

Firm can hold its head up with pride

An Evening Post Supplement, October 17, 1987

Looking towards year 2,000 and beyond

A GOLDEN future awaits world-beating GEC Avionics, according to managing director Ron Howard.

By RICHARD JACKSON

In an exclusive interview with the Post he outlined his hopes for the company in the year 2000 and beyond.

And he spoke of some of the mind-boggling technology which he is confident will keep the firm ahead of its rivals.

Mr Howard revealed that work was progressing on cockpit technology which will never go wrong. The machine itself will see the problems and rectify them independently.

"Equipment will never exhibit faults during the whole of its life. It will be self healing," he said.

Prototypes will undergo experimental tests within six months and next year tests are due to start with the giant Boeing company.

It is just one of the fields Australian Mr Howard expects the firm to capitalise on in coming years.

The mainstay of the firm will continue to be avionics, but applications of the technology in other fields will be explored.

Already GEC Avionics technology is at work 6,000 ft under the sea off Canada, helping with a deep water drilling job for an oil firm.

And technology developed for Concorde has been modified to help pump 50,000 barrels of oil a day from

the Magnus North Sea oilfield since 1978.

Mr Howard said: "In the future we will be making more advanced versions of the things we make now. In the year 2000 we will find hypersonic aircraft which will fly from London to Australia in the time it takes to get to New York by Concorde.

"You will get to the stage where a large amount of what a pilot does today is done automatically. He will always sit there and add the extra dimension to what the systems and computers already do."

America will continue to be a main market and the firm has recently acquired the 1,500 strong Astronics Corporation of the Lear-Siegler company to develop its US operation.

Mr Howard said: "We are going to have a more extensive capability in the US. The effect should be to bring more work to Rochester.

"If we divide the business estimates by the best predictions, between the six major companies in the field we are only getting a quarter of our due share. We are a very capable company which is not yet getting its full market share.



Ron Howard... on automatic pilot

"We don't see any limit to the expansion we can support through the people we can take on and the investment we can bring to bear. We are nowhere near our limit yet. We are as solid as the Boeing company — and that is pretty solid."

Mr Howard, who joined the company as a project engineer 33 years ago, said the company had brought together a unique blend of people who are ready to take on the world — and ignore the knockers of British industry.

"We have accrued a team of people who like very significant challenges.

There is a constant argument about how can British companies compete with the massive investment of other countries. It would be easy to lie back and say 'this is a bit tough'. But that doesn't seem to be what's happening with the people here. The instinct to win is very strong."

And he said the company would continue to sell itself hard in worldwide marketplaces and would not shrink from the strength of the opposition.

"It is down to the fundamental character of this company. We are not going to be trampled on by any of our competitors."

TIME TABLE OF SUCCESS

GEC Avionics' remarkable run of success in winning Queen's Awards goes back 19 years. The timetable of success is as follows:

- 1968 Export Award
- 1969 Export Award
- 1970 Export Award and Technology Award
- 1971 Export Award
- 1975 Technology Award
- 1978 Export Award
- 1983 Export Award and Technology Award
- 1985 Technology Award
- 1987 Export and Technology Award



With the Queen's Award are Martin Redfern, left, and Donald McNalty

Here's to another Queen's Award

THE presentation of the Queen's Export Award was made yesterday by the Lord Lieutenant of Kent Robin Leigh-Pemberton.

As the monarch's representative in the county, it is his job to hand over the trophy and a scroll, to the winning Airborne Display Division (ADD).

The technology award, which has also been won by ADD together with other divisions, was presented at GEC Avionics Basildon works.

Yesterday's presentation at Rochester was made to two of the division's employees — principal systems engineer Martin Redfern and assistant chief of testing Donald McNalty.

VIP guests included civic leaders, local MPS and industry chiefs. The award-winning scroll was signed by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

GEC Avionics has now won a total of 12 Queen's Awards and it is the third time the company has achieved the 'double'.

It previously won both export and technology awards in 1970 and 1983. Only two awards can be made to the same company each year. The awards have a life span of five years.

GEC Avionics managing director Ron Howard said: "There is always a great deal of excitement when we win one of these awards. There is no complacency about it."

INSIDE THIS 8-PAGE TRIBUTE

- A town within a town — Page 2
- Helping pilots to fly blind — Page 3
- Displays that make the mind boggle — Page 4.5
- World praise pours in — Page 6
- Scientific girls in demand — Page 7

GEC AVIONICS



A town within a town

Bid to attract others

AN AWESOME JOB KEEPING IT RUNNING

ONE of the main weapons in the hard-sell of Medway has been the presence of GEC Avionics.

All around the world the name of the firm has been used as a lever to try and attract other employers to the area.

And, a council leader has admitted, the continued presence of GEC Avionics kept Medway afloat after the Chatham Dockyard closure and jobs axed at other factories.

Rochester upon Medway leader Doug MacLennan said: "When we go abroad trying to attract investment here, GEC is the first thing we mention. They have got a worldwide reputation.

"We can prove that the skills are here because GEC is based here. If it had gone at the time all the others were going, we would have been in a hell of a mess."

RUNNING Medway's biggest business is an awesome task. Just making the 40-acre site ready for work is a mind-boggling undertaking.

The scale of the operation is such that:

- *A team of 275 people is needed to keep the plant running;
- *Car parks alone cover 17 acres and have spaces for 5,000 cars;
- *The factory floor space is 1,000,000sq ft and the roof area covers 21 acres — or 110 football pitches;
- *The phone system handles two million calls a year and the factory uses half a million toilet rolls and 43,000 bars of soap each year;
- *The site uses enough electricity to power 7,000 houses and gas for 10,000 houses and uses 33 million gallons of water a year;
- *The cooling for the air-conditioning is equivalent to nine million domestic fridges.

Travel agency

Feeding the workforce is also a staggering task. A team of 56 work in the canteen providing 1,700 meals a day. Staff have to butter 1,000 bread rolls every morning.

The man in charge of running the site is Chris Frost. He admits that few of the employees ever give a thought about his job.

"I don't expect them to want to know," he said. "They just want things to be in place and ready for them to do their jobs. I hope management appreciate what we do."

The company has its own airport and has two aircraft — a Beechcraft King Air and a Piper Navajo — which are busy taking people to important business meetings in Britain and Western Europe. Charter planes are also used.

"It's not just for executives," said Chris. "If it



The team that keeps the factory running — Bill Gosling, Don Freeman and Chris Frost

was, we probably wouldn't run the planes. A lot of our passengers are working engineers and it is vital for them to get to places quickly."

The company also has its own travel agency which arranges trips all around the globe. Managers often use Concorde for urgent travel and enough people to fill several Jumbo jets travel during the course of major contracts.

The travel office is so busy that it can issue its own British Rail and internal airline tickets. Car hire is also big business for GEC Avionics. Dozens of vehicles are rented each day.

A repair and maintenance team is permanently on site keeping the buildings in working order and sub-contractors are brought in for bigger jobs.

In last winter's big freeze, eight JCBs worked to clear snow so the factory could keep running. An emergency helicopter pad was used by the Forces, airlifting equipment to standard communities.

GEC workers stood out in blizzards at 2am setting up flare paths so the helicopters could land safely. And at one point the firm was asked to reduce its use of power to prevent the Medway Towers being blacked out.

Equipment was switched off until the overall use of electricity was back to manageable proportions.

Chris said: "We operate like our own company and have a very strict budget. We are a loss centre for the company. The others make the money, we spend it."

Idiot's guide to how it all works

HEAD-UP displays are a mind-boggling feat of modern technology. And that means most people have not got a clue how they work. So here is an idiot's guide to how the HUD works.

It is made up of two black boxes — the display unit (DU) and electronics unit (EU).

The EU is a computer which does various computing tasks and generates symbols for display to the pilot via the DU.

This DU uses a cathode ray tube to draw symbols generated by the EU. This picture is then transmitted optically to the pilot's eyes via a system of lenses and mirrors.

Glass on top of the DU lies between the pilot's eyes and the windscreen so he looks at the world through the glass. This glass reflects the symbols into the pilot's eyes and also transmits the image of the real world so the two are combined.

Image

The picture is focused at infinity so the pilot can look far ahead of the aircraft and still gather information such as aircraft speed and altitude without having to refocus his eyes to look at instruments.

At night the symbols are overlaid on to a synthetic image of the outside world generated by a Forward Looking Infra-Red System (FLIR).

It obtains its image by detecting temperature differences between various objects in the outside world.

This time the FLIR image is presented as video just like a domestic television screen. The pilot can literally see in the dark.

The new holographic HUD uses glass manufactured in part using holographic techniques which increase the field of view.

We knew we were on a winner here

A MOOD of optimism is growing in the Towns — but GEC Avionics has never doubted that the area would be a winner.

Spokesman Malcolm Moulton said: "We've always had faith in the Towns. It's just that people are more inclined to believe us now. What we have been saying has not always been popular. "We can feel a

current of self-confidence growing. The lifeblood of our business are people with technical qualifications from graduates to skilled crafts people."

"We've had as big a battle to get the brains to come to Medway as we've had to win orders."

The company moved to Rochester after the war at the request of the Government. Its growth and success has often been there while the Towns have been suffering economic gloom.

Even when the firm has hit poorer times it has managed to avoid redundancies by cutting back on new recruits.

More than 700 people now belong to its long service association.

L.G. SCOTT & SON LTD
ARE HAPPY TO CONGRATULATE
G.E.C. AVIONICS
ON THEIR EXCELLENT PERFORMANCE DURING 1987 RESULTING IN
THE QUEEN'S AWARDS TO INDUSTRY
L.G. SCOTT & SON LTD
SPECIAL PURPOSE MACHINERY
AUTOMATIC ASSEMBLY MACHINERY
TOOLS & GENERAL MACHINING
JIGS & TOOLS
FULL CNC MACHINING CAPABILITIES
47-49 Second Avenue, Gillingham
MEDWAY 47248

P.F. AIRSPACE AVIONICS LTD
PROTOTYPE & PRODUCTION WIRING
ELECTRONIC DESIGN
Congratulates
G.E.C. AVIONICS LTD
ONCE AGAIN ON THEIR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT
Double Queen's Award to Industry 1987
WE WISH THEM CONTINUED SUCCESS FOR THE FUTURE
P.F. AIRSPACE AVIONICS LTD
7-8 New Road Avenue, Chatham, Kent
MEDWAY 43878
MAIDSTONE 682709

Congratulations & Best Wishes to GEC AVIONICS
On your continued success
B L PRINTING CO,
STAR HILL INDUSTRIAL CENTRE
1 NEW ROAD, ROCHESTER
TEL: MEDWAY 815791

GEC AVIONICS



Return
of music
while
you
work

Helping pilots to fly in blind conditions

A NEW phenomenon has been noted among production workers in the airborne display division — nodding heads.

It's not because they are dropping off, or even trying to give a silent sign for 'yes'.

No, the employees are listening in to their favourite music after bosses discovered that pop and profits can mix.

Artificial

Personal stereos have recently been allowed following a trip to America by boss Carly Childs where he noticed workers wearing headphones.

The production area in the division has no windows and uses artificial light and heating. In an attempt to make the place more human, personal stereos are allowed.

And, says Carly, it has proved a winner with people working better while listening in to their favourite music.



The Falcon Eye helmet for night flying



A pilot's eye view of a holographic head up display

JUST what does the award-winning Airborne Display Division produce which is so special?

Well, it develops and produces aviation electronics — or avionics — systems which display information so military aircraft can fly and navigate aircraft and aim and fire weapons, by day or night in all weathers.

Using advanced computer-based technology, these systems include head-down displays — similar to television screens in the cockpit — and head-up displays (HUD) which project flight information on to a screen in front of the pilot.

TV SCREENS IN THE COCKPIT

He can then simultaneously see both the display, focussed at infinity, and the outside world.

And both systems can project images, generated by infrared sensors, which give the pilot a view of the outside world as clear as a black and white television picture.

It exactly overlays the view the pilot would have if it were daylight, so allowing the pilot to fly safely at low level and find and attack targets at night and in bad

visibility. The division also produces systems for improving night vision which can be fitted to a pilot's flying helmet.

The night vision goggles use devices which intensify natural light — there is always some — many thousand times to give the pilot, wherever he looks, a clear view even on the darkest night.

Work is underway on a system which incorporates flight information displays and night vision capability within the flying helmet and projected immediately in front of the pilot's eyes.

This integrated helmet is seen as the display system of the future.

Giant that helped tiddlers

HUNDREDS of small firms in Medway can thank GEC Avionics that they are in business.

For it was one of the driving forces behind Medway Enterprise Agency, which now claims to have helped provide 3,000 jobs in The Towns.

As a founder sponsor, GEC Avionics helped

launch the agency in 1982 and general manager Glyn Thomas acted as chairman for the first five years. As well as \$5,000 a year backing, the Rochester giant also put many of its facilities and know-how at the disposal of

the agency. The work of Glyn Thomas has been praised by agency director Guy Sibbey, who said: "He had an enormous influence in the way things went and guided the board in the early days. GEC Avionics has always been totally

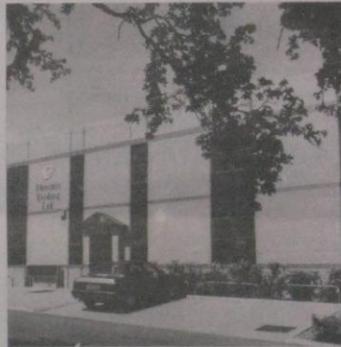
committed to the concept of the agency."

Thomas described his firm's willingness to help new firms as "enlightened self-interest". A buoyant Medway was a good environment for GEC to thrive in.

The agency has helped 850 firms start-up in Medway and another 500 have been given assistance to stay afloat.

WHERE PRECISION COUNTS

We congratulate GEC Avionics on once again winning double Queen's Award honours, both for Exports and Technological achievement and are proud to have contributed to this success during the past 14 years. For machined parts wherever precision counts and price, delivery and quality matter, Phoenix Tooling can be relied on for the right result. For information please contact Ray Gutteridge, Managing Director



PHOENIX TOOLING LTD.

2, Saracen Close, Gillingham Business Park, Gillingham, Kent ME8 0QN. Tel: Medway (0634) 363168 or 32660



A.T. VINCENT & SON, LTD.

**BUILDING CONTRACTORS
&
EXHIBITION CONTRACTORS**
ESTABLISHED 1924

offer congratulations to

G.E.C AVIONICS LTD
on obtaining

THE QUEENS AWARD TO INDUSTRY

90 SUTRDEE AVENUE, GILLINGHAM
Telephone: 0634 51228 & 53718



GEC AVIONICS

We're lucky to have you says MP

HEAD-UP AND

ONE of GEC Avionics' biggest fans is Medway MP Dame Peggy Fenner.

Not only does the firm keep a lot of her constituents in work but she believes the company itself is an outstanding member of the community.

"They sell very hard around the world and have maintained an increasing workforce," she said.

"We are extremely fortunate to have them in the constituency because it attracts skills from a wide area and provides a great many jobs.

"They are also extremely important, quite apart from their continued success. As a firm they have been wonderful constituents. The managing director and senior directors



PEGGY FENNER have always been extremely helpful," she said.

"They are a shining example of a good business to have in one's constituency. I am very pleased to support them. When the Nimrod vote was taken in the commons I would not vote against them."

'NO PRAISE TOO HIGH FOR THIS COMPANY'

YOU'RE the greatest! That's the message to GEC Avionics from business boss John Day.

As chief executive of Medway and Gillingham Chamber of Commerce he is well positioned to see the impact the firm has on north Kent — and he is full of praise.

"The Medway Towns would be significantly poorer without them. In every organisation that comes together to improve business in the Medway Towns you always find GEC Avionics involved," he said.

"The company puts back as much into the community as possible. I can't think of praise high enough for what they have done and are continuing to do for the Medway Towns."



SOCIETY LINEN SERVICES

Wish to congratulate GEC AVIONICS On their 12th Queens Award to Industry

A complete cleaning service for:

Offices Shops Supermarkets and Factories

Also a Carpet and Window Cleaning Service

Maidstone Road, CHATHAM Kent

(0634) 48991

The door slid back on a humble-looking store room. A few objects lay on the shelves waiting collection.

The room was no larger than a luxurious broom cupboard.

Dave "Curly" Childs viewed the various items in there, and said casually: "I'd say this lot is worth between a half and one million pounds. Probably nearer a million."

Curly is in charge of the Airborne Displays Division's production department for which normally is pretty abnormal.

Its military customers want orders delivered today, or preferably yesterday. The day-to-day technology is mind-boggling and the test procedures so exhaustive that an outsider might accuse them of nit-picking.

Take, for example, the "ovens" where each of the head-up displays goes through a roller-coaster ride from the Alaskan wastes to the deserts of the Sahara.

Temperatures vary from minus 41 degrees centigrade to plus 71 to recreate the extremes that the displays may have to face during life in a fighter cockpit.

During the heat and cold test, which last three days, the HUD is ferociously shaken up and down, left to right and backwards and forwards.

This is the "soft" test — a randomly selected

Displays that make the mind boggle

HUD has to go through a more thorough examination. It last several thousand hours and the temperatures are even more extreme.

Thoroughness could be the watchword of the 300-strong department, if the HUD isn't perfect when it leaves GEC, they have had a damn good try to make it so.

The department produces about 60 complete HUDs a month and the order book extends to 1992 — with orders still coming in.

The team consists of highly skilled engineers as well as scores of less qualified, but equally important, workers.

Behind the scenes, one group works on the frontiers of technology, creating test equipment to reproduce a working environment for the HUDs.

Curly has risen through the ranks at GEC after 25 years in the RAF. His department runs quietly and efficiently.

working together. It's all about teamwork," he said.

"We can't afford to have square pegs in round holes. We have a reputation for very high reliability and quality. Down-time is very expensive for military aircraft."

Not all his team works in the 36,000 sq ft air-conditioned, windowless department in a converted hangar.

Groups are sent out to customers — mostly in America — to solve any problems which may occur with either the head-up or head-down displays.

"Our market is purely military," said Curly. "It's very pressurized and we are in a very competitive business."

He knows, however, that his department is out in front. It makes more head-up displays than all the other manufacturers in the world put together.



Curly Childs with his world-beating

Success in every Environment

We congratulate GEC Avionics on their 3rd Queen's Award. Aviation is one environment in which successful products are backed by rigorous testing. Thermotron is proud to supply environmental simulation systems for some of GEC's most demanding programmes.

We have a world reputation for complete environmental test systems. For details, please contact us.



Thermotron UK Corporation, Unit 7 Enterprise Centre, Revenging Road, Lordswood Chatham, Kent ME5 8UD, Phone (0634) 684126/7/8

THREE TOWNS OFFICE EQUIPMENT LTD

SEND SINCERE CONGRATULATIONS TO GEC AVIONICS

ON THEIR WONDERFUL ACHIEVEMENT OF THE QUEENS AWARD TO INDUSTRY



Ashley House 2 Mill Hall Business Estate Aylesford Kent ME20 7JN

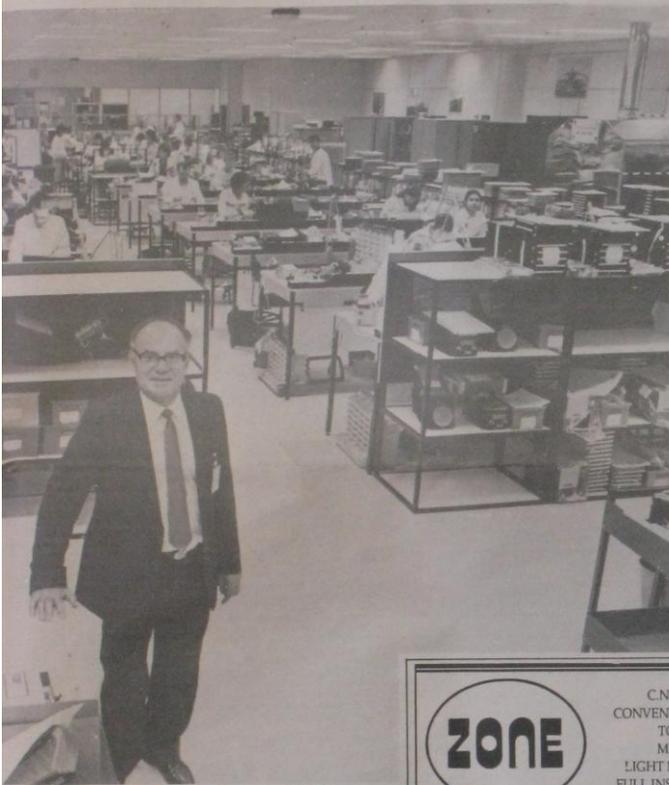
MAID: 75271

GEC AVIONICS



WAY AHEAD

Small firms praised for their help



SMALL is beautiful. Not the sort of sentiment you might expect from a g-normous operation like GEC Avionics.

But that is the mighty firm's view when it considers the dozens of small businesses in the medway area which keep it running.

Its £350 million a year operation would be thrown into jeopardy if it was not for the "little people" who support the firm.

Angus Maclean, who deals with about 60 suppliers from around The Towns, is full of praise for them.

"They are excellent and we spend a lot of time working with them. We have got a good rapport."

Growth

In fact, the main problem he faces is from the Medway businesses knocking on his door eager to win orders. They pick up on the slightest lead, he said.

Angus added: "If someone locally can do the job and puts up a good price, they tend to be favoured because they are local. The people around here are as good as anyone else."

"We can get most of the things we want around the Medway Towns. Hopefully these firms are growing with us."

On the technical



Production executive Angus Maclean

side, GEC pours out a helping hand by the company, which helps them get their enterprise off in the right direction.

And running a huge company requires many other local services just to keep the show on the road. Numerous ex-GEC employees have set up in business to supply their old bosses. Others have been given

Said Angus: "We couldn't survive without them and they couldn't survive without us. We are finding we are putting out more and more work to sub-contractors."

g head-up display production line

MEDWAY TOOL & GAUGE SERVICES LTD

congratulates
GEC AVIONICS
 on their outstanding achievement of
THE QUEEN'S AWARD TO INDUSTRY
We wish them every success for the future and look forward to our continued association with them.

MEDWAY TOOL & GAUGE SERVICES LTD
 12A New Road Avenue, Chatham, Kent
MEDWAY 407222



C.N.C. MACHINING
 CONVENTIONAL MACHINING
 TOOL DESIGN & MANUFACTURE
 LIGHT MECHANICAL ASSY
 FULL INSPECTION FACILITIES

Offer congratulations to GEC Avionics on obtaining The Queens Award to Industry

Zone Engineering is a precision engineering company situated in Gillingham, Kent. It is engaged in the manufacture, assembly and machining of precision components used in the Avionics and associated industries.

As well as C.N.C. machines we also have a good back up of up to date conventional machines and can offer a service that includes planning, tool design, tool manufacture, component manufacture and assembly, from engineering one off prototypes to batch and production runs to customers requirements.

If you have a machining requirement, whether it be conventional or C.N.C. please contact Mr M. Collins or Mr R. Collins.

GADS HILL, GILLINGHAM, KENT
 (0634) 576255 - 573457



SOCIETY CLEANING SERVICES

Wish to congratulate
GEC AVIONICS
 On their 12th Queens Award to Industry

Suppliers of:
Garment Rental (specialists)
Dust Control Mats
Cabinet Towels
Laundry Services

Maidstone Road,
CHATHAM
 Kent
(0634) 830030

GEC AVIONICS



Nimrod not a 'big blow'

THE Government's decision to scrap the Nimrod warning system was not a major blow to GEC Avionics, claims managing director Ron Howard.

He said the impact of the choice of the American AWACS had been blown out of proportion.

Mr Howard said: "The loss barely made an impact on us. The profit for the year hardly moved."

"It is unfortunate that the loss of Nimrod was seen by the world as a major catastrophe for the UK after so much money and effort had been put in."

"But we just diverted into other activities. It was a setback but the Press made it out to be immensely greater than it was."

TRAINING PRIORITY

TRAINING is a huge undertaking at GEC Avionics. At any one time about 600 people are undergoing some form of instruction.

Personnel manager John Ainley said: "There are a variety of training schemes for school leavers, people on YTS, trainee computer programmers and others needing technological training."

A lot of training is done on the Airport site, where the company has its own training team. Others go to Mid-Kent College.



Fighter for the future

TECHNOLOGY for the next generation of British fighter aircraft is being developed at GEC Avionics. It is one of the major investors in the development of a demonstrator for the Experimental Aircraft Programme (EAP).

The new plane will succeed the ageing Jaguar and its systems technology will be 15 years ahead of that used in the EAP's Tornado.

Last year the demonstrator flew over the Rochester works and also put on an impressive display at the Farnborough Air Show.

The company says its role in the EAP shows its continuing investment in the future. The Airborne Display Division has supplied the automatic flight controls, the air data computer and the state-of-the-art holographic head up displays.

GEC Avionics also provides panel displays, radio, navigation equipment, a television that records what the pilot sees and automatic test equipment.

World praise for team

WHEN Robin Sleight joined GEC's Airborne Displays Division it was a team of just 12.

Given the title project leader, there was not much of a project to lead.

And the division's first venture in the early 1980s never saw the light of day because it failed to reach the production stage.

Even now, with the division 900-strong and admired throughout the world, there is the occasional hiccup.

Robin, who now heads the division, admitted: "We have the odd false start but overall we do fairly well."

Fairly well is something of an understatement. Winning two Queen's Awards in one year sounds more like doing very well.



ROBIN SLEIGHT

Deserved

The division won a Queen's Award for Technology in 1985 and this year shares the award, given for its night vision work, with other GEC departments at Farnborough and Baddlon.

The export award, also won this year, is purely for the division. And with 95 per cent of its products going overseas, it is well deserved.

The list of countries which have bought from the division reads like a world gazetteer.

USA, Germany, Denmark, China, Thailand, Greece, Turkey, Italy, Spain... the list goes on.

In fact the Warsaw Pact nations and others like Iran are the only ones without equipment from the division.

The biggest customer is by far the United States. This, explained Mr Sleight, is because of its vast number of aircraft and the frequency with which new programmes are launched.

The division supplies equipment for the European Tornado and the American A7 and F16, for example.

The UK has bought 400 Tornados. There are 2,000 A7s and

4,000 F16s. That gives an idea of the sizes of the market.

The division is a company within a company. It has its own marketing staff, research and development teams, drawing offices and programme management.

"Our technical staff are operating at a world technological level. There is no-one doing more advanced work in the world," he said.

The sales team keeps a close watch on development in military fields. Among the team are ex-EAP pilots who keep in touch with the flying fraternity to find out what innovations are needed.

The Airborne Displays Division prides itself that it has a good idea what the military wants before formal announcement.

Mr Sleight said: "It is unusual for us to be taken totally by surprise by what arrives through our letter box. We tend to know what is coming."

Confident

With the technology in the head-up displays up to 18 months, ahead of the competition, he is confident the division will keep its market lead.

"The awards are a tremendous morale booster for the division. All the staff are very proud," said Mr Sleight.

It's a winning invitation

AWARD winning workers will show their families and friends around their high-tech "home" at an open day today.

The employees have been told they can invite guests to see the Airborne Display Division. About 2,000 people are expected to pass through the division during the day.

A spokesman said: "The award has been won by the people in the division so they are acting

as the hosts and have chosen who the guests will be. It can be their family, friends, next-door neighbour — whoever they want to bring."

In the past, the firm has held big open days for GEC Avionics' entire operation. This time it has been decided to restrict it to the Airborne Display Division, which has won the Queen's Award.

COLLIS Heating
Building Services Contractors
For installation and maintenance of all heating services.

COLLIS Retailing
Suppliers of tools and hardware. Color (main agents), horticultural merchants.

Congratulate
G.E.C. Avionics
on once again receiving the double Queen's Award honours.

COLLIS
25 HIGH STREET
STROOD
Tel: Medway (0634) 290221

CONGRATULATIONS ONCE AGAIN TO GEC AVIONICS

We supply GEC AVIONICS with Typesetting, Word Processing and Graphic Services.

GEC are tops in the Avionics field. We are tops in our field.

DESIGN & SECRETARIAL SERVICES LTD
THE OLD COURTHOUSE, NEW ROAD AVENUE,
CHATHAM, KENT.
TEL: MEDWAY 406697

C & I DESIGN LTD. ARE PROUD TO BE SUPPLIERS OF PUBLICITY, EXHIBITION & MODELMAKING SERVICES TO GEC AVIONICS

UNIT 15,
RAILWAY STREET IND. PK.
GILLINGHAM, KENT ME7 1YQ
TEL: MEDWAY 576797/574211

Pall Mall
CLEANING GROUP LTD
421 HIGH STREET CHATHAM

Cleaning contractors to GEC AVIONICS
Congratulations on a fine achievement
For free estimates, for quality cleaning phone
MEDWAY 408186

Established over 70 years
Members of Contract Cleaning & Maintenance Association

GEC AVIONICS

You can ALL share pride in success

THE people of Medway Towns should share the credit for GEC Avionics' great success, says the company.

It is only right that the area should feel proud of the Queen's Awards because the firm stresses its role as part of the community.

The awards last for five years and the company is already working on its submissions to

win awards next year. But Malcolm Moulton, who prepares them, admits it is getting tougher each year.

"The judges like to encourage firms which haven't won before and people are getting better at presenting their case."

"But it does not lose its appeal for us. It is the highest accolade to industry in the UK — to us it is like becoming heavyweight champion of the world."

"We like to think the award to us is an award to the Medway Community."

The firm's role in Medway is vast. As well as being the biggest private employer, so pumping millions into the local economy, it spends \$3 million a year with local sub-contractors, sponsors the Medway Enterprise Agency, backs the Information Technology Centre ITeC, runs Rochester Airport and is

involved in campaigns such as the recent schools' Drug Awareness Scheme.

A charity committee divides receipts from a workers' levy among local charities as well as national causes.

"The company makes the employees' contribution. We seek to support those activities which are close to the hearts of the employees and their

families," said Mr Moulton.

"We never forget we have got our feet firmly in the Medway Towns."

The company also runs the Medway Aeronautical Society, which has a large membership both inside and outside the firm. It is planning to set up a company for aircraft restoration and has been active in trying to keep the Sunderland flying boat in Medway.

FACTS

SOME facts about GEC Avionics:

● It is part of the General Electric Company, which celebrated its centenary in 1986.

● GEC Avionics has an associate American company with bases in Dallas, Seattle, Fort Worth, Dayton and Los Angeles.

● The British operation has its headquarters at Rochester — other centres are at Bauldon and Borehamwood.

● When the airborne display division won the technical achievement award in 1985, two Dutch F16s flew over the Rochester works in recognition.

● GEC Avionics produces computers for more than 30 types of American military aircraft.

● The firm has twice won FE for Work awards for its success in employing disabled people.



JOHN AINLEY ... man with jobs

IT'S a man's world at GEC Avionics — but the bosses wish they could change that.

They would love to have more women on the staff but it seems engineering is still a dirty word with the fairer sex.

In the production department, only one in 10 workers are women although the high-tech work can be done just as well by either.

Personnel manager John Ainley would also like to see more of Medway's teenagers coming forward with good Science A Levels to train for the avionics business.

Administrative and clerical vacancies are easily filled but getting suitable qualified engineers is a problem. The firm has about 50 outstanding vacancies, expansion means more opportunities are coming up.

The workforce now stands at 6,000 and will increase by about 400 next year as order books continue to bulge. Positive attempts are being made to attract more skilled youngsters, including women, into the company but it's an uphill struggle.

Order bulge

Mr Ainley said: "We are having to go outside the county to get people for university courses. We take in about 100 graduates from the Medway Towns and sponsor a large number of students."

"Last year we obtained 300 graduates from Australian universities — a tradition which dates back 10 years to the time when Aussie electronics was in dire straits and GEC had many vacancies."

Opportunities for graduates are immense. The firm has a policy of promoting talented engineers and the top tiers of management are packed with people who have worked up through the ranks.

The company is forever looking for new staff. In the 2,000-strong engineers department about 160 leave for more jobs each year. Add to that numerous retirements each year and other staff moving on and it means GEC has to recruit just to stand still.

Mr Ainley proudly recalls that the company has not lost production through industrial action for 16 years. Relations with the unions are as good as could be expected, he said.

'Scientific' girls are in demand

HI-TECH JOBS GALORE AWAIT RIGHT PEOPLE

Providing the back-up services for the workforce — in number as big as a small town — is a major operation. There is a bank on the site, three large subsidised canteens, a company doctor, welfare officer and a team of nurses.

For 60p a month workers can join the company social club which has a spectacular array of activities.

It runs a strong athletics club, a brass band, horticultural society, model aircraft club and a ballroom dancing group to name but a few. Sports from squash to sub-aqua diving and golf to karate.

At Christmas, the club runs parties for employee's children. Two parties are run with 400 kids at each. The club's own drama group stages an impressive pantomime and all employees children receive a present.

Important

The personnel department is quite small and efforts are made to divide the huge firm into small units so that workers do not feel like tiny cogs in a giant machine.

The general man-management is a mid-Atlantic style — partly British and partly American, due to the influence of major customers.

Mr Ainley explained: "The customer is the most important person with whom we come into contact so we adapt ourselves to suit him."

"We learn our lessons if we do something wrong. We might do it wrong once but we don't make the same mistake twice."



ONE of the major customers for the award-winning head-up displays is the General Dynamics Fighting Falcon. Otherwise known as the F-16, it is one of the world's most advanced fighter aircraft. GEC Avionics has supplied 4,000 HUDs for the aircraft. A recent £72 million order was announced for the latest holographic displays, and delivery should start in next spring.

Sincere Congratulations to
GEC AVIONICS
for winning the Queen's Award to Industry
from
WILD HEERBRUGG (UK) LTD
Suppliers of Theodolites and Collimating Telescopes for
use in GEC's testing and calibration facilities.

 Wild Heerbrugg (UK) Ltd.,
Revenge Road, Lordswood,
Chatham, Kent. ME5 8TE
Tel: Medway (0634) 64471
Telex: 965071 GEOSIM G


Rochester Airport Industrial Estate
21 Laker Road
Rochester

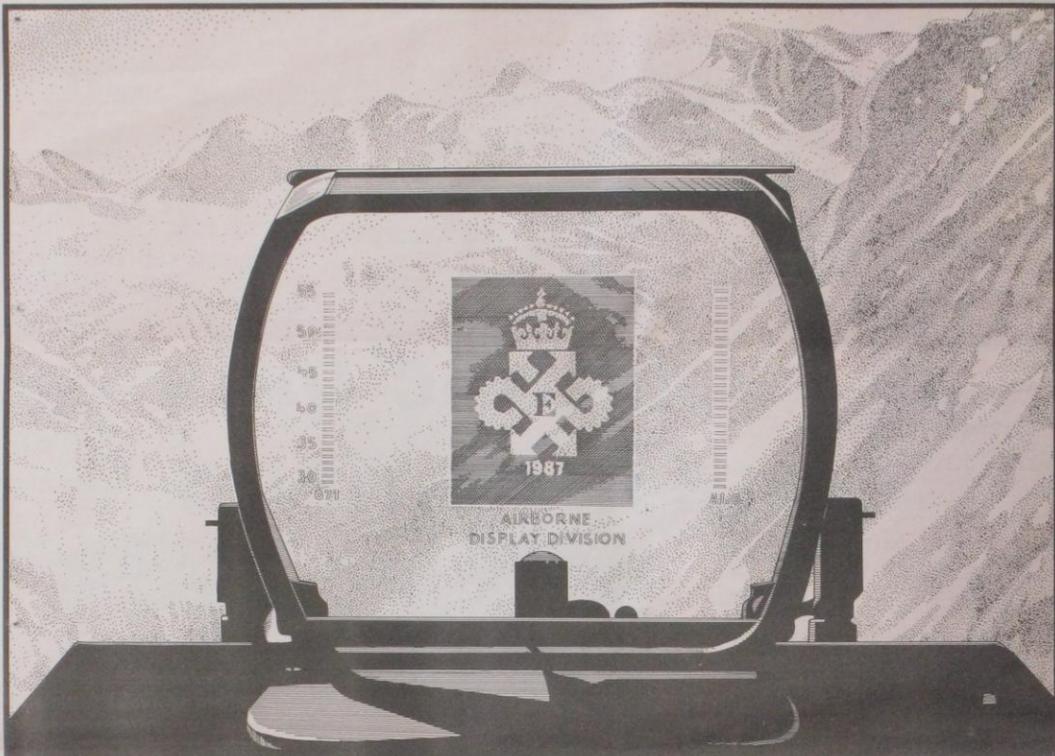
Industrial Precision Castings PLC
Suppliers of Aluminium Investment and Precision castings congratulate
GEC AVIONICS
on achieving their third Queen's Award
MEDWAY 660831/7

SUPPLIERS OF PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT TO GEC AVIONICS AND OTHER PROGRESSIVE COMPANIES.

 **Camera Gear**
Photographic Dealer

21 Camden Road 87 High Street 317 High Street 175 High Street
Tunbridge Wells, Kent Tonbridge, Kent Chatham, Kent Rochester, Kent
Kent 0732 354738 0634 45344 0634 43879
0892 22870

CONGRATULATIONS
to GEC AVIONICS
ON WINNING
THE QUEENS AWARD TO INDUSTRY? >>



ANOTHER DISPLAY OF EXCELLENCE...

Once again, the GEC Avionics team has won the Queen's Export Award, this time for its electronic display systems used by aircraft manufacturers throughout the world.

Become part of this winning team and help us achieve even greater success in the future. We currently have opportunities for additional production staff, including:

**Testers, Wirers, Fitters, Assemblers,
Instrument Technicians, Planners
and Production Engineers.**

For full details and an application form, please send this coupon to our freepost address.

To Brian Rogers, Personnel Department, GEC Avionics Limited,
FREEPOST, Maidstone Road, Rochester, Kent ME1 2BR.

Name _____

Address _____

Area of Interest _____



GEC AVIONICS

A Kent Evening Post supplement published and printed by Kent Messenger Group at New Hythe Lane, Larkfield, Maidstone ME20 6SG.

www.rochesteravionicarchives.co.uk