

Correspondence

Lord Sempill

From Francis J. Boreham, Associate Fellow

DURING the period 1931-1935 I was Chief Inspector for National Flying Services, subsequently London Air Park Workshops, supervising repairs, C of A work and maintenance, when Colonel the Master of Sempill (as he then was) was our managing director. Flying his own Puss Moth, G-ABJU, he never missed an opportunity for advancing the cause of aviation and the private flyer, indeed very few meetings and air races of this period were missed by the "Col." and his well-known aircraft.

I remember many occasions, when I had the privilege of accompanying him on visits to the out stations, he invariably trimmed the monoplane very precisely, and was able to spend some time with reports and paperwork during the flight.

During the time he was director, many exciting events took place and he was largely responsible for the visit of the "Graf Zeppelin", RAeS Garden Party, visits of World flyers, and "Planette" pylon racing at London Air Park.

He really was a great pioneer, and thought nothing of setting off for Australia, in his Puss Moth. We fitted extra tanks, also an additional fuel tank on the luggage rack in the cabin, as we were concerned about him meeting strong head winds, over the Timor Sea. I still have a letter which he sent on arrival at Port Darwin, complimenting the workshop staff on the work done on his aeroplane which had given no trouble on the long journey. He always impressed me with his great enthusiasm for the work we were doing, also his keen understanding of people, and his charm, which stimulated and enabled things to be done better.

Truly a good man and distinguished pioneer, I remember him with affection, he gave me great help and encouragement in aviation.

The Editor regrets that this appreciation by Mr. Boreham, which was received shortly after Lord Sempill's death, could not be included with Capt. Pritchard's "memoir" in the May JOURNAL.

The Journal

THANK you for the splendid issue of the January JOURNAL. It projects a very real picture of events in the one hundred years of our history, and to me it recalls very vividly much that I have been acquainted with, and lived with, since I became a boy-apprentice aero engine fitter with the RAF in 1925, leaving that excellent Service in 1951. I joined the Society in 1930.

What does the JOURNAL mean to me? It keeps me informed upon the more important and interesting projects of which I might otherwise know little.

It has frequently focused attention upon the urgent need for the industry to become efficient, and to improve the quality and reliability of its products, a theme which pleases me, but which has as yet borne little fruit.

The colloquium on this subject was of particular interest and expresses many of the hopes and ideals of those who have been battling with aircraft serviceability problems over the years. Could not the Society publish these papers as a booklet and circulate it in quantity in all places where it might profitably be read? Surely some steps must be taken to get such a worth-while message across? (The work

of the NCQR has certainly made those who work in industry conscious of the need for improvement in the quality and reliability of their products.)

It is probable that better guidance could be given by the publication of comprehensive statistics of unreliability in selective fields, indicating losses incurred and costs of rectification. It might then become apparent that the manufacturer must spend more on preventative measures, and further, the customer might find it expedient to share these extra costs.

It is apparent also that some new study might profitably be made of the payment and rewards to employees within the industry, tied in some way to quality and reliability. Throughout the war years the emphasis was undoubtedly upon quantity, and rewards and agreements were established towards this end. Has not the time come for management and workers to affect some re-appraisal of these issues?

LAURANCE BROWN, *Associate.*

26th April 1966.

THE article by Mr. A. D. Baxter in the March JOURNAL was most interesting and having read the subsequent correspondence in the May issue, I am prompted, albeit a little late, to join in the discussion.

As a background, let me state that I am an undergraduate apprentice with the British Aircraft Corporation, reading Mechanical Sciences, to be followed by Economics, at Cambridge. Since my interests lie in the field of production management I am a student both of this Society and the Institution of Mechanical Engineers.

Please accept the following comments as the constructive criticism which they are intended to be.

The contrast between the JOURNAL and the "Chartered Mechanical Engineer" is little short of startling. Whilst the former has no editorial matter, reports of proceedings and a number of technical notes (which can only be of interest to quite a small proportion of members), the latter is eminently readable and deals not only with the practice of engineering "per se", but also with the education of engineers (surely of vital importance in view of our present losses to US-based industry) and the history of engineering. Certainly the publication of proceedings is important, so the Institution of Mechanical Engineers provides short precis of, and order forms for, copies of such reports, while publishing also the "Journal of Mechanical Engineering Science."

Obviously such a broad base is rendered more economic when the circulation is 66 000 against our 12 000, but it seems to me that some arrangement of the JOURNAL mid-way between its present format and that of the CME would be possible, and would prove more popular with most members.

Whilst the Centenary JOURNAL was a splendid effort on which I should like to congratulate you, I feel that a more coherent arrangement would have made it even better.

It did stimulate me to organise, with the Engineering Dept. Librarian, an exhibition of the History of Aircraft in Britain, to be held in the Engineering Dept. in October. Many of the photographs to be used were kindly lent by the Royal Aeronautical Society Library to whom I am very grateful, and it seems to me that a survey of this nature, from your own files, would have made an excellent basis and background for the reminiscences in the Centenary JOURNAL.

Returning to the main subject, the future format of the JOURNAL. I think it a pity that articles of such historical interest as the reminiscences referred to above, should only appear once a century!

Finally, Mr. A. D. Munro's suggestion for a correspondence column receives my full support, although I should perhaps seldom have the temerity to contribute to it.

A. J. HAND, *Student*.

23rd May 1966

AS a past (time-served) member of the one-time aircraft industry of Great Britain, I feel that some comment be made to the letter of A. D. Munro in the May JOURNAL.

Firstly, congratulations on the Centenary issue. In my opinion, the events recounted therein, and in subsequent issues, will stand retelling long after the trivial blunderings of today have been forgotten.

I would like to assure Mr. Munro that a very large number of today's members regard the period ending in about 1950 as that in which all the *real* work was done, and all the real progress made.

These were the times, of course, when the industry had a preponderance of doers rather than talkers (Executives, I believe, is the term preferred by the latter group). Please keep the JOURNAL up to its present high standard. This is a technical Society, and I for one would deplore any tendency to reduce the JOURNAL to a chatty forum for inconsequential correspondence.

The "doers", in any case, would have little time to spare for this kind of thing.

It is also unlikely that these people will be much concerned with the exact time or date of arrival of their JOURNAL.

There are, I feel, too many abstract or scientific papers included, however (the late Mr. C. G. Grey could express himself pungently on this); and more with a practical design bias would, perhaps, result in a more effective JOURNAL.

Finally, may I make a brief comment on the extremely interesting article by G. Bryer, "Ship Planes in the Grand Fleet" in the May issue? I have an original photograph of a Fairey Flycatcher (entered service in 1924) flying off "B" turret of HMS *Ramillies*. My father was serving in this ship at this time, and recalls that the pilot was a very well-built man, who had almost to be fitted into the cockpit with a shoe horn!

It would seem that the Panther flight from *Hood* was not, in fact, the final effort with this method.

Once again, thank you for your efforts in this Centenary year; keep up the good work!

A. C. RATTLE, *CEng (Assoc. Fellow)*.

24th May 1966.

E. W. PIKE's letter in the May issue criticises the JOURNAL for neglecting operational aspects. Discussion cannot be free in respect of space and defence aeronautics, which form the bulk of the industry's products with Government the only customer. This disadvantage, accentuated by cumbrous Departmental machinery, may in some measure account for the post-war shortcomings of the industry and for a narrowing of the field that the JOURNAL covers.

Similar restrictions do not, however, apply in the case of air transport. There are many, who have become expert through study and experience on matters in this field pertaining to air safety, aerodromes, electronics and traffic control and ground handling, now outside the Society's fold. It would seem advantageous for the Society here to widen its scope and for the JOURNAL to reflect a wider outlook.

In the determination of optimum size, for example, there are other considerations besides the aircraft capital and running costs. We should not perhaps forget the impact that a real European Customs Union might have, that the first airbus concept, Hillman's DH Dragon, which from a small aerodrome undercut the State service to Paris, ushered in the short-range air transport developments of the thirties and that it was the small, reliable, robust and economical aeroplane that gained a world-wide reputation for our industry before the war.

G. L. GANDY (*Associate*).

23rd May 1966.

The DH103-Hornet

WITH reference to the interesting paper by Mr. Harper in the April 1966 JOURNAL, I would like to comment on his remarks about the DH103-Hornet (p 477).

It may well be that the Hornet was the fastest piston-engined aircraft to see service in the RAF or RN, but it was not the fastest ever built. The Supermarine Spiteful had a maximum level speed of 494 mph. A published reference to this is in *The Aeroplane* of 26th December 1947, but I have a personal memory of this figure also, as I was a member of the Flight Test team which made the performance measurements on the Spiteful.

R. A. HARVEY (*Assoc. Fellow*).

22nd April 1966.

Material strength—Information required

I HAVE felt for a long time now that certain statistical estimation techniques could be very useful to design engineers in the rational assessment of factors of safety based on known variation of material properties and logically derived confidence levels for structural and material integrity. Some work of this nature has been done at RAE Farnborough, based mainly on aircraft materials and constructional types, but little, if any, has been available for general engineering purposes.

Recently, I have started trying to collect from various sources such information as may be available on variability of material strength, elongation and elasticity properties for materials to general engineering specifications, and have discovered that quite a lot of this information exists, but that it is hidden away in odd corners. My aim, ultimately, is to try to collect such information as I can obtain, and to make it available to a wider engineering public.

I would very much like to hear from any of your readers who may have any such information available, or from anyone who may be attempting the same task.

M. J. CLARKE,

10th May 1966

Lecturer in Mechanical Engineering,
School of Engineering, University College of Swansea,
Singleton Park, Swansea.