



THE HAWKER ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 1 – AUTUMN 2002

Editorial

The Editor hopes you enjoy the first of what he expects will be a long series of Newsletters, each issue more interesting than the last. However, the future size and content does really depend on you readers supporting it with enthusiasm.

Make it your own Newsletter by contributing anything you think might interest Members of our Hawker Association. For instance, this could be news of members; what you are doing now or what you did do at 'Hawker's'. There must be lots of history, experiences and anecdotes stored out there in your memories. Which projects did you work on? What about overseas visits and trials? Any good stories about Hawker characters? Between us we can compile an intimate and human account of the life at the 'Hawker's' we loved (or hated!) and which will be a valuable resource for future researchers. Everyone has a tale to tell, so tell it in the Newsletter.

Or just write us a letter for publication. You may have a technical or historical question you want answered. If the Editor can't oblige, perhaps someone who can will write in. Maybe you want to contact an old colleague; search via the Newsletter.

Also, if you spot any news item likely to interest Members, send them in; or if you hear of any relevant forthcoming events, let me know.

Send contributions to: The Editor, Chris Farara, at 24 Guildown Road, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 4EN (tel. 01483 825955), or by e-mail to chrisfarara@ntlworld.com

Meanwhile, I had better write the rest of this issue myself.

The Hawker Association

It was Barry Pegram's idea to start the Association. He contacted a few ex-colleagues he guessed might be enthusiastic and invited them round to his house for the inaugural meeting on the 21st March 2002. The fact that an excellent lunch was to be provided by Rosie Pegram had nothing at all to do with the fact that he achieved 100% attendance. Besides Barry, there were Wilf Firth, Harry Fraser-Mitchell, Ralph Hooper, Gordon Jefferson and your Editor.

We all considered that an Association would be welcomed by many people, both retired and current, so set about defining who would qualify for membership and what the aims of the Association might be. But first we had to settle on a name. No contest; we all thought of ourselves as 'Hawker' people, although the Company had traded under many names. So 'Hawker Association' it would be.

This led us to decide that membership should be open to anyone who had worked for those Companies, in the south east of England, springing from Sopwith Aviation founded by TOM Sopwith at Brooklands in 1912: Sopwith Aviation, HG Hawker Engineering, Hawker Aircraft Ltd., Hawker Siddeley Aviation (Kingston, Dunsfold, Hamble), British Aerospace (Kingston, Dunsfold, Weybridge and Farnborough) and BAE Systems (Farnborough).

As to the aims, we thought that initially the primary aim would be to organise social and other meetings and events for the Members, where old friendships could be renewed and different generations could swap experiences. This would keep alive the spirit and memories of the Hawker Companies. The Association would also be a means of communication between Members, and a

Newsletter was seen as an essential link between Members and a means of announcing events. We also thought that we could publicise the achievements of Hawker people and products when insufficient credit was being given, for instance, in the press. Finally, the Association would encourage and facilitate the preservation of 'Hawker' artefacts, papers, photographs, drawings, information, etc. at the most appropriate location.

Those present agreed to form a Committee (to which were added Mike Hoskins and Percy Collino) and set about compiling a list of likely Members. In due course Barry wrote to those on the list to establish the level of interest. The initial response was most encouraging with over 150 positive replies from the mail-shot. Consequently all those who said "yes" to the Association were invited to join, and you must have or you wouldn't be reading this! In all there are now 178 paid up members from a large number of Departments across many sites. If you have any 'Hawker' friends or acquaintances let them know about us in case they haven't heard the good news.

The Brooklands Museum

I'm sure many of you already know of the Brooklands Museum and some of you will have visited it and admired the large collection of aeroplanes and cars.

There is much there for the 'Hawker' enthusiast. Outside are a Danish Hunter, a two-seat Hunter in ETPS livery and the 6th Hawker P.1127, XP984. This historic aircraft was restored as the Dunsfold 'gate guardian' but when the airfield was closed British Aerospace transferred the aircraft to the Museum. In the hangar is HSA's two-seat Harrier demonstrator, well known by its civil registration G-VTOL. Close by is a Sopwith Camel replica built to full flying standard, and nearing completion is a Hawker Fury biplane full-scale reconstruction for static display. The late Robin Balmer was responsible for creating the drawings for this beautiful example of Sydney Camm's art. In the Engine Exhibition are examples of engines used to power Hawker types, including a Rolls-Royce Kestrel and a Merlin.

Less well known than the 'hardware' is the fact that Brooklands houses an ever growing aviation archive of material relating to Companies that have a Brooklands association. This, of course, includes Sopwith and Hawker Aircraft Ltd and by extension HSA and BAe Kingston and Dunsfold. Your Editor is in charge of this section of the archives and spends many fascinating hours there sorting and listing reports, drawings, photographs, correspondence, press cuttings, brochures and even models and parts. Several Hawker colleagues have donated or loaned valuable material that they have saved from the 'skip', and when Dunsfold closed BAe chose Brooklands as the home for its historic items. The archive is particularly strong in the V/STOL area covering the P.1127 from inception through prototypes to Kestrel, Harrier and Harrier II. Several authors and TV film makers have used material from here.

If your nearest and dearest is fed up with those old files and boxes cluttering up the house, you can be sure that your treasures will find a good home at Brooklands. Just give me a call.(01483 825955).

Kingston Aviation Memorial

Plans are afoot to erect an impressive memorial to Kingston's aviation industry. The site chosen is in the pedestrian area on the town side of Kingston Bridge. The memorial itself will be an elegant curved polished stainless steel column sweeping to the vertical and carrying a polished model of a Hawker Hunter, some 30 feet up, at its tip.

The Kingston Aviation Memorial Fund Trustees, all former members of Hawker's (Cliff Bore, Chris Farara, Ralph Hooper, Mike Hoskins, Gordon Jefferson and Trevor Jordan) have been working with the Kingston Council for some years to arrive at an agreed design and site in the town centre. The chosen design, besides commemorating this most important of Kingston's industries, started by TOM Sopwith in 1912, will add to the visual excitement of the town, being clearly visible down the length of Clarence Street, along Horse Fair, across the Bridge approaching the town and from the river banks.

Initial funds are shortly to be used for Project Definition including the preparation of drawings and cost estimates and the achievement of planning permission. The next step will be for the

Trustees to raise further funds for the construction and erection of the memorial. Support will be sought from the aerospace industry, many members of which profited from their association with Hawkers, the armed services in the UK and overseas who operated Kingston aircraft, former employees, aviation enthusiasts, the press, prominent citizens with an interest in aviation or industry, professional institutions etc.

Hawker Websites

Try www.harrier.org.uk for a really thorough coverage of the Harrier both historically and technically. Contributions are invited by the organiser, Michael Pryce, a frequent visitor to the Brooklands archive. The content is extensive and accurate. For the Hurricane try www3.ns.sympatico.ca/hurricane, for the Typhoon try www.kotfsc.com/aircraft/typhoon.htm and for the Tempest try user.tninet.se/~ytm843e/tempest.htm For a database on existing Hunters www.hunty.com.au/Reborn/02hhd.htm gives a worldwide list.

Harry Hawker can be found at: www.gardencentre.com.au/moorabbinhistory/hawker.htm or www.localhistory.kingston.vic.gov.au/htm/article/188.htm For Camm go to www.thamesweb.co.uk/carpark/history.html

There are thousands more; just surf 'Hawker' via Google or others!

The Aeroplane

The November 2002 issue contains 'Database Hawker P.1127 & Kestrel'. This very thorough and well illustrated 19 page article was prepared by aviation historian Henry Matthews with much help from Hugh Merewether, Duncan Simpson, Ralph Hooper and your Editor. It covers the development history of the P.1127 and Kestrel, the Kestrel Evaluation Squadron, technical details, flying the type and individual aircraft histories. A good £3.30's worth.

Kingston & Dunsfold Reunion

Organised by Richard and Anne Fletcher and Les Palmer, with help from Barry Pegram, a very successful reunion lunch was held in the Chequered Flag Room at the Brooklands Museum on Saturday November 2nd.

About 165 'Hawker' people attended and enjoyed lunch in the interesting surroundings. Sir Colin Chandler spoke about his memories of the good old days at Kingston, and Mike Turner outlined the future for BAe Systems. Mick Mansell then gave a short resume on the future thinking for military aircraft. Many old friendships were renewed and exciting times relived.

Many attendees suggested that this reunion should become a regular event and the Association Committee and organisers will be giving this idea serious thought. What do you Members think about the venue and frequency?

RAeS Lecture at Weybridge

Members may be interested to note that the Weybridge Branch of the Royal Aeronautical Society has invited Simon Hargreaves to talk on the flight testing of the Lockheed Martin/BAe Joint Strike Fighter (JSF). Simon, who was a Dunsfold Harrier test pilot and is now based at Warton, carried out all of the early STOVL flying on the JSF aircraft. The lecture will take place on Wednesday 15th January at the Brooklands Museum beginning at 6.30pm. All are welcome, both members and non members of the Society, providing they bring the £2 entrance fee.

Another date to note is Wednesday the 19th March, when Dick Poole will be talking about Harrier Ski-jump Trials. Both venue and time are as above.

Postscript

Don't forget that the Editor needs contributions for the next Newsletter...please.