



Convoy Peewit: August 8th, 1940: The First Day of the Battle of Britain?

Andy Saunders

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During the early hours of 8 August 1940 over twenty merchant ships set sail in Convoy CW9 “Peewit” and edged past Dover, hugging the shore in complete darkness. Whilst unseen to human eyes, the Germans had picked up the large convoy on its Freya radar at Cap Gris Nez and flashed warning messages to the Kriegsmarine and Luftwaffe. At Boulogne E-Boats were readied and left port in the early hours to take up station off Beachy Head to watch and wait for the inevitable convoy. With horrendous suddenness, the E-Boat Flotilla was amongst the convoy as it passed Newhaven. Like a pack of wolves into a flock of sheep, the German boats scattered the convoy and mayhem ensued until the E-Boats called off the attack in the gathering light. The rest would be left to the Luftwaffe.

What ensued was recorded in history as the first day of the Battle of Britain. It was the commencement of all-out attacks on channel convoys and resulted in the heaviest losses witnessed in the war so far. After sustaining massive damage, RAF fighters scrambled from Tangmere to defend the convoy and clashed with attacking Me 109s and Ju 87s in a vicious battle over the channel.

Andy Saunders gives a blow by blow account from the perspective of the RAF, Luftwaffe, Merchant Navy, Royal Navy and Kriegsmarine on this milestone day. Using personal accounts of the action, official diaries, logbooks and contemporary records, 'Convoy Peewit 1940' gives a chronological breakdown of events on land, sea and air, successfully setting them into context against the wider picture that was the Battle of Britain. Published to coincide with the screening of a BBC program, based on the author's research and writings.

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