



Twinwoods Entrance, May 2014



Tornado ZA326 at Bruntingthorpe, March 2014



Re-Union 2014 Planning for this event is well under way. Tickets are essential and are selling well. More than 250 people are expected. There are still a few tickets left. If you haven't had the details, contact BAHG through the email address at the bottom of the page. We plan to show some of our historic photos of aircraft, wind tunnels and people. We also invite everyone who is coming to bring pictures and any other material. We will make a display board available to pin them up. The event will be held in the Bodyflight building, formerly the Vertical Spinning Tunnel (see picture, left), with parking round the back. Note only the former 'B' Gate, at the Milton Ernest end, can be used to access the site. This gate has the large yellow Twinwoods sign outside, as in the picture above.

Milton Ernest Neighbourhood Plan Milton Ernest village is taking advantage of recent government legislation which allows communities to produce a development plan

for their area. At a recent Open Day, held in the village hall on Saturday 10 May, local residents were able to discuss the plan's progress and to talk about the future of the village. BAHG was invited to be the Special Guest, to display the work and achievements of the RAE wind tunnel site (Twinwoods), as this is included in the parish boundary. (The airfield is in the adjacent parish of Thurleigh.) Our display is shown here. A commonly heard comment was "I knew the wind tunnel site was there but I had no idea of the range and quality of work undertaken". This widespread "ignorance" about RAE is one of the key reasons for the existence of BAHG and for the programme of talks BAHG gives to local and not-so-local organisations.



Visit to Bruntingthorpe A group from BAHG (see picture on steps to VC10) visited the airfield at Bruntingthorpe on Thursday 13 March to see Tornado ZA326. We were given a full tour of the airfield and saw one of the recently arrived Tristar aircraft just out of service with the RAF. Bruntingthorpe was full of aircraft (below) – including several Boeing 747, Nimrod, VC10, Tristar, HP Victor, Buccaneer, Hunter, Canberra, 2 Lightning and, of course, Tornado ZA326.

ZA326 is currently in a hangar and in excellent condition, although lacking engines, and the long-term plan is to get her back to fast-taxiable condition at Bruntingthorpe.

Web site
Some additional material has been added recently to cover the Flight Systems era and also to document

the history of some of the research aircraft. More information will follow. We are always interested to receive contributions and suggestions.



Bedford Aeronautical Heritage Group

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

RAF Museum For some time, we have been working with the Museum at Hendon to identify our interest in a number of important films about naval aviation R&D using the unique catapult and arrester gear on the Thurleigh airfield. This work was undertaken in the 1950s and 1960s. At long last, we have acquired 119 films and have brought them to the archive. We now have quite a task to view and assess these, as most of them are 35mm, for which we only have very basic viewing facilities. The picture at right shows Ewan Burnet (RAF Museum) with Tony Manning and Barry Moulang, as the first trolley-load is brought out. The picture below shows the shiny new cans in the BAHG film store.



Some “4” Anniversaries in Brief 1954, 1964, 1974, 1984, 1994

With the major re-union happening in June 2014, here are a few “4” anniversaries in brief. There are many more. Your suggestions welcome, especially for the tunnel site.

By 1954, two of the major tunnels were operational: the 3x3 Supersonic Tunnel (1952) and the 13x9 Low Speed Tunnel (1953). Still to come were the Vertical Spinning Tunnel, VST (1955), the 8x8 Supersonic Tunnel (1957) and the 3x4 High Speed Supersonic Tunnel, HSST (1960).

1954 saw Thurleigh airfield coming into use, with the first official landing at the rebuilt airfield, by Avro Anson VP509, on 9 June.

In 1964 (13 April), the first aircraft launch took place from the flush catapult, but there seems to be no photograph of this in the archive and no record of the aircraft type. Can anyone help? The Cumberbatch Trophy was awarded to BLEU in 1964 for contributions to air safety. The BAC Type 221 WG774 made its first flight, at Filton on

1 May 1964, eventually coming to Thurleigh in May 1966 and finally leaving in 1974.

There were still several unique research aircraft flying at Thurleigh in 1964. This “view from the office window” around this time (picture courtesy Clive Rustin) shows P1A, Short SB5, Avro 707A, and HP115. As Clive has remarked, at this time in Aero Flight there were 14 aircraft, of which 9 were experimental, including the FD2 and Jet Flap, as well as those mentioned above, and just 4 test pilots to do the flying – bliss!



1974 saw the end of the “famous names”, when Aero Flight, together with BLEU, formed the nucleus of the new “Flight Systems” department at Bedford.

Another milestone in 1974 was the installation of the first digital computer for the flight simulator - the picture (neg B3825) shows the large and fully air-conditioned computer room built to house the hybrid computer system (Xerox Sigma 8 digital and Applied Dynamics AD4 analogue). Only computers were allowed such luxuries as air conditioning at that time. The computing power of the Sigma 8, despite costing about £200K, was far less than today’s mobile phone.



By 1984 the Advanced Flight Simulator (AFS), with its unique Large Motion System, was nearly ready, making its first trial in 1985.

In March 1994, Thurleigh Airfield closed and all research aircraft departed to Boscombe Down, although the research teams remained working at Bedford.

Forthcoming Talks We continue to give talks to local (and not so local) organisations. Some 10 talks about RAE Bedford and other subjects were given in 2013 and so far this year we have already given 8, with more scheduled. The most recent ones have been to the Olney and District Historical Society, on “Aviation in Bedfordshire” (which included the history of RAE Bedford) and to the Sandy Historical Society, on “The Air War Over the Western Front”. Future talks, all on “The History of Thurleigh Airfield and the Royal Aircraft Establishment”, include to the Chichele Society, Higham Ferrers (27 June 2014), to the Rushden Branch; British Legion (14 July 2014) and to Northamptonshire Advanced Motorcyclists (29 July 2014).

Photographs We would like to emphasise that the BAHG archive has hundreds of people pictures of all kinds and if you would like a fresh copy of one that you have or if you want one that you haven’t got, please enquire. We can supply prints at modest cost.