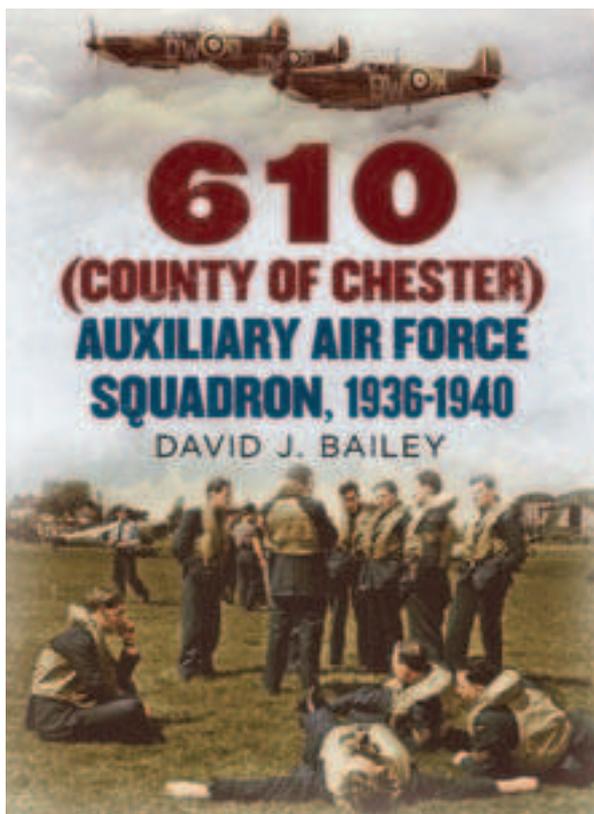


# 610 Auxiliary Air Force Squadron



*610 (County of Chester) Auxiliary Air Force Squadron, 1936–1940* is a new local history book, written by Heswall author David J. Bailey. Just published, it provides a fascinating account of the early history of Wirral's local RAF Squadron, focusing on 610's role during the Dunkirk evacuation and the Battle of Britain.

610 (County of Chester) Squadron was formed in February 1936 at Hooton Park, Wirral. With personnel recruited from the local area for the expanding Auxiliary Air Force, these 'weekend fliers' were moulded into a cohesive fighting unit. 610 Squadron was originally equipped with biplane light-bombers, such as the Hawker Hart, but as the Second World War loomed, the Squadron transferred to Fighter Command, ultimately operating the iconic Supermarine Spitfire.

In May 1940, flying from Gravesend, 610 Squadron suffered seven pilots killed and one wounded whilst desperately protecting the Dunkirk evacuation. Flying Officer John Kerr Wilson, aged 32, from Heswall, was killed on 29th May 1940. He had been a director in his family's engineering firm in Liverpool and is remembered on Heswall's War Memorial.

On 27th May 1940, Flying Officer Albert Rupert John Medcalf, aged 26, was another local man who was tragically lost without trace over Dunkirk. He had studied architecture at Liverpool University and lived in Willaston.



Flying Officer John Kerr Wilson, from Heswall. (Copyright Medcalf family)



Flying Officer Medcalf, from Willaston, in his Spitfire's cockpit. (Copyright Medcalf family)

The Squadron went on to perform a key role in the Battle of Britain, being based at the vital RAF Station at Biggin Hill, just south of London, also operating from the forward airfield at Hawkinge, near Folkestone. 610 Squadron claimed a heavy toll on the Luftwaffe, during deadly dogfights above the English Channel and south-eastern England.

These brave men included Flight Lieutenant Warner, aged 21, from Oxtou, one of the Squadron's veterans (standing third from right, front cover), whilst three Wirral men who had originally been part of 610 Squadron's ground crew, rejoined the squadron as novice sergeant pilots. Sergeant Bamberger, aged 21, from Port Sunlight, Sergeant Manton, aged 25, from Bebington and Sergeant Corfe, aged 21, from Meols (lying, far right front cover), would endure very mixed fortunes during the remainder of the Battle of Britain...

After further tragic losses, including ground crew killed during bombing raids against Biggin Hill, 610 Squadron moved to Acklington, Northumberland, to rest and train replacement pilots.

Despite the famous photographs of its men and aircraft during 1940, two of which feature on the book's front cover, 610's valiant history remains largely unknown. This detailed book recounts their heroic story for the first time, combining the Operations Record Book with Combat Reports, pilots' Log Books, ground crew and relatives' testimonies, plus a rare interview with a founding Squadron pilot who fought during 1940. Finally, this fascinating story is brought to life with many previously unpublished photographs from relatives and the Squadron's Association, to recognise 610 Squadron's brave sacrifice.

*The book is now available through the publisher, Fonthill Media.*