

# SOKÓŁ

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Thank you for reading the first installment of 305 Squadron's newsletter "SOKÓŁ". The purpose of this newsletter is not solely dedicated to just 305 Squadron articles, but anything about the Polish Air Force (PAF) in World War II. So if anyone has articles of interest in this area, please submit them for future newsletters. Hopefully with this newsletter, we can all learn about the sacrifices the brave men of the PAF made during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. We will also have articles focusing on our PAF section of PALHA. Please feel free to visit PALHA's website at <http://orz1944.tripod.com/palha.html> With out further delay, I give you "SOKÓŁ"!

Jake Duda  
Editor



## FROM THE 305 COMMANDING OFFICER'S DESK

Welcome to the first issue of our newsletter dedicated to the Polish Air Force impression within the Polish American Living History Association. This newsletter will be a valuable resource for those interested in the PAF impression. Thanks to Jake for coming up with the idea and taking on the task of producing it. I know how much work it can be.

To start off, why 305 Squadron? First, a bomber squadron can make for a more interesting living history impression. Re-enacting pre-mission briefings and post-mission debriefings allows us to draw the public in and convey a tiny bit of what the Polish airmen went through. But just as a real bomber squadron required more personnel to operate the large aircraft, a bomber squadron impression needs more people to make it believable. 305 Squadron, however, transitioned to Mosquito fighter-bombers in 1944. The Mossie required only a two-man crew, which means we can do a more realistic impression with less people. 305 was also a unit of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tactical Air Force which operated from bases in France after D-Day. Since most of our living history events involve living out of tents, we can incorporate this in to a realistic portrayal of a squadron in the field. There is even the benefit of a late-war impression, where the air force uniform and equipment are a little easier to acquire.

Even though we will concentrate on 305 Squadron for our main impression, we can also portray other Polish squadrons as the need arises. We might have access to a certain aircraft flown only by a certain squadron, or weather conditions might dictate we portray a squadron which operated in those conditions. The wide variety of Polish squadrons which operated in many of the theaters of war, allows us this flexibility.

Our expectation for this impression is that, as with all PALHA impressions, the members will devote considerable time and effort towards “getting it right”. Guidelines for uniform and equipment will hopefully have been adopted by the time you read this. I can’t emphasize enough that these are only guidelines, and a knowledgeable member should be consulted before buying anything. Beyond uniforms, I would hope that those portraying members of the PAF would try to find out as much as they can about their impression, be it aircrew, ground crew, staff or whatever. By doing this we honor those we seek to portray.

I have high hopes for the inaugural season of 305 Squadron. With the current high level of interest in, and dedication to, the PAF within PALHA, we are off to a good start. Hope to see everyone out on the airfield!

Chris Moore  
Commanding Officer



## **BRIEF HISTORY OF 305 SQUADRON**

By: Jake Duda

No. 305 Squadron, the fourth and last of the Polish bomber squadrons, was formed at Bramcote, Warwickshire, in No. 6 (Training) Group, on 29th August 1940. It was manned by the same type of personnel as its immediate predecessor, No. 304 Squadron, and again, like No. 304, was originally equipped with Fairey Battle aircraft. In November 1940, it began to convert to Vickers Wellingtons and in December moved and transferred (with No. 304) to Syerston and No. 1 Group. It started operational flying in April 1941.

The squadron continued to operate with No. 1 Group until August 1943, and during this period was based at Syerston, Lindholme, Hemswell and Ingham in turn. It then disposed of its Wellingtons and early in September 1943, moved to Swanton Morley and joined the Second Tactical Air Force. It left a creditable record of service in Bomber Command: over a span of roughly 27 months of operations (25/26th April 1941 to 2nd/3rd August 1943) it had logged 1,117 sorties and dropped/laid 1,555 tons of bombs and mines. On the debit side it had lost 136 airmen killed, 10 missing and 33 taken prisoner.

At Swanton Morley No. 305 converted to North American Mitchell B-25 light bombers and during the first half of November started daylight bombing in formation with fighter escort, attacking Noball sites, enemy headquarters and fortifications in the Cap Griz Nez region. The squadron was transferred to RAF Lasham on 18th November where it became part of 138 Wing, No. 2 Group, 2nd TAF. It ceased flying Mitchell’s in December and began to convert to Mosquito FB.VIs. With these, during the remainder of the European war, it operated somewhere on the hazy frontier between light-bomber and fighter-intruder duties; it operated both by day and night and from November 1944, onwards was based on the Continent. Two of the highlights of its wartime Mosquito period were the bombing of the Sabotage School at Chateau Maulny on 2nd August 1944, and the destruction of some millions of gallons of petrol at Nomeny near Nancy - a feat which helped to immobilize many of the German tanks and aircraft taking part in the Battle of Normandy - on 31st August 1944.

**Bomber Command WWII Bases:**

- Bramcote : Aug 1940-Dec 1940
- Syerston : Dec 1940-Jul 1941
- Lindholme : Jul 1941-Jul 1942
- Hemswell : Jul 1942-Jun 1943

- Ingham : Jun 1943-Sep 1943
- Swanton Morley : Sep 1943-Nov 1943
- Lasham : Nov 1943-Oct 1944
- Hartford Bridge (Blackbushe : Oct 1944
- Lasham : Oct 1944
- Hartford Bridge (Blackbushe : Oct 1944-Nov 1944
- Cambrai/Epinoy (A75), France : Nov 1944 onwards

**Bomber Command WWII Aircraft:**

- Fairey Battle : Sep 1940-Nov 1940
- Vickers Wellington IC, II, IV and X : Nov 1940-Aug 1943
- North American Mitchell II : Sep 1943-Dec 1943
- de Havilland Mosquito FB.VI : Dec 1943 onwards

**Code Letters:**

- "SM"

**First Operational Mission in WWII:**

- 25/26th April 1941: 3 Wellingtons bombed petrol and fuel oil storage tanks at Rotterdam.
- (IT IS OF SPECIAL NOTE THAT 25 APRIL IS 305'S SQUADRON DAY-TO COMMEMORATE THEIR FIRST OPERATIONAL MISSION)

**Last Operational Mission in WWII:**

25/26th April 1945 : 12 Mosquitoes bombed and/or strafed enemy troops and transport in region Westerland- Flensburg-Eckenforde-Neuhaus-Ording-Westerland. 1 aircraft unable to release bombs owing to flak damage.

## **De Havilland Mosquito**

By: Chris Moore

The de Havilland Mosquito was one of the most successful aircraft of the Second World War. It excelled in many roles, including high-speed bomber, reconnaissance aircraft, night fighter and as a long-range strike aircraft. The Mosquito's remarkable success was due to an extremely efficient streamlined design, and in large part, to its construction. Known as the "Wooden Wonder", the Mosquito's airframe was constructed mainly of that material, which resulted in a strong, light aircraft. Even though it entered production relatively late in the war and there were never enough to fill all the roles of which it was capable, the Mosquito was able to establish itself as one of the most capable aircraft of the war. 305 Squadron was fortunate to be one of two Polish squadrons to fly this aircraft.

The direct ancestor of the Mosquito was the D.H. 91 Albatross airliner, which entered service in November 1938. The Albatross' fuselage was formed using a balsa wood core covered with plywood skin. This created a strong, light structure. Rather than a throwback to the wooden airframes of the early part of the century, this construction is more analogous to the composite construction of modern high-performance

aircraft. This form of construction also allowed the creation of aircraft possessing streamlining not easily created with aluminum construction. One of the reasons this type of construction had not been used previously was the unsuitability of glues traditionally used by carpenters. These glues were made from animal products and broke down in water. In the 1930s, however, boat-builders and the aircraft industry became aware of casein glue, which is based on the protein in milk. Casein glue forms a bond that is impervious to moisture. Another innovation was the use of Bakelite, an early plastic, as an adhesive. While it could not be used in every situation because it requires heat and pressure to cure, it was used in the manufacture of strong, waterproof plywood.

In the late 1930s, as war in Europe became a possibility, de Havilland was under increasing pressure to become involved more fully in military work. If the company did not come up with an aircraft of its own design, it would be forced to do sub-contract work for another manufacturer. With experience gained from the Albatross, de Havilland set out in 1938 to build a bomber that, through light weight and streamlining, would be faster than any fighter. The concept of the fast bomber had been a reality in the early part of the decade when bombers employing the new technologies demonstrated in civilian airliners had easily outpaced the old biplane fighters. The new generation of fighter aircraft, however, used the same technology and were considerably faster than the bombers. It was generally agreed that bombers needed at least a minimum of armament to deter fighters. By doing away with the extra weight of defensive armament and the crew needed to man it, however, de Havilland proposed to build a bomber with the required speed to outrun the fighters.

The project met official resistance. Besides the lack of armament, the Air Ministry felt that the workload on a two-man crew would be prohibitive. One thing de Havilland did have in its favor was the fact that the aircraft would be constructed of non-strategic materials. Foreseeing the massive need for bauxite to construct the aluminum heavy bombers, the Air Ministry had in fact issued a specification for a medium bomber made of non-strategic materials in 1938. There was also a complete industry of woodworkers that could be tapped to build the aircraft. Finally, three days after the war began, the government approved the construction of a prototype, based mainly on the need for a fast reconnaissance aircraft. The company received an order for 50 aircraft in March 1940, but in May Lord Beaverbrook, the Minister of Aircraft Production, canceled the contract. It was restored in July when de Havilland promised to deliver 50 aircraft by July 1941- a target that was never achieved.

Except for the extreme cleanliness of its lines, the Mosquito looked fairly conventional externally. It was internally that it was like no other aircraft. The Mosquito's skin was made up of two layers of 2mm plywood, which required neither heat nor pressure to form. The first layer was fastened to a mold and then the balsa core was glued on. For strength, spruce stiffeners were added in critical areas, such as around the doors. The outer skin was then glued on. Once dry, all doors were cut out. The fuselage was made in two halves and, therefore, much of the internal equipment could be added without the difficulty of working in a confined space. Once this work was done, the two halves were joined in a manner similar to a large model airplane. The wing skins were made of two layers of birch plywood sandwiched around spanwise spruce stringers. This structure was extremely resistant to gunfire and would prove to be easy and cheap to repair.

The first prototypes flew at the end of 1940 and the type was given the name Mosquito. The aircraft suffered very few development problems and production aircraft varied very little from the prototypes. Problems did arise, however, in setting up the assembly lines for such a new and radical construction. But, by this time the value of the Mosquito was realized and the delays did not bring on threats of cancellation. The Mosquito was produced in Canada and Australia as well as Great Britain. Canadian production was facilitated by the availability of Packard built Merlin engines from the United States.

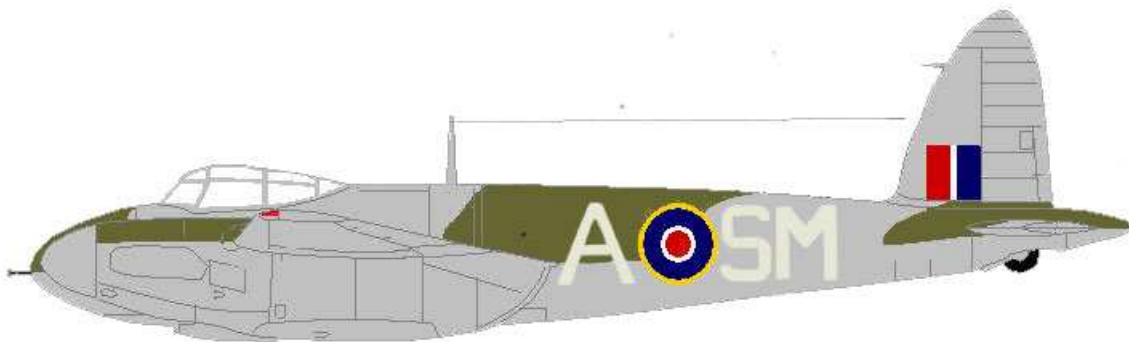
One of the reasons for the Mosquito's success was the multitude of roles it was able to fill. The bomber version included a clear plexi nose with a flat panel, through which the bombardier could sight. The photoreconnaissance version also included the glass nose along with cameras in the bomb bay. The fighter version was heavily armed with a solid nose housing four .303 in. Browning machine guns. These were secondary to the main armament of four 20mm Hispano canon in the forward bomb bay. Most fighters were, however, delivered as fighter-bombers. This type included an active bomb bay just behind the canon. There was also a naval version with folding wings. Major developments of these types were remarkably

few, but two of the more significant ones were the installation of Merlins with two-stage superchargers and the development of a pressurized cockpit. Mosquitos continued in service with the RAF until 1963, serving as target tugs in their last days.

305 Squadron began re-equipping with Mosquitos in December 1943. The immediate advantage was that the Mosquito required only a crew of two, unlike the Wellingtons and Mitchells the squadron had been flying previously. Losses in the squadron had been so great over the first three years that 305 had not been able to man a full squadron of aircraft. The squadron became operational on the Mosquito FB VI on 25 February 1944.

The Mosquito FB VI was a fighter-bomber and 305, as a unit of the 2<sup>nd</sup> TAF, used them mostly on day and night bombing and strafing attacks against targets in France - such as V1 sites - and for nighttime attacks on German airfields and night fighters. 305 Mosquitos supported the D-Day landings and the fighting in Normandy through June and July 1944 with attacks on German troops and supply lines. One of the most spectacular Mosquito missions was the attack on the SS espionage and sabotage training school near Le Mans. They attacked at very low level, strafing and bombing the school; causing great panic and damage to the establishment. The squadron moved to bases in France in November 1944 and began operations on the 21<sup>st</sup>, carrying out similar operations until the end of the war.

Wingspan: 16.51 m (54 ft 2 in)  
Length: 12.55 m (41 ft 2 in)  
Height: 3.81 m (12 ft 6in)  
Weight: 6,638 kg (14,635 lb) empty  
10,433 kg (23,000 lb) loaded  
Engine: Two Rolls Royce Merlin V-12, water-cooled engines.



*305 Squadron Mosquito FBVI*

## Song and Dance Section

By: Jake Duda

# Sto Lat! - May you live a hundred years.

This Traditional Polish Song is often sung during a birthday celebration.



Sto lat, sto lat niech ży-je, ży-je nam, sto lat, sto lat  
Good luck, good cheer may you live a hundred years, good luck, good cheer

niech ży-je, ży-je nam. Jeszcze raz, jeszcze raz  
may you live - a hundred years. Good luck, good cheer

niech ży-je, ży - je nam! Niech ży - je nam!  
may you live a - hundred years! One - hundred - years!

