

= Caesar Hull =

Caesar Barrand Hull , DFC ( 26 February 1914 ? 7 September 1940 ) was a Royal Air Force ( RAF ) flying ace during the Second World War , noted especially for his part in the fighting for Narvik during the Norwegian Campaign in 1940 , and for being one of " The Few " ? the Allied pilots of the Battle of Britain , in which he was shot down and killed . From a farming family , Hull 's early years were spent in Southern Rhodesia , South Africa and Swaziland . He boxed for South Africa at the 1934 Empire Games . After being turned down by the South African Air Force because he did not speak Afrikaans , he joined the RAF and , on becoming a pilot officer in August 1936 , mustered into No. 43 Squadron at RAF Tangmere in Sussex .

A skilful pilot , Hull dedicated much of his pre @-@ war service to aerobatics , flying Hawker Audaxes , Furies and Hurricanes . He reacted to the outbreak of war with enthusiasm and achieved No. 43 Squadron 's first victory of the conflict in late January 1940 . Reassigned to Norway in May 1940 to command a flight of Gloster Gladiator biplanes belonging to No. 263 Squadron , he downed four German aircraft in an hour over the Bodø area south @-@ west of Narvik on 26 May , a feat that earned him the Distinguished Flying Cross . He was shot down the next day , and invalided back to England . Hull returned to action at the end of August , when he was made commander of No. 43 Squadron with the rank of squadron leader . A week later , he died in a dogfight over south London .

With eight confirmed aerial victories during the war , including five over Norway , Hull was the RAF 's first Gladiator ace and the most successful RAF pilot of the Norwegian Campaign . He was buried among fellow fighter pilots at Tangmere , and a monument to his memory was erected near his birthplace in Southern Rhodesia . This remained until 2004 , when the plaque was transported to England and donated to the Tangmere Military Aviation Museum . Other memorials to Hull were built in Bodø in 1977 and Purley , where his aircraft crashed , in 2013 .

= = Early life = =

Caesar Barrand Hull was born on 26 February 1914 at Leachdale Farm , a property near Shangani in Southern Rhodesia . His childhood years were divided between Rhodesia and South Africa , and in his early teens the family moved to Swaziland . He was educated at home until 1926 , when he began to board at St. John 's College in Johannesburg . A champion boxer , he was a member of South Africa 's boxing team at the 1934 Empire Games in London .

Hull attempted to join the South African Air Force in 1935 , but was turned down because he did not speak Afrikaans . He joined the Royal Air Force ( RAF ) instead , enlisting in England in September 1935 . Completing the pilot 's course on 3 August 1936 with the rank of pilot officer , he joined No. 43 Squadron at RAF Tangmere in Sussex five days later .

Much of Hull 's early air force career was dedicated to aerobatics . He and Peter " Prosser " Hanks perfected a routine in which they would change places in a two @-@ seater Hawker Audax in mid @-@ air . Along with Peter Townsend ( who joined the squadron at the same time as Hull ) and Sergeant Frank Reginald Carey , they formed an aerobatic flight that performed stunts such as loops , barrel rolls and stall turns . Piloting a Hawker Fury , Hull flew the individual aerobatics at the air show at Hendon in 1937 honouring the coronation of King George VI .

Hull was promoted to flying officer on 16 April 1938 . As war loomed , the squadron began to prepare for combat in late 1938 , and in December that year was re @-@ equipped with Hawker Hurricane Mk Is . Hull reacted to the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 with great excitement ; according to Hector Bolitho , No. 43 Squadron 's intelligence officer , the Rhodesian leapt from one foot to the other in the officer 's mess , repeating the words " wizard , wizard " .

= = Air war in Europe = =

== = Early war == =

In November 1939 , No. 43 Squadron moved to RAF Acklington , near Newcastle @-@ upon @-@ Tyne , flying Hawker Hurricane Mk Is . Amid severe weather conditions , Hull scored the squadron 's first victory of the war on 30 January 1940 , when he shot down a Heinkel He 111 bomber of the Luftwaffe near the island of Coquet . On 26 February the squadron was transferred to RAF Wick in northern Scotland to help protect the Home Fleet at Scapa Flow . Hull , Carey and three others together downed another He 111 on 28 March 1940 . On 10 April 1940 , Hull took part in the destruction of a reconnaissance He 111 . The aircraft had been sent out in advance of a major raid launched by He 111s from Kampfgeschwader 26 and Kampfgruppe 100 , aimed at covering the German invasion of Norway .

When No. 43 Squadron returned to its home base at Tangmere in May 1940 , some of its leading pilots were reassigned to other units : among these were Townsend , who was assigned to No. 85 Squadron RAF as its commanding officer , and Hull , who was posted to No. 263 Squadron to command a flight of Gloster Gladiator biplanes during the unit 's second committal to the Norwegian Campaign .

== = Norway == =

No. 263 Squadron was deployed to the area around Narvik , a strategically valuable port city in northern Norway then under German control , but fiercely contested by the Norwegians and Allies . Crossing the Norwegian Sea aboard the aircraft carrier HMS Furious , the pilots took off on 21 May while at sea , in groups of three each led by a Fairey Swordfish of the Fleet Air Arm , and encountered thick mist around the island of Senja ; the Swordfish and two Gladiators from one of the groups crashed into a mountain . Hull led the first four aircraft through and landed safely at Bardufoss airfield , about 80 kilometres ( 50 mi ) north @-@ east of Narvik , at 04 : 20 . A further 12 Gladiators followed four hours later . Fourteen Gladiators were operational and began flying patrols from Bardufoss on 22 May , carrying out 30 sorties on the first day . Hull and two other pilots together downed a He 111 over Salangen on 24 May 1940 , killing two of the five German crew ; the other three were captured by Norwegian troops after making an emergency landing at Fjordbotneidet . In all , during its two weeks of operations in northern Norway , No. 263 Squadron was to claim 26 confirmed kills and nine probable victories during 70 dogfights .

Hull and two other pilots , South African Pilot Officer Jack Falkson and Naval Lieutenant Tony Lydekker , volunteered to be detached to an improvised airstrip at Bodø , a port about 100 kilometres ( 62 mi ) south @-@ west of Narvik , on 26 May 1940 to cover Allied troops who were retreating north for evacuation under Operation Alphabet . Arriving to find the airfield extremely muddy , the pilots had great difficulty moving their aircraft to drier ground to refuel from four @-@ gallon ( 18 @-@ l ) tin cans . A He 111 was spotted overhead while this was in progress , prompting the three pilots to scramble having only partially refuelled . Falkson 's plane crashed after mud clung to its wheels , and while Lydekker took off successfully , he had so little fuel that Hull almost immediately ordered him to land to add more .

The Rhodesian pursued the He 111 over the Saltdal valley and , with three attacks from astern , set the bomber ablaze , forcing it to crash . Hull then downed a Junkers Ju 52 transport plane and , after unsuccessfully chasing another He 111 , destroyed two more Ju 52s . The transports had been coming to the aid of the hard @-@ pressed German forces fighting around Narvik ; one was loaded with supplies , while the other two were carrying Fallschirmjäger paratroops . One of the latter aircraft successfully landed in German @-@ held territory before burning out , allowing the crew and paratroopers aboard to exit safely , but the second spiralled out of control and crashed , killing eight German paratroopers . Hull then attacked another He 111 , which soon retreated , giving off smoke . Having used up all his ammunition , Hull returned to Bodø . In the space of about an hour , in a technologically @-@ outdated aircraft and without assistance , he had destroyed four German planes and damaged a fifth .

Hull , Falkson and Lydekker spent the night of 26 / 27 May 1940 patrolling the area around Rognan

, about 20 kilometres ( 12 mi ) inland from Bodø . After driving German bombers away from British and Norwegian forces fighting at Pothus south of Rognan , the Gladiators strafed German ground forces . Around 08 : 00 on 27 May , Bodø was attacked by 11 Ju 87 " Stuka " dive bombers from I. / Sturzkampfgeschwader 1 ( StG 1 ? Dive Bomber Wing 1 ) and three Messerschmitt Bf 110 fighters attached to I. / Zerstörergeschwader 76 ( ZG 76 ? Destroyer Wing 76 ) . Lydekker claimed one of the Stukas , but was ultimately forced to limp north to Bardufoss to land , his Gladiator heavily damaged . Having initially been caught on the ground by the German attack , Hull got his fighter airborne during a pause in the raid . After engaging the German aircraft and shooting down Feldwebel Kurt Zube 's Stuka , which fell into the sea , Hull was overcome by one of the Bf 110s , piloted by Oberleutnant Helmut Lent , and forced to crash near the Bodø airfield . Wounded in the head and the knee , he was initially treated at Bodø Hospital before being evacuated back to Britain for further treatment on a Sunderland flying boat via Harstad . Hull 's kills during the Norwegian Campaign made him the RAF 's first Gloster Gladiator ace , as well as the most successful RAF fighter pilot of the campaign . On 17 June , while convalescing , he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions in Norway .

= = = Battle of Britain = = =

Hull was declared fit to return to operational duty after about two months ' rest and recuperation in Guildford , and on 31 August 1940 he was appointed commanding officer of his former unit , No. 43 Squadron , replacing Squadron Leader John " Tubby " Badger , who had been shot down and grievously wounded the previous day . The unit was still based at Tangmere , flying Hurricanes , and was by now fighting in the Battle of Britain , the Allied participants of which would later be dubbed " The Few " . Concurrently promoted to squadron leader , Hull expressed disbelief at his sudden elevation and " as if to emphasise his surprise " , Andy Saunders records , suffixed his first description of himself on paper as " Commanding No. 43 Sqn " with four exclamation marks .

The first engagement of Hull 's command , on 2 September , resulted in three of the squadron 's Hurricanes being shot down in return for two Messerschmitt Bf 109s . On 4 September , Hull led a group of Hurricanes in a decisive aerial victory over coastal Sussex against a large group of Bf 110s from ZGs 2 and 76 . Flight Lieutenant Thomas Dalton @-@ Morgan destroyed a Bf 110 north of Worthing and chased another until it crashed near Shoreham @-@ by @-@ Sea , while Sergeant Jeffreys shot down another Bf 110 in a field . Pilot Officer A E A van den Hove d 'Ertsenrijck , from Belgium , pursued a fourth back out to sea and sent it crashing into the English Channel , but was hit himself and compelled to make an emergency landing at RAF Ford . Hull and Flight Officer Hamilton Upton together seriously damaged two more Bf 110s .

Around 16 : 00 on 7 September 1940 , nine Hurricanes of No. 43 Squadron scrambled to intercept a large formation of German aircraft over Kent on their way to London . Hull led six of the aircraft towards the German bombers while Flight Lieutenant John " Killy " Kilmartin , from Ireland , headed a section of three tasked with countering the fighter escort . Hull took his aircraft above the bombers , then dived towards them , telling his pilots to " smash them up " . A very fast engagement followed in which Hull was killed while diving to the aid of Flight Lieutenant Dick Reynell , an Australian pilot who had come under heavy attack . Hull was last seen firing at a Dornier Do 17 , and was shot down by a Bf 109 . Reynell was also killed . The Rhodesian ace 's body was discovered largely burnt inside the shell of his Hurricane , which had crashed in the grounds of Purley Boys ' High School in Purley , Surrey . He was 26 years old .

The loss of Hull and Reynell , two of the squadron 's most popular pilots , affected morale deeply . Kilmartin , arriving back at Tangmere on the evening of 7 September , simply muttered " My God , My God " . Dalton @-@ Morgan took over command of the squadron . Hull 's remains were recovered and returned to Tangmere , where he was buried among fellow fighter pilots at St Andrew 's Church . His final confirmed record for the war was four German aircraft destroyed , two damaged and four shared destroyed ( counted at half a victory each ) ; also noted were one unconfirmed destroyed , two probably destroyed and one shared probable .

= = Memorials = =

After Hull 's death , the people of Shangani organised the construction of a memorial in his honour ? a granite plinth to which a brass plaque was affixed commemorating the pilot 's service and bravery . This monument was completed before the end of the war and erected alongside the main road between Bulawayo and Gwelo , near the bridge over the Shangani River . A memorial to the actions of Hull , Falkson and Lydekker at Bodø was built at the town 's airport three decades later , and inaugurated on 17 June 1977 with the Norwegian Minister of Defence , Rolf Arthur Hansen , in attendance .

After Rhodesia 's reconstitution as Zimbabwe in 1980 , Robert Mugabe 's government disowned many old monuments making reference to the fallen of the World Wars , including the Hull memorial at Shangani . The Hull family resolved in 2003 to take the plaque down and donate it to the Tangmere Military Aviation Museum , an idea that the museum welcomed . The plaque was removed , flown to England free of charge by MK Airlines ? a freight carrier owned by a former Rhodesian Air Force pilot , Mike Kruger ? and ceremonially delivered to the Tangmere museum curator on 17 April 2004 by Hull 's sister , Wendy Bryan .

A new monument to Hull was erected at Coulsdon Sixth Form College , which today occupies the Purley High School site , in 2013 . Depicting an aeroplane and a dove intertwined , it was formally dedicated on 11 November that year , Remembrance Day , with Bryan present .

= = Character and reputation = =

Hull was remembered by his comrades as an exceptional pilot and an affable , jovial personality . Jimmy Beedle , in his 1966 history of No. 43 Squadron , called Hull one of its all @-@ time great characters , citing him as a major factor in the squadron 's " high standard of flying and ... outstanding squadron spirit " . John Simpson , who joined the unit as a pilot officer two months after Hull , recalled finding " a confidence when flying with Caesar that was wholly lacking otherwise . " " I have never seen anyone who could throw a fighter about with so much confidence as old Caesar , " said another pilot , quoted by Beedle . " Nobody gave me so much confidence to have a lead from , nobody gave me so much exhilaration and fun . Following Caesar you found yourself getting more out of your machine than you had ever imagined was possible , doing things that done by yourself would have made your hair stand on end . "

" All the superlatives have already been written about Caesar , " Beedle wrote . " Caesar Barrand Hull , of the crinkly hair and the croaky voice , the laughing warrior whose idea of a lark was to change seats in the air ... who had a phobia about worms or slugs , who would look under the bed ' in case there are any feenies about ' , then kneel beside it and say his prayers . " Bolitho took a similar line in his 1943 book *Combat Report* , attesting to Hull 's " bubbling , unquenchable gaiety " . According to Bolitho , Hull was " possessed of a magic power of creating happiness in others ; making them belittle their cares , of inspiring them with confidence , not simply in him but in themselves . Of imbuing them with his own abounding love of life . Where Caesar was , laughter was . "