



# The Memoirs of Major S.E. Parker Instructing at Gosport and Beaulieu

via Andy Thomas

*Sidney Ernest Parker's training and operational service with 1 and 60 Squadrons RFC were presented in CCI 49/4. Upon his return to England, he became involved with the development of the training syllabus by Robert Smith Barry. His recollections give insight to many famous names, although there are some noticeable errors due to this paper being written at a much later date.*

Back in England I went to No.1 Reserve Squadron at Gosport to teach pupils to fly on Avro 504 biplanes fitted with the famous Monosoupape engine, a castor oil lubricated rotary engine of excellent efficiency, but with the occasional bad habit of blowing off a cylinder.

When I arrived at No.1 RS, it was commanded by Lord Wellesley, but he was succeeded temporarily by 'Streamline' Mealing. We were housed in Fort Grange, one of the old brick and earth fortresses which surround the naval base of Portsmouth, and which were known as 'Palmerston's Folly' because the completion of these forts coincided with the invention of high explosives which rendered the fortifications almost useless.

It struck me that the morale at Gosport at this time, late in 1916, was low and the instructors seemed disinclined to fly except under most favourable circumstances. My own morale had been lowered by the tremendous humiliation of catching one of those contagious complaints off a toilet seat and which I

did not have the nerve to show to the Medico and consequently suffered in silence. The effect of this horrid complaint had far more effect on my nervous system than my physical being, and I would have appreciated being in a better morale atmosphere than then existed at Gosport.

As low as I was feeling, my own enthusiasm for flying was much above the general average of the instructors' who appeared to be a nervous lot. This situation was not to be blamed upon the individual as it was a result of using tired war pilots as instructors and the general innate fear that there was among the majority of pilots for flying. The aeroplane seemed to be safe but there were always unexplainable crashes that took the lives of those we thought to be quite capable. There were also the crashes that were due to error, and which were understood. The occurrence of this class of crash did not affect morale to any appreciable extent.

After a few weeks at Gosport, I was moved to Beaulieu which was then commanded by a nasty little man named Carmichael. The aeroplanes in use were American JN-4's with water cooled stationary engines. It was not a very suitable aeroplane for instructing but we got along with it quite well. In fact, I became so accustomed to it that I began stunting it mildly near the ground which was contrary to regulations.

At Beaulieu there was a small single seat scout plane called a Barnwell Bullet [Bristol Scout] which we used to look at with awe. It sat in a hangar week after week, and was never used,

*Three of Parker's commanding officers upon his return to England: l-r Major Lord George Wellesley, Major Rupert Henry Steinbach Mealing, Major George Ian Carmichael.*

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