



Montrose Air Station
Heritage Centre
@MontroseAirStation

www.rafmontrose.org.uk

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. In this edition, we focus on our latest exhibition theme: 'Romance at Montrose Air Station'...

Airspeed



Newsletter of the Montrose Air Station Heritage Centre



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2018 Events Calendar

18-20 May: Festival of Museums Weekend – 'Romance at Montrose Air Station'

7th June: Exhibition at the Scottish Parliament

24-26 August: Open Weekend & Fly in

September : Freedom of the Burgh No. 2 Squadron

2019 Charity Calendar

Member Neil Werninck is preparing to start photography for a 2019 charity calendar for the Heritage Centre. It will have a vintage theme with models dressed mainly for the 1940s and feature them at different locations around the museum.



'Romance at Montrose Air Station'



Festival of Museums Weekend 2018

18th – 20th May

Festival of Museums

The Festival of Museums invites museums all over Scotland to participate in a national event to make museums attractive and open to a wider public. It is sponsored by Museums Galleries Scotland, the body which oversees the museums and galleries sector and by Visit Scotland which promotes Scotland as a tourist destination. Montrose Air Station has been involved with the Festival of Museums since it started.

Romance at Montrose Air Station

Our approach has always been innovative and is even more so this year. Our theme is "Romance at Montrose Air Station Heritage Centre" reflecting the fact that, soon after its foundation in 1913, local women married men stationed at RFC/RAF Montrose. This is a major way in which the air station impacted on the local community.

Welcome

A special welcome to the families who are the descendants of these couples. The family of Samuel Swain RFC who married Mary Ann Boyek on 31st December 1913, the Parrott's whose great-grandfather Sergeant Parrott married Eva McKenzie on 16th November 1914 and the Bullocks descended from the famous engineer of No2 Squadron who married Elizabeth Alexander on 13th December 1914.

The American Weddings 1918

Montrose, always in the lead, had GI brides before anywhere else in Britain and our opening event is an exhibition which draws on research into a happy episode in the First World War. America entered the war in 1917 and sent US Army Squadrons to train on British Aircraft like the Sopwith Camel. They were here only a few months but

when they left, there was a spate of weddings of local girls to American servicemen. Research into this long forgotten episode in the history of the war reveals a wonderful story of how couples, brought together by fate, overcame barriers of distance and culture to make (mostly) successful marriages.

The exhibition will be opened by Susan Wilson, Principal Officer at the US Consulate in Edinburgh. Susan, a historian, will surely appreciate this great story.



Victoria Copplestone Bush WRAF married William Beaver No138 Squadron USAS.

Left: Test photoshoot with Roslyn Walker, a student of Costume Design, from Edinburgh.

RAF 100: The Centenary of the formation of the Royal Air Force

The centenary of the formation of the Royal Air Force, the first independent air force in history, fell on 1st April. At that time 100 years ago, Montrose was one of the most important training centres for pilots and ground-crew in Britain. We don't know how this watershed in aviation history was celebrated at Montrose at the time. Probably it was business as usual. The American 138th Squadron had arrived only days before.

Montrose Air Station Heritage Centre is contributing to the celebration of the centenary. Would you believe we are lending an aircraft to the RAF? Our Red Lichtie Spitfire is going to an exhibition at the Glasgow Science Centre showing the historical development of the RAF over the century. We have been hosting an RAF100 project involving Scottish Opera

working with the children of Lochside school and the BBC are coming to record a programme for Radio Scotland.

Our special contribution will be the presentation of the Freedom of Angus to No2 (AC) Squadron. Angus Council unanimously approved our request and the ceremony is likely to take place in Montrose in September. No2 Squadron, which proudly proclaims that it is "The Oldest fixed wing Squadron in the World" came to Montrose in 1913. They left in August 1914

to lead the RFC to war. It has taken them a century to get back to Scotland and the squadron is now flying Typhoons at RAF Lossiemouth.

The Heritage Centre is building links with today's RAF whose units regard it as an important part of their history and heritage. As well as the link with No2 Squadron we have recently had a very successful visit by No 612 Squadron: a unit of medics based at Leuchars now preserving the heritage of the old City of Aberdeen squadron.



Left: No 612 Squadron in front of the Red Lichtie Spitfire.

Developing the Museum

Our Unique Approach to Aviation History

Montrose Air Station Heritage Centre is a very unusual place. It is one of the very few accredited museums in Britain run entirely by volunteers. That means we must meet the same standards and use the same procedures as big museums run by professionals. Unlike other aviation museums, which are essentially collectors of aircraft, we set out to tell the story of the men and women who served here through two world wars.

Building the Sopwith Camel

Of course aircraft are essential to their story. If they are unobtainable, we make them. Hence the replica of the B.E.2a is the first British aircraft to land in France in the First World War, flown by Lt Harvey-Kelly who left Montrose with No2 Squadron on August 3rd 1914. Our amazing volunteers are now building a replica Sopwith Camel, the most famous British fighter of the First World War. It will be finished as the aircraft flown by Captain John Todd MC DFC, a Scottish Camel "ACE" from Falkirk who trained new fighter pilots at Montrose

in 1918. Construction of the Camel is well advanced. Fabric is going on the wings and fuselage. It should be on display in the Robertson building beside the B.E.2 in the next few months.

The Avro Anson

We have recently acquired an Avro Anson. Will restoration of an actual aircraft be easier than building from scratch? Not really. Estimated time for completion is 2021.

The Anson is very relevant to our collections policy. Ansons of No269 Coastal Command were flying from Montrose when the Second World War broke out in 1939 and they were used for training pilots throughout the war.

Below : Member Jules works on the Sopwith Camel.



Burke's Sheds: A lost opportunity

Burke's sheds is the name given to the three grey buildings adjacent to the Heritage Centre compound, named after Major Charles Burke, first Commanding Officer of No2 Squadron, who had them built in 1913 to house the B.E.2s of No2 squadron. The end building, which is A grade listed, has been vacant for over six months. What a place for an aviation museum we thought. Here was a heritage building of international significance, the aviation equivalent of Arbroath Abbey, which would put Montrose and Angus on the map of aviation tourism. Dr Dan Paton writes: 'What have Angus Council decided to do with the building? They have let it out to a company selling tyres.'

Right: Inspection of the newly arrived Avro Anson.



Volunteer Profile

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



Airspeed Editor

Jodi Thomson

As a relatively new volunteer I am incredibly excited to have been given the chance to edit the newly regenerated Airspeed newsletter. Weekend working restricts me to volunteering every other Saturday so many of you reading this may not have met me, so where better to introduce myself than the first issue of 2018!

Over the past year I have been working 'behind the scenes' learning from curator Dr Dan Paton who has been sharing his wisdom about all things museums. I have learned so much in that time and met so many hardworking volunteers who have really welcomed me into this diverse and dedicated team.

From a very young age history has always been my passion, and I graduated from the University of Dundee with a History degree in 2013. Since then my goal has been to start a career in museums.

I am happiest when researching: trawling through books, photographs, documents or old newspapers determined to uncover a hidden gem of information! The First World War is where my interest lies and was the subject of various original research projects during my degree.

Over the coming year I am looking forward to learning more about the museum's accessioning process, meeting more members and visitors and of course producing more issues of Airspeed!