

FLIGHT LEUTENANT GERRY SAYER

Flight Lieutenant Gerry Sayer was the chief test pilot for the Gloster Aircraft Co and on the 15th May 1941 made the first flight in the Gloster E/28/39, Britain's first jet aircraft, reaching over 500 mph in level flight.

On 21st October 1942 he lost his life flying a Hawker Typhoon from RAF Acklington. Due to conduct weapon tests over the bombing range off Druridge Bay he did not return and was believed to have collided with his wingman who also did not return. His body was never found although a part of his aircraft was later found off Amble.

Scroll down for the whole story.



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FLT. LT. GERRY SAYER



Flight Lieutenant **Phillip Edward Gerald Sayer** OBE (5 February 1905 - 21 October 1942), was Chief Test Pilot for Gloster Aircraft as well as a serving RAF officer. He flew Britain's maiden jet flight in Sir Frank Whittle's Gloster E.28/39 (Pioneer), an aircraft designed by George Carter, on 15 May 1941.

He was born in Colchester, the only son of Wing Commander E. J. Sayer MC. He attended St Joseph's College, Nainital in India and Colchester Royal Grammar School, in England. Sayer joined the Royal Air Force in June 1924, obtaining a short-service (five year) commission. On 23 May 1925, he became a Pilot Officer. He learnt to fly in an Avro 504K. Later he flew Sopwith Snipes and Gladiators, and became an RAF test pilot at RAF Martlesham Heath, the home of the Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment.

In January 1929, he became engaged to May Violet Ellen Wallace-Smyth daughter of the vicar of Bure, north Essex. They were married on 7 June 1930 at Holy Innocents Church, Lamarsh in north Essex.

He resigned his commission in 1930 to be second test pilot with Hawker Aircraft, assistant to Group Captain P.W.S. Bulman (who first flew the Hurricane on 6 November 1935). He was engaged in testing Harts, Furies and other aircraft. In 1934 Hawker took over the Gloster Aircraft Company and Sayer was appointed Chief Test Pilot in November 1934. Sayer's first actual flight in the E28/39 consisted of some short hops of between 100 and 200 yards at Hucclecote on the 7th April 1941 while the aircraft was still fitted with its first W1X (Taxi only) engine. The aircraft was then moved to Cranwell where it received its flight ready engine.

On 15 May 1941 at 7.45pm, he took off from RAF Cranwell, near Sleaford in Lincolnshire on the maiden flight of the Gloster E.28/39 (W4041/G) powered by the W.1 engine and flew for 17 minutes- due to its minimal fuel load, flying at over 500 mph, impossible for other aircraft at the time in level flight. Over the next thirteen days he completed a further ten hours of test flights at altitudes up to 25,000 feet with the longest of just under an hour with its maximum load of 81 gallons

That Gloster aircraft has been in the Science Museum since 1946. A second aircraft of the same type (W4046/G) would be later demonstrated to Winston Churchill on 17 April 1943, having first flown on 1 March 1943 and later crashed in June 1943.

On 21 October 1942 Sayer departed from RAF Acklington in a Hawker Typhoon to carry out tests of a gunsight involving gun firing into Druridge Bay Ranges, he never returned. The cause of the accident was never determined but it is thought that he collided in the clouds with the other aircraft he was flying with.

