

Birmingham Medal Society Meeting 3 July 2014

John Scott, standing in for the President, opened the meeting at which 14 members and 3 guests were present. Apologies were received from 8 members. John Scott introduced new member Chris Davis and the 3 guests, 2 of whom later expressed a wish to become members.

John Scott then introduced Paul Handford who gave his talk on Major E Cadbury DSC DFC and WWI Aviation.

The story of Egbert 'Bertie' Cadbury and his remarkable achievement during WW1 by Paul Handford MBE

Egbert 'Bertie' Cadbury was the youngest son of George Cadbury's second marriage to Elizabeth Mary Taylor. During WW1, after a brief period as an Able Seaman with the Royal Navy, in May 1915 he was commissioned as Flight-Lieutenant with the R.N.A.S. and based as a pilot at Great Yarmouth Air Station, one of the many Air Service stations on the East Coast.

'Bertie' Cadbury was decorated twice for his daring exploits during the war, when he was involved bringing down two German Zeppelin airships that had attacked Britain. The first Zeppelin kill was on Tuesday 28th November 1916.

On 27th November 1916 ten Zeppelins (formed in two groups) had set out for the Industrial Midlands and the North of England. One of the Airships the L21 had arrived on the East Coast at 9.20pm on 27th and proceeded to Leeds, Barnsley, Dodworth and Macclesfield before heading off for the Potteries. There the L21 she dropped one bomb on Kids Grove, three at Goldenhill and three at Tunstall.

The Commander seeing the lights of the ironstone-burning hearths at Chesterton, altered his course and dropped 16 HE and 7 incendiary bombs on this town but caused no casualties. Bombs were next dropped on the collieries between Fenton and Trentham but again no damage or injury was caused. At 1.30am she steered towards Great Yarmouth and headed for home.

As L21 steered towards Great Yarmouth she was seen by two RNAS aeroplanes who engaged...L21 managed to evade the aeroplanes and resumed her easterly course. At East Dereham she was attacked by Flt. Lt. W R Gaynor who had seen a light shining from the airship. He tried to engaged but had engine failure.

As dawn broke three RNAS aircraft flown by Flt. Lt. 'Bertie' Cadbury, Flt Sub-Lt Gerard Fane and Flt Sub-Lt Edward Pulling saw the L21...

The account of the attack by Lieutenant Cadbury.

Tuesday (morning) 28th November 1916

"We were warned that the Zeppelin had dropped bombs in the Midlands and was making its way to the coast and I, with two other pilots, immediately got into the air to wait for it. I saw the Zeppelin approaching the coast and immediately chased after it...

It was flying about 5,000 feet when I first saw it and it immediately climbed to 8,000 feet...

I went after it. I approached from the stern about 3,000 feet below and fired four drums of explosive ammunition in to its stern, which immediately started to light...

At the same time one of the other pilots was flying over the Zeppelin and to his horror he saw a man in the machine-gun pit run to the other side and leap overboard.

Having seen the Zeppelin circle down to the sea in a blazing mass – a most horrible sight – I went back to Yarmouth. I could not say I felt very elated or pleased at this; somehow I was overawed at the spectacle of this Zeppelin and all the people aboard going down into the sea.

For this action Flight Sub–Lieutenant E.L. Pulling was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and Flight–Lieutenant E. Cadbury, and Flight Sub–Lieutenant G.W.R. Fane were both awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. London Gazette 29th June 1917.

Bertie Cadbury's second Zeppelin kill was on 5th August 1918 (One of the last Zeppelin raids of the war)

Early in the afternoon of 5th August 1918, the L70 (the latest and largest of the German Naval airship Fleet) slipped her moorings at Friedrichshafen, together with L53, L56, L63 & L65. They headed for the east coast, intending to bomb the Midlands.

On board was Service Commander Fregattenkapitän Peter Strasser Chief of the Naval Airship Division. Strasser, he was making one of his surprise trips.

The airships reached the coast just after dusk and prepared to make a low-level run over Great Yarmouth...

However, unbeknown to them their presence had been detected by the Lenman Tail Lightship...

The account of the second attack by Lieutenant Cadbury.

"Mary was singing at a concert across the road in aid of some charity and singing very well too. I was enjoying the music, and war and rumours of war were far from my thoughts..."

...a cousin of Mary's staying with us and I were enjoying a particularly fine piece of music when a cross-eyed R.A.F. orderly struck me with his converging vision...

...I guessed I was wanted and hastened to join him. I dashed along the front, and, to my intense surprise, saw an airship in the dim distance, silhouetted against an extremely bright, clear, northerly, evening light. This was about 8.45p.m.

...I learnt from H.Q. that 3 Zeppelins were at a point about 50 miles north-east of here, well to seaward. Knowing that there was only one machine available that had the necessary speed and climb – its twin having already gone – I saw that the race was to the nimblest, to the pilot who could get in to the waiting seat."

"I roared down to the station in my ever-ready Ford, seized a scarf, goggles and helmet, tore off my streamline coat, and, semi-clothed, with a disreputable jacket under my arm, sprinted as hard as ever nature would let me, and took a running jump into the pilot's seat. I beat my most strenuous competitor by one-fifth of a second".

As the fighters were scrambled Major Cadbury, with Captain 'Bob' J Leckie as Observer/Gunner, climbed the De Havilland DH4 aircraft to 16,000 feet and jettisoning a reserve tank of fuel and some smaller bombs...

As they broke through the clouds Bertie Cadbury saw the three Zeppelins just above him silhouetted against the Northern lights. He estimated their height as 17,550 feet...

"At 22.20 we had climbed to 16,400 feet and I attacked the Zeppelin ahead (L70) slightly to the port so as to clear any obstruction that might be suspended from the airship"

Robert Leckie fired his tracer bullets from his two Lewis guns ripping a large hole through the fabric at the base of the Airship.

"It was a most fascinating sight – awe inspiring- to see this enormous Zeppelin blotting the whole sky above one..."

"The tracers ignited the escaping gas, the flames spreading rapidly and turning the airship into a fireball in less than a minute. The L70 dived headlong into the clouds..."

"It was one of the most terrifying sights I have ever seen to see this huge machine hurtling down with all those crew on board..."

The Commodore of Lowestoft recommended Major Egbert Cadbury for a Victoria Cross for his very great courage in attacking two airships with a land machine without floatation gear some 30 – 40 miles out to sea in bad weather. However, both Bertie and Leckie were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

In a letter to his father dated 6th August 1918 it ended:

“...You will have heard probably before this reaches you that my lucky star has again been in the ascendant, and that another Zeppelin has gone to destruction, sent there by a perfectly peaceful live-and-let-live citizen, who has no lust for blood or fearful war spirit in his veins.”

On 7th August the skeletal remains of the L70 were discovered on the sea bed in 48 ft of water.

During the next three weeks most of this was brought ashore and in the remains several bodies were discovered, including that of Fregattenkapitän Peter Strasser. All of these recovered crewmembers, including some washed ashore, were given a burial at sea several days later.

Paul produced a piece of the L70's structure that had been made into a letter opener, with a bullet as the handle. Inscribed on the blade is: Brought down North Sea Flight Comm. Cadbury – Zeppelin L70 4th August 1918.

Egbert Cadbury survived the war, and in 1919 joined his father's associate company J S Fry and Sons Ltd becoming managing director in two years. During World War II he served as an Air Commodore for the City of Bristol Squadron. He was knighted in 1957 for his public services. He retired as vice-chairman of the Cadburys in 1962 and died peacefully at his Bristol home in 1967.

Following an excellent talk, Jeff Taylor gave some further background information about the Cadbury family and WW1 aviation. Members then talked about the following medal groups:

A replica group to Ritter Max von Muller, the highest scoring Bavarian Ace of WW1, along with the actual medals to 3 of his victims. The British War Medal to Capt. G.E. Mahoney-Jones RFC (the Victory Medal is missing) who was serving with No. 20 Squadron RFC and was shot down on the 7 April 1917. A British War Medal, Victory Medal and Memorial Plaque to Lt. Sidney Thomas of 27 Squadron RFC. He was shot down and became a prisoner of war, only to die at home of influenza in January 1919. A British War Medal, Victory Medal, Memorial Plaque and framed photograph of 2nd Lt. George Cowie of 54 Squadron RFC.

A 1914-15 Star Trio and Belgium Croix de Guerre to 13168 Pte. William Wilkes 8th South Staffordshire Regiment, later 61929 1st Air Mechanic RFC and RAF. Whilst serving as an Aerial Gunner with 15 Squadron RFC he was awarded the Belgium Croix de Guerre, dated 20 July 1917, for completing over 100 hours flying as an Aerial Gunner.

A 1914-15 Star Trio and Memorial Plaque to Lt. Francis Lewis. He originally served as a Cpl. In the Royal Engineers (1914-15 Star named to RE) before being commissioned and becoming a pilot. He was killed in action with 53 Squadron.

A 1914-15 Star Trio to Lt. B.A. Garrett of 12 Squadron flying RE 8 aircraft. This group came with his Log Book and an original map of the Arras salient with artillery battery positions marked on it.

A 1914 Star and clasp Trio to 799 2nd Air Mechanic later Sergeant C.H. Tuting, who joined the Royal Flying Corps in 1913 and was discharged from the Royal Air Force in 1920. He rejoined the RAF in 1940 reaching the rank of Warrant Officer and earning the Defence and War Medals.

A CBE group of 5 to Group Captain L. Auker. He was a school master who after service in the Volunteers, he joined the Corps of Army Schoolmasters in December 1902 being transferred to the RFC as a Sergeant Major in April 1915. He was commissioned in the RFC in July 1915. He held a Royal Aero Club certificate as an Aeronaut (balloonist). His British War Medal is named Major RAF and his Victory Medal as Sergeant Major RFC. He received the OBE on 1 Jan 1919 and the CBE on

11 May 1937 and received both the 1935 Jubilee Medal & 1937 Coronation Medal as Commanding Officer of No. 1 Maintenance Unit, RAF Kidbrooke.

A MC 1914 Star & Clasp group of 8 to William Anderson. In 1914 he was a student at Edinburgh University who enlisted in the 8th Royal Scots, serving in France until wounded. Recovering, he completed his degree before being commissioned in the 7th Cameron Highlanders. At Loos he was wounded leading a bombing raid on the German trenches near Hulloch, winning the Military Cross. Recovering, he transferred to the RFC qualifying as a pilot. In March 1917 serving with No. 20 Squadron, he was shot down near Lille spending the rest of the war as a prisoner of war. After the war he qualified as a doctor rejoining the RAF as a doctor in the 2nd World War.

John Scott closed the meeting.

7 July 2014