

BOMBER HALL

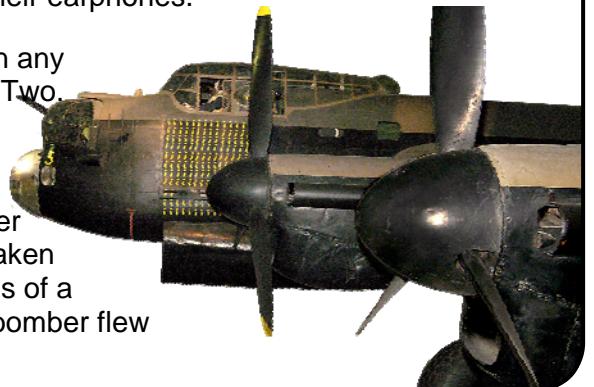
Following the fall of France in 1940, the only way of taking the fight to the enemy was by undertaking bombing missions against occupied Europe. The bombing offensive against the Axis powers continued for five years, during which over 55,000 Royal Air Force and 76,000 United States Air Force, aircrew perished.

This pack will highlight 5 important bomber aircraft from World War II to help you in your self guided tour.

THE AVRO LANCASTER 1

Location: At the entrance to Bomber Hall from Historic Hangars.

- ➔ The Lancaster, which first saw action in April 1942, was the RAF's best heavy bomber and for the last three years of the war was the major heavy bomber used by Bomber Command to take the war right into the heart of Nazi Germany.
- ➔ The Lancaster was fully equipped for night flying and usually flew with a crew of 7 men. This included the pilot, flight engineer, radio operator, navigator, and 3 gunners. It was the gunners, positioned in the rear and mid-upper turrets, who suffered the most as they were forced to sit through long flights in cold isolation, breathing through oxygen masks and having very little contact with the rest of the crew, other than through their earphones.
- ➔ Bomber Command suffered higher casualty rates than any other branch of the British services during World War Two. It is also well worth noting that the average age of the crew of a Lancaster was only 22.
- ➔ The yellow bombs painted on the side of this Lancaster bomber denote the number of missions which it has taken part in, a total of 137. The average number of missions of a Lancaster bomber was in fact 21 and only one allied bomber flew more missions than this.



THE BOEING B-17G FLYING FORTRESS

Location: On the left of the Lancaster bomber, as you look at its nose.

- ➔ It was the B-17, also known as the Flying Fortress, together with the B-24 Liberator that played the most important role in America's daylight strategic bombing campaign. The B-17 was loaded with machine guns and could fly at an altitude of up to 9000 metres. When used in mass formation it could deliver a staggering tonnage of explosives. In clear weather, a sophisticated Norden Bombsight allowed the B-17 to strike a target that was relatively small.



- ➔ However, for the 10 man crew of the B-17, conditions were cramped and uncomfortable as the aircraft was not pressurised, meaning the effects of air sickness could be horrific.
- ➔ B-17s were deployed in large fleets, so mass production was necessary; for every aircraft that was shot down by the Germans at least another two were produced in American factories!
- ➔ One American Officer said "The B-17 was a very sturdy, easy to fly aeroplane that would take lots of damage and get you home."

TEACHERS RESOURCES – WORLD WAR II AIRCRAFT

THE FOCKE WULF FW190A-8/U-1

Location: To the left of the Lancaster bomber, as you look at its nose.

- The Focke Wulf was one of the most successful combat aircraft flown during World War II; being superior to the Spitfire V, the Luftwaffe had the advantage until the first Spitfire IX in July 1942.
- The Fw190 proved to be fast, strong and heavily armed with good all round vision and excellent ground handling. Although it was more advanced than the Messerschmitt Bf109, they operated side by side as day fighters on all German fronts. As higher performance was demanded of the Fw190 it was quickly fitted with bomb racks for fighter-bomber work.

- As a fighter-bomber it proved itself to be very adaptable and was used for:

- Hit and run bombing
- Ground attack
- Torpedo attack
- Tactical reconnaissance



THE VICKERS WELLINGTON X

Location: To the right of the Lancaster – adjacent to the Milestones of Flight tunnel.

- The two-engine Wellington bomber, introduced into service in 1938, formed the backbone of Bomber Command and was Britain's most effective night bomber until the introduction of four-engine bombers in 1941.
- The Wellington was renowned for the large amount of damage that it could withstand. It was immensely strong as a result of the geodetic type of construction developed by Barnes Wallis.
- Although originally designed as a bomber, the Wellington also proved effective as a torpedo carrier and submarine killer in Coastal Command, before moving on to Transport and Training Commands.
- The Wellington dropped the first 1,880kg 'Blockbuster' bomb during the Emden raid of 1941.



THE HANDLEY PAGE HALIFAX II

Location: At the back of the Bomber hall behind the Wellington.

- The Handley Page Halifax was the second British four-engine bomber to enter service during World War II and the first to bomb Germany, as part of the Hamburg night bombing raids, on 12-13 March 1941.
- The Halifax was easy to fly, much faster than the Wellington and possessed a good range and bomb load which meant that it was second only to the Avro Lancaster bomber.

- Unfortunately, as it lacked adequate defensive fire power it suffered heavy losses in Bomber Command operations over Germany and was gradually restricted to less hazardous targets from September 1943. Later in the war, the Halifax was withdrawn from Bomber Command and used as mine layers and torpedo bombers in Coastal Command.



Explore Further

There are 4 other World War II aircraft in the Bomber Hall: the Heinkel He 162A-2, the Airspeed Oxford 1, the Avro Anson 1 and the North American TB-25 J Mitchell. Basic information about these aircraft can be found on our website

www.rafmuseum.org/london