



RAE Bedford Re-Union 2014 Well, it happened, as planned, on 18 June, our big event of the year. On a fine sunny day, more than 300 former staff and partners from RAE Bedford (and its successors) turned up, to talk to old friends and colleagues and to view a variety of photographic displays. While the event was meant to kick-off at 1100, several people had arrived by 1030. However, we were ready! Edna and team went into action, handing out badges (see photo, right).



First, some thanks. This event would not have been possible without the full support of the Bodyflight management and their team. We thank them very much for making their facilities in the Vertical Spinning Tunnel building available, for managing the food and for helping the day run smoothly. We remind you that their sky-diving and other activities are open to everyone.

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The day was a great success, largely due to the hard work of the Planning Group, and to the rest of the BAHG team, to whom this writer expresses his sincere thanks. Picture left shows Reg Harlow and Nick Cooke at work setting up, and below, most of the team: Gerry Shanks, Ken Moreton, Edna Osborn,

Bob Manning, who managed the ticketing process, Reg Harlow, Tony Manning, Trevor Turvey, an expert on car parking, among other things, Barry Tomlinson, Mike Dobson, Barry Moulang, David Bull & Kate Annette.



The date was chosen because 2014 was effectively the 70th anniversary of the origins of RAE Bedford. A report to Government (ARC 7500) in March 1944 recommended the creation of a new National Experimental Establishment for aeronautical research. Expansion of facilities at Farnborough was not possible, so the Bedford Establishment became the Nation's primary centre for Aerodynamics Research and Flight Test.



The event was primarily an opportunity for former colleagues to meet and talk, as in this scene on the "FlowHouse" level. People from the many areas of work came to the re-union: aircraft department, engineering services, workshops, admin, fire services and boffins. Many messages of appreciation have been received: "...enjoyed immensely meeting up with so many colleagues, pilots, servicing personnel and friends" - "...an enjoyable day and one that I will always remember" - "...a super day, felt like only yesterday I was working there" - "...the experience will stay with me as a happy reminder of my time at Bedford". People travelled large distances, coming from Cornwall, Scotland and even Malaysia. Some could remember the earliest days, when the tunnels were being constructed in the

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1950s and the airfield was being re-built to serve a variety of flight research needs. Many former apprentices praised the training they had received.

Below is a picture of groups in conversation.



One of the display panels showing Bedford's VTOL heritage

BAHG put on displays of a wide range of historic photographs, as a focus for reminiscences. More than 30 display panels were prepared, many dealing with research subjects, such as Vertical Take-off and Landing, a significant theme at Bedford that began in the 1950s with the world's first vertical take-off device, the Rolls-Royce Flying Bedstead and continued to the 2000s, culminating in the adoption of "Bedford control laws" for the JSF F-35B VTOL variant.



Other display panels featured formal and informal work groups, such as those of the 8ft tunnel (left). Lists of names were appended, including gaps which we hoped might be filled by those looking at them. We are indebted to Jonathan Palmer's organisation for the use of their display boards.

Photographs on display We would like to remind you that the BAHG archive contains thousands of pictures of all kinds and if you would like a fresh copy of one that you have or if you want one that you haven't got, please enquire. We can supply prints at modest cost.

Next? The Big Question Will there be another such event? That remains to be seen. There were many requests to repeat this. Well, we in BAHG have

discussed it, and have concluded, provisionally, Yes. The key issues are that it takes people to organise it, and we need somewhere to hold it. A possible date for a "next" event might be 2017, to reflect the 60th anniversary of the official opening of RAE Bedford on 27 June 1957. The Blind Landing Experimental Unit (BLEU) also completed its move to Thurleigh in that year. Thoughts and comments welcome, and volunteers.

A further question arising from the success of the re-union day is whether the "ex-RAE" community would be interested in participating in other activities organised by BAHG, *before* any further re-union. Ideas include holding a "Talks" event, perhaps with films, and arranging visits to places of interest such as aviation museums. Several (such as Coventry, Yeovilton and the RAF Museum at Cosford) house aircraft that used to be operated at RAE Bedford. We would like to hear your views, via the usual email address given at the bottom of the page.

Facebook page Thanks to Kate Annette, we have a Facebook page. If you took photos at the re-union, please post them there. This is the link. (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/568438583210453/>) Some have already been posted. We have also posted the list of names of those who came (or who bought tickets but couldn't come on the day). We hope this is helpful. If there is someone you would like to be able to contact, then send us a message via our usual email address (below) and we will do our best to put you in touch.

Web site Some additional material has been added recently to cover the Flight Systems era and also to document the history of some of the research aircraft. More information will follow. Please tell us what you would like to see included. We are always interested to receive contributions to the web site and to this newsletter. These could be articles on, or accounts of, specific events, special memories, or even near disasters! We would like to hear from you, even if it is just a rough idea or suggestion. We would particularly like to receive material relating to wind tunnel programmes and activities.

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