

## Arthur Westerhoff



Arthur Westerhoff died on July 14th aged 94. He served as an armourer with the Tigers from June 1940 until late 1941 at Hornchurch, Kirton-in-Lindsey, Coltishall, Biggin Hill, Manston and Gravesend. He was demobbed in 1946 but then re-enlisted in 1961 as an Aerospace Systems Operator, finally retiring in 1976.

Of his time with 74, Arthur wrote as follows when he joined the Association: "I joined 74 Squadron at RAF Hornchurch in early June 1940 when it had been busy with intruders over London and on escort duties over the Channel and that had been good training for what was about to happen. There had been plenty of activity and it was gradually increasing until the squadron was in the thick of it. We did not know it then but this was the start of the Battle of Britain. I was an armourer and a member of the ground staff but I feel a sense of pride that I was a member of the team and of course a member of 74 Tiger Squadron commanded by the great Sailor Malan (who we knew as Maxi). A few weeks later when things had quietened down the squadron moved up to RAF Kirton-in-Lindsey in Lincolnshire for a well earned rest. We flew up in a Bombay transport aircraft so that we could be there before the squadron arrived. It was an experience as the Bombay was canvas covered and much different to the aeroplanes of today. We then moved down to Coltishall in Norfolk just outside Norwich. There we met up with Douglas Bader's 242 Squadron flying Hurricanes. We had a quiet time at Coltishall compared with 242 who flew to Duxford each day and bagged a lot of enemy aircraft down there, flying back to Coltishall each evening. We were pretty peeved seeing them do their victory rolls over Coltishall and we were glad to move down to Biggin Hill. Biggin was a dawn to dusk operation with plenty of action from us and the

Germans. The station was attacked almost every day at breakfast and lunchtime - known as nuisance raids - but one day a disaster occurred when a bomb hit a shelter holding about 40 WAAFs and they were all killed. We were operational at Manston nearer to the coast as well for quite a few months and then moved on to Gravesend where I left the Tigers.

I always have a special thoughts for P/O Chesters, P/O Stephen and F/O Mungo Park from those days as they were the ones I mostly worked with. I helped to re-arm their aircraft on many occasions when they returned from combat. During those brief moments we were all too busy for conversation and the Intelligence Officer would probably be there to de-brief them anyway. Mungo Park in particular would sometimes visit the ground crew and I remember him coming over in a small sports car with another officer although I can't remember whether he was driving or the passenger. He gave us Players cigarettes and the rigger filled the car up with 100 octane fuel! We all admired him so much. He was outgoing, strong, friendly and a brilliant and brave fighter pilot. After Malan he was Number 2 alongside Stephen and Freeborn. When he was shot down we as ground crew had no information and operations just carried on as normal. We missed him."