

On Her Majesty's Service

WASC 601

Car of the future made
of asbestos

Chesnut and Walton
Mercury

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CAR OF THE FUTURE—MADE OF ASBESTOS!

IMPORTANT breakthroughs that could cheapen the cost of car bodies and the production of supersonic jets have been made at Waltham Abbey's Explosives Research and Development Establishment.

Using aluminium alloys and asbestos fibre whiskers the Ministry of Technology centre has made three discoveries that could be a boon to

both motorists and the British Aircraft industry.

The advance that will have the most meaning for the man in the street is the development of a composite material of a plastic type and asbestos which has the strength of mild steel although it is much cheaper.

The material could be used extensively for such everyday items as car bodies and refrigerators.

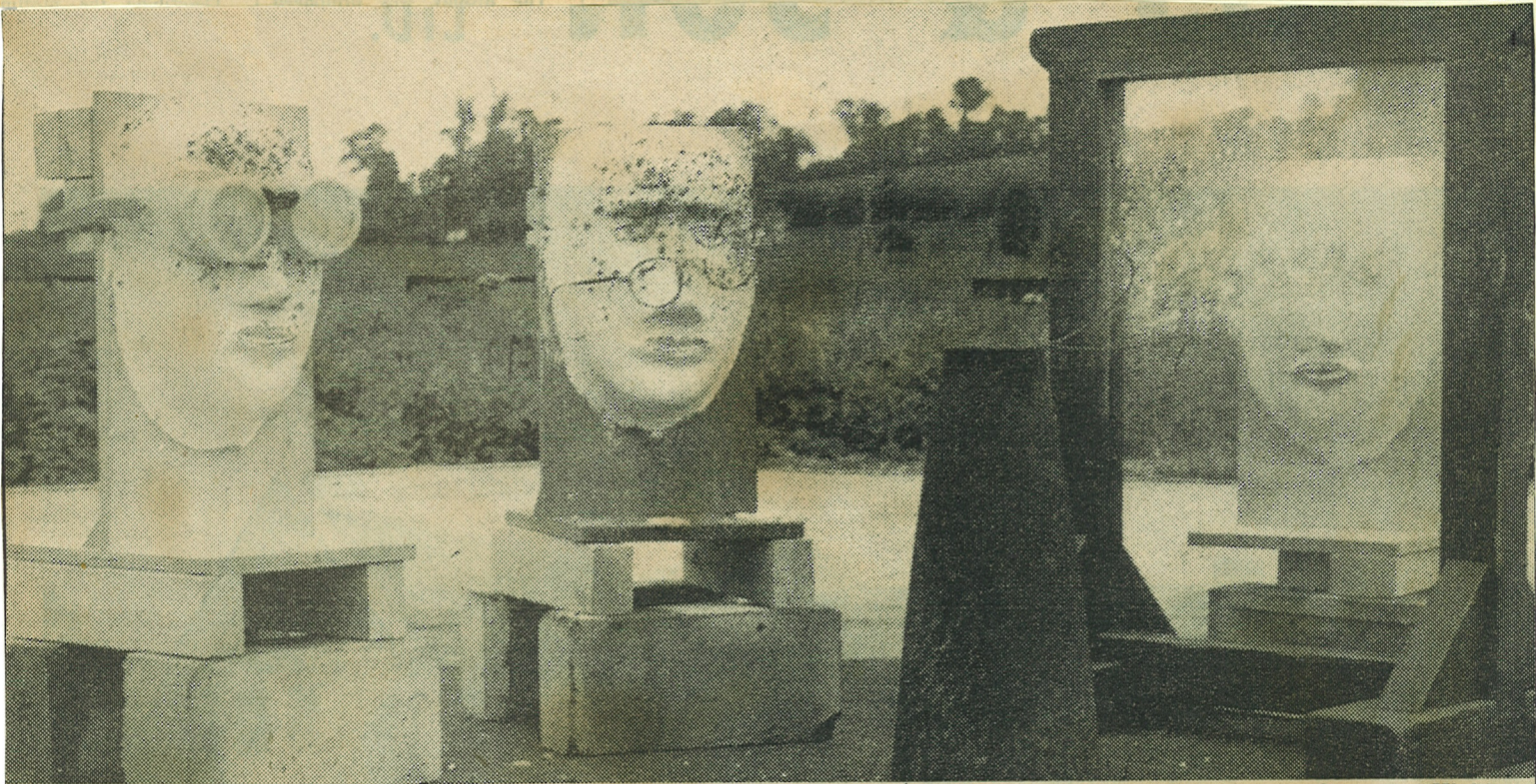
But the breakthrough that has the most significance internationally is the development of a special form of silicone carbide, which, blended with aluminium alloys, produces a material stronger than titanium.

Discovery of the compound, made in the past three months, means a 50 per cent increase in the present strength of the toughest alloy—the

type used to build the Anglo-French Concorde.

The third development is of an asbestos fibre compound which has a strength twice that of high tensile steel. It could be used as an incredibly tough engineering material, also for aircraft.

Dr. R. L. Williams, who has been heading the development of the car body material for the past two years, said this week: "All these discoveries are still at a very early stage and have to be put through exhaustive tests, but all have great possibilities."



SPECIAL precautions were taken at Waltham Abbey's top secret Explosives Research and Development Establishment last week to ensure against security leaks.

Over 500 civil servants involved in defence work were carefully vetted before they were allowed into the establishment—run by the Ministry of Technology—and shown some classified projects.

That was on Wednesday of last week—the first of three days when the establishment

was open to Press, public, and general industry.

A spokesman said: "Only on Wednesday was any work of a classified nature shown although the names of anybody entering the establishment on the other two days were screened."

On Thursday of last week the Press were invited to inspect work for the first time since the establishment was set up in 1945, and on Friday about 600 industrial representatives were invited to inspect the work, also for the first time ever.

When it was formed, E.R.D.E. was solely concerned with liquid and solid propellants and explosives, but in recent years the establishment has extended its work to cover several fields of general industrial interest.

Research

About 30 per cent of research and development effort is absorbed by two materials groups working on the physics, chemistry, and the applications of polymers and the development of fibre-reinforced materials.

There are seven technical branches within E.R.D.E., including the explosives branch, concerned mainly with the development of high explosives.

E.R.D.E. employs about 1,000 people on its two sites—one off Highbridge Street and the other off Sewardstone Road.

● In our picture safety equipment is being tested and shows the damage caused by one-third of an ounce of explosive at normal handling distance. One of the models is wearing a pair of safety goggles, one a pair of ordinary glasses, and the third is protected by a safety glass screen.