

U3A WWW Group visit to Duxford: 5th November 2019



Being relatively new members of the U3A this was our first Gredley trip, and we were pleased that it ran so well and according to schedule. On arrival at Duxford we all went to the AirSpace exhibition from which Tim Young, our Group Co-ordinator gave us an overview of the Duxford site, its history and exhibits. After that everyone went off to explore as they wished. We decided on our own route by reviewing a site map whilst having coffee and cake in the Armoury Café and Kitchen, and decided to take an alternative view by avoiding aeroplanes as much as possible.

We had previously been impressed by seeing a submarine in Scotland, so decided to expand our knowledge by visiting the Air and Sea exhibition, which included submarines. Although initially disappointed at the absence of any “full-size” submarines we enjoyed seeing the German Navy one-man *Biber* submarine and the British HMS X7 midget submarine. Furthermore, the Water Wagtail gyro kite used as an observation platform by German U-Boats highlighted the ingenuity and dangers associated with submarine warfare.

Earlier in the summer we had visited the Battle of Britain Bunker in Uxbridge, north-west London, so decided to continue this theme by going next to the Duxford 1940 Operation Room; only to find that it was closed for refurbishment. A short diversion however enabled us to see unusual vehicles such as a Hucks Starter which helped you get your plane started during the 1920s and 30s, and was based on a Ford Model T car, and a Standard Beaverette light armoured car based on an ordinary car chassis, and used to protect Duxford during the 1940s.

After a light lunch in the American Air Museum and seeing exhibits from the Cold War we went back in time by visiting the Land Warfare exhibition, particularly the D-Day and Normandy Experience. It was interesting to hear how the midget submarines we had learnt about earlier had played a role in the D-Day landing.

Unfortunately, it was now time to dodge the rain showers and meet up with our fellow group members and head back to Newmarket. Overall it was a great, entertaining and educational day, and we look forward to going back to see things like Conservation in Action and the Story of Historic Duxford exhibitions. The WWW Group trip had certainly lived up to our expectations and we look forward to the next one.



Steve and Joanne Garner

