



THE HURRICANE

The Newsletter of the North Weald Airfield Museum Association

EDITION: JULY 2024

SUMMER ACTION

Remembering D-Day 1944

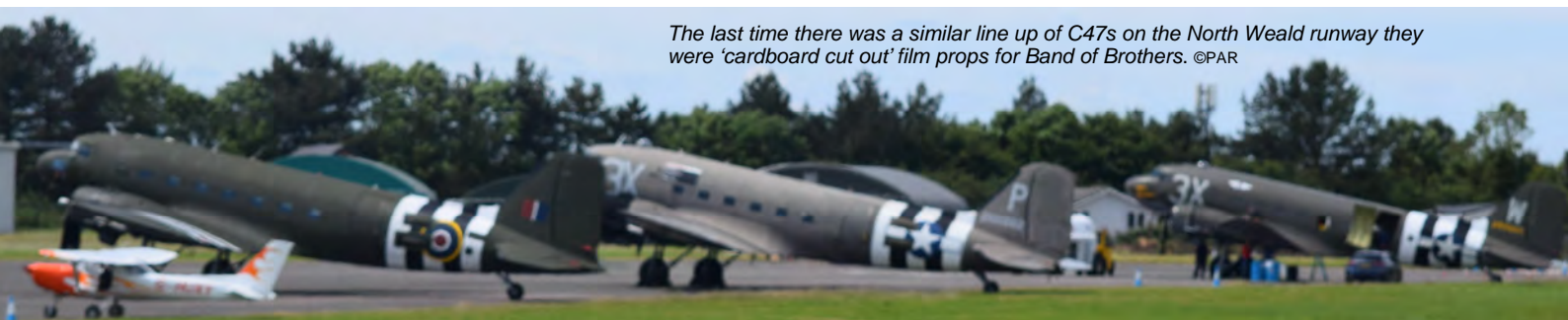


Placid Lassie is the Tunison Foundation's 1943 Douglas C-47 Skytrain. ©PAR

It was always a gamble with the weather—as indeed it was way back in 1944—but the plans to commemorate D-Day scheduled North Weald to link up to a series of other airfields to mark the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy, France mostly went to plan. The event “D-Day 80 North Weald Embarkation” involved Aero Legends over the end of May and into June 2024.

The Imperial War Museum Duxford hosted a celebration of the invasion of Europe by hosting a number of Douglas Dakota aircraft, these include two C-47A Skytrain aircraft that are in the fleet of North Weald based Aero Legends. The weekend before the 80th Anniversary Duxford hosted a mass parachuting event but they were limited in airfield capacity and that is where North Weald came into play. As they are quieter they will ‘look after’ the gathered Dakota’s prior to them flying off to Duxford and on overflights of sites important to the commemoration. A formation of around twelve Dakota aircraft set off to Normandy itself accompanied by other types – currently planned to be the Boeing B-17G Flying Fortress Sally B and two Supermarine Spitfire IX operated by Aero Legends. Most of the Dakota aircraft flying at the events had wartime military colours, others retained their modern civil markings. (continued bottom of page 3)

The last time there was a similar line up of C47s on the North Weald runway they were ‘cardboard cut out’ film props for Band of Brothers. ©PAR



ADDED TO THE ARCHIVE

BLAST FROM THE PAST

The museum continues to receive some high quality images from its past and early this year two really good images of 56 Squadron in the 1930s arrived in the post from a kind donor on the Isle of Wight.

The original images of squadron members in front of one of their Bristol Bulldog fighter aircraft include the names of those of 56 Squadron at the time



No. 56 (Fighter) Squadron North Weald 1933

(Standing at rear) P/O L G Levis; F/O L C Slee; F/O L R Mouatt; F/O H E Mayes; F/O R Smith; F/O S E R Shepard; P/O E L A Walter; W/O F A Ladell.

(Seated) F/Lieut. A E Taylor; F/Lieut. J W Colquhoun; S/Leader G E Wilson; F/Lieut. N Carter; F/O I C Bird.

EPPING MARKET

Every Monday

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Please come along and see us!



No. 56 (Fighter) Squadron North Weald 1934

(Standing at rear) P/O E L A Walter; F/O S E R Shepard; F/O L C Slee; W/O 2 F A Ladell
(Seated) F/Lieut. A W Sandeman; F/Lieut. J W Colquhoun; S/Leader G E Wilson; F/Lieut. A E Taylor; F/O I C Bird.

Both of the original images were taken by Bassano Ltd., Dover Street, London. The company was active 1901-1962. The National Portrait Gallery holds over 40,000 negatives taken by the Bassano studio between the 1870s and 1950s.

There is history in the images as the pictures were taken a few short years before the Second World War and some might not be expected to survive the conflict. Pilot Officer Levis made it as there is a report of a Wing Commander L G Levis handing over RAF Cottesmore to the Army in late 1945 and F/O Leonard Cain Slee later became a Group Captain and bomber pilot on Lancasters, flying 26 operations with 49 Squadron in 1942-43. James Woods Colquhoun died in old age in 1985. The last man in each image was perhaps the most intriguing. He was Ivor Curtis Bird, born in 1908 in Hendon he joined the RAF in 1930 and learned to fly at Grantham. His service record shows that he joined 56 Squadron in September 1931 but left to train in the Russian language, School of Slavonic Studies, in London in 1935. He survived the war and in 1950 was serving as an Air Commodore as the Air Attaché in Moscow. He died in November 1951 at the age of 42 after an investiture dinner for the new UK ambassador. The record shows that there were "suspicious circumstances" it seems not much changes in the world.

From page 1

Among the C-47s temporarily based at North Weald in May and June were *Placid Lassie*, the Tunison Foundation's 1943 Douglas C-47 Skytrain. Unlike many warbirds operating today, she is a real war hero, not so much a replica, or deep restoration based upon parts from multiple separate aircraft. The majority of these same rivets crossed the English Channel on June 6th, 1944 and continued across Europe in service.

Placid Lassie was built by the Douglas Aircraft Company in Long Beach, California as a C-47 in July 1943 with S/N 42-24064. She cost \$109,683 to build (just short of \$2 million in 2023). Check out the full story at <https://www.tunisonfoundation.org/lassie-history>



Another in the line up was *That's All, Brother* a Douglas C-47 Skytrain (the military version of the civilian DC-3) that led the formation of 800 others from which approximately 13,000 U.S. Paratroopers jumped on D-Day, June 6, 1944, the beginning of the liberation of France in the last two years of World War II.

After the war it was returned to the United States and sold to civilian owners, eventually falling victim to neglect until it was found in an Oshkosh, Wisconsin, scrapyard in 2015, facing imminent modification to be converted into a modern turboprop-powered aircraft. It has since been restored and is now part of the Commemorative Air Force.

The C-47's name, painted on its nose, was chosen by U.S. Army Air Force Lt. Col. John M. Donaldson, commander of the 87th Troop Carrier Squadron, who flew the plane during the operation. It was successfully flown again in 2018, and has been exhibited at air shows since. After further refitting it has been flown across the Atlantic with other historic aircraft that took part in the invasion, to commemorate both the 75th and 80th Anniversaries.



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

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	£5.00
Concessions	£2.50
Children [5-15]	£1.00

Group rates vary but generally there is a minimum charge of £50 per group entering on a day the museum is normally closed.



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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.

THE GRAND PLAN FOR NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD

Not so long ago *The Hurricane* was reporting on grand plans for the future of North Weald Airfield. The vision, being presented as the Strategic Master Plan, was that of the airfield owners Epping Forest District Council [EFDC] and some developers. Under the plan the whole of the east side of the airfield was being developed with a range of new industrial units and the current control tower was to be repurposed and replaced with a new control tower on the east side of the runway.

The whole was clearly far more attractive than the threat of building some 3,000 or more houses across the whole of the airfield but it was nonetheless promising some disruption in the future.

There were even plans for moving the *North Weald Airfield Museum* into the new area – although precious little contact, let alone discussion, has actually taken place between EFDC and NWAMA on the subject.

It is a good job the museum had not started packing its bags for the whole situation has again changed direction. Money talks, and there are £88.2M reasons for a rethink.



Now it seems we need to forget nearly all of those published Strategic Master Plans as the EFDC has announced the sale of 52 acres on the airfield to **Google** for the "possible" development of a new data centre campus. The announcement said the airfield would "continue to function as an operational aerodrome", with a new combined control tower and fire station also planned – although plans for that to be on the east side of the runway have already moved it to the west side near the M11 Motorway.

The council said its announcement came after an "extensive consultation" among key local stakeholders and local residents which was carried out in light of the Master Plan put together last March. Unfortunately none of those important people have been identified so remain a mystery to those who might have an interest in the matter – the NWAMA for instance remains in the dark.

One positive note on this development is that Epping Forest District Council has guaranteed the aviation future of North Weald Airfield, as a place for business, family and community. All no doubt subject to the financial pressures of the day being equal!

A planning application for a new control tower has been submitted. That plan located it next to the top of the main runway at the southern end of the airfield near the Epping Road. The plan was to have it operational by early 2025 but no start has been made on construction so far. Plans were being drawn up to provide a new access point to replace the current gatehouse entrance, and to relocate the 'plastic Hurricane' but the favoured location for that has already moved from near the M11 Motorway to near the museum. The subject remains fluid.

The main North-South runway divides the airfield in 2 unequal parts. Land to the West of the runway next to the M11 is mainly dedicated to aviation. Among the major aviation tenants with long term investments at North Weald are Aero Legends, offering vintage flight experiences in aircraft dating back to World War II, and Weald Aviation which restores and maintains vintage aircraft. You can learn to fly with North Weald Flight Training and Academy Aviation. The National Police Air Service, and Essex and Herts Essex Air Ambulance Trust have invested millions of pounds in new hangars and maintenance facilities with long leases. Those areas may be safe from ever changing plans. Perhaps.



Two seat Spitfire aircraft operate air experience flights from the west side of the main runway. ©PAR



The air ambulance helicopters are usually red and yellow. This one is an engineering stand in . ©PAR

It is the area to the East of the main runway, the land originally allocated to economic development and also currently busy hosting a number of light commercial, storage and distribution businesses, the large concrete apron used by car clubs during the week that is the home to North Weald Market every Saturday and Bank Holiday Monday that remains under threat.

To the right of the current gate house entrance, the perimeter track runs up to the northern end of the airfield and the area previously used by HMRC as a temporary customs post following Brexit. Planning permission has just been granted to build a new environmental operations hub depot on this site for the council's waste and recycling service. Currently, the tower, gatehouse and fire station functions are sited within land bought by Google.

BINS

A fleet of new refuse and recycling vehicles will be operated by Epping Forest District Council's new wholly-owned company Terra Verde Services (TVS) from the old HMRC site when the current contract with Biffa ends in November.

No rubbish or waste will be brought or stored on the airfield. As an environmental operations hub, the depot will provide storage, maintenance and a refuelling point for the new fleet of vehicles capable of running on diesel or a carbon-neutral alternative called HVO. Depending on availability, Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) could represent a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to traditional fossil fuels.



A BRIGHT FUTURE

The airfield owners—Epping Forest claim that North Weald Airfield has a bright future. With more land available for economic growth, the airfield is a place for jobs and investment. The commitment to aviation is supported by those long-term leases to aviation tenants.

Also part of the intention to bring new attractions to the airfield are the elements that will bring the general public to sample such as the weekly market, flying lessons, flights in vintage aircraft and, as the days warm up, the airfield's food outlets. Both Wings and Rosey Lea are places to bring the whole family simply to watch other people using aviation.

Around £5.7M has been set aside for the council to spend on building new facilities - including the new control tower and entrance. The combined control tower and fire station is estimated at £4.9M, with new equipment for the tower estimated at £300,000 and works for a new interim airfield entry point along with works associated with the electrical power supply is estimated at around £500,000.

ALL WORK STOPPED

A North Weald based team of enthusiasts who were attempting to return a four engine Douglas C-54 Skymaster to flying status have announced "with a heavy heart and great sadness" it is closing its "beloved" charity.

The team had been working on returning the 1944 C-54 Skymaster 56498 (c/n 10630) to a flyable state, but announced via a statement on social media on February 16 it could no longer afford to continue operating.

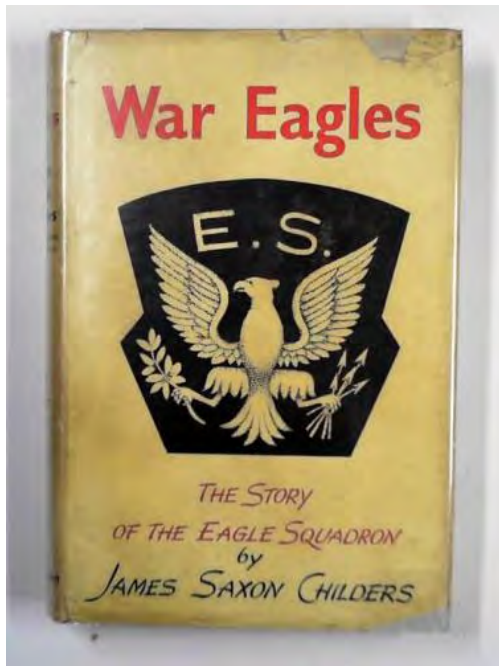
The group have donated ground equipment to the Sally B aircraft [Boeing B-17G Flying Fortress based at Duxford], ensuring that resources are put to good use within the aviation community. Any remaining funds are being donated to the Veterans Foundation.



It will be interesting to see whether this project will still be preserved. ©PAR

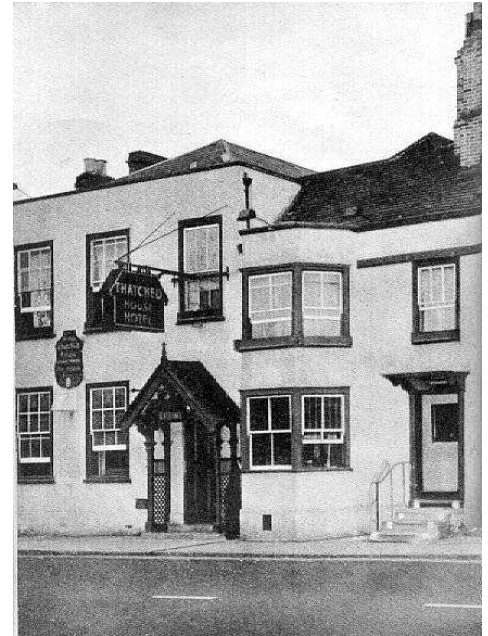
GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

The first U S volunteer pilots Eagle Squadron, No. 71, was formed in September 1940 as part of the RAF's buildup during the Battle of Britain, and became operational for defensive duties on 5 February 1941 flying Hawker Hurricane's. 71 Squadron commenced operations based at RAF Church Fenton in early 1941, before a move to RAF Kirton-in-Lindsey and then on to North Weald where they operated in Supermarine Spitfire's.



In 1943 James Saxon Childers (April 19, 1899 - July 17, 1965) an American educator, newspaperman, author, publisher and Colonel, American Army Air Forces penned a book on the activities of that first US Eagle Squadron. It was wartime so, although there were images, no written clue was given to where the squadron was based. Certainly there was no mention of North Weald, Epping or Essex in the text. The one clue to Epping was the appearance of a single photograph of a hotel in the town, and only a local might make the connection.

An illustration from the 1943 book War Eagles – The story of the Eagle Squadron by James Saxon Childers. Published by William Heinemann Ltd., London and D. Appleton-Century Company, Incorporated, New York.



"The Thatched" was an Epping landmark.

The *Thatched House* restaurant and hotel at 236 High St, Epping CM16 4AP was famous at North Weald airfield throughout most of its service life. Along with such as the surviving Kings Head pub in North Weald village, aviators of all ranks and nationalities saw the hotel as a place to go in war and peace. It remained under that name until recently. Now, although it looks very much the same the name has changed to *Funky Monk*. The Thatched House has not had a thatched roof in many a lifetime but the origin of the Monk may be judged as equally obscure!

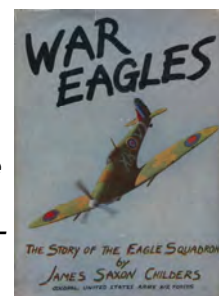
In mid-2022 it was announced that the former Thatched House Hotel and Prezzo restaurant in Epping High Street is to open as a ten-bedroom hotel and a "niche, quirky" designed seafood restaurant offering "something a little bit different".

According to the promotional text, The *Funky Monk* Hotel and Restaurant offers dining, drinking and luxurious accommodation. A boutique hotel, it describes its accommodation as lavish with thoroughly thought out interiors, with nine sumptuous suites offering an exciting, sensual nights stay.

Its restaurant offers delicious food, eclectic wines, champagne and cocktails making a unique dining experience with live entertainment, intimate lighting and desirable décor for all tastes. It also has a heated sun terrace with outdoor bar.

The author, Childers, wrote numerous novels, biographies, and travel books based on his own extensive travels before, during, and after World War II.

Copies of War Eagles can still be found on offer on the Internet at a not too high premium. The original wartime versions offer the best value although time has not been kind to most of these wartime copies. A few are on offer with the original badged dust cover. There are later editions including one produced by Eagle Publications in the USA in 1983 and newer soft cover versions, by Literary Licensing, LLC, in 2013 and Coachwhip Publications in 2023. Most of these actual-ly cost significantly more than the originals.





Among the new images come into the museum in recent months are these from Canada. Keith Ward was stationed at North Weald in 1952-54, serving with the RAF Police. I believe these are the first images on the RAF Police we have.

The sender and star in some of the images is Keith himself including the 'then and now' shot taken outside the museum. Keith Ward was originally from Cambridge and emigrated to Canada in 1957. He used to visit the UK nearly every year and still reads the *Cambridge News* every day.

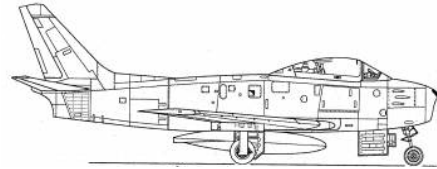


Watching over Epping Forest
Assisting residents keeping themselves safe
Contact: efdnhw@aol.com



A far from clear new image of two North American F-86 Sabre fighters on the airfield at North Weald. The date is around 1952-53 and the pair appear to be from the USAF.

We are not aware of any similar images of visiting Sabre aircraft. The USAF based the type in Suffolk.



Another recent visitor to North Weald airfield was this Fairey Swordfish W5856 '4A' G-BMGC. Built in 1941, the Swordfish is now operated by the Royal Navy Historic Flight based at Yeovilton. She wears the markings of an 820NAS aircraft from HMS Ark Royal, which participated in the sinking of the German battleship 'Bismarck' in May 1941. This is the oldest airworthy Swordfish having first flown later that year, on Trafalgar Day (21 October) 1941.



Waltham Abbey

8am to 3pm

MARKET

TUESDAY & SATURDAY

WALTHAM ABBEY



NWAMA gets its fair share of veterans visiting but the same applies to others on the airfield including the Essex & Herts Air Ambulance. They were recently honoured by the visit of the remarkable WW2 veteran Flt Lt Colin Bell (aged 103, right) who popped in to meet the team while at North Weald helping promote the Aero Legends D-Day 80 North Weald Embarkation event.

Essex & Herts AA

In recent years the museum has been obliged to work its way around opening its doors while the Ride-London-Essex festival of cycling has clogged up local roads with as many as 20,000 bicycles. This year it was over the weekend of 24-26 May.

On **28 July** the museum will feature in The London to Southend Classic Vehicle Run by the South Eastern Vintage & Classic Vehicle Club (SEVCVC). The rally itself will commence at Fairlop Waters but because of ULEZ they have added a second start position for non compliant vehicles at the museum. They expect to be running by the museum at about 9-30am and along the way collecting an additional handful of vehicles for the onward journey to the sea side. Around 80 vehicles are expected to take part.

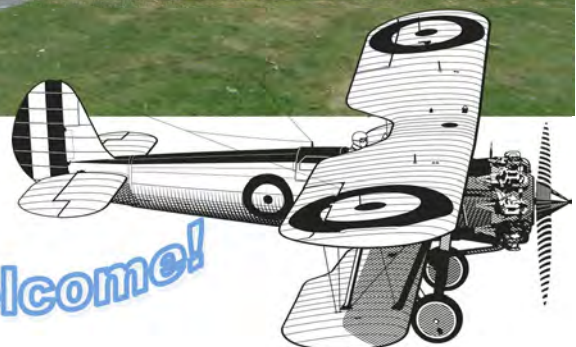


The SEVCVC is a club for owners and enthusiasts of any type of historic vehicles 25 Years old or older. The family orientated club places an emphasis on using and enjoying classic vehicles. www.essexclassicvehicles.co.uk



The North Weald Museum is no stranger to classic and vintage cars gathering outside.

Classic cars always welcome!



North Weald Airfield Museum

OPEN DAY 2024

Sunday 8 September

Open 11am until 4pm - FREE Entry



8/9 Make a day of it!

Plenty of choice on and around the airfield with

Epping & Ongar Railway

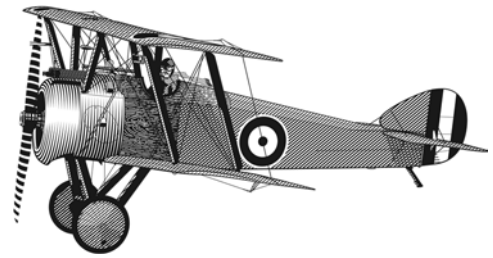
Essex & Herts Air Ambulance

North Weald Airfield Museum

Rosey Lea Tea Rooms at The Squadron

Wings Café

also look out for the garden centres, pubs and light railway



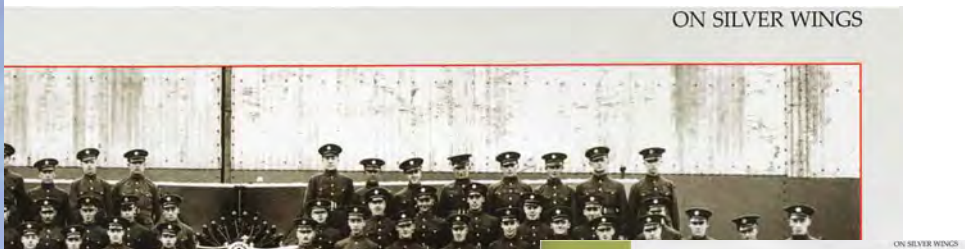
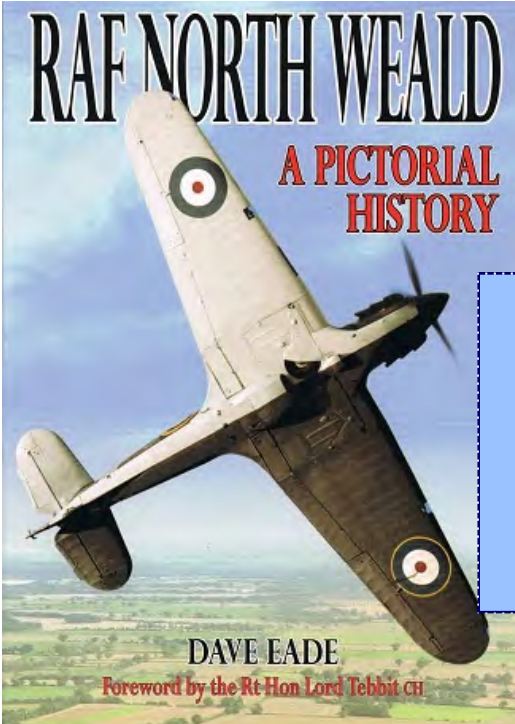
North Weald Airfield's



Some things never change and, despite millions spent of computers, as ever we are in the fickle hands of the English summer weather and this 1944 cartoon is still relevant 80 years later!



"This is the meteorological officer speaking."



RAF NORTH WEALD
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Perhaps surprisingly, another Empire Air Day was held on Saturday 20 May 1939. Sixty-two RAF stations and sixteen civil airfields were open to the public at North Weald, on this occasion time attended by no less than 100,000 people, featured displays of the based Hurricanes, a flight and speed competitions and gun-bombing tests by Bristol Blenheims. The charge for entry was one adult and threepence for children. Motorists were also 1939

...had witnessed the arrival of another fighter squadron at North Weald when No 17 had flown in with its Gauntlets, having spent the previous five years at RAF Kenley in Surrey. Almost immediately it began converting to Hurricanes, and by the end of 1939 it had become the third front-line Hurricane squadron at the Essex airfield, joining Nos 50 and 151.

It was at about this time that a new system of identifying the units to which aircraft belonged came into force. The colourful squadron line and unit emblems had been hushed, and in their place came a three-letter code system, the first two identifying the squadron and the last the individual aircraft. No 17 Squadron were allocated the letters 'LV', No 56 'LR' and No 151 'LZ'—although No 17s were quickly changed to 'W' and No 56 to 'US'.

Meanwhile, away from the public gaze, preparations for war were in full swing...



L. F. Mk. I (1945). De Havilland Vampire F. Mk. 3 (1943-1952). Gloster Meteor F. Mk. 8 (1952-1957).

Right, top: New for old: three of No 604 Squadron's Vampires, as yet unadorned with unit markings, await their pilots along the eastern perimeter track following their delivery to North Weald in late 1948. Some of the Squadron's remounted Spitfires are seen in the background.

Right, above: Franks chasing Vampires 38 of No 601 (upper) and 604 (lower) Squadrons, showing the striking color wheel-like in the upper zone on top.



counterparts in the RAF, but the annual Summer Camps offered them opportunities of working with other units, conducting live firing exercises and generally honing their skills. They were much looked forward to, not least because they often took place in exotic climes. No 601 found themselves at Suhl, an island off Germany, and Ta Kali in Malta during their period at North Weald, while 604 were sent to Ta Kali and to Thorney Island near Portsmouth (proving that you cannot win them all!).

Above: A No 29 Squadron sergeant checks the wiring equipment in a Siskin. Above, right: A Siskin in the colours of No 29 Squadron. Below: No 29 Squadron Siskins at Hendon; the aerobics instructor and a member of sister-unit No 56 are in front of them.



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