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Cross & Cockade International
The First World War Aviation Historical Society

Wind in the Wires

Welcome to the eighth quarterly newsletter from **Cross & Cockade International**, bringing you all that's new and interesting in the world of WW1 aviation.

Cross & Cockade International 2014 Seminar

Our **2014 Seminar** will be held over the weekend of **14th and 15th June 2014** at the **Park Inn Hotel** in the centre of **Bedford**. Guests and partners are (as always) welcome, and there's plenty to do in the town for those "less interested than is normal" in WW1 aviation, and of course the train to Central London takes only 30 minutes. A list of ten speakers includes well-known authors Peter Hart, Norman Franks, Trevor Henshaw and Phil Jarrett, plus Director General of the RAF Museum (and our President) Peter Dye and a fine selection of well-known and respected authorities on our subject - from the UK and elsewhere in Europe.

It's time - book your place **now!** Full details are on our web site <http://bit.ly/1f1OvQ4> or you can email seminar@crossandcockade.com or ring Andy on **+44 1832 720522** if your question is still unanswered, or prefer to do things the traditional way! There's now a link to the Park Inn Hotel web site, where we've negotiated a special rate for seminar attendees. We know times are hard, so we're doing our bit by subsidising this event; maintaining prices at the same level as those charged for the 2012 event in York.



The first issue of the 2014 journal will be leaving the printers in early March, featuring on its cover this beautiful painting by David Ellwood. Apart from the cover, the contents look pretty good too - leading with Colin Owers' article on the Phoenix P.5 Cork, plus two articles on Moranes, another detailing the service career of Geoffrey de Havilland - and a superb number by Canadian stalwart Stewart Taylor on his namesake, Lt MS (Sammy) Taylor of Naval 9. In addition we have an article on the BE6 by Paul Hare; part 17 of Mick Davis' series on UK flying sites - and Paul Leaman's series on German seaplanes reaches LFG.

If you're overseas and subscribed via airmail, you'll probably get yours just a week or so after it leaves the printers. However, if you live outside Europe and subscribe surface mail, I'm afraid you may have a much longer wait - and might want to consider subscribing airmail next year. US and Australia delivery can take up to an extra 14 weeks!

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**WW1 wings recovered from
Connah's Quay**



Lord of the Wings

Probably the biggest WW1 aviation news

At the end of November 2013, it was reported that rare wooden wing sections from a **Handley Page O/400** bomber had been saved after they were discovered propping up the roof of a garage in Connah's Quay in Flintshire.

This Welsh location is near to the former RAF Sealand camp, which was used as a flight training school in 1916. Members of the **Michael Beetham Conservation Centre**, at **RAF Museum Cosford**, were first alerted to the existence of the 25ft wing parts in April 2013. The lower wing sections are now being stored at **RAF Stafford**, which already houses other remnants of an O/400, including panels and struts.

<http://bbc.in/1blVVPp>

<http://bit.ly/1nNZHkM>



Replica Sopwith lands at Brooklands

On 27 November 2013, a replica 1914 Sopwith Tabloid floatplane was presented

at the moment is that Oscar winning director Sir Peter "Lord of the Rings" Jackson is part of an ambitious scheme to bring a collection of First World War fighter planes to **Stow Maries** Aerodrome. The news broke in the *Sunday Times* on 12 January 2014.

Jackson is, of course, chairman of the **14-18 Aviation Trust**, which maintains around forty original and reproduction aircraft at Malborough's **Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre** in New Zealand. It is hoped that some of these aircraft will ultimately form a permanent collection at **Stow Maries**. The Trust has given £5,000 in start-up funding to the UK-based **World War I Aviation Heritage Trust** ("**WAHT**"), which plans to ship a number of planes halfway across the world each year between 2014 and 2018.

In a recent conversation with your correspondent, the Chief Trustee of **WAHT**, Dick Forsythe, explained how **WAHT** would like to raise sufficient funds to buy one plane from each year of the war for the nation. Dick described this as effectively returning to the WW1 tradition of Presentation aircraft being given to the RFC from the Empire and towns and cities across the country. **WAHT**'s funding target for 2014 is £750,000 and investors are being sought.

Check **WAHT**'s ever expanding and

to **Brooklands Museum**. The full-scale aircraft, commissioned by the **Kingston Aviation Heritage Trust**, was built in the Weybridge museum's Balloon Hangar by volunteer Steve Green and a team of craftsmen.

The aircraft, originally flown by Harry Hawker and later Howard Pixton, who won the 1914 Schneider Trophy race in Monaco, was presented by Tommy Sopwith's son in the presence of Pixton's daughter and Hawker's family.

<http://bit.ly/1jQUnzZ>
<http://bit.ly/1gGj9zF>



Pilots of the Caribbean Exhibition

Running until 22 April 2014, the **RAF Museum's** exhibition tells the inspirational stories of the volunteers of African heritage who served in the RAF in two World Wars. The exhibition includes RFC pilot, Sgt William Robinson Clarke (pictured here with his RE8 in 1917). Born

informative website for more details:

<http://bit.ly/1d0ivbl>

<http://bit.ly/1eSbNUR>

<http://bit.ly/1fh2GS8>



“Zeppelin Zapper” Returns to Life

Published on 16 January 2014, the *Yorkshire Post* website had an interesting piece and accompanying video highlighting the work of the **Yorkshire Air Museum** at Elvington.

The “Zeppelin Zapper” of the article's headline is the **Eastchurch Kitten**, a rare First World War aircraft, which is being reproduced by a team of volunteers. The Kitten was only built as a prototype, which was conceived as a lightweight fighter that would tackle the threat posed by Zeppelin raiders.

Designed and built by the Port Victoria Experimental Aircraft Depot on the Isle of Grain, the Kitten's wingspan was only 18 feet, powered by a 35 hp ABC Gnat

in 1895, he came to the UK from Jamaica to enlist in the RFC as an air mechanic. After service in France as a driver with a kite balloon unit, he was accepted for pilot training and eventually flew RE8s with No 4 Squadron.



Vimy Ridge Fly-Past

There was an interesting article posted by the *Canadian Times Colonist* (Victoria BC) on 9 January 2014. It reported on the plans of four pilots to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the battle of Vimy Ridge in April 2017, the battle which marked the coming of age of Canada's military.

J Paul O'Reilly and his friends want to transport their replica **Nieuport 11** fighters to France for a fly-past over **Vimy Ridge** and are looking for funding of \$500,000 to \$1,000,000. Mr O'Reilly hopes that the Canadian government will back this ambitious project.

The planes are all painted in historic markings, to include two with links to

engine and armed with a single Lewis gun.

The Kitten was to be launched from platforms on battleships, cruisers or even torpedo boats. It was to be a disposable, one-operation aircraft, to simply go up, intercept and shoot down the airship, then ditch in the sea. However, its engine was unreliable and, as the threat of airships receded, it was deemed unviable. Using faded and sketchy plans, work on the Eastchurch Kitten began in spring 2011 after the remnants had been in storage for many years.

Volunteers are also working on different projects in an aircraft restoration workshop at the museum, including a First World War SE5a replica biplane.

<http://bit.ly/1fdRzL7>

<http://bit.ly/1eSgX3a>

Canadian pilots, namely 60 Squadron's Alan Duncan Bell-Irving (a Vancouver resident) and Redford Henry "Red" Mulock, a Winnipeg born RNAS ace with No 3 Squadron. Nieuport fans will be pleased to hear that the other planes carry the markings of Albert Ball VC and the Lafayette Escadrille.

<http://bit.ly/1nO4rqJ>

<http://bit.ly/McUAYS>

Talking of Canadians, I would briefly mention an interesting article posted on *NiagaraThisWeek.com* on Christmas Eve. The piece previews an exhibition at the **Jordan Historical Museum**, Ontario, telling the story of the **Beamsville Aerodrome**, a flying training school built by the Royal Flying Corps.

<http://bit.ly/1dNbfE2>



Pulham's Golden Age as an Airship Base

Published on 28 December 2013 in the



German Aviation Posters

If I may, here is another mention for Ian Sumner's **Local and Military History Blog**. To celebrate reaching 5,000 page views, he has posted a wonderful selection of German aviation posters, to include this one produced by Fokker.

<http://bit.ly/1gGnCm2>

Diss Express was a first-class article chronicling the history of **Pulham Air Station**. Also known as No 2 Coastal Airship Station, the 216 acre site was acquired in 1912 by the Admiralty and was used as a base for airships to patrol the North Sea during the First World War.

What fascinated me was the size of the giant airship sheds that must have dominated the local skyline. The two largest sheds, each 800 ft long by 180 ft wide and 130 ft high, had giant sliding doors at each end, which were opened and closed by a steam traction engine and a tank. By the end of the war 3,000 servicemen and women were stationed on site, along with a further 2,000 civilians who came to work daily.

After a notable history, to include a part in R34's trans-Atlantic crossing in 1919, the station finally closed in 1958. The local **Pennoyer Centre**, where photographs and memorabilia from the Air Station are on display, are planning an Airship Festival for 2014.

<http://bit.ly/MAujem>

<http://bit.ly/1maaTJB>

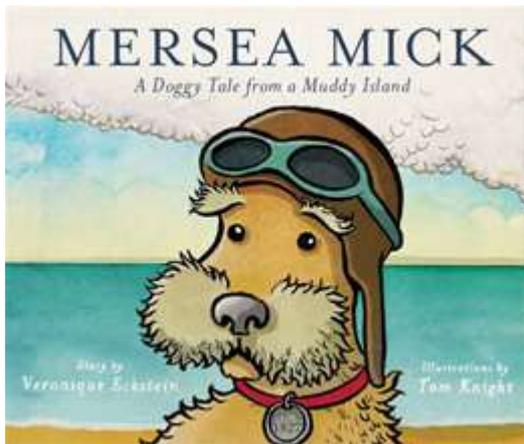


The Rise and Fall of An Aircraft Manufacturer

A nice little article appeared in the *Luton News Herald & Post* on 2 January 2014 concerning **Hewlett & Blondeau**, an aircraft manufacturer based at **Legrave**, Bedfordshire, which produced more than 800 planes and employed up to 700 people.

The company was formed by Hilda Hewlett and Gustav Blondeau who had met in Surrey, where Blondeau had opened his own flying school. In May 1914, they bought a field in Legrave specifically to build Farman aircraft. They named the factory The Omnia Works, after the disused Clapham ice-skating rink that had been their first home.

On the outbreak of war, it was able to meet government orders for aircraft for the expansion of the Royal Flying Corps. However, by 1919, despite a full order book, the firm encountered difficulties and the Air Ministry appointed an official to oversee the factory.



Mersea Island Tales – A Real Shaggy Dog Story

A heartwarming First World War story proved the catalyst for a £10,000 Heritage Lottery Fund grant being obtained by a local Trust. A barn at **Ivy Farm**, in **East Mersea**, has now been transformed into a replica First World War mess area, which will form part of a wider educational project.

In 1988, a sharp-eyed nine-year old boy found a 1lb glass jar sticking out of the cliffs at East Mersea. The jar contained a faded envelope with a letter from a First World War pilot, Second Lieutenant Edgar Roberts, to his faithful fox terrier, Mick. They turned out to be from the dog's gravestone that used to be in the bluebell wood on the cliff.

Local pig farmers Percy and Edgar Roberts signed up at the outbreak of the War and Percy, who joined the army, was killed in the trenches in March 1918.

<http://bit.ly/1dNdlnt>



Not so Fluffy

I enjoyed the article in the *Chichester Observer*, published on 27 January 2014, about the exploits of **Major Charles Hebert Dixon** MC, DFC, who had a distinguished First World War career.

After returning to the UK following the end of the war, he was transferred to Home Establishment and served at RAF Tangmere before it closed in 1919. A new exhibition on Major Dixon, including extracts from his diary, has opened at the **Tangmere Military Aviation Museum**.

Dixon joined No 25 Squadron RFC in October 1915 and, within the squadron, he was nicknamed "Fluffy" because of his rather downy cheeks. He was awarded the Military Cross on in January 1917 and he subsequently became commanding officer of No 6 Reserve Squadron, Catterick. After completing a fighting

Meanwhile, Edgar joined the RFC and took his canine companion with him to his training base.

The story was unearthed by local author, Veronique Eckstein, used the heart-warming tale as the basis of her children's book **Mersea Mick**. Veronique also approached the museum at **Stow Maries Aerodrome** asking to borrow a flag and was, instead, lent a replica Sopwith Pup and a First World War truck!

<http://bit.ly/1kXHR1Q>

<http://bit.ly/1fdUXpt>



Exhibition at Tate Modern - Paul Klee: Making Visible

Your writer likes a bit of culture now and again and made a trip to **Tate Modern** to see the **Paul Klee** exhibition. Klee's highly individual style was influenced by movements in art that included expressionism, cubism, and surrealism.

Of interest to Wind in the Wires readers

instructor course at the Central Flying School, Upavon, he joined No 29 Squadron in November 1917 as commanding officer. In August 1918, Dixon brought down three enemy aircraft while flying a SE5a scout and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in the New Year's Honours list.

<http://bit.ly/1dNfoaZ>

Whilst we are in "**Tangmere**" territory, lets cross to the Isle of Wight where the **Dimbola Museum** and Galleries have been holding an exhibition chronicling how aerial reconnaissance came of age during the First World War. The highlight is original reconnaissance photographs and maps collected in two volumes by **Lt Frank Vans Agnew**.

Agnew served with the Canadian Cavalry and, by 1917, he was a junior tank commander using imagery intelligence. Wounded at Messines, he was awarded a Military Cross for gallantry. During the first Battle of Cambrai in November 1917 he was wounded again and captured.

<http://bit.ly/1jQX5FL>

will be Klee's First World War service, which influenced his works. He was conscripted into the infantry reserves in March 1916 shortly after the death of a friend and fellow artist, Franz Marc at Verdun.

The deaths of so many artists resulted in a policy of preferential treatment and Klee was sent to an air force maintenance company in Oberschleissheim, near Munich. His duties included restoring aircraft camouflage. In 1917, he was transferred to the paymaster's office at a Flying School in Gersthofen, near Augsburg. This allowed him to stay in a small room outside of the barrack and continue painting.

Do you think that this Klee abstract landscape might have been influenced by German lozenge camouflage patterns?



First Blitz Round Up

Evacuees

On Twitter recently, I stumbled across an



Biggles – A Legend Born Under Norfolk Skies

On 19 January 2014, to mark the publication of new editions of some of his classic adventures, by **Random House**, the *Norwich Evening News* posted an excellent article on the origins of Wind in the Wires' favourite **Biggles**.

Looking at author **WE Johns'** First World War career, the article explains how Norfolk was the backdrop to the aeronautical beginnings of his famous creation. Much of "Biggles Learns to Fly" is autobiographical, as it uses the author's earliest flying experiences as an instructor to 25 Training Squadron at Thetford and then at the larger Narborough aerodrome.

Johns' active service above the Western Front was relatively brief, just six weeks as a bomber pilot with 55 Squadron RAF. In September 1918, whilst piloting a DH4 as part of a raid on Germany, Johns was shot down and captured.

interesting project being undertaken by the **Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre**. This department of the University of the West of England, is looking at the possibility of children having been evacuated from London to rural areas, such as Wiltshire, during the First World War.

This would have been an unofficial evacuation of children and families and was probably as a result of the June 1917 Gotha bomber raid that resulted in the deaths of 16 children at Upper North Street School in Poplar. As far as I am aware, this is a unique research project and it will be interesting to see how it develops.

<http://bit.ly/1d368dH>

Antique Roadshow and the SL11 Propeller

In Wind in the Wires 5, I covered the story of the propeller blade and hub which featured on the Antiques Roadshow in March 2013. This was supposedly from one of SL11's propellers. At the time, doubt was expressed as to whether this was an actual relic from the first airship destroyed over Britain by Leefe-Robinson. If the claimed provenance had proved correct the item, which had been converted to a walking-stick stand, would carry a £10,000 valuation.

<http://bit.ly/1ghSxT2>



Hooton Park Hangars

News reaches Wind in the Wires of a crowd funding site that has been launched in an attempt to get some desperately need funds to repair **Hooton Park's** Hangar 1 south bay, after being let down by English Heritage.

Hooton Park in **Ellesmere Port**, Cheshire, was developed as an aerodrome in 1917 from a racecourse set in the grounds of Hooton Hall, which was requisitioned in 1914 for Army training purposes at the beginning of WW1. The first unit stationed at the new aerodrome was a Royal Flying Corps pilot training unit, which remained until disbanded in 1919.

There were three Belfast Truss hangars, built in 1917 using "utility" materials with a projected life of just 5 to 10 years. Some additional buildings were added around

Unfortunately for the owner, a contributor to the Great War Forum has now settled the argument following a review of the markings. The propeller in question was built by the manufacturer AXIAL in Berlin and, whilst this type would have been used for many WW1 German aircraft, it does not include airships.

<http://bit.ly/1jHAIPG>

A Zeppelin Over Yarwell

The **Prebendal Manor** and Tithe Barn Museum at **Nassington**, near **Peterborough**, will be mounting a new exhibition in 2014 to commemorate the participation and sacrifices of the communities in villages in the north of the district in the First World War.

The exhibition will be titled "**A Zeppelin Over Yarwell**", as a nod to the sudden appearance of a Zeppelin over the village. It will be funded with grants from the National Heritage Fund (£3,400) and the Northamptonshire County Council Empowering Councillors and Communities Fund (£500). The organisers hope to build a large replica Zeppelin to hang from the beams of the Tithe Barn.

<http://bit.ly/1eSyrMP>

the WW2 period. Unfortunately, one of the buildings - held up by scaffolding for some years - collapsed at Easter last year.

Can you help? <http://bit.ly/1bMaDjn>
<http://bit.ly/1gW05wR>



Society Meetings

As well as on-line communication using [Twitter](#), [FaceBook](#) and the [Forum](#), we also offer the opportunity to meet like-minded folk face to face. We recognise that's not for everyone - but some of us are old enough to remember the days when a chat over a pint comparing "real" aircraft photos (as opposed to on the iPad) was the norm.

We hold regular meetings in **London** and **York**. Great locations - equally inconvenient for everyone.



Society Seminars

Arrangements for the **2014 Seminar** are complete; so here's another reminder to book your place. It's to be held in Bedford over the weekend of **14/15th June 2014** and we're taking bookings now - with prices subsidised by the society, to keep them down to those charged at York in 2012. Full details, plus a mouth-watering list of speakers are on the web site at:

<http://bit.ly/1f1OvQ4>

... or ring Andy on **+44 1832 720522**.

Howard Pixton: Britain's First Schneider Trophy Winner

Our very own Phil Jarrett will be giving a lecture on **Howard Pixton** at the **Royal Aeronautical Society**, 4 Hamilton Place, London, W1J 7BQ on **14th April 2014**. Entry is free and the talk starts at 18:00, with people foregathering in the foyer.

"In only four years from his first involvement with aviation in 1910, **Cecil Howard Pixton** established himself as a leading British pioneer aviator. He will forever be remembered as the first pilot to

York: we meet at noon, four times a year, in The Ackhorne, a real ale pub on St Martin's Lane, just off Micklegate. Sadly they no longer provide the excellent ham, eggs and chips of previous years, but there's a good sandwich shop nearby and those wishing for a hot lunch tend to use the Brigantes, 100 yards away on Micklegate. Dates for 2014 are 7th June, 16th August and 1st November. We usually get a good spread of folk from all over the North and Midlands - it's well worth the trip! We had 12 enthusiastic attendees for a very convivial meeting on 15th February.

London: as opposed to York's "chat over a pint" format, London does "proper" talks. We meet on an old "Q Ship" - HMS Saxifrage - now going under the alias of HMS President and tied up on the Embankment opposite the Oxo Building. Jeff has been working hard on the schedule for 2014, and has almost got there. Check the web site for updates, but here's the provisional schedule:

23-
May Jeff Jefford

*Pilot Training in the RFC &
RAF 1912 - 1918*

20-Jun Mike Pearce

*Jean Navarre the Sentinel of
Verdun*

win the Schneider Trophy seaplane race for the Great Britain, which he did a century ago, on 20 April 1914, flying a Sopwith Tabloid. As well as describing that event, Philip Jarrett surveys his early flying with Avro, Bristol and Sopwith, and also looks briefly at his First World War career and his subsequent continued involvement in aviation."

25-Jul Norman Franks

*Adventures of a Military
Aviation Historian*

19-Sep Brooklands Museum

Subject TBA

21-Nov Phil Jarrett

*Bring a WW1 Aviation Curio;
plus Xmas Quiz*

Don't forget the next [AGM](#) & Social Day:
starts 11:00 Saturday **26 April 2014** at
the **RAF Museum, Hendon**.

All meetings, including the AGM, are **free
for everyone**.

WIND IN THE WIRES

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If you read your emails in Outlook I apologise for the oddities in the layout. This is unavoidably caused by Microsoft's lack of adherence to any accepted web layout standards ...

Poor soul! I wonder if she's been
hit with a Zeppelin Bomb.



Written by David Marks, edited by Andy Kemp
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Hamilton House, Church St

Wadenhoe

Peterborough, Northamptonshire PE8 5ST

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