



THE HURRICANE

The Newsletter of the North Weald Airfield Museum Association

In June 1945 the Royal Observer Corps held a disbandment parade and ceremony at North Weald. Featured in many publications at the time was the then new experience of a helicopter – a Sikorsky R4 – and in particular this one KK995 'E'.

As the museum endures another winter closure from late November until Easter it is perhaps time to review the year past and look ahead.

The visitors intrigued by the aerial history of the area continue to call at the museum each weekend—although flocked is no longer a word that applies to most museums these days, even the nearby railway museum struggles to find members, volunteers and to attract numerous visitors. It is not a good time for any museum and North Weald Airfield Museum fully reflects that.

As the dwindling air force generation that operated from the airfield passes on to the afterlife, their family members continue to think of us with donations of artefacts, books and models. It is unclear where that will leave the museum in a year or so. It is 50 years since the RAF operated from North Weald and even those who served in their teenage years are now 'white hairs.'

Membership has understandably dwindled and it is difficult to see a time when the upcoming generations will reverse that trend. It is not their thing to research and marvel at the past. If it is not already on Wikipedia, the on-line encyclopedia, it cannot even be true.

The museum has therefore to create and fund its own future with new projects and in recent weeks there have been some positive developments. More of that later.

AERO LEGENDS

Aero Legends fighter jet experiences started in April 2023. All fighter jet experiences operate from the base at North Weald Airfield as it provides the hard runway required. Members of the public can now experience outstanding and significant ex-military jet aircraft in addition to the wartime types including the Spitfire, Harvard and Tiger Moth.



The bookings of those wishing to fly as passengers in the iconic BAC Strikemaster opened in late 2022, giving the new facility a ready made list of those who were waiting to be a fighter pilot for the day.

For the past two years Aero Legends have tried to organise an air show without success. So much has changed since the multiple fatal accident at what was then called Shoreham Airport – now, with the original name tainted, it is Brighton City although it's not really near that seaside resort, it remains firmly on the edge of Shoreham. The message though is that Aero Legends have not given up on getting an event on the North Weald calendar to match the well regarded air event at their other base – the grass field at Headcorn Ashford in Kent, it is just proving difficult to get finalised.

CHANGE AT THE TOP

Over a year has passed by since our Queen of over 70 years passed away – although I actually started writing this piece in the days immediately following her death – and I have sought to see where there might be a close connection between Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and North Weald. Unfortunately it appears that, unlike her father King George VI, she never visited the airfield officially.

The sole connection appears to be that on the day of her June 1953 Coronation a Bristol Sycamore helicopter was briefly stationed at the airfield for the sole purpose of collecting and transporting the film/movie footage of the service in Westminster Abbey to the airport for swift transportation to the United States.

North Weald based Aero Legends modified the nose-art on Supermarine Spitfire T.IX NH341 to pay tribute to Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth II by modifying the existing artwork of Elizabeth.

1935 SILVER JUBILEE REVIEW

With the recent death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II fresh in mind time perhaps to take a look back at an article originally published in the late lamented magazine Air Pictorial 1977 and written by Michael J F Bowyer one of Britain's great air historians (now 94 years old and therefore of Her Majesty's generation). The magazine was one of those on offer from a wide range of pre-read publications that the museum sells as part of fundraising.

Naturally for the purposes of The Hurricane the interest in the five page article is primarily in the elements that concern North Weald so what follows will not be the whole article, just a taster!

EPPING MARKET

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The 1935 Silver Jubilee of King George V marked 25 years of the monarch. The 25 years anniversary fell on May 1935 but the aerial show took place in the first week of July.

Aircraft were gathered for Review at Beck Row, Mildenhall, Suffolk. Hundreds of airframes, about one third of the air force of the time, were scheduled to take part and during the week the public swarmed to the airfield to watch the build up of aircraft and the practices for the main fly past event at Duxford on the Saturday mainly on foot or by bicycle. The author, Bowyer, intimated that even the build up events were deemed 'no cameras' and as befits the period they did not breach that unwritten rule and kept camera folded up out of sight. As a result most of the images were official RAF photographs – a firm contrast to the situation in the 21st Century where Kings and Queens had to grow used to having an iPhone thrust into their face at every circumstance.

The Prince of Wales and the Duke of York accompanied King George V to Mildenhall on 6 July 1935 to be met by a Guard of Honour for the Silver Jubilee Review of the Royal Air Force.

The line up included most types in use by the RAF at that time including Hawker Harts of 500 Squadron, Westland Wallaces of 503, Ospreys of the Coastal Development Unit, then a range of Auxilliary Squadrons 600, 601, 602, 604, 605, 608 and others led finally to the newer fighters – in those days the Gloster Gauntlet operated by 19 Squadron,



Sleek Hawker Furies of No 1 Squadron headed the second group in which there were Bristol Bulldogs of 3 and 32 Squadrons as well as a range of bomber types. In among the group were the Bristol Bulldog fighters of North Weald based 56 Squadron.



In June 1945 there was a major display at North Weald primarily put on for the disbandment of the wartime elements of the Royal Observer Corps.

Featured in many publications at the time was the then new experience of a helicopter – a Sikorsky R4 – and in particular this one KK995 'E'. You can still see what purports to be the R4 at the RAF Museum Hendon and it wears the colours it had when at North Weald. All is not what it seems. The Hendon machine is made up of parts from at least two machines. [period image on the cover]

THE CHAIRMAN'S TRAVELS

Images from the wanderings of the North Weald Airfield Museum Chairman Peter Gardner.

February 2023: Museum Chairman and former mayor of London Borough of Havering, Peter Gardner, with the Worshipful Mayor of Stafford Cllr, Phillip Leason, MBE signing the Star of Stone picture.

Among several other claims to fame, *Philip Leason*, is the *chairman* of Stone Historical Society. The Star of Stone Spitfire Group was formed in 2018 to mark the town's role and commemorate the death of the pilot, Flt Lt Karl Jacobsen, but they to find that the painting was in a position where it would never be seen, and at that time they were unable to find a really satisfactory alternative location.

A decision was passed to make both Karl's Wing Man, Flt Lt Jens Müller and 331 Norwegian Squadron Silver Founding Partners.



Back in the late summer of 2021 the new licensees of the Star Inn honoured the town's connections to the WW2 Spitfire the Star of Stone. The Star Inn gave its name to the Town's own Spitfire which it funded during WW2. The funding meetings are thought to have taken place there.

The Inn sign carries a picture of the Spitfire, which is the only external public display of the plane in the whole town.

Stone's based artist, Charles O'Neill, painted a beautiful picture of the Spitfire, a copy was presented to the Star Inn for prominent display. In 2018 the Star of Stone Spitfire Group was formed to Celebrate the Funding of the Spitfire by the Town, and to Commemorate the sad death of Norwegian pilot, Flt Lt Karl Jacobsen, who was killed in action on 19th June 1942.

New licensees Shaun & Vicki, offered to give the picture a prime display position in the Bottom Bar, with its own picture light above, and an excellent space for the Scroll alongside. The Bottom Bar has now been renamed The Spitfire Bar.



At the unveiling the Principal Guest was Philip Leason, Chairman of the Royal British Legion Branch, a strong supporter of the Spitfire Project. Born and bred in Stone he represents St. Michael and Stonefield Ward on the Borough Council. After attending Newcastle College he went to work for Joule's Brewery and later Bass and Trade Team. He then went to work at Royal Mail as an Advanced Customer Service Advisor and in 2016 received an M.B.E. for services to Royal Mail and the community of Stone. He was first elected to the Borough Council in 1991 and has served for several terms since then. He was Deputy Borough Mayor in 2011/12. In 2022 he retired as a magistrate having served for 36 years sitting in both the criminal and family courts throughout the county.

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 web-site www.nwamuseum.co.uk



MUSEUM OPENING TIMES

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

When open entry is free for members.

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

Adults	£5
Concessions	£2.50
Children [5-15]	£1

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.

On June 19 last year The Chairman Peter Gardner with Captain Pål Hope, Norwegian Naval Attache.



The following day (20/06) Peter was on the steps of the Victory Club in London with enthusiastic museum supporter Geoff Berriman.



North Weald Airfield Users Group have recently upgraded their webcam hosted by S2T Group Ltd, and located on the southern boundary of the airfield after the previous camera had condensation issues.

The old camera was a basic fixed view facility where the new camera auto-pans to provide more views. The new coverage now takes in most of the west side of the airfield, the flying school, Weald Aviation, NPAS across to The Squadron and the length of the main runway. The quality is a great deal better than the old camera and the facility is great for pilots wishing to check the local weather. Check it out on the first page of their website www.northwealdairfield.org

BOOK REVIEW

Book Review

Since our stalwart member Eric passed we have had some difficulties in finding someone with a desire to review books. Fortunately in my other life I knew just the man for at least some of the reviews in Tony Cowan. Tony was a Maritime Nimrod man so flying small stuff was more of a hobby than most – he famously flew a Chipmunk around the world some years ago – Anyway here is his take on the latest review book....

GNAT BOYS

by Rick Peacock-Edwards and Tom Eeles

If you're not too tall, join Rick Peacock-Edwards, Tom Eeles, Dickie Duckett and many other fast-jet pilots, strap into the RAF's advanced training aircraft, the diminutive Folland Gnat and enjoy the ride of your life in the 'pocket rocket'! After forty-five minutes of exhilarating flying you'll either look forward to your next flight with enormous anticipation, or wish that you were too tall to squeeze into the front seat and that, instead, you'd flown your advanced fast jet training on the larger, Hawker Hunter.



After turning a few pages you'll have learned the importance of the mnemonic STUPRECC and the disastrous consequences of removing Fuse 13. If you're a flying instructor, sitting in the back-



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seat, you'll look forward to a gentle cross-wind, for landing, so that you can see ahead, but not too strong for an aircraft that can be a hand-full in a cross-wind on a wet runway! In the final chapters you can join those pilots of the Finnish and Indian air forces who flew the single-seat variant, the Gnat fighter, also the Mk 2 version, the HAL Ajeet.

For the aviation enthusiast this is a book that should have been on your Christmas list and on your bookshelf for the New Year.

Tony Cowan MBE
Squadron Leader
Royal Air Force (Ret'd)

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Many readers will be aware of the major display changes undertaken in the Scott Malden or Allies Room in the museum. That has been accompanied by stories placed online and easily accessible to readers across the world. As a result of one element of the revised Norwegian displays being available on-line the museum received a series of e-mails from Ty Oberg in the State of New York, USA in early September.

Subject: Robert Hassel

Sir/Maam—in response to your 2000 Hurricane article including Norwegian RAF Sgt Robert Hassel 332 sqn.

I was recently going through the computer purging bad pictures from the hard drive when I came upon a pair of pictures I took in 2000 when I was on honeymoon with my wife in Norway where her family is from. The pictures were taken of her 93 year old grandmother's photo album; pictures of her brother. The first was a portrait of a young man with curly blond hair in full RAF pilot attire looking into the distance, a Norwegian flag prominently on his life vest, in front of what could be nothing other than the nose of a Spitfire. No machine was made so more elegant. The handwritten notes in the corner of the print is "Father and Mother, from Belgium, December 1944".

The second photo is of the same young man in the cockpit of a Spitfire. He's at work; it's not a staged photo. Under the photo, written in old Norwegian to her descendants, "Uncle Robert never came home. He fell over Osnabruk January 15, 1945." He was shot down just weeks after the other photo. On the fringes of that picture are 2 other photos that show him with a woman and a dog.

I knew that he'd fled Norway when the Germans invaded and that he'd joined the RAF. He'd transported to Canada for pilot training. The training camp there was called Little Norway. He'd married a woman in England when he fought there, and he was killed in action late in the war.

On this day of cleansing multiple iPhone selfies, car parts needing repair, and too many of my sleeping dog, I saw these two pictures taken of prints way back in 2000. A Norwegian man, his splendid flying machine, and his new wife.

It brought me back to my own father (he's still afoot): that picture of him as a young forward air controller in the USAF in 1969 flying a Cessna O1E to provide surveillance, direct air strikes for pre planned missions, and to directly support special forces ground operations in south Vietnam. He's in faded jungle fatigues, pistol on his belt. He's at work, pre-flighting the bird; it's not a staged photo.



I went back to Robert Hassel and did an internet search: Norwegian, 332 squadron, and found The same stuff I'd searched ten years prior with some success. I knew he'd damaged a FW190, and that he'd fallen with several others on January 14. I had previously found the same staged photo of him before the elegant Spitfire (minus the note to Mom and Dad). But this time, I found

his account of damaging an FW190. And a few moments later I found an image of him picnicking with his wife, and that his personal belongings had been carefully stored and are now curated at NWAM.

The NWAM in England is not a place I've never been to. But it has succeeded in providing a clear link beyond the rapidly fading family tales, thanks to the diligence of its patrons, volunteers, and the English family who had the care to preserve and forward the memory of Robert Hassel; a Norwegian who stepped in and fought in the war.



My father is still alive. But I'm wondering now how long his memory will survive? I've put his 8mm and excellent slides onto YouTube (Tyoberg) and Imgur and some yahoo groups. But I don't think there's a similar place that would store his sort of stuff and that doesn't seem adequate.

Ty Oberg
Schenectady, NY

Dear Mr Elliott

I'm researching family history, specifically Kenneth Field Balmain (my wife's grand-father) who served in the RFC and later, when WW2 started, the RAF.

He was a professional photographer in civilian life in Edinburgh. I've discovered that he served as a 2nd Lt. Observer in 4 Squadron between 9/8/1915 and 6/1/1916. After leaving 4 Squadron, he qualified as a pilot; serving in No 12 Squadron and later in No. 35 Squadron as CO. He was awarded the Croix de Guerre (Belgium).

I've recently digitised a couple of photos from his album. I'm certain they were taken at the time he served with 4 Squadron. There are two photos of an unknown pilot. In one photo K F Balmain is to the right of the pilot. My other researches informed me that Charles Chabot was a pilot with 4 Squadron at the time and the internet turned up a photo of him that looked a lot like the unknown pilot in my photos.

My reason for contacting you is, because I found you had published a biography on Charles Chabot, to ask you to look at the photos and let me know if you recognise the pilot.

Bill Banks
Suffolk

Ed: It is not certain of course but both images sent do look to be of Charles Chabot. The full story of Charles Chabot and many others is on-line.



AFTERNOON TEA AND MUCH MORE

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North Weald Airfield

01992 350540



Another blast from the past—and relating to a former NWAMA Chairman came in by e-mail during December from Canada.

Dear Friends at the North Weald Museum,

In April-May 2002 I paid a visit to the museum in my capacity as Commanding Officer 403 (Helicopter) Operational Training Squadron (Royal Canadian Air Force) and I had the pleasure of presenting a copy of our squadron's history book (see photo to below). Can you please tell me the name of the bespectacled gentleman? I believe he may have been the curator of the museum at that time.

Dean Black
Lieutenant-Colonel (Ret)
Executive Director RCAF Association
613-612-7223

That was an easy request to meet. It was former Chairman Arthur Moreton who lives in North Weald. Arthur is still a member of NWAMA.

Subsequently Dean told us that the reason for the interest was that, he and his editorial team at the quarterly (RCAF Association) magazine Airforce had received a story about 403 Squadron and the Dieppe Raid in 1942. Sorties were flown in support of the operation from North Weald. For them the photo with Arthur is a nice addition to the story and will run it in the January issue. <https://www.rcafassociation.ca/the-magazine/current-issue/>

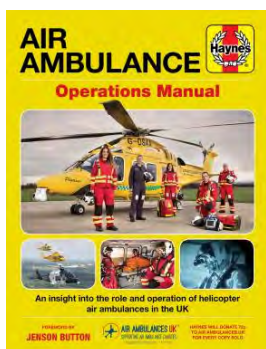
I think I have gone some way to illustrate where the future of the museum might lie. If you cannot get people in through the door in large numbers at least there is a market on the Internet.

To that end the museum has done a deal with a major helicopter company for it to financially support the museum in a small way into the future and their advertisement (linked to their web site) is already on the NWAMA website. Their contribution may not be massive but it is equal to eighty new memberships.

Bell Helicopter in the USA and Canada are supporting the North Weald Airfield Museum in 2024.



NEW BOOKS AVAILABLE AT THE MUSEUM OR BY MAIL. £10 each title. Plus £4.50 p&p (UK)



NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD MARKET
EVERY SATURDAY AND BANK HOLIDAY MONDAY

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD MUSEUM ASSOCIATION

A new edition of the North Weald Airfield Museum leaflet is now at the printers. No massive change in style this time, some alterations in the central images and the two Bristol Bulldog's on the cover of the 2020 version have given way to a Gloster Gauntlet and a Bristol Bulldog.

The museum occupies Ad Astra House. Built as a private house called 'Brosley' built in about 1908 and later used as the Station Office of North Weald adjacent to the old main entrance of the historic and still very active airfield where on most weekends visitors can watch a wide variety of veteran and classic aircraft flying.

This unique 'House of Memories' is about people. An ever-changing community of service personnel and civilians who have lived, worked, flown, fought and died here since the airfield opened in 1916.

Their story is told through an extensive collection of dioramas, artefacts, photographs, personal memorabilia and models displayed in themed rooms on the ground floor. One covers the Great War and 1930s, another

The museum is open each weekend and bank holidays from Easter until November between noon and 5 p.m. (last entry 4 p.m.).

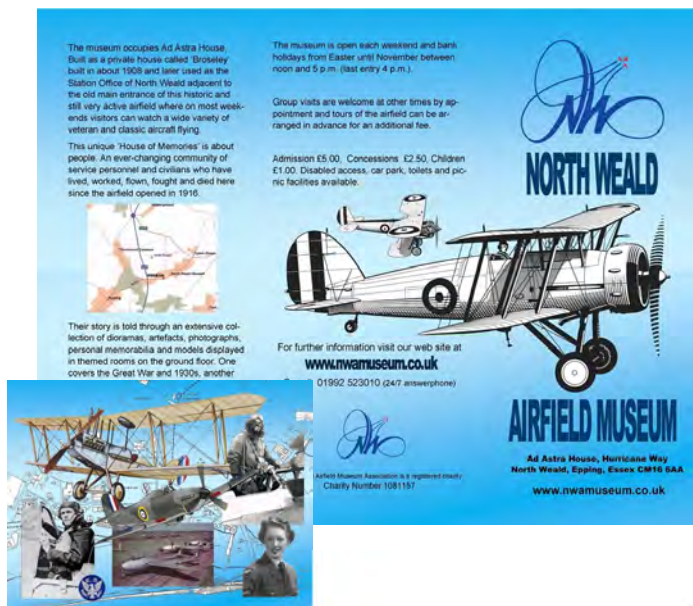
Group visits are welcome at other times by appointment and tours of the airfield can be arranged in advance for an additional fee.

Admission £5.00, Concessions £2.50, Children £1.00. Disabled access, car park, toilets and picnic facilities available.


For further information visit our web site at www.nwamuseum.co.uk
01992 523010 (24/7 answerphone)

NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD MUSEUM
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www.nwamuseum.co.uk


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If you know of somewhere that will display them please let us know and we will arrange for them to be sent a supply.



The Westland Whirlwind 4 cannon, twin-engine fighter briefly served at North Weald with 25 Squadron immediately before the Battle of Britain started.

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Pilot Officer Brooker 1938