

# WINGS



# THINGS

## GREAT PLAINS WING - COMMEMORATIVE AIR FORCE

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### 1st Quarter 2026

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Photo: Greg Jacobson



Airplanes = Maintenance

## Great Plains Wing 2025 Recap

By Jared Malbers

2025 was a year of tremendous growth for the Great Plains Wing along with the inevitable growing pains that come with it. This marked the first year our Wing had an operational aircraft assigned to us, and we jumped into those uncharted waters with both feet.

The year began with an extensive annual on "60," which included numerous repairs and several modifications to enhance functionality. After a successful application, "60" was officially enrolled in the ride program, and our Wing began learning the ins and outs of operating within it.

## "Lest We Forget"

While we didn't sell as many rides as we had hoped, "60" unfortunately suffered several malfunctions that cost us valuable time during peak ride season. Even so, we're excited to come out swinging next year with all the wrinkles ironed out ready to fly more, reach more people, and share her story with the public.

Our Ercoupe project also faced some delays due to unexpected challenges with her hangar mates earlier in the year. However, progress has picked up recently, and we look forward to seeing her step closer to taking to the skies once again.

The Museum continued to grow and evolve throughout 2025, with refreshed existing displays and new rotating exhibits in Revv's building.

We also expanded our community outreach through STEM events, fly-ins, and various aviation-themed activities at the Lincoln Airport. All of these efforts help spark excitement around our aircraft while inspiring a love of aviation and history in younger generations.

On a bittersweet note, we close the year bidding farewell to one of our own. Lt. Tom Keable, Royal Air Force exchange pilot to Offutt Air Force Base and RC-135 pilot, is returning home.

Tom became a sponsor and pilot of "60" and made significant contributions of time, passion, and talent during his time with us. His presence will be greatly missed. We wish him all the best in his future endeavors and hope he'll make a few hops across the pond to visit.

Looking back, 2025 was a meaningful year of learning, progress, and momentum for the Great Plains Wing.

Looking ahead, 2026 holds tremendous promise for "60," for the Ercoupe, and for the Wing as a whole.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all who supported us in 2025 and in years past. Your dedication allows us to preserve the memory of the Greatest Generation and to honor all who have bravely served our country.

*Photo: From the Web.*



*Hope for the Future?*

**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the Great Plains Wing!**

## ***Australia's Leading Battle of Britain Ace and his aircraft. (Ed.)***

*Photo: From the Web*



*Flight Lt Hughes and Flying Officer Butch, his terrier.*

Amongst all my useless scrolling, I recently came across an advertisement for a wristwatch containing a fragment of skin from an actual Spitfire Mk Ia.

The aircraft in question was flown by the leading Australian Battle of Britain Ace. The Spitfire is being "restored" in Australia after being recovered from its crash site. The fragments of skin are being included in the watch as a fund raising effort for the restoration. The museum restoring the aircraft is the Hunter Fighter Collection in Scone NSW, Australia.

Since I had never heard of Flight Lieutenant Paterson (Pat) Clarence Hughes, DFC, and I was excited by the prospect of a surviving Spitfire Mk Ia from the Battle, I began following the bread-crumbs trail to find out the facts.

The story is a bit more poignant and much shorter than I expected.

Pat Hughes enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force in 1936. He was trained in England and initially posted to Bristol Blenheim Heavy Fighters in No 64 Squadron. In October 1939, he was posted to No 234 Squadron, flying Blenheims, Fairey Battles and Gloster Gauntlets. He was promoted to Acting Flight Lieutenant in November. In March of 1940, 239 Squadron began re-equipping with Supermarine Spitfires.



*A lithograph of Pat's aircraft, X4009*



Pat claimed his first victory in July, 1940 when he shared the downing of a Ju 88 reconnaissance aircraft with a Squadron-mate on the 8th. He was credited with a Ju 88 Damaged on the 27th and another Ju 88 Shared Destroyed on the 28th. Interestingly, the damaged Ju 88 did not return to base and was listed as destroyed in German records.

Apparently, around the end of July, he modified his tactics, changing from beginning to fire from 150 yards or so, to starting to shoot at a range of 30 yards. He also added head-on attacks to his repertoire. The tactic of close in shooting is very similar to the one used by the great German Ace, Erich Hartmann, who said "wait until the enemy fills your windscreen, then shoot!". Between mid-July and early August, 2 pilots, Pat Hughes and Bob Doe were responsible for half of the Squadron's victories.

On August 1, 1940, he was married to Kay Brodrick, whom he had met earlier in the year.

On 15 August, Hughes claimed a shared victory over one Bf-110 and a solo victory over another. He again achieved dual success on 16th both victims being Me 109Es. Subsequently, on the 16th he was shot up by an Me 109 while attempting to down some Stukas, and disengaged after he ran out of ammunition. On the 26th, two more Me 109s fell to his guns as confirmed victories

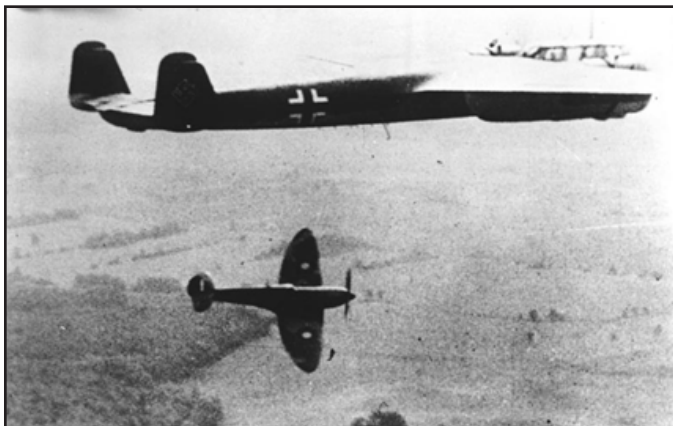
He continued his string of victories in September, with 3 Bf 110s destroyed on the 4th.

On the sixth, he scored twice more, with an Me 109 destroyed and one probable, but only because he had to break off after his aircraft was covered with oil from the crippled opponent.

His score at this point was 13 enemy aircraft destroyed, 3 enemy aircraft shared destroyed, 1 enemy aircraft shared damaged and 1 enemy aircraft probably destroyed

On September 7, Hughes attacked a Do 17 which was part of a large raid on London.

*Photo Bundesarchiv*



*Spitfire making a pass on a Do 17*

As you may be aware, fatigue had become a major problem for the RAF (and for the Luftwaffe) during this time and both fatigue and losses contributed to the German decision to switch to Civilian targets. Fatigue may have been factor in Pat's attack on this day.

*Photo: From the Hunter Fighter Collection Facebook Page*



*234 Squadron resting and waiting for another scramble*

Varying accounts and conjectures exist as to what exactly happened. The Dornier had been damaged by previous Spitfire attacks and may have been having issues with control, which caused a collision. One witness on the ground claimed that Pat intentionally rammed the bomber, but his habit of closing the range before firing coupled with fatigue may have caused him to misjudge his approach and collide with his target. Some conjecture exists that debris from the bomber struck his Spitfire. Interestingly, when the crashed bomber was excavated after some years, fragments of his Spitfire were found embedded in the wreckage, reportedly including unfired .303 cartridges.

In any case, Pat Hughes Spitfire lost a wing in the collision and he bailed out of the stricken aircraft. His parachute failed to open and his body was found in a garden, not far from the wreckage of his Spitfire.

*Photo: From the Hunter Fighter Collection Web Site*



*The recovered cockpit section of Pats Mk I, X4009*

His last victory left his total at 14 Destroyed, 3 Shared Destroyed, 1 Shared Damaged and 1 Probably Destroyed, in approximately 7 weeks of aerial combat.

Kay Hughes was a Widow after barely 5 weeks of marriage and though inconsolable at his death, she went on to drive ambulances for the War effort. Kay passed away in 1983 and her ashes were buried with Pat at her request.

X4009 was excavated and the remains registered in the UK as G-EMET. A couple, Ross and Ann-Marie Pay, operating Pay's Air Service and Vintage Fighter Restorations, purchased the remains and donated them to the Hunter Fighter Collection in Scone, NSW, in 2021.

A series of supporters have donated troves of Spitfire parts since then, and the fuselage has been constructed and painted as X4009 to aid in fund raising.

*Photo: From the Hunter Fighter Collection Web Site*



*The Display Fuselage used for fundraising.*

Restoration has been in progress since then. A five-year time-frame has been set for the full restoration to flying condition.

*Photo: From the web*



*Flight Officer Paterson Clarence Hughes, DFC*

Please, refer to the Facebook page for the Hunter Fighter Collection for additional information and updates (Ed.)

## **GREAT PLAINS WING 2026 CALENDAR OF EVENTS FEBUARY**

14th – Wing Meeting – @ Hanger – 11:00 a.m.

### **MARCH**

14th – Wing Meeting - @ Hanger – 11:00 a.m.

### **APRIL**

14th to 19th – Sun'n Fun Fly-In  
Lakeland Linder Regional Airport – Lakeland, FL  
11th – Wing Meeting – @ Hanger – 11:00 a.m.

### **MAY**

9th – Wing Meeting – @ Hanger – 11:00 a.m.

### **JUNE**

13th – Wing Meeting – @ Hanger – 11:00 a.m.  
20th – Nebraska State Fly-in & Airshow  
Fremont Municipal Airport – Fremont, NE  
26th to 27th – Quad City Airshow  
Davenport Municipal Airport – Davenport, IA

### **JULY**

11th – Wing Meeting – @ Hanger – 11:00 a.m.  
20th to 26th – EAA AirVenture 2024  
Wittman Regional Airport – Oshkosh, WI

### **AUGUST**

1st – GPW Open House &  
Fly-in/Walk-in Pancake Breakfast - @ Hanger  
Breakfast • 8:00-12:00 a.m.  
Open House • 8:00-4:00 p.m.  
8th – Wing Meeting – @ Hanger – 11:00 a.m.

### **SEPTEMBER**

12th – Wing Meeting – @ Hanger – 11:00 a.m.

### **OCTOBER**

10th – Wing Meeting – @ Hanger – 11:00 a.m.

### **NOVEMBER**

14th – Wing Meeting – @ Hanger – 11:00 a.m.

### **DECEMBER**

12th – Wing Meeting – @ Hanger – 11:00 a.m.  
12th – Christmas Potluck - @ Hanger – 12:00 p.m.

### **Events TBD**

Fly Iowa 2026 – Winterset Municipal Airport  
Winterset, IA

If you would like to put a event on this calendar, please send an email with the necessary information to Terry Helphrey at [terry.helphrey@outlook.com](mailto:terry.helphrey@outlook.com)

### **Monthly Events**

Council Bluffs Airport – Great Plains Wing hosts a monthly cookout on the 3rd Wednesday of each month from April to October – 5:30-7:00 pm

York, NE Airport • EAA Chapter 1055 hosts a fly-in breakfast on the 1st Saturday of every month - 8:00 to 10:00 am

Crete, NE Airport • EAA Chapter 569 hosts a fly-in breakfast on the 3rd Saturday of every month - 8:00 to 10:00 am

If you would like to put a event on this calendar, please send an email with the necessary information to Terry Helphrey at [terry.helphrey@outlook.com](mailto:terry.helphrey@outlook.com)