



Melton Mowbray Wellington Bomber Memorial Appeal

Issue 1

October 2013

Welcome to the first issue of the Melton Mowbray Wellington Bomber Memorial Appeal (MMWBMA) newsletter.

Back in September 2012, a memorial was erected in Plungar for Lancaster bomber ED549 piloted by Royal Canadian Air Force Sgt Russell Avey, which crashed on March 5, 1943 with only one survivor.

Following the publicity of the Plungar memorial, the Melton Times published an article on the 4th October 2012 titled "Should crew of Wellington bomber which crashed in Melton be remembered?" They managed to track down Melton man Walter Griffin who as a young ATC cadet went to the crash scene and rescued some of the crew from the blazing wreck of the Wellington bomber that came down in Copley South field, off Saxby Road, at 7.30pm on August 13, 1944.

Walter, whose arms were badly burned as a result of his brave rescue bid was commended for his efforts after trying to save the lives of young airmen and is now calling for the crew members to be remembered in Melton.

He said: "I think when young RAF servicemen lose their lives they should be acknowledged in some way. I've never forgotten what happened but there will probably be a lot of people in Melton who don't even know about the crash.

As a result of this article, this gave the incentive to research and record what happened with the aim of making the people of Melton Mowbray aware of what happened on that fateful day of 13th August 1944 and to erect a memorial that will provide a lasting memory in recognition of the sacrifice the crew of Wellington LN281.

Back in July 2013, the newly formed Melton Aviation Society held its first meeting and the proposal for a memorial was suggested. The proposal received a warm welcome from those present and so; on 9th September a more in depth presentation was given to the Society, which again received their backing.

So what actually happened back on 13th August 1944

Wellington Mk X LN281 and her crew were based at RAF Market Harborough and operated by No 14 Operational Training Unit whose primary role was to train new aircrew to an acceptable standard before joining an operational squadron within Bomber Command.

LN281 took off with a crew of eight from RAF Market Harborough on 13th Aug 1944 at 15:45Hrs for what was thought to be a routine cross country training flight followed by a bombing detail at Grimsthorpe Bombing Range. The normal crew of a Wellington bomber consists of six: Pilot, Navigator, Bomb Aimer, Wireless Operator and 2 x Air Gunners. On this particular flight, LN281 had two extra crew members a Staff Pilot and Staff Navigator whose role was to train the inexperienced crew and 'check them out' ensuring that the trainees were achieving the correct standard.

At some point during the sortie, the aircraft started to experience trouble with the starboard engine and overflew Melton Mowbray airfield at a height of 1000ft.

At this height, the aircraft was too low for the crew to safely bale out so the only option was to try and make a safe landing.

Whilst trying to execute a large circuit on one engine and make an emergency landing at Melton airfield, the aircraft lost flying speed, stalled and crashed four miles from the airfield between Saxby Road and Thorpe Road in the Copley South field and after hitting a haystack burst into flames and ended up in the field next door.

The entry in the No 14 OTU Operational Record Book for 13th August states:-

"Wellington LN281 crashed 4 miles north Melton Mowbray airfield. Staff Pilot - F/O Owen. Pupil Pilot - Sgt. Roberts. Attempted forced landing in field and blew up on impact, finally being destroyed by fire. 7 killed and 1 dangerously injured."

The accident record card for LN281 goes on to state:

"The aircraft crashed and caught fire. Court of Inquiry: the aircraft started to execute a large circuit on one engine, lost flying speed, stalled and crashed and burnt out" " Pilot lost safe S.E. flying speed and turned with the good engine and stalled".

The crew on this fateful sortie included were:

Staff Pilot: Flg Off Norman Owen DFC 162950 – Aged 26 – Killed on Active Service
Staff Navigator: Plt Off Sydney Jack Guiver 174686 – Aged 24 - Killed on Active Service
Pilot: Sgt Edward Mansel Roberts 1624053 – Aged 20 - Killed on Active Service
Navigator: Sgt William Marshall Thomas 1652484 – Aged 28 - Killed on Active Service
W/OP: Sgt Robert McCudden 1822819 – Aged 19 - Killed on Active Service
Air Gunner: Sgt Peter Robert Stafford 1881894 – Aged 20 - Killed on Active Service
Bomb Aimer: Sgt Leonard Wilson 1684528 – Aged 21 - Killed on Active Service

Air Gunner: Sgt George H Raby 3006707 – Aged 19 – Survived with serious burn injuries

The memorial proposal

The proposed memorial would consist of a memorial stone, engraved with the details of the crash and the crew with a small garden of remembrance for wreaths and memorial crosses plus an information board informing visitors about what happened on that day back in Aug 1944.

The memorial board would be A2 size (594 X 420mm or 23.4 X 16.5 in) with the front/lower edge of the display being 42"/107cm from the ground.

It is proposed that the actual memorial would be a sandstone or granite block with smooth face and inscribed. It is estimated that it would stand no more than 3.5 – 4ft high X 2ft wide and sit in a 'garden' that would be 6ft wide X 3.5ft deep to allow for memorial crosses and wreaths to be laid.

The following wording is the proposed text that will be inscribed onto the memorial below the RAF Crest (With King George VI Crown) and painted black.



In memory of the brave men who lost their lives
whilst serving their country
when their aircraft Wellington MkX LN281
of No. 14 O.T.U. RAF Market Harborough
crashed near this site on 13TH August 1944

Staff Pilot	Flg Off Norman Owen DFC	Aged 26
Staff Navigator	Plt Off Sydney Jack Guiver	Aged 24
Pilot	Sgt Edward Mansel Roberts	Aged 20
Navigator	Sgt William Marshall Thomas	Aged 28
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Also

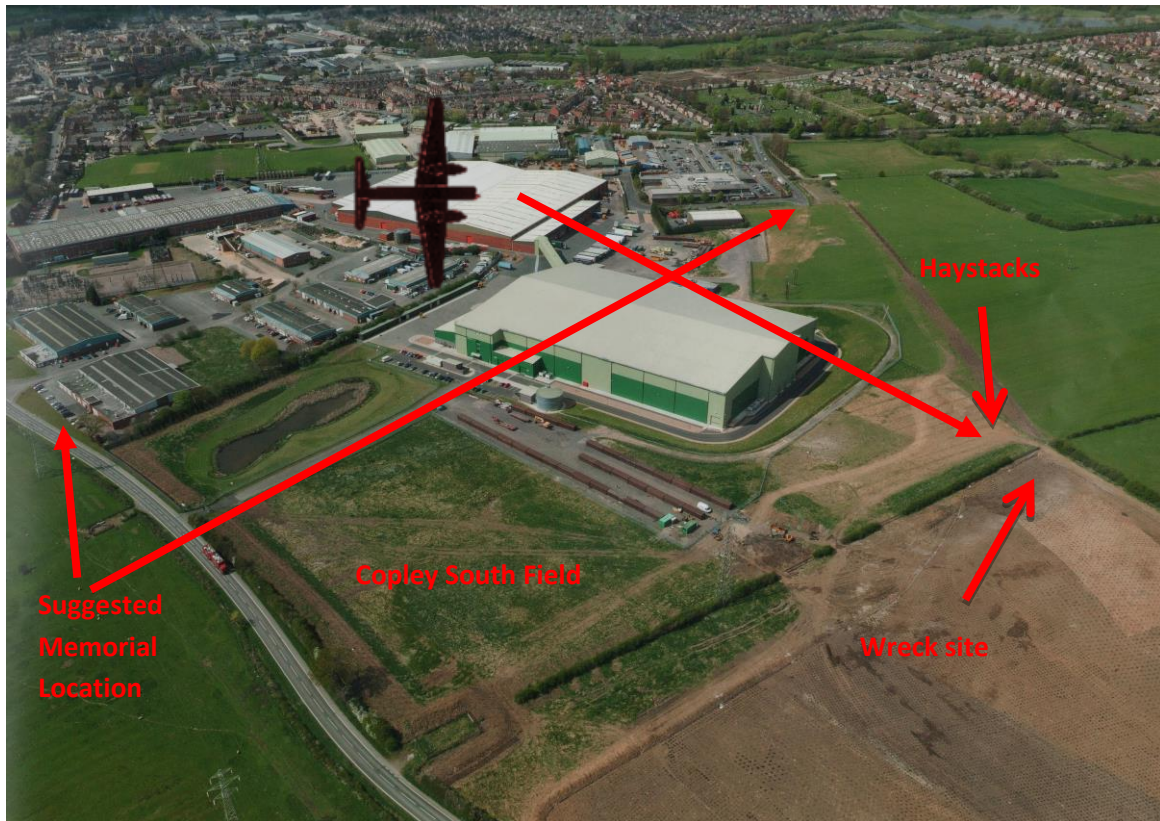
Air Gunner Sgt George Henry Raby
who was the only survivor and suffered serious injuries

IN FRIENDSHIP AND IN SERVICE
WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

It is planned to erect the memorial near to the crash site on or around the 70th anniversary which will be 13th August 2014.

We are currently looking at two possible locations for siting the memorial:

- A) Near to Tesco Supermarket & Royal Mail Sorting Office at the end of Crossfield Drive/Acres Rise
- B) On the grass verge on the B676 Saxby Road just in front of the industrial units of CE Turners (Engineers) Ltd LE13 1BS.



Aerial view of crash site and proposed memorial location.

At the moment, we are liaising with various individuals/companies and obtaining quotes for the provision and erecting of the memorial stone and information board in order to ascertain all necessary costs involved. We are also in the process of ascertaining the registered landowners for the two proposed sites.

Once all quotes and land owners permissions have been received we will officially launch our MMWBMA Fundraising Campaign!

There is still plenty of research to be carried out in trying to track down relatives of the crew members and to ascertain photos and other artifacts relating to the deceased that can be used to enhance the story.

In the meantime, don't forget to visit our new Facebook page and hit the 'LIKE' button to keep up to date with our appeal.

<https://www.facebook.com/MeltonMowbrayWellingtonBomberMemorialAppeal>

For further information about the MMWBMA, please contact Brian Fare on 07885 938945 or email brian.fare@hotmail.com