



Friday 5 April 2013

Over Here

IWM Duxford commemorates the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Americans to this fighter station during the Second World War

In April 1943, the 78th Fighter Group of the US Eighth Air Force moved into RAF Duxford and helped to change the course of the Second World War.

To commemorate this significant event in RAF Duxford's history, we are hosting a number of events and activities throughout 2013.

Somewhere in England: Portraits of the Americans in Britain 1942 to 1945

Mezzanine gallery, *AirSpace*

From Saturday 13 April to Tuesday 31 December

On Saturday 13 April, the anniversary of the first 78th Fighter Group combat mission from RAF Duxford, we open our new temporary photographic exhibition, *Somewhere in England*.

These striking photographs have been selected from the Roger Freeman collection of over 15,000 images of the United States Army Air Forces during the Second World War, which has recently been acquired by IWM.

Some of the images have not been seen in public before. They show the range and diversity of the roles undertaken by the men of the United States Army Air Forces and the women of the Women's Army Corps and the Red Cross – it wasn't just pilots and ground crew that kept the aircraft flying.

We tell the individual stories of these men and women, their wartime experiences in Great Britain and how their own personal war ended.

The photographs also capture rare off-duty moments and show how the American airmen became part of the community in which they were based.

Somewhere in England: Portraits of the Americans in Britain 1942 to 1945 is included in general admission to IWM Duxford. Visitors aged 15 and under enjoy free admission to IWM Duxford.

NEW *Americans in Britain* Tour

Our new *Americans in Britain* Tour looks at the US aircraft flown from RAF Duxford and other USAAF stations in East Anglia during the Second World War.

You'll learn about the development and production of the B-17 Flying Fortress and the B-24 Liberator, the P-47 Thunderbolt and the P-51 Mustang. Find out more about the USAAF bombing strategy and how the German forces defended their territory.

You'll hear jaw-dropping true tales of courageous actions by air crew members in incredibly dangerous situations.

We'll also explore the social and cultural changes that the Americans brought to East Anglia. Find out how the local people reacted to this 'friendly invasion' and how the American airmen found life at RAF Duxford. Hear about their bravery in combat and their off-duty exploits.

The *Americans in Britain* Tour runs for approximately 90 minutes. Groups will not exceed 25 people and there will be plenty of opportunity for questions, debate and personal interaction. The tour is suitable for all ages but is primarily aimed at adults.

The *Americans in Britain* Tour takes place on Wednesday 24 April, Wednesday 29 May, Saturday 15 June, Wednesday 17 July and Saturday 17 August. The *Americans in Britain* tour starts at 11am in the foyer to AirSpace.

Ticket prices (including admission to all IWM Duxford exhibitions):

Adult £20.70

Child £5.10

Senior £17.20

Student £17.20

Unemployed £12.10

Disabled £13.70

Carer £3.60

Friend of Duxford/ Duxford Aviation Society/ Friend of IWM £3.60

Please book your tickets in advance for *Americans in Britain*. Tickets can be purchased online at iwm.org.uk.

Spring Air Show

Remembering the Mighty Eighth

Sunday 26 May

The Spring Air Show takes place on the 70th anniversary of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth visiting RAF Duxford to welcome the 78th Fighter Group of the United States Army Air Forces to Great Britain.

We'll be celebrating this royal occasion in spectacular style as we bring together contemporary and historic aircraft for a fabulous day of flying.

The highlight of the Spring Air Show will be the first-ever display by the *Eagle Squadron*. This historic four-ship display comprises a Mark I Spitfire, Hawker Hurricane, P-47 Razorback Thunderbolt and the P-51 Mustang *Princess Elizabeth*. *Princess Elizabeth* is being shipped over from the USA specifically for the Spring Air Show.

The Eagle Squadron will fly in four-ship formation, as pairs and also in an evocative display alongside B-17 Flying Fortress *Sally B*.

The four aircraft will be piloted by Dan Friedkin, Ed Shipley, Steve Hinton and Paul Bonhomme. Dan, Ed and Steve are best known as The Horsemen Flight Team and have performed spectacular P-51 Mustang displays at the Flying Legends Air Show in the past. The Horsemen perform their stunning aerobatic routine in a host of vintage platforms (P-51 Mustang, F-86 Sabre, P-38 Lightning etc) at shows and events across the globe. Paul Bonhomme is a Red Bull Air Race pilot and has displayed historic aircraft at over 500 air shows to date.

The Eagle Squadron represents the history of American pilots in the Second World War. Spitfires and

Hurricanes were flown by American volunteers in the Royal Air Force prior to the United States officially entering the Second World War. Soon these American recruits were formed into their own squadrons within the RAF, known as Eagle Squadrons.

From its arrival at RAF Duxford in April 1943, the 78th Fighter Group flew P-47 Thunderbolts on bomber escort duty switching to P-51 Mustangs in December 1944.

The Eagle Squadron forms the centrepiece of the Spring Air Show where historic US warbirds will take to the skies as we remember the time when the stars and stripes flew at RAF Duxford.

Purchase your tickets for the Spring Air Show by Monday 13 May at our advance booking rate and enjoy 10% off our 'on the day' ticket prices. Also, one free child ticket is available with every adult or senior ticket purchased in advance.

– Ends –

For further press information please contact:

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Notes to Editors

70 years ago - the 78th Fighter Group at RAF Duxford

RAF Duxford (USAAF station 357) potted history, taken from the 78th Fighter Group's own *Duxford Diary 1942-45*, profusely-illustrated book:

- By April 1943, the 78th Fighter Group began moving to RAF Duxford.
- Its first mission was on 13 April 1943 as Lieutenant Colonel Peterson led the 83rd Squadron of the 78th Fighter Group into the air from RAF Duxford.
- On 14 May 1943, the 78th Fighter Group chalked up its first victories and suffered its first losses. Providing bomber escort, it encountered more than 20 Fw 190s and Messerschmitt 109s and dogfights broke out all over the skies. Two Fw 190s were shot down, there were two 'probables' and four Fw 190s were damaged. Three pilots of the 83rd were lost, but none killed. Captain McTaggart evaded capture by working his way southwards across the Pyrenees into Spain. Captain Adamina, who rode his Thunderbolt down to the water, is believed to be the first – and perhaps only – pilot to ditch a P-47 successfully.
- Within a few weeks, RAF Duxford was well on the way to becoming a showcase of the Eighth Air Force. King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, Air Secretary Sir Archibald Sinclair, Viscount Trenchard ('father' of the RAF), Bob Hope, Frances Langford, Bing Crosby, Jimmy Cagney and other famous and near-famous personalities began a string of 'celebrity' visitors that continued for two years.
- Although censorship forbade mentioning units or places, RAF Duxford began grabbing headlines in the UK and the USA. Broadcasts were made to America on George Hicks' Blue Network feature and a part of one *Army Hour* programme originated on the field. The station's dance band, The Thunderbolts, appeared on trans-Atlantic programmes.

- 1 July 1943, Colonel Peterson, the Commanding Officer, was lost in combat. A dark day for everyone on the station. Bob Hope and Frances Langford visited two days later and it was a challenge to entertain their audience.
- On 14 July 1943, a wounded Duxford pilot, 2nd Lieutenant A V DeGenaro of the 82nd Fighter Group, risked drowning rather than let his aircraft crash into an English village. He earned the Distinguished Service Cross, the second highest American award for valour.
- The mission of 30 July 1943 marked the day that the 78th Fighter Group became the first American unit to enter its victories into double figures. Captain London became the first American 'ace' of the Second World War in this theatre of combat. Major Eugene P Roberts got two Fw190s and one Me 109 to become the first American in this theatre of combat to score a 'triple'. Roberts was awarded the Group's second Distinguished Service Cross within a month. However, for the second time in one month, the station lost its commanding officer. Lieutenant Colonel Melvin McNickle, who had succeeded Colonel Peterson, was shot down and became a prisoner of war.
- In Late February 1944, the 78th Fighter Group participated in one of the decisive air blows of the European war. Aimed at ball-bearing plants and aircraft production centres, the 'Blitz Week' of 20-25 February was planned to greatly reduce the expanding German fighter force. Although mainly a bomber offensive, RAF Duxford contributed one-tenth of fighter support and destroyed 16 German aircraft.
- June 1944 saw RAF Duxford feverishly preparing for D-Day. The 82nd, 83rd and 84th squadrons flew area support missions, rail target bombings and 'Rhubarb' sweeps (ground invasion attacks). They knocked out tanks, trucks, railroad lines and other objectives. 10 June was one of the costliest days recorded by the 78th Fighter Group at RAF Duxford. Ten pilots, including Major Harold E Stump, Commanding Officer of the 84th Fighter Squadron, were lost – nine missing in action and one killed in a mid-air collision. 45 missions were flown during June 1944.
- On 19 July 1944, tragedy struck when a visiting B-17 Flying Fortress, carrying its own co-pilot and two crewmen plus two pilots and eight enlisted men from RAF Duxford, buzzed the control tower and clipped a beacon light on top of the adjacent hangar, shearing off most of the left wing and the left horizontal stabiliser. The crippled bomber rolled over, barely missed wrecking the officers' barracks and tore up the main barracks of the 83rd Fighter Squadron and part of the main barracks of the 82nd Fighter Squadron. All those in the bomber, and one man in the 83rd Fighter Squadron's barracks, were killed in the crash and resulting explosion of fire.
- On 28 August 1944, the 82nd Fighter Squadron brought down the first German jet fighter bagged by Allied aircraft.
- In September 1944, Duxford's 78th Fighter Group earned the Distinguished Unit (presidential) Citation for its flak-busting activities during the airborne invasion of Arnhem and Nijmegen, Holland.
- In December 1944, the 78th Fighter Group changed from P-47 Thunderbolts to P-51 Mustangs. December also saw the destruction of its 440th enemy aircraft.

- February 1945 was the costliest during the whole period of operations from RAF Duxford – 18 pilots were reported missing in action and three more were killed while returning from missions.
- 16 April 1945 saw Duxford-based Mustangs over airfields in Czechoslovakia destroy 135 enemy aircraft and damage 89 more on the ground – an all-time Eighth Air Force record.

From *Action Stations Revisited* Volume One by Michael Bowyer

Americans were no newcomers, for US engineers had trained here at the end of the 1914-1918 war. When their forces returned in 1943, they did so flying P-47s and later P-51s.

During the first week of April 1943, Republic P-47C Thunderbolts of the 78th Fighter Group noisily came out of the wild blue yonder in strength, for an unbelievable seventy-five of them were fielded by the three squadrons. The Americans worked up great affection for Duxford, some referring to it as 'real antique!'

On 13 April 1943 the '78th' commenced operations, first combat claims (two Fw 190s) being made on 14 May. P-47Ds came into use in June and long-range tanks were first operationally carried on 30 July. That enabled the Thunderbolts to penetrate into Germany escorting bombers, which was a great step forward for the Eighth Air Force. Ground strafing commenced in January 1944, pilots returning with photo coverage of air strikes on He 177s and Ju 188s intending to operate against London. Even more spectacular was some of the first air-to-air combat film showing Me 163s and Me 262s being engaged.

P-47Ds with teardrop canopies came into use just before D-Day. On that memorable morn, the 78th gave beach cover early on. Later the 84th Fighter Squadron dive-bombed Alençon, the 83rd engaged eight Fw 190s near Mayonne and destroyed two and the 82nd and 84th Fighter Squadrons flew an evening patrol. On 10 June during the course of four missions the Group claimed five enemy aircraft but nine P-47s did not return and another crashed. Cover was given to Allied troops in Normandy and to the ill-fated Arnhem venture.

A PSP runway was laid at Duxford in November-December 1944, during which time the 78th flew from Bassingbourn. Then it was all change as the Group converted to flying P-51 D Mustangs which they took into action for the first time on 29 December 1944. April 1945 found long-range Mustangs penetrating as far as Czechoslovakia, the final operation taking place on 25 April when the Group supported the RAF bombing raid on Hitler's Berchtesgaden lair. In the course of 450 operations, 167 US fighters had been lost in action. Pilots of the 78th claimed 338 enemy aircraft destroyed in the air, 358 on the ground and shared one of each with other Groups.

In June 1945, men and officers began leaving for the occupational air force, Pacific-bound units – and home. Officers and men from other outfits replaced them and by VJ-Day in August the strange faces far outnumbered the familiar ones.

Most of the Americans left in August 1945 after which Duxford was held on Care and Maintenance.

IWM Duxford

IWM Duxford is Britain's best-preserved Second World War airfield, with a fascinating history that dates back to the First World War. Its story reflects the landmark achievements made in aviation history. IWM Duxford is Europe's premier aviation museum, where historic buildings intersperse with state-of-the-art exhibition halls, including AirSpace and the American Air Museum. Historic aircraft can regularly be seen taking to the skies from Duxford's wartime airfield. Through the rich displays of aircraft and the powerful stories of the men and women involved, we tell the story of the impact of aviation on the nature of war, on people's lives and on the social and economic history of the region. With one of the finest collections of tanks, military vehicles and artillery in the UK, we also show the impact of technological development on war and conflict.

Open Daily:

Summer 2013 16 March 2013 to 26 October 10am – 6pm. Last entry an hour before closing.
(Closed 24 – 26 December).

Admission*: £17.50 Adults; £14.00 Concessions (Senior, Student, Unemployed, Disabled Adult); £12.25 Disabled Senior/Student; Children (under 16) Free; Special rates for groups of ten plus.

IWM

IWM (Imperial War Museums) tells the story of people who have lived, fought and died in conflicts involving Britain and the Commonwealth since the First World War.

Our unique Collections, made up of the everyday and the exceptional, reveal stories of people, places, ideas and events. Using these, we tell vivid personal stories and create powerful physical experiences across our five museums that reflect the realities of war as both a destructive and creative force. We challenge people to look at conflict from different perspectives, enriching their understanding of the causes, course and consequences of war and its impact on people's lives.

IWM's five branches attract over 2 million visitors each year. [IWM London](#), our flagship branch, is transforming with new First World War Galleries and a new Atrium with large object displays which will open in summer 2014 to mark the Centenary of the First World War (Please note IWM London is closed until July 2013 when it will partially re-open, and in June 2014 the museum will fully reopen). Our other branches are [IWM North](#), housed in an iconic award-winning building designed by Daniel Libeskind; [IWM Duxford](#), a world-renowned aviation museum and Britain's best preserved wartime airfield; [Churchill War Rooms](#), housed in Churchill's secret headquarters below Whitehall; and the Second World War cruiser [HMS Belfast](#).

First World War Centenary

2014 - 2018 marks the centenary of the First World War, a landmark anniversary for Britain and the world. IWM will mark the centenary by leading a vibrant, four year programme of cultural activities across the country, including the opening of brand new First World War Galleries at IWM London in 2014. For more information visit www.1914.org

