



SCREECH OWLS

OVER BRITAIN

In June 1940, Maj Wolfgang Falck was tasked to form a night-fighter unit for defence of the Reich duties.

This accomplished pilot was formerly of 2 Staffel/ Zerstörergeschwader 76 (2./ZG 76) and afterwards commander of I./ ZG 1; the preferred aircraft for the role were the Messerschmitt Bf 110 and Junkers Ju 88C-2/C-4 (the latter having been tested operationally in Norway with Zerstörerstaffel/ Kampfgeschwader 30 – Z./KG 30). However, there would also be two versions of the Do 17 used as night-fighters... the Z-7 'Kauz I' and Z-10 'Kauz II'. The name Kauz translated as 'Screech Owl'.

Conversion of the first sub-type involved removing the glazed nose from a Do 17 Z-3 and replacing it with the nose from a Ju 88C-2/C-4. The armament was three 7.9mm machine guns and one 20mm cannon. But the layout was soon found to be unsatisfactory and an entirely new nose was designed, which increased the armament to four machine guns and two cannon. In the tip of the nose was an infra-red spotlight called Spanner Anlage (roughly translating as Peeping Tom) that was later replaced by the first-generation FuG 202 Lichtenstein radar. This aircraft was then designated Z-10.

INTO BATTLE

Precise numbers of Z-7s and Z-10s are hard to define, but it is thought that eight Z-7s were produced and the survivors were later converted to Z-10s, of which around 11 were built. The Z-7 first entered service with I./Nachtjagdgeschwader 1 (I./NJG 1) on or around June 22, 1940 and the first recorded combat probably came in the early hours of June 29, 1940. This was when a Whitley of 58 Squadron flown by Plt Off Bill Espley (who had only joined the squadron five days before) reported damaging a night-fighter near Eindhoven. However, the 58 Squadron Operations Record Book made scant mention:



DORNIER'S DO 17 IS USUALLY REGARDED AS A MAJOR LUFTWAFFE BOMBER, BUT HERE CHRIS GOSS DESCRIBES ITS SHORT CAREER AS A NIGHT-FIGHTER/INTRUDER

"Aircraft was attacked over Eindhoven by a Me 110 at 8,000ft. Fired five bursts from the rear turret at the enemy which was hit and broke off the engagement."

A Do 17Z-7 of I./NJG 1 coded G9+GK, flown by Uffz Hugo Schwarz, was damaged in combat and later crash-landed near Mönchengladbach. Schwarz and his radio operator, Fw Gerhard Palm, were both injured while the engineer Fw Ludwig Born died of his wounds.

In August 1940, the Do 17Z-7s and Z-10s became part of II./NJG 1. The Gruppe would be commanded by Maj Karl-Heinrich Heyse, an experienced bomber

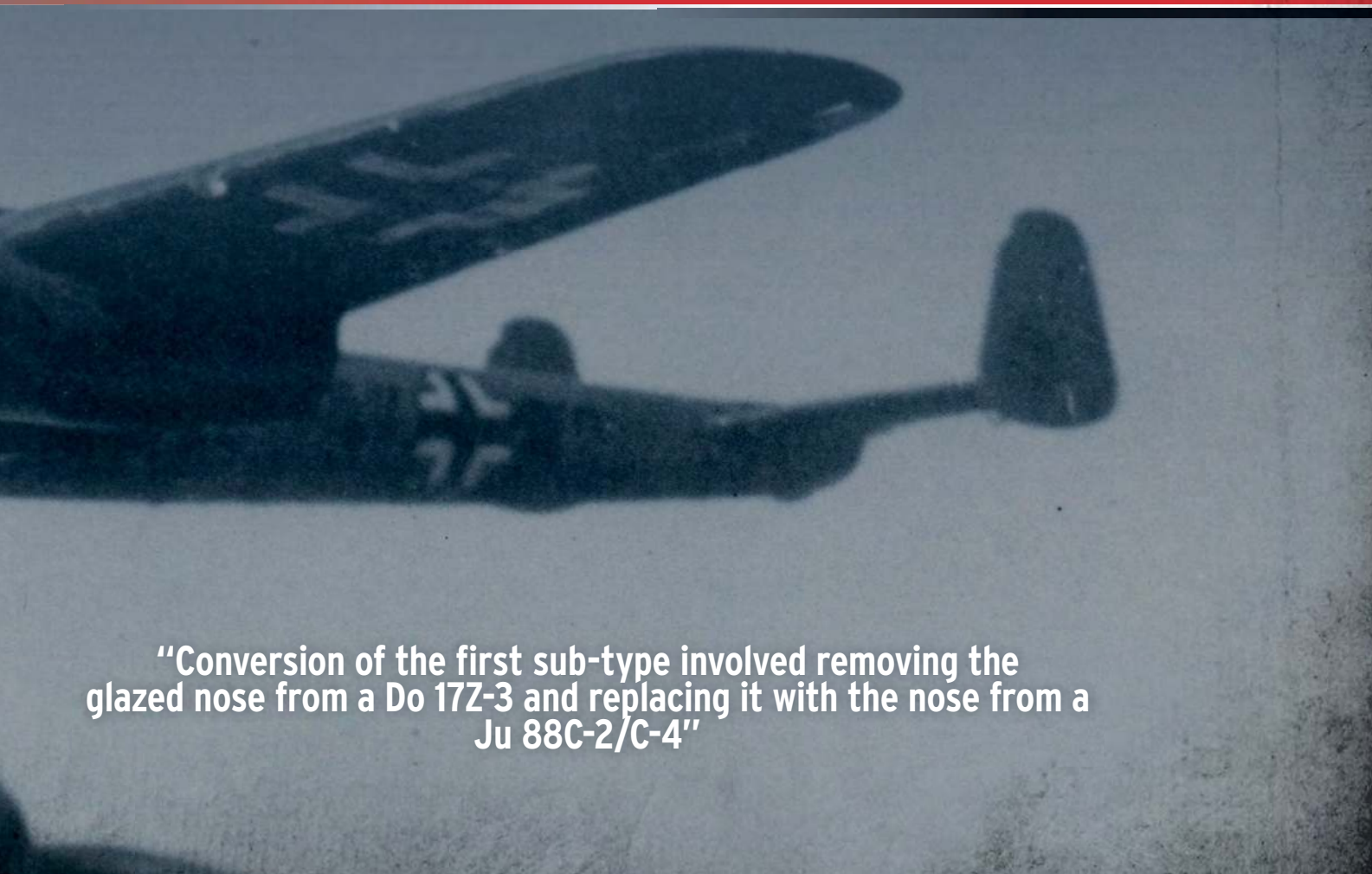
pilot who fought in Spain and had commanded the He 111-equipped 2./KG 55 until the end of January 1940. Two of the Staffeln operated the Ju 88C-2/C-4; 4 Staffel was commanded by Oblt Herbert Bönsch, while 6 Staffel was led by Oblt Karl Hülshoff. Just 5 Staffel appears to have operated the Do 17Z-7/Z-10 and was commanded by Hptm Rolf Jung, an officer whose early career is not well documented. However, Maj Heyse would be reported missing in action over the North Sea on November 23, 1940 while flying a Ju 88C-4. He was replaced by Hülshoff. But on September 11, 1940 II./NJG 1 had become I./NJG 2, so command

of Hülshoff's 3./NJG 2 went to Oblt Ulrich Mayer.

HUNTING WASPS

On July 17, 1940 Oberst Josef Kammhuber – the former Geschwaderkommodore of KG 51, who had recently returned from French captivity – was given command of the new 1 Nachtjagd-Division. He firmly believed that suitably converted bombers such as the Do 17Z and Ju 88, flown by experienced crews, would be ideal for Fernnachtjagd (long-range night-fighter) missions over the UK and later said: "When I want to kill wasps, I smoke out their nest. I don't swat insects in the

Below
Production of the Do 17Z finished in October 1940, by which time a number of Z-3s had been converted to Z-7 or Z-10 night-fighters. This aircraft is from the bomber unit KG 3.
ALL CHRIS GOSS



"Conversion of the first sub-type involved removing the glazed nose from a Do 17Z-3 and replacing it with the nose from a Ju 88C-2/C-4"



Right Far left is Gen Maj Josef Kammhuber. He was awarded the Ritterkreuz on July 9, 1941. To his left are Hptm Helmut Lent, Oblt Paul Gildner and Oblt Ludwig Becker... all successful night-fighter pilots, but who would be killed in action.

Right centre Hptm Wolfgang "Wolf" Falck seen here while serving with 2./ZG 76. He would be awarded the Ritterkreuz (Knight's Cross) on October 1, 1940.

Below An early production Do 17Z-1 showing the distinctive twin tail, rounded wings and glazed cockpit. The Z-7 and Z-10 had the glazed nose replaced by a solid unit.



air one at a time, I go to the nest when they are in!"

So it was that II./NJG 1 and then I./NJG 2 began intruder operations over British airfields, from Gilze-Rijen in the Netherlands.

It is difficult to tie the majority of 2./NJG 2's kills to the Kauz II, as it was used in very small numbers and soon replaced by the Ju 88C.

For example, during the period June to October 1940, Do 17Z-7s and Z-10s were only used on 19 nights, flying 22 sorties. Uffz Vincenz Giessübel – formerly of 2./KG 2, who had been shot down and taken prisoner over France on May 15, 1940 (and then released when Germany invaded France) – flew his first intruder mission in a Do 17Z-10 on November 15-16, 1940; he flew just three more before the end of the year.

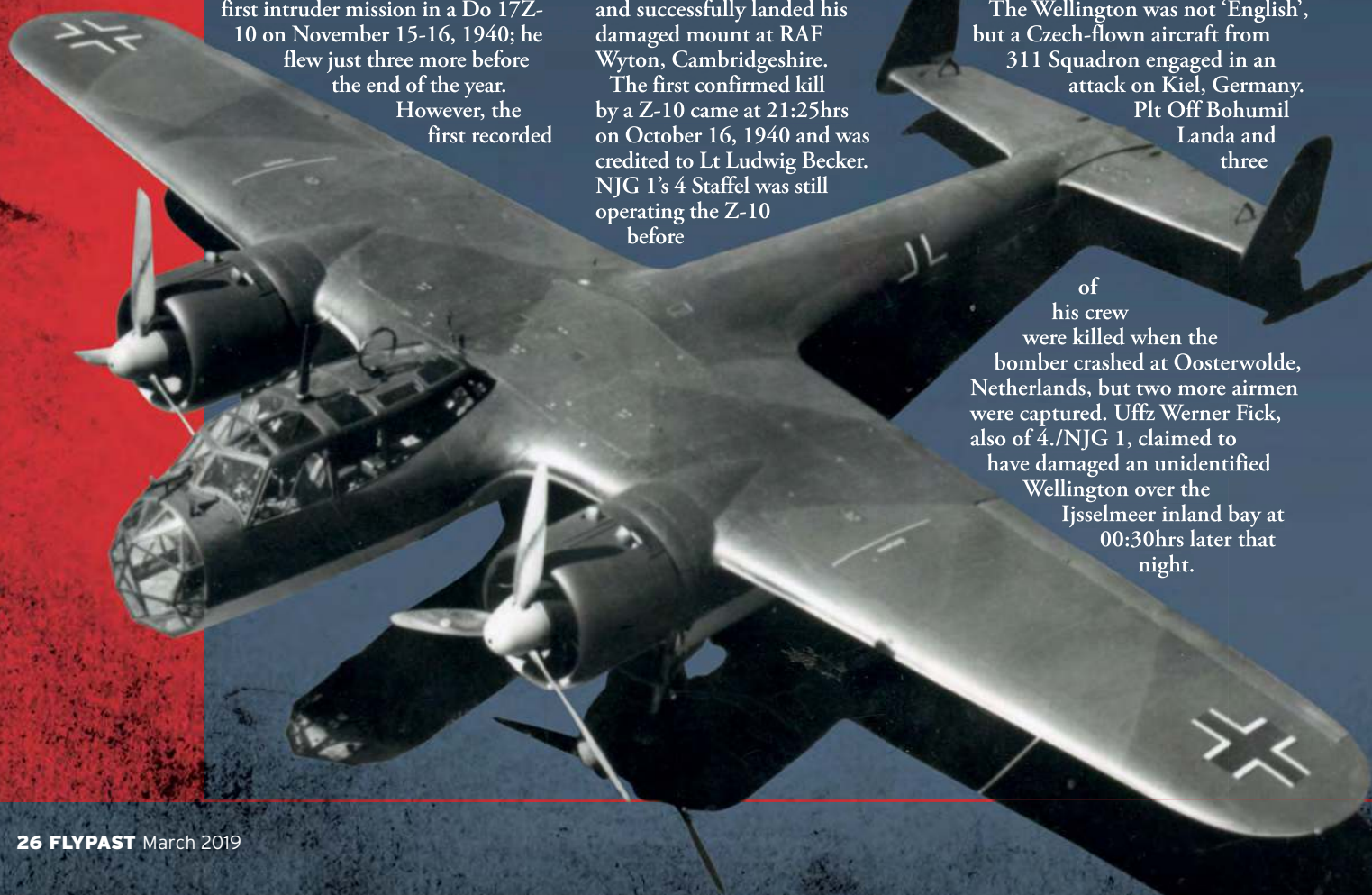
However, the first recorded successful interception by a Do 17Z-10 came on the night of September 9, 1940 and was the first success of the war for Fw Hermann Sommer of 5./NJG 1... although his claim was optimistic. He had taken off from Gilze-Rijen in a Do 17 coded G9+DN at 21:05hrs and supposedly shot down a Blenheim in the circuit at RAF Waddington, Lincolnshire, at 23:15hrs. Although not mentioned in any detail by 15 Squadron records, it is believed that Sommer attacked a Blenheim flown by Plt Off James Kee, piloting one of ten aircraft briefed to attack Ostend harbour. Brief reports say he was assaulted by an enemy aircraft and successfully landed his damaged mount at RAF Wyton, Cambridgeshire.

The first confirmed kill by a Z-10 came at 21:25hrs on October 16, 1940 and was credited to Lt Ludwig Becker. NJG 1's 4 Staffel was still operating the Z-10 before

converting to the Bf 110 shortly afterwards. Becker recorded the following: "I was well positioned at the correct altitude of 3,300m and directed onto the enemy by a series of continual corrections. Suddenly I saw an aircraft in the moonlight about 100m above and to the left. On moving closer I made it out to be a Vickers Wellington. Slowly I closed in behind and aimed a burst of five to six seconds at the fuselage. The starboard engine caught fire immediately and I pulled my aircraft up. For a while the Englishman flew on, losing height rapidly. The fire died away but I then saw him spin towards the ground and burst into flames on crashing."

The Wellington was not 'English', but a Czech-flown aircraft from 311 Squadron engaged in an attack on Kiel, Germany. Plt Off Bohumil Landa and three

of his crew were killed when the bomber crashed at Oosterwolde, Netherlands, but two more airmen were captured. Uffz Werner Fick, also of 4./NJG 1, claimed to have damaged an unidentified Wellington over the Ijsselmeer inland bay at 00:30hrs later that night.





of the three German and eight RAF aircrew.

There are just three other nights where Luftwaffe records specifically mention Z-10s shooting down RAF aircraft. The first was the night of February 10-11, 1941 when four aircraft, three flown by Hptm Rolf Jung, Oblt Albert Schulz and Lt Johannes Feuerbaum, were involved. The first victory was made by Schulz, who reported: "Take-off 23:50hrs, landing 03:51hrs, over target area 01:00-03:00hrs. Shot down a Bristol

behind the aircraft flown by Sgt [Norman] Ramsay, who was then fired upon. Sgt Marland made five separate attacks on this e/a which was identified as an Me 110. Shortly afterwards incendiary bombs were dropped, and two hangars sustained slight damage.

Left
Lt Hans Hahn joined 3./NJG 2 in September 1940 from 9./KG 54. He would shoot down ten aircraft as an intruder, be commissioned and awarded the Ritterkreuz before being killed when colliding with his 11th victim on October 11, 1941.

SUCCESS AT LAST

The first confirmed intruder 'kill', and almost definitely secured by a Z-10, was a Hampden shot down by Lt Heinz Völker near Scampton, Lincolnshire, at 00:30hrs on October 28, 1940. The 49 Squadron Operational Record Book states what happened: "One aircraft was attacked by an enemy aircraft while circling the Q site on return. The aircraft suffered slight damage including three burst tyres and a shot accumulator. Hampden X3027 landed in the sea half-a-mile off Skegness. It is believed that they had been shot up by an enemy aircraft while over this aerodrome [Scampton]."

Another damaged Hampden, X3001/EA-H, was flown by Plt Off John Green, who landed without incident at 01:40hrs (he would be shot down by a night-fighter while flying this aircraft on February 11, 1941), but there were no survivors from Plt Off John Bufton's aircraft. Völker would then claim a Blenheim over the North Sea on the night of December 22, 1940 (some records state the claim was near RAF Cranwell, Lincolnshire), again probably flying a Z-10, but this cannot be matched with any RAF losses. In 1941, Völker would convert to the Ju 88C-2/C-4 with 3./NJG 2, claiming another five RAF aircraft on intruder missions to become one of the most successful intruder pilots to date. There would be one more claim for him when, at 01:30hrs on July 22, 1941, he collided with a Wellington of 11 Operational Training Unit flown by Flt Sgt Walter Hannah and Australian Sgt Bruce Thompson, which was preparing to land at RAF Bassingbourn. Both aircraft then crashed at Ashwell, Hertfordshire, with the deaths



Blenheim near airfield 10242 [West Raynham] at 01:10hrs. Attack took place at 200m altitude from 100m distance. After the first shots, the left engine broke off. The plane spun vertically over the right wing. A crash could not be observed because Defiant or Spitfire night-fighters attacked the Do 17. Own aircraft was shot at by night-fighters four times without success. Dropped 120 incendiary bombs from 800m altitude on airfield 10841 [Waybourne] at 02:05hrs. Several persistent fires observed in barracks and airfield installations."

His claim was optimistic and no losses can be attributed to his assault. Furthermore, he actually attacked RAF Coltishall, Norfolk, where Spitfires and Hurricanes, of 222 and 255 Squadrons respectively, were practising night flying; 222 reported afterwards: "While night flying was in progress at about midnight, one enemy aircraft was seen by Sgt [Rainford] Marland to be making the circuit

A second stick was dropped, and it is believed that e/a was then intercepted by a Hurricane [flown by Sgt Leslie Barnes of 257 Squadron] and chased out to sea."

Hptm Jung, with his crew Uffz Theo Schürks and Uffz Herbert Thomas were the next to claim and reported: "Take-off at 23:45hrs, landing at 03:46hrs, over target area 01:00-03:00hrs. Observed four landing aircraft near illuminated airfield 10280. Own plane was detected too early. The lights of the airfield were switched off. Dropped 120 incendiary bombs on accommodation and hangars from 01:00-01:45hrs in three attacks from 500m altitude. Observed numerous persistent fires. [Shot] at fire brigade crews in six low-level attacks. Observed six landing aircraft at airfield 10242 at 02:20hrs. Attacked an aircraft at 100m altitude, the navigation lights were immediately switched off, further pursuit was without any result. Shot down a Wellington ➔

Above
A Dornier Do 17Z-10 of 2./NJG 2, under camouflage at Gilze-Rijen, the Netherlands.



Right
Helmut Lent (4th from
right) and other officers
of NJG 1 entertaining the
captured crew of an RAF
bomber, Arnhem, late
autumn 1940.

Below right
A clearer view of the
Spanner Anlage and
pilot's infra-red scope.

“Plt Off Alexander was giving night flying instruction from Langham when at 800ft was attacked simultaneously by a Ju 88 and a Do 17”

near 10242, 200m altitude at 02:30 hrs. After two bursts of fire, the right engine burned and the plane exploded in the air. Despite the air combat there was well-aimed light anti-aircraft fire, six hits in own machine. Attacked a Bristol Blenheim with three bursts near Great Yarmouth at 800m altitude at 03:00hrs. The Blenheim was shooting recognition signals (red-yellow). Hits and fire effect recognised perfectly. Further observation of the aircraft was not possible. Subsequent loss of the aircraft can be expected.”

The only loss that can be attributed was a Wellington from 115 Squadron, captained by Sgt Harry Rogers, which was returning from an attack on Hannover. The pilot managed to crash-land at Narborough near Swaffham in Norfolk, with just the rear gunner suffering injuries.

On the night of April 7-8, 1941, Lt Johannes Feuerbaum almost got another victim while flying a Z-10 when he claimed a Hudson near Wells, Norfolk, flown by Plt Off Charles Alexander DFM; the 206 Squadron Operations Record Book states what happened: “Plt Off Alexander was giving night flying instruction from Langham when at 800ft was attacked simultaneously by a Ju 88 and a Do 17. Plt Off Alexander took avoiding action,



first to port then to starboard, down to 200ft, then shaking off both enemy aircraft. Estimated that enemy aircraft between them fired 500 rounds including some cannon shells, one of which hit the tail. Hudson then climbed to 3,000ft and tried to locate enemy aircraft, but returned and landed safely at 01:15hrs.”

On the way home, Feuerbaum then claimed what he thought was a Handley Page Hereford, but was probably a Whitley of 51 Squadron flown by Plt Off Gordon Matthey, who reported being attacked by a German aircraft 60 miles east of Flamborough Head, Yorkshire. Matthey was wounded slightly in the

action. Feuerbaum would claim just one more RAF aircraft on the early morning of May 3, 1941, but he was possibly flying a Ju 88C; even the crew of his intended victim, a Whitley of 77 Squadron flown by a Sgt Mills, failed to recognise what their assailant was flying: “While circling over the beacon at base, [we were] attacked by an enemy aircraft, the type of which could not be ascertained. The attack was made from the rear and the enemy aircraft opened fire at 400 yards range, severely damaging the controls. The engagement lasted for only a short time, the enemy aircraft breaking away when the rear gunner returned fire. Damage

to the aircraft controls made landing very difficult and a crash-landing was unavoidable. None of the crew was injured.”

Feuerbaum would live another month and one day – he and his crew were killed on June 4, 1941 near Whitby, North Yorkshire, when their Ju 88C-2 flew into the ground in bad weather.

BEGINNING OF THE END

The final kill that can be attributed to a Z-10 intruder went to the recently promoted Fw Vincenz Giessübel, who shot down a Wellington of 11 Operational Training Unit captained by Sgt Phillip Nicholls, over RAF Bassingbourn at 00:50hrs on April



24, 1941. On its way down, the aircraft crashed on to and destroyed a second Wellington. Nicholls was badly injured, but two crew were killed. It was Giessübel's 37th operational flight and he would continue to crew the Z-10 with 2./NJG 2 on another 33 sorties. Failing to increase his score, though, his last Kauz II mission was on October 13, 1941 after which he flew the Ju 88C-4.

Dornier
Do 17Z-10

losses were understandably light due to the small numbers involved and because around October 13, 1941 intruder missions ceased by order of the Führer, who wanted to see RAF bombers burning on German territory rather than British airfields. On October 13, 1940 Z-10 Wk Nr 2851 (coded R4+DK) crashed on landing at Gilze-Rijen, injuring Uffz Erich Götz and two crew. Then, on November 9, 1940 Obfw Herbert Schmidt's 2817 (R4+HK) was damaged by flak on an intruder sortie and crash-landed at Gilze-Rijen. Finally, on February

5, 1941 Oblt Otto Hauser's 2859 (R4+BK) went missing on an intruder sortie. The second and last combat loss, which also involved the last Do 17 to crash on British soil, came on May 8, 1941 when Fw Wilhelm Lettenmeier's 2843 (R4+GK) was intercepted by a Beaufighter of 25 Squadron, flown by Plt Off David Thompson, with radar operator Plt Off Leslie Britain. Initially, the British crew

had difficulty getting behind the German aircraft due to its low speed.

Thompson reported: "I throttled back, [causing] exhaust flames to appear from our aircraft, which was up moon of the Dornier [and this] apparently sighted the Beaufighter. I immediately made a steep turn to port to evade and did [escape] the first burst. I followed the Dornier, which continued on a straight course after making the steep turn to port, giving me the impression that the pilot of the Dornier thought he had succeeded in evading me. I followed him and fired two further one second bursts at about 100 yards range from below and to starboard, and I saw hits from the first burst. After the second burst the port motor of the Dornier caught on fire."

Flight engineer Uffz Herbert Thomas recalls what happened next: "There was an awful crash and grinding noise and the port engine began to burn brightly. The noise was terrific. My first reaction was to get the canopy clear, close the fuel tap, cut the ignition, cut everything. I went to help Lettenmeier, but our Dornier simply went down. The fire closed in on the cockpit and together we gave the command to get out. Tracers went under me and the Bola [gondola] but I could not find the switch for the bale-out buzzer so with great effort I forced open the hatch against the airstream. ➡

Below left
Do 17Z-7, Wk Nr 2817 of 2./NJG 2 after suffering flak damage during an intruder mission and force-landing back at Gilze-Rijen. Note the stubbier nose compared to the Z-10.

Below
A Do 17Z-10 of 2./NJG 2 at Gilze-Rijen. Note the Spanner Anlage infra-red spotlight in the tip of the nose.





Right
This revealing photo shows a Do 215B-5 Kauz III, fitted with the Spanner Anlage spotlight and FuG 202 Lichtenstein radar.

I climbed onto the radio operator's position and to my surprise found that Georg [Uffz Herden] was still at his post. I screamed at him to jump and together we got out."

Both Thomas and Herden survived, but Lettenmeier was killed (sadly, David Thompson would also die in a flying accident on July 8, 1941). The Do 17 crashed at West Fen, Lincolnshire, hitting the ground at high speed, exploding and causing a deep crater. Lettenmeier's body was found 100 yards away with an unopened parachute. Despite being the first (and last) Z-10 to crash on land, all the RAF could find of note was a plate stating the aircraft had been made by Dornier at Friedrichshafen, traces of machine guns, a single 15mm round and traces of 1kg incendiaries.

OBSCOLESCENCE

Although the Z-10 soldiered on, it was soon replaced by more



adept night-fighters, namely the Bf 110, Ju 88C-4 and even the Do 215B-5. The last recorded incident involving a Z-10 came on September 19, 1941 when 2867 of 2./NJG 2 suffered an undercarriage collapse at Gilze-

Rijen. Intruders in the form of the Me 410 returned to British skies in the summer of 1943, but by then, RAF defences were much improved and the efforts of the 'Screech Owls' two years before were but a distant memory. ●

II./NJG 1 AND 2./NJG 2 DO 17Z-10 CLAIMS, SEPT 1940 – MAY 1941

The units operated a mixture of Ju 88Cs and Do 17Z-10s until the latter was replaced by the former by spring/summer 1941. German aircraft types are speculation apart from where indicated in **bold** that the aircraft was a Do 17Z-10. Note that 'dam' denotes damaged.

Date	Pilot	Type	Time	Intercepted at	Notes
8 Sep 1940	Fw Hermann Sommer, 5./NJG 1	Blenheim	23:15	Waddington	R3905, 15 Sqn, Plt Off J Kee, damaged, RAF Wyton
16 Oct 1940	Lt Ludwig Becker, 4./NJG 1	Wellington	21:25	Oosterwolde	L7844, 311 Sqn, Plt Off B Landa
17 Oct 1940	Uffz Werner Fick, 4./NJG 1	Wellington	00:30	Ijsselmeer	Damaged
28 Oct 1940	Lt Heinz Völker	Hampden	00:30	Near Scampton	X3027, 49 Sqn, Plt Off J R Buffon, crashed off Skegness
22 Dec 1940	Lt Heinz Völker	Blenheim	21:15	50km east of Aldeburgh	
16 Jan 1941	Oblt Albert Schulz	Defiant	02:30	Church Fenton	L7002, 54 OTU, Plt Off H G S Wyrill
16 Jan 1941	Oblt Albert Schulz	Defiant	02:45	Church Fenton	N1542, 54 OTU, Plt Lt R J B Burns, damaged
11 Feb 1941	Oblt Albert Schulz	Blenheim	01:10	West Raynham	
11 Feb 1941	Hptm Rolf Jung	Wellington	02:30	West Raynham	R1084, 115 Sqn, Sgt H Rodgers
25 Feb 1941	Fw Ernst Ziebarth	Wellington	23:40	Marham	R1009, 218 Sqn, Sgt R Hoos
12 Mar 1941	Fw Heinz Mittelstädt	Wellington	22:10	Wells-next-to-the-Sea	Probably P9226, 311 Sqn, damaged
8 Apr 1941	Lt Johannes Feuerbaum	Hudson	01:20	Wells-next-to-the-Sea	206 Sqn, Plt Off C R Alexander, damaged, near Langham
8 Apr 1941	Lt Johannes Feuerbaum	Hereford	01:23	Wells-next-to-the-Sea	Probably Whitley Z6478, 51 Sqn, Plt Off G R Matthey, damaged
10 Apr 1941	Oblt Albert Schulz	Wellington	01:30	Cambridge	Possibly L4253, 11 OTU (Sgt Dutton)
24 Apr 41	Fw Vincenz Giessübel	Wellington	01:55	Marham	N2912, 11 OTU, Sgt P H Nicholls
3 May 41	Lt Johannes Feuerbaum	Hereford	03:15	Church Fenton	Whitley Z6641, 77 Sqn, Sgt Mills, damaged, Topcliffe
5 May 41	Uffz Bittner	Blenheim/Beaufighter	04:15		22 miles off Gt Yarmouth

Fw Hermann Sommer awarded Deutsches Kreuz in Gold (DKiG), Apr 24, 1942; Ehrenpokal (EP - Honour Goblet) Nov 1, 1943 † with 3./NJG 102, Feb 11, 1944 • Lt Ludwig Becker awarded EP Mar 2, 1942, DKiG May 4, 1942, Ritterkreuz July 1, 1942, Eichenlaub Feb 26, 1943 † with 12./NJG 1, Feb 26, 1943 • Uffz Werner Fick † with 2./NJG 1, Apr 24-25, 1944 • Lt Heinz Völker † with 3./NJG 2 July 22, 1941 • Oblt Albert Schulz, awarded DKiG Aug 21, 1942 † 1./NJG 2, Jan 30, 1944 • Hptm Rolf Jung, awarded EP 7 Sept 1942; survived • Fw Ernst Ziebarth † Dec 22, 1942 with 2./NJG 2 • Fw Heinz Mittelstädt, † 5 Dec 42 with Blindflugschule 8 • Lt Johannes Feuerbaum † June 4, 1941 with 2./NJG 2 • Fw Vincenz Giessübel, survived.