

SHORTS NEWSLETTER 2

February 2016

Dear supporter,

Well a lot has happened since I last wrote and I must apologise for not telling you all about our exciting times since then. We have been VERY busy.

We visited Rochester for a few days at the end of January 2016 staying at The Golden Lion on High Street (recommended highly) and whilst we were there we met a whole host of great people who are, of course, interested in the Project.

We now have search leaflets out in the Guildhall Museum, Rochester Library, The Seaplane Works Cafe on High Street, Bluetown Heritage Centre, The Aviation Museum at Stanford Hill, Eastchurch Village Hall, Muswell Manor and most recently The Aviator pub at Queenborough. These have been most fruitful in our search and as well as finding a respectable number of SHORTS BOYS we now have contact with many descendants. We visited several and they spoke at length about their time at SHORTS and were shown treasured items such as a 1947 redundancy letter. Every few days we receive another letter or email.

As well as the response from our search leaflets we made a great find in **Peter Cook**. Peter is a local journalist with an intense interest in Kent Heritage in general and SHORTS Brothers in particular. He writes a frequent column in the *Medway Messenger* and recently did a two-page spread that has yielded several more SHORTS BOYS and descendants. We now regard Peter as an important member of our team.

As you know we hope to add to the number of oral memories recorded some years ago by Rochester Royal Aeronautical Society members and Peter has agreed to 'pick-up' our new found contacts and interview and record their memories. They and he are a big step forward in achieving our Project aims.

We had the privilege of meeting many other supporters and have been promised help from them all without exception. We have yet to meet anyone who does NOT want to help !

Billy Childish, artist and musician and entrepreneur has been most helpful and we met him in his new Seaplane Works Cafe on High Street, Rochester. He has 'resurrected' several SHORTS posters to a very high standard and promised we can have copies for our events this summer - see later in this newsletter. He has also promised to assist in an idea Liz had of, a young people's art competition and it is not too hard to guess the theme.

Billy, and hopefully a fellow artist Steve from London, will judge the entries and from the three or four categories choose worthy 'winners'. These will go on a travelling exhibition around Kent possibly at places like County Hall, Rochester Art Gallery, Council premises, village halls and heritage and information centres.

Air Commodore Bill Croydon CBE, FRAeS, RAF (ret'd) - 'ROCHESTER REMEMBERS THE SHORTS'.

Talks have now been arranged for Friday 15th. July at The Guildhall Museum, Rochester. At the afternoon session **Liz Walker** will start the event with a talk on 'The *THREE BROTHERS, Their Family Background*' and that will be followed by Bill, from his infinite knowledge of such matters, setting the SHORT aviation scene for us from the world's first aircraft production facility at Leysdown, through the important Eastchurch years of development and on to mass production and design at The Seaplane Works, The Airport Works and The Strood Extension, Rochester.

We anticipate that local elected members and others interested in aviation heritage will want to attend as well as the Rochester general public. There will be posters, heritage artefacts, A.V. displays and refreshments, as long as we can secure the funding. Otherwise, without funding you may have to bring your own finger buffet!

The talks will be repeated in the evening. However, due to the restricted number of seats available, admission will be by ticket ONLY but the good news is that there will be no charge. WATCH THIS SPACE! Nearer the time I will email you all to ask for interested people to contact me for tickets.

Richard Boorman. A nephew of a very important man in SHORTS history Robert 'Bob' Boorman who went to Belfast as their Chief Technical Engineer and retired in 1968 after 42 years' service. We were pleased to make contact with Richard at his home and hope his close connections with The Chatham Dockyard and Medway engineering might shed some light on Horace's time as a teenager employed there.

Richard was also an active member of the *SHORT BROTHERS COMMEMORATION SOCIETY* that has not functioned for some years and in whose shadow we carry on the work they started.

Other meetings...

- Swale CVS - Sean Leacock & Zoe Deveson
- Kent County Council - Bill Ronan
- City of Rochester Society - Rob Flood
- Nic (Nicola) Nicholas - Local Historian, Indexer and Proof Reader
- Neville Dacks - Medway Voluntary Action
- Medway Aircraft Preservation Society - Philip Cole
- Bluetown Heritage Centre - Jenny Hurkett
- Stanford Hill Aviation Museum - Ian Hurkett

We await the Heritage Lottery Fund application outcome on March 15th. for the graves restoration module of the Project and various other much smaller applications for a variety of other events (modules)

During our two 'business' weekends in Rochester we have come across a quite large number of people who have expressed a view that there is no memorial to Shorts and their workforce AND that there should be one. We have therefore logged this idea for future action after the main modules of our Project have been accomplished.

Liz and I consider that the very wide pavement on High Street, Rochester on the topside of Blue Boar car park and opposite the Eagle Tavern would be ideal. Another suggestion we like, apart from the maintenance implications is a sculpted seaplane on the River Medway near the bridge and yet another suitable site could be in the Esplanade Gardens. Food for thought and of course another cash injection would be needed.

Your continuing support is much appreciated and long may it last because without it the Project is *L O S T*!

If anyone has any source of funding that would be appropriate to our present Project OR a memorial sometime in the future, then please let us know.

regards,
Barrie & Liz