

Obituary for Ernest John Tanner

This Obituary notice for Ernest John Tanner (1923-2004) was compiled by Stuart Tucker. The complete text is in the club hut – this is a scaled down version.

It is with great regret that I have to announce that John Tanner, one of our club's oldest members, died suddenly on September 8 and that his funeral service was held at Randall's Park on September 14th.

Little is known of John's early life but he married in the 40's and had a daughter who lived in Bookham. His interest in aircraft led him to join the RAF probably in 1941 when he was 18. He flew Spitfire Mk VB's from Tangmere with 131 squadron., then Mk 1X's and finally, Mk V11's with extended wings and pressurised cabin used for high altitude photographic work. In October 1944 he went to the Far East where the squadron was re-equipped with Republic P-47 Thunderbolts. At one time, John flew a Spitfire Mk V11 Serial no. MD111 with a pale pink / medium sea grey colour scheme which is often featured in Spitfire 'literature'.

After the war John flew Spitfire Mk 21's with 615 (County of Surrey) squadron -. Winston Churchill was the squadron's honorary Air Commodore.

After 'Demob' John turned to civil aviation and joined BOAC, flying a variety of machines including 707's. He was short-listed for Concorde training but his enforced retirement at 55 precluded this. He then flew for a variety of small airlines and would often hire a small aircraft from Biggin Hill for private excursions.

He was already a keen aeromodeller when he joined LMFC in 1978. Radio control was in its infancy and the club then operated from Effingham Common. As the number of R/C enthusiasts grew the club moved to the Randall's Road site and John, one of our first instructors, taught a number of our members the principles of R/C flying.

John was a jovial man, always willing to help others and never short of a story to tell of his considerable aviation experience. He always came round at the beginning of a year for a chat and to pay his subs even though in later years he must have known he wouldn't be able to participate.

Finally, my thanks to Val Knapp and Ken Sollars for their help in putting together this tribute.