

John Gillespie Magee Jr. Foundation

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Lincolnshire Aviation History Trail to Expand with the addition of a Memorial to “High Flight” poet Pilot Officer John Magee

The **John Gillespie Magee Jr. Foundation** has announced the project to erect a memorial statue commemorating the life and work of the WWII Canadian Air Force pilot and poet in a public park at Wellingore village, Lincolnshire. The new bust of John Magee was exhibited at the Royal International Air Tattoo in Fairford in July and at RAF Scampton today.

John Magee is the author of the well-known poem “High Flight” - the pilot’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. In October 1941 John Magee was stationed at Wellingore airfield and billeted in the village. On 11th December 1941, at the age of 19, 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. The village sits along a popular visitor trail of aviation history within the county including RAF Waddington, RAF Cranwell, RAF Scampton - the home of the Red Arrows and the base of the Dam Buster’s squadron - and RAF Coningsby - the home of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. The new Bomber Command Memorial sits on the hill above the city of Lincoln to the north.

The memorial will be a 9 feet high bronze sculpture of John Magee in pilot uniform with a relief plaque inscribed with the High Flight poem. 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 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, including the preparation for the John Magee sculpture, can be viewed at www.antonydufort.co.uk.

As a well-known poet around the world, the project is supported by groups in the U.K., Canada and the U.S.A. Our patrons include 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 and Captain Michael Lopez-Alegria USN, retired NASA astronaut.

Fundraising for the project is underway with a target of £350,000 to include landscaping of the park and a small visitor centre. To support the funding, limited edition bronze castings of the maquette model of the statue and of a separate bust of John Magee will be available. The target for opening the park to visitors is autumn 2019.

The John Gillespie Magee Jr. Foundation is a charitable company (Reg. 10773259) formed by volunteers in Wellingore village to erect the memorial and to continue to promote interest and research in the life and work of John Magee and the operations at Wellingore airfield.