



**Press Release – For Immediate Release**

## **WW1 Living History event major success**

**Essex, July 29, 2024:** Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome in Essex, Europe's largest surviving First World War aerodrome, hosted another of its famous Living History Events this weekend, to great success.

The popular museum is battling for survival, trying to recover from huge financial losses caused by the recent road closures that prevented its loyal supporters from reaching the site.

With the road now fully open, the audiences so desperately needed to keep the museum open are starting to return, with this event attracting visitors from south of London and further afield.

Under a gleaming sun, thrilled visitors enjoyed the 'Trench Experience' – provided by the 10<sup>th</sup> Essex Living History Group, which saw groups of visitors be escorted through a front line 'Trench' as it exploded into life around them. Gunfire from Vickers and Lewis machine Guns echoed around the aerodrome as the excited audiences experienced, first-hand, the fear of an enemy attack. Paul Weaver, a Commanding Officer and Secretary of the 10<sup>th</sup> Essex, was only too happy to support the event.

"We love coming to Stow Maries – it's a privilege to support the museum with our 'Trench'. It's an exciting way to engage people in our history and help this vital place to survive."

Fellow Living Historian Owen Powell, Chairman of the highly respected Great War Society, brought members from Doncaster and beyond to take part.

"Stow Maries is a special place and working with them to educate and entertain their visitors is great fun" he said.

"Some of our members travelled 7 hours just to be here and there was no hesitation from them at all. This museum is one of the most important in the country and we are glad to support them."

The two-day event was enjoyed by hundreds of visitors. After enjoying the exhibitions, hangars and various displays by the groups under a beating sun, the culmination on both days was a 'Gun Run' tournament, where opposing teams competed to strip, run with, reassemble and prepare to fire heavy period Vickers machine guns – in an echo of the famous 'Royal Tournament Gun Run'. Judging by the enthusiastic cheers of the crowd, the heat did not dampen spirits.

At the close of the competition, the Charity's Chief Executive, Ian Flint, took a moment to thank both the crowd and the hard-working historians for all their support, highlighting how grateful the charity was for all the support and urging all those present to spread the word.

"We are not going to give in. "he said, "We are all going to work as hard as we can to save this museum and with all your help there is a chance we can do it."

The next event at the site is the Wings and Wags dog show on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> August. For details of how to visit the site, or to donate to their funds, go to

[www.stowmaries.org.uk](http://www.stowmaries.org.uk)

Ends

Further information from CEO Ian Flint on [ian.flint@stowmaries.org.uk](mailto:ian.flint@stowmaries.org.uk)

**Notes for editors:**

- Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome, Hackman's Lane, Purleigh, CM3 6RN is open from 10am until 4pm, on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. To check out their packed events programme or to make a donation to their survival, visit [www.stowmaries.org.uk](http://www.stowmaries.org.uk)
- A campaign to save the site in 2012 led to its purchase, following a generous grant from the Heritage Memorial Fund. It was placed in the care of Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome, a registered Charity.
- Today the museum, still an operational airfield, is supported and maintained by over 100 volunteers.
- More information about Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome can be found at [www.stowmaries.org.uk](http://www.stowmaries.org.uk)
- Images Credit: SMGWA