

Memorials to the Battle of Britain



War Memorials Trust

Introduction

The Battle of Britain took place in 1940 and was a key victory for Britain. Its significance can be seen in the many memorials that specifically commemorate the events of the battle and those who fought it. Some of those memorials are described on this information sheet and can be used as a way of learning more about the Battle of Britain, its place in the wider context of the war and how and why it is still remembered and commemorated so widely 75 years later. Other memorials can be found on the accompanying PowerPoint and further examples may be added to, or updated at, www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk.

Battle of Britain memorial, Victoria Embankment, London

This memorial (www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorial/85585), located in Central London, consists of an elaborate 3D sculpture depicting various scenes of the battle and life at the time. It also shows various people – both airmen and those that supported them. In the centre of the sculpture are figures of airmen running towards their aircraft. On the stone wall underneath the sculptures are the words 'Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few.' This is a quote from Winston Churchill's speech during the battle, from which the nickname 'The Few' came. The memorial also features a list of the men who flew in combat missions during the battle.



Battle of Britain memorial, London, 2011

The memorial was unveiled in 2005. It was designed to be interactive and this is why it is at an accessible level.

Capel le Ferne

This memorial (www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorial/121046) is located in Kent, in an area that saw significant attacks during the battle and became known as Hellfire Corner. It was unveiled in 1993.

The central feature of the memorial is a statue of an airmen sitting looking out to sea. According to a website giving information about the memorial, this figure sits on a propeller boss surrounded by the badges of all the Allied squadrons and other units that took part in the Battle. The blades of the propeller are set into the ground, making the memorial as striking from the air as it is for the visitor on the ground (www.battleofbritainmemorial.org). The site of the memorial also has a new building offering an educational experience. This is an example of how some memorials act as a link between the past and the present and continue to evolve.



Battle of Britain memorial at Capel le Ferne, Kent © Kent Fallen, 2002.

RAF Lakenheath, Suffolk

This memorial (www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorial/235733) consists of a replica Spitfire plane on a plinth to make it look like it is taking off. There are also various dedicatory plaques and information boards.

This memorial is a fairly unusual design, with the main element of it consisting not of the

people being remembered but an object associated with the event. It may be a useful way of introducing the military tactics of the battle. The memorial is also dedicated to the men of all nations who flew with the RAF – this could also be used to introduce the fact that other countries were also involved.

Preesall, Lancashire

This memorial is a monument, rather than a sculpture like those above. It is located in Lancashire on the coast, and consists of a jagged stone on which is a metal plaque. The plaque bears the local coat of arms, the RAF crest and the famous quote by Churchill praising 'The Few.' The monument is set in a small garden and was unveiled in 2010.



Preesall Battle of Britain memorial, Lancashire © Philip Platt, 2014.



All Saints' Church, Brenchley, Kent

The church in Brenchley has a lychgate at its entrance, and on the wall close to this a metal plaque paying tribute to the 'lads' who fought in the Battle of Britain 'over this corner of England' (www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorial/152650). Although much smaller than some of the other memorials described here, this one feels more personal and the area has a specific link with the battle. It is a good example of how memorials can vary and depend on community choices.

Sandbach, Cheshire

This memorial is another relatively small one and consists of a simple plaque on the wall of a row of houses. What is unusual about it, however, is the date the memorial was unveiled. The inscription on the stone plaque indicates that it was laid in 1941, just a year after the battle, to commemorate those that had died. Like others, the memorial also bears an inscription of the words of Churchill's speech: 'Never was so much owed by so many to so few.'

Site of RAF Gravesend

The site of the former Gravesend airport, where RAF pilots were stationed, is now a leisure facility known as Cascades swimming pool. Despite its changing use, the buildings house plaques explaining the former role of the site and lists those who lost their lives while stationed there. This may be useful for finding out more about the people involved in the battle. It also demonstrates how the legacy of the battle is still felt and considered important. One plaque, situated outside the building, gives detailed information about the history of the site and shows that efforts have been made to show that this significant event remains part of our shared memory of the area.

There are many memorials to the Battle of Britain and it is not possible to list them all here. Other examples can be found at www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk. These examples do, however, demonstrate how much importance is still placed on remembering the Battle of Britain and can be used to learn about those events and their impact, both then and now.

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