



"...SO FEW"



A FOLIO DEDICATED  
TO ALL WHO FOUGHT AND WON  
THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN



YORK HOUSE  
ST. JAMES'S PALACE  
LONDON S.W.1

It is with great pleasure that I write this foreword to "So Few".

Its creators were faced with a daunting task since many who contributed to a victory that changed history could only be represented in spirit. Such is the modesty of those in the forefront of that action that they would not countenance any suggestion of superiority over their brothers in arms.

It is important to recognise, therefore, that the twenty five subjects portrayed in this book have consented to being included on the understanding that they represent not only the Royal Air Force but the Nation, Commonwealth, and our steadfast Allies in that momentous summer and autumn of half-a-century ago.

In addition to the high ideals the book reflects, its quality as a work of art should ensure its status as a lasting inspiration to future generations. I wholeheartedly commend this fine tribute in support of the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund.

H.R.H. The Duke of Kent



Lord Barber was commissioned as a 2nd Lt in the Territorial Army at the age of 18. After the fall of France he transferred to the Royal Air Force, trained as a pilot, completed his training after the end of the Battle of Britain and went on to fly Spitfires. In 1942 he baled out over the Channel, was taken prisoner by the Germans and sent to Stalag Luft III, the prison camp made famous by the “Wooden Horse” escape. He was an active member of the camp’s escape committee and made many attempts to escape. During his time as a POW, Lord Barber also studied Law. He later received a First Class Honours degree and practised at the Bar.

He entered Parliament in 1951 and very early in his parliamentary career, held a succession of important Party and Government posts, including PPS to Harold Macmillan. Senior posts as Government Whip, Economic Secretary and Financial Secretary to the Treasury and then Minister of Health followed. From 1970 to 1974 he was Chancellor of the Exchequer after which he retired from politics. Lord Barber is presently Chairman of the RAF Benevolent Fund.



*Foreword by The Rt Hon The Lord Barber of Wentbridge, PC, TD, DL*



he Battle of Britain, in the summer and autumn of 1940, was certainly the most crucial battle in the history of Great Britain. But more than that, a relatively tiny group of RAF pilots saved Western civilisation as we know it. In the divisive world in which we live today, it is salutary to reflect on a time when our small island stood undaunted against a seemingly invincible enemy. As the Prime Minister of the day, Winston Churchill, put it "...for a thousand years, men will still say, 'this was their finest hour'".

The original limited edition of this book, of which only 401 copies were printed, was created primarily as a tribute to the immortal "Few" who won that great Battle and also to raise money for the RAF Benevolent Fund, which cares for the needy families of present and former members of the Royal Air Force. The book's impact was enormous and copies are now in private homes and public institutions all around the World, raising over £300,000 for the Fund. As Air Chief Marshal Sir "Jock" Kennedy, Controller of the Fund, said, "It was the jewel in our anniversary crown", the anniversary being the half-century since the Battle.

You are now holding the popular edition of that book. Thanks to W.H. Smith, it has been possible to bring this emotive and beautiful work to a far wider audience. It tells the stories of 25 men who helped to win that great battle. At the time, they were very young, typically around 20 years old. A few months before, they had no idea what a desperately stern test the future held for them. Once plunged into it, they had no choice but to go on day after day, with no time for brooding or mourning the loss of friends, and almost always with very little sleep. Survival required courage, skill and luck. These 25 did survive and they were selected by the Battle of Britain Fighter Association to represent the different nationalities which took part. One pilot was an officer in the Royal Marines flying with the Fleet Air Arm. No Hurricane or Spitfire for him, he flew a Gladiator!

A particular feature of the book is the 25 silhouette paintings done from life in 1989-90. The silhouette is a powerful art form which in some strange way projects the subject's character even better than a photograph. Each subject was allowed to wear what he liked, and in true cavalier fashion they each chose something different. One chose his hole-in-one golfing tie. Another showed that, even though the squadrons of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force were (perhaps shortsightedly) disbanded in 1957, he was still an Auxiliary at heart, with a red silk lining to his jacket. Not the least of the subjects said "I'm Secretary of the Order of the Bath, so my robe is unique!"

Each man was also invited to contribute a handwritten reminiscence of the Battle, together with personal memorabilia for photographing. The latter can be a page from a flying log-book, or a faded photograph, a bus ticket, a silk scarf, or a knife, fork and spoon from a German prisoner-of-war camp. Again, no two collections are alike. Each tells a story.

When the original limited edition was being prepared, the Battle of Britain Fighter Association was at first understandably guarded and suspicious. Once they realised that the book would make money for the RAF Benevolent Fund they gave it their wholehearted support. So did every one of the 25 subjects of the book. Just as the Battle of Britain gave "the Few" a unique opportunity to serve the many, so has this book given an even smaller group of survivors of that gallant band the chance to help the entire RAF family, through the Benevolent Fund. I know that it will also bring pleasure to the many who will buy it.

*Antony Barber*

On behalf of The Few . . .

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