



## Transformed American Air Museum at IWM Duxford opens with new personal stories and objects

**Opens to the public from Saturday 19 March**  
**Exhibition included in general admission to IWM Duxford**

IWM Duxford's transformed *American Air Museum*, containing the best collection of American aircraft on display outside North America, will open to the public on Saturday 19 March after a major redevelopment.

The newly-transformed *American Air Museum* tells the story of Anglo-American collaboration in twentieth and twenty-first century conflict, as seen through the eyes of the people linked with the aircraft and objects on display. From Private to President, the *American Air Museum* tells the personal stories of 85 people whose lives have shaped or been shaped by their experiences of conflict. It focuses on the key role played by American air power, in conflicts from 1918 to the present day, with dramatic displays of historic and contemporary aircraft.

**Diane Lees, Director-General of IWM says:** "The transformed American Air Museum tells the story of the relationship between Britain and America in very human terms. Personal stories come to the fore, vividly demonstrating the consequences of war in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. From the pilot to the female riveter who built the aircraft; the African-American engineer who built the airfields to the courageous female journalist who reported on the action, visitors come face-to-face with people whose moving stories are inextricably linked with the formidable aircraft on display. The impact of global warfare is told from contrasting perspectives, giving visitors a rounded view of the lasting effect of contemporary warfare."

**The *American Air Museum* is home to 850 objects, including equipment, uniforms, keepsakes and photographs. Many of these have never been seen by the public before.**

Upon entering the *American Air Museum*, visitors will be greeted by the commanding sight of 18 aircraft, some suspended as if in flight. Here, visitors are introduced to the chronological themes of the exhibition - **World Wars, Cold War and War in the Mountains and Deserts** – through introductory films featuring some of the remarkable people they will encounter as they explore the museum.

Contextual displays explore the personal and technological consequences of British and American co-operation in conflict; the need for aircraft in war, how these aircraft have been used, and the consequences of their use. At the heart of the museum are the personal experiences of American air crews who gave their lives flying from Britain during the Second World War.

In the **World Wars** section of the exhibition:

- **George Vaughn** will be introduced. He was one of the leading American 'aces' of the First World War.
- The exhibition explores how America developed its potential as a leading air power in the First World War and the budding close collaboration between Britain and America.
- The SPAD S.XIII biplane soars above.
- British pilots trained in America on the PT-17 Stearman, AT-6 Harvard and Link Trainer and these can be seen in this section.

- Thousands of impressive B-24 Liberator bombers were produced at Willow Run, the gigantic Ford plant in America. Equipment such as the crane, which IWM saved from the Willow Run aircraft factory, prior to its demolition in 2014, and the newly conserved Cletrac tractor and bomb trailer, can be seen on display for the first time.
- IWM's North American B-25J Mitchell can be seen in its new colour scheme. Missions flown in a B-25J Mitchell were the inspiration for American author Joseph Heller's classic novel *Catch 22*.
- The newly displayed Clarkair Bulldozer represents the huge building operation required to create the bases from which thousands of aircraft and hundreds of thousands of men could operate. In a segregated United States Army Air Force, construction work was one of the few areas in which African-American servicemen were allowed to contribute.
- The role of the Ninth Air Force, attacking targets near the front line after D-Day, is told through the P-47 Thunderbolt aircraft and the story of **Virginia Irwin**, a pioneering journalist who was attached to the Ninth Air Force.
- The C-47 Skytrain transport aircraft is a veteran of D-Day, having dropped troops and supplies into occupied Europe. The remarkable story of '**Duke** **Boswell**, who parachuted from a C-47 Skytrain into action on 6 June 1944, brings this important aircraft to life.
- The effect of the war in Japan, on Allied prisoners of war and Japanese civilians, is explored through moving personal stories presented alongside the B-29 Superfortress aircraft that dropped atomic bombs on Japan.

In the **Cold War** section of the exhibition:

- The cutting-edge SR-71 Blackbird designed to gather intelligence on America's enemies is on display. The personal experiences of **Colonel Richard Graham** show how pilots prepared for such technologically-advanced missions in this imposing aircraft.
- The section shows a period of political and military tension between rival countries, led by the United States and the Soviet Union. American air power was at the heart of the British and American alliance, where surveillance of the enemy was seen as paramount and aircraft armed with nuclear weapons were kept ready to go to war at a moment's notice.
- The UH-1H Iroquois 'Huey' helicopter on display is an iconic symbol of the Vietnam War, a conflict which shaped America in the 1960s and 1970s.
- The immense B-52 Stratofortress on display symbolised the Cold War. For most of the 1960s, B-52s were on round-the-clock airborne alert, ready to be sent into action on the orders of the President of the United States. **Jack Revelle** recalls his role as a bomb disposal officer, dealing with the Goldsboro incident where a B-52 armed with nuclear weapons crashed in North Carolina in 1961.
- In contrast to the Second World War, where the arrival of American servicemen was dubbed the '*Friendly Invasion*', during the Cold War period, the American presence in Britain was met with mixed reactions. Greenham Common, home to US cruise missiles, was a focal point for British opposition to nuclear weapons, and to Britain's role as America's Cold War partner. Visitors will hear the contrasting personal stories of a member of the United States Air Force, a Greenham Common protester and a policeman who acted as peacekeeper.

**War in the Mountains and Deserts** offers a deeper understanding of modern warfare, exploring the causes of conflict in the Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq. In this section:

- The *American Air Museum's* F-111 aircraft on display was operational in the Gulf War. Accompanying the aircraft are former BBC correspondent **Kate Adie's** experiences of reporting on the F-111 strikes in Libya and CNN cameraman **Dave Rust's** testimony on the Bosnia War.
- The A-10 aircraft, also on display, was developed as close air support, working with troops on the battlefield in Iraq and Afghanistan. Visitors will meet a man who won one of America's highest gallantry awards, and discover how his heroism nearly cost him his life.
- New technology has been used to create a continuously evolving **Roll of Honour**, a tribute to the men and women who lost their lives fighting for world freedom from the UK. Using crowd-sourced content from the *American Air Museum* website, the Roll of Honour brings emotion, meaning and, importantly, faces to the names of the fallen.

The Roll of Honour is located in the Georgia Frontiere Gallery, which looks at the '*Friendly Invasion*', the social impact of the Americans in Britain during the Second World War, and offers a contemplative space in which to reflect on the sacrifices of these men and women. The gallery also shows how the history of the Americans in Britain, particularly during the Second World War, is preserved by hundreds of volunteers, groups and societies at airfields, in small museums and memorials.

The £3 million transformation has been made possible with the support of the Board of Trustees of the American Air Museum in Britain and a number of funders, sponsors, trusts, foundations and individual donations, including the Heritage Lottery Fund, Butterwick Trust, Mr Ross Perot, Jr., Mr and Mrs John F Bookout, Jr., DCMS/Wolfson Museums & Galleries Improvement Fund, Estate of Harry Fagen, Federal Express Corporation, Hathaway Family Foundation, Northrop Grumman Corporation, Dale Rosenbloom and Lucia Rodriguez, Estate of Ltc Donald H Standiford (Ret), Frederick and Barbara Clark Telling.

**Inga Grimsey, Chair of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said:** "The American Air Museum has possibly the best collection of US military aircraft outside the USA. This project has given Duxford the opportunity to overhaul the displays and galleries and to bring many of the fascinating stories of the First World War, Second World War, and more recent conflicts to life in new and inspiring ways. We are delighted that National Lottery players have been able to support this fantastic transformation".

The *American Air Museum*, a stunning Foster + Partners-designed building, was originally built at IWM Duxford in the late 1990s on the former site of First World War US hangars, to present the best collection of American military aircraft on public display outside North America. It stands as a memorial to the approximately 30,000 US airmen and women who were killed while serving from Great Britain during the Second World War.

– Ends –

**For further press information please contact:**

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**Images:** Images are available to download online at

- <https://press.iwm.org.uk/>
- Username: American Air Museum
- Password: IWM/press

**Footage** – Available from the press office – please email [press@iwm.org.uk](mailto:press@iwm.org.uk)

## Notes to Editors:

### Heritage Lottery Fund

Thanks to National Lottery players, we invest money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife. [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk) @heritagelottery @HLFEoE

### The people behind the aircraft in the American Air Museum -

Examples of some of the 85 personal stories featured in the new *American Air Museum* exhibition.

#### George Vaughn – ‘Premier Ace of Brooklyn’

George Vaughn, from New York, learned to fly while studying at Princeton University. He completed his pilot training in Britain and flew with the British Royal Flying Corps' No.84 Squadron. He shot down six aircraft and one balloon in his SE5a and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Later he transferred to the US 17th Aero Squadron and shot down a further six aircraft. He flew the Sopwith Camel, and briefly, the SPAD XIII. When he arrived back in America after the war he was greeted as 'the premier ace of Brooklyn'. After the war he became an engineer and built his own business. He helped train thousands of engineers for the United States Army Air Forces in the Second World War. He died in 1989.

#### General Ira Eaker – the tough decision maker

Ira Eaker was one of the most senior US military commanders in the Second World War. His decisions had a huge impact on the conflict.

Ira Eaker became a pilot in 1918. As a general, he was the Eighth Air Force's first commander. From February 1942, he faced the difficult task of beginning the bombing campaign against Germany, working with his British allies. Eaker believed that bombing would shorten the war and save lives: "*I would be certain..*," he said after the war, "*that if we had not had strategic bombing... perhaps a million men would have died that lived through that struggle.*"

In January 1944 he moved to take overall command of Allied air power in the Mediterranean. He became Deputy Commanding General of the United States Army Air Forces in 1945, retiring two years later.

#### Henry 'Duke' Boswell – he was one of the 13 lucky ones

Duke Boswell had one of the most dangerous jobs in the army; he was a paratrooper. He enlisted aged 16 and became a paratrooper in 1942. He carried out four combat jumps – in Sicily, Italy, Normandy and Holland.

"*Your plane might get hit before you get there. You might be killed as soon as you hit the ground*", Duke said, "*You had seen that many of your friends wounded or killed... You just lived from day to day. And you didn't think about it very much.*"

"*When we jumped in Sicily which was our first combat we had 146 men in our company. A little over two years later in Germany, when the war ended we had 13. The rest had either been killed or wounded so bad that they couldn't come back to the unit.*"

#### Martin Loveridge – he was an invisible insurance policy

Martin Loveridge was an F-4 Phantom Navigator in the RAF. He and his pilot flew the F-4 Phantom in the *American Air Museum* to Duxford on its last flight. Martin's job was to manage the aircraft's radar and other vital systems. On several occasions during his career, he and his pilot were scrambled to intercept Soviet aircraft entering British air space. "*We did that in the Cold War... to show the Russians that if they did try and start something we would be there, we had live missiles, we would shoot them down... We were there in case something happened,*" he remembered, "*The Cold War was a pure insurance policy.*"

## About The American Air Museum

Part of the IWM Duxford visitor experience, the *American Air Museum* stands as a memorial to the almost 30,000 US airmen and women who gave their lives flying from British shores in the Second World War in the defence of democracy and freedom.

Since its opening in 1997, the 70,000 square foot museum has hosted 5.5 million visitors who have come to pay tribute to the fallen airmen and to admire the outstanding collections and exhibits. The museum is the only facility of its kind outside the United States that commemorates and highlights the special bond between the United States and the United Kingdom.

## 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:

Winter (From Late Oct): 10am – 4pm. Last entry at 3pm

Summer (From 15 March): 10am – 6pm. Last entry at 5pm.

## Admission:

- Adult £18;
- Child (5 – 15) £9;
- Child (under 5) Free;
- Family Tickets (depending on family size) £31.50 – £47.25;
- Concession £14.40
- Group Rates available

## 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.

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 is marking the centenary by leading a vibrant, five year programme of cultural activities across the world. 2016 is the centenary of the Battle of the Somme. For more information, visit [www.1914.org](http://www.1914.org).

