

Battle of Britain Spitfire Squadron 19 Squadron RAF at Fowlmere



The RAF's 19 Squadron were deployed to Fowlmere on 24th July 1940 from their home base at nearby Duxford. They were already a famous Spitfire squadron having been the first operational RAF squadron to be equipped with Spitfires in 1938.



The young pilots had recently given a good account of themselves whilst defending British troops retreating from Dunkirk, the Spitfire's scoring 13 enemy kills with the loss of only 4 of their own aircraft.



German troops posing on the wreck of a 19 squadron Spitfire which has crash landed on the beach.

The battle of Britain was already raging as the Luftwaffe's bombers were concentrating their efforts on bombing all RAF's airfields. This was the main reason for the Squadron's redeployment from Duxford. At Fowlmere they were considered to be out of harms way and could be used effectively to counter the German bomber threat to North Weald, Debden, and Duxford.



19 Squadron's identification letter code was QV and all Spitfires operating out of the grass airstrip at Fowlmere carried these markings.

The 31st August 1940 was one of the worst days for Fighter Command suffering their greatest losses of the entire summer's fighting. It was also one of the darkest days of the battle of Britain for 19 Squadron. They engaged the enemy over Duxford and Debden in bitter air battles, and while they were away their base at Fowlmere was bombed by the Luftwaffe.

Pilot Officer Ray Aeberhardt was involved in this fighting and his Spitfire was hit and damaged by enemy fire. He nursed the stricken machine back to Fowlmere, and attempted to land without the use of flaps to control speed and descent. The aircraft flipped over onto its back and caught fire killing the pilot. He is buried in the churchyard at nearby Whittlesford. He was nineteen years old.



Pilot Officer Ray Aeberhardt