

THE HURRICANE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD MUSEUM ASSOCIATION



EDITION: SPRING 2014



*The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight returned briefly to North Weald due to inclement weather at its home base—story on page
[Image © Pete Gardner]*

Did your Sunday roast dinner arrive by unmanned air vehicle?
Did any of your Christmas presents arrive by such means?

Of course not, but who can blame Amazon for 'filling their boots' on this little PR stunt. It reverberated through the media for days on end in December. Nothing like a bit of positive PR to get the tills ringing. If only we could tap into the minor genius that set that little coup off we would be using him or her to boost the profile of the museum!

Meanwhile the mailman has been and left a card saying we were not in and there is a parcel to be collected from the depot..... Moral must be that we must, somehow, open more often!

INSIDE THE FULL EDITION

List of contents of the full on-line edition of The Hurricane available by e-mail or as a download from the museum website:

www.northwealdairfieldmuseum.com

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As we glide towards reopening for a new season it dawns on us that we are temporarily among a select few at the moment, our official guiding museum, the Epping Forest District Museum remains closed for at least another year undergoing its Lottery Funded reincarnation.

There are other attractions in the District of course but one less museum places upon us a little more pressure and a chance to prove our mettle in serving a growing appetite for history and in particular family research.

In the following pages of The Hurricane you will find several examples of ongoing research by members and enquiries from others. Mainstream museums tend to be too busy to involve themselves directly in pure new research, they are mostly repositories of information and artefacts and use that to produce often excellent exhibits. With a number of enthusiastic research members that is an area where North Weald can grow, albeit within the confines of aviation no matter how loosely interpreted.

The museum interior has been revised and redisplayed for the new season starting in April with a growing level of attention being directed at the Great War as we approach the 100th anniversary of the airfield opening in 1916.

Open from May until November



Meanwhile there are mutterings in the wings about our new 'all electronic' format. Some are clearly unable or unwilling to access the Internet so the first pages of this edition will be print friendly, list the comings year's events and indicate the articles contained in the main edition.

2014 Events

This year we have pooled our resources with The Squadron as speakers are increasingly difficult to find so Talk nights this summer will be held at the Squadron starting at 19:45 hrs, with a entrance donation of £1 for members and £2 for non members. Other events may become evident during the year.

09 April [Wednesday] Talk night at The Squadron 19:45hrs Keith Wilson Air To Air Photography

27 April [Sunday] Charity Fly In at The Squadron

4 May [Sunday] - Essex Bike show in partnership with Essex Air Ambulance. Free entry [Charity event] - 10am to 4pm.

10 May [Sunday] 72 Squadron Reunion

14 May Talk Night at The Squadron 19:45 hrs Robin Richardson Motorbike Land Speed Record

30 May Quiz Night at The Museum 19:30 hrs (£1 per person)

14-15 June [Saturday and Sunday] - Air Britain Fly - in and the Epping and Ongar Railway [EOR] 1940's Military Week End at North Weald Station.

14 June [Saturday] from 6pm - 11pm, D Day Hangar Dance - staged by Weald Aviation in cooperation with the "Dakotair RAF Transport Command Memorial" <http://www.rafrtransportcommandmemorial.com/>

7 July [Monday] Tour de France in Epping Forest District includes stage changeover outside museum.

18-20 July [Friday to Sunday] Base 2 Base Challenge, an Essex & Herts Air Ambulance Charity fundraising event. The charity is asking all comers to join them for a 45 mile walk from the Hertfordshire Air Ambulance base on North Weald Airfield to their Essex Air Ambulance Base in Earls Colne. This is a unique 3 day challenge; walking by day and camping by night. Get sponsored and help raise vital funds for your local Air Ambulance Charity Register now by sending an E-Mail to Jenny.Macpherson@EHAAT.uk.com

7 September [Sunday] North Weald Airfield Annual Community Fun Day Fly-in.

The theme of this year's event will be 'Wings over Europe'. - remembering D Day and beyond," commemorating the epic days that followed the Allied Forces invasion of Europe on D Day- 6th June 1944; when RAF North Weald played a major role in releasing the people of Europe from Nazi tyranny.

14 September [Sunday] North Weald Airfield Museum Fun Day and reunion 12 noon.

21 September [Sunday] Battle of Britain Sunday - Wreath laying and Service will be at St Andrews Church North Weald commencing 11am.[tbc]



Getting to the museum

Accessing the museum if you do not have a car can be problematical as there is only a restricted standard bus service. Thankfully the Epping Ongar Railway runs its heritage 339 bus service every weekend throughout the day from before we are open until after we close. It provides an additional bus connection from the museum to Epping London Underground Station.

An added feature is that the museum now has an antique reproduction styled sign on the bus top at North Weald EOR Station.

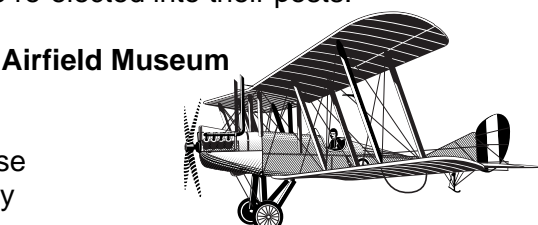
Full details on the bus other bus services [20, 21, 381 and 382] can be found at <http://www.harlowride.co.uk/places/northweald.html>

Annual General Meeting

This year the Annual General Meeting of the North weald Airfield Museum Association took place in the museum conference room on Sunday 8 December 2013 at 3pm. All the current Trustees were re-elected into their posts.

North Weald Airfield Museum

Ad Astra House
Hurricane Way
North Weald
Epping
Essex
CM16 6AA



01992 523010 [24/7 answer]
office@northwealdairfieldmuseum.com

Open

Saturday and Sunday 12noon to 5pm
Last entry at 4pm. April to November
Or groups by appointment during the week

www.northwealdairfieldmuseum.com

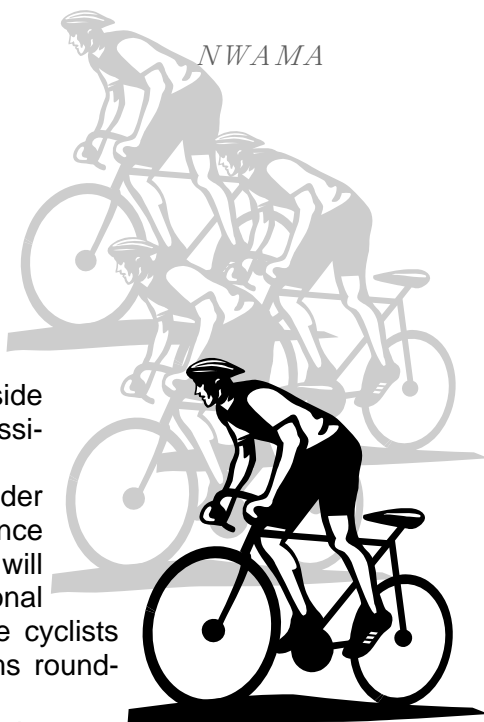
Organisers of the Tour de France will be closing local roads for up to nine hours when the race passes through the district on Monday, July 7. On the positive side hundreds, if not thousands of people will be marooned within the area bounded by the road closures looking for something to do and somewhere to go.

The route through Willingale, Fyfield, Moreton and Magdalen Laver will be closed from 8am until 5pm, with the rest of the route - through North Weald and Epping - closing from 9am.

One of the check-points for the road race event is expected to be outside the North Weald Airfield Museum and Memorial and that suggests a possible avenue of promotion for the museum.

The supporters of this high profile International cycle race say the wider benefits of the event include expecting many spectators viewing this once in a lifetime opportunity to see the world class cyclists which we hope will inspire a new generation of people to be more active. But the promotional cavalcade is expected to reach the district at about 12.15pm with the cyclists reaching Willingale at about 2pm and passing through the Wake Arms roundabout and Epping New Road at about 3pm.

This gives the museum a few hours in which it might attract and entertain a potentially 'unengaged' group of people awaiting the arrival of the cyclists.



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North Weald and Ongar Branch

Formed in 1953 the North Weald Branch of The Royal Air Forces Association [RAFA] meets on the second Wednesday of each month at **The Squadron**, situated in the centre of the historic and still very active North Weald Airfield.

Meetings commence at 12 noon with lunch at 1pm, followed by a speaker or entertainment. Members can also enjoy regular social activities at a variety of venues and take an active part in airfield and local community events.

If you are an ex RAF service man or woman, why not come to one of our monthly meetings, where you are sure of a warm welcome and pleasant company. If you are not ex RAF you will be equally very welcome and, if you wish, could join as an associated member.

For more information please contact Branch Secretary Yvonne Grace
on 01277 2215514

Be part of something special

OBITUARY

A long time stalwart of the museum, Eddie Collins, died early in the New Year.

Edwin Arthur Collins, "Eddie" had been a very active member and Trustee until illness progressively halted his attending. He was one of our team of resident historian's and excelled in ferreting out the type of book our library should have from amongst the many in the used market.

Born on 19th December 1925 in North London his family owned a cycle shop and from the age of 15 Eddie would cycle up to London to work and used to find that he regularly had to ride home during the bombing raids in the Blitz.

Like many of his era he joined the ATC [Air Training Corps] as a precursor to volunteering for the RAF in 1942 at the age of 17. He was turned down as too young but was accepted when he turned 18 the following year.

Trained at Newquay in Cornwall and in the Yorkshire Dales and passed out as a flight engineer on bombers. He was posted to No. 296 Squadron at Earls Colne, Essex serving on Handley Page Halifax bombers. He rose to the rank of sergeant.

After demob Eddie joined the Civil Service – Government Defence Establishment and rose to the grade of Senior Executive Officer. His final post was as Personnel Manager at the Royal Ordnance Factory where he looked after over 2,000 staff.

After retirement he re-joined the GDE as a part-time public relations officer, was an active member of the Essex Aircrew Association, Scouting, crown green bowls, PROBUS and swimming, and in 1959 he was a founder member of the Epping Film Society.

He married on 25th March 1950 – with a wedding reception at the George and Dragon, it was a union that lasted for 53 years. They initially lodged with his parents at Palmers Green but moved into their first and only house at 3 Tidy's Lane in Epping when it was built in the early 1950's.

They adopted a son and a daughter in 1959 and 1960 respectively.

Eddie suffered a stroke after a heart valve replacement operation in 2012 and died on 2nd January 2014

The funeral service, attended by local undertakers Poulton's, was conducted at St John the Baptist Church, Epping on 16th January 2014 was followed by committal at Parndon Wood Crematorium and a wake at the Rainbow and Dove, Hastingwood. The NWAMA sent a floral tribute and was attended by members of the Trustees.

The coffin, which bore an RAF service cap and family flowers on top, made full use of the latest fashion in design and technology in that it was a picture coffin representing a WWII airfield with Spitfires and Halifax bombers dispersed about the field.

We are grateful to the family who have asked for donations in memory of Eddie to go to North Weald Airfield Museum .



© NWAMA



ANOTHER TIN LEGS

Sub Lt. Colin Shaw Hodgkinson RN, a 21-years old pilot who lost his legs in a training accident in a Tiger Moth during 1940 returned to flying, and war service, with the RAF in 1942 thus joining the likes of Douglas Bader as one who flew wearing tin legs. He also picked up a nickname that might not be acceptable today – "Hoppy".

It is said that Hoppy had a fear of flying over water and took measures to ensure his survival in case of a ditching.

While flying high above the English Channel in a Spitfire he was alarmed to hear popping sounds and thought he was under attack, he immediately took evasive action and dived to a lower altitude where thankfully the noises of the attack ceased.

He returned safely to base and landed to find that the aircraft was surprisingly undamaged by the experience. It was only later when he took off his false legs that he discovered that the popping sounds had come, not from gunfire, from the explosion of some 100 ping pong balls he had acquired to fill the voids in them and improve his buoyancy in case of ditching in the sea. They had not taken kindly to the high altitude flight and burst!

Colin's full story is told on the web at <http://www.n5490.org/Pilots/Hodgkinson/Hodgkinson.html>
He served at North Weald after the war with 604 Squadron flying DH Vampire jets.



©Essex Fire & Rescue

©NWAMA

OBITUARY

It is with a heavy heart that The Editor was obliged to halt the production of this edition of *The Hurricane* on the devastating news that our young and enthusiastic Secretary Simon Chamberlain died on the eve of publication. Indeed he looked over the original document the day before his death and proposed some minor changes.

On the afternoon of Saturday 29 March 2014 Simon was with his wife Lizzie and young son Charlie at North Weald Airfield when he was offered a free ride in the back of a Yak 52 G-YAKR that was going out on a local flight. Like all of us he enthusiastically jumped at the opportunity to follow his hobby and waved goodbye to his family and flew off to the east.

About 15 minutes later at 14:55 hours Essex Fire & Rescue were called to a site near the A414 Ongar Road at Cooksmill Green where a light aircraft had reportedly crashed and burned. The site was just a minute flight time from the airfield between Ongar and Writtle. Firefighters extinguished the fire within an hour but the two occupants were dead. The Air Accident Investigation Branch (AAIB) will be investigating the cause of the crash.

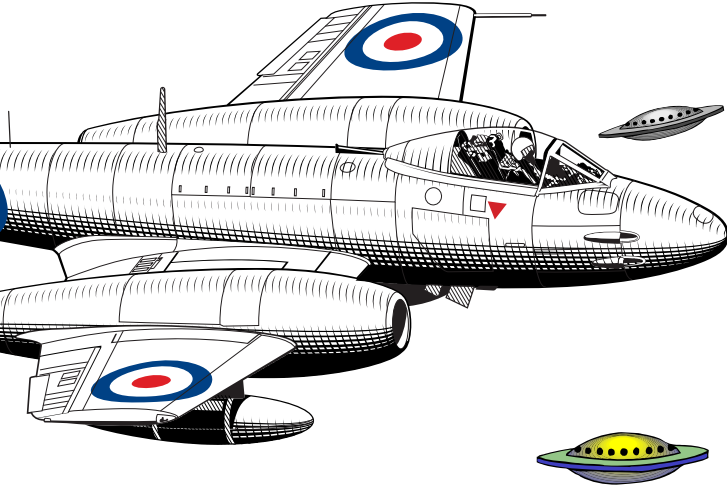
Simon, a resident of Harlow, was at the core of the North Weald Airfield Trustees and worked tirelessly for the museum as Secretary and undertaking the annual redisplays despite a long term problem with his foot that he had just put behind him. The museum was due to reopen for the new season a week after the accident and without him it has not been completed in time to meet the schedule and therefore the opening will be delayed. We have put a nominal date of 1 May but hope to be open well before that.

Time alone will tell whether one of Simon's new projects for 2014, *The Typhoon Tea Room*, will open on its intended date of Sunday 10 May. It was to be open 12-4 with hot and cold drinks and light refreshment.

Simon Paul Chamberlain was born in Romford in May 1984 so was just shy of his 30th birthday, he married Lizzie in 2008.



Simon set up his own company Country & Game in 2010 to provide property maintenance and equestrian services.



604 SAUCER

On 14 October, 1954, Flight-Lieutenant James R. Salandin was one of the 'weekend' pilots of No. 604 County of Middlesex Squadron, Royal Auxiliary Air Force. He had reported for duty at North Weald, Essex, and at 4.15 p.m. took off in his Gloster Meteor Mark 8 jet. Climbing southwards into a blue and cloudless sky he soon observed two other Meteors flying in formation high above him and leaving long vapour trails. Flight-Lieutenant Salandin watched the passage of the two aircraft while occasionally checking his instruments.

He had reached 16,000 feet (4,880 metres) over the outlying districts of Southend, when to his surprise

he saw two circular objects, travelling in the opposite direction to the Meteors, hurtle between them. One of the objects was silvery in colour, the other gold. Salandin watched them until they disappeared, at the '9 o'clock high' position-to his port, or left, side.

After checking his own instruments he turned his gaze to the air in front of him. To his horror he saw a silvery object streaking straight towards him. For a few split seconds he saw a thing that "had a bun-shaped top, a flange like two saucers in the middle, and a bun underneath... it could not have been far off because it overlapped the windscreen." The object avoided a head-on collision at the very last second by suddenly swerving off past the jet on its port side.

Badly shaken, the Flight-Lieutenant flew around quietly for 10 minutes or so to regain his composure, and reported his experience to ground control. He was annoyed, too, when he realized later that his camera - standard equipment on combat aircraft - had been loaded all the time. With everything happening so quickly he didn't have time to press the button. A valuable opportunity to gather evidence had been missed.

[London Illustrated News, December 2, 1954, and RAF Flying Review, July 1957, and Richard Hall, NICAP].

AIRFIELD NEWS

The latest edition of the Spirit of North Weald – the EFDC Management take on local events is available for download from <http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/index.php/out-and-about/north-weald-airfield>

POLAR TREK

Greenpeace used Weald Aviation's Hangar 6 Apron to assemble Aurora "the world's largest" Polar Bear, which took part in the Mayor's Thames Festival in September.

This giant construction was designed and the parts built in east London, but when the team began to put it together they realised there wasn't sufficient room on the site. One of the team members had recently learned to drive and had come past the airfield on one of her lessons. A quick phone call to Weald Aviation gave them the all the space they needed.

The polar bear has moving legs, head, and jaws, and is steered from a platform at the back. Each leg is moved by two people and the whole float is attached to ropes which are pulled from the front. It weighs three tonnes.

Once the bear was complete, the team spent two days getting used to operating it, because the whole process had to be choreographed so that the legs were moved in the right order. Other people manipulated the head and jaws from a cabin inside the body. It is intended to highlight the issue of changes to the Arctic.



LIBRARY BOOSTER

Beware: If this item appears pure advertorial in nature I make no apologies for its content, in fact it is created without the knowledge of After the Battle.

During the annual Remembrance service in November Gail Parker Ramsey presented the museum library with the latest title from After the Battle publications stable, a book based on aerial photographs taken across the fronts of mainland Europe during the Great War.

The museum library includes many titles from the After the Battle lists, these are available for free loan to members.

In the archives the museum has some of the earliest work of the group, early editions of Aviation News which was published by a company Winston Ramsey was associated with during the 1960s.

After the Battle is a military history magazine published quarterly in the United Kingdom by Battle of Britain International Limited, it has exceeded 160 editions since it was first published in 1973, and appears on the 15th of February, May, August and November each year. The Editor-in-Chief since 1973 has been Winston, now ably assisted by his co-author wife Gail Parker Ramsey. Recent editions include an article on the raising of a virtually intact Dornier from the English Channel and a treatise on the remains of the Siegfried Line.

The magazine deals with the Second World War in a "then and now" format. Articles are illustrated by historical photographs matched with a modern-day photograph of the identical scene to show how much (or how little) things have changed. Most issues feature a major article on a specific subject, with several smaller articles. All areas of the world are written about, not all are in English language there are examples in German and Flemish. There are also occasional features on related subjects such as war films, vehicle preservation and war memorials.

Winston Ramsey sponsored the North Weald Memorial built in 2000 and has erected or refurbished grave markers on a number of important war graves including the those of six men who died in Royal Gunpowder Factory explosions in 1940, a Chigwell mass grave to people killed a public house destroyed by a land mine and the grave of Mrs Ivy Millichamp the last person to be killed by enemy action on 27 March 1945.

The magazines provided the fuel for a series of books – the ones in the museum library – providing a broader treatise on various subjects with perhaps the most famous being The Battle of Britain – then and now and The Blitz – then and now.

In addition to these pure war titles ATB has ventured into a variety of different subjects far removed from war including the early works such as Epping Forest –then and now and Woodford – then and now. More recent titles have included some unexpected titles such as The ACE cafe – then and now and The Great North Road – then and now. The latter means absolutely nothing to some who have never travelled north of Watford on an A road but a great deal to one who might have bumbled along now long disconnected northern roads in a 1938 Wolseley Wasp in days before much of the route was turned into a virtual motorway. As with everything from this stable – sheer nostalgia!

Winston Ramsey has been the Vice President of the NWA museum for some years. After the Battle is based at Hobbs Cross, Old Harlow Essex CM17 0NN 01279 41 8833 E-mail: hq@afterthebattle.com and can be contacted in office hours **Monday to Friday 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.** www.afterthebattle.com



Gail presents the new volume to NWAMA Trustee Stephen Wagstaffe last November. ©NWAMA

LOOK WHAT THE WEATHER BLEW IN! [Cover Story]

An unscheduled high profile operation of some of the RAFs flying preserved aircraft from North Weald last September was only notified on the day thanks to unexpected winds at their Coningsby base.

The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight's Spitfire and Hurricane operated out of North Weald to perform the commemorative flypast over Westminster marking Battle of Britain Day.

They arrived early on the morning of Sunday 15 September for fuel, then departed to central London, returning 40 minutes later, performing fly byes over the airfield and museum before landing. The aircraft were housed in the hangar at The Squadron, leaving two days later.

It was particularly fitting that the BBMF operated from North Weald on this day. On 15 September 1945, Douglas Bader and eleven of his Battle of Britain comrades took off from North Weald to lead the 300 aircraft in the first Battle of Britain Day commemorative flypast over London.



Another local departure has been that of Simon Hannay lately the manager of the EOR [the Epping & Ongar Railway]. Largely a volunteer run operation it has proven highly successful in recent times with growing numbers of customers flocking to its doors.

Simon the paid member of staff did well in guiding the expansion of the attraction with high profile marketing that clearly worked.

No word yet on his replacement.

BIG GUNS – North Weald history

As early as 1939, the Air Ministry was looking at installing 20 mm cannon in fighter aircraft as a more powerful and devastating alternative to the standard armament of eight 0.303-inch Browning machine guns.

Hawkers fitted an experimental installation of two 20 mm Oerlikon cannon to a Hurricane Mark 1, L1750. These were contained in housings under each wing, but they reduced the speed by some 20 mph. Each round also had to be greased, which was not acceptable operationally.

During the Battle of Britain, the aircraft was allocated to 151 Squadron, then based at North Weald, but it was not popular because of its unreliable guns and slower speed.

A new commander for B Flight was posted in from Aston Down in early June – F/Lt R L 'Dick' Smith. His first few weeks were spent getting fully operational in the aftermath of the Dunkirk evacuation. Then, in early July, he noticed an unusual Hurricane in the Squadron's hangar, and asked about it.

"This aircraft was L1750, Squadron letters DZ-Z, and it had two cannons, which were cocked and fired by a tricky procedure, I think the system was called 'Eureka'. . . We were short of aircraft, the idea of flying an Experimental system appealed to me, and I was now leading B Flight and often the Squadron, and having the leader with a slow aircraft helped the rest of the aircraft to keep up – so I

flew 'Z' as a routine."

The reliability of the guns improved with use, and he shot down a Dornier 17 on 13 August. His Hurricane was hit in the armoured windscreen and he took a perspex splinter in his eye. Smith flew 80 operational missions with L1750 until it was again damaged by enemy fire, and was sent to Cardington for repair. It returned to the Squadron, then based at RAF Digby, in October and he flew it for the last time on 22 November 1940.



Call in and see us any Saturday or Sunday

He also used another Mark 1 fitted experimentally with cannon on many sorties – V7360. This Hurricane had four drum-fed 20 mm Hispano cannon in the gun bays of the wings, and bore the Squadron letters DZ-C. It was the initial prototype of the layout used later in the Hurricane IIC. But V7360 did not have the more powerful Merlin XX of the developed aircraft, and was heavier and even slower than L1750. The guns were designed for mounting within rigid engine blocks, so the recoil in the more flexible wing structure twisted the installation and caused the shells to mis-feed.

Smith persisted with the aircraft, and on 31 August, scored a probable on a Messerschmitt 109 while flying it out of Stapleford Tawney, a satellite aerodrome of North Weald.

V7360 was then transferred to 46 Squadron at Stapleford and F/Lt Alexander Rabagliati shot down a Messerschmitt 109 on 5 September. It later returned to Hawkers for further development to modify and strengthen the gun mountings.

Mark IICs eventually became the most numerous version of the Hurricane; 4,711 were built. Smith flew 133 sorties with the cannon prototypes and so 151 Squadron played a useful role in developing this fine ground-attack aircraft.

AIR AMBULANCE NEWS

Essex & Herts Air Ambulance Trust, who operate the 7 days a week red and white MD Explorer helicopter from North Weald Airfield on life or death missions across southern England officially launched a new extended service beyond daylight hours at the end of March. As an alternative strategy to that being taken by other operations the Trust have gone for having a dedicated fast response vehicle based in the middle of its region at North Weald Airfield. The HEMS Doctor/Paramedic team will respond to patients in Essex & Hertfordshire rapidly and safely in the hours of darkness on Friday and Saturday nights. The cars will carry full life-saving equipment and drugs exactly like the helicopters but unlike the helicopters they are not weather dependent.

London has had a similar system of response cars covering the night hours and adjoining areas still have restricted night hours helicopters available.

The whole system of night response in the UK is still developing and the variety of models being tried out varies considerably. A few years down the road we can expect some consolidation towards perceived 'best practice' but until then variety is the name of the game. [PAR]



The Trust was able to announce that both finalists from the Charity were crowned winners at the very first Air Ambulance Awards of Excellence!

Poppy Young, one of the Charity's youngest and most enthusiastic supporters won Outstanding Young Person and Flight for Life Lottery Manager Janice Flower won Charity Staff Member of the Year.

Janice's award is in recognition of all her hard work and dedication over the past 10 years. Janice came to the Charity as a volunteer in April 2003 and just over a year later she joined the team working full time in the Lottery Department. Since joining, Janice has completed three fundraising treks for the Charity; she has trekked China, Iceland and Italy, personally raising over £7,000!



This is the first year the awards have been held and were hosted by BBC Breakfast presenter Louise Minchin with GP and noted comedian Dr Phil Hammond on hand to present each winner with their award in front of an enthusiastic gathering.



L-R: Louise Minchin (Awards Co-Host), Paul Westaway of Bond Aviation Group (Award Sponsor), Poppy Young (Outstanding Young Person) and Dr Phil Hammond (Awards Co-Host)

The Essex & Herts Air Ambulance Trust Flight for Life Lottery is now more popular than ever, reaching the highest number of members in its 15 year history! A record breaking 107,000 chances are now being played across Essex and Herts all helping to keep the local Air Ambulances operational and saving lives across much of the south east.

To join, simply visit www.FlightforLifeLottery.uk.com or call the Flight for Life Lottery Team on 0845 2417 688.

NOT TOO YOUNG TO DIE

From Canada came the story of a 15-year-old who managed to get to war years before he was old enough.

A now Ottawa-based veteran has revealed how he hid his real age and became a British soldier three years before it was legal to do so. Nine weeks later, Ken Fletcher was critically injured in a Nazi bombing raid on North Weald and ten of his teenage army friends lay dead.

Just out of school, Mr. Fletcher walked into a recruiting office near his home in England determined to fight for Britain. As there was then no requirement to produce a birth certificate it was the only way in that summer of 1940 that a 15-year-old boy could get into uniform. Within an hour, he was signed up for the Essex regiment.

His original ambition to enlist in the Royal Air Force had been dashed by their stipulation that they wanted to see his birth certificate. The army was less demanding.

Armed with heavy new boots and knowledge from just three days of lectures, Mr. Fletcher and his fellow recruits were sent to RAF North Weald — a 25 mile march that left most of them with red raw blistered feet to undertake airfield defence in all weathers.

It was at 3 p.m. on Aug. 24 when the North Weald Tannoy speaker system warned of enemy aircraft approaching from the east. The boy soldiers made their way into their allotted defence positions in slit trenches and shelters as the enemy aircraft droned towards the airfield.

Fifty bombers and up to 100 fighters appeared in the sky above the airfield and bombs rained down.

North Weald Airfield's



OPEN EVERY DAY - 930am to 5pm

Why not visit our unique café and step back in time to RAF North Weald in the 1950's and the dawn of the "New Jet Age".

Sited alongside the Essex Air Ambulance Helicopter pad and busy maintenance hangars of Weald Aviation, visitors to this comfortable and friendly dining venue can see and hear [weather permitting] historic aircraft coming and going from the same spot as the Cold War Jet Pilots of RAF North Weald in the 1950's

Customers can sample good food from a themed menu; including a wide range of breakfasts, lunch, hot or cold snacks, daily specials and even afternoon Cream Tea; while on Sunday traditional Sunday Lunch is also served.

Group visits are welcome, tours of the airfield can be arranged by prior appointment and we can also cater for your private functions and parties. For further information please call Debbie on 07583857445

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU VERY SOON



Please remember North Weald is an active airfield – visitors enter at their own risk.

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. please let us know who you are and whether you like it!

EPPING MARKET

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The shelter where some of his young friends had gone for safety received a direct hit. Ten 17-19 year olds were killed. The walls of the trench shook like a jelly and concrete was flying everywhere. A large chunk hit him in the back and completely winded him for a minute or so. Sent off to sick bay, an X-ray revealed five spine fractures. For the next six months, he was in a full body plaster and completely divorced from contact with the regiment, the survivors and North Weald itself.

For years he had not known just who had died in that raid. Finally, ten years ago he made the nostalgic return to North Weald and for the first time read the names engraved in the stones in the churchyard. The names etched on his memory were there engraved on a long line of stones all bearing the same date of death.

A year after the raid, Mr. Fletcher's army career was over. His parents produced the birth certificate showing his real year of birth as 1925, not 1922. Torn between pride at their son's commitment and anguish over his plight following the raid, the couple until then had gone along with the age deception at their son's request.

But they also wanted to pave the way for Mr. Fletcher to volunteer for his first ambition, to join the Royal Air Force.

He was soon drafted into Bomber Command, and as the rear gunner in a Wellington bomber flying from Foggia in Italy, would complete 40 operations over southern Europe.

Mr. Fletcher finished his service career as a staff officer in the Aden Command. He was still only 21. He later went to Canada and married an Ontario woman and had three children.

[Extracted from an article by Peter Owen is a retired British journalist and a cousin of Ken Fletcher. Originally carried by the Ottawa Citizen in 2008 image via After the Battle].



THE CANADIAN FROM VIRGINIA

From America comes a claim for a new name to be added to the North Weald Roll of Honour. When the war memorial set up it was decided by the Memorial Trustees that any listing of the names would be in a renewable form – a printed sheet – to ensure that any errors were easily revised. This option has led to a number of revisions and reprints since 2000.

Bill Florance a former member of the US Forces in Britain wrote to the museum late in January claiming that his relative served and died in the service of the RAF while at North Weald

His cousin, Richard Fuller Patterson, was a member of the Eagle Squadron, No. 121, and was shot down and killed over Belgium on December 7, 1941. He was flying a Spitfire, and was on a Rhubarb mission flying out of North Weald at that time. A photo of Fuller showing him leaning across the tail end of his Spitfire was published in Life Magazine in the US just prior to his death. The North Weald memorial list did not acknowledge his death.

Bill had found that Fuller had been stationed there when he did some Internet research recently. That activity was itself prompted by the local marking of his death and those of 15 other men from the State of Virginia in a special ceremony held in Richmond, Virginia last year.

After researching the claim it was found that Richard Fuller Patterson had not died whilst flying out of North Weald.

Most sources show that 121 Squadron came to North Weald from the north in December 1941, but they neglect to show the exact date. The actual transfer took place after his death on December 16 and further research confirmed that the squadron had not flown down from Kirton-in-Lindsay to refuel at North Weald whilst en-route to Belgium.



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A Yank in RAF uniform: Pilot Officer C W "Red" McColpin of No 71 (Eagle) Squadron RAF, standing by his Supermarine Spitfire Mark VB at North Weald, Essex.



© File



Although Epping Forest District Museum in Waltham Abbey remains closed throughout 2014 [and potentially well into 2015] the team there are creating exhibitions which travel to other museums using funds provided by the Arts Council of England.

The latest to open is Response and Rescue, an introduction to a range of Emergency Services, which opened on 28 March at the Time Machine, Harlow Leisure Centre, CM20 3DT.

This Exhibition tells the story of the creation and development of the emergency services from Victorian volunteer fire brigades to today's dedicated coastguard crews. Explore the lives of those working on the front line and discover the history of the life-saving services that we de-

pend upon daily.

With a special emphasis on emergency services in the East of England, *Response and Rescue* includes an audio tour of collected objects and stories from the region. On display, visitors can see the newly restored Second World War trailer pump, previously stationed at the North Weald Aerodrome, the cell door from the nineteenth century Ongar Lock up and a pair of stunning watches presented to the RNLI's most decorated lifeboat man, Henry Blogg.

The newly restored 1939-45 Wartime trailer pump originally collected by Jack Farmer from Theydon Bois, had been lying a little worse for wear at the museum store in Loughton for some years until selected for a little bit of tender loving care especially for the show in Harlow.

The main trailer body was produced by Briggs Motor Bodies Ltd., Dagenham and the demountable water pump is a petrol driven Standard Gwynne. In service the trailer was towed behind a light car to the fire and connected to either a pond or a hydrant to fight a range of fires. The design was supposed to be easily removed from the trailer by two men but I can testify that these two will have had a good reserve of strength, it is awkward to get at and very heavy even when drained of integral water and petrol tanks as it is now.

Aside from a thick layer of grime the main problem with the trailer was the tyres. Cross-ply tyres, a design that we of the older generation are familiar with, but no-one born after the 1960s will know much about are almost impossible to source. The quirky result of the light touch restoration is that the tyres now gracing this very British equipment were acquired from the wheels of a Russian Jeep complete with Cyrillic text – but not too many people will notice that detail.



The two parts of the trailer separated for transport to the Harlow exhibition site last month © NWAMA



A group of North Weald RAFA members in front of a Vampire Jet Trainer based at the airfield today - an example of the type of aircraft that could be seen flying at RAF North Weald in the early fifties.

Members of the North Weald and Ongar Branch of The Royal Air Force Association [RAFA] had a surprise, when they were presented with a certificate to honour the group's 60th anniversary at their North Weald Airfield HQ recently..

Accepting the certificate on behalf of members, Branch President Tom Saville reminded those present the RAFA motto is *Friendship Help and Support*; and that the association exists to ensure recognition of the

debt this nation owes to RAF personnel, past and present, and their immediate families. The aim of RAFA members is to help ensure that in an ever-changing world, where the needs of our veterans, old and young are constantly evolving, such sacrifice does not result in suffering, poverty or loneliness.

Formed in 1953 as Ongar and District Branch [adding North Weald to its title in 1963]; over the years, thanks to the generosity of the community and active support of its members, the group have raised tens of thousands of pounds to support RAFA's vital work.

Held on the second Wednesday of each month at *The Squadron* on North Weald airfield, meetings commence at 12 noon with lunch at 1pm, followed by a speaker or entertainment. Members also enjoy regular social activities at a variety of venues and take an active part in airfield and local community events.

Attached photo shows a group of North Weald RAFA members in front of a Vampire Jet Trainer based at the airfield today - an example of the type of aircraft that could be seen flying at RAF North Weald in the early fifties.

For further information on the local branch of RAFA please contact Arthur Moreton on 01992 524440.

WIND TUNNELS by the Black Sheds

Away from North Weald there is news that the historic wind tunnels at Farnborough, the birthplace of British aviation, in Hampshire are to again be open to public view and launched with a contemporary art exhibition between 9th June and 20th July 2014.

Farnborough's Grade 1 Listed Wind Tunnels are being re-opened for the first time since the 1960s and the exhibition runs for six weeks leading up to the Farnborough International Air Show 14 — 20 July.

The Wind Tunnel Project opening on the 9th June will be housed in and around 1917 and 1935 Grade 1 Listed buildings which will open to the public for the first time in history.

Once the Royal Air Force flight testing warehouse for the Hawker Hurricane, the fighter plane that revolutionised fighter plane design, the sites Q121, R52 and the Air Balloon Hangar that cover 2400 sqm will be revived with art from a selection of international artists. For over 50 years, the wind tunnels, located beside TAG Farnborough Airport have laid dormant. These historic examples of British heritage showcasing world leading Research & Development are being reinvented as one of the most exciting new venues for the art outside London. The event will run every two years to coincide with Farnborough International Airshow.

Richard Gardner, Farnborough Air Sciences Trust (FAST) Chairman added: "The FAST trustees have campaigned for 20 years to safeguard the legacy of the Royal Aircraft Establishment. A priceless collection of artefacts, film and documents are now safe in the FAST museum and we are delighted to see the start of a new life for this most precious historic site."



The historical gems lingering in the background of the bi-annual Farnborough Airshow are finally opening their doors © PAR



TEN YEARS AGO

How time passes!

This image of the Canadian built "Z5140" HA*C was taken in the blast pens by The Squadron in September 2004 shortly after it was restored

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MUSEUM OPENING TIMES

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Except on Special Event Days
visitors will be charged standard
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Adults	£2
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Children [5-15]	50p

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

MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

We accept all currencies in welcoming
you to museum membership—becoming
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as long as it means the same as
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You can join through the museum [website](http://www.northwealdairfieldmuseum.com).

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