

23 September 2016

## Hampden bomber gets new lease of life

**A rare example of a Handley Page Hampden being restored at the Royal Air Force Museum Cosford is making huge steps towards completion of the fuselage section. As one of the Museum's longest running conservation projects, the aircraft is starting to take shape now thanks to one of the museum's skilled Aircraft Technicians who is building a large section of the aircraft from scratch!**

The museum's Hampden, serial number P1344 is one of only three examples of the type remaining and was recovered from a crash site in northern Russia in 1991 and acquired by the RAF Museum the following year. Restoration on the badly damaged airframe has been a slow labour of love for the team at Cosford, but since it was taken under the wings of full time Aircraft Technician Dave Carr 18 months ago, the project has been propelled and the unmistakable Hampden silhouette can now easily be recognised.

With the project now stepped up a gear, visitors who viewed it during last year's open week just ten months ago will remember seeing the tailplane assembly, a predominantly new build manufactured on site at Cosford. The Hampden's salvaged fin and rudder parts were fully restored and with little else of the original tailplane remaining following the aircraft's crash landing, Dave used pre-production drawings and built formers to create the components he needed including a new elevator. Following the build, the rudders received a new covering of Irish linen and the tailplane assembly was given a new coat of paint in its initial Bomber Command camouflage colour scheme; the assembly was well received by aviation fans who visited during the open week last November.

Eagle eyed visitors will have also noticed that work had just started on the forward fuselage and the beginning of the frame work was starting to take shape. Since then Dave has focussed his efforts on the forward fuselage and cockpit section and in just twelve months the section is now almost 75% complete and is estimated to be fully manufactured by Spring 2017. Work on this section began with creating formers and building the entire framework from scratch. Some components including instrument panels, seat mounting and windscreen frames have also been produced and fitted. Castings and a few components from P1344 have been restored and fitted to the newly built forward fuselage and work is now underway skinning the section.

The entire new section has been assembled using original Handley Page pre-production drawings from the late 1930s and where possible, measurements taken from the partial wreckage remaining from the original aircraft. As the build procedure for the Hampden is not documented on any of the original drawings, the build has required a lot of forward thinking to ensure components were fitted in the correct order, as not to cause complications further down the line.

### **RAF Museum Aircraft Technician, Dave Carr said:**

*"I have worked at the RAF Museum for over 18 years and this has by far been the biggest project I have worked on from a scratch build point of view; usually we are conserving and repairing aircraft. Because I don't have a build procedure, I always have to work about five steps forward to ensure the correct components are fitted before the aircraft is skinned i.e. anchor nuts, brackets etc. It is being constructed as accurately as possible, although there will be some subtle differences as I've had to manufacture with hand*

*tools and limited machinery, rather than the original factory machinery which doesn't exist anymore. It's very rewarding and motivating to see the aircraft coming together."*

The lower forward frame work is still to be complete as well as frame work for the nose section followed by the instillation of electrical and hydraulic components. An original Hampden seat salvaged from a crashed Hampden in Patricia Bay, Vancouver will also be incorporate into the new cockpit. Once complete, the next phase will see the new section programmed into the museums paint shop where it will undergo a full re spray to match the tailplane.

All effort on the aircraft is going into manufacturing the fuselage section which is hoped will be completed sometime in 2018.

Visitors to the museum will be able to view the continuing progress on the Hampden during the Conservation Centre Open Week from 14-19 November. By November it is hoped that the lower longerons will have been manufactured and fitted to the forward fuselage so visitors will see an almost fully complete frame. Work is also continuing on the rear fuselage repairing damage caused during its crash landing. The Conservation Centre will open between 10.15am and 1.00pm each day and admission is £5.00 per person (children under 16 are free and must be accompanied by an adult).

The Museum's other hangars will be open from 10am until 5pm and entry to the museums is free of charge. For further information, please visit the museum's website [www.rafmuseum.org/cosford](http://www.rafmuseum.org/cosford) or call 01902 376200.

Ends...

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- 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>
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