

16 February 2016

NEW aircraft added to Open Cockpits Evening line-up

Date: 13-14 May 2016

Time: 6.00pm to 9.00pm

Cost: £12.50 per person

Aviation fans are being given the chance to climb on board a selection of historic aircraft and sit in the pilot's seat during an 'Open Cockpits Evening' event taking place at the Royal Air Force Museum Cosford. The event which runs on Friday 13 and Saturday 14 May will offer 300 visitors each evening the rare opportunity to step inside some of the world's most iconic aircraft, including two research jets which have never been opened to visitors before.

Visitors can experience what it feels like to sit inside a military aircraft that's seen action around the world and marvel at the advanced technologies on unique airframes. So whether it's a fast jet to spark interest in the younger generation, or a nostalgic wartime aircraft that brings back memories with older visitors, with the mix of aircraft available there is something to please everyone.

Confirmed aircraft include the never before opened **English Electric P1A**. This experimental aircraft was the basis for the RAF's front line fighter, the English Electric (later BAC) Lightning and was the first and only truly supersonic aircraft developed by Britain on her own. This radical and far sighted design was considered so novel there were concerns as to whether it could succeed. The museum's example is the first of two prototypes built to test the 60 degree sweepback wing and the low position tail plane, a concept that was later confirmed. The P1A exceeded the speed of sound in level flight, achieving in excess of Mach 2.0 and went on to become the RAF's front line fighter, staying in service for nearly three decades.

Also new to the event list is the **Fairey Delta 2 (FD2)**, one of only two FD2S ever built. Devised in response to Britain trailing behind in supersonic aircraft design during the late 1940s, the Ministry of Supply issued a specification for a supersonic research aircraft. Fairey set about meeting this with a single-seat, delta-winged aircraft powered by a Rolls-Royce Avon engine with an afterburner and called it the FD2. To improve the pilot's forward view during landing, taxiing and take-off, the aircraft had a unique feature whereby the cockpit and nose section could be hinged downwards by ten degrees. In March 1956 the FD2 broke the World Air Speed Record reaching speeds of 1132mph, breaking the record by 300mph set by an American F100 Super Sabre the year before.

This May will be the first time Visitors at Cosford have been able to get on board both the P1A and the FD2 and organisers are confident they will be popular with aviation fans wanting a closer inspection. Visitors to 'Open Cockpits Evening' can also view inside the cockpit of the **British Aircraft Corporation TSR2** - one of the most exciting and controversial British combat aircraft designs of the 1960s. Plus, the giant **Short Brothers Belfast**, a long-range, strategic RAF transport aircraft weighing over 56 tonnes when empty, will be opened up for visitors along with the **Handley Page Hastings** and the **Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-15bis** to name but a few.

RAF Museum Cosford Event Manager, Abi Betteridge said:

"Events like this make a visit to the museum extra special as it's such a unique opportunity to have access inside military aircraft. To make sure visitors get the most out of the event, we have a fantastic team of

Volunteers on hand to answer any questions they may have. We have also added two new aircraft to the list, along with some that haven't been open for a number of years, so there is something new and exciting for our repeat visitors."

'Open Cockpits Evening' is part of 'The Museums at Night' cultural event, an annual international event where hundreds of museums, galleries, libraries, archives and heritage sites across Europe open their doors to the public for special after hours events. Visitors will have exclusive after-hours access to the museum which displays a collection of over 75 aircraft, military vehicles, engines and aviation artefacts within three wartime hangars and the National Cold War Exhibition.

Tickets are now available to purchase through the museum's website www.rafmuseum.org/cosford and cost £12.50 per person which includes parking. Minimum height restrictions of 1.07 metres will apply. The Museum will close at 5.00pm both days, however the Visitor Centre and Refuel Restaurant will remain open for visitors attending the evening event which commences at 6.00pm and finishes at 9.00pm.

Tickets for a second Open Cockpits Evening taking place in September which will feature a different collection of aircraft to the May event are also on sale via the Museum website.

Ends...

Notes to Editors:

Aircraft available for close viewing on 13-14 May (subject to change) include:

- Hawker Siddeley Dominie T.Mk.1
- Scottish Aviation Jetstream T Mk1
- Junkers Ju52/3M (CASA 352L)
- Vickers Varsity T Mk I
- de Havilland Chipmunk
- English Electric P1A
- British Aircraft Corporation TSR2 (view only)
- Bristol Type 188
- Fairey FD2
- Short Brothers Belfast
- Handley Page Hastings
- Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-15bis
- Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG 21PF (view only)

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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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