



## Friends of the New Forest Airfields

Registered charity 1063648

Patron: **The Lady Montagu of Beaulieu**

<http://fonfasite.wordpress.com/>

Location references for the Memorial are:

Map OS reference **SZ 208 987** Post Code **BH23 8EB**

Museum & Education Centre Post Code: **BH23 8HE**

# FONFA Members' Newsletter – April 2019

Dear FONFA Member,

This second Newsletter of 2019 is being circulated to members much earlier than usual, both because of new developments in our Heritage Centre Museum and necessary changes in our management team, the Trustee Board.

John Brooks, our Honorary Treasurer and Membership Secretary, has decided to retire from both posts at the end of this summer's Open Day season, in October. John was one of the original founders of our organisation and has been a loyal and valued Trustee since, and was Chairman of Trustees for many years, before taking on the roles of Treasurer and Membership Secretary. However, John has suffered from health issues in recent years and he has therefore decided to step down.

**The Trustee Board is looking immediately for a volunteer Member or Members to understudy these roles and to take over both roles in October this year. This is essential as, without a Member to carry out these responsibilities, our organisation cannot continue to function. Are you capable of contributing to these roles? Do you have some time that you can give, to support the other Trustees in their work?**

**If you can, please contact the Board via our e-mail: [fonfa2010@gmail.com](mailto:fonfa2010@gmail.com)**

You may have seen the local publicity about our recent 'Launch Day' for the upgraded wall display panels and the new electronic equipment, which have been installed in the Centre. This was covered well in the Christchurch Times, the New Milton Advertiser & Lymington Times and the Bournemouth Echo. The first two papers had large picture spreads in their printed editions and, as a result, we saw over seventy visitors at our first 2019 Open Day, on Sunday March 24<sup>th</sup>.

The Launch Day was attended by our Patron, Lady Montagu, accompanied by her husband, Lord Montagu, and the unveiling of the new 55" interactive 'Welcome' touch table was carried out by the Veterans Minister, Tobias Ellwood, MP for Bournemouth East. Over fifty invited guests and Members attended and the event was a success.



*Tobias Ellwood unveiling the touch table with Dr Henry Goodall, Chair of Trustees.*



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A notable attendee was Staff Sergeant Laurie Weeden, who piloted one of the six Horsa gliders taking part in the D-Day 'coup de main' attacks on the Orne River and Canal Bridges, and later piloted a Horsa glider into Arnhem. In addition, several Parachute Regiment and Special Air Service Veterans attended the launch event. The Chairman of the House of Commons Defence Select Committee, Dr Julian Lewis, who is the MP for New Forest East, was also present, as well as Lesley Deadman, the Mayor of Christchurch. We have published a full account and photographs on the website at <https://fonfasite.wordpress.com/>.



The new equipment includes two 55" interactive wall mounted screens, which display a map and details of the WWII New Forest Airfields, with detailed timelines, photographs, videos, descriptions of the aircraft and additional information about every airfield described. In addition, all of the wall panels, formerly comprising eight laminated A4 size sheets mounted on cardboard, have been replaced by single boards, in the same blue steel frames, with artwork designed to include more information and give a consistent modern look to the Centre. We are now able to display twenty five boards at once, with five more in reserve, so that we will be able to rotate the boards, and focus on different aspects of the story of the airfields, over time. A new projector, capable of showing videos or slides, with surround sound, has been installed in the Centre, with a retractable screen.

All these improvements have been made possible by two grants, one from the New Forest LEADER Programme and from the Beaulieu Beaufort Foundation, without which they would have been way beyond our capability to finance.

We have also increased the number of models in the Centre, displaying the aircraft, which flew from the Forest in the dark days on the 1940s. Master Modeller Kip Watson, who previously created the large scale Sopwith Camel, for our WWI East Boldre airfield display, has since modelled a large scale P-47 Thunderbolt, flown by Col. Hal Shook, Squadron Commander at Winkton in 1944, the first pilot in the US Army Air Force 404<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group to fly 100 missions, whose decorations include the DFC, Air Medal with 19 Oak Leaf Clusters, a Presidential Unit Citation, Belgian Croix de Guerre, French Croix de Guerre with Palm and the Belgian Fourragere. If you want to know what sort of people these guys were (and still are!) just check out this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fO2REKIfNt0>



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Since then, Kip has completed a 1/32 scale Spitfire, depicting the aircraft flown by Christopher 'Bunny' Currant, DSO, DFC & Bar, who commanded the Spitfires of the Ibsley Wing from June until August 1942.

There are additional models, 'in the pipeline' for the upcoming 'Assault Glider Day', which we are planning to stage on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> May, over the late May Bank Holiday weekend. We expect to see Laurie Weeden again for that day, all being well, and Matt Yates, who has an impressive display of Glider memorabilia, uniforms, logbooks and equipment for display.

So, now that we are potentially on the threshold of a step change in what we can offer the local population in the future, it all depends on you, the Membership. We need a new Treasurer and a new Membership Secretary pronto!

**What will your contribution to FONFA be over the next twelve months, in 2019?**

Henry Goodall,  
Chair of Trustees, FONFA  
April 7<sup>th</sup> 2019