

THE HURRICANE

The Newsletter of the North Weald Airfield Museum Association

EDITION: WINTER 2017

Congratulations to museum Trustee Stephen Wagstaffe on being installed as the Master Chartered Architect of the Worshipful Company of Chartered Architects on 20th September. They are a Livery Company of the City of London.

The installation service was held in the City of London at St. Lawrence Jewry Church, Gresham Street under the direction of The Rev. Canon David Parrott, the Incumbent.

The hour-long service was followed by a somewhat longer and very jovial luncheon at the Stationers Hall close by St Paul's Cathedral. The Principal Guest was Alderman Charles Bowman who became the 690th Lord Mayor of London a few days later.

Other guests included John Stevens, Baron Stevens of Kirkwhelpington, QPM, KStJ, DL, FRSA who was Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis from 2000 until 2005 and Trustees from the museum.

Right: A robed Steve Wagstaffe and his principal guests bid welcome to the Stationers Hall.

Bottom Right: A fine setting for a grand occasion.

Below: The entrance to St. Lawrence Jewry Church, a few yards of green among the concrete jungle. [NWAMA]



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD MUSEUM ASSOCIATION



It is expected that the police base will be in a gap in the present structures ©NWAMA

The future of the airfield – be it flying or houses – has never been far off the agenda since I first joined the museum over 25 years ago.

This summer the latest twist and turn, thrust forward, dramatic u turn or lack of interest in official attitudes appeared to suggest that rather than closing the airfield there was a will to move forward with more aviation rather than less. Houses – whilst still close by and potentially threatening – were off the agenda for now.

It is in that light the latest news from Epping Forest District must be viewed. The council appear to be welcoming the latest moves by the airborne emergency services to expand the scope and intensity of North Weald Airfield.

The former Metropolitan Police helicopter base - currently at Lippitts Hill, High Beach - could relocate to North Weald. The Met, and more recently the National Police Air Service [NPAS], the body that now runs police aircraft nationally, have been looking to move the unit for years and the previous favourite was RAF Northolt near Heathrow airport.

NPAS have approached Epping Forest District Council, which owns the airfield, about the possible move as it has been given notice to leave Lippitts Hill by the time its current lease expires at the end of March next year.

NPAS is initially seeking a temporary site with a view to making the move permanent, for three helicopters and a fixed wing aircraft to operate from the airfield in west Essex on a 24/7 basis. They are currently regular users of the open grassland of the airfield for hoist and rappelling [roping] training.

To accommodate the aircraft and have space to store and maintain its fleet NPAS would need at least one acre of land where a 35m x 35m (1,225sq.m) hangar could be built, along with some portable office accommodation for support staff.

The airfield is already used as a base by the Essex & Herts Air Ambulance Service which also recently approached the council about establishing a more permanent base at the airfield to operate two helicopters. Their current activities register 1,300 movements a year, mainly in daylight. With all air ambulance services also increasingly offering 24/7 operations the council's decision for both the police and air ambulance applications will be profound.

The relocation of NPAS would mean the relatively quiet daylight only airfield eventually absorbing an additional 20,000 movements a year and being open all hours. Those numbers would be a "key consideration" for any new location to absorb even though it is not foreseen that 20,000 movements is likely for several years hence.



Police helicopters use North Weald for training ©EFDC

The council has requested a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment to include a noise assessment covering all proposed hours of operation. The council could receive about £120,000 per annum in ground rent and movement fees (with the number of movements capped at 20,000).

The cabinet report concludes: "In reaching a decision on the NPAS proposal, Members (councillors) will need to balance the likely environmental impact against the potential revenue benefits to the council of the proposal, which is in line with the council's stated objective of intensifying aviation activity.

"This also needs to be considered alongside our role as a public body in supporting the Police in ensuring community safety and crime reduction." [David Jackman Everything

Epping Forest/PAR]



The airfield is already a base for ambulances ©NWAMA



North Weald has just run through its own 100th year celebrations and next year will be dealing with the much wider celebration of 100 years of the Royal Air Force. Unlike the local 100 years there is little likelihood of anyone losing impetus and not celebrating with an air show or two somewhere. It was unfortunate for North Weald that it had to contend with the fallout from its own tenuous involvement in the fatal Hawker Hunter crash at Shoreham at a time when it really wanted to be celebrating the 100.

The RAF was born in war [1st April 1918] so North Weald was very much an active airfield defending London and the South East when it moved from being the Royal Flying Corps to being the Royal Air Force.

For the RAF Centenary a spectacular salute is being planned for next summer at the Royal International Air Tattoo at Fairford. North Weald you may recall created the Tattoo back in 1972 but it quickly outgrew the airfield.

On July 13-15, 2018, the Fairford airshow will mark the centenary with a full eight-hour flying programme on the Friday that will include a dramatic RAF centenary flypast and a Royal Review of aircraft - featuring aircraft from the RAF's past, present and future, many military air arms from around the world are expected to be represented at the airshow to celebrate the close and enduring friendships they've forged with the RAF over the years.

The Air Tattoo is extending its 'under-16s go free' policy to include all under-18s. Air Tattoo spokesman Richard Arquati said: "The 2018 airshow is a very special event for both us and the Royal Air Force and, more than ever, we want to use it to inspire the next generation of pilots, engineers, aircrew as well as all the associated trades. For one year only, we're extending our free entry policy to include all under-18s, making the Air Tattoo more affordable and more accessible than ever."

A limited number of specially priced Super Earlybird tickets for next summer's event go on sale this week priced £45, representing a £10 saving on the standard advance ticket price. Mr Arquati added: "We've simplified our Super Earlybird and Earlybird discounts which no longer end on a specific date but will change after a set number of tickets have been sold."

To purchase Air Tattoo Super Earlybird admission tickets and to view all the enclosure options, visit www.airtattoo.com. It may be expensive to join the party but they will be offering Free Parking.

Full details of how North Weald will be celebrating 2018 have yet to be published.



This year Epping Forest District Council continued its welcome financial support of North Weald Airfield Museum as a part of £30,329 it passed out to fifteen community and voluntary groups.

This year the museum aid package is designed to boost the publicity to increase the number of visitors to the museum.

A little more information on local air pioneer Frank Neale has come to light via the pages of the Townsville Daily Bulletin, Queensland dated 21 November 1942

Squadron-Leader Frank Neale, 47, of Melbourne, has flown 1,710,000 miles in 17,400 flying hours. Many in the R.A.A.F. claim that Neale has flown more miles than any other man in the World. His job is to maintain R.A.A.F. communications in isolated areas, and every week he adds hundreds--some-times thousands— of miles to his flying record.

As a civil pilot, Neale pioneered most of the air routes in Central Australia, and took the first party of air tourists to Alice Springs. He flew the first three-engined plane to Darwin, and in four aerial desert surveys covered all the desert country west of Alice Springs.

One of Neale's most cherished aviation souvenirs is a faded cablegram he received years ago from Sir Percy McKinnon, director of Lloyds of London, who was visiting Australia. Neale had been assigned to fly Sir Percy in Australia, and before accepting him Sir Percy wired Lloyds of London asking their opinion of Neale. Back came a cable which Sir Percy later gave to Neale. It read: "Neale considered safest pilot in Southern Hemisphere"



Frank Neale, Thornwood's own air pioneer

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. 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 party.

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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.

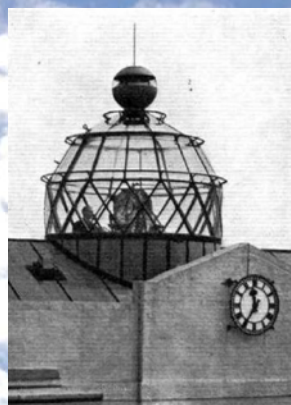
There have been some significant changes in the aircraft to be seen in and around the airfield in recent months but as ever it remains an interesting and at times exciting place to be with modern aircraft and numerous Warbirds often making an appearance.

New resident arrivals among the Warbird category include a Westland Wasp HAS.1 G-BYCX/92 and a similar army version Scout AH.1 G-SASM. These should be returned to flight in the coming months but they arrived from Thruxton by road in May.

The majority of the recent arrivals have been civil light aircraft as the residents of Damyns Hall near Upminster migrated to North Weald and led to a significant rise in the number of small hangars along the north side of the airfield leading to The Squadron.

The air ambulance remains that of the Essex & Herts Air Ambulance but they have now changed

aircraft; it is a significant change but no doubt still 'a helicopter' to the uninitiated. The supplier is the same – Specialist Aviation Services based in Staverton, Gloucestershire – but the prime aircraft is a much larger Leonardo AW169 supported on maintenance days by a more familiar MD902. The most obvious change for both 'new' helicopters is the colour scheme, the red and white having given way to a striking yellow and orange. The AW169 G-HHEM arrived from Gloucestershire on 23rd June and was formally launched as the new Essex & Hertfordshire Air Ambulance at an event at Audley End House on 25th June. Four months on the operation has now settled in to a familiar routine.



The long standing glass dome that once stood on top of the mound alongside The Squadron has now moved back to nearer its original home in Hatfield.



READ THIS ON-LINE AT www.nwamuseum.co.uk



The 1934 Hatfield navigational aid, which enclosed a beacon light that beamed morse code flashes into the night sky to help pilots land long before radar and radio aids had been rusting away when it was transported to the North Weald Airfield in 1988 as part of the closure and demolition of the de Havilland Aircraft, Hatfield site.

Following an £11,000 refurbishment, by Great Amwell, Ware, based Birch Engineering the equipment is now back on home territory. Marking the University of Hertfordshire's efforts to observe 60 years since the de Havilland Comet airliner's first flight in 1949, the beacon is now back in its full former glory.

In December 2009, the plan was to have the iconic beacon – believed to be the only remaining of its type in existence in the world – placed on a roundabout in the Hatfield village ward. Unfortunately planning was not authorised, but professor Owen Davies, who has lead the programme, said: "On reflection I think it's in fact better placed at the campus as it has a real impact when you drive in. "It has already attracted a lot of interest.

"It's up and looking very nice indeed; you can't miss it anyway and it marks the start of our Heritage Trial [the university's walking guide covering the story of the former de Havilland aerodrome]." Birch Engineering is one of the UK's leading specialist in laser cutting and metal fabrication services, and has been working with artists, architects and designers for over 40 years, producing highly detailed and distinctive metalworks using the latest CAD and laser cutting technology.

Some of their other work can be found at Stansted Airport, Stakis Hotel, Xscape, Goodwood Sculpture Park, Chelsea Harbour, Chelsea & Westminster Hospital, The Natural history museum, University of Hertfordshire and many other locations throughout the UK.



Transporting the beacon cover from North Weald ©Birch



Final resting place in Hatfield ©Birch



In June the village and airfield featured in the 'coffee table' magazine *Essex Life*.

The seven images were of water colours painted by James Merriott, the resident artist of the magazine and included watercolour sketches of the Airfield Museum building, the Memorial, the Norwegian stone and the replica Hurricane Gate Guardian.

EPPING MARKET

Every Monday

www.eppingmarket.co.uk
Please come along and see us!

On November 15, 1944 a Vickers Warwick BV258, of 278 Squadron out of Martlesham Heath, crashed half a mile east of now defunct Blake Hall railway station on the line to Ongar and burst into flames. Over the years the museum knew very little on the story but now the son of one of the occupants, Paul Savill, has filled in many gaps in our knowledge.

Fortunately, the crew of five, although burned, were rescued and taken to North Weald prior to being sent to St Margarets Hospital, Epping, for further treatment.

Attached is the page from my Dad's logbook. He was with 278 Squadron based at Hornchurch. He was undertaking air/sea rescue when the problem arose.

He claims they jettisoned the lifeboat in a blind panic to find a bit of height. Apparently the boat hit a pub and not the school nearby and they were proclaimed as heroes in the local paper. I'm not sure if I believe that, but it's a fun story.



The Vickers Warwick was an enlarged Wellington bomber used for rescue. ©IWM



YEAR 1944		AIRCRAFT		DUTY		T	
Month	Date	Type	No.	Pilot	(INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)	Day	Night
					278 Sqn Hornchurch	386	20 153-35
Nov	15	WARWICK		Flt Lt Gordon BSK	Crashed at Ongar		
					Plus 30 hours not		30.0
					carried from May 1943		

Dad, M.J.W. 'Mick' Savill, was the Flight Navigator and he survived with sufficient injuries to require three months in the Princess Mary Hospital in Halton and one month's convalescence in Hoylake before going back flying in 1945 in more sedate Walrus aircraft.

Here are a couple of pics. Mick is 'Self up there', and in the group pic, he is 7th from the left in the back row.

Incidentally, fourth from the left in the front row is my Uncle George (G.K. Newton). I think that's an Anson and this is a pic from their training. George spent much of the war in Stalag Luft III.



Paul Savill

Some years ago members of the museum hit the local newspaper headlines when they came upon a 'bomb' on the airfield and led to it being made safe. Abandoned ordnance remains a problem but they tend not to go off unless unduly mishandled. Such a scenario is always likely to see a repeat from time to time but a recent story from Lincolnshire provides a likely sting in the tail for even the most careful of finders.

In Lincolnshire a large-scale investigation was set up after mustard gas cannisters were discovered by bottle diggers in the east of England. The diggers were treated in hospital for minor burns and respiratory problems after disturbing the rusting gas containers. An object was retrieved from the water at Stixwold near Woodhall Spa and taken away after local authorities widened their search following the discovery of the potentially deadly substance on October 1 [2017].

It has still not been revealed whether the recovered item contained the deadly gas originally discovered in canisters in the nearby Roughton Moor Woods, which has now been cordoned off by officials for some time while investigations are carried out to see if more of it can be found. A Royal Navy bomb squad and experts at the Ministry of Defence's Porton Down facility in Wiltshire are involved in the inquiry.



Confusion has arisen because the woods were once used by the military and the police said that they believed the devices had remained there since the closure of RAF Woodhall Spa. The woods where canisters were originally found has been used by the military, but the lake is not connected to the Armed Forces and the police were considering whether it had been moved recently. The area remained cordoned off while it was decontaminated after a total of 150 canisters were found in the woods in a matter of ten days.

A further potentially unpalatable aspect of this discovery is that the cache that has been found appears to be British and dating from the 1940s. Mustard gas was declared illegal in the 1920s and should not therefore have existed at that later date. If nothing else this may turn out to be history rewritten.

The latest on this is that the search and research continues and questions remain unanswered as to which formation might have wanted an illegal substance stashed away in this manner and whether there might be more, many more, hidden away across Britain as a desperate means for small groups attacking unwelcome guests from the Continent!



Be careful where you tread!



Hurricane & Spitfire badges

The museum is closed from November until April but our shop is never closed.

You can purchase a range of goods using our on-line sales facility through the website including lapel badges depicting famous aircraft and the ever popular *RAF North Weald—A Pictorial History*. Just £10 plus post & packing

