



### **Operation Chastise 16/17 May 1943**

Derwent Reservoir is the site where 617 Squadron RAF, the Dambusters, trained for low-level night flying in preparation for Operation Chastise during World War II. The raid was intended to reduce industrial output in the Germany's Ruhr Valley by breaching the Eder, Mohne, and Sorpe Dam walls which were providing hydroelectric power and a water supply for steel making. The aim of the training runs was to perfect the height above the water when the bouncing bombs were to be released and skip over the surface to hit the dam walls. This was achieved by 2 searchlights mounted on the underside of the wings and facing towards the fuselage and diagonally downwards. When the Lancasters were too high, the beams would not meet. When they were too low, the beams would cross over. The ideal situation was when the beams converged on the surface of the water. The reservoir has become a place where thousands of visitors gather on certain anniversaries to watch the last airworthy Lancaster in the UK fly over the dam wall.

The dam wall also holds the Dambusters' museum in the west tower (currently closed by STW since the death of the curator/collector, Mr Vic Hallam). If Derwent Dam wall is to be raised, both east and west towers will have to be filled with concrete or removed to withstand the weight of the wall above.

There is also a war memorial dedicated by Johnny Johnson who was the last surviving airman of Operation Chastise but sadly passed away in 2022. The war memorial would require re-siting and rededicating.

If the Derwent and Howden Dam walls are raised, these Grade II listed memorial structures would disappear forever under concrete and water. Derwent Dam wall especially is an iconic treasure of the Peak District National Park and instantly recognisable with millions of visitors coming to see it. It would simply no longer be there. Many visitors to the Upper Derwent Valley, particularly the less mobile and veterans of the forces, come to remember the sacrifices made by those involved in wars