



VC10 XX914 last flight, Thurleigh 1975 (B3915D)



The BAHG team preparing the BLARS display

Bedfordshire County Archives (BLARS)

Bedford on 14 September 2013 as part of the celebration by the Bedfordshire and Luton Archives & Records Service (BLARS) of its centenary. A number of former employees visited the display in the Borough Hall (former County Hall) in Bedford. We used photographs from the BAHG Archive and also from BLARS own collection. (We are, incidentally, helping BLARS catalogue the material they have about RAE Bedford, mainly photographs of the construction of the wind tunnels in the 1950s.) Our display consisted of several panels outlining the origins of RAE Bedford in the war-time report from the ARC, showing the work of the first units on the airfield - Naval Air Department (NAD), Aero Flight and BLEU – then Flight Systems Department and the Wind Tunnels. Models of the BAC 1-11, BAC221 and a Javelin (kindly loaned by ARA) were also on display, after considerable physical effort moving them into the building. Rolling powerpoint slide-shows dealing with the airfield, the tunnels and the radar flight trials unit were also presented on laptops.

As we announced in the last issue, we put on a display about RAE Bedford on 14 September 2013 as part of the celebration by the Bedfordshire and Luton Archives & Records Service (BLARS) of its centenary. A number of former employees visited the display in the Borough Hall (former County Hall) in Bedford. We used photographs from the BAHG Archive and also from BLARS own collection. (We are, incidentally, helping BLARS catalogue the material they have about RAE Bedford, mainly photographs of the construction of the wind tunnels in the 1950s.) Our display consisted of several panels outlining the origins of RAE Bedford in the war-time report from the ARC, showing the work of the first units on the airfield - Naval Air Department (NAD), Aero Flight and BLEU – then Flight Systems Department and the Wind Tunnels. Models of the BAC 1-11, BAC221 and a Javelin (kindly loaned by ARA) were also on display, after considerable physical effort moving them into the building. Rolling powerpoint slide-shows dealing with the airfield, the tunnels and the radar flight trials unit were also presented on laptops.



Display Panels – NAD, Aero Flight & BLEU



Display Panels – Flight Systems & Wind Tunnels

Re-Union 2014 The first meeting of the Re-Union Planning Group was held at Bodyflight on 24 October. This meeting confirmed the date as Wed 18 June 2014 from 1100-1600 approx. (This day happens to be the anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo 1815.) One of the group's first priorities is to ensure as many people as possible know about the event. As previously stated, the re-union is open to anyone (civilians and service personnel) who worked for the RAE or its successors DRA and DERA at Bedford (in any area on the wind tunnel and airfield sites, including the RFTU). This includes wives/partners. We want to reach as many people as possible - Boffins, Aircraft Dept, Apprentices, Engineering, Air Traffic, Admin etc. Please pass this information on to anyone you think may be interested, and ask them to contact BAHG through the email address at the bottom of the page.

Bedford Aeronautical Heritage Group

Don't forget, to contact us with any news or comments, please email (bahg-bt@hotmail.co.uk).

Talks We continue to give talks to local (and not so local) organisations. The most recent ones have been to the Rushden and District History Society (15 Nov 2013, Reg Harlow) and to the Haverhill Aviation Society (21 Nov 2013, Mike Dobson). We already have 8 talks scheduled for 2014, the first of which will be by Barry Tomlinson at the Boscombe Down Branch of the RAeS on 14 Jan 2014, at 1715 (NB). Guests are welcome.

The VC10 and RAE Bedford October 2013 has seen the retirement from the RAF of all VC10 aircraft. RAE's VC10 XX914 (formerly G-ATDJ with BUA) operated at Bedford, in Aero Flight and Flight Systems, from Oct 1973 to May 1975, when it was a victim of cuts. After its brief research life, the aircraft languished at Bedford for some years. An article, "*Queen of the Skies*" Bows Out, reviewing briefly the VC10 Story, can be found in Flight International, 8-14 October 2013. RAE Bedford's involvement with the VC10 goes back to its design. Models of the Super VC10 were tested in the 8ft tunnel, as in this picture from 1966 (Model 835, neg B5753-Bk1A).



Readers may like to know that the Flying Tigers organisation, www.flying-tigers.co.uk, have produced a die-cast model VC10 in RAE Bedford colours (to the same scale as the previously released RAE Bedford BAC 1-11 model). They announced "We mark the final operational RAF VC-10 sortie by putting the few 1/200th scale RAF VC-10 models we have available in a new [VC-10 RETIREMENT](#) section this week - numbers are now extremely limited."

Latest News of Tornado ZA326 Following the report in the last issue, we have now heard from the new owner of this aircraft. After re-locating to Boscombe Down in March 1994, when Thurleigh airfield closed, ZA326 flew its last flight in December 2005 in the hands of Dave Southwood, and since then has been stored by QinetiQ at Boscombe. The new owner acquired the aircraft earlier this year and a couple of weeks ago moved it (by road) to Bruntingthorpe Airfield in Leicestershire (<http://www.bruntingthorpeaviation.com/>). Photos of the move can be found at <http://www.za326.com/news/>. He reports that ZA326 is in excellent condition, and the plan is to get her back to fast-taxiable condition at Bruntingthorpe alongside other trials aircraft such as Canberra WT333. We will provide them with some information about how the aircraft was used during its time at Bedford.

Visits to RAE (Reg Harlow) The recent "Children in Need" appeal was a reminder that RAE Bedford sometimes invited disadvantaged children to the Establishment. These photos show a visit from the Hinwick Hall School for handicapped boys on 12 July, 1972. They clearly enjoyed an exciting and memorable day and provided a rewarding experience to the RAE staff taking them round.



HS748 XW750 Crew (B3196Q) Comet XP915 Full Party (B3196U) Comet XP915 Captain (B3196G)

FASTA AGM The AGM of the Farnborough Air Sciences Trust Association (the membership arm of FAST) was held at Farnborough on 26 Nov 2013. We briefed the meeting on the activities of BAHG over the past year.

Anniversaries Two anniversaries of note: October saw the 10th anniversary of the last scheduled flight of the British Airways Concorde, with 3 Concorde aircraft landing consecutively at Heathrow on 24 October 2003 (see article Flight International 22-28 Oct 2013); and on 20 Dec 1963 a Trident made the first ever automatic landing by a production airliner, and it was at Thurleigh. As it was the culmination of a progressive series of tests that day, there is no photograph of this historic event from 50 years ago.

What and When? We came across this picture in the archive, one of many taken the same day. There are no other details eg about the date (1990s?). Some sort of lunch-time "event" outside building 109? Pirates? Hallowe'en? Can anyone offer some information?

