



Guidance Heligoland39 Educational Resources

'Father Forgive' Provost Howard 15 November 1940

Championing Education

Daylight to Darkness: Remembering the men that flew in The Battle of Heligoland Bight 18 December 1939 tells the human story behind the statistics of the first named air battle of WWII. A battle that many had not registered but one which had significant impact on the strategy of Bomber Command.

Over the last year The Heligoland39 Project has worked hard to share and learn more about the stories behind *Daylight to Darkness* and in doing so thought about how they could be used to Champion Education.

As fewer and fewer veterans from WWII remain and we no longer hear first-hand about their experiences we have to ask, 'How do we keep their stories alive?' 'How are they relevant today?' and 'What can we learn from them to secure a peaceful world?'

Children and young people are capable of tackling big questions and teachers are skilful in creating opportunities for learning from the past and looking at the relevance for today. What is hard is tackling these facts in a world where conflict remains, in June 2024 there were 56 conflicts reported, the most since WWII. Many children across the UK have joined our schools having left war zones and conflict. War is a reality to them.

Championing education must be anchored in knowing who contributed to Bomber Command and what is meant by Remembrance, Recognition and Reconciliation.

The Heligoland39 Project endorses the work of the Community of the Cross of Nails 'Growing together in hope' and the three guiding principles:

Healing the wounds of history,
Learning to live with difference and celebrate diversity,
Building a culture of justice and peace.

International Bomber Command Centre, honours all those who served in Bomber Command working with veterans, to record their stories and preserve their documents and photos with the aim to educate the generation of today and future generations. In Lincolnshire it serves as a centre of education for children and young people of all ages.

The Heligoland39 Project has worked with St Peter at Gowts Church of England Primary School to consider how the story of The Battle of Heligoland Bight can enhance the school curriculum and impact the wider school community through Remembrance, Recognition and Reconciliation playing its part to 'Shine a beacon of hope'.



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Guidance Heligoland39 Educational Resources

A number of educational resources have been produced to support learning. The resources are printable and can be used to enhance the curriculum in both primary and secondary schools. They can be used to support learning in the history curriculum and the wider curriculum including PSHE, RE and Values Education.

A brief description and suggestions of how they can be used in the classroom is set out below. In addition a list of useful websites with educational resources is also included.

Knowledge Organisers: A4 landscape

The Battle of Heligoland Bight:


Timeline: plotting the Battle of Heligoland Bight in the context of WWII

Key knowledge: easy accessible facts

Key images: to support recall of facts

This knowledge organiser has been designed to enable learners to easily access key facts in relation to the first named air battle of WWII. It has a set of symbols to support recall of the key facts associated with the battle.

● The Battle of Heligoland Bight ●




WWII began on
3 September 1939
after Germany invaded Poland


**18 December
1939**

Sqn Ldr Harris
Daytime Sweep
2 January 1940

The Battle of Britain
10 July 1940







Painting of Battle



Map of Heligoland Bight battle

- Battle of Heligoland Bight first named RAF air battle of WWII
- 130 RAF aircrew flew in the Battle of Heligoland Bight
- 24 Wellington Aircraft took off on a daylight raid around 9.30am on Monday 18th December 1939, led by Wing Commander Kelllett
- 2 aircraft turned back early
- 22 Wellingtons flew on to the target area
- Rules of engagement: no attack on civilians
- Target German warships
- No German warships found at sea
- Ships in the harbour could not be bombed under the 'terms of engagement'
- Weather, bitterly cold with no clouds and good visibility
- As the Wellingtons returned they came under attack from 44 Luftwaffe radar-directed fighters and a fierce battle took place
- Length of battle: reportedly lasted around 33 minutes
- Of the 22 Wellingtons 10 were shot down, 2 ditched in the sea before reaching the English coast and 3 crash landed in East Anglia
- Total Losses: 57 RAF aircrew and 2 Luftwaffe pilots
- POW's: 5 men were taken prisoner of war one of whom died
- 2 weeks later on Tuesday 2 January 1940 Squadron Leader Harris was instructed to send 3 Wellingtons on a daytime sweep into Heligoland Bight. 2 out of the 3 crews perished.
- As a result Bomber Command changed from daytime bombing operations over Germany, to night flying.

printable resource@Heligoland39.org

The Battle of Heligoland Bight: Aircraft, Aircrew and Recruitment

Timeline: plotting the development of aircraft pre- and during WWII

Key knowledge: Wellington Bomber, the crew and recruitment to Bomber Command.

Ideas for use:

This knowledge organiser has been produced to enable learners to look at the interrelationship between the aircraft, the crew and the recruitment process. It creates a context to discuss the challenges presented by each element individually and as a whole.

Discussion can centre around the limitations of the Wellington, the age, experience and training of the crew. It can explore the idea of 'a sense of duty'.

●The Battle of Heligoland Bight●


10 October 1938
Wellington MK1 entered the RAF

3 March 1939
prototype Wellington MK11 maiden flight (at Brooklands)

WWII began on
3 September 1939 after
Germany invaded Poland

18 December 1939
Wellington MK 1C
-target German Shipping

The Battle of Britain
10 July 1940




- Wellington Bomber MK 1C flew in the Battle of Heligoland Bight
- British ill-equipped compared to the Germans in terms of aircraft design at beginning of WWII
- Longer to build and repair
- Much work had to be done on design and production of aircraft
- 'Unique geodetic' construction
- Several deficiencies with the design of aircraft
- No armour protection made the gunners vulnerable
- Lack of armaments and inferior weaponing
- Fuel tanks not self-sealing, oil coolers, and engines located in the wing
- Crew spread out throughout the fuselage, gunners confined to the turrets
- Enemy fighters had superior planes, faster and more agile
- Wellington still in production at the end of war

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- Crews were made up of 5 or 6 airmen
- Most aircrew were aged between 19 and 25
- Typically until 1942, 2 pilots and dual aircrew
- 1st Pilot was captain and responsible for co-ordinating the actions of the whole crew
- 2nd Pilot had dual role of Navigator
- Observer (or Navigator) also acted as bomb-aimer
- Wireless operator also acted air gunner
- Front and rear gunners in turrets
- Gunners were young men with little experience

BRITONS

- Started in April 1939
- Volunteers signed up
- Young, civilian men
- Limited training
- Pilots and Navigators most often had some experience with the RAF or RAuxAF
- Variable experience of formation flying
- As the war progressed Bomber Command crews were made up from men from the United Kingdom, other Commonwealth countries and occupied Europe, especially Poland, France, Czechoslovakia and Norway.

printable resource@Heligoland39.org

Let's Talk About the Battle of Heligoland Bight:

Key vocabulary

Fact Finders

Ideas for use:

This knowledge organiser is a resource to access key vocabulary. It can be used as a mini dictionary to check meaning and spelling to support written accounts, and additionally used as a prompt for applying and extending vocabulary in group or class discussion. The fact finder element is included to encourage curiosity and enjoyment of words and language.

●The Battle of Heligoland Bight●

Let's talk about the Battle of Heligoland Bight 1939

Key vocabulary:

Aeronautics The science of aviation, including designing and building aircraft

Aircraft A vehicle that is able to fly by gaining support from the air.

Allies Countries who fought on the British side (France, USA, Russia (1941-45))

Armaments Military weapons and equipment

Armour The tough metal layer covering a military vehicle to defend it from attack

Aviation The human activity that surrounds aircraft

Axis Countries who fought on the German side (Italy, Japan and Russia (1939-41))

Battle A sustained fight between large organised armed forces

Blitz Series of air-raid bombings on UK, mainly London but other significant cities such as Coventry and Hull

Deficiencies In the context of aircraft weaknesses in the design

East Anglia An area in the East of England. It is made up of the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire

Fuselage The main body of an aircraft

Lincolnshire Lincolnshire is the second largest county in England, and forms part of the East coast

Operations An activity that is planned to achieve something such as a military operation

Challenge:
How many of the words listed can you bring into your discussion?

Propaganda Information used to promote a political cause

Phoney war The period at the beginning of WWII between September 1939 and April 1940 when there was very little fighting. It was brought to an abrupt end by the German invasion of Norway in April 1940. Winston Churchill referred to this period as the 'twilight war' and the Germans as the 'armchair war.'

RAF Royal Air Force

RAuxAF Royal Auxiliary Air Force

Rules of Engagement The rules set out in terms of the use of force

Sortie An attack made by troops coming out from a position of defence

Warfare Engaging in the activities involved in war and conflict

Wing Part of the structure of the aircraft

Wing Commander A senior officer rank

WWII An abbreviation for 'World War Two'. WWII also stands for 'World War One'

Volunteer A person who freely offers to take part in an enterprise, task or job

Fact Finder:
Where did the term 'Phoney War' come from?

Fact Finder:
Can you name the aviation engineer and designer associated with the Wellington?

Fact Finder:
A sortie is from the French word meaning 'to exit' or from the Latin root word 'surgere' what is the English translation?

printable resource@Heligoland39.org

This knowledge organiser focuses on one key quote from German Radar. It alludes to the disbelief that the RAF would fly on such a clear day which increased their vulnerability.

The Battle of Heligoland Bight 18 December 1939 resulted in significant loss of aircraft and crew. The Battle was followed shortly by a day time sweep by S/Ldr Harris on 2 January 1940, when 2 out of 3 Wellingtons perished. These events, with significant losses, informed a change of strategy from daylight flying to night raids.

● The Battle of Heligoland Bight ●


Battle of Heligoland Bight

18 December 1939: Daylight to Darkness

On 18 December 1939, 24 Wellingtons assembled over The Wash and headed across the North Sea. Bright sunshine and visibility in excess of 50 miles.

German Radar reported an echo as the aircraft approached Wilhelmshaven.

Luftwaffe Command reacted
"Tommies approaching in weather like this?..... You're plotting seagulls or there's interference on your set".



printable resource@Heligoland39.org

The Story of Wellington N2983

These resources are an example of how by taking the story of one aircraft and its crew can enable a deeper reflection on the reality of the men behind the statistics. The Wellington N2983 was selected by St Peter at Gowts Church of England Primary School Lincoln who had adapted the school curriculum to include The Battle of Heligoland Bight and wanted to dig deeper through incorporating a local story.

Newspaper reports can be sourced in Daylight to Darkness: Remembering the men that flew in The Battle of Heligoland Bight 18 December 1939.

Newspaper Reports

Newspapers reports can be used as a source of evidence and presented to children in an age appropriate way. For example a template can be created in the style of front page news with the date, name of newspaper and report. A blank box can be included and used for an illustration for artistic purposes or an assessment tool e.g can the learner identify and illustrate key aspects of the story.

Ideas for use:

Children could be grouped and each group could take one crew member and use the newspaper reports linked to that crew member, using the reports to build up an evidence base to consider what each report was trying to convey and the purpose of the report.

Example of Newspaper Report resource

Evening Standard

WEDNESDAY, 20 DECEMBER, 1939.

Naval Trawler Rescues Crew Returning from Battle

Aircrew Picked Up By Trawler -

The crew of a Wellington after they ditched in the North Sea. Swift action was needed after the fuel tank caught fire. It is understood the rear gunner courageously deployed the

inflatable dinghy, before the plane came down in the freezing waters of the North Sea. This is believed to be the first time such an RAF emergency dinghy has been deployed in action. A representative confirmed the crew were returning from The Battle of Heligoland.

Piecing together the Story of Wellington N2983.

This resource is a template to create a pack of cards with key images and words to support the recall of the story and fate of the crew of N2983. There are a number of ways the cards can be used for a whole class, group or paired activity.

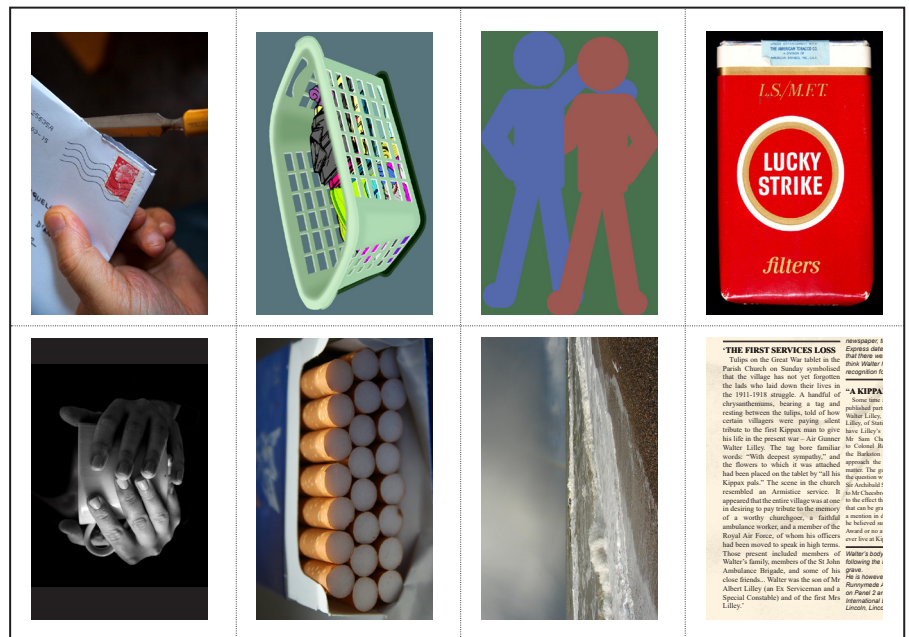
A child could select 3 cards and use the word or picture to piece together and articulate how they relate or prompt the retelling of part of the story.

A group could have a pack of cards and take it in turn to take a card from the top of the pack and use it as a prompt to articulate its significance as part of the story.

A pack could be dealt between a group of players, each player organises their cards and then take turns to retell the story with the words or images they have.

A single player could work with a pack of cards and decide how they can be grouped or linked to piece together the story.

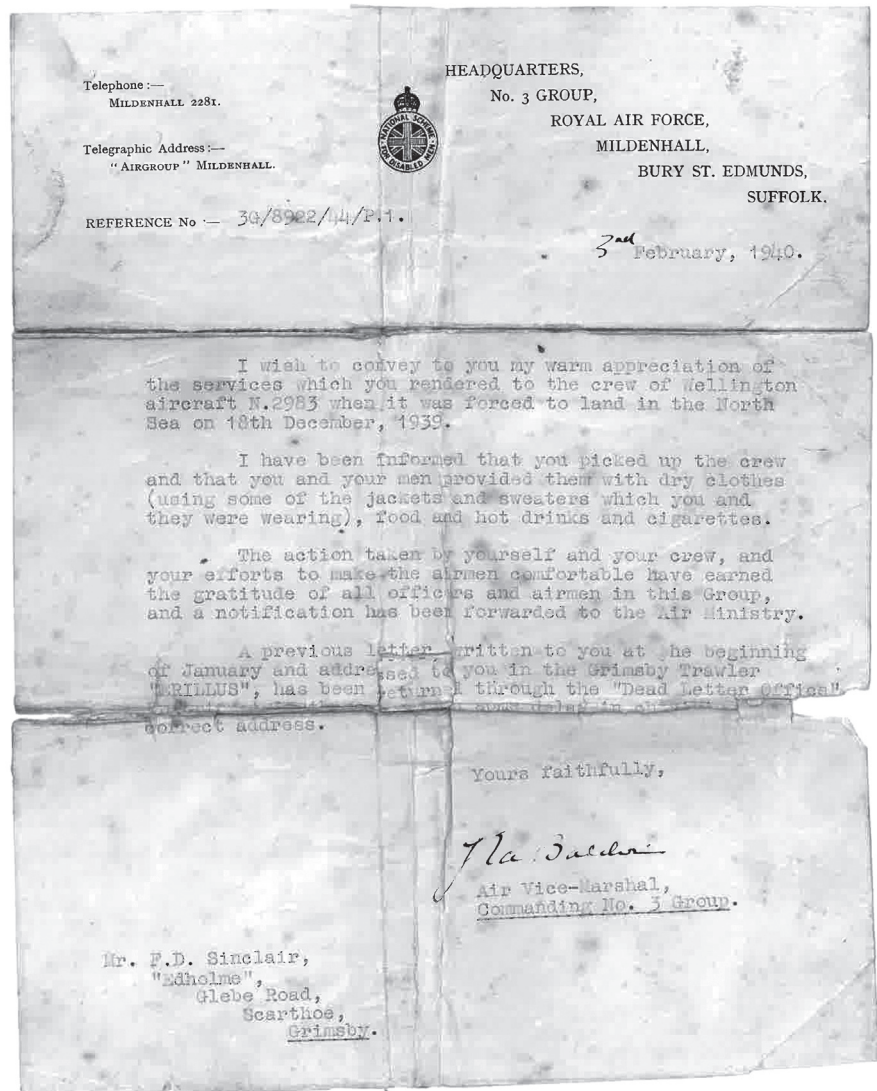
A group or pair of children could use the pack to create an activity to help them recall and piece together the Story of Wellington N2983.



Fred Sinclair and the Trawler Erillus.

Available resources: Fred Sinclair Archive Pack from his son Tony.

The role of the trawler WWI and WWII information pack produced by The Carnegie Heritage Centre.



In February 1940, Skipper of the Erillus Frederick David Sinclair received the following letter of thanks from Air Vice Marshal J.E.A. Baldwin, Commander of No.3 Group RAF:

"I wish to convey to you my warm appreciation of the services which you rendered to the crew of Wellington aircraft N.2983 when it was forced to land in the North Sea on 18th December, 1939.

I have been informed that you picked up the crew and that your men provided them with dry clothes (using some of the jackets and sweaters which you and they were wearing), food and hot drinks and cigarettes.

The action taken by yourself and your crew, and your efforts to make the airmen comfortable have earned the gratitude of all officers and airmen in this Group, and a notification has been forwarded to the Air Ministry.

A previous letter written to you at the beginning of January and addressed to you in the Grimsby Trawler 'ERILLUS' has been returned through the 'Dead Letter Office' unfortunately... some delay in...correct address.'

Painting of the ditching of N2983

This painting was commissioned by Jack Waterfall Heligoland39 Project Leader to depict the ditching of the Wellington off the coast of North Lincolnshire.

Artist: Des Brophy



Remembrance, Recognition and Reconciliation

The Heligoland39 Project book *Daylight to Darkness: remembering the men that flew in the Battle of Heligoland Bight 18 December 1939* has highlighted its significance as the first named air battle of WWII, and told the human story behind the statistics. Remembrance, Recognition and Reconciliation are at the heart of this work.

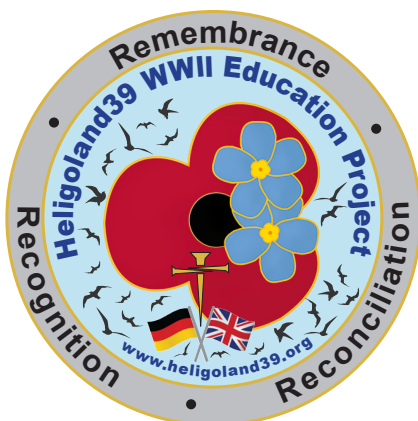
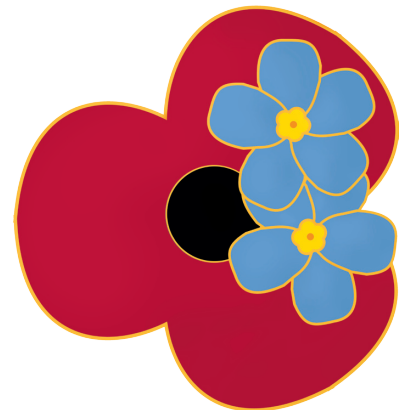
The following resources provide a context for engaging with the concepts of remembrance, recognition and reconciliation.

Logos, Cross of Nails, Paintings, Memorial Stone designs

Children can discuss the design of each logo to consider the choice and symbolism of the images and colours used.

The original Heligoland39 Project logo.

The H39 design is our representation of reconciliation; a three petal poppy, with two Forget-me-Nots to represent the two German fighter pilots who perished on 18 December 1939. The Forget-me-Not is the German symbol of remembrance.

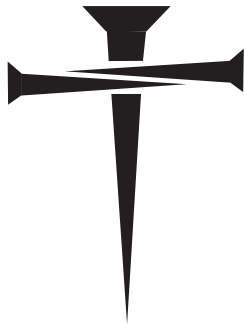


The Heligoland39 WWII Education Project logo

incorporates a number of features which children can discuss to consider what they represent or convey: the Poppy, 2 Forget-me-Nots, a flock of seagulls, the Cross of Nails logo, the 3 R's: Remembrance, Recognition and Reconciliation.

Cross of Nails

The story of Coventry Cathedral, the Cross of Nails and Reconciliation.



The Heligoland39 Project


Commissioned painting 'Reconciliation' from an original painting by Linda Macdonald.



Memorial Stone Facsimile and design options:

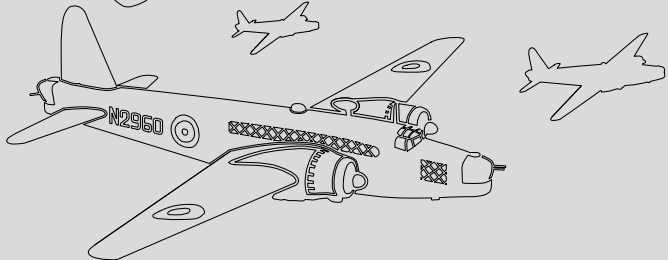
Class based resource includes a full size facsimile of the final design of the Memorial Stone. This can be used to consider the key design features when designing a memorial stone. This provides the opportunity to discuss the purpose of a memorial stone, the audience, who it is for, where it will be located as well as consideration of respect, remembrance, recognition and reconciliation. A memorial stone is about the words chosen and the images to go alongside the words with the purpose of remembering.

The final design of the Memorial Stone designed by Brian Downing IBCC Ribbon AutoCAD Designer



REMEMBERING

THE BATTLE OF HELIGOLAND BIGHT 1939



ON 18 DECEMBER 1939, 24 WELLINGTONS ASSEMBLED OVER THE WASH AND HEADED ACROSS THE NORTH SEA. BRIGHT SUNLIGHT AND VISIBILITY IN EXCESS OF 50 MILES. GERMAN RADAR REPORTED AN ECHO AS THE AIRCRAFT APPROACHED WILHELMSHAVEN. LUFTWAFFE COMMAND REACTED "TOMMIES APPROACHING IN WEATHER LIKE THIS? YOU'RE PLOTTING SEAGULLS OR THERE'S INTERFERENCE ON YOUR SET"

THIS MEMORIAL COMMEMORATES THE 130 AIRMEN WHO FLEW IN THE FIRST NAMED AIR BATTLE OF WW2. 57 AIRMEN AND 12 AIRCRAFT WERE LOST IN THE RAID. TWO LUFTWAFFE FIGHTER PILOTS FAILED TO RETURN.

In terms of Design Technology - the example of the design process when determining The Battle of Heligoland Bight 39 Memorial Stone provides an excellent 'real life' example of what needs to be considered:

Purpose	Audience
Placing/location	Imagery
Text	Technical constraints
Cost	

This memorial stone was designed to be added to the Ribbon of Remembrance at the International Bomber Command Centre.

<https://youtu.be/-JzIFZj5050?si=X4f6uaMO8DdDe9CL>

The initial design idea included seagulls.

Class or Group Discussion

Ask the children to reflect on their understanding of Remembrance, Recognition and Reconciliation and share their thoughts in a group or class discussion. Consider how an understanding of the 3R's might impact on the design of a memorial stone. Link this discussion to other values which might be important for example respect, love, forgiveness.

Discuss the design process.

Debate why you think the final design was chosen.



Design of invitation:
another resource for design analysis.



The Heligoland39 Project

www.heligoland39.org

Follow on Facebook @Heligoland39 Project

Click the link below to view a series of films collated by Brooklands TV covering a number of events and interviews directly related to the project. These provide an excellent educational resource and selected clips can enhance learning in the classroom.

Please contact patriciaruff@icloud.com if you need further guidance.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLx4w0Uz8rNI8ialUPgcvN65v9wfLMoxXD>

To access a copy of 'Daylight to Darkness: Remembering the Men that Flew in the Battle of Heligoland Bight 18 December 1939,' please visit the H39 website for a list of venues where it is lodged for reference

International Bomber Command Centre

<https://internationalbcc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Bomber-Command-timelineV1.pdf>

<https://internationalbcc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Teachers-Information-Pack-2024.pdf>

<https://internationalbcc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Bomber-Command-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

Coventry Cathedral Digital Resource Download

<https://www.coventrycathedral.org.uk/visit/school-visits/school-resources>

<https://www.coventrycathedral.org.uk/shop/digital-resources>

Provost Richard Howard Christmas Day Speech 1940

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-Uk3EfpDMk>

Brooklands Museum

www.brooklandsmuseum.com/learning/schools-and-teachers

The Carnegie Heritage Centre, Hull

www.carnegiehull.org.uk

The Imperial War Museum

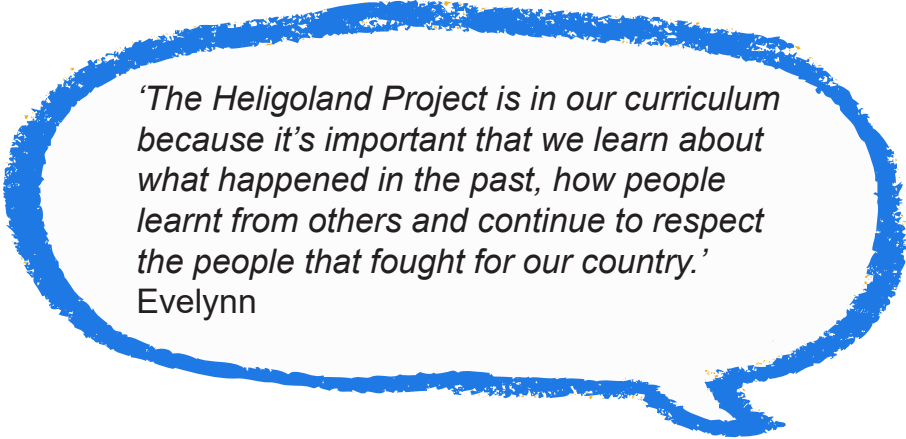
<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/raf-bomber-command-during-the-second-world-war>

Pupil Voice:

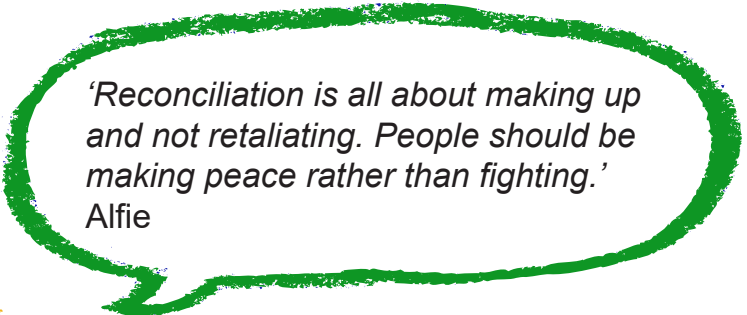
Y6 pupils from St Peter at Gowts Church of England Primary School, Lincoln had the opportunity to learn about the Battle of Heligoland Bight for the first time in academic year 2024/25.

The school engaged in the Heligoland39 Project to further enhance their WWII curriculum by learning about The Battle of Heligoland Bight - the first named air battle of WWII. They chose to look closely at the story of Wellington N2983 which ditched in the North Sea just off Grimsby - as a local story. A big thank you to Emma Bradley and Julia Thorne for engaging in the project and trialing some of the educational resources with their class.

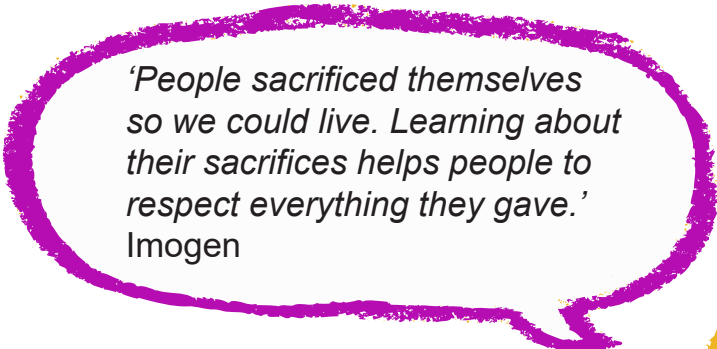
This is what the pupils had to say:



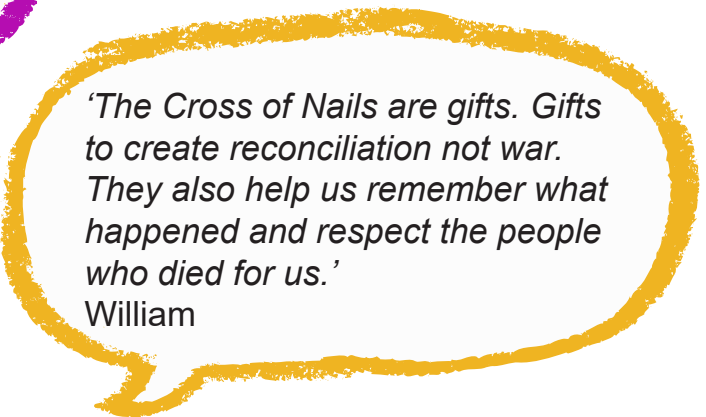
'The Heligoland Project is in our curriculum because it's important that we learn about what happened in the past, how people learnt from others and continue to respect the people that fought for our country.'
Evelynn



'Reconciliation is all about making up and not retaliating. People should be making peace rather than fighting.'
Alfie



'People sacrificed themselves so we could live. Learning about their sacrifices helps people to respect everything they gave.'
Imogen



'The Cross of Nails are gifts. Gifts to create reconciliation not war. They also help us remember what happened and respect the people who died for us.'
William