

RAF pilots through the decades

2018 marks the centenary of the Royal Air Force. Now, thanks to £4.89million from the National Lottery the story of the World’s oldest air force will be told.

With its foundations in the First World War, for almost 100 years the RAF has had an incredible impact not only here in the UK but across the globe.

It has affected the lives of millions, driven technological innovations, pushed the boundaries of human achievement and has become part of the UK’s cultural identity.

As custodians of the RAF story, the RAF Museum plans to mark this important national centenary by delivering an ambitious programme of activities and events in 2018.

The plans include major renovations to the museum’s London site, designed to enhance to greatly enhance the visitor experience. A new visitor centre with a café, shop, soft play area and community spaces will be created. Plus a derelict 1930s RAF supply building will be transformed into a new restaurant.

A series of new permanent exhibitions will open including The First 100 Years of the RAF and Now and the Future exhibitions, telling the story of the RAF from its earliest years in the First World War to its global role today.

Sir Peter Luff, Chair of HLF, said: “The foundation of the Royal Air Force is one of the most significant legacies of the First World War. It's wonderful that National Lottery players have made it possible to mark the RAF's centenary so fittingly. I'm sure they will enjoy the museum's outstanding collections of aviation technology combined with the extraordinary stories and courage of the men and women who have served in the RAF over those 100 years."

So, if you can’t wait until 2018, here are some things you might not know about the RAF:

- Established 1 April 2018, the RAF is the oldest independent air force in the world. That is to say, independent of army or navy control
- At its height in 1944, more than 1.1million personnel served in the RAF compared with 34,200 regular personnel today
- The RAF’s motto is Per Ardua ad Astra, which is officially translates as 'Through Struggle to the Stars'
- Not just a fighting force, the RAF is proud of its rich music tradition with the first Director of Music appointed in 1918
- The name given to the squadron of volunteer American pilots that flew in the RAF during the Second World War was the Eagle Squadron. Formed in September 1940, it was later absorbed into the USA Air Force
- The first female jet pilot in the RAF was Flight Lieutenant Jo Salter in 1994, flying a Panavia Tornado. Now it is a common sight for both men and women to take to the skies for Britain



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RAF pilot uniforms through the decades

Royal Air Force Museum secures National Lottery Investment for RAF Centenary Programme