

MIDDLEMARSH

In 1940, before the great German breakthrough in May, the men at R.A.F. Middlemarsh waited, watching the skies, for the real action to begin. One of these men was air-gunner Charlie Stokes, who was temporarily attached to the base's anti-aircraft defences while he awaited posting.



HULLO. FAIREY BATTLES! WHAT ARE THEY DOING LANDING ON OUR BLENHEIM FIELD?

GOOD QUESTION, STOKES. THEY'RE STOPPING TO REFUEL ON THEIR WAY TO JOIN THE ADVANCED AIR STRIKING FORCE IN FRANCE.



OH. HULLO, SIR. I DIDN'T SEE YOU COME UP.



THEY WON'T BE HERE LONG, BUT WE MUST MAKE SURE WE GIVE THE CREWS A REAL MIDDLEMARSH WELCOME, RIGHT?

RIGHT, SIR.

And the Battle crews were easy to welcome—with one exception!

WELL, WHAT'S IT FEEL LIKE FOR YOU MIDDLEMARSH LOT TO STAY HERE AND LET US BATTLE CREWS GO TO FRANCE AND DO YOUR FIGHTING FOR YOU?



BLIMEY! WHERE DID THEY DIG THIS CHARMER UP?



MAYBE IT'S BETTER YOU DO STAY HERE—AS OUR BATTLES CAN DO ANYTHING YOUR BLENHEIMS CAN, AND BETTER!

NOW JUST A MINUTE, MATE. YOUR KITES FLY SLOWER THAN OURS. THEY CLIMB SLOWER—AND WHEREAS YOU'VE GOT ONLY ONE GUN AFT, WE'VE GOT TWO AND A PAIR IN THE BLISTER BEHIND THE NOSE AS WELL!



YOU CHEEKY LITTLE RUNT! I'LL—AAGHH!

AND IT COULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED TO A NICER BLOKE!

But the incident wasn't over—



I KNOW IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT, STOKES—BUT THE FACT REMAINS THAT THE MAN'S HAND IS STILL BROKEN, AND SO THIS OFFICER MUST MAKE THE FLIGHT TO FRANCE WITHOUT A REAR GUNNER.

MUST HE, SIR? WELL, AS I GOT THE FLIGHT LIEUTENANT INTO THIS FIX, MAYBE I COULD GET HIM OUT?



HOW ABOUT ME TAKING HIS PLACE, SIR—JUST FOR THE FLIGHT TO FRANCE? ONCE WE'VE ARRIVED SAFELY AT THE A.A.S.F. BASE, HE CAN PICK UP ANOTHER GUNNER AND I CAN MAKE MY WAY BACK HERE BY SEA.

A VERY SPORTING OFFER, SQUADRON LEADER—AND WITH YOUR PERMISSION, I'LL TAKE HIM UP ON IT.