

# Bader's Big Wing Controversy: Duxford 1940

One of the most controversial aspects of the Battle of Britain was the concept of the "Big Wing." This idea, championed by Air Vice-Marshal Douglas Bader, called for the concentration of large numbers of fighter aircraft into a single, massive formation that would overwhelm the Luftwaffe and gain air superiority over the English Channel.



## Bader's Big Wing Controversy: Duxford 1940 by Dilip Sarkar

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

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Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 294 pages



## Concept and Development

Bader first proposed the Big Wing concept in 1939, based on his experiences in the Spanish Civil War. He believed that a large, tightly controlled formation of fighters could not only outmaneuver and outgun the enemy, but also provide mutual support and protection.

In the months leading up to the Battle of Britain, Bader's ideas gained traction within the Royal Air Force (RAF). In June 1940, he was given command of the Duxford Wing, a new unit tasked with testing and refining the Big Wing concept.

## **The Duxford Wing**

The Duxford Wing consisted of three squadrons of Hurricanes and Spitfires. Bader's flagship was a Hurricane Mk I nicknamed "Faith." The wing operated from Duxford Aerodrome in Cambridgeshire, which became a focal point of the Battle of Britain.

Bader's tactics were unorthodox. He insisted on flying his fighters in exceptionally tight formations, often as close as 50 feet apart. He also developed a system of "chain climbing," in which the aircraft climbed in a series of staggered steps, allowing them to maintain maximum energy and altitude.

## **Controversy and Criticism**

The Big Wing concept was not without its critics. Many RAF commanders believed that it was too risky and unwieldy, and that it would make the fighters more vulnerable to enemy attack. They also argued that the concept was impractical, as it required a high level of coordination and discipline, which was difficult to achieve in the heat of battle.

Despite the criticism, Bader and his supporters remained convinced of the Big Wing's potential. They pointed to the wing's success in a series of training exercises and mock battles.

## **Operation Eagle**

The Duxford Wing's first major test came during Operation Eagle, a major offensive launched by the Luftwaffe on August 13, 1940. The wing was tasked with defending the Thames Estuary against waves of enemy bombers and fighters.

The battle was a mixed success for the Duxford Wing. Bader's fighters shot down a number of German aircraft, but they also suffered heavy losses. The wing's tight formations made it difficult for the pilots to avoid enemy fire, and many of them were lost to flak and attacking Bf 109s.

## **Aftermath and Legacy**

Operation Eagle revealed the flaws in the Big Wing concept. The wing's tight formations made it vulnerable to enemy attack, and it was difficult to control such a large number of aircraft in the heat of battle.

After Operation Eagle, the Big Wing concept was abandoned. Bader was relieved of his command and assigned to a non-operational role. However, the Duxford Wing continued to fight on, and it became one of the most successful fighter units in the Battle of Britain.

The controversy over the Big Wing concept continues to this day. Some historians argue that it was a flawed idea that cost the RAF unnecessary lives. Others argue that it was a bold and innovative concept that had the potential to change the course of the battle.

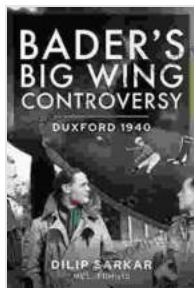
## **Stunning Imagery**

The book "Bader's Big Wing Controversy: Duxford 1940" is filled with stunning imagery, including:

- Rare photographs of Bader and the Duxford Wing
- Detailed illustrations of the Big Wing tactics
- Maps and diagrams of the Battle of Britain

These images bring the story of the Big Wing controversy to life, and help readers understand the challenges and sacrifices that the pilots of the Duxford Wing faced.

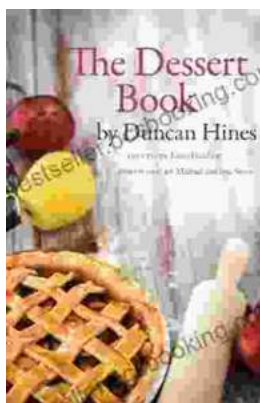
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