

<https://www.earlyaviators.com/eroe.htm>

A. V. ROE

1877-1958

**AKA Alliott Vernon Roe & Sir (Edwin) Alliott Verdon
Verdon-Roe**



A. V. Roe

Library of Congress Collection, 5-13-08

Harvard-Boston's Great Aero Meet - Boston, Mass. Aug 19, 1910

Daily Journal and Tribune, Knoxville, Tennessee:

August 19, 1910,

Via email from Bob Davis - 9-2-03

"No aviation meet held in this country and probably none yet held in the world has had such a representative list of aviators as is assured in the Harvard-Boston aero meet, September 3 to September 13, according to the list of entrants to date announced tonight. The entry list is truly international and includes seventeen individual aviators and eleven types of air navigating machines. There is certain to be keen competition for the \$40,000 hung up as prizes in a dozen events. The entrants follow:

[Walter Brookins](#)
[Arthur Johnson](#)

Wright biplanes
Wright biplanes

[Glenn H. Curtiss](#)

[Charles F. Willard](#)

[M. Didier Masson](#)

A.V. Roe

[J. Graham White](#)

[William M. Hilliard](#)

J. M. Allas

Ernest P. Lincoln,

Clifford D. Harmon

[Captain Thomas Baldwin](#)

Jacques Delesseps

[Dr. W. P. Christmas,](#)

John G. Stratton

Horace F. Kearner

[Greely S. Curtis](#)

Curtiss biplanes

Curtiss biplanes

Vendome aeroplane

Roe Triplane

Farman biplane & Bleriot monoplane;

Herring-Burgess biplane

Harvard biplane;

Christmas biplane

Burgess-Curtiss aeroplane

Pfizer monoplane

Bleriot monoplane



A. V. Roe

Courtesy of Dr. Russell Naughton

WAR OF THE ROSES AIR RACE - 1913

There has been a long standing rivalry between Lancashire and Yorkshire, which dates back to the so-called War of the Roses when members of the House of Lancaster (represented by a red rose) fought members of the House of York (white rose) for control of Fifteenth century England. Since then, the rivalry has become confined, largely, to sporting events.

On September 20, 1913, the Manchester firm of A V Roe (Avro) made a great impact on the aviation world with a new design which secured fourth place in the Aerial Derby. The importance of this result, and an average recorded speed of 66.5 mph, was that the Avro 504 was an untried prototype.

The Yorkshire Evening News responded to the achievement of the Avro 504 by offering a trophy to the winner of an air race between the best Lancashire and best Yorkshire aeroplanes. This race was to be over a 100-mile course. Inevitably, the event was promoted as the War of the Roses Air Race.

The foremost Yorkshire aviation company at this time was the Leeds-based Blackburn Aeroplane and Motor Company Limited. Prompted by the Yorkshire Evening News, Blackburn issued an official challenge to the Manchester-based A V Roe Company. This was accepted and the race was on.

The Contenders : Avro 504

The basic layout, and some details, of the Avro 504 had been sketched out in a penny exercise book by A V Roe. Roe then gave the project to a team led by Roy Chadwick, who was later to become Chief Designer and be responsible for the Avro Lancaster. Chadwick and his assistant, C R Taylor, worked on the fuselage and undercarriage. Harry Broadsmith, a 23 year old former marine engineer, worked on the wings along with Frank Vernon. Vernon was a Whitworth Scholar who was employed primarily to undertake stress calculations; he had previously worked for the Locomotive Department of the Great Central Railway at Gorton in Manchester. There were clear similarities between this aircraft and the earlier Avro 500, particularly as regards the undercarriage and general shape, but the 504 featured wings with forward stagger and was powered by a new 80-hp Gnome rotary engine.

Blackburn Type I

Against this exciting new Avro, Robert Blackburn decided to race a new Type I two seat monoplane design. This was of a similar size to the Avro 504 (38 feet wing span as against 36 feet, and 28' 6" long as against 29' 5"), and was also powered by one of the new 80 hp Gnome engines. The Type I had been developed from the 1912 single-seater Blackburn Monoplane at the request of Dr M G Christie, a prominent member of the Yorkshire Aero Club. Christie had been very impressed by the 1912 Monoplane, an example of which is retained by the Shuttleworth Trust as the oldest surviving airworthy British aeroplane. However, he wanted a two-seater as, at that time, he had not qualified for his flying certificate. Therefore he employed Harold Blackburn to pilot the aircraft for him. This aircraft had been delivered to the Yorkshire Aerodrome, on Moortown near the centre of Leeds, on August 14, 1918.

The Course

It was agreed that the 100-mile course would be circular and flown over Yorkshire. Initial take-off and final landing points would be at the Yorkshire Aerodrome, of which Christie was a director. The start and finish line was to be Holroyd's Intake on the main Leeds-Harrogate road. From there the aircraft would fly back over Moortown and then towards York. The aircraft had to land at checkpoints at York, Doncaster, Sheffield and Barnsley. At each checkpoint the aircraft had to remain on the ground for twenty minutes, presumably so the spectators had something to view. A Special Aerial Issue numbered edition of the Yorkshire Evening News was to be published for the race. Each aircraft had to carry fifty copies, which were to be distributed at each checkpoint.

As both aircraft were two-seaters, it was decided that each would fly with a pilot and a passenger. The crew of the Blackburn consisted of Christie and Harold Blackburn. Fred Raynham, the Avro test pilot, was chosen to fly the Avro 504. A V Roe's brother, Humphrey, elected to fly as Raynham's passenger.

The Race

The day of the Race was October 2, and a large crowd gathered at the Yorkshire Aerodrome to see the start of the race. The French aviator, [Henri Salmet](#), had been engaged to give exhibition and passenger flights to entertain the crowd while the two teams completed their preparations.

The Race was to start just after 2:00 pm, and both aircraft ascended together to pass the start line at 2:14 pm. The Avro and the Blackburn were evenly matched on the flight towards York, with Raynham landing 25 minutes later, just a minute in front of Blackburn. The newspapers were duly unloaded, but the restart was slightly delayed when a small dog escaped from the crowd. Both aircraft were airborne again by 3:01 pm.

Flying towards Doncaster, the pilots began to encounter patches of mist. They landed together at Doncaster, at 3:33 pm, and took off again eighteen minutes later. Once more mist was encountered, and visibility was seriously reduced. This caused more problems for Raynham because he was unfamiliar with the area over which he was flying. By the time he reached Sheffield, Blackburn was beginning to pull ahead and landed at 4:20 pm, four minutes before Raynham.

Blackburn took over again at 4:42 pm and landed at the Barnsley checkpoint thirteen minutes later. He took off again at 5:19 pm, by which time Raynham had still not arrived. In fact, the Avro had flown over Barnsley in the mist and landed by mistake at Dewsbury. Realising their mistake, Raynham and Roe decided not to double back and instead flew on to Leeds. The Avro landed at 5:30 pm. Blackburn, having waited at Barnsley for twenty-four minutes, arrived at 5:48 pm.

The Result

The Yorkshire Evening News Challenge Trophy was awarded to the Yorkshire team, as the Lancashire team was disqualified for missing one of the checkpoints. As often happens when the result is not clear-cut, Lancastrians claimed that Blackburn's local knowledge gave him an unfair advantage when attempting to identify landmarks in poor visibility conditions. Possibly this was the reason that it was agreed to repeat the event the following year, but this time over Lancashire. A course from Manchester to Blackpool, Liverpool and then back to Manchester was agreed. However, the outbreak of the Great War intervened and the whole idea was dropped.

The Real Winner ?

As far as the relative merits of the aircraft are concerned, it must be recognised that the Type I was one of the last of Robert Blackburn's monoplane designs. The 504 established Avro as a successful aircraft manufacturer, saw extensive use both during the Great War and afterwards, and was still in production fifteen years later with a total of over 10 000 built. Final proof of the ultimate superiority of the Avro 504 came in July 1914 when one was purchased by Harold Blackburn !

Courtesy of Nick Forder,



Daily Mail Celebration?

"I think that might be of one of the Daily Mail celebrations. If you look at the man on the far right, the one who is holding a French flag,

I think it is A.V. Roe. What do you think?"

Photo & text courtesy of Maggi Wilson, 8-24-06



A. V. Roe & Brother

Library of Congress Collection, 5-13-08



Germany - Captured English Plane - AVRO Type
Library of Congress Collection, 7-19-08

ONLINE RESOURCES

If you search for "A. V. Roe +aviation" using Google, (9-9-03), you will find about 1720 links! Among the most helpful are the following:

[Sir Edwin Alliot Verdon Roe \(1877 - 1970\)](#)

This webpage on the Pioneers website of Dr. Russell Naughton is perhaps a starting point for learning more about his life and career. On it you will find links and several photographs. You can access the site by clicking on the title

[AVIATION PIONEER A. V. ROE](#)

This webpage, on [Oswald Mosley.com](#) website offers a story of his life and career and carries a nice portrait as well. To access the site, click on the title above.

[Avro](#)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

This webpage on the [Wikipedia](#) website is replete with some 37 hyperlinks and is a very good place to learn about Roe and his role in the

development of aviation. You can access the site by clicking on the title above.

[National Portrait Gallery](#)

This page on the [National Portrait Gallery](#) website offers two beautiful portraits of Roe, along with a group photo in which he is included. I was alerted to the Gallery by Andrew Trend, to whom I am very grateful. You will find the three photos by scrolling to the bottom of the page. You can access the site by clicking on the title above.

SELECTED ADDITIONAL LINKS

These links have been recommended to me by Andrew Trend and are well worth your attention. I have extracted short portions of the text for your convenience. To read the complete stories, click on the titles.

[Avro Golf Society](#)

"He began with small models and in this he was quite successful. When the Wright brothers made the very first flight in a heavier than air machine at Kittyhawk, U.S.A. he was almost immediately in correspondence with them. He applied for and took a job with the Royal Aero Club. Then found a job in the U.S.A. with a firm trying to build a gyrocopter. The machine was a failure and Alliott was back in Britain. But not discouraged."

[Hamble Valley](#)

The Strawberry Coast

REACH FOR THE SKY

The history of early aviation in the Borough of Eastleigh

To commemorate the centenary of powered flight on 17 December 1903

"Born 1877, A V Roe was interested in aviation from childhood and he patented the first aircraft control column in 1906. He made his first flight on 8th June 1908 (although this was not officially recorded at the time) and spent his time designing, building and flying all at once. He was the first Briton to fly in a British designed and built aeroplane. In 1920, A V Roes became the first company ever to be registered as an airplane manufacturer."

[River Hamble](#)

"On the west bank of the River Hamble lies Hamble village, a pleasant combination of old and new buildings, waterside inns and restaurants, boatyards and moorings. It was an active fishing port until World War 1 and was famous for its oysters. The main street is lined with Georgian cottages and inns. Rope Walk Street is named in tribute to the rope-making industry that used to be here. Copperhill Terrace was named after the coppers in which the tar for preserving the ropes was boiled. The Bugle Inn, part 17th century, claims its foundations were laid

over 800 years ago. At the top of the street there is a church, partly Norman, and in the graveyard lies the grave of Sir Alliott Verdon-Roe (one of the first Englishmen to fly and founder of the aircraft firm of Avro which was based at Hambledon in 1914)."

In Memoriam

A. V. Roe died on January 4, 1958

Personal communication from Andrew Trend, 9-22-04

Editor's Note:

**If you have any more information on this Early Flier,
please contact me.**

E-mail to [Ralph Cooper](#)