

COST OF WAR

MORE PHOTOGRAPHS FROM OUR FILES OF AIRCRAFT
KNOCKED OUT OF ACTION DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR
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On 26 May 1940, S/Ldr. G.D. Stephenson of No. 19 Squadron had taken off in Spitfire Mk. Ia N3200/QV (this was the aircraft's first and only combat mission) from RAF Hornchurch to patrol over the disaster that was Dunkirk. He was taking part in the Royal Navy's Operation *Dynamo* to recover members of the BEF from Dunkirk and he attacked a group of Junkers Ju 87 dive-bombers (shooting down one) but then was in turn attacked by Bf 109Es from 1/JG1 and 2/JG2. The Spitfire received hits in the coolant system, knocking out the Merlin. Stephenson pulled off a perfect belly-landing on the beach but was immediately captured to become a "guest of the Germans." After numerous escape attempts, he was transferred to Colditz Castle where he participated in building the "Colditz Cock" glider. Three Spitfires were lost in the clash and N3200 was one of two shot down by Fw. Rudorffer of 2/JG2. N3200 was slowly covered by the shifting sands but in 1986 those same sands parted to reveal what was left of the wreck. Amazingly, the plane was recovered and eventually restored in 2014 to flying condition. It was later donated to the Imperial War Museum. Sadly, Stephenson was killed in the USA during a flight in F-100A USAF 53-1534 on 8 November 1954.



Coming across the English Channel and into France, there was a great deal of confidence that the British Expeditionary Force would be able to repel (along with their French and Belgium allies) any sort of German movement towards the west. They were wrong. Royal Air Force Bristol Blenheim Mk. IV L9332/PZ*Z of No. 53 Squadron was on an armed reconnaissance mission on 13 May 1940 when it ran into a mobile anti-aircraft unit. One of the engines was knocked out but F/Lt. Brown managed to get the craft to the airfield at Vitry-en-Artois. He and observer Sgt. Brooks escaped without injury but gunner W.J. Calvert was badly wounded. The Germans were on their way towards the field and it appears the British set the Blenheim on fire before making a rapid retreat.

Japanese night attacks on American island airfields took a toll on aircraft and personnel. Quite often, the enemy pilots would come in at high altitude and then once in the vicinity of the airfield, they would throttle back and then glide down toward their target. After releasing their bombs, the power would go up and they would attempt to escape a fury of anti-aircraft fire and night-fighters. Lockheed P-38-1-LO USAAF 44-24850 of the 432nd Fighter Squadron, 475th Fighter Group, was parked at Mindoro on 21 December 1944 when a Japanese bomb came whistling down and exploded off the right wing. The blast completely destroyed the right side of the fighter and from this point on it was "good only for parts."