



Happy Landings

Duxford's Director looks forward to a major new exhibition.

By Edward Inman OBE

Aeroplanes are not only used by tourism passengers: they are also an integral part of modern warfare. And the Imperial War Museum at Duxford holds an incomparable collection. Here its director, Ted Inman, looks ahead to Duxford's future.

Second only to their association with mass travel, aircraft are forever linked with warfare. So it is only fitting that the Imperial War Museum's site at Duxford has become Britain's premier aviation destination.

The classic Spitfire, the remarkable Harrier and the trailblazing Lancaster are just some of the British aircraft at Duxford that have helped shape the world in which we live. Ted Inman, director of the Imperial War Museum in Duxford, here lays out his plans for the future, too.

Duxford is to be the location for AirSpace, an ambitious £21.5 million development that will tell the story of Britain's aviation and aerospace industry, past, present - and future. While commemorating the remarkable achievements of the past, AirSpace will

educate and inspire the pilots and engineers of tomorrow. It will also increase the public's understanding of aviation heritage and its relevance for today and the future.

Duxford has its origins in the First World War as one of Britain's earliest military airfields. As a wartime Royal Air Force fighter station, Duxford's Spitfires and Hurricanes played a key role in the Battle of Britain in 1940. Later in the War, Duxford became a United States Army Air Force fighter base and by the end of the conflict, the Cambridgeshire airfield had played a significant part in the Allied victory. Duxford continued to serve as a fighter base until its closure as an RAF base in 1961. Today Duxford is a branch of the Imperial War Museum, Britain's national museum of modern conflict, and is Europe's most-visited aviation heritage complex with over 420,000 visitors each year. Duxford is a national attraction with an international reputation and proudly displays one of the world's best collections of historic aircraft, many of them kept in flying condition by their owners who base their aircraft at historic Duxford.





These and other aircraft operate from Duxford's active airfield, giving the complex a unique dynamism. Duxford's famous air shows are highlights of the aviation calendar and attract both visitors and aircraft from around the world. Duxford is above all, an educational resource for the nation, powerfully illustrating many important aspects of modern history. Enthusiasts, historians, veterans, family groups and educational parties all enjoy the benefit from the Duxford experience.

Aviation has changed the world

On the morning of 17 December 1903, the Wright brothers made their first successful powered flight. In the past 100 years, aviation has progressed from that first powered flight of 37m (120ft) to flight at three times the speed of sound and travel into space. Aviation has quite simply changed the world in which we live. Military air power has revolutionised warfare and has shaped, and continues to shape, history. It was aircraft that fought the Battle of Britain in 1940 and it was aircraft that brought the Second World War to an end when the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan by US

bombers. Meanwhile airliner development has transformed travel and commerce – journeys that a century ago may have taken days or weeks now only take a matter of hours. Aviation has effectively shrunk our world. Whereas international travel was once the preserve of the wealthy, the development of fast, safe and comfortable airliners have made virtually the whole world accessible to the man and the woman on the street for both leisure and business purposes. The cultural effects of more accessible air travel are considerable. Worldwide, over 1.6 billion passengers use the world's airlines each year. Air transport simply links people, countries, businesses and cultures.

Preserving Britain's heritage

Using an outstanding collection of aircraft, the Imperial War Museum and its partners at Duxford reflect the dramatic development of aviation technology over the past century. For most of aviation's short history, Britain has played a major role in the field of aircraft design and construction; this tradition of achievement and innovation is evident throughout the world-renowned collection of British military and civil aircraft



on display at Duxford. The de Havilland Mosquito (the 'wooden wonder'), the Gloucester Meteor (Britain's first jet fighter in service), English Electric Canberra (Britain's first jet bomber), de Havilland Comet airliner (the world's first jet airliner) the groundbreaking 1960s' BAC TSR-2 strike aircraft, the Concorde and the Harrier are just some of the remarkable aircraft types that Duxford visitors can view. Although some of these aircraft were produced in great numbers, there are now few left. In some cases, Duxford has the last surviving example of an aircraft type. These aircraft are national treasures and part of our heritage that has to be preserved so that future generations can see the actual artefacts that helped make history.

However, without ideal conditions, the metal and wood that make up most aircraft's construction steadily deteriorate. It is therefore essential that these aircraft be kept in environmentally controlled conditions. Many of these key British aircraft are stored either in unheated hangars or in the open air. The answer to this long-term preservation challenge is AirSpace. The new building will provide a balanced and controlled environment for the aircraft that are so precious.

AirSpace is a dramatic redevelopment of an existing 1980s hangar which will, at 10,000 square meters, be one of the world's largest and most dramatic spaces for the interpretation of aviation heritage. Twenty-five historic British and Commonwealth aircraft, both military and civil will be preserved, some of them dramatically suspended from the roof area as if in flight. AirSpace will be twice the area and volume of the British Museum's "Great Court". It will enable the Museum to maximise physical and intellectual access to its world-class collections and subject matter. The exhibition plan moves away from traditional aviation presentation and will instead explore the impact that civil and military aviation has had on our world.

Some 43,000 children currently visit Duxford in organised school parties annually, as well as special needs and adult education groups. Within AirSpace, we will feature an Education Centre that will provide purpose-built, self-contained facilities for educational groups of all kinds. With the new Centre providing not only history but also design and technology teaching, we anticipate this figure to rise to a minimum of 50,000. Duxford is already second to none in the world of aircraft restoration and conservation:



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AirSpace will help to ensure the aerospace industry's future with a centre where current and trainee aerospace engineers will be able to gain nationally and internationally recognised qualifications. It is hoped that the provision of this facility will raise the profile of this career path and help to redress the national shortage of engineers.

This prestigious project has been allocated £9 million by the Heritage Lottery Fund and £995,000 by The East of England Development Agency. The UK aerospace industry is providing enthusiastic support. BAE SYSTEMS have agreed to form a partnership with the Imperial War Museum in the development of the project. This partnership also enables the Company to center its main heritage activities at Duxford. In a special display, AirSpace will tell the story of the evolution of Britain's aerospace industry through the innovation of the many British companies of the past to interactive displays that look into the future of aerospace.

Quite simply, AirSpace will tell the story of British aviation in what we are sure will be the most exciting and inspiring display of British and Commonwealth aircraft in the world.

Edward Inman OBE, is Director of the Imperial War Museum Duxford.