

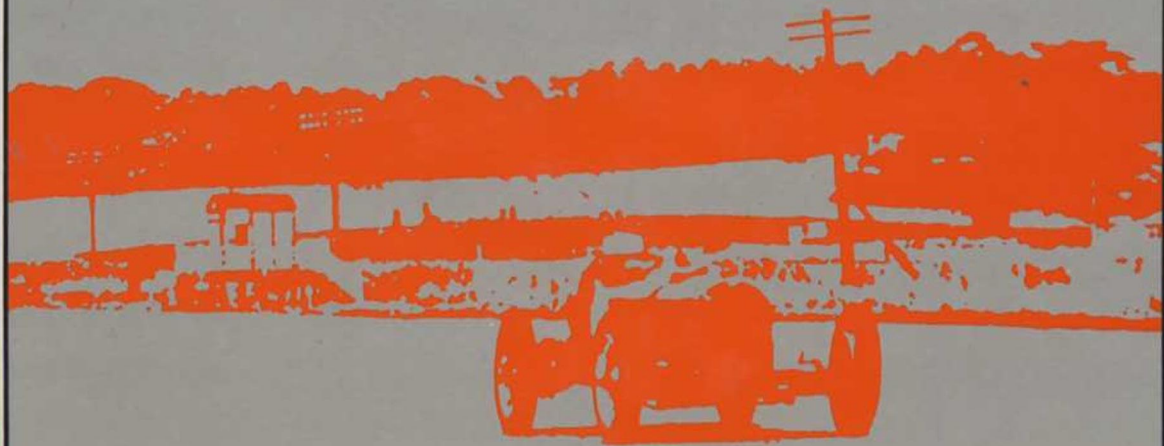
WINGS OVER BROOKLANDS

The Story of the Birthplace of British Aviation



Howard Johnson

with a Foreword by
SIR THOMAS SOPWITH



Foreword

Wings Over Brooklands is a splendid title for a review of some of the aeronautical activities that went on there between 1907, when they began, and the end of the VC 10 production programme in 1970 when flying from Brooklands virtually ended.

Howard Johnson's book has revived many memories of the place. The early days before the First World War were very challenging. It was a struggle to get off the ground and, as the author has said, we were greatly influenced by the weather. The engines and controls of our early aircraft were experimental to say the least; sometimes we were over-controlled and sometimes we had insufficient control and never did we have excess power. The spirit of competitive comradeship, the colourful characters, the suspicion that we were starting something new, the knowledge that we were getting better and better at flying and the attractive features of the place always made visits to Brooklands very agreeable. Those of us who were among the first to get off the ground normally had to teach ourselves because then there were very few two-seater aircraft. Some found the process reasonably simple and others just could not get the hang of it. I remember one fellow who, although he could take

off, always crashed on landing, usually breaking an arm, a leg or part of a limb. In fact, when the poor fellow eventually died he only had one of everything left.

There were two wings I would love to have seen over Brooklands. Harry Hawker and his navigator Mackenzie-Grieve took off from Newfoundland in our aircraft the 'Atlantic' on May 18th, 1919. Theirs was the first attempt to fly the Atlantic non-stop. Their flight plan was direct to Brooklands. Halfway across the ocean the engine overheated and before all the coolant boiled away Hawker landed in the sea close to a ship which eventually brought him and his colleague safely home. How wonderful it would have been if their wings had arrived over Brooklands on May 19th when so many were there to welcome them.

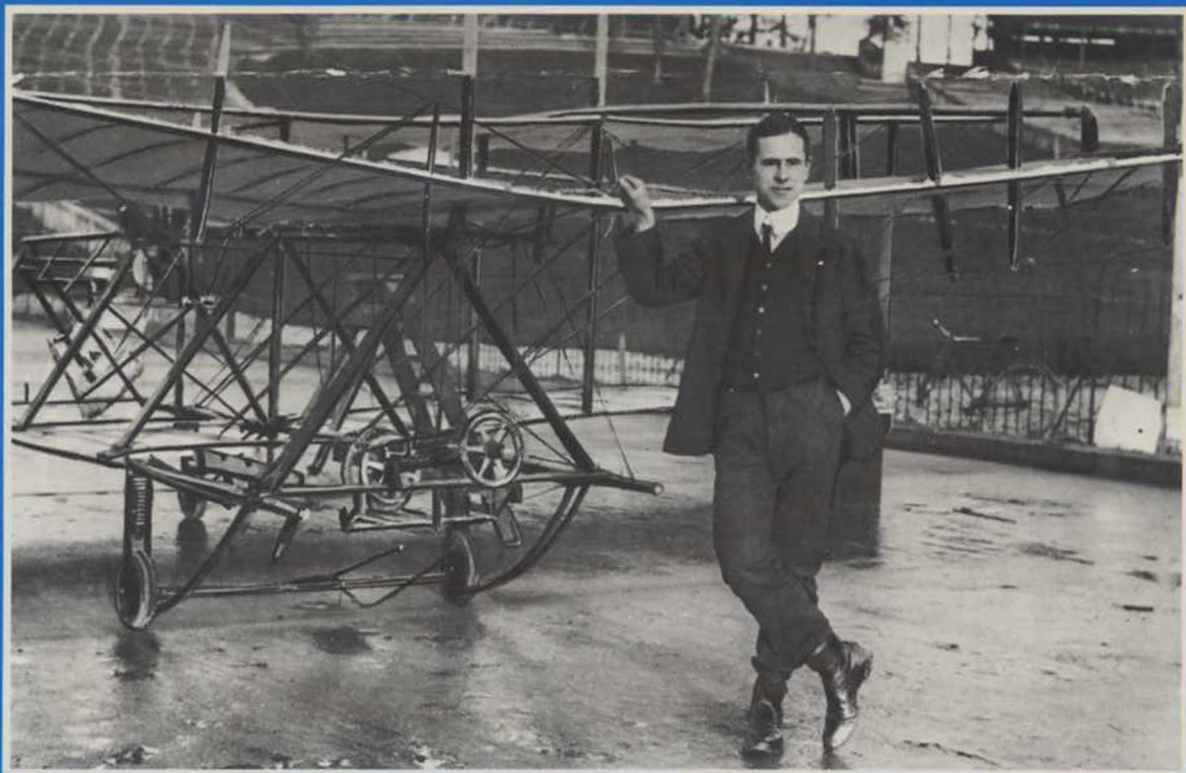
By the time Vickers took over the aerodrome, Hawkers had moved to Langley, near Slough. We were not therefore privy to all that went on at Brooklands during the second half of the last war and the years up to its closure as an aerodrome.

I congratulate Howard Johnson on producing this aerial history.

Sir Thomas Sopwith, CBE FRAeS
Hampshire, 1981

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Above (Syndication International): Soon after A.V. Roe arrived at Brooklands in 1907 he posed for this picture with what he described as the first man-lifting machine built in England which left the ground. The specifications of the Roe Biplane were: *length* 23 feet *wingspan* 30 feet *weight* 350 lb. *power* 9 h.p. JAP (later fitted with 24 h.p. Antoinette) *speed* 38 m.p.h.

Below (British Aerospace): A British Concorde in flight; major parts of Concorde were built by BAC at Brooklands. The first prototype was flown in 1969. The specifications of Concorde are: *length* 203 feet *wingspan* 84 feet 10 inches *weight* 389,000 lb. (max. take-off weight) *power* 4 Rolls Royce/SMECMA Olympus 593 Mk 602 turbojets *speed* 1,300 m.p.h.

