

Flt Lt Geoffrey Richard Henry Talbot

Barry O'Brien – Dover Tales

On Thursday June 29th, 1916, a Nieuport biplane, Type 10, No. 3869, took off from the airfield at RNAS Guston*, located adjacent to Fort Burgoyne, bound for Dunkerque, France, piloted by Flt Lt Geoffrey Richard Henry Talbot, who was accompanied by Air Mechanic 1st Class Abraham Alf Hampson, Service Number F/10086.



Flt Lt Geoffrey Richard Henry Talbot

Descended from the lineage of the Earls of Shrewsbury, Talbot's family name was actually Chetwynd-Talbot, his cousin, the 20th Earl, being the co-founder of the Clément-Talbot motor vehicle manufacturer, later known as Sunbeam-Talbot.

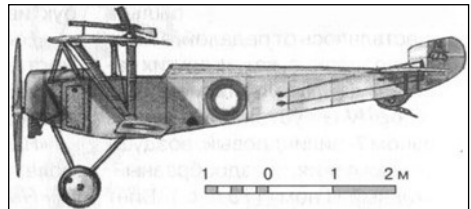
Educated at Eton, Talbot initially saw Military Service with the Eton College Volunteer Rifles before serving with the Indian Army in the East Indian Railway Regiment. Obtaining his "Wings" in 1915 he then served variously within the Royal Naval Air Service as a Flight Sub-Lieutenant before achieving the rank of Flight Lieutenant in April 1916.

Writing to his Uncle Reggie [Major General the Honourable Sir Reginald Arthur James Talbot KCB CB, Commander of the Army of Occupation in Egypt and then Governor of Victoria, Australia] on April 2nd, 1916, Talbot informed him: "You will be glad to know I am now a Flight Lieut. It was in the paper this morning... I had another smash yesterday and turned upside down so I am feeling rather as if I had been rolled down a hill in a barrel today! It was my fault and not the machine's on this occasion as I

bounced when landing and she turned right over." It is recorded that "Geoffrey had rapidly become 'an expert and exceptionally enterprising and steady pilot' [and] had made many flights to and from France."

Sadly, however, less than three months later Talbot was not to have such a lucky escape. *The Morning Post* newspaper, reporting that

later incident, wrote that, having taken off from RNAS Guston, "The aeroplane was caught by a gust of wind, side-slipped, and was wrecked." In a letter to Talbot's family sometime later, Mr A.R. George told of his having witnessed the incident first hand "Between five and six thousand of us (R.G.A. recruits) were drilling on the parade ground at Fort Burgoyne, and you can imagine we were closely packed in, when an aeroplane rose from behind the fort and suddenly swooped down directly over the heads of the men drilling, so closely in fact that many fell on their faces to avoid being hit by the propellers, but the pilot in order to avoid what would have been a terrible catastrophe swerved sharply to the left, and the machine fell into a sunken road near the fort. There is no doubt that the machine would have



Nieuport biplane, Type 10

landed in the thick of the men with terrible results but with safety to the two men in it, and it was freely admitted by all who witnessed it that the pilot lost his life in a most gallant attempt to avoid crashing amongst the dense mass of men." Mr George concluded "I heard it said by the airmen there that air currents around Fort Burgoyne were very bad and this was probably the cause of the accident", while the Coroner's Inquest was advised "nothing was wrong with the aircraft."

Both Flt Lt Talbot (aged 28) and Air Mechanic Hampson (aged 24) were unconscious when help reached them. Although Talbot died from multiple injuries whilst being lifted into the ambulance, Hampson was taken to the Military Hospital, Western Heights, Dover, where he died from multiple injuries sustained in the crash the following day, June 30th, 1916. A motor fitter by trade

according to the 1911 census Abraham Hampson had joined the Royal Naval Air Service on December 7th, 1915. He was given the service number F10086 and the rank of Air Mechanic 1st Class.

Abraham Hampson is buried in Philips Park Cemetery, Miles Platting, Manchester, Lancashire. Geoffrey Talbot was interred at St Peter and St Paul's Church, Little Gaddesden, Hertfordshire, the register entry was signed by his uncle the Revd. F. H. Hodgson.

**Some records show the location of the plane's take off as HMS President II. This was the accounting base for the RNAS. Someone listed at President II could also be on a ship or boat [or RNAS Camp] too small for its own paymaster.*

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MEMBERSHIP NEWS **Ann Burke**

All Change

Firstly, I must thank Sheila Cope for her years of service as Membership Secretary, she continues to be an invaluable help to me in my new role. Sheila grew up in Dover so knows a great many people and her knowledge is so good with 'who's who'. Happy retirement my friend and thank you.

We have had quite a few new members since the last newsletter. They are Mr & Mrs Crowther, from Canterbury, Mr Crowther was our speaker at our April meeting, he spoke about Maison Dieu and the works going on there. Mr L J Oliver, Dover, Mr Oliver's relative was one of Dover's Forgotten Commandoes that Phil Eyden wrote about in his book that was televised. Mr C Valdus, from Rainham, Mr

Valdus is involved with Fort Burgoyne and gives talks on the subject. Mrs M Formaggi, Dover, Mrs Formaggi is interested in writing for the Newsletter. And finally, Mr R Edwards, Dover and Mr P Dawkins. We number 496 now, very close to that magical 500 member target.

We have had several renewals lately. If you want to renew by bank transfer the details are, The Dover Society, sort code 20-02-62 and the account number is 80864803. Cash and cheques are still very welcome, my address is in the front of the newsletter if you wish to renew by post or in person.

I want to thank you all for making me so very welcome, despite my Yorkshire accent!