

NEWS LETTER



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February 2025

www.jetagemuseum.org

ISSUE 116

Preserving the past, inspiring the future

Issued every quarter: November, February, May and August

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December 2024 saw the launch of the new Jet Age Museum website after months of hard work by Trustee Peter Woolfrey and Volunteers Caroline Topping and Louie Elford on behalf of Jet Age and Kelly McPhee and her inspirational team at Barnwood based Marketing Agency Digitel.

This is a giant leap forward in communicating what Jet Age Museum has to offer and bringing real-world visitors to Meteor Business Park, be they little children awe-inspired by Meteors and Javelins or those seeking more about aviation history.

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CUSS TAKES A TILT

In more of his memoir extracts, GAC's John Freeman Cuss recalls setting up Gloster Design Services in 1965.

I and two of My Heads of Departments, Percy Braisby in charge of Technical Publications, and Ron Draper in charge of Lofting and Photographic, formed our own Design Services Company, to undertake design services work for anyone who would employ us.

BRISTOL

I had great help in being put on the right track in company formation by Hugh Burroughes - one-time Chairman of the Gloster Aircraft Company.

Until our company was properly formed and got going, I traded under the name of John F. Cuss and hired out draughting staff to work at the Bristol Aeroplane Company.

PROFITS

The profits were put into Gloster Design Services when it was formed. I and my colleagues put in £ 2000 cash - in the end I cashed in savings certificates and put in a lot more. This addition was eventually repaid. The three directors had no pay for a year but lived on a year's redundancy money given by Whitworth-Gloster Ltd.

Among our customers was British Rail at Derby. They gave us the job of designing coaches for the Advanced Passenger Train (APT). We were responsible for the structure but not the tilting mechanism.

TILTING

It will be generally known that the APT itself had not lived up to its promise, but much of the experience has been incorporated into British Rail's other rolling stock.

Another major customer was the former Bristol Aeroplane Company for work on bits of the Concorde. Other main customers for our service were Dowty Rotol, Dowty Mining, Gloster Saro and some smaller firms on the Gloucester Trading Estate.

Not infrequently when we only had slight acquaintance with the particular field of work, we could read it up and secure the order, making good our lack of knowledge of the exact problem as we went along. Our fairly wide and extensive technical background helped in this.

CROP SPRAYERS

It usually fell to me to do the extra reading. One might take 'crop sprayers' as an example, and 'elastic bollards for mooring ships' as another to illustrate the range of our tasks.

It was very demanding work, since in the sub-contract field one always seemed to either have too much staff and not enough work or too little staff and too much work. Particularly, promises on time scales had to be met.

British Rail's gas turbine Advanced Passenger Train (Experimental) and the British prototype Concorde G-BSST were both partly designed by Gloster Design Services



HARRIER LIFTS OFF

Before Christmas we bid farewell to our 2-seat cockpit from Hawker-Siddeley Harrier T2 XW264 which is going to be refurbished by our friends at the Tempest Trust in Wales and become a feature of their Hawker collection.

As a detour, after a quick clean up it went sightseeing, as you do. The drive past Buckingham Palace was not for Royal approval though - just because some parts needed to be delivered to north London.

BOSCOMBE

XW264 first flew on 3 October 1969 and was being delivered to RAF Boscombe Down, Wiltshire, on 11 July 1970 when the Rolls-Royce Pegasus vectored thrust engine failed due to dirt entering the fuel system.

DUNSFOLD

The undercarriage collapsed after a heavy vertical landing and the Harrier skidded on to the runway and burst into flames. Fortunately the pilot escaped with minor injuries and the remains of XW264 with the makers serial number 212003 were stored at Dunsfold and later Farnborough before the cockpit section joined Jet Age Museum.

TEMPEST

The Tempest Trust is based at the South Wales Aircraft Museum, St Athan, and is also restoring ex Indian Air Force Hawker Tempest HA580 which was previously MW758 of the Royal Air Force. A similar Chakra-marked Tempest, HA 547, pictured right, was delivered direct by Hawker in 1948.



NF(T).14 AND COLLECTION CARE TEAM PROGRESS



My last newsletter article ended with a mystery, writes Terry Willis.

Why does our NF14 have the badge of the Armament Practice Station Acklington painted on its starboard nacelle?

This matter has now been solved, with the help of our archivist, Richard Hentschke.

HENDON

He applied to the RAF Museum archive at Hendon for the movement records of WS807. What we learned was that '807 never served at Acklington but it did suffer two Category 3 accidents at Stradishall, which were repaired on site.

I'm told by Laurie Hilditch, himself an ex RAF pilot of long service, that Cat.3 accidents are commonly caused by ground vehicles striking an aircraft.

BOWSER

At the time of these prangs, the Acklington TT20s (converted NF11s) were being scrapped. The TT20 / NF11 shared the same 'wide mouthed' air intake with the NF14, so it is highly likely that '807 was struck by a bowser or similar and, as a result, had the front part of its nacelle replaced by one that had served at Acklington.

Since the last newsletter, my team and I have repainted the Vulcan in the scheme it wore later in its life; specifically to how it appeared in a photograph of it at Luqa, Malta, in 1978.

I think Vulcans look at their best in this sleek colour scheme and I hope that fellow members agree.

We also addressed the cockpit leak, which, if it is still holding, makes ours the only dry Vulcan in existence!

VENTRAL

With the Vulcan work now behind us, restoration of the NF(T).14 has ramped up again. Work underneath the centre section will be our focus, including main undercarriages and reattaching the ventral tank, plus all of the surrounding skin work. This is a huge task, taking hundreds of work hours.

Thanks to Workshop Manager, Roy Pressland, for buying a scaffold tower in a timely fashion to work on the tail of the NF(T).14. I am frequently asked, when will it be finished, admittedly, mostly by visitors. Our members are a more discreet bunch, recognising the variables involved. So, I'm going to stick my neck out here: Christmas 2026, with minor stencilling work going on for a further six months while the aircraft is in the Main Display Hall.

At time of writing (3rd January), we have just taken delivery of a Sea Vampire T22 cockpit section, swapped for our Harrier. This has been placed in a corner of the workshop but by the time you read these words, it should be in the Main Display Hall.

BARGE

The aircraft is XG775, once an Admiral's Barge. Why did we want this aircraft, with no Gloucestershire connections?

The trustee with oversight for collections, Martin Renshaw, identified a vulnerability, namely that we did not own the Gnat or Hunter cockpits, meaning that they could be withdrawn by their owners.

SEA VAMPIRE

Quite rightly, he wanted these popular exhibits to be in our ownership or replaced by ones we owned. The plan is that the Sea Vampire become a visitor accessible attraction, once restored. I understand that, following overtures, the Gnat is to be gifted to us. Vulnerability solved.

Do you have a story for the February edition of Jet Age Museum Newsletter? Please get in touch by Monday 7 April 2025 at alan_drewett_jet_age_museum@yahoo.com

WELCOME BACK VULCAN



With Jet Age Museum's Vulcan cockpit restoration complete at the end of 2024, volunteer and former Vulcan pilot Pete Branthwaite has been kind enough to contribute some memories of this four engine bomber.

'I flew the Vulcan for 10 years and over 2000 hours and 4 squadrons.

BLUE STEEL

The first was 83 Squadron in 1968 with the Blue Steel stand off missile at Scampton. Then the squadron was disbanded because the Polaris ballistic missile submarines were taking over the nuclear deterrent so the second half of my co-pilots tour was on 50 Squadron at Waddington.

I was then made a Captain and went to Cyprus on 35 Squadron in 1971. I was the only Flying Officer on the crew so asked the boss for early promotion.

We did very well so were chosen to go back to UK for the bombing competition, but I am not sure if the other crews wanted to escape the sunshine.

JAGUAR

I returned to the UK in 1973 and did a ground tour on the SEPECAT Jaguar at Lossiemouth, then returned to Scampton on 617 Squadron in 1978 until April 1981. I still had the best bombing crew, winning three cups in the UK bombing competition in 1980 and beating every USAF B52 squadron in their Giant Voice competition.

NAVIGATION

In late spring 1968 we were flying a high level navigation exercise for the navigators. The route was Scampton to Dover and then Lands End, the Hebrides and back to Scampton.

It was a beautiful night, stars in the sky and from the top of climb we could see all the lights on the ground all the way to the South coast.

As we turned West at Dover all the lights stopped at Southampton in a line North to South.

CORNWALL

It was a solid bank of cloud up to about 35,000ft. What's more there were flashes of lightning everywhere every 2 or 3 seconds which showed towering columns of cloud. As we came closer we realised they were much higher than we were.

We climbed to 47,000ft in a valley between two towering cloud bases which much have been over 50,000ft. It was the night that Cornwall and Devon were washed away. Afterwards I thought that if we had lost an engine our only way was downwards.

I wrote a song/poem about the adventure and used it in talks about the Cold War. It starts with 2 verses that are standard songs of the time, and the last 4 verses I wrote.'

NOW TURN TO PAGE 8

A TRIBUTE TO PHIL BUTLER BY TONY BUTTLER

Aviation history has suffered a major loss with the passing of Phil Butler on 26 September 2024.

Phil was a major contributor in helping Jet Age to establish itself and I was asked to compile this review of his life and career. However, as I knew him only from the year 2000 onwards, I am indebted to his sons Michael and Christopher for providing the details of his earlier life.

Phil lived in Liverpool until he was 40. This was where he went to school and to university and then began his working life with Lucas Aerospace.

He was dedicated to his career, first as an aeronautical and metallurgical engineer and later as a nuclear engineer with a focus on quality assurance, and was highly respected by his colleagues through his various companies and roles.

LIVERPOOL

Phil was a keen Liverpool football supporter, but his biggest youthful interest was plane-spotting. He was an early member of the Merseyside Aviation Society and enjoyed seeing the expansion of Liverpool Airport. His aviation interests also brought the first opportunities to travel abroad.

Phil was in his late thirties when he met his wife Irene. After marrying they moved to Cheshire (where Phil had recently joined Nuclear Electric) and this was home when Michael and Christopher were born. .



Eventually Phil was transferred to the company's corporate headquarters at Barnwood and so the family made the move to Bishop's Cleeve. His work enabled him to travel to Taiwan, Czechoslovakia, Germany and to the United States.

TAIWAN

After his sons Chris and Michael moved abroad with their careers, Phil and Irene also took the chance to go to Australia, Finland and Taiwan, before making three trips to Japan to see their sons, their wives and now two granddaughters.

Retirement from British Energy in 2001 brought more time for aviation research and writing, and helping in the establishment of the Jet Age Museum at Staverton and also the Defford Airfield Heritage Group at the former Defford Airfield site at Croome Park. Phil also became an honorary member of the RAF Association and was by now a qualified glider pilot. Indeed, other than his dedication to his family, the great passion in Phil's life was aviation and he had a drive and determination to find out historical facts.

This passion translated into thousands of hours of research either in his home office or on the road photographing aircraft, checking archives and exchanging information with his many collaborators.

That led to the publication of many books and articles which are very well-regarded in the aviation community.

WAR PRIZES

I had the pleasure of co-authoring several volumes with Phil, but he will probably be best remembered for his masterworks War Prizes and Air Arsenal: North America (the latter written with Dan Hagedorn).

By the time I first met Phil in 2000 his reputation and achievements were already long established. It is impossible to stress enough just how much he has helped me since then.

EXTRAORDINARY

His knowledge of British aviation was incredible! In particular with serial and airframe histories, Liverpool Airport and its predecessors, captured aircraft, and gliders. He could look at the most basic and bare photo of an aircraft or an airfield, with minimum reference points, and say immediately where it was taken, give the date and list which squadrons and units were involved.

An extraordinary memory and record! In over 50+ years Phil made an enormous contribution in recording and assembling aviation facts and records.

PHIL BUTLER CONTINUED

Gloster Meteor

Britain's Celebrated First-Generation Jet



Phil Butler and Tony Buttler



GLOSTER AND ROCHESTER



Much of his output went into the publications produced by Air-Britain, one of many aviation groups that have benefited so much from his efforts.

He became a great friend, and I miss his company and advice, and his infectious enthusiasm for his subject, at Air Fairs, Museums, Scale Model World and many other aviation events. Phil had a myriad of different qualities and characteristics but, fundamentally, he was a good man who soldiered on through (at times) considerable adversity. He was quiet, reserved, honest and generous, but had a nice sense of mischief and humour as well. He was analytical and diligent with any task and that proved so important in his professional career, and of course with his aviation research.



Having mentioned the Short Stirling Airfix kit box art of Roy Cross in Issue 115, Tim Kershaw was kind enough to add some facts and this picture. Note half a barrage balloon behind the trees on the far left!

28 Stirlings were completed by AW Hawksley (the Gloster No. 2 factory, now part of Invista) after the production line was evacuated from Rochester in August 1940. The Stirlings were completed between 15 July and 26 November 1941. 27 were Mk Is and there was one Mk II.

However, these were not the only links between Gloucester and Rochester. Both were mediaeval cities besides mighty rivers - the Severn and Medway respectively - although while the site of Gloucester Castle became its prison, Rochester Castle still stands. On 29 December 1961, Rochester based Wingets Ltd also took over the century old Gloucester Railway Carriage and Wagon Company Limited.

Just as Britain's aerospace industry was contracting, so Gloucester RCW was facing the end of British Railway's Modernisation Plan and the disappearance of former industrial (pictured below left) and colonial markets. Ten years earlier, both Gloster Aircraft and Gloucester RCW had been the biggest employers in Gloucestershire. The last BR carriage was completed at the Bristol Road Wagon Works in November 1963.

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PETE'S POEM

Rolling down the runway throttles open wide

See the mighty Vulcan sway from side to side

We're airborne again, were overweight, we can't stop now were we're much to late

So we'll carry on regardless for the Wing Co's AFC

Went to early briefing climbed into the kite

Opened up the throttles and roared into the night

Leaving the runway far behind, it's dark outside but we don't mind

'Cos we're pressing on regardless for the Wg Co's AFC

Sitting in the darkness looking down below

Watching all the city lights winking as we go

Now there's only one sandwich left, I think the Co has eaten the rest

But we're pressing on regardless for the Wg Co's AFC

Flying on a navex one clear and starry night

Turned towards the West and saw a flash of light

Then another and lots more, then we realised what's in store

But we'll carry on regardless for the Wg Co's AFC

Lightning flashes filled the sky, perhaps we'd better fly quite high

Flashes left and flashes right, even some above our height

Homes and bridges washed away, what a way to end the day

And we're pressing on regardless for the Wg Co's AFC



Descending to the airfield, maps are put away

It's time for the pilots to have a little play

Round the circuit one more time then put this crate down on a dime

And we're pressing on regardless for the feeder* is in sight.

**Feeder was the name for the Canteen, RAF Bomber Command also being known as Eating Command.*

Peter adds 'I was a pilot in the RAF for 35 years so I have a few stories to tell. I also have a copy of the RAF song book of the time but I don't think it is suitable for today's climate. I did fly now-preserved Vulcan XH558 but my favourite was XH538, my bombing competition aircraft in 1980.'

METEOR F4 EXPORTS



1947 marked the first of many Gloster Meteor exports that earned valuable foreign currency for a cash strapped post-War Britain. These models by Tim Mansfield depict a Dutch Meteor (above) and a Belgian marked example, delivered in 1948 and 1949.



A TALE OF TWO VAMPIRES

As described on Page 4, Gloucestershire's aviation heritage at Jet Age Museum has been put into context with the arrival of a fuselage pod from Britain's second jet fighter - the de Havilland Vampire. And a Vampire with a Swiss imposter.

DH115 Sea Vampire T22 was given the de Havilland works number 15650 and came on strength with the Royal Navy in 1955 as XG775 with the code letters VL as a flying Admiral's Barge for the Flag Officer Flying Training. It was never fitted with a tail hook and so flew from shore bases rather than aircraft carriers, as seen below right.

After appearing at the Yeovilton Air Day in 1967 XG775 was struck off Royal Navy charge in January 1970 and taken by road to Southall Technical College, London, for use as an instructional airframe.

A few years later the fuselage was rescued from a London scrapyards (what an episode of Steptoe and Son that would have been!) by a private owner from Norfolk. June 2020 saw the fuselage pod move to a new private owner in Wales and restoration began at Fishburn airfield, County Durham. on 21 July 2021.

SWISS

Meanwhile, a de Havilland Vampire T11- licence built by F+W Emmen with the constructor's number 866 - was delivered to the Swiss Air Force on 17 February 1956 as U-1006 and renumbered on upgrade to T55 standard as U-1206 in June 1957.



U-1206 completed a mere 371 landings and less than 2200 flying hours before joining the American civil register as N115DH on 19 December 1991.

However, N115DH was seen back in the UK in the 1990s painted up as Admiral's Barge XG775

RENO

In September 2009 as #67 Vampire, N116DH competed in the National Championship Air Races Jet class in Reno, Nevada. It finished in seventh place with an average speed of 443 mph and in 2010 went racing at Reno again, now named Cosworth. This time finishing in sixth place at a speed of 461 mph.

In 2013 the blue and white Vampire joined the World Heritage Air Museum in Michigan.

JET AGE MUSEUM

In January 2025 the fuselage pod of the real XG775 joined the other cockpits and full scale model of Electroflight P1e 'Spirit of Innovation' at Jet Age Museum.

When work on the Meteor NF(T).14 is complete, both the Vampire and the Gnat Procedural Trainer will enter the workshop area for further restoration.



Picture courtesy of Ray Deacon

THE ROLE OF TRUSTEES, AND THAT OF TRUSTEE CHAMPIONS WITHIN THE JET AGE MUSEUM TODAY

This article is the first in a series of articles that are intended to help clarify the role and responsibilities of Trustees, and their associated objectives, in respect to Jet Age Museum.

Each quarter, we will call upon a Trustee to provide insights within their respective area of responsibility by highlighting key initiatives, major projects and forward plan activities.

First, however, it may be beneficial to provide some “scene setting” by way of addressing the fundamental issue of why the museum, operating as a registered charity, requires Trustees in the first place.

Further, it may also help to make clear the distinction between the role of a Trustee and that of a Trustee champion, the latter role being introduced recently within Jet Age .

This proposed series of articles is not intended to include a lengthy diatribe on Trustees legal and financial responsibilities (although these are important) but a concerted effort to improve communication, provide insights and to help clarify roles and responsibilities.

VOLUNTEERS

We all recognise that it is important that volunteers and members have ample opportunity to understand and engage with the challenges facing Jet Age operating in a post-Covid environment.

The Trustees, throughout this series of articles, will make clear their perspectives relating to the challenges faced by the various teams of volunteers that are in place to address these.

CHARITY

For example, the Trustees jointly believe that the biggest challenge faced by the Charity is maintaining the life blood of the museum i.e. its volunteers.

Through this series of articles, we hope to make clear the steps being taken to deal with supporting, maintaining, developing and sustaining an experienced cadre of volunteers necessary to “preserve the past and inspire the future”.

We specifically cite this as an example where we believe that each and every Trustee, volunteer and member has a role to play in addressing what potentially could become an existential threat driven by adverse factors such as an ageing demographic profile.

So, let us step back to the beginning – Why have Trustees in the first place?

The simple answer to this question is that in order to qualify and operate as a registered charity within the UK, Trustees are required to be accountable for discharging certain responsibilities as defined by the UK government’s Charity Commission.

These responsibilities include financial, legal and adequate operating procedures which have to be regularly monitored

and recorded by way of formal board meetings.

Further, the museum, as with any registered company, has to operate consistently with the “Articles of Association” which were drawn up at the time of registration and are updated periodically. The Articles of Association define the museum’s main objectives and its overall strategic rationale (deployed via its forward plan).

BOARD

The charity statutory requirements do not define how many Trustees are required nor does it specify how often they meet formally via a board meeting. Why is it necessary for JAM to have a planned level of 8 Trustees inclusive of a chairperson? One key factor has been increases in regulatory and constitutional requirements resulting in much greater focus placed upon Governance and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), Environment, Safeguarding, Health and Safety at Work (HASAW).

Jet Age is classified as a “small charity” as defined by the Charity Commission code, however, this still requires that we adopt “best practice” in all areas of our operation.

These “best practice” are typically defined by the policies of Jet Age and procedures which have increased in number in recent years.

THE AEROPLEUSTIC ART



Long before Concorde, the Brabazon or even the Boxkite, a Bristol man could see the possibilities of air related transport.

In his 1827 'Treatise on the Aeropleustic Art (or Navigation in the Air by means of Kites', schoolmaster George Pocock (1765-1840) described a carriage that he had built which he had named the Charvolent (pseudo French for Flying Carriage).

KITES

Fitted with a steering tiller and a handbrake, the Charvolent was powered by two linen covered kites at the end of 300 yard long lines. At night, these kites also suspended lamps which must have frightened unsuspecting onlookers.

Mr Pocock also designed his horseless carriage with an unusually long wheelbase to keep it stable at the expected but otherwise unheard-of speeds of 20 mph. He claimed that the lift of the kites would also support the vehicle and offer a smooth jolt-free ride for the passengers.

A bonus of the Charvolent was that it was not covered by the tolls set out for the use of turnpike roads by carriages hauled by animals.

.However, a crew of three was anticipated to control the vehicle and further disadvantages included the kites becoming tangled up in trees, chimneys and steeples and the possibility of the wind not blowing.

TREES

George Pocock himself dismissed this detail by saying, "Ships might be objected to on this principle".

Although a number of Charvolent races were staged on the Great West Road to London (the A4 today) the coming of the railways in the 1830s put an end to further development of the aeropleustic art as a practical form of transport.

KITE BUGGY

Despite this, Mr Pocock's legacy remains in the sporting kite buggy. These are typically single seat tricycle space frames with kites made of modern synthetic materials. Rather than the public highways now, kite buggies compete in wide open spaces such as beaches - far away from any trees!



TRUSTEES

Continued from Page 11

This increase, in part, is driven by the need for the museum to better protect and safeguard all of its stakeholders including volunteers, members, visitors, partners and benefactors.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Internally, we are also faced with greater needs in certain specialised areas such as financial management and IT infrastructure. In 2024 alone we saw the launch of an improved Jet Age file server system, a new website and a new e-mail system, and a new Xero financial system will be implemented soon. As ever the Trustees are open to discussion about the needs for Trustees in order to adequately cover the workload, however, it is noted that board meetings recently increased from 4 to 6 per year.

EXCEPTIONAL

Further, even with this increased level of meetings, additional "exceptional" meetings were held in September, November and January to ensure that key challenges facing the museum are adequately covered.

The picture below left shows the exceptional onsite meeting venue in January 2025 which also enables us to reinforce contacts with local industries – in this case Dowty Propellers.

We understand that there continues to be debate amongst volunteers about the need and associated role of designated "Trustee champions".

Continued on Page 12

Gloucestershire Aviation Collection known as Jet Age Museum

Meteor Business Park, Cheltenham Road East,
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TRUSTEES Continued from Page 11

The “champion” role was introduced in order to both provide the key interface to facilitate matters between the Managers (to whom most operational matters are delegated) and the Board.

The current list of Trustee champions is contained within the Jet Age directory, and we expect to issue a “roles and responsibilities” document early in 2025 which should help to clarify the scope of this function.

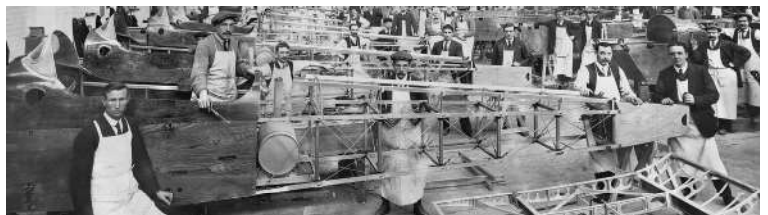
Also, there needs to be a clear distinction between the role of a “Trustee” and that of “Trustee champion”. Whilst the former has clearly defined legal responsibilities and accountability the latter has no direct authority as it is a facilitating role.

Many of the points raised above will be covered in greater detail during the series of articles to be published within the Newsletter over the next 12 months or so.

Hopefully this article has helped to “set the scene” for a series of forthcoming articles to be published by individual Trustees.

We can now look forward to next quarter’s thought-provoking article which will be entitled “Thoughts from the Chair...” produced by our current chairperson, Oliver Towers.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN...



When H H Martyn received sub-contract work from the Aircraft Manufacturing Company in 1915, boss A W Martyn proposed a joint venture. The first aircraft built in Cheltenham was the Airco DH6 trainer. The new Gloucestershire Aircraft Company later became world famous as Gloster.



JET AGE

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