



AEROMAIL



News, New Developments and How-To-Do-Its from Aeronaut Automation

Welcome to the first issue of **AEROMAIL**. Yet another newsletter to cram into your already jam-packed day.

We hope you all will find Aeromail useful. There's advice on several technical and maintenance issues, some news about our customers, and ideas which ought to save you time and money.

In this premiere issue we profile Aeronaut and highlight our Program Of Events around the upcoming ACASPA Trade Show in Sydney.

Aeronaut @ ACASPA

With ACASPA being held in Sydney this year, we thought we'd take this chance to have an open day and an operator training day at our premises. This newsletter contains the details...

Introducing the Aeronaut Support Desk

For all your technical enquiries; software or mechanical or general operation. Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.00pm EST.

To help us solve your problems, you'll be put through to one of three departments... Software, mechanical or electrical. Make sure you ask for the right department.

Customers can subscribe for unlimited access or on a casual basis. Contact our office for more information and to register. Also ask about our service contract.



Meet The Aeronaut Team.

We've been in our new Terrey Hills factory for 15 months. Following the best real estate advice, we bought the worst building on the best block... and then spent a few months transforming it into the best.

This is what the area in the picture above looked like before we moved in. Believe it or not, the high ceiling is cheaper to make than a suspended ceiling or a gyprock version.



Apart from having a dedicated showroom, the new building has space for a tech-support area where software, electrical and mechanical support can all be handled.

Our team has grown to fifteen on site, plus a host of software writers, (or is it a gaggle of geeks?) working from various places.

In Melbourne we have Simon Meens our Victorian customer/sales manager. Simon also looks after S.A. W.A, TAS and distributors.

Richard Allen in Sydney manages NSW, QLD and the NT.

We've got three people dedicated to software and hardware support and by now many of you will have met our dedicated and highly skilled service technician, Johnny Wilkins, who has not given up a glamorous football career, but has been doing the rounds making sure every customer is getting all their servicing requirements met.

Scheduled service visits are conducted every six months. Customers are advised of impending visits.

We have agents in England/Europe, Asia, and a new one starting up on the East Coast, USA.



Aeronaut Open Demo Day Wednesday May 31st

To coincide with the 2006 ACASPA trade show in Sydney, we're having an open day at the factory. Here are some reasons why you might want to attend...

You can see a demonstration of automated cutting on many different materials in a casual environment and see if there's anything you could apply to your work. You can even bring along your own materials.

You can have a tour of the factory, see our manufacturing processes, and look at our spares inventory to make sure we have that spare for your 1992 plotter. (If we don't we can make it!)

You can see the latest software developments in design and nesting. Or just come for a catch up and a good coffee.



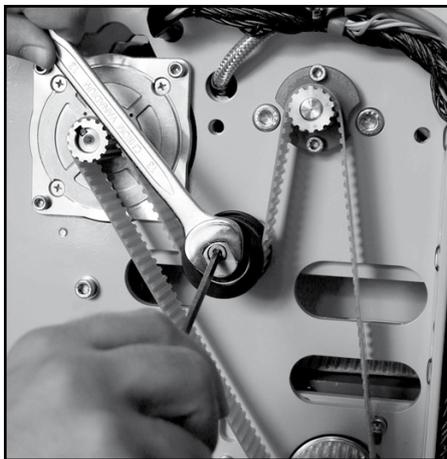
We're looking forward to welcoming visitors to our new premises in Terrey Hills. With the renovations now complete, we have lots of space to demonstrate our latest equipment.

So before heading home, come to our open day where anyone wanting to know more about automated cutting can see the whole process in action.

Light refreshments will be served. So we can get an idea of the numbers likely to attend, please reply on the attached booking form.

Operator Training Seminar Friday May 26th

This one day course is for existing users of our plotter cutters. Catering to all levels, it will cover a lot of ground which your operator may have forgotten or never got to grips with.



On the mechanical side, we'll cover basic maintenance and calibration of the machine. Blade alignment, trouble shooting and gantry squaring and how to get the best life from your table top.

On the machine software side, we'll demonstrate the essentials of correct machine set-up, configuration buffer settings, cutting speeds and software profiles in Tangent and DXPlot.

There will be sessions on Vectorworks, CAD files such as DXF and VSS, Aeroblinds & AeroAwnings and how to get the best out of your software.

The basics will be covered for those who may have taken over from a previous operator and not had training from an Aeronaut technician.

This is a great opportunity for refresher training, or advanced software training for existing operators.

A light lunch will be served. Booking is essential and numbers are limited, so please reply ASAP on the attached booking form.

Rapid Patterning Using Low Cost Digital Cameras

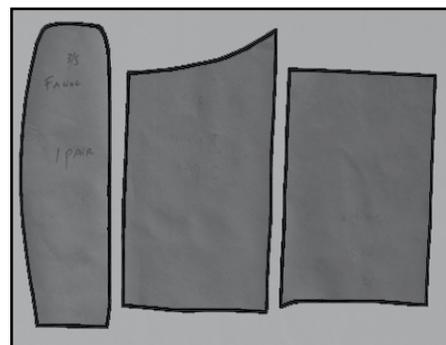
As part of the ACASPA convention, Aeronaut's John Clark is giving a presentation on how to easily and quickly get patterns and templates onto your computer.

This is mainly designed for people who are contemplating automated cutting, but who are overwhelmed by the thought of getting all their paper or wooden patterns into some digital format, and it will be covering many methods of rapid patterning.

There are many reasons why digital patterns are better than solid ones... here's just a few.

Imagine you had a factory fire and lost your patterns. It might take months to recover... or worse. If your patterns are stored electronically, they can be stored at home, or for next to no cost, stored safely on a computer server on the other side of the world, and retrieved at any time.

What if one of your key employees, a cutter or a foreman, resigned... with all the knowledge on your patterning in their little paper book, or in their heads? With digital patterns, once they are right, they can be re-cut again and again without errors.



And if you want to sell your business, you will need to have computerised drawings and procedures of your work for the incoming people.

See the ACASPA timetable for details on this talk.

Technology Health Check.

At Aeronaut we have to keep pace with technology. As such, all of our mainstream software has to be compatible with current operating systems. If your computer is several years old, you may find you cannot run the latest versions of our software.

Apple are no longer supporting OS 9. In fact we've been using OS X so long, that most of us can't remember how to use stand-alone OS 9. Although most OS 9 software will still run in OS X in "Classic" mode, it's days are numbered and it will not run on Intel Macs... see below.

All our plotter users who use OS 9 Macs should update to OS X as soon as possible. The chances are that your computer is at least 5 years old, and may be due to be retired and replaced by a new computer.

Aeronaut can give advice on software updates, and it is important that you do this before any major update to make sure your software runs properly on the new system.

Windows on a Mac.

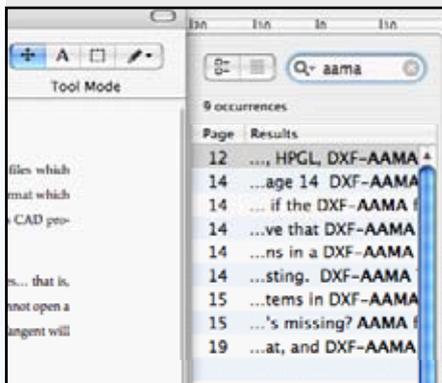
Since the beginning of the year, Intel based Macs have been sold by Apple. Now Apple have released a public beta of a technology called "Boot Camp" which allows you to boot the one computer into an Apple or a Microsoft environment.

Yes, you'll still be able to wreck your Windows partition with viruses and worms! And you won't be getting support from Apple or Aeronaut for the Windows side of your computer. However, it does mean that people who have to run the occasional PC program can have the best of both centuries on the one computer.

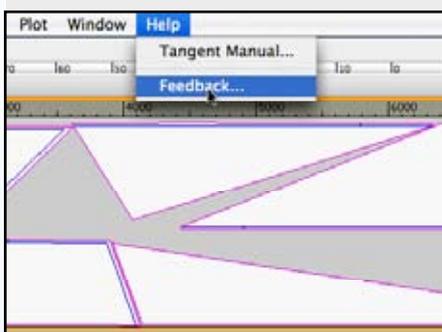
See the Apple web site for details on Boot Camp. www.apple.com/macosx/bootcamp

Tangent Help.

You might not have looked but Tangent has actually got a help menu, and there is a fairly comprehensive searchable manual in PDF form. You can search this file for help on specific issues by typing in the name of the item in the search field.



Here you can see the pages with any reference to AAMA. Click on any line below and Preview will jump directly to that page of the document. If you have an attached printer, you can print the whole document or just specific pages. Since the help file is in pdf form, it can be opened in Preview (on the Mac) or Acrobat reader. You'll find Preview is a lot faster and lighter on its feet.



Tangent has a feedback feature to help with troubleshooting. This is not so you can let us know what a cracking piece of software Tangent is, but so you can email us a full status report on how your version of Tangent is set up.

The Feedback menu will collect your comments, the file you are working on, your plotter setup and preferences etc. and bundle them up all ready to be emailed back to Aeronaut.

Aeronaut Welcomes Bradmill's Input and Fabric Styles.

Bradmill Outdoor Fabrics have supplied us with their awning fabric patterns, and we've entered the data into the Aeroawnings fabric database.



The entire Brella Classic Canvas Collection can be imported into your Aeroawnings program and adds the Bradmill styles to the drop down fabrics menu.

Now available by email or on CD contact us at support@aeronaut.org.



UK customers Base Structures were awarded the contract to replace the Mound Stand canopy at Lords Cricket Ground by The MCC. Commenting on the completion of the work, MCC's Deputy Chief Executive David Batts said: "The Mound Stand has long been one of the iconic buildings at Lord's. We're delighted that it's back to its best. I am equally pleased that, in partnership with our contractors, we have delivered this important project ahead of schedule - and below budget as well."

Base Structures own a Maxis II plotter-cutter which at 6 metres long is surprisingly small for this type of work, but a rigid cutting surface and alignment marks make accurate work possible on even a short cutting table.

Service Contracts.

We now have a service contract available which apart from offering two services per year including travel costs, has added benefits such as free software upgrades, unlimited customer support and discounts on mechanical upgrades and spare parts.

If you are interested in a service contract, please give us a call on 02 9450 0800.

The Aeronaut Help Desk

Yes, we have a help desk! Manned by Sean, Johnny, Carl and James. Almost any question you have on software or your plotter's mechanical and electrical systems can be rapidly answered.

Many of our customers want to solve their own problems, and others only want Aeronaut staff to do all the maintenance on their equipment. Either way is OK with us, but regrettably we cannot provide a full on-line service free. We have to cover the costs of having these experts on staff, ready to assist customers.

We're not going to hit you with a service charge as soon as we pick up the phone, but you should be aware that extended calls on service will be charged for.

To help us help you, it is a really good idea to email us first, describing the problem in plain English and enclosing problem files etc. In many cases this process will actually remind you of the process which caused the problem.

You'd be amazed at how often problems begin after blackouts, lightning strikes, strikes from fork-lift trucks, tools being dropped on the floor, fabric rolls being dropped on the gantry, the plotter being run full speed into the end of the table...

For details and costs of service contracts, please call Aeronaut.

ROI or ROUS?

Having paid for automated cutting, you want to keep your machine working profitably as much of the time as possible.

What that means varies enormously from factory to factory. In many cases the plotter will do the work of more than three people... accurately and reliably 24 hours a day. In other cases the machine does not appear to be much faster than a human...

However, what the machine is often doing is a lot more than the human was doing. The plotter is marking more details on the fabric than before, and the productivity increase is realised in faster and more reliable fabrication rather than plain cutting time.

In most cases, the payoff on an automated plotter is around 1.5 to 2.5 years if you are counting that way. At a recent auction, a 5 year old Aeronaut Maxis II plotter-cutter was sold for more than 50% of its original purchase price.

And so far as we know, every single plotter Aeronaut has ever made since 1992 is working hard somewhere in the world.

With automated cutting, you might think about diversifying into new products and markets. Your machine can cut many types of fabric, rubber, leather, even cardboard so why not take advantage of that?

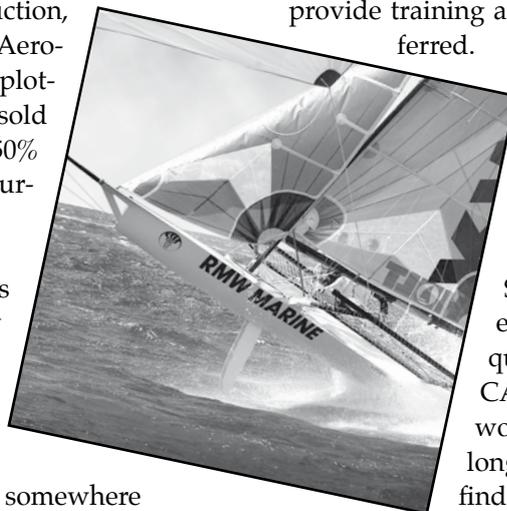
One company who bought an Aeronaut plotter uses it to not only cut sail cloth and carbon fibre, but also to rout plywood panels, so almost all their production is affected by their decision to automate.

Manage your operator.

An Aeronaut plotter-cutter is a relatively simple piece of equipment to operate compared with a CNC lathe and many operators are trained on the job in-house. But we do get a lot of calls from operators who have never had a moments training in maintenance, calibration and alignment. Not surprisingly some are out of their depth when something goes wrong.

This can result in machines being properly set-up with alignments out, blade angles incorrect, speeds too high or low for the file that is to be cut. All result in less than optimal cutting. Why invest in a machine if you don't care how it's run? You need a license to drive a car, and you need training to run a plotter.

To address this problem Aeronaut are running regular operator training days at the factory or we can provide training at your site if preferred.



It is not always obvious who should operate this type of machine. Some companies employ staff with qualifications in CAD and computer work who don't last long because they find the work mundane. However many

factories have found that the guy in the corner counting wing nuts, whose name you can never remember, is a dab hand with computers and spends most weekends coding in C++. Voila! The perfect operator was already in-house.

It is important to check that your machine is routinely calibrated, squared and maintained and it is a good idea to set a maintenance schedule and make sure someone follows it.