

Historical Lecture

Free to Attend

## Charlie Rolls – Pioneer Aviator

Gordon Bruce MA FRAeS

Tuesday 13 July 2010

Charles Stewart Rolls (1877 - 1910) had a brilliant career in aviation.

He made his first balloon ascent in 1898 and, in 1901, he was a founder of The (Royal)\* Aero Club. He also joined The (Royal)\* Aeronautical Society in the same year. The lecture traces his ballooning years but concentrates on his connection with the Wright Brothers. He owned (amongst other aircraft) the first Wright Flyer built by Short Brothers. He was awarded the second pilot license issued by The (Royal)\* Aero Club and his most public achievement was his two-way crossing of the channel in June 1910.

The lecture traces the causes of Charles S Rolls' fatal crash at Bournemouth on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1910 flying a modified French built Wright flyer.

As a patriot Charles S Rolls advocated aviation for national defence and, as an industrialist, he was beginning to distance himself from the motor car so that he might enter the new aircraft industry on the ground floor. He died with great promise unfulfilled.

The lecture includes contemporary newsreels and images from Rolls' own archive.

\*(The 'Royal' in the text have been placed in brackets because neither body then held a Royal title)

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Gordon Bruce was educated at Newcastle upon Tyne and later studied at Cambridge where he read History and Law. After his MA, he worked at Bristol Aircraft Limited between 1956 and 1959.

Between 1959 and 1979 he was with Short Brothers at Belfast and for most of that time was either Assistant Secretary or Secretary. He was also Secretary of the government owned holding company S.B (Realisations) Ltd. In 1979 he joined Marshall of Cambridge as Secretary. He retired in 1993.

Since retiring, Gordon has made a study of the early years of the United Kingdom's aviation history and particularly the Short Brothers, Charles S Rolls, and their relationship with the Wright Brothers. The lecturer also became the author of the aviation biography of Charles S Rolls for the Rolls-Royce Heritage Trust.

Gordon has given a series of lectures to the Society's Historical Group, most recently (February 2009) on Short Brothers before and after 1909. He was elected a Fellow of the Society in 2004.

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**This Lecture has been organised by the Historical Committee and the Royal Aeronautical Society. The Lecture will take place at: No.4 Hamilton Place, London W1J 7BQ. Commencing at 18:00 hrs, refreshments will be served from 17:30 hrs.**



LECTURE

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All Visitors Welcome

RSVP is appreciated:  
Conference & Events Department  
Royal Aeronautical Society  
No.4 Hamilton Place  
London W1J 7BQ, UK  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7670 4345  
Fax: +44 (0)20 7670 4349  
Email: [conference@aerosociety.com](mailto:conference@aerosociety.com)  
[www.aerosociety.com/conference](http://www.aerosociety.com/conference)