



Issue 35 Sep - Oct 2016

Contraails

Newsletter of the Christchurch Aviation Society

CAvSoc

Charles Rolls and the Bournemouth International Aviation Meeting

Stephen Robson gave us a talk about Charles Rolls of Rolls-Royce and the events that led up to his fatal crash at the 1910 Aviation Meeting held at Southbourne. In 1810 Lewis Tregonwell bought some land by the Bourne stream and started what became a thriving community. With the increasing popularity of sea bathing and the arrival of the railway, rapid expansion occurred and by 1910 Bournemouth had a thriving population in excess of 75,000. The Council held a Centenary event themed on the popular French Carnivals of the time and this coincided with the French International Aviation Federation wanting to hold an event in Britain. The flat area leading out to Hengistbury Head was chosen as an airfield and cleared of obstacles such as allotments. Temporary hangars were built to assemble the aircraft which arrived mainly in crates towed by cars although 'Mac' McArdle (a Bournemouth garage owner) caused a stir by flying in from the nearby Flying School at East Boldre. The aviators were attracted by £8,000 of prize money (about £750,000 today) for the competitions and crowds were further entertained by flying displays. The competitions included prizes for the fastest, slowest, and highest each day. Also for a flight to the Needles and back and an alighting competition for which the aviator had to land, switch off his engine and roll on into a circle with a central target.

The Honourable Charles Stewart Rolls could have lived a life of indolent ease but he was an adventurer in speed. Whilst at Cambridge he had gained a half blue in cycling and was known as dirty Rolls after he bought a Peugeot of 3.75 hp and was found regularly with dirty hands whilst working on it.



From 1902 Rolls had been selling cars to the gentry and had competed successfully in the town to town races in France when Britain still had a 20 mph speed limit. He wanted to use a British car and after meeting Henry Royce in 1904 he used Rolls-Royce cars to compete because he knew that winning races would publicise and establish the reputation of the marque and he won the Isle of Man TT in 1906.

Meetings - at Druitt Hall commencing 8pm

Wed 07Sep 2016 - Flying the Vulcan by Phil Nelson

Wed 02Nov - Saunders Roe Princess by Bob Wealthy

When Wilbur Wright visited Le Mans to promote the Wright Flyer in Europe, Rolls was given a short flight of only 4 minutes but it was enough for him to realise that this was his future. In 1909 he asked the Short Brothers, who were established balloon makers, to build a glider on which to learn to fly and in the same year the Wrights gave Shorts a licence to build six Wright Flyers so creating the world's first purpose built aircraft factory. In June 1910 Rolls flew non stop return across the channel which showed a disinterested government that Britain was 'no longer an island'. So Rolls



Rolls waiting to cross the channel

came to Bournemouth in July and won a prize for slowest aircraft around the course and a third prize for the alighting prize mentioned above. On the second day, 12th July, to improve on his 3rd prize and in blustery conditions he tried again but the tail of his Wright Flyer (which had a last minute tail modification), failed at a critical moment and the aircraft plunged to earth from about 80 feet. So died a great pioneer in Charles Rolls at the age of 32.

Wings and Wheels Shuttleworth

There were vintage cars and aircraft aplenty although gusty winds prevented the display of WW1 biplanes until the later afternoon



DHComet racer and DH Chipmunk



Percival Mew Gull overflies Chipmunk,
PBY Catalina flyby ^^
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