

GEC AVIONICS NEWS

House Journal of GEC Avionics Limited

To Mark the Retirement of W H ALEXANDER OBE BSc Hon FIQA

The retirement of 'Bill' Alexander at Easter marks the end of his association with our company of over 36 years. In fact rather more, he said, counting his six years with Ferranti, whose activities are now also under the wing of GEC.

At the presentation which was led by Jack Pateman, himself recently retired, Bill's message to the company was 'You are now led by a new young team. Despite some problems and temporary difficulties, you are still showing the opposition how good we are. Continue with the good work - you ain't seen nothing yet!'

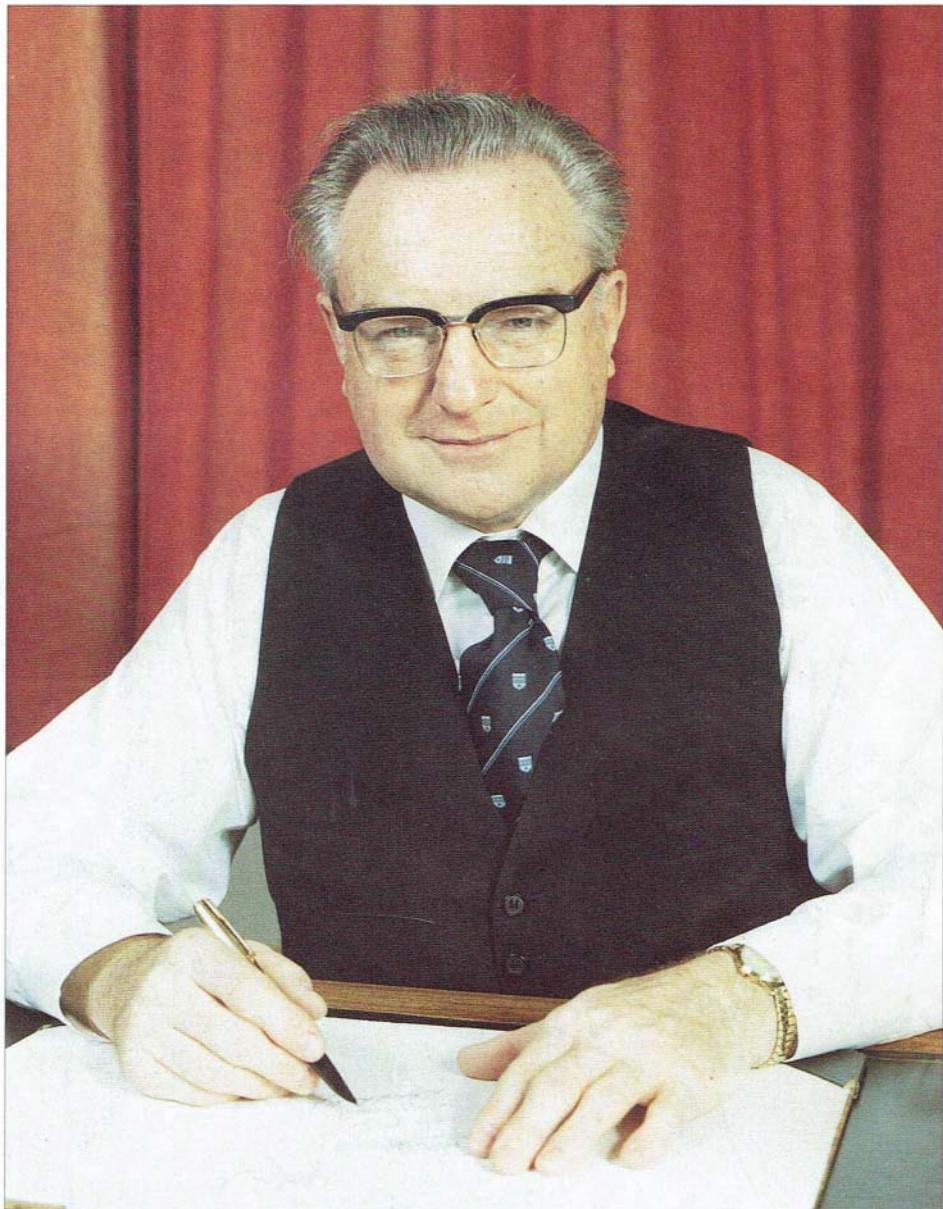
*Mr J.E. Pateman CBE
has written:*

"Until his retirement Bill Alexander was, apart from myself, the longest serving member of the Company, and since the earliest days he and his wife have been personal friends of ours.

"His contribution to the Company and his influence on it have been substantial, both in the field of management and in support of our social activities - the acquisition of the social club at Hoo was largely his initiative.

"However, if I was asked to single out a particular activity where Bill has had a profound effect on all our fortunes, I would have to say that his work on introducing proper effective procedures and controls on our activities had a great influence on enabling us to complete our early US contracts at a profit. This was the groundwork on which our now impressive reputation as a supplier to the United States has been founded. Other companies who also won large US contracts at about the same time fared less well.

"I know we all wish Bill and his wife Edith continued good health and a long and happy retirement. He can always be assured of a good welcome whenever he calls to see us."



Bill Alexander at his desk.

A Distinguished Career in Avionics - around 40 years

WILLIAM HECTOR ALEXANDER OBE, BSc, Hon FIQA

Born in Edinburgh, 1926.

Educated at George Heriot School and University of Edinburgh; BSc Honours Physics, Post Graduate Diploma in Electronics and Radio, Hon. Fellow of the Institute of Quality Assurance.

Married, with 3 Daughters and 10 Grandchildren.

Bill Alexander joined the Aviation Division of Elliott Bros. (London) Ltd at Borehamwood in 1954, after six years with Ferranti working on aircraft stabilisation and weapon aiming systems.

Early Days

Soon afterwards he moved to Rochester to prepare for the introduction of the Blue Steel Inertial Navigator into production and to deal with some urgent problems on Fuel Flowmeters. He later became Chief Engineer. In 1958 the Aviation Division was split into four and Bill

was made Manager of the Aircraft Controls Division responsible for systems in the Lightning, Buccaneer, Jindivik and several other unmanned aircraft. Later that year this Division was divided into Military Aircraft Controls Division and Transport Aircraft Controls Division and Bill became Assistant General Manager responsible for both businesses.

When Elliott Flight Automation was founded in 1962 he was appointed Joint General Manager with Jack Pateman and subsequently Assistant Managing Director (1965) and Joint Managing Director (1966).

Growth of the Company

Following the Elliott merger with English Electric and the takeover by GEC, Bill was, in 1970, appointed Executive Director of the newly formed Marconi-Elliott Avionic Systems Ltd. In 1972 he became Assistant Managing Director and there followed a period of great expansion in the company and a growth of exports to become around 70% of output.

The company name was changed to GEC Avionics Ltd in 1984 (and our Basildon establishment became GEC Sensors) and in 1986 Bill became Managing Director.

In 1987 he was promoted to Deputy Managing Director of GEC-Marconi.

For many years Bill Alexander, together with Jack Pateman, guided the 'Elliott' Avionics management and workforce through the tremendous growth of the business, particularly in the early 1960s and throughout the 1970s and early 1980s.



Some of the friends and colleagues of Bill Alexander at a farewell gathering in the Lounge Bar:



Jack Pateman presents Bill with his retirement gift of a computer, with other mementoes.

Services to the Industry and the Community

Bill has also served in many Industry bodies including AGARD (Advisory Group for Aerospace Research and Development), SBAC (Society of British Aerospace Companies), EEA (Electronics Engineering Association) and the MoD's Aerospace Technology Board, but his two main interests have been in Quality and Business Aircraft. He was President of the Institute of Quality Assurance from 1985 to 1987, member of the Defence Industries Quality Assurance Panel from 1976 and its Chairman from 1979 to the present. He was also Chairman of the British Quality Association.

He has been Chairman of the Business Aircraft Users Association for over ten years, active in protecting the interests of the Business Aircraft Users from more and more restrictive legislation. He has also been Chairman of the International Business Aviation Council for the last three years, and was instrumental in setting up a permanent Secretariat to work with

ICAO in protecting the interests of Business Aviation.

His local interests have included membership of the Kent Industrial Liaison Group, the Kent Economic Development Board, the Medway Heritage Committee (including being a Trustee), and Medway Young Enterprise.

A Company Man

Throughout his time with the company Bill has taken an active interest in Employee welfare; he has been President of the Social Club since 1982 and was largely responsible for the acquisition and improvement of the Hoo facilities.

His liking for good food and wine is well known and he has ensured that his standards are maintained in the various facilities provided for employees. His particular interest has been the GEC Avionics Athletics Club, of which he was President from 1964 to 1989, and through his enthusiastic support the Club has received national recognition.

Bill's athletics interests extend to membership of the Kent County Athletics Association. He is a Senior

Official of the Amateur Athletics Association and British Amateur Athletics Board with the grade of Chief Timekeeper, but in recent years he has been mainly concerned with photo-finishes.

Bill is also a keen follower of Rugby Football and regularly organises parties for the Five Nations Championships and the Middlesex Sevens. He has even been known to patronise the Rugby League Final at Wembley! His other main leisure activity is Opera, both as a performer and a listener.

With such broad interests and his extensive family, we are confident that Bill's future will be fully occupied. We all wish him a long and happy retirement.

In the Queen's Birthday Honours List of 1981, Bill Alexander's contribution to the Avionics Industry was recognised by his appointment as Officer of the Order of the British Empire.



*'Presented to Bill Alexander on the Occasion of
his Retirement - March 28th 1991.
From his friends and colleagues.'*

The picture represents many of his interests. The framed original was given to him on the day.

Drawing by Kevin Harris, Publications Dept., LCSD.