

A HISTORY OF
No. 68 SQUADRON

ROYAL AIR FORCE



PETER L. CROFT

1994

The 'Owl' motif and unusual motto, reflect the Squadron's night-flying activities and its Czechoslovak Aircrew connections

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APPENDICES:

- A. List of enemy aircraft destroyed by the Squadron during the Second World War, and those claimed as probably destroyed or damaged.
- B. List of the Czech/Slovak aircrew who served on the Squadron
- C. 68 Squadron Aircrew Strength at Disbandment - 20 April 1945.
- D. 68 Squadron Aircrew at Disbandment - 21 January 1959 and Squadron Silver notes and list

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The following authors:

Michael JF Bowyer	'Air Raid'
Robert Jackson	'Fighter Pilots of World War II'
David Johnson	'The City Ablaze'
John Kemp	'Off to War with 054'
JDR Rawlings	'Fighter Squadrons of the RAF'
Andrew Thomas	'Squadrons of the RAF'

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No. 68 Squadron was first formed on 30th January 1917, at Harlaxton, near Grantham. The personnel consisted of Australian volunteers who had requested to join the Royal Flying Corps. The Squadron spent eight months working up and in September of that year was posted to France. It was equipped with DH 5 aeroplanes which had not proved effective for air fighting because of their low speed, and therefore the Squadron was given ground attack duties, particularly trench strafing. In January 1918 the Australians formed their own Flying Corps, and 68 became No. 2 Squadron AFC. Having been re-equipped with SE 5 aeroplanes, the Squadron then flew the whole range of operational patrols and fighter duties. By the time of the Armistice it had claimed 40 enemy aircraft destroyed in combat. It remained on the Continent until disbandment at Hellemes on 28th February 1919, when the personnel returned to Australia.

In World War II the fierce Luftwaffe night bombing raids during the Autumn of 1940 had convinced even the Air Ministry that the Air Defence of Great Britain was going to take place mainly at night. Also something had to be done on a large scale to protect the whole Country, and particularly the main cities and ports; the devastating air-raid on Coventry on the night of 15th November 1940, may have had more effect politically than the London blitz. Therefore, in the Winter of 1940-1941 there was an urgent need for an increase in all aspects of night defence, and it had been thought for some time that the night-fighter aeroplane would be the most effective. In this respect some better tools for the job were slowly becoming available which were the fast and heavily armed Beaufighter aeroplane, and airborne interception radar, known as A.I.

This is not to say that the British night-fighter defence did not exist in 1940, but the available aeroplanes were the Blenheim and the Defiant, both already failed daytime fighters, which because they were too slow to catch the enemy Junkers and Heinkels, and had little forward-facing fire-power, led to many lost opportunities. Day-fighter Hurricanes were co-opted to join in night defence to get over the low speed problem, but they had to rely on searchlight cooperation or by just patrolling over a suspected target in the hope of finding a raider. For example, after the day Battle of Britain was over, No. 85 Squadron Hurricanes flew regularly at night from Gravesend, with one flight on duty at any one time in the hope of finding a raider. On the night of the great fire raid on London, of 29th December 1940, Group instructed the fighters to fly "layered" patrols over the City, and to allow the fighters freedom, the anti-aircraft guns were ordered to cease firing, but there were no interceptions.

There was no room in Hurricanes (or Defiants) for operator-manned airborne radar, the pilots seeing powers were limited to nights of clear skies or sometimes a concentration of enemy bombers over a small target. As an example of the latter, during one of the raids on Hull, No. 255 Night-Fighter Squadron flying Hurricanes and Defiants, shot down seven enemy bombers in one night, and also claimed two damaged. Flt Lt Richard Stevens of No. 151, ostensibly a day-fighter Hurricane Squadron, destroyed 14 enemy aircraft at night over a long period. However these brave efforts were only a stop-gap before better night airborne defences could be made available, together with a system of ground control suited to night operations.

Controlling fighters from the ground at night had not been a great success in 1940 because although the original Chain Home early warning ground radars protecting the South-East of England, operating on long wave-lengths with fixed aerials, were adequate for interceptions on raiders in daylight, they were not accurate enough for night operations when the pilot perhaps could only see his target at a much shorter range. Gradually the CH stations were now being supplemented by GCI stations with rotating aerials on shorter wave-lengths which also gave accurate height information. However the precision in synchronising individual height, course and speed, essential to night interception, demanded specialised techniques from the ground controllers which took time to be appreciated and developed. It is said that the first really successful night interception from the ground did not take place until the night of the 26th February 1941, by the famous Sqn Ldr Brown, the "Sultan of Sopley", who became arguably the most successful GCI controller of the War.

Airborne radar had been in the experimental stage for some time. In 1940, the Fighter Interception Unit (FIU) had attached their Blenheims from Ford to Nos. 25 and 29 Squadrons with some success when they could catch up with the enemy bombers. As well, No. 219 Squadron flew Beaufighters fitted with Mark IV A.I. from the end of October 1940, but the early A.I. sets had more than their share of teething troubles. Often the vibration of the Beaufighter engines would be enough to knock out the sensitive radar, the set working beautifully on the ground, but registering nothing when switched on in the air. As an example of the frustration of the time, at the height of the London blitz from 19th to the 22nd December 1940, over 160 night-fighter sorties were flown with only one interception and no kills. The Luftwaffe air fleets ranged over Britain largely unmolested.

It is recorded that in December 1940 even Hampden bombers from Nos. 83 and 144 Squadrons amongst others, with their turrets manned and extra beam guns fitted, were airborne as night-fighters, which is an example of the desperate measures attempted because of the nightly raids. They were of course no faster than the enemy bombers that they sought to pursue. In the Winter of 1940-1941 the essential tasks were to improve the A.I. performance in the speedy and well-armed Beaufighters, building more of these aeroplanes, better ground control in the initial stages of an interception, and forming more squadrons of trained crews..

One of the night-fighter units that came into being as a result of some of these requirements was No. 68 Squadron. The Squadron record reads as follows:

"7/1/1941. The formation of 68 Squadron, which is to be an operational night-fighter squadron, commenced at Catterick, Yorks., on this date. The Squadron is to be equipped with twin-engine aircraft (Blenheim I, Mercury XV) and the Squadron letters will be WM."

The first Commanding Officer of the Squadron was the newly promoted Sqn Ldr D L Clackson, who had been the senior Flt Lt Flight Commander of No. 600 Squadron, which was also stationed at Catterick early in 1941. Soon after this the Air Ministry ordained that the Commanding Officers of twin-engine aircraft squadrons should be of the rank of Wing Commander, and obviously Sqn Ldr Clackson was not senior enough for this rank. Wg Cdr Aitken, DFC was posted in as C.O.; Sqn Ldr Clackson was retained for a while as a Flight Commander.

At Catterick No. 68 Squadron began work-up training to be a night-fighter squadron as and when the personnel were posted in. It is probable that most of the the pilots were from single-engine fighter squadrons, and may or may not have been through a twin-engine conversion course.. The first A.I. operators were mostly ex-gunners who were trained on the Squadron mainly by the ground 'boffins'. At this time there were no 'operational training units for night-fighter crews, and although the pilots were fully trained to fly aeroplanes, there was no A.I. training school for operators until No.3 Radio School was opened at Prestwick in July 1941. Incidentally, in early 1941 gunners, and therefore those who became A.I. operators, although they received flying pay, were not guaranteed sergeant rank. For example, on 68 Squadron, Briggs, Sandow and Robbins flew regularly in the rank of Leading Aircraftsman before they were promoted to sergeant in July 1941. For a time there was the anomaly of ex-gunner A.I. operators flying as LAC's, and Radio Observers, converted from Observers and Navigators, arriving from May onwards as sergeants.

In April 1941, 68 Squadron was made operational and moved to High Ercall in Shropshire into what became 9 Group, for the defence of the Midland towns and the North-West coastal ports and cities. Early in May the Squadron commenced re-equipping with Beaufighter If aeroplanes and the A.I. was Mark IV. An intensive training programme was started with day and night interception practice with the GCI station and army searchlight units. It remained operational, flying Blenheims while the changeover of aeroplanes was taking place, and unfortunately on the 18th May the first casualties occurred when Plt Off Butcher and Sgt Wiskar crashed their Blenheim when coming back from a patrol.

On the night of the 17th June 1941 the Squadron achieved its first success when Flt Lt Pain AFC, shot down a He 111 which crashed near Bath, his A.I. operator was the ground Signals Radar Officer and A.I. Instructor Fg Off David Davies, who was flying on this sortie for air experience. In his combat report Derek Pain complimented his temporary operator on the total efficiency with which he conducted the interception, and also praised Sqn Ldr Kirby-James for his controlling technique on the ground.

One of the best things that happened to 68 Squadron was the introduction of the Czech element because these experienced and resourceful flyers gave such character to the Squadron. On the 1st July 1941, Fg Off Kloboucnik, the first Czech pilot to arrive came from No. 54 OTU with his operator Sgt Klvacik. Later on Plt Off Mansfeld and his operator Sgt Janacek, and another pilot Sgt Rietiker also came from this OTU. According to Miro Mansfeld the reason for their, and others' later, postings to 68 Squadron was that the Czech Officer Commanding, General Janoucek, required that all branches of operational air activity should be covered by Czech aircrew, and until then no Czechs were flying on night-fighter squadrons. As there were not enough Czech aircrew to spare to form a full squadron, the next best thing was to become part of a British squadron.

There were sometimes as many as eight Czech crews flying with 68, not quite enough for a full Czech flight, and the average was about four or five, but it must be remembered that such as the Mansfeld/Janacek and Bobek/Kovarik crews, each did two very long tours. Sqn Ldrs Vesely, Sykora and Mansfeld in their turn, became 'A' Flight Commanders.

The Squadron continued to fly operationally from High Ercall and Valley, but the amount of enemy activity in their sector had reduced to very occasional raids. The weather on that side of the Country was terrible throughout the year, with high winds and rain which naturally also reduced the amount of flying, even if only practice trips. Unfortunately in July there was a fatal crash when Fg Off Morrough-Ryan and Sgt Willis went into the south side of the Wrekin, a 900 ft. high hill not too far from the runway, it is sad to think that they nearly cleared it. At the subsequent Court of Enquiry the reason given for the crash was "a sudden deterioration in the weather", and there was a recommendation "that a red obstruction light should be placed on top of the Wrekin"!! In October another Beaufighter crashed near High Ercall when Fg Off Kloboucnik and Sgt Klvacik were killed, they were buried in Wellington Cemetery.

A further four German bombers were destroyed while the Squadron was still at High Ercall and claims for one probably destroyed and two damaged were allowed. Four of these seven combats were by Miro Mansfeld and his radio observer Slavo Janacek on the night of 12th October 1941, during a raid on Liverpool. This raid was handled on the ground by a GCI controller called John Kemp, it was his first operational duty in a mobile unit set up on Rhosneigor golf links in North Wales. Both on the ground and in the air first class interceptions were carried out. Plt Off Mansfeld was awarded the Czech DFC and Sgt Janacek the Czech DFM for these victories. Plt Off Shepherd and Sgt Oxby destroyed a He 111 on the night of the 1st November.

The Squadron had been at High Ercall for eleven months, and were most happy when the news was announced that they were to move to Coltishall. This took place on the 1st March 1942, when they did a straight swop with No. 255 Squadron. A good deal of 68's happiness was due to the fact that Coltishall, completed in 1939 as a permanent brick-built station, was akin to paradise compared to the rough living at High Ercall, and the flat lands of Norfolk for approach and take-off were much preferable to orbiting the Wrekin!

Percy Lamey was eventually christened the "Father Engineer" of 68 Squadron, but he was a very junior Pilot Officer when he arrived a few days before the move. His favourite story in later years was how he came up against the mighty Fg Off Clowes, who was the Squadron Adjutant, on moving day. When the inadequate amount of transport provided by Group arrived, Ivor Clowes immediately filled it with his filing cabinets and other office furniture leaving no room for Percy's spare engines, guns, tools, and all other vital items to keep the Squadron in the air. The watching airmen much enjoyed the verbal battle between the two officers for space on the transport, and junior-in-rank Percy eventually had to appeal to the CO, who wisely ordained that the Squadron Engineer's supplies took precedence over the office, which had to wait for the transport to return from its first journey.

The Squadron quickly settled down in their new sector at Coltishall in 12 Group, under the control of Neatishead and Happisburgh CHL. They hardly had time to complete their sector reconnaissance before there was enemy activity over the East Coast, and on the night of the 8th March they had three A.I. contacts and two visuals, but the only combat was when Plt Off Newhouse/Plt Off Matson claimed a damaged He 111. Later on in March W/O Welch/Plt Off Bennett were given another He 111 as damaged. There were many more alerts and scrambles at this time, but many 'bogeys' turned out to be returning friendly bombers.

Described as the 'Sacking of Norwich' in his book 'Air Raid' by Michael J F Bowyer, commenced at the end of April 1942. It is said that Hitler, incensed by the fire damage done by RAF bombers to the medieval buildings in Lubeck, the old Hanseatic city in Schleswig-Holstein, ordered that retaliatory terror attacks of a similar nature should be made on certain British cities. These came to be known as the 'Baedeker' raids, so called because the places involved were listed in the tourist directory of that title, and Norwich, nearby to Coltishall, was one of these targets. The raids were concentrated into a short space of time and consisted of about 30 bombers. German records show that the Luftwaffe lost 40 aircraft shot down on 14 'Baedeker' raids on cathedral cities such as Bath, York, Exeter, Canterbury and Norwich during April and May 1942, not a very good result for an Air Force hard pressed on other fronts, such as the Mediterranean and Russia.

On 27th April, on a fine, cloudless and moonlight night, the first major attack on Norwich was by 26 Heinkels and Dorniers and was over in about 45 minutes. The City suffered badly from fire and structural damage, and although 9 Beaufighters of 68 were scrambled and there were 6 A.I. contacts, there was only one opportunity to open fire by Fg Off Allen/Plt Off Sandow and this was inconclusive. Also involved were Spitfires from 610 Squadron at Ludham, and Mosquitoes from 157 Squadron at Castle Camps, but the raiders suffered no losses. The RAF could do nothing to halt the bombing and indeed were not in position when the first bomb fell. Fighter Command had certainly responded with 32 aeroplanes having tried to engage the enemy, but to a considerable extent the defence had been taken by surprise and the heart of old Norwich had been brutally destroyed. It was obvious that other defensive tactics were necessary, using standing patrols of several aircraft.

Norwich was bombed again on the 29th, with more severe damage to the City, and as well another raid targetting York, flew over the sector, during this W/O Bobek/Sgt Kovarik shot down a Do 217, and the Squadron also claimed one enemy aircraft probably destroyed and two damaged. On the 1st May the Luftwaffe operated north of the Wash but as the bombers proceeded homewards 68 went in amongst them. Wg Cdr Aitken/Fg Off Higham shot down a Do 217 and claimed another damaged. Plt Off Mansfeld/Sgt Janacek destroyed two He 111's and shared a Do 217 with Sqn Ldr Veseley/Plt Off Montgomery, and there were a claim for another He 111 damaged. During April the Squadron flew a total of 83 operational sorties.

The month of May until the 29th, was comparatively quiet insofar as operations over land in East Anglia was concerned, the activity was out at sea with mine-laying and attacks on convoys by the enemy. The Squadron took the opportunity to get in a good amount of practice flying, unfortunately Sgt Hindle/Plt Off Bailey were both killed when their Beaufighter crashed on the Base at 16.00 hours on their return from an air-firing exercise. After reports of lights flashing in Norwich, 68 conducted a blackout test on the City, but no lights were seen.

The Squadron was still flying Beaufighter 1f aeroplanes, but in May the radio observers commenced converting from Mark IV to Mark VII radar (later in the same year they progressed to Mark VIII). Dear old Mark IV was all very well and had done sterling service for night-fighting, however it was useless at low heights when the massive signal received from land or sea returns obliterated the signal of aircraft being intercepted, even at 20,000 ft the maximum range did not exceed 4 miles. By contrast the narrow rotating 10-centimetre beam from Marks VII and VIII, and later the American Mark X, gave a maximum range of 8 miles at all heights above land or sea, which was a revolutionary advance for the Squadron.

On the 29/30th May about 30 enemy aircraft were plotted heading towards the Norfolk Coast and the Humber, and nine Beaufighters of 68 were scrambled to join those already on patrol, and were almost immediately amongst the raiders. Wg Cdr Aitken/Fg Off Higham shot down one Do 217 and claimed one Ju 88 damaged. Sqn Ldr Howden/Fg Off Montgomery destroyed one Ju 88, Flt Lt Winward/F/Sgt Wood destroyed one Do 217 and Plt Off Marshall/Plt Off Haigh claimed one He 111 probably destroyed, and one damaged. During the second of the latter combats both engines of the Beaufighter were hit by return fire and Plt Off Marshall had to crash-land in a field. The crew suffered injuries and Plt Off Marshall remained in hospital until 20th June.

In June there was sporadic activity all along the East Coast areas. On the 1st, Ipswich was bombed, and on the 9th and 16th it was the turn of Yarmouth and Gorleston. As well as the action at night in the air, German E-boats were reported in the North Sea. During the month Plt Off Welch/Plt Off Bennett with one Ju 88 and Plt Off Cleaver/F/Sgt Nairn and Plt Off Gough/F/Sgt Tate each with one Do 217 had confirmed victories. The Beaufighter X7842 flown by Plt Off Gough was subscribed for and presented to the Squadron by the Birmingham Civil Defence. On the 1st June Miro Mansfeld was awarded the British DFC, and Slavo Janacek the DFM, formally presented by the AOC at a ceremony at Coltishall on 11th July.

The first three weeks of July were fairly quiet over the East Coast of England with only desultory enemy appearances at night, probably due to weather recorded as almost continuous wind and rain. It was cloudy on most days and 68 frequently scrambled for daylight sorties but with 'no joy'. However, in the four weeks commencing on the 23rd July, the Squadron was involved in an unprecedented period of operations, and during this time shot down 12 Ju 88's and Do 217's and an He 111 confirmed, and claimed five Do 217's probably destroyed and four damaged.

This period started, in the words of the Neatishead History, with "a grand night for the Squadron" when on the 23rd July, under the control of that GCI station, Wg Cdr Aitken/Fg Off Higham shot down two, Sgt Truscott/Sgt Howarth, W/O Bobek/F/Sgt Kovarik and Sqn Ldr Vesely/Sgt Necas destroyed one each, and Sqn Ldr Howden/Fg Off Longdon claimed one damaged. There were combats on 11 nights of the next month with following scores: W/O Bobek/F/Sgt Kovarik two confirmed and one probable; Fg Off Raybould/F/Sgt Mullaly one confirmed; Plt Off Ward/Sgt Wilson one confirmed; Plt Off Welch/Plt Off Bennett one confirmed and one probable; Fg Off Allen/Fg Off Wiseman two confirmed, one probable and one damaged; Sqn Ldr Howden/Fg Off Higham one damaged; F/Sgt Adam/Sgt Gemrod one probable; Plt Off Cleaver/Sgt Nairn one confirmed; Flt Lt Winward/F/Sgt Wood one damaged; and Plt Off Gough/F/Sgt Tate one probable. At the end of July Wg Cdr Aitken DFC, was awarded the DSO. A total of 79 operational sorties were flown in July by the Squadron.

After the intensity of the enemy raids in July and August, the next four months of 1942 were rather an anti-climax but not without incident. During this period only two enemy aircraft were destroyed and there were claims for one probable and three damaged. The confirmed were one Ju 88 by Flt Lt Winward/Plt Off Wood and one Do 217 by Flt Lt Mansfeld/Plt Off Janacek. The rest of the Squadron were not idle, and in cooperation with flare-dropping Albacores, they made attacks on E-boats and were engaged in some daylight escort work. It was during the latter that Fg Off Raybould/Sgt Mullaly took part in a long dog-fight in and out of cloud and claimed a damaged Do 217.

The weather during this period was very poor with much fog or rain, in fact in November there were only 11 night patrols or sorties, and 16 in December. Unfortunately in September there were casualties when on the 5th W/O Richter/F/Sgt Kovanda crashed in flames during a practice flight and both were killed, as were Plt Off Glauder/Sgt Vasata when their Beaufighter crashed on the perimeter track at Coltishall after taking part in a searchlight cooperation exercise.

There were decorations received and postings out and in during this period. On 16th October the AOC 12 Group again visited Coltishall and presented Sqn Ldr Vesely and W/O Bobek with the DFC, and F/Sgt Kovarik with the DFM. Sqn Ldr Howden also was awarded the DFC but he had departed for 51 OTU. As well as his award, Lada Bobek was commissioned; Fg Off Wiseman was posted for controller duties; Plt Off Mensik/Plt Off Sliva, Fg Off Capka/F/Sgt Cupak and Plt Off Campbell/Sgt Blows arrived from 54 OTU.

In spite of bad weather, and because of less enemy activity, a good deal of practice flying was achieved, with GCI interceptions, searchlight co-op, camera gun and Lorenz beam. The WAAF operators from the Watch Tower were given the chance of a flight in a Beaufighter around Coltishall. On the 6th and 12th December there were blackout patrols both over the Italian prisoner-of-war camp and Norwich City. It was reported by Sgt Serhant that many lights were showing.

The weather was very bad over Christmas with little flying by the Squadron. At the end of 1942, after two years of operations, No. 68 Squadron score was 31 enemy aircraft confirmed destroyed, with claims for nine probably destroyed and 17 damaged.

After the 1942 excitement and battles, 1943 was perhaps something of a let-down for the veterans of 68 Squadron. It is said that the losses of German bombers over and near Britain had convinced Hitler that if it was to be subdued, and not become a springboard for the invasion of the Continent involving the Americans, the idea of pilotless aircraft must be revived. These could be cheaply produced and of course did not need highly trained manpower on operations of which Germany was very short. Therefore he decreed that all possible resources and endeavours must be put into the flying bomb, and also into the rocket building programme. This decision was much to the chagrin of Goering who took it as a personal insult.

Production of these two horrors continued throughout 1943, but was delayed by Allied bombing of the production factories and the launching sites in German-occupied territories. Therefore 1943 was rather a waiting period for the pulse-jet pilotless aircraft V1 and the rocket V2, to be built and proved. Nevertheless, the Luftwaffe were allowed some liberty to try Britain's defences, sometimes testing new aeroplanes such as the Ju 188, the He 177 and the Me 410, and new tricks such as the use of 'window', and infiltration of the RAF Bomber Command stream of returning aircraft, and attacking their bases.

The year 1943 commenced with terrible weather in Norfolk with thick cloud and rain, and icing at 6,000 ft, eventually the skies cleared and there was snow and hard frosts. Apart from NFT's, there was little flying and few practices and patrols. On the 15th January, Wg Cdr Aitken DSO,DFC,CMC was posted to the Middle East, and on the 24th Wg Cdr AP Dottridge DFC, arrived to take command of the Squadron - his radio observer and Navigator Leader would be Flt Lt GT Williams DFM. On the 28th the King and Queen came to Coltishall and included visits to the dispersals.

In February 1943 the Squadron had completed the changeover from the Beaufigther if to the VIc, the increased height rating of the Mark VIc improved the scope for overtaking the German bombers. The Squadron crews had recently included cross-country navigation exercises as part of their training with the objective of offensive operations, and on the 16th February the first 'Ranger' operation to Vlieland and the Dortmund-Ems Canal was flown by Wg Cdr Dottridge/Flt Lt Quittenden, this was a successful sortie and they shot up canal barges and lorries on the towpath, Sqn Ldr Vesely/Plt Off Sliva and Fg Off Allen/Fg Off Bennett also went out that night, but had difficulty in finding the target due to bad weather. On the 18th Sqn Ldr Winward DFC flew another 'Ranger' but did not return. Later it was learned that he had crashed and survived with a broken arm and other injuries, and was now a prisoner-of-war. Unfortunately his navigator Plt Off Wood was posted missing, believed killed.

At 05.00 hours on the 18th, three crews of 'A' Flight scrambled to intercept seven E-boats operating 70 miles East of Yarmouth, with the following results: Plt Off Gough/Plt Off Matson destroyed one E-boat and probably destroyed another; and Sqn Ldr Sykora/Fg Off Oakley and Flt Lt Mansfeld/Plt Off Janacek each claimed an E-boat probably destroyed. These attacks were accomplished with the aid of a Fleet Air Arm Albacore dropping flares, and in spite of a lot of flak from the E-boats. During February and March the Squadron was called on to reinforce 11 Group by patrols in the Thames Estuary. Fg Off Allen/Fg Off Bennett shot down two Do 217's; Flt Lt Mansfeld/Plt Off Janacek and Fg Off Vopalecky/F/Sgt Husar each had one Ju 88 confirmed.

On the 11th March Plt Off Bobek/W/O Kovarik were obliged to crash-land because of engine trouble, but were unhurt. Indeed soon after when 18 raiders were plotted approaching the Norfolk Coast they shot down a Ju 88, and on the same night Fg Off Vopalecky/F/Sgt Husar were credited with just 1/2 a Do 217 destroyed, the other half was claimed by another Squadron. The weather in March had improved somewhat with some sunshine, which caused fog at night, leading to the cancellation of some planned Ranger operations.

April and May were very quiet in respect of operations on the East Coast of England, but on the 22nd April the Squadron was called upon to send a detachment to Peterhead because of some Luftwaffe action in the North of Scotland. The first crews sent were Fg Off Gough/Fg Off Matson, Fg Off Bobek/W/O Kovarik and Sgt Serhant/F/Sgt Necas who remained there until 11th May. During May Flt Lt Allen was awarded a bar to his DFC and his navigator Fg Off Bennett, the DFC. On the 22nd Plt Off Mensik/Plt Off Sliva taking off from Coltishall to do their NFT crashed and both were killed. In June Flt Lt Langley/Plt Off Reade crashed near Cromer and did not survive.

Although there was a lack of enemy activity, the time was not wasted by the Squadron and there was much practice flying on A.I. interceptions and camera gun. Of the 178 contacts obtained during exercises with the GCI Sations, 169 resulted in the fighter being brought to minimum range. There were aircraft recognition tests and with the warmer weather dinghy drill on the Broads. As well as all this training the normal operational patrols over the North Sea were carried out with only one combat when on the 14th June, Fg Off Wills/Fg Off Ledebor shot down a He 177, the first of this type of enemy aircraft experienced by the Squadron. To help co-operation with the Army over 100 anti-aircraft and searchlight sites were visited by two-man teams from the Squadron giving talks on night-fighter requirements.

July followed the previous three months with hardly any appearances by the enemy - only on the 12th did Sqn Ldr Sykora/Fg Off Oakley do some damage to a Ju 88. There were two marriages during the month when Mike Allen married at Horning, and Robert Kovarik married the daughter of Lord and Lady Vernon at St Margaret's, Westminster. Needless to say the Squadron were well represented at both these ceremonies. The Squadron radar section were well pleased with themselves in July with only one fault found in 50 flights, however the ground crews generally were not happy because the strength was being reduced, by not replacing postings-out. For example, the flight mechanic strength came down from 52 to 27 and delays had occurred in maintenance as a result. There was bad news for Coltishall when Wg Cdr Rabagliatti, the Station Commander, was posted as missing from a shipping strike.

Things livened up a little in August with some action. F/Sgt Peters/Sgt Rackham destroyed one Do 217, Plt Off Adam/F/Sgt Gemrod two Do 217's and Flt Lt Allen/Fg Off Josling claimed a Do 217 probable, all these combats taking place over North Norfolk. This was good enough, but as well, 68 Squadron beat No. 72 Searchlight Regiment at clay-pigeon shooting, 60 points to 43, Fg Off Len Harvey being top scorer with 21. During the month AVM Roderic Hill CB MC AFC inspected the Station, and in the evening of the same day the Station Sport Meeting took place. Fg Off Ritchie, Squadron I.O. was replaced by Plt Off Halls, and F/Sgt Honore/Sgt Edwards rejoined the Squadron after seven months away on ferry work. On the 22nd Coltishall was bombed by a lone aeroplane said not to have been plotted by radar, for which no warning was given, three 5 Kg anti-personnel bombs were dropped about 100 yards from the Watch Office. In spite of the reduction in ground crews, 15 minor and two major inspections were carried out by the Squadron and its Echelon with five engine changes, and a total of 640 hours were flown in August. The bad news was that the homing radar beacon was causing a lot of trouble to returning aircraft, said to be due to poor quality valves.

The premier news in September 1943 was the fall of Rome to the Allies on the 7th, which happened to coincide with a Dining-in Night in the Mess, described as a "novel and lively evening". One might think by this news and of sports meetings etc, that the War was over, but to correct this idea, Coltishall was again bombed on the 27th. Two Beaufighters were scrambled but had 'no joy'. This intrusion was not plotted by control and was blamed on enemy fighter-bombers infiltrating with friendly aircraft returning from bombing Mannheim. During the month F/Sgt Honore crashed and his Beaufighter was reduced to scrap, but he and Sgt Edwards only suffered scratches. A new readiness system was now in effect which, depending on the weather, ensured that two Beaufighters were on patrol, another two at 30 minutes, and eight more on standby. The Engineer Officer reported a shortage of new Hercules engines, but this did not seem to deter the Squadron as 607 hours were flown during the month, though there was one A.I. fault per 35 flights, which was not as good as before.

There was some action and many changes in personnel in October, when the days were bright, but with much fog at night. On the 3rd Flt Lt Allen/Flt Lt Josling chased a Me 410 flat out for about 20 minutes before destroying it 60 miles East of Lowestoft at 800 ft. They closed to minimum range from a distance of 5 miles at the Beaufighter's maximum speed of 330 knots IAS. On the 7th Plt Off Serhant/F/Sgt Necas, after another long chase, caught and shot down a Do 217 at 400 ft 40 miles South-East of Yarmouth, both interceptions being under Neatishead and Patrington control. To help cope with the speedy Me 410's, four Mosquitoes of 151 Squadron arrived at Coltishall on detachment.

On the 21st October Wg Cdr Tony Dottridge left for HQFC and Wg Cdr Hayley-Bell DFC, arrived as Commanding Officer, accompanied by his navigator Fg Off Harry Uezzell. Flt Lt Allen DFC was posted to West Mailing, and the great Flt Lt Clowes went to Coltishall HQ, replaced as Squadron Adjutant by Flt Lt JR Colquhoun. Sqn Ldr Frantisek Sykora went to Neatishead as Chief Controller and Sqn Ldr Miro Mansfeld DFC returned to the Squadron as 'A' Flight Commander. The Radar Section was taken over by Fg Off DK Murray, replacing Fg Off Shearston.

Fg Off Harvey DSO, Fg Off Wicksteed DFC and Plt Off Halls established links with the Americans when they flew over to Station Nethel (USAAF) to lecture to the Liberator crews on night-fighter techniques, as apparently this group were training for night operations. In October 68 Squadron radar was said to be the best in the Group with only one fault in 37 flights, with an average maximum range of 4.81 miles, and an average minimum of 440 ft. The Station home radar beacon had been thoroughly overhauled and now gave a good range with strong indications. An important change during the month was that all aeroplanes were fitted with fully-feathering propellers. The ground crews continued to grumble because there were no taps at dispersal, and water to wash the aeroplanes had to be transported from the hangar.

Barely had the new CO settled in when on the 16th November, he shot down a Me 410 at night - Wg Cdr Hayley-Bell/Fg Off Uezzell were under the control of Habbishburgh CHL. There was still much fog at night early in the month, but the Squadron did manage a few E-boat patrols but with 'no joy'. When the weather cleared in the middle of the month, several 'bullseye' practices were carried out with the training aircraft of No. 5 Group Bomber Command, including searchlight affiliation. On the 9th Plt Off Halls was posted to Inverness and Plt Off Kohler arrived as the new 10. The Radar Section could not keep up the good record attained previously - the November figures being one fault per 25 flights. This was traced to dampness in the A.I. sets, which were further insulated to prevent the arcing-over that takes place in a damp atmosphere. The Engineering Officer reported that the number of ground crews was now less than 50% of establishment.

After a quiet period in early December, 20 hostiles appeared on the 12th over East Anglia at heights varying from 4000 to 20000 ft, and there were several battles. Grampus Leader Wg Cdr Hayley-Bell/Fg Off Uezzell claimed two Dorniers damaged, but F/Sgt Irwin was shot down by return fire - he baled out and survived, but F/Sgt Brown was killed. There were more postings out and in during December when Sqn Ldr Gayner was posted overseas and Sqn Ldr JD Wright arrived to take command of 'B' Flight. Willie Williams, abandoned by Tony Dottridge when he left the Squadron, became Johnny Wright's navigator. The following arrived from OTU: Plt Off Gibson/Sgt Lack; F/Sgt Loveland/Sgt Duffy; and F/Sgt Brill/Sgt Walter. The Signals Radar Officer, Fg Off Murray was posted to TRE. During the month the majority of 68 Squadron maintenance personnel were amalgamated with the Station Maintenance Wing, and the Squadron was left with a small and highly mobile unit described as No. 3058 Echelon. There was less dampness affecting the A.I. sets, and the problem seemed to have been solved.

At the end of 1943 after three years of operations, 68 Squadron's score was 43' enemy aircraft and one E-boat confirmed destroyed, with claims for 10 enemy aircraft and 3 E-boats probably destroyed, and 20 enemy aircraft damaged.

There were two very good battles in January 1944. Flt Lt Hickin/Fg Off Harrison had been detached to Peterhead, and on the 17th shot down a Ju 88 about 60 miles East of Kinnairds Head. Debris hit the Beaufighter as the Junkers blew up, and then dropped to burn on the sea. On the 29th at Coltishall F/Sgt Neal/F/Sgt Eastwood who were on a practice night landing exercise, were diverted by Neatishead to be vectored after a bandit. A long chase and combat took place but eventually F/Sgt Neal hit the starboard engine of the Ju 188 and it crashed at Shrubland Hall near Ipswich - the crew baled out and three were taken prisoner. 'Chang' Neal was originally an AC1 electrician on 68 who, when he left for aircrew training had made it his ambition to return to the Squadron as a pilot, this being realised three weeks before his success on what turned out to be his first operational sortie.

The postings out and in continued when Flt Lt Josling went supernumerary to Coltishall HQ awaiting a controllers course. Fg Off Karel Juchelka, the new Radar Signals Officer arrived, as did the following from OTU: Fg Off Haskell/Sgt Bentley; F/Sgt Martin/Sgt Prior; F/Sgt Lauchlan/Sgt Bailey; and Sgt Williams/Sgt Waples. During the month Mark 11G IFF was replaced in all aeroplanes by Mark 11D and a satisfactory signal was received by the AA and Searchlight sites. Unfortunately this change caused a problem at Habbishburgh CHL, and more modifications had to be made resulting in Mark 111G which was a success with all ground stations.

February started well when Fg Off Seda/Plt Off Hradsky shot down a Ju 88 on the 4th, which was confirmed by the ROC and a coastal AA Unit. On the 5th the Squadron moved to Coleby Grange near Lincoln. There must have been some reason for this move at the time, but it is difficult to understand why when three weeks later 68 moved again, this time to Fairwood Common. Before the last move some old Czech friends were welcomed back after a rest from operations. They were: Fg Off Lada Bobek/Plt Off Bobby Kovarik; and Plt Off Miro Standera/W/O Karel Bednarik. Also Flt Lt Cameron Cox/Plt Off Peter Croft arrived from 140 Wing Airfield, and Fg Off Cyril Murray from Upper Heyford to become Squadron Medical Officer replacing Fg Off Nolan.

At Coleby Grange it was found that the improved range of the ground radar stations resulted in more panic scrambles as enemy aircraft were plotted taking off from say, Amiens. 15 double scrambles were ordered during the three weeks at Coleby. The weather was bitterly cold with deep snow and that famous photograph in the Squadron records shows the aircrew helping to clear the runway. Maintenance of the Squadron Beaufighters continued to be excellent in spite of the difficulties with the weather and moving Stations, and no complaints were received by the Engineering Officer. Owing to a little difficulty between the navigators and ground crew radar mechanics, a system was adopted whereby new navigators arriving on the Squadron were obliged to pass certain tests in the workshop before being passed as operational. The signature of the Radio Signals Officer was needed when the tests were passed.

On the 1st March the Squadron moved South West to Fairwood Common on the Gower Peninsula where many of the nights early on, were spent on channel patrols and convoy escort work. Many Beaufighters were fired on by the Navy as they took over at dusk from the day fighters. Luckily the Navy were even worse at shooting than at aircraft recognition and there were no casualties.

As well as the Channel work at Fairwood there were practice interceptions under the control of Wrafton, Longload and Ripperston. The only enemy aircraft plotted in the sector occurred when they strayed off course going home as happened when Fg Off Russell/Flt Lt Weir shot down a Ju 188 returning from a raid on Birmingham. Wg Cdr Hayley-Bell was also inclined to stray and would wander off East in the hope of finding something to shoot down. On the 14th, under East Hill control he destroyed a Ju 188 which crashed at Barkingside! Harry Uezzeli was his operator.

There was a continuous weather problem at Fairwood with a mist coming in from the sea at a moment's notice. The Squadron members enjoyed life there, especially at the Langlands Bay Hotel dances, until the Americans arrived to compete for the favours of the local girls and others. The Squadron took solace in the pubs of Swansea, but there was always a problem at first because they closed on Sundays. As usual there was a way out by becoming members of the Gower Country Club where drinks could be had all day - life membership cost half-a-crown. One of the members of Fairwood Common Station Mess who lived locally, was retired Flt Lt Alcock of the famous Atlantic Ocean flyers, Alcock and Brown.

In April and May the Channel patrols continued with some enemy activity infiltrating the Bomber Command stream returning from bombing Cherbourg and other targets in France. The Squadron scored four victories in May when on the 14/15th Sqn Ldr Mansfeld/Fg Off Janacek shot down two Do 217's, Sgt Peters/F/Sgt Rackham one He 111, Fg Off Wild/Fg Off Baker one Ju 88, and Flt Lt Capka/Fg Off Cupak were credited with one Ju 88 probably destroyed. Using callsign Ferro 25, Gilbert Wild's interception commenced on a weaving bandit, Freddie Baker did his stuff and brought his pilot in to a minimum range, and after firing several rounds, the starboard engine of the Junkers was hit and burst into flames. Gilbert last saw the blazing Junkers going down into cloud, and Hope Cove control confirmed that it went on down into the sea.

During this time the Squadron was subjected to a series of lectures which heralded important events in the near future. The Station Commander, Wg Cdr 'Sandy' Johnstone DFC spoke on 'Security', Plt Off Mayer on 'Internment of Prisoners of War' and Plt Off Kohler on 'Grasshopper Procedure', and also gave an 'Escape' lecture. On the 28th Air Chief Marshal CR Steele CB, DSO visited the Station and presented the 68 Squadron crest. The Crest had first been officially requested by Tony Dottridge when he was CO. He had decided on an owl as the centrepiece, and had asked the Czechs for a suitable motto. After some debate the British boy-scout motto 'Be Prepared' was amended to 'Always Prepared' which in Czech is 'VZDY PRIPRAVEN'.

Another visitor to the Squadron at Fairwood was Sqn Ldr Wilhelm Hoy, commander of the Mark X A.I. circus, consisting of two Wellingtons converted into classrooms, All the navigators were instructed in the marvels of this superior American-made airborne radar. However Mark X was not installed in the Beaufighters because another important change was about to take place. In late May two Mosquitoes arrived and pilots took turns in local flying practice with dusk landings, cine gun etc. The Beaufighter was on its way out, but the Squadron was delighted with the Mosquito XIX and the prospects of change to Mark X A.I. However in the meantime, the faithful Beau continued with the Channel patrols.

It was at Fairwood that the chant dedicated to the special aircrew rations was first heard. "Aircrew rations, whose aircrew rations? Aircrew rations for Kohler's big, fat, bouncing, bulging baby". So went the chorus of this unique 68 Squadron doggerel, with each verse separately telling the story of the raisins, eggs, chocolate and sultanas allowed to the aircrews. This of course, was much to the discomfort of Leslie Kohler, the I.O. ('Koke') in whose hands was entrusted the issue of these products, and who was the last person to think of diverting even one currant to his baby son, Michael. Embarrassingly for Koke, Michael was the biggest, fattest and most bulging baby imaginable.

On D-day, the 6th June 1944, the Second Front opened with the landings on the French Coast, however the next 48 hours was a complete anti-climax for the Squadron. Both flights were called together on the evening of the 5th when the Station Commander announced the good news and the Station 10 gave a detailed picture of the coming event, but when one keen airman of 68 asked 'what do we do, Sir?' the disconcerting reply was 'nothing'. He was told that the air would be so full of aeroplanes directly connected with the landings that all superfluous aircraft in the UK must remain on the ground. This did not mean that everybody made off to the pub, but the usual readiness state was maintained, with the poker and bridge schools at dispersal going full swing through the nights. Daytime was the best chance for the pilots to fly the two Mosquitoes, and every opportunity was taken.

On the 23rd June the Squadron moved once again, this time to Castle Camps near Saffron Walden where the full conversion to Mosquitoes and Mark X A.I. was quickly made. Now the Squadron's future role was clearly defined, because the first V1 pulse-jet pilotless aircraft, launched from Holland, had crashed into England, and Fighter Command were attempting to cope with this new situation. 68 Squadron was in the front line for day and night operations against the flying-bomb, and such sorties were officially named 'anti-diver patrols'!

There were two tragic events to report in June. Fg Off 'Peter' Ledebøer died from injuries received in a flying accident involving another Beaufighter on the 28th May, in which Flt Lt Bernard Wills was badly injured. In another incident Flt Lt Capka/Flt Lt Williams were shot down by the rear gunner of a Liberator they were investigating under ground control in cloudy weather. 'Charlie' Capka suffered very bad head injuries and 'Willie' Williams, severe shock. In June the Squadron Adjutant was posted and Flt Lt 'Paddy' Cartwright arrived to fill this position.

It was not until the 2nd July that the first flying-bomb was seen by a 68 Squadron crew, and a week later before Fg Off Wild/Fg Off Baker shot down the Squadron's first, near Manston; soon followed by Plt Off Williams/Plt Off Waples with another, 40 miles East of Manston. An enormous number of patrols were flown - actually 123 in July - whilst the weather was not exactly summer-like with thick cloud day and night. Another three were shot down in July, a second by Plt Off Williams/Plt Off Waples watched by the operations staff at Foreness Coastal CHL, another by Fg Off Gibson/Sgt Lack, and an absolute corker by Sqn Ldr Mansfeld/Flt Lt Janacek. Miro took off at 01.35 on the morning of the 26th and was about to gain height over Castle Camps according to instructions from the ground, when he saw a flying-bomb lit up by searchlights, and at 01.40 shot it down, cheered on by 'A' Flight watching from the ground at dispersal.

During July, unfortunately the Squadron lost two crews. On the 21st Plt Off Williams/Plt Off Waples disappeared into the sea 5 miles East of Dover, and on the 25th Flt Lt Kemp/Fg Off Farrar also drowned. After an attempted interception of a flying-bomb, Flt Lt Kemp was given another vector by control, but after this message was acknowledged they were unable to contact him and Ferro 19 had to be considered missing. On the 27th Flt Lt Barker arrived from Group to investigate the disappearance of Ferro 19, but the crew were then posted missing, believed killed.

Both the casualties previously described were caused by using the laid down procedure for tackling the flying-bombs. Because they usually flew so low (say 400 ft) and so fast (390 knots IAS), pilots were instructed to patrol at 6000 ft and dive on to the target in order to have the necessary speed to catch it up on the straight and level. Inevitably in the dark and without electronic altimeters mistakes were made, and eventually six crews of 68 Squadron were killed on operations directly connected with this method of attack. During July, four aircraft of the Squadron were operating from Bradweil Bay under the control of Sandwich, Foreness and Bawdsey CHL to reinforce No. 219 Squadron attempting to deal with flying-bombs coming in at a great rate towards the Thames Estuary. Apart from this 68 was patrolling off the Dutch Islands hoping to catch the flying-bombs early on in their flight. A vast amount of operational flying was done by the Squadron during the flying-bomb period, but the weather was so bad at times in the Summer of 1944 that on some days it was difficult enough to get the NFT's completed.

In spite of the amount of flying and the sadness of the casualties there was a good deal of social life while the Squadron was at Castle Camps. The Officers' Mess was at Waltons Park and the Sergeants' at Shudy Hall. At Waltons Park, a magnificent country house set in parkland, the Luddington family were still living in part of it. Needless to say, the family heirlooms had been removed from the RAF quarters except for one lone stag's head so high up on the wall of the Great Hall, that it was obviously thought to be safe from predators. Within a few hours of the arrival of the Squadron Officers, a cigarette had been placed in the corner of the stag's mouth, how it was done remains a mystery. Fg Off Basil St. John Wynnell-Sutherland, the prankster/navigator of 68 may have been responsible!

The Great Hall was ideal for social events, and on 28th July a dance was given in honour of Wg Cdr Hayley-Bell who had been posted. Flt Lt Dan Hickin also left to join BOAC. Wg Cdr George Howden DFC an old friend of 68 arrived to take over as Commanding Officer, together with Flt Lt Dan Norris-Smith as Navigator/Radio Leader. Other postings were Willie Williams to ADGB; Fg Off Lada Bobek to the Czech Depot; and Flt Lt Horri Hanson and Fg Off Gilbert Wild to No. 501 Squadron.

Castle Camps was quite close to Newmarket, believed to be the only race-course allowed to continue to hold race meetings during the War. The local farmers, with unlimited supplies of petrol for their farm vehicles, but unable to use their cars for social reasons because of being known to the local police, were very happy to pour petrol into the cars owned by the Squadron members and accompany them for a visit to the races, and indeed were very generous with their hospitality in many ways. At Castle Camps the unfortunate Fg Off Peter Croft caught the eye of the CO and was made Sports Officer, and the Squadron went into a series of cricket matches with Ashdon Village. Needless to say, with the Czech element in 'A' Flight, it was 'B' Flight who took the field of play. The only result recorded was on the 27th August, when 68 won by four runs! Tennis was played on the Walton Park courts. Later on in October, the Squadron beat the village at soccer by 10 goals to one!

By August 1944 civilian casualties caused by the flying-bombs were mounting up and further measures were needed to attempt to counter the increasing number of attacks. A radical change occurred when the classic method of AA Guns defending individual towns was abandoned, and these defences were distributed along the coastal strip to blaze away at any aeroplane crossing the sector. Obviously this meant that day and night-fighters could not fly over the coast except through a narrow safety channel, and therefore had less time to get into position to intercept, particularly at night. The new ground defences were a frustrating change for night-fighters chasing flying-bombs but not getting the chance to open fire in the time allowed. For example Fg Off Adam/W/O Gemrod, on patrol off the Dutch Islands chased three flying-bombs at speeds of 340-390 mph at 800 ft above the sea, but in each case were, of course instructed to break off well before approaching the English Coast, and did not score a hit.

The flying-bombs were flying lower than ever as Fg Off Trice/Fg Off Stafford found out when on patrol at 6000 ft. They were vectored on to a bomb and dropped to 300 ft only to find the target still below them. Another pilot reported trying to get a shot in at 150 ft which was not very nice on a dark night over the sea. Yet another reported that he was just closing in at the same height as a bomb, when the coastal searchlights exposed it and the guns shot it down in front of his very eyes. The day fighters were more successful with a longer sighting of the target, and the AA guns on their new sites did better than ever before. Unfortunately, on the 20th September F/Sgt Wilson/F/Sgt Jenkins after being vectored on to a bandit, were not heard of again and were posted missing.

Early in October there were several examples of what seemed to be a new phenomenon when it was found that flying-bombs being followed just fell into the sea without the fighter's guns being fired, and also that radar blips had assumed a peculiar shape and sometimes appeared to become two. On the 16th some of these unusual happenings became clear when 68 Squadron was involved in the first proved example of a flying-bomb being launched from a carrier aeroplane. It was established afterwards that the Germans had begun to use this method because the V1 launching sites in France had been overrun by the Allied Armies.

Wg Cdr Howden/Fg Off Baker were first vectored on to a bandit by control 50 miles east of Lowestoft, and eventually closed to a range of 300 ft and 15 degrees below, but could not identify the strange shape in front of them. At 150 ft, speed 180 mph, a huge flash dazzled the pilot, then the crew saw a flying-bomb coming away from a He 111 with a bright flame in the tail which became less almost immediately as the bomb proceeded on its way. Unfortunately, to avoid a collision the Mosquito had to break away and the contact was lost. On the 19th Flt Lt Cox/Fg Off Croft after one hour on an anti-diver patrol, had an engine cut out which would not feather. After losing height all the way back from the patrol line they could not make base, and Cameron landed safely at Woodbridge.

During October 68 Squadron made up for all the frustration of the two previous months as they shot down 13 Flying-bombs. The crews were as follows: Fg Off Haskell/Plt Off Bentley - three; Fg Off Humphrey/Fg Off Robertson - two; F/Sgt Bullus/Fg Off Edwards - one; W/O Lauchlan/F/Sgt Bailey - two; Fg Off Gibson/Sgt Lack - one; Sqn Ldr Wright/Fg Off McCullough - two; and Sqn Ldr Mansfeld/Flt Lt Janacek - two.

Part of the Squadron's training programme at this time was devoted to cross-country navigation exercises, and these included trips over France, recently cleared of Germans. Sqn Ldr Evans of ADGB came to give a lecture on 'Intruding Over Enemy Territory'. The aircrews were shown three films: 'The Nazis Strike', 'The Battle of Russia', and 'Divide and Conquer'. Earlier, three American Navy aircrews had been assigned to the Squadron, they were: Lt Peebles/Ens Grinnal; Lt Black/Lt Aitken; and Lt Kelly/Lt Martin. On 27th October the Squadron moved back to Coltishall having had a very good series of farewell parties at Castle Camps. The Squadron continued to fly anti-diver patrols over the North Sea, but seemed to be selected by Control to operate against Heinkels carrying the flying-bombs.

On 5th November F/Sgt Neal/F/Sgt Eastwood caught a He 111 just releasing its bomb and after a long chase shot it down into the sea, and on the 11th F/Sgt Brooking/Plt Off Finn also dealt with a Heinkel in similar circumstances at 700 ft above the sea. W/O Cookson/W/O Gravell claimed a Heinkel probably destroyed. On the 8th the first V2 rocket was seen by a 68 squadron pilot as it was launched from a site in Holland, it was described as a 'red glow with flames on the outside shooting straight up into the air at great speed and to a great height'.

The Squadron had really taken to the American crews, who though more formal than the RAF, were super chaps, and 68 were most upset when Joe Black and Tom Aitken were killed pursuing a flying-bomb. Apparently they followed the bomb into the gunstrip and tragically the guns missed the bomb, but brought down the Mosquito. Soon after this there was another tragedy when Sam Peebles and Dick Grinnal, having been scrambled for anti-diver activity at 22.30 hours and just airborne, reported going over to channel 'D' on the R/T, but crashed near Horstead at 22.33 hours, both were killed. It is good to be able to say that John Kelly and Tom Martin survived the War.

Notwithstanding the foul weather in November when there was no flying at all from the 16th to the 21st, and 26th to the 30th, a total of 117 operational sorties were flown during the month. There was bad news at the beginning of December when on the 4th, W/O Brill/F/Sgt Walter on patrol under Greyfriars control, informed them that he was going down to investigate a red flare, and nothing further was heard. A search was made by the Squadron at dawn without success, and the crew were posted as missing.

The weather throughout December was rather poor. On the 21st there was thick fog after midnight over most of the Country except at Coltishall and other Norfolk aerodromes which were not shut down until later in the night, and thereby hangs a tale. The Coltishall Officers' Mess Committee had ordained that there should be a really good party at Christmas, and in view of the chronic shortage of spirits the ration should be saved, and for the two months prior to Christmas only beer would be served in the Mess. However in the early morning of the 22nd several Bomber Command Lancasters, with Canadian crews were diverted to Coltishall because their bases in Lincolnshire were completely fog bound, and they remained at Coltishall for three days. Out of the goodness of their hearts the Coltishall Officers brought out their stocks of Scotch and Gin for the benefit of the gallant Bomber Command crews who drank the lot! They then took off on Christmas Eve to fly back to their own Christmas celebrations and the Officers at Coltishall were left spiritless. On the 31st December there was a dance held in the Mess. Was it beer only, or had the magic wand been waved and more supplies of spirits obtained? At the end of December the last combat of 1944 was fought when F/Sgt Bullus/Fg Off Edwards shot down a He 111.

The year 1945 opened with another loss to the Squadron. W/O Brooking/Plt Off Finn on patrol at 1000 ft informed Greyfriars control that they had contact, but nothing further was heard by the ground station. Ferro 23, just flying out on patrol reported seeing an aircraft going down in flames, and after the enquiry, Group decreed that a Heinkel 111 had been destroyed and allowed this to Brooking and Finn. The weather was generally rather poor in January and there were few patrols, mainly scrambles only.

On the 16th two aeroplanes were ordered off for an exercise in the North Sea with HMS Caicos, but when they reached the warship it knew nothing about the arrangement and the two returned to base. On the 25th it was Leslie 'Koke' Kohler's birthday and Squadron records show there was a 'wicked' lunchtime session in the Mess which resulted in Koke and others being completely 'slew'd'. With good timing the 31st January was thick fog again and the whole Squadron was released from readiness state, and this coincided with the occasion of the Squadron party held in the WAAF NAAFI! During January only 39 operational patrols were flown by the Squadron.

On the 3rd February there was a farewell party in the Mess as Wg Cdr George Howden DFC had been posted, and on the 4th, the Squadron welcomed Wg Cdr LWG Gill DSO from No. 125 Squadron, as the new Commanding Officer. On the 8th the Squadron moved to Wittering, where the Mess seemingly had a time warp going back to pre-war conditions. For example they had a civilian Mess Manager, boiled eggs for breakfast, and plenty of newspapers, it was all greatly appreciated. However, it had the up-to-date same old bad weather, and early in the month the airfield was u/s, so four Mosquitoes were sent to operate from Church Fenton. There was very little flying from Wittering, and things became so bad that it is recorded that 'A' Flight on the 15th, suffered an hour's PT in the gym!

On the 18th there was an improvement in the weather and everybody took to the air with practice interceptions and cross-country flying. Two newly arrived crews did their dusk landings. On the 24th the aircrews did a Russian aircraft recognition exercise, but instead of being posted to Murmansk the Squadron went back to Coltishall where they immediately took up again the anti-diver patrols they had left behind three weeks earlier.

The number of V2 rockets seen early in March belied the thought that the War was nearly over, and then on the night of the 3rd about 70 German bombers crossed the coast on their way to bomb the Midlands. Nine Mosquitoes were scrambled and there were two combats. Flt Lt Miles/Fg Off Hobdey obtained a contact 10 miles ahead and closed to a visual at 1000 ft on a Ju 188, and after Miles opened fire there was a vivid flash from the port engine and many bits fell off, followed by a ball of fire on the sea. Flt Lt Wills/Fg Off Goodwin were also vectored on to a bandit and after some difficulty because of haze, identified it as a Ju 188. Berni Wills opened fire with a 1-2 second burst and there was a violent explosion from the starboard engine, and the 188 was next seen burning furiously on the sea, this was confirmed by Hopton control. There were other contacts but no further "joy".

These were the last combats of the War for 68 Squadron, and after just over four years of operations the Squadron score was 58½ enemy aircraft, one E-boat and 18 flying-bombs destroyed, with claims for 12 enemy aircraft, and three E-boats probably destroyed, and 20 enemy aircraft damaged.

As well as the triumphs, there were also difficulties in early March. Fg Off Austin/Fg Off Halestrap scrambled at 01.26 hours on the 3rd, and came back to base at 03.44 hours on one engine, then the undercarriage would not come down. They made one circuit of Coltishall and then crashed, and both were killed. The next night W/O Lauchlan/Pit Off Bailey, whilst under Greyfriars control were given vector 080, angels 5, and when on this vector the starboard engine was hit by AA gunfire and the pilot requested an immediate vector home, which was given by Greyfriars as 280 degrees. As the pilot turned on to this course, the port engine was hit and control of the aeroplane was lost. Both crew baled out and landed safely. A few days later Fg Off Trice/Fg Off Baker were returning to base when an engine cut out, but Sidney Trice made a good forced landing and there were no casualties.

On the 10th March there was a good turnout at the Goat pub to give Alf Bullus a farewell party. Also on this day, Bill Gough was awarded his DFC. On the 15th the Squadron moved once again, this time to Church Fenton and had hardly settled in when four Mosquitoes were scrambled because Coltishall was being bombed and Carnaby was shot up. There were mixed feeling amongst the crews when Flt Lt Stilliard DFC arrived to give a lecture on 'Flying over Burma'. There were so many Bomber Command sorties during March that every bogey for which control requested identification turned out to be a friendly.

There were no more casualties on 68 Squadron but there were one or two close run things. On the 24th March Fg Off Holloway/W/O Wilson had an engine cut out but landed safely on one. On the 26th an engine cut on the Mosquito with Flt Lt Wills/Fg Off Goodwin on board, and they were losing so much height that control brought them straight through the restricted flying coastal gun fringe, but they landed safely. On the 27th and 28th March there were celebrations on the birth of daughters to Bill Gill, the Commanding Officer, and Lew Lewis, the Engineering Officer.

April is a very strange month to record. First of all on the 7th, the AOC arrived at Church Fenton, called all the aircrews and ground officers together, and made the grave mistake of announcing that the Squadron would be disbanded in two weeks. So of course on the 8th the first of a series of grand piss-ups was held! It is incredible to think when one reads in the Squadron records of all the parties that took place, that 68 not only maintained a full readiness state, but undertook practice formation flying for the first time! Perhaps, as the parties were of course only attended by the Flight not on readiness, though all were attended by the Ground Officers who wrote up the Form 540 and recorded them all, it just seemed a lot! There were separate 'A' and 'B' Flight functions, and on the 14th a grand party to beat all previous ones, included ground crews. On the 16th a farewell function for Johnny Wright in the 'Junction' pub which carried on into the Sergeants' Mess. On the 18th another party in the 'Ulleskelf' pub, but on the 20th it all had to come to an end and No. 68 Squadron was released from readiness, and was now finished as an operational Squadron.

The Squadron personnel were dispersed to many units, some each to Nos. 51, 54, and 62 OTU's; some to No. 125 Squadron; the Czechs mainly to the Czech Depot; and some crews remained at Church Fenton. It was a brilliant idea of Wg Cdr Bill Gill to instruct Leslie Kohler to organise a 68 Squadron Reunion on the 3rd Saturday in October at the Dorchester Hotel in London, which order he faithfully carried out.

1952 - 1959

The third period of operations by No. 68 Squadron commenced on the 1st January 1952 at RAF Wahn in Germany, and it became part of 148 Wing (with 87 Squadron) in 2nd TAF as a contribution to the NATO Alliance. The Squadron was once again to be a night-fighter unit, and the establishment was to be 12 Meteor NF XI's, with two Meteor VII's for training, and the code letters were to be WM. Sqn Ldr DS Leete was the first Commanding Officer who arrived to find a most difficult situation in having to work up the Squadron with most pilots and ground crews arriving unfamiliar with the aeroplanes they were to work with, and with no Qualified Flying Instructor available.

It seems as if one of the other major problems was the absence of an adequate Station Headquarters at Wahn, and the several units there were working independently of each other. Denny Leete found himself in rather an isolated position with no Station Commander, no Wing Commander Flying, and not even a Commanding Officer for 87 Squadron. Indeed the first aircrew to arrive found themselves employed to assist the Station organisation rather than the Squadron, using a small room in what was to become SHQ. The first ones in were Flt Lt Saunders-Davies, Fg Off McCleary, Fg Off Park, Plt Off Campbell, M/P Bamberger and Sgt Wanstall.

Even after the two Meteor VII's were flown in there was little flying during the first two months, the weather was poor and there were no controlled descent facilities. The Squadron had no tools, spare parts or re-fuellers, and alterations to the Watch Tower did not help in the short term. A small start was made on the training for conversion to jets, but that situation perhaps can best be described by stating that in February there was only 31 hours flying, but 36 hours PT for the Squadron! However at least the personnel continued to arrive, including Flt Lt Smythe (OC 'A' Flight), Flt Lt Clay (NRL), Fg Off Elphick, Plt Off's Fitzer, McClughen, Owens, Cobourne, Willis, Pordham, James, Collins and Northall, and Sgts Richmond, Robertson, Liddie and Beere.

By the end of February and beginning of March the servicing had begun to improve as the ground crews became more familiar with the VII's, and the essential equipment started to arrive. There was a great step forward when the Ground Controlled Approach was established on the airfield, but no A.I. radar servicing existed.

Three Meteor NF XI's had arrived but were not serviceable as also was one of the VII's. The poor old remaining VII was flogged to death as it was used every day, weather permitting, including Wednesdays, by both Squadrons. Flying times were from 08.00 to 18.30, and the aeroplane was serviced on Saturday afternoons and Sundays. At the end of March four pilots of 68 were passed ready to fly Meteor XI's but still there was no Qualified Flying Instructor from CFS. Particularly there was an urgent need to commence interception practice, but even then at the end of March no radar servicing existed. Postings in during March were Flt Lt Melville-Jackson (OC 'B' Flight), Flt Lt Bonny and Pit Off's Evans and Gill.

Things cheered up in April, with better weather for a start. More Meteors arrived and 68 now had seven XI's and a Wing Leader XI. However there was still no airborne Mark X Radar, and nine crews had not yet flown in an XI, which news must have depressed the new crew Plt Off Whitworth/Plt Off Spanier when they arrived, but 228 hours were flown by the others in April, including 136 hours on GCA let-downs.

It could be said that it was in May 1952 that the new Squadron members began to feel at last that there was some hope for them soon to be taking an active part in what they had expected of an operational squadron. It was in this month that there was a compliment paid in the Squadron records, when it was said that "the young and inexperienced pilots tackled the conversion to jets with good spirit and have made commendable progress under the conditions prevailing". By now 15 crews had converted to night-flying on the NF XI's and there were much better servicing arrangements for the aircraft. Also the navigators were at last able to use the A.I. because radar mechanics had joined the ground crew. However the failure at times of the homing facilities, and the erratic value of the GCA had a lowering effect upon the all-weather morale, and things such as a radar bench for ground training for navigators was still not available. Anyway somebody had faith in the Squadron because in May it was called on to aviate the Secretary of State. Lord de Lisle round the night skies of Germany. Flt Lt Bennett, Fg Off Jensen, Pit Off's Dawson and Ansdell, and Sgt Creeth joined the Squadron.

In June and July the highest number of hours yet were flown - 301 (74 night), and 409 (140 night) respectively. All pilots had now converted to the Meteor XI's and the VII was now used only for instrument training in an endeavour to bring the ratings up to date. The pilots now had air-to-ground firing practice facilities, but although the Mark X A.I. sets were working better than previously, the average maximum range was still only 31/2 miles. However, for the first time, the Squadron was able to take part in searchlight co-op and dusk and dawn intruder exercises. The establishment was still 12 Meteor XI's plus one Wing Leader's XI, but actually there were only 10 on the Squadron in total.

In August and September the Squadron took part in three big events. First of all it departed for APS at Sylt for air-to-air live firing practice. To start with the scores of both the experienced and inexperienced pilots were small, but by the end of the visit all pilots' general standard had improved and most were able to understand and fly the normal curve of pursuit. At Sylt there occurred the Squadron's first accident when an aircraft struck a flag target due to over-enthusiasm on the part of the pilot.

The second event was the realistic 'Holdfast' exercise when the whole Squadron operated from dispersals and established domestic accommodation under canvas. They were not allowed the normal facilities of the Station at all and in fact all personnel were completely barred from the main camp for the first four days. The whole thing lasted seven days, and although problems were expected, in the event serviceability remained high. The third happening was at the end of September when eight crews flew to Tangmere to prepare and take part in exercise 'Ardent'. With GEE fitted the navigators were given some practice with this aid.

In October Wahn airfield was unserviceable for jets so the Squadron moved to Wildenrath to operate, and joined 96 Squadron there. Posted in were: Flt Lt Smith, Plt Offs Cole and Bough, and Sgt Jenkins. The strength was now 28 officers and 7 sergeant aircrews. The aircraft establishment was raised to 16 Meteor XI's, but the strength in November was only 12, plus one Mk VII. When the Squadron returned to Wahn, every effort was made to bring the crews to a higher operational standard, particularly with A.I. interception practice.

In December Plt Offs Flitton and Chadd were posted in. Bad weather and the Christmas break meant that there was much less flying in the month - actually only 151 hours, of which 30 were at night. There was an annoying series of R/T faults which only became apparent in the air. The raising of the establishment to 16 Meteors coincided with the Squadron becoming fully operational, and this meant involvement in NATO exercises and alerts. There were many 'Bullseye' type of exercises with Canberras and Washingtons acting as targets.

In January 1953 for 10 days there was no flying at all because of inclement weather, but in spite of this 194 hours were flown. There was formation flying practice, and even aerobatics are mentioned in the Squadron records. Unfortunately there were some accidents. Because of ice on the runway there were two instances of aircraft overshooting and, when the weather closed down at Wahn one night, five aircraft airborne were diverted to Wildenrath and one struck the approach lighting and suffered minor damage. In the records there is the first mention of the Wing Leader, Wg Cdr IG Esplin OBE, DFC. For some time now of course, Wahn had been under the proper control of the CO Gp Capt CH Hartley CBE, DFC, AFC.

In February there was still snow and ice on the runway at Wahn, and in any event there was no flying after midnight when this time was given over to runway repairs. The Squadron was not idle and spent any spare time on ground exercises as well as catching up on leave. During the month experts arrived to give talks about the situation in Korea, and Flt Lt Smythe survived the Winter Survival Course!

The main events in March were first the 'Jungle King' exercise which was the attempted interception of the sophisticated Canberra jet bomber, and secondly the ground/air defence exercise 'Popgun 1'. The latter was the defence of the Squadron dispersal with positions manned, whilst normal flying was carried out as part of the exercise. The remaining aircrews made up three fighting patrols to carry out skirmishes and 'other enjoyable actions'. A searchlight unit was attached to Wahn to take part in certain exercises. Unfortunately in February, the Squadron suffered its first loss since re-forming, when Fg Off McLeary was killed because his oxygen supply proved defective, and the Meteor went into an inverted spin. Fg Off Lake escaped by baling out and landed safely.

The first days of April were given over to formation flying practice for the Chief of Staff's coming visit to the Station. This caused some problems because formation flying was not usually given much precedence in the training syllabus. However four aircraft of 68 took part in the fly-past on the 10th which was completely successful. On the 17th, 12 Meteors went to Sylt for air-to-air firing, flying there via Holdenberg where they re-fuelled. The following were posted in during the month: Flt Lt Duff, Plt Offs Paterson, Griffin, Miles, Jones and Hatfield.

At Sylt in the first half of May, the initial results were not good and caused some concern. Indeed when the majority of the Squadron returned to Wahn, three new pilots and, in the CO's words 'three duffers', were left behind at Sylt for an extended period of air firing to try to do better. Apparently this had a remarkably good effect, and in the end the six crews' final average was higher than the rest of the Squadron. One 'new boy', Plt Off Paterson had the highest individual score of 29%. It is nice to see in the Squadron records that during the air-to-air, the navigators seat in the Meteors was quite often given up to ground crew to give them air experience. Back at Wahn every effort was put into rehearsing for the Coronation fly-past. At last the strength of 16 Meteors came up to establishment, plus one Meteor VII for training. The officer strength was 41, with eight NCO aircrew.

There were three big events in June. The first was on the 2nd, when the whole Wing took part in a large scale fly-past at Dusseldorf to celebrate the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, after which the Station closed down for the rest of the week. The second event was the well-earned award of the Air Force Cross to Sqn Ldr Denny Leete. Lastly on the 25th, the Commander-in-Chief, Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Foster DSO, DFC inspected the Station. Unfortunately the weather prevented the much-rehearsed fly-past in his honour. Sqn Ldr Leete AFC, was much worried by the lack of night interception practice due to the ceremonial duties, as well as the large number of crews now on the Squadron flying the only 14 serviceable aircraft in the short hours of darkness available.

There was a little more routine practice flying in July, but even this was interrupted by air-to-ground firing at Monschau range, and exercise 'Coronet' at a camp site at Beauvechain where the Squadron lived and operated in the field as if under war conditions. There was meant to be complete mobility and even the full inspection of an aircraft was carried out in the open air under a canvas awning. The main purpose was for the Squadron to act as if on the offensive, and the flying was intruder operations carried out against F86's as well as Lincolns and B29's. Unfortunately during this exercise. Flt Lt Duff and Pit Off Miles were killed in a flying accident during a low-level sortie.

At the end of the month there was another offensive strike, and on return some of the Squadron were invited to a great party in the Belgian Officers' Mess. On the 30th, a very busy month ended with a redeployment to RAF Geilenkirchen. On the 31st at 14.30 hours, the 'war' ended and all the Squadron personnel, air and ground, headed back to Wahn and the August break.

The CO's remarks about the 'Coronet' exercise were that 'it was certainly a proving ground when the cream came to the surface, and the dead wood came to light, and the new crews were blooded'. The morale of the Squadron air and ground crews was high - perhaps specially the ground crews, who had been left largely on their own to deal with serviceability problems. There seems to have been a shortage of service transport during the exercise, because the CO was noticed driving most of his Squadron aircrews to and from meals in one Landrover, which must have meant some very tight packing in!

The Squadron deployed at Coltishall in August on exercise 'Momentum' which was described as very useful in providing a better understanding of the UK control organisation, and which included visits by all aircrew to Sector Operations and GCI Units. The Customs Officer at Coltishall must have been astonished when on arrival, Bob Smythe 'declared' the Squadron's cannon trophy (taken from a Do 217 destroyed by the Squadron during the War) as a 'fire-arm' to be imported! The reason for this importation was for it to be left in the safe hands of the Coltishall Officers' Mess.

Back at Wahn the Squadron was hoping to get back to routine training with plenty of night interceptions, and indeed a good number of hours was flown. But there were criticisms of the ground stations when their shortcomings interfered with required high altitude interceptions, which added to the spasmodic serviceability in the new gunsight installations meant sometimes, that only 25% of these interceptions were successful. Therefore a five-day stand-down from flying was ordered, when the Squadron aircraft were completely cleared of all outstanding modifications.

There was an attempted resurgence in ground training, but the Station was still short of equipment such as a place for dinghy drill, and a skeet shooting range. Three crews were attached to 85 Squadron at West Mailing and three of 85 came to Wahn. Incidentally it was thought that there was no special difference in the flying techniques between 68 and 85 aircrews, but the superiority in the training of 68 ground crews was very evident. At Wahn the winter was approaching and the weather factor now started to show because of a lack of confidence in Air Traffic Control, GCA and bad weather diversion facilities. Postings in were Flt Lt Lumsdaine and Fg Off Oxenham.

In November and the first 18 days of December there was a gratifying number of hours flown totalling 739 in the period, including 516 at night. This was mainly on night interceptions, and the Squadron broke up for the Christmas holidays well pleased with being able to have this experience of many flying hours in credit against the expected problems to come of airfield unserviceability due to inclement weather and the Christmas break. With all that flying the Squadron also took part in ground combat training. Plt Off Haynes was posted in. The CO remarked on Form 540 that at the end of the month 'due to seasonal activities the general physical fitness standard is extremely low'.

The Squadron carried on the good work in January 1954 with 313 hours flown, with 100 at night. The main exercise was 'Kingpin' when the Squadron registered 12 'kills' of two Canberras, eight Lincolns, and two Washingtons. On the 11th there was a 'prang' when Fg Off Smith/Fg Off Evans crash landed Meteor WM 233 in bad weather at Pech, near Bonn following a fuel shortage. The landing was a creditable performance with cloud base at 200 ft and both engines dead. On the 25th Flt Lt Smythe, 'B' Flight Commander, was hit by a ricochet whilst on air-to-ground firing at Monschau range, but successfully landed at base. Those aircrew who could be spared took advantage of the seasonal conditions to ski, and in the CO's words 'look a lot fitter for their efforts'.

The good flying weather finished at the end of January, and in February and March only 286 sorties totalling 183 hours were flown, and there was no night flying. It is difficult to understand why the Squadron, in view of the known weather forecast for that time of year, was sent to Sylt for air-to-air. The CO summed it up nicely when he remarked 'the appallingly low number of hours flown on the range because of the weather is a good case for establishing a base for gunnery training in sunnier climes'. Incidentally it is seen in the records that Flt Lt Basil St. John Wynell-Sutherland, ex-wartime 68 Squadron navigator, and now on 87 Squadron (occupying the next-door hangar at Wahn) cadged a lift back to Wahn from Sylt in an aeroplane piloted by Bob Smythe.

The recent frustrations in the attempts to get some hours in, were put on one side in April when an all-time record in the history of the Squadron of 626 hours were flown, including 227 at night. The aircrews and the ground crews were congratulated by the CO on a fine performance and he said of the latter 'the support of the ground crews and servicing personnel has been a vital and re-assuring feature of the past month'. However the CO was still complaining that the ground training for the aircrews lacked the vital background of instruction by specialist officers of the various branches of the Service.

In May there was still a good show with 536 hours, of which 220 were at night. This included 427 successful interceptions, 190 GCA let-downs and 28 single-engine landings plus scramble practice and low-level cross-country runs, all this even though the runway at Wahn was closed for seven days for construction purposes. Flt Lt B Appleyard and Fg Off FW Saunders joined the Squadron. June was given over to extra activities in establishing operational and servicing facilities under mobile conditions at dispersal. It was said that the experience gained by all personnel in the long term was invaluable. Only 296 hours were flown.

Back to the big time in July with 437 hours flown of which 137 were at night - this total in spite of interruptions because of distinguished visitors. On the 1st the Air Officer Commanding, Air Vice-Marshal RB Lees CB, CBE, DSO inspected the Station, and Nos 2, 68 and 87 Squadrons flew past this popular officer. On the 12th HRH Princess Margaret arrived as part of a four-day visit to BAOR units. Bad weather prevented a fly-past in her honour, but the Squadron had better luck on her departure, when they joined a fly-past as she left Bruggen on the 15th. It is mentioned that there was also an informal visit by the Secretary of State for Air when 68 were dispersed out on the 'Mad Heath' of Wahnheide.

There were a number of out and in postings in August when the Commanding Officer Sqn Ldr DS Leete AFC after 21/2 years of bringing the Squadron from a scratch start to its present operational excellence, left and returned to England. He was accompanied by Flight Commander Flt Lt RH Smythe AFC, NRL Flt Lt FAW Clay and Plt Offs Pordham, Fitzer and Collins, and Sgt Beere. In came the new CO, Sqn Ldr RJA Goode, the new NRL Flt Lt AJ Neville, Fg Off NA Davies and Sgt PA Fell. This left the Squadron four crews under establishment. For some time it had been two aeroplanes under establishment as well.

In remarkably similar circumstances to January 1941 with the very first wartime CO Sqn Ldr Clackson and Wg Cdr Max Aitken, in September 1954 Sqn Ldr Goode was only CO for a month, when due to upgrading of the establishment the Squadron's CO was to be a Wing Commander, and Dickie Goode was not senior enough for this position. At the same time the position of Wing Commander Flying was reduced to Squadron Leader Operations. Therefore a number of cross-postings took place in BAOR. Wg Cdr E James DFC, AFC who had been OC Flying at Ahlhorn became CO of 68 Squadron, Wg Cdr Verity who had been OC Flying at Wahn became CO of 96 Squadron at Ahlhorn, and Sqn Ldr Goode became Sqn Ldr Operations at Wahn. Wg Cdr James, the new CO of 68, brought with him the message that the operational policy was to continue extending training in all aspects of the night-fighting role of the Squadron. Postings in were: Flt Lt Parker, Fg Off Blakeley, Plt Off Barrett, M/P Batchelor and Sgt Gregory.

In October it was learned that the Squadron was to be given another crack at air-to-air at the APC at Sylt, and the month was spent in preparation for this. Additionally, a grand refuelling exercise was held and brought complimentary remarks from the observing team from HQ 2nd ATAF. Three crews were temporarily exchanged with 29 Squadron, and the following were posted in: Flt Lt EFS May and Fg Offs Bates and Geddow.

On the 16th October the Squadron sent as many as could be spared to the 10th Annual Reunion of past and present members of 68 Squadron at The Dorchester Hotel in London. There were 52 chaps present at the Dinner with Sqn Ldr Denny Leete in the Chair. Leslie 'Koke' Kohler, wartime 10, was presented with an inscribed tankard by the wartime, and the Squadron crest by the present members, for his great work in organising the Reunion for the first 10 years. In his retirement speech 'Koke' suggested that the Crest should be hung in the Brevet Club where members old and new were wont to foregather, and this request was carried out.

There was some bad news on the 21st when the Wahn Station Commander, Gp Capt Gilbert-Smith crashed coming back from a night training exercise. His navigator was Flt Lt Basil St. John Wynell-Sutherland, a wartime member of 68 Squadron, and now serving on 87 Squadron, also at Wahn. Both men were killed. 'Winnie' had attended the 68 Squadron Reunion only a few days before.

November commenced with routine flying training mixed with ground combat training, which included lectures and demonstrations of 'Active and Passive Defence', 'Chemical and Atomic Warfare', and 'Rescue'. There were practical written tests for the aircrew. On the 22nd the Squadron flew to Sylt for the second APC of the year. Fg Offs L Jones and R Poulter achieved the highest averages with 11.3% and 8.4% respectively, Fg Offs Haynes and Davies coming next with 8.0% and 7.2%. New people to arrive on the Squadron were Flt Lt A Wright and Fg Off P Godden. Fg Off Mason re-joined after marriage for which he had been presented with a wall clock by the Squadron. The Squadron soccer team, after a poor start, improved somewhat but then suffered a humiliating defeat by, of all people, the Wahn Police!

Air-to-air continued at Sylt in December with poor weather and results - in respect of the latter only eight countable sorties, out of the 20 planned per pilot, were flown. The Winged Bullet was won by Fg Off Jones with 10.3% average. Bad weather persisted even on the way home to Wahn, and the Squadron had to spend the night at Ahlhorn where it was subjected to a considerable display of hospitality by Nos. 96 and 256 Squadrons. Social activity predominated after the end of the flying programme and finished up with a grand party for Officers, Senior NCO's and their Ladies in the crew room. Plt Offs MacConnachie and Clarke arrived in December 1954.

In January 1955 there was not much flying, and that completed was mainly navigation refresher courses. It will become noticeable that during 1955, the number of hours flown by the Squadron diminished considerably. There are no reasons given for this on the Form 540, and it is possible that the information was regarded as too secret for mentioning in this document, although later on in the year the actual flying figures are shown! The halcyon days of mid-1954 when 626 hours were recorded in a single month were over. Also the number of crews on the strength commenced to fall, which accounted for some of the discrepancy in hours flown, but not all. Posted in were Fg Offs GJ Sweetapple and WG Fullilove. The Squadron soccer team beat both No.2 and No. 87 Squadrons at Wahn to become the Station's representative XI in the 83 Group Aircrew Competition.

There was an exchange of six crews each with RAF Tangmere and the Danish Air Force No. 723 Eskadrille at Aalborg in Denmark in February. Routine training included intruder practice over Norvenich airfield and air-to-ground firing on the range at Monschau. There were more Winter Survival Courses at Ehrwald in Austria, and the facilities for ground training improved in that specialist officers visited Wahn to give lectures such as 'The Meteor Fuel System' by Flt Lt Bart, and 'C & R Systems' by Flt Lt Gwynne. There were also aircraft recognition lectures and tests. In February there were actually 17 Meteor XI's on strength - one over establishment - and two Meteor VII's as well.

Routine training continued in March plus two low-level dusk strikes at Diepholtz. One feature of the second strike was that Plt Off GW Jones's aircraft was struck by birds, and he was forced to return to base immediately, with dented ventral and wing tanks, where he landed safely. Unfortunately the Squadron aircrew lost 5-3 in the semi-final of the Group soccer competition.

In April the whole of No. 148 Wing took part in a massive escape and evasion exercise code named 'April Fool', with 60 officers and 700 airmen taking part, during which much valuable training was accomplished in the principles of evasion over the terrain covered. Also there was a five-day exercise in co-operation with Bomber Command, in which all 2nd ATAF took part with NATO forces in Europe - 68 logged 20 Canberra 'kills' in night defence. Towards the end of the month, a new experimental system of GEE was tried out with the aim of positioning the aircraft for a GCA or visual approach to the airfield, from as far out as 30 miles, to try to organise a steady flow of traffic under conditions of high pressure flying activity, with as little waste of time and fuel as possible.

In May the policy of less flying hours continued with 198 hours by day and 88 at night in good weather. In the records there is the first mention of A.I. Mark 21. HRH Princess Margaret arrived at Wahn and then went on to present new colours to a 'Brown Job' regiment of which she was C-in-C. She left Wahn to fly back to England at 18.30 hours on the same day. 68 Squadron provided part of the ground route-lining party.

A new scheme came into being in May in that past members of the Squadron arrived for one week's refresher course. The four navigators who have returned so far showed that they have lost little of their skills in using the equipment in the air. During the month the last exchange of crews with No. 723 Eskadrille took place. On the 22nd, No. 2 Squadron celebrated its 43rd birthday at a drumhead service at Wahn when the Squadron standard was paraded. Under Flt Lt May, 68 provided a squad to follow No. 2 Squadron on a march through the camp and past the AOC, AVM Lees, who took the salute. In the good weather outdoor sports were well supported with cricket, swimming and athletics.

On the 3rd June the AOC returned to Wahn for the annual inspection, and on the 9th there was the Queen's Birthday Parade with a fly-past of Nos. 2, 87 and 42 (Belgian) Squadrons, with 68 Squadron in the lead. In the middle of the month the Squadron was attached to Brusthem in Belgium for exercise 'Carte Blanche'. This was a massive NATO exercise under war conditions with 68 under canvas and in caravans, allocated to night defence operations against 'enemy' bombers. Many sorties were flown and it claimed 41 'kills' and eight 'damaged'. There were also intruder attacks against bomber airfields at night and daylight sweeps. During the month 190 sorties comprising 149 hours flown by day and 126 at night. During June, Fg Off Sweetapple of 68 had the honour to be made leader of the Wahn team taking part in the 2nd TAF Gliding Championships.

In July the hours flown by the Squadron was 325, all in daylight. The reason was the move to Sylt for the annual air-to-air firing in unbroken good weather. A total of 454 sorties were flown, which was considerably more than the combined totals of the two previous visits in winter! There might have been more done at Sylt but the programme was interrupted by the AOC's Annual Inspection conducted by the SASO AVM DG Morris CB, CBE, DSO, DFC. Insofar as the results are concerned they are described overall as erratic. However 50% of the pilots had reasonable scores and the averages finished at 4.6% for 22 sorties per pilot. The top scorer was Fg Off Godden with 9.8% and the silver bullet for 'A' Flight was won by Fg Off Murgatroyd with 11.75%, and for 'B' Flight Fg Off Godden with 17.75%. The August Bank Holiday Grant commenced on the 29th July.

Much of August was spent in routine training with just exercise 'Loco' to test the air defence of 69 Group in the Netherlands. The Squadron's deployment was 6 aircraft and crews to Eindhoven, and it claimed three enemy aircraft 'destroyed'. There is mention in the records that the lack of aircraft spare parts was causing difficulties.

September was given over to routine training in good weather, though the flying hours achieved were disappointing:

	'A' Flight	'B' Flight	Meteor VII	TOTAL
Day	108	131	34	273
Night	67	70	9	146
TOTAL	175	201	43	419 hours

Unfortunately the very good Squadron accident-free record running from January 1954 was broken in September 1955 when two Meteors collided in mid-air at 22.30 hours at 21000 ft over Bonn. Flt Appleyard/Fg Off Saunders flying in a Meteor VII were acting as target for interception practice by Fg Off Jones/Fg Off Ansdell in a Meteor XI. The VII caught fire immediately and indeed both aeroplanes were damaged so badly that they went out of control. However all four occupants baled out and landed in trees near Beuel on the east bank of the Rhine opposite Bonn. Fg Off Jones broke a collar bone, and Fg Off Ansdell cracked a rib, but otherwise it was only bruises. One of the aeroplanes fell on an occupied house in Beuel, but luckily none of the occupants was hurt though the house was wrecked. The cause of the accident is obscure and subject to a Court of Inquiry. A new crew arrived on the Squadron - Fg Off Pinner/Fg Off Hammond.

In October a new schedule of flying commenced when the Squadron was allocated only three nights per week for night exercises. More crews arrived: Fg Offs Holmes, Jennings and Coucill and Plt Off Charlesworth, but these only made up the Squadron strength to 20 pilots and 18 navigators. Operation 'Skittle' was flown with 10 of the Squadron's Meteor XI's acting as a fighter screen for Canberra bombers operating against targets in England. Later on in the month there was an inter-group exercise over Germany. Already the weather problem had started to interfere with flying. Hours flown in October were:

	'A' Flight	'B' Flight	Meteor VII	TOTAL
Day	112	104	39	255
Night	73	64	4	141
TOTAL	185	168	43	396 hours

The weather in November and December was not good and greatly interfered with the planned exercises, which were mainly as fighter escorts to Bomber Command aircraft operating against the UK. In reverse, Canberras and Lincolns flew from the UK to test NATO defences, and during 68 Squadron scrambles, one 'kill' and two 'damaged' were scored. There was more air-to-ground firing practice at Monschau. Hours for November were:

	'A' Flight	'B' Flight	Meteor VII	TOTAL
Day	149	134	17	300
Night	95	76	3	174
TOTAL	244	210	20	474 hours

It was now established that Saturday mornings would be given over to lectures for the Squadron, and they started with a special series on aircraft recognition, after which the aircrew were tested by a team from the Central School of Aircraft Recognition. The Squadron average of 59.9% was said to be the second highest in 2nd TAF. 'A' Flight attended No. 38 LAA Wing for their annual CCT training and all aircrew had further work to do on pre-flight inspection of the Meteor aeroplane. Fg Offs Thomson, Mitchell and Funnell, and Plt Off Hunter arrived on the Squadron. At the end of the year, the Commanding Officer, Wg Cdr 'Jimmy' James left the Squadron and returned to another posting in England - he had been CO for 15 months. Also posted out were: Fg Offs A Smith and R Braund.

The weather in January 1956 was good enough for interception exercises, allowing some success for the Squadron, particularly during an ECM when 17 'kills' were claimed. Another success was a low-level strike on Vechta. A total of 266 day and 104 night hours were flown. On the 25th Wg Cdr FW Davison arrived and remained as Commanding Officer for the next 2' years. The Station Commander was Gp Capt Lapsley. Incoming crews from Leeming were Fg Offs Kershaw and Morgan, Plt Offs Walker and Holdway, FS Masters, and Sgt Blow. Fg Off Richards arrived from 29 Squadron. These brought the aircrew strength to 22 pilots and 21 navigators.

In February bad weather and the resulting condition of the runway restricted flying - the only exercise being a 'Bombex' with Canberra targets overflying at 40,000 ft. The hours flown were only 93 by day and 37 by night. Sqn Ldr May volunteered for detachment as a human guinea pig to the Institute of Aviation Medicine from the 3rd to 17th, but no details are available on the Form 540, as to what he had to endure.

On 13 March 13 aircraft of the Squadron proceeded from Wahn to Sylt for APS attachment. Here there were 302 successful air-to-air sorties of which 267 were over 25,000 ft and the rest below. The Squadron average was 6.3%, and a total of 415 day hours were flown by the detachment. A new exercise was the practice of hoisting aircrew by the Sylt helicopter.

Back at Wahn the unsettled weather caused the cancellation of the AOC's fly-past for which the Squadron had been practising formation flying so assiduously. However for the first time this year, the Squadron was able to do some air-to-ground at Monschau. There were 244 hours flown by day and 80 by night in April. The Squadron was now working a full shift system, the two flights flying on alternate nights. In April Sqn Ldr May was posted to command a squadron at North Luffenham. Fg Offs L Jones and Charlesworth also left, and Fg Off Boggis was posted in.

In May full advantage of the better weather was taken by the Squadron (Form 540 adds 'aircraft serviceability and manpower taken into account') and 318 day hours were flown and 118 at night. There were two formal exercises including scrambles, and there was no effect from the radar jamming attempted. The following were posted in: Sqn Ldr Bunch, Flt Lts WB Bailey, ER Cresswell and I Macpherson, Fg Off PJ Muggeridge and Sgt CS Longsdale. Fg Off Borrett was posted out. The crew position of 68 at this time was 12 operational, and 5 non-operational pilots, with 13 operational and 8 non-operational navigators.

There were no formal exercises in June, and the training programme arranged by Wahn Operations included low-level attacks in co-operation with the RAF Regiment defending the airfield. On the 28th Fg Offs Pinner and Kershaw were obliged to bail out of a Meteor VII in the vicinity of Bonn. Both made a successful descent suffering only superficial injuries.

In July at Monschau air-to-ground range, Fg Off Holmes scored 49% when the Squadron average was only 29%. The hours flown by the Squadron were 316 by day and 86 at night. Four new members arrived: Flt Lts SG Knight, T MacDonald and DR Patrick, and Fg Off E Green.

(August 1956 F.540 not available)

There was a very busy programme in the air and on the ground during September, with exercises 'Whipsaw' and 'Stronghold' being successfully carried out. There was also a full programme of GCA let-downs, practice interceptions, formation flying and cine-gun. A total of 436 hours was flown in the month. The sports programme changed from Summer to Winter, but unfortunately the first soccer match was lost when the Squadron was beaten by the Wahn Admin Wing five goals to three. The Squadron was represented in the Station team at rugby, soccer, hockey, basketball, athletics and cross-country running. Posted in were Fg Offs Dick and Hyland; and Fg Off Sweetapple left the Squadron. There was a total of 120 personnel on the Squadron at this time consisting of 47 aircrew, 8 SNCO's and 65 airmen. The Squadron coffee bar - 'The Brown Owl' - opened, and a large shield, being a replica of the Squadron Crest in marquetry, was presented to the Squadron by FS Steve Masters.

(October 1956 F.540 not available)

(November 1956 F.540 not available)

Because of bad weather and the Christmas grant, there was little flying in December. On the 14th there was a Christmas party in the crewroom with games and competitions, for which the prizes were presented by Mrs Davison. On the 19th there was a children's party and on the 21st the whole Squadron assembled in the crewroom together with a barrel of beer for the celebration of the start of the Christmas holiday. Postings in were Plt Offs Davey and Dennison, and FS Gray. Flt Lt NA Davies arrived back after successfully completing the OATS Course at Bircham Newton. The senior ground crew FS WJ Carvill was posted out.

There was bad news in January 1957 with an official cut in flying hours because of the need to conserve fuel, and unfortunately the Squadron rather overdid the flying this month as the weather was so good. Therefore each crew was limited to just 22 hours flying during February and early March. It was in February that Wg Cdr Davison had a ricochet accident at Monschau, there had been others in the past few months, and so range procedures were reviewed. Fg Off Blakeley, currently the compiling officer of the Form 540, threw a party to celebrate his forthcoming marriage. Postings in were Plt Off Davoine and FS MacMillan.

In the middle of March the fuel restriction was lifted and the Squadron completed 338 hours flying during the month, including 192 practice interceptions. Somehow the Squadron managed to acquire a Vampire T.11 from RAF Bruggen on temporary loan and those pilots qualified took the opportunity to fly this aeroplane. There was a good deal of activity on the ground with lectures, and some members departed for the Winter Survival Course. The Siegburg range was used for attacks against the flag simulating the conditions to be expected at APS Sylt. A decompression chamber was made available at Wahn to give aircrew the experience of the result of lack of oxygen. The dreaded Mobile Recognition Test team arrived on the Station to test the crews, but no results are listed!

There was a Squadron Parade in March to re-present to 68 Squadron, the Dornier 217 cannon wartime trophy which RAF Coltishall had looked after for several years. This was formally 'trooped' in traditional fashion by Sgt Longsdale and F/Sgt Masters, along the ranks of the Squadron, drawn up specially for the occasion in a 'hollow square' formation, devised by Flt Lt NA Davies. Photographic evidence of this rare activity is on file, proving that not all OATS Course parade drill procedures, can always be applied! A cocktail party was given in the evening at which the Coltishall representatives were the honoured guests. A party was also given by Flt Lts Appleyard and Saunders bidding farewell to the Squadron on posting, at which they presented an engraved silver cigarette case to Wg Cdr Davison as a token of their tour. Flt Lt MG Waudby and Fg Off GA Pearce were posted in.

At Sylt the weather was favourable, and the planned programme of air-to-air exercises was largely completed. When occasionally the target glider was destroyed by gunfire, the fighter's surplus ammunition was expended at the air-to-ground range at the Northern end of Sylt before returning to base. On the ground the Squadron armourers excelled themselves in re-arming exercises, said by the Armaments Officer at Sylt to be the most efficiently conducted 'turn rounds' he had ever witnessed. Corporal RW Oakley received special praise. While at Sylt, wet dinghy drill and ditching drill were practised by the aircrews. For instance, Fg Offs Muggeridge and Funnell notably, were dropped in a dinghy 40 miles from shore, the Sylt rescue organisation was set in motion, and within an hour they were spotted and hoisted from the dinghy by the helicopter. The highest scores in the air-to-air were by Wg Cdr Davison with 54% and Sqn Ldr Mason with 52%. The highest in 'A' Flight was by Flt Lt NA Davies at 24%, and in 'B' Flight by Flt Lt Johnson at 21% and Sgt Blow at 20%. There was much sporting activity this time at Sylt, including a Squadron victory over RAF Sylt at squash. The Squadron gave a party there on the 25th April, and the honoured guests were the Sylt officers and their ladies.

Back at Wahn there was an inter-group exercise code-named 'Guest', when long cross-country routes were flown requiring wing tanks - the total fuel carried by each aeroplane being 700 gallons. The aircraft were flown in pairs and were controlled by 83 Group GCI Stations. Another exercise was the annual testing of the UK Air Defences, known as 'Vigilant', in which the main task for 68 Squadron was to provide a protective radar screen at 35,000 ft. During this exercise a record landing rate of 14 aircraft in 61/2 minutes was achieved at Wahn. Also during May the Squadron aerobatics team - 'The Moonrakers' - was formed, no connection, but there was a farewell flypast for the C-in-C 2nd TAF soon after. From the 20th, 68 Squadron provided two crews for a 'Battle Flight', sleeping in the hangar on at 15 minutes readiness. On the 25th it was Wahn Station sports day, when the Station Commander, Gp Capt R McFarlane presented the prizes, Flying Wing could manage only fourth place at this meeting. During the month Sqn Ldr Bunch was posted to a Wing Commander's post at SHAPE, and Flt Lt NA Davies and Sgt Slopan were repatriated to the UK. Posted in were Sgts Killin and Caldwell-Jones. Flying hours for the Squadron in May were 365 by day and 189 by night, achieved by the excellent aircraft serviceability, long cross country flights, and the superb weather.

The Whitsun break, and many German public holidays reduced the flying times in June, and only 325 hours were flown. There was one formal exercise during the month, which was a 'Bombex' with 'hostile' Canberras flying over at 40,000 ft, several kills were claimed by the Squadron. Otherwise it was interception training exercises plus a visit from a Fighter Weapons Touring team, who checked on pilots' air gunnery. The Queen's Birthday Parade was held on the 17th. The Squadron cricket team beat Wahn Station team, and our first car rally and picnic was held - Sgt Blow driving the winning car. Sqn Ldr MT Harding arrived to take charge of 'B' Flight together with his navigator Fg Off H Barker.

In July 1957 Wahn closed down as an RAF Base, on being handed back to the Germans. 68 Squadron moved to Laarbruch, and at the same time there was a reduction in the Squadron's unit establishment from 16 to 12 Meteor NF11's. At Laarbruch there was immediate difficulty in obtaining spare parts and other equipment. All these factors contributed to low flying hours for the month - 221 by day and 81 by night, however the Squadron did take part in a 'Guest' exercise and also one with 618 Signals Unit, using their MSQ 1 equipment. There was other flying training, but no air-to-ground because Monschau range seems to have been permanently unserviceable. The following were repatriated to the UK: Flt Lts AJ Neville and JMA Parker; and Fg Offs JB Blakeley and GW Jones. Fg Off MF Boggis went to 618 Signals Unit and Fg Off Kershaw to HQ 2 Group. In came Sqn Ldr JH Rogers (to replace Sqn Ldr CLC Mason) with his navigator Flt Lt LG Huddy. Although the aeroplane establishment reduced, the number of pilots and navigators remained at approximately 20 of each. The ground crew strength was 12 SNCO's, 16 corporals and 72 airmen. Before leaving Wahn a cocktail party was given by 68 Squadron, the honoured guests being Wahn officers and their ladies, a highlight of the occasion was the first public performance of The Moonrakers aerobatic team. At the party the Squadron Commander presented Wg Cdr DE Gibbs with a 68 Squadron tie, making him an Honorary Member in recognition of his outstanding support as OC Tech Wing at Wahn.

In August there was a loss of flying days due to August Bank Holiday, and 291 hours were flown in total. Things had improved at Laarbruch but the main problem still, was fitting in the Meteor let-down pattern with the Canberras and the RF 84F's. Added to the fact that 24-hour Air Traffic Control was not available at Laarbruch, this meant that the battle flight had to be stationed at Wildenrath overnight. The exchange of aircrews between 68 Squadron and 723 Eskadrille Danish Air Force at Aalborg was resumed. A visit was made to the Squadron by AVM HJ Kirkpatrick, recently appointed SASO at 2nd TAF.

The weather in September was terrible, with wind and rain, and the result was that at least 6 aircrew caught colds and were unfit to fly for several days. The weather also interfered with the big NATO exercise 'Counterpunch', this involved air and ground crews being bedded down in the hangar and being provided with meals there. However after two days the exercise was cancelled, which was extremely disappointing considering the preparation carried out by the Squadron. During the month the crews had the use of an epidiascope for aircraft recognition purposes. There was no soccer played in September due to the waterlogged pitch!

In October an influenza epidemic swept through Germany and some aircrew were affected, and in the last part of the month fog blotted out everything on the airfield. The little flying work that was done included two 'Round Robin' refuelling exercises, some PI's and navigation. A visiting team gave lectures on 'The Effects of an Atomic Explosion', 'Damage Control', 'Radioactivity Measuring Instruments' and 'Elementary First Aid'. The aircrew also had their annual range practice with small arms. Flt Lt T MacDonald left the Squadron, being the first to leave under the new "voluntary premature termination of service" scheme. On the Squadron a new three-flight system was introduced with Flt Lt MG Waudby as flight commander of 'C' Flight. On the 19th, seven current members of the Squadron flew over to attend the Squadron Reunion at the Dorchester Hotel in London: Sqn Ldr MT Harding, Flt Lt RL Holmes, Fg Offs J Hyland, J Mitchell, JC Holdway, PJ Muggeridge and JAS Thomson. Form 540 goes on to say 'several ex-members who have recently left the Squadron, as well as the Old Brigade, were also present'.

Due to the age of the Meteors, the Squadron became quite worried about airframe unserviceability, on some occasions the entire flying programme had to be postponed while airframe faults were investigated. Flying hours were therefore reduced to 290 in November. However the Squadron moved to Sylt for the air-to-air exercises and scored an average of 20.7% - Flt Lt Jennings being best with 35.5%. Back at Laarbruch 68 threw a party in the crewroom with guests from RAF Laarbruch and the Royal Netherlands Air Force there, Gp Capt CB Winn DSO, OBE, DFC was present. At the end of the month the Rt Hon Ian Orr-Ewing MP, Under-Secretary of State for Air visited the Squadron.

In December bad weather and the Christmas Grant reduced the monthly total flying to 133 hours. Much of the time was spent by the aircrew on the ground attending lectures. Flt Lt MG Waudby left to take a Squadron Leader's post on 96 Squadron at Aalhorn. The new Airman's Bar, especially contracted for the Christmas Holiday was well and truly opened.

January 1958 was the fourth month in sequence when the hours the Squadron flew were not up to target - only 178 by day and 28 by night. This was due to poor aircraft availability and the bad weather factor, in fact there were nine days completely unsuitable for flying and 10 more were marginal. However operation 'Argus' took place with 68 Squadron in a defensive role, flying seven sorties, and making nine claims. A further exercise was when Fighter Command made sweeps into the ATAF area. In general training, 250 interceptions were carried out of which 140 were at high level. Sqn Ldr Collyer arrived as NR Leader, and Fg Off DJ Dewdney was repatriated, tour expired.

Very bad weather again in February reduced the hours flown to 232 by day and 76 by night. The flying was general training on interceptions plus some air-to-ground firing on a target range at Nordhorn. There were ground lectures on aircraft recognition, navigation, intelligence and current affairs. Flt Lt DR Patrick was posted to HQ Flying Wing at Laarbruch, and Sgt Pilot Longsdale was repatriated, tour expired.

A large amount of second-line servicing fell due in March and this reduced the hours flown to 284. However it did give the aircrews the opportunity to devote ground training to aircraft engineering and servicing. There were two standard exercises during the month: a 'Guest' and an 'Amled' with successful operations by the Squadron against F84F's and Canberras. During these operations there were two hasty returns to base: in the first instance because of a leaking ventral tank, and in the second, instrument failure. Three members were posted out: Fg Offs GA Pearce, JP Dennison and PJC Davey, this reduced the crew strengths to 16 pilots and 17 navigators. On the 15th a very good party was given by the aircrew to which they invited the ground Officers and SNCO's and Wives, when the prizes awarded at Sylt were officially presented. Silver bullets went to Flt Lt JC Holdway and Fg Off JG Morgan of 'A' Flight, and Flt Lt JK Jennings and Fg Off Coucill of 'B' Flight. The latter also received two bottles of champagne for a score better than 50%. Another bottle was given to Sgt Blow and his navigator Fg Off NED Walker. The opportunity was taken to present Fg Off J Hyland with a gift in anticipation of his wedding in April.

Things improved in April with 345 hours flying completed, which according to the Form 540 reflected great credit on the ground crews maintaining the ageing aircraft in a serviceable condition. The exercise undertaken during the month were 'Battlecall' and another 'Amled'. There was also much formation flying training.

There was also a satisfactory number of hours flown in May - 321 - mainly on routine training. On the 13th there was an operational scramble, but the bogey turned out to be a USAF T33 which had flown too far East and returned in a panic! The Instrument Rating Team from CFE at West Raynham visited the Station and tested all the pilots, commenting favourably on the standard of instrument flying on 68 Squadron. On the 30th Wg Cdr FW Davison was posted to HQ Fighter Command, and his navigator, Fg Off GA Richards left the RAF. A party was held in the crewroom to say goodbye to these officers, and Sqn Ldr Harding on behalf of the Squadron, presented Frank Davison with a silver cigarette box, and he in turn gave the traditional present to the Squadron of a tankard. The new Squadron Commander, Wg Cdr M Scannell, DFC, AFC arrived to take over.

In June the Queen's Birthday Parade, and the AOC's Annual Inspection and Parade, meant a disappointing number of hours flown. The immobilisation of some personnel because of the effects of a typhoid inoculation, also did not help the training programme. Flt Lt A Sadler arrived to become the CO's navigator. In his first report, Wg Cdr Scannell said that the Squadron's morale was good despite the age and performance of the aircraft with which it was equipped.

A total of 327 hours were flown in July, which was considered satisfactory. The aircraft servicing was better, with SACEUR's target being met. There was an exercise 'Argus' and an 'Amlid', in each of which several "kills" were recorded. There was air-to-ground firing at Nordhorn with Flt Lt RL Holmes shooting a 78%, which can only be described as brilliant!

Described as the wettest August for 130 years, the weather obviously interfered with the flying programme. There was also a shortage of aircrew because of Promotion Exams. However an exercise 'Argus' was completed with 219 interceptions, together with some formation flying. Unusually air-to-ground firing was carried out using old MT vehicles instead of the more usual plain targets. During the air-to-ground firing, the armourers set an all-time record of only one stoppage per 10,000 rounds fired! Flt Lt JAS Thomson and Fg Off Mitchell were repatriated on completion of their tour, Fg Off NED Walker was also posted out, and Sgt(RO) JR Wright was posted in. There was a party on the 9th to accept a very fine set of murals by Fg Off's J Mitchell and J Hyland, depicting aircraft from the Squadron's History.

In September there was air-to-air practice firing planned but the Sylt Airfield was unserviceable, and the visit was postponed until November. The weather was much better this month at Laarbruch, and 348 hours were flown which was thought to be satisfactory. Unfortunately on the very day of the much-practised fly-past to mark the disbandment of 2 Group it was foggy, preventing a final join-up of the Squadrons. There was routine flying training during the month with 244 interceptions completed, and on the ground there were lectures on various subjects. Welcome reinforcements arrived with Flt Lt AG Westerman and PJ Cabourne, and Fg Offs JA Quilley and Adam. Sgt Blow retired to civvy street.

The weather continued to be very good early in October with plenty of sunshine, but inevitably this led to thick fog in the second half of the month. Operation 'Sunbeam', which was Fighter Command's major annual exercise was completed successfully. At night 68 Squadron played the bomber role in this exercise, but by day became fighters again intercepting the 2nd TAF Canberras returning from attacks on the UK. Unfortunately there was little time for the cine gun practice required prior to the visit to Sylt the next month. Flt Lts Jennings and Holmes left the Squadron during the month, and the following were posted in: Flt Lts AP Stowell, JR Francis, FA Mallett and P Morgan, and FS HR Scott. The new officers were well and truly inducted at a Guest Night on the 31st when the traditional 'Night Intruder' was drunk with the usual results.

At Sylt there was the most appalling weather yet experienced, much to the chagrin of the Squadron members. There were days on end when no flying was possible, and 'other days which started well, spoiled later by the sea mist suddenly sweeping across the airfield. Only 164 hours were flown. Prior to 68 Squadron's visit, 96 Squadron had scored 26% - 68's score of 15% did not appeal to the Commanding Officer! There were no flying accidents during November, but Flt Lt IS Macpherson achieved a certain notoriety when he had to land on the perimeter track at Laarbruch because the runway was blocked. Flt Lt Fitcher and Fg Off Hall were posted in. Although 68 Squadron at Sylt was not renowned for its shooting, its ability to consume champagne was never in doubt. On Saturday the 22nd the entire Mess stock of 61 bottles, including pink, was consumed by the members in just over 2 hours.

Back at Laarbruch bad weather, much essential work on the aeroplanes, and the Christmas Grant interrupted the flying programme, and only 150 hours were flown during the month. An important piece of news did not help to enthuse the Squadron - 68 Squadron was to be disbanded on 20th January 1959, and re-numbered No. 5 Squadron. Form 540 states that everybody was sorry that this had to be, because 68 had an outstanding record as a night-fighter squadron. The change was however in accordance with Air Ministry policy of keeping the most senior squadrons of the RAF in existence.

The Air Ministry then agreed that the Squadron silver which had been collected during the post-war period is to remain in the care of No. 5 Squadron, it will be accounted for separately, and will always be available should 68 Squadron ever be re-formed. No. 68 Squadron Forms 540 and the Badge will be sent to the Air Historical Branch for safe keeping. The Dornier 217 machine-gun trophy will be returned to RAF Coltishall under the agreed terms. The silver candlesticks which 68 Squadron was holding in trust for RAF Wahn are being transferred to RAF Laarbruch for safe keeping, under the agreed terms, by which 68 Squadron is responsible for them, and they are to be re-presented to RAF Wahn should that Station ever be re-opened.

The last flight of No. 68 Squadron was an air test of 50 minutes by Flt Lt SG Knight and Fg Off WDG Blundell.

The final entry on the Form 540 states: 'It is sad to think that No. 68 Squadron is being disbanded for what is probably the final time. It is holding the distinction of being one of the only two Meteor-equipped Night-fighter Squadrons existent in the RAF, and notwithstanding the age of the equipment, morale was high and we trust we were maintaining the high standard set by our predecessors.'

Peter Croft, Kew.

June 1994

No. 68 NIGHT-FIGHTER SQUADRON

ROYAL AIR FORCE

LIST OF ENEMY AIRCRAFT CONFIRMED AS DESTROYED
PLUS THOSE CLAIMED AS PROBABLY DESTROYED, OR DAMAGED
DURING WORLD WAR II

<u>DATE</u>	<u>CREW</u>		<u>DESTROYED</u>	<u>PROBABLE</u>	<u>DAMAGED</u>
<u>1941</u>					
17.06.41	Fit Lt Pain	Fg Off Davies	1 He 111		
12.10.41	Pit Off Mansfeld	Sgt Janacek	2 Ju 88	1 Ju 88	1 Ju 88
22.10.41	Fg Off Winward	Sgt Wood	1 Ju 88		
25.10.41	W/O Welch	Plt Off Bennett			1 Ju 88
01.11.41	Fg Off Shepherd	Sgt Oxby	1 He 111		
<u>1942</u>					
08.03.42	Plt Off Newhouse	Plt Off Matson			1 He 111
27.03.42	W/O Welch	Plt Off Bennett			1 He 111
29.04.42	Sgt Jenkinson	Sgt Kindell		1 He 111	
	W/O Bobek	Sgt Kovarik	1 Do 217		
	Sqn Ldr Vesely	Plt Off Montgomery			1 Ju 88
30.04.42	Sqn Ldr Howden	Flt Lt Quittenden			1 He 111
01.05.42	Wg Cdr Aitken	Fg Off Higham	1 Do 217		1 Do 217
	Plt Off Mansfeld	Sgt Janacek	2 He 111		
			1/2 Do 217		
	Sqn Ldr Vesely	Fg Off Montgomery	1/2 Do 217		
29.05.42	W/O Bobek	Sgt Kovarik			1 Ju 88
30.05.42	Plt Off Marshall	Plt Off Haigh		1 He 111	1 He 111
	Wg Cdr Aitken	Fg Off Higham	1 Do 217		1 Ju 88
	Sqn Ldr Howden	Fg Off Montgomery	1 Ju 88		
	Flt Lt Winward	F/Sgt Wood	1 Do 217		
05.06.42	Pit Off Welch	Plt Off Bennett	1 Ju 88		
24.06.42	Pit Off Gough	F/Sgt Tate	1 Do 217		
25.06.42	Plt Off Cleaver	F/Sgt Nairn	1 Do 217		
23.07.42	Sqn Ldr Howden	Fg Off Longden			1 Do 217
	Wg Cdr Aitken	Fg Off Higham	1 Ju 88		
			1 Do 217		
	Sgt Truscott	Sgt Howarth	1 Do 217		
	W/O Bobek	F/Sgt Kovarik	1 Do 217		
24.07.42	Sqn Ldr Vesely	Sgt Necas	1 He 177		
28.07.42	W/O Bobek	F/Sgt Kovarik	1 Do 217	1 Do 217	
	Plt Off Welch	Plt Off Bennett	1 Do 217	1 Do 217	
30.07.42	Fg Off Raybould	F/Sgt Mullaly	1 Do 217		
31.07.42	Plt Off Ward	Sgt Wilson	1 Do 217		
	Fg Off Allen	Fg Off Wiseman	1 Ju 88	1 Do 217	
	W/O Bobek	F/Sgt Kovarik	1 Do 217		
03.08.42	Sqn Ldr Howden	Fg Off Higham			1 Do 217
	Fg Off Allen	Fg Off Wiseman			1 Do 217
07.08.42	F/Sgt Adam	Sgt Gemrod		1 Do 217	
08.08.42	Plt Off Cleaver	F/Sgt Nairn	1 Do 217		
12.08.42	Fg Off Allen	Fg Off Wiseman	1 He 111		
16.08.42	Flt Lt Winward	F/Sgt Wood			1 Do 217
22.08.42	Pit Off Gough	F/Sgt Tate		1 Do 217	
16.09.42	W/O Bobek	F/Sgt Kovarik			1 Do 217
19.09.42	W/O Bobek	F/Sgt Kovarik			1 Do 217
19.10.42	Sqn Ldr Vesely	Sgt Necas		1 Do 217	
	Flt Lt Winward	Plt Off Wood	1 Ju 88		

DATE	CREW		DESTROYED	PROBABLE	DAMAGED
24.10.42	Fg Off Raybould	F/Sgt Mullaley			1 Do 217
10.12.42	Flt Lt Mansfeld	Plt Off Janacek	1 Do 217		
<u>1943</u>					
12.03.43	Fg Off Vopalecky	F/Sgt Husar	1 Ju 88		
15.03.43	Flt Lt Mansfeld	Pit Off Janacek	1 Ju 88		
18.03.43	Fg Off Allen	Fg Off Bennett	2 Do 217		
	Plt Off Gough	Plt Off Matson	1 E-boat	1 E-boat	
	Sqn Ldr Sykora	Fg Off Oakley		1 E-boat	
	Flt Lt Mansfeld	Plt Off Janacek		1 E-boat	
28.03.43	Plt Off Bobek	W/O Kovarik	1 Ju 88		
	Fg Off Vopalecky	F/Sgt Husar	'h Do 217		
14.06.43	Fg Off Wills	Fg Off Ledebore	1 He 177		
12.07.43	Sqn Ldr Sykora	Fg Off Oakley			1 Ju 88
17.08.43	F/Sgt Peters	Sgt Rackham	1 Do 217		
18.08.43	Plt Off Adam	F/Sgt Gemrod	2 Do 217		
	Flt Lt Alien	Fg Off Josling		1 Do 217	
04.10.43	Flt Lt Alien	Fg Off Josling	1 Me 410		
07.10.43	Plt Off Serhant	F/Sgt Necas	1 Do 217		
06.11.43	Wg Cdr Hayley-Bell	Fg Off Uezzell	1 Me 410		
10.12.43	Wg Cdr Hayley-Bell	Fg Off Uezzell			2 Do 217
<u>1944</u>					
17.01.44	Flt Lt Hickin	Fg Off Harrison	1 Ju 88		
29.01.44	F/Sgt Neal	F/Sgt Eastwood	1 Ju 188		
04.02.44	Fg Off Seda	Plt Off Hradsky	1 Ju 88		
14.03.44	Wg Cdr Hayley-Bell	Fg Off Uezzell	1 Ju 188		
27.03.44	Fg Off Russell	Flt Lt Weir	1 Ju 188		
29.04.44	Flt Lt Capka	Fg Off Cupak		1 Ju 88	
14.05.44	Sqn Ldr Mansfeld	Fg Off Janacek	2 Do 217		
	F/Sgt Peters	F/Sgt Rackham	1 He 111		
15.05.44	Fg Off Wild	Fg Off Baker	1 Ju 188		
09.07.44	Fg Off Wild	Fg Off Baker	1 Flying bomb		
	Pit Off Williams	Plt Off Wapies	1 Flying bomb		
18.07.44	Plt Off Williams	Plt Off Wapies	1 Flying bomb		
19.07.44	Fg Off Gibson	Sgt Lack	1 Flying bomb		
26.07.44	Sqn Ldr Mansfeld	Flt Lt Janacek	1 Flying bomb		
06.10.44	Fg Off Haskell	Plt Off Bentley	1 Flying bomb		
07.10.44	Fg Off Humphrey	Fg Off Robertson	2 Flying bombs		
14.10.44	Fg Ogg Haskell	Fg Off Bentley	2 Flying bombs		
19.10.44	F/Sgt Bullus	Fg Off Edwards	1 Flying bomb		
	W/O Lauchlan	F/Sgt Bailey	2 Flying bombs		
	Fg Off Gibson	Sgt Lack	1 Flying bomb		
24.10.44	Sqn Ldr Wright	Fg Off McCulloch	2 Flying bombs		
25.10.44	Sqn Ldr Mansfeld	Flt Lt Janacek	2 Flying bombs		
11.11.44	F/Sgt Brooking	Plt Off Finn	1 He 111		
15.11.44	F/Sgt Neal	F/Sgt Eastwood	1 He 111		
	W/O Cookson	W/O Gravels		1 He 111	
24.12.44	F/Sgt Bullus	Fg Off Edwards	1 He 111		
<u>1945</u>					
05.01.45	W/O Brooking	Pit Off Finn	1 He 111		
04.03.45	Flt Lt Wills	Fg Off Goodwin	1 Ju 188		
	Flt Lt Miles	Fg Off Hobdey	1 Ju 188		

TOTALS

Aircraft	581/2	12	20
E-boats	1	3	
Flying bombs	18		

No. 68 NIGHT-FIGHTER SQUADRON

ROYAL AIR FORCE

NAMES OF CZECHOSLOVAK AIRCREW WHO SERVED WITH
68 SQUADRON IN WORLD WAR II (1941-1945)

FORENAME	SURNAME	P/N	FLEW WITH
Josef	ADAM	P	GEMROT
Karel	BEDNARIK	N	CHABERA, STANDERA, SERHANT
Lada	BOBEK	P	KOVARIK
Josef	CAPKA	P	CUPAK
Frantisek	CHABERA	P	BEDNARIK
Lada	CUPAK	N	CAPKA
Ferdi	GEMROT	N	ADAM
Frantisek	GLAUDER	P	VASATA
Josef	HANUS	P	
Vaclav	HORAK	P	KRUZIK
Drahos	HRADSKY	N	SEDA
Rudolph	HUSAR	N	VOPALECKY, PRCHAL
Slavo	JANACEK	N	MANSFELD
Miro	JIROUDEK	P	KANOVSKY, KOVANDA
Antonin	KANOVSKY	N	JIROUDEK
Josef	KLOBOUCNIK	P	KLVACEK
Josef	KLVACEK	N	KLOBOUCNIK
Josef	KOPRIVA	P	KOVANDA
Jarda	KOVANDA	N	KOPRIVA, RICHTER
Robert	KOVARIK	N	BOBEK
Bedrich	KRUZIK	N	HORAK
Pavel	KUDLAC	P	
Miro	MANSFELD	P	JANACEK
Josef	MENSIK	P	SLIVA
Zbysek	NECAS	N	VESELY, SERHANT
Eduard	PRCHAL	P	HUSAR
Karel	RICHTER	P	KOVANDER
Karel	SEDA	P	HRADSKY
Jan	SERHANT	P	NECAS, BEDNARIK
Josef	SLIVA	N	MENSIK
Jan	SMUDEK	N	TAUDY
Miro	STANDERA	P	BEDNARIK
Frantisek	SYKORA	P	
Jaroslav	TAUDY	P	SMUDEK
Franta	VASATA	N	GLAUDER
Vlastimil	VESELY	P	NECAS
Josef	VOPLALECKY	P	HUSAR

Appendix B

PLC 13th January 1994

68 SQUADRON R.A.F. AIRCREW

STRENGTH AT
DISBANDMENT 20th April 1945

Squadron Commander - Wg Cdr L W G Gill, DSO

'A' Flight Commander - Sqn Ldr M J Mansfeld, DSO, DFC

'B' Flight Commander - Sqn Ldr J D Wright, DFC

Pilots			Navigators		
Fg Off	J	Adam	Plt Off	H	Bailey
Fg Off	K	Boulton	Fg Off	F F	Baker
Pit Off	K R	Cookson	W/Off	K	Bednarik
Fit Lt	JC	Cox	Fg Off	J	Bentley
W/Off	J	Gibbon	Fg Off	C A L	Cliffe
Fg Off	GT	Gibson	Fg Off	PL	Croft
Fit Lt	WJ	Gough, DFC	F/Sgt	J G	Duffy
Flt Lt	J H	Haskell	Plt Off	E	Eastwood
Fg Off	EJ	Holloway	Fg Off	L W	Edwards
Fg Off	V	Horak	W/Off	F	Gemrot
Fg Off	H K	Humphreys	Fg Off	FJ	Goodwin
Flt Lt	J	Irvine	W/Off	W J	Gravell
Fg Off	P	Kudlac	F/Sgt	TJ	Hayes
Plt Off	EW	Loveland	Fg Off	R H	Hobdey
Fit Lt	R B	Miles	W/Off	R T S	Hoile
Plt Off	L W	Neal	Fg Off	R	Husar
Flt Lt	K W	Pendrey	Fg Off	D C	Hutchinson
Flt Lt	V G J	Phillips, DFC	Fit Lt	S A	Janacek, DFC, DFM
Fit Lt	A E	Sloman	F/Sgt	B	Kruzik
Fg Off	M	Standera	Fg Off	B M	Lack
Fit Lt	B H	Talbot	Fg Off	W H	McCulloch
Flt Lt	J	Taudy, AFC	Fit Lt	C	Matson
Fg Off	S G	Trice	Plt Off	z	Necas
Fit Lt	J	Vopalecky	Fg Off	D S	Pollard, DFC
Fit Lt	G	Wild	Fg Off	P A	Robertson
Fit Lt	B	Wills, DFC	Fg Off	R G	Stafford
			Sgt	E E	Waller
			W/Off	K A	Willson

Other well-remembered people were:

Adjutant
Medical Officer
Engineering Officer
Intelligence Officer

Flt Lt J D Cartwright
Fit Lt C V Murray
Flt Lt L Lewis
Fg Off L W Kohler

68 SQUADRON R.A.F. AIRCREW

STRENGTH AT
DISBANDMENT 21 January 1959

Squadron Commander - Wg Cdr M Scannell, DFC AFC

'A' Flight Commander - Sqn Ldr J H Rogers, AFC
'B' Flight Commander - Sqn Ldr M T Harding-Rolls
Nav/Rad Leader - Sqn Ldr R K F Collyer

Flt Lt	W B	Bulley	Fg Off	J H	Adam
Flt Lt	PJ	Cabourne	Fg Off	H	Barker
Flt Lt	E D	Creswick	Fg Off	W D G	Blundell
Flt Lt	N M	Dick	Fg Off	J A S	Davoine
Flt Lt	K E	Fitchew	Fg Off	E	Green
Flt Lt	J R	Francis	Fg Off	G T	Hall
Flt Lt	L G	Huddy	Fg Off	D G	Holes
Flt Lt	S G	Knight	Fg Off	J	Hyland
Flt Lt	F A	Mallett	Fg Off	PJ	Muggeridge
Flt Lt	P	Morgan	Fg Off	J A	Quilley
Flt Lt	F C	Romney			
Flt Lt	C B	Spurr	F/Sgt	E	MacMillan
Fit Lt	P	Stowell	F/Sgt	H R	Scott
Fit Lt	A G	Westerman	Sgt	J R	Wright

68 SQUADRON SILVER

The Squadron silver was formally left in the care of 5 Squadron in January 1959. The mounted gun trophy was returned to RAF Coltishall. Eventually all the silver also went to RAF Coltishall, and the following items were those formally on charge in May 1973. The list may not be complete, and some items (candelabra for instance) being impossible to identify as belonging to 68 particularly, are believed to be in use now on other Stations.

Model of Silver Owl on Ebony base	68 Squadron Funds
Silver-plated Model of Owl - hinges to show Naked Lady	Donor not known
Two Silver-plated bottle openers	723 Escadrille, RDAF
Coronation (1953) silver ash-tray in case	68 Squadron Wives
Two round, table lighters - red and black	Donor not known
Silver mounted, cut glass, spirit decanter	Donor not known
Silver model of Meteor NF 11	Sir Armstrong Whitworth
EPNS Table napkin ring - with enamelled Squadron Badge	Donor not known
Square Penter ash-tray	Fg Off Peter Dennison
Silver Cigarette Box	Flt Lts Appleyard/Saunders
10" Gadroon Silver Salver on four feet	Flt Lts Davies/Turner
Eight three-light Candelabra, silver-plated 11"	Donor not known
Ebony Gavel on Ebony Block	Sqn Ldr Mason and Flt Lt Neville
Mounted cannon trophy, with engraved plate	RAF Coltishall (1957)
22 Tankards: 3 from Squadron funds, and 19 given by:	

Wg Cdr James; Sqn Ldr Bunch; Flt Lts Holmes, Patrick, Coucill, Jennings and Lee; Fg Offs Dewdney, Walker, Fullilove, Boggis, MacConnachie, Jones, Chadd, Sweetapple, Pinner and Gibson; Sgt Blow; and 723 Escadrille RDAF.

Appendix D

P L Croft, Kew. July 1494