

## U3A SHARED LEARNING PROJECT: STOW MARIES AERODROME

### RESEARCH WITH A PURPOSE.

A shared learning project is where a museum or other institution define a research project for local U3As to attempt together. Ideally they are of a limited duration; normally three months, with about 12 members from various U3As.

Local U3As recently had a meeting at Stow Maries Aerodrome, ([www.stowmaries.com](http://www.stowmaries.com)) the unique WWI aerodrome currently being restored, where several projects have been identified.

The aims at the aerodrome are four fold:

- the restoration of as many of the original buildings as a possible to their 1918 state.
- the establishing of a large wildlife conservation area with wild grass meadows, ponds and scrapes.
- To establish the Aerodrome as a centre of RFC research and education.
- To establish the aerodrome as a conservation area and education centre for the local flora and faune.

In the last two years many projects have been undertaken ad completed.

On the air side seven buildings have been restored and there are many more to do.

On the wildlife side a wild grass meadow has been sown, 5000 trees planted and one of three ponds dug.

If the museum is to become a prime visitor attraction and a place of remembrance then help is needed to undertake some different projects which the volunteer staff at the aerodrome who are currently refurbishing buildings will not be able to complete in the foreseeable future. This dilemma led to the proposal to set up some Shared Learning Projects.

At the meeting several projects were proposed.

(1) A tapestry or appliqué depicting the life of the aerodrome from its inception in 1916 through to the present day. This would eventually hang in the chapel there.

(2) Writing and publishing a series of walks, based on public footpaths, around the area that would either start at the aerodrome or where the aerodrome could be included in the walk.

(3) Museum Guide to allow visitors to self-guide themselves around the museum building and the site.

(4) Critique of (a) the Aerodrome leaflet and (b) Website from an uninformed visitor's perspective and make recommendations for their improvement.

(5) Wildlife conservation issues: These are many and varied and anybody interested in the local fauna and flora will find something to interest them.

(6) Details of the other ranks that served with Stow Maries. Apart from the pilots little is known of the 400 or so ground staff that served there.

(7) During WW2 families who had been bombed out were temporarily accommodated there. What is their story? Some of the children could possibly still be around. Also Italian prisoners of war were there to help the farmer until they were repatriated, what is their story?

(8) To design display boards on all the aircraft and RFC equipment that would have been used at Stow Maries. These boards will form part of the display that is planned in the pilots ready room.

Since that meeting there has been a volunteer to co-ordinate three projects, we are now seeking to find some U3A members to form part of their teams. The projects identified to date are:

1. The tapestry
2. The walking guide
3. The display boards for all the aircraft and equipment that served at Stow Maries.

What skills and interests are needed?

Needlework, local history, family history, aviation history, graphic design, botany, bird watching, photography, walking, writing etc.

I will be an opportunity to get to know members of other local U3As with whom you will be working. These projects will be extremely helpful to the historic Stow Maries Aerodrome but to individual members it will give enjoyment and satisfaction in a job well done with a long lasting benefit to others.

Please contact me if you want to be involved or need further information.

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