

# The National Physical Laboratory, Faggs Road Bedfont,

'a visit by the Duke of Edinburgh'

Visits by Royalty to this Middlesex Village have been few and far between and it is felt appropriate, therefore, particularly at this time of the Dukes passing, that an account (summary) of his visit to the testing centre in Faggs Road be made.

Of recent times maritime testing requirements were held at Teddington, operating under the guise of the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) where it operated two towing tanks for testing purposes; with time more facilities were required, i.e. additional tanks, etc, therefore a new establishment was built at Feltham.

The Feltham site was officially opened 13<sup>th</sup> October 1959 by His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh; his visit being recorded on film and indeed in local newspapers.



During his visit he was shown the various tanks and water tunnels and certain experiments taking place that day. He was informed of tank sizes, in particularly 'Nr. 3 tank' - which was very large, some 400 metres in length. A feature of the building is that it had an aluminium roof, which we are told proved a good investment as re-painting was not required.



Duke Of Edinburgh Visits Ship Hydrodynamics Laboratory (1959)



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Other features were the two water tunnels, used to study cavitation with propeller models. There was a unique device installed to avoid small air bubbles building up in the circulating water and thereby preventing any obscuring of the view of water in the tunnel. In the Circulating Water Channel water flows past a stationary model enabling approximation experiments to be made.

Also shown was the method of constructing wax ship models and model propellers, the latter require great skill to make and cost about £2,000.



The Duke was shown many more features and experiments, he interjecting, in his normal enquiring way, throughout the visit.

The Institute was privatised by Prime Minister Thatcher in 1983, and in 1985 was merged with UK's British Ship Research and became BMT. The Feltham site was subsequently sold and buildings including the tanks demolished. There is now a Tesco food store on much of the site which is the Duke may have commented as to 'physically testing' but in a very different way!

This view, from Hatton Cemetery, was taken just prior to its demolition.

