



INGHAM WHITE EAGLE

Za Waszą wolność i naszą

Autumn 2018

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



Welcome

After what has been a very long absence, welcome back to the ***Ingham White Eagle*** newsletter. We realise and value the need for communication with our members, so this Newsletter, will now become a quarterly issue, and may well be even more frequent, in the future. The concept of the Newsletter, is to keep all our Members informed of the key projects and initiatives we're currently undertaking, and those we're hoping to start, in the near future. We have been involved with several exciting projects over the last couple of years, which you'll read about later in this edition. I hope you enjoy the updates and news. Please feel free to forward this on to friends, family and anyone in the Polish community; and spread the word about RAF Ingham and the Polish Air Force Bomber Squadrons.

Geoff Burton

Chairman / Founder



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Renovations at RAF Ingham

The one underlying thread that weaves through our entire Heritage journey since Day 1 in 2010, has been the renovation of the No. 3 Domestic Site, in different guises and mini-projects, with the end-goal of creating our Heritage Centre, utilising the former ww2 Airmen's Mess. Thanks to Mr William Rose (W & AC Farms Ltd) and Mr David Carter (Tennant Farmer), we were able to secure a 25 year lease for the former Airmen's Mess and a surrounding footprint of land.



Over the last 7-8 years, small pots of funding have continually been sourced, allowing our Community Volunteers to remain engaged and gainfully employed. Projects to-date, have included laying-out and constructing over 100+m of pathways; the creation of an access road and car park, courtesy of 12 (Air Support) Royal Engineers; constructing a new Main Entrance, onto the public highway; the rebuilding of a Polish families Resettlement Hut; planting 150m of hedgerows; renovation of 'Food Preparation Building'; and of course, the design and creation of the Memorials and Memorial Gardens (see below). In all, our Team of dedicated volunteers from all walks of life, have spent many thousands of man (and lady) hours, creating the foundations of what will eventually become, a globally recognised centre of excellence; telling the story of the men and women of the Polish Air Force Bomber Squadrons.



Memorial Gardens & Ceremony

At the start of 2016, with Heritage Lottery Funding of the renovation of the Heritage Centre still a way off, we decided we needed a special project, that we could focus-on and complete within the year, but that would enhance our presence, and announce our arrival, not only to the Aviation Heritage world, but would help us to connect with both surviving Veterans and their descendants. So we decided to design and create an elaborate Memorial Garden that would wrap-around three central Memorials; one to the men and women who served on (199, 300 & 305) at RAF Ingham; one to the men and women of the Polish Air Force Bomber Squadrons (300, 301, 304 & 305); and a Remembrance wall in the centre, to the 166 aircrew who gave their lives flying from RAF Ingham.



Also in the Garden, we designed a full-sized metal sculpture of a 5-man Wellington Bomber Crew, returning from a mission (see front page).

With all our planning, there was a catch; we needed to choose a date for the official unveiling ceremony, in order to plan and choreograph the event, send out invitations, book flypast etc.

We chose the 26th May.....no pressure then! Now the clock was ticking.

So we had 15 weeks to turn a farmer's ploughed field, in the Lincolnshire countryside, into a wonderful, thought provoking, yet peaceful and tranquil space, where Veterans, descendants and visitors, can come and pay their respects to those who sacrificed so much.



The Memorials and Memorial Gardens were officially unveiled and opened by HE Witold Sobków, (now former) Ambassador to Republic of Poland, and Mr John Lockwood, Deputy Lord Lieutenant, accompanied by Polish Veterans, and watched by over 200 invited descendants and guests, in what proved to be a very special and poignant ceremony; during which, when the music for the Polish National Anthem failed, the Ambassador, Consul General and many of the Polish guests, burst into song, and gave a truly memorable and spirited rendition of their National Anthem.





The ceremony was followed by a reception at Hemswell Court, the former Officers Mess of RAF Hemswell, where many Polish Air Force Officers lived during the war.



So please come and visit our tranquil Memorial Gardens, and our iconic Memorials, to their memory.

New Gazebo



Fundacja Stowarzyszenia
Polskich Kombatanów
w Wielkiej Brytanii
Polish Ex-Combatants' Association
in Great Britain Trust Fund

We've always strived to spread the news about what we're hoping to achieve here at RAF Ingham. We've covered Social Media, with our website, Twitter and Facebook pages; but nothing beats meeting and chatting with people. So we decided we needed to raise our profile, by attending local summer events around Lincolnshire; and for that, we needed a Gazebo. Now, if



you've ever attended a large outdoor event, you'll know that all gazebos tend to look the same. We on the other hand, wanted to be different and stand-out. We wanted to attract visitors of Polish descent or those with an interest in the Polish Air Force. So, with grateful financial support of the Polish Ex-Combatants Association, Stowarzyszenia Polskich Kombatantów (SPK), we were able to design and purchase an extremely unique Gazebo, that has certainly 'turned a few heads'! Last year, we were able to take the Gazebo to the Lincolnshire Show, Woodhall Spa 1940s Weekend, and the Scampton Air Show, where we made numerous new Polish contacts, including 3-4 descendants, one of whom connected us with Wanda Pietras, a 99 year old Polish WAAF, who'd lived and worked at RAF Ingham..... incredible!



This year we've doubled our exposure, with a second Gazebo, courtesy of funding from Community Grants, West Lindsey District Council.



Oral Histories



Andrzej Jeziorski



Antonia Skoczen



Julian Michalski



Lech Gierak



Wanda Pietras



Jan Black

As part of our Heritage Centre Project, we engaged with Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in 2012; and as a new untested organisation, HLF required that we undertake an assurance project. They tasked us to source and record 12 Oral Histories from Polish Air Force veterans and anyone connected to RAF Ingham, during the war years. For this task, HLF provided funding for us to purchase audio and visual recording equipment, to undertake the task; processing equipment to develop the recordings; projector and screen, to deliver presentations; and expenses to undertake the recordings and processing.

Unbeknown to us, this turned out to be the most wonderful and valuable opportunity we could have been given. With all our veterans, being in their 90s, the clock was certainly ticking. Firstly, we had to identify and locate the subjects, then convince them about the importance of our Project. Fortunately, every single veteran was more than happy for us to visit them in their

home and undertake a recording. To be honest, as I'm sure many of you will agree, most of our veterans need very little encouragement to talk about their lives and their time in PAF, so it was an absolute delight and honour.

In the end, we made 15 recordings, but we're convinced there are many more PAF Bomber Sqn veterans around the Country, and possibly abroad, that we aren't even aware of, or that aren't aware of us. If you know of any, please let us know asap; because, as I said earlier..... 'the clock is ticking!' Sadly and inevitably, several of our original 15, have now passed-on; but their recordings will live-on, as their testimony and legacy will be there for future generations.



Hangar Doors

You may well have seen photographs of the PAF ceremony that took place at RAF Swinderby, Lincolnshire, on 11 July 1941, when the Polish Air Force Standard (Wilno Standard) was presented to the PAF Sqns, by Gen. Sikorski. It was then paraded in front of the gathered Sqns.



But did you ever notice the murals painted on the hangar doors, or wonder what happened to them? Well, we can now reveal their fate. The story started in late 2010, when the old RAF Swinderby site was being commercially redeveloped, with the former RAF buildings being slowly demolished to make way for new industrial and a housing developments.

We had just formed as an organisation and were reaching-out to the Polish community around Britain. One of our early meetings was with Mr Richard Kornicki, Secretary of Polish Air Force Association Charitable Trust (PAFACT). The PAFACT were so impressed by our vision for RAF Ingham, that they agreed to help fund our project. As there was nowhere in the UK, let alone the world, that tells the story of the men and women of the Polish Air Force Bomber Squadrons, they asked if we'd accept the honour of becoming the "Home of the Polish Air Force Bomber Squadrons", for which we were truly humbled, but honoured to accept.

It was at this time, that Richard Kornicki, became aware of the demolition at Swinderby, and PAFACT also provided us with funding, for the preservation of the Hangar doors and the transportation costs of moving them to their new permanent home at RAF Ingham. We, for our part, had assurances from the then owners of the site, that the doors would be ours, when the Hangars were eventually demolished, but this would be some years away.

Fast forward to Oct 2017. As we'd heard nothing for several years, we contacted the old owners, who informed us, that the site had been sold-on to a new developer, St Modwen. We made immediate contact, and was told that the demolition of the Hangars was starting in November! However, once we



explained the historical significance of the doors, St Modwen were delighted to be able to donate them to us; how fortuitous. If we'd waited another month, it would have just been a huge pile of twisted scrap metal!

So, at 1100hrs on 11 November 2017 (the significance was not lost), UDACS Demolition started to break apart No2 Hangar. The huge claw-like pincers, cut through the iron girders, like a hot knife through butter. But despite their ferocity, they were gentle enough to ease the doors free; and with eerie silence, the

doors fell to the ground, in almost slow motion. Then 'Wham!', they hit the hangar floor. The doors were then pushed clear, ready to be cut down in size, over that next week. Strange to think of the sights and sounds that this Hangar has experienced over its long years.



A couple of weeks later, and both doors were lifted onto a low loader and transported the relatively short journey, to their permanent new home at RAF Ingham Heritage Centre, where they'll be installed within the Heritage Centre for future generations to see. It is our hope, to work with Conservation & Restoration Dept of Lincoln University, to attempt to strip-back the layers of paint that have accumulated on the doors, over the years, and hopefully reveal the original Eagle and Chequer Board.



Mission For Tonight

In each edition, John Rennison, our historical Researcher, will focus on a particular mission flown by a crew from RAF Ingham.

On the night of the 3rd/4th of June 1942 Wellington Z1291 was one of ten aircraft from 300 Squadron to take off from Ingham airfield shortly after 2300 hours for a raid on the Northern German city of Bremen. It was to be the heaviest raid on the port for some months and involved a total of 170 aircraft. The Fock-Wulf aircraft plant and the city's submarine yards were hit, together with a wide range of port facilities.



Whilst returning to base, Z1291 suffered a failure of the port engine. Over the North Sea the bomber began to lose height and the pilot, Flying Officer (F/O) Dominik Mendela, was forced to ditch the aircraft some 36 mile east of Great Yarmouth. Mendela and his crew managed to scramble into their dinghy. Nearly six hours later they were rescued and brought ashore; F/O Mendela (later Flight Lieutenant), F/O Hulas, F/O Malinowski, Sgt Hauptman, Sgt Badelek and Sgt Pakiet were damp and cold but none the less grateful.



W/O Wladyslaw Hauptman PAF and SOE

Wladyslaw Hauptman later volunteered for special duties as a wireless operator with the Polish arm of the Special Operation's Executive. He was dropped into Poland on the night of the 8th/9th of April 1944. He used the code names 'Gapa' and 'Kaczor' and took part in the 'Warsaw Uprising' against the Germans in September 1944. He survived the war and later, in 1946, was allowed to emigrate to the United Kingdom.

John Rennison (Researcher)

Heritage Centre - Target

After 7 years, we're hopefully on the brink of something very special. In August, we submitted our bid to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) , for funding to undertake the renovation of the former Airmen's Mess building, in order to create our Heritage Centre. Our bid will be presented to the Regional HLF panel in December, and we should hear their decision by Christmas. So if we're successful, contractors can hopefully start on the Site in Mar-Apr next year; with all building work completed during the summer, and we can plan and look forward to a Grand Opening Event in Sep of next year.....fingers crossed.

But for our part, and to make this happen, we are required by HLF to contribute 10% of the overall cost of the Project. We have undertaken a great fundraising campaign, with donors large and small, contributing to our goal. We're almost there, but this is where you may be able to help us make one final push to the finishing line. Whether you can fundraise or make a donation, we'd be delighted to receive your help.

Please donate by either:

BT MyDonate and type in '**RAF Ingham Heritage Centre**'



or

Send a cheque, made payable to '**RAF Ingham Heritage Group**' and send to:

'Heritage Centre Fund'

RAF Ingham Heritage Centre

Middle Street

Fillingham

Gainsborough

DN21 5BU

Your donations will help us to achieve the dream of creating a globally unique place, to not only remember the sacrifices made by the brave young aircrew, but to ensure the personal stories and recollections of the men and women of the Polish Air Bomber Squadrons, are there for future generations, to explore, understand and experience. Thank You.

Our Volunteers

"Our Volunteers, are our most valuable asset"

These are the men and women who turn-up every Sunday morning, regardless of the weather, week-in, week-out. Some have skills and trades, whilst others have pure enthusiasm. But one thing we all have, is a passion for what we're doing, and the goal of creating a world unique Heritage Centre.



Our Volunteers are made-up from many different ages, backgrounds, cultures. We are an organisation which fully embraces Equality & Diversity, and we welcome everyone. Currently, most of our tasks involve an element of either DIY or gardening, but this will change and expand, once the Heritage Centre is nearing completion, and will then include such roles as: Visitor Guide, Reception & Sales Staff, Catering Team, and many more. So if you're interested in Volunteering either now or next year, we'd be pleased to see you and welcome you into our great team.

Contact: Volunteering@rafingham.co.uk

Or write to:

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