

A VERY FINE SPITFIRE PILOT'S IMMEDIATE D.F.C. GROUP OF SIX AWARDED TO ROYAL AIR FORCE FLIGHT LIEUTENANT WHO SERVED WITH 601 (MILLIONAIRES) SQUADRON AND LATER 241 SQUADRONS IN ITALY, 1944-5, FLYING OPERATIONS OVER THE CASSINO FRONT IN MAY 1944 AND CRASH LANDING AFTER BEING HIT BY FLAK. DURING THE REST OF HIS OPERATIONAL SERVICE, HE TOOK PART IN 146 SORTIES; A LARGE NUMBER GROUND ATTACK, BOMBER ESCORT, ARMED RECONNAISSANCE, ROVERS ETC ETC, CLAIMING MANY TARGETS AND ENEMY VEHICLES. DURING HIS FINAL SORTIE, FOR WHICH HE WAS AWARDED THE D.F.C., HIS SPITFIRE WAS TWICE HIT DURING STAFFING ATTACKS ON A CONVOY BUT HE CONTINUED TO ATTACK UNTIL 'ONE ARMoured FIGHTING VEHICLE AND THREE M.T. WERE LEFT BLAZING AND THE REMAINDER OF THE CONVOY, COMPRISING FOUR M.T. AND 2 GUNS, HAD BEEN SEVERELY DAMAGED.' POST WAR HE FLEW METEOR AND VAMPIRE JETS



DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS, G.V.I.R., THE REVERSE OFFICIALLY DATED 1945; 1939-45 STAR, ITALY STAR; DEFENCE & WAR MEDALS, CORONATION 1953, MOUNTED AS WORN. TOGETHER WITH HIS VERY DETAILED AND COMPREHENSIVELY ANNOTATED PILOT'S FLYING LOG BOOK FOR THE PERIOD FEBRUARY 1943 TO AUGUST 1951

D.F.C. London Gazette 29 June 1945:

'This officer has participated in a large number of varied sorties. He has set a fine example of skill and courage and has invariably pressed home his attacks with accuracy and determination. On his last sortie in April, 1945, Flight Lieutenant Russell took part in an armed reconnaissance. When nearing Padova a convoy of enemy vehicles was sighted. In the face of considerable light anti-aircraft fire a good attack was pressed home. In the first run over the target, Flight Lieutenant Russell's aircraft was hit. Despite this, he made several more runs over the target. He afterwards flew back to an airfield where he executed a perfect landing although one of the wheels was punctured.'

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT (86703) RICHARD GERALD CRUICKSHANKS RUSSELL

Flight Lieutenant Richard Gerald Cruickshanks Russell joined the R.A.F.V.R. in 1939 and underwent pilot training in the U.K. before proceeding to South Africa in 1941. He served as an instructor at No. 27 Air School in 1943, and, having converted to Spitfires at 71 O.T.U., Ishmalia, joined No. 601 (County of London) Squadron, also known as the 'Millionaires' on 8 May 1944, flying sorties in support of the Allied offensive on Monte Cassino and would continue serving on the Italian front for his entire operational service.

His initial sorties were over Anzio from 9 May 1944, notes patrolling the beachhead and experiencing his *'first dose of flak'* and on 18 May, the day the Polish flag was finally planted on the summit of Cassino, at the cost of one thousand Polish dead, Russell recorded in his Log Book: *'Nothing seen in the air but lots of shelling at Cassino early morning & dead quietness there in the evening.'* The rest of the month consisting of offensive patrols, staffing, practice bombing, armed reconnaissance's, some escorts. On 19 May, during a patrol over Ripido bridges, Russell's aircraft was hit by flak and he crash landed but he was uninjured and resumed flying on following day, flying a sortie to the same area.

British Claims				
145 Sqn	Flg Off J.S.Ekbery	Spitfire VIII JG337	FW 190	Viterbo a/f-Lake Bolsena
British Casualties				
253 Sqn	SpitfireVc MA862 shot down in dive attacking mine dump at Pupnat, Yugoslavia; Flg Off W.V.Whittaker KIA			
601 Sqn	Spitfire VIII JG121 left 0950, hit by AA while firing at a FW 190 dive bombing Venafro 200 yards from the a/f crash-landed 1140; Flt Lt R.G.C.Russell safe			
655 Sqn	Auster N915 hit by own artillery shell Anzio area at 2,500ft; Capt G.M.H.Aitchison KIA			
US Casualties				

Posted to Air Gunnery School, Ballam (ME) where he flew spitfires and Hurricanes between 25 July 1944 and 18 August 1944 when he was posted back to 601 Squadron. His first operational sortie on his return was on 20 September 1944; a 'Rover Paddy', when he *'bombed and strafed infantry strongpoint'*, attacks on gun positions, notes various bridges attacked, Self propelled guns, Motor transports, enemy strongpoints, railway lines. On 22 November 1944, he flew his last sortie with 601 Squadron; a 'Rover David', which was his 87th sortie with the squadron (all Spitfires).



601 SQUADRON SPITFIRES

There are lots of 'Rover Paddy's' 'Frank' and 'David's' noted in his logbook. 'Rovers' are described as such:

"By the time the Italian Campaign had reached Rome, the Allies had established air superiority. They were then able to pre-schedule strikes by fighter-bomber squadrons; however, by the time the aircraft arrived in the strike area, oftentimes the targets, which were usually trucks, had fled. The initial solution to fleeing targets was the British "Rover" system. These were pairings of air controllers and army liaison officers at the front but able to switch communications seamlessly from one brigade to another – hence Rover. Incoming strike aircraft arrived with pre-briefed targets, which they would strike 20 minutes after arriving on station only if the Rovers had not directed them to another more pressing target. Rovers might call on artillery to mark targets with smoke shells, or they might direct the fighters to map grid coordinates, or they might resort to a description of prominent terrain features as guidance. However, one drawback for the Rovers was the constant rotation of pilots, who were there for fortnightly stints, leading to a lack of institutional memory. US commanders, impressed by the British tactics at the Salerno landings, adapted their own doctrine to include many features of the British system."

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TO 241 SPITFIRE SQUADRON

Joining 241 Squadron on the same Front, both squadrons being based at Fano (both 244 WING), his first sortie on 24 November 1944, also a 'Rover David' against targets at Rimini, which he describes as 'ordered to pancake, weather duff!!'. His sorties in December are pretty much the same with 601 squadron, bombing Nebelwers, field guns, medium guns, various 'Rovers' etc. In January 1945 he took part in armed Reconnaissance, Escorts to Baltimore's and Kittyhawks, a couple of Air Sea Rescue searches for 'Curly', found oil slick and wreckage but no pilot etc. After an Air Test, he notes 'Flew 'Wes Mac' flies like a bird!!'. Also notes meeting to FW190's 'had 2 second squirt at one but he dived for deck. Gus clobbered second one well'. February much the same, lots of targets mentioned; 'Jumped by 10-12 FW190's and ME109's', 'No damage or hits'. March was mainly bombing and escort, occupied buildings etc 'scored either DH or VNM and * house and straffed it madly!!', dive bomber a battalion HQ at Soladol, 'direct hit and 3**'. POW captured later. Stated battalion commander wounded – Polish Corps sent congrats!', another entry notes 'Staffed madly and really clobbered house!'

In April 1944, Russell flew a large number of sorties, again lots of dive bombing against dugout, mortars, enemy held houses etc, a number of armed reconnaissance's, straffing, several 'Timothy

operations' and back to 'Rover' sorties (various). A huge amount of detail of these sorties crammed into this page (see pic); mortar strong points, tanks, troop carriers; various claims of hits of AFV's, MT, trucks, tank transporter etc 'chased and bombed four tanks, damaged one with a VALM'

On 28 April 1945 he flew his final sortie of his tour, and, on the recommendation of his commanding officer, was awarded an immediate D.F.C. Squadron Leader A. J. Ratcliffe recommended:

'F/Lt. Russell took off on the 28th April 1945, briefed to take four long range Spitfires to the Padova area on an armed recce. Just S.E. of the town he saw a convoy of enemy vehicles. Light flak was intense and on their first straffing run F/L. Russell was hit in the cannon and his subsection leader in the hydraulic system. He told the fourth member of the formation to look after the subsection leader on his way back to our lines and then proceeding to do four more runs on the enemy convoy with his three remaining guns, during which he was hit once more. When he and his No.2 finally broke away from the aera, one armoured fighting vehicle and three M.T. were left blazing and the remainder of the convoy, comprising four M.T. and 2 guns, had been severely damaged. On returning to base his No.2's A.S.I. was found to be u/s so F/L. Russell, although very short of fuel, told him to formate on him and twice led him into land before flying off to a strip where he did a perfect landing with his burst tyre ...'



In his logbook he notes 'staffed 1 AFV, a tank and several MT' part is hard to read but clearly talking about his own damage. He then goes on to note 'claimed 1 AFV destroyed, 3 MT destroyed, 3 MT and 2 guns damaged 2Y' clobbered the tank'. In a different ink, clearly added later 'Awarded immediate D.F.C.'. These are just some examples of targets he destroyed or damaged, there are a great many others throughout the logbook.

POST ITALIAN FRONT SERVICE AND BEYOND

Russell left 241 Squadron on 27 May 1945 by which time he had taken part in a total of 146 sorties between both squadrons, all piloting spitfires. He joined 164 Squadron on 20 July 1945 and 235 Squadron on 5 December 1945 (both Spitfires). In February 1946 he was posted to 1335 conversion unit where he trained on Meteor III jets and on 6 April 1946, he joined 1 Squadron, flying spitfires and Meteors. Russell was demobbed in December 1946 but on 16 June 1949 he joined 501 (County of Gloucester) Squadron, Royal Auxiliary Air Force flying Vampire jets from Filton, his last flight being on 30 August 1951.

THE LOGBOOK

Russell's logbook is extremely well detailed, indeed Russell seems to have squeezed as much info as possible into details of flights; mentions where his targets were and then details of targets, if there was flak, hits on targets, enemy aircraft etc. This continues throughout his logbook for operational sorties and may be the reason he stuck with the S.A.A.F. logbook rather than switching back to an R.A.F. one, ie they are bigger logbooks and more info can be crammed in!



241 SQUADRON SPITFIRES

Logbook starts on 1 February 1943, which was when he was serving as an instructor in South Africa and is fully filled bar a couple of pages, his last flight being in 1951. His first R.A.F logbook, consisting training and his first 6 months as an instructor, was presumably fully filled. Spine of lookbook is a bit loosed as are a couple of pages but all is complete. It really is one of the most fully filled logbooks I've had details wise.



SAMPLE PAGES FROM LOGBOOK

OCTOBER 1944

G.P.-S.34474-1941-2-5,000-100. S. D.D. 461.

YEAR		AIRCRAFT		PILOT OR 1ST PILOT	2ND PILOT, PUPIL OR PASSENGER	DUTY (INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)
Month	Date	Type	No.			
Totals Brought Forward						
Oct.	1 st	SPITFIRE IX	G.	SELF	SOLO.	FOUR 88mm GUNS.
-	1 st	-	G.	-	-	PONTOON TYPE BRIDGE.
-	1 st	-	G.	-	-	BRIDGE OVER SAVOY BRIDGE N. CEVIA.
-	4 th	-	A.	-	-	ROVER PADDY.
-	7 th	-	G.	-	-	FOUR MEDIUM GUNS NEAR CAMBETTA.
-	13 th	-	G.	-	-	GUN POSITIONS.
-	13 th	-	G.	-	-	ROVER PADDY.
-	15 th	-	G.	-	-	ROVER PADDY.
-	20 th	-	G.	-	-	ROVER PADDY BOMBING GUN POSITIONS.
-	23 rd	-	E.	-	-	AIR TEST.
-	24 th	-	G.	-	-	GUNS.
-	24 th	-	G.	-	-	ROVER PADDY.
SUMMARY FOR OCTOBER.				SPITFIRE TOTAL OPS. HOURS.		
At LAND. ITALY.				SPITFIRE OPS. HOURS IN OCTOBER.		
No. 601 SQUADRON.				SPITFIRE Non-ops. HOURS IN OCTOBER.		
No. 244 WING.				SERIES IN OCTOBER.		
R.G. Russell. H.M.				TOTAL NUMBER OF SERIES.		
				H. H. H.		
				OC. "B" FLIGHT.		
GRAND TOTAL (Cols. (1) to (10))						
1462 Hrs 00 Min.						
Totals Carried Forward						

APRIL 1945

YEAR		AIRCRAFT		PILOT OR 1ST PILOT	2ND PILOT, PUPIL OR PASSENGER	DUTY (INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)
1945		Type	No.			
Month	Date					Totals Brought Forward
APRIL	9 th	SPITFIRE IX	Y.	SELF	Solo.	DIVE-BOMBED DUG-OUTS ON SENIO (village)
-	9 th	-	Y.	-	-	DIVE-BOMBED H.Q. IN HOUSE NR. LUZO
-	10 th	-	P.	-	-	DIVE-BOMBED MORTARS ON WEST SIDE of SENIO
-	11 th	-	P.	-	-	ROVER PADDY.
-	11 th	-	P.	-	-	"TIMOTHY" OPERATION.
-	12 th	-	Y.	-	-	DIVE-BOMBED HOUSE IN HASSA LOMBARI
-	13 th	-	Y.	-	-	"TIMOTHY" OPERATION.
-	14 th	-	Y.	-	-	"TIMOTHY" OPERATION.
-	16 th	-	Y.	-	-	ROVER DAVID.
-	16 th	-	Y.	-	-	ROVER DAVID.
-	17 th	-	Y.	-	-	ROVER PADDY.
-	18 th	-	Y.	-	-	ROVER DAVID.
-	18 th	-	Y.	-	-	"TIMOTHY" OPERATION.
-	19 th	-	Y.	-	-	ROVER DAVID.
-	19 th	-	Y.	-	-	ROVER DAVID.
-	21 st	-	P.	-	-	ARMED RECCO IN 70 AREA.
-	22 nd	-	Y.	-	-	ROVER PADDY.
-	23 rd	-	Y.	-	-	ARMED RECCO IN 2.70 AREA.
-	24 th	-	Y.	-	-	ARMED RECCO IN 2.70 AREA.
-	25 th	-	Y.	-	-	ARMED RECCO IN 2.70 - ADIGE AREA
-	26 th	-	Y.	-	-	ARMED RECCO IN 2.70 - ADIGE AREA
-	27 th	-	Y.	-	-	AIR TEST.
-	28 th	-	Y.	-	-	STRAFFING RECCO BEHIND ADIGE MINE.
GRAND TOTAL (Cols. (1) to (6))						Totals Carried Forward
1584 Hrs. 20 Mins.						

APRIL 1945 2

(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
98.00			14.20					13.45	3.20
Opening 3/8" Army attack on Suro Tura. D.H.s on dug-outs & shrapnel banked									
bould attack by bombing H.G. South of Tura. D.H. a house left smoking & dest.									
Found earth-works at pin-point. Scoured D.H. & shrapnel thoroughly!									
Directed against a Tiger tank. Blasted it away & bombed it a road down N.H.									
Attacked house on outskirts of Massa Lombarda. D.H.s & area well shrapnelled!									
Dropped 1000 lbs for first time. D.H.s scoured house & area & nearby house!									
Another 1000 lbs on house east of Sillaco & west bank well shrapnelled by safe..									
One house destroyed, another demolished & 3rd left burning fiercely by my action									
Dive-bombed inf. post successfully & thoroughly shrapnelled area!									
Attacked motor transport & troop-carrier with trailer. All destroyed & some beds									
Attacked enemy occupied house N.E. of Argenta. House damaged. Lots of mortars									
Attacked enemy occupied house N.W. of Medicina. 2nd but mine didn't explode. Area shrapnelled									
by bomb trucked corner of house. 3rd, 1st & 2nd & hole area shrapnelled succ!									
Attacked motor positions N.W. of Castel S. Pietro. D.H. and area & nearby house shrapnelled.									
Blasted & bombed four tanks S.E. of Budrio. Damaged one tank with a 4th H. Lots of a									
Bombed cross-roads & then shrapnelled. Blinded one 2nd H.V. dest. 2nd V. dest. 1st H. dest.									
Bombed tanks near a house E. of Ferrara. Hit house & shrapnelled thoroughly!									
Bombed trucks S. of CRISTO. Shrapnelled area & damaged. 6th H. dest. 3rd H.V. dest.									
Bombed 4th H.V. & scoured H.V. on road. Shrapnelled in area claiming 1st H.V. dest. 2nd H. flames									
Bombed o.d.v. & got direct hit. Damaged tank transporter at R/O mouth.									
Bombed & shrapnelled, claiming 1st H. dest. 1st H. dam. & 4th H.V. dest with H.H.V. damage									
Don't like any "Y."									
Found 5th Army almost in Vicenza. Found & shrapnelled 1st H.V. tank & 1st H.V. tank									
and claimed 1st H.V. dest. 3rd H. dest. 3rd H. & 2nd H. dam. & 1st H. dest. 1st H. dam.									
Awarded immediate D.F.C.!!!									
98.00			14.20					13.45	3.20

RECORD OF SERVICE.

D.D. 451.

UNIT	DATES		UNIT	DATES	
	FROM	TO		FROM	TO
PADGATE. RECEPT. DEPOT.	7 th SEPT. 39	2 nd OCT 39	AIR GUNNERY SCHOOL. BALLAN. ILE	24 th JUN 44	20 th DEC 44
FEARWELL.	30 th OCT. 39	3 rd DEC. 39	No. 601 SQDN. AT FANO.	18 th SEPT. 44	25 th NOV. 44
CAMBRIDGE I.T.W.	4 th DEC. 39	9 th JUNE 40	No. 241 SQDN AT FANO	25 th NOV. 44	1 st DEC. 44
SYWELL. No. 6 E.F.T.S.	10 th JUNE 40	25 th JULY 40	No. 241 SQDN. AT BELLARIA.	4 th DEC. 44	21 st MAY 45
CRANTHAM. No. 12 S.F.T.S	27 th JULY 40	12 th OCT. 40	No. 164 SQDN AT TURNHOUSE.	20 th JULY 45	4 th SEPT. 45
UPAVON. C.F.S.	19 th OCT. 40	3 rd DEC 40	No. 234 SQDN. AT BENIWATERS.	5 th SEPT. 45	31 st DEC. 45
MULLAVINGTON. No. 9 S.F.T.S.	4 th DEC 40	26 th JAN 41	No. 3A.P.S. AT CHARTER HALL	1 st JAN 46	9 th APRIL 46
WEST KIRBY. TRANSIT CAMP	28 th JULY 41	28 th JULY 41	No. 1835 CONVERSION UNIT. HOLESWORTH	29 th JAN 46	8 th FEB. 46
ROCHESTROTH. TRANS. CAMP S. A.	4 th SEPT. 41	14 th SEPT 41	No. 1 SQUADRON. LANGHIRE.	9 th APRIL 46	3 rd DEC. 46
NIGEL. No. 24 AIR SCHOOL	16 th SEPT. 41	19 th OCT 41	C.F.E. WEST LAYNHAM.	5 th MAY 46	14 th JULY 46
STANDERION No. 25 AIR SCHOOL	28 th OCT. 41	22 nd JULY 42	R.A.F. WEST KIRKBY.	4 th DEC. 46	14 th JULY 46
No. 24 GROUP H.Q. PRETORIA	23 rd JULY 42	4 th AUG 42	(1) DEMOB BEI		
BLOEMFONTEIN. No. 2 AIR SCHOOL	5 th AUG 42	12 th DEC 43	No. 501 SQUADRON. K. A. A. F. FINTON.	16 th JUN 49	
L.F.C. (BLACKWOOD). DURBAN	23 rd DEC 43	6 th JAN 44			
NS (H.L.) A.L.C., R.A.F. M.L.F.	21 st JAN 44	12 th FEB 44			
NO. 101 SQU. ALEXANDRIA	12 th FEB 44	24 th MAR 44			
NO. 22 P.I.C. ALEXANDRIA	1 st APRIL 44	9 th APRIL 44			
TUNIS BASE AREA TUNIS.	8 th APRIL 44	17 th APRIL			
No. 3 B.P.D. NAPLES.	17 th APRIL 44	29 th APRIL			
No. 38 P.I.C. VASIO.	30 th APRIL 44	14 th MAY 44			
No. 601 SQDN. 244 WING. AT VENAFRO	5 th MAY 44	12 th JUNE 44			
No. 601 SQDN. LITerno. ROME.	12 th JUNE 44	17 th JUNE 44			
No. 601 SQDN. FERRERO. ANCONA.	17 th JUNE 44	2 nd JULY 44			
No. 601 SQDN. PEROCIA L.G.	2 nd JULY 44	18 th JULY 44			

D

AIRCRAFT	ENGINE	AIRCRAFT	ENGINE	AIRCRAFT
TIGER MOH.		57.15 hrs.		
BATTLE.		88.15 hrs.		
TOTOR.		9.15 hrs.		
MASTER. I		231.30 hrs.		
MASTER. II		576.45 hrs.	up to	30 TH 1100.
HURRICANE I		13.30 hrs.	up to	20 TH Aug. '46 28 TH
HARVARD		322.40 hrs.	up to	20 TH Aug. '46 28 TH
SPITFIRE V		53.05 hrs.	up to	20 TH Aug. '46 28 TH
SPITFIRE VII		31.00 hrs.	up to	28 TH Feb. '45
SPITFIRE IX		143.05 hrs.	up to	28 TH Feb. '45
METOR III		4.45 hrs.		
SPITFIRE XIV		38.00 hrs.	up to	31 ST JULY '46
SPITFIRE XXI				
SPITFIRE IX'S		262.30 hrs.	up to	31 ST JULY '46
OXFORD.		30 hrs.		

G.P. 5.54474-1941-2-5,000-100. R.

No. 3 A.P.S. CHARTER HALL.

D.D. 801.

YEAR 1946		AIRCRAFT		PILOT OR 1ST PILOT	2ND PILOT, PUPIL OR PASSENGER	DUTY (INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)
Month	Date	Type	No.			Totals Brought Forward
JAN.	23 rd	MASTER II	J.	SELF.	7/8 COPE.	LOCAL FLYING.
"	25 th	MASTER II	J.	"	7/8 COPE.	LOCAL FLYING.
"	31 st	OXFORD	XL3	H.L. MELLING.	SELF.	DUAL.
SUMMARY FOR JANUARY 1946						TYPES MASTER II
UNIT:- CHARTER HALL.						OF OXFORD
DATE:- 1 st February 1946						AIRCRAFT 1
SIGNATURE:- R.E. Russell H.L.						
FEB.	1 st	MEIKOR III	XL R.	SELF.	SOLO.	FAMILIARISATION ON TYPE.
"	1 st	"	XL R.	"	"	2 nd FAMILIARISATION ON TYPE.
"	4 th	"	XL V.	"	"	SINGLE-ENGINE APPROACHES.
"	5 th	"	XL B.	"	"	H.C. 25,000'; SLOW FLYING; STALLING.
"	5 th	"	XL Z.	"	"	AEROBATICS.
"	5 th	"	XL V.	"	"	LOW FLYING.
"	7 th	"	XL Z.	"	"	LOW FLYING.
SUMMARY FOR 29/1/46 To 11/2/46						TYPES OXFORD
UNIT:- 1335 CONVERSION UNIT, MOKESWORTH						OF MEIKOR III
DATE:- 11/2/46						AIRCRAFT 1
SIGNATURE:- R.E. Russell H.L.						

GRAND TOTAL (Cols. (1) to (10))

1660 Hrs 05 Mins.

Totals Carried Forward

