

NEWSLETTER 11

(November 2019)

Where does time go? It is a year since our last Newsletter and so much has happened and new chapters of the SHORT BROTHERS story have opened up. Read all about them below...

FEBRUARY

Liz and Barrie had a meeting with Trevor Avery, Founder and Director of *ANOTHER SPACE - THE LAKE DISTRICT HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS PROJECT* www.ldhp.org.uk on the banks of Windermere.

Three hundred Holocaust surviving children were transported from Prague in 1945, in SHORT STIRLING bombers, to what is now the new Carlisle Airport. The R.A.F crews 'kindly' gave the children chocolate en route BUT it made them sick. From Carlisle they were taken to CALGARTH at Troutbeck Bridge, Windermere, where they spent several weeks before 'distribution' to homes throughout the U.K. Some came to Barrie's primary school in Higher Crumpsall, Manchester.

The CALGARTH ESTATE was built in 1941-42 to house the workforce that had moved from Rochester Seaplane Works to the new SHORT BROTHERS White Cross Bay factory where 35 Sunderland Flying Boats were built, and many repaired as the Factory was a Civilian Repair Organisation (C.R.O.).

It is said that Shorts Chief Test Pilot - John Lankester Parker, was the only man ever to land a Sunderland across the lake and not down the 10-mile length.

At the end of 1942 CALGARTH was a complete community, comprising bungalows for families, hostels for single men, two shops, a canteen, assembly hall, club house, laundry, sick bay and they even had a football team.

The semi-detached bungalows, although simple, were considered quite modern at the time (as was Shortstown, Bedford in 1917) and designed to attract skilled workers from Rochester who then trained local people from the Windermere area to help build flying-boats. The bungalows had either two or three bedrooms, an inside bathroom and toilet and hot running water heated by a range in the kitchen and they had a fireplace in the living room.

The workers called the bungalows 'Short's Palaces' and the area was referred to by locals as 'China Town' as there were so many lights around. The bus stop was even labelled 'CHINA TOWN'.

Through our association with THE STIRLING SOCIETY <http://stirlingaircraftsoc.raf38group.org> we were able to put the Holocaust Project in touch with Norman Shepherd, a WW2 R.A.F navigator, who was on one of the STIRLINGS and actually gave chocolate to the children, not knowing the effect it would have on starved and 'neglected' digestive systems.

We are pleased to report that our contact with Norman, through the Stirling Society, resulted in an invitation for him to meet some of the surviving children at a recent event in London where he was the Guest of Honour.

APRIL

Our Society exhibited one of our four displays in The Mick Jagger Building at Dartford Grammar School, Kent, where Liz gave a well-received SHORT talk to 150 members at the South-East Region Industrial Archaeology week-end conference. Our display aroused much interest from the archaeologists and thirty-two copies of Liz's 'A SHORT STORY' book were sold.

A visit to Rochester Airport and the Medway Aircraft Preservation Society (MAPS) www.mapsl.co.uk gave us an update on their SHORT SCION restoration project.

We were well received, as usual, and it was very enjoyable to once again meet the dedicated team of highly skilled volunteers working on this exciting project.

The restored SCION is bound for display in Rochester Cathedral, when completed.

A meeting with the Rochester Airport manager and MAPS much enhanced our vision of the possible future of the SHORT BROTHERS heritage, as a new hanger is to be built, MAPS are to move in and there is a chance that an aviation museum will be incorporated.

AT LAST! Maybe, we will have a permanent 'home' that will record the SHORT BROTHERS true pioneering contributions to aviation and their wonderful ballooning achievements from 1896 to 1909 and then in powered flight through two World Wars and beyond. What a heritage!

JULY

The Society was again represented by one of our displays in the Sports Hall at Calgarth, Troutbeck Bridge, when the Lake District Holocaust Project initiated an archaeological dig, along with Staffordshire University staff and students, to uncover the underground remains of the CALGATH ESTATE that was demolished, down to ground level, between 1956 and 1961. The demolition, an arrangement imposed when planning permission to build the Estate was granted, came about at the insistence of The Friends of the Lake District, Beatrix Potter and the local vicar we understand. These people didn't seem to realise the need for housing for the returning military at the end of the war!

More fascinating information keeps appearing, both on our website and on Facebook (many thanks to Martin Hubbard, our Facebook 'manager'). There have now been 7k hits on the website since we started counting early in 2019 and there are more than 1000 followers on Facebook.

Anglepoise Lamps... Short Brothers were the first to commission a non-magnetic lamp for use by navigators in their aircraft, in 1936. The lamp was made of brass and zinc and very few are now known to exist. *Flight* magazine, in 1936, carried an advert for the SUNDERLAND in which one of these lamps, made by Herbert Terry & Sons of Redditch, is clearly visible. {Courtesy Robert Munro}

Thames Sailing Barges... Just after WW1, accurately predicting a post-war shortage of work, Shorts bought the LONDON AND ROCHESTER BARGE COMPANY along with a contract to build two new vessels that Shorts honoured. These vessels were named THE LADY JEAN, launched 1923 and THE LADY DAPHNE, launched in 1926. We understand that S.B THE LADY DAPHNE, one of the most famous London classic wooden vessels, is still sailing out of St. Catherine's Dock, London, on both public and corporate entertainment. Unlike other Thames barges these two were built to precise drawings that Shorts, as was their way, produced. Both vessels had remarkable trading careers. There is a model of Lady Daphne in The Guildhall Museum in Rochester. {Courtesy Mike Jones}

Medway Archives... cityark.medway.gov.uk. This is always a great place to seek out Short Brothers information and the staff could not be more helpful. This summer the Archives hosted a 'SHORT BROTHERS IN KENT' exhibition and had an invited professional historian speaker.

Eastchurch Aviation Museum... eastchurchaviationmuseum.org.uk. Peter West and others continue to meet and greet visitors and Jane Puckering (daughter of John Lankester Parker) and husband John have recorded a most informative and welcoming recent visit.

SBCS 2020... The Society have four talks planned and exhibitions to mount in the Spring in our efforts to place Shorts in their rightful, historically important, high-ranking position in aviation history. Again, back to Rochester (home of Short aircraft) and Devizes in Wiltshire.

We welcome enthusiasts to our less than formal free-membership and continue to seek £7k of funding to complete the restoration of the graves of Horace and Eustace at Hampstead Cemetery – our origin.

Liz's book 'THE SHORT STORY' is in the 3rd. edition and would make a wonderful Christmas present at a reasonable price. To order your signed copy please use our email contact address below.

Bombardier Shorts of Belfast... The Company has been sold to SPIRIT AeroSystems Inc. and we are in the process of contacting the new company and their senior managers to seek financial aid and for them to retain the SHORT BROTHERS internationally famous name reflecting the fine engineering heritage that made 'SHORTS' so well-respected in aviation development and manufacture . ÷