



Pedro: The Life and Death of Fighter Ace Osgood Villiers Hanbury, DFC and Bar

Robin Rhoderick-Jones, Christopher Lee

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‘I went into the cloud and went flat out for a few minutes, turned, and as I dived out my luck was in and I got him head-on. He went straight into the sea and I am glad to say there were no survivors. A Dornier which had blown up came floating down in bits and another burnt up on land. It was a most spectacular show.’

Known as Pedro to his comrades and Tiggy to his family, Osgood Villiers Hanbury was a charismatic Eton schoolboy who, before his untimely death aged 25, became acting squadron leader of 260 Squadron in the Middle East and was awarded the DFC and bar for his bravery. Here, using letters and first person testimony, is his life in the RAF from training school to the Battle of Britain and ultimately to the Middle East.

Pedro, with his pipe, moustache, upper-class accent and slightly detached air was the archetypal public-school educated Englishman, but his leadership skills and care for his men commanded respect from all ranks and nationalities. An accomplished letter writer, his lust for life and thirst for action are evident in his missives to family and friends. His dramatic firsthand descriptions of air battles that cost the lives of his comrades are a thrilling testament to the bravery of 602 Squadron, but are counterbalanced by his frustrations of life in the Middle East, the long wait for action and the opportunities for leisure.

With the help of Christopher Hanbury, the son he never saw, and Christopher Shores, the acclaimed author, Robin Rhoderick-Jones has written a fine tribute to a naturally gifted pilot whose fearlessness, efficiency and unswerving devotion to both his duty and his loving family were praised by colleagues and superiors alike. Sir Christopher Lee was Pedro’s intelligence officer in the Middle East and had kindly agreed to pen a foreword.

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