

The incredible and moving Battle of Britain flypast earlier this week to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle's "hardest day" reminded me of the importance of air power both in war and peace. The anniversary itself was an opportunity for people to remember those who lost their lives during the Battle of Britain including the 544 British pilots and the 2500 Luftwaffe crew. It is also a reminder of the important part Kent played during the Second World War. I grew up in Capel-le-Ferne and then Hythe and at primary school was regaled by tales of aerial threat and combat from a series of senior folks who had, for various reasons, not be evacuated from the area. We sat crossed legged mouths open listening intently at tales before running out for break time to play marbles unaware of the real significance and importance of the stories.

Near where I grew up was a massive concrete radar dish that was erected on the hills overlooking West Hythe to detect incoming German planes and alert not just the locals but the nation of imminent attack. As teenagers we sat for hours in that dish talking about whatever teenagers talk about but in one of our many games of "war" I am sure we used that dish.

Now living here in Malling, I learn, with more intelligent appreciation, how places like West Malling contributed to the Battle and the overall war effort. In fact I have met veterans who were based at the then local airfield. With Spitfires, Hurricanes and other great aircraft taking part in the flypast, and with more appreciation for the efforts of those 75 years ago than ever before, it is no wonder we are seeing a growth in the popularity of airshows and demonstrations of air capability. I only hope it continues for many years to come both to show our respects to those who lost their lives but celebrate the machines that helped keep this great nation free and safe.