

## Messerschmitt Me 210/410

### *FlyPast*

Scrutinizes the history of...



# The Messerschmitt Me 210/410

**Above**  
The Messerschmitt  
fighter in flight.  
BOTH KEY COLLECTION

Conceived as a replacement for the twin-engined Messerschmitt Bf 110, the development of the Me 210 was so troublesome that the older aircraft was required to soldier on until the end of the war. The flawed Me 210 was eventually transformed into the much more capable Me 410 Hornisse (Hornet), but it arrived too late in the war to make a significant difference.

The concept of the Me 210 can be traced back to 1937. Envisaged as a multi-role Zerstörer (destroyer), the prototype made its debut flight on September 5, 1939. Among its unusual features were two fuselage-mounted, remotely controlled, rearwards firing guns.

Around 1,000 of the new aircraft were ordered, but due to mounting aerodynamic problems during

the test flight schedule, only 94 pre-series 210A-0s were built. Fritz Wendel, Messerschmitt's test pilot, was particularly damning in his assessment of the machine, describing it as having "all of the least desirable attributes an aeroplane could possess."

### Accident prone

Several variants were planned, including the 210A-1 fighter-bomber, the 'A-2 dive-bomber and the 'B reconnaissance version. Sadly for its crews and maker, the aircraft's first year of service was so plagued by accidents that production was halted in early 1942. Only 90 'A-1s had been completed, with a further 370 at various stages of manufacture.

Of those that were still in the factory, around 170 were completed,

all of which incorporated the significant modifications applied to the Me 410. Hungary licence-built approximately 270 machines, production of which was at an advanced stage when Germany opted to suspend its programme. Constructed by the Hungarian DAF company, these aircraft were fitted with upgraded Daimler-Benz DB605B engines, each producing 1,475hp (1,100kW) as opposed to 1,350hp on the German-made DB601F-powered versions. Designated 210Ca, many of these aircraft served with the Royal Hungarian Air Force, although over 100 ended up in Luftwaffe hands.

Some original Me 210s served on the Eastern Front from early 1942, with modified aircraft seeing action in the Mediterranean later that year. They were never popular and it was

**SPOT FACT** The Me 410C was designed for high-altitude, but none were produced

## Origin & history

clear that Messerschmitt needed to go back to the drawing board. The resulting aircraft, though very similar in appearance, was given a new name to avoid being associated with the disastrous Me 210. Designated Me 410, it was popularly known as the Hornisse, though this was never official.

### Hornet hive

Despite its physical similarity, the new aircraft had several significant modifications. The rear fuselage was deepened and lengthened, and new outer wing panels with revised flaps and ailerons were incorporated, along with automatic leading edge slats. Perhaps the biggest change was the introduction of much more powerful engines – the Me 410A was fitted with 1,750hp DB603As, with later models swapping these for 1,900hp DB603Gs.

Deliveries to Luftwaffe units began in January 1943, and Messerschmitt was finally able to develop its machine to serve in different roles. There were reconnaissance versions and heavily armed fighter-bomber variants, the latter equipped with ventral gun packs. The potent 410B model began to appear in April 1944. At last the Luftwaffe



Above  
Captured Messerschmitt  
Me 410A-2 F6+WK  
'FE-499'.

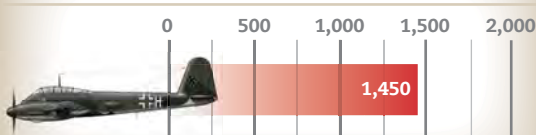
had a worthy successor to its ageing Bf 110, but with the tide of war changing direction, and German factories under pressure from Allied bombing, the Me 410 was never built in sufficient numbers. Most surviving 410s had been converted to undertake multi-role Zerstörer operations by the end of 1944, and while a torpedo-bomber version was built, it never entered production.

Certainly more successful than

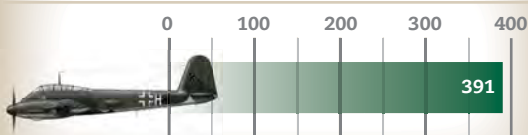
its predecessor, the Hornets flew nocturnal fighter-bomber operations over Britain, and served in various roles over the Mediterranean and northern Europe. They were also used as night-fighters on the Eastern Front, and finally in defence of the Reich. In the latter role they posed a serious threat to Allied bombers, but were no match for USAAF fighters, and production ended in September 1944. ●

### Messerschmitt Me 410A-1

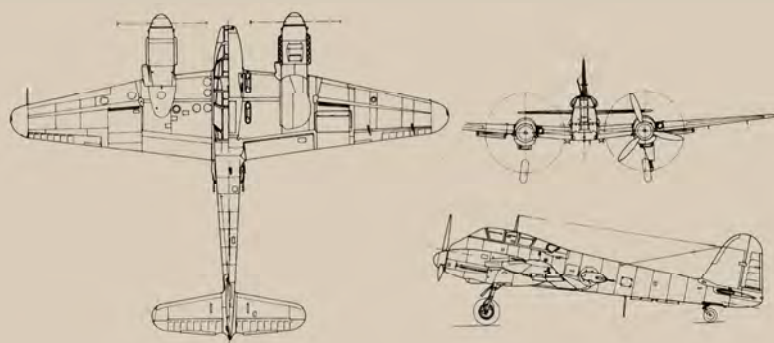
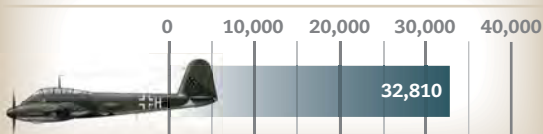
#### AT A GLANCE: RANGE (miles)



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



#### AT A GLANCE: CEILING (feet)



- Construction:** A total of 1,160 Me 410s of all models were built.
- First flight:** Following the Me 210's debut on September 5, 1939, the first Me 410 flew on March 14, 1942.
- Powerplant:** Two 1,750hp (1,305kW) Daimler-Benz DB603A inverted V12s driving three-bladed propellers.
- Dimension:** Span 53ft 8in (16.4m). Length 40ft 11in. Height 14ft 0in. Wing area 390sq ft (36.2sq m).
- Weight:** Empty 17,598lb (7,982kg). Loaded 24,772lb.
- Performance:** Max speed 391mph (629km/h) at 26,575ft (8,100m) or 317mph at sea level. Service ceiling 32,810ft. Max range 1,450 miles (2,333km).
- Armament:** Two 20mm cannon and two 7.9mm machine guns in nose, plus two ventral 20mm cannon and two 13mm machine guns in fuselage side barbettes. Max bomb load 2,205lb (1,000kg).
- Crew:** Two - pilot and gunner.

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

**1** Me 310 prototype was built, bridging the gap between the 210 and 410



# Hornet W

Chris Goss describes the Me 210 and '410 – rare examples

**N**o prototypes had been flown, or even a design agreed, when the German air ministry – the Reichsluftfahrtministerium – responded in the autumn of 1938 to a proposal from Messerschmitt by ordering 2,000 new fighters. The origins of the Me 210 and '410 go back to 1937 and a requirement to replace the twin-engined Bf 110 Zerstörer – ‘destroyer’ or heavy fighter. The new machine was to be capable of carrying a 1,000kg bomb, have a dive-bombing capability and better defensive armament.

When a design was forwarded, it was revolutionary as armaments manufacturer Rheinmetall-Borsig and electronics giant Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft

(AEG) combined to come up with electronically operated twin MG 131 13mm machine guns in barbettes on either side of the fuselage. Since the twin rudders had worked well on the Bf 110, they were retained on the first prototypes of what was designated the Me 210. However, as the guns were mounted laterally, a single-rudder model was also tested.

A bomb bay was located beneath the cockpit in the extreme nose. Both of these features facilitated dive-bombing missions.

## Optimism dashed

The first prototype flew on September 2, 1939 but immediately it was clear that handling was not good and the fuselage had to be lengthened. The second prototype, designated Me 210 V2, had its maiden flight on October 10. This was still fitted with a twin-tail layout but the single-rudder configuration became standard from the fifth example.

Optimism was dashed when on September 5, 1940 the tailplane



# Without a sting

of a Messerschmitt failure

failed on the V2 as the pilot pulled out of a 403mph (650km/h) dive and he was forced to bale out. As a result, the V3 was strengthened, adding more weight to the structure. Further problems, for example poor slow-speed handling leading to flat spins, extended the development process. At the same time, the Luftwaffe wanted to look at further roles, such as it being a night-fighter, or tropicalised, adding to the delays.

It was October 1941 before operational trials of the Me 210 began. A few examples were delivered to Erprobungsstaffel Me 210, the dedicated test and development unit, and I/Schnellkampfgeschwader 210 (schnellkampf – fast bomber). The latter was the unit originally intended to take the Me 210 into combat; it later was re-designated I/Zerstörergeschwader 1 (I/ZG 1 – destroyer wing).

By March 1942, after no less than 30 training accidents of varying severity, it was agreed that in its current form the Me 210 was too



**Left**  
Successful Me 410 pilot, Oblt Fritz Stehle.

**Below**  
An Me 410A-1/U4 of ZG 26 breaks away after attacking a B-17 of 338th BG, circa May 1944. ALL VIA AUTHOR UNLESS NOTED

much of a danger to its crews. Beside the spinning problem, there were fatal instances of engines breaking loose in flight and aircraft flipping over onto their backs.

Messerschmitt was informed that the Me 210 programme had been cancelled, but the current batch of 240 was to be finished and development testing was to continue. Any decision to

resume would not be made until the fuselage was lengthened, and balanced elevators, wing slats and an auto-pilot were installed.

On April 27, 1942, Obstlt (equivalent to RAF wing commander) Edgar Petersen from the Luftwaffe test centre at Rechlin wrote the first positive report on the type, praising the improved stability. He recommended that none



**SPOT FACT** *The fuselage gun barbettes were remotely controlled from the gunner's cockpit position*



**Above**  
Bomber destroyer  
Me 410B-2/U1  
showing the WB  
151A fairing under  
the centre section  
housing twin MG  
151 20mm cannon.

**Right**  
An Me 410A-1  
equipped with  
21cm rockets under  
each wing.

**Below**  
Typical targets  
for an Me 410 - a  
formation of  
American bombers.

of the airframes be scrapped and that if trials with the problematic undercarriage proved successful, the Me 210 could be declared suitable as a high-speed bomber.

### **210 becomes 410**

As a result, Erprobungsstaffel Me 210 restarted operational trials in July 1942. Two months later, this unit was redesignated 16/Kampfgeschwader 6 (16/KG 6). In October a number of modified Me 210A-1s were issued to III/ZG 1 in Sicily and these were joined by 16/KG 6 toward the end of the month. In the early summer of 1943 III/ZG 1 received a replacement, the Me 410 Hornisse (hornet).

By September of 1942 the designation 'Me 410' was appearing



“Defence of the Reich became the top priority and 280 Me 410s per month were called for by the end of 1944”





At the end of May 1943, the Dornier Do 217-equipped II/KG 40 began to convert to the Me 410 and it was redesignated V/KG 2 at the end of June. Bombing missions over Britain began and V/KG 2 suffered its first loss on the night of July 13/14 to a Mosquito of 85 Squadron during an attack on Cambridge.

Bomber and intruder sorties continued until June 1944 by which time V/KG 2 had been redesignated II/KG 51 and been joined by I/KG 51. After a brief period of action over the Normandy beaches operating in the bombing, intruder and even night-fighter roles, both I and II/KG 51 were withdrawn to Germany for conversion to the

variants began to appear – see the panel below.

## Defence of the Reich

However, it was for daylight anti-bomber missions that the Me 410 was better known, albeit its impact was minimal. In this guise it served only with ZG 26 and ZG 76, both being redesignated as single-seat fighter units from August and September 1944 onwards.

Oblt (flying officer) Fritz Stehle of II/ZG 26 started flying Bf 110s with 2/ZG before converting to Me 210s with 8/ZG 1 and then the '410s of 5/ZG 26. He related to the author what it was like attacking bombers: "You really had to work hard on those bombers; it was very seldom that you knocked one down with

**Left**  
Me 410s fly over an aircraft of 6/ZG 26. A clog badge is just discernible on the engine cowling.

**Below left**  
Close-up of the 21cm rocket tubes on an Me 410.



### Me 410 Hornisse variants

Me 410A-1	Light bomber
Me 410A-1/U1	Armed photo-recce
Me 410A-1/U2	Heavy fighter
Me 410A-1/U4	Bomber destroyer with 5cm cannon
Me 410A-2	Zerstörer
Me 410A-3	Reconnaissance
Me 410B-1	Bomber
Me 410B-2	Bomber destroyer with a pair of 30mm cannon
Me 410B-3	Reconnaissance
Me 410B-5	Torpedo-bomber with Hohentwiel maritime radar
Me 410B-6	Anti-shipping and similar to the 'B-5
Me 410B-7	Day reconnaissance
Me 410B-8	Night reconnaissance

more frequently in official documents. Essentially this was a modified Me 210 with the Daimler-Benz DB 601F 12-cylinder inverted 'vee' engines replaced by the DB 603G.

Petersen promised that 210 Me 410s would be delivered by December 1 for use as day bombers against Britain. However, there was still debate as to the primary role for the Me 410, with high-speed bomber taking primacy, but with prospects changing for the Germans, a heavy fighter to defend the Reich was equally attractive.

## Finding a role

On December 8, 1942 the first of five Me 410s were delivered on schedule. The following month Erprobungsstaffel Me 410 was formed at Lechfeld to ready the Hornisse for combat.

twin-jet Me 262.

Trials were carried out with Me 410s fitted with modified 5cm BK 5 anti-tank guns in order to turn the twin into a powerfully armed bomber destroyer. Despite the fact that this pointed to emphasis on the Zerstörer, production during 1943 still favoured the Schnellbomber: 200 bombers, 80 reconnaissance and 100 heavy fighters were built during the year.

Defence of the Reich later became the top priority and 280 Me 410s per month were called for by the end of 1944. The Bf 110 was to be used for night operations and the Me 410 for day. The initial version was the Me 410A-1 light bomber with fixed forward-firing machine guns and cannon, two rearward-firing remotely controlled guns and an internal bomb load of two 1,000kg bombs. New Hornisse

the first burst.

"Sometimes you would sit behind a bomber and fire off all your ammunition into it and it would not move; it would just keep going. We fired rockets either in pairs or singly, usually from behind the bomber formation.

"Sometimes the rockets were useful. As we ran into attack one could note a certain nervousness in the American bomber formation, the individual bombers started to go up and down relative to each other, but aiming was difficult.

"Not only was it difficult to judge the range but the weapon was not very accurate in line. It was only of real value as a means of splitting up the enemy formations and sometimes it was successful in doing that."

Stehle shot down 18 bombers including a number using the BK 5 cannon. He recalled how effective this gun was: "In the windscreen we had a telescopic sight, which had marks etched on to it to indicate ➔



**SPOT FACT** Intensive testing during 1941 and 1942 failed to cure the Me 210's aerodynamic problems



**Above**  
Damaged by fighters on November 26, 1943, Me 410A-3 10253 crash-landed in the Sangro River in central Italy. Obfw Arthur Kammerger and Uffz Vitus Mirlach were captured.

**Right**  
Pictured is Me 410B-1 of 13/KG 2 in late 1943.

**Below**  
A Hungarian-built and operated Me 210.

the wingspan of a B-17 at different ranges. The ideal engagement range was one kilometre.

“After each firing the cannon took some seconds to reload before it was ready to fire the next round. The rotary magazine carried some 21 rounds and each time the pneumatic reloading system went into operation you could hear the hiss of the compressed air above the engine noise.

“When you fired one round you might see it go above the bomber, so you corrected and fired again and you might see the round go below the target. You then corrected a bit more and fired, and you might see the round going towards the bomber then disappearing against the bomber’s silhouette.



“On two occasions I hit bombers when they still had bombs on board. When that happened there would be a great explosion and nothing more would be left of the bomber...”







“Then you could relax because you knew that if you didn’t see the shell any more, very soon it was going to hit the bomber. On two occasions I hit bombers when they still had bombs on board. When that happened there would be a great explosion and nothing more would be left of the bomber apart from the wingtips and tail.”

## Fighter cull

By 1944 there were other problems and priorities on the horizon. The Luftwaffe ordered Heinkel He 177 bomber output to be increased from 100 to 200 per month and, as a result, some programmes had to be reduced. Among the 20 types affected by this were the Bf 110 and Me 410. On June 30, Hitler ordered an increase in single-engined fighter production.

It was clear that losses to American fighters would soon dry up the pool of available Me 410s. For example, 16 Bf 110s and Me 410s were shot

down while attacking bombers on March 6, and eight Hornisse were downed on April 11.

Oblt Fritz Stehle described combat with USAAF escort fighters: “When we reached the bombers we would try to attack as soon as possible before the escorts could get on to us. Usually we did not have a fighter unit assigned to escorting the Me 410s to keep off the American escorts. Everybody was ordered to go for the bombers.

“When the Mustangs caught us, it was terrible. Always we had to look behind ourselves for them. The Me 410 was useless in a dogfight as it couldn’t turn well. It was too heavy and not manoeuvrable enough. If you were attacked by a Mustang, you could only pray and hope your gunner shot well.

“My gunner Unteroffizier [corporal] Alois Slaby was very experienced and knew exactly when the fighter was about to fire. He would say, ‘Not yet, not yet – now!’ and I would chop

## Hornet survivors



The RAF Museum’s Me 410A-1 420430 on a rare occasion outside of Cosford’s ‘Warplanes’ display hall. *KEC*

Although a number of Me 410s were captured during and after the war, only two still exist. At the RAF Museum Cosford, Shropshire, is Me 410A-1/U2 420430, which was captured at Værløse, Denmark, and brought to the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough, in October 1945.

The US National Air and Space Museum has Me 410A-2 10018 under long-term restoration. This was captured at Trapani in Sicily in 1943 and was shipped to America for evaluation the following year.

the throttles and the Me 410 would decelerate very rapidly. If we were lucky, the fighter would go screaming past us or sometimes I put the ‘410 into a skid with wings level and bullets would flash past the wingtip. We knew that if we could buy a little time that often meant survival...”

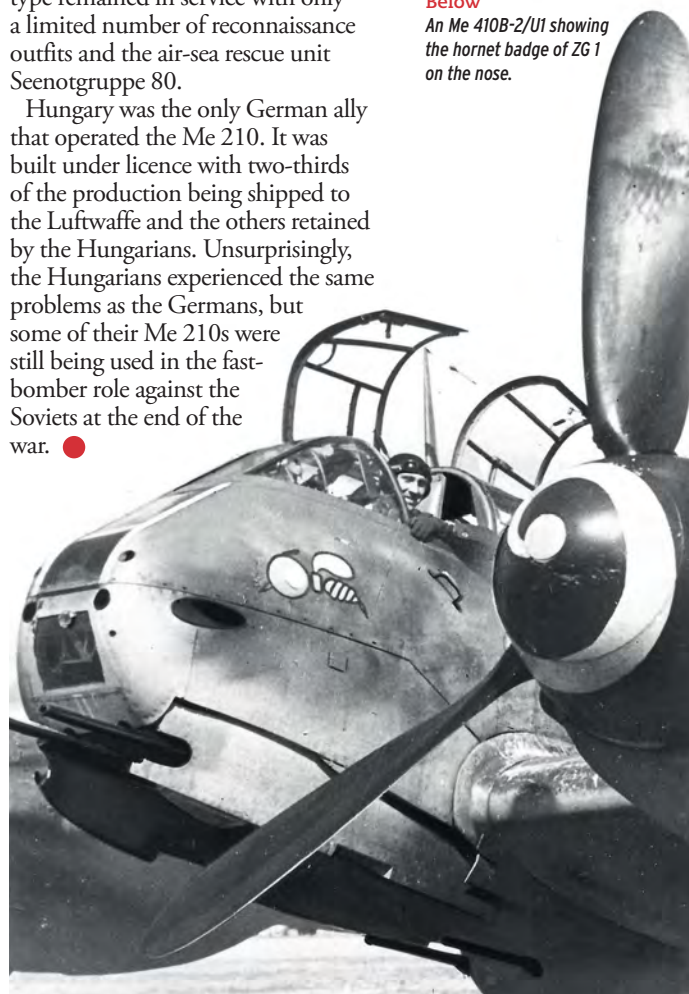
With production of the Me 410 finished by the summer of 1944, the type remained in service with only a limited number of reconnaissance outfits and the air-sea rescue unit Seenotgruppe 80.

Hungary was the only German ally that operated the Me 210. It was built under licence with two-thirds of the production being shipped to the Luftwaffe and the others retained by the Hungarians. Unsurprisingly, the Hungarians experienced the same problems as the Germans, but some of their Me 210s were still being used in the fast-bomber role against the Soviets at the end of the war. ●

**Above left**  
Close-up of the barbette on an Me 410B-6 at Farnborough after the war.

**Below left**  
The nose of captured Me 410B-6 10278 shows its Hohentwiel radar antenna.

**Below**  
An Me 410B-2/U1 showing the hornet badge of ZG 1 on the nose.





## Messerschmitt Me 410



# Eagles over England

Andy Hay artwork of an Me 410 that took part in raids over Britain

**Artwork**  
Messerschmitt Me  
410A-1 9K+HH of I/KG  
51 'Edelweiss', based  
at Beauvais, France  
in February 1944.  
ANDY HAY-2017

**B**y the time the Messerschmitt Me 410 reached frontline Luftwaffe units in 1943, it was already too late to make a significant impact. Although a vast improvement on its predecessor, the Me 210, and faster than the older Bf 110, the weight of opposition it encountered in the skies above Europe proved overwhelming.

Among units operating the Hornisse was Kampfgeschwader 51

(KG 51). Nicknamed 'Edelweiss', the bomber wing formed in December 1939, and saw action in the Battle of France, the Battle of Britain, in the Balkans campaign and on the Eastern Front.

Comprising four main Gruppe, it was I/KG 51 that operated Me 410s, equipping with the new type in May 1943. After training in Germany, it had 36 crews and around 40 aircraft on its books, including our subject, Me 410A-1 9K+HH. For the first

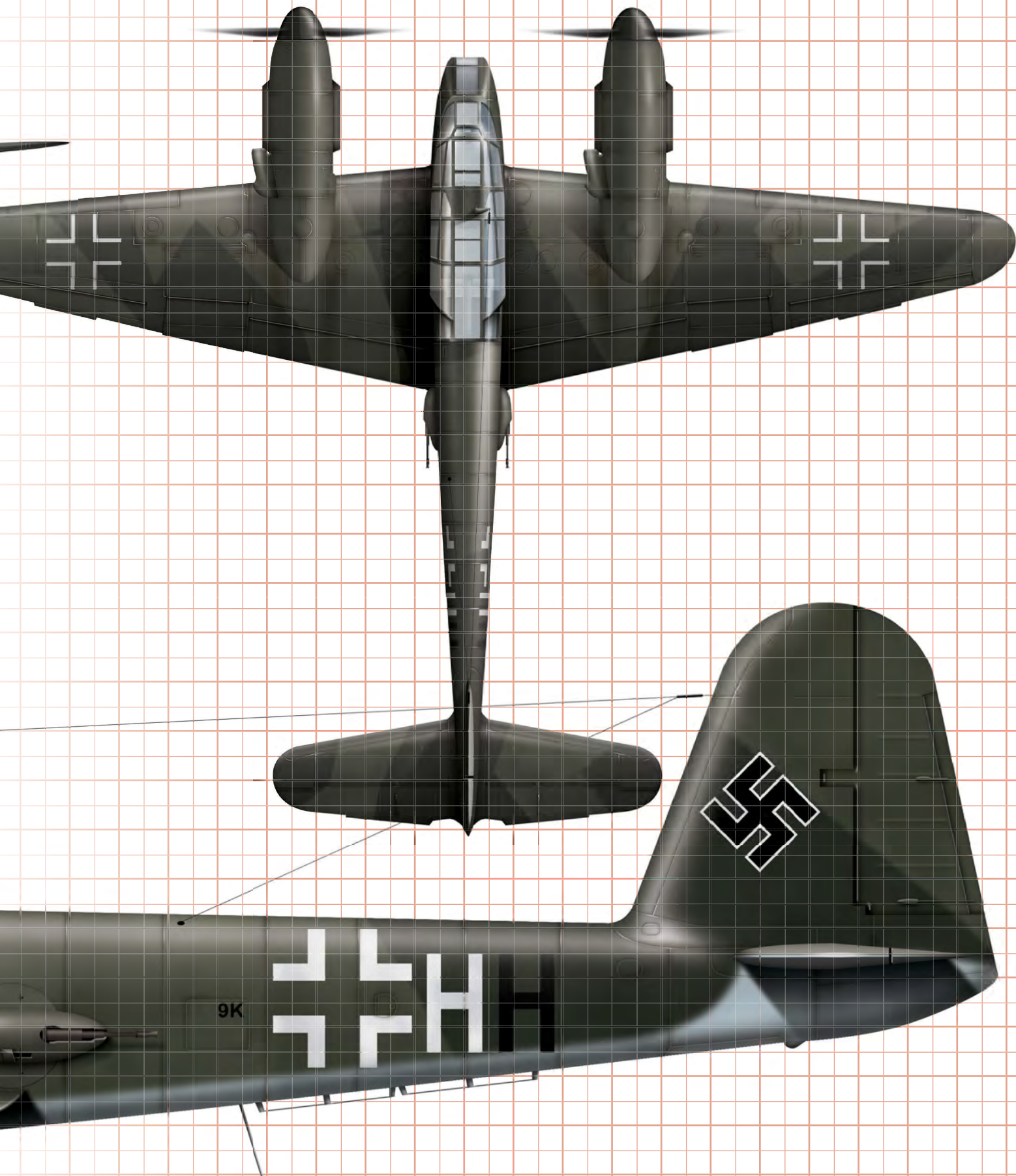
five months of 1944 it undertook bombing raids on England – successes were sporadic and losses were high.

As attention turned to the defence of Germany, elements of the Geschwader converted to the Messerschmitt Me 262, and attempted to intercept Allied bombers. It also participated in strikes on Allied airfields, but the unit was permanently disbanded at the end of the war.



**SPOT FACT** The Me 410 was produced between May 1943 and August 1944

Me 410  
in profile



**4** eight-inch Werfer-Granate 21 rockets could be carried by the Me 410A-1



# Hornets



**F**lying at sea level, a pair of twin-engined Luftwaffe fighters skimmed the North Sea, maintaining strict radio silence. They were heading west from Soesterberg in the Netherlands on August 3, 1942, bound for a convoy sailing off the Yorkshire coast. Leading the raiders was 25-year-old Oberleutnant (Oblt) Walter Maurer, who had cut his teeth on Messerschmitt Bf 110s.

Nearing the target, they climbed to 1,200ft into a bank of mist, before diving to 600ft. They released their bombs and headed for home, not knowing if they had been successful. Flying the

For a few days in September 1942 the Me 210 flew opera-

Luftwaffe's Me 210, the crews had been on the receiving end of British anti-aircraft fire, but knew that sooner or later they would meet the RAF. Only then would they find out how the problematic new warplane shaped up operationally.

At the end of April 1942, Erprobungsstaffel Me 210, dedicated to bringing the new machine into service, formed at Lechfeld in Germany, with Oblt Maurer in command. Following officer and pilot training, in 1938 Maurer was posted to 3/Jagdgeschwader 137 (3/JG 137) at Bernberg after which he flew with 1/Jagdgruppe 88 in Spain, where he shot down a Republican aircraft on June 13, 1938.

By the outbreak of war in Europe, 3/JG 137 had become 3/Jagdgruppe 102 and Maurer achieved his second 'kill' over Poland on September 11, 1939. The unit withdrew to Germany, redesignated as

I/Zerstörergeschwader 2 (I/ZG 2), commanded by Major Johannes Gentzen, and began converting to the Bf 110.

At the start of the French campaign on May 10, 1940, Maurer was with 3/ZG 2 at Darmstadt-Griesheim, led by Oblt Hans Röderer. With another two victories to his name, 24 hours into the campaign Maurer and his radio operator, Unteroffizier (Uffz) Stefan Makera, were escorting Heinkel He 111s attacking railway targets at Sainte Menchould, east of Reims.

They were engaged and shot down by Hurricanes of 1 Squadron flown by Flt Lt Peter Hanks, Plt Off Peter Mould and Fg Off Leslie Clisby. The Bf 110 crash-landed at 15:15 hours near





# over Britain

tionally against England. **Chris Goss** describes its tragic debut

Vendresse where both Maurer and Makera were taken prisoner. With the fall of France, Maurer was released and rejoined his old Staffel, ready for the Battle of Britain.

Over Britain ZG 2 suffered heavy losses and disbanded. In October, Maurer was sent to the Zerstörer Ergänzungsgruppe, the Bf 110 training unit, at Værløse in Norway. Subsequently posted to the headquarters flight (Stab) of II/ZG 1 in June 1941, he took part in ground attack and escort missions over the Soviet Union, shooting down another three aircraft.

## Operational trials

In October 1941 he and radio operator/gunner Feldweibel (Fw) Rudolf Jansen were selected to be part of the Me 210 development team at Rechlin, Maurer replacing

Knights Cross holder Oblt Heinz Forgatsch who had been killed while testing Me 210A-1 0117 on September 23.

Maurer was selected to lead the type's operational development, reporting personally to Major Walter Storp of the operations staff (Führungsstab). Storp was the former commander of Schnellkampfgeschwader 210, the fast bomber (Schnellbomber) unit originally equipped with the Me 210, which had experienced considerable problems training on the type in late 1941 and early 1942.

It's not known how many crews were posted to Erprobungsstaffel Me 210 but it would appear most came from

the Zerstörerschule (heavy fighter school) at Wunstorf and generally did not have combat experience.

One such pilot was Fw Hermann Bolten who had finished his training at the start of March 1942 and first flew a Me 210 at Landsberg on April 29. He had flown 87 sorties by July when it was decided to undertake tactical tests on the Me 210 under operational conditions.

On 18 July,

**Left**  
Me 210A-1 0182 'VN+AT' flew operational trials with Erprobungsstaffel Me 210. ALL CHRIS GOSS ARCHIVE UNLESS NOTED

**Below**  
An Me 210A-1 of Erprobungsstaffel Me 210, tasked with introducing the type into combat.





**SPOT FACT** Its fuselage-mounted gun-aiming mechanism was unique at the time



**Above**  
A pair of Me 210A-1s  
of Erprobungsstaffel  
Me 210.

**Below right**  
An Me 210A-1 of  
16/KG 6.

**Right**  
An unidentified  
Leutnant of 16/KG 6  
in front of a Me 210  
showing the bomb  
bay doors under the  
nose.



about a mile away approaching from very low level at their 2 o'clock. It passed beneath both Typhoons but they identified it as German and believed it to be a Junkers Ju 88.

The combat report read: "Plt Off Munro (call-sign Red 1) turned to port and Plt Off Lucas (Red 2) to starboard and chased it... E/a [enemy aircraft] opened inaccurate green tracer fire and then started to weave to port but this brought him dead ahead of Red 2; he returned to his original course and presumably decided to rely on speed as he used his emergency boost.

"Red Section was overtaking fast. Red 1 gave a momentary burst and

Erprobungsstaffel Me 210 deployed to Evreux in France but saw very little flying. Eleven days later it moved to Soesterberg in Holland, starting operations in earnest.

So far the unit had suffered just the one accident – on May 31 when Me 210A-1 2343 suffered 45% damage at Stade after an undercarriage problem. However, on July 31, Fw Hermann Bolten and radio operator Fw Wilhelm Lohf, flying 0063, coded 'NT+CM', had engine failure and force-landed east of Dordrecht in Holland. Their injuries meant they did not rejoin the unit until October.

### First encounter

It's believed Erprobungsstaffel Me 210 conducted reconnaissance flights over the North Sea as well as anti-invasion patrols up to the east coast of England. As related above, on August 3, 1942 Maurer led a two-aircraft bombing mission, both returning safely.

Six days later, at 19:25, Rhodesian Plt Offs Norman Lucas and Ian Munro of 266 Squadron took off from Matlaske in Norfolk on a patrol over the North Sea. After around 30 minutes they spotted an aircraft



“Immediately after opening fire on the last burst, flames appeared inboard of both engines. A hood came off and one of the crew started to climb out but as fire was continued, he slumped back”

saw strikes low on water. Throttling to plus-2 boost, range was rapidly closed to 200 yards and a three-second burst given. The e/a was flying straight and level. Red 2 also opened fire from port quarter, a very short burst at 600 yards and then 400 yards and a longer burst at 200 yards.

“Immediately after opening fire on the last burst, flames appeared inboard of both engines. A hood came off and one of the crew started to climb out, but as fire was continued he



slumped back. The enemy attempted a belly landing but bounced, dropped a wing and went in nose first...”

No Ju 88s were reported lost over the North Sea that night but Oblt Ernst Haberland and Uffz Heinz Danigel in Me 210A-1 2322 ‘GF+CB’ were reported missing from an operational flight.

## Worse for wear

Four days later 266 Squadron struck again but still failed to correctly identify what they had shot down. On August 13 at about 18:30, Me 210A-1 0184 ‘2H+VA’ took off from Soesterberg on an anti-invasion reconnaissance up to the English east coast. Flying 0184 was Leutnant (Lt) Heinz Menger with Uffz Erich Rudolph as radio operator/gunner.

After half an hour, four Typhoons of 266 led by Flt Lt Tony Johnston took off from Duxford in Cambridgeshire in the hope of catching a reconnaissance Ju 88. Their intention was to fly close to Southwold on the Suffolk coast, then out to sea 25 to 30 miles (40 to 48km) before heading north for 50 miles and returning south.

Forty minutes into the sortie, they spotted an aircraft flying west at very low level, so the Typhoons, in line astern, turned port to intercept what they thought to be a Ju 88.

It was Tony Johnston (Blue 1) who according to the squadron combat report “got astern of the e/a which at once opened fire using tracer and self-destroying ammunition, some of which came close. Using full boost, range was closed but Blue 1 feared that the enemy might reach the cover of the rain storm so he gave a short burst at 1,000 yards and saw strikes on the water below it.

“For the same reason he gave

## Sicilian Trophy

*Wearing part of its Luftwaffe codes, and RAF roundels and fin flashes, Me 210A-1 10263 taxiing at Gerbini.*



Accepted by the Luftwaffe on March 15, 1943, Messerschmitt Me 210A-1 10263 ‘2N+HT’ flew with 9/ZG 1 from Sicily. It was one of 15 of the type found at Gerbini on the island as Allied forces took over from early July 1943.

Occupying the airstrip at nearby Lentini West from late July were Spitfire Vs of 601 Squadron. Discovering Me 210 10263 on August 25, air and ground crew of 601 decided to return it to flying status. Given RAF roundels and fin flashes, it was flown several times by the unit’s pilots.

Based at Gerbini, the USAAF’s 12th Bomb Group operated B-25 Mitchells; and, with 601 Squadron preparing to leave for the Italian mainland, ‘ownership’ of the Me 210 passed to the Americans

On October 1, Lt Col G E Hall, the 12th’s executive officer, prepared for a test flight. As he opened up for take-off, one engine seemed to run away, pulling the aircraft off the runway and preventing it becoming fully airborne. The Me 210 crashed into a personnel accommodation area, killing the colonel. The former Luftwaffe fighter thankfully missed the tented area and Hall was credited with firing the nose cannon as a warning when he realised his predicament.

*The remains of Me 210A-1 10263 at Gerbini, October 1, 1943. BOTH KEY COLLECTION*



another short burst at 600 yards, again short. Closing to 400 yards he saw one strike on starboard engine. Closing from 300 to 30 yards, firing a series of short bursts, he saw the port engine smoking and the starboard engine and under part of the fuselage catch fire.

“Up to this point, the enemy had flown straight and level but when well on fire it climbed to 600 feet, a hood cover came off and one man baled out; the e/a dropped a wing and went into the sea and sank...”

Rudolph reported that at 19:36, when they were off Great Yarmouth at sea level, they had been attacked by four Typhoons flying in line astern.

He had tried his best to return fire with the gun barbettes but found it hard to bring them to bear.

Menger climbed to 600ft and, with the port engine and fuselage on fire, he transmitted an SOS, jettisoned the cockpit canopy and baled out. The Me 210 crashed into the sea and sank, taking the pilot with it. Rudolph was picked up six days later, “...somewhat the worse for wear” and not in a fit state to be interrogated.

## Mainland attack

Three Me 210s were involved in the Allied raid on Dieppe on August 1944 ➔



**SPOT FACT** *The Luftwaffe began to receive Hungarian-built Me 210s in April 1943*



**Above**  
The remains of Me 210A-1 0173 '2H+CA', shot down on September 6, 1942.

**Below**  
Me 210As of II/ZG 1 over the Mediterranean.

19, but what they were doing is unknown. One apparently lost an engine to enemy gunfire and had to crash-land at Soesterberg, but there is no record of this.

On September 1, Erprobungsstaffel Me 210 was redesignated 16/KG 6. A few days later Major Storp took command of the newly formed unit.

Maurer undertook a night probing flight over East Anglia during the first days of September at heights between the treetops and 10,000ft and was fortunate to hear British night-fighter transmissions, enabling him to turn and dive away. On the 3rd, he had a discussion with Storp when it was decreed that the Me 210 could carry out its first attack on mainland Britain.

Two days later, between 15:00 and 16:00, two Me 210s, piloted by Maurer and Fw Max Blättler, took off from Soesterberg and flew towards the Thames Estuary at 26,000ft, with the probable target of Chatham in Kent.

Off Southend they were intercepted by two Spitfires of 610 Squadron flown by Australians Flt Sgt 'South' Creagh and Sgt Rupert Gregory. Creagh attacked first: the aircraft, correctly identified as a Me 210, had dived from 20,000 to 15,000ft. Gregory then took over, "closed in astern and fired a short burst closing from 400 yards. I saw no results so I closed in to 100 yards and fired a two-second burst.

"The port engine began to burn behind the nacelle. I noticed that the

starboard propeller had stopped and the aircraft turned slowly to starboard and dived into the sea..."

Blättler and Uffz Reinhold Graf were killed when Me 210A-1 2348 '2H+LA' crashed into the sea. Maurer managed to drop his bomb near Southend and streaked back for Soesterberg.

### **Black out**

Mid-morning on September 6, 1942 a pair of Me 210s flown by Maurer and Fw Heinrich Mösges headed towards Middlesbrough in northeast England. Their route took them towards the island of Texel off the Dutch coast, then west to a point 10 miles off Hartlepool and then into the mouth of the River Tees.





Two Typhoons of 1 Squadron, piloted by Plt Offs Des Perrin and Tom Bridges, lifted off from Acklington in Northumberland at 11:16 and were ordered towards Blyth, climbing to 30,000ft. When they were off Redcar at 28,500ft they spotted two aircraft they identified as either Me 210s or Ju 88s at the same height, heading northwest and weaving gently.

When the raiders turned west the Typhoons gave chase. After about four minutes, they spotted one of the Me 210s jettisoning its bombs before

What Perrin did not witness was the tail of the German aircraft breaking off at 3,000ft and the Me 210 fluttering down to crash on its back at New Marske, near Redcar. Austrian radio operator/gunner Obergefreiter Eduard Czerny, whose 23rd birthday was that very day, managed to get out, but his parachute failed to open.

Mösgeles managed to get away from Me 210A-1 0173 '2H+CA' just before it crashed. But he had left it too late and his body fell into a pool alongside a reservoir.

motor boat *Florence*.

Also unwounded, Jansen landed close to the village of Sledgate, North Yorkshire and was captured by a holidaymaker. The Me 210A-1, 2321 '2H+HA', crashed at Sunnyside Farm, Thorpe in the same county seven minutes after the first one had come down.

## Vital intelligence

Within 24 hours of the Me 210 being cleared for operations over Britain, three aircraft had been lost, two coming down on land. The wreckage of Mösgeles's Me 210 was recovered for analysis by the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough.

Moreover, the RAF had captured three Me 210 crew, including the unit commanding officer – leading to a very comprehensive intelligence report on both the type and the unit.

Just who took command of 16/KG 6 is not known, nor if it staged any more missions over Britain. Erprobungsstaffel Me 210 moved from Soesterberg to Beauvais in France and suffered one more accident – on September 16, 1942 – when Me 210A-1 2335 was all but written off as

**Left**  
In October 1942, 16/KG 6 moved to the Mediterranean, its aircraft absorbed by 11/ZG 1. In the middle is '2N+TR' of 7/ZG 1.



turning steeply away from the coast. Perrin went after Mösgeles, Bridges took on Maurer.

The combat report describes the engagement: "Perrin turned steeply to port, diving and following the port aircraft... Closing to approximately 250 yards, he fired a two-second cannon burst from astern and slightly to port. Pilot saw strikes and saw pieces fly off the port engine. He then crossed over and fired another two-second burst from astern and slightly to starboard and saw strikes and pieces fly off starboard engine.

"Typhoon then began to overtake e/a and fired a third burst of one to two seconds from 100 to 50 yards from dead astern and saw e/a's rudder on fire and partly shot away. The [enemy machine] then turned on its back and dived vertically..."

Perrin tried to follow but he blacked out with his airspeed indicator reading 520mph (836km/h). When he recovered, the starboard cockpit door had come loose and was hammering in the slipstream. He had a cursory look for his victim and then returned to base.

## Down in the drink

Meanwhile, Bridges – attacking Maurer's Me 210 – related: "Pilot fired a short deflection burst from port quarter at long range to test cannons... The e/a continued turning to port and began diving in a southeast direction.

"Typhoon closed rapidly and fired two or three bursts at approximately 200 yards from port quarter astern and saw strikes between port engine and fuselage and on top of the fuselage and cockpit cover. He saw pieces fly off and white smoke from port engine.

"The e/a then began weaving violently but stopped turning to port. He then fired a final burst from 100 to 50 yards from dead astern and slightly to port. He saw port engine catch fire and more pieces fly off. The aircraft then slowed down and dived steeply to port..."

Like his colleague Perrin, Bridges blacked out in the dive and came to over Whitby where he saw a launch headed for a patch of something in the sea. This was Maurer who had baled out and landed in Robin Hood's Bay, to be picked up by the



a result of an engine failure, crashing at Beauvais.

After recovering from his engine failure of July 31, Ofw Hermann Bolten rejoined the unit in October. On the 28th he picked up a new Me 210 from the Messerschmitt factory at Augsburg and ferried it to the Mediterranean where 16/KG 6 crews would fly missions subordinate to 10/ZG 26.

Bolten flew just 17 operations from Crete, Italy, Tunisia and Sicily. In January 1943 he started flying Ju 88C-6s with 10/ZG 26 before being sent back to Lechfeld in February 1943 where he joined a new unit, Erprobungsstaffel Me 410, tasked with introducing this new aircraft – a vast improvement on the Me 210, for which the Luftwaffe had high hopes. ●

**Above**  
Another view of the wrecked Messerschmitt 'OK' pictured on page 68. KEY COLLECTION