



# INGHAM WHITE EAGLE

*Za Waszą wolność i naszą*

Autumn/Winter 2020

**To the Memory of all who served at RAF Ingham (Cammeringham)  
and in the Dywizjony Bombowe Polskich Sił Powietrznych**



## Welcome

Hello once again, and welcome to the Autumn/Winter Edition of our newsletter *Ingham White Eagle*.

We were looking forward to celebrating our 10th Anniversary; but 2020 has been a unique and challenging year, for all the wrong reasons. Covid-19 has hit millions around the world, and has not discriminated between race, colour, creed, age or religion.

Very sadly this year, we've lost four of our wonderful veterans (see page 2).

And for the first time in its proud 60 year history, the traditional Polish Air Force Commemoration Ceremony, organised by PAFMC, and normally held on first Saturday in September, at Polish Air Force Memorial, RAF Northolt, had to be cancelled in its traditional format.

On a similar theme, all of our events, that we normally organise or have attended, were all cancelled; and this has had to include our planned **10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** Exhibition, during November. This has had a huge impact on our fundraising ability though 2020, which in turn will affect our renovation plans for 2021. Volunteering is another area that's had its challenges this year (more details on page 4).



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We continually strive to increase the circulation and visibility of *Ingham White Eagle* and indeed raise awareness of RAF Ingham as the 'Home of the Polish Bomber Squadrons', not only around the UK, but also globally. So please forward, pass-on, or print-off a copy, for anyone you feel might enjoy the content or have Polish connections. We estimate, that despite their advancing years, there are still quite a few PAF Veterans around UK and the World, and certainly 2nd, 3rd and now even 4th generation descendants.

I hope you find this Edition interesting and informative, in these very difficult times. From the all the Team and myself at RAF Ingham, we wish you all a safe and healthy Christmas, and a peaceful New Year.

*Geoff Burton*

Chairman / Trustee

## Roll Call



### **Mieczysław Józef Stachewicz**

It is with great sadness, that I have to report the passing of Mieczysław Józef Stachewicz, aged 102.

In June 1940, Mieczysław escaped from France as it fell to the Germans, and joined 301 'Land of Pomeranian' Bomber Sqn, of the Polish Air Force as a pilot, flying Fairey Battles, and then Vickers Wellington aircraft. He took part in Bomber Commands famous



1000 bomber raid on Cologne, and completed 33 missions. He finished his career as a Flying Officer in 1948, having been awarded the Silver Cross of the Virtutis Militari, the Cross of Valour (two bars), and the Air Medal. An active member of the Polish Airmen's Association, and the Chairman of the Jozef Pilsudski Institute of Research in London. In 2017, he received the Order of the White Eagle, Poland's highest award, from the Polish President Andrzej Duda.



### **Wanda Szuwalska**

It is with great sadness, that I have to report the passing of our great friend Wanda Szuwalska. A wonderful lady, with a true zest for life. Wanda arrived in Britain after first joining General Anders Army in Persia. Once in Britain she joined the Polish Air Force, and commenced WAAF training.

Wanda was then posted to RAF Faldingworth, as a clerk, directing aircraft on the

ground, and as a driver. It was at Faldingworth where she met and married her first husband Jan Gawel, a Wireless Operator on Lancaster's (see photo above). In her later years, with resurgence and interest in the



heritage of Polish Air Force in UK, Wanda became a celebrity, and was invited to many events, as the guest of honour; which I must say, I think she thoroughly enjoyed. She will be sadly missed. Sleep well.



### **Lech Gierak**

I was saddened to hear that Lech Gierak had passed away in April. Although Lech was an Armourer on 303 Sqn, (the famous Polish Air Force fighter Sqn, from the Battle of Britain), and had no connection with the Polish Bomber Sqns, I spent a wonderful afternoon in his company, at his home, some 6-7 years ago. We talked of his memories and thoughts of his time in



303 Sqn, and the Polish Air Force. Lech was very proud of his time in PAF, and was a wonderful gentleman, with a great sense of humour. Sleep well my friend.



### **Julian Michalski**

April was a month for sad news, and included the passing of Julian Michalski, Navigator, 304 Sqn, aged 101.

In 1937, Julian joined the Polish army as a driver-technician with 24 Cavalry Regt. But when the Soviets invaded Poland, he escaped and started his astounding trek across Europe and North Africa; passing through Hungary, Yugoslavia, Italy, France, Spain, Algiers, Casablanca, Sahara Desert, Nigeria, and finally



arriving in Egypt, where he joined the Polish army and fought at Tobruk. After which, he was sent to Britain whilst guarding German and Italian POWs. On arriving at Liverpool, he volunteered for the Polish Air Force, and was sent for Navigator training in Canada. In late 1943, he returned to Britain, and joined 304 Sqn, Coastal Command at RAF Benbecula; flying convoy protection and anti-submarine missions, far out into the Atlantic, as far as fuel would permit. After the war, he remained with the Sqn, flying transport duties to the Mediterranean, until his eventual demob; and having achieved the rank of Warrant Officer. Sleep well.



## Volunteering

### **Welcome to our new 2020 Volunteer Team.**

Our Team is very diverse, bringing together people of different ages, backgrounds, and cultures. We are an organisation which fully embraces Equality & Diversity, and we welcome everyone. We're currently working on-Site every Sunday morning, all year round (COVID excepted). Although many of our current weekly tasks focus on DIY, in 2021 we will require volunteers to help run our Visitor Reception, opening in the spring. So if you're interested in Volunteering, we'd love to hear from you and welcome you into our great team.



## Fundraising



No charitable organisation can operate or exist without funding. This year, with the Heritage Centre closed and all events both on and off Site cancelled, we've been unable to undertake any of our usual fundraising activities. Our only remaining funding stream has been our Collecting Tins. To widen our net, and help increase our fundraising ability, we'd like to offer you as Members, the opportunity to help.

Would you be interested in taking one of the Collecting Tins and placing it somewhere in your local area? Ideally, the chosen location should be somewhere that cash and small change is regularly used, such as local shops, pubs, barbers/hairdressers, newsagents etc. We appreciate that with 'Lockdown 2', this may now have to wait for a few weeks; but funding is vital to our existence.

We'll send you a Collecting Tin, and explain what to do. We'll also provide a 'Thank You' certificate, to the premises where the Tin has been placed. Your help will be greatly appreciated and you'll be helping the Heritage Centre over this next year.

If you're interested, please contact: [rafingham@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:rafingham@hotmail.co.uk) or write to us at:

Fundraising Team  
RAF Ingham Heritage Centre  
Middle Street  
Fillingham  
DN21 5BU

*Thank you*

## Asbestos



One of the vital tasks that had been needed for some time, was the removal of the 1940s Asbestos sheets from the ceiling of the Kitchen Wing, within the former Airmen's Mess. This was a Health & Safety requirement before any restoration work could be considered. After receiving some very generous donations, we were able to proceed. We identified a local company Wenham Asbestos Removal (W.A.R), who kindly agreed to undertake the work 'at cost', thus protecting



our meagre resources. With the work now complete, we can plan the design and layout of this area of the Heritage Centre.

## 'Another Sad Day For RAF Ingham'

Although much of what we do at RAF Ingham, is focused on the PAF Bomber Sqns, we mustn't forget 199 Sqn, who were based at RAF Ingham during the spring of 1943.

No 199 Squadron (Sqn), 1 Group Bomber Command reformed in November 1942 and had a short stay at RAF Blyton near Lincoln.



The Sqn moved across to RAF Ingham in February 1943, but only stayed until June 1943. During those five months the Sqn suffered 57 losses, all of which are remembered on the Memorial Wall, within the Memorial Gardens, at RAF Ingham.

The 12<sup>th</sup> March 1943, was one of the saddest days for RAF Ingham. Three aircraft and their crew were lost. Two aircraft were lost over the North Sea after a successful raid over Essen, and were both believed to have been hit by flak.

**Wellington X HE 519** - Pilot Sgt Dennis John Clifford age 20; Sgt Raymond Lambert age 19; Sgt Leslie Morgan Jones; Flt/Sgt Jack Graydon Richardson (RCAF) age 20; F/O Kitson survived and was taken prisoner.



Wellington BK 158

**Wellington HZ 263 EX-E** - Pilot Flt Lt William John King; Sgt Douglas Arthur Nunn age 21; Sgt Charles Richard Townend (RAAF) age 24; Sgt Cyril Frank White age 22; Sgt Russell Irwin Edwards (RCAF) age 24, his body was recovered from the sea and buried in Bergin General Cemetery Netherlands.

Earlier that afternoon **Wellington BK158 EX-G** was on air test, approaching Skellingthorpe, Lincoln, when the aircraft broke up in mid-air around 1600 hrs, with the loss of all the crew. *Flt/Sgt Terrance Fredrick Hockley age 26; Sgt Leonard George Vaughan age 29; Sgt Leslie Joice age 24; W/O Albert George Shorten (RCAF) age 20; Sgt Archibald McKay Cormack age 22.*

**They placed your bodies broken I know not how, under the soil you fought so hard to protect.  
*Lest We Forget***

Carol Wharmby-Gordon  
199 Sqn RAF Ingham Researcher  
Email: rafingham199sqn@aol.com

## Rose Turret

In 1943, Rose Brothers (Gainsborough) Ltd, a well-established and respected engineering company, were commissioned to design and manufacture a new type of Gun Turret for RAF Bombers. They started with a clean sheet, but drew heavily on the experience and expertise of No. 1 Group.

Work started on the design and development of a twin .50 calibre turret in late 1943, with production beginning in 1944, after a few prototypes had been tested and modified, mainly to eliminate vibration. Two turrets were fitted to 101 Squadron Lancasters in May 1944 at Ludford Magna; and ten turrets were produced by June 1944 after which production was steadily improved.

The Rose turret introduced a number of improvements, in that; the turret was far less cluttered and had a large unglazed area – thus improving target acquisition and tracking (it had long been common practise for rear gunners to remove the centre panels of the turret glazing to improve visibility).

The Rose turret was not fed ammunition from tanks installed in the rear of the fuselage as were other turrets; its ammunition was carried in four boxes, two per gun, in the turret itself. Each box contained 150 rounds which, along with the top layer of rounds that ran in to the guns themselves, would provide 350 rounds per gun, about 27 seconds firing time. An additional box of ammo would be carried for each gun in the rear fuselage, the new belts being linked to the existing ones by means of a tool carried inside the turret. The reason the ammunition was contained in the turret and not in rear-fuselage tanks, was that the Rose turret could then be a 'drop-in replacement' for the Frazer-Nash, and fitted in hours, rather than the days needed to install a remote feed arrangement.

Another great advantage for the gunner,



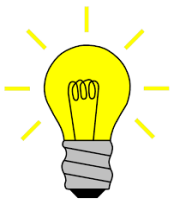
was that he could wear his parachute and escape in seconds by rolling forward between the guns, even if the turret was jammed.

Over seven thousand Lancaster aircraft were built during the war, most were equipped with Frazer-Nash rear gun turrets, with four .303 machine guns. According to the RAF Museum, only 227 Lancaster's were fitted with Rose turrets. This may not seem many, but it was a fantastic achievement in such short time, especially by a firm that, prior to the war, had not been involved in this type of work.

(Information courtesy of Baker Perkins Historical Society)

## Utilities – Update

This has been a great year for moving our Heritage Centre Project forward.



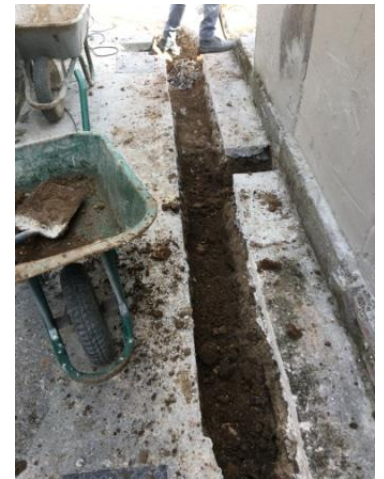
### FANTASTIC NEWS

We've waited 8 years, and we now finally have mains electricity to the whole of our Heritage Centre site. Now, regardless of the time of day or night, we can flick a switch, and illuminate a room, a building, or even an outside area; and with sockets in every building, we can now power a wide variety of tools and equipment.



The journey started with us acquiring a lease for the Airmen's Mess site back in 2012. In 2014, we undertook groundworks to install 300m of armoured electrical cable from the high-voltage pole at the back of Hares Wood, to our Site. The cable was funded thanks to the generous grants provided by Ingham Parish Council, and Fillingham Parish Meeting; maintaining that local community link.

Fast forward to 2020, and we've finally achieved our goal of mains electricity on Site. Thanks to our volunteer team for undertaking the ground-works, and to Luke from Selmec (Lincoln) Ltd, with the actual installation.



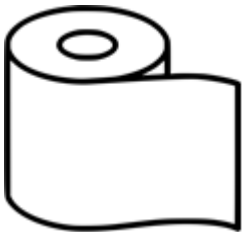




#### MORE FANTASTIC NEWS

Along with an electrical supply, we've also now finally got a mains water supply onto the Site. This is a huge step forward, providing fresh drinking water and water for flushing toilets, that will hugely benefit our volunteers, staff and visitors alike in 2021 and moving forward.

You may recall that this journey started in 2015, following an extremely successful grant application to the Armed Forces Community Covenant Fund. The Grant allowed us to commission a utilities company, to install a full suite of utility ducting, including gas, water and media, from the public highway, up to our Site. We held-off connecting the water at the time, as this would have meant standing charges being raised.



#### FLUSHED WITH SUCCESS

And finally, to complete the Utilities trio, by the end of this year, we'll have refurbished the Toilet block, with a brand new roof, new windows and internal fixtures and fittings; and with the generous support from **Selmec**, who have commissioned our eco-friendly waste-water recycling plant, at no cost, we'll have the use of flushing toilets for our volunteers, staff and visitors (post-Covid of course).

## Volunteers Workshop

Our Volunteer's Workshop Project has been progressing well, through the year (despite Covid). The major milestones started with the installation of an electrical supply, in August, as previously mentioned.



In September, our great team of Volunteers helped to create a concrete



apron along the north and east internal sides of the Workshop, by laying 6 cube of ready-mix. This will be replicated in the near future, with similar on the south and west



sides. This was then followed in September and October, by the building and installation of industrial racking, along the north side of the Workshop. The racking was generously donated by Mike Erentraut, of Erentek Ltd. Mike's father Henryk, was an armourer on 300 Sqn, here at RAF Ingham; so this is a great connection. The racking will have a dual role, as both storage and benching, for the various renovation projects, taking place at the Heritage Centre.

**New Website**

[www.rafingham.co.uk](http://www.rafingham.co.uk)



You may have noticed, our Website has had a complete 'makeover'. In fact, it's actually been totally redesigned and rebuilt by the Media Students from Lincoln University, under their company of **Cygnnet PR**, and Brendan one of our Trustees. Please visit the website and let us know what you think.

We'll be continually adding new pages as we go along. Next to arrive early next year, will be separate Sqn pages, telling their story, and those who served on them.

## **What Should Have Been**

This year promised so much, with events, anniversaries, and celebrations, in abundance. Sadly, Covid hadn't read the script!

Casualties of the pandemic from a Heritage prospective, included: Polish Heritage Day 2020; Lincolnshire Show; Woodhall Spa 1940s Weekend; Polish Community Event, Sheffield; Polish Community Event, Lincoln; 60th Polish Air Force Commemoration, Northolt; Remembrance Day Service; Fundraising Talk by Michael Czajkowski; and RAF Ingham 10th Anniversary Exhibition.

Let's hope and pray, that 2021 brings some form of normality back to our communities, and our lives.

Registered Charity No 1142147

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[www.rafingham.co.uk](http://www.rafingham.co.uk)



@rafingham



RAF Ingham Heritage Centre

[rafingham@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:rafingham@hotmail.co.uk)

RAF Ingham Heritage Centre  
Middle Street, Fillingham, DN21 5BU  
Tel: 07787805978

