



Herbert William Matthews, FRIBA (1874-1954)

In 1919 Herbert William Matthews was one of the three founding members of Aerofilms Ltd; his two fellow founders were Claude Grahame-White and Francis Lewis Wills (Board of Trade, BT31/33802/154995). Francis Wills was managing director, Claude Grahame-White was chairman and Herbert third director (Renwick, 2012:65).

Herbert was born in London in 1874, probably the only child of William and Eliza Matthews. The 1881 Census records that the family lived at 42 Hindon Street in Westminster, and that they were wealthy enough to have a live-in servant. Herbert's grandmother was also living with the family at that time (1881 England Census). By 1891, when Herbert was 17, the family had moved to 68 High View in the village of Freshford just outside of Bath, the birthplace of Herbert's father. Herbert's grandmother, now aged 84, was still living with the family, but there is no mention of servants in the 1891 Census. Herbert's occupation is described as "architect articled pupil" (1891 England Census). As a trainee architect he was articled to Charles Septimus Adye, Architect and County Surveyor of Wiltshire from 1841 to 1906 (Directory of British Architects, 2001:151).

Herbert began independent practice as an architect in Bath in 1898 (Chatterton, 1926:202). During his professional life he planned renovations to the Grand Pump Room Hotel in Bath, and became architect to the Lady Honeywood group of hotels; he was responsible for Denewood Grange in Bath, the Little George Hotel and the infectious diseases hospital in Chippenham (Anon., 1954:251). He designed many domestic buildings, shops, hotels and factory and aerodrome buildings (*The Times*, 1954). He also designed replicas of the parliament buildings of Canada, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa in steel, timber

and plaster, for the Festival of Empire and Imperial Exhibition of 1911 (Chatterton, 1926:202).

The 1901 Census records Herbert (then aged 27) as living at Fairfield in Bath with his wife Minnie Agnes whom he married in 1897, and son Herbert George William. A niece is also listed at the address and a live-in servant is present. Herbert's occupation is given as "architect & surveyor/estate agent" (1901 England Census). The family was living in London by the time of the 1911 Census, at 35 Crystal Palace Park Road in Sydenham. By now, Herbert and Minnie had three children: Herbert George William (12), Margaret Edith (3) and John Arthur (1). Rosa Powell (27), described as a 'companion' was also living with the family at this time. The 1911 Census sees Herbert describe himself not only as an architect, but also as "Manager Festival of Empire" and "Director Public Companies" (1911 England Census).

It is uncertain just how Herbert met Claude Grahame-White, or how and when he became interested in aviation. Perhaps the one led to the other. One possibility is that they met in 1910 at the Festival of Empire held at Crystal Palace, an event managed by Herbert and at which Claude carried out a month of exhibition flying. Certainly they were acquainted by the spring of 1911 when Herbert is named as one of the directors of a new aviation company: Grahame-White, Blériot and Maxim Ltd, of which Claude was managing director (*Flight*, 1911:298). They must have been on good terms because in the summer of 1912 Mr and Mrs Matthews were among the guests at Claude's wedding (*Flight*, 1912:608).

Amongst his aviation-related commissions, Herbert designed the prestigious London Flying Club at Hendon, and factory and hangar buildings for the Grahame-White Aviation Company (Cherry & Pevsner, 1998: 167). He also

designed Aeroville for the Grahame-White Company. This was a project to provide on-site accommodation for company employees. Designs were drawn up in 1917, but it is unclear whether work started before the end of the war, and due to the company's uncertain future, only part of the proposed housing scheme was ever completed (National Heritage List for England).

Herbert's interests were not confined to architecture and aviation. He organised a hugely successful Bath pageant which led to his involvement in managing the Festival of Empire at the Crystal Palace in 1911, and he was a founding member of the Bath Operatic and Dramatic Society (Anon., 1954:251).

In 1916, at the age of 18, Herbert's eldest son was awarded his Royal Aero Club Aviator's Certificate. A 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corps, Herbert George William Matthews was awarded certificate number 4280 on 12th November (Great Britain, Royal Aero Club Aviators' Certificates, 1910-1950). Sadly Herbert senior outlived his son, who died on the 12th July 1937.

Herbert William Matthews died on the 4th March 1954 at the age of 79.

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