

News story: Battle of Britain

Reception

Battle of Britain Sunday commemorates the great victory won by the Royal Air Force, which saved Britain from invasion in 1940. On Sunday, September 15th came what Sir Winston Churchill called "one of the decisive battles of the war" and with it the Luftwaffe's greatest defeat.

Many Argentines, decedents from British families living in Argentina listed themselves as volunteers to serve and join the British forces in World War II. Multiple of them were assigned to the Royal Air Force (RAF) and were part of the legendary No. 164 "Argentine-British" Squadron which was composed by Argentine and Polish volunteers.

The No. 164 Squadron's coat of arms finds its origins in 1918 although, by that time, it didn't have a motto. Mr Miguel Angel Carcano, who was the Argentine Amabassador in London, suggested that it should be "Firmes volamos" (Firmly we fly). The idea for the insignia of the British lion in front of a rising sun representing Argentina was also Carcano's. The coat of arms wasn't recognised until 1943 when the Duque of Gloucester presented the Squadron officially at a ceremony in front of the Air Marshalls Sir Hugh Sanders, Roderick Hill, and members of the British community in Argentina. It was the only Squadron whose name was inscribed in Spanish.

Argentine men from British families were not the only ones who volunteered, there were many women who also had a prominent participation during World War II: Maureen Dunlop, an Argentine volunteer, became an ATA pilot in the RAF during the Second World War, and Rosemary Simpson another Argentine volunteer who participated in the Royal Army Ordinance Corps (RAOC), part of the British Army.

In a reception at the HM Ambassador's residence, we honoured Ronnie Scott, the son of a Scottish immigrant, who in 1943 enlisted as a pilot in the British military; Stanley Coggan, a veteran of the Second World War who was a Flying Officer; Mary Chapman, as well Scottish, who has been living in Argentina for 70 years, but before that she was a cryptographer in British military defence during World War II; Antoni Żebrowski, who was born in Poland and was trained as a combat pilot by the RAF, and then fought between 1943 and 1944 and Dennis Crisp.

One of Sir Winston Churchill's most famous quotes was delivered in the midst of the Battle of Britain: "The gratitude of every home in our Island, in our Empire, and indeed throughout the world, except in the abodes of the guilty, goes out to the British airmen who, undaunted by odds, unwearied in their constant challenge and mortal danger, are turning the tide of the World War by their prowess and by their devotion. Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."