



# THE HURRICANE

The Newsletter of the North Weald Airfield Museum Association

EDITION: SPRING 2018



For many years North Weald Airfield Museum has been in the happy position of receiving significant financial aid from both Epping Forest District Council [EFDC] and North Weald Parish Council [NWPC]. We understood that neither was likely to last forever and in due course that direct aid has now ceased. Firstly NWPC pulled away and latterly EFDC funding changed in style.

In December EFDC announced some of its planned funding rounds to local groups. Last year the level of financial support fell away but we were assisted with some promotional costs and of course we now have an invaluable 25-year lease in place. That alone has substantial financial implications to EFDC.

At the same time NWPC was making similar decisions within its smaller area and budget. The Parish Council proposed a 5% precept increase for the next financial year. The proposed increase included a budget item to set aside £3,000 for maintenance of the Debt of Honour. An original proposal to set aside £5,000 was defeated on the casting vote of council chairman Alan Buckley who instead proposed the £3,000.

In recent months Winston Ramsey declared that he would no longer fully support the Memorial outside on the grassed area in front of the museum. His past effort was significant and for over a decade included regularly changing the flags on the two poles to reflect a range of significant days. Seamlessly the RAF ensign would give way to a Polish, French or Norwegian flag overnight.

Since 2000 the structure was operated by a separate charitable trust although it lay on Epping Forest District Council land. Now EFDC is expected to gift the memorial to the parish council for them to provide support. There is no connection to the museum except that we provide and pay for electricity to illuminate the memorial and always strive to physically support the veterans and groups wishing to use the memorial with necessities.

It was always going to happen, the often solitary efforts of Mr Ramsey were always going to have to give way to the inexorable passage of time. Well, that time has come and the high standard of care afforded to the Debt of Honour over the years will be difficult to achieve. Whether the allotted £3,000 will be enough to keep the stonework and flags in an acceptable standard of good repair



remains to be seen. The money assigned relates to care into the new financial year [April 2018 onward].

The latest on this storyline is that although the Parish Council have set aside an amount to maintain the memorial they have yet to be given a go-ahead from the District Council, as the land-owners, to take up that role. As a result, by January the two flags on the poles flanking the memorial were in tatters and were removed pending a decision of how the memorial would be managed in future. New flags have now returned for the summer season thanks to unknown donors.

An active item of good news is that it has been confirmed that the Royal Norwegian Air Force in Bodo will continue to support the North Weald Remembrance events into the future.



This year there was an unveiling of a new Norwegian bench and 26 Norwegian veterans attended the Debt of Honour on the Saturday prior to Remembrance Sunday and had laid a wreath at the Norwegian stone as well as having a tour of the airfield. The NWAM past Chairman and Vice-President Arthur Moreton was presented with the Norwegian Defence Memorial medal in recognition of his work fostering the good relationship between North Weald and Norway over the past 20 years. Arthur sees this award as being for all residents of North Weald.



Arthur Moreton [Centre] the recipient of the Norwegian Defence Memorial Medal

The museum has been selected as the recipient of financial assistance to upgrade one of its display rooms. The Secretary made a successful bid to the Trustees of the Stansted Airport Community Trust early this year.

The Wulstan Tempest Room [covering the period up to 1939] is to have new display boards, electronic image displays and refurbishment of the interior and exterior of the existing display cases. In addition, storage folders for our growing collection of historical images has been funded. The work will enable us to display many more of the many Great War and Inter-War images than we have previously and to give the story more chronological flow.



All this will take time to design and put into place. There is no intention to close the room so regular visitors will see it develop over the coming season with the final elements being incorporated next winter when the museum is closed.

Epping Ongar Railway is to become more disability-friendly after its own successful bid to the Stansted Airport Community Trust to provide a fully accessible coach on its regular heritage services. The Epping Ongar Railway Volunteer Society and Epping Ongar Railway made a joint bid for £2,000 to the Stansted Airport Community Trust earlier this year.

The money will be matched by the railway and society to give a total fund of £4,000 for the conversion. The guards' van of one of its coaches will be insulated, heated, fitted with lights and suitable seating and with double-width doors to ensure passengers with disabilities can travel in comfort.

It is hoped both projects will be finished in 2019.

## EVENTS

**1 April 2018** RAF 100 Sunday Afternoon Hangar Dance. The Squadron presents a celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Royal Air Force from 1pm to 6pm. Dancing in the hangar to The Glenn Miller Weald Orchestra with Vintage Afternoon Tea. Contact 07392 606263. Buy tickets at £18.50 each online at [www.airfieldfireworks.co.uk](http://www.airfieldfireworks.co.uk) email: [info@airfieldfireworks.co.uk](mailto:info@airfieldfireworks.co.uk)

**9 May 2018** Lunchtime RAFA Talk at The Squadron, North Weald. "Ops Tonight" – stories of the RFC and RAF through medals awarded to them. Mark Smith (known for his appearances on the Antiques Road Show and being the former curator at the Firepower Museum). Arrive at 11-45am for a 12 noon start. Lunch, coffee and tea available at the canteen. Tickets are £5 from Bill or Heather on 07526650917 or 07745620758.

**5 June 2018** [Tuesday] at the Enfield Drill Hall [8pm] a presentation by the museum on its history and work to the TETC.

**23-24 June 2018.** Wings and Wheels 2018. This year sees the 32<sup>nd</sup> spectacular show at North Weald. As the longest running radio control model show *Wings and Wheels* Model Spectacular tickets including camping, all you need to enter the show on both days along with the Saturday night entertainment and night flying displays! Children under 5 years old can enjoy entry for free. Includes trade stores, model airshow, live Saturday night music, night flying displays! The website includes details and advance ticket prices saving significant amounts [an advance purchase 2-day ticket is just £20] <https://www.wingsnwheels.net>

**30 June -1 July 2018** Air-Britain's Classic Fly-In will be held at North Weald over the weekend. It is the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year for Air Britain and as a result they hope to gather together as many aircraft built or first flown in 1948 to the event. Alternatives are pilots born in 1948. The event has another theme to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the North American T-6 Harvard, again they hope



to attract a few of them to the usual mixed fleet of aircraft calling in at the airfield. Time, and the weather will tell. Updates on this and other Air-Britain events can be found at their recently revamped website [www.air-britain.com](http://www.air-britain.com)

**5 August 2018 [Sunday]** at the museum. Fairthorpe Sports Car Club Car rally. It is an ordinary opening day for the museum but this year promises something different in that it is also a launch pad for a rally.

Every year the Fairthorpe Sports Car Club have their main Gathering at a museum somewhere in the UK, last year it was at the Bubblecar Museum in Lincolnshire, the year before it was at RAF Twinwood Farm museum in Northamptonshire. This year they plan to make the venue North Weald. We expect 12-15 cars attending with around 25 people.

There is a family connection for the club organiser, Martin Collins, his father used to own a couple of planes and race cars, and in the early 1970's competed on the airfield in a number of sprint meetings with his race prepared Ford Anglia. In the 1990's he also competed in Sprints in Ford Anglias and a Mallock racing car, in later years the attraction then as now was the Wings & Wheels event. [www.fairthorpescc.com](http://www.fairthorpescc.com)  
[www.fairthorpe.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.fairthorpe.blogspot.co.uk)



Picture of 1963 Mallock racing car at North Weald in 1984.

Please remember that our near neighbours are the airfield and the Epping Ongar Railway. They have a broad range of events to visit each year. Details of the railway can be found at <http://www.eorailway.co.uk/events/>

Updates on the Airfield Events – including film showings, fireworks, drag racing, bus rallies etc Facebook at [www.facebook.com/northwealdairfield/](https://www.facebook.com/northwealdairfield/)



**OPEN EVERY DAY - 930am to 5pm**

## MEMBERSHIP DETAILS HOW TO JOIN

We accept all currencies in welcoming you to museum membership—becoming a Friend of North Weald Airfield Museum as long as it means the same as £12.50p!

You can join through the museum website [www.nwamuseum.co.uk](http://www.nwamuseum.co.uk)

## MUSEUM OPENING TIMES

The museum season is April until November and it is closed for the winter

When open entry is free for members.

Except on Special Event Days visitors will be charged standard rates for entry:

Adults	£2
Concessions	£1.50
Children [5-15]	50p

Group rates vary but generally there is a minimum charge of £50 per group.

## NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD MUSEUM

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## CONTACT US

### ADVERTISING AND THE HURRICANE

One way in which the NWAMA can earn income and to finance the production of hard copies of the Newsletter is advertising. Advertisers need circulation beyond the membership and they also need to know who is reading the Newsletter. If you pass this edition on please let us know who to so we can help finance your reading!

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*The Hurricane includes artwork produced for it by Ian J Commin of Insight Design of North Burnham, Slough SL1 6DS. In some cases it may not be possible to indicate the source of this material directly associated with the images used.*

## Allan Church Notes

I have mentioned previously that the museum has recently been donated additional items to what we now call the Allan Church Collection. We have had items before, including the first image of the 1920s aerial photograph of Neale's Garage at Thornwood and slides of the first International Air Tattoo in 1972. Now we have hundreds of additional images – taken from negatives and slides – books and artefacts from his personal collection.

Allan Church [right] was born 95 years ago into a family that were already shopkeepers in Epping. Church's Pork Butchers moved to a new shop at 224 High Street, leaving the original shop to be rebuilt.

When the war broke out in 1939 he was too young to fight in the war but already had an interest in aircraft. This interest is clearly highlighted by his well-known "Box-Brownie" image of a 151 Squadron Hawker Hurricane coming into land over the Kiora Café, Epping Road.

On 8<sup>th</sup> January 1942, in his late teens, he joined up as 1456914 AC2 via Entry No. 72 Airframe RAF Halton. In the autumn of that year he was posted north to join 105A Entry Conversion Course RAF Cosford, passing out on the 8<sup>th</sup> November as an LAC.

He spent the rest of the war in Europe, including time with 32 Squadron in Redcar.

By the end of the war and into 1946 the personal photographic collection moves to locations in Mingaladon and Rangoon, Burma, then to Singapore, Malaya and Batavia [now Jakarta], Indonesia. There are lots of photographs from this period, supported by his personal negatives, but unfortunately a significant number of 2x2 negatives were cellulose nitrate and besides being dangerously unstable they were beyond restoration. In many cases it was possible to copy from existing prints but the flammable film stock has now largely been disposed of.

Back home in civvie street he lived not far from work in the shop in Buttercross Lane, Epping. This is the lane directly opposite the former police station just two doors down from the shop. His mother lived in one house and built another for himself a few doors further down on the north side.

Meanwhile whilst continuing to spend time on his aviation hobby via RAFA and other



With over 300 images to choose from it was always going to be a difficult task to select just three. The top image is Alan when in the RAF in the Far East. The middle image is of the collection of Battle of Britain film aircraft by what is now Hangar 4 North Weald. The last image is Epping High Street when the Yorks & Lancaster Regiment marched through the town to Stand Down in 1968.





groups. He clearly had important contacts for in 1962 he was able to facilitate the supply of a Bristol Bulldog propeller to Bristol Aircraft after the company owned Bulldog K2227 was damaged. That same aircraft is an important exhibit in the RAF Museum today.

In the summer of 1968 he managed to get up 'close and personal' with the production of the "Battle of Britain" film while the crew was using the airfields of North Weald and Duxford. There are several images of him with the Hawker Hurricane's, Supermarine Spitfire's and Hispano Buchon's used in the film.

He was involved in the first couple of RAFA Air Tattoo in late May 1971 and 1972. For the second event he was shown as The Ground Exhibition Manager.

The RAFA linked St John's Air Ambulance operation operated from St Margaret's Hospital was a significant part of his life. The story of this important part of the past history of North Weald was recounted in The Hurricane in late 2013.

After living in a Tudor house in Nazeing ["Smalldrinks"] during the 1970s and 1980s in 1991 he moved back to Epping and Trent House, 7 Maltings Lane. While living there in 2008 Allan died aged 85. In 2017 the house in Maltings Lane was sold by Mrs M Church and in downsizing the museum came into the photographic collection and other items.

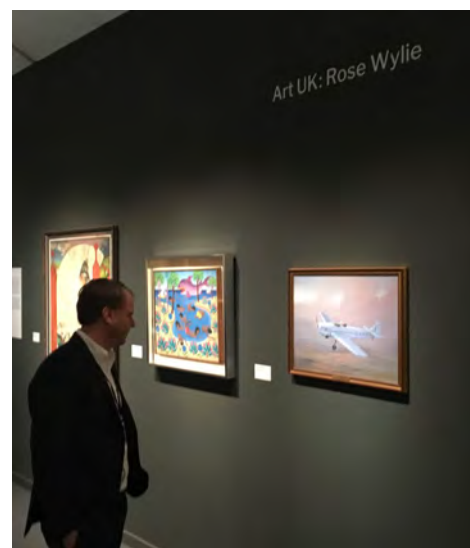


## ON TOUR

In recent weeks the museum has loaned a painting in the collection to Art UK in London [www.artuk.org](http://www.artuk.org) for a public exhibition.

The London Art Fair opened in mid-January at the Business Design Centre, Upper Street, Islington. Among the hundreds of artworks on public display was one on loan from NWAMA. On loan to Art UK the image of civil Miles Magister G-AKKR - a part of the extensive range of art held by the museum and donated in 2004 by Bob Hill a former EFDC Councillor. It was displayed for the week within Rose Wylie's selection of images in the Art UK area, close to the entrance of this magnificent building. Miles Magister G-AKKR was painted by Harold Garland in 1988.

Art UK (formerly the Public Catalogue Foundation) has worked over the last 15 years to document and share the nation's art and they have all our original works catalogued.



For the exhibition, Kathleen Soriano worked with five contemporary artists (Sonia Boyce, Mat Collishaw, Haroon Mirza, Oscar Murillo and Rose Wylie) who have chosen themes personal to them. With those in mind they have each selected five 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century works of art from the collections featured on the Art UK website.

The painting of a civil Miles monoplane - a subject not normally associated with the RAF or even North Weald. The connection is that the acrylic painting was donated by the family of Robert Peter Hill in 2004. Hill was a local councilor and trained local glider pilots at North Weald. Uniquely he had one leg – a factor that led to museum also being donated flying boots – one pristine and the other worn away. He preferred to shun his prosthetic leg for a crutch presenting us with the unique footwear.

*Image at the Business Design Centre 16 January 2018.*

Once again the museum took part in "Remembering 1917" on a Sunday late in 2017.

The Museum Outreach event attracted over 120 visitors. As well as the Museum display, featuring operations by 39 Squadron at North Weald in 1917, there were displays from the Western Front Association, Hylands House (a hospital during WW1), Dr Vivien Newman (First World War Women) and Galleywood "People at War" & the "Home Front".  
[Eric]

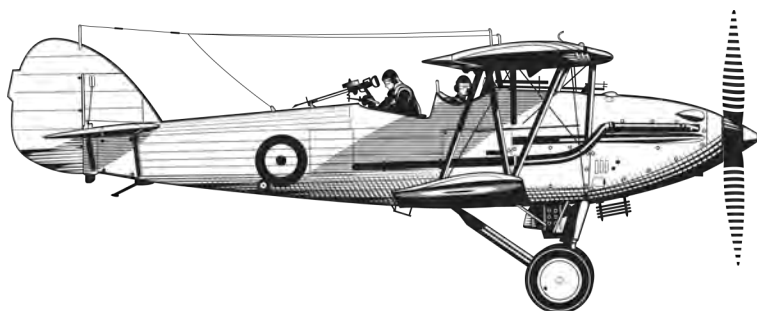


Babcock International, a player in several fields including aircraft engineering and support, will be a major sponsor the RAF100 Appeal to celebrate 100 years of the RAF in 2018. Under various names Babcock has enjoyed a partnership with the RAF for almost as long as it has been in existence.

Roger Hardy, Chief Executive of Babcock's Aviation sector, said: "The long history between Babcock and the RAF can be seen in our shared focus on young people and STEM education, dedication to our serving military personnel and an unwavering commitment to the delivery of air power. I am delighted we are able to support the RAF100 Appeal celebrations and look forward to the wonderful programme of events planned. Whilst we must remember the heroism and achievements of the past 100 years we are equally keen to contribute to the strong legacy that RAF100 will surely provide."

Simon Collins, Chairman of the RAF100 Appeal stated: "The RAF100 Appeal is delighted to welcome Babcock as a Headline sponsor to support the charitable aims of the RAF100 Appeal and help celebrate the RAF's Centenary.

The RAF and the four major RAF charities are combining as one for this unique moment in history to commemorate the past 100 years since the formation of the RAF and look forward with confidence to a future of hope and opportunity for the entire RAF family."



# EPPING MARKET

**Every Monday**

**[www.eppingmarket.co.uk](http://www.eppingmarket.co.uk)**  
**Please come along and see us!**



*In December 2017 Eric Probert a museum trustee was assisting a researcher with information on two former North Weald pilots. On this occasion the museum gained far more detail of the subjects than it started off with.*

**Leonard Davies**, a Sergeant pilot at North Weald in the Battle of Britain was to be the last surviving member of the 'The Few' from Teesside when he died more than a decade ago.

Born in Norton (now a suburb of Stockton-on-Tees), County Durham on an otherwise unremarkable Wednesday 17 November 1920 he was the youngest of eight children in the working class, two up, two down terraces of Stanley Street, Norton in 1920. Len's father, Joseph, was a marine engineer. Len had the tough upbringing experienced by many born of that era. However, Len did well at school and gained a scholarship to attend the Stockton Grammar School. After leaving there he joined ICI to train as a research chemist. In 1939 with war looming, and despite his job being a reserved occupation, he volunteered to join No.608 Squadron, Auxiliary Air Force based at Thornaby-on-Tees. He was learning to fly, part time, in the Squadron's Avro Tutors when war broke out. The reserves and auxiliaries were immediately called into full time service with the RAF. Len only had three hours flying time under his belt at this point. After a brief and frustrating wait for available places at a training school, Len, along with the ten other airmen pilots-under-training from No. 608 Squadron were posted to No.6 EFTS at Sywell near Northampton. This was from 21<sup>st</sup> October 1939 until 5<sup>th</sup> March 1940. The course had been extended by a few weeks due to the very bad weather that winter which had caused delays further up the training chain. They learned on the Tiger Moth [right] and Len was assessed as 'Above average'.



The next posting was to No. 8 FTS at Montrose in Scotland. Here they were the first course to be taught on Miles Masters. The course ran from 6<sup>th</sup> March 1940 until 29<sup>th</sup> June 1940 Six of the original eleven from No.608 Squadron finished the course and they all had the unusual distinction of holding the lowly rank of LAC yet being qualified Service pilots with 'wings'.

Upon being posted to O.T.U. this anomaly was addressed and they were immediately made up to sergeants. Len was posted to No.7 O.T.U. at Hawarden and was trained on the Hurricane from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> July 1940 and managed 22 hours on the Hurricane.



With a modest total flying time of 193 hours he was posted to No.151 Squadron at North Weald and along with two others from the O.T.U. arrived at the Essex airfield on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1940. The squadron had a long association with North Weald, arriving there in the summer of 1936 and only leaving briefly after hostilities broke out in May 1940. The squadron was back after an absence of days long before his arrival.

After a period of further training with the squadron, Len flew his first operational sortie on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1940. His stay was to be relatively short-lived.

On 28<sup>th</sup> August 1940 he was shot down after combat with Me109's over Kent. Rather than bail out and despite the fact a German cannon shell had wounded his leg and taken out his flying instruments along with a large chunk of the cockpit side, he elected to make a forced landing at Eastchurch aerodrome on the Isle of Sheppey. Unfortunately it had just been bombed and the air raid warning was still in progress. However, he was committed to land and his Hurricane ended up on its back with Len dangling from the straps dripping more blood from a further gash to his forehead where he'd hit the gun sight. He was still only nineteen years old!

151 Squadron moved out of North Weald for the last time and took up a very short period of residence at Stapleford the next day.

Len wasn't out of action for long though and before the end of the year he was volunteering to go to overseas where he eventually joined No.261 Squadron at Malta on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1941. Conditions turned out to be even worse than they were in the Battle of Britain!



One of the artworks in the Battle of Britain Room depicts a 151 Squadron Hawker Hurricane.





*Len Davies in his Hurricane, Malta 1941 (courtesy J. Felce)*

By June of 1941 Len and his squadron were rested from Malta and he was posted to an Aircraft Delivery Unit delivering a variety of aircraft, via the Takoradi route, all over North Africa, the Middle East, India and on one trip, even as far east as China. Later he became a check and conversion pilot for No 1 Middle East Training School, converting single engine pilots onto twins. He had taught himself this skill flying twins on the Takoradi route. On 26<sup>th</sup> January 1944 he was posted back home and was again based in the UK, flying with No.525 Squadron based at Lyneham and Membury. By this time he had been commissioned and had attained the rank of Flight Lieutenant and flew as a transport captain, mainly on Dakotas, but again flying great distances, as far afield as India.

After the war he did an engineering degree at Durham University (in Newcastle) and on his first week he met his wife to be, Katie. Upon graduating, his work as an engineer took him from Teesside to Merseyside, down to Swansea and finally to the Aylesbury area. Katie and Len had two children, Philip and Janet. Sadly, Philip died from cancer at the age of 50. Upon retiring Len and Katie moved back up north and settled in the village of Rosedale Abbey in the beautiful North Yorkshire moors. As they got older they moved to Whitley Bay and finally, in 2009, they moved down to Cardiff to be near their daughter, Janet. Katie died in 2000.

When I first made contact with Len in 2012 (whilst doing some research about local Battle of Britain pilots for a book I hope to publish), he enthusiastically invited me, a complete stranger, down his home and made me feel very welcome and at ease. It was like I had known him for years. His stories and anecdotes kept me entertained for hours. What a pleasure it was to sit with Len and hear him talk of his life, not just in the Battle of Britain but also of his other adventures during the war. It was heart warming to hear him talk of his own childhood in and around Norton and Stockton and to hear of life after the war with his family that he so loved and appreciated. Time spent with Len, literally flew by. He will be sadly missed by all his family and friends.

On March 31st 2014 Len Davies died peacefully of an aortic aneurism at University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff. He was 93 years old.

**Bill Peacock**, Len's good friend from their training days, was another working class lad from Teesside. He was the first child of Albert and Catherine Rebecca Peacock. He was born in Seaton Carew, at the mouth of the Tees, on the 11th June 1920. They lived at Snook Cottages close to the Zinc works where his father worked as a distillery hand. Like Len, Bill had a tough, working class upbringing and he attended the Henry Smith School in nearby Hartlepool. The family later moved to South Bank, Middlesbrough where Bill worked in the steel works and where his father worked as a labourer at the docks. Bill had one sibling, a younger brother, Bob

Just before war was declared in September 1939 Bill, along with the other 608 Squadron Auxiliaries, was re-called from summer camp at Warmwell in Dorset and called to full time service. His training was the same as Len's; at Sywell, Montrose and Hawarden.

After O.T.U. in July 1940 came a posting to No.46 Squadron at Digby. The Squadron was based there to re-group after being decimated in the Norwegian Campaign. On 1<sup>st</sup> September 1940, the Squadron moved south to Stapleford Tawney in Essex where, ironically, they replaced Len's 151 Squadron, which was moved north for a rest. This was only four days after Len was shot down!

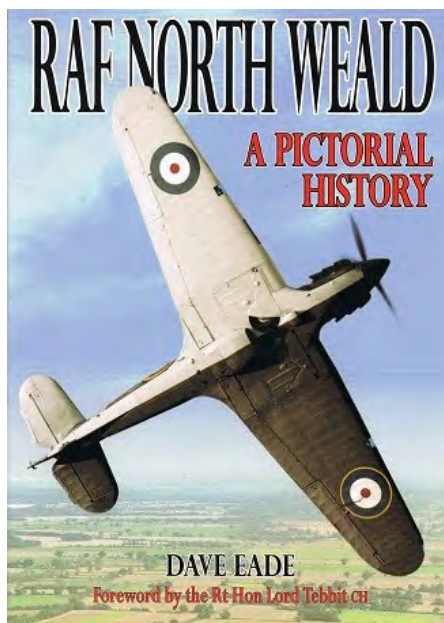
Bill claimed his first enemy aircraft on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 1940 when he shot down an Me109. Alas, on the 11<sup>th</sup>, Bill was reported missing after a patrol over North Weald. Neither his body nor his Hurricane was ever found. He was twenty years old.

Sgt William Peacock 46 Squadron is included in the North Weald Debt of Honour as dying on 11 September 1940 (see [www.nwamuseum.co.uk/page12.html](http://www.nwamuseum.co.uk/page12.html))

For those members and others who worked in the Royal Air Force in the 1950s and 1960s notice has come in to highlight the past dangers of work with asbestos.

The Outreach Department of The Mesothelioma Center (Asbestos.com) have written to the museum stating that past Aircraft Mechanics are at risk of developing mesothelioma, a rare cancer caused from asbestos exposure that can take 20-50 years to develop. Asbestos was commonly used in aircraft equipment for its heat and friction resistant properties. These parts include the brakes and insulation around the engine and electrical components.

A website features extensive information on asbestos and the work they do to work with individuals to help them find local doctors, treatment centers and support groups at no cost. Details can be found at [asbestos.com/occupations/aircraft-mechanics/](http://asbestos.com/occupations/aircraft-mechanics/)



Still on sale in the museum or via our website is the spectacular North Weald – A pictorial history book at just £10 each brand-new at the museum or plus postage if you cannot get there. The original publication price written and compiled by Dave Eade was nearly twice that value until the publishers went out of business and the remainder were bought up at a reasonable price. We can deal with bulk orders at a discounted price.

There are plenty left in store but clearly someone thinks it is rare as I saw exactly the same book offered for sale on-line for a massive \$64!



Above: Alan Church images from 1938

Picture Postcard images of the future perhaps?

These and a couple of the images on the airfield website following the recent snow falls. Summer and good flying weather cannot come soon enough!

