

found to be waverers. In short, a quarter of a per cent were classified LMF. "It happened to some, we cannot deny it, but it involved very few aircrew indeed."⁽⁵⁸⁾ *Death by Moonlight* glosses over this point, preferring, it would seem, to dwell on the sensational.

THE DAMS RAID: AN ACT OF FOLLY?

The depiction in *Death by Moonlight* of the famous Dams Raid by 617 Squadron in May 1943 was, according to a number of witnesses, seriously flawed. Indeed, its biased and superficial research seemed to mirror the shortcomings of the entire film. The suggestion, for example, that the attack was launched in order to score a "public relations triumph" and nothing more was met with scepticism by several of the Sub-Committee's witnesses. Dr. Harris stated categorically that such an argument could not "be supported based on the latest research."⁽⁵⁹⁾ Indeed, Mr. Halliday pointed out that the dams had first been considered as strategic targets as early as 1938.⁽⁶⁰⁾

The criticisms did not end there. The bomb used against the Eder, Mohne and Sorpe dams (the film-makers neglect to mention the Eder at all) was hardly a "smart bomb;" while unusual, it was still just a conventional bomb without any internal guidance system, the only difference being that it was dropped from a Lancaster with a backspin so that it would skip along the surface of the water.⁽⁶¹⁾ The bomb's inventor, Barnes Wallis, described in the film as "an eccentric scientist...who cooked the whole thing up in his spare time," was in fact one of the most celebrated British scientists and munitions designers of the war, who had staked virtually his entire career on the bouncing bomb.⁽⁶²⁾ He worked tirelessly on the project (often at home, where he conducted much of his research) long before it was even approved by Bomber Command.

The attack - carried out by nineteen Lancasters, not seventeen as cited in the film -⁽⁶³⁾ destroyed two of the three dams but the film-makers argue that the damage was minimal, especially since the Sorpe was never breached. Moreover, they suggest that the heavy losses suffered by the squadron - eight Lancasters - outweighed any possible gains. These claims are

(58) Proceedings, 3:49-50.

(59) Proceedings, 3:52.

(60) Proceedings, 6:11.

(61) See the brief submitted by Professor Carter, Proceedings 5A:4.

(62) See the testimony of John Bates, Proceedings, 4:26 and Frank Williams, 8:48. Mr. Williams, a former CBC documentary film-maker, interviewed both Arthur Harris and Barnes Wallis for his film on the dams raid entitled *Operation Downwood*.

(63) Frank Williams, Proceedings, 8:51.