

9th November 2011

VIP Guests To View Wellington's Progress

14th to 19th November 2011

10.15am to 1.00pm

FREE Admission

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 14th to Saturday 19th November. A number of VIP guests are expected to attend the Conservation Centre Open Week taking place at the Royal Air Force Museum Cosford next week, to view the progress being made on the conservation of the Museum's Wellington Bomber.

Special guests include Mary Stopes-Roe, daughter of Barnes Wallis, designer of the Wellington Bomber's famous geodetic structure. Mary will be visiting the Michael Beetham Conservation Centre on Thursday 17th November to view the aircraft her father helped design and will be hosted by the Centre's Manager.

Other VIP guests include Wellington Pilot, Ronald Cooper aged 90, who will be visiting on Wednesday 16th November. Mr Cooper flew in Wellingtons during the early 1940's was posted to the Middle East, Italy, Germany and then to Palestine in July 1944 where he worked as an instructor teaching pupils how to fly Wellingtons. On Tuesday 15th November Mary Bonigal, who fitted the Irish Linen fabric to Wellington's during the 1940's, will meet with the Museum's team of skilled Technicians and Apprentices helping to restore the Wellington to her former glory to discuss the process.

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. It was sold to Vickers in 1955, and then presented to the Royal Aeronautical Society in mid-1956. Delivered to the RAF Museum in 1971, the nose-turret was re-installed, and the Wellington then displayed in the Bomber Command Hall at RAF Museum London until July 2010. It was then dismantled and transported to the Museum's Michael Beetham Conservation Centre at Cosford for long-term refurbishment.

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.

Other aircraft and artefacts on display during Open Week include the Handley Page Hampden TB1 and Range Safety Launch. This may also be the last opportunity to view the conservation efforts on the Mk1 Sopwith Dolphin which is nearing completion.

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. The next Open Week is planned for November 2012. For further information, please contact the Royal Air Force Museum Cosford on 01902 376200 or visit www.rafmuseum.org.

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Notes to Editors

- The extensive conservation work on the Wellington structure will take place at the Museum's Conservation Centre over the next four to five years.
- 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.
- Royal Air Force Museum, Cosford, Shifnal Shropshire, TF11 8UP
- Photos available on request
- Open daily between 10am
- FREE admission
- For further information and all media enquiries please contact Michelle Worthington on 01902 376 212 or michelle.worthington@rafmuseum.org
- RAF Museum Cosford images & logo available at:
<http://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/cosford/media-enquiries/downloads.cfm>