

## DAY TRIP TO TANGMERE

On Monday 3rd November a number of us set off by coach to Tangmere, armed with a Fact Sheet kindly compiled by Brian Lavery. On arrival at the Museum and after hot drinks in the cafe, we met up for a talk given by Sheryl Green, an impressively knowledgeable lady who lectures on the Allied Intelligence Agents during the 2nd World War. She began by telling us that in 1940, the Special Operations Executive (S.O.E.) was set up and how Allied Intelligence Agents were flown in and out from Tangmere Aerodrome. The Westland Lysander was the aircraft mainly used to transport the Agents into Occupied Europe with the even more dangerous missions in then retrieving them as well as taking supplies to the resistance networks. Although discussing some of the heroic men who were Agents, such as Jean Moulin, Sheryl concentrated on the number of women Agents who served as Couriers and Radio operators, such as Diane Rowden, Cecily Lefort, Violette Szabo and Noor Inayat Khan, all of whom flew out from Tangmere and were tragically captured by the Nazis and executed. Sheryl also spoke of the rivalry of the Intelligence Agencies at the time.

We then moved on into the many different areas of the Museum, illustrating the history of Tangmere from 1917-1970 (when the aerodrome was closed down by the RAF). There were so many aircraft on display, I loved seeing the streamlined Hawker Hunter, the Spitfire and the Lightning Interceptor. So much information to take in, the time flew by, I was sorry to miss the Flight Simulator where visitors can "fly" a number of different aircraft.

After an enjoyable break for lunch at the "Anglesey Arms", the coach took us to the Priory of St. Mary and St. Blaise at Boxgrove which was initially established as a Benedictine Priory in the 12th Century. History tells us that a church existed here even before the Norman Conquest. The architecture is a mixture of Romanesque and Gothic with spectacular stained-glass windows. The ceiling depicts flowers and foliage. More recently a stained-glass window was installed commemorating the 1st American aviator to be killed in action during the Battle of Britain and his grave is in the churchyard. The Priory Guest House, close by, is now in ruins but it was where dignitaries were entertained and where travellers and pilgrims could rest.

Then it was back on the coach for the drive home! A most memorable day, a lot to absorb and certainly worth a return visit. My thanks to Nicola Mason for organising it and keeping us all together.

Gillian Wellings.