



## Local History Collection

### 16 - The History of Fifield Airfield - Part 1

(known as Maidenhead Aerodrome)

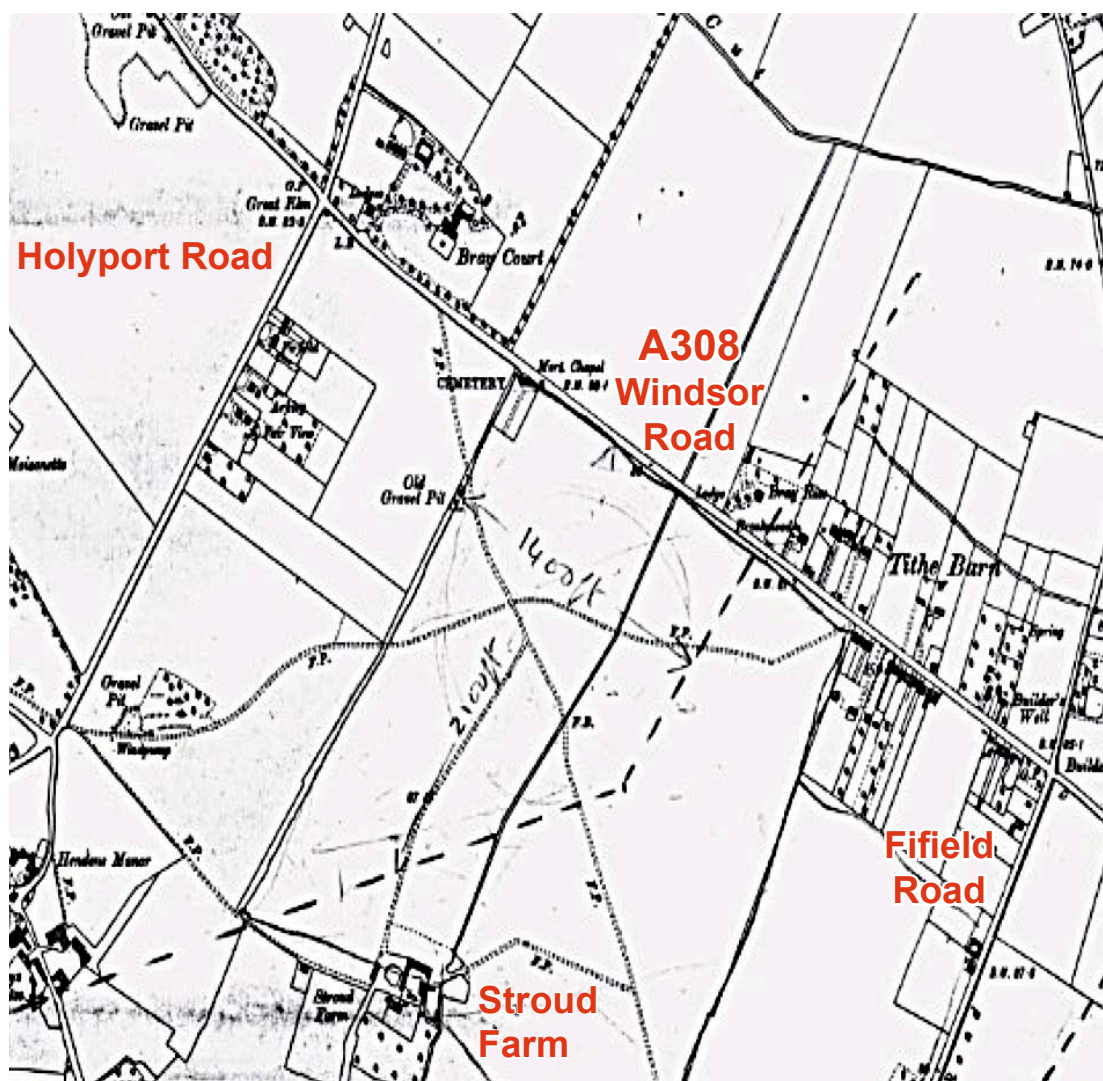
October 2022

Researched & written by Sarah Grace

With thanks to Richard Poad and the Maidenhead Heritage Centre for photos and information

A chance meeting with two locals led me to investigate the Fifield Airfield. Both locals had read my 'historical' articles in the OGAFCFA magazine and asked 'what about the Fifield Airfield history as a topic?' This led me to investigate further as I had no prior knowledge of its existence. I was informed that it had been located 'somewhere in the fields behind the cottages in Coningsby Lane'.

The internet provided some of the information but my meeting with Richard Poad (ex-Chairman) of the Maidenhead Heritage Centre gave me much more insight into the history. Richard has previously lectured on historical subjects including 'Grandma flew Spitfires' and has an extensive knowledge of local airfields.



The airfield was located in the fields south of the A308 near the junction with Holyport Road on land belonging to the Good family of Stroud Farm. Access was on the Windsor Road. I imagine that locals from Fifield would have walked the footpaths in Coningsby Lane to the airfield officially known as Maidenhead Aerodrome and opened in June 1929.

Aircraft design was still very primitive at

this time but after WW1 many towns began building aerodromes for commercial uses and as the network of aerodromes was limited the Air Ministry encouraged local authorities to provide suitable sites for municipal and private aerodromes.

A local engineer called Donald Stevenson (descended from the famous family of lighthouse builders) had a lifelong interest in cars and aeroplanes and was the entrepreneur behind the Maidenhead Aerodrome. His name was well known in Maidenhead as an Automobile and Aeronautical Engineer and Agent at Station Approach and the local Ford dealer was named Maidenhead Autos and Stevenson for many years.

## **Maidenhead Aerodrome**

(Entrance from Windsor Road).

Proprietors: DONALD STEVENSON & Co., Ltd.

### **A Grand Opening Display**

OF

# **FLYING**

**On SATURDAY NEXT, June 8th,  
AT 2.30 P.M.**

HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR (Councillor W. Archer), supported by Members of the Town Council, has kindly consented to open the Aerodrome.

## **EXHIBITION FLIGHTS**

BY WELL-KNOWN PILOTS

who have kindly offered to assist, including:

Capt. G. de HAVILLAND, O.B.E., A.F.C.,

designer of the famous "Moth" Light Aeroplanes,

Capt. H. S. BROAD, A.F.C.,

Chief Test Pilot of the de Havilland Aircraft Co., Ltd.

Capt. H. D. DAVIS, A.F.C.

Managing Director of the Brooklands School of Flying,

Capt. E. A. JONES & Major C. M. PICKTHORN, M.C.,

Instructors of the Brooklands School of Flying.

## **PASSENGER FLIGHTS**

*By the Instructors of the*

**BROOKLANDS SCHOOL OF FLYING**

**ENTRANCE TO GROUND 6d. Cars Parked Free.**

*Refreshments by the "SPORTSMAN RESTAURANT."*

Phone: Maidenhead 1111.

Telegrams: "Plane, Maidenhead."

**DONALD STEVENSON & Co., Ltd.,**

*Automobile & Aeronautical Engineers & Agents,*

**STATION APPROACH, MAIDENHEAD.**

Donald designed an aeroplane in 1903, his plans were sent to the War Office, who decided they would like the plane but would not like to fund 'such a revolutionary and uncertain thing as flying'. Donald became the Chief Production Engineer at Hendon working for Claude Grahame-White and they pushed production of planes during WW1 to record levels. Claude was the first to fly from Hendon airfield after gaining his pilot's licence on January 4 1910. He turned Hendon into a centre for the rich and famous and put on air displays and rallies as well as offering flying lessons to anyone who could afford it. He also started the first air mail service between Hendon and Maidenhead. All of this came to an end with the start of WW1.

After the war Stevenson turned to motor cars working in Maidenhead for GWK and inventing the first 4-wheel brake system. He was convinced that aviation was the future and became an approved aviation consultant in aerodrome design. In May 1929 the local town council approved the plan for Maidenhead Aerodrome and the grand opening ceremony took place on June 8 1929 at 2.30 pm.

In the next edition I will describe the opening day and what happened to the aerodrome.