

The Black Shed Tour ... 18 January 2019

Those of us lucky enough to live in Farnborough are proud of our town ... and one of the reasons we're proud is its history. Across the world, Farnborough is famous for Aviation in general, and the Air Show in particular. BAE Systems, one of the world's largest Defence and Aerospace companies, has its Headquarters here on the airfield.

While the name BAE Systems is only 20 years old, its heritage is as old as British aviation itself. In the pioneering days, the companies that built aircraft were small – very small. The successful ones grew, and their names are still famous today – De Havilland, Avro, English Electric, Gloster, Hawker, Sopwith, Supermarine – the list goes on. Through mergers and acquisitions, these companies all became part of what is today BAE Systems.

BAE Systems puts huge importance on the rich history of the companies that have evolved into its very modern business. It takes great care to preserve what is most important from the past – documents, plans, certificates, models, photographs, paintings, etc. These artefacts are stored here in Farnborough, in one of the sheds from the former RAE, itself a listed building.

By kind arrangement of the BAE Systems Heritage Manager, Mr Howard Mason, some 30 of us from the Farnborough Society were given a tour of the Black Shed on 18 January 2019. Howard and his colleague Terry each took a group of us round. Their knowledge, their enthusiasm, and their ability to share that with us were outstanding.

Just think of the iconic aircraft that these companies built – Camel, Tiger Moth, Mosquito, Meteor, Hurricane, Spitfire, Lancaster, Comet, Canberra, Concorde ... here in the Black Shed we saw contemporary documents and models, and heard from Howard and Terry about the awesome people who designed and flew them.

BAE Systems Heritage is not all about aircraft – we also learned a great deal about Britain's great shipbuilders including Vickers, Yarrow, Vosper

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Thornycroft and others. And the history of the Royal Ordnance Factories goes back centuries.

This was a wonderful visit. I'd happily do it several times over.