

THE "MANY" REMEMBER

Twelve years ago there was no runway here, only oil-stained grass, yellowing in the hot sun, for this is Biggin Hill. Today a chapel stands in memory of those Few who flew and fought from here. Biggin Hill has changed since their day! Meteors have replaced their Hurricanes and Spitfires and even their little Flying Control will soon be no more. Jets take off from where, during that summer of 1940, orders were given to send a mere handful of young men into the skies again and again, some of them to die for the many who waited below. The pilots who gather today in the rooms where these Few found rest from battle, are proud of the heritage that has been handed to them. For they are of the same breed of fighter, deadly in combat but carefree and happy among their friends.

A memory of twelve years ago — and the walls too bear witness to the men who won us glory in those summer skies, men whose names shall never be forgotten by those for whom they fought — their leader, Air Chief Marshal Dowding; the legless pilot who destroyed twenty-two enemy aircraft, Douglas Bader, or his fellow-pilot Stanford Tuck. Hour after hour, week after week, the Few took their planes into the air in desperate, stubborn battle against the might of Goering's Luftwaffe. High over the vales of Kent and the downs of Sussex they fought, and down below we kept score as if it were a county cricket match. Then, as the weeks stretched into months we knew that victory would be ours, the few were winning the "Battle of Britain."

They were only a few, and of that few many did not return. But wreckage that scattered the shores and fields of southern England told its own story of the glory that they had won. The Luftwaffe had been smashed!

Each year we remember those immortal few. A great fly-past of Britain's air might salutes their memory and now to join that great pageant of thanksgiving, R.A.F. Camberras head for London.

On the roof of London's Air Ministry, Britain's war-time leaders watch the parade. Air Chief Marshal Sir John Baker is with Lord Alexander. Now the lone Hurricane passes over. Lord Tedder and his son are there, and so are Sir William Slim and Admiral Sir Roderick Macgriger. All eyes turn upwards as a supersonic Hawker Hunter flashes over London in a final salute to that gallant few whose deeds were the glory of our island home.