

John Magee Memorial Project

Wellingore, Lincolnshire UK



Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth

Of the thousands of young men from many different countries who gave their lives to help to defend England in World War II, Pilot Officer John Gillespie Magee Jr., Royal Canadian Air Force, left a legacy which has been acknowledged throughout the world. John was both a Pilot and a Poet whose life was cut short while on active service at the age of 19. We will never know what he might have achieved but his legacy of poetry must be acknowledged as significant. His most recognised poem, High Flight is known as the airman's poem which includes the famous lines

*Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace.
Where never lark, or even eagle flew --
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.*

The village of Wellingore in Lincolnshire is a most fitting location to commemorate the life and work of John Magee. John Magee was stationed at Wellingore airfield and billeted in the village. On 11th December 1941 he took off from Wellingore on a routine training flight and, on his return, descending through cloud, collided with a training flight taking off from RAF Cranwell. Both planes crashed in a field to the east of the village and both pilots were sadly killed. The grave of John Magee is in the village of Scopwick close to Wellingore and there is a well-travelled trail of aviation history sites within the county including the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight at RAF Coningsby, 12 Group Control Room at RAF Digby, the home of the Red Arrows at RAF Scampton and the new Bomber Command Memorial in Lincoln.

The Memorial Project

The project is managed and all donated funds administered under the governance of the **John Gillespie Magee Jr. Foundation**, a charitable company registered in Wellingore (Reg. #10773259). Upon completion, the Parish Council will

take responsibility for maintenance of the memorial site and the landscaped park as a public area open to all visitors. A small Visitor Centre is planned to provide facilities for visitors, displays of the life and work of John Magee and archived resources for further study and for educational programmes sponsored by the Foundation.

The Memorial Statue

The memorial will be in the form of a 9ft (2.75 metres) high bronze sculpture of John Magee in pilot uniform with a relief plaque inscribed with the High Flight poem. Every detail of the uniform and kit has been researched to match the appearance of John Magee in 1941. The image above shows the 48cm

maquette of the statue. It will be placed in the landscaped park in Wellingore village which is easily accessible from the main A607 road.

The Sculptor

The sculptor chosen for the project is Mr. Antony Dufort FRBS, SPS, MA, a most highly regarded and well known artist with many significant works on display around the UK. Mr. Dufort won the competition to design the reverse of the new definitive £2 circulation coin issued in July 2015 and has completed many portrait sculptures of well-known figures including HM The Queen, Pope John Paul II, Tudor Monarchs, Margaret Thatcher and David Cameron. His work can be viewed at www.antonydufort.co.uk.

Project Timeline

Mr. Dufort accepted the commission in January 2017. The first 48cm high bust of John Magee was completed in July 2017 and the maquette of the complete statue in June 2018. It is hoped that funding of £120,000 will be received by the end of 2018, sufficient to issue the contract for the statue with additional funds for landscaping and opening of the memorial to visitors in 2019.

Project Support

John Magee was born to missionary parents in Shanghai, of an American father and English mother, and educated in England. With the outbreak of war and the invasion of China by the Japanese, the family returned to America which was a neutral country at the time. John was determined to become involved in the conflict and, giving up a place at one of the Ivy League universities and as an American citizen, he crossed the border to Canada to join the Royal Canadian Air Force. With his contributions recognised across several nationalities, the memorial project has received widespread support from within the UK, Canada and the USA.

Patrons

Reverend Canon F. Hugh Magee - the brother of John Magee
Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Graydon GCB CBE
Air Vice-Marshal Gavin Mackay CB OBE AFC
Carol Vorderman MBE - Hnr. Group Captain and Ambassador for the RAF Cadet Force
Captain Michael Lopez-Alegria USN (Retd) – former NASA astronaut

Fund Raising

The immediate goal is to achieve our target of £120,000 to allow the commissioning of the complete bronze statue. To support the funding for the project, Mr. Dufort has permitted the Foundation to provide Limited Edition bronze castings of the maquette of the statue and of the bust of John Magee. Copies are also available cast in bronze-effect resin at lower cost.

To consider a donation or for further details and to purchase copies of the commemorative items please contact -

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