

Talbot Village Aerodrome

1910

The Aerodrome has actually been in operation twice; Firstly in 1910 by William E. McArdle (1885-1935) and J. Armstrong Drexel (1891-1958) as a Flying School.

McArdle was a Bournemouth automobile business owner who was very successful, having turned his garage business in Holdenhurst Road in to one of the largest in the South of England.

Drexel was a millionaire American, whose grandfather was one of the founders of J.P Morgan Bank. Now one of the largest employers in Bournemouth.

They set up an Aviation School at East Boldre in the New Forest, but also at Talbot Village, approximately where the Bournemouth University is now located.

They assembled aircraft at the Talbot Village site, and they performed a flying display on the Whitsun bank holiday in 1910 - only the second Air Show ever to be held in the UK. This is not to be confused with the event held at Southbourne in July 6-16 where Charles Rolls lost his life in a crash.

The Aerodrome operated until 1912, but a decline in interest in flying (Possibly due to the risks of flying in these early aircraft) when Drexel and McArdle sold off all the aircraft at both Talbot Village and East Boldre.

After closure of the Aviation Schools, McArdle remained in the Bournemouth area where he continued to be involved in flying activities and by 1916 he was Official Observer at the newly formed Bournemouth Flying School. He died in Bournemouth in February 1935, aged 60.

During World War I, Drexel flew with the Lafayette Flying Corps, a Fighter Squadron formed as a volunteer American air unit fighting for France. He died in 1958, aged 67, having survived many of the early pioneer aviators, a significant number of whom were killed in aviation accidents during those precarious early pioneering years.

1915

Frederick Etches was the General Manager for The Bournemouth Aviation Company. They started a Flying School operating at the Talbot Village site in 1915 - it is possible some of the original Flying School buildings were still present. Adverts for Learning to Fly appeared in the Bournemouth Graphic newspaper from October 1915.

The Flying school trained pilots prior to their entry into the Royal Flying Corps (Later renamed to the Royal Air Force) and other air forces. Pupils included those from Canada and Belgium.

Flying was still very dangerous - One of the early fatalities was second lieutenant Edward Rebeck, son of the well known Bournemouth Estate agent.

The site was becoming too small, and despite plans to build additional hangers in late 1917, The Flying school moved to a big new site at Ensbury Park. This became requisitioned by the Royal Fling Corps and became known as RAF Winton, which eventually closed down in 1919, with the RAF moving to Beaulieu, somewhat ironically located close to the original East Boldre flying School.

The site became a racecourse, and later air racing took place. It eventually closed down in 1928, replaced with a major housing development.

1930

The legendary Amy Johnson landed at Talbot Village in 1930, in support for a fundraising appeal for a Hospital.