

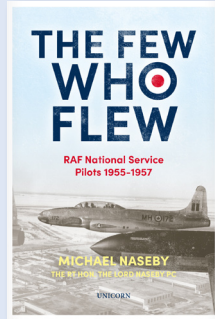
## FLYING HIGH

Lord Lexden

### *The Few Who Flew: RAF National Service Pilots 1955–1957*

By Michael Naseby

Published by Unicorn



IN THE SUMMER OF 1955 the 18-year-old Michael Morris, future Conservative MP and peer (as Lord Naseby), visited his parents who were working in Pakistan. In just a few weeks he learnt to fly with sufficient proficiency to go solo. He returned home in September with a glowing testimonial from the Chief Instructor of the Lahore Flying Club. "I consider

his aptitude for flying markedly above the average and should he choose, I am sure he would have a very promising career in aviation."

Two years' National Service were about to start. He had applied to join the Royal Artillery, but on reporting for duty he immediately said that the RAF was now his choice, swiftly overcoming objections through his persistence and charm. Seven months later he was in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, as part of a select group from NATO countries, for intense training as a pilot by the Royal Canadian Air Force. He relished the opportunities, the adventure and the friendships that his good fortune and ability brought him in this remote place in the Prairies, where Al Capone had once found refuge from the FBI.

The high point of his National Service career came at the beginning of 1957 at another Canadian air base in freezing Manitoba. After intense training on one of the best front-line jet fighters in the world, he was told: "You are ready for solo. You know what to do for the next one hour 15 minutes—Good luck." A few days later he flew in formation for the first time. He writes: "It was a brilliant day for flying with gorgeous sunlight which, as we banked our aircraft, flashed off our silver wings."

His great Canadian adventure ended in March 1957. "My logbook records that I flew a total of 287 hours in the skies over snow-covered northern Canada, of which 120 hours were solo. What a thrill and privilege for any young man." This captivating book makes clear that he enjoyed every single moment. It sets his own career in the wider context of the work of National Service pilots in Britain and Canada. Written with the panache appropriate to its subject, it brings to light an almost unknown episode in aviation history in detail, thanks to his own prodigious memory, the recollections of lifelong friends and researches in air force archives.

Michael Naseby was offered a permanent RAF commission. He would undoubtedly have risen to a very high rank. He concludes: "My life would now take a very different route but flying would always remain a very special part of it." Aviation is one of the many subjects on which he speaks in the Lords, confident that low carbon air travel will be achieved.

**Alistair Cooke (Lord Lexden) is a former official historian of the Conservative Party**