



## New Forest Aviation Group.

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#### 2017 TALKS

January 13<sup>th</sup> - 'Whittle and the Jet Engine' by Stephen Robson  
February 10<sup>th</sup> - "Flying and Displaying Vintage Jet Aircraft." by Rod Dean  
March 10<sup>th</sup> - Charles Rolls and Britain's First International Aviation Meeting - preceded by AGM  
April 7<sup>th</sup> - Half a Century of Military Flying - Bernie Scott  
May 12<sup>th</sup> - 'Fleet Air Arm Sea Vixen pilot' by Kim Sharman  
June 9<sup>th</sup> - The Wessex Aircraft Industry by Mike Phipp

For our last talk of 2016 the topic was "The Cowboy, the Revolutionary and the Novelist". Graham Spiller, our speaker, is an enthusiast member of Gosport Aviation Society, which aims to increase people's knowledge and awareness of local aviation history within the well-known naval garrison towns of both Portsmouth and Gosport. As well as identifying three pioneer individuals, he introduced us to three airfields – Lee-on-Solent, Portsmouth and the less well-known one of Grange, now the site of HMS Sultan.

After a brief reminder of the early days and evolution of aviation including Wright, Cayley and the science of Bernoulli we were introduced to Franklin Samuel Cowdery, a cowboy in more than one sense of the word. He used the reputation of Buffalo Bill Cody to promote himself as SF Cody in his circus like displays of horse riding ability. He became interested in kite flying and developed a man-carrying kite which could carry a military or naval spotter and which showed an improvement over the balloons then used. The Navy bought four of his kites following a successful demonstration. With involvement at Farnborough he moved on to powered flight but was delayed by the use of his chosen engine in the airship he helped design 'Nulli Secundus'. His aircraft, in similar configuration to the Wright aircraft but using 'tractor' propellers, became the first to fly in England on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1908. Cody became known as 'Colonel' after the King had met him and used that title presuming him to be Buffalo Bill.

In 1909, a proposal for a 'Portsmouth Aero Club' by Patrick Alexander led to Grange airfield situated between Fort Grange and Fort Rowner – now the site of HMS Sultan – which initially saw experiments with gliders. The airfield was used alternately by RFC and RNAS until the RAF was formed and continued in use for flying to as late as 1956 in Navy ownership.

Our revolutionary is Robert Smith Barry AFC, who was given the task of improving training standards following unacceptable losses in pilots during training and when in action against the German air force especially during the Fokker scourge. He structured the flying training and instead of avoiding dangerous flying manoeuvres, he introduced them to his trainees in a supervised manner such that they would be able to know how to handle their aircraft. The aircraft in use was the redoubtable Avro 504 with dual controls and a Smith-Barry invention known as 'The Gosport Tube' which enabled the instructor to speak to the trainee despite the noise and vibration of the aircraft. Lord Trenchard was quoted as saying that Smith-Barry '...was the man who taught the air forces of the world to fly.' Lee on Solent was set up for seaplane training as a satellite of RAF Calshot, initially temporary but made permanent in 1918. The seaplane hangar and slipway was expanded in the mid '30s to provide an airfield although how much it interacted with RAF Gosport is not clear. In May 1939, the base was transferred to the Navy and became HMS Daedalus remaining in various states of use until 29<sup>th</sup> March 1996. Fortunately it is now in use as a general aviation airfield with a supporting industrial area including Britten-Norman, police and coastguard units.

Our last pioneer is the novelist – Nevil Shute Norway known just as Nevil Shute for his books to identify himself from his engineering career. Whilst he started with deHavilland his notable early work was with Vickers working as a stress engineer on the R100 being promoted to Chief Engineer when Barnes Wallis left the project. He wrote more than twenty books, many centred on aviation but encompassing all facets and classes of life. He co-founded Airspeed Ltd, originally set up in York but which moved to Portsmouth Airport in March 1933. Sir Alan Cobham became a director having previously specified the AS4Ferry which Airspeed produced at York. The Airspeed Courier and Envoy, chosen for the Kings Flight raised the profile of the company. In WW2 Shute was involved in the RNVR working on secret weapons. He emigrated to Australia in 1950 being disappointed with post war Britain.