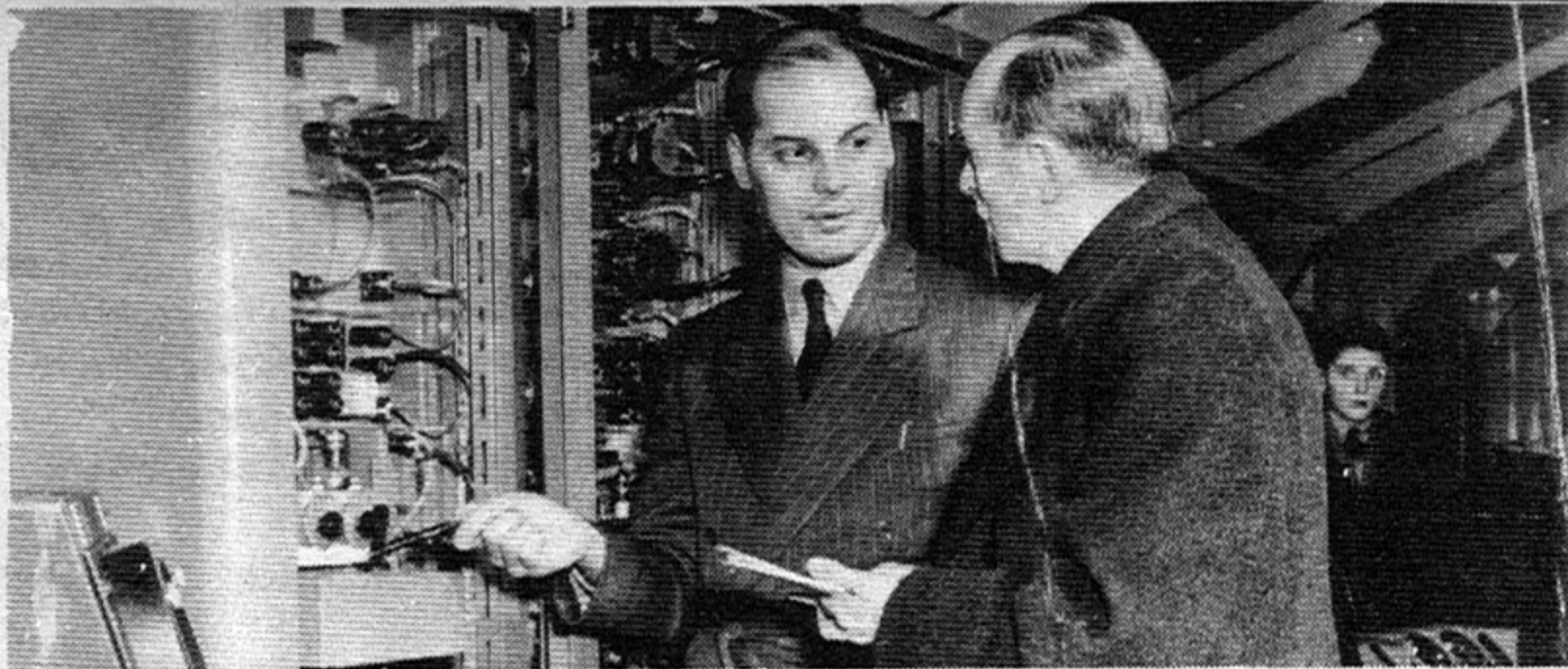


**WHERE ARE
THEY NOW?**

COST-CUT INVENTION

DURING the early years of the Air Traffic Control Evaluation Unit an idea that stemmed from a working model costing just nine shillings saved the unit and the British taxpayer many thousands of pounds. The invention of Signals Officer John Fenwick, the model became an £8,000 synthetic radar trainer which served for 19 years — in fact it almost matched its originator in length of service to the aviation industry. Although John left the Unit in 1972 to move to headquarters, his trainer soldiered on until 1972, three years before he retired. Only one component failure was recorded in the trainer's 19 year life span.

After Tom McWiggan set up the ATCEU at Heathrow in 1947, John Fenwick took over from him as STO in January 1950 and in 1952 John, whose background was electrical engineering and aircrew and radar training in Coastal Command during the war, built his working model from spare materials. A full scale



John Fenwick (left) gives a visiting aviation journalist a briefing on his new simulated radar trainer at Heathrow in January 1953.

prototype followed, costing £8,000.

In collaboration with Bill Maskell, a technical officer at Heathrow, John devised a simulator that fed information normally supplied by aerials and receivers into standard plan position indicator tubes and reproduced them as life-like 'blips' and ground returns. There were three consoles with 12-in tubes and associated computer cabinets.

Initially the trainer was able to handle four aircraft but this was subsequently increased to six and finally, 20. Among the advantages of it was the fact that the eight week training period for six air traffic directors was cut to six weeks. In addition, about 200 hours flying time associated with the course was reduced by a quarter.

Cutting flight time led to substantial savings as the aircraft

used in controller training could not be light single-engined types. The target returns shown as blips on the screen had to approximate the altitudes and speeds attained by the airliners of the day — Constellations, Stratocruisers, Comets and the like. To fly those on training sorties cost at least £500 per hour.

In 1956, John Fenwick was awarded the Royal Aeronautical Society's Silver Medal for that year in recognition of his 'practical achievement leading to advancement in Aeronautics.' A year later he also received £1,000 from the Ministry of Supply under its Awards to Inventors scheme.

After becoming D of Tels F in 1974, John retired from the CAA in 1975. Today he lives in Cornwall and has recently published his first book, a study of the history of the parish of St Sampson.

June 81