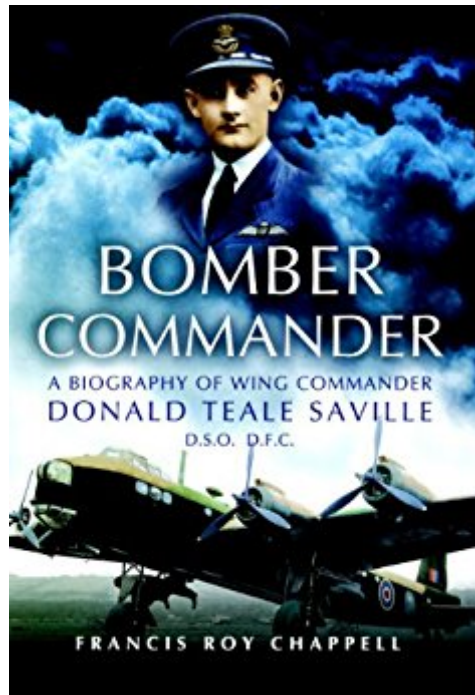


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Bomber Commander: Don Saville DSO, DFC - 'The Mad Australian'



Synopsis

Wing Commander Donald Teale Saville DSO, DFC joined the Royal Australian Air Force in 1927. From 1932 until 1939 he flew and tested private aircraft, was a flying instructor and then a Captain-pilot with Australian National Airways. In 1936, at the age of 36 years, he volunteered for the RAF whilst on holiday in England. Because of his age he was posted to the Ferry Pool Service and eventually became its Commanding Officer. In 1941 he dropped rank from Squadron Leader to Flight Lieutenant to join Bomber Command, and in December of that year joined No 458 RAAF Squadron flying Wellingtons as a Flight Commander. In 1942 he was appointed to command another Wellington squadron, No 104, at Kabrit in Egypt. He was awarded the DFC for daring operations whilst flying from Malta against enemy airfields and ports. In March 1943 he took command of No 218 Squadron at Downham Market flying somewhat elderly Short Stirlings and at a time of intolerable losses. In July 1943 he went missing on the first mass bombing raid on Hamburg. He made the supreme sacrifice by holding his burning aircraft steady while four of his crew escaped by parachute. He was known affectionately as 'The Mad Aussie' and was reputed to have flown 10,000 flying hours. He was fifteen or so years older than most of his aircrews and was probably the oldest pilot in Bomber Command. At the time of his loss he was in was on his third tour of operations. This is the story of a man who carried leadership by example and was renowned as an exceptionally skilled, daring and confident aviator.

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Customer Reviews

This is a good look at Donald Saville's career as a pilot but the first third of the book (five long chapters) covers his family history in very great detail and has very little to do with his sterling record as a flyer. Saville was born in 1903 into a quite well-to-do family who were English immigrants to Australia. He was in his twenties and still wondering what to do for a living when he discovered flying which became his life's passion. By the time World War II came around, he had thousands of hours flying time and had been a commercial pilot captain, flying instructor, test pilot, and a member of the peacetime R.A.F. He made his way into Bomber Command and was probably the oldest pilot in that service at 38. The book covers this pre-war period in some detail and gives the reader a good idea of the kind of training and experience Saville brought to the R.A.F. The book gives an extraordinary amount of detail about Saville's flying - in fact so much detail that the author, in some cases, even lists the serial numbers of the planes Saville flew on certain bombing missions. This can be a little off-putting because details like this don't add to the narrative or help the reader understand what is happening - and there are plenty of instances like this in the book. His wartime years are well-covered (again in great detail) all the way from the Battle of Britain to his final flight and death in a bombing mission over Hamburg. I don't know if there was any family relationship between the author and the Saville family, but the book reads more like a privately printed family history. Much of the writing appears to have come from action reports, flight logs, and squadron histories. There is little of the intimate detail that really lets us know the real Donald Saville, D.F.C., D.S.O. The book is well worth reading for a good look at the mechanics of a squadron in Bomber Command and the life of a dedicated pilot.

A detailed biography honoring the life of Australian Don Saville that filled in some gaps in my knowledge of the WWII British night time bombing campaigns in the Mediterranean and European theaters. The book suffers somewhat from relentless details and a little too much early family history for my taste but it's very much worthwhile reading if only to learn about the life of a pioneering Australian aviator and better understand the incredible bravery of the WWII British bomber crews.

A great story of a remarkable pilot. A must for lovers of WW2 air warfare stories. A great tale of an

airman that defied the odds and made a major contribution to the war effort and the ultimate victory.

Took some time to get into this book. The further I got into it the more I liked it. A beautiful story about an Aussie larrikin that I didn't know a thing about. A well written enjoyable novel. I recommend this novel to any devout follower of the Aussie ANZAC legend.

What a bloke!!!! The Brits would be wrapped in a CO like that who was not a stickler for the bull like the RAF officers. I am afraid that it was a bit too much of the statistics about various aircraft and a bit light on for the personal side of things about the man himself.

Definitely one of the best written books covering an individual's wartime experiences. A "Gold Class" rating for this most gripping of wartime involvements. Certainly a "Hard to put down" book once started.

This book gives a great insight into the lives of RAAF and RAF aircrew during WW2. At times it can become a bit tedious with long lists of what Saville did today, tomorrow and the next day. At other times however, where information is obviously less readily available, it can be quite sparse. Overall, well worth the price of purchase.

I am sorry, it just did not work for me! Perhaps I have read too many books of the events and background of this era. If you wish to read an outstanding book relating to the bomber offensive, I recommend Murray Peden's "A Thousand Shall Fall" as the best book on the topic that I have had the pleasure of reading.

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