



CHAPTER 4

1961-1970

The Sixties was the decade of the epic in movies the world over: Roman, “The Fall of the Roman Empire” (1964); Medieval, “El Cid” (1961); Napoleonic, “War and Peace” (1965); Western, “Once Upon a Time in the West” (1968); and, of course, World War Two, “The Longest Day” (1962) and “Battle of Britain” (1969), to name just a few.

In a decade renowned for its permissiveness, its creativity in music, fashion and film, and its increasing challenges to the accepted norms and attitudes within society, it had become obvious that the War years were definitely in the past and a new generation was looking imaginatively and hopefully forward towards the future. Great Britain was putting the austerity of the post-War years behind it in a variety of new ways, with hugely successful rock bands, England winning the football World Cup in 1966, and leading the way with many highly praised and original film productions.

World War Two could now be enjoyed as a time of bold and daring adventure, never better expressed than in “The Guns of Navarone” (1961). German soldiers could be mown down or blown up wholesale, as in “Where Eagles Dare” (1968), with the comforting justification that they started it (the War), so they were asking for it. The portrayal of German officers could be more satisfyingly stereotypically arrogant, as actors like Anton Diffring and Wolfgang Preiss took full advantage of, even if privately they preferred kinder and more sensitive roles.

Black-and-white films were now becoming a minority, especially as the decade advanced. Of the 38 British war films covered in this Chapter, 13 were filmed in black-and-white, just about one third of the total. The War was fully in colour now.

For the British war film to succeed internationally, it was even more obligatory to have a major Hollywood film star in a leading role in the majority of these productions, whether appropriately so or not. Gregory Peck fitted neatly and naturally into “The Guns of Navarone” (1961) as a ruthless British Commando leader;

Kirk Douglas fitted like a square brick into a round pothole as a Norwegian atomic energy scientist in “The Heroes of Telemark” (1965). George Peppard had a knack as an American actor of playing German characters convincingly, as he does in “Operation Crossbow” (1965) - and even more so in the World War One epic, “The Blue Max” (1966) - but Clint Eastwood might as well have gone into action in the Bavarian Alps in “Where Eagles Dare” (1968) wearing his poncho from the Italian Westerns he made his name in, for all the effort he makes in trying to look and sound like an officer in the Waffen SS!

Entertainment was the key word for most British war films of the Sixties. They were directed at a new young audience that had not been born during the War itself, and so were willing to be more liberal with the realities. This meant that the studios could be more ambitious in the scale of the productions they were creating, and be marginally less sensitive when changing the facts. This allowed for an American to lead the mass break-out of PoWs in “The Great Escape” (1963), that most British of all Hollywood ‘British’ war films, and have him perform motorcycle stunts amid the Bavarian countryside.

The Sixties did produce the biggest challenges yet for both the British and American film industries when it came to using aircraft for World War Two war films. Making films in Technicolor and Panavision meant that archive footage could no longer be employed. Creative answers had to be found, resulting in Messerschmitt Bf.108s and North American Harvards increasingly being called upon to fill in as Luftwaffe fighters. There were still British World War Two aircraft that could be found, as the Mosquitos in “633 Squadron” (1964) and “Mosquito Squadron” (1969), a Lancaster in “Operation Crossbow” (1965) and, of course, the massing of Spitfires and Hurricanes for “Battle of Britain” (1969), attest. As the Sixties drew to a close, Hollywood was quick to ‘Scramble’ to join the aerial epics with huge productions like “Patton” (1970) and “Tora! Tora! Tora!” (1970). The decade ended with historic aviation on an all-time high on both sides of the Atlantic.

THE LONG, AND THE SHORT, AND THE TALL

(Released: February 1961)

This film version of the stage play, concerning disaffected British soldiers trapped in the Burmese jungle and surrounded by the Japanese, was produced entirely in the studio. Consequently, no aircraft feature in it.

THE GUNS OF NAVARONE

(Released: April 1961, Royal Premier)

If any war film made in any country has such a worldwide following as does “The Guns of Navarone”, then please name it. For, without question, this is the classic war film of all time, with more repeats on television and re-runs in the cinema than any comparable production.

It has everything: genuinely believable characters at odds with each other while being faced by dangers that are virtually overwhelming, created both by humans and by Nature, as they struggle to achieve their almost impossible objective, the destruction of the mighty radar-controlled guns belching fire malevolently like monstrous dragons crouched in the mouth of their cave. Treachery, betrayal, courage, fear, cowardice, pain and love - all eight of the main characters in the plot, six male saboteurs and two female Resistance fighters, go through it all.

Let's make one thing clear: “The Guns of Navarone” is a British war film. Yes, it was backed by Hollywood's Columbia Pictures Corporation, who put up the bulk of the \$6 million budget, the most expensive for a war film ever at the time (eclipsed only by 20th Century Fox's “The Longest Day”, the following year). Yes, its producer and scriptwriter, Carl Foreman, was American, but Foreman had turned his back on Hollywood after becoming a victim of the investigation by the United States House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities into alleged Communist subversion within Hollywood, and had since devoted himself entirely to the British film industry which, in turn, had given him its total support.

Everything else about “Guns” was British, apart from its naturalised American, Russian-born theme music composer, Dimitri Tiomarkin, and its Greek location, the island of Rhodes. Its premier was a Royal one, in front of HM The Queen and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh in April 1961. Its English director, J Lee Thompson, got the job (after the original director had been fired by Foreman for not being up to it) because he could handle both sensitive personal scenes, as in “Tiger Bay” (1959), and large-scale action scenes, such as those he directed in “North West Frontier” (also 1959). The special forces operation against the guns on Navarone was mounted by British Commandos (played by David Niven, Anthony Quayle and Stanley Baker), along with two Greek nationals (acted by Anthony Quinn and James Darren).

Hang on, the lead star is famous American Hollywood actor, Gregory Peck, acting the role of Captain Keith Mallory who takes over the leadership of the Commandos when Quayle's Major Franklin is crippled in a cliff fall. In fact, the nationality of Mallory's character is never revealed, but at the beginning of the film he clearly is working undercover in Nazi Occupied Crete for British Naval Intelligence. In Alastair MacLean's novel, on which the film is based, Mallory is a New Zealander. He could, therefore, be a Commonwealth officer and, in being played by American Gregory Peck, could be assumed to be Canadian. We are told he can speak Greek like a Greek, and German like a German; how, we are not told.

In effect, Mallory is British, but played by a leading American actor who wisely tries not to affect a British accent (Peck did affect a German accent in “The Boys from Brazil” (1978), portraying the escaped Nazi doctor, Josef Mengele, in South America, and suffered as a result). Actually, Peck was a great favourite with British cinema audiences because he often played heroic yet sensitive and honourable characters similar to British gentleman-types, and was often thought of as an ‘honorary Englishman’. Peck did, in fact, play a British SOE agent in “The Sea Wolves” (1980), alongside, and due to the insistence of, friend and fellow actor David Niven. So, he fits naturally into the role of Mallory.

Aviation plays its part in “The Guns of Navarone”, and in some unusual ways. Even before the film credits roll, a tribute appears on the screen to the Greek government, the Royal Hellenic Army, Navy and Air Force, and especially to the Greek people, “for their unstinting aid, co-operation, hospitality and friendship throughout those aspects of the production in Greece”. The Greek Royal Family were still on the Hellenic throne when “Guns” was in production on Rhodes during 1960, and actually visited the film set on one occasion. The air force was the then Royal Hellenic Air Force (the King was overthrown by a military junta in 1967, allegedly backed by the CIA, and went into exile in London; the Royal Family has never returned to Greece).

The tribute also thanks the Admiralty and the War Office “for their most generous advice and assistance”. For the historian, it may be of interest to note that the War Office was still in situ, 15 years after the end of World War Two. Its functions were combined with the Admiralty and the Air Ministry in 1964, to create the Ministry of Defence.

The film then leads into a prologue, narrated by the actor James Robertson Justice who plays Commodore Jensen, Mallory's boss, in the plot. The prologue explains that close to the island of Navarone is the island of Kyros (both fictional Greek islands), on which 2,000 British soldiers are marooned. In Berlin, the Axis High Command has determined on a show of strength in the Aegean Sea, to bully neutral Turkey into coming into the War on their side. The scene of the Axis demonstration was to be Kyros, only a few miles off the coast of Turkey.

An inset over the main image of Greek countryside and ruined temples shows archive footage to illustrate what the prologue is describing. This includes footage of a number of aircraft. First to be seen is the turning propeller of the starboard engine of a Vickers

Wellington. Next, a close-up of another Vickers Wellington moving off its chocks. This is followed by a Short Stirling taking off with gear still hanging. Immediately following it is footage of a pair of Armstrong Whitworth Whitleys over-flying an airfield at low-level. Then a sole Short Stirling is filmed as it performs a fly-past over a densely packed row of 13 Douglas DB-7 Boston III day bombers, the closest to the camera clearly bearing the code letter 'R'. Finally, an air-air shot of seven Bristol Beauforts in two flights brings the prologue to a close and leads into the film credits with its famous theme tune.

Immediately after the credits and theme music end, the film cuts to a night-time image of the sky with the following words imposed on it: "The first day 02.00 Hours. An Allied Airfield somewhere in the Middle East". Smoking in towards the camera is the black silhouetted shape of an Avro Lancaster bomber, with its port inner engine on fire. It is popularly held by many aviation enthusiasts and film fans that this is Avro Lancaster B.I PA474, making its first film appearance and acting the role of a stricken RAF Middle East Air Force bomber. They are correct, but only in part.

In 1960, Lancaster B.I PA474 was being operated by the College of Aeronautics (today, Cranfield University) at the former air station of RAF Cranfield in Bedfordshire. Its principal task was to operate as a flying test bed for the laminar flow wing design produced by the Handley Page aircraft manufacturing company: the wings were mounted vertically above the rear fuselage. It was loaned to Highroad Productions to portray a Lancaster in "The Guns of Navarone" returning from a failed raid on the guns' fortifications, with flames and smoke streaming from one engine. It was not asked to perform the crash landing which follows.

However, although PA474 was flown and filmed for the production, it was found that the effect director Thompson was looking to 2nd Unit assistant director Peter Yates to achieve, could not be safely or convincingly realised. An alternative way had to be found, which meant using a studio miniature Lancaster. This is what we are seeing in this opening shot of the main film. But, in effect it is Lancaster PA474 we are looking at, because the real Lancaster was used as the pattern for Highroad Productions' art department team to measure for the accurate creation of the Lancaster miniature that appears on screen.

The Special Effect was achieved by having the Lancaster miniature filmed in studio lighting, then the imagery was darkened in the editing process to create the effect of the scene happening at night. This helped to disguise the miniature Lancaster as it is 'flown' down guidance wires towards the camera (the placement of the camera in relation to the miniature confirms it cannot be a real Lancaster in shot), with flames and black smoke pouring from the port inner engine (it was the difficulty in being able to replicate an actual engine on fire that made the use of PA474 unrealistic, as the effect on screen would obviously be seen to be fake, while trying to make it look as if PA474 was really on fire would have put the aircraft at risk).

A second shot shows another angle of the miniature Lancaster heading towards the ground, leaving a long, thick trail of smoke behind it. Then the Lancaster ploughs nose first into the desert runway, rearing up with the propellers digging into the dirt. The

actual crash is realistically and convincingly achieved; what spoils the effect is the suspended, motionless Lancaster hanging in the sky in the background. What induced the art department SFX team to put it there is anyone's guess. However, the author can attest that when he saw "The Guns of Navarone" for the first time as an 11-year-old sprog, he did not spot the 'hanging' Lancaster at all; his whole attention was fixed on the crashing Lancaster. Nor did he spot it when he saw several repeats of "Guns", both in the cinema and on TV, until much more recently when he acquired a video tape copy of the film. So, by the standards of 1961, the effect of the crashing Lancaster was not spoiled by the 'hanging' Lancaster.

Unfortunately, the restoration of "The Guns of Navarone" in 2002 from the original damaged film and its transfer to DVD has resulted in this and other night-time scenes being reproduced on screen as much darker than they were shown when "Guns" was first released to the cinema and later broadcast on television. As a result, even on a high quality TV screen, the Lancaster is almost unseeable against the very dark blue sky background, while the crash-landing is lost against the black surface of the airfield. The imagery is slightly more visible on a laptop screen.

In using a Lancaster in the opening scene, Thompson and Yates have avoided historical accuracy, presumably because to use the correct RAF bomber type for this sequence (the Consolidated B-24 Liberator III of No.178 Liberator Squadron, operating out of Egypt) was either not possible or it was thought it would not resonate with the cinema audience as much as would a Lancaster. The Avro Lancaster was not operated in either the Middle East or the Mediterranean theaters of war.

The first real aircraft to appear in "The Guns of Navarone" is a Consolidated PB5 Catalina, acting the role of an RAF Catalina I which is carrying the team of saboteurs on the next stage of their mission from Alexandria in Egypt to Castelrosso, an island port close to the Turkish border in the Dodecanese. Castelrosso was occupied by the Italians in 1941 but came under Allied control after Italy surrendered to the Allies on 8th September 1943. As Castelrosso is shown in "Guns" as having a British garrison in place, it must be that the action in the film's plot is taking place in late 1943.

The Catalina used in "Guns" is a real problem aircraft in the identification stakes. From close examination using freeze-frame analysis it appears to be a Royal Hellenic Air Force Catalina. Indeed, the author always assumed it was, as it bears what appears to be a Greek national blue-white roundel on its port rear fuselage, although the two horizontal blue stripes atop the tail fin do not look like a military fin flash. However, careful analysis of the imagery shows that the roundel is a fake RAF red-white-blue roundel.

The amphibian is painted white overall except for the engine cowlings, which appear to be light grey. Beneath the wing mounting and just aft of the main undercarriage wheel housing is a large code letter, 'Z'. There is a large, four-digit number on the Catalina's rear fuselage at the base of the tail fin. Regrettably, the number is not easy to read due to the quality of the image and the movement of the aircraft past the camera, but a best guess is that the number looks like '5583'. The Royal Hellenic Air Force of the period (1960) normally maintained the US military serials of its aircraft, as most of

the reconstructed air force in Greece from 1949 onwards had been built up with American-supplied equipment under the US Military Aid Program. The serial number of the Catalina could be the 'final four' of a US military serial, if it were not for one basic fact: the Consolidated PBV Catalina never served with the Royal Hellenic Air Force, nor with the Royal Hellenic Naval Aviation.

So, where does this Catalina come from and who operated it when it was used in "Guns"? Research has not thrown up any one candidate. Indeed, the editor of The Catalina Society's newspaper himself posted a query on the Web some years ago as to its identity, and appears to have got nothing in return.

There are a couple of noteworthy features about this Catalina which offer some differences between it and most Catalinas that were operated worldwide during and after World War Two, including those that have since been preserved. Firstly, this Catalina has an antenna housing fitted atop its cockpit cabin. Not many Catalina variants carried such an antenna, and those that did were often used in surveillance or long-range maritime patrol roles. It is possible this Catalina's antenna housed a more sophisticated form of weather radar or navigational system, but for whose benefit seems destined to remain unknown. The second noteworthy feature is the layout of two cabin windows in the forward fuselage between the cockpit and the wing mounting, one small, one large: this is an unusual layout, as most Catalinas had one small cabin window in the same position and a second in the central fuselage area beneath the wing and aft of the main undercarriage wheel housing. Careful research has not thrown up any version of a Catalina with the same cabin window layout as the Catalina in "Guns"; it is suggestive of a large forward cabin with bigger windows for its occupants to look out of.

The best guess is that the Catalina in "Guns" is a civil, customised variant because of the specialised wide vision layout of the passenger cabin windows. It may be a luxury, privately owned amphibian that was loaned for the film, with RAF roundel plus fake serial number and code letter applied. Its identification and source remains unknown.

The next aircraft to appear in "Guns" is a Piper L-21B Cub observation and liaison aircraft of the Royal Hellenic Army Aviation, acting the role of a Luftwaffe Henschel Hs.126 (actually, the Royal Hellenic Air Force did operate the Hs.126 before Greece was invaded firstly by Italy, then Germany, in World War Two). "Guns" is representative of British war films that now had to rely on glaringly obvious substitute aircraft to portray German Luftwaffe types. Piper Cubs appear in a number of war films deputising for Luftwaffe spotter aircraft, in this case an Hs.126, not a Fieseler Storch, because the Hellenic Army Cub is flying too fast to replicate a Storch, while Luftwaffe Hs.126s were widely used in Greece and the Balkans.

The Piper Cub is first seen over-flying the run-down Greek caique fishing boat that the saboteurs are using to reach Navarone, then later searching for the Commandos and Resistance fighters on the island. From what can be discerned by freeze-frame analysis is that the Greek military roundels have been removed from the Piper Cub, but no Luftwaffe crosses have been applied in their place.

The Piper Cub/Henschel Hs.126 directs the attack on the Commandos and Resistance fighters by two Junkers Ju.87 Stuka dive bombers, although as shown in the film the Stukas don't actually dive onto Gregory Peck and his team - they fly through and over the ravine the British and the Greeks are taking cover in, bombing and strafing them.

Actually, three different methods are used to create the effect of the Stukas' attack: SFX art work, studio miniatures and real aircraft. What happens is that, as the six men and two women make their way through the ravine towards a cave where they can shelter from the dive bombers, the two Stukas first drop bombs on them, which thankfully all miss, then return and strafe them with cannon fire just as they finally get into the cave. No one is hurt except for one of the Greek women, who appears to have a limp and is lagging behind.

Having Stukas appear in a film when not a single Ju.87 was in flying condition in 1960, let alone was preserved anywhere (the Air Historical Branch's example was one of two rare exceptions in the world), posed a real challenge for the Highroad Productions Special Effects team. To understand how they achieved the Stukas' attack, it is necessary to study each frame in which the Ju.87s appear.

The first frame shows the two Stukas flying separately one behind the other in a straight line across the screen, each aircraft slightly banked to port, above a hillside range. Beyond, in the distance, can be seen the 'Hs.126' (Piper Cub) flying away, leaving the sky free for the Stukas to operate in. Or, it seems it must be the Piper Cub portraying the Hs.126; in fact, it is a helicopter, a Sikorsky UH-19D Chickasaw of the Royal Hellenic Air Force, which had been acting in a support and logistics role for the Royal Hellenic Army armoured units that were appearing as German light Panzer in this scene (the UH-19D was the US military designation for the Sikorsky S.55, or the Westland Whirlwind built under licence in the UK).

The two Stukas appear convincing, seen from a distance. The problem is, they are flying in too straight a line one behind the other: unrealistic for real aircraft manoeuvring aggressively at low-level. They are studio miniature Stukas being pulled along guidance wires, filmed at either Shepperton or Elstree Studios, then merged into the skyscape on the frame showing the Chickasaw flying away beyond the hills.

The second frame to show the Stukas is a continuation of the first, with the Chickasaw still in the distance, but the lead Stuka has now turned head-on towards us and is diving down in a curve to attack; the second is continuing its straight and level approach behind. The movement of the lead Stuka is unrealistic for an actual diving turn as depicted here; it is an art work SFX two-dimensional miniature superimposed onto the main picture - the second Stuka is in genuine motion, as its blurred image attests, moving along its guidance wire.

Actors Anthony Quinn, Irene Papas and Gregory Peck stop to look back at the Stukas approaching. From their perspective, we see the two Stukas heading directly towards us, flying into the ravine. The imagery has significantly changed, however: the rough terrain is different from that in the previous frames that showed the studio miniature Stukas superimposed onto them. There is

also something different about the Stukas themselves: they do not have the steeply cranked wing shape of the Ju.87 design that the miniatures portrayed; instead they have a slightly downward bend of the wing brace adjoining the fuselage, while their wings themselves issue outward in a straight line. They appear to have fixed undercarriage a la Stuka, but yet they are noticeably different in shape from the Ju.87 design (at least, in freeze-frame analysis they can be seen to be different, but to a cinema audience in the Sixties there would have been no time to spot the difference).

They are, in fact, real aircraft. They are two North American T-6G Texan trainers of the Royal Hellenic Air Force deputising as Ju.87 Stukas! They are filmed approaching head-on from a distance, flying with their undercarriage down, and for the brief appearance they make they offer a superficially similar frontal likeness to the feared Luftwaffe dive bomber.

The next frame depicting a Stuka is vastly different. It shows the lead Stuka heading in fast in a weaving attack manoeuvre - far too fast to be realistic. This is art work of one of the studio miniatures superimposed onto the screen image, and even at the time of the first release of "The Guns of Navarone" in 1961 it was plainly obvious to the cinema audience that this was fake imagery. Bombs are seen falling and explosions erupt around the saboteurs and their Greek comrades.

The second Stuka now comes into the attack. It is seen from the same angle as that of the two T-6G Texans; in fact, it is one of the T-6Gs, but the film speed has been significantly increased to create the effect of a Stuka coming in fast. Too fast, actually; the film speed has been over-egged by the editor, making the effect unrealistic. The editor has also tried to make it look as if the T-6G is diving in Stuka-like fashion. To achieve this, he has moved the T-6G image in stop-motion fashion, dropping it slightly in a diagonal line on each stop and re-positioning it in each successive take of it. The result is that the T-6G appears to be dropping in a steep slant, while the aircraft itself is still flying at a flat angle of attack head-on towards the camera, so the achieved effect just looks wrong.

Stanley Baker drops the suitcase containing the team's radio. He turns to go back to collect it but sees the second Stuka coming in. A head-on shot of a T-6G Texan is again used, this time not speeded up to such an exaggerated extent. There is no mistaking the frontal shape of the T-6, whose wing design did have a very slightly cranked shape.

Another art work effect of a miniature Stuka flying in to attack appears next, again all too obvious a fake due to the over-exaggerated speed at which the aircraft is shown to be manoeuvring. A different shot shows the Stuka flying away; this, in fact, is a shot of one of the T-6G Texans that has been reversed - the ravine is the opposite way round, while the film itself is being run backwards, to create the effect of the aircraft climbing away. It is actually the same shot of the T-6G we saw before Stanley Baker takes cover, that was made to appear in stop-motion as if it is diving, but the picture itself here is turned round and the 'diving' T-6G is being played backwards, so that the 'Stuka' is 'flying' upwards, not down! If you understand that, you will realise that the entire effect has been created in the film editing suite, using a single piece of footage

of one T-6G Texan flying in a straight line towards the camera but manipulated in different ways by the editor on successive frames.

Another shot from the same reversed angle shows one Stuka diving towards the ravine while the other is flying away along the escarpment line. This is a continuation of the two studio miniatures seen at the start of the attack, with the lead Stuka diving in (down its guidance wire) while the second passes along in a straight line beyond it. The imagery has then been merged onto the picture frame of the ravine: both the merged imagery of the Stukas and that of the ravine have been reversed.

Gregory Peck turns to look behind him as his team get into the cave. He sees one of the Stukas flying towards him and hears cannon fire. A shot of one of the T-6G Texans filmed from a distance is used here, then merged art work imagery of a miniature Stuka diving in and firing cannon appears with a Texan in the distance behind it - the only shot in which a miniature Stuka and a Texan acting as a Stuka appear together in the same frame. Another art work shot of a miniature Stuka, totally unrealistically swooping into the ravine like a cartoon dive bomber while firing its cannon, finally closes this scene and with it the final act of aviation in "The Guns of Navarone".

Interestingly, a genuine Junkers Ju.87D-3 Stuka shot down by a USAAF P-38 Lightning on 9th October 1943 was salvaged from the sea half a mile off the coast of Rhodes on 5th October 2006, and is now in the Hellenic Air Force Museum at Dekeleia Air Base.

VERY IMPORTANT PERSON

(Released: April 1961)

An engaging take on the popular PoW theme of the time has James Robertson Justice as a cantankerous and overbearing military scientist who gets sucked out of a damaged RAF bomber while testing a top secret apparatus over Germany, and ends up in a PoW camp. James Robertson Justice had made an authoritative appearance in "The Guns of Navarone" during the same month as the release of "Very Important Person". His performance as the scientist, Sir Ernest Pease, echoed his role as the equally overbearing surgeon, Sir Lancelot Spratt, in the much-loved "Doctor" series of comedy films of the Fifties and Sixties.

Aviation has a short but significant part to play in "Very Important Person", when the disagreeable Sir Ernest proves the law of gravity by disappearing out through the flak shell hole in the fuselage side of the RAF bomber. To portray the bomber taking off at night, flying in German airspace and taking the flak hit, out-takes of the Vickers Wellington Ic of No.XV Squadron in the role of 'B - Bertie' in "One of our Aircraft is Missing" (1942) are used.

As an aside, the uncredited actor playing the part of the Vickers Wellington pilot in this film is Vincent Ball, the same actor who plays the part of the British Junkers Ju.52 pilot in "Where Eagles Dare" (1968).

TARNISHED HEROES

(Released: May 1961)

This lowest of low budget British war films from the Danziger Brothers' B-Movie production line in the Fifties and the Sixties has a simple storyline: a British Army Major leads a team of misfit soldiers - deserters, thieves, drunkards - on a suicide mission behind enemy lines. Sounds familiar? "Tarnished Heroes" predated "The Dirty Dozen" (1967) by six years, but there is no source that suggests the famous Hollywood movie was influenced in any way by this British 75 minute-long support feature to a pretty indifferent comedy film released at the same time. One thing is for certain, the rudimentary budget did not allow for any aircraft to appear in it.

THE PASSWORD IS COURAGE

(Released: 1962)

Yet another PoW war film, and one which attracted controversy because, in making the claim that it is based on fact, it stages the same mass escape as used in "The Great Escape" (1963), which was in production at the same time. It is known for a fact that the lead character in the film, played by Dirk Bogarde, was a real PoW during the War but was not part of the "Great Escape" from Stalag Luft III. As the film uses real events, but not those involving the same real PoW, suspicion falls on "The Password is Courage" for exploiting a famous escape that was going to form the plot of a major Hollywood film due for release at almost the same time. Aviation is not involved.

THE SILENT INVASION

(Released: January 1962)

Another Danziger Brothers' B-Movie studio-based production, about the French Resistance in 1940. No aircraft are featured.

THE VALIANT

(Released: January 1962)

An Italian-British co-production, "The Valiant" portrays the attack by Italian Navy 'Human Torpedoes' on the battleship HMS Valiant and her sister ship, HMS Queen Elizabeth, as they were moored in Alexandria Harbour during December 1941 (this attack was also depicted in "The Silent Enemy", 1958). Both battleships were mined but the Valiant was damaged, not sunk, and repaid the debt to the Italians in 1943 by providing covering fire for the invasions of Sicily and Salerno.

The only part aviation plays in the film is towards the end when the Royal Navy helped to deceive the Italians into believing the Valiant had not been badly damaged because the ship remained visible above water. The Regia Aeronautica sent a photo reconnaissance aircraft which was allowed to fly unopposed over Alexandria and photograph the battleship. This is depicted in the film by the use of rather poor quality archive footage of a Luftwaffe Junkers Ju.88.

The irrepressible, or the inevitable, John Mills plays the lead role of the Captain of HMS Valiant. Ironically, Mills had played exactly the reverse role of the leader of British mini X-Craft submarines which mined the German battleship Tirpitz, in "Above Us The Waves" (1955).

THE LONGEST DAY

(Released: September 1962, France, and October 1962, USA and UK) Hollywood 'British' war film

"The Longest Day" is unquestionably a massive Hollywood epic and, until the release of "Schindler's List" (1995), was the most expensive black-and-white feature film ever made (\$10 million USD). But it is also a very international film, with large parts of it filmed and directed by directors and crews of the same nationalities represented in this re-enactment of D-Day 6th June 1944: an American director filmed the American military scenes, a German director filmed the German-speaking scenes, while Englishman Ken Annakin handled both the British and French battle scenes. Because producer Darryl F Zanuck wanted to give fair and accurate representations of the roles employed by the principal nations involved on both sides in D-Day (he took a bit of flak, though, for excluding the Canadians), it would be justifiable in describing Annakin's contribution as "the British part", with the Americans and the Germans having their "parts". The French were incorporated mostly into "the British part", which was fair enough as the Free French Forces operated under British command on D-Day itself.

In fact, Annakin directed more than one third of the production and, what is significant for the purposes of this book, "the British part" contains all, bar a couple of scenes, the major elements of aviation in the film.

"Surprisingly, not a single Spitfire could be found in the British Isles", claims Richard Oulahan Jr, in his Online article on the making of "The Longest Day", entitled "The Longest Headache". That's an extraordinary claim to make, and completely out of kilter with the facts. There were five airworthy Spitfires in Britain in 1961, when "The Longest Day" was in production, of which four were operational: the ex-THUM Flight Spitfire PR.XIX PM631, operated by the RAF Battle of Britain Flight at Martlesham Heath; the Rolls Royce Derby-owned Spitfire FXIV G-ALGT/RM689, then kept at Hucknall Aerodrome; Vickers-Armstrong Weybridge's Spitfire Mk.Vb G-AISU/AB910; and Captain John Fairey's two-seat Spitfire T.8 G-AIDN, which lived at Staverton

Airport. Air Commodore Allen Wheeler owned Spitfire Mk.Ia G-AIST/AR213 that he kept stored at Booker and which could have been made airworthy, although at the time it had been taken off the British civil register.

Two out of the five would have been contemporary Marques for the D-Day period, comprising the PR.XIX and the F.XIV, both of them Rolls Royce Griffon-engined Spitfires. However, the PR.XIX was an unarmed photo-reconnaissance Spitfire, which would have reduced its effectiveness for a role as a ground-attack aircraft in the film, although whether the audience in general would have known or cared is debatable. It certainly could have been made to look the part, especially as PR Spitfires of the period had been operational over Normandy. The F.XIV was an out-and-out fighter, but could also have made a good stand-in. The Mk.Ia and the Mk.Vb, however, would have been unrepresentative of 6th June 1944, as these Marques had long been withdrawn from front-line use by the RAF well before D-Day. The two-seater Spitfire T.8 would have been a non-starter.

Whoever was advising Zanuck about where to find Spitfires seems to have had a complete blind spot concerning these five well known Spitfires on the British aviation scene at the time; or, was there another explanation as to why Zanuck was possibly kept in the dark about them. As it is, Zanuck was offered the use of a number of exactly the correct type and Marque of Spitfire that operated over the Normandy beachhead, so perhaps the question of using British-based Spitfires that were not properly representative is immaterial. We'll look at these particular Spitfires when we come to the scene where they appear in the film.

"The Longest Day" is loaded with cameo roles by a large number of the most famous American, British, French and German actors of the early Sixties. Among them, Richard Burton plays 'Flight Officer David Campbell', according to the caption that introduces him to us (spot the probably not deliberate mistake - it should be Flying Officer, not Flight Officer), an RAF fighter pilot who becomes the last surviving member of his squadron who fought in the Battle of Britain.

"I think what always worries me about being one 'The Few', is the way we keep on getting...fewer", Campbell tells a squadron pal played by stalwart World War Two actor, Donald Houston (a real wartime serving RAF officer), about their other Battle of Britain pal, 'Johnnie', who has been shot down by flak over Calais the day before D-Day. "Now, if the big show starts tonight, he won't be in it", protests Houston's character in a creakingly cliched scene of an RAF fighter pilots' Mess. To add to the unfairness of it all, 'Johnnie' - presumably the American scriptwriters thought most British fighter pilots were called 'Johnnie' - died with Houston's boots on, not his own. At least Annakin was able to work in a neat little 'McGuffin' in what is meant to be a hackneyed scene reminiscent of all British war films about RAF fighter pilot 'types', by having a squadron member tinkling with the piano keys softly playing the film's theme tune.

The first scene in "The Longest Day" to show aircraft is that in which Luftwaffe Oberstleutnant (Lieutenant Colonel) Josef 'Pips' Priller calls his superior, General Wolfgang Hager, at the Hauptquartier (Headquarters), Luftwaffen Kommando West, in

Paris, to protest at the withdrawal of all but two of his fighters from the front line. Both the film and the book versions of "The Longest Day" made the German fighter ace, 'Pips' Priller, a well known name to an international audience. Played by German actor Heinz Reincke, Priller is seen expressing the contempt he was notorious for displaying on occasions towards his senior officers, as he berates General Hager over the telephone for depleting his Geschwader when the risk of the Allies invading is high.

"Why wasn't he court-martialled?", asks Hager's adjutant, as he hands the phone to the General.

"He shot down 132 planes", answers Hager.

That is incorrect, Priller's confirmed total between May 1940 - October 1944 was 101 aerial victories, of which 68 were Spitfires, the highest number of 'kills' scored against the RAF's most famous fighter 'plane of World War Two by any Luftwaffe pilot.

"You were a rotten pilot when we flew in Russia", rants Priller at Hager. "You're flying a desk now, but you're still a rotten pilot!". Again factually incorrect, Priller never served in Russia, his wartime career following the fall of France was almost entirely conducted from captured airfields close to the Channel coast, mostly with Jagdgeschwader 26 Schlageter, of which he became GeschwaderKommodore in January 1943. Considering that the real 'Pips' Priller was one of the many military advisers from both sides on D-Day available to Zanuck and his scriptwriters, it is difficult to understand how these errors of fact got into the screenplay. By a strange twist of fate, 'Pips' Priller died of a sudden heart attack at the age of 45 in May 1961 while "The Longest Day" was in production.

"I'm squatting here on this God-forsaken airfield with only two planes, two stinking crates!", shouts Priller down the phone, watched by his long-time wingman, Heinz Wodarczyk. The "God-forsaken airfield" was Rambouillet, Normandy, in June 1944, although its name is not mentioned in the film. The "two stinking crates" were Focke Wulf FW.190A-8s of JG.26, of which Priller's personal aircraft carried the number 'Black 13'. It was in this FW.190A-8 that Priller claimed his 100th aerial victory (a USAAF B-24 Liberator) on 18th July 1944. It is almost certain the real 'Pips' Priller did not think of 'Black 13' as "a stinking crate".

Obviously, no Focke Wulf FW.190 existed in flying condition in 1961, so Zanuck had to find a suitable alternative. Thanks to British war films like "633 Squadron" (1964) and "Mosquito Squadron" (1969), we are to become familiar in the Sixties with the appearance of Messerschmitt Bf.108 Taifuns acting the roles of Messerschmitt Bf.109s. But, as we now know, by 1961 this had only been done once before in a war film, that being the use of Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands's former Messerschmitt Bf.108D-1 posing as a Messerschmitt Bf.109 in "Operation Amsterdam" (1959). Perhaps Zanuck had seen this film and decided that using Messerschmitt Bf.108s would make suitable substitutes for Bf.109s, or someone tipped him off about the idea. Whichever, France had no shortage of Bf.108 Taifun look-alikes available in the shape of the French-built Nord 1000 Pinguin series of military liaison aircraft. In fact, La Marine Nationale were in the process of disposing of their fleet of Nord 1002 Pinguin IIs onto the French civil market

in 1961 and aircraft dealer, Alexandre Renault, had made a bid for more than a dozen of them, which he based at the airfield of Mureaux where SNCAN manufactured the Bf.108 during the Occupation and the Nord 1000 series post-War.

Almost certainly it was Alexandre Renault who was the original owner of the two retired French military Nord 1002 Pinguoin II aircraft that appear in "The Longest Day", painted in Luftwaffe camouflage and markings to give them the appearance of being Messerschmitt Bf.108s impersonating Messerschmitt Bf.109s.

It seems we get our first view of them when 'Pips' Priller walks to the window of his crewroom as he continues to argue over the phone with General Hager and looks out at two Luftwaffe fighters parked on the grass outside. We only see the fighters in this scene as back drop set-dressing, but later we see them clearly as Priller and Wodarczyk fly low, strafing British troops on the Normandy beachhead. To all appearances they are the same two aircraft, but in fact they are not: the two 'Messerschmitts' seen through the window beyond Priller are two entirely different Bf.108s than the two examples seen acting as Messerschmitt Bf.109s strafing the 'Tommies'. The paint schemes of the parked fighters do not match those of the two other 'Bf.108s/Bf.109s' seen later, there being noticeable differences between their respective camouflage patterns.

Moreover, there is a distinct feature of the two Pinguoin IIs we are looking at in the Priller - v - Hager scene which is unusual: they both have three-bladed propellers. What's unusual about that? Only that the Messerschmitt Bf.108/Nord 1000 design series all flew with twin-bladed props.

There are two possible explanations for this discrepancy. Firstly, that the art department came to the conclusion that the Nord 1002's two-bladed propeller configuration did not create a fighter-like image. So, they removed the two propeller blades and attached three for effect. Perfectly feasible.

However, it has to be recognised that the airfield scene with the two parked Messerschmitts viewed through the window behind actor Reincke is a matte image combined with the Priller studio scene in the foreground. Very often in this pre-CGI age of cinema matte backgrounds were painted on canvas, then merged as a backcloth with the foreground studio scene. So a second possible explanation is that the two Luftwaffe Messerschmitt fighters are painted images on a painted airfield, filmed as a backcloth to the scene with 'Pips' Priller.

But there is an argument against the matte backcloth airfield being a painting. It is seen in two shots behind Priller, one showing the two Messerschmitts, then another from a slightly changed angle in which two hangars can be seen through the window over Priller's shoulder. Freeze-frame study shows that this is definitely a black-and-white photograph, not a painting, of a wet and muddy airfield. Quite likely it is Mureaux, where Renault kept his collection of Nord 1002 Pinguoins.

Could they be full-scale facsimiles, or studio miniatures photographed and cut into the matte airfield image? The former seems an unnecessary waste of effort and expense if there were real aircraft available; the latter is a possibility. Three-bladed propellers could be added to the miniatures to give them a more fighter-

like appearance. But again, if miniatures were used, why not of Messerschmitt Bf.109s? Continuity with the Nord 1002/Bf.108 design has to be the reason why.

The shot of Priller shouting into the telephone with the two 'Messerschmitts' parked on the airfield outside the window behind him provides the answer to the mystery they create. It shows that the scene is a combination of matte airfield background photograph with two miniature 'Messerschmitts' modelled up against it, then merged with Priller in the foreground. The giveaway that the fighters are miniatures is that, under the studio lights, their three-bladed propellers cast shadows of themselves onto the background matte photograph of the airfield. The audience would not have noticed this at all because the shadows are so faint, but freeze-frame analysis confirms they are there. So, photograph an airfield, make two model miniature Messerschmitts and place them in position in front of a blow-up of the airfield picture, then matte the image onto the window behind Priller. There, you have your scene of Priller stranded on the airfield at Rambouillet, with the only two fighters he can call upon to attack the invasion visible outside the window as he makes his protest to his Commanding Officer.

A curious and noticeable feature of "The Longest Day" is Zanuck's decision to have the airborne part of the invasion carried out exclusively by British aircraft. In actual fact, Zanuck is in error in having the 82nd and the 101st Airborne Divisions para-drop from RAF aircraft - American Paratroopers dropped only from USAAF C-47 Skytrains. Also, Zanuck uses studio miniature Lancaster bombers as the para-dropping aircraft, a role that the Lancaster neither could nor did perform. Again, it is a mystery as to why Zanuck took this option, compounded by the miniature Lancasters looking very much like the models they are.

Zanuck had gone 'European' when he made "The Longest Day". He and the studio bosses at 20th Century Fox were not exactly on good terms in 1961 when the film was in production, largely because of the massive budgetary and time schedule over runs afflicting the studio's greatest project in cinema history, the epic "Cleopatra", being filmed in Italy and starring Elizabeth Taylor in the title role and Richard Burton as Mark Anthony. "Cleopatra" nearly broke 20th Century Fox; "The Longest Day" saved it. Zanuck had emigrated to Europe to avoid the continuing flak he was getting from the heads of 20th Century Fox and had virtually given up on being an American. He had become a close friend of Lord Louis Mountbatten, who gave a lot of assistance to "The Longest Day", and liked to swear like an Englishman, using the expression "bloody" a lot. Zanuck made sure his French girlfriend, Erina Demich, got a leading role in the film as a heroine of the French Resistance. This 'Europeanisation' of Zanuck may explain why he opted for only British aircraft in the Paratroop and glider assault scenes.

The scene involving the attack by a glider-borne unit of the British 6th Airborne Division on the Orne River Bridge is very effectively and realistically created with the use of studio miniatures and a full-scale facsimile of an Airspeed Horsa troop glider. Zanuck apparently contracted a furniture-making firm in England to build two full-scale Horsas, which was achieved with

such a degree of accuracy that they could be said to be the real thing. They didn't actually fly, however.

Both Horsas appear in several different scenes throughout the film. One of them first appears when John Wayne, as Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Vandervoort, addresses his troops of the 82nd Airborne in a hangar with a Horsa in the background. It is accurately painted in RAF markings and camouflage with D-Day stripes. For some reason, the nose has been completely detached. Again, though, this scene is inaccurate, as US troops that landed in Normandy by glider did so either in USAAF Horsas acquired under Reverse Lend-Lease or in Waco GC-4A Hadrian assault gliders,

In the Orne River Bridge assault scene, one of the Horsas is dragged by unseen ropes through barbed wire fencing and shrubs to create the effect of the assault glider landing. The same shot was used three times in succession and speeded up by the film editor. The battle scene itself was actually filmed at the Caen Canal Bridge that was stormed and seized at the same time as the Orne River Bridge, today known as Pegasus Bridge in honour of the Pegasus Horse badge worn by the British Airborne forces and now the site of a museum dedicated to the first part of France to be Liberated in World War Two.

Both Horsa facsimiles can be seen in the background to the scene involving US Paratroopers meeting up outside the strategically important town of Ste Mare Eglise.

The 'Omaha' Beach scenes were filmed on Corsica, using ships of the United States Navy's Sixth Fleet that were supporting an amphibious exercise on the French island colony, to portray part of the massive Allied armada crossing the English Channel. Seen twice over-flying some of the Sixth Fleet's warships, and darkened in the editing to create the impression of the armada sailing at night, is a four-ship of Douglas AD-4 Skyraiders flying in 'Finger-Four' formation. Their appearance is an attempt to create the effect of American warplanes flying toward Normandy to attack targets ahead of the beach landings. The Skyraider might look the part, but it came into United States Navy service one year after World War Two ended. The four seen in "The Longest Day" could be from the US Navy aircraft carrier attached to the Sixth Fleet (which had to be kept out of shot because aircraft carriers were not used in the D-Day invasion), or from the French Air Force which also operated the AD-4 Skyraider. All four carry drop tanks under the wings. Operationally, it would have been easier for Zanuck to liaise with the Admiral commanding the Sixth Fleet, to arrange for over-flights by four Skyraider aircraft, than it would have been with the French Air Force, so it is more likely they are US Navy AD-4s we are seeing in the film, and not French.

The two most prominent scenes in "The Longest Day" involving actual aircraft both consist of strafing attacks by a pair of fighters, the first by what are meant to be Messerschmitt Bf.109s (as mentioned, in reality, Focke Wulf FW.190A-8s) and the second by Spitfire Mk.IXs.

The 'Messerschmitt Bf.109s' are French-built Nord 1002 Pinguoin II F-BFYX and Nord 1002M Pinguoin II F-BGVU. As stated earlier, they are believed to be part of the batch of former Armee de l'Air and Marine Nationale Nord 1002s purchased by aircraft

dealer Alexandre Renault at Mureaux. They are used to portray the strafing attack by Oberstleutnant 'Pips' Priller and his wingman, Heinz Wodarczyk, on what in reality was 'Sword' Beach on 6th June 1944, but which is depicted as being 'Gold - Juno' Beaches in the film.

Heinz Reincke as Priller is seen filmed in what looks like a larger cockpit than that of the Nord 1002, and certainly much larger than the narrow, squared-off cockpit of a Messerschmitt Bf.109. The control column is much too tall for a fighter, being almost up to the height of Reincke's chin (the real Priller was only 5ft 4in in height, but not even he would have had to hold such a tall yoke as is shown here). The cockpit windows are noticeably tall and large, suggesting the aircraft it has been taken from had a spacious cabin with good visibility.

Research reveals that the cockpit layout used for Priller's Messerschmitt Bf.109 matches that of the SIPA S.12 training and liaison aircraft, also used by the French Armee de l'Air in the counterinsurgency role against Algerian rebels between 1956 - 1958. Like the Nord 1000 series, the SIPA S.10 - S.12 family were French-built versions of a Luftwaffe type constructed in Nazi Occupied France, the Arado Ar.39. An example is the SIPA S.121 that appears as an Arado Ar.396 in "The Eagle Has Landed" (1977), reviewed in Chapter Five. More than likely this cockpit came from a struck off charge SIPA S.12, again perhaps part of Alexandre Renault's collection of retired French military light aircraft.

As the camera focuses on Reincke in the SIPA S.12 cockpit, a back drop filmed air-air shot of Wodarczyk's 'Messerschmitt Bf.109' can be clearly seen closing up and forming just off what would be Priller's starboard wing. It has been painted in a blotch-style camouflage scheme that is definitely not accurate for a Luftwaffe fighter. The small air filter atop the nose identifies this 'Messerschmitt Bf.109' is being played by Nord 1002M F-BGVU, as of the two Pinguoin IIs it was the one that had this modification. The Nord 1002M manoeuvres really close to the camera-ship, which may have been Nord 1002 F-BFYX - as is seen shortly, a camera was placed in one of these two Pinguoin IIs.

There is a goof in this back drop shot of Wodarczyk's 'Messerschmitt Bf.109' seen through the cockpit windows of Priller's 'Messerschmitt Bf.109': the Swastika on the tail is the wrong way round, meaning this imagery has been reversed. Quite possibly the reason for this is that Reincke as Priller is filmed in the SIPA S.12 cockpit from the port side, which means that Wodarczyk's 'Messerschmitt Bf.109' beyond him has to be seen flying to starboard. However, because the Swastika on Wodarczyk's 'Messerschmitt Bf.109' is reversed means that when it was filmed air-air, it was actually flying in formation on the port side with the camera aircraft, which would have then produced imagery of the Swastika facing in the correct direction. The imagery had to be reversed for the back drop shot when, for whatever reason, Reincke was filmed from the port side in the cockpit of Priller's 'Messerschmitt Bf.109' (the editor could have just reversed the whole scene, which would have had Wodarczyk's 'Messerschmitt Bf.109' flying in the correct direction; one wonders why he did not do this).

"Follow me. Do everything I do!", Priller tells Wodarczyk, before beginning his dive. Wodarczyk waves his acknowledgement.

How he heard Priller, and how Priller got his message through to his wingman is a miracle of the airwaves, seeing as how Priller is not speaking into a radio mike! In their real attack early in the morning of 6th June 1944, Priller and Wodarczyk flew at 50 feet in a classic Luftwaffe 'Rotte', spread apart with Wodarczyk offset slightly behind Priller. The leader would not have instructed his wingman to follow right behind him, because that would have reduced the effectiveness and destructiveness of their cannon fire. Priller actually calls "Rotte" into his non-existent radio before commencing his attack. However, the scriptwriter responsible for this scene makes the mistake of having Priller order Wodarczyk to fly in line astern.

Director Annakin, on the other hand, has actually staged the 'Gold - Juno' Beach set-piece with the 'Messerschmitts' attacking in a 'Rotte', so good for him. Very clearly, though, more than one pass was made by the two Nord 1002s, as a second shot shows the two flying in line astern. This is immediately followed by a shot filmed from the right hand seat in the cockpit of the second Nord 1002, looking straight ahead as the two 'Messerschmitt Bf.109s' strafe the British and Canadian troops, with the lead Nord 1002 very low down on the deck before pulling up. The pilots who flew these two Nord 1002 Pinguoin IIs in "The Longest Day" have not been identified, but it is thought that Marine Nationale pilots who flew the type in Aeronavale service may have carried out the task.

Priller's dive and strafe was most likely filmed from Nord 1002M F-BGVU, with the camera attached beneath one of the wings to obtain a clear and unobstructed view. This set-piece was very obviously not filmed from within the cockpit, as the follow-up shot from this position shows it was not possible to get the clear, unobstructed view that Annakin wanted. It has been suggested that a helicopter was used to obtain the shot of Priller's strafe attack, but this seems unlikely as a sustained dive at a steep angle would be very risky for a rotary wing machine, while the speed flown low over the beaches indicates that it was a propeller-driven aircraft that was being used as the camera-ship. A pity about the Stuka-like wail in the dive, but how often have we seen and heard this device used for dramatic effect, no matter how inaccurate it is.

The final shot is of Priller laughing mockingly in his cockpit, while sarcastically claiming, "The Luftwaffe has had its great moment!". Beyond him, Nord 1002M F-BGVU swings in a second time to close up in the same back drop shot used before. This scene creates the impression that the strafe by Priller and Wodarczyk was the sole attack by the Luftwaffe on D-Day: this is inaccurate, Kampfgeschwader 54, with its Heinkel He.111s and Junkers Ju.88s, attacked later on D-Day but faced overwhelming Allied air superiority over the beachheads and suffered accordingly. Zanuck would have had to have resorted to using studio miniatures of the KG.54 bombers if he wanted to depict this action in the film.

The one other prominent scene in "The Longest Day" that uses actual aircraft is the very realistically created strafe attack by two RAF Spitfires on a German vehicle convoy. Here, Zanuck is absolutely on the money in using exactly the correct Marque of Spitfire that operated over Normandy on 6th June 1944 and which would have carried out just such an attack as seen in the

film. They are Vickers Supermarine Spitfire LF.Mk.IXs, adapted for low-level attacks with their distinctive clipped wings. Rare is it that the correct type or version of a particular aircraft of the World War Two era is used in war films on either side of the Atlantic, so Zanuck deserves all the credit for getting it so right with the use of these two Low Flying Spitfires. How did he achieve it?

Firstly, Zanuck was clearly under the misapprehension in 1961 that there were no flyable Spitfires in Britain, which every British pilot, aviation enthusiast and historian of the time could have told him was palpable nonsense. Nonetheless, he believed this to be the case. Why? Could a gentleman by the name of Pierre Laureys hold the answer? Monsieur Laureys had been brought into the production team as a co-ordinator for Spitfires to be flown in the film. He was well placed to do so, with the scene involving the Spitfires to be shot in his country. But his principal credit was that Monsieur Laureys was a former Spitfire pilot. He had served with No.340 (Free French) Squadron in the RAF, which formed part of the 'Ile de France' Fighter Group. Monsieur Laureys would have experienced flying the Spitfire Mk.IX with No.340 Squadron, although it would have been the High Flying HF.IX Marque that this 'Ile de France' unit operated between October 1942 and March 1945, when it converted onto the Mk.XIV. No.340 Squadron was in action over Normandy on D-Day, providing fighter cover for ground-attack Typhoons and day bombers.

The influence of Pierre Laureys has to explain why the Spitfire LF.IXs in "The Longest Day" are in No.340 Squadron markings, as there is no other obvious explanation for why Free French Spitfires appear in the film. Could a little Gallic creativity have led Monsieur Laureys to convince Darryl F Zanuck that there was nil *pointe* in looking for Spitfires in Britain? Even if a little subterfuge was employed, nonetheless Monsieur Laureys did manage to get exactly the correct Marque and type of Spitfire of the D-Day period. And he must have known where to find them.

They are former Belgian Air Force armament trainers which had been taken on charge by the COGEA Nouvelle company at Middelkirke Airport near Ostend, where they were being operated as target-tugs on a contract with the Belgian armed forces. All of them were in clipped-wing configuration and bore silver and blue COGEA colour schemes.

COGEA agreed to provide four Spitfire LF.IXs to 20th Century Fox for "The Longest Day". The company also agreed to paint them in RAF camouflage of the period, together with D-Day stripes and No.340 Squadron codes. The camouflage paint schemes aren't exactly accurate, along with the wrong size and style of code lettering, while the Cross of Lorraine symbol is different from that carried by actual No.340 Squadron Spitfire HF.IXb Marques.

The four Spitfire LF.IXs were, with their Belgian civil registrations given first and their original RAF serials following in brackets: OO-ARA (MH434), OO-ARB (MK297), OO-ARD (MH415) and OO-ARF (MK923). Straightaway, we could have a debate as to whether OO-ARA (MH434) does appear in "The Longest Day". There are various sources which quote four Spitfires from COGEA being provided for the film, including the Spitfire Mk.IX we all know today, and many love, as MH434 of the Old

Flying Machine Company. There are other sources that claim three COGEA Spitfires were made available, and that MH434 was not among them. Photographic evidence is available of OO-ARB, OO-ARD and OO-ARF in "The Longest Day" 'wardrobe', as applied by COGEA at Middelkirke. There has also been a photograph published, the caption for which claims that it is of MH434 in its "The Longest Day" markings.

The Old Flying Machine Company list "The Longest Day" in their film credits for Spitfire HF.IXb MH434, and as owner and operator they obviously know their aircraft's history. Nonetheless, there is no shortage of sources on the Web who state that "Operation Crossbow" (1965) saw MH434's first starring role. The contradiction can be explained. Although COGEA provided four Spitfires for "The Longest Day", that does not mean all four were used. MH434 might have been held in reserve as a back-up, if needed, or maybe it went 'tech' and couldn't be used. In the film industry, if you sign up to be an extra in a production you are still part of the production team even if you are not actually called to appear before the cameras: you wait to hear if you are going to be called and don't leave the film set until you are actually told you are not needed. You are still paid for turning up and could be asked to come back the next day. The same principal applies to vehicles, like historic aircraft or cars, hired to be used in films. Perhaps MH434 was hired by 20th Century Fox for "The Longest Day", but, for whatever reason, did not get in front of the cameras. It would still be entitled to a film credit, though.

There is one instance in the film which indicates that four Spitfires were actually used; however, this is audible, not visual, evidence. Throughout the film aircraft are heard but not seen flying overhead. What is noticeable, though, is that the aircraft engines are distinctly Rolls Royce Merlins. In one scene involving American Paratroopers passing by German soldiers at night four fighter aircraft are heard to roar past overhead, one after the other. Careful replay of this scene confirms that there is no break in the soundtrack, meaning that it is of four aircraft recorded flying low past the sound mike in quick succession, not that of two aircraft flying by one after the other more than once, then taped together to make it sound like four fighters flying overhead. Four recorded fighters with Rolls Royce Merlin engines must mean they were the four COGEA Spitfire LF.IXs, including OO-ARA (MH434).

Spitfire HF.IXb MH434's history, filmography and current status is well documented elsewhere in this book, so it is the histories, careers and fate of its three former COGEA colleagues that were used in the film which we now follow:

Vickers Supermarine Spitfire LF.IXb MH415, Belgian registration OO-ARD. Painted to represent Spitfire Mk.IX coded GW-R of No.340 (Free French) Squadron in the film.

Spitfire LF.IXb MH415 was taken on charge by the RAF on 11th August 1943 and delivered to No.129 (Mysore) Squadron at Hornchurch, before joining No.222 (Natal) Squadron in October the same year. This was another short stay because on 2nd January 1944 MH415 was transferred to the Air Fighting Development Unit, then based at RAF Wittering. It served with the AFDU until

it was transferred to No.126 Squadron at Bradwell Bay, Essex, in September 1944. Something caused it to be sent to Vickers Armstrong at Oxford for repairs and re-fitment in January 1945, after which MH415 spent the whole of 1945 in storage, except for an overhaul by de Havillands at Witney, Oxfordshire.

Spitfire LF.IXb MH415 was one among a batch of Spitfire IXs acquired by the post-War Dutch government in August 1946 and shipped to the Dutch East Indies (today, Indonesia) where it was operated in the ground-attack role by No.322 Squadron LSK from Java against Indonesian Nationalist Forces, initially carrying the code H-108 and later H-65. Subsequently, Spitfire LF.IXb MH415 was one of the batch of ex-Royal Netherlands Air Force (LSK) Spitfire IXs to be acquired by the Belgian Air Force in April 1953 as an armaments trainer with l'Ecole de Chasse at Koksijde, coded SM-40. It served in this role until it was struck off charge by the Belgian Air Force and transferred to the COGEA company at Middelkirke, Ostend, for target-towing duties under a contract with the Belgian military and with NATO forces.

In "The Longest Day", Spitfire LF.IXb OO-ARD/MH415/GW-R was the personal mount of Pierre Laureys himself. When filming was complete, Laureys made an unexpected appearance in MH415 at the Battle of Britain RAF 'At Home' Day display held at Biggin Hill during September 1961, still in No.340 Squadron 'wardrobe'. Laureys was by now the proud owner of this Spitfire, which was registered to Rousseau Aviation and based at Dinard. It was stored in the open but kept in flying condition, making a second film appearance when Laureys flew it to portray a Spitfire LF.IX strafing the train of the title of the excellent John Frankenheimer French/US co-production, "The Train" (1964), starring Burt Lancaster. MH415 then went on to appear in two Franco-British co-productions filmed in France, "Triple Cross" (1966) and "The Night of the Generals" (1967), again flown by Pierre Laureys. It remained at Dinard until 'Hamish' Mahaddie came calling for Spitfires to be used in "Battle of Britain" (1969). After being registered G-AVDJ to Mahaddie on 29th December 1966, Spitfire LF.IXb MH415 underwent the prerequisite overhaul and test flights before joining the growing fleet of Spitfires and the few Hurricanes at RAF Henlow (see the review of "Battle of Britain" later in this Chapter for its performances in that film).

Following completion of "Battle of Britain", MH415, now in HF.IXb configuration with elliptical wingtips, was laid up at Bovingdon Airfield but was soon purchased by one of the American pilots contracted to fly in that film, Wilson 'Connie' Edwards, who also swept up many of the ex-Spanish Air Force Buchons used as Messerschmitt Bf.109s in "Battle of Britain". At Edwards's request, Simpsons Aero Services stripped MH415 down and arranged for its shipment, along with all the Buchons, to Houston, Texas, to arrive in January 1969. Once in the States, Spitfire HF.IXb MH415 became N415MH on the US civil register and was based at Edwards' ranch at Big Springs, Texas, where it was painted as a No.222 (Natal) Squadron Spitfire with the codes ZD-E. As happened with many of the aircraft in 'Connie' Edwards's collection, Spitfire N415MH did little flying and spent much of its life in storage at Big Springs. It is still there under wraps, but

its Certification of Airworthiness was renewed on 13th July 2011, extended to 31st July 2014, so it is still live and kicking.

Vickers Supermarine Spitfire LF.IXc MK297, Belgian registration OO-ARB. Painted to represent Spitfire Mk.IX coded GW-O of No.340 (Free French) Squadron in the film.

Spitfire LF.IXc MK297 was taken on charge by the RAF and delivered to No.6 MU at RAF Brize Norton on 30th January 1944. Although it was assigned to No.411 (RCAF) Squadron, it was quickly transferred on to No.66 Squadron on 17th February 1944, with which it served until it was transferred again in October 1944, this time to No.132 Squadron at RAF Hawkinge. In February the following year, MK297 was passed to AST, Ltd, at Hamble for a major inspection, after which it was stored with No.33 MU. On 27th September 1946, MK297 became H-116 with the Royal Netherlands Air Force, later becoming H-55 and being operated in the ground-attack role (alongside MH415 and MH434) by No.322 Squadron LSK in the Dutch East Indies against Indonesian Nationalist Forces. In September 1953, the same Spitfire LF.IXc had joined the Belgian Air Force, coded SM-43. After serving as an armaments trainer, SM-43 was one among the number of Spitfire LF.IXs that were acquired in May 1956 by COGEA to serve as target-tugs, registered OO-ARB.

Following its appearance in "The Longest Day", OO-ARB remained with COGEA but retained its No.340 Squadron markings. It was then placed on the British civil register as G-ASSD on 28th April 1964, registered under the ownership of Film Aviation Services. Spitfire LF.IXc G-ASSD was flown to Biggin Hill in May 1964 but was stored at Swanton Morley Airfield in Norfolk, apparently advertised for sale for the then not exactly substantial sum of £4,000.

The Confederate Air Force at Harlingen, Texas, were seeking a Spitfire to buy in England and made a bid for G-ASSD. It was intended that it would be transferred to the USA on 1st September 1965, but this did not go ahead; G-ASSD was then registered to Captain John Crewdson, who then passed it on to one of his partners in the film aviation world, Alan 'Taff' Rich. During this time, G-ASSD was being prepared for shipment to the USA, but, with the passage of time, the massive production of "Battle of Britain" (1969) was underway and the Confederate Air Force agreed to contract to Spitfire Productions, Ltd, for the use of G-ASSD/MK297 in that film and, like Spitfire Mk.IXb MH415, was fitted with elliptical wingtips.

Now a Spitfire HF.IXc, G-ASSD/MK297 was transferred to US ownership on 18th April 1969, registered as N1882 with the Confederate Air Force and based at Harlingen; its registration was later changed to NX9BL. It was flown by the CAF with the personal codes 'D-B' of Group Captain Douglas Bader, an Honorary Colonel with the CAF. On 15th May 1981, Spitfire NX9BL was seriously damaged in a crash at Palacios, Texas, but was fully repaired and continued to be flown at airshows across North America. It suffered a fateful incident when it was performing at the Hamilton International Air Show, Ontario, Canada, in 1990, during which its propeller was struck by an object as the Spitfire was taxiing in. Repairs with exactly the

correct kind of propeller blade were difficult to achieve at the time, so an agreement was reached between the CAF and the Canadian Warplane Heritage (CWH) that NX9BL/MK297 would remain at Hamilton, Ontario, during which time it would be stripped down and completely refurbished, to emerge in its original wartime markings. The plan was that MK297 would be operated as a joint CWH/CAF project, along with the CWH's Lancaster and Hurricane as the Canadian Memorial Flight. Tragically, this dream literally went up in smoke when MK297 was destroyed in a hangar fire at Hamilton on 15th February 1993, which not only took MK297 but the CWH's Hurricane as well. There is mention on a Website of the remains being used in a possible restoration project, but no details are to hand at this stage.

Vickers Supermarine Spitfire LF.IXc MK923, Belgian registration OO-ARF. Painted to represent Spitfire Mk.IX coded GW-U of No.340 (Free French) Squadron in the film.

Spitfire LF.IXc MK923 was taken on charge by the RAF on 24th March 1944 when it was delivered to No.9 MU at RAF Cosford, remaining in storage until it was allocated to No.126 Squadron stationed at Sawbridgeworth in Hertfordshire on 10th May 1944, coded 5J-Z. It remained with No.126 throughout most of 1944, undergoing three base relocations with the squadron and at one time was the personal mount of the CO, Squadron Leader W W Swinden. Spitfire LF.IXc MK923 has two 'kills' to its credit, both achieved on the same day and on the same Raid, 'Rodeo 202' on 14th August 1944, when Pilot Officer Risley claimed two Messerschmitt Bf.109Gs south of Paris. No.126 swapped its Spitfire LF.IXs for Mustang IIIs in December 1944, as a result of which MK923 went to No.32 MU at RAF St Athan, South Wales, for a full inspection and overhaul. Back on line by April 1945, the closing stages of the War meant that MK923 went into storage with No.39 MU at RAF Colerne, Wiltshire, where it remained until it was selected for sale to the Dutch government in May 1947.

That same month MK923 was shipped to India before onward transfer to Kalidjati in the Dutch East Indies. Given the code H-104, the Spitfire was operated like its future COGEA brethren with No.322 Squadron LSK and flew a total of 24 bombing missions against nationalist rebels, some as H-61. In March 1952, MK923 was sold to the Belgian Air Force, earlier than its future COGEA colleagues. Given the code SM-37, it, like the others, served as an armaments trainer with the Belgian Air Force until it was passed on to COGEA, being registered on 25th April 1958 as OO-ARE, later than the other COGEA Spitfires flown in "The Longest Day".

It is known that Hollywood film actor Cliff Robertson had sought to purchase a Spitfire when his attempt to acquire a Mosquito, resulting from his starring role in "633 Squadron" (1964), came to nought. Having learnt in 1963 that Spitfires were for sale in Belgium, Robertson negotiated the purchase of one of these, the chosen one being OO-ARE. Robertson asked his friend, test pilot and British National Aerobatic Champion, Neil Williams, to fly the Spitfire from Belgium to Britain, which Williams duly undertook, routeing from Ostend to Southend via Swanton Morley, before finally completing the journey at Biggin Hill. There, Film Aviation Services stripped the Spitfire

down in readiness for its flight across 'The Pond' aboard a Flying Tigers Canadair CL-44. Once in the States, MK923 was at first registered as N93081 and painted dark blue overall following a full overhaul, making her first test flight in the USA in 1964. Later, the registration was changed to N512R.

Cliff Robertson joined forces with the only other Spitfire owner in America at the time, the late Bill Ross, who owned Spitfire Mk.XVI SL721. They decided to completely rebuild MK923, which was carried out at Ross's own facility at Dupage County Airport, near Chicago. On Ross's recommendation, Robertson contracted the very experienced Spitfire pilot, Canadian Jerry Billing, to fly his Spitfire on his behalf, which Billing did for more than 22 years throughout the USA and Canada, only finally retiring at the tender age of 75 in 1994. An attempt was made to repaint MK923 in its original No.126 Squadron colours and markings, with the code 5J-Z, but the camouflage was unfortunately not accurate. Nonetheless, Cliff Robertson's Spitfire - which had also been converted into an HEIX with elliptical wingtips when it was rebuilt - was a very busy performer on the North American airshow scene. Robertson finally sold MK923 in 1996 to Craig McCaw of California, who continued to display it up till 2000, flown by Bud Granley who used it to lead the Canadian Forces Snowbirds Display Team at Abbotsford that year.

When another full overhaul was needed, the cost involved led to the decision to place Spitfire HEIXc MK923 on display in a museum. It can be seen today exhibited in the Seattle Museum of Flight in Washington, DC.

No more than two Spitfire LFIXs are seen in "The Longest Day" for the strafing sequence of German reinforcements struggling to reach the Normandy beachhead. It is a very dramatically staged sequence, with SFX charges set off accurately in front of the Spitfires as they tear in out of their dive and rake the German troops with machine gun and cannon fire. Pierre Laureys was one of the pilots of the Spitfires, reprising his real wartime role in a No.340 (Free French) Squadron Spitfire Mk.IX. There can't be many pilots in films who got the job of practically repeating their actual wartime experiences in an aircraft identical to the type they actually flew in the War. And Pierre Laureys's influence didn't end there: he managed to make sure he got himself in front of the camera as well. That's him in the close-up of a Free French Air Force RAF pilot, in a studio mock-up of a Spitfire cockpit wearing his actual wartime uniform and flying helmet, with the Cross of Lorraine patch just below the shoulder. He deserves the accolade for his ingenuity in obtaining the COGEA Spitfire LFIXs, even if it did mean he allegedly might have 'diverted' Zanuck's attention away from Britain as a source for Spitfires, but for that he shouldn't be begrudged for making sure he and his famous Free French fighter squadron got on film.

With the Spitfires strafing sequence, aviation departs from "The Longest Day". Zanuck strove for authenticity with his enormous epic on such a grand scale. Although inevitably he had to make adjustments, for the most part he succeeded in producing a spectacular recreation of "the longest day in history".

THE WAR LOVER

(Released: October 1962, USA)

Almost a decade earlier, director Philip Leacock and his cameraman Stephen Dade had created some of the most evocative shot angles of Avro Lancaster bombers seen in any film, starting engines, taxiing and flying for "Appointment in London" (1953). Now Leacock was to repeat this process with the Lancaster's American contemporary, the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress, in this wartime drama and love triangle featuring two US Eighth Air Force aircrewmembers and a young Englishwoman.

As with the earlier film, Leacock brings to bear his creative eye to film the B-17s in dramatic close-ups and from inventive angles that fully illustrate the power of the Flying Fortresses' airframes and the energy of their radial engines. Leacock was aided in achieving this dramatic imagery by renowned aerial cameramen Skeets Kelly, who, three years earlier had worked on "Sink the Bismarck!" (1960), and Ron Taylor, who later would work with Richard Attenborough and share an Oscar for his camera work on the epic, "Ghandi" (1982). (Leacock himself would make only two more films after "The War Lover", choosing to spend the remaining 22 years of his directorial career filming a host of TV series in the USA).

The filming of "The War Lover" and the use of the B-17s which star in it has been covered in other publications, most notably by Scott A Thompson in his meticulously researched study of all surviving post-War Flying Fortresses, "Final Cut", and by Martin Caidin in his 1964 book of the daunting ferry flight across the Atlantic by the film's three B-17s, "Everything But the Flak". Reference to "Final Cut" has been made in this review, but not to Caidin's book.

For the record, three Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bombers were acquired in the United States for the production by the Film Aviation Services company, headed by an adventurous character named Captain John Crewdson who had flown troop-carrying gliders with the British Army Glider Pilot Regiment during the War. Crewdson had set up Film Aviation Services to do what its title said on the tin, provide aviation services to the (largely) British film industry. He was among the first to utilise helicopters as camera platforms for film and television productions in Britain, and had just returned from Jordan, where he had flown one of the two Tiger Moths in "Lawrence of Arabia" (1962) masquerading as Turkish Ottoman Air Force Rumpler C1s, when he was contracted by Columbia Studios to locate the B-17s and to arrange their aerial sequences in "The War Lover".

At first Crewdson believed he could obtain surplus B-17s that had been clandestinely acquired by the fledgeling Israeli Air Force in the Fifties and which were now grounded. However, when he got to Israel, Crewdson found that they had been scrapped apart from the fuselage of a Boeing B-17G Flying Fortress identified only by its original Fiscal Year (FY) serial of 44-83811. Crewdson purchased the fuselage to be used as a studio prop and for a crash scene.

He then went to the USA, finishing up at Ryan Field near Tucson, Arizona, located close to Davis-Monthan AFB where literally thousands of surplus US military aircraft were lined up

cocooned in the desert. The USAF was in the process of retiring its last Boeing VB-17 staff transport variants of the Flying Fortress and one of them, Boeing VB-17 44-83563, had been acquired by Ryan Field-based Aero American Corp and placed on the US civil register as N9563Z. Aero American Corp was run by aviation businessman (let's respectfully call him that), Gregory Board, a former Australian Brewster Buffalo pilot in World War Two who reputedly liked to fly close to the edge in the legal sense. Four years after his involvement with "The War Lover", Board would be forced to do a flyer out of the USA when the FBI accused him of trying to illegally export Douglas B-26 light bombers to Portugal without a licence to do so.

However, all that was in the future; in the meantime, Board agreed not only to sell VB-17 N9563Z to Crewdson, but offered to show him where he could acquire the two more B-17s he needed. These were owned by American Compressed Steel Corp of Cincinnati, Ohio, of which Board's Aero American Corp was a subsidiary, and were located at Dallas-Love Field in Texas. They were part of a batch of six ex-US Navy Boeing PB-1W airborne early warning variants that had been retired to the Naval Aircraft Storage Center at Litchfield Park, Arizona, in 1956 and then sold the following year to American Compressed Steel Corp, a scrap dealer, and kept in storage at Love Field.

Crewdson purchased Boeing PB-1Ws N5229V (ex-44-83883) and N5232V (ex-44-83877). Both needed considerable attention after being stored in the open for nearly five years, but Board's Aero American team brought them back into flying condition before Board and Crewdson flew them back to Ryan Field. By mid-September 1961, VB-17 N9563Z and PB-1Ws N5229V and N5232V - the latter both still in their US Navy blue colour schemes - had set out on the arduous trek to England, arriving at London Gatwick Airport on 8th October, two days before the film's schedules were due to begin.

It would be right and proper to refer the reader to Scott A Thompson's "Final Cut" and to Martin Caidin's "Everything But the Flak" for details of the ferry flight across the Atlantic. Veteran American pilot Don Hackett made up the third aircraft commander besides Crewdson and Board. Two former USAF Lieutenant Colonels - William Tesla and Robert F Spence - were brought in by Columbia Studios as Flying Fortress Adviser and General Technical Adviser respectively.

Bovingdon Airfield in Hertfordshire provided the location for the 324th Bomb Squadron of the 91st Bomb Group B-17Gs that appear in the film, the first of five British war film productions to be made at this once busy RAF air station: "633 Squadron" (1964), "Mosquito Squadron" (1969), "Battle of Britain" (1969) and "Hanover Street" (1979) would likewise re-create RAF and USAAF air base scenes there. Manston Airport in Kent was also utilised as a base from where scenes involving air-air shots of B-17s over the English Channel were filmed. Filming with the B-17s took place between October - December 1961.

The key B-17 is named The Body, flown by Steve McQueen's disturbed, risk-taking 'Buzz' Rickson. No single B-17 played The Body exclusively; all three B-17s adopted different identities

throughout the production, to create the impression of extra Flying Fortresses. Crewdson had obtained gun turrets and other B-17 equipment in the States before flying them over on the ferry flight, then had them all fitted at Bovingdon to bring each Flying Fortress up to external B-17G configuration, while also having the three B-17s painted in reasonably accurate Eighth Air Force B-17G colour schemes. One unexplained error by the film's art department was to paint the fuselage 'Star and Bar' symbols smaller and further forward than was actually applied to wartime USAAF B-17Gs.

The VB-17 and two PB-1Ws were the only aircraft, apart from the fuselage of the ex-Israeli Air Force B-17G, that were actually acquired for use in "The War Lover". But the choice was made to make the film in black-and-white so that archive and other footage could be used as well, mixing as naturally as possible with the actual film material. "The War Lover" makes more use of wartime archive footage than any other British World War Two war film. Out-takes from other war films featuring B-17s are also used.

An archive shot used early in the film shows 24 B-17s flying in three separate formations of eight B-17s apiece, while no less than 40 B-17s are seen in an air-air archive shot filmed at considerable height. Another air-air has eight B-17Fs flying in three sections, two of three aircraft each leading the third as a pair which are almost out of shot; although it would be difficult for the audience to discern, these eight Flying Fortresses are in natural metal colour schemes, whereas the three B-17s used in "The War Lover" are all in olive drab.

Nine more B-17s are seen as silhouettes flying in three sections of three; 13 B-17Gs stand out starkly against the white carpet of clouds below them; another archive shot of 11 B-17Gs appears to show part of this same group, as the cloud cover below them is very similar. A good look-down air-air onto six B-17s clearly reveals their camouflage schemes, while a shot from the dorsal turret of one B-17 looking rearwards shows the antenna wire whipping in the airstream ahead of eight B-17s passing behind. Another dorsal turret shot has six B-17Gs flying below in two 'Vics' of three, framed by the camera-ship B-17G's tailplane. For a bomb run on Kiel's U-Boat pens, a rough shot of an unidentifiable B-17 - both as variant and of which Bomb Group - dropping bombs is used.

The quality of all this archive footage is variable; they contrast with the very sharp imagery of the actual three B-17s flown in the film. The source of all this archive footage was possibly the US government's National Archives Establishment.

An air-air study of three B-17s flying in 'Vic' formation is an out-take from the 20th Century Fox movie, "Twelve O'Clock High" (1950). The B-17s are filmed silhouetted against bright sunlit clouds, but this cannot disguise the fact that the two nearest the camera (filmed from a B-25) are both B-17Gs, while the third distant aircraft appears to be a B-17E, confirmed by the lack of chin turret compared with the other two. These three B-17s were part of a dozen Flying Fortresses gathered together at Eglin AFB, Florida, in 1949 to film "Twelve O'Clock High", some coming from the Eglin-based 1st Experimental Guided Missile Group and

consisting of DB-17G and QB-17G drone control variants. They were 'dressed up' to appear as either B-17Fs or B-17Gs.

To portray attacking Luftwaffe fighters, archive imagery of two Republic P-47 Thunderbolts is briefly used. Their imagery appears to have been filmed from the waist gun position of a B-17 and may have been filmed during wartime air combat training. Another shot of a single P-47 Thunderbolt flying right at the B-17 filming it clearly shows that it is a USAAF 'Jug', and not a Luftwaffe FW.190 or Bf.109. This same shot is repeated, but in the reverse direction, while more archive footage shows either another pair of P-47s, or the same two as before, 'attacking' from a different direction. The Eighth Air Force maintained a P-47 Thunderbolt training unit at RAF Alconbury, Huntingdonshire, so it is possible that the attacks by the P-47s seen here are being made at B-17s by USAAF fighters to train newly arrived aircrew in defensive tactics against enemy fighters.

An air-air of a B-17, filmed from the bombardier's glazed nose position and showing the Flying Fortress ahead to be slightly below the following camera-ship, has a fighter running in head-on but underneath it which, through freeze-frame analysis, proves itself to be a Spitfire. Again, this almost certainly is archive footage of air combat training or tactics development, this time involving an RAF Spitfire as the attacker.

A B-17 that is hit and blows up is a rather obvious studio miniature. A shot depicting B-17s returning from a raid and breaking formation to land is an out-take of the ten B-17Gs of the 384th Bomb Group put up for "The Way to the Stars" (1945), filmed over RAF Grafton-Underwood 16 years before "The War Lover".

A scene in which Steve McQueen's character, 'Buzz' Rickson, lives up to his name by 'buzzing' the base at low-level, was flown solo by John Crewdson in one of the PB-1Ws. As it streaks low over Bovingdon's ramp, a visiting RAF Vickers Varsity T.1 can be seen parked in the background! Almost unavoidably, more modern-day (for 1961) RAF aircraft, of the type that were based at Bovingdon, appear in shot, filmed from the glazed nose of the PB-1W as it tears over the tarmac at what cannot be more than 50 feet. They comprise six Avro Anson C.19 communications aircraft, operated by the Bovingdon-based Southern Communications Squadron of RAF Transport Command, plus a visiting de Havilland Vampire T.11 jet trainer.

What is noteworthy is that as the PB-1W runs in towards the Ansons and Vampire, a USAF Boeing C-97G can be seen parked on the ramp in the distance. USAF aircraft were no strangers to Bovingdon in 1961, as the 7,531st Air Base Squadron with its C-47 Skytrains were based there at the time - one C-47 is seen in the film undergoing maintenance in a hangar, appearing as a backcloth to the 91st Bomb Squadron CO in his office when Rickson's B-17 roars past his window. Also, the nearby location of USAF Third Air Force Headquarters at RAF South Ruislip, Middlesex, meant that visiting USAF VIP and transport aircraft were a regular sight at Bovingdon.

One can guess that both the RAF and USAF senior staff at Bovingdon were extremely unhappy at Crewdson's low-level flying, as he passes right between buildings and just over hangars,

with no margin for error. It is rumoured he flew this scene as the last to be filmed at Bovingdon, so that Leacock's production crew did not risk being expelled for taking an unacceptable risk. The Ministry of Civil Aviation, which owned Bovingdon Airfield, could have ordered the B-17s to be grounded for such a breach of flight safety rules.

As low as John Crewdson got, famous film stunt pilot Paul Mantz got even lower. He is filmed belly landing a B-17, flying alone. This is a famous out-take from "Twelve O'Clock High" which is used in "The War Lover" to depict a shot-up 91st Bomb Group B-17G crash landing. Mantz flew the B-17 alone, minus its chin and ball turrets so as not to impede the Flying Fortress's progress along the grass and through a row of tents.

The B-17 Mantz flew to destruction was an actual in-service USAF aircraft about to be struck off charge, being DB-17G 44-83592 of the 1st Experimental Guided Missile Group, Eglin AFB. The crash landing was filmed at an auxiliary field to Eglin AFB in Florida, which had been 'dressed up' to appear as a USAAF air base in wartime England.

The finale to "The War Lover" is a one thousand bomber raid on Leipzig. Another out-take of the ten B-17Gs of the 384th BG from "The Way to the Stars" is used to depict B-17s en route to the target. A massive archive shot showing 191 - yes, 191 (!) - B-17s flying en masse, with the contrails of many more flying much higher, illustrates impressively how the Eighth Air Force could congregate so many bombers in one area of sky. Another archive shot of six B-17Gs shows clearly the large Bomb Group code letter 'C' on a black square on their tail fins, denoting the 96th Bomb Group at Shetterton Heath. More air-air archive imagery has 12 B-17Gs in loose formation showing white pyramidal code patches on their tail fins, but their Bomb Group code letter cannot be discerned. In a back drop to a ball turret shot, five B-17Gs of the 96th BG can clearly be seen.

To depict a mass attack by Luftwaffe fighters, a mix of archive footage and studio miniatures is used. One brief shot has very poor imagery of five Messerschmitt Bf.109s breaking formation. Another is of two P-47s, probably the same pair seen earlier, followed by a solo example, again likely to be the same one as before.

A particularly telling aerial archive shot is that of gun-camera footage of a B-17 taking hits from a German fighter. The clarity of this imagery and the concentrated area of fire from a central position in the attacking aircraft suggests it may have been taken from the nose cannon of a Messerschmitt Me.262 jet fighter. More imagery of what is meant to be four Luftwaffe fighters attacking from the rear reveals itself to be that of two Lockheed P-38 Lightnings! No mistaking the next shot of two Messerschmitt Bf.109s, though - they are filmed flying steadily in trail to the camera aircraft, not aggressively at all, so this cannot be air combat footage.

With the attack beaten off, archive footage shows 13 B-17s progressing towards their target. More gun-camera footage shows a Focke Wulf FW.190 taking hits and the pilot bailing out - the countryside below it has the appearance of the wooded plains of central Germany. Another air-air looking down on eight B-17s has the patchwork quilt-like countryside of England below them. A very

scratchy piece of archive footage has two Messerschmitt Bf.109s performing a hard turn. Another rough piece of archive is meant to convey two attacking fighters, but in fact is a Bf.109 in pursuit of a Spitfire; it is of too poor quality to be the Crown Film Unit's imagery of a captured Bf.109 and RAE Spitfire, so presumably is actual air combat footage or that of a captured Spitfire being filmed chased by a Luftwaffe Bf.109. Another shot of a single Spitfire running in behind the camera aircraft is of very similar quality, so it may be the same Spitfire in the same film shoot. Suspicion is confirmed when this Spitfire makes a curved pass across the camera aircraft with the Bf.109 coming in behind it; freeze-frame analysis shows it to be a Bf.109G 'Gustav', so whenever this footage was filmed it could not have been before mid-1942.

Actual shoot-down imagery of a B-17 spinning down with its starboard outer engine ablaze appears next. During this sequence, a close-up of one of the three B-17s in "The War Lover" shows that it was flown with its port outer engine shut completely down and with its bomb doors open, the starboard door being made to look badly shot up.

Back to more archive footage, this time of five B-17s filmed from the dorsal turret of a sixth B-17 below them. A sudden attack by a Bf.109 is portrayed by a very grainy archive shot of a Bf.109G variant which can clearly be seen to be armed with a gondola cannon kit attached beneath each wing. It appears again in another shot and seems to have been filmed from the ground while making fast, low passes in front of the camera. More archive imagery of ten B-17s in three separate tight sections, then the first out-take from the William Wyler documentary of B-17F Memphis Belle is used to show a B-17F flying amid flak bursts. Art work is used to 'paint' flak bursts onto an archive shot of six B-17s that we have seen used earlier in the film.

A much closer shot of five B-17Fs also has flak bursts painted onto it, but we can identify one of them once we get past the irritation of having to use a mirror to do so because the editor has cut this shot into the film in reverse. Nearest the camera is a B-17F coded GK-R and revealing '613' as the last three numbers of its FY serial. We can nail this B-17F down to being 42-3613/GK-R. This B-17F and its four companions are all 91st Bomb Group B-17Fs, with the 91st BG code letter 'A' clearly displayed on a white triangle on the tail fins. The 91st BG featured in the wartime documentary, "Memphis Belle" (1944). Much of this same imagery of its B-17Fs was used as backcloth not only in "The War Lover", but also in the earlier "Twelve O'Clock High" (1950) and the later "1,000 Plane Raid" (1969) B-17 movies. This has resulted in the B-17s actually used in each of these three film productions being painted with the white triangle and letter 'A' of the 91st Bomb Group, in order to match with the out-takes of 91st BG B-17Fs from the "Memphis Belle" documentary. Because the B-17F coded GK-R and carrying '613' as the last three of its Fiscal Year serial is so visibly prominent in the air-air shots from "Memphis Belle", it was decided that the DB-17G that Paul Mantz would crash land in "Twelve O'Clock High" would be painted as this same 91st BG B-17F. It clearly can be seen carrying the serial 23613 as well as the GK-R code as it bellies in, which matches with the B-17F in the foreground of the

"Memphis Belle" air-air, confirming the identity of the real GK-R as being FY 42-3613.

Incidentally, all three B-17s flown in "The War Lover" carried 'DF-' codes, that of the 324th Bomb Squadron, in order to match with "Memphis Belle" out-takes of B-17Fs from the real 324th BS which are used in the documentary film.

An archive air-air of a 305th BG B-17F, carrying the codes 'JJ-' of the 422nd BS, is shown unloading its bombs, with three more B-17Fs below it. Genuine wartime footage of bomb strikes is used to depict the attack on Leipzig's chemical and oil refineries. More archive footage of another but unidentifiable B-17F dropping a stick of bombs appears; camera shake makes this Flying Fortress impossible to detect. Another archive shot of a B-17G, this time with bomb doors open, shows a flak burst very close to it.

The Body is in bad shape, with one engine out and a bomb hung up in the bomb bay. It comes under attack by German fighters again. More footage of P-47s and P-38s is used - why, only the director and editor know. Could not real air combat footage from the "Memphis Belle" documentary of Focke Wulf FW.190s attacking B-17s have been inserted here instead, giving complete reality to these shots? Maybe, for some reason, they were not available to Leacock, while perhaps the National Archive Establishment did not possess actual combat footage of Luftwaffe fighters engaging B-17s, but could offer air combat training and tactics footage as a reasonably realistic alternative.

Gun-camera footage of another FW.190 being shot down does appear, this one taking a hit directly on its underfuselage fuel tank, which erupts into flame. Then another shot is shown of a Spitfire making an attacking run, filmed from the dorsal turret of a B-17, presumably during air combat training or tactics trials for USAAF aircrew. The two Bf.109s seen earlier are shown again, this time with their footage reversed. An aircraft that is difficult to identify by type, due largely to the poor quality of the footage, is shown taking hits before gun-camera footage of what looks like a twin-engined aircraft exploding in a mass of flame appears - the editor has cut the film so that most of the aircraft's shape is obscured by the fireball. A brief shot of a Focke Wulf FW.190 passing beneath an aircraft may have been filmed from a B-17 during actual air combat - if it is, it's the only actual air combat footage used in "The War Lover". That cannon-toting Bf.109G reappears, image reversed.

The final act of the film has the crew of The Body bailing out over the English Channel; parachutists actually bailed out of one of the B-17s for this scene. The image is very realistically created of a badly damaged B-17 struggling to remain airborne. Rogue pilot Rickson stays with The Body, which crashes into the white cliffs of Dover - this is achieved by a studio miniature B-17. The actual flying in this sequence over the Channel with one engine stopped, the starboard undercarriage leg lowered and smoke trailing, is among the most dramatic and challenging of any aerial re-enactment seen in a film, and may explain why two of the three B-17s did not survive the film production.

Apparently the more than 50 hours of gruelling filming was too much for the two PB-1Ws: after the production had been completed, they were broken up at Manston. VB-17 N9563Z was

more robust: it was flown back to the USA and used by Columbia Studios on a promotional tour for "The War Lover". It then served as a camera-ship, filming low-level flight scenes that were used to depict the perspective from a B-52D making a nuclear bomb attack run in the satirical Cold War film, "Dr Strangelove" (1962). In February 1963, N9563Z was sold to Aviation Specialties and was converted into an air tanker. Four years later it was one of five B-17s that were hired to appear in "Tora! Tora! Tora!" (1970), then returned to air tanker duties before it was bought in an auction by the National Warplane Museum of Geneseo, New York, in 1986. N9563Z has had an active life on the warbird scene in the USA; she still flies, being now operated as 42-97400/Fuddy Duddy by the Lyon Air Museum at John Wayne/Orange County Airport in California.

"The War Lover" is a fine film, with excellent performances by its cast, and creates a quite believable representation of characters under stress within an Eighth Air Force Bomb Group in 1943. It is certainly worth having in one's collection for the many superb flying sequences involving B-17 Flying Fortresses, as well as a great deal of fascinating archive footage.

MYSTERY SUBMARINE

(Released: 1963)

A sea hunt war film in which the Royal Navy use a captured Kriegsmarine U-Boat to lure a Wolf Pack of U-Boats into a trap prepared for them by a squadron of destroyers. The aviation content is limited and consists entirely of archive material.

The Kriegsmarine headquarters is bombed by the US Eighth Air Force, depicted by archive air-airs of four Boeing B-17G Flying Fortresses and six Consolidated B-24 Liberators. However, using this Eighth Air Force material is a serious goof because the time period in which the action is taking place is in 1941, due to a reference to the Bismarck being a threat. America wasn't even at war then.

Because the captured U-Boat is being crewed by British submariners, they have to avoid RAF Coastal Command maritime patrol aircraft whose aircrew would be unaware of the deception. Sure enough, the U-Boat is targeted by an RAF Catalina. To depict this the film editor has used archive footage of a Coastal Command Consolidated Catalina I, clearly carrying the code letter 'A' next to its fuselage roundel and the large number '10' on the forward fuselage. Part of this footage appears to be the same as that of the Catalina seen in "Sink the Bismarck!" (1960), only shown flying in the opposite direction. No other aircraft footage is shown in "Mystery Submarine".

Curiously, there was a Hollywood made film of the same title released in 1950, but with a very different story about a US Intelligence Officer trying to track down a U-Boat operating off South America. Whether the British "Mystery Submarine" was influenced by the former film is not known.

THE GREAT ESCAPE

(Released: July 1963, USA) Hollywood 'British' war film

Let's get one thing straight - "The Great Escape" IS a British war film. It may have been produced by the Mirisch Corporation (the same film production company that made "The Magnificent Seven", 1960, and the classic Marilyn Munroe/Jack Lemmon/Tony Curtiss comedy, "Some Like It Hot", 1959); its producer/director, John Sturges, may have been more famous for Westerns than war films ("The Magnificent Seven" again); its instantly recognisable and much parodied theme music might have been composed by Elmer Bernstein, another aficionado of Westerns whose compositions for "The Magnificent Seven" and "The Comancheros" (1961) were equally as recognisable; while its all-American lead star, Steve McQueen, was undoubtedly the 'King of Cool' at the time, but his character - Hilt, 'The Cooler King' - was created solely to bring an American into a prime position in what is otherwise an almost entirely British World War Two story.

To 'American-ise' the film even more, the distributor, United Artists, insisted on more American actors taking prime roles, even though no American PoW took part in the mass escape on 24th March 1944 from Stalag Luft III. McQueen's character Hilt is believed to be an amalgam of a USAAF flight commander on the Doolittle Raid over Japan who was later shot down and captured in Europe, an American OSS Colonel captured in North Africa who disguised himself as a USAAF flyer by borrowing a flight jacket from a fellow PoW to avoid being shot as a spy, and a British Squadron Leader who escaped seven times from German PoW camps.

McQueen is joined by James Garner, a very popular film and TV actor in the Sixties and the Seventies (notably, "The Rockford Files" private investigator TV series), who plays an American Flight Lieutenant who joined the Royal Air Force before the United States entered the War and served with RAF 'Eagle' Squadrons, thus bringing an acknowledgment of American volunteers in the RAF, even though the 'Eagle' Squadrons had been transferred to the USAAF by the time the real escape took place; Charles Bronson, who plays a Polish Air Force officer who has escaped to fly with the RAF, thus paying a tribute to Polish airmen as well as making a link with the actual location of Stalag Luft III in Sagan, now Zagan in Poland; and rising star James Coburn, who acts the role of an Australian RAF pilot to acknowledge the number of Commonwealth officers who took part in the escape.

Taking prominent roles alongside the Yanks are a number of strong British character actors, not the least of which is Richard Attenborough who had by now forged an admirable portfolio of film roles ever since his uncredited debut as the rating who deserts his post in Noel Coward's "In Which We Serve" (1942). Attenborough was among a number of British actors in "The Great Escape" who had not only served their country during World War Two, but who also appear in various films reviewed in this book both during and after the War itself, including in his case, "Journey Together" (1945), "A Matter of Life and Death" (1946), "School for Secrets" (1946), "The Gift Horse" (1952) and

“Dunkirk” (1958), among others. Attenborough plays Squadron Leader Roger Bartlett, or ‘Big X’, the organiser of the break-out, based on the real Squadron Leader Roger Bushell, the actual ‘Big X’ who escaped from Stalag Luft III on 24th March 1944 and was among the ‘Fifty’ who were shot by the Gestapo.

Alongside Attenborough are wartime veterans Gordon Jackson (“The Foreman went to France”, 1942, “Millions Like Us”, 1943, “San Demetrio London”, 1943, and “Against the Wind”, 1948), James Donald (“In Which We Serve”, 1942, “Went The Day Well?”, 1942, “San Demetrio London”, 1943, “The Way Ahead”, 1944, “The Gift Horse”, 1952, and “The Bridge on the River Kwai”, 1957), and Donald Pleasence, who had actually been shot down and imprisoned during the War. Pleasence was a wireless operator aboard Avro Lancaster Mk.III NE112/AS-M of No.166 Squadron when it was shot down on 9th September 1944, nearly six months after the actual ‘Great Escape’. His biography on the IMDb Website says he was sent as a PoW to Stalag Luft I, where he organised amateur dramatic plays to help pass the time for himself and his fellow captives until their liberation in 1945. Notably, Pleasence would play Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler, who ordered in secret the murder of the ‘Fifty’, in “The Eagle Has Landed” (1977).

As fans of “The Great Escape” know, aviation only features in one section of the film, but it is an important part. Flight Lieutenant Hendley (Garner) plans to steal a Luftwaffe aeroplane and fly it to Switzerland. He takes with him Flight Lieutenant Blythe (Pleasence), the ‘Forger’, who produced all the essential documents the escapees need and who is suffering from progressive myopia due to the strain his eyes have suffered as a result. We aren’t shown how, but the pair manage to break into a German airfield in Bavaria. Among the parked fighters Hendley sees “a trainer I could fly”. He kicks an armed guard unconscious, then positions Blythe beside the nose so that Blythe can work the primer handle as he, Hendley, pumps in the fuel. The engine catches, Hendley gets Blythe into the cockpit, and they take off before officers in the air traffic control tower can alert the guards. It looks like they are going to make it to Switzerland, but the trainer’s engine starts to fail and Hendley is forced to crash land the little aircraft. It plunges into trees and catches fire, but Hendley and Blythe manage to get out. Blythe staggers into the open, unable to see where he is going. German troops pull up on the road below the hill where he is standing and a soldier armed with a telescopic-sighted sniper’s rifle deliberately and needlessly shoots Blythe dead. Hendley is re-captured.

The scene where Hendley and Blythe steal the trainer aeroplane was filmed on an air base in Bavaria. The aircraft used as props to represent Luftwaffe fighters are all CCF Harvard Mk.IV trainers, the first type issued to the newly constituted Bundesluftwaffe (Federal Air Force) after West Germany (the Federal Republic of Germany) joined NATO in 1955. At the time when “The Great Escape” was in production in Bavaria during the summer of 1962, Schule 1 (School 1) of the Flugsdienststaffel Technische (Technical Flying Squadron) was based at Kaufbeuren in the Schwaben region of Southern Bavaria. It was one of two such units in the Bundesluftwaffe that was equipped with the CCF Harvard Mk.IV.

Although not confirmed, it seems most likely that it is the Harvard Mk.IVs located at Kaufbeuren that appear in “The Great Escape”, and that Kaufbeuren itself is the air base which provided the location for Hendley’s and Blythe’s escape scene.

Freeze-frame analysis indicates that a minimum of seven Harvards were used as props. “The Great Escape” was one of the first major feature films that used the North American T-6 Texan/Harvard variants as doubles for Axis Powers fighters, culminating in 1969 with their ultimate expression as Texans and Harvards converted into Japanese Zero look-alikes for “Tora! Tora! Tora!” (1970). In “The Great Escape”, the Luftwaffe fighter type that the Harvards are impersonating is the Focke Wulf FW.190, both having radial engines.

All the CCF Harvard IVs were repainted in spurious Luftwaffe camouflage and markings, but with completely unrealistic serials and codes for German World War Two-era aircraft. As Garner and Pleasence sneak into an aircraft shelter - again, untypical of a 1944-period Luftwaffe airfield - they pause beside a Harvard that clearly carries the (fake) serial of ‘1-37’. The colour scheme that all the Harvards bore in Bundesluftwaffe service was all-over yellow, apart from a matt black top from engine cowling to the cockpit front as anti-dazzle paint for the student pilot, green cowling band and black-and-white checkerboard square. The serials for all the Harvards based at Kaufbeuren began with the letters ‘BF-’, then had a three-digit number to follow, the first digit always being ‘0’. It’s possible that the Harvard bearing the fake serial ‘1-37’ was actually BF-037, with the last two ‘37’ being retained in the fake serial so that the real identification could be visible while the aircraft was in ‘wardrobe’. Another Harvard can be seen to carry the fake serial, ‘1-56’. If these Harvards are BF-037 and BF-056 respectively, their serials would have been separated by the Bundesluftwaffe Iron Cross symbol, making them appear as BF+037 and BF+056 on their fuselage sides.

When the escape scene was filmed at Kaufbeuren, it appears to have been completed in a single day. The reason for guessing this was the case is that the taxi-tracks and hard parking areas outside individual aircraft shelters are all wet throughout the scene, indicating that it had rained quite heavily before shooting took place.

The aircraft that Hendley and Blythe steal is the only type that is not a Harvard. It is, in fact, a training aircraft of genuine Luftwaffe World War Two vintage, a Bucker Bu.181 Bestmann. It is unlikely that this Bestmann was in service with the Bundesluftwaffe when it was used in the film, as the Bestmann was withdrawn along with all other Deutsches Luftwaffe types following the Wehrmacht surrender in 1945. It could have been a real former Luftwaffe aircraft, however, as the Bestmann served in large numbers as the primary German trainer throughout World War Two. If so, this Bestmann could be the first genuine German World War Two aircraft to appear in a Hollywood movie. How many Bestmann were in flying condition in Germany in 1962 - if any, as the German historic aircraft preservation scene was in its infancy at the time - cannot be guessed at, but the Mirisch Corporation could have obtained an example from other sources, the Swiss Air Force being one possibility, as it was still operating

the Bestmann when the film was made; ex-Swedish Air Force Sk.25s were another source.

It has to be stated that there is no doubt that this Bestmann was sacrificed by the Mirisch Corporation's film production team for its role in "The Great Escape". It is not a full-scale facsimile of the Bestmann that is fast-taxied across grass and through trees into a copse beyond; it is the actual aircraft under power from its own Hirth HM 504A 105hp piston engine. Careful freeze-frame analysis shows no sign of guidance wires pulling the aircraft along the ground, as other crash scenes in films have used.

The crash is filmed from two camera positions. The first is positioned close to the aircraft as it passes by, continuing to film it as it travels at speed towards the trees. The shot is cut the instant the Bestmann mounts a slight rise in the ground, with its port wing striking a slender sapling.

The second camera position is fixed in the copse close to the sapling that the Bestmann strikes. At no time does the camera move. The Bestmann appears from screen right, mounting the rise in the ground to enter the copse as its port wing strikes the sapling tree's trunk. The wing is completely severed as the Bestmann powers through under its own momentum into the copse. For a very brief second the Bestmann is airborne as it leaps over the rise, banking slightly with its starboard wing low which strikes a more substantial tree trunk, causing the wing to break off backwards from the fuselage. The forward fuselage disappears out of shot at screen left, at which point the aircraft clearly impacts an unseen obstacle not in view, bringing a complete halt to the airframe's forward momentum and causing the Bestmann to collapse, partly on its right side, partly on its belly in the copse.

Examination of the wreckage in this crash sequence leaves no doubt it is the Bestmann that was effectively driven through the two trees into the copse. It was almost certainly under the control of a stunt pilot in the cockpit, as ground-running the Bestmann without any control severely risked the aircraft losing direction and ground-looping. The aircraft must have impacted something like an aircraft crash barrier set up out of shot, which would have brought it to an immediate stop and helped to have protected the pilot who, almost certainly, would have had protective padding and strapping in the cockpit. Firecrews with hand-held extinguishers and cutting equipment would have been on hand behind the fixed camera in the copse, to effect a rescue if necessary.

Aviation enthusiasts of today's film audience may berate the destruction of a valuable historic aircraft as nothing short of movie industry vandalism, but they need to take into account the attitudes of the times when "The Great Escape" was made. Much of the cinema audience would have been made up of people on both sides of the Atlantic for whom World War Two would still be of recent memory, while those of the Sixties generation - of which the author is one - were brought up on tales of good Allies versus evil Nazis, as evidenced in many films and documentaries. The sight of a German military aircraft carrying Balkenkreuze and Swastika symbols being trashed in a war film was not a displeasing one in 1963. Future aircraft preservation of historic wartime Luftwaffe types was not even a distant dream in those days, and

the attitude of the Hollywood producers of "The Great Escape" almost certainly would have been, "Hey, so what? It's a Kraut airplane, after all".

TORPEDO BAY (FINCHEDURA LA TEMPESTA)

(Released: September 1963, Italy) International 'British' war film

This international hotch-potch of a production has both Italian and French backing, as well as both British and Italian film directors. The British director is Charles Frend, who has "The Big Blockade" (1942) propaganda drama-doc and "The Cruel Sea" (1953) among his credits.

The storyline has an Italian Navy submarine being hunted in the Mediterranean during 1941 by a Royal Navy destroyer. The submarine puts into the neutral port of Tangiers for repairs, as does the destroyer. The Italian and British Captains forge a diplomatic friendship until they both have to put to sea again.

The only aviation content in the film occurs right at the beginning, when archive footage of Allied aircraft that are meant to be searching for the submarine is shown. First up is a Blackburn Skua, with the sub-Flight code of 'H', taking off from the deck of an aircraft carrier. The shot that immediately follows is taken from an unidentified aircraft, with only part of the tail plane in view, as it departs an aircraft carrier: what is of interest in this shot is that the bow end of the flight deck has an extension for aircraft taking off under their own power but clearly shown are two catapult launch systems, one each side of the forward flight deck, confirming that this method of launching aircraft was operational on British carriers during World War Two (as is seen being operated in the 1944 'drama-doc', "The Volunteer", reviewed in Chapter One).

The next shot to follow shows two USAAF Lockheed P-38 Lightnings departing RAF Gibraltar, with a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress parked below The Rock. This is an error on the part of the film editor because the United States hadn't entered the War in the 1941 period represented in the film, while USAAF aircraft didn't begin flying from Gibraltar until very late in 1942. Finally, two air-airs of a Martin Maryland flying over the sea appear.

THE VICTORS

(Released: November 1963)

"The Victors" is fully representative of the argument about a film's nationality: is it American or British? Columbia Pictures Corporation financed, presented and distributed it, so that makes it American. The Open Road film company, formed by producer/director Carl Foreman to make "The Guns of Navarone" (1961) and for which "The Victors" was its second production, was based in Britain and used British film studios, technicians and crew.

As stated at the beginning of this book, a film made by a British film company using British film crew members is a British film, even if the backer and distributor is American. By that definition, "The Victors" is a British war film. Perhaps it should be regarded as a British-US co-production.

Having said that, its subject is most definitely American, despite the book on which it is based having been written by a British author. Foreman changed the characters in the book from being British troops to American GIs, to improve the film's chances in America, and follows their fortunes of war across Europe from 1942 to the post-War Occupation of Berlin in 1946. It is fair to say that it is not the kind of film about GIs in World War Two that Hollywood would want to see made today. "Band of Brothers" it is not, although there are some similarities between this film and the celebrated TV series made in the 21st Century based on the same time period in the War.

The film opens with a pre-title credits montage of shots created by graphic designer Saul Bass, showing the sequence of events leading from the end of World War One up to the Battle of Britain in World War Two. Among these images created by Bass are blended images of Hawker Hurricanes, Vickers Supermarine Spitfires, Messerschmitt Bf.109s and Junkers Ju.87 Stukas. What Bass has done is to take one image of one aircraft from archive footage, then multiply it many times over in silhouette so that the impression of hordes of aircraft flying over is shown on screen. One mistake that Bass has made, however, is to use the image of an early model B-17 which he has multi-layered like all the others, but in its case upside down!

Aviation only appears briefly in "The Victors", and exclusively in archive and newsreel form. In depicting the Allied advance across northern Europe amid the deep snows of the winter of 1944 - '45, Foreman selected a variety of archive shots showing army trucks sliding and GIs slithering on icy roads. But really dramatic footage shows a USAAF Republic P-47D Thunderbolt losing complete traction on an ice-bound runway, with its undercarriage collapsing as it slides off onto the snow and hurtles out of control into another parked Republic P-47D Thunderbolt. The impact forces the parked P-47D into the air before it crashes back down again, while a groundcrewman who had been working on it has a miraculous escape as he tries to flee the oncoming Thunderbolt.

The P-47D which loses control on landing is coded C4-N, while the P-47D it collides with is C4-B. This makes both Thunderbolts as being on strength with the 388th Fighter Squadron, part of the 365th Fighter Group in the USAAF's Ninth Air Force. A Web page on Wikipedia for the 365th Fighter Group shows a photograph of a P-47D of the 388th Fighter Squadron coded C4-T, parked on an identical snowy airfield as seen in the archive footage of the collision in "The Victors". The caption to this photograph states it was taken at RAF Beaulieu. The 365th FG, with its three Fighter Squadrons, including the 388th FS, was stationed at RAF Beaulieu in Hampshire from 4th March 1944 until the entire Group moved to Azeville in France on 28th June 1944, post-D-Day. Therefore, this footage of P-47D C4-N colliding with P-47D

C4-B was almost certainly filmed at RAF Beaulieu, most likely during a wintry March 1944.

The only other imagery in "The Victors" involving aviation is newsreel footage, probably from CBS as its microphones are the only ones visible in shot. It shows an amusing scene with the then new First Lady, 'Bess' Truman, wife of new President of the United States, Harry S Truman, at what the newsreel narrator describes as "the National Airport" performing a launch ceremony for "new flying ambulances". The "National Airport" would have to be Washington National Airport (today, Ronald Reagan International), with the launch ceremony being held on 30th May 1945. It was 'Bess' Truman's first public appearance as First Lady, and was not one she would forget.

No matter how hard she tried, the champagne bottle she repeatedly hit against the nose of one of the "flying ambulances" refused to shatter. Apparently the bottle had not been weakened, as would normally be the case with champagne bottles used in ceremonial launches of ships or of aircraft, in order to ensure they shattered easily.

Two aircraft were lined up nose-to-nose for the launch ceremony at the National Airport. Both are versions of the Douglas C-54 Skymaster. The example on the right of the screen which the First Lady continues to batter with the unco-operative champagne bottle is an unidentifiable Douglas C-54D of the USAAF's Air Transport Command. The example on the left can be identified, as its Bureau Number (BuNo) 56509 is clearly visible on the nose. This makes it Douglas R5D-3 BuNo 56509 of the United States Navy, which was originally manufactured for the USAAF as C-54D 42-72580 and was among 202 examples diverted to the US Navy, in whose service they were designated R5D. This particular aircraft would later become Douglas DC-4 N62433 on the US civil register.

"The Victors" is a highly regarded war film for which Carl Foreman received much praise for its realism and the balance it strikes in creating both sympathy and dismay with the behaviour of its central characters in war. Unlike co-producers Steven Spielberg and actor Tom Hanks, with their TV joint venture, "Band of Brothers", Foreman avoids making his equivalent of 'Easy' Company heroic and admirable, just honestly human. He is also respectful in his treatment of British characters in the film, unlike Spielberg who cannot resist making British troops look ineffective compared with their American counterparts. "The Victors" will be high up on any list of best war films ever made, and should be an important component of any war film historian's collection.

633 SQUADRON

(Released: April 1964)

As every aviation enthusiast and British war film fan will attest, the stars of "633 Squadron" are not actors Cliff Robertson, George Chakiris and Maria Hershey, but four out of 11 examples of the de Havilland Aircraft Company's finest ever creations: Mosquito fighter-bombers.

Much has been said and written about “633 Squadron”, so to simply rehash well worn tales about the filming and how the aircraft were used in the production could lead to the accusation that material printed here has been ‘borrowed’ from other published sources. Instead, the focus will be on each aircraft’s character, history and fate where known, in keeping with the broad theme of this book. Some extra information not published before is also added.

The film’s titles credits are played out over that aerial shot of that swirling cloud caused by the vortex from the camera aircraft, accompanied by the film titles and that perennially played theme music composed by Ron Goodwin. Matched only by the theme music for “The Dam Busters” (1955), “The Great Escape” (1963) and “Where Eagles Dare” (1968, and Ron Goodwin again), “633 Squadron” will always be credited with having the most immediately recognisable musical accompaniment.

And then we have three fabulous Mosquitos roaring low in ‘Vic’ formation over The Black Swan pub and breaking to land abreast the control tower of the fictional air station of RAF Sutton Craddock. In one memorable zoom shot we see a close-up of the three ‘Mossies’, filmed from the control tower and looking right down their swirling twin props, taxiing in towards their dispersal. They look and sound every inch the part of wartime Mosquito FB.VIs, for which the art department did an excellent job in dressing them up to appear as.

All aviation film fans and historians know that the majority of the Mosquitos appearing in “633 Squadron” were target-towing Mosquito TT.35 variants. The art department painted over their glazed noses so that each TT.35 had grey-green camouflage nose tops and all-grey undersides, then had dummy cannon and machine guns installed. That made them almost indistinguishable from the FB.VIs they were portraying. However, look closely at the zoom shot, as well as at other close-ups in the film, and you cannot fail to detect the oval, painted-over flat panel of the bomb aimer’s glass in the nose - not a quibble but a credit, in fact, on how good a job the art department had done on each Mosquito TT.35.

In total, 11 Mosquitos were acquired for “633 Squadron”, nine de Havilland Mosquito TT.35 and two de Havilland Mosquito T.3 versions. Their identities have appeared in a number of publications and Websites, but for whatever reason most sources quote a total of nine Mosquitos, overlooking two that were dismantled for various scenes. The majority were sourced from No.3 Civil Anti-Aircraft Co-Operation Unit (No.3 CAACU) at Exeter Airport, Devon (the same unit which had provided three Spitfire LF.XVIs for “Reach For The Sky”, 1956). Officially, some had been struck off charge and were no longer in RAF service by the time of their acquisition in August 1962 by Mirisch Films, Ltd, the British subsidiary company of the US Mirisch Films Corporation that was the production company for “633 Squadron”.

Filming was intended to take place during September and October 1962, but a delay in releasing from service those Mosquitos still in flying condition prevented this schedule from being met. No.3 CAACU was the sole source for a suitable number of airworthy Mosquitos to appear in the film. They were dedicated

to aerial towing sleeve targets for Army, Navy and RAF Regiment gunners to practice against, a task from which they could not be spared until replacement aircraft came on line. Mirisch Films, which had bought the film rights to “633 Squadron” from the author of the original novel, Frederick E Smith, had to wait until the remaining flyable Mosquito TT.35s were finally taken out of service, which occurred in May 1963.

Of the nine TT.35s, five were still based in varying states of condition at Exeter Airport, three more had flown into storage with No.27 MU at RAF Shawbury, while the ninth example had been retained by the MoD and had been allocated to the Central Flying School at RAF Little Rissington. The two T.3 trainers were both earmarked for preservation, one held by the Ministry of Defence’s Air Historical Branch (AHB) that was keeping it in store at RAF Henlow in readiness for display in the future RAF Museum, while the other was to be preserved by the Imperial War Museum and was being kept at Exeter until its transfer to Lambeth.

Filming took place at Bovingdon Airfield, Hertfordshire, between July - September 1963, the same location that, two years earlier, had hosted the three Boeing B-17 Flying Fortresses for “The War Lover” (1962). Just as in that film, the Avro Anson C.19s of the RAF Transport Command’s Southern Communications Squadron were still based at Bovingdon and inevitably get into shot on occasion, as happened in “The War Lover”: when three Mosquitos land in succession, seven Anson C.19s can be seen parked on their ramp in the distance. There was equally the constant risk of visiting transport aircraft getting into shot: when two ‘Messerschmitt Bf.109s’ strafe the airfield, a Handley Page Hastings C.1 transport can be seen parked in the far distance as the Luftwaffe fighters depart. Also, Bovingdon’s relatively close location to London Heathrow Airport (it was then, and still is today after the closure of the airfield, one of the ‘Stacks’ for holding airliners in-bound to Heathrow) meant that intruding airliners were likewise a risk, as evidenced by the contrails in the sky unavoidably getting into shot of the two ‘Messerschmitts’ departing.

All the Mosquitos used in “633 Squadron” are detailed below, with their film roles, their known histories and their fates explained. All wore ‘HT-’ squadron codes in the film, which in reality had been carried by No.154 Squadron (Spitfires) between November 1941 - November 1942 and again between June 1943 - October 1944, as well as by No.601 Squadron (Vampire F.3s) between November 1949 - April 1951.

de Havilland Mosquito T.3 TV959, static prop as ‘MM398/HT-P’. Built at Leavesden and taken on charge by the RAF in 1945. Accepted by No.13 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at RAF Middleton St George, Durham, then served with the following units between 1946 - 1950: No.266 Squadron, No.54 OTU, No.228 Operational Conversion Unit (OCU) and No.22 MU at Silloth, where it was stored until it was transferred to No.204 Advanced Flying School in July 1951. Whilst there, TV959 was damaged and underwent repair by Brooklands Aviation at Sywell. It returned to RAF service in February 1952 and from then onwards spent varying periods of time either in store with various Maintenance Units or being operated by the Home Command

Examination Unit at White Waltham, Berkshire. On 30th April 1959, TV959 was assigned to No.3 CAACU with whom it was operated alongside Mosquito T.3 TW117 on pilot conversion, aircrew standardisation and general 'hack' tasks. TV959 remained with No.3 CAACU at Exeter until it was loaned to Mirisch Films in July 1963 for "633 Squadron".

In the film, TV959 was already in a stripped down condition, in being prepared at Exeter for its forthcoming display in the Imperial War Museum at Lambeth, South London. It appears as a wingless airframe in a couple of background shots, portraying a Mosquito undergoing repair and maintenance at RAF Sutton Craddock.

Of course, many will remember the incongruous sight of TV959 suspended from wires at Lambeth, with its starboard wing severed. It was rescued from this undignified fate in 1989 when it was removed from Lambeth and put into storage at Duxford. While there, it was acquired in August 1992 by The Fighter Collection (TFC), with a view to long-term restoration to fly again. This was not proceeded with and TV959 was sold by TFC in April 2003 to Paul G Allen's Flying Heritage Collection at Paine Field, Everett, Washington State. It was placed in storage in Norfolk pending a decision as to how to proceed to full restoration, due to the problems caused by the severing of the starboard wing inboard of the engine nacelle; even though the severed wing had been preserved, it was not possible to re-attach it due to the unconventional way it was dismantled from the airframe. A completely new wing and spar will have to be built from the correct type of wood to match with the rest of the airframe, a skill that has been developed in New Zealand. Consequently, Mosquito T.3 TV959 has been shipped to Ardmore, New Zealand, where experienced Mosquito restorer AvSpecs has been contracted to undertake this challenging project during the second decade of the 21st Century.

de Havilland Mosquito T.3 TW117, flyer as 'HR115/HT-M'. Built at Leavesden in 1945 and accepted into RAF service in August that year. On 30th May 1946 TW117 was placed in storage with No.15 MU at Wroughton, Wiltshire, before being assigned to No.2 Armament Practice Station, RAF Acklington, North Yorkshire, on 22nd July 1947. Two years later it found itself assigned to the Station Flight at RAF Linton-on-Ouse, Yorkshire, where it was used to convert pilots onto the Mosquito's short-lived successor, the de Havilland Hornet. In July 1951, TW117 joined No.204 Advanced Flying School alongside its future No.3 CAACU and film-mate, Mosquito T.3 TV959, until it came on charge in February 1953 as a pilot conversion trainer, standardisation flight examination aircraft and general 'hack' with No.58 Squadron based at RAF Benson, the RAF's last dedicated Mosquito photo reconnaissance unit. It was with No.58 Squadron that Mosquito T.3 TW117 received the PR blue and green camouflage scheme that it retained when it spent the years 1954 - 1960 stored with various Maintenance Units, and continued to do so after it joined No.3 CAACU on 31st March 1960. In September 1962, Mosquito T.3 TW117 made a rare public appearance when it was flown at the Farnborough Air Show, in a special programme on the Public Days dedicated to historic British aircraft.

When No.3 CAACU gave up its Mosquitos in May 1963, TW117 was selected for preservation and display with the future RAF Museum and was flown from Exeter to RAF Henlow for storage with the AHB collection. However, Film Aviation Services, on contract to Mirisch Films, came calling and the decision was made to loan TW117 for a role in "633 Squadron". It needed no conversion, as it was manufactured with a solid nose and did not carry target-towing gear as did the TT.35s. It was one of the five flying Mosquitos in the film, but was used as a reserve and as the aircraft on which all the pilots contracted to fly the Mosquitos were checked out on.

After filming, Mosquito T.3 TW117 returned to AHB store at RAF Henlow where it remained until it went on display at the RAF Museum from 1972 - 1991. In November 1991 it was acquired by Tacair Systems of Toronto, Canada, but for what purpose is not known. In any case, it never made the journey to Canada and was instead loaned to the Royal Norwegian Air Force Museum at Gardermoen Air Base, Norway, in February 1992, painted with the codes KK-T to represent a Mosquito FB.VI flown by Norwegian pilots with No.333 Squadron between November 1943 - February 1945. Today, this Mosquito is publicly displayed at the National Museum of Aviation at Bodo, Norway.

de Havilland Mosquito TT.35 RS709, flyer as 'HR113/HT-D/HT-G'. Purchased by Mirisch Films and registered as G-ASKA. This Mosquito began life as a B.35, constructed by Airspeed at Christchurch, Hampshire, in 1946 and serving with No.109 and No.139 (Jamaica) Squadrons until it was sent for conversion into TT.35 target-towing configuration in late 1952. It was then operated by No.3 CAACU for ten years until it was transferred to No.27 MU, RAF Shawbury, at the end of May 1963. It was one of the three Mosquito TT.35s acquired by Mirisch Films for the sole purpose of being used in "633 Squadron" and had a leading role in the film.

When filming was complete, Group Captain 'Hamish' Mahaddie, the film's aviation technical adviser, purchased Mosquito TT.35 RS709 from Mirisch Films in August 1964. But within two months Mahaddie had sold RS709 on to Peter Thomas, who displayed the Mosquito at Staverton Airport, Gloucestershire, in his Skyfame Museum collection, keeping it in its FB.VI disguise. In 1968, Mosquito TT.35 RS709 was in front of the cameras again at Bovingdon for "Mosquito Squadron" (1969), then in August the following year it began the first of its two sojourns to the United States. Ed Jurist of Vintage Aircraft International based RS709 at Nyack, New York State, from August 1969 until 1971, when it joined the Confederate Air Force at Harlingen, Texas, registered as N9797. This Mosquito stayed at Harlingen until 1975, when David Tallichet acquired it for his Yesterday's Air Force collection at Chino, California. Tallichet loaned the Mosquito for display by the Combat Air Museum at Topeka, Kansas, until 1979, during which time it was allowed to fall into non-airworthiness condition.

In November 1979, this Mosquito returned to the UK under the ownership of Doug Arnold, who registered it as G-MOSI with his Warbirds of Great Britain collection at Blackbushe Airport, Surrey, and restored it to flying condition, it taking to

the air again in September 1983. However, G-MOSI did not stay long in the UK before it was acquired by David Zeuschel of Van Nuys, California, in 1984. In February 1985, this Mosquito made its last flight to date when it was flown to Dayton, Ohio, for display at the National Museum of the United States Air Force. Today, it is exhibited there as a Mosquito PR.XVI, painted as NS519, a weather reconnaissance version operated by the 653rd Bombardment Squadron based in England between 1944 - 1945.

de Havilland Mosquito TT.35 RS712, flyer as 'RF580/HT-F'. Purchased by Mirisch Films and registered as G-ASKB. Constructed by Airspeed as a B.35 in the same batch as RS709, it had a short service career with No.13 OTU at RAF Middleton St George before it went straight into storage, where it remained until it was delivered to Sywell in November 1951 for conversion by Brooklands into a TT.35. Following conversion it had another spell in storage before it was assigned to No.1 CAACU at Hornchurch right at the end of 1953. In February 1958, Mosquito TT.35 RS712 was transferred to West Germany for operation within the 2nd Tactical Air Force, serving with the Target Towing Flight of the Armament Practice Section at Schleswigland, but within two months it had been transferred on again to No.3 CAACU at Exeter.

Mosquito TT.35 RS712 was placed in storage with No.27 MU after it was taken out of service with No.3 CAACU at the end of May 1963. It became the second of the three Mirisch-owned Mosquitos that did much of the flying in Scotland. RS712 was chartered by 'Hamish' Mahaddie after filming was completed, who based it first at RAF Henlow, then at RAF West Malling in Kent. Like RS709, it too returned to Bovingdon in 1968 for its role in "Mosquito Squadron", followed by a further spell in storage at West Malling until, in September 1972, the entrepreneurial Sir William Roberts acquired it for his Strathallan Collection in Scotland.

One of Britain's most famous airshow and experienced test pilots, Neil Williams, had an 'interesting' flight in this Mosquito when, after completing a check ride with Personal Plane Services at Booker, he attempted a go-around from Wycombe Air Park's Runway Two Five. As Williams opened the throttles, the starboard engine choked, leaving onlookers to watch helplessly as the Mosquito disappeared from sight into the valley at the end of Two Five. Expecting to see a mushroom ball of flame and smoke, they could only watch in wonder as Williams continued with all his experience to maintain the boost and coax RS712 on its single live port engine towards RAF Benson, to make a successful emergency landing. On 8th November 1975, Neil Williams made the successful ferry flight from West Malling to Strathallan.

History records that the Strathallan Collection went into receivership in 1981. Mosquito RS712 was acquired by Kermit Weeks in the auction of the Strathallan Collection on 14th July 1981. It remained in storage in the UK for several years before it was transferred back to Personal Plane Services at Booker on 21st December 1984, to begin the long programme of preparation for the trans-Atlantic flight to Florida. It was painted to represent the No.487 Squadron Mosquito flown by Group Captain P C Pickard in the attack on Amiens Prison in 1944, coded EG-F, and displayed at the 1987 Biggin Hill Air Fair, its last public appearance in the

UK. On 29th September 1987, RS712 began its long flight from Britain to Florida where it joined Kermit Weeks's Fantasy of Flight collection, registered as N35MK. Today, it is displayed statically by the EAA Museum at Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

de Havilland Mosquito TT.35 RS715, studio prop and set-dressing. Another Airspeed-built Mosquito B.35 in 1946, RS715 was, like others of its kind that year, placed straight into storage following acceptance by the RAF. There it remained until November 1951 when it was sent to Sywell for conversion into TT.35 status by Brooklands. After completion of the conversion, RS715 went back into storage with No.27 MU until it was summoned for duty with No.3 CAACU at Exeter, then again with No.4 CAACU at Llandow; it was still target-towing with the latter when No.4 CAACU combined with its No.3 sister unit, meaning a return to Exeter. Mosquito TT.35 RS715 served out the remainder of its flying career at Exeter, until it was struck off charge on 18th September 1961. As proof that the Mirisch Corporation planned well in advance of actual filming to make "633 Squadron", the entire airframe of RS715 was purchased by Mirisch Films in August 1962 and stored in sections at MGM British Film Studios, Borehamwood, with the expectation that they could be used in set-dressing for crash scenes or selected close-ups. The airframe remains were acquired by the MGM Studios after filming for future productions, but were sold in 1973. Currently, the rear fuselage is being used in the restoration of Mosquito NEXI HJ711 with the Yorkshire Air Museum. Because Mosquito TT.35 RS715 was purchased much earlier than when nearly all the other Mosquitos were obtained, and then dismantled, it is often overlooked by those sources which list Mosquitos appearing in "633 Squadron".

de Havilland Mosquito TT.35 RS718, taxiable and static prop as 'HJ662/HT-C' and 'HJ898/HT-G', the latter being the Mosquito assigned to Wing Commander Roy Grant, played by Cliff Robertson (incidentally, HJ662 was actually the serial number of the Mosquito FB.VI prototype in 1942). It was used to film the crash landing scene when Grant, with navigator 'Thistle', is forced into a wheels-up failure at Sutton Craddock after returning from the raid on the Gestapo headquarters in Bergen, where Erik Bergmann was being tortured under interrogation.

Again, another of the Airspeed batch of B.35s built at Christchurch in 1946, RS718's early career took a different path from its compatriots, being delivered to Marshalls on 11th October 1946. In early 1947, it was transferred to the BTU at West Freugh. It suffered a flying accident on 12th July that year and underwent repairs at de Havillands before being placed in storage with No.19 MU in April 1949. There is some suggestion that RS718 spent some time with No.98 Squadron, but it was in storage again when it was sent for conversion into TT.35 status by Brooklands in late 1953. On 17th May 1954, Mosquito TT.35 RS718 began operations with No.1 CAACU, with which it served for three years before being returned to storage with several different MUs. It was assigned to the Target Towing Flight of the Armament Practice Station at Schleswigland in November 1957, but stayed no longer than six months. After returning to the UK, RS718 was sent on its final tasking with No.3 CAACU.

Mosquito TT.35 RS718 suffered a second flying accident on 31st May 1962 that brought an end to its career. It was struck off charge on 19th June and was due to be transferred to No.71 MU for scrapping, but was saved from this fate through being purchased by Mirisch Films in August 1962. It appears an agreement was reached with the MoD that RS718 would be retained at Exeter until all the Mosquitos were transferred to Bovingdon for filming. The author can personally confirm this because he photographed RS718 in the static park of the Exeter Air Day held on 22nd June 1963, still in its target-tug markings. Within a few weeks it had been road-freighted to Bovingdon, where it received its "633 Squadron" 'wardrobe'.

On 8th August 1963, John Crewdson performed the wheels-up crash landing: study of this film stunt shows that Crewdson began a high speed run across grass with the tail high, before lowering the tail as he came abreast the camera position, at which point he deliberately retracted the undercarriage, resulting in RS718 slamming down onto its belly, bouncing the tail into the air and then pounding down again with such force that the fabric covering the rudder shattered, while an elevator broke off completely. The Mosquito slewed round in a complete 90 degrees before coming to a stop. Mosquito RS718 was then set up where it lay to film Grant escaping from the cockpit, with flames pouring from the port engine which actually set fire to the flying suit worn by the stuntman filling in for Cliff Robertson. The scene continues with actual Bovingdon Airfield firecrew hacking their way into the blazing cockpit to rescue the trapped 'Thistle'.

This same crash was also filmed from a camera position ahead of Mosquito RS718, with Crewdson collapsing the undercarriage and RS718 slewing round 90 degrees just before reaching the camera. This shot was used right at the end of the film, when Grant's and Hoppy's Mosquito crashes in Norway after completing the attack on the rocket fuel plant that 633 Squadron have been sent to destroy. The art department matte painted a background scene of mountains and forest trees onto the imagery of this crash, effectively creating the impression the Mosquito really was crashing in Norway. The broken airframe of another Mosquito, understood to be TT.35 TA642, was used to film Grant and Hoppy being rescued by a woodsman. Thus it was that Mosquito TT.35 RS718 was destroyed on the "633 Squadron" film set at Bovingdon, with its remains torched, then buried, along with the other two Mosquitos in the production to suffer the same fate.

de Havilland Mosquito TT.35 TA639, flyer as 'HJ682/HT-B'. Despite the sequence of the serials, TA639 is older than all the above listed TT.35s, having been built by de Havillands at Hatfield as a B.35 and taken straight into storage at No.27 MU on 16th April 1945. There it remained completely inactive until May 1952, when it underwent the TT.35 conversion course at Sywell with Brooklands. On 17th October 1952, Mosquito TT.35 TA639 joined the RAF Ballykelly Station Flight in Northern Ireland, serving there for two months before it transferred to the RAF Aldergrove Station Flight, with which it remained in Northern Ireland until it returned to storage with No.38 MU during December 1954. It remained locked away with both No.38

and No.27 MUs until it was taken out, dusted down and sent to No.3 CAACU at Exeter during September 1959.

Mosquito TT.35 TA639 was struck off charge on 31st May 1963, but was retained by the MoD and assigned to the Central Flying School (CFS) at RAF Little Rissington for display flying and personal use by the CFS Commandant. From there it went to Bovingdon in July 1963 for its role in "633 Squadron", being the other of the two MoD-owned Mosquitos (alongside T.3 TW117) which flew in the film but not in the flying sequences filmed in Scotland.

This Mosquito returned to RAF Little Rissington after completing its role in "633 Squadron". It seems that some controversy became attached to this aircraft, especially as to whether it was maintained in airworthy condition. A book published in 2006 about the CFS at Little Rissington has made the claim that Ground Engineering Wing staff resented being given the task of maintaining not only an extra aircraft in addition to all the Jet Provost T.4 trainers they had to care for, but of a type and method of construction that they had no experience of working on before. The book alleges they intentionally placed the Mosquito in the sole heated hangar at RAF Little Rissington, making sure it was placed with its tail positioned under a canvas hot air duct. This caused the glued joints in the wooden airframe to progressively fail, making the Mosquito unsafe to fly. In March 1966, a glued joint inspection took place, which found that the joints had deteriorated to such an extent that the aircraft was not only unsafe to fly, but unsafe to taxi.

Another mystery attached to Mosquito TT.35 TA639 is an event that the author himself was witness to in 1965, but the significance of which he was unaware at the time. Mosquito TA639 was an extra and undeclared flying display item at the Exeter Air Day on 26th June 1965. TA639 was still carrying its "633 Squadron" camouflage and roundels, but its fake code and serial had been removed. It flew as the final item in the flying display, not listed in the published flying programme. What is mystifying is that this demo is not mentioned in TA639's flight record that is in the possession of the RAF Museum at Cosford and is obtainable Online. Its absence from TA639's flight record suggests that this demo might have been unauthorised and, thus, may have been illegal.

Suffice it to say, Mosquito TT.35 TA639 did not fly again after it was grounded in March 1966. It was transferred to the AHB collection store at RAF Henlow in August 1967, listed for display in the future RAF Museum. In September 1969, it had been placed in storage at RAF Cosford and went on display at the then Cosford Aerospace Museum during the Seventies. In 1988, it was repainted to represent the Pathfinder Mosquito B.XX flown by Wing Commander Guy Gibson, VC, coded AZ-E of No.627 Squadron, in which he lost his life on a sortie during 19th/20th September 1944. TA639 retains these markings to this day with the RAF Museum collection at Cosford.

de Havilland Mosquito TT.35 TA642, intended as a flyer as 'HX835' but written out of the film when it suffered an undercarriage collapse on landing on 1st August 1963. The damaged airframe was used for the crash scene at the end of the film, when the Norwegian

woodsman helps 'Hoppy' rescue Grant from the burning wreckage. Its remains were also used as the flaming wreck of the Mosquito in the film which crashes while training for the mission in Scotland, with another Mosquito over-flying it to represent Grant performing his salute to fallen comrades.

This Mosquito was built as a B.35 by de Havillands at Hatfield and was delivered to the RAF in 1945 just as the War in Europe was coming to an end. Little is known about its service record, but it was converted into a TT.35 in 1951 and was operated by both Nos.1 & 3 CAACUs. It was struck off charge on 31st May 1963, but was clearly still airworthy when it joined its compatriots for filming at Bovingdon. After it was dismantled and burnt for the two crash scenes, Mosquito TT.35 TA642 was reportedly buried at Bovingdon along with the remains of RS718 and the third Mosquito that was destroyed during filming, TA724.

de Havilland Mosquito TT.35 TA719, flyer as 'HJ898/HT-G', Wing Commander Grant's Mosquito. Purchased by Mirisch Films and registered as G-ASKC. Built as a B.35 at Hatfield, TA719 was placed into storage after being accepted by the RAF in June 1945. There it was to remain, completely inactive, until it was sent to Sywell on 15th August 1953 for conversion into TT.35 configuration. When completed, it was first stored with No.22 MU before being allocated to No.4 CAACU. On 30th June 1954, it was transferred to No.3 CAACU and served out the rest of its career at Exeter until it was retired in November 1962. It remained at Exeter after being purchased by Mirisch, awaiting "633 Squadron" duty.

After filming was completed, Mosquito TT.35 TA719 was sold to Peter Thomas at Staverton Airport for his Skyfame Museum collection, much to the reported annoyance of actor Cliff Robertson - himself a very experienced pilot in the States - who had been so taken with this Mosquito that he wanted to purchase it when filming was completed. Robertson allegedly blamed 'Hamish' Mahaddie, who handled the disposal of the three Mirisch-owned Mosquitos post-filming, for blocking the deal and selling TA719 on to Peter Thomas, especially as Mahaddie sold RS709 to Thomas as well two months later while chartering RS712 himself from Mirisch. Robertson is quoted on his own Website as saying, "I tried to buy one, so I could bring it back to America, but I was subverted by someone who will remain nameless, who screwed things up so nobody got them". One possible explanation for Robertson not getting his hands on one of the Mirisch Mosquitos is that the studio, Columbia Pictures, to whom Robertson was contracted, did not want the actor to own what they perceived as a high risk machine, so perhaps Mirisch Films were instructed not to approve the sale to him.

Thomas intended to keep TA719 in flying condition, and in B.35 configuration, together with RS709. This meant that, along with Hatfield-based Mosquito T.3 RR299, MoD-owned TA639 at RAF Little Rissington, ex- No.3 CAACU Mosquito TT.35 TA634 acquired by the Liverpool Corporation at Speke, and the Mahaddie-chartered RS712 stored at RAF Henlow, there were six airworthy Mosquitos in the UK at the end of 1963. Today there isn't one. However, by 27th July 1964 that total was reduced

to five when TA719 was badly damaged at Staverton during a deadstick landing, especially to the port wing outboard of the engine. The damage was too extensive for Skyfame to repair, but it was used as a static prop with a fake port outer wing when "Mosquito Squadron" was filmed at Bovingdon in 1968. The Imperial War Museum acquired TA719 in 1978 after taking over most of Thomas's collection following the closure of the Skyfame Museum and transferred it to Duxford, where it has remained ever since. Today, Mosquito TT.35 TA719 is suspended from the ceiling in the AirSpace Hall at Duxford, beautifully restored in its silver-yellow-black target-tug colours.

de Havilland Mosquito TT.35 TA724, taxiable and static prop, with no serial but as 'HT-R'. Built in 1946 by Airspeed at Christchurch as a B.35, this Mosquito, like so many others, went straight into storage after delivery to the Royal Air Force. It seems to have remained there until 1951, when it took the TT.35 conversion course and at some stage in time arrived at Exeter with No.3 CAACU. Purchased by Mirisch Films, it was selected to be used in the crash scene when a Mosquito is shot up on the runway by a Messerschmitt Bf.109 and runs out of control into a petrol bowser. To achieve this, a brace was attached to the tail wheel and fitted to the fuselage underside, in order to prevent the tail wheel from turning and thus ensure the pilotless Mosquito - naturally there was no one in the cockpit - taxied under its own power in a straight line right into the bowser on 10th August 1963. According to Robertson, "...they had this special effects guy running behind it with long wires, so he was able to trigger it off when it hit this truck. It exploded. That broke my heart. Then we watched it burn... That central spar was made of very highly compressed wood. I watched it burn for over three hours, and that spar was still intact. It was amazing how strong it was".

de Havilland Mosquito TT.35 TJ118, cockpit section only for filming in MGM British Film Studios in Borehamwood and set-dressing at Bovingdon. Built in 1945 by de Havillands at Hatfield, TJ118 was originally ordered as a B.XVI but was produced as a B.35. Like so many 1945-delivered B.35s, it was placed straight into storage by the RAF with the War in Europe over. It probably remained locked away until July 1953, when it went to Brooklands at Sywell for conversion into a TT.35. It, too, was acquired by Mirisch Films in August 1962 as a grounded airframe with inhibited engines. All the cockpit scenes in "633 Squadron" were filmed at Borehamwood using the nose section of TJ118; it was used likewise in "Mosquito Squadron". The separated wing section of TJ118 appears in "633 Squadron", set up on a low loader with 'Erks' working on it just before the attack by the two Messerschmitts; the wings had not been repainted, the yellow-black target-tug scheme clearly visible in shot. Today, Mosquito TT.35 TJ118's nose and fuselage sections are in the possession of the de Havilland Aircraft Heritage Centre at London Colney, Hertfordshire.

On 9th May 1963, six Mosquitos of No.3 CAACU made a farewell fly-past over their Exeter Airport base. They comprised T.3 TW117 and TT.35s RS709, RS712, TA634, TA639 and TA719, although TA639 suffered a port engine failure and had