

PAFMC COMMENDATIONS

In 2014 the Polish Air Force Memorial Committee began awarding Commendations. These are given to people who, with no personal connections with Poland, have nonetheless made an exceptional contribution to preserving the memory of Polish Airmen.

1. Mr Peter Whitaker and the late Mr Jim Hartley

For their work in establishing a memorial to seven Polish airmen who died when their Wellington bomber crashed at the side of the Leeds Liverpool canal at Bradley on September 23, 1943, tracing descendants of those airmen, and taking the medals to which they were entitled back to their families.

2. Mrs Nina Britton Boyle

For her work over many years sending information about Polish airmen who died to their families in Poland, tending their graves, and erecting memorial plaques.

3. Mr Colin Mitchell-Smith

For his work in creating the memorial at Faldingworth to Polish airmen, organising ceremonies there, and recently creating an Anglo-Polish 'Path of Friendship' at the Church there.

4. The R J Mitchell Primary School

This School is built on the former parade ground of RAF Hornchurch. Classrooms are named after Battle of Britain pilots, and they chose to include Ferić and Gabszewicz among them. It is one of only two schools in the country allowed to wear the RAF tie as its school tie. The headmaster, Mr Read, will receive the Commendation.

5. Ms Kate O'Mara

A Commendation has also been awarded to Ms Kate O'Mara, who was responsible for establishing a memorial to 302 Squadron in the church at Leconfield. As she is unable to be here today, it will be presented subsequently.

2015

6. Cllr Ray Puddifoot MBE
Leader of Hillingdon Council

For many years work, both on routine matters, such as the impeccable maintenance of the Monument and its grounds, and one-off events, such as the wonderful gesture of the creation of the Memorial Garden to mark the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

7. Peter Devitt
RAF Museum, Hendon

For curating the splendid 'Brothers in Arms' exhibition at the RAF Museum and in giving presentations in Britain and in Poland on the role and achievements of the Polish Air Force.

8. Kelvin Youngs
Aircrew Remembered web-site

For creating and maintaining the Aircrew Remembered website, which has grown into a source of immense value to family members, scholars and the general public.

9. Jan Mills
RAF Northolt

For the care provided to visiting veterans and their descendants, as well as the trouble taken to make sure that no visitor to RAF Northolt, from whatever background, leaves without understanding the role played by the Polish Air Force.

2016

10. 307 Squadron Project
Michael Parrott, Founder

For restoring 15th November to its war-time title of 'Polish 307 Squadron Day' in the City of Exeter, in tribute to the night-fighter Squadron stationed there for two years and a key defence during the Blitz. In support of which, the Project has created exhibitions, secured the involvement of the Lord Mayor and the Polish Embassy, and built up a growing body of local interest.

11. Clitheroe Youth Forum
Mel Diack MBE Chairman

For engaging young people locally in researching the history of 15 aircraft crashes on the fells of the Forest of Bowland, marking each site with a memorial stone, and creating a common memorial to the 25 aircrew killed.

Particular care was taken to ensure that Polish aircrew were properly remembered and that their heritage was reflected in the ceremonies that took place.

12. RAF Ingham Heritage Group
Geoff Burton, Founder and Trustee

For the Group's work in acquiring the site of the former RAF Ingham - predominantly a Polish bomber base - and creating firstly a memorial and over the longer term restoration of some of the buildings to create a museum. The RAF Ingham Heritage Centre is seen as the home of the Polish Bomber Squadrons for commemorative purposes.

13. Calverton and Woodborough Branch, Royal British Legion
Sue Bereznyckyj, President

For maintaining since 1940 a memorial cross deep in local woodland marking the site where a 300Sqn Fairey Battle crashed during the Battle of Britain on 13 October 1940 on returning to RAF Swinderby, killing its three crew, F/O Jan Gebicki pilot, Sgt Edward Morawa observer and Sgt Tadeusz Egierski wireless operator/gunner, and securing the presence of relatives of those killed at a 75th anniversary service in 2015.

2017

14. Air Chief Marshal Sir David Parry-Evans

For many years the Patron of the Polish Air Force Association and later of its Charitable Trust, Sir David has been an unwavering supporter of the Polish Air Force and its veterans, attending Commemorative events in Britain and Poland with unshakeable fidelity, always accompanied by Lady Parry-Evans. Sadly, this is the first year that his health has prevented attendance at our Ceremony, so we will applaud him now, and the Certificate will be posted to him with our best wishes.

15. Mr Neville Bougourd

From a chance discovery in 2007 that a Polish aircraft had crashed near the village where he was born, Mr Bougourd has developed an interest, now he says an 'obsession' with Polish Air Force history. He has developed and moderated a comprehensive blog on 304 Squadron, publishing profiles of members of the Squadron and helping relatives seeking information. His work has been recognised by the 44th Naval Aviation Base at Siemirowice, the successor to 304 Squadron's traditions and on a recent visit he was awarded a plaque there.

16. Mr Michael Olizar

Mr Olizar's passion for the achievements and memory of the Polish Air Force is both well known and deeply appreciated. He has worked tirelessly both in

connecting 663 Squadron with their Polish heritage and in providing tours of the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum for officer cadets from Dęblin. As he cannot be here, his Certificate was presented earlier.

17. The Gaelic Athletic Association

Over many years the GAA has been effortlessly hospitable to us, providing parking facilities, opening up their club-house, and offering the support services adjacent to the Monument without which it would be hard to run our annual Commemoration. All of this is done *pro bono* and with the minimum of fuss or bureaucracy. Again, their Certificate is being presented separately.

18. Kelly-Ann Donaldson and Team

For some years now we have been blessed with the support of Kelly-Ann Donaldson and her team from the Mess, including SAC Alex le Marquand as Chef. They go to enormous trouble to make sure that the lunch at RAF Northolt matches the importance of the occasion and the tastes of their guests. But most of all I know that their priority is a deep concern and affection for our distinguished veterans. As Kelly-Ann is away on leave, could I ask Charlea Bright to come up and accept the Award on behalf of the whole team.