

A bombing diary

Below are details from an actual military campaign diary showing one day's bombing at the beginning of the Battle of Britain.

19 July 1940

Enemy action by day

At 0703 hours a German plane which had carried out a reconnaissance over Croydon, Northolt and Brooklands was shot down off Shoreham.

About 30 enemy aircraft approached Dover at 1215 hours. Three squadrons took off to intercept. Three of our planes were shot down immediately and another three crashed while returning to base. (4 pilots killed, 2 injured; 5 air gunners missing). Four German planes were shot down. Anti-aircraft at Dover shot down one German plane.

One raid of two German planes crossed the coast north of Aberdeen and bombed Glasgow at 1013 hours. 42 people were injured.

At 1431 hours our planes encountered 12 German planes off Selsey Bill and one was shot down (unconfirmed). One of our planes is missing.

Other raids were reported in the Bristol Channel, Portsmouth and Swanage areas during the day and minesweepers were attacked off the Isle of Wight.

At 1600 hours about 36 enemy bombers and fighters again approached Dover. Three squadrons were sent up. Seven German planes were shot down (unconfirmed). In addition, 2 enemy seaplanes (unconfirmed) were shot down near Calais. One British plane crashed (pilot safe).

At about 1735 hours one British plane landed in flames at West Grinstead following enemy action. It was a total loss but the pilot is safe.

At 1803 hours a German plane which had penetrated inland was shot down off Shoreham.

By night

From 2330 19 July until 0230 hours on 20 July, 33 raids were directed against the coast west of the Isle of Wight as far as Plymouth, 5 or 6 of which crossed to the Bristol Channel.

There were about 15 raids in the Thames Estuary–Harwich area,

At about 0030 hours 20 July, an enemy seaplane was shot down. It was seen to fall into the sea in flames near Harwich.

Statistics

Fighter Command Working Aircraft as at 0900 hours, 19 July 1940: 642

Planes shot down:

- Enemy: Fighters – 3 confirmed, 8 unconfirmed; Bombers – 3 confirmed, 1 unconfirmed; Seaplanes – 1 confirmed, 2 unconfirmed.
- British: 9 planes confirmed lost plus one unconfirmed (No. 43 Squadron; crashed on landing).

Patrols flown:

175 patrols flown, involving 735 aircraft.

Home Security Reports

At about 0603 hours, bombs were dropped on the Norfolk and Norwich Aerodrome at Norwich. A hangar, used for the storage of AFS appliances, was hit and the clubhouse was burnt out.

At about 1040 hours, 8 bombs were dropped in the Govan and Scotstoun areas of Glasgow. Tenements were seriously damaged. Windows of the nearby Royal Ordnance Factory, were broken by splinters and blast, but the factory was not otherwise damaged.

At 1720 hours, a boy's school was demolished when bombs were dropped on Polruan, near Fowey.

Teacher's sheet

Based on **pages 10 and 11** of *Children in the Second World War*

A bombing diary

Age range

- Years 3/4 (SP4/5).
- Years 5/6 (SP6/7).

Resources

Copies of the worksheet.

Using the worksheet

The information on worksheet **4B** is taken from an actual military campaign diary. The designations of the individual aircraft and some other jargon terms have been removed to make it simpler to read and understand.

You may want to begin by reviewing military time. Instead of using 12 numbers and am and pm to tell the difference between night and day, the military clock uses 24 hours. This makes telling the time more clear and eliminates confusion. So, instead of saying 2 o'clock in the afternoon, a person would instead say 'it is 1400 hours.' Students could begin by changing all the military times to am and pm.

There are many ways to extract information from this report in order to learn what happened on 19 July 1940. Below are a few suggestions. You may like to put some questions up on the board and have students work in groups to answer them.

Younger students

The students should use a dictionary to look up the meanings of any words they do not understand. They can also use a map of Britain to look up the locations mentioned in the text. They should then answer these questions.

Questions (and answers)

Write these questions on the board for the students to try. (Answers in brackets.)

1. What time of day did most of the action happen, morning, afternoon or night? (night)
2. How many people were injured in the 1013 bombing of Glasgow? (42)
3. At 1400 hours, how many German planes were shot down? (9 unconfirmed)
4. What is the total number of German planes shot down on 19 July, confirmed and unconfirmed? (18)

5. What damage was done to the Norfolk and Norwich Aerodrome? (10)
6. How many British pilots escaped safely when their planes crashed? (2, and another 2 were injured)

More able students can try the questions for the older students.

Outcomes

The students can:

- Extract information from a text.
- Appreciate that a lot of pilots were injured or killed and planes were lost on just one day of fighting.

Older students

The students should use a dictionary to look up the meanings of any words they do not understand. They can use a map of Britain to plot where the day's attacks took place. They could start by answering the questions set for younger students then move on to these questions. (Answers in brackets.)

Questions (and answers)

Write these questions on the board for the students to try.

1. During the 1215 raid near Dover, how many German planes were shot down? How many British planes were shot down? (5 German, 3 British).
2. Why do you think most of the raids happened at night? (It was dark and harder to see the enemy planes).
3. At 1040 bombs were dropped on Glasgow, what damage was done? (Royal Ordnance Factory windows broken, tenements damaged).
4. How many German raids were there between 2300 and 0230? (33).
5. On 19 July one British plane was unconfirmed lost. What squadron did it belong to? (43 Squadron).

Outcomes

The students can:

- Extract information from a text.
- Appreciate the extent of the fighting on just one day of the Battle for Britain.