

**BULLETIN ISSUE NO. 4 – SEPTEMBER 2023**



**One of “The Few”  
Flight Lieutenant  
Hugh Richard Aden Beresford**

# Welcome

Ladies & Gents,

Welcome to this September edition of the *HistoryFare Bulletin* and I hope you enjoyed reading the last issue, sent a couple of few weeks ago.

As mentioned in previous editions, if you come across anything that has a military connection to Melton and you think it will be of interest to other readers, then please send it in to me and I will endeavour to include it hopefully in the next edition.

It will also include details of any future events such as talks, tours etc. Let's promote our local military history so it is kept alive for future generations.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our next meeting.

Brian

## Next Monthly Meeting

Our next monthly meeting will be on **Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023** at the Melton Mowbray Royal Air Forces Association Tornado Club, Asfordby Road, Melton Mowbray, LE13 0HR at 20:00Hrs.

**Admission Cost £3**

**Seats are to be reserved by email:  
meltonhistoryfare@gmail.com**

Jed Jaggard will be our guest speaker and the presentation will be about the Royal Flying Corps and 38 Squadron who set up their HQ in Melton Mowbray during WW1. Jed will also bring along



## Raffle



At our monthly meetings, I will now be introducing an interval to our talks where I will be holding a raffle prize draw. Tickets will be £1/strip.

If you would like to support this raffle by donating prizes for use in either this draw or future draws, then they will be gratefully appreciated.

Biscuits, chocolates, wine, beer etc are all acceptable proving they are in date! Books and partwork etc will also be accepted.

## Social Media

Keep up To Date by following HistoryFare on the following social media sites:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MeltonHistoryFare>

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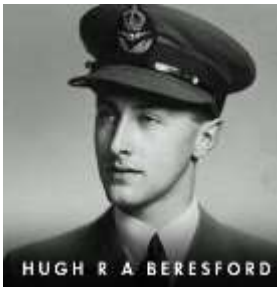
Twitter: HistoryFare [@FareBrian](#)

Website: <https://historyfare.co.uk/>

Email: [meltonhistoryfare@gmail.com](mailto:meltonhistoryfare@gmail.com)



## Flight Lieutenant Hugh Richard Aden Beresford



The image on the front-page features Flight Lieutenant Hugh Richard Aden Beresford, one of 'The Few'.

Hugh was born 8th November 1915 and was the son of the Rector of Hoby & Rotherby, Hans Aden Beresford and his wife Dorothy Lydia Royston.

He was known by the family as 'Tom' and was educated at Rossell School in Fleetwood Lancashire. He was a keen sportsman and fine cricketer playing in the first XI team for four seasons and became team captain in his final year at the school.

He joined the RAF on a short service commission in 1935 and after completing his training he was posted as a pilot to No 3 (Fighter) Squadron, arriving at Port Sudan as an Acting Pilot Officer on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1936. Port Sudan is the Capital of Sudan and is located on the Red Sea coast. The aircraft operated by the Squadron was the Bristol Bulldog, until it was replaced by the Gloster Gladiator.



*Bristol Bulldog*

Just over a year later, he was posted to the No 1 Anti-Aircraft Co-operation Unit at Biggin Hill on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1937.

On 4<sup>th</sup> October 1937 he was appointed Personal Assistant to Air Vice-Marshal Ernest Gossage, Air Officer Commanding No 11 Group at RAF Uxbridge and on the 16th January 1938, Hugh was promoted to Flying Officer. Whilst at Uxbridge, in December 1939, Hugh married his wife Cherry Kyree 'Pat' Kemp, the daughter of a RAF Officer Walter Ernest Kemp.

On 17<sup>th</sup> May 1940, No 257 (Burma) Squadron was reformed at RAF Hendon initially being equipped with Spitfires. Beresford joined the Squadron from HQ No 11 Group as Senior Flight Commander. The CO was Squadron Leader David Bayne who lost a leg in a flying accident whilst serving on No 3 (Fighter) Squadron, back in July 1935 when his Bristol Bulldog crash landed at RAF Duxford. This was the same Squadron that Hugh joined after leaving school.

During May and June, the Squadron was involved in training missions including bringing new pilots up to speed on Spitfires, Interception Exercises, formation flying, gunnery practice, night flying, high altitude (25000 feet) flying and dog fights.

On 10<sup>th</sup> June, it was announced that the Squadron would be re-equipped with the Hurricane fighter, meaning more re-training for the pilots. The first eight Hurricanes arrived the next day with a further eight the day after. Training continued through June with the Hurricanes and on the

30<sup>th</sup>, the Squadron were informed they would be moving from RAF Hendon to their new base at RAF Northolt on July 4<sup>th</sup>.

Although the Battle of Britain hadn't officially began (10<sup>th</sup> July), after settling in at Northolt on the 4<sup>th</sup>, the Squadron were put on Standby the following day at ¾ Hour before Dawn on the 5<sup>th</sup>. The Squadrons first scramble came on the 9<sup>th</sup> when Flt Lt Hall, PO Frizell and Sgt Forward were ordered into the air and Sgt Forward engaged a Do17 at 22000 feet.

Hugh had an aristocratic bearing which gave the men of his squadron much needed morale. He was affectionately known by his fellow pilots as "Blue-Blood Beresford" which was a reference to his aristocratic good looks and up-bringing.

Allegedly, he was privately very nervous and vomited under the daily intense stress of the Battle of Britain. With exhaustion taking its toll on him, he was known for obsessively pacing up and down the dispersal hut continually asking "What's the time?" and "I'm sure there will be a Blitz soon".



*Painting by Robert Taylor depicting 257 Squadron Hurricanes in combat against Luftwaffe HE111 bombers and ME109 fighters*

On 18<sup>th</sup> August, Hugh and Sgt Girdwood shared in destroying a He111 from III./KG 53 flown by Uffz Gustav Gropp which came down in the sea with all crew killed and a few days Hugh later claimed a Me110 on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> July, the CO Squadron Leader Bayne was posted to HQ Fighter Command with Squadron Leader H Harkness taking over as Commanding Officer. Apparently, the Squadron had poor leadership and was held together by two well respected Flight Commanders, Flt Lt Hugh Beresford and Fg Off Lance Mitchell.

Hugh Beresford and A Flight had patrolled Martlesham twice during the morning of the 7<sup>th</sup> September followed by a 3<sup>rd</sup> patrol around Colchester at 11:15Hrs, landing at 12:20. At 14:15 the whole Squadron was called to 15 minutes readiness but were not ordered off.

Beresford in Hurricane P3049 along with 11 other Hurricanes of Yellow, Red, Blue and Green Sections of 257 Squadron left Martlesham Heath at 16:53Hrs to patrol Chelmsford area at 15,000 feet. They were vectored to the Rochester area under the Command of Squadron Leader Harkness when at 17:50Hrs they intercepted a formation of about 50 enemy bombers flying up the Thames estuary. The large formation of enemy aircraft flying up the Thames were intent on sustaining the continuous bombing of London. An escort of Luftwaffe fighters above dived towards the squadron as they attacked.

The CO, Yellow 1 (Squadron Leader Harkness) passed the information about the enemy aircraft to "Kiwi 1" and the Squadron climbed up to their level, turning North. As they were coming from the Colchester area, they didn't have the advantage of attacking out of the sun and must have been seen by the Me109s which were circling above the bombers at about 18-20,000 feet.

Yellow 1, followed by the Squadron, did a head on attack on the port section of three enemy aircraft. When Yellow 1 broke away to the right, Yellow 2 (PO Gundry) followed him without firing. Yellow 3 (Sgt Robinson) when following Yellow 2 in line astern, doing a steep turn to the right was thrown over on his back, losing control of his aircraft and dropped about 8,000 to 10,000 feet as a result of ant aircraft fire all around him.

Red 1 (Flt Lt Beresford) "A" Flight Commander followed Yellow Section into the attack and slightly to the right, is believed to have been unable to attack the bombing fleet head-on as his line of fire was obstructed by the leading Hurricanes. He climbed to about 500 feet in a clockwise

circle above the bombers and turning to attack them from astern. At this point, Red 2 (Sgt Fraser) noticed at least four Me109 fighters with yellow noses swooping down on the section from astern.

Hugh Beresford tried to warn the other pilots of the danger over the radio by issuing a frantic warning "ALERT squadron – four snappers coming down now!" to the squadron about the attacking fighters, stating that he could not attack as another Hurricane was in his line of fire. (ALERT was the radio call sign for 257 Squadron). Then there was silence. In his final few moments of life he had used his last breath to save others.

None of the squadron saw what had happened to him, but a River Board worker inspecting the water ditches which criss-crossed the flat Isle of Sheppey, was watching the dog-fight developing above in a crescendo of engine noise and rattling of machine guns. He saw a lone Hurricane break away and dive vertically into the soft estuary ground alongside a ditch at Elmley Spitend Point, Sheppey.

There was no fire or explosion, just a small crater with a black stain and slashes either side where the wings had cut through the grass. No time could be spent during the weeks of the Battle of Britain to mount salvage operations and as the aircraft was deeply buried it was eventually forgotten.

From the combat action in the 7th, three pilots failed to return, Hugh Beresford, the other Flight Commander Lance Mitchell and Sgt Hulbert. Later, the Squadron received news that Hulbert was OK and had crash landed near Sittingbourne. None of the other pilots could provide any info on what had happened to the two Flight Commanders and enquiries were made with other RAF airfields, Police HQs and Royal Observer Corps observation posts but nobody saw what happened.

Hugh's wife, Pat, rang the Squadron in tears on the evening when he failed to return. The Squadron Adjutant spoke to her and telling her that he might have been picked up by boats in the sea and not to give up hope. It was as if she knew his fate as she asked if she could pick up his clothes.

Hugh Beresford was classified as missing in action and an Air Ministry telegram was sent to Pat telling her that he had failed to return from an operational flight, and they would contact her again as soon as possible when they received further news. No news came forward, and one year after he went missing, he was officially presumed dead. Shortly after his Hurricane had plunged into the marshy ground, RAF personnel from nearby RAF Eastchurch came to the crash site and as little could be done, they reported it to No 49 Maintenance Unit who covered the South East of England

Ten days after Hugh's disappearance, Air Vice-Marshal Ernest Gossage wrote to Reverend Hans Beresford, explaining that Hugh had once been his personal assistant and that he had become very fond of him. His letter also said that he wanted to make sure that no possibility of him being alive before he wrote with his sincere and heartfelt sympathy.

For decades no one knew the exact spot where he laid buried. 39 years later, in August 1979, there was renewed interest by aviation enthusiasts in locating and excavating the wrecks of wartime planes. Hugh Beresford's Hurricane was discovered and on 29th September 1979 the entire wreckage was recovered with Hugh's body being found still in his aircraft. Hugh Beresford and his tattered identity card were recovered.



Forty years to the day he was shot down, on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 1980, BBC2 Television documentary series Inside Story screened a programme “Missing” all about Hugh Beresford and the remarkable story of him being reported as missing in 1940 and the discovery of his Hurricane fighter with his remains still in the cockpit.

He was laid to rest with full military honours in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, with the Band of the RAF and the Queen’s Colour Squadron providing the honours. Hugh’s sister, Pamela who lived in Hoby village attended his funeral along with a few other residents from the village.

His headstone bears the inscription “NO ONE SO MUCH AS YOU LOVES THIS MY CLAY, OR WOULD LAMENT AS YOU ITS DYING DAY” which is the opening verse from the poem “No One So Much As You” by World War One poet Edward Thomas (1878 – 1917).



No one so much as you  
Loves this my clay,  
Or would lament as you  
Its dying day.

You know me through and through  
Though I have not told,  
And though with what you know  
You are not bold.

None ever was so fair  
As I thought you:  
Not a word can I bear  
Spoken against you.

All that I ever did  
For you seemed coarse  
Compared with what I hid  
Nor put in force.

Scarce my eyes dare meet you  
Lest they should prove  
I but respond to you  
And do not love.

We look and understand,  
We cannot speak  
Except in trifles and  
Words the most weak.

I at the most accept  
Your love, regretting  
That is all: I have kept  
Only a fretting

That I could not return

All that you gave  
And could not ever burn  
With the love you have,

Till sometimes it did seem  
Better it were  
Never to see you more  
Than linger here

With only gratitude  
Instead of love-  
A pine in solitude  
Cradling a dove.

Hugh is the only Hoby casualty from World War Two and is commemorated on a plain stone tablet on the Chancel wall opposite the Stained Glass window, along with his father, Reverend Hans Aden Beresford, and his mother Annie.

In 2022 I was on a visit to Brookwood Military Cemetery so whilst there, I took the opportunity of visiting Hugh and paying my regards.



## Walking Tours

The walking tours are going well and thank you to those of you who have taken part on one of them. I hope you enjoyed them and most of all, learnt something new about the rich and wonderful history of our fabulous town, Melton Mowbray.

I have 2 public tours currently planned, both of which are look at the general history of the town from Lords of the Manor, The Magna Carta, Royalty, Socialites, Fox Hunting and much more. The first tour is this Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> September, and currently there are 3 spaces available. The tour will be repeated again on the 21<sup>st</sup> October where there are currently 12 spaces available.

There is also the military history tour which looks at Victoria Cross recipients, the Boer War, English Civil War, the RAFs highest scoring fighter pilot, military working dogs, plus much more. I am in the process of finalising another military tour which will focus on the Airborne troops that were based in town during WW2 and also the Commando General, Major General Sir Robert Laycock who as a child lived at Newport Lodge for a while. Another tour I am developing is the Melton 'Royal Mile' Trail based on the leaflet produced by the council. The town was important enough to have been a royal mint in the reigns of King Aethelred II (978-1016) and King Canute (1016-1035). Also, between 1194 and 1487, 11 of England's 15 Kings visited, but what brought them to this market town? Later on, during the height of the hunting season, the sport attracted lots of other Royals not only Kings of England, but Prince's and Princesses from England and across the Globe.

To keep up to date with future tour dates, keep an eye out on social media and my web page <https://historyfare.co.uk/historyfare-tours/>

# W T Hume Electrical

On Norman Way here in Melton Mowbray, you will find a local electrical business, operating by the name of W T Hume Electrical. But who was W T Hume?

During the epic battle at Arnhem, tragically lots of the Paras who left Melton in September 1944 were killed and many more were taken POWs.

There was a small number who managed to escape by withdrawing across the river as part of Operations PEGASUS I & PEGASUS II.

Out of the 680 men that made up 156 Bn prior to Arnhem, it now mustered approximately 115 men. Of these, 80 had not flown to Arnhem as they stayed behind as the rear party. There were 9 who escaped on Operation PEGASUS I and 6 on PEGASUS II.

In total for PEGASUS I, 138 men escaped with the help of MI9 and the Dutch Resistance. Many of the 138 were soldiers from the 1st British Airborne Division plus 13 RAF/RCAF/USAAF airmen, 1 Polish Para, 1 US 82nd airborne, 1 Dutch Navy, 8 Dutch Resistance, 8 Dutch civilians and a lost Russian evader.

From those units attached to the 4th Brigade, the numbers were:

4th Para Brigade HQ	1
10 Bn	30
11 Bn	0
156 Bn	9
2 Air Landing Light Battery RA	0
2 Air Landing Anti Tank Battery RA	0
4 Para Sqn RE	0
133 Field Ambulance	25

It was a similar situation for the 10th & 11th Bn's. As a result, it was decided that the 4th Brigade should be disbanded, and the surviving members be amalgamated with the 3 Bn's from the 1st Brigade.

On their arrival back at Melton, 11 Bn returned to the Welby Camp and 156 Bn returned to their billets at Newport Lodge, The Spinney and Staveley Lodge.

Shortly afterwards, 156 Battalion disbanded with the remnants of 156 moving to Grimsthorpe Castle to join 1 Para.

3 Para who were based at Spalding and when they returned from Arnhem they moved into Welby Camp in Nov 44 with the remnants of 11 Bn joining them upon disbandment of 11 Bn.

Moving to Melton with 3 Para was Private William (Bill) Thomas Hume, a 26-year-old originally from Sunderland.





*Bill Hume*

He was a veteran of the Sicilian campaign, taking part in the parachute assault on the Primosole Bridge in Sicily on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1943. Afterwards, the 3rd Battalion drop was scattered alongside that of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions and a two-day hard fought action developed at the bridge, during which Bill was wounded in action and listed on the casualty reports.

Bill and the 3rd Bn were dropped into Arnhem as part of the 1st lift on 17<sup>th</sup> September by the 62nd Troop Carrier Sqn from RAF Saltby.

Bill was one of those who had gone into hiding after Arnhem being hidden by a Dutch family as the forces retreated. He was listed as missing in action for over 2 months (horrific for his family) before he was liberated by our advancing forces and escaped with 137 others as part of operation PEGASUS I.

In 1945, Bill married Kathleen Stableford and the couple set up home here in Melton and in 1946, their son David was born.

After Bill left the Army, he set up the Electrical business whose premises is now on Norman Way. He joined the Working Mens Club and became a committee member and was also a member of the Pegasus darts club. Sadly, Bill passed away back in 2002.

## Melton's Two Headed Calf



If you go into Melton's Carnegie Museum, you can see what some people call a freak of nature.

This two headed calf was born in 1900 at Braunston near Oakham in Rutland and only lived a few hours. It was delivered by the Justus Littler Veterinary Practice who operated out of Elgin Lodge on Scalford Road.

Mr. Justus Littler had the animal stuffed and he kept it at Elgin Lodge. But did you know during both World Wars it was displayed in peep shows at Melton Cattle Market to raise money for charities supporting the war effort such as the Red Cross?

## Till next time!

Please feel free to share this bulletin with whoever you think may be interested.

**For any enquiries or to submit articles, please email Brian at [meltonhistoryfare@gmail.com](mailto:meltonhistoryfare@gmail.com)**