

## Removal of the Bedford Archive to Farnborough

Readers of recent contributions by the Bedford Aeronautical Heritage Group will have noticed reference to the removal of the Bedford Archive to Farnborough. Decreasing local support at Bedford and pressure on our current accommodation have forced us to remove our holdings to join with the FAST collection. In consequence, during March this year a plan was developed to move all the remaining Archive to Farnborough. Careful consideration of the removal task led to the conclusion that the choice of remover should be based on experience in the moving of technical rather than domestic customers. On this basis a number of firms were approached and three were eventually selected for competition.

Contact with the firms and the bids submitted made the final choice quite difficult as the proposed prices were surprisingly close; the final choice being made on the basis of proven experience of the firm and their appreciation of the special nature of the Bedford archive. On the day, 4 April 2023, the packing was carried out and with great care by the removal team, two members of BAHG, Tony Manning and I, being present to answer any questions and smooth the process. The framed pictures were carefully and individually wrapped, and the priceless negatives kept in their filing cabinets to avoid disturbance. The portion of the Puma helicopter blade from the British Experimental Rotor Programme had generated a few worries and was given special protection for its journey. The Archive almost completely filled the large removal vehicle. On the following day, 5 April, the archive was transported to Farnborough where preparations are being made to create a special RAE Bedford section of the FAST Museum.



During the afternoon, it was reported that it had been unloaded safely and stored without damage or loss of any kind. Our colleagues at Farnborough have now noted all these Bedford items and placed them into safe keeping until they are supported with catalogue and guidance information from us at Bedford. Eventually all this will form a specific Bedford collection within the FAST Museum. In particular, over the next six months, the precious Bedford negative collection, will be moved into a new environment, controlled in temperature and humidity, where it will be housed with the completed RAE Glass plate negative collection.

There is still plenty for us to do here at Bedford: dealing with queries, web site and Facebook page issues, the important supporting documentation and, eventually the installation of a memorial 'blue plaque' on the former Bedford site.