

26th February 2014

Local Rotary Club acknowledges Museum Apprentice

An Apprentice at the Royal Air force Museum Cosford has been acknowledged by a local Rotary Club for their outstanding conservation work. The award was presented by the Rotary Club of Wolverhampton at their annual awards evening on Thursday 20th February, where Museum Apprentice Bethany Colburn was named 'Rotary Club of Wolverhampton - Apprentice of the Year' and was presented with the George Sidebotham Memorial Award.

This is the third annual awards held by the club, set up in honour of former member George Sidebotham, who was a member of the Rotary Club of Wolverhampton for more than 30 years. Mr Sidebotham served as an RAF Lancaster pilot with 100 Squadron during the Second World War and was a prisoner of war during the time of the Great Escape. As a tribute to Mr Sidebotham, the Rotary Club set up the annual awards and has offered continued support for the Museum's conservation efforts and team of Apprentices.

The event was attended by five of the RAF Museum's Apprentices, accompanied by the Museum's Training & Development Manager and Conservation Centre Manager. During the evening, Apprentices gave a presentation to Rotary Club members and their guests, about the ground-breaking work they are currently undertaking on the Dornier Do17, the largest conservation project ever undertaken by the RAF Museum. Bethany was presented with a trophy and a cheque, before being presented with an additional prize from Bomber Command Historian Rob Davis.

Bethany was nominated by RAF Museum Training & Development Manager, Mick Shepherd for the improvements she has shown over the last twelve months. Bethany has put herself forward and played an integral part in the conservation of the smaller Dornier components and has work closely with Museum Volunteers on the project. During the 2013 Conservation Centre Open Week, members of the Rotary Club observed the relationship Bethany had built with the Volunteers and were impressed by her interaction with the public and the work she was showcasing.

Bethany Colburn, RAF Museum Apprentice said:

"I was delighted to have been chosen by the Rotary Club of Wolverhampton as this year's Apprentice of the Year. It's great to have the support of the Rotary Club and to gain recognition for the conservation work we do."

The Rotary Club of Wolverhampton is the oldest club in the city, founded in 1921 and has a current membership of 63. Their purpose is to bring together business and professional leaders in order to provide humanitarian services, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations, and help build goodwill and peace in the world. They are regular attendees to the Museum's Conservation Centre Open Week in November and seek to raise awareness of former member, George Sidebotham's story through books and DVD's, with the proceeds going towards the apprentice awards.

This acknowledgment comes just one week before National Apprenticeship Week which is a nation wide celebration of Apprenticeships and the positive impact they have on individuals, businesses and the wider economy. This annual Apprenticeship Week aims to increase the awareness, understanding and demand for Apprenticeships, as well as celebrate the wealth of talent, skills, achievements and successes.

The RAF Museum's Apprenticeship scheme began in 2005, due to a shortage of people with the hand skills required to look after its historic aircraft collection. The Museum began running apprenticeships for heritage aircraft engineers who soon proved to be a source of enthusiastic, reliable, trustworthy, capable and safe pairs of extra hands. Nurtured by the Museum's Aircraft Technicians, master craftsmen in their trade, the Apprentices rapidly developed their hand-skills and their work is now enthusiastically incorporated into Museum exhibits for future generations to admire. The Apprentices are a vital asset in the Museum's team and have enabled the Museum to be less reliant on outside contractors and to keep more work in house under its direct control.

The Museum works in partnership with City of Wolverhampton College for the academic and specialist vocational education of the Apprentices as well as the assessment and verification of their skills for NVQ awards.

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Notes to Editors:

- Follow us on Facebook – The Royal Air Force Museum, Cosford
- Follow us on Twitter – @RAFMUSEUM
- 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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