

W and M Flying Services Lincolnshire Flying Services

1934 to 1936

Author Geoff Wright
Son of Fred Wright

Fred Wright was not only interested in buses. On the 20th September 1931 he obtained a private aviator's certificate No 10100 from the Royal Aero Club of the United Kingdom after a flying training course at an airfield near Nottingham. He subsequently flew from Waltham aerodrome where he met an instructor called Mr Michelmore. I clearly remember flying with Mr Michelmore in a Blackburn Bluebird two seater (side by side) in 1933 at the age of eight. We did a loop, a poor one, and I was suspended upside down in the harness expecting to fall out at any moment. On 7th May, 1934, my father and Mr. Herbert Basil Goldwire Michelmore formed "W and M Flying Services" and purchased an Avro 504 Lynx biplane of first world war vintage, from Air Travel Ltd. of Gatwick, registration letters G-ACRE. The price was £340.

This could carry two passengers in the front cockpit and the intention was to give joy-rides from rented fields at towns and seaside resorts in the North east of England. The hangar was in a field at the top of Kenwick road, Louth, on the right hand side just before the quarry cottages. (After the war the hangar was transferred to Welton top where it still serves as a garage.)

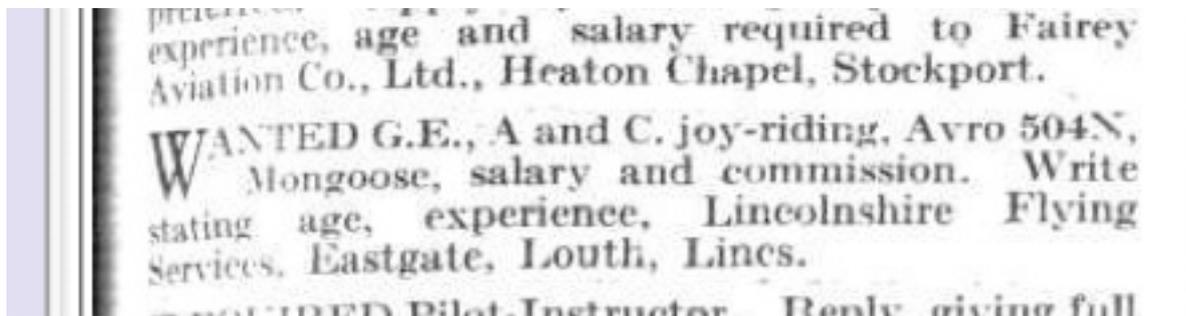
This partnership did not last very long. There is an entry in the 1934 accounts which reads:

"Bad Debt - Michelmore drawings, less capital paid in £43.0.4."

£43 would probably be the equivalent of £4000 these days so the loss was significant. Mr Michelmore disappeared, address unknown, and W and M Flying Services ceased to operate on the 20th July, 1934.

A paragraph in the Louth Standard about 1970 throws some light on Mr Michelmore's character. A Mrs Potts enrolled for five lessons at Waltham. She admits that she did not get very far, but recalls that the fiercest and rudest of the instructors was called Michelmore. He was a brute, but she admitted that his down to earth tactics and more than rough language did more good to students than the kid-glove treatment.

I remember, at the age of 9, being at the airfield during the summer holidays of 1934 and watching Mr Michelmores first replacement take the Avro up for a test flight. On landing the poor fellow crashed straight through the hedge and was put on the next train back to London. I burst into tears. . Insurance was initially for Third party only at a cost of £12 but I note that this was wisely revised to Fully Comprehensive Cover at £35 per year. This was probably after the crash as there is no mention of an insurance payment in the accounts. There is an item however for repairs £97.9.10 including cartage £12. A new pilot was subsequently recruited for the remainder of the season, Mr. D H V Craig. Unfortunately the most lucrative months had passed and WFS made a substantial loss of £186 that year.



In 1935 Mr Craig was replaced by Mr J Kennedy, whose letter of application read as follows:

Address: 7 Albert Road, Merstham, Surrey.

Joy riding - a few days with the Herts and Essex Club two years ago, only (Moth).

Hours 504N - 15 hours with the RAF.

Total hours, all types - 939.

Licence endorsed for 504N.

Accidents - Nil

Recent Flying - RAF Reserve Feb. this year (Instructors Course)

Apart from the financial accounts there is no official record of the company's activities in 1934 and 1935. We do know that banner advertising brought in £70 in 1934 and one of the advertisers was Bertie Hallam, who owned the Playhouse cinema in Louth..

Passengers were charged 2/6d, for a quick circuit round the field, 5/- for a longer trip or 7/6d for aerobatics. If we assume the average charge was 5/-, the number of passengers flown in 1934 was about 1144 and in 1935, 4660.

I remember camping with the aircraft at Withernsea and Redcar and seeing it fly from a long narrow field by the side of the road at the Cross Inn Mablethorpe. On the latter

occasion my father asked me if I would like a flight just to show customers that there was nothing to fear. I was ten at the time. Unfortunately the pilot overshot on landing and we were heading fast for the ditch in front of the Cross Inn. The pilot had to make a violent u-turn and the wing touched the grass. On leaving the plane I noticed a bracket under the wing on the airon was bent, and on pointing this out to my father was told to shut up. "Did I want to scare the customers ?." I also have a vague memory of the Avro flying off the sands at Mablethorpe from a roped off area of the beach. It also went to Caistor in Norfolk and Wragby and presumably numerous other locations.

On another occasion LFS was attending an RAF Open Day at Waddington, and in the evening my brother Les and I were asked if we wished to fly back to Louth. Of course we said YES, but it turned out to be an adventure. After we had taken off the clouds came right down on to the Wolds and eventually the pilot had to make an emergency landing in a field of cows near Wragby.

An advertisement in the Standard in 1935 read as follows:

**LINCOLNSHIRE FLYING SERVICES
LOUTH**

**FLYING
FOR
ONE DAY ONLY
AT
KENWICK ROAD AERODROME
ON
SUNDAY, MAY 26TH, 1935.**

FLIGHTS FROM 2/6.

AEROBATICS.

An article in the Grimsby Telegraph about 1979 about an incident in 1935 shows that sometimes the aircraft was used for other purposes than joy-riding.

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HIGH FLYING JOKER LAID AN EGG

Fred Wright had some friends who were always ready for a jape and one practical joker at Alford had a versatile preoccupation with eggs. He hit on the bright idea of bombing the police station there with the rotten variety. and using Fred's craft for his dastardly deed, he accomplished his mission.

Although there was no immediate return of fire - dare I say "shelling" - from the unsuspecting bobbies they did not finish up with "egg" on their faces.

But Fred's fun loving friend suffered a little later from the "beaks". Although it was explained with some sincerity that his objective was the cricket ground, the magistrates suspected "fowl" play all along and duly fined him.

Grimsby Evening Telegraph. (Later)

POOR SHOT

And now more of the continuing saga of the mystery joker who dropped eggs from Fred Wright's Avro 504k aeroplane. The high flying egg-dropping joker was one John Twigg. He did not deliberately bomb Alford police station. He was aiming for the bowling green where a match was in progress but his aim was not very good. And he only dropped one egg according to Mrs Mary Boswell of Gloucester Avenue, Grimsby, who used to live at Alford.

We have no financial accounts later than December, 1935, but we do know that an Air Display was held at the Kenwick Road Aerodrome on 26th May, 1936, as revealed by the following advertisement in the Louth Standard.

This seems to indicate that the Avro may have been flown after 1935, but I have no evidence of this. Of course, as my father had a private pilot's licence he may have flown it for his own pleasure, but I don't think that this was so. It may have been a financial decision or the Alworthiness Certificate may have been withdrawn.

The departure of Mr Michelmore and the accident resulted in a substantial loss of £186 in 1934, but in 1935 there was a working profit of £39. The aircraft, G-ADFW, was not sold, and was eventually dismantled, the engine being given to the Air Training Corps and the wings being stacked near to a pea stack outside the hangar on the Kenwick Road.(See photograph).

End of information relating to the Avro. There is lot more general information about the whitening pits, the Flying Flea and Mr Wilson's life in Louth in the recording.

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All that remains of the original Avro 504K is an air speed indicator, and a few documents and photographs. During the last war a German bomber returning from a raid in the Midlands dropped a stick of incendiary bombs which damaged Kenwick Hall, hit some of

the buildings in the whitening quarry, and also set fire to the wings and fuselage of the Avro which were still lying outside the hangar. My brother Les claims that the incident was mentioned by Lord Haw Haw in his German propaganda broadcasts, but it was a sad end to a bit of Louth history.

Details supplied by the Royal Air Force Museum at Hendon

G-ACRE was a 504K (serial no. E9408), delivered to the Royal Flying Corps during the first world war by the Graham-White Aviation Company, one of a batch of 300 (E9207 - E9506). It was converted by the RAF to 504N standard (with an Armstrong Siddeley Lynx engine) and sold for civilian use in 1934. It was bought by W and M Flying Services on the 7th May 1934 but must have been resold later that year as on Sunday the 13th February 1938 it was written off in an accident at Camlingay, Cambs., while in the ownership of Air Publicity Ltd.

G-ADFW was built for the RAF as a 504N (serial K1061) by A V Roe and Company in 1929. Another civilian conversion, the aircraft was sold by the Air Ministry on 23rd April, 1934 and purchased in 1935 by Lincolnshire Flying Services for £350. It was powered by an Armstrong Whitworth Mongoose engine and removed from the civil register in November, 1945.

Mr Harold Wilson - 10th June 1992

This is a transcription of a conversation with Mr Harold Wilson aged 89 at Louth, Lincolnshire on the 10th June 1992.

In the 1930's Mr Wilson was manager of the Whitening Pits and lived in the first house of a block of 4 at the top of Kenwick Road overlooking Wright's Aerodrome. My father kept an Avro 504k and a Flying Flea in a hangar there and Mr Wilson helped with the maintenance of both of them.

Mr Wilson The AVRO 504K. When did he buy it?

Geoff I thought it was in 1934. According to his accounts he bought it in 1934.

Mr Wilson He would do because he had two, if not three pilots very quickly.

Geoff I can tell you that he had a Mr Michelmore who departed rather quickly owing something like £50. Do you remember him ?

Mr Wilson No. I don't

Geoff Because it was called W and M Flying Services. i.e. Wright and Michelmore.

You see that - that's the Registration of Business Act 1916. It says W and M Flying Services, the Aerodrome, Kenwick Road, Louth Lincs. ceased to carry on business on the 20th July 1934. Mr. FBJ Michelmore left locality. He did in fact leave in rather a hurry. Do you remember that ?

Mr Wilson I don't think I was any thing other than first names. I didn't know his surname.

Geoff He went and then there was a chap called Kennedy.

Mr Wilson Now he was a box of tricks. He was the one I first went up with.

Geoff 21st May 1935. In reply to your letter I beg to give the following information. Joy Riding - a few days with the Herts and Essex Club. Hours on the Avro 504N, 15 hours in the RAF. Total hours of all types 939. Licence endorsed for the Avro 504. Accidents NIL. Before he came another pilot came who crashed it on his first flight. He came up on the London train, I think it was a Thursday morning. Crashed through the hedge near the gate and my father put him on the next train.

Do you know where the hangar is now ?

Mr Wilson Yes I do. Welton Top.

Geoff Last Tuesday I went up there .

Winn Isn't it dilapidated though.

Mr Wilson Yes. Take the years it's been made. The corrugated iron sheet must have been a lot better than it is today. Dick Marshall - he had something to do with buying it - the farmer at Welton. He came to see me one day, whilst I was up at the pits and he said "are you very busy". I said "well just moderate". He says "can you do a job for me". He says "well I want that hangar taking down". And I said "no that's a bigger job than I want". And you know what I'd seen

Geoff When was this. Before the war ?

Mr Wilson No. Well it was stood there when the war was on.

Geoff Was the hangar burned ?

Mr Wilson No the hangar wasn't burned. But another machine was outside it that your father was going to build, or finish and furnish and put an engine in. It was burned and it was at the side of a stack of pea straw.

Geoff I thought that was the fuselage and wings of the old Avro & he'd given the engine to the ATC. It seems we're getting the truth now.

Mr Wilson I think the original machine was inside the hangar. Right up to the time of the incendiary raid on us here. That was when Kenwick Hall got burnt.

Geoff So the incendiaries fell in the field. They didn't hit the hangar.

Mr Wilson No. Well it was a stick of incendiary bombs that came right across you see, and that stick of incendiary bombs finished in our quarry at the whitening pits. Some of them did actually drop on the sheds.

Winn You know where Geoff's dad had the hangar, well if you face the cottages the hangar was to the right.

Mr Wilson No, it was right at the bottom corner. If you're going up Kenwick Road, this is the gateway, the hangar was there and our cottages were there the full length of the field away, further up the hill. There was a gate actually at the side of the hangar, within the width of this road. Beyond the cottages was Kenwick Hall Farm. That's still there. And then Kenwick Hall Lodge which now has the new by-pass running past it.

machine down right at the top end of the field and taxied. An the blooming grass was up here and there I was walking at the side of it the plane end, you know, keeping it steady for him to taxi. I was soaked with dew.

Geoff You must have had quite a few flights then.

Mr Wilson Yes, I did. The first flight I ever had we went to Caistor in Norfolk. He was looking for a possible weekend flying visit down there. We didn't make anything out much. And another time we went to Redcar.

Geoff I actually went up and camped at Redcar. We spent a week or more up there.

Mr Wilson I didn't stay of course.

Geoff We also went up somewhere near Middlesbrough. Do you remember that long field they had at Mablethorpe ?

Mr Wilson This side of the Cross Inn

Geoff I remember my father putting me in - business wasn't very brisk - he stuck me in and we did a quick trip round the field just to show a little lad of ten wasn't scared to try and boost business.

Mr Wilson At the same time there was somebody doing the Hackney Carriage business. They used to gather the people up in the town and conveyed them up to the flying field at the side of the Cross Inn at Mablethorpe there. Conveyed from point to point. All in the price I think.

Winn Is that the Hackney Carriage on the photo taking you down to the?

Mr Wilson Yes, that's the Hackney Carriage. Aye and it had got the FW, his initials, on the kite, G-ADFW.

Geoff He had two, because he had one G-ACRE. This puzzles me.

Mr Wilson Yes, that was right.

Geoff But that other one is not the same, is it, which makes me think maybe he had two.

Geoff But that other one is not the same, is it, which makes me think maybe he had two.

Mr Wilson There's something in this. Now wait a minute. I don't know which one.....had a five cylinder engine, a radial, and then there was a seven cylinder radial. And I don't know which one was which.

Geoff But I can find out as the registers are still in existence. In the same way I have discovered there is a Flying Flea Society in existence .

Geoff I wouldn't have thought they could change the letters. The registration letters on the two insurance cover notes are different.

Mr Wilson It doesn't give any engine capacity - it's not necessary on this.

Geoff It says here Comprehensive insurance £19 per year. Wasn't bad was it.

Do you remember a chap called Perkiss ?

Mr Wilson Yes

Geoff When Michaelmore left

Mr Wilson He was the last pilot of the whole situation. I think so.

Geoff Now what was the mechanic's name ? Was it Brattersby, Brattlesby, He did have a mechanic ?

Mr Wilson Yes he did.

Geoff Brother John went down to Cawthorpe recently and met an old lady who told him that her brother was the mechanic of Fred Wright's aircraft up on Kenwick Road. She

mentioned his name and said he was still alive and living down south. Unfortunately John didn't take any particulars. Very few people can remember about the aircraft.

Geoff I was just trying to find out where my father used to go flying. I remember Withernsea, Redcar, Mablethorpe - that little field by the Cross Inn - Waddington.

Mr Wilson I know he went to Wragby for a weekend. I think he seemed to concentrate where his bus services were. Now, there's another item I've found, Mr Kirkham next door he had a book bought for him, maybe a Christmas present, and I think it's called the "Aerodromes of Lincolnshire". Kenwick Road is in it. It's talking about all the aerodromes in Lincolnshire. How on earth they could grow any grain I don't as it was simply covered. Little places that I know and I've been past and seen, aerodromes or flying fields or dummy flying fields where they used to put dummy planes to deceive Jerry. It's a beautiful book.

Geoff Yes, you mentioned that the old fuselage and things were hit by incendiaries but the hangar was still there.

Mr Wilson It never touched it.

Geoff The hangar must have been there during the war. Was it sold afterwards ?

Mr Wilson Yes

Geoff During the war then - what was in it during the war.

Mr Wilson I don't know what was in it. I was going to Lincoln but I think as the aerodrome stood there I think there was a pea straw stack belonging to Frank Pridgeon (he's dead and gone) and then parts of the machine were outside. I don't think the wings were on it.

Mr Wilson Do you remember them flying for Bertie Hallam with carpet adverts.

Geoff I remember they used to have two banners from the wings and as they came in to land they used to pull a lever or something and dropped the banners.

Mr Wilson He had a big canvas sausage that he dragged along.

Geoff I remember the Lincolnshire Show. He used to fly overhead advertising it. Also, somewhere there are aerial photographs of the show. My father used to have one on his living room wall. I haven't got it. Apparently the library have got a lot of old photographs and there's also a chap called Robinson I think and one called Kay in Southlands who writes books on transport. He was in the library and we're going to swap information.

The photographs (attachments) in sequence as sent are:

The Insurance Certificate

The Airfield , Kenwick Road, Louth. The original site of the hangar.

(The whitening pits were top left) The hangar was sold after the war to Dick Marshall, a farmer at Welton on the Lincoln Road and is now used as a commercial garage.

The Avro with advertising banners

The Avro after it crashed in 1934

Fred Wright and his wife, Jesse in front of the Avro

The avro with horse drawn carriages at the Cross Inn, Mablethorpe

Pilot Kennedy, Maurice Smith the butcher and two ladies