

## **A flying Springbok of wartime British skies: A.G. ‘Sailor’ Malan**

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*This article, an expanded version of a 2008 public lecture, explores the life and times of Adolph Gysbert ‘Sailor’ Malan, a South African who rose to prominence as a combatant in the 1940 Battle of Britain and who, after his post-war return to the Union, became a notable personality in liberal reform politics. A classic Anglo-Afrikaner empire loyalist or ‘King’s Afrikaner’, Malan became ‘Sailor’ through his interwar merchant marine service, joining the Royal Air Force in the later 1930s. An exceptional fighter pilot, his wartime role as an RAF ace in defending Britain turned him into a national hero, a migrating loyal Springbok who had sprung selflessly to the defence of Great Britain. Subsequently, as an ex-serviceman, Malan drew on his wartime sensibilities and beliefs to return to political battle in his home country, in opposition to post-1948 Afrikaner nationalism and its apartheid policies. The mini-biography of Sailor Malan analyses several key life-story elements, including his seafaring apprenticeship, British wartime identity and combat experience, and troubled relationship with post-1945 South Africa as a gradualist liberal.*