

PRESS RELEASE 10th February 2010

Sir Douglas Bader, whose instinctive and extraordinarily spirited contribution to rebutting German air attacks during the Battle of Britain, is to be commemorated on **Wednesday 10th February 2010 at the RAF Museum, Hendon** at 2pm with the opening of a Bader exhibit, launch of a podcast on Bader narrated by Sir Richard Branson and the launch of the Bader Foundations new initiative BADER BRAVES.

Bader's already outstanding war time achievements are all the more remarkable given that he suffered a double amputation in 1931 following a horrendous crash. In response to accident, Bader committed a typically laconic reflection to his log book, recalling: 'crashed slow-rolling near ground. 'Bad show'. In peace time, Bader increasingly turned his attention to charitable activities on behalf of the disabled. Always sympathetic about the plight of others who had lost limbs, he offered both inspiration and practical advice to those living with disabilities. He was awarded the CBE in 1956 and knighted for his services to amputees in 1976.

'A disabled person who fights back is not disabled...but inspired.' It is this maxim that the charitable foundation established in Douglas's name immediately following his death in 1982, seeks to replicate and develop.

The Douglas Bader Foundation was formed by family and friends, many of whom had flown side by side with Douglas during World War 2 and exists to advance and promote the physical, mental and spiritual welfare of persons who are without one or more limbs, or otherwise physically disabled.



2010 is a significant year for the DBF - The 100th anniversary of Douglas' birth in February and the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain in which he played a part.

To mark this The Douglas Bader Foundation will at the same time be announcing the launch of '[Bader Braves](#)', a concept inspired by Douglas being made a Chief of a

Canadian Indian Tribe and the Bravery of children with limb loss and other physical or learning disabilities in their efforts to live normal lives.



- **Bader Braves** will support these children (and their families) by offering unique experiences and improving life-skills to increase confidence.
- **Bader Braves** will include 5 Flying days providing children with limb loss and physically disabled youngsters from 6-16 with the opportunity of experiencing flight in a light aircraft
- **Bader Braves** will include two short break outdoor multi-activity long "Challenge" weekends at the Calvert Trust venues at Kielder Water in Northumberland and one in Exmoor. These centres offer a fantastic residential and activity programme of sailing, canoeing, archery, climbing, abseiling, orienteering all specifically designed to enable full participation by children with physical disabilities
- **Bader Braves** fundraising activity will include a **3** day Hike along Hadrian's Wall in summer 2010 (all participants are welcome!)



NOTES FOR EDITORS:

In attendance at the launch will be Lady Bader, David Bickers (Chairman of the DBF and Douglas' son in law), Major Phil Packer (The Pride of Britain Fundraiser of the Year, receiver of the Helen Rollason award at the 2009

BBC Sports Personality of the Year show, David Gardner (7/7 Victim and survivor).

Douglas Bader was born on 21st february 1910 in north London, the son of Frederick Roberts Bader and Jessie Scott-Mackenzie.

Bader's initial interest in flying was sparked by his aunt's husband Cyril Burge, himself a RAF officer. Encourage by Burge, Bader won a prize scholarship to Cranwell in 1928 – his progression was swift, and after flying solo in 1929, he was commissioned pilot officer a year later. His natural skill earned him a place in the aerobatics team at Hendon but his showmanship caught up with him, and December 1931, he crashed whilst attempting an ambitious stunt. Though lucky to survive the crash, Bader sustained horrific injuries that necessitated the amputation of both his legs.

Bader adopted an extraordinarily upbeat approach to his disability, and defied the doctor's expectations by walking with a pair of artificial legs within six months of the crash. He soon set his sights on flying again and he successfully piloted an Avro 504. However, the RAF, faced with such an unprecedented case, decided that Bader could not resume his career as a pilot – he was given ground duties but the naturally flamboyant Bader found this hugely frustrating; he was discharged from the force in 1933. Bader found it difficult to reconcile himself to civilian life and in 1938 – at the height of the Munich crisis – applied to the Air Ministry, but was again refused for re-admittance. He finally extracted a promise that he could return to flying duties once war had been declared and, after completing a refresher course at Cranwell, he reported for duty at RAF Duxford in February 1940. Seven days later he took to the skies in a Spitfire for the first time, a machine he later described as 'the aeroplane of one's dreams'.

Following promotion in 1940 to Flight Commander in No.222 Squadron, Duxford, he concentrated on honing the handling skills and formation flying of the young pilots under his command. Bader took part in the patrol in support of the evacuation from Dunkirk, and was swiftly promoted to command No. 242 Squadron, made up of battle-weary Canadian pilots bearing the scars of the debacle in northern France. Yet Bader's enthusiasm and skill moulded the unit into a disciplined fighting team and by August, they joined the battle against the daily German bombing raids. Bader and his commanding officer, Trafford Leigh-Mallory conceived the plan to deploy five squadrons in a wing

formation to attack the German bombers and accompany fighter planes. The 'Big Wing' strategy was put into place in two battles on the same day (15 September) –and proved a resounding success. Two days later, Hitler switched to a plan of night time raids and effectively abandoned any plans to launch an invasion that year. The Battle of Britain had been won.

Bader was promoted to Wing Commander in March 1941 – becoming one of the force's first 'Wing Leaders'. He laid raiding missions across northern Europe with a view to distracting and destroying German fighter units. By August 1941, Bader could claim that he had shot down twenty-three enemy aircraft, making him the fifth most deadly fighter pilot in the RAF. However, any hope of adding to this tally was dashed on 9 August when Bader collided with a German aeroplane over Bethune and bailed out – leaving one of his prosthetic legs in the cockpit. **(Recent research has brought challenges to this theory suggesting that Bader may in fact have been brought down as a victim of “friendly fire”)** He was captured by the Germans and after spending a brief spell in hospital, was taken to a prisoner of war camp at Sagan. Bader's reputation preceded him, and he initially won respect from his captives and they arranged for a replacement leg to be parachuted over. Yet Bader's persistent non co-operation with the Germans and numerous attempts to escape saw him sent to the prison camp at Colditz. There Bader remained until liberation by American troops in 1945.

Bader was awarded numerous honours for his wartime service, including the Distinguished Service Order and bar, the Distinguished Flying Cross and bar, and the Légion d'honneur. Bader's reputation was such that he was chosen to lead the first Battle of Britain fly past in September 1945 – a formation of three-hundred aircraft.

In peace-time, Bader returned to his former employer, Shell Transport and Training, which allowed him to make a number of round the world promotional flying trips, accompanied by his wife, Thelma. The publication in 1954 of Paul Brickhill's biography of Bader, which was made into the popular film *Reach for the Sky* (1956), brought him widespread fame as a war hero. From 1958 until his retirement in 1969 he was managing director of Shell Aircraft Ltd, but he increasingly, Bader devoted time to charitable activities on behalf of the disabled. Bader offered inspiration and practical advice to those living with disabilities and

there is little doubt that through his charitable work, he helped changed attitudes towards those who had suffered the loss of a limb; this pioneering activity is perpetuated by the Douglas Bader Foundation, which was set up by his friends and family, following his death. Bader was awarded the CBE in 1956 and knighted for his services to amputees in 1976. He flew for the last time in 1980, at the age of seventy and died in London in September 1982.

Douglas married Joan, Lady Bader, in 1974, inheriting three step children and a subsequent family life of in-laws and grandchildren, a life he embraced with great enthusiasm and participation.

THE DOUGLAS BADER FOUNDATION

Formed by family and friends, many of whom had flown side by side with Douglas during World War 2 and exists to advance and promote the physical, mental and spiritual welfare of persons who are without one or more limbs, or otherwise physically disabled.

‘A disabled person who fights back is not disabled...but inspired.’ It is this maxim that the charitable foundation established in Douglas’s name immediately following his death in 1982, seeks to replicate and develop.

THE FIRST INITIATIVE

The first initiative was realised in 1993 – the completion of the Douglas Bader Centre, a facility built at Queen Mary’s Hospital, Roehampton, in West London to support rehabilitation services for amputees. Followed by :

- The Douglas Bader Grant Scheme provides support for the pursuance of achievements by those with disabilities. This initiative has assisted countless disabled individuals and groups throughout the UK to achieve a variety of goals in diverse areas ranging from education, the arts, sport and recreation to small businesses
- National Help Bureau a joint initiative between the Douglas Bader Foundation and The Limbless Association
- Prosthetic and Orthotic User and Professionals Industry Awards Ceremony in association with the Limbless Association
- Opening of first overseas Bader Walking School within University Malaya Medical Centre, Kuala Lumpur
- Launch of the Limb Loss Legal Panel offering free legal advice to amputees in need
- Launch of the inclusive Bader Challenges designed to encourage disabled people to participate in life changing challenges

- Launch of first Limb Loss Information Centre for people with limb loss- a central resource information website for amputees, their families and friends, carers and healthcare professionals support and information services currently offered to best pool resources and serve amputees in the most efficient and purposeful way.
- Bader Amputee Games for new amputees

DAVID GARDNER

On July 7 David Gardner suffered horrific injuries and was left fighting for his life. He was standing three feet away from Mohammad Sidique Khan when the suicide bomber blew up the Circle line carriage he was travelling in. Father of two Mr Gardner, lost his left leg and his spleen in the blast and was so badly hurt he was the first person from the underground train to be operated on.

PHIL PACKER

Over the last year and a half the National Media and our British Public have supported and joined Phil in his quest to raise well over £1 million for Help for Heroes. A year after being paralysed and having been told that it was highly unlikely that he would walk again, Phil undertook a number of challenges including rowing the English Channel, walking the London Marathon and Climbing El Capitan (all within a six month period) and through his determination and challenges has inspired many. His realization that experiencing difficult and dark days when coping with disability can be hard for many, has led Phil to announce recently that he would be leaving the Armed Forces in March 2010, to channel his energy into supporting Young People with Disabilities. In addition to Phil's remarkable support to six charities, his new quest is to build and found the British Inspiration Trust (BRIT); a multi-million pound Centre of Excellence to provide a residential retreat to enthuse, inspire and provide British Best Practice for Disability. He is currently gaining support throughout the country from our Ambassadors of Sport, Culture, the Arts, Music and Business to volunteer a day a year as "BRIT Mentors", to stay at the Centre and quite simply, relax with Young People and inspire them. Phil's (www.philpacker.com) commitment to supporting Young People is inadvertently enthusing them as well; he is on a Quest that is undoubtedly a must for being part of.

ENDS

CONTACT: email: douglasbaderfdn@btinternet.com keith.delderfield@btinternet.com

davidbickers@hotmail.com

www.douglasbaderfoundation.com www.limblossinformationcentre.com