

## Simon Herbert's new book "Wings over Cairo"

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Simon W. Herbert was born on Jersey, the largest of Great Britain's Channel Islands. In 1974, rather than following his father's advice to enter the Royal Air Force, he left the island to earn a degree in industrial design before moving to British Columbia, Canada.

After moving to the United States, he worked as a carpenter, and was involved with overseas service work in Senegal and the Philippines, before completing a Masters of Science in Historic Preservation from the University of Pennsylvania.

In addition to consulting on numerous historic architectural projects, Herbert taught for more than ten years, first as an associate professor at Belmont Technical College, and then as director of the Arkansas Institute for Building Preservation Trades. In addition to working for local government in Southern Arizona, Herbert is an architectural photographer. His other interests include kayaking, scuba diving, and fine scale modeling.

Herbert was inspired to research the history surrounding his father's experiences as a navigator in Bristol Beaufighters during World War II. He flew with 272 Squadron in North Africa and the Middle East. Herbert wrote *Wings Over Cairo*, his first novel, while riding the bus to and from work. He lives in Tucson, Arizona with his wife, Kate.



*Wings Over Cairo*: When Jack McClelland joins the Advanced Flying Unit at RAF Ramsey in early 1941, he is one of many hot shot pilots who take to the air to defend Britain. But he finds out the hard way that a thwarted senior officer can carry a grudge, especially when a beautiful woman is at the heart of their rivalry. As love and war collide, McClelland finds himself in an impossible situation, forced to choose between following orders on a doomed suicide run, or disobeying a commanding officer to accomplish the mission in Egypt. Set in the early, desperate days of World War II, here is a tale of courage, love, and the struggle to win over adversity, based on the actual exploits of the men of the RAF's 272 Squadron.

Available at Amazon.com *Wings over Cairo*

A recent article was published in the Jersey Evening Post, during a recent visit "home" by Simon Herbert with his wife Kate.

# A son's inspiration

Jerseyman Simon Herbert has mined his father's experiences as a wartime pilot for his debut novel. Diane Simon reports



Simon, who now lives in Arizona, with his wife Kate on a visit to Jersey  
PHOTO: PETER MOURANT (019471024)

**A** JERSEYMAN who was fascinated as a child about his father's exploits as a navigator for the RAF during the Second World War has written a novel based on his stories.

Simon Herbert, who has lived in the USA since 1978, could never get enough of the tales his father Richard told him about his hair-raising sorties in Bristol Beaufighters in the RAF's 373 Squadron.

Speaking while in the island this week visiting his brother Paul and his family, Simon said that he had always had it in his mind to one day write a novel featuring scenes from some of the actual events which his father had described.

His novel *Wings Over Cairo* is not only based on his father's stories, but also on his research about the part played in the war by the Beaufighter pilots, some of whose accounts he has read.

The British Beaufighter first served as a night fighter, then as a fighter bomber, and finally as a torpedo bomber.

The central character in the book, which takes place in England and Cairo, is flying officer McClelland who joins the Advanced Flying Unit at RAF Ramsey in 1941.



Simon's novel has been inspired by the experiences of his father, Richard (left)



A crash-landed Beaufighter. The planes were used as both fighters and bombers during the course of the war

He falls out with a senior officer and little realises the backlash that will follow from that encounter. McClelland finds himself in an impossible

situation when he must choose between following orders on what could be a suicide mission, or disobeying the commanding officer to save his own life and to protect the woman he loves.

Simon said that the character in the book which is based on his father is Jersey-born navigator Phillip du Quesson.

Simon, who wrote the book over seven years during his daily bus journey to work, lives in Tucson, Arizona with his wife Kate, and works for the local government as a specialist who co-ordinates historic building restoration.

Describing his father, who died in 1980, as having been a rather private, stoic man on the outside but very vulnerable on the inside, he said that there was a great deal of his father's wartime experiences that he had never learnt about.

It was revealing, therefore, when he had read in his father's RAF records that there had been times during the war when he had been in hospital.

'The terms used in the records was that my father had been a "Warweaver", a condition which I believe would now be referred to as having post-traumatic stress disorder,' he said.

Other terms used then for the condition had been 'lacking in moral fibre'.

'My research showed that it might have been suggested to some of these men that they were cowardly to make them angry so that they would return to the cockpit,' he said, adding that some men were even beaten by fellow crews if they refused.

### Witnessed

He added that it was poignant to realise what his father might have endured mentally due to what he had witnessed in action and found it necessary to do in battle.

Among the exploits featured in the book is the story told by his father of his pilot who consistently flew too low.

In one mission involving flying over the sea, the aircraft came too close to the water and the propellers kicked up water which nearly drenched the Beaufighter.

'The pilot pulled back on the column which batted the tail plane in the water. The aircraft suffered severe structural damage, but the pilot managed to lift it out of the water and fly it back to base for a crash-landing,' he said.

Simon was educated in the island at Trinity School, and Victoria College, Les Quennevais and Haulbowline.

His father was from Bath and his mother Jean from Llanrhastris. Among his relatives, was his uncle, former Airport manager Jack Herbert, and his grandfather, former harbour engineer Harry Herbert.

Wings Over Cairo is due to be published by Fireship Press in September, and will be

### RECOMMENDATIONS

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**Booker recommendation of the week**

**FRENCH REVOLUTIONS**  
Tim Moore

If you're a fan of cycling and love a laugh then read this book.

Moore, a long-time journalist and man who admits to lacking any sporting prowess, decides to cycle the route of the Tour de France.

The Tour is a monster, the task is massive, this shouldn't make an amusing read but it does, it's absolutely hilarious.

Moore's brilliant wit and riotous antics have enabled this writer to spin out a page-turner that is literally hysterical to the very last word.  
*Jim Loutis*