
Museum of Berkshire Aviation

News for Museum Members

In This Issue: Check out the progress on Martinet, the Museum film archive, Miles History and much, much more.

Welcome to the relaunch of the Newsletter for the Museum of Berkshire Aviation. It has been away for some time, but it is hoped that it is now better than ever.

ENGINEERING SECTION - PROGRESS REPORT

by Geoff Etridge

As you all probably know we have finally managed to get the new extension completed. This was achieved after a lot of sometimes back breaking work by the Wednesday team, who I hope the rest of the museum members appreciate.

Anyway, we have now got full approval of the local council to use this marvellous facility. During the winter months will be able to get on with projects that were not possible before. I must say we all feel so much more willing to get stuck into the tasks at hand in the warm.

If you care to pay a visit to the workshop it is evident what the lads have managed to achieve in such a short time scale. It is also worth looking around at the exterior work.

Ongoing is the rebuilding of the Martinet cockpit section and the sliding- cockpit covers. We

have been able to get the compressor running after rebuilding it, and we are now able to use the air tools so kindly donated to us. This in turn enables us the facility to carry out some decent riveting on the aircraft.

As the weather has started to settle down again we have continued stripping the Gannet, preparatory to painting it in its proper colours. Incidentally we have managed to get hold of some canopy covers to replace the ones vandalised last year.



Video archives for the Museum. This is to be based, initially, on the contents of the quantity of films that had remained dormant in the storeroom for some years because of lack of facilities and effort.

Almost simultaneously I was able to enlist the support of friends in the Reading Film and Video Makers (of which I was a founder member in 1957) to investigate the possibility of making a video of the History of Aviation in Berkshire for display, and hopefully, for sale in the Museum to help boost funds. It was hoped that some of the film in the Museum storeroom would be of pre-war Miles activities.

Inspection and listing of the 16 mm films has been undertaken at home where I have the necessary equipment for inspection and occasional repairs. The Wessex Film and Sound Archives at Winchester kindly allowed me to use their facilities to examine the small amount of 35 mm film also found at the Museum.

The Museum Film and Video Archive

by Alan E Lott

Last year I suggested to Jean and Ken Fostekew that I should take charge of forming a Film and

At the time of writing (first week in February) I have examined and produced a listing of 83 films, about 12,000 feet of film. I have about another 4,000 feet to examine. The findings have been interesting but the

disappointment is that nearly all of the films concern the Handley Page Dart Herald. I am now confident that the remainder will not contain any Miles or pre-war film of Aviation in Berkshire. Therefore, in order to try and obtain such materials for the proposed Museum video the quest has had to be extended via letters in the local press, the magazine Amateur Cine Enthusiasts (for which I write articles) the Film and Video Maker and even an appeal on the Pam Ayres radio programme on Radio 2 on Sundays.

Visits by myself, Don Currie and Dennis Burke of the RFVM to the Wessex Archives and then Brooklands to see Julian Temple have to date yielded nothing. I have been told by Peter Amos of the Miles Association that the films given to the RAF Museum at Hendon, which he has thoroughly inspected on Super VHS video seem to be virtually oddments collected from cutting room floor and of no use for our purpose. If so where are the completed films of which these are the "sweepings"?

I find it rather incredible that with some 20 airfields in pre-war Berkshire and the steady increase of amateur cine film on both 9.5 mm and Standard 8 mm films pre-war that no footage of aircraft in the county has come to light.

Attempts to use professional footage from commercial outlets have to be ruled out on the basis of copyright and fees charge. Recently Don Currie contacted the BBC to find out if we could use an extract from the Fat Ladies programme last year taken at a Northern Airshow which featured a Miles Magister. The extract would have been not more than two minutes, but the fee quoted was £50. As a result of further efforts by Don Currie this was

reduced to £50 but obviously this sort of charge is out of the question for our venture.

Regarding the Handley Page films we have, Harry Fraser-Mitchell, Vice-President of the Handley Page Society, has kindly offered to help me identify the films which carry no dates, places or credits or titles. I have said that I shall be glad to accept his offer when I have finished listing the remaining films. I think that when time permits quite a good documentary video can be made of the Dart Herald, especially as our own display model, G-APWA, features in much of the footage.

Now that I have the film situation under control, although not quite complete, I would like to obtain an overall feel of the video situation. Such videos that I am told exist, seem to have a variety of origins and are scattered amongst the membership and no one has a clear idea of the total.

Some members have taken their own videos of Museum activities and I shall be glad if these members will inform me of exactly what they have and if I might examine their recordings. May I also make a plea to such members that if they still have original camera tapes, to carefully preserved them, so that if necessary, sharp first generation copies may be made.

Keith Freeman has been the first to help by handing me a VHS copy of his shooting of the ceremony of the Mayoress of Wokingham handing over the keys of the hangar to Jean Fostekew in January 1991. He thinks he still has the 8 mm camera original tape (my fingers are crossed) but thank you Keith.

During the slide show I gave in January to the Aviation Society,

Jack de Conick stated that he had made three three hour videos for the Museum which contained, amongst other things, the films that I projected. He has subsequently told me that he also donated to the Museum an 18 minute video of the film made by Fairey Aviation of the Fairey Gannet. Where are these videos which are Museum property? Presumably a member or members have them in safe keeping on behalf of the Museum.

This is the state of affairs in February 1999. You may see a short appeal for information on videos in an issue of the newsletter of the Aviation Society before this is published.

In the long term it is my hope, similar to many other Museums, we shall be able to install a video player and monitor to display tapes as an added attraction for visitors. Your assistance with videos and information will be greatly appreciated.

HISTORY

MILES AERONAUTICAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL

by Jean M. Fostekew

Walter W. Evans was the headmaster of the school, MATS as it is usually called. He and another of the former tutors, Allan Pepper proposed to write a book which they provisionally called "Our Achievements". This was to be based on as many of the old students' CV's or biographies as they could assemble. Many of the students did in fact go on to top jobs in the aircraft and other industries. Out of a total intake of only 300 students from start to finish (1943 - 1949) they felt that

this would reflect the value of the education that MATS provided.

It was not to be a book of bare facts, but would draw conclusions of an erudite nature from the data.

When Walter Evans died with the task only in its very early stages, the urgency went out of the project, but I had acted as liaison between the old students and Walter Evans and Allan Pepper and so before I sent off the biographies to each of them I also made a further copy which I felt would make a valuable addition to the archives of the Museum. Therefore I had assembled quite a lot of material.

At various reunions, old boys (and girls, though not many of them !) naturally asked what was going to happen to their biographies over which some of them had taken a great deal of time and trouble. It seemed rather a waste to consign all that paper work to an archive box, so I decided that I would compile some sort of book to preserve it.

I cannot see that this would be "publishable" in the commercial sense, it has a very limited appeal, but if it is bound in some manner and a certain number of copies made, then it can be archived. The Museum can obviously have a copy, maybe the British Library or local reference libraries, the Miles Collection can have a copy and anyone else who would like one could have one at a small charge of £2.50.

I am not going to attempt to draw any conclusions, educational or psychologically or in any other way, I have already expressed my opinion of the value of the education we received at MATS in my book on Blossom Miles. What I am going to do is merely present the biographies and CV's as I have received them, with a few notes of explanation where necessary.

The more I read of these "achievements" the more I am amazed and I am sure that

someone somewhere will find the compilation interesting and useful.

NEWS!

FRINGE ACTIVITIES OF THE MUSEUM OF BERKSHIRE AVIATION

by Jean M. Fostekew

Members might be interested to know of other activities of the Museum staff and as number one of a series I have compiled the following list of lectures and/talks/ slide shows/ we have given to various organisations. We do not charge for these but usually the group or organisation does give a small donation to the Museum's funds and we feel that the added publicity, interest and good will generated is well worth the effort.

Recent lectures included -

Group/Organisation - Venue -
Subject - Given by

Probus - Goring & Streatley
Golf Club - History of Aviation
In Berkshire - Jean Fostekew

Caversham Rotary - Mansion
House - History of Aviation
In Berkshire - Jean Fostekew

Newbury Transport Group -
The Wharf, Newbury - Air Survey
& Aerial Photography - Ken
Fostekew

Reading Transport Group -
Caversham - Air Survey &
Aerial Photography - Ken & Jean
Fostekew

Under 40 Club - Fox & Hounds
- History of Aviation In
Berkshire - Ken & Jean Fostekew

Woosehill Over 50's -
Community Centre - The Museum
of Berkshire Aviation -
John Kite

Woosehill Over 50's
Community Centre -
Blossom Miles - Jean Fostekew

University of the 3rd Age -
Adult Ed., Reading. - History of
Aviation - Jean Fostekew

Thamesway Young Members,
Institution of Mechanical
Engineers - MBA - History of
Aviation in Berkshire - Ken &
Jean Fostekew

Geoff Etridge and John Bold
have also been involved in giving
talks and slide shows.

Membership, Visitors and Admissions

by John Hunt

Membership currently
standing at 58, comprising 46
Bronze, 9 Silver and 3 Gold. There
are 11 family members included in
these figures and one Honorary
Member. Surely is not impossible
for all existing members to try and
recruit at least one new member ?
Forms are available at the
Museum or from the Membership
Co-ordinator, John Hunt.

The total number of visitors to
the MBA in 1998 was 3,114, very
similar in number to the previous
two years. It is thought unlikely
that there will be any
improvement until such time as
adequate signing is provided on
all major through routes in the
area.

The 1998 attendance figures can
be broken down into Adults - 1456,
Child - 884 and Senior - 774. Total
admission for the six years we
have been open is 22,079

For the first time since our opening, admission charges have been increased, with the new rates being Adults £2.50, Children & Seniors £1.50. This increase is not expected to deter would be visitors and will provide us with a little more much needed income.

2nd March was the first Saturday opening of the 99 Summer season and visitors flocked in - all 9 of them !! Having nothing organised to attract the crowds did allow the duty crew to do a little spring cleaning ! At least the weather was absolutely glorious and thermal underwear was definitely not needed !

Forthcoming Events at the Science Museum, Wroughton

**Enquires: Science Museum
01793 814466**

June 12-13 Wiltshire Agriculture Preservation Group. From plough horse to steam tractors, see the reality behind the rustic idyll. A great day out including ploughing demonstrations, working steam engines and traditional country fayre.

June 26-27 Try Drive and Motor Show 1999. Ever wanted to drive a double decker or an articulated lorry? Attractions include the JCB Digger Challenge, mini motorbikes, off-road karting, helicopter rides and vintage vehicles.

July 3-4 Festival of Free Flight. Organised by the British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association, this event encompasses all forms of free flight from paragliding and hand gliding.

July 11 Science Museum 'More in Store' Open Day. A chance to delve deep into the national collections in storage as the Science Museum opens the hanger door.

July 31 Wroughton Nostalgia Show. Packed with over 1500 classic vehicles, antiques and collectors, autojumble, craft and trade stall as well as helicopter rides.

August 11 Science Museum Eclipse Party. Eclipse begins 10.01. Maximum eclipse 11.17.

September 12 Science Museum Conservation Open Day. See conservation in action in this fascinating look at the work of the Science Museum.

September 26 Festival of Transport. An early autumn feast for transport lovers featuring buses, lorries, bikes, display driving, classic cars and vintage vehicles.

Forthcoming RBAS Lectures and Visits

June 1st: Teddy Key - ex FAA pilot with 1772 Naval Air Squadron (Fireflies). Experiences in the Pacific and on HMS Indefatigable.

July 4th: Alec Waldon of the Glider Pilot Regiment - reminiscences.

11th June: RAF Cardington, SOLD OUT

7th July: ATC Swanwick, ID required on the day, only 3 places left!

26th September: RAF Cosford, RBAS Annual trip. See Les Hillier for more info.

21st October: FRA Bournemouth and Jet Heritage.

Final Thoughts from the Editor

I hope you enjoyed this relaunched newsletter. Don't forget that this is your newsletter, let me know what you think of it and what you would like in the next issue. If you want to write an article, I would be pleased to hear from you.

Also, please don't forget that the Museum still needs volunteers to man the museum during the weekends. If you want to help, please let me know, below I have included my e-mail address. Finally, did you know the Museum is on the World Wide Web? Why not visit us at ; <http://fly.to/MuseumofBerkshireAviation> e-mail: MuseumofBerkshireAviation@fly.to