



Media Centre

Radio 2 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Dambusters Raid

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Category: [Radio 2](#)

On Friday 17 May, BBC Radio 2 marks the Dambusters 70th anniversary with a special day of programming.

Chris Evans to broadcast from the home of the Dambusters – RAF Scampton – and to fly in a Lancaster Bomber

Featuring Dambusters veterans and Barnes Wallis' daughter

The largest live music event for the anniversary - Friday Night Is Music Night presents The Dambusters 70 Years On from Biggin Hill Airport

The Central Band of the RAF to perform a new composition, plus the Military Wives Choir and the BBC Concert Orchestra

Chris Evans' Breakfast Show will come from RAF Scampton and later he will fly in the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight's Lancaster Bomber.

The Jeremy Vine Show will come from Biggin Hill Airport, and from 8pm Jeremy and Dermot O'Leary present a special Friday Night Is Music Night from an aircraft hangar at Biggin Hill. This will be the largest live music event commemorating the anniversary of this iconic Second World War raid.

Bob Shennan, Controller Radio 2, 6 Music and Asian Network, said: "Radio 2 is proud to commemorate the Dambusters 70th anniversary with a truly memorable day of programming, culminating in a special Friday Night Is Music Night at Biggin Hill."

Starting the day's proceedings, The Chris Evans Breakfast Show will come from RAF Scampton, the airfield where airmen of 617 Squadron (the Dambusters) were based. During the show, Chris will broadcast from a Lancaster Bomber on the ground (this being the historic aircraft which made the daring raid), the original Dambusters hangar, and their Wing Commander, Guy Gibson's office, which still contains artefacts from the time of the operation. He'll also be chatting to various guests including Colin McGregor (brother of actor Ewan) who flew RAF Tornados for 617 Squadron.

Following his show – and subject to weather conditions - Chris is due to fly to Biggin Hill Airport in the Lancaster Bomber, which is one of only two in the world still airworthy. On landing he will talk about this incredible experience on Jeremy Vine's show. It will also be filmed for that evening's The One Show on BBC One.

Chris Evans said: "The Lancaster Bomber holds so many emotions for so many people. It is a true icon for myriad reasons. To be even considered for such a project made the hairs stand up on the back of my neck. The fact that I am going to fly in it is as exciting as my job gets."

The Jeremy Vine Show, 12-2pm, will come live from Biggin Hill Airport that day, commemorating the anniversary with a tailored programme.

The day culminates with Friday Night Is Music Night presents The Dambusters 70 Years On from 8-10pm on Radio 2. This unique radio programme, to be performed live in front of an audience of 2500 people in an aircraft hangar at Biggin Hill Airport, is the largest music event commemorating the anniversary of the Second World War raid.

Dermot O'Leary and Jeremy Vine, accompanied by music from the BBC Concert Orchestra, the Central Band of the RAF and the RAF Squadronnaires will re-tell the story of the Dambusters. There will also be a performance from the Military Wives Choir.

Jeremy Vine said: "This a huge day for us at Radio 2. From the team who brought us Titanic Minute-by-Minute will be a detailed account of this legendary episode from World War Two. Friday Night Is Music Night will stir us like we have never been stirred before. I'm especially glad that Dambusters pilot Les Munro and bomb-aimer George 'Johnnie' Johnson will be a part of it."

There will be special messages from Dambusters pilot Les Munro and bomb-aimer George 'Johnnie' Johnson, both aged 93 and two of just three remaining veterans from the raid. And Barnes Wallis' daughter Mary Stopes-Roe will be reading from a letter she wrote to her father when she was 14 years old after hearing about the successful raid.

The BBC Concert Orchestra and the Central Band of the RAF will combine to perform music including 'Dambusters March', made famous by The Dambusters film. And the Central Band of the RAF will perform for the first time a new composition by Nigel Hess called 'The Bouncing Bomb' which was written specifically to mark this 70th anniversary.

Dermot O'Leary said: "Honouring the Dambusters veterans, the BBC Concert Orchestra, The Central Band of the RAF and the Military Wives Choir – all brought together for Friday Night Is Music Night and coming from an enormous aircraft hangar. It's going to be one memorable event."

Talking about the 70th anniversary, veteran George 'Johnnie' Johnson said: "It was sensational at the time and 70 years on it is still remembered by a number of people. Also, it can bring together [two of the] surviving members of the original squadron. That is something that is worth celebrating as well."

Veteran Les Munro said: "Seventy years on and I still have memories of the Dambusters Raid and how it affected so many people on both sides of the war. The Bomber Command Memorial [a tribute to the 55,573 Bomber Command crew who lost their lives in the Second World War] means we will always remember and hopefully learn from the past so future generations will not experience the pain and upset of another world war."

Talking about how she would like her father, Barnes Wallis, to be remembered, Mary Stopes-Roe said: "As a man of high principles, great intelligence, a good deal of wisdom as well and a lot of fun."

Tickets for Friday Night Is Music Night are available to purchase from Tuesday 23 April. More information is available at bbc.co.uk/radio2.

Friday Night Is Music Night celebrates its 60th birthday this year, making it the world's longest-running orchestral music show. The aircraft hangar at Biggin Hill should prove to be an interesting location, but during its long history, it has broadcast from many other unusual locations including circus tents, castles, cathedrals, a beach, a quayside, the cruise ship Oriana, and yet another aircraft hangar at RAF Northolt for a show which commemorated the Battle of Britain.

In addition, BBC Radio Lincolnshire will be commemorating with Dambusters 70: After Me, The Flood on Thursday 16 May from 7pm to 6am.

The 70th anniversary of the Dambusters Raids will be marked with a special 'as live' overnight show on BBC Radio Lincolnshire on Thursday 16 May.

Programme editor Michael Hortin says: "We will be reporting on the night at the same time as the bombs dropped in 1943, commemorating the events of that night as they unfolded with special music, reporting and a drama.

"This was a major wartime event for the country - and particularly the people of Lincolnshire, from where the 617 Squadron flew - which we are keen to commemorate."

The show, from 6pm to 7am, will be presented by Judy Theobald, Howard Leader and Nicola Gilroy with Rod Whiting in Germany offering live coverage from commemoration events at the Mohne dam.

There will be recorded memories of people who served as ground crew and aircrew in the war in Lincolnshire, and rarely heard BBC archive material from the 1940s.

There will also be link-ups with veterans and historians across the world to paint a picture of life in Lincoln in 1943, plus specially commissioned local folk music about the Dams raids and music from the period.

A drama, commissioned by the radio station working in partnership with the RAF and the University of Lincoln, will be broadcast throughout the programme. The drama has been written by university lecturer Conan Lawrence and former graduate Emma Rodgers, who is now working at BBC Radio Lincolnshire. It was inspired by a book on the Dambusters raids by Max Arthur.

Notes to Editors

Thursday 16 and Friday 17 May 2013 mark the 70th anniversary of the Dambusters Raid - an operation which changed the course of the Second World War. Nineteen Lancaster Bombers, each carrying the lethal 'Bouncing Bomb', took off from Lincolnshire to destroy the dams of Germany's Ruhr Valley, the heart of Germany's war-machine. The crews came from Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Eight aircraft never returned. In total, 133 airmen took part in the raid, 53 of them died. In Germany almost 2000 lives were lost as a result of the dams being breached.

'Friday Night Is Music Night presents The Dambusters 70 Years On' is a BBC co-production with TBI Media and Snappin' Turtle Productions.

The Lancaster Bomber flight is subject to weather conditions and aircraft serviceability.

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Bob Shennan, Controller Radio 2, 6 Music and Asian Network

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