



Aviation Science & Development at Farnborough History and Learning Briefings



A BRIEF HISTORY OF FARNBOROUGH AVIATION SITE Part 6 : The Demise of the RAE 1991

This is Part 6 of a much abbreviated history of the Farnborough Site and contains just a small range of the experimental research and development carried out in its lifetime. In these brief notes, it has, unfortunately, not been possible to mention all of the many Departments' contributions or individual staff contributions. The tremendous width and depth of the research & development can be obtained from wider reading – just a few recommendations of which are made at the end of each section – most of which are available from FAST.

The End of an Era

In 1988 the Royal Aircraft Establishment had changed its name to the Royal Aerospace Establishment to reflect the increased breadth of the research and development that it was undertaking.

On the 1st April 1991 the RAE ceased to exist. The Establishment was renamed the Defence Research Agency (DRA) and remained an executive agency of the UK Ministry of Defence (MOD).

This briefing describes what happened in 1991 and brings this brief summary of some of the many significant contributions made by the of the RAE to a close.

Agency Amalgamation

The DRA was formed in 1991 from the amalgamation of the RAE and the following Defence Research Establishments :

- **Admiralty Research Establishment (ARE)** comprising the major sites of Portsmouth in Hampshire and Southwell in Dorset. This became the Maritime Division DRA.
- **Royal Aerospace/Aircraft Establishment (RAE)** – major site Farnborough, Hampshire (Aerospace Division)
- **Royal Armament Research & Development Establishment (RARDE)** - Fort Halstead, Kent – the Military Division
- **Royal Signals & Radar Establishment (RSRE)** – the site at Malvern in Worcestershire – the Electronics Division.

The HQ of DRA was based at Farnborough, but the other sites retained much of their former independence. Nigel Hughes was the first Chief Executive (formerly called Directors of the Establishments) followed by John Chisholm in August 1991.

FAST is developing a series of briefing on key aspects of Farnborough's Aviation Heritage.

These briefing notes are not intended to be a complete and comprehensive history of the subject of the title, but are intended to stimulate the imagination and encourage further reading. To that end, a 'further reading' list is included at the end of each briefing. By reading a number of different histories, written by varying authors over a range of timescales, a balance of the differences can be achieved – and the reader's own opinions formed. But we hope that these briefings will be an interesting summary.

It is a continuing process and a number of further briefings are planned.

BRIEFING SERIES

1-6 A Brief History of the Farnborough Aviation Site (1901 to 1991)

1. 1901-14 The Early Days
2. 1914-18 World War I
3. 1918-39 The Inter War Years
4. 1939-45 World War II
5. 1945-90 The Cold War Period
6. 1991 The Demise of RAE
7. Royal Engineers Balloon School
8. Royal Flying Corps
9. Royal Aircraft Factory
10. Edward Teshmaker Busk (Scientist)
11. Frank W Gooden (Test Pilot)
12. Samuel Franklin Cody
13. The Farnborough Wind Tunnels
14. Hermann Glauert (Aerodynamicist)

Please check www.airsciences.org.uk for the latest list of available titles.

The Formation of DERA

The DRA lasted until 1st April 1995 when it was re-arranged into DERA (Defence Evaluation and Research Agency) by amalgamating DRA with:

- **CBDE Porton Down** (Chemical & Biological Defence Establishment – later changed to PLSD Protection & Life Sciences Division);
- **The Centre for Defence Analysis** (CDA – the old DOAE at West Byfleet); and
- **The Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment** (A&AEE) Boscombe Down, now amalgamated with the DTEO (Defence Test & Evaluation Organisation), which also covered the MOD's ranges for weapons and armaments testing.

The Chief Executive throughout DERA's brief life was John Chisholm and the DERA staffing level was around 9000 scientists, technologists and supporting staff, making it, at the time, the UK's largest science & technology organisation.

Qinetiq

The flying at Bedford was largely shut down by 1994 and on the 2nd July 2001, DERA was split (the government Public Private Partnership initiative - PPP) into a private and commercial company – QinetiQ – and the retained state-owned DSTL, which continued with the more sensitive aspects of the MOD R&D (Porton Down, Fort Halstead, Weapons Research etc).

QinetiQ retained the Ball Hill site of the old RAE and, after sharing it with DSTL until 2010, DSTL finally decamped to the old ARE site at Portsdown near Portsmouth.

FAST and the Future

Both Qinetiq and DSTL are still operating (2011), but central government defence funding is in significant decline at this time and the appetite to continue long term government-funded military research and development has largely disappeared. It is anticipated that this will lead to a significant reduction in the world class status in such R&D that the UK once held and well-deserved.

It was during this period from 1991 onwards that the Farnborough Air Sciences Trust (FAST) was set up to ensure that - over the period of the obvious coming reductions in size and funding - the scientific, engineering and social history and heritage of the RAE, and it's associated out-stations and sister establishments, would not be lost in the rush to close down the Factory Site and move the diminished establishment to the Ball Hill site.

FAST continues to work to preserve and promote Farnborough's great heritage in aviation science - an important educational resource and an internationally significant part of the nation's scientific progress.

FURTHER READING

You can see and read for yourself what remains of the RAE's home in Farnborough and many of the fascinating artefacts of the time by visiting the FAST Museum.



Article by Dr Graham Rood 2011