



## WAVERLEY COUNCIL

# KENNETH HOLLAND: SPITFIRE PILOT

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A Waverley Library  
Local History Fact Sheet

Research kindly provided by  
Chris Taylor

The gratitude of every home in our Island, in our Empire, and indeed throughout the world, except in the abodes of the guilty, goes out to the British airmen who, undaunted by odds, unwearied in their constant challenge and mortal danger, are turning the tide of the world war by their prowess and by their devotion. Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.

All hearts go out to the fighter pilots, whose brilliant actions we see with our own eyes day after day; but we must never forget that all the time, night after night, month after month, our bomber squadrons travel far into Germany, find their targets in the darkness by the highest navigational skill, aim their attacks, often under the heaviest fire, often with serious loss, with deliberate careful discrimination, and inflict shattering blows upon the whole of the technical and war-making structure of the Nazi power. On no part of the Royal Air Force does the weight of the war fall more heavily than on the daylight bombers who will play an invaluable part in the case of invasion and whose unflinching zeal it has been necessary in the meanwhile on numerous occasions to restrain.

Images from top:

Kenneth Holland, undated.  
Image courtesy of Chris Taylor.

Excerpt from Winston  
Churchill's wartime speech of  
August 20, 1940.

The Battle of Britain occurred over the skies of Southern England in 1940. It lasted four months and involved pilots from at least twenty different countries. In British history it ranks along side Waterloo and Trafalgar in its significance.

It was the strangest of conflicts, as unlike previous air battles there was not a land battle going on at the same time.

The British population watched as pilots fought in the skies above them. Planes crashed and people died, but life went on. In the evening it was not unusual for Allied pilots to go down the pub.

Over 540 Allied pilots died in the conflict, which delivered the first major defeat to German armed forces during World War II and prevented the invasion of Britain. The heavily

outnumbered Allied pilots became known as *The Few* as they were described in Winston Churchill's famous war time speech.

There were at least 30 pilots and air crew who fought in the Battle of Britain who had an Australian connection. Kenneth Christopher Holland was the 10th Australian casualty to be killed in action, and at twenty years old the youngest. His involvement in one of the most significant battles of the Second World War was quite by chance.

Born in Sydney on 29 January, 1920 Kenneth Holland grew up in the Waverley area. His father was from Cowra and met his wife Ina at Weymouth in England during World War I whilst serving with the Australian Imperial Forces. They moved back to Australia

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Images from top:

Tamarama Surf Life Saving Club, group photo, undated. Image courtesy of Tamarama SLSC.

Group photo at the Airspeed Company, circa 1938. KC Holland, back row far left.

in 1919. On return his father Harold Holland was medically discharged from the AIF suffering from 'shell shock'.

Records indicate that the family were living in Bondi from 1923, then settled in Tamarama in the mid-1930s. The eastern suburbs were an area that was changing rapidly, Bondi Pavilion opened in 1929 and marked the explosion in Australian beach and surf culture. According to a school friend, Neville Gray, Holland spent his formative years rock fishing along the coast, shooting rats with air rifles, and hanging around the Tamarama Surf Life Saving Club. Holland joined the Club at 15 as a junior, his membership application listing his occupation as 'student'. Holland attended the Intermediate High School at Randwick (now Randwick Public School), where he got A's in English and French, and B's in History and Latin for his intermediate certificate in 1934.

During his time at the Surf Club, Holland met the mysterious Mr Ripley.

A wealthy businessman who ran a market gardening business in Sydney., Hugh Ripley was very involved in the Surf Club, and made a number of financial donations over the years. At some point in 1935, Ripley extended an invitation to Holland to accompany him back to England and to sponsor his further education in aviation engineering at the Airspeed Company in Portsmouth. Their departure is noted in the Tamarama SLSC minutes, stating simply that "K. Holland has accompanied Major Ripley to England".

The aviation engineering course was developed and coordinated by Neville Shute Norway, later to become a famous author (*A Town like Alice*) and Australian resident. While Holland was attending college, he was given the nickname 'Dutchy'. A friend of his from college, Phillip Markham recalls:

*"I remember Dutchy very clearly. He was a cheerful outgoing person but not so extroverted as most Australians I met later!"*

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## BRISTOL RAIDERS DOWN IN SOMERSET & WILTS

### City's Biggest Attack of the War

#### TWENTY-SIX NAZI PLANES DESTROYED

ENEMY PLANES WERE BROUGHT DOWN IN SOMERSET AND WILTSHIRE ON WEDNESDAY, WHEN BRISTOL HAD ITS FIRST MASS DAYLIGHT RAID. IT WAS THE CITY'S BIGGEST ATTACK OF THE WAR. SOME OF THE SEVERE AIR FIGHTING WHICH TOOK PLACE BETWEEN BRISTOL AND THE ENGLISH CHANNEL OCCURRED OVER NEIGHBOURING CITIES AND TOWNS.

A communique from the Air Ministry and Ministry of Home Security, issued early on Thursday, stated: "Later reports show that in yesterday's air battle a total of 26 enemy aircraft were destroyed, 22 by fighters and four by A.A. fire." Our losses, according to a previous statement, were four fighter aircraft, the pilots of three being safe.

Two raids were made on Bristol, the second by more than 50 planes, which came over in two waves. About 100 enemy planes were seen flying from the south. About half of these made for the Welsh coast and the others made for Bristol, their main objective.

Fierce anti-aircraft gunfire met the raiders, and later their formations were broken up by British fighters, which dived out of a bank of cloud and went savagely into action.

Three German planes were seen to crash to the north of the city, some members of their crews saving themselves by means of their parachutes, and four more planes were chased by our fighters and brought down at different places in the South-West.

The four were a Heinkel III, between Failand and Porbury, Somerset; a Junkers 28 at Wolverton, Somerset; a Messerschmitt at Greatridge, Wilts; and a Heinkel III at Swanage, Dorset.

One anti-aircraft battery on the outskirts of Bristol claims to have "drawn blood" with its first shell. Its victim, a Heinkel III crashed near Porbury, but the few occupants escaped by parachute and were captured by police, soldiers and Home Guards at Failand. One of the crew, minus one of his boots, cried "No oomies English" as he surrendered.

Another said, "Hitler is a good man. And a third, apparently hysterical, fired his revolver in the air. One of the crew broke his leg and had to be taken to hospital.

Thousands of pieces of white paper were picked up. Apparently leading planes dropped them to guide the others following.

**German Claim**  
The official German News Agency description of the raid, quoted by Reuter says:  
"German formations bombed the aircraft motor works at Filton, near Bristol. The attack was made in several waves.

The bombers, which were protected by fighters, scored direct hits on the works. Several air combats ensued. The exact number of enemy planes shot down has not yet been ascertained.  
"The last squadron of our planes was able to observe the devastation

## BATH BAPTIST OBJECTOR

### SAYS BRITAIN IS "NOT HIS COUNTRY"

A Bath applicant at the South-Western Conscientious Objectors' Tribunal at Bristol, who said he did not want to become part of the war machine, was told by the President (Judge Wethered) that he did not mind being part of the machine that was out to destroy his country.

Applicant replied that it was not his country, Judge Wethered asked him what he meant when he said it was not his country? He lived by it. The applicant was David Conrad Matchett, a confectionery salesman, of 7, First Avenue, Bath, who, in the course of his statement, said he was a Baptist and, as such, believed in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. He could not, therefore, lend his support to any cause which had as its object, the destruction of human life, or the wanton and needless destruction of personal property.

Furthermore, and apart from religious views, looking squarely at modern war, no man in his right mind could possibly wish to cause all the waste of life, time, money, labour and material which is the demand of war today. The peoples of the world have enough brains to be able to manage to live without resort to war.

**"Ineffective" Help.**  
He said he would not do any work under Government control. He was not prepared to help in A.R.P. work, but he would do anything to help people who were suffering.

A member of the Tribunal commented that he would help them if effectively but not effectively. Asked if he would do civilian work, not organised by the Government, for the civilian population, such as work on the land, applicant replied that whatever one did it was helping the war. If he did anything by the direction of the tribunal it would be under the Government as the tribunal had been set up by the Government.

Judge Wethered said applicant was a member of the Baptist Church, but he was taking up an attitude that had been repudiated by that Church in 1936. He did not want to do anything to help save his country from destruction. His action was morally wrong.

Matchett said he had always been brought up that way. Judge Wethered remarked that this was very unfortunate for the country. He was retained on the Register of Conscientious Objectors conditionally on his doing some form of work on the land, either agriculture, horticulture, forestry or land reclamation.

**BEDS FOR MEMBERS OF THE FORCES**  
Efforts to Solve a Problem at Bath  
The serious problem in Bath of accommodation for members of H.M. Forces at week-ends was called attention to at the weekly luncheon of Bath Rotarians by the President (Rotarian A. Norman Wills).

One of the churches, he said, had in a schoolroom, provided 25 beds, but many members of the Forces slept in public air raid shelters during the week-ends.

"We have got to do our part to stop this!" Mr. Wills emphasised. Single beds were needed, mattresses (double or single), sheets, pillows, an cushion, only on loan, and the leaders' names could be tied to the articles. But let an effort be made, as the matter was well agreed. Many

## SOON DRIVEN OFF

RAIDER ATTACKED OVER S. WEST TOWN

In the whole of the South-West there was not a single air-raid warning anywhere during the night of Friday-Saturday last—for the first time for over a month.

On Saturday morning, however, following a raid alarm, a German plane was seen flying over the outskirts of a S. West town in the direction of a nearby larger town.

It had not gone far before it was engaged by two British planes, and made off in a northerly direction, hotly pursued by the R.A.F. machines, which were giving it "all they had got" as the machines vanished from sight.

## OVER EIGHT MILES AN HOUR

"Speeding" in Victoria Park

A prosecution for exceeding the speed limit of eight miles an hour in Royal Victoria Park was heard by Bath city magistrates on Wednesday.

Defendant was Margaret Dorman, Brockley Court, Bristol, and the offence

When not at college, Holland lived with Ripley in a farmhouse near Camelford on the North coast of Cornwall. At the end of 1936 he and Ripley made a trip back to Australia, where they rejoined the Tamarama Surf Life Saving Club. Holland earned his Bronze Medallion in surf life saving in December, and then returned to England and his studies in 1937.

During 1936 the British Government announced a major expansion of the Royal Air Force (RAF). The RAF Volunteer Reserve was formed to provide flying lessons for any suitable candidate to learn to fly at weekends. Holland joined the RAFVVR sometime around 1938, after his 18th birthday.

With the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, Holland was called up full time into the ranks of the RAF for pilot training. He was posted to Perth, Scotland for training in Tiger Moth biplanes. Only one in four trainee pilots were selected for fighter pilot training. In June 1940 he was posted to 152 Squadron at Ackrington in

Northern England. On 10 July the squadron were posted to Warmwell Airfield in Dorset two days before the Battle of Britain commenced. They were directed to defend the Portland /Weymouth area and channel shipping.

Life at Warmwell during the Battle of Britain would have been tense. The Airfield was attacked on a number of occasions, with pilots reported missing or killed in action on a daily basis. The level of stress during September for the 152 Squadron was documented by P.O Roger Hall in his book *Clouds of Fear* (1975):

*"Our two Spitfires hummed easily along the air paths..... The world of last night seemed a long way off, and I wondered how, by contrast to this ecstatic feeling I had now. I could never have descended to the general debauchery which characterised last night's behaviour. I wondered what the alternatives were. Were we to sit in our rooms to read a book, or sit in the mess and do a crossword puzzle or read all about the war, or write letters to*

Images from top:

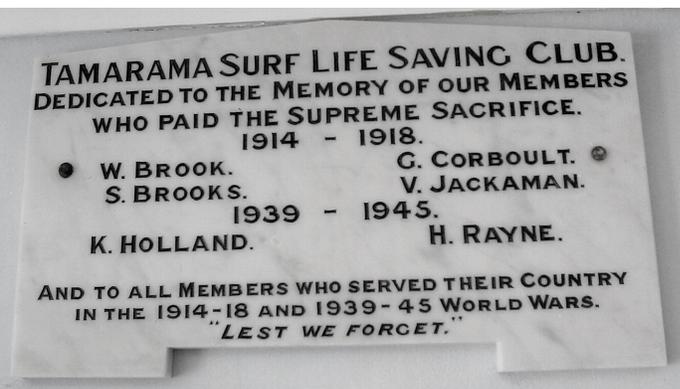
152 Squadron, Warmwell Airfield, 1940. KC Holland, kneeling front row, far right.

Newspaper report of the air battle in which KC Holland died, 28 September, 1940. Bath Chronicle.



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Spitfire of the 152 Squadron  
downed on the same day as  
KC Holland. The pilot, Devitt,  
survived, though the fuel tank  
had been hit by return fire.

Memorial in Tamarama SLSC.

Woolverton Memorial, at the  
site of the fatal crash of KC  
Holland.

*our loved ones in case we got  
no further opportunity, or  
should we go to the cinema? I  
didn't think any of these  
activities would really be  
adequate as a sequel to the  
day. It would be physically  
possible to sit down by oneself  
in one's room and read a book  
after fighting Germans at a  
great height and at great speed  
at intervals during the day - but  
it would be unnatural. It was no  
longer a mystery to me why  
fighter pilots had earned such a  
reputation for being somewhat  
eccentric when they were on  
the ground. I knew why it was,  
and I knew that if I were alive  
this evening I should get drunk  
with the others and go  
wherever they went."*

Squadron records show that  
Holland took part in a number  
of actions during September,  
and that he was responsible for  
the destruction of at least 3  
enemy aircraft.

Kenneth Holland was killed on  
25 September, 1940 whilst  
attacking German planes  
returning from bombing Bristol.

Combat reports state he was  
involved in shooting down a  
German bomber, but was hit by  
return fire. He crashed behind  
the church at Woolverton, with  
the German bomber he'd just  
shot down.

He was cremated on 2 October,  
1940 at Weymouth. His ashes  
were removed by Hugh Ripley  
on the same day. There is  
some mystery to where the  
ashes might have ended up.  
The most likely scenario is that  
Ripley kept them until his death  
in 1964 in South Africa.

There are a number of  
memorials for Kenneth Holland,  
with our local Waverley one  
inside the Tamarama Surf Life  
Saving Club. He is also listed  
on the Roll of Honour at the  
War Memorial in Canberra.  
In England there is memorial at  
Tintagel church in Cornwall,  
and at Weymouth  
Crematorium. His name is  
listed on the Battle of Britain  
monument in London, and a  
memorial stands at Woolverton,  
on the site of his death.