UK's best preserved First World War aerodrome set



Airside at Stow Maries

Largely forgotten for decades, Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome will be turned into a major visitor attraction.

A near-complete example of a First World War aerodrome, untouched and largely forgotten for 60 years, is to be revived and turned into a major visitor attraction thanks to £4.3million from the National Lottery.

The history of Stow Maries

Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome was established by the Royal Flying Corp (RFC) in 1916 and played a pivotal role in defending London and the British mainland from German zeppelins and Gotha bombers.

Following the end of the First World War, the site reverted to agricultural use, leaving behind a unique collection of historic buildings still in their original form. Stow Maries fell increasingly into disrepair and was largely forgotten until the late 1970s when local historians and military aviation enthusiasts recognised its importance.

Back on the map

The 24 surviving structures and airfield remain relatively unaltered since the aerodrome was taken out of service in March 1919. Since 2015, however, one-by-one the buildings have started to be restored. Now a major conservation project, backed by £4.3m from the National Lottery, will put Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome, near Maldon in Essex, firmly on the map as a major UK visitor attraction.

The money from the National Lottery is the largest injection of cash to date and will allow it to:

- Restore and bring back into use five buildings, four of which are on the Heritage at Risk register
- Create a purpose-built welcome centre with visitor orientation, a café and shop
- Fully restore an officers' accommodation block and use it to house a major new permanent exhibition – exploring what life was like to live as an RFC officer

The project will also fully restore two more accommodation buildings to enable them to host temporary exhibitions, as well as being flexible spaces for school use and income-generating private hire.

Lord Ashton of Hyde, First World War Minister, said: “I am delighted that Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome has received a £4.3m grant thanks to National Lottery players. This grant will go towards preserving a rare example of a First World War aerodrome that was pivotal in protecting Britain. As we approach the final year of our centenary commemorations, it is fitting that we are making efforts to protect our First World War heritage for future generations.”



Buildings at Stow Maries



me wins National Lottery cash

The evolution of flight and the First World War