

**A Happy & Safe Christmas to Everyone**



*Barrage balloon outside the two airship sheds, Cardington, June 1976 (neg C18475)*



*Visiting Aircraft Hawker Sea Hawk WW908, Royal Navy Historic Flight (neg B5402B, 1980)*

**Archive Activities** Covid-19 is still having a major effect, shutting down our work in the archive. There is still work in progress on imagery, scanning and cataloguing. The bulk of the Bedford archive will eventually form a special part of the FAST holdings at Farnborough. We have already transferred about 2500 movie films and videos to FAST, with documentation (see Issue 37, Feb 2020). Our plan is to survive as long as we can at Bedford and we remain committed to the archive and to other activities, including talks and support to local exhibitions.

**RAE and Cardington** Although airship work at Cardington was not part of RAE's activities, it is perhaps appropriate in this year of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the final, and fatal, flight of airship R101, to recall briefly something of Cardington's history and RAE's involvement. The airship works came to Cardington, just outside Bedford, in 1916 when Short Brothers were awarded a contract to build airships to counter the German Zeppelins. Shed No 1 was erected in 1916 and the second shed was moved from Pulham, Norfolk and re-erected at Cardington in 1928.

The airship R101 first flew from The Royal Airship Works Cardington in 1929 and then, after lengthening, set off on its final tragic flight on 4 October 1930. Its crash in France on 5 October, 90 years ago, brought to an end the promise of luxury long-distance travel by airship. RAE had no direct management responsibility for Cardington until October 1946 when it was managed as an outstation from Farnborough. Responsibility for management was transferred



to the Chief Superintendent of RAE Bedford in 1983. RAE finally withdrew from the Cardington site in early 1985. After the barrage balloon work of World War II, Cardington continued to pursue "inflatable objects" of various kinds. These included inflatable aircraft, hovercraft, dummy tanks and even a Land Rover with balloon tyres (neg M108-F8). There were also attempts by several companies to revive the commercial airship industry – see picture of Aerovision blimp G-BECE occupying a fraction of shed No 1 formerly filled by R101 (neg CL534, 1978). Barrage balloons were used by Aero Flight as a platform from which to release free-flying aircraft models as part of its early research on stability and control.

**Royal Aeronautical Society - VAAC Team Award**

VAAC Harrier

(XW175) has featured frequently in these pages, for its major contribution to the F-35B programme. It has not been reported here before – as the event occurred before the first issue of this newsletter – that in 2009 the VAAC Harrier Team received the Royal Aeronautical Society's Team Gold Medal "for work of outstanding achievement". The full citation for the award reads as follows:

*"The QinetiQ VAAC Harrier Team has completed flight test activities that have prototyped guidance, control and automatic landing systems for the STOVL Joint Strike Fighter and developed the Shipboard Rolling Vertical Landing technique for recovery to CVF – a combination that will provide significant capability to future UK expeditionary forces."*

*Bedford Aeronautical Heritage Group*

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

**Interesting Visiting Aircraft** Over the years, many interesting aircraft visited RAE Bedford. Here is a small selection. Information providing further background to these visits would be welcome.



*Short Belfast XR364, autoland testbed, soon after arrival to work with BLEU, May 1966 (neg B1928A)*



*Lockheed U2 landing at Bedford, part of turbulence research programme, March 1967 (neg B2085G)*



*BOAC B747 take-off during a visit for a BOAC publicity film in Sept 1970 (neg B2912S). The last British Airways Boeing 747-400 was withdrawn from service in 2020*



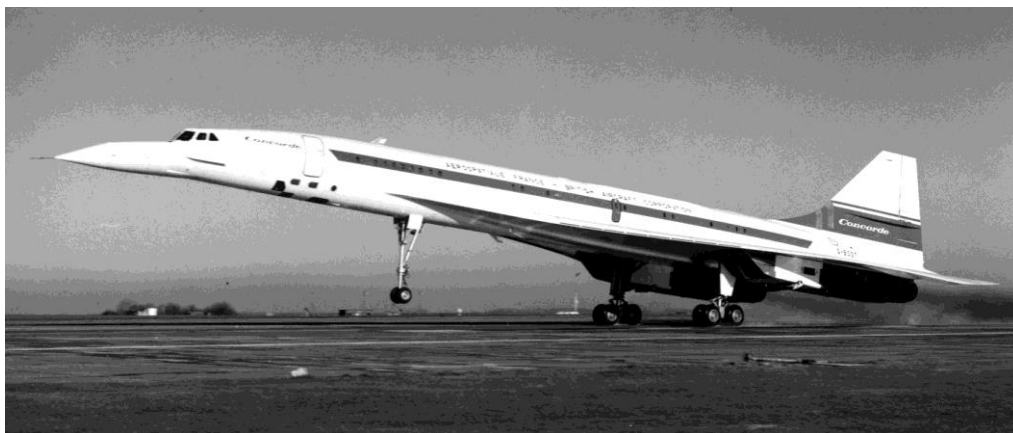
*Guppy aircraft N1037V at Thurleigh Dec 1971 (neg B3081G)*



*Britten Norman Islander G-FANS with Dowty Ducted Fan engines, Nov 1979 (neg B5182F)*



*Dakota ZA947 landing, Oct 1990 (neg A5298D) The aircraft is now with the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight*



*Perhaps RAE Bedford's most famous visitor, Concorde 002, G-BSST, Jan 1972 (neg B3090)*

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