



Dennis Andreas

RC REPORT

RC club finds a clever way to preserve its flying field

With the advent of the FAA regulations and increasing disdain for RC aircraft, flying fields are coming under pressure. Many RC clubs use land under agreements with local governments, and encroaching development has led clubs to lose their flying fields.

My club found a unique approach to preserve our flying field.

With the persistent work of past and present members, we were able to secure Historic Status for our flying field in Wantagh, New York. The status is quite fitting considering that Long Island is regarded as the Cradle of Aviation. You may have heard of historic aerospace companies such as Grumman, Republic, Fairchild, Norden and Curtis that were started here. Some are still present on Long Island. Along with many of my club mates, I have worked for many of the aircraft and electronics manufacturers based here.

In the early 70s, I started flying RC at Mitchell Field, a World War II training and aircraft transport hub for the Army Air Corps. Roosevelt Field, where Charles Lindbergh took off on his historic New York to Paris flight in 1927, is a stone's throw away. Back then, there were many unpopulated areas of Long Island where full-size and model aviation could thrive.

Time and progress march on, and by 1973 the open areas were starting to be sold for development. Mitchell Field was divided up for Nassau Community College and the Nassau Coliseum, and numerous other businesses. Historic Roosevelt Field became a shopping mall. Several RC clubs used the runways at Mitchell Field and needed a new home.

Nassau County granted the use of the southernmost part of Cedar Creek Park in Wantagh. The flying site was named Cedar Creek Park Aerodrome, and the city provided us with T-shaped paved runways and a credential system for flyers.

Fast forward to approximately 2010, when two main clubs used and supervised the field, although all are welcome with the AMA and county permits. There was always a discussion of merging these two clubs, though it was not done at that time. There were also numerous attempts to either transform or share the area with various business proposals. We were successful in quelling the attempts with the help of the community.

During the same time, two people started investigating the history of the area after finding old pictures of small flying fields in the area. Those dogged detectives were Charlie Landau, who unfortunately has passed on, and Ken Gutwein, who made a huge discovery that changed the fate of the field. Ken uncovered the fact that the field had

been named Lufbery Airfield in honor of World War I French-American flying ace Major Raoul Lufbery, who was killed in action during the war.

The next logical step was to gather as much information as possible with the hope of obtaining Historical Status for the field. This move would place special significance on our little plot of an airfield and hopefully thwart any future attempted acquisitions of the field.

After 10 years of historical investigation and multiple presentations to Nassau County, Charlie Landau and Ken Gutwein's hard work paid off! Historic site status was granted, the airfield was renamed Lufbery Aerodrome, and we set a date to unveil the historical marker. On August 21, 2021, which was also National Model Aviation Day, county executives, club members and many model aircraft gathered at the field. We had the local Boy Scout troop lead the Pledge of Allegiance and the American Legion Color Guard proudly presented the Red White and Blue.

If a flying field is in danger in your city, support your local clubs' efforts to preserve their access to the field. It's a great way to build relationships in the community.



A plaque and citation were presented from the town for the field and our historian, Ken. Those present from left to right were Bruce Blakeman, Town Councilman; Ken Gutwein, Club Historian; Laura Curran, County Executive; Steve Rhodes, District 19 Legislature; and Ted Evangelatos; Lufbery Flyers President. Not shown are Eileen Krieb, Parks Commissioner and Brian Schneider, Deputy Executive for Parks and Public Works, who is directly responsible for our flying field.



Born to an American father and French mother, Raoul G. Lufbery served with both the French and American air services in World War I. He was America's first air ace with the Lafayette Escadrille and died May 19, 1918, in the skies over France. **HM**