



# INGHAM WHITE EAGLE

*Za Waszą wolność i naszą*

Winter 2023



**To the Memory of all who served at RAF Ingham and in Dywizjony**



**Wesolych Swiat & Szczęśliwego Nowego Roku**  
**Wishing all our readers a Merry Christmas and a**  
**Happy & Prosperous New Year**

## Welcome

Welcome to the Winter Edition of our Newsletter. What a year we've had! The observant amongst you will have noticed a new logo in the top right corner, on November 14<sup>th</sup> we were officially informed by Buckingham Palace that we, the "RAF Ingham Heritage Group" a team of local volunteers based in West Lindsey, Lincolnshire had just been awarded The King's Award for Voluntary Service 2023. This is the highest award a local voluntary group can receive in the UK and is equivalent to a group MBE. We were awarded this accolade for our efforts in honouring and remembering the men and women of the Polish Air Force Bomber Squadrons in Britain. Needless to say we are immensely proud to be given the award as one of only three recipients in Lincolnshire this year. It is pleasing to see that the hard work and persistent effort by such a small band of dedicated unpaid volunteers both British and Polish, over the past 14 years have been recognised by His Majesty. The award itself will be made in early 2024 on site at RAF Ingham.

Since our last edition of this newsletter we have made enormous progress on the site (more of which later), held a massively attended Open Day, hosted special visits and been made a Community Champion by Lincolnshire Co-op. We have received an amazing grant from West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) that has enabled us to install the under floor pipework for our heating system and complete our cement floor over the top. We now look forward to 2024 which will prove to be our most exciting year yet, as finally, we plan our official formal opening of the Centre in April 2024 and our public opening the following weekend. On behalf of the Trustees, Committee

and Volunteer Team I'd Like to wish you and your families , a happy, safe and healthy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

*Jan Shaw*  
Secretary

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## A Sad Farewell

It is with great sadness and heavy hearts that we say farewell old friend to Jan Black. Jan was a Polish Air Force veteran who served at RAF Ingham as a Wellington bomber Air Gunner. Poland's ambassador to the UK, Piotr Wilczek, has written: " Heartbroken to learn of the passing of Jan Stangryciuk-Black, one of the last Polish airmen who defended Britain during the Second World War. A rear gunner on the 300 Bomber Squadron, he demonstrated immense courage and resilience throughout his life." Jan was born in Chełm, eastern Poland, in 1922. He emigrated



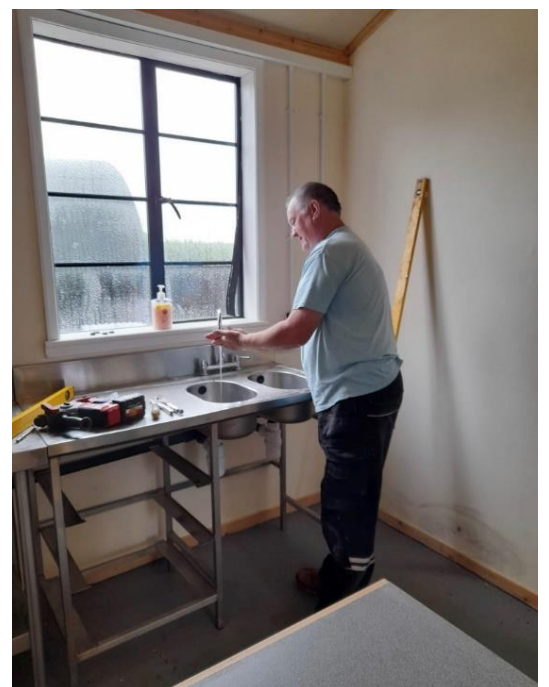
to Argentina with his family as a child. After the outbreak of World War II, he came to Britain to join the Royal Air Force. In 1942, he was badly injured when the Wellington Bomber he was in crashed in southern England. He risked his life trying to free the pilot from the burning fuselage but was the only survivor, suffering severe burns to his face. His first wife died in 2004 and he later remarried Jadwiga, who was also originally from Poland. Jan Stangryciuk-Black held several British and Polish medals and distinctions including the Air Crew Europe Star, the Defence Medal, the Bomber Command Medal, the Knight's Cross of the Order of Reborn Poland, and the Polish Cross of Valour.

He was successfully cured thanks to an experimental therapy by New Zealand doctor Archibald McIndoe. In 1944 and 1945, as a rear gunner on 300 Sqn, Jan took part in 18 missions over Nazi Germany. After the war, he settled in London and married his first wife, adopting her surname of Black, although he retained a Polish passport bearing his birth name of Stangryciuk.

He left the armed forces in 1948, spending the next 20 years working as a delivery driver. Jan was a good friend and supporter of the RAF Ingham Heritage Group, we had hoped that he would be our special guest at our upcoming Opening ceremony. He will be sadly missed but we are sure he will be there with us in spirit on the day. Our sincere condolences go out to Jan's family and friends, rest well old friend.

## [On Site News & Developments](#)

Once it had been agreed in the Summer that as we were not going to be ready to open the Centre in early September, the Committee decided that it would be a good idea to hold an Open Day on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September. The plan to hold An Open day enthused the Volunteers to get as much done to prepare the building and its surroundings to be as complete as possible and to use the day to show the general public how our project had progressed. A maximum effort was put in by the Team over the next few months, finishing the Café and rendering the outside walls of the North Wing. The gardens and grassed areas were also given a once over to improve their appearance. A large model of the whole RAF Ingham aerodrome





and accommodation sites that had been started by the Geoff the Chairman many years ago was wheeled out, dusted off and handed over to Tina and Ian Shaw to see if they could finish it off. The interior of our exhibition Nissen Hut was completed as far as possible and furnished with furniture and artifacts from the 1940's. Over recent weeks we have installed the roof drainage pipework under what is to be the Memorial Garden, re-rendered part of the tower structure and laid the bases for the heat pumps.



## Fund Raising

Funds are our lifeblood, we cannot progress without a constant flow of cash. Cement, bricks, paint and timber are all costly items. We are constantly searching for ways of raising money for the completion of the Centre. This past quarter has seen generous grants from the WLDC, the Bomber Command Association and donations from relatives of deceased aircrew and local businesses. Another source of income has been derived from sales from our shop stock at events like the Open Day and casual visitors who come for a tour around the site on Sunday mornings. We have also been fortunate to be allowed to make collections in a local Tesco store and we have been appointed Local Community Champions by Lincolnshire Co-operative society from December through until February next year. We have to put as much effort into these activities as we do actually working on our buildings and facilities. We never cease to be amazed in these difficult financial times by the generosity of the great British public.



## Open Day 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2023



As described earlier we were determined that if we couldn't open fully in September then we would make a big effort to show the public and our benefactors

how far we have come this year. We tried to make the day interesting by providing tours around the site, having a Polish aircraft model exhibition, a Wellington bomber flight simulator, artefacts and lectures in our new Cinema. The Café was fully stocked and opened



for the first time, the Shop was set up in the main hall and attractions such as a Frazer Nash Bomber turret replica, a superb Tombola, a Polish folk singer and a Polish food stall selling delicious cuisine were all set up and ready to go by 10 am. I think most of us in the RAF Ingham Heritage Group thought that we would get



around 100 people at the most! The weather was fabulous and proved to be one of the nicest days of the year, then the visitors started to arrive and kept coming. By 1025 the car park was nearly full and some nifty tactical decisions made by our Parking Team saved the day. We estimate that we had around 500+ plus visitors with a large proportion of them being our Polish friends from all over the Midlands and Yorkshire. The day proved to be a brilliant success with some particularly complimentary remarks being made on our evaluation sheets by our



guests as they left. For saying that we were in direct competition with the International Bomber Command Centre's "Wings and Wheels" event that was held on the same day we did really well with the day raising over £2,000, incredible when one considers that we did not charge for car parking or entry!



The shop did a roaring trade as did the Polish Food stall. The kids loved the turret display. The Tombola also went down a storm with many visitors having several goes each. The RAF Ingham Station model also attracted lots of interest and questions as it demonstrates how dispersed all the sites were away from the aerodrome. It was really hard work on the day but thoroughly enjoyable and our visitors seemed to have a great time too! Afterwards we gathered in the picnic area for a well-deserved celebratory tipple.



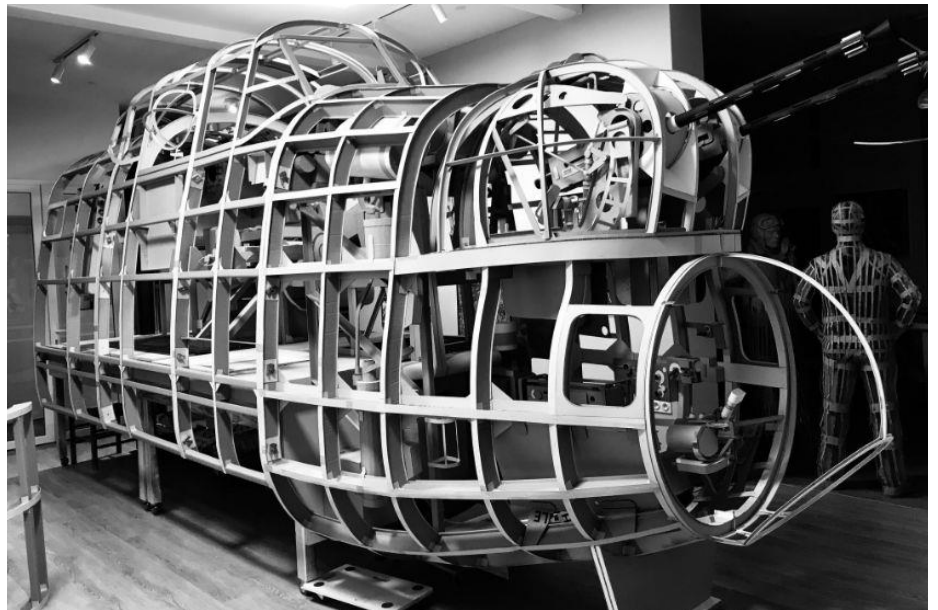
## Exhibition News

Once the Open Day was over it was full steam ahead to get the Nissen Hut, North and South Wings completely emptied and clear so that the contractors could move in to lay the underfloor heating pipes. All the pipes have been laid in the Nissen Hut, North Wing, South Wing and Toilet block. In the next few weeks after the concrete screed floor covering have been sanded and sealed we will be will be having the Air Sourced Heat Pumps installed. It looks like Henson & Franklyn will be now installing the Exhibition into the buildings early in the New Year.

Another interesting future addition to our exhibition that has been offered, once it has completed its current exhibition tour, will be an incredible full-scale front section of an Avro Lancaster bomber, made entirely from cardboard and paper by acclaimed artist Suhail Shaikh.



Suhail, wants during its tour of NW England, RAF Bomber Command veterans to come and add their signatures to the aircraft. He also wants as many people as possible to create thousands of paper poppies, bearing the names of RAF crew members, which will be seen tumbling from the open bomb doors of the Lancaster sculpture. Members of the public are also being urged to come forward with any Bomber Command logbooks, letters, photos, and any other items that can be copied and used to form part of the sculpture. When its tour is complete, we here at Ingham are looking at the possibility of installing this sculpture in an extension of the existing Workshop.





## Special Thanks

A quick special thanks to Sqn Ldr Michael Frankel, one of our members who represented our Group at two ceremonies held at the Newark Polish Cemetery this Autumn. The first was the Air Bridge Ceremony on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> September. This special event is held annually to commemorate and remember the Polish (also British and Commonwealth) Aircrews who lost their lives whilst air dropping supplies to the Polish Home Army during the Warsaw uprising in the winter of 1944 and early months of 1945. Members of 1586 Flt flying Halifax and Liberator bombers flew almost suicidal missions to Warsaw from Brindisi in



Italy, having to fly at 400ft as slowly as possible with flaps and wheels down to try to accurately drop sorely needed parachuted supplies into the City. The ground fire and flack being some of the most intense seen during the war. Their losses were horrendous and were the highest casualty rate seen by any bomber force in WW2, but they bravely went back time after time in an attempt to help their Polish comrades on the ground. So many aircrew from 301 Sqn volunteered to fly on 1586 Flt that 301 Sqn had to be disbanded. The Polish Command in recognition of this always described 1586 Flt as 301 Sqn to the extent that they adopted the "GR" squadron codes on the aircraft, so hopefully in the future as part of our exhibition we can tell our visitors about their heroism. The second ceremony Mike attended on our behalf was the All Souls Day event at the Cemetery on 29th October, where each grave has a lighted candle placed in front of it to commemorate the individual soul, a beautiful but poignant sight. Thanks again Mike, we all appreciate your help representing us on both occasions.

## A Special Visit!

On the 11<sup>th</sup> November Tina and I along with Karol and Angelica two of our stalwart Polish volunteers hosted a special visit. It is very important that the Polish Bomber Squadrons Centre attract visitors of all ages to promote the remembrance of those who served on those squadrons and of course the RAF's 199 Sqn. Therefore the visit of the York Polish Children's Saturday School was so important that we showed and told the pupils about their heritage.



It coincided that the 11<sup>th</sup> November was also the day that Poland commemorates the anniversary of the restoration of its sovereignty. Poland had been erased from the world map for 123 years when the Second Polish Republic was established in 1918. So, the day was doubly important to us all. The large group of 47 children aged from 4 to 11 arrived just before 11am so the first event was the marking of the 2 minutes silence at our Memorial stones. This was followed by the children and their teachers and parents all singing the Polish National Anthem, which I must admit bought a tear to the eyes as they did it so beautifully. They then laid some flowers and a lantern at the Stones. Next we gave them the Cooks tour of the outside of the centre, pointing out buildings and features along the way, it got tricky when describing the old Guard Hut in the distance when I realised that the little ones couldn't see over the fence! We then took them inside and showed them a short presentation about Ciapek the mascot of 305 Sqn (more about this little character in a later issue of the newsletter). They all knew about him as the author of several books about him had visited their Saturday school a few months ago. This was followed by showing them the RAF Ingham Station Model, they were fascinated and asked lots of questions about it with several of them spending their picnic break looking for the various coloured pins denoting the many locations on the model. We found the whole visit a brilliant and enlightening experience, the children's behaviour throughout was superb, showing interest and attention at all times. Some of them had attended the Open Day

with their parents and were telling their friends about all the things they had seen. This visit really boosted our enthusiasm, as it showed that if pitched correctly the centre will hold interest not only for the older visitors but the kids as well, as they are our future. It is important that we pass onto them the story and heritage of their forebears. Many of them seemed reluctant to get back on the coach and leave but Tina had a secret weapon! A bag full of chocolate lollipops, which she gave them individually as they climbed aboard, there was even enough for the adults and coach driver. We all said afterwards that this visit was one of the most enjoyable things that we had taken part in up at Ingham and we look forward to the next one.

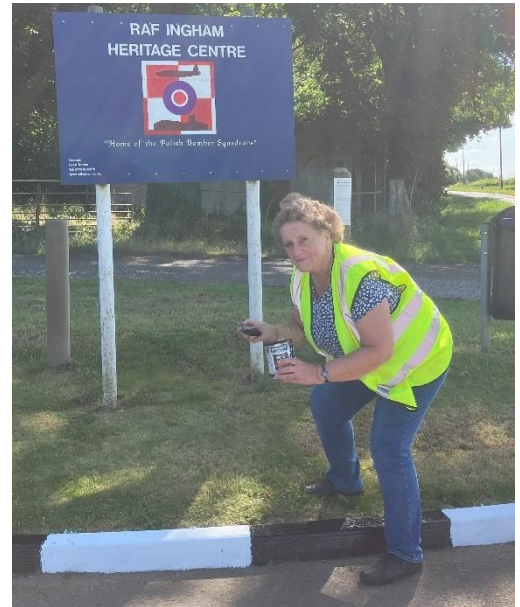
## Spotlight on a Volunteer



In this edition the spotlight falls on our Treasurer **Tina Shaw**.

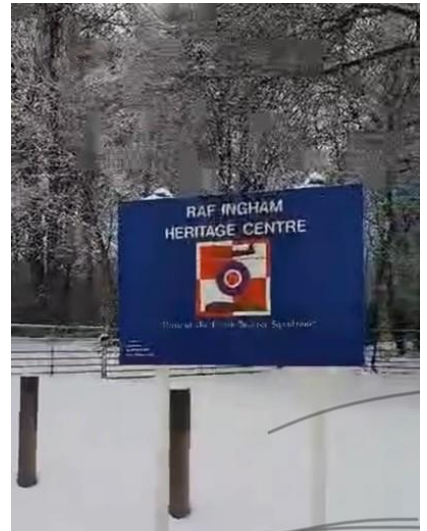
Tina joined the Committee as Treasurer in May 2023 and has made a remarkable impact ever since. She has used her massive experience of working with accounts and finances all her working life to great effect and has literally done day by day updates on our funds since she started. Not only brilliant with figures she has turned herself to virtually any task at hand whenever it has been required, be it painting, creating the Station model, the amazing Tombola stall that she arranged and ran on the Open Day, to her massively popular fresh cooked hot sausage rolls on Sunday mornings. Having retired in May this year she was looking for something to do in her spare time. Unbeknown to her she had already been “volunteered” at the AGM by her husband

for the Treasurers role. It goes to show that whatever an individuals skills and talents are, we can utilise them in our merry team of volunteers. So if you are reading this and are interested in getting involved, please contact us and come along and get involved, its great fun



# Winter Site Closure

Unfortunately during the winter months we are closing to visitors. We have had to take this decision mainly on safety grounds as we plan to have large scale infrastructure projects going on both inside and outside over the winter and spring. We have to take the safety and wellbeing of our visitors very seriously so we have decided to close to visitors from 12<sup>th</sup> November 2023 until our official opening in April 2024. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause but we hope you understand that safety has to come first.



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