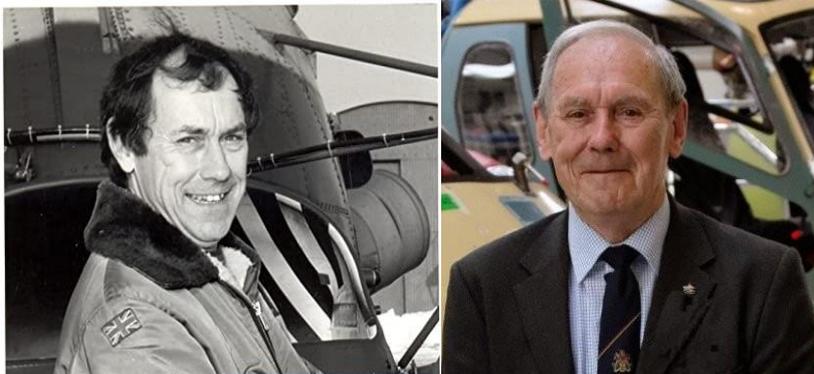




In Memoriam

David Eveleigh Gibbings (1932-2022) MBE CEng FRAeS



We are saddened by the news of David Eveleigh Gibbings passing (1932-2022). All the SFTE-European Chapter members join me in paying respect to one of the most remarkable FTEs, with a long-standing career, a SFTE fellow and recipient of the Kelly Johnson Award.

Not long time ago, during our 2021 SFTE EC Symposium we decided to honour his experience by creating a special moment which we called the Campfire Session. David was the absolute protagonist of this moment and he enlightened us all with his charm and experience.

David was a modern pioneer. The Royal Aeronautical Society helped us to discover and remember details of his outstanding career. He tested the Fireflash air-to-air missile onboard the Meteor aircraft, developed and fly the Rotodyne tip jet. He was also one of the crew for the WG.13 Lynx first flight. David was to lead the early and formative development trials of electric rotor ice protection, Advanced Sea King trials (including experiencing the unplanned demonstration of the effectiveness of its flotation equipment off the coast of Marseilles), and the very successful flight test of the Westland composite main rotor blade for the US Navy SH-3 (aka Sea King) at Patuxent River, under the watchful gaze of NAVAIR.

He was awarded the 'Kelly Johnson' award for outstanding achievement in his field by the Society of Flight Test Engineers in 1993, the first recipient to receive the award outside the US and was later awarded Fellowship of the SFTE in 2011.

David presented the 43rd Cierva Lecture to the Royal Aeronautical Society in 2003, speaking on the topic of the Rotodyne and he was awarded the John J Schnieder Trophy for historical activity by the American Helicopter Society (now the Vertical Flight Society).

In his earlier years David was a keen sportsman, willing to have a go at any outdoor activity that did not involve deliberate swimming. He was a keen mountain climber and caver, an unusual combination of extreme opposites which captures his eclectic approach to sports of all kinds. His robust response to adverse conditions was the stuff of legends, shrugging off hot, cold and wet weather that sent lesser mortals searching for shelter. He was a 'lover of the arts', including all genres of music. He is perhaps best known for his own aviation- oriented paintings, of which over 200 were completed, and very many charcoal vignettes. David was a founding member of the Guild of Aviation Artists, later being granted Honorary Associate Membership of the Guild of Aviation Artists in April 2016.

He was a member of the Royal Aeronautical Society for more than 70 years, starting at Halton as the Secretary of the Branch formed there and he was still engaged with the Yeovil Branch committee right to the day of his passing. In 2021 he received the Society's Long Service award in recognition of his long and meritorious support to local Branches at Halton, White Waltham and Yeovil. Dave was at the forefront of supporting apprentices and younger engineers in all they did; he was a regular invitee to their achievement ceremonies where none paid any attention to the age difference in the room. Having a lifelong interest in the historical achievement of the aeronautical industries of the world it was natural that in retirement he would take on the role of custodian of the Yeovil historic archive reaching back to 1915. His efforts have helped to protect and maintain this material for posterity and in 2014 he was recognised for his contribution to Aviation Heritage and Support to the Defence Industry by the award of the MBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours list. As a member of the Vertical Flight Society he was to contribute to their History Committee with great confidence and value, born of his extensive knowledge of UK and European rotary- wing achievements.

Join me in expressing our condolences, deep sympathy and thoughts to his family at this sad time.

Paul Koks
President SFTE EC