

Renowned aerospace correspondent dies

Reginald Turnill reported on troubled Apollo 13 mission

REGINALD Turnill, who has died aged 97, was possibly most famous for his reports as a BBC aerospace correspondent when the Apollo 13 lunar flight in 1970 almost ended in disaster.

On the evening the drama unfolded Mr Turnill had been covering the flight from mission control at Johnson Space Center (JSC) in Houston.

The story goes that he went home to have dinner with his wife but decided to pop back to the base to check all was well.

Problem

But just as Mr Turnill was leaving the JSC for the night, he heard the now famous words "Houston, we have a problem" coming from the space craft.

He later recalled: "I went to my desk and stayed there for the three days."

During those dramatic hours Houston's experts tried to save the crew and craft.

Mr Turnill covered each part of the unfolding story and in doing so firmly established his reputation in broadcast journalism.

Reginald Turnill was born in Dover in 1915 but the family moved to Lon-

don after his father died when he was aged four, although his mother was to marry again.

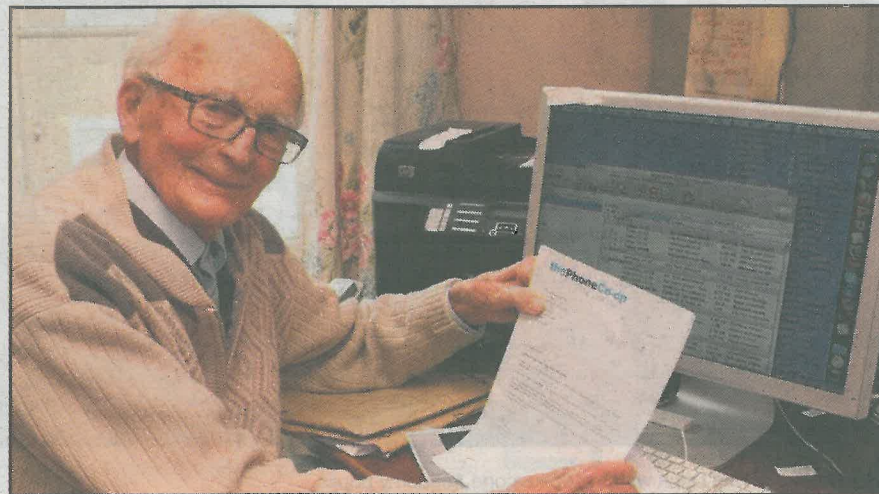
His career in journalism started at the Press Association as a copy-taker and graduated over time to become a reporter for the respected national news agency.

But his move to the BBC as a journalist on the industrial staff in 1956 would ultimately shape his career and establish his reputation, because by 1958 he was aerospace correspondent with the space race already under way.

During the war, which interrupted his career, he had served as a machine-gunner with the Middlesex Regiment, achieving the rank of warrant officer although reportedly determined not to attain a commission.

His time at the BBC also covered the major advances in civil aviation and he was the man on the ground as Concorde launched in March 1969 in France. According to last week's Times newspaper, he was "best pleased" to be retired from the BBC at 60 although he continued working for the corporation as a freelance.

He forged a career as an author



MOURNED: Journalist and broadcaster Reginald Turnill

which included the celebrated M.Joonslugt: The Full Story of Man's Race to the Moon and two "Observers" books as well as editing the prestigious Jane's Spaceflight Directory.

He won the Sir Arthur Clarke Lifetime Achievement Award in 2006.

He spent much of his later years living in Sandgate where he was a well-known and much-liked figure.

He married Margaret in 1938 and she survives him, as do their two sons.

Simon Finlay