



# The Desert Air War

*Richard Townshend Bickers*

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**The Desert Air War** Richard Townshend Bickers  
1940.

World War Two has just begun.

Fighting breaks out across the continent of Europe, as Hitler and his generals face off against the French and their allies in Churchill and Montgomery.

The game was set.

But across the Mediterranean, another storm brews.

Italy takes its chances in Northern Africa. And if it were not for the Royal Air Force, the Second World War might have had a severely different outcome.

During those long months when the men on the ground went back and forth across the desert in a dizzying succession of triumphs and reverses, the men of the Royal Air Force, often woefully under equipped, struggled valiantly to keep possession of the skies under which the troops were fighting.

Richard Bickers, author of several books on the history of the aerial warfare, saw the war in North Africa and Italy from both the ground and the air, and uses his own experiences, interwoven with the recollections of numerous contemporaries, to create a vivid picture of what it was like to fly, to fight and to control operations over the desert at that time.

He also gives the usually ignored ground crews the full measure of the recognition due to them — ground gunners, armourers, motor transport drivers and others.

In view of the fact that death was never very far away, the impression he creates of life in the Desert Air Force is surprisingly light-hearted. But, as he says, they were all very young at the time, morale was also high and nothing was to be gained by going around with a long face.

An unending diet of sand and flies found compensation in the thrill of flying and the re-emergence of a kind of chivalry conjured up by this new and sophisticated form of combat.

‘The Desert Air War’ is at once a gripping historical account of the RAF’s role in North Africa during World War Two, and an endearing and empathetic portrayal of the indomitable spirit of the men who risked their lives for their country.

Praise for Richard Bickers:

‘A valuable history of the air war that began it all ... by an ex-flyer of the Second World War who has a genuine feeling for the feats of his predecessors’ - THE BIRMINGHAM POST

‘His sympathy with the fighting man (and woman) shines out of every page’ - LIVERPOOL DAILY POST

Richard Townsend Bickers volunteered for the RAF on the outbreak of the second world war and served, with a Permanent Commission, for eighteen years. He wrote a range of military fiction and non-fiction books, including 'Torpedo Attack', 'My Enemy Came Nigh', 'Bombing Run', 'Fighters Up' and 'Summer of No Surrender'.

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#### **Brad Sharpe:**

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