

John Caudwell & Lord Ashcroft Major donors come to the aid of the Bomber Command Memorial

London 21ST April 2011 - The Bomber Command Association announced today that thanks to the financial support of John Caudwell and Lord Ashcroft KCMG, two of Britain's most successful entrepreneurs, construction of the long-awaited RAF Bomber Command memorial in London is now fully funded.

Chairman of the Bomber Command Association, Air Commodore Malcolm White commented:

'On behalf of the Bomber Command Association and all who we represent, this news is splendid. Many of the British public, the Association and others from around the world have helped see this through, but we are particularly grateful to John Caudwell and Lord Ashcroft for their generosity and support in ensuring that the Memorial is now fully funded and that construction can begin soon.'

John Caudwell said:

"I am honoured and delighted that my contribution has meant that such a significant memorial will go ahead, and that it will go some way to highlighting the commitment and sacrifice of the extremely brave, and, in many cases, very young members of Bomber Command. It is a long-overdue tribute to a group of people who helped shape the world we live in, and while it is incredibly lifting that such a memorial will now be constructed, there is an element of sadness in that of those remaining crews who are with us today, many are of an age and in a state of health that they may not be with us to witness its unveiling."

Lord Ashcroft said, *“As a committed champion of bravery, I am delighted to have played a part in helping to right a wrong. With this memorial, the courage and self-sacrifice of these air crews, who faced some of the most terrifying combat conditions of the Second World War, will be recognised for ever more. Over the years, I have been privileged to have met many surviving members of RAF Bomber Command and invariably their gallantry is matched by their modesty. Rarely, if ever, can any group of servicemen have been more deserving of a permanent memorial to their outstanding courage. Members of Bomber Command are truly worthy of their place in history among the bravest of the brave.”*

Robin Gibb CBE, member of the Bees Gees and President of the Heritage Foundation, who has been spearheading the Bomber Command Memorial campaign said:

‘I welcome John Caudwell’s and Lord Ashcroft’s magnificent support of this memorial commemorating those very brave young men of Bomber Command who helped us win the war for freedom.’

The memorial described by Prince William as ‘sublimely beautiful’ designed by award-winning architect Liam O’Connor, and featuring a monumental bronze sculpture of seven aircrew 9ft tall by Philip Jackson CVO, will be situated at the western end of Green Park, alongside Piccadilly. It will represent a permanent memorial to the brave men and women of RAF Bomber Command, whose heroic efforts during the Second World War will be properly recognised for the first time.

During World War II, 125,000 volunteers from the UK, the Commonwealth and Allied countries, with just an average age of twenty-two and some of them as young as eighteen, volunteered to join Bomber Command. Of these, 55,573 died on operations or in training, while many more were shot down, captured and held as prisoners of war. They sacrificed their lives for a freedom that we enjoy today and that sadly they never lived to see.

Editor's Note:

John Caudwell is an entrepreneur and philanthropist who sold his immensely successful mobile communications business - which included high street mobile phone chain Phones 4u - in 2005, and now concentrates on charitable work. In 2000, he founded Caudwell Children, which provides specialist equipment, treatment and therapies for sick and disabled children across the UK, as well as "Destinations Dreams" holidays for children fighting life-threatening conditions.

Lord Ashcroft KCMG is an international businessman, author and philanthropist, with a significant interest in military history, and especially in bravery. His unique collection of VC's and other medals are on permanent exhibition at the Lord Ashcroft Gallery at the Imperial War Museum.

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