RAF Museum Midlands (Cosford) Tech Trip Report



After the success of the inaugural SCSC Tech Trip to Bletchley Park, the SCSC's next organised trip was to the RAF Museum Midlands (Cosford) on Saturday 19th Nov 2022. The trip, which was open to everyone included a 3-hour guided tour of the museum's collection. Dave Banham provides a report of the trip.



Our guide was Cameron, a former engineer from Bentley cars and who had nurtured a lifelong interest in aircraft as his father had been a test pilot, and now retired, is learning finally to fly a small aircraft! He was certainly very knowledgeable on the collection and talked us through it for 3 hours non-stop.

Cosford is relatively close to me and I have visited it numerous times with family and growing children, but never with a guided tour. The difference a knowledgeable guide brings to understanding and contextualising the technology of each exhibit in its era and with that era's motivations is considerable!

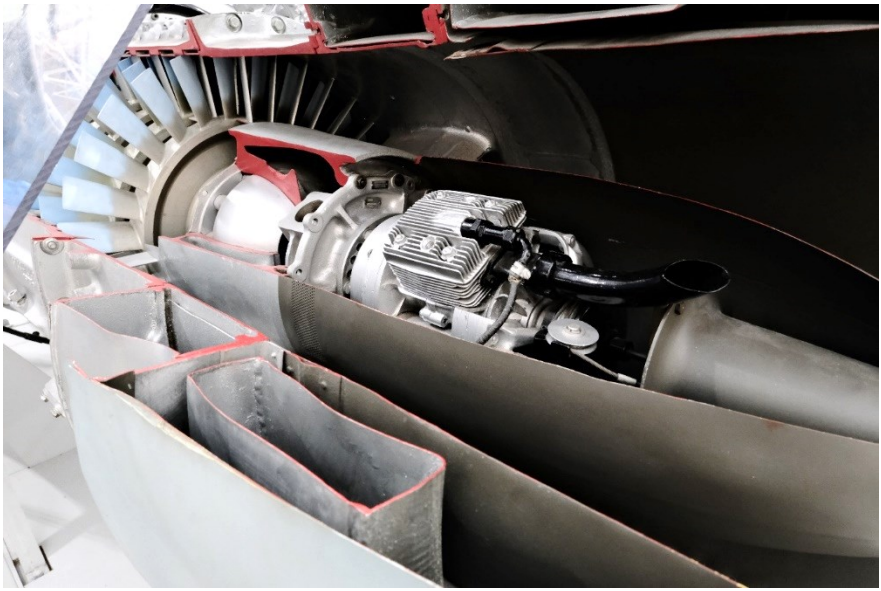
Our tour covered the Test Flight, War in the Air (WW1 and WW2), and the Cold War museum buildings. On learning that his tour party were safety engineers Cameron pointed out a few safety-related points of interest, such as the notice next to the Mk1 Spitfire's engine hand-crank socket that reads:



"HAND TURNING GEAR FOR MAINTENANCE ONLY. IF USED FOR EMERGENCY STARTING AIRCRAFTSMAN MUST HAVE ROPE FROM HIS WAIST TO THE UNDERCARRIAGE TO PREVENT HIM FALLING INTO THE AIRSCREW."



I was also bemused by the Messerschmitt Me 262A-2a Schwalbe's jet engine starter motor – it was a single cylinder "lawnmower" engine with a cable pull start! But back in the day that must have been an innovation that freed the jet engine from needing ground starting equipment. Just imagine reaching in and pulling the starting cable for a jet engine!



The Museum's Cold War building is relatively modern having been purpose designed for the collection and opened in 2007. There's a staggering array of aircraft, ground vehicles (including some tanks) a helicopter (a Sikorsky transport), and several missiles including the huge Douglas Thor Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) – some 20m tall.

The high-altitude bombers were the Valiant and the Victor, but they were soon surpassed by lower altitude fast bombers such as the Vulcan, but remained in service by being repurposed as refuelling tankers. The Victor had three mid-air refuelling pods; two for fast jets and one for a large-bodied aircraft.



The slender English Electric Lightning has pride of place showing off its polished metal work on all sides with its vertical display as the picture on the right shows. (And alongside it, just visible bottom left, is a Gloster Javelin and on the right, behind the Lightning is the Douglas Thor).





All in all it was a good, but exhausting, visit and one that is highly recommended. The museum is free to enter, although donations are encouraged and there is a fee for a guided tour and for the car park. There's a railway station close by too.



The museum's website is: https://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/midlands/ and it has extensive information about the exhibits too.

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