

= Archie McKellar =

Squadron Leader Archibald Ashmore McKellar DSO , DFC & Bar ( 10 April 1912 ? 1 November 1940 ) was a flying ace of the Royal Air Force ( RAF ) during the Second World War .

McKellar grew up and joined the family business in his native Scotland , but in 1936 , aged 24 , he joined the RAF and began pilot training . He completed his training in 1938 and was assigned to No. 602 ( City of Glasgow ) Squadron RAF , an Auxiliary Unit . In 1939 he converted to the Supermarine Spitfire fighter . He experienced his first combat with No. 602 Squadron on Monday 16 October 1939 during a Luftwaffe raid on shipping in the Firth of Forth . McKellar 's first combat sortie was notable for being the first ever flown by Spitfires . Later the same day , in a second sortie , he claimed the second RAF air @-@ to @-@ air victory in ' British skies ' of WWII . On Saturday 28 October 1939 McKellar was involved in the first RAF air @-@ to @-@ air victory over UK mainland soil in WWII .

McKellar gained further fame in 1940 during the Battle of Britain as a part of , and later squadron leader of , No. 605 Squadron RAF , equipped with the Hawker Hurricane fighter . The Auxiliary Unit was moved to southern England and participated in the large air battles . McKellar 's combat career proved to be very brief , lasting just over a year . He claimed all but two of his victories within the last two and a half months of his life ; 15 August ? 1 November 1940 . On 7 October 1940 he shot down five Messerschmitt Bf 109s , thus becoming an ace in a day ; one of only 24 Allied aces to achieve the feat . At the time of his last mission he had claimed 21 aerial victories and another two shared destroyed against enemy aircraft . Included in this total of 21 air victories are 11 Bf 109s . McKellar was one of two British pilot to achieve the feat of " Ace in a Day " during the Battle of Britain . On 1 November 1940 ? one day after the official end of the Battle of Britain ? he was killed in action . He took off and engaged a formation of German fighters , one of which he possibly shot down for his 22nd ? albeit uncredited ? and final victory . McKellar was then shot down himself .

= = Early life = =

Archibald Ashmore ( " Archie " ) McKellar was born in Paisley , Renfrewshire , Scotland on the 10 April 1912 , the son of John and Margaret McKellar , of Bearsden , Dunbartonshire and was then educated at Shawlands Academy in the Southside of Glasgow . Upon leaving school he joined a local stockbroker 's firm . This did not suit McKellar , who preferred an open ? air life style . Keen to leave , but unsure of what direction to take in life , he joined his father 's general contractor and construction business as a plasterer . He spent five years as an apprentice plasterer . During this time he was given no special privileges despite being the boss ' son .

McKellar was also a keen fitness enthusiast and , despite his short stature , built up a great physical strength . Though he enjoyed wine and smoked the occasional pipe or cigar he kept in peak physical shape until his death . Even at the height of the Battle of Britain he was always clean shaven and immaculately dressed . McKellar 's spare time was used reading about sport and First World War fighter pilots . His interest in the flying personalities of the past spurred him to take up flying . He joined at his own expense the Scottish Flying Club , which had been founded in 1927 ; it leased and managed Renfrew Airport from 1933 until it was requisitioned during the Second World War . McKellar quickly acquired a pilot 's licence . By the time he began his military career , McKellar was a very experienced pilot , and he soon began earning relatively quick promotions .

= = Joining the AAF and RAF = =

His flying skills earned him the attention of Lord Clydesdale , Commanding Officer of No. 602 Squadron AAF . Clydesdale invited McKellar to join the Auxiliary Air Force ( AAF ) and was soon commissioned into the RAF as a Pilot Officer on 8 November 1936 , joining No. 602 ( City of Glasgow ) Squadron RAF . McKellar 's comrades affectionately nicknamed him " Shrimp " owing to his short , 5 feet 3 inches ( 1 @.@ 60 m ) , stature . McKellar stayed with the Squadron and on 8 May 1938 was promoted to Flying Officer .

Based at RAF Abbotsinch near Paisley , the squadron operated the Hawker Hind light bomber . The members of squadron ? both pilots and ground staff ? were reservists and completed their service on a part @-@ time basis , in the evenings , weekends and an annual two ? week summer camp . With the approach of war , the squadron converted to a fighter role and re @-@ equipped with the Supermarine Spitfire . It mobilised on the outbreak of war at RAF Grangemouth on 6 October 1939 and then to RAF Drem a month later , charged with defending Edinburgh and the shipping area around the Firth of Forth .

Upon completing training McKellar was deemed to have exceptional eyesight which earned him a reputation as a good marksman in air @-@ to @-@ air combat . Yet , paradoxically , when shooting with his rifle he was a well below average shot ? a trait he shared with some other successful pilots . McKellar was a keen sportsman . He believed physical fitness was a critical attribute in aerial combat ; fitness , he believed , would ensure that the mind and body were always at their peak of alertness , and enable a pilot to react swiftly within a fluid battle situation .

McKellar was also considered a capable leader in combat . Aggressive and instinctive , his fighting spirit was an inspiration to his squadron but according to one biographer , he was highly strung , vociferous and blunt with members of his unit . Nevertheless , his directness and socially confident nature singled him out for command . His dedication to his job as a fighter pilot and leader led him to refuse any leave from his Squadron while the Battle of Britain lasted . Invariably McKellar led from the front of his unit . He spent a large proportion of his time with his squadron practising combat tactics . While intensely loyal to anyone he considered a friend , McKellar 's attitude to others outside the squadron was either of utmost friendliness or utter dislike . He is said to have tended to see everything and everyone in black and white .

= = Second World War = =

= = = 602 Squadron = = =

At 10 : 21 hours on Monday 16 October 1939 as part of Blue Section , 602 Squadron , Archie McKellar and his section leader , Flight Lieutenant George Pinkerton , intercepted a reconnaissance Heinkel He 111 of Kampfgeschwader 26 ' Löwen ' ( Lions ) over the Isle of May in the Firth of Forth . Together Pinkerton and McKellar fired 1 @, @ 720 rounds from their Spitfires ' .303 calibre Browning machine guns at the enemy aircraft , yet the Heinkel managed to escape . Pilot Officer Paul Webb , flying Blue 3 , was unable to get into an effective firing position against the intruder . Pinkerton and McKellar 's shots were the first fired in combat by RAF aircraft over the British Isles in WWII . Blue Section 's action was also the first combat mission ever to be flown by Spitfires .

Later that same day Pinkerton and McKellar were in action yet again . This time 602 was scrambled to intercept Junkers Ju 88 bombers of Kampfgeschwader 30 ' Adler ' ( Eagle ) as they attacked Royal Navy warships in the Forth near the Rosyth Naval Dockyard . The Luftwaffe 's target that day was the battlecruiser HMS Hood which was believed to be in the area . In fact the German reconnaissance had wrongly identified HMS Repulse which was now docked safely at Rosyth . At this stage of WWII German Bomber crews were under strict orders to avoid bombing targets which risked British civilian casualties , so Repulse was spared . However there were other available targets of opportunity out in the Forth , namely Town Class light cruisers HMS Edinburgh and HMS Southampton plus other warships including the Tribal Class Destroyer HMS Mohawk . The first flight of three Ju 88A @-@ 1s led by KG 30 's Gruppenkommandeur , Hauptmann Helmut Pohle began a dive @-@ bombing attack against these ships at 14 : 27 hours . With the British defences slow to respond to the German attack , 602 's Pinkerton and McKellar only managed to engage Pohle 's aircraft after he had attacked and inflicted damage on HMS Southampton . Pohle was observing the bombing runs of his other aircraft , whilst circling north of the Forth Bridge above Inverkeithing , when 602 caught up with him . In a shared attack , McKellar fired the final burst , knocking out the Junkers ' port engine . Pohle limped eastwards but was forced to ditch his aircraft in the Forth , coming down three miles east of Crail off the coast of Fife . Pohle survived , but the action claimed

the lives of his three crew members . Seventeen year old Gefreiter August Schleicher and Unteroffizier Kurt Seydel ( nineteen ) , whose bodies were recovered , were accorded military funerals with full honours . RAF pipers played ' Over the Sea to Skye ' as a lament . Originally interred at Portobello Cemetery , their remains were moved in 1959 to the German Military Cemetery at Cannock Chase , Staffordshire . The body of Pohle 's Observer , Feldwebel Werner Weise , was not recovered . Archie McKellar was credited with the victory , which was logged by the Royal Observer Corps as being at 14 @. @ 55 hours , missing by just ten minutes the downing of the first enemy aircraft over Britain in WWII . That honour had fallen to Flight Lieutenant Patrick ' Patsy ' Gifford , from 602 's brothers in arms , and friendly rivals , 603 ( City of Edinburgh ) Squadron ; also auxiliaries . Gifford had shot down the Ju 88 of Oberleutnant Hans Storp at 14 @. @ 45 hours during the same action . Following the 16 October success , Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief of Fighter Command , Air Marshal Hugh Dowding telegraphed ; " Well done , first blood to the auxiliaries . " The area around the Firth of Forth soon became referred to as ' suicide alley ' by the Luftwaffe pilots who were operating at the limit of their range and far beyond any fighter cover .

On Saturday 28 October 1939 Flying Officer McKellar was on patrol leading Red Section of 602 when anti @-@ aircraft fire alerted them to the presence of a Heinkel He 111 over the Forth . Together with a section from 603 Squadron ( led by ' Patsy ' Gifford ) they gave chase . The Spitfires soon caught up with the Heinkel , which had been hit by the flak directed at it , and lined up to attack the intruder as it attempted to flee south . Piloted by Unteroffizier Kurt Lehmkuhl , the Heinkel , code 1H + JA , of Stab . / KG 26 desperately tried to evade the faster and more manoeuvrable fighters . Acting on the advice of his navigator and commander Leutnant Rolf Niehoff , Lehmkuhl dived down towards what sparse cloud cover was available . In the pursuit , McKellar became separated from the other two aircraft in his section . The Heinkel 's cover , however , quickly dispersed and McKellar and the Spitfires of Gifford 's 603 section closed in for the kill , raking the enemy aircraft with their fire . Both the Heinkel 's engines were damaged and air gunners Gefreiter Bruno Reimann and Unteroffizier Gottlieb Kowalke were killed . Lehmkuhl was wounded in the back by machine gun fire but somehow managed to pilot his stricken aircraft to successfully crash @-@ land near the village of Humble in East Lothian . Niehoff and Lehmkuhl both survived to become prisoners of war . Debate continues to this day as to which squadron or pilot could claim the victory , but officially McKellar was awarded a share , along with each of the three 603 pilots . The ' Humble Heinkel ' was the first enemy aircraft to be downed onto British soil by the RAF in WWII .

= = = 605 Squadron = = =

In early 1940 , No. 605 ( County of Warwick ) Squadron moved to RAF Drem , as they converted to Hurricanes . McKellar was transferred to No. 605 and promoted to Flight Lieutenant , assuming the responsibilities of a flight leader on 21 June 1940 . McKellar imposed strict discipline , both in standard of dress on the ground and in tactical discipline in the air . Despite his strict methods McKellar was held in high regard . His popularity arose from his desire to help mould his unit into a well @-@ disciplined fighting team .

On 15 August 1940 No. 605 intercepted a German raid against Tyneside mounted by He 111s based in Norway with Luftflotte 5 ( Air Fleet 5 ) . McKellar was credited with three He 111s destroyed during the encounter . For this action he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross ( DFC ) and was gazetted on 13 September 1940 which made reference to the " outstanding leadership and courage " displayed by McKellar .

On 7 September 1940 , No. 605 moved on rotation to Croydon Aerodrome under the command of Squadron Leader Walter Churchill . McKellar scored a further four victories in a single mission on 9 September . McKellar attacked with the sun at his back with his Squadron , save for one Section which was left to provide top cover against Bf 109s . The attack was made head @-@ on to break up the German bomber formation which consisted of a large mass of He 111s . He destroyed three He 111s with a single , 12 ? second burst . The first He 111 exploded . It damaged a second which rolled over and dived down into the ground . McKellar then moved his fire to a third . Its port wing snapped off . He then destroyed a Bf 109 in the afternoon giving him a fourth success .

McKellar took over from Squadron Leader Churchill on the 11 September . He achieved a further three victories 15 September . The raids were made in large formation leading the fighting that day to be christened the Battle of Britain Day . McKellar led 605 into combat twice on that date claiming two Bf 109s and a Do 17 . That night , at an hour past midnight , 16 September , he claimed another He 111 shot down . A Medal bar to the DFC followed which cited his " excellent fighting spirit ... particularly brilliant tactician , and his led his Squadron with skill and resource " .

On 3 October McKellar became one of the select few pilots of Fighter Command to sit for one of Cuthbert Orde 's charcoal portraits . On 7 October his score rose by five victories , all Bf 109s ? becoming an Ace in a day . McKellar explained three of the five victories in the combat that day in his combat report ;

I attacked the Number One and saw a bomb being dropped from this machine . I fired and pieces fell off his wing and dense white smoke and vapour came from him and he went into a violent outside spin . In my mirror I could see another ' 109 coming to attack me and therefore turned sharply right and found myself behind another ' 109 . I opened fire and saw my De Wilde ( explosive ammunition ) hitting his machine . It burst into flames and went down inverted east of Biggin Hill . As I again had a ' 109 on my tail I spiralled down to 15 @, @ 000 feet and by this time there appeared to be ' 109s straggling all over the sky . I followed one , pulled my boost control and made up on him . I gave him a burst from dead astern and at once his radiator appeared to be hit as dense white vapour came back at me and my windscreen fogged up . This speedily cleared and I gave him another burst and this machine burst into flames and fell into a wood with a quarry near it , west of Maidstone .

Thirteen days later , on 20 October 1940 , McKellar brought down another Bf 109 . Its pilot , Feldwebel Adolf Iburg from 9 Staffel Jagdgeschwader 54 ( JG 54 ? Fighter Wing 54 ) , was slightly wounded in action . Iburg managed to force ? land near New Romney and was captured . The victory was credited to him in a post @-@ war account , but there is no official accreditation of the Iburg victory to McKellar by the RAF , though he was credited with another Bf 109 victory on that date .

= = = Death = = =

By 1 November 1940 McKellar had claimed 21 victories . Taking a section of No. 605 that included Flight Lieutenant Bob Foster , up to meet a flight of Bf 109 Jabos ( Bf 109s equipped with bombs ) . The section climbed to high altitude to meet the enemy aircraft . In the ensuing battle it is believed McKellar was shot down by II . / Jagdgeschwader 27 ( JG 27 ? Fighter Wing 27 ) Hauptmann ( Captain ) Wolfgang Lippert . McKellar 's Hurricane MkI ( V6879 ) crashed at the side of Woodlands Manor near Adisham , Kent at 08 : 20hrs . Lippert rightly claimed Hurricanme at 09 @.@ 15 in Canterbury area ( OKL + JFV d.Dt.Lw. 4 / I @-@ 85B ) .

On 8 November 1940 his actions brought a final award ? the Distinguished Service Order ( DSO ) . His DSO was gazetted posthumously on 26 November 1940 and again cited both ' outstanding courage and determination ' in leading his squadron . Further recognition came in a Mention in Despatches gazetted on 31 December 1940 .

On 16 January 1941 Sir Archibald Sinclair , Secretary of State for Air , visited Glasgow to deliver the eulogy ;

Not long ago I visited a fighter squadron which was taking part during the dark days in the battle of this island . That squadron lost its leader in an air fight ? and they felt the loss . He had been wounded in combat and had been withdrawn from service . I found in his place , taking to the air with daring resolve , proving himself a leader amongst leaders , a young Scot . His name was Archie McKellar . He had come from the City of Glasgow Squadron to lift up this squadron in its dark hour and to carry it on to fresh victories and achievement by his spirit . It was quite apparent to me that he had the whole squadron with him . He was regarded with the greatest admiration and affection by his officers . I will never forget the impression he made upon me when I saw him .

As McKellar died outside the Air Ministry " nominal " dates for the Battle of Britain ( 10 July ? 31 October 1940 ) , he is not listed on the Battle of Britain roll of honour at The RAF Chapel ,

Westminster Abbey . McKellar is buried at New Eastwood Cemetery , Thornliebank , East Renfrewshire , by Glasgow .

= = List of victories = =

Historian Alfred Price credited McKellar with 17 air victories , three shared destroyed , five probably destroyed and three damaged . Historians Christopher Shores and Clive Williams credit him with 21 air victories , three probably destroyed and three damaged as does E.C.R Baker . In his last combat they credit him with a possible 22nd victory , since a Bf 109 crashed in the area of his last combat and no RAF pilot made a claim . John Foreman credits him with at least 17 victories and acknowledges the unclaimed Bf 109 that crashed on 1 November 1940 near to McKellar might have been his last victory . Chaz Bowyer , another prolific historian and writer on RAF personnel credits McKellar with at least 20 victories .

During the period he flew Hurricane P3308 , McKellar scored 13 victories and shared one more destroyed , four probable and one damaged , between 15 August and 7 October 1940 . Thus earned the distinction of being the Hurricane with the highest number of kills during the Battle of Britain . It was later handed over to a Czech unit , No. 312 Squadron RAF on 4 January 1941 and written off in an accident on 30 April 1941 .