

BOMBER COMMAND ASSOCIATION IN AUSTRALIA Inc.

BCAA 75 Spring 2020



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F/O Alastair Panton in his Bomber Command Bristol Blenheim dodging Messerschmitts in France during the first weeks of WW2 – Story – Page 8

COMMAND ROUTINE ORDERS BY AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR A.T. HARRIS KCB, CBE, AFC

A.52. SPECIAL ORDER OF THE DAY - 10th May 1945

Men and Women of Bomber Command.

More than 5 ½ years ago, within hours of the declaration of War. Bomber Command first assailed the German enemy. You were then but a handful. Inadequate in everything but the skill and determination of the crews for that sombre occasion and for the unknown years of unceasing battle which lay beyond horizons black indeed.

You, the aircrews of Bomber Command, sent your first ton of bombs away on the morrow of the outbreak of war. A million tons of bombs and mines have followed from Bomber Command alone. From Declaration of war to cease fire a continuity of battle without precedent and without relent.



In the Battle of France your every endeavour bore down upon an overwhelming and triumphant enemy. After Dunkirk your Country stood alone- in arms but largely unarmed – between the Nazi tyranny and domination of the world.

The Battle of Britain in which you took part, raised the last barrier, strained but holding, in the path of the all-conquering Wehrmacht, and the bomb smoke of the Channel ports choked back down German throats the very word *Invasion*: not again to find expression within these narrow seas until the bomb-disrupted defences of Normandy beachheads fell to our combined assault. In the long years between much was to pass.



WAAF Airfield Controller

Then it was you, and you for long alone, carried the war ever deeper and ever more furiously into the heart of the Third Reich. There the whole might of the German enemy in undivided strength and – scarcely less a foe – the very elements arrayed against you. You overcame them both.

Through those desperate years, undismayed by any odds, undeterred by any casualties, night succeeding night, you fought. The very phalanx of the United Nations. You fought alone, as the one force then assailing German soil, you fought alone as individuals – isolated in your crew stations by the darkness and the murk, and from all other aircraft in company.

Not for you the hot emulation of high endeavour in the glare and panoply of martial array. Each crew, each one in each crew, fought alone through black nights rent only, mile after continuing mile, by the fiercest barrages ever raised and the instant sally of the searchlights. In each dark minute of those long miles lurked menace. Fog, ice, snow and tempest found you undeterred. In the loneliness in action lay the final test, the ultimate stretch of human staunchness and determination.

Your losses mounted through those years. Years in which your chance of survival through one spell of operational duty was negligible. Through two periods, mathematically Nil. Nevertheless survivors pressed forward as volunteers to pit their desperately acquired skill in even a third period of operations, on special tasks. In those 5 years and 8 months of continuous battle over enemy soil our casualties over long periods were grievous. As the count is cleared those of Bomber Command who gave their lives to bring to near impotence an enemy who had surged swift in triumph through a Continent, and to enable the United Nations to deploy in full array, will be found not less than the total dead of our National Invasion Armies now in Germany.

In the whole history of our National forces never have so small a band of men been called to support so long such odds. You indeed bore the brunt. To you who survive I would say this. Content yourselves and take credit with those who have perished, that now ‘Cease Fire’ has sounded countless homes within our Empire will welcome back a father a husband or a son whose life, but for your endeavours and your sacrifices, would assuredly have been expended during long further years of agony to achieve a victory already ours. No Allied Nation is clear of this debt to you.

I cannot expound your full achievements. Your attacks on the industrial centres of Northern Italy did much toward the collapse of the Italian and German armies in North Africa and to further [the] invasion of the Italian mainland.



Typhoon Falaise Gap

Of the German enemy two to three million fit men, potentially vast armies, were continually held throughout the war in direct and indirect defence against your assaults. A great part of her industrial war effort went toward fending your attacks, You struck a critical proportion of the weapons of war from enemy hands. On every front. You immobilised armies, leaving them shorn of supplies, reinforcements, resources and reserves, the easier prey to our advancing Forces.

You eased and abetted the passage of our troops over major obstacles. You blasted the enemy from long prepared defences where he essayed to hold. On the Normandy beaches. At the hinge of the battle of Caen. In the jaws of the Falaise Gap. To

the strong points of the enemy-held Channel ports, St Vith, Houffalize and the passage of the Rhine. In battle after battle you sped our armies to success at minimum cost to our troops. The commanders of our land forces and indeed those of the enemy, have called your attacks decisive.

You enormously disrupted every enemy means of communication, the very lifeblood of his military and economic machines. Railways, canals and every form of transport fell first to decay and then to Chaos under your assaults. You so shattered the enemies oil plants as to deprive him of all but the final trickle of fuel. His aircraft became earthbound, his road transport ceased to roll, armoured fighting vehicles lay helpless outside the battle, or fell immobilised into our hands. His strategic and tactical plans failed through inability to move. From his war industries supplies of ore, coal, steel, fine metals, aircraft, guns, ammunition, tanks, vehicles and every ancillary equipment dwindled under your attacks.



Submarine Pen Saint-Nazaire

You sank or damaged a large but yet un-totaled number of enemy submarines in his ports and by minelaying in his waters. You interfered widely and repeatedly with his submarine training programs. With extraordinary accuracy, regardless of opposition, you hit and burst through every carapace which he could devise to protect his submarines in harbour. By your attacks on inland industries and coastal shipyards you caused hundreds of his submarines to be still-born

Your minelaying throughout the enemy's sea lanes, your bombing of his inland waters and his Ports, confounded his sea traffic and burst his canals. From Norway throughout the Baltic, from Jutland to the Gironde, on the coast of Italy and North Africa you laid and re-laid the minefields. The wreckage of the enemy's naval and merchant fleets litters and encumbers his sea lanes and dockyards. A thousand known ships and many more as yet unknown, fell casualty to your mines. You hunted and harried his major warships from hide to hide. You put out of action, gutted or sank most of them.

By your attacks on Experimental Stations, factories, communications and firing sites, you long postponed and much reduced the V weapon attacks. You averted an enormous further toll of death and destruction from your Country. With it all you never ceased to rot the very heart out of the enemy's war resources and resistance. His Capital and near 100 of his cities and towns including nearly all of leading industrial importance lie in utter ruin, together with the greater part of the war industry they supported. Thus you brought to nought the enemy's original advantage of an industrial might intrinsically greater than ours and supported by the labour of captive millions, now set free.

For the first time in more than a century you have brought home to the habitual aggressor of Europe the full and acrid flavours of war, so long the perquisite of his victims. All of this and much more have you achieved during these 5 ½ years of continuous battle, despite all the opposition from an enemy disposing of many a geographical and strategical advantage with which to exploit an initial superiority in numbers. Men from every part of the Empire and of most of the Allied Nations fought in our ranks. Indeed a band of brothers.

In the third year of war the Eighth Bomber Command, the Fifteenth Bomber Command, USAAF from their Mediterranean bases, ranged themselves at our side, zealous in extending every mutual aid, vieing in every assault upon our common foe. Especially they played the leading part sweeping the enemy fighter defences from our path and, finally out of the skies. Nevertheless nothing that the crews accomplished which was much and decisive – could have been achieved without the devoted service of every man and Woman in the Command.



LAC Marsh RAF - 1,000 pound bomb

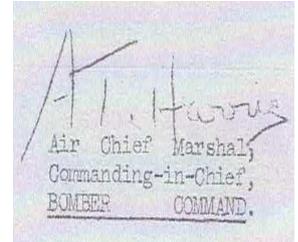
Those who tended the aircraft, mostly in the open through six bitter winters, endless intricacies in a prolonged misery of wet and cold. They rightly earned the implicit trust of the crews. They set extraordinary records of aircraft serviceability. Those who manned the stations, Operational Headquarters, Supply lines and Communications. The pilots of the Photographic Reconnaissance Units without whose lonely ventures far and wide over enemy territory we should have been powerless to plan or to strike.

The Operational Crew training organisation of the Command which through the years of ceaseless work by day and night never failed, in the face of every difficulty and unpredicted call, to replace all casualties and keep our constantly expanding first line up to strength in crews trained to the highest pitch of efficiency; simultaneously producing nearly 20,000 additional trained aircrew for the raising and reinforcement of some 50 extra squadrons, formed in the command and despatched for service in other Command at home and overseas. The men and women of the Meteorological Branch who attained prodigious exactitudes in a fickle art and stood brave on assertion where science is inexact. Time and again they saved us from worse than the enemy could

ever have achieved. Their record is outstanding. The Meteorological pilots who flew through anything and everything in search of the feasible.

The Operational Research Sections whose meticulous investigation of every detail of every attack provided data for the continuous confounding of the enemy and the consistent reduction of our own casualties. The Scientists, especially those of the Telecommunications Research Establishment, who place in unending succession in our hands the technical means to resolve our problems and to confuse every parry of the enemy. Without their skill and their labours beyond doubt we could not have prevailed. The Works Staff, Designers and Workers who equipped and re-equipped us for Battle. Their efforts, their honest workmanship, kept in our hands indeed a Shining Sword.

To all of you I would say how proud I am to have served in Bomber Command for 4½ years and to have been your Commander-in Chief through more than three years of your Saga. Your task in the German war is now completed. Famously have you fought. Well have you deserved of your country and her Allies.



BCAA Newsletter President's Report April 2020

Following VE Day in May 1945, my Bomber Command days were behind me, and I returned to Australia expecting to participate in the continuing war in the Pacific. Those plans all came to an abrupt end on 6th August 1945 when the 'Enola Gay', a Boeing B-29 Superfortress dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Three days later Nagasaki was also bombed, and with the subsequent announcement of the Japanese surrender, the hostilities of World War II finally came to a close.

The 6th August 2020 marked the 75th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, and was reason for reflection. Hiroshima and Nagasaki have become the world's most renowned examples of the perils of nuclear conflict. Consequently, this tragedy of human suffering has had profound implications and represents one of the significant events of the twentieth century. I hope our world leaders will make choices in the future that avoid the devastation of war.

I wish all Bomber Command members well in our current COVID skirmish, and again I find myself hoping our leaders make choices that will keep us all safe and well.

Best Wishes

Ron Houghton

VALE – June Higgs 24 June 2020, Betty Seery ? Aug 2020 (Frank Seery 460 Sqn), **Yvonne Gerstel June 24 2019 Fred Bowman April 16 2020**

NEW MEMBERS – Mrs Gillie Street – BC-HQ High Wycombe

MEMBERSHIPS – Renewals fell due 1/1/2020

Thank you- to those members who have caught up with subscriptions : Subscriptions are annual, due 1st January each year. Thank you to those who have paid already (or even further in advance!). The Association needs Members to contribute \$20 per year to defray the cost of printing the quarterly Newsletters, postage and Secretarial out-of-pockets and our assistance in subsidising BCAA widows at luncheons. Many of our nearly 400-strong membership have caught up since I first appealed for members to become financial. When paying, there is an optional RAAF Association membership subscription of \$15 which entitles you to 'Wings' Magazine and a RAAFA lapel badge. [Anthony Trayhurn - Treasurer]

[Membership forms are available by email from the Editor by email or mail from the Secretary (Details Page 1). Cheques/Money Orders should be sent to our Treasurer, Anthony (Also on Page 1) or please Direct Deposit to BCAA – BSB 633000 Account no.125530550, being Bendigo & Adelaide Bank Ltd. Please put your name on the deposit reference. [ED]. For convenience, you can pay, **Membership \$20, and if paying for a RAAFA subscription membership** and the new excellent **Wings Magazine** add \$15 ie \$35 for both. ED]

ARE YOU (or your Parents) MOVING HOUSE OR GOING INTO CARE? Please mail or email our Secretary annette.guterres@gmail.com to keep our lists up to date so your newsletter can follow you and we can know your situation.

NINETEENTH OP – DAYLIGHT – NORDSTERN – (Near Gelsenkirchen) Ruhr Oil 13/9/44

Briefed 1.30pm, off at 4, in "F", climbed early to 19,000 and to target at that height, in a compact formation. Rather good lead in to the target but flak soon grew very intense, as usual and some burst quite near. Hard to see the target because of smoke screen and little Joe got the wrong one, though just as valuable. Hurrying away, Joe saw two [aircraft] go down from one of which were two parachutes. The

flak continued to be heavy for some time and we were all relieved to get away. Bomb doors would not close, so we lagged behind coming home, but Joe remedied it before base. Landed before 9pm and so completed half a tour, with five Ruhr's' from the diary of P/O Michael Wilson 466 Sqn. - courtesy of his Nephew Daryl Martin of Corowra -

[Abstract: Nearby Gelsenkirchen was a large coal mine and a factory producing synthetic fuel from the coal. It was a very inefficient process and had been the target of Bomber Command from early in the war. Imagine if those flak guns had been available to use against Allied tanks!]



IBCC (International Bomber Command Centre)

To join the IBCC and receive a membership pack please email members@internationalbcc.co.uk To conduct research follow this link:- <https://internationalbcc.co.uk/history-archive/digital-archive/> For more on the digital archive, Use the link below

<https://somethingverybig.com/2018/09/06/the-ibccs-digital-archive-is-now-live/>

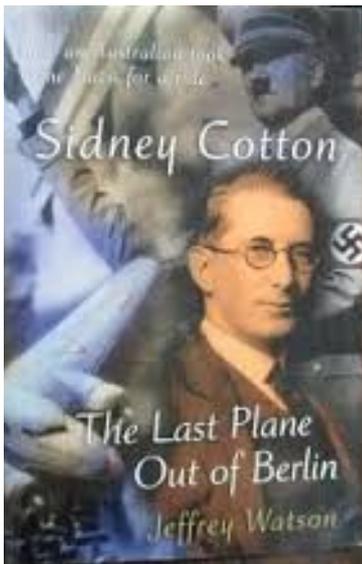
COMING EVENTS – To be advised at the moment

BCAA Christmas Lunch NSW Parliament House Macquarie St **To Be Advised December 2020**

RAAF losses in Bomber Command: understanding the numbers via Dr Lachlan Grant Senior

Historian Australian War Memorial – an analysis of the disparate accounts of loss numbers – [Bill Chorley was pretty close] ! Link is <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/blog/RAAF-losses>

Wing Commander Sidney Cotton a Taswegian in the RAF



Bear with your poor editor on this very Australian story; Sidney Cotton was a scoundrel, con-man, romancer, so good that during the Battle of France he prised two Spitfires out of ACM Hugh Dowding to test out his photo-reconnaissance ideas. In his lifetime he made and lost millions of pounds. One of his investments was Dufaycolour; unknown today but in the 1930's rivalled Kodak Colour. This interest in photography, his inventiveness (think of the warm SidCot flying suit from WW1) and flamboyant extravagance and engaging manner opened many doors. RAF photo-reconnaissance had not improved much since WW1. Cotton managed to persuade the RAF into buying two Lockheed 12 small airliners for civil use with one passed quietly to his control. In a secret RAF unit at the small civilian airfield of Heston outside London his team modified the Electra with three expertly concealed small panels behind which were mounted Leica Reporter 250 shot cameras with very fine grained film. One was vertical and the other two in the wings were angled inwards at 45°. These were fired by discrete under-seat buttons. Cotton enlisted his reluctant wife into the WAAF in case they were caught (she would not be shot). Posing as an eccentric archaeologist/Imperial Airways route planner - he

swanned around Europe, Germany, Italy and North and East Africa photographing areas of interest. In the North African adventure, they first employed *Camotint* – the duck-egg blue colour. Stopping at Malta he picked up “Shorty” Longbottom; later a mainstay in Photo Reconnaissance. They photographed new airfields, floating docks, and submarine bases with three RAF F24 cameras. All these pictures became important by 1942. They discovered in Libya a tremendous stockpile of provisions for the Italian Army. More excursions around Germany and the Baltic showed the *Bismarck* and *Prinz Eugen* preparing for sea. Mrs Patricia Cotton delivered the pictures direct to Churchill. Cotton flew seven flights into Berlin, without exposing any film and German searches of the aircraft discovered nothing. In June 1939 at last a chink opened, a WW1 comrade of Herman Goering came to Cotton.

The Germans were interested in licencing Dufaycolour off Cotton and requested he visit Berlin. As they rolled to a halt at Templehof, Nazi Troops ran toward them – with trepidation the opened the door to be greeted with a Guard-of-Honour! A big Mercedes pulled up to take them to their meeting, while the Lockheed was pushed into a hangar to be searched. The meeting went well and they flew back with samples at 20,000' with oxygen coming from a rubber tube in their nose. Patricia Martin looking out, came up with the idea of a

perspex blister, later patented and used on Lancasters. There followed more flights, even at one time with Kesselring at the controls with the cameras running as they flew from Frankfurt.

Cotton was in Germany trying to clandestinely take Goering to Britain to meet Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary but on 23rd August 1939 Stalin signed a non-aggression pact with Hitler. Cotton was trying to assure the Germans that the British would fight rather than sue for peace but he was signalled to return to UK. There was a delay in their takeoff but eventually the affable Australian received a clearance to fly west at 9,000'. It was a 250 mile dash, in the autumn sunlight passing over Wilhelmshaven they photographed all the shipping they could. Arriving at Heston the Customs official asked "Where have you come from sir?" "Berlin" "Left it a bit late didn't you!"

It was Ian Fleming (007) who took Cotton's pictures to the First Sea Lord and Cotton and his navigator Niven continued making photographic flights for the Secret Intelligence Service. On a supposed air-test in that second week of the war Cotton flew unauthorised to Flushing and along the Dutch coast with the cameras running. Cotton was conscripted into the RAF as an Acting Wing Commander and the RAF wanted his techniques for high altitude photography and interpretation. When Air Chief Marshall Dowding found Cotton was getting an 18m.p.h increase out of his Blenheims, he agreed to give Cotton two Spitfires to play with..



Source *Sidney Cotton – The Last Plane Out of Berlin – Jeffrey Watson 2002 – 262 pages*

Coastal Corner – Exhibition advice from Dr David Sutton at the AWM

In September 1942, a small group of RAAF airmen lay in their billets, far from home, when their peace was shattered by the frantic shouts of one of their crew. He was calling their attention not to the resumption of one of the frequent German air raids they would grow accustomed to enduring, but an entirely different spectacle in the wartime sky – the *Aurora Borealis*.

Borealis.

The Australians, all from No. 455 Squadron, RAAF, were in the frozen north of Russia, near Murmansk, to provide protection for Allied shipping [Convoy PQ18] bringing much-needed supplies to the Soviet war effort. This was a small but important contribution to the Allied war against Nazi Germany. It also brought a small group of Australians close to the ferocious Eastern Front of the Second World War, where the vast armies of Hitler and Stalin fought an epic war of annihilation.

This story, and the wider context of the war in the east, is now being told in a temporary exhibition at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Shared Victory explores the often overlooked alliance between the Soviet Union and the West through a series of British and Soviet wartime posters that called on people to unite against their common enemy, Adolf Hitler.

The exhibition also tells the story of the Soviet war effort through a series of evocative photographs revealing the war experience of soldiers and civilians on the Eastern Front.

Exhibition curator and historian David Sutton says "*The Soviet Union was a powerful partner of the Western Allies, including Australia, in the Second World War*".

"Between 1941 and 1945, the Soviet Union was responsible for destroying roughly 75 per cent of all of Hitler's military forces and played a crucial role in the victory over Nazism. In those same years, more than 27 million Soviet citizens, mostly civilians, lost their lives.

"Despite the crucial role played by the Soviet Union in the Second World War, its story is relatively unknown to many in Australia." Dr Sutton said. "To be able to tell this monumental story at the Australian War Memorial, including Australia's small role in it, is a great privilege."

"Shared Victory" is currently on display in the Memorial's Captain Reg Saunders Gallery until late 2020.



DOCTOR BRENDAN NELSON'S RECENT TALK ON ABC RADIO NATIONAL

"Will they remember me in Australia?" A dying soldier asked Charles Bean, the historian (left) in 1918, Bean, who more than any other created the Australian War Memorial. It was a good and honest pitch by Brendan Nelson, on ABC Radio National. *It is why this newsletter is produced.* They are not forgotten, **"We Do Remember Them"**. Dr Nelson reminded the audience that Parliamentarians walking out of Parliament House look directly at the Memorial and are reminded of the consequences of their decisions. *[Your Editor was a civilian in Mazir-i-Sharif, Kabul, Kandahar and Bost - Afghanistan, in 1979].*

“Children of a Far Away War”!



There are many, many books that have been written about Bomber Command, some of them are very technical and heavy with information. Others are very personal stories of Bomber Command written by veterans with details of training and service. *Children of a Faraway War* is quite different. Wendy Gruner, the daughter of Arthur Plowman, who served in Bomber Command is the author. Arthur left for overseas when Wendy and her sister were very young and he never returned. His daughters in later years, when their families had grown up wanted to learn about their father's life in Bomber Command.

They only had their father's diary to fill in the gaps so they decided to re-trace his steps in the UK. This book is about their journey supplemented by interesting stories about Arthur's life in Australia and the recollections of two airmen who knew him, one having served with him on his first crew. BCAA member and veteran Tony Adams trained with Arthur in Parkes and is one of the people who was able to help the sisters learn about their father.

In making the journey Wendy and her sister Robyn learnt about Bomber Command and if you the reader knows little of Bomber Command this book will certainly enlighten you. Unlike many of the books written, it tells what the men did when they were off duty, where they went on leave, who were their friends, what did they wear, where did they sleep and what did they eat.

Arthur Plowman was an orchardist from Orange. He was killed on the night of 11 November 1944 when his and another aircraft collided as they returned to base. No-one survived. 14 men lost in one accident. 14 men who would've been mostly single men not a married man with a family like Arthur the orchardist but men who would not return to continue on with their lives, men who had loved ones waiting for their return. The loss of life, the loss of a loved one is a strong theme in this book.

I thoroughly recommend it. For me it was a special book, in that my uncle was also killed on the night of 11 November 1944 when his plane was shot down on the same raid on Harburg as Arthur's plane.

PS In reading the book you also get to meet Wendy and Robyn.....by the time you finish you feel as if you know themthe children of a faraway war.

Available from -.. [Google Books](#) [by clicking there – on the email newsletter].

Review by Annette Guterres OAM

BRISTOL BLENHEIMS IN BOMBER COMMAND

World War 2 between Britain and Germany began with Battle of the Heligoland Bight at sea off Germany's north-west coast. Chamberlain's government in the UK was still trying to pacify Hitler and German cities were forbidden targets. To demonstrate the power of Bomber Command it was decided to bomb German warships off the coast of Denmark in the first "named" Air Battle of the Second World War. On 3 September 1939, the United Kingdom declared war on Nazi Germany after the German invasion of Poland, which started the European War. The British did not assist Poland by land or sea but RAF Bomber Command flew several missions against German *Kriegsmarine* (German Navy) warships in the Heligoland Bight. With the front lines static between September 1939 and May 1940, a period known as the "Phoney War" set in, with little fighting on land or in the air.

At sea, German U-boat (submarine) forces were taking a considerable toll on Allied shipping. The Air Ministry decided to launch an attack on German surface ships to prevent them supporting the U-boats in the North Atlantic. On 18 December 1939, a force of three RAF bomber squadrons was sent to engage German ships in the Heligoland Bight and sink or damage as many as possible. Originally 24 Vickers Wellingtons took off. Two turned back owing to engine trouble before reaching German airspace. The German reaction was slow, but eventually they scrambled fighter aircraft to intercept. Just over 120 aircraft, 80–100 German and 22 British, were involved but only 44 German fighters made contact with the British bombers.

The Germans inflicted more damage on the RAF than the *Luftwaffe* received but the battle's influence on both sides' strategy was profound. The battle led the RAF to abandon daylight missions in favour of night bombing as daytime casualties were too high. In the build-up to the war, the RAF had adopted the mantra that "the bomber will always get through" but in daylight the Heligoland battle had shown this was not the case and it forced a reappraisal of bombing operations. The failure of the raid led the *Luftwaffe* to believe its base in Germany proper was invulnerable to enemy attack. This belief was reinforced with the success of

the Wehrmacht in 1939–1941, which meant that opposing air forces were pushed too far away for effective bombing attacks on the German homeland (it was thought).

SIX WEEKS OF BLENHEIM SUMMER

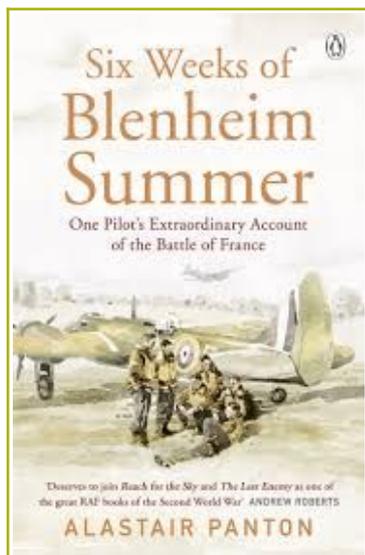
"I am so pleased to have been invited, by Geoff [Raebel] to write a message for the Bomber Command Association in Australia Newsletter, thank you. I am a freelance writer; my main interest being World War Two history - in addition to being a mother of two young boys. I am only too aware, in spite of the challenges our world faces, that we live in peace and it is because of the service and sacrifice during the war that we have our peace. No other unit or Command gave more than Bomber Command; young men, and women, the world over who repeatedly took to the sky; repeatedly not knowing of their destiny, such were the perils you faced. Thank you.

However, my message to you is particularly about the Battle of France. To remind you, this was a six week battle in the summer of 1940, during which Germany became the occupying country not only of France, but Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg too. It was a horrific time for the Allies; thousands lost lives and it was in the midst of the Fall of France that the Dunkirk Evacuation took place.

My Grandfather, Alastair Panton (who later became an Air Commodore) was a reconnaissance pilot, flying a Bristol Blenheim during this battle. In this short time he was shot down three times, and finally a fourth time - in July 1940 - after which he was captured and taken prisoner. In 2012, I discovered that Alastair had kept a diary of these challenging weeks - and, with support of the family, I wrote it up and it was first published in 2014, and again - as a paperback - in 2018, to mark the centenary of the RAF. I called it 'Six Weeks of Blenheim Summer.' I am certain he wrote this diary so that one day it might be shared - not so much that he is remembered, but for the thousands who died or did not, simply, share their story.

*Since publishing my Grandfather's diary, I have campaigned for Remembrance of World War Two as much as I can, including re-telling the story of the sinking of the **Lancastria**; a troopship which was bombed whilst in harbour in St Nazaire in France on 17th June 1940, leading to the loss of life of around 6,000 men, women and children; refugees and allied troops hoping to journey to England.*

I first learnt of this tragedy whilst researching Grandfather's book..



'Six Weeks of Blenheim Summer' is a true, heartfelt account of the Fall of France; which I have come to realise has been little documented in this way. His memory is, therefore, important as it tells the story of, and for, so many. I am delighted, therefore, that not only has his story been published as a book, it has also been set to music.

The excerpts, read by me, tell of the rapidly worsening military situation and humanitarian crisis, as well as Grandfather's inevitable pain and grief - and the vital camaraderie he shared. William Drew-Batty wrote, and performed the music. He describes the music as "The breeze beneath the wings of Alastair Panton's Blenheim as he takes us across the skies of northern France in 1940 ... and he says "I read Victoria's book, 'Six Weeks of Blenheim Summer' in 2017 and was moved by her grandfather's story. Even more poignant to me was its provenance; a diary, written on scraps of paper, humble yet with devastating clarity and charting the entire Battle of France seen through the eyes of a young airman in the early summer of 1940."

This is Grandfather's story, thank you, and very Best Wishes, Victoria

www.victoriapb.co.uk

Six Weeks of Blenheim Summer presentation
listen to -Ed.] Ctrl+ click on the link

[The following link is beautiful and evocative to

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZpdVcwvdfk>

To buy the book:

<https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/309/309187/six-weeks-of-blenheim-summer/9781405936743.html>

BCAA now have a website and a Facebook page.

<https://bombercommandassociation.org.au>

<https://www.facebook.com/BomberCommandCommemorativeDay>

Members of the RAAF escorting
Mrs Joy Moffatt On Anzac Day 2019
leading the 460 Squadron banner

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