



Montrose Air Station
Heritage Centre
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www.rafmontrose.org.uk
Registered Scottish Charity No. SC023193

Airspeed



Newsletter of the Montrose Air Station Heritage Centre



Welcome to Airspeed; a quarterly publication presenting news, stories and updates from Montrose Air Station Heritage Centre. Members are invited to contribute stories and comments for future editions.

Chairman Ron Morris measures our success....

Welcome

Squadron Scramble III
2018
Family Open Weekend
25th & 26th of August



Free entry to all, sit in the Spitfire, watch the aircraft fly in to the historic Montrose air field, Great Britain's first Operational air station

Trustees, members, volunteers and visitors I'm always pleased to report on success at the Air Station and the activities of the past three to four months have given me a number of opportunities to report some very good news.

Visitor Numbers

I've just completed a review of our visitor numbers for the first four months of the year and for the period April to July our visitor numbers are up 36% on the same period last year. It would be easy to say this is down to the great weather but I have no doubt this increase in numbers is largely down to the growth in our collection of large scale exhibits such as the Miles Hawk and the Anson, the interest generated by the restoration work on the Sopwith Camel and new exhibitions such as The American Weddings of 1918.

The main ingredient making all our exhibitions come alive are our volunteers and I can never say enough to thank all volunteers for the great work they put in to support and

make this museum as popular and important as it has become.

Visitor Survey

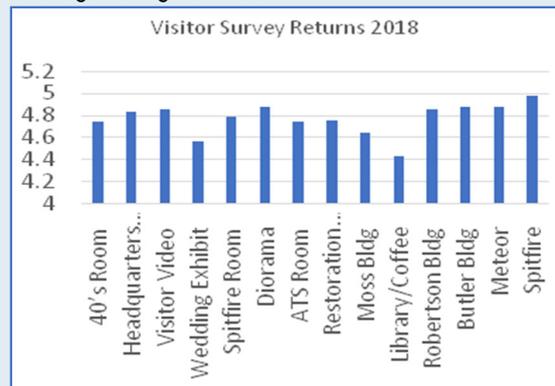
In an effort to ensure we are delivering a high quality experience to our visitors, during the month of August we have been conducting visitor surveys to get direct feed back on what our visitors think of the museum which assists us in developing our exhibits in a way that interests, educates and appeals to those who visit the museum.

In the chart below you can see that the response to all our major exhibitions is excellent.

On a scale of 1 – 5, the average rating for the all

exhibitions has been 4.77, demonstrating a very high level of visitor satisfaction. The survey also allowed us to develop a picture of where our visitors come from 36% are from Angus and Dundee, 36% from the rest of Scotland, 13% from the rest of the UK and 15% from overseas. This profile shows that we are making a good contribution to tourism and the local economy. This confirms the response on Trip Advisor which rates the Air Station as the No 1 visitor attraction in Angus, ahead of larger, more famous and longer established attractions.

Ron Morris: Chairman



Left: Measuring our visitor satisfaction.

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Events Calendar

1940's Dance British Legion Hall.
6th Sept 2018.
WW100 Event, commemorating the centenary of the armistice. Nov 2018

Right: Some thoughtfully written poppies placed in tribute to the fallen.



The Poppy Wall in the Robertson Building is full again. This is a measure of the success it has been with visitors. They are invited, for a small donation, to pin a poppy to the wall with a label commemorating a family member killed in the World Wars. Perhaps it is not surprising. Few families in Britain did not lose a family

The Poppy Wall

member. Other museums have had similar idea but our Poppy Wall is special and one of the things that make it so are the poppies themselves, all hand knitted by Mrs Betty Anderson in Anstruther, Fife and donated to the museum. She can knit a poppy in 20 minutes and watch TV at the same time. The idea of a Poppy Wall came from the fertile mind of Carol

Sanders and the design of the heading boards by Ian Burt. The sound effects were installed by Kevan Dickin and the lighting by Colin. The Wall is about to spread and will be an important feature of the Robertson Building when the museum holds its final First World War commemorative event in November.

Developing the Museum

Accreditation

Most volunteers know we are an accredited museum but I wonder if everybody knows what this means. It means we have to operate to the same standards and use the same systems as professional museums. That is a big challenge and explains why it is very unusual for a museum run entirely by volunteers to have accredited status. Why does it matter? It is partly a question of status and recognition but it has important practical advantages. When it comes to getting grants, which we are very good at, only accredited museums are eligible. Right now we need to be preparing for re-accreditation next year which means examining the way we do things to ensure we are complying with the rules.

Re-organising the archive office and the storage of the collection.

Active volunteers will know that a new archive store has been built adjacent to the archive office in the Robertson building. This is not just to add capacity but to ensure that all items in the collection are stored and labelled in the approved manner and recorded using standard museum procedures.

Training for Volunteers

Our volunteers are wonderful and the museum is fortunate in having an amazing range of skills and knowledge. There are areas where we do need training and over the next year training courses will be organised. The first of these, on the role of museum trustees, was held on 17th August. It was delivered by

Fiona Sinclair. Thanks Fiona. You have given us a lot to think about.

Changes to Displays

We are a living museum which means that things are changing all the time as new knowledge and material comes in and we find new ideas to display and explain them.

For instance, the American Weddings exhibition has been moved to the former Home Front room. A new Air Raid Shelter has been quickly constructed by Mike Craib in an unused corner so visiting children can still understand blackouts and gas masks which they read about at school.

The Russian exhibition in the Richard Moss building has been slimmed down to make room for an exhibition on "The Bombing War, 1939 to 1945".

Important sets of medals have been put together to form an impressive display in the Diorama room. All this results in a certain amount of chaos but this is preferable to a museum which never has anything new to offer.

Tea in the Library

The lack of a café in the museum has been a constant cause of complaint by visitors for some time and having a coffee machine at Reception has not worked. Marie Paton's suggestion that we put it in the library where visitors can sit down and have a drink in comfort has been an instant success. It is hardly up to her preferred standard of tea and cakes with china cups but the new kitchen will enable us to provide that at special events like

the Fly-In without breaking regulations on serving food.

Battle of Britain Lace Panel

Montrose Air Station Heritage Centre is the only museum in Scotland to have a Battle of Britain Lace Panel. Not many people know that, including most members. That is because, at 16 feet high by 5.5 feet wide, we do not have a space to show it. The only solution is to create a suitable space and this could be done by extending the Butler building, making use of the ground behind it, to create a new Exhibition Hall.

The panel is one of 36 made at the end of the war by skilled lace-makers in Nottingham. They were given to war leaders, RAF Units and Commonwealth countries. Thirty are still accounted for mostly on show in major museum or cathedrals.

Displaying a fragile textile masterpiece like this has its challenges. Advice has already been taken from the Scottish Textile Workshop and the National Museum of Scotland. Building a box frame to protect the panel is feasible and the building would have to admit no natural light. A grant application is being prepared. The aim is to make the panel the centre-piece of an exhibition to coincide with the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain in 2020. Imagine the visual impact of this magnificent work of art, lit by spotlight, as you enter the exhibition hall through the door at the far end of the existing building.

An Arty Museum

The Heritage Centre is far from a museum with a narrow perspective. Lately we have been involved in projects involving the arts and the media.

Scottish Opera used our outside exhibits as the backdrop for a project with children from Lochside School, filmed singing songs of the war years.

BBC Radio Scotland made a programme here interviewing Dan Paton for a series on World War One at home.

Recently, we helped Edinburgh University Squadron Association with a project to commemorate their most famous member, Captain Winkle Brown, by erecting a statue of him at Edinburgh Airport.

Mr Annand, the sculptor commissioned to carry out the work, approached us for advice and help on what Winkle Brown would have been wearing. Dan Paton warned him to be sure to get it right because any error would be cast in bronze. We were able to supply exactly the

flying gear Winkle was wearing in a photograph beside a Miles Hawk at RAF Turnhouse in 1938.



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Volunteer Profile

Here we will showcase some of our active members...

June & Bill Melvin

Like many of our most active volunteers, June and Bill Melvin are busily doing work of great value to the Heritage Centre on their own initiative and with minimum supervision. Some time ago, June took it upon herself to keep accurate records of visitor numbers which are entered in a spreadsheet. This information is vital in many ways. Visitor numbers are a measure of the success of the museum and are sent to the Tourism organisation at Glasgow Caledonian University which compiles and publishes them. They are also essential in producing a marketing strategy for the museum.

Her real interest is in Family History research and she is expert in using the many sources now available on the internet for this kind of research. The museum regularly gets enquiries from the families of men and women who served in the RAF, asking how they can find out about them. This often leads to fascinating new information and material about the history of RFC/RAF Montrose and the men and women who served here.

Bill has devised a filing system which makes information on people who served here instantly accessible. If a visitor has an enquiry about a relative, Bill's filing cabinets are the first place to look. Nobody instructed him to do this but the end result is a wonderful asset to the museum which would be the envy of many professional museums.

Bill comes across as a large but gentle person but his career shows another facet. This is a man who drove Centurion tanks in Germany and Ferret armoured cars in the Yemen, who boxed (at light heavy-weight) for the army and was a shot-put champion. And he wore the red cap of the Military Police. Not the sort of man to get on the wrong side of. Despite this June Greig married him in 1963. They have four children.