

DORNIER Do 17Z Werke nr. 1160

Built as a Do 17Z-2, with two supercharged Bramo 'Fafnir' 323P-1 nine-cylinder radial engines; the ultimate, and most numerous, model of the Do 17 produced.

Allotted to 7/KG3 (7 Staffel (Squadron), III Gruppe of KG.3 with fuselage codes 5K+AR. Based at St Trond in Belgium.

Mon. 26 August 40 Part of a formation despatched to bomb Debden and Hornchurch airfields. Seven aircraft of the Staffel started to bomb an aerodrome. Accounts of its loss vary from source to source; The original PoW Interrogation Report states that before reaching the target, when flying above clouds this aircraft seemingly became separated from the rest of the formation and lost its bearings. It was attacked by fighters, probably one of the recently-arrived RAF Hornchurch, Essex-based Boulton Paul Defiants of No.264 Squadron RAF led by Flt Lt Banham (with their forward base at RAF Manston, Kent) which hit both engines and the cockpit as one of at least one – or up to six, as again published accounts vary - Dorniers brought down by the Defiants, who lost three of their number to defending Bf109s. At around 13.40 hours the aircraft force-landed on Goodwin Sands off the eastern Kentish coast at low tide. Of the four crew, two (Wounded Pilot Feldwebel Willi Effmert, and Bomb Aimer Uffz Hermann Ritzel) became Prisoners-of-War in Canada and two (27-year old Wireless Operator Unteroffizier Helmut Reinhardt and 21-year old Bomb aimer Gefreiter Heinz Huhn) were killed, their bodies being recovered later and buried in Holland and the UK (Cannock Chase German cemetery) respectively.

Sep 2008 Following probable recent exposure by shifting sands, wreck located at a depth of some 16m/50 feet and a high – resolution side-scan sonar and magnetometer survey was made (following original discovery by recreational diver Mr Bob Peacock who reported the find) by Wessex Archaeology on behalf of English Heritage. The aircraft is lying inverted and largely complete on a bed of chalk on Goodwin Sands, with a small debris field around it. Mr. Peacock indicated the wreck was first reported to him c. 2004 by a fisherman who had apparently snagged his nets on it c.2000/2001.

Starboard tailplane, port rudder, tail fairing cone and tailwheel assembly, flap assemblies, engine cowlings, forward nose glazing and bomb bay and undercarriage doors missing, though both the main undercarriage units remain retracted and in place.

Other items including at least two of the original six 7.92mm MG 15 machine guns removed during unauthorised dives by 'sport' divers since 2008.

20 May 2009 Further Sidescan geophysical sonar survey of area including the Do 17 wreck by Wessex Archaeology on behalf of English Heritage, confirming the continued presence and good condition of the aircraft.

2/3 Jun 2010 Diving Survey (two dives on consecutive days) of aircraft undertaken in conjunction with Wessex Archaeology Ltd. A few small corroded components were recovered from the vicinity of the aircraft. A further two dives made later.

This is the only known substantially intact Dornier Do-17. A few components from other machines survive, including the rudder, spinner and propeller blade displayed in the Battle of Britain Hall at Hendon.

TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON © RAF MUSEUM 2010

RAF Museum contact for further information, images and interviews on the Dornier project: 020 8358 4849 / dornier@rafmuseum.org