

316 Club – 25th Anniversary Lunch

Highlights 1990 to date

Let's go back to 1990

- At Stevenage we were part of British Aerospace Dynamics Division which had recently been formed by bringing together all the BAe Guided Weapons businesses. Remember at Stevenage we were Army Weapons Division before that.
- The year opened with the news that BAe Dynamics would merge with Thomson CSF to produce a European guided weapons powerhouse but the deal was dead by the summer.
- The hard hitting redundancies that had started in the late 80s continued and the workforce in Stevenage continued to shrink. The numbers of people on the site dropped from around 7000 in the mid-80s to only about 1600 in the mid-90s.
- The Hatfield move of Air Weapons to Stevenage was completed.
- There were initial firings for ship-launched Sea Skua, Vertical Launch Seawolf and a double firing success for Laserfire in the Middle-East.
- VL Seawolf entered service with the Royal Navy Type 23 Frigates in 1990.
- The final Milan missile was produced (number 60,000) and ALARM achieved a successful fully guided firing from a Tornado fast jet.
- There were significant uplift orders for Swingfire and Sea Dart fuze
- Computers had monochrome screens and churned out the classic green and white striped paper.....do you remember that?
- Our working environment was starting to step away from offices and towards the open plan setup we still have today.

What was happening outside MBDA in 1990...

- In the news, Nelson Mandela was freed from Robin Island after 27 years, John Major succeeded Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister, the Hubble telescope was launched and the first web browser was written.
- In sport, Paul Gascoigne cried tears for England as they lost on penalties to Germany in the World Cup semi-final, Liverpool won the League, Stefan Edberg

won the Men's Singles title at Wimbledon and Mr Fish won the Grand National.

- At the cinema, Kevin Costner was "Dancing with Wolves", Demi Moore saw a "Ghost" and Richard Gere found a "Pretty Woman".
- In music, Elton John achieved his first solo No 1 with "Sacrifice" and the re-released "Unchained Melody" became the biggest selling single of the year after featuring on the soundtrack of "Ghost".
- On television, lots of scantily clad men and women ran about on the beach in Baywatch, the bizarre Twin Peaks series baffled millions of viewers as they repeatedly asked "who killed Laura Palmer?" and Homer Simpson arrived on our screens.

So what happened in our Company between 1990 and now..... a few of the highlights across the years...

- During the 1990s we started to sell Rapier FSB1(X) upgrades to our overseas Rapier customers in Oman, Singapore and Turkey.
- In 1995 the ultimate Air Defence system Rapier FSC (some of you will remember it as Rapier 2000) entered Service with the RAF Regiment and British Army. This was the culmination of over a decade of work and one of the largest projects we had ever taken on.
- In 1996 the guided weapons businesses British Aerospace Dynamics and Matra Defence merged to form an Anglo-French joint venture and we became Matra BAe Dynamics. The merger launched the development and production of the Storm Shadow cruise missile.
- In the late 90's we were working hard on the development of ASRAAM which we successfully brought into service with the RAF.
- We continued to push Rapier FSC in the export market but success didn't come until the end of 2001 when we sold it under the name Jernas to Malaysia.
- In the year 2000, thanks to the confidence generated by the successful bid for Meteor, the beyond visual range air to air missile to equip the new Eurofighter, the company made a multi-million pound investment in redeveloping the Stevenage site.
 - 36 buildings were demolished and 14 new ones built including facilities such as a restaurant, gym, atrium coffee bar and we even built a pond!

- MBDA was formed in 2001 as the first truly integrated European defence company. Matra BAe Dynamics merged with Aerospatiale-Matra Missiles and Alenia Marconi Systems' missile division. As part of this latest merger we saw the staff, from what had been GEC Marconi Radar & Defence Systems, in Borehamwood move up to join us in Stevenage.
- Brimstone (originally a GEC Marconi project) entered service with the RAF in 2005, designed for the attack and destruction of armoured targets. Over the last 10 years we have updated this missile with a new Dual Mode seeker allowing it to use laser targeting and making it a weapon of today. The RAF have used it very successfully in Libya, Afghanistan and Iraq.
- In 2007 we signed our first long term Contract for Availability support contract for Rapier; this was quickly followed with similar arrangements for both Air and Naval Weapon systems.
- Also in 2007 we put the final touches to the Stevenage site redevelopment, creating the Quadrangle which put a roof on the courtyard of what was B1 Building and has now been host to many events and VIP visits.
- Over the last 10 years we have seen the PAAMS project come to conclusion, renamed as Sea Viper and it has been fitted to the six Royal Navy Type 45 Destroyers.
- March 2010 saw the signing of a completely new business agreement between MBDA and UK MoD. This Portfolio Management Agreement, with just one contract covering all work placed by our UK Customer, makes MBDA responsible for delivering Complex Weapons to the UK's Armed Forces for the long term provided that we continue to deliver great value for money.
- The financial crisis started to bite all areas of defence in late 2010/2011 and we successfully demonstrated the robustness of our new business agreement coming through this difficult time relatively unscathed.
- In 2014 we recognised 60 years at the Stevenage Site with our Diamond Jubilee celebrations. You will remember our 'Picnic in the Park' event at Shuttleworth which a number of you came along to. We also have the pleasure of a Royal visit to Stevenage from HRH Prince Andrew, the Duke of York to mark the occasion.

This brings us to 2015 so what is happening today in Our Company...

- Dave Armstrong was appointed as UK Managing Director in April 2015 in succession to Steve Wadey. Some of you will remember Dave, he was Rapier FSC Trials Team Leader in the late 80's, he was Deputy Chief Engineer on Storm Shadow in the late 90's and then as Programmes Director managed the successful Meteor programme.
- Today, we have 3500 people working on our sites across the UK. Stevenage remains our largest site with approximately 2200 people working here. Whilst we have always tried to keep an inflow of graduates and apprentices it is only over recent years that we have been making a big recruitment push for experienced people. We are still recruiting hard today to replace people retiring and the additional people we need to cover our vibrant UK and export order book. Do you know that today 1 in every 3 of our employees has been with us for less than 10 years.
- Our sites in the south are in good shape and we are now embarking on a new phase of infrastructure development with a £30m investment in a brand new manufacturing facility at Bolton. This is just a few miles down the road from Lostock and will come on-line in 2016 giving us a production capability for at least the next 30 years.
- The Portfolio Management Agreement with UK MoD which we signed in 2010 has turned around the fortunes of our business in the UK and we are now developing new products and have more in the pipeline. A few examples:
- We are developing a new air defence missile system that will begin replacing Seawolf in 2017 and, in its Land variant also on contract, will replace Rapier in 2019. The common missile at the core of this system is based on the ASRAAM design and will form the basis of the recently announced new buy of ASRAAM. This means we are now developing one missile for the Land, Sea and Air environments.
- We are currently developing a replacement for Sea Skua which will be known as Sea Venom and will equip the Royal Navy's new Wildcat Helicopter. We are doing this development in collaboration with France.
- We have started work on a long range air launched surface attack missile called SPEAR 3 which will give the RAFs Typhoons and F35 Lightning II a world class capability against many different types of target. We expect SPEAR 3 to become our next common missile and we can see it can be used to great effect for not only the RAF but also surface launched for the Army and the Royal Navy.

- Looking a little further into the future.... we are already working on a next generation cruise missile that will replace Storm Shadow in the 2030's, we are looking at a Ballistic Missile Defence solution, working on new battlefield weapons and we even continue to explore the use of directed energy like lasers. Yes, I do see Star Wars like weapons in the future of our Company.

So you can see a lot has happened over the last 25 years, we have a lot going on today and you will be pleased to know that we have a strong future.