

– THE –
SIR KEITH PARK
– MEMORIAL CAMPAIGN –

UK COMMEMORATES BATTLE OF BRITAIN COMMANDER

**STATUE OF SIR KEITH PARK TO BE UNVEILED ON FOURTH PLINTH
IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE ON 4th NOVEMBER**

- Installation on Fourth Plinth supported by London Mayor Boris Johnson and granted planning permission for six months by Westminster City Council
- Statue remains on the Fourth Plinth through to May 2010
- Permanent statue to be unveiled on Battle of Britain Day, 15 September 2010, in Waterloo Place, London
- Statues commissioned by the Sir Keith Park Memorial Campaign

14 October 2009 - A statue of **Air Chief Marshal Sir Keith Park**, who led the Royal Air Force (RAF) forces over London and the South East of England throughout the Battle of Britain, will be unveiled on the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square on Wednesday 4 November 2009.

The statue, presented by the Sir Keith Park Memorial Campaign, will be in place for six months and a permanent memorial statue of Park will then be erected in Waterloo Place on the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Britain on 15 September 2010.

Sir Keith Park commanded Number 11 Group of Fighter Command – responsible for the defence of London and the South East. He therefore commanded the squadrons which bore the brunt of the Battle of Britain. The failure of Nazi Germany to defeat the RAF in 1940 is seen as Hitler's first major setback in the Second World War – and forced Germany to call off the planned invasion of Britain. This statue is a fitting memorial to Park as it will be erected in London's Trafalgar Square, in the heart of the United Kingdom's capital City which he helped to defend in 1940 and beneath Nelson's Column – a memorial to another commander (this time Naval) who likewise defended Britain from invasion 135 years earlier.

Park was a New Zealander, who had fought in the First World War in the field artillery first at Gallipoli, and then the Somme where he was wounded and evacuated to England. Medically graded unfit to continue service with the artillery, Park joined the Royal Flying Corps, remaining with the air arm when it was re-formed as the Royal Air Force.

Marshal of the RAF, Lord Tedder, said of Park: "If ever any one man won the Battle of Britain, he did. I don't believe it is recognised how much this one man, with his leadership, his calm judgement and his skill, did to save not only this country, but the world."

Terry Smith, Chairman of the Sir Keith Park Memorial Campaign, said:

"I am delighted that Sir Keith Park, one of the most successful yet unsung of Britain's Commanders during the Second World War, is being honoured in such a fitting manner. His calm and decisive leadership helped win the Battle of Britain in 1940. If this battle had been lost, then the outcome of the Second World War, and our current lives, would have been very different."

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Commenting on the pending unveiling, **Air Vice-Marshal Greg Bagwell**, the modern day equivalent of Sir Keith Park, who currently commands the Air Defence fighter squadrons that protect UK airspace today, commented:

“One of the Royal Air Force’s key roles, on its formation in 1918, was and remains the control of the airspace above the UK, to ensure that the country is safe from air attack. Today, as they were during the Battle of Britain, a force of fighter aircraft are held on ‘quick reaction alert’ all year round, day and night, with a remit to ‘scramble’ within a few minutes to intercept any aircraft that enters the UK’s airspace without proper authorisation. Sir Keith Park’s legacy endures today through the unwavering courage, professionalism and dedication of the men and women who serve in the Royal Air Force.”

London Mayor Boris Johnson said:

“London owes an enormous debt to Sir Keith Park for his courage and leadership, which helped to win the Battle of Britain. Having a temporary memorial to this great hero in Trafalgar Square in time for the 70th anniversary of a historic turning point is our way of showing gratitude for the bravery and commitment he showed to London and the world.”

Planning permission was granted by Westminster City Council in May 2009 for a temporary statue of Park to go on the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square. The six-month installation on the Fourth Plinth bridges a gap in the programme of contemporary artwork on the Plinth and falls between Anthony Gormley’s “One and Other” which closes on 14 October 2009 and Yinka Shonibare's Ship in a Bottle which will be installed in 2010, sometime after early May.

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Notes to Editors

1. Air Chief Marshal Sir Keith Rodney Park, GCB, KBE, MC and Bar, DFC, DCL, MA, RAF was the New Zealand born RAF Air Vice-Marshal who commanded Number 11 Group, Fighter Command, responsible for the air defence of London and South East England during the Battle of Britain. His inspirational leadership and tactical brilliance was central to Britain winning the battle, which in turn helped determine the outcome of the entire Second World War. Sir Keith went on to lead the air defence of Malta in 1942, subsequently reaching the rank of Air Chief Marshal in South East Asia at the end of the war. During the First World War, Sir Keith served at Gallipoli and then the Somme before becoming a pilot and shooting down 20 enemy aircraft.
2. The design by sculptor Les Johnson will be used for both the statue to be exhibited temporarily for six months on Trafalgar Square's Fourth Plinth from 4 November 2009, as well as for the permanent memorial statue which will be erected in Waterloo Place on the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Britain on 15 September 2010, Battle of Britain Day.
3. The Sir Keith Park Memorial Campaign was launched on 7 March 2008 when Battle of Britain pilots, senior serving RAF officers, a great-great niece of Sir Keith Park, politicians and many other supporters assembled in Trafalgar Square beside a full-size replica Spitfire.
4. The Campaign received support from a broad constituency including the RAF, Battle of Britain veterans, members of the Park family and the New Zealand cricket team. It also secured the support of the leader of every New Zealand political party, including the Prime Minister and Defence Minister. In this country more than 100 MPs and a number of House of Lords members from all parties, former politicians such as Tony Benn and Lord Tebbit, as well as well-known names such as Sir Patrick Moore, Dan Snow and Edward Fox have backed the Campaign.
5. Over 10,000 people signed the various Campaign petitions.
6. Terry Smith is the Chief Executive Officer of Tullett Prebon plc and Executive Chairman of Collins Stewart plc. He has a keen interest in military history.
7. Other supporters of the Campaign include: Algy Cluff; Air Chief Marshal Sir Brian Burridge; Air Marshal Clifford Spink; Lord Lee of Trafford; Lord Selkirk; Rt Hon Lord Trefgarne; Mark Field MP; Richard Benyon MP and Hon. Nicholas Soames MP.
8. For more information, please visit our website at www.sirkeithpark.com.