

BREAKING OF THE DAMS

ON a night in 1943 nineteen R.A.F. bombers led by Wing Commander Guy Gibson, V.C., D.S.O., D.F.C., let loose millions of tons of water to cause havoc in the Nazis' greatest arsenal, and did more damage to Hitler's war effort than some of the thousand bomber raids. The story of the destruction of the Moehne and Eder Dams in the Ruhr is told in a BBC programme, *The Dam-Busters*, which will be broadcast for the first time in

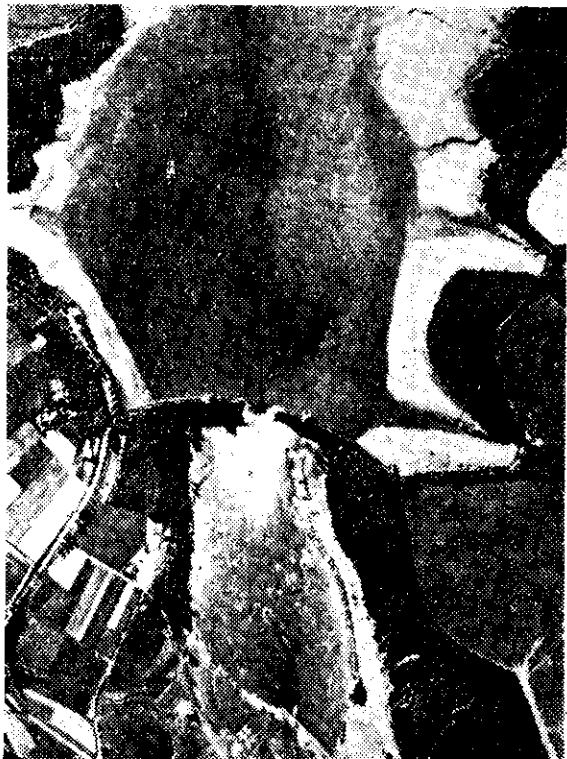
viaducts, railways, bridges and everything that stood in their path. . ."

So Wing Commander Gibson described the moment when the wall of concrete of the Moehne Dam broke under the successive assaults of the mines dropped by his Lancasters. The Ruhr Valley was flooded for 50 miles and more, and many factories were put out of production. This operation and the breaching of the Eder Dam on the same night was one of the greatest manifestations of air power in the Second World War. It was a triumph too for B. N. Wallis, the British scientist whose patient back-room work made the raid possible, and an example of the courage of the young men picked by Gibson from the cream of the Bomber Command.

Precisely

Following a flight over enemy territory the heavy bombers were flown at precisely 232 miles an hour at exactly 60 feet above the water, almost into the muzzles of the German guns defending the dam. Then they dropped their mines directly at the point where the scientist had determined they would do the greatest damage. Only ten of the Lancasters returned home. Some were shot down before they reached the target, one was blasted to pieces when making its run-in, another dropped its mine a second too late. Only one man out of the 56 who crashed escaped to become a prisoner of war. Gibson survived this raid, but was killed in a later operation over Germany.

The Dam-Busters, which reconstructs the attack, was adapted by Paul Brickhill (who wrote *The Great Escape*) from his book of the same name. Brickhill, a fighter pilot, was shot down over the Mareth Line and imprisoned in Stalag Luft III. He knew several of the "dam-busters" and has based his story on first-hand information, official records and Guy Gibson's own excellent account of the raid in his book *Enemy Coast Ahead*. The story of how the bombers flew through tremendous hazards to the attack is thrilling enough in itself, but there is also considerable interest in how Wallis worked out the problems of the special mine they used, and the immensely difficult job of planning and rehearsing the crews to a hair's breadth of accuracy. *The Dam-Busters*, which occupies an hour, was produced by Leonard Cottrell with Ronald Simpson as B. N. Wallis, Clement McCallin as Guy Gibson, and Felix Felton as the narrator.



MOEHNE DAM: "... the water looked like stirred porridge in the moonlight"

New Zealand by 2YA at 9.30 a.m. this Sunday, January 27.

"... Now there was no doubt about it; there was a great breach one hundred yards across and the water, looking like stirred porridge in the moonlight, was gushing out and rolling into the Ruhr Valley towards the industrial centres of Germany's Third Reich. . . Then I looked again at the dam and the water while all around me the boys were doing the same. It was the most amazing sight. The whole valley was beginning to fill with fog from the steam of the gushing water and down in the foggy valley we saw cars speeding along the roads in front of the great wave of water which was chasing them and going faster than they could ever hope to go. I saw their headlights burning and I saw water overtake them, wave by wave, and then the colour of the headlights underneath the water changing from light blue to green, from green to dark purple, until there was no longer anything except the water bouncing down in great waves. The floods raced on, carrying with them as they went

N.Z. LISTENER, JANUARY 25, 1952.



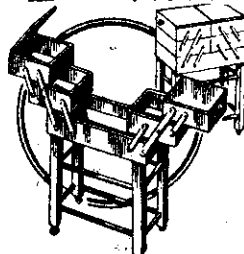
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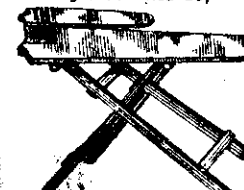
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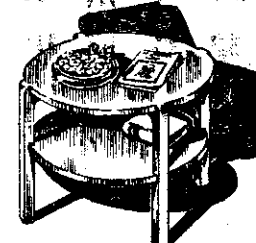


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