



# Sniper of the Skies: The Story of George Frederick 'Screwball' Beurling, DSO, DFC, DFM

*Nick Thomas*

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When asked to conjure an impression of the 'typical fighter pilot', you may be inclined to think of the confident, extroverted, gregarious type, rallying his men and flying in the pursuit of victory. George Frederick 'Screwball' Beurling, DSO, DFC, and DFM, certainly achieved more victories than most typical fighter pilots dream of, but in temperament, personality and style, he was a one-off.

A devout Christian, teetotaler and non-smoker, Beurling wasn't to be found patronising the local bars with his fellow pilots. Instead, he committed himself solely to the art of aerial combat. His very first missions saw him pursuing lone German fighters that he ultimately destroyed. He was determined to retain focus, noting how the men who did indulge had much briefer and much less effective tours.

In Maltese skies he really came into his own, shooting down 27 Axis aircraft in just 14 days. In the month of July 1942, he secured five 'kills' in just four days. In the process he was awarded the DSO, DFC and DFM, along with hero-status amongst his fellow pilots and members of the public. He survived the war, only to be killed three years later whilst landing a transport aircraft following a test flight. This biographical study serves as a tribute to one of the most successful and intriguing fighter pilots of the twentieth century, and should appeal broadly to fans of the genre.

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