

### Concorde at The Higgins Bedford

In the last newsletter we outlined some of RAE Bedford's research contributions to the design and evolution of Concorde. Our special display in Bedford's museum, The Higgins, is now open. It is shown in the photograph. There is also a series of pictures on the staircase showing RAE staff at work.



The display tells the story of the extensive testing of alternative slender wing shapes using Bedford's main wind tunnels, the 3x3 supersonic tunnel, the 8x8 supersonic tunnel and the 13x9 low-speed tunnel. It also illustrates some of the flight research undertaken with the Handley Page HP115 and the British Aircraft Corporation BAC 221 slender wing research aircraft. Local interest in the display has been strong; it has stimulated a number of recollections from former staff and apprentices (see Concorodosaurus below). We would be pleased to receive more.

The Higgins in Bedford ([www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk](http://www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk)) is open Tuesday to Saturday 11AM to 5PM and Sunday 2-5PM. Admission is free. The exhibition will be on display at least to the end of 2019.

BAHG is grateful to our friends at Farnborough Air Sciences Trust (FAST) for the loan of wind tunnel models tested originally in Bedford's 3x3 supersonic tunnel and for the loan of two display models of Concorde.

**Concorodosaurus** In response to our last "Concorde" newsletter, Mike Johnson (former apprentice) sent us a copy of this picture of "Concorodosaurus" (which we identified as neg C17750) from 1975. It was created by the apprentices for Bedford and Rushden carnivals.

Mike writes "The Concorodosaurus was built from scratch by the lads in the photo and had flashing lights on the wingtips and tail, a smoke machine (borrowed from the Fire station) that puffed smoke from the nostrils and engines. The engines were surplus Concorde wind tunnel model engine pods - hence the name Concorodosaurus! A driver from MT volunteered to tow the trailer to both Bedford and Rushden carnivals. I seem to remember we won a prize at one of them - a £5 note."

Names from left to right: Mike Johnson, two apprentice chippies - can anyone help with names? - Graham Hartwell, Kevin Willis, Phil Mayhew, Andy Newell, Peter Jones.



**Response from a reader**

Responding to the Concorde article in the previous Newsletter, Mike Markin (ex Flight Systems Bedford) writes: “Before joining RAE I did four years at Filton on guided weapons. During that time Concorde was briefly short of a cockpit physicist and I was assigned for three grand months, which allowed me to be right beside the runway when the first pre-production model (Concorde 101 G-AXDN) first flew on 17 December, 1971 - a fantastic and eye watering experience.

I was very much a junior sprog scientist at the time and my modest contribution was mainly measurements of instrument, cockpit, and cabin lighting conditions for high altitude flight.

The day of the first flight was as dark and gloomy as the picture shows, which perhaps made it look even more spectacular. Being in the Optics Research Group I was able to borrow a camera and take the shot. As soon as she had gone I rushed in and personally developed and printed my picture in our lab, the very original attached! (Perhaps I should take it to Antiques Roadshow!) Concorde 101 was the first with the more powerful engines and the word was that the flight crew had so much excess thrust to manage that they were quite grateful when one of the burners didn't light (as can be seen in the picture)!”



**Workshops and Model Making**

The workshops were a crucial part of the establishment, producing many objects including wind tunnel models in wood and metal to very high accuracy. The archive includes many group pictures, but usually without any identification of the people. Here are two examples. Can anyone help with names? Larger versions of the photos could be supplied. Do you have other group pictures from the workshops? Please contact us.



Group in Wood Model Shop “Jack’s Little Empire” (neg C7094A 8 March 1962)



Photo identified as “Group of Carpenters” but possibly hangar staff – we have a few names - (neg B2823 4 Sept 1970)

**Meteor VW411**

We have received an enquiry from someone who (as he says “starting with the original cockpit but not much else”) is re-building to flying standard Meteor VW411 (a T7 hybrid) and asks what it did at RAE Bedford. Our information is sparse. What we know, from photographs in the BAHG archive, is that the aircraft was with BLEU at Martlesham Heath in early 1957, then used in emergency barrier trials at Bedford in 1958. Two further photos are shown below. No others have been found. Can anyone help and add to the story?



VW411 in background when BAC221 WG774 was delivered to Bedford May 1966 (neg B1925E)



BLEU aircraft in formation: Varsity WF417, Canberra WJ992, Meteor VW411 (neg B4536, 1977 – a copy of an earlier picture, original date not known).