

### ELEANOR LETTICE CURTIS A.T.A. FEMALE PILOT

She was born on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 1915, in Denbury, in Devon. She came from a very wealthy family. Her father was Lord of the Manor of Denbury and was also a famous barrister, working in London.



She was educated at a private school, which had just been built. It was called Beneden School. She was very good , especially in Science and Maths and she wanted to be an engineer. This was very unusual at the time. In those days, girls didn't do technical jobs.

She went to St. Hilda's College in Oxford, which was a college for ladies only. Here, she did Maths and was one of only two girls to do so. She was also very good at sport and became the Captain of the university ladies , lawn tennis and fencing clubs.

When she left Oxford University, she got an office job , but found it very boring. One Sunday, while she was driving her car down the country lanes near to her family home, she spotted an aircraft coming in to land at a local airfield. She decided that this was what she really wanted to do.

In 1937, she joined Yapton Flying Club in Ford, West Sussex. It cost £100 for flying lessons which was a lot of money in those days . Her Grandmother paid.

During the Second World war, she served in the Air Transport Auxiliary which needed pilots to deliver aircraft around the country It was a very dangerous job.They had to fly in all weathers, they had no navigation and had to find their way by following rivers, or railway lines. They had no ammunition and could have been shot down by the enemy at any time. They had to learn how to fly lots of different aircraft.



Lettice was a brilliant pilot, who coped very well flying all types of aircraft. Her favourite was the Spitfire. She was one of the first women to qualify to fly the four engined heavy bomber aircraft.

She became very famous in 1942, when she met Eleanor Roosevelt, who was the wife of the American President. Her photograph appeared in lots of newspapers and she became quite famous.



She stayed in the A.T.A. until it was closed down at the end of the war. She then became a technician and flight test observer and then moved on to Fairey Aviation, where she was Senior Flight Development Engineer. It was a great achievement, as there were very few women who managed to do this.

In her spare time, he took part in air races around the country and was one of the founders of the “Women Pilots Association”. She also qualified in old age as a helicopter pilot. She continued to fly until 1995.

She died at the age of 99, on the 21<sup>ST</sup>. of July, 2014.

