

INTRODUCTION

This is the story by way of the log book and diary of Squadron Leader ARH Barton's operational tour of Malta from March to June 1942. I have tried to make this as natural as possible by adding only a few prepositions etc. and finishing the sentences, instead of just leaving a dash or other such abbreviation. If I wasn't sure, I left everything original.



A.R.H. Barton

I have combined the log book and the diary where everything is duplicated. I have tried wherever possible to verify dates and times and other such material by way of the Internet and books. Some sortie times and any Spitfire numbers I have added from other sources. *My notations are in Italics.* I have made various notes of interest and to help along the story of these three incredible months which were fought by the bravest men that I have had the honour to read about. I never realised how bad this theatre of the war was. (No food, no sleep - constant bombing day & night, dysentery, dilapidated aircraft, no spares and precious little fuel.) Men with balls!

The diary, especially, has been a nightmare to decipher. I would like to imagine that he wrote this diary whilst strapped in his Spitfire on readiness awaiting the flare signal for take-off. The pilots sometimes had to wait for hours sitting on a hard dinghy on top of a parachute in extreme heat which would then turn to minus 20 degrees or more at 20,000ft. He would write up his log book when he had time later.

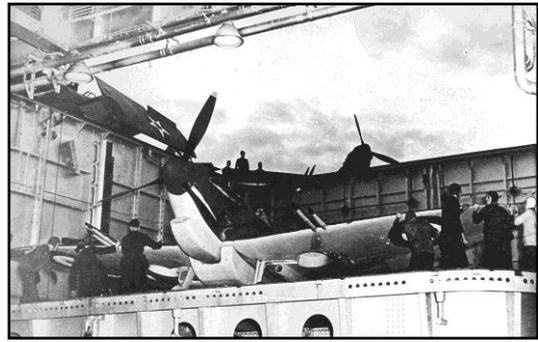
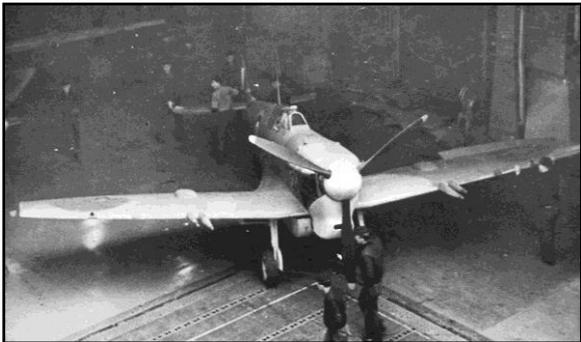


HMS Glorious

My father was stationed with HMS *Glorious* at Hal Far, Malta before the war, whilst in the Fleet Air Arm, so not only did he know the island, he was used to flying off an aircraft carrier's deck.

NB This story is intended for my family and friends and any war historians who are interested. If it helps as a record for 126 Squadron's sorties, I am delighted. If I have infringed any copyright in writing this, it is unintentional. This narrative is not intended for publication.

(A note about the Malta Spitfires.) They were of the Mk. Vc variant, then freshly off the production line and armed with hard-hitting four 20mm Hispano cannon. However, cannon ammunition was always in short supply and a lot of aircraft had two of the cannon removed, to save on ammunition and weight, and replaced by four Browning 0.303" machine-guns.



Spitfires MkVc on board USS Wasp – April delivery – 4-cannons, Vokes filter, slipper tank

Compared to the early mark Spitfires, the Mk. V featured a number of refinements. A new SU injector-carburettor increased the top speed by 5-10 mph depending on altitude. Internally-mounted windscreen armour gained around 5 mph, streamlined rear-view mirror another 2-3 mph. Modified exhaust pipes brought another 6-7 mph, and a slightly improved propeller another 5 mph. Thus, despite the presence of the large Vokes tropical filter under the nose which cut the top speed by 15-20 mph, the Spitfire Mk. Vc could hold its own against the German Messerschmitt Bf109F and the Italian Macchi C. 202 fairly well. The Bf109F was the fastest of the three, and was also superior in climb. However, the Spitfire was the most manoeuvrable of the trio and despite the reduction to two cannon had the heaviest armament. Combat victories over Malta were therefore highly dependent on pilot skills, element of surprise and efficiency of ground control.

Where I have written the "KILL" score, this is where he put "Swastikas" in his log book.

If anyone reading this can answer any of my questions or can offer any material or anecdote in order to make anything clearer or more interesting, please contact me on amrb6@hotmail.com

The first class website "**Ahoy**" under the auspices of Mackenzie J Gregory - "Mac" has allowed me to use the story written by Pl. Off. DW McLeod of the embarkation of 126 squadron for Malta. (URL next page).

Susan Hudson of **MaltaGC70** another first class website - has kindly allowed me to use "**Malta: War Diary**" www.maltagc70.com for confirmation of dates, times of sorties & for general statistical information.

Martin Woodhall son of "Woody", Group Captain A.B. Woodhall, the famous controller in Malta and who cited my father for a Bar to his DFC, has been of invaluable help; especially in providing some *anecdotes* to this story, published in his fabulous book "**Soldier, Sailor & Airman Too.**"

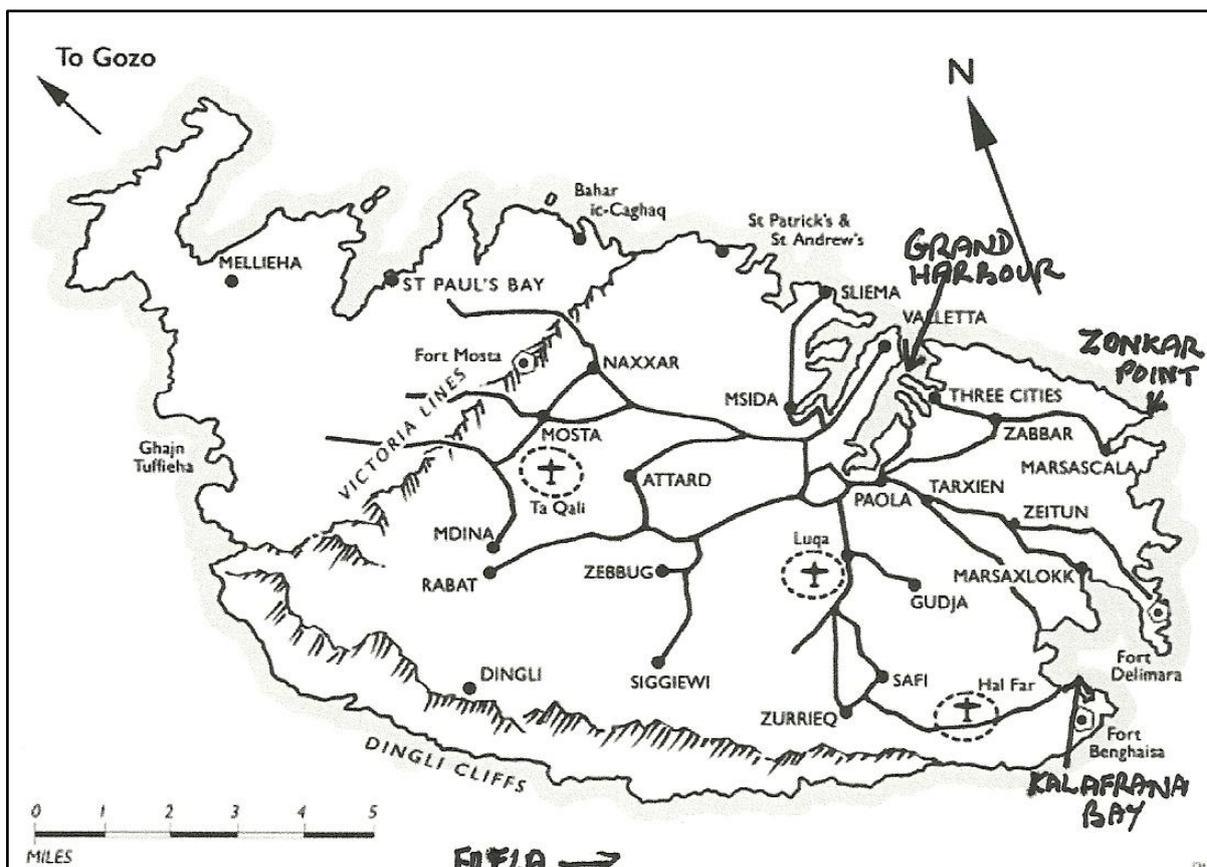
Brian Cull author of **Malta: The Spitfire Year** and **Spitfires Over Malta** has also kindly allowed me to use references from these two superb books. The former being a great reference work to me and the other providing some great stories from the pilot's point of view.

To all of these people many, many thanks.

Also to my good friends David & Marion Lloyd who proof read the narrative for me, helping to correct my many original grammatical errors and making many useful observations; to them both, a huge debt of gratitude.

After I had released this narrative; I was contacted by Frederick Galea, from the Malta Aviation Museum. He has most kindly helped me to make many corrections, answered my many questions and supplied additional material for this version. In fact he has helped to make this story more factual. To Frederick, thank you, I am much indebted. His notes I have marked: **Note/Courtesy/Explanation F.G.**

The airfields on Malta were LUQA for the bombers and fighters, TA' QALI for the fighters, HAL FAR for the RN-Fleet Air Arm torpedo-bombers and RAF fighters, and QRENDI, late in 1942, for the fighters. As both the British and the Italians cannot pronounce the 'Q' correctly they replace this with a 'K' (and at times with a 'C'). This also applies to ZONQOR POINT. As the airfield at LUQA is also close to MQABBA village, and the Italians refer to it by that name, they pronounce it as MIKABBA. Calafra Bay, home for the Air Sea Rescue launches, was invariably written with a 'K'. **Note courtesy F.G.**



Map Courtesy "Malta War Diary"

THE MALTA HISTORY (ARH BARTON)-VERSION 3

I start the account from the day my father left 124 Squadron Biggin Hill on the 17th February 1942, to marry my mother on the 19th day of that month. After a few days honeymoon at "The Lygon Arms, Broadway, Worcestershire; "he was posted to 126 squadron on the 25th February, leaving from Glasgow on the tramp steamer *Queen Victoria* for Malta; sixteen souls in total.

This is from the story written by P/O D.W. McLeod, allowing me to give the names of the sixteen original 126 Squadron personnel bound for Malta. (Nicknames or used names are in inverted commas). This is the link where the story can be found in full - starts 'Fog! Fog! Fog!'

<http://ahoy.tk-jk.net/macslog/BattleforMalta.html>

(Another *anecdote* is on the 9th May from the same source.)

The C.O. was Squadron Leader E.J. "Jumbo" Gracie.

Fl/Lt A.R.H. "Tony" Barton {*quote:*} *'known to all and especially his enemies as "Killer Barton". One line would be sufficient to describe Tony. He was shot down five times and ended up destroying as many Huns as had knocked him down.'* Fl/Lt H.A.S. "Tim or (Johnnie)" Johnston {*Both my father & McLeod refer to him as "Johnnie", my father spells it with a "Y"*} P/O D.W. "Mac" McLeod, P/O J.E. "Jimmy" Peck, P/O M.A. "Mike" Graves, P/O B.H.E. "Bis" Bisley, P/O "Bill" Bailey, P/O W."Mac" McCarthy, Fl/Sgt "Dusty" Miller, Fl/Sgt W.H.L. Milner, Fl. Sgt E.A. "Junior" Crist or as my Father refers to him Chrissy, Fl Sgt G.A.J. Ryckman, Fl/Sgt W.G. Dodd, Fl/Sgt G.S. Bolton, and Fl/Sgt Bush.

These 16 pilots and their as yet unassembled Spitfires (still in crates) arrived in Gibraltar and boarded the aircraft carrier HMS *Eagle* where the Spitfires were assembled.

Whilst In Gibraltar, Bush & McCarthy (see book *The Greatest Squadron of Them All – Vol 2*) were replaced on the *Eagle* by Fl. Sgt J.W. Yarra & P/O Frank Jemmett according to the list of pilots in "Picket 1 & 2" detailed in "[Spitfires Over Malta.](#)" Supposedly they flew into Malta on a transport aircraft.

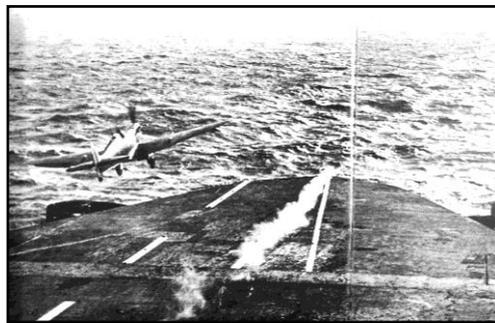


RAF pilots on HMS Eagle on Operation 'Picket 1', in foreground with fuzzy hair is 'Slim' Yarra

THE CLUB RUN: (The name given for aircraft deliveries to Malta). Once "Operation Spotter" had finally been successfully launched, HMS *Eagle* returned to Gibraltar to collect more pilots to fly 16 more Spitfires Vc's to Malta. "Picket 1" was carried out on 21/3/42 and 9 more Spitfires arrived safely in Malta led in by a Blenheim. As the second Blenheim had failed to appear, {*Conflicting accounts here*} but certainly *Eagle* was in a very vulnerable position and unable to hang around in hostile waters, again she returned to Gibraltar with the remaining pilots (my father amongst them). The same squadron set sail

on the 27th and the Spitfires were safely launched on the 29/3/42. This was operation "Picket 2" and was led in by my father.

(Note-1: All planes had additional long-range slipper tanks fitted as the standard tank was only good for 435 miles. They also had small wedges fitted to the flaps to give the optimum 15 degrees for carrier take-off. When airborne, the pilot briefly lowered his flaps and the wedges fell out. No pilot was allowed to land back on the carrier for any reason whatsoever, on pain of a court-martial as the Spitfires were unsuitable for carrier landing for various reasons. If you needed to land you had to ditch alongside one of the support ships! Another point, the Spitfire needed approximately 800ft of runway to make the 85mph lift-off speed. *Eagle's* deck was 430ft of which only 400ft was useable. They needed a minimum of 30mph wind across the deck plus the 27mph forward speed of the carrier to allow them to make the extra 35-40mph to become airborne. If they failed to make this speed they would fall off the front of the carrier and be run over by it! (Read the full story in the link, above.)



Point of no return – A Spitfire Vb gets airborne from HMS Eagle on 7th March 1942

29/03/1942

OPERATION PICKET 2

These were the remaining 7 Spitfires that were not flown off HMS *Eagle* during operation Picket 1. (For explanation see previous page) - It was a 4-hour flight from about 700 miles west of Malta with clouds at 500ft. Assumedly, as they would have lost the Blenheim in the cloud, they flew on the deck.

"Malta: War Diary states": *Weather* Wind south westerly; cloud and rain – visibility poor.

Log book (4.00hrs-Spitfire Vc) *Eagle* to Malta. Clouds 500 feet, with Blenheim. {His logbook says the 27th but it **was** on the 29th in every other reference. Palm Sunday}

From "Spitfires Over Malta": Eric Crist recalled: "The first one off was our C/O {my father} he disappeared over the bow and finally staggered into view half a mile ahead. That didn't inspire any confidence!"



A Spitfire Vb low down over the sea

(NOTE-2: The Spitfire pilots, during the first few months, were ordered to concentrate on the bombers and ignore the fighters; even using minimal fire so as to put them off their targets and to jettison their bombs, causing less damage to major installations etc. The Hurricanes were used for airfield defence and to protect the landing Spitfires. With such superior odds against them, it was impossible to give more than a quick burst at one bomber and then onto the next as they dived through the formations. To follow through an attack almost always meant you would have more than one Axis fighter on your tail immediately. BIG problem was cannons kept jamming - later found to be due to faulty ammunition.)

30/03/42

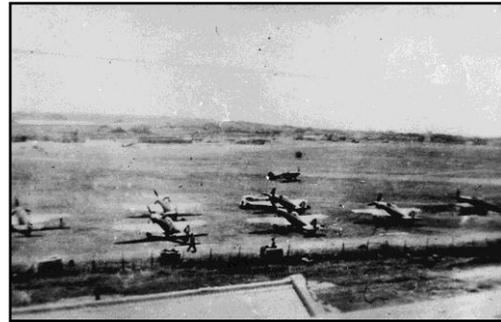
Log book (0.50mins-Spitfire Vc) From Takali - 3 cannon tests during raids (missed a 109)

31/03/42

Log book (0.40mins-Spitfire Vc) From Luca - After 109s on deck - oil on windscreen

02/04/42 {Kill 1} Confirmed Damaged (1) Ju88

Log book (1.10mins-Spitfire Vc) Four Spits over (from Takali) and seven (185 Squadron) Hurricanes - 3 Spits go down U/S. (unserviceable) I sit behind a Ju88 and my cannons jam. I damage him with 4 guns only. (Browning 0.303" machine guns - Note F.G) One engine is on fire. *{Pilots: Gracie, Barton, Mike Graves, Bill Bailey.}*



Spitfires of 249 Sqn at RAF Station Takali and Hurricanes of 185 Sqn at RAF Station Hal Far

Diary: Evening from Luca - damaged a Ju88 with 4 guns only over Grand harbour. Bill Bailey is hit by 109s but is OK. "Jumbo" (Sq/Leader Gracie) & Charles Graves alone & U/S - Hit by return fire & flak. *{These are how the Logbook & Diary are written. he must mean Mike not Charles. I can find no other mention of Bailey anywhere else.}*



Sqn Ldr 'Jumbo' Gracie – Mike Graves – 'Bis' Bisley

05/04/42

Diary: My father was not flying that day but writes of P/O Bisley: Bisley got 2 confirmed but he is shot in the legs coming home and is hospitalized.

09/04/42 {Kill 2} Confirmed Damaged (1) Ju88

Log book/Diary (0.45mins-Spitfire Vc) 16.55hrs. I got into a bunch of Ju88s over the harbour and damaged one. He slowed up - he'd had it. His pals do battleship attacks on me and I damage another from 50 yards. My cannons only fire 40 rounds.

"Malta: War Diary states": 1655-1800hrs Two Spitfires from 126 Squadron are scrambled and intercept a formation of Ju88s off Grand Harbour. FI/Lt Barton damages one.

Also written in "Malta: The Spitfire Year": In the air were 10 Hurricanes and the 2 Spitfires against a plot of at least 100; fifty bombers and the same number of Me109Fs. Total claims were made for 8 Ju88s damaged: The 2 Spitfire pilots, FI/Lt Barton and Sgt. Schade - claiming two and one respectively.

Thursday, April 9 - Luqa and Grand Harbour again badly blitzed. Fighters stood down this morning. They went up this afternoon (two Spits and four Hurricanes) but could do very little owing to vast numbers of 109s. FI/Lt A.R.H. Barton (126) and P/O Stanley F. Brooker RAF(VR) (Canadian 601/126) were on. Claim and damaged 109 apiece and so it goes on. (*Excerpt from the Diary of Pilot Officer PETER NASH DFC - No.249 SQUADRON RAF - 30 JANUARY to 16 MAY 1942- Courtesy F.G*)

There are no logbook or diary entries between the 10th and 19th of April

(NOTE-3: On the **13th April** there were no raids, allowing much needed maintenance on the defending Spitfires and Hurricanes. From the **15th April to 17th April** there was little or no flying over the Island because of bad weather. **10th to 14th - 18th & 19th April** weather was OK.)

The weather for the 15th April: "Malta: War Diary states": Wind cold, north easterly; 100% medium cloud – poor visibility. Gale force winds develop. After 16.00 hrs - Bad weather prevents further operations during the day by enemy aircraft. **There was also a period when it was not possible to have any fighter aircraft airborne at all, due to unserviceability.**

Also written in "Malta: The Spitfire Year": Sunday 19th April. It had now been five days since Malta's dwindling number of fighters had been able to operate. The situation was desperate.

(NOTE-4: On the 18th/19th all the fighter squadron personnel were preparing the airfields for the arrival of new Spitfires from the carrier USS *Wasp*. This is when 601 Squadron arrive with Dennis Barnham of the book "Malta Spitfire Pilot" aka "One Man's Window.")

20/04/42

Log book/Diary (1.25mins-Spitfire Vc) 47 Spits arrived for Luca & Takali. 6 of the new Vc's all U/S. I hit a Ju88 from close underneath but made no claim. Johnny (FI/Lt "Tim" Johnston) bailed out over Luca. We lost Putman and Ryckman. 109s were strafing the aerodrome. My cannons only fired 6-15 rounds.



601 and 603 Squadron group photo on board USS Wasp for 20th April 1942 Spitfire delivery flight to Malta

Also written in " Malta: The Spitfire Year": At 17.20hrs six Spits from 249 Squadron, Takali and six from 126 Squadron Luca, were scrambled. The latter being late owing to telephone lines being down. The 126 Squadron pilots **led by FI/Lt Barton** had become engaged with Messerschmitts and suffered badly. Two pilots were lost - P/O Putnam and Flt/Sgt Ryckman. Meanwhile FI/Lt Johnston's Spitfire, whilst trying to avoid 2 Me109s over Luca, was hit by a bomb blast and was hurled up in the air out of control. He bailed out at *only* 150ft. and all he did was *bruise* his heel on landing!

21/04/42 Confirmed Probables (2) Ju88s

Log book/Diary (1.35-Spitfire Vc - BR190/2-A) 16.20hrs. Evening aerodrome defence with FI/Lt Parry of 601 squadron (*actually a familiarisation flight as well*). On the way down caught 8 Ju88s going out north over Ghajn Tuffieha {*incorrectly written "Hein Tan Far"*} squirted three windscreens and probably hit two. Then I had a head-on duel with two 109s firing together over Takali three times running and every one missed & so on. My tail is shot up and the cannons jam. 3 rounds - nobody hit. The "5C" is too heavy. (*If BR190/2-A was still fitted with 4-Hispano cannons, the comment is correct. Courtesy F.G.*)

22/04/42 {Kill 3 & 4} Confirmed Kill (1) Ju87

Log book/Diary (1.40-Spitfire Vc) 17.30hrs. Led four Spitfires at 9,000 feet circling amongst 20+ 109s which had caught us. Probably hit one. Edged away. Chased a Ju88 north of Sliema then came back for more. I caught a 109 asleep over St. Paul's Bay and damaged it. Pieces flying off! His no.2 interfered. Smoke from fires in 2 Ju87s that I shot at over Grand Harbour. Given damaged. I squirted from below and abeam a Ju88 off Zonkor point. I was jumped by 2 pairs of 109s all firing at once. I pulled up and into a spin. My Spitfire (BR120/T) is damaged with holes in the tail plane. Sgt Crist and P/O Frank Jemmett are on aerodrome defence. Jemmett is killed. He was shot up by 109s as he was coming down. Broke his legs but made a good crash landing near Rabat. He hit a wall and burnt. Army and Geoff West tried to get him out.

Also written in "Malta: The Spitfire Year": When 50 Ju88s and 20 Ju87s appeared at 17.30. Six 126 Squadron pilots and two 185 Squadron were sent up to meet them. **Fl/ Lt Barton** claimed 1 Ju87 shot down and a second as a probable, plus a Bf109 damaged before himself being hit.



'Paddy' Schade – Stanley Brooker on left – 'Tim' Johnston – 'Jack' Ryckman

24/04/42 {Kill 5} Confirmed Kill (1/2) Ju88

Log book (0.50-Spitfire Vc-BP973/2-J) Fixed a Ju88 from 400yds. An 8-second burst. Nothing seen by me but seen to go down by ground watchers. Given a 1/2 probable.

Diary: Morning with Bailey, Crist & Milner. Tried entry from the sun, this was wrong. Closed Ju88s to sea level. Fired at 400yds. 1/2 probable Ju88 with Milner. Same trouble around aerodrome, but everyone safe.

Also written in "Malta: The Spitfire Year": Just after 10.00hrs - 26 Ju88s & 14 Ju87s bombed Valletta. **Fl/Lt Barton** led off four Spitfires of 126 Squadron to meet the raiders.

29/04/42

Diary: My father was not flying that day but writes: 'Italians appear at high level Fiat BR20s - 5 of them. Crissy (Sgt. Crist) is up with Johnny (Fl/Lt "Tim" Johnston) - shot up while on tail of Ju88 by a 109 - Crash landed Luca OK. He is hit in the hands and legs.'

(NOTE-5: So many Spitfires had been destroyed on the ground and in the air that there were not enough planes for the 2 squadrons based at Luca, 126 and 601. There were also too many pilots for the few planes available. No spares to fix the damaged ones, only parts that could be cannibalised from broken Spits; so the few planes available were allocated to the squadrons by rotation. One morning it's 601's turn & the afternoon 126's turn. Next morning it's 126's turn & 601's in the afternoon. Before flying again you had 2 days off. In fact sometimes there were only two or three Spitfires in serviceable condition on the whole aerodrome. Most of those from the USS *Wasp* have been destroyed already.

Between 24th April and 30th April my father was promoted to Squadron Leader of 126 Squadron.

*{Next diary/logbook entry is the **1st May** but all other records state the day as **30th April.**}*

30/04/42 or (1/05/42) Confirmed Damaged (1) Ju88

Written on the left side of his log book: {*exactly as written*} Taken over 126 squadron - Luca. By this time Malta had very much had it. Raids 2 or 3 times a day. 90+ to 100+. Only 3 to 6 Spits left to fight this off. Harbour U/S. Aerodromes could not hold grounded aircraft. No hope of supplies or facilities for unloading. 2/3rd's of electric power plant bombed. No juice for making bread. Moral shocking.

Log book (1.05-Spitfire Vc-BR116/1-V) 11.10hrs. Bill Bailey & Scott (601) and myself - 3 Spits - perfect interception by control. Head on with Ju88s off Zonkor Point. 109s bothered the other two. I couldn't do much alone. Strikes on the Ju88 leader. Damaged - then usual 109 scrap on the deck. (20+ on deck in 4's & 2's). Diary: Wizard interception Ju88s coming in off Zonkor. Solo interception, only me left. Head on and low at Ju88 - damage strikes - then 109 trouble.

Log book/Diary: I shot a 109 off the tail of a Spit around Takali. I hit him but result unknown. Not claimed. Diary: But funny, he was the one that fell in at St. Paul's Bay but claimed by ground gunners. Claimed after as a probable.



'Junior' Crist – Frank Jemmett – John Mejon

3/05/42

Written on the left side of his log book: (*unabridged*) - Preparations for 70+ spitfires to arrive from the carriers *Wasp* & *Eagle*. Estimated that A/C must be airborne within 20mins of landing to avoid being bombed on the ground. Everything in one pen from pilot to oil & armour.

Huns available in Sicily: 188 - Ju88s; 44 - Ju87s; 346 - Bf109s & Macchis.

Log book/Diary (1.30-Spitfire Vc) 17.30hrs - 2 Spits from Luca, Dusty (*Miller*) & me and 3 from Takali. We held 109s off the Takali boys to some extent while Bill Douglas's bunch got into the bombers. Out-generalled {*outclassed*} by four 109s. They came around from underneath, all four squirting together (one of these seen to fall down after head on squirt - but I made no claim). Tried old head on tactics; upward skid & turn: Tennis balls flying underneath. By the time they were underneath me I had lost flying speed and spun. This will work one day!

Squirted a Ju87 & missed. Long squirt at a 109 near Filfla - extreme long range to get him off someone's tail. All Spits together at sea level. Usual trouble landing. Nobody hit much.

(Tennis balls - Explanation-courtesy F.G. *The Bf109 was fitted with a 20mm aircraft cannon firing through the engine spinner – the cyclic rate of a cannon is much slower than that of a machine-gun, and if tracer ammunition is fitted say, one in five, this will show every fifth round visible to the naked eye, giving an even slower effect as if 'tennis balls' are coming your way, in this case passing underneath Barton's Spitfire.*)

"Malta: War Diary states": 1730hrs Air raid alert for an incoming formation of 37 aircraft including Ju87s, Ju88s and Me109 fighter-bombers plus fighter escort. Two Spitfires are scrambled from Luca to intercept enemy aircraft. They engage numbers of Me109s and a Ju87: no claims.

Also written in " Malta: The Spitfire Year": At 17.40hrs 5 Spits flown by 603 Squadron were scrambled with Fl/Lt Douglas. *{this was the action.}*

(NOTE-6: Around this time my father formed an all American flight "B" within 126 Squadron led by Fl/Lt Jimmy Peck. Pilots included: P/O D.W. McLeod (Mac - Jimmy Peck's close friend), Downs, Reade Tilley and Booth. Almos from 249 Squadron and McHan from the Malta Night Fighter Unit, 1435 Night Fighter Flight, joined them on May 16th. In fact my father thought the Americans were exceptional pilots and would trade other pilots from 126 to get an American from another unit.)



Jimmy Peck – Don McLeod – Reade Tilley – Douglas Booth – ‘Sandy’ McHan – some pilots which formed 126 Sqns’ all-American Flight

4/05/42

Diary only. (No log book entry): Ace McQueen got it. (Fl/Lt Norman McQueen 249 Squadron was killed) Same as yesterday with Dusty. Bad visibility downwind. *{So I assume flew sometime with Fl/Lt Miller although there is no log book entry.}*

"Malta: War Diary states": 1740hrs Four Spitfires are scrambled from Luqa and four from Ta' Qali are scrambled to intercept an incoming formation of enemy aircraft. *{Must have been the sortie}*

6/05/42

Diary only. (No log book entry): Johnny Johnston bailed out; he was burnt in the face.

(Note: Courtesy F.G. Johnston does not fly again on Malta - See book 'Tattered Battlements – A Fighter Pilot's Diary' by Wg Cdr Tim Johnston DFC.)

8/05/42

Diary only. (No log book entry.) Tilley gets two 109s. I couldn't go up as feeling ropey. Hurricanes kept the Ju88s off the Island while Tilley fixed the 109s - perfect!

9/05/42 {Kill 6} Confirmed Probable (1) Macchi 202



Group photo of pilots on board USS Wasp for 9th May 1942 Spitfire delivery flight to Malta

OPERATION BOWERY

The evening *before* the operation my father gave the boys of 126 the following briefing
(The story again written by Pl. Off. D.W. McLeod)

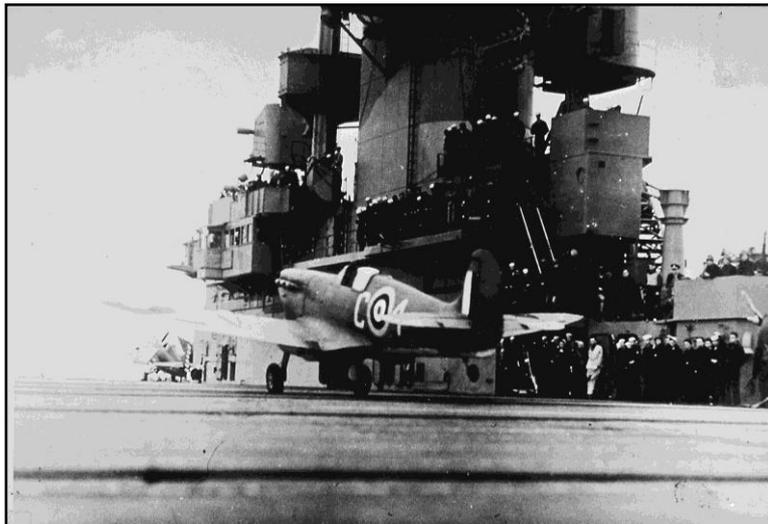
Anecdote: Tony Barton, now acting as C/O said: "Fellows this is it. One half of the aircraft will land at Takali and one half at Luca. As you all know there are many pens built. Each one of these pens will house an aircraft. At each pen there will be a number of men of whom one will be an experienced Malta pilot. The minute the aircraft touches the ground he will be flagged immediately into a pen in the dispersal area. Ground crewmen will instantly tear off the long-range petrol tanks, another crewman will begin pouring petrol from already handy four gallon tins. Each squadron will have a definite purpose. Our purpose will be to intercept combat enemy fighters. The positions of the other three squadrons will be varied. We will then attempt the diversion of the bombers from the targets. The other aircraft on the Island will be used in defending you and other squadrons in their efforts. In other words the success of the entire operation depends on you becoming immediately airborne. With units cooperating as usual and with good luck gentlemen, we can turn the tide of this, our little war. The minute that our radar picks up a bomber strength building up over Sicily every aircraft will become airborne.

Immediately upon arrival at your pen you will get the pilot out of the aircraft who flew it in, put him to work in some handy way, get yourself into the aircraft, strapped in and ready for instant take off. When your flare is given from the dispersal hut, each section will give it the gun and take off. When your flare is given you will have a clear field. If you should have only half a tank of petrol take-off anyway."

Written on the left side of his log book: Spits arrive in batches of 12. All down in half an hour. 109s shooting up Hal far and Luca. They shoot down 2 new boys who hadn't seen them. They cause 2 crashes more. Hun misses the bus with raid and 5 squadrons airborne! 50 down 1st day for certain!

Diary states: 60 odd Spits arrive - colossal effort by everyone. 126 Squadron in readiness pens {*Dennis Barnham in "Malta Spitfire pilot" describes all this. - worth reading!*}

Scrambled 13.00hrs. Jerry bombing aerodromes. No R/T {*Radio Telephone*}. I got Graves to take over in the end. I pushed off and played with three 109s. Squirted hell out of one - bum attack whilst the other



Spitfires delivered by USS Wasp – The April delivery Spitfires were coded '1' and '2' followed by a letter, such as: 1A, 1B, 1C and 2A, 2B, 2C. The May delivery Spitfires were coded '3' and '4' followed by a letter, such as: 3A, 3B, 3C and 4A, 4B, 4C.

two were firing underneath. One cannon jammed at 40 rounds, the other three would not fire. The boys got into the Ju87s & 88s. Malaya (FI/Sg Paddy Schade - born in Malaya - hence nick name) & Dusty some success.

Mike would not cut the corner.



Dennis Barnham, in cockpit, looks on as armourers work on his 4-cannon Spitfire Vc

17.00hrs. - Went up after Eyties. No R/T - Mike took us up. Cant 1007s (3 engine bomber) - five of them. Malaya & Goldy got three of them. Me - white smoke out of Macchi 202. Wizard dog fight. Boys must have destroyed at least half the fighters. Bag for the day 30 odd.

{Later he added in pencil} - None returned home. Referring to the Cant 1007s.

Log book (1.10-Spitfire Vc) 13.00hrs Big battle stunts. No R/T and my cannons jammed. 1 cannon fired 30 rounds. {Diary says 40 rounds but assumedly log book written up after aircrew checked the problem.} Played around by myself - played around with three 109s. Squirted hell out of one. I had to spin out as others fired at me.

Log book (1.15-Spitfire Vc) 17.00hrs No R/T. Given probable Macchi as it was streaming glycol. Squadron knocked out 100 percent of 5 Cant 1007s and several Macchis.

Sergente Maggiore Teresio Vittorio Martinoli log: At 17:45 on 9 May 1942, five Z.1007bis from the 210 Squadriglia BT were out to attack Malta. They were escorted by 16 MC.200s, eight from each 9 Gruppo and 10 Gruppo. To meet this threat, 33 Spitfires were scrambled, and eleven of these from 126 Squadron intercepted, **led by Squadron Leader A.R.H. Barton.** Barton's single section engaged the escort while Pilot Officer M.A. Graves led the rest to attack the bombers. No RAF aircraft was even damaged. RAF claimed three Z.1007s (two by Flight Sergeant Schade and one by Sergeant Goldsmith), one MC.202 (by Pilot Officer Bisley) and three damaged - claimed by Flight Sergeant Schade, **Squadron Leader Barton** and Pilot Officer Graves.

10/05/42 {Kill 7} Confirmed Kill (1) Bf109

(NOTE-7: This is the day that vital supplies are delivered to Malta by the minelayer HMS *Welshman*. Without these Malta would not have survived. The Axis planes had to try and destroy her. Thanks to the Spitfires, intense A/A barrage and smoke screen they didn't succeed. It was the most intense air battle ever seen!)

Written on the left side of his log book: Big raid on harbour. Ju88s & Ju87s

Log book/Diary (1.15-Spitfire Vc) 10.40hrs. Offensive patrol off Sicily at 29,000 ft with Tilley, Goldy. (Sgt Tim Goldsmith) and another (*This was Jimmy Peck*). We got about 8 -10 miles off the Sicilian coast and the plot builds up. We hung around. Then shadowed the advance party back to Malta from up sun. We jumped them 15 miles NE of Grand Harbour at 25,000 ft. I jumped two 109s. I made strikes on one 109. He jinked and went straight down. My cannons jam after 30 to 40 rounds and I don't know if he fell in. later confirmed Destroyed.

*{Jimmy Peck is mentioned as the leader in "**Malta: The Spitfire Year**" & "**Spitfires Over Malta**" - but no one had access to my father's diary or logbook and 126 Squadrons diary (operations book) was one of the worst not to be made up to date. In fact it was my father who was the leader} - **This I have now confirmed as the trap laid by "Woody" (Group Captain Woodhall, the Malta operations controller,) in his book "Soldier, Sailor & Airman too.***



'Bis' Bisley, 'Sailor' Barton, 'Goldy' Goldsmith, Don Smith

Anecdote -THE TRAP: (Page 194 in Soldier, Sailor & Airman Too)

"We had not been raided for several days so I decided that the time had come to do a little *Hun Baiting* as we wanted to keep the enemy *on the hop*, instead of allowing him to lick his wounds and repair his damaged aircraft. I arranged that '*Admiral*' Barton should take four Spitfires and do a sweep at 25,000ft over the German fighter airfield at Comiso to entice the Hun fighters into the air. As soon as the *Admiral* reported that the German's were reacting, I was to *scramble* two or more squadrons to deal with whatever was put up. When the *Admiral* was about half way to Sicily I had indications that a huge bomber force was assembling and their fighters were joining up over Comiso. Over the R/T I told the *Admiral* - *stick around where you are there is some trade on its way*. Back came the *Admiral's* husky reply - '*OK*'. He never wasted words! He was beautifully placed to bounce the Hun because his section was 25,000ft up sun and on the flank of the enemy's approach. In the mean time I scrambled two squadrons of Spitfires who climbed up and intercepted the enemy about 25 miles north of the Island. Our boys went right in and attacked, one squadron going for the bombers and one for the fighter escort. Once the fight had developed into a *mix up* there was a certain amount of excited chatter, dominated by Canadian and American voices. The *Admiral* who was by now at 30,000ft *up sun* of the

fight chose a lull in the chatter to say huskily over the R/T - 'Take it easy boys, take it easy, there's one each apiece all round!' Then led his section in and they shot down four Germans. The effect of the Admiral's transmission was immediate there was almost complete R/T silence from then on! As far as I remember only two enemy bombers out of that raid of about twenty reached the Island and they were so shaken that they hit nothing."



Johnny Plagis

10/05/42 continued

Log book/Diary (1.10-Spitfire Vc) 14.00hrs - False alarm we were too early. I climbed with the squadron. (11 aircraft) We went high south of the Island and had 109 trouble all the way up. Jimmy Peck got one and 249 Squadron bagged three out of five Ju88s that bombed the harbour. We took on 109s whenever possible.

I was alone with 4 again. Milled around. Much squirting and a lot on one of them.

Diary only: Boys will not stick in milling complex. (*Milling complex possibly refers to a 'dogfight', and I suspect that the Boys are in fact the enemy, the Rats!* **Explanation-courtesy F.G**)

Written on the left side of his log book: Evening raid Ju87s only. Very foxy!

(Diary 0.30-Spitfire Vc) Evening - scrambled 8 aircraft with 249 Squadron from Takali just before Ju87s came in on the harbour. Too late, we milled around with 109s off Ghajn Tuffieha Bay {*written phonetically: Hein Tan Far Bay again*} at sea level. They played very well, getting 180 degrees from each other. As one was squirted the other came in. Squirted leader twice & the other one. Little result but good fun. {*Repeated in log book, shortened version*} Johnny Mejon (*Belgian*) bales out into the sea but picked up OK.

Bag for the day 60 odd.

Written on the left side of his log book: P.R.U. Spit reports that the Sicilian channel is like the Oxford boat race: Jerry dinghies. (*P.R.U.: - Photo Reconnaissance Unit. The pilot was probably P/O Harry Coldbeck.*)

Estimated 100 - Ju88s knocked out by now in 2 days. Ju87s don't appear again after this except at night.

(Note-8: This business of no R/T: One cause was the battery packs oiling up. The other was no decent chargers, only home made. This is noted in one or two books that I have read.)

11/05/42 {Kill 8} Confirmed Kill (1) Bf109

Written on the left side of his log book: Hun bombing stopped. Their casualties are too high. This and other raids are hit and run by small numbers. Damage nil. Intelligence from Italy reports that casualties are much higher than claimed.

Log book/Diary (1.05-Spitfire Vc) 07.00hrs Took off after "George", the reconnaissance plane (Ju88), and another plot of 6 plus 109s. With Dusty & Goldy, we shot up hill halfway to Sicily - too fast. 109s were pouring phony smoke.

Diary only: Johnny Plagis *{who was a very good friend of my father's}* and the boys from 249 Squadron Takali, were already up. We saw the Ju88 and handed him to Johnny. Then we got onto the next plot. We found more 109s. We chased them 20 miles out but couldn't get nearer than 800yds, so didn't fire. Left them to help Johnny who was in trouble.



*Peck, Barton, Dodd, Ryckman, Miller, Crist, unidentified
Mcleod, Bisley, Bisdee, Johnston*

Log book/Diary (0.55-Spitfire Vc) 11.30hrs Squadron (9 of us) having missed the bombers yesterday we decided to stay below the cloud at 4,000 ft above Grand Harbour to make sure of catching them. 249 Squadron was above the cloud. Air control all to hell. Jerry's are foxy. I got into 109s off Kalafrana. I shot one up after he had hit Schade. His propeller stopped. This was confirmed by the Y service installation at Fort Rinella. *{In fact Schade was wounded in the arm.}*

Diary only: Nine Ju88s approached Grand Harbour, we are all set; but they funk'd it and went out over Hal Far at 8,000 ft. Only one came in which was shot up. One more made towards Hal far. No bombers, so got stuck into 109s over Kalafrana. Malaya is shot up but OK. I shot up the lead 109 and got strikes. He had his engine ticking over & was gliding down. I used bow and beam shots from 100yds or less. I got shot at once or twice so pulled up. I had some vibration and I found that I had been flying with a bent propeller all the time!

Some goodish delivery pilots flying but they can't keep up so always have to turn and cover them when "rats" are anywhere near. *{Love his expressions!}*

Jimmy Peck, Douglas, "Tiger" Booth, Fl/Sgt C.F. Bush, Winfield (New Fl/Lt), P/O Johnson, Goldy, Dusty & me. *{The nine pilots.}*

This is the third day. *{after Operation Bowery.}* Feeling wizard. Yesterday I was very tired. Good food and wizard crew.

A bomb fell outside Goldy's pen.

12/05/42

Diary only: Day Off. Fl/Lt J.P. Winfield, Tilley, Bisley, Bailey, Graves, Lewellin, Conway & Bush. Last 3 all new, shot down and slightly wounded. Mike Graves bailed out. The rear gunner of a Ju88 shot him. Bailey was shot down but is OK. 109s with red spinners, very hot!

13/05/42

Written on the left side of his log book: Bombing completely stopped except Eyties at high level on night work. Everybody comes up above the ground. Pubs are open.

Log book (0.55-Spitfire Vc) 19.10hrs (Approx.) Evening scramble after Macchis on circular tour of the Island. Engine went to hell.

Diary: Rather depleted. Took Goldy as No.2, also Jimmy, Tiger and Dusty. Just the five of us. No trade until evening for us. Jerry sending lots of 109s plus three Ju88s at a time. I scrambled Goldy, Tiger and me after Macchis that are doing a circular tour of the Island. Off Kalafrana they went down to the sea level. Intercepted them 15 miles west of Gozo. It was cloudy. My aircrew, already bent, packed in. Jimmy couldn't catch them. Goldy fired then his cannons jammed.

14/05/42 {Kill 9 & 10} Confirmed Kills (2) Bf109s



Bill Johnson

Log book/Diary (1.15-Spitfire Vc) 09.07hrs Morning scramble with Tilley, Goldy, Winfield, Dusty, Fl/Sgt Milner and P/O Johnson (new) {This was P/O Bill Johnson}. Scramble mix up. I seemed to be leading the Hal Far boys, so no use using R/T - Nothing.

From "Spitfires Over Malta": Sgt Goldsmith recalls: "Scrambled with 601 by mistake."

Log book (0.50-Spitfire Vc) 17.30hrs Best Dogfight of the Century. No R/T. With Tilley leading we climbed with four other Spits over the Island and waited. The 109s came in at 9,000 ft in fours. Tilley and I both got one. We reformed and climbed up over Takali. I got another by flick rolling in front of one that had fired at me. He overshot and was seen to go in from the ground later.

Diary: Evening. Best Dogfight of the Century. The 109s were in relays of 4's & 2's. (1,000 ft below) We were at ten grand over St. Paul's bay & the harbour. Tilley fixed one & I shot one out over Grand Harbour. Deflection upwards at 100yds. He was hit hard and went out to sea crooked & slowly. Claimed destroyed later. I came back and found the boys over Takali. I led them up again in a defensive circle.

"Rats" came in on us from the sun. One at Tilley and one at me. As they fired I pulled up and flicked. It didn't work. I tried again going south. He fired from underneath me. I flicked and he appeared 30yds ahead. I gave him a good burst. (*Some crossing outs and over the top he has written:*) "Full of it still! My 109 going down is dust! People on the ground reckon he had had it. Claimed Destroyed. DESTROYED!

(Note-9: A flick roll is in fact a horizontal spin. For a positive G flick (which is what my father was performing,) one pulls hard back on the stick and gives full rudder at the same time. The nose rears up and the plane rotates rapidly around its own axis, left or right, depending on the rudder direction.)

Also written in "Malta: The Spitfire Year": [Reade Tilley](#) {*Another good friend of my father's*} recalled: "We flew a couple of missions and working closely together bagged several 109s, despite unfavourable odds, getting somewhat shot about in the process."

Diary: Goldy, who has got 6, is very ill. Staff are ill. Everyone ill. No pilots.

Thank God we can now go straight into the fighters (see note-2). The last 6 weeks we always had to try and fend them off and get the bombers. Very distressing.

15/05/42

Diary: This was a day off for me.

This was almost certainly the day that [Dennis Barnham](#) in "[Malta Spitfire pilot](#)" mentions my father, when he and others were suffering badly from the Malta Dog (dysentery - owing to little and poor quality food available). "Squadron Leader Barton, commonly called *Sailor*, the C.O. of the other Luqa Squadron is also off duty today, also suffering from the Dog; he's shuffling across the floor, clad in black leather flying boots and an old silk dressing-gown..... " {*This was the first reference I had of my father being called "Sailor" I suppose the name was from him being in the Navy and FAA before the war.*}

Anecdote: I asked Martin Woodhall if he knew why Woody referred to my Father as "Admiral" & He told me this: "My brother told me that there was some story about a joke when Woody said he would have to promote [Sailor](#) to [Admiral](#) after he had cited him for the Bar to his DFC and the name stuck."



'Woody' Woodhall

16/05/42

Written on the left side of his log book: From now on 109s sent over with bomber call signs to make us take off and waste remaining low stocks of fuel.

Log book (1.20-Spitfire Vc) Dogfight with 109s. Oil on my windscreen, I couldn't see.

Diary: Very tired. Two sorties. Me, mix up - Damn all. *{This is pencilled in and very faint as though struggling to write. log book actually only shows one sortie.}*

"Malta: War Diary states": 1152hrs Six Spitfires 126 and 601 Squadrons are scrambled from Luqa to intercept another incoming formation of enemy aircraft. Fighters are unable to climb to the height of the bombers in time. *{1st sortie for sure}*

1516hrs Five Spitfires 126 Squadron are scrambled. *{The second sortie?}*

Dennis Barnham again mentions my father, when he has been told not to fly as he was still ill with the "Dog": *He's told whoever he puts in charge, is to use "Ratter" as the call sign, not "Exile"*. However he does fly as there is no one else to lead 601 Squadron. When circling at altitude, Woody tells him that Eyties are arriving at angels 30 over Gozo: *"Gain as much height as possible Sailor."* Woody thinks he is my father as he, Barnham, wasn't meant to be flying!

{This might mean that my Father's call sign was Ratter? He does call Jerrys "Rats" in his diary! It also, I think, confirms his diary entry of "mix-up"}

17/05/42

Diary: This was a day off for me.

18/05/42

Diary: This was a day off for me.

Jimmy Peck and Sgt Jones go to town. Three and a half between them!

19/5/42

Log book/Diary (0.40-Spitfire Vc) Scrambled late after P.R.U. and 109s. Not a hope of catching them. Hopeless!

Log book/Diary (0.35-Spitfire Vc) Scrambled four after damn all.

Diary: Would they send us up after dusk at the Ju88s? Not they!

Diary: *{exactly as written - apart from my date notation.}*

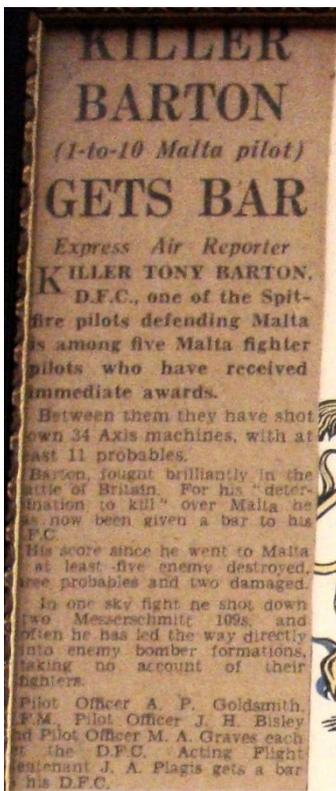
		<u>GIVEN</u>	<u>CLAIMED</u>
April 2nd	1 Ju88 Damaged - 4 guns only - A/C shot up by return fire.	1 Damaged	1 Damaged
April 9th	2 Ju88s Hit - 1 Claimed Damaged - Own A/C OK.	1 Damaged	1 Damaged
April 20th	1 Ju88 Hit - No Claim - Only 6-15 rounds fired - Own A/C OK	-----	-----
April 21st	2 Ju88 Hit - Windscreens - Possibly others - Aerodrome defence. Slight tail damage.	2 Probable's 1 Damaged	2 damaged ?
April 22nd	2 Ju87s Probable - 1 Bf109 damaged - Hit in tail plane - Slight.	-----	-----
April 24th	1/2 Ju88 Probable But seen from ground to be finished! No claim (Makes You Think!)	1/2 Probable	1/2 Probable
May 1st	1 Ju88 Damaged. <i>{30th June actually.}</i>	1 Damaged	?
	1 Bf109 - Probable (Probably Not Given)?	1 Probable	?

May 3rd	1 Bf109 Seen To Fall Down Dead after head-on engagement ?	-----	-----
May 9th	1 Macchi 202 - Probable - Slightly Shot-up - No R/T.	1 Probable	-----
May 10th	1 Bf109 Destroyed - OK.	1 Destroyed	-----
May 11th	1 Bf109 Destroyed - OK.	1 Destroyed	-----
May 14th	2 Bf109s Destroyed - OK - No R/T.	2 Destroyed	-----

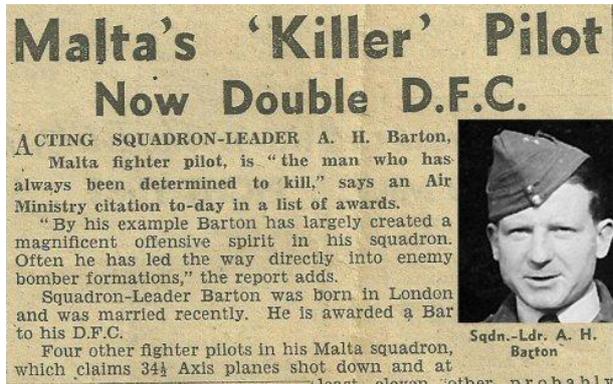
So Far Arithmetic very Good - But very lucky
 Makes you Think - All because Cannot Get Confirmation Especially When No R/T

21/05/42

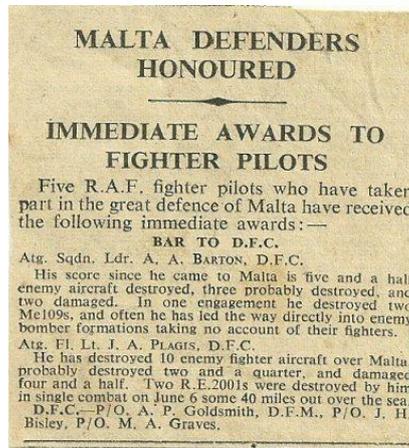
Diary: Me, Tilley, Goldy and Jimmy Peck get D.F.C.s etc. (These were given on the 29/04/42 - Group Captain Woodhall cited my father for his) - From the newspapers - Daily Sketch Monday the 29th:



< Daily Express



The Times of Malta



[It does seem for these newspaper clippings that his score was five & a half destroyed. he also says on page (26) that his official score is five & a half confirmed before leaving the Island. This score is given as only three & a half in some instances. It would be nice to see this total of five & a half verified by all.]

23/05/42

Diary: By Hudson to Gib. Gibraltar is full of Shiny bottomed Warriors and Wingless Wonders. {*What a fabulous expression!*} They must wear beautiful clothes, ties etc. All very ill mannered. Their favourite expression; "The regulations say that you can't do this" - Hopeless!

Anecdote :(Page 194 in Soldier, Sailor & Airman Too) The "Admiral" was a great character and a magnificent leader albeit he was thought unorthodox. He was an old friend of mine I had taught to

"deck land" in aircraft carriers in 1936 when he was a Lieutenant RN. He left the Navy because he found in the early days of the war he was doing more watch-keeping than flying. He then joined the RAF as a pilot officer: Was awarded the DFC in "The Battle of Britain" and got a "Bar" to his DFC in Malta.

I Sent him back to Gibraltar in May with some other experienced Malta pilots to help lead in the reinforcements who were being flown into us from the aircraft carriers. These chaps had to wait a few days and stayed at the Rock Hotel in Gibraltar. They naturally and excusably arrived in rather untidy condition because they had only been allowed to bring 45lbs of kit from England in the first place. Thanks to losses from bombing and pilfering, my pilots had not even one decent suit of uniform and uniform was almost impossible to replace on the Island. Until these fellows could buy more in Gibraltar their dress was "fancy" to say the least of it.

During their first dinner (which incidentally was the first decent meal they had eaten for weeks) an officious Wing Commander who had been living in fat ease and comfort in Gibraltar under almost peacetime conditions, sent a waiter to ask "Admiral" to report to him at his table and then in public, handed him a "raspberry" for being improperly dressed.

As the "Admiral" humorously put it when he told me about the incident on his return "I was only wearing one khaki sock and one blue one, khaki slacks, a blue tunic and scarf. It was all I had to wear and the blighter hadn't even got wings on his chest! It makes you think you know, sir!" I was furious of course and I tried to locate the Wing Commander concerned when I passed through Gibraltar on my way home at the end of July, so that I could invite his criticism to my dress. It is perhaps as well that I did not meet him. I wonder why it is that people who have soft, comfortable, safe and (usually unimportant) jobs, become self complacent, critical, intolerant and full of their own importance.

"Admiral" Barton was one of my finest Squadron Commanders who was loved and respected by us all. His subsequent death in a flying accident in England was an irreparable loss to the service.

(THE TRAGIC ACCIDENT - In 1943 my father had been posted to No.53 OTU at RAF Llandow to train new pilots - he was flying Spitfire P7378 (1250 hours experience, 300 hrs on type), the other pilot, Hamilton, in P8641, according to the F1180 accident cards. Collapse of No.1 conrod assembly was the reason for his engine failure which led to his landing downwind and subsequent collision. Both pilots were killed.)

From "Spitfires over Malta": [31st May](#) - Reade Tilley writes: "I was ordered on board a Lockheed bound for Gib that night, to lead some more Spits back from an aircraft carrier. Arrived in Gib the morning of the 1st June. Called the Skipper [Squadron Leader Barton] at the Rock hotel. He was plenty surprised. That day we all had dinner - skipper, Peck, Plagis and I. Then that afternoon they sailed with 32 Spits aboard the Eagle. {Only embarked} I was to remain a week longer."

(Note-10: On 20 May, SS *Empire Conrad* departed from Milford Haven, Wales with a cargo of **32 Spitfires** in crates. The aircraft were all Spitfire Mk Vc (Trop). Also on board were the ground crew who were to assemble them, a total of over 110 men. *Empire Conrad* was escorted by the 29th ML Flotilla and the corvette HMS *Spirea*. The convoy was later joined by the Minesweepers HMS *Hythe* and *Rye*. *Empire Conrad* arrived at Gibraltar on 27 May. The aircraft were transferred to the aircraft carrier HMS *Eagle* where they were assembled.)

Diary: 1st evening we embark on HMS *Eagle*. We take-off for Malta on the third morning.

3/06/42

OPERATION STYLE

(On 2 June, HMS *Eagle* departed Gibraltar escorted by the cruiser HMS *Charybdis* and destroyers HMS *Antelope*, *Ithuriel*, *Partridge*, *Westcott* and *Wishart*.)

Diary: 32 Aircraft take-off in groups of 8. Me, Johnny, Jimmy and Glen (P/O Arthur "Pinky" Glen DFC with 3 victories already.) Lousy journey, my 90-gallon slipper tank runs out in 1hr 50mins. I have visions of macaroni for the duration! 3 of Jimmy's boys shot down off Pantelleria. *{In fact it was only two. Two more were lost off Gozo}* One of mine goes off to Sicily and comes back as raid in progress.

After slipper tank comes off, I back off to 1,400 revs. Hopeless!

We are right inside Gulf Of Tunis. The French take notice.

Log book (3.40-Spitfire VcT) 90-gallon overload not properly filled. I ran out in 1hr 50mins. I crawled along most of the way. Jimmy Peck's boys jumped off Pantelleria. Four lost.

Diary: New living quarters 114 St. Julians. *{This must be the same place at Sliema that Dennis Barnham in "Malta Spitfire pilot" mentions. An English lady wished to get off the Island and in return said the RAF could use the house as a mess. It would make sense that 601 and 126 Squadron (The 2 fighter squadrons at Luca) would be sharing the same mess. They were before in Naxxar.}*



(NOTE: Courtesy F.G. This is most likely PEMBROKE HOUSE, in Main Street, St Julians. Today, this house is no more – sadly, it has been replaced by an apartment block. From Pembroke House Dennis Barnham pen-sketched the building opposite into his diary – this building survives today.)

4/06/42

Diary: Bathe before breakfast!

5/06/42

Diary: Readiness - Jerry's yellow. Hun activity is nil for the last fortnight. Some Eytie day and night bombing. 85 Ju88s left out of 1,000 on Comiso. *{1000, seems a lot - I think he must mean all of Sicily?}* Relegate old "A" to 23A pen. She's had 7 destroyed and some probables. She's the only one of the 9th May aircraft to reach a 30hrs inspection.

While I was away Tilley and Goldy got one each. No loss to us. Squadron has done about 37 destroyed and lots of others given from 24th March. Best arithmetic on the Island!

7/06/42

Log book/Diary (1.00-Spitfire Vc) One scramble. No combat - he writes D/A (Damn All) - {most probably 14.50hrs, although there was another 126 Squadron scramble at 19.40hrs but for only 15mins}. Flight times from "Malta: War Diary"

12/06/42

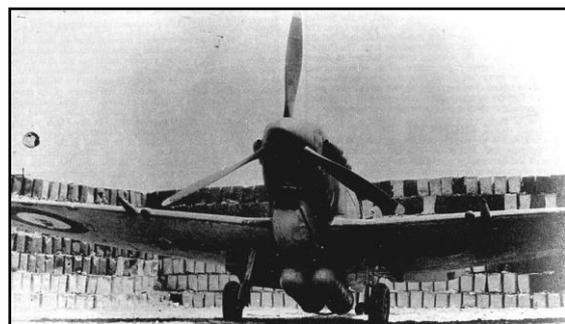
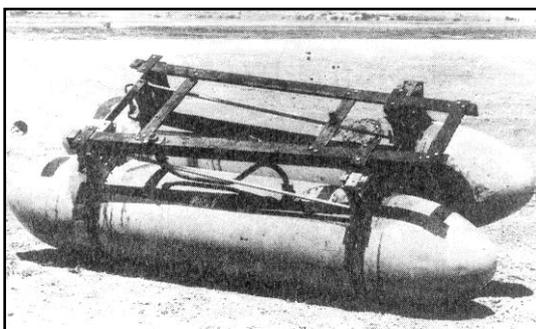
Log book/Diary (0.50-Spitfire Vc) Again he writes D/A (Damn All). {I can find no mention of a 126 Squadron scramble on that date. I wonder if he has put down the wrong date? 126 was scrambled on the 13th with no interception noted. See "Malta: War Diary" below.}

"Malta: War Diary states": (13th June) 0815hrs Air raid alert. Eight Spitfires 126 Squadron Luqa are airborne to intercept enemy aircraft.

15/06/42

"OPERATIONS: HARPOON & VIGOROUS" - CONVOY BATTLE

(Note-12: One convoy left Alexandria code named "Alex" and one left Gib. codenamed "UK". Once and for all to re-supply the Island. However although the Italian fleet had returned to base after a severe pummelling from our bombers; "Alex", after heavy losses and out of ammunition turned back for Egypt although it had just become within range of the Malta fighters. "UK" continued to Malta. 126 and 601 Squadron Spitfires were fitted with Hurricane long-range tanks under the belly so that they could protect "UK" once their protective umbrella of ships had to return to Gibraltar and before the Takali and Hal Far boys could protect them at about 70 miles out. These tanks effectively doubled the range to 140 miles. Only 2 supply ships got through although there was no shipping loss once the Spitfires from Malta were able to give cover. Orders were: 4 Spitfires over the convoy, 4 Spitfires on route and 4 Spitfires returning - a continuous rotation. 4 Spitfires against about 500! - Orders also said: The 4 Spitfires over the convoy must not leave until relieved. If you ran out of fuel you had to ditch - effectively a death sentence!)



Long-range Hurricane fuel tanks and Spitfire fitted with same tanks

Log book (3.10-Spitfire Vc) 08.00hrs Great Convoy battle! We are the 2nd section over the convoy which is 140 miles out and is being shelled by Eytie cruisers. The convoy is heading west. Convoy insists on hanging around Pantelleria. Mac's section escorts Eytie cruisers by mistake.

{I can find no information of this sortie in books or Malta Diary!}

Log book (2.15-Spitfire Vc) 18.00hrs (Time from "Malta: War Diary".) Convoy again. Ju88s bombed it and missed. Got sent after a trap on the deck.

No damage to convoy since "umbrella" over it off Pantelleria. Score: 15 - 2 out of 5 get home.

Diary: Convoys from East & West. 08.00hrs take-off: 3 hours on long-range tanks. Tilley and Dusty are with me. Convoy is 160 miles out, South of Pantelleria. Ice Cream (*Italian*) cruisers are firing at it. Destroyers lay smoke screens and the convoy goes off to the West. Swordfish get one destroyer and the Eyties streak for home.

11.00hrs. Phil (*Fl/Lt Winfield*) and Goldy get 2 of 3 Bredas that are bombing the convoy. No damage to convoy.

Evening over Convoy which is travelling at 12 knots South of Malta. Jerry bombs with Ju88s. We get caught on the water to the South East of the convoy by Jerry booby trap. Control on the convoy fell for it. No damage to convoy.

"Malta: War Diary states": 1802-2010 hrs Four Spitfires 126 Squadron on patrol: no combat.

16/06/42

(The only 2 supply ships that arrived, Troilus & Orari are unloaded at 07.00hrs)

Log book/Diary (1.05-Spitfire Vc) First team, four of us at 07.00hrs. There were four Ju88s and lots of 109s and Reggianes *{Italian fighters}*. No damage to the harbour. Later on it [*was confirmed*].

[*I am seeing*] Black spots & very tired.

17/06/42

Log book/Diary (0.50-Spitfire Vc) 07.00hrs. Ante Ju88s coming from Libya to Sicily [flying] on deck.

Nothing. No bloody good. (*He is actually mistaken and these were Ju52s nicknamed "Tante Ju's" which are the tri-motor cargo German aircraft which transport Rommel's requirements to the desert. They are returning to mainland Sicily/Italy, for more cargo. Explanation courtesy F.G.*)

Log book (0.35-Spitfire Vc) Took off alone to catch up the squadron as A1 (the Skipper) U/S - N.B.G. (*No bloody good.*)

(Explanation courtesy F.G. -*The aircraft "A1" was still surviving the blitz although from the April delivery, but u/s, unserviceable. Hence he had to take-off alone to catch up the squadron.*)

Diary: 14.00hrs. A1 U/S - So took off & climbed up alone - Me's about - jumped Tilley & Co. reported as Eyties. (Explanation-courtesy F.G. - *He was sent up by ground control to attack Tilley & Co. He then got into a position to jump them only to find them "buddies" and not "rats"*)

Log book/Diary (0.35-Spitfire Vc) 17.00hrs. Damn all! I floated up and down with experts, in a formation of four. All landed from 15,000ft in 5 minutes.

19/06/42

Log book/Diary (0.40-Spitfire Vc) 07.30hrs. 109s with bomber call signs trying to get us to waste the Island's petrol. (*Diary states flying time as 0.55mins.*)

Log book/Diary (0.35-Spitfire Vc) 12.00hrs. [Scrambled] after delivery Ju88s [flying] on the deck. (**Note F.G** - low down just above sea level to be undetected by Malta's Radar – possibly on their way to North Africa)

Control could not reach us low down. (**Note F.G** - R/T and Radar were ineffective at low level)

Hopeless! Control should have put on its Dingli station but couldn't. N.B.G.

(**Note F.G** - located at the highest point on Malta – for better range, etc.)

(Diary states his flying time as 0.40mins)

This is where his log book action finishes.

There are 3 more Diary entries in pencil:

22nd: 0.45mins - gremlin chase.

0.40mins. Ditto.....

27th: 1.05hrs. Nothing written. These three entries are very faint.

Written on the right side of his Log Book:

Official score for the period **5 1/2 - 3 - 3** apparently (newspapers.)

13 claimed damaged in various stages of composition when last seen, pending confirmation of destruction. Intelligence system is hopeless.

5 1/2 confirmed up to time of leaving the Island.

Own estimate **10** destroyed plus others damaged.

+ **5** destroyed + **3** probables (summer 1940) = Total **15** + destroyed.

Total destroyed in Malta 11th Feb 1942 to 14th July 1942 = **379** destroyed-**146** probables-**446** damaged.

The Log book is signed by my father as Commanding Officer 126 Squadron.

CONFIRMED KILLS ARE: 22ND APRIL - 1 Ju87 10TH MAY - 1 Bf109

11TH MAY - 1 Bf109 14TH MAY - 2 Bf109s 24TH APRIL - 1/2 Ju88

CONFIRMED DAMAGED ARE: 2ND APRIL - 1 Ju88 9TH APRIL - 1 Ju88 30th April - 1 Ju88

CONFIRMED PROBABLES ARE: 21ST APRIL - 2 Ju88s 9TH MAY - 1 MACCHI 202

Around the 30th June he hands over 126 Squadron to Squadron Leader Winfield and returns to the UK.

SINGLE-ENGINE AIRCRAFT			MULTI-ENGINE AIRCRAFT						PASS- ENGINEER
NIGHT			DAY			NIGHT			
PILOT	DEAL	PILOT	DEAL	1ST PILOT	2ND PILOT	DEAL	1ST PILOT	2ND PILOT	
(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
14:00		7:35							20:00
1:20			Plot 6, 109Fs in stratosphere No contact. Later chased another bogey						
15:20			M.D. on the D.F.C. 5/4 O.S. 126 Sqdn						
			The best of luck to our eldest member in 126 "Admiral"						



Above is a page from the log book of P/O Richard "Sandy" McHan signed off by my father, on right, as O.C. 126 Squadron with a note to him signed "Admiral" - a nice confirmation of his nick name. courtesy F.G.

I found written at the back of his log book - (Unabridged - apart from my note about Easter Monday.)

THE LUFTWAFFE HYMN OF HATE to Malta - Easter 1942

On Holy Thursday let us snooker
All the bloody Spits on Luqa
Fill the bloody sky with Stukas
Hallelujah!

Hail Good Friday, Hal Far's turn
Watch the Bloody Swordfish burn
Won't the Bastards ever learn?
Hallelujah!

Easter Saturday's - that's fine!
We'll make Takali toe the line
Here's a Rocket - Here's a mine!
Hallelujah!

Christ the Lord has risen today
Bomb the harbour! Bomb the bay!
Bomb the Bloody place all day
Hallelujah!

Easter Sunday let it rip! {In fact it should read" Easter Monday" }
God will give those boys the pip!
Then tear them off a Safi strip (150 wrecks on the Safi strip!)
Hallelujah!