


John A. Kent

John Alexander "Johnny" Kent	
	
"Johnny" Kent posing in front of a Hurricane, October 1940	
Nickname	"Johnny" "Johnny Kentowski"
Born	23 June 1914 Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
Died	7 October 1985 (aged 71)
Allegiance	British Empire
Service/branch	Royal Air Force
Rank	Group Captain
Unit	303 Squadron 92 Squadron
Commands held	Kenley Wing Station Commander RAF Church Stanton Chief Test Pilot Royal Aircraft Establishment RAE Farnborough Royal Aircraft Establishment Station Commander Odiham Station Commander RAF Tangmere
Battles/wars	Second World War
Awards	AFC DFC & Bar Virtuti Militari

Group Captain **John Alexander "Johnny" Kent** DFC & Bar, AFC, Virtuti Militari nicknamed "Johnny Kentowski" (23 June 1914 – 7 October 1985) was a Canadian fighter ace in the Second World War. Considered one of the best young squadron leaders of the war, he went on to a distinguished postwar career before entering the aviation industry.^[1]

Early years



(Left to right) Kent and Al Bocking, students of Konrad Johannesson at the Winnipeg Flying Club, c. 1932.^[2]

John Alexander Kent was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada where he^[3] learned to fly and obtained his licence in 1931.^[4] He obtained a commercial licence in 1933 after working for the Northwest Aero Marine Company and became the youngest to achieve this in Canada.

In 1935, Kent joined the RAF and was posted to 5 FTS (Flying Training School) on 15 March before joining 19 Squadron at RAF Duxford in February 1936 where he remained until October 1937 when he moved to the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE) at Farnborough. For his research work, during which he deliberately made over 300 airborne collisions with various types of barrage balloon, Kent was awarded a well-deserved Air Force Cross (AFC) on 1 February 1939.

Second World War

Kent was posted to the Photographic Development Unit (PDU) in May 1940 flying unarmed Supermarine Spitfires in France. During the late stages of the Fall of France, while on a low-level sortie with an armed Spitfire, he was attacked by a Messerschmitt Bf 109 that subsequently crashed during the encounter.^[5] By early July, he was posted to RAF Hawarden flying Hawker Hurricane fighters. On 2 August 1940, as a Flight Commander, Kent joined 303 Squadron, a newly formed squadron consisting of Polish pilots, based at RAF Northolt throughout the Battle of Britain.^[6]

His first combat victories came on 9 September 1940 when Kent shot down a Messerschmitt Bf 110 and a Junkers Ju 88. On 23 September, he destroyed a Bf 109 and damaged a Focke-Wulf Fw 58 reconnaissance aircraft while intercepting a raid over Dungeness. He shot down a Ju 88 after a raid over London on 27 September.



(Left to right) Pilot Officer Miroslaw Feric, Flying Officers Bogdan Grzeszczak, Jan Zumbach and Zdzislaw Henneberg and Flight-Lieutenant J. A. Kent, who commanded "A" Flight of No. 303 (Polish) Squadron RAF, October 1940.

During a dogfight over the south coast of England on 1 October, Kent found himself alone with 40 Bf 109s. In the ensuing engagement, he shot down two of the enemy fighters and scored hits on another. Kent was awarded the DFC on 25 October 1940 and the following day, he was posted to RAF Biggin Hill to take command of another highly successful group of pilots, 92 Squadron. Kent's strict discipline initially proved unpopular with the laid-back attitude the 92 Squadron pilots had at the time.^[7]

On 1 November, Kent shot down a Bf 109 and two more the following day. On 24 December 1940, he was awarded the Silver Cross of the Polish Virtuti Militari decoration for his achievements with 303 Squadron.^[8] He was then posted back to Northolt as a Wing Leader in June to lead the Polish Wing of four squadrons. On 21 June, during an operation escorting Blenheim bombers against enemy positions at

Saint-Omer, France, Kent shot down a Bf 109. On 27 June, during another raid over northern France, he destroyed a Bf 109 on the ground.

As the raids over France continued from RAF Fighter Command during summer 1941, Kent continued adding to his score with a Bf 109 destroyed on 3 July and another Bf 109 on 20 July before he was then moved again as Wing Leader to command and lead the Kenley Wing in August 1941. His first few operations over northern France with his new squadrons proved successful, claiming Bf 109s on 7 and 16 August. Kent remained with the Kenley Wing until October 1941, when he was posted back to 53 OTU at RAF Heston and then RAF Llandow before he was sent on a lecture tour of Canada and America late that year.^[9] Kent was awarded a Bar to his DFC on 21 October 1941.



No. 92 Squadron pilots celebrating their 130th victory; Squadron Leader Kent in centre.



(Left to right) Wing Commander Kent talking to Wing Commander Zimmerman, 1942

In June 1942, Kent was Station Commander of RAF Church Stanton where he remained until October of that year when he was posted to Fighter Command HQ as a Wing Commander of Training. Two months later, Kent was posted to the Middle East and took command of 17 Sector in Benghazi, Libya where on 25 January 1943, he damaged a Ju 88 during an engagement near the airfield at Benina. After a posting to Air HQ as a Command Training Inspector at Air Defences East Mediterranean, he returned to the UK during March 1944 for an instructor's course at the Central Flying School, Upavon.^[10]

His final wartime victories included 13 aircraft destroyed, three

probables and three damaged.^[11]

Postwar

Kent was then posted to Air HQ, British Forces of Occupation and in late 1946 he became the Personal Staff Officer to Sholto Douglas, the Commander-in-Chief, and Military Governor of the British Zone of occupied Germany.

Kent returned to flying duties as Chief Test Pilot at RAE Farnborough in 1948 and was involved until 1952 with many developments of military aviation including the de Havilland Dh 108 "Swallow" and Avro 707. In August 1952, he assumed command of the RAF Station at Odiham, a fighter base operating Gloster Meteors. Subsequently, he was posted as Station Commander at RAF Tangmere, and in early 1956 accepted his final posting to RAF Newton as Station Commander.

On 1 December 1956, Kent retired from the RAF service with the rank of Group Captain.^[12] He joined Kelvin-Hughes Aviation Limited as sales manager.

Kent died on 7 October 1985 at the age of 71 years.

Quotes

I cannot say how proud I am to have been privileged to help form and lead No. 303 squadron and later to lead such a magnificent fighting force as the Polish Wing. There formed within me in those days an admiration, respect and genuine affection for these really remarkable men which I have never lost. I formed friendship that are as firm as they were those twenty-five years ago and this I find most gratifying. We who were privileged to fly and fight with them will never forget and Britain must never forget how much she owes to the loyalty indomitable spirit and sacrifice of those Polish fliers. They were our staunchest Allies in our darkest days; may they always be remembered as such!

Awards

- Distinguished Flying Cross
- Air Force Cross
- Virtuti Militari, Silver Cross

References

Notes

- [1] Bungay 200, p. 120.
- [2] Both Kent and Bocking later became Group Captains in the RAF.
- [3] Johannesson, Brian J. "Some of Konnie's more notable Students." (<http://www.rareaviationphotos.com/students.htm>) *Rare Aviation Photos*. Retrieved: 19 May 2011.
- [4] "Gp/Cpt. J. A. Kent." (http://www.thesoutheastecho.co.uk/Pilots/Kent_J.htm) *thesoutheastecho.co.uk*. Retrieved: 19 May 2011.
- [5] Kent 2008, pp. 80–81.
- [6] Bristow, Mark and Sylvia Laidlow-Petersen. *A History of Royal Air Force Northolt*. RAF Northolt: No. 1 AIDU, 2005.
- [7] Kent 2008, pp. 117–118, 136.
- [8] Ratuszynski, Wilhelm. "No. 303 Squadron in the Battle of Britain." (http://www.polishsquadronsremembered.com/303/303_BoB.html) *polishsquadronsremembered.com*. Retrieved: 21 October 2009.
- [9] Kent 2008, p. 142.
- [10] Johannesson, Brian J. "Famous Pilot: Wing-Commander John Alexander Kent." (<http://www.rareaviationphotos.com/johnkent.htm>) *Rare Aviation Photos*, (originally published in the Icelandic-language newspaper 'Logberg', Winnipeg, Manitoba, October/November 1940). Retrieved: 19 May 2011.
- [11] Hess 1966, p. 30.
- [12] Kent 2008, p. 235.

Citations

Bibliography

- Bell, Kelly. "The Forgotten Few." *Aviation History*, May 2007.
- Bungay, Stephen. *The Most Dangerous Enemy: A History of the Battle of Britain*. London: Aurum Press, 2000. ISBN 1-85410-721-6.
- Fiedler, Arkady. *Dywizjon 303*. London, Roy, 1942. *Squadron 303: The Polish Fighter Squadron with the R.A.F. (English translation)*. New York: Roy, Publishers, 1943.
- Gretzyngier, Robert. *Poles in Defence of Britain: A Day-by-Day Chronology of Polish Day and Night Fighter Operations, July 1940 - June 1941*. London: Grub Street, 2001. ISBN 1-902304-54-3.
- Hess, William N. *The Allied Aces of World War II*. New York: Arco Publishing Co., 1966.
- Kent, Johnny. *One of the Few: A Triumphant Story of Combat in the Battle of Britain*. London: History Press Ltd, 2008, First Edition, 1971. ISBN 978-0-7524-4603-5.
- Ramsay, Winston, ed. *The Battle of Britain Then and Now, Mk V*. London: Battle of Britain Prints International Ltd, 1989. ISBN 0-900913-46-0.
- Shores, Christopher. *Fighter Aces*. London: Hamlyn Publishing, 1975. ISBN 0-600-30230-X.

External links

- John Alexander Kent "Johnny Kentowski" (<http://www.acesofww2.com/Canada/aces/kent.htm>)
- Test & Research Pilots, Flight Test Engineers: G/CPT John A. Kent (<http://thetartanterror.blogspot.com/2010/02/gcpt-john-kent-dfc-afc-virtuti-militari.html>)

Article Sources and Contributors

John A. Kent *Source:* <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?oldid=510033789> *Contributors:* Iexec1, Abraham, B.S., After Midnight, Agustjonas, Brutal deluxe, Bzuk, CS46, Chris the speller, Craigy144, Erik9, Folks at 137, Gaius Cornelius, Gilliam, Greenshed, Halibutt, Harryurz, Herostratus, Hurricane111, Jweiss11, Kernel Saunters, Ketiltrout, KizzyB, LMB, MBK004, Marco Thomas, Martin451, MeltBanana, Nobunaga24, Snowmanradio, Stukent, Tarfu92, Trevor MacInnis, We hope, Welsh, Witkacy, Wprlh, YUL89YYZ, 11 anonymous edits

Image Sources, Licenses and Contributors

File:Johnny Kent.jpg *Source:* http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Johnny_Kent.jpg *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* Bulwersator, Bzuk, SchuminWeb

File:Kent Bocking.jpg *Source:* http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Kent_Bocking.jpg *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* Brian J. Johannesson (from the estate of Konrad Johannesson)

File:303 Squadron pilots.jpg *Source:* http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:303_Squadron_pilots.jpg *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* Royal Air Force official photographer - Devon S A (Mr)

File:92 Sdn 1941.jpg *Source:* http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:92_Sdn_1941.jpg *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* Photographer: RAF photographer

File:JA Kent.jpg *Source:* http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:JA_Kent.jpg *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* Photographer: RAF photographer

License

Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported
[//creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)