

75th Anniversary Ceremony of the crash of Liberator EW250

Speech by Malcolm Pither, October 2019

I am the son of Sargent Ronald Pither who survived the crash in October 1944. He died at the age of 82, 15 years ago. So I speak for him today.

I am sorry I am not with you today. Other commitments have kept me away although few things are more important than keeping the memory of the brave Home Army and the fallen airman alive.

If my father was here to give his views about that terrible time 75 years ago he would speak of duty, fear and a burning desire for peace; peace for Poland and the whole of Europe.

The Warsaw airlift was for volunteers only. Everyone knew it was very dangerous. Many planes and aircrew were lost in the weeks before my father's plane came down. When his plane was shot down in a way he was very lucky. He got out of the plane very late. It was almost on the ground. But his parachute opened and he landed alive but injured. He was lucky too to find someone from the Home Army within minutes. Despite the terrible risk to them, their families and even the whole village, they hid him and tended to his injuries.

He was moved from one cottage to another and then later to the big house at Rochwalawice. The Home Army risked their lives to save his. It is not an exaggeration to say he and I owe the brave Polish people everything. I thank the Home Army that he died at the age of 82 and not 22. He and his brave hosts had many adventures. If you don't know the stories I will be happy to share them with you. I am not here today but I will return. Talk to Adam and we will arrange a date.

But what is my main message today? What would be my father's message? He would say "Peace". He always wanted people to be happy and at peace. When there is peace, people thrive, families thrive and communities thrive. The country becomes more prosperous, stable and safe. In peace there is a chance for happiness.

In 1944 my father risked his life for Poland and for peace in Europe. I thank the Home Army for their brave help and acknowledge the sacrifice of the airmen who died. Together we got that peace. But the world is still full of danger which is why the lessons of 1944 must not be forgotten and why we must still work to keep the peace today. The Home Army Museum and those who created this monument do a fantastic job to keep the memory alive but they should not work alone. This is a job for us all. We must all tell this story to everyone, especially the children. Not to glorify war but to remember the importance of peace. This is vital for the peace, prosperity and happiness of Poland.

I thank the Home Army and these airmen who flew with my father for their bravery and sacrifice and look forward to working with you to keep this story alive for peace in Poland and Europe.

Malcolm Pither, 11 October 2019.