

First Pamphlets and Then Big Bombs in Plenty

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he pays an enthusiastic tribute to the men who chase up and down the North Sea in destroyers all the year round. They are the really tough ones.

"Exciting Enough"

Next he went on to do jobs of bombing over France, Belgium, Holland and Germany, and this was where the lessons learned in peace-time flying were really put to the test. He supposes that he must have been lucky, for although at times he struck a certain amount of what he euphemistically refers to as "opposition," he came through safely. It had its nasty moments, of course. A fighter coming for you when you hadn't been expecting fighters, or anti-aircraft fire uncomfortably close, could both be exciting enough.

Sleep Is Most Important

Operational flying, particularly when he was at it for long stretches at a time, Squadron-Leader Breckon found could be tough enough, and a man needed to be fit. Preparation for a night's trip started in the morning with a thorough inspection of the 'plane controls, turrets, communications and so on. Then you take her up and try everything again, giving the radio a good work-out this time. When everything is in order you stand by, and during the afternoon you endeavour to get some sleep. That's important. Sleep comes before food, and it is easy to see why. You can eat at any time, even when flying over Ger-

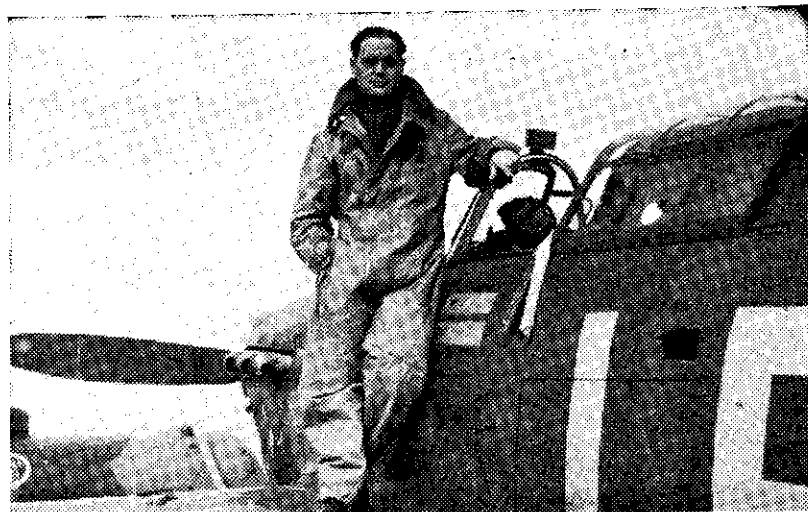
many, but once on the job, you can't sleep or relax.

Some time before the flight, comes what is technically known as the briefing, which amounts simply to a thorough coaching in what has to be done. There is time of departure; route and time of rendezvous over the target; identification of target; height at which to make the run in; type of bomb carried and results to look for; opposition to be expected; weather all along the route, and a hundred and one other details.

Then the trip itself, impossible to describe in general terms, but then most people have a good idea by now of what it is like. Discussing his own reactions, Squadron-Leader Breckon recalls some tension when nearing the target, complete concentration when actually on it, some excitement, maybe, if there was opposition, and most of all, the strain of keeping awake on the way home.

Bombs Aren't Wasted

"You read a lot about the care we take in identifying our target and making sure that the bombs are used to good purpose," says Squadron-Leader Breckon. "This isn't just propaganda. Even when conditions have been particularly tough, I have known pilots turn and make a second or even a third run in before dropping their bombs. And if there is no chance at all of making fairly sure, they will go on to another target or carry their bombs back to England in preference to wasting them."



FAMOUS LEGLESS PILOT: Squadron-Leader D. R. S. Bader, D.S.O., D.F.C., with his Hurricane (see below)

When the bomber pilot arrives home, tired as he is, he is interrogated again by Intelligence Officers. What time did you arrive over the target? What opposition? How did you know it was the right target? How many runs in did you make? Describe the fires you started. How many of them? And it is seldom that Intelligence doesn't know to the last detail what should have happened if those bombs landed on or near the target.

New Zealanders Are Keen

Much of Squadron-Leader Breckon's work included training other pilots, particularly in navigation and long-distance day and night flying. Even on flights over Germany he would be pushing along

someone else to the stage where he could take over command of a bomber himself, this taking usually five or six operational flights. In this way, he naturally came in contact with a large number of New Zealanders, some of whose names have since become well known.

"You'll be glad to know that New Zealanders have a particularly good reputation in the R.A.F. and the New Zealand Bomber Squadron is one of the most prominent," says Squadron-Leader Breckon. "Their keenness is just phenomenal, so much so that when they are posted to other work after a heavy spell of flying they make 'nuisances' of themselves trying to get back."



A PORTRAIT of Squadron-Leader D. R. S. Bader, D.S.O., D.F.C., by Captain Cuthbert Orde

IN America, that land of picturesque slang, they would call the famous legless pilot, Squadron-Leader D. R. S. Bader, D.S.O., D.F.C., a "Birdman." He has never had any other ambition except to fly. He went straight from school to the R.A.F. College at Cranwell

"MIRACLE MAN OF THE AIR"

as a cadet, and at the age of 21 he had already made a name for himself as one of the most daring stunt aces.

Fear had—or has—not any place in this remarkable young man's lexicon. They say he can make a 'plane do anything but talk. Thousands were thrilled at the old Hendon air pageants by his wonderful flying.

But it seemed he had dared once too often when he crashed at that Reading air field. Even though he survived, no one thought he would ever fly again. The tragedy was all the greater because he had been such a brilliant athlete.

He Wouldn't Be Beaten

He was a magnificent Rugby footballer—one of the best scrum halves ever to play for the famous Harlequins, and was certain of his international cap. He had played cricket and squash for the R.A.F. and showed great promise as a boxer and cross-country runner.

Legless, it seemed that the two things for which he lived—flying and sport—must be denied him, but Bader made up his mind that he would not be beaten.

A few months after his crash, taking his first hesitant steps on his new legs, he was already making plans.

"I haven't a leg of my own to stand on," he grinned, "but I'll still get by."

He even refused to use a stick to help him. As soon as he was fit enough he went to work as a traveller—in an especially adapted car—spending every penny he could save on flying lessons. Within nine months he had fulfilled his vow. He was flying solo again—a fully qualified civil pilot.

Immediately Bader applied to be taken back into the Service. It was his first, his only, love. But they would not have him. Disappointed but not discouraged, he continued to fly. He played cricket, tennis and squash again, doing everything possible to prove that he was as useful without his legs as before.

Not Good Enough

When war broke out he tried to join up again. He begged, argued, pleaded and cajoled. "Just give me one chance," he asked. "That'll all I need."

At last his dogged persistence, or perhaps it was his obvious sincerity or the light that gleamed in his eyes as he argued, impressed the Board. They decided to give him a test. Bader passed with flying colours, and as a result he was offered a 'commission and a job as a taxi-pilot—flying aircraft from factories to airfields and similar duties.

That was not good enough for him.

"I want to be in the fun," he said. "Give me a fighter 'plane to fly."

He got his own way in the end. Back in the Air Force blue once again,

By A. W. HELLIWELL in "Parade," the Weekly Journal of the Middle East Command

with the precious wings sewn over his left breast, Bader was the happiest young man in the world.

The eight-gun Spitfire in which he rode the skies was the apple of his eye. With his metal legs on the rudder bar he flew it with all his old dash and brilliance and promotion came swiftly. In a little more than six months he had command of his present Maple Leaf squadron of young Canadians.

His Legs Were Bent!

Only a few months ago his engine failed as he came in over the airfield and he crashed lightly. They pulled him out with both metal legs badly bent.

The legless wonder of the skies grinned as he squatted on the grass waiting while the artificer carefully straightened them.

"It's a good job I've got tin legs," he joked, "otherwise I should be booked for a few months in splints instead of a ten-minutes' wait."

Twenty minutes later he was in the air again.

Now he is a prisoner in Germany, and the whole world knows the story, equally creditable to both sides, of the arrival in the prison camp of his spare leg.