

Welcome

The number of people who turned out for the Dambusters commemoration was a wonderful tribute to the bravery of those who took part. Talking to some of you on the day, the strength of pride you feel for the Control Tower and the rich heritage that relates to Kings Hill's days as an airfield was palpable. It was a real community event and is just what Kings Hill is all about.

In fact, there was so much interest that we have decided to make this a commemorative issue of the newsletter and have devoted the centre pages to a photographic record of the day. Our latest news in brief is on the back page – more details on some of these stories in the next issue.

Andrew Blevins *Managing Director, Liberty Property Trust UK Ltd*



Hundreds honour the Dambusters

Around 800 people from Kings Hill and surrounding areas joined in with the commemorations held to mark the 70th anniversary of the Dambusters, attending a special Service and afterwards watching a Spitfire fly low over the Control Tower.

Kings Hill's connection with the Dambusters – who used bouncing bombs to destroy the dams of Germany's Ruhr Valley – is through the squadron's commander Guy Gibson, who was based at RAF West Malling (now Kings Hill) with 29 Squadron in 1941.

The event began with a special Service of Commemoration conducted by Leybourne vicar Rev (Flt Lt) Matthew Buchan, who has just returned from a three month deployment as the Chaplain to the Joint Air Group at Camp Bastion, Afghanistan.

It was held at the RAF West Malling memorial, which marks Kings Hill's aviation past and honours the military and civilian personnel who were based there over the years. The sculpture was unveiled in 2002 by the late actor Richard Todd, who played Guy Gibson in the 1955 film 'The Dam Busters'.

After the Service hundreds of people – including many children – gathered in the sunshine to watch a flypast by



Crowds watching the Spitfire flypast

a Spitfire, which flew four times over the Control Tower, before signing off by dipping its wings and returning to RAF Coningsby in Lincolnshire.

One of the guests of honour was 89-year-old Warrant Officer Neville Croucher, who was based at RAF West Malling during the war. He was given a tour of the Control Tower – which is undergoing renovation – and was full of stories about life there during the war. The Grade II listed building is being painstakingly refurbished in keeping with its Art Deco style.

Neville recalled how orders were received from the Control Tower during the war and how he was kept on there afterwards. He said: "By the end I'd clocked up 800 hours and 20 minutes of flying time. I was a Warrant Officer and we were looked after very well. The contrast between

being at war was huge – it was a different world."

Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Kent, Viscount De L'Isle MBE led the event, which was organised by Group Captain Patrick Tootal and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council.

Group Captain Tootal said: "It was a great community event but was also an opportunity to highlight contemporary links to the Dambusters raid in warfare today and demonstrate the critical contribution air power still makes today towards the defence of the UK and its interests abroad."

The event was extensively covered by the media, with BBC South East, ITV Meridian and BBC Radio Kent filming and recording for much of the day. Visit the news section of www.kings-hill.com for a link to ITV Meridian's coverage of the day.

Dambusters raid

The Dambusters raid, 'Operation Chastise', took place on the night of 16 May, 1943. Nineteen Lancaster bombers, under the command of 24 year old Wing Commander Guy Gibson, flew from RAF Scampton, near Lincoln, to destroy the dams of Germany's Ruhr Valley using 'bouncing bombs' invented by Sir Barnes Wallis CBE.

It was a dangerous mission and of the 133 men who set

out, only 77 returned. Wing Commander Gibson was awarded the Victoria Cross for his bravery during the raid. Kings Hill's connection with the mission is through Guy Gibson, who served with 29 Squadron based at RAF West Malling (now Kings Hill) in 1941/2. He loved his time there and said: 'Of all the airfields in Great Britain, here, many say, including myself, we have the most pleasant.'



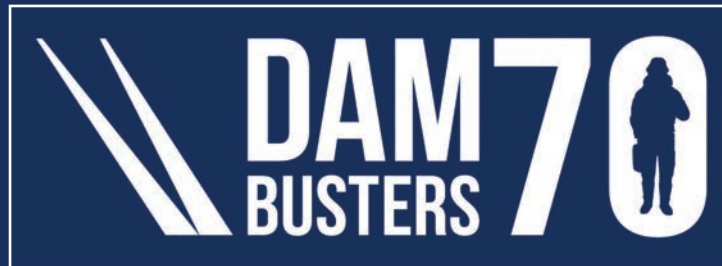
Wing Commander Guy Gibson
VC DSO* DFC*



The Möhne Dam



Standard Bearers - Royal British Legion Tunbridge Wells, Dover Royal Air Forces Association, Royal British Legion Gravesham & Ebbsfleet



Group Captain Patrick Tootal, OBE, DL addressing the crowds. Alongside him are the Lord Lieutenant of Kent Viscount De L'Isle, MBE; Viscountess De L'Isle and the Mayor of Tonbridge and Malling, Howard Rogers



Flt Lt Richard Watts, (29 Squadron), pays his respects having laid a wreath at the RAF West Malling Memorial



Councillor Leyland Ridings, MBE, of KCC and President of the Royal British Legion Kent County, the Lord Lieutenant of Kent Viscount De L'Isle, MBE, Flt Lt Richard Watts, 29 Squadron, Group Captain Patrick Tootal, OBE, DL, the Mayor of Tonbridge and Malling, Howard Rogers, and Rev (Flt Lt) Matthew Buchan RAuxAF



Wreaths in front of the Running Airman



Poppy wreath laid by the Tonbridge Branch of the Royal British Legion
Courtesy of Paul.C.Davies, Pcdphotography



Warrant Officer Pilot (retired) Neville Croucher, who was based at RAF West Malling and returned for the first time since the war, enjoying a quiet moment outside the Control Tower



Warrant Officer Pilot (retired) Neville Croucher being interviewed by BBC Today



Rev (Flt Lt) Matthew Buchan RAuxAF, who has recently returned from Camp Bastion, Afghanistan



Children from Kings Hill School at the Memorial



Trumpeter, SAC Alison Cartledge, from the Central Band of the Royal Air Force played the Last Post and Reveille

Future Development

An outline planning application for the next phase of Kings Hill's development has now been submitted to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council.

The application includes land allocated for a new primary school with associated playing fields; 975 residential dwellings; self-service petrol station; park and other landscaped open spaces.

A decision is expected in the Autumn. For more information visit <http://publicaccess2.tmbc.gov.uk/online-applications> and then key 13/01535/OA into the search box.

Liberty Square full

With the opening of Sue Ryder, all the shops in Liberty Square are occupied and open for business, bucking the national trend which is seeing many High Streets suffer.

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Crest Nicholson: 0845 504 8506
Environ: 01732 848316
Hillreed: 01732 847500
Ward Homes: 0844 700553
www.kings-hillnewhomes.com
www.kings-hill.com

News in brief



Working out

24-hour gym

Planning consent has been granted for Infinity Fitness UK to open a 24-hour gym in 10 Kings Hill Avenue. The fit out is underway and the gym is pre-signing members – visit www.infinity-fitness-uk.com or call 01732 870095 for more information.

Call for volunteers

Thanks to the fantastic support from local residents, national care charity Sue Ryder is a great success. Volunteers are needed to help in the new shop so if you can spare a few hours please email nikki.ellis@suerydercare.org or call 01732 843808.

New name for sports facilities

A name has been chosen for the new sporting facilities and allotments being constructed at the end of Discovery Drive – Kings Hill Sports Park. The facilities – which include five grass pitches, one 3G artificial grass pitch and a pavilion – will be handed over to the Parish Council by Liberty by the end of the summer.

A rose to remember

Relatives of Flight Lieutenant Don Stewart, who flew with 617 Squadron in the Dambusters raid, will be planting a yellow 'Golden Wings' rose beside the Running Airman statue to commemorate him.



'Golden Wings' rose which will be planted in remembrance

One of the features that sets Kings Hill apart from other developments is the quality and maintenance of the environment, which is the responsibility of the Kings Hill Residential Estate Management Company (KHREMC). It is run by Liberty but has two residents as directors, John West (john@kingshillrentals.com) and Sarah Barker (sarah.barker-khrem@hotmail.co.uk).

Kings Hill Residential Estate Management Company Ltd can be contacted on 01732 870375 or kingshillresidential@libertyproperty.com

Kings Hill Estate Management Company Ltd, which is run on a similar not-for-profit basis to KHREMC, looks after the commercial business park within Kings Hill.

Log on for latest news

Our website www.kings-hill.com has information on all aspects of the development – maps; the masterplan showing the scale of the development; latest news; links to the Kings Hill amenities such as shops, restaurants, surgery etc; public transport timetables and information on matters that affect those living and working at Kings Hill.

