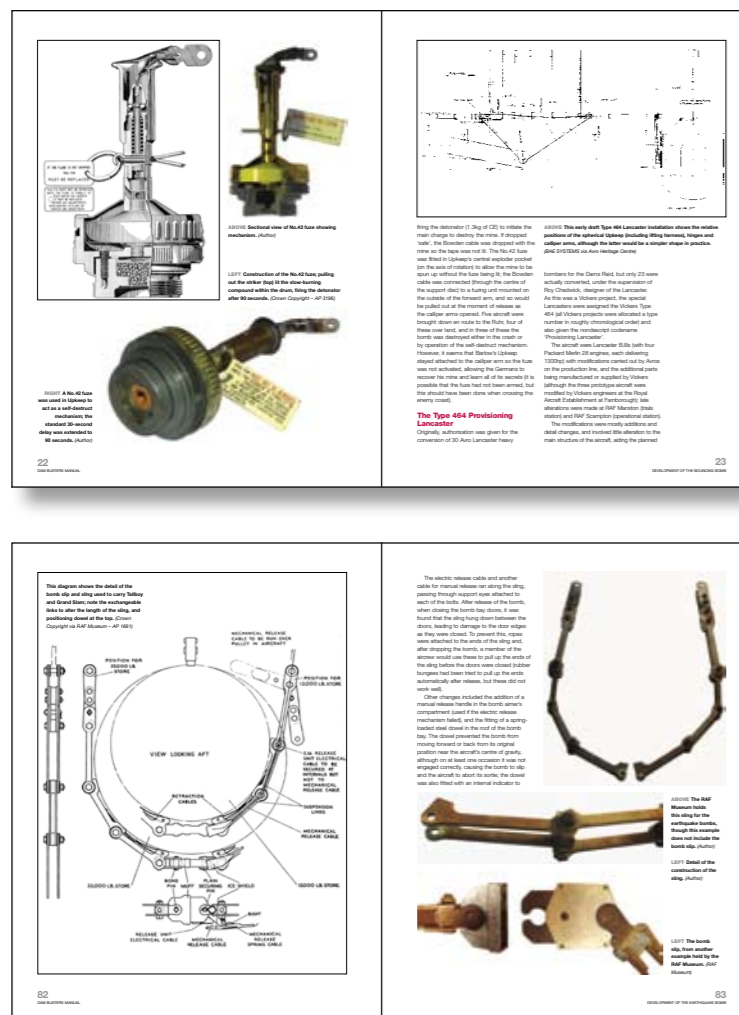


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DAM BUSTERS



1943 onwards (all marks and models)



When the Second World War broke out, aeronautical engineer Barnes Wallis asked himself what he could do to shorten the war. His answer was to develop a range of air-delivered weapons to attack enemy targets that until then were invulnerable to conventional bombs and bombing.

The Ruhr dams in Germany were one such group of vital strategic targets and in one of Wallis's characteristic flashes of genius he provided the means to attack and destroy them. His 'bouncing bombs' were dropped by the Lancasters of 617 Squadron on 16–17 May 1943, smashing open the Möhne and Eder dams – the raid became the stuff of legend.

After the dams raid, the RAF retained 617 Squadron as a special operations unit, which soon acquired the sobriquet of the 'Dam Busters' and was selected to drop another new type of bomb, the 12,000lb 'Blockbuster', which for a short time was the largest weapon in the RAF's armoury. This was followed by the so-called 'earthquake' bombs – the 12,000lb 'Tallboy' and massive 22,000lb 'Grand Slam' – probably the most effective non-nuclear bombs of the war. They were dropped with success by 617 Squadron and 9 Squadron on a variety of crucial targets including the Nazi V-weapon sites, U-boat pens, bridges and the formidable battleship *Tirpitz*.

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Dr Iain Murray is a lecturer in the School of Computing at the University of Dundee. He is the author of *Bouncing Bomb Man: The Science of Sir Barnes Wallis* (Haynes, 2009). Iain has acted as a consultant for a number of TV productions featuring wartime weapons. He lives in Dundee.

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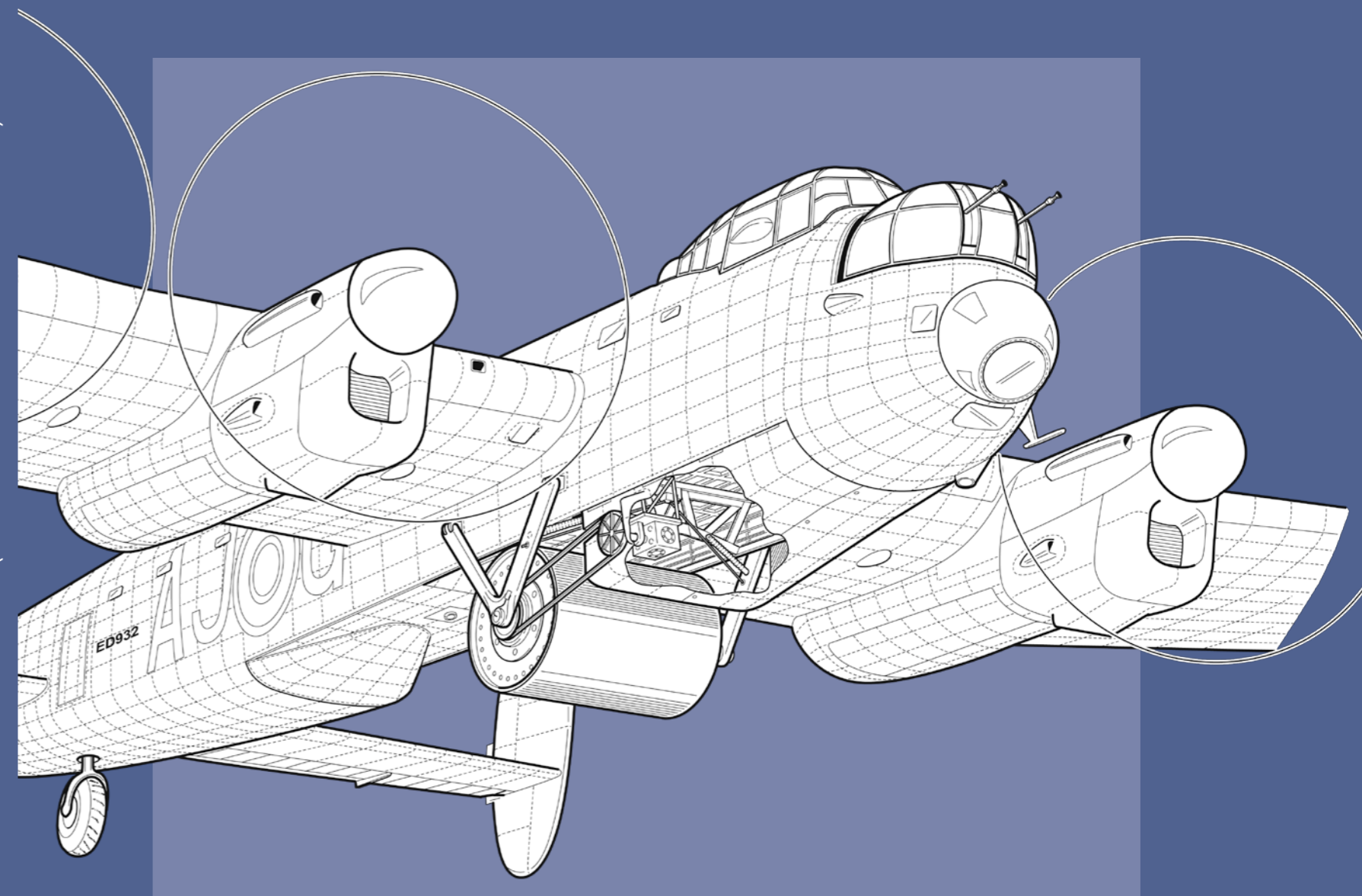
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A guide to the weapons technology used against the dams and the special targets of Nazi-occupied Europe