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Chapter 1

Ken Gatland, 1924–1997: A Biography*

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Abstract

Ken Gatland was a great advocate of space travel and exploration and wrote many popular books on the subject. In 1941 whilst still a teenager he started the Astronautical Development Society (ADS) in London, which became part of the newly reformed British Interplanetary Society (BIS). He was a member of the BIS for over 50 years and served on the Council for 30 of those years. He was an active participant of the International Astronautical Federation (IAF). At the IAF held in London in 1951, he presented his famous paper “Minimum Satellite Vehicles” which he coauthored with Tony Kunesh and A. Dixon. Ken will be remembered for his contribution to space literature, the British Interplanetary Society, and the International Astronautical Federation.

I. Introduction

Ken Gatland (1924–1997) is best known as a popularizer of space travel and a prolific author of books, articles, and newspaper reports on the subject. Ken was born in Richmond, London, on 20 October 1924, but the family soon moved to Tolworth in London. After attending Tolworth Junior and Hollyfield schools,

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he joined the Hawker Aircraft Company (referred to as Hawkers) in Kingston as a trainee draughtsman, probably in 1940, aged 16. He stayed at Hawkers until 1957 when he left to devote his time to full-time writing on space and astronautics. At the end of the 1970s, when public interest in spaceflight was beginning to wane, he returned to Hawkers (by this time BAe) to earn a living and stayed there until he retired in 1989. In retirement, he devoted his time to establishing some sort of memorial to the aircraft industry in Kingston.

Ken had always been interested in spaceflight and astronomy. He was a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society and joined the British Interplanetary Society (BIS) as a Fellow in 1946. Before that, in 1941, he had formed the Astronautical Development Society (ADS) with friends from school and Hawkers. After the war, the ADS combined with the newly reformed BIS, and Ken became a loyal and extremely active member until the end. Although quiet, reserved, and a very private man, Ken became known and respected the world over for his writing on all aspects of space exploration.

In 1952, Ken married Doreen Powles, who also worked at Hawkers from 1948–52. They used to meet on the public transport bus on the way to work and lived for nearly 40 years of marriage in the southwest London area. Doreen had been born in Bangalore, India, the daughter of a mining engineer from Birmingham in England.

II. The Young Ken (1924–1940)

Ken William Gatland was the only son of William James Gatland and Ruth Whitworth. His parents were married at the Holy Trinity Church in Twickenham in July 1921. They both lived in Twickenham at the time and were both employed as “clerks,” so it is likely they met via work. The family soon moved to 17 Southcote Avenue in Tolworth, where Ken lived with his parents until he married in 1952. This was a typical, between-the-wars, three-bedroom, semi-detached house, and the family was probably prosperous middle class. Ken’s father had served in the Royal Naval Air Service and the RAF before joining the Liverpool Victoria Insurance Company. He was by all accounts a very accomplished amateur soccer player gaining one cap playing for England against Ireland. Ruth was, as was normal for those times, a full-time housewife. Being an only child, Ken was probably slightly spoilt and Doreen says that his mother was very possessive, but Ken seems to have had a happy childhood. Ken was a non-smoking teetotaler all his life, unlike his parents “who smoked and were partial to a glass of wine,” again according to Doreen Gatland.



Figure 1–1: Young Ken Gatland, aged 8. Credit: BIS Archives.

Ken went first to Tolworth Junior School followed by, in 1937, Hollyfield School. Both these schools were in Surbiton and less than a mile from Southcote Avenue. One event, of which Ken was very proud according to Doreen Gatland, was being invited to give the address at Hollyfield School’s prize-giving on 19 October 1964. The Headmaster, Mr. D. Humphreys introduced Ken as “one of the school’s most successful old boys.” Also present at the prize-giving was an English teacher, Mr. Lamb, who was at Hollyfield when Ken had attended some 25 years before. Ken was obviously quite happy at school, because in his address he thanked Mr. Lamb and his other teachers in absentia for the “encouragement he received when he was at school and pursuing an interest which then was considered an oddity for a schoolboy.”

Ken was a keen sportsman, probably taking after his father. He was active in athletics, being a very good sprinter and relay runner, both at school and local athletics clubs, according to Tony Kunesch, his schoolboy friend. Ken and Tony used to travel to local athletics meets with the Hawkers Athletic Society. Later Ken became a social tennis player. Other interests of Ken’s outside space travel were modern jazz and, rather surprisingly, Formula 1 motor racing, because Ken never learnt to drive. He said he didn’t see the need.

III. Hawker Drawing Office (1940–1959)

We are not certain when Ken actually started work at Hawkers in Canbury Park Road, Kingston. One biographical note [Ref. 1] states that he joined the Hawker design staff in 1941, after attending the Hawker Aircraft Technical School. However, there was no Hawkers Technical School, and it is probable that he joined Hawkers as an apprentice in 1940, when he would have been 16, and that he went to Kingston Technical College, where Hawkers apprentices were sent. This is supported by the memories of Doreen Gatland, who said Ken joined as an apprentice, or junior draughtsman, in 1940, aged 16, and by the recollections of Tony Kunesch, who thinks that Ken was at Hawkers in May 1940. We do know that he was at Hawkers in July 1941, because that is when he formed the Astronautical Development Society with a work colleague (see later). Ken was living with his parents in Tolworth just 4 miles from work at Canbury Park in Kingston, and his mode of transport to work was either the 406 bus, which still runs along the route, or by bicycle. His friend Tony Kunesch remembers that Ken used to cycle very fast and on one occasion Ken came past him “at a great rate of knots.” Ken’s hat flew off, Tony retrieved it for him, and a chastened Ken cycled off more slowly.



Figure 1–2: Ken (second left) in a handicap sprint race at Hawker’s Sports Field circa 1965. Credit: BIS Archives.

The Hawkers factory at Canbury Park Road had originally been a roller skating rink, but in 1912 this was taken over by Sopwith Aviation that began air-

craft manufacture there. In 1920, Sopwith became Hawkers Aircraft Company and when Ken joined the design office in 1940, Hawkers was part of the Hawker Siddeley Aircraft Group, although it still retained its old name. The main part of the Hawkers Experimental Design Team had moved from Canbury Park to Claremont House near Esher in the spring of 1940 to escape potential German bombing, leaving the Production Drawing Office at Kingston. In actual fact, Kingston received relatively little attention from German bombers. Ken remained at the Kingston premises working on the famous Hawker fighters of WW2—the Hurricane, Tempest, and Typhoon and, in 1944, the whole design office was reunited at Canbury Park. After the war, Ken would have been involved with, for example, the Hawker Hunter and the vertical take-off Hawker Harrier aircraft and its test vehicles such as the Kestrel.



Figure 1–3: The famous Hawker Hurricane aircraft that, with the Supermarine Spitfire, bore the brunt of the Battle of Britain. Credit: BIS Archives.

In 1948, Hawkers bought a factory at Ham, a few miles from Canbury Park, and the company gradually decanted to the new site, a move which was not completed until the early 1960s. The drawing office and design team moved in 1958. Ken continued working in the drawing office at Canbury Park, and in the *New Scientist* on 18 July 1957, his CV was given as:

“Kenneth William Gatland is a design engineer with Hawker Aircraft Ltd. He is currently working on the development of electrical systems for high-performance aircraft. In private life his interests are astronomy [he is a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society] and problems of spaceflight.”



Figure 1-4: Ken, aged 28, with one of his famous hats. According to Doreen, Ken often wore a hat, although not many pictures survive of him wearing one. Credit: BIS Archives.



Figure 1-5: Ken (sixth from left with Sidney Camm behind him on his right) and colleagues in Hawker Drawing Office. Credit: BIS Archives.

IV. Ken Gatland and the Space Societies

In the 1920s and 1930s, a number of amateur rocket societies sprang up around the world, starting with the German Rocket Society (Verein für Raumschiffahrt, or VfR) in 1927 [Ref. 2]. This was quickly followed by other countries, and in 1933 the British Interplanetary Society (BIS) was founded in Liverpool by Phil Cleator. Several smaller British amateur rocket groups appeared in the late 1930s, including the Paisley Rocketeers in Scotland. Another, started by Eric Burgess in 1936 was the Manchester Interplanetary Society (MIS), an offshoot of the Manchester Astronomical Society. This Society attained some notoriety in the spring of 1937 due its firing of homemade rockets [Ref. 3]. Then, in 1938, the MIS split, with Burgess, Cusack, and others moving on to form the Manchester Astronautical Society (MAS)—not to be confused with the earlier Manchester Astronomical Society. The MAS published a regular bulletin and quarterly journal *Spacewards*, starting in the late 1930s.

Both the BIS and the MIS went into hibernation during the Second World War, but MAS continued to meet. Ken had obviously been interested in spaceflight while still at school, but he did not join the BIS before the war, possibly because it was initially based in Liverpool and also because of his age—he was not quite 15 when war broke out. But on 15 July 1941, Ken formed the Astronautical Development Society (ADS) together with H. Pantlin, also a junior draughtsman at Hawkers. They were quickly joined by Ken's school friend, Tony Kunesch, who had just returned from Cornwall, where he had been sent at the outbreak of hostilities. The aim of this society, as laid out in their publicity leaflet (Figure 1–6) was: “for the study of Astronautics and advancement in design of rocket propelled aircraft and machines capable of leaving this earth for the exploration of other planets.”

This Society was small and used to meet at Ken's parents' house in Tolworth. The story, that appears in some of the literature, that the ADS experimented with small, solid fuel rockets and built a launcher, is apocryphal, according to Tony Kunesch. Tony, who was later to collaborate with Ken and Alan Dixon on their historic rocket paper of 1951, remembers vividly an incident during one of the meetings. It was between 4 and 11 October 1944, during an air raid that had been sounded because of air launched V1 missiles. Ken's father went to the door to see what was happening, came rushing back in saying, “There's something rushing through the air. Take cover.” Two seconds later there was a massive explosion from a V1 that had landed just off King Charles Road in Surbiton, less than half a mile away. Tony said it had obviously not functioned properly, as

there was none of the normal sounds and cut out. It just glided in. Two people were killed [Ref. 4].

Astronautical Development Society

AN EXPLANATION OF ITS FORMATION AND ITS AIMS.

On July 15th, 1941, Mr. K. W. Gatland decided to form an organised group, aided by Mr. H. N. Pantlin, for the study of Astronautics and advancement in design of rocket propelled aircraft and machines capable of leaving this earth for the exploration of other planets.

Later it was decided by the majority of members that the group should be called "THE ASTRONAUTICAL DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY," as the words "Astronautical" and "Development" are indicative of the group's ambitions and work. The main principle upon which the Society is based is one of democratic co-operation between all members, since Astronautics is essentially an embodiment of nearly all the branches of science and engineering. Consequently membership is open to any person studying a section of Science, or Engineering, and he or she will have a definite part to play in the Society's construction and growth.

For further details of this modern and fascinating science, apply to the following addresses :—

Astronautics Section :

K. W. GATLAND,
17 Southcote Avenue,
Tolworth,
Surbiton, Surrey.

H. N. PANTLIN,
29 Wynash Gardens,
Carshalton,
Surrey.
Tel. : Wallington 3573

Figure 1-6: Original Publicity Leaflet for the ADS. Credit: BIS Archives.

By the end of 1941, the same year that the ADS formed, Eric Burgess of the MAS had made contact with Ken and the ADS via correspondence in *Flight Magazine*. Ken had had a letter, expounding the virtues of liquid fuels for rockets, published in the 28 August 1941 issue of the magazine, which caused a flurry of correspondence. Following this contact, by early 1942, the MAS and the ADS were collaborating unofficially, and a joint edition of the journal *Spacewards* appeared in October 1942. Burgess visited Ken and the ADS in London twice during 1943, and, the two groups more or less formally combined by the end of 1943 to become the Combined British Astronautical Society (CBAS), with Burgess as President and Gatland as General Secretary. Ken also became editor of

the *CBAS Bulletin* and wrote copiously for *Spacewards*. The CBAS was also never very large with 230 members in 1944, and some of them worked at the RAE Farnborough, where Ken visited to see the V2 rocket under investigation there.

V. The British Interplanetary Society

By 1945, with the end of WW2 in sight, the various British space groups began to look toward what type of society should emerge at the end of hostilities. This story has been told many times [Ref. 5], but of relevance to Ken was the role played by the CBAS and former members of the BIS. It was decided that the CBAS would be subsumed into the BIS, which would remerge from the ashes of war. But it is interesting to note that, although Ken had played a lead role in the CBAS, he was on the periphery of the decisions behind this reformation. One is tempted to think the mild-mannered Ken was railroaded by the overpowering personalities of some of the participants—Arthur C. Clarke and Len Carter, for example, and, indeed, Eric Burgess.

However, Ken joined the “new” BIS as a Fellow, and at the November 1946 AGM, he was nominated for the Council, being described as a “design engineer at Hawkers Aircraft.” On the new reformed Membership list, Ken appeared as Number 5 (Number 1 was Eric Burgess, 2 was Arthur C. Clarke, 3 was Ralph Smith, 4 was Phil Cleator, 6 was Len Carter, 7 was Val Cleaver, and 8 was Harry Ross—all stalwarts of the post-war BIS).

He immediately became active in the running of the BIS, but mainly as a reliable and dependable helper, rather than as a leader. According to colleagues who worked with him at Hawkers, Ken was very meticulous, thorough, and reliable, but would not push himself forward. In 1949 and 1950, Ken worked mainly with Val Cleaver and Arthur C. Clarke, to provide input to an International Space Meeting in Paris in 1950, which was the preliminary to the second International Astronautical Congress (IAC) held in London in September 1951. An immense amount of work went into organizing this Congress, which was extremely successful and provided the template for the annual IACs, which are still running today. It was at this Congress that Ken, together with Tony Kunesch and Alan Dixon, presented the seminal paper, “Minimum Satellite Vehicles.”

He continued to be a devoted servant to the Society until an unfortunate disagreement with Len Carter, Executive Secretary of the BIS, in the early 1980s (see below). Ken remained a member until death but never served on any committees after the fall out.

VI. Ken's Married Life

One turning point in Ken's life came in 1947 with the arrival in England of Doreen Powles from India. Doreen was born in Bangalore, India, the daughter of an English mining engineer from Birmingham, England, and she followed her sister to England after the war. She got work as a typist at Hawkers in 1948, and one day, on a Number 406 bus to work, she met Ken. He had been engaged to a girl, called Daphne, but it must have been love at first sight. Doreen had intended to become a nun, but it appears that Ken was persistent, and after two-and-a-half years of "courting," as they used to say in those days, Doreen and Ken became engaged. Two-and-a-half years later, they were married. Initially, they lived in a small flat at 431A Chertsey Road, Whitton, obtained for them by Ken's father. Then, in early 1960, Ken and Doreen moved to 42 Knightswood Crescent, New Malden. As was the custom in those days, Doreen gave up paid work after marriage to become a housewife and Ken's "typist." Doreen accompanied Ken on most of his trips to the IAC Congresses. One disappointment to Doreen was that they had no children, but as a couple, they were devoted to each other.



Figure 1-7: Ken and Doreen relaxing at the 1965 Congress in Athens.
Credit: BIS Archives.

VII. Early Moves into Writing

It seems that Ken was encouraged in the field of technical writing by Fred Camm (1895–1959), the younger brother of Sydney Camm, who was Ken’s overall boss at Hawkers. Fred was the second of 12 children in the family, with Sydney being the eldest. Sydney had become Chief Designer at Hawkers in the 1920s and is famous for, among others, the Hawker Hurricane, Hunter, and Tempest aircraft, which came to fruition under his leadership. Fred, although joining his brother in making and selling model aircraft in early life, took a different path and moved into publication. Working with the George Newnes Company, Fred Camm was responsible for their “Practical Series” of magazines, sometimes referred to as Camm’s Comics. These included *Practical Mechanics*, *Practical Wireless*, and *Practical Engineering*—well known to engineers of this time. How Ken met Fred is not known; one suspects it would probably have been via Sydney Camm, but an article by Ken appeared in the May 1943 edition of *Newnes Practical Mechanics*, titled “The Reaction Engine—Notes on the Possibilities of This Form of Propulsion for Aircraft of the Future.” There is an interesting comment at the front of this issue, which paints a picture of the time—“Owing to the paper shortage The Cyclist, Practical Motorist and Home Movies are temporarily incorporated.” But by the time Ken joined Hawkers, he had started in the literary field. On 28 August 1941, a letter from Ken discussing the use of liquid fuels in rockets had appeared in *Flight International*. Later, in 1945, several more letters appeared in the *Flight* correspondence column on, among other things, the V2 rocket.

His first article for the BIS was “Development of Rocket Flight,” a review of the Ministry Film shown by the BIS, which appeared in the May 1948 issue of *JBIS*, followed in the July 1948 issue by a review of “Expendable Rockets.” His first real paper, “Rockets in Circular Orbits,” appeared in the March 1949 issue. From then on, Ken was a regular contributor.

Until the early 1950s, Ken’s literary contributions were mainly reviews and articles. But some of these were outstanding and gained worldwide recognition. The most prominent was the paper, “Minimum Satellite Vehicles,” coauthored by Tony Kunesch and Alan Dixon, which was presented at the second International Astronautical Congress in London in 1951, actually in the afternoon session of Friday, 7 September 1951, with Dr. Loesser from Germany in the chair [Ref. 6]. After this paper, Ken was interviewed, along with Fred Durant from the United States, on the BBC’s popular *In Town Tonight* program. Ken had also been actively involved in the organization of this Congress behind the scenes but, as appears to have been the case many times during his membership of the BIS,

does not appear in the credits in the write-up of the Congress. Then, in November 1977, Ken, much to his delight, received a letter from Alexander Satin, one-time Chief Engineer at the Office of Naval Research in Washington, which he copied to Tony Kunesch and Alan Dixon. Satin wrote,

“I have been planning for some time to write to you concerning your excellent article “Minimum Satellite Vehicles”... May I inform you that this article was used by me in 1952 to direct the first United States Space Project at the Office of Naval Research...to an immediate application with available hardware in the US in 1953/54.

...Thanks to your report, I proceeded to a three stage rocket.”

This became Project Orbiter, which saw fruition as the OHR Project Orbiter and was launched as Explorer 1 in January 1958. Praise indeed!

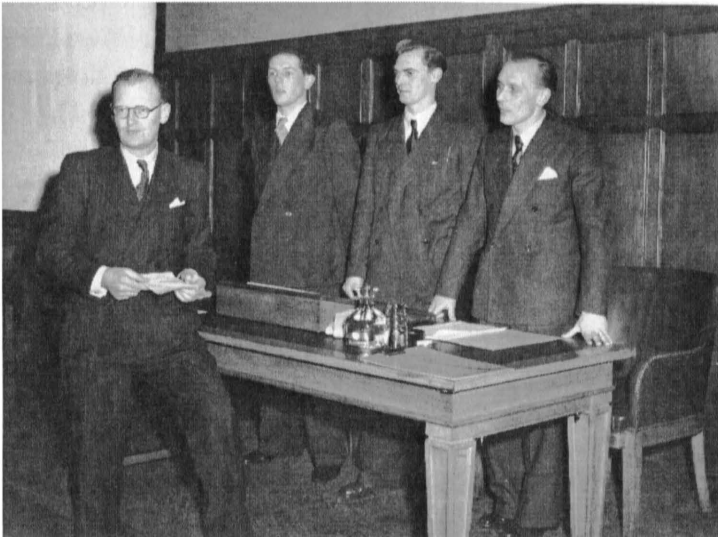


Figure 1–8: The three authors of the “Minimum Satellite Vehicle” paper at Caxton Hall in September 1951 after its presentation. Left to right—Arthur C. Clarke, Tony Kunesch, Alan Dixon, and Ken Gatland. Credit: BIS Archives.

Ken later, in November 1982, in an article in *Spaceflight* on the 30th anniversary of this paper, described himself and Alan Dixon as being junior members of the design team at Hawkers in 1951 and went on to say:

“As far as our studies of “Minimum Satellite Vehicles” were concerned, official interest in Britain was nil.

Our aim in starting these studies in 1948 was precisely to discover the smallest class of vehicle which could result in a satellite. At Hawkers we

were very conscious of the need to minimise structural and equipment weights in high-performance combat aircraft.

I well remember going down to the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough after World War II where a whole galaxy of German aircraft and missiles had been assembled for technical inspection. The V-2 rocket held special fascination and one was immediately struck by the structure with its circular frames, stringers and external skin (and separate tanks for liquid oxygen and ethyl alcohol propellants) which owed much to conventional aircraft construction techniques” [Ref. 7].

In 1952, Ken’s first book, *The Development of the Guided Missile*, was published by Iliffe. It relied heavily on pictures and articles written by his friend, Eric Burgess, who soon after, in 1956, left the United Kingdom for the United States, but the book was very influential and was immediately translated into Russian and published in Moscow. This was quickly followed, in 1953, by *Space Travel*, published by Wingate, written together with his school friend and co-founder of the ADS—Tony Kunesch.

Also in the 1950s, Ken became the technical advisor for the third series of the famous and immensely popular radio series, “Journey into Space.” Written by Charles Chilton, “Journey into Space” first appeared in the spring of 1953 and lasted until 1958. It was an immensely influential program for many young scientists and still can be found on audiotape. Ken also appeared on the Patrick Moore Astronomy show, often with his friend, Les Shepherd. Although the Gatlands did not possess a television in the early 1950s, Ken’s dentist, who had obviously listened to Ken’s views on space travel, took pictures of the show and passed them over.

By the late 1950s, Ken had effectively established himself as an honest pundit on space matters. Apart from his early contributions to the CBAS and BIS publications, Ken was also writing for the *New Scientist Magazine* and publishing book reviews whilst still working at Hawkers.

VIII. Freelance Writing and Activities (1957–1981)

But the time had come for new ventures, and, in 1957, came a major career change. Ken left Hawkers, which by this time was part of the Hawker Siddeley Group, to start a full-time writing career. He had been building up his contacts in the technical press and, as noted above, had started making a mark in the publishing and space advocacy world. As Doreen said, “Ken was born for this work.”

Ken also took over the role of editor of the BIS popular magazine, *Spaceflight*, in 1959, replacing Patrick Moore, and he retained this role, which brought him in a small stipend until 1981. The first issue of *Spaceflight* appeared in Oc-

tober 1956 with articles from, among others, Wilf Neat, Val Cleaver, Phil Cleator, and Ken Gatland. Ken's submission had been a 15-page offering on the US Vanguard rocket. Ken then oversaw the expansion of the magazine from 6 issues a year, in 1961, to 12 issues, in 1966. It is true to say that Ken was instrumental in making the magazine a success. Then, in 1981, he had a falling out with Len Carter, Executive Secretary of the BIS, and resigned from the post.

Also in 1959, he became editor of the astronautics section of the *Aeroplane Magazine*, and as a freelance journalist, wrote for the *Sunday Telegraph* and the *Sunday Telegraph Magazine* as space correspondent. The *Aeroplane* was a Temple Press publication owned by Associated Iliffe Press, but when Iliffe closed the publication and absorbed it into *Flight International* in 1962, Ken moved to work for Iliffe Press. At the time, he was heavily involved in writing the book, *Astronautics in the Sixties*, which was published by Iliffe in 1962. It appears that, in 1964, he left Iliffe to become fully freelance. In November 1965, the *Aeroplane Magazine* held a reunion, "from among those who worked on and for the world's best aviation journal," at Bertorelli Bros restaurant in London for "reminiscences and refreshment." Ken attended.

Ken's scope was eclectic. In 1984, he was involved in writing texts for a set of 50 cards, titled "Race into Space," issued in packs of Brook Bond tea. He had articles published in a wide variety of places. For the *New Scientist*, he regularly produced book reviews and many articles. For example, in 1965, he wrote on the "New Soviet Space Rocket" and, a constant refrain from Ken, "Cooperation in Space." The latter was following Leonov's spacewalk. Later in the 12 October 1972 issue of *New Scientist*, he wrote, "Missing the Boat," a fervent plea for Europe to get its act together and produce a coherent and workable plan for its future in space. In this plea, he echoed the views of Val Cleaver with whom he regularly corresponded. He also regularly espoused the work of the BIS with, for example, an article "Trekking to Barnard's Star," an appreciation of the BIS feasibility study (*New Scientist*, 29 August 1974).

Probably the book for which Ken is most remembered is the *Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Space Technology*, published by Salamander Books in 1981. Ken was the consultant and principal author, but among the other chapter authors were Mitch Sharpe, Bob Parkinson, and Alan Bond. For this publication, Ken was awarded the International Academy of Astronautics Honorary Diploma of 1983 in "recognition of his outstanding work on the History of Astronautics." It also received wide praise in a number of reviews, for example the *New York Times* of 6 October 1981 wrote, "Of the several books on spaceflight in recent years, this is by far the most comprehensive as well as being quite readable."

TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER	DATE
Development of the Guided Missile	KG	Iiffie	1952
Space Travel	+ Tony Kunesch	Wingate	1953
The Inhabited Universe	KG	Wingate	1957
Project Satellite	KG Editor		1958
Space Technology	KG Editor	London	1960
Astronautics in the Sixties	KG	Iiffie	1962
Spaceflight Today	KG	BIS	1963
Spacecraft and Boosters 1 (& 2—1965)	KG	Iiffie	1964
Telecommunications Satellites	KG Edit	Iiffie	1964
Manned Spacecraft	KG	MacMillan	1967
Frontiers of Space	+ Philip Bono		1969
Space	KG	MacDonald	1972
Robot Explorers	KG	MW Books	1972
Exploring Space	KG	Grosset & D	1973
Worlds in Creation	KG	NTC	1974
Frontiers of Knowledge	+ Derek Dempster	TBS	1974
Missiles and Rockets	KG		1975
Young Scientists Book of Spaceflight	KG	Osborne	1976
The Scholastic Funfact Book of Spaceflight	KG	Scholastic	1976
Rockets and Space Travel			1976
Rockets and Space Travel	+ Terry Collins	Silver Burde.	1978
Space Shuttle Handbook	KG	Littlehampton	1979
Osborne Book of the Future: A Trip in Time to the Year 2000 and Beyond	+ David Jefferies	Usborne	1979
Future Cities: World of the Future	+ David Jefferies		1979
Star Travel	+ David Jefferies		1979
Robots: World of the Future	+ David Jefferies	Usborne	1979
The World of Future Space Travel	KG	Usborne	1979
Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Space Technology	KG editor	Salamander	1981
Battle for Space	+ Curtis Peebles	Littlehampton	1883
Exploring Space	KG	Puttnam	1985
House that Jack Built (nursery Rhymes)	KG	World Trea.	1985
BRITAIN IN SPACE (NEVER FINISHED)			1986
Space Diary—A Discoverers Guide	KG	Outlet	1989
Spaceflight	KG	Usborne	1995
Illustrated Diary of Space Exploration	KG	Salamander	1997
All About UFOs (World of the Unknown)	Chapter in book	Tiger Books	1998

Table 1–1: List of books written by Ken Gatland.

But by the end of the 1970s, Ken's financial problems were growing, due to the waning of public excitement of space travel with the completion of the Apollo lunar landings, as he put it in a letter to the BIS, dated 12 February 1981:

"My own problems have grown during the past 18 months, mainly because of the effects of inflation on the publishing industry. I have no income other than that which I earn from freelance journalism, and publishers have been going out of business or withholding payment as long as possible. In the three months before Christmas, my total income amounted to just £286.14.

The problems I faced last year led to a period of anxiety resulting in a blood pressure problem considered serious enough for my doctor to put me on Aldomet and tranquillisers" [Ref. 8].

Ken was ill and on the edge of a nervous breakdown. His first move was to approach the BIS to see if it would be prepared to increase his stipend for his editorship of *Spaceflight*. This approach could not have come at a worse time, because the BIS, in general, and the Executive Secretary, Len Carter, in particular, were going through a stormy period. It appears that one of the part-time employees at the BIS—Mrs. Golovine, wife of a past president—was accusing Carter of doing his own work on the Society's time and asking her to type letters for him. Carter did not deny this, but he said part of the agreement he had made with the BIS upon taking up the post was that he could do some freelance work on the Society's time. This appears to have been a "gentleman's agreement" only, according to Les Shepherd, with nothing in writing. However, the then-president of the BIS, Gordon Thompson, looked into the problem, which resulted in an unseemly row with Carter. It also appears that, after the opening of the BIS Headquarters at Vauxhall in 1979, Thompson and Les Shepherd had taken Ken Gatland out to a local park for a private chat to see if he would be interested in taking over as Executive Secretary from Len Carter. Thankfully, Ken, who would not have been happy with the responsibility, declined. But it seems that word of this approach got back to Carter, just when Ken was asking for more money.

The upshot was that Ken did not get a raise. Carter said the Society could not afford it, and it all came to a head at a Council Meeting on 10 January 1981, although unfortunately, the minutes of this meeting seem to be missing from the BIS records. Very bad feelings resulted between Carter, Thompson, and Ken, who was supported by, among others, Reg Turnhill. Ken resigned from his Committee posts and from editorship of *Spaceflight*, but no recognition of his time as editor of *Spaceflight* appeared in any BIS magazine. Ken was very hurt by the events, after over 35 years serving the Society. There is no doubt that he had been badly treated.

IX. Return to Hawkers and Retirement (1981–1997)

So, in 1981, at the age of 57, because of financial considerations, Ken went back to work at Hawkers, but by this time the name Hawkers had disappeared and he now found himself working for British Aerospace Military Aircraft Division at their Ham factory in Richmond. It appears that his return had been facilitated by John Allen, who would have known Ken through his journalism activities. John Allen was Chief Engineer with the Advanced Projects Group at Hawker Siddeley Aviation in Kingston, from where he retired in 1988.

Ken joined the SABA 25 team, working on a secret design for a Small Agile Battlefield Aircraft, designated the P1233-1 by BAe. A series of designs were produced, mainly based around a simple turbo-prop pusher, but the project never got off the ground, and in his final years Ken moved to Technical Publications Department, where he stayed until he retired in October 1989.

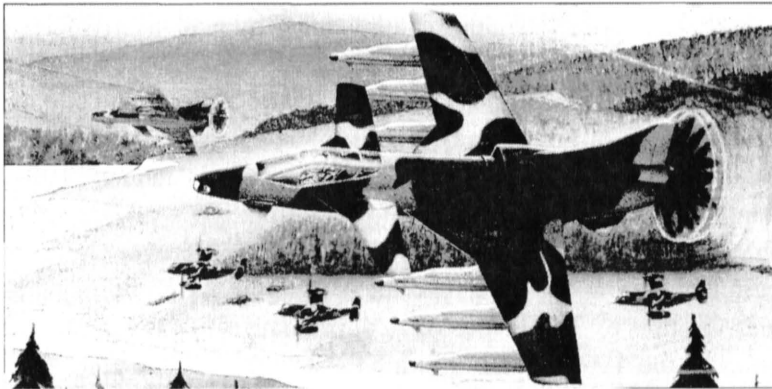


Figure 1–9: Artist’s impression of one of the many paper study versions of the SABA 25. Credit: BIS Archives.

While working at BAe Kingston, Ken did continue writing and, for example, had *A Discoverers Guide: Space Diary* published in 1989, but the output was far lower than at his peak in the 1970s. He likely, in 1985, wrote *The House That Jack Built*, a children’s book of verse, although we have been unable to trace this. There was also evidence of how Ken had been removed “from the loop” at the BIS, because, in February 1992, Ken wrote to Les Shepherd saying “...It was therefore with some interest to discover from the 1992 Council Ballot papers that you are writing a book on BIS history...” Ken had never been informed of this initiative, but he did offer to help.

But even after retirement, Ken could not sit still, and the demise of aircraft industry in the Kingston area in 1992 gave him a catalyst for a new mission.

When Ken left Hawkers for the first time in 1957, the Company (then under the name Hawker Siddeley) was nearing the end of its transfer from Canbury Park in Kingston to a site just up the road at Ham. This move had begun in 1948 and was completed in the early 1960s, when the Canbury site was closed. When Ken left the Company (then British Aerospace) for the second time in 1989, it was planning to move out of Ham, which it did in 1992. Thus ended some 80 years of the aviation industry in Kingston with its proud record of producing, among others, such famous aircraft as the Sopwith Camel of WW1, the Hawker Hurricane of WW2, and the Hawker Hunter and Hawker Harrier of later years.

Ken and many other ex-employees felt that something should be done to acknowledge the legacy of the aircraft industry in Kingston. A letter from Ken, "A Tribute to Noble Breeds of Aircraft," was published in the local paper *The Surrey Comet*, on 6 November 1992, and was followed by another one, published on 18 December 1992, titled "Plaque for Plane Heroes." In it, Ken suggests that, rather than raising a monument to the Kingston aircraft industry, the sites and buildings associated with this industry be marked by plaques giving relevant information. He identified the old roller skating rink in Canbury Road site of the first Sopwith factory, the red-brick Hawkers factory on the island site in Canbury Park Road (now part of Kingston University) and Camm's drawing offices, plus the BAe factory near Ham Common. Following this, in January 1994, a Campaign Committee was formed by five former employees of British Aerospace (Ken Gatland, Bob Marsh, Cliff Bore, John Fozard, and Trevor Gordon) with the aim of commemorating the local aircraft industry. This group appears to have gone under the title of The Plane Makers, probably after the successful British TV program of the 1960s, some of which was filmed at the Ham site at Richmond Road. Meetings were held, generally in the New Inn on Ham Common, to pursue the idea of Heritage Memorial Plaques. Draft text for the proposed plaques was prepared and honed with Ken at the forefront.

However, the wheels of local government turned very slowly and they were still wading through the various committees and blockages in local government at the end of 1996. In the event, this group evolved into the Kingston Aviation Heritage Project, which became a registered charity in 1998. This group has now taken over the crusade, so Ken's last project was not in vain.

In 1995 Ken got a BIS Christmas card congratulating him on being a "Member/Fellow since the rebirth of the BIS 50 years ago."

Ken died on Thursday, 11 December 1997, at the Princess Alice Hospice, in West End Lane, Esher.

X. Conclusions

Ken will be remembered for his contributions to the space literature, the British Interplanetary Society, and the International Astronautical Federation. He was a quiet, methodical, and efficient gentleman. If he had a fault, it was not pushing himself forward enough, but his work was appreciated by all who worked with him, with the exception perhaps of Len Carter at the BIS. Ken's input to the BIS cannot be over emphasized. Many present members of the BIS remember Ken as one of the figures who was a catalyst for their interest in space-flight. Council member David Shayler writes, "During the mid-1970's Ken Gatland encouraged me to join the BIS... Ken was very supportive in my early efforts in publishing articles, with the first appearing in *Spaceflight* in 1977." Alan Bond and David Baker both remember Ken with affection and appreciation. In addition, he served on the Council of the BIS for some 35 years, was a Vice President from 1957–1971 and President from 1974–1976, sat on various Committees, and represented the BIS at outside events, particularly the International Astronautical Congresses.

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