

Squadron Leader M Avent
28 Dec 1939 - 27 Jun 1940

On the departure of the second Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader Geoffrey Ambler, the replacement was due to be Squadron Leader J A Vick, formerly a flight commander with 607 (County of Durham) squadron. However, due to a bad motor accident, the replacement turned out to be Squadron Leader M T Avent, once of 605 (County of Warwick) Squadron. His posting, straight from the reserve and biplanes, without a conversion course on monoplanes was as unfair to him as it was to the squadron. For the six month tour he spent with the squadron, he was obliged to lead from the ground and rely on his flight commanders for taking the lead in the air. He did, however take to the air with the intent of going to war, when the squadron was sent south from its Kinloss base, to cover the Dunkirk withdrawal. In the end, however, it was not to be, for the section of three aircraft that he was a member of, had to land at Manston.

Stephen Beaumont wrote, rather scathingly, of Mark Avent: "No fighter leader of a squadron can ever have had less impact on his squadron. We hardly saw him at all either at the flight dispersal or even in the Mess, and I have told of the only times he flew, once with me at my suggestion, and in his fiasco effort at Dunkirk, which latter time is the last I saw of him anyway. Perhaps one should not blame hime for being appointed CO.....but having been appointed he must be blamed for not making any attempt to fulfill his role. I can feel some sympathy for him as he realised he was unfitted for command, but none because he never tried to accept his responsibilities."