



A Salute to One Of the Few: The Life of Flying Officer Peter Cape Beauchamp St John RAF

Simon St John Beer

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In a quiet churchyard in Amersham is the grave of an airman who lost his life fighting in the skies over southern England in October 1940. The author happened to come across this grave in 1998 and after some initial

enquiries discovered that nobody in the town was aware that 'One of the Few' Battle of Britain pilots lay at rest in their parish. He determined to discover more about the short life of this hero and undertook several years

of research to piece together this biography.

Peter joined the RAF in November 1937 on a four-year short service commission at the age of twenty. In July 1938 he was posted to No. 87 Squadron being equipped with the then new Hawker Hurricane fighter. After war had been declared the Squadron was posted to Boos in France in support of the British Expeditionary Force, becoming operational on 10 September 1939. In March 1940 he was transferred to 501 Squadron in Tangmere and then again in April to 74 Squadron as an operational pilot at Hornchurch, equipped with Spitfires. It was from here that he fought his part in the Battle of Britain. For those who may have forgotten 'The Few', this stirring and yet sad story tells of the all-too-short life of one of the 544 young men who gave everything to defend Great Britain from Nazi aggression.

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