



RAF Elsham Wolds Association

~~President – Margaret Bailey~~
~~Vice President – Fred Spencer~~
Chairman – Paul Mellor



PRESS RELEASE

For Publication - Immediate

Reunion Weekend: 24/25 August 2019

The RAF Elsham Wolds Association held its 38th consecutive annual Reunion Weekend on Saturday 24 August and Sunday 25 August.

This year's Reunion got under way with a dinner in Elsham village hall on Saturday 24 August when the Association President, former WWII WAAF Margaret Bailey, lit the special memorial candles. For the first time, the Memorial Table featured commemorative photographs of airmen being remembered by their families or veterans who had passed away, this year.

Entertainment was provided by Marina Mae, who sang a selection of traditional 1940s numbers, before several from the 1960s.

On Sunday, members and guests enjoyed an informal Buffet Lunch, after the business of the Association AGM, prior to a service at the Memorial Garden at the former airfield. This was conducted by Canon Peter Hall, assisted by local Lay Minister, Dawn Enser. Cadets from 866 (Immingham) Squadron, Air Training Corps paraded and formed the Guard of Honour.

Unfortunately, the BBMF Lancaster was delayed by sea fog at the Rhyl Air Show and the fly-past scheduled to coincide with the end of the memorial service was cancelled. Being on the site of the highest airfield in Bomber Command, the memorial garden setting would have given wonderful views of the 'Queen of the Skies', as the Lancaster is referred to by some veterans.

The weekend ended on Sunday evening, with a Carvery Supper back in the village hall.

Two special books were also on sale over the weekend, one by David Crawford concerning the wartime exploits of former Elsham Wolds Association President, Jack Spark. The second, 'A Daughter's Choice', written by 92-year-old Margaret Ford includes the poignant and personal story of her love for a young wireless operator with 576 Squadron, who failed to return to Elsham from a raid on Stuttgart in 1944.

The Reunion Weekend is judged as a success, particularly with numbers well up on last year: 52 sitting down at the Annual Dinner (Saturday), with 47 enjoying the Lunchtime Buffet and 33 attending the Supper, on Sunday.

There was also a very positive feeling about the Association's future and collaboration with other like-minded groups or people, such as the most successful 576 Squadron Facebook Group, who were represented throughout the weekend. One of them was David Goodes, from Melbourne, Australia, whose father served as a Radio Operator, with the Squadron.

For further information on this or any other aspect of the Association please contact Secretary, Keith Macrae, at kmacrae@glonville.co.uk or telephone/ text + 44 7860 953359.

There is also coverage on the BBC website –
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-humber-49465823>

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION – See Overleaf



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Additional Information

The RAF Elsham Wolds Association was initially formed by veterans of 103 and 576 Squadrons to foster friendships between comrades and remember all who flew from or were based at the north Lincolnshire airfield during the Second World War.

With remaining veterans finding it ever more difficult to travel as the years take their toll, the majority of the membership is now second or third generation descendants of those who served at Elsham Wolds and others wishing to perpetuate their memory or having an interest in aviation history.

The airfield, built on the site of a First World War landing ground, was constructed in the early war years and Wellington, Halifax and Lancaster bombers operated from its concrete runways until the end of the war.

103 Squadron were based at Elsham from July 1941, when it opened, until 1945. 576 Squadron was formed at the end of November 1943, when 103 was reduced in size and 'C' Flight (of 103) was formed into 576 Squadron, with new crews from Training Units making up the balance. [Precise figures can be provided if required.] At the end of October 1944, 576 Squadron relocated to Fiskerton, where they remained until disbandment in September 1945.

Today, much of the site is a busy industrial estate but at its heart is an impressive volunteer-run museum and a Memorial Garden, all housed in part of the Anglian Water Treatment Plant in Middlegate Lane. The Plant is private property but visits to view the collection of fascinating artefacts can be made by prior arrangement with the Curator.

In addition, there is an Airfield Memorial Marker inaugurated by the Airfields of Britain Conservation Trust charity on 12 May 2018. This is located alongside The Flarepath in the industrial estate (where the road names all have an aviation theme to acknowledge previous use of the land, such as Halifax Approach or Wellington Way).

Elsham Wolds was a key airfield in the chain of Bomber Command bases in Lincolnshire. It was headquarters of 13 Base, which included RAF Kirmington (166 Squadron) and RAF North Killingholme (550 Squadron), and could put a combined force of over 80 Lancasters into the air, at one time. Elsham was also 'home' to Bomber Command's most famous Lancaster, ED888 – better known as 'Mike-Squared' or 'Mother-of-them-All', which flew with both 103 and 576 and recorded an incredible 140 operations.