

in March 1945. He remained in the RAF after the war and relinquished his commission as a flying officer in November 1958.

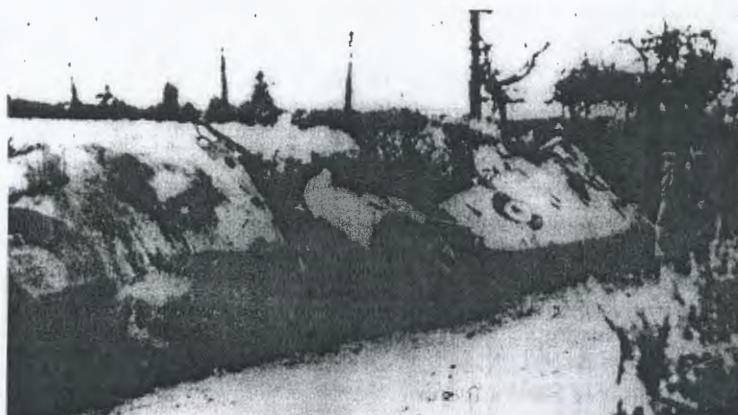
The names of the trainee bomb aimers are unknown.

27 March (Saturday)

Aerobatics training. 109th Observation Squadron, 6th Fighter Wing (Station 342, Atcham, Shropshire) Supermarine Spitfire VA (X4669, presentation aircraft named *Sir Walter*) crashed at Kingsnordley, between Quatt and Tuckhill to the south-east of Bridgnorth, at 14.40 hrs. The pilot was attempting a forced landing, after the engine began to falter due to a glycol leak, when he is believed to have been overcome by fumes on the approach and crashed through a hedge, ripping off both wings and skidding across a narrow lane, before coming to rest inverted and on fire. The accident was witnessed by Bombardier W D Allen, who was manning the local searchlight site. He gave the following account for the investigation:

I heard an aeroplane flying low and approaching the site BG041b. I looked up and identified a Spitfire flying at about 100–150 feet, this plane was approaching the site in a circular movement from the southwest and receded in the same direction. The pilot 'revved' his engine two or three times which appeared to sound normal but emitting several large clouds of white smoke from the region of the base of the engine. From the unusual amount of smoke coming from the plane, I deduced that it was on fire and gave the alarm telling the detachment to bring the fire extinguisher. Following the direction of the plane, I heard it crash and shortly afterwards saw a column of black smoke appearing. When I reached the plane, it was blazing fiercely and I saw the blackened remains of the pilot who was beyond hope. After putting the fire out, I posted a guard and then notified the police at Bridgnorth and Battery headquarters.

Flight Officer (pilot u/t) John L Becker (T-190561), USAAF, aged 25 (?), was the son of Louis and Sigrib Becker of 40 Garden Street, West Englewood, New Jersey. Educated at Teaneck High School, he had served with the RCAF before transferring to the USAAF in February 1942. He is buried in Cambridge (Madingley) Cemetery.



Spitfire X4669's wings, still bearing RAF roundels, pictured on the edge of the lane after being torn off by the impact. [USAAF]

29 March (Monday)

Sector reconnaissance flight. 109th Observation Squadron, 6th Fighter Wing (Station 342, Atcham, Shropshire)

Supermarine Spitfire VA (P7849) crashed near the Cross Keys Pub, Hadley (in what is now part of Telford), at 15.40 hrs. Lt Scott was flying in the vicinity of Wellington when he made several unauthorised 'attacks' on another Spitfire piloted by Lt Smith. During his last attack, however, he made a series of slow barrel rolls around Lt Smith's aircraft and a collision occurred. This resulted in the severing of the tail assembly of Lt Smith's aircraft and sent it crashing into a field, while the tail section fell near the REME work-shop. Lt Scott managed to remain in control of his aircraft for a further ninety

Pancakes and Prangs

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