

 ROYAL
AIR FORCE

museum News



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Winter / Spring 2010

Director General's Foreword:



Dr. Michael A Fopp MA FMA FRAeS
Director General, Royal Air Force Museum

History never stands still so neither should the Museums that seek to represent it.

Here at the Royal Air Force Museum, we are always striving to move forward with new acquisitions, expansions and exhibition methods to keep our regular visitors engaged and encourage new ones.

It is with a great sense of pride that I introduce this latest update of stories from around the Museum – which is I have to say, only a small glimpse into our efforts and achievements. To discover the complete story, you'll have to pay us a visit, or at least have a look at our website!

Battle of Britain Hall improvements



The Battle of Britain Hall at Royal Air Force Museum London

As part of an on-going program of continuous improvement, the Museum is proud to announce the completion of the first phase of the Battle of Britain Hall refurbishment.

The work done includes a new energy efficient lighting system donated by the Royal Air Force Charitable Trust (RAFCT), a glass

wall and complete re-cladding of the building funded by the Ministry of Defence.

This new form of energy saving lighting can change colour and light intensity whilst still being cheaper to run. Quite importantly, it is also better for the long-term conservation of the exhibits because it doesn't give out any UV light.

Chairman of RAFCT, Air Chief Marshal Sir John Cheshire, said: "We are delighted to have been able to fund this lighting upgrade. The Charitable Trust aims to support the work of RAF charities and the Museum is a great tool to promote the Service and its exciting history to a wide range of people, young and old."

The Fee

July marked the completion and public display of the Royal Aircraft Factory F.E.2b (A6526)

The FE2b represents over 20 years of painstaking restoration and construction work with involvement from a number of different parties including: Aircraft and Weapon Reproductions; Retrotec and the Museum's own experts at the Michael Beetham Conservation Centre.

The aircraft is finished as a night bomber of 102 Sqn and the unveiling ceremony was attended by Members of the 102 (Ceylon) Sqn Association including Hon. Sec: Tom Wingham, DFC (Amer).

The **Royal Aircraft Factory F.E.2** was a two-seat pusher biplane that was operated as a day and night bomber and as a fighter aircraft by the Royal Flying Corps during the First World War. The attention to detail is extremely precise; for example, the wiring for the wing lights, most of which can not be seen, is exactly right for 'A6526'.

It takes its place in the Bomber Hall by the Avro Lancaster – perhaps the most iconic night bomber of WWII.

Peter Dye (Director, Collections Division, RAF Museum): "We are extremely proud to have been able to rescue this hugely important aircraft from obscurity. Although many thousands served with the RAF, none have survived other than the few components that have provided the basis for this 20 year restoration project.

This is the first time in nearly 90 years that a 'Fee' has been on public display. Its size and craftsmanship is certain to prove impressive and will provide a fitting memorial to those many thousands of aircrew and support staff that flew and maintained the aircraft at home and overseas during the First World War."



Top: The 'Fee' on display in the Bomber Hall
Middle left: In restoration
Bottom: Members of 102 (Ceylon) Sqn Association at the launch

OLD COMRADES UNVEIL TRIBUTE TO OLD FRIENDS

In May, members of the '601 Squadron Old Comrades Association' unveiled a sculpture at the London site (formerly RAF Hendon) to recognise the long standing association between the two units.

In May, members of the '601 Squadron Old Comrades Association' unveiled a sculpture at the London site (formerly RAF Hendon) to recognise the long standing association between the two units.

Prior to the Museum opening in 1972, the site was an active RAF station and home to amongst others, 601 (County of London) Squadron for a total of fifteen years.

Aircraft flown by the squadron include Hawker Harts, Hurricanes and Spitfires. Nicknamed 'the Millionaire Squadron', its ranks include renowned pilots such as Roger Bushell (the driving force behind the Stalag Luft III 'Great Escape'), Max Aitken, Stanislaw Skalski (Polish veteran of the Battles of France and Britain)

and the legendary American, Billy Fiske whose Bentley was also on display during the day.

The sculpture was designed by Sam Bofey and is on display opposite Building 69. It represents the squadron's crest with a bronze cast sword and wings resplendent on a plinth of stainless steel.

The unveiling ceremony was attended by members of the squadron's 'Old Comrades Association' with Air Marshal Ian Macfadyen (Honorary Inspector General of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force) as lead speaker. Other notable attendees include Squadron Leader Iveson DFC of the Bomber Command Association and Jack Riddle, a squadron pilot during the Battle of Britain and the deputy Mayor of London.



Above, Sir Torquil Norman (601 Sqn Assoc) and Air Marshal Macfadyen

Right: A 601 Veteran peers into the Billy Fiske Bentley



Museum Honours Ethnic Minorities in New Exhibition

The diversity of the Royal Air Force along with its multi ethnic past and present is celebrated in a new permanent exhibition at both sites.

To celebrate the contribution that members of the Afro-Caribbean, Asian, East European and other ethnic communities have made to the growth and development of the Royal Air Force, as well as the defence of the U.K. during times of adversity, the Royal Air Force Museum now permanently exhibits "Diversity in the Royal Air Force" at both sites.

Chief guest at the official launch at Cosford was Squadron Leader Mahinder Singh Pujji, an Indian national who flew Hurricanes for the RAF during World War II. He was joined by current serving members of the RAF and local school children from Alexandra High School.

The exhibition tells the story of the RAF's diversity from 1918 to the present date. It highlights brave men such as Group Captain Larry Osbourne OBE the first Afro-Caribbean Officer to reach this rank having joined the Royal Air Force from Trinidad as a Navigator in 1943; and women like Indian Princess Noor Inayat Khan (WAAF) GC MBE, who was the first woman operator to infiltrate enemy occupied France during World War II and received the George Cross.

An active supporter of the Commission for Racial Equality the Royal Air Force has welcomed, since its earliest days, service men and women from all sections of society on the basis of their talent, drive and ambition. In "Diversity in the Royal Air Force" we celebrate them, their talents and honour their contributions, inviting members of their communities and the wider population to do the same.

Above: Veteran pilot Squadron Leader Mahinder Singh Pujji DFC



THE MICHAEL BEETHAM CONSERVATION CENTRE



Left to right: Michael Shepherd, Martin Purcell-Shaw and Darren Priday.

The Michael Beetham Conservation Centre at Cosford is delighted to announce the following appointments:

MBCC Deputy Manager - Mr Darren Priday

Darren has been promoted internally to fulfil this role in the face of increased efforts to address growing conservation tasks and the need for year-round engineering management cover.

MBCC Training Manager - Mr Michael Shepherd

WO Michael Shepherd retired from the Royal Air Force to join the Museum to assist with the further development of the MBCC Apprentice Scheme. He is tasked with heading up the mentoring programme targeted at young people and attracting aviation enthusiasts from across the globe to participate in planned MBCC Conservation Skills Workshops.

The following appointments are part of the MBCC Apprentice Scheme which is now in its 4th successful year:

Martin Purcell-Shaw and Nathan Pugh

Martin and Nathan are part of the 2009 apprentice intake and both hail from Telford. They hope to become a significant part of the area's engineering heritage through the MBCC Apprentice programme. The scheme has already produced an 'Apprentice of the Year' (Rebecca Pitts - who met the Queen as part of that award) and this year, it was the turn of Daniel Perks, who recently received the '2009 TCAT Student Achiever Award'.

The MBCC is committed to preserving Aviation Heritage through its conservation of aircraft and associated exhibits, whilst recognising the need to ensure that unique skills are retained, nurtured and developed amongst the younger generation in respect of fostering ongoing aircraft conservation efforts for the foreseeable future.

Receiving loud and clear

In September, the Bomber Hall in London initiated the usage of Audio Tours using a new company called 'Guide By Cell'. The system allows visitors to use their mobile phones to access an in depth tour of the hall.

The visitor simply dials an '0208' number, followed by a specific number clearly displayed and designated to each aircraft and then the '#' key. Number 1, for example, is an introduction to the Bomber Hall.

Each object can have more than one number, enabling the Museum potentially to create a junior guide for school groups, a standard guide, and an "Enthusiasts Guide" for the same object.

The cost to the user is their own minutes and the audio tour recordings are also available on the website to download for free.



Chief of Air Staff opens new exhibition

November saw the launch of the Sikorsky MH-53 Pave Low exhibition at the National Cold War Exhibition in Cosford.

The combat Search & Rescue Helicopter is the first aircraft of its type to go on display in the UK and was kindly donated by the United States Air Force. The supporting exhibition which greatly enhances the display was made possible by sponsorship from Sikorsky.

David Powell, Sikorsky Vice President, Sales, The Americas & Global Oil:

“The National Cold War Exhibition in the RAF Museum at Cosford will provide a marvellous historical perspective of this time period, and the inclusion of the venerable Sikorsky MH-53 PAVE LOW helicopter will add to the historical perspective. We are excited about the opportunity to provide sponsorship for this exhibition and to continue to rekindle the strong legacy of Sikorsky Aircraft in the United Kingdom”

The opening was conducted by Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Dalton RAF Chief of Air Staff. Sir Stephen also took a tour of the Cosford site including a visit to the Michael Beetham Conservation Centre (MBCC).



Left to Right – Sergei Sikorsky, son of helicopter inventor Igor Sikorsky and Ambassador for Sikorsky, Bruce McKinney, Regional Sales Executive – Europe, Sikorsky, Dave Powell, Vice President Sales, Sikorsky and Museum Director General Dr Michael Fopp



MBCC Manager Tim Wallis with Sir Stephen and Dr Fopp



Sir Stephen meets Museum Apprentice Kyle Anderton



Left to right: The Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Pattie (representing Sikorsky), Sir Stephen Dalton, Dr Michael Fopp and Museum Chairman Sir John Day



The Tweenies

In July, Cosford received an extra special visit from Fizz and Jake, two members of the popular BBC children's TV group, the Tweenies.

The two were a huge hit with visitors and staff and spent most of their time posing for pictures!

Cosford General Manager, Alex Medhurst greets the Tweenies

Take Off For Learning!

The "Let's Fly" classroom at Cosford has been transformed into a mini airport which enables children to participate in the entire pre-flight airport experience.

A conveyor belt, security gate, genuine aircraft seating and fuselage all add to the activity.

Children from St John's Primary School from Essington, Wolverhampton attended the launch.

Philip Clayton, Education Officer: "The Team at the Museum have created a wonderful innovative session that goes beyond just a 'flying experience' in that it helps children make sense of the world, generates curiosity and moreover inspires self confidence".

This exciting project was funded by the Aerospace Museum Society, volunteers at the Museum, who donated over £1,500 towards the project. It was officially opened by Group Captain James, Director of Training at DCAE Cosford.

During the academic year 2007/2008 over 1,200 pupils aged 3-7 visited the 'Let's Fly' classroom for workshops aimed at foundation stage and key stage 1.



Cosford votes for a 'Refuel!'

The Cosford site re-launched its restaurant this year in conjunction with caterers Aramark.

The new menus include a range of health foods including, a fresh salad bar and seasonal daily specials. The restaurant offers a range of affordable hot savouries including for the first time a traditional hot roast bap of the day, whilst more adventurous tastes will be catered for with a new range of tantalising and filling hot paninis.

As part of the redesign, members of the public were invited to suggest a new name for the restaurant. The winner was chosen by a Museum panel out of hundreds of entries.

James Nolan age 10 from the Wirral (pictured above), who suggested the winning name, officially opened the restaurant at a ribbon cutting ceremony. He received a £100 voucher from the Museum shop and a free meal for him and his family at the Cosford site for a whole year.

Stewart McCulloch of Aramark says: "We are delighted to be working with the Royal Air Force Museum on this exciting refurbishment of its restaurant and look forward to welcoming our existing and new customers to this new facility and its new menus."

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE MUSEUM SWORD OF HONOUR DELIVERED IN STYLE

The Museum is proud to announce the delivery of the Royal Air Force Museum American Foundation Sword of Honour.

The Royal Air Force Officer's Sword was commissioned by the Royal Air Force Museum American Foundation and kindly donated by one of its board members, Tim Manna of Kennet Aviation.

It is to be presented annually to the Royal Air Force Officer on exchange with United States Air Forces who has made the most significant contribution in that year to Anglo/American relations.

This year it was presented to Flight Lieutenant Atila Batu on October 28th at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., at the home of the British Ambassador. The ceremony included a banquet dinner which was attended by former USAF pilot and astronaut Buzz Aldrin.

The sword itself was transported to the US on board 'Grumpy', the B-25D Mitchell which made its historic return journey after 25 years in the UK. The journey followed the route taken by aircraft travelling to the UK during WWII, representing and honouring those flight crews who were unable to complete their missions.

The aircraft was piloted by Foundation Director, John T Sessions who started the commemorative journey from Duxford, England and ended at the Historic Flight Foundation's collection at Paine Field, in Everett, Washington. The flight took five days, with a flight plan that included Ireland, Iceland, Greenland and the Baffin and Hudson Bays.

The Royal Air Force Museum American Foundation supports the work of the RAF Museum and promotes ties of friendship between Britain and America. In the past, it has supported exhibits in the Museum's galleries such as the Boeing Chinook exhibition in London as well as promoting youth exchanges.

The Royal Air Force sends a number of officers to embed with the US Air Forces each year. They share best practice and promote interoperability between the Services which is vital when on the front line.

The Sword of Honour was created by British company Pooley Swords which makes the ceremonial swords for all three Services, and hand-finished at their base in Shoreham, Hants. The inscription on the sword comes from the famous American anthem The Star-Spangled Banner and reads "Oh, thus be it ever when free men shall stand".



Left: Buzz Aldrin presents the sword of honour to Flt Lt Batu

Main: Tim Manna of the Museum's American Foundation (right), hands over the sword to pilot and fellow Foundation Director John T Sessions



JUST LANDED

The Museum welcomes the following into its collection

T Douglas A-20G-25-D0 Havoc 43-9436

The largely intact airframe was recovered from a freshwater swamp in Papua New Guinea in 1994 and subsequently transferred to RAAF Amberley.

Following the signing of the contract last year between the Museum and Precision Aerospace Productions of Wangaratta, work has moved forward rapidly with the restoration of Douglas A-20G Havoc 43-9436 'Big Nig'. Completion is currently scheduled for the summer of 2010.

The aircraft will now be returned to as close to its original condition as possible and will eventually be displayed at the London site.



1949 Percival Prentice T.1 VS618 /G-AOLK

One of only 17 surviving examples in the world, it is one of the RAF's most well known training aircraft. The aircraft is currently at the Michael Beetham Conservation Centre, where it is undergoing renovation and refurbishment.

Anchors Away!

The Museum was grateful to receive a generous donation of £5,000 from Air Marshal Sir John Harris KCB CBE. The money is to be used towards the repair of one of the Museum's boats (RTTL HMAFV 2757), that stands in the car park of the London site.

The boats are taken care of by the RTTL Team, led by Bill Amos (pictured in his blue overalls, handing over the cheque to Director of Collections Division, Peter Dye).



Podcast

After the success of our Dambusters Podcast read by actor Richard Todd, the Museum is proud to announce that Sir Richard Branson has narrated a podcast for the Museum to be available in early 2010.

The subject of the podcast is the legendary RAF pilot Douglas Bader, who was a family friend of Sir Richard. Next year also ties in with the centenary of Douglas Bader's birth. Sir Richard Branson conducted the recording at his own private Caribbean island and also included some unscripted personal anecdotes.



Cosford 30th Anniversary

Cosford celebrated its 30th anniversary this year with an afternoon of events that included a Spitfire flypast.

As visitors and staff gathered outside the Museum, the events commenced at mid-day with a flypast of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Spitfire Mk 19, piloted by Squadron Leader Al Pinner.

An official plaque (made from a genuine engine bearer from a 1918 Sopwith Snipe), was unveiled in the Visitor Centre by the Museum's General Manager, Alex Medhurst, in the presence of current and former members of Museum staff and volunteers.

Visitors were also treated to a specially designed anniversary cake and a performance by the Brass Quintet from the Royal Air Force College Band.

A timeline of all the significant events of the Museum's history was also on display in the Visitor Centre.

Nina Mitchell, Events Coordinator says: "The event marked a significant milestone in the Museum's history. It was nice to see so many old friends return to the Museum for this special occasion, many of whom were here all those years ago".



Cosford staff, old and new, line up for the anniversary photo between the Bristol 188 (left) and the Sikorsky MH-53

Brew For the Few

July saw the first of what promises to be many joint events between the Museum and the Church of St Clement Danes.

Staff from Access and Learning Department dressed in authentic period uniforms along with No 291 ATC Squadron 'manned' tea and cake stands to welcome guests from the Royal Air Forces Association, MoD and passing tourists into the Church.

The event was held to raise money and awareness for both the Royal Air Force Association and St Clement Danes. Also present was one of the last "Few", Spitfire pilot Flt Lt William Walker.



Museum staff join in the celebrations at Brew for the Few

Cosford hosts BBC star James May's New Show

Over the May Bank Holiday Weekend, the Cosford site was pleased to host James May's new BBC 2 show; Toy Stories.

Able assisted by local school children, James May and his team of engineers built a life-size Airfix model of a Spitfire over the course of three days. Based down in the Museum's Hangar 1, work involved the positioning of the wings, the propeller and of course painting the correct colour scheme.

The series uses some of Britain's best loved toys to capture the imagination of children today and show them alternatives to modern electronic toys.



Top to bottom:
Cosford Marketing Manager, Karen Crick gets to work.
BBC star James May with a production team member.
The Spitfire roll out!

Women of the Air Force

The WAAF was established on 28th June 1939. By 1945 over 200,000 women had served in the WAAF employed in over 110 different trades, supporting operations around the world. They became an integral and vital part of the Royal Air Force's war effort.

After WWII it was decided that the contribution made by women should not be lost. In 1949 the Women's Royal Air Force was re-formed as a permanent force and from the 1960s women could qualify as aircrew for the first time.

Full integration was achieved in 1994, when the WRAF was absorbed completely into the RAF. Currently, female personnel are serving in the United Kingdom and overseas including operationally in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Air Commodore Barbara Cooper, the most senior serving female officer in both the Royal Air Force and the British Armed Forces officially launched the exhibition and guests included some WRAF post-war personnel including Sqdn Ldr Browning the secretary of the RAF Women Officers association; Flt Lt Julie Gibson (retired) who was the RAF's first operational female pilot flying Hercules aircraft and Sgt Nicholls, currently serving with 18 Squadron.

Women of the Air Force may also be viewed online at www.rafmuseum.org The online exhibition also includes an interactive area where veterans or current serving female personnel can share their experiences online.



Photo-fit

As a special thank you for assisting them on numerous editorial projects, Flypast magazine presented the Museum with some extra large prints of some of our exclusive cockpit pictures. The images, meticulously taken by Museum photographer Iain Duncan are for an upcoming book which will be published by the Museum.

APPRENTICE EXCHANGE

During their exchange visit to the US, the Museum Apprentices were taken for a tour of the Boeing facility near Philadelphia PA, by none other than Phil Dunford, the Boeing Rotorcraft General Manager.

Phil himself started out as an apprentice in the RAF and in tribute to his early years, was presented with a special framed vintage RAF Apprentice poster.

With Mr. Dunford (Center) are from left, Squadron Leader Keith Bowles (RAF, engineering officer at the Boeing plant); retired RAF warrant officer and now RAF Museum employee Mick Shepherd; Mr. Dunford and the two Museum apprentices Daniel Perks and Kyle Anderton.



Q: Who do you think you are?

A: Kate Humble, TV presenter!

In July, popular BBC1 Television Series "Who Do You Think You Are?" showcased Kate Humble's family history which included her grandfather, the Hawker test pilot Bill Humble.

Staff at the Museum assisted Kate with her search and she was able to find documents and film footage relevant to her quest.

This service is also available to anyone who wishes to trace their RAF Ancestry. Simply put a call into our Department of Research and Archives (DoRIS), or email research@rafmuseum.org

A Museum of two halves:

The Cosford site recently paid host to the members of the Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Team, who were there to raise awareness for Armed Forces Day. First team players unveiled specially produced shirts which included a poppy symbol.



Wolves midfielder Dave Edwards with Sgt Gary Kite (RAF Careers) and Alison Bates (The Royal British Legion).

ROYAL AIR FORCE museum

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Material for consideration for inclusion can be sent via the details above.