

## Alec Ingle DFC AFC AE

Born on 15th February 1915 at Louth in Lincolnshire, Alec was educated at Pocklington School, East Yorkshire until July 1933. He was later employed in Electrical Power Distribution Yorkshire and Lancashire, until August 1939, and was mobilised on 1st September 1939.

Alec Ingle joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve on its inception in 1937, and was soon flying Blackburn B2's and Hawker Harts from Brough, Yorkshire, and subsequently De Havilland Moths, Hawker Harts and Hawker Audaxes at Manchester, Barton and Ringway, and at Tollerton, Nottingham.

Mobilised, Alec served as a Reserve and Regular Officer until June 1966, retiring with the rank of Group Captain, and having been awarded the Air Force Cross, Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Efficiency Award. He was wounded in action three times, and became a prisoner of war during World War Two.

At the start of hostilities he was posted to No. 605 Squadron in 1940, flying Hawker Hurricanes from Drem, near Edinburgh. It was from here that the squadron intercepted one of the early air raids on Newcastle which signalled the beginning of the Battle of Britain. 605 moved to Croydon in September 1940 and was active in the defence of London until the end of the year.

During that period, Alec was shot down by a Messerschmitt Bf109; cannon shells went through the wing and aileron control wires and damaged the oil cooling system, so he had no choice but to crash land the aircraft at Balcombe, near Lewes, sustaining light head injuries. In a subsequent mission, returning after an engagement, Alec's aircraft was severely damaged by enemy action and he baled out near Harrietsham in Kent. He was taken to hospital at Leeds Castle with multiple gunshot wounds.

In 1941 Alec was involved in day and night fighter defence of the Midlands flying from Baginton, near Coventry and Honiley, with spells of defending the Liverpool area. After a posting to No. 59 Operational Fighter Training Unit at Crosby on Eden, near Carlisle in September 1941, he was engaged on various operational training duties with the rank of Squadron Leader. Alec was awarded the Air Force Cross for flying a badly burned pilot to hospital at Cosford in hazardous conditions.

In 1943 Alec took over command of No 609 (West Riding of Yorkshire) Auxiliary Air Force Squadron from Roland 'Bee' Beamont, flying Hawker Typhoons from Manston in Kent. From here he was engaged in intercepting tip-and-run raiders on South East England, preventing hostile shipping movements in the Dover Straits, and attacking railway movements in northern France and Belgium. When the supply trains began to limit their movements to only the darkest nights, he even had bombs fitted to the Typhoons so that they could be used to attack airfields, marshalling yards and barracks — at night. Despite some successes, he was still not content, so the squadron embarked upon what came to be known as 'Ingle's Tours of the Dutch Islands' using bombs and cannon to attack enemy shipping; coasters, minesweepers, E-boats and R-boats. After many successful missions Alec was caught by intense anti-aircraft fire from a flak ship near Flushing, and his aircraft set on fire. But he managed to get his

aircraft and the Squadron back to base at Manston. He then was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Manston was at that time one of the busiest airfields in the country, with many different aircraft landing at all times of the day and night. At 03.30 one morning, Alec was surprised to see a Focke Wulf Fw190 landing, but thinking quickly, he chased after it in the squadron car and, not being armed, arrested the pilot, Heinz Ehrhardt, by pointing his finger at him! The unfortunate pilot had mistaken the Thames estuary for the Channel, and thought he was landing at St Omer.

After a very active day and night spell, the Squadron moved to Matlask in Norfolk, to continue attacks against the shipping bringing German supplies from Sweden to Holland, and acting as an escort for US Air Force Bombers crossing the coast on their way home. Following this the Squadron moved to Lympe in Kent, and continued attacks on French communications. In the summer of 1943 Alec was promoted to Wing Commander and took command of No.124 Wing, which consisted of three large squadrons of Typhoon fighter bombers and the wing attacked airfields, coastal defences and communications in Northern France.

Alec was shot down on 11th September 1943 whilst attacking a German airfield at Beauvais-Tille near Paris. He was in combat with two Fw190s when his aircraft went out of control, trapping him inside until it finally blew up at approximately 300 ft (90 metres) flinging him out. Thankfully he managed to open his parachute just before hitting the ground, but the explosion burned his face and legs. Despite his injuries he managed to hide from pursuing German troops and dogs until nightfall, when he located a farm and took refuge in the straw barn. The following day he was found by a terrified farmer whose wife provided some food and sought assistance from local agents. The priest arrived and administered extreme unction, but the agent indicated that there were no French doctors nearby, so he was carried to the local hospital in Aumale by cart. The Germans then took over and they had to spend several hours picking wheat husks out of his badly burned face and legs. He was moved by ambulance to the Luftwaffe base at Poix, and hence to hospital in Amiens. After some time in hospital Alec was taken by train, on a stretcher to Paris and then to Hohemark, near Frankfurt. This hospital was used for interrogation purposes as an adjunct to the interrogation camp, Dulag Luft, which was based at Ober Ursel. Alec was able to communicate the detail of his survival to his old squadron by sending a postcard with the rather cryptic message "Irvin beat Newton by two seconds!"

After some weeks Alec was moved to Dulag Luft where about 40 British and 80 American aircrew were assembled, and they were loaded into three cattle trucks for a long and cold three day journey to Stalag Luft 3 at Sagan. They joined about 1,000 prisoners in North Camp where the tunneling operations were in progress, which led to 'The Great Escape'. Just six weeks before the tunnel broke successfully from North Camp (sadly resulting in some 50 prisoners being executed by the Gestapo), Alec was moved to a subsidiary camp at Belaria, where he was eventually joined by Roland "Bee" Beamont, greeting him with "What's kept you so long Bee-we've been expecting you!"

After Christmas 1944, as the Russians approached they were moved out of Belaria, and trudged through the snow for a week, heading west until housed in a camp for

French workers at Luckenwalde, near Juterbog, some 35 miles south of Berlin. The conditions were appalling, and the rations were at starvation levels, with some 25,000 prisoners and forced workers of varying nationalities. As the Russians approached Berlin, the Germans attempted to move the RAF Aircrew to Austria, but communications were cut by the advancing allies. The German Commandant had an order signed by Himmler not to allow RAF Aircrew to fall into Russian hands but, after negotiations, he did not execute the order, and eventually handed the whole camp over to the RAF contingent who had already made plans to deal with this eventuality. Alec then became Camp Administrator, and subsequently Russian Liaison Officer.

The Russians appeared in due course, but then left the camp to its own devices. Foraging parties were sent out, and transport was acquired in the attempt to keep the remaining 20,000 remaining prisoners fed. The appointment of a Russian camp commandant helped very little, especially as refugees kept flooding in at the sight of the British flag. The Russians resisted several attempts by the Americans, who were on the Elbe some 35 miles away, to remove the Anglo-American prisoners, but after some weeks, the allied prisoners were trucked to the Elbe, where they were picked up, taken to the airfield at Halle Leizig, and flown back to the UK.

After a few weeks leave following repatriation, Alec was posted back to Fighter Command to take command of the airfield at West Malling in Kent. Later he took command of RAF Tangmere for a few months, then Pembrey in Wales, and Chivenor in Devon before attending the RAF Staff College at Bracknell. On graduation from Staff College he spent a period on the directing staff of the Officers Advanced Training School, before moving to Tangmere once again as the Wing Commander Administration. In 1952 he was posted to Holland to command the RAF station at Eindhoven, with the 2nd Tactical Air Force, and following this, in 1955, to Greenwich on the directing staff of the RN Staff College.

In 1958, Alec moved to Singapore as Deputy Head of the Far East Defence Secretariat, which involved travelling around the Pacific, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Pearl Harbor, North Borne, Sarawak and Malaysia. This was followed by a year on intelligence work in Whitehall and then by five years as Deputy Director of Air Staff Plans and Policies in the Air Ministry / Ministry of Defence, principally engaged in the matters related to the size and shape of the RAF. During this time he was one of the 13 Battle of Britain pilots to head the funeral procession of Sir Winston Churchill. There were 2,947 of them. Four hundred and seventy-seven died in the 113 days before it was over. Another 802 died in the years and battles that followed. Others were shot down, maimed, disfigured, wounded, burnt, captured. They were the Few - the handful of fighter pilots who won the Battle of Britain - and saved Britain. The men more deeply associated than any others with the Churchill legend. 13 of them marched at the head of Sir Winston's funeral, Alec Ingle was one of them, seen in a contemporary photograph with the others standing second from the right. A proffered post as Air Advisor to the High Commissioner in New Delhi was rejected in favour of retirement in 1966.

After the war Alec became a keen sailor, and he owned a variety of sailing yachts, the last of which was a 40' Finisterre class yawl which he had built in Hong Kong during the Singapore posting. His knowledge of boats and their operation was extensive, he

made many voyages throughout European waters, and was a member of the Cruising Club. On changing to motor sailing yachts, he started a yacht sales business and acquired a small boat yard in Littlehampton. The business developed the building of the Banjer and Rogger range of Dutch designed motorsailers, but unfortunately this venture failed, as so many others did in the late 70's, due to the recession and high inflation. However Alec retained close contact with Littlehampton through membership of the Littlehampton Harbour Board, of which he was Chairman for nine years.

Alec's election as an Arun District Councillor in 1979 resulted in his appointment as Vice Chairman of the planning and development committee, and the Chairmanship the following year. This was followed by the Chairmanship of the finance Sub Committee in 1982 and the Vice Chairmanship of policy and resources, together with the leadership of the ruling Conservative group. On re-election the following year, he was Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, and leader of the Council. In 1986 Alec became Chairman of the Planning Committee, Vice Chairman of the Policy Committee, and Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group. He did not seek re-election in 1987, but was Chairman of the Arundel Constituency Conservative Association from 1991 until 1994.

Alec's first marriage in 1939 to Joan Bates was dissolved. He was survived by his second wife, Frances Mary McLean, eldest daughter of Sir William Hannah McLean, who was Conservative Member of Parliament for the Tredston Division in Glasgow 1931-1935, after serving in the Egyptian ministry of the Interior as Engineer-in-Chief.

#### Squadron Leader A Ingle DFC AFC

Alec Ingle was born on Feb 8th 1916 and joined the RAFVR at the age of 21. After training at Brough and No 14 FTS at Kinloss, he was commissioned and posted to 605 Squadron, then at Drem in East Lothian in 1940. By November he had been promoted to Flight Commander and had been shot down three times. In July 1941 he was posted to 59 OTU as an instructor where he received the AFC and promoted to Squadron Leader. On the 5th May 1943 he was posted to the command of 609(WR) Squadron where he led the squadron on anti-shipping strikes in their Typhoons. To the pilots of the squadron, these strikes became known as "Ingles tour of the Dutch Islands". By August he had been promoted to Wing Commander and posted to command No 124 Wing. On the 11th of September 1943 he was in combat with Fw190's when his aircraft blew up. As his aircraft disintegrated around him, he managed to get out at an altitude of around 300 feet. Fortunately his parachute opened up just in time and was captured on landing and taken to Stalag Luft III where he remained for the rest of the war. He remained in the RAF after repatriation and retired as a Group Captain in 1966.

INGLE, Alec, flew with 605 Squadron as a Flying Officer during the Battle of Britain. On 8th September 1940 he probably destroyed a Do17 and on 12th October shot down a Bf109. He claimed Bf109's probably destroyed on the 26th and the 27th, and damaged one on 8th November. On 11th November he destroyed a Bf109, and by the end of the year his score was 3. He had been shot down three times himself, and wounded once. Early in 1941 he served in 124 Squadron, but in July was posted to 74 Squadron. In 1943 he commanded 609 Squadron on Typhoons, and damaged 15 ships

while with the unit. He was promoted to Wing Commander in August 1943, and by the end of the war had received the DFC and AFC, with a score of 5.