

FLYING FIFTEENERS



Lancaster Bomber in WWII

1. **Bomber Command**
Wing Commander Derek Walbourn, DSO, DFC & Bar
2. **Coastal Command**, Wing Commander Tom Stokes, DFC, RAAF
3. **Fighter Command RAF**
 - a) Flight Lt. Marcel Fakhry (mentioned in despatches)
 - b) Flight Lt. Hans van Roosendaal, Croix de Guerre &

WING COMMANDER DEREK WALBOURN, DSO, DFC & BAR

In 1936 at the age of 22 years (11 years before the first flying fifteen was designed), young Derek Walbourn, an engineering student at London University joined the University Squadron and learnt to fly in that famous old trainer The Tiger Moth.

Qualifying in 1938 with a Bachelor of Engineering Degree, Derek joined De Havilland and was involved in the development of Reversible Pitch Propellers. The project was abandoned when the top surface of the monoplane's wings began to lift off while diving steeply.

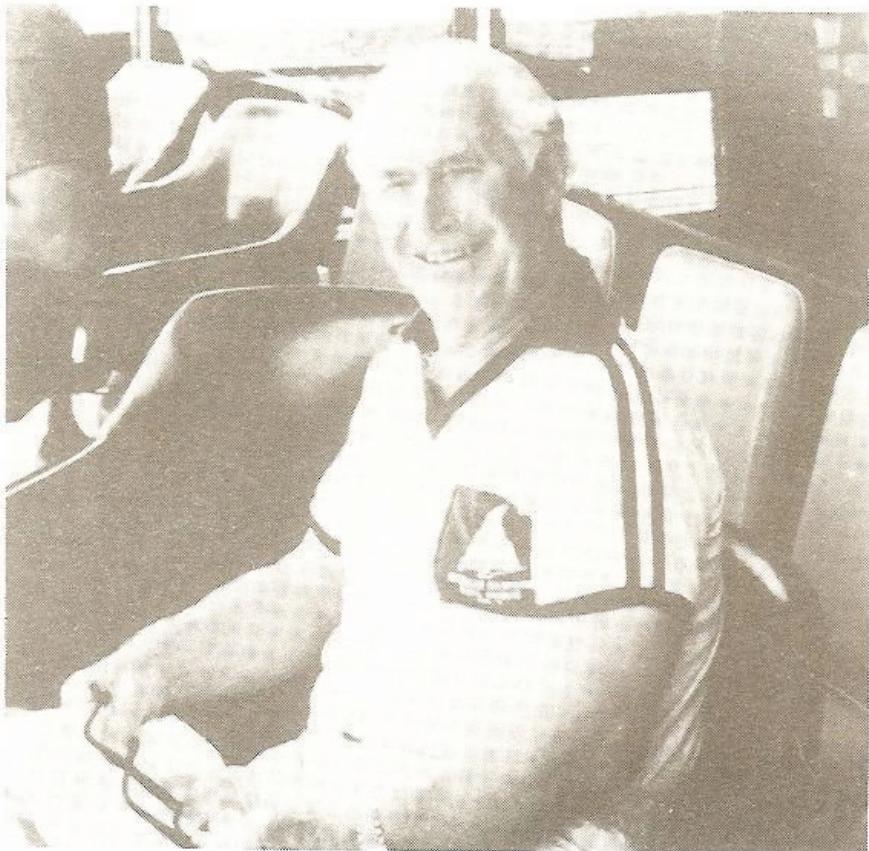
In 1939 Derek went off to a far safer career as a wartime pilot in the RAF. Life for Derek has often been exciting and sometime quite dangerous. His earliest task involved towing drones and being shot at by air gunners and ground gunners. Another task was to train Polish pilots to fly British aircraft which, because of the language barrier, was not only difficult but at times quite hazardous.

As Derek said, "one dozey gunner forgot to secure his guns properly to a rail within the training aircraft and when he fired, he shot up the rear controls and the petrol lines necessitating an emergency and dangerous landing.

Once again, in typical Derek fashion, he sought a safer job and volunteered to join Wing Commander Don Bennetts' (a famous W.W.II. Australian airman) 'Path Finders' Squadron, flying mainly Lancasters. This was highly dangerous work and involved identifying targets in enemy occupied Europe with the aid of radar devices called Oboe and H25 and then marking the targets with incendiaries for the following squadrons of Lancaster and Wellington Bombers, the master bomber remaining over the target to direct the bombing -- a highly dangerous occupation for a quiet lad like Derek.

The usual tour of duty in Bomber Command was 30 operations, but with a loss rate of 4% per mission, only 13 crews of 100 crews

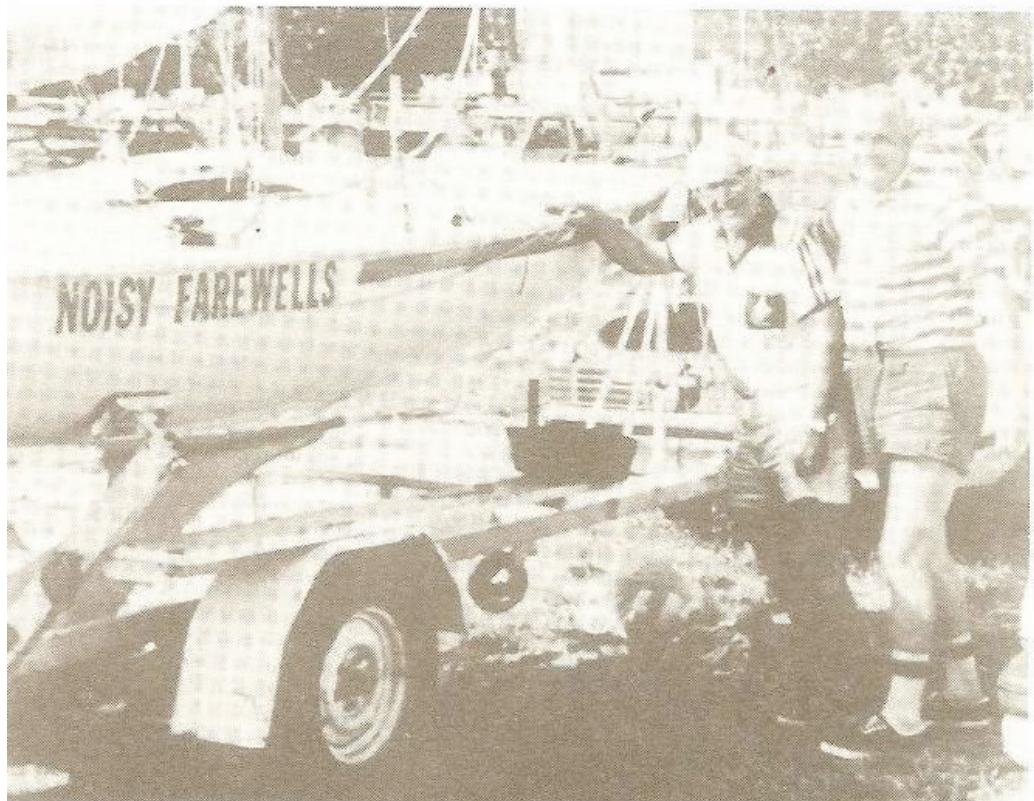
The Path Finders, as volunteers, were allowed to wear a special badge (once they had done ten operations and were fully trained). It was a small pair of golden wings worn on the medal ribbons. Their only other privilege was that they could do twice the normal number of missions -- from 30, up to 60 before being 'rested'. Derek went on to do 67 missions in the Path Finders flying Lancasters, and 16 of these as Master Bomber.



For most of his missions Derek's crew were Australian and began his long link with this country.

Derek's first 5 bombing raids were over Berlin which was heavily defended. He took part in the sinking of the Island of Walcheren in October 1944. This island contained the coastal batteries defending the approaches to the Port of Antwerp. The intention was to flood the island, most of which was reclaimed polder and below sea level. The flooding would submerge the batteries and hamper the Germans. The island was captured by Scottish and Canadian troops, who sailed their landing craft through the breaches in the seawalls made earlier by E

Derek also remembers the ill-fated raid on Nuremberg on 30th March 1944 when 96 of the 795 aircraft despatched to Nuremberg failed to return, mainly due to interceptions by German night fighters in the moonlit sky. This was the biggest loss by Bomber Command in W.W.II.



Derek with crew Mike Joyce

In 1945, Derek became Commanding Officer of Transport Command Squadron 242 and served out the rest of W.W.II in what can properly be described as a lot safer than Path Finders. It is worth remembering that in World War II, Bomber Command lost 9,000 aircraft and 50,000 airmen.

The end of World War II marked the beginning of Derek's next career as an airline pilot, first with British South American Airways which was taken over by British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC). Derek flew with BOAC for 28 years and after retirement, joined Singapore Airlines for a further 3 years, and eventually retired from Command in 1973.

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THE WALBOURN TROPHY
Presented by Derek Walbourn
Awarded annually to the helmsperson of the winning
boat whose sail number is 400 below that of the
highest sail number competing at the
National Championship.

From 1936 until 1974, he had flown 23,000 hours in both, piston engine aircraft, and modern jets, flying in at least 30 different types of aircraft.

In 1975, Derek began his next career, that of a flying fifteen sailor after he had tipped his wife Betty, out of an overturned centre board dinghy in Carrick Road Harbour.

His first fifteen was called Fasta ff545 and over the next 15 years he had 3 different fifteens, his last being a Roy Windebank MkIV ff2743 called Hunky-Dory.

Derek's home is in Cornwall at Flock on Carrick Road Harbour.

Every year since 1976, Derek has travelled to Australia to meet with his wartime friends and to regularly compete in the Australian National Championships, usually with his long-time sailing companion, Mike Joyce of Australia.

In 1986, Derek presented the Australian Flying Fifteen Association with the Walbourn Trophy, a magnificent silver trophy of a flying fifteen, which is competed for annually at the National Championships by helmsmen sailing in the older boats, 400 numbers below the highest sail number of the boats competing in the championships.

The next time you are passed by Derek and Mike in 'Noisy Welcomes' just remember here is a quiet unassuming man with bright alert eyes, a wonderful sense of humour and quick smile who has a great admiration and respect for Australians and their country -- a friendship forged in war and now, after all these years, is stronger than ever.

In Derek's famous toast - salut et l'amour et de pesetas et much tempo para castades -- cheers, love and wealth and plenty of time to enjoy it.

Derek we thank you.