

Ex-Heathrow radar is now museum piece

A GAP in the history of radar has been filled by the CAA with the donation to The Science Museum. It will be sited, as a non-working exhibit, at Wroughton Airfield, Wiltshire.

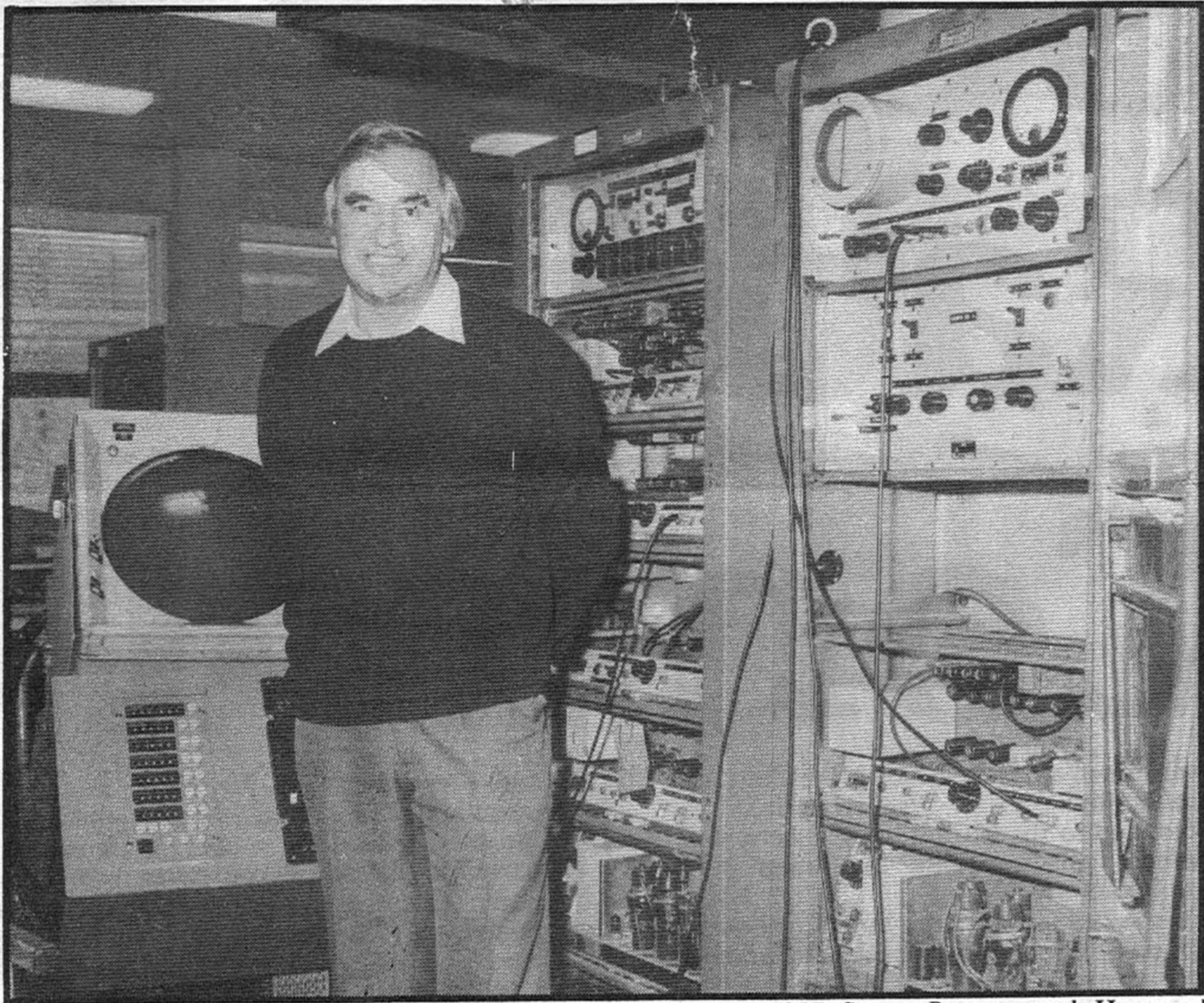
The 10cm ACR6 approach control radar was decommissioned at Heathrow in December, having served the airport for almost 28 years.

Prototype ACR6 radars were installed at Heathrow from 1955 onwards, and early watch logs for the equipment date back to 14 August of that year. The radar donated to the Science Museum went operational in early 1957. In those days, the equipment was very much 'state of the art' and Tels staff were required to go to the radar site every two hours throughout the day and night to carry out monitor checks to ensure that it was still serviceable!

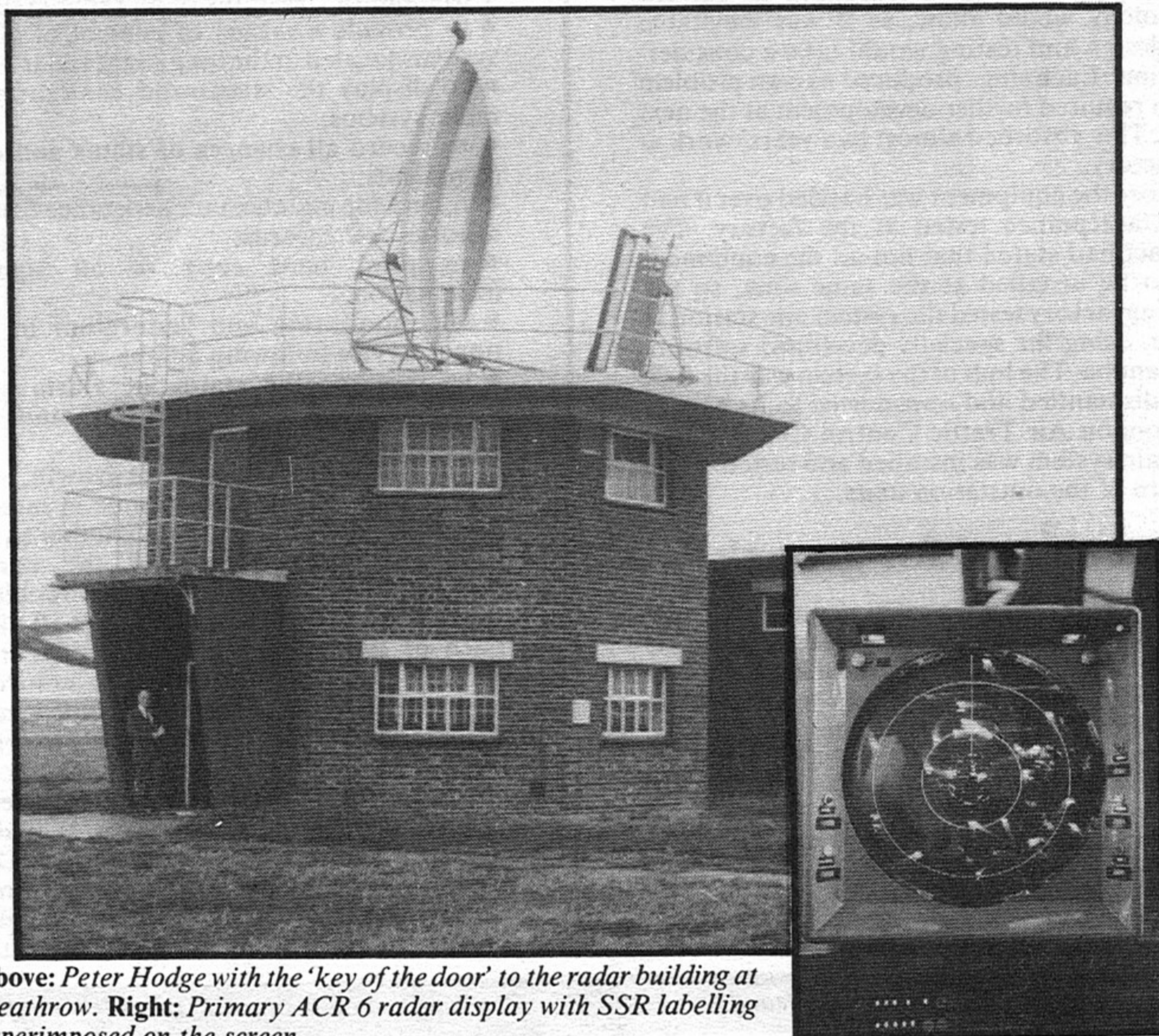
Initially, the equipment followed the improvements and trends in radar development. In 1960, the troublesome mercury delay line was replaced by a quartz line, and in 1961, parametric amplifiers were fitted to improve the noise figure. Since 1961, apart from rewiring of the transmitter modulator, the equipment has remained unchanged, providing a reliable service to the very end.

The ACR6 antenna and turning gear, used with various radars throughout the Authority, is to be refurbished and retained for the Marconi EN4000 replacement radar at Heathrow.

For the technically-minded, the specification for Heathrow's ACR6 was: 10 cm — 2960 MHz actual; PRF — 850 pulses per second; pulse width — 1 micro-second; antenna rotation — 15rpm; peak power — 410 KWatts; single loop, non-staggered MTI; rain clutter elimination.



ATE I Peter Hodge, who has worked on the ACR 6 radar since 1957, first at Bournemouth-Hurn and latterly at Heathrow.



Above: Peter Hodge with the 'key of the door' to the radar building at Heathrow. Right: Primary ACR 6 radar display with SSR labelling superimposed on the screen.

Manes