



FOREWORD

Vice Admiral Sir Roy Halliday,
K.B.E., D.S.C.

As Patron of the Kent Fleet Air Arm Association I am honoured to have been invited to write a foreword to this book.

It is a story of unsurpassed bravery and dedication, achieved in spite of a regrettable lack of support from the controlling authority at the highest level.

In 1942 I was completing my flight training at the United States Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida when news of the Channel Dash broke on the American media. It made us all feel intensely proud of the Fleet Air Arm; especially when we learned how eighteen Naval aircrew, in six unescorted Swordfish armed with torpedoes had attacked the might of the German battlefleet in the Channel. The US. Navy was astounded by the sheer bravery of the action.

The odds were absurdly stacked against Lieutenant Commander Eugene Esmonde D.S.O. and 825 Squadron on the 12th February 1942, but that day they earned the undying admiration of this Country and its Allies. Every aircrew was awarded recognition of their outstanding gallantry, which included a Victoria Cross for Eugene Esmonde.

Unfortunately many of this Country's great moments in history have been as a result of unbelievable courage in the face of insurmountable odds. None demonstrate this better than the story of Esmonde and his gallant Naval aviators.

Roy Halliday