

# Flying Officer John Grey Gorton.

by Greg Hyde

During WWII Flying Officer John Grey Gorton survived four accidents that could have cost him his life.

On 21/01/1942 while flying an RAF Hurricane (232 Sqn BE633) out of Singapore, he was shot down by a Japanese Zero and flipped on landing near Bintang Beach. Gorton, who hadn't tightened his harness correctly, was slammed into the instrument panel, breaking his nose and causing facial injuries. He was posted missing believed dead.

Hurricane 11B BE633 arrived in Singapore with Convoy DM-2 on 13/01/1942. On 19/01/1942 BE633 was issued to "C" Flight 232 (Prov) Sqn RAF. Two days later BE633 piloted by John Gorton was shot down and the Hurricane destroyed.

On 13/02/1942 while being evacuated from Singapore on board the ship Derrymore he ended up spending some time in the water after the Derrymore was torpedoed. Gorton and the other survivors were picked up by the Corvette HMAS Ballarat.

While on a training flight with RAAF 77 Sqn out of Darwin on 07/09/1942, Gorton's Kittyhawk A29-60, force landed due to an incorrectly set fuel cock. He spent several days living off the land before he and his aircraft were recovered.

Again while flying with 77 Sqn, this time out of Milne Bay NG, his Kittyhawk A29-192 suffered engine failure on takeoff flipping over at the end of the strip. Gorton was shaken but unhurt.

In March 1944 he was posted back to Australia as a Flight Lieutenant where he spent some time as a flying instructor with RAAF No. 2 OUT in Mildura

A truly remarkable and short wartime experience. He was elected Australian Prime Minister on 10/01/1968 and fell on his sword after a party room battle on 10/03/1971.

(Thanks to Gordon Birkett for more details on the history and crash of BE633)

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