

# A DICTIONARY OF BOMBER COMMAND 1939-1945

Geoff Simpson

*There are no words with which I can do justice to the aircrew who fought under my command. There is no parallel in warfare to such courage and determination in the face of danger over so prolonged a period, of danger which at times was so great that scarcely one man in three could expect to survive his tour of operations.*

Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Arthur Harris writing in Bomber Offensive, 1947.

RAF Bomber Command controlled the RAF's bomber forces from 1936 to 1968. During the Second World War, the period covered by this book, the Command destroyed a significant proportion of Nazi Germany's industries and many German cities, although at great loss, with over 55,000 killed out of 125,000 aircrew.

While many books detail the story of the Command and the individual squadrons and aircraft which took part in the aerial war against Nazi Germany, here for the first time is a book that provides a useful background to the principal aspects of the conflict, a dictionary comprising alphabetical entries covering everything from 'Airborne Cigar' to 'Women's Auxiliary Air Force'.

Selected entries are accompanied by contemporary photographs enhancing the reader's enjoyment of this unique publication.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

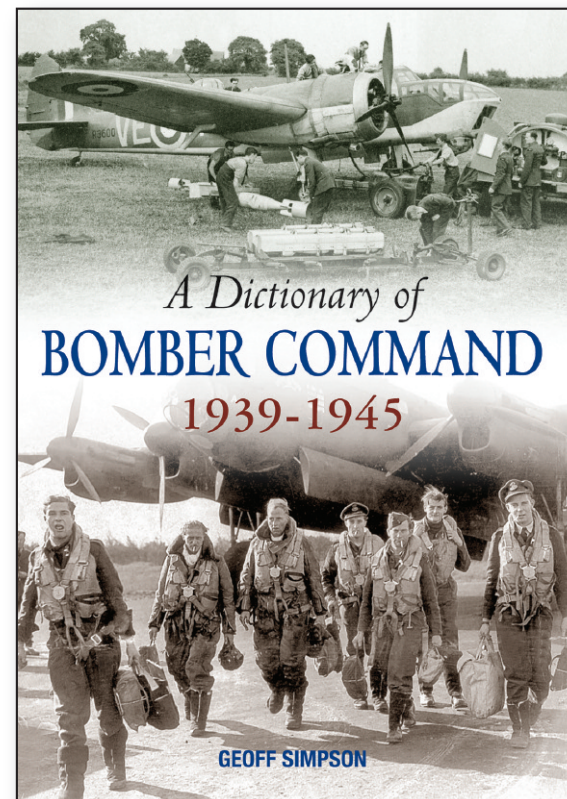
**Geoff Simpson** has spent his career in journalism and public relations. He has studied the RAF in the Second World War for many years, becoming a frequent writer, broadcaster and lecturer on the subject. His book, *A Dictionary of the Battle of Britain* was published by Halsgrove in association with the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust in 2009. He writes regularly for *Britain at War* magazine and is a Trustee of the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust. Geoff lives in Hazel Grove near Stockport and is married with two adult children.

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Above: The ATA does its stuff.



Above: The B-24 ended World War II as the most produced Allied heavy bomber in history with over 18,400 coming off the production line.



Left: The nose art on this Lancaster of No 463 Squadron RAAF, at RAF Waddington, is of a cow with the title "Whoa Bessie".



Pilot and crew ready to board their Fairey Battle aircraft with No 218 Squadron in 1940.



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**Airborne Cigar (ABC)** – One of the Radio Counter Measures (RCMs) designed to aid Bomber Command in overcoming German defences.

The two vertical aerials visible on the fuselage of this Lancaster were part of the Airborne Cigar equipment which jammed radio signals of German night fighter controllers.



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From October 1943 Lancasters of No 101 Squadron flew from Ludford Magna in the bomber stream with an eighth crew member known as the Special Duties Operator (SDO). Colloquially they were "Specials".

These men spoke fluent German and their job and that of their equipment was to jam the transmission of the German night fighter ground controllers. Each SDO used his knowledge of German to identify three frequencies on which the enemy controllers were transmitting and jammed them by broadcasting engine noise. In theory eight Lancasters operating in this way could blot out all transmissions.

The Germans developed the technology to find the engine noise transmissions and significant RAF casualties resulted. An earlier version of ABC was ground-based but achieved limited success.

**Aircrew Age** – Some of the men who flew into action with Bomber Command were as young as 18 and many were in their 20s. On the other hand, especially amongst the Air Gunners, there were aircrew born in the reigns of King Edward VII and Queen Victoria.

Chorley in *Bomber Command Losses*, vol 1 suggests that a gunner in the crew of a Wellington IC of No 37 Squadron, flying from Peltwell, that crashed south of Dunkirk on the night of May 31/June 1 1940, may have been the oldest man to be lost on Bomber Command operations.

This was Pilot Officer Sir Arnold Wilson, born on July 18 1884 and therefore 55 at the time of his death. Sir Arnold had achieved the King's Medal and Sword of Honour at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, had served in the 32nd Sikh Pioneers and the Indian Political Department and had been made DSO in 1916 after reconnoitring a position under Turkish fire. In 1933 he became MP for Hitchin, Hertfordshire as a National Conservative and in 1939 he volunteered for the RAF.

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Armourers check the bomb load for Mosquitos of No 105 Squadron at RAF Marham.

Example of a double-page spread.