

5th November 2012

Museum Opens Conservation Centre to Public

12th to 17th November 2012

10.15am to 1.00pm

FREE Admission

The Royal Air Force Museum Cosford's award winning Conservation Centre will be opening its doors to visitors for exclusive behind-the-scenes access to aircraft conservation work from Monday 12th to Saturday 17th November. Visitors will be able to view the progress being made on the Museum's bombers, the Handley Page Hampden and Vickers Wellington, plus other aircraft and artefacts in various stages of restoration.

Introduced into RAF service in 1938, the Handley Page Hampden TB.1 P1344 was originally designed as a medium bomber. During the early months of the Second World War the Hampden's defensive armament proved inadequate and it suffered heavily in the daylight raids of that time. It continued as a night bomber until 1942 when it was replaced by the Halifax and Lancaster. Some Hampden's were converted to torpedo bombers whilst the Museum's Hampden suffered a rather different fate. The aircraft was en-route to Murmansk in Russia for convoy defence duties as part of 144 Squadron when it was shot down on 4th September 1942 during its transit flight. Three crew members died, although two survived to become prisoners of war (P.O.W's). The wreckage lay on the Kola Peninsula, Northern Russia until 1989 when it was rediscovered. The RAF Museum acquired the airframe in 1991. The Hampden is one of the Museum's longest running conservation projects.

Over the last few months the Hampden's rear fuselage section has progressed considerably under the direction of Apprentice Ella Middleton. The corrosion work on the starboard side is nearing completion allowing the restored original fixtures and fittings to be reinstalled. Also, on the rear fuselage section, the structural repair to the aft frame has been progressed and should be completed soon; this is a significant part of the project with it being the interface between the rear fuselage and the tailboom section. The tailboom will be the next major part of the aircraft to undergo restoration; the coming Open week being a good chance to see its condition before the work starts.

Conservation Centre Deputy Manager Darren Priday says:

"A lot of effort has been put into the Hampden over the summer months; hopefully, regular supporters of our Open Week will see a change in the way the aircraft is now looking".



The Hampden



The Wellington

Also on display will be a specially commissioned painting, produced by artist Ian Conway. The painting depicts the final moments of Hampden X2983, shot down over Garonne, France. The painting was commissioned by Ian Tunstall, whose father Pilot Officer DG Tunstall, was killed in the crash along with navigator Sgt Barclay; Sgt's F Bailey and B Dixon both survived the crash and ended up as P.O.W's. During the Museum's Open Week, artist Ian Conway and Mr Tunstall will both be visiting the Conservation Centre and will be speaking with visitors about the painting. Proceeds from the painting will be going to the RAF Benevolent Fund.

Visitors will also have the rare opportunity to speak with the skilled Technicians and Apprentices and view current projects including the on-going refurbishments of the Hawker Siddeley Kestrel, the Range Safety Launch as well as the two aircraft featured above.

Admission to the Conservation Centre Open Week is FREE and from 10.15am to 1.00pm each day. Cosford's main Museum will open daily from 10am. For further information, please contact the Royal Air Force Museum Cosford on 01902 376200 or visit www.rafmuseum.org.

...ends

Notes to Editors

- **About the Conservation Centre** - Opened in May 2002 by Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Michael Beetham, the MBCC is regarded as one of the world's foremost centres of excellence in aircraft conservation and restoration. Its skilled technicians undertake careful, extensive work to prepare aircraft and other projects for display at both of the Museum's sites in Cosford and London with the MBCC team responsible for the conservation and routine maintenance of some 300 aircraft.
- **About the Vickers Wellington B.X-MF628** - The Museum's Wellington MF628 first flew on May 9, 1944. In 1948 it was converted from bomber to navigation trainer and designated a Wellington T.X - removal of the nose gun turret being the most obvious of many modifications. During 1954 the aircraft took part in the filming of "the Dambusters" both as a camera-ship and with a brief appearance in front of the camera. Delivered to the RAF Museum in 1971, the nose-turret was re-installed, and the Wellington then displayed at RAF Museum London until July 2010 when it was brought to Cosford for long-term refurbishment. Since its arrival at the Museum there has been significant progress made on the Wellington and any visitors to previous Open Weeks will be able to see the development of this huge conservation project.
- **Original Wellington fabric for sale** - As part of this major refurbishment the Wellington will be re-covered and repainted. The fabric that was previously covering the Wellington has been carefully removed and a limited amount has been made available exclusively to RAF Museum Shop customers. Each piece of fabric comes with an individually numbered certificate of authenticity. For those wishing to own a piece of this iconic aircraft's history, sections of this fabric will be on sale during the Open Week. It is also available in the Museum Shop and online through the Museum's website.
- 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
- All images used should be credited: '©Trustees of the Royal Air Force Museum'