat upright on the edge of the dinghy. Wood wryly commented: "In another three days we should have had the system absolutely perfected!"

## Rum and a mug of tea

As the ninth morning dawned they all thought that they had 'bought it'. Then they saw a Hemswell-based Hampden and this time it spotted the flashing mirrors, turned towards them and was soon circling the dinghy. After a few minutes, the bomber signalled "Help coming" with the Aldis lamp. It continued circling for the next four hours having dropped a dinghy, which the survivors recovered, immediately finding some precious water aboard. Wood thought the water tasted foul, no doubt due to the state of his mouth.

Two Blenheims with a Spitfire ➔

### Top left

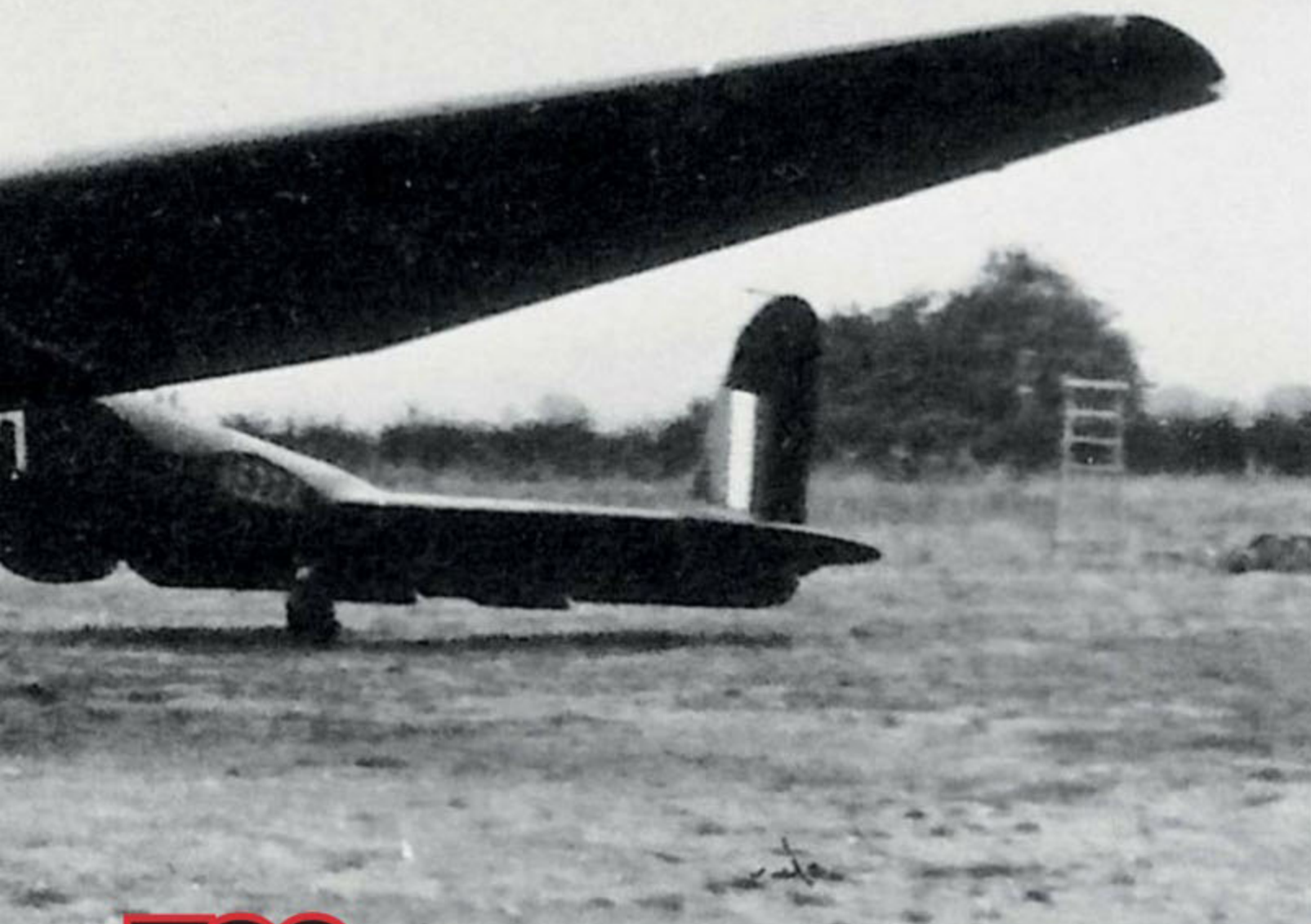
As satisfied 'customers', Woolston and his crew visited the factory to meet the builders of the RAF's High Speed Launches.

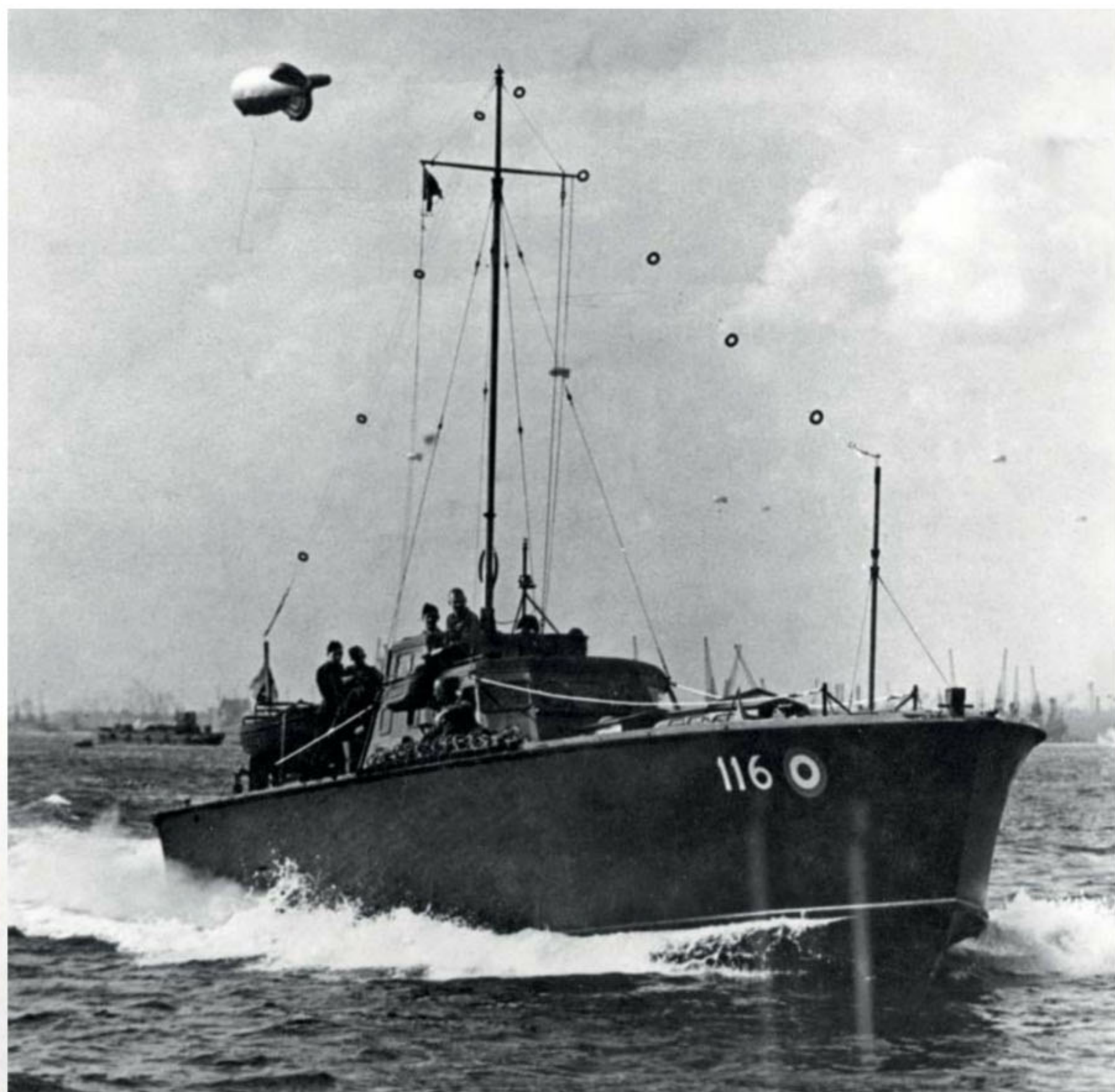
### Left

The telegram received by George Wood's mother.

### Below left

Hampden AE224 of 49 Squadron at Scampton.





“At noon, High Speed Launch 116 appeared and was soon alongside. The crew were too weak to climb the scrambling net and had to be lifted onto the launch”

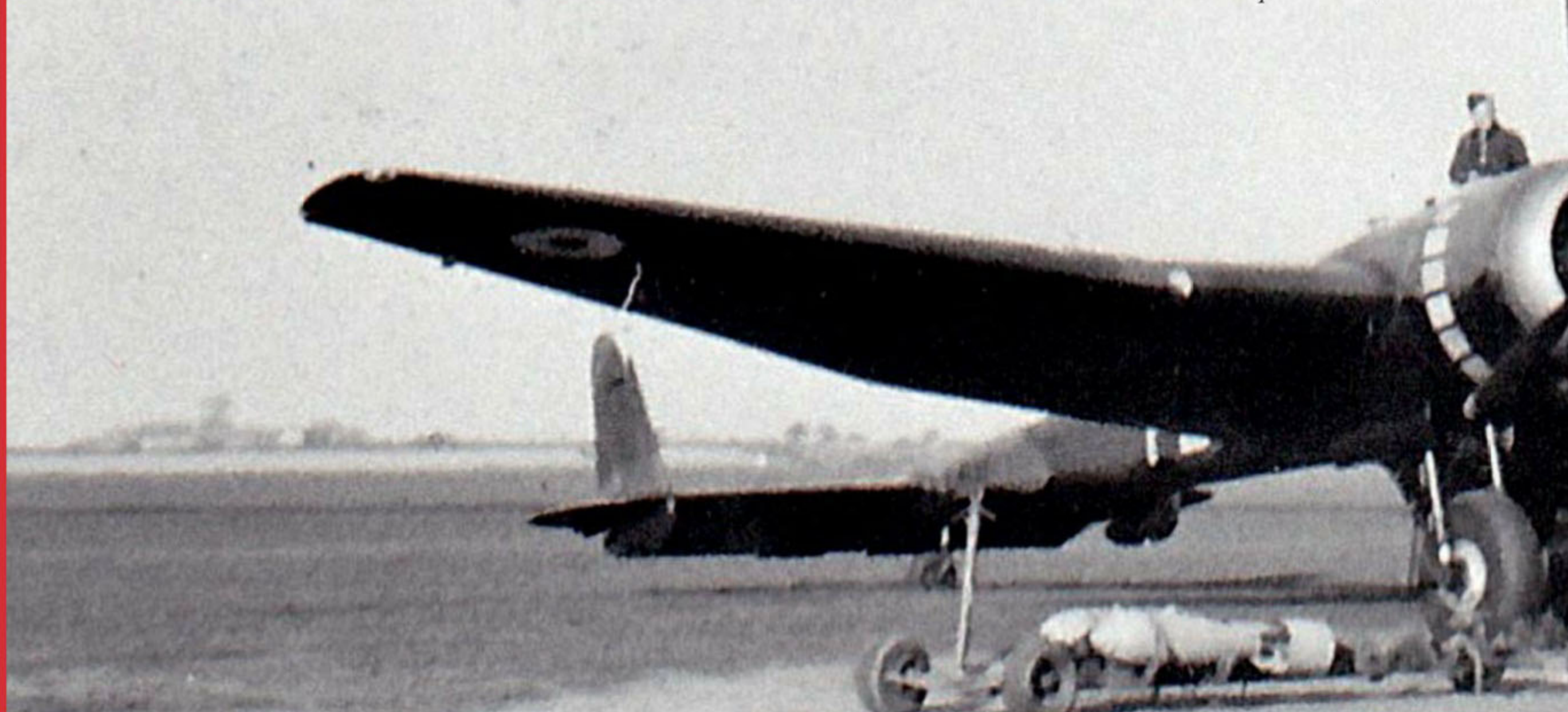
escort relieved the Hampden. At noon, High Speed Launch 116 appeared and was soon alongside. The crew were too weak to climb the scrambling net and had to be lifted onto the launch. None could stand and they were soon resting on bunks with a tot of rum and a mug of tea. They were landed at Great Yarmouth where they spent the next ten days in the care of RAF doctors before returning to a wild celebration at Scampton.

After recovering in hospital Woolston and Wood were rested from operations and within a few weeks both had been awarded the DFM. They served in the Burma campaign and survived the war. Mackay returned to the squadron but was lost on operations. Chandler had a distinguished career as an air gunner completing 98 ‘ops’. He was awarded the DFM before joining 617 (Dam Busters) Squadron when he was awarded the DFC.

### **Snowstorm**

Devon-born George Glenn left school when he was 16 to become an apprentice with the Ellerman Hall Shipping Line, spending the next three years travelling the world. In 1939 he volunteered for service in the RAF and trained as a pilot, gaining his wings in December 1940.

After converting to the Hampden at Cottesmore, Glenn joined 144 Squadron at Hemswell. During the summer of 1941 he flew eleven sorties as second pilot/navigator including an attempt on June 20 to attack the *Tirpitz* at Kiel, but



complete cloud cover thwarted the force of 115 bombers.

On October 12 he flew his first operation as captain when he hit Bremen from 17,000ft. During early November he encountered heavy flak over Cologne; solid cloud forced him to bomb on flak bursts over Kiel; and overcast prevented him from finding Rostock – and he jettisoned his warload, landing after a nine-hour flight.

His luck changed for the better on November 9 when he bombed Hamburg shipyard in a 'glide attack' from 14,000ft. Large fires were started and they were still visible to Glenn and his crew 70 miles (112km) away. However, good weather conditions were short-lived. In December he bombed Aachen (Germany) in a snowstorm. Throughout his time on 144 he also completed a number of sorties to drop mines in the Kattegat and off the Frisian Islands. His experiences, and frustrations, were very similar to those experienced by Deryck Grainger.

### Press on alone

Soon after being appointed to a commission, Glenn was approaching the end of his tour when the squadron was tasked to send three aircraft at dawn on Christmas Eve, 1941 to attack the German battlecruiser *Gneisenau* at Brest.

The three were to make a daylight raid and Glenn and his crew were one of those selected by the tossing of a coin. They were due to rendezvous at Start Point on the Devon coast but Glenn arrived five minutes late and, after waiting for 20 minutes, decided

to press on thinking he was behind the other two. He was not aware that his radio was unserviceable so he and his crew failed to receive the general recall and they pressed on alone.

He flew at 600ft across the English Channel in poor weather. As he approached the target and descended through a patch of cloud, the starboard wing hit the cable of a tethered balloon and the bomber swerved violently. Glenn only just managed to retain control before heading for the ship to drop his 2,000lb armour-piercing bomb. Anti-aircraft fire was extremely fierce and accurate and the tailplane of the Hampden was badly damaged making it almost uncontrollable.

Glenn managed to bring the stricken Hampden back to England to make an emergency landing on an airfield in Cornwall. The crew were collected by another aircraft and returned to their base where the station commander insisted that they attend the Christmas party. A few days later Glenn and his navigator were awarded the DFC for "displaying rare courage, skill and tenacity".

### Flak and cloud

Glenn flew three more sorties in January 1942. Over Hamburg, cloud hampered his attack and on the 17th he headed for Bremen, but a 30-minute search above 10/10ths cloud, when heavy flak was encountered, proved fruitless. Eventually they bombed an airfield that appeared briefly in a break in the cloud. They had been airborne seven hours when they landed.

Their final sortie was to Brest on January 25. The crew obtained a pinpoint nearby but found the target completely covered in cloud. As Glenn circled the area looking for a break, heavy flak was again encountered. The crew had to abandon their attempt to find the aiming point and headed for base, jettisoning the bombs en route as the weather forecast for landing was poor.

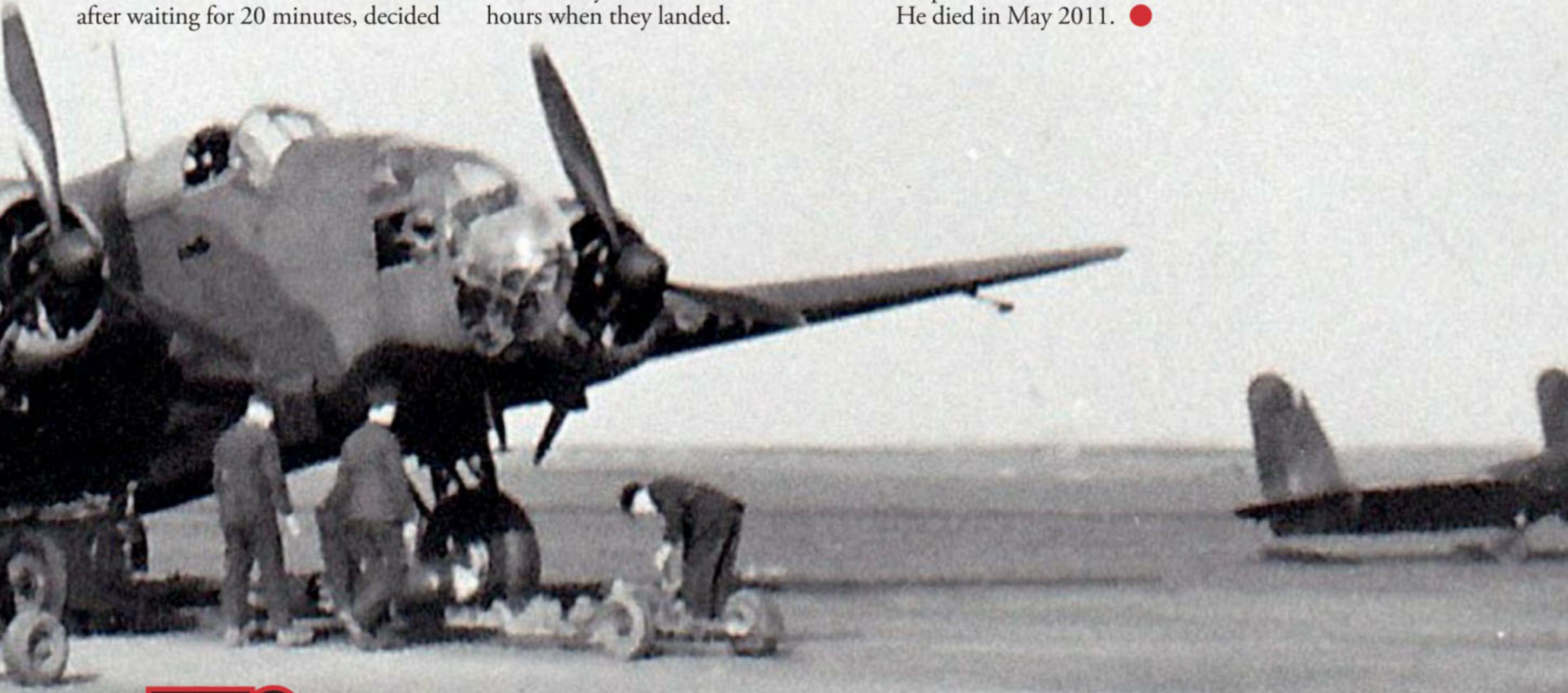
Glenn's experiences in the winter of 1941-1942 were typical for this stage of Bomber Command's campaign. The lack of navigation aids and poor weather forced crews to abandon sorties or bomb on estimated positions. Crews persevered in poor conditions, and some of their sorties were nine hours long, but often there was scant reward for their efforts.

After a tour as a flying instructor at 14 OTU at Cottesmore, Glenn trained on the Mosquito before joining 139 Squadron, part of the Pathfinder Force. He flew over 50 bombing operations to the most heavily-defended targets in Germany, including 21 to Berlin. He was awarded a Bar to his DFC in November 1944.

Glenn remained in the RAF post-war and flew photographic-reconnaissance Mosquitos with 13 Squadron in Egypt's Canal Zone. He spent 12 years instructing student pilots and was the adjutant of Edinburgh University Air Squadron. He served as the senior administration officer at the RAF's Initial Officer Training Wing for his last two years of service and retired as a Squadron Leader in October 1963. He died in May 2011. ●

**Left**  
HSL 116, which rescued the Woolston crew.

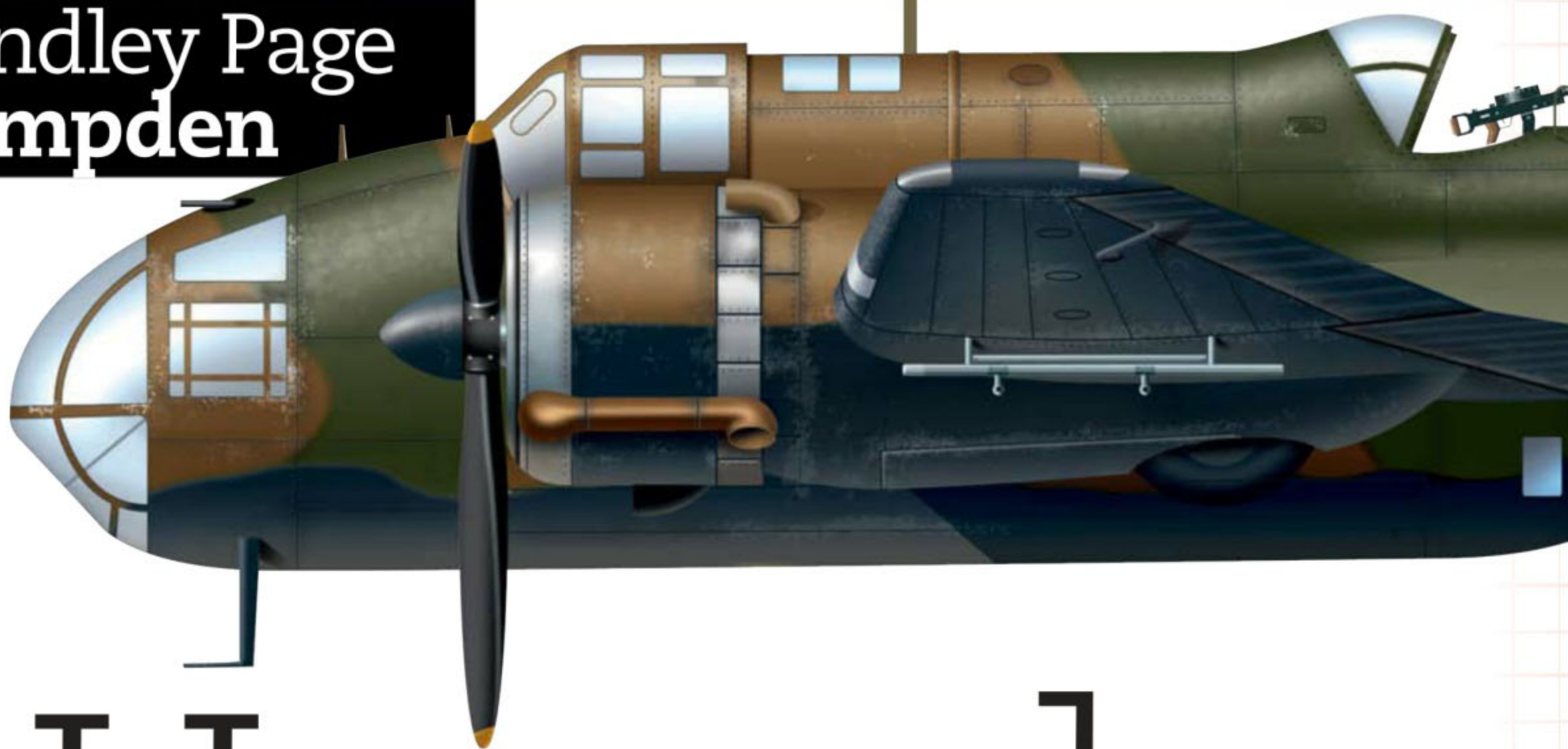
**Below**  
A Hampden of 144 Squadron at Hemswell.  
ALL VIA AUTHOR UNLESS NOTED





## Spotlight

# Handley Page Hampden



# Hampden heroism

Handley Page  
Hampden I P1355  
'OL-W' of 83  
Squadron. PETE  
WEST-2012

**W**hile the focus of the nation was on Fighter Command's defence of the skies in the Battle of Britain, bomber crews were continuing to take the fight to the enemy across the Channel.

No.83 Squadron was the second unit to equip with the Handley Page Hampden, and was based at Scampton, Lincolnshire, along with 49 Squadron, the first to receive the distinctive looking medium bomber in September 1938. In 1940, Hampden crews were tasked with bombing enemy targets in Europe, but suffered serious losses.

P1355, a Mk.I, was attached to 83 Squadron and carried the unit codes 'OL-W'. On September 15, 1940, a day that would live on in history as Battle of Britain Day, it took off to bomb German invasion barges assembling near Antwerp, Belgium. During the attack, P1355 was badly damaged by flak. The fuel tanks

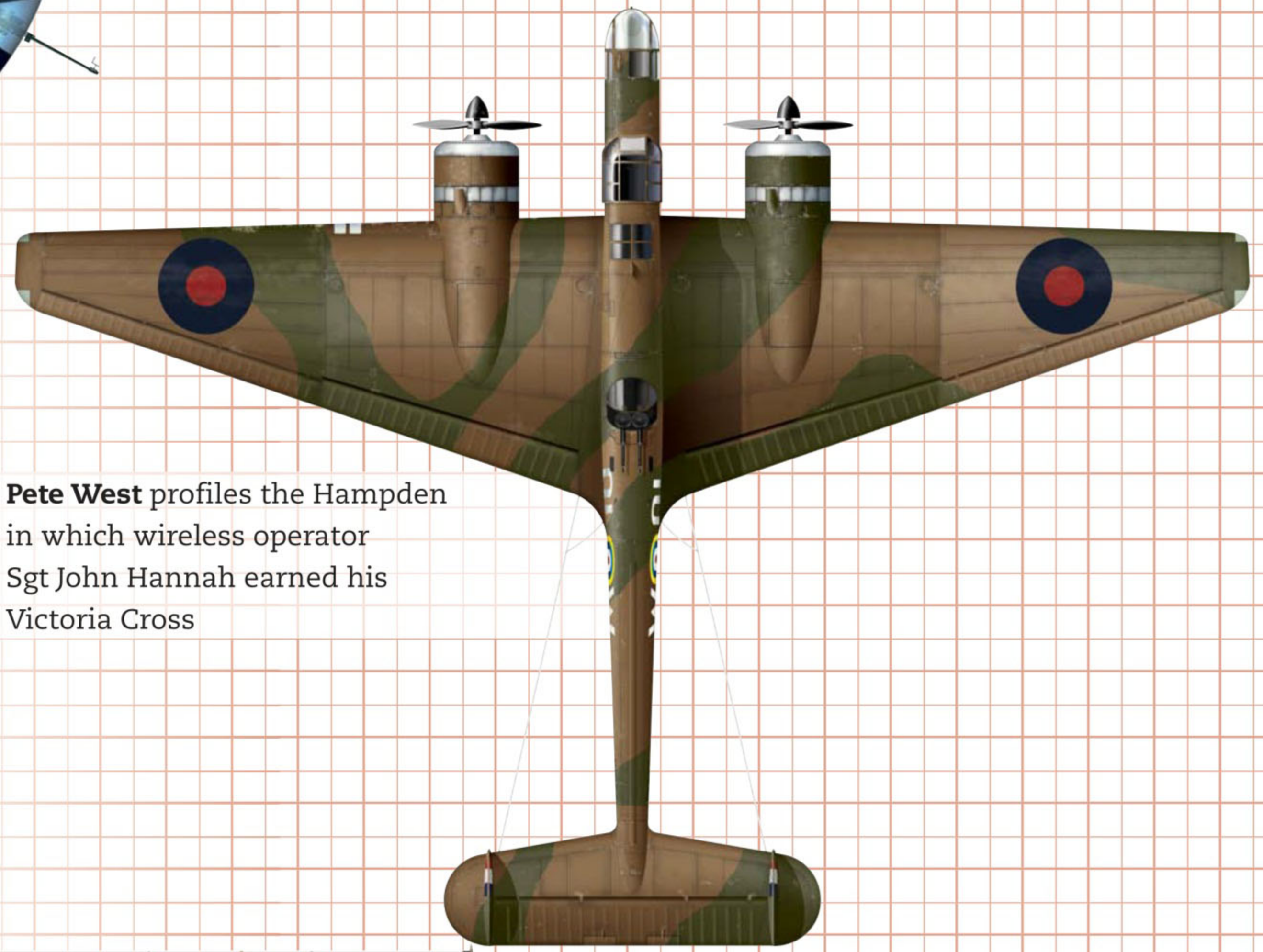
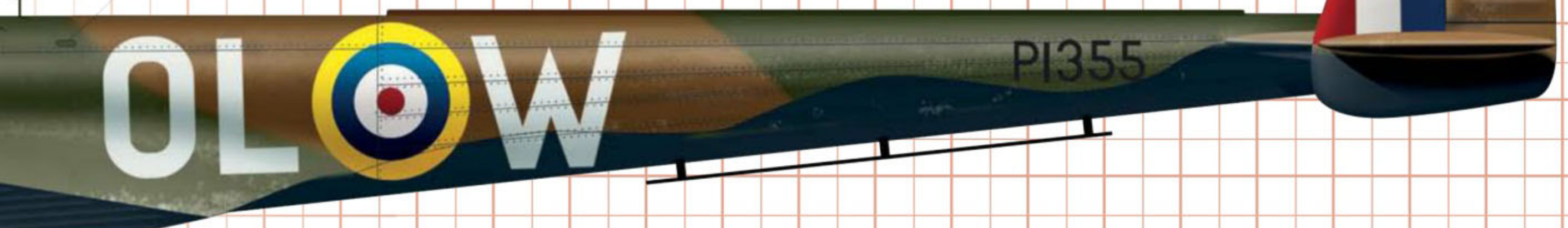
were punctured and a fire broke out in the bomb bay.

Wireless operator Sgt John Hannah, just 18 at the time, made his way to the rear of the aircraft to find that the gunner had already been forced to bale out. The young Scotsman tackled the blaze, firstly with extinguishers, and then – even as the floor of the cabin started to melt – by beating at the flames with his logbook. Though badly burned, Hannah succeeded in his efforts,

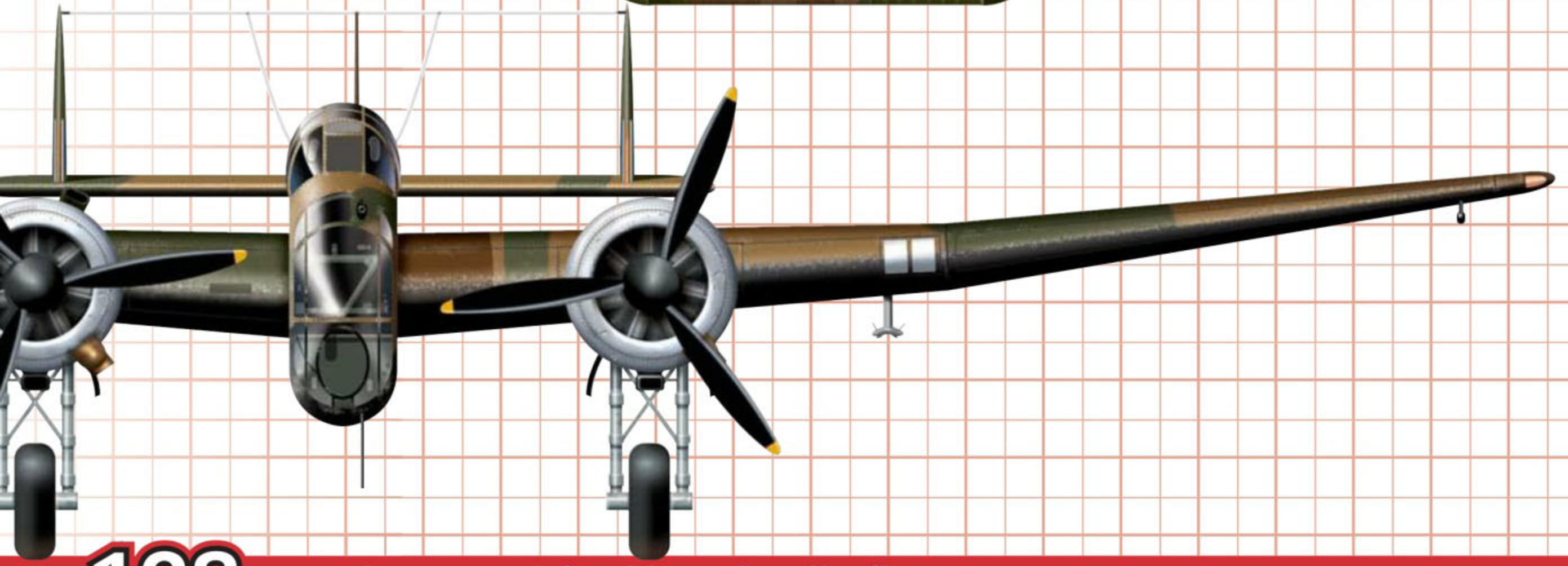
enabling the pilot to bring the crippled bomber home.

For his bravery, he was awarded the Victoria Cross, becoming its youngest ever recipient for aerial operations. John was so weakened by his injuries that he was discharged from the RAF, with full disability pension, in December 1942. Sadly, his health did not improve significantly and he died on June 7, 1947, in Leicestershire. His VC is on display at the RAF Museum Hendon.





**Pete West** profiles the Hampden in which wireless operator Sgt John Hannah earned his Victoria Cross



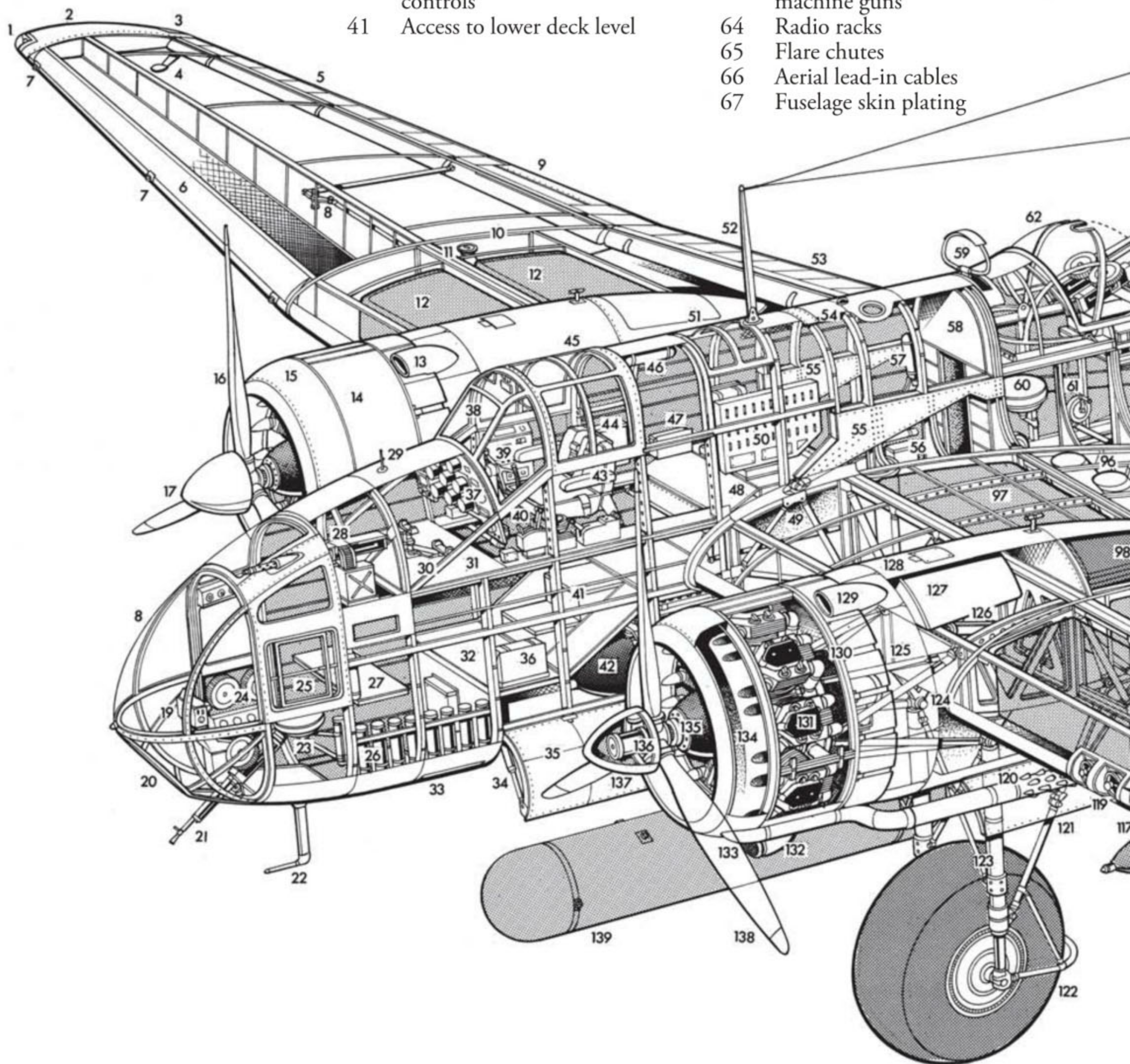


# Spotlight

## Handley Page Hampden Mk.1

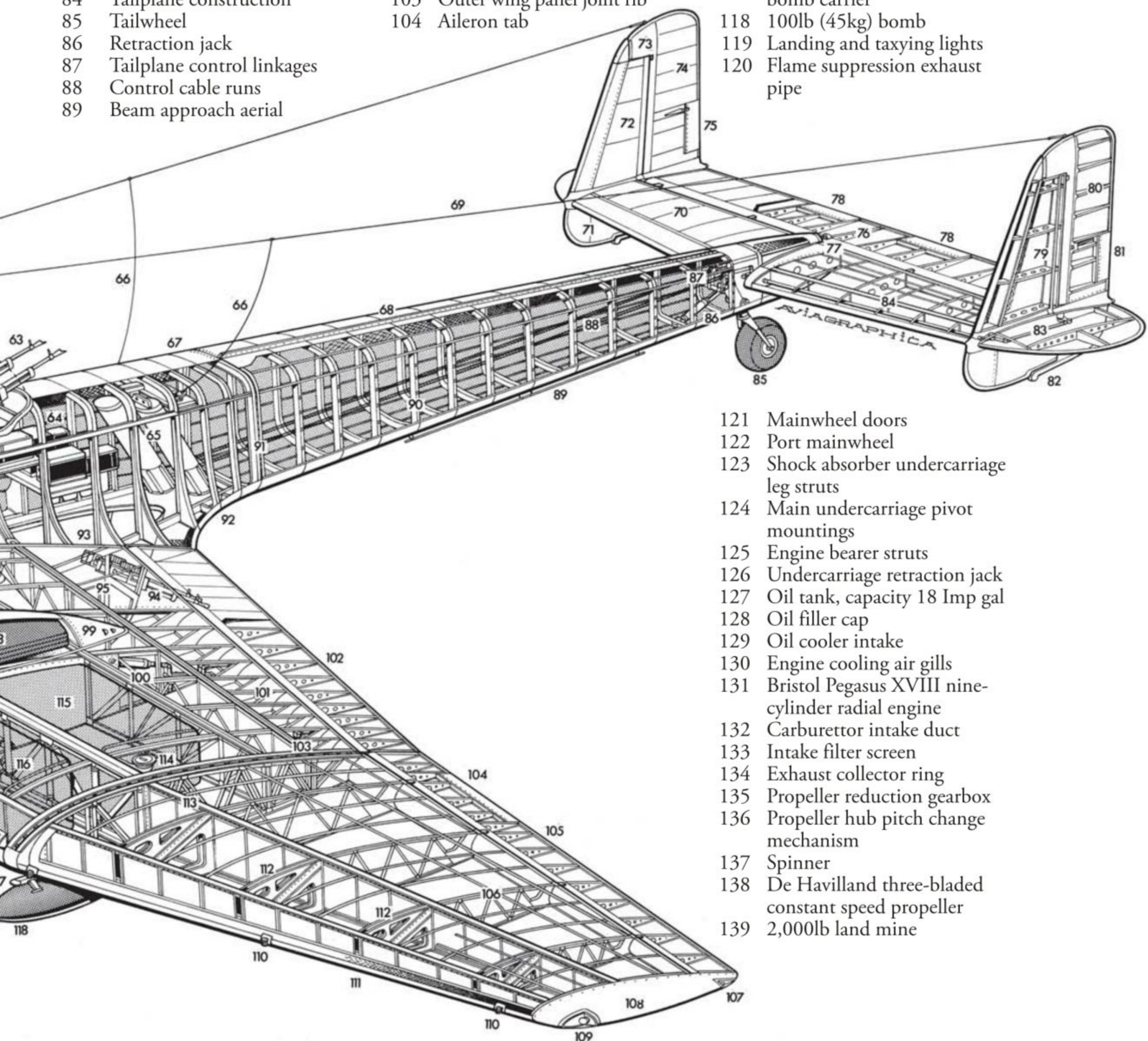
### Handley Page Hampden Mk.1

- |    |                                                       |    |                                            |    |                                                            |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------|----|--------------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Starboard navigation light                            | 18 | Nose compartment glazing                   | 42 | Bomb stowage – maximum internal capacity 4,000lb (1,815kg) |
| 2  | Wing tip fairing                                      | 19 | Drift sight                                | 43 | Pilot's seat                                               |
| 3  | Formation keeping light                               | 20 | Bomb aiming window                         | 44 | Map case                                                   |
| 4  | Aileron mass balance                                  | 21 | Vickers K-type 0.303in (7.7mm) machine gun | 45 | Sliding cockpit canopy cover                               |
| 5  | Starboard fabric covered aileron                      | 22 | Pitot tube                                 | 46 | Fire extinguisher                                          |
| 6  | Leading edge slot (normally bolted closed in service) | 23 | Front gunner/bomb aimer's seat             | 47 | First aid kit                                              |
| 7  | Balloon cable cutters                                 | 24 | Spare ammunition drums                     | 48 | Wing spar carry-through structure                          |
| 8  | Aileron control linkage                               | 25 | Jettisonable side window                   | 49 | Wing attachment joints                                     |
| 9  | Aileron tab                                           | 26 | Flame floats                               | 50 | Electrical switchboard                                     |
| 10 | Outer wing panel joint rib                            | 27 | Folding chart table                        | 51 | Centre cabin roof hatch                                    |
| 11 | Fuel filler cap                                       | 28 | Fixed Browning 0.303in machine gun         | 52 | Aerial mast                                                |
| 12 | Starboard wing outboard fuel tanks                    | 29 | Pilot's fixed gunsight                     | 53 | Starboard flap                                             |
| 13 | Oil cooler intake                                     | 30 | Rudder pedals                              | 54 | Upper identification light                                 |
| 14 | Detachable engine cowlings                            | 31 | Pilot's floor level                        | 55 | Wing attachment joint plates                               |
| 15 | Starboard engine nacelle                              | 32 | Nose compartment floor level               | 56 | Battery                                                    |
| 16 | De Havilland three-bladed constant speed propeller    | 33 | Ventral escape hatch                       | 57 | Fire extinguisher                                          |
| 17 | Spinner                                               | 34 | Bomb door hydraulic jack                   | 58 | Rear cabin bulkhead                                        |
|    |                                                       | 35 | Bomb doors                                 | 59 | Retractable D/F loop aerial                                |
|    |                                                       | 36 | Parachute stowage                          | 60 | Rear gunner's seat                                         |
|    |                                                       | 37 | Instrument panel                           | 61 | Trailing aerial winch                                      |
|    |                                                       | 38 | Windscreen panels                          | 62 | Upper gun hatch, open                                      |
|    |                                                       | 39 | Control column handwheel                   | 63 | Twin Vickers K-type 0.303in machine guns                   |
|    |                                                       | 40 | Engine throttle and propeller controls     | 64 | Radio racks                                                |
|    |                                                       | 41 | Access to lower deck level                 | 65 | Flare chutes                                               |
|    |                                                       |    |                                            | 66 | Aerial lead-in cables                                      |
|    |                                                       |    |                                            | 67 | Fuselage skin plating                                      |





- |                                            |                                                        |                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 68 Tail boom skin joint flange             | 90 Tail boom frame and stringer construction           | 105 Port fabric covered aileron construction                   |
| 69 Aerial cables                           | 91 Tail boom joint frame                               | 106 Wing lattice ribs                                          |
| 70 Starboard tailplane                     | 92 Blended fuselage/trailing edge fillet               | 107 Formation light                                            |
| 71 Ventral fin                             | 93 Ventral gun cupola                                  | 108 Wing tip fairing                                           |
| 72 Starboard fin                           | 94 Twin Vickers K-type 0.303in machine guns            | 109 Port navigation light                                      |
| 73 Rudder horn balance                     | 95 Crew entry hatch                                    | 110 Balloon cable cutters                                      |
| 74 Starboard fabric covered rudder         | 96 Flare launch tubes                                  | 111 Port leading edge slot (normally bolted closed in service) |
| 75 Rudder tab                              | 97 Inboard fuel tank, capacity 130 Imp gal (591 litre) | 112 Slot guide ribs                                            |
| 76 Fabric covered elevator construction    | 98 Dinghy stowage                                      | 113 Outer wing panel main spar                                 |
| 77 Elevator hinge control                  | 99 Nacelle tail fairing                                | 114 Fuel filler cap                                            |
| 78 Elevator tabs                           | 100 Flap jack                                          | 115 Outboard rear fuel tank, capacity 110 Imp gal              |
| 79 Fin construction                        | 101 Flap shroud construction                           | 116 Outboard front fuel tank, capacity 87 Imp gal              |
| 80 Port fabric covered rudder construction | 102 Fabric covered flap construction                   | 117 Wing-mounted light series bomb carrier                     |
| 81 Rudder tab                              | 103 Outer wing panel joint rib                         | 118 100lb (45kg) bomb                                          |
| 82 Rudder mass balance                     | 104 Aileron tab                                        | 119 Landing and taxiing lights                                 |
| 83 Rudder control linkage                  |                                                        | 120 Flame suppression exhaust pipe                             |
| 84 Tailplane construction                  |                                                        |                                                                |
| 85 Tailwheel                               |                                                        |                                                                |
| 86 Retraction jack                         |                                                        |                                                                |
| 87 Tailplane control linkages              |                                                        |                                                                |
| 88 Control cable runs                      |                                                        |                                                                |
| 89 Beam approach aerial                    |                                                        |                                                                |



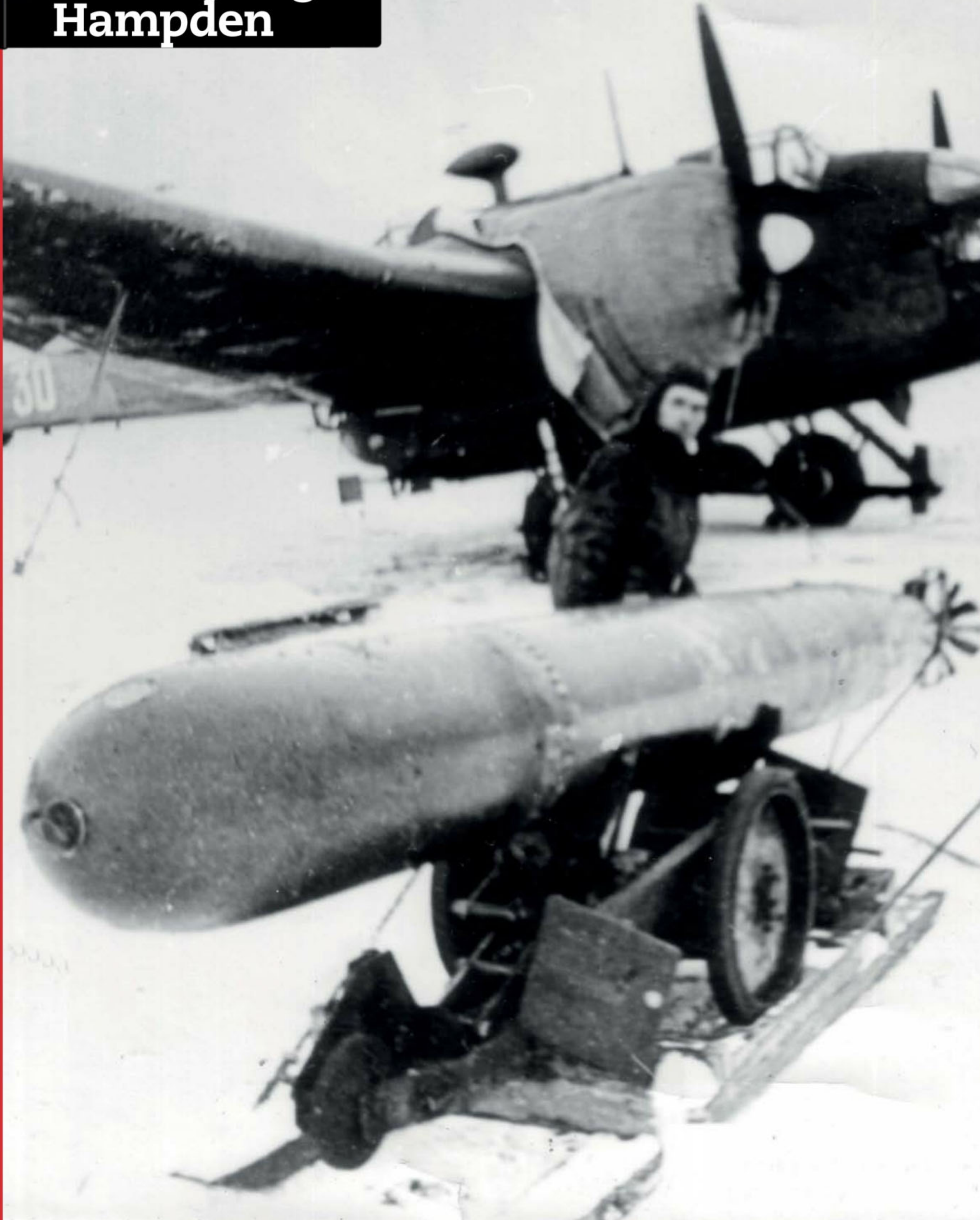
- |                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 121 Mainwheel doors                                    |
| 122 Port mainwheel                                     |
| 123 Shock absorber undercarriage leg struts            |
| 124 Main undercarriage pivot mountings                 |
| 125 Engine bearer struts                               |
| 126 Undercarriage retraction jack                      |
| 127 Oil tank, capacity 18 Imp gal                      |
| 128 Oil filler cap                                     |
| 129 Oil cooler intake                                  |
| 130 Engine cooling air gills                           |
| 131 Bristol Pegasus XVIII nine-cylinder radial engine  |
| 132 Carburettor intake duct                            |
| 133 Intake filter screen                               |
| 134 Exhaust collector ring                             |
| 135 Propeller reduction gearbox                        |
| 136 Propeller hub pitch change mechanism               |
| 137 Spinner                                            |
| 138 De Havilland three-bladed constant speed propeller |
| 139 2,000lb land mine                                  |

**1** became the victim of a German barrage balloon



# Spotlight

## Handley Page Hampden



# Balalalika

Vladimir Kotelnikov and Yuriy Rybin relate the gallant exploits of Hampdens in Soviet service



**A**t the beginning of autumn 1942, convoy PQ18 (codename Orator) sailed from Scotland to the north Russian ports and needed air cover. The British decided to deploy a variety of types to help shadow the ships, which braved interception by the Luftwaffe but faced much more formidable enemies: the wild seas of Arctic seas and the uncompromising weather. Gp Capt F Hopper was given command of a detachment of photo-reconnaissance Spitfires and Mosquitos, a dozen Catalina flying-boats and two torpedo-bomber squadrons. The latter units were 144 and 455 (Royal Australian Air Force) equipped with Hampden TB.Is. Nos.144 and 455 had converted to Hampden torpedo-bombers at Leuchars in Scotland from April 1942. The crews of both units had already gained battle experience by the time they set off for the Soviet Union.

The 35 Hampdens came from different production batches, including Canadian-made examples. All had been brought up to similar modification states.

## Russian deployment

On the evening of September 4, the Hampdens took off from Sumburgh in the Shetland Islands, bound for the exotically-named Afrikanda close to the unladen limit

of the twin-engined machines. This was a small Soviet settlement near Kandalaksha on the western edge of the White Sea, south of Murmansk. As well as the intended airfield at Afrikanda, crews could use Belaya and Gremjakha for an emergency landing.

Without a torpedo or additional fuel tanks, the normal range of a Hampden TB.I was 1,040 miles (1,673km) but an experienced pilot could stretch the range up to 1,360 miles. The closest Russian airfield at Vaenga was 1,314 miles away, but due to constant German bombing raids the British decided it would be too dangerous to use.

A route could be flown across Norway (bringing the distance down to 1,100 miles) but the fuel saved would be expended reaching the altitude required to over-fly the mountains safely. As well as a crew of four, each aircraft carried a member of ground crew, ready to keep the bombers serviceable until the full team reached Russia by sea.

The flight to the USSR was expected to be far from easy and so it proved. German fighters based in occupied Norway monitored the air space, flak batteries were ready to open up and, to cap it all, the bombers encountered thick fog.

Not all the Hampdens reached their destination – only 23 landed at Afrikanda, Kandalaksha and Murmashi. One searched in vain for the specified airfields in the fog, but run out of fuel and belly-landed near Afrikanda. Another, also with empty tanks, landed near Kandalaksha but hit tree stubs and was completely destroyed, fortunately with no injury to the crew.

One flew south of the intended route and reached the mouth of Kola river at the height of a German air raid. Two Soviet fighters mistook the Hampden for a Messerschmitt Bf 110 and quickly shot it down. It managed to ditch and all of the crew were saved other than Flt Sgt W A Tabor, who had been killed when the fighters attacked.

**Left**  
A wheeled torpedo carrier mounted on skids for easier tugging through heavy snow.

**SPOT FACT** The Torpedo development Unit at Gosport operated four Hampdens

Three Hampdens fell to German fighters over Finland. Two crashed in Sweden – one had engine failure and another flew into a hill in thick fog. One got lost and made forced-landing near Petsamo (or Pechenga); this aircraft is now under long term restoration at the RAF Museum's workshop at Cosford, Shropshire. Only three-quarters of the Hampden force reached their Russian destination.

Twenty-three serviceable Hampdens were concentrated at Vaenga airfield near Murmansk under Wg Cdr McLoughlin by September 7. The ground crew,

**Right**  
Captain Stoyanov  
in the cockpit of a  
Hampden.



“The Soviets were learning the hard way that the Hampden was an unforgiving aircraft...”

**Above**  
Captain S N Trunov  
(first from left) with  
his crew: Snr Lt  
Chernikh (navigator),  
Sgts Khamnin and  
Gartovanniy. Trunov  
and crew sunk a  
German transport on  
December 18, 1942.

equipment, spare parts and torpedoes had been taken to Murmansk by the American cruiser *Tuscaloosa*.

On September 14 the torpedo-bombers staged their first 'op' from Soviet territory. For seven hours they patrolled the approaches to Altenfjord, where the battleship *Tirpitz* was located. On the 22nd, the operation to defend PQ18 had been completed.

### Present for Stalin

Ferrying the Hampdens back to Britain was going to be very difficult due to constant headwinds, range and navigation difficulties. On September 24 Coastal Command proposed that they leave the

Hampdens at Vaenga, as a gift to Soviet Northern Fleet. While the aircraft's fate was debated, the Luftwaffe staged yet another heavy raid on Vaenga: three Hampdens were destroyed and nine others damaged.

The Soviets made an official request for the Hampdens on October 1. Five days later, Prime Minister Winston Churchill approved the handover but with the proviso that all equipment, including bomb sights and cameras, be removed and shipped back to Britain together with unused torpedoes.

Common sense eventually prevailed and on the 12th the torpedo-bombers, fully equipped

and armed, were handed over to Air Force of Northern Fleet. On the 22nd, personnel of the British detachment embarked on HMS *Argonaut* for the voyage home.

### Unforgiving

The British torpedo-bombers allowed the USSR to establish 24 Mine-Torpedo Aviation Regiment (Soviet designation MTAP), the first such unit in the Soviet Northern Fleet. Initially, the regiment was arranged as two squadrons detached from the 2nd Guards Combined Aviation Regiment. The mine-torpedo squadron of the famous Safonov Regiment, led by Captain Popovich, became 24 MTAP's 1st Aviation Squadron (AS) and Captain A Z Stoyanov's bomber squadron became the 2nd AS.

The 3rd AS was formed soon after, with personnel for this and the first two squadrons being taken from the 118 Reconnaissance Aviation Regiment and the 35 Bomber Aviation Regiment. Captain Stoyanov, and then Major Shipilov, took charge until the permanent commander, Lt Col N N Vedmedenko, arrived. Eight Ilyushin DB-3f bombers were transferred to 24 MTAP and it was decided to equip the 1st AS with these machines.

On November 19, 1942, Soviet crews began flying the British torpedo-bombers. First to get into the air in a Hampden was Captain I J Garbuz, shortly to become leader of 3rd AS. He was followed by Captain Stoyanov who was to thoroughly evaluate the new type. For this he flew alone and was

ordered to bale out if necessary. During a right turn at 6,560ft (2,000m) the TB.I fell into a spin and everyone on the ground thought that Stoyanov would take to the silk, but the experienced pilot managed to recover and landed safely.

The Soviets were learning the hard way that the Hampden was an unforgiving aircraft, especially when making sharp movements when turning or at a high bank angle. The Hampden was around 25mph (40km/h) slower than the DB-3f and had a considerably smaller range.

The regiment's personnel gave the nickname 'Tarataika' (a two-wheeled, one-horse carriage) to the Hampden. It was also called 'Balalaika', due to its almost triangular wing and the pod-and-boom format of the fuselage being reminiscent of the shape of the famous Russian musical instrument.

Regiment pilots were expected to have mastered flying the Hampden in six weeks and it was planned to have the aircraft in frontline service by December. To accelerate the conversion process one was equipped with a second set of controls in the navigator's cabin. The modification was achieved by the repair shops of the Northern Fleet Air Force using Curtiss P-40s and DB-3f parts.

The pilots were eager to get into action and training on such a demanding aircraft did not occur without losses. One (X3022) was destroyed in November 1942 and, in December, P5315 crashed during its first flight under Soviet control.

Lt Col Vedmedenko did not get a chance to lead his unit in battle – he died in an Ilyushin Il-4 (a refined DB-3) accident. Major F V Kostkin was appointed in his place.

## Free hunting

On November 8, two 24 MTAP Hampdens took-off to survey enemy shipping but returned due to bad weather – not an auspicious start. The next action, on December 15, was also unsuccessful; a single machine on a night raid to Luostari airfield failed to find the target in thick fog.

Soviet pilots dropped their first bombs from British aircraft when two Hampdens out of a flight of four successfully raided the harbour at Kirkenes at night on the 16th. Two days later a pair of torpedo-equipped Hampdens carried out the first 'free-hunting' mission. Near the mouth of Tanafjord, Captain S I Trunov torpedoed a 5,000-tonne German cargo ship. On December 30 this vessel, licking its wounds in Kirkenes, was sunk by a direct hit from a Hampden.

Captain Stoyanov and crew did not return from a sortie on New Year's Day 1943, the first battle loss for 24 MTAP. Their colleagues watched as the Hampden caught fire and crashed in the sea; it had probably been attacked by German fighters

## No.144 Squadron Hampdens in Russia

Serial	Fate
P1344	'PL-L', shot down over Finland, near Petsamo (Pechenga), Sep 5, 1942; remains moved to the UK in 1991
AE130	Burnt on the ground during German raid on Vaenga, Sep 28, 1942
AE158	Burnt on the ground during German air raid on Vaenga, Sep 28, 1942
AE310	Crashed in emergency landing near Afrikanda, Sep 5, 1942
AE356	Shot down by Soviet fighter, Sep 5, 1942
AE436	'PL-J', crashed in Sweden, Sep 5, 1942
AT138	Crashed near Allakurti, Sep 5, 1942
P2122	24 MTAP, on charge from Oct 23, 1942
P4415	24 MTAP, on charge from Oct 23, 1942
X2976	24 MTAP, on charge from Oct 23, 1942
X3022	24 MTAP, on charge from Oct 23, 1942, written off Nov 1942
X3053	24 MTAP, on charge from Oct 23, 1942
AE231	24 MTAP, on charge from Oct 23, 1942
AN126	24 MTAP, on charge from Oct 23, 1942
AT145	24 MTAP, on charge from Oct 23, 1942

escorting the convoy. By this time, the regiment was frequently 'free-hunting' using pairs of Hampdens.

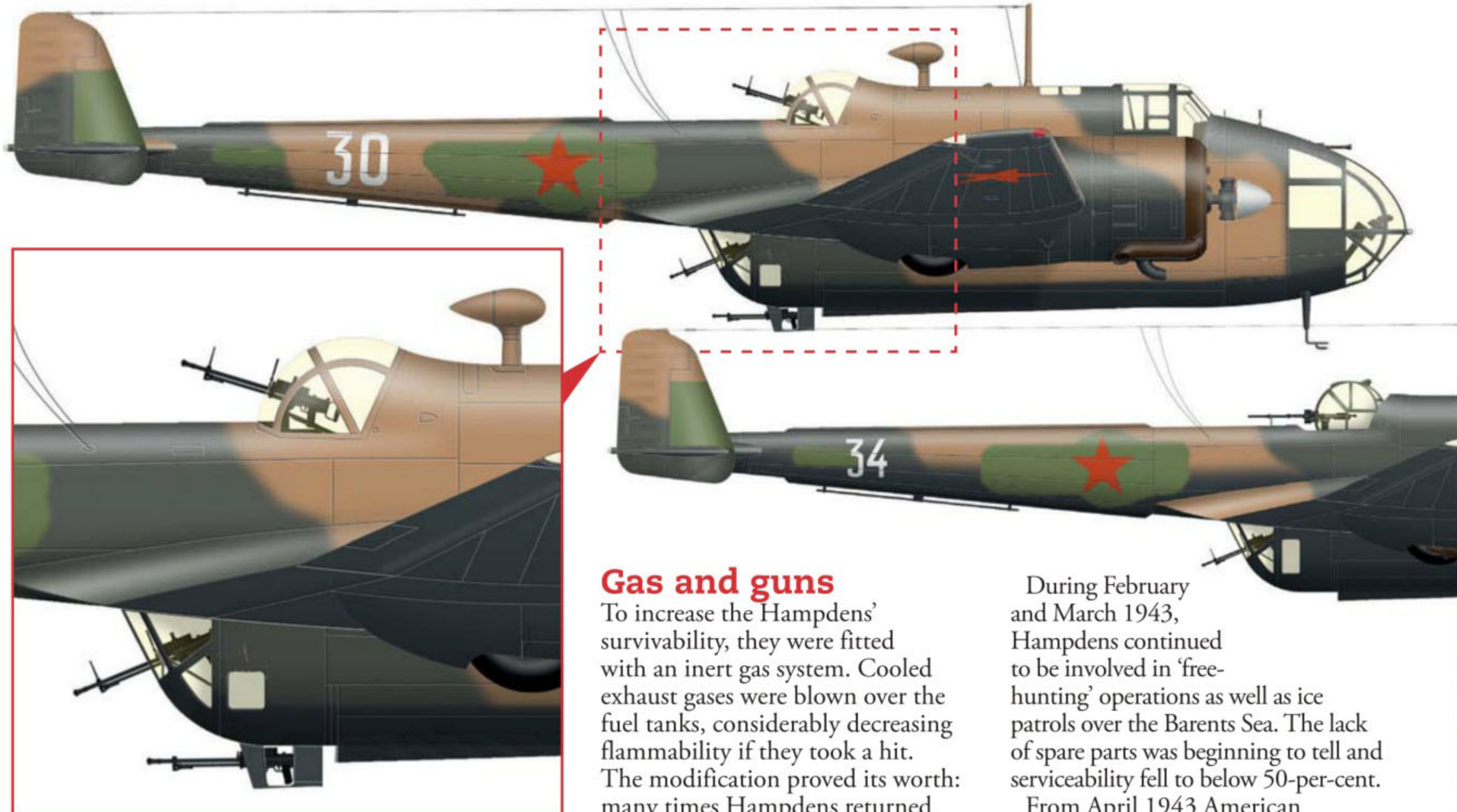
Substantial results were beginning to come 24 MTAP's way, but at a cost. On January 14 Captains V

### Below

A torpedo inscribed 'For Kiselev' ready for hoisting into a 9 GvMTAP Hampden, May 1943.



**SPOT FACT** RAF Torpedo-carrying Hampdens were replaced by Bristol Beaufighters



**Top and above** Hampden TB.1 '30' of 455 Squadron RAAF, Vaenga, October 1942. RAF markings, serials and codes have been over-painted. Inset: Additional under-fuselage defensive machine-gun. ANDREY YURGENSON © 2012

**Above right** Hampden TB.1 of the 3rd Air Squadron, 8th Guards MTAB in May 1943. Note the Soviet-made UTK-1 turret. ANDREY YURGENSON © 2012

**Right** Hampdens of 24 MTAP at Vaenga.

N Kiselyov's and A A Bashtirkov's crews torpedoed a convoy near the Norwegian coast and sunk two cargo ships. Bashtirkov's aircraft was hit by flak during its attack and caught fire, but he did not turn away until he released his weapon. Bashtirkov and his navigator, Sgt V N Gavrilov, were killed during the attack and were posthumously made Heroes of the Soviet Union.

Next day the same convoy was on the receiving end of two more attacks by Hampdens. Captain S I Trunov and Senior Lieutenant P N Zaitchenko each made hits on merchant ships. Then a flight (an Il-4 and two Hampdens) led by Snr Lt Agafonov hit cargo and patrol vessels. On January 17 the People's Commissar of the Military Naval Fleet personally congratulated the regiment on its battle successes.

Three Hampdens failed to return on the 29th. Captain Trunov's and Snr Lt S A Maligin's aircraft were hit by flak and crashed into the sea. A third, piloted by Captain A I Ostrovsky, managed to reach the Ribachi peninsula and belly-landed. It's believed that during that day 24 MTAP sank a 12,000-tonne German merchant ship – the largest 'Balalaika' victim. But, by February 1, the regiment had only 11 Hampdens on strength.

### Gas and guns

To increase the Hampdens' survivability, they were fitted with an inert gas system. Cooled exhaust gases were blown over the fuel tanks, considerably decreasing flammability if they took a hit. The modification proved its worth: many times Hampdens returned home with hits in the petrol tanks.

Their armament, criticised even by British crews, was beefed-up – the twin Vickers K machine-guns were replaced by a higher-calibre single UBT gun in a standard Soviet UTK-1 turret. Naval repair shops also strengthened the tail wheels which suffered on rough-and-ready Soviet airfields.

During February and March 1943, Hampdens continued to be involved in 'free-hunting' operations as well as ice patrols over the Barents Sea. The lack of spare parts was beginning to tell and serviceability fell to below 50-per-cent.

From April 1943 American Douglas A-20 Havocs started to join 24 MTAP and the crews began conversion training. But the Hampdens were not finished, and remained operational.

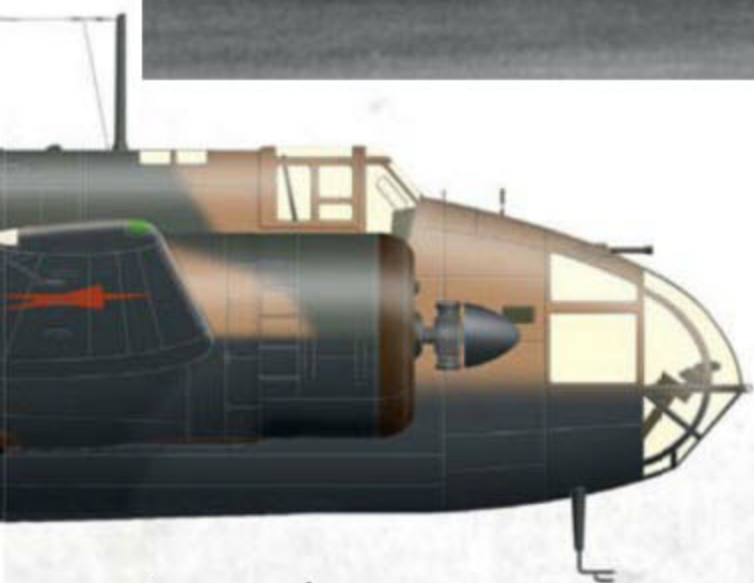
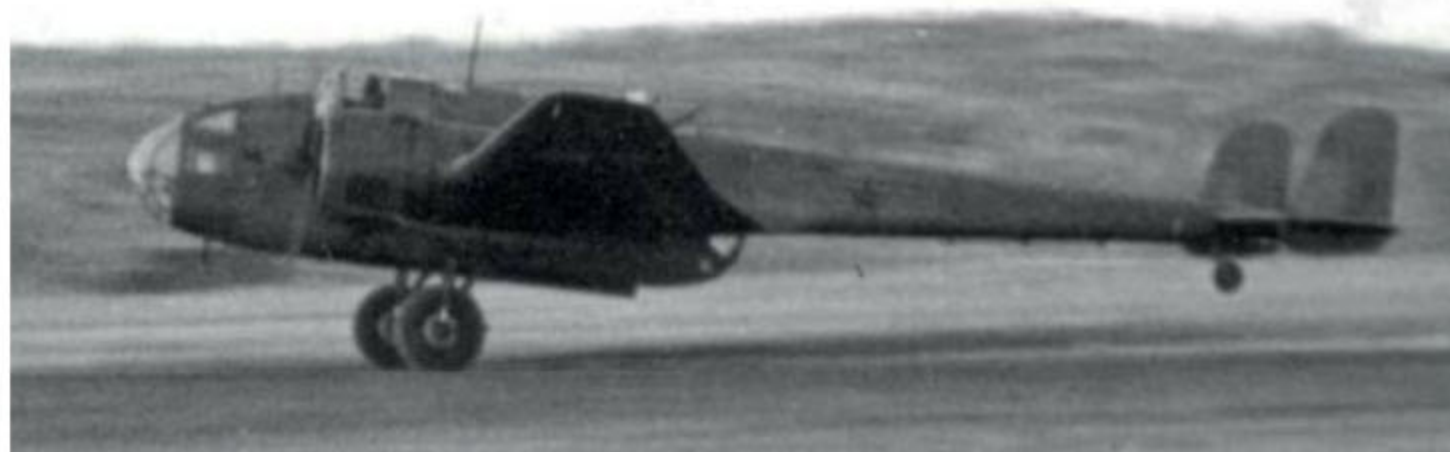
### Heroic swansong

As shipping losses increased, the Germans improved air cover for convoys. In response, the Soviets



“Without fighter cover, the Hampdens could easily become victims of Luftwaffe Bf 110 ‘Zerstörers’ escorting convoys far from the coastline”

A Hampden touching down at Vaenga.



increased protection for the torpedo-bombers with cover from

Petlyakov Pe-3 long-range fighters of 95 Fighter Aviation Regiment. In addition to escorting the A-20s and Hampdens, the Pe-3s suppressed enemy flak.

Without fighter cover, the Hampdens could easily become victims of Luftwaffe Bf 110 'Zerstörers' escorting convoys far from the coastline. On April 10 the Pe-3s flew far ahead of the torpedo-

bombers, and the latter were met by four Messerschmitts on their way home; two of five Soviet aircraft were shot down.

Captain Kiselyov repeated the feat of arms of his friend, Captain Bashtirkov, on April 25, 1943. He led five Hampdens to a coastal



convoy of 17 ships discovered by aerial reconnaissance. Three German fighters and a seaplane were shepherding the vessels. Seven Pe-3s engaged the Luftwaffe, allowing the Hampdens to form up in line and attack. Kiselyov chose the leading cargo ship, but while closing on the enemy his port engine was set on fire – but he pressed home the attack.

## No.455 Squadron Hampdens in Russia

Serial	Code	Fate
P1273	??	Shot down over Finland, Sep 5, 1942
P1287	'UB-B'	Burnt on the ground during German raid on Vaenga, Sep 28, 1942
P5304	'UB-H'	Crashed in Sweden, Sep 5, 1942
P5323	'UB-L'	Crashed in emergency landing near Kandalaksha, Sep 5, 1942
AT109	UB-C	Emergency landing in Northern Finland, Sep 5, 1942
L4038	'UB-R'	24 MTAP, on charge from Oct 23, 1942
P1245	'UB-J'	24 MTAP, on charge from Oct 23, 1942
P2095	??	24 MTAP, on charge from Oct 23, 1942
P2126	'UB-S'	24 MTAP, on charge from Oct 23, 1942
P5315	'UB-K'	24 MTAP, on charge from Oct 23, 1942, Russian service number '8', crashed Dec 1942; crew of Captain N F Piskarev
X3131	'UB-D'	24 MTAP, on charge from Oct 23, 1942
AD743	'UB-F'	24 MTAP, on charge from Oct 23, 1942
AD908	'UB-V'	24 MTAP, on charge from Oct 23, 1942
AD977	'UB-T'	24 MTAP, on charge from Oct 23, 1942
AE156	'UB-N'	24 MTAP, on charge from Oct 23, 1942
AE194	'UB-P'	24 MTAP, on charge from Oct 23, 1942
AE307	'UB-M'	24 MTAP, on charge from Oct 23, 1942

The torpedo was dropped from a distance of 1,300ft. All available flak concentrated on the 'Balalaika' which careered overhead and crashed beyond the stricken ship. Kiselyov and his navigator, Snr Lt M F Pokalo, were made Heroes of the Soviet Union posthumously. Kiselyov's wingmen managed to sink another merchant vessel and an escort ship. ➔

Left  
A Hampden in flight over a beach on the Kola Peninsula.

**SPOT FACT** The Swedish Air Force operated a single HP.52 for evaluation purposes

**Soviet Hampden Losses**

Date	Circumstances
Oct 10, 1942	Accident on landing
Oct 31, 1942	Accident on take-off
Nov 1, 1942	X3022, crashed on landing after training flight
Dec 1942	P5315, '8', crashed on take-off
Jan 1, 1943	'30', caught fire and crashed into sea, 4 killed
Jan 12, 1943	'37', shot down by fighters on return from night raid of Kirkenes, 4 killed
Jan 14, 1943	Shot down by flak during torpedo attack, ditched, 4 killed
Jan 29, 1943	Shot down by flak near Varde during attack on convoy, ditched, 4 killed
Jan 29, 1943	Hit by flak, emergency landing on Ribachi peninsula
Jan 29, 1943	'6', shot down by flak, ditched, 1 killed
Jan 31, 1943	Caught fire and crashed into the sea, probably shot down by fighters, 4 killed
Apr 10, 1943	Shot down by Bf 110 over Tanafjord, 4 killed
Apr 25, 1943	Shot down by flak over Kungfjord, ditched, 4 killed
May 2, 1943	Shot down by flak near Kibergnes, ditched, 4 killed
May 8, 1943	Shot down by flak over Bosfjord, ditched, crew took to life raft but missing, 4 killed
Jun 2, 1943	'34', crashed near Vaenga
Jun 23, 1943	Hit by flak over Bosfjord, ditched near Ribachi peninsula, crew rescued
Jul 4, 1943	Two Hampdens hit by fighters over Varangerfjord, both ditched near Vilana Bay, crews rescued

**Note:** Other known Russian identification numbers: '4', '5', '31' and '36'.

**Below**  
Hampden at low level over Kola bay.

By the spring of 1943, A-20s and Hampdens were used in parallel. Retirement of the British twin was postponed because of the Havocs' heavy losses: seven in April alone. By May 1 the regiment had seven Hampdens on charge, but only one or two were operational due to a lack of spark plugs for the Bristol Pegasus engines. Poor-

Captain A Stoyanov (first from right) and crew, autumn 1942. Note the bomb under the port wing.



quality Soviet petrol considerably decreased the plugs' longevity so mechanics adapted Soviet plugs which required modifications to the ignition system.

British torpedo stocks also came to an end. The Soviet 45-36AN torpedo did not fit into the Hampden's bomb bay as it was over 18in (45cm) longer. To solve the problem, the doors and front and rear walls of the bay were modified.

In May 1943 the regiment was honoured by becoming an elite 'Guards' unit – 9 Guards Mine-Torpedo Aviation Regiment (GvMTAP). The cost had been high: by June 1943 the total of Hampdens lost in action was 12. The survivors were concentrated in the 3rd AS.

On July 4, 1943 two Hampdens, three Il-4s and two Il-2 'Shturmoviks', led by regiment commander F V Kostkin, attacked ships near Cape Kibergnes. The torpedo-bombers sunk an 8,000-tonne cargo ship and damaged two more. But the bombers were vulnerable as their P-39 Airacobra escort fighters had to return to the base at the halfway point due to the weather. German fighters tore into

them on the return leg and only two Il-4s escaped. Both Hampdens ditched, and Major Shipilov and Junior Lieutenant Martinov and their crews were rescued. By mid-July the Northern Fleet had only one – unserviceable – Hampden left; 9 GvMTAP was fully converted to A-20Gs. The Soviet 'Balalaika' had sounded in anger for the last time. ●

Ground crew checking-over a Hampden.

