

WINGS



THINGS

GREAT PLAINS WING - COMMEMORATIVE AIR FORCE

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2nd Quarter 2025

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Photo: Greg Jacobson



PT-19 and Ercoupe

Great Plains Wing CAF 1st Quarter Update

The first quarter has been a busy one for the Great Plains Wing, with significant work taking place in the hangar. The PT-19 is undergoing an extensive annual inspection, which includes repairs and maintenance on both main landing gears, the tail wheel assembly, fuel doors, fuel tanks, fuel lines, wobble pump, fuel tank selector, nose bowl, flaps, and the installation of an oil filtration system. We are eager to get the PT-19 back in the air and share it with the community once again.

Despite the PT-19 being temporarily grounded, our commitment to community outreach remains strong. We continue to participate in STEM events and historical preservation meetings, ensuring our presence and engagement with the public. Meanwhile, ongoing work in the museum aims to enhance and expand the historical narratives we share.

“Lest We Forget”

Photos: Greg Jacobsen



Maintenance in Action

The Fighting Shamrock

By: Jared Albers



Paddy Finucane flying with 452 Squadron

Brendan “Paddy” Finucane was an Irish ace who flew with the Royal Air Force (RAF) during the Second World War. He is one of only six Irish pilots credited with five or more confirmed kills, and he leads his countrymen with an impressive tally of 28 victories.

Finucane was born in Dublin, Ireland, to an Irish father and an English mother. As an infant, he narrowly survived crossfire during the Irish Civil War. His passion for aviation began at age 12 when he attended an airshow with his brother and experienced his first flight in an airplane. From that moment, Finucane dreamed of becoming a pilot. At school, he excelled both academically and athletically, succeeding as a boxer, rower, and rugby player. In 1936, his family relocated to London for his father’s work. After graduating, Finucane worked briefly as an accountant, a job he found unfulfilling. In 1937, he seized the opportunity to join the RAF through the Short Service Commissions program, which allowed academically gifted individuals from lower-income backgrounds to train as pilots. Finucane passed the selection process and began flight training in Northamptonshire.

His early training was challenging. He narrowly avoided a crash into a hedgerow and suffered a hard landing after a tire blew out. Despite these difficulties, Finucane completed basic flight training and earned his RAF commission. He then advanced to training in Montrose, Scotland, where he again struggled and received only average marks. Determined to improve, Finucane invested significant time honing his skills. His persistence paid off, and as Nazi forces advanced through France, he was sent to Chester for Spitfire training.

Finucane’s first posting was with 65 Squadron at Hornchurch, where he sought to learn from expe-

rienced aces. He spent as much time as possible flying and training, and the squadron soon became operational at RAF Rochford. During the escalating Battle of Britain, Finucane faced early setbacks. On his first scramble, his aging Spitfire suffered a coolant leak, filling the cockpit with fumes and forcing him to make a wheels-up landing. On his second mission, however, he claimed his first victory—a Messerschmitt BF-109. This marked the beginning of a promising career. By April 1941, Finucane was a Flight Commander with 452 Squadron, the first Royal Australian Air Force squadron to serve in Fighter Command. He achieved his fifth kill, becoming an ace, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Finucane's popularity as a leader grew at 452 Squadron, where his relaxed demeanor stood in contrast to his English counterparts. It was during this time that he adopted his signature emblem—a shamrock painted on his Spitfire, which earned the nickname "The Flying Shamrock." Finucane's leadership and combat success led to his promotion to Squadron Commander of 602 Squadron at Redhill.

In February 1942, Finucane narrowly survived his closest brush with death when his Spitfire was hit six times by a FockeWulf FW-190. Shrapnel tore through the fuselage and into his leg, but he managed to land the aircraft before passing out. By June 1942, he was promoted to Wing Commander of RAF Hornchurch, becoming the youngest Wing Commander in RAF history.



Paddy flying with 602 Squadron

On July 15, 1942, Finucane led his wing on a Ramrod mission to Le Touquet, France. While attacking enemy machine gun positions, his Spitfire was hit in the radiator and began to smoke. Finucane attempted to limp the damaged aircraft back across the English Channel. Tragically, eight miles from the coast of France, he ditched the plane unsuccessfully and was lost at sea. The Irish ace's luck had run out.

2025 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL

1st to 6th – Sun'n Fun Fly-In – Lakeland Linder Regional Airport – Lakeland, FL

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

MAY

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

JUNE

7th to 8th – Nebraska State Fly-in & Airshow
Gordon Municipal Airport – Gordon, NE

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

JULY

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

21st to 27th – EAA AirVenture 2024

Wittman Regional Airport – Oshkosh, WI

AUGUST

2nd – GPW Open House & Fly-in/Walk-in Pancake
Breakfast - @ Hanger

• Breakfast • 8:00-12:00am

• Open House • 8:00-4:00pm

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

23rd to 24th – Quad City Air Show – Davenport
Municipal Airport – Davenport, IA

SEPTEMBER

13th to 14th – Fly Iowa 2025

Clinton Municipal Airport – Clinton, IA

13th – Wing Meeting – @ Hanger – 11:00a.m.

OCTOBER

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

NOVEMBER

8th – Wing Meeting – @ Hanger – 11:00a.m.

DECEMBER

13th – Wing Meeting – @ Hanger – 11:00a.m.

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 - 8:00am to 10:00am

Crete, NE Airport • EAA Chapter 569 hosts a

fly-in breakfast on the 3rd Saturday

of every month - 8:00am to 10:00am

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