



2Lt Philip Stanley Butterworth, RFC

1895-1979

by Peter Brand



It was June 2001, and I was flying a vintage open cockpit biplane to the grass airstrip at Albert in France, visiting other First World War aerodromes en route. The poignancy of the moment was not lost to me. I flew over perfect rows of headstones of the cemeteries from the Great War. To my left lay the Somme, where the great slaughter of that battle, which started on 1st July 1916 and continued through to November of the same year, occurred. One and a half million men from 50 divisions thrown into the battle against the enemy and a million men are killed or wounded. I am of an age when boys were brought up reading Biggles. Here I was now flying through the same airspace as our other hero 'aces' from that war. I have a keen sense of history and, notwithstanding the absence of 'Archie', could have been transported back in time. The hairs stood up on the back of my neck as I fancied that I was squinting into the sun and twisting my neck around so as not to get surprised by the Hun. Fast forward a year and I was

again in my element indulging my passion for vintage aeroplanes at the Shuttleworth Collection at Old Warden. On a second-hand book stand I came across a first edition of 'The Flyers Guide' by Captain N.J. Gill. I knew of this book; it was one of the main flying training books that aspiring pilots were reading in 1916. I was drawn to it, as I started my flying career as an instructor and in my retirement years, I was back to elementary flying training once again. I decided that I must have it, and

I had soon done the deal, but actually I would have paid a lot more for it had the dealer known. Flying training was

The cover of Gill's book, with the signature from the title page superimposed.

in its infancy in 1916 and, in retrospect, the naïvety of it all would probably amuse today's pilots. Gill tells us that *a man is expected to get his ticket in three to four days, many people only take about three to four hours actually flying before they take their tickets and On average the newly qualified aviator has not been higher than 500 feet!* There probably was never a second edition because, appalled by the limited experience and of the low standard of pilots being sent to the front, Major Robert Raymond Smith-Barry devised a completely new training syllabus which he introduced at Gosport in late 1916. His team was also responsible for inventing the Gosport tube, a speaking device where the instructor could talk to the student by means of a tube. These both revolutionised flying

training and, as a result, the quality of the pilots being sent to the front increased dramatically and may very well have had a bearing on the outcome of the war. Sir Hugh Trenchard described Smith-Barry as *The man who taught the world how to fly*. But this was yet to come to fruition and in my hands, I was holding the book that one of those aspiring pilots may well have been avidly reading in 1916! I was very happy and intrigued when I find that the title pages were signed 'Philip Stanley Butterworth 1916'.

Several years passed before the internet yielded the first return on my research: 'Flight' showed a Philip Stanley Butterworth gazetted for getting his 'ticket', Royal Aero Club certificate number 2283 in January 1916 at the Hall School of Flying, Hendon. The flag had dropped on my research, and it was starting to bear fruit, I soon had a copy of this aviators certificate. I became excited and it was now confirmed that my man did indeed gain his licence. It was an emotional moment when I saw for first time the photograph of the young twenty-year-old who owned this book over 100 years ago.

J.L. Hall started his flying school at Hendon in 1913, initially using a mixture of aeroplanes; Avro, Bleriot, Deperdussin and Caudron. In 1914 he started manufacturing Caudron machines which were powered by 35-hp and 45-hp Anzani engines.

Next, I discovered in Flight magazine dated 29 June 1916 that Philip Butterworth was made a 2nd lieutenant (on probation). At this time there were two routes into the RFC, by transfer from the army or as a civilian pilot who had gained an aviators certificate at their own expense and then joined the Special Reserve. New officers being appointed as a temporary Second Lieutenant. Geoffrey De-Havilland was one such Special reservist. Initially these Special Reservists were looked down upon by the regulars because of their lack of military experience. New officers would go to either Oxford or Reading to undergo ground training and then to a Reserve

The Hall School Biplane.

:CCI Archive

