

## Some guidelines to using the Watermarked RAF Squadron ORB on the UK National Archives website –

by Dennis Burke - [www.ww2irishaviation.com](http://www.ww2irishaviation.com)

**Note:** These instructions are as of 30 September 2018, links and layouts may of course change over time.

- a. Go to The National Archives Discovery Database

<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

It should look like this:



- b. In the search box, Type in the following string of text and numbers including the quotation marks:  
"Squadron number: xxx" where the letters xxx should be replaced by the Squadron number you wish to look up. For example:  
"Squadron number: 7"  
"Squadron number: 34"  
"Squadron number: 224"

c. Then click on the search icon



d. You will be presented with a long or short list of results, depending on the unit you are searching for. Example of 224 Squadron Shown below

Home > Discovery > Your search results Discovery help Bookmark Show quick tour

## Search results for "Squadron number: 224"

"Squadron number: 224"

[Start new search](#) [Advanced search](#) [Browse](#)

**Filter results**

**Held by**

- The National Archives (477)
  - Available for download only (477)

**Date**

- 1950+ (257)
- 1925 - 1949 (220)
- 1900 - 1924 (1)

**Records 477** Record creators 0

Descriptions of records and information about how to access them

1 - 15 of 477 results Sorted by: **Relevance**

**Squadron Number: 224. Appendices: Y.**

Air Ministry and successors: Operations Record Books, Squadrons. No. 224 SQUADRON. Appendices. **Squadron Number: 224. Appendices: Y.**

**Held by:** The National Archives - Air Ministry and Royal Air Force records  
**Date:** September 1939  
**Reference:** AIR 27/1392  
**Subjects:** Air Force | Armed Forces (General Administration) | Operations, battles and campaigns

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**Squadron Number: 224. Records of Events: Y.**

Air Ministry and successors: Operations Record Books, Squadrons. No. 224 SQUADRON. Operations Record Books. No 224 Squadron: Operations Record Book. **Squadron Number: 224. Records of Events: Y.**

**Held by:** The National Archives - Air Ministry and Royal Air Force records  
**Date:** July 1943  
**Reference:** AIR 27/1387/19  
**Subjects:** Air Force | Armed Forces (General Administration) | Operations, battles and campaigns

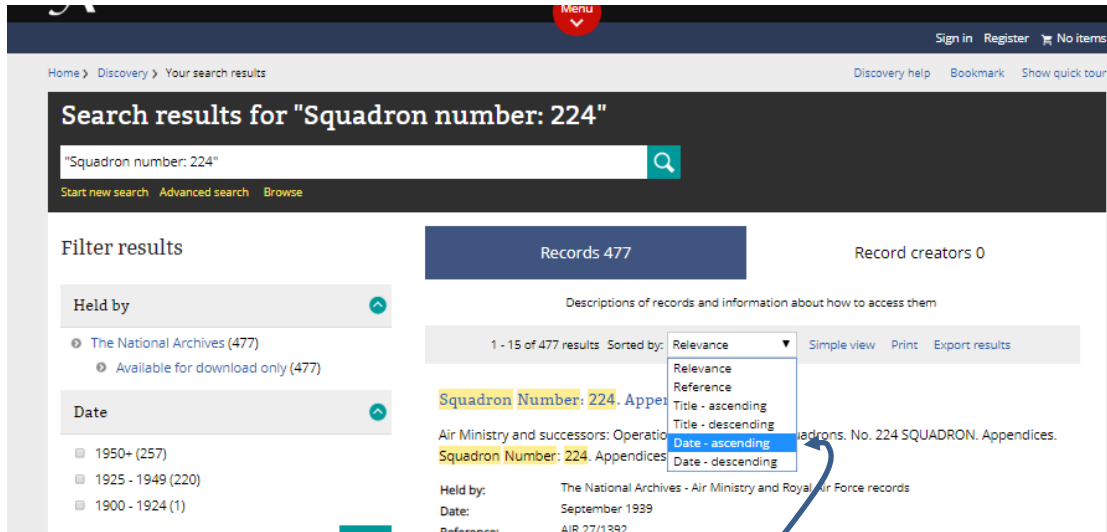
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**Squadron Number: 224. Summary of Events: Y.**

Air Ministry and successors: Operations Record Books, Squadrons. No. 224 SQUADRON. Operations Record Books. No 224 Squadron: Operations Record Book. **Squadron Number: 224. Summary of Events: Y.**

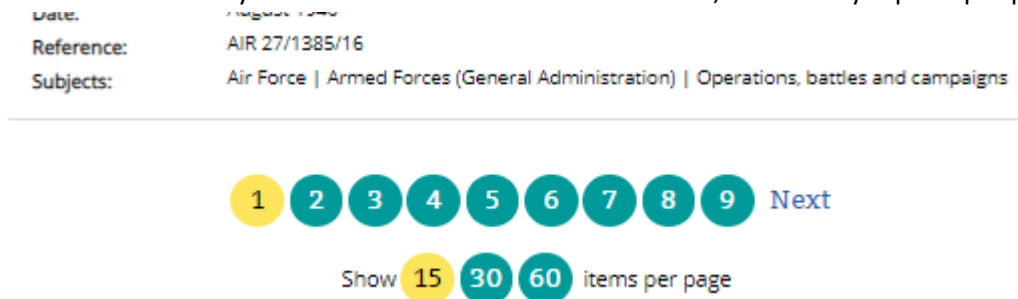
**Held by:** The National Archives - Air Ministry and Royal Air Force records  
**Date:** October 1940  
**Reference:** AIR 27/1385/19

e. What to do with these results?



You can then sort the results in a number of ways using this drop down menu. My own preference is to sort the results by “Date – ascending”

f. You can also choose to increase the number of monthly reports on each page of your browser, from 15 to 30 or 60  
This is the default layout at the bottom of the results screen, 15 monthly reports per page:



You can change this by clicking on the 15 or 30 or 60 to show:

**At 30** per page

Date: July 1940  
Reference: AIR 27/1385/13  
Subjects: Air Force | Armed Forces (General Administration) | Operations, battles and campaigns

---

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Next

Show 15 30 60 items per page

**Or at 60** per page:

Date: January 1942  
Reference: AIR 27/1387/2  
Subjects: Air Force | Armed Forces (General Administration) | Operations, battles and campaigns

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Next

Show 15 30 60 items per page

g. So, once that's done, what are you being presented with at the clickable links? Here is a typical monthly return:

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**Squadron Number: 224. Records of Events: Y.**

Air Ministry and successors: Operations Record Books, Squadrons. No. 224 SQUADRON. Operations Record Books. No 224 Squadron: Operations Record Book. **Squadron Number: 224. Records of Events: Y.**

**Held by:** The National Archives - Air Ministry and Royal Air Force records  
**Date:** May 1945  
**Reference:** AIR 27/1389/34  
**Subjects:** Air Force | Armed Forces (General Administration) | Operations, battles and campaigns

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**Squadron Number: 224. Summary of Events: Y.**

Air Ministry and successors: Operations Record Books, Squadrons. No. 224 SQUADRON. Operations Record Books. No 224 Squadron: Operations Record Book. **Squadron Number: 224. Summary of Events: Y.**

**Held by:** The National Archives - Air Ministry and Royal Air Force records  
**Date:** May 1945  
**Reference:** AIR 27/1389/33  
**Subjects:** Air Force | Armed Forces (General Administration) | Operations, battles and campaigns

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**What is in a “Records of events: Y” link?**

It should be the RAF Form 541, **Detail of Work Carried Out** for the particular month.

If you are searching for an aircrew member of any rank this is the place where you **should** be able to find their **operational missions**.

But, they vary in style and quality depending on the time period, the unit itself, and probably even down to the style that the Squadron clerk employed at that time.

- I say **should** above because, depending on the time and unit and a myriad of factors, some squadrons of multi crew aircraft recorded only the name of the pilot(s), or maybe just the officers on board an operational flight.

- What is an Operational Flight? A single engine pilot might fly a combat mission each day. A multi engine crew might fly every second day. But in between such missions, depending on the location, the situation the unit found themselves, one might expect that a pilot or crew would fly other non-combat missions, such as simple training flights, to practice navigation, to test an aircraft after maintenance, there was lots of reasons to find yourself flying when you weren't on a combat mission. The Form 541, does not record ALL flights by the unit, only those considered 'Operational', i.e. a flight undertaken in pursuance of direct interference with the enemy, be that a bombing, fighter, recon, transport etc mission. Exceptions of course will be found.
- For periods when the unit was not at the front line, you may find there is no Form 541's, they were "non-operational" at that time.
- The presentation of names may vary widely, you could find some listed in any of the following ways
  - o Sgt Other, A N
  - o Sgt Other
  - o Sgt Other (WO/AG)
  - o Sgt Other A M ← a typical example of a typo, or, there might happen to be two men, A N Other and A M Other on the squadron.
  - o Sgt Other A
  - o Sgt Other 123456 < in some cases serial numbers might be presented.
  - o Sgt Otter A M ← another probably typo, think outside the box when looking at the lists

**What is in a "Summary of events: Y" link?**

It should be the RAF Form 540, Summary of Work Carried Out for the particular month.

This one differs from the above by summarising the days missions. Whereas the Form 541 Record of events may list, lets say, seven crews, all their names, the details of each aircrafts operational flight during that mission etc, the Summary, Form 540 will just say seven aircraft took part in raids on..... and then give a summary of results.

One important thing in the Form 540 monthly is that it sometimes, I believe most of the time, lists postings in and out of the Squadron, promotions of aircrew. One snag is, this you may find is only details of the Officers postings, the great unwashed, the Non Commissioned aircraft were left out a lot of the time, but again depends on the unit you are looking at.

h. When you click on those monthly links the new window looks like this.

**You are in**

- The National Archives' catalogue
  - AIR - Records created or inherited by the Air Ministry, the Royal Air Force, and related bodies
    - Division within AIR - Records of the Royal Air Force
      - AIR 27 - Air Ministry and successors: Operations Record Books, Squadrons
        - Subseries within AIR 27 - No. 224 SQUADRON
          - Subsubseries within AIR 27 - Operations Record Books
            - AIR 27/1389 - No 224 Squadron: Operations Record Book
              - This record (browse from here by hierarchy or by reference)

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**Catalogue description**

### Squadron Number: 224 Records of Events: Y

Reference:	AIR 27/1389/34
Description:	Squadron Number: 224 Records of Events: Y
Date:	1945 May 01 - 1945 May 31
Held by:	The National Archives, Kew
Former reference in its original department:	IIM/E224/6
Legal status:	Public Record(s)
Closure status:	Open Document, Open Description

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[Preview an image of this record](#)

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**Squadron Number: 224 Summary of Events: Y**

Reference:	AIR 27/1389/19
Description:	Squadron Number: 224 Summary of Events: Y
Date:	1944 Oct 01 - 1944 Oct 31
Held by:	The National Archives, Kew
Former reference in its original department:	IIM/E224/6
Legal status:	Public Record(s)
Closure status:	Open Document, Open Description

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Image 6 of 15

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The images are digital images for the most part of existing microfilm copies of records. They might be handwritten and very hard to read, they might be hand written and easy to read.

They might be typed and hard to read, and typed and excellent for reading but might contain no useful information.



The viewing window may be very small on your screen but you can use the controls on the top of the viewing window to make it bigger and to surf through the month's files.



From left to right the controls are:

|< - Go to first page of file

< Go to previous page of file

Magnifier to zoom in - you can also zoom in using the wheel on the mouse.

Magnifier to zoom out- you can also zoom in using the wheel on the mouse

← Scroll to the left

→ Scroll to the right

↑ Scroll up

↓ Scroll down

The house symbol resets the page to be fully visible within the viewing window.



This symbol brings the viewing window to FULL SCREEN which I feel is the best option for viewing.

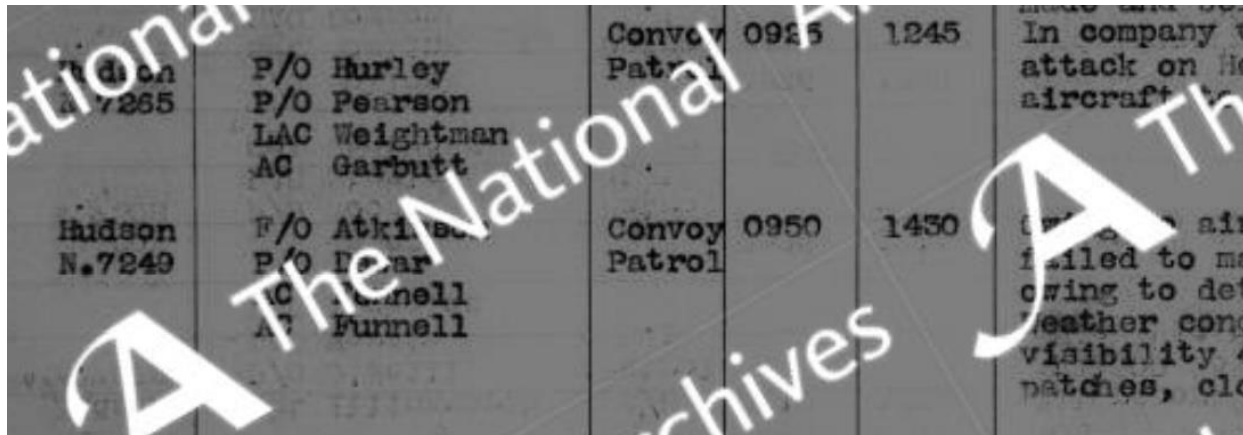
The printer symbol does as the icon suggests, you can print a page or more of the ORB but it will have a water mark like you see on the screen.

➤ Go to next page

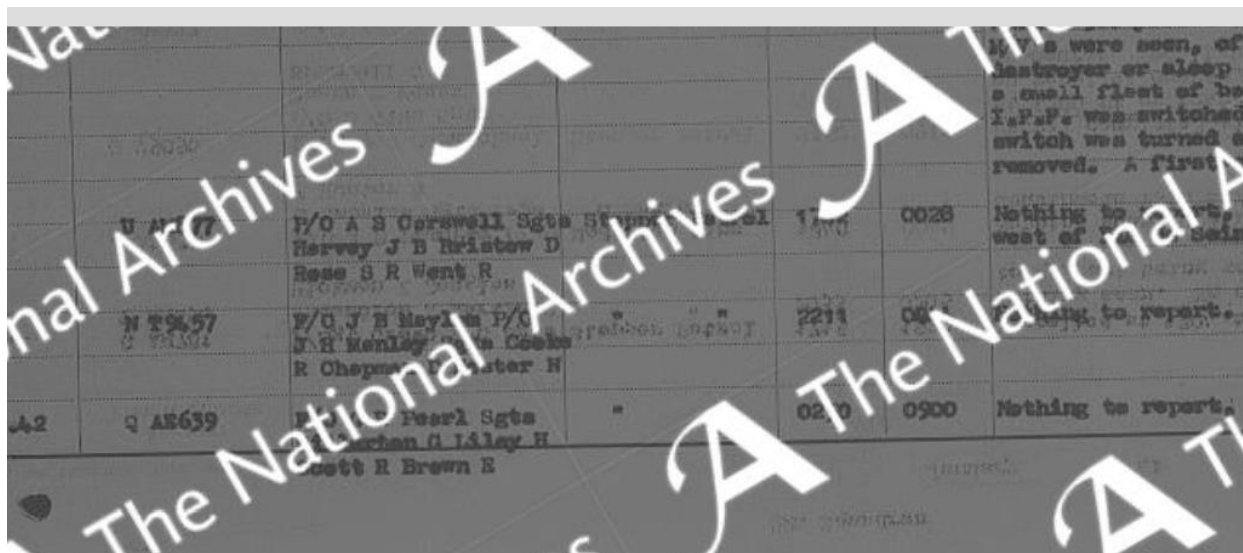
>| Go to last page

So, finally, what's presented at such a link, an image of the documents with a National Archives watermark obliterating some of the text you're trying to read. They still would like you to pay for and download the image, but in the viewer you will get this type of image, it may be good, bad or terrible, but having read many, many, many of these, I have generally been able to determine most of what I wanted without a purchase.

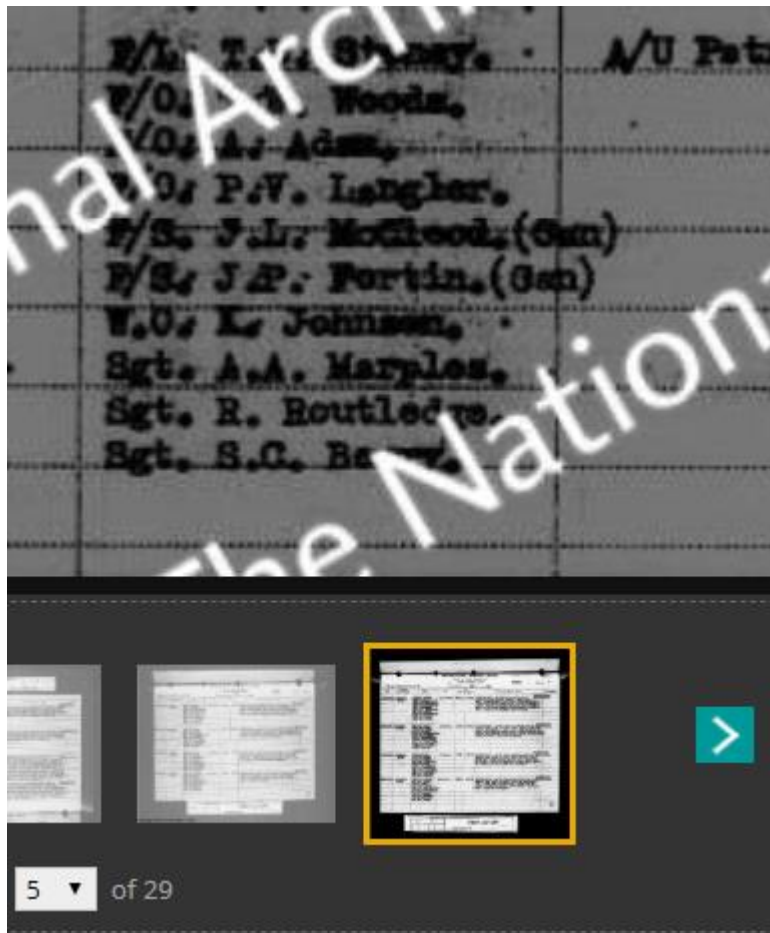
Remember, for a squadron from Sep 1939 to Aug 1945, with two reports per month,  $72 \times 2 = 144$  reports at £3.50 each = UK£504 – Yikes



Much better example of 224 Sqn in 1940, very readable except for the water marks, but by comparing to other flights by a crew you can determine the names listed.



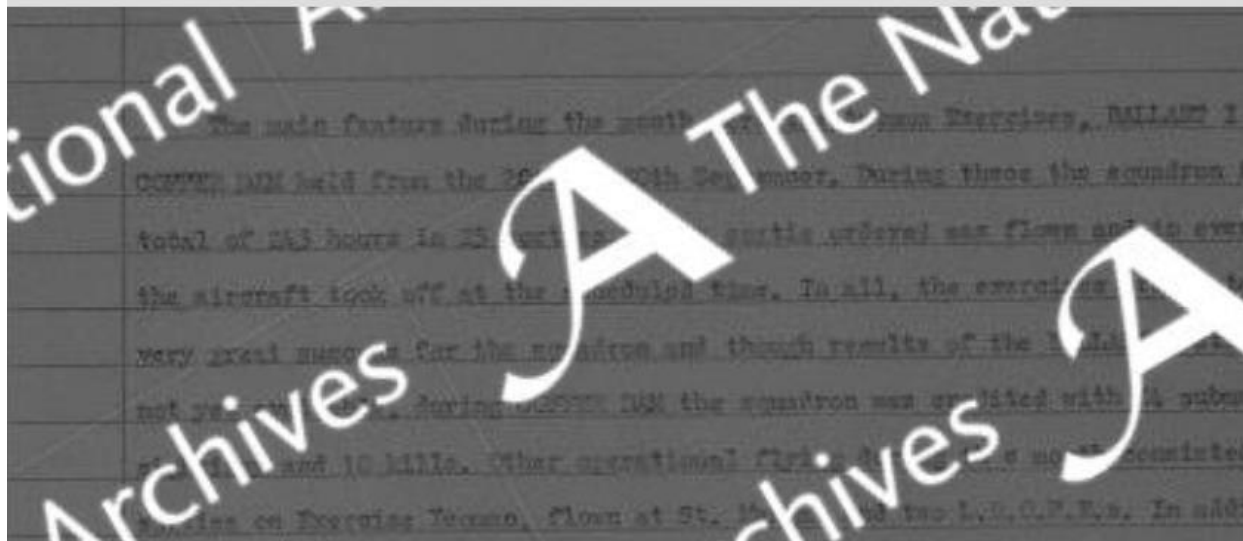
A sample from 1942, the typewriter was a little worse for wear, and the crew sizes had increased and weren't being typed as list, but it's still readable



Even between pages in a month, you will find differences in the scan quality from the Microfilm, in the above example, page 5 of 29 is much clearer than preceding pages.

OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK

To download this record without a watermark, please add it to your basket.



Not a great example from 224 Squadron in 1960!