

# WILBUR AND THE IMPS GO TO WAR



George Anthony Wright. D.F.M.



No.61 Squadron  
Royal Air Force

Badge

The Lincoln Imp

Motto

Per purum tonantes

Thundering through the clear sky

## CONTENTS

No. 61 Squadron	1
Preface	3
Boyhood	4
A Crippled Youth	6
Prestwick	8
Uxbridge – Per Ardua Ad Astra	11
North Coates No. 1 A.O.S.	12
Hemswell	14
Wick	21
The Real War	22
Death or Glory or - - -	24
Dulag and Stalags	33
These Foolish Things	36
Going Round the Bend	38
A Daily Function to Perform	40
On Parade	42
The Allies	44
The Red Star Rises in the East	45
From Bad to Worse	47
On Your Way, Boy	48
The Hounds of War	54
Warsaw, City of Sorrow and Sadness	58
To Odessa	59
Sailing Back to Happiness	62
DFM Citation	64
Crashes at Hemswell until July 1940	65
Reflections	67
RAF Hemswell Memorial	72
The Re-union	73
P4344's Last Flight by K. Jones	75
Hampden Op. on Dortmund-Ems Canal	76
Wilhelmshavener Zeitung Article	77
60 Years On	79

## No. 61 Squadron

Badge: The Lincoln Imp

Motto: Per purum tonantes (Thundering through the clear sky)

No. 61 Squadron was formed on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1917 at Rochford as a home defence unit guarding the approaches to London. Initially equipped with Pups, it re-equipped with S.E.5As to combat German bomber raids from bases in Belgium. Shortly before the end of the war, Camels were received and the squadron disbanded on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1919.

On 8<sup>th</sup> March 1937, No. 61 reformed at Hemswell as a bomber squadron. Equipped initially with Audaxes, it received Ansons within a few weeks in preparation for more modern equipment. Blenheims arrived in January 1938 and were replaced by Hampdens from February 1939. Operations over Germany began on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1940 and night raids with Hampdens continued until 10<sup>th</sup> October 1941. Manchesters had begun to replace Hampdens in July 1941 but teething troubles with the type delayed full equipment for several months. In April 1942, the first Lancasters were received and were flown for the rest of the war, the squadron forming part of the main force of Bomber Command. Conversion to Lincolns began in May 1946 and in December 1950 No. 61 moved to Malaya for a few months to operate against the Communist guerrillas and in March 1954 undertook a similar role against the Mau Mau in Kenya. In August 1954, Canberras were received which were taken to Cyprus in October 1956 during the Suez operation. On 31<sup>st</sup> March 1958 the squadron disbanded.

### Squadron Bases

Rochford	24.07.1917	Coningsby	01.02.1944
	to	Skellingthorpe	15.04.1944
Hemswell	08.03.1937	Sturgate	16.06.1945
N. Luffenham	17.07.1941	Waddington	25.01.1946
Woolfox Lodge	11.1941 (P)	Wittering	06.08.1953
Syerston	05.05.1942	Upwood	03.07.1955
Skellingthorpe	16.11.1943		to 31.03.1958

### Aircraft Equipment

Pup	Aug 1917 – Jan 1918
S.E.5A	Jan 1918 – Oct 1918
Camel	Oct 1918 – Jun 1919
Audax	Mar 1937 – Apr 1937
Anson I	Mar 1937 – Jan 1938
Blenheim I	Jan 1938 – Mar 1939
Hampden I	Feb 1939 – Oct 1941
Manchester I	Jun 1941 – Jun 1942
Lancaster I, III	Jun 1942 – May 1946
Lancaster II	Oct 1942 –
Lincoln B.2	May 1946 – Aug 1954
Canberra B.2	Aug 1954 – 1958

At the beginning of a war:-

“Youth is the bravest of all ages;  
Youth dares all!”

At the end of a long war:-

“And now I realise that life is not all  
that is beautiful, healthy, strong and  
true, but that life is – and must be –  
composed of sorrow and bitterness  
and suffering, and it is only the manner  
in which we endure this suffering that  
makes life beautiful – or hideous.”

These words, spoken by a Russian Nurse, Anna  
Ivanova, were taken from Florence Farnborough's  
book 'Nurse At The Russian Front'.