The Heligoland39 Project

REVIEW

Spring 2019

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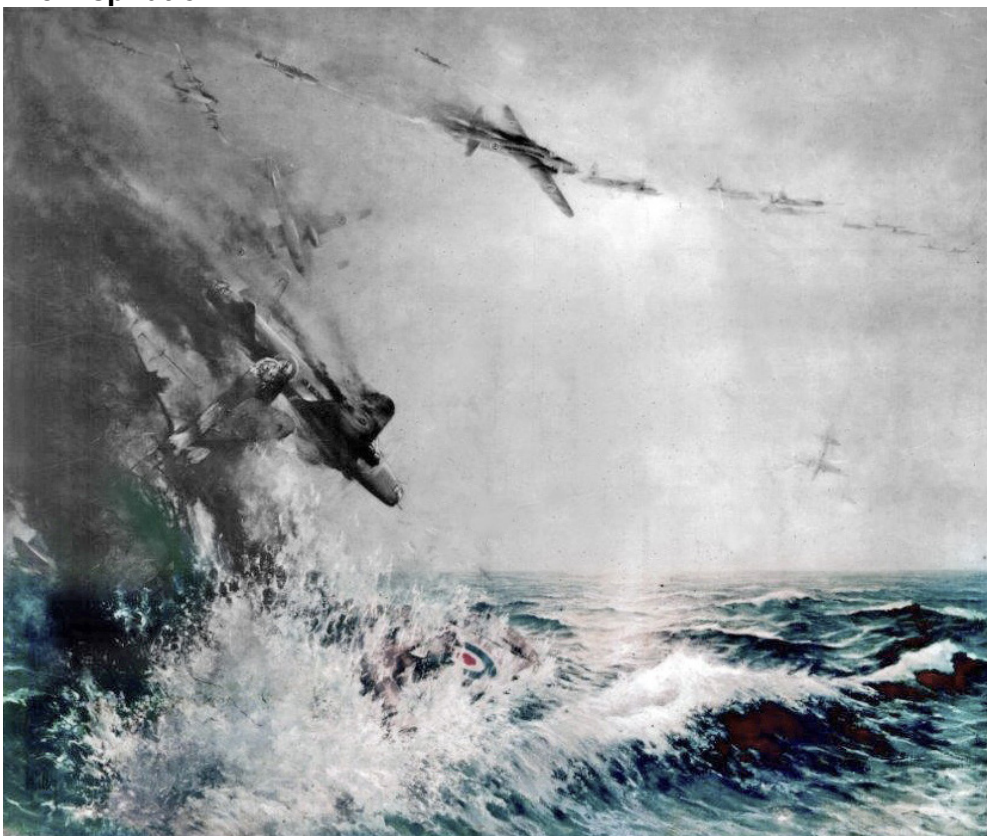
Photo: 'The Memorial Cluster' by Marta Lotysz-Veiga

The Inspiration.



This print of an untitled 1940 German painting by Willy Müller was presented to the group of families associated with Wellington R3236 on the 24th June 2016, by Captain Charly Pfeifer, Luftwaffe (Retired). The occasion was the 80th Anniversary of the opening of Jever Airfield in Lower Saxony where R3236 had been shot down with the loss of its entire crew on an early night mission in July 1940.
The graphic image depicts the damage inflicted on a formation of Wellington Bombers by a dominant Luftwaffe on the 18th December 1939.

A mounted copy of the German print was presented to the Heritage Room at RAF Honington in April 2017. Thus began a valuable collaboration with the station which continues.

The worldwide search.

At the heart of the International Bomber Command Centre are the Memorial Spire and Walls of Names.

Lincoln University had been aware of our early research and a visit to the IBCC site under construction was organised in April 2017, a year before the memorial site stood ready for its official opening.

In March 2018 The International Bomber Command Centre, in partnership with Lincoln University, agreed to assist The Heligoland39 Project in the worldwide search for the relatives of all the RAF airman who participated in The Battle of Heligoland Bight.

With IBCC researchers leading, this collaboration proved to be very effective and resulted in over 120 individual family members being contacted, of whom more than eighty were able to attend the Act of Remembrance at Ely on the 18th December 2018.

A warm welcome awaited visitors and project partners at the Old Palace, Ely.

Above: Relatives of the Heligoland airmen gather in the Old Palace to exchange stories prior to the ceremony in the Cathedral.

Above: The 1939 postman from March quizzes a Luftwaffe officer about the bombing of the Marshalling Yards in his town during WW2.

An Act of Remembrance

Marking the beginning of the 80th Anniversary Year of The Battle of Heligoland Bight

ELY CATHEDRAL – Tuesday 18th December 2018

The Mayoral Procession enters.

Laying a ceremonial disc.

The Canon's welcome.

59 candles and discs in all.

Solo Cello accompaniment.

Squadron honours predecessors.

Ely Thank You

Relatives & Friends

This ceremony was attended by 82 relatives and representative 'friends' of 23 of the RAF airmen who flew in 14 of the Wellington Bombers involved in the 1939 action. Some had travelled from as far as Australia and Canada as well as from Mainland Europe and the UK.

Ely Welcoming Party & Project Supporters

Here in Ely much effort was made to ensure the occasion was special.
Grateful thanks must go to:

The Dean & Chapter of Ely Cathedral

Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Norddeutschland

The Mayor of The City of Ely

The Chairman of East Cambridgeshire District Council

King's Ely Catering Department

IX(B) Sqn Association

Visit Ely

Sue Aldridge; Alan & Alison Arnold; Doug Aylward; Chris & Mary Barber; Colin Bedford; Joe Bridge; Tom Brown; Colin Bostrom; Alan Canham; Marcus Christ; Peter & Roslyn Cresswell; Enid Dickinson; Andy Dicks; Chris Flatman; Martin Fleet; Paul Garland; Jim Gerrard; Markus Graw; Laurine & Phil Green; Paul Harding; Tracey Harding; Mark Hart; Nick Hay; Avril & Graham Hayter-Smith; James Heeps; Graham Hoskins; Ken Howard; Mike Inder; Richard & Julia James; Shirley Jolly; Caroline Kesseler; Beth Lane; Marta.Lotysz-Veiga; Gothart Magaard; David Martin; June & Michael Massey; James Milner; Alex Patterson; Maggie & Nick Pollington; Dirk Polter; Geoff Reynolds; Malvin Rogerson; Mike Rouse; Tom Russell; Stuart Samuels; Martin Skilbech; David & Beryl Smith; Ed Stanley; Csilla Waterfall; Andrew White and Guy Wood.

Thank you all for supporting H39 at Ely. JW.

FILM

PRESENTATION

Find link on

www.heligoland39.org

A

Heligoland39 Production

Catharsis

'Reconciling a Tragedy'

The Book.

A long-held objective of The Heligoland39 Project has been to document this history in the form of a book.

This publication is not expected to be a ‘best seller’ and will probably be of interest only to those having a direct connection to the catastrophic events back in 1939 and 1940.

The intention is not to replicate what has already been written, but to present previously unseen material held by the families of the airmen involved. It is hoped to collect memories, anecdotes, family folk lore, old photographs and other memorabilia before they are forgotten or disappear into the skip.

There is also the potential to visit and research the places which were touched by those events of 80 years ago. See list on next page.

INVITATION:
You may wish to contribute to the text and content of this publication or you may have material and stories you wish to be recorded by others. Either way I’m sure that between us we have a mass of information which is worthy of inclusion. Please let it be known if you are interested in joining in.

COVERING THE COST.
It would be possible to share the cost of producing this volume by subscription where those interested in the scheme would commit to pre-buying a copy prior to collectively ordering the print run.
Please let me know if you would consider going ahead on this basis, or if you have an alternative idea of how best to proceed?

TARGET PUBLICATION DATE.
As project leader, I have always had it in my mind to have a party at the end of the project. A book-launch at the end of 2020 could provide the reason!

JW

Heligoland39 Charity Collection

The project supports three chosen charities:

JustGiving™

THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

ROYAL AIR FORCES Association
The charity that supports the RAF family

INTERNATIONAL BOMBER COMMAND CENTRE

Donate online via Just Giving to RBL & RAFA
or to IBCC via https://internationalbcc.co.uk/supporting-ibcc/donate
Proceeds from CASH COLLECTIONS at fund-raising events will be divided equally between the three charities'.

2019 & 2020 Research.

Family searches:

- Complete the search for relatives of the RAF airmen.
- Begin the search for the relatives of the two lost Luftwaffe pilots.

Visit the 1939 airfield bases:

- RAF Mildenhall –

Note: Mildenhall Register Reunion – 17th-19th May 2019. Contact: Geoff Reynolds <mrsecretary@hotmail.co.uk>

- RAF Honington
- RAF Feltwell
- RAF Lossiemouth

Research the forced-landing airfields:

- North Coates
- Sutton Bridge
- Coltishall

Search museums for information and memorabilia:

- Brooklands
- Cromer
- Duxford
- Flixton
- Grimsby
- Hendon
- Mildenhall
- Wilhelmshaven
- Wisbech

Read the period records held by others:

- RNLI
- Royal Navy
- Meteorological Office
- Lincoln University Digital Archive
- Coastal Command
- Training Command

Locate and honour all War Graves, Civilian Graves & Memorials related to all 132 men we are researching. This could take place near Remembrance Day 2020 by personal visit if practical or via remote communication to the custodian of the site.

Crown MOD Copyright.

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www.heligoland39.org

2019 Diary Dates:

CWGC
Commonwealth War Graves Commission

The Tower, Runnymede

Advance Party

An 80th Anniversary Act of Commemoration

RAF Memorial, Runnymede, Egham TW20 0LB

11:00 Wednesday 18th December 2019

A ceremony for the relatives and friends of the airmen who participated in The Battle of Heligoland Bight on Monday 18th December 1939.

Conducted by:

The Reverend Wing Commander David Norfield & Canon Chris Barber

BROOKLANDS MUSEUM

Wellington N2980 on display in the NEW 'Factory' Building.

Reception, Lunch, Tour & Exhibition

The Club House & Art Gallery

Brooklands Museum, Weybridge KT13 0QN

12:00 to 16:00 Wednesday 18th December 2019

A gathering of the relatives and friends of the airmen who participated in The Battle of Heligoland Bight on Monday 18th December 1939.

BY INVITATION ONLY

Note: The museum is supporting this event with a generous party rate.
Tickets will be offered to invitees at cost.

More information available from:

The Heligoland39 Project, 1 Castelhythe, ELY, Cambridgeshire CB7 4BU UK

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