

**LARGE PRINT GUIDE**



# **PEOPLE OF THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN**

THE  
**BATTLE**  
OF **BRITAIN**

---

Prime Minister Winston Churchill summed up the thoughts of the nation as the Battle of Britain raged overhead, thanking the RAF: ‘Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few’.

‘The Few’ received vital support from ‘the Many’ – men and women from across society, both service personnel and civilians, and from around the world who came together to face a common enemy. Luftwaffe aircrew faced the same dangers as the RAF. Having endured the same risks as enemies, many RAF and Luftwaffe personnel became friends after the war.

## PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAITS

---

These photographic portraits from the Museum’s collection represent the Many and the Few, whose actions had such a great impact on the outcome of the Battle of Britain.

They include RAF aircrew and groundcrew as well as pilots and senior commanders from many nations around the world. The contribution of factory workers, politicians, aircraft designers and test pilots cannot be overestimated.

RAF ranks, whether temporary or permanent, are shown as held at the time of the Battle of Britain – as are any awards and honours.

Portraits in this guide appear in alphabetical order.

[Discover more about RAF personnel, including the Roll of Honour of those who gave their lives on operations during the Battle, on the screen.](#)



**British**

### **Squadron Leader**

**John William Maxwell Aitken DFC**

---

In 1935 Max Aitken joined No. 601 Squadron, Auxiliary Air Force, stationed at RAF Hendon. He served during the Battle of France, flying Hawker Hurricanes, and claimed the destruction or probable destruction of six enemy aircraft.

Max was given command of No. 601 Squadron in June 1940. He destroyed a Heinkel He 111 and shared in the destruction of a Dornier Do 17 in July. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross on 9 July.



**British**

### **Pilot Officer**

**Dennis Lockhard Armitage**

---

Dennis Armitage was born in Lancashire in 1912. He learned to fly in 1934 and joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve when it formed in 1936.

Like many reservists, Dennis went on to play an important role in the RAF once the war started. He was called up in 1939 and was posted to No. 266 Squadron. In 1941, he became commanding officer of No. 129 Squadron, before being shot down over France later that year. He was held as a prisoner of war until 1945.



**British**

### **Sergeant Ivor James Badger**

---

Ivor Badger joined the RAF in 1929 and initially trained as an engine fitter. He re-trained as a pilot and by 1938 was a member of No. 151 Squadron's aerobatic team.

During the Battle of Britain, he served with No. 87 Squadron, flying Hawker Hurricanes. On 11 August 1940, Ivor claimed the destruction of a Messerschmitt Bf 109 and damage to another. On 25 August, during an engagement with a large formation of Germany aircraft off Portland, he damaged a Junkers Ju 88 and Messerschmitt Bf 109.



**British**

### **Sergeant Frederick James Barker DFM**

---

Frederick Barker was born in London in 1918. He joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve in April 1939 before being called up in September 1939. He then joined No. 264 Squadron as an air gunner, flying with pilot Sergeant Edward Thorn.

Frederick and Edward flew Boulton Paul Defiants with Frederick as a gunner, becoming the most successful team to crew Defiants. Both were awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal in 1940, and a bar in 1941. Frederick was commissioned in 1944 and left the RAF in 1946 as a Flying Officer.



**British**

### **Flying Officer Roland Prosper Beaumont**

---

‘Bee’ Beaumont joined the RAF on a Short Service Commission in 1939. After training, where he was graded ‘exceptional’, he joined No. 87 Squadron in France.

During the Battle of Britain, No. 87 Squadron was stationed at Exeter. Flying Hurricanes, Bee claimed the destruction of several aircraft. On 15 August, for example, he claimed the destruction of a Messerschmitt Bf 110 and the probable destruction of a second.



**British**

### **Flying Officer John Randall Daniel Braham**

---

‘Bob’ Braham joined the RAF on a Short Service Commission in 1938 and was posted to No. 29 Squadron in December 1938.

On 24 August 1940, on a night flight in a Bristol Blenheim, Bob shot down a Heinkel He 111 over the Humber. Later, he became one of the first pilots to fly a Bristol Beaufighter equipped with radar.



**British**

### **Sub-Lieutenant Henry George Kenelm Bramah**

---

Born in London, Henry Bramah joined the Air Branch of the Royal Navy in 1939. After training with the RAF, he joined No. 213 Squadron on 1 July 1940.

On 15 July 1940, Henry made three flights. On the first he shot down a Dornier Do 17, but on the third he was shot down and rescued from the sea. His slow recovery prevented him from re-joining the squadron. He returned to the Royal Navy, where he remained until 1955.



**British**

### **Flight Lieutenant Peter Malam Brothers DFC**

---

Peter Brothers learned to fly aged 16 while he was still at school. He joined the RAF in 1936 and was posted to No. 32 Squadron at Biggin Hill.

While he was with No. 32 Squadron, between May and August 1940, Peter claimed the destruction of 10 German aircraft, including seven Messerschmitt Bf 109s. He was posted to No. 257 Squadron in September as a flight commander. After destroying a Dornier Do 17 and a Junkers Ju 88, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.



**British**

## **Right Honourable Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill MP**

---

Winston Churchill entered politics in 1900, when he was elected MP for Oldham. In 1940 he was made Prime Minister, a post he held for the rest of the war.

Although Churchill was Prime Minister, there was little he could do to influence the outcome of the Battle of Britain, and he relied heavily on his commanders. His Battle of Britain speeches may be his greatest legacy as they helped to inspire the British people and their allies.



**British**

## **Flight Sergeant Harry Cook**

---

Harry Cook joined the RAF as a flight sergeant in July 1939. He was posted to No. 266 Squadron at Wittering, flying Spitfires, in August 1940.

Harry moved to No. 66 Squadron in September and during the Battle of Britain was involved in the destruction or damage of seven enemy aircraft. On 13 October, he crash landed at RAF Hornchurch, but although his Spitfire X4543 was written off, Harry was unhurt.





**British**

**Wing Commander  
John Scatcliff Dewar DSO DFC**

---

John Dewar entered RAF College Cranwell January 1926, later taking command of No. 87 Squadron in December 1939.

During the Battle of Britain, John claimed five possible enemy aircraft. On 12 September 1940, John was posted missing while on a routine flight. He was the highest-ranking officer to be killed during the Battle. His body was washed up on 30 September off the Sussex Coast. John is buried at St John the Baptist churchyard, North Baddesley, Hampshire.



**Polish**

**Flying Officer  
Jan Pawel Falkowski**

---

Jan Falkowski was born in 1912. He joined the Polish Air Force in 1932 and was commissioned in 1936. He escaped when Poland was invaded, reaching England in 1940.

Unlike many of his compatriots, he joined No. 32 Squadron rather than a Polish squadron, flying Hurricanes. After being shot down over Portsmouth in January 1941, Jan was mistaken for a German until he was vouched for by his commanding officer. In 1945, he was shot down again and was helped to safety by the Dutch Resistance.





**Irish**

### **Flying Officer Brendan Eamonn Fergus Finucane**

---

Brendon 'Paddy' Finucane joined the RAF on a Short Service Commission in August 1938, aged 17. He was posted to No. 65 Squadron at Hornchurch in July 1940, flying Spitfires.

On 12 and 13 August, Paddy claimed two Messerschmitt Bf 109s destroyed, two probables and one damaged. He went on to achieve 28 aerial victories, and became the RAF's youngest ever wing commander.



**American**

### **Pilot Officer William Meade Lindsley Fiske III**

---

'Billy' Fiske was an American citizen and Olympic bobsled gold medallist, who worked for the London branch of a US bank. He joined the RAF Volunteer Reserve in 1939.

Billy joined No. 601 Squadron in July 1940. He was badly burned when his Hawker Hurricane was hit while intercepting a formation of Junkers Ju 87s on 16 August and he died of his wounds the next day. Billy is buried in St Mary and St Blaise churchyard, Boxgrove. He was the only American serving with the RAF to die in the Battle of Britain.



**Australian**

### **Sergeant Desmond Fopp**

---

Desmond Fopp was born in Australia and joined the RAF Volunteer Reserve in 1938. After completing flying training, he joined No. 17 Squadron.

Desmond shot down a Heinkel He 111 on 12 July 1940. On 3 September, his Hurricane P3673 crashed in Hutton, South Essex after being pursued by Messerschmitt Bf 110s. Desmond baled out but was badly burned and took three months to recover in hospital.



**German**

### **Major Adolf Josef Ferdinand Galland Spanish Cross in Gold with Swords and Diamonds, Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves**

---

Adolf Galland was a commercial pilot before he joined the Luftwaffe in 1934. He served in the Spanish Civil War, the invasion of Poland and the Battle of France.

Adolf was based in Calais throughout the Battle of Britain, flying Messerschmitt Bf 109s. He was a highly successful and influential pilot and shot down an estimated 50 British aircraft between July and October. He, and fellow ace, Werner Mölders, disagreed with Hermann Göring's tactics of how to deploy German fighter aircraft, but were overruled.



**British**

### **Flight Lieutenant Ian Richard Gleed DFC**

---

Ian Gleed learned how to fly privately before he joined the RAF in March 1936. He was posted to No. 266 Squadron as a Flight Commander in September 1939.

During the Battle of France in May 1940, flying Spitfires with No. 87 Squadron, Ian was involved in the destruction, or probable destruction of eight German aircraft. During the Battle of Britain, he claimed a further seven aircraft and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in September 1940.



**British**

### **Unknown Ground Crew**

---

The roles of ground crew were varied. Riggers and engine fitters maintained the airframes and engines, armourers made sure the guns fired, while wireless mechanics ensured the radios could transmit and receive. All were supported by numerous office and administration staff. Few received recognition for their vital work.



**British**

## **Alexander Adolphus Dumfries Henshaw**

---

Alex Henshaw was born in Peterborough in 1912. He learned to fly in 1932, making his name in air races and winning the King's Cup in 1938. Also in that year, he made a record-breaking flight from England to South Africa and back.

Rather than joining the Royal Air Force, Alex joined Vickers-Armstrong as a test pilot. In June 1940, he transferred to the new Vickers Castle Bromwich factory where he test flew Spitfires. It is estimated that he flew 10% of all Spitfires ever built.



**Canadian**

## **Flying Officer Frank William Hillock**

---

Frank Hillock joined the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) Auxiliary in May 1939 and was called to full-time service in September. He then served with the 1st Canadian Division in England in February 1940.

After volunteering for Fighter Command and converting to Hawker Hurricanes, Frank was attached first to No. 151 Squadron and then posted to No. 1 Squadron (RCAF) on 21 October.



**British**

## **Squadron Leader Philip Algernon Hunter DSO**

---

Philip Hunter joined the RAF in 1931 and took command of No. 264 Squadron at RAF Martlesham Heath in March 1940.

In May 1940, Philip, with his gunner Frederick King, in Boulton Paul Defiants, shared in the destruction of 10 enemy aircraft and damaged another. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order in June 1940. On 24 August, he went missing in Defiant N1535 while pursuing a Junkers Ju 88 over Kent. Philip is commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial.



**British**

## **Sergeant Donald Ernest Kingaby**

---

Donald Kingaby joined the RAF Volunteer Reserve in April 1939 and was called up on 1 September. He converted to Spitfires and joined No. 266 Squadron on 24 June 1940.

Donald damaged two Junkers Ju 88s and a Messerschmitt Bf 100 on 12 August. After sustaining an injury to his hand, he was posted to No. 92 Squadron at Biggin Hill on 25 September. Donald was credited with the destruction or damage of six Messerschmitt Bf 109s in the last months of the Battle of Britain.





**British**

## Unknown Lathe Worker

---

The rapid expansion of the aircraft industry in the Second World War required a large number of workers to fill the new factories. Newly recruited women made up a large proportion of the workforce as so many men were serving in the armed forces.

Without women factory workers, many of whom had never worked in industry before, the RAF would not have had the aircraft it needed to defend Britain against the Luftwaffe.



**British**

## Sergeant Edgar Francis Le Conte

---

Edgar Le Conte joined the RAF Volunteer Reserve in October 1939 and trained first as a wireless operator and then as an air gunner.

Edgar was posted to the Fighter Interception Unit at Shoreham, Kent in September 1940. On 7 October his Bristol Blenheim was attacked by three Messerschmitt Bf 110s and Edgar claimed to have damaged one. He later went on to retrain as a radar operator, flying in Bristol Beaufighters.



**South African**

## **Flight Lieutenant Adolph Gysbert Malan DFC and Bar**

---

‘Sailor’ Malan was born in South Africa in 1910. He was a merchant seaman and member of the Royal Naval Reserve before he applied to join the RAF.

After serving in No. 74 Squadron for four years, he was promoted to Acting Squadron Leader in August 1940. Sailor was a highly successful Spitfire pilot and was given responsibility for improving RAF tactics during the Battle of Britain. His ideas in ‘Ten of My Rules for Aerial Fighting’ were widely adopted during the Second World War.



**New Zealand**

## **Archibald Hector McIndoe**

---

Archibald McIndoe was born in New Zealand. In 1930, he moved to England and, in 1938, was appointed consultant plastic surgeon to the RAF.

When the Second World War started, he moved to the Queen Victoria Hospital in East Grinstead where he developed new techniques for treating seriously burnt and disfigured faces and hands. He also recognised the need for post-surgery rehabilitation and social integration. Archibald supported the Guinea Pig Club, an association formed by his patients, and remained its president until his death in 1960.





**British**

## **Reginald Joseph Mitchell CBE**

---

After taking an apprenticeship at a locomotive engineering works, Reginald Mitchell joined the Supermarine Aviation Works at Southampton in 1917. He was rapidly promoted and by 1927 was Technical Director.

In 1931, Supermarine was commissioned to design a new fighter aircraft for the RAF. Using his experience with developing fast flying seaplanes, Mitchell designed an all-metal monoplane which could fly at high speed. The prototype Spitfire, K5054, flew for the first time in March 1936. Mitchell died before the Spitfire entered service with the RAF.



**Czechoslovakian**

## **Pilot Officer Karel Mrázek**

---

Karel Mrázek was born in 1910 and served in the Czechoslovakian Army Air Force from 1932 until 1939. After brief service in France, he reached the Czechoslovakian Airmen's Depot at Cosford in 1940.

Karel was commissioned in the RAF Volunteer Reserve on 2 August 1940. He served with several squadrons during the Battle of Britain, including No. 310 Squadron alongside other former Czech Air Force aircrew. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and Distinguished Service Order in 1942, and later became a Group Captain.



**British**

### **Aircraftwoman 2nd Class Joan Myers**

---

Joan Myers was born in 1918, the youngest of three daughters, to a Jewish family in Stamford Hill, north London.

In 1940 Joan joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and trained as an Operations Room plotter. Once her training was completed, she was posted to RAF Biggin Hill, where she worked in the Sector Operations Room. In 1944 Joan married, and left the WAAF when she became pregnant.



**British**

### **Sergeant Kenneth Edward Naish**

---

Kenneth Naish joined the RAF in 1936 and undertook pilot training. He was posted to No. 235 Squadron in June 1940 at Bircham Newton, Norfolk.

On 25 August, Kenneth's Bristol Blenheim Z5736, operating from Thorney Island, Chichester, was attacked in error by Hawker Hurricanes of No. 1 (Royal Canadian Air Force) Squadron and badly damaged. He crashed on landing but he and his gunner, Harry Owen, were unhurt. During the Battle of Britain, Kenneth continued to conduct local patrols, reconnaissance sorties and search missions for lost aircraft.



**Canadian**

### **Flying Officer William Henry Nelson DFC**

---

William Henry Nelson was born in 1917, the son of Jewish parents from Montreal. In 1937 he joined the Royal Air Force, becoming a bomber pilot. In 1940, he retrained and joined Fighter Command.

William flew Spitfires with No. 74 Squadron, becoming an ace by shooting down five aircraft. Having survived the Battle of Britain, William had the misfortune to be shot down on 1 November 1940. His body was never recovered.



**British**

### **Flying Officer Alan Geoffrey Page**

---

Geoffrey Page learned to fly with the London University Air Squadron and was called to full time service in September 1939.

In June 1940, Geoffrey joined No. 56 Squadron and during July destroyed three enemy aircraft. He was badly burned when his Hawker Hurricane P2970 was shot down while attacking a German bomber formation over the Channel on 12 August. He became one of the patients, known as 'Guinea Pigs', of Dr Archibald McIndoe, who used pioneering reconstruction surgery on injured aircrew. Geoffrey eventually underwent 40 operations.



**New Zealand**

### **Air Vice Marshal Keith Rodney Park MC and Bar DFC**

---

Keith Park, originally from New Zealand, joined the Royal Flying Corps in 1916. He served with the RAF between the wars and was appointed Air Officer Commanding of No. 11 Group, Fighter Command, which defended London and South East England, in April 1940.

No. 11 Group saw the majority of action in the Battle of Britain. His tactics included instructing fighter pilots to divide their attacks between German fighters and bombers in order to force them to turn back before they reached their targets. He supported the use of radar and the Dowding System, which enabled squadrons to be in the best position to intercept enemy raids.

CM3513,

© Crown Copyright, Imperial War Museum



**German**

### **Oberleutnant Günther Rall Iron Cross First Class**

---

Günther Rall qualified as a fighter pilot in 1938. He saw action in the Battle of France, flying Messerschmitt Bf 109s.

During the Battle of Britain, Günther served with Jagdgeschwader 52, based in northern France. Although he later became a successful fighter pilot, he scored no victories during the Battle of Britain, something he blamed on the tactics his unit was forced to adopt.

MH6079, © Imperial War Museum



**German**

## **Hanna Reitsch** **Iron Cross**

---

Hanna Reitsch qualified as a glider pilot in 1932, going on to set many altitude and endurance records.

In 1937, she became a Luftwaffe test pilot, flying the Focke-Achgelis Fa 61 helicopter. She also tested the Junkers Ju 87 and Dornier Do 17 bombers later used by the Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain. Hanna became a well-known figure in Germany and in 1942 received an Iron Cross First Class for her contribution to the war.

5889-5,

© Charles Brown Collection, RAF Museum



**British**

## **Flight Lieutenant** **William Henry Rhodes-Moorhouse DFC**

---

William Rhodes-Moorhouse was selected to represent Britain in the 1936 Olympic ski team. He joined No. 601 Squadron in 1937.

William was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in July 1940, after many successes in the Battle of France. On 6 September, the squadron intercepted a formation of enemy aircraft over Tunbridge Wells and, in the melee, his Hawker Hurricane P8818 was shot down and dived vertically into the ground. William was cremated and his ashes are buried at Parnham Private Cemetery, Dorset.

PC98/174,

© Charles Brown Collection, RAF Museum





**British**

## **Flying Officer Francis David Stephen Scott-Malden**

---

Francis Scott-Malden joined Cambridge University Air Squadron in 1938 and joined the RAF Volunteer Reserve the following year.

After completing flying training, Francis joined No. 611 Squadron on 23 June, and in his first few weeks was credited with shooting down three Messerschmitt Bf 109s. In October he transferred to No. 603 Squadron at Hornchurch and in the next two months probably destroyed a Messerschmitt Bf 109 and two Fiat CR.42s and shared a Dornier Do 17.



**British**

## **Wing Commander James Cornelius Stevens**

---

James Stevens was born in 1891 and was originally in the Royal Naval Air Service, joining the RAF when it formed in 1918.

He became an armament officer and during the Battle of Britain was responsible for making safe unexploded bombs and ordnance on RAF Stations and on or near crashed aircraft. James invented the fuze immuniser called the 'Stevens Stopper'.

Most of the bomb disposal personnel under his command were non-commissioned officers, trained as armourers, including one of his sons.

You can see an example of the 'Stevens Stopper' fuze immuniser by the timeline.



**British**

### **Pilot Officer James Eric Storrar DFC**

---

James Storrar joined the RAF in 1938, on a Short Service Commission, after lying about his age. He joined No. 145 Squadron in October 1939 and saw action in the Battle of France in May and June 1940.

During the Battle of Britain, James, flying Hawker Hurricanes, was involved in the destruction, or probable destruction of nine enemy aircraft and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in August 1940. He was then posted to No. 73 Squadron and undertook patrols over East Anglia and the Thames Estuary.



**British**

### **Flight Lieutenant Eric Hugh Thomas**

---

Eric Thomas joined the RAF in 1936 on a Short Service Commission and, on completion of training, joined No. 19 Squadron at Duxford in May 1937. In April 1939, he became an instructor at the Advanced Training Squadron at RAF College, Cranwell.

Eric moved to No. 222 Squadron at Hornchurch on 10 September 1940, flying Spitfires. In September and October, he was credited with damaging or and destroying a Dornier Do 17 and five Messerschmitt Bf 109s.





**British**

## **Sergeant Helen Emily Turner**

---

Helen Turner joined the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps in 1917 and transferred to the Women's Royal Air Force in 1918. She joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force at the beginning of the Second World War.

During the Battle of Britain, Helen served as a switchboard operator at the busy RAF station at Biggin Hill. On 31 August 1940, during an air raid, she kept on working in order to maintain vital telephone contact with Group Headquarters. She, and colleague Corporal Elspeth Henderson, only left when a 500lb bomb crashed through the roof and the building caught fire. She was awarded the Military Medal in November 1940.



**British**

## **Robert Alexander Watson-Watt**

---

Robert Watson-Watt began his pioneering work in radio direction finding at the Meteorological Office in 1916. He moved to the National Physical Laboratory and by 1935 had developed a way of detecting and locating aircraft by radio waves.

His system, Chain Home, which used fixed radio towers, was adopted for use by the RAF as a way of tracking incoming enemy aircraft. By the start of the war, 19 towers had been built. Chain Home was the first early warning radar network in the world and a vital part of the Dowding System.



**German**

**Major  
Helmut Paul Emil Wick  
Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with  
Oak Leaves**

---

Helmut Wick joined the Luftwaffe in 1936 and trained as a fighter pilot, flying Messerschmitt Bf 109s under the supervision of German ace Werner Mölders.

During the Battle of Britain, and up to the time of his death in November 1940, Helmut became the leading German ace, claiming to have destroyed 56 enemy aircraft. On 5 October, he claimed to have shot down five RAF fighters in a single day. He became the youngest commander in the Luftwaffe and was strongly supported by Hermann Göring.



**British**

**Sergeant  
Kenneth Astill Wilkinson**

---

Kenneth Wilkinson joined the RAF Volunteer Reserve in March 1939 and was called up on 1 September.

After completing his flying training, he joined No. 616 Squadron in Lincolnshire on 1 October, and then moved to No. 19 Squadron on 17 October.

