### The Road to Victory: The Legacy of the Second World War

### Tuesday 30 September 2025

Hosted at the Royal Air Force Museum, Midlands, this one-day workshop will explore the events that led to victory in the Second World War and its impact. The workshop will host scholars working on topics that relate to air forces, their personnel and technologies; the economies and societies with which they interact; the conflicts in which they have engaged; and the global and international context with which they are connected.

The research presented will provide new evidence and insights on the road to victory. In doing so, this research offers to contribute to and bolster the emerging scholarship on Air Power and the impact of the Second World War.

The panels hosted in the workshop will include the latest research on a range of topics relating to:

* Victory in Europe and its Aftermath.
* Victory over Japan and its Legacy.
* The Recovery of the RAF Museum’s Dornier Do 17 and the Ongoing Impact of the Second World War.

This event is in collaboration with the Air Historical Branch (RAF).

The cost of attending the workshop in-person is £5. This cost covers registration and afternoon tea/coffee.

Please click [here](https://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/midlands/whats-going-on/the-road-to-victory-workshop/) to book your place now.

The RAF Museum will be live-streaming the workshop, with access provided via the Museum’s [Crowdcast channel](https://www.crowdcast.io/c/qq3ytcmlaubc).

Royal Air Force Museum Workshop: The Road to Victory

Times are Given in British Summer Time (GMT+1)

Tuesday 30 September 2025

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| 10:00 AM | Registration opens |
| 10:30 AM | Welcome |
| 10:40 AM | **Panel 1 – Victory in Europe and its Aftermath**Andrew Duncan | Preparing for the next war during the current oneAlastair Noble |Deliverance for the Dutch: MANNA from Heaven, April-May 1945Emily Walton | “The R.A.F. took our boy and broke our hearts”-The Tragedy of the Royal Air Force Casualty Branch’s P4(Cas) Files |
| 12:00 AM | Lunch |
| 1:00 PM | **Panel 2 – Victory over Japan and its Legacy**David Omissi | Victory in Burma, 1944-1945Stuart Hadaway | The Greatest Detective Story in the World: The Missing Research and Enquiry Service and the search for missing aircrew, 1944-1952Lucia Wallbank | The role of RAF Transport Command in the Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees |
| 2:20 PM | Break (Teas/Coffees) |
| 3:00 PM | **Panel 3 – The Recovery of the RAF Museum’s Dornier Do 17 and the Ongoing Impact of the Second World War**Ian Thirsk | The Dornier’s RecoveryDarren Priday | Dornier Recovery from the Sea  |
| 4:15 PM | Closing Remarks |
| 4:30 PM  | End of Workshop |

**Workshop Registration and Details**

The cost of attending the workshop in-person for both days is £5 This cost covers registrations and afternoon teas/coffees.

To book your ticket click [here](https://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/midlands/whats-going-on/the-road-to-victory-workshop/).

If this is your first time attending an academic conference, you are warmly encouraged to email the RAF Museum’s Historian and Academic Access Manager (details below).

The nearest station to the RAF Museum Midlands is Cosford Station, which is a 20-minute walk from the Museum. For full details of how to reach the Museum visit: <https://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/midlands/plan-your-day/getting-here/>

**Access:**

The Museum is committed to providing equal access to its Research Events. All the buildings and rooms used for the workshop are wheelchair accessible. However, only a limited number of wheelchair accessible seats are available in the Lecture Theatre. If you wish to reserve a space, you are warmly invited to contact the RAF Museum’s Historian and Academic Access Manager (details below). Please also contact us if there are additional arrangements that we can make for you.

**Online:**

The RAF Museum will be live-streaming the workshop. Access to the live-stream will be free via the Museum’s [Crowdcast channel](https://www.crowdcast.io/c/qq3ytcmlaubc). For the best, experience, however, the Museum recommends attending in-person.

**Contact Us:**

If you have broader questions, please contact the Museum’s Historian and Academic Access Manager, Dr Megan Kelleher; she is part of the Archives, Library, and Research Department (Email ResearchNews@rafmuseum.org).

**Panel 1 – Victory in Europe and its Aftermath**

**Andrew Duncan**

**Biography**

Dr Andrew Duncan completed his MA (Hons) and M.Litt, both in Modern History, at the University of St Andrews. He read for his PhD at the University of Birmingham under the supervision of Prof Jonathan Boff. He remained at Birmingham as a Teaching Fellow after completing his PhD, and taught modules in the Modern History and War Studies degree programs there. He then moved to Lincolnshire and taught on the academic course for officer cadets at RAF Cranwell. He now holds the post of Senior Researcher with the Air Historical Branch.

**Title:** **Preparing for the next war during the current one**

**Abstract**

The UK’s planning for the post-war period was well developed by the time fighting ceased in 1945, so much so that initial steps towards preparing the RAF's post-war reserves were taken while the war was still underway. The paper will consider the RAF's plans for its reserves at the end of the war, and use this to illustrate how military and organisational considerations were balanced against political and financial constraints. VE Day and VJ Day may have been marked by joyful celebration, but the mood in the Air Ministry and the senior echelons of the RAF was not necessarily cheerful. The end of the war did not in any way mark the end of the difficulties that the war caused, and the need to prepare for the next war loomed large even as the RAF was heavily involved in helping to bring the current conflict to a conclusion.

**Alastair Noble**

**Biography**

Dr Alastair Noble is Deputy Head of the Air Historical Branch (RAF) and has been a Historian in the Branch since 2015. In this capacity he has written narrative volumes on Defence Policy and the Royal Air Force since 1970. He is the author of books, articles and contributions to edited volumes encompassing aspects of modern political, military and diplomatic history.

**Title: Deliverance for the Dutch: MANNA from Heaven, April-May 1945**

**Abstract**

Operation MANNA is deserving of greater scholarly attention. Most accounts of the RAF over Europe during 1945 focus on the devastating late-war  Bomber Command operations against German town and cities. It makes for grim reading. However, it was not always about destruction. MANNA, the dropping of supplies to the starving population of German-occupied Holland in late April and early May 1945, is a case in point. This was a real relief operation which saved thousands of Dutch lives and entered into the annals of history.

This contribution will consider the drivers for MANNA. Using contemporary  documentation, it will go on to describe the arrangements and organisation which made such an extraordinary effort possible. This highlights the barriers to be overcome to provide salvation for the starving. At the heart of the discussion are the RAF squadrons and units responsible for gathering and dispensing this immense aid effort. Alongside this, is an assessment of the impact of MANNA on squadron morale as the European war neared a victorious conclusion. This was a very different kind of operation for the aircrew of Bomber Command, albeit with its own set of risks and dangers.

This was not the first time and most certainly not the last occasion where the RAF delivered vital humanitarian aid. Indeed, this very year we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the RAF relief effort in Ethiopia in 1985, Operation BUSHEL. However, the special circumstances of MANNA, the successful provision of mass humanitarian relief in the midst of a total war, render it worthy of inclusion in any examination of the RAF at the end of the European war.

**Emily Walton**

**Biography**

After graduating from Kings College London, Emily now works at the Air Historical Branch as a researcher with a focus on historic casualty identification. In the past, she has volunteered with the International Bomber Command Memorial, RAF College Cranwell and Thorpe Camp Visitor Centre (old RAF Woodhall Spa).

**Title: “The R.A.F. took our boy and broke our hearts”-The Tragedy of the Royal Air Force Casualty Branch’s P4(Cas) Files.**

**Abstract**

“Japan has surrendered, so let us join in thanking Almighty God that war has ended throughout the world”. So were the words of King George VI on 15th August 1945 following the events that would officially return the world back to a ‘peacetime’ status and start the process of moving on from war. However, on both a practical and personal level, the war was far from over. The RAF Casualty Branch and the Missing Research Enquiry Unit were just beginning the long task of identify remains and trying to trace missing aircrew. Their contribution, both during the war and after, is often overlooked in the official records and few books bar Stuart Hadaway’s ‘Missing Believed Killed’ look at the invaluable work they did. But it is not only their work that is overlook but also the documentation they left behind, specifically the P4(Cas) File.

Currently in the process of being released into The National Archives, the P4(Cas) File gives remarkable insight into RAF Casualties. From the first letter often containing the dreaded words ‘believed to have lost his life’ to the final letters in the late 1940s, a picture can be built up not only of the events that led to the loss of those who the file represents, but also the impact it had on the people they left behind. The files show the ranges of emotions from denial and blame in some, to understanding and thankfulness of others when any news, no matter how small, is heard no matter how many years later. By exploring a few examples of these files and the documents they contain, it becomes clear that for many, the war did not end on the 15th August and its impact continued to be felt many years after the war ‘ended’.

**Panel 2 – Victory over Japan and its Legacy**

**Stuart Hadaway**

**Biography**

Stuart Hadaway is the Historian at the Air Historical Branch (RAF), where he has worked since 2009. Before that, he worked at the RAF Museum, where he met and interviewed veterans of Tiger Force for the Museum’s archive. An Associate Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and committee member of the Royal Air Force Historical Society, he has written widely on RAF history, including the Second World War and immediate post-war period in the Far East.

**Title: The Greatest Detective Story in the World: The Missing Research and Enquiry Service and the search for missing aircrew, 1944-1952**

**Abstract**

At the end of the Second World War, 41,881 Royal, Dominion, and Allied Air Forces personnel were listed as ‘missing, believed killed’, and another 30,000 had been reported as killed but their identity and the locations of the graves had to be verified. In December 1944, the Casualty Branch of the Air Ministry sent a small team to Paris to start the work of tracing these personnel. From a team of a dozen or so officers and men, the missing research effort would expand into a global effort, spanning Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and South East Asia. Thousands of personnel, many former aircrew putting off their own demobilisation, supported by locally employed staff would scour the world as part of the Missing Research and Enquiry Service (MRES). It was, in the words of one veteran, ‘the greatest detective story in the world.’

This talk will give an overview of the history and methods of the MRES, including both their field and administrative techniques. It will highlight the challenges they faced in the rapidly polarising post-war world, with search efforts being stymied by the political as well as geographical landscapes across the globe. The talk will finish with a brief overview of the surviving records, including those being currently released into AIR81 at The National Archives.

**Lucia Wallbank**

**Biography**

Lucia Wallbank is the Archivist at the RAF Museum. Lucia has an Ma (Hons) in Modern History from the University of St Andrews, and a postgraduate certificate from the Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies at the University of Strathclyde. She has recently achieved her MLitt in Archives and Records Management via the University of Dundee, writing her dissertation on Air Ministry recordkeeping. She has been at the RAF Museum since 2018, starting as an Assistant Curator for the Archive and Library before moving into her current role. Previously, she worked at the Montrose Air Station Heritage Centre and Arbroath Signal Tower Museum. She has appeared in a number of documentaries, with her most recently featuring in 'WW2: Women on the Front Line' (Channel 4).

**Title: The role of RAF Transport Command in the Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees**

**Abstract**

Following the Allied victory over Japan in August 1945, the urgent task of repatriating civilians and personnel from South-East Asia began in earnest. By May 1946, the multi-national RAPWI organisation (Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees) had coordinated the evacuation of over 96,000 people. However, despite the scale of its operations and humanitarian impact, RAPWI has received only limited attention in official histories. This paper examines the critical role played by the RAF’s Transport Command in supporting RAPWI’s objectives, drawing on original papers from the RAF Museum Archives.

**David Omissi**

**Biography**

David Omissi is a recognized authority on the military history of British India. His publications include ‘A Dismal Story? Britain, the Gurkhas and the Partition of India, 1945‒1948’ in Alan Jeffreys and Patrick Rose (eds), *The Indian Army, 1939‒47: Experience and Development* (2012), and ‘Europe Through Indian Eyes: Indian Soldiers Encounter England and France, 1914‒1918’, *English Historical Review*, 122(2007). He has also edited *Indian Voices of the Great War: Soldiers’ Letters, 1914‒1918* (1999). David gained his PhD in the Department of War Studies at King’s College, London. He is a former Prize Research Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford. He is currently finishing a book on the Indian Army and the Second World War, to be published by Cambridge University Press.

**Title: Victory in Burma, 1944-1945**

**Abstract**

Japanese air superiority was a key factor in the loss of British Burma between January and May 1942. The tide then turned in late 1943 with the arrival of the first Spitfires, which could intercept the Japanese ‘Dinah’ high-speed reconnaissance aircraft, and which went on to win the battle for the skies. The Allied high command in Burma achieved an impressive level of ‘jointness’ in air-land operations. Air supply was vital at all stages in the Burma campaign, for example when Allied troops were encircled in the ‘Admin Box’ in the Arakan. In March 1944, when the Japanese attacked on the Assam front to cut the supply lines to China, Allied reinforcements were airlifted from the Arakan to Imphal, while the beleaguered Kohima garrison was supplied from the air. The long-range penetration tactics of the Chindits in Burma pioneered the combined use of air mobility and air supply. Dive-bombers – not favoured by the British Air Staff ‒ were used extensively by the RAF in Burma. Because there were few industrial targets, strategic bombing played a smaller role than it did in Europe, although Allied heavy bombers attacked oil targets and the Rangoon docks, and they mined the sea approaches to Rangoon. Air evacuation from the Burma battlefront saved many lives by getting casualties to hospital more quickly. RAF Thunderbolts provided close air support during the offensive, Beaufighters interdicted Japanese supply routes, while the Indian Air Force (founded in 1932) played a useful secondary role, often flying ‘Hurri-bombers’. Although heavily reliant on US-built aircraft, the RAF in Burma trusted the British Spitfire to gain and keep the air superiority on which most other air operations depended. Furthermore, by 1944 Japanese air units were being withdrawn from Burma to concentrate on the Pacific and on home defence. Allied air power was vital to the reconquest of Burma, although improved infantry training also played an important part.

**Panel 3 – The Recovery of the RAF Museum’s Dornier Do 17 and the Ongoing Impact of the Second World War**

**Ian Thirsk**

**Biography**

Ian Thirsk joined the Royal Air Force Museum (RAFM) in December 1989, working in the Visual Arts Department as Assistant Curator of the Film Archive. Promoted to Curator of Film in 1994, he became responsible for the Museum’s collection of Film and Sound Recordings, overseeing their preservation and conservation and ensuring their accessibility for research by external users and Museum staff. In 2010 Ian succeeded Richard Simpson as Keeper of RAFM’s Aircraft and Exhibits Department, the job title being revised to ‘Head of Collections’ to incorporate a wider remit including responsibility for the Museum’s Michael Beetham Conservation Centre (MBCC) at Cosford plus the Reserve Collection at Stafford. In June 2013 Ian led the RAFM’s Goodwin Sands Dornier 17 recovery project and oversaw other notable acquisitions including the C-130K Hercules, Harrier GR.9A, VC10 C.1K and Predator Drone. Retiring from post in 2021, Ian maintains a lifelong interest in aviation history, first inspired by his father who worked for de Havilland’s at Hatfield. Author of several books and published articles on the de Havilland Mosquito, Ian has been a voluntary member of the de Havilland Aircraft Museum’s Large Object Conservation team for over forty years.

**Title: The Dornier’s Recovery**

**Abstract**

This presentation will consider the recovery of the Dornier, from its discovery to its exhumation and conservation. This includes discussion about the key stakeholders and partners.

**Darren Priday**

**Biography**

Darren Priday is the Manager of the RAF Museum’s Michael Beetham Conservation Centre (MBCC), based at the RAF Museum’s Midlands site. After serving in the Royal Air Force for over 26 years as an Aircraft Airframe Engineer, working on VC10, Phantom, Jaguar and Hawk, following discharge in 2005, Darren was fortunate to join the RAF Museum’s Michael Beetham Conservation Team. Since 2013, Darren has been the Manager of the Centre, overseeing the Large Object engineering at all three Museum sites.

**Title: Dornier Recovery from the Sea**

**Abstract**

This talk will provide an overview of the aircraft’s last flight, including what happened to the crew and the aircraft’s recovery from the sea. The talk will then share information about how the RAF Museum went about stabilising the airframe at the Michael Beetham Conservation Centre (MBCC).

**Notes**