



New Forest Aviation Group.

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2016 TALKS

12th February - An Airborne View by Ian Haskell

11th March - AGM followed by 'The Sopwith Bat Boat' by Bob Wealthy,

8th April - 'Flying & Displaying Vintage Aircraft' by Rod Dean

13th May - 'Flying the 747' by Kim Sharman

10th June - TBC

8th July - TBC

August - No meeting

September 9th - TBC

October 14th - TBC

11th November - 'The Cowboy, the Revolutionary and the Novelist - three unsung aviation pioneers' by Graham Spiller

December - No meeting

Our January talk was entitled 'Battle of Britain 1935' by Steve Robson with the story of the political and military situation between WW1 and WW2 He identified 1935 as a key time when important developments occurred that enabled novice fighter pilots with novel aircraft to stop the Luftwaffe gaining the air supremacy needed as a prelude to an invasion.

In WW1 the Zeppelins had roamed our skies with impunity initially. General Smuts, a former Boer general, was tasked with reviewing Britain's aviation capability and response, divided between the RFC and RNAS. He delegated General Ashmore to work out a defence scheme for London and he worked on a report to combine the two air arms into a co-ordinated fighting air force. Ashmore developed the London Air Defence Area which was the forerunner of the Royal Observer Corps. The combined air arms became the Royal Air Force but as soon as

WW1 finished the ten year rule (based on no more wars for ten years) was imposed which decimated military budgets. The RAF fared relatively well as there was a policy to keep the range of aircraft companies alive with small orders and aircraft were being used effectively in the Middle East. As chancellor, Churchill wanted to roll over the ten year rule in 1928 but by 1931 it was realised the cuts had gone deep at a time when Nazi Germany was gaining strength and ignoring the limitations imposed by the Versailles Treaty. 1935 saw the Luftwaffe formally announced and the first flights of the Heinkel 111, Me109 and Stuka.

The Schneider Trophy race of 1931 enabled the rapid development of an engine which was the forerunner of the Merlin thanks to Lady Huston who donated £100,000 towards the aircraft and engine when the government refused to do so. The Hurricane, Spitfire and Merlin engine had all started as private ventures with first flight of the Hurricane in November 1935 and Spitfire a few months after with the Merlin still at a development stage. Meanwhile two scientists; Watson and Wilkins, in February 1935 had started developing what was to become the Chain Home radar network. On its own all it did was to identify aircraft at up to 100 miles but when integrated with the Observer Corps in what was to become known as the Dowding system it enabled our outnumbered forces to react effectively and sparingly without the waste of flying standing patrols.

A key decision in 1935 was to change armament from 4 Vickers guns to 8 Brownings which gave a higher rate of fire albeit still with the puny .303in rifle round. Whilst cannons provided far better fire power they were too few and troublesome to affect the Battle of Britain. Aircraft performance was dramatically improved around 1938 by the

