

The end of an era. At midnight on January 29, Preston Air Traffic Control Centre, housed at Barton Hall, ceases operations and at one minute past midnight on January 30, when the new Manchester sub-centre takes over, another page in the history of Britain's air traffic control centres will have been turned. For one unique moment both centres will be manned — and then it's "Goodbye Barton Hall".

GOODBYE BARTON HALL — THE END OF AN ERA

BARTON HALL is a country house located in acres of rolling fields and woodlands. Little is known of its history, except that the present building dates from 1786 and was originally "U"-shaped, until modified by the RAF in 1940. A pump in the courtyard (which still requires a new washer) bears the date 1844 and the letters GJ — appropriately enough the initials of the present and final Centre Superintendent, George Jones.

The many staff who have manned the Ops Room since Barton Hall passed into the hands of the Ministry of Civil Aviation on June 24, 1948, may not know that a deep well is located in the centre of the room — it was filled in.

Barton Hall may claim a certain notoriety for instigating the title "Sir Loin". It was James I who, on arrival at the original Barton Hall found it had been burned to the ground, made his way to the nearby Hoghton Tower, where he and his entourage proceeded to bankrupt the owner by eating and drinking all that could be put before them. In this happy state he duly knighted the loin of beef and hence we have Sir Loin!

OCCUPIED

Barton Hall was occupied during World War II by RAF No. 9 Fighter Group. When the Ministry of Civil Aviation inherited the Hall in 1948 a joint civil/military operations room was housed in what later became the Centre Superintendent's office. VHF/RT came in 1950 and the first airways course for staff of Northern Division was completed in early 1951. The present Operations Room was built in the old courtyard of the Hall about this time where it has remained, albeit with a great number of changes.

RECRUITING

The first senior officer in 1948 was D. J. Harrison. At the same time Tony Rushton, now working as a clerical officer at Manchester Airport, was responsible for recruiting the first staff to Barton Hall. Mr Harrison was followed by the first Centre Superintendent, Mr Hornblower, and George Jones's predecessor was Tom Hodgkinson, now Deputy Centre Superintendent, LATCC. Of the present ATC staff at Barton Hall, comprising 47 controllers and 36 assistants, many will continue to work together at the Manchester sub-centre, while others will move to pastures new in very different surroundings.

A nucleus of staff will remain at Barton Hall for some time for the Hall will not finally close its doors until the spring of 1976. The building belongs to the

Authority and will be maintained for any prospective buyers or bidders. Staff of the teleprinter section will remain until the Hall closes, together with a number of the MoD meteorological staff.

On the Tels side, Bill Gibson, TTO1, and Les Mass, TTO11, will remain at Barton Hall for approximately a year, mainly involving themselves in administration work and the clearing out of technical equipment. Radio technician Geoff Robson will also stay on and he will be responsible for fault-finding and maintenance of the

the Hall closes completely, as he has not been offered a CAA contract.

PATCC was also unique in that it was the only ATC centre in the UK with its own clubhouse. The Centre Superintendent must be chairman of the club with an EO as treasurer. George Jones is therefore faced with the sad task of disposing of the bar contents (no lack of volunteers for this chore) as well as the furniture and so on. The club makes a very healthy profit from the bar and its one-armed bandit which enables the committee to arrange regular outings to theatres and concerts. A Christmas party is held each year for the children, who are also taken to a pantomime, and children from a local orphanage are invited to join the group. A Christmas draw is held with over 250 prizes which, in theory, means that each member of staff could win at least one prize.

The success of the club has been due in no small measure to the excellent services of the steward and stewardess, Mr and Mrs G. Salthouse, and the staff and ex-members would wish this tribute to be paid to them. They have been at Barton Hall for the past 17 years.

RETIRING

The present Centre Superintendent will retire at the end of March 1975. His deputy, Peter Perry, first joined the staff of PATCC in 1950 and, following a period at RAF Lindholme, returned to Barton Hall in 1968. He will now transfer to the Manchester sub-centre. Both agreed that the time spent in idyllic surroundings of Barton Hall had been extremely pleasant and that they will miss the friendly atmosphere. But Ethel Dunkerley, who has worked at PATCC for the past three-and-a-half years, summed up the feelings of all the staff leaving Barton Hall. "This has been such a happy place to work," she said. "We are all very sad that the Centre is closing down and feel that there will never be another Barton Hall for us."

by

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multi-carrier stations serving West Drayton and the Manchester sub-centre. The transmitting station is at Whittingham Lane, about a mile from the Hall, and the receiving station is at Wesham, 12 miles away. Reg Carley, TTO11, retires on February 28, 1975, after almost 37 years' service. Reg was an original committee member of the Barton Hall Club.

ADDITION

There is one fairly recent addition to the staff at Barton Hall whose future is causing a little concern — the PATCC cat. When "Cat" (so far un-named) decided to make Barton Hall his permanent home a few months ago he was wild and completely unapproachable. Now, as the result of a little loving kindness by PABX, plenty of food and fresh milk, he lives in state on the front doorstep of the Hall and sleeps in a metal wastepaper basked lined with newspaper. The staff are hoping that someone will offer "Cat" another permanent home before