

28th November 2012

Historic aircraft 'nose art' on display at Cosford

On display until 31st March 2013
FREE admission

On display at the Royal Air Force Museum Cosford from Monday 3rd December is a new temporary exhibition showcasing original examples of artwork that wartime aircrew created to personalise their aircraft. The exhibition brings together eleven original pieces of aircraft art, taken from aircraft including a Mosquito and a Wellington, plus copies of photographs showing how the artwork appeared on the aircraft.

Aircraft artwork was often located at the nose area and referred to as "nose art", but it could also be found on an aircraft's tail or fuselage. Some of the pieces exhibited date back to early fabric covered aircraft such as the Sopwith Camel and the Hawker Demon as well as more modern aluminium aircraft like the Handley Page Halifax. Nose art featured on aircraft all over the world and ranged from cartoon characters to stylised portraits of the aircrew's sweethearts. The RAF Museum is delighted to be able to showcase these historic illustrations to our visitors.

The most historic artwork is the love heart motif taken from the Sopwith Camel of Lieutenant Colonel William Barker, a Canadian World War One Ace who was awarded the Victoria Cross in 1918. Barker was awarded the medal for single-handedly fighting over 15 German aircraft in one combat, a fight which left him critically wounded. Although not from his Victoria Cross combat aircraft, this motif featured on Barker's previous aircraft and was given as a gift to his engine mechanic, who later donated it to the RAF Museum.



Barker's Heart on Sopwith Camel

Other artwork featured includes: 'Donald Duck' taken from a Mosquito, a little skunk taken from a Halifax and a Red Indian Brave once painted on the nose of a Wellington.



Donald Duck on Mosquito



Skunk on Halifax



Red Indian Brave on Wellington

The exhibition also includes a display of the winning entries from Aviation Heritage Lincolnshire's 2011 nose art competition. This competition invited children and young adults aged between 6-20 to design their own nose art or recreate a classic World War Two image. There are 21 imaginative and vibrant examples on display as part of the exhibition.

The final element of the display is a collection of excerpts from the documentary film "Nose Art and Pin Ups" by Gail Downey. This features the artwork of Don Allen, a ground crew member of the US Army Air Force, whose paintings decorated the noses of fighter aircraft based at Debden in Essex during World War Two. A full version of the film is also available on DVD from the Museum Shop or via Mail Order priced at £12.99.

RAF Museum Cosford Assistant Curator Clare Carr says:

"Many of the aircraft on display in the Museum feature some form of artwork. This exhibition gives us the chance to bring from storage some of the historic examples held in the Museum collection. It's really interesting to see the children's interpretations of nose art brought up to date and the clips from the film "Nose Art and Pin Ups" really helps to place the pieces in context."

For anyone wishing to take a look at these unique pieces of aviation art, the exhibition is on display from Monday 3rd December in the Temporary Exhibition Gallery located in the Museum's Hangar 1, until Sunday 31st March 2013. Admission is free of charge.

For more information on the exhibition and the wide range of exhibits on display at the Museum please visit www.rafmuseum.org or call 01902 376200.

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Notes to Editors:

- Royal Air Force Museum Cosford, Shifnal, Shropshire, TF11 8UP
- Open daily from 10am
- Admission to the Royal Air Force Museum is free of charge.
- RAF Museum Cosford images & logo available at:
<http://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/research/media-vault.aspx>
- For further information and all media enquiries please contact Michelle Morgans on 01902 376 212 or email michelle.morgans@rafmuseum.org
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