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Airspeed



Newsletter of the Montrose Air Station Heritage Centre

www.rafmontrose.org.uk
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Welcome to Airspeed; a quarterly members' publication presenting news, stories and updates from Montrose Air Station Heritage Centre. Members are invited to contribute stories and comments for future editions. Please send to:

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PLEASE REPORT TO GROUP CAPTAIN COLEMAN'S OFFICE!

WINTER OPENING HOURS

Saturday 10 - 4
Sunday 12 - 4

A reminder to all our members that we are now operating on our winter opening hours. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped throughout the summer months. The success of the museum is fuelled by our volunteers' hard work and dedication.

**Wishing all members a
Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year!**

**NEXT ISSUE
OUT 2023!**

CHRISTMAS DRINKS

There will be a Christmas gathering for all members at the British Legion in Montrose next month.

More details to follow shortly via email.

**Don't forget the Air Station
shop has plenty of Xmas
gift ideas!**



Our volunteers have been hard at work transforming the old Station Commander's office in the HQ Building and the end result is almost ready to be revealed!

Upon entering the room, visitors will be stepping back in time...into the office of Group Captain Francis Henry Coleman, who was Commander of RAF Montrose during the Second World War. He is an important figure in the Air Station's history as he was in charge during some key moments, including: the bombing of the station in October 1940 which saw the tragic loss of 5 personnel; the transition from No.8 Flying Training School to No.2 Flying Instructors School and also the end of hostilities in 1945.



**Gp Capt.
Francis
Henry
Coleman**

Gp Capt. Coleman had a distinguished military career before taking up his post at Montrose. He joined the Royal Flying Corps in 1916, in his early twenties, and

saw service in France with 32 Squadron. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order in 1927 and he eventually attained the position of Air Commodore prior to his retirement from the RAF in 1945. After his retirement, he continued to live in Hillside just outside the town for many years, before moving to England later in life. Coleman died in 1975.

Although no photographs exist of the office as it appeared in 1940, our volunteers have carried out extensive research in order to recreate the room as accurately as possible. Great attention has been paid to detail and objects have been added around the office to reflect the character of Gp Capt. Coleman himself.

There is an original Air Ministry oak desk and chairs, period furniture and artefacts as well as blast tape and blackout curtains covering the windows. On the desk alongside his telephone, pipe, tobacco tin and cap, is his wedding photograph and the rod and reel in the corner reflect the fact Coleman was a keen fisherman.



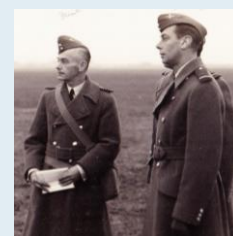
New Commander's Office Room

A range of military and technical aviation books of the era fill the bookshelf and an RAF great coat hangs on the vintage coat stand.

Not forgetting the dog basket for the black Labrador, visible in a large group photograph of WW2 station personnel.

Last but not least a photograph of King George VI adorns the wall, with a nearby photo showing Coleman meeting the monarch himself - thought to have been taken on a visit to RAF Montrose.

It is hoped to open the room to visitors in the next couple of weeks, so please report to Gp Capt. Coleman's Office! And let us know what you think!



**Gp Capt.
Coleman
meeting
King
George
VI.**

THE MONTROSE WAR HORSE STORY CONTINUES TO GATHER PACE...

Since the opening of our 'Animals at War' exhibition last year, more information has come to light in connection with the amazing story of Vic, the Montrose War Horse...

Letters written during the First World War by Vic's owner, Captain Alexander Wallace, have been loaned to the museum and arrived with us in the past few weeks. The letters document Vic's incredible War record, and detail the places Capt. Wallace and his trusty steed fought. The letters note that the pair saw action in some historic battles such as Passchendaele, Arras and The Somme.



Vic's incredible war record detailed in a series of letters.

Incredibly, Vic was the only horse out of 131 sent from the Royal Field Artillery's Angus battery to survive the war. When she returned home after the hostilities to more comfortable surroundings back at Mains of Rossie Farm, Montrose where she had once lived, Capt. Wallace presented farmer William McGregor with the letters. The prized letters have been in the McGregor family ever since, and their arrival at the museum means Vic's story will live on for years to come as our visitors can now marvel over them. The McGregor family can be seen pictured below (with volunteer Sian) handing over the letters to the museum.



In early October, the museum was also honoured to welcome John and Meg Wallace from Massachusetts, USA. John is the grandson of Captain Alexander Wallace who accompanied Vic throughout the war. John very kindly gifted his grandfather's army tunic and medals last year and came to see the display for himself after watching them being unveiled via video link last year. The couple also visited the farm where Vic lived both before and after the war. Mr Wallace advised that the story of Vic has been passed down through the generations in his family, and that it is clear that Vic held a very special place in his grandfather's heart.



John and Meg's visit featured in the local paper The Courier.

Volunteer Sian Brewis has been at the forefront of all these new discoveries and did a fantastic job of sharing the story on STV news on 4th October. Sian unearthed the untold story of Vic and Capt. Wallace, alongside her late husband Michael, during lockdown. Thank you Sian for bringing this incredible story to the museum, it is certainly one that deserves to be told for many generations to come.



Left: David McGregor, Sian Brewis, Jean McGregor and Shona McComb with the letters. Above: Sian Brewis on STV news.

VOLUNTEERS AT WORK

Work on our long-term Anson project is continuing and the engineering team have been doing a sterling job. Most recently work has been undertaken on the cockpit. Pictured right, alongside the fuselage, from L to R are: Ian Richardson, Mike Craib & Pete Grant.



NEWS FLASH!

Quick Updates...

MASHC MEMBERSHIP

A total of 32 new members have joined up since January - making our total now 191! Welcome!

AIRCRAFT ARTWORK

The museum is now displaying two Hunter paintings from the 43(F) Squadron Association. Pictured is Chairman Stuart Archibald receiving the artwork from Group Captain Derek Johnston, Chairman 43(F) Squadron Association.



MILES HAWK UPDATE

The Miles Hawk now has its wings reattached and is awaiting wing joint covering.



DAVID BROWN

TRACTOR RESTORATION

Hazel and her skilful team are currently hard at work undertaking a careful renovation our much loved 1941 David Brown Taskmaster RAF Airfield Tractor and have now stripped it down ready for the next stage of restoration.



SQUADRON 'BOSS BOARDS' UNVEILED

Traditionally each RAF squadron has a 'Boss Board', which lists the names of the Squadron Commanders and their dates of service. Montrose Air Station Heritage Centre is now the proud home of the old 43 (Fighter) Squadron 'Boss Boards', which until recently were stored in Edinburgh. Their arrival in Montrose has been made possible due to the assistance of Air Officer Scotland Air Vice Marshal Ross Patterson. The 'Boss Boards' will reside alongside the beautifully painted 43(F) Squadron Crest on the wall of our original 1913 Burke's Shed hangar. On Saturday 24th September 2022 former members of '43': Wg Cdr Andy Moir RAF, Wg Cdr Sandy Davies, and Sqn Ldr Jack Hammill, were present, accompanied by their partners, as the 'Boss Boards' were proudly unveiled.

