

I felt and heard 'bang, bang, bang'

Forty years on, Jeff Glover has mixed thoughts about the Falklands War. He is glad to have played a part in a winning campaign but for a very long time he felt he had "let the side down". He was shot down on his very first combat mission, losing one of the six aircraft from his squadron and becoming the only British pilot to be taken as a prisoner of war during the conflict. **Lord Ashcroft** interviewed him for his latest book, *Falklands War Heroes*.



Jeffrey William Glover, the son of a school headmaster, was born in St Helens, Lancashire, on 2 April 1954. An only child, he was educated at Cowley School, St Helens. Glover gained a BA Honours degree in engineering sciences at St Catherine's College, Oxford, but was also a member of the University Air Squadron.

Above: The original group of No 1(F) Squadron pilots southbound aboard *Atlantic Conveyor* in early May 1982. From left: Pete Harris, Jeff Glover, Mark Hare, John Rochfort, Jerry Pook, 'The Boss' (Pete Squire), Bob Iveson and (sitting) Tony Harper. © MOD/Crown

Right: Jeff Glover at home today, having retired from the RAF and as a civilian pilot and instructor. © Lord Ashcroft





Above: Glover being pulled out of the sea at gunpoint by Argentine troops after his Harrier GR3 was shot him down at Port Howard on 21 May 1982. The damage to his face was caused by his oxygen mask attachments, ejecting at 500 knots. © Lord Ashcroft

Below: Glover's log book, showing the page for spring 1982, and his RAF squadron badges. © Lord Ashcroft

From 1976 to 1977, Glover attended RAF College, Cranwell, in Lincolnshire, where he won the Battle of Britain Trophy for best aerobatics pilot. The following year, at RAF Valley, he came top of his course in advanced flying training on Gnat jets. Next, he trained at RAF Leeming

top of his course in advanced flying training

in Yorkshire before returning to RAF Valley to be a qualified flying instructor on the Hawk, and capturing the aerobatics trophy.

While based at Leeming, he met his first wife, Dee, and they married in February 1981, just 14 months before the start of the Falklands War. In fact, Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands on Glover's 28th birthday. By then, he was serving as a Harrier pilot with No 1 (Fighter) Squadron at RAF Wittering.

Glover recalled that he had been on a one-month training course at Jever Air Force Base in Germany on the day that the Falklands were invaded. Two weeks into his course, he was called back to RAF Wittering as the possibility of war loomed. At this point, he was a Flight Lieutenant. He deployed with No 1 (F) Squadron, one of nine pilots and six Harrier jets to go to the South Atlantic.

On the morning of 21 May 1982, Glover took part in his first war-time mission but things did not go to plan: "It was the squadron's second mission of the day. The wing commander and I were to get airborne, liaise with HMS Antrim, which was controlling the missions, and await targeting information.

We took off at around 8am local time – it was a beautiful day, not →





Glover was at low level, searching for his targets when, flying over West Falkland at more than 500 knots, he was suddenly hit. He takes up the story: "I felt and heard 'bang, bang, bang'. The aircraft then entered a maximum-rate roll to the right – the roll taking no more than a second but it was as if it was happening in slow time. I had three separate thoughts: the first was 'I cannot control the roll with this control column', the second was 'that sea is awfully close' and the third was 'I have to time my ejection right'. After the aircraft had gone through 320 degrees, I looked down and saw my right hand pull the ejection seat handle. I then heard a metallic bang and I lost consciousness. I woke up about four feet under water, sunny-side up and flapped to the surface and saw the sun again.

"In fact, I had been hit by a Blowpipe missile that had been fired from the ground by an Argentinian. The missile had hit and taken off half off my right wing which is why I had done a hard roll to the right. The reason I blacked out was that normally you try to pull the ejector handle with both hands but, because it happened so fast, my left hand was still on the throttle so, as I ejected, my left arm went into a whiplash movement at around 600 mph, and I lost consciousness. After I ejected, my

parachute opened and I dropped into the freezing sea.

"So I was in the water in my protective immersion suit and, after what seemed like five minutes of being in shock, I started to think about getting into my self-inflating dinghy which was attached to me by two quick-release clips. At some



Above: News reports of the time. © Lord Ashcroft
Right: Bob Iveson (left) and Jerry Pook (right) celebrating Jeff Glover's return to RAF Wittering after release from Argentina. © MOD/Crown.

a cloud in the sky. I just wanted to perform to the best of my ability, and not let the side down. The Hermes was less than 200 miles to the north-east of the Falklands. I lined up behind 'The Boss' [Pete Squire] on the carrier. We each had two cluster bomb units and guns loaded. He selected full power and four seconds later I too went to full power, chased him down the flight deck and left the end of the ski jump at 120 knots – nearly 140 mph. I then took 35 degrees of nozzle to be partially wing-borne and jet-borne. We started to climb to around 25,000 feet but 'The Boss' could not retract his under-carriage. He had to abort because of the problem...leaving yours truly on his own to complete the mission."



point, I realised that I couldn't see out of my left eye – because my helmet had flown off during the ejection, which shouldn't have happened. The end of the oxygen hose, which got separated from my oxygen mask as the helmet flew off, had bashed into my mouth causing some damage. My left side was also completely incapacitated from various injuries. I then heard voices and looked around. There was a little rowing boat with some Argentinian troops in it, holding rifles. In my stupidity, I reached for my RAF-issue pistol but, thankfully, I had mistakenly left it on the Hermes and did not have it with me. The soldiers pulled me out of the water and I was from then on, and for the next fifty days, a PoW."

Glover had a deep cut to his mouth and top lip, severe bruising to the left side of his face, a broken left arm, a broken left shoulder-blade and a broken left collar bone. "I was a bit of a mess. I was feeling a bit sorry for myself but I was glad to be alive," he said with understatement. After his immersion suit was cut off him, he was asked his name, rank and serial number, all of which he provided.

After receiving medical treatment on the Falkland Islands, on 25 May Glover was flown in a Hercules to the Argentine mainland. For a week, his wife did not know whether he was alive or dead but eventually word reached her from the Ministry of Defence that he was alive – but being held captive.

Glover told me that he was never aggressively interrogated or mistreated by the enemy but it was a tough seven weeks with his future uncertain for the whole time, even



after the Argentine surrender. After Glover eventually returned home, it was feared he might not fly again. However, he made a good recovery from his physical and mental challenges and returned to flying duties early the next year. "It took me seven months before I could fly solo again. It was eventually discovered that I had had a paranoid reaction to isolation and captivity. My problems were more mental than physical," he said.

Glover was awarded the Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service in the Air on 31 December 1985, while still a flight lieutenant. In February 1988, then aged 33, a squadron leader and a father of two young children, he became a member of the RAF Aerobatic Team; he said it had been a life-long ambition to fly with the Red Arrows. Glover retired from the RAF in December 1996.

Next, Glover became a commercial pilot, finally retiring in 2019, aged sixty-five. In the mid 2010s, while working for the Qatari Royal Family, he found himself in Buenos Aires for 12 days and decided to look up the man who had shot him down more than 30 years earlier, Major General (Retired) Sergio Fernandez. "We went out for dinner and it was only then that he told me that I had been in the sea after being shot down for forty minutes, when I had always thought it was for about five minutes. We had a great evening. He speaks good English and he was, and is, a smashing chap."

Glover now lives with his second wife, Angela, in Stamford,



By the *QUEEN'S* Order the name of
Flight Lieutenant J W Glover
Royal Air Force
was published in the *London Gazette* on
31 December 1985
as commended for valuable service in the air.
I am charged to record
Her Majesty's high appreciation.

Secretary of State for Defence.

Lincolnshire. Reflecting on his role in the conflict nearly four decades ago, he does not see himself as a war hero. However, he added: "At the time, as a PoW in 1982, I thought I had let the side down and lost one of our six planes. But, nearly forty years on, I have got over it." [AM](#)

Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC is an international businessman, philanthropist, author and pollster. For more information on his work, visit lordashcroft.com. Follow him on Twitter and Facebook: [@LordAshcroft](#). *Falklands War Heroes* is published by Biteback and is available from the publishers, Bookshop.org and good bookshops. Visit: falklandswarheroes.com for more details.

Above: "High appreciation" from Her Majesty The Queen. © Lord Ashcroft

Left: The South Atlantic medal with rosette © Glover personal archive

Below: Lord Ashcroft at the launch of *Falklands War Heroes*. © Lord Ashcroft

