



RAF Hendon: The Birthplace of Aerial Power

Andrew Renwick

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If any one airfield in the world could claim to be the home of military aviation, RAF Hendon has to be the no.1 contender. The story starts more than 150 years ago in August 1862, when one Henry Treacey Coxwell took a party on a balloon flight from the present-day Hendon site. It was not an auspicious start - suffering from light winds they only just reached a field near Mill Hill.

Aviation returned to Hendon in 1910 in the form of British aviation pioneer Claude Grahame-White, who laid the foundations for the development of the Hendon site that was soon christened "The London Aerodrome." Many famous aviation personalities (not least Geoffrey de Havilland) came to Hendon and the fledgling airfield hosted nine Air Displays in the years leading up to World War I, before being requisitioned for pilot training and the air defense of London. Aircraft were also manufactured here including Morane-Saulnier Type H monoplanes and the Royal Aircraft Factory BE.2c.

Aircraft production and civilian flying training continued post-war until the airfield became an RAF station in 1927. As World War II unfolded, Hendon was a Fighter Command station: Hurricanes flew from Hendon at the height of the Battle of Britain and later in the war, USAF units moved in as Hendon became home to transport and communications squadrons.

With the return of peacetime, and despite the steady encroachment of urban London on the already cramped airfield site, flying continued at RAF Hendon, with the last aircraft using the site as late as 1968. Today, Hendon is best known as home of the RAF Museum, housed in part in the historic First World War hangars and widely regarded as one of the world's premier aviation collections.

RAF Hendon: The Birthplace of Aerial Power narrates the full story of this remarkable airfield through war and peace and provides a wealth of information for historians and aviation enthusiasts alike.

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