

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” John 15:13



**Pilot Officer Cyril Barton VC
1921-1944**

“Cyril Barton believed in God”

**Victoria
Cross**

Handley Page Halifax

Introduction – “Cyril Barton Believed in God” en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyril_Joe_Barton

RAF Pilot Officer Cyril Barton VC was a true disciple of Christ. PO Barton was awarded the VC posthumously for his last operational flight over Germany on March 30th 1944. He was captain and pilot of a Handley Page Halifax heavy bomber and his actions testified to the Lord’s words in John 15:13 ***“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”***

PO Barton’s life and testimony could be summed up by the words *“Cyril Barton Believed in God.”*

Those five words begin the chapter on Pilot Officer Cyril Barton VC in the book *VC’s of the Air* by John Frayn Turner published in 1960. Frayn Turner gives summary accounts of the 32 airmen from Britain and the Old Dominions who won the Victoria Cross in WW2. Only seven survived the war. Cyril Barton, as indicated, was not among them. He was 22 years of age when he died.

A Personal Note

This writer received the book *VC’s of the Air* as a Christmas present in 1960. It is very possible that his salvation seven years later was in part the result of the chapter on Pilot Officer Barton VC.

“Confession is made unto salvation” Romans 10:10

Cyril Barton was born in Suffolk but grew up in Surrey where he attended Kingston-on-Thames technical college. On graduation from college Barton became apprenticed to an aircraft factory and continued his studies in the evenings. He lived in New Malden and attended church and Bible class regularly. When his class leader asked Cyril *“Do you know Christ as your personal Saviour?”* Barton answered *“Yes.”* Cyril had fulfilled Romans 10:10 ***“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”***

“Thou shalt be his witness” Acts 22:15

Acts 22:15 states **“For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.”** Cyril Barton was. He bore witness to his friends at Youth Services, taught Sunday School and joined in open-air witness. Frayn Turner said he *“tackled some of the toughest types in the area, bringing them into the services.”* Then in September 1939, things changed radically.

“Snared in an evil time” Ecclesiastes 9:12

Ecclesiastes 9:12 states **“as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.”** That was what befell the WW2 generation. Cyril was able to join the RAF early in 1941. After a period of training and non-operational duties, he made his first operational flight in July 1943. By March 1944 he'd made 18 operational flights and been promoted to Pilot Officer. He was, however, concerned about maintaining a stronger Christian Witness.

“Let your light so shine” Matthew 5:16

The Lord Jesus Christ said **“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”** Matthew 5:16. Barton had said in a letter *“I felt that my witness was not as vigorous as it should be, and I knew if I didn't do anything about it I would only slip back.”* He asked for prayer, especially from his girlfriend, Doreen. God answered.

On Sunday evening March 26th 1944 Barton got back from church to the quarters that he shared with the other two officers in his crew. They were stationed near Selby. He wrote on March 28th *“I said I would be off the “intercom” for ten minutes and knelt by my bed. I very reverently turned down his favourite radio programme and an awkward hush settled on the room. The Lord was very real to me for a few minutes, and I was very thankful to Him for bringing me through.”* The others tried to act normally but when they all turned in Cyril had to remind J to switch off his radio.

“The fiery trial” 1 Peter 4:12 www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/mar44.html

1 Peter 4:12 says **“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.”** The fiery trial came on March 30th 1944 with the Nuremberg raid. The *Bomber Command* site states that 795 aircraft set out. 95 were lost. It was one of the heaviest Allied losses of the war. Night fighters repeatedly attacked Barton's aircraft. 70 miles from the target an engine was badly damaged, the communications were shot out, fuel tanks were punctured and the turret machine guns disabled. Owing to a confusion of signals, Barton's navigator, wireless operator and bomb aimer parachuted out of the aircraft. Barton nevertheless pressed on to the target and released his bombs. He and his three remaining crew members then faced a 4½ hour journey home on three engines into strong headwinds without navigational aids. As Barton wrenched the heavy Halifax around, the damaged propeller flew off. Providentially it missed the aircraft. Barton held course as best he could and crossed the English coast near Ryhope Colliery, 90 miles north of his base. Then with fuel almost gone, two engines stopped and the aircraft was now too low for the men to leave safely by parachute. Barton ordered his crew *“Take up crash stations.”* He struggled to avoid some miners' cottages and then the Halifax fell to earth. The three other crew members aboard the Halifax survived and the three who had baled out were taken prisoner so Barton alone died in the crash. He had fulfilled John 15:13 **“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”**

Last Letter Home and “all things well” Mark 7:37

Barton had given a letter to his brother, who was saved, to give to his mother if he was killed. It begins *“Dear Mum, I hope you never receive this but I quite expect you will.”* It ends with *“Your loving son, Cyril.”* He also wrote to Doreen. In part the letter to his mother says [AFCU/OCU *Contact* magazine, spring 1992] *“Except for leaving you...death holds no terrors for me. I know I shall survive the judgement because I have trusted in Christ as my Saviour. All that I am anxious about is that you and the rest of the family will come to know Him...I commend my Saviour to you.”* Maybe other members of the family did get saved. Barton is buried in Bonner Hill Road Cemetery, Kingston-upon-Thames and the family's personal message on Cyril's headstone is Romans 8:28 **“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.”** That is, **“whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's”** Romans 14:8. That's reassuring. Amen.