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BATTLE OF BRITAIN





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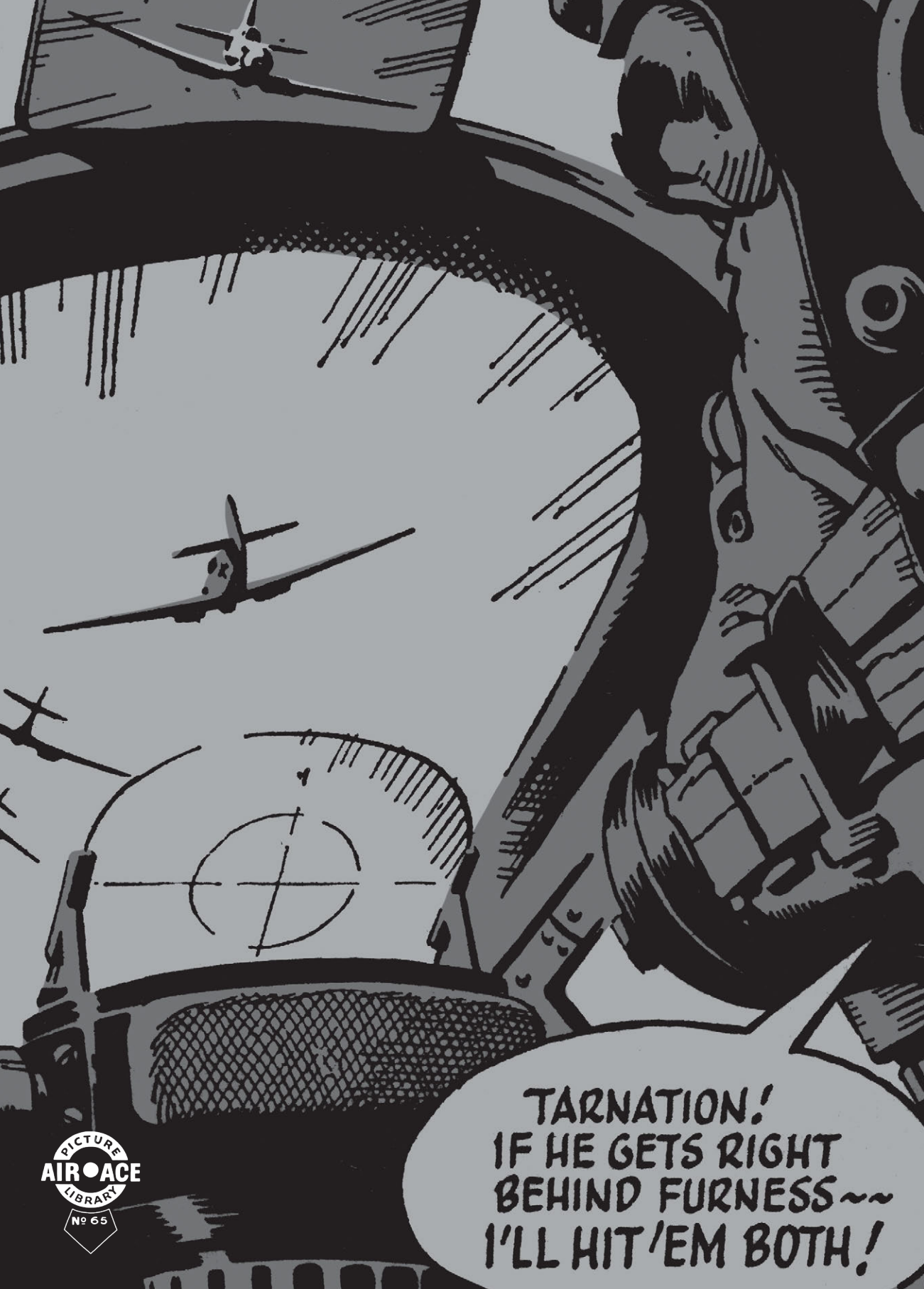
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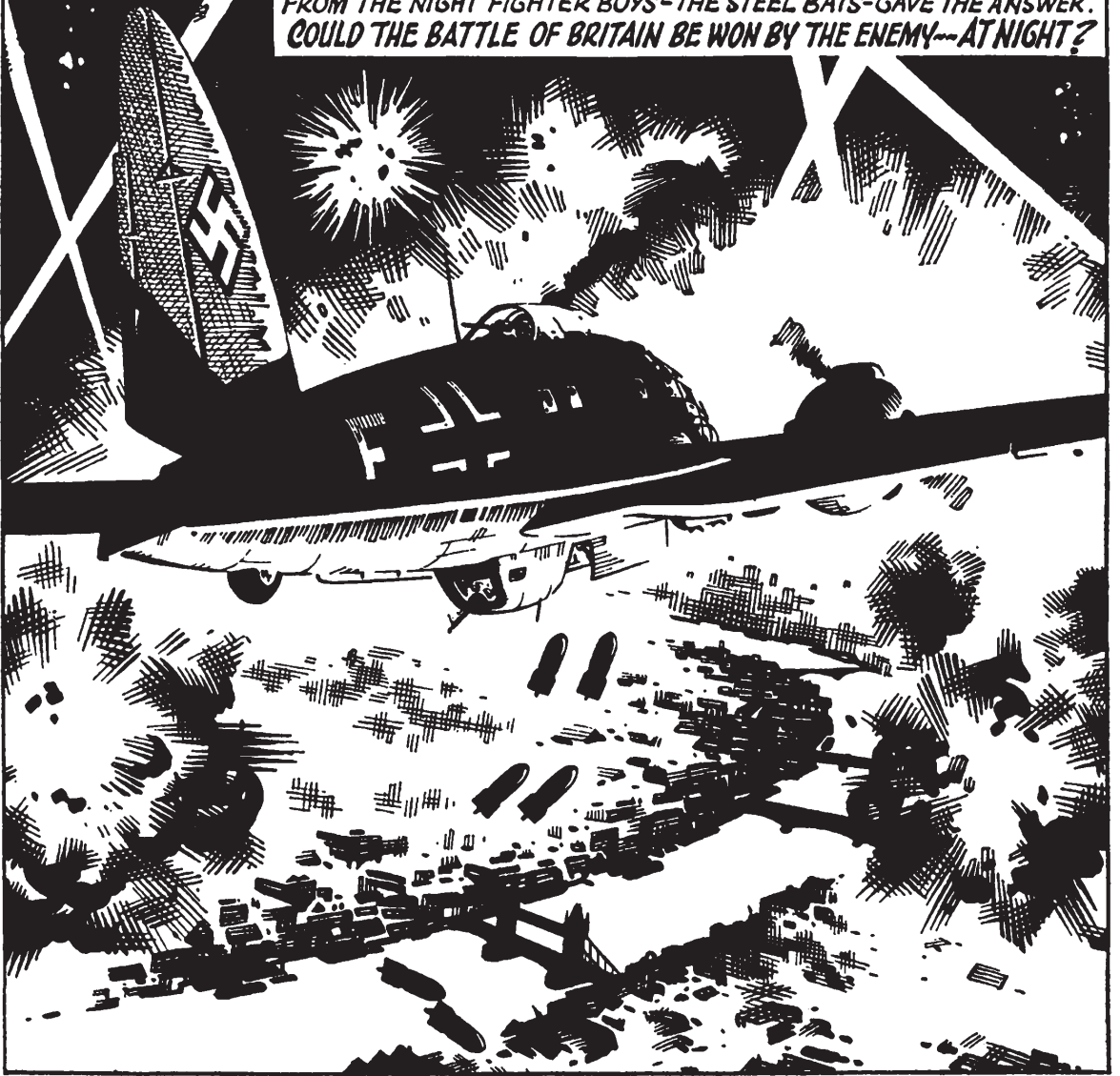
Battle of Britain



TARNATION!
IF HE GETS RIGHT
BEHIND FURNESS~~
I'LL HIT 'EM BOTH!

STEEL BATS

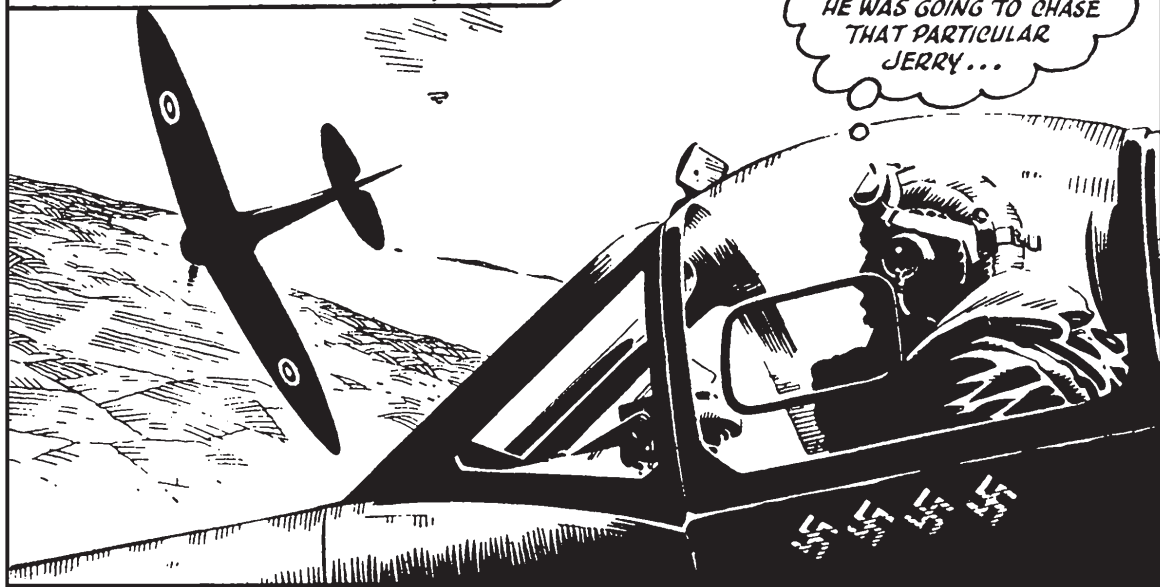
THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN HAD REACHED ITS GLORIOUS CULMINATION. THE DEPLETED SQUADRONS OF FIGHTER COMMAND STILL KEPT THE MARAUDING ENEMY UNDER CONTROL. BUT GERMANY WAS NOT YET DEFEATED. FROM WHAT QUARTER WOULD THE BLOW FALL NOW? THE DRUMMING RISE AND FALL OF UNSYNCHRONISED AERO-ENGINES FROM THE NIGHT FIGHTER BOYS—THE STEEL BATS—GAVE THE ANSWER. COULD THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN BE WON BY THE ENEMY—AT NIGHT?



Chapter 1. THE REBEL

AT R-A-F ELTENSRAW, NO 870 SQUADRON OF FIGHTER COMMAND CAME IN AFTER A VICTORIOUS BATTLE OVER THE NORTH FORELAND. FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT BILL MITCHELL FOLLOWED HIS SQUADRON COMMANDER IN ~ BUT HE WAS IN NO ELATED MOOD!

I BOOBED AGAIN!
CAN'T DO ANYTHING RIGHT
THESE DAYS! HOW THE
HECK WAS I TO KNOW THAT
HE WAS GOING TO CHASE
THAT PARTICULAR
JERRY...

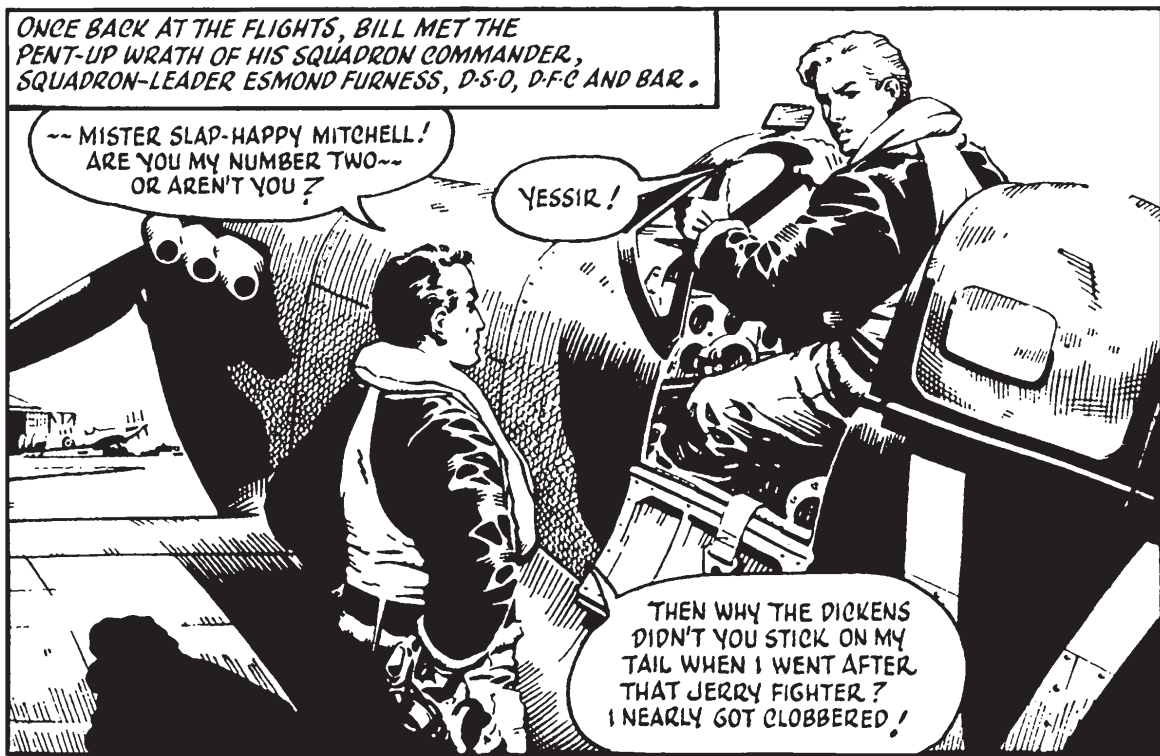


ONCE BACK AT THE FLIGHTS, BILL MET THE PENT-UP WRATH OF HIS SQUADRON COMMANDER, SQUADRON-LEADER ESMOND FURNESS, D-S-O, D-F-C AND BAR.

-- MISTER SLAP-HAPPY MITCHELL!
ARE YOU MY NUMBER TWO~
OR AREN'T YOU?

YESSIR!

THEN WHY THE DICKENS
DIDN'T YOU STICK ON MY
TAIL WHEN I WENT AFTER
THAT JERRY FIGHTER?
I NEARLY GOT CLOBBERED!



MITCHELL WAS SAVED THE NECESSITY OF EXPLAINING BY THE ARRIVAL OF THE STATION ADJUTANT.

EXCUSE ME, SIR! AIR MARSHAL FENNER HAS ARRIVED, AND IS WAITING FOR YOU UP AT YOUR OFFICE!

CONFOUND HIM! I MEAN-- OH, FORGET IT! TELL HIM I'M ON THE WAY! SEE YOU LATER, MITCHELL!



NOT TO WORRY, MITCH! THE SKIPPER'S HAD TOO MUCH-- LIKE WE ALL HAVE! LET'S GO AND GRAB A CUPPA

NO, THANKS, PADDY! YOU GO ON-- I'M GOING TO WRITE A LETTER TO MY DAD!



BILL MITCHELL SMARTED UNDER THE LASH OF HIS FIERY SQUADRON COMMANDER. IT WAS ALL THE MORE PAINFUL FOR BEING WELL MERITED ...

PADDY WAS RIGHT! WE'VE ALL HAD ENOUGH. AND WHAT MAKES IT WORSE IS TO HEAR THE JERRIES GOING OVER AT NIGHT WHILE WE'RE SAFELY ON THE DECK! I'D GIVE ANYTHING TO GET UP THERE AND PULL 'EM DOWN!



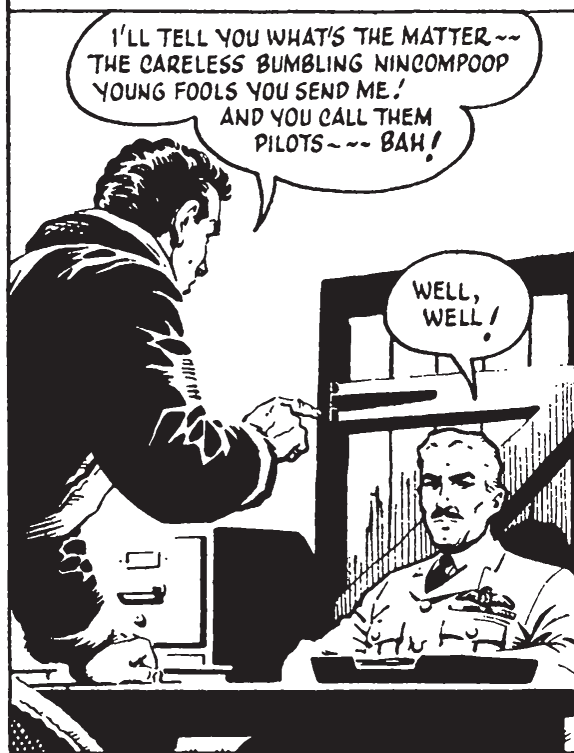
AIR MARSHAL FENNER WAS NO RELATION TO ESMOND FURNESS. ALTHOUGH AFFECTIONATELY KNOWN AS "UNCLE", THEIR FRIENDSHIP HAD GROWN OVER THE YEARS OF PEACE. NOW, IN WAR, FENNER VALUED THE SHREWD JUDGMENT AND FORESIGHT OF THE YOUNGER MAN...



MORNING, UNCLE!
DIDN'T EXPECT YOU
TODAY!

-- HA-- YOU'RE IN
ONE OF YOUR EVIL MOODS!
YOU YOUNG DEVIL--WHAT'S
BITTEN YOU Z...

THOROUGHLY IRRITATED BY FENNER'S FORTHRIGHT JOCULARITY-- FURNESS TURNED LIKE A TIGER...



I'LL TELL YOU WHAT'S THE MATTER--
THE CARELESS BUMBLING NINCOMPOOP
YOUNG FOOLS YOU SEND ME!
AND YOU CALL THEM
PILOTS-- BAH!

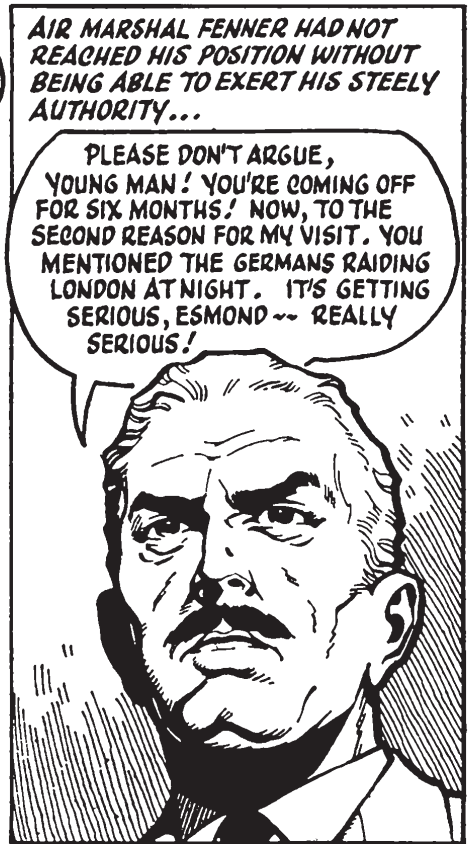
WELL,
WELL!

IT WAS A FEW MINUTES BEFORE THE SQUADRON-LEADER'S ANGER SUBSIDED...



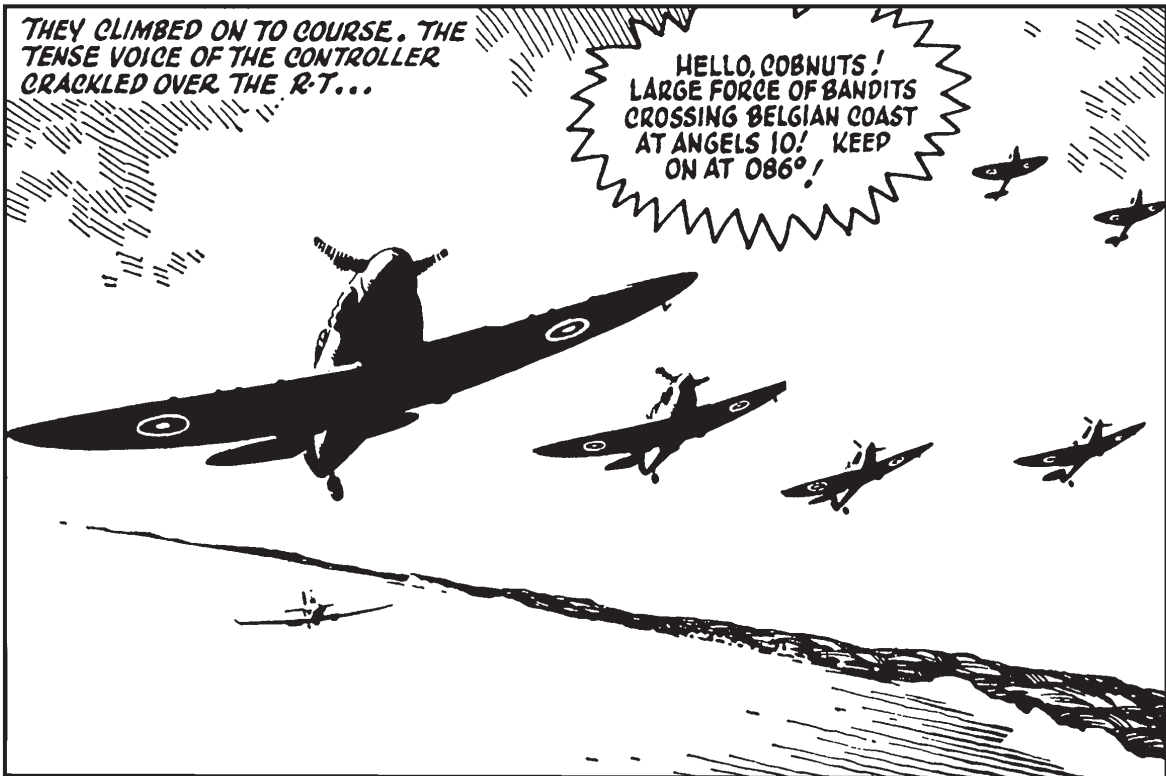
SORRY,
UNCLE...

THAT'S ALL RIGHT. I'VE HEARD
WORSE FROM YOU. IN A WAY, IT WILL
HELP ME TO TELL YOU ONE OF THE
REASONS I'M HERE!



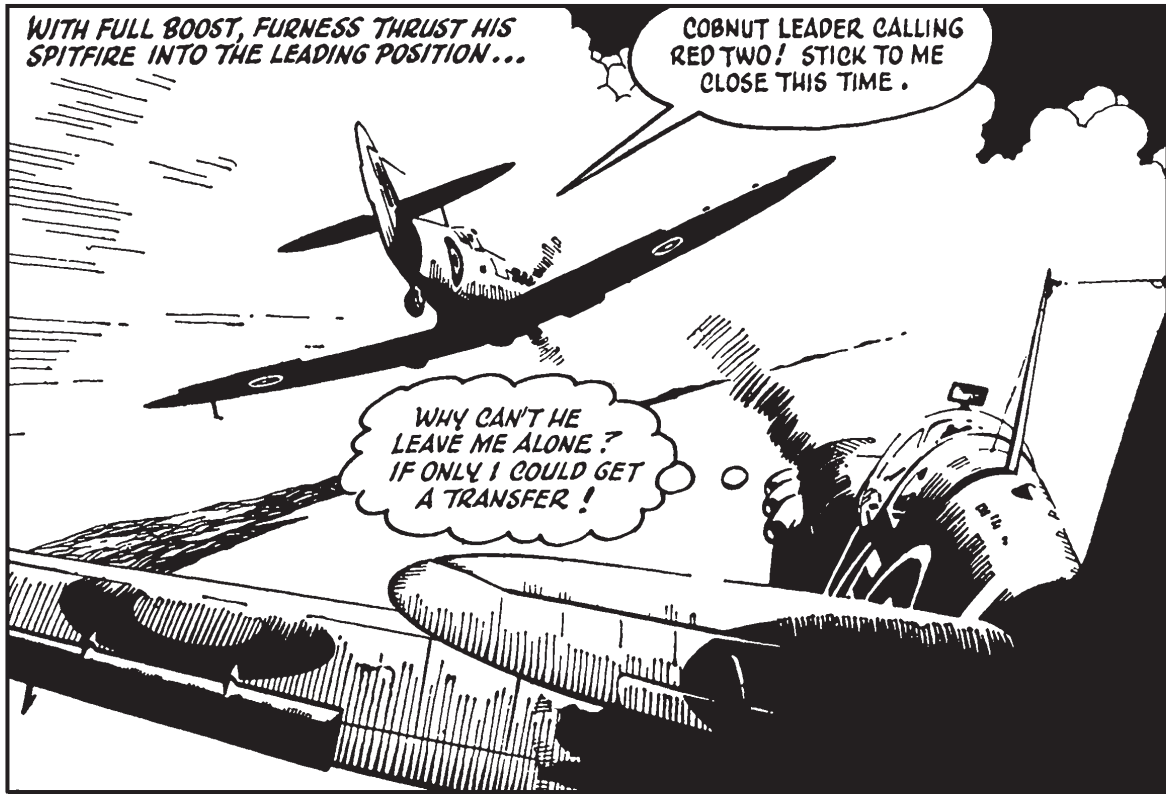
THE JANGLE OF A BELL SOUNDED IN THE DISTANCE...





THEY CLIMBED ON TO COURSE. THE TENSE VOICE OF THE CONTROLLER CRACKLED OVER THE R-T...

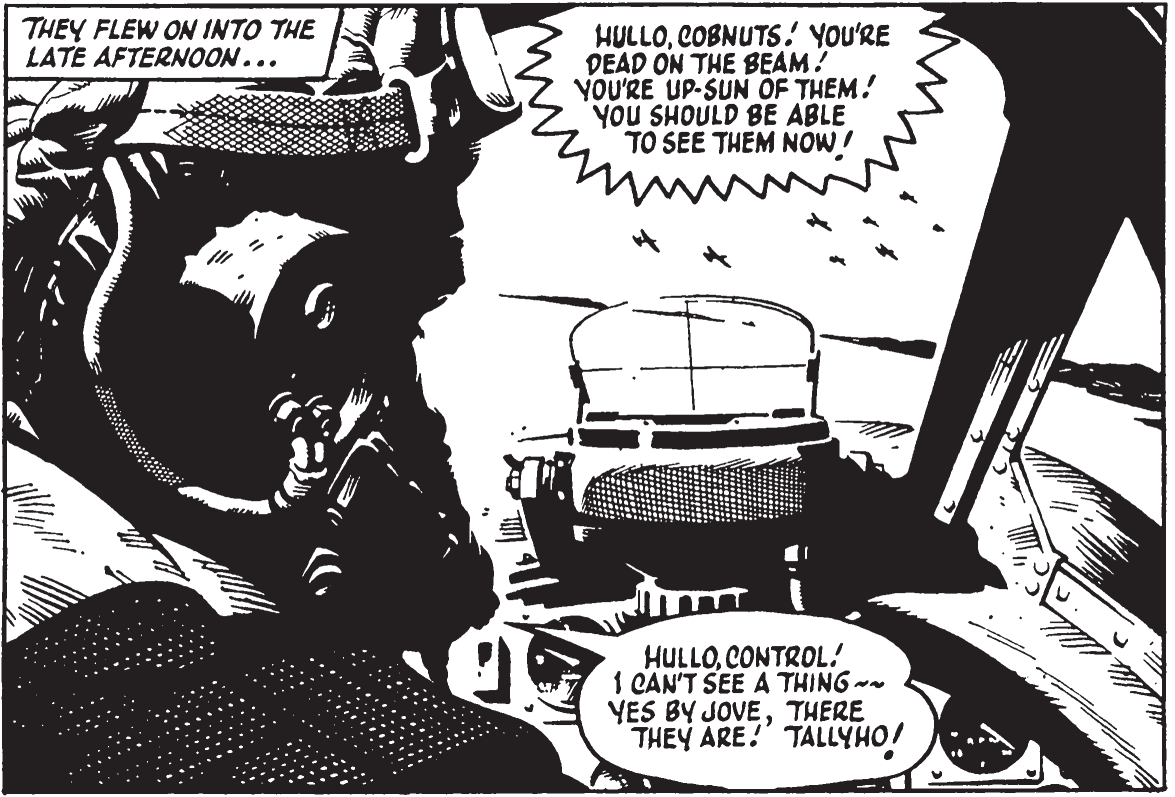
HELLO, COBNUTS! LARGE FORCE OF BANDITS CROSSING BELGIAN COAST AT ANGELS 10! KEEP ON AT 086°!



WITH FULL BOOST, FURNESS THRUST HIS SPITFIRE INTO THE LEADING POSITION...

COBNUT LEADER CALLING RED TWO! STICK TO ME CLOSE THIS TIME.

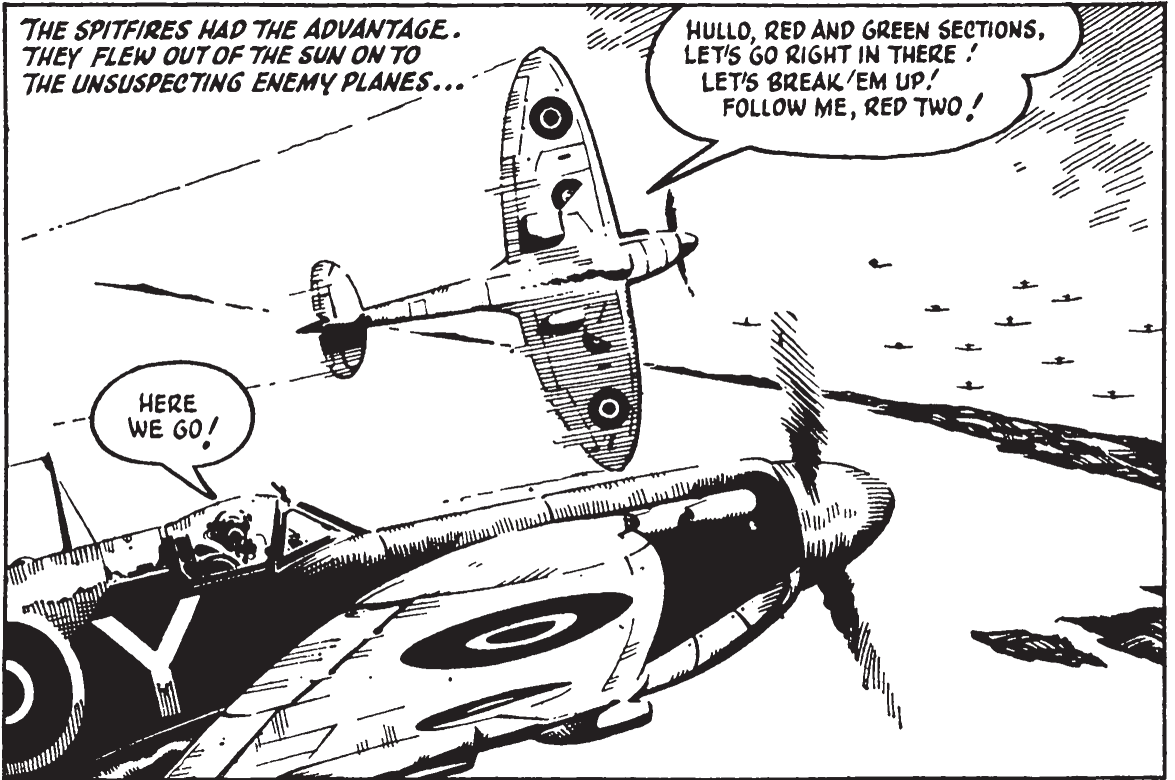
WHY CAN'T HE LEAVE ME ALONE? IF ONLY I COULD GET A TRANSFER!



THEY FLEW ON INTO THE LATE AFTERNOON...

HULLO, COBNUITS! YOU'RE DEAD ON THE BEAM! YOU'RE UP-SUN OF THEM! YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO SEE THEM NOW!

HULLO, CONTROL! I CAN'T SEE A THING -- YES BY JOVE, THERE THEY ARE! TALLYHO!



THE SPITFIRES HAD THE ADVANTAGE. THEY FLEW OUT OF THE SUN ON TO THE UNSUSPECTING ENEMY PLANES...

HULLO, RED AND GREEN SECTIONS, LET'S GO RIGHT IN THERE! LET'S BREAK 'EM UP! FOLLOW ME, RED TWO!

HERE WE GO!

FOR HALF A MINUTE THE SKY WAS A CONFUSION OF CRISS-CROSSING AIRCRAFT...

NICE WORK, CHAPS!
NOW FOLLOW UP!
STICK CLOSE,
RED TWO!

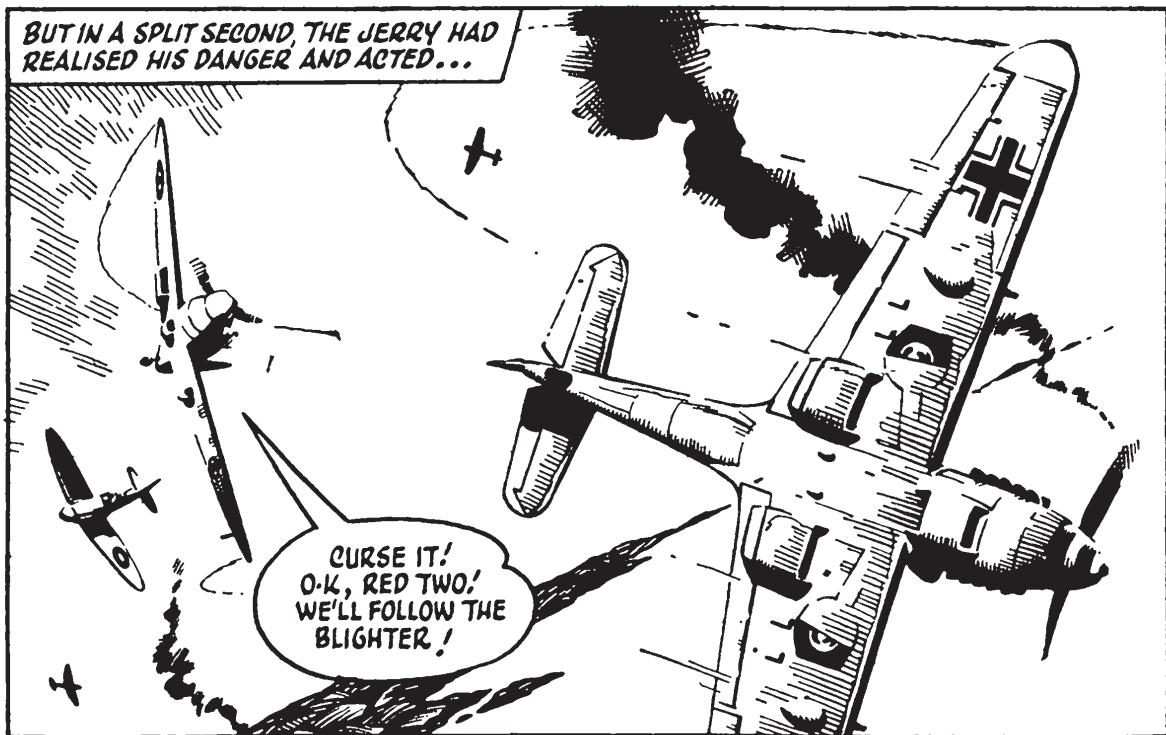
MITCH'S EYES CLEARED. HE
SAW THAT FURNESS HAD
RE-ENGAGED THE ENEMY...

FURNESS FORCED BACK THE STICK.
THE SPITFIRE RESPONDED WITHOUT A
JUDDER. MITCH, FOLLOWING HIS
LEADER, DRAGGED THE STICK
TOWARDS HIS STOMACH...

HUH! I'M
BLACKING OUT!
MUSTN'T
BLACK OUT!

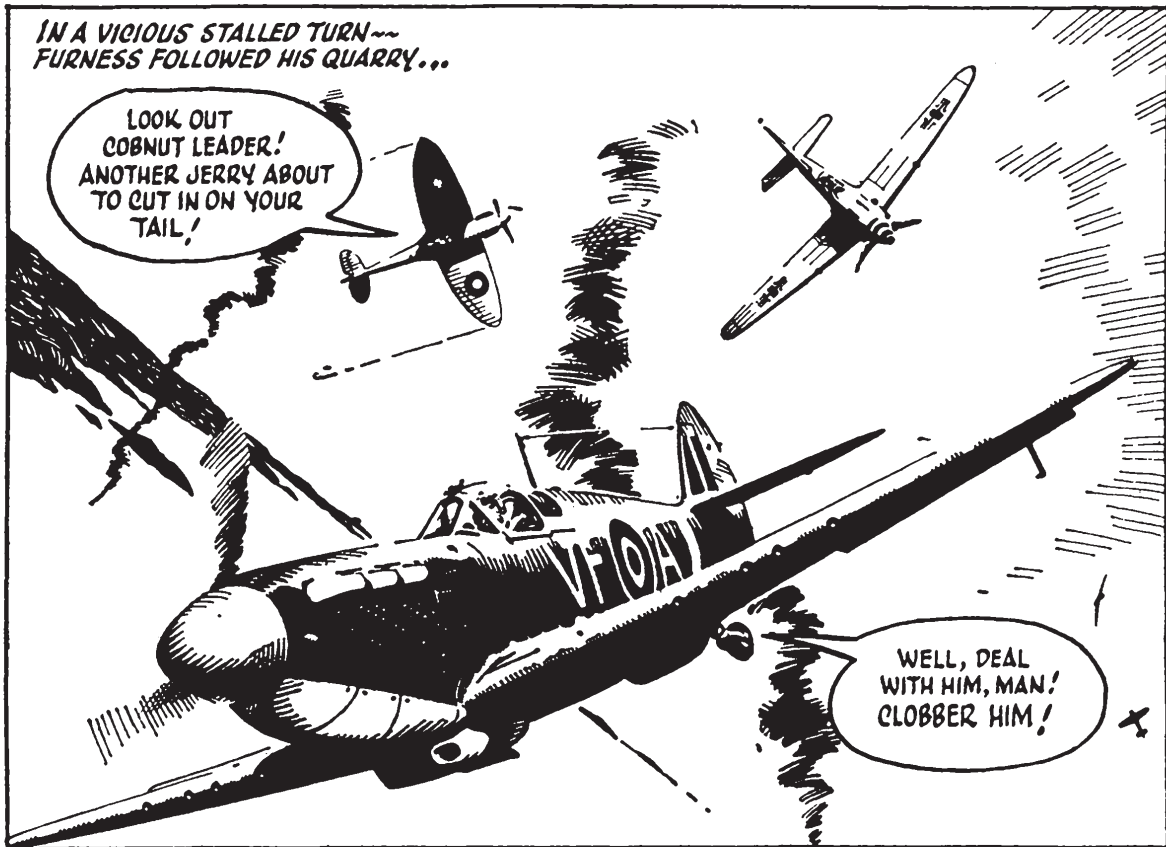
~ GOSH,
HE'S GOT A
SITTING DUCK!

BUT IN A SPLIT SECOND, THE JERRY HAD REALISED HIS DANGER AND ACTED...

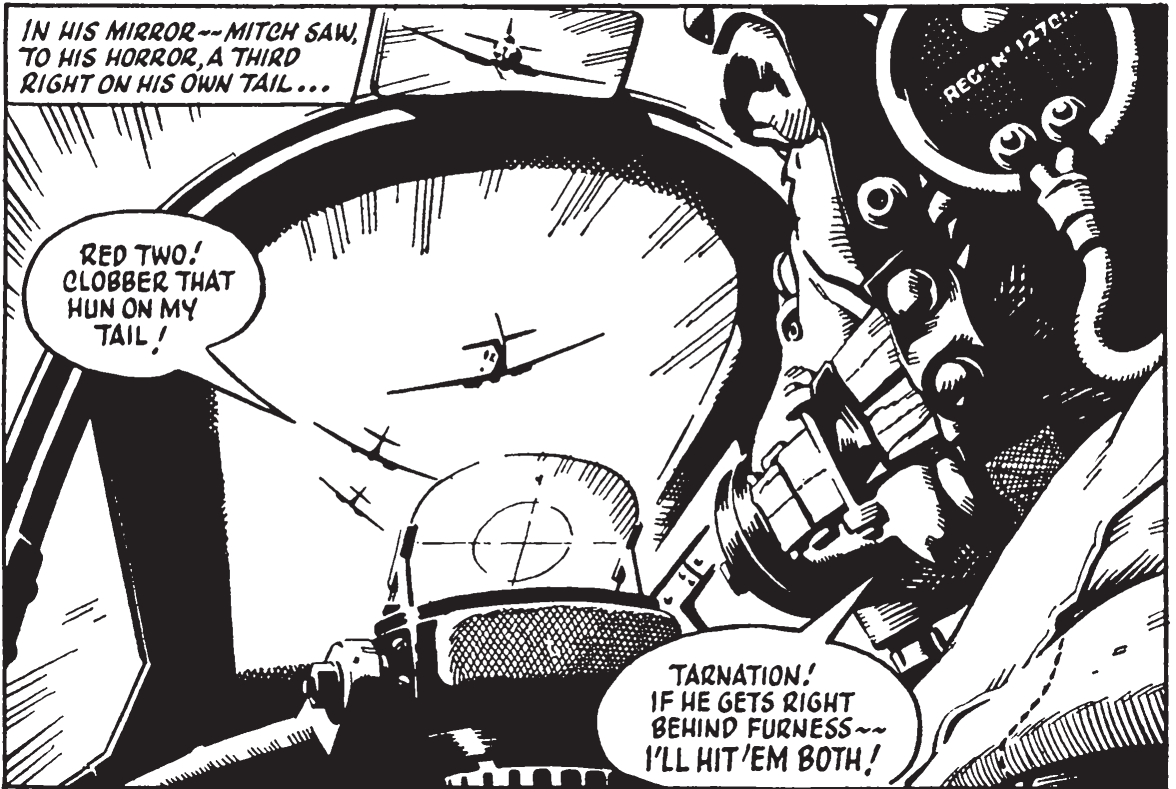


IN A VICIOUS STALLED TURN... FURNESS FOLLOWED HIS QUARRY...

LOOK OUT
COBNUZ LEADER!
ANOTHER JERRY ABOUT
TO CUT IN ON YOUR
TAIL!



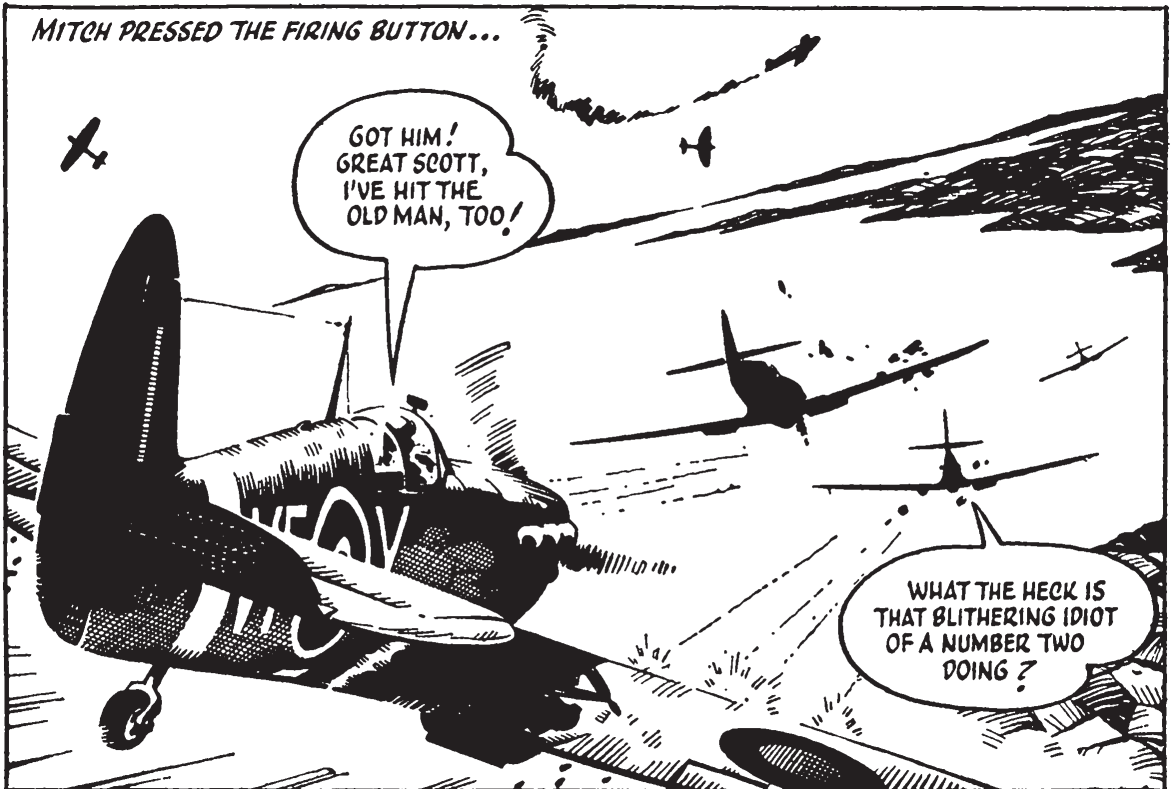
WELL, DEAL
WITH HIM, MAN!
CLOBBER HIM!



IN HIS MIRROR-- MITCH SAW,
TO HIS HORROR, A THIRD
RIGHT ON HIS OWN TAIL...

RED TWO!
CLOBBER THAT
HUN ON MY
TAIL!

TARNATION!
IF HE GETS RIGHT
BEHIND FURNESS--
I'LL HIT 'EM BOTH!

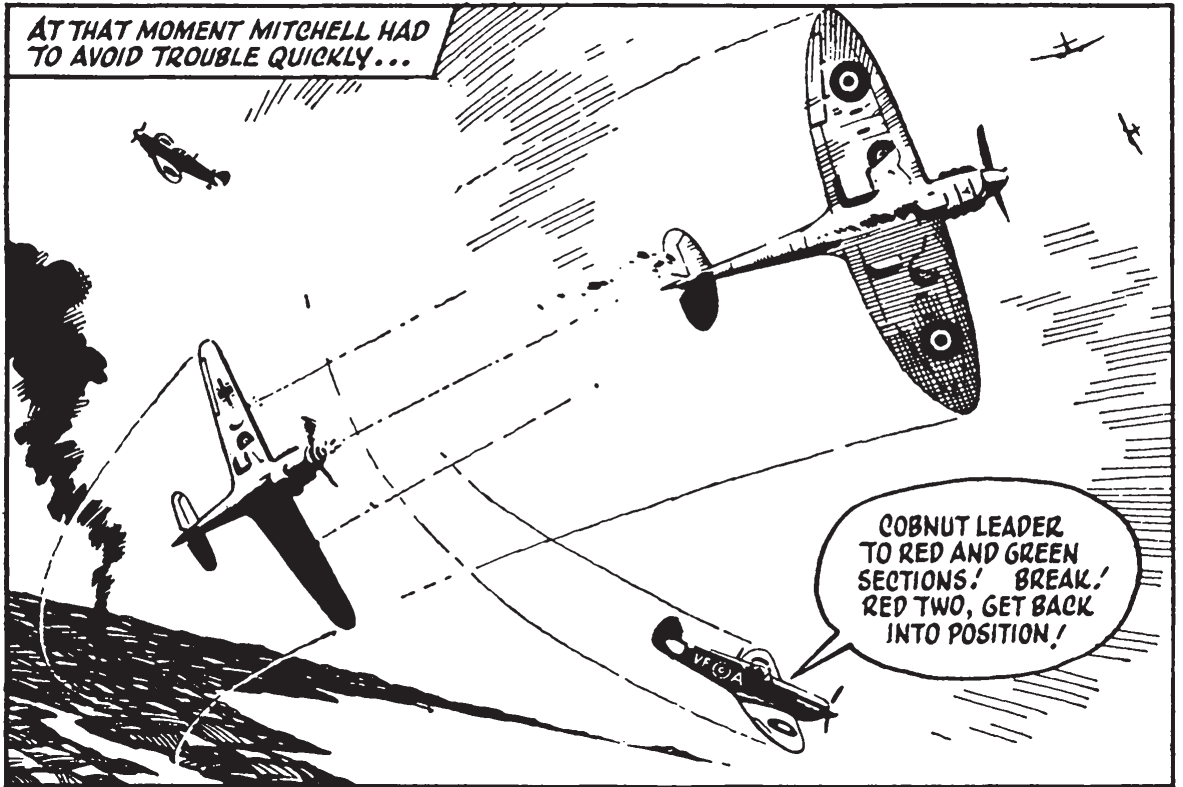


MITCH PRESSED THE FIRING BUTTON...

GOT HIM!
GREAT SCOTT,
I'VE HIT THE
OLD MAN, TOO!

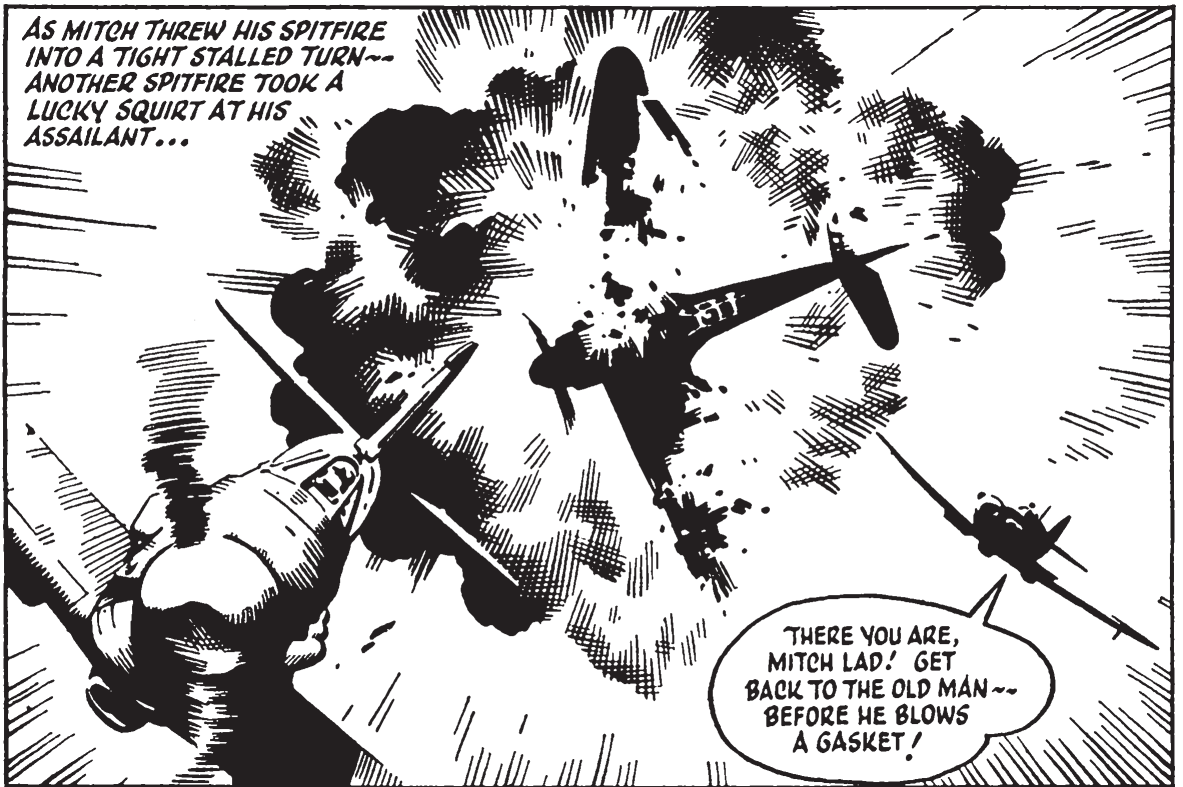
WHAT THE HECK IS
THAT BLITHERING IDIOT
OF A NUMBER TWO
DOING?

AT THAT MOMENT MITCHELL HAD TO AVOID TROUBLE QUICKLY...



COBNU T LEADER
TO RED AND GREEN
SECTIONS! BREAK!
RED TWO, GET BACK
INTO POSITION!

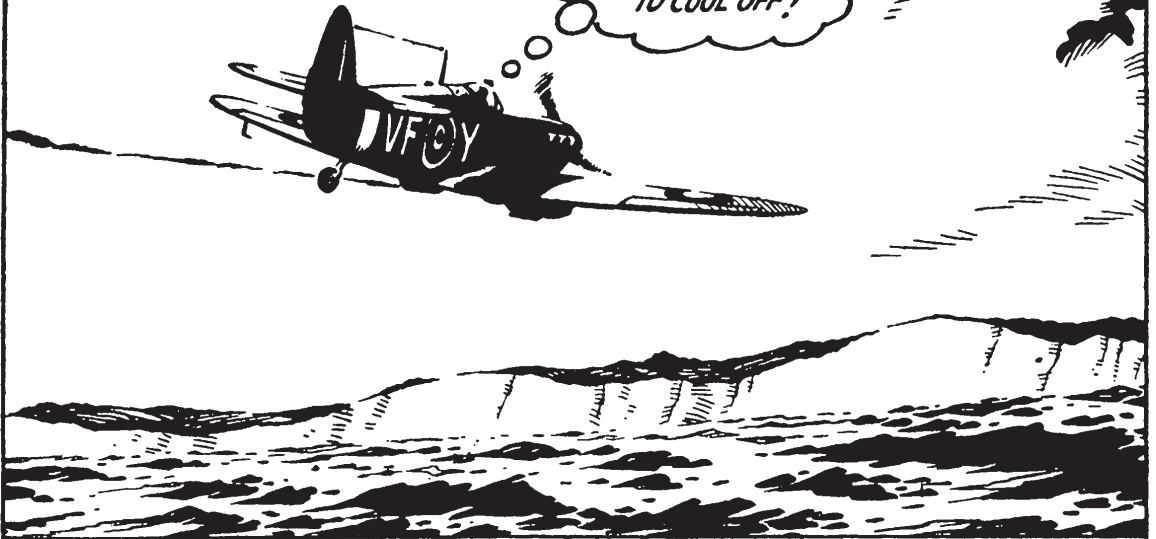
AS MITCH THREW HIS SPITFIRE
INTO A TIGHT STALLED TURN--
ANOTHER SPITFIRE TOOK A
LUCKY SQUIRT AT HIS
ASSAILANT...



THERE YOU ARE,
MITCH LAD! GET
BACK TO THE OLD MAN--
BEFORE HE BLOWS
A GASKET!

MITCHELL FELT THAT ALL WAS NOT WELL WITH HIS "SPIT". THE OIL PRESSURE WAS CREEPING DOWN, AND THE REVS KEPT SURGING...

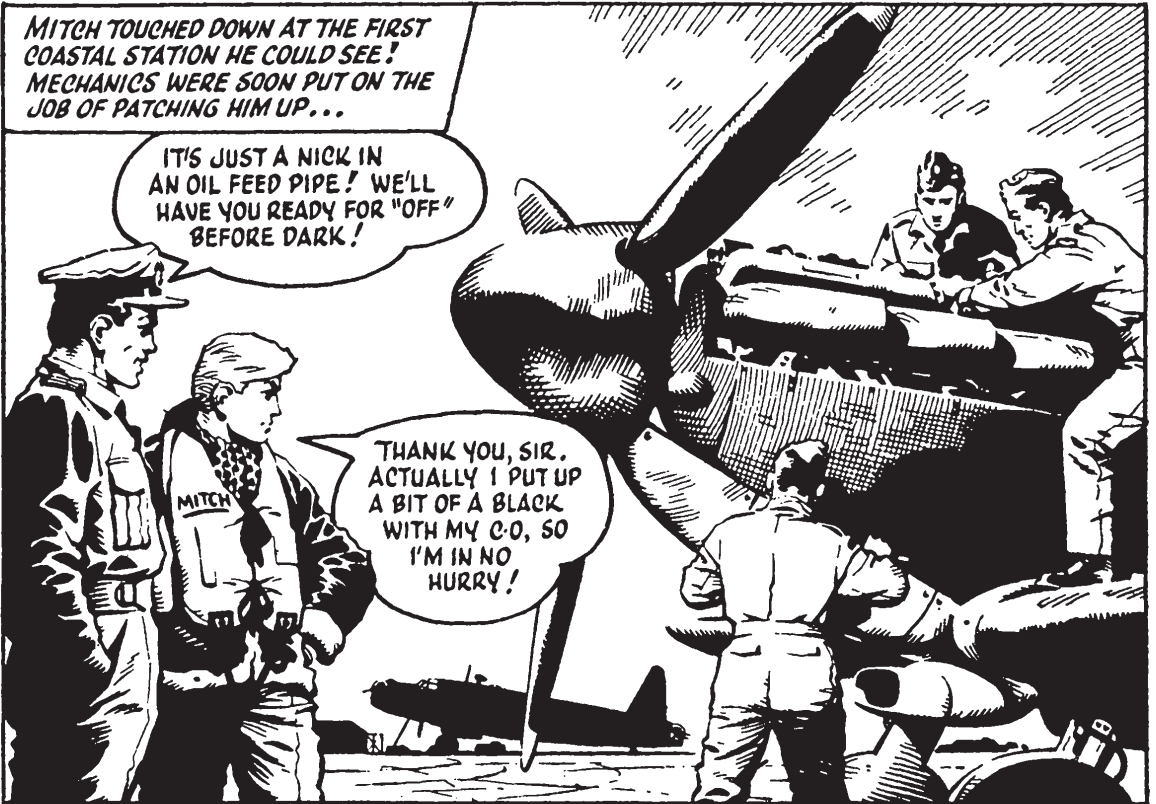
~~ LOOKS AS IF I'LL HAVE TO DIVERT! I'LL NEVER MAKE BASE! ANYWAY, THAT'LL GIVE THE OLD MAN TIME TO COOL OFF!



MITCH TOUCHED DOWN AT THE FIRST COASTAL STATION HE COULD SEE! MECHANICS WERE SOON PUT ON THE JOB OF PATCHING HIM UP...

IT'S JUST A NICK IN AN OIL FEED PIPE! WE'LL HAVE YOU READY FOR "OFF" BEFORE DARK!

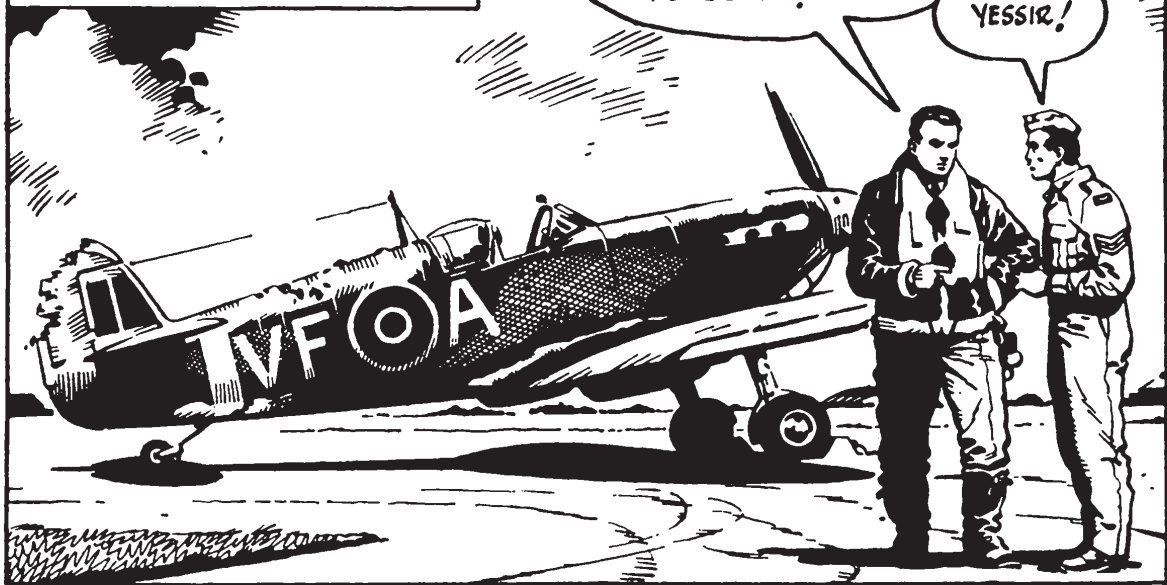
THANK YOU, SIR. ACTUALLY I PUT UP A BIT OF A BLACK WITH MY C.O, SO I'M IN NO HURRY!



BY THE TIME FURNESS HAD LANDED, HIS FURY WITH MITCH WAS IN FULL SPATE ~ ESPECIALLY WHEN AN ARMOURER SHOWED HIM A BRITISH 303 BULLET EXTRACTED FROM THE INSTRUMENT PANEL ...

BY GAD, THAT JUST ABOUT DOES IT! THE STUPID ~ BLITHERING ~ FATHEADED ~ BLISTERING IDIOT! TELL FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT MITCHELL TO REPORT TO ME AS SOON AS HE LANDS!

YESSIR!

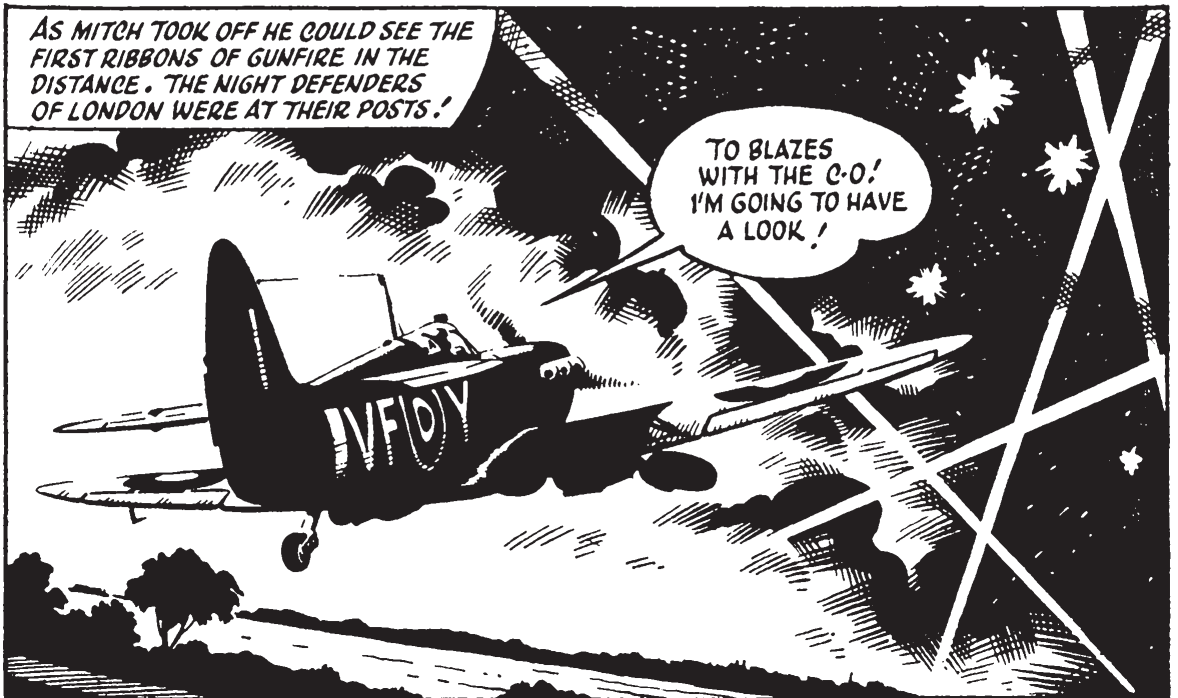


MEANWHILE, MITCHELL AND HIS FRIENDLY HOST WATCHED THE DARKNESS CREEP OVER THE THAMES ESTUARY ...

THE JERRIES'LL BE OVER IN ABOUT HALF AN HOUR. AT NIGHT THEY SEEM TO BE ABLE TO DO JUST WHAT THEY LIKE!

MY FATHER LIVES IN LONDON. AND THE THOUGHT OF HIM GETTING PASTED WHILE I'M SAFE ON THE DECK GETS ME ANGRY!





Chapter 2. TRANSFER GRANTED

EDWARD MITCHELL, MITCH'S FATHER, WAS DOING HIS BIT. IT WAS HIS NIGHT FOR FIRE-WATCHING ON THE ROOF OF HIS COMPANY'S OFFICES ...

THEY'RE EARLY TONIGHT, MITCHELL. WE'RE FOR IT AGAIN, I SUPPOSE. WHY DON'T THESE NIGHT FIGHTER FELLERS DO SOMETHING ?

IT'S NOT SO SIMPLE, SIR! MY SON, WHO IS A PILOT, SAID IT'S A HUNDRED TO ONE AGAINST A 'STEEL BAT' SPOTTING A JERRY !

IN A QUARTER OF AN HOUR THE RAID HAD INCREASED TO FEROCIOUS INTENSITY...

IF OUR DEFENCES DON'T DO SOMETHING SOON, THINGS'LL GET REALLY BAD !

LOOK OUT, SIR! GET DOWN ~ ~ A LAND MINE !

THE WORLD ERUPTED AROUND EDWARD MITCHELL IN A SICKENING CONCUSSION...



WHEN HIS BEMUSED SENSES RETURNED, MR MITCHELL STAGGERED TO HIS FEET...





HURRY, LADS!
A BREATH OF WIND
AND THAT LOT'S
COMING DOWN!



BUT THERE WAS TO BE NO MERCY...

BOMBS GONE,
HERR KAPITAN!

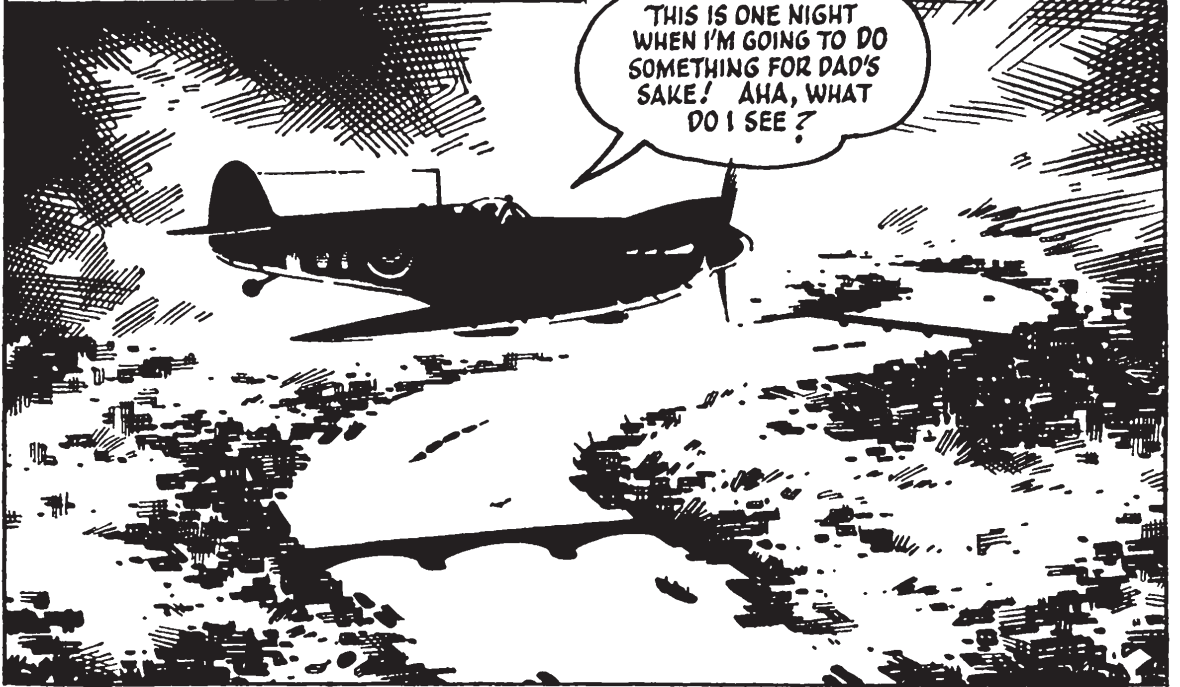


THE END WAS SWIFT AND DEVASTATING...

AAGH!

WHILE THE DEBRIS WAS SETTLING AFTER THE EXPLOSION, MITCH FLEW AT FULL THROTTLE HIGH ABOVE THE OUTSKIRTS OF LONDON.

THIS IS ONE NIGHT WHEN I'M GOING TO DO SOMETHING FOR DAD'S SAKE! AHA, WHAT DO I SEE?



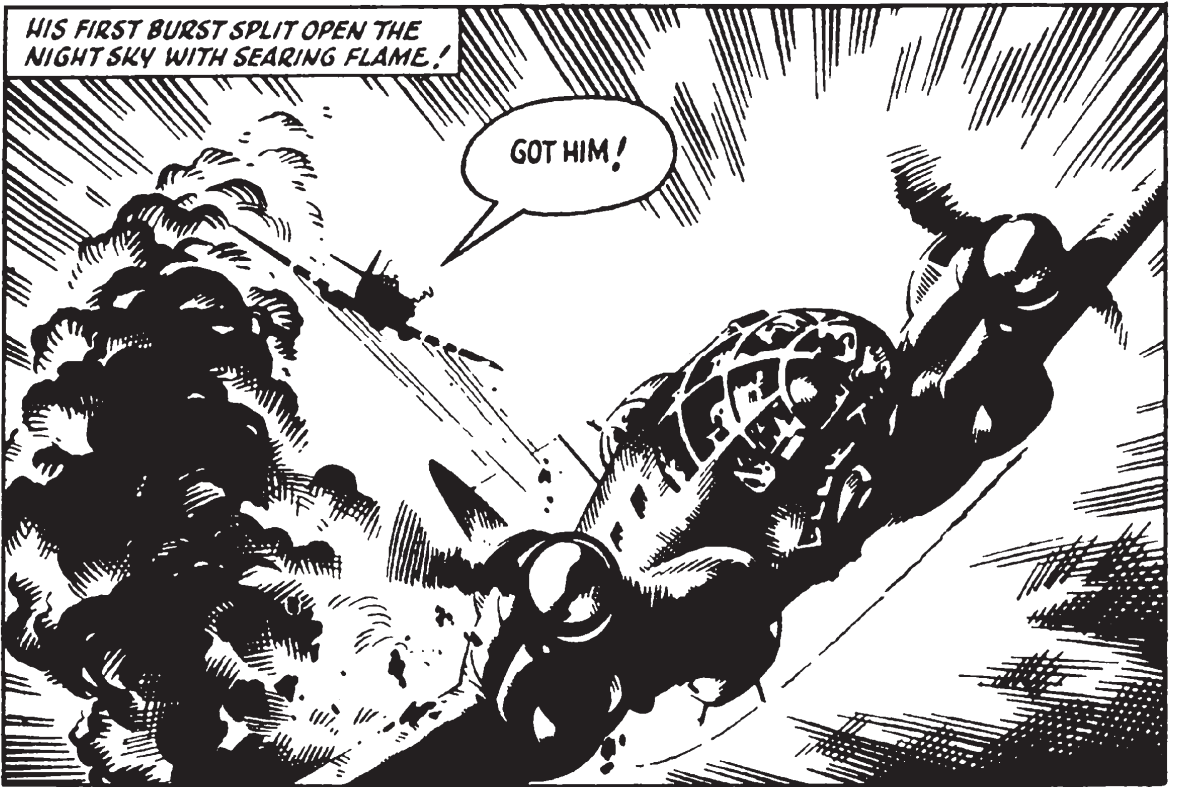
MITCH WAS UNAWARE THAT HE POSSESSED THE MOST NECESSARY QUALIFICATION FOR A NIGHT FIGHTER... CAT'S EYES! HIS NIGHT VISION WAS PHENOMENAL! HE HAD SIGHTED HIS QUARRY....

RIGHT, YOU JERRY RAT! I'M ON YOUR TAIL! LET'S HOPE I'VE GOT ENOUGH AMMO...



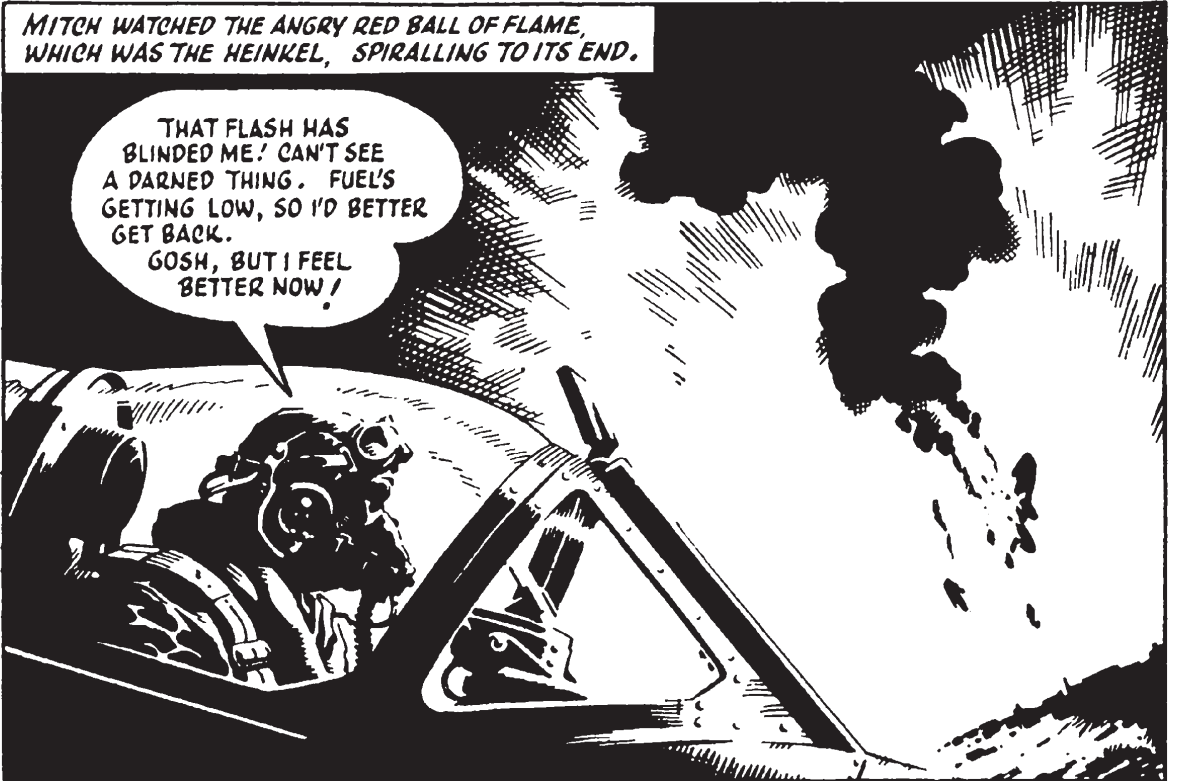
HIS FIRST BURST SPLIT OPEN THE NIGHT SKY WITH SEARING FLAME!

GOT HIM!



MITCH WATCHED THE ANGRY RED BALL OF FLAME, WHICH WAS THE HEINKEL, SPIRALLING TO ITS END.

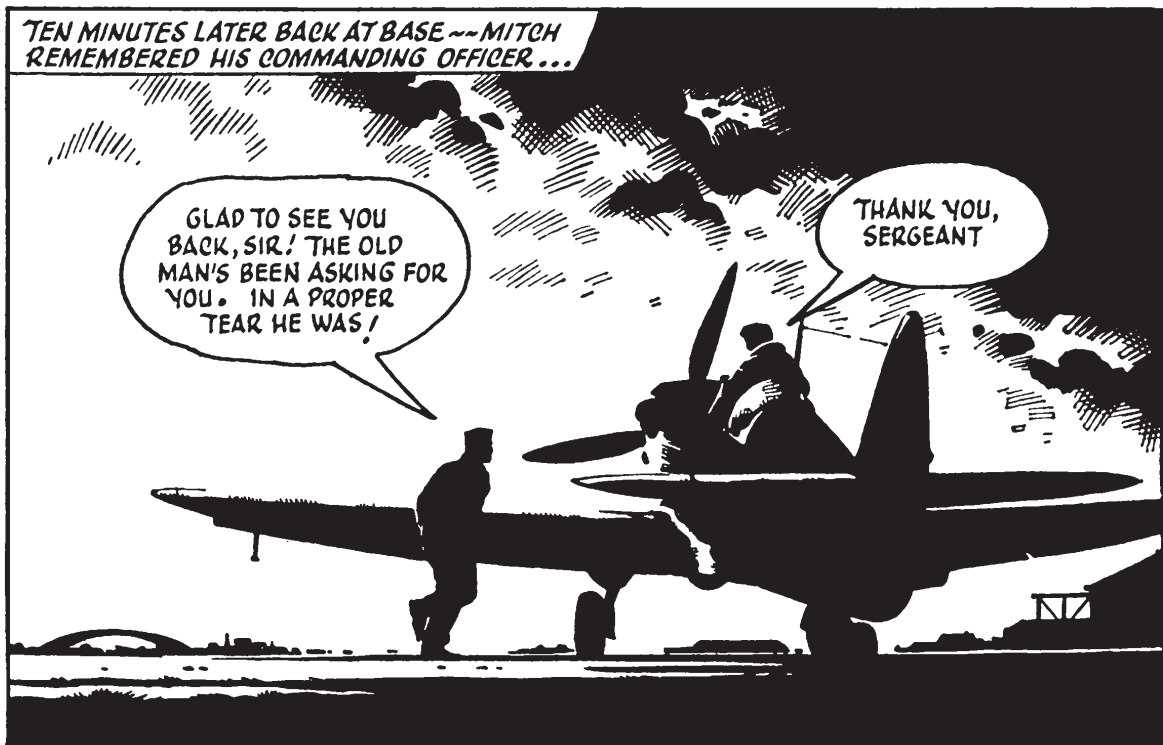
THAT FLASH HAS BLINDED ME! CAN'T SEE A DARNED THING. FUEL'S GETTING LOW, SO I'D BETTER GET BACK.
GOSH, BUT I FEEL BETTER NOW!



TEN MINUTES LATER BACK AT BASE -- MITCH REMEMBERED HIS COMMANDING OFFICER...

GLAD TO SEE YOU BACK, SIR! THE OLD MAN'S BEEN ASKING FOR YOU. IN A PROPER TEAR HE WAS!

THANK YOU, SERGEANT

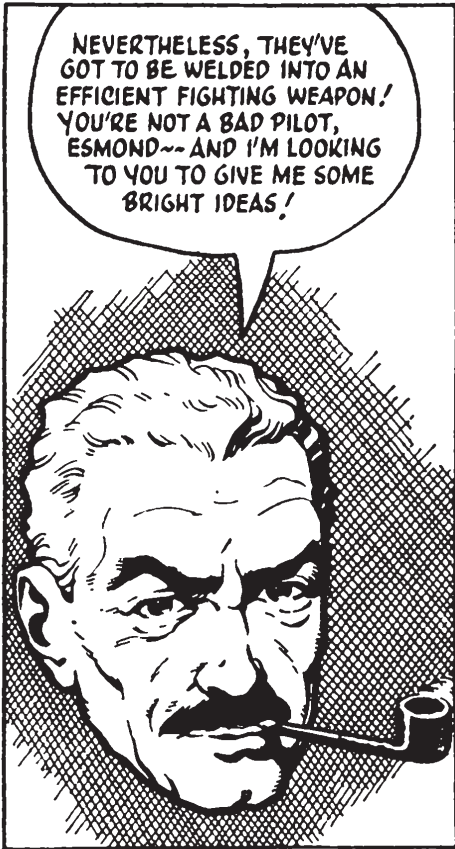


FURNESS WAS STILL DISCUSSING THINGS WITH THE AIR-MARSHAL ...

I'VE DECIDED TO POST YOU AND A HANDFUL OF YOUR BEST PILOTS -- TO MACNALTY'S NIGHT-FIGHTER WING. I WANT YOU TO LEARN FROM MACNALTY'S BRIGHT BOY, TAFFY LLOYD, HOW BEST TO TACKLE NIGHT RAIDERS!

I THOUGHT YOU SAID THE NIGHT FIGHTER BOYS WEREN'T DOING ANY GOOD.



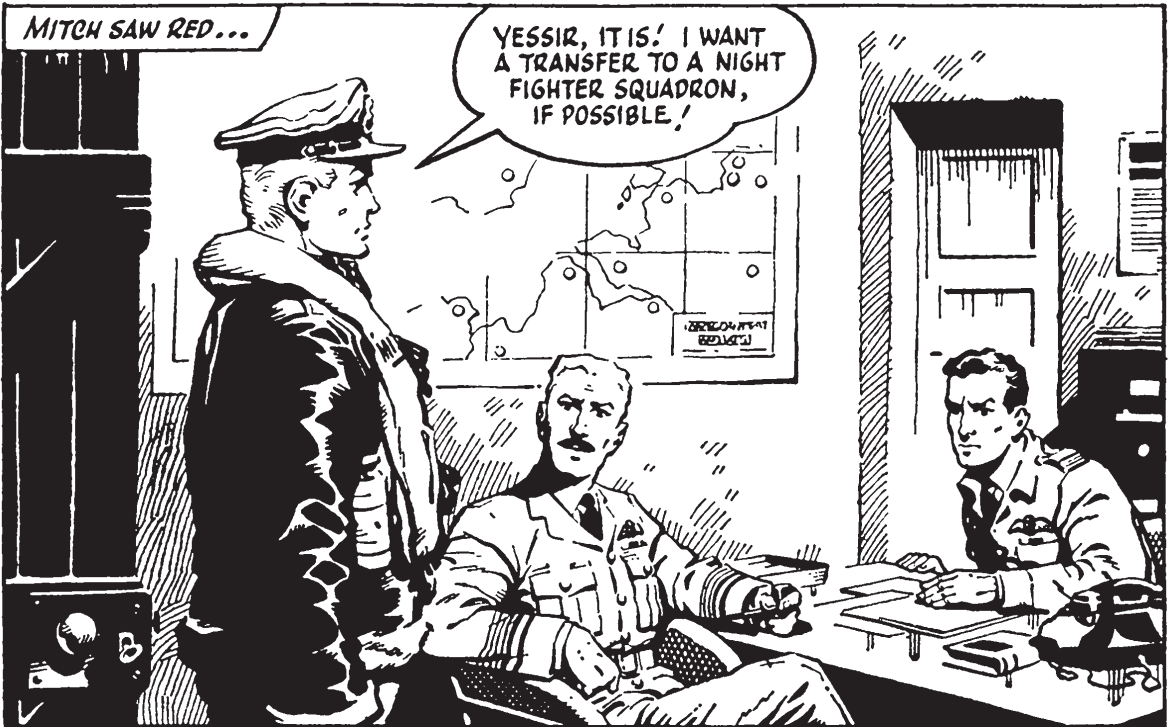


NEVERTHELESS, THEY'VE GOT TO BE WELDED INTO AN EFFICIENT FIGHTING WEAPON! YOU'RE NOT A BAD PILOT, ESMOND-- AND I'M LOOKING TO YOU TO GIVE ME SOME BRIGHT IDEAS!



A FEW MINUTES LATER, MITCH KNOCKED RESPECTFULLY AT HIS C-O'S DOOR...

I'M BUSY AT THE MOMENT, MITCHELL! IS IT ANYTHING IMPORTANT?



MITCH SAW RED...

YESSIR, IT IS! I WANT A TRANSFER TO A NIGHT FIGHTER SQUADRON, IF POSSIBLE!



AND WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THAT YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE A BETTER NIGHT FIGHTER THAN YOU ARE A DAYLIGHT FIGHTER? NIGHT FIGHTER, INDEED!

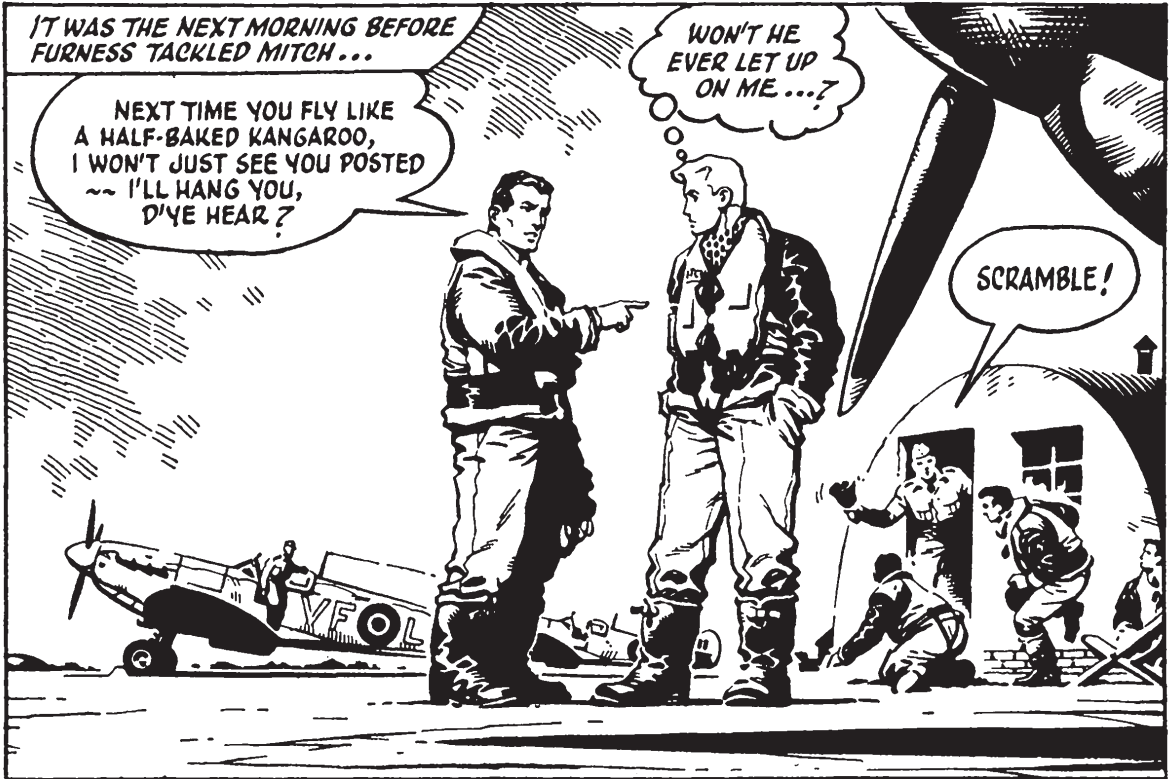
EASY, FURNESS-- EASY!



MITCH THREW DISCRETION ASIDE...

I'LL TELL YOU WHY, SIR! I'VE JUST SHOT DOWN A HEINKEL OVER LONDON! I EXPECT THE OBSERVER CORPS WILL CHECK IT! THE TIME WAS 2201 HRS EXACTLY!

GOOD MAN!



WHAT HAPPENED AFTERWARDS WAS THE WELL-MEANING ADJUTANT'S FAULT...

I SAY MITCHELL
ER~~ I'M AFRAID~~ WELL~~
I'LL TELL YOU WHEN
YOU RETURN!

WHAT IS IT,
SIR? MY FATHER?
HAS ANYTHING
HAPPENED
TO HIM?

ER~~ I'M AFRAID--
SO! AIR RAID~~
VERY SORRY AND ALL
THAT I SHOULD HAVE
WAITED REALLY
TILL YOU GOT
BACK!

FOR HEAVEN'S
SAKE, MITCHELL~~
COME ON!

BY THE TIME MITCH HAD TAKEN OFF, THE OTHERS WERE WAY-AHEAD. HE FLEW AUTOMATICALLY, NUMB WITH GRIEF. HIS DAD WAS HIS ONLY RELATIVE-- HIS GREATEST FRIEND...

HULLO COBNUT RED TWO!
GET WEAVING, OLD BOY.
YOU'LL BE LATE FOR THE
PARTY! BANDITS AT
ANGELS 20. YOU'RE
RIGHT ON COURSE!

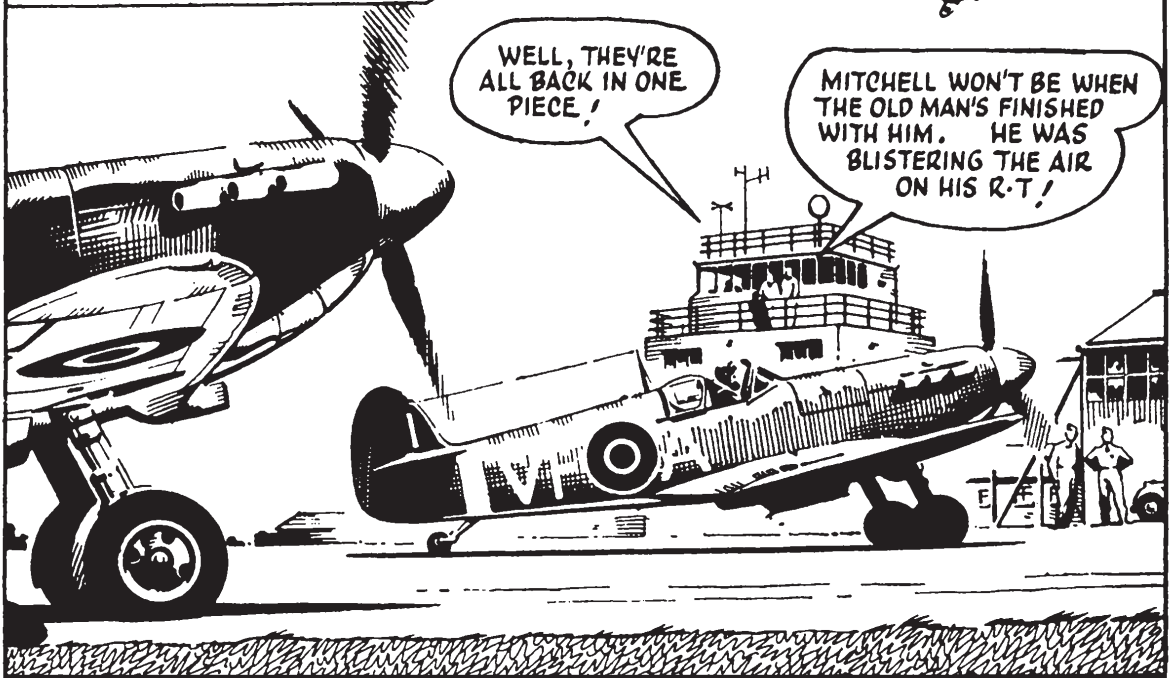
BY THE TIME MITCH
REACHED THE FIGHT
IT WAS ALL OVER...

HULLO, COBNUTS!
THIS IS RED LEADER.
THE BLIGHTERS HAVE TURNED
BACK! HULLO, COBNUT RED
TWO. JOLLY DECENT OF YOU
TO TURN UP-- BETTER
LATE THAN NEVER
I SUPPOSE!

THE SQUADRON-LEADER'S WITHERING
SARCASM WAS LOST ON MITCH.
HE HADN'T EVEN HEARD...

WELL, THEY'RE
ALL BACK IN ONE
PIECE!

MITCHELL WON'T BE WHEN
THE OLD MAN'S FINISHED
WITH HIM. HE WAS
BLISTERING THE AIR
ON HIS R-T!



FURNESS MADE STRAIGHT FOR MITCHELL'S AIRCRAFT...

NIGHT FIGHTER
IS HE? A SPINELESS
SWAB LIKE HIM ISN'T
FIT TO FLY AT ALL!

THE OLD MAN
LOOKS FAIR BRASSED
OFF!



BEFORE FURNESS COULD OPEN HIS MOUTH, SOMETHING SUDDENLY WENT "CLICK" IN MITCH'S BRAIN. HE BECAME AT ONCE COLDLY AND IMPLACABLY ANGRY...

I'VE GOT NOTHING TO SAY TO YOU, FURNESS -- NOTHING AT ALL! FROM NOW ON I'LL FIGHT MY OWN WAR. IF IT'S TROUBLE YOU WANT, FURNESS, I'LL MAKE IT AS AND WHEN YOU LIKE! NOW GET OUT OF MY WAY!

WHY -- YOU INSUBORDINATE...



THE ADJUTANT WAS TOO LATE TO BUTT IN...

I'LL HAVE YOU DOWN TO THE RANKS FOR THAT, MITCHELL! I'LL BREAK YOU!

EXCUSE ME, SIR!



THEY WERE NEARLY BACK AT THE FLIGHT OFFICES BEFORE THE ADJUTANT COULD OFFER AN EXPLANATION...

HMM, I SEE! THERE MIGHT BE SOME EXCUSE BUT, EVEN SO, I EXPECT MY OFFICERS TO HAVE SOME SELF-CONTROL!



Chapter 3. Two Up!

A FEW DAYS LATER, FURNESS, MITCHELL AND SIX OTHER PILOTS FOUND THEMSELVES POSTED TO No 770 SQUADRON (NIGHT FIGHTERS) COMMANDED BY NIGHT FIGHTER ACE TAFFY JONES, D-S-O, D-F-C, A-F-C. AIR-COMMODORE MACNALTY WAS TOUGH. HE HAD A TOUGH JOB ...

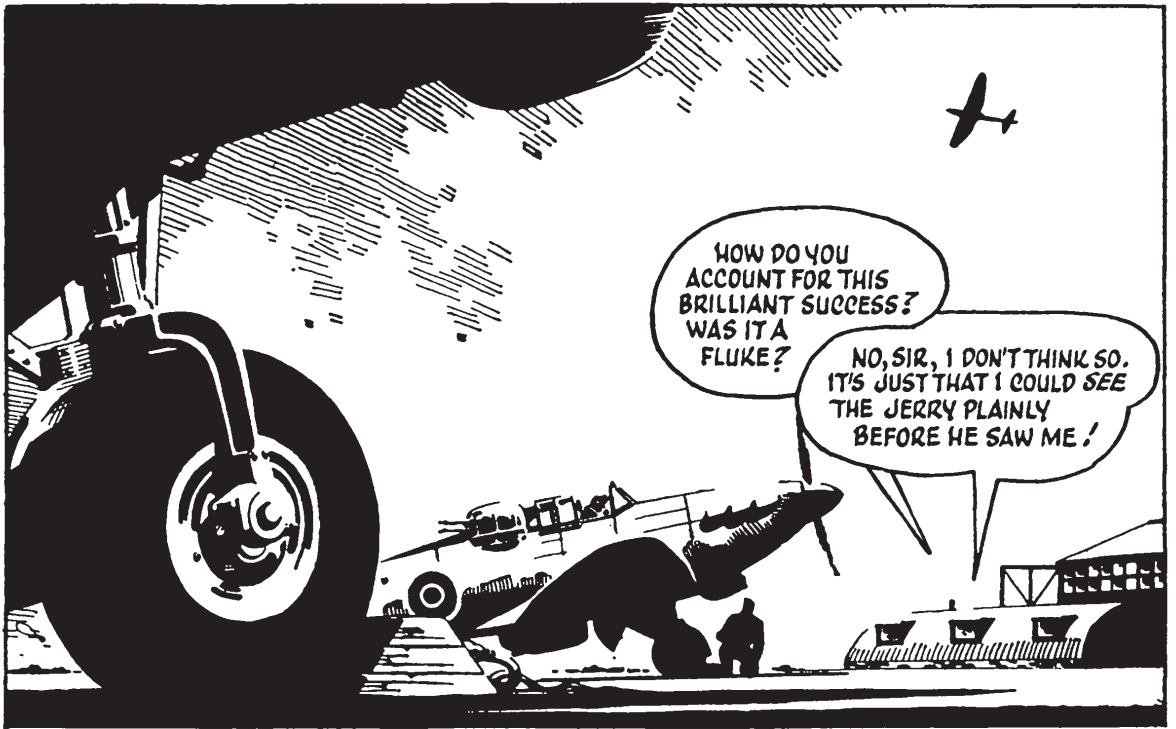
YOU FELLERS ARE GOING TO HAVE TO UNLEARN EVERYTHING YOU EVER KNEW! FROM NOW ON, YOU'LL BE FIGHTING AT NIGHT! CONTROL WILL GET YOU AS NEAR AS THEY CAN TO YOUR ENEMY~~ BUT FROM THEN ON IT'LL BE UP TO YOU. SO FAR, WE'VE BEEN RELYING ON THE PILOT'S NIGHT VISION TO GET HIM TO THE ENEMY...



SOON WE HOPE TO HAVE SCIENTIFIC AIDS TO HELP YOU~~ BUT UNTIL THEN, IT'S UP TO EACH ONE OF YOU PERSONALLY. I UNDERSTAND THAT ONE OF YOU HAS ALREADY HAD UNOFFICIAL SUCCESS. FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT MITCHELL, ISN'T IT ?

ER~~ER~~
YESSIR!



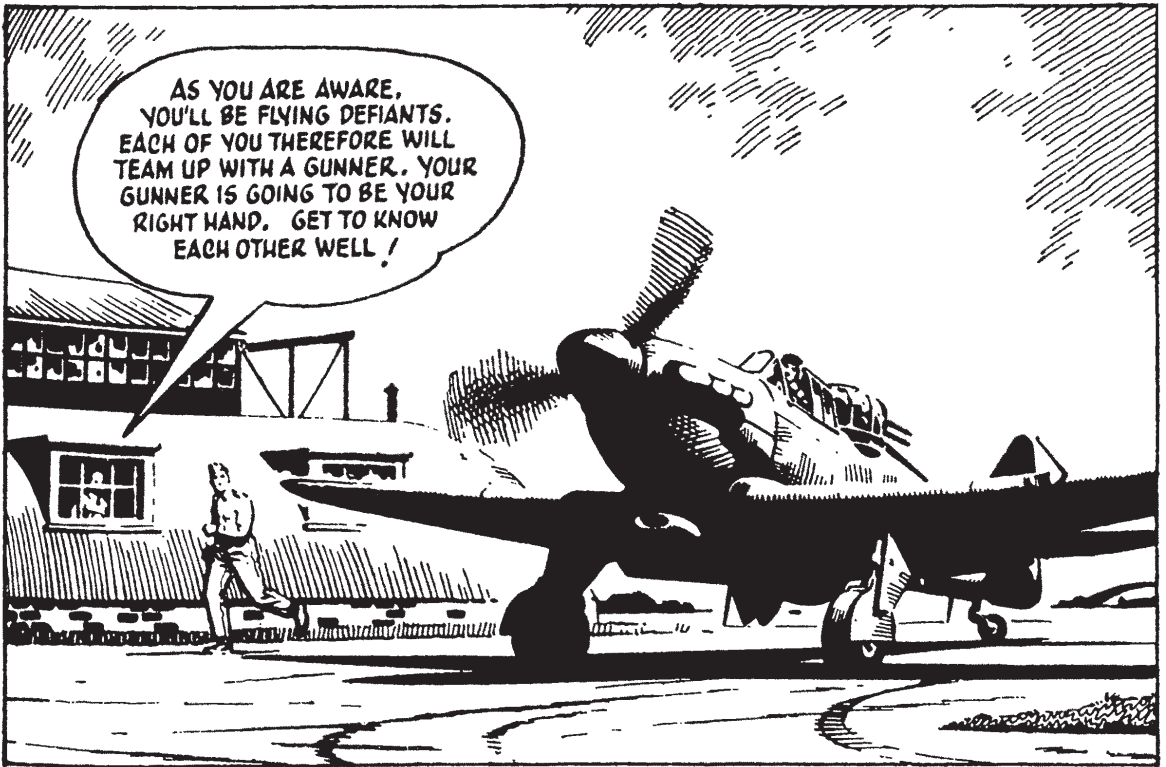


HOW DO YOU
ACCOUNT FOR THIS
BRILLIANT SUCCESS?
WAS IT A
FLUKE?

NO, SIR, I DON'T THINK SO.
IT'S JUST THAT I COULD SEE
THE JERRY PLAINLY
BEFORE HE SAW ME!

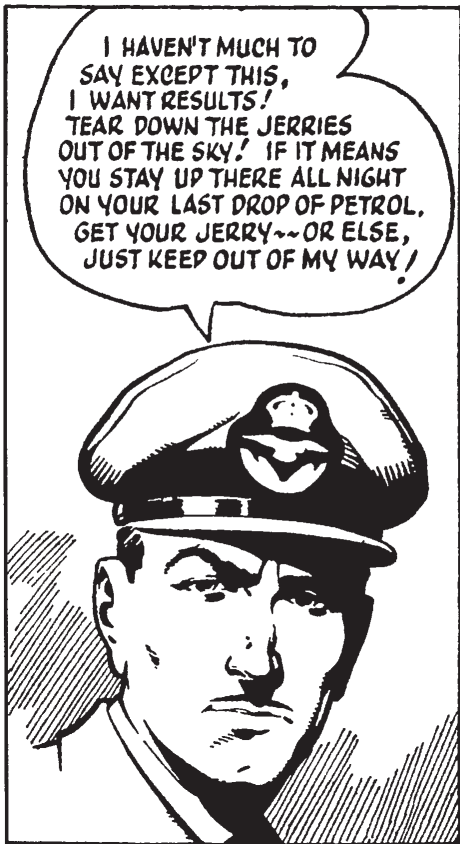


THAT'S IT, GENTLEMEN! MITCHELL'S
GOT THE ONLY ANSWER WE KNOW ~ AT
PRESENT! NIGHT VISION! FROM NOW ON,
YOU'RE ALL GOING TO LIVE LIKE BATS
IN THE DARK. THESE GOGGLES ARE
TO BE WORN FROM 1500 HRS EVERY
DAY UNTIL YOUR DUTIES ARE
OVER!



THE DOOR SUDDENLY OPENED...





I HAVEN'T MUCH TO SAY EXCEPT THIS, I WANT RESULTS! TEAR DOWN THE JERRIES OUT OF THE SKY! IF IT MEANS YOU STAY UP THERE ALL NIGHT ON YOUR LAST DROP OF PETROL, GET YOUR JERRY--OR ELSE, JUST KEEP OUT OF MY WAY!



THE NEW ARRIVALS WERE ALL VETERANS OF AERIAL WARFARE ~ BUT TO THIS MAN THEY WERE AMATEURS. THEY WATCHED HIM DEPART WITH MIXED FEELINGS ...

HMM! I'VE SEEN THESE LIVE WIRES BEFORE!

DON'T WORRY, HE WON'T MAKE YOU FLY AS HIS NUMBER TWO! IT'S EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF FROM NOW ON!



FURNESS WAS THE SYMBOL OF THE HATRED MITCH FELT FOR THE GERMANS. UNTIL MITCH HAD EXTRACTED HIS VENGEANCE FROM THE SKIES, THEIR PRIVATE WAR WOULD CONTINUE

THERE GOES A VERY GRIM YOUNG MAN, LOOKS AS IF HE'S GOING TO BE A "NATURAL" AT THIS JOB!

I WONDER?



AS MITCH WALKED IN COLD ANGER
TOWARDS THE FLIGHT OFFICE, HE
WAS AWARE OF THE APPROACH
OF A YOUNG AIR-GUNNER ...

EXCUSE ME, SIR, YOU'RE
ONE OF THE NEW PILOTS,
AREN'T YOU? I'M AN UNEMPLOYED
GUNNER! WILTON IS THE NAME,
SIR!

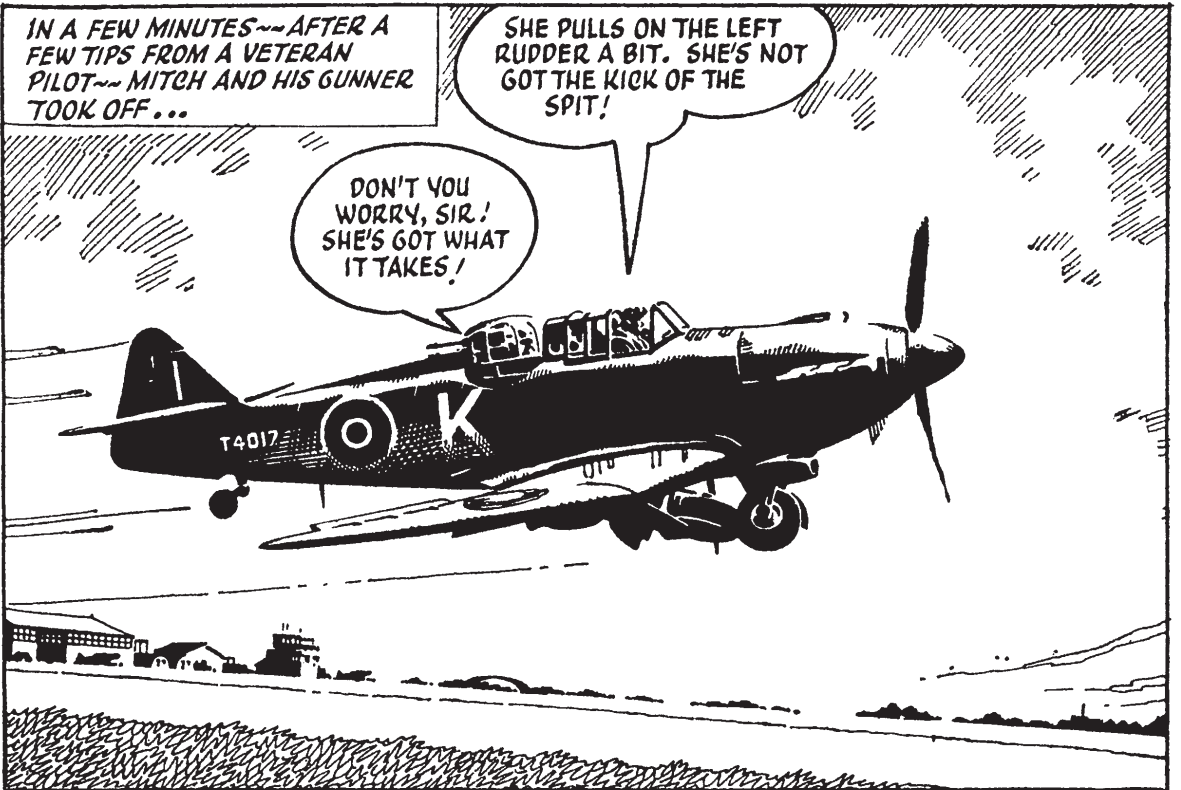
AIR-GUNNER, ARE YOU?
WELL~~ LET'S SEE HOW WE
FLY TOGETHER FOR A START...

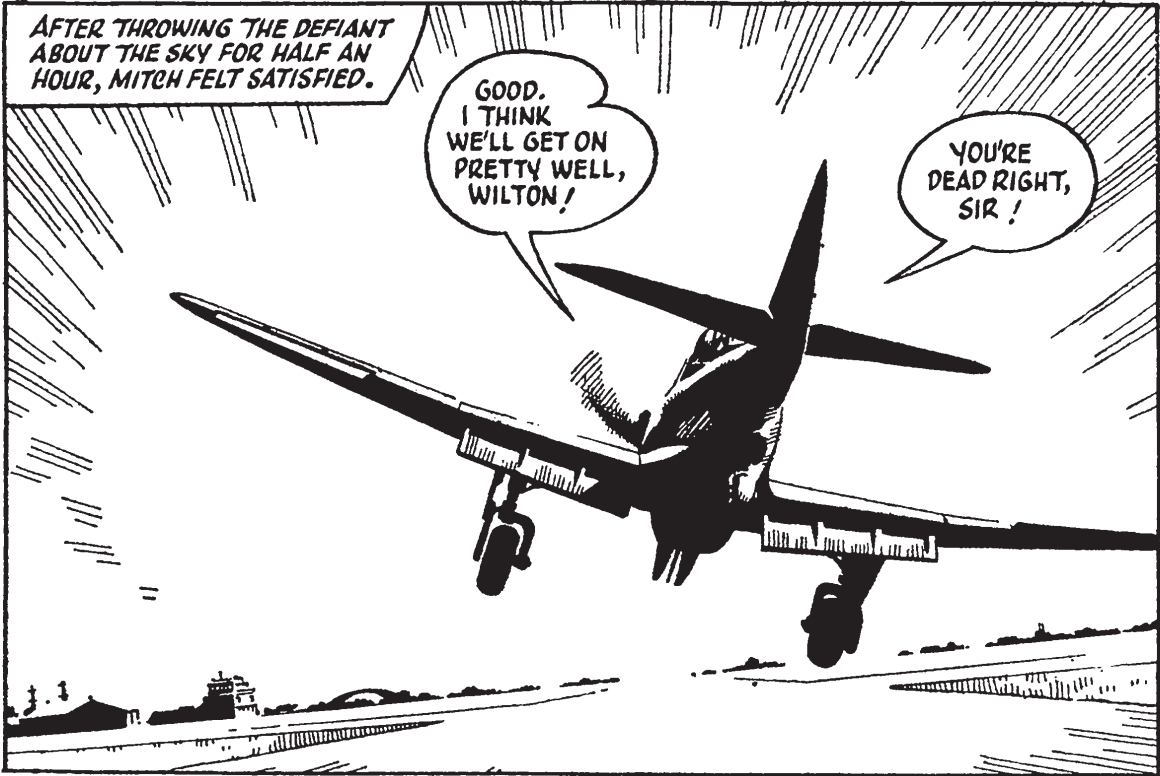


IN A FEW MINUTES~~ AFTER A
FEW TIPS FROM A VETERAN
PILOT~~ MITCH AND HIS GUNNER
TOOK OFF...

SHE PULLS ON THE LEFT
RUDDER A BIT. SHE'S NOT
GOT THE KICK OF THE
SPIT!

DON'T YOU
WORRY, SIR!
SHE'S GOT WHAT
IT TAKES!

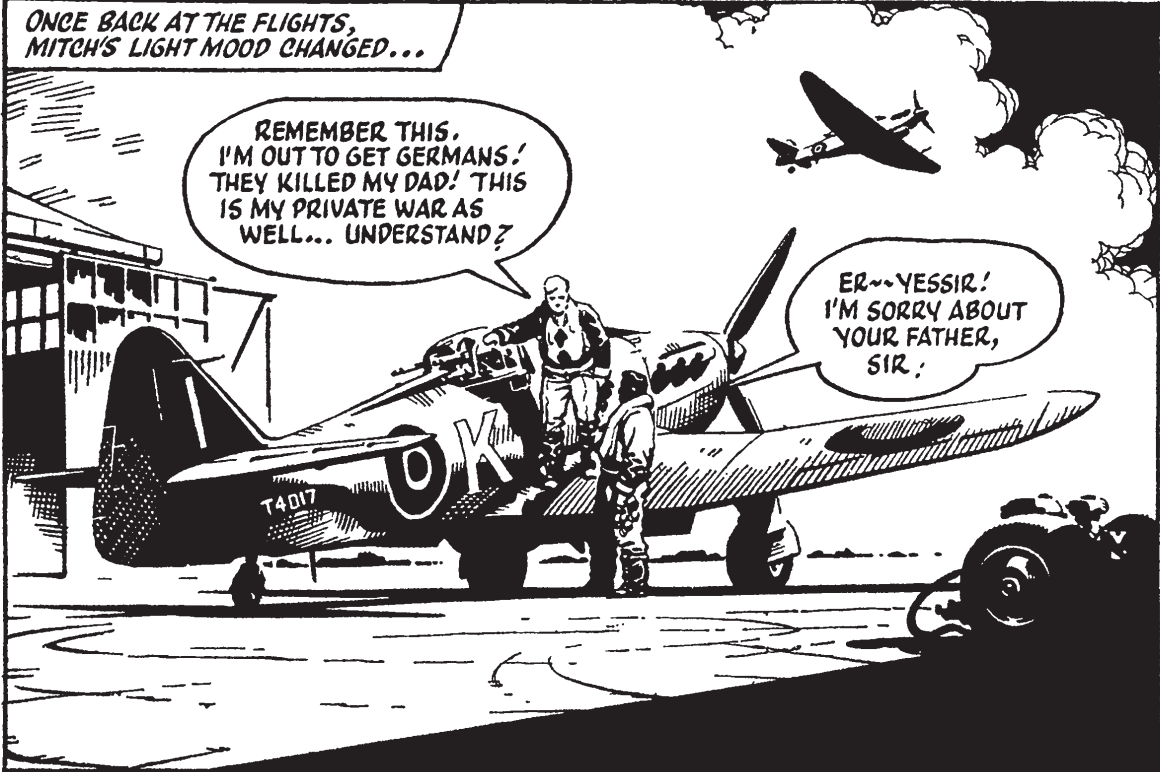




AFTER THROWING THE DEFIANT ABOUT THE SKY FOR HALF AN HOUR, MITCH FELT SATISFIED.

GOOD. I THINK WE'LL GET ON PRETTY WELL, WILTON!

YOU'RE DEAD RIGHT, SIR!



ONCE BACK AT THE FLIGHTS, MITCH'S LIGHT MOOD CHANGED...

REMEMBER THIS. I'M OUT TO GET GERMANS! THEY KILLED MY DAD! THIS IS MY PRIVATE WAR AS WELL... UNDERSTAND?

ER--YESSIR! I'M SORRY ABOUT YOUR FATHER, SIR.

THAT EVENING AS TWILIGHT FELL
THE NEW PILOTS WAITED ...

THE FIRST BLOOD'S
GOING TO BE MINE TONIGHT.
I WON'T BE WALKED OVER
BY SOME BRAINLESS
SPROG PILOT!

RUNWAY
NOW IN USE
Nº 2 N-S
K - MITCHELL
L - FURNESS

I BET I KNOW
WHAT YOU'RE THINKING,
MISTER CLEVER FURNESS ...
IT'S RESULTS THAT ARE
GOING TO COUNT!

THEN IT CAME...

ALL RIGHT,
GENTLEMEN!
SCRAMBLE!

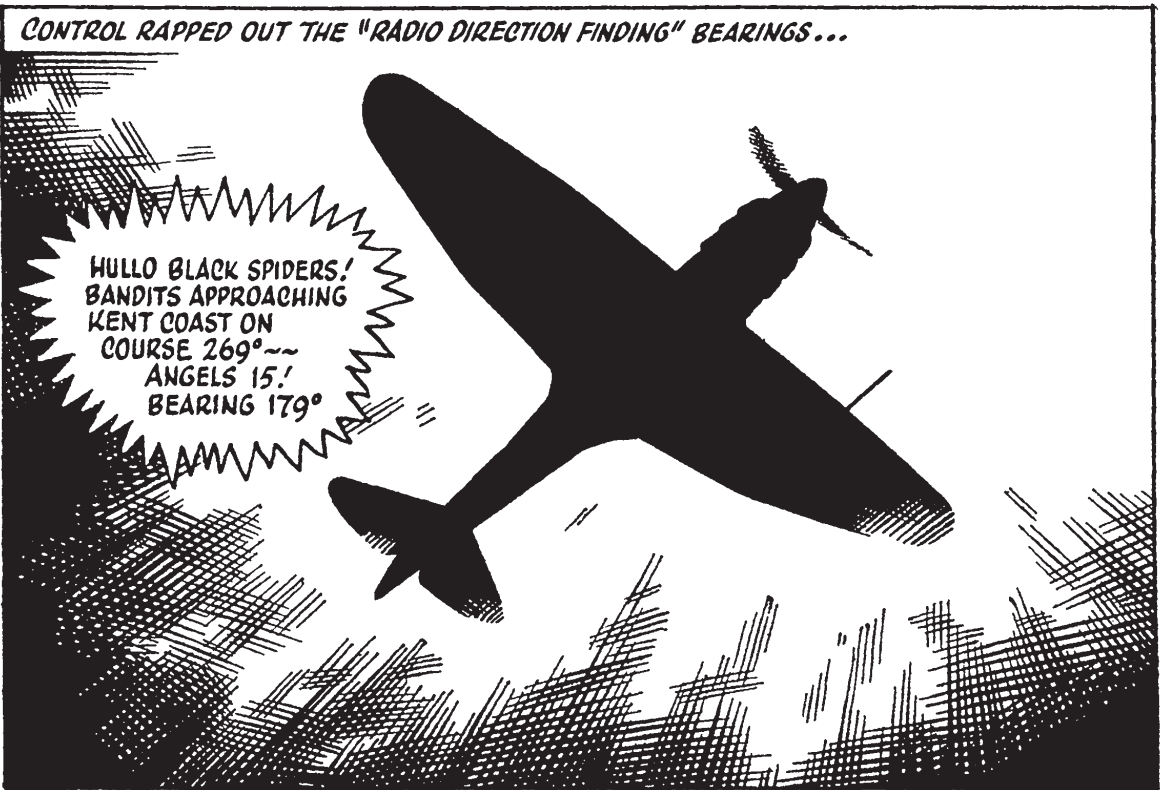
THEY RAN TO THEIR AIRCRAFT.



COME ON THERE,
WILTON! GET
CRACKING!

COMING,
SKIPPER!

CONTROL RAPPED OUT THE "RADIO DIRECTION FINDING" BEARINGS...



HULLO BLACK SPIDERS!
BANDITS APPROACHING
KENT COAST ON
COURSE 269°--
ANGELS 15!
BEARING 179°

THEY HURTLIED INTO THE NIGHT SKY...

THIS IS IT, WILTON! I'LL TAKE YOU WITHIN SPITTING DISTANCE OF THE JERRY. TELL ME WHEN YOU'RE GOING TO FIRE-- AND SEE THAT YOU SHOOT STRAIGHT!

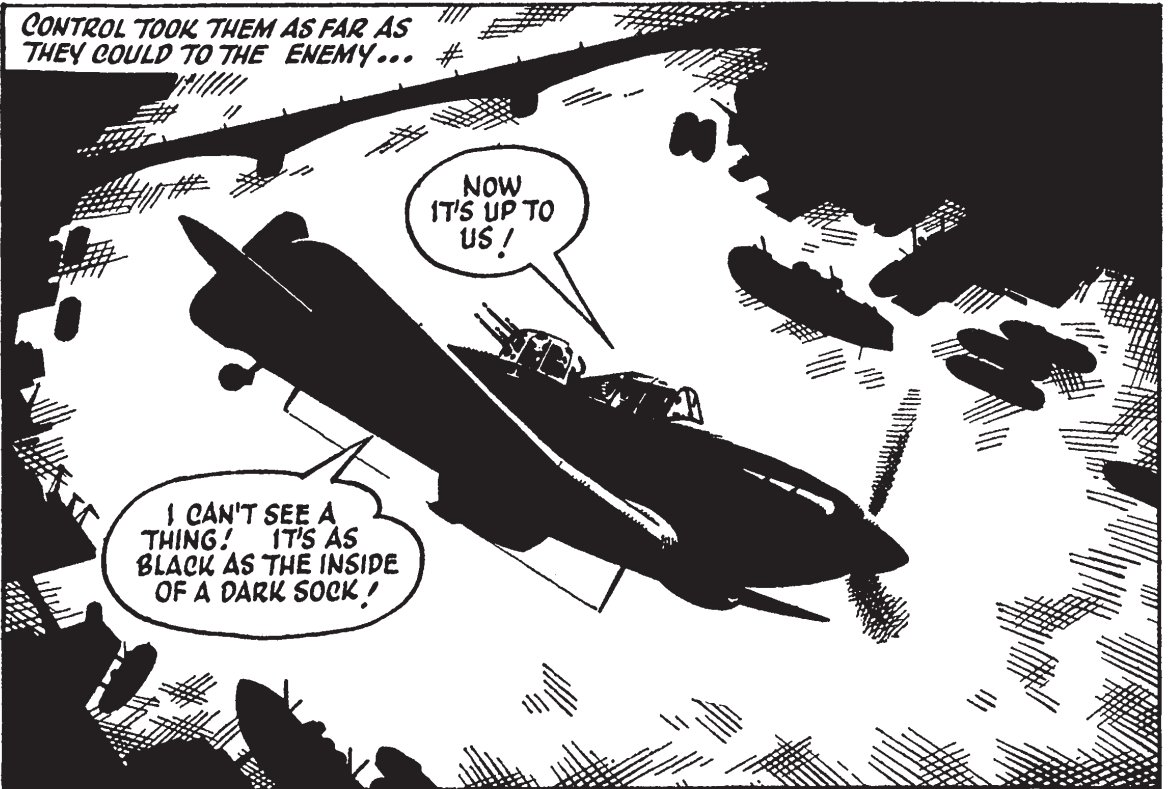
NOT TO WORRY, SKIPPER!



CONTROL TOOK THEM AS FAR AS THEY COULD TO THE ENEMY...

NOW IT'S UP TO US!

I CAN'T SEE A THING! IT'S AS BLACK AS THE INSIDE OF A DARK SOCK!



BUT MITCH'S KEEN EYES PICKED UP A SINISTER SMUDGE LOW ON THE STARBOARD QUARTER ...

I'VE SPOTTED HIM, WILTON! GET READY FOR SOME FUN! HE'S DOWN ON THE STARBOARD QUARTER AT TWO O'CLOCK--ABOUT 500 YARDS!

CAN'T SEE HIM YET, SKIPPER!

GO ON, MAN-- SHOOT!
IF YOU CAN'T SEE, SHOOT OVER THE STARBOARD WING!

O-K! HERE GOES!

FLAME REACHED FOR THE GERMAN RAIDER
FROM WILTON'S FOUR BROWNING...

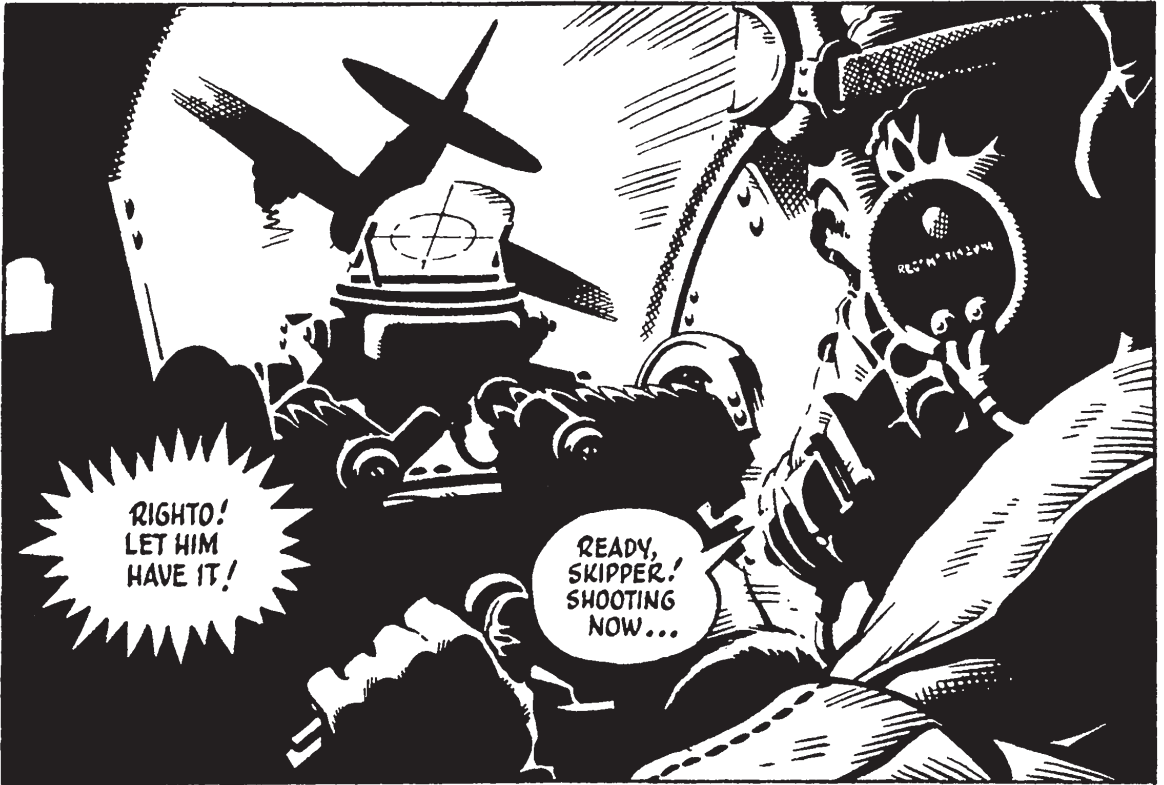
NICE WORK,
GUNNER!

ACHTUNG!
NIGHT-FIGHTER!

AS THE GERMAN PLUNGED TO DESTRUCTION, MITCH THREW THE
DEFIANT ON TO THE COURSE FOR THE RUN IN ON LONDON...

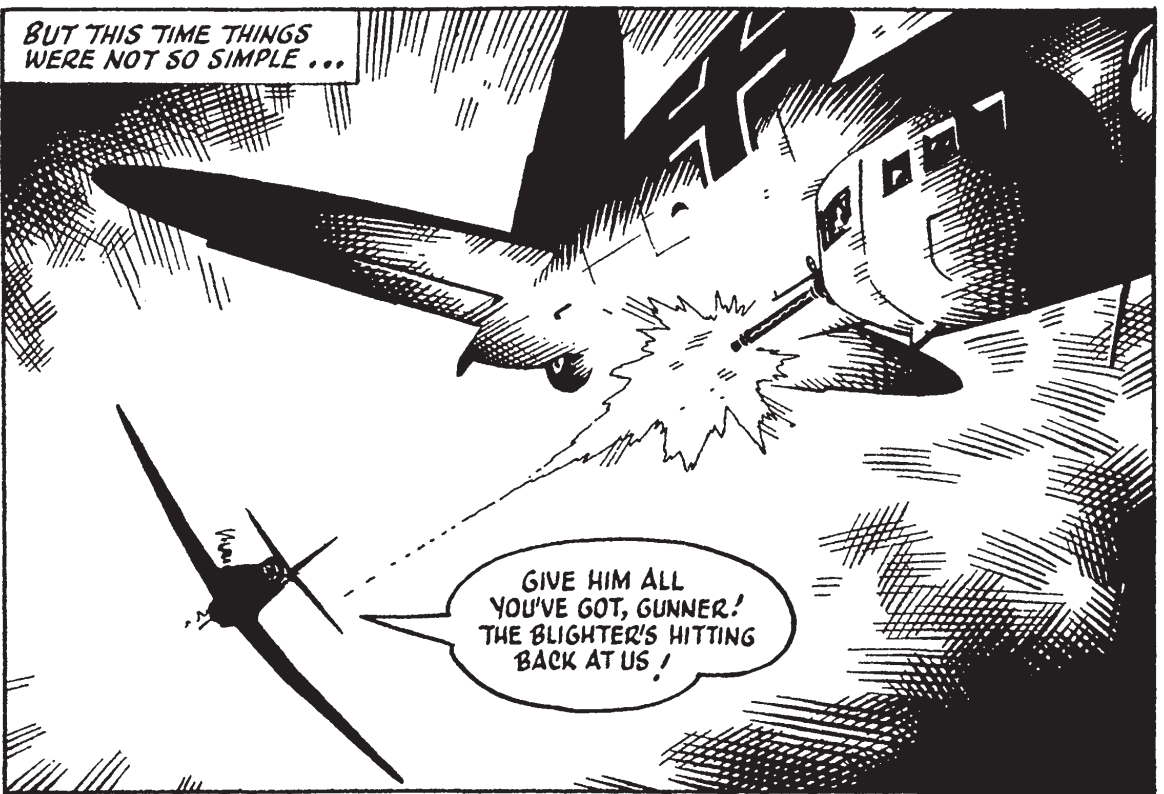
KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN, GUNNER!
WITH ALL THOSE SEARCHLIGHTS AND
THAT FLAK, WE SHOULD PICK UP
ANOTHER IN SILHOUETTE!

SOMETHING
AHEAD,
SKIPPER!



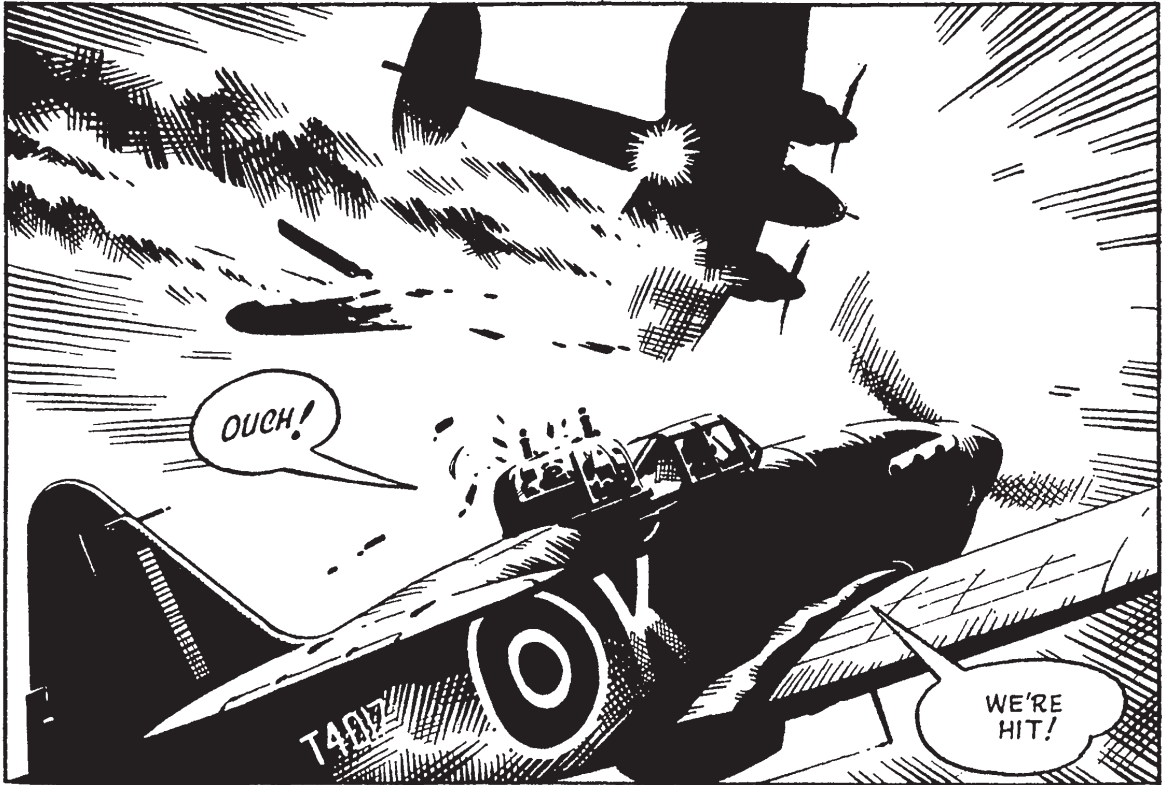
**RIGHTO!
LET HIM
HAVE IT!**

**READY,
SKIPPER!
SHOOTING
NOW...**



**BUT THIS TIME THINGS
WERE NOT SO SIMPLE ...**

**GIVE HIM ALL
YOU'VE GOT, GUNNER!
THE BLIGHTER'S HITTING
BACK AT US!**



BUT TED WILTON HAD SHOT WELL...



SQUADRON-LEADER FURNESS WAS NOT HAVING THE SAME LUCK...

DAMMIT, GUNNER!
CAN'T YOU SEE
ANYTHING?

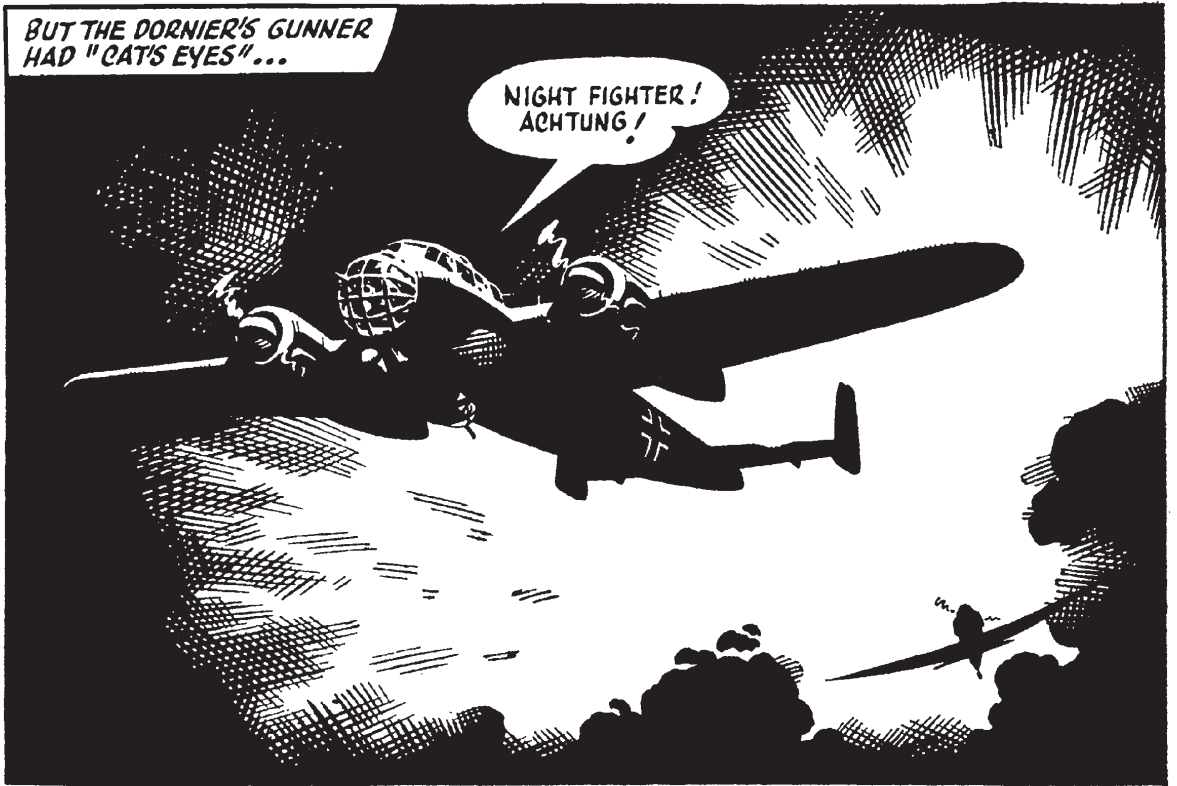
NO, SIR! YOU KEEP
TURNING TOWARDS ALL
THAT LIGHT. IT'S RUINING
MY NIGHT VISION! IN THE
PITCH DARK I COULD
FIND YOU ONE!

*BUT FURNESS HAD HIS OWN IDEAS
ON NIGHT FIGHTING...*

WELL, YOU'VE FOUND
NOTHING SO FAR. WE'LL
TRY AND GET ONE IN
SILHOUETTE! THERE YOU
ARE -- DEAD AHEAD!
WHAT DID I TELL
YOU?

*BUT THE DORNIER'S GUNNER
HAD "CAT'S EYES"...*

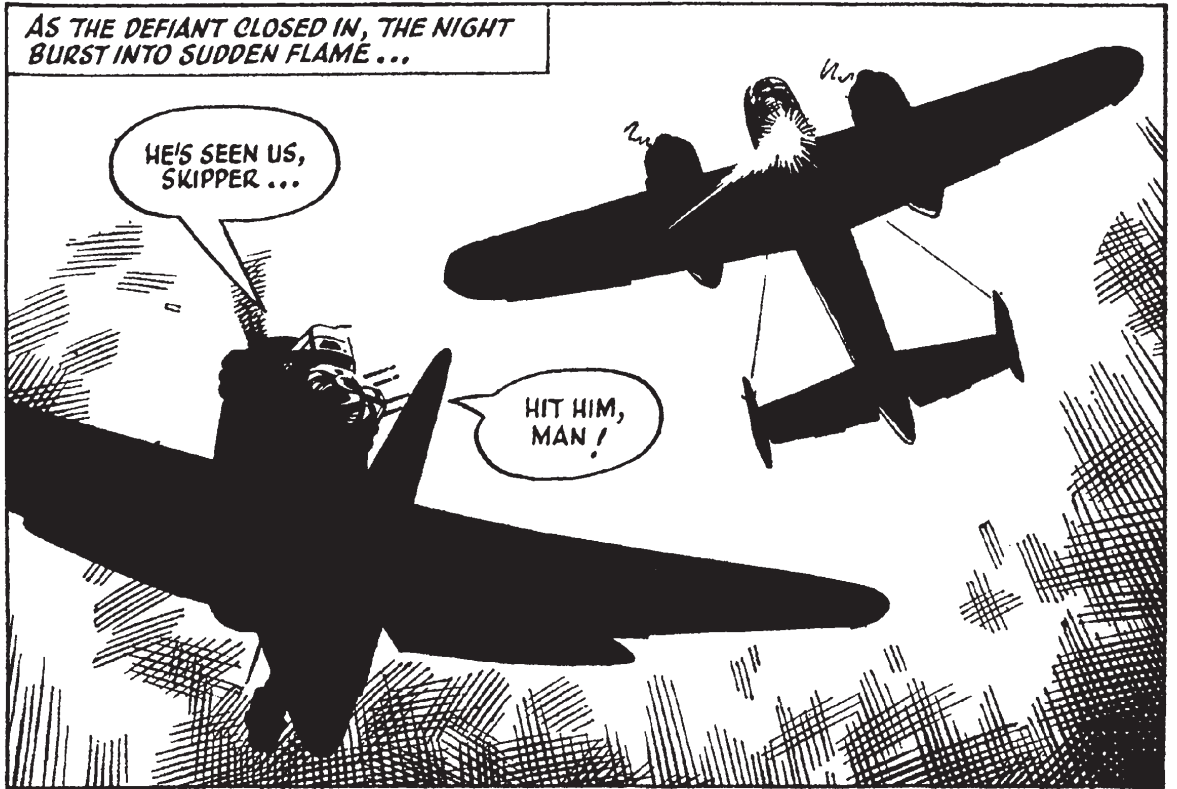
NIGHT FIGHTER!
ACHTUNG!

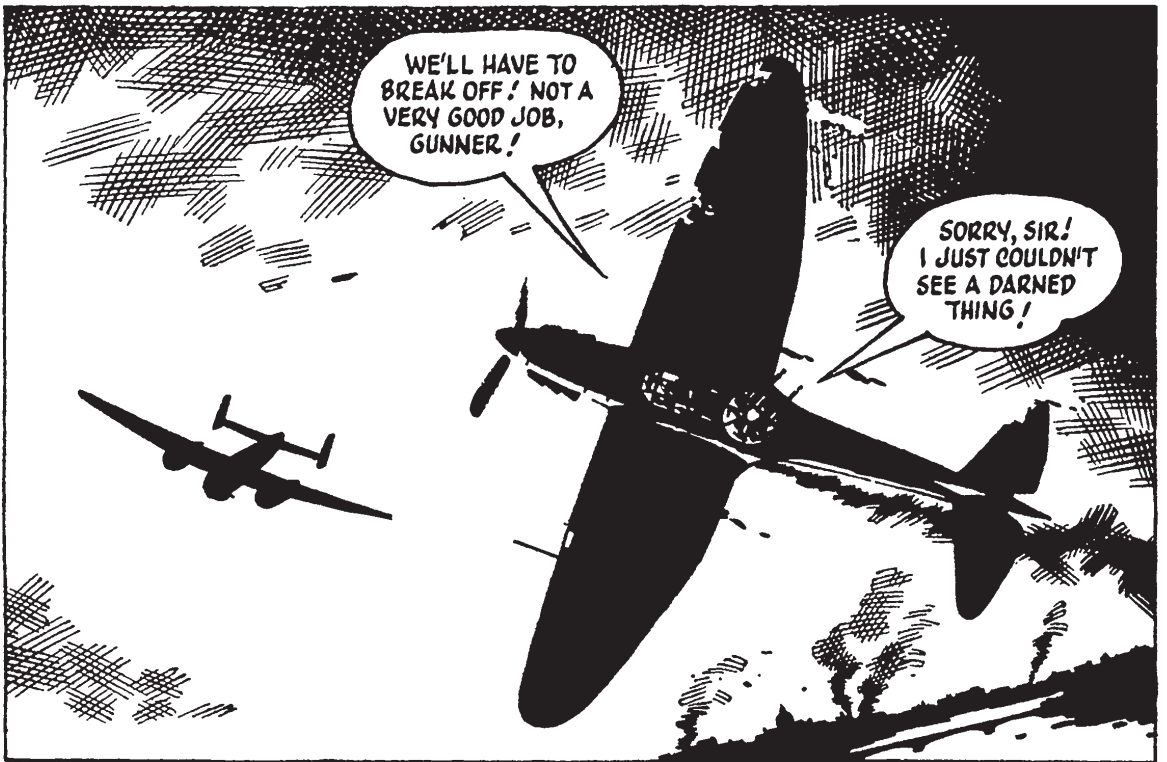


*AS THE DEFIANT CLOSED IN, THE NIGHT
BURST INTO SUDDEN FLAME...*

HE'S SEEN US,
SKIPPER...

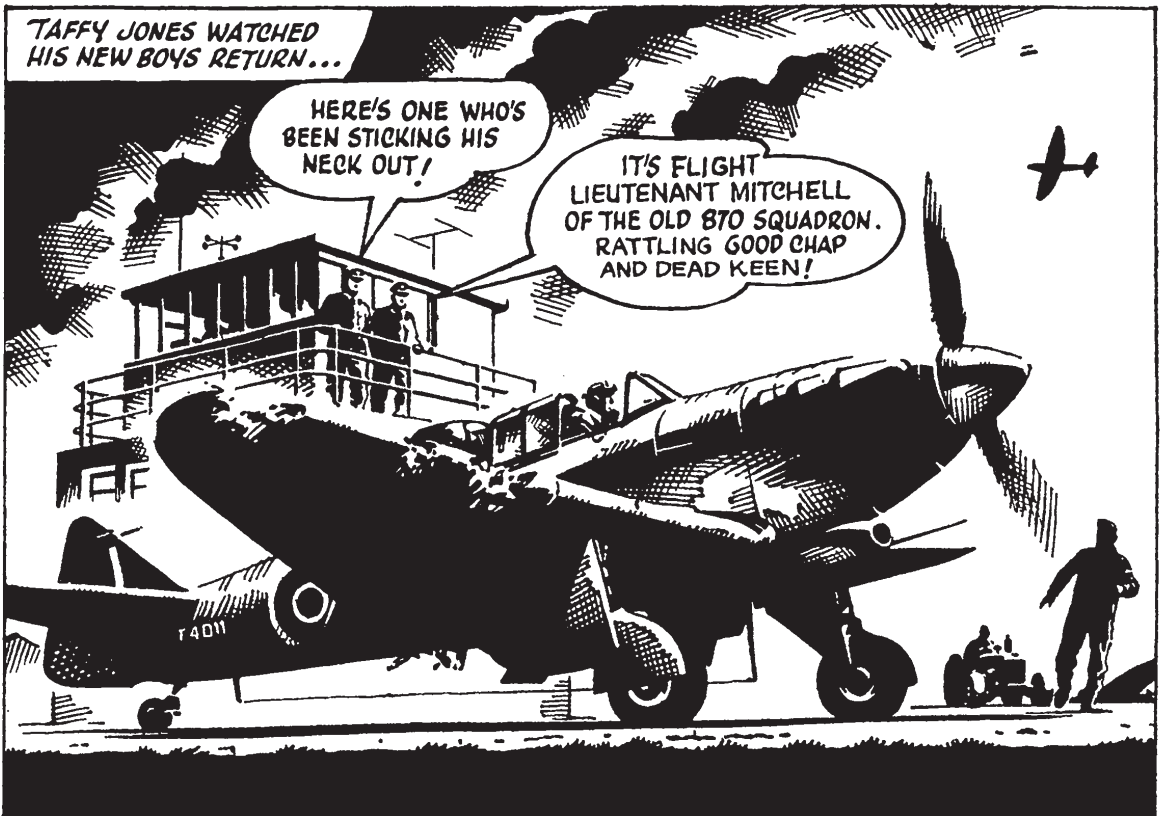
HIT HIM,
MAN!





WE'LL HAVE TO
BREAK OFF! NOT A
VERY GOOD JOB,
GUNNER!

SORRY, SIR!
I JUST COULDN'T
SEE A DARNED
THING!



TAFFY JONES WATCHED
HIS NEW BOYS RETURN...

HERE'S ONE WHO'S
BEEN STICKING HIS
NECK OUT!

IT'S FLIGHT
LIEUTENANT MITCHELL
OF THE OLD 870 SQUADRON.
RATTLING GOOD CHAP
AND DEAD KEEN!

ON LANDING, EACH PILOT RECEIVED
A TERSE MESSAGE FROM
TAFFY JONES...



LOOKS AS IF YOU'VE
'AD A BIT OF A PICNIC, SIR!
C-O'S COMPLIMENTS ~~~
ALL CREWS TO REPORT TO
HIM ON LANDING!

IN THE BRIEFING ROOM THE NIGHT FIGHTER
AGE EYED THE NEW PILOTS COLDLY...



NOT A VERY INSPIRING NIGHT'S WORK,
GENTLEMEN! YOU ALL DISAPPOINT ME,
EXCEPT YOU, MITCHELL-- YOU DID WELL!
TOMORROW NIGHT YOU WILL-- I HOPE--
HAVE BENEFITED FROM TONIGHT'S
MISTAKES!



THE C-O'S CRITICISM WAS HARSH. TO FURNESS--A FIGHTER PILOT WHO HAD WON HIS LAURELS-- IT TASTED VERY BITTER...

THIS, GENTLEMEN, IS MITCHELL, ONE OF THE LATEST LINE IN NIGHT FIGHTER PILOTS! IN THE DAYTIME, HOWEVER, HE'S AS BLIND AS A BAT. TRIED TO SHOOT ME DOWN, HE DID!

THE DAY WILL COME-- SIR-- WHEN I'LL MAKE YOU TAKE THOSE WORDS BACK!

BAH!



AND FURTHERMORE--SIR! IF YOU WANT TO SHOOT DOWN A GERMAN-- DON'T BE AFRAID! GO RIGHT IN CLOSE!

WHY-- YOU!



SEE HERE, MITCHELL! ONE MORE CRACK LIKE THAT OUT OF YOU AND-- I'LL-- I'LL THROW THE BOOK AT YOU! REMEMBER I'M YOUR SENIOR OFFICER-- AND DON'T FORGET IT!

YES-- SIR!

Chapter 4. MITCH'S PRIVATE WAR

AFTER THE NIGHT'S ADVENTURES, THE DAYLIGHT LIGHTENED THE GLOOM. EVEN THE RAKISH C.O., TAFFY JONES WAS IN A GOOD MOOD...

YOU'LL BE PLEASED TO HEAR THAT VERY SOON YOU ARE TO BE GIVEN BEAUFIGHTERS! DON'T LOOK SO GLUM! THE BEAUFIGHTERS ARE GOING TO BE FITTED WITH A MAGIC EYE! EVEN IN THICK FOG YOU'LL BE ABLE TO TRACK DOWN YOUR MAN AND GET HIM!

HMM! WONDERS WILL NEVER CEASE!



TRUE, SQUADRON-LEADER FURNESS! BUT I COULD DO WITH LESS OF YOUR SARCASM AND MORE PRACTICAL HELP! I WANT TWO VOLUNTEERS TO SHOOT DOWN A JERRY MINE-LAYING AIRCRAFT! CAT AND MOUSE STUFF! WHO'S KEEN?

I'D LIKE TO HAVE A GO!





NEXT AFTER FURNESS TO SPEAK WAS MITCH...

THAT GOES FOR ME TOO, SIR! I KNOW OF THAT MINE-LAYING CHAP!

GOOD! HE'S BEEN LAYING HIS MINES IN THE CHANNEL EVERY NIGHT NOW FOR THE PAST WEEK. THE NAVY ARE GETTING FED UP WITH SWEEPING UP AFTER IT!

YOU CAN BOTH TAKE OFF RIGHT AWAY TO 448 SQUADRON! AND REMEMBER ~ GET THAT JERRY!



A FEW HOURS LATER, FURNESS AND MITCHELL WAITED WITH THEIR GUNNERS FOR NIGHTFALL AT 448 SQUADRON. THE C.O DETECTED IMMEDIATELY THE HOSTILITY EXISTING BETWEEN THE TWO PILOTS...

NOT TO WORRY, SIR! LEAVE IT TO ME ~ I'LL GET HIM!

LOOKS LIKE BAGS OF BAD VISIBILITY! TOUCH AND GO WHETHER THAT MINE-LAYER WILL COME TONIGHT!

IT'S TOUGH ENOUGH AT NIGHT WITHOUT IT BEING BAD VISIBILITY AS WELL!

R-D-F CONTROL SENT WORD THAT A LONE HUN WAS HEADING FOR THE THAMES ESTUARY. THE TWO CREWS SCRAMBLED...

HERE WE GO, LAD. BEST OF LUCK. ONE OF THESE DAYS OUR TWO SKIPPERS ARE GOING TO LET FLY AT EACH OTHER! HOPE I'M NOT IN THE WAY!

THAT GOES FOR ME. MY OLD MAN HATES MITCHELL'S GUTS!

THE LONE MINE-LAYER FLEW IN LOW...

A BAD NIGHT FOR MINING, WOLFGANG! VISIBILITY WILL BE LIKE ENGLISH PEA-SOUP!

NEVER MIND, KAPITAN. THERE WON'T BE MUCH DANGER OF BEING CHASED!

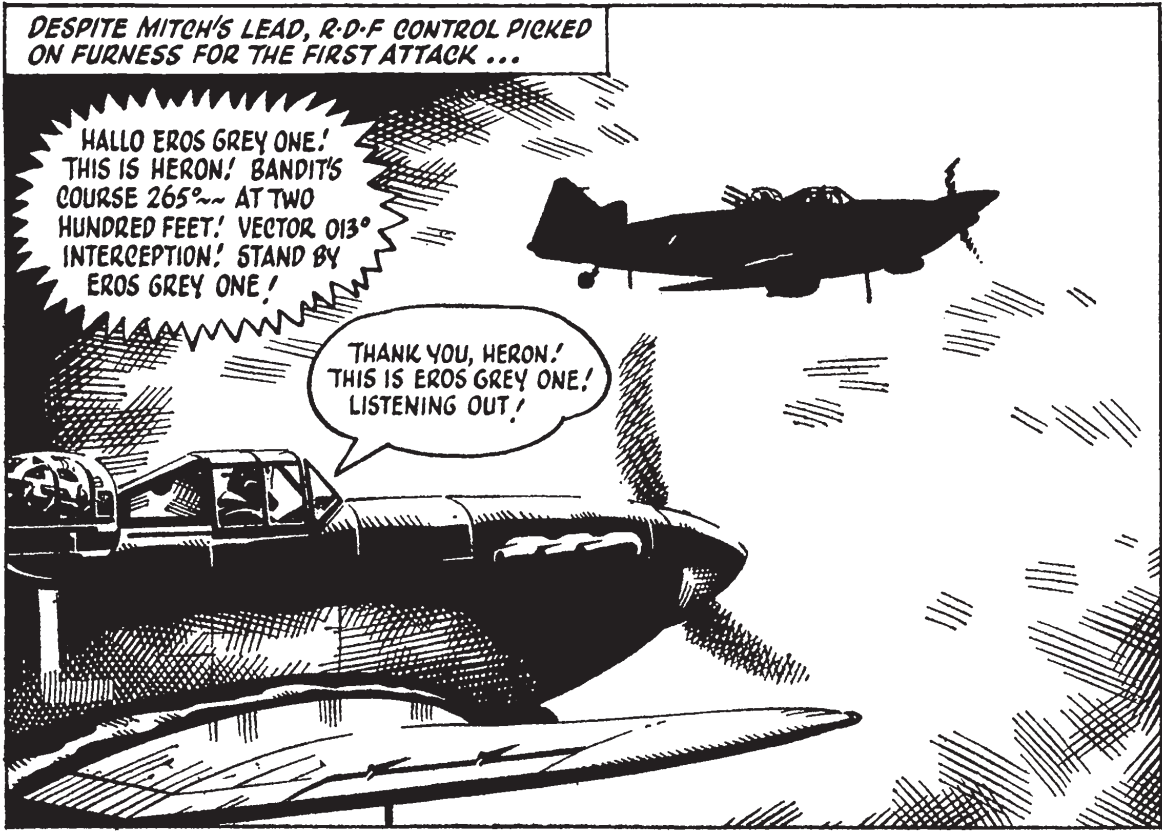


IN HIS FANATICAL EAGERNESS TO SHOW HIS SUPERIORITY OVER FURNESS-- MITCH HAD HIS UNDERCART UP ALMOST BEFORE HE WAS AIRBORNE ...

**WHEW!
TAKE IT EASY,
SKIPPER!**

**TAKE IT EASY NOTHING!
I'M GOING TO SHOW THAT CHAP
FURNESS ONCE AND FOR ALL!**

**MITCHELL
IS A RECKLESS
IDIOT!**



DESPITE MITCH'S LEAD, R-D-F CONTROL PICKED ON FURNESS FOR THE FIRST ATTACK ...

**HALLO EROS GREY ONE!
THIS IS HERON! BANDIT'S
COURSE 265°-- AT TWO
HUNDRED FEET! VECTOR 013°
INTERCEPTION! STAND BY
EROS GREY ONE!**

**THANK YOU, HERON!
THIS IS EROS GREY ONE!
LISTENING OUT!**

FURNESS CHUCKLED GRIMLY TO HIMSELF...

KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN, GUNNER! IF WE MISS THIS SHOT THEY'LL LET THAT CHAP MITCHELL HAVE A GO! THIS IS TO BE OURS! UNDERSTAND?

YESSIR! BUT! CAN'T SEE A THING, SIR!

SUDDENLY THE HUNT WAS ON...

THERE YOU ARE EROS GREY ONE! SHE'S ALL YOURS! AHEAD OF YOU AT FIVE HUNDRED YARDS!

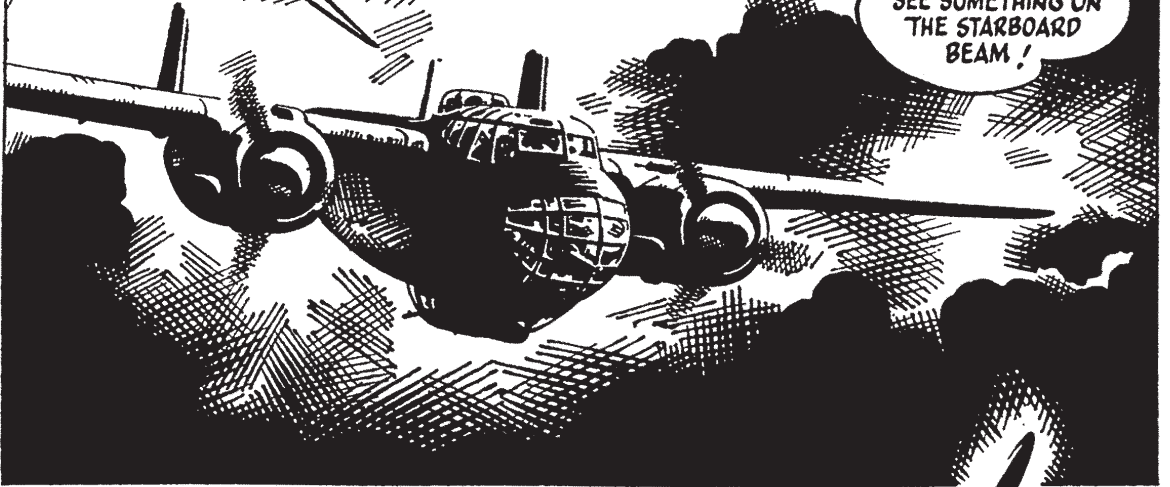
YES, I THINK I CAN SEE SOMETHING!

BUT THE GUNNER OF THE MINE-LAYING DORNIER HAD SIGHTED THE ONCOMING DANGER ...

**WELL DONE!
WE PLAY THE
ENGLISH GAME
OF HIDE AND
SEEK!**

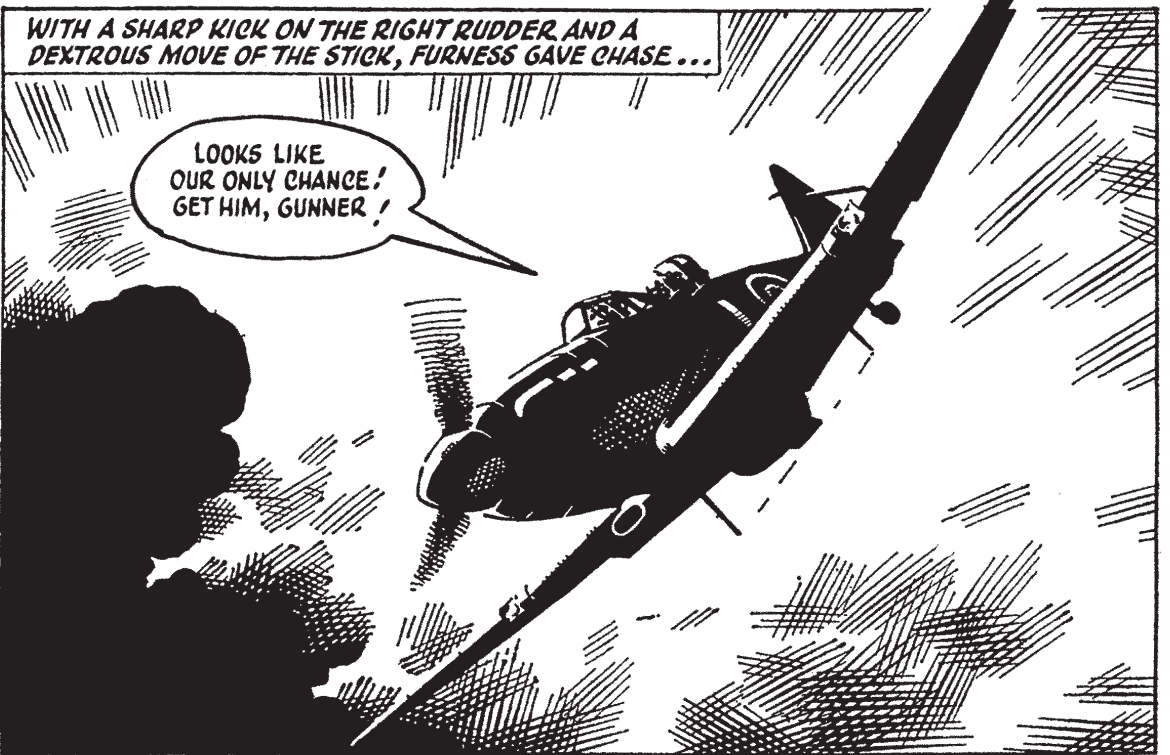
**CURSE IT~~
WE'VE LOST THE
FELLER!**

**I THINK I CAN
SEE SOMETHING ON
THE STARBOARD
BEAM!**



**WITH A SHARP KICK ON THE RIGHT RUDDER AND A
DEXTEROUS MOVE OF THE STICK, FURNESS GAVE CHASE ...**

**LOOKS LIKE
OUR ONLY CHANCE!
GET HIM, GUNNER!**



*THE RISING MIST FROM THE RIVER
ENSHROUDED BOTH HUNTER AND HUNTED...*

**LOOK OUT,
SKIPPER!**

*THE DEFIANT TOOK THE FULL
FORCE OF THE COLLISION...*

HIMMEL!

**DON'T JUMP!
WE'RE NOT HIGH
ENOUGH!**

AS SOON AS R-D-F CONTROL SAW FURNESS'S BLIP DISAPPEAR ~- THEY CALLED IN MITCH...

FURTHER OUT TO SEA THE MIST BROKE UP...

HULLO EROS GREY TWO!
THIS IS HERON! YOUR
NUMBER ONE'S GONE SILENT!
JERRY'S ON HIS WAY HOME!
VECTOR 089°- BANDIT AT
LESS THAN 100 FT.
BEST OF LUCK!

HERE WE GO,
GUNNER!
THANK YOU, HERON!
LISTENING
OUT!

ACHTUNG,
KAPITAN!
ANOTHER NIGHT
FIGHTER!

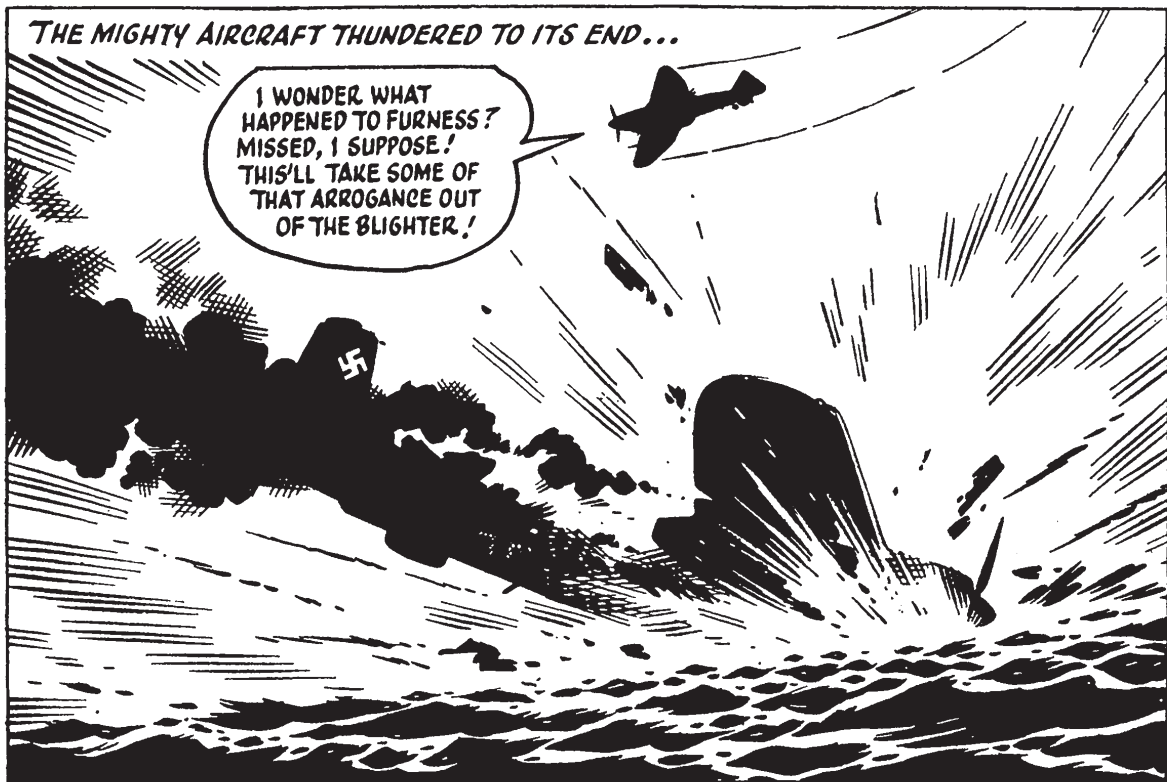
THERE HE
IS, GUNNER!

TED WILTON LET HIS FOUR BROWNING'S
SPRAY ONTO THE GERMAN AIRCRAFT...

WELL DONE, LAD,
YOU'VE GOT HIM!
WE'VE BEATEN FURNESS!
WE'VE SHOWN HIM!

THE MIGHTY AIRCRAFT THUNDERED TO ITS END...

I WONDER WHAT HAPPENED TO FURNESS? MISSED, I SUPPOSE! THIS'LL TAKE SOME OF THAT ARROGANCE OUT OF THE BLIGHTER!

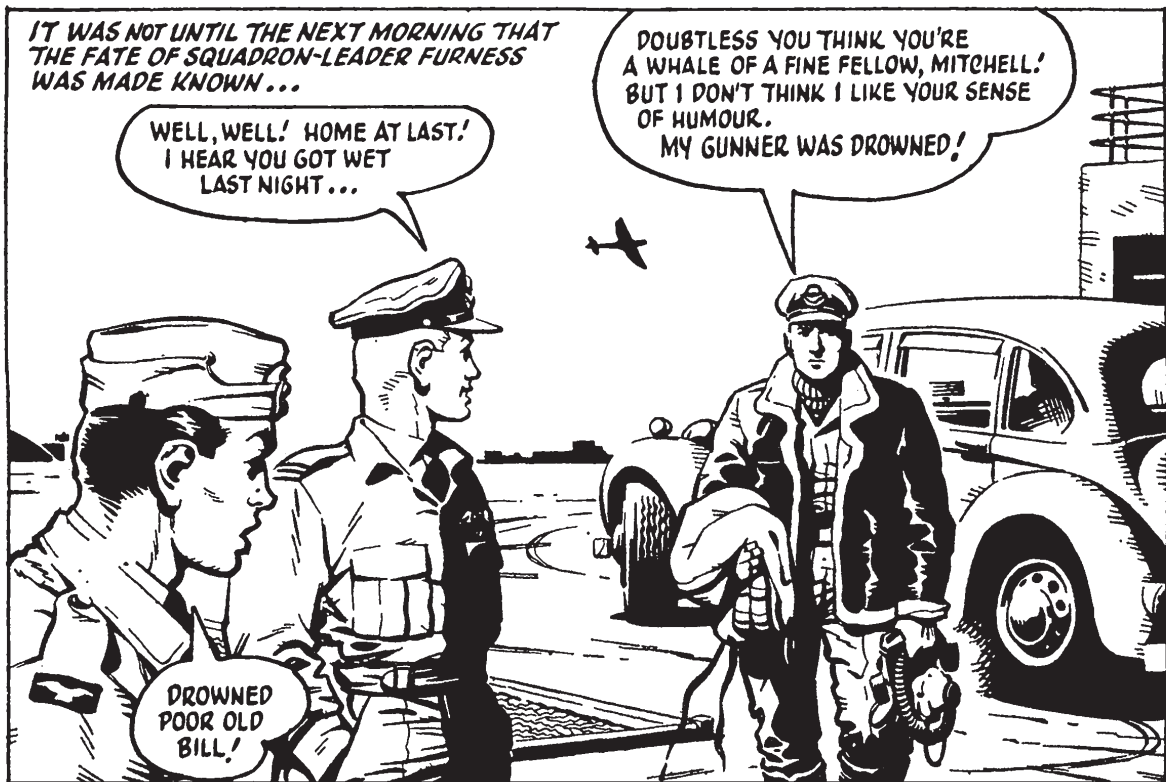


IT WAS NOT UNTIL THE NEXT MORNING THAT THE FATE OF SQUADRON-LEADER FURNESS WAS MADE KNOWN...

WELL, WELL! HOME AT LAST! I HEAR YOU GOT WET LAST NIGHT...

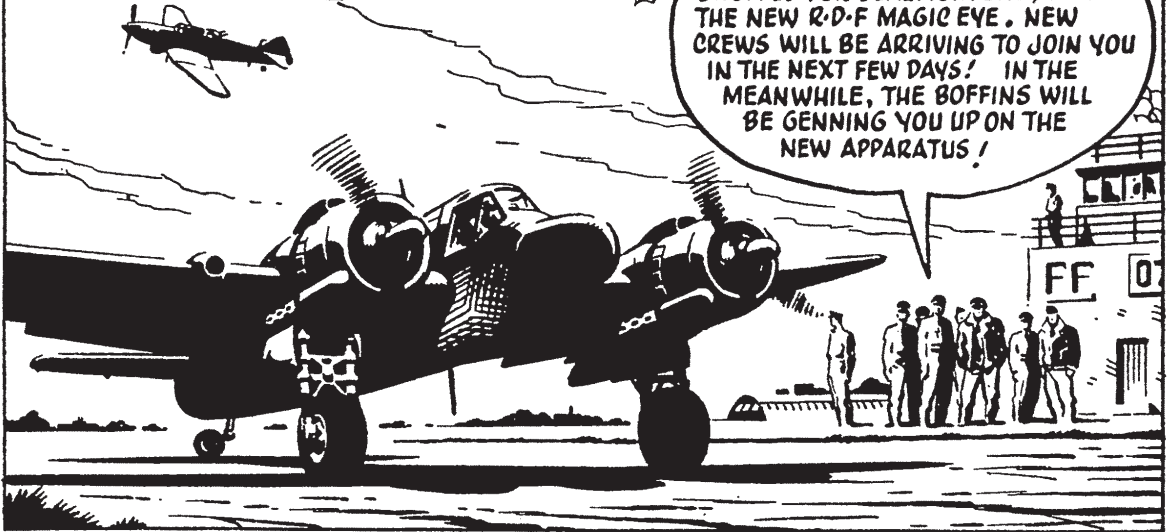
DOUBTLESS YOU THINK YOU'RE A WHALE OF A FINE FELLOW, MITCHELL! BUT I DON'T THINK I LIKE YOUR SENSE OF HUMOUR. MY GUNNER WAS DROWNED!

DROWNED POOR OLD BILL!



THAT AFTERNOON TAFFY JONES BROKE SOME NEWS TO HIS NEW CREWS...

GENTLEMEN! TODAY YOUR DEFIANTS ARE BEING SWOPPED FOR BEAUFIGHTERS, WITH THE NEW R·D·F MAGIC EYE. NEW CREWS WILL BE ARRIVING TO JOIN YOU IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS! IN THE MEANWHILE, THE BOFFINS WILL BE GENNING YOU UP ON THE NEW APPARATUS!



MORE NEWS WAS TO COME...

YOU, MITCHELL, WILL STILL BE ALLOWED TO OPERATE AS BEFORE IN YOUR DEFIANT! THERE ARE NOT ENOUGH BEAUFIGHTERS YET TO GO ROUND. YOU'VE GOT "CAT'S EYES", SO YOU SHOULD BE ALL RIGHT! YOU, FURNESS, ARE TAKING OVER AS C.O.! I'VE BEEN TAKEN OFF! THE BEST OF LUCK TO YOU!

A FEW HOURS LATER, AIR MARSHAL FENNER DROPPED IN TO CONGRATULATE FURNESS. ALTHOUGH FURNESS WAS PROUD OF HIS NEW COMMAND, THE AIR MARSHAL KNEW THAT ALL WAS NOT WELL...

THEY'RE A PRETTY GOOD BUNCH OF 'STEEL BATS', ALL BUT THIS CHAP MITCHELL... HE'S OUT TO DO ME DOWN, BUT I MUST ADMIT HE'S A DARNED GOOD NIGHT FIGHTER PILOT...

I KNOW THE LAD YOU MEAN. DON'T THINK I HADN'T HEARD ABOUT YOU TWO!



A GOOD COMMANDER MUST KNOW WHEN TO GIVE GROUND. IN THIS CASE YOU BEHAVED LIKE A MARTINET JUST WHEN THE BOY HAD LOST HIS FATHER. IF YOU'RE A BIG ENOUGH MAN-- AND I KNOW YOU ARE-- YOU'LL APOLOGISE!

APOLOGISE-- NOTHING!



A WEEK LATER, MITCH STOOD BY FOR NIGHT OPERATIONS. FURNESS WAS STILL WITHOUT AN AIRCRAFT AND WAS FEELING UTTERLY FRUSTRATED. HE HAD ONLY JUST BROKEN THE BACK OF THE PAPER WORK OF "TAKING OVER" HIS NEW COMMAND. THEY BOTH WATCHED THE OTHERS TAKE OFF ON THEIR FIRST OPERATION WITH THE "MAGIC EYE". EACH WAS KEPT BUSY WITH HIS OWN THOUGHTS...

THAT BLIGHTER MITCHELL IS GETTING MORE AND MORE IMPOSSIBLE! HE'S SHOT DOWN FOUR JERRIES SINCE HE'S BEEN HERE! MY BAG'S STILL NIL!

YOU MAY HAVE BEEN ALL RIGHT ON "DAYLIGHTS", MISTER BLOOMING FURNESS, BUT AT NIGHT YOU'RE A DEAD LOSS!

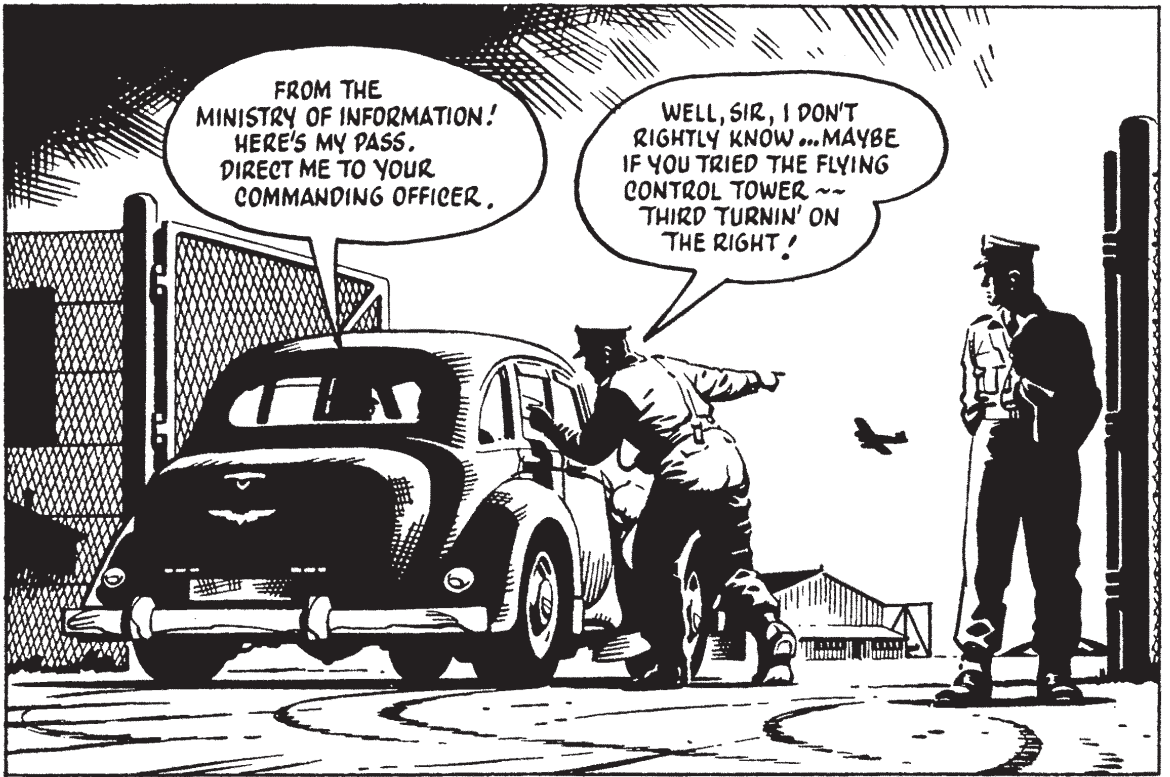


FATE IN THE PERSON OF MR FENNY WEEDON WAS FAST APPROACHING FURNESS AND MITCHELL. WEEDON WAS A "SNOOPER" FROM THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION. HIS JOB WAS TO SEE THAT THE WAR WAS FOUGHT TO THE SATISFACTION OF WHITEHALL. HIS REPORTS ALWAYS SUCCEEDED IN MAKING TROUBLE...

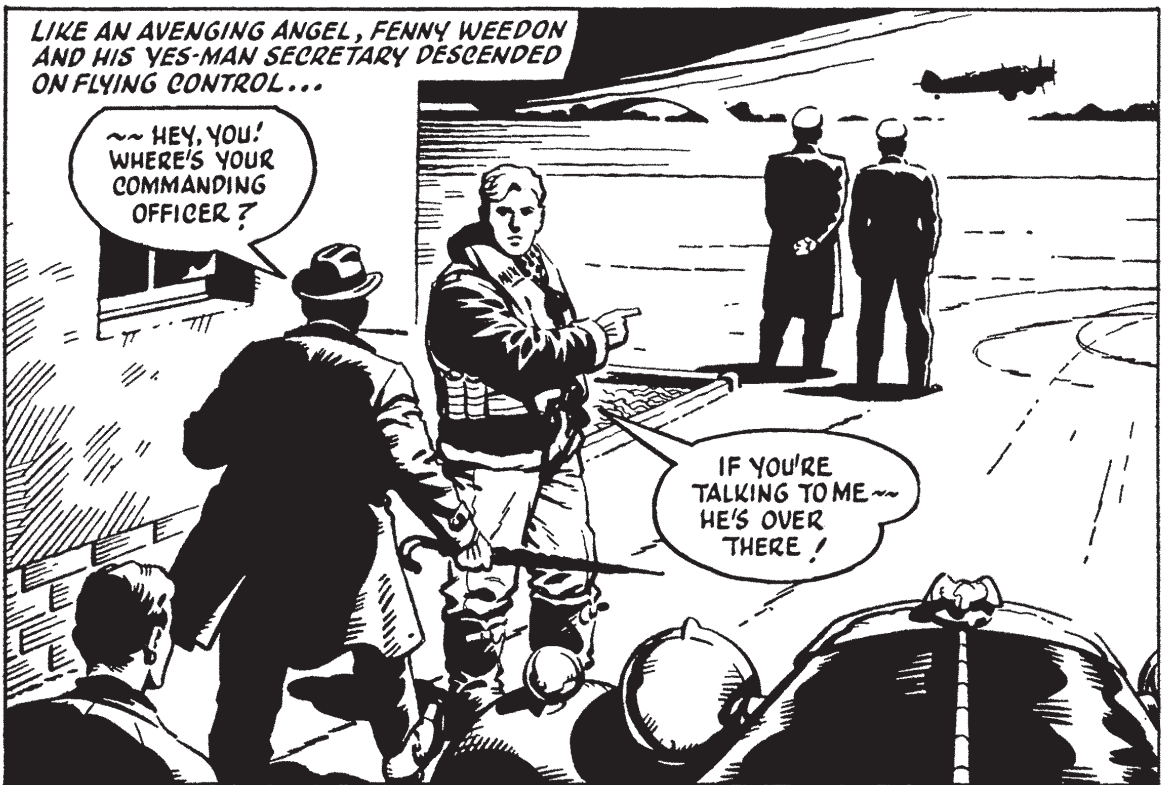
YES, MARSHAM! I THINK A LIGHTNING SWOOP ON ONE OR TWO NIGHT FIGHTER STATIONS WILL TEACH US A LOT! WE'LL SEE WHY THEY'RE SHOOTING DOWN SO FEW OF THE GERMAN RAIDERS...

YOU'RE RIGHT, SIR! WE MUST BE VIGILANT!





LIKE AN AVENGING ANGEL, FENNY WEEDON AND HIS YES-MAN SECRETARY DESCENDED ON FLYING CONTROL...







FURNESS GRASPED THE OPPORTUNITY...

-- LOOK, SIR! LET'S SHOW THOSE FOOL CIVIL SERVANTS! -- I'LL BE YOUR GUNNER! LET'S GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO TAKE BACK TO THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION! WE DON'T NEED A MAGIC EYE!

I'M WITH YOU, MITCHELL!

THOSE YOUNG MEN ARE GOING TO LEARN A SHARP LESSON! SUCH INSOLENCE!



HEY, WHERE ARE YOU GOING? YOU'VE LEFT ME WITH A COUPLE OF DANGEROUS CIVIL SERVANTS! THIS MAN WEEDON'S BEEN ON MY TAIL FOR WEEKS!

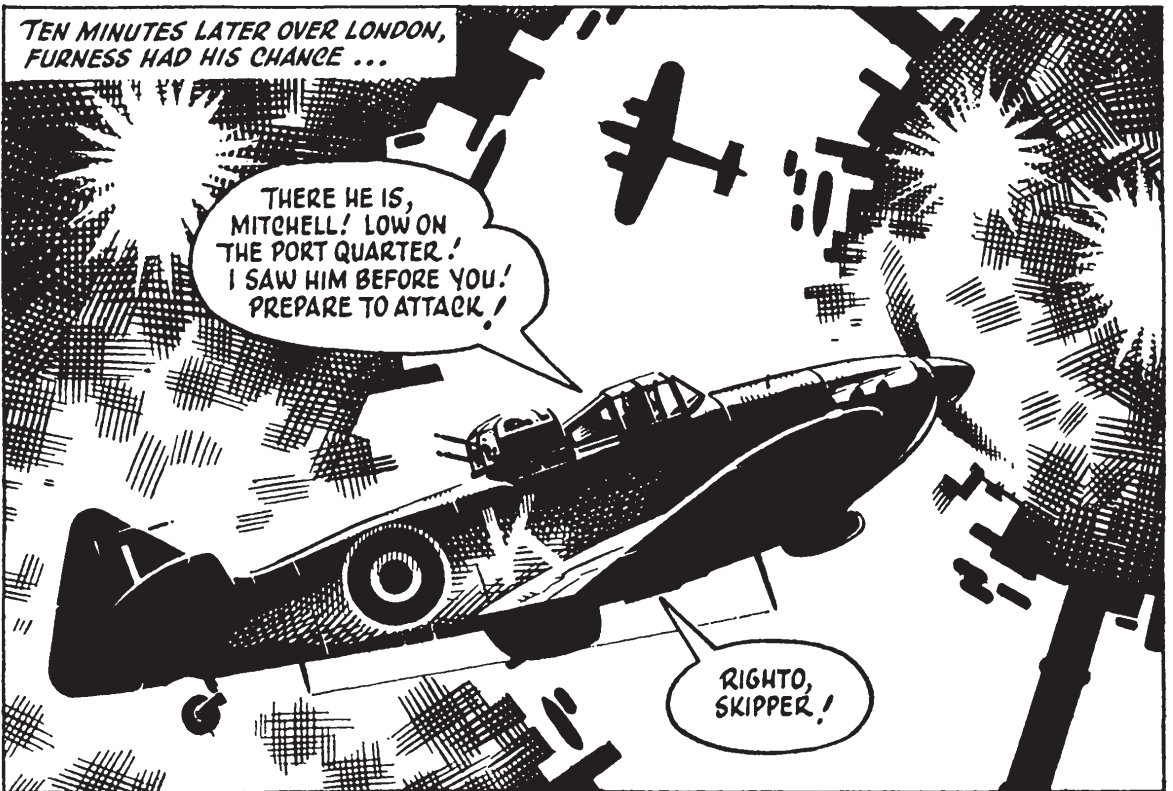
TELL THEM WE WON'T BE LONG, UNCLE. WE'VE GOT SOME WORK TO DO! IF HE GETS TROUBLESOME -- PUT HIM IN THE GUARDROOM!



WITH THE MENACE OF A BIRD OF PREY,
THE DEFIANT REACHED INTO THE NIGHT...

HULLO, NIGHTHAWK,
THIS IS BUZZARD!
BANDITS ANGELS 12-
BEARING 270°!
INTERCEPTION
COURSE 179°!
OVER!

THANK YOU, BUZZARD!
WE'RE OUT FOR BLOOD
TONIGHT!



TEN MINUTES LATER OVER LONDON,
FURNESS HAD HIS CHANCE ...

THERE HE IS,
MITCHELL! LOW ON
THE PORT QUARTER!
I SAW HIM BEFORE YOU!
PREPARE TO ATTACK!

RIGHTO,
SKIPPER!

THE DORNIER ERUPTED IN FLAMES ON THE FIRST ATTACK ...

GOT HIM!

NOW FOR ANOTHER ...

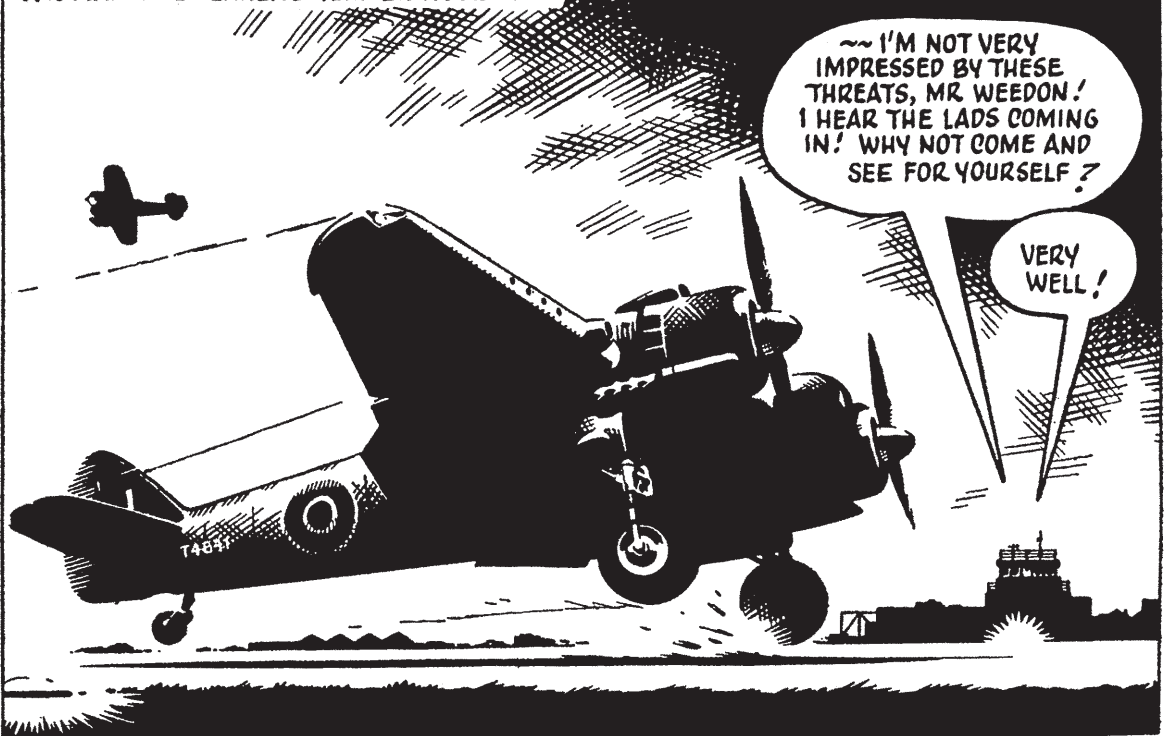


MEANWHILE, AIR MARSHAL FENNER WAS BEING SUBJECTED TO CROSS-EXAMINATION BY THE SNOOPER FROM THE MINISTRY...

H'M! I MUST TELL YOU THAT THE MINISTER IS NOT AT ALL SATISFIED! SOME HEADS ARE GOING TO ROLL, AIR MARSHAL! FURTHERMORE, I SHALL REPORT PERSONALLY ON THE DISCOURTESY OF SQUADRON-LEADER FURNESS AND HIS SUBORDINATE OFFICER -- MITCHELL, ISN'T IT?



AIR MARSHAL FENNER'S TEMPER ROSE ...



~ I'M NOT VERY IMPRESSED BY THESE THREATS, MR WEEDON! I HEAR THE LADS COMING IN! WHY NOT COME AND SEE FOR YOURSELF?

VERY WELL!

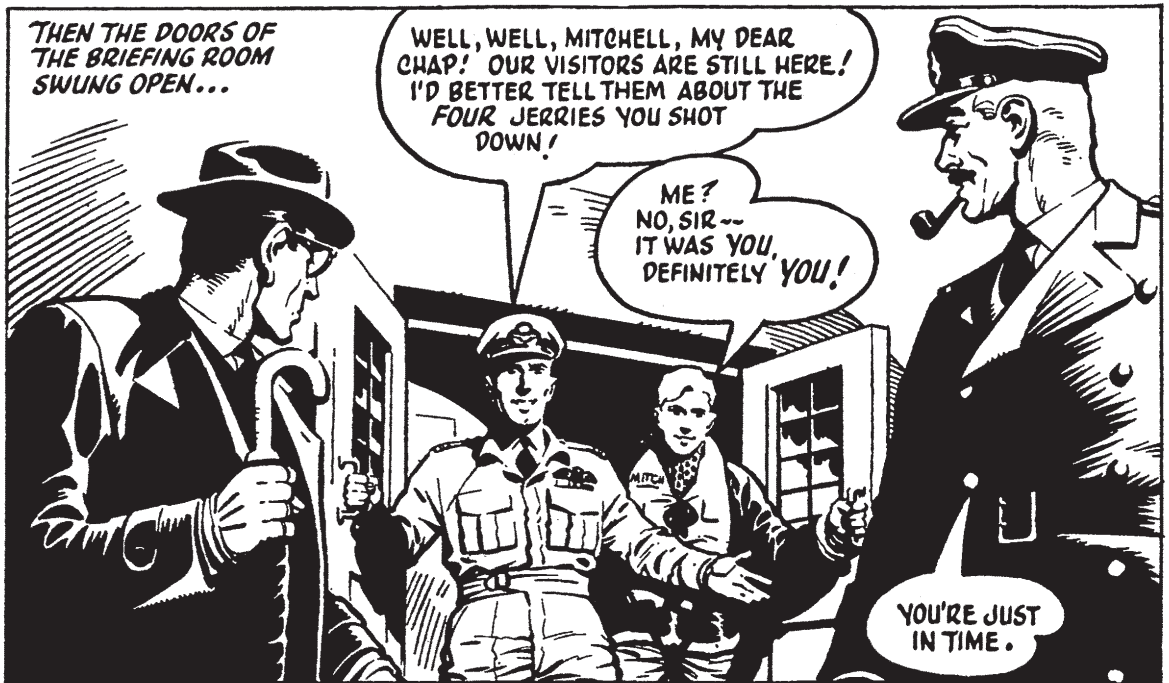
THE BEAUFIGHTER CREWS HAD SCORED SENSATIONAL SUCCESSES WITH THE MAGIC EYE ...



IT'S TERRIFIC, SIR! THE "MAGIC EYE" TOOK US RIGHT UP TO SIX JERRIES! WE SHOT DOWN FOUR OF THEM!

~ IT'S AMAZING! WE CLOBBERED TWO OF THE BLIGHTERS!

THIS HAS GOT JERRY FIXED! WE'VE GOT 'EM BY THE TAIL!



THEN THE DOORS OF THE BRIEFING ROOM SWUNG OPEN...

WELL, WELL, MITCHELL, MY DEAR CHAP! OUR VISITORS ARE STILL HERE! I'D BETTER TELL THEM ABOUT THE FOUR JERRIES YOU SHOT DOWN!

ME? NO, SIR-- IT WAS YOU, DEFINITELY YOU!

YOU'RE JUST IN TIME.



FENNY WEEDON SUDDENLY REALISED THAT IT WAS TIME TO GO...

FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT MITCHELL, CALL MR WEEDON'S CAR! GOODBYE, MR WEEDON --DECENT OF YOU TO CALL! PRESENT MY COMPLIMENTS TO THE MINISTER AND TELL HIM THAT WE'VE GOT EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL. HAVEN'T WE, MITCHELL?

YOU BET WE HAVE, SIR!

END



PICTURE
AIR BOAT
LIBRARY



"NEVER SAY DIE" WAPITI

"FIGHTER PILOTS OVER-EAGER FOR THEIR FIRST VICTORY HAVE BEEN HAZARDING AIRCRAFT AND LIVES BY IGNORING TACTICAL ORDERS" — FROM AIR OFFICER COMMANDING, SUB-AREA, FIGHTER COMMAND, DURING THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN.

PILOT-OFFICER PERISHING PERKINS HAS DONE IT AGAIN — HE'S BOTCHED THE SQUADRON'S BATTLE ORDERS.



Chapter I.

Sacked Pilot!

PILOT-OFFICER STAN PERKINS, NEW TO 2204 SPITFIRE SQUADRON, HAD BEEN ORDERED TO STAY IN THE "LONG STOP" POSITION, WHEN BATTLE WAS JOINED WITH THE ENEMY COMING IN OVER DOVER . . .

HALLO, DOG-TAIL -
KEEP WATCH TO
OUR REAR ...

DOG-TAIL,
OKAY, OUT...

PERKINS, A FRUSTRATED SPECTATOR, FORBIDDEN TO JOIN IN, FLEW TO-AND-FRO ACROSS THE FRINGE OF THE BATTLE . . .

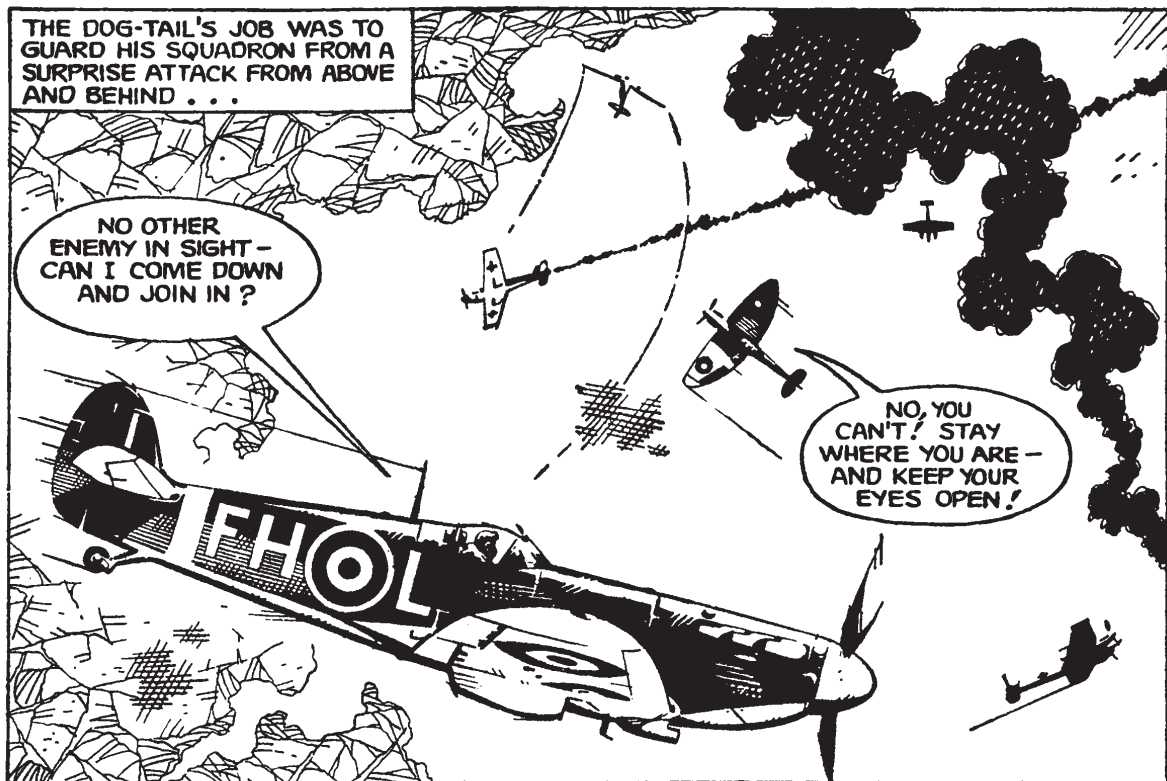
OH, BOY, IF ONLY I COULD
GET IN THERE - INSTEAD
OF STOOING AROUND LIKE
A LINESMAN AT A
PERISHING FOOTBALL
MATCH!

DOG-TAIL,
REPORT...

THE DOG-TAIL'S JOB WAS TO GUARD HIS SQUADRON FROM A SURPRISE ATTACK FROM ABOVE AND BEHIND . . .

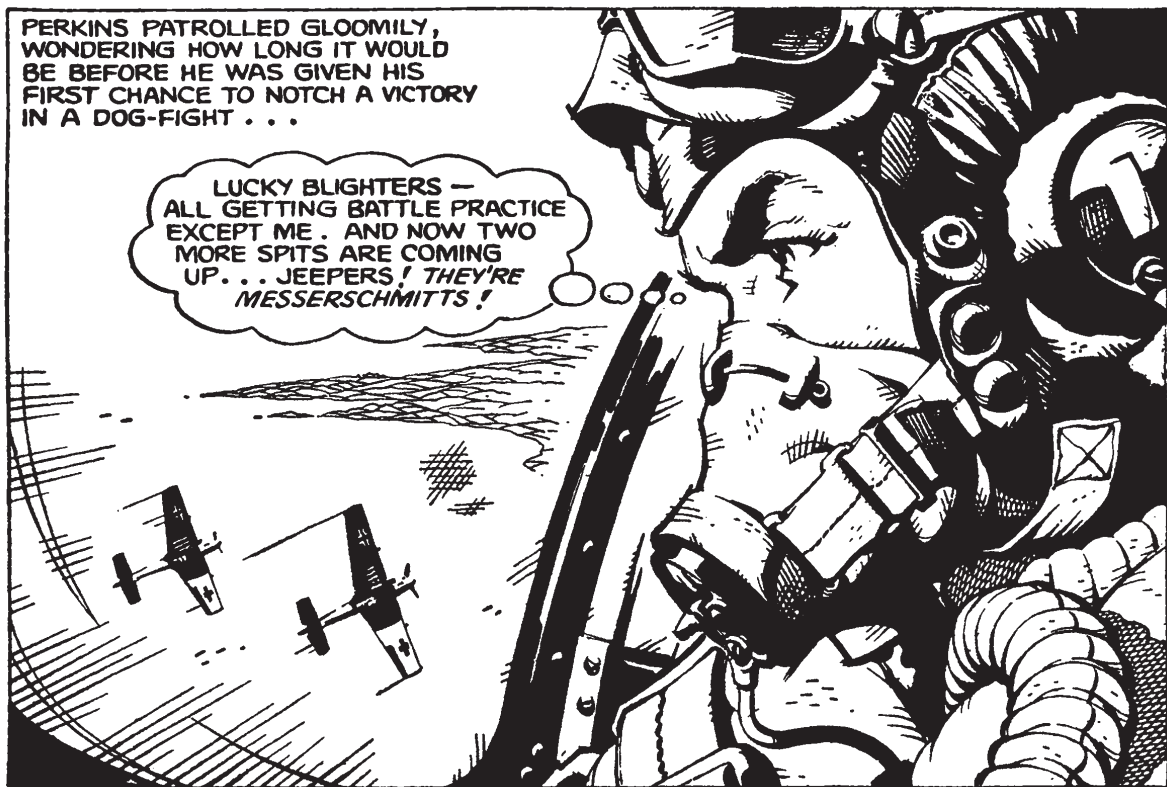
NO OTHER ENEMY IN SIGHT - CAN I COME DOWN AND JOIN IN ?

NO, YOU CAN'T! STAY WHERE YOU ARE - AND KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN!



PERKINS PATROLLED GLOOMILY, WONDERING HOW LONG IT WOULD BE BEFORE HE WAS GIVEN HIS FIRST CHANCE TO NOTCH A VICTORY IN A DOG-FIGHT . . .

LUCKY BLIGHTERS - ALL GETTING BATTLE PRACTICE EXCEPT ME . AND NOW TWO MORE SPITS ARE COMING UP . . . JEEPERS! THEY'RE MESSERSCHMITTS!



FROM OUT OF THE SUN SWOOPED THE TWO MESSERSCHMITT FIGHTERS, INTENT ON BOUNCING THE HEAVILY ENGAGED SPITFIRES ...

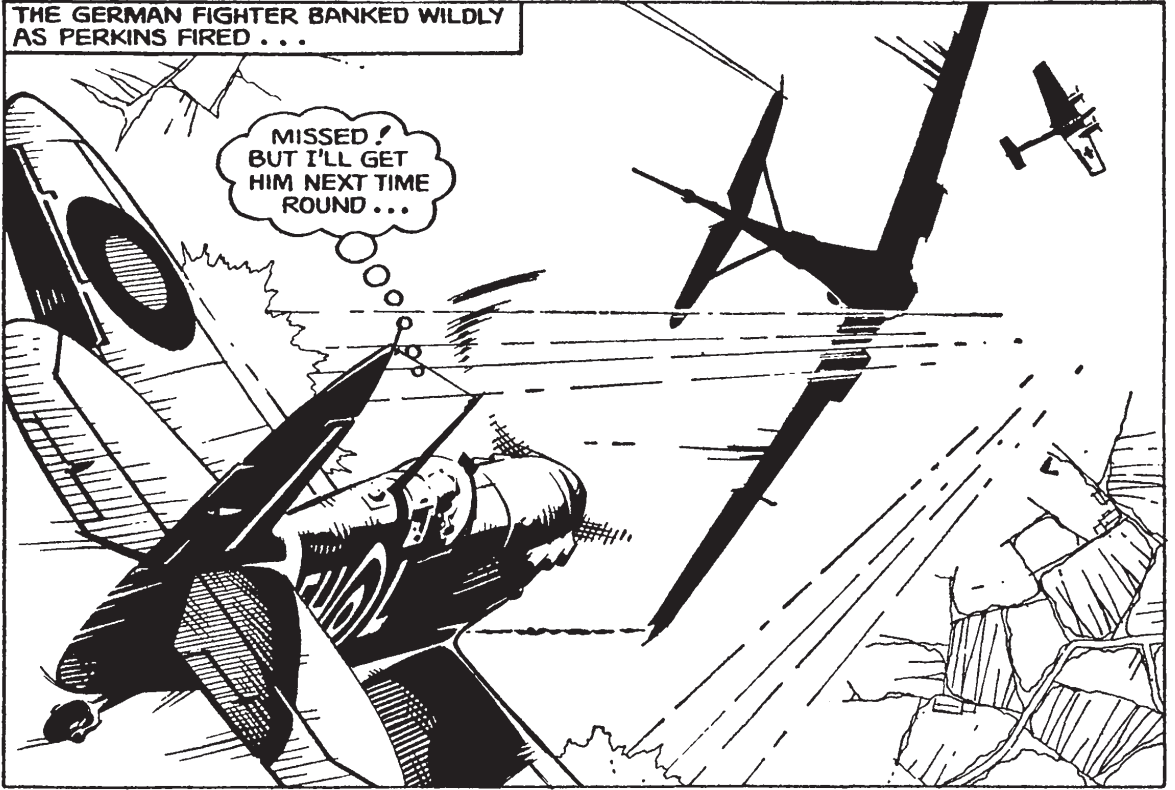
THE BRITISH
HAVEN'T SEEN
US!

AT LAST! A JOB
FOR A DOG-TAIL. THIS
IS WHERE I GET ME
A JERRY - MAYBE
TWO!

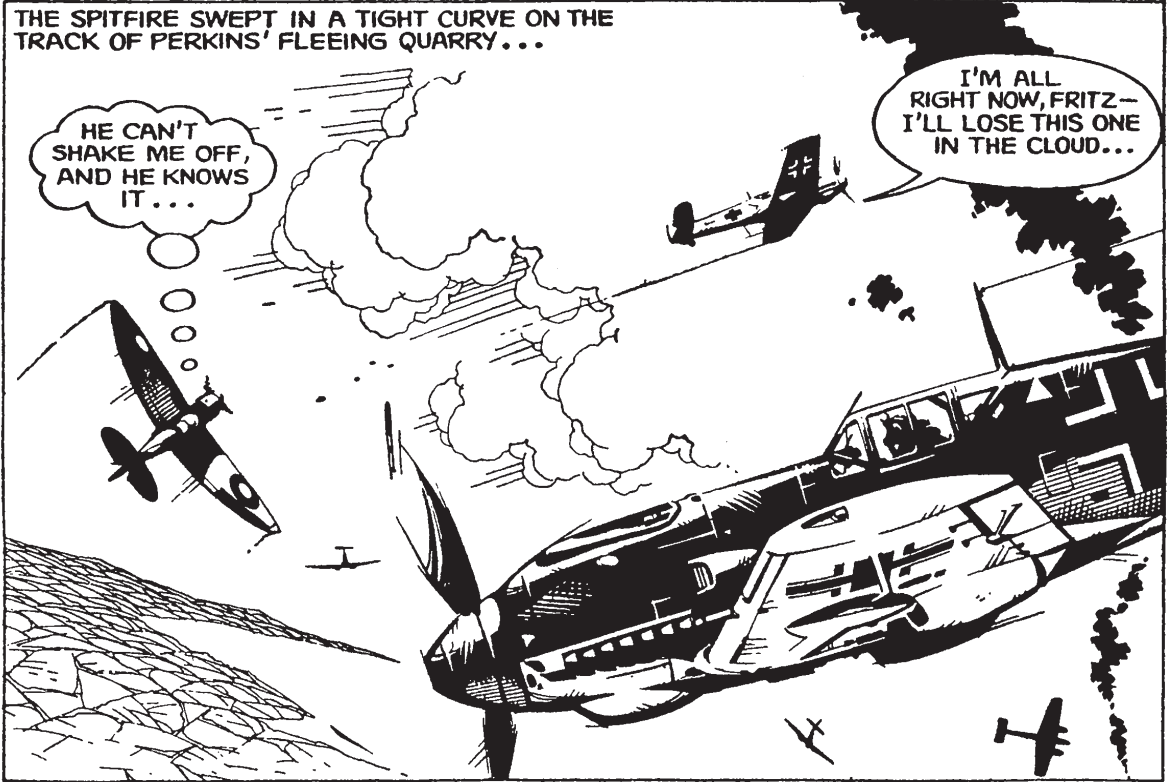
PERKINS DIPPED THE NOSE OF HIS PLANE AND SENT IT SCREAMING DOWN THE SKY ...

LOOK OUT,
HANS - A SPITFIRE
IS ON YOUR TAIL

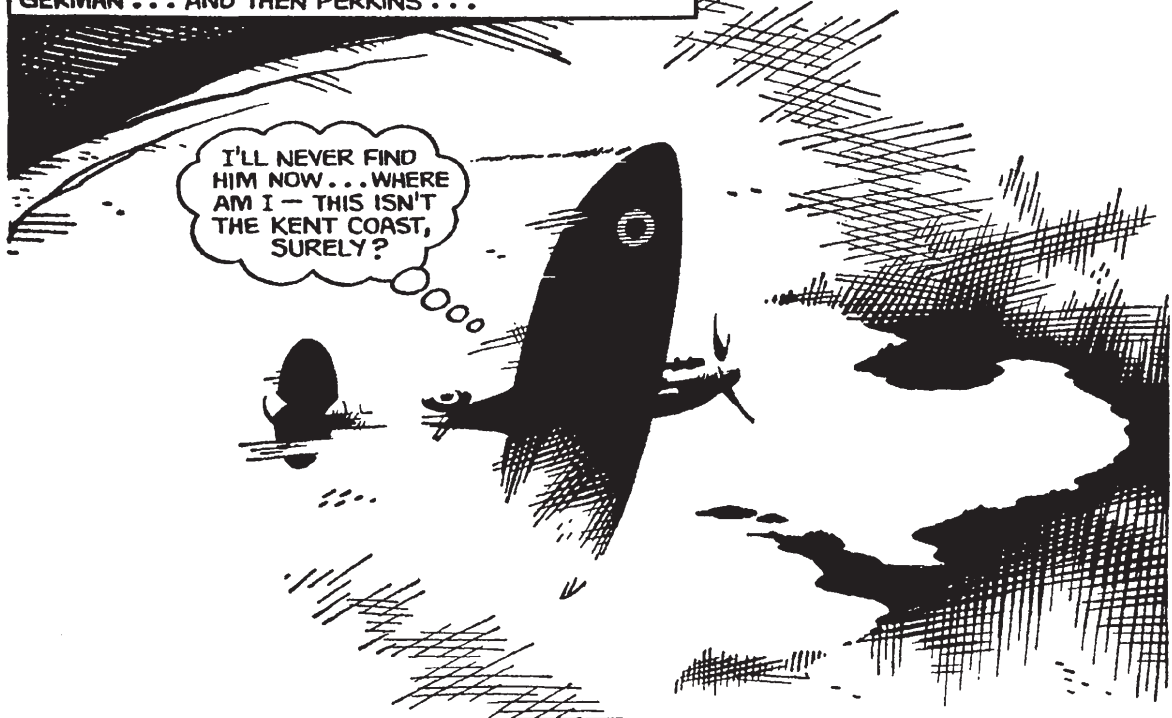
THE GERMAN FIGHTER BANKED WILDLY AS PERKINS FIRED . . .



THE SPITFIRE SWEEPED IN A TIGHT CURVE ON THE TRACK OF PERKINS' FLEEING QUARRY . . .

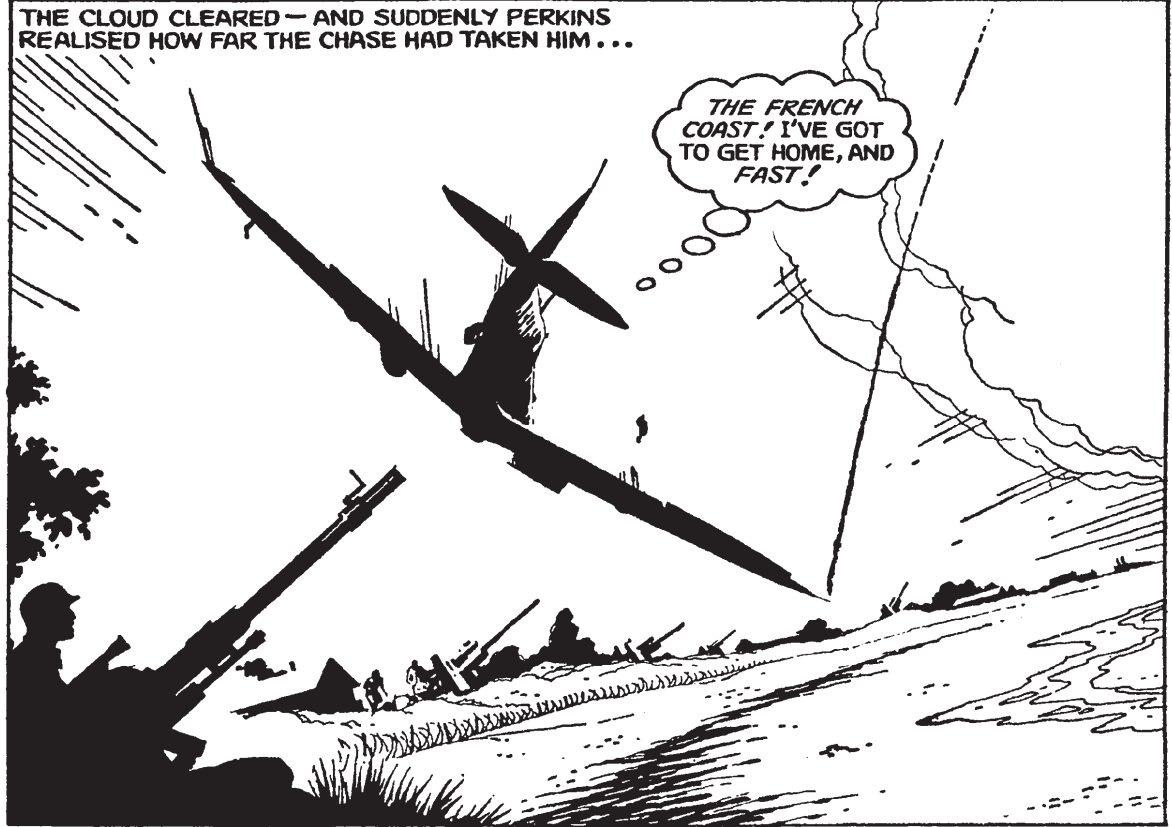


THE WHITE MIST OF THE CLOUD BANK SWALLOWED THE GERMAN . . . AND THEN PERKINS . . .



I'LL NEVER FIND HIM NOW . . . WHERE AM I — THIS ISN'T THE KENT COAST, SURELY?

THE CLOUD CLEARED — AND SUDDENLY PERKINS REALISED HOW FAR THE CHASE HAD TAKEN HIM . . .



THE FRENCH COAST! I'VE GOT TO GET HOME, AND FAST!

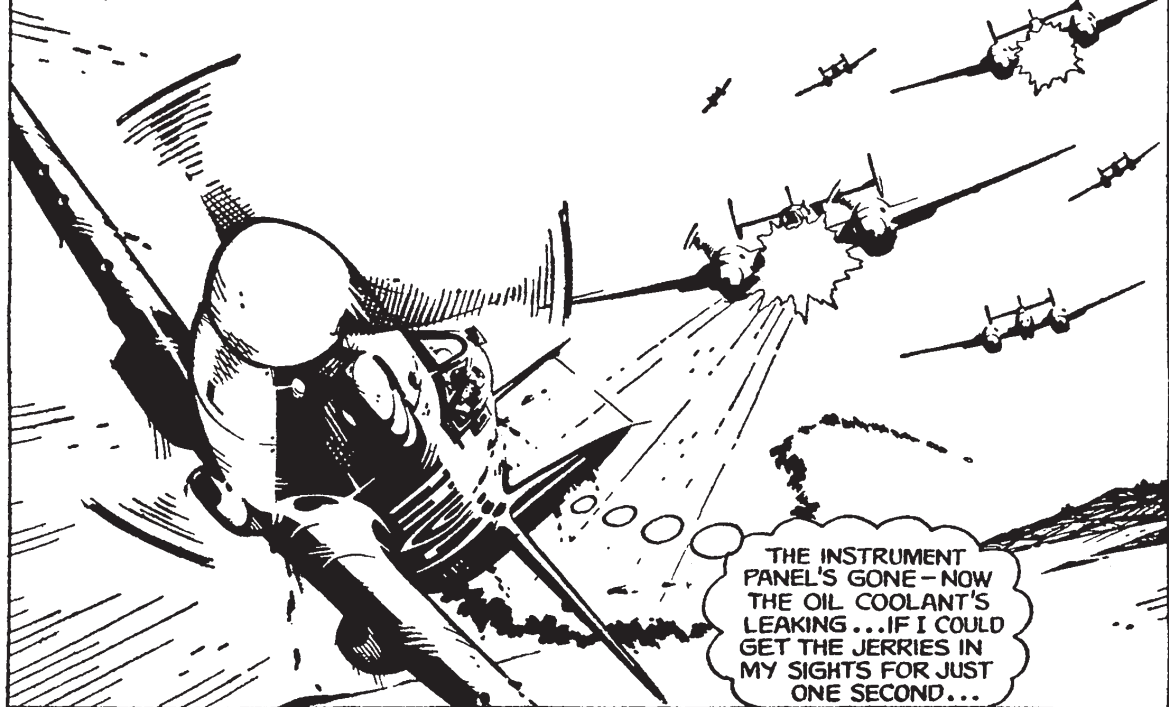
AS HE HEADED BACK OVER THE SEA, THE GERMAN GROUND DEFENCES OPENED UP . . .



THE FLAK ROCKED PERKINS' PLANE, AND ONLY THE ARMOUR-PLATED BACKING IN HIS COCKPIT SAVED HIM . . .



PERKINS, AWARE OF NEW DANGER, KICKED FIRST ON ONE RUDDER AND THEN ON THE OTHER, GOADING HIS LIMPING SPITFIRE HOME . . .



THE INSTRUMENT PANEL'S GONE - NOW THE OIL COOLANT'S LEAKING... IF I COULD GET THE JERRIES IN MY SIGHTS FOR JUST ONE SECOND...

HARRIED BY NAZI FIRE, HIS BADLY CRIPPLED PLANE STAGGERED HOMEWARDS . . .

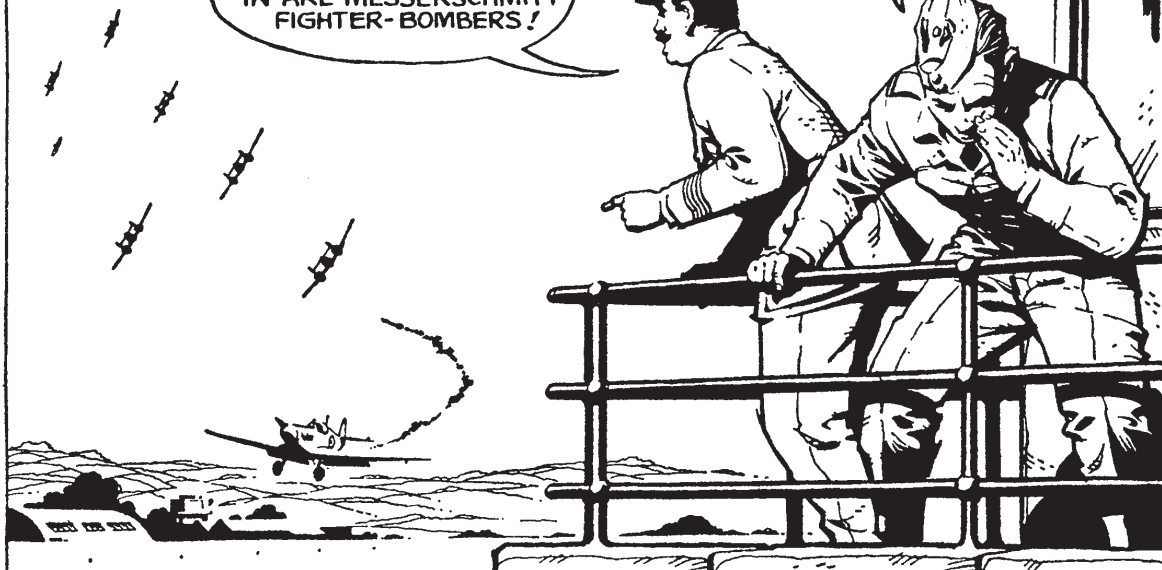
DOVER CLIFFS - I'VE MADE IT! THE JERRIES HAVE DISENGAGED - ALL I'VE GOT TO DO NOW IS LAND THIS FLYING SIEVE IN ONE PIECE . . .

JUST FOLLOW HIM QUIETLY HOME . . .

PERKINS HEADED FOR HIS SQUADRON STATION...WHEELS AND FLAPS DOWN, HE CONCENTRATED ON LANDING BETWEEN THE YELLOW FLAGS MARKING THE SAFETY LANE ...

IT'S PERKINS!
LOOK OUT—THOSE
PLANES TRAILING HIM
IN ARE MESSERSCHMITT
FIGHTER-BOMBERS!

MAN THE
BOFORS!



AS PERKINS BUMPED TO A STANDSTILL,
ALL HELL SEEMED TO RIP LOOSE AROUND
HIM ...

FIRE!

WHAT
THE HECK IS
HAPPENING?





DIVING FOR THE SAND-BAGGED SHELTER OF THE OPERATIONS-HUT, PERKINS CAME FACE TO FACE WITH THE C.O. . . .

PERKINS, YOU BLITHERING HALF-WIT! YOU DISAPPEAR FROM YOUR DOG-TAIL - AND BRING HALF THE GERMAN AIR FORCE BACK TO BOMB US, YOU JIBBERING MANIAC!

YES, SIR...



EVEN THE FALLING BOMBS SEEMED PREFERABLE TO THE FURY OF THE C.O. . .

THE FIGHTERS FROM MANSTON ARE DRIVING OFF THE RAIDERS, SIR.

GET OUT OF MY SIGHT, PERKINS - I'LL SEE YOU IN THE MORNING!

THAT EVENING, WITH CALM RESTORED AND THE CAMP PATCHED UP, PERKINS' PALS CONSOLED HIM . . .

DO YOU THINK HE'LL GROUND ME ?

WE'RE TOO SHORT OF PILOTS—ANYWAY, IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT THE JERRIES FOLLOWED YOU . . .



NEXT MORNING, THE C.O., ALTHOUGH STILL RUMBLING LIKE A VOLCANO, COULD NOT FAIRLY BLAME PERKINS FOR THE BOMBING . . .

YOU GET ONE MORE CHANCE, PERKINS. BUT I'M KEEPING YOU OUT OF MISCHIEF. FROM NOW ON YOU'LL FLY NUMBER TWO TO THE SQUADRON-LEADER . . .



THANK YOU, SIR—SORRY ABOUT YESTERDAY . . .

IT COULD ONLY MEAN THAT SQUADRON-LEADER MACEY HAD SPOKEN UP FOR HIM, AND PERKINS WAS HAPPY WHEN TWO HOURS LATER THERE CAME THE NEXT CALL FOR ACTION . . .

SCRAMBLE!

THIS TIME SOMEONE ELSE IS DOG-TAIL . . .



AS THEY RACED FOR THE PLANES, PERKINS
SPRINTED ALONGSIDE SQUADRON-LEADER MACEY...

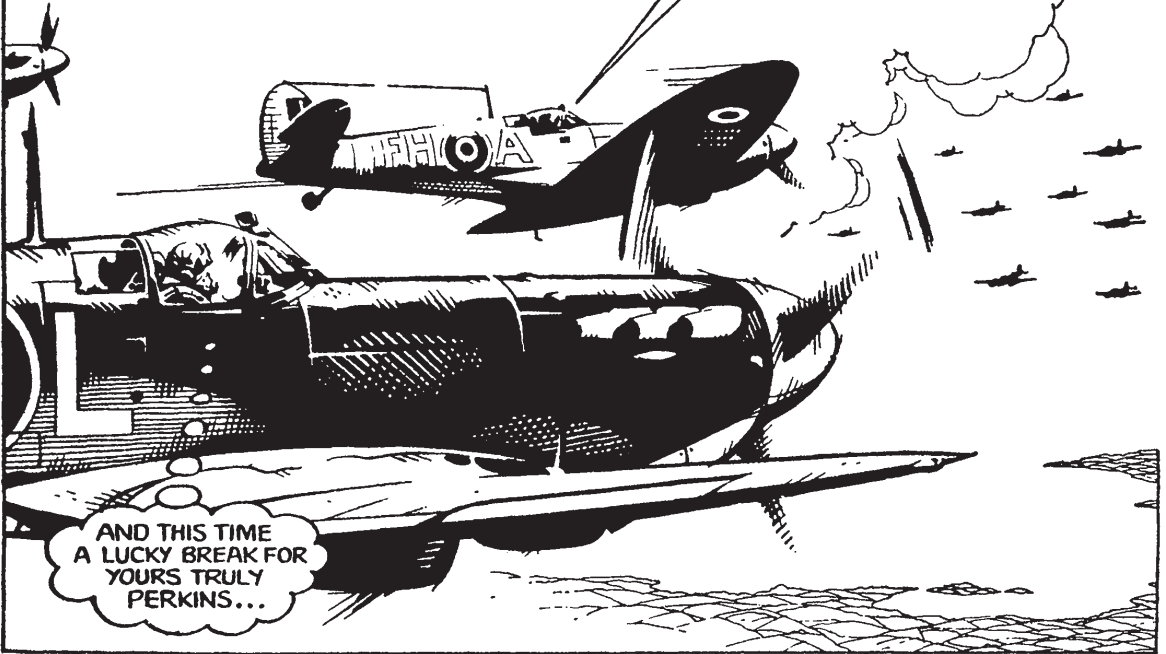
THANKS FOR
SPEAKING UP FOR
ME, SKIPPER...

JUST REMEMBER
THAT AS MY NUMBER
TWO YOU STAY RIGHT
WITH ME, PERKINS —
NO CHARGING OFF
ON YOUR OWN!



ABOVE DOVER, THEY MET A WAVE
OF THIRTY JUNKERS ESCORTED
BY MESSERSCHMITT FIGHTERS —
ON THEIR WAY TO BOMB LYPNE...

HORNET SQUADRON
BREAK AND ENGAGE.
BREAK NOW!



AND THIS TIME
A LUCKY BREAK FOR
YOURS TRULY
PERKINS...

AS THE SQUADRON-LEADER BANKED AND DROVE AT THE LEADING MESSERSCHMITT, PERKINS BANKED WITH HIM . . .

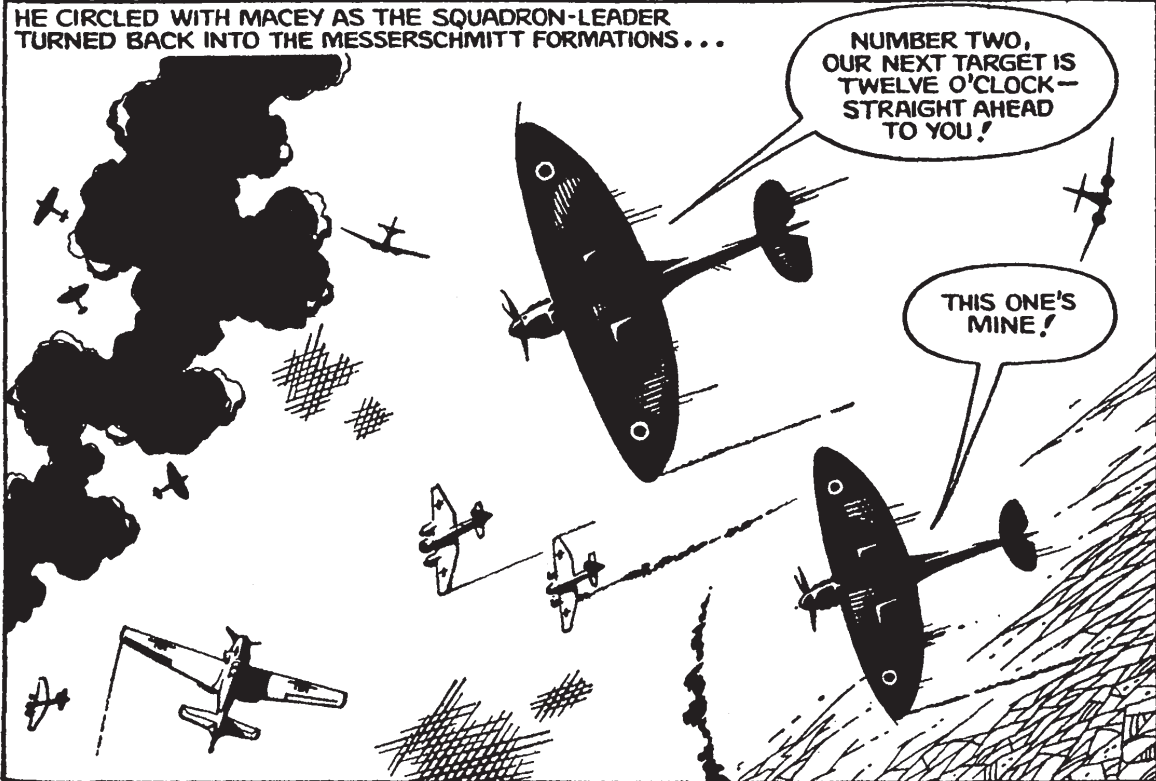
GOOD OLD SKIPPER — GOT HIM WITH THE FIRST BURST! MY TURN NEXT . . .



HE CIRCLED WITH MACEY AS THE SQUADRON-LEADER TURNED BACK INTO THE MESSERSCHMITT FORMATIONS . . .

NUMBER TWO, OUR NEXT TARGET IS TWELVE O'CLOCK — STRAIGHT AHEAD TO YOU!

THIS ONE'S MINE!



PERKINS OPENED HIS THROTTLE AND HIS PLANE SCREAMED ALONGSIDE SQUADRON-LEADER MACEY IN A DEADLY DOUBLE ATTACK ON THE PANIC-STRICKEN ME 109 . . .

THE BLIGHTER'S SIDE-SLIPPING US!

LOOK OUT, PERKINS, YOU'RE TOO CLOSE TO ME!

PERKINS DID NOT EVEN HEAR THE WARNING . . . A SUDDEN SHOCK SENT HIS PLANE SPINNING . . .

GOOD GRIEF! I'VE COLLIDED WITH THE SKIPPER!

PERKINS, YOU FLAMING IMBECILE!

THE CONTROL COLUMN WAS
JERKED OUT OF PERKINS'
HANDS AS HIS PLANE
NOSE-DIVED . . .

THE
SKIPPER'S
BALED OUT!

PERKINS
WILL NEVER
PULL OUT OF
THAT SPIN!

BUT A HUNDRED FEET ABOVE THE SEA, PERKINS,
WRESTLING WITH THE BUCKING CONTROL STICK,
LEVELLED OUT OF HIS DIVE . . .

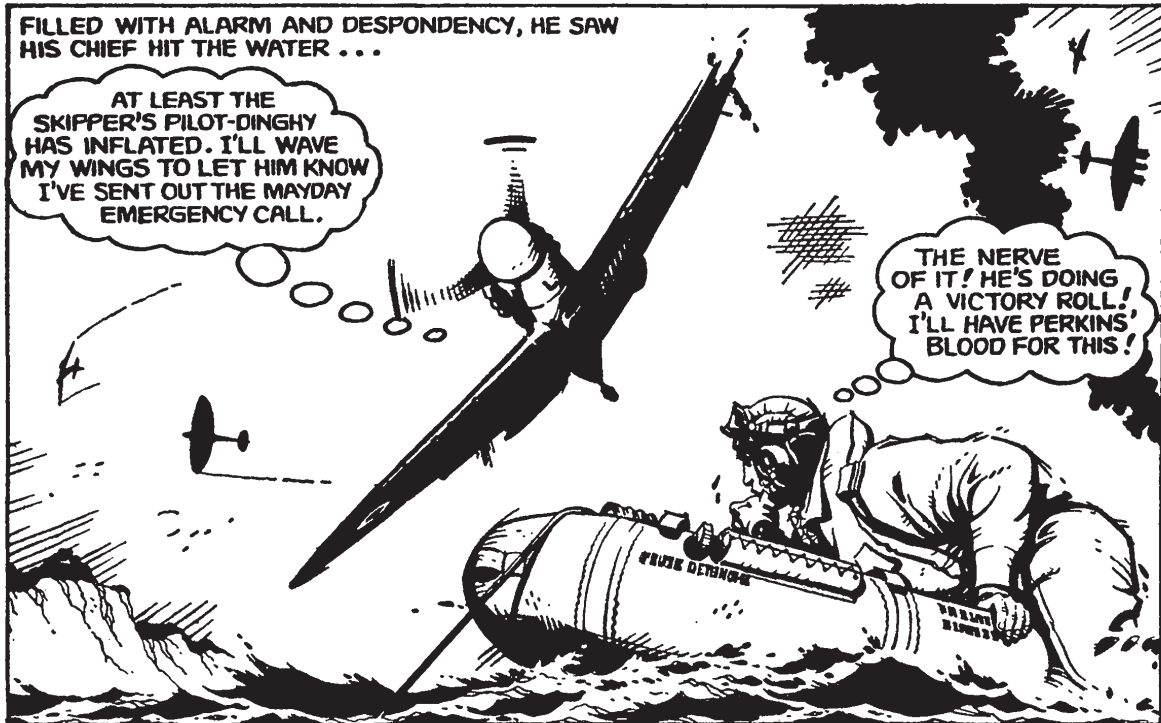
YOU PIN-HEAD —
YOU'RE NOT FIT TO
PILOT A FRAM!

HECK!
I'VE DONE IT
THIS TIME!

FILLED WITH ALARM AND DESPONDENCY, HE SAW HIS CHIEF HIT THE WATER . . .

AT LEAST THE SKIPPER'S PILOT-DINGHY HAS INFLATED. I'LL WAVE MY WINGS TO LET HIM KNOW I'VE SENT OUT THE MAYDAY EMERGENCY CALL.

THE NERVE OF IT! HE'S DOING A VICTORY ROLL! I'LL HAVE PERKINS' BLOOD FOR THIS!

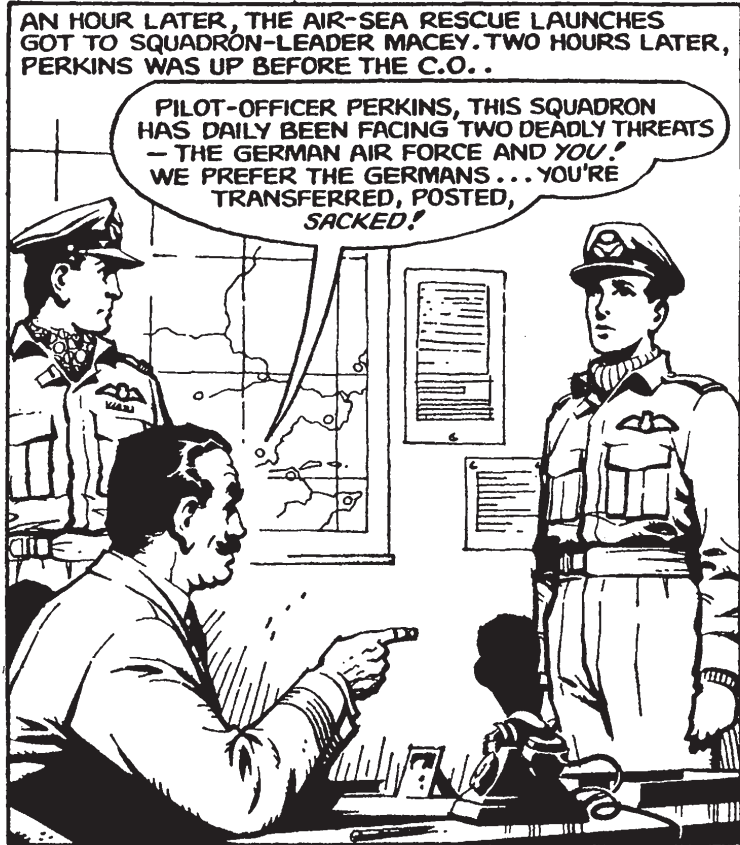


AN HOUR LATER, THE AIR-SEA RESCUE LAUNCHES GOT TO SQUADRON-LEADER MACEY. TWO HOURS LATER, PERKINS WAS UP BEFORE THE C.O. . .

PILOT-OFFICER PERKINS, THIS SQUADRON HAS DAILY BEEN FACING TWO DEADLY THREATS - THE GERMAN AIR FORCE AND YOU! WE PREFER THE GERMANS . . . YOU'RE TRANSFERRED, POSTED, SACKED!

SHATTERED TO THE CORE, PERKINS PACKED HIS KIT AND MOVED OFF . . .

SO I HAVE TO REPORT TO X-PLANES STATION? WHATEVER IT IS, I'M GOING TO PROVE SOMEHOW THAT I'M A GOOD PILOT . . .



HIS RAIL WARRANT TOOK HIM TO LINCOLNSHIRE, AND A COUNTRY BUS SET HIM DOWN OUTSIDE HIS NEW CAMP...



IS THIS X-PLANES STATION?

THAT'S ONE NAME FOR IT—WE CALL IT THE CEMETERY!

ABANDON HOPE
ALL YE WHO ENTER HERE

TRAFFIC
EX-PLANES
INDEPENDENT

PERKINS

INSIDE THE GATES PERKINS HALTED.



WHAT SORT OF A JUNK YARD IS THIS?

YOU SHOULDN'T SPEAK ILL OF THE DEAD, SIR... THESE ARE THE EX-PLANES—THEY LAID DOWN AND DIED YEARS AGO!

K
7074

Chapter 2. Chased by a Bomb!

FROM THE WEED-INFESTED RUNWAY TO THE RAMSHACKLE HUTS OF THE OFFICES BLOCK, THE DANK HAND OF DECAY HAD FALLEN UPON EX-PLANES AIR STATION . . .

WE'VE GOT FOUR WESTLAND WAPITIS, A HAWKER HORSLEY, THREE HART BOMBERS AND SEVERAL LIKE THIS VICKERS VICTORIA - A GOOD PLANE IN GEORGE THE FIFTH'S TIME!

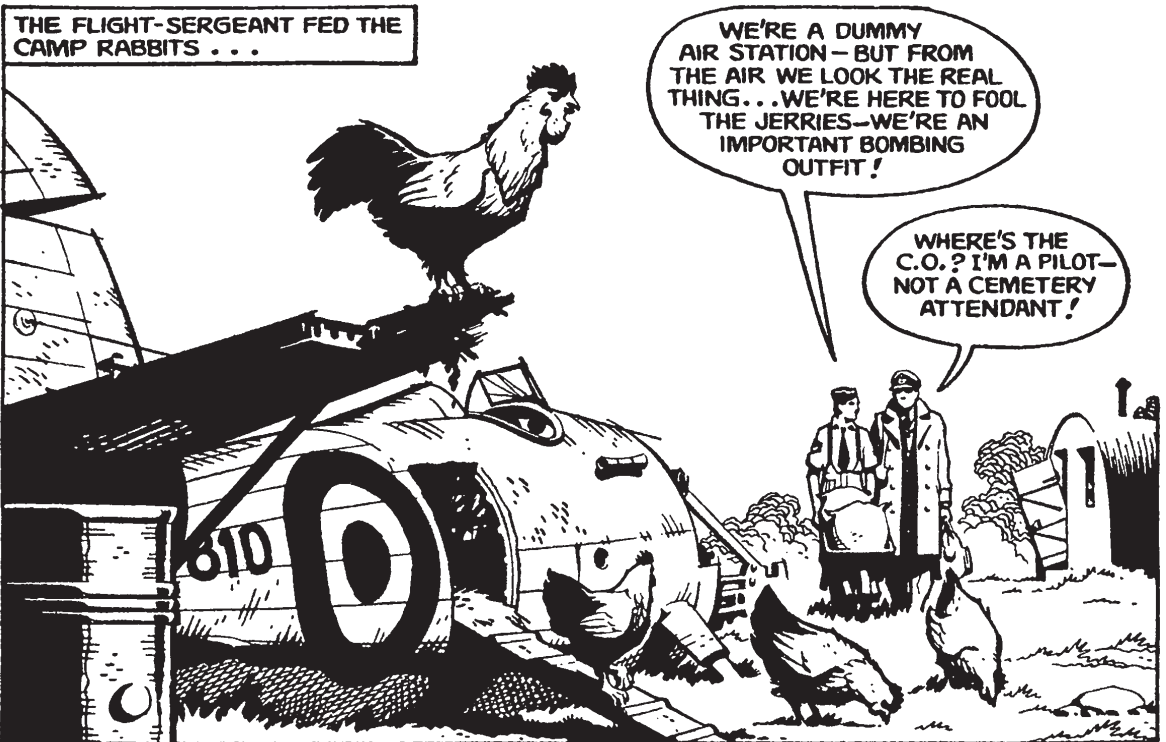
THIS DUMP ISN'T AN AIR STATION!



THE FLIGHT-SERGEANT FED THE CAMP RABBITS . . .

WE'RE A DUMMY AIR STATION - BUT FROM THE AIR WE LOOK THE REAL THING . . . WE'RE HERE TO FOOL THE JERRIES - WE'RE AN IMPORTANT BOMBING OUTFIT!

WHERE'S THE C.O.? I'M A PILOT - NOT A CEMETERY ATTENDANT!



PERKINS' INDIGNATION WAS WASTED. THE FLIGHT-SERGEANT WENT TO THE NEXT PLANE . . .

WE'RE WAITING FOR A NEW C.O. TO ARRIVE . . . SOME OFFICER CALLED PERKINS — ALWAYS HAVING ACCIDENTS — HE OUGHT TO FEEL AT HOME HERE!



I'M PERKINS!

THE STARTLED N.C.O. CAME TO ATTENTION . . .

JUST POINT OUT THE OFFICE — THE FIRST THING I DO IS ASK FOR A TRANSFER!



ARE YOU PERKINS? WELCOME TO MISERY FARM. FLIGHT... LEND A HAND WITH THIS LEWIS GUN I'VE JUST FOUND!

UNWILLINGLY, FOLEY TOOK CHARGE OF THE MACHINE-GUN . . .

MY NAME'S FLYNN . I'M HERE BECAUSE I GAVE FIVE-BOB JOY RIDES IN MY WELLINGTON . . . THE BUZZ SAYS YOU'RE HERE BECAUSE YOU'RE ACCIDENT PRONE!



NO APPLICATIONS FOR TRANSFER FROM THIS UNIT WILL BE CONSIDERED

SO WE'RE THROWN ON THE SCRAP HEAP!

THAT EVENING, FLYNN TRIED TO
CHEER PERKINS UP...



FROM ACROSS THE CAMP CAME THE
DRONING BEAT OF A POWERFUL MOTOR...



PERKINS STARTED ACROSS THE TARMAC...



THEY FOUND FOLEY IN
A HANGAR . . .

I'M
GETTING THESE
BATTERIES CHARGED—
ANYTHING YOU WANT,
MISTER PERKINS?

A PLANE THAT'S
A GOING CONCERN—
AND YOU TURN IT INTO
A DONKEY ENGINE! GET
THOSE BATTERIES OFF
IT— WE'LL MAKE
THIS PLANE FLY!



FOLEY WAS SHOCKED . . .

BUT IT'S A
WESTLAND WAPITI—A
GRANDAD OF A PLANE . . .
IT HASN'T LEFT THE
GROUND FOR
GENERATIONS!

FROM NOW ON IT'S
BACK IN SERVICE . . . UNHOOK
THAT DYNAMO, FOLEY— AND
NEVER MISUSE A WARPLANE
AGAIN!



THEY GOT THE WAPITI OUTSIDE THE HANGAR, AND WORKED ON ITS MOTOR, OVERHAULING AND TUNING, UNTIL THE MOON WAS UP . . .

SEE WHAT I MEAN, MISTER FLYNN? IT JUST REELS AROUND THE SKY!

WE'LL WORK ON IT TILL IT'S GOOD AS NEW AND ARM IT WITH THOSE OLD BOMBS IN THE STORES — WE'RE BACK IN THE WAR WITH OUR OWN BATTLE-PLANE, FOLEY!

SPURRED ON BY THE ENTHUSIASM OF PERKINS AND FLYNN, THE GROUND STAFF SPENT THE NEXT TWO DAYS WORKING ON THE WAPITI, RENOVATING THE EXTERNAL BOMB-RACKS . . .

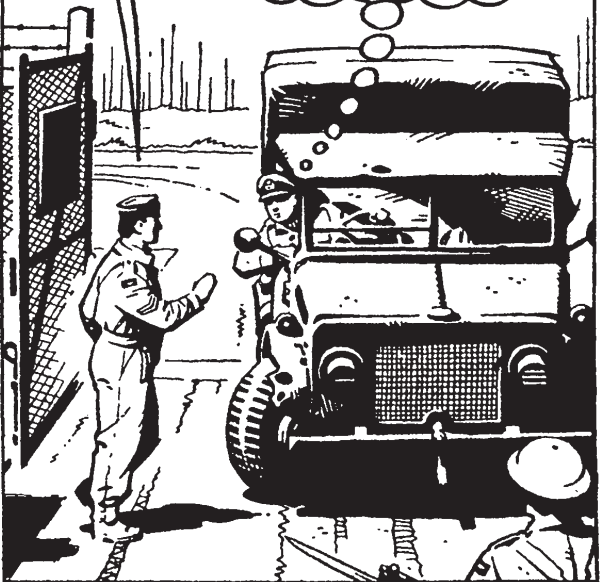
FIRST WE NEED A FUEL SUPPLY . . . THEN A TEST FLIGHT AND THEN WE'LL RAID THE FRENCH COAST!

I KNOW JUST THE JOB FOR US — WE'LL BOMB THE ARSENAL AT ST. GRINERE!

NEXT MORNING, PERKINS RUBBER-STAMPED AN OFFICIAL REQUISITION ORDER FOR HIGH OCTANE, AND TOOK THE CAMP'S BEST TRUCK TO A DISTANT R.A.F. DEPOT.

GOT A PASS, SIR?

THEY'D NEVER GIVE ME FUEL IF THEY KNEW IT WAS FOR A WAPITI. I'VE GOT TO BLUFF 'EM!



THE CORPORAL WAS IMPRESSED WITH ALL THE CAREFULLY FRANKED DOCUMENTS PERKINS HAD BROUGHT WITH HIM AND LET HIM THROUGH TO THE STORES AREA . . .

YOU WANT FUEL AND OIL FOR EX-PLANES EXPERIMENTAL STATION — NEVER HEARD OF IT!

KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN, SERGEANT—IT'S TOP SECRET!



THE SERGEANT HANDED THE FORMS BACK TO PERKINS . . .

YOU'RE NOT IN OUR AREA FOR FUEL, SIR... BUT IF IT'S FOR A SPECIAL JOB WE'LL SEE YOU GET IT FIRST THING TOMORROW!

THE WAPITI FLIES AGAIN!



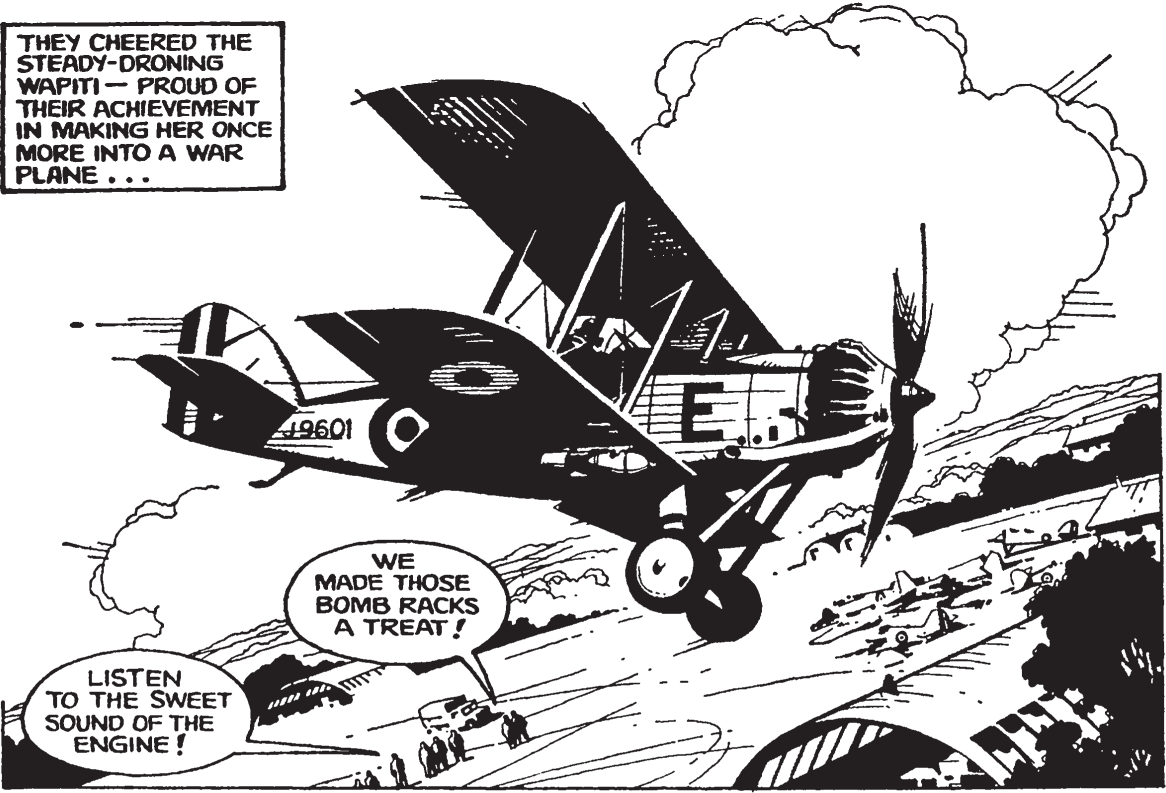
WHEN HE GOT BACK TO CAMP THAT AFTERNOON THE ENTIRE GROUND STAFF WERE LINED UP . . .

WHAT ARE YOU PARADING FOR? WHAT'S UP?

MISTER FLYNN — IN THE WAPITI! THERE WAS JUST ENOUGH FUEL FOR A SHORT TEST FLIGHT WITH THE BOMBS ON BOARD!



THEY CHEERED THE STEADY-DRONING WAPITI — PROUD OF THEIR ACHIEVEMENT IN MAKING HER ONCE MORE INTO A WAR PLANE . . .



WE MADE THOSE BOMB RACKS A TREAT!

LISTEN TO THE SWEET SOUND OF THE ENGINE!

FLYNN, AIRBORNE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MONTHS, HAD SEEN PERKINS' ARRIVAL . . .



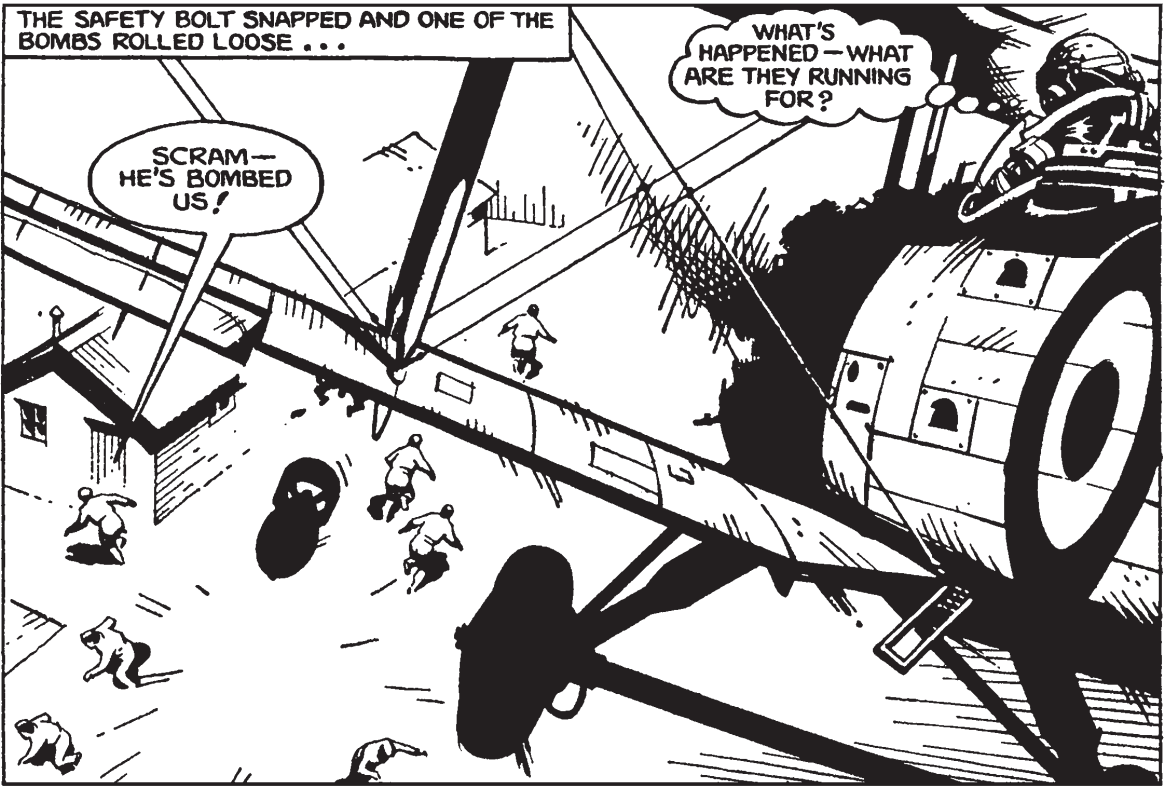
I'LL SHOW OLD PERK HOW WELL THE WAPITI CAN FLY — WONDER WHAT THEY'RE SAYING!

LOOK OUT — ONE OF THE BOMB RACKS IS GIVING WAY!

THE SAFETY BOLT SNAPPED AND ONE OF THE BOMBS ROLLED LOOSE . . .

WHAT'S HAPPENED—WHAT ARE THEY RUNNING FOR?

SCRAM—HE'S BOMBED US!



THE GROUND CREW DISAPPEARED INTO LONG-PREPARED SLIT-TRENCHES, BUT PERKINS, NEW TO THE CAMP, MADE FOR THE STURDIEST SHELTER HE COULD SEE . . .

THIS IS IT—IT'S CHASING ME!

PERK HAS HAD IT!



Chapter 3.

Under Arrest!

HE HEARD A GRINDING CRUNCH...



FLYNN, SHOCKED AT THE MISHAP, LANDED THE PLANE AND JOINED PERKINS IN THE WRECKED H.Q.



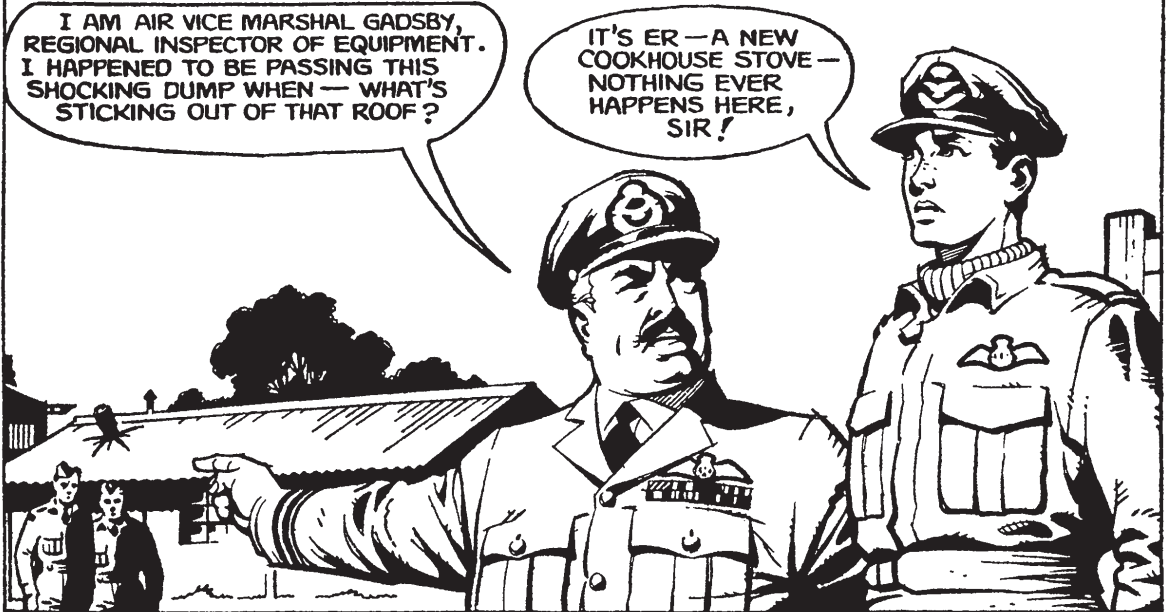
BUT HELP FROM OUTSIDE WAS THE LAST THING THEY COULD ASK . . .



PERKINS HURRIEDLY ABANDONED HIS TASK OF DE-FUSING THE BOMB . . .



NEVER IN HIS LONG CAREER HAD THE AIR MARSHAL SEEN A CAMP WHICH DISGUSTED HIM MORE . . .



AT THAT MOMENT THE BOMB BLEW UP...



BLAST DOES STRANGE THINGS. BUT THIS BLAST DID A STRAIGHTFORWARD JOB ON THE CAMP AND ALL IN IT. EVERYWHERE WRECKAGE WAS PILED ON WRECKAGE...



THE ANGRY AIR VICE MARSHAL DROVE OFF IN HIS BATTERED CAR AS FLYNN CAME UP . . .



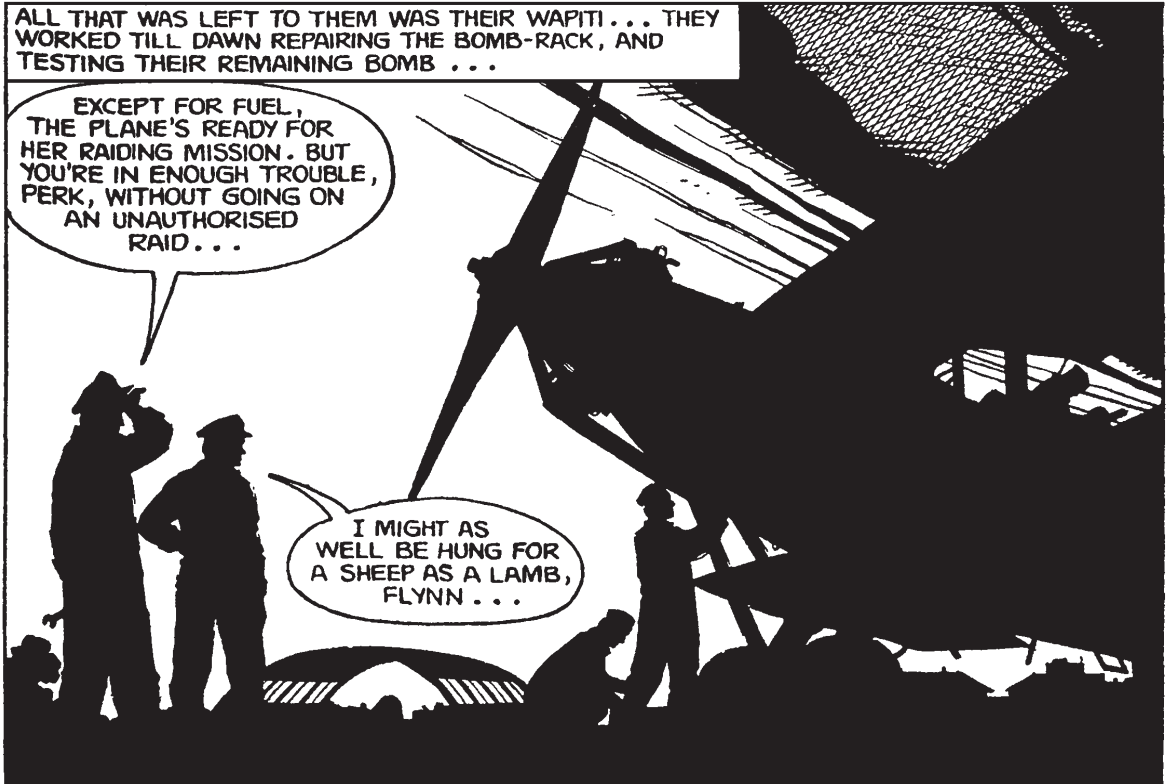
IT LOOKS LIKE WE'VE HAD IT, FLYNN — THE AUTHORITIES WILL HAVE IT IN FOR US NOW!

BUT THE WAPITI'S SAFE — I HID IT BEHIND THAT RISING GROUND AND THE BLAST MISSED IT!

ALL THAT WAS LEFT TO THEM WAS THEIR WAPITI . . . THEY WORKED TILL DAWN REPAIRING THE BOMB-RACK, AND TESTING THEIR REMAINING BOMB . . .

EXCEPT FOR FUEL, THE PLANE'S READY FOR HER RAIDING MISSION. BUT YOU'RE IN ENOUGH TROUBLE, PERK, WITHOUT GOING ON AN UNAUTHORISED RAID . . .

I MIGHT AS WELL BE HUNG FOR A SHEEP AS A LAMB, FLYNN . . .



PERKINS WAS EXPECTING A VISIT FROM THE AIR MARSHAL'S STAFF AT ANY MOMENT. AS C.O. OF THE WRECKED CAMP, HE DID NOT BELIEVE HE WOULD EVER GET ANOTHER CHANCE OF FLYING IN THE R.A.F..



IF THE FUEL TRUCK ARRIVES BEFORE I'M CARTED OFF UNDER GUARD, WE'LL CARRY OUT THE RAID AS PLANNED!

THE CHAP FROM THE FUEL DEPOT'S HERE NOW, SIR!

BUT IT WAS NOT A FUEL TANK . . .



SORRY, BUT WE DON'T ALLOW VISITORS HERE!

I'M SORRY, TOO - BUT YOU GUYS ARE UNDER ARREST FOR BLOWING UP AN AIR VICE MARSHAL!



GLOOMILY, THEY LED THEIR ESCORT OFFICER TO WHAT REMAINED OF THE STATION MESS . . .

I'LL WAIT WHILE YOU PACK UP—MY ORDERS ARE TO TAKE YOU BACK TO AREA COMMAND!

IT LOOKS LIKE THIS TIME OUR GOOSE IS COOKED!



THEY WENT TO THEIR QUARTERS AND PACKED THEIR KIT . . .

IF ONLY THE FUEL FOR THE WAPITI HAD ARRIVED!

A FUEL TRUCK FROM THE DEPOT HAS JUST FUELLED UP THE WAPITI!

THEY THOUGHT OF THE COURT OF INQUIRY OVER THE STRICKEN CAMP, AND THEN THE COURT MARTIAL . . .

AFTER WHAT WE'VE DONE, WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE IF WE GO ON A BOMBING MISSION BEFORE WE'RE ARRESTED?

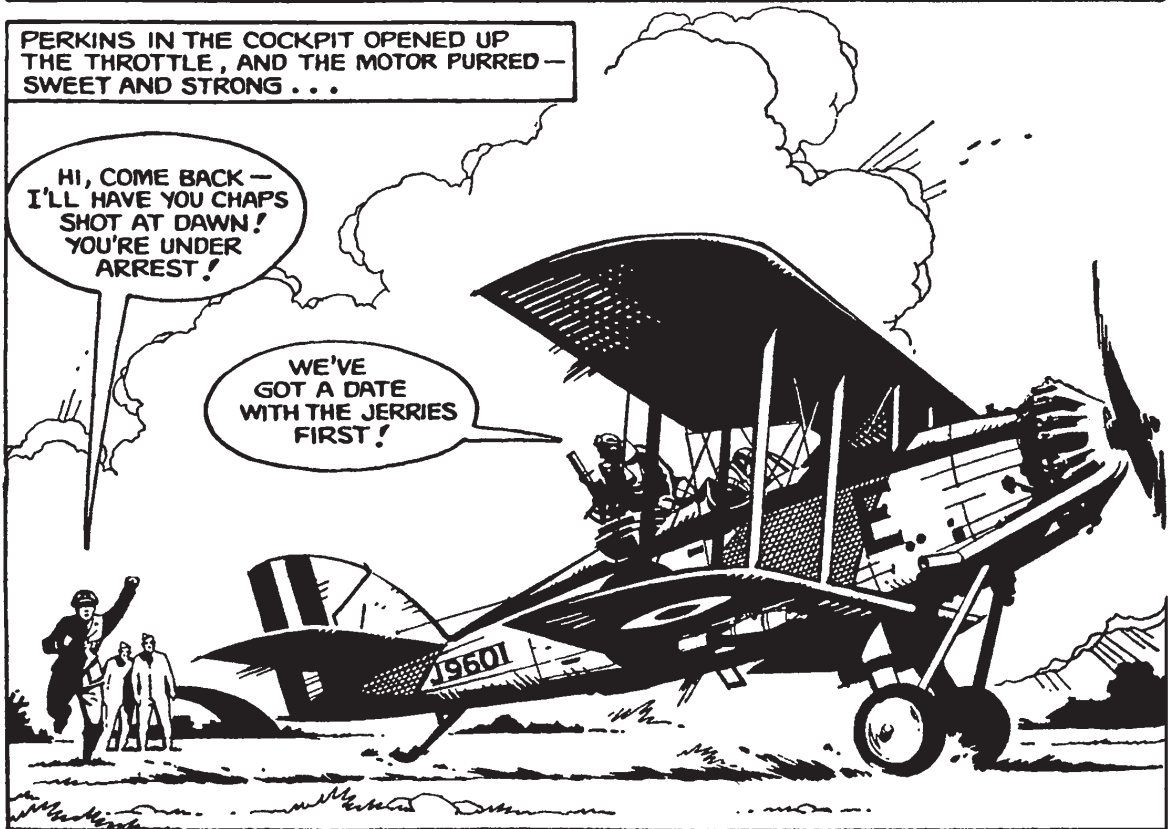


ONCE YOU'VE BLOWN UP AN AIR MARSHAL—NOTHING MATTERS—LET'S GO!

THEY GRABBED THEIR FLYING KIT AND SCRAMBLED OUT OF THE WINDOW . . .



PERKINS IN THE COCKPIT OPENED UP THE THROTTLE, AND THE MOTOR PURRED — SWEET AND STRONG . . .



Chapter 4.

Unofficial Air Raid

HEADING EAST, PERKINS CROSSED THE COAST
AT SIX THOUSAND FEET . . .

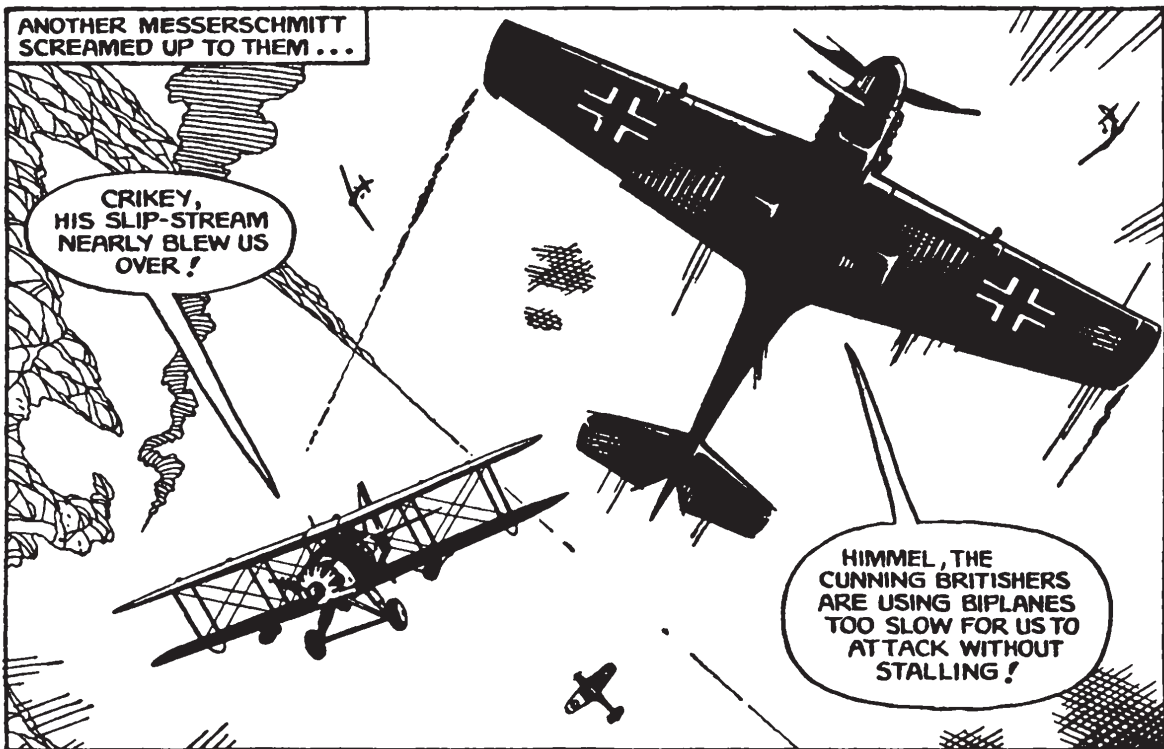
HURRICANES
AHEAD!

THEY'RE
NOT! THEY'RE
ME. 109'S!

THEN THEY REALISED THAT A
HURRICANE SQUADRON WAS
FLYING TO INTERCEPT A
RAIDING FORCE OF ENEMY
FIGHTERS . . .

NOW'S YOUR
CHANCE WITH THE
LEWIS GUN, FLYNN—
WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE
OF A DOG-FIGHT!

WE'RE
SO BLOOMING
SLOW, I CAN'T GET
LINED UP ON A
TARGET!



ANOTHER MESSERSCHMITT SCREAMED UP TO THEM ...

CRUIKEY,
HIS SLIP-STREAM
NEARLY BLEW US
OVER !

HIMMEL, THE
CUNNING BRITISHERS
ARE USING BIPLANES
TOO SLOW FOR US TO
ATTACK WITHOUT
STALLING !

ONE MOMENT THE DARTING PLANES WERE ALL ROUND THEM, AND THEN, AS IF BY MAGIC, THE SKY WAS CLEAR ...



WHY,
THEY'VE ALL
GONE !

LOOK, PERK,
WE'RE OVER THE
FRENCH COAST !



THEY MIGHT BE TOO SLOW FOR THE GERMAN FIGHTER PLANES, BUT THEY LOOKED EASY MEAT TO THE GROUND DEFENCES ...

FLAK - AND
I CAN'T CLIMB
ANY HIGHER !

TRY DROPPING
A FEW THOUSAND
FEET - THAT'LL MAKE
US A HARDER
TARGET !

IT WAS THEIR BEST CHANCE, AND PERKINS
LEVELLED OUT AT FOUR HUNDRED FEET...

BY JINGO — THAT'S
ST. GRINERE AND THE
NAVY'S HAVING A CRACK
AT THE JERRY
SHIPPING!

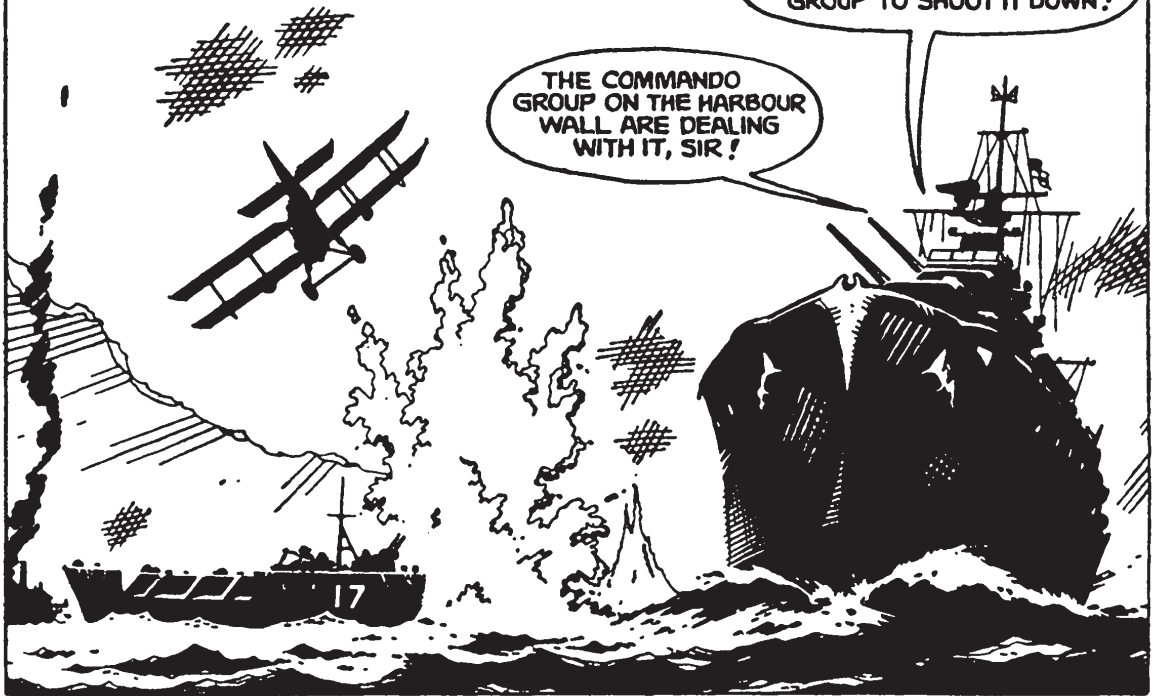
THEY'RE LANDING
COMMANDOS ON THE
BEACH! WE'VE PICKED
THE RIGHT DAY FOR OUR
OUTING, PERK!



THE CAPTAIN OF A BRITISH DESTROYER LOOKED SKYWARDS — HE HAD NEVER SEEN A WAPITI BEFORE...

THE ENEMY HAVE A NEW TYPE OF OBSERVER PLANE STOOGING AROUND — ORDER OUR R.A.F. GROUP TO SHOOT IT DOWN!

THE COMMANDO GROUP ON THE HARBOUR WALL ARE DEALING WITH IT, SIR!



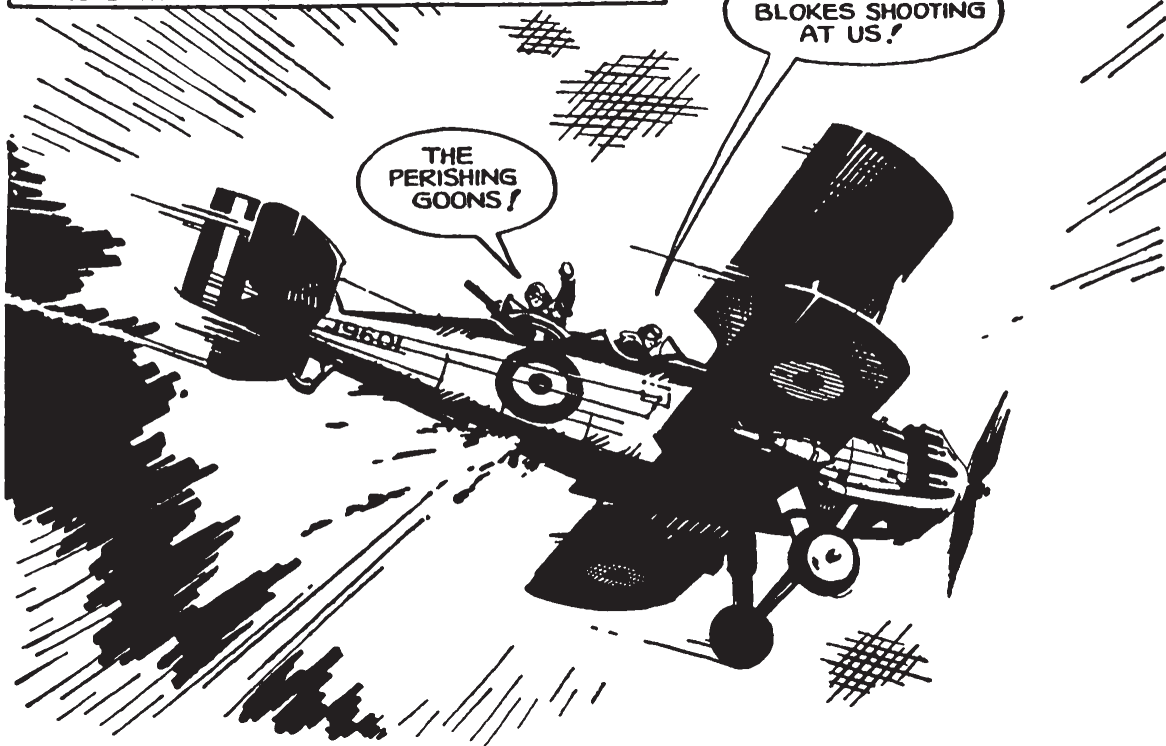
BRITISH RAIDERS ON THE GROUYNE HAD ASSEMBLED A BREN GUN TO HOLD ONE WING OF THE HARBOUR ...

IT MUST BE TAKING AERIAL PHOTOS, BERT — SHOOT IT DOWN!

I CAN'T MISS!



THE WAPITI LURCHED AS A STREAM OF LEAD
PIERCED THE FUSELAGE AND THE WING FABRIC . . .



THE
PERISHING
GOONS!

IT'S OUR OWN
BLOKES SHOOTING
AT US!

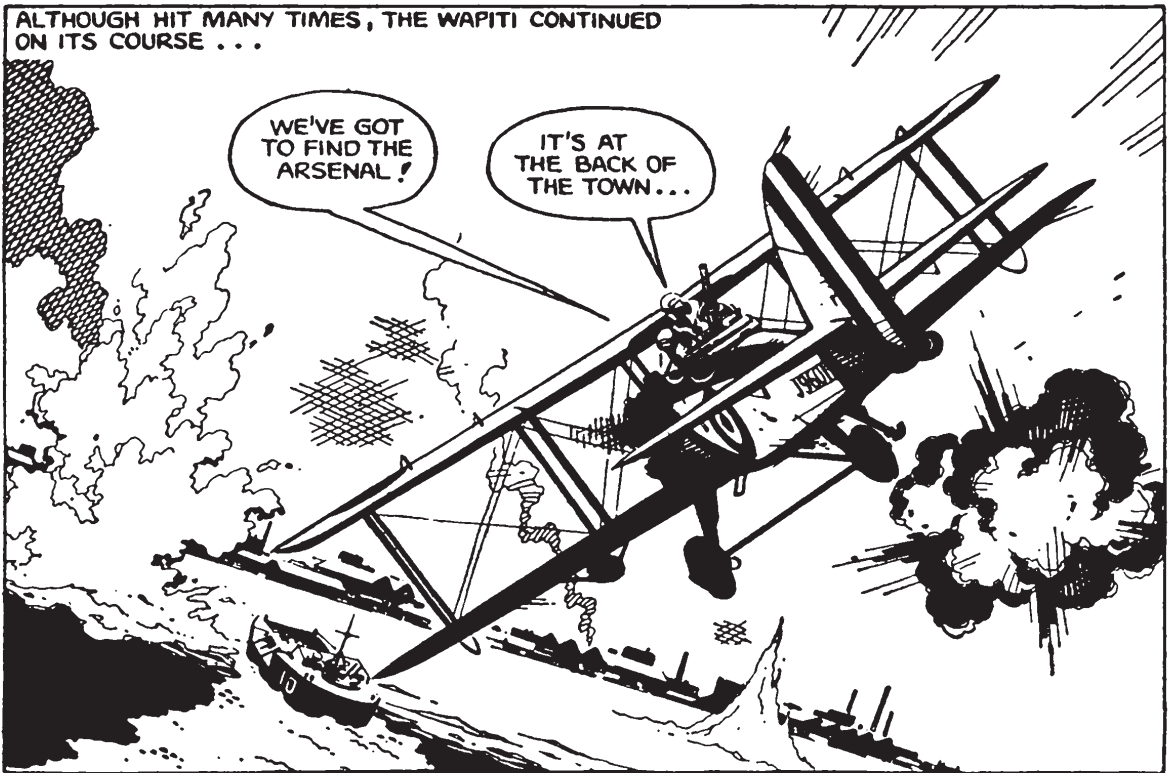
THE WAPITI STAGGERED, LOST HEIGHT AND THEN
RECOVERED . . .



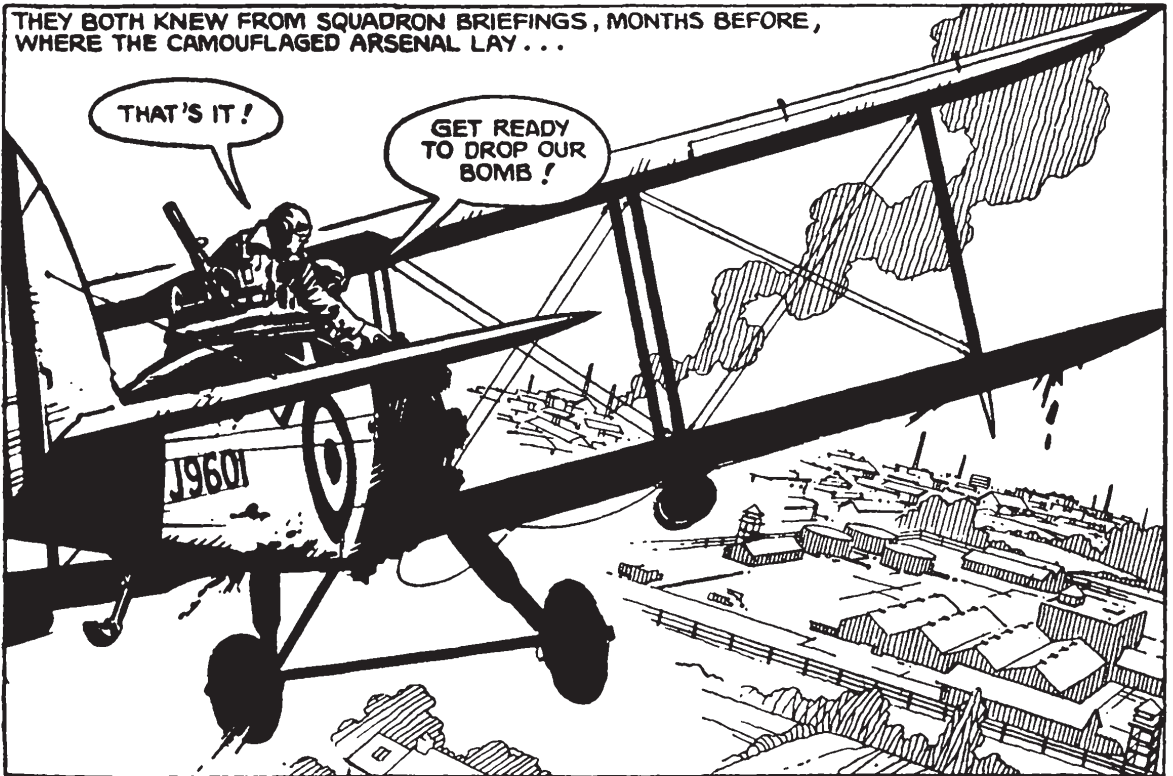
WHAT CRAZY
STUNT IS THIS? THAT
BIPLANE IS BRITISH!

THE
TARLTON HAS
MADE IT, SIR —
SHE'S SAILED INTO
THE HARBOUR!

ALTHOUGH HIT MANY TIMES, THE WAPITI CONTINUED ON ITS COURSE . . .



THEY BOTH KNEW FROM SQUADRON BRIEFINGS, MONTHS BEFORE, WHERE THE CAMOUFLAGED ARSENAL LAY . . .



PERKINS PUT THE WAPITI IN A SHALLOW DIVE TOWARDS THEIR TARGET . . .



HURRY UP, FLYNN — WE'RE OVER THE ARSENAL NOW!

THE FLIPPING BOLT'S STUCK—I'VE PULLED THE RELEASE AND NOTHING'S HAPPENED!

THE DRONING WAPITI, WITH THE BOMB OBSTINATELY CLINGING TO ITS CRADLE, LEFT THE ARSENAL BEHIND . . .



I'LL TRY ANOTHER RUN IN FROM THE HARBOUR SIDE!

I CAN'T MAKE OUT WHAT'S HOLDING THE BOMB!

AS PERKINS SWUNG OUT OVER THE HARBOUR, THE WAPITI JERKED SUDDENLY UPWARDS . . .

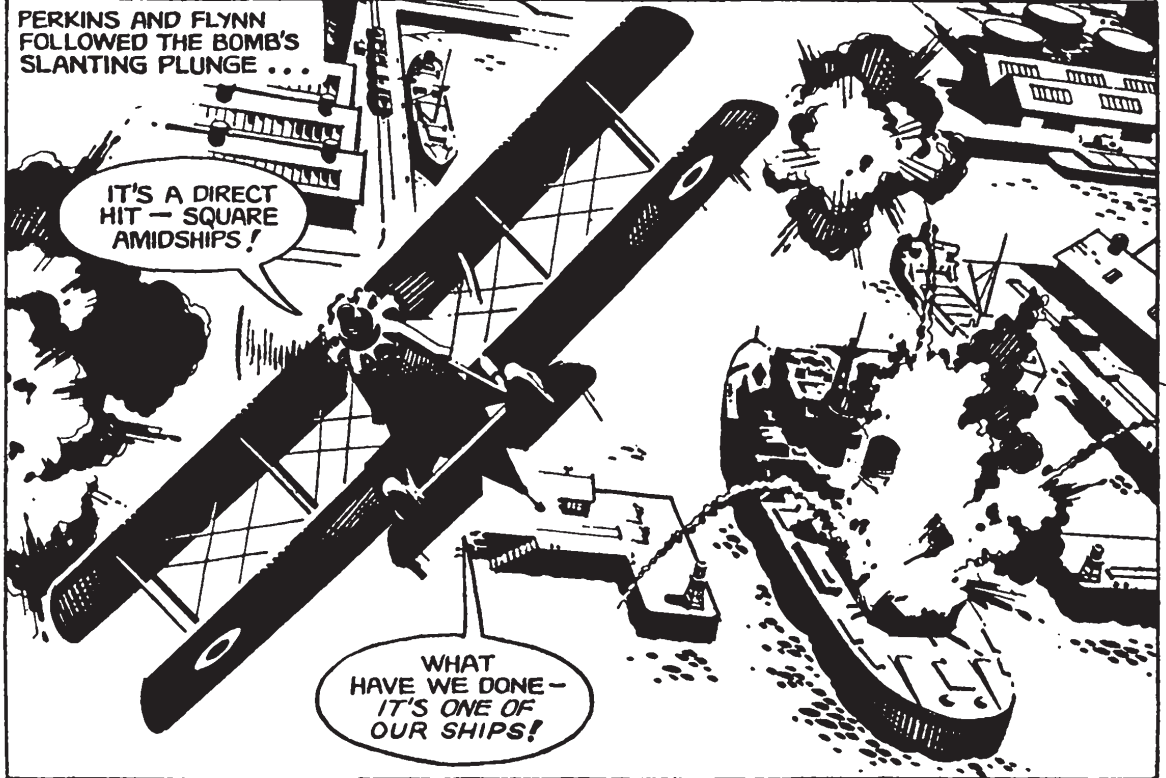


THE BOMB'S GONE! THE BOLT SUDDENLY BROKE AND I COULDN'T STOP IT!

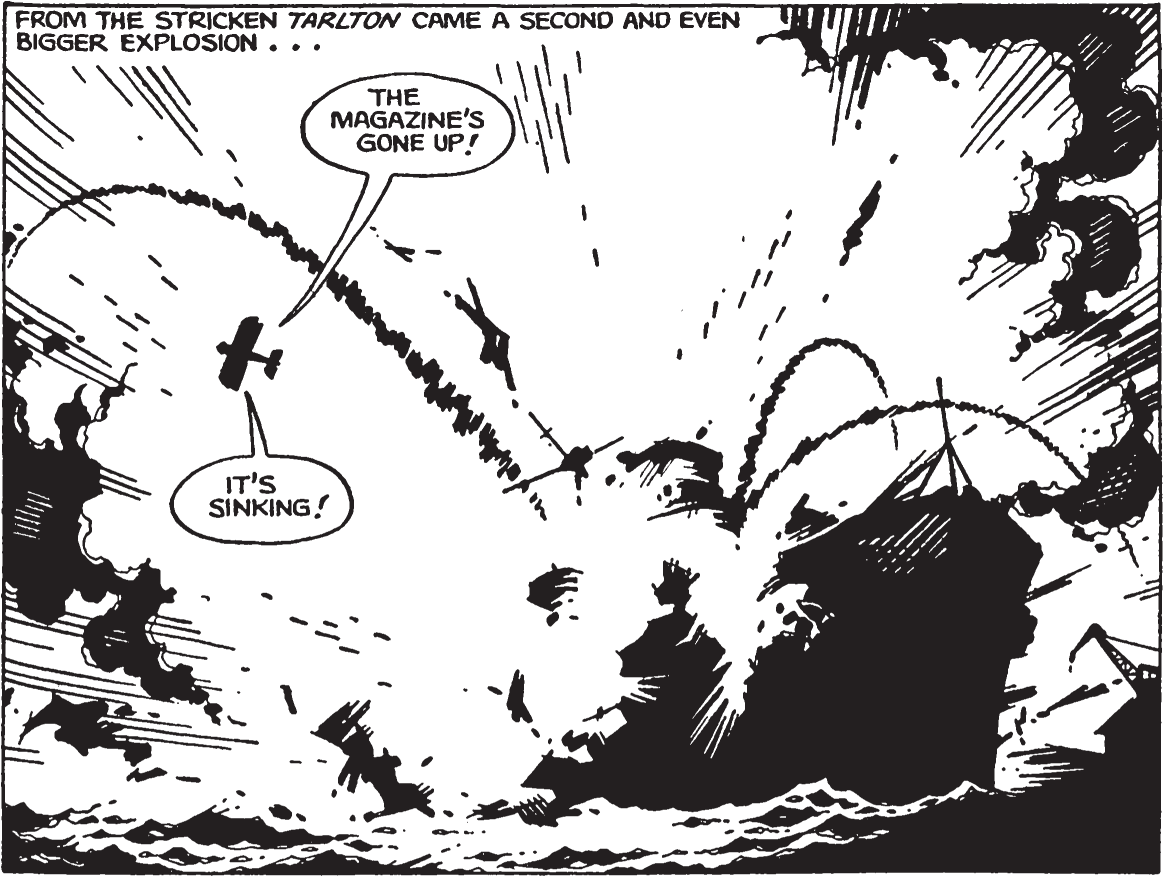
THE FLOTILLA COMMANDER OF THE BRITISH RAIDERS
COULD NOT BELIEVE HIS EYES . . .



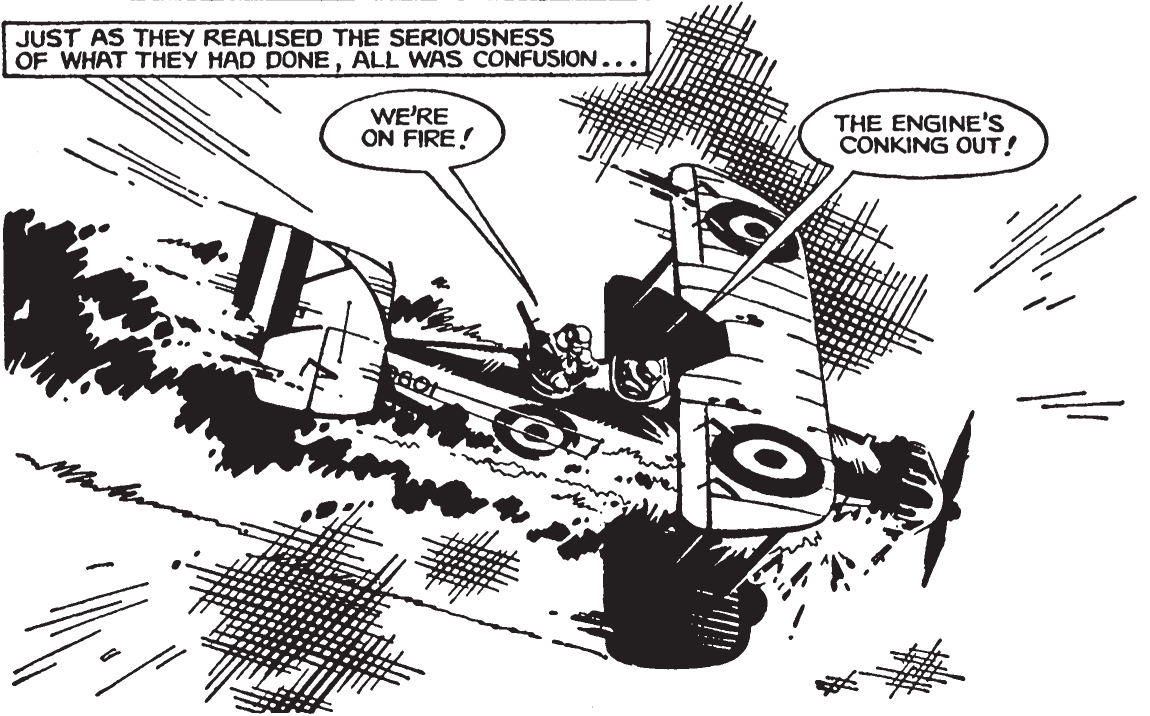
PERKINS AND FLYNN
FOLLOWED THE BOMB'S
SLANTING PLUNGE . . .



FROM THE STRICKEN *TARLTON* CAME A SECOND AND EVEN BIGGER EXPLOSION . . .



JUST AS THEY REALISED THE SERIOUSNESS OF WHAT THEY HAD DONE, ALL WAS CONFUSION . . .



Chapter 5.

The Escape

PERKINS NEVER KNEW HOW HE LANDED THE WAPITI, OR HOW HE AND FLYNN MANAGED TO SCRAMBLE FROM THE WRECKAGE . . .



THEY MADE FOR COVER . . .



PERKINS AND FLYNN FOUND THEMSELVES COLLARED AND DRAGGED INTO THE BUSHES . . .

TAISEZ-VOUS !
WE ARE THE MAQUIS -
WE ARE FRIENDS !

PICK OFF THE
BOCHES AS THEY
COME !



THE GERMAN PATROL WAS BEATEN OFF, AND THE TWO BRITISH FUGITIVES WERE TAKEN TO A HIDE-OUT...

I AM LE FEVRE -
WHEN THE MOON WANES
IN TWO NIGHTS A BRITISH
PLANE WILL COME . IT CAN
TAKE YOU HOME TO
ENGLAND . . .

WE'RE OUTCASTS,
LE FEVRE . WE'D
SOONER STAY HERE
AND FIGHT, AND TRY
TO MAKE UP FOR
THE HARM WE'VE
CAUSED !



THE TWO AIRMEN HAD NO WISH TO RETURN TO ENGLAND FOR THEY WOULD BE COURT-MARTIALLED ON SEVERAL CHARGES ... INCLUDING, FINALLY, THAT OF SINKING A BRITISH SHIP!

THAT NIGHT THEY WERE RECEIVED INTO
THE MAQUIS . . .

YOU WILL GET YOUR
CHANCE TO SERVE YOUR
COUNTRY, MES AMIS... OUR
TASK NOW IS TO RESCUE
OTHER BRITISH SOLDIERS!

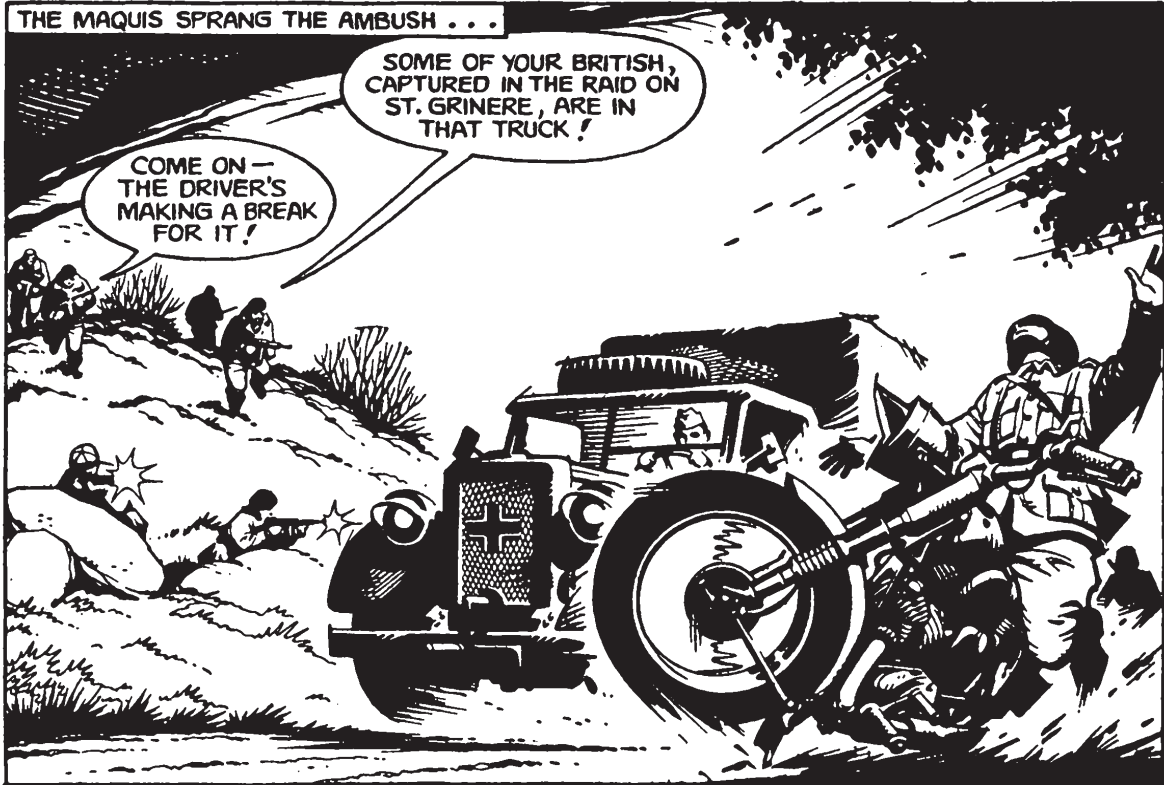
THE GERMANS
ARE COMING,
LE FEVRE!



THE MAQUIS SPRANG THE AMBUSH . . .

SOME OF YOUR BRITISH,
CAPTURED IN THE RAID ON
ST. GRINERE, ARE IN
THAT TRUCK!

COME ON —
THE DRIVER'S
MAKING A BREAK
FOR IT!



THE TWO BRITONS TUMBLED DOWN THE HILLSIDE TO INTERCEPT THE TRUCK . . .



GET THE DRIVER, FLYNN!

FLYNN SWITCHED THE TOMMY GUN FOR SINGLE SHOTS . . .



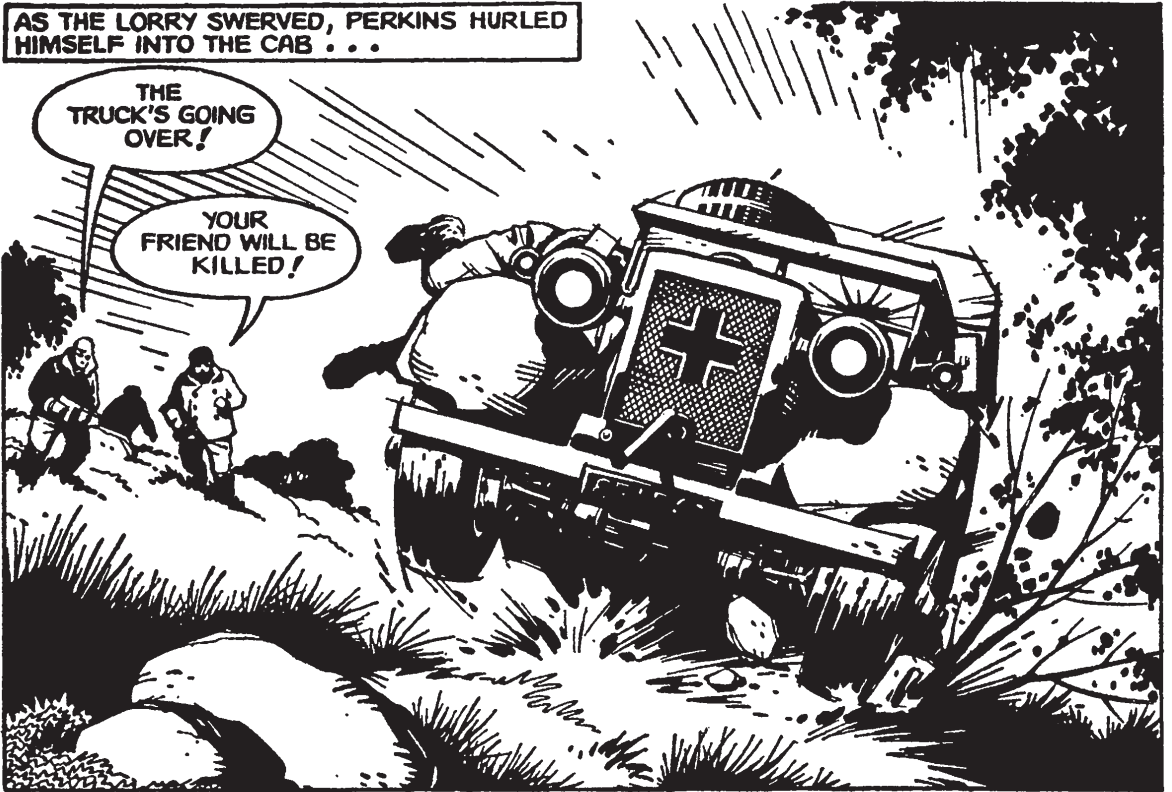
IF THE TRUCK TURNS OVER, HOW MANY MORE BRITISH WILL BE KILLED BECAUSE OF ME?

I'VE GOT TO GET ABOARD— AND QUICK!

AS THE LORRY SWERVED, PERKINS HURLED HIMSELF INTO THE CAB . . .

THE TRUCK'S GOING OVER!

YOUR FRIEND WILL BE KILLED!



PERKINS HAULED WITH ALL HIS MIGHT ON THE HAND-BRAKE IN AN EFFORT TO STALL THE ENGINE . . .

HE'S MANAGED IT!

GET YOUR FRIENDS OUT OF THE TRUCK BEFORE IT IS ON FIRE!





PERKINS CLAMBERED STIFFLY FROM THE DRIVING CAB, AS DAZED BRITISH PRISONERS WERE RELEASED FROM THE BACK . . .

WE'RE MUCH OBLIGED . . . YOU'VE SAVED EIGHT OF US AND A BADLY WOUNDED CHAP FROM DYING IN A GERMAN PRISON CAMP!

WE MUST HIDE YOU TILL THE PLANE FROM ENGLAND ARRIVES HERE!



THE RESCUED PRISONERS WERE TAKEN TO A FARM HIDE-OUT OF THE RESISTANCE MOVEMENT . . .

SO YOU CHAPS WERE SHOT DOWN IN THE RAID ON ST. GRINERE? MY LADS LANDED AND BLEW UP THE ARSENAL BEFORE WE WERE CAPTURED!

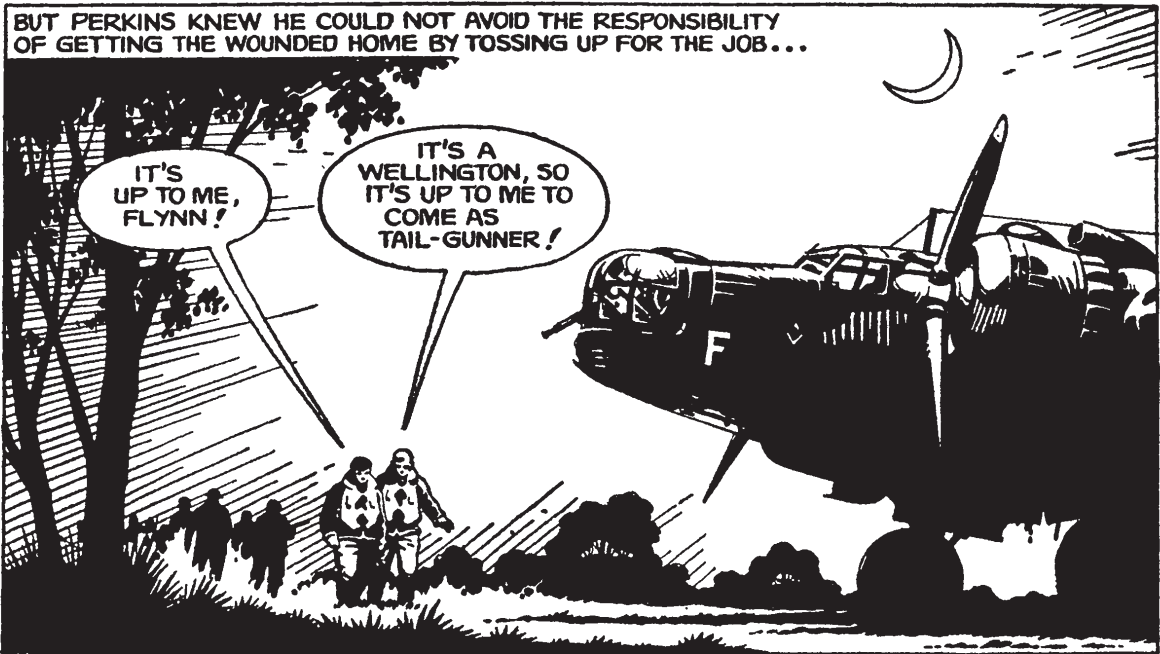
THE COLONEL DOESN'T GUESS HOW WORSE - THAN - USELESS WE'VE BEEN!



AT TWO A.M. THE DOOR BURST OPEN . . .

THE PLANE IS HERE - BUT THE PILOT IS BADLY WOUNDED!

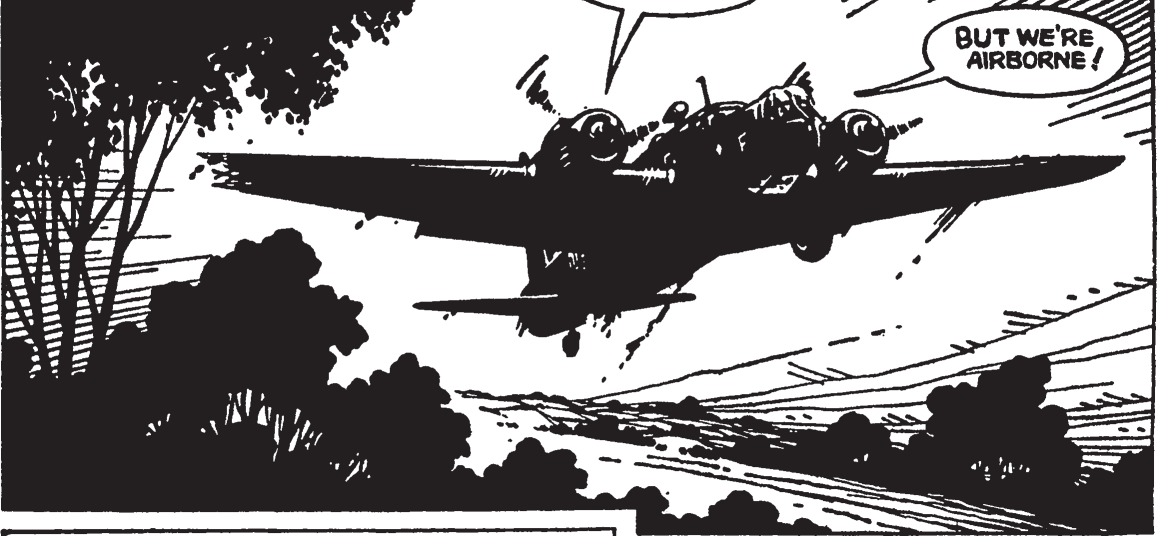
IT WAS FLAK OVER THE COAST - I THINK THE PLANE CAN JUST ABOUT MAKE IT BACK TO ENGLAND!



WITH HIS PASSENGERS ABOARD, AND THE UNFAMILIAR PLANE LABOURING INTO THE AIR, PERKINS KNEW THIS WAS GOING TO BE THE HARDEST FLYING JOB HE HAD UNDERTAKEN...

THIS PLANE'S A CRIPPLE, PERK!

BUT WE'RE AIRBORNE!



GERMAN BATTERIES OPENED FIRE AS THE LIMPING REFUGEE PLANE CROSSED THE COAST...

THE SEARCHLIGHTS MOMENTARILY BLINDED PERKINS...

ENEMY PLANES ARE COMING UP FAST BEHIND US, PERKS!

KEEP FIRING!

LUFTWAFFE INTERCEPTION... ACHTUNG... YES, A LONE BRITISH BOMBER!

I'LL TRY TO LOSE THE LIGHTS!





HE SET THE WELLINGTON IN A DIVE SO STEEP THE MOTORS NEARLY STOPPED ...

HOW'S THE MARINE OFFICER, CORPORAL?

STILL UNCONSCIOUS, SIR!



PERKINS HAD EVADED THE LIGHTS - BUT NOT THE GERMAN NIGHT FIGHTERS, ALERTED BY THEIR COASTAL BATTERIES ...

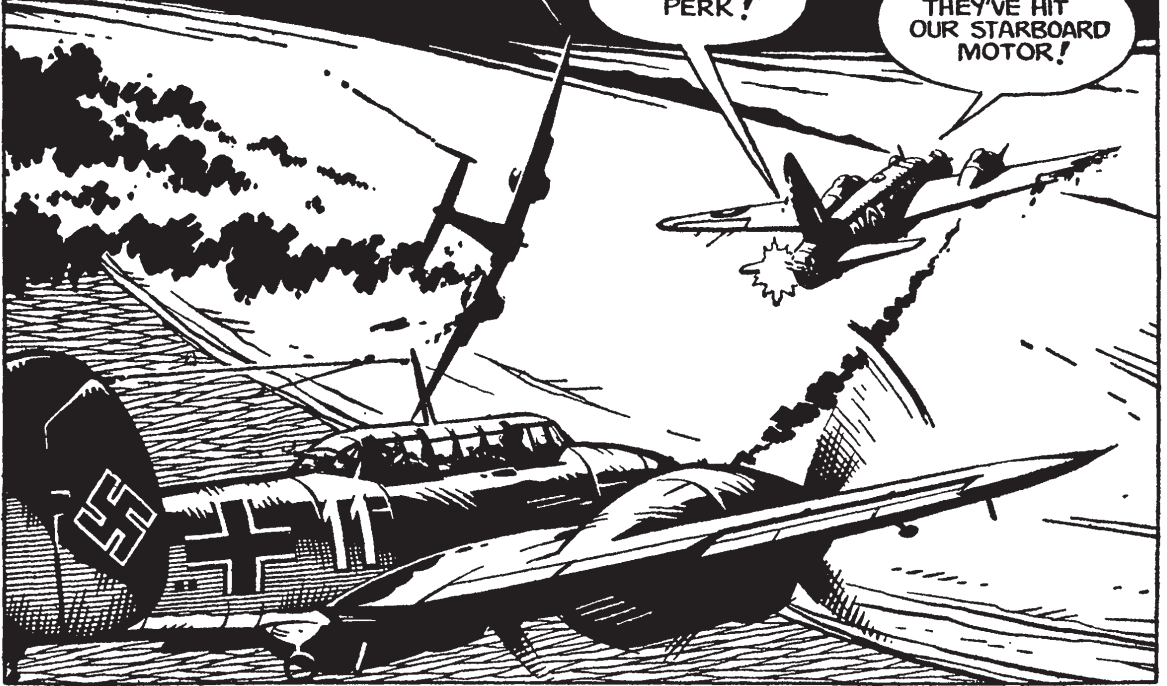
THIS IS WORSE THAN THE SEARCHLIGHTS!

HALLO, FRITZ ... THE BRITISHER IS AN EASY TARGET - FOLLOW ME - I WILL ATTACK NOW!

LIKE HAWKS ON THEIR PREY THE GERMANS SWOOPED, AND FLYNN IN HIS GUN TURRET OPENED FIRE . . .

I'VE GOT ONE, PERK!

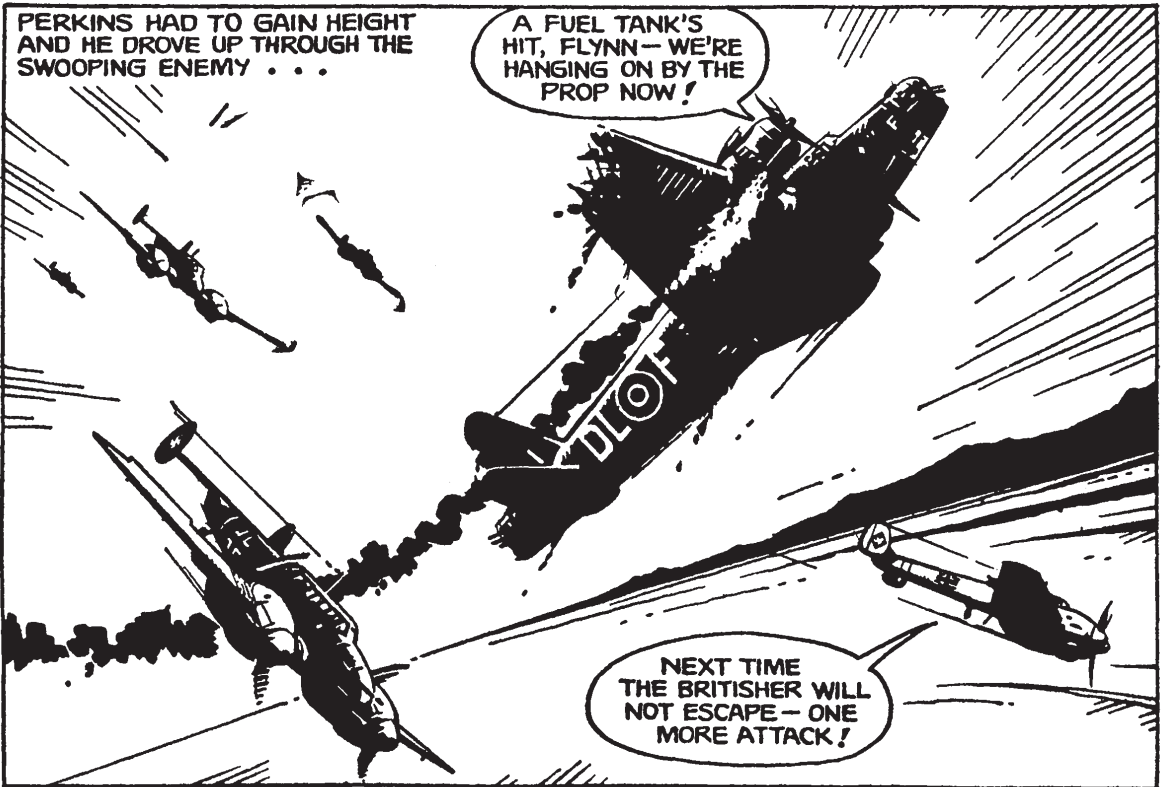
BUT THEY'VE HIT OUR STARBOARD MOTOR!



PERKINS HAD TO GAIN HEIGHT AND HE DROVE UP THROUGH THE SWOOPING ENEMY . . .

A FUEL TANK'S HIT, FLYNN - WE'RE HANGING ON BY THE PROP NOW!

NEXT TIME THE BRITISHER WILL NOT ESCAPE - ONE MORE ATTACK!



OVER THE THAMES ESTUARY A PATROLLING SQUADRON OF SPITFIRES CHANGED COURSE TO INVESTIGATE APPROACHING PLANES . . .

CALLING BLUE ONE... ME 110'S ARE ATTACKING A CRIPPLED WELLINGTON!



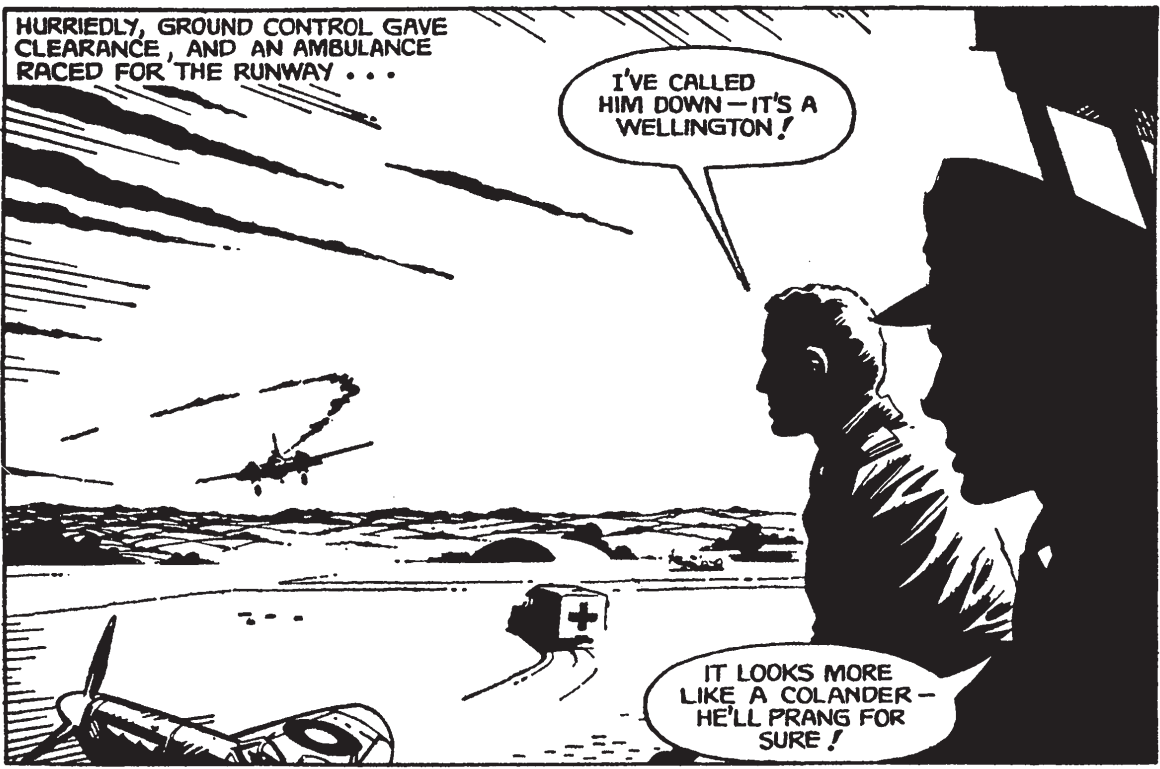
O.K..BLUE TWO.... HORNET SQUADRON PICK YOUR TARGETS - BREAK NOW!

AS THE SPITFIRES TOOK HEAVY TOLL OF THE 110'S, THE WELLINGTON LURCHED INLAND OVER ESSEX, WITH PERKINS MAKING CONTINUOUS RADIO CALLS . . .



I DON'T CARE WHO YOU ARE - YOU CAN'T LAND HERE!

WE'VE WOUNDED MEN ABOARD... THIS PLANE'S FINISHED - IT'S COMING DOWN ANYWAY!



HURRIEDLY, GROUND CONTROL GAVE CLEARANCE, AND AN AMBULANCE RACED FOR THE RUNWAY . . .

I'VE CALLED HIM DOWN - IT'S A WELLINGTON!

IT LOOKS MORE LIKE A COLANDER - HE'LL PRANG FOR SURE!

THE WELLINGTON HIT THE TARMAC AND BOUNCED, JUDDERING VIOLENTLY . . .



HE'S MADE IT!

WHOEVER BROUGHT THAT CRATE DOWN IN ONE PIECE IS SOME PILOT!

AS THE WOUNDED WERE DISEMBARKED INTO THE AMBULANCE, PERKINS AND FLYNN WENT TO REPORT ...



THEIR DISMAY DEEPENED WHEN THE AIR STATION C.O. TOLD THEM THAT THE SUB-AREA COMMANDER AND A REAR-ADMIRAL WANTED TO SEE THEM PERSONALLY.



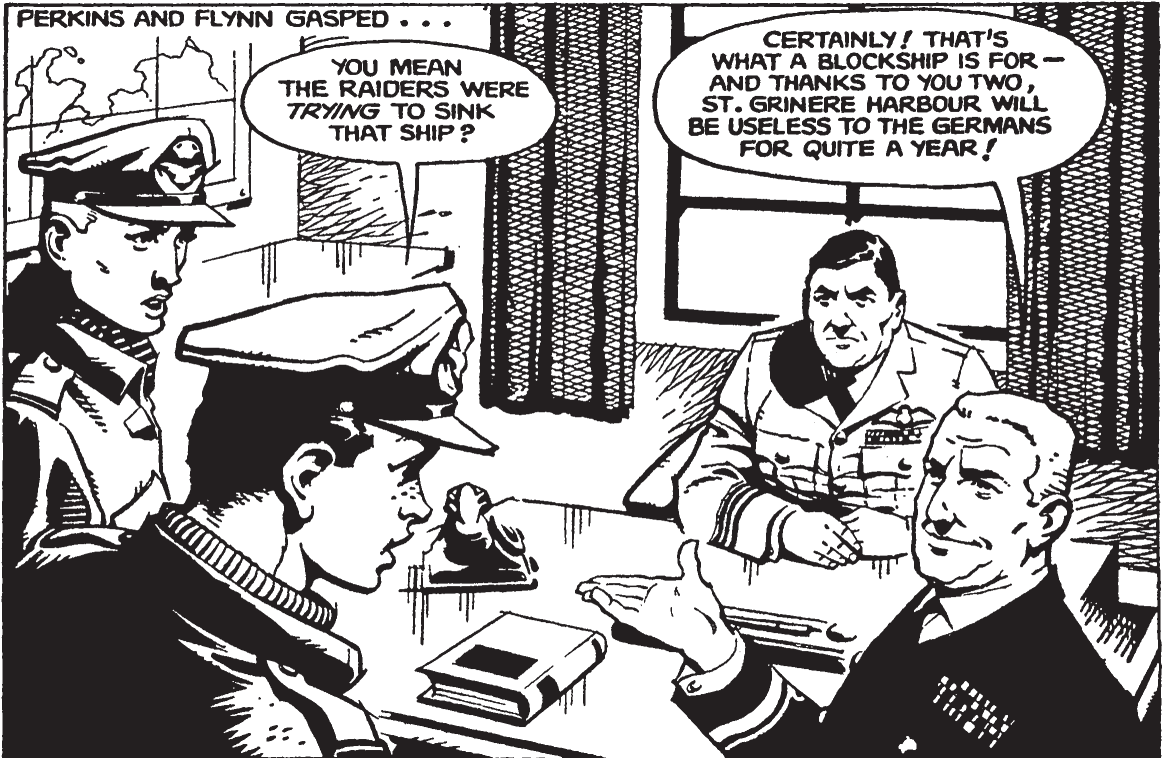
A CAR TOOK THEM TO SUB-AREA H.Q., AND THEY WERE USHERED INTO THE PRESENCE OF TOP BRASS OF THE R.A.F. AND THE NAVY . . .



I WON'T MINCE WORDS, YOU TWO TYPES OUGHT TO BE SKINNED ALIVE, BUT -

BUT YOU DID SUCCEED IN SINKING THE BLOCKSHIP, TARLTON, WHEN ALL ATTEMPTS OF THE MARINES TO DO SO HAD FAILED!

PERKINS AND FLYNN GASPED . . .



YOU MEAN THE RAIDERS WERE TRYING TO SINK THAT SHIP?

CERTAINLY! THAT'S WHAT A BLOCKSHIP IS FOR - AND THANKS TO YOU TWO, ST. GRINERE HARBOUR WILL BE USELESS TO THE GERMANS FOR QUITE A YEAR!

INSTEAD OF BEING DRUMMED OUT OF THE SERVICE IN DISGRACE THEY WERE LET OFF WITH A SEVERE REPRIMAND . . .

SO THIS TIME YOUR INDEPENDENT, UNAUTHORISED, SCANDALOUS ACTIONS WILL BE OVERLOOKED. HERE ARE YOUR POSTING PAPERS TO ANOTHER SPECIAL UNIT — Y-PLANES SQUADRON!

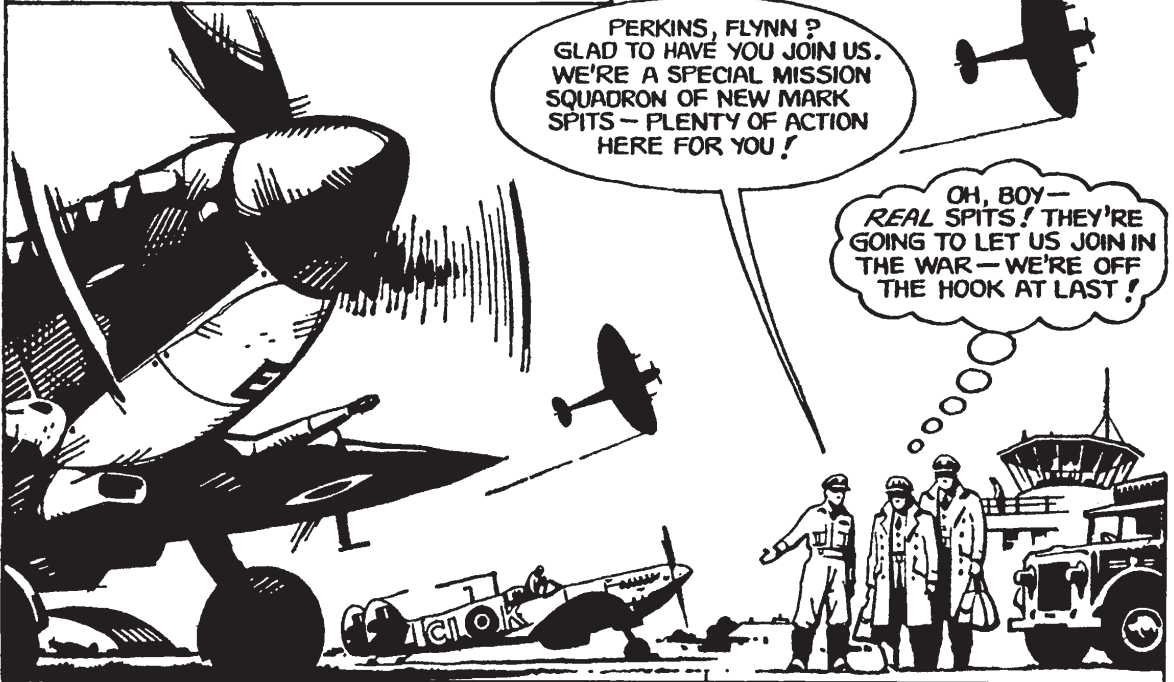
OH, HECK — NOT ANOTHER PUNISHMENT CAMP OF OLD BANGERS!



BUT THEIR NEW UNIT WAS NOT, AFTER ALL, A PUNISHMENT CAMP . . .

PERKINS, FLYNN? GLAD TO HAVE YOU JOIN US. WE'RE A SPECIAL MISSION SQUADRON OF NEW MARK SPITS — PLENTY OF ACTION HERE FOR YOU!

OH, BOY — REAL SPITS! THEY'RE GOING TO LET US JOIN IN THE WAR — WE'RE OFF THE HOOK AT LAST!



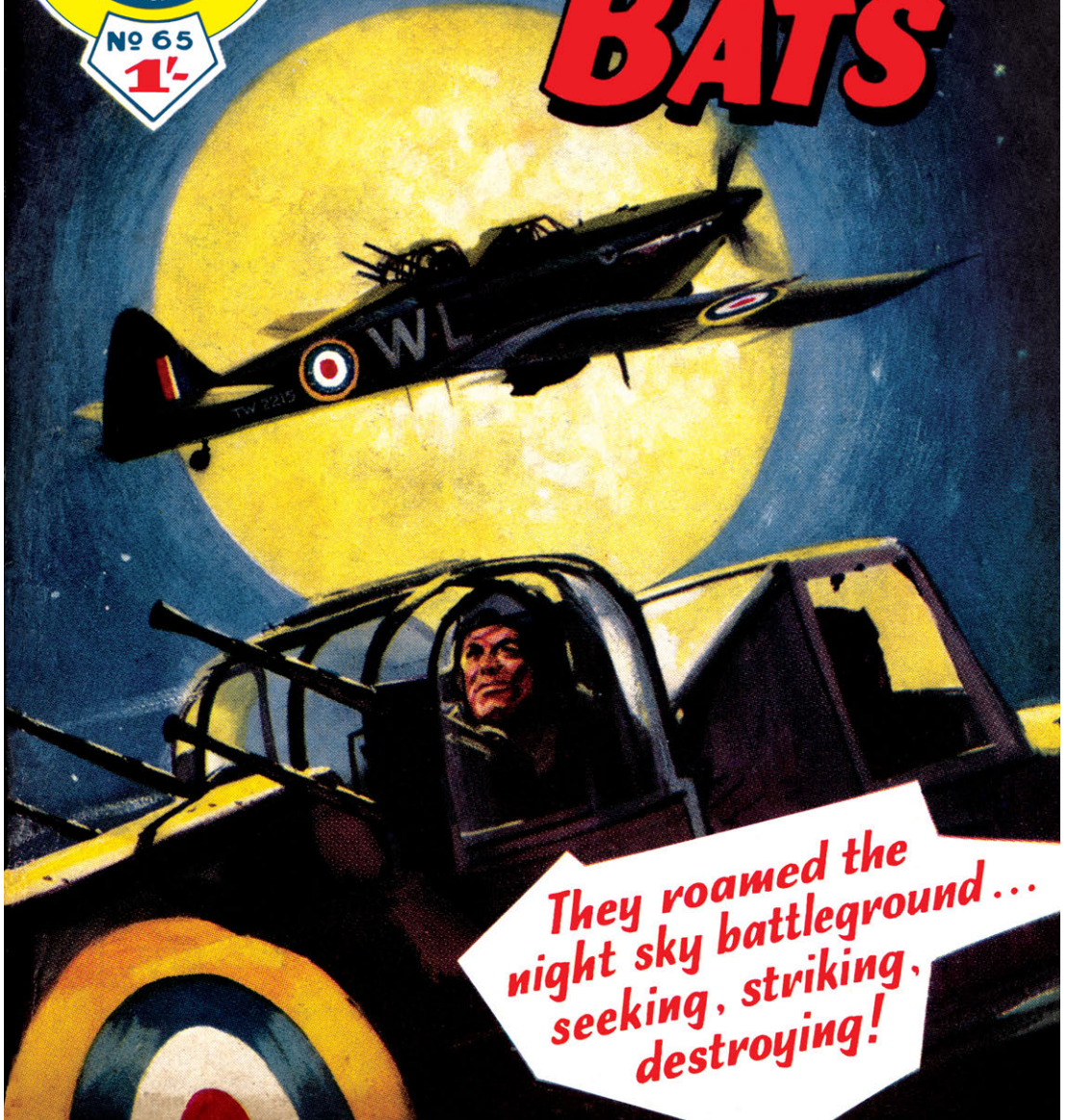
END

GALLERY





STEEL BATS



*They roamed the
night sky battleground ...
seeking, striking,
destroying!*



CAT'S EYES

They hunted by night, making darkness their ally.





"NEVER SAY DIE" WAPITI

The pilot who
flew it was in
disgrace
until - !



IAN KENNEDY

Ian Kennedy is a legend in comics. He provided the art for various 2000 AD strips including *Invasion!*, *Judge Dredd*, *Tharg's Future Shocks* and *M.A.C.H. 1*. He drew many issues of **Commando** and the **Fleetway Picture Library**, focusing especially on the **Air Ace Picture Library** stories about the aerial battles of World War II.

AIR ACE AUTHORS

The **Air Ace Picture Library** comics were published without writer or artist credits. Artists can be more easily discerned by individual styles but the writers of the comics are a frequently more difficult to identify. However we know that between 1960 and 1965 the following writers contributed stories to the **Air Ace Picture Library**: E.W. Evans, Douglas Leach, Gordon W. Brunt, Edward G. Cowan, V. Stokes, Tom Tully, R.P. Clegg, James Hart Higgins, Syd J. Bounds, R. Wilding and A. Carney Allan, and the stories in this collection may well have been by some of them.



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