

'The Battle of Britain' took place in the skies over Britain between July and October 1940. After Germany had taken over France, Winston Churchill, Britain's Prime Minister, said on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1940,

'The Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilisation. Upon it depends our own British life ... let us therefore brace ourselves to our duty and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will say: This was their finest hour.'



The German air force was called the Luftwaffe and they flew Messerschmitts, Dorniers and Junkers! They were ordered to bomb all the airfields, shipping centres and factories in Britain so that the Germans could invade without worrying about the British making more aeroplanes, ships and ammunition to attack them. To make it more difficult for the Luftwaffe, Britain had a blackout every night so that the enemy aeroplanes could not see where they were. Everyone had to make sure that once it was dark there was no light shining from any building, if there was, no matter how little, the occupiers were fined.

The RAF (Royal Air Force) was a relatively new part of the British armed forces, set up during the First World War. The RAF didn't even have many pilots or aeroplanes and the people of Britain were asked to donate their saucepans, iron railings and even milk bottle tops so that they could be made into new aeroplanes. It took a lot of practice, and a lot of lives, to work out the best way of attacking the enemy. The Luftwaffe took advantage of this and shot down many British aeroplanes.

Neither the Luftwaffe or RAF had very accurate ways of navigating in the 1940's, it was very difficult to see where they were going during the night and the Luftwaffe often missed their targets. In cities like Liverpool and Birmingham the bombs hit houses instead of factories and killed many people. Britain retaliated and the RAF, who flew Hurricanes and Spitfires to defend Britain, started using Bristol Blenheims and Bristol Beaufighters to bomb Berlin.

Adolf Hitler (who was in charge of Germany) was enraged and ordered a stop to the attacks on British air fields, instead the Luftwaffe were to undertake large attacks on British cities during the day and night. In September 1940 the Luftwaffe began bombing London. The first night this happened, 1600 people were very badly injured and 430 were killed. This (for most people) marked the beginning of 'The Blitz'. The RAF rushed to the defence of Britain and tried to shoot down the Luftwaffe during these raids.

Throughout 'The Battle of Britain' the RAF lost 792 planes and 544 pilots. Even so, the Luftwaffe never managed to destroy Britain's air defences and so lost 'The Battle of Britain'. This put a stop (for the time being) to the Germans invading Britain.