



Heritage Open Day becomes an annual event

Over 300 people braved one of the hottest days of the year to attend Alconbury Weald's Heritage Open Day to find out about the development's fascinating past, from the Bronze Age through to its more recent military past. As well as vintage lawn games and food trucks, attendees were treated to 1940's hits performed by The Umbrella Band, tours of the Avionics Building - the unique Cold War era military bunker - and in-depth talks from experts from the Airfield Research Group (ARG).

The tours around the Avionics Building, which was designed to survive chemical and biological attack, proved popular again this year. Attendees were transported to the bunker in a vintage 1940s Dews coach before being taken around the Grade II listed building, which processed intelligence data collected by the TR-1 reconnaissance aircraft during the Cold War. The building is protected by a hardened concrete shell that keeps the building very cool, which provided a welcome break from the heat of the day.

Among those taking the tour was Kevin Burt and his wife, Theresa. Kevin was an aircraft mechanic for USAF based at RAF Alconbury from 1988 to 1993. He worked mainly night shifts and was part of the team responsible for repairing returning aircraft, so they were ready for their next mission. He lived on the base until 1992, when he married Theresa and they moved to Godmanchester.

Many of the site's historic features and footprints have been designed into the future designs for Alconbury Weald, which will include a specific Cold War heritage area, to remember the unique role the base played in Cold War intelligence.



On returning to the site after 30 years, Kevin said that the Avionics Building *“Felt like it has just stopped in time”, although he remarked at “how quiet the building was” compared with when it was operational; with the machinery on, the airflow system operating and people working. He recalled that some days were very busy, while some were much quieter – especially on windy days when the planes could not fly – and how they played cricket or softball in one of the hangars or on the taxiway to pass the time. He’s looking forward to returning with his son next year, to show him where he worked and share some of his stories from his time at RAF Alconbury.*

