

## **NEWSLETTER 17** (November 2023)

It is some time since the last NEWSLETTER, and we have kept matters going despite our ambitious spring and summer holiday programme.

### **Air Commodore Bill Croydon CBE R.A.F. (rtd) 1933 - 2023**

It is with some deep regret that we must inform you that our good friend and a most enthusiastic supporter of our Society has passed away.

It was on January 30<sup>th</sup> 2023, that we had much pleasure in taking Bill out to lunch and he really enjoyed a visit to see his friends at MAPS where he was very warmly welcomed.



Robin Heaps, Bill Clayton,  
Phil Cole and Liz Walker @ M.A.P.S.



Bill Clayton and Liz Walker

Bill was one of life's gentlemen. He had a seriously sharp brain and an illustrious career. He was a man of many parts having been an actor at school in London and at 16 landed a part in Peter Pan alongside the famous Margaret Lockwood. His daughter says it was here that he gained his undoubted confidence in public speaking.

We experienced this at our first talk in Rochester when at The Guildhall we did a double act with him adding his to our SHORT BROTHER'S presentation in the wonderful main hall.

National Service gave Bill the welcome opportunity to join the R.A.F. and he was posted to Canada for flying training. On completion he was 'airmailed' to the Far East where he flew Hornets, Venoms and Vampires whilst stationed in Hong Kong.

His piloting skills developed speedily, leading him to win a first place in an International Aerobatics competition in Manilla.

Bill enjoyed further postings to London, Brussels, and Germany where he was promoted to Air Commodore and received a CBE from the Queen in the 1988 Honours List.

He mentioned casually to us that he had flown in a Short Sunderland.

Following retirement in 1996 he took on the role of Chief Executive of Swale Borough Council alongside a hectic life with 11 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren that was curtailed by the duty to care for his wife as he became her full-time carer.

He carried on with his strict daily routine of waking to Radio 4 at 07.00, listening to a weather briefing, a Daily Telegraph, grapefruit breakfast at a properly laid out table.

We will miss him and thank his daughter Nicola for her detailed summary of his life from which I have quoted. **To his large family and numerous friends our sincere condolences.**

# SHORT COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES



The ORIGINAL SHORT BROTHERS COMMEMORATION SOCIETY plaque located on the factory site on the ESPLANADE ROCHESTER



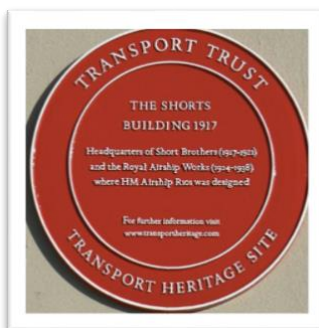
MUSWELL MANOR Birthplace of aviation. 80 men worked here from 1909 -1910 located at Shellbeach Leysdown, Isle of Sheppey, KENT



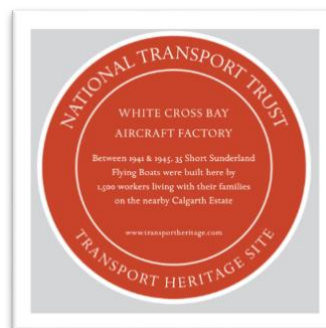
EASTCHURCH AVIATION MUSEUM Early years cradle of aircraft production Located on the site H.M.P. Standford Hill



ROYAL FLYING CORPS (later known as RNAS) In 1913 established this NAVAL AIR STATION where SHORT flying boats were flown and developed



CARDINGTON has two VERY large airship hangars, a beautiful SHORTS building and small village SHORTSTOWN



TROUTBECK The Windermere Sunderland factory built 35 flying boats and nearby complete village CALGARTH



RAILWAY ARCHES BATTERSEA, LONDON Site of the balloon factory and the first aircraft Shorts built. Adjacent to the Battersea coal-gas works



The FLYING SCHOOL WINDERMERE where John Lankester Parker taught flying for two years, as a teenager, before his move to Shorts Brothers

John Lankester Parker OBE and his family became close friends of Oswald Short and he became Shorts Chief Test Pilot. He is reputed to have flown every Short aircraft built between the two world wars. He even landed a Sunderland across Windermere. At the Troutbeck factory, Shorts produced 35 Sunderlands from 1941-45 and as a C.R.O (Civilian Repair Organisation) repaired many others for further service.



## **OUR VERY LAST SHORT TALK**

Medway Council put in much effort and resources into organising a successful Short Brothers exhibition that ran from June to October in Rochester Art Gallery. Liz and I had the pleasure of giving our swansong talk on October 7<sup>th</sup> to an audience of 61 crammed into the small space.

The exhibition consisted of a very large and fine painting by Billy Childish (another of our supporters) along with superb heritage Short aircraft paintings by David Ellwood who had worked for Shorts at The Seaplane Works. These were kindly loaned by The Castle Club and formed a major part of the exhibition alongside many technical drawings and texts.

We were pleased that it went well and rewarded after our long drive from Macclesfield with meeting the public and gaining further knowledge of Shorts as several were related to people who worked at the Rochester Airport or The Seaplane Works.

An exciting feature was the recording by the daily visitors of their memories and connection to Shorts at The Esplanade and Airport factories.

The plan is to organise these into a coherent text and publish them online.

## **THE WINDERMERE INTERPRETATION PANEL**

You will have seen a RED WHEEL has already been placed at the site of the Short's wartime (1941-45) Troutbeck factory and we have negotiated with the owners, Parkdean Resorts, to install an A1 sized Interpretation Panel that is now in production.

## **THE SOCIETY FUTURE**

Liz and I will continue to keep the website updated, adding further articles as they become available and will reprint and sell our booklet THREE BRILLIANT BROTHERS.

Eastchurch Aviation Museum have taken over publication of Liz's book A SHORT STORY and are to offer them for sale.

Our wonderful committee member Martin Hubbard is taking Facebook to ever new heights. It has proved an enormous success, and we are eternally grateful for his efforts.

We are grateful to other members of the committee for their past help and encouragement

**Liz Walker** continues to follow her heritage as the great, great niece of the brothers Horace, Eustace and Oswald.

**Barrie Walker** continues to do as he is told, in charge of the ageing computer and responsible for much of the day-to-day work answering emails and planning for things to happen.

We thank **Jane Harvey** for her earlier involvement in the Society and wish her well having moved house and taken on other responsibilities some time ago.

**Rick Heys** has offered advice on our financial struggles, and we are still solvent.

**Alan Bond FCCA** has been working away on our behalf auditing our annual financial affairs, so far has been without 'complaint' or remuneration.

**Martin Hubbard** 'founded' our Facebook page and manages it so well.