Born 21 November 1925, Blenheim, New Zealand
Went to school (Marlborough College) during World War 2, encouraged to do science by his Chemistry teacher. No family background in engineering, but he & his brothers always worked on cars & mechanical things as kids. Started Mechanical Engineering at Canterbury College in 1944. Canterbury was a growing school, with lots of ex-servicemen. Only Auckland & Canterbury taught engineering then.

Many classmates became well known – Alan Titchener, Jack Woodward, Brian Egan, Bob Callander – some taught at Auckland later

Graduated in 1947. Planned to study aeronautics which was only taught at Auckland, by Prof Leech (an Australian). Leech set up Government funded post-graduate scholarships for overseas study.

2nd recipient of scholarship to Cranfield College of Aeronautics in 1948. 1st was Ris Heald. Leech suggested he spend the months before going to Cranfield teaching applied mechanics at Auckland School

Spent 5 months at Ardmore and assisted with the move there

He was 22, and it was 55 years ago, so take his perspective “with a grain of salt”

Les Woods & Clif Stevenson were aeronautics engineers there at the time

Ardmore memories – Leech was a fiery red-haired Australian with great energy. Early 1948 Army lent trucks to move equipment to WW2 hangers at Ardmore. Driven by students, some crashed & some equipment broken. Foundations of some of the labs eg hydraulics weren’t ready in time.

Some aeronautics classes probably taught by Leech. Other students: Harold Denly, Rob Allen, Jimmy Wilkinson

List from the Alumni Association isn’t accurate, contains Canterbury College graduates as well as Auckland ones

Designed a small wind tunnel. Not all staff wanted to be at Ardmore. Leech encouraged student initiative & wide study. He also let them use his service revolver for target practice & allowed him to use the university car to take Ngaire Crosby, Leech’s secretary, to the beach.

Started at Cranfield in Sep 1948. Worked his passage to the UK on the Shaw Savill ship Waipawa going via Cape Horn with a deck cargo of stud rams for Uruguay. Denly worked his passage on the NZ Shipping Co ship Rangitoto.

From then on his association with Ardmore & the Auckland School was through friends from his graduate year
He wasn't involved with Project Seal.

Auckland: Other students thought that the Engineering students were a rough bunch. Ardmore mix of Eng & Teachers Training College worked well. Eng students liked beer, but had to get it from Papakura.

His only experience of the 'tin shed campus' (downtown campus pre Ardmore) was in moving the hydraulic lab equipment to Ardmore. They were 'ghastly labs', the Ardmore labs were much better.

Materials lab at Ardmore was especially good. Ardmore had staff housing on campus.

Student morale was high. Good academic students eg Les Woods, Clif Stevenson (went to Cranfield), & Rob Allen (he thinks did UK postgrad work)

Auckland staff impressions: Didn't get to know many staff in his 6 months teaching 2nd year applied mechanics. There were a lot of expatriate British, slightly disgruntled at being there, and not of great academic standard. Possibly why Leech went to Snowy River. There were staffing problems in the early Ardmore days, but good staff developed -- Titchener, Dalton, Vogel, Segedin, Mowbray

Were you a 'star scholarship student'? Not really, was always leaving soon, taught some aeronautics, Leech may have taught it too, many students continued in aeronautics

Impressions of Cranfield: Incredible place. Specialized in advanced aeronautics in old aerodrome & hangers. Isolated, but top notch research & academic staff, very stimulating. He was 2nd NZ scholarship student (1st was Ris Neald). Great aircraft museum. Alex Young, a prof, got him involved with Swedish Air Board

Spent 2 summers at Stockholm. After Cranfield went to Swedish Aeronautics Labs to work on wind tunnels

1951 returned to NZ to fulfil scholarship provisions by teaching at Canterbury. Spent 4 years there. Met Titchener again. Taught strength of materials, applied mechanics, and aeronautics to final year students (in small classes of about 6).

Students included: Ray Meyer, a Defence Science scholarship, PhD at Manchester, moved to Canada & the National Aeronautical Establishment, moved to NZ in 1969, and went on to be Dean of the School. He is close friends with the Meyer family. Jack Woodward, spent time in Australia & New Guinea, then back to Auckland.

Brian Woods, Cranfield, Royal Aircraft Establishment, applied mechanics at Canterbury. Ian Axford, possibly the brightest, Defence Science Corp, PhD Cambridge, Cornell, Vice Chancellor at Victoria University of Wellington, Director of a Max Planck Institute. Doug Murray, Dean of Engineering at Calgary. Bill Dawson & Geoff Williams both in the US aeronautics industry. Mike Frengley. Dennis Kemp, Cranfield, Chief Engineer for Air NZ.
Alan Titchener had a great impact on the Auckland School from 1951-1986. Ray Meyer put together a memorial paper on his contributions

Richard Flay graduated from Canterbury, did a PhD there with Cliff Stevenson. Was in Canada in the late 70s & 80s working in wind engineering & wind tunnels for the aeronautics & automotive industries. He recruited Flay for 5-6 years. Flay returned to Auckland where he has done really well with twisted flow wind tunnel for sail design, and became Associate Dean for Research

Spent sabbatical at Auckland Feb-July 1977. Was teaching at Carleton University in Ottawa, Ray Meyer organized the sabbatical to teach fluid mechanics and convective heat transfer

Nice interlude. After this left academia and moved to consulting

He had no concerns with the Auckland School, doing well, growing, Chemical & Materials programme set up, both research & graduate work good

Titchener, Graham Davies, Colin Maiden all did graduate work at Ardmore

In 1951 had criticisms of Canterbury Engineering’s performance – remnants of ‘nuts & bolts’ staff from the UK had a stultifying effect, didn’t enjoy his time there in spite of the good Dean, little research work done there, mechanical engineering in particular was suffering

NZ academic standards in Engineering were fairly high. Some exam papers still set overseas

Canterbury Engineering moved to new premises, appointed new staff, and blossomed in the 60s & 70s

Was the Auckland School programme successful, did it develop NZ expertise? The 2 scholarships to Cranfield were good, no other NZ options at the time. Developed good people in the field, but some left NZ. Mike Frengley helicopter design, Geoff Williams with Lockheed, Harold Denly Rolls Royce

Defence Science Corps broader based, encouraged postgrad study up to PhD in a range of scientific disciplines. Many students left NZ, but some returned. Colin Franklin, Michael MacLean & Ian Axford went to Communication Research Centre

Leech wanted to encourage students into graduate studies & research – not necessarily for NZ. His scheme was a good one that helped NZ students

Titchener graduated in mining engineering, went to Canterbury to do mechanical eng, already had a B.Sc. Tramped the South Island back country together. Titchener missed the chance to do graduate work, but Rainbird persuaded him to apply for foreign student summer program at MIT. This made Titchener’s career as he returned to MIT in 1955 to do his PhD.

When the history of the Auckland School was written in 1969, discussed the collection of information with Ray Meyer.

This information, held in Meyer’s office, may be useful to those writing the updated history

Was there a letter/disagreement with Leech? Can’t remember, got on well. Leech wanted him back at Auckland, but Leech had gone to
Australia by then. Leech fell out with the University Council about the move, and had lots of arguments with them

Ardmore move: It was chaotic, but good for the School. Leech was probably fed up all the other options for the school eg Tamaki, Western Springs

Ray Meyer went on to be involved with the development of the Tamaki campus

There was talk of moving the University of Auckland in the 1940s, but great resistance. Ardmore was “the end of the earth”, but a great place. Training College being there was an asset

Students lived in hostels at Ardmore, and there were ‘wild goings on’ (no detail)

Alumni Assoc tried to draw up lists of students, one he got had Canterbury students on it. Probably because they were Univ of NZ then, eg Callander, Woodward, Egan

He missed Canterbury’s centenary 10-12 years ago

Thank you. He hopes it is useful