



## **THE ROYAL AERO CLUB TRUST ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2007**

### **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 2007 to 31 December 2007.

### **PUBLIC BENEFIT SUMMARY**

The records and artefacts in the conservation programme are available to anyone seeking further information from the archives of the Royal Aero Club through an application to the Trust or to the Royal Air Force Museum, with copies of specific records available for a small fee. The Flying for Youth programme grants relatively small amounts, typically under £500, which are available providing that applicants raise a similar sum from their own resources or through their own efforts.

## **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 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> 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. The InterContinental Hotel Group presented the Trust with the 1<sup>st</sup> Aero Club Cup, a trophy which was won by Frank Hedges Butler in July 1906. It is probably the world's oldest trophy for an air sport contest.

### **AVIATORS' CERTIFICATE ALBUMS AND AVIATORS' CERTIFICATE CARDS**

The RAeC collection includes 35 albums of Aviators' Certificates (No. 1 to 13,299). Certificate No. 1 was issued to the then John Moore-Brabazon, later Lord Brabazon of Tara. Sadly Album No. 4 (Certificates No. 925 to 1488) is still missing but it is hoped that volunteers from Cross & Cockade International will create a 'virtual' album from their data. 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. Negotiations are in progress with a third party to have all Aviators' Certificates made available via their website.

### **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.

Four 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, 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.

Thanks to a generous donation of a scanner, computer and suitable software by the Royal Air Force Museum, the project to scan and to identify around 8000 photographs in the archives has been started. The objective is to identify all photographs and attach a caption to each and eventually make them available for viewing via the Trust's website.

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. Eric Grimes, a retired airline pilot continues with his work of preparing an index of the contents of all volumes. The index of the first seven albums is already being displayed on the Trust website. It is hoped that this

Index and some of the contents will be illustrated in 2008 by David Tait on the Trust's website. Thanks to generous sponsorship it is anticipated that the project to conserve, microfilm and digitise all 20 volumes will be soon be completed.

### **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 digitise and index these Minute Books and then to display the 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. The Trust is endeavouring to find 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 still in the process of being compiled by Andrew Dawrant. When completed it will enable future conservation work to be prioritised taking 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 2007 the Trustees awarded 12 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. In 2007 one flightsim bursary was awarded.

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

## **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

### **MOBILE DISPLAY STANDS**

Thanks to a generous donation approved by Dr Michael Fopp, the Director of the Royal Air Force Museum four Roller Banner Display Stands for indoor-display were commissioned. Each Banner Display, when erected is 210cm high and 90cm wide. Each banner display stand can be rolled-up and packed into zip-up carrying bags for trouble-free transportation. Three display stands are single-sided and one is double-sided. They give a pictorial presentation of the work of the Trust. Normally on display at the RAF Museum, they are now available, subject to some safeguards, to sponsors, friends and other organisations in the United Kingdom.

### **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 technical support to the Organising Committee of The Schneider Trophy Banquet "A celebration of the World Aviation Record Breakers". That 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 the Trust's support the RAF Museum provided the Trust with computer equipment and software for use by the NADFAS Heritage Volunteers and with several portable illustrated Banner Display Units. The Trustees wish to express their thanks to the RAF Museum for these most practical 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**

At the AGM in November Fred Marsh who founded the Trust in 1998, retired as Chairman and was then elected as President.

At the AGM Jim Crocker was elected Chairman. Jim Crocker has been a Trustee since the Trust's foundation. He is also a Vice-President of the Royal Aero Club and a past Chairman of the British Parachute Association.

During 2007 Andrew Dawrant, Richard Dilworth and David Hempleman-Adams were elected as Trustees. Andrew Dawrant has for several years worked on the RAeC Collections at the RAF Museum, Hendon and has a particular interest in Genealogy. Richard Dilworth is a past Equerry to HRH The Duke of York. David Hempleman-Adams is a well known aviator with many world first and ballooning records to his credit.

David Bills joined the Trust as Bursary Administrator.

During the year Richard Crabtree, OBE, a Trustee and Trust Administrator retired. His presence will be greatly missed. Dr Simon Philbin, the Trust's Intelligence & Research Executive also retired due to pressure of academic work

The Trustees wish to place on record their thanks to the following:

Lucy Smeaton of Imperial College, for her work to ensure that the website is kept updated;

Messrs. Jackson, Feldman and Company to the Auditors;

The British Gliding Association for permitting use of its Leicester offices as the Trust's Registered Office.

The Director and staff of the Royal Air Force Museum, Hendon

Mr Eric Grimes continuing to undertake the immense task of indexing the contents of the Hedges Butler albums which are now on display on the Trust website.;

Mr David Tait for his work on the digitised images of the Frank Hedges Butler albums to enhance the website with illustrations.

Mr Franz la Rosée and Messrs Breitling for making their Boardroom available to the Trust for its meetings  
The Royal Automobile Club for providing a room to the Trust for one of its Committee meetings.

The Trustees are particularly appreciative of the generous donation from Dr Vijaypat Singhania which has enabled the Trust to complete the conservation of the Frank Hedges Butler Albums.

#### **PATRON, TRUSTEES, COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND OTHER INFORMATION**

Patron: HRH The Duke of York, KG, KCVO

President: Frederick Marsh

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

At the end of 2007 the Trustees and Committee members were:

Chairman: Jim Crocker

Trustees: Jim Crocker, Peter Crispin, Andrew Dawrant, Richard Dilworth, Frederick Marsh, Dick Poole and David Hempleman-Adams.

Other Committee members: David Bills - Bursary Administrator, Peter Crispin – Hon. Secretary and Treasurer, Air Vice Marshal P J Dye OBE, RAF, Miss Lucy Smeaton (Webmaster).

Honorary Auditors: Messrs. Jackson, Feldman and Company

Bankers: CAF Bank Limited

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Royal Aero Club Trust website: [www.royalaeroclubtrust.org](http://www.royalaeroclubtrust.org)

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