



BAC221 WG774 in flight in 1968 (B2497E)



Vertical Spinning Tunnel 1982 – the location for the 2014 re-union (CL839)

Newsflash The Bedfordshire archive, officially known as the Bedfordshire and Luton Archives & Records Service (BLARS), is the oldest county archive in the country. Established in 1913, it is celebrating its centenary this year. One of the special events in the centenary programme is an Archive Service Heritage Open Day on 14 September 2013. Bedford Aeronautical Heritage Group has been invited to put on a display about RAE Bedford based on material in both the BAHG archive and in the BLARS collection. Please put the date in your diary and come along to see us and the rest of the BLARS archive. The display will be in the Borough Hall (former County Hall) in Bedford, open 10AM-4PM, access from Prebend Street bridge.

The Higgins Bedford's newly-rebuilt museum complex, now known as The Higgins, opened on 21 June. Thanks to our contacts with the museum, there is a small exhibit relating to RAE Bedford, under the heading "The Skies Over Bedford". We are in the process of adding to their information about the BAC221 (picture above), a model of which is on display. The BAC221 was adapted from Fairey FD2 WG774 to have a new "ogee" slender wing. It first flew at Filton on 1 May 1964, as briefly mentioned (but without the '1964') in the last newsletter and was brought to Bedford on 20 May 1966 by test pilot Clive Rustin.

Re-Union 2014 We confirm that the proposed re-union outlined in the previous newsletter will take place in June 2014. More information will follow in later newsletters.

COUGAR Project Our colleagues at Farnborough Air Sciences Trust (FAST) have initiated Project COUGAR (Collation Of UK Government Aeronautical research Reports), which is trying to build a database of RAE reports, and where they can be found. As our web site reports, there is no single place or organisation in the UK with a complete collection of RAE Reports!. BAHG is working with FAST on this, together with the National Aerospace Library (NAL), Cambridge and Cranfield Universities and Dstl.

Response to Web Site Our new web site (www.bahg.org.uk), which went live in late May, is proving to be a success. Readership statistics, not surprisingly, reveal that most readers are in the UK, Europe or USA. However, some 43 countries are represented in the readership, including Malta, Mexico, Iran, Maldives and New Zealand. We have had some interesting messages, stimulated by the web-site, from former RAE employees.

Model of wind tunnel (HSST) We are pleased to report we have received on extended loan from our FAST colleagues at Farnborough a scale model of the High Supersonic Speed Tunnel (HSST). A small expedition took a van (helpfully loaned by Blue Bear) to Farnborough in July to collect it. See picture Right. The different parts of the tunnel in the model are helpfully colour-coded – blue for the air supply, red for the tunnel circuit and pale green for the drive machinery. The tunnel was officially opened on 24 March 1961.



New RAE Book "Wind Beneath the Wings" This new book, mentioned in the previous issue, has turned out to be lighter than *Wings Over Thurleigh* (more lift?), so that its postage cost is less. *Wind Beneath the Wings* is £15 plus £3 P&P, whereas *Wings Over Thurleigh* is still £15 plus £6 P&P. They are both softback editions. Please email us if you want to buy one.

Talks We continue to give talks to local (and not so local) organisations, with seven already arranged for 2014, at locations ranging from Boscombe Down and Brooklands to Olney, Roxton, Sandy and Biggleswade. The next talks will be to the Cambridge Industrial Archaeology Society (14 Oct 2013) and to the Rushden and District History Society (15 Nov 2013). Guests are welcome at both these events.

Bedford Aeronautical Heritage Group

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

FASTA AGM The AGM of the Farnborough Air Sciences Trust Association (the membership arm of FAST) will be held at Farnborough on 26 Nov 2013. We will attend as usual to give a brief report on the activities of BAHG.

Social Life at NAE Bedford in the Early 1950s (by Mike Dobson) Inspiration for social activity at the embryo NAE Bedford in the early 1950s sprang from the staff of the 3ft x 3ft Wind Tunnel. For an occasion like a celebration of the 100th run of the tunnel or somebody's promotion, a party would be arranged. The Pub adopted for these parties was "The Crown" at Little Staughton. "Traditions" were quickly established like the wearing of bow ties. Newcomers would not be told of this tradition and would turn up wearing a normal tie, whereupon the end of the tie would be swilled in a glass of beer and chewed off. Spitting this end onto the very low ceiling would determine whether the victim was a good bloke or not by whether it stuck or not. I never knew one not to stick! The tunnel engineer would then step forward with steel rule, callipers and micrometer and cut off the tie 3.000 +/- 0.005 inches below the knot, whereupon it would be pinned to the wall for posterity. When the pub changed hands several years later, many dozens of tie-ends were wantonly destroyed! A second tradition was that anyone who left the 3ft would be hoisted to the ceiling between the beams and his outline drawn in chalk. Peter Sutton who went off to take up a post at Cambridge University was particularly tall and would not fit between the cross beams, so the outline of his head had to appear on the "other side" of a beam. These parties went on until the early 1960s and many other stories could be told, but it all ceased when the pub changed hands. The first (fuzzy) photograph is a typical party scene with, from the left, Ian McGregor, Dave Llewelyn-Davies (at the back), Jim Cooke, Derek Capps, Alan Stanbrook, ANO?, and John Harris [tunnel engineer].



The second photo (Left) was at the departure to HQ of the tunnel boss, Dai Morris (hence the Welsh mining theme). Pictured are Graham Simpson, Landlady, Dai Morris, Landlord and Mike Dobson. The Landlord was an ex-RAF wartime air traffic controller from Little Staughton airfield - perhaps that's why he put up with the stupidities which, I guess, were not unlike those practiced in the average wartime Officers Mess.

RAE to be Re-Invented? Twelve years after the end of the RAE/DRA/DERA era of national aeronautical research laboratories, the government has announced that it is planning to set up a new Aerospace Technology Institute, with £150M annual funding, for 7 years, with an equivalent amount to come from industry. Flight International began its comment recently with "If this plan evolves into a UK version of NASA..." but without making any mention of the previous existence of RAE! The ATI will be a virtual institute with fluid consortia and with a small HQ, largely of seconded staff, to be located from Dec 2013 on the Cranfield University campus. The UK has been finding itself at a disadvantage with no "RAE" when faced with organisations like NLR in The Netherlands, DLR in Germany and ONERA in France. Research programmes under this initiative will be carried out at a range of locations across the UK.

Tornado ZA326 We have heard that Bedford's Tornado, ZA326 (pictured), that transferred to Boscombe Down in 1994, has finished its work there and is to gain a new life not far away, with a move to Bruntingthorpe (near Lutterworth, Leics <http://www.bruntingthorpeaviation.com/>). Bruntingthorpe is home to many aircraft, including Canberra WT333 (ex Radar Flight Trials Unit at Bedford). Many are capable of performing "fast taxi" runs along the runway. Perhaps ZA326 will be able to do this at some point. We are trying to get more information about the plans for the aircraft.



Support to Vulcan Aero Flight and BLEU each operated a Vulcan (respectively XA890 and XA899) for a while during the 1960s. Today, there is just one Vulcan flying, XH558. It took to the air again in October 2007, after restoration supervised by Marshall's of Cambridge. While not directly connected with RAE, the 'Vulcan to the Sky' project (www.VulcantotheSky.org) is struggling to keep its Vulcan in the air, at least until 2015. We strongly recommend it as worthy of your support. Please see their web-site. Vulcan XH558 used to operate at Bruntingthorpe but is now based at Robin Hood Airport, Doncaster.

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