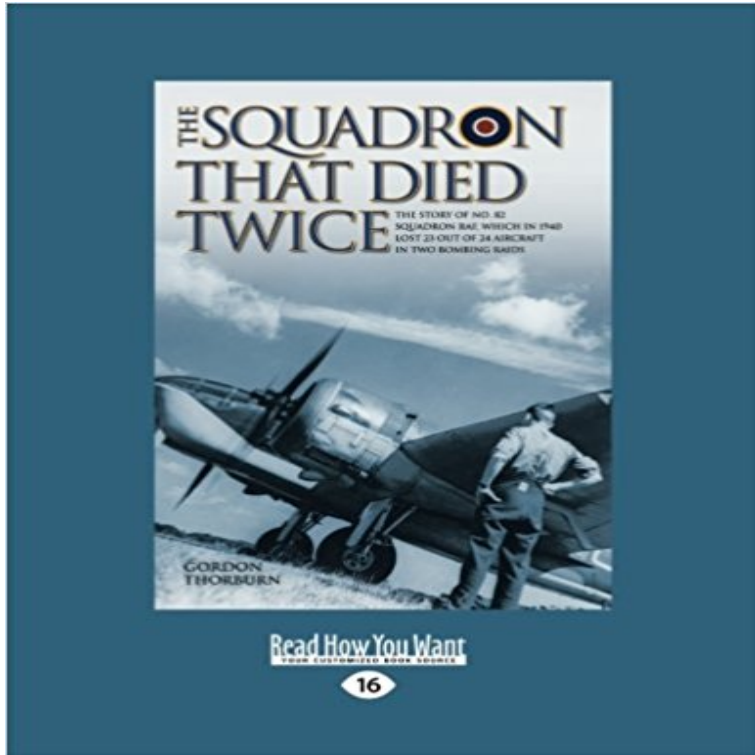


The Squadron That Died Twice: The true story of No. 82 Squadron RAF, which in 1940 lost 23 out of 24 aircraft in two bombing raids



Apart from the quiet chatter of a few mechanics, who were checking that one aircraft was too badly damaged ever to fly again, there was a shocked silence over the aerodrome as everyone there tried to understand the impossible. Twelve twin - engined bombers of 82 Squadron RAF had set out on a fine May morning in 1940, from Watton, Norfolk, in a brave but hopeless attempt to slow down the German armour ripping through Belgium. Sergeant Thomas Jock Morrison was the pilot of the only one to come home. Heavy losses in Bomber Command in the Second World War were common, normal, came with the territory, but this? Eleven out of twelve were shot down, by flak and fighters, and lay in burning fragments along the Belgium/France border. It is said that history repeats itself. And so it was, almost exactly three months later, on a cloudy day in August 1940, that twelve more twin - engined Bristol Blenheim bombers, each with a crew of three men, set off from Watton, Norfolk, in a brave but hopeless attempt to destroy a Luftwaffe base in enemy - occupied Denmark. One aircraft had to turn for home before it reached the target. The other eleven pressed on as the clouds disappeared and, on a fine sunny morning, were all shot down, by flak and fighters, and lay in burning fragments on the shores of the Lymfjord. At the time, when the whole world was trying to understand the impossible, how Germany could conquer Denmark, Norway, The Netherlands, Belgium and France in a few weeks, and Poland before that - and surely Great Britain next? - 82 Squadrons disasters were barely noticed. Based on the accounts of survivors and on squadron and other records, Gordon Thorburn's moving retelling of the story, of the events of it and the men in it, at last puts right that terrible omission.

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