

## **Bomber Command Memorial Wins Planning Permission**

War veterans around the world are celebrating today, as planning permission has been granted for a memorial in London's Green Park to commemorate the 55,573 men of Bomber Command who lost their lives in WWII. The news is also welcome to the RAF Bomber Command Association and the Bee Gees' Robin Gibb, who have been campaigning and raising money over many years.

Until now, the collective role of RAF Bomber Command in freeing Europe from Hitler's tyrannical rule has never been publicly recognised by the British Government. They are the only WWII veterans not to have been acknowledged for their decisive part in saving Europe from the Nazis, despite the fact that they suffered the greatest casualties, accounting for 10% of all fatalities in the War. The memorial will serve as a reminder of the lives that were lost, and as a place for family members to remember loved ones, some of whom never had a formal place of rest. The average age of the Bomber Command servicemen was just 22; they were all volunteers, and came from all across the world including Britain, the Commonwealth, and Allied countries like the US, Poland, France and the Czech Republic.

Thanks to tireless campaigning by the RAF Bomber Command Association, £1.5m has already been raised, however, they need another £2m to build and maintain the memorial. Donations can be made via bmycharity - [www.theygaveeverything.co.uk](http://www.theygaveeverything.co.uk)

Acclaimed architect Liam O'Connor has been chosen by the Bomber Command Association to design the memorial. He is best known for creating the Armed Forces Memorial in the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, and for the design and construction of the Commonwealth Memorial Gates on Constitution Hill in London, near Buckingham Palace. Liam was selected from a shortlist of some of the country's most respected architects, and is a driving force in the memorial's construction and fight for planning permission.

The renowned sculptor Phillip Jackson, (whose work includes the HM Queen Elizabeth Memorial on The Mall in London and The Bobby Moore Memorial at the new Wembley Stadium) is crafting a bronze sculpture within the memorial, depicting seven Bomber Command aircrew. Another part will be constructed from sections of melted down aluminium taken from a Halifax bomber, shot down over Belgium on the night of 12 May 1944. The lighting around the memorial is designed so that the profiles of the figures will always be visible against the sky, both night and day. It is due to be unveiled in autumn 2011. Please see

*Notes to editors below for further information on the design*

Marshal of the Royal Air Force, Sir Michael Beetham, President of the Bomber Command Association, commented: "This is great news and the Bomber Command Association are all immensely grateful to Westminster City Council for granting planning permission. We have been striving for many years to have a memorial in central London to recognise the contribution of Bomber Command to victory in World War Two, and in particular, the huge sacrifice of the lives of so many of our comrades in achieving it. The memorial has been designed and we are now ready to go ahead with all speed."

Air Commodore Charles Clarke, OBE added: "Bomber Command are delighted that at long last recognition has been made to the brave men of Bomber Command who operated night after night over heavily defended territory. It's now up to us to see that the memorial is unveiled whilst some of the veterans are still alive."

Robin Gibb, CBE said: "This is the greatest news. I've put my heart and soul into being a champion of this cause. I had a vision of this monument becoming a reality and now I want to see it unveiled. These guys are heroes – they saved the world and they deserve the best. Anyone speaking against it should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves. The whole world, including Germany, is free today because of Bomber Command's sacrifice."

Alex Aiken, Director of Communications & Strategy at Westminster City Council said: "Westminster's planning committee tonight approved the memorial recognising that it was a tribute to the crucial role that Bomber Command played in the Second World War. Councillors said that it was right that this important public space should have this memorial, which we believe will be admired by the public."

In a speech in 1940, Winston Churchill said: "The fighters are our salvation but the bombers alone provide the means of victory."

The Prime Minister, Gordon Brown said: "I have always believed that the brave men of Bomber Command who lost their lives in the service of their country deserved the fullest recognition of their courage and sacrifice."

The Conservative leader, David Cameron echoed that sentiment: "It is time the nation finally showed its gratitude by building a permanent memorial. I fully support this important campaign to do more to remember those brave men from

Bomber Command who died doing their duty. Their deeds have not been recognised in the way the heroes from the Battle of Britain have been, but their sacrifices were just as great."

~ Ends ~

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#### About Bomber Command

The Bomber Command memorial in London is to commemorate the 55,573 aircrew who lost their lives during WWII

- The memorial will be built in London's Hyde Park Corner in Green Park, adjacent to Buckingham Palace
- Bomber Command consisted of more than 125,000 volunteers from all over the Commonwealth and Allied nations
- Their losses were greater than that of any other service during WWII, accounting for 10% of all fatalities
- The 'Forgotten Heroes' campaign needs to raise £2.5m or roughly €2.9m by April 2011 in addition to the £1.5m has already been raised in the UK
- Donations can be made at [www.rafbombercommand.com/memorialfund](http://www.rafbombercommand.com/memorialfund)
- 55,573 died, more than 8,000 were injured and nearly 10,000 were made prisoners of war
- Three out of five airmen would become casualties
- The average age of the Bomber Command aircrew was 22. The youngest was 18
- Half of the Bomber Command casualties have no known grave
- They are the only WWII servicemen not to have been publicly honoured in Britain
- Time is of the essence for the surviving servicemen, who are now in their late 80s and 90s
- Bomber Command sank more enemy ships than the Navy
- Bomber Command was the only British fighting force which took the war directly to Germany, destroying vital infrastructure, supply lines and morale
- During the war, the Dutch population faced severe famine

and starvation. With the acquiescence of occupying German forces, Bomber Command dropped 6,680 tonnes of food into the Netherlands

- Bomber Command was responsible for humanitarian missions to drop life saving aid to civilians and resistance forces in occupied territories

- There were 125,000 in total, all of which were volunteers. 55,573 aircrew were killed; 8,403 were wounded; 9,838 were made prisoners of war.

- \* Their average age was 22. The youngest was 18.

- As well as Britain, bomber aircrew came from the Commonwealth countries - there was a Canadian Group and Australian and New Zealand Squadrons. South African and West Indian aircrew came to help our fight, together with those who had escaped from Poland, Czechoslovakia, France and other countries of occupied Europe.

#### About Bomber Command Association

Despite the tragic losses suffered by Bomber Command during the 1939/1945 conflict there remained a strong comradeship, indomitable spirit and high level of morale amongst all its members. Following the end of the conflict a number of those who served in the Command were determined to maintain these ideals and recorded their names in an unofficial Bomber Command Register. In 1985 The Bomber Command Association was formed as a means of continuing that comradeship and perpetuating the Command's history with truth, dignity and pride.

The Bomber Command Association is the promoter of the Bomber Command Memorial, with assistance from The Royal Air Force and the Heritage Foundation, who's President Robin Gibb, CBE has given much personal support for the project.

The Association's objectives, as defined by the constitution, are: To promote the efficiency of the Royal Air Force and preserve its traditions by maintaining contact between past and present members of Bomber Command and Strike Command, fostering esprit-de-corps and comradeship; to support the charitable work of the Bomber Command Hall (of the R.A.F. Museum at Hendon) and other projects which educate and inform the general public in the work and history of Bomber Command and the V-Force.

About Robin Gibb's involvement with Bomber Command  
Robin Gibb is President of the Heritage Foundation, a show business-based charity which raises money for plaques and memorials to British achievers. Robin Gibb and the Heritage foundation have been a key part of the Bomber Command Association for many years, and have played a major role in raising awareness of the campaign.

Robin Gibb has had a lifelong interest in the Second World War and in this country's contribution to the rights and freedoms of Europe during two world wars. He has outlined on many occasions that it was a childhood dream of his to one day create a memorial fit for the air crews of Bomber Command to be remembered, which would act as an inspiration to all age groups, not glorifying the horrors of war but to remind people that no generation should ever have to endure what took place in World War II.

#### About the memorial

This memorial will be built in a modern classical idiom in Portland stone and contain bronze sculptures. Inscriptions will be carved to record key quotations from Winston Churchill as well as set out the purpose of the memorial. Some illustrative carving for educational purposes is proposed which will provide an historical and visual record of key aspects of the Air campaign during the Second World War.

The aim, in terms of its immediate setting, is to ensure that although visually prominent, the memorial should have a minimal impact on the park setting to the south of Piccadilly.

Most of the memorial takes virtually no space whatsoever as the flanking screen wings merely replace the existing visually poor park railings that are at odds with the character of the park and thus continues the modifications and changes made by the Royal Parks Agency in recent years to reintroduce traditional black painted cast iron park rail which is effectively a continuation of the park rail fencing that runs along the entire southern boundary of the park with Constitution Hill.

New park rail and bronze lights are proposed to rejuvenate the western end of the park – together with landscape planting including trees and hedges. This will create a clear and positive connection between Piccadilly and the pedestrian crossing at Constitution Hill for the first time since the highways works in the 1960's left the present legacy.

The wings to the memorial anchor the scheme to the site and provide an important contextual element to the overall design. They also provide new entry points and visual connections that link the scheme to its wider landscape setting. The western piers that terminate the memorial screen provide a natural architectural termination to the existing main public footpath leading northwards from Constitution Hill towards Piccadilly and in doing so, provide a natural focal and destination point, creating visual and conceptual clarity for local users and visitors to London alike.

The space proposed for the site of this memorial is presently unfriendly and presents a 'forlorn' appearance – as described by English Heritage in its letter of support for the scheme following a Peer Group review of the proposals. The unresolved nature of the site is unfortunate for thousands of visitors to London who pass this site on their way from north of Piccadilly via Constitution Hill to watch the various pageants and parades such as the Changing of the Guard at Buckingham Palace.

The form of the memorial with its central raised section and lowered wings takes its cue from the nearby Ionic Screen to Hyde Park. Although similar in scale to this nearby structure, for contextual reasons our proposal nevertheless remains lower in height at 8.5 metres.

Decimus Burton's screen is in the Ionic Order, The Wellington Arch is in the Corinthian Order and our proposal is in the Doric Order. Thus there is no stylistic or architectural repetition and a straightforward complementary relationship is set up.

The overall length of our proposal is in part to provide a screen to the park and to block out unwelcome views of passing traffic. It must also be recognized that there will not normally be 'fully frontal' views on the central axis of the front elevation due to its special location – meaning that it will be mostly viewed at an extremely acute and limited angle, for example, along the pavement whilst walking west along Piccadilly (see perspective, page x). This acute viewing angle will effectively 'compress' the front elevation into a fraction of its true or 'orthographic' length.

The screens provide an entrance or introduction to the memorial; generating a perception that something interesting is about to happen: Therefore the space of the memorial gradually unfolds from park railing, to screen, to memorial.

The provision of entry points to the park assist in providing greater access and visual connection to the western end of the park which remains curiously cut off compared with the remainder of the park edges.

The central section of the memorial is defined by two stone plinth-like masses defining an airy, spacious loggia or open arcade in between; this is fully open to pedestrians and looking north to Piccadilly and south across The Green Park towards Constitution Hill.

The main façade of the memorial: this loggia, or open arcade, is defined by a screen of six Doric columns to the north and six to the south facades creating an otherwise open transparent space that should be read as an extension to both the public realms of

the street and the park. The roofline of the memorial is finished with an open stone balustrade design.

The balustrade, central loggias and wings are mostly open space rather than structure ensuring that the dominant perception is one of openness and transparency ensuring that the character and appearance of the park remains open and uncluttered to view.

It is important to note that, within the recommendations of the Royal Parks Management Plan for The Green Park, published in 2007, key vistas are noted that ensure strong visual connections between the Green Park and the Hyde Park Corner Island site are respected, particularly views toward the Wellington Arch from within the park. This design proposal fully respects these criteria.

The walls and plinths would be carved with RAF badges such as that at figure x. Otherwise the simple, unadorned Portland stone walls will retain a dignified, uncluttered appearance, appropriate for a memorial structure.

The hexastyle screens of columns to the loggia will be in Portland stone and fluted with the simple characteristics associated with the Doric order such as simple square abacus and circular echinus mouldings (parts of the capitals) that define the Doric Order together with no base at ground floor level.

Within the memorial, the space is open to the sky with an opening designed to allow light to fall directly onto the central sculpture group. The sculpture group would be a life-and-a-half scale bronze sculpture group depicting seven aircrew; the typical number of airmen that flew on missions since the introduction of the four engine heavy bombers such as the Avro Lancaster in 1942. The figures will be set on a 1.5 metre black Basalt plinth – elongated in proportion to the space in which it fits. The height of the plinth and the scale of the sculpture group as a whole means that visitors will always see the profiles of the figures against the sky above them, day and night, thus rendering that section of the sky powerfully symbolic for the memorial.

The two flank walls of the inner part of the memorial will also be in large blocks of Portland stone and will have central niches cut into the masses of the walls and contain cast bronze lamps that provide a general overall soft level of illumination during winter days and evenings. These would be controlled by solar activated switchgear ensuring that the lighting period coincided exactly with surrounding streetlights.

Flanking the niches will be carved, into the stone walls, depictions of the principle aircraft of the RAF Bomber Command such as the Wellington, Bristol Blenheim, Whitley, Hampden, Stirling, Halifax, Mosquito, and the Avro Lancaster. The latter is well known over the skies of Westminster accompanied by a Hurricane and Spitfire as the last Lancaster aircraft still in service. It flies over Buckingham Palace on major celebration fly-pasts as part of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, based at RAF Coningsby in Lincolnshire.

These depictions will provide an educational element within the memorial and serve to remind visitors of the extraordinary leaps in design and technology that occurred during the six years of the Second World War.

Above these will be a series of key quotations.

In addition to the inscriptions above there will be a general dedication inscription and a single description of the purpose of the memorial, such as ...

"This memorial is dedicated to the 55,000 volunteer aircrew of Bomber Command who lost their lives during the Second World War"

The design for the roof of the central section of the memorial comprises a polished aluminum curved form, based on the shape of the lower section of the fuselage of a four engine World War Two bomber. It is designed to evoke the shape and aerodynamic qualities of an aeroplane and will provide interesting distorted reflections of the more 'static' components of the memorial composition.

This roof will be made from sections of melted down aluminum from a Halifax bomber (Halifax LW682 from 426 Squadron), shot down over Belgium on the night of 12 May 1944, in which eight crew were killed. Three members of the crew: John Summerhayes (mid upper-gunner), Fred Roach (Tail gunner) and Wilbur Bentz (pilot), were still at their stations when the aircraft was excavated from a swamp in Schendelbeke in 1997. They were buried with full military honours alongside the other five members of the crew at Geraardsbergen.

Despite the modern characteristics of the roof, it will be nevertheless discreet and will not be visible when viewed from outside the memorial thus ensuring that the graceful, simple stone balustraded top to the memorial remains visually uninterrupted, except by the surrounding tree canopy.

Beyond the memorial the landscape drops gently southwards towards Constitution Hill.

To the immediate south of the memorial, it is proposed to create a contained but distinct addition to the path in the form of a simple curved space at the centre of which would be a simple block of Portland stone upon which a bronze wreath would rest. This would provide a visual landscape anchor for the southern front of the memorial and provide a focus for wreath laying events which would be out of the general way in terms of ensuring minimal disruption to other park users at any time. Wide, shallow Portland stone drop down discreetly from the path to the southern expanse of lawn and link the wreath plinth back to the memorial.

## LIGHTING

It is intended to have limited lighting within the memorial: 2 bronze lamps in the north and south niches. A single search light type lamp is intended to be buried within the sculpture plinth at the centre of the memorial, with the source hidden by the surrounding sculptures. This will add an element of drama to the bronze sculpture group.

The present provision of lighting for pedestrians to the south side of Piccadilly at this location is very poor: tall sodium lamps serve the highways requirements of the approaching roundabout well – but do little to enhance the pedestrian experience of this central London site.

It is therefore intended to supplement this with cast bronze street lamps to a bespoke design to complement the memorial. These would be similar in scale and light output to the four bronze lamps that we designed for the highway at Constitution Hill, which form part of the Commonwealth Memorial Gates scheme which are widely regarded as successful in conservation area impact as well as technical lighting terms.

The proposed lamps would run along Piccadilly in front of the memorial and continue down towards the pedestrian crossing at Constitution Hill thus improving safety and enhancing the pedestrian quality of experience in this location.