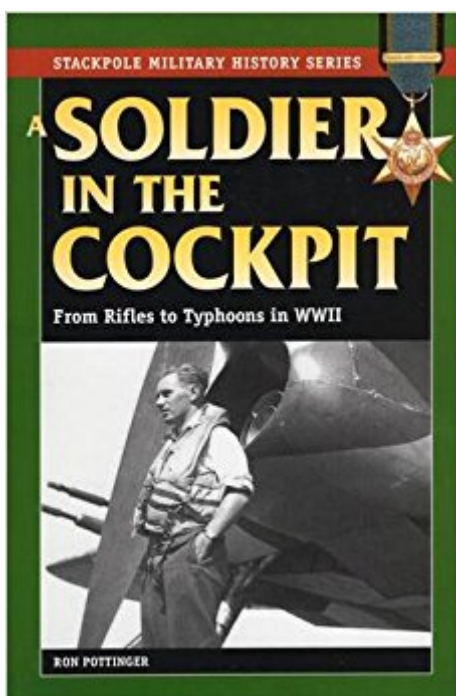


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# A Soldier In The Cockpit: From Rifles To Typhoons In WWII (Stackpole Military History)



## Synopsis

I could see a carpet of twinkling lights from the ack ack all along the rail sidings which bordered the canal. I dove onto these with my cannons going. Then suddenly, when the attention of all the guns turned on me, I realized how foolhardy I was being. I ran the guns along the row of rail trucks--opened the throttle wide and pulled straight up for the clouds--with tracers crossing in front and on all sides of the plane. Ron Pottinger started the war as a rifleman in the Royal Fusiliers, then transferred to the Royal Air Force, where he began flying the 7.5-ton Hawker Typhoon. He flew dozens of dangerous ground attack missions over occupied Europe through bad weather, heavy flak, and enemy fighters before being shot down and taken prisoner.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"...an excellent and very readable account..." -- George Murdoch, Armchair Auctions, August 2007.

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Ron W. Pottinger lives in England.

.....you are a Typhoon and Tempest fan...read this book. If you want to read about the Battle of Britain from a 'Brown Job"'s perspective, read this book, Well written by a stand up fellow who just did his job, a job that killed many.

Excellent book, but all the books from the Stackpole series are great. It was another winner from

them.

I realize I am biased in this review because I know the author well but never the less because I am from the same era and went through WWII as a child and experienced some of the battles in the air (from the ground) he describes I can vouch for most of the things he refers to in his book. Good reading.

Nicely written..tells the story well, interesting topic little bombast not trying to sell a point of view..well worth the time to read

Author Ron Pottinger spent much of World War II planning rharbarbs and searching for doodlebugs -- and no -- he wasn't gardening. He was flying Hawker Typhoons on dangerous interdiction missions over German occupied Western Europe. Often by moonlight, two "kites" (Typhoons armed with 4 lethal 20mm cannon and two 250 lb. bombs) would "do a trip" in search of targets of opportunity at extreme low level. Coastal shipping, E-Boats, canal locks, barges, as well as industries and trains were his favorite prey. Crossing the sea down on the deck to avoid detection was not all that safe at high speed. Even in daylight, poor weather could mask obstacles such as chimneys -- and at such low altitude it was easy to get lost. At that level, any German gunner could get lucky, and there was little altitude to bail out when seriously hit. W/O Pottinger knew this type of flying was very dangerous, but he kept on looking for anything worthy of attack. Many such pilots were lost with mediocre results. The Hawker Typhoon was developed as an interceptor but its power was disappointing at high altitude and the fuselage had problems -- the tail sometimes broke off. Nevertheless, it proved to be extremely fast at low level. In fact, it was faster than the Fw-190 or Messerschmitt Bf-109. Heavily armed with 4-20mm cannon, it was a natural strafing aircraft. "Soldiers In the Cockpit" is W/O Pottinger's memoir of his service in World War II. But how does an infantryman in the British Army get to fly a hot fighter-bomber? The R.A.F. lost many fine pilots in the Battle of Britain and soldiers were being recruited for flying school. W/O Pottinger didn't train in gloomy Scotland however, but in sunny Florida, U.S.A. Here, he flew the Stearman PT17, Vultee BT13A, and the AT6A Harvard. In "The Wide Blue Yonder", he narrates his stateside training with humorous stories of living in the swamps, chasing girls, and nail-biting flights. The Luftwaffe had several nasty surprises for the R.A.F. such as the Messerschmitt Me-262 jet, and the diabolical V1 Doodlebug flying bomb. W/O Pottinger's squadron was soon upgraded to the new Hawker Tempest. The 24-cylinder fighter was among the fastest allied aircraft at all altitudes and proved an excellent

interceptor of the doodlebug -- 638 V1's were downed by Tempests. After the Allies invasion of France, the new Tempest really began to pay off. Fighter nerds hoping to read about the Typhoons knocking out 175 German tanks in one day at the Falaise Gap, or the strafing of roads choked with armored columns during the Battle of the Bulge will be disappointed -- W/O Pottinger was not there. His main assignment was supporting General Montgomery's Operation Market-Garden, in Holland. On New Years Day, W/O Pottinger's luck ran out and he was shot down over Paderborn, Germany while strafing a train. To be honest, only one-third of this book is fighter plane action. In the final fifty pages he narrates his bailout, capture and imprisonment in various POW camps until finally transferring home after the war. W/O Pottinger has not set out to write a complete history of the Hawker Typhoon and Tempest operations. Rather, he has given us an intimate look at his own experiences in World War II -- much in diary form. The book works best when W/O Pottinger has his feet on the ground. As should be apparent now, Ron Pottinger was an "ordinary working-class chap" who wants us to know that the war was unglamorous and a dirty business. "Soldier In the Cockpit" has numerous photographs taken during the war by the author. There were no maps included. This book will be of most interest to the fans of POW stories and wartime biographies.

Excellent detailed memoir for a unique and under-reported aspect of WW 2, ground attack fighter bombers. Used extensively, these planes, Typhoons, Tempests, Thunderbolts, Corsairs, Avengers, and Hellcats as well as the Russian Stormoviks were by far the best ground support aircraft in WW2. Coupled later with forward ground observers, they were truly, the best friends the infantrymen would have for close support.

The only disappointment I have with this book, is that the title would lead one to believe that there would be stories about Typhoon missions destroying tank columns in Normandy.... The author spent only a brief amount of time in Typhoons before the unit received Tempests.... The book does cover how a typical PBI soldier became eligible for flight school; how he made it to Canada and Florida for flight training; how he made it back to England, becoming a combat pilot and an officer; how he was shot down close to the wars end and became a prisoner of war, eventually to be "rescued" by the Russians... The story as a whole reads well, is vivid but does not get mired in the details, and covers a myriad of topics within the scope of World War Two. A good interesting read.

This was an interesting book about a British soldier who leaves the infantry to become a pilot in the RAF. Unfortunately, there isn't much combat so I was a bit disappointed by that. However, the book

is a pretty quick read and provides lots of background and insight into the Hawker Typhoon fighter plane, as well as just how mundane life could be for a fighter pilot. It's not all blasting three Messerschmitts out of the sky everyday or shooting up columns of troops and armor. At least there's some aerial combat against the German V-1 rockets to liven things up a bit. The final part of the book deals with the author's experience as a POW and is fairly detailed. Not a bad read overall, just not much action.

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