HERBERT SMITH
AIRCRAFT DESIGNER *PAR EXCELLENCE*

An Appreciation, by Robin Platt

HERBERT SMITH WAS BORN IN BRADLEY, near Skipton in the West Riding of Yorkshire, on 1 May 1889, into a family which had been resident there for many years. His grandfather, Thomas Smith, was the local Schoolmaster, assisted, according to the 1881 census, by two of his children, Charles and Aspasia. Thomas' other children, as recorded on the census, were daughters Hannah, Janet and Mary and son John, then aged 25 years and employed as a Railway Clerk .

At the time of the 1891 census, John, still a Railway Clerk, had married a local girl, Susannah, and they had two children, Percy and Herbert. Their address was shown as Cross Lane Terrace, Bradley. Ten years later, the family had moved to Chestnut House in Main Street; daughters Hilda and Edith had been born and son Percy was now in employment as a Bank Clerk.

A young Herbert Smith, with one of his sisters.   *:via Author*

Upon leaving the village school in Bradley, Herbert attended Keighley Grammar School in the early 1900s and later Bradford Technical College, where he studied Mechanical Engineering and in 1907 was awarded a Diploma for students passing every examination set during the three year course. Herbert Smith said that he was one of only three students to receive the Diploma at Bradford that year.

During this period Herbert's interest in sport developed: he and his brother Percy played football for the village team while Herbert also showed skill as a cricketer. In 1908 he topped the local cricket league bowling averages with 56 maidens and 149 runs; 47 wickets at an average of 3.17 from his 143 overs. His performances included, amongst others, 5 wickets for 8 runs and 6 wickets for 18 runs, all recorded in the local newspaper or the published history of The Craven Cricket League. It is interesting to note that the bowling feats of another local cricketer, Don Mosey, late BBC cricket commentator and sports writer, are also noted in the same records.

Herbert began his professional training with the Keighley machine-tool manufacturers Dean, Smith and Grace, which gave him first-hand experience of shop-floor engineering practice. He worked there for several years before changing his employment to further his career. He was next employed by lift manufacturers Smith, Major and Stephens of Northampton, where he joined the drawing office, to develop his draughting skills. His stay with this company lasted for about a year. In 1913 his next move, which set him on the road to fame and fortune, took him into the aviation industry.

Bradley CC, winners of the Junior League Cup, 1907; Herbert Smith is third from right in the back row.   *:M. Walmsley*