

John Ernest Proctor (1913-1988)



John Ernest Proctor was born at 47 East London Street, Edinburgh on 15th July 1913. He was the son of Mayland Proctor and Janet Hunter Proctor (nee Noble). Mayland Proctor was the youngest son of John Proctor (1836-1914) cartoonist and brother of the painter Adam Edwin Proctor (1864-1913) both of whom who lived in Brook and Little London in the late 19th/early 20th Century.

He joined the RAF in September 1929 as an Aircraft Apprentice attending RAF Cranwell Training Centre. He passed out in August 1932 but later applied for pilot training and served in the RAF until his retirement in 1957.

In the electoral register for Albury in 1938 he is listed as living with at his parents address at Old Cottage on Albury Heath, Surrey. That same year he married Sylvia May Gay 20 March 1938 in Albury, Surrey.

On 25th April 1940 he is listed as a Pilot Officer with service number 44131. On 10th May 1940 he went to France with 501 Squadron. During the Battle of France he claimed a Me110 and a Do17 destroyed on the 12th May 1940, two He111s on the 14th May 1940, a Me110 on the 15th May 1940, a Me110 on 5th June 1940 and a Do17 on 6th June 1940. He was one of the most significant aces of this phase of the war in Europe. The squadron was withdrawn from France on 19th June 1940 and re-assembled at Croydon on the 21st June 1940.

On the 8th July 1940 he joined 32 Squadron at Biggin Hill flying Hurricanes transferring to RAF Hawkinge in Kent with B Flight shortly afterwards. During the Battle of Britain he claimed a Me110 destroyed and shared another on 20th July 1940 and claimed Me109s on 12th and 24th August 1940. He is included in this famous photograph (see below) taken at RAF Hawkinge on 22nd July 1940, he is second from the left hugging his knees:

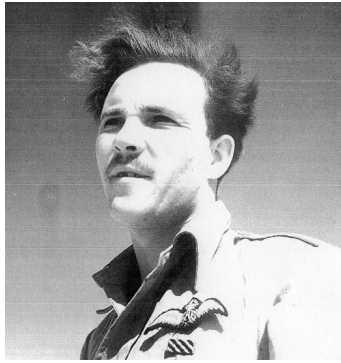


On a personal note, my grandmother Dorothy Jeorrett (nee Proctor) was John Ernest's cousin. She lived with my grandfather and my father and uncle at Fairlee, Farley Green during the war and often recalled how 'Cousin Jack' would often fly low overhead in his Hurricane and waggle his wings to his family and friends in Farley Green and on Albury Heath.

Like many surviving fighter pilots Proctor rose rapidly through the ranks becoming a Flying officer on 24th November 1940 and then on 18th March 1941 he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with this citation, "This officer has displayed great skill as a fighter pilot. He has destroyed at least 11 enemy aircraft, 7 of these were shot down while serving with his squadron in France. He has set a splendid example".

In July 1941 Sylvia, Proctor's first wife died in Devon.

On 18th May 1942 Proctor took command of 33 Squadron in the Western Desert and three days later he made a forced-landing after being hit by flak. In June 1943 Proctor was promoted to Squadron Leader and went on to command 352 Yugoslav Squadron from its formation at Benina, Libya on 22nd April 1944 until September 1944. Becoming a Wing Commander in January 1944. During this time Proctor married his second wife Janty Boshi in Cairo, Egypt on 29th May 1943.



Proctor stayed in the RAF postwar. He was awarded a Bar to the Distinguished Flying Cross (gazetted 17th April 1951) for services in the Korean War with 205 Squadron where he flew hundreds of in operations Sunderland sea planes.

After the Korean War Proctor and his wife settled in Australia and New Zealand, they divorced in 1965.

He retired on 15th October 1957 as a Wing Commander. Proctor remarried Mary Tennant Carter and he spent the last twenty years of his life in Spain, where he died 25th May 1988 in Partida de Masets, Torremanzas, Alicante, Spain.

He is now commemorated in [‘The Spirit of the Few’](#) monument at the Kent Battle of Britain Museum, unveiled 29th July 2022 (see photo below) which is a full size recreation of the famous Battle of Britain photo from July 1940.



Here's a clear, well-organised profile of **Flight Lieutenant / Wing Commander John Ernest Proctor**, one of the notable RAF fighter pilots of the Second World War.

Who He Was

John Ernest Proctor (born 15 July 1913 – died 1989) was a highly skilled RAF fighter pilot and later Wing Commander, best known for his combat record in France and during the Battle of Britain. He served across multiple theatres, including the Western Desert and the Korean War.

Early RAF Career

- Joined the RAF in **September 1929** as an **Aircraft Apprentice**.
- Qualified in **August 1932**, later selected for **pilot training**.

Combat in France (1940)

Later Wartime Commands

- **18 May 1942**: Took command of **No. 33 Squadron** in the Western Desert; forced landing three days later after flak damage.
- **22 April 1944 – September 1944**: Commanding Officer of **No. 352 Squadron** (a Balkan Air Force unit formed at Benina).

Post-war Career

- Remained in the RAF after 1945.
- Awarded a **Bar to his DFC** for service in the **Korean War** with **No. 205 Squadron** (gazetted 17 April 1951).
- Retired as **Wing Commander** on **15 October 1957**.
- Spent his final years in Spain; died in **1989**.

Decorations & Mentions

- **Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC)** – 18 March 1941
- **Bar to the DFC** – 17 April 1951
- Multiple **Mentions in Despatches** (1941, 1943, 1944)