



Rochester Avionic Archives Newsletter

From the Curator,

So much has been happening that I have been too busy to write a Newsletter; so apologies for that. We have seen our collection expand significantly as one of the large huts on the Rochester site has been cleared. The equipment was mostly from the VC-10 but we found a large Naval Compass Unit which we hope to get into the Museum somehow. As I mentioned last time we concluded our support for the EAP aircraft by supplying a Control Stick, a Head Up Display and a Computer all of which have been installed in the airframe at Cosford. We finally got our baseball caps in thanks for support of Janet the Fairey Gannet in Australia and amazingly we recovered a Concorde Autopilot Control Unit which is being refurbished to sit in the cockpit of the Concorde at Orly Airport. Over five years ago I was asked to help with a collection of photos from Leonard Hill a Rochester photographer who has pictures dating back to post war possibly 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 but we have yet to explore the contents. Finally to conclude a fascinating period we were approached by a man offering the Control Yoke from the Canopus Flying Boat. The artefact had been on the wall of the Canopus Pub at Borstal for many years. I hope I will be able to describe the events that followed in a later edition. Meanwhile the background work of collecting and recording goes on with the website ever expanding; there are a few videos on the site now and more to come. It is surprising that the basic catalogue system has coped over seven years but it is creaking a bit now and although we have tinkered with it a major overhaul is being planned. So as busy as ever and of course we welcome any feedback about the website and visitors from the Company.

Chris Bartlett

The Farnborough Air Science Trust <http://www.airsciences.org.uk/>

This Museum is located at Farnborough on the Farnborough Road beside the Airport. There is a collection of historic aircraft including a replica of the Cody Flyer and flight equipment of all sorts. It is well worth a visit. The FAST Curators have excellent links with the old RAE/DERA organization, now the modern Qinetiq. The RAE was internationally renowned as a test house and operated many aircraft such as the Hunter to carry out in-flight tests. Elliotts would work with the specialists there and frequently provided items of prototype equipment for trials and some of these have ended up in the FAST collection. We intend to visit and record these items which are an important part of our heritage.

Acquisitions



This Board was found in the old Huts at the Rochester site and was at first ignored. However we realized that these boards show a long forgotten way of making cableforms. The individual wires were wrapped around the pins and eventually the whole thing would be tied together.

This is a lovely wooden model of the workings of an Inertial Platform. The whole thing rotates and the individual axes also rotate. So many of these models have been damaged but we aim to carry out repairs where possible.



I am sorry to report the untimely death of Derek Jackson whose funeral was held on the 24th of October. Derek joined Elliott Bros from University rising to be a Director. He worked initially at Borehamwood on the development of Automatic Flight Control Systems for aircraft such as the Lightning and VC-10. He later came to Rochester, returning to Borehamwood to manage the Nimrod programme before joining Smiths Industries at Cheltenham. Our thoughts are with Ann (who is on the RAA team) and all his family.

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The control Yoke from the Canopus.



Parts of the CANOPUS still exist. One of the control wheels and a 15ins. (380 mm.) length of the control column were mounted on a plaque which for many years hung in the Public Bar of the Canopus Inn at Borstal- up the road from where the Seaplane Works was located; the Pub has now closed. An accompanying photograph showed Captain .W.C.Alger presenting the plaque to Mr Green, the licensee, on 4 July 1947 - the eleventh anniversary of the first official flight. Nearby on the wall was a brass plate giving the permission of Imperial Airways and Short Bros, to the naming of the Inn in 1938.

The produce of the melt-down furnaces had many uses. Some was used to make crankcase covers for cars and some of the metal found its way into domestic kitchen ware. A small amount of the melt-down was cast into commemorative ashtrays, weighing 300g. each. The words BOAC IMPERIAL AIRWAYS SHORT C CLASS 1936 - 1946' and the Speedbird logo are moulded inside. If you look at Newsletter 8 you will see a larger a picture of one of these ashtrays in the Collection. Back numbers of Newsletters can be found on our website



Shorts 'Canopus' by Rochester Castle

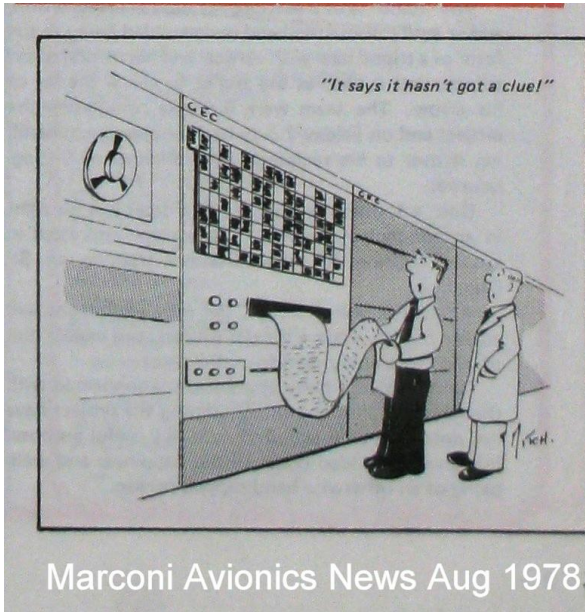


This little glass award was found on the floor in the old Media department and was for the 7500th Slats and Flaps Computer in 2008



The Manometer was made by Glass Developments of Brixton Hill. It was found in the Hangers some years ago and acquired by a man who used to make cableforms for Elliott Bros. It resided in his garage until the RAA acquired it a few weeks ago. This is known as a null-reading cistern manometer, equipment and was used for the calibration of pressure-reading instruments.. Much of the existing calibrating gear at present available to Service operational units was insufficiently accurate for the precise calibration of modern aircraft instruments, such as Machmeters, airspeed indicators and altimeters. The null-reading cistern manometer was developed with the intention of providing a precise means of calibrating pressure measuring instruments over positive or negative pressure ranges up to one atmosphere, and robust enough for unit use, while having accuracy comparable with that of standard equipment hitherto only available at maintenance depots. Glass Developments last filed accounts in 1990 so have long since gone. Their other claim to fame was making glass buttons!

From the Newspapers and Archives



August 1987

LOST ISLAND

The birds of GEC Rochester deplore the destruction of the traffic island near the Phase III building. This has been an oasis in a desert of concrete and cars for the past few years, trees had been planted on it and on sunny days in the Summer (few it is true), between the 12p.m. and 1.30p.m. featherless birds of every kind, Tower birds, Portacabin birds, Hanger birds, Phase III birds to name a few could be seen to alight and rest for half an hour to an hour during feeding time. Surely this tiny haven could have been left for the for the enjoyment of many, not destroyed or vandalised for the use of a few. Bird watchers have now been deprived of what little pleasure during a break from what has now become for many, unfortunately a claustrophobic working day.

White Tiled Towers

There are three great white-tiled Towers to the North of Bluebell Hill,
And a clutch of factory buildingd not so tall,
Where the flower of Britain's youth,
Has been known to cut a tooth,
On avionic projects great and small.

The first great white-tiled Tower that you see when you arrive,
Is used to house the thinkers bold and deep,
Whose new plans must be laid,
Before the tea is made.

The first great white-tiled Tower is also used for 'shops,
Where hardware is assembled by the ton,
And tested 'till it's hot,
And rejected if it's not,
And rewired 'till it ceases to be fun.

There's a second white-tiled Tower to the West of Tower Ne,
Where a host of engineers work day and night,
To timescales made so short,
That they feel they must be caught,
With their trousers down before the proving flight.

There's a third great white-tiled Tower, just like the other two,
Where workers scurry round like ants and bees,
At least 'till six or seven,
When their idea of heaven,
Is to ring their wives and say they're late for tea.

And so the white-tiled Towers house both industry and thought,
And industry its thinkers must protect,
The only trouble is,
That thoughts must have a WIS,
Or they could be classed as merely indirect!

Paul Chesmond AS&RD

A picture from the past



This was The Aviation Division Christmas Party at the Elstree Hotel at Borehamwood in 1955 or 1956.

Concorde 02 automatic landings



Autopilot Control unit

CONCORDE 02, the newest pre-production aircraft, made a successful automatic landing at the completion of its third flight at Toulouse, France. In spite of moderate turbulence the aircraft performance was sufficiently accurate for the crew to allow an automatic landing on the first automatically coupled approach.

Since then, pre-production Concorde 02 has made two more automatic landings and the Toulouse prototype aircraft 001 has now completed over 60 automatic landings, including 11 successful landings in one day.

The automatic flight control system in the two prototype and two pre-production Concorde's has now controlled the aircraft in all the planned manoeuvres, speeds and

heights that will be met in airline service. The system performs 33 functions giving automatic control of climb, acceleration, cruising, navigation, height changing, deceleration and landing.

The dominant feature of Concorde cockpit presentation is the Autopilot Control Unit mounted in prominent position visible to all crew members. This control unit (illustrated left) enables the pilots to control all the automatic functions and clearly indicates the status of the automatic control system.

The manufacture of Concorde AFCS is shared equally by Marconi-Elliott Avionic Systems Limited and its French partner SFENA (Société Française d'Équipements pour la Navigation Aérienne). □

Avionics News April 1973

This is the type of panel that the RAA is refurbishing for the Concorde F-WTSA at Orly Airport.

Brain Teasers (from MAD Times April 1997)

1. What connects a nominal oversize Yankee pippin, a cathedral in the North of England, an RAF aircraft, a difficult ball for a batsman to cope with, and an unboiled pudding eaten with beef?

There is a short word which connects all these things. What is it and what are the connections?

2. Imaginary small workers, ancient structures, mortal crimes and what a heavy roller likes to throw; they are all connected by an odd prime.

What is the connecting word and what are the references?

Answers next time (If I can work it out Ed)