

## **NEWSLETTER 18** (January 2025)



### **THE FINAL NEWSLETTER FROM LIZ AND BARRIE.**

Yet again, it is some time since our last newsletter - NEWSLETTER 17. Old age has caught up with us and low energy levels mean we are no longer able to give 'SHORT' talks and mount 'SHORT' exhibitions. All 18 newsletters are available on our website.

We are delighted to tell you that, despite our frailties, the Society is set to continue and prosper with a new, and much younger vigour.

Martin Hubbard, who is a descendant of SIX employees of SHORTS, and whose uncle 'Perc' oversaw the Swindon factory, has already stepped into the ever-widening gap in our SHORT efforts.

You will know that Martin was the originator and still is the 'manager' of our VERY successful FACEBOOK pages. If you have not seen them yet you will be surprised to see so much there is about SHORTS aviation heritage from many who have a keen interest in aviation heritage but are not on our mailing list.

Martin will be the new driving force behind the renamed 'SHORT BROTHERS AVIATION HERITAGE' and we will help in whatever way we can, for as long as we can.

### **Gordon Bruce**

Along with many others who have an interest in aviation heritage, we are saddened to have lost our good friend and a fount of so much SHORT knowledge that he freely shared with us. Much of our knowledge of Shorts came from Gordon and we were always excited to receive his packages of notes, copies of original documents and letters, accompanied by his humorous anecdotes. He was a painstaking researcher.

We first got to really know Gordon and develop a mutual friendship when we were invited, in 2009, to attend the Belfast Royal Aeronautical Society branch to celebrate the centenary of the R.Ae.S. and listen to Gordon giving an astonishing in-depth, and unique insight into Shorts Brothers from start to finish.

Gordon had been the Company secretary for several years and early on in his position he had been instructed by the Company directors to research and establish a definitive history of the progress of Shorts into one of the UK's leading research, design and manufacturers of aircraft, starting before the end of the nineteenth into the mid-twentieth century, despite being twice nationalised.

Any query we raised drew an enthusiastic response from Gordon and he was not averse to visiting the National Archives at Kew to determine full answers to what he was initially unsure of, despite his meticulous memory and keenly enquiring mind.

Gordon knew Oswald and many of the Short brothers' relatives. He interviewed and recorded their memories along with those of Oswald Short with whom he corresponded during Oswald's retirement at Gilham's Farm, Lynchmere, West Sussex.

**To Gordon's family, colleagues and numerous friends our most sincere condolences.**

## **Sally Beckett**

It is with deep regret that we announce the passing of Mrs. Sally Beckett, the elder daughter of John Lankester Parker. He, (JLP) was for many years the chief test pilot for Short Brothers and later a director of the Belfast company Shorts and Harland Ltd.

Sally became a very generous supporter and our firm friend and always referred to Oswald Short as "Uncle Oswald" having been closely associated with him for most of her life.

Sally donated many of her family heirlooms to the Society and thereby enabled us to keep 'afloat' on more than one occasion. The restoration of both family graves at Hampstead Cemetery and that of Oswald and his wife Violet at Lynchmere Burial Ground (GU27 3ND) was accomplished thanks to Sally and her sister Jane.

Just last year we were able to have made and installed the large interpretation panel at White Cross Bay, Troutbeck, Windermere on the site of the wartime Sunderland factory and where their daredevil father was a teenage flying instructor.

During the war he was the ONLY pilot ever to land a Sunderland Flying Boat ACROSS Windermere rather than use its' 10-mile length.

**Sally, our friend and supporter, will be much missed.**

Our thanks to Martin Hubbard, our Facebook manager, who organised and manned the Society display at the *Medway History Showcase* last October.

Martin's great grandfather, Frederick Thomas Quittenden was the storekeeper at the Short Brothers Eastchurch factory, on the Isle of Sheppey, in 1915.

### **Oswald's Casket.**



Many thanks go to Joan Capper and her stepdaughter Tracy Bergman for donating the onyx casket presented to Oswald by the Council when he was given the freedom of the City of Rochester, also Horace's glasses and compass, photographs, headed paper, letters from Frank McClean in 1914, and books. These important heritage artefacts are now in the safe keeping of Eastchurch Aviation Museum for all to see.

Joan is the widow of Horace's grandson, Francis who passed in January 1990 and Tracy is Horace's great, granddaughter.

The casket, designed by a Mr. A.G. Styles, is rectangular with a shaped and bevelled lid that carries a beautifully modelled figure of Pegasus and the seven panel sides have scenes of balloons, airships and aircraft hand engraved. The front panel bears the *Arms of Rochester* in relief and coloured enamel.

We are so grateful that Joan and Tracy felt able to release these precious belongings into public view and they are now available to all to see in the new 'Study Area' at Eastchurch A.M.

Oswald was also a Freeman of the City of London, an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society, a fellow of – The Society of Aviation Artists, The Royal Astronomical and The London Zoological Society.

A most remarkable and caring man who headed a company to whom we all owe a debt of gratitude for the WW2 aircraft that helped the free world to win that dreadful war.

**SHORT BROTHERS**  
Aviation Pioneers



Barrie and I are stepping back from 'active duty' within the Society. It is many years ago that we set off on this journey, thanks to retirement and the family records so lovingly preserved by Liz's mother Margart Hancox née SHORT, a niece of the three famous brothers. We set out to find and then restore the brother's graves and hoped to have them recognised as national monuments. We think we have gone a long way towards that goal. We went further, bringing to the attention of the 'world' the role played by these amazing designers, developers and builders of such important aircraft for half-a-century and the important role in Kent engineering and local employment that rose to 11,500+ during WW2. The brother's story is now secure and importantly no longer lost to the younger generations, although the challenge still exists to bring it to their attention and that challenge has been taken over by Martin Hubbard, our new chairman and his 'team' of younger supporters who will bring forth new and exciting initiatives to further enhance the truly 'rags to riches' remarkable Short brothers story That story started with a penniless Short family, on the death of their father Samuel in Chesterfield, Derbyshire and developed into a company dedicated to the design, development and construction of aircraft. The use of lightweight Duralumin was pioneered by Oswald Short and is still in use today.

**SHORT BROTHERS AVIATION HERITAGE**



Our new logo

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