

4<sup>th</sup> September 2012

## Local Apprentice takes a trip down under to learn WW1 aviation skills

The Royal Air Force Museum this week unveiled three new additions to their collection: a WW1 Sopwith Snipe, Royal Aircraft Factory RE.8 and an Albatros D.Va. All three aircraft are extremely rare examples of their type; the Snipe is the only example within the UK, whilst the Albatros and the RE.8 are one of only two of each type in the UK. Hosted by the RAF Museum's Director General, Peter Dye the aircraft were unveiled to an invited audience at the Shuttleworth Collection in Bedfordshire, where the aircraft will be housed for the remainder of the summer.

Produced in New Zealand by The Vintage Aviator Ltd. the Albatros and RE.8 are flying examples and enthusiasts will be able to see these legendary aircraft in flight at Air Show's later this year, including Shuttleworth and Duxford, before going on permanent display at the RAF Museum London.

RAF Museum Director General Peter Dye said:

*"The three aircraft fill critical gaps in the Museum's collection. Both the Royal Aircraft Factory R.E.8 and the Sopwith Snipe have featured on the Museum's Wants List since the 1970s; the former because it was critical to the RAF's operational contribution on the Western Front and the latter because it provided the RAF's standard fighter of the early inter-war period. The Albatros D.Va was the most important German single-seat fighter of WW1 (after the Fokker D.VII) and its acquisition will allow the presentation of a more balanced story of the First Air War."*

Nathan Pugh from Telford, Shropshire, an award winning Apprentice at the RAF Museum Cosford has recently spent two months in New Zealand on a work placement with The Vintage Aviator Ltd, learning many of the skills needed to build these rare aircraft. The Vintage Aviator Ltd. is an aircraft restoration and manufacturing company whose primary aim is to build WW1 aircraft, engines and propellers to the same exact standards they were originally made over 90 years ago. Upon arrival back in the UK, Nathan was heavily involved in the reconstruction of the Museum's Sopwith Snipe.

Whilst in New Zealand Nathan was based in Wellington where he spent the majority of his time working on the Royal Aircraft Factory RE.8, building brackets to hold the interrupter gears, a device that prevents the aircrafts guns from shooting off their own propellers. This project involved working with copper and aluminum metals using a process called annealing whereby the metal is partially shaped then reheated until it becomes more supple, before being molded into its final position. Nathan also spent time working on the Albatros building small access panels that fit on the underside of the wings and coating the wooden fuselage with shellac which acts like a varnish sealing the wood and accentuating the natural grain.

The purpose of Nathan's visit was for him to experience working with a commercial company to gain an appreciation of the speed in which they work. Building new and reconstruction aircraft is very different to the conservation work that Nathan is used to doing on a daily basis in the RAF Museum's Conservation Centre. Throughout the duration of the placement, Nathan worked with Project Leaders for each of the Museum's

new WW1 acquisitions, learning the specialist skills required to build these aircraft.

RAF Museum Cosford Apprentice Nathan Pugh says:

*“The trip was an amazing opportunity to work with flying heritage aircraft and to learn different manufacturing skills. It was also brilliant to be able to travel to New Zealand and see some of the country and the most special experience for me, was being able to fly in some of The Vintage Aviators aircraft including the Fe2b BE2 and the Tiger Moth.”*

The relationship between the RAF Museum and The Vintage Aviator Ltd. began when the Museum's Director General made a visit to New Zealand a couple of years ago to meet with The Vintage Aviator Manager and Chief Test Pilot Gene DeMarco to discuss their assistance in adding to the Museum's collection. Now, following the success of Nathan's recent work placement, the relationship between the two organisations has gone from strength to strength and we are hopeful that they will offer a similar work placement to another Museum Apprentice next year.

The Museum is open daily from 10am and admission is free of charge. For more information on the Museum, visit [www.rafmuseum.org](http://www.rafmuseum.org) or call 01902 376200.

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#### **Notes to Editors:**

- Aircraft histories available on request
- Royal Air Force Museum, Cosford, Shifnal Shropshire, TF11 8UP
- FREE admission
- Open daily 10am – 6pm
- For further information and all media enquiries please contact Michelle Morgans on 01902 376 212 or [michelle.morgans@rafmuseum.org](mailto:michelle.morgans@rafmuseum.org)
- RAF Museum Cosford images & logo available at: <http://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/research/media-vault.aspx>