

FOR KITH AND KIN?

The letter reproduced here was never finished because the writer, a Rhodesian-born pilot, aged just 21, died in defence of Britain.

It was addressed to his mother in Salisbury by H. A. P. "Buster" Peall, after he had volunteered for the bomber raid on Augsburg, Bavaria, from which only one Lancaster returned. The lone survivor was piloted by a South Africa. Squadron Leader John Nettleton, who was awarded a Victoria Cross for his gallantry.

The raid was regarded as so dangerous by Bomber Command that Squadron Leader Nettleton called for volunteers, and stipulated that they must be single men. Flying Officer Peall was one of the first to step forward.

The former Prince Edward High School athletic star was in Britain when World War Two was declared, and immediately volunteered for service in the Royal Air Force. He first flew Spitfires, with 91 Squadron, and was rescued from the English Channel after being forced to bale out.

When 44 (Rhodesian) Squadron was formed he converted to bombers. In a letter written to his mother the day before he died in action, he described a flight from his Lincolnshire base to the Isle of Wight and Scotland.

He continued:

"It is now half six and feels half four at home. It is by the way, isn't it?"

"I am sitting writing this with only my slippers, vest and under-pants on. Unbelievable in England, is it not? The sun is shining through the window.

"I received your cheque for £20, bless you darling, I shall cable you tomorrow morning. Sorry I have not done so before."

The letter concluded:

"God bless you always darling,

"Your ever loving youngest,

"Buster."

Flying Officer H. A. P. "Buster" Peall was one of 550 Rhodesian volunteer flyers, who made the supreme sacrifice. It is not to be wondered at that their relatives and friends, and those that survived, now ask themselves: "Was it worth it?"

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The London "Sunday Express" in an editorial published on March 28, 1976, said: "He was one of many hundreds of men and women of British stock who came to fight for Britain. They could have stayed in their safe, remote homes, reckoning it was not their quarrel. But they had ties of blood and family, of common ideals and heritage that made distance irrelevant.

"Could any of these Rhodesians or any of the grateful nation they protected have imagined little more than 30 years ago that there would be people in high places in Britain who scoffed at 'kith and kin' as an empty slogan. Who shrugged off as inconvenient statistics the deaths of 'Buster' Peall and almost 1000 other Rhodesians? Who, for cynical political ends, were prepared to abandon the white Rhodesians, their farms, their factories, their homes, maybe even their lives, to the black tide of nationalism that has spread death and destruction everywhere else in the tortured continent of Africa? Who were even ready, as the final stroke of infamy, to pay out millions of pounds from the national exchequer to put guns in the hands of half-crazed guerrillas and their Communist masters."

The editorial concludes: "But have the British people really forgotten?"



OFFICERS MESS,
ROYAL AIR FORCE,
WADDINGTON,
LINCOLNSHIRE,
TEL. WADDINGTON 48

April 17th 1942

Tuesday

My darling mother,

I knew from the start that this was bound to happen in the end, and I have always thought that my only regret would be not saying thank you, and good bye. It seems strange writing so, but I feel I must.

I will not begin to thank you for everything because words cannot express it, and anyway it would take far too long.

Like Dad I am not afraid to die but just don't want to. But, God's will be done' so instead of coming home to you I go and meet Dad. I have heard how brave you were when Dad left us so I have no fear now. It is rather strange I should mention those words about God's

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God's will as I remember so well when I last said them. It was just before I past out when in the sea that time.

I should have loved to see you all once again, Mica, Guy and little Anthony, but that's how it must be, I suppose. You are a wonderful 4, and I hope you stick together and see Hitler beaten. But for you people there would be nothing in life to live for. Dear, "Fatty" I wonder if he really remembers me or if he has just heard you talk of me so often. Actually I think he does remember me - perhaps in the swimming bath. God, what a home-life I have had. Everything a man could wish for and I don't think I appreciated to the full.

You remember, Mums how I used to say, "When I find a woman like you I would marry her tomorrow." I now realize that if I had kept to that and if I had lived, I should never have been married.

Rhodesians Worldwide

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