

THE ROYAL AERO CLUB TRUST



Advancing the cause of air sport and aviation

THE ROYAL AERO CLUB TRUST ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2006

INTRODUCTION

The Royal Aero Club Trust was founded as a Charity in 1998. The Trust has two objectives:

- the conservation of the collection of memorabilia of the Royal Aero Club of the United Kingdom and the dissemination of its contents to a much wider public.
- promoting the development of young people by helping them achieve their physical, social and spiritual potential through participation in air sports and aviation related activities.

SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

This report covers the period from 1 January 2006 to 31 December 2006.

THE ROYAL AERO CLUB COLLECTION

GENERAL

The collection includes more than 900 files & boxes of archival material, albums, books, publications and reference works, Aviators' Certificates, more than 70 paintings and sculptures and numerous items of historic silverware. The collection is a significant part of the nation's 19th and 20th Century aviation heritage.

Whilst most is kept at the RAF Museum at Hendon some is also held at other locations. It should be noted that only a few items are on public display. The Collection's conservation and maintenance is a cause for concern to the Trustees and the Royal Aero Club who recognise its national importance and our responsibility towards future generations.

PAINTINGS AND SCULPTURES

The catalogue of all RAeC paintings and sculptures prepared over the past two years by Dick Poole has been kept updated. This catalogue will eventually be published on the Trust website.

CUPS, TROPHIES AND SILVERWARE

Dick Poole has completed the catalogue of all RAeC cups, trophies and silverware. The catalogue has enabled us to identify those items which are in need of conservation and repair.

AVIATORS' CERTIFICATE ALBUMS AND AVIATORS' CERTIFICATE CARDS

The RAeC collection includes 35 albums of Aviators' Certificates (No. 1 to 13,299), unfortunately Album No. 4 (Certificates No. 925 to 1488) is still missing, but the search will continue. (Certificate No. 1 was issued to the then John Moore-Brabazon, later Lord Brabazon of Tara). As there are no copies or duplicates of these certificates anywhere in the world the Trust has taken steps to ensure that these records are conserved. Thanks to grants from the Mercers' Charitable Foundation, the Royal Air Force, the Royal Air Force Historical Society, the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators and in particular from Cross & Cockade International (The First World War Historical Society) 13 Albums have now been conserved. It was also decided to copy the Albums on archival film and additionally create digital images of these albums, so far 17 have microfilmed and digitised. It is anticipated that the digitised images will soon be displayed on the Trust website.

There are also approximately 33,000 Aviator's Record Cards, many incorporating photographs of the pilots. The Trust also seeks sponsors to conserve, microfilm and digitise these Cards.

THE RAeC ARCHIVES and NADFAS VOLUNTEERS

The Trust has previously reported that estimates for the stabilisation of the 900 odd files & boxes of RAeC archives, kept at Royal Air Force Museum, Hendon, were in the range £79,000 to £290,000 and that such

sums were well outside the Trust's resources. However, urgent action was required as physical and chemical damage caused by rusty staples, paper clips and pins, was accelerating the rate of paper deterioration and decay. Fragile images of photographs had become tarnished and stained and these needed to be put in special, neutral pH photographic envelopes to provide protection.

Three years ago the Trust was fortunate to secure the services of NADFAS (National Association of Decorative & Fine Arts Societies) Heritage Volunteers who, working in 2 teams, have now completed the stabilisation of a large number of documents including photographs. The NADFAS teams spent more than 700 hours working on these archives. More than £5,000 of conservation material was used in this project. The Trust would like to thank the Royal Aero Club for their considerable financial assistance. The Trustees are extremely grateful to the NADFAS volunteers for providing this service.

These archives contain unique material and only by inspecting each box, on an item by item basis, are historic documents and photographs being discovered. Examples include - the grant to the Aero Club of the prefix 'Royal'; the origin of the King's Cup air races; correspondence between the Club, the Air Ministry and Lady Houston in regard to the funding of the RAF crew which won the Schneider Trophy for the UK and correspondence relating to the 1934 England - Australia Air Race. Also in these archives is a scrapbook / photo album prepared by R L Dunville while a schoolboy at Eton, documenting the exploits of his father, John Dunville, a famous, 1908, Irish balloonist.

During 2006 a further 40 files & boxes of archival material, property of the late Beverley J. Snook OBE, a past chairman of the RAeC were added to the collection. These will be stabilised during 2007. It is estimated that it will take several months to complete this work and that additional conservation material will be required.

The next project is to scan and to identify around 7000 photographs which are in the archives. This project is estimated to take up to two years to complete. The scanned images of photographs will be placed on DVD's and the DVD's disseminated among all those who might be able to help with their identification and on the Trust's website. It is intended to create a database of information about each photograph. The equipment for this project has been donated by the RAF Museum.

The next major project will be to make the material in the archives more accessible and thereby unlock its research potential and interest to a much wider public. A broad list of contents already exists, however for this to be really useful a more detailed cataloguing is essential. This would require the services of a professional archivist. Initially one would focus on only one or two subjects, for instance - "air races and record attempts" or "the formation and development of the RAeC". The cost of such a project might be in the region of £30,000. The funding of such a project would require an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Thereafter it may be possible to microfilm and digitise sections of the archives that have been catalogued, to promote wider dissemination.

HEDGES BUTLER ALBUMS

The 20 volumes of Frank Hedges Butler Albums contain press cuttings, prints and other printed items chronicling British aviation since its inception. The earliest press cutting is dated 1756. Others record the first balloon flights in Great Britain. 10 volumes have now been conserved, microfilmed and digitised. An index of the contents of the first ten volumes is being prepared by Eric Grimes, a retired airline pilot. This index will be displayed on the Trust website. Sponsors to conserve, microfilm and digitise the 10 remaining albums are being sought.

RUPERT L PRESTON COLLECTION OF AVIATION POSTCARDS & PHOTOGRAPHS

This comprises 10 albums with around 900 Postcards and Photographs, some pre-date 1901. Whilst some of them are quite ordinary, others are rare. Many have become discoloured and stained. As an interim measure it has been decided to interleave the album pages to delay further deterioration as they will continue to deteriorate unless such action is taken.

MINUTE BOOKS

A list of the Minute Books of the Main Committee of the Aero Club, later the Royal Aero Club, covering the period 1901 to 1956 has been compiled. It was decided to restore and conserve these without delay. The

next stage will be to index these Minute Books and to display this index on the Trust website to make their contents generally available to the public. The Main Committee Minute Books for the period 1956 to 1965 are missing however action is being taken to locate them.

Other Minute Books identified include: Aero Club Proprietary Ltd, the Finance Committee and the Racing Committee also special sub-committees such as: MacRobertson International Air Race, Schneider Trophy 1938, Memorial to Alcock & Brown.

OTHER BOOKS & ALBUMS

During the year a valuable and unique book "Progress in Flying Machines" by Octave Chanute, published in 1899 and the property of the RAeC was recovered and has been placed with the Collection.

A list of albums and books is being compiled by Andrew Dawrant, a NADFAS Team Leader and now a Committee Member to enable the Trustees to prioritise future conservation work. It will take into account (a) degree of damage, (b) historical and archival value of items, (c) value of items in monetary terms, and (d) cost of conservation.

BRITISH AVIATION PRESERVATION COUNCIL

The Trust is a member of the British Aviation Preservation Council, an organisation "linking national, local authority, independent and service museums with private collections, voluntary groups and other organisations in the advancement of aviation preservation".

CONSERVING UNIQUE ITEMS IN THE RAeC COLLECTION FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

The Trust is aware that because of exponential developments in electronic archiving it is unlikely to be cost-effective to make copies on CD's only, as both digitised images and viewing equipment may well become obsolete due to technological developments within a short period, perhaps a decade. This would then involve the Trust in continual expenditure just to keep security copies on CD's in readable and recoverable condition.

To ensure that some of the unique historical items in the RAeC Collection, for example the Aviators' Certificate Albums and the Frank Hedges Butler Albums will be available to future generations the Trust has taken steps to have this material available on Archival Microfilm as 'security copies'. It is understood that Archival Microfilm, when kept under temperature controlled condition, has a theoretical service life of 250 years. The Trustees would like to express their thanks to the Museum of Science & Industry of Manchester (MSIM) for agreeing to store the Archival Microfilm security copies on a pro bono basis in temperature controlled conditions.

THE FLYING FOR YOUTH PROGRAMME

FLYING BURSARIES

During 2006 the Trustees awarded 7 flying bursaries to young people to assist them to progress from a basic level in their air sport to a higher level of skill and competence. Sponsors of these bursaries included: the Royal Aero Club Trust and The Royal Aeronautical Society.

FLIGHT SIMULATOR BURSARIES AWARDED TO PERSONAL COMPUTER PILOTS

A major objective of the Trust is to encourage youngsters to become involved in all forms of recreational and leisure activities in the air including air sport. Many young people still perceive air sport and its related leisure activities to be expensive and elitist and consequently an adventure activity beyond their wildest dreams. To dispel this notion the Trust offers bursaries to qualified PC pilots to provide real or hands-on experience of flying as well as activities such as parachuting and designing, building and flying model aeroplanes and rockets. Regrettably no applications were received for these bursaries in 2006.

Information about those who were awarded bursaries is displayed on the Trust's website.

THE LONDON AIR SHOW 2006

The Trust was most generously invited to participate in this event by Messrs Breitling. Dick Poole helped to design the stand. The stand whose construction was financed by Breitling, incorporated a large Plasma screen. The event helped to create greater awareness of the Trust's activities both among visitors and exhibitors. The Trustees would like to express their thanks to Messrs. Breitling and Dick Poole, Simon Philbin, Tony Newton and Peter Crispin who manned the stand over the 3 days on behalf of the Trust.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

FUND RAISING

The major task of the Trust is to raise funds for its various projects. Fund-raising activities take a tremendous amount of time and energy. The Trustee would like to thank Dr Simon Philbin of Imperial College London who has greatly assisted the Trust with its fund-raising campaign in his role of Intelligence & Research Executive.

During 2006 the Trust and the RAeC provided support to the Organising Committee of The Schneider Trophy Banquet "A celebration of the World Aviation Record Breakers". This event was jointly organised by the Air League and the Royal Air Force Museum. It was a very successful fund-raising event and took place at the RAF Museum, Hendon. In consideration for this support the RAF Museum has now provided the Trust with computer equipment and software for the NADFAS Heritage Volunteers to process some 7000 photographs. The Museum will also provide the Trust with several portable illustrated Banner Display Units which will be available for use early in 2007 to help promote the Trusts activities at the RAF Museum and at other venues and events. The Trustees wish to express their thanks to the RAF Museum for these most welcome gifts.

2012 OLYMPICS

It is hoped that the 2012 Olympics may provide the Trust with a unique opportunity to present sports heritage artefacts of the RAeC Collection, for instance some of its cups and trophies to a wider audience. To bring this about the Trust will continue to liaise with the Sports Heritage Network and similar organisations.

FRIENDS OF THE ROYAL AERO CLUB TRUST

It should be noted that our benefactors are not only corporate sponsors. During 2006 several new individual Friends have been enrolled. A list of names of sponsors and benefactors is displayed on the Trust website.

TRUST ADMINISTRATION, VOLUNTEERS AND BENEFACTORS

During 2006 both Dr Simon Philbin, the Trust's Intelligence & Research Executive and also Andrew Dawrant who has been one of the original NADFAS Team Leaders since 2004 is now the Trust's Heritage Collection Adviser, have both joined the Committee.

The Trustees wish to thank Lucy Smeaton of Imperial College, who assumed the function of webmaster during 2006 and ensures that the website is kept updated.

The Trustees would like to place on record their thanks to the Hon. Auditors Messrs. Jackson, Feldman and Company. In 2006 Michael Feldman was made a Companion of the Royal Aero Club in recognition of his pro bono services to the Trust and the Royal Aero Club.

The Trustees would like to thank the British Gliding Association for permitting use of its Leicester offices as the Trust's Registered Office.

The Trustees would like to thank Eric Grimes and Peter E Elliott of Oxford Brookes University for undertaking the immense task of manipulating the digitised images of the contents of the Hedges Butler albums and the Aviators' Certificate albums which will be available for display on the Trust website in the very near future

Mr Franz la Rosée, one of our two Vice Presidents has been present at almost all the Committee meetings during the year and his advice and counsel is greatly appreciated.

The Trustees are most grateful to Messrs Breitling for making their boardroom available to the Trust for its meetings and also for inviting the Trust to participate in the London Air Show through the use of their stand.

PATRON, TRUSTEES, COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND OTHER INFORMATION

Patron: HRH The Duke of York, KG, KCVO, ADC

Vice Presidents: Lord Stevens of Kirkwhelpington and Franz la Rosée, CRAeC

At the end of 2006 the Trustees and Committee members were:

Chairman: Frederick Marsh

Trustees: Richard Crabtree OBE, Jim Crocker, Peter Crispin, Frederick Marsh, Dick Poole and Sir Rowland Whitehead, Bt.

Committee members: Andrew Dawrant (Heritage Collection Adviser), Air Vice Marshal P J Dye OBE, RAF, Dr Simon Philbin PhD (Intelligence & Research Executive), Miss Lucy Smeaton (Webmaster), Hon. Peter Crispin - Secretary and Treasurer; R A K Crabtree, OBE – Trust Administrator

Honorary Auditors: Messrs. Jackson, Feldman and Company

Bankers: CAF Bank Limited

Registered Office:

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Royal Aero Club Trust website: www.royalaeroclubtrust.org

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