

26 February 2016

Dambusters evolution is focus of university lecture

Date: 10 March 2016

Time: 6.30pm

Cost: FREE

The role of No. 617 Squadron, Royal Air Force, better known as the 'Dam Busters' will be the focus of a lecture taking place at the University of Wolverhampton next month. The lecture entitled 'Planned Development or Haphazard Evolution? No. 617 Squadron, 1943-45' will be presented by Dr Robert Owen, the Official Historian of the No. 617 Squadron Association. The lecture is a continuation of the joint partnership between the University's Department of War Studies and the Royal Air Force Museum and takes place on Thursday 10 March 2016.

In this lecture, Dr Robert Owen will discuss the backstory to the units operations during the Second World War and the decision to keep them in existence as a precision-bombing unit. For the remainder of the Second World War, they carried out precision attacks using new and unconventional weapons, culminating with Barnes Wallis's deep penetration bombs, 'Tallboy' and 'Grand Slam'.

Many of the Squadron's eventual operations emerged as the result of an inability to execute initial planning due to unrealistic expectations of weapon performance, delays in the development of a new weapons and political intervention. The Squadron played a major role in the assessment of weapons, equipment and new techniques and were often given alternative targets, taking advantage of their capabilities and to address specific issues. During its comparatively short period of active service No. 617 won 2 Victoria Crosses and more than 150 other decorations.

The numerous accounts written detailing the Squadron's history fail to take into account many of the factors that determined its role and concentrate on the operational record and the weapons used. The result is a distorted and incomplete perception of the Squadron's development and a misconception of its full contribution to the bomber offensive.

This lecture will identify the various policy and decision making bodies and examine their role in selecting weapons and targets for the Squadron. It will explore the issues which determined the role played by the Squadron, including changes in Air Staff policy for Bomber Command, choice of targets, the development and production of weapons and tactical requirements. Comparison is made between the planners' original intentions for the Squadron and the final operational record.

The Trenchard Lectures in Air Power Studies form part of the RAF Museum's Research Programme for 2016. '**Planned Development or Haphazard Evolution? No.617 Squadron, 1943-45**', is the first of three joint lectures taking place at the University of Wolverhampton this year.

Dr Ross Mahoney, RAF Museum Aviation Historian said:

“The RAF Museum is once again delighted to be working in conjunction with our colleague at the University of Wolverhampton to bring the Trenchard Lectures in Air Power Studies to a wide audience. The year’s first lecture is about one of the RAF’s most famous units, the Dambusters. The lecture will highlight No. 617’s development beyond the famous Dams raids of 1943 and open up a new understanding of the Squadron’s contribution to the Second World War.”

Dr Peter Preston-Hough of the university’s Department of War Studies said:

“We’re delighted to be part of this prestigious series of lectures, which promises to provide an interesting insight into this area of history.”

This FREE lecture will be held in the main lecture theatre (MC001) at the University of Wolverhampton at 6.30pm on Thursday 10 March. As spaces are limited, organisers advise visitors to book their tickets in advance via the museum’s website to avoid disappointment.

For further information about the museums research programme or to book your FREE ticket to the lecture, please visit the museum website www.rafmuseum.org/cosford.

Ends...

Notes to Editors:

For more details about the RAF Museum’s Research Programme, please email RAF Museum Aviation Historian, Dr Ross Mahoney at ross.mahoney@rafmuseum.org

About Dr Robert Owen:

Robert Owen is the Official Historian of the No. 617 Squadron Association and Chairman of the Barnes Wallis Foundation. He received his doctorate in May 2015, through the Arms and Armour Research Institute, University of Huddersfield, for his thesis entitled: 'Planned Development or Haphazard Evolution? No.617 Squadron 1943-45'. This work was supervised by Professor Richard Morris and the Reverend Paul Wilcock, with funding assistance by the RAF Museum and RAF Historical Society.

Robert Owen’s research into the Squadron extends over 40 years and he is co-author of Breaching the German Dams for the RAF Museum and contributing author to *Dam Busters – Failed to Return*. He has assisted the authors of numerous authoritative books on the subject together with the producers of TV documentaries. He has contributed to publications for the RAF Museum, Keith Park Memorial Fund, Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and the RAF’s official publications commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain and Sir Frank Whittle’s first jet powered flight. He is also author of a number of articles for magazines including *Aeroplane*.

About the University of Wolverhampton

- For more information please contact the Media Relations Office on 01902 322003/322736.
- Based at campuses in Wolverhampton, Walsall and Telford and education centres in Stafford, Burton and Birmingham City Centre, the University has over 21,000 students and 2,400 staff. In addition, the University of Wolverhampton Science Park is home to tenant businesses and supports the development of innovative companies.
- The University welcomes students from around the world and has regional offices in China, Malaysia, India, Oman, Nigeria and Cyprus. It has a branch campus in Mauritius and courses are also delivered with global partners in China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, India, Sri Lanka, Russia, France and Cyprus.
- It is investing £250 million over the next five years as part of the Our Vision, Your Opportunity programme. The ambitious plans to invest in education, training and economic growth include the £25 million Rosalind Franklin Science Building, the new £18 million Lord Swraj Paul business school building and the £65 million Springfield Campus, creating an international hub for construction excellence.
- The institution’s excellent teaching and learning provision, which spans sciences, creative and performing arts, education, business and management, health and wellbeing, engineering and technology, law and social sciences, ensures 95% of graduates find employment.

- Of the 13 subject areas entered in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) in 2014, all had elements graded at the highest level as being world class. The University also entered more staff and more subject areas for assessment than previously.
- In 2015 the University of Wolverhampton was awarded the highest possible accolade in the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) higher education review. The report highlighted areas of good practice such as initiatives to raise aspirations and achievement for students and the University's commitment to enhancing their employment prospects.

About the RAF Museum Cosford

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- 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 376212 or email michelle.morgans@rafmuseum.org
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