

## The Sussex Combined Services - Air



*Flt. Lt. Hall's Spitfire engine*

Being on the English Channel coast, Sussex (along with Kent) bore the brunt of the air battles that raged overhead. Although not suffering attacks such as those metered out to London, Coventry and other major cities, many coastal towns that were on the flight paths of German aircraft operating from French airfields suffered damage as aircraft crashed or hurriedly dropped their bombs in order to escape from R.A.F. fighter attack. Eastbourne gained the title of 'most raided town in the south-east'.

During the Battle of Britain, the German airforce (Luftwaffe) first attacked shipping convoys in the Channel, then R.A.F. fighter airfields before starting to bomb London and other cities, in preparation for an invasion of Britain. After Hitler's plan, known as 'Operation Sealion' was postponed, the Luftwaffe began what became known as 'tip-and-run' raids.

A 'tip-and-run' raid involved one or two German fighter aircraft flying very low across the Channel to avoid being seen on radar screens, dropping some bombs and then rushing back home before the defences could react. In the process, many towns were bombed or strafed with machine gun fire, causing damage and casualties.

Whilst the Germans were still carrying out night-time raids on cities, in 1944, the menace of the V1 flying bomb or 'doodle-bug' appeared. A pilotless aircraft carrying a ton of high explosive, the doodle-bug was a fearsome weapon, so-called because of the grating noise its engine made. Because the V1 did not have a

pilot, the only way for the Germans to guide them to their target was to calculate how much fuel was needed for the bomb to reach it. When the fuel supply ran out, the engine cut off, and the bomb descended silently to the ground, where it would explode on impact. Anyone hearing a doodle-bug engine suddenly cut out would suffer the terror of perhaps not knowing if it was going to land near them, or pass overhead and crash somewhere else.