

Presentation of Shields Narrative

24 Sqn was originally formed in 1915 and spent the First World War in and around the Western Front. During the Second World War the squadron provided air transport support; route flying with both Dakota and York aircraft. Immediately after the end of the War, 24 Sqn was tasked with flying Royalty and Heads of State and Government home from exile in the UK.

Today, 24 Sqn flies C-130J Hercules aircraft from RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire.

The Role of Honour records seven Belgians as serving with 24 Sqn during the war.

32 (The Royal) Sqn was originally formed in 1916 and saw action on the Western Front during the First World War. Disbanded after the war, it was reformed in 1923 and was operating the Hurricane during the early days of the Battle of Britain. After the Squadron suffered heavy losses it was withdrawn from the frontline until 1942 when it was deployed to the Near East and the Mediterranean.

32 (The Royal) Sqn is currently based at RAF Northolt in West London and operates British Aerospace 125 and 146 aircraft and Squirrel helicopters, all in a VIP role.

Six Belgians are recorded as having served with 32 Sqn during the Second World War.

91 Sqn was originally formed in 1917 and then reformed with Spitfires in 1941 in a maritime role. The Sqn flew armed reconnaissance sweeps over the approaches to the invasion area in Normandy and later searched for midget submarines off the coasts of Belgium and the Netherlands.

Nine Belgians are reordereed as serving with 91 Sqn during the Second World War.

123 Sqn was originally formed in 1918 and was reformed as a fighter sqn in 1941. In 1942 the Sqn was deployed to the Middle East, then the Western Desert in 1943 and finally, in 1944, to India and Burma. In June 1945, 123 Sqn was renumbered as 81 Sqn and continued operating in the Far and Middle East until 1970.

Six Belgians are listed on the role of honour as serving 123 Sqn during the Second World War.

124 Sqn was originally formed in 1918; the Sqn reformed with Spitfires in 1941 and initially provided convoy patrols and escort missions over France. Interestingly, in 1945, the Sqn was equipped with high altitude Spitfire Mark 7 ac and pilots were intercepting enemy aircraft at up to 50,000 ft. Later the Sqn was tasked against V-2 sites and V-2 supply lines in the Netherlands.

In 1946, the Sqn was renumbered 56 Sqn, and today 56 (Reserve) Sqn is the Air Command and Control, Intelligence, Surveillance, Targeting and Reconnaissance Operational Evaluation Unit, based at the Air Warfare Centre, RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire.

Eight Belgians are reordered as serving with 124 Sqn.

141 Sqn was originally formed in 1918 and then reformed in 1939. In July 1940 operating Defiants, the Sqn was withdrawn after losing 6 out of 9 aircraft over the Channel to Me 109s. In 1941 the Sqn converted to Beaufighters for local defence and intruder missions. In late 1943, the Sqn re-equipped with Mosquitoes and for the rest of the war supported Bomber Command by attacking enemy night-fighters and their bases.

After the War, the Sqn was disbanded and then reformed within 12 months. 141 Sqn was a Bloodhound Surface to Air Missile Sqn when it was finally disbanded in 1964.

Seven Belgians are recorded on the role of honour as having served with 141 Sqn during the Second World War.

143 Sqn was originally formed in 1918 and based in Belgium. The squadron was disbanded after only 18 months, but was reformed in 1941 as a long-range fighter unit in Coastal Command, equipped with Beaufighters and later Mosquitoes. Throughout the war the squadron provided fighter support to maritime operations including anti-shipping, convoy patrol and air-sea rescue missions. The Sqn was disbanded in May 1943.

5 Belgians are recorded as serving with the Sqn during the Second World War.

147 Sqn was originally formed in Egypt in 1918, and then reformed in 1944 at Croydon as a transport unit with Dakotas, and later Ansons, to provide passenger and freight flights between the UK and the newly-liberated cities in France, Belgium and Italy. The squadron was disbanded in 1946, then reformed in 1953 as a ferry unit before amalgamation with 167 Sqn in 1958.

Five Belgians are recorded as having served with 147 Sqn during the Second World War.

171 Sqn was formed in 1942 and equipped with Tomahawks and Mustangs to provide tactical reconnaissance support to the Army. Later the Sqn was equipped with Halifaxes and Stirlings and was tasked with dropping 'Window', to disrupt enemy radar, in support of bombers.

Fifteen Belgians served with the Sqn before it was disbanded at the end of the War.

236 Sqn was originally formed in 1918 then reformed in 1939 with Blenheim fighters, and later Beaufighters, to provide fighter reconnaissance support to naval and maritime air operations. From mid-1942 the Sqn conducted anti-shipping operations, including some off the Netherlands coast, until the end of the war when the Sqn was disbanded.

Ten Belgians are recorded as serving with the Sqn during the war.

272 Squadron was originally formed in 1918 and then reformed in 1940, with Blenheims, to conduct shipping escort patrols. In mid-1941 the Sqn converted to Beaufighters and was then deployed, for the rest of the war, to the Mediterranean and the Near East in long-range fighter and convoy escort roles.

Sixteen Belgians served on the squadron before it was disbanded at the end of the war.

525 Sqn was formed in 1943 as a transport unit with Warwicks, and later Dakotas, operating to Gibraltar and to allied bases in France and Belgium. Immediately after the war the squadron took over the mail and newspaper service between the UK and British bases on the Continent, before being disbanded six months later.

5 Belgians served with the Sqn during the war. The Sqn also has a special place in Belgian aviation history as, after the war, it was the air transport training ground for many ex-RAF pilots who went on to form the core of SABENA.