

# BOOK Reviews

## RANGE AND ENDURANCE Fuel Efficient Flying in Light Aircraft

Frank Hitchens

*The Crowood Press/Airline*

ISBN 978 1 86126 920 1

Price £12.99 + £3.09 if ordered by post  
from: *The Crowood Press, The Stable  
Block, Crowood Lane, Ramsbury,  
Marlborough, Wiltshire SN8 2HR*

With the cost of avgas and the growing problems of supply and pollution, there can be no more appropriate time than now to have guidance on operating a light aeroplane to maximum fuel economy. So the author has landed on the centre-line with some well-researched advice that will be beneficial to all who fly. In his introduction he stresses the significance of wind velocity, altitude, power settings, weight and choice of route, with associated reference to knowledge of the correct leaning schedule to achieve safe, fuel-efficient flight.

The names of the chapters alone provide a good guide to the contents: fuel technology, aircraft fuel systems, fuel management, leaning techniques, carburettor icing, flight plan fuel and aircraft performance. These are followed by fuel calculation formulae and a glossary.

As an example of the extent of the coverage, Chapter One includes explanations of the energy content of fuel, volatility, flash point, specific gravity, detonation and pre-ignition, octane rating, types of fuel and a chronology of fuel development, together with a graph showing temperature against volume and density. Similar depths of detail are provided in all the subsequent chapters, while the conclusion goes further with advice on type and quantity of oil; this, Frank Hitchens rightly states, must be considered as seriously as fuel.

The author states that he has written the book with the student, private pilot and new commercial pilot in mind and it would be difficult to challenge his claim that all who fly should absorb what he states about fuel management. However, if I have a criticism, it is that perhaps he expects too much of the average person. Despite a lifetime in aviation, there are many quoted facts that I have never known. Please treat this, though, as a purely personal comment and I would not like to

deter anyone from buying the book. Although some say that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, in this case anyone who is able to put at least part of the information to a practical purpose must be a better pilot. My advice: gain from it. – *David Ogilvy*

## For Your Freedom and Ours The Kosciuszko Squadron: Forgotten Heroes of World War II

Lynne Olson and Stanley Cloud

*Arrow Books, £8.99*

*428 pages, many b&w illustrations*

When Britain held its victory parade on a dull June day in 1946, everyone who'd participated in World War Two on the Allied side was invited to take part; Brazilians, Arabs, Chinese, Mexican medics, Seychellois pioneers – more than 10,000 men and women marched past two million cheering bystanders in a celebration of life such as London had never seen. But one group was missing.

Instead of marching, they stood among the spectators, forbidden to wear their uniforms for fear of giving offence, and some of them wept.

Britain's treatment of this group stands as one of the most shameful and craven episodes in its history, and is not forgotten to this day. Nor should it be. Our abandonment and repudiation of the Poles who had fought in our Air Force, Army and Navy throughout the war is an ineradicable black mark on Britain's reputation and a drag on its moral authority even now. We sold the Poles down the river in the interests of realpolitik, and the men who stood beside us in Britain's finest hour were thrown to the wolves in

its most shameful.

The Polish contribution to the Battle of Britain was colossal. Of about 400 fighter pilots engaged in the battle in September and October 1940, up to 100 were Polish. At times, Poles flew 20 percent of the fighters in the air. The Kosciuszko Squadron, the central characters in this book, were credited with 126 kills, and even after post-war revision of claims were said to have shot down more than twice as many aircraft as any other RAF Squadron in that period. Goebbels attempted to paint the Poles as mad, and his invented stories of them charging tanks on horseback are still in

circulation today. But they were damned good pilots, battle-hardened before they reached Britain, generally older and of higher calibre than their RAF counterparts, and their refusal to adopt the RAF's tight formation tactics gave them a better chance of survival and of successfully attacking the enemy. After the battle, Sir Hugh Dowding said: "Had it not been for the magnificent work of the Polish squadrons and their unsurpassed gallantry, I hesitate to say that the outcome of the battle would have been the same."

Polish airmen, soldiers and sailors fought and died throughout the war – asked which nation's soldiers he would choose to have fighting for him if he had the choice, General Alexander plumped unhesitatingly for the Poles – but when it was over, for fear of offending the Soviet Union, Britain turned its back on its staunchest ally. Bureaucrats were sent to harass Poles into returning home, but many stayed because with Stalin's murderous occupation replacing Hitler's, they had no homes to go to. It may have been some small consolation to the survivors that within their lifetimes, the communist boot was lifted from the Polish neck. The obituaries column of *The Times* has recently reported the passing of some of these heroes with whom we did not keep the faith. The debt we owe to Poland should inform our dealings with that country and its people today. – *Pat Malone*

## TALES OF MY TIME

Raymond Baxter with Tony Dron

*Published by Grub Street at £10.95. ISBN*

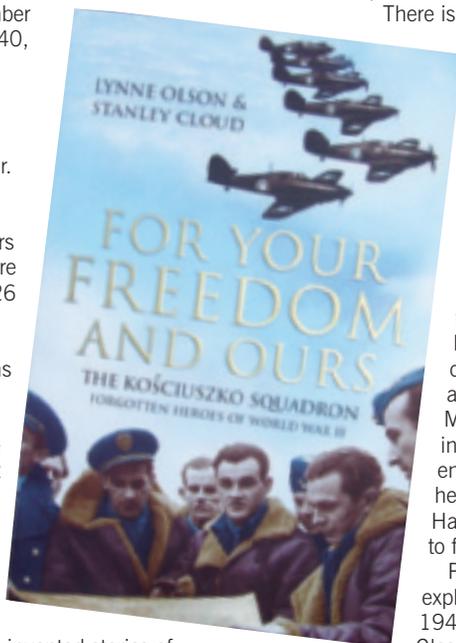
*978-1-904943-70-9 / 1-904943-70-5.*

*Softback, 256 pages, illustrated with 76 black and white and 16 colour photographs and other reproductions*

Raymond Baxter's fame was established largely through his contributions to and appearances on television, especially his weekly roles in *Tomorrow's World* on BBC1. It was no secret that he was a Spitfire pilot in the Second World War and that he was a keen competitor in the Monte Carlo Rally and motor racing commentator. But he was also a small boat enthusiast, and became Vice Commodore of the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships, as a result of looking for a more adventurous boat to replace a much loved family inland cruiser.

There is a wealth of fascinating detail to read about this man, who seems to have packed enough into his life to cover several lifetimes. The flying exploits cover a large proportion of the book and start with his initial RAF selection and training at a civilian establishment, the Spartan School of Aeronautics, in Oklahoma in the USA. He froze in the open cockpit of the Fairchild PT19 before graduating onto Harvards. Back in the UK, after a mere 17 hours on Miles Masters, Raymond was strapped into a Hurricane for his Merlin engine 'baptism'. Two flights later, he was posted to OTU in Hawarden and then 65 Squadron to fly Spitfires.

Probably his most daring Spitfire exploit was his taking part in March 1945 in the raid by 602 (City of Glasgow) Squadron on the Shell-Mex building in the Hague, which was



being used as HQ for enemy V1 and V2 operations. The final attack with machine guns, cannon and time-delay bombs was conducted at 100 feet AGL and 400 mph. Raymond all but took off a cockerel on the weather vane of a church spire next to the target, he was so low.

Later on, in the 1950s and 60s, Raymond's fame as a commentator was such that he was often invited to fly with the test pilots in advanced aircraft of the day. For example, there

is a wonderful description of flying with John Farley in the VTOL Harrier aircraft in which the recorded dialogue between John and Raymond is repeated in the book; this provides a more complete picture of what it takes to fly such a beast than any account written after the event ever could.

Only a sprinkling of the book's content is provided here; I thoroughly recommend reading this biography of a daring and versatile aircraft pilot, racing and rally car driver, and radio and television commentator. — *George Done*



## GUNNING FOR THE ENEMY

Wallace McIntosh DFC and Bar, DFM

Published by Grub Street:

£9.99: paperback

ISBN: 978 1 906502 10 2

Although this has no direct connection with general aviation, the story is an extreme example of rags to riches – even though those riches were not financial – and is one of specific personal endeavour leading to success.

Wallace McIntosh was born in March 1920 into an extremely harsh Scottish environment, with no permanent family home, constant changes of crude abode, long treks to a series of schools and almost perpetual undernourishment. This aspect of the tale alone serves as an eye and heart opener to us all.

After numerous menial and often unpleasant jobs, eventually and unexpectedly he was accepted into the RAF as an aircrew, general duties – the most basic

'tradeless' appointment available. Yet this was luxury as, for the first time in his life, he was provided with three meals a day. The Service taught him to use a fork, as until his

enrolment he had used

only a knife and fingers. Hungry for education, he joined evening classes, mainly covering English language and mathematics.

Over a considerable time all this produced results, for he was accepted for training as an air gunner. Subsequently his operational activities led to the award of the Distinguished Flying Medal, then to a commission and, later, to the

Distinguished Flying Cross – and Bar. Allegedly this made him the RAF's most decorated air gunner of all time.

Many pilots' experiences have been written, but there have been far fewer true tales about other aircrew. This one is unlike any other that I have met and most certainly you will not be bored! – *David Ogilvy* ■



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