

11 March 2015

Local Rotary Club acknowledges Museum Apprentice

As events and businesses across the country celebrate National Apprenticeship Week (9-13 March 2015), an Apprentice at the Royal Air Force Museum Cosford has been acknowledged by a local Rotary Club for their work conserving some of the nation's most historic aircraft.

The award was presented by the Rotary Club of Wolverhampton at the fourth annual awards evening held at Perton Park Golf Club on Thursday 5th March. Museum Apprentice **Ella Middleton** aged 21 from Walsall, was named '**Rotary Club of Wolverhampton - Apprentice of the Year**' and was presented with the George Sidebotham Memorial Award.

The awards evening was attended by the RAF Museum's Apprentices, accompanied by their Training Manager as well as the Museum's Conservation Centre Manager. During the evening, Apprentices gave a presentation to Rotary Club members and their guests, about their recent visit to the National Air & Space Museum, a division of the Smithsonian Institute, based in and around Washington DC, USA. During their trip the apprentices worked on a number of unique aviation based machines such as the Breitling Orbiter 3 which completed the first non-stop flight around the world with a free balloon in 1999 and a massive propeller fan shroud from NASA's hypersonic wind tunnels. Ella was then presented with her 'Apprentice of the Year' trophy and an additional prize and cheque.

Ella was nominated by RAF Museum Training & Development Manager, Mick Shepherd for her hard work and dedication over the last twelve months. Her main training has involved working in sheet metal but Ella has proved to be a diverse and capable individual who has worked on a variety of projects. Ella was part of the team based at Ramsgate, Kent during the salvage operation of the Dornier Do 17 and played an integral part in the first phase of its conservation. She has worked with colleagues across the Museum assisting with Museum events, educational workshops for schools and has even coordinated a work experience programme with students interested in engineering.

RAF Museum Apprentice Ella Middleton said:

"During my apprenticeship with the Museum I have been given some fantastic opportunities to develop my skills, working on projects including; the Handley Page Hampden, Dornier Do 17, Vickers Wellington and the First World War in the Air exhibition. A highlight of my apprenticeship was an exchange to America in 2014 where I worked for three weeks at the Smithsonian Institute at the Udvar Hazy Conservation Centre in Virginia."

National Apprenticeship Week is a nationwide 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 craftsman 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.

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Notes to Editors:

About the Rotary Club of Wolverhampton:

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.

This is the fourth 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.

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.

About the Apprenticeship NVQ qualification:

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.

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