



## Dawn of a Legend

by

**Stephen Brown**

Artist **Stephen Brown** is a self-taught artist who has specialised almost exclusively in aviation subjects for the last 15 years. Building on a background as a landscape and aviation photographer, his style carefully combines both these areas of interest. Stephen's originals in oil are in much demand and have been regularly exhibited with the prestigious Guild of Aviation Artists. Demand for his originals is high with regular commissions being undertaken for commercial and private clients as well as the RAF.

*We do hope you will find this biography of interest. We think that by knowing a little about the men behind the signatures, it will help you get the most from your copy of "Dawn of a Legend".*

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**Flight Lieutenant Geoffrey Derry Perks, DFC** was in a reserved occupation and unable to be released to join the RAFVR until July 1941. He was then sent by convoy to the USA, via Canada, for pilot training by the US Army Air Corps in Alabama and Georgia. In January 1943 he joined 420 RCAF Squadron to fly the Wellington initially, before converting to Halifaxes in April and was moved briefly to 427 RCAF Squadron before joining 434 Squadron – a new RCAF squadron in 6 Group. On completion of his tour he was posted to undergo a pilot instructor's course and returned to 1666 HCU Group in December for instructional duties until the end of 1944.

Geoff then volunteered to fly Mosquitoes in 8 Group and flew with 571 LNSF Squadron from mid-March 1945, completing a further thirteen operations, eight to Berlin, the last to Munich on the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1945.

*Also a signatory to the Artist Proofs and Remarqued editions:*

**Wing Commander Branse Burbridge DSO and Bar, DFC and Bar** (85 Sqn. Pilot) gained his wings in 1941. Putting duty before personal feelings as a conscientious objector Branse, together with his navigator, Bill Skelton, became known as "The Night Hawk Partners".

The two of them went on to shoot down 21 enemy aircraft - 16 during a seven-month period. The total included a Bf110 and three Ju88Gs during the night of 4-5

November 1944. Their officially credited 21 enemy aircraft destroyed made the pair the top night fighting crew in the whole of the RAF. Branse recalls, *“I always tried to aim for the wings of enemy aircraft – and not the cockpit. I never wanted to kill anyone.”*

The citations for their awards paid tribute to both men setting “an unsurpassed example of outstanding keenness and devotion to duty”.

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