

Our Historic Airfield



1916 - 2005

At the very heart of the community

Yesterday...

The airfield opened in 1916, to defend London against the German Airship and Bomber raids of the First World War, Operational flying ceased in 1919, but restarted when the airfield became an operational RAF Fighter station once again in 1927. More than 52 squadrons from seven nations, including the U.S. and Norway, flew from the base before the last operational fighter squadron left in 1958.

It's role in the Battle of Britain inevitably brought the community into the firing line and during enemy raids on the airfield many bombs fell on North Weald village and the surrounding areas. Several buildings received direct hits and in one of these air raids nine young soldiers taking cover in a shelter were killed and the Woolpack pub destroyed.



The Woolpack

Throughout the war local people continued to welcome the airmen and women into their community, many of who'm returned and still live here today. A lasting reminder of those epic days is provided by the Airfield Memorial, sited at the former main entrance to the airfield and dedicated to all who served at RAF North Weald between 1916 and 1964. It incorporates the *Norwegian Memorial Stone* erected by the people of Norway in 1952 and a *Debt of Honour* to the 264 people who died while serving here.

Today....

Owned by Epping Forest District Council this 385 acre example of our heritage is a working airfield with facilities for all kinds of aviation

activities; including gliding, veteran and executive aircraft. It is an active base for companies involved in aircraft restoration, maintenance and sales, providing a home for a number of classic aircraft collections and the unique 'Squadron'.

Add to this; an international air fair, fly-ins, model aircraft flying, gymnastics, a golf driving range, archery, shooting, various motor sports / training. Couple it with a Saturday and Bank Holiday Market that is reputed to be the biggest in the U.K [attracting more than 25,000 people each week] and a thriving business community on the south side of the airfield and it becomes abundantly clear that the old fighter station continues to play an active role in the life of the district, county and local community.

North Weald airfield is steeped in aviation history but retains its vitality through the people that continue to work, live and play there. Over the years it has become the very heart of a community that has grown around it – a RAF Fighter Station that has had a great past, and an airfield that deserves a safe future.

Tomorrow

As we come up to the Ninetieth anniversary of the opening of the airfield and decision time on its future, this should be a time for reflection and learning as well as action. So while campaigning against the proposed massive housing development, spare a thought for those who over the years made North Weald one of the finest airfields in any Air Force and never forget the many from this airfield *who gave their today, so that we might have our tomorrow!*

To learn more about the history of the airfield and its people visit the North Weald Airfield Museum in Hurricane Way. Open each weekend and Bank Holiday from Easter until the end of October, between 12noon and 5pm. Group visits welcome by arrangement, please telephone 01992 523010 for further information.