



Box Hill Aeromodelling Club

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I have just read Rosie McNamara's book on Boxfields with great interest and fond memories. However, I realised that there has been no mention anywhere of the Aeromodelling Club that used to meet in the Community centre.

My memories of this are vague as it operated around the early 1950s. My recollection is that the club used to meet in the end of the right-hand wing of the centre with access through the side door. I joined with my friend, Mike Betteridge who had somehow had found out about it. There were about four grown-ups and also the Denise Edgell who was about the same age as us and his older brothers. They lived in Southlands and their father distributed newspapers.

Tragic Accident

The main activity was building model aircraft out of balsa wood to fly and display. However, visits were also arranged to the Farnborough Air Show. The first show I went on was in 1951 where the two attached photos were taken but the second visit on 6 September 1952 was more memorable for the wrong reasons. It was the year of the Air Show disaster when the prototype DH110 broke up over the crowd resulting in one of the two engines landing in the crowd and killing over twenty people. I clearly remember watching the two engines, still working and spirally towards us and the crowd around me dropping flat on the ground. After the impact there was local confusion as people rushed both towards and away from the casualties.



When we eventually got back to the coach, we found that the driver had been injured in the crash. Fortunately, it was only some shrapnel in his backside but it necessitated getting a relief driver sent out from Bath. This took ages and we eventually got home in the early hours where my anxious parents were overjoyed at our safe return as there were no easy access to phones in those days.

I don't know what eventually happened to the Box Hill Aeromodelling Club as eventually I went to Chippenham Grammar School and had to give up due to homework pressures and my friend Mike moved from Box Hill to Barn Piece, Box.

The Portsmouth Evening News, 6 September 1952 carried the following report on the same day: One of Britain's new fighter jets, the DH110, broke up in mid-air after beating the sound barrier at Farnborough air display this afternoon... A crowd of over 120,000 people saw pieces of the plane hurtle across the aerodrome... Some of the wreckage landed in the crowd... Some spectators were believed injured... later reported dead... The pilot was believed dead.