Historic aircraft unveiled

23/09/2011

A special event took place today to mark the climax of a two-year project to return the historic Canberra PR9 aircraft to Belfast where it was built by Shorts in 1959 and served with the RAF until 2006.

The Canberra, registration number XH131, has been rebuilt by an enthusiastic group of local volunteers and will now be permanently preserved and displayed in the Ulster aviation collection at Long Kesh, the centrepiece of a wider project to inform the public about the strong local connections of the Canberra aircraft.

Guests at the event included local people who have a connection to the Canberra such as Shorts personnel who designed, built and tested the aircraft as well as those who flew and maintained the machines in service.

Other initiatives of the project, which was part-funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), include the publication of a book and a programme of outreach and educational activities.

Ernie Cromie, UAS Chairman said: “Our choice of the title 'Canberra connections' for the project has proven very apt – we have been amazed at the number of local people with links to the aircraft and stories to tell.”

Head of HLF Northern Ireland, Paul Mullan, added: “This fantastic project has brought to life the local heritage of the Canberra PR9 which was designed and built locally for use across the world. We are delighted to help raise awareness of the aircraft and its local connections and we hope many people will enjoy seeing the Canberra here in Northern Ireland, which is one of only two in the UK on public display.”

Diane Poole, Stena Line’s Head of PR and Communications added: “We were delighted to be able to assist the Ulster Aviation Society with the transportation of the Canberra to Belfast. She represents a very important piece of the aviation history of Northern Ireland and we would like to commend the Society for the superb piece of restoration work they have carried out to preserve the Canberrra for the enjoyment of future generations.”

About the Ulster Aviation Society

Founded in 1968, the Ulster Aviation Society is an educational charity run entirely by volunteers. The Society’s objectives are to inform and educate the public on aviation matters and to preserve aviation related artefacts for public benefit, especially items of local significance. The Society undertakes a wide variety of activities ranging from illustrated talks and other events to educational publishing and historical research. The Society also runs The Ulster Aviation Collection, Northern Ireland’s leading aviation museum. Visit the Ulster Aviation Society website.