

# Battle of Britain commemoration revived

The annual commemoration of the Battle of Britain is being revived with a service at the Australian War Memorial on September 12 at 10.30am.

The national commemoration of the battle, fought in the skies over southern England in the northern summer of 1940, was moved from the National Capital to Hobart in 2005.

The British Sub-Branch of the ACT Returned and Services League has decided to reactivate the commemoration in Canberra.

The Battle of Britain was the first major air battle of World War II but its strategic consequences were far wider than that of just an air battle. It had an enormous effect on the future success of the Allied war effort and, by implication, on the security of Australia.

Before it, in May and June of 1940, Hitler's forces had occupied most of Europe from France in the west to Poland in the east. In a few cases countries had formed alliances with Germany or remained neutral. Even the USSR had signed a nonaggression pact with Germany.

Hitler planned next to invade and conquer Britain but to do this he needed air superiority.

The assault on Britain began in July when the battle-hardened German Luftwaffe, with more than twice the 600 aircraft available to the Royal Air Force's Fighter Command, began its attacks.

Hitler's plan to invade Britain depended on the defeat of the RAF. From July through to October, daily battles were seen between bombers and fighters over the English Channel and SE England. The final effort to destroy the RAF came on August 13, known as Eagle Day, when Hermann Goering believed his vastly superior forces could sweep the RAF from the skies in four weeks.

The turning point came on Sunday, September 15, when masses of blips

*A Spitfire — the most famous and celebrated of all the British aircraft of World War II and the core of the Battle of Britain. Fighter Command committed 24 squadrons to intercept — the maximum force available — fewer than 300 aircraft — but on that day the tide turned. The RAF inflicted on Germany its first real defeat of the war because, although short of aircraft, the RAF withstood the Luftwaffe and Operation Sea Lion, Hitler's plan for the invasion of Britain, was cancelled.*



on British radar screens signalled more than 400 bombers escorted by 700 fighters heading for England.

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September 15, one of the heaviest days of aerial combat, was chosen as the day to especially remember the significance of the battle.

In Winston Churchill's immortal words: Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.

Although the ordeal of the blitz on

Britain's towns and cities was to come, and although there would be many set-backs before final Allied victory, the pilots of Fighter Command, "The Few", scored a victory that changed the course of the war.

Thus The Few who fought in the Battle of Britain from the UK, the Commonwealth and the occupied countries of Europe forced Hitler to fight a war on two fronts and paved the way for the final victory in Europe.

Australia can take pride in its contribution to the defence of Britain in that crucial summer and autumn. A brigade of Australian troops arrived in Britain in 1940 and trained on Salisbury Plain. Among the first Australian deaths in action in the war were men who came under attack from German aircraft.

Twenty-five Australians were considered eligible for the Battle of Britain

clasp to the 1939–45 campaign medal. Other Australians flew during the battle with RAF Bomber Command and Coastal Command but the total number involved in the battle did not exceed 35.

Five hundred and thirty seven Fighter Command pilots died in the Battle of Britain. At least 10 of them were Australian, including Flight Lieutenant Paterson Clarence Hughes DFC, of Cooma, NSW. He was killed in action on September 7, 1940. He was credited with 14 destroyed enemy aircraft plus other shared planes, making him the highest-scoring non-British fighter pilot in the Battle of Britain at the time of his death.

Expected to be present at the ceremony at the Australian War Memorial is Air Commodore James Coward RAF (Retd), who fought in the battle.

## Digger's remains identified

The remains of an Australian World War I soldier recovered from a lost grave in Belgium in 2006 has been identified as Private George Richard Storey, who was killed in the Battle of Polygon Wood in September 1917.

Private Storey's remains, with those of Private John Hunter, Sergeant George Calder and two other unidentified Australian soldiers, were discovered during excavations near Westhoek, Belgium, two years ago.

The Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, Warren Snowdon, said on August 13, "While very good research work produced a list of seven possible names for the men, DNA matching techniques were only able to confirm the identity of two of the five [before] the reburial ceremony with full military honours last year."

Confirmation of George Storey's identification was made using DNA as well as compelling historical research.

"It has been a long, arduous process but now Private Storey's place of burial is known to his country and, most importantly, his family. Plans are under way to replace the current headstone at his grave from 'known unto God' to

'Private George Richard Storey'."

A small, informal ceremony will be held in Belgium to mark the occasion and it is hoped that representatives of the Storey family will be in attendance.

Private Storey was born in London, England but was working as a farm hand in Western Australia when he enlisted on 31 March 1916 as a 20-year-old. As part of 5th reinforcement, he was posted to the 51st Battalion and embarked for Europe on 20 September 1916, where he joined his unit on 19 December. He was wounded on 9 June 1917 but recovered in time to rejoin his unit on 27 August 1917 and participate in the attack on Polygon Wood. He was killed in action on 30 September 1917.

His brother, Jack Storey, survived the war and returned to Australia in January 1918.

## Canberra Defence team wins achievement award

The Canberra-based Defence Materiel Organisation project team that successfully delivered the C-17A Globemaster III heavy-lift aircraft to the Royal Australian Air Force has won the Defence/Aerospace category of the

## He helped Sandakan PoWs

Henry Chang Ting Kiang, a member of the underground formed to assist Australian prisoners of war at Sandakan, died peacefully on August 25, 2008 at Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia, aged 93.

During World War II he was employed by the Japanese as a mechanic at the airfield being built by Australian PoWs.

Although the Japanese watched the PoWs and locals carefully at the airfield the two groups managed to communicate by means of signs and whispers.

The PoWs asked for money, food and medicines for an escape.

Moved by the harsh treatment of the PoWs, Henry Chang approached his friends and eventually a group of 20 to 30 banded together to get the necessary

items and became part of the underground.

When the underground was betrayed, Henry Chang was also rounded up by the Japanese.

He was tortured and sent to Kuching, Sarawak, where he was tried and sentenced to six years of hard labour. Fortunately, the war ended after he had served two years.

With liberation he was brought home by members of the Australian Army.

Until his return his family had no idea whether he was dead or alive.

Like the families of other members of the underground who had been sent to Kuching they were left destitute and survived by hiding and living in the jungle.

Henry Chang was one of only three surviving members of the Sandakan underground.

Since 2001, Douglas and Doreen Hurst have been lobbying the Australian government to recognise these men and to award them the same gratuity that was given to Australians who were gaoled by the Japanese.

The government has so far refused this request.