



**60th DLOC ANNIVERSARY & 58th INTERNATIONAL RALLY
17TH TO 21ST JULY 2024 - THE SUSSEX COUNTIES.
TANGMERE MILITARY AVIATION MUSEUM – INSIGHT & VISIT
Saturday 20th July 2024**

Concluding our list of itinerary visits, is the very popular and immensely interesting RAF Tangmere, or as it is better known today Tangmere Military Aviation Museum. The visit will be on Saturday 20th July, arriving at 9.30am and departing at approximately 4pm.

RAF Tangmere was one of several stations based near Chichester in West Sussex, that played a significant strategic role during the Battle of Britain. The famous Second World War aces Wing Commander Douglas Bader and the then inexperienced Johnnie Johnson were both stationed at RAF Tangmere in 1941. Of note, Johnson went on to finish his RAF career [1939-1966] attaining the rank of Air Vice Marshall; whilst Douglas Bader [later Sir Douglas Bader] concluded his Royal Air Force service as a Group Captain. After the war and through the decades, both men were fervent supporters and pace setters for commissioning numerous charities; legacies that still continue today.



The aerodrome was founded in 1917 for use by the Royal Flying Corps as a training base. In 1918 it was turned over to the Aviation Section, US Signal Corp (USSC) as a training ground and continued as such until the end of the Great War in November of that year, after which the airfield was mothballed in 1919. As the Second World War loomed, the airfield was reactivated and enlarged to defend the south coast against attack by the Luftwaffe, with Tangmere's only hotel and some houses being demolished in the process. The RAF commandeered the majority of houses in the centre of the village, with only six to eight families being allowed to stay. The village would not resume its status as a civilian community until 1966. Throughout RAF Tangmere's military history [1917-1970] there were in excess of one hundred squadrons recorded at the airfield, many of which obtained great honours, including numerous service personnel. There is one aspect of RAF Tangmere, during the Second World War, that is only just starting to be recognized. It is the role

that was undertaken by No.161 Squadron – this particular unit dealt with ferrying Special Operations Executive personnel in and out France; of whom many of these agents were women. The organisation was formed in mid- July 1940 after the fall of France – it was in effect Churchill's Secret Army and his direction to all the agents and the various resistance lines was to “Set Europe Ablaze”. As an organization, it was hugely successful, albeit the price paid by the lives of SOE agents was extremely high. The above is just a “drop-in-the-ocean” example of the numerous displays at the museum and I can assure you that the visit will not only be memorable but also very moving, when one delves into the lives of those who were stationed and / or connected with the RAF base. On an aside, if you wish to know more about the landings of SOE agents, then the following book by Hugh Verity is an excellent read: “We Landed By Moonlight – Secret RAF Landings in France, 1940 to 1944”.



There are over sixty other interests and exhibits at TMAM, some of which are: Photographic Reconnaissance, Polish & Czech Pilots, RAF Apprentices, Tangmere & D-Day, First World War, Picture Gallery, German Air Force / Luftwaffe, Women in the RAF, Bomber Command, Dambusters, Cold War, plus a large range of aircraft exhibits and that's just a mere selection !!

The trustees have agreed to a reduced entry fee for our visit, the cost being £8 per person on the day. Unlike our other visits, earlier in the week, this will be pay-on-the-day rather than a pre-payment arrangement.

There is a small cafe [Cockpit Cafe] at the museum and with the DLOC descending upon them, they will be somewhat overwhelmed !! Therefore, arrangements have been made with the cafe to have the option of having a pre- packed lunch of your choice; the cost will be approximately £8. For folk wishing to take advantage of this, pre-payment will be required and there will be a menu option to choose from.

Closer to the International Rally, I will make contact with members who wish to partake in this. After we have concluded our visit to the museum, cars returning to the Avisford Park Hotel will be parked on the hotel lawns in readiness for the DLOC Rally & Anniversary Parade, on Sunday 21st July.

Richard Long – East Sussex Branch Secretary dloc.eastsussex@gmail.com