

## NAVAL FIGHTER PILOT

**A.H. Wren**

“Dickie Cork was an exceptional man – courageous and unflinching no matter what the odds. There was none better.”

So wrote Douglas Bader when recalling the young man who had flown at his side during the Battle of Britain and gone on to become the Fleet Air Arm’s most successful fighter pilot. Yet history has largely forgotten Cork and the Royal Navy – his parent service – has yet to do him honour; a lack of activity not shared by his fellow pilots who continue to revere his memory.

This book, written with the help of Cork’s family and friends, presents a moving and honest account of his life. But it is more than this. In 1944 he was killed in a tragic accident, when in collision with a young New Zealander – Mudge Anderson. The navy blamed the pilots and so a record of unremitting gallantry was stained irrevocably. After more than half a century the complex events have been unravelled and the truth finally revealed.

With each passing year those who knew Cork get fewer and fewer. But the sense of loss they feel does not diminish. One survivor interviewed for this book summed up his feelings about life in those days by reciting a poem scribbled in his log book during 1944;

*‘Sometimes I fly at dawn above the sea,  
Where, underneath, the restless waters flow –  
Silver, and cold, and slow.  
Dim in the East there burns a new born sun.  
And now appears beneath the milk-white haze  
A little fleet of anchored ships,  
which lie  
In clustered company,  
And it seems as they are yet fast bound by sleep.*

*The fresh, cold wind of dawn blows on my face  
As in the sun’s raw heart I swiftly fly,  
And watch the seas glide by.  
My flight is done. I cross the line of foam  
That breaks around a town of grey and red,  
Whose streets and squares lie dead  
Beneath the silent dawn – then I am proud  
That England’s peace to guard I am allowed:  
Then bow my head  
In thanks to Him who brings me safely home.’*



There is little doubt that these words would have applied to Cork just as well. Modesty and courage intertwined.

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