

The Polish Fighter Squadron 316 Project

The Polish Fighter Squadron 316 project is a tribute to the 316 "City of Warsaw" Polish Fighter Squadron, honouring the bravery and sacrifices of the Polish pilots who fought for the Allies during World War II. Formed on February 15, 1941, at RAF Pembrey in Wales, the squadron was initially equipped with Hurricanes and later transitioned to Spitfires and Mustangs.

The 316 Squadron played a significant role in defensive and offensive operations. Initially, they conducted defensive patrols over southwest England, then later engaged in sweeps over northern France. By October 1941, they had upgraded to Spitfires and relocated to RAF Northolt. Throughout the war, they participated in numerous critical missions, including fighter-bomber and escort missions, and operated against V-1 flying bombs along the South coast.

The project, spearheaded by enthusiasts and historians, aims to compile, and preserve detailed information about the squadron and its personnel. Over the past fifteen years, the project has been collecting and archiving various documents, photographs, and personal accounts, gradually piecing together the squadron's comprehensive history, particularly focusing on its activities during the spring of 1941.

History of No. 316 Squadron

No. 316 "City of Warsaw" Polish Fighter Squadron (Polish: 316 Dywizjon Myśliwski "Warszawski") was formed in Great Britain as part of an agreement between the Polish Government in Exile and the United Kingdom in 1941. This squadron was one of several Polish fighter squadrons that fought alongside the Royal Air Force during World War II, highlighting the strong collaboration between the Polish forces in exile and the British military.

Formation and Early Operations:

- **February 15, 1941:** The squadron was established at RAF Pembrey in Wales, initially equipped with Hawker Hurricanes. The Polish pilots, many of whom had escaped from Nazi-occupied Europe, were tasked with defensive duties over southwest England.
- **Initial Equipment:** Flying Hurricane fighters, they defended against potential Luftwaffe attacks, protecting key installations and civilian areas.

Transition to Offensive Operations:

- **Mid-1941:** The squadron upgraded to Hurricane IIs and began offensive sweeps over northern France, engaging enemy aircraft and disrupting German operations.
- **October 1941:** Transitioning to the more advanced Supermarine Spitfires, No. 316 Squadron moved to RAF Northolt. This move marked the beginning of their participation in more aggressive offensive missions over occupied Europe.

Further Developments and Relocations:

- **July 1942:** The squadron was transferred to Yorkshire, continuing offensive operations from the north of England.
- **March 1943:** Returning to southern England, they resumed intensive offensive operations, contributing significantly to the air war effort over Europe.

Final War Years:

- **April 1944:** Equipped with North American P-51 Mustangs, the squadron relocated to East Anglia. The Mustangs, known for their long range and versatility, allowed the squadron to conduct crucial fighter-bomber and escort missions in preparation for the D-Day landings.
- **July 1944:** Redeployed to the South coast, No. 316 Squadron countered the threat of V-1 flying bombs, intercepting these early cruise missiles before they could reach their targets.
- **October 1944 - End of War:** The squadron resumed escort duties, protecting Allied bombers on raids deep into Germany and occupied Europe until the war's end.

Disbandment:

- **December 11, 1946:** After a distinguished service record, No. 316 Squadron was disbanded. The squadron's Polish airmen, through their bravery and skill, made substantial contributions to the Allied victory in Europe.

Legacy and Recognition

The history of No. 316 Squadron stands as a testament to the courage and dedication of Polish pilots who fought alongside the Allies during World War II. From defensive patrols over England to offensive missions across Europe, their efforts were crucial in the fight against the Axis powers. The squadron's legacy is preserved through historical projects and commemorations, ensuring their heroism is remembered.

Bohdan Anders

Bohdan Anders was born on February 27, 1918, in Poznań, Poland. With a strong sense of duty to his homeland, Anders joined the Polish Air Force, demonstrating exceptional skill and bravery. His service began in Poland, where he likely saw the early stages of World War II unfold, witnessing the invasion of his country by German forces.



After the fall of Poland, many Polish airmen, including Anders, made their way to France to continue the fight against the Axis powers. In France, Anders continued to hone his skills as a pilot, contributing to the efforts of the Allied forces. However, the rapid advance of German troops soon forced him and his fellow Polish aviators to seek refuge in Great Britain.

In Great Britain, Anders joined the Royal Air Force (RAF), which welcomed Polish pilots who had escaped the fall of their homeland. He became a member of the famed No. 303 "Tadeusz Kościuszko" Polish Fighter Squadron. This squadron gained a legendary reputation during the Battle of Britain for its remarkable effectiveness and bravery. As part of No. 303 Squadron, Anders flew numerous sorties, defending Britain against the Luftwaffe and contributing to the eventual Allied victory in the Battle of Britain.

Later, Anders was transferred to No. 316 "City of Warsaw" Polish Fighter Squadron. This squadron, named to honour the capital of their occupied homeland, continued to fight valiantly in various operations over Europe. Anders' skills and dedication as a pilot were critical to the squadron's successes.

Tragically, Bohdan Anders' promising career was cut short on June 2, 1941. While flying a Miles Magister, serial R1838, from 316 Squadron, he struck a barrage balloon cable near Malpas, Newport Gwent. The collision was fatal, and Anders perished in the incident.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/228015059/bogdan-anders>

Olech Antoni Kawczyński

Olech Antoni Kawczyński was born on February 20, 1916, in Wudzyn, Poland. His early life in Poland was marked by a strong sense of duty and patriotism, leading him to join the Polish Army, where he rose to the rank of Lieutenant. With the outbreak of World War II and the subsequent invasion of Poland, Kawczyński, like many of his compatriots, found himself compelled to continue the fight beyond his homeland's borders.



After Poland's fall, Kawczyński made his way to Great Britain, where the Royal Air Force (RAF) was integrating experienced Polish pilots into its ranks. Kawczyński joined the RAF and served with distinction as a Pilot Officer, initially with No. 32 Squadron. His skills as a pilot were critical in the defence of Britain, contributing to the efforts to thwart the Luftwaffe's relentless attacks.

Kawczyński later transferred to No. 79 Squadron, continuing his brave service in the skies. No. 79 Squadron was actively involved in various operations, and Kawczyński's role as a pilot was vital to the squadron's missions. His aircraft, a Hawker Hurricane,

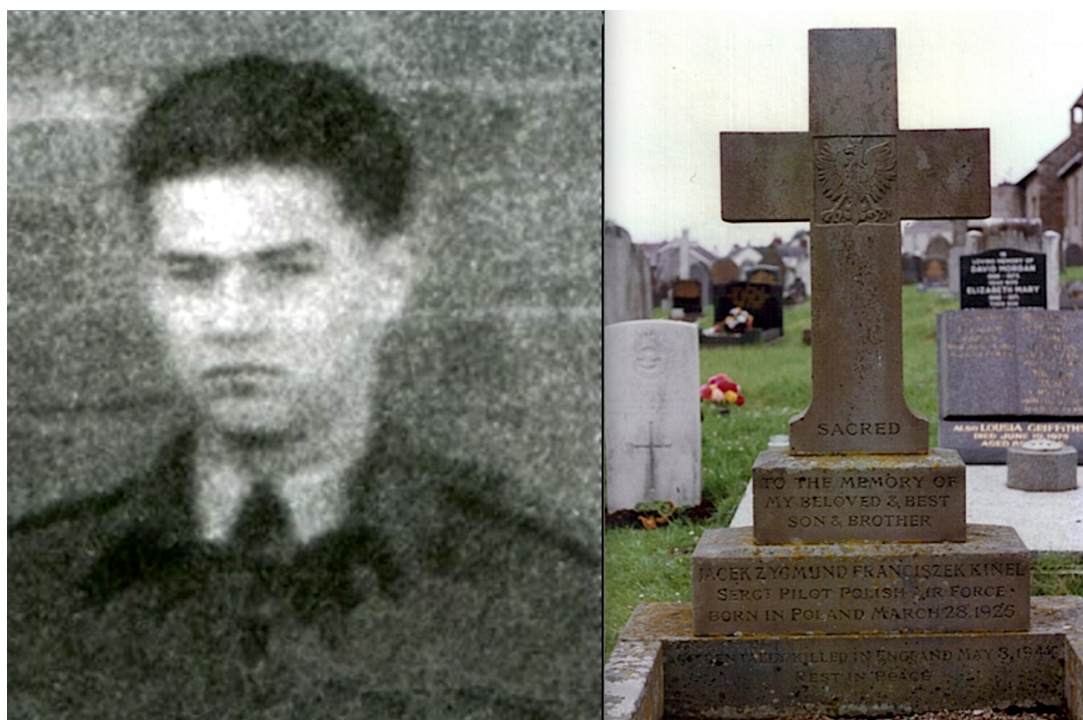
was a formidable fighter that played a key role in the RAF's defensive and offensive operations.

Tragically, Olech Antoni Kawczyński's service was cut short on May 8, 1941. While on target practice over Cefn Sidan Beach, his Hawker Hurricane, Serial Z2324, crashed, resulting in his untimely death. The exact circumstances of the crash remain a poignant reminder of the perils faced by those who took to the skies in defence of freedom.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/228015273/olech-antoni-kawczynski>

Jacek Zygmund Fran Kinel.

Jacek Zygmunt Fran Kinel was born on March 28, 1924, in Bydgoszcz, Poland. Despite his young age, Kinel's early life was profoundly impacted by the onset of World War II. Driven by a strong sense of duty to his homeland, he joined the fight against the Axis powers, a decision that would lead him far from his native land.



As the war progressed, Kinel joined the Royal Air Force (RAF), a common path for many Polish airmen who had escaped the fall of Poland. His dedication and skill earned him the rank of Sergeant Pilot, and he was assigned to the 1st Air Gunnery School in Pembrey, Wales. This school was crucial in training airmen in the essential skills of aerial gunnery, which were vital for the success of bombing missions and air combat.

Tragically, Sergeant Pilot Jacek Kinel's promising career was cut short on May 8, 1944 at Cwrt Malle Farm. The specific circumstances of his death remain a sombre testament to the dangers faced by those who served in training as well as in combat. The rigorous training regimes and the ever-present risk of accidents meant that even those not on the front lines were exposed to significant peril.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/228015344/jacek-zygmund-f-kinel>

Waclaw Oyrzanowski

Waclaw Oyrzanowski was born on September 18, 1903, in Zawady, Poland. His early years were marked by a dedication to his country, which led him to join the Polish Air Force. With the outbreak of World War II and the invasion of Poland, Oyrzanowski's journey took him across Europe as he continued to serve with unwavering commitment.



Following Poland's fall, Oyrzanowski, like many Polish airmen, made his way to Great Britain. Here, he joined the Royal Air Force (RAF), where his expertise as a mechanic became invaluable. Oyrzanowski initially served with No. 302 "Poznański" Polish Fighter Squadron, a unit renowned for its bravery and effectiveness in aerial combat. His skills were critical in maintaining the squadron's aircraft, ensuring they were always ready for their vital missions.

Oyrzanowski later transferred to No. 307 "Lwowskie Puchacze" Night Fighter Squadron, another distinguished Polish squadron within the RAF. The squadron specialized in night-time operations, defending Britain from enemy bombers under

the cover of darkness. Oyrzanowski's role as a senior mechanic was crucial in keeping the squadron's planes operational and combat ready.

On June 27, 1943, while serving as a mechanic aboard a Mosquito, Serial DD644, piloted by Kaptain Roman Grzanka, Oyrzanowski was fatally wounded in a crash at Pennard on the Gower. Despite the best efforts to save him, Waclaw Oyrzanowski succumbed to his injuries the following day, June 28, 1943. This tragic incident underscores the constant dangers faced by airmen and support crews, not just in combat but also during training and operational flights.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/228015429/waclaw-oyrzanowski>

Roman Grzanka - The Legendary One-Legged Pilot

Roman Grzanka was born on February 8, 1903, in Ujma Duża, Poland. His early life was marked by a strong sense of duty and adventure, leading him to join the Polish Air Force. Grzanka quickly distinguished himself as a talented pilot, demonstrating exceptional skill and determination.



With the outbreak of World War II and the invasion of Poland, Grzanka, like many of his compatriots, continued the fight beyond his homeland. He served with distinction in Poland, and after the fall of his country, he moved to France, where he continued to combat the Axis forces. Eventually, Grzanka found his way to Great Britain, where his experience and bravery were highly valued.

In Great Britain, Grzanka joined the Royal Air Force (RAF), where he became a member of No. 307 "Lwowskie Puchacze" Polish Night Fighter Squadron. This

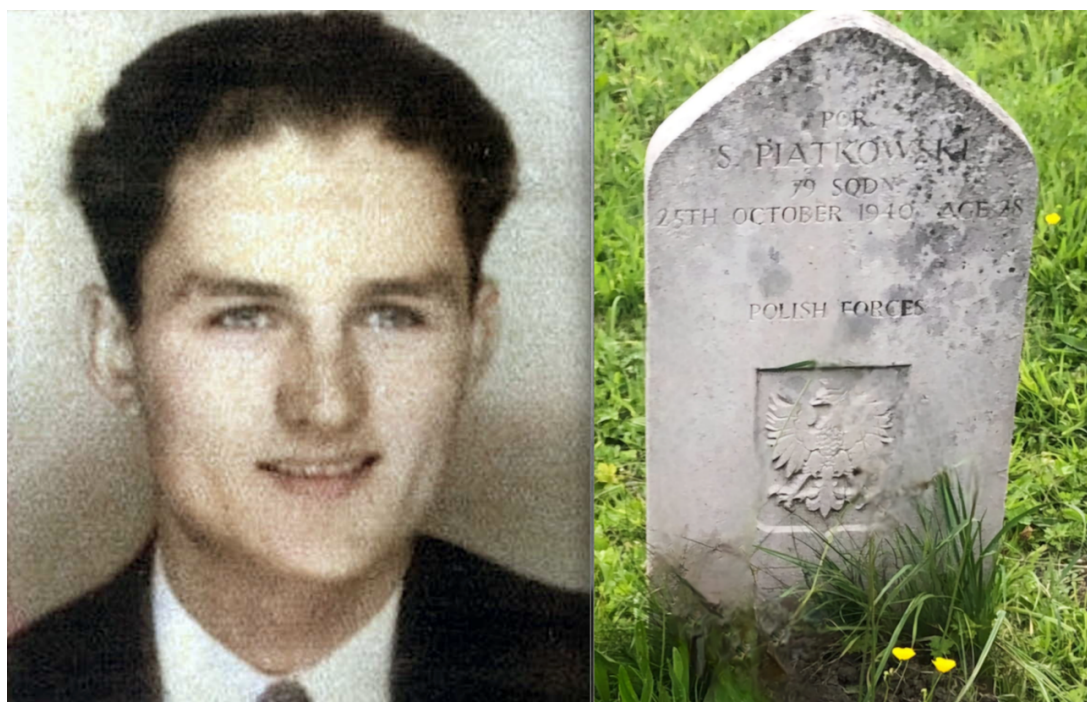
squadron was renowned for its effectiveness in night-time operations, defending Britain from enemy bombers under the cover of darkness. Despite losing a leg, Grzanka's determination and skill allowed him to continue flying, earning him a legendary status as a one-legged pilot.

On June 27, 1943, Grzanka was piloting a Mosquito, Serial DD644, based at RAF Fairwood Common. Tragically, the aircraft crashed at Pennard on the Gower, resulting in Grzanka's death. His co-pilot, Sergeant Mechanic Waclaw Oyrzanowski, succumbed to his injuries the following day. The loss of these brave airmen was a significant blow to their squadron and to the broader war effort.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/228015146/roman-grzanka>

Stanisław Piątkowski

Stanisław Piątkowski was born on May 1, 1912, in Jaroszków, Poland. From a young age, Piątkowski demonstrated a strong sense of duty and a passion for aviation, leading him to join the Polish Air Force. His dedication and skill as a pilot were evident early in his career, earning him the rank of Lieutenant.



With the outbreak of World War II and the subsequent invasion of Poland, Piątkowski, like many Polish airmen, sought to continue the fight against the Axis powers. He made his way to Great Britain, where he joined the Royal Air Force (RAF). His experience and bravery were a valuable addition to the RAF, and he was assigned to No. 79 Squadron.

No. 79 Squadron was an essential part of the RAF's efforts during the Battle of Britain. The squadron was equipped with Hawker Hurricanes, a key fighter aircraft in the defence of Britain. As a Pilot Officer in No. 79 Squadron, Piątkowski participated in numerous patrols and combat missions, contributing to the squadron's valiant efforts to repel the Luftwaffe and protect British skies.

On October 25, 1940, after a routine patrol over Linney Head, Piątkowski tragically crashed his Hurricane, Serial N2728, near Carew Cheriton. The circumstances of the crash underline the constant dangers faced by fighter pilots, both in combat and during routine operations. Piątkowski's untimely death was a significant loss to his squadron and to the broader war effort.

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Stanislaw Waldemar Szymejl

Stan Szymejl's early life in Poland born May 6 1913 was marked by a profound sense of duty and a passion for aviation. His commitment to his country and his desire to serve led him to join the Polish Air Force, where he trained and developed his skills as a pilot.



With the outbreak of World War II and the subsequent invasion of Poland, Szymejl, like many Polish airmen, sought to continue the fight against the Axis powers. He made his way to Great Britain, where the Royal Air Force (RAF) was integrating

experienced Polish pilots into its ranks. Szmejl joined the RAF and was assigned to No. 79 Squadron, a unit known for its valour and effectiveness in combat.

No. 79 Squadron played a crucial role in the defence of Britain, flying Hawker Hurricanes, one of the most important fighter aircraft of the war. As a Flying Officer (Pilot) in No. 79 Squadron, Szmejl participated in numerous patrols and combat missions. His bravery and skill were vital to the squadron's efforts to protect British skies from enemy incursions.

Tragically, Stan Szmejl's service was cut short on June 26, 1941, Flew Hurricane into cliff in bad visibility on convoy patrol at Freshwater East, Pembrokeshire. The circumstances of his death are a poignant reminder of the constant dangers faced by fighter pilots during the war. Whether in combat or training, these pilots faced significant risks, and their sacrifice was immense.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/207494665/stanislaw-waldemar-szmejl>

Leon Jan Watorowski

Leon Jan Watorowski served with distinction in the Polish Air Force during World War II, specifically with 317 Squadron. This squadron, part of the Polish Air Force in exile, played a vital role in the defense of Britain during the Battle of Britain and later participated in offensive operations across Europe.



Watorowski's duties as a pilot included escorting bombers, conducting reconnaissance missions, and engaging enemy aircraft in aerial combat. His bravery

and skill in the cockpit were instrumental in the squadron's successes and in ensuring the safety of Allied forces. Tragically, he died at the age of 24 on December 8, 1944, while piloting Supermarine Spitfire LF.IX, nr. MK986. He was killed during a training flight in a mid-air collision over Port Talbot.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/228057238/leon-jan-watorowski>

Tadeusz Blach

Tadeusz Blach was born on November 20, 1915, in Warsaw Poland, he rose to the rank of Lieutenant Pilot, serving with honour in the esteemed 308 Squadron fighter pilot. 76689 PAF Age 22.



His missions were not without peril, and it was during a routine training flight in a Spitfire IIb (P8676 ZF-H) that his life was claimed. On August 9, 1941, the engine of his aircraft is believed to have stalled at low altitude, causing it to dive into the ground at Ruislip, Middlesex.

Though his final resting place is in St. Clears, his spirit soars among the clouds, forever remembered for his selfless sacrifice and unwavering devotion to duty. Tadeusz Blach remains an enduring symbol of valour and heroism, inspiring future generations to cherish the gift of freedom secured through his bravery.

The Polish Servicemen story is a poignant reminder of the contributions and sacrifices of Polish airmen who served with the RAF. Their commitment and valour were instrumental in the Allied efforts to secure victory, and their legacy continues to inspire future generations.

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