

A Happy & Safe Christmas to All Our Readers



Airfield Sign Post in Snow, Jan 1963 (neg B429)



Hunting Jet Flap Research Aircraft (neg B1777)

Bedford Aeronautical Heritage Group – the Future
hard lately about how to ensure the safe preservation in the long term of the BAHG archive relating to RAE Bedford. There must be no risk of anything going to the skip!

BAHG is in a state of transition. We have been thinking in the long term of the BAHG archive relating to RAE Bedford.

Since the Group came into existence in 2008 it has stored its valuable collection of negatives, prints, films and other material in a series of temporary locations in former RAE buildings. Unfortunately, no permanent home has been found so we have decided the only appropriate solution is to move everything of importance to the safe keeping of the Farnborough Aeronautical Sciences Trust (FAST) at Farnborough, who are fortunate to have their own permanent building space. To ensure the preservation of the BAHG Archive and to provide access to its heritage material, it has been agreed with FAST that our holdings will form a special part of the collection at Farnborough. The first steps on this path were taken in Feb 2020 (see Newsletter 37, Feb 2020) when about 2000 movies, 16mm and 35mm, were relocated to Farnborough in one van load of 87 boxes.

What does the BAHG archive contain? The archive includes

- **Negatives** This is the largest and, probably, the most important part of the Bedford Archive. The BAHG negatives collection contains more than 70 000 and perhaps as many as 100 000 items, covering the research at RAE Bedford from the 1950s until just after closure in 2001. There is also a lot of “people-related” stuff e.g. retirements, and visits. This number of negatives is an estimate. Although nearly all negatives are in numbered envelopes, and are recorded in the original photographers’ Log Books (which we hold), many envelopes contain multiple negatives, sometimes 20 or more, hence the uncertainty. A selection of important negatives was moved to the Imperial War Museum before BAHG came on the scene.
- **Loose photographs (prints)** Several thousand loose and framed prints have been (and are still being) catalogued covering the early construction of the Bedford wind tunnel and airfield sites, and much of the work subsequently.
- **Artefacts** There are only about 50 objects listed as artefacts. This is not an area where we hold very much, as BAHG came into existence some years after the closure of RAE/DERA. FAST holds many wind tunnel models that were made and tested at Bedford.
- **Video material** This class includes films (already moved), video cassettes and DVDs.
- **Reports and books** The archive contains around a thousand RAE reports, in paper form, largely related to Bedford’s research, and a quantity of other documents.

The Web Site The BAHG web site will continue to exist with all its current content as it is today but will be re-hosted by FAST and integrated as part of the FAST web site. As well as providing a brief history of certain elements of RAE Bedford’s research work, the web site includes copies of all the newsletters and information about the books produced which describe much of Bedford’s work. We will still be able to add to it.

Bedford Aeronautical Heritage Group

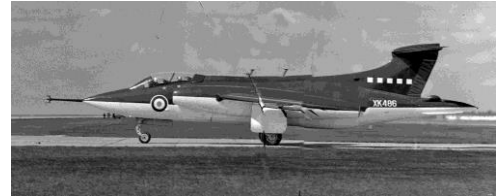
Don’t forget, to contact us with any news or comments, please email (bahg-bt@hotmail.co.uk).

Newsletter We will continue to publish the BAHG Newsletter (which began in 2011) on an occasional basis. We will also continue to respond to queries about Bedford's work and people as far as we can.

New Book Bruce Lumsden, formerly at the Blind Landing Experimental Unit, Bedford has produced a new book, "Blind Landing: A History", covering the subject world-wide, including the work of BLEU. Cost is £30 plus £5 p&p (UK only), via BAHG.

Snow With the recent spell of snow and ice it is of interest to recall earlier occurrences, such as the winter of 1963, when there was snow on the ground until March. The picture at the head of this newsletter reminds us of the quantity of snow then. The first flight of the Handley Page Jet Flap research aircraft was delayed until March 1963 as a result (see picture at top).

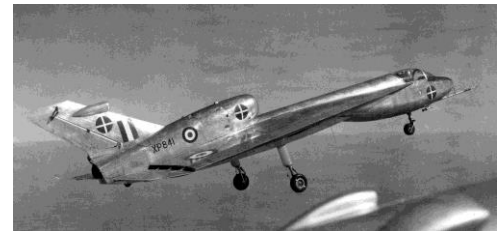
First Flights at RAE Bedford Over the years, RAE Bedford's Thurleigh airfield, with its long main runway (10500 ft.) has been used for several significant maiden flights. The first of these was the prototype Blackburn NA39 Buccaneer XK486, on 30 April 1958 (neg C2487). It appeared at the Farnborough air show later that year but the aircraft was lost on a company test flight on 5 October 1960 when the crew ejected following instrument failure. Buccaneer aircraft returned frequently to Bedford in the 1960s for arrester gear and catapult launching trials, prior to operations at sea.



The next major first flight was the prototype Hawker P1127 XP831, pre-cursor of the Harrier, which made its first conventional flight at Bedford on 13 Feb 1961, flown by company test pilot Bill Bedford. It had already conducted hover flights at Dunsfold. This aircraft later came to Bedford in Feb 1965 as part of the Aero Flight research fleet (neg B1486C). The aircraft is currently in the Flight Gallery of the Science Museum, London.



The Handley Page HP115 slender wing research aircraft XP841 made its first flight on 17 Aug 1961, flown by RAE test pilot Sqn Ldr Jack Henderson, on behalf of the company. This was a very successful research aircraft (neg B255), with some 60 pilots making more than 1000 flights until 1973 as part of the Concorde programme. The aircraft is now at the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm Museum Yeovilton.



Another unique research aircraft, the Hunting H126 Jet Flap XN714 made its first flight on 26 March 1963, after several months' delay due to the severe winter of 1962/63 (see above). The aircraft is now at the RAF Museum Cosford (see Nick Cooke image, left, showing its colour scheme), after making its last research flight at Bedford in Nov 1967.



Fire Engine In the previous issue (June 2022), we reported that the Hampshire Police and Fire Heritage Trust have acquired a somewhat dilapidated Bedford RL fire tender CYY426C which they plan to restore. Bedford's former Fire Chief Roland (Ro) Haggerwood contacted us to confirm that the vehicle had, indeed, been part of Bedford's fleet, in the role of

Equipment Carrier, with the call sign "Fire 10".

306 Bomb Group Memorial A year ago (Issue 44, Dec 2021) we mentioned plans for a memorial to be erected in the village of Bletsoe to nine men killed (only the tail-gunner survived) when their B-17G aircraft crashed near the village shortly after take-off from Thurleigh on 26 April 1944 on a mission to Germany. We made a donation to the fund for the memorial, which was formally unveiled on 14 August 2022. A memorial stone in the churchyard (image right, P1130147 Barry Tomlinson) lists the names of the ten aircrew. There is also an information board at the crash site in a nearby field (image left, Nick Cooke).

