

THE HURRICANE

The Newsletter of the North Weald Airfield Museum Association

EDITION: WINTER 2016-17

GOODBYE DEAR FRIEND



General Wilhelm Mohr (June 27, 1917 – September 26, 2016)

This summer at the age of 99, General Wilhelm Mohr, wartime commander of the Norwegian No 332 Squadron based at RAF North Weald, visited the airfield to lay a wreath at the memorial in memory of the 36 Norwegian aircrew who failed to return from operations between 1942-45.

In September we received news that the General passed away and, as a mark of respect the Norwegian flag was lowered to half-mast at the Memorial and Debt of Honour outside the North Weald Airfield Museum.

We thank him for his service.

He was born in Fana, in the west of Norway to land-owner Wilhelm Mohr and Emily Holm. He served as aviation officer during the Second World War, both in the Norwegian Campaign, later in the organisation of the Little Norway flying training camp in Canada, and then serving with 332 Squadron to the end of the war.

He remained in the Royal Norwegian Air Force after the war and was promoted Major General in 1962, and Lieutenant General in 1964, and served as head of the Royal Norwegian Air Force. He was decorated Commander of the Order of St. Olav in 1964. His war decorations include the War Cross with sword, the British DFC, and the American Legion of Merit. Wilhelm was a regular visitor to North Weald and a great supporter of the airfield and the museum and we are proud to have known him as a friend.



Lieutenant General W. Mohr, DFC, Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Norwegian Air Force, seen at Abingdon during a recent visit to the Royal Air Force. The general has close ties with the RAF having flown Spitfires as commander of No 332 (Norwegian) Squadron from British and French bases in 1944. At the end of the war he was commanding No 132 (Norwegian) Wing.

(Photo by Sergeant R. J. Dunn, Photo Section, Abingdon)

RECENT AIRFIELD NEWS

If you have access to the Internet the best place to keep an eye on the day to day happenings on the airfield is the North Weald Airfield Facebook page to be found at <https://www.facebook.com/northwealdairfield/> You will find lots of excellent new photography popping up on its pages most days and most of it is of unique events.

There you will have seen that in November *The Squadron* held a 100th Anniversary Fireworks display and bonfire. To add an aeronautical theme to the traditional fare the event offered a range of illuminated hot air balloons to provide a 'Hot Air Balloon Glow' backdrop to the proceedings.

The evening event – only £2 to enter – also offered a Kids' Disco, Hog Roast, BBQ, Fish'n'Chip Shop complete with hot chocolate, mulled wine and the licensed bar and attracted thousands.

Also announced on the Facebook page were the day to day training events and even recent flights by important aircraft based at the airfield. Some could be seen as predictable but others less so.

You have to be lucky to arrive on a day when the Army drop in for one of their regular but unplanned, coffee stops or to catch the police of the National Police Air Service undertaking rappelling training with armed officers. Each of the operators has their own reasons for being coy about their movements and will not be advertising their arrival any time soon!



On November 15 the Essex and Herts Air Ambulance held one of its monthly training days on the airfield and a surprise visitor was 'Coastguard 163', an Leonardo AgustaWestland AW139 a type of rescue helicopter rarely seen away from its base overlooking the English Channel.

The crew came in for the training day, stayed all day and flew back to their base in Lydd as darkness settled on the airfield. There was a hope that someone would get a picture of the AW139 with the air ambulance ["Helimed 55"] but real life intervened and the ambulance went out on an emergency call shortly before it arrived, and had not returned.





A new and exciting airfield attraction is being promoted by North Weald Heritage Aviation, part of Weald Aviation at Hangar 4. They are offering a very popular Hangar Tour of the collection's historic aircraft and much more besides.

Probably more of a niche option from the same people are chances to sit in some important classic aircraft but there is also the long standing virtually free option of simply taking coffee outside the *Wings Café* – also a part of Weald Aviation - and watching the day-to-day movements of the many Classic and Warbird aircraft on the airfield.

For that something different to do, that unique present for the aircraft freak in your life, or even for yourself why not book the chance to sit in a Spitfire, Mustang and Fury! An upcoming date for hangar tours and sit-in experiences is Saturday 14th January but check out Facebook and the web site for other dates. They are usually once a month. North Weald Heritage Aviation will be offering:

Gold Hangar Experience - £60 - a guided tour of the NWHA/Weald Aviation facility taking in the airworthy warbirds, engine restoration shop and aircraft restoration shop, followed by the chance to sit in Spitfire Fr.XIVe 'MV268', P-51D(TF) Mustang 'Miss Velma' and Hawker Fury Mk.II 'SR661'.

Silver Hangar Experience - £40:- A guided tour of the facility taking in the airworthy warbirds, engine restoration shop and aircraft restoration shop, followed by the chance to sit in P-51D(TF) Mustang 'Miss Velma'.



North Weald Airfield's



OPEN EVERY DAY - 930am to 5pm

The Bronze Hangar Experience costing £25 offers a guided tour taking in the airworthy warbirds, engine restoration shop and aircraft restoration shop. A Hangar Tour is offered at just £12 and takes in only the warbirds with children under 16 going free.

If you want to book a tour, either for yourself or a group, please contact the Weald Aviation office on 01992 525176 or email

clare@wealdaviation.com.

MUSEUM RESEARCH

Having access to the British Library newspaper collection over the years and spending many hours turning over paper pages and spinning microfiche handles brought many interesting historical items to the North Weald Airfield Museum collection [and a few others]. Now the trips to the Colindale library just down the road from the RAF Museum have finished and the collection is being placed on-line. Annoying to the older generation but much more accessible to everyone - at a price.

The new 'home research' regime has brought new historical gems to light and they enhance the depth of the museum story. It is a growing resource, it will be a long time before every British newspaper is found on-line; the collection is being constantly added to so every day can bring new gems to the home computer screen.

Many stories are the perhaps mundane, the stories of the many accidents that took place in and around the airfield in yesterday. Others have more meat on them and that includes the 19-year-old murder suspect Aircraftsman Peter Withers who was hauled off to Ayr in Scotland to face a murder charge in 1947. He was supposed to have killed a woman, a domestic servant at an unmanned RAF transmitting station in Symington, Ayrshire and run off back to North Weald. The problem with the current system is that there are still no reports relating the story of the trial on-line so I have not yet discovered whether he was found guilty of the killing but other sources confirm he was not hanged for the crime.



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

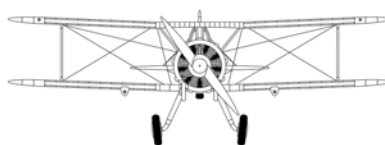
The museum season is April until November and it is closed for the winter

When open entry is free for members.

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

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

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



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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.

If Withers had been done to death in a judicial manner that might have created a problem for the administrators of the North Weald Memorial and Debt of Honour. They regard anyone killed while serving at North Weald as having the right to be remembered. I guess this scenario was never considered!

There is far less of a problem with Leading Aircraftman Hooper. His name too surfaced from the pages of a far off newspaper title as a likely candidate for addition to the North Weald Debt of Honour of airfield dead.

As recorded in a June 1933 edition of the *Cheltenham Chronicle* the unfortunate LAC George Arthur Hooper died from injuries received in a road traffic accident near Piesdown near his parents home in Cheltenham. He was on his way to surprise his family with his unexpected return home on a short leave from North Weald when he crashed. The 26-years old was riding a motorcycle that collided with a car emerging from a side turning on June 3. He survived long enough to see his father at his hospital bedside but died the following day, a Sunday. He was buried near his family home in Cheltenham Cemetery with RAF North Weald being represented by Warrant Officer E A Cousins.

It will be a while before this is resolved. The Debt of Honour document [freely available throughout the year 24/7 in the bronze cabinet set into the Memorial wall] has just been reprinted with the addition of LAC Stratton who died on July 31, 1941 so will be sometime before Hooper will be confirmed and added in print after his service record arrives from the RAF.

STERSHIRE GRAPHIC

AIRCRAFTMAN'S
FATAL SWERVECheltonian Killed While
Riding Home

A verdict of accidental death was returned at the inquest at Cheltenham Police Station on Saturday on Leading Aircraftman George Arthur Hooper, R.A.F., who died from injuries received in a collision near Piesdown while motorcycling home to pay a surprise visit to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. A. T. Hooper, of Regent-street, Cheltenham.

Mr. John Waghouse, the Cheltenham coroner, conducted the inquest, and Mr. J. D. Lase represented the relatives, and Mr. P. Haddock appeared for Mr. Philip Parker, the driver of the car with which the young man collided.

Mr. George Spicer was the foreman of the jury. Mr. Arthur Thomas Hooper, house-painter, of 11 Regent-street, Cheltenham, said his son was 26 years of age, and stationed at North Weald, Essex. He did not know his son was coming to visit him at Piesdown, for he had received a letter from him the previous week saying he was not coming. He had since ascertained that he was granted leave on June 2. In the afternoon he was telephoned for from the General Hospital, and he rushed to the institution on his bicycle to find his son lying there seriously injured.

When he saw him he exclaimed, "Hallo, Pop, what are you doing here?" He told him his mother was on her way to see him, and asked him to remain quiet, but he did not mention any accident to him. His son was quite conscious, but it was thought his spine was injured, and he had to be kept quiet.

He saw him again the following day, and said to him, "Where's father?" He replied, "I had the sick road and he came out on me."

His son died shortly before midnight on Sunday.

MOTORIST'S EVIDENCE
Mr. Philip Parker, solicitor, of Knighton, Radnorshire, said on June 3 he had been touring round several villages on the Cotswolds, and had with him Mr. Kendrick Murray East, a friend.

About 4.30 they were coming down the road from Cheltenham, and on approaching the main road he noticed a sign-post which said, "Dead Slow." He ran the car up near the junction and pulled up to look at the direction sign.

"We decided then," said Mr. Parker, "to go to Northleach for tea. While we were stationary quite a considerable amount of traffic passed in both directions, but we did not see the motorcycle."



©Goodey

Articles from 1930s newspapers about North Weald news ...

A foreign visit, a pretty standard Accident in 1934 to PO John Bigelow 29 Squadron Bristol Bulldog [right] and others...

Pilot Taken to Hospital Badly Injured

EXTRICATED BY SOLDIERS

WHILE R.A.F. machines were co-operating with troops in manoeuvres near Ashford, Kent, to-day, one of the planes struck a pylon wire, and fell into a field.

The pilot, Flying Officer J. G. Bigelow, was seriously injured, and removed to hospital.

Cable With High Tension Current of 132,000 Volts

A Royal Air Force single-seater machine struck a pylon wire at Ham Street, near Ashford, Kent, to-day, and crashed into a field. The pilot, the only occupant of the machine, was seriously injured. Manoeuvres were in progress in the district when the accident occurred.

Some 2,000 troops belonging to the 12th and 10th Infantry Brigades were concentrated in the area and R.A.F. machines were co-operating in the tactics.

After Peeling Clump of Trees

Suddenly one of three aeroplanes, after peeling over a clump of trees, collided with one of the wires of the grid line which an R.A.F. FIGHTER PLANE

runs across the Ashford-New Romney road at this point, close to the Royal Military Canal.

There was a terrific crash, and then the machine fell into a field.

Soldiers who were in the field rushed to

extricate the pilot, who was very badly injured. "I was taken to hospital in a military ambulance."

The Hastings-Folkstone Grid

The aeroplanes collided with the grid line which runs from Hastings to Folkstone. These cables carry high tension current (+132,000 volts). The electricity supply was not affected, but it was automatically transferred to other lines supported by the pylons.

The Injured Pilot

The injured pilot is Flying Officer John Graham Bigelow, of the 29th Fighter Squadron, stationed at North Weald, Essex. He is in the Shorncliffe Military Hospital with serious head injuries.

Previous Accidents

There have been several accidents this year caused by aircraft coming into contact with masts and electric cables. These were:-

January 4.—Instructional plane struck wireless mast at Hornsea, Germany; two killed.

January 5.—Private aeroplane hit high tension cables at Nettle, France; one killed, one injured.

January 15.—French air liner crashed into wireless masts at Corbigny; ten killed.

May 31.—French mail plane crashed at Crodon aerodrome after striking a wireless mast; two killed.

AIRMEN'S ESCAPE

While flying late on Wednesday night, Flight-Lieut. Lees and Sgt. Patworth, of the North Weald R.A.F. Aerodrome, had a narrow escape when their aeroplane crashed on landing. The machine was destroyed, but Lees and Patworth escaped with severe bruises.

Aircraftman G. F. Patterson (21), of the 56th Squadron, R.A.F., was found shot dead in a store-room at North Weald Aerodrome, Essex, with a Service revolver beside him.



the wreckage and got the pilot out. He was seen to be very severely injured, and was taken to hospital.

Miss Colclough, of Carter House, Ham Street, told a reporter: "The three aeroplanes had flown round once, and then as they went round again they passed over a

clump of trees. One of the pilots ap-

THEM DARN HOUSES

Much has been said and written about the Epping Forest District Council Draft Local Plan list of potential sites for housing but it is clear not everyone understands it. Called the Local Plan confusion seems to surface when it is realised that it pretty much concentrates on buildings, or the lack of them, rather than any other wider grand plan for shaping the future lives of locals.

In short Epping Forest District Council believes some 4,550 homes can be built across the district up to 2033 and the documentation lays out where they might be. As far as North Weald is concerned it seems that at least that original much fought over plan for 6,000 homes on the airfield remains deferred.



In North Weald there is an expectation of about 1,580 homes being built on eight sites including placing up to 276 homes in fields east and west of Church Lane and north of Lancaster Road to the east of the airfield, around 288 homes on land at Blumans Farm, west of Tylers Green around the area of The Talbot pub and another 28 homes on land at Tylers Farm, High Road.

Rather than 3,000 homes the new plan states that there are to be only 225 homes on North Weald Airfield on land, currently scrub and overgrown dispersals alongside Merlin Way on the approaches to the current airfield entrance. It is probably fair to say that building there is no surprise at all.

Land south of Vicarage Lane, might see around 590 homes built, another 91 homes on land north of Vicarage Lane West, some 49 erected between Church Lane and Harrison Drive, another 27 on the Chase Farm Business Centre, Vicarage Lane West and eleven at St Clements also in Vicarage Lane West.

All this seems quite complex to those unfamiliar with the road names but it amounts to placing new housing across the fields bounded to the north by the A414 [Harlow – Ongar road] to the east between the airfield and the Talbot roundabout north of the village and surrounding the church, St. Andrews where the memorials to the dead pilots currently overlook fields of crops. Although this is apparently just half of the total being proposed a few years ago as on the airfield some are quite naturally stating that it is "unacceptable" that the number of homes in parish of North Weald Bassett would more than double in the next 17 years. The main worry is the lack of local infrastructure, shops and medical facilities, in the plan.

Comment: An additional issue is that importing so many new families to live next to the airfield will immediately dilute the current attitude of the majority of villagers to preserve their airfield despite its obvious noises and smells to a point where building those 6,000 homes on the airfield may become so much easier to push through.



A very old image (well we are a museum!) but it gives some idea of the area to be built upon in the next few years if the local plan goes through. The main group of houses might be built off to the left of the image ©FMI

LETTERS TO THE MUSEUM

Bryn,

Thank you for the latest issue of The Hurricane which was, as usual, a good read - except for one thing.

The story about NASA spending a great deal of money on the invention of an ant-gravity pen is a great story - but it is not true.

The space pen used by astronauts was actually developed independently by Paul C. Fisher of the Fisher Pen Co.. NASA subsequently tested Fisher's pen and bought them for a modest price.

These pens were also used by Russian cosmonauts. Pencils were not considered to be ideal: pencil tips can flake and break off, and having such objects floating around space capsules in near-zero gravity posed a potential harm to astronauts and equipment.

You can read the truth here: <http://www.snopes.com/business/genius/spacepen.asp>

I hope you will agree with me that it is not a good thing to promote a myth like this and that you will issue a correction in the next issue.

Regards.

Mike

Duly duped - along with thousands of others it seems!

The truth it seems may be that both teams used pencils on space flights, but those writing instruments were not ideal: pencil tips can flake and break off, and having such objects floating around space capsules in near-zero gravity posed a potential harm to astronauts and equipment.

When the solution of providing astronauts with a ballpoint pen that would work under weightless conditions and extreme temperatures came about, though, it wasn't because NASA had thrown money at it. The "space pen" was developed independently by Paul C. Fisher of the Fisher Pen Co., who spent his own money on the project and subsequently offered it to NASA. After that agency tested and approved the pen's suitability for use in space flights, they purchased a number of the instruments from Fisher for a modest price.

Hi Bryn

Hope all is well and thanks for letting me know about the AGM, I hope it goes well.

A friend in Air-Britain has asked I can help with the following, so if you or anyone at the Museum have the answer please could you let me know.

There was a memorial to those who served with 39 (Home Defence) Squadron at North Weald, does it survive and if so where?

The earlier memorial was in the form of a brass plaque, which was dedicated by the Chaplain to RAF North Weald on 15 May 1932. It was inscribed: "No. 39 (H.D.) Squadron, R.F.C. and R.A.F., North Weald, 1916-1919. To the memory of those members of the squadron who gave their lives for their King and Country during the Great War."

Any help with the about would be greatly received.

Best wishes

Phil Kemp

Ed: We know of no-one who has even seen this memorial in their lifetime. The wording in Flight suggests that it was in the airfield chapel and that building is long gone although the museum has a wooden wall sign and the organ preserved. There is a hope of course that this brass plaque has been preserved in some private collection rather than simply melted down as scrap but I wonder if someone has a photo of it anywhere?



EPPING MARKET

Every Monday

www.eppingmarket.co.uk

Please come along and see us!

FRANK NEALE REVISITED

We have known about Frank Neale, aviator, for many years now and told a limited tale of his exploits from time to time. Now thanks to the Internet his Australian connections have become more apparent.

Frank was born in September 1895 and was an ex-Royal Flying Corps and Royal Air Force pilot who lived in Thornwood in the years after the Great War [1914-18] trading as the Essex Aviation Company offering joy rides from a field near to North Weald airfield using an Avro 504 he acquired in January 1923.

The reason why he was living there is clear, his family ran the garage on what was then the main road from London to Cambridge and Newmarket – the A11 – as George Neale & Son during the 1920s and 1930s. Much changed it is still there today near to the junction with Rye Hill Road serving the travelling public.

Before the war Frank was an Mechanical and Electrical Engineer, presumably in the garage, but he was called up into the Army Service Corps Motor Transport as a probationary 2nd Lieutenant – again making use of his mechanical skills.

He transferred to the Royal Flying Corps as a pilot, and by the end of the war had flown numerous aircraft types including most of the available de Havilland types [DH4, DH6, DH9, DH9A] as well as the BE2e, RE8, Armstrong Whitworth FK8, Bristol Monoplane, the Sopwith Pup and Camel and the Avro 504.

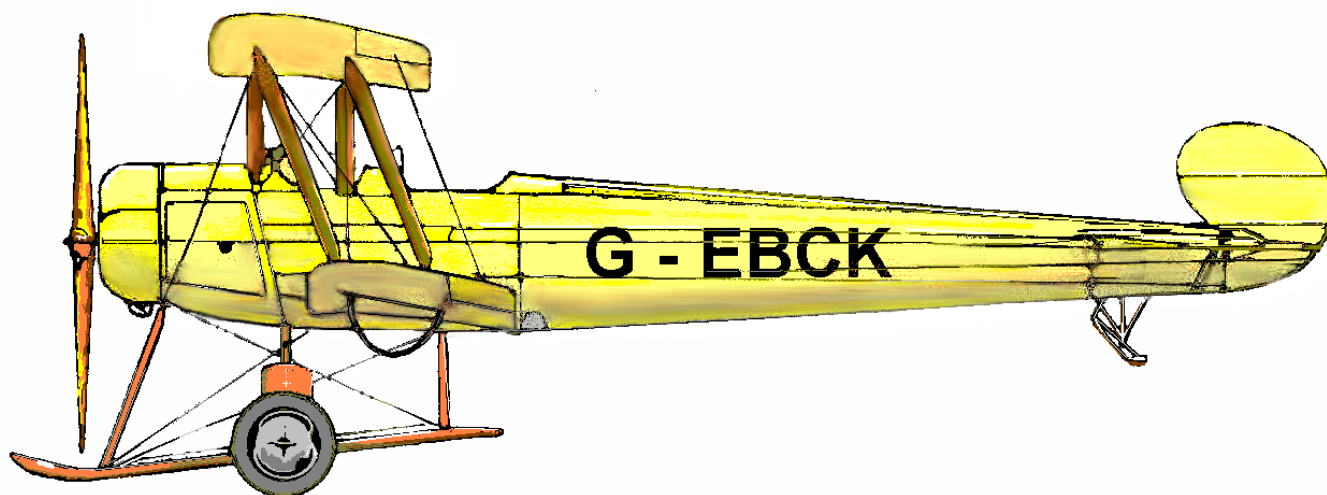
During the war Neale met an Australian aviator Herbert Larkin and it is clear that meeting was to craft the future course of his life. He ended the war as an RAF Flying Officer and an assistant Instructor at No.1 Training Depot Station. Although still in the RAF Reserve he left the service and was issued with UK Civilian Pilots Licence No.171.

Frank was just one of many young men who had been trained to fly in the war but now had a skill and very little use for it. There were many pilots but as yet few airlines to fly for and many sought their fortune in 'start up' businesses that were effectively trying to find out what this very new business of flying could do for the world.

He may be the same F. Neale who was flying 504 G-EAEB for S. Sumerfield & Co. when it crashed at Norwich on 25 September 1921, the pilot was not injured in that incident but the Avro was wrecked.

Frank acquired his own Avro 504, one of a batch of 150 Avro 504K built by Parnall & Sons in Bristol against a military order as E3379. During the war the aircraft was allocated as one of a number for Grand Fleet use.

After military service it was overhauled and converted from being a standard two-seater to a three seat configuration by F J V Holmes at East Hannay and registered to them as G-EBCK on 29.4.1922.



We know he used the Avro to undertake joy-rides from North Weald and other locations. It was reported that he 'did well at Epping and also on Margate beach' but was also reported as providing joyriding at Cliftonville August/Sept 1923 with the same bi-plane.

His posters mentioned he flew from North Weald Aerodrome but we really do not know whether it was the Great War flying ground or some other field nearer to the garage – both offered areas of flat grass.

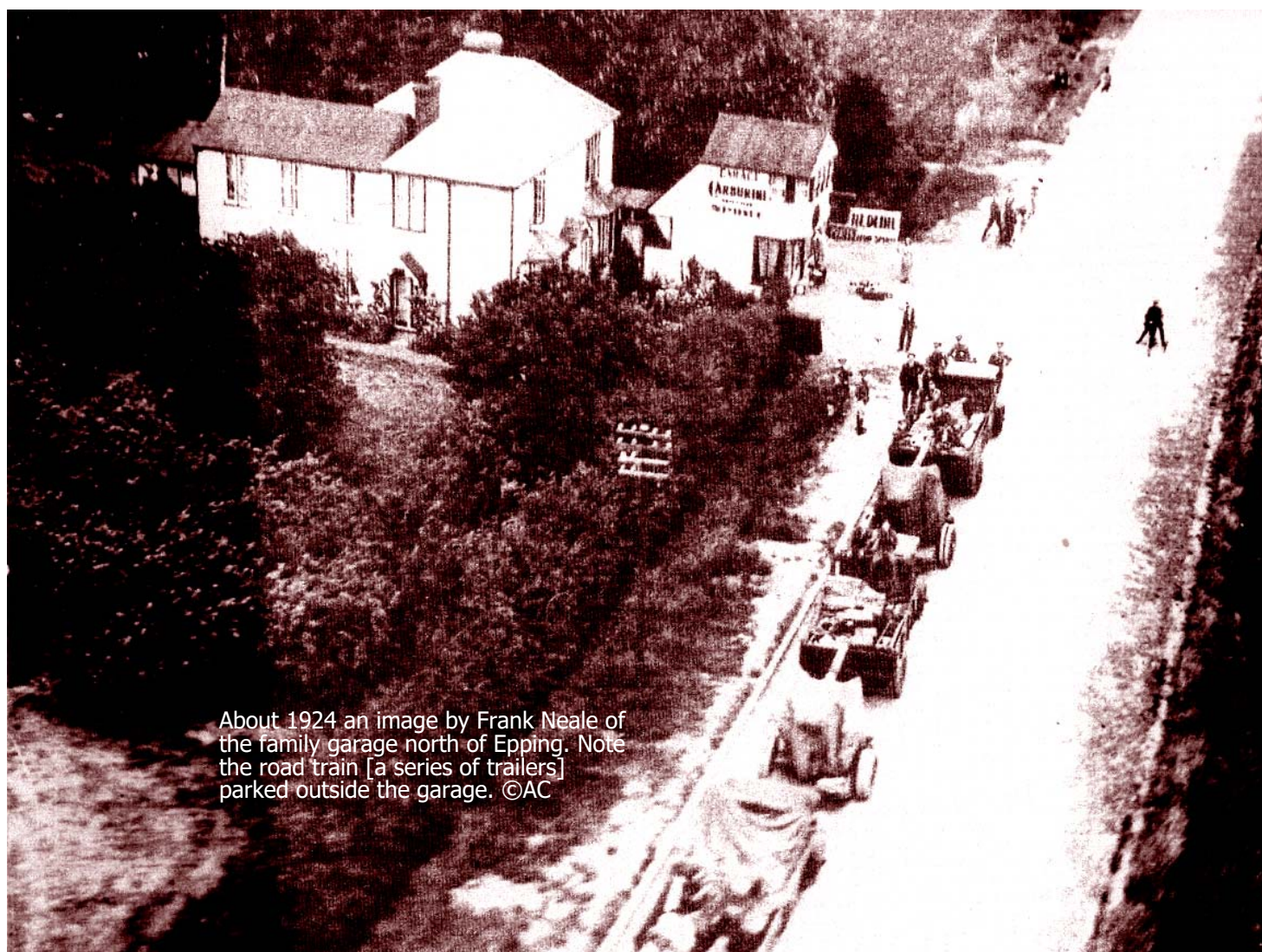
There are some aerial photographs taken by Frank of the Epping skyline and another of the family garage with a road train parked up outside on the A11. The photographs, taken from the Avro, passed down to the well-known local food shop owner and keen local aviation historian Alan Church but the museum only managed to get a copy of one of them before Alan died.

FLYING!

Come and experience the joys of Flying
ON
AVRO 3-SEATER
WITH
FRANK NEALE
(OF EPPING) Late R.F.C. & R.A.F.
AT
NORTH WEALD AERODROME.

Flying from 10.30 till Dusk from
12/6.

Flights can be Booked with DAVIS & Co., Stationers;
at NEALE'S GARAGE: and on the AERODROME.



About 1924 an image by Frank Neale of the family garage north of Epping. Note the road train [a series of trailers] parked outside the garage. ©AC

Early in 1925 Frank Neale sold the Avro to B Roberts and left the UK for a new flying career in Australia.

At that point the story of Frank Neale should have finished but others in Australia have shown us that it was not so and he actually went on from relative obscurity to being an aviator – indeed a pioneer - of some standing 'Down Under' and his name lives on in two or three remote places in the country and in aviation folklore.

Frank Neale arrived in Freemantle, Perth, Australia on 3 February 1925 aboard the Orient liner R.M.S. Ormonde. He had been persuaded to come to Australia by Bert Hinkler and was contracted as a new pilot for Western Australian Airways. W.A. Airways as it became known had a government mail contract on the route from Geraldton to Derby via intermediate ports and they employed some well known pioneer names of the day including Charles Kingsford Smith. Neale replaced him when he went off to do other things. The aircraft they were flying were tiny compared to today, they were giving up the Bristol Fighter based Bristol Tourer for the much favoured airliner of the day the DH.50.



By late 1926 Neale had joined Jim Larkin at Australian Aerial Services (AAS) in Melbourne flying charters undertaking surveying the vast country and on the lookout for grazing land. Many of the flights were simply investigating how aviation could be used profitably and involved long distance flights in unsophisticated and relatively unreliable aircraft across still uncharted territory.



Moving from periods in operating regular airline style flights he soon returned to survey operations and aerial surveys were undertaken in the years 1930, 1933, 1935 and 1937 with Neale as the chief pilot.

During 1930 survey flights several new salt lakes were mapped and named. The largest was named Lake Mackay after its discoverer, and another in Northern Territory, Lake Neale after Frank. In local terms it may have been 'small' and inhospitable but it still covers 120 square miles of Aboriginal land – about a tenth of the size of Essex.



As if that were not enough there is a nature reserve in the Western Australian desert that is known as Neale Junction.

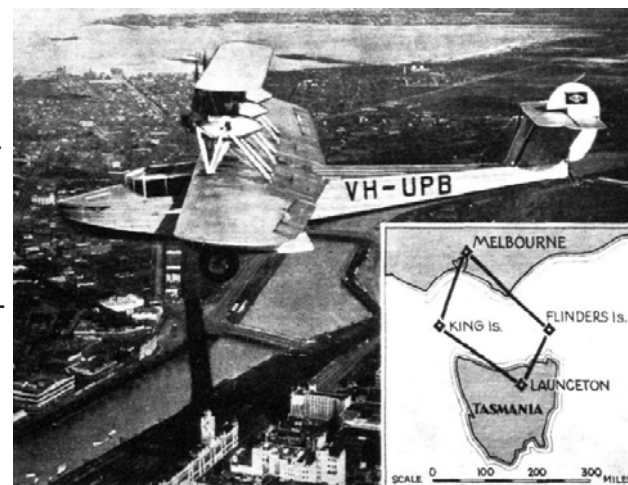


Today Neale Junction is a hot and dusty spot marking the junction of Connie Sue Highway and Anne Beadell Highway. Red soil, kangaroo and even an abandoned aircraft wreck To give you a handle on the magnitude of this other remote bit of territory there is a location about 25 miles from Neale Junction that is known as Neale Junction Camp. So it may be just a desolate spot on the map but it is again a mighty big one!

In June 1930, Frank Neale became the first pilot to land an aircraft at Ayers Rock (Uluru) during one of these survey flights.

With the onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s, Larkin's companies came under financial pressure, and Frank Neale teamed up with G.C. Matthews [Matthews Aviation Pty] operating regular flights across Bass Strait to Tasmania. The aircraft in the first instance was a Saro Cutty Sark VH-UNV, a twin engined amphibian. It was replaced in September 1931 by a Saro Windover [right] with three engines. In January 1933 while flying between King Island and Melbourne, the aircraft suffered a failure of two engines forcing Frank Neale to land on the ocean and taxi 25 miles to the beach with the remaining engine. All six occupants survived.

In 1935 Frank formed a charter service under the name Neale's Air Services Ltd., Sydney^e.



He returned home to England at least once in the inter-war years; he is reported to have flown a 1936 DH90 Dragonfly VH-UXA back to the UK via Hong Kong in early 1939 after the machine was sold to a new owner from Croydon in the UK.

Frank returned to Australia and continued to fly right up to the Second World War in September 1939 and then signed up for service with the RAAF as a Flying Officer at No.1 Communications Unit based in Laverton, Victoria. By then he was in his mid-forties so spared from the front-line and he flew a variety of aircraft for communications and transport of staff.

It was perhaps a quiet war but there were highlights such as that on 7th February 1940 when Frank was flying a Communication Flight Percival Vega Gull A32-2 that made a forced landing. The exhaust manifold broke in flight and the resulting flame caused a small portion of the lower fuselage to be burnt.

By 1941 he had been promoted to Flight Lieutenant, and in 1942 was a Squadron Leader, commanding the Unit. He was awarded the Air Force Cross in June 1942, and had logged 17,400 hours flying.

He was fifty years old by the time he was again discharged from the Air Force in March 1946, with the rank of Wing Commander and as far as we currently know he seems to have retired from active aviation. As we have found before though there may yet be more stories to tell about this particular man from Thornwood.



He died at his home in Glen Huntly a suburb of Melbourne in 1979.

Story compiled using various sources including NWAMA archive, Wikipedia , goodall.co.au and aviadejavu.ru

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD MUSEUM ASSOCIATION

MUSEUM OUTREACH

On Sunday 20th November member and Trustee Eric Probert again mounted a display at the Galleywood Heritage Centre on "The RFC in Essex, 1916" promoting the Museum to others in the region. Likewise both Steve Wagstaffe and Bryn Elliott regularly provide talks about the history and work of the museum to local groups subject to their personal availability. All the payments received help boost museum funds.

The enquiries continue to come in and occasionally we surprise ourselves with the breadth of the material we have.



Most enquiries are to help Family Historians but occasionally we are faced with a very different type of request. We have all sorts of isolated material stored away it is often just a case of remembering where. A recent enquiry from Buckinghamshire about the Royal Observer Corps (ROC) post at Weston Turville seemed way off our field of expertise but in the end we did actually provide some useful material for the enquirer including relevant images extracted from the few copies of the ROC Journal. We also have a 'Ground Zero' nuclear blast recorder and a suitcase of ROC material from High Easter. We gave it a home.



In October the Crystal Maze, a tiny bit of modern North Weald history came back to life! The Crystal Maze was a British game show produced by Chatsworth Television and shown on Channel 4 between 15 February 1990 and 10 August 1995. There were 84 episodes, most presented by Richard O'Brien and the set for the presentation was a Hangar on the airfield.

In addition to its small screen version the popular game show has now been adapted into engaging corporate team building event where a mobile version of the maze can be set up at locations across the country complete with an inflatable version of the famous Crystal Dome.

The new production company is a London based events agency Chillisauce - The Crystal Maze being just one of their offerings.

The game show was set within "The Crystal Maze" - a labyrinth consisting of four different "zones", set in various periods of time and space, and a centrepiece called "The Crystal Dome". Each show saw a team of six contestants travel through all four zones, competing in a range of different challenges, each varying in category and length of time, with a "time crystal" won for each challenge successfully completed. Upon reaching the Dome, the final destination, the team competed in one final challenge held within it, in order to win it and claim a major prize. The amount of time the team had for the final challenge was determined by the amount of crystals they had won in the previous challenges, with each crystal giving them five seconds of time for the final challenge.



The return of the Crystal Maze to Channel 4 was as a celebrity one-off in support of Stand Up To Cancer was a reminder of a less toxic era, when “reality TV” meant something very different from its modern definition. With its cerebral challenges, elaborate sets and occasionally menacing atmosphere, The Crystal Maze represented the highpoint of a style of show that we tend not to see – except perhaps on retro channels like ‘Dave.’

Just like many of the reality shows of today it was not all as it seemed of course. For instance the Aces High hangar at North Weald was simply way too small to accommodate the complete Crystal Maze set. There were four areas surrounding a central Crystal Dome but only part could be accessed at any one time, the rest being collapsed and dismantled while shooting took place.

On screen it all looked like a freely flowing series of events as the contestants were put through various tasks and tests. In reality it was a great deal more disjointed. As soon as the action needed to move to another area the filming ground to a halt while the area required for the next scene was made ready.

Still it was a programme of its time and it represented a tiny part of the numerous diverse income streams that has effectively maintained the airfield as a going concern. One week it was the aircraft hangar was housing the aircraft it was designed for, then it was let out as a tv studio and then it was again cleared to be making adverts. Many of the BP adverts of the 1990s looked like they were in the great outdoors of the Lake District when in fact they were crammed into Hangar 4. Those adverts were of course equally a thing of their time, today of course the same level of special effects would probably be created on a tablet computer in a back street café.

They call it progress!

For more information on The Crystal Maze team building event, or to enquire about booking it for your company, visit www.chillisauce.com/events/crystal-maze.



In October the museum was visited by the Hornsey Historical Society



2018 marks the centenary of the Royal Air Force. The award-winning RAF Museum [above] will celebrate and commemorate this anniversary through a major transformation of its visitor experience sharing the RAF story on site and online. A multi-million-pound transformation of the RAF Museum's London home will welcome visitors to discover a new green heart of the community in Colindale, reflecting the historic RAF Hendon airfield. New, innovative galleries will explore the first 100 years of the RAF, its roles today and invite visitors to imagine its future contribution and technology. A new digital sharing project will promote a conversation with a global audience and help connect people to the RAF story

Work starts on site in January 2017 and is due to complete the following Spring to coincide with the RAF's Centenary year, 2018.

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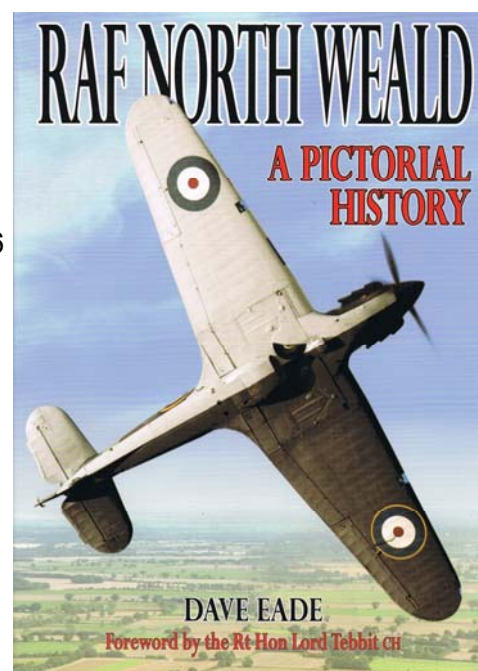
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The North Weald Airfield Museum still has in stock the 1916-2016 commemorative badge. Available now through the website or at the museum during opening days. Just £5.

RAF North Weald the book by Dave Eade remains available through the museum and can be purchased for just £10 plus postage.



If you need shop items during the winter closure you can still order them through the museum website and we will get them to you as quickly as possible.

