



# Rochester Avionic Archives Newsletter

## From the Curator

Our meeting with Liz and Barrie Walker proved most interesting; Liz being the Great great niece of the Short brothers. They had spent a busy time down in the Rochester area which included a visit to the tunnels under the Rochester Esplanade used by Short Brothers during WWII. These tunnels featured in a BBC programme called 'Secret Britain'.

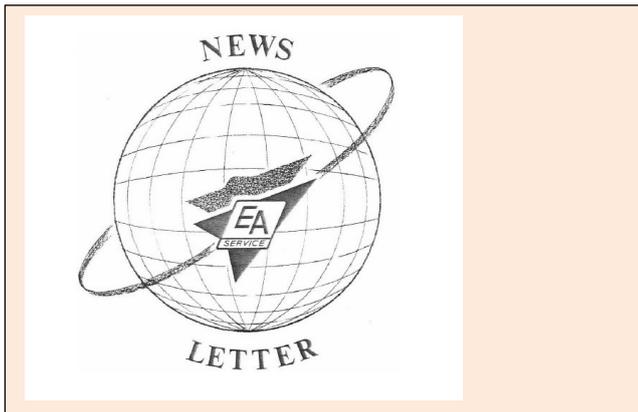
We recently acquired some 1700 large negatives from the collection of Leonard Hill which were kindly donated to the RAA by Norma Crowe of the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

I have included a few bits from the AS&R Scrap Book and in particular a page of cartoons which really show how times have changed (definitely for the better!).

Finally I would like to thank BAE Systems for inviting the whole RAA team to the 'Performance Recognition Evening' held at the Priestfield Stadium.

Chris Bartlett

Curator

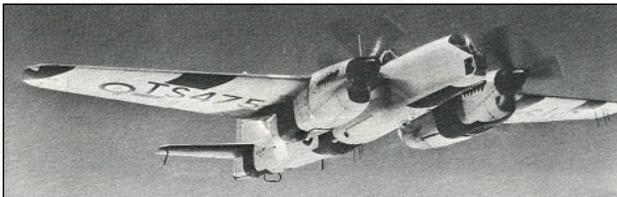


The symbol of SERVICE in orbit on world-wide coverage was on the cover of the AS&R Newsletter. The EA-SERVICE flash has become established as the Divisional insignia and will be appearing in a variety of ways in the near future.

March 1962 AVIATION SERVICE AND REPAIR  
DIVISION No 3  
(MARCH 1962)

## Short Sturgeon and Auto-Pilot

In 1955 Short Brothers at Rochester were overhauling both Beaufighter T.T.Mk10 and Short Sturgeons for target towing. The second prototype Sturgeon was used for the first air test of an auto-pilot designed by Elliott Bros at Rochester. This aircraft was housed and maintained on Rochester Airport by the remnants of the Short's staff until the unit and the aircraft were sent to the main Short's factory at Belfast,



## AS&R Car Hire Scheme (1960's).

The car hire scheme is now going into action, the cars being made available from Russels Garage, Chatham, at about one a week. The hiring of Morris Traveller models was completely abandoned, by instructions from the Divisional Manager, when he heard that these cars would be subject to a Car 'C' license cover and consequent Ministry of Transport Log Sheets where the driver would probably spend more time filling in his movements than he would Service Engineering. It was, therefore, decided that the Austin A.40 new model would be adopted.

At the Service Engineers meeting just before Christmas several opinions were expressed as to the reliability of the A.40, but it was felt that these opinions were based on a vehicle hired by Mr. S. Wells which was certainly badly serviced. This will not happen with the present vehicles and the Division will be taking a very keen interest in the general condition of the cars. It is hoped that the people allocated these cars will be as careful with them as they would be their own vehicle; a forlorn hope, maybe, but the means of retaining a hard won privilege.

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The picture above shows Ron Hayden, a Mechanical Design Engineer and coincidentally Ann Jackson's father, relaxing at Nairobi Airport

A selection of pictures from the proving flight of the VC-10 to Nairobi in November 1964. Elliott engineers from Transport Aircraft Controls Division (TACD) went along to maintain the Flight Control System. Earlier that year flights to Karachi, Kano in Nigeria, Accra and Lagos, among others, took place mostly within a day. The first flights required engineers who were familiar with the Autopilot and they were required to be on the flight deck for landings using the Auto-pilot and were also asked to make notes. After the first seven flights things were relaxed just to give some engineers flying experience (back in 1964 quite possibly some engineers may not have flown).



Transport at Nairobi Airport



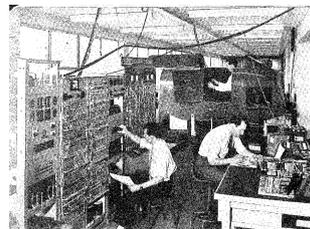
A rather poor picture but it does show the comfortable and spacious cabin of the VC-10.

**ELLIOTT**

OPEN DAYS at Airport Works  
April 22nd - 23rd, 1961

**ELLIOTT BROTHERS (LONDON) LIMITED**  
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Development of autopilot systems for the Vickers V.C.10 transatlantic jet air liner in a laboratory at Borehamwood.

TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT CONTROLS DIVISION

Production of components for the dual autopilot system for the Vickers V.C.10 200-seat transatlantic jet air liner has just started at Airport Works. Over the next few years equipment worth millions of pounds will be made here for use all over the world. The V.C.10 will be one of the first aircraft in the world equipped with blind-landing facilities which Elliotts have designed and are making. The Division is now looking to the future and is engaged on the study of autopilots and flight control systems for Supersonic airliners which will fly at speeds up to 25 miles per minute. It is also engaged on autopilots and automatic controls for helicopters and vertical take-off aircraft.

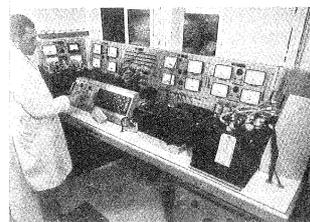


Testing an autopilot before delivery.

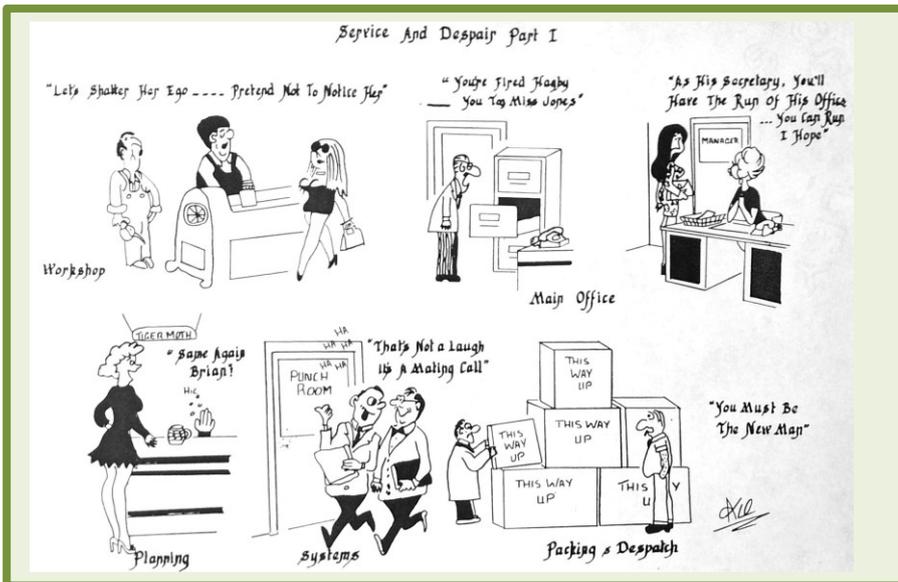
WELL KNOWN AIRCRAFT CONTROLS DIVISION

Many of the latest types of aircraft in service have autopilot and control systems produced by this Division. It is currently producing the only fully integrated flight control system for a supersonic aircraft in Europe and its activities cover the whole field of autopilot, flight control and air data systems for aircraft, including work on gyroscopes and hydraulic valves.

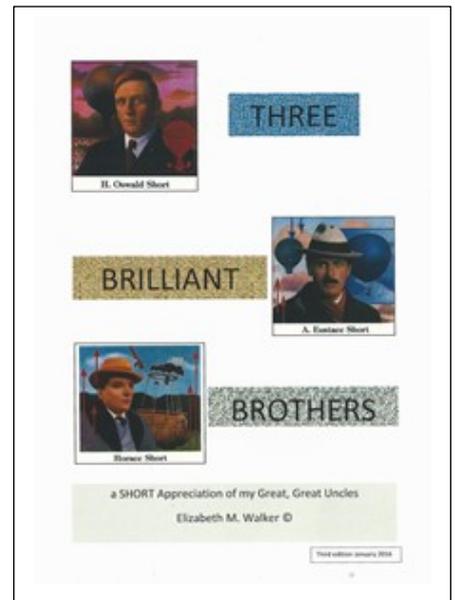
A demonstration model of an autopilot system for a target aircraft will be on show.



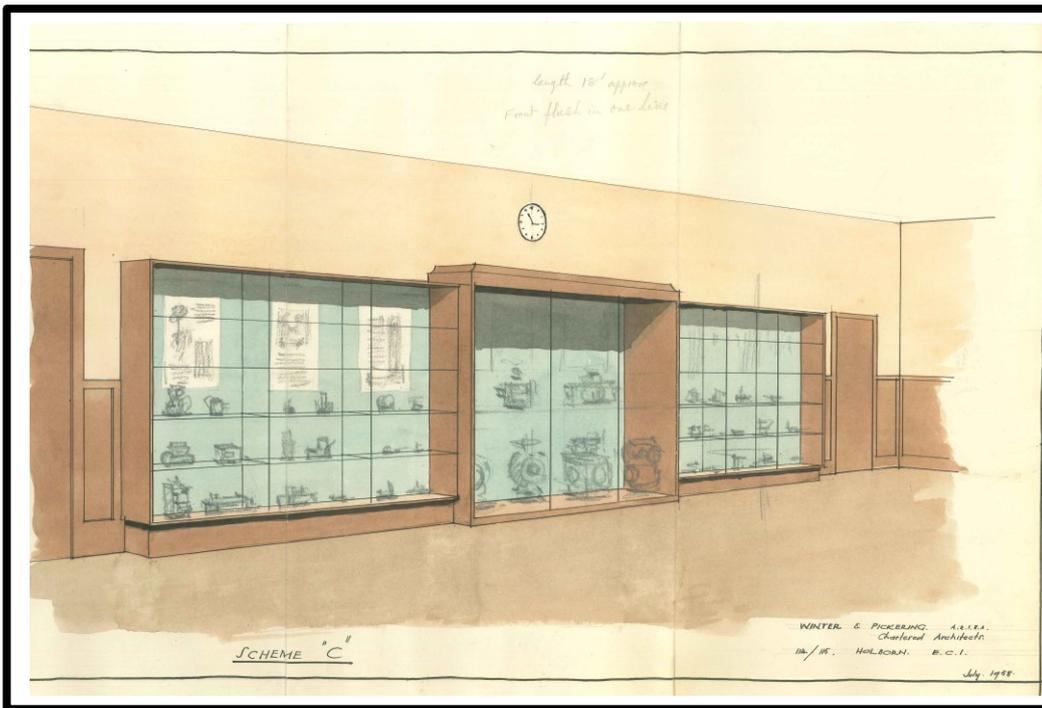
The cover and one page from the 1961 Open Day Guidebook for Elliott Bros Open Day



One of the many cartoons typical of the 1960's in this case from an Aviation Service and Repair Divisional newsletter (AS&R was known as Aviation Service and Despair)



The booklet on the Short Brothers produced by Liz Walker



A plan for the Airfield entrance to Elliott Bros which was at one time the main reception. It was later called the 'William Elliott' entrance. The plan shows some display cases and it is not known if this was ever carried out. A large part of this area was later filled in with an office each side encroaching into what was originally quite an open space.



Elliott Brothers (London) Ltd - Long Service Association badge (1960's or earlier)



**Newsletter 18**  
In case you did not realise it is Marc Isambard Brunel and his son Isambard Kingdom Brunel who are buried in Kensal Green Cemetery along with many other famous people.

**TSR2**  
When the airframe was on life-test at RAE Farnborough the wings suffered premature fatigue failure. Does anyone know if this is true as it does not appear in any of the published literature I have seen.  
Ed.

Rochester Aerodrome in 1943. This map was found in the new collection of site drawings. It is of interest in showing all the Forts in the area



**Leonard Hill Negatives**

In 2007 I was asked to help with a collection of photos from Leonard Hill a Rochester photographer who has pictures dating back to post war including negatives of the Airport and Elliott equipment. These pictures have been recovered from a garden shed and are now safe in the Medway Archives and Local Studies and we are very grateful for the donation of some 1700 negatives. One example is given below.



An early Head Up Display probably for the Viggen although this unit has a sort of 'power bulge' on the top forward of the Combiner. The Part no. is 429D1449-A-1 which suggests it was built at Sydenham as all the Rochester Divisional Codes began with '2' i.e 229 for Airborne Display Division.



**Airport Works in 1961**



Another of the Leonard Hill pictures showing Cyril Smith of Automatic Test Equipment Division with a Compact ATE for the Clansman a Combat Net Radio system used by the UK Army from 1976 to 2010.

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The latest LiteHUD Head Up Display. The RAA holds some prototypes of this unit