

## EDITORIAL

Once more our Chairman, Martyn Cook was able to give a very up-beat account of the Society's progress during the last year. Membership is 270 and the number we get at our monthly meetings is really most encouraging. Given that many of our members live too far away to attend the meetings it is most heartening to see so many active members. As I said once before – we must be getting something right!

After Gordon Kinsey's talk about "The Birth of the Beam", in January, our member, Jork Andrews has submitted a most interesting piece about the use of Radar during the early war years. It was indeed our practical application of the new science of Radar that proved so important and I believe that Jork's article is a most valuable addition to the story. It surely deserves a better airing than our modest newsletter can afford it.

On May 8<sup>th</sup> we are holding a celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the war in Europe. It promises to be a fun day and, fingers crossed, we should have the presence of a Spitfire. We know the aircraft is available and are currently in touch with the CAA to obtain permission. The Museum will be open from 11am to 4pm and a chuck wagon and barbeque will be on site. Also vintage cars and military vehicles together with other attractions. Come and support us and have some fun too!

Back issues of "Runway 22" can now be viewed or printed off from our web sit, ([www.mhas.org.uk](http://www.mhas.org.uk))

Hopefully you will also enjoy the other articles. I always look forward to any feedback. Without your comments it is difficult to know whether our newsletter is "pressing the right buttons!"

**ED**

### MARTLESHAM JOTTINGS.

During the last few months, although it was the closed season for visits at the museum, we have had a steady stream of people calling in to have a look around on Wednesday mornings.

We have also had five parties of schoolchildren from Gorselands School of around 30 each time, for a visit also on Wednesday mornings. This, together with the double-glazing of the windows, has held up a more thorough preparation for our opening on 3 April.

We have also received more contributions of artefacts and documents to add to the museum collections. Some of these have had to go into store, but others are being prepared for exhibition.

I have, mainly through our member, Tarkey Barker, received a steady stream of emails and contacts of previous inhabitants of Martlesham and have collected some good stories of their time here.

One item, from ex Corporal P.G. Honey of 5003 Airfield Construction Squadron, who was here in 1956, has solved a mystery for me.

In Sqdn. Ldr. Tim Mason's book on 'Flight Testing at Boscombe Down – The Cold War Years' he shows a picture of Argosy XN815 which is said to be on soft ground at Martlesham Heath in October 1962.

I have never been able to confirm this visit before, but Corporal Honey provided the clue when he said the detachment was to take a strip of open heath land and convert it into a temporary airstrip for use within 1 month. To do this they removed the top 1 foot of soil and debris and then rotovated and mixed in cement and rolled it to a compact surface and land an Argosy aircraft on it. To do so they worked continuously for two 8-hour shifts during the day and another 8-hour shift during the night to refuel and service all the equipment while living under canvas. The idea was to simulate the soil consolidation technique for use in the Far East theatres.

I wonder if the strip was also the one used by the RAF in testing the Dart Herald and the Hawker Siddeley 748 (developed into the Andover) which competed for the contract for a transport for the RAF in 1963.

Also received were accounts of the happenings during the period April 1959 to October 1960 by Ray Blake who confirmed that the Fairey Rotodyne paid a visit bringing in the Duchess of Gloucester for a visit to the WRAF at Bawdsey. (I remember it passing over the north of Ipswich The noise was terrific and could be heard while it was miles away)

He also tells us that there were a quantity of WW.2 "Tallboy" and "Grand Slam" bombs in the bomb dump which only came to light when a scrap merchant was clearing the site after the Air Ministry had decommissioned it. Having lugged a few off to his site in Ipswich, believing they were inert, when he started to cut one up in his scrap yard, he discovered they were full of high explosive.

Also the Station Commander in 1959-60, Squadron Leader B. Reece used to raise pheasants out on the Heath, the and on the "Glorious 12<sup>th</sup>" had a shooting party on the station to which all the hierarchy of Fighter Command attended. The airmen were employed as beaters, for which the CO amply rewarded them with. "copious quantities of ale in the NAAFI afterwards!"

The Fire Section used to take a crash tender to the bomb dump every day to fill the water troughs for the CO's pheasants.

He also tells me that there were still "characters" in the RAF. In particular he remembers the arrival of Air Commodore Crawford-Compton who, on his arrival as the new SASO to HQ 11 Group, arrived in an Anson which deposited him and a fold-up ex army wartime mini scooter at the end of the main runway and from there proceeded to ride the contraption, which left a lovely trail of deep grey exhaust smoke, up to the main entrance of the Group Headquarters, much to the amazement of everybody who witnessed the event, including the AOC. He was well respected on the camp for stopping the driver of his Staff Car and give airmen, waiting at the bus stop at the end of the camp road, a lift into Ipswich.

**ALAN SMITH**

### **THE INNOCENT – no, not Bob!**

When the idea of a creating a museum about the aviation history of The Heath was first mooted I was sceptical and put forward the objection that it would be open only on Sundays afternoons between Easter and October. After all, we did have a small display in the Doctor's surgery which was open all day on most days. I was overruled and as we now know we have a very successful Control Tower Museum. I stand corrected!

Many volunteers have worked hard to establish it and everyone will agree that Bob Dunnett has led from the beginning. It was his enthusiasm which drove the project and continues to do so.

Probably unseen from the start, but subsequently of great benefit to the community, are the parties of young school children who frequently visit the museum accompanied by their teacher. It is so important that the history of the two world wars is taught to the younger generation and fortunately it is very much in the school curriculum. Our Archivist, Alan Smith is a retired school teacher and the perfect person to talk to the children.

*At a recent visit by a party of very young children from the neighbouring primary school Bob asked one of the youngsters if he had enjoyed it. "Yes sir", said the boy. "The Germans were fighting France and we went to help?" "Yes, that's right", said Bob, anxious not to paint too complicated a picture. "The Germans weren't very nice were they". No, said Bob, they weren't. – Long pause – Please sir – Yes? – Please sir, WHO WON? !!!*

**ALAN POWELL**

### **CHAIN HOME RADAR – SOME FRESH INFORMATION**

Gordon Kinsey gave us one of his superb presentations for January. He dug into his great store of knowledge to inform and amuse us about the Bawdsey Radar story. His long and apparently unscripted performance made lecturing look easy but all who try, know that he gave us a quality which few can approach.

He had so much material that he must have had to choose to omit some parts. I wonder, then, whether I am allowed some space to describe two little-known details. Because both of these involve the, then GPO, it will go some way to over-ride the statement he made that the GPO had given the early pioneers a lorry full of equipment which was immediately dumped in the river as being of no use.

The first detail is never discussed. It is always said that Watson Watts work on Radar won us the Battle of Britain. I suggest that this is inaccurate and that it dismisses other, much less glamorous work, which turned radar detection into a finely honed tool.

It would not have been sufficient for all radar operators to be individually calling airfields and Fighter Control with observations as the aircraft appeared.

There would have been a jumble of information which could not have been usefully reviewed and might easily have been forgotten or over-written. It is clear that someone in Fighter Command had the vision to see that all of the information could be presented on the large control-room map with which we are now so familiar. This allowed the overall commander on his balcony to enjoy a view of the whole battlefield, hundreds of miles across, with accurate, easily understood and up to the second information. Fighter Command had the drive to specify the solution they needed, then to get all of the parts in place and train the many different operators to make it happen.

It required communication links to the control centre from all of the data sources, not only radar stations but Observer Corps, airfields and so on. Then at both ends of each of these lines there had to be operators who were trained to respond to messages in concise and accurate ways. The end result was to be a faithful display of all of the threats and resources for the "chief" to make his decision. Then these decisions had to be relayed to the various points for appropriate action - airfields, balloon sites, air raid warnings, civil defence, fire, ambulance and so on. This required more links and trained operators. On top of all this, the system had to be resilient in the face of faults and enemy action.

This was nothing less than a big data processing system long before computers became commonplace. Its specification, design and proper working was a triumph for Fighter Command. It would not have been possible without a very considerable input from the Post Office telephone business which was already over-taxed with many other wartime pressures. I have never seen the Battle of Britain story told in this way. Yes, radar was the "magic ingredient" but many other countries were then working on radar. It was the overall system, which was the battle winner; it was the first time that a commander had had a complete picture of the whole battle displayed before him in "real-time". I think that the considerable contribution, which the Post Office made to this story, has never been acknowledged.

But there was another contribution from the Post Office, which remained secret and has never been made public. It concerns the useful range of a radar station. When only one station is working it may have a range of more than 100 miles depending upon the radio noise at the receiver which will mask the signal reflected by the aircraft. However, when all stations in the "chain" are transmitting, each is contributing to the "noise" seen by the other receivers and this reduces their range to less than half.

It was seen that, if they could synchronise all of the transmitters to send their pulses in turn, it would be possible for each receiver to view its own reflected signal in a quiet spell, free of unwanted transmissions. To do this from a central point by a telephone line was not a difficult task but, if just one of those lines were to be put out of action then all of our radar network would be severely disabled. This fault liability was not acceptable. The solution was offered by the Post Office Research Station, then at Dollis Hill and now at Martlesham Heath.

It used a 400Hz tone within a working telephone line to provide the synchronising signal. This employed techniques, then recently developed at Dollis Hill, to send a number of telegraph signals as separate “vf - voice frequencies” on one telephone circuit. This time they used only one of these so that the remaining bandwidth could still be used for speech.

Then, if the line were to go faulty, a 132khz crystal-controlled “time flywheel” circuit was installed at each transmitter to keep the transmitter in synch. This “flywheel equipment” was based on that which had earlier been used in the design at Dollis Hill of the Speaking Clock to provide the first “Tim” Service in 1937. The work of synchronising the radar stations is described in Research Reports 10617, 11468 and 11381 which were all classified and difficult to view.

I was fortunate to meet the man responsible for doing this. He said that he had an aerial on the roof of Dollis Hill which allowed him to see in his lab all of the radar transmitters firing away sequentially showing that all was well. The man’s name is Eric Hoare.

During WW2 he worked on a number of important tasks such as getting circuits out to the Naval bases in the Northern Isles and preparing cross-channel circuits for use after D Day, using the latest multi-channel techniques. After the war he looked for different work and found it with the Glass House Crops Research Institute (GCRI) where he designed electronic systems for controlling the environment in glass houses - then, of course, still using valves and high voltages. He was also involved with ICI in the very early designs of Polythene tunnels at Lea Valley. They pioneered these designs, which are now used around the world. Then he was attracted to Australia where the Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) was supporting the great development of the Snowy Mountain scheme which used the steady snow melt to provide constant irrigation for a great new farming area - including the diversion of whole rivers through mountains back into the potentially productive country inland.

This scheme is a great success story. I met Eric on one of his occasional returns to the “Mother Country” and established email contact with him - sadly he died on one of his camping trips to the wild Northern Territories. But I had captured this story and offer it to be added to Gordon’s already full story. In multiplying the range of our CH stations his work made a great contribution which was much appreciated by fighters when they started to make their aggressive “rhubarb” sweeps from 1941. The Post Office certainly played its part in the team, which made our radar story a great success.

In his last email to me from Australia in 1993 Eric quoted “The good that men do is often interred with their bones”. In writing this I am hoping to publicise what he did and avoid his work being completely lost from view.

**JORK ANDREWS**

### **IMPRESSIONS OF A PILOT**

Flight is freedom in its purest form,  
To dance with the clouds which follow a storm;

To roll and glide, to wheel and spin,  
To feel the joy that swells within;

To leave the earth with its troubles and fly,  
And know the warmth of a clear spring sky;

Then back to earth at the end of a day,  
Released from the tensions which melted away.

Should my end come while I am in flight,  
Whether brightest day or darkest night;

Spare me your pity and shrug off the pain,  
Secure in the knowledge that I'd do it again;  
For each of us is created to die,

And within me I know,  
I was born to fly.

Gary Claud Stokor

### **MARTLESHAM PARACHUTISTS - A/C DOBBS AND CPL. EAST**

In England, it was the men of the Parachute Test Unit who led the way. Amongst them were two jumpers called Dobbs and East, who made a largely unrecognized but significant contribution to British parachuting, and who would have contributed even more had they lived longer.

'Brainy' Dobbs, they called him, for he had an inventive mind not entirely applied to the parachute, for he made a two-wheeled car, and an aquaplane, which he eventually crashed on the banks of the River Deben. Towards the parachute, he had the right attitude. 'A parachute', he would say to the men he trained, 'must be so simple that even the highest officer in the Royal Air Force can understand it.' His main contribution to parachute technology was the 'trapezoidal' ripcord handle. Remember the trouble that Lieutenant Harold Harris had in trying to find the ripcord ring as he tumbled through the sky? Others had experienced the same problem, particularly when wearing the heavy gloves required for open-cockpit flying. There were also occasions when the circular handle had slipped from its fabric housing to dangle free, which made the finding of it whilst falling even more traumatic. 'Brainy' Dobbs devised a trapezoidal-shaped handle (one side longer than the other) that not only

presented a wider handhold, but also allowed the elasticised mouth of the pocket to grip the converging sides more securely. He had one made in the workshops at Henlow, where Leslie Irvin saw it on one of his frequent visits. Within months the American had patented it and produced it. So when you reach for your trapezoidal handle, all you sky people, think of 'Brainy' Dobbs.'

Dobbs was a good parachutist, but East was said to have been even better. The two of them, with no guidance, had tackled the mysteries of free fall, and it had been East who had quickly discovered that the normally tumbling body could be stabilized by spreading out arms and legs, and that even though this caused a tendency for the body to rotate like a propeller, that too could be controlled by adjusting the relative positions of the limbs. He hadn't fully mastered it yet, but he was close. He would surely have been amongst the first of the world's controlled free fallers had his bravery and confidence not killed him at the age of twenty-five. On 9 March 1927 he made a display drop from a Vickers Vimy at Biggin Hill. He was to have jumped from 5,000 feet and delayed his opening for twenty seconds, but Flight Sergeant 'Timber' Woods, the Vimy pilot, gave him an extra thousand without telling him, for he knew that it wasn't altitude but lack of it that killed people who leapt from aeroplanes. So East jumped from just above 6,000 feet. He was seen to be falling in a slow, head down spin, which then developed into an almost leisurely somersaulting, which continued until he pulled his ripcord only 100 feet above the ground. The canopy streamed, but he crashed onto the road that borders the airfield on its western side, and died instantly. Some said that he had been trying to dive into the valley and open his 'chute out of sight of the aerodrome 'to give them a real thrill'. What is more likely is that when that slow and not unpleasant somersaulting began, he became so intent on this novel sensation and on finding a means to control it, that despite the extra 1,000 feet that 'Timber' Woods had given him, he lost sense of time and of the looming earth until it was too late. He probably died as other free fallers have died since-from sheer preoccupation. Two days later, 'Brainy' Dobbs was practicing 'balloon hopping' at Stag Lane aerodrome in North London. Harnessed to a small gas balloon, he was making gigantic leaps across the airfield, rising to over 100 feet, and then settling back to earth before propelling himself once more into the air and the gentle wind. It was great sport! At the end of the 'field he made one final bound. He sailed over a tree, and came down the other side onto electric power cables. He, like East, died instantly.

(Extract from "The Sky People, a History of Parachuting' by Peter Heam Airline 1990.)

**ALAN SMITH**

## **FLYING SAUCERS?**

The following fascinating extract from a London newspaper was sent to me by our long-standing member, Peter Hawkins. It is dated 17<sup>th</sup> September, 1957.

"Four people living in North London telephoned the Air Ministry late last night to say that they had seen a mysterious luminous object moving across the sky.

"Three of the four gave descriptions which tallied exactly", said an Air Ministry spokesman. They said the object was blue/green in colour, cigar shaped and travelling very fast. One of the calls said the object was travelling far faster than a jet 'plane.

The East Anglian Daily times also featured the story.

### **SEEN OVER SUFFOLK**

A mystery object similar to that seen over London was seen by Mr Hawkins of the Post Office, Creeting St Peter, near Needham Market..

Mr Hawkin's description of the object was almost identical to that of observers in the London area. He saw the object at 10.35pm when it was travelling from the south-east, below the cloud base at a speed comparable to that of a "shooting star." It was bright green in colour and produced no noise."

## **HANDLEY PAGE – THE END OF AN ERA**

The 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2004 and for the first time in 86 years the RAF ceased to operate a Handley Page designed aircraft. The aircraft in question was a Jetstream T.1. Thus came to an end an era in which the name "Handley Page" had been associated with the RAF. The first time since 1918 when the Royal Air Force had been formed. A record unsurpassed by any other aircraft manufacturer.

The first mention of the name Handley Page in Gordon Kinsey's book "Martlesham Heath," was in the list of military and civil aeroplanes tested at Martlesham. This was a Handley Page O/400 in August of 1917 for "handling trials". The first operational HP bomber was the twin-engine HP O/100 and this first saw service in 1916. The O/400 soon succeeded the O/100. Eventually about 700 O/100 and the later O/400 saw service and the O/400 was operational until 1925. They were large aircraft for the time and particularly in view of the fact that they were only twin-engine aircraft. A wingspan of 100ft and fuselage length of 63ft. Cruising speed was 95 mph and the ceiling was 8500ft. Bomb load was initially eight 250lb or sixteen 122lb bombs carried internally. Late in the Great War they carried one 6.500lb bomb externally. Endurance was 8 hours.

It is interesting to read the following in an edition of the official Handley Page Association newsletter. The headlines in an American magazine dated 1918 read: - "The First of the Great Fleet of Powerful airplanes to be built in the United States for Combatant Purposes in France" "*The first American built Handley Page bombing airplane was turned over to the government on July 6*

*and will be followed by thousands more*". Presumably the Great War came to an end before production got under way.

The first successful "heavy bomber" was the German Gotha which was first produced in 1915. This was developed during the Great War and subsequently the Gotha G-1V was capable of reaching and bombing London. This prompted the War Office to call for our own bomber capable of bombing Germany. Hence the appearance of the Handley Page V/1500 four engine bomber. The design was similar to the Gotha, with four engines – two pulling and two pushing. This was never used in anger over German soil as the war ended before it could be used for this purpose. Only 48 of these were ever produced.

The Handley Page Hyderabad was the next aeroplane from that manufacturer to see service with the RAF. It was produced to succeed the Vickers Armstrong Vimy and the DH10. It became the RAF's main heavy bomber in the late 20's and early 30's although it is only recorded that 45 of these was built. Such was the state of the Royal Air Force in those inter-war years.

The HP Hinairi replaced the Hyderabad and was in regular RAF service from 1929 until 1933. These rather frail twin-engine biplanes with a performance little better than the aircraft of the Great War showed just how much, or perhaps how little importance the government of the day gave to aircraft development. The Handley Page Halifax was coming into service less than 10 years later and this gives some idea of the sudden acceleration of aircraft technology that the impending clouds of war had given. Conversely at the end of the twentieth century an aeroplane such as the Nimrod was developed from a design of many years earlier.

Apart from the little known HP Clive transport 'plane of which three saw service from 1928 to 1934, the HP Heyford was the next Handley Page aeroplane to come into service. This was in 1933 and was designed as a night bomber. This ungainly looking aircraft would not have many friends in those who believe in the unscientific maxim that, "if it looks right it must fly right". If this were true then surely it would have flown like a lead balloon! Nevertheless records show that it was not entirely withdrawn from service until 1942. Thankfully no aircrew were ever required to operate it in combat. This was another twin-engine biplane and now powered by two Rolls Royce Kestrel engines. At least it had a metal frame but this was fabric covered. Unlike the Americans it seems we did little in those inter-war years to develop all metal aircraft. Maximum speed of 124mph at 13000ft. Range with 1600lbs bomb load was 920 miles. A total of 124 Heyfords in different variants were supplied and it was the last biplane bomber to see service with the RAF.

The Handley Page Harrow was to follow into RAF service. A high wing braced monoplane of partly metal structure. The wings were all metal and the fuselage was fabric covered metal frame. This was originally designed as a heavy bomber but subsequently described as a "bomber-transport" when they had turrets removed and were called "Sparrow transports". 100 of these were

manufactured and they were in service from 1937 and until the latter stages of WW2, for the most part as transports in non-combat areas. Powered by two Bristol Pegasus radial engines, the range was 800 miles and a bomb load of 3500lbs. 190mph at 22800ft.

The HP Hampden was the next aeroplane to enter active service and this was described as a medium bomber. 1580 Hampden's were built and it was in service from 1938 to 1945. They carried out some of the first operational sorties against the enemy but with little success. It was soon converted to night bombing but was withdrawn from Bomber Command operations in September 1942. It was thereafter used as a minelayer and as a torpedo bomber. Powered by two Bristol Pegasus engines and with a speed of 254mph at 19000ft it had a range of 1,885 miles and a bomb load of 4000lbs. It had a crew of four but armament layout proved to be inadequate and the aeroplane was extremely vulnerable to a beam attack from below.

All Handley Page aircraft, both civil and military were tested at the A & AEE at Martlesham up to and including the Hampden.

The HP Halifax was next in line for operational service and its record is truly legendary. 6,176 Halifax's were built and were in service from 1941 to 1952. Between 1941 and 1945 the Halifax made over 75000 bombing sorties and dropped 227610 tons of bombs. Post war role was in Coastal Command and as a transport. Unlike its famous opposite number, the Lancaster, it was used during WW2 in various other roles apart from as a night bomber. These included glider towing. Like the Lancaster it was initially fitted with Rolls Royce Merlins but subsequent variants used the excellent Bristol Hercules sleeve valve radial engines. 282mph at 18500ft and a range of 1030 miles, it had a bomb load of 13000lbs. Whilst the bomb load was similar to that of the Lancaster the service ceiling was some 5000ft below the Lancaster and the range was slightly less. Undoubtedly the Lancaster was the more famous heavy bomber and more than 7000 were built. It has been said that the Lancaster unfairly overshadows the wartime achievements of the Halifax. The same is surely true of the American B17 "Flying Fortress". The B24 Liberator was considered by many to be at least its equal but it is the Flying Fortress that is remembered.

The post WW2 period saw the introduction of the Hastings transport. A military variant of the HP Hermes airliner it was the mainstay of RAF Transport Command until retired in 1968 in favour of the Lockheed Hercules. Surprisingly only 146 Hastings were built. They were powered by four Bristol Hercules sleeve valve engines and carried approximately 50 passengers.

1957 saw the introduction into RAF service of the Victor bomber. Designed and in service as a strategic nuclear bomber it remained in service until 1993. The first 50 Victors were powered by Armstrong Siddeley Sapphire engines and the Mk2 version was powered by Rolls Royce Conway engines. The Victors intended role as bombers with nuclear carrying capability came to an end in 1968 and thereafter they were employed as flight re-fuelling aircraft.

The development by Handley Page of this, their first operational jet aircraft proved extremely costly and the government of the day had insisted that our aircraft companies merge together for understandably practical reasons. Handley Page had not merged with anybody and that meant that future orders would be placed with larger companies. Sir Frederick Handley Page, on his deathbed, railed at the destruction wrought by the mandarins of Whitehall, saying "*These misguided little men think they are having their revenge*". Fortunately he would die without ever seeing the collapse of his beloved company. The illustrious name of Handley Page finally disappeared in 1970 when it was driven into receivership.

Politicians are frequently cited as one of the causes of the decline in our manufacturing success but perhaps, whilst pioneers such as Sir Frederick Handley Page understandably "fought their corner", it has to be true that sentiment alone is not enough. Crudely put, the era of great companies being run by the "engineers" has been replaced by the "accountants." Sadly this is true of much of British manufacturing industry in the post-war years.

Surely another illustration of sentiment was illustrated by the De Havilland aircraft company when they designed the first jet-powered airliner in the world, the Comet 1. The Company were determined that their revolutionary aircraft should not only be built by De Havilland but that it should also be powered by De Havilland jet engines. History records that the installation of the De Havilland designed Ghost jet engine was a catastrophic decision. Instead of waiting for the more powerful Rolls Royce Avon engine, design and manufacture went ahead with the Ghost engine. Consequently the Comet was built with a lightweight airframe which, as we all know, could not stand up to the forces of cabin pressurisation required by this new era in high altitude aviation.

The last HP designed aircraft was the Jetstream T1. Designed as a 20-seat commuter aircraft it was at first powered by two small Turbomeca Astazou turbo-props. Considerable interest was shown, particularly in the United States when 20 were ordered straight off the drawing board. American influence saw the replacement of the Turbomeca engines by the Garrett-AirResearch TPE331. Orders by the US Air Force were cancelled on the grounds of late delivery. Only 30 aircraft had been built by the time of the Handley Page demise and production was taken over by other manufacturers. Somehow the whole sorry story of British post war aircraft manufacture seems to be embodied in the Jetstream saga. A succession of manufacturers struggling for funding leading to the ultimate demise of the original project.

Ironically however, when British Aerospace resurrected the project in the late 1970s the aircraft featured the TPE331 engines and went on to great success with more than 300 built.

**ALAN POWELL**

### **HAWKER HURRICANE – FILM STAR!**

Prototype Hurricane K5083 was at Martlesham Heath for final evaluation trials during the spring of 1937 before flying on to various specialist establishments, such as gunnery ranges. It was then considered that this particular early example of Sydney Camm's genius could contribute nothing more to the development of the Hurricane design, either at Brooklands or Hucknall, (the Rolls Royce airfield). It was therefore taken on Royal Air Force charge at Martlesham on 25<sup>th</sup> May of that year where it was flown by the Martlesham test pilot, Sammy Wroath at the Empire Air Day displays at Martlesham and Felixstowe.

At about this time the Air Ministry were approached by Metro Goldwyn Meyer with a request to assist with the making of a film. They required a modern fighter and pilot for flying sequences. Camera crews duly arrived at Martlesham Heath and Sammy Wroath's logbook reveals that the Hurricane made 14 flights between August and October of 1938. The entries stated that the flying sequences were filmed with the intention of including them in the film.

The film in question was a successful Hollywood epic of the time and starred Clark Gable, Myrna Loy and Spencer Tracey. Originally intended to be named "Shadow of the Wing", it was renamed "Test Pilot" before being released.

Of course, for the flying sequences Sammy Wroath, with his helmet and goggles would have been indistinguishable from Clark Gable.

MGM had studios in this country and indeed made the very successful film "Pygmalion" here, also in 1938. However, records show that "Test Pilot" was filmed in the US, as one would expect. The filming of the flying sequences of the Hurricane would have been sent to America to be included as required.

No records of this appeared in Hawker records and the only verification which exists is in the logbook of Martlesham Test Pilot, Sammy Wroath.

Whether the sequences were ever used in the final print of the film I cannot say. Maybe they finished up on the cutting room floor. Perhaps if a video or DVD is still available we might find a volunteer to sit through it and find out? Not being a fan of glitzy Hollywood "epics", I don't feel like being that volunteer. In fact, as Samuel Goldwyn was once memorably heard to say, "include me out!"

**ALAN POWELL**

### **MONTHLY MEETINGS ROUNDUP**

January and our President, Gordon Kinsey gave one of his informative and humorous talks. Interest in Bawdsey and the development of Radar has recently been rekindled with the BBC "Restoration" series, which had short listed the Bawdsey Transmitter Block as being an historic site worthy of preservation. The history is well known to all of us but it was, as always, Gordon's seemingly effortless and humorous delivery that is so professional.

Gordon related the following very humorous story. A favourite myth about the secret establishment was that it emitted a lethal ray capable of stopping engines and therefore presumably, aircraft engines. A father and son operated a bus service from the river Deben ferry to the centre of Felixtowe. One day the bus broke down outside the gates of the golf club. A phone call summoned the other bus that attempted to tow the stricken vehicle. This promptly also broke down and a very irate bus owner phoned Bawdsey from the golf club. "Will you turn that bl\*\*dy thing orf over there. I can't get either of me buses to gool?". This little story also appears in a new book by our distinguished member Keith Wood, who lives at Felixtowe. Entitled "Echoes and Reflections", the book is about Keith's career both at Bawdsey in the early years and also at the post-war Blind Landing Experimental Unit at Martlesham.

A whip round during the interval and resulted in a collection of £85.60 towards the Tsunami Appeal

Our February meeting welcomed back someone who has spoken to us in the past. Hedley Molland's talk was entitled, 50 Years of Flying – 1951-2001.

He recalled that in 1965 he was in a detachment of Lightnings of "Treble One Squadron", which displayed at the Paris Air Show. On that day Ipswich Airport was having one of its modest air shows and one of the guests was the CO of Wattisham, where Treble One were based. He thought what a good idea it would be if the Lightnings buzzed the air show at Ipswich on the way back from Paris. The Lightning was a powerful and extremely noisy aeroplane capable of mach2 and the arrival of nine of them at a very low altitude caused mayhem in Ipswich.

Hedley Molland has the doubtful distinction of twice baling out of a stricken jet fighter.

Our March meeting was notable by being the first monthly meeting, (at least in my memory), that was ever cancelled. It had been snowing hard and the speaker was due to come up from Rochester, in Kent. Chris Bartlett is chief technologist for Avionic Systems at BAE and his talk was entitled, "Through the Looking Glass".

We look forward very much to the time when Chris can come and give the talk. Hopefully this will be in July or September.

April is the occasion of our AGM and although the attendance was well down on our average, nevertheless a good crowd were present.

Our Chairman, Martyn Cook was once again able to report a very up-beat account of the performance of the Society over the past year. He said that the Control Tower Museum was ever popular and made particular reference to the Wednesday morning helpers who do so much towards the success of the museum.

Martyn said that the Remembrance Service in November was quite well attended and the Society should be proud that we organise it each year.

After the break the annual "Holly Hall" Photographic Competition was held. The cup was won by Alan Powell and the runner up was Mike Crowley.

**ED**

**Please welcome** the following new members:- Alan Barber, Peter Best, Robert Cowen, Michael Cowin, Raymond Crisp, Robert Drake, Nick Haywood Andrew Hughes, Mike Rodwell, Leslie Spratt and Guy Vincent. John Bulbeck, our Membership Secretary reminds me that some annual membership subscriptions are overdue £6 – what a bargain!